



Amache Special Resource Study

■ CIVIC ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY



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Front Cover: Guard tower foundation at the Amache National Historic Landmark. Photo by NPS.
Back Cover: The National Historic Landmark plaque at Amache. Photo by NPS.
This Page: View of Amache from above, circa 1943 to 1945.

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CIVIC ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

Background

In fall of 2019, the National Park Service (NPS) initiated a special resource study of the Granada Relocation Center, more commonly known as Amache. Located in a remote corner of southeastern Colorado, Amache was one of ten incarceration sites established by the War Relocation Authority (WRA) to illegally detain Japanese Americans forcibly removed from their homes and communities on the West Coast during World War II. Initiated pursuant to the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management and Recreation Act, the special resource study's purpose is to evaluate Amache's potential for inclusion within the national park system. Congress authorized this study because of Amache's importance to the history of Japanese American incarceration during World War II (WWII).



Arrival of incarcerated to Amache. Photo courtesy of the Amache Preservation Society.

Public Outreach

The National Park Service invited stakeholders and the public to provide their comments, thoughts, and ideas related to the Amache Special Resource Study through an informational newsletter, printed comment cards, the project website (<https://parkplanning.nps.gov/amache>), and in-person and virtual public meetings. The public comment period was from February 11, 2020, to June 30, 2021.

The NPS Amache Study Team initiated conference calls and in-person meetings with Amache stakeholders beginning in 2019, requesting information about how to best reach the various groups, communities, and individuals with a connection to Amache. A public scoping newsletter was created early in the study process, which included historical background information on Amache, a description of the study, the criteria used in special resource studies, and an invitation to submit comments via the project website or mailed correspondence. In-person public meetings were planned in Arvada and Granada, Colorado, and eight locations in California, including San Francisco, Sebastopol, Sacramento, San Jose, Merced, Oakland, Los Angeles, and Gardena. Although one community meeting was held in Granada, Colorado, on February 11, 2020, the other public meetings scheduled in Colorado and California in March and April of 2020 were postponed and eventually cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Pivoting to conducting public involvement in remote and online contexts, public meetings were reorganized into a virtual format and hosted via Zoom. All meetings followed the same format, beginning with a 30-minute presentation on Amache and the special resource study process, followed by small group discussions in two to four virtual breakout groups. The first three virtual public meetings took place on July 16, July 25, and August 1, 2020, as part of the online event, *Tadaima! A Community Virtual Pilgrimage*, hosted by the Japanese American Memorial Pilgrimages organization and the National Park Service. Meeting materials, as well as a recording and transcription of the July 25th meeting, were uploaded to the project website and made available throughout the rest of the comment period for attendees and other interested parties to view online. To expand public involvement opportunities for the study, the National Park Service hosted three additional virtual meetings in May 2021. Comment summaries were completed for all six virtual meetings and uploaded onto the project website.

To raise awareness of public involvement opportunities and provide multiple avenues to submit comments, 2,000 scoping newsletter packets were printed and distributed in March and April of 2021 to Colorado state agencies and county and town offices representing Granada and southeastern Colorado, Japanese American organizations, preservation partners, and other related nonprofit organizations.

Each newsletter packet contained an introductory letter, the scoping newsletter, a comment sheet, and a pre-addressed envelope that recipients could use to submit feedback via mail. To circumvent closures due to COVID-19, the NPS study team worked directly with leaders of several key organizations with ties to Amache survivors and descendants, who helped advise and/or distribute copies to their members. Newsletters and comment cards were also placed at the Amache Museum in Granada, Colorado, and other gathering points of the Japanese American community in Denver, as recommended by Amache stakeholders and NPS subject matter experts.

During the public comment period, a total of 5,123 correspondences were received by the NPS study team. A large majority of these correspondences (5,063) were submitted electronically through the project website. Additionally, the NPS Amache Study Team received 60 correspondences that were submitted either as e-mail or mailed letters. These documents were digitized and added to the project database for inclusion in public comment analysis.

The majority of the correspondences received were submitted as form letters. The NPS Amache Study Team identified two different form letters. The first letter was an exact match to 4,589 correspondences. An additional 209 correspondences matched this form letter but added personal connections, stories, and expanded on the topics addressed. The second form letter matched three correspondences that also added personal testimony and opinions. Of the 5,123 public comments received, a total of 323 unique correspondences were identified that did not conform to any portion of either of the form letters.

