Potentially Dangerous Enemy Aliens: Experiences at Fort Missoula and Transformative Immigration Policy in the United States

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POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS ENEMY ALIENS: EXPERIENCES AT FORT MISSOULA
AND TRANSFORMATIVE IMMIGRATION POLICY IN THE UNITED STATES

By

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Thesis

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

Master of Arts
in Anthropology, General Anthropology

The University of Montana
Missoula, MT

May 2017

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Potentially Dangerous Enemy Aliens: 
Experiences at Fort Missoula and Transformative Immigration Policy in the United States

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Abstract

In this paper, I attempt to comprehend the experiences of Italian and Japanese internees who were detained at Fort Missoula’s Alien Detention Center during World War II. Furthermore, I draw upon historical patterns of United States’ immigration policies that greatly affected perspectives and social values between various ethnic groups. Simultaneously, national immigration policies shifted across space and time reflecting ethnocentric ideals and discriminatory campaigns that altered past cultural, political, and economic landscapes. The events that produced the internment of Italian and Japanese men at Fort Missoula varied greatly and are critical to examine through historical records. Such records pertain to the experiences of Japanese Americans who were subject to loyalty hearings at Fort Missoula’s T-1 military courtroom during World War II. The secondary purpose of this paper is to establish a foundation in which to design and create a travelling display for museum purposes. The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula, located in Missoula, Montana, seeks to develop and construct a travelling display to draw upon the history, conflicts, and importance of those who were detained at Fort Missoula from 1941 to 1944. Museum institutions seek to serve the interests of their surrounding communities. In this light, the historical narratives of a dynamic physical and cultural landscape in Missoula become necessary to understand. Aspects of research, details, and methodology supported in this paper reflect core concepts to efficiently and creatively build a travelling display. Understanding such concepts emphasize positive and negative impacts relevant to terminology as one attempts to conduct historical research and a contemporary analysis of social, political, and economic issues.
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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to examine the history of Fort Missoula’s Alien Detention Center, immigration policies in the United States prior to World War II, and the experiences of those held at the Alien Detention Center during the war, namely Italian and Japanese men. The historic events leading to and ultimately producing anti-Italian and anti-Japanese sentiment in the United States become significant to explore prior to internment-era Fort Missoula. In this light, examining U.S. immigration policies such as the Chinese Exclusion Act, Gentlemen’s Agreement, California Land Law, and the Immigration Act of 1924 is necessary. Each law was created in response to varying economic circumstances that produced racist campaigns widely discriminating against the Issei, the first generation of Japanese immigrants to the United States. Furthermore, as Italian immigration increased in the twentieth century, regionally dependent stereotypes developed, which reflected internment policies prior to the United States’ entrance into World War II.

This paper also examines the experiences of several Italian internees detained at Fort Missoula’s Alien Detention Center before and during the war including Umberto “Bert” Benedetti, Alfredo Cipolato, and Giovanni “John” Pelle. The events that led to Japanese internment were significantly different than those of Italians once President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed an Executive Order to target, remove, relocate, and incarcerate all those of Japanese ancestry. Furthermore, the historical development of Japanese cultural associations and integration into economic niches in the United States
becomes important to illuminate its relationship to pre-WWII surveillance conducted in densely populated Japanese regions to determine potential dangerousness of individuals in the event of war. After Japanese naval forces attacked Pearl Harbor in 1941, President Roosevelt signed a sequence of laws including Executive Order 9066, Public Law 503, and a series of Civilian Exclusion Orders that targeted and incarcerated over 110,000 Japanese Americans widely throughout the west coast of the United States.

Aforementioned laws created a vast network of detention facilities and, consequently, Alien Enemy Hearing Boards to conduct loyalty hearings, as observed at Fort Missoula’s Alien Detention Center and T-1 military courtroom. To comprehend the experiences of those subject to such processes, I examine the histories of Japanese Americans who were interned at Fort Missoula during the war including Yukio Shimomura, Masuo Yasui, Mataichi Iseri, and Jiro Oishi. During and following the Second World War, the shadows of internment continued to greatly impact the lives of those discriminated against. At this juncture, it becomes necessary to examine the institutional development of Fort Missoula due to its historical roles on local and national stages.
Chapter 1

Fort Missoula and Transformative Immigration Policy in the United States

“Aerial View of Fort Missoula,” 1941.
The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula Collection John Moe Collection (2005.066.099)
1.1 A History of Fort Missoula

Throughout its institutional history, the identity of Fort Missoula has continuously shifted across changing periods of conflict and economic development. Between 1941 and 1944, over 2,000 Italian and Japanese men were incarcerated at Fort Missoula’s Alien Detention Center in Missoula, Montana during World War II. As foreign and domestic immigration policies affected Fort Missoula, the Alien Detention Center greatly affected Italian and Japanese internees before, during, and long after the war ended in 1945. Such policies identified and targeted potentially dangerous enemy aliens who were detained at designated Alien Detention Centers across the United States, including Fort Missoula. In this light, it becomes necessary to illuminate a chapter of Fort Missoula’s history beginning with its establishment in the nineteenth century, a foundation built upon military and economic interests.

When the Louisiana Purchase was finalized in 1803, President Thomas Jefferson contracted Meriwether Lewis and William Clark to explore territories extending to the Pacific Coast of the United States. Beginning near St. Louis, the exploration endured for three years from 1804 to 1806. In 1805, Lewis and Clark ventured into the Missoula Valley in Montana and did not become a permanent settlement until the latter half of the nineteenth century. Promises of prosperity and opportunity attracted many settlers including entrepreneurs and tycoons, who migrated into the region where resources were abundant. In 1860, C.P. Higgins and Francis Worden opened a logging and trading post on the Blackfoot River nestled in Hellgate Canyon (The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula 2017). Three years later, Mullan Road was constructed to establish trade routes and travelling networks between Fort Benton, Montana and Walla Walla, Washington.
This transformed the Missoula Valley into an economically promising and geographically strategic location secured further by the United States Army with the establishment of Fort Missoula in 1877. The military outpost was initially constructed in response to arriving settlers’ concerns of potential conflict with local Native American tribes.

In the early 1900s, federal funds were allocated to Fort Missoula for the construction of additional buildings including an assembly of multi-storied houses designed for accommodating military officers, later called “Officer’s Row,” a multitude of barracks, and the Post Hospital. What was once an open Fort, composed of scattered log buildings, evolved into a resource to provide military training, local security, and housing for military personnel. By 1921, the Fort was nearly abandoned altogether (The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula 2017).

In 1933, President Roosevelt assigned Fort Missoula as official headquarters for the Civilian Conservation Corps as part of the New Deal. The reassignment tasked the Fort with administration duties overseeing various offices in Montana, Idaho, Glacier National Park, and Yellowstone National Park. The primary reason for this decision was due to the Fort’s preset establishment of living quarters and resources to serve military training programs. Furthermore, a mass influx of resources sent to Fort Missoula, then the Civilian Conservation Corps headquarters, provided the work relief program with military equipment and basic living supplies. It was largely due to recent renovations, establishment of modern facilities, and its remote location that Fort Missoula was selected and loaned to the Department of Justice in 1941 to serve as an Alien Detention Center during World War II.
1.2 Fort Missoula: Alien Detention Center

In 1941, Fort Missoula began an unexpected but significant shift in its institutional history. In events leading to the United States’ entrance into the war, the Department of Justice – Immigration and Naturalization Service maintained responsibility to detain men deemed potentially dangerous enemy aliens (Van Valkenburg 1995). Between 1941 and 1944, Fort Missoula’s Alien Detention Center detained 1,200 non-military Italian men, approximately 1,000 Japanese resident civilians, twenty-three German resident civilians, and 123 Japanese-Latin and South American men (The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula 2017). Individuals suspected of being potentially dangerous were targeted, incarcerated, and relocated within an extensive network of military detainment facilities positioned across the United States. The network, observed in Figure 1, consisted of Wartime Civil Control Administration Assembly Centers, War Relocation Authority Camps, U.S. Department of Justice – Immigration and Naturalization Service Internment Camps, U.S. Army Internment Camps, Immigration and Naturalization Service Detention Stations, and War Relocation Authority Isolation Centers:
Prior to the attacks at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, U.S. intelligence agencies were wary of a looming threat of attack and created a strategy to detain suspicious individuals in the event of war. President Roosevelt strategized a display of military force by seizing approximately sixty-nine ships suspected of potential involvement with Axis regimes. Suspicious ships in national waters were mainly of Italian, German, and Dutch origins (Van Valkenburg 1995:8). As a result, the ships were detained in U.S. operated ports. On March 30, 1941, military agencies, namely the United States Coast Guard, were authorized to board and detain crewmen due to possible risks of
espionage and sabotage to potentially valuable war resources such as ships and weaponry. Approximately 1,800 Italian men were arrested aboard ships in U.S. ports and sent to Immigration and Naturalization Service Detention Stations including Ellis Island, New York and Boston, Massachusetts. The first detainees to arrive at Fort Missoula in 1941 were Italian merchants aboard “Il Conte Biancamano” (“The White Hand”) that was seized in the Panama Canal prior to the ship’s impoundment and attacks at Pearl Harbor (Benedetti 1991:1).

After Japanese naval forces attacked Pearl Harbor in Honolulu, Hawaii, President Roosevelt and Congress took immediate action by declaring war on Japan. In the days following the attacks, previously acquired Federal Bureau of Investigation surveillance data led to the immediate arrests of over 1,000 Japanese individuals in the United States, residing widely across the west coast. Such individuals were targeted based on socio-economic status, connections to Japan, and prominence in local communities. On February 18, 1942, Congress endorsed the War Relocation Authority to direct and enforce the removal, relocation and internment of Japanese and Japanese Americans residing in California, Oregon, Washington, Alaska, Hawaii, and Arizona. The following day, President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066 to authorize the Secretary of War to identify areas to detain individuals who were deemed to be potentially dangerous enemy aliens.

Approximately two-thirds of the Japanese population in the U.S. was forcibly removed and incarcerated in response to the President’s Executive Order, including women and children, who were U.S. naturalized citizens at the time (Smithsonian American Art Museum 2017). The task was larger than many military and political
strategists realized due to the scale of construction that was to be completed as the nation entered the war. Such facilities were often unfinished as prisoners arrived and were sometimes recruited to finish construction as observed at Fort Missoula’s Alien Detention Center (Benedetti 1991). Other facilities were built on Native American tribal reservations, school grounds, and in sports facilities. In California, twelve of the total fifteen Wartime Civil Control Assembly Centers were established to provide immediate, temporary imprisonment spaces that transferred men, women, and children of Japanese ancestry to Department of Justice and War Relocation Authority Camps located throughout inland regions distant from the west coast.

Between February 19, 1942 and March 20, 1946, over 110,000 Japanese and Japanese Americans were forced to abandon homes and relocated in a militarized network of detention facilities located throughout the United States. During the war, approximately 1,000 Japanese were detained at Fort Missoula’s Alien Detention Center to appear before Enemy Alien Hearing Boards administering loyalty hearings. None of such men were charged with crimes, but many were considered to be potentially dangerous enemy aliens and transferred to larger facilities to be interned for the duration of the war (The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula 2017). Dating to the late nineteenth century, individuals of Italian and Japanese ancestry have long been discriminated against in the United States. Such discriminations correlate to historical patterns of economic development that largely shaped U.S. immigration policies.

To comprehend the experiences of those interned at Fort Missoula’s Alien Detention Center, it is necessary to examine historical patterns of economic development, immigration rates, and ethnocentric perspectives that continuously transformed national
and international policies. It becomes evident that labor shortages, resource scarcity, and competitive economic niches heavily correlated with racial discrimination that affected local, state, and national policy. These historical forces may have largely foreshadowed and produced the internment of those suspected of being potentially dangerous as the United States enforced immediate and drastic strategies in the aftermath of Japanese naval attacks at Pearl Harbor. In this regard, such strategies, fueled by concerns for national security, were also supported by anti-Italian and anti-Asiatic sentiments advocated by government officials, economic lobbyists, and military leaders.

1.3 The Rise of Anti-Chinese Sentiment

Previously heightened anti-Asiatic sentiments in the United States directly influenced the immediacy and severity of national security measures after Japanese naval forces attacked Pearl Harbor. Thus, an examination of how such sentiments developed in correlation to immigration policy is important to understand. For clarity, immigration in this paper refers to Asiatic and European trends beginning in the mid-nineteenth century. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, immigration to the United States soared during various economic periods with the eruption of California’s Gold Rush in 1849 and the expansion of railroad construction, particularly the first transcontinental railroad from 1864 to 1869.

Between 1848 and 1850, prospects of wealth brought an unprecedented wave of immigration to the United States including China, Mexico, Germany, and France among other foreign countries. At this time, Chinese immigration had increased drastically in comparison to other countries with promises of economic prosperity and opportunity.
High unemployment and declining wages among U.S. citizens during this era encouraged governmental action to insulate capital that was leaving the country and pouring into foreign investments. These factors strongly influenced Anglo-centric campaigns against Chinese populations despite significant portions of non-Asian foreign labor contributing to the changing economic conditions. In 1875, the first federal immigration policy was enforced to restrict labor contracts involving Asian “undesirables” (Densho Encyclopedia 2017). At this time, Japanese laborers began immigrating to the United States seeking labor, though rates were marginal compared to Chinese individuals seeking labor opportunities (Thernstrom et al. 1980). The Page Law “outlawed the importation of Chinese and Japanese contract laborers, prostitutes, and felons” (Densho Encyclopedia 2017). California’s politicians, economic lobbyists, and newly forming labor unions adopted strong anti-Chinese policies to ostracize Chinese laborer access to further opportunities. Due to economic concerns of U.S. politicians and lobbyists, the nation’s first law restricting immigration was passed.

Significantly, the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed in 1882. This signified the first major restriction against immigration in the U.S. with penalties of imprisonment and deportation. Furthermore, this year comprised the largest number of immigrants entering the U.S. in a single year at nearly 800,000 people (Pula 1980:6). Chinese immigration was banned for the following ten years while also prohibiting those already present in the U.S. including acquiring citizenship. In 1892, the law was extended before becoming permanent in 1902. The Chinese Exclusion Act later served as a cornerstone for developing anti-Japanese exclusion campaigns once stereotypes of anti-Chinese sentiments shifted to those of general Asiatic ancestry including Japanese origins.
1.4 Japanese Immigration to the United States

Between 1600 and 1868, the Tokugawa shogun, a ruling entity of Japan, restricted Japanese citizens from leaving the country or foreigners from entering through a policy known as “sakoku,” or “closed country” (Laver 2011). This policy was enforced during a period of cultural, political, and economic isolation that focused on increasing nationalism prior to foreign trade being introduced at the end of this period before the introduction of the Meiji era (Laver 2011). Once the rule ended in 1868, Japanese citizens sought foreign prosperity and opportunity. Japanese immigration rates to the United States increased in the following years and contract labor sectors desired arriving Japanese populations to fill cheap labor positions with minimal wages (Thernstrom et al. 1980:562).

In 1868, the first event of Japanese immigration to Hawaii occurred due to the abundance of emerging labor sectors in sugarcane production. The harsh working conditions of the sugarcane industry were not ideal and coveted by local Hawaiian residents and contractors refused to pay higher wages. Through contract labor, Japanese farmers continued to move to the island nation, not yet annexed by the United States, in large numbers over the next two decades. By 1890, nearly 12,500 Japanese immigrants were residing in Hawaii (Thernstrom et al. 1980:562; U.S. Bureau of the Census 1960). By 1900, there were over 60,000 Issei residing in Hawaii (Thernstrom et al. 1980:562; U.S. Bureau of the Census 1960). Such individuals organized labor campaigns to improve labor conditions and wages for Japanese residing Hawaii (Hawaii History 2017). Importantly, Japanese laborers integrated into the island’s economic landscape becoming a vital component of domestic labor and production spheres.
As labor campaigns in Hawaii increased to improve working conditions and higher wages, anti-Japanese sentiment also rose as local residents viewed foreign laborers as “invaders.” The socio-economic landscape of the mainland U.S. demonstrated a drastic transformation during the following years. Importantly, the U.S. annexation of Hawaii in 1898 ended contract labor and nearly 12,000 Japanese immigrant work agreements mainly in sugarcane plantations (Hawaii History 2017). Many Japanese returned home with their earnings while approximately half of those from Japan stayed in Hawaii and immigrated to the mainland United States to become what is known as the Issei, the first generation of Japanese immigrants to reside in the United States.

