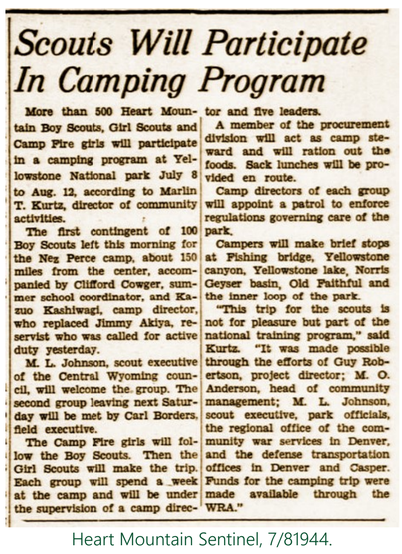
Summer Camps: **Behind Barbed Wire**

Japanese American Incarceration

During World War II, Japanese Americans living on the west coast were forced into ten concentration camps scattered from California to Arkansas. More than half of the 120,000 Nikkei (people of Japanese ancestry) were children—some 60,000, almost all American citizens. Because of the high number of children, the camps each established schools, youth programs, and their own boy and girl scout troops.

During the summer, recreation programs were devised to keep children busy. Some teenagers were able to temporarily leave their concentration camp to attend summer camps hosted by religious groups or the scouts. Heart Mountain (WY) sent truckloads of kids to Yellowstone; while Topaz (UT) set up their own summer camp at Antelope Springs.



Scouts Will Participate In Camping Program

More than 500 Heart Mountain Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and Camp Fire girls will participate in a camping program at Yellowstone National park July 8 to Aug. 12, according to Marlin T. Kurtz, director of community activities.

The first contingent of 100 Boy Scouts left this morning for the Nez Perce camp, about 150 miles from the center, accompanied by Clifford Cowger, summer school coordinator, and Kazuo Kashiwagi, camp director, who replaced Jimmy Akiya, reservist who was called for active duty yesterday.

M. L. Johnson, scout executive of the Central Wyoming council, will welcome the group. The second group leaving next Saturday will be met by Carl Borders, field executive.

The Camp Fire girls will follow the Boy Scouts. Then the Girl Scouts will make the trip. Each group will spend a week at the camp and will be under the supervision of a camp director and five leaders.

A member of the procurement division will act as camp steward and will ration out the foods. Sack lunches will be provided en route.

Camp directors of each group will appoint a patrol to enforce regulations governing care of the park.

Campers will make brief stops at Fishing bridge, Yellowstone canyon, Yellowstone lake, Norris Geyser basin, Old Faithful and the inner loop of the park.

"This trip for the scouts is not for pleasure but part of the national training program," said Kurtz. "It was made possible through the efforts of Guy Robertson, project director; M. O. Anderson, head of community management; M. L. Johnson, scout executive, park officials, the regional office of the community war services in Denver, and the defense transportation offices in Denver and Casper. Funds for the camping trip were made available through the WRA."

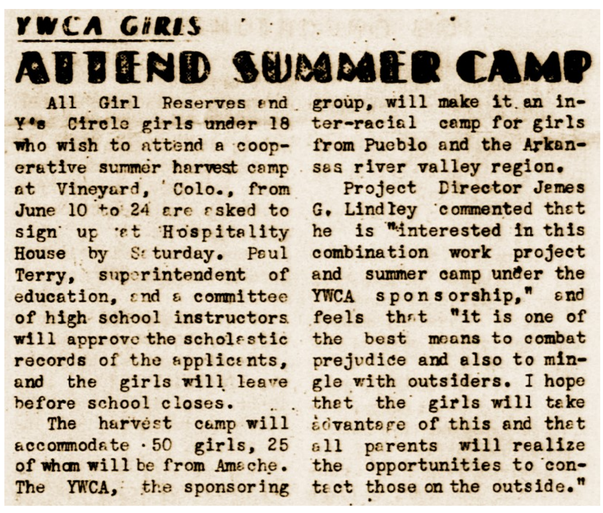
Heart Mountain Sentinel, 7/81944.



Heart Mountain Boy Scouts at Yellowstone, 1944.

