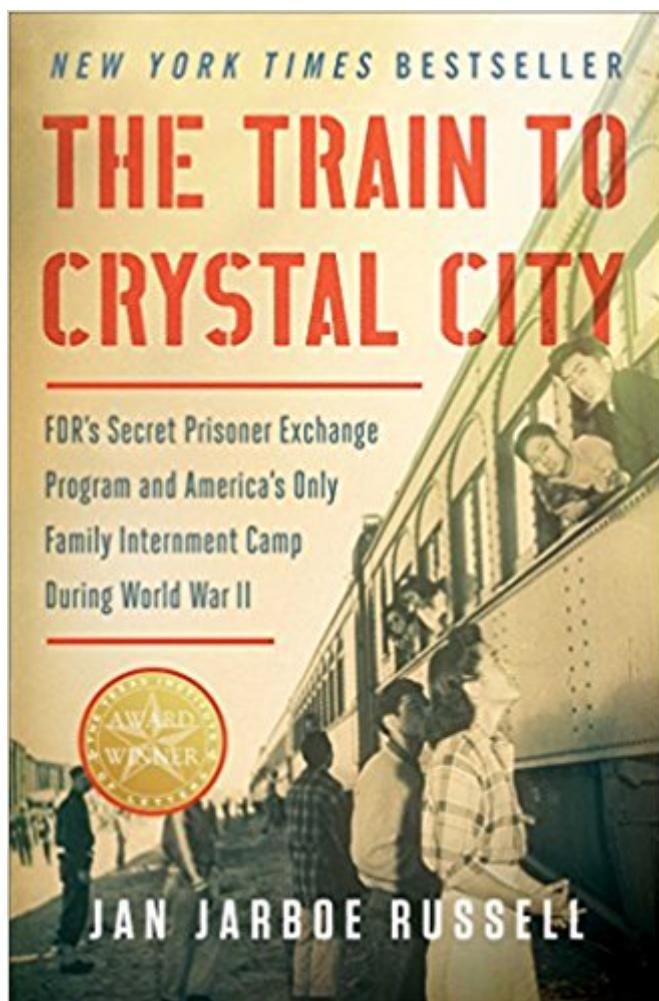


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# The Train To Crystal City: FDR's Secret Prisoner Exchange Program And America's Only Family Internment Camp During World War II





## Synopsis

The New York Times bestselling dramatic and never-before-told story of a secret FDR-approved American internment camp in Texas during World War II: "A must-read." The Train to Crystal City is compelling, thought-provoking, and impossible to put down. (Star-Tribune, Minneapolis). During World War II, trains delivered thousands of civilians from the United States and Latin America to Crystal City, Texas. The trains carried Japanese, German, and Italian immigrants and their American-born children. The only family internment camp during the war, Crystal City was the center of a government prisoner exchange program called "quiet passage." Hundreds of prisoners in Crystal City were exchanged for other more ostensibly important Americans—diplomats, businessmen, soldiers, and missionaries—behind enemy lines in Japan and Germany. "In this quietly moving book," (The Boston Globe), Jan Jarboe Russell focuses on two American-born teenage girls, uncovering the details of their years spent in the camp; the struggles of their fathers; their families' subsequent journeys to war-devastated Germany and Japan; and their years-long attempt to survive and return to the United States, transformed from incarcerated enemies to American loyalists. Their stories of day-to-day life at the camp, from the ten-foot high security fence to the armed guards, daily roll call, and censored mail, have never been told. Combining big-picture World War II history with a little-known event in American history, The Train to Crystal City reveals the war-time hysteria against the Japanese and Germans in America, the secrets of FDR's tactics to rescue high-profile POWs in Germany and Japan, and above all, "is about identity, allegiance, and home, and the difficulty of determining the loyalties that lie in individual human hearts." (Texas Observer).

