NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name: Rohwer Relocation Center Memorial Cemetery

other names/site number: Nisei Camp Cemetery

2. Location

street & number: Arkansas Highway #1 — [ ] not for publication: N/A

city, town: Rohwer — [X] vicinity

state: Arkansas code: AR county: Desha code: AR 041 zip code: 71666

3. Classification

Ownership of Property
- [ ] private
- [X] public-local
- [ ] public-State
- [ ] public-Federal

Category of Property
- [ ] building(s)
- [X] district
- [ ] site
- [ ] structure
- [ ] object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
		buildings
		sites
		structures
28	1	objects
28	1	Total

Name of related multiple property listing: Rohwer Relocation Center

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 61 (DOE)

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this [X] nomination [ ] request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property [X] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. [ ] See continuation sheet.

Cathryn A. Byrd — 6-26-91

Signature of certifying official — Date

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property [ ] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. [ ] See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official — Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- [ ] entered in the National Register. [ ] See continuation sheet.
- [ ] determined eligible for the National Register. [ ] See continuation sheet.
- [ ] determined not eligible for the National Register.
- [ ] removed from the National Register.
- [ ] other, (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper — Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

FUNERARY/cemetery

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

FUNERARY/cemetery

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: vernacular Japanese-American artwork

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete
walls
roof
other concrete headstones
concrete monuments
concrete entrance markers

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

[X] See continuation sheet

SUMMARY

The Rohwer Relocation Camp Memorial Cemetery site is one of only three extant Japanese-American relocation camp site cemeteries in the United States. A total of twenty-eight contributing monuments remain in the cemetery, including twenty-four concrete gravestones, two entrance markers, and two tall commemorative concrete monuments. One non-contributing resource, a non-historic monument erected in 1982, is also present.

The adjacent relocation camp site features several standing structures and standing objects that date from the period of Japanese-American internment: two original buildings (including a brick smokestack), a concrete reservoir, and twenty-seven concrete foundations. The relocation camp site also includes a total of forty-three non-contributing resources, most of which are small, non-historic single-family residences and all but one of which are concentrated in the northern quarter of the site. However, because significant elements of the relocation camp have been lost and the original layout of the facility is no longer evident, the National Historic Landmark nomination is limited to the boundaries of the Memorial Cemetery.

ELABORATION

Significant standing structures of various kinds remain to show that a temporary city of over ten thousand people once occupied the open fields near Rohwer, Arkansas. The Rohwer Relocation Center, located on a roughly rectangular, 500-acre site lying to the north of the center of the community of Rohwer and to the west of Arkansas Highway 1 and the Missouri-Pacific Railroad tracks, housed Japanese-Americans who had been forced to relocate from the West Coast during the Second World War. Upon completion, the camp was roughly rectangular in layout, measuring 5,000 feet in length (north to south) and 3,250 feet in width, and divided into fifty-one blocks by eleven perpendicular streets running east-west and north-south (though they are indicated on the plan, it is not clear that the westernmost eight residential blocks were ever constructed). The north-south streets were numbered "First" through "Eleventh" from east to west and the east-west streets were "A" through "K" from south to north. Though most of the blocks (a total of thirty-six) were square in shape and reserved for evacuee residences -- each containing barracks (twelve), a recreation hall, a lavatory/laundry facility and a mess hall -- other larger blocks were set aside for schools, churches, utilities and maintenance, military police headquarters, a hospital and an administration area. It is interesting to note that there was no provision in the original site plan for a cemetery.

Extant elements of the relocation camp proper include a one-and-one-half story boiler house and its associated brick smokestack, the hospital laundry building, a twenty-foot tall round concrete

reservoir, and twenty-seven concrete slab foundations for the laundry/lavatory buildings, mess halls, recreation buildings, the fire station, and other miscellaneous facilities. Though many of the original buildings and structures were removed soon after the closing of the camp in November of 1945 (including all of the military fortifications and most of the barracks) and even more have been lost in the recent past (all three of the barracks buildings formerly adjacent to the new Delta High School, which actually housed administrative personnel and which were extant as of the listing of the site on the National Register of Historic Places on 07/30/74, have since been removed), a total of fifty-eight contributing historic resources, including buildings, structures and objects, are distributed evenly throughout the site. However, the loss of significant resources through demolition, removal, farming activities, and new construction have damaged the property's integrity sufficiently so as to preclude the nomination of the entire camp as a National Historic Landmark.