"The first group of Scouts went off to Yellowstone on July 8th. There were 100 Scouts from troops 313, 341, and 345. The following Saturday the second group left. Troops 379, 342, 323 and Toru's troop—333. On "Y Day" 1944, we climbed aboard the back of a truck with our sleeping bags and a few personal items. I think there were about 30 of us crammed in two trucks. We stood up for the whole trip for three hours, but that was no problem. Our good cheer got a temporary jolt as we rode through the town of Cody where we heard nasty catcalls from the sidewalk— people shouting racial slurs and obscenities. But, the days that followed were full of happy and exciting moments."

Nob Shimokochi, Unforgotten Voices from Heart Mountain.



YWCA GIRLS

ATTEND SUMMER CAMP

All Girl Reserves and Y's Circle girls under 18 who wish to attend a cooperative summer harvest camp at Vineyard, Colo., from June 10 to 24 are asked to sign up at Hospitality House by Saturday. Paul Terry, superintendent of education, and a committee of high school instructors will approve the scholastic records of the applicants, and the girls will leave before school closes.

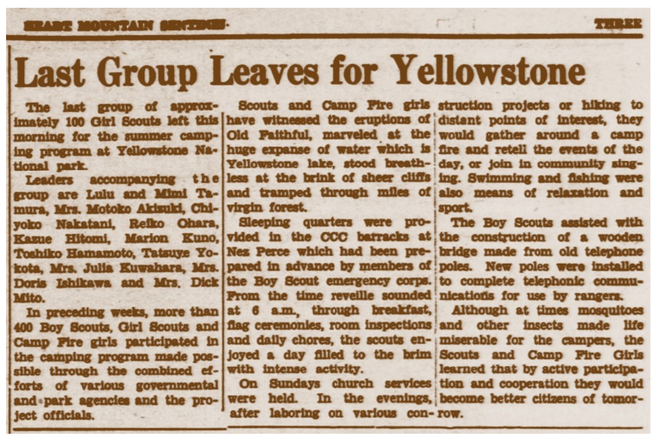
The harvest camp will accommodate 50 girls, 25 of whom will be from Amache. The YWCA, the sponsoring group, will make it an inter-racial camp for girls from Pueblo and the Arkansas river valley region.

Project Director James G. Lindley commented that he is "interested in this combination work project and summer camp under the YWCA sponsorship," and feels that "it is one of the best means to combat prejudice and also to mingle with outsiders. I hope that the girls will take advantage of this and that all parents will realize the opportunities to contact those on the outside."

Granada Pioneer, 5/19/1943.



Girls from Granada Relocation Camp at a YWCA Summer Camp.



HEART MOUNTAIN SENTINEL — THREE

Last Group Leaves for Yellowstone

The last group of approximately 100 Girl Scouts left this morning for the summer camping program at Yellowstone National park.

Leaders accompanying the group are Lulu and Mimi Tamura, Mrs. Motoko Akisuki, Chiyoko Nakatani, Reiko Ohara, Kazue Hitomi, Marion Kuno, Toshiko Hamamoto, Tatsuye Yokota, Mrs. Julia Kuwahara, Mrs. Doris Ishikawa and Mrs. Dick Mito.

In preceding weeks, more than 400 Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and Camp Fire girls participated in the camping program made possible through the combined efforts of various governmental and park agencies and the project officials.

Scouts and Camp Fire girls have witnessed the eruptions of Old Faithful, marveled at the huge expanse of water which is Yellowstone lake, stood breathless at the brink of sheer cliffs and tramped through miles of virgin forest.

Sleeping quarters were provided in the CCC barracks at Nez Perce which had been prepared in advance by members of the Boy Scout emergency corps. From the time reveille sounded at 6 a.m., through breakfast, flag ceremonies, room inspections and daily chores, the scouts enjoyed a day filled to the brim with intense activity.

On Sundays church services were held. In the evenings, after laboring on various construction projects or hiking to distant points of interest, they would gather around a camp fire and retell the events of the day, or join in community singing. Swimming and fishing were also means of relaxation and sport.

The Boy Scouts assisted with the construction of a wooden bridge made from old telephone poles. New poles were installed to complete telephonic communications for use by rangers.

Although at times mosquitoes and other insects made life miserable for the campers, the Scouts and Camp Fire Girls learned that by active participation and cooperation they would become better citizens of tomorrow.

