

*J.H.*  
Colorado River Relocation Proj  
Poston, Arizona  
March 6, 1944

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Religion in Poston

The Poston Census survey reveals 55% Buddhist, 35% Christian, and 10% unclassified, out of the population of 18,000 since the establishment of this center. Since then some changes have taken place in religious classification due to the fact that the unclassified or undecided groups are now either attending Christian or Buddhist Churches.

The population of Poston is composed of evacuees from localities throughout California, from Washington, Oregon, and Arizona. The first to occupy the barren barracks of Poston were the Central Californians from the Bakersfield-Delano area. The Imperial Valley people and Boyle Heights from Los Angeles occupied the remainder of the unit while a few from Arizona concluded the full occupation of Unit I.

In Unit II, many came to Poston direct from the assembly centers. There were some direct from the free zone which later was affected as a Military War Zone before evacuation. These people were from Tulare County and Lindsay Exeter Areas. Those direct from the assembly centers are from Salinas, Santa Cruz, Monterey, and some from the Sacramento rural areas.

Unit III is composed of evacuees mostly from Central California and San Diego, and some from the region throughout the state. These evacuees evacuated to the so called "Free Zone", at the time they evacuated to Central California. It was later effected as Military War Zone after they were evacuated here, and they were relocated to Poston the same time the Central Californians were.

The first indication of change in Poston's religious institution since the establishment of Poston would strike one almost as one got to the Project. In the heart of every section of the Project, a once barren hall is now occupied by benches and chairs and equipment. The number meeting every Sunday were some fourteen thousand, representing 27 different denominations. These members of the organizations have decreased since many have relocated for outside employment and the statistics show great change in number of members of various religious believers.

When the evacuees occupied the barren barracks of Poston, many problems were to be faced. There was no equipment to build furniture walls, interior decoration etc., to establish churches, which may resemble as churches so that the many thousands may be able to hear reverends' sermon and to forget the hardship and turmoil which they tasted the time of the evacuation. Despite

these handicapped circumstances the aggressive evacuees devoted their efforts to establish what is today a great church which they could be proud of. Therefore, in these more ponderable aspects, religion in Poston shows drastic change since the establishment, evidence that religion in some ways means enough to evacuees so that they spend their time to build Churches and at the same time devote their time to educate the little one to serve them their purpose in future.

### Catholic Church

Originally there were approximately 200 Catholics in the entire camp. Due to relocation there are about 100 at present time. There are various Catholic activities here. Apart from the Sunday services consisting of Mass at 9:00 a.m. and Benediction at 7:30 p.m. they have a Sunday School each Sunday afternoon attended by some 80 children of both grade and junior high school age. These children are picked up from all over the entire camp by truck. The Sunday School begins at 1:30 p.m. and lasts over two hours. Father Clement combines both recreation and study at this Sunday School, games music slides and often movies on the Life of Christ or some film which has the parables of Christ for subject.

Another activity is the choir which includes the entire group of people both old and young. Then there is the young girls' club, called the Maryknoll Society which is special group of about 25 young ladies whose aim it is to help in taking care of the chapel, the altar, flowers, etc., and to make known that Maryknoll is an interesting friends, inviting them to come to special services. The Sodality has social activities which consists in parties, lunches, Communion Breakfasts, picnics, dance practice, etc..They also help Father Clement in teaching Sunday School.

Still another activity is the Altar Boy's Club consisting of 12 boys who are especially chosen to serve at the altar during mass. They study Latin, take care of the chapel altar. The chaplain in charge of the Catholic Church in Poston, it is Father Clement, formerly of the Maryknoll Church in Los Angeles. Previous to his being in Los Angeles he was a missionary in Japan for five years.

There are three Catholic chapels in camp. In Poston I it is at Block 45 Recreational hall. In Poston II, the Catholic chapel is at Block 222, building 9, apartment A. In Poston III the chapel is at Block 330 Recreational hall. It is important to note however, that among the Catholics in the United States there are several thousand Catholic Japanese, both Issei and Nisei, most of whom have pledged and proven their loyalty to the United States of America.

