

Lessons Learned From a Historical Reconstruction Service-Learning Project

R. Casey Cline, Ph.D. and Rebecca Mirsky, Ph.D., PE
Boise State University Department of Construction Management
Boise, Idaho

Pursuant to Executive Order 9066, issued in 1942, U.S. citizens of Japanese descent living in western states were relocated to various internment camps. One of these camps was located near Twin Falls, Idaho. The Department of Construction Management at Boise State University is working with the Friends of Minidoka, a non-profit organization under a grant from the National Park Service (NPS), to design and reconstruct the historic guard tower that was once located at the Minidoka Internment Camp. The tower has long been removed from the site and the NPS wishes to restore it to its original location and specifications as a feature of historical significance. This Service-Learning (S-L) project allows students to investigate the historical construction materials and methods used during the period, with the guidance of a professional architect and an NPS archaeologist. Further, it allows students to survey the political, cultural, and sociological factors surrounding the internment of Japanese Americans at Minidoka and similar centers to begin to understand the impacts of relocation and confinement on a targeted group of Americans. In addition, students will explore the moral and ethical dilemmas confronting the contractors that participated in the construction of the camps. Learning objectives that will be assessed for the S-L class include students' ability to: 1) evaluate the choices of materials and methods employed in the design and construction of the Minidoka internment camp from the standpoints of the government, the contractors, and the internees; 2) identify the stakeholders involved in the reconstruction and describe the type and style of communication appropriate for each; and 3) plan, organize, communicate, implement, and document the design, construction, and turnover phases of a construction project. The outcome of the class will be a case study describing lessons learned and guidance for other Construction Management programs that might be engaged in S-L with non-profit organizations and/or historical reconstruction projects.

Key Words: Service-Learning, Construction Management, Historical Construction