ABOUT SOLDIERS AND THE CAMPS

OVERVIEW

Several thousand Americans of Japanese ancestry served in uniform during the WWII era despite having been uprooted from their homes and confined to so-called “relocation centers” run by the United States government’s War Relocation Authority (WRA). The object of this on-going project is to identify as many of these soldiers as possible and the camps through which they passed. The compilation does not attempt to identify the military units in which the individuals served and therefore should be viewed as complementary to the database projects of the AJA WWII Memorial Alliance and the Japanese American Veterans Association which record such information.

Placing boundaries on the period covered by such a database is inevitably arbitrary. The present compilation covers the period from 1940 through 1950, so it includes soldiers who served in the early years of the occupation of Japan as well as some who went on to serve in Korea and Vietnam. Many Japanese Americans who served only in these later wars also passed through a WRA camp and deserve their own compilation.

Approximately 31,000 names of Japanese Americans serving in the WWII era have been recovered to date, largely from government sources. About half of these are individuals from the mainland and, of these, about half can with varying degrees of confidence be identified as a person who was confined to one of the ten WRA camps. Because gaps and corruptions have slipped into these records over the years, a compilation such as this will inevitably be subject to errors of omission and commission. In making the compilation available to the public, it is my hope that people seeking a record of a friend, family member or fellow soldier will notify me of any such errors or any questions they might have: james_mcilwain@brown.edu.

A BRIEF GUIDE TO THE ENTRIES

**Army Serial Number.** Each person entering military service was assigned a unique serial number, which is the most reliable identifier of a particular individual. The ASNs included here were taken primarily from official sources, which are very incomplete. Consequently ASNs are currently unavailable for many individuals known from other evidence to have been in the service. Officers’ ASNs are preceded by O, WACs’ by A and warrant officers’ by W. ANC in this compilation indicates Army Nurse Corps. Men entering service in Hawaii usually had ASNs beginning with 101... or 301... (For detailed information on WWII Army ASNs see http://users.skynet.be/jeeper/page83.html.)

**Name.** Nisei children commonly had both a Japanese and an English first name. In a significant number of cases, one name was used when registering for evacuation and the other when inducted into the Army. Sometimes a source, such as a camp newspaper, provides both names in a list of inductees or high-school graduates. In other cases, the first or middle name represented by its initial in the Army record can be inferred from the camp record by the correspondence of leading letters, supported by identical state and year of birth, if this information is available. A name in bold face indicates that the soldier died during the war. Because of marriage or other legal name changes, individuals may currently be known by names

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Revised 5/8/16
that differ from those in government records. These alternate names are appended in brackets after the first names.

**State and Year of Birth.** This information is usually given in two electronic databases of the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), one that documents Army enlistments in WWII and another that lists individuals incarcerated in one of the WRA camps. When the information is not given in one of these sources, it is often present in the other. While the latter situation does not provide evidence for a match, the information can be useful for identification and is included here. In many cases the NARA electronic database of WWII enlistments uses the state code R2 for “Idaho, limited service or Hawaiian Islands.” The result is that the database often displays ID as the state of birth of someone who was actually born in Hawaii. In the present compilation, when the state of birth is given as R2 for someone with an ASN from Hawaii, the state of birth is recorded as HI. The NARA database sometimes records state of birth as UND (undefined code), meaning that the digitization process could not interpret the microfilm image of the original enlistment punch card. These cells are left blank. It is likely that most of the men with Hawaiian ASNs were born in Hawaii. The national census records also provide valuable information about state and date of birth.

**WRA Camp.** When it could be established with a reasonable degree of certainty that an individual had resided in a camp, that camp is listed in here. Other camps in which the individual resided, when known, are listed under **Other Camp Association** (below).