The contributing and non-contributing resources found in the adjacent Memorial Cemetery are classified by category below.

Contributing Resources

At the south end of the original site lies the cemetery, with twenty-four concrete gravestones and two entrance markers clustered behind two tall concrete monuments, all of which were made by the Rohwer evacuees themselves. The gravestones are small and simply detailed, with each displaying the name of the deceased, birth and death dates, and a symbol inscribed in a circle above indicating whether or not the deceased was a Buddhist or a Christian.

Each of the two larger monuments is approximately fifteen feet tall. The soldier's memorial (#1) -- a monument to Japanese-American soldiers from the camp who were killed in action during World War II -- was engineered and constructed by internees Kaneo Fujioka and Kay Horisawa in 1945. The base of the soldiers' memorial gives the appearance of a tank, with the turret being replaced by a pyramidal tablet of cast stone topped by a star. Inscribed on this monument are the words "Dedicated to the men from Rohwer Center who gave their lives to America on foreign soil." On the eastern side, the relief designs in the concrete consist of an American flag with the colors painted into the relief and on the western side of the names of those soldiers who perished in battle beneath an eagle. The tank base of the monument also has the outline of the machinery of the vehicle cut into the concrete, as well as the numbers of the units in which the soldiers served. It is in fair condition, as some parts of the base have spalled and there are other cracks visible in the concrete.

The other monument consists of a square base with decorative carving, surrounded by urns, that supports a tall obelisk surmounted by an eagle perched upon a globe (#2). Commemorating the lives of the twenty-four Japanese-Americans who died while being forced to live in the camp, this obelisk is inscribed as follows: "May the people of Arkansas keep in beauty and reverence forever this ground where our bodies sleep." The base is inscribed with elegant, decorative floral patterns and a star and circle alternately at the corners. The obelisk itself appears to rise out of formed, concrete rocks and is decorated on all four sides with ornamental carving and Japanese script. Of particular beauty are the egret and the peacock on the southern elevation, which stand beneath a tree branch and a stylized, rising sun. The American eagle beneath the star on the eastern or front elevation is also noteworthy and stands as a silent testimonial to the patriotism of these Japanese-Americans. The same motif is repeated through the eagle atop the globe at the top of the monument. This monument has also suffered some deterioration as a result of the freeze-thaw cycle, and small sections of the concrete have fallen away, but overall it is still in good condition.

Non-Contributing Resources

The new monument to the Japanese-American 442nd Fighting Unit of the 100th Battalion was erected in 1982 by Sam Yada, a former Rohwer internee who lived in Sherwood, Arkansas until his death in 1991.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

[X] nationally [ ] statewide [ ] locally

Applicable National Register Criteria [X] A [ ] B [ ] C [ ] D

National Historic Landmark Criterion: 1

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) [ ] A [ ] B [ ] C [X] D [ ] E [ ] F [ ] G

NHL Criteria Consideration: 5

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)	Period of Significance	Significant Dates
Ethnic Heritage: Asian	1942-1945	N/A
Social History		
NHL Themes-VIII: World War II		
D: The Home Front		

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Kaneo Fujioka and Kay Horisawa

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

[X] See continuation sheet

SUMMARY

The Rohwer Relocation Camp at Rohwer, Arkansas (of which the twenty-four concrete headstones, two entrance markers, and two tall concrete monuments found in the Memorial Cemetery are contributing resources) was constructed by the federal government in the late summer and early fall of 1942 as part of the response to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Executive Order #9066 which empowered the United States Military to prescribe military areas of strategic importance within the borders of the United States and to exclude persons from those areas at the discretion of the Secretary of War. Under this order, over 110,000 Japanese aliens and Japanese-Americans were relocated from the three Pacific Coast states -- California, Oregon and Washington -- to ten relocation camps within the western and central regions of the United States.

