

Amache Special Resource Study

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



September 2020



Hello Friends,

The National Park Service (NPS) is pleased to announce the launch of a special resource study of the Granada Relocation Center. More commonly known as Amache, the site was one of the 10 military-style prison camps operated by the War Relocation Authority (WRA) under the Department of Interior during World War II. Amache incarcerated Japanese Americans and legal residents of Japanese ancestry in a remote area of southeastern Colorado near the Arkansas River.

The John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act of 2019 directed the secretary of the interior to conduct a study of Amache to evaluate its national significance and determine the suitability and feasibility of designating it as a unit of the national park system. Congress authorized this study because of Amache's importance to the history of the Japanese American incarceration during World War II.

As we begin this study, we would like to invite the public to submit comments about Amache.

After the comment period closes, the National Park Service will evaluate Amache using congressionally established criteria for national significance, suitability, feasibility, and need for direct NPS management. Based on the analysis, the National Park Service will determine whether the site meets the criteria for inclusion in the national park system and will prepare the study for the secretary of interior. The secretary will then submit the findings and a recommendation to Congress.

We hope you will let us know your thoughts and ideas by taking time to comment on the study. Information on public involvement opportunities and how you can submit comments is included on the last page of this newsletter. The comment period will be open through February 15, 2021.

Your thoughts and ideas are important to us. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
The NPS Study Team

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About the National Park Service



The National Park Service preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The National Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world. The National Park Service is a bureau within the Department of the Interior and manages more than 400 park units that comprise the national park system. Administration of park units occurs in many ways, from traditional units that are federally managed to non-traditional units that rely on partnerships and may have little, if any, federal landownership.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Special Resource Study?

A special resource study objectively evaluates the eligibility of an area to be designated as a national park or other special designation. The National Park Service collects information about the quality of resources in the study area. The study will be completed within three years. If the resources meet the eligibility criteria, the National Park Service evaluates the potential for visitor enjoyment and efficient management and analyzes the feasibility and appropriateness of different management options. The National Park Service provides its findings to the secretary of the interior who then presents a recommendation to Congress. Regardless of the outcome of the study, new units of the national park system can only be established by an Act of Congress or by presidential proclamation.

How will Amache be evaluated?

The 1998 National Parks Omnibus Management Act (54 United States Code 100507) established the process for identifying and authorizing studies of new national park units. Under the law, a study area must meet all four of the following criteria to be recommended as an addition to the national park system:

- Contain nationally significant natural and/or cultural resources.
- Represent a natural or cultural resource that is not already adequately represented in the national park system or is not comparably represented and protected for public enjoyment by another land-managing entity.
- Must be (1) of sufficient size and appropriate configuration to ensure long-term protection of the resources and visitor enjoyment, and (2) capable of efficient administration by the National Park Service at a reasonable cost; important feasibility factors include landownership, acquisition costs, life cycle maintenance costs, access, threats to the resource, and staff or development requirements.
- Require direct NPS management that is clearly superior to other management approaches.

How will the study affect the local community of Granada and surrounding private property?

The National Park Service seeks to work collaboratively with local communities and agencies. The study will not consider management actions that would adversely affect private property rights. A new national park system designation, if enacted by Congress, would not give the National Park Service any regulatory authority over private land outside of the boundary of the park unit.

What are some of the possible outcomes of the study?

Over the last 15 years, approximately one in four completed special resource studies have resulted in a recommendation for inclusion in the national park system. Many studies conclude that resources do not meet the required criteria or that existing management; technical or financial assistance; or local, state or private initiatives are preferable to the establishment of a new national park unit. If the Amache special resource study results in a recommendation from the secretary of the interior that Amache warrants addition to the national park system, Congress may or may not act on or follow the recommendation. There is no timeframe for legislative action.

When will I learn the results of the study?

The National Park Service will publicly release a study report after it has been transmitted to Congress. The National Park Service does not release preliminary findings or drafts of the study or indicate whether or not the study is likely to recommend inclusion in the national park system. The timeline for transmission to Congress is fall 2022.

What happens if Amache is designated a unit of the national park system?

Developing a new unit of the national park system is a slow process. In the event Congress adds Amache to the national park system, NPS operations would likely be at a minimal level for the initial period after designation. The National Park Service operates in a constrained fiscal environment and does not have the capacity to open fully-staffed units immediately after designation. It may take many years for the National Park Service to develop visitor facilities and for an increase in visitation to materialize.

