

AMACHE SPECIAL RESOURCE STUDY

VIRTUAL MEETING NOTES: THURSDAY, MAY 27, 2021

MEETING ATTENDANCE: 10

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.

Breakout Group 1.

1. I would like to see a whole block rebuilt so people can see how we lived, how close we lived, how the mess hall was there, how the trees were planted, and how the latrine was without privacy and there were coal bins every two rooms. Don't skip anything. Don't make it worse than it was, make it exactly like it was. That is important. And the streets were all dirt. If you could show what it was before and what the incarcerated did afterwards. The problem would be water and whether you can pull water there, because there wasn't much water there.
2. As I get older, I think the most valuable resources important to collect are oral stories; they are very important. We need to be able to share those stories more and to hear those stories. We lost a lot of elders because of coronavirus, so we lost those stories. We need to get those stories from our elders.
3. I agree with recreating the physical environment; it's one of the main purposes of going there and feeling it. I am concerned about the demonstration of it. What was the response, the resilience? Like what Dr. Bonnie Clark has showed through archeology— that they tried to make use of what was around them and change the environment a little by planting trees,

plants, and gardens. Life wasn't just going to the mess hall, but it was seeing where you are making it more like what you wanted it to look like because you didn't want to be there. A piece beyond the physical. Part of this could be captured with the oral histories, so I agree with that. What did people do, in a sense, to survive this situation, which was beyond what they could change? Not quite sure how you can do all that, but that is an important part.

4. When you show how many people were in barracks, you could have up to six to seven people in the largest room, four to five in the middle size, and two to three in the smallest room. One family had five boys and parents, so they had wall-to-wall cots in one room. People were jammed into rooms. By the time we moved into 9L, we had more room, but the early people suffered a lot.
5. It was a terrible idea to put people in confinement sites and imprison them. The feeling at that time was emotional, but they don't talk about the consequences and impact today, how it affects people's lives still today. We should try to fix that with Amache and demonstrate how it affects people's lives today.
6. Amache is special because I have spent a career working in the Midwest and East Coast, and so many people think it's a West Coast story. My family didn't have clothes for that first winter there; they didn't know where they were going when they ended up in Amache. The National Park Service is supposed to tell the story of America, good and bad. America needs to be educated on what happened. There are terrible stories but also good stories of allies, and churches, and people that supported the people at Amache. A complete story needs to be told.

Breakout Group 2.

7. To everyone born in Amache, it is a very important place in your life in regard to where you started. Not the most comfortable place. At Granada, there was so much community support. I felt that strongly. Hoping the National Park Service will play an important role with the community. That's what happened at Manzanar. Many groups were part of the planning of Manzanar National Historic Site. I was part of the Manzanar National Historic Site General Management Plan with several other landscape architects. One person who really helped me out was John Reynolds. He helped me in regard to navigating the bureaucracy of the federal government.
8. Echoing my support for John Reynolds, National Park Service regional director between 2000 and 2001. One of the recommendations for Minidoka, Reynolds was a part of getting that presidential proclamation. Thank you National Park Service! We are grateful for everything you do. The congressional authorized theme study is an important avenue for this work. Thank you Manzanar for your leadership.
9. The National Park Service has done a tremendous job.
10. It is one of the few camps that is intact. It has remarkable integrity. A lot of other camps have been broken up and sold off to private owners. There is a unique integrity to the site.
11. I was born there. I have somewhat of an attachment. We left and went as far east as we could go. My father was a landscape architect. He did a lot of work there in the camp to bring the environment up to something livable.
12. The community of Amache is unique. The way everyone interacts with each other through pilgrimages. The interaction between these groups of people spread across the United States trying to preserve the site, telling their stories, and sharing histories. I think that is something that is really special about Amache. This is fostered by the preservation at the site. Because you can go and walk to places and hear people talk about their memories in an intact landscape where you can visualize it. And then having the museum there that has objects that people have donated. So you can sit with groups of people and families looking through the newspapers from Amache. Engaging in the place, and the things, and the people all in one

location has, I think, made Amache a really special site. And really unique, because it has had all this time to become this grassroots place.

