



Aerial view of Amache, circa 1945. Credit: National Archives and Records Administration

Hello Friends,

We are pleased to share that the National Park Service (NPS) is conducting a special resource study of the Granada Relocation Center, more commonly known as Amache. Amache was one of the 10 incarceration sites operated by the War Relocation Authority under the Department of Interior during World War II. Authorized by Congress in 2019 under the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management and Recreation Act, the study will evaluate Amache's potential for inclusion in the national park system. Congress authorized this study because of Amache's importance to the history of Japanese American incarceration during World War II.

Following the outbreak of COVID-19 and cancellation of public meetings originally planned in early 2020, three virtual public meetings were held in July and August as part of the *Tadaima! A Community Virtual Pilgrimage* online event hosted by Japanese American Memorial Pilgrimages and the National Park Service. Three additional virtual public meetings will be held in 2021 as a continuation of public involvement efforts for this study. As outreach moves forward in virtual and remote formats, we welcome you to submit comments about Amache. The public comment period opened in February of 2020 and has been extended to June 30, 2021.

After the comment period closes, the National Park Service will evaluate Amache using congressionally established criteria for national significance, suitability, feasibility, and need for direct NPS management to determine whether the site meets the criteria for inclusion in the national park system. This analysis will be submitted to the secretary of the interior who will then transmit findings and any recommendations to Congress for consideration. Only Congress or the president have the authority to designate new National Park Service units.

Please consider sharing your thoughts and ideas by submitting comments on the study. Engagement is welcome and encouraged from Amache survivors and descendants, as well as any member of the public with an interest in Amache. Information on public involvement opportunities and how to submit comments is included in this newsletter packet.

**Your thoughts and ideas are important to us.  
We look forward to hearing from you.**

Sincerely,  
The NPS Study Team

## About the Study Area

On February 19, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, leading to the forced removal of more than 110,000 Japanese Americans from their homes and communities on the West Coast to a system of incarceration sites. The Granada Relocation Center, commonly known as Amache, was one of 10 incarceration sites built to imprison Japanese Americans during World War II. Although it had the smallest population of the 10 sites, more than 10,000 people passed through Amache between August 1942 and October 1945. At its peak, Amache housed more than 7,300 individuals, two-thirds of whom were United States (US) citizens.

The War Relocation Authority, through purchase or condemnation, used 10,000 acres of land for the Amache incarceration site. The central, “built-up” portion of Amache was 640 acres (one square mile) and was primarily made up of 29 blocks of military-style barracks used as residential blocks and administrative buildings. Surrounded by barbed wire fence with six watch towers along the perimeter, incarcerated lived under armed guard. Living quarters were cramped; families were assigned to one small room. Incarcerated had little privacy, as each block shared a communal mess hall, laundry, toilets, and a shower room. The military police and administrative staff lived in a separate part of the camp. The remaining 9,360 acres of Amache were used for agriculture to sustain the camp.

