

Topaz Museum, P.O. Box 241, Delta, Utah 84624

June 2012



This rendering of the facade of the Topaz Museum is reminiscent of a typical barrack, but instead of tarpaper, this building will be dressed up with windows and metal accents. Everyone is invited to the ground breaking on August 4 in Delta, Utah.

Topaz Museum to become a reality

After years of planning, the building for the Topaz Museum is moving to fruition. With a National Park Service grant for \$714,314 that was announced in March, the Topaz Museum Foundation is well on its way to completing a building to honor and remember those who were confined in Topaz from 1942 to 1945.

The Museum will be located on Main Street in Delta, Utah, sixteen miles from the Topaz site. The building will provide 8,254 sq. ft. of space for exhibits, an art gallery, curatorial facilities, office and library.

Ground breaking will be on Aug. 4, 2012 in Delta.

Rick Okabe, Topaz Museum Foundation member, expressed the feelings of the entire Board when he said, "We are very pleased with this grant. Having

the NPS endorsement will help us with our long-range funding."

The cost for the building and exhibits will be \$2.3 million. The funds from the grant combined with the Topaz Museum building fund and new donations, now equals \$1.5 million. The Topaz Foundation just received a \$50,000 donation from the Great Basin Heritage Area toward its goal.

The building was designed by Alan Kawasaki, principle of Shah Kawasaki Architects located in Oakland. Alan's family, the Hayashidas, lived on Block 7 at Topaz.

The look of Delta's Main Street will be enhanced
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by the new Museum beside the new Great Basin Museum and a new Delta City community building.

The Topaz Museum will be an Education Center and is the core of the comprehensive preservation plan the Foundation began in 1993 when it started buying the Topaz site.

The Museum will attract patrons and students from all over the state, bringing more people to Delta to view the art and artifacts in the collection. The Topaz Museum owns 84 pieces of art created by artists who were in Topaz. Those works will be displayed at

the new facility's gallery.

Visitors will be able to view the exhibits and learn the complex history of internment and specifically Topaz. They will also be able to tour the restored recreation hall that tangibly demonstrates the living conditions for the internees.

In 2009, the Foundation hired the company West Office Exhibition Design, from Oakland, to design the various exhibits that will be housed in the Museum. The design is on the Topaz Museum website at www.topazmuseum.org.

Ground breaking for the new Museum set for August 4

Come to Delta and kick-off the construction of the Topaz Museum at a ground breaking ceremony on Aug. 4, 2012 at 10:00 a.m. on Main Street where the new museum will be built. Besides the ceremony, there will be tours of the Topaz site and other events during the day in Delta.

Honored guests will be Mayor Gayle Bunker and Willie Ito, who taught himself how to draw cartoons

while he was a child in Topaz and later worked for Disney, Warner, and Hanna Barbera Studios.

Mayor Gayle Bunker became a champion for building the Topaz Museum years ago when he was on the city council and Assistant US Attorney General Bill Lann Lee visited Topaz with the former director of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Stuart Ishimaru, whose parents were in Topaz. Since then the mayor has been a tireless supporter of the Topaz Museum Board's plans to build a Museum.

Willie Ito worked in the cartoon industry beginning in 1954 when he was 19 years old and was hired by Disney Studio for the famous spaghetti kiss scene of "Lady and the Tramp." Since then he has worked for other studios, and returned to Disney until he retired.

When Ito was five-years old he saw "Snow White" and knew from the moment the seven dwarfs started singing "Hi ho, Hi ho" that he wanted to do animation.

The ground breaking ceremony falls on the same weekend as the Millard County Fair, so there will be other entertainment in Delta. Come and celebrate the Topaz Museum that will be constructed soon.

The Topaz Museum is looking forward to the completion of the Museum so that we can accommodate visitors.

Delta City is also planning a building project that will be located on the west side of the Topaz Museum. Their building will be used for community events and will be available for special programs for the Topaz Museum, too. Both projects should be finished in two years. Join with us to celebrate the starting of construction.



This historic photo of Florence Nagamoto's family was taken by Tony Sato, Mrs. Nagamoto's brother. Mr. Sato's photos recorded daily life at camp.

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Why Journey to Topaz?

By Ann Tamaki Dion



Ann Tamaki Dion and her husband Paul toured Topaz earlier this month.

The legacy of injustice represented by the Topaz Relocation Center must be preserved by all those who care about how we treat each other in our democratic nation. Parents, aunts, uncles or friends were unjustly locked up in Topaz Relocation Center in 1942. Have we done all we can to ensure that the egregious loss of their civil rights will never be forgotten nor repeated in America?

My parents were both imprisoned in Topaz after the President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066, ordering Japanese Americans on the west coast to be removed from their homes without due process. My older sister, Ellen, my younger brother, Don, and I grew up hearing stories about Topaz even though we were born after World War II. My name is Ann Tamaki Dion and this spring I visited what remains of Topaz with my husband, Paul. When Paul joined the family after our marriage in 1972, he soon became aware that my parents, like all former Topaz internees, dated events by "Topaz time," saying, for example, "We knew him before camp" or "That was after camp" or "We haven't seen them since camp."

"Camp" was what Japanese Americans called their imprisonment and, as children, we mistook the "camp" experience for a wilderness adventure. We did not know otherwise because members of our parents' generation consciously or unconsciously buried their bitterness about internment so as not to sour their children's happy childhood.