## Book Information

Paperback: 432 pages

Publisher: Scribner; Reprint edition (January 5, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1451693672

ISBN-13: 978-1451693676

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 1.1 x 8.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 12.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 417 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #56,635 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #45 in Books > Biographies &

## Customer Reviews

An Best Book of the Month, January 2015: By now, most Americans past high school have learned something about the internment of Japanese-Americans after the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1940; until recently a not-much-discussed piece of history—•the internment of citizens mostly born on our soil—•was, to many, a blight on the human rights record of the Roosevelt administration. But what *The Train to Crystal City* makes clear is that Executive Order 9066, which paved the way for internment of Japanese Americans, was just one of the questionable human rights decisions the wartime administration made. According to this dramatic, copiously detailed but still very readable account, a camp in Crystal City, Texas housed American-born children of German and Italian descent as well as Japanese, and many of those children were traded for—“more ostensibly important Americans”—•diplomats, businessmen, soldiers, and missionaries—•who were stuck behind enemy lines. (The program was dubbed the “quiet passage.”) How did such a thing happen? To find out, author Jan Jarboe Russell looked into government files (surprise: Eleanor Roosevelt did not agree with her husband the president and publicly abhorred internment of “Oriental looking people,”—•suggesting that it was un-American) and interviewed now-adult survivors who had been in the camp as children, most notably a Japanese-American girl named Sumi and a German American one named Ingrid. Though the two never met, their stories, taken together, celebrate the pluck and resilience on the part of many survivors. They also paint a vivid picture, all too applicable today, of a country beset by wartime fear, bigotry and governmental misguidance. --Sara Nelson --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

“Russell movingly focuses on human stories coming out of one camp that held both Japanese and Germans, outside Crystal City, Tex....Poignant.” (New York Times Book Review) “Mind-boggling...The Train to Crystal City combines accounts of terrible sorrow and destruction with great perseverance.” Readers [will] wish these stories weren’t true. (The New York Times) “Americans—and particularly Texans—should read Jan Jarboe Russell’s *The Train to Crystal City*... Ultimately, *The Train to Crystal City* is about identity, allegiance and home, and the difficulty of determining the loyalties that lie in individual human hearts.” (Texas Observer) “Poignant, even shocking—a valuable

look at a dark stain on America's Second World War." (Newsday)"In this quietly moving book, Jan Jarboe Russell traces the history of one unusual camp that housed detainees from Japan, Germany, and Italy, along with their families, many of whom were American-born." (Boston Globe)"There are obvious parallels between Crystal City and today's Guantanamo Bay detention facility and between the anti-immigrant sentiment then and now, but Russell wisely resists the urge to connect the dots. Her story is harrowing enough on its own." (Chicago Tribune)"A must-read for those interested not just in history, but in human nature." (Minneapolis Star-Tribune)"Engrossing" Russell documents in chilling details a shocking story of national betrayal. (Kirkus)"This is an informative, disturbing, and necessary reminder of the dangers produced by wartime hysteria." (Booklist)"Both scholars and general readers interested in World War II will agree, this book is a gripping story from start to finish." (Library Journal)"Russell pulls no punches describing the cost of war and the conditions internees endured...a powerful piece." (Publishers Weekly)"The Train to Crystal City is a story of heartbreak, dislocation, of lives smashed and ruined, and of almostunbelievable human endurance, resilience, and determination. Jan Jarboe Russell has written a powerful book that will leave you shaking your head in disbelief." (S.C. Gwynne, New York Times bestselling author of *Rebel Yell* and *Empire of the Summer Moon*)"Jan Jarboe Russell has exposed a corner of American history that few knew existed, one that is at once bitter and transformative. The glory of this book is in the many human details so skillfully sketched, which add another chapter to the unending tally of war." (Lawrence Wright, author of *Thirteen Days in September: Carter, Begin, and Sadat at Camp David*)"Russell does a good job of exploring little-known historical events that deserve more attention." Die-hard Texans who think they know everything about the Lone Star State are likely to discover that they don't readers with no particular interest in World War II or ties to Texas may find it hard to put the book down. (Dallas Morning News)"Russell does a good job of exploring little-known historical events that deserve more attention." Die-hard Texans who think they know everything about the Lone Star State are likely to discover that they don't readers with no particular interest in World War II or ties to Texas may find it hard to put the book down. (Dallas Morning News)"Beautifully written" History buffs and general readers alike will enjoy this wonderfully realized account of a little known incident in 20th Century American history. Jan Jarboe Russell personalizes the story with sensitively written accounts of how the internment affected both

the internees and the people running the camp. I can't recommend it too highly. (Huntington News) A gripping, horrifying and fascinating read. Russell's reporting shines a bright light on the indignities suffered nearly 70 years ago. The Train to Crystal City is an eye-opening and moving look at the personal and political impact of racist policies. (Truthout)