## Y.W.C.A. of Poston

The Young Women's Christian Association is a world wide organization whose purpose is "To build a fellowship of women and girls devoted to the task of realizing in their common life those ideals of personal and social living to which they are endeavor to seek and understand Jesus to share his love for all people, and to grow in the knowledge and love of God". Every day the YWCA all over the center is helping the younger girls as well as the older women to understand the practice of Democracy.

This world - wide organization is open to all girls and women irrespective of creed, nationality or race. In these groups are found girls and women of widely different social backgrounds and economic levels working together with mutual respect and cooperation, and most important of all, a genuine liking for each other which is, after all, everyday practice in democracy.

YWCA in Poston are also following this great movement and striving for the purpose of "building a fellowship of women and girls". With Maki Ichiyasu, former secretary of the Japanese YWCA in Los Angeles, as head, the Poston YWCA was at full speed soon after evacuation. The Business and Industrial Group, Inter-Y Council, Girl Reserves, and an Advisory Board were soon organized with plenty of activities such as planning discussions, conferences, meetings, putting plays, arranging parties, outings, and doing their share in community services.

With the relocation program under way, the older girls' clubs were soon abandoned but this did not stop us from continuing the YWCA. Although they no longer have no active older Y group, they concentrate on the high school Girl Reserves. Programs are planned by the girls themselves with the help of adult advisors. A nicely furnished "Y" room is also maintained for their use as well as well as for their activities. The YWCA room is located in Block 36 Recreational Hall. To date, the YWCA here in Poston has helped organize the USO, maintain a Toy Loan for the little children, organized clubs, and taking part in the community activities. All in all, we are trying to help the girls not only to appreciate and to enjoy the advantages of the American way of life, but also to take an active part in preserving and extending them.

## Buddhist

There are ten Buddhist churches and three Buddhist Offices in the project. Originally there were approximately 9,000 Buddhist members including all sects of Buddhist denomination. Due to relocation considerable decrease in membership was felt.

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The Young People's Service at 10:00 a.m. and the Children and Junior Service every Sunday from 9:00 a.m. The Children's Service composed of person who are from birth to 12 and the Juniors up to 16 years of age. These groups are directed by the Sunday School Teachers who direct and teach these groups the fundamentals of Buddhist religion. The adult services are held at the respective churches in the evening.

There are activities such as choir which includes the entire groups of people from both junior and senior groups. This Choir has made many public appearances throughout the project. The YBA nights sponsored by each block weekly, a evening of entertainment and services, is one of the big activities which has been in progress for last two years. Socials, music and sport are the other activities highlighting the years activities and programs. Beside these activities the Infantile Paralysis Drive sponsored by the young Busseis proved most successful; the YBA Convention held last October in Unit I gathered approximately 4,000 young Busseis which once before evacuation was the Buddhists largest occasion which drew Busseis from all parts of California, Oregon, and Washington. This is the annual convention which was the Buddhists one tradition back home in California.

There are ten Reverends in Poston at present time. The only Nisei Reverend, Rev. Tsunoda formerly of Santa Barbara is the advisor for the young people's movement. Besides Rev. Tsunoda, Rev. Kawasaki formerly of Visalia Buddhist Church is the advisor for the Sunday School groups, and Rev. S. Sakow advisor for the YBA organization. Rev. Onoyama, who transferred to Tule Lake Segregation camp last October was the Fujin Kai advisor. The churches are at 306, 316, and 322 Recreation Hall. The YBA Office is located at 310-7-A & B. apartments. In Unit II Rev. Iwanaga, and his able leader carry on their activities there. The church is at 214 Recreation Hall. The office is adjacent to the church. Their activities are similar to that of Unit III.

In Unit I, there are different sects of Buddhism such as the Odaishi, Nichiren, etc. The Nichiren Reverend is Rev. Ishihara, who have their own church at 30 Block apartment 1-A & B. The Odaishi sect, with small membership congregated at the Block 30 church. Rev. Kurahashi is the advisor. Rev. Izumida, Rev. Nagafuji formerly of Delano Buddhist Church, California, and Rev. Masuoka formerly of Brawley Buddhist Church are the Shinshu Reverends in this unit. Rev. Masuoka was paroled recently from the Santa Fe Detention Station, Santa Fe, New Mexico. The shinshu churches are at block 13, 17, 22, and 54 Recreation Halls. The office is located at 31-1-A & B. apartments.

Approved

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