



# Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

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## [Topaz, Utah War Relocation Center -- Japanese Internment Camp]

**Stock#:** 57273  
**Map Maker:** Anonymous  
**Date:** 1942 circa  
**Place:** n.p.  
**Color:** Pen & Ink  
**Condition:** VG  
**Size:** 36.5 x 24.5 inches  
**Price:** SOLD



### Description:

***Previously Unknown Hand Drawn Plan of the Japanese Internment Camp at Topaz Mountain, Utah -- Home to Fred Korematsu and Mitsuye Endo***

Detailed plan of the "City" and neighboring buildings of the Topaz War Location Center, one of the primary locations utilized to house Japanese internees from the San Francisco Bay area during World War II.

Named for its location, near Topaz Mountain, Utah, approximately 140 miles southwest of Salt Lake City Utah, the camp opened in 1942 as a means of removing Japanese living in the Bay area from the "sensitive" coastal regions. The map shows the 1 square mile "City," barbed wire perimeter, guard towers



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and 42 "blocks" within the core of the camp, which included a pre-school school, high school, music school, churches (Protestant, Catholic, Buddhist and Inter-Faith), library, Japanese library, gym, industrial arts building, science building, barber shops, movies and other facilities for residents.

The relocation center eventually consisted of 623 buildings including two elementary schools, one junior/senior high school, a hospital, a church, seven watch towers, a perimeter fence, and a sentry post. Thousands of trees and shrubs were planted throughout the developed area of the camp and internees engaged in extensive landscaping of the barracks areas.

The area at the bottom of the map would appear a model unit for a typical residential block. The model of the block shows an area partitioned into 12 barracks, with central kitchen, dining, laundry and latrine facilities (including showers, baths and toilets) for the common use of the surrounding barracks.

Toward the top of the map, which is oriented to the north, are the non-internee facilities, including "Caucasion's Quarters," a Warehouse, Hospital, Administration Building, Lumber Yard, Motor Pool, Coal Yard, etc., with wells, a gate, M.P. location and guard towers shown around the perimeter.

Of particular note, Topaz was the interment camp which housed Fred C. Korematsu and Mitsuye Endo, the named plaintiffs in two landmark U.S. Supreme Court cases addressing Japanese interment during the war. The cases challenged the constitutionality of the exclusion, relocation, and incarceration of Japanese Americans. At the beginning of the war Fred Korematsu, a native-born U.S. citizen of Japanese descent, refused to follow Executive Order 9066 and continued to live and work in California, which was within a military exclusion zone. Korematsu was arrested, tried, and convicted for violating Public Law No. 503, which criminalized violations of military orders issued under Executive Order 9066. Fred Korematsu appealed the conviction stating that the Executive Order was unconstitutional and a violation of the Fifth Amendment. In Korematsu v. United States (1944), the Supreme Court ruled against Korematsu finding that, while the constitutionality of compulsory exclusion as stated in the Executive Order was suspect, the government's need to protect against espionage during time of war outweighed Korematsu's individual rights, and the rights of Americans of Japanese descent.

Unlike Korematsu's case, Mitsuye Endo's dealt only with the incarceration of Japanese Americans. In 1943, Mitsuye Endo, a native-born U.S. citizen of Japanese descent, was contacted by civil liberties lawyer James Purcell about serving as a test case to challenge incarceration in relocation centers. She agreed to serve as a test case and Purcell filed a writ of habeas corpus on her behalf stating that "she is a loyal and law-abiding citizen of the United States, that no charge has been made against her, that she is being unlawfully detained, and that she is confined in the Relocation Center under armed guard and held there against her will." Purcell asked that Endo be either charged with a crime or released from incarceration. The U.S. Government agreed that Endo was loyal and law-abiding and also that she was not being



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detained on any charge or suspected of disloyalty. Because they were concerned that the courts would find the detention of Japanese Americans unconstitutional and also to keep the case from proceeding any further, the government offered to release Mitsuye Endo as long as she agreed not to return to the West Coast. Endo refused and her case proceeded to the Supreme Court. In Ex Parte Mitsuye Endo (1944), the Supreme Court held that "admittedly loyal" citizens could not be deprived of their liberty and held in relocation centers. The decision effectively ended the incarceration of Japanese Americans.

Based upon the historical information described below and modern models of the camp, this would appear to be an accurate depiction of the camp, drawn by a Japanese Internee, whose first language was not English.

This link below shows a modern recreation of the "City" portion of the Topaz camp and model barracks: <http://www.topazmuseum.org/camp-map>.

#### **Observations on the Map**

The present map includes significantly more information than any other source document we could locate, both in terms of the specificity of the location of various facilities and services and the details provided (inter-faith and catholic churches), Japanese Language libraries, nurseries, boy scout area, judo, art school, sewing school, etc. The existence of Buddhist and Protestant Churches (shown at center of plan) was relatively well documented, but we found no mention of Catholic or inter-faith facilities in most sources consulted, other than brief mentions in the *Topaz Times*.