The Rohwer Relocation Camp Memorial Cemetery features exquisitely detailed and distinctive funerary monuments which were designed and erected by the evacuees themselves during their internment; of the three relocation camp cemeteries that survive, Rohwer is singularly significant as the largest, the most elaborately detailed, and the most unique. As such, the site is eligible under Exclusion Five (5) for "[a] cemetery that derives its primary national significance from ... an exceptionally distinctive design or from an exceptionally significant event," under National Historic Landmark Criterion One (1) for its outstanding association with the federal government's Japanese-American relocation policies during World War II, and under National Historic Landmark Criterion One (1) for the distinctive and exceptional artistic design elements of the funerary monuments in the cemetery and their exclusive relationship to the Rohwer internment. The National Historic Landmark nomination of the Rohwer Relocation Camp Memorial Cemetery falls within the theme of *World War II/The Home Front.*

ELABORATION

The devastating surprise attack on the American fleet at Pearl Harbor of Sunday, December 7, 1941 by the Japanese Navy and the subsequent panic that was most acutely felt on the west coast precipitated a series of decisions and events by both federal civilian authorities and the United States Military that would profoundly affect the lives and fortunes of over 110,000 Japanese and Japanese-Americans residing along that coastline for the duration of the Second World War. The decision by the federal government to discriminate against an entire race of people -- most of whom were American citizens -- solely on the basis of unfounded suspicions regarding their patriotism during wartime and their physical proximity to what was considered a threatened and vulnerable area has since been widely criticized by many legal and social scholars as one of the darkest and most shameful periods in the history of both the United States and the Constitution

that ensures the fundamental rights of democracy and equality to all citizens. To whatever degree the decision to remove all persons of Japanese descent from the west coast and incarcerate them in camps was the result of a genuine and relatively legitimate fear of military invasion, its presumptions of genetically inherent disloyalty and treachery were rooted in earlier anti-Oriental and specifically anti-Japanese sentiments that traced their origins to the middle of the nineteenth century and which must be considered in order to understand fully the reaction which followed Pearl Harbor.

The first wave of Oriental immigration to the west coast of the United States in any significant numbers did not occur until 1849, when the first Chinese arrived at the same time as the Gold Rush. In spite of their Oriental "color" and features, they were not initially mistreated, and their unusual costumes and hairstyles were considered yet another contribution to the cosmopolitan atmosphere that pervaded San Francisco during the Gold Rush. In fact, the economic boom then in progress in northern California made any additions to the labor force welcome. Yet the crowding and competition for the richest ore deposits that increased during the brief tenure of the Gold Rush caused more than a few of the white miners to grumble about protecting American gold for Americans (meaning *white* Americans). The Foreign Miners' License Laws of 1850 and 1852 were especially aimed at the skilled and industrious Mexican and Chinese miners; these, coupled with the 1854 California Supreme Court decision *People v. Hall*, which set the precedent of rejecting the right of a Chinese to testify against a white, were harbingers of things to come.

This relatively favorable situation continued until 1869, when the abundance of cheap Oriental labor and the stiff competition for jobs that had caused occasional friction within the mining industry was magnified to acute proportions by the release of over 10,000 Chinese laborers by the Union-Central Pacific Railroad upon the completion of its western leg. The resentment felt by white workers was to some degree understandable, as the glut of Chinese laborers lowered wages that had previously been raised by the scarcity of workers. It was the anti-Chinese demagoguery of Dennis Kearney and his leadership of the Workingmen's Party which first lent an overtly racist cast to the labor issue. His rallying cry of "the Chinese Must Go", though inspired by the relatively legitimate concerns over unfair competition, added the ideology of white supremacy/Oriental inferiority. The fear of 'John Chinaman' spread throughout the west coast in the decades following the Civil War, even permeating state and local government policy: in addition to the testimony of Chinese people being ruled unacceptable in court, many municipal ordinances were passed for no other reason than racist harassment. The call went out to stop Chinese immigration and soon the idea of a Chinese exclusion policy that had been generated by Kearney and his party was appropriated by both the Democrats and the Republicans.

