

FROM FAIR TO UNFAIR: HASTINGS PARK

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The Hastings Park Detention Site Project examines the history and use of Hastings Park and the Pacific National Exhibition (PNE) buildings in Vancouver, B.C. before and after they were expropriated by the Canadian government to detain Japanese Canadians in 1942, during the Second World War.¹

ABSTRACT

In 1942, the Canadian federal government ordered the expulsion of 22 000 Japanese Canadians residing on the west coast of Canada.² Many were detained in a temporary holding centre within the Pacific National Exhibition (PNE) buildings on the grounds of Hastings Park, Vancouver.³ Most of those expelled were Canadian citizens.⁴ Families were separated, and women and children were detained in a building, which seven days prior, housed animals.⁵ This project examines the history of the park and the PNE, from the site of an annual fair that emulates "fun" to its use as a place of incarceration for Japanese Canadians.⁶ The role of the Canadian federal government as the authority and legitimizer of the expulsion and decision to detain Japanese Canadians in Hastings Park, is also explored.



Building K, Men's Dormitory- (Formerly Forum); Hastings Park, Vancouver, BC, Alex Eastwood Collection, Nikkei National Museum, 1994.69.3.18

❖ The interior of the Men's Dormitory with many bunk beds.



Building A, Section of Women's Dormitory- (Formerly Livestock Building); Hastings Park, Vancouver, BC, Alex Eastwood Collection, Nikkei National Museum, 1994.69.3.20

❖ The interior of the building, with covered bunk beds, where women and children were detained.

METHOD

Part One

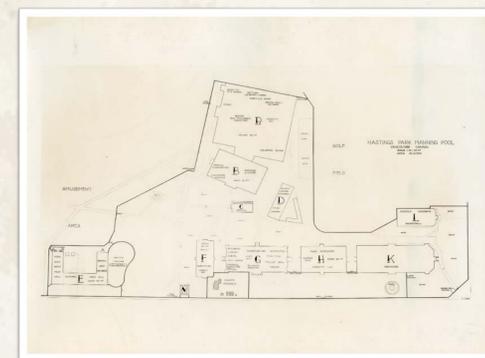
This project outlined the history of the PNE through online research in the York University libraries, various Canadian archives, and other electronically available sources. Photographs, documents, maps, and scholarly literature pertaining to history of the PNE and Hastings Park were compiled into a bibliography using the Mendeley bibliographic software.⁷

Part Two

Research continued by examining the federal government's decision to use Hastings Park, and the PNE buildings, as a site of detention for Japanese Canadians. This was carried out through conducting online searches and compiling the resources into Mendeley. The objective was to identify scholarly, museum, archival, and popular sources pertaining to the policies and actions of the government.⁸

FINDINGS

- ❖ Hastings Park was granted to the City of Vancouver, by the B.C. government in 1889 "for recreation and enjoyment".⁹
- ❖ The Vancouver Exhibition Association (VEA), the predecessor of the PNE, began to lease the grounds of Hastings Park for the operating of an annual fair in 1910, and commercialized the grounds.¹⁰
- ❖ In 1942, when Hastings Park was used for the purpose of detaining Japanese Canadians, the buildings used to confine them were owned by the PNE (known at the time as the VEA).¹¹
- ❖ The conditions in Hastings Park shocked detained Japanese Canadians as there, "was the ever-present stink of animals and the maggots and the dirt that encrusted the buildings".¹²
- ❖ There was no privacy, inadequate eating facilities, and no properly staffed school, among other poor conditions.¹³
- ❖ Japanese Canadians were given short notice to report to Hastings Park, and had to reduce their belongings to "150 pounds of baggage per adult and 75 pounds per child".¹⁴
- ❖ The detention of Japanese Canadians was legitimized as an act of "national security" by the Canadian federal government and B.C.'s politicians, however, they were never a real threat. The government was influenced by racist traditions and assumptions of anti-Asian (anti-Japanese) sentiments. The expulsion and detention disregarded the Canadian citizenship of 75% of the 22 000 Japanese Canadians living on the west coast.¹⁵



Hastings Park Clearing Station, Alex Eastwood Collection, Nikkei National Museum, 1994.69.3.1

❖ A hand-drawn map with the various buildings and their usage for detaining Japanese Canadians.

What's Next?

This is an ongoing project for Dr. Oikawa and the research and methods started here, as well as looking at the contemporary efforts to commemorate the detention, will continue. The project has also inspired me to think about my own research interests, specifically within Japanese Canadian history, to connect with the community, and (hopefully soon) visit Vancouver.



Race Track- [Hastings] Park, Stuart Thomson, City of Vancouver Archives, AM1535-S1-CVA1123-1

❖ View of Hastings Park taken in 1919, with the early PNE buildings, racetrack, and roller coaster visible.