

On March 24, 1942, soldiers posted notices and instructions for the forced evacuation of Japanese Americans from Bainbridge Island under Exclusion Order-1.

Photo courtesy National Archives and Records Administration

Puget Sound, a degaussing station was established in Rich Passage near Point White to demagnetize ships and protect them from magnetic mines.

Arrests and Relocation: Preparation for Internment

Because of the military importance of Bainbridge Island, the Bainbridge Island Japanese Americans became the first Nikkei community to be forcibly removed from their homes after Executive Order 9066 and relocated to remote inland areas far from the Pacific Coast. Prior to E.O. 9066, the FBI conducted a series of raids on homes of the Japanese Americans of Bainbridge Island on February 4, 1942, looking for suspicious materials for sabotage such as guns, radios and dynamite. As a result, 15 Issei men were arrested for possessing these types of materials and sent to a military prison at Fort Missoula, Montana.

In part, because of this concern over the security of military areas on the West Coast, the War Department drafted a proposal that became Executive Order 9066 directing the Secretary of War

to “prescribe military areas . . . which any or all persons may be excluded.” In response to E.O. 9066, the War Department ordered the removal of all Japanese Americans from the western portions of Washington, Oregon, Arizona, and all of California and Alaska. President Franklin Roosevelt signed E.O. 9066 on February 19, 1942, and by March 24 the military had posted evacuation notices around Bainbridge Island. The notices stated that the forced evacuation would take place on March 30. The notice also stated evacuees could bring two suitcases with them and would have to sell, lease, rent, or store their other belongings and property. Thus, the Bainbridge Island Nikkei became the first to be removed under E.O. 9066.

With only six day’s notice, government offices were setup in Winslow to begin processing the island’s Nikkei for relocation. The 45 Nikkei families did not resist the authorities and hastily arranged with friends and neighbors for the disposition and safe guarding of their property. Kay Nakao recalled, “. . . all the Japanese records, books, artifacts, anything we have, just all

burnt. And then, out on the farm we had an outhouse, so we were dumping a lot of things in the outhouse.” Some of the families were able to store their personal belongings at the Japanese American Community Hall in Winslow, but had no assurance that anything would be there when they returned. A few days before the forced evacuation, the government relented and told the families they could ship some of their possessions to Manzanar. Unfortunately, many of their possessions and property had either been already destroyed or sold at a tremendous personal and financial loss, making the removal that much harder on the families.

Departing from Eagledale Ferry Dock
Early in the overcast morning of March 30, olive drab Army trucks with armed soldiers began rounding up the Nikkei from their homes on the island and taking them to the landing at Eagledale Ferry Dock to meet the 11:00 a.m. Black Ball Ferry *Kehloken*. At the same time, a crowd of islanders gathered in the parking area and knoll adjacent to the ferry dock to say tearful farewells to their Japanese American friends, neighbors, and classmates. Earl Hanson, a classmate of Jerry Nakata recalled, “I went to the Eagledale Ferry Dock to say ‘Goodbye’ to my friend Jerry and it

was heartbreaking.” After the *Kehloken* was secured to the dock, a procession of 227 Japanese American men, women and children passed through a cordon of soldiers with bayonets on their rifles to the waiting ferry and into history. At 11:20 a.m., the ferry pulled away from Eagledale Ferry Dock taking the Nikkei to Seattle where they would board a train that would take them on a three-day journey to Manzanar, located in the remote Owens Valley of eastern California. Later internees from Washington were sent to an assembly center at the fairgrounds of Puyallup, Washington.



Japanese American residents had six days to pack and store their personal property before the evacuation took place. Neighbors helped the Nikkei families pack.

Photo courtesy National Archives and Records Administration



Ritsuko and Yoshiko Terayama, here with Betty Ericksen, were two of the many island Nikkei who had friends bid them farewell at the ferry landing.

Photo courtesy National Archives and Records Administration



A squad of armed soldiers at the Winslow Ferry Dock await the arrival of the Black Ball Ferry *Kehloken*, seen behind the soldier standing in the center of the photograph. The *Kehloken* then went to Eagledale to pick up the island's Nikkei.

Photo courtesy National Archives and Records Administration



Shortly after 11 a.m., a solemn procession of fathers, mothers, toddlers, babes in arms, children, teenagers, and grandparents began their slow trek onto the *Kehloken* that would take them to Seattle.