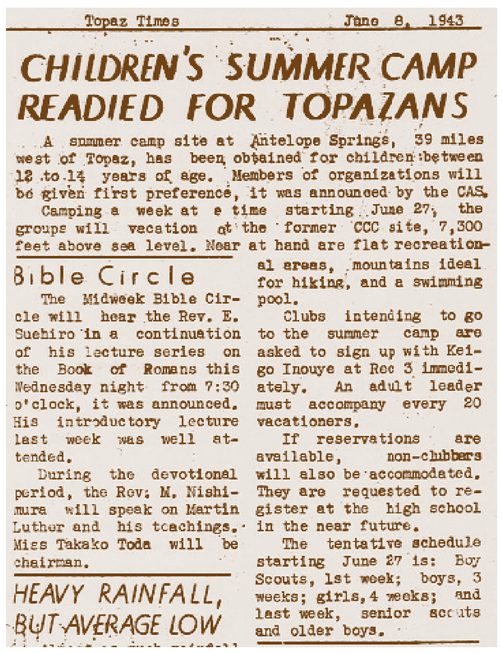
Heart Mountain Sentinel, 8/5/1944.

"Well, when I was in the Boy Scouts we went to Yellowstone, in 1944. The camp director felt that we youngsters were too much under the control of our Issei parents with the Japanese ideas and so the camp director contacted Yellowstone National Park and found these empty barracks, and so five hundred Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts spent one week at Yellowstone."

Densho interview with Bacon Sakatani

Antelope Springs

An abandoned Civilian Conservation Corps camp became a summer camp for the kids of Topaz in the summer of 1943. More than 300 children spent a week up in the mountains—kids swam, hiked, played, hunted for trilobites (the area is famous for these fossils), and told ghost stories around the fire—an ordinary week of summer camp, a respite from their everyday lives behind barbed wire.



Topaz Times — June 8, 1943

CHILDREN'S SUMMER CAMP READIED FOR TOPAZANS

A summer camp site at Antelope Springs, 39 miles west of Topaz, has been obtained for children between 12 to 14 years of age. Members of organizations will be given first preference, it was announced by the CAS.

Camping a week at a time starting June 27, the groups will vacation at the former CCC site, 7,300 feet above sea level. Near at hand are flat recreational areas, mountains ideal for hiking, and a swimming pool.

Bible Circle

The Midweek Bible Circle will hear the Rev. E. Suehiro in a continuation of his lecture series on the Book of Romans this Wednesday night from 7:30 o'clock, it was announced. His introductory lecture last week was well attended.

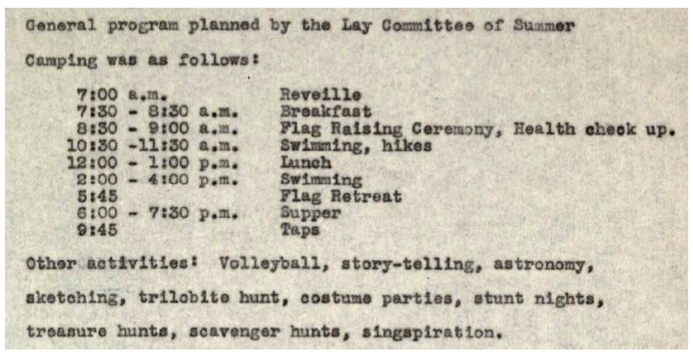
During the devotional period, the Rev. M. Nishimura will speak on Martin Luther and his teachings. Miss Takako Toda will be chairman.

Clubs intending to go to the summer camp are asked to sign up with Keigo Inouye at Rec 3 immediately. An adult leader must accompany every 20 vacationers.

If reservations are available, non-clubbers will also be accommodated. They are requested to register at the high school in the near future.

The tentative schedule starting June 27 is: Boy Scouts, 1st week; boys, 3 weeks; girls, 4 weeks; and last week, senior scouts and older boys.

