

WAR RELOCATION AUTHORITY  
1510 Fidelity Building  
Kansas City, 6, Missouri

RELOCATION OPPORTUNITY SUMMARY  
CENTRAL AREA - JULY 15, 1944

TO: All Project Directors  
ATTENTION: Relocation Program Officers  
FROM: Leo T. Simmons, Acting Relocation Supervisor  
SUBJECT: Mr. Walter A. Heath's Impressions of St. Louis

In our Relocation Opportunity Summary of June 25, we mentioned that Mr. Heath, Relocation Program Officer from Manzanar, would spend some time in our area evaluating relocation opportunities as well as work as a relocation officer. For the past two weeks, Mr. Heath has been in St. Louis, and since then he has written to the Block Managers and Relocation Committee of Manzanar about that city. You will recall that I promised to pass the information to the other centers.

The following material is taken from two letters written by Mr. Heath:

"St. Louis seems to be a fine place for professional people. Already twelve doctors, two social workers, several nurses, a lawyer and a dentist have successfully relocated here. Altogether there are about 375 evacuees in St. Louis in a wide variety of occupations.

"This city does not have the labor shortage that some of the other cities have, inasmuch as no new war industries are in operation here. Placements are made, however, which provide a particularly good post-war outlook.

"The relocation supervisor does not expect that the number of evacuees in St. Louis will ever exceed 800 or 1000. For those who do not rely upon close association with other Japanese-Americans, St. Louis would appear to be a fine place. There isn't any "Little Tokyo" in St. Louis, nor will there ever be. People who are here are integrating themselves into the community life very well and I have not seen any place where there is less prejudice against Orientals.

"Undoubtedly there are many business opportunities in St. Louis. One Issei has had a cafe here for the past thirty-five years and is still doing very nicely. However, there does not seem to be a shortage of cafes and boarding houses in St. Louis.

"St. Louis has been without a relocation officer for several months because of the shortage of qualified personnel. The office has been held down by two exceptionally personable young women, one a Caucasian and one an evacuee. Although these two young women have done a fine job in obtaining positions for those who came to St. Louis, they have not had the opportunity to make many outside contacts which are necessary if their work within the office is to continue to be entirely adequate. I have, therefore, attempted to make outside calls which would result in more job offers and to strengthen and improve relations with the U.S.E.S. It is hoped that a qualified relocation officer will be obtained within a few weeks. (We expect to have a good man in the St. Louis Office on or before the middle of August.-Relocation Supervisor.)

"It is the opinion of the WRA office in St. Louis that incoming evacuees and those who have made St. Louis their home should become accustomed to obtaining employment through regular community channels. It is also felt that regular community agencies should become accustomed to serving the American Japanese so that when and if it becomes necessary for the WRA to step out of the picture, the Japanese-Americans will not suffer.

"In the past we have referred a good many incoming evacuees to the U.S.E.S. for assistance. A designated person there has attempted to help them, but has not been as successful as we would desire. I have found that the person who handles the placements at the U.S.E.S. is a capable individual. Due to the fact that she is responsible for supervising a number of interviewers, she has not actually had the time necessary to do the type of work we desire. It is now arranged for regular Employment Service interviewers to take applications from evacuees in the same manner as they would take applications from other people. They will then make an attempt to refer our people to interested employers, making sure by telephone call that there is no prejudice against Japanese-Americans. The War Relocation Authority will attempt to furnish these interviewers with sufficient background information about the WRA and evacuees so that they will be qualified to talk intelligently to prospective employers. Our office will also call on firms to whom evacuees are referred for the first time so that evacuees are assured of courteous treatment and the proper consideration.

"It is recognized that continuing work will have to be done with the Employment Service interviewers and that results will not be perfect. On the other hand, it typifies the long range thinking and planning which the WRA is doing in outside communities. It is not particularly difficult for us to place incoming evacuees through our own efforts at the present time, but it cannot be expected that Congress will maintain a WRA to care for persons of Japanese ancestry throughout the long years ahead.