Photo courtesy National Archives and Records Administration



As many Japanese American residents of Seattle watched, 227 Bainbridge Island Nikkei board the train that would take them to Manzanar Relocation Center in California's Owens Valley.

Photo courtesy National Archives and Records Administration



Ten hastily built relocation centers were constructed in the western United States to eventually accommodate 120,000 Japanese Americans. The Bainbridge Island Japanese Americans spent 10 months at Manzanar, pictured here, before being transferred to Minidoka in southern Idaho.

Photo courtesy National Archives and Records Administration

The Camps

The U.S. government constructed 10 relocation centers in the western United States that later fell under the jurisdiction of the War Relocation Authority. The camps were identified as: Rohwer and Jerome, Arkansas; Granada, Colorado; Heart Mountain, Wyoming; Topaz, Utah; Gila River and Poston, Arizona; Manzanar and Tule Lake, California; and Minidoka, Idaho. The plans for each center were similar with tar-papered, one-story, Army-style barracks, schools, mess halls, a hospital, power plant, and other outbuildings. In

addition to the 10 war relocation centers, the Department of Justice ran 27 camps and the U.S. Army held Nikkei in 14 Army facilities. Most of the relocation centers closed in fall of 1945 with Granada closing on January 26, 1946, and Tule Lake in March 1946.

Many of the Bainbridge Island internees were transferred to the new Minidoka Camp from the Manzanar on February 24, 1943, to be with other Nikkei from the Northwest. Eventually, Minidoka encompassed more than 33,000 acres and 600 buildings with



Island residents Florence and Arthur Koura (Twin Falls, Idaho, 1943) prior to Art's assignment overseas as a member of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. He received a Purple Heart after being severely wounded in October 1944 during a battle to rescue the "Lost Battalion" of the Texas 36th Infantry Division. Seven other Bainbridge Island Japanese Americans were wounded during the war. A total of 62 Bainbridge Island Japanese American citizens served in the U.S. military.

Photo courtesy Frank Kitamoto

a peak population of 9,400 internees. The internees attempted to make the facilities and the landscape more livable by building furniture, recreational fields, planting trees, and constructing elaborate gardens.

As the Japanese American internees struggled to retain some semblance of community cohesiveness, their lives continued. They welcomed babies, buried their loved ones, and performed hard work. They made difficult choices: Should a young male join the Army, wait to be drafted, or resist? Should and could graduating students go off to college? Fathers and mothers worried about family responsibilities and traditions being lost in a new and strange environment. Should they stay together as a community from Bainbridge Island to support one another? As in every community, there were differences in perception, attitudes, wages, work hours, and coping strategies for dealing with the indignity of being incarcerated because of one's ethnicity. In some cases, indefinite leave was given for the internees to attend college or join family members who lived outside of the military exclusion zone.

Guard-towers, barbed wire fences and machine guns around the perimeter of the camps reminded the internees that the government controlled their lives and that discipline would be maintained. Contrary to some misperceptions, the evacuees could not be considered to be coddled by the government for they had lost their freedom and the basic constitutional rights guaranteed to all citizens.

Constitutional issues of the relocation were raised as early as June 1943 when the Supreme Court was asked to review the right to enforce a curfew on a specific group of people on the grounds of military necessity. In December 1944, the Court ruled that the government had a right to exclude people of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast but that the War Relocation Authority exceeded its authority to confine loyal Japanese Americans. At the same time, the War Department lifted the exclusion order and the WRA announced that the camps would be closed in one year.

Local Support of the Internees

No discussion of the relocation of the Bainbridge Island Nikkei would be

complete without acknowledging the contribution of the two intrepid co-publishers of the *Bainbridge Review*, Walt and Milly Woodward, and the support of the local community. Connie Walker said it best in her evaluation of “Multiple Property Sites” on Bainbridge Island when she wrote:

Throughout the period of internment, they (the Woodwards) were outspoken in their support of their Nikkei neighbors, many of whom were U.S. citizens, who had been forcefully removed in March 1942. While the Woodwards maintained a strong anti-internment message on the island, they retained a relationship with Manzanar and Minidoka internees, who became the newspaper’s “field correspondents.” For three years, Bainbridge Island native Paul Ohtaki, who was the *Bainbridge Review*’s correspondent, diligently sent in reports to the Woodwards that included news of engagements, marriages, births, deaths, and other events in the internment camps. Ohtaki’s reports—and those of his successors Sadayoshi Omoto, Tony

Koura, and Sachiko (Koura) Nakata—contributed to the Woodwards’ attempt to retain the ties between Bainbridge Island’s Nikkei and Caucasian communities.