The passage of a law prohibiting further Chinese immigration into California or any other state

proved problematic, a situation not helped by the view taken by the federal government of the Reconstruction period that this was largely a west coast problem and not worthy of national policy. Furthermore, the Burlingame Treaty of 1868 provided for free immigration and neither the President nor Congress was willing to repeal it immediately thereafter. Increased lobbying for a national Chinese exclusion policy by the western state legislatures during the early 1870's resulted in the passage of such a bill by both houses of Congress that was vetoed by President Rutherford B. Hayes. Continued pressure finally resulted in the signing by President Chester Alan Arthur of a compromise, ten-year Chinese exclusion bill in 1882. Anti-Chinese sentiment remained high, however, and Congress renewed the ban in 1892 that was eventually made 'permanent' in 1902 under the "progressive" administration of Theodore Roosevelt.

By 1902, Japanese immigrants had been arriving on American soil for twelve years and had been working in Hawaii even earlier. The Japanese emperor first allowed his subjects to emigrate to foreign lands in 1884, when menial laborers were allowed to work in the Hawaiian sugar fields. From Hawaii, many then continued on to the United States. Twenty thousand had arrived by 1900 and another 45,000 arrived in the years 1903-1905 alone. The Japanese-born immigrants (called 'issei', which roughly translated as 'first generation') differed from other contemporaneous ethnic immigrant groups in that they nurtured a pride in their native Japan and openly celebrated traditional holidays and ceremonial occasions. Unlike the Chinese before them, the Japanese cultivated their heritage within their communities and thereby highlighted the cultural differences which separated them from white Americans.

The idea that the Japanese threatened to 'take over' America forcibly and to impose themselves and their monarchic dynasty began to capture the imaginations of much of the white populace. Though it had been brewing during the 1890's, distinctly anti-Japanese sentiment did not become public until 1900, when the increasing tide of Japanese immigration caused labor groups in particular to resume the same brand of racist anti-Orientalism which had characterized their reaction to the Chinese. This prejudice was only exacerbated by the fact that labor's attempts to include the Japanese in the Chinese Exclusion Act when it came up for renewal in 1902 was met with counterdemonstrations of significant strength and vigor, the first such protests to the racist charges of genetic inferiority by any group of Oriental immigrants. Japan's resounding victories on both land and sea over the military forces of czarist Russia in 1905 confronted American whites with the first concrete demonstration of the ability of Orientals to overturn forcibly the notion of white supremacy. As had been the case with the Chinese, the newspapers were the next to jump on the anti-Japanese bandwagon. The San Francisco *Chronicle*, in February of 1905, printed a front-page article beneath the headline "The Japanese Invasion, The Problem of the Hour." In the article, the author alleged that the Japanese, in addition to being an inherently subhuman and undesirable race, were also a menace to American women (again,

meaning white women) and spied for the Emperor in service to his alleged grand scheme of world domination.

As had been the case with the Chinese, it took little time at all for state and local officials to take up the cry. Though their efforts received little sympathy outside of the west coast, within a week of the publication of this article both houses of the California legislature passed a resolution asking Congress to pass a Japanese exclusion bill. Later that year, two Republican congressmen from California introduced Japanese exclusion bills into Congress which, though they never got out of committee, succeeded in garnering support on the race issue alone from certain powerful Southern politicians. Ironically, it was the belated enforcement of an ostensibly innocuous decision by the San Francisco School Board in October of 1906 that brought the controversy to national proportions. Their attempt to segregate Japanese students in the public schools as they had done with Chinese students previously drew serious diplomatic protests from the Japanese government -- protests which President Roosevelt heeded. Though their obvious and reactionary bigotry caused Roosevelt to hold little regard for the California legislators, he had been aware of the growing anti-Japanese sentiment on the west coast. Yet it required the Japanese protest over the segregation decision to get him actively involved. An investigation of the situation in San Francisco by a cabinet member resulted in Roosevelt's accurate conclusion that the issue for the Californian authorities generally was not segregation but immigration. Though Roosevelt persuaded the San Francisco School Board to revoke its segregation decision -- thereby placating the Japanese government -- he embarked upon a sequence of diplomatic maneuvers aimed at persuading the Japanese authorities themselves to limit the issuance of passports for laborers to the United States, thereby reducing immigration. The result was the so-called Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907-08, the first distinctly anti-Japanese national policy enacted in the United States.