Correspondences were received from all 50 states plus Washington, DC, Puerto Rico, and Great Britain. California recorded the most correspondences (795) by a large margin, followed by Florida (325), Colorado (314), New York (303), and Washington State (260).



Granada, Colorado, public meeting, February 11, 2020. Photo by NPS.

Most public comments were submitted by individuals. However, correspondence from several organizations, local governments, political offices, agencies, and businesses were also received and are listed below:

- Amache Historical Society II
- Bent County Board of Commissioners
- Bent County Development Foundation
- Bent County Historical Society
- Bent's New Fort
- Canyons & Plains of Southeast Colorado Regional Heritage Taskforce
- City of La Junta
- City of Lamar
- Coalition to Protect America's National Parks
- Colorado Tourism Office
- Crowley County Board of County Commissioners
- Fred T. Korematsu Institute
- Friends and Family of Nisei Veterans
- History Colorado
- Japanese American Museum of Oregon
- Jared Polis, Governor of Colorado
- Jim Collins, Mayor of the City of Las Animas
- Kiowa County Board of Commissioners
- Michael B. Hancock, Mayor of the City and County of Denver
- National Veterans Network
- Otero County Board of County Commissioners
- Outdoor Asian Colorado
- Prowers County Board of County Commissioners
- Southeast Colorado Business Retention Expansion and Attraction
- Southeast Colorado Enterprise Development
- The Conservation Fund
- The National Parks Conservation Association
- The Tuna Canyon Detention Station Coalition
- Town of Granada

The public comment period focused on seeking comments, thoughts, and ideas on five key questions. These questions were provided on the project website and guided breakout discussions during the public meetings:

1. What do you value most about Amache? This can include objects, buildings, remaining features, values, or stories that you believe are most important.
2. 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?
3. Do you have any ideas or concerns that the National Park Service should be aware of and/or address in the study process?
4. What do you think differentiates Amache from the other Japanese American incarceration camps and sites?
5. Do you have any other ideas or comments you would like to share with us?

An overview of the responses received to these questions across all modes of public engagement are presented in the following sections. These summaries are organized by primary topics as presented through the five key questions and include an analysis of overall support for NPS designation.



Amache incarcerated. Photo courtesy of the Amache Preservation Society.

PUBLIC COMMENT SUMMARY

Potential Designation and Management

Support for NPS Designation

The correspondence received during the public comment period indicates overwhelming support for NPS designation. Several perspectives stand out as the primary reasons for this support. These include:

- Providing relief for John Hopper and the Amache Preservation Society (APS) by transferring stewardship responsibility for the site to the National Park Service
- Preventing this event from ever being repeated, and the National Park Service’s responsibility to share this story for such purpose
- Preserving and protecting the physical remains in perpetuity
- Providing economic benefits to the region
- The need for updated/improved interpretation and urgent collection of firsthand experiences

Opposition to NPS Designation

Of the comments received, a small selection of individuals, unaffiliated with any agencies or organizations, expressed opposition to NPS management of the site. These commenters cited the following as reasons for their disapproval of designation: the site’s insufficient size; Amache as an inaccurate example of WWII Japanese American incarceration because it was the smallest site and had a reputation as “loyal” because of its lack of riots and violent resistance when compared with other WRA sites; a preference to focus resources on Manzanar and Tule Lake; the inability of the National Park Service to manage another park unit; and the sufficient representation of the incarceration story through the existing NPS confinement sites.

Continued Community Involvement

Many of the support letters that stated a need to relieve John Hopper and the Amache Preservation Society of the burden of site maintenance also insisted on the inclusion of these stewards in future management of the site. These comments expressed overwhelming support and appreciation for the many decades of work that John Hopper and the society have committed to Amache, and therefore asserted that their input, advice, and recommendations be an influential part of any future NPS management. The continued involvement of Granada High School students in site stewardship and activities were highly valued by the local Granada community. Commenters communicated that access to the site and the current activities, events, and programs that take place at the site should not be disrupted or ceased because of NPS management.

Joint Management

Amache's proximity to two other NPS managed sites—Bent's Old Fort and the Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Sites—also prompted many commenters to suggest joint management and collaboration between these sites and Amache. These suggestions and opportunities are briefly covered again in the Differentiating Amache section below.



Contemporary view of the guard tower from inside the barrack building. Photo by NPS.