**Family/Individual Number.** Each evacuated family was assigned a unique number that was later used to identify the family in WRA records. The on-line database of the National Archives usually places a letter after this number, uniquely indentifying each member of the family. As the records were converted from cards to microfilm and then to digital form, various errors crept into these numbers. This on-line database is very incomplete and in many cases Family Numbers have been retrieved from the Final Accountability Rosters of Japanese-American Relocation Centers, 1944-1946 held at the National Archives in Washington, DC (hereafter FAR). The microfilms of these documents have been scanned and are available on-line to educational institutions from Gale|Cengage Learning, 27500 Drake Rd, Farmington Hills, MI 48331. Numbers in the Family/Individual Number column without a suffixed letter are from FAR. The FARs often give the month, day and year of birth and other information useful in matching the military records.

**Other Camp Association.** The camp or camps named in this column can signify at least one of the following:

- There is evidence that the individual moved to this camp from another.
- There is suggestive, but inconclusive, evidence that the individual resided in the camp.
- The individual was not in the camp but had relatives there. For lack of available evidence, many such camp associations are almost certainly missing from **Soldiers and the Camps**.

**SOURCES AND METHODS**

The first task in assembling this database was to identify individuals of Japanese ancestry who were in the service during the WWII era. As already noted, this is taken to include the years 1940-1950.
Almost all entries are for men who joined the Army prior to December 31, 1946, but a few may have entered as late as 1948 when a datable change in Army Serial Numbers occurred. Impossibly late enlistment dates (e.g. 1954 for a man born in 1915) probably represent faulty conversion of the punch-card/microfilm records to electronic form. These could be checked by comparing the dates of adjacent Army Serial Numbers, which were generally issued seriatum. Most of the names in Soldiers and the Camps come directly from government sources but some were found in camp newspapers and others were provided by related projects of the AJA WWII Memorial Alliance and the Japanese American Veterans Association. I thank the directors of these projects by name below for generously sharing their work with me.

A. Principal sources for soldier’s names and ASNs.

- National Archives and Records Administration, World War II Army Enlistment Records, created, 6/1/2002 - 9/30/2002, documenting the period ca. 1938 - 1946, Access to Archival Database Project. Although huge (9.2 million entries), this database does not include officers and is missing some two million enlistment records. This source will be referred to as AAD-ARMY. Most of the names in Soldiers and the Camps were found by screening a purchased copy of this electronic database for Japanese names.

- The so-called ‘WRA File’. This is a separate, shorter list of servicemen and servicewomen of Japanese ancestry compiled by the Adjutant General’s office of the War Department. The listed individuals served between July 1, 1940 and June 30, 1945. It provides name, Army serial number and most recent state and county of residence, but no other identifying data. I am most grateful to Grant Ichikawa of JAVA for giving me a printed copy of this document, which fills many of the gaps in AAD-ARMY.

- The Echoes of Silence Project, Jim J. Yamashita, Project Director. This project identifies the military units in which a soldier served and also includes the biographical profiles of men who died during the war: I am grateful to Jim Yamashita for making this database available to me and for other valuable assistance. An on-line version can be found at http://www.honoringtheniseiveteran.org/HonoringTheNiseiVeteran.org/The_Registry.html.

- Japanese American Veterans Association MISLS Registry and Supplement, 11-11-05 Final, compiled by Seiki Oshiro, Paul Tani and Grant Ichikawa of JAVA. These files are now incorporated into the Echoes of Silence database. I am grateful to Grant Ichikawa for making the MIS databases available to me.

- Oshiro, Seiki. US Army “small linguistic units” 1946-1953, Far East Command. My thanks to Seiki Oshiro of JAVA for sharing with me this compilation and a collection of over 5,400 laboriously transcribed Army special orders and for valuable assistance with many entries.

Comment: An ASN in Soldiers and the Camps should usually call up the individual’s record when searching the AAD-ARMY web site, if a record is there. The soldier’s name can also usually be used to retrieve the record. The prefix RA for Regular Army, does not appear in the AAD-ARMY database and has been removed from certain ASNs listed here. In rare cases the ASN will appear to belong to another individual, perhaps because it is incorrect or because of corruption in the AAD database. Discrepancies between official government sources can be documented. Identical ASNs for two different individuals have probably arisen from similar causes and are distinguished by appended letters ‘A’ and ‘B’. 