In a letter to Ohtaki, Woodward explained his reasoning for the continued reports from camp:

When this mess is all over, your people are going to want to come home. You’ll be welcomed with open arms by the vast majority of us, but those who don’t or won’t understand will not feel that way. They may actually try to stir up trouble. But they’ll have a hell of a hard time of it if in the meantime you’ve been creating the impression every week that the Japanese are just down there for a short while—and that by being in the *Review* every week—they still consider the island as their home.

Informal communication continued between island residents and those



Upon their return to the West Coast, many internees faced continued racial prejudice. However, the Japanese Americans from Bainbridge Island were welcomed by a large majority of the island’s residents.

Photo courtesy National Archives and Records Administration

incarcerated at the Minidoka War Relocation Center, sharing the latest news between them.

The Return to the Island

By late 1944 it was clear that the war in the Pacific was coming to a victorious conclusion for the United States, and the Bainbridge Nikkei would be returning. In early November 1944 a local resident formed the “Committee Against Japanese” aimed squarely at the island’s returning Nikkei. Again the Woodwards rose to the challenge and through the

Long-Awaited Apologies from the U.S. Government

President Ronald Reagan, a veteran of World War II, made the following remarks at the signing of the bill providing restitution for the wartime internment of Japanese American civilians on August 10, 1988:

Yes, the Nation was then at war, struggling for its survival, and it's not for us today to pass judgment upon those who may have made mistakes while engaged in that great struggle. Yet we must recognize that the internment of Japanese Americans was just that; a mistake. For throughout the war, Japanese Americans in the tens of thousands remained utterly loyal to the United States. Indeed, scores of Japanese Americans volunteered for our Armed Forces, many stepping forward in the internment camps themselves. The 442nd Regimental Combat Team, made up entirely of Japanese Americans, served with immense distinction to defend this nation, their nation. Yet back home, the soldiers' families were being denied the very freedom for which so many of the soldiers themselves were laying down their lives.

The legislation that I am about to sign provides for a restitution payment to each of the 60,000 surviving Japanese Americans of the 120,000 who were relocated or detained. Yet no payment can make up for those lost years. So, what is most important in this bill has less to do with property than with honor. For here we admit a wrong; here we reaffirm our commitment as a nation to equal justice under the law.

The President then reminisced about a presentation in December 1945 where General Joseph Stilwell awarded the Distinguished Service Cross to Mary Masuda on behalf of her brother Kasuo Masuda. At the presentation, a number of show business personalities were in attendance, including one young actor who said:

Blood that has soaked into the sands of a beach is all of one color. America stands unique in the world; the only country not founded on race but on a way, on an ideal. Not in spite of but because of our polyglot background, we have had all the strength in the world. This is

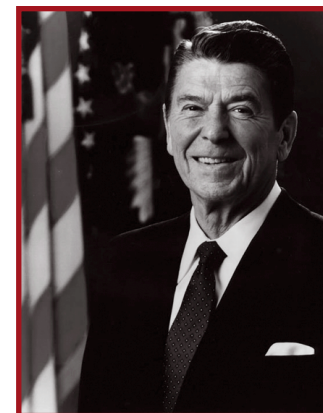


Photo courtesy National Archives and Records Administration, Ronald W. Reagan Library and Museum

the American way. The name of that young actor—I hope I pronounce this right—was Ronald Reagan. And, yes, the ideal of liberty and justice for all—that is still the American way.