Amache's Valuable Resources (Objects, Buildings, Stories)

Amache's tangible resources—building foundations, the cemetery, the reconstructed barrack, guard tower, recreation hall and water tower, the artifacts and museum objects associated with the Amache experience, and the overall existing landscape—are all highly valued by the public. Many commenters emphasized the importance of the physical site as the most effective and powerful way for visitors to more deeply understand and appreciate the Amache experience. Amache was referred to as a “living classroom” where the opportunity to learn through tangible objects and a visible landscape is more meaningful than that offered through classrooms and books.

The physical remains of Amache, specifically the barrack foundations, were particularly valuable and important to survivors and their descendants. This group of respondents found the visible presence of barrack foundations significant because they allowed visitors to navigate to and stand in the exact location where they or their family members' barracks were once located. Being able to experience this was a powerful interaction with the site, one that was treasured by these individuals and their families. These stories emphasized the importance of place and the value associated with Amache's physical landscape.

The reconstructed buildings were also mentioned as valuable physical resources by many commenters. These commenters expressed how these buildings helped visitors better visualize the living conditions during the incarceration period, including the size of barrack living spaces, the distance between the barrack and recreation hall, and the presence of armed soldiers in the guard tower.

Personal objects associated with the Amache experience curated at the Amache Museum (located in Granada, Colorado) were also highly valued by commenters. Commenters appreciated being able to access these objects and collections at the museum, especially if their family had donated personal items. Keeping these collections accessible to visitors who traveled to the site and museum was a high priority for many commenters.

Public comments mentioned Amache's intangible resources at nearly the same rate that its tangible resources were referenced. The intangible resources specifically emphasized by many commenters were Amache's stories, as told by those who experienced it firsthand. Commenters highlighted Amache survivors as one of the site's greatest resources whose stories urgently needed to be collected and preserved while still possible. These commenters noted how the personal experience of Amache, as told by those who lived it, was more engaging, meaningful, and relatable to visitors, students, and the general public, humanizing the experience and making it more relevant.



Reconstructed water tower and barrack at Amache. Commenters frequently identified the importance of these buildings for understanding the site and the opportunity to rebuild more features. Photo by NPS.

Activities and Experiences

Commenters valued and expressed support for the continuation of the current activities and experiences that take place at the site and are important to the community.

The comments present widespread support for the annual pilgrimage to continue at the site, expressing their hope that NPS management would not only allow and support such an event, but a few commenters also suggested expanding the pilgrimage.

Commenters expressed a great appreciation and interest in the archeological research being conducted at Amache, praising the work of Dr. Bonnie Clark and advocating for the continuation of the archeological field school. They emphasized the value of the research and made the point that there is still much that can be learned through continued research.



Denver University student excavating an entryway garden at Amache. Courtesy of the University of Denver Amache Project.

A Vision for Amache

Support for NPS management also included suggestions and visions of how the visitor experience at Amache could be improved and expanded. Among the many detailed and specific suggestions were several that were often repeated. The most common suggestion was for the reconstruction or relocation of more historic buildings on site. Commenters appreciated the reconstructed and relocated structures that currently exist and expressed the need to continue reconstructing and restoring historic buildings to provide visitors a more complete and immersive experience. Several commenters envisioned the reconstruction of an entire block that would include barracks, the recreation hall, mess hall, and latrine. The importance of being able to understand the spatial layout of everyday life was repeatedly highlighted. Commenters, predominately survivors, further emphasized the need to create buildings that accurately reflected the historic living conditions, noting that current building codes and standards would not be representative of the living conditions of incarcerated.

Commenters expressed a desire for staff consisting of knowledgeable NPS rangers who would be able to offer guided interpretive tours of the site. Many commenters commended the APS students for their work as docents and tour guides and noted that NPS rangers would be able to augment these efforts by providing tours and information on a more regular basis with expanded availability. Many commenters felt that touring the site with a guide was imperative to getting a full and meaningful experience of Amache.

For a few commenters, a grand vision for Amache's future included a new, NPS staffed visitor center. Most of these commenters also specifically indicated that a visitor center should be located on-site rather than in town. Commenters raised several themes and topics they placed great importance in communicating to audiences. The themes most commonly mentioned include:

Learning from the Past

Nearly half of the unique public correspondences mentioned the need to learn from the past. They condemned the WWII incarceration of people of Japanese descent and reflected the firm belief that this dark chapter of American history must be told to prevent it from ever happening again. The form letters also reinforce the idea, declaring the story of incarceration not just a Japanese American story or WWII story but an American one that must not be forgotten. Many added that the National Park Service not only has the responsibility and capacity to tell an inclusive history of the United States but that it also has the experience in doing so at other sites of difficult history.