Revised 5/8/16
Extensive lists of Japanese Americans serving in WWII are available at a number of websites, but these appear for the most part to be derivative of the sources listed above. Some of these websites are listed at the end of this document, along with books which have also been very helpful.

B. Ancillary sources for soldier’s names:

1. Camp newspapers. Newspapers published in the WRA camps list men who volunteered for service or, after re-institution of the draft for Japanese Americans, who were called for pre-induction physical exams, induction and active duty. Articles contain reports of those killed, wounded or missing in action. Soldiers visiting the camps are listed and miscellaneous articles report marriages, celebrations, medals awarded and so forth. Most papers published summary lists or honor rolls of soldiers from the camp or who had relatives there. These lists are demonstrably incomplete in some cases and all are subject to vagaries of spelling and to problems arising from the practice of using Japanese first names in some contexts and English first names in others. For this reason, the following rules were used in deciding whether a name from such a list should be added to those obtained from the principal sources listed above. Densho has provided an invaluable service by making these papers available on the web.

- Individuals reported as called to active duty were automatically added, care being taken that they did not duplicate an entry already present. These constitute less that 1% of the entries.
- Individuals listed as volunteers or who were called for induction or pre-induction physical exam were added only if corollary evidence of service was found. Many volunteers never entered service, presumably because of age or failure to pass a physical examination. Many men called for induction left no trace in the records that would indicate actual entry into service. Some were called for induction two or more times, suggesting repeated failure to pass a physical exam. The failure rate of those called for pre-induction physicals is variously reported for individual cohorts as 30% and higher, so such a call alone is not proof of service. Corollary evidence of actual service would include listing with an army rank in an honor roll, presence among visiting servicemen with rank specified, or interviews available on the internet or in printed sources.
- Short lists of men in service associated with specific residential blocks are serialized in some camp papers, while others published extensive summary lists, including the Granada Pioneer of 12/24/44, the Gila News-Courier of 11/11/44, the Topaz Times of 1/1/44, the Manzanar Free Press of 5/12/45, and the Minidoka Irrigator of 9/16/44. Names with Rohwer associations were printed in the McGehee Times on 3/15/45 and this list has been reproduced on the web at http://www.rootsweb.com/~ardesha/center.htm. This list overlaps, but is not identical to, the serialized honor rolls in the Rohwer Outpost. Names occurring in honor rolls and special summary compilations were added if corollary evidence of service was found, as above, and duplication of names already listed in different form was deemed improbable.

3. Veterans Administration Gravesite Locator: http://gravelocator.cem.va.gov/j2ee/servlet/NGL_v. Approximately 380 additional names of WWII veterans were retrieved from this website, which gives dates of birth and death and, in many cases, the wars in which the individual served. Care was taken to avoid entries with obvious errors (e.g. WWII service for someone born in 1943) as well as entries recorded elsewhere under a different given name.
4. Camp monuments and other lists. Monuments memorializing men killed in action or listing all servicemen with family in the camp were constructed during and at varying dates after the war. Large exterior lists were present at Heart Mountain and Minidoka, but have not survived in their original forms. The Heart Mountain list has been recreated by the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation using sources at the National Archives, the Heart Mountain Sentinel, and personal knowledge of family and friends of former internees. It is available on the web at: http://www.heartmountain.org/honorroll.html. It is likely that the list on the original Minidoka monument is present in large part in the Minidoka Irrigator of 9/16/44 mentioned above. A reconstruction of this honor roll was dedicated at the Minidoka camp site in July, 2011, but the listing is incomplete because of difficulties in reading photographs of the original. The modern Topaz monument lists men in service with connections to that camp as well as men whose homes were in Millard County, Utah, location of the camp. Names of a large number of men serving in the 100th/442nd, MIS, and other units with Nisei components appear on the Go For Broke Monument in Los Angeles. I think Randall Fugimoto of the Go for Broke National Education Center for providing an electronic version of this list.

