

A remarkable document, in Japanese, is titled "Meiji Foreign Office Report on Idaho" (as translated). It is undated, but since it refers to the 1895 Sino-Japanese War, and to the beginning of Japanese employment on railroad construction in southern Idaho "four years ago" [i.e., 1892], it was probably written about 1896 [in contrast to the 1899-1900 date mentioned in the following article from the *Asian American Comparative Collection Newsletter*]. Here, on the map that accompanies it, a few place names and railroad names have been translated into English.

## MEIJI FOREIGN OFFICE REPORT ON IDAHO

Edited and with introductory remarks by Ronald L. James  
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The following Meiji Era Foreign Office report on working conditions for Japanese immigrants living in Idaho was received from Aaron M. Cohen who found the document while conducting research in the Japanese Foreign Affairs Ministry archives. It is not dated but a reference to the 1895 Sino-Japanese War helps place its origins to sometime around 1899-1900. The document is five pages in length, and consists of a title page, three pages of text, and a map of Idaho. The document is written in a combination of Chinese characters and *kana* syllabary, with *kanji* for part of the title page and for the map locations. The document was recently translated from Japanese to English with the assistance of Jessica Silver, an archivist at the Japanese American National Museum, who arranged for Amy Ota to translate the older Japanese script that can no longer be read by most Japanese. Chika Shimono, a teaching assistant at the College of Southern Idaho, provided additional clarification and translation assistance for some of the specific place names.

Following the 1868 Meiji Restoration, Japan began a massive and ambitious program of modernization. Industrialization was financed by taxing the farmers, which resulted in severe economic hardship for the rural prefectures of Kumamoto, Hiroshima, and Yamaguchi in southwest Japan. At the same time, Japan began to loosen its restrictive emigration policies. Internal pressures on Japanese society, brought on by the Meiji push to modernize, were partly alleviated by allowing more Japanese to migrate to Hawaii and the United States (Takaki 1998:43-46). Between the years 1885 and 1924, 180,000 Japanese migrated to the United States with Idaho being one of the first states to receive significant numbers of Japanese immigrants, primarily as railroad construction workers (Sims 1978:2).

The Japanese government "viewed overseas Japanese as representatives of their homeland.... Review boards screened them to ensure that they were healthy and literate and would creditably 'maintain Japan's national honor'" (Takaki 1998:46). The Japanese government also closely monitored working and living conditions for the Japanese emigrants. The following document was written by an unidentified informant reporting back to the Foreign Affairs Office in Tokyo on the status of working conditions, wages, and economic opportunities for the Japanese living in Idaho.

### References Cited

Sims, Robert C.  
1978 "The Japanese American Experience in Idaho." *Idaho Yesterdays* (Spring):2-10.

Takaki, Ronald  
1998 *Strangers From a Different Shore*. New York: Back Bay Books, Little, Brown.

The document begins:

### REPRESENTATIONAL ITEMS

40 acres farmland crop worth \$5560.  
40 acre expenses \$1580.  
Balance net earnings/year \$3980.  
For the above the yearly income is 1% per \$1000 invested per acre

There is much hope for the future in this newly settled land although many of the [Japanese] laborers coming into this area are without money and skills. Most seek railroad construction jobs in response to want ads from the Portland and San Francisco areas although only a limited number of people are hired. Those not hired by the railroads are forced to seek out less preferable opportunities. One way to improve opportunities would be for businessmen to invest in farming or stock, which is impossible to do in Japan. Anyone attempting this would be very welcomed and could become very successful. The independent businessman would, in addition to establishing a profitable business, also achieve great status.

### **The State of Our Immigrants' Work and Remuneration**

In this state most of the Japanese laborers are railroad workers and number about 400. Working hours are 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., ten hours a day, \$1.15/day with Sunday off. Overtime work should pay much more but the Union Pacific Railroad Company contracts the hiring of Japanese laborers to private contractors who hire the laborers. The Union Pacific Railroad Company pays the contractor and the contractor pays the laborers. The extra money paid for overtime hours goes to pay for the businessman's expenses and the favors of influential people. The contractor is also in the grocery business so the laborer's livelihood is completely in his hands. The laborer becomes the contractor's steady customer with all expenses deducted prior to payment of the laborer's wage.

