

21-23-K015-54

Form 10-300
(Rev. 6-72)UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICENATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries. complete applicable sections)

Arkansas

COUNTY:

Desha

FOR NPS USE ONLY

ENTRY DATE

1. NAME

COMMON:

Rohwer Relocation Center Site

AND/OR HISTORIC:

Nisei Camp

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:

Arkansas Highway 1

CITY OR TOWN:

Rohwer

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:

Four

STATE

Arkansas

CODE

05

COUNTY:

Desha

CODE

041

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)		OWNERSHIP		STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District	<input type="checkbox"/> Building	<input type="checkbox"/> Public	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied	Yes:
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Site	<input type="checkbox"/> Structure	<input type="checkbox"/> Private		<input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted
<input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Both	<input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress		<input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> No

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate).

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Comments
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religious	Cemetery	
<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific		

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:

Mr. Joe Gould, Mr. Robert Adcock

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:

Rohwer

STATE:

AR

CODE

05

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:

Desha County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:

Arkansas City

STATE:

AR

CODE

05

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

DATE OF SURVEY: July, 1971

☐ Federal☐ State☒ County☐ Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

STREET AND NUMBER:

Suite 1030 - Plaza West, McKinley and Lee

CITY OR TOWN:

Little Rock

STATE:

AR

CODE

05

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE

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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Some physical evidence remains to show that a temporary city of ten thousand (10,000) people once occupied the open fields near Rohwer, Arkansas. The Rohwer Relocation Center, situated along a two (2) mile stretch just west of Arkansas Highway 1 and the railroad tracks at Rohwer, housed relocated Japanese-Americans during World War II. The sentry towers and most of the tar paper barracks have been torn down. Several buildings which were in the hospital area of the Relocation Center are now used by the Desha Special School District. Other buildings have been moved from the site.

At the northern extremity of the area are seven buildings now used by the Desha Special School District. In the east central portion of the site are two large concrete foundations, now overrun by weeds and rubbish. West of the concrete foundation stands a twenty (20') foot tall water storage reservoir. Adjacent to this tank are the remains of the Center's fire station.

At the south end of the original site lies the cemetery, with twenty-five (25) concrete gravestones clustered behind two (2) tall monuments. Each of these concrete monuments is approximately fifteen (15') feet tall. The base of the soldiers' memorial gives the appearance of a tank, with the turret being replaced by a double pyramid of cast stone topped by a star. Inscribed on this monument to soldiers from the camp who were killed in action during World War II are the words, "Dedicated to the men from Rohwer Center who gave their lives to America on foreign soil."

The other monument is a concrete obelisk rising from a square base and supporting an eagle atop a globe. Commemorating the lives of the twenty-five (25) 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."

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

3. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- ☐ Pre-Columbian | ☐ 16th Century | ☐ 18th Century | ☒ 20th Century
☐ 15th Century | ☐ 17th Century | ☐ 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Phi- | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | losophy | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social/Human- | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | itarian | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, many Americans feared a Japanese invasion of Hawaii, and ultimately, the West Coast. The loyalty of all persons of Japanese ancestry was immediately questioned. The Japanese-American population was concentrated in the three (3) westernmost states, especially California. This concentration was viewed as a serious threat to American security. To check the Japanese "threat", the United States Government established ten (10) isolated camps in the interior of the country for the relocation of Japanese-Americans.

Executive Order No. 9102 issued by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on March 18, 1942, created the War Relocation Authority. This board established assembly centers on the west coast to which those of Japanese ancestry were to report. Within seven (7) months most of the West coast Japanese-Americans had been loaded onto trains and moved inland to these relocation centers. Two Arkansas camps, one at Jerome in Chicot County and the other at Rohwer in Desha County, housed almost 20,000 Japanese-Americans from 1942-1945.

Construction of Rohwer Relocation Camp, the nation's easternmost relocation center, was initiated on July 31, 1942, under Director Ray D. Johnston. This 10,161 acre site included 500 acres of tar paper buildings efficiently divided into blocks. Each block contained twelve barracks which housed approximately two hundred and fifty (250) people. The twenty (20') foot x one hundred twenty (120') foot barrack buildings were each divided into six (6) apartments of different sizes. A cot, mattress and three (3) blankets were provided for each evacuee.

Each block in the camp also contained a mess hall, laundry and bath-toilet building. Two blocks were set aside

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(Number all entries)

8. Significance (Continued - Page 2)

for schools, two blocks for a hospital and three blocks for office buildings. The entire camp was surrounded by barbed wire fences and sentry towers.

