

# AMACHE SPECIAL RESOURCE STUDY

**VIRTUAL MEETING NOTES: SATURDAY, MAY 22, 2021**

**MEETING ATTENDANCE: 7**

## **Breakout Group Topic Questions**

What is your vision for preserving Amache? How would you like to see the site managed? What types of activities and experiences do you want to see as part of Amache's future?

Do you have any ideas or concerns that the National Park Service should be aware of and/or address in the study process?

What objects, buildings, remaining features, values, and stories do you believe are most important and why?

What do you think differentiates Amache from the other nine Japanese American incarceration camps?

Do you have any other ideas or comments you would like to share with us?

## **Note to Readers**

These notes were transcribed as precisely as possible to correspond to the participants' own words. In a few places in these notes, the meaning of a statement may be obscured or lost; this is a result of manual transcription and/or human error.

The numbering system applied to the comments and questions is for ease of identifying the comment or question. It does not necessarily represent the comment or question in the order it was received.

## **BREAKOUT GROUP TOPIC QUESTIONS**

**What do you value most about Amache? This can include objects, buildings, remaining features, values, or stories that you believe are most important.**

1. What the site represents is what is important. The unconstitutional injustice of the incarceration of myself and 7,500 other Japanese Americans there. Generally speaking, it represents humanity's tendency to misunderstand races and cultures.
2. The history of the area, including where the people came from and how the site was chosen and how the government set up the camps far from populated areas. Human impact is of utmost importance in the areas people were incarcerated—nearby Amache is the Sand Creek massacre site and telling the history is important because unless we know our history, we cannot put things into perspective.
3. The integrity of the resources that remain at Amache is important, including the residential area, roads, and foundations. I was able to visit with my parents and they could walk to their barracks, mess hall, and walk over where they went to elementary school. I saw the memorial that my great grandfather designed with my father, and that was really special. Other incarceration sites have some reconstructed buildings, but being able to see tangible remnants along with the reconstructed water tower and feeling the scale of how big Amache

was helped me relate to my father's stories. These stories need to be preserved, and the relationship with the town of Granada should be recognized. My dad remembers walking to town to get a soda or ice cream without getting passes once restrictions were loosened. He learned how to fish down by the Arkansas River, where he made fishing poles from branches. These are all precious stories connected to place.

4. When Japanese American prisoners were released from Department of Justice camps, they worked at Amache in the Granada Fish Market. A family member would sneak into Amache and eat with his relatives then sneak out before change of guards.
5. The relationship between Amache and Granada and how the postal designation changed because the mail was getting mixed up—it changed from Granada Relocation Center to Amache. The fact that kids in Granada played against the kids in Holly in football. Mr. John Hopper's involvement beginning in the 1990s as stewards of the camp, its history and their efforts to build a wonderful museum with artifacts that have been collected and saved over the years. The story of the town coming to grips with their legacy is an important part of this. The Granada Fish Market, Newman's drug store [Newman Drug Co.], are good examples of how the town built a relationship with Amache incarcerated. Through archaeology, we can see the relationship between town and camp. Examples of artifacts found on site that illustrate this are a swizzle stick from the town bar and sake jugs from Newman's drug store. And the Amache High School yearbook is filled with ads from town businesses in Granada and Lamar.
6. Being able to walk to town helped create the connection, and townspeople hired students living in Amache to help around the house. A family had an au pair from Amache, and kids were hired from camp to look after Granada children. They brought them into their homes, which is striking to me. An oral history was done with Mr. Newman, the one who owned the drug store, for a documentary about Amache.

**What is your vision for preserving Amache? How would you like to see the site managed? What types of activities and experiences do you want to see as part of Amache's future?**

7. Education of what happened not only so that it never happens again, but that people across the country are aware of the history. It is much more than a Japanese American story on the West Coast, many people don't know that there was a camp in Colorado. Division should be a part of the education—some people were sent to Amache because they needed medical staff. I have often heard that it was just a California or West Coast story, but it is so much more than that.
8. The work of Mr. John Hopper and Amache Preservation Society has been tremendous in creating what we have today, it is one of the reasons we are here. The site should provide education of not only hardships and perseverance but also the history of the neighboring towns. There were local organizations that donated things to Amache such as Bibles and Christmas trees to the mess halls. The elementary school teachers sent their own kids to Amache with Japanese American students.
9. We should take advantage of the positioning of Amache. It is right off of the Old Santa Fe Trail, Highway 50, and near two other National Park Service sites: Old Bent's Fort and Sand Creek Massacre. Increase historical tourism and have Amache be part of a circle that includes these other sites, including educational opportunities and exhibits. Make sure people know what happened to keep it from happening again.