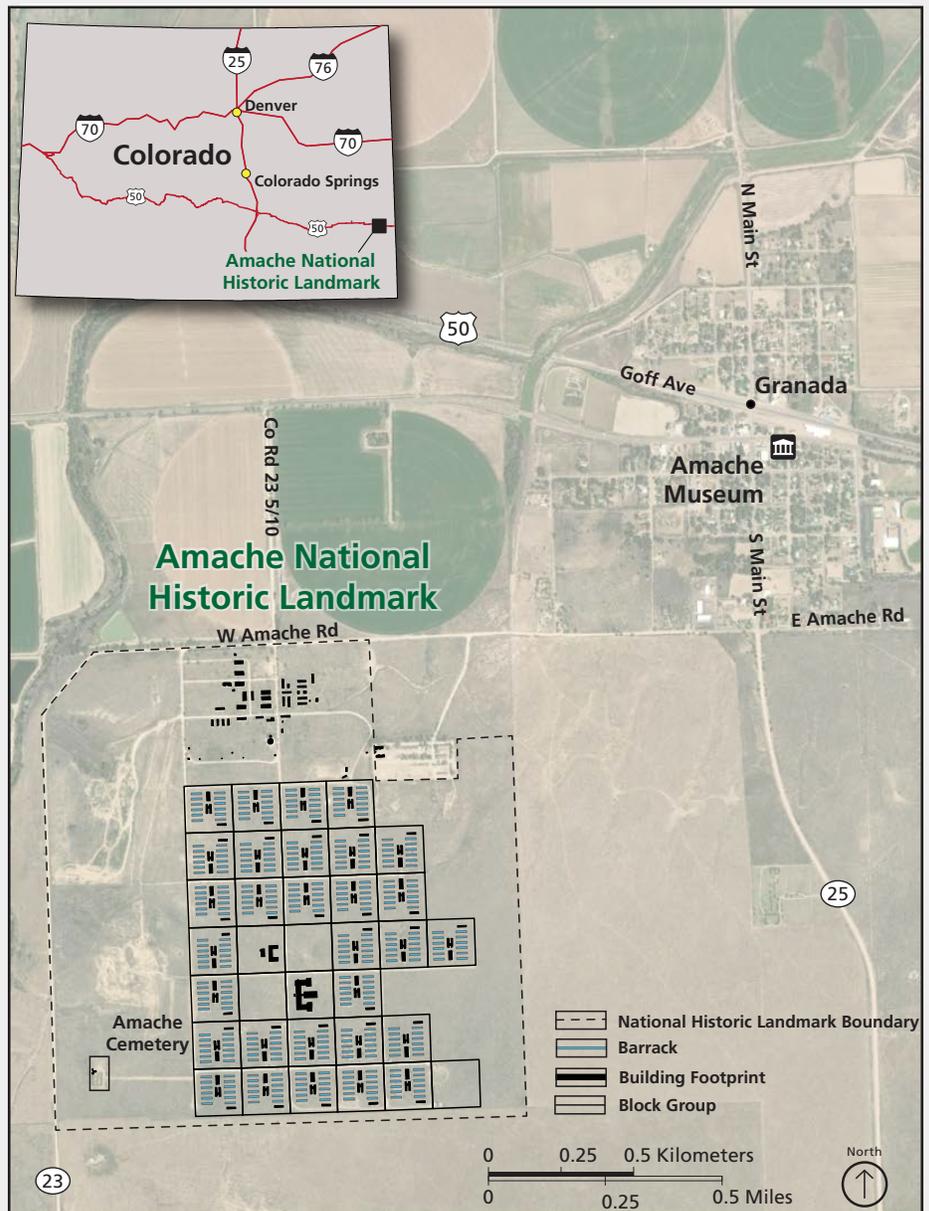
In December 1944, following the US Supreme Court decision on *Ex parte Mitsuye Endo* (323 U.S. 283), which ruled that the War Relocation Authority acted beyond its power and could not detain American citizens without charges, the camps began to close. Many incarcerated hesitated to return to California, having lost their homes and property and knowing that there was strong anti-Japanese sentiment. Japanese Americans gradually left Amache. Their lives disrupted, many struggled to rebuild as they faced an uncertain future.

Following the camp’s closure on October 15, 1945, the buildings were demolished or removed, and Amache’s agricultural lands reverted to private farming and ranching.

The land comprising the built-up portion of the center was sold to the town of Granada.

Today, the historic cemetery, concrete foundations, road network, perimeter fence, and elements of the historic landscape remain. Recent efforts to preserve Amache have led to the restoration of the original water tower and the reconstruction of a guard tower and residential barracks.

Over the past 40 years, former incarcerated and their descendants have returned to Amache as part of an annual pilgrimage. In 2006, the secretary of the interior designated Amache a National Historic Landmark, affirming its national significance as part of the Japanese American incarceration during World War II.



## What is a special resource study?

A special resource study objectively evaluates the eligibility of a study area to be designated as a national park unit or other designation. The study is estimated to be completed within three years, per the study's authorizing legislation, although delays from COVID-19 may cause the study to take longer than anticipated to complete. The study process begins with the National Park Service collecting information about the quality and uniqueness of resources in the study area. If the resources meet the eligibility criteria, the National Park Service evaluates the potential for visitor experiences and efficient management and analyzes the feasibility and appropriateness of different management options. The National Park Service provides its findings to the secretary of the interior, and those findings along with any recommendations are submitted to Congress for consideration. Regardless of the outcome of the study, new units of the national park system can only be established by an Act of Congress or by presidential proclamation.

## What role does public involvement serve in a special resource study?

The first step of a special resource study is gathering information about the study area through research and public input. Information received from the public helps the National Park Service better understand what is most important and unique about the area; how much support exists for preservation, public use, and potential designation; and what the public envisions for the area's future—including management ideas, activities, or experiences. Public comments also inform whether there are any issues or concerns that should be considered during the study process.

## How will Amache be evaluated?

The 1998 National Parks Omnibus Management Act (54 United States Code 100507) established the process for identifying and authorizing studies of new national park units. Under the law, a study area must meet all four of the following criteria to be recommended as an addition to the national park system:

- **National Significance:** Contain nationally significant natural and/or cultural resources.
- **Suitability:** Represent a natural or cultural resource that is not already adequately represented in the national park system or is not comparably represented and protected for public use by another land-managing entity.
- **Feasibility:** Must be (1) of sufficient size and appropriate configuration to ensure long-term protection of the resources and visitor enjoyment, and (2) capable of efficient administration by the National Park Service at a reasonable cost. Important feasibility factors include land ownership, acquisition costs, life cycle maintenance costs, access, threats to the resource, and staff or development requirements.
- **Need for National Park Service Management:** Require direct agency management that is clearly superior to other management approaches. Different management options are considered, and how they may or may not protect the resource as compared to national park unit designation. Other management options to be evaluated could include:
  - » Continuation of current management;
  - » Transitioning management to other private or nonprofit or other public agencies;
  - » Managing the site as an affiliated area of the national park system. Affiliated areas remain privately managed but maintain a formal relationship and receive technical support from the National Park Service.