Military Service

For many commenters, the Japanese American involvement in the US military is a source of both pride and great interest. Commenters noted that Amache had the highest number of incarcerated volunteer for military service of all the camps, which earned Amache the reputation as the most “loyal” camp. Many commenters felt strongly that this story of loyalty and sacrifice from Amache volunteers should be a subject to be highlighted for future interpretation opportunities.

The Strength of Community

Commenters highlighted several aspects of community strength that they felt were important to showcase and interpret. Several commenters wanted to ensure that the resilience and strength of the Japanese American community be showcased as something admirable and in which to bear pride. Public comment also defined the current Amache community as being composed of the community of survivors and descendants and the local community of Granada. The strong relationship between these two communities, both historically and at present, were often mentioned as important aspects of the Amache experience that need to be addressed when telling a complete and inclusive story. The relationship between Amache and Granada was also strongly emphasized as a unique characteristic.



Many comments indicated that the efforts of the Amache Preservation Society and the Denver University Field School have expanded the base of stakeholders with interest in Amache. Photo by Greg Kitajima.

Differentiating Amache (Uniqueness)

Commenters provided a robust list of what differentiates Amache from the other incarceration centers, but the idea that all camps are unique and contribute to the overall story of Japanese American incarceration was also a frequent sentiment that was threaded throughout many of the comments that addressed uniqueness. Commenters made the point that because of their locations, the people who were incarcerated, and other variables, each camp unquestionably had its own unique characteristics and that they should all be valued as important parts of the incarceration story. Several commenters noted that the National Park Service manages multiple Civil War sites in order to tell a more complete and broader story of that period in American history and argued that there should be a similar effort for Japanese American incarceration sites.

Amache's close proximity to the town of Granada and the relationship between the two, both historically and currently, was identified as a unique and defining characteristic compared with the other incarceration centers. The historic relationship between the town and camp was illustrated with stories about Amacheans traveling to town to shop at well-known establishments such as Newman's Drug Store and the Granada Fish Market. The buildings of these two shops still exist in Granada today, tangible representations of this historic relationship and a testament to the continued relationship between Amache and the town. Commenters also relayed stories about Granada sports teams playing Amache teams and a few commenters even mentioned stories about townspeople coming in to Amache to watch movies when they were being shown because there was no theater in Granada. The unique, symbiotic relationship between Amache and Granada is one that commenters felt strongly about and proudly shared in these stories.

Commenters also mentioned the current relationship between the town and the site, lauding John Hopper, the Amache Preservation Society, and the town of Granada for their continued support of Amache and its history. Commenters felt that this current relationship was also unique to Amache and has contributed to the care and stewardship that Amache has received.

Being located in Colorado was another aspect of Amache's location that commenters presented as contributing to its uniqueness. Governor Ralph Carr was one of the only governors who welcomed the Japanese Americans from the West Coast during the short voluntary displacement period that commenced before forced removal. Because of his actions, there was a population of Japanese American families that moved to Colorado from the West Coast who avoided incarceration.

Commenters regarded Governor Carr as a brave and admirable politician, willing to sacrifice his career to welcome those of Japanese descent into his state. Commenters provided stories about non-incarcerated Japanese Americans who conducted business with Amache such as the owners of the Granada Fish Market. The public comments expressed how the unique situation in which non-incarcerated Japanese American families were living freely in Colorado in close proximity to an incarceration camp was only made possible by Governor Carr's actions.

Another aspect of Amache's location that commenters highlighted is its proximity to two other national historic sites: Bent's Old Fort and Sand Creek Massacre. The adjacency of these other sites brought up the possibility for joint management among the sites, sharing resources, and also developing interpretation that addresses the similar themes of discriminatory and racist treatment of people of color by the US government. Another unique connection that a few commenters mentioned is that the Granada Relocation Center's more common name, Amache, is in honor of the daughter of the Cheyenne chief who was killed at the Sand Creek Massacre. Some commenters suggested creating a network of sites that would include Amache, Bent's Old Fort, and Sand Creek Massacre that could present a connected and unified history of southeastern Colorado.