10. The museum is important to telling the story of Amache. I would hope for a teaching classroom on site, whether in the reconstructed barrack or rec hall, to act as an extension of the museum. There is nothing like being on site with the original foundations, feeling the heat of the summer and cold of the winter.
11. It would be great to offer tours of the site to show different places like the ponds, the rec halls, the latrines. My daughter stopped by Amache but was not able to get a tour of the camp because John Hopper was busy, but the museum was left opened for her to see family items. Tours and the museum are essential for the site.
12. It is important for the National Park Service to be there instead of depending on John and students. There is a lot on the ground to the trained eye, but you need the trained eye; it is a landscape that may look the same without a guide. With a guide you can have a powerful experience. Someone that can give those types of tours and bring people back to the museum and find family connections is key for visiting families. It is important they are accessible and available for visitors. For instance, Heart Mountain has onsite tours and appointments at the museum. Combining the two resources is critical, you must have tours. You need community liaisons for families with connections but also guides that can approach the wider community. Often, knowledge of the site is just word-of-mouth but it is a much more important story to be shared than just by word-of-mouth.
13. The original physical remnants that exist need protection for the future. While some buildings are reconstructed, there are still old walls of the co-op building, and the original granite stone of the Amache memorial. We need to protect these sites because it is a valuable part of history.
14. A big part of the story and preservation is the healing of intergenerational trauma. The community avoided healing for a long time and tried to deal with it by helping others in similar situations. We organized the first pilgrimage in 1975 to start the healing process. We took the first generation back to Amache, and I think it's important to have that tangible connection so that descendants can understand what incarcerated endured. While the educational component is important, the direct aspect of how it has affected generations is important for the healing process.

**Do you have any ideas or concerns that the National Park Service should be aware of and/or address in the study process?**

15. A metal "toxic" sign was found during the first pilgrimage. I haven't seen it on subsequent pilgrimages, but it could imply the necessity of environmental clean-up.
16. The current town of Granada dump is very near the site and the site is downwind. Sometimes light trash like Styrofoam will blow into the site. If the dump is closed because it is too windy, people leave trash at the site. The town dump is also very near the historic dump and moving the town dump may be important for protecting the site in the long run. The town has shown commitment to this site becoming a park, and the water rights will need to be addressed. There are some concerns about materials leaching out of the current dump. In terms of feasibility, the archeological preservation there is magnificent. We have been able to recover pollen from gardens to see the way that incarcerated used their expertise in growing things to amend the soil and how they radically transformed that landscape; although not visible on the surface, they are there. Resources at Amache tell the Amache story and fill in what may have been happening horticulturally at other locations as well. Because of its high and dry location, it has high preservation of archaeobotanical materials.

17. Amache is in a remote location, but the site needs protection. There is no clear picture of how something that remote gets protected with a museum and educational site. The town only has one restaurant and one gas station.
18. Amache is isolated compared to other places, but because of Highway 50, many people show up—as we've seen while archaeological work is happening. So, it is actually rather busy compared to other National Park Service units nearby. I noticed an uptick in visitors when an official sign indicating the site was put on the highway, so I think more people will come if it is a National Park Service unit. We can tell the story of Amache's impact on agriculture in the region and the heartland of America. As others mentioned, it is not just a West Coast story in California.

### **What do you think differentiates Amache from the other Japanese American incarceration camps and sites?**

19. The relationship with the Town of Granada. The evolution of the relationship between the Town and camp. This can be seen through sports. Kids in Granada [Amache] played the kids in Holly. Governor Roy Romer was on the Holly High School team at that time. Current kids in Granada have a strong association with these stories.
20. Governor Carr set the tone for the state of Colorado and made it more welcoming to the Japanese American community than other states.
21. The people and the stories of the families make Amache unique too. The Amache director sent his kids to the Amache school system and hired someone to help care for his family. Amache's uniqueness goes back to the people. Stories of the co-op and how successful the store was. People from town began shopping in the store. The United States Navy helped set up a silkscreen shop in Amache to produce posters and materials to support the war effort.

### **Do you have any other ideas or comments you would like to share with us?**

22. Amache is a piece of the incarceration story. Just like there is not just one Civil War site, not just one atomic bomb development site, etc. Like that, Amache is a part of the bigger story. Californians were moved from the West Coast to southeastern Colorado, but they did the best they could to make a life in Amache. They planted trees, and when my father visited 60 years later, he commented that the scrub and brush looked the same in many aspects.
23. I had a Caucasian teacher, probably a Quaker, John W. Cochran. He took our class to the Arkansas River and picked up arrowheads and things along the way. My family didn't stay long, we left in 1943 to go farming. My cousin was the first ping-pong champion of Amache. He went to the Army and was killed April 5, 1945. When the war started, we didn't want to be separated so we congregated in my uncle's farm north of San Francisco so that we would all go together. We were all in adjacent barracks in Amache.
24. My family was separated during the war. My great grandparents were arrested and sent to different places. My grandmother was at Amache; her siblings were at Poston and Manzanar. It was not until 1943 that the family was reunited in Amache. Family separation is a big part of the story. Amache was their reunification point. The family moved to Seattle and never really came back to Southern California like before the war.
25. As a kid, we adapted very easily despite lack of privacy and imprisonment. As long as our parents were there, it seemed normal to us. We didn't mind the inconveniences because we didn't know any better. But our parents suffered because they lost everything and didn't know what the future held. We didn't suffer as much as those who had fathers picked up by

the FBI and sent to other states. We were fortunate that our family stayed together. My mother was a citizen. The Issei women had to take charge and had a hard time because they didn't know the language. Depending on how old you were and what circumstances you were brought to the camp, everyone experienced different degrees of suffering and inconveniences.

26. Everybody has a different story. There are hundreds of thousands of stories. There are as many stories of this experience as the people who had them. The more stories we have, the better to capture the complexities, the surprising, interesting, heart-breaking and heart-lifting stories heard about camp. They are American stories we need to hear.