

Internment of Japanese-Americans

In May 1942 during World War II, East Multnomah County's Japanese Americans were taken away to internment camps for the duration of the war. The event, then regarded as a war-time necessity, resulted in an official apology by the U.S. Government years later.

The internment act singled out only Japanese-Americans, though we were also at war with Germans and Italians, forcing the Japanese, many of them American citizens, to leave their homes and farms and move away from U.S. coastal areas to designated camps. They were allowed one suitcase apiece on the day they were taken away at the fairgrounds in Gresham.

Most local families, some of them high school students only days before their graduation, went to Minidoka, a camp in western Idaho. Many chose to leave the camps to work in field labor crews in Idaho and eastern Oregon. Others joined the military serving bravely in World War II. The rest spent 4 to 5 years in the camp.