Chapter 14
"Life in Manzanar Where There Is a Spring Breeze": Graffiti at a World War II Japanese American Internment Camp

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Abstract Confinement sites by design replace freedom with restriction and restraints, and individuality with anonymity. However, recent research has shown that even in strictly controlled circumstances, individual emotions, thoughts, and reactions to the social context can be revealed by graffiti. In settings and institutions of confinement, graffiti can have various meanings and functions, including self-identity, enduring dignity, and resistance. Over 280 inscriptions made in wet concrete have been recorded at the Manzanar Relocation Center, one of the ten internment camps where Japanese American civilians were confined during World War II. These hidden texts include militaristic slogans, poems, individual and group names, present and former addresses, whimsical sayings, and expressions of love. Numerous directly and indirectly dated inscriptions allow an examination of how attitudes within the camp changed through time, reflecting both internal camp politics and external world events.

The incarceration of almost 120,000 Japanese Americans by the US government during World War II is one of the more shameful episodes in American history. The "Relocation" removed all persons of Japanese ancestry from their homes, schools, and businesses on the West Coast of the United States and placed them under guard and behind barbed wire for most of the war. Over two-thirds of them were American citizens. Some accounts suggest that the Relocation was passively accepted, through the Japanese concept of *Shikataganai*, which loosely translates as "it cannot be helped."

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However, the most obvious archaeological features at the camps, such as guard tower foundations and fence posts, suggest how difficult it would have been to defy the incarceration. Moreover, graffiti at the Manzanar Relocation Center indicates that the Japanese American community did not, after all, passively accept the Relocation, nor the negative self-identity promoted by this government-sanctioned racism.

Background

On December 7, 1941, the United States entered World War II when Japan attacked the United States at Pearl Harbor. About 1,200 leaders in the Japanese American community were arrested in the days following and sent to Department of Justice internment camps. Bank accounts were frozen, homes were searched, and contraband, broadly defined to include flashlights, radios, and cameras, was confiscated. Sensationalistic newspaper headlines talked about sabotage and imminent invasion. Public opinion grew in support of interning all persons of Japanese ancestry.

On February 19, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order No. 9066, allowing for the removal of Japanese Americans from restricted areas without formal charges or trials. The first evacuations began in March 1942. After initial notification, residents were given 6 days in which to dispose of nearly all of their possessions. They were told to pack only what could be carried by the family. Shops, homes, and belongings all had to be quickly sold, usually for pennies on the dollar. After reporting to collection points near their homes, each group was moved to hastily contrived assembly centers, most of them located at racetracks or fairgrounds. From the assembly centers, the Japanese Americans were sent to relocation centers. Ten relocation centers were established in isolated inland areas. Although still in California, Manzanar was far from the coast, located at an abandoned town site.

Casella (2007:3) describes three reasons why a state would imprison members of its own citizenry: rehabilitation, segregation, and punishment. The relocation centers appear to have served all three functions: the government wanted to "rehabilitate" the Japanese Americans by relocating them from the West Coast to places in the interior of the country where they would not be so dangerous. Some argued that the "segregation" of Japanese Americans was for their own good: they were put into centers to protect them from potential racist violence. But to those interned, the relocation amounted to punishment for the crime of being of Japanese descent. In January 1942, newspaper columnist Henry McLemore wrote: "Herd 'em up, pack 'em off and give them the inside room of the badlands. Let 'em be pinched, hurt, hungry and dead up against it" (tenBroek et al. 1954:75).

The 1-square-mile central area of Manzanar, holding 36 blocks of barracks, was completed in 6 weeks, and within 3 months 10,000 people were interned there (Unrau 1996). The relocation centers were designed to be self-contained communities, complete with hospitals, post offices, schools, warehouses, offices, factories, and residential areas, all surrounded by barbed wire and guard towers. Internees worked agricultural fields outside the central fenced area to provide some of their own food.

Stress within the Manzanar Relocation Center arose from day-to-day conditions, including food shortages in the summer of 1942 and oil shortages in October and November that forced the closing of some mess hall kitchens. More fundamental issues included the loss of income and property as a result of the relocation, the separation of Japanese aliens from their families, and the uncertainty about the future of Japanese Americans in the United States.

Imposed from outside, these conditions led to tensions within the community. Hansen and Hacker (1974) point out long-standing differences in the Japanese American community which were exacerbated by the mass incarceration. The immigrants themselves had been discriminated against the entire time they were in America, and were even barred from becoming naturalized citizens because of their race. They tended to see the relocation as one more example of prejudice; their reaction, as to previous ostracism, was to retrench into their Japanese cultural ethnic identity. Their children, born in the United States and therefore US citizens, tended to identify with American culture, but because of discrimination depended upon their immigrant parents and the ethnic Japanese community economically and socially.

A few of these first-generation citizens tried to prove their loyalty to the United States by acquiescing to, and even abetting, the evacuation. In this way, they tried to exonerate the Japanese American community from the unfounded charges of subversion, but “more ominously, they cooperated with authorities as security watchdogs,” even helping the FBI identify and locate potentially dangerous Japanese Americans (Hansen and Hacker 1974:125). Those who cooperated with the administration appeared to receive preferential treatment in the allocation of jobs and food.

Erupting in December 1942, the so-called Manzanar Riot followed months of tension among different factions within the internee community. The center director called in the military police to control a crowd that had gathered to protest at the arrest and detention of Harry Ueno, leader of the kitchen workers union, on suspicion of having taken part in the beating of a suspected administration informer. Feeling under attack, the military police fired into the crowd, killing two young men and wounding at least eight others. In the ensuing events, 15 “troublemakers” were removed from the relocation center; of these, the immigrants were eventually sent to Department of Justice alien internment camps and the citizens were sent to an isolation center at Moab, UT.

More unrest followed the government’s attempt to expedite leave clearances from the relocation centers via a “loyalty questionnaire” distributed in February 1943. One of the goals of the War Relocation Authority was to determine which internees were actually loyal to the United States, and then to find places for them to work and settle away from the West Coast, outside of the relocation centers. At first, each case had to be investigated individually, which often took months, since each person had to find a job and a place to live while convincing the government that they were not a threat. Eventually, to streamline the process, every adult evacuee was given a questionnaire entitled “Application for Indefinite Leave Clearance” whether or not they were attempting to leave. Unfortunately, the questionnaire had originally been intended for determining loyalty of possible draftees, and was not modified for the general population, which included women and Japanese citizens.