### **Present State of Japanese Laborers' Condition**

Most of the laborers in Idaho work for the Union Pacific Railroad Company. Japanese workers have been responsible for helping build this famous railroad which runs 541 miles from Wyoming to Granger, Idaho and then on to Huntington, Oregon; counting extension lines, the miles total 560. The Idaho or the Oregon Short Line employs 400 laborers during the summer time but during the winter months the numbers drop to only 100. Their duties are mostly repair work and the foreman in charge of the Japanese is always white. Our laborers are overworked and the unequal working conditions cause resentment. The living quarters are a wood barracks building, 12x20 feet, with 5-12 people living together. They are fed flour dumpling soup, which was recently improved by the addition of meat and vegetables. The bosses noticed that improving the workers' diet increased their efficiency. The railroads built by the Japanese laborers have a reputation for quality construction and a much smoother ride for the passengers.

When railroad construction began four years ago, hostile whites attempted to force the Japanese out but these threats soon subsided. At the same time the victory of the Sino-Japanese War [1895] caused many whites to change the way they viewed the Japanese. White laborers are paid \$1.50/day but the Japanese are more diligent workers. Many of the laborers were farmers from Hiroshima, Kumamoto, Wakayama, Yamaguchi, and Okayama [prefectures] who regularly sent their money back to their hometowns. During the Sino-Japanese War the Japanese consulate requested contributions to the war effort. These laborers worked overtime to earn extra money and donated 930 yen to the Japanese Navy. Even when they are far away from home there is no change in their love of their country.

There has been much discussion among the Japanese laborers about working conditions, antagonism from white workers, safety issues, and the profitability of the companies that they work for.

### **Consideration of the Pacific Northwest, the People, and the Issues Concerning Japanese Laborers**

Idaho is in the Pacific Northwest and more rugged than the eastern states. Lately many migrants from the eastern states have arrived and compared to twenty-some years ago, the social climate is more peaceful and orderly, but still depending on whether it is an area like "South h" City where many of the local people were friendly to the Japanese from the beginning or other places in which the people have been hostile to the Japanese. [The identity of "South h" city is a mystery, since the character in question has multiple meanings. "South h" can be phonetically translated as "Tomoe" (similar then to Tacoma) but it could also be "Nan" (Chinese for "south") Pa, which then resembles Nampa].

For Japanese in the Pacific Northwest, finding jobs has been difficult due to the large numbers of white workers. But anyone with assets, ideas, and the ambition to invest in long term business ventures such as farming, stock ranching, or mining could be successful and would be welcomed.

The South h? where the Japanese immigrants were welcomed had living quarters and even hospitals for them. Laborers with families back in Japan were able to support their families with the money they sent home. Some were able to use their savings to buy property or start a business, but many single men without responsibilities did not save their money to maybe start a farm, stock farm, or mining. The sad result was that they squandered their earnings. Compared to the Japanese, European immigrants had more opportunities to purchase inexpensive, undeveloped land, make improvements, and then resell it for a large profit.

The major political parties in Idaho are the Republicans, the Union Party, and the Democrats. Their views can be summarized as follows: To have the Chinese removed (but so far, as of today, there does not appear to be too much of a threat to continued immigration from Japan), and to protect American laborers from competition from foreign workers. English people have invested much money into the U.S. [End of text].

[AACC Newsletter editor's note: A copy of the document and the map are in the Asian American Comparative Collection at the University of Idaho, Moscow. The map is on the Friends of Minidoka Web site, <<http://www.friendsofninidoka.org>>, under Immigration.]

北米合衆國の地産地消報告 完

和書門			
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2  
4

我労働者ハ鐵道工事ニ從事スル者ノ外殆ド他業ニ從事スルモノナク而シテ其鐵道工事受持線路ハ有名ナル共同太平洋鐵道會社線路中ウワイヨミンゲ州「グレン」シヤヨリ「アイダホ」州ヲ全通シテ「オレゴン」州「ハンチングトン」迄凡五百四十一哩及其支線等ニシテ總延長凡五百六十哩ニ亘リ通常「アイダホ」區又ハ「オレゴン」短線ト稱スル部分ニシテ夏期ハ殆ド四百人ヲ使用スルモ冬期ハ減シテ百人内外トナル是等ノ労働者ハ鐵道工事中唯線路ノ修復ヲ爲スニ過ギズ工夫長ハ悉ク白人ニシテ我工夫ハ其指揮ノ下ニ労働スルモノトス時ニ或ハ酷使スルモノアレハ衝突ヲ來ス如キヲ恐シ其居處ハ同シカラズト雖モ概シテ幅二間長三四間ノ板屋ニ五人ヨリ十一二人起臥ス食物ハ麥團子汁ノ如キモノヲ食シ間々白人ノ批評ヲ受ケシモ近來ハ次第ニ改良シ肉及野菜類ヲモ食シ白人労働者等ニ耻ヂザルニ至レリ日本労働者ハ眞實ニ就役スルヲ以テ雇主ノ信用ヲ得ル處トナレリ日本労働者受持ノ線路ハ工事行届キ外見ノ美ナルノミナラズ汽車ニテ通過スルニ甚シク動搖ヲ感ゼズト賞賛スルモノアリ

