

Bainbridge Island Japanese American Memorial Committee
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Construction groundbreaking ceremony for the Bainbridge Island Japanese American Memorial “Story Wall” to be held on March 30, 2009 – the 67th anniversary of the first exclusion of Japanese Americans in World War II

One of the first Japanese Americans to be forcibly removed and exiled to concentration camps in World War II will climb aboard a construction backhoe and literally break new ground at the culmination of a special ceremony to mark the beginning of building Phase 2 of the Bainbridge Island Japanese American Memorial and the 67th anniversary of the first exclusion of Japanese Americans in WWII.

The 67th Anniversary and Groundbreaking Ceremony will be held on Monday, March 30th, 10 – 11 a.m. at America’s newest National Historic Site – the Bainbridge Island Japanese American Memorial – located on the south side of Eagle Harbor at the former Eagledale ferry landing at the intersection of Eagle Harbor Drive and Taylor Avenue (due south across the harbor from the Winslow ferry dock).

The Bainbridge Island Japanese American Memorial Committee (BIJAM), a private non-profit 501 (c)(3) corporation, in partnership with the City of Bainbridge Island, will be building Phase 2, a 272-foot-long stone and cedar “Story Wall” that will eventually tell the unique American story of the 272 Japanese American residents on the island in 1942. While projected to be finished this summer by Drury Construction of Poulsbo, WA, an estimated \$300,000 is still needed to design and install the Story Wall’s interpretive materials.

The first phase of construction was completed in 2006, consisting of boardwalks, bridges and paths meandering through forests and over wetlands; driveways, parking lots and ponds; and a pavilion and pair of stunning yellow cedar gates hand-crafted by the Timber Framers Guild.

To date, BIJAM has raised \$2.7 million for the \$9 million memorial project: \$1.7 million towards the building of Phases 1 and 2 and planning for Phases 3 and 4, and \$1 million for eight acres on the west end of Pritchard Park. Phase 3 includes construction of the \$5.7 million interpretive center cluster, and Phase 4 will build a \$900,000 departure pier. Scale models of the entire memorial project will be on display at the event. **(A detailed three-page fact sheet and artists’ rendering of the wall are attached)**

This American story began on Monday morning, March 30, 1942, when with only six days notice and only allowed to bring what they could carry or wear, 227 Bainbridge Island men, women and children were gathered up by armed U.S. Army soldiers and delivered in military trucks to the Eagledale ferry landing. There they boarded the ferry Kehloken and departed on a lonely journey with an unknown destination and fate.

These Bainbridge Island families were the first of more than 120,000 Japanese Americans – two-thirds of them United States citizens – to be exiled from the West Coast. While more than 120,000 were incarcerated in internment camps, others served in the U.S. military, some were unjustly imprisoned and some moved away, but all were forbidden to stay.

Their only crime was being Nikkei – persons of Japanese ancestry.

Now almost 67 years later to the day, in 2008 the federal government designated the Bainbridge Island site as a satellite unit of the National Parks Service’s Minidoka National Historic Site.

Parking is limited at the memorial site. Free bus service directly to the site will begin at 9:25 a.m. from the Winslow ferry terminal for walk-on passengers arriving from the 8:45 a.m. sailing from Seattle to Bainbridge Island, with pick up for park-and-ride passengers at 9:35 a.m. The park-and-ride is located at the Bethany Lutheran Church lower parking lot, High School Road and Sportsman Club Road, 7968 Finch Road NE. Return service to the park-and-ride lot and the ferry terminal begins at 11:15 a.m.

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