President George W. Bush wrote from the White House on February 20, 2001, on the occasion of recognizing the two Medal of Honor awardees William Nakamura and James Okubo, residents of Washington state, “. . . By remembering Mr. Nakamura and Mr. Okubo and their service in World War II, you help teach young people and remind the United States government of the importance of never again questioning the loyalty or patriotism of any American based on their race, religion or national origin.”

editorial page spoke against the anti-Japanese sentiments. Local citizens wrote to the paper and expressed their outrage over the “incipient fascist prejudice” of the anti-Japanese group. These efforts of a large majority of the Bainbridge Island residents resulted in more than half of the Nikkei islanders returning to their homes and reclaiming their lives. Life on the island had changed during the war years, and some families did not want to return and endure humiliating experiences of racial prejudice again. Those who did not return to Bainbridge Island relocated to the East Coast and Midwest where there was less discrimination and more employment opportunities.

In mid-April 1945, the Saichi Takemoto family became the first to return to the Island to find personal property missing, broken windows in their home, and weed-filled strawberry fields. Other families returned to the island and attempted to pick up their broken lives with a spirit the non-Nikkei community admired.

The Aftermath

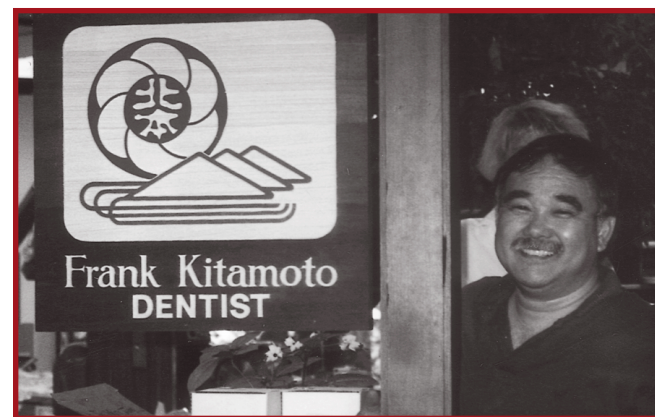
Nearly 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry were interned and incarcerated

in the relocation centers during World War II, and it was from these camps that loyal U.S. citizens joined or were drafted to serve in the U.S. Army. Sixty-two men and two women from Bainbridge Island served in the armed forces during World War II. The segregated 100th Battalion/442nd Regimental Combat Team was the most-decorated unit for its size and length of service in the history of the U.S. Army. More than 6,000 Japanese Americans served in the Army’s Military Intelligence Service prompting Major General Charles Willoughby, General MacArthur’s Chief of Intelligence, to write, “The Nisei shortened the Pacific War by two years and saved possibly a million American lives.”

By January 1947 President Harry Truman ended segregation in the U.S. military. In 1952 the McCarran-Walter Act allowed Asian immigrants, including Issei, to become naturalized U.S. citizens. California repealed the California Alien Land Law in 1956 that had prevented immigrant Japanese from

owning or leasing land. Washington’s alien land laws were repealed in 1958. President Gerald Ford officially terminated Executive Order 9066 on February 19, 1976. In 1980 Congress established the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians that reported in 1982:

“Executive Order 9066 was not justified by military necessity. The broad historical causes for the mass internment of Japanese American civilians were racial prejudice, war hysteria, and a failure of political leadership.”



Dr. Frank Kitamoto, the two-and-a-half-year-old boy seen in the photo behind the Vision Statement in the front of this study, opened his dental office on the island in 1966 after graduating from the University of Washington.

Photo courtesy Frank Kitamoto

On August 10, 1988, President Ronald Reagan signed the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, which provided an official Presidential apology and a redress payment of \$20,000 to each person of Japanese ancestry who had been incarcerated in the camps. The Act also created the Civil Liberties Public Education Fund to help teach the public and especially children about civil liberties and the experiences of the Nikkei during World War II.

Professors Staphen Fugita and Marilyn Fernandez, co-authors of *Altered Lives, Enduring Community*, noted the redress had a cathartic healing effect and reduced the stigma the Japanese Americans felt over their ancestry.

In October 1990 President George H. W. Bush sent redress payments along with signed letters of apology to the survivors. A National Japanese American Memorial to Patriotism was dedicated in Washington, DC, on November 9, 2000. The same day the United States Courthouse in Seattle, Washington, was

named for the Medal of Honor recipient PFC William Kenzo Nakamura, a Nisei from Seattle.