リ況ヤ口清ノ戦争ハ世界ノ歴史ニ於テ未曾有ノ大勝利ヲ我ニ與ヘタル今日我労働者ノ聲譽モ遂ヒテ増進セリ唯白人労働者ハ我労働者ヲ目スルニ安値労働者ヲ以テシテ幾分カ輕視スルノミ白人ニシテ此種ノ労働ニ從事スルモノハ口給大抵一弗五十仙以上ナレハ労働ノ點ニ至リテハ怠慢ニシテ我労働者ノ誠實ナルニ及バズト云フ

是等労働者ハ重ニ廣島熊本和歌山山口岡山等ノ農民ニシテ其年々家郷ニ送金スル蓋シ少小ニアラザルナリ

舊日此地方我労働者ノ監督其宜ヲ得ザルヨリ大ニ紛議ヲ生シ或ハ舉テ此工事ヲ失ナフナキヤ一場合ニ立至リシモ爾來事漸ク其緒ニ就ケリ

日清戰端ヲ開クノ公報我領事ヨリ達スルヤ我労働者ハ競ヒテ軍資ニ献納シ桑港報國義會ヲ經テ我海軍ニ献納セシ分ニテモ殆ド九百三十圓ニ達セリ若シ是等労働者ニシテ我本國ニ在リト假定センカ其志如何ニ多額ヲ献納セント欲スルモ實際ニ於テ豈能ク如此ナランヤ又海外ニ在リト雖モ我本國ヲ愛スルノ念篤カラズンバ豈能ク如斯ナランヤ依リテ以テ移住出稼ハ如何ニ我國民ニ益スルカタトスベシ

此地方將來此種ノ我労働者ヲ増使スルヤ否ヤノ點ニ至リテハ今日之ヲ斷言スル能ハズ需要者ハ我労働者ヲ多ク使用セントスルノ念慮ハ止マザルモ世

間ノ物議白人労働者ノ妨害等ヲ憚ルモノ、如シ  
 是等労働者ヲ監督シ教導スルノ如何ハ實ニ尠カラザル利害ヲ彼等ニ波及ス  
 ルヲ以テ大ニ注意ヲ要ス

○地方人民ノ本邦人ニ對スル現時ノ感情及將來移住若クハ出稼ヲ爲  
 スニ當リテハ如何ノ意向ニ傾クベキカ  
 「アイダホ」地方ハ俗ニ未開ノ西北ト稱スル一部分ナレバ從ヒテ人氣粗野ニシ  
 テ東部諸州ノ如クナラザルモ今日ノ西北部ハ東部諸州ヨリ移住セシモノ大  
 ニ増加シタレバ二十年前ノ西北部ト異リ人氣次第ニ温和ニ赴ケリ東部ヨリ  
 近來移住シ來ル人ノ如キハ外國人ニ對シ概シテ懇切ナリ然レモ地方ニ據リ  
 多少我國人ヲ嫌惡スルノ差異アリ南巴市ノ如キハ當初ヨリ我國人ニ對シ常  
 ニ好意ヲ表セリ此州亦他太平洋沿岸諸州ノ如ク我無資力出稼者ノ目的ナク  
 シテ俄ニ入込ミ來ルモノ別ニ被雇セラルベキ場處ヲ見出スト容易ノ業ニアラ  
 ズ白人ノ労働者多キヲ以テ却テ彼等及一般人民ノ感情ヲ毀損スベシ然レモ  
 多少ノ資力ヲ畜シ農業牧畜鑛業ニ従事スルノ目的及計畫ヲ以テ渡航シ或ハ  
 是等ノ越意ヨリ成立スル合資會社ヲ代表シ永久此地ニ事業ヲ爲スノ目的ヲ  
 以テ來ルモノ、如キハ歡迎セラルベシ  
 我労働者ニ好意ヲ表スル南巴ハ我出稼者ノ根據地ニシテ彼等ノ宿泊所及病