## About the National Park Service



The National Park Service preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The National Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation

throughout this country and the world. The National Park Service is a bureau within the Department of the Interior and manages more than 400 park units that comprise the national park system. Administration of park units occurs in many ways, from traditional units that are federally managed to nontraditional units that rely on partnerships and may have little, if any, federal landownership.

## How will the study affect the local community of Granada and surrounding private property?

The National Park Service seeks to work collaboratively with local communities and agencies. The study will not propose management actions that would adversely affect private property rights, and the National Park Service would anticipate only working with willing sellers on any future land acquisitions within the study area. A new national park system designation, if enacted by Congress, would not give the National Park Service any regulatory authority over private land outside of the boundary of the park unit.

## Does the study affect water rights, given that the town of Granada's water source is located on the Amache site?

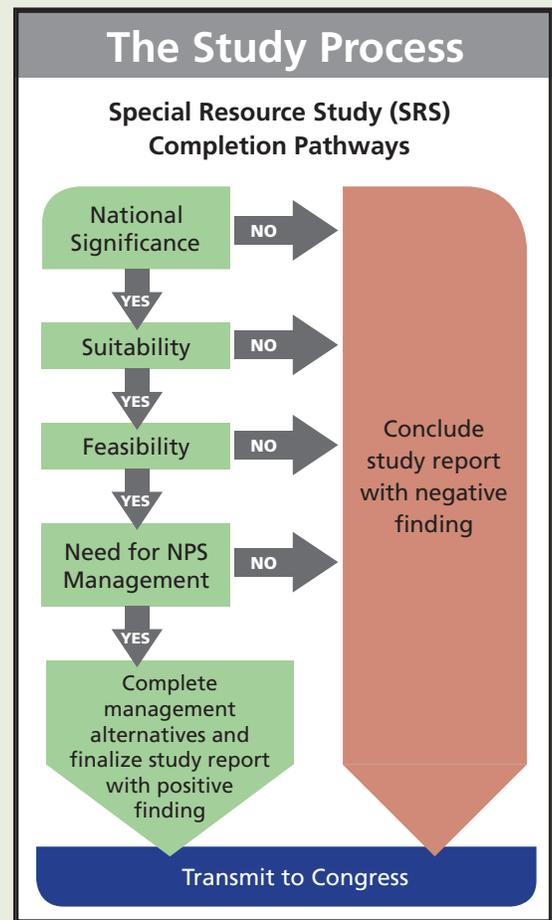
The study process will not affect water rights or impact existing water rights. Issues such as water rights, water availability, and water systems / infrastructure will be evaluated in the study under the feasibility criteria. In the event of a positive feasibility finding, water rights would be addressed in management alternatives.

## What would happen to Amache's artifacts in the event of a potential NPS designation?

In the event of an NPS designation, a management plan would be developed to address resource protection and preservation, including museum collections and the location of collections items. Part of this effort would include determining what is appropriate for the new park collection and in accordance with the new unit's legislation.

## What are some possible outcomes of the study?

Over the last 20 years, approximately one in three completed Congressionally authorized studies has resulted in a positive finding, whereby the study area meets all of the criteria. Many studies conclude that resources do not meet the required criteria or that existing management; technical or financial assistance; or local, state or private initiatives are preferable to the establishment of a new national park unit. If the Amache special resource study results in a recommendation from the secretary of the interior that Amache warrants addition to the national park system, Congress may or may not act on or follow the recommendation. There is no timeframe for legislative action.



## When will I learn the results of the study?

The National Park Service will publicly release a study report after it has been transmitted to Congress. In most cases, the National Park Service will not release findings or drafts of the study prior to transmittal to Congress. The timeline for completion of the study is fall 2022, although delays from COVID-19 may cause the study to take longer than anticipated to complete.

## What happens if Amache is designated a unit of the national park system?

Developing a new unit of the national park system is a slow process. In the event Congress adds Amache to the national park system, NPS operations would likely be at a minimal level for the initial period after designation. Management planning for resource preservation and visitor use and experience would first need to occur. The National Park Service operates in a constrained fiscal environment and does not have the capacity to open fully-staffed units immediately after designation. It may take many years for the National Park Service to develop visitor facilities and for an increase in visitation to materialize.