

ARTICLES RE JAPANESE EVACUATION
AND REPATRIATION

⑧
1942-1945

Some Facts About the Evacuation of Japanese-Canadians
from the coastal areas of B.C. - 1942.

December 7, 1941 - the day Japan bombed Pearl Harbour - was Sunday. In Vancouver we heard the news in the afternoon. At 7 p.m. we had our regular evening services at the Japanese Missions where a faithful few of the older generation had gathered. I shall never forget them - stunned by what had happened - anxious, shocked, apprehensive, fearful. What would happen to them and their children? We could reassure them! This was Canada and they would receive just and democratic treatment. Only those proven to be disloyal need have any fears.

But - how wrong we were! British Columbia - always a centre of racial prejudice - now erupted in hysteria and a wave of unbelievable persecution gathered momentum. The Press, the Honourable Members of Parliament, business men, even teachers in the schools, joined in a chorus of hate and abuse. I am sorry to report that in this time of opportunity, the voice of the Christian Church was not heard - or was a very faint whisper - and often joined in the widespread hysteria.

The Government of Canada acted quickly. Government by Orders-in-Council had begun. A dusk to dawn curfew was imposed on all those of Japanese racial origin; cameras, radios, flashlights, cars and such things were impounded. Fishermen and all those with boats must bring them to Vancouver immediately. In many cases telephone communication was cut off - without explanation. Japanese "nationals" of military age were ordered to report for assignment to "road camps" in the interior and trainloads of them were soon leaving the city. Many workers in Vancouver lost their jobs - some after many years of faithful service - causing more anxiety about daily living.

These regulations caused great suffering and anguish to the 22,000 Japanese in B.C. - 75% of whom were Canadian citizens by birth or naturalization. This Canadian citizenship was of no value to them now - they had none of the rights of a Canadian.

During this time, what could the workers in Japanese Missions do? Much of our organized work could not be carried on, i.e. night classes for teaching English etc. We could just make ourselves available to our people - act as liaison between the authorities and the Japanese - visit much in the homes, especially at night when they could not go out, and in families where the menfolk had been sent away to work camps. (Because the man is very definitely the head of the home, and is responsible for making decisions etc., his absence at such a time as this, made life even harder to bear.) We could try to bring a little understanding to our own people and, hopefully, a more Christian attitude. Actually, we could just stand by.

The really big blow was not long delayed. The newspapers carried banner headlines announcing the order for the complete evacuation of ALL Japanese-Canadians to beyond 100-miles of the coast. This really meant ALL - the seriously ill, the crippled, the T.B. patients - everyone. One M.P. promised "not one Jap will ever be back in B.C." We were stunned. The B.C. Security Commission had been set up by the Department of Labour and entrusted with the evacuation.

All Japanese were ordered to place all property in "protective custody" with the Government Custodian of Enemy Alien property, and prepare to move at once. This proved to be far from "protective". Personal belongings, clothing, furniture etc. were lost, stolen, destroyed, sold without permission and in every way badly handled. Expensive boats and fishing gear were allowed to be severely damaged due to wilful carelessness. Houses and property sold far below reasonable prices and the entire business handled disgracefully. Due to fear of the future, the people did not respond too readily to the order to report, although some of the men had already been sent to various Ghost Towns in the interior to prepare for the influx. The Commission then decided to allow the Churches that had been working among the Japanese, to register the families for definite areas. The Anglicans were assigned Slocan City (with Bay Farm and Popoff) - which became the largest "Relocation Centre". Some time later, the B.C. Church established work there too, but no other churches worked in Slocan. Later in the evacuation, Tashme (near Hope) was built and the Anglicans and U.C.C. shared responsibility for Christian work there.

ARTICLES RE JAPANESE EVACUATION AND REPAIRATION 1942-1945 8

In the meantime, all families living outside the Vancouver area were ordered to pack and be ready to be moved. On very short notice and under very trying conditions, the Prince Rupert area people were herded on trains - no sleeping accommodation, no meals etc. - and brought to the Exhibition grounds (Hastings Park) in Vancouver. Those on Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands were rushed to this same "camp". So hurriedly was this done that proper arrangements could not be made for livestock and other property. Many months later a girl from Pt. Alberni was wondering "what became of our chickens that night". Baggage allowance was 150-lbs. which must include bedding and all things needed for an unknown period.

