

AMERICA'S YOUNGEST NEWSPAPER

From Manzanar in Owens Valley, California, one of the first reception centers for Japanese evacuees, comes a lively mimeographed newspaper called the Manzanar Free Press. Printed exclusively in English manned entirely by Japanese Americans, the paper announces in its first issue of April 11: "We don't have a 'policy'.... Politics are out! We don't have to worry about what our advertisers think! We will have no circulation department worries. This, to a newspaper man or woman, is plain Utopia. We should be able to devote all our creative efforts to making this sheet one of the liveliest ever published in the world. And one of the most democratic...."

"We are the principals in an experiment unparalleled in the annals of American democracy. Much of our progress lies through uncharted ground. We can't give all the answers. We won't know the answers until we come to them.

"We'll be providing the answers that a world and the American public especially are asking. Democracy is being tested of its mettle right here. By our actions and attitudes we shall be responsible--responsible to this and future generations of free men. Truth must be the keystone of this community....."

Population statistics announced by the Free Press show that in the first three weeks of the evacuation program Manzanar "mushroomed into the bonanza town of '42," boasting on April 11 a population of 3,302, "the largest California city east of the Sierras." New caravans of arrivals toward the end of the month upped this figure to 7,181 on April 29. The issue of April 25, dedicated to the new arrivals, ran a large map of the community and a word of welcome from Harry L. Black, assistant camp manager:

"We make no apologies for the more or less primitive living conditions at Camp Manzanar. Time will report that we met these problems with the same resolution which characterized the pioneer settlers. By our efforts and our mutual co-operation we expect to develop here a model community.

"We invite the newcomers to join in the big task of further development which lies ahead. Our civic growth, the improvement of our physical accommodations, the means of meeting our social, educational, and spiritual needs are limited only by the co-operative imagination and energy we are willing and able to devote to the job."

"All manner of names" adorn the barracks, reports the paper. "Apt titles like Dusty Inn, Manzanar Mansion, and Jerks' Jernt stand with the more wistful or pretentious Waldorf Astoria and Hotel Mt. Whitney. As for La Casa de Paz (House of Peace, you of the north), we admit it's clever.....But we're still looking for the sign that reads: "Through these portals pass the most beautiful sweaters in the world!"

Great excitement occurred over the first wedding--the entire camp turning out for the occasion. Similar interest was manifested in Manzanar's first bouncing baby boy, "born April 16 in the emergency hospital. "The slender young father, waiter in Mess 12, was beaming excitedly as he dished out extra helpings of hash. Disappointing those local residents who had hoped the first baby would be called Owens, the child's name is to be Kenji. A contribution box had been placed in the canteen to receive donations for the expected first baby."

With an illustrative cartoon heading the item, the April 15 issue warned: "The traditional Japanese zeal for cleanliness is reaching a feverish pitch as many Issei, unaccustomed to the spraying showers, are reportedly using the laundry tubs for bathing purposes. This works an unaccustomed hardship on the tubs and should be stopped immediately

as damage to tubs may possibly ensue."

In each block, heavy and interested voting took place to select three candidates from whom the Camp Manager chose one block leader and as alternate to have general charge of the welfare of their sections. In many cases this was the first experience of the Issei with the democratic ballot. Athletics, musical activities, and pre-school recreational centers have been organized; registration for vocational classification has taken place; and a large size experiment with guayule raising is under way to help solve the rubber shortage and aid in national defense.

An appeal is made for books and magazines for the proposed Manzanar library. Address any contributions to Mr. Robert Brown, Public Relations Representative, Owens Valley REception Center, Manzanar, California.

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