Further, the questions were ambiguous and poorly worded, and caused more confusion and contentiousness. Those who did not answer correctly were considered disloyal, and sent to the Tule Lake relocation center, which had been converted into a higher-security segregation center.

Some of the remaining internees eventually left the relocation centers, volunteering for or being drafted into the military or applying for "parole" to work away from the West Coast. However, the vast majority spent the war years in these relocation centers, for the "crime" of being of Japanese ancestry. At the end of the war when the camps closed, the wooden barracks and other buildings were sold at auction and removed. In some cases whatever foundations remained were bulldozed away. As the most salient tangible remains of the camps were physically erased, the memory of the relocation was also suppressed. The entire episode was left out of textbooks, because it contradicted the accepted narrative of democracy, fairness, and equality in American history. Former internees did not discuss the relocation outside of their Japanese American communities, because they considered the episode shameful and embarrassing. People who lived near the former "Japanese camps" often assumed they had housed prisoners of war, not citizens of the United States.

Although during World War II the relocation was justified as a "military necessity," decades later, a US commission determined that there had been no true threat to national security. The incarceration of Japanese Americans was due to war-time hysteria, failed leadership, and racial prejudice (Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians 1982). President Ronald Reagan signed the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, which provided a formal apology and redress for all Japanese Americans interned during World War II. In 1989, the US government officially apologized and granted redress of $20,000 to each surviving evacuee. On the 50th anniversary of the executive order that authorized the massive internment, Congress designated the Manzanar Relocation Center a National Historic Site.

The Data

Since the Manzanar National Historic Site's creation in 1992, the National Park Service has conducted archaeological work that has revealed many traces of the Japanese American confinement (Burton 1996). Some archaeological features, such as foundations for latrines and guard towers, were built by military contractors. Some, such as infrastructure additions and modifications, were constructed by the internees themselves. After the initial construction of the relocation center, internees formed the work crews that did routine maintenance, modified inadequate infrastructure, and built new structures where needed. Relatively cheap and abundant, concrete was used for foundations, floors, dams, irrigation ditches, and sewer systems. Wet concrete also provided a blank slate for graffiti. Most of the inscriptions were written on wet concrete, sometimes in a careless manner. Thus, some are hard to read. Most appear to have been made by Japanese Americans interned at the relocation center. Of course, the inscriptions represent the work of only a small fraction of the internees.

Fig. 14.1 *Top left*: Internee-built traffic circle in the administration area. *Top right*: Testimony inscription within the administration area, "KUBOTA / 4-1-42." *Bottom left*: Typical internee-built irrigation ditch outside the security fence. *Bottom right*: Testimony inscription at the Manzanar reservoir, "Jiro Matsuyama / 11/24/43" (Courtesy Jeff Burton, National Park Service)

Inside the fenced 1-square-mile central area of the relocation center, where internees were usually confined, inscriptions occur in foundations for the ironing rooms, on rock and concrete planters, on stoops placed to support steps to barracks, on a sidewalk constructed at the morgue, and similar features (Fig. 14.1, top left, right). Outside the central area, inscriptions occur where internees used concrete to improve facilities at the chicken and hog farms, to increase the capacity of the reservoir, and to reinforce canals and ditches (Fig. 14.1, bottom left, right). To date over 280 World War II-era inscriptions have been recorded at Manzanar during a variety of archaeological projects (Burton 2005, 2006, 2008; Inomata and Burton 1996 Appendix). The large number of preserved inscriptions makes Manzanar unique among the ten relocation centers and provides a special insight into the people interned there (Burton et al. 2002).

Japanese Writing System

The Japanese writing system consists of three types of characters and letters: Chinese characters, *hiragana*, and *katakana*. Chinese characters carry meanings

and some of them can represent more than one syllable. *Hiragana* and *katakana* are phonetic writings and each character represents one syllable. These three types of writing can be used in the same sentence. Japanese can be written both vertically and horizontally. Vertical writings read from top to bottom, right to left. Horizontal writings can go from left to right or from right to left.

Notation for Manzanar

In the inscriptions, "Manzanar" is written with three Chinese characters. Although today Japanese usually use *katakana* to write foreign place names, the use of Chinese characters was more common in the 1940s. In such cases, Chinese characters with the closest phonetic values were usually chosen. However, Chinese characters convey meanings, which are often considered for their selection. The place-name Manzanar in the inscription of the cemetery memorial tower uses three characters with the meanings of "full," "sand," and "what." In other inscriptions, the second character is replaced with one meaning "seat." It is possible that the Japanese Americans at Manzanar chose these characters just for their phonetic values rather than for their meanings, but "sand" and "full" might have been descriptive of the crowded, dusty conditions. Note that the reading of the characters is manzana instead of manzanar.

Another example, from a stele at Merritt Park seen in historic photos, appears to have no hidden meaning. Merritt Park, which included a pond, rose gardens, and a tea-house ramada, was built by internees to provide a respite from the severity of the barracks, guard towers, and barbed wire. First called Rose Park, then Pleasure Park, the park was eventually named Merritt Park, in honor of the relocation center's director. When the National Park Service was trying to translate an inscription painted on a stele at the park, we asked native speakers of Japanese what it meant. They could make no sense of the inscription until they spoke the characters out loud and we recognized Camp Director Merritt's name. In this case, for the first three characters it is not the meaning of the characters, but their sound (*mei-ri-to* = Merritt):

mei = light
ri = hometown
t(o) = climb
ko = public
en = garden

Chronology

While dated inscriptions are relatively rare at Manzanar, 82 % of the graffiti could be dated. Because the inscriptions were made in wet concrete a single date would apply to many other inscriptions on the same feature (Table 14.1). Only 33 of the