Names which appear on these monuments and lists, but in none of the principal sources, present many of the same problems as the honor rolls and special lists of the newspapers and have been treated similarly. A name is added to Soldiers and the Camps only if there is confirmation of service from another source, such as an interview or obituary, and if duplication of a name already listed in different form is improbable. This approach may have led to the inadvertent omission of some deserving names from the list. It is hoped that family and friends of those soldiers will help rectify this by notifying me at james_mcilwain@brown.edu.

5. Three deservedly famous books contain extensive lists of men who served with the 100th Infantry Division and the 442nd Regimental Combat Team: Orvill C. Shirey’s Americans. The Story of the 442nd Combat Team, Infantry Journal Press, 1947, reprinted Battery Press, 1998; John Tsukano’s Bridge of Love, Hawaii Hosts, 1985; and Thomas D. Murphy’s Ambassadors in Arms, Univ. of Hawaii, 1954, reprinted by Club 100, 1992. These lists lack the all-important serial numbers and have not been used as principal sources. They have been valuable in confirming names and distinguishing among identically named individuals on the basis of the units in which they served.

C. Principal sources for camp matches and associations.

- National Archives and Records Administration, Records About Japanese Americans Relocated During World War II, created, 1988 - 1989, documenting the period 1942 - 1946. Access to Archival Data Project. A purchased copy of this database is the main ‘official’ source used here to identify those incarcerated in the WRA camps. Here it is called AAD-CAMP. This database usually, but not always, gives the ‘individual number’ of the internee as the family number plus a letter. When querying the database using only the family number, it must be augmented to six characters. This can usually be accomplished by adding an asterisk at the end, for the letter, and zeros at the beginning.
- National Archives and Records Administration. M1865, Final Accountability Rosters of Evacuees at Relocation Centers, 1944-1946. These records, available for use at the Washington, DC, location, contain the same information as AAD-CAMP and also indicate when the individuals

Revised 5/8/16
entered and left camp, whence they came and where they went. The entries record only the family number. This source was used to check entries in *Soldiers and the Camps* where camp residence was suspected but not confirmed in AAD-CAMP. I am grateful to the Brown University Library for providing access to an electronic version of this database from Gale Digital Collection, Archives Unbound.

- Camp newspapers, oral histories, personal communications, miscellaneous web sites. Use of these will be discussed below.

D. Strategies for matching names of soldiers with names of internees.

1. By far the majority of matches were made between names in AAD-ARMY and AAD-CAMP. The principal identifying variables used were the individual’s name and the year and state of birth, which are included in both databases, although not in the WRA list. Years of education were also taken into account, but these are not strictly comparable between the two databases because of the passage of time between registration and enlistment. The AAD-CAMP database is incomplete and a camp assignment was made for some entries on the basis of information gathered at the National Archives in Washington, DC, as just mentioned, and by other means discussed below.

Matches between entries in the two NARA databases are made with varying degrees of confidence, which may be classed *highest* to *lowest* roughly as follows.

a. Exact match of last name, first name, middle initial, birth year, birth state; education level generally consistent with passage of time between registration and enlistment and with the practice of recording current enrollment, rather than years completed.

b. Match as in (a) but no middle initial in one or both entries.

c. Match as in (a) but Japanese name used in one entry, English name in the other, with middle initial in both. Initial letters for the two first names correspond. For example, Taneo T. Yamamoto matched to Tony T. Yamamoto, both born in 1922 in CA and both having four years of high school education.

d. Match as in (a), (b) or (c) but in which birth state, birth year, or education level was reported as ‘undefined code’ (UND) in one database.

e. Match as in (a), (b), or (c) but 1-yr (rarely 2-yr) discrepancy in Birth Year. Matches of this type have been proposed only rarely (see discussion of discrepancies below).

f. Match based only on last name, first name and middle initial, other relevant information being unavailable. Confidence in these matches varies with the uniqueness and frequency of the name, and they should be regarded as plausible hypotheses only. In the absence of middle initials or other identifying information, no matches have been proposed for many servicemen with high frequency first and last names.