In 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Act banned immigration to the United States. Thus, labor contractors needed a new source of cheap labor to occupy vacancies previously held by Chinese laborers. This policy continued to drastically affect immigration regulation into the twentieth century not exclusively for Chinese immigrants, but also for the Issei who began settling in the United States in the late nineteenth century. When Chinese immigration was halted due to federal legislation, railroad companies sought new sources of cheap labor and widely recruited the Issei recently released from work contracts in Hawaii. Issei populations settled widely across the west coast seeking labor in railroads, lumber, mining, agriculture, and fisheries. An emerging population of Issei laborers soon became targets as new patterns of economical competitive niches of labor and resources developed.
1.5 The Rise of Anti-Japanese Sentiment

Anti-Japanese sentiment developed in the early twentieth century, founded upon previous anti-Chinese sentiment. Not only were the Issei establishing themselves in a tense anti- Asiatic climate, they began purchasing land, forming Japanese language institutions across the west coast, constructing Buddhist and Shinto places of worship, forming community partnerships, and establishing businesses as well as cultural centers to practice traditional Japanese values such as artistry, culinary skills, and martial arts among various other foreign practices (Densho Encyclopedia 2017). Such organizations of cultural practice, developing widely across the west coast, served as vital institutions for the Issei in the establishment of Japanese communities amidst heightened anti- Asiatic climates. Furthermore, the same institutions were targeted by anti- Asiatic campaigns to discriminate against the Issei based on perceived inability to adopt American cultural values (Densho Encyclopedia 2017).

Entering the twentieth century, the emergence of the Issei and success in agriculture, business and entrepreneurship birthed a new discriminatory perspective mainly due to emerging economic competitive niches. Similar to anti-Chinese sentiment in the latter half of the nineteenth century, the beginning of the twentieth century magnified discriminatory beliefs aimed towards those of Japanese ancestry. West coast anti- Asiatic campaigns, including those directed by key political figures in San Francisco, California, called for an equivalent of the Chinese Exclusion Act to ban Japanese immigration to the United States (Newspaper Enterprise Association 1905; Library of Congress 2017). West coast lobbyists and politicians did not achieve a Japanese exclusion ban aimed previously toward Chinese immigrants, but anti-Japanese sentiment
increased nonetheless. In an article by the *Newspaper Enterprise Association* (1905), San Francisco’s Mayor and a labor strategist Eugene Schmitz called for the barring of Japanese immigration to the United States and, especially, California. In the article, Schmitz stated, “The Japanese are far more dangerous to us than the Chinese. It is my firm belief that an exclusion act, even more stringent than the present one, should be passed in the matter of Japanese immigrants. To anyone who has given the matter constant and careful attention, it is at once apparent that the Japs are to be feared more than the Chinese, primarily because of their cheapness of labor” (Newspaper Enterprise Association 1905; Library of Congress 2017). Anti-Japanese legislation was not considered by political figures a pragmatic solution to immigration conflict as international relations were prioritized over the interests of local and state leaders. Moreover, international relations varied significantly between the United States and Japan in the early twentieth century. A ban, as suggested previously, did not form until decades later and remained dependent upon a shifting landscape of international relations, national economic goals, and the preservation of American cultural values.

U.S. political and military leaders ascribed an inability of arriving populations to assimilate into Western society whilst threatening cultural ideals through what racist agendas would identify as a perpetual wave of de-Americanization. Unlike the governed regulations against Chinese immigration, U.S. policies considered a range of concerns regarding Japanese immigration policy as Japan rose to a global power state following its victory in the Russo-Japanese War and international relations became vital to maintain. This ultimately extended to and affected state laws regarding discriminatory immigration
policy, particularly in California, a state that did not reflect national goals and interests to maintain positive relations with Japan in the early twentieth century.

1.6 The Gentlemen’s Agreement

Anti-Japanese sentiment rose as Japanese immigration to California increased and eventually led to segregation policies in California’s public schools, targeting the Issei’s children. Such policies reflected the Japanese state’s interests and opposed President Theodore Roosevelt’s national and economic interests including international relations. The Japanese government was outraged that U.S. school systems were isolating Issei children from non-Asian populations, which limited opportunities for future generations of Japanese Americans to succeed. In 1907, Japan and the United States created a service exchange agreement known as “The Gentlemen’s Agreement” to support interests of west coast anti-Japanese sentimentalists whilst addressing the concerns of an expanding Japanese state (Thernstrom et al. 1980:563).

As a result of the agreement, schools in San Francisco were desegregated to improve opportunities for success and assimilation into U.S. culture for Issei children. President Roosevelt requested that Japanese travel and immigration agencies cease the issuance of passports to Japanese citizens attempting to enter the U.S. This was to meet the needs of anti-Asiatic campaigns in California concerned with economic competition and shortages of labor. Additionally, the Japanese government viewed economic achievements of the Issei, mostly in agriculture, as symbolic of further opportunity to successfully integrate into U.S. society. In 1908, an extension of “The Gentlemen’s Agreement” permitted Issei family members, spouses, and future wives, or “picture
brides,” to leave Japan and obtain entry into the United States (Densho Encyclopedia 2017). This extension resulted in a steady increase of Japanese immigration to the U.S. over the next two decades. As Japanese families continued to settle throughout the west coast, land purchases, agricultural production, business investments, and local networking also increased.

1.7 The California Alien Land Law and the Immigration Act of 1924

Once anti-Japanese sentiment increased throughout California, state rhetoric aimed to denigrate the Issei continued to permeate into national immigration policy. Such sentiments were widely driven by the Issei’s success, particularly in agricultural production. Despite the proportion of land being marginally owned by Japanese at the time, anti-Asiatic campaigns aimed to strip or limit access the Issei’s access to agricultural resources to control production markets. Furthermore, Japanese farmers residing in California owned thirteen thousand of twenty-eight million acres, with one Japanese farmer to every 201 Caucasians (Le Pore 1979:103). Such campaigns targeted the Issei via political rhetoric diffused by local politicians and newspaper institutions. As a result, the California Alien Land Law was passed in 1913 with the influence of nearly forty anti-Japanese campaign supporters that “denies to aliens ineligible for citizenship the right to own, lease, or otherwise enjoy land except that provided by treaty” while allowing short-term leases (Ferguson 1947:61). To further prevent opportunities to the Issei, the law was extended in 1920 disallowing any ownership of farming land, lease permits, and agricultural land stock for “aliens ineligible for citizenship.”
United States’ cultural values were perceived as threatened due to increased immigration rates. Thus, the Literacy Act was passed in 1917 to further restrict immigration based on an applicant’s ability to read or write in one’s own native language whilst prohibiting immigration including most Asiatic countries whilst excluding Japan (Densho Encyclopedia 2017). Immigration steadily increased during the first half of the twentieth century including European and Asiatic countries, regional labor sectors mainly along the northeast and west coasts, including urban industrial and rural agricultural spheres of production, soon sought strict immigration bans. Anti-Asiatic ideals steered political rhetoric throughout west coast states, stereotypes of “backward” people from European nations reflected similar ethnocentric and xenophobic campaigns throughout the east coast, namely in northeastern states.

The United States Immigration Commission, also known as the “Dillingham Commission,” became increasingly prevalent in political and international policy structuring through analysis of immigration statistics in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Harvard University Library Open Collections Program 2017). The commission was charged with collecting and analyzing data ultimately culminating in a forty-one-volume manuscript revealing estimated statistics of immigration to the U.S. from European nations between 1819 and 1910 at approximately 25,528,410 immigrants (United States Immigration Commission 1911:13). To meet the concerns of U.S. economist lobbyists, politicians, and citizens, the commission initiated and motioned the Immigration Act of 1924 to restrict all immigration from Asiatic countries, including Japan, whilst regulating European immigration to the U.S. at “two percent of each nationality residing in the U.S. in 1890” (Hayes 2012:779). Furthermore, Japanese
immigration never reached the magnitude of European immigration to the U.S. Barring Asian immigration remained a priority to protect American cultural values simultaneously supporting anti-Asiatic sentiment.

1.8 Italian Immigration to the United States

Between 1880 and 1920, approximately four million Italian immigrants travelled to the U.S. (United States Immigration Commission 1911). For Italian immigrants to the U.S., “chain migration” began in one’s family, convincing family members, relatives, and friends to move to another country or place for opportunity and success (Luconi 2003). At the turn of the twentieth century, Italian immigrant populations in the United States had rapidly increased. In 1907, nearly 300,000 Italians entered the U.S. through Ellis Island (Corsi 1942:100). By 1910, over four million Italians resided in the U.S. (Corsi 1942:100). Many Italians originally emigrated from southern regions of Italy where poverty and disease were high.

During the early twentieth century, northern and southern divisions of labor in Italy remained significantly distinct, ultimately creating regional classifications that carried into the United States. Stereotypes, based on suspected criminality and untrustworthiness, were reproduced in urban areas such as New York and Chicago once Italian immigration increased. Moreover, the early twentieth century witnessed vast increases of Italian populations, mostly in New York and Chicago. Many were from southern regions of Italy unfamiliar in skilled labor with little access to educational programs. Many U.S. citizens viewed Italians as inherently deviant and Issei as economically burdensome and being an “alien” continued to fluctuate across varying
economic and political circumstances. For instance, the term “alien,” as first defined through the Alien Enemies Act in 1798, classifies persons of potential danger as all white and non-white persons with malicious intentions toward the national security of the United States (Densho Encyclopedia 2017). This logic, originally propelled by conflict between Great Britain and the United States, currently authorizes the U.S. government to detain, deport, and incarcerate all those deemed as threats to national security in the event of conflict. Similar logic supported the incarceration of potentially dangerous enemy aliens as anti-Italian sentiment intensified throughout the United States prior to the Second World War.

1.9 Anti-Italian Sentiment and Social Conflict

Escaping poverty, disease, and conflict, Italian immigrants sought economic prosperity in the U.S. Farming was a dominant occupation for many Italian immigrants to “L’ America.” Unskilled labor translated into blue collar and union labor niches in the U.S. mostly concentrated in northeastern urban areas where racial and xenophobic tensions were high. Significantly, Italian immigrants were targeted and stereotyped as fascist radicals and participants in crime organizations. Italian immigrants were classified as criminals, suspicious, uneducated, and maintained traditional Roman-Catholic practices amidst the heavy influence of Protestantism in the U.S. This perpetuated violence supported by a variety of radical groups including the Ku Klux Klan targeting those of Roman-Catholic practice (Pegram 2011). As labor, social, and health disparities increased in Italian populations widely in urban areas, nativist-driven prejudice ultimately produced extensive violence and criminal actions often going unpunished by law.
enforcement and government officials. Lynchings, Italian church burnings, abuse in work places, and corrupt control of resources and services were occurrences across the eastern region of the United States. Such factors confirmed anti-Italian sentiment, especially as urban employment rose. As law enforcement and political defamations of Italian immigrants in the U.S. largely reflected economic interests and the “protection of American values,” rhetoric fueled anti-Italian hatred densely in northeastern United States as well as other urban areas.

In 1924, immigration from Italy and other European countries was regulated at two percent of the state’s total population according to population numbers represented in the 1890 United States Census. As Italian and Japanese immigration was met with various aspects of economical, political, and social challenges, war alliances began forging in Europe nearly a decade after the Immigration Ban was established. By the late 1930s, Italy joined Nazi Germany to diffuse elements of fascism and Nazism throughout Europe. Japan had overtaken the Manchurian state solidifying its position as a power state with soon-to-be powerful allies in the Pacific, Asia, and Europe.

Prior to the Second World War, Ellis Island in New York became a symbol of opportunity for those arriving to the U.S., escaping poverty in Italy, and persecution in Russia and Germany, among many others. In 1892, Ellis Island opened as a federal immigration station. According to U.S. Immigration Statistics at Ellis Island, between 1892 and 1924, Ellis Island admitted over thirteen million immigrants including mainly European countries (National Parks Service 2017). Following the end of the First World War, the Immigration Act of 1917, or the “Asiatic Barred Zone Act,” restricted “undesirables” from entering the country including “idiots, imbeciles, epileptics,
alcoholics, poor, criminals, beggars, any person suffering from attacks of insanity, those with tuberculosis, those who have any form of dangerous contagious disease, and aliens who have a physical disability that will restrict them from earning a living in the United States” (The University of Washington Bothell and Cascadia College Library Collections 2017). Interestingly, the law banned immigration from any country not owned by the U.S. adjacent to the continent of Asia. Defining “whiteness” led to the formation of the policy and further ostracized those already residing in the U.S. Following this year, entering the country coincided with the requirement of owning and carrying a U.S. passport. Prior to this year, passports were recommended and not required. Furthermore, passports were only provided to U.S. citizens disallowing aliens the necessary resources to enter the country.

At the beginning of the Second World War, Ellis Island assumed a dimorphic role after the U.S. entered the war. Between 1941 and 1943, the Statue of Liberty transitioned into a new symbol, viewed through barred windows once Italians were detained at Ellis Island Detention Station before internment at Fort Missoula’s Alien Detention Center. Once a symbol of prosperity, Ellis Island was loaned to the Department of Justice – Immigration and Naturalization Service to serve as an Alien Detention Station to temporarily detain those of suspicious nationality in the event of war.
Musicians, Artists and Exhibitionists: From Ellis Island to Fort Missoula

2.1 An Alien Detention Center

Ellis Island, once a site of optimism for immigrants seeking opportunity and refuge, was repurposed as a detention facility for potentially dangerous enemy aliens in spring 1941. As stated previously, national security measures were heightened with the diffusion of Nazism in Europe, U.S. authorities detained and anchored all potentially
dangerous enemy ships in national waters. Following the seizure of “Il Conte Biancamano” in the Panama Canal, those aboard, mainly merchants and non-military sailors, were arrested for overstaying a sixty-day limit provided to alien seamen in national waters (Van Valkenburg 1995). Nearly 1,300 Italians were arrested aboard the ported ships and imprisoned in Ellis Island Detention Station (Van Valkenburg 1995). Nearly 500 of these men were detained in the Panama Canal, arrested aboard “Il Conte Biancamano,” and were eventually transferred to Fort Missoula for internment during the war. Most men were not charged as potentially dangerous, but were interned due to tightened bans on international travel, namely British constraints of Axis vessels and nationals moving freely throughout Allied occupied waters.

On May 9, 1941, approximately 100 Italians arrived at Fort Missoula by train along the Northern Pacific Railroad (The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula 2017). Enclosed in caged train carts, the interned Italians arrived and were notably satisfied with the new living conditions opposed to the over crowded, unsanitary, and dangerous conditions found at Ellis Island Detention Station. Between 1940 and 1943, not all interned Italians at Fort Missoula were arrested aboard “Il Conte Biancamano” as observed in Figure 2:

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Figure 2: List of seized Italian ocean liners
Once the Italians arrived at Fort Missoula on May 9, 1941, the Fort was undergoing construction with the first project to reach completion of barbwire fencing that enclosed the facility. Charged with the authority to maintain the facility, the Immigration and Naturalization Service selected Nick Collaer as Fort Missoula’s supervisor, to oversee all operations of the internment camp. The Immigration and Naturalization Service required additional buildings including sufficient guard-tower structures, firehouse, warehouse, repairs to the hospital, resource-issuing facility, repair shop, recreational hall, headquarters, and barracks. Following the arrival of the Italian internees to be interned in May 1941, Supervisor Collaer assigned many of the Italians to complete construction projects. The newly appointed supervisor borrowed unused resources previously held by nearby U.S. Forest Service and Civilian Conservation Corps offices including cots and basic living supplies. Many of the men were skilled laborers such as carpenters and technicians employed by the Italian merchant company “Lloyd Triestino di Navigazione” aboard “Il Conte Biancamano” (The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula 2017).

On May 20, 1941, nearly 500 Italians arrived at Fort Missoula including approximately 60 men who had worked at New York’s World Fair in 1939 (The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula 2017). Thus, Fort Missoula’s first interned population consisted widely of merchants and sailors who joined Italian professional musicians, artists, athletes, and employees of the 1939 New York’s World’s Fair. The Italians interned at Fort Missoula were not suspected to be violent or charged with any crimes. The men were divided in allegiances to Italian fascism while many disregarded or were misinformed of what had been happening in Italy as the country aligned with the
interests of Nazi Germany. As the number of Italian internees at Fort Missoula increased, anti-Italian sentiment in Missoula had not developed as intensely in urban areas, namely New York. Perhaps, Missoula was selected as an internment site due to its geographic positioning and isolation from dense urban areas where anti-Italian sentiment was concentrated.