Arrived at the Exhibition Grounds in Vancouver, the women and young children (these made up most of the group, of course) were assigned to the livestock building, which had not even been properly cleaned - where rough bunk beds had been erected and straw was available, as there were no mattresses. Some 1500 persons were housed in this building with absolutely no privacy, no adequate sanitary arrangements - with continuous commotion and dust - the floor being of concrete. The indignity of this was intensified by the fact that all were behind closed gates with guards on duty, and no one could get out and no friends could get in. It would take a book to tell of the grief and anguish one witnessed in this place..but I mention one elderly woman whom I was asked to visit. She was the wife of a fisherman (all fishermen were naturalized Canadians) - a simple hardworking woman. She sat on the edge of her bunk with her head in her hands, rocking back and forth, and all she would say was "they took our boat and they took our house." She died later in Slocan - of a broken heart, I feel sure.

The church workers did make a united appeal against the "closed gates" and were allowed passes to enable them to get in to see their people. Never shall I forget the first Holy Communion Service we had there - in a large corner horse stall in the livestock building - with hundreds of people milling about and the small space crowded with bewildered but devout worshippers. This was the first of a number of services conducted by the Rev.W.H.Gale in that place.

In the huge undivided - very breezy - Manufacturers' Building, a kindergarten was run jointly by the U.C.C. and our own teachers. Sunday School and various groups were organized. Some of the high school pupils were coached and tried to study to complete their year. But our job was mainly to counsel and comfort, to visit the sick, to accompany persons to a doctor or dentist - just show our concern and do what we could.

Registering the families for "interior housing" kept us terribly busy - working late into the night. So much information was required and of course "all forms in quintuplicate"! We had to do all the typing too. I should make it clear that not only Anglican families registered with us. Many non-Christians felt happier about being in a town where well-known church workers would be stationed. Some came because relatives would be there. So people of all faiths were to be found in all relocation centres, as they were later called. R.C.M.P. officers were stationed in these centres and no Japanese-Canadian could leave or enter without a permit - they could not telephone anywhere - even the professional people who were employed by the Government. In passing I might add that as late as 1948-49, Japanese-Canadians, whether Canadian citizens or not - could not enter B.C.without a permit from R.C.M.P.

At a time when apparently the only way for a man to prove his loyalty to the country was to join the armed forces - the Nisei boys were not accepted. Even the few who were in the Army before the evacuation were given their discharge. A number of older men, veterans of the first world war - who had served in the Canadian Army and were receiving Government pensions - were included in the discrimination and classed and treated as enemy aliens. (NOTE "A")

Slocan City is about 500 miles east of Vancouver and a large proportion of Japanese families spent the war years there and in the Slocan Valley where several "Ghost Towns" were brought to life and other areas cleared of trees, and very poor housing (?) rushed. When the first snow came in the fall of 1942 there were hundreds of people - women and children - still under canvas.

With the first trainload to Slocan went Miss Hattie Horobin. A crowded, uncomfortable, endless trip in day coaches. Miss Alice Cox (a former C.M.S. missionary in Japan) was already there and tireless in her efforts. The Rev. G.G. Nakayama arrived later with his family and sought to strengthen and encourage his people. It is not possible to recount the trials and tribulations of those days - trainloads of people arriving before accommodation was ready - no schools for crowds of children - sickness, accidents, death - things happening everywhere but seeming much worse under the trying conditions.

Margaret Foster, Aya Suzuki and Gertrude Shore arrived in due course and set to work holding regular classes for school children - using every inch of space they could find, even rooms in the mission house.

The townspeople were very co-operative, although perhaps bewildered too. The Church people welcomed their fellow Christians and shared all they had. For their part the Japanese began at once to plant flowers and beautify the Church grounds. All through the years there was a very happy relationship between the Church members. Many persons were taught and prepared for Baptism, and several deeply moving Confirmation Services were held in the little church.

Gradually the various groups were begun - three kindergartens (one in the United Church, kindly loaned to us), three Sunday Schools, Junior Church, Japanese and English Services, Bible Classes, J.A., G.A., Guides, Scouts, W.A., Library and a very important venture - a much-needed high school. The Government opened public schools, almost a year after the arrival of the first evacuees (with the Buddhist priest as supervisor) but took no responsibility for high school. With the support and encouragement of Archbishop Adams the school was opened in the Orange Hall and soon Miss Nora Bowman came out of retirement to be the Principal. The teachers were H. Horobin, G. Shore, Elsie Heaps and young Japanese-Canadians who were University students. The pupils were a credit to their teachers who had absolutely nothing to work with and spent many, many hours in preparation. I should point out that in the kindergartens and S.S. several of the young Nisei girls gave excellent service - they were both talented and faithful.