The Gentlemen's Agreement, however, contained one fatal loophole which proved to be its undoing as an effective means of limiting Japanese immigration. Specifically exempt from the ban on passports were laborers who had already visited the United States and the parents, wives, and children of laborers already here. Thus the tide of immigration from Japan hardly diminished at all, and in fact, the influx of families placed a new concern before the west coast authorities: the natural desire for land ownership by the Japanese, and ownership of prime agricultural land in particular. The natural growth of the Japanese population in California brought on by the arrival of families and the marriages of Japanese people already there further raised the specter of the Japanese "taking over" California. A sequence of political maneuvers by California governor Hiram W. Johnson and the California legislature resulted in the passage of the Alien Land Law in 1913, which effectively prevented the ownership of land by immigrants. Yet, as Johnson himself anticipated, even this law did little to change matters, as Issei farmers could

either lease the land from white landholders or simply transfer their land titles to their American-born children, who were exempt from the Alien Land Law.

Once again, the true ineffectiveness of this purported legal cure-all only raised the ire of the anti-Japanese exclusionists. Yet Japan's involvement on the side of the United States against Germany in the First World War delayed any further activity until 1920, when it resurfaced dramatically through the instrument of a California ballot initiative which proposed a stronger Alien Land Act. This more restrictive version of the 1913 Act prohibited leasing and sharecropping as well as land purchase; it passed by a margin of more than 3 to 1. This rising tide of popular anti-Japanese feeling (which paralleled such other popular racist movements as the Ku Klux Klan's attacks on Negroes, Catholics, and Jews), aided by such anti-Japanese organizations as the Oriental Exclusion League, finally achieved national sanction through the passage in 1924 of the Immigration Act, which excluded the further immigration of all Japanese to the United States. The success of the anti-Japanese forces in spreading their sensationalist fears and racist sentiments throughout a wide cross-section of the American populace was only aided during the 1930's by Japan's aggressive military actions, as manifested through the occupation of Manchuria, the invasion of China, the withdrawal from
the League of Nations and the defiance of naval arms limitations. Many white Americans believed that they had genuine cause to fear the Japanese -- not just as a sovereign nation and military power, but as a race.

It is against this historical backdrop that the events that followed the attack in Pearl Harbor must be understood. Furthermore, the element of surprise that enabled the attack's success was underscored by two other concurrent circumstances: Japanese diplomats had been negotiating with American diplomats regarding limiting their aggression in the Pacific Basin -- ostensibly in good faith -- right up until the Pearl Harbor attack, and most Americans, preoccupied with Hitler's blitzkrieg conquest of Europe, were unsuspecting of any immediate threat from the Japanese. The hysteria that resulted from the perceived threat of a Japanese attack on the Pacific Coast caused events to unfold quickly. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's declaration of war on Japan was quickly followed by a vigorous campaign of anti--Japanese propaganda from California newspapers and radio stations. The idea of the removal of all people of Japanese ancestry was proposed early on as the only dependable means of securing the west coast, first by the local media and then by the California legislature itself. These proposals were echoed by California State Attorney General Earl Warren and Military Commander for the Western Command, Lieutenant General John L. DeWitt. Though no similar plans were seriously suggested for people of German and Italian ancestry (with whose native countries the United States was also at war) and President Roosevelt's own personal intelligence men reported that the vast majority of the people of Japanese ancestry residing on the west coast (both Issei and

Nisei, the first American-born generation) were intensely loyal to the United States, and in spite of the opinion of U.S. Attorney General Francis Biddle that the forced removal of U.S. citizens by race and without trial was unconstitutional, he nevertheless signed Executive Order #9066 on February 16, 1942, which effectively transferred the authority to the military for the removal of any persons required by "military necessity."