院アリ此地ハ之ヲ立脚ノ地トシテ順次他ニ及ボスニ便利ナル要地ナリトス  
 我出稼労働者ニシテ其得ル處ノ賃銀ハ毎月之ヲ本國ニ送り其父兄妻子ノ生  
 計ヲ補助スルモノ惡シキニアラザルモ家計ニ關係ヲ有セザルモノハ之ヲ浪  
 費スルトナク蓄積ヲ專トシ資ヲ合シテ或ハ農業ニ或ハ牧畜ニ鑛業ニ又或ハ  
 製造ニ從事セバ得ル處更ニ大ナルベシ然レモ彼等ノ志望ハ茲ニ至ラザルト  
 適宜ニ之ヲ教導スルモノナキハ遺憾トスル處ナリ之ニ反シ歐洲ヨリ移住シ  
 來ルモノハ志望稍々其度ヲ進メ獨立自治ノ精神ニ富ムヲ以テ當初ハ給料ノ  
 爲メニ労働スルモノ遂ニ自活ノ生計ヲ營ムニ至ル彼等ニシテ一朝本國ニ皈ラ  
 ント欲スルカ爾日安直ニ購求セシ未開地ハ今ヤ非常ナル高價ニ賣却シ巨額  
 ノ財產ヲ懷ニシテ去ルモノ尠シトセザルナリ我労働者ノ志望未ダ茲ニ至ラ  
 ザルナリ

此州ニ於ケル共和黨合衆黨及人民黨ガ外國移住民ニ對スル政説ハ左ノ如ク  
 ナレモ我國人ニ對シテハ其實際及ボス處ノ結果今日ノ處未ダ深ク憂フルニ  
 足ルモノナシ

一 支那人放逐條例ヲ厲行スル事  
 一 内國労働者保護ノ爲メ外國契約労働者排斥條例ヲ厲行スル事  
 英人ガ合衆國ニ於ケル諸種ノ事業ニ資本ヲ注入スル實ニ多額ニシテ之ニ對

摘要

四十、エーカーノ農産物價額

四十七、エーカーノ入費高

差引毎年ノ利益

五千五百六十弗

千五百八十弗

三千九百八十弗

右表ニヨレバ、毎エーカー千弗ノ資本ニ對シテ、割ノ利益ニ相當ス

人員 此地方ハ新開ノ地ニシテ、將來多量ナレハ無資力ノ我勞働者ニシテ、  
狼ニ進入シ來ルモ別ニ爲スベキノ業ナク、餓渴ニ迫ランモ未ダ知ルベカラ  
ズ、只當時鐵道工夫ノ在ルアルモ之トテ人員ニ定限アリ、若シ必要ヲ感ズル  
ハ、ハポートランド或ハ桑港邊ヨリ便宜募集スルヲ以テ之ニ應ジテ來ル者  
ハ可ナレハ無賴ノ徒ヲ増加スルガ如キトアラシカ、我國人ノ聲價ヲ降落ス  
ルニ過ギザルノミ  
之ニ反シテ我資本家ニシテ相當ノ人ヲ撰ミ、充分ノ資本ヲ下シ、農業ニ從事  
センカ、其方法ニ依リ必ズヤ回資本ヲ我内地ニ於テ下シテ以テ得ル處ノ利  
益ヨリ多額ノ利益ヲ得ベシ、牧畜家ノ如キ、兎角我國ニ於テハ成功スルニ難  
キヲ歎ズル者多キヲ聞ク是等ノ輩若シ相當ノ資本ヲ此地ニ抛テ、牧羊或ハ  
牧牛等ノ業ニ從事センカ、其成功ハ期シテ待ツベキモノアラシ  
如此獨立ノ業ニ從事セント欲スルモノハ其幾何人ナルヲ問ハズ、地方人民