2.2 Experiences of Italian Internees at Fort Missoula

Under Supervisor Collaer, the Italian internees were subject to rules of war. Such rules of war included daily head counts, barrack inspections, maintaining clean living, and work areas, and proper addressing of correspondence to avoid detailing Fort Missoula’s location (Benedetti 1991:9). As the Italians came to be mostly viewed as non-dangerous by the guards, they were allowed to venture past the fences of Fort Missoula, visiting the downtown area for a variety of errands including purchasing Italian foods and drinks provided by a local Italian grocer in downtown Missoula called “D’ Orazi’s,” that delivered and sold groceries to the camp and Italian internees (The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula 2017). They often had access to foods such as olive oils, dried meats, and fresh vegetables that were largely restricted as part of rationing programs set forth by the U.S. government. It became a firm belief among the guards that the internees were non-dangerous as they were able to establish relationships with the guards and, to a degree, Missoula’s community with the introduction of Italian culture through art displays, theatrical productions, and musical performances. Though some local residents held anti-Italian sentiments, practices of Italian culture came to be portrayed in Fort Missoula as well as in Missoula’s community.
By August 1941, Italians began choreographing theatrical productions and musical performances at Fort Missoula and in Missoula’s surrounding community including the Missoula Service Club. In a *Missoulian* newspaper article (1995), Jo Joyce Dratz, a Missoulian resident during internment-era Fort Missoula, recalled her first memories interacting with Italian internees who participated in an amateur night musical contest in 1942:

Many years ago, I performed in an amateur night contest with my friend, Janice. She was a self-taught and accomplished accordion player. Jan was delighted with the invitation and the thought we would be performing for some of the Garden City’s elite. I was not. By the evening of our appearance, I knew the tunes we were going to play so well I could have played them in my sleep. My confidence returned until we entered the waiting room in the entrance of the lodge hall. Several dark, handsome, and foreign appearing fellows wearing tuxedos appeared. I thought they were visiting dignitaries of the lodge. I turned to Jan, “Why were they carrying musical instruments? Who are they?” Jan replied, “Oh, just some of those Italian musicians from the Fort.” I responded, “What!? Don’t you know they’re professional musicians!?” The Italians played first and as the sound of fine concert music soared through the hall, my spirit sank. We played next and broke into a rousing rendition of “Red River Valley” and “Red Wing.” [Missoulian 1995]

Following the performance, Dratz noted the Italian musicians were notably happy to observe local musical varieties as much as she was to hear Italian music. The Italian musicians continued to hold small concerts as well as choreographed theatrical plays as fundraisers for local work relief programs. Furthermore, their artistic skills, as seen in woodworking including model ships, boats, and paintings, were recognized by the guards and permitted a display to appear in Missoula’s downtown area where several paintings were sold (Missoulian 1941).

As war required manpower in the United States, almost ten percent of Montana’s population left to serve in Europe. The Department of Justice eventually dismissed the Italians as potential threats and permitted them to work in Missoula and surrounding industries (Benedetti 1991). Many Italians worked in local sugar beet fields, the timber
industry, railroad projects including the Northern Pacific Railroad, St. Patrick’s Hospital, and the completion of local Highway 12.

Though the internees were under guard, behind barbwire fencing, and unable to return home, they found unique ways to practice and share Italian culture through art and culinary skills. The guards occasionally dined with the Italians as their culinary practices proved to be far better than other practices observed at the Fort (The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula 2017). As mentioned previously, the Italian internees were notably pleased to be at Fort Missoula, as it was named “che bella vista,” Italian for “a beautiful view.” The name was first given when a small party of officers, including two aboard “Il Conte Biancamano,” visited the Fort prior to their crew’s arrival to assure living and
facility conditions were satisfied. The Italian internees were notably pleased to be at Fort Missoula with surrounding landscapes, climate, and a local community that treated them generally well setting the environment apart distinctly from that of Ellis Island’s Detention Station.

In total, Fort Missoula’s Alien Detention Center detained 1,200 Italians between 1941 and 1943. In September 1943, Italy surrendered to Allied forces and later declared war on Germany. At this juncture, all Italians were released from Fort Missoula. Some moved to Italy while others continued to live in and around Missoula. Some former detainees stayed in Missoula and Montana long after the war ended. Individuals such as Umberto “Bert” Benedetti, Alfredo Cipolato, and Giovanni “John” Pelle remained in Montana, establishing families, operating small businesses, and sharing their experiences as internees at Fort Missoula. Such experiences are vital to comprehend, as the history of Fort Missoula remains important to share and preserve.

2.3 Umberto “Bert” Benedetti

Umberto “Bert” Benedetti was born in Vasto, Italy in 1911. Benedetti worked as a cabinet-maker for the Italian merchant company “Lloyd Triestino di Navigazione” aboard “Il Conte Biancamano” before his detainment in Ellis Island’s Detention Station and internment at Fort Missoula. Many of the Italian internees focused their attention on previous occupations including music, food, theatre, artistry, and other forms of skilled labor. For Benedetti, his woodworking passion carried from a previously held position aboard “Il Conte Biancamano.” Benedetti completed projects such as a theatre building for orchestrated and theatrical performances, several stage sceneries, a wooden ship
model of “Il Conte Biancamano,” a church altar, and a platform for the Ambassador of Switzerland as part of the Geneva Condition (Benedetti 1991:44-47).


Benedetti (1991) went on to serve in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and as an Intelligence Officer while earning U.S. citizenship. After earning a Master’s Degree in California, he was employed as a social worker teaching foreign languages to volunteers in the Peace Corps. Benedetti eventually earned his Bachelor’s Degree in Education at the University of Washington in 1959 before earning a Master’s Degree in Education at the University of Montana. Benedetti also taught language and art at a school in Miles
City, Montana before moving to Missoula to work at a printing office at the University of Montana where he retired in 1985 (Benedetti 1991).

A skilled writer, Benedetti published several books including *Italian Boys* in 1991 and a poetry book, *Montana: Noon a Very Bright Day, Friend*, in 1985. In 1993, the National Library of Poetry honored him with the Editor’s Choice Award pertaining to his descriptions of his experiences at Fort Missoula. Below is a poem called *A Little Sail Boat*, written by Benedetti during his internment at the Fort:

A little white pilgrim sail  
Is set out to find a small beach  
In her full heart she is not discouraged  
From sailing the seas

A little sail humble and modest  
Under the arch of constellations  
A nest of sorry songs  
Under a stormy wind with no protection

A little sail with a monastic joy  
Kneeling in the rainbow horizon  
Thirsty by a clear water fountain  
Of light that falls down from a star

A little sail, full of desire  
The dead bit your wood  
But wherever you go, make your mark  
White is the name of God and country.

- *Italian Boys at Fort Missoula, Montana* by Umberto Benedetti (1991)

In 2009, Missoula officially declared October 13th as “Umberto ‘Bert’ Benedetti Day” following his death to recognize his struggles and resilience during and after the war. His story is well documented due to a willingness to share his experiences after he resided in Montana following the war (See Appendix A). Benedetti remained close with several others, including Alfredo Cipolato, who was interned at Fort Missoula and also remained in Missoula after World War II.
2.4 Alfredo Cipolato

Alfredo Cipolato worked in Tripoli, Libya before accepting employment at the Italian Pavilion at the 1939 New York’s World Fair. Afterward, Cipolato was employed at a hotel in Miami, Florida (The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula 2017). In June 1941, he was arrested as a potentially dangerous enemy alien due to an expired visa as international travel bans prevented a return to Italy. According to an interview (Cipolato 1991), Cipolato was detained in the Miami County Jail before relocation to Ellis Island where he remained until his transfer to Fort Missoula nearly two months later (The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula 2017).

Soon, Cipolato was transferred to Fort Missoula via the Northern Pacific Railroad, the same railroad he found labor with after release from internment. In the same interview (1991), he briefly describes experiences of being transferred to Fort Missoula:

The train was very comfortable. When I got there, I thought, “This is paradise.” I went from Hell to...yeah. We were guests, not prisoners there. We had top of the line cooks. I was lucky. [The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula 2017]

According to Cipolato, the Italians had much better food rations than Missoula’s residents as they were given U.S. soldier rations referring especially to that of “butter, mil’’, and coffee” (Cipolato 1991). His only complaint was that he “didn’t have a girl” (Cipolato 1991). Although, Cipolato noted a great appreciation for the freedoms he had at Fort Missoula, considering previous conditions at Ellis Island Detention Station, he stated a reality consisting of restrictions against leaving the Fort, maintaining that he, among many others, were behind barbed fencing (See Appendix B). He noted, “It may have been dangerous outside the walls. Connection to Italy…if you was not a citizen of the U.S. and was Italian…you were an enemy” (Cipolato 1991).
Cipolato organized the first effort to convince the camp’s military personnel to allow and accompany any Italians who wished to find labor in local sugar beet industries and later at St. Patrick’s Hospital in Missoula. In 1942, Cipolato met his future wife, Ann D’Orazi, daughter of an Italian immigrant and singer at a local church, Francis Xavier Church. They married the following year. Ann’s father owned the Italian grocery store in Missoula, “D’Orazi’s,” that became a resource and delicacy for the Italian internees. Prior to Cipolato’s release from Fort Missoula, he worked at St. Patrick’s Hospital and then the Northern Pacific Railroad. Cipolato then pursued work with his father-in-law at “D’Orazi’s” before owning and running his own grocery store, “The Broadway Market,” until 2004.

Following the release of Italian internees from Fort Missoula, anti-Italian sentiment remained prominent in Missoula as it was portrayed in Cipolato’s inability to acquire economic resources such as housing, basic living resources, permits, and business associates. Racial tensions toward Italians existed in Missoula but can be argued to have partially diminished due to marginal degrees of Italian integration into Missoula’s community during World War II. Cipolato’s experiences at Fort Missoula are distinct from other internee’s based on the circumstances of his arrest and detainment. Giovanni “John” Pelle, arrested at the age of fifteen years old, was also arrested based on Italian ancestry and suspicions.

2.5 Giovanni “John” Pelle

Giovanni “John” Pelle was born in Locri, Italy in 1923. At fifteen years old, Pelle began his own exploration of the world by joining the Italian ship “Arsa.” In spring 1941,
he was arrested aboard the merchant liner in a U.S. harbor and detained in Ellis Island’s Detention Station (See Appendix C). The U.S. Coast guard arrested Pelle on suspicion of sabotage to valuable war resources. According to an interview (Pelle n.d.), Pelle was beat, thrown into a transport boat, and incarcerated at Ellis Island Detention Station. In the same interview, he stated a part of his experience, “I was confused. What’s gonna happen? I start to worry. I was almost left behind at Ellis Island with the criminals. So I told the guards there was a medical shot mix-up” (Pelle n.d.). Pelle also describes the transfer process from Ellis Island to Fort Missoula “It was a three day train trip, with around 50-70 men in three carts. It was a hard trip, cattle train…that’s the way we were in there…terrible” (Pelle n.d.). When asked of the internment camp’s security measures, “guard towers and barbed wire…I thought, ‘this is a joke really.’ The guards up there watching you. Why are we behind this fence? For us, we were prisoners” (Pelle n.d.).

In many interviews pertaining to Italian internment at Fort Missoula, responses to Italian fascism and Benito Mussolini were often vague or avoided. Pelle implicated his perception of Mussolini, “He helped poor people. He’s a good man and makes the trains run on time” (Pelle n.d.). The development and expansion of train networks integrates greatly into various aspects that can easily relate to the transfer and networking of internment-era U.S. Once Mussolini gained political power in Italy, prior to an allegiance with Nazi Germany, train systems represented the development of Italy’s economy and acquisition of resources. This concept diverges in the context of the United States, as it became a resource constructed widely through foreign labor and later served as a primary method of transfer and the establishment of internment camps for many of foreign ancestry.
Benedetti, Cipolato, and Pelle each represent contrasting perspectives relative to their experiences of internment at Fort Missoula. Conflict was minimal at Fort Missoula between Italians, guards, or the community. According to an interview with former guard John Moe (n.d.), a large group of Italians, between 300 and 400, claimed that a guard had been rationing and stealing Italian olive oil for himself. “The Italians had been complaining about the olive oil which one of the border patrolmen had been securing for their cooking needs. We didn’t know about the olive oil” (Hacke 2001; Moe n.d.). Moreover, this event has been subject to questionable degrees of validity due to an absence of documentation and witness accounts. Therefore, the event described below should be examined as one of the many events not sufficiently documented and has been included in this paper based on its merit in various sources acquired during the research of this examination.

2.6 Olive Oil as Incident

One day, the sirens blared and Italian internees protested at the front gate of the Fort. According to Moe, border patrolman Hans Jensen rushed to the scene, parking beneath a guard tower. When he exited the car, Jensen accidentally dropped a tear gas grenade that exploded setting the car on fire and producing a large cloud of smoke. The guard tower was operated by Leonard Kuka, who was relatively new to the Fort’s military personnel and had little experience with a rifle (Hacke 2001; Moe n.d.). After the grenade exploded, Kuka accidentally shot himself in the foot inflicting a more embarrassing than harmful wound, then “the Italians retreated rather humorously. They thought, ‘these guys were armed and dangerous so one of them shot himself in the foot
and they burned up a patrol car”” (Hacke 2001; Moe n.d.). As one of the most heightened conflicts at Fort Missoula regarding Italians pertained to olive oil and arguments of food product quality, they were often given liberties not allowed for others detained at Fort Missoula. The Italians were eventually permitted to visit Missoula’s downtown area without supervision, participating in local plays, musicals, and integrating with Missoula’s local population, but the experiences of Japanese individuals detained at the Fort were drastically different.

The following section provides insight into various perspectives held towards Italian and Japanese men detained at Fort Missoula during the war. News reports from local sources, namely the Missoulian, may have directly influenced public perspectives of internees at Fort Missoula prior to and following the arrival of Italian and, later, Japanese internees. In a Missoulian article (Arne 1942), the report described a fence that reportedly separated Italian and Japanese internees at Fort Missoula. Currently, the Historical Museum at Fort Missoula does not have records to prove the existence of a fence separating the two groups. This detail is to be examined as historical events that remain subject to questions of authenticity to determine whether events, details, or physical characteristics of the Fort are accurate as described in historical records.

2.7 First Perspectives of the Internees at Fort Missoula

During World War II, newspaper outlets sought to inform a general audience whilst maintaining the attention of readers through printing controversial stories fueled by political rhetoric. The notion that current museum archives do not have records of a fence dividing Italian and Japanese internees at Fort Missoula presents a perspective and
relationship between the internment camp, media, and the surrounding community that should remain questionable and important to critique. Perhaps, the article was written to spark controversy pertaining to Fort Missoula and influence public perceptions of the internees detained in the camp. Of course, the fence possibly existed dividing the internees and was deconstructed once guards observed the men were not dangerous. Moreover, one should comprehend media reports as a source often rooted in personal bias and fascinations to increase readership that simultaneously contributes to public perspectives of historical persons and events.

Prior to the arrival of Italian internees in 1941, local news sources contributed to early public perspectives of residents toward Italian men who were soon transported there. On April 23, 1941, the Missoulian described the newly adopted role of Fort Missoula after the facility was loaned to the Department of Justice:

Under the recently announced move by which Fort Missoula was loaned by the War Department, the post gradually is being turned over to the Federal Immigration and Naturalization Service and will be fitted to accommodate between 450 and 800 aliens...According to W.F. Kelly, chief border patrol supervisor and head of official who are here, the Immigration and Naturalization Service will have charge of the alien seamen, who are not classified as enemy aliens, who can not be deported because of the international situation. [Missoulian 1941; The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula 2017]

According to the article, local residents potentially viewed the Italian internees as non-dangerous based on observations that such individuals were detained due to international travel bans that prevented them from returning to Italy. In 1941, the first group of Italian internees arrived at Fort Missoula.
According to a *Missoulian* article (1941), Missoula residents were notified to avoid gathering near the train station upon the arrival of Italian internees the following morning:

After the special train, carrying the seamen, who are crewmembers of seized Italian merchant ships, arrives here, all roads to Fort Missoula will be closed to the public. Only those with business will be admitted to the reservation, after the arrival of the detainees. The gate on the southeast side of the reservation, near U.S. Highway 93, will be closed by a stationary gate and locked. Guards will be posted at the entry station on the main road into the post. [Missoulian 1941; The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula 2017]

Provided articles suggest that the Italian internees at Fort Missoula were not enemy aliens, detained due to travel restrictions, and were under guard as the Fort adopted military roles during World War II. The Italian internees were transported to an environment in which local news sources contributed to perceptions that the internees were non-dangerous, yet forced to reside behind barbed fencing under guard.

“Italian internees arrive at Fort Missoula,” 1941-1943.
The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula Peter Fortune Collection (2001.048.218)
Furthermore, perspectives held by Missoula’s residents toward the internees were vastly shaped by local newspaper sources and may have influenced degrees of integration of Italians in Missoula, potentially shaping perspectives and relationships between the internees, public, and guards. This is observed in previous sections stating the Italian internee’s involvement in the surrounding community of Fort Missoula including orchestra and theatrical performances, art, and labor sectors.

The overall population at Fort Missoula, consisting mainly of Italians, increased following the attacks at Pearl Harbor and the relocation of Japanese internees to detainment facilities. By April 1942, Fort Missoula’s Alien Detention Center detained over 2,000 Japanese and Italian internees. Mentioned previously, a fence reportedly separated the Italian and Japanese internees. Interactions between the two groups were also reported to be minimal once the first group of Issei was relocated at Fort Missoula. Moreover, the Italians were detained based on international travel regulations whilst the Japanese were targeted, removed from homes, and relocated in camps across the country as a result of policies established during wartime.