13. Amache is one of the few places that had original settlers from the Yamato Colony, as they were from the Livingston, California, area. They were inspired by a publisher—Abiko—to assimilate to the area by tilling the land and farming. After they were sent to Amache, this group helped to develop the farmland of the area with their techniques. Bonnie Clark has met another researcher who will investigate this. Their kinships are very close, and this was preserved in camp. If you know anybody from the Livingston area, they will all be related. Perhaps this is the cohesion within the smallest camp. John Hopper illuminates this in his studies.
14. My mother and father knew each other before the war. They got married in Kansas and then moved back to Jerome and then were together in Amache. When I came to Amache and heard other stories, it was really moving, just the range of stories. The sadness. The tragedies. We are really blessed to have had neighbors who looked after our family's things. It is very touching to hear everybody's stories.

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?

Breakout Group 1.

15. I want to be sure that the National Park Service always includes John Hopper in their decisions. He has preserved the site by himself for all these years, and we are indebted to him. Everything he has done he has done for us, and I don't want him to be left out. He should be a part of the decision-making process. I would like Amache to be accessible to all. The National Park Service has resources most people don't have but they must compete with other National Park Service units, so if we can get people to fight for Amache that would be great.
16. The creation of the gardens by incarcerated people was so important to the social feeling of the place and maintaining who they were despite their environment. So, allowing visitors to experience what people who lived there were trying to create for their own sanity, the overall feeling of what the struggle was and what the response was that helped them survive is important.
17. I would like Amache to look like what it was when we were there: the guard towers, the entryway with Military Police where we had to get permission to leave camp, what the barracks looked like. Could build a mess hall as a multipurpose use building. We had picnic tables and benches where we ate; the kitchen, this could be used as a meeting place. A latrine and laundry room to show the lack of privacy at Amache and how the women detested it. Men created shower curtains and put doors on each commode so the women would have privacy. The Japanese women are very modest, so the lack of privacy was a difficult thing. These are important things to show what Amache was when we went in, and what it was when we settled down, and how we changed it—everything the incarcerated people had to do to make it a more livable place.

Breakout Group 2.

18. I will take Manzanar National Historic Site as an example. I was fortunate to work on that site's general management plan. As a total body, we all agreed that we did not want to make Manzanar a "Disneyland." We did not want to "enhance" the experience that we thought people went through. We aimed for the reality of what happened in camp. We didn't want to

reconstruct too much of it, where the story goes astray in regard to people saying, “Wow, this doesn’t look too bad. What were they complaining about?” We set a tone in the general management plan that from an interpretative standpoint, we wanted specific things highlighted that had impact. The most important thing that we came up with in Manzanar was that we wanted a guard tower. That told the story that we were prisoners. It was important to make that part of the interpretation of the site itself. We wanted the guard tower at the entrance. It would have had the highest impact of interpretation. After discussing this with the community, including Native Americans, we all agreed that a guard tower needed to be on the site. We got the location we wanted; it is at the front. It makes a high impact. That is what I see visually is important for Amache. The greatest thing about Amache, as we all know, is that it is all intact. There’s great potential for the entrance at Amache. It must be done in a subtle way that it shows the reality of Amache more than anything. You can’t get away from that. We don’t want to rebuild the whole thing. It needs to be an interpretative site. With Manzanar, we selected to recreate. Not as a whole block, but parts of it that were important in the interpretation. That is how it is being built. I think that will happen to Amache. They have unearthed a lot on these sites, and it is a great interpretive story behind each and every one of them. There is a lot of animal life, too which I saw when I first visited.