As the Nikkei from Bainbridge Island returned and tried to restore their lives, they picked up where they had left off in business and agriculture, raised their families and sent their children to college. But burning in their collective conscience, was the Japanese phrase *Nidoto Nai Yoni* that translates in English to “Let It Not Happen Again,” and they vowed to honor and recognize those islanders who spent part of their lives in the internment camps because of their heritage.

Memorialization

Bainbridge Island Japanese American Community

By 1952 the Bainbridge Island Nikkei recognized the importance of their place in history and the need to educate the general public. They formed the Bainbridge Island Japanese American

Community (BIJAC). The goals of the organization are (1) to contribute to knowledge of the Japanese American culture and history; (2) to facilitate the cultural well-being of the Japanese American community, and to foster understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity and promote increased cooperation among people.

These goals are achieved by collecting, preserving and making available for public display and use Japanese American artifacts, historical photographs, oral histories, documents, and educational materials; by conducting a continuing program of oral history interviews and documentary research; facilitating cultural events and activities that promote increased knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of Japanese American history and culture, cultural diversity; and foster greater understanding among peoples; and initiating long-term programs for cultural enrichment and education including a pictorial exhibit and catalog.

The BIJAC has, since 1975, developed educational materials, sponsored cultural activities and collected histories and documentation of the island's Nikkei. In 1983 BIJAC started their oral history project and two years later developed a traveling exhibit *Kodomo No Tame Ni*—"For the Sake of the Children" which toured the Washington State during its centennial celebration, as well as Boston, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Japan. A video production entitled "Visible Target" documented the evacuation and incarceration and was shown on the Public Broadcasting System in 1985. In 2002 BIJAC, together with other organizations, including the Bainbridge Island Historical Society, produced a film called "After the Silence" using local high school students. "After the Silence" ties the internment of the Nikkei directly into today's fight against terrorism and the treatment of Muslim Americans.

As a result of the efforts of BIJAC and other islanders, the newly constructed intermediate school was named after Sonoji Sakai, an Issei who came to America in 1915 and began farming on Bainbridge Island in 1918. Through hard work and struggles, he was able to

purchase land along Madison Avenue where the Bainbridge Island School District offices are now located. He and his family were incarcerated during World War II and returned to their island home. Aware of the value of an education, Mr. Sakai made land available to the school district at a nominal cost, and the grateful district named the new intermediate school after him in 1998.

In 2000 BIJAC, working with the North Kitsap Interfaith Council and the National Park Service, began their efforts to develop a memorial and interpretive center at the site of the former Eagledale Ferry Dock and to place the site on the National Register of Historic Places. As conceptual plans for a memorial were developed, it was decided that the name would be the Bainbridge Island World War II Nikkei Internment and Exclusion Memorial. Shortly thereafter, BIJAC selected *Nidoto Nai Yoni* as the name of the memorial, which means "Let It Not Happen Again" in English. In 2002 a stone was placed on Taylor Avenue dedicating the site to the interned Japanese Americans. The Bainbridge Island World War II Internment and Exclusion Memorial Committee



From left to right: Yae Yoshinara, Nobuko Omoto, Kay Nakao, and Rimi Sakai at the ground breaking ceremony for the Sonoji Sakai Intermediate School in 1998. Mr. Sakai, a first-generation Japanese American, sold land to the school at a nominal cost because of his respect for the value of an education.