After the Issei’s arrival to the Fort, required additions reportedly (Arne 2016) included separate living quarters and specified areas for dining in the Mess Hall. In this light, it becomes important to attempt a comprehension of perspectives between the Issei and Italians at Fort Missoula. Historical records, as observed in news reports (Missoulian 1942), portray perspectives between internees at the Fort as divided due to various ancestral backgrounds. Of course, such reports potentially made claims that were ungrounded, biased, and discriminatory. One should attempt to comprehend the experiences of internees detained at Fort Missoula as the experiences of men attempting
to make sense of a new reality, struggling to maintain aspects of what one may call an “ordinary life.” Such aspects were reflected in certain skills and practices that carried into the daily experiences of the men detained at the Fort.

Missoula’s residents may have held drastically different perspectives toward the Italians and Japanese at Fort Missoula. The residents and guards held notably different perspectives toward Japanese and Italian internees. As the Italian internees were permitted to visit downtown Missoula, the Japanese internees were not observed to do so. Previously stated, cultural practices were displayed as Italian musicians played at local venues contributing to local perspectives between the Italians and Missoula’s residents. Such relations did not develop between Missoula’s residents and Japanese internees, as they were perhaps publicly perceived to be more threatening due to media and propaganda. Local perspectives of the Issei at Fort Missoula were strongly influenced by recent conflict, war, and propaganda.

Internment at Fort Missoula may have been considered to provide better living arrangements than the larger War Relocation Authority Camps. Nonetheless, Italian and Japanese men were detained based on significantly different circumstances and national policies. Japanese internees were transferred to Fort Missoula Alien Enemy Hearing Boards, one of which included Mike Mansfield, an icon of Montana politics throughout the twentieth century (The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula 2017). Importantly, a large portion of Post Headquarters building architectural and historical documentation is absent in museum archives. The building, including the military courtroom used for loyalty hearings during World War II, may have existed prior to the war though this has yet to be proven. Such hearings determined the fates of the Issei that were transferred to
Fort Missoula from west coast militarized zones following the attacks at Pearl Harbor. Due to this fact, many of the Japanese transferred to Fort Missoula did not reside there long. After submitting to a loyalty hearing, the board determined an individual’s internment status. This resulted in one’s extended internment at the Fort or transfer to another detainment facility.
Chapter 3

The Issei, Nisei and Executive Order 9066

“Japanese internees at Fort Missoula,” 1941-1943.
The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula Peter Fortune Collection (2001.048.132)
3.1 The Japanese Association of America

As anti-Japanese sentiment rose throughout the west coast in the early twentieth century, public perceptions of a rising Japanese state propelled xenophobic tension resulting in heightened concerns of national security. State policies reflected interests of anti-Asiatic politicians and lobbyists concerned with economic development in the United States. As Japan expanded on an international stage, openly displaying allegiances to Japan became risky and unsafe. Moreover, increased anti-Japanese rhetoric attempted to force U.S. political ideologies onto Issei communities, creating difficulties to acquire goods and public services, whilst establishing community and business relations.

Issei entrepreneurs and community leaders initiated organizations to assist struggling Japanese communities with acquisitions of resources such as housing, employment, and property that were arduous to attain due to discriminatory rejections. Previously, Japanese organizations including religious, language, and cultural practice institutions had been established in Hawaii to combat unequal labor and wage conditions during the influx of Issei labor in the sugarcane industry. Similar institutions soon developed throughout California, Oregon, and Washington to establish reform campaigns to improve morale of the Issei and to provide means to acquire basic and occupational resources. A vital Japanese association was the Japanese Association of America.

Established in 1900, the Japanese Association of America sought to enhance the relations between the United States and Japan as well as economic and social reformation. This became increasingly relevant as Issei populations wished to establish families, achieve economic success, and maintain cultural and political ties to Japan. The Japanese Association of America eventually developed three organizational levels with
major consulates in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Portland, and Seattle after increased anti-Japanese rhetoric from west coast newspaper outlets. In 1907, the Japanese Association of America responded to The Gentlemen’s Agreement and sought to improve the living conditions of the Issei to aid in processes of citizenship in collaboration with federal agencies particular to the documentation and registration of Japanese residing in the country at the time (Densho Encyclopedia 2017). Within such communities, Japanese associations remained vital to counter public perceptions of an “Asian horde,” (Densho Encyclopedia 2017) sustain connections to Japan, where family resided, as well as reform campaigns to improve opportunities for the Issei and Nisei, second generation Japanese Americans, including those in educational systems. Japanese associations were also created to alleviate anti-Asian prejudice and discredit stereotypes of emerging Japanese American families being “uneducated, immoral, and a problematic immigrant population” (Densho Encyclopedia 2017).

As the Issei organized politically viable options to maintain ties to Japan, anti-Japanese rhetoric supported notions that such populations were incapable of assimilating into the United States whilst adopting non-Japanese cultural values. The emergence of Japanese American children, the Nisei, became the first generation of Japanese Americans to inherit values representative of both countries. Such values include both cultural traditions maintained and taught by their parents and those of U.S. traditions. The Nisei, U.S. natural born citizens, were not “aliens ineligible for citizenship.”
3.2 The Nisei and Institutions of Education

Between the First and Second World Wars, following a series of transforming immigration policies structured by concerns for economic development and anti-Asiatic ideologies, the Nisei inherited a range of perspectives, behaviors, and experiences distinct from parents. One may argue that educational systems are among the earliest and most influential factors that shape early senses of self. Furthermore, schools are symbols and distributors of knowledge that propel students into experiences of learning. An opposing view may symbolize learning institutions as sites of indoctrination utilizing knowledge to further strengthen cultural values. Particularly in California, many schools began integrating Nisei children and were soon targeted by ethnocentric and anti-Asiatic campaigns. In this regard, such campaigns desired the preservation of American cultural values among young non-Asian populations, as schools were now viewed as sites for potential Japanese nationalism. Prior to desegregation pacts with Japan, the Issei sought the improvement of educational programs for Japanese youth in the United States. This was not a new endeavor but nonetheless faced new challenges.

After the U.S. annexed Hawaii, the Issei immigrated to the mainland U.S. once contract labor ended. Prior to this event, Japanese language schools were built in Hawaii to provide opportunities for Issei children to learn their native language. Japanese language schools also transitioned with the Issei as they evolved into an integral component of the Japanese community. By 1912, several Japanese language schools were established in California (Densho Encyclopedia 2017). Along the west coast where Japanese populations were most concentrated, schools symbolized both opportunity and institutionalization, as schoolteachers and administrators utilized education to both teach
and Americanize children of foreign ancestry. For anti-Asian sentimentalists, following the Immigration Act in 1924, previously segregated schools represented sites of indoctrination and a silent de-Americanization once Nisei students began entering the public school system in the 1930s.

The Nisei held values of both Japanese heritage and U.S. citizenship by birthright that both threatened and improved Californian educational systems. Moreover, the Japanese Association had improved socio-economic conditions of the Issei while promoting opportunities for their children, particularly in educational institutions. State policy strategists, school administrators, teachers, and community leaders were beginning to adapt and evolve new strategies to create programs that balanced preexisting racial conflict and the changing socio-cultural identity of the U.S. Japanese associations greatly improved opportunities for the Issei and Nisei including aid in educational systems to increase potential for success and the integration of Japanese American children in the U.S. Such organizations were often created and led by business leaders, entrepreneurs, and resourceful individuals who became effective in domestic and international relations negotiations. Also, these organizations and individuals became targets based on suspicion in the immediate years preceding World War II.

3.3 Surveillance and Potential Dangerousness

Prior to the attacks at Pearl Harbor, U.S. federal agencies considered potential conflict with Japan, Germany, and Italy. U.S. intelligence agencies considered potential conflict, precautionary surveillance was conducted in Japanese American communities producing a consensus of individuals based on potential risk in the event of conflict and a
plan for immediate removal targeting prominent Japanese leaders in communities across the west coast. In this regard, federal agencies formed Custodial Detention Lists that identified potentially dangerous individuals, mainly successful businessmen and community members. The lists ultimately provided information utilized during periods of attempted and immediate conflict resolution following the attack at Pearl Harbor:

The Custodial Detention List and the A-B-C classification matrix was used to evaluate the “dangerousness” of organizations and individuals and pre-designate those who would be late interned when the United States went to war against the Axis forces. In total, the United States interned 31,899 nationals of Japan, Germany and Italy from the contiguous United States, Hawaii, Alaska and Latin American countries as part of its Custodian Detention Program. Many Japanese ancestry persons mistakenly referred to these as the “Issei Camps.” While those of Japanese ancestry constituted the majority internee population, this internment process should not be confused with the larger incarceration of over 110,000 Japanese nationals and American citizens authorized under Executive Order 9066. [Densho Encyclopedia 2017]

Lists were formed to supply intelligence, names, and locations for the immediate removal of those deemed potentially dangerous to prevent risks of espionage, sabotage, or violence in the event of war. This became especially relevant when President Roosevelt embargoed oil to the Japanese military in the 1930s that intensified previous tensions between the U.S. and Japan. The categorizations of Custodial Detention Lists draw upon a ranking of dangerousness according to the success of individuals in communities including ties to businesses such as the Japanese Association, other similar institutions, language organizations, religious organizations, (Buddhism, Shinto and Christianity), flower arranging societies, martial arts clubs, and previous ties to Japanese military groups (Thernstrom et al. 1980:564). Interestingly, the adaptive mechanisms of the Issei, and later Nisei, in a racially turbulent west coast environment ultimately created the same institutions utilized for surveillance and, following the attacks at Pearl Harbor, targeted those of interest for arrests.
In response to growing fears and concerns of national security, approximately ninety-one individuals were arrested and convicted of crimes widely based on connections to Germany and Nazism (Densho Encyclopedia 2017). None were of Japanese descent. Furthermore, as Custodial Detention Lists identified and located mainly Germans and Italians in 1939, the Issei and Nisei were excluded until the U.S. entered the war in 1941. Following the attacks at Pearl Harbor, U.S. political leaders were compelled to assert a nationalistic and militant agenda to gain citizenry support in the event of war. Soon, economic lobbyists and military strategists, widely across the west coast, sought a radical response to the attacks and challenged President Roosevelt and Congress to target those of Japanese heritage for removal and relocation.

3.4 Executive Order 9066: Removal and Relocation

After Japanese Naval forces attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, President Roosevelt and Congress were pressured to take drastic measures to protect national security. Such measures included Executive Order 9066, Proclamation 1, Public Law 503, and 108 Civilian exclusion orders that removed and relocated nearly 120,000 Japanese Americans. On February 19, 1942, Executive Order 9066 was passed to create military zones to exclude persons of interest due to periods of war and conflict. Interestingly, this order did not explicitly state the Issei or Nisei (Densho Encyclopedia 2017). Rather, this order created the premise in which later provisions specified restrictions against those of Japanese ancestry (See Appendix D) and detention areas to authorize the removal and relocation of potentially dangerous enemy aliens. Significantly, this order also set a precedent for upcoming regulations that constructed a
boundary along the edge of the Cascade Mountains in Washington and Oregon south along the eastern boundary of the Californian state line.

The boundary, created by Proclamation 1, authorized the Western Defense Command to create two militarized zones along the west coast. The Western Defense Command, managed by General John L. DeWitt, oversaw all operations of removal, relocation, and internment in the western region of the United States including Fort Missoula’s Alien Detention Center. Military Zone 1 comprised regions west of the Cascade Mountains in Washington and Oregon expanding southward, splitting California to the state’s southern most point. Military Zone 2 was comprised of the eastern half of inland California. This provision excluded California, Washington, Oregon, and parts of Arizona and created a militarized zone to urge those of Japanese ancestry to abandon specified areas including homes, properties, businesses, and communities.

On March 21, Public Law 503 authorized military force and penalties for any civilians who opposed removal and relocation. During the Second World War, between 110,000 and 120,000 Issei and Nisei were targeted and incarcerated. Executive Order 9066 was notably influenced by anti-Asiatic sentiment supported by politicians and lobbyists concerned with the Issei’s and Nisei’s integration into labor sectors, academic settings, businesses, and creations of cultural associations (Thernstrom 1980:564).

In March 1942, Japanese families were urged to voluntarily move from militarized zones created by Executive Order 9066 in California, Oregon, and Washington. Simultaneously, as voluntary action was suggested by government agencies to avoid transportation expenses, temporary and permanent detainment centers were in planning and construction stages regulated by the United States Army and Department of
Justice – Immigration and Naturalization Service. This strategy failed most likely due to families having little or no resources and connections in inland states. Furthermore, Issei bank accounts had been suspended, further preventing the Issei from leaving assets, homes, and businesses. As a result, only ten percent of Japanese Americans residing across the west coast voluntarily moved to other states ultimately avoiding internment but facing new environments of adversity.

U.S. agencies were identifying and creating facilities to detain Issei and Nisei populations by methods of U.S. intelligence through its recent decade of surveillance in prominent Japanese American communities. Once voluntary actions failed and U.S. strategists were developing infrastructures to supply internment resources, the Wartime Civil Control Administration was established on March 11, 1942 to construct a range of facilities to detain and provide shelter and basic resources. Assembly centers were built in highly populated Japanese areas to temporarily detain families prior to transportation to permanent, larger facilities. Moreover, centers for the immediate incarceration of Japanese Americans were repurposed and inland facilities were undergoing construction to replicate military designs of living instead of accommodating to various age groups including families and children (Shimomura 2016).

3.5 Civilian Exclusion Orders

The Western Defense Command oversaw the creation and management of exclusion zones along the west coast and implemented the process that removed and relocated the Issei and Nisei to one of the many transfer facilities from March to August in 1942. Such transfer facilities represented sites that divided families and forced an
abandonment of homes, communal relations, resources, and businesses. More than one hundred Civilian Exclusion Orders were executed to facilitate a methodical neighborhood-by-neighborhood removal process of the Issei and Nisei in California, Oregon, Washington, and western regions of Arizona.


Following the systemized removal of all Japanese Americans residing across the west coast in August (Shimomura 2016), the Issei and Nisei faced a harsh new reality. Each type of facility, varying in function, offered different living conditions and resources. Increased geographic distance between facilities symbolized increased distance and unknown statuses of family members. Once the civilian orders were executed, “a new reality” emerged, forcing abandonment and a “take what you can carry” policy that altered the lives of the Issei and Nisei during and long after the war. “A new
reality,” defined by Yukio Shimomura (2016), a previous Nisei internee, is the experiences of many who faced discrimination supported by Executive Order 9066. The new reality encompassed the immediate adjustments Shimomura, among many others, was forced to adopt to maintain important aspects of a previous life.
Chapter 4

A New Reality

“Barbed fencing at Fort Missoula,” 1941-1943.
The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula Peter Fortune Collection
4.1 Yukio Shimomura: “Shikata ga nai”

- (Japanese) “That’s the way it is.”

Yukio Shimomura was born in San Francisco, California where he attended grade school before forced relocation to Tanforan Assembly Center in San Bruno, California. The city received its first Civilian Exclusion Order in early April 1942 that ordered all those of Japanese ancestry to be present on set departure dates for bus transportation to a nearby Assembly Center. The buses were noted to have windows covered in brown paper (Densho Encyclopedia 2017). Tanforan Assembly Center opened in April 28, 1942 to temporarily detain Japanese Americans, primarily residing in the San Francisco Bay area, to be transferred to inland internment camps, mainly Topaz War Relocation Camp. Tanforan Assembly Center closed soon after removal procedures were completed in Military Zone 1 in October 1942.

“From freedom to incarceration, I was facing a new reality”, said Shimomura at a guest lecture at the University of Montana in 2016. Shimomura’s family was forced to assess what belongings to gather and what to leave behind while approaching a new set of questions and uncertainties, as they were required to abandon their homes, property, communities, and schools. Questions, perspectives, and policies, as described in the following section, held new meaning as many were forced to abandon homes, families, and communities:

We faced new questions. What’s your age? Where are you from? Are you a parent? Are you a veteran? Where do you put your car or your livestock? We were faced with new policies and had to adjust. You can’t take more than you can carry. No pets allowed. You were forced to be there. We adopted many sayings such as ‘Shikata ga nai’ (that’s the way it is) and ‘gaman’ (to be stoic). [Yukio Shimomura 2016]
Tanforan Assembly Center was the second largest assembly point constructed on a racetrack previously used for horse and dog racing (Densho Encyclopedia 2017). Those forced to reside behind Tanforan’s barbed fencing stayed in either barracks, mainly in the fields between the tracks, or horse stalls for families including pregnant women, infants, and children. Each family had two rooms and mainly on repurposed military cots (Shimomura 2016). Unsanitary and harsh living conditions were intensified in living quarters including disease and vulnerability during cold winter months. Shimomura and his family were sent to the Topaz War Relocation Camp near Delta, Utah where they were detained until the facility closed in October 1945.

At Topaz, water sanitation became problematic due to the high salt content in nearby salt lake reservoirs. Cooking pots, potbelly stoves, coal heating, and laundry were each maintained by the families as daily responsibilities. During growing seasons in spring and summer, vegetable gardens were maintained while Japanese cooks provided for mainly Japanese internees. According to Shimomura, there were approximately four to five Christian churches in the area. None were of Shinto tradition. Local teachers were employed to provide educational programs for youth in the camps. Shimomura recalls reciting the “Pledge of Allegiance” each morning along with flag raising ceremonies. This routine, at a young age, approximately seven to nine years old, became a source of institutionalization as those in internment camps began questioning the integrity of the U.S. Constitution, as openly discriminatory federal regulations were enforced.