The opening of the public school was cause for great relief and joy among parents and children. There were virtually no trained teachers among the Nisei because they were not acceptable to the educational authorities in B.C. I knew only one Nisei teacher who was employed outside of Vancouver in a fishing village, largely Japanese people who had raised a large portion of the money to build the school. So teachers were recruited from among the University students and high school graduates, and many undergraduates, who did a remarkable piece of work. The opening ceremony was on May 24, 1943 (if I remember correctly) and the whole town was present. To begin the program, the children stood at attention and with great enthusiasm led us in singing the National Anthem. It was a moving experience to hear it - "O Canada, our home, our native land" - sung by these displaced persons.

About 20-miles north of Slocan was New Denver with Roseberry nearby, where quite a number of families were housed and a sanatorium built for the T.B. patients. Here Miss Florence Hamilton and Miss W. Clench lived among the people, visited and taught them and were true friends and Christian leaders there. There had been no resident clergyman in Slocan, but the Rev. F. Browne lived in New Denver and travelled to Slocan each Sunday for services. He continued this ministry, conducting the English services with Mr. Nakayama holding services in Japanese in Slocan and all up and down the Valley. Mr. Browne was a true friend to us all. After he moved away to the coast, the Rev. R.N. Savary and his family came from Salmon Arm (where he had worked among the men in the road camps) and carried on his work in the Slocan Valley - moving to Ontario sometime later.

Our idea was to do everything we could to bring happiness under these very difficult conditions - so picnics, hikes and other gatherings were arranged. We tried to stress the bright future and to broaden their thinking. We joined with women all over the world in the World Day of Prayer each year (translated into Japanese) and used every opportunity to have outside speakers. The Japanese themselves kept busy - they organized cooking classes, sewing classes, flower-arranging and all sorts of interesting things. Living under the existing conditions with 2, 3 or even more families using the same limited kitchen facilities tended to make life even more trying!

The "mission house" was an old farmhouse - just a shell - with 6-rooms and a "path" - a very chilly one when the thermometer registered 35 deg. below zero or thereabouts. No electricity - no telephone. Wood stoves and only very green wood available. We had taps, but the pipes froze at the beginning of winter and we would load the buckets on a hand sleigh and go to the stream, break the ice and get water for our needs. Snow was used a great deal too. But to get sufficient water for bathing for five persons (in addition to all other needs) and to get it heated - was no mean task. The small room we called the bathroom, was often covered with ice, the towels frozen solid to the walls! We paid rent for this house at Slokan; (Tashme workers had a rent-free house and other benefits), and we had to buy fuel, pay for cutting, chopping etc. Expenses were very high and the problems very great. But we had a pleasant garden in the summer and could grow many vegetables and enjoy the flowers.

Very early, it became clear that the policy of the Government was to move the people out of B.C. into other provinces (although the other provinces did not want them) and so families gradually settled on beet farms in Alberta and Manitoba and many young people went to Ontario farms. So many disappointments, misunderstandings, so much loneliness and bitterness. But, on the whole, there was not the prejudice in the East that had been their lot in B.C. Early in 1945 the Department of Labour began a campaign to "send them BACK to Japan" (apparently overlooking the fact that many had never been there.) It is a long story and in some ways the unhappiest chapter of all. Pressures were brought to bear, much soul-searching, bitterness in families - the young Nisei opposing their parents and altogether a heartbreaking time. The movement to the East accelerated greatly - worried parents saw young teenagers starting out for strange and distant places. A great break-up of families even among those in the interior towns - aged parents being carted off in open trucks to some other town, and so on. We would need a book to tell of this one phase alone.

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In this new emergency we felt the Canadian people should know what was going on and were sure they would not allow the plans to be carried out, if they had the information. We needed help and quick action and unfortunately knew no one in our church who would be ready to do something - so phoned, wired and wrote to a U.C.C. minister who contacted the Japanese Consultative Committee (a keenly interested and concerned group in Vancouver headed by Dr. Black of U.B.C.) and they appealed directly to the Prime Minister and also did much to arouse public opinion. As a result many of the Government plans had to be changed. So often church workers are accused of being interested only in "souls" and I would like to make it clear that we were all very much interested in the "whole person" and all that happened to him and we fought for his rights - to the best of our ability - all along the way. The Japanese-Canadians were not all "shipped back" to Japan but most of them moved to the East - some remained in interior B.C. and in the Prairie Provinces but the majority went to Ontario. The Rev. G.G. Nakayama was moved to Calgary Diocese with his family. With him went one of the kindergarten buildings - cut into three sections and loaded on a flat car - together with furnishings. This was re-assembled in Coaldale, Alta. and served as a church for ALL Anglicans there for several years.

