Janice Camp: Artist's Statement

In 1942 over 1,200 people were living, working, and farming in the area that would become the Hanford nuclear reservation. Many families had worked the land by hand for nearly 100 years, coaxing orchards and alfalfa out of the sandy soil and protecting their livestock from the elements. But after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the US government worked in earnest to develop the ultimate weapon. The government needed a large and remote tract of land with clean and abundant water supply, and access to electric power; sites in Oregon, Washington, and California were candidates for this effort. In late 1942 the Washington site, code named 'Site W', was selected. In 1943 the US Army Corp of Engineers, working with project management teams from DuPont, began removing the inhabitants of the small towns of Hanford, White Bluffs, and other nearby settlements from their land. Landowners were paid 'fair market value' for their farms and