19. I think I would borrow from the Minidoka General Management Plan. I think a reconstructed barracks block on this original location is a critical piece of any camp story. You can start to imagine a sense of scale. One barracks block...they are huge. The second thing is the proximity of Amache to the town of Granada provides an opportunity for the National Park Service in terms of its management to have the administrative visitor contact station in the town itself. That would be something I would recommend looking at. I also want to flag that the Amache folks are having a virtual pilgrimage. It’s scheduled for two weeks. It is June 11, 12, and 13, Friday to Sunday.
20. There’s a lot of great work that has been done by the school through John Hopper’s work with the students. I would like to see that created in a legacy format. Kids teaching each other and older generations. They have their own stories to tell on that interpretation and the building of the site. They just put together a wonderful kiosk of the Honor Roll. These are the soldiers who served in the 442/100th regiments. I would like to see those stories. Amache is one of the few camps that had many volunteers that went off to war and served. That story of courage, sacrifice, loss of innocence. A lot of them were 18-, 19-, and 20-year-olds. These stories need to be told. The students did a wonderful job with the flags. The kiosk looks great. They do have a barracks museum to do the interpretation from. Little replications are good on site. But I would like to see that institutionally, working with the kids as docents or future rangers or whatever. Keeping close ties with the community and school is important.
21. It was so touching to learn about the people of Granada when they saw the camp being created. They see all these people being fed by the government and here they are, struggling to survive. The Japanese were able to come to the town and they were welcomed and not have stuff thrown at them. Now the town is reaching out and preserving that history, especially the young people. It’s so touching.
22. There’s a really nice museum being set up in town. It helps to emphasize that really unique connection between Amache and Granada. They were physically separated by a mile, but the people were linked strongly. So I think having the museum there is really nice. The other thing I think, if I had my dream, would be to keep some of the unique, very personal elements the site has—where John Hopper and his students will take people out to the site and help them find places they want to find. You can come with family members’ names, and they will track down where they were and take you to different sites. It is magical; it is the most emotional thing.

23. The students who learn about this are so respectful. There are no excuses that this was a concentration camp. After all, these kids are of a mixed background. They get it. They want to share that story as it relates to their experience.
24. One governor who actually said it was wrong to imprison the Japanese was the governor of the state of Colorado. I'm glad that is going to be pointed out. There was somebody who stood up in a high position. His political career was ruined as a result, and now that will be known.
25. My memories of Amache are restricted to my beginnings. My family had few conversations or descriptive discussions about the camps. This conversation today is awakening me as to what could be preserved and interpreted there and finding out that the participants really ran the camp at that time.

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

Breakout Group 1.

26. There is a tendency for the work itself to show the conditions better than what we lived in. We need to be able to look at plans and comment on the plans. There are not many of us left, but some of us remember details of what it was like. Otherwise, people will see it and think it wasn't so bad. Amache was a peaceful place but not a place where anybody would want to live. The guard towers, fence, the ability to do many things was not there. Although we played sports: baseball and basketball, and we eventually played teams outside of Amache. We played football with Holly High; they were the league champions, and we told everybody about it and we played them in camp. We beat them by one touchdown, and we were proud of that. They had maybe several hundred people, and we had 7,000. But size-wise, being Japanese, we were small. Our biggest guy was a 160 pound fullback vs. their 200 pound fullback.
27. The problem with development now is that you have building codes that were not in place when we were there, so now reconstructions almost must be built nicer than when we were there. There should be notation about the difference between what was built then versus built now. They were building as fast as they could and moved people from Merced before they were even finished. The buildings had no windows or mess halls yet. It was not an easy life when they first came in. Not sure where they lived, but their rooms did not have windows. There should be notes telling what the conditions were actually like versus what is rebuilt.
28. I do not think we should overlook the fact that all these Japanese American confinement sites were put on native land. Amache was Cheyenne and Arapahoe land, so there is a connection that should not be left out of the story.

Breakout Group 2.

29. I had an earlier question about the suitability criteria. There seems to be additional language or elements of uniqueness that were added in the presentation that were new to me—that I didn't know before. Maybe it has always been there.
30. (National Park Service Response) In terms of suitability, we look at comparable sites. How is Amache different than Tule Lake or some of the other camps. What we've heard is there are a lot of differences. If there are other differences, what makes it unique? We want to make sure to capture that during this study process.
31. One of the unique things about Amache was the fact that it was near Denver. That was a place where after the camp closed, people could go back and resettle. Folks generally returned to the West Coast or they were scattered in the East or Midwest like my family was. I think

Amache is unique because folks went to Denver and built a community there, not too far from camp.