At the time Civilian Exclusion Orders were implemented, approximately 127,000 Issei and Nisei resided in the U.S and over 110,000 residing along the west coast (Densho Encyclopedia 2017). Men, women, children, U.S. citizens, and non-citizens were targeted
as potentially dangerous alien enemies and potential connections to the Japanese military. Furthermore, some Issei served in the Russo-Japanese War as well as World War I. Others served in the United States military. In loyalty review programs, Shimomura and his family were subject to interrogative methods to determine loyalties, background, and information. Shimomura recalls the Enemy Alien questionnaires that were sent to those relocated in internment camps during the war. Questions pertained to family, background, relations to Japan, businesses, income, perspectives of the Japanese Emperor, and allegiance to the U.S.:

Are you willing to serve in the Armed Forces of the United States in combat duty wherever ordered? Will you swear allegiance to the United States of America faithfully to defend the U.S. from any or all attacks by foreign or domestic forces or swear any form of disobedience of the Japanese Emperor or any other form of Government power? You are behind barbed wire and your freedom has been taken away. Your constitutional rights have been taken away from you. You're under armed guard and now they send out this questionnaire. Are you still loyal to the U.S. or will you show your allegiance to Japan? Do you have principles relating to the U.S. Constitution as its being violated?

[Yukio Shimomura 2016]

During the Second World War, approximately 20,000 Nisei served in the U.S. military. The 442nd Combat Regiment in the 100th Combat Battalion eventually became one of the most decorated World War II groups composed entirely of Nisei troops who entered the war (Shimomura 2016). Such efforts included decoding Japanese intelligence and increased military utilization of the Japanese language as it pertained to U.S. wartime strategies. During the war, approximately 4,500 Nisei were killed, wounded, or missing in action once Germany surrendered in 1945.

Following the closing of Topaz War Relocation Camp on October 31, 1945, Shimomura among others were “free to go” (Shimomura 2016). “Where to?” Shimomura asks. Previous homes, businesses, and properties had been sold, stolen, or liquidated.
According to Shimomura, “a Japanese face still says ‘I’m the enemy’ and communities were most likely to not take you back.” Quotas set deadlines to gather belongings prior to escort to nearby train stations where individuals were transferred to “where you came from” (Shimomura 2016). Many Japanese were skeptical to reenter previously held residential areas. Communities were dismantled in previous military zones where anti-Asiatic sentiment had accumulated and remained following the war. A return to previous communities presented a range of problems following the closure of internment facilities. Shimomura’s family did not return to their previous home in San Francisco, California and moved to Ogden, Utah. Though, Shimomura recalls his family’s efforts to escape anti-Japanese sentiment, he noted that discrimination continued after World War II ended in 1945, “A Japanese face still says that I am the enemy” (Shimomura 2016). Shimomura described a sense of futility to react to racist conflict at a young age. He completed high school in Ogden, Utah before joining U.S. military efforts as well as his brothers who participated in intelligence efforts. Though, Shimomura was not detained at Fort Missoula during the war, his future father-in-law was transferred there for internment and briefed in front of an Alien Enemy Hearing Board in Fort Missoula’s T-1 loyalty hearing military courtroom (Shimomura 2016).

Shimomura’s father-in-law moved to the U.S. in 1918 and eventually became a successful storeowner in California before forced removal and incarceration at Fort Missoula’s Alien Detention Center (Shimomura 2016). He was soon subject to loyalty hearings in Fort Missoula’s T-1 military courtroom to determine causes for being drafted into the Japanese army, previous connections to Japan, and allegiances to the U.S. None of those subject to loyalty hearings at Fort Missoula were charged with crimes other than
being potentially dangerous including Shimomura’s father-in-law. Based on success in a small Japanese community in Oregon, Masuo Yasui was also targeted and briefly interned at Fort Missoula in 1942. Considered to be a potentially dangerous enemy alien, Yasui was subject to a loyalty hearing to determine connections to Japan and reasons for success in a branch of the Japanese Association in Fort Hood, Oregon.

4.2 Masuo Yasui: Prominence and Discrimination

Masuo Yasui was born in Japan on November 1, 1886 to Shinataro and Tsune Yasui. In 1903, Yasui came to the U.S. at the age of 16. Soon after Yasui entered the U.S. through Seattle, Washington, he moved to Glen, Montana to work with his brother in railroad construction. In 1905, Yasui moved to Hood River, Oregon for employment in agriculture and logging, that attracted several hundred Issei laborers (The University of Oregon 2005). Yasui continued his education for two years in Portland, Oregon where he finished high school and became fluent in English. Between 1903 and 1908, he held five jobs including the railroad construction and a grocer position (U.S. Department of Justice National Archives Public Research Files 1942; The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula 2017). In 1908, Yasui and his brother started a business, Yasui Brother’s Store, in Hood River to supply general merchandise such as food, supplies, and Japanese cultural goods including art and food. The business served as an important cornerstone of Japanese culture in the Hood River community for many Issei struggling to integrate into and negotiate in the area. Due to Yasui’s accomplishments, approximately 80 Japanese families settled in the Hood River area to purchase homes, businesses, and properties (U.S. Department of Justice National Archives Public Research Files 1942; The
Furthermore, Yasui’s English speaking capabilities allowed him to serve as a “middle man” for Issei in the area struggling to purchase land, settle agreements, and achieve fair working conditions partially due to language barriers.

In 1912, Yasui married Shidzuyo, a teacher in his home village of Nanukaichi, Japan, through written correspondence (U.S. Department of Justice National Archives Public Research Files 1942; The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula 2017). At 26 years old, Shidzuyo was a successful teacher in history, philosophy, geography, flower arrangement, and tea ceremony before her arrival the U.S. (The University of Oregon 2005). Once Yasui moved to Hood River and was joined by his wife, Shidzuyo, he purchased a large quantity of land to convert to orchards that became vital sources of agricultural productivity in Oregon over the following two decades.

After becoming a successful landowner, including five ranches in the Hood River area, Yasui formed the Japanese Farmer’s Association and Mid-Columbia Vegetable Grower’s Association (U.S. Department of Justice National Archives Public Research Files 1942; The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula 2017). He was the first person of Japanese ancestry to be elected to the Hood River Valley Fruit Growers Association. Yasui also served as Director of the Hood River Apple Growers Association and as a board member of the Japanese American Welfare Society of Hood River. Both Yasui and Shidzuyo were prominent members of the Hood River Methodist Church in the Japanese community. These organizations served as vital labor sectors for Issei in the Hood River community despite rising anti-Asian sentiment as portrayed by the “Anti-Asiatic
After their marriage in 1912 at the ages of 26 years old, Yasui and Shidzuyo eventually had nine children. Yasui’s oldest son, Ray, took work in his father’s agricultural business before forced relocation at Tule Lake War Relocation Authority Camp in May 1942 (The University of Oregon 2005). Following the war, Yasui and his family moved back to Hood River where he operated what was left of his father’s agricultural businesses since Issei accounts and property had been stolen, sold, or dispersed after Executive Order 9066. Yasui’s second son, Minoru, graduated from the University of Oregon Law School in 1939 becoming the first Japanese American to do so in the state of Oregon. Shortly after his graduation, Minoru was denied employment based on his Japanese ancestry. He soon moved to Chicago, Illinois to work in the Japanese Consul General’s Office before moving back to Oregon following the attacks at Pearl Harbor.

Yasui’s daughter, Michi, was near graduation from the University of Oregon and was unable to attend her graduation ceremony due to the curfew regulations set forth by Executive Order 9066. Among Yasui’s other children, several completed programs including Engineering at the University of Michigan, Pre-Medicine at the University of Colorado, University of Wisconsin, and at the Hahnemann Medical College in Philadelphia (The University of Oregon 2005). It becomes evident that the Yasui family had become successful inside and outside of the Hood River community. Yasui returned to Japan with his wife in 1926 to attend family matters, which later became a primary basis for Yasui’s inclusion in Custodial Detention Lists and hearings at Fort Missoula.
Yasui established a positive reputation based on connections and success in the Hood River community. Such factors were utilized by U.S. intelligence agencies to target and identify Yasui as suspicious and potentially dangerous after the attacks at Pearl Harbor. In 1935, Yasui received the Silver Loving Cup Award in Fort Hood based on accomplishments in the Hood River community in economic niches including agriculture and a storefront. In 1940, he was honored by the Foreign Minister of the Japanese Government with the awarding of a Wooden Cup for services and contributions at a convention in Tokyo, Japan celebrating the 2600th anniversary of the nation on November 10, 1940 (U.S. Department of Justice National Archives Public Research Files 1942; The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula 2017). Yasui was arrested on December 12, 1941 due to his recent visit to Japan and aforementioned awards based on his success.

Receiving wooden cup from Japanese foreign office for distinguished service abroad and close friendship with Japanese Consulate in Portland, Oregon. There is nothing to indicate that this subject would be influenced by the connections of his son with Japanese Consulate. One wonders what the attitude of the American born children of this subject will be towards this country if the father is interned by reason of the action of the lawyer son? The acceptance of the wooden cup and the close relationship with the Japanese Consulate can be reconciled with the affluence of this Japanese subject in this country In the writers, opinion, paroling this subject on condition that he report to the frequent intervals to the F.B.I. Office in Portland, Oregon, would constitute sufficient protection for this country. In making this recommendation, the writer is not unmindful of the fanatic loyalty which those of Japanese origin and birth bear to Japan.

- Recommendation: Parole as herein recommended
[U.S. Department of Justice National Archives Public Research Files 1942; The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula 2017]

Due to indications of success, U.S intelligence and surveillance agencies identified Yasui in Custodial Detention Lists, authorized by Director of the F.B.I., J.
Edgar Hoover, on December 8, 1941 that led to his immediate incarceration despite support from family and community members from the Hood River community.

It is recommended that this individual be considered for custodial detention in the event of a national emergency. The information contained on the attached dossier constitutes the basis for appropriate consideration in this regard.

Very Truly Yours,
J. Edgar Hoover

Director – Federal Bureau of Investigation

[U.S. Department of Justice National Archives Public Research Files 1942; The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula 2017]

After Yasui’s immediate incarceration at the Portland County Jail, he was transferred to Fort Missoula in January 1942. On February 19, 1942, Yasui was brought before an Alien Enemy Hearing Board to determine potential risks to national security. At this time, his family and several members of the Hood River and Portland, Oregon communities, sought his release and relocation to Tule Lake War Relocation Camp, where his family was relocated (The University of Oregon 2005). Affidavits were provided to support a person’s character as hearing boards to detention facilities and the Department of Justice – Alien Enemy Control Units in Washington, D.C. support an individual’s support and relationship to a person provided by Yasui’s wife, Shidzuyo, Other members included an array of affidavits filed by associated and friends, some of whom were well known in the Hood River community, such as the former Mayor of Portland, Oregon, Superintendent of City Schools of Hood River, the Principal of Hood River High School, and the leader of the Pacific Northwest Japanese branch of the Hood River Methodist Church where Yasui and his wife had attended.
Each affidavit supported Yasui’s character as respectable and not of risk to citizens of the U.S. In an affidavit immediately following Yasui’s initial arrest in December 1942, Frank Herron Smith, Superintendent of the Pacific Japanese Provisional Conference wrote to the Board of Hearings for Enemy Aliens at Fort Missoula, Montana on January 7, 1942:

Dear Sirs:
It is a pleasure for me to testify to the character of Mr. M. Yasui of Hood River, Oregon. I have known Mr. Yasui intimately in the work of the Church at Hood River and also in the Rotary Club. I believe him to be a man of probity and honor. He would long ago have become an American citizen if it had been possible. He, like myself, did all that was possible to preserve peace between Japan and America. I am confident that Mr. Yasui will do all in his power to help America win an early and complete victory over her foes in both the Orient and Europe.

Yours respectfully, Frank Herron Smith

[U.S. Department of Justice National Archives Public Research Files 1944; The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula 2017]

On January 11, 1943, Shidzuyo, Yasui’s wife, submitted an affidavit while detained in Tule Lake War Relocation Camp supporting Yasui’s character to the Alien Enemy Hearing Board at Fort Missoula and justification for release and transfer to Tule Lake War Relocation Camp:

My husband first entered the United States in 1903 at the age of 16 years and has continuously resided in the Continental United States since that time except for a brief two-month visit to his aged parents in 1926. My husband was instrumental, as records of early Hood River will show, in discouraging those Japanese elements that were rowdy, to settle down and establish homes in a true Christian way of life. My husband has always stressed the American way of living to the Japanese and has encouraged them to send their children to college. My husband and I both feel the need of making good citizens of our children, and to this end, we have sent our children to college. I respectfully request that open due consideration of this letter ad such other facts as are before the Board of Authority concerned, that Masuo Yasui will be permitted to join us in the Tule Lake War Relocation Center.

Very Truly Yours,
Shidzuyo Yasui

[U.S. Department of Justice National Archives Public Research Files 1944; The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula 2017]
Since his family was in “good financial condition, good health, and the children are well developed,” there was no reason that Yasui not be permitted to join his family at Tule Lake War Relocation Authority Camp (U.S. Department of Justice National Archives Public Research Files 1942; The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula 2017). Enemy Alien Hearing Boards often considered written support that negated or approved a person’s character and reputation. Higher authorities, as seen previously, held the power to overrule such support. Alternative views, through written correspondence with loyalty hearing administrators, opposed accounts stating the positive reputations of those deemed potentially dangerous enemy aliens. Moreover, anti-Japanese lobbyists, motivated by racist and ethnocentric ideals, mostly supported the detainment of Issei and their potential for dangerousness once the U.S. entered war. The Hood River Sheriff stated, “The subject was in close touch with S. Ban and Company, a company that brought in thousands of Japanese laborers to the northwest and that subject’s store was the headquarters for a great many Japanese farmers in that area. Also, many students in the subject’s children’s school noted them describing medals their father had received from the Japanese Government” (U.S. Department of Justice National Archives Public Research Files 1942; The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula 2017).

On April 10, 1942, it was determined that Yasui’s request to join his family at Tule Lake War Relocation Camp be denied:

The evidence shows clearly that this subject is a leader among the Japanese of Hood River Valley in Oregon and that one-third of the population of that valley are Japanese; that his children are American citizens by birth, but one of them at least by virtue of his citizenship, is entitled to be at large. He is a lawyer, apparently unscrupulous, and through the influence of his father, his son has been connected intimately with the Japanese Consulate. These facts justify the conclusion that subject is dangerous to the peace and safety of the United States and it is recommended that the order directing his internment be permitted to stand and that his petition to be reunited with his family be denied.
Over the following four years, Yasui was transferred to Fort Sill Internment Camp in Oklahoma, Camp Livingston Internment Camp in Louisiana, and eventually Santa Fe Internment Camp where he joined German and Italian prisoners of war. Despite Yasui’s numerous supporters, he did not join his wife until six months after the war ended upon release from internment. In January 1946, Yasui reunited with his wife in Denver, Colorado, where they resided before moving to Portland, Oregon. Yasui’s land, businesses, and assets were sold, stolen, or liquidated. Once Issei bank accounts were frozen after the attacks at Pearl Harbor the Yasui Brother’s Store was closed indefinitely. In 2004, the Oregon Historical Society Museum began the construction of a replica exhibit of the store, “Oregon My Oregon,” to exemplify the struggles of the Issei and the Yasui family to connect present populations to a troubling past pertaining to internment-era World War II (The Oregon Historical Society 2017).

The Yasui family’s experience encompasses vital aspects of the devastating effects caused by Executive Order 9066. As families were removed and relocated, previously anti-Japanese climates intensified. Fort Missoula served as a site that determined one’s internment status during the war based on past connections to Japan, prominence in Japanese communities, and wealth as observed in the accounts of Masuo Yasui. Another individual was Mataichi Iseri who was interned at Fort Missoula in 1942. Similarly, Iseri was targeted due to success in occupational sectors and leadership in
organizations that provided resources and opportunities to emigrating Issei to the United States.

4.3 Mataichi Iseri: “Did you bow at the Emperor’s Statue?”

Mataichi Iseri was born in Koasa, Japan on September 26, 1883. He arrived in the U.S. in 1900. Iseri married and had nine children. He was also a devout Buddhist and farmer by occupation. In 1912, he joined the Thomas Japanese Association in Kent, Washington and eventually served as president. In 1940, his recent travels to Japan, connections to local Japanese associations, and success in the Kent, Washington community became a source used by U.S. Alien Enemy Hearing Boards to determine Iseri’s parole or internment status.