ニ歡迎セラルベシ

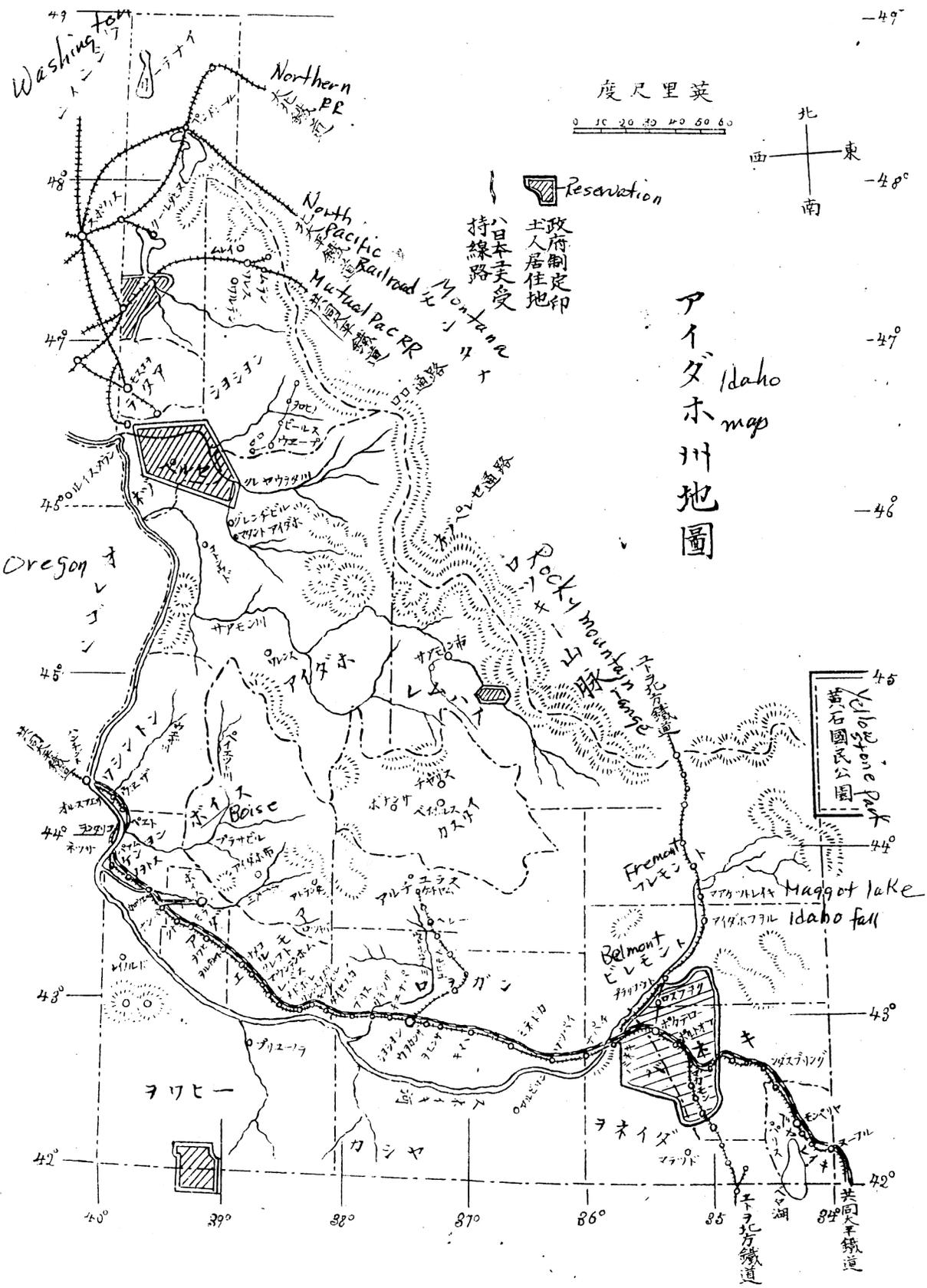
我國人ノ獨立ノ事業ニ就ク者多キハ從ヒテ地位ヲ高メ、勢力ヲ得ルハ自  
然ニシテ其結果移住人員モ年月ト共ニ増加シ、異日我國人ガ下シタル資本  
ニ對シ思掛ナキ大利益ヲ見ルノ日來ラン人員何程ヲ以テ適當トナスマヤト  
ノ問ニ對シテハ、確言シ難キモ以上ノ陳述ヲ以テ之ニ換ヘントス

◎第六章

○我出稼者ガ從事スル勞働及其報酬並ニ之ガ需要者ノ狀況

此州ニ於テ我出稼者ガ從事スル處ハ重ニ鐵道工事ニシテ、其人員多キ時ハ殆  
ト四百名ニ達ス、勞働時間ハ日々午前七時ヨリ午後五時迄、十時間トシ、給料ハ  
一日一弗拾五仙ニシテ、日曜日ハ休業ナリトス、若シ時間外ニ臨時ノ仕事ヲ爲  
スハ從ヒテ相當ノ増給ヲ得ルヲ例トス、需要者ハ共同太平鐵道會社ナレハ  
該會社ハ有力ノ一商人ヲシテ之ガ受負ヲ爲サシメ、日本人ハ此受負者ノ下ニ  
勞働シ、給料モ亦共同太平鐵道會社ヨリ此受負者ニ下シ、此受負者ヨリ更ニ我  
勞働者ニ拂下ルモノトス、此受負者ハ食用品御商ニシテ且我勞働者ノ全權ヲ  
掌握スルヲ以テ受負人ニ取リテハ我勞働者ハ前金ヲ納メテ物ヲ買フ無上ノ  
花客ト云フベシ、尙ホ逐次左ニ其狀況ヲ記サン

○現ニ在留スル本邦勞働者ノ狀況



アイダホ州地圖  
Idaho map

Yellowstone Park  
黄石公園地圖

Reservation  
政府制定印土人居住地  
日本手受持線路