HEAVY RAINFALL, BUT AVERAGE LOW



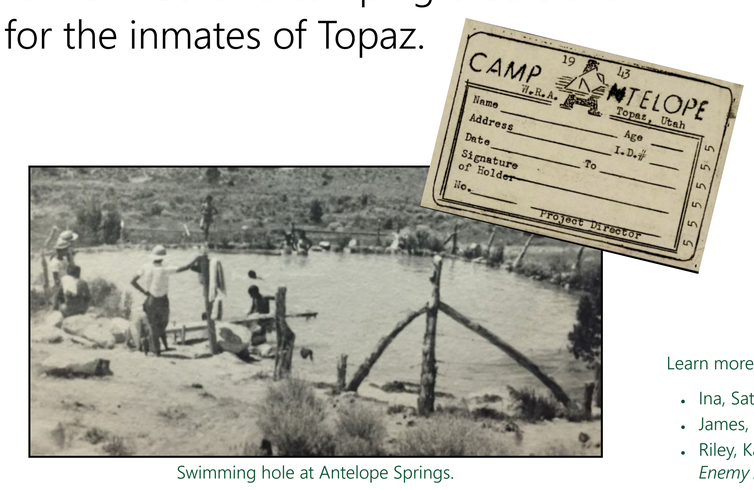
General program planned by the Lay Committee of Summer Camping was as follows:

7:00 a.m.	Reveille
7:30 - 8:30 a.m.	Breakfast
8:30 - 9:00 a.m.	Flag Raising Ceremony, Health check up.
10:30 -11:30 a.m.	Swimming, hikes
12:00 - 1:00 p.m.	Lunch
2:00 - 4:00 p.m.	Swimming
5:45	Flag Retreat
6:00 - 7:30 p.m.	Supper
9:45	Taps

Other activities: Volleyball, story-telling, astronomy, sketching, trilobite hunt, costume parties, stunt nights, treasure hunts, scavenger hunts, singspiration.

Daily Antelope Spring schedule. 1943 report, Summer Camp of Topaz.

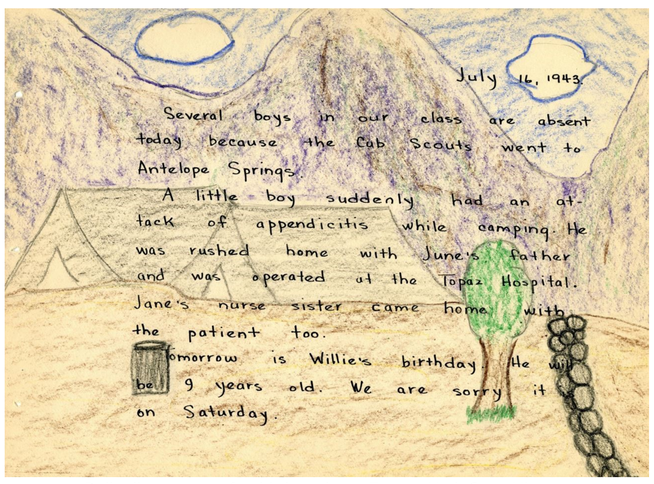
In 1944 and 1945, the week-long organized camps were replaced by less formal weekend camping excursions for the inmates of Topaz.



Swimming hole at Antelope Springs.

"Sure we dreamed about having a camp. We talked about camps our boy scout troops used to have back home. We kidded ourselves along and got a kick out of just talking about it. We didn't think that our dream would really come true. But look at us tonight. It just shows that if you make up your mind you want something bad enough you will get it, even out in the middle of the desert."

Camper quoted in the 1943 report, Summer Camp of Topaz.



July 16, 1943

Several boys in our class are absent today because the Cub Scouts went to Antelope Springs.

A little boy suddenly had an attack of appendicitis while camping. He was rushed home with June's father and was operated at the Topaz Hospital. Jane's nurse sister came home with the patient too.

Tomorrow is Willie's birthday. He will be 9 years old. We are sorry it is on Saturday.

Daily diary entry of a third grader at Topaz. Utah State History.

Learn more about the experience of Nikkei children during World War II:

- Ina, Satsuki, et al. Children of the Camps : the Documentary. Center for Asian American Media, 1999.
- James, Thomas. *Exile Within: The Schooling of Japanese Americans, 1942-1945*. Harvard University Press, 1987.
- Riley, Karen Lea. *Schools Behind Barbed Wire: The Untold Story of Wartime Internment and the Children of Arrested Enemy Aliens*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2002.