Between February and June of 1942, General DeWitt effectively declared the entire Pacific Coast -- the states of California, Oregon, and Washington -- a military zone from which all people of Japanese ancestry were to be excluded. By April, exclusion orders had begun to appear on telephone poles in all Japanese communities within this zone. These orders stipulated both the locations of the assembly centers to which the evacuees were to report and the deadlines by which they were to do so. Some were given as little as twenty-four hours to make their arrangements for removal, though most were given two weeks. They were ordered to dispose of all their property, make arrangements for pets which they were not allowed to take with them, contact family and friends, and pack up all their belongings for removal to an undisclosed final destination. Needless to say, those who were not able to leave property with trustworthy white friends were frequently forced to accept only pennies on the dollar.

In March, 1942, Executive Order #9102 established the War Relocation Authority (WRA) for the purpose of supervising the camps themselves and directing their construction and maintenance. This was a civilian agency distinct from the Wartime Civil Control Administration (WCCA), which was controlled by the military and concerned exclusively with the round-up, assembly and transport of the evacuees; the WRA would assume sole control of the camps themselves. Its first director was Milton S. Eisenhower, who experienced perhaps the most difficult period of the entire operation, the forced relocation of the Japanese-Americans to the camps. He had been one of the most hopeful regarding the success of the initial policy of voluntary relocation; however, soon after his appointment he realized that forced relocation was the only possible avenue. In addition to the reluctance felt by the Japanese-Americans themselves, many white residents of the states to which the evacuees were to be moved were violently opposed to having such a camp sited among them. Though he never made public his private misgivings about the legitimacy and legality of the relocation effort, the experience obviously weighed heavily upon him. By June of 1942, he sent a letter of resignation to President Roosevelt and was replaced thereafter with Dillon S. Myer, a former Agriculture Department administrator who Eisenhower had recommended as a replacement.

By August, 1942, the removal of all persons of Japanese ancestry from the west coast was complete, though it would take several more months before they were all transferred from the temporary assembly centers to their 'permanent' homes in the actual camps. A total of ten inland

camps were established: Colorado Rivers and Gila Rivers in Arizona, Central Utah in Utah, Granada in Colorado, Heart Mountain in Wyoming, Manzanar and Tule Lake in California, Minidoka in Idaho, and Jerome and Rohwer in Arkansas. All ten sites were chosen not only for their distance from the Pacific Coast but also for their desolation and suitability as secured, closed camps. Roger Daniels states on page 96 of his book *Concentration Camps USA: Japanese Americans and World War II*, "That these areas were still vacant land in 1942, land that the ever-voracious pioneers and developers had either passed by or abandoned, speaks volumes about their attractiveness." The sites of the Rohwer and Jerome Relocation Camps were no exception (the Jerome camp was closed in 1944, a year before the Rohwer camp was closed, and no standing structures of any kind remain). The Rohwer camp was sited among flat cotton fields which were part of a parcel previously purchased by the Farm Security Administration for future subsistence homesteads for low-income southern families. It is just one of the ironies of the entire relocation effort that this land instead served as an incarceration site for a group of people who were being deprived of inherent rights and opportunities.

Construction on the Rohwer camp began on July 31, 1942 under the supervision of director Ray D. Johnston. Located adjacent to the Missouri-Pacific Railroad Line that brought the 10,000-plus evacuees, the Rohwer camp consisted of five-hundred acres of wood frame barracks, covered with tar paper and divided into blocks with twelve barracks per block. Each block also contained a mess hall, a laundry and a combination bath/toilet building. The barracks buildings each measured twenty feet in width and one-hundred-and-twenty feet in length. Each was divided into six apartments of different sizes and housed two-hundred-and-fifty people.

Life at Rohwer shared many of the problems experienced by the evacuees in all the relocation centers. Though immediate families were not separated during the relocation process, maintaining family unity was difficult within the camp due to overcrowding, poor sanitation facilities, common dining halls, a lack of sheltered space for family gatherings and an extreme lack of privacy overall. Common also was the severe sense of separation felt by children and adults alike. All had made friends and established close ties with coworkers in their communities on the west coast, Japanese and Caucasian alike. The problem was especially acute for school-aged children, however, as they had left behind many classmates with whom they had established close and enthusiastic friendships. Finally, the strong feelings of anger and frustration regarding their obvious mistreatment at the hands of the federal government and the physical and psychological disorientation took a toll on all the evacuees. Over 10,000 evacuees passed through Rohwer during its existence and over two-thirds were American citizens. Yet how they chose to express those feelings and how that anger manifested itself is one of the triumphs of the Japanese-American relocation experience, and is of particular relevance at Rohwer.