32. I think it is important to make sure that part of the history of the Yamato Colony from the Valley and its community is interpreted. I think it is important that the natural resources on this site were so well used, especially on the agricultural side. They were able to feed both the town itself and some of the other internment camps. It was such a great success regarding that. One of the things that they used was the availability of the nearby water. They developed a natural aqueduct that they used. That was basically the success of the agricultural facility that they had there.
33. Yes, that was my father; he had just spent time with Frank Lloyd Wright at university. His background was in nursery work, as was my mother's. That's an interesting opportunity for the future interpretation of the site—studying and interpreting what people did after the camp.
34. A consideration is the physical makeup of the camp itself and how it manifests through the incarcerated. It was unique; the government really threw the responsibility to them to make their life and manage the place.
35. There were stories of a lot of the guys going out and working in the fields and going up to Idaho or someplace like that. Because all the other white guys were at war. They weren't around. They needed bodies. It is an interesting approach to incarceration.
36. You bring up the power of people. Oftentimes, the National Park Service is focused on land and the resources and the buildings. But really, the value of the personal stories and the connections are what make it what it is. I have a quick question for you. As a landscape architect, do you know what kind of trees are there and how they got there?
37. I think they were maple trees. Some were indigenous.
38. If there is some iconic feature of the tree that was planted outside the area that is being studied and preserved, that is important to point out. If specific cultural landscapes were preserved, it's important to consider the resources that exist on the site to help define the park boundaries.

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

Breakout Group 1.

39. The director of the camp, Lindley, was considered the best project director. We had different buildings with 2 feet x 4 feet composition walls, tongue and groove, with tar on both sides and beige gravel on the outside, including in the administrative area. This was different than the other camps with tarpaper barracks. We also had concrete foundations, but the only problem was that nothing was built properly. If you build a home, you put down concrete and then flooring and then the regular floor or carpet or something; however, ours was built right on top of the concrete, but our floors were brick laid end to end on the sand. They used green lumber that warped as it dried, and when the wind blew, the sand would come in during the summer and the snow in the winter. We would put in rags to mitigate that. The bricks were on the floor of the sand so it was always cold, and we had to get area rugs to keep from getting too cold. We had one coal stove, but it was too small and it wasn't insulated. We would put in a lot of coal until it got white hot. You would warm your front and then turn around to warm your back. We had an entryway to two rooms, but the dust still came in. Windows were sliding windows that didn't seal. We had drywall in the ceilings, so it was better than the other camps; there was some soundproofing between rooms. They put in a small wall when they put in the stove, so there was a space for us to make a closet. Everybody made a closet with a shelf where we put our suitcases.

40. The rooms had canvas cots and cotton mattresses and two wool army surplus blankets when we first got there. We got there early October so it was already starting to get cold. We had to do what we could to keep warm but, being from California, we were not used to the weather. Our parents would say make do with what you have and don't complain, so that is what we did. It was an awakening for us, how life was before and what life was like at Amache.
41. Governor Carr of Colorado welcomed Japanese Americans and stood up for them. He actually invited my aunt to work for him and she did—it was an amazing relationship. We have communications between her and the governor, and she would write to her family about her experience.
42. I think you have to step back and look at context of the whole story. They were in the desert, but how did they get there? Not just how they were living, but how all of the 7,000 people ended up there, to put context to this place where they were living.

Breakout Group 2.