I just recently got the opportunity to preview a upcoming release, "The Train to Crystal City" by Jan Jarboe Russell. This is the untold story of not just Japanese-Americans held in US concentration camps during WWII, but the largely unknown story of German-Americans and Italian-Americans as well, many of whom had lived in the US for years but were stripped of the US citizenship and imprisoned. In addition, this story reveals how the American born spouses and their children were also incarcerated as well. That would be story enough, but there's more. "The Train to Crystal City" also details a secret prisoner exchange designed and approved by FDR whereby these now former Americans were sent to enemy combatant countries along with their spouses and children, often against their will in exchange for key individuals being held behind enemy lines, including downed airmen and US businessmen. The story details how the US military kidnapped foreign nationals---German-Mexicans or Peruvian-Japanese along with their families, with the aid of their respective governments, who then shipped to the US to be held at potential exchanges in this very same internment camp. In exchange for their support, these governments freely confiscated the businesses, homes, and assets of these individuals. Unable to return home and not wanting to be deported to war torn countries they barely knew, if at all, this is a gripping book. I urge everyone to read it.

This book was one of the best historical books I have ever read. I had heard about internment camps during WWII but hadn't any idea of the scope and results of them. Innocent, hardworking Japanese were taken from productive businesses (and their homes). Their children and wives were left on their own for a time and then joined their husbands in the camp. Some were traded for Americans in enemy territory. Those who went back to war-torn lands faced starvation and death. The Japanese people who were American citizens couldn't understand why their country would treat them this way. For sure, it makes you think of present day unrest in our country - hopefully, we learned from past mistakes.

Russell's research into declassified files, personal interest in the subject, and interviews with

internees provide an intense, sometimes heart-breaking, look at the internment camp at Crystal City and the families who inhabited it. She has blended family stories and historical facts and statistics into an informative, interesting book. And it is especially pertinent to our times as America once again has to come to grips with how we are going to deal with immigrants who may be met with fear, prejudice and animosity. I heartily recommend the book. Too many of us know too little about the internment camps during World War II and other books I have read about the subject dealt only with the Japanese internment. Russell's book is limited to only one camp, but her research and the background information she has uncovered will provide the reader with a better knowledge of the internment process and with information about the specific purpose of this particular camp. As one who has grown up in South Texas, I was especially interested in how such a large camp flourished with so little interest in what happened there.

The personal stories of those who experienced some of the least stellar actions of their country must not ever be forgotten, lest we repeat them. This is a work of historical nonfiction that is as contemporary as 2016 editions of the New York Times. This is a must read for government officials at all levels and for the people who elect them.

My book club chose this book and our meeting/discussion is next Monday. I can't wait to hear what everyone thought about it. I was fortunate to hear a speech by a state historian very familiar with Crystal City which added another layer of understanding. The book was chosen by Gulf Coast Reads as their selection for this year. I enjoyed discussing the book with the librarian at the public library. My hope is that if we study our history, even the difficult, painful and unfortunate parts, we may be spared from repeating our mistakes. It really helped me to understand the World War II era in greater depth. On page 58 is a great quote about the children playing war and that the game fell apart because nobody wanted to be the enemy. If only we could see things through the eyes of children.

Amazing read. Well researched, carefully written, and faithfully accurate. I've been involved with holocaust studies for 12 years and I'm quite familiar with the notorious Nazi concentration camps and many other camps where political prisoners are held in Europe and South American countries. It's SO embarrassing to know that the United States of America has their own camps for people they are afraid of. You can debate Guantanamo back and forth all day, but this was one of 6 camps in Texas alone, but it was quite different in that it was designed to keep families together, unlike

most of the American POW or internment camps (primarily Germans and Japanese, but also other nationalities caught up in the conflict and entire because of President Roosevelt. It's shameful what we did as a nation, but heart warming to read of a very few success stories and some random acts of kindness, from time to time. This is a life lesson and it could happen again. It's was wrong then and it would be wrong today, to hold innocent people who were doing their best to be good Americans, not spies.

The Author clearly did her research, as I was one of those interned in Crystal City Internment compound for 5 years. Her footnote references prove decisive in objectively discussing the ramifications and at times the shear terror of internment. The deliberate, even purposeful, denial of the rights accorded in our Constitution, and the violations of the protections accorded by the Geneva Conventions are delineated by this historic book. That it is also an easy read makes it even more remarkable.

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