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Beehive Archive

Welcome to the Beehive Archive—your weekly bite-sized look at some of the most pivotal—and peculiar—events in Utah history. With all of the history and none of the dust, the Beehive Archive is a fun way to catch up on Utah's past. Beehive Archive is a production of the Utah Humanities Council, provided to local papers as a weekly feature article focusing on Utah history topics drawn from our award-winning radio series, which can be heard each week on KCPW and Utah Public Radio.

Alien Registration Act of 1940

The United States has a long history of limiting immigration and managing migrants once they are here, including a campaign to register non-citizen immigrants living in Utah.

Imagine you're a non-citizen living in Utah. When you open up your local newspaper after a long day at work, you find out that the federal government wants to register you as a potential threat to national security. According to the newspaper, you'll need to report to the nearest post office, where you'll complete a questionnaire and then be fingerprinted. At the post office, you're told that after a few weeks you'll get a registration card in the mail and your fingerprints will be sent to the FBI. This may sound like a modern-day plan to root out anti-American terrorists, but it's not.

The plan was actually part of the *Alien Registration Act of 1940*, in which more than 3 million people were expected to register with the government between August and December of that year. So-called "loyal aliens" were assured that their information would be kept secret, and that the only people who need fear were criminals and spies. The United States was still a year away from entering World War II, but many politicians were already jumpy about what they believed were potential threats coming from foreign-born immigrants.

Bingham Canyon was the Utah center for the registration effort. All non-citizens 14 years old and up were required to register in person. They were obliged to give details about their foreign military service, how they entered the country, what their occupation was, and the clubs they belonged to. They were also to provide a list of their relatives living in the United States. Those who ignored the government's order faced \$1,000 fine and six months in jail.

Only two cases were prosecuted under the *Alien Registration Act* during World War II. In later years, however, the law was used to silence communists, socialists, and fascists. In 1957, the US Supreme Court declared some of its provisions were unconstitutional. But the law is still on the books.

Beehive Archive is a production of the Utah Humanities Council. Sources consulted in the creation of the Beehive Archive and past episodes may be found at www.utahhumanities.org/BeehiveArchive.htm. Brandon Johnson © Utah Humanities Council 2014.

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