

# Gordon Hirabayashi Recreation Site Brochure

## Coronado National Forest

United States Department of Agriculture  
PREPARED BY: Forest Service  
Southwestern Region

### **Tucson, Arizona, 1933**

Desert dwellers wanted a road up the nearby Santa Catalina Mountains to provide an escape from the summer heat, but building a road through the steep and rocky terrain was expensive. To cut costs, Federal prisoners would supply most of the labor, and a minimum-security "Federal Honor Camp" was begun in 1937 to house the prisoners. There were no fences or guard towers at the camp; painted rocks marked the boundary.

During two decades of labor, the prisoners constructed 24 miles of road through Coronado National Forest, with the route winding from 2,800 feet in elevation at the base of the mountains to over 8,000 feet in the cool pines. Catalina Highway was completed in 1951, and the honor camp buildings were torn down in the 1970s. Little remains at the site beyond foundations and rock walls built by the prisoners.

### **A Prison Without Bars**

All of the prisoners at the honor camp had been convicted of Federal crimes, ranging from immigration law violations to tax evasion to bank robbery. During World War II, many of the prisoners at the honor camp were conscientious objectors, such as Jehovah's Witnesses and Hopi Indians, whose religions prohibited them from serving in the military. Some of the prisoners were Japanese Americans protesting the "Japanese American Relocation," the largest forced removal and incarceration in U.S. history.

### **Lest We Forget**

In 1999, Coronado National Forest named a new recreation site at the old honor camp after its most famous inmate, Dr. Gordon Hirabayashi, to honor him and other resisters of conscience who were imprisoned there. In 2001, interpretive signs were installed at the Gordon Hirabayashi Recreation Site to tell the story of the old honor camp and its connection to the Japanese American internment.

Gordon Hirabayashi Recreation Site is 10 miles east of Tucson just beyond Milepost 7 on Catalina Highway, the road originally built by honor camp prisoners. Facilities at the site include a picnic area, campsites, corral, barrier-free interpretive trail, and trailhead for the Arizona Trail.

### **For More Information**

About Coronado National Forest, its resources and opportunities, contact:

Coronado National Forest  
Santa Catalina Ranger District  
5700 N. Sabino Canyon Road  
Tucson, AZ 85750  
Phone: (520) 749-8700

TTY: (520) 749-8700

Or Visit:

[www.fs.fed.us/r3/coronado](http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/coronado)

July 2003