About the Study Area | Study Area Map

About the Study Area

On February 19, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, leading to the forced removal of more than 110,000 Japanese Americans from their homes and communities on the West Coast to a system of incarceration sites. The Granada Relocation Center, commonly known as Amache, was one of 10 incarceration sites built to imprison Japanese Americans during World War II. Although it had the smallest population of the 10 sites, more than 10,000 people passed through Amache between August 1942 and October 1945. At its peak, Amache housed more than 7,300 individuals, two-thirds of whom were U.S. citizens.

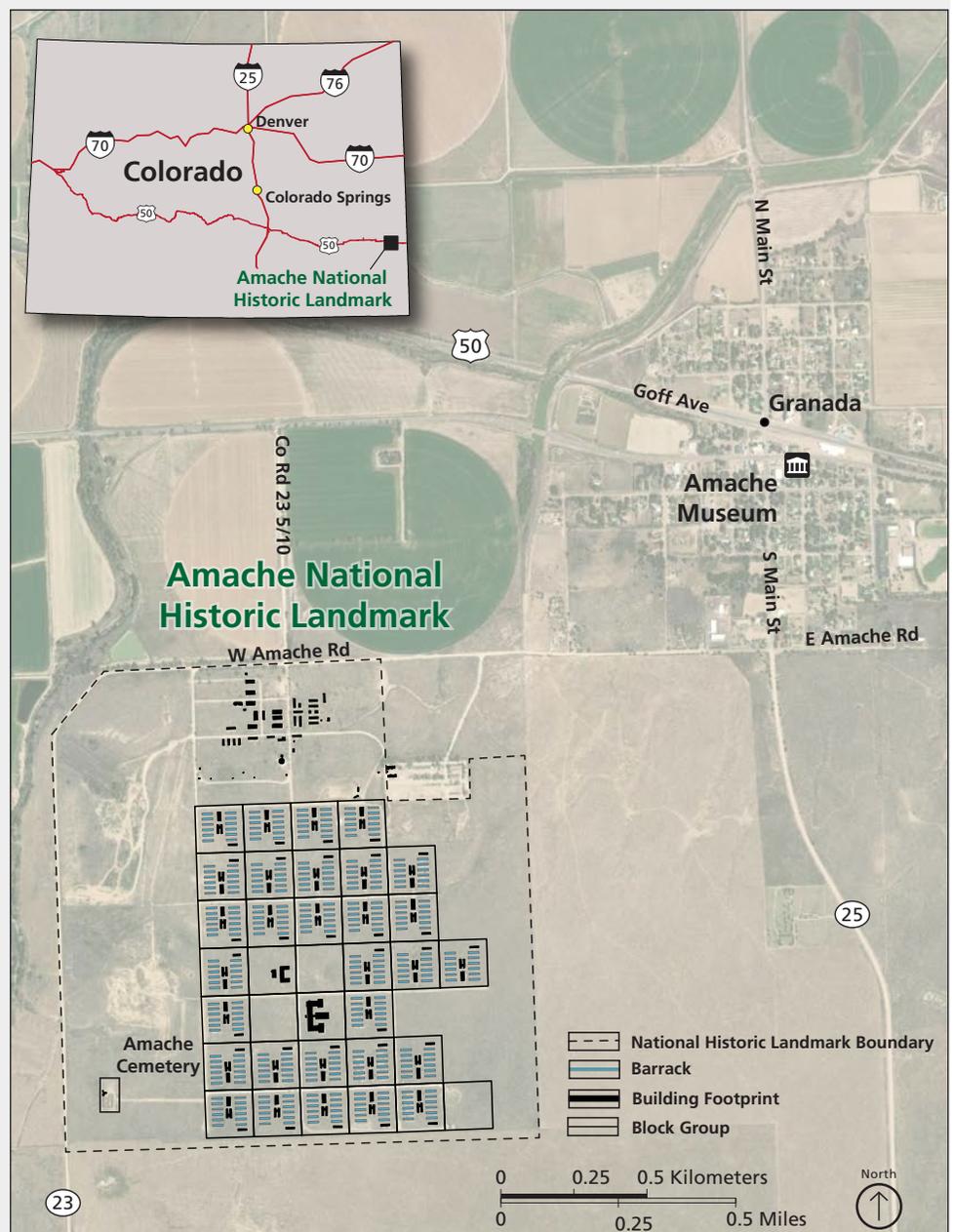
The War Relocation Authority, through purchase or condemnation, used 10,000 acres of land for the Amache incarceration site. The central, “built-up” portion of Amache was 640 acres (one square mile) and was primarily made up of 29 blocks of military-style barracks used as residential blocks and administrative buildings. Surrounded by barbed wire fence with six watch towers along the perimeter, incarcerated lived under armed guard. Living quarters were cramped; families were assigned to one small room. Incarcerated had little privacy, as each block shared a communal mess hall, laundry, toilets, and a shower room. The military police and administrative staff lived in a separate part of the camp. The remaining 9,360 acres of Amache were used for agriculture to sustain the camp.