Table 14.1 Features at Manzanar with dated inscriptions

1942	
April 1	Small slab at Administration Block
May 8	Block 34, Barracks 2 entry
June 6	Camouflage Net Factory
June 10	Traffic circle at Administration Block[a†]
June 19	Block 10 ironing room slab
June 26	Manzanar Airport hangar apron
August 7 and 9	Blk 22 pond (first mess hall garden)
November 9	Service Station slab
October 11	Fire Station driveway[a†]
December 30	Small slab at lath house
Unknown	George Creek ditch and cap wall added to Bairs Creek dam
1943	
February 11	Chlorination Tank improvements[†]
February 17	Reservoir Settling Basin improvements[a†]
February 25	Reservoir cap wall[a†]
February 25	Block 19, Barracks 12 faucet overflow basin
February 26–28	South Fields (ditch)[a†]
March 1	South Fields (ditch)[†]
March 2–3	Reservoir cap wall[a†]
March 10	South Fields (ditch)[†]
March 26	North Fields (N. ditch)[a]
March 30	Bairs Creek Ditch (weir box)
June 6–11	North Fields (N. ditch)
August 9	Chicken Farm (main building entry)
August	Cemetery Monument[†]
August	North Park grill
September 9–10	Morgue sidewalk[a†]
September 22	Hog Farm (weir box)
October 7	Caucasian mess hall expansion[†]
October 14–15	Chicken Farm slabs[a†]
October	Merritt Park Stele[†]
November 1	Far South Fields (weir box)[†]
November 9 and 12	Reservoir Sand Trap walls[†]
December 22	Chicken Farm (retaining wall)[†]
Unknown	Various[a†]
1944	
January 28	Chicken Farm (main building addition)
February 12	Auditorium cornerstone
January 28	Chicken Farm (main building addition)
February 12	Auditorium cornerstone
March 6	Far South Fields (retaining walls)[†]
March 19	Far South Fields (S. ditch)[†]
March 23	North Wells pipeline
May 14	Block 17, entry?
May 21	Block 11, Barracks 6 entry

(continued)

Table 14.1 (continued)

June 6	Block 10, Barracks 11 faucet overflow basin
June 13	Auditorium sidewalk
July 24	Well #169 apron
Unknown	Farm shed foundation
1945	
Unknown	Reservoir Sand Trap retaining wall
1946	
March	Reservoir settling basin repair

[a]Includes pro-Japan, anti-U.S. statements; † includes Japanese characters

inscriptions, or less than 12 %, could be attributed to contractors, camp staff, or military police. Of the graffiti that dates to 1942, 89 % is within the camp. In contrast, 87 % of the 1943-dated graffiti is outside the camp, as the focus of internee work changed from finishing construction within the residential and administrative areas, to upgrading and repairing water system infrastructure and constructing facilities for the agricultural operations.

The few inscriptions dated to 1944 are found about equally in and outside the camp fences. By this time, the pace of new construction had slowed. Only two inscriptions date to 1945, when there was very little new construction associated with the camp. A repair at the camp reservoir is dated March 1946.

Typology

The Manzanar inscriptions can be categorized using Casella's (2009) six categories for inmate graffiti: Testimony, Separation, Diversion, Dignity, Identity, and Resistance (Tables 14.2, 14.3, and 14.4). As Casella notes, graffiti can have several meanings, and the categories overlap. But in her useful scheme, names and dates would be "testimony"; places or people longed for would fit the separation category; doodles and pranks would be "diversion and amusement"; taking pride in one's work or trying to lead a normal life would be "dignity under adversity." A name in Japanese characters, proclaiming Japanese-ness, would be classified as "identity," and antiadministration or antigovernment graffiti would be classified as "resistance."

Testimony

The most common type of graffiti at Manzanar is testimony, with 64 % of the inscriptions consisting of names, initials, and dates. The inscriptions at Manzanar include over 50 dates, 70 different identifiable people, and numerous initials at dozens of locations both inside and outside the fenced camp.

Testimony graffiti dating to 1942 are nearly all within the fenced residential and administrative areas of camp, except for one 1942 date on a dam repair and names

Table 14.2 Internee inscriptions within the security fence

	1942	1943	1944	1945	Unknown	Total
Testimony	52	6	10		28	96
Separation	2					2
Diversion	4	2			2	8
Dignity	1	1			3	5
Identity	1	7				8
Resistance	2	1				3
Total	62	17	10	0	33	122

Table 14.3 Internee inscriptions outside the security fence

	1942	1943	1944	1945	Unknown	Total
Testimony	7	49	8	2	3	69
Separation		2				2
Diversion		8	1			9
Dignity		15	1			16
Identity		24	3			27
Resistance		17				17
Total	7	115	13	2	3	140

Table 14.4 Military and staff inscriptions

	1942	1943	1944	1945	1946	Unknown	Total
Testimony	6		1		1	16	24
Separation			2				2
Diversion	2					1	3
Dignity							0
Identity	3					1	4
Resistance							0
Total	11	0	3	0	1	18	33

and a date carved into the wall of the Lone Pine train station. One common place to find concrete is at building entryways, where small pads of concrete were built by internees in front of steps to serve as a small landing. The earliest dated inscription (4/1/42) was by Ray Kubota (Fig. 14.1, top left), who must have been among the first to arrive when Manzanar opened, the last week of March. Kubota was likely one of the several hundred Japanese Americans who offered to go early to help build the camp and prepare it for the influx of internees who would follow. The inscription was found on an entryway in the administration area. Kubota was still in the relocation center in August 1943; his name and that date are on a barbeque grill in North Park. Jiro Matsuyama, whose name and the date 11/24/43 appear on one of the later reservoir walls (Fig. 14.1, bottom right), was manager of the reservoir and the sewage plant. Matsuyama had agreed to take on the reservoir job when he realized it would give him a chance to go fishing. Although he recalled many details of the water system operation, he did not remember writing his name in the wet concrete, which he recognized as his handwriting (Matsuyama 2005).

A “May 8, 1942” date on a concrete stoop south of Barracks 2 in Block 34 shows someone had managed to establish residence in Block 34 before the standard or official assigning of barracks there. Blocks were supposedly filled in numerical order, from 1 to 36, as internees arrived. By May 1942, only the first few blocks would have been occupied. This date also indicates that internees quickly became adept at acquiring materials such as concrete for their own use. A date of August 1942 on a concrete-lined pond at Block 22 corroborates Harry Ueno’s account that he built the first mess hall garden.

Only a few names are repeated at different areas. These include: crew leader “Tom Fujisaki” at three different areas dating to 1943 and 1944; “Tom Makio” at the north and south fields; and “Yoshinaga” at the hog farm and at the reservoir. The initials or nickname “NOB” occur at the fire department (October 1942), chlorination tank (February 1943), and reservoir (March 1943).

Notable names include “Kurihara” inscribed in the foundation of an internee-built ironing room, which also has a date of “6-19-42.” Joseph Kurihara was a US citizen and a World War I Army veteran. Embittered by the government’s refusal to make any exception to the evacuation for veterans who had already proven their loyalty by serving during World War I, Kurihara became a prominent spokesperson for the pro-Japan faction. When Harry Ueno was arrested under suspicion for the beating of a person accused of being an administration informant, Kurihara was the main spokesman demanding Ueno’s release. Kurihara was arrested and removed from Manzanar after the riot.

