

SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

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CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FRESNO

WALTER E. POLLOCK (1908-1986)

PAPERS, 1942-1955, 1966-1985, 1995  
(bulk 1942, 1979-1985)  
1.75 linear feet

ACQUISITION: The papers were donated by Walter E. Pollock, Warren W. Pollock, and Weston J. Pollock in 2014.

ACCESS: The papers are open for research.

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## **Biography**

Walter E. Pollock was born in Florida on June 30, 1908, but moved to Chicago early in life. Later, his entire family moved to Southern California, where Pollock eventually met his wife Grace. After their marriage the couple moved to Bakersfield, California where Pollock eventually got a job with the Works Progress Administration (WPA), which gave jobs in government projects to people suffering in the Great Depression who preferred to work for government assistance instead of taking welfare. His job there entailed building housing and facilities for laborers flooding into California to take jobs in agriculture. He was also in charge of making the facilities into a community, including putting on recreational events for the laborers.

Following the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the subsequent decision to evacuate all people of Japanese descent from the West Coast, the State Directory of the WPA asked Pollock to head the service division of the Fresno Assembly Center, giving him only ten days to prepare for the new assignment. This center was intended to be a temporary place to incarcerate the Japanese Americans until more permanent facilities could be built in the Midwest. His position with the WPA prepared him well for the task at hand. At the center, Pollock was in charge of making sure there were adequate facilities for food and medical services as well as recreation. Pollock accomplished a nearly impossible feat, preparing these services for thousands of people in barely a week. Beyond just providing facilities for recreation, he was tasked with facilitating and running events such as weddings, a high school graduation and other events to turn the facilities into a community. His job also entailed creating and publishing the center's newsletter and other center communications.

Pollock considered his main job with the Fresno Assembly Center to make as easy a transition and as pleasant an experience for the incarcerated as he possibly could under the circumstances. During his six months at the Assembly Center, he strove to make a thriving community for the Japanese Americans. In fact, upon the closing of the center in October 1942, Pollock felt he had lost many friends. The center's publication "the Grapevine" even announced the birth of his son in August. The Japanese Americans from the Fresno Assembly Center were transferred to a facility in Jerome, Arkansas.

After the closing of the center Pollock moved his family to Vancouver, Washington to head the Vancouver Housing Administration. He later moved to Portland, Oregon to head the Portland Housing Authority. He worked in other careers that tried to make life better for others; managing movie theaters, a county fair, and a public utilities district. His experience with the incarcerated had such an impact on him that later in life, Ray Usui took Pollock and his wife on an all-expenses paid trip to Japan thirty-eight years after the closing of the center. Usui was a baseball player incarcerated at Pinedale who helped Pollock create a baseball program in the assembly center. The two remained close friends even after the closure of the center.

Pollock's time at the Fresno Assembly Center was one of the defining experiences of his life. He wanted to prevent the center being forgotten by everyone except those who had been

**Biography** (cont.)

incarcerated there. He kept and preserved everything he thought to be important about the center's history. Until his death on January 31, 1986, he had been working on a book of his experiences with the center and its incarcerated, after doing vigorous research into the aspects of the incarceration with which he was not directly involved. Pollock had planned to call his book *The Fresno Assembly Center and a Time Beyond Tomorrow*. The book remains unfinished.

**Scope and Content Note**

The Walter E. Pollock papers measure 1.75 linear feet and date from 1942 to 1995. The collection is arranged in four series: Fresno Assembly Center, Research, Writings, and Miscellaneous.

The **Fresno Assembly Center** series (1942-1943) contains items from the Center and the incarcerated. In the Blueprints subseries there are twelve hand-drawn blueprints of elaborate enhancements envisioned for the Fresno Assembly Center after the incarcerated were moved in. These blueprints were all drawn by Ben H. Jinkawa in September 1942, while he was being incarcerated at the Center. Among the blueprints are additions to the three hospitals, one of the libraries, the Grapevine press room, the office used for religious services, the barbershop, center store, post office, recreation center, scout building, and even blueprints for sports equipment. In the Bulletins and newsletters subseries there are the bulletins and newsletters from the Fresno Assembly Center, including the initial publications from the center and the Grapevine Bulletin written and edited by the incarcerated. This subseries also contains bulletins from the Tulare Assembly Center and the Jerome Relocation Camp where the incarcerated from Fresno were transferred. The series also includes detailed directories of all incarcerated detained there, including their addresses within the center and their original places of origin within California. Also in the series are Center Regulation Handbooks, detailing rules of the center for both incarcerated and the staff, and a book of sheet music in Japanese.

The **Research** series (1942-1955, 1966, 1970-1985) contains the handwritten notes of Walter Pollock and photocopies of outside sources on several subjects related to the incarceration such as Canadian incarceration, statistics on Japanese Americans prior to the war, military areas on the West Coast, and voluntary migration. He also has handwritten notes, photocopies, and pamphlets related to Fresno and Fresno County and the Fresno Assembly Center, such as location and climate information, incarcerated areas of origin, facts about the county and the center, and notes on specific individuals he met in the center. This series also contains a subseries of the Books Pollock collected related to the incarceration of Japanese Americans and were meant to be used as background information and context for his own book. This subseries also contains handwritten lists of the books he had collected, as well as receipts and correspondence between Pollock and the publishing company that helped him locate the books in the series. This series also contains the Reports subseries, which contains two reports

**Scope and Content Note** (cont.)

from the U.S. government on the incarceration.

The **Writings** series (1983 and undated) contains the first two chapters of Pollock's book *Fresno Assembly Center and a Time Beyond Tomorrow*, including handwritten drafts of these chapters and a typed draft of the first chapter. This series also contains handwritten preliminary scenes and thoughts for the book, as well as ideas for stories, chapter titles, and name changes for the incarcerated described in the book.