2. Additional evidence used to establish camp residence in the absence of government records. These individuals have here an entry under WRA CAMP, but no family or individual number.
• Camp newspaper report that the individual served on the paper’s staff, or graduated from the camp high school.
• Oral histories, obituaries and other items retrievable from the internet.
• Personal communications.

3. A special thanks to Roger Eaton for his on-going notice of obituaries in the bi-weekly JAVA Round Robin, the electronic newsletter of the Japanese American Veterans Association. These often confirm birth dates and the names of family members, information critical to matching an enlistment record with an entry in AAD-CAMP. I am also grateful to Drusilla Tanaka for help with questions related to the 100th Infantry Battalion.

E. Entries under OTHER CAMP ASSOCIATION:

• The individual is known to have moved from one camp to another. It is assumed that the entry in AAD-CAMP represents the individual’s initial camp assignment. There is often clear evidence that the individual left that camp to reside in another. For example, a camp newspaper may show that the man entered the service from Topaz but he is listed in AAD-CAMP as having been at Tule Lake. Thus, Tule Lake appears under WRA CAMP and Topaz under OTHER CAMP ASSOCIATION.
• AAD ARMY and the WRA file report the last residence (state and county) of an individual prior to entry into the service. When this corresponds to the location of a camp (e.g. Jerome County, ID, for Minidoka or Park County, WY, for Heart Mountain) and there is no firm evidence that the individual actually resided in that camp, the camp is listed in OTHER CAMP ASSOCIATION. It is possible that some of these men may actually have resided in camp, but others may simply have used their family’s camp residence as a mailing address. The entry is omitted when there is evidence that the man was a local resident of the state. This applies especially to Topaz and Minidoka which were located in states with significant Japanese populations.
• A camp is listed here if a camp newspaper reports that the individual was called for pre-induction physical, induction or active duty from a camp, but there is no conclusive evidence that the person resided in camp.
• A camp is listed here if the individual was not in the camp but had relatives there, as indicated by mention in an honor roll or reported in the camp newspaper as visiting relatives. (A camp entered under WRA CAMP is not repeated here, since it is assumed that the individual almost always had family in that camp).
• The individual is associated with a camp in the Echoes of Silence database.

F. APPARENT DISCREPANCIES BETWEEN AAD-ARMY AND AAD-CAMP DATABASES.

Otherwise compelling matches were found in the two AAD databases for individuals reported as differing by 1 or 2 years in the year of birth. Such discrepancies could be real, in which case the match is false, or could have arisen from other causes. For example, it is not known how the information about birth year was solicited and differences of a year could have arisen if the person were asked for their year of birth or for their age, with the clerk making the calculation from the latter. Also, the Japanese custom of taking a baby’s age as 1 year at birth may have been a factor in some cases. And, of course, the year could have been read incorrectly when the microfilm records were scanned and digitized, as in several
cases that show ‘impossible’ years of birth, e.g. 1950s, along with other evidence of corruption in the record.

The passage of time between registration for evacuation and enlistment would affect recorded education level if the individual attended school in camp or after relocating. In most matches, the number of grades advanced was more or less consistent with the difference between year of forced removal from restricted areas (i.e. 1942) and the year of enlistment. A caveat here, however, is that the AAD-ARMY database occasionally records re-enlistment dates for some men, giving the appearance of a later date for entry into the service than was actually the case. This can usually be confirmed by comparing the dates of enlistment for ASNs neighboring in sequence the one in question.

G. MISCELLANEOUS INTERNET AND PRINTED RESOURCES

- http://www.javadc.org/ (especially for their PDF files of monthly reports of the 442nd RCT).
- http://www.goforbroke.org/ (especially for their oral history interviews)
- http://www.densho.org/ (especially for their oral history interviews and PDF images of camp newspapers).
- http://gravelocator.cem.va.gov/j2ee/servlet/NGL_v1
- www.mocavo.com/Social-Security-Death-Index/246389

- Item Chapter, 442nd Veterans Club of Hawaii. And Then There Were Eight, 2003.