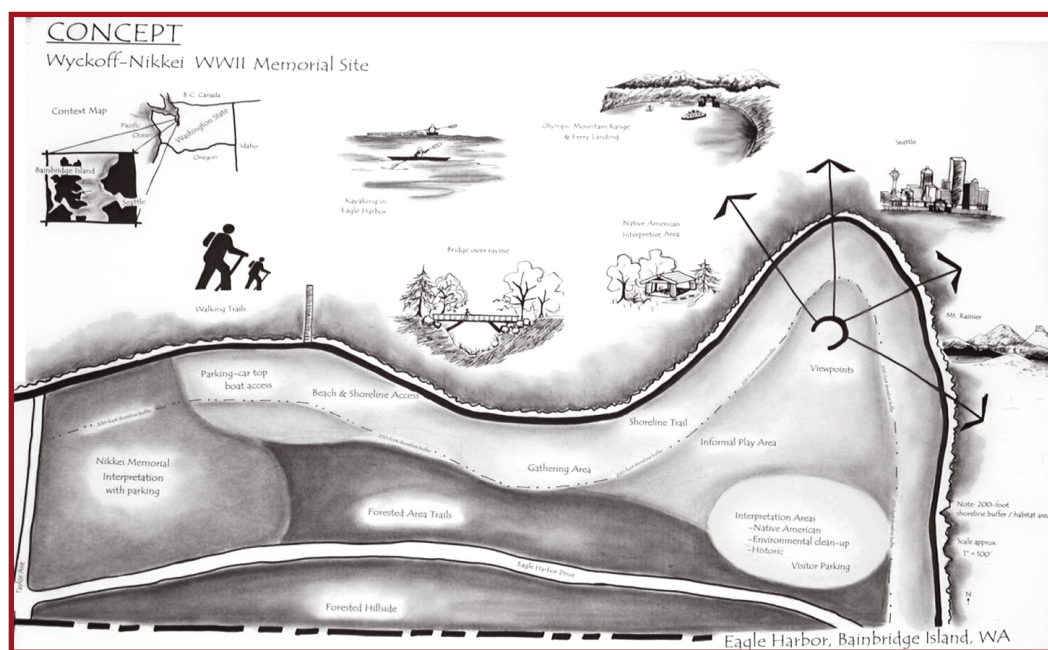
Photo courtesy Frank Kitamoto

(Memorial Committee) held a ground breaking ceremony for the memorial on March 30, 2004. At the present time, the Memorial Committee, in conjunction with the City of Bainbridge Island, is involved in raising \$3.5 million to develop the memorial.

The City of Bainbridge Island

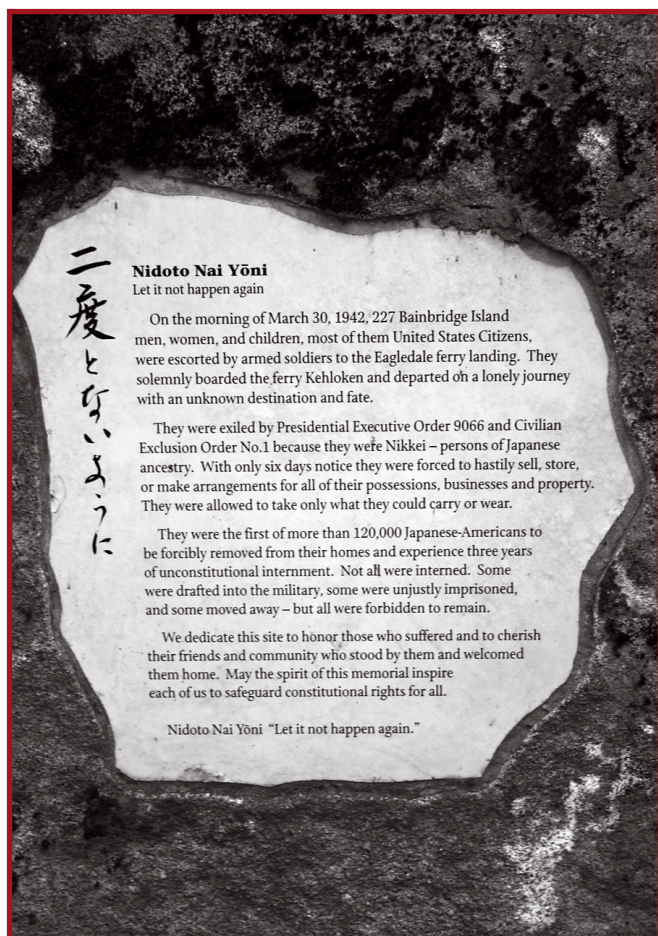
In the mid-1980s, the Association of Bainbridge Island Communities (ABC) became concerned over the effects of the waste byproducts coming from the Wyckoff site and petitioned for its cleanup. After a series of public hearings, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) began cleanup and halted operations of the creosote plant in 1987. Most of the plant facilities were removed in the mid-1990s.

Planning for the use of the area began after cleanup. At first the site was considered for waterfront residential and mixed-use commercial, but in 2001 the city decided that the best use for the property was as park lands. The Memorial Committee had been formed, and the proposal for a memorial was accepted by the city. Efforts have been underway by the city, Bainbridge Island



The Bainbridge Island Park & Recreation District's conceptual plan for the Joel Pritchard Park and the Japanese American memorial.

