

## Helen Tanigawa Tsuchiya

Life-altering circumstances brought Helen Tsuchiya and her family to Minneapolis in 1946. "In California someone else was farming our farm and living in our house. We didn't want to go back to California. . . . They hated us there because we were Japanese. Minnesota saved us. I didn't run into prejudice here." At the prompting of a friend, Tsuchiya has recently begun telling students about her experiences.

On August 6, 1942, under Executive Order 9066, the Tanigawa family left Parlier, California, for Gila River Relocation Center in Arizona, where they lived in a 20-foot-square room for the next three years. "It was so dusty it was difficult to breathe. The bathrooms had no privacy," Tsuchiya remembered. "All these people came to our farm. . . . They knew that we were going to be evacuated. We had all our stuff out trying to sell. We must have gotten maybe \$2.00 for our refrigerator, \$2.00 for our stove. It was very sad. Just before we left to go to the internment camp . . . my mother said, 'This war is not going to last very long, so I'm going to leave some of these pictures here that would protect our home.' She had her beautiful wedding picture and I said, 'No, Mom, we need that.' She said, 'No, we're going to put it in a box and we'll leave it here and it will protect our farm . . . our home,' and we left.

"The next day, my older sister, who was married with two children, came to check the house before they, too, were evacuated. Everything was gone, even the upright piano that we couldn't sell was gone. The photographs were gone. We finally had to tell my mom, and it just broke her heart. . . . Naturally, we couldn't make the payments, so we lost the farm. It was 40 acres of beautiful land. It just killed my dad and mom."

Tsuchiya's school memorabilia attest to her academic and athletic success and popularity, all of which continued at the internment camp—with encouragement. The teachers "were so compassionate; they were good to us. They came because they felt sorry for us." Losing three years of her life and all that the family owned, though difficult, did not cause bitterness. "I am a Buddhist. Buddhism teaches you to be compassionate and kind to people. You must be compassionate, patient, and think of others in a good way." Tsuchiya works as medical secretary near her home in St. Louis Park, a job she has held for 50 years. —Ben Petry



The Tanigawa family (Helen, third from left) leaving home, August 6, 1942: "It was the last picture at our home. We wanted to take a nice picture, so we are smiling. It's not saying that we're happy." (Helen Tsuchiya)

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*Ben Petry is an exhibit developer at the Minnesota Historical Society. This essay is based on interviews conducted by Petry for the Minnesota's Greatest Generation Project and by singer-songwriter-activist Larry Long for the Elders' Wisdom, Children's Song™ Songbooks Project.*



**Minnesota's  
Greatest  
Generation**

*The Minnesota Historical Society is in the midst of a long-term project to preserve and present the history of "Minnesota's Greatest Generation," the men and women who grew up during the Great Depression and came of age during World War II. This essay is part of a series that spotlights the experiences of generation members from all walks of life. For more on the MHS project, visit [www.mngreatestgeneration.org](http://www.mngreatestgeneration.org).*

## Lutsen Lodge



MINNESOTANS ARE A PEOPLE with a boundless enthusiasm for outdoor recreation and a high tolerance for extreme weather. For as long as anyone can remember, they have been flocking to “the lake” to boat, fish, swim, ski, hunt, and battle insects. However, in a state that boasts (at least) 10,000 lakes, there is only one Lake Superior. It is frigid in summer, ice-bound in winter, and treacherous at all times. Lutsen Lodge, located on the shore of this wild and beautiful lake, stands as evidence that the allure of Superior has long been hard to resist.

Lutsen began to gain a reputation as a destination in the late 1880s, when Swedish immigrant Charles Axel Nelson offered travelers accommodations in his lakeside cabin. In 1949 architect Edwin Lundie designed a lodge for the site, thereby bestowing resort status on the property. In its Scandinavian-rustic style and timber-frame construction, the lodge not only echoed the majestic scale and sweep of the lake and its surrounding rocky and forested terrain, but it also looked rugged enough to withstand all the inhospitable forces that Superior could muster. Yet its interior—elegant and refined by tradi-

tional north woods standards—welcomed travelers with finely crafted wood paneling, eye-catching details, and a warm, inviting hearth. In the dining room, visitors could enjoy herring fillets, fried chicken, and other quintessential Minnesota resort cuisine while savoring an uninterrupted view of the largest of the Great Lakes.

When it was constructed nearly 60 years ago, the lodge stood as a civilized buffer of shelter and sustenance on the edge between an untamed expanse of Minnesota wilderness and the unknowable depths of Lake Superior—which was precisely its appeal. Wherever one might hail from, Lutsen Lodge was a world away.

—JANE KING HESSION

*Jane King Hession, the co-author of Frank Lloyd Wright in New York: The Plaza Years, 1954–1959 (2007) and president of the Chicago-based Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy, is currently working on a monograph about architect Lisl Close.*

Sources: Dale Mulfinger, *The Architecture of Edwin Lundie* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1995); Kathryn Strand Koutsky and Linda Koutsky, *Minnesota Eats Out* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2003).

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