"In obtaining employment opportunities for evacuees, two general methods are used. One is an individual placement method, wherein we start out to find a position for a particular individual, whose background and skills are known to us. In doing this, want ads in the local newspapers and other leads are followed. Prospective employers are called on personally or by telephone. It is found in St. Louis, at least, that the majority of employers are willing to consider evacuees for employment on the same basis as they consider other people.

"In addition to this method of caring for individuals for whom no position is immediately at hand, the WRA also contacts firms to find out what their

general labor needs are and to offer the services of the WRA in recruiting help. For example, I noted that the Yellow Cab Company needed fifty cab drivers, and called in person to see whether or not evacuees could be used in positions of this kind. I was thrown off balance by the personnel man when he interrupted me before I was well started in my sales talk to say: 'Sure, we can use them if they know the city - send them around.' I inquired as to whether he needed other help. He informed me that three mechanics and an experienced grease man was needed at the moment and that they would be grateful if we could send qualified applicants.

"Attempting to find a place where persons with sales ability might obtain a remuneration comparable to their ability, I called at the White Bakery to see if evacuees could be used in positions as driver salesmen on their retail delivery trucks. The sales manager told me that he had no difficulty in obtaining driver-salesmen but he was not altogether satisfied with the type of people that were applying for positions. He showed an interest in the American Japanese and an understanding of their talents as salesmen. He was at first a little hesitant as to whether or not persons of Japanese ancestry would be accepted by customers, but within a few minutes came to the conclusion that he would like to try it out if people with proper qualifications could be found. I, myself, am convinced that American Japanese would experience no difficulty in this field and feel that within a few months some of our people would be earning upwards of eighty dollars a week with the White Baking Company.

"The number of people who have knowledge of American Japanese is surprising to me. I found that a sizeable proportion of the employers whom I called on were fully aware of our problem and were friendly. For instance, I called the man whom I believed to be the president of the local Bar Association to see if employment could be found for an evacuee lawyer. He was most interested, and said that he had employed one evacuee already in his law office, but that he had no further vacancy and was no longer president of the Bar Association. He directed me to call a second lawyer. When I started to tell this gentleman about the evacuation, he said: 'Yes, I know all about it. I employed a Japanese-American student in my home and now have another. They are both fine fellows and I think they have had some bad breaks. I will help you all I can.'

"In the approximate fifteen calls that I have made to find employment for Japanese Americans, I have not once run into prejudice that would prevent the employment of evacuees. Not always have there been vacancies, but in every instance, there has been a friendly interest in the problem and the desire to be of help.

"This broad basis of understanding in St. Louis is further indicated by frequent editorials which appear in the local papers. For instance, on May 22 the Post Dispatch carried an editorial 'Mr. LaGuardia's Slip' condemning that mayor's attitude:

'When Mayor LaGuardia protested the resettlement of Japanese-Americans in New York City, he prejudiced his prestige with many who have supported him on public issues in the past. Further, such a stand lowers the prestige of a city which has long prided itself on its tolerance . . . . Let the Mayor ask himself once again whether loyal American citizens of any race shall live under the protection of a democratic constitution or be persecuted in spite of it.'

"On May 6 the Post Dispatch reprinted an editorial from the Milwaukee Journal 'Justice for Japanese Americans' endorsing the relocation program. Pointing out that there are still 50,000 people of Japanese ancestry in relocation centers, the editorial comments:

'This is a disgrace. We might as well be honest with ourselves and admit that race prejudice is behind the situation - not a well-based fear of sabotage or espionage. . . . . The job to be done refers to here and now. . . . . The first objective of such a program must be to get all the loyal citizens of Japanese blood out of these camps and properly placed in American life. . . . . It is time for us to look this thing in the eye and decide that we are going to do something right about it.'

"The evacuees who are here seem to like St. Louis, although they dislike the long hot summers. The majority seem to want to remain here when the war is over. This is perhaps the best index of conditions here."

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In our next summary, we hope to give you Mr. Heath's impressions of Nebraska.