“Jackson Nakashima” appears inscribed in one of the concrete-lined ditches, built in March 1943, in the irrigation system for the fields far north of the central area. Kunihiro Jackson Nakashima came to Manzanar on April 28, 1942, from Los Angeles with his family. He had two brothers who enlisted in the military from Manzanar (according to the Buddhist Church directory), plus another brother and a sister. What makes Jackson Nakashima unique is that he is the only Manzanar resident who went to state prison for a crime. In January 1945, when Nakashima was 22 years old, he was convicted of molesting a 9-year-old girl, and was sent to San Quentin (James Howell, 2011, personal communication).

Separation

Only six of the inscriptions fit the separation category. In 1942, two hometowns are identified, Elk Grove and Glendale (Fig. 14.2, top left). The name of the hometown of Venice, Calif, and a former employer (Oriental Steamship Co) date to 1943 (Fig. 14.2, top right). “Tucson” was written two times in wet concrete at a small diversion dam at George Creek, along with the names Ned and Harvey and the date 1944. No internees were from Tucson, AZ, but the camp staff included a Ned and a Harvey, and one of them may have been from Tucson.

Fig. 14.2 *Top left*: Separation inscription within the administration area, "Gerd Kurihara / Glendale Cal. / 6/19/42." *Top right*: Separation inscription at the chicken farm, "Okamoto / Venice / Calif." *Bottom left*: Diversion inscription at the fire station, "TOM TAKAHASHI "JERK"." *Bottom right*: Diversion inscription at the chicken farm, "FRANK BAKATARE." *Bakatare* is Japanese for stupid or foolish (Courtesy Jeff Burton, National Park Service)

Diversion and Amusement

Twenty inscriptions at Manzanar fit the diversion and amusement category, consisting of doodles, sexual images, and parody. They include foot and handprints, abstract designs, a possible drawing of a penis, a vulgar Japanese term for penis, and epithets referring to the author or to others as Jerk (Fig. 14.2, bottom left), Gimp, or *Bakatare* (Japanese for stupid; Fig. 14.2, bottom right).

One former internee, George Izumi, related the story that he and two other kids one afternoon found a retaining wall with wet concrete at the chicken farm, and inscribed their names (Allen 2002). Izumi had a broken leg at the time, and jokingly signed himself as Gimp. By December 1943, even a kid with a broken leg could easily leave the fenced area. From the archaeological perspective, Izumi's story points out that inscriptions are not necessarily made by the same people who poured the concrete. Izumi and his companions wrote their names more than once in the concrete they found:

GIMP IZUMI Dec 22 1943
SHO with two Japanese characters translated as—*nakayama* (a family name).

MINORU and an abstract design
GIMP THE … (with a possible Japanese character, erased)
GIMP (with erased characters?)
MIN
MIN SHISHIDO

George Izumi was born in 1921 in Los Angeles; at Manzanar he lived in Block 23, Barracks 3, Room 4. There were seven internees with the same family number, 2711. George joined the military and left Manzanar for Ft. Douglas on February 22, 1945. Sho Nakayama, born in 1919 and from Los Angeles, lived in Block 26, Barracks 7, Room 5. Nakayama was apparently a young single man without family, since he is the only one with family number 590. He left Manzanar for Chicago August 23, 1945. Minoru Shishido, born in 1925 and also from the Los Angeles area, had six others with his same family number (3704), and was a family friend of Izumi's (Allen 2002). Shishido lived in Manzanar in Block 3, Barracks 7, Room 1, until he left for Clearfield, Utah, September 14, 1944.

Dignity Under Adversity

Twenty of the inscriptions convey the emotions and ideas of "normal" life. In the clearly abnormal confinement context, expressions of normality can be considered within the dignity under adversity category. They include barracks addresses, expressions of love (Fig. 14.3, top right), and six different work crew names (Fig. 14.3, top left), including the Emergency Crew. Tommy Miyaoka, who apparently thought highly of himself, wrote his name six times in one small area along a wall at the reservoir sand trap in November 1943:

TOMMY MIYAOKA
TOM M.
TOMMY - NOV. 1943
TOMMY M 1943
Tommy Miyaoka 1943
I LOVE MYSELF / TOMMY MIYAOKA (Fig. 14.3, bottom left)

Born in Sacramento in 1925, Tom Toshiaki Miyaoka was listed as a single male, probably living with parents and siblings at Manzanar, since four others had the same family number (22028). He would have been about 18 when he inscribed his name. He was transferred to the Tule Lake segregation center on February 26, 1944. It is likely that Tommy answered the loyalty questionnaire "incorrectly" in the eyes of the administration, whether from personal belief or, like many young Japanese Americans in the camps, to abide by his parents' wishes so that the family would stay together.

Fig. 14.3 *Top left*: Dignity inscription at the administration staff mess hall, “TOM’S CREW / Oct. 7th 43.” *Top right*: Dignity inscription on an irrigation ditch, “Jun, The LOVER.” *Bottom left*: Dignity inscription at the Manzanar reservoir, “I LOVE MYSELF / TOMMY MIYAOKA.” *Bottom right*: Japanese writing on an irrigation ditch transcribed as “*Showa* 18 [1943] / March 1 / E Group” (Courtesy Jeff Burton, National Park Service)

Identity

Forty of the inscriptions convey explicit group or ethnic identity, apart from that inherent in being part of a work crew. The only work crew written in Japanese is the Emergency Crew or E Group (Fig. 14.3, bottom right). Japanese characters in themselves express Japanese ethnicity (Figs. 14.4 and 14.5). Of the Japanese inscriptions, 80 % were made outside camp, not surprising since the use of Japanese was initially banned.

The inscriptions at Manzanar use both Japanese and Western calendars. Near the water system’s chlorination tank foundation slab is Japanese writing transcribed as “ … hachi nen … kigensetsu,” and translated as “…eighth year … National Foundation Day.” Kigensetsu was an important national holiday of Japan, occurring on February 11, that commemorates the founding of the nation and the imperial line by its legendary first emperor, Jimmu, around 660 BC. Damaged characters in the first part are probably “*showa* 1…” which, with the legible letters, would be translated “Showa 18th year.” The 18th year of showa in the Japanese system corresponds

Fig. 14.4 *Top left*: Identity inscription at the administration staff mess hall, unclear Japanese characters. *Top center*: Identity inscription at the Manzanar reservoir, Japanese writing transcribed as "November 16 / 1943 / Nakahama [family name]." *Top right*: Resistance inscription at the fire station, Japanese writing transcribed as "Great Japan." *Bottom left*: Resistance inscription at the chicken farm, Japanese writing transcribed as "Philippine independence / *Showa* 18 [1943] / October 14." *Bottom center*: Resistance inscription at the chicken farm, Japanese writing transcribed as "Empire of Japan." *Bottom right*: Japanese writing on an irrigation ditch transcribed as "Life in Manzanar where there is a spring breeze" (Courtesy Jeff Burton, National Park Service)

to 1943 in the Western calendar. Damaged letters in the second part are probably "February 11." Although clearly expressing Japanese identity, this inscription could also fit the category of resistance, since it alludes to the legitimacy of the Japanese emperor.

