

Farm Security Administration Documentation of Agricultural Labor Internment Camps in the Pacific Northwest – Project Update

With a grant from the Malheur County Cultural Trust, Project Director Morgen Young spent four days in Ontario and Nyssa, Oregon conducting oral history interviews in April. Ten video oral histories were recorded with eighteen individuals. The subjects included Japanese Americans who were recruited from the Portland Assembly Center to live and work at the FSA Labor Camp near Nyssa; children of Japanese Americans who resided at the Nyssa camp; Japanese American families who moved to Malheur County in the 1930s; and individuals whose families had hired Japanese American laborers during World War II.

The trip greatly advanced the project by capturing first hand accounts of the Nyssa camp. Many of the subjects commented that this was the first time they spoke so openly about their experiences in the labor camp. Additional research was also conducted, through newspaper archives and published sources. Subjects interviewed also identified additional individuals in the 1942 FSA photographs by Russell Lee under examination in this project.

Subject(s) Interviewed:

1. Patricia Imada – lived at former Civilian Conservation Corps camp from 1942 to 1959; the camp housed Japanese American laborers from October 1942 until the end of the war; some families remained in the camp well in to the 1960s
2. Dange and Fumi Atagi – husband and wife; the Atagi family moved to the county in 1925
3. Reid Saito – son of Kayno Saito, a Nyssa camp resident
4. June Morinaga and Anne Enoki – members of the Morishita family, one of the first families to move from the Portland Assembly Center to the Nyssa camp
5. Sumi Saito and Teddy Tanaka – members of the Wada family; moved to the area in 1930
6. Elaine Cockrell, Meta Pierson, and Darlene Hamilton – members of farming families based in Nyssa and Adrian; hired Japanese American laborers during and after the war
7. Janis Cornmesser and Dave Murakami – children of Sig Murakami, a crew leader who hired laborers from the Nyssa camp
8. Yas Teramura and Bob Kida – residents of the Nyssa camp; Mr. Teramura was one of the first men to volunteer to work in the sugar beet fields in Malheur County
9. Nellie Saito – wife of Joe Saito, a community leader; the Saito family arrived in the area in 1934
10. Mary Takami and Janet Koda – mother and daughter; Mrs. Takami lived in the Nyssa camp, where she met her husband; the couple moved to the converted CCC camp and lived there with their children until 1964

**Screen grabs of those in these ten interviews follow.
Thanks to all concerned.**



**Anne Morishita Enoki &
June Morishita Morinaga**



**Darlene Hamilton, Meta Pierson
& Elaine Cockrell**



Fumi & Dange Atagi



Janis Murakami Cornmesser & Dave Murakami



Mary Takami & Janet Takami Koda

**Screen grabs of
video interviewees
by Morgen Young at
Four Rivers Cultural Center
April 15-17, 2013 in Ontario, Oregon
– Dr. Dorin Daniels &
Gary McClellan, videographers**



Nellie Saito



Patricia Imada



Reid Saito



Sumi Wada Saito & Teddy Wada Tanaka



Yas Teramura & Bob Kido