The W.A. and MSCC felt it was necessary to have workers in the East who knew the Japanese and could help them to get decently settled. In January 1946 I joined Aya Suzuki (who had gone to Ontario earlier with her family) and we began our work in Toronto. Bishop Heber Hamilton was conducting Japanese services and Miss E. Lennox was visiting her old friends. This beginning gradually led to the formation of a congregation in Toronto and another in Hamilton, with various workers on the staff - including Miss A.F. Moss and Mrs. H. Hayashi. The Rev. K. Imai from Japan was in charge of this work from about 1952. But in those early days of the movement to Ontario, Aya and I worked under great pressure - very long hours and many discouragements. Canon Dixon arranged for us to have an office in the basement of South House at Church House, and to this came a steady stream of telegrams, phone calls, letters, persons seeking advice, those wishing to employ Japanese people, some looking for employment - and so on. We met trains - which always seemed to arrive at 7 a.m. - helped those who were changing trains in the large and bustling Union Station, took people to new addresses or to waiting jobs, went with them to parish churches and S.S. to introduce them to the rectors - and just did what we could to help them feel at home in the strange and sometimes unfriendly surroundings. This is another long chapter which must be cut short.

In Toronto we received great help from Canon Judd and Canon Dixon at Church House, as well as from Mrs. Louise Wolfenden who was chairman of the Committee set up to guide this work. The Ontario clergy were usually very co-operative, although often too busy to do extra things. Always ready to welcome those whom we took to church and S.S. and to present our Confirmation Candidates or include them in their classes, and also to marry the young people. We visited most of the churches in the city - and many outside - taking new parishioners and S.S. pupils - but they needed much more support and encouragement under these new conditions, than we were able to give them. We found jobs and houses and took under our guidance many "student domestics" (high school boys and girls in the city without their families, who did light housework in return for room and board.) This was quite an undertaking but we were proud of the record of our young people. The Toronto Board of Education was very understanding and ready to do almost anything to enable the boys and girls to receive an education.

We visited areas all over S.W. Ontario where Japanese were living and were glad to be given the opportunity to speak to groups of all ages and all kinds - W.A. Deaneries, Board Meetings, Annuals, Branch meetings, J.A., G.A., A.Y.P.A., S.S. - various denominations and in several dioceses - even "Unity Church" in Toronto!

We acknowledge a debt of gratitude to many people for much kindness during the war years and after, but would mention Miss A.M. Hilliard and Mrs. Cousins of Vancouver and Miss Cartwright of Toronto. Also many of the clergy who allowed us to use their churches and halls - especially perhaps Canon John Frank of Holy Trinity Toronto who made us so welcome for so long in the Chapel and Church there. The Rev. J. Thompson of St. Thomas and Canon Stanley of Kapuskasing were outstanding in their leadership to ensure Christian treatment of Japanese-Canadians in their areas. We worked closely with the U.C.C. workers and with the Committee on Japanese-Canadians.

The Tashme story is a separate one and somewhat different and must be told by those who were there. The workers were Frances Hawkins and Helen Bailey back from Japan, and Mae Walker. When Tashme closed in 1946, Mae Walker came to work in Toronto for a time and was then posted to Hamilton. The Rev. W.B. Gale lived in Vancouver and travelled to Tashme for services etc. He also spent some time in Toronto after the war, continuing his work with the Japanese-Canadians.

Miss Kay Lang was at Prince Rupert when the evacuation order came and she was a great strength and practical help to the people there and later when they were in Hastings Park. She later worked in the Cariboo with headquarters in Kamloops. Miss Horobin and Miss Hawkins had been in Alberni on Vancouver Island for a short time and were able to give assistance in the evacuation and to bring comfort to so many later on.