As in the example above, and in the examples discussed under "resistance," below, the use of Japanese writing was often associated with anti-American and militaristic slogans. However, one inscription in Japanese presents a clear Japanese identity along with a decidedly antimilitaristic sentiment. At the reservoir, five

Fig. 14.5 *Left*: Japanese *tanka* on a pipeline support transcribed as “Pleasantly we will soon reap all spikes / If you want to be proud / be proud for now / Ugly Americans.” *Right*: Japanese writing at the Manzanar reservoir transcribed as “Beat Great Britain and the USA” (Courtesy Jeff Burton, National Park Service)

stones were placed atop a large boulder to evoke an *ishidoro* or Japanese stone lantern. An area on the front of the boulder itself was plastered with a patch of concrete, which was inscribed with the character *heiwa*, “peace.”

Three of the inscriptions express Caucasian identities. On a concrete stump next to the Sentry Post at the entrance to the camp is inscribed “319th MP.” The 319th Military Police Escort Guard Company, which included 3 officers and 135 enlisted men, was at Manzanar from June 1, 1943, to April 20, 1944. The 319th was commanded by Captain Donald R. Nail, who appears to have been a no-nonsense administrator who sought to correct lax enforcement of rules as well as lax maintenance of the MP facilities. However, by December 25, 1943, Nail had agreed to withdraw sentries from the guard towers and all the auxiliary gates except at night, and to discontinue perimeter patrols. Manzanar’s director, Ralph Merritt, considered Nail’s decision a “Christmas present,” indicative of drastic changes in the attitude of the military police toward the internees (Unrau 1996:655–656). Upon its departure in April of 1944, the 319th was replaced by a military unit less than half its size, reflecting the War Department’s decision that military police could curtail their security measures even more (Unrau 1996:657). By May 1944, the guard towers were not staffed even at night, and by November, the military police force was reduced once again, to 2 officers and 40 enlisted men, with the understanding that the military police’s primary function was to be on stand-by in case of unexpected disturbances (Unrau 1996:658). The concrete stump on which the inscription was written is one of two designed to look like tree stumps and function as decorative gate posts at the main entrance.

On a ditch near one of the guard towers “Jap Camp,” “1942,” “Ralph S…,” and “M.R.C.” are inscribed, and “Summers” is formed with embedded pebbles. Lone

Pine contractor Charles Summers began work on the first four guard towers in June 1942 (Wehrey 2008:58). "ART—Maillet / LONE PINE / 6-6-42" is on the foundation slab of the net factory. Although it includes a place name, this inscription expresses identity, rather than separation. Lone Pine is a nearby town, and Maillet likely worked on the slab. Art Maillet's son is the current District Attorney for Inyo County, where Manzanar is located.

Resistance

Over 20 of Manzanar's inscriptions fit the final category, Resistance. They include expressions of anger and defiance, and militant slogans. Three examples were written inside camp. Two from 1942 are in Japanese: one at the traffic circle in the administration area translates roughly to "rice" or "America" and "urine" (dated June 1942, shortly after the camp opened). The character for America was the same as the character for rice; Americans were seen as rich and if you were rich you would have lots of rice. A second, dating to October 1942, was inscribed at the fire station (Fig. 14.4, top right). It consists of three characters which translate as *Dainippon* (Great Japan). Both inscriptions are in conspicuous locations inside the camp, but it should be noted that most of the Caucasian staff could not read Japanese. The third inscription inside the camp is in English and dates to 1943: at the hospital morgue sidewalk is "BANZAII" (along with Zero Boys and an unclear Japanese inscription). *Banzai* can be a Japanese cheer of triumph, but *Banzaii* is used to mean "[let the emperor live] ten thousand years," which would be a decidedly pro-Japan sentiment.

Most of the pro-Japan inscriptions date to between February and October 1943, and are located outside the camp. The expressions suggest a strong resentment against the United States as well as emotional attachment to Japan, and the Japanese characters marking National Foundation Day discussed above under identity could fall into the "resistance" category as well. Likewise, the name "Tojo," which appears near the chlorination tank's slab foundation, probably represents a subtle form of resistance, rather than identity. The only known person at Manzanar with the name "Tojo" was a young orphan. Shown the inscription over 55 years later, Dennis Tojo Bandhauer was surprised to see it. It occurs along with two other names and what could be considered a militant statement in Japanese characters. The inscribed Tojo, then, was probably not reflecting someone's own identity, but rather resistance: Tojo was the name of the Japanese Prime Minister and army general who ordered the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Several Japanese inscriptions at the chicken farm convey militant sentiments (Fig. 14.4, bottom center), with translations such as "Great Japanese Empire"; "Beat the US"; and "Unconditional US surrender." The fact that the same text is written in slightly different ways suggests that more than one person created the graffiti. Two inscriptions commemorate Japan's propaganda move of granting independence to the Philippines in October 1943 (Fig. 14.4, bottom left). The phrase, "BANZAI NIPPON," inscribed at an irrigation ditch in the farm fields south of the central area,

can be translated as “Long live Japan.” Using the Romanized form of the native name of Japan, this inscription is the only one that someone who does not know Japanese would recognize as pro-Japan.

Some of the most militant graffiti occurs at the camp reservoir: “Beat Great Britain and the US” (Fig. 14.5, right) “Loyal to the emperor,” and “Black Dragons.” In Japan, the Black Dragon Society was a prominent paramilitary, ultra-nationalist group. At Manzanar it consisted of a dozen or so very outspoken men, most of whom had been educated in Japan. Working on repair and scavenger crews, they rode around on a trash truck with a black pirate flag. They were reportedly responsible for numerous acts of violence and intimidation, including beatings, trying to run over people, instigating unrest, and drawing up a death list (Inada 2000:161–162).