Illustration courtesy Bainbridge Island Park & Recreation District



On March 30, 2002, sixty years to the day, Governor Gary Locke, Congressman Jay Inslee, and the Bainbridge Island Japanese American Community unveiled this marker to honor the 227 Japanese American residents who were forcibly removed from their homes on Bainbridge Island. Sheltered by a weeping cedar tree, the marker is part of an effort to create a memorial/interpretive site at the site of their embarkation.

Photo courtesy Jones & Stokes

Park & Recreation District, and the Memorial Committee to purchase the property for a public park, including the memorial site. In 2002 the Bainbridge Island Park & Recreation District prepared a concept plan for the entire Wyckoff site, which would be called the Joel Pritchard Park¹ and include a minimum two-acre memorial on the western portion. The city and the park district developed a conceptual park plan in 2003 that became the guide for what the city wanted for the Wyckoff site.

In order to acquire the site, the city must purchase the land from the Pacific Sound Resources Environmental Trust for \$8 million. The majority of the acquisition funding, including purchase of a portion of the memorial, will come from local, state, and federal sources. Private donations will be needed to complement the public monies. The community efforts have already secured \$4.9 million with the hope of securing additional grants for \$1.5 million.

The first 22.5-acre site, which includes the proposed memorial site, was acquired for \$4.9 million in December 2004 as part of the Joel Pritchard Park.

The Friends of Pritchard Park are raising \$3.1 million for the remaining 27.5 acres with a quarter mile of waterfront. The Bainbridge Island Land Trust and the Trust for Public Land will coordinate the efforts to raise money from private donors.

When completed, the Joel Pritchard Park and the memorial will be available for kayakers, swimmers, and beachcombers. The upper portions of the park will include nature trails and picnic facilities. When EPA completes the remediation, the Bill Point area will have a large open area providing spectacular views of Puget Sound and Cascade Mountains.

National Park Service Studies

In 1992 Congress established Manzanar National Historic Site, one of 10 War Relocation Centers in which Japanese Americans and resident aliens were interned and incarcerated during World War II. In the same legislation, Congress directed the National Park Service to document and interpret the stories and sites associated with the experiences of Japanese Americans and Japanese resident aliens during World War II. Early in 2001 a second camp, Minidoka,

was added to the National Park System as Minidoka Internment National Monument. The National Park Service's ongoing commitment to telling the story of the Japanese American experiences includes a number of efforts. Two draft National Historic Landmark surveys, *Japanese Americans in World War II* and *World War II on the Homefront* are undergoing internal NPS review.

In addition to the creation of Manzanar National Historic Site and Minidoka Internment National Monument, the National Park Service published a series of studies covering the Japanese American experiences in World War II. *Confinement and Ethnicity: An Overview of World War II Japanese American Relocation Sites* and *Report to the President: Japanese American Internment Sites Preservation* were two of the

major publications on the subject, and provided a summary of the history and contemporary conditions of each of the camps and associated sites.

The NPS assists the National Park Service Advisory Committee in identifying cultural and historic sites of national significance for consideration for designation as National Historic Landmarks. In July 2001 Dr. Gail Dubrow and University of Washington graduate students Ray Rast and Connie Walker prepared a draft nomination for the Eagledale Ferry Dock/Taylor Avenue site. This nomination documented the history and physical character of the site, providing guidance for the Congressional action that led to this study and the team that conducted it.

In addition to preparing the National Historic Landmark nomination, Connie Walker completed a master's thesis documenting a number of historic sites associated with the Nikkei who settled on Bainbridge Island since 1883. Nine cultural properties, including Eagledale Ferry Dock, were identified as contributing to a context for understanding and appreciating the Japanese American culture and history on Bainbridge Island and the events that led to internment and incarceration.

The National Park Service also provides technical assistance to private and public groups supporting the preservation and interpretation at other camps, including Tule Lake, California, and Heart Mountain, Wyoming. Of the 10 camps, six have been placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Section notes

¹Joel Pritchard, a Bainbridge Island native, was a popular state representative, state senator, lieutenant governor and U.S. Representative from the 1st Congressional District.