In fact, in my case, my parents' protective instincts that kept us in the dark about their traumatic experience backfired on them when we were taken to what remained of Topaz on a family visit in the 1960s -- a brief detour from our fun-filled Grand Canyon camping holiday.

When we reached Topaz, we were clueless and, I suspect, even somewhat hurtful to our parents in the way we demonstrated no interest whatsoever in their Topaz experience or what Topaz really meant to them. I was a typical self-centered teenager who was only interested in the Cokes that our Dad bribed us with, and I couldn't wait to get out of the Topaz desert heat that felt like a blazing furnace. I am now quite a bit older and I see Topaz differently.

There are no longer any original buildings on the Topaz site. The entire camp was torn down and parts of the barracks sold throughout Utah. Several of these barracks still exist as homes or public buildings in Delta.

The Topaz site is now littered with countless rusty nails, weathered wood, pipes, the four-foot barbed wire fence that surrounded the camp and concrete foundations that supported the old mess halls, bath facilities and guard towers. Walking the grounds you may even see pieces of broken Japanese porcelain bowls brought to camp by the internees as well as the ubiquitous rock formations placed in decorative fashion that enclosed gardens planted by families. In addition, being at Topaz also allows you to feel with your own senses the harsh, dusty and bug-filled environment endured by the internees.

When I returned home to the San Francisco Bay area that is still home to both my brother and me (my sister now lives in Los Angeles), I urged them both to go to Topaz. They will no doubt experience, as I did, that the old family stories come alive as they walk on the Topaz site. The injustices that took place there should be remembered.

"It's an American story," as Jane Beckwith, long-time Delta resident and Topaz Museum curator, told me. "I grew up in Delta and heard stories about Topaz, too. We asked, 'Why were those people behind barbed wire? What did they do to deserve this treatment?' It's not just about Japanese Americans. It's about American justice and how we treat each other."

Students from BYU and SUU complete major projects

For years the Topaz Final Report compiled during camp has been a valued resource, even though a few pages are impossible to read. The information that was recorded about each internee provides an unusual look into the lives of those who were in camp.

The Final Report was the master document used by the camp administrators to record all names of internees who were held at Topaz. It is currently on our website at topazmuseum.org under the button called Digital Archive.

The index lists all 11,212 names and birth dates of people who were in Topaz, the day they arrived at camp, where they lived prior to Tanforan or other assembly centers, and where they went when they left Topaz and why.

In order to make the Final Report more user friendly, the Topaz Museum Board had the information re-typed from a paper copy into a digital spread sheet format. However, the quality of the original manuscript is difficult to read in many places because it was typed on blueprint paper that has degraded over the years.

To clean up the spread sheet, the Topaz Museum Board recently began working with 18 student interns from Brigham Young University's History Dept. The students are proofreading the new format to ensure the information is as accurate as possible. The 228-page document should be finished by the end of June.

Soon the CyArk project (See page 3) will utilize the index of the names of people who were in Topaz by attaching as many names as possible to the blocks where those people lived in camp. We hope to have a list of as many people as possible showing where they lived on each block.

Another project completed by a group of SUU college students and Delta High School was the list of over 460 babies born in Tanforan and Topaz. That list is also on the topazmuseum.org website. Some of the names need to be confirmed on that list. Please contact us regarding any changes.

Besides the proofreading, the BYU student interns are also reading various histories of Topaz. Some have visited the Topaz site and all are more knowledgeable about internment.

Call for names and addresses

The Topaz Museum is committed to sharing the story of Topaz with internees, their families and the broad community. We would like to communicate regularly with those who know that the story of Topaz must be told to the new generations and that the lives of those who suffered there are honored.

We need your help! We have been diligent in collecting names of those who want to hear from us, but we know there are others we have missed. The Topaz address list has been growing steadily over the years until now we have almost 3000 names. But we know there are still many people who have a connection to Topaz and would like to hear what progress we have been making in preserving the Topaz site and building the Museum.

Please consider sending us the names and addresses of your family and friends who might share our desire to educate people about Topaz.

You can send the names to us via e-mail at

topazmuseum@frontiernet.net. Or go to our website at www.topazmuseum.org and click on Contact Us.

We will only use the addresses for informing people of our progress and upcoming programs.

Recently an entire family sent us their family directory with forty names, addresses, e-mail and phone numbers. We thank them for that.

And don't forget -- we have a presence on Facebook and would welcome your participation there, too.

Friend of Topaz donates stamps

You may have received a newsletter that has three colorful stamps instead of the regular one 45-cent stamp. Topaz has a good friend who is a stamp collector, and he donated enough postage to mail 300 pieces, saving us the cost. We enjoy getting a letter from him every month, not only for the donation but for the interesting stamps. Thanks to our friend!

Special artifacts donated to the Museum ready for display

Artifacts continue to come into the Topaz Museum's collection. The photos are of two of the most recent acquisitions. The doll came from Hannah Maggiora Wallstrum. Both her father, Bob Maggiora and her mother, Patricia Bond, were teachers at Topaz. They married while they lived at camp.

The doll is a fine piece of workmanship, made from wire wrapped with floral tape, wearing a sweet taffeta dress, neatly fitted over a slip made of crepe paper. The doll sports a handbag made of shells.

The fireman's badge belonged to Jim Jacobs' grandfather who was, of course, a fireman at Topaz. He was later a fireman in southern California.

We believe that the artifacts tell part of the history of Topaz that is missed by the academic discussions of internment.



Don't forget the ground breaking August 4

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