Some resistance is conveyed through poetry (Fig. 14.5, left). For example, in the South Fields irrigation system are two *tankas*, Japanese poems that consist of 5, 7, 5, 7, and 7 syllables. Both *tankas* are written in Japanese characters, and are inscribed near concrete dated to February and March 1943. One transcribes as:

kokoroyoku yagate mi(unclear character)*zara*
karitoran
hokoraba hokore
komeno shuhi

The translation is:

Pleasantly we will soon reap all spikes.
If you want to be proud, be proud for now.
Ugly rice (despicable Americans).

The Chinese character for rice is also used for the words of the United States or American. The poem carries double meanings, one about harvesting rice and the other about beating the Americans. The last two characters are hard to read, but probably *shu-hi*. They do not make a common word, but the meaning of the characters is “ugly despicable people.”

Poetry referring to “Ugly despicable Americans” is clearly defiant. The other *tanka* is more ambiguous:

tawamurewa asaseno watashi
samo nitari
sawo nigi kawa(ri)
atti kotti

The translation is:

This play is like crossing a shallow stream.
Holding a stick.
(ramble) here and there.

It seems likely that the writer intended some double meaning, now unclear.

A third poetic inscription is in Japanese characters transcribed as *harukaze* (damaged characters) *fuku manzana seikatsu* (unclear character), translated as “Life in Manzanar where there is a spring breeze.” Although the inscription sounds like a paean to the beauty of Manzanar, we consider this saying to fit the resistance category.

Almost universally, former internees have commented on the harsh winds at Manzanar. Wind blew the recently disturbed soil into the poorly constructed barracks, so that internees often woke up in the morning covered with sand and silt. Swirling dust frequently obscured the nearby mountains and made breathing difficult. In the spring, especially, winds blow nearly constantly. Unlike the mild climate of Los Angeles, where most of the internees had lived, Manzanar's weather was extreme, with winter temperatures often below freezing and summer temperatures often exceeding 100°. Wind, in all seasons, was unavoidable, since internees had to stand outside in lines for the mess hall and latrines. "Life in Manzanar where there is a spring breeze" may have been ironic, a negative comment on the relentless wind. Or it may have been defiant, with the writer seeing beauty in spite of his circumstances and imposing that perspective onto a harsh reality.

Conclusions

Together the Identity and Resistance categories comprise 20 % of the recorded graffiti at Manzanar. The only other relocation center with resistance graffiti, so far as is now known, is the Tule Lake Segregation Center. Most of the Identity and Resistance graffiti at Manzanar dates to the period from February to October 1943, the main period of concrete work outside the camp, suggesting it was safer to make defiant and angry inscriptions away from the eyes of the administration. But it may not be a coincidence that the proliferation of Identity and Resistance graffiti appears to begin about the time the Loyalty Questionnaire was issued, in February 1943, or that it abates after October 1943, when the first group of "disloyals" were shipped to Tule Lake Segregation Center. In November 1943, a Manzanar work group made inscriptions at the same location where numerous resistance and Japanese inscriptions had been previously made. But none of the November crew's graffiti would be considered to fit the category of resistance and only one included Japanese characters.

The Emergency Crew (which apparently contained members of Manzanar's Black Dragons), produced some of the most militant and defiant graffiti, but also did some of the least desirable work at Manzanar, including manual labor – like concrete construction. But, it should be noted that in spite of their angry rhetoric, their work was essential to Manzanar's operations (Figs. 14.3, bottom right and 14.5, right). One could infer that although they wanted the United States to lose the war, they did not want Manzanar to fail. The Emergency Crew was still around in March 1944, although its membership had likely changed, and still inscribing Japanese characters, but not with the resistance and defiance meanings.

In summary, confinement sites by design replace freedom with restriction and restraints, and individuality with anonymity. However, graffiti at Manzanar reveals a variety of individual emotions, thoughts, and reactions to the social context even in strictly controlled circumstances. Graffiti shows that many strove to retain their ethnic identity and dignity throughout their incarceration, and that defiance and

anger may have peaked in the months following the distribution of the Loyalty Questionnaire. However, the intended meanings of some inscriptions are difficult to understand without knowing the contexts and the people who wrote them. Further study of the inscriptions by native speakers, bibliographic and archival research, and interviews may clarify more hidden meanings and related contexts.

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Appendix: World War II Era Inscriptions at Manzanar

Inside Security Fence

Administration Block, Caucasian mess hall addition

TOM'S CREW Oct 7th 43
TOM FUJISAKI 10/7/43
Japanese (Katakana) characters transcribed as "ehu" (or "efu"). It does not appear to be a Japanese word, and may represent the letter F.
Chinese characters transcribed as "… ju hou …". The first and third characters are unclear. The second character means celebration; as a Japanese word it may be a transcription of a foreign place name. This inscription was scribbled over when wet.
Finger marking possibly the Buddhist character "mu" (nothing)
Outline of a bare footprint

Administration Block, small slab

KUBOTA
KUBOTA / 4-1-42

Administration Block, traffic circle

BUILT BY WADA AND CREW JUNE 10, 1942 A.D.
Paul TAKEUOHI "42"
M MASY
MII
Yosh YASUDA + B.N.
MASY M
N..AMI
Z (or N)
YANK
OKAMUDO
GERD KEHIHARA / GLENDALE CAL / 6/10/42
S KUMO

ELK GROVE
SM…
OV
Yosh
Two Japanese characters transcribed as *ta* (rice field or paddy) and *yubari* (urine). It is not clear how the writer intended these characters to be read, they are not a typical juxtaposition and there are at least three possible ways of reading this character compound. In addition, the character used for urine is not the form used in common conversational Japanese; its use is usually confined to formal writing.
Handprints
Pebbles pressed into concrete

Auditorium, concrete cornerstone
AUDITORI… FEB. 12, 1944

Auditorium, sidewalk
MC 6/13/44
NN
YK 6/13/4…
FX 4…

Camouflage Net Factory
ART - Maillet / LONE PINE / 6-6-42

Camouflage Net Factory, small slab
MAR. 30th 194-

Farm Equipment Storage Building
1944

Fire Department
Bob UARAGAMI
TOM TAKAHASHI "JERK"
SHO MATSUSHITA
GEO H.
R… G…
HIDEO JUN (?)
Oshita
19 NOB
SHO N
J KIO…
KEN Hif…
TAK…
SOTO OCT 11 1942
MAS
MASA …

AO - 42
F
MI
A
WANA ....A (?)
Japanese characters transcribed as *Dainippon* (Great Japan)
Imprint of a quarter