In addition to the usual services of a fire station and a separate city government, with the "city" being divided into wards for effective management and administration (organized by the civilian federal administrator, E.B. Whitaker), modern schools were also provided for the Japanese-American students. A superintendent was provided for each Arkansas camp and Mr. John Trice of Springdale was selected for the Rohwer school (he later enlisted in the Armed Forces and was replaced by Mr. A.G. Thompson of Lake Village, who had been the superintendent at the Jerome camp until it closed in 1944). The regular teachers were all Caucasian, though teacher aides were recruited from among the evacuees. The schools operated on a year-round basis, providing 180 days of class room and vocational instruction and one month off in the summer, with an additional summer program which provided work opportunities, organized recreation, arts and crafts workshops and specialized vocational training. A program encouraging active student participation in the social and economic development of the centers was instituted during the school year as part of a civics curriculum. The curriculum was directed toward meeting the accreditation requirements of both the state of Arkansas and any colleges to which the students may want to apply upon their graduation. WRA policy also provided for the appointment by the project director of an advisory board of education. Their function was purely advisory, as WRA policy gave sole decision-making authority over the school to the appointed superintendent. Thus this was in effect a parents and teachers association, with the parents being allowed to inform the administrators of the school of their concerns and their recommendations. However, the WRA did value the input of the parents and attempted to coordinate a unity of educational purpose among the entire community.

The overwhelming impression left upon the Caucasian teachers and administrators at Rohwer was that the Japanese-American pupils were generally more studious and interested in their studies than their Caucasian counterparts. They exhibited great pride in their academic achievements, a pride which was strongly reinforced by their parents and families. The teachers who accepted assignments at Rohwer were often criticized by whites, and even the students did not always accept them immediately, but virtually all left with a remarkable respect for the genuine interest and willingness of the Japanese-American students to learn. The students also showed a strong proficiency for creative endeavors, as was particularly evidenced by the poetry they left behind. The theme that runs through the poetry composed by the Rohwer students is one of hope and an unswerving appreciation of natural beauty. And however bittersweet, some of the poetry is patriotic.

This proficiency in the arts was neither limited to poetry nor to the children. The abundance of cypress in the Delta surrounding Rohwer made popular the art of *kobu* -- the sculpture through hand-rubbing of fantastically-shaped root growths found particularly in the root systems of the cypress. Other traditional Japanese arts at which the Rohwer evacuees excelled in spite of a

paucity of materials included artificial flower manufacture and arrangement, landscape design and gardening, mural painting, theatrical set decoration and costume design, tool craftsmanship, wood carving, weaving, tsumami (a form of picture-making using natural material which are adhered to paper), cabinetmaking and furniture manufacture (including decorative relief sculpture) and dollmaking.

The creative gifts of the Rohwer evacuees have left their most poignant record within the Memorial Cemetery at the site. Set within a rectangular plot, twenty-four simple concrete headstones and two similar entrance markers are placed to the west of two larger concrete monuments, all of which were designed, manufactured and inscribed by the Japanese-American evacuees themselves. The headstones mark the graves of twenty-four evacuees who died while at the camp.

The monument with a tall, rectangular tablet and a star atop the bottom of a tank commemorates the Japanese-American men who left the Rohwer camp to enlist in the American army. These men served in Italy and France with the 100th Battalion and the 442nd Combat Team, the all-Japanese volunteer units many of the soldiers of which came from the relocation centers and the latter of which won the distinction of being that which suffered more casualties and received more decorations than any other unit of its size and length of service in the Second World War. The names of the soldiers who enlisted from the Rohwer camp are memorialized on the monument itself. The relief designs in the concrete consist of the eastern side of an American flag with the colors painted into the relief and on the western side of the names of those soldiers who perished in battle beneath an eagle. The tank base of the monument also has the outline of the machinery of the vehicle cut into the concrete, as well as the numbers of the units in which the soldiers served.