In December 1944, following the US Supreme Court decision on *Ex parte Mitsuye Endo* (323 U.S. 283), which ruled that the War Relocation Authority acted beyond its power and could not detain American citizens without charges, the camps began to close. Many incarcerated hesitated to return to California, having lost their homes and property and knowing that there was strong anti-Japanese sentiment. Japanese Americans gradually left Amache. Their lives disrupted, many struggled to rebuild as they faced an uncertain future.

Following the camp’s closure on October 15, 1945, the buildings were demolished or removed, and Amache’s agricultural lands reverted to private farming and ranching. The land comprising the built-up portion of the center was sold to the Town of Granada.

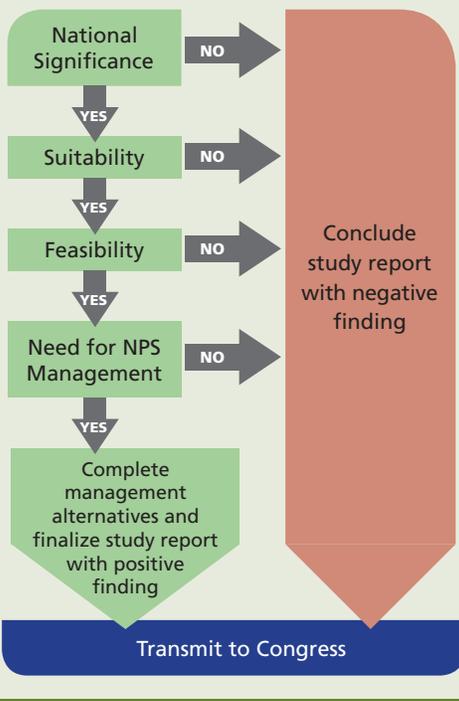
Today, the historic cemetery, concrete foundations, road network, perimeter fence, and elements of the historic landscape remain. Recent efforts to preserve Amache have led to the restoration of the original water tower and the reconstruction of a guard tower and residential barracks.

Over the past 40 years, former incarcerated and their descendants have returned to Amache as part of an annual pilgrimage. In 2006, the secretary of the interior designated Amache a National Historic Landmark, affirming its national significance as part of the Japanese American incarceration during World War II.



The Study Process

Special Resource Study (SRS) Completion Pathways



Website:

<https://parkplanning.nps.gov/amache>

How to Participate

We encourage you to learn more about the special resource study process and share your ideas during the comment period from February 11, 2020, thru February 15, 2021. Here are some ways to do so:

- Visit the study site at <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/amache>
- Send us your thoughts, comments, and information:
 - » **Online.** Visit the web address above and click the “Open for Comment” link.
 - » **By mail.** Send written comments to the mailing address below.

In your comments, we are particularly interested to hear your thoughts and ideas about the following:

1. What is your vision for preserving Amache? How would you like to see the site managed? What types of activities and experiences do you want to see as part of Amache’s future?
2. Do you have any ideas or concerns that the National Park Service should be aware of and/or address in the study process?
3. What objects, buildings, remaining features, values and stories do you believe are most important and why?
4. What do you think differentiates Amache from the other nine Japanese American incarceration camps?
5. Do you have any other ideas or comments you would like to share with us?

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Other Public Involvement Opportunities

Meetings in California and Arvada were canceled due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Unfortunately, public meetings scheduled to take place this past March and April had to be cancelled due to the COVID-19 outbreak. Three virtual public meetings were held in July and August as part of the *Tadaima! A Community Virtual Pilgrimage* online event hosted by Japanese American Memorial Pilgrimages and the National Park Service. As part of this effort, we recognized that virtual meetings are not a viable option for members of the public who are less comfortable with technology or for those who do not have devices or reliable Internet access.

Moving forward, we are committed to exploring different options for public involvement that meet the needs of people directly connected with Amache and the broader public. Updates on additional public involvement opportunities will be widely announced as they become available as well as posted on the project website:

<https://parkplanning.nps.gov/amache>

We appreciate your patience and understanding and continue to be grateful for your participation!