Guayule Lath House
12-30-42

Hospital Laundry Room
Jed…

Merritt Park, west stele
Pleasure Park 1943
Japanese Characters transcribed as “Merritt Park”

Merritt Park, east stele
Pleasure Park 1943
Japanese characters transcribed as “Memorial Marker / October 1943”

Military Police Sentry Post, decorative concrete stumps for gate
319TH M.P.
AW
B.C.
BERT
E.MN
JH
PL
WL. WELLES
XXXXXXX
BG

Morgue, sidewalk
BUGS
SAM 9/9/43
1/4/… JACK
BANZAII
9/10/43 Zero Boy’s
Indistinct Japanese writing / 1943

Motor Pool Office
E. K. (? ?)
L I
Handprint
Possible child’s footprint

North Park, barbecue grill
Ray Kubota
August 1943 / hi

Residential Block 2, small pond at Barracks 1
Impressed pennies

Residential Block 3, ironing room
MY
M
Frank

Residential Block, laundry room fat trap
1942 MAS HAMA
Possible initials

Residential Block 6, manhole fragment
E KONI…

Residential Block 7 (High School), manhole apron
TAKOY
N K
V T
E N
… K
MAR
SAM
MASNIA
T … I
LOVE (?)
TAK
… AN
T A
T H
K H T
J …
N H

Residential Block 8, ironing room
"FRED JERK"

Residential Block 9, entry at Barracks 6
9=6=1 (shorthand for "Block 9, Barracks 6, Residence 1")

Residential Block 10, overflow basin at Barracks 11 faucet
June 6, 1944

Residential Block 10, ironing room

KURIHARA
GEO M… M
6-19-42

Residential Block 11, entry at Barracks 6
Shintoni May 21, 1944

Residential Block, overflow basin at Barracks 3 faucet
1944

Residential Block 15, pond bridge at Barracks 7
unclear Japanese characters

Residential Block 15, slab fragments near Barracks 8
K. ONISHI
M. NANISHI
M. NAKAZAW
…S M 5
…r 5
114

Residential Block 15, entryway at Barracks 13
15-13-4 (made with embedded pebbles; shorthand for “Block 15, Barracks 13, Residence 4”)

Residential Block 15, ironing room
JACKSON / (…LORDAL)
K.N.
M.T.
abstract design

Residential Block 16, laundry room fat trap
G.T.
M.K.

Residential Block 17, slab fragments near Barracks 1
5.14.44. SA

Residential Block 18, entry at Barracks 11
Two deliberate handprints; one is very small and must be that of a child.

Residential Block 19, overflow basin at Barracks 12 faucet
Feb. 25, 1943

Residential Block 22, mess hall pond
8-7 1942 (within pond, made with embedded pebbles)
AUG. 9, 42 (on bridge)

Residential Block 34, entry at Barracks 2
May 8, 1942

Residential Block 36, small pond at Barracks 12
36-12

Service Station
M.F. 11-9-42

Well #169, concrete apron
BK 7/24/44
7/2…/44 M …
M … …/…/…
Finger and hand prints

Outside Security Fence

Bairs Creek Irrigation System, dam cap wall
1942

Bairs Creek Irrigation System, diversion box
WILLY 3-30-43
ITCH 3-30-43
WILLY + ALYEE
W.... ....
WILLY + A
S.M. 3-30-40 (sic)
M.Y. 3-30-43
MAR. 30 1943

Cemetery Monument
Front transcription: *ireitou*, "memorial tower." The direct translation is: "Monument to console the souls of the dead." It is a common term for this kind of monument. Back transcription: *senkyuhyaku yonjusan nen hachigatsu. manzana nihonjin konryu*, "Erected by the Manzanar Japanese, August 1943."

Chicken Farm, office and processing building, perimeter foundation
Japanese (*katakana*) inscription transcribed as *chinpo*, a colloquial word for "penis."

Chicken Farm, office and processing building, slab
Japanese writing transcribed as "Empire of Japan / Great victory"
Japanese writing transcribed as "Empire of Japan"

Chicken Farm, office and processing building, entryways
OOKA
JR A

Handprint
J.N.
AUG 9, 1943
Two penny impressions

Chicken Farm, addition to office building
SHISHI K… …
1/28/44 / DAVID …

Chicken Farm, chicken coop perimeter foundations
Frank Bakatare (in Japanese *bakatare* is analogous to stupid)
N.Y.K. LINE (n*ippon yusen kaisha*, "Japan Mail Shipping Line")
Japanese writing transcribed as *toyo kisen gaisha*, "Oriental Steamship Company."

Chicken Farm, chicken coop slabs
Shoe, boot, and dog prints
Okamoto / Venice / Calif. ornia
Oct 15 / Ray O ----
Oct …4th 1943 / … YASUI
TOM
Japanese inscriptions transcribed as "Beat the U.S."
Japanese writing transcribed as "Manzanar"
Japanese writing transcribed as "Philippine independence / Showa 18 (1943) / October 14"
Japanese writing transcribed as "US surrender without objection to Japan"
Japanese writing transcribed as "Philippine independence / Showa 18 (1943) / October 14"

Chicken Farm, retaining wall
GIMP IZUMI / Dec 22 1943
SHO with two Japanese characters transcribed as *Nakayama* (a family name).
MINORU and an abstract design
GIMP THE … (with a possible erased Japanese character)
GIMP with possible erased characters
MIN
MIN SHISHIDO

Chlorination Tank, ditch and retaining walls
T. YOTS 2-11-43
NOB 2-11-43
2-11-43 TOJO
Japanese writing transcribed as (damaged letters) *hachi nen* (damaged letters) *kigensetsu*, "… eighth year … National Foundation Day." *Kigensetsu* is an anniversary on February 11, that commemorates the accession of the first emperor in mythical times. It is similar to the concept of National Foundation Day, and was an important national holiday of Japan. Damaged letters in the

first part are probably *showa* 1. With the legible letters, they make "*Showa* 18th year," which corresponds to 1943. Damaged letters in the second part are probably "February 11."

Far South Fields Irrigation System, bridge and diversion dam

TUCSON
HARVEY NED
TUCSON 3/6/44
COMPLETE… MARC…
Japanese writing transcribed as *senkyuhyaku yonjuyonen sangatsu konryu*, "Built in March 1944."
Japanese writing transcribed as *senkyuhyaku yonjuyonen sangatsui* (?)*gumi konryu*, "Built by E Group in March 1944."