Iseri was deemed suspicious to an Alien Enemy Hearing Board at Fort Missoula due to a return trip to Japan in 1940 to visit relatives and attend the 2600th anniversary celebration of Japan in Tokyo. A hearing (See Appendix E) deemed Iseri as “potentially dangerous to the public safety of the country in which they reside” (U.S. Department of Justice National Archives Public Research Files 1942; The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula 2017):

That the alien, like many other in Japanese neighborhoods, made small donations to the Japanese army and navy relief funds in connection with the China war; That the alien admitted that he has attended, from time to time, celebrations of the Japanese Emperor’s birthday; that the alien bears a good reputation in his locality, both as to character and loyalty, among American citizens who are not of Japanese extraction.

- Alien Enemy Hearing Board

[U.S. Department of Justice National Archives Public Research Files 1942; The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula 2017]
The following section is provided to illuminate aspects of historical records that reflect a relationship between church institutions and its members, some of which were men targeted due to affiliations with religious institutions and cultural associations prior to internment, including Mataichi Iseri’s detention at Fort Missoula. Herbert Nicholson, a high school teacher of mathematics and economics in Los Angeles, served as pastor for the West Los Angeles Methodist Church in 1941 due to his abilities to speak English and Japanese. After the attacks at Pearl Harbor, Nicholson became concerned for the Japanese members of the church who now faced increased adversity after the attacks. In an interview conducted by Betty Mitson from California State University in 1975, Nicholson took the initiative to track the whereabouts of previous members of the Methodist Church in Los Angeles, California. After visiting the homes and business places of his previous church attendees, Nicholson eventually took a train to Fort Missoula. According to the interview, Minister Frank Herron Smith was at the facility working as a pastor to administer church services for the Japanese internees. Nicholson, upon Smith’s request, assisted in interpretations of Alien Enemy Hearing Board procedures at Fort Missoula due to efficiencies in Japanese and English languages.

Ultimately sitting in on 52 hearings at Fort Missoula, Nicholson described his observations of loyalty hearings administered at Fort Missoula’s T-1 military courtroom.

A Department of Justice man was in charge of the hearings, and they had three people that were brought in to act as judges. Then they’d have an F.B.I. man present and secretary to take everything down verbatim. Then the “suspicious” character was brought in and he was allowed to have one friend. But way up there in Missoula, they had no friends, so practically none of them had anyone to sit with them…The three-man panel of judges were Dr. Johnson who had been a Baptist minister and now a professor of philosophy at the University of Nevada, a man named Smith who was head of a newspaper in Carson City and another man who was a lawyer …They started the hearing with the “prosecutor”, the F.B.I. man, asking the victim, ‘Why are you here?’ All answered, ‘I don’t know…I don’t know.’ The F.B.I. prosecutor asked, “Well, you are here because we suspect you of being a dangerous character.’ That is all. They didn’t
give any reason. The professor of philosophy would always ask, ‘What’s your philosophy of life?’ I told them not to ask that question. The whole thing was a farce, an absolute joke. I didn’t see how these reasonable, intelligent university graduates and professors with Ph.D.’s could carry on a thing like that. I just couldn’t understand. It was absurd. [Nicholson 1978]

As portrayed in the experiences of Shimomura and Yasui, questions pertaining to personal and family background, connections to Japan, and allegiances to the U.S. simultaneously serve interests of national security whilst stripping U.S. citizens of constitutional rights due to immediate decisions made following the attacks at Pearl Harbor. The procession of questions during this hearing may be somewhat reflective of how other loyalty hearings were administered. As previously observed in Yasui’s case, a number of supporters attempted to persuade review boards to approve of one’s character as non-dangerous to national security.

Affidavits were sent to Fort Missoula to reflect Iseri’s character and reputation within the Kent and Thomas, Washington areas included several affidavits provided by business associates:

Affidavit:

State of Washington
County of King

I, Esther Dragness, being first duly sworn on her oath says: That she is a natural born American Citizen born at Volga, South Dakota on October 27, 1900. That her husband and her have known Mataichi Iseri for about 15 years. That they first met him at the time her husband, George Dragness, was working as a truck driver for the Shell Oil Company at Kent, Washington and Mr. Iseri had a gas station at Thomas just south of Kent. That they have found him honest and upright in all their dealings with him. That in the year 1938, she was the chairman for the hot lunches for the Meridian School District under the Auspices of the Parent-Teachers Association. At that time, she had a closer contact by having Mr. Iseri help her get part of the vegetables. This produce was donated to her for hot school lunches. Mr. Iseri contacted other Japanese farmers in his district and gathered these vegetables for her and picked them up once a week. He did all this without charge of any sort. That since then she has not known of him or his family of any un-American activity.

Subscribed and sworn before me this day 23 of Jan. 1942.
Signed: Esther Dragness
The Alien Enemy Hearing Board determined that Iseri be recommended for parole without bond after his initial hearing considering an array of support in the form of affidavits, including eight letters provided by teachers, family members, and business associates located in Kent and Thomas, Washington. It was further determined that his visit to Japan and connections to the Thomas Japanese Association did not justify any reasoning to intern him and “the alien bears a good reputation in his locality, both as to character and loyalty, among American citizens who are not of Japanese extraction. The board finds no evidence that justified the opinion that, if paroled, the alien would be dangerous to public safety” (U.S. Department of Justice National Archives Public Research Files 1942; The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula 2017). As in many hearing reviews pertaining to Issei with established reputations, success, and prominence in communities throughout the west coast, Alien Enemy Hearing Boards often did not make absolute conclusions if higher authorities were to intervene. In the case of Iseri, J. Edgar Hoover overruled the Fort Missoula hearing conclusion:

Conclusion:

In view of Iseri’s leadership in the Japanese Association and because of his apparent strong sentimental attachment for his native country, it is believed that the internal security of the nation would be better served by the individual’s internment. Accordingly it is suggested that the facts in this case be reconsidered and Iseri ordered interned for the duration of the war.

Respectfully,
J. E. Hoover - Director F.B.I.
Once Iseri’s hearing conclusion was overruled, he was transferred to Minidoka War Relocation Camp in Hunt, Idaho where he was detained until 1945. On January 31, 1945, Iseri was released with parole and certain conditions. Furthermore, Iseri was required to remain outside California and the western halves of Washington and Oregon, Military Zones 1 and 2, and was not permitted to establish residence or visit the Pacific coastal area. As a regulation of parole, Iseri was assigned a parole officer to meet with monthly through the Immigration and Naturalization Service office in Portland, through a “Parolee’s or Internee’s-At-Large Agreement” which stated his acknowledgement and agreement of his limitations as a parolee (U.S. Department of Justice National Archives Public Research Files 1942; The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula 2017).

Mataichi Iseri, Masuo Yasui, and Yukio Shimomura were each forced to abandon homes and communities due to regulations set forth by Executive Order 9066. Such individuals faced a diversity of circumstances according to personal backgrounds, geographic locations, relocation in an extensive network of detainment facilities, and procedures dictated by Alien Enemy Hearing Boards. Nonetheless, a new reality was composed of removal, relocation, incarceration, and interrogation. Such procedures inevitably produced a range of questions and uncertainties, questioning the integrity of the U.S. constitution that devastated the lives of Issei and Nisei during and long after World War II. As the Issei and Nisei were forced to leave homes and communities, one individual faced an abnormal set of questions based on a case of mistaken identity prior to detention at Fort Missoula’s Alien Detention Center.
4.4 Jiro Oishi: A Case of Mistaken Identity

Jiro Oishi was born in Japan in 1918 before his family moved to the United States in the following year. His father sought work at a Seattle Methodist Church before moving to Portland, Oregon. After struggling to find employment and resources, the Oishi family moved to Utah in 1923 before moving to El Monte, California in 1928. At a young age, Oishi was actively engaged in the El Monte Japanese Methodist Church while attending El Monte High School. He then attended Pasadena City College and later the University of Southern California. The day after Pearl Harbor was attacked, F.B.I. agents visited the Oishi household as authorized by Custodial Detention List surveillance searching for Goro Oishi, a 67-year-old Japanese veteran of the Russ-Japanese War (The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula 2017). Oishi’s sister, Joanne Kumamoto, recalls their mother asking Oishi to stop by the El Monte Police Station the next day on his way to class at the University of Southern California to state the man they were looking for did not reside at the Oishi household (The University of Southern California 2008). Oishi was arrested on the spot and transferred to Fort Missoula in the following days. At the age of twenty-three years old, Oishi was the youngest of nearly 600 Japanese internees at Fort Missoula at the time of his relocation there (The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula 2017).

Instead of completing a final exam in his senior year, Oishi was interned at Fort Missoula and did not make contact with his family until nearly two weeks after his arrest. On December 26, 1941, Oishi was permitted to write to his future wife, Anna Makino:

Dear Anna,
I am writing while lying in a warm bed. The soft white snow is gently floating down from the beautiful Montana sky. The whiteness of the snow covering the earth makes me feel clean inside. God, I guess, is trying to make it possible for me to think of better things of
life by covering this war torn world with a white blanket. This must be one way God meant things to be. He lets us start all over again in the Spring by creating new life in the trees, plants, and animals and gives to me a new joyful start by the enjoyment of toiling the new soil refreshed by the winter snow. These thoughts are just my interpretation of the way I think my Creator encourages me along toward living a better life. He created the seasons for variety, the colors for enjoyment, the weather for frigidity, days for growth, nights for rest, music for emotional interpretation and years for again and me to be tested and approved when I die.

- Jiro Oishi [The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula 2017]

On February 24, 1942, Oishi appeared before an Alien Enemy Hearing Board at Fort Missoula’s T-1 military courtroom. The hearing was brief as it was evident that Oishi was not the 67-year-old Goro Oishi they were searching for (The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula 2017). It was concluded that Oishi’s arrest and internment at Fort Missoula was a case of mistaken identity (The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula 2017). He was soon released on March 6, 1942 and returned to El Monte, California. Upon Oishi’s return, he discovered that he was not permitted to graduate due to accumulated absences. He married Anna just one month after President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 (The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula 2017). Shortly after, Oishi and his wife were transferred to the Tulare Assembly Center before relocation to the Gila River Relocation Center in Arizona. As Oishi was previously actively engaged in community and educational programs, he served as Director of Community Activities at the Gila River War Relocation Authority camp (The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula 2017). After the Oishi’s release, they lived in Chicago before moving to El Monte, California once Military Zones 1 and 2 were deconstructed and the war in Europe was nearing an end.

Oishi purchased and operated a radio repair shop in Pasadena, California before working in a variety of jobs including landscaping and stockbroking. Approximately 130
students of Japanese ancestry attended the University of Southern California at the time Civilian Exclusion Orders were implemented. As the U.S. began restitution procedures in the 1980s to address the devastating impacts of discriminatory policies against the Issei and Nisei, several universities, including the University of Southern California, initiated honorary programs to recognize the wrongdoings of denying educational degrees and awards to those who were subject to regulations of Executive Order 9066. Oishi’s wife, Anna, attended a USC Nisei Honorary Ceremony to receive a degree that Oishi was denied due to a case of mistaken identity (The University of Southern California Trojan Family Magazine 2008).

Chapter 5

Racism, Rights, and Restitution

5.1 Conflict and Increased Anti-Japanese Sentiment

Following the attacks at Pearl Harbor, a strong hatred toward those of Japanese ancestry developed. Grocery stores, milk delivery services, insurance agencies, fishing businesses, gas stations, and other businesses often refused service to Japanese Americans widely in California during this time (Time-Life Books 1985:201). Anti-Japanese sentiment was further enflamed by west coast politicians, economic lobbyists, and military officials who used the attacks to propel racist and discriminatory policy in the wake of conflict and wartime panic. Newspaper sources assumed positions alongside racist campaigns producing anti-Japanese rhetoric including headlines such as, “Why treat the Japs well here? They take the parking positions. They get ahead of you in the stamp line at the post office. They have their share of seats on buses and in streetcar lines. Let ‘em be pinched, hurt, hungry and dead up against it…Personally, I hate the Japanese” (Time-Life Books 1985:201). An official act and declaration of war on Japan legitimized regulations discriminating against those of Japanese ancestry.

After Japanese naval forces attacked Pearl Harbor, California Governor Earl Warren and Lieutenant General John L. Dewitt, Western Defense Command Military Commander, headed an all-out political and military campaign that sought to convince a federal government to remove, relocate, and detain Japanese Americans. Several special
interest groups, including the California Grange Association, the American Legion, the Native Sons and Daughters of the Golden West, the California Farm Bureau, the Japanese Exclusion League of California, and the California Joint Immigration Committee, also served the interests of targeting the Issei and Nisei (U.S. Department of Justice National Archives Public Research Files 1944; The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula 2017).

California Governor Earl Warren openly supported the forced removal of Japanese Americans including a drastic measure taken in 1942 that seized all land held in the names of the Issei’s children. One year later, Governor Warren, later Chief Justice to the Supreme Court, expanded the previously established California Alien Land Law of 1913. This denied Japanese rights to farming and owning land, including land held in the names of American born Nisei. Only in 1948, through the Supreme Court case State of California v. Oyama, was this restriction overturned deeming it unconstitutional and a measure to restrict Japanese farm competition (The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula 2017). The Land Law was repealed in 1956. In the immediate years following internment, Warren became an icon of civil rights with his involvement in and support for equality in cases such as Brown versus Board of Education.

Lieutenant General John L. DeWitt influenced much more than the outreach of state politics as Western Command Region Military Commander. General DeWitt quickly sought drastic measures to enforce the provisions later signed by President Roosevelt despite his closest advisors supporting that the Issei and Nisei were not threats to national security. As General DeWitt’s aggressive mentality reflected major shifting or
preset racial tensions in the U.S., he supported that “evacuation was impelled by military necessity” (Final Report, 1942 1942).

Lieutenant John L. Dewitt stated his position against those of Japanese ancestry in the U.S. in a hearing before a Subcommittee on Naval Affairs in Congress in 1943:

DeWitt: A Jap’s a Jap…I don’t want any of them here. They are a dangerous element. There is no way to determine their loyalty. There is a feeling developing, I think, in certain sections of the country that the Japanese should be allowed to return. I am opposing it with every proper means at my disposal.

Subcommittee: Would you base your determined stand on experience as a result of sabotage or racial history or what?

DeWitt: I first of all base it on my responsibility. I have the mission of defending this coast and securing vital installations. The danger of the Japanese was, and is now, it they are permitted to come back…espionage and sabotage. It makes no difference whether he is an American citizen...he is still a Japanese. American citizenship does not necessarily determine loyalty.

Subcommittee: You draw a distinction then between Japanese, Italians, and Germans? We have a great number of Italians and Germans and we think they are fine citizens. There may be exceptions.

DeWitt: You needn’t worry about the Italians at all except in certain cases. Also, the same for Germans except in individual cases. But we must worry about the Japanese all the time until he is wiped off the map. Sabotage and espionage will make problems as long as he is allowed in this area…problems, which I don’t want to have to worry about.

[U.S. Department of Justice National Archives Public Research Files 1943; The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula 2017]

As Yukio Shimomura described at a University of Montana lecture (2016), the devastating effects of internment for those deemed potentially dangerous enemy aliens were harshly unjustified by radical military strategists. Such racist and ethnocentric agendas permeated national policy as it produced Executive Order 9066. As radical and drastic policies were created during wartime panic, the stripping of rights of over 110,000 Japanese Americans was widely unconstitutional. Once the Second World War ended, many found that the lives they once had were unattainable due to heightened anti-Japanese racial tensions in the areas they were attempting to establish in and, to a degree,
had successfully done so prior to forced removal. Shimomura (2016) recalls his family’s limitations to protest the restrictions set forth by Executive Order 9066 due to heightened military security once curfews and removal procedures were enforced. Though this notion is true to a great extent, some sought the restoration of constitutional rights for those of Japanese ancestry through public service and legal means including Masuo Yasui and his son Minoru “Min” Yasui.

5.2 Rights as Restitution

On March 28, 1942, Executive Order 9066 authorized curfew orders that restricted all individuals of Japanese ancestry to stay within five miles of their homes while remaining inside of homes during nighttime hours (U.S. Department of Justice National Archives Public Research Files 1942; The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula 2017). The events of Masuo Yasui’s arrest and enforced curfews instigated his son, Minoru, to take action against violations of constitutional rights through discriminatory policy created during periods of wartime panic. After alerting the F.B.I. of his intentions, Minoru walked into a Portland police station where he demanded to be arrested. He was imprisoned in solitary confinement for nearly a year after before relocation to Minidoka War Relocation Authority Camp and detained until 1944 (The University of Oregon 2005). Prior to his release, Minoru’s case went to review in the U.S. Supreme Court in 1943. The trial was the first of its kind reviewing the repercussions of Executive Order 9066. The actions of the government were justified by “military necessity” suggested by General DeWitt previously.
Following Yasui’s release from internment in January 1946, he and his wife, Shidzuyo, did not return to Hood River, Oregon, where previously earned and owned assets were liquidated, stolen, and sold. After moving to Portland, Oregon, Yasui and his wife returned to assisting other Issei and Nisei who attempted to return to their homes. During his years in Hood River, Yasui gained legal and financial skills to aid fellow Issei in the community. He utilized the same skills in Portland advocating for equality and citizenship for those of Japanese ancestry (The University of Oregon 2005). In 1952, the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 was passed (The University of Washington Bothell and Cascadia College Library Collections 2017). This law repositioned immigration laws to only target those who were unlawful, immoral, diseased and politically radical (The University of Washington Bothell and Cascadia College Library Collections 2017). Moreover, it did not exclude immigrants purely based on country of origin and allowed Japanese immigrants to attain U.S. citizenship.