Commenters noted how far east Amache is positioned from the West Coast, aside from the two incarceration camps located in Arkansas. The public comments overwhelmingly stressed the fact that the story of Amache is not widely known and that Japanese American incarceration is often seen as a West Coast story. Amache's geographic location, near the center of the country, offers the incarceration story to a different population than the other camps, broadening its reach and making it relevant to audiences that may be less familiar with this part of American history.



Visible foundations of the bathroom in Block L-9. The historic integrity of the site was commonly referenced by commenters. Photo by NPS.

The physical characteristic that was most impactful to the commenters is the integrity of the site today. Because Amache barracks were built on concrete foundations that are mostly still intact, the footprint and layout of the camp is still very visible. This contrasts greatly with many of the other incarceration camps that no longer have visible foundations. As discussed previously, commenters strongly value this unique aspect of Amache as it directly enables the powerful connections they are able to experience when standing in the exact location of their family’s barrack.

Many commenters also focused on Amache’s physical characteristics when describing its uniqueness. Commenters highlighted the brick floors that lined some of the barrack floors, the fact that Amache had the smallest population of all the incarceration camps, and the unique octagonal design of the Amache guard towers.

Commenters also mentioned the Amache Silk Screen Shop as a unique feature of its history. Although a silk screen shop was also started in Heart Mountain (Wyoming), it eventually closed and Amache became the only incarceration camp with a successful silk screen operation, fulfilling orders for the production of thousands of Navy training posters. In addition to Navy posters, the silk screen shop printed items for incarceratedees such as calendars, invitations, programs, and souvenirs.



Operations at the Amache Silkscreen Shop, ca. 1943–1945, Namura collection. Courtesy of the Amache Preservation Society.

Concerns, Ideas, and Observations

Economic Benefits to Local Area

One recurring perspective that was repeated largely by local organizations, governments, and agencies was the economic benefit that a federally managed national park unit could bring to the region. The comments received from these local groups emphasized how the establishment of a national park site in the region would promote more tourism to southeast Colorado where economic development is most needed, bolstering the economy in rural America and emphasizing its complex and varied history.

Still Widely Unknown

Many of the commenters voiced concern that the story of Amache was still widely unknown. For many, this was a motivating reason for supporting NPS designation, expecting that the broader reach and resources of a federal entity would help bring Amache to the attention of wider audiences. For others it was an admission of their own lack of knowledge and desire to have the site and its history preserved so that they may have the opportunity to learn more. Amache as an “unknown” story in American history surfaced through a majority of the public comments whether it be from those well acquainted with its story or those with much more to learn.



Schoolchildren at Amache, ca. 1943-1945, McClelland color slide collection.
Courtesy of the Amache Preservation Society.

Commonly Occurring Questions

Public comments sometimes included questions, and several questions were repeatedly raised during public meetings. Many of these questions relate to details of operations and management of Amache if it were to be designated as a unit of the national park system. Others are more appropriate for the special resource study process and would be addressed in the special resource study report. These questions are paraphrased below:

- Will pilgrimages and the field school be able to continue at the site under NPS management?
- What will happen to the artifacts and objects at the Amache Museum?
- What area is the National Park Service looking at in terms of a site boundary?
- How will the National Park Service manage the cemetery landscaping in light of probable drought conditions in Colorado?
- Have any measures or considerations been made for addressing the protection of endangered or threatened wildlife in the area?
- Are there any plans for creating recreational sites nearby in light of the current lack of such sites?
- If Amache becomes a unit of the national park system, will personnel invest time in researching Amache?
- What is the status of water rights on the property?



The Amache memorial cemetery landscape. Photo by NPS.



As the nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering sound use of our land and water resources; protecting our fish, wildlife, and biological diversity; preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historic places; and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to ensure that their development is in the best interests of all our people by encouraging stewardship and citizen participation in their care. The department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in island territories under U.S. administration.

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GRANADA RELOCATION CENTER
(AMACHE)

HAS BEEN DESIGNATED A

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK

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国定史跡に指定されています。

DURING WORLD WAR II, MORE THAN 7,300 JAPANESE AMERICANS
WERE INTERNED HERE FOLLOWING THEIR FORCED REMOVAL
FROM THE WESTERN UNITED STATES UNDER THE TERMS OF
EXECUTIVE ORDER 9066

第二次世界大戦中、7,300人以上の日系アメリカ人衆、
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強制的に退去させられた後、ここに収容されました。

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