Almost two-thirds of the evacuee population at Rohwer were United States citizens. On March 11, 1943, the camp reached its peak population with 8,475 evacuee residents. During its three (3) years of operation two hundred seventy-four (274) men volunteered from the Rohwer Center for service in the United States Army. The high morale of the Rohwer camp was further marked by their publication of the Rohwer Transmitter, a weekly news bulletin edited by Kinuko Oga.

One of the evacuees maintained a personal diary during her stay at the Rohwer Relocation Center. Arriving on October 31, 1942, this woman recorded in her diary: we "could see the points of the barbed wire fences with droplets of rain stuck on them. Camp looked like some regimented metropolis - orderly rows of lights, quite a sprawling village . . . We were herded off the cars - MP's grabbed our arms as we slipped into the soft mud."

Though the American relocation centers bore little resemblance to concentration camps, they were areas of enforced inhabitation. In spite of the living conditions, both the evacuees and the administrators endeavored to make camp life resemble normal life as much as possible. Buddhist and Christian religious groups were organized, parties and shows were held by the evacuees for their own entertainment and schools with evacuee teachers and Caucasian supervisors were opened.

Federal policy in all relocation camps was that of segregation to separate the "loyal" from the "disloyal" evacuees. Such factors as study or travel in Japan, ability to speak Japanese, or the purchase of United States Savings Bonds were determinants in ascertaining the "loyalty" of Japanese-Americans. If an evacuee was considered "loyal" he could be issued a work permit which allowed him to leave the camp for a specific destination in order to take a pre-arranged job. However, no Japanese-Americans were allowed to return to California until World War II was ended.

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(Number all entries)

8. Significance (Continued - Page 3)

According to camp director Ray Johnston, "The evacuees were never accepted at their true worth by the people of the State and the surrounding community." His overall reaction to the evacuees was that they were "just folks." Another administration official, Austin Smith, thought that the greatest difficulty at the center was a lack of qualified personnel to operate the facility.

During its 1,170 days of operation, the Rohwer camp housed over 10,000 persons. Despite the fact that sixty-five (65%) percent of the evacuees were American citizens, the government felt that their ancestry was sufficient reason during this time of stress to cause their confinement. Near the end of the war, even before the Japanese surrender, the evacuees were gradually allowed to leave the camp. The last group left on November 30, 1945, and the Rohwer Relocation Camp was officially closed.

The Rohwer Relocation Center represents a unique experience in American history. Though nine other such facilities existed in the central United States, the Rohwer Center site is especially significant because of the many physical remains. The cemetery and monuments, water tank, concrete foundations and several original buildings remain as tangible evidence of the city that once stood in these southeast Arkansas fields.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Arkansas Democrat, December 4, 1955; and April 15, October 21, 1961.
 Arkansas Gazette, August 2, September 20, 1942; March 7, 1943; October 15, 1961; November 16, 1969; February 1, 1970; and December 22, 1972.
 Arkansas History Commission. Archives, Austin Smith Collection.
 Vickers, Ruth Petway. "Japanese-American Relocation." Arkansas Historical Quarterly, X (Autumn, 1951), 168-176.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees	Minutes Seconds
NW	33° 46' 47.3"	91° 17' 13.3"		°	°	"
NE	33° 46' 47.3"	91° 16' 33.6"				
SE	33° 45' 57.4"	91° 16' 33.6"				
SW	33° 45' 57.4"	91° 17' 13.3"				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 363

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:

Dianna Kirk, Staff Historian

ORGANIZATION

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

DATE

February, 1974

STREET AND NUMBER:

Suite 1030, Plaza West, McKinley and Lee

CITY OR TOWN:

Little Rock

STATE

AR

CODE

05

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National ☒ State ☐ Local

Name

William E. Henderson

Title State Historic Preservation OfficerDate March 8, 1974

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date _____

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

Date _____

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM**

(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with photograph)

1. NAME		
COMMON	AND/OR HISTORIC	NUMERIC CODE (Assigned by NPS)
Rohwer Relocation Center	Nisei Camp	
2. LOCATION		
STATE	COUNTY	TOWN
Arkansas	Desha	Rohwer
STREET AND NUMBER		
West of Arkansas Highway #1		
3. PHOTO REFERENCE		
PHOTO CREDIT	DATE	NEGATIVE FILED AT
Robert Dunn	February, 1974	Arkansas Historic Preservation Program
4. IDENTIFICATION		
DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.		

Southern-most section of the site viewed from the east.