Far South Fields Irrigation System, diversion box

NOV 1 43
Japanese writing transcribed as *fujisaki* (a family name) and *kumi* (a given name?).

Far North Fields Irrigation System, ditches

SV 1944 MARK
JUN, The LOVER
K.O.+ CH
Timber
Tommy /11/43
Eichi + Michi Timber
I LOVE MICHI SIGNED …ICHI
COMPLETED 3.26.43
OUTT
RI
JACKSON NAKASHIMA
Y.J.K. 1943
// KJ JY
Japanese writing transcribed as *hichigatsu muika ootsuki*(?), "July 6 Ootsuki" (a family name).
Japanese writing transcribed as *manzana dainipponkoku*, "Manzanar Great Japan."

North Fields Irrigation System, dam cap wall

KO
TK

Far South Fields Irrigation System, ditches

MAR 19 1944
Japanese writing in poor condition transcribed as six possible family names (*mizoguchi* [?] *tamai* [?] … … … ..*da*) and *senkyuhyaku yonjuyon konryu*, "Built 1944."

Guard Tower 4 Vicinity, ditch
JAP CAMP
M.R.C. 1942
FS (overlapped letters)
Summers (formed with embedded pebbles)
RALPH S…
1942

Hog Farm, loading ramp
YOSHINAGA

Hog Farm, weir box
J L M
Tom Fujisaki 9/22/43
Mitsuru Morikawa

Hog Farm, ditch
194-
Japanese writing transcribed as *no*(?) (family name)
Japanese writing transcribed as *matsu*(?) (family name)
Japanese writing transcribed as *ita*(?) (family name)
Japanese writing transcribed as *saura* (family name)
Japanese writing transcribed as *hirabayashi* (or *hiramatsu*) (family name)
Japanese writing transcribed as *yoshimura* (family name)
Japanese writing transcribed as *maeda* (family name)
Japanese writing transcribed as *butai bi* (damaged character), "Group or Unit B(?)."

Lone Pine Train Station, exterior clapboard siding
I. SHIGEI 1942 8. …1
Y FUJII

Manzanar Airport, hangar apron
SN
IG
RW
6-25-42

Military Police Compound, small slab
E.H.
W.C.W.
W.E.C.

North Fields Irrigation System, ditches
2nd 55 44
MAKIO TOM
NH
YOSH K
geometric design

North Wells, pipeline support

FINISHED BY TOM FUJISAKI CREW / MAR. 23, 1944.

Reservoir, cap walls

STONE WALL BY THE EMERGENCY CREW 2/25/43 (made of embedded pebbles).
NS
NOB 3-2-43
E.S. MURAOKA 14-4-1 3-3-43
Japanese writing transcribed as *itaru* (unclear character) *manzana kokugun* (two unclear characters), "To Manzanar National Army" (?). The last two characters are not clear. They might represent a specific place name within Manzanar instead of National Army.
Japanese writing transcribed as *showa juhachinen*…, "18th year …" (corresponds to 1943). The indistinct second line is likely a month and day or a person's name.
Japanese writing transcribed as *chukun aikoku*, "loyal to the emperor and love the country." A motto favored by the Japanese military government.
Two columns of indistinct Japanese text, it includes "18th year"

Reservoir, settling basin sidewalls

Japanese writing transcribed as *kougun senryouchi* 2/17 /43 *itaru*(?) *manzana* …, "the army of the emperor occupied territory 2/17/43 to Manzanar …"
Japanese writing transcribed as *datou eibei*, "beat Great Britain and the USA."
Japanese writing transcribed as *banbanzai*, "banzaii"; *dainippon teikoku*, "The Great Japanese Empire"; *manzana kokuryukai honbu*,"Manzanar Black Dragon Group headquarter."
An abstract design, possibly of a penis

Reservoir, settling basin repair

REPARED [sic] MAR 19 46 / BY GEO SHEPHERD / AND / RAY M…EX … ENT / THE / …R… (obscured by repair work)

Reservoir, sand trap

CONSTRUCTED BY CHODO & INC. NOV. 9 '43
TOMMY MIYAOKA
TOM M.
TOMMY - NOV. 1943
TOMMY M 1943
Tommy Miyaoka 1943
I LOVE MYSELF / TOMMY MIYAOKA
NOV. 1943 MANZANAR CALIF.
Z. OGAWA
K E - YOSHINAGA
1943 NOV OGAWA
NOV 12 1943 MANZANAR WALL

1943 Y. & T. KOBATA KAI
K. OGAWA
Jiro Matsuyama 11/24/43
K O 11/9/43
M. ITO + Co
HY ’45
’42 / HK / ’45
Japanese writing transcribed as *senkyuhyaku yonjusannen juichigatsu juroku-nichi nakahama*, “November 16, 1943 Nakahama” (a family name).
Two columns of Japanese text. The inscription is too unclear to translate, but is likely a person’s name

Reservoir, anti-siphon pipe apron
A.J.E.
H L / L L / A C
RS

Reservoir, large boulder with stacked rock “lantern”
Japanese writing transcribed as *heiwa*, “peace”

South Fields Irrigation System, ditches
SAT
1943.2.28
JOE ǂ 1943
Feb. 26 / FARM CREW 1943
March 10, 1943 M
BANZAI NIPPON
Japanese writing transcribed as *harukaze* (damaged characters) *fuku manzana seikatsu* (unclear character), “Life in Manzanar where there is a spring breeze.”
Japanese writing transcribed as *kuroiwa* (a family name) *gakusan* (a pen name for a male?) *Gakusan* may be a *gagou*, a kind of pen name that poets, writers, and painters use. Many Japanese of this generation wrote traditional Japanese or Chinese poems and had *gagou*. *Gagou* are sometimes taken from old Chinese literature or made by combinations of Chinese characters with elegant meanings. The meanings of the characters in this *gagou* are “study” and “mountain.”
Japanese writing transcribed as *showa juhachinen sangatsu tsuitachiihi*(?) *butai*, “18th year (corresponds to 1943) March 1 E (?) Group (or Unit).

South Fields Irrigation System, diversion box
MAKIO

South Fields Irrigation System, pipeline supports
kokoroyoku yagate mi(unclear character)zara
karitoran
hokoraba hokore
komeno shuhi

The translation is:
Pleasantly we will soon reap all spikes.
If you want to be proud, be proud for now.
Ugly rice (despicable Americans).

tawamurewa asaseno watashi
samo nitari
sawo nigi kawa(ri)
atti kotti

The translation is:
This play is like crossing a shallow stream.
Holding a stick.
(ramble) here and there.

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