The **Miscellaneous** series (1976-1973, 1995) includes a photocopy of Proclamation 4417 by President Gerald R. Ford regarding the official repealing of Executive Order 9066 and apology for the incarceration. Also in this series are a compilation of newspaper clippings and articles about the incarceration and its lasting impact. Finally, the series includes articles written by Pollock's grandson, Jim Pollock, on his grandfather's experiences in Fresno.

**Related Collections**

Violet Kazue de Cristoforo  
JACL-CCDC  
Japanese Americans in World War II  
TOMO Foundation

**Box no. Description**

Box 1

**Fresno Assembly Center**

- Blueprints [shelved in map case E: drawer 2]
  - Amphitheatre, 1942
  - Barber shop, interior perspective view, 1942
  - Center hospitals, September 2, 1942
  - Center library number 2, September 10, 1942
  - Grapevine press room, September 15, 1942
  - Hospital numbers 1 and 3, September 28, 1942
  - Hospital number 2, September 11, 1942
  - Office room, September 25, 1942
  - Recreation center, 1942
  - Post office and center store, 1942
  - Scout building, September 4, 1942
  - Sports, September 20, 1942
- Bulletins and newsletters
  - Communique*, Jerome Relocation Center, Denson Arkansas, 1942 to 1943
  - Fresno Assembly Center Bulletin*, 1942
  - Grapevine* originals
    - Volume 1, numbers 1-20, 1942
    - Volume 2, numbers 1-20 and volume 3, numbers 1-4, 1942
  - Grapevine* photocopies, 1942
  - Tulare news*, volume 1, number 8, June 3, 1942
- Center regulations handbook (2 copies), 1942
- Fresno Assembly Center directory (2 copies), 1942
- Japanese sheet music, undated
- Sugimoto, Henry. Painting of Fresno Assembly Center [shelved on hanging storage rack 1B] [1942]

**Research**

Books

- Bailey, Paul. *City in the sun: the Japanese Concentration Camp at Poston, Arizona*, 1971
- Bloom, Leonard and Ruth Reimer. *Removal and return: the socio-economic effects of the war on Japanese Americans*, 1949
- Book lists, undated
- Book receipts, undated
- Broadfoot, Barry. *Years of sorrow, years of shame: the Story of the Japanese Canadians in World War II*, 1977
- Cleveland, Anne. *It's Better with Your Shoes Off*, 1955.
- Conrat, Maisie and Richard Conrat. *Executive Order 9066: the Internment of*

**Box no. Description**

Box 1 (cont.)

**Research (cont.)**

Books (cont.)

*110,000 Japanese Americans*, 1972

Correspondence, Arthur H. Clark Company, 1979-1981

Edmiston, James. *Home Again*, 1955

Grodzins, Morton. *Americans Betrayed: Politics and the Japanese evacuation*, 1949

Hynd, Alan. *Betrayal from the East: the inside story of Japanese spies in America*, 1943

McWilliams, Carey. *Prejudice: Japanese-Americans, Symbol of racial intolerance*, 1944

Box 2

Okubo, Miné. *Citizen 13660*, 1966

Thomas, Dorothy Swaine. *The Salvage: Japanese American evacuation and resettlement*, 1952

Vogel, Ezra F. *Japan as number 1: Lessons for America*, 1980

*Bulletin and Grapevine* notes, undated.

Canadian incarceration, 1977 and undated

Center restrictions, undated

Correspondence, Department of the Army, 1980

Correspondence, notes on inquiries to Fresno Chamber of Commerce and Fresno County, 1985

Fresno County and climate information, 1984-1985

Fresno evacuee areas of origin, undated

Map of military areas one and two, undated

Notes on all centers, undated

Notes on General J.L. DeWitt's *Final Report, Japanese evacuation from the West Coast*, undated.

Notes on specific individuals, undated

Notes on voluntary migration, undated

Occupations of incarcerated in California prior to 1940, undated

Reports

Conn, Stetson, Rose C. Engleman, and Byron Fairchild. "United States Army in World War II, Japanese Evacuation from the West Coast." Extracted from *Guarding the United States and its outposts*, 1970

Box 3

DeWitt, General J.L. *Final Report. Japanese Evacuation from the West Coast*, 1942

**Box no. Description**

Box 3 (cont.)

**Research (cont.)**

Short facts about the Fresno Assembly Center, undated  
Statistics on families, undated  
Statistics on incarcerated, undated  
U.S. Japanese population 1940 and before, undated  
Miscellaneous research notes, undated

**Writings**

*Fresno Assembly Center and a Time Beyond Tomorrow*  
Chapter one handwritten, undated  
Chapter one typed, 1983  
Chapter two handwritten, undated  
Chapter titles, undated  
Name change ideas, undated  
Preliminary scene writings, undated  
Speaking to the assembled incarcerated for the first time, undated  
Stories to consider, undated  
Miscellaneous writing notes, undated

**Miscellaneous**

Gerald R. Ford Proclamation 4417, February 20, 1976  
Newspaper clippings, 1979-1981, 1983  
Jim Pollock articles, 1995 and undated

*Oversize:*

**Fresno Assembly Center**

Blueprints [shelved in map case E: drawer 2]  
Amphitheatre, 1942  
Barber shop, interior perspective view, 1942  
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Office room, September 25, 1942  
Recreation center, 1942  
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*Oversize (cont.):*

Walter E. Pollock

**Fresno Assembly Center**

Blueprints [shelved in map case E: drawer 2] (cont.)

Sports, September 20, 1942

Sugimoto, Henry. Painting of Fresno Assembly Center [shelved on hanging storage rack 1B] [1942]