GPO 932-009

Form No. 10-301
Rev. 7-72

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
PROPERTY MAP FORM**

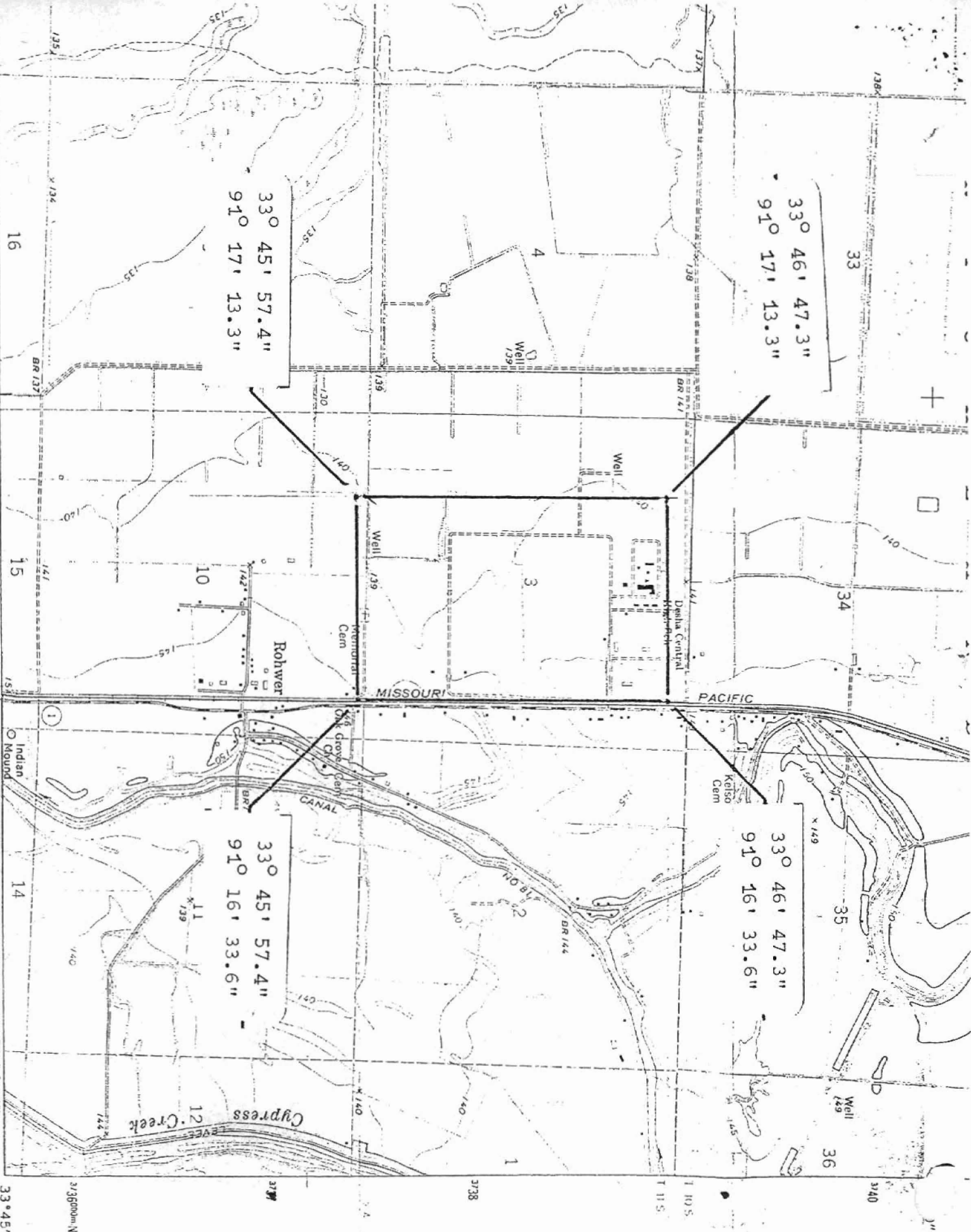
(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with map)

STATE	
Arkansas	
COUNTY	
Desha	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

1. NAME			
COMMON: Rohwer Relocation Center Site			
AND/OR HISTORIC: Nisei Camp			
2. LOCATION			
STREET AND NUMBER:			
West of Arkansas Highway #1, north of Rohwer			
CITY OR TOWN:			
Rohwer			
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
Arkansas	05	Desha	041
3. MAP REFERENCE			
SOURCE:			
U.S.G.S. 7.5 Minute Series, Kelso Quadrangle			
SCALE: 1:24000			
DATE: 1969			
4. REQUIREMENTS			
TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MAPS			
1. Property boundaries where required.			
2. North arrow.			
3. Latitude and longitude reference.			

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

1:62 500' 657 658 17'30" 590000 E. 133°45' 91°15'



3736000 N.

ENC. ARTHUR S. M. INTERIOR-GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, WASHINGTON, D. C. - 1971