Following 1952, Yasui became one of the first Issei to successfully pass the naturalization tests and became a U.S. citizen at the age of sixty-six years old (The University of Oregon 2005). He eventually taught classes to aid Japanese immigrants in naturalization processes and access to resources in nearby communities. In the years following internment, Minoru continued to protest inequalities and in 1976, the city of Denver, Colorado officially recognized Minoru through the “Min Yasui Community Volunteer Award” to award those with achievements in volunteer and public service sectors (The University of Oregon 2005). In 2002, The University of Oregon Law School honored Minoru after his death with a Meritorious Service Award for activism in human rights and equality movements (The University of Oregon 2005). It becomes
unmistakable that the Yasui family held great success in as protecting Japanese Americans as they were discriminated against and interned during the war and aiding them during times of recovery following the war.

### 5.3 Restitution

Restitution is to restore what has been lost or stolen. When pertaining to the repercussions of Executive Order 9066, restitution strategies attempted to address travesties brought upon those of Japanese ancestry during and long after the war. Minoru and others sought legal means to restore constitutional rights after the implementation of the Executive Order. Such restorations were not attempted until decades after the war once the U.S. recognized a failure of governmental leadership during periods of wartime panic and intensified racism. On September 18, 1987, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a bill to formally apologize and allocate over one billion dollars to over 65,000 surviving Japanese Americans who were subject to regulations set forth by Executive Order 9066 (The New York Times 1987). Of course, this bill was created to redeem an earlier attempt of legal restitution in 1948 known as the Evacuation Claims Act that allocated thirty-eight million dollars to surviving Issei, Nisei, and Sansei, third generation Japanese American citizens, to compensate for lost and stolen properties.

In 1988, two years after the death of Minoru Yasui, Congress passed the Civil Liberties Act to formally recognize and apologize for the struggles of the Issei, Nisei, and Sansei during and after World War II. In 1993, President Bill Clinton acknowledged such struggles through a written apology after a decade of Japanese American activism pertaining to restitution. The fund provided approximately $20,000 to each living
internee though most Issei at this time were deceased or approaching 100 years old. It becomes evident that the U.S. government’s attempt at restitution, as a monetary and written form of apology, only skims the surface of recognizing a dark period in United States’ history.

According to The New York Times (Nash 1987), the authors of the bill acknowledged that the “token payment” did not compensate for lost and stolen properties. The legislation also created a fifty million dollar fund to be allocated to various sources to educate and inform the public in histories and topics of internment. This fund has become vital for the preservation and maintenance of historic internment facilities across the U.S. including Manzanar War Relocation Authority Camp in California, Minidoka War Relocation Authority Camp in Idaho, and Heart Mountain Internment Camp in Wyoming among others. As legislative restitution, through monetary and written forms, attempts to compensate those who were removed and relocated during the war, it fails to address how such histories and events remain vital in educational programs and current political discussions. The preservation, acknowledgement, and sharing of historic narratives of internment becomes deeply rooted in education and community engagement. In this light, sharing such narratives widely becomes the task of museum institutions to identify, comprehend, share, and preserve the narratives of historic events.
Chapter 6

An Upcoming T-1 Exhibit

6.1 Museums and Community

The historical narrative of internment-era Fort Missoula, shaped by decades of shifting policies and perspectives, has become largely disconnected from Missoula’s community. The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula currently rests on the grounds where Fort Missoula’s Alien Detention Center resided, though without many of its original buildings. The grounds are scattered with log buildings, reflecting histories of settler days versus Fort Missoula’s internment era. The barbwire fencing is no longer present. Nor is the Mess Hall, theatre building, or stage sets. Officer’s Row currently operates as local, regional, and state administration buildings. One barracks remains in good condition and currently houses an exhibit and is used for museum object storage. Moreover, the physical landscape at Fort Missoula marginally reflects a complex, historical narrative. As a non-profit organization, the Historical Museum at Fort Missoula currently seeks to research, educate, and share the historical narrative that remains vital to the present identity of Missoula.

The word “museum” is often debated based on its various roles in contemporary societies. To a degree, museums are charged with the authority to interpret natural and cultural history for purposes of material culture appreciation and preservation. Museums are also constructed to maintain a vital connection to a surrounding community through
education and engagement. The institution attempts to engage visitors in current social, political, and environmental issues and, if possible, topics of conflict. Museums attempt to engage their audiences through methods of “stimulating dialogue on difficult issues, accurately representing all the people of a nation and creating forums of discussion among groups with disparate opinions” (Rosenburg 2012:116). Thus, museums should engage with audiences confronting social and political issues through methods of research-oriented, controversial, and sensitive topics. As such, non-profit organizations, such as the Historical Museum at Fort Missoula, has adapted to its surrounding cultural environment whilst integrating creative strategies to portray the historic narrative of Fort Missoula’s Alien Detention Center and, as an upcoming exhibit suggests, the T-1 military courtroom.

Museum staff, interns, volunteers, and patrons have developed strategies to engage with Missoula’s community through various means including outreach events such as public book sales, involvement with various other non-profit organizations, travelling exhibits, holiday celebrations on the grounds, community events at the museum, and fundraising events in popular social scenes including downtown events and local businesses. At such events and establishments, the Historical Museum at Fort Missoula has introduced educational programs via travelling exhibits, displays, and social events for public audiences to interact with museum staff and volunteers as well as engaging with historic narratives through visual, educational, and stimulating methods outside of the museum institution:

Museums have helped shape the American experience in the past. They have the potential to play an even more aggressive role in shaping American life in the future. They offer a powerful education model that can help redesign and reform American education, and they can be important centers of community development and renewal. However, to
accomplish these two things, museums must engage the world with a spirit of activism and openness far beyond what they are used to.

-Renewing the Museum: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on the Paradigm Shift (Skramstad 1999; Anderson 2004:118)

Strategies such as holiday festivities, community book sales, social gatherings “pint nights,” and brief, one-night fundraising events have become useful tools not only for museum outreach, but to contribute to the community they seek to serve whilst proving gateways of learning and interaction. Over the past several years, the Historical Museum at Fort Missoula has expanded its reach into Missoula creating innovative methods of learning and engaging and strives to educate and preserve whilst meeting institutional goals. This notion serves a dual role, as such institutions need to reach capital goals as well as serve their primary goal to reflect the interests of a local community.

One narrative the museum seeks to share is that of the role and significance of T-1. The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula is currently in the planning process of converting T-1 into a multi-functional resource not only for museum purposes, but also for public services. As the historical narrative of T-1 becomes vital to share throughout Missoula’s community, proper research, effective concepts, sensitive and accurate terminology, and appropriate degrees of creativity contribute to sensitively interpret the experiences of past persons and historical events when utilized for museum strategies. Such qualities ultimately create the core functions of museum institutions. Core concepts, persons, and events described in this paper will ultimately culminate in the development, creation, and implementation of the Historical Museum at Fort Missoula’s travelling display to inform local audiences about the historical narrative of Fort Missoula’s Alien
Detention Center. With clear goals and adequate research, an exhibit or display maintains sensitivities to past persons and factual events. The display integrates vital concepts, events, persons, and details that this paper has drawn upon to discuss the impacts of Fort Missoula on the lives of the Issei and Italian internees in a sensitive and effective manner.

Importantly, museum displays vary greatly in comparison to exhibits, as the former does not feature artifacts. Importantly, museum exhibits and displays differentiate and share similarities. Exhibits typically offer multiple gateways for an audience to view, engage, and learn about various topics. Effective techniques include the usage of artifacts, positioning of objects, conceptual flow, text, and environmental factors including lighting, coloration, and sound. A travelling display excludes the usage of objects displayed in a permanent setting. The display is constructed to interact with diverse audiences in a variety of environments with the inclusion of scanned historical photographs portraying aspects of internment-era Fort Missoula for visual stimulation.

The challenge of a display is to effectively and address controversial topics whilst maintaining sensitive and accurate interpretations of historical narratives. Such narratives also seek to further support museum and community relations. “Exhibitions have to be formulated with expertise, and that has to be shared. Power, the ability to self-define in a way upon, which we can act, must entail shared decision-making, leadership, empowerment, scholarship, and curatorial expertise between the diverse communities and mainstream institutions” (Mesa-Bains 1992; Anderson 2004:108). In this light, scholarship, curatorial expertise, and community engagement can produce a system of creativity, idea flow, professional direction, and valuable feedback to produce an effective travelling display.
For the Historical Museum at Fort Missoula, the narrative is supported by the history of the grounds and is perceived, learned, and built upon by Missoula’s community. Maintaining connections and building relationships with those seeking to learn about the history and identity of Missoula and the Alien Detention Center remain vital to the institution’s sustainability and ability to create new opportunities in educational and professional arenas. The museum continues to engage with the local community, gauging interests, and refining its goals and continues to progress toward new developmental stages of T-1. The experiences of those I have attempted to describe in this paper provide dynamic perspectives that are at the core of pertinent and effective research. Through the story of Fort Missoula’s Alien Detention Center, the display continuously develops and supports the interests of both the community and museum. As mentioned previously, research is the groundwork of museum practice to produce exhibits and displays. An important component of forming displays for museum purposes is effective research that emphasizes sensitive and accurate terminology to comprehend the experiences of past persons and historical events. As museums seek to serve the interests of a surrounding community, thoughtful analysis of semantics may produce sensitivities to concepts, topics, and terminology that remains appropriate and vital in museum strategies.

6.2 Semantics

Across numerous academic settings, terminology has significant impacts on how concepts, ideas, and facts are interpreted. Based on a writer’s selected terminology, reading audiences may interpret topics differently, which results in a dynamic range of
reactions and perspectives. Effective and thoughtful research assists one in selecting and utilizing terminology that is sensitive and accurate to historical events and, importantly, persons of the past. Moreover, this paper utilizes terminology that attempts to convey historical narratives whilst avoiding misinterpretation of past events and individual experiences. In this regard, I examine a range of terms applied throughout this paper that is grounded in interpretations of historical events and personal experiences. Terms such as “concentration,” “Concentration,” “internment,” and “incarceration” are among those I have selected to emphasize the important of terminology to interpret certain events and individual experiences. Such factors are grounded in personal experiences at the Historical Museum at Fort Missoula, academic research, and a guest presentation provided by Yukio Shimomura at the University of Montana in 2016.

The presentation, titled, “My Two and a Half Years Behind Barbed Wire in America,” was led by Yukio Shimomura, a previous Japanese American internee during World War II. During his presentation, he touches upon the usage and significance of terminology as one attempts to comprehend the history of internment and experiences of those detained during the war. Shimomura states the dynamics of the terms “concentration” and “Concentration”. He explains the difference of “concentration” and “Concentration” as it pertains to the Holocaust and the internment of Japanese Americans in the U.S. Capitalization, the letter “c,” represents a separation between the two words, identical in structure, yet different in meaning. According to Shimomura (2016), the word defines both his personal experiences of internment compared to those targeted in the Holocaust. In his interpretation, he emphasizes he difference between the events as vastly distinct but similar in the regard that “we had our constitutional rights taken from us”
(2016). According to Shimomura, a letter potentially symbolizes the complexity of language that is reduced to written form and remains important when attempting to understand historical events of conflict and the experiences of individuals.

“Incarceration” is a term commonly applied throughout this paper. The term is applied due to my personal experience attending Shimomura’s presentation and observations of his own usage of the term. “Incarceration” is defined as a state of being imprisoned. A period of internment in the U.S. targeted, removed, and relocated nearly 120,000 Japanese Americans in response to national crisis. As Shimomura’s presentation title states, he and many others were confined behind barbed fencing during the war. Imagery of imprisonment surfaces as the men detained in internment facilities were stripped of constitutional rights, forced to abandon homes, and were, in some cases, separated from family. The semantics of “incarceration” refers to contemporary references as well pertaining to the U.S. prison system, which has become a topic of controversy in recent years.

During my experience at the Historical Museum at Fort Missoula, engaging in social events and researching as a fellow, intern, and volunteer, I have learned that the historical narrative of Fort Missoula is widely unknown throughout its surrounding community. As I attend and assist in organizing outreach events, providing “pop-up” and “table-top” materials to display historical topics, I am often approached with the question, “what is ‘internment’ compared to ‘incarceration’?” Explanations are often kept to simple, short definitions. As such, “internment” is defined as the state of being confined as a prisoner, which does not differentiate heavily from “incarceration.” In this light, “incarceration” is often viewed as an interchangeable term with “internment.” The former
term, as I have learned throughout my experiences in museum events, reflects meanings of the contemporary prison system that has utilized the term “incarceration” to illuminate the failures of U.S. prison systems, mainly a controversy surrounding prisons that entrap individuals in webs of criminality versus systems to rehabilitate. One can observe the complexity of terms when observing the terms applied throughout this paper. Of course, I have only touched upon the significance of semantics but hopefully have drawn upon the nature of interpretation when attempting to comprehend the experiences of individuals and historical narratives.
Conclusion

In this paper, I draw upon historical immigration policies and internment-era Fort Missoula to comprehend the experiences of Italian and Japanese internees detained at Fort Missoula during World War II. Prior to 1941, anti-Italian and anti-Japanese sentiments developed across the United States through varying economic processes amidst racist and ethnocentric environments. Such sentiments were ultimately reflected in military strategies, prior to and following the attacks at Pearl Harbor, that resulted in the internment of potentially dangerous enemy aliens at Fort Missoula. Furthermore, I attempt to comprehend the experiences of men detained at Fort Missoula through applications of museum archives, public research files, and personal experiences to emphasize the significance of the Fort and importance of the Historical Museum at Fort Missoula in its surrounding community. Ultimately, the interpretations of events and individual experiences I have provided will produce a travelling display that serves to educate, inform, and engage diverse audiences pertaining to the historical narratives of Fort Missoula’s Alien Detention Center. Importantly, it is vital for effective research to maintain sensitive and thoughtful considerations as researchers attempt to comprehend the experiences of others, especially regarding topics of conflict as internment-era Fort Missoula suggests. Thus, it is also vital for museum institutions to maintain sensitive, yet effective, approaches to comprehend and portray historical narratives.
Appendix A

An Interview with Umberto “Bert” Benedetti

Below is a transcribed interview produced by Kathy Witkowsky (1995:a) at the University of Montana pertaining to Benedetti’s experiences before and during internment at Fort Missoula. The transcribed material reflects content selected for the purposes of this paper.

Umberto Benedetti interview (n.d.)
Kathy Witkowsky Collection (1995:a)

Kathy: Tell me your name and where you were born.
Benedetti: My name is Umberto Benedetti. I was born in Vasto region of Abruzzo. I am not familiar with that region because my family is from Genoa where I was employed by Lloyd Triestino…After that, I took a trip to go to Africa, Shanghai, Hong Kong and the last trip we change route to go to Valparaiso. From there, 1940, while we were coming back…we stopped in the Panama Canal and the war broke out. So we were over there for 9 months. And then the declaration of the war between the states, you know the Roosevelt Administration, the immigration and so forth, they took us to Ellis Island.

K: You worked on the ship, right?
B: Well, I worked over there. That's my boat…Making paintings and theatre.

K: So what kinds of things did you do?
B: Cabinetmaker, but not a true cabinetmaker. I fix the cabin, the bed, this and that. Because this boat carried the soccer team, you know, and the music quartet. There was 1,200 people…And when we move for instance, while the soccer team are playing and they have some opera in the theater…We went over there to fix all the scenery of the opera.

K: Tell me about the day that the ship was seized in the Panama Canal.
B: We were stuck over there. And then, when we were on the dock, here comes the train with all the American Soldiers with the bayonets to assault the boat…They capture us, transfer us to American boat and we came to Ellis Island.
K: What was your job at the camp?
B: I did the carpenter job. Make the altar, make the painting, make scenery and help all of the theatre. That was my job. Work, carpenter, cabinetwork, and theater work.

K: Do you think that you were treated well at Fort Missoula?
B: Oh yeah. Definitely. All of us were well treated well…The first two or three months, the guard towers, rifles disappeared. Was nothing compared to other camps. This was the model of the best camp at Fort Missoula. Guaranteed. We didn’t have no questions with the guard. Become better friends, actually.

K: Why do you think its important that people know what happened at Fort Missoula?
B: Well, because we did so many things. And that’s to preserve historically the things we did on the campus. And we should be treated differently than others because we worked over there. And it was not like the California (camps). It was a small community. See? The historical point of view…in black and white you can see what we did. And the immigration (DOJ - Immigration and Naturalization Service) treated us good.