The other monument consists of a square base with decorative carving, surrounded by urns, that supports a tall obelisk surmounted by an eagle perched upon a globe. The base is inscribed with elegant, decorative floral patterns and a star and circle alternately at the corners. The obelisk itself appears to rise out of rocks and is decorated on all four sides by decorative carving and Japanese script. Of particular beauty are the egret and the peacock on the southern elevation, which stand beneath a tree branch and a stylized, rising sun. The American eagle beneath the star on the eastern or front elevation is also noteworthy and stands as a silent testimonial to the patriotism of these Japanese-Americans. The same motif is repeated through the eagle atop the globe at the top of the monument. The eagle, with wings outstretched and ready for flight, appears to be both a static patriotic symbol and a prediction of America's triumph over the Axis powers which still threatened the world as of 1944.

It is interesting to note that although the last group of evacuees did not leave the Rohwer Relocation Camp until November of 1945, the threat allegedly presented by the possibility of so-called "fifth column" activity (sabotage and espionage) among west coast Japanese-Americans during an attack was actually eliminated before the relocation camps were even fully constructed and operational. Any long-range attack capability on the part of the Japanese Navy was effectively destroyed during the Battle of Midway, which occurred on June 2, 1942. By early 1943, President Roosevelt was advised by the military that the need for the relocation camps no longer existed. Probably for political reasons (he did not want to jeopardize his 1944 bid for an unprecedented fourth term in the White House), he waited until December 17 -- a full eighteen months -- before allowing the War Department to issue the orders to close the camps. The evacuees were shipped back to the west coast gradually, though some chose not to return and settled elsewhere.

The most eloquent testimony to the ambivalence felt by many of the Rohwer interns regarding the circumstances of their incarceration is found in the words of Miyo Senzaki, who was a young woman of twenty-two when she was forced to relocate from Seattle, Washington to Rohwer, Arkansas.

> I remember when we saw names of kids we went to school with who died in the 442nd. We'd run over every day and see whose name would appear. Then my friend said, "Miyo, how can you salute that flag?" and I looked at her and I said, "I can't answer that, but I know how you feel." From the time you're in the first grade that's what you learn, and you're so proud when you do salute that flag, and then I remember going to ball games, the "Star-Spangled Banner," and there was a time when I couldn't even sing that, because I didn't feel it was right.
>
> ...I want to be proud of it, when it's flowing in the sky, to be proud to salute it, because you know that it's telling you something. But you have to live what you're taught to know the meaning of it.

9. Major Bibliographical References

[X] See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- [ ] preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- [X] previously listed in the National Register
- [ ] previously determined eligible by the National Register
- [ ] designated a National Historic Landmark
- [ ] recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- [ ] recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- [X] State historic preservation office
- [ ] Other State agency
- [ ] Federal agency
- [ ] Local government
- [ ] University
- [ ] Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Less than one (1).

UTM References

	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	15	659270	3737380
B			
C			
D			

[ ] See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

[X] See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

This boundary includes all the property historically associated with this resource that retains its integrity.

[ ] See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kenneth Story, National Register Coordinator; William D. Baker, Preservation Planner

organization Arkansas Historic Preservation Program date June 25, 1991

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★U.S.GPO:1988-0-223-918

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Beginning at a point formed by the intersection of the southern edge of the dirt cemetery access road leading into the site from Hwy. 1 to the east with a perpendicular line running along the eastern edge of the whitewashed concrete markers that outline the perimeter of the cemetery, proceed southerly along said line to the southeast corner of the concrete markers; thence proceed westerly along a line running along the southern edge of said markers to the southwest corner of the concrete markers; thence proceed northerly along a line running along the western edge of said markers to the northwest corner of the concrete markers; thence proceed easterly along a line running along the northern edge of said markers to the northeast corner of the concrete markers; thence proceed southerly along a line running along the eastern edge of said markers to the point of beginning.