

The Lordsburg Shooting

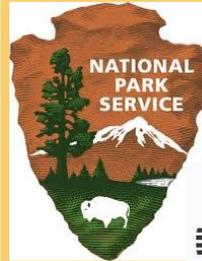
The internees did not know what happened at first, but later that morning rumors spread that Isomura and Kobata had been shot in an “escape attempt.” As Nakamoto recalls, “All internees were [as] depressed as they were shocked, astonished, and in deep fear” after learning about the shooting. Yet incarcerated “could not believe the two had attempted escape under such physical conditions.” Many who knew Isomura and Kobata came forward to make statements about the health and personalities of their friends, who they remembered as “honest,” “gentle,” “compassionate,” and highly unlikely to try an escape. Clearly, attempting to escape in the middle of the night, into an unknown desert landscape, in the presence of an armed guard at the camp entrance seemed like a ridiculous thing for even a healthy person to try; the internees “vowed to find out the truth” about the deaths.



Possible Site of
Lordsburg
Shooting., 2011.
Courtesy of CLOE

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*National Park Service
New Mexico Japanese American
Citizens League
Colorado State University Public
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Japanese American Confinement Site at Lordsburg



Lordsburg Guard Tower, ca. 1942

Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration

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CONFINEMENT in the LAND of ENCHANTMENT

Project Purpose

The goal of “Confinement in the Land of Enchantment: Japanese Americans in New Mexico during WWII” (CLOE) is to reach a wide and diverse audience of New Mexicans and Americans about the histories of Japanese internment in the state, and to inspire thought and conversation about issues of citizenship, identity, and civil liberty. The project focuses on the stories of World War II Japanese confinement sites that were located at Santa Fe, Ft. Stanton, Old Raton Ranch (Baca Camp), and Camp Lordsburg in New Mexico. In addition to telling the stories of detainees held at each of these facilities, the project examines how the surrounding communities interacted with these camps. Stories of how various communities across New Mexico treated their Japanese and Japanese American community members are also explored.

“They worked hard to improve the camp’s bleak landscape”



They planted a vegetable garden that added green space and supplemented their camp rations.

They constructed a stone and cement roundabout and a surrounding cactus garden near the main camp headquarters area. Adjacent to the main road leading into

the camp the internees created a pebble and cement mosaic of the U.S. seal including a proud bald eagle, an interesting show of patriotism by these forsaken Japanese Americans.

The Nikkei at Lordsburg put on a Christmas show and exchanged gifts. To celebrate the New Year, some of the incarcerated men performed a lion dance and dressed as geisha girls.

Sketch of show put on by internees at Lordsburg Internment Camp, 1942.

By George Hoshida

Courtesy of Japanese American National Museum