Of further note, there are numerous interesting word misspellings such as "Caucasion's Quarters", "Nurserey", "Prodestant" (2 times) and "Baber Shop" (3 times). The word "Motor" was initially spelled "Modor". The map also uses all capital letters and a naive style/inconsistency in the handwriting and modeling. These factors strongly suggest the map was created by an untrained hand. The erasures and nature of the details suggest either a contemporary resident of the camp or a highly well informed recreation. The map tends to be very inward looking in terms of its information.

Given the nature of the misspellings, the maker would seem to most likely be Japanese. Similarly, the use of all caps and the decision to show "Boy Scout" as a singular name, rather than plural "Boy Scouts" are all reflective of a non-native English speaker.

Based upon the foregoing, we believe that the maker was most likely Japanese (non-native English language speaker) and almost certainly someone who was either living in the Topaz Camp or drawing the camp from a very recent recollection.



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One other feature of note that strongly suggests that the map was drawn by a Japanese internee. Great attention is paid to the direction in which the doors in the barracks model swung open, including building entries, boilers and closet doors. This sort of detail suggests an attention to function, not merely location, the sort of detail that would much more likely be observable to a resident, rather than someone drawing an historical re-recreation.

#### **Topaz Japanese Internment Camp**

The Topaz War Relocation Center was also known as the Central Utah Relocation Center (Topaz) and briefly as the Abraham Relocation Center. It was a camp which housed Americans of Japanese descent and immigrants who had come to the United States from Japan, called Nikkei. President Franklin Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 in February 1942, ordering people of Japanese ancestry to be incarcerated in "relocation centers" like Topaz during World War II. Most of the people interred at Topaz came from the Tanforan Assembly Center and previously lived in the San Francisco Bay Area. The camp was opened in September 1942 and closed in October 1945.

Locate approximately 15 miles west of Delta, Utah, consisted of 19,800 acres, with a 640 acres main living area. Most internees lived in the main living area, though some lived off-site as agricultural and industrial laborers. Approximately 9,000 internees and staff were housed at Topaz at its peak. The extreme temperature fluctuations of the arid area combined with uninsulated barracks made conditions very uncomfortable, even after the belated installation of pot-bellied stoves.

The relocation center eventually consisted of 623 buildings including two elementary schools, one junior/senior high school, a hospital, a church, seven watch towers, a perimeter fence, and a sentry post. Thousands of trees and shrubs were planted throughout the developed area of the camp and internees engaged in extensive landscaping of the barracks areas.

The camp housed two elementary schools and a high school, a library, and some recreational facilities. Camp life was documented in a newspaper, *Topaz Times*, and in the literary publication *Trek*. The *Topaz Times* was a daily newspaper, typically 4-6 pages, with a 1 page Japanese language supplement. Internees worked inside and outside the camp, mostly in agricultural labor. Many internees became notable artists.

Topaz was the primary internment site in the state of Utah. A smaller camp existed briefly a few miles north of Moab, which was used to isolate a few men considered to be troublemakers prior to their being sent to Leupp, Arizona. A site at Antelope Springs, in the mountains west of Topaz, was used as a recreation area by the residents and staff of Topaz.

Topaz contained a living complex known as the "city", about 1 square mile, as well as extensive



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agricultural lands. Within the city, forty-two blocks were for internees, thirty-four of which were residential. Each residential block housed 200-300 people, housed in barracks that held five people within a single 20 by 20 feet room. Families were generally housed together, while single adults would be housed with four other unrelated individuals. Residential blocks also contained a recreation hall, a mess hall, an office for the block manager, and a combined laundry/toilet/bathing facility. Each block contained only four bathtubs for all the women and four showers for all the men living there.

Barracks were built out of wood frame covered in tarpaper, with wooden floors. Many internees moved into the barracks before they were completed, exposing them to harsh weather. Eventually, they were lined with sheetrock, and the floors filled with masonite. While the construction began in July 1942, the first inmates moved in in September 1942, and the camp was not completed until early 1943. Camp construction was completed in part by 214 interned laborers who volunteered to arrive early and help build the camp. Rooms were heated by pot-bellied stoves. There was no furniture provided. Inmates used communal leftover scrap wood from construction to build beds, tables, and cabinets. Some families also modified their living quarters with fabric partitions. Water came from wells and was stored in a large wooden tank, and was "almost undrinkable" because of its alkalinity.

Topaz also included a number of communal areas: a high school, two elementary schools, a 28-bed hospital, at least two churches, and a community garden. There was a cemetery as well, although it was never used. All 144 people who died in the camp were cremated and their ashes were held for burial until after the war. The camp was patrolled by 85-150 policemen, and was surrounded by a barbed wire fence. Manned watchtowers with searchlights were placed every 400 yards surrounding the perimeter of the camp.

#### **Provenance**

The map was purchased in July 2018 from a San Francisco Bay area seller, who wrote:

*I WAS TOLD BY THE PREVIOUS OWNER THAT BOUGHT THIS FROM THE ORIGINAL FAMILY HERE IN THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA, THAT THIS MAP WAS MADE BY A FEMALE JAPANESE INTERNEE... NOT SIGNED.*

#### **Rarity**

We have been unable to locate any other surviving contemporary maps or plans which depict the Topaz Camp.



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**Detailed Condition:**

Some discoloration. Top left corner torn away, just outside of the neatline, without loss of image. Minor marginal tears. Narrow right margin.