The staff at Slocan consisted of the Rev. G.G. Nakayama, Miss A.M. Cox (Hon. C.M.S. Missionary), H. Horobin, G. Shore, M. Foster, A. Suzuki and Elsie Heaps, as well as Miss Bowman who came out of retirement to be principal of the high school. Margaret Foster was probably the most travelled member of our group - moving from Slocan (with kindergarten furniture and all) to Neys, Ont. - a former German P.O.W. Camp still complete with barbed wire fences - a most unsuitable and miserable place for the families shipped there. After we all made a big complaint about this place, the majority of the Japanese-Canadians were moved to an Air Force base at Fingal in Huron Diocese, and Miss Foster went with them. This was a much more civilized situation but still a "camp" run under strict orders, although the war had been over for a year or more. Her next move was north again to Opasatika, near Kapuskasing, in Moosonee Diocese - a bitterly cold lumbering area where she and her Nisei co-worker lived in extremely primitive conditions and taught school in the Japanese community, as well as holding S.S., Church Services, and answering the 1001 other calls upon their time and energy. I went to Slocan in 1942 as Welfare Manager - an employee of the Federal Government - on leave of absence from the W.A. I had a staff of 4 or 5 Nisei - some with their university degrees but prevented from work in their chosen profession. We dealt with the social problems of such a situation - allowances for food (I think it was \$12. a month for a single person, \$23. for two, with small additional payments for children) - clothing, relocation etc. Many of the problems were caused directly by the evacuation - these people had been hard-working, self-supporting members of society. This was an arduous piece of work. In 1945 I resigned from this and returned to full time work on the Mission Staff.

In reading reports of the P.B.M.O. for the years 1942-1947, it is noticeable that the women workers were nameless - with the exception of K. Lang working alone in Kamloops. I would like to record that the W.A. workers bore the heat (and cold!) and burden of the day and did it with gladness. As one of the Japanese-Canadians remarked "we have no choice - we have to live under these conditions - but you are here because you care and want to help us."

In the history of Canada, probably the darkest blot will always be the treatment of Japanese-Canadians during the second world war. 75% of them were Canadian citizens by birth or naturalization. They were all classed as enemy aliens, were disenfranchised, uprooted from farms and homes they had toiled and saved for, all their property taken from them - even small things of sentimental value - and they have never been fairly compensated for their losses. No democratic country in the history of the world had ever treated its people in this way - simply and purely on the basis of racial origin. Of the 23,000 or so in the country only 38 were ever interned and the Prime Minister himself made the statement on a nationwide broadcast that not one incident of sabotage or disloyalty had ever been found among these people. For such a thing to happen in a Christian country should have been absolutely impossible.

This dark blot will certainly show very clearly in the history of Church too. We can recall many instances of cruel discrimination in the church - where Holy Communion was refused to Japanese Anglicans - where the superior Canadians would not kneel beside their Japanese brethren at the altar rail - where priests refused to marry young couples (only because of their race) - where baptism of babies was refused. This is an endless story and a very sad one for our Church.

We speak of the evacuation as "it" but actually we should say "they" - for it was people and they were deeply hurt. The bare facts do not tell the story, because the uprooting of 20,000 people requires major surgery and the scars will remain. True, they have risen above the prejudice and indignity and are again

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AND REPARATION
1942-1945 (8)

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AND REPATRIATION
1942-1945 (8)

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making a great contribution to Canadian life - including Church life - and are to be found in many professions and all types of business. Our years with them have been very rewarding and we follow them with our prayers and with pride in their achievements.

A..Later in the war, at the persistent urging of the British Government, a number of Nisei were recruited for service in the Asian areas. So - it is a fact that a limited number of Japanese-Canadians wore the Canadian uniform and acted as interpreters, language teachers, and also as combatants.

Attached: Copies of letters to :
The Rev.H.G.Watts, March 27, 1945.
The Rev.Canon Judd, June 15, 1945
~~The Rev.H.Norman, July 3, 1945.~~

Photostat of pass to Hastings Park.
Night letters to Prime Minister from S.Ross
and from Slocan Mission Staff.

B..At this time all Japanese were required to "re-register" and state preference, whether they wished to "return" to Japan or go East. If they went East, older members of the families, sick persons, some large families, were not considered suitable for relocation, so families would be broken up and scattered. Following is an extract from a letter we sent to the Rev.H.Norman on July 5th.1945 : "One thing regarding the "re-registration" which so many have told me, is that the forms to be signed for repatriation were all prepared in Vancouver and were sent up here with all names attached and ready for signature - as though expecting all Canadian citizens to sign away their citizenship. In every case the forms, with the name attached, were handed to the person to sign, and then if he expressed the desire to stay in Canada, a white card was attached, and "relocation" marked on form."