[The University of Montana Library Special Collections Kathy Witkowsky Collection 1995]
Appendix B

An Interview with Alfredo Cipolato

Below is a transcribed interview produced by Kathy Witkowsky (1995:b) at the University of Montana pertaining to Cipolato’s experiences before and during internment at Fort Missoula. The transcribed material reflects content selected for the purposes of this paper:

Alfredo Cipolato interview (n.d.)
Kathy Witkowsky Collection (1995:b)

Kathy: You start.

K: Tell me how you came to Fort Missoula.
C: I don’t know how I came here. I don’t come over myself. They brought me over here in June 1941.

K: And you’d been in the states because why?
C: Well, I come over in the United States for the opening of the New York World Fair in 1940. I was working at the Italian Pavilion.

K: What were you doing there?
C: I was a waiter.

K: Why did you come to the New York’s World Fair?
C: Well, that’s a beautiful thing to do. So, I had a chance to come over, it was not easy because you need to be a very special type of people, you know. I come to New York between April 1940 to October 1940 and I moved to Miami.

K: Why?
C: Because it was nice and warm over there. In Miami, I worked for a hotel for a while until I went to jail because I was Italian and plus alien. I was in Miami County Jail for about three weeks and it was not a nice place. It was bad. Especially when you don’t do nothing bad. They do because I was an Italian. That’s the only reason. After Miami, I went to
Ellis Island for, I don’t know, another three week over there. And Ellis Island, finally, they brought here in Fort Missoula.

K: Did they charge you with a crime?  
C: No, what kind of crime? I had no crime.

K: Tell me about what happened. Tell me about the trip from Ellis Island to Fort Missoula.  
C: Well, it was a long trip because it was a train. I don’t remember how long. How many days we made it to Ellis Island. I know we arrive in Missoula, I think it was the morning.

K: Tell me about what else was around here (Fort Missoula).  
C: We was just passing time. I play soccer, bocce, reading quite a bit, we used to play tennis. Oh yeah. We used to sing. We used to have a teacher. He was a choir director.

K: Was this where you learned to sing?  
C: No, I think I learned in Venice…in the theater with the orchestra.

K: What kind of songs did you sing?  
C: Mostly Italian folk songs.

K: As I understand it. Everyone had a job at Fort Missoula, what was your job?  
C: Mess hall, cook, cleaning, washing, take care of the yard…I don’t remember what I was doing myself. I don’t think I was doing very much work at Fort Missoula anyway.

K: And how long were you at Fort Missoula?  
C: I was over here in June 1941 to June or July of 1942.

K: What was your attitude about the United States when you were here?  
C: Now you’re going to politics. I don’t like to talk about politics…the only thing I was thinking was wrong, what they was doing…to put me in jail and sending me over here, you know. But at the same time, I don’t know. I think we were lucky that we land in Fort Missoula.

K: Did you work outside of the Fort?  
C: Yeah, after I left Missoula, I worked down to the sugar beet fields for about, oh about a month. After that to St. Patrick’s Hospital. I was orderly for about, oh, six seven months. And after that, I decided to go work on the railroad. And I was on the railroad until the end of the war. It was 1945.

K: And were the men mostly very religious?
C: Not very much. Because everybody was playing bocce or soccer. Not many used to go down to the church.

K: Were you here when the Japanese came?
C: Yes, I remember yeah. Because the Japanese come over here in the first part of December 1941. I don’t remember too much about Japanese because I started to be getting out at the time. See, but I do remember we tear down the fence of separation between the two groups and we start to mix quite a bit with them. And the Japanese, they used to have shows too. They used to give shows down at the theatre every other week. One week was the Italian and the next was Japanese, most about dancing. They used to have costumes. Ourselves, most of us singing and speaking, you know…comedy, drama.
Appendix C

An Interview with Giovanni “John” Pelle

Below is a transcribed interview produced by Kathy Witkowsky (1995:c) at the University of Montana pertaining to Pelle’s experiences before and during internment at Fort Missoula. The transcribed material reflects content selected for the purposes of this paper:

Giovanni “John” Pelle interview (n.d.)
Kathy Witkowsky Collection (1995:c)

Kathy: Talk to me.
Pelle: My name is Giovanni John Pelle.
I was born in Italy October 13, 1923. Southern Italy. In 1935, we were 12 in my family. Eight brothers and four sisters. Uh, schooling was not for me. My folks decided they were going to send me up north in Genoa. I had two brothers there.

K: How old were you?
P: 14 years old when I went up there.

K: To sail?
P: To just go to school. But schooling like I say, was not for me anyhow. So then I joined the merchant marine 1938-1939.

K: How old were you?
P: Not quite 16 years old.

K: Why did you join?
P: You always dream about the United States, you know.

K: Why did you always dream about the United States?
P: Well, you know everybody’s talking about it. I don’t know how a lot of people think. This is the greatest nation in the world. People don’t realize how good this country is…and a lot of people take this country for granted.

K: You must have been furious (when taken to Ellis Island Detention Station).
P: Yes. And 54 years later, I’m still waiting for my clothes because I never had a chance to go back there. And my family pictures…I didn’t get nothing back.

K: Every day they interrogated you?
P: Just about every day in Ellis Island.

K: Did they interrogate you in Italian? How many did that?
P: Some in Italian and some in English. Maybe 20-25 guys…like you and I talking here.
(On Pelle’s first impressions of Missoula after his arrival in May 1941).
They (Missoula’s residents) look at us like were a bunch of criminals! And after a while, they changed their mind, we were nice people then.

K: John, about how you felt like it was never explained to you why they took you. I mean, you went through these hearings but nobody ever explained to you, I mean, there’s a question because of the chronology…because the United States wasn’t at war yet.
P: That’s what got me more than anything else, you know? United States wasn’t at war. Ten months before this country went to war, they lock us up. 10 months before and then they say, well, this is war.

K: I just want you to clarify this…Nobody ever really sat you down and explained to you…
P: Not to me anyhow.

K: Well John, tell me about a typical day at the camp for you.
P: Play soccer. Did you see the field we did? I still got callous in my hand. With a shorthanded shovel, we leveled that place up. And every other day we had a game.

K: Who did you play against and how were teams organized?
P: We played the Conte Biancamano crew. I don’t think we ever beat them once. They had the professional team, you know? We just, a bunch get together. But we had a good time. We enjoy it.

K: You had some bad memories of those shows (musical performances).
P: Don’t ask me again. I’m still sick and tired of listening to Bing Crosby-Bah, bah, bah boom…Three times a week.

K: The guards wanted to count you?
P: Yeah, he want to count you. But you know, those guys. They never give us a bad time. They were nice people you wan to met, those guys. Nice, very nice. All the way around.

K: So they actually let you out of the camp to go fishing?
P: No, we were...yeah. We were working on the farm. We was supposed to clean the brush...We had this wood trout, you know, come down form the mountain. And boy, if you put your head in there, some of them fish come down and hit you in head. Out you go!

K: So, you’d get up in the morning and you’d work for what...a couple hours?
P: Sometimes, yeah.

K: Well, it’s still an odd feeling to have a fence...
P: We just walk around the fence all day. Just pass the time.

K: We have plenty of photos of you playing soccer. You played all the time.
P: Just about every day. That’s all we can do. Some made wooden ships in bottles. We all played on the weekend. We had a big game.

K: What position did you play?
P: I played left wing.

K: How often did the band play? Did the Italian men dance with themselves?
P: Well, there was no girls. What are you going to do? You got to dance with somebody.

K: Did anybody ever escape?
P: What for? Never had it so good. We had everything ourselves. We had a doctor, priest, shoemakers, barbers. You name it we had it. No outside help in the camp.

K: Well, what was the atmosphere like at the camp? You know, you guys were pretty happy, but not everyone was happy to be there.
P: Well, like I said before, I was 17 years old. The youngest guys, they didn’t give a darn for nothing. The married people, they was worrying about their families. That was hard for those guys.

K: Now could you write back and forth?
P: Yeah, every letter was censored. We could see it. It was open. It says right on it: Censored

K: I want to know a little bit more about the camp...I’m trying to imagine what it would have been like. I mean, on the one hand, you were happy to be there. But on the other hand you were living behind a fence. Is that right?
P: Well, the most problem it was, you know, family. The family, we was attached to our family. Especially old people, they had kids. And some of
those guys, that’s all they thinking. Walking around the fence all day thinking. Us young guys, we play soccer. We thought about it but not as bad.

K: Were people bitter? Was there a lot of talk in the barracks?
P: No, no, I don’t think so. It wasn’t bad overall. But it was bad for some people with family…

K: And you guys were bored there at all?
P: Not really.

K: How long were the Japanese there?
P: We left before they did.

K: Did you get to talk with them at all?
P: Oh yes. We go on their side of the camp, they come on our side of the camp. We can walk around you know.

K: Did you ever find out about your boats?
P: Who cares? Those babies…they go a long time ago.

[The University of Montana Library Special Collections Kathy Witkowsky Collection 1995]
In the months following the signing of Executive Order 9066, a range of laws and authorizations aimed to discriminate against those of Japanese ancestry. The Issei and Nisei were forced to abide by regulations mandated by local, regional, and national agencies. A United States National Archives document states such regulations enforced upon those of Japanese ancestry:

Department of Justice – Immigration and Naturalization Service
Conduct to be Observed by Alien Enemies

Regulations governing the conduct of alien enemies have been issued, of which the following is a brief summary:

All alien enemies are required to preserve the peace toward the United States, and to refrain from violating the laws of the United States, or aiding any enemies of the United States.

No alien enemy shall have in his possession any of the following articles: FIREARMS, WEAPONS, AMMUNITION, BOMBS, EXPLOSIVES, SHORT-WAVE RADIO RECEIVING SETS, TRANSMITTING SETS, SIGNL DEVICES, CODES OR CIPHERS, CAMERAS, or any documents in which there may be any information concerning any military or naval equipment.

Alien enemies are excluded from designated areas surrounding any fort, camp, arsenal, airport, power plant, navy yard, or any factory used for the manufacture of anything for the Army or navy unless their presence in such areas is in pursuit of their regular employment.

No alien enemy shall enter or be found in or upon a highway, waterway, airway, railway, public utility building, or place not open to the public generally; nor shall he undertake any air flight in any aircraft.

No alien enemy shall be affiliated with any organization, designated by the Attorney General as opposed to the public interest of the United States,
not shall any alien enemy attend any meetings or possess or distribute any literature of such an organization.

Alien enemies must report changes of residence or employment within their own community to their district parole officer within 24 hours after effecting such changes. Changes of residence or employment or travel outside their own community may be made only after receiving permission from their district parole officer. All changes of residence or employment must be reported to the Alien Registration Division of this Service and to the local office of the F.B.I.

No alien enemy shall be found within any area designated as a military area except under such restrictions as the military authorizes may impose.

All alien enemies required to have Certificates of Identification shall carry such certificates with them at all times.

An alien enemy who fails to comply with the Regulations Governing the Conduct of Aliens of Enemy Nationality is subject to apprehension, detention, and internment for the duration of the war.

- U.S. Department of Justice National Archives Public Research Files (1944); The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula (2017)

After regulations were posted to store fronts and telephone poles among other public places, recommendations to abandon specified areas failed. In the following days, government agencies executed civilian orders to forcibly remove those of Japanese ancestry residing in militarized zones.

[U.S. Department of Justice National Archives Public Research Files 1942; The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula 2017]
Appendix E

The Matter of the Hearing of Mataichi Iseri

On January 29, 1942, Mataichi Iseri was questioned in the T-1 military courtroom. Below is a section of Iseri’s loyalty hearing at Fort Missoula:

Detained Alien,

The above matter came on for hearing on the 29th day, 1942, before the Alien Enemy Hearing Board of the Western District of Washington, in session at Fort Missoula, Montana.

Present:
Mr. Frank Holman, Chairman of the Board
Mr. John Speed Smith
Mr. Leslie A. Stone, Alien Enemy Hearing Board
Mr. Gerald Hile, Asst. U.S. Attorney
Mr. R.L. Flanders, Special Agent, F.B.I.
Mr. John F. Harrington, U.S. Immigration Services
Miss K. Wishiue, Interpreter, Japanese Language
Mrs. Lillian H. Bourland, Reporter
Nerwyn W. Williams, Subject’s Adviser

Statement made by Special Agent Flanders:

Informant stated that when Iseri came back from Japan in 1941, Iseri had tears in his eyes because he felt so bad about the conditions over there. The informant from Kent, Washington. 58 years old, entered the country first in 1900 – farmer by occupation; wife and nine children in this country. Believe all but oldest son born in United States. Oldest son is 37 years old. One of his sons about to be drafted into the American army. Took a trip to Japan in 1940-41, on the tour taken over by Cambi. Subject was president of the Japanese Association, an influential old time Japanese in the Kent area. Attended the 2600th celebration in Tokyo while he was back there. Delegated by the Association to represent it when he went back. On his return, a welcome party was given to him and he delivered a lecture on “Seeing Japan.
Board-Members-Questioning:
Asst. United States Attorney Questioning:

Q. Understand English?
A. A little bit.

Q. Do you understand what this hearing is about?
A. Yes.

Q. When did you first come to this country?
A. June 1900, I think it was.

Q. How old were you?
A. 16 years and 6 months.

Q. When did you next leave the United States?
A. October 18, 1940.

Q. How long were you there that time?
A. Four months.

Q. What did you go over there for?
A. Visit the old folks.

Q. What old folks?
A. My wife’s brother and my sister.

Q. Is that the only reason you went over?
A. Yes. We been wanting – I wanted my wife to visit her mother for until about 10 years ago but she didn’t want to go alone so that she waited for me to go but we didn’t have money enough to make a trip and we just barely made it at that time under help from my boys.

Q. Did you go alone?
A. No, my wife.

Q. Have you any property, stocks bonds shares in any companies or banks there?
A. No.

Q. How long have you been connected with the Japanese Association?
A. I been connected there ever since. I think 1912 – ever since I moved to Thomas, Washington.

Q. When you were in Japan did you participate in the celebration of the 2600th anniversary of the founding of the Japanese nation?
A. Well, I went on tourist trip.

Q. Did you go on the trip where they took people out to see the battleships?
A. Yes, I think I went to Mikasa. The one Togo was on.

Q. Did you go aboard the war ship?
A. On board the Mikasa, yes, but never on the war ships.

Q. Did you see any of the airfields?
A. No, I never saw any of the airfields.

Q. Airplane factories?
A. No.

Q. Lots of soldiers march with tanks and guns?
A. No.

Q. You didn’t see any of these?
A. No.

Q. Did you bow at the Emperor’s statue?
A. Yes.

Q. Of your boys, do you want your boys to go in the army?
A. Yes.

Q. You don’t want your boys to kill other Japanese do you?
A. What do you mean?

Q. You wouldn’t want them to shoot Japanese that come from Japan?
A. This is not likely. But when you find your own house on fire I don’t see why I couldn’t protect my own house before I do anybody else – you hit me, I want to protect myself. I will protect my house first and see that everything is settled before I start out about the other man’s house.

Q. You are perfectly willing that your boys go into the service of this country?
A. Yes sir, I am perfectly willing.

Q. Do you think the Issei are very strongly attached to Japan and its teachings?
A. No. Very few does. Very few thinks about the old country and they have an awful time to get along in this country with their families and heavy duties.
Q. This is not what I am talking about. The point is, don’t you think there are a lot of the first generation Japanese here who feel very strongly in favor of Japan?
A. No. No.

Q. Hasn’t there been some difference of opinion between the Issei and the Nisei how you should conduct to resolve and what ideas you should have?
A. The difference in feeling is the Nisei is always trying to play. They don’t want to work; they can’t make money; they are more for the automobile and too well Americanized and I talk to my boys lots of times, ‘Gee whiz, mother works her head off from morning to night and they don’t come home until 10, 11 o’clock and we want them to help’.

Q. In complete harmony with your ideas, do you think the younger – the second generation – and the old generation feels the same toward Japan or about America?
A. The first generation thinks the same of America – the same as the Nisei – and the Nisei doesn’t think about going back. The first generation feels the same way. They are not trying to go back to live.

Q. When you went back to Japan, did they talk about forming a central organization?
A. No.

Q. Who do you want to see the war?
A. I like to have everything settled now soon as possible.

Q. Who do you want to see win the war?
A. What do you think about it?

Q. I am not here. You are the one here in camp.
A. Just like I said – when my house on fire I will still put my house out before anybody else’s house.

Q. Wouldn’t you be better off if Japan ruled this country?
A. How can that be?

Q. If it happened, wouldn’t you be better off?
A. Well, I am going to fight for my liberty in the United States as long as I can. Because I was born in Japan but I was raised in this country.

Q. Wouldn’t your boys be better off to have the Japanese government rule this country? Conquer us?
A. No, I don’t think so. As long as we being so used to this country, I think no good coming from Japanese rule.
Statement by Williams – Merwyn W. Williams, attorney acting as Adviser for detainee.

Affidavits of Esther Dragness, J.W. Warren, F.C. Jarvis

Let the record show this alien knows and understands his privileges but does not desire any witnesses.

MR. HILE: Asst. U.S. Attorney:

Recommend: INTERNMENT

[U.S. Department of Justice National Archives Public Research Files 1942; The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula 2017]
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