43. The National Park Service should think through the existing body of resources that have been put together by the University of Denver and by John Hopper and his students. There has been all this existing work. There is a packet of things that have been accomplished that will be handed over if Amache becomes a part of the national park system. There are already reconstructed buildings. There is already museum interpretation. There are already materials and work that has been done. Think about those as part of the study and the resource.
44. The resources that you start with are important. Many other camps didn't have all of that. But Amache has all these resources already that have been accumulated for the last, I don't know how many years. I was amazed. It goes back to the community and the people involved in it. They can probably tell the history of the site better than anybody else. They should be part of the planning process once we get to that point. We really must get the input from the community, especially the old-timers, especially John Hopper. The kids, they go throughout the United States telling this story, they don't just stay in Colorado. I think we will have a hard time figuring out what we are going to do at the end of the day. I think it is really important that we start there.
45. I think it is an amazing observation compared to some of the other camps that were established earlier on. For Amache, they've already received a lot of grants to do projects. To do research. To do reconstruction. It is a different situation than some of the other camps earlier on.
46. I remember something just going back to the relationship of the town to Amache. I've been doing a lot of reading. I think it was a fish market or something like that in the city of Granada. They either lived there or they were interned there. Once the camp closed, they stayed there. But during the time the camp was there, they had the fish market. I don't know how it worked; I don't know the full story. The relationship of the community to Amache. That is another thing I would like to hear the real story about. I'd like to reinforce the story of the governor. He is so well respected in Colorado. They dedicate many things for him because he basically sacrificed his entire political career with the stand he took. He was the only one throughout the United States that was able to make that statement.
47. Now more than ever, we need a uniting force for people to come together. We need strong political leaders who are willing to stand up for what is right. These are just powerful messages that Amache brings.

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

Breakout Group 1.

48. I appreciate everyone sharing their thoughts. Please do not overlook the fact that these sites were all put on native land. This was Cheyenne and Arapahoe land. The history of the native people and how it was connected cannot be left out. There are a lot more stories there and plenty of information. The area was a reservation at one time.
49. Government was smart and first brought all Merced Assembly Center folks who were superb farmers. Gardeners and produce workers were from Los Angeles, they were just fill-ins. The farms from Amache created surplus that was sent to other camps because they were so productive. They raised things that the people in the area were surprised at. A person [who transferred] from Tule Lake said, I am going to raise celery. And the local farmers marveled at that. They didn't keep it up after the camp closed; either they didn't know how or didn't want to. It was an important agricultural camp. The cemetery is still out there with lots of plants and a garden area still thriving.
50. Thank you for doing this. It is difficult to put words or history behind what happened to us so that it doesn't happen again—we should have a history that is written that everyone can understand.

Breakout Group 2.

51. We've been collecting for the past 30 years. The mentality is always to protect and not to share. We need to protect them. Now recently, and thanks to the grants, we have been able to digitize our collections. We have several Amache-unique items. One is an album—like a scrapbook—that describes what I think was a co-op. They wanted to clear it like a department store. It is a cute example of how everyone can work together in camp. They were so proud of this co-op department store they had created. I would be happy to share that. I don't know if you would do it like an inventory of what's different. We would be happy to share what we have. Things are digitized. We could be on loan to. We would be happy to share that with Amache in the future. We have examples and artifacts from the co-op of people sharing in camp.
52. I want to say that the Japanese American community, if you think of the entire United States, is a relatively small community within the Asian American community. Unfortunately, our community has suffered an incredible shattering, a traumatic diaspora scattered all over the country. My family settled in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. We are incredibly fortunate as a community to have leaders like Governor Carr and the broader community up to John Hopper, former director of the National Park Service, Jon Jarvis, John Reynolds, the former regional director and deputy director of the park service, Jeremy, Chuck, your team. Everybody on the Park Service team. We are incredibly grateful for the work you are doing. There is no better steward of this story than the National Park Service. I just want to thank you for all you are doing. There is more work to do. There are additional steps in the process in the event the legislation passes. Just thank you in advance for your leadership and commitment.
53. I'm looking forward for this to be my third project on the same subject matter. The first was Manzanar, the second was the National Japanese American Memorial. The third is going to be Amache. I am really looking forward to working with all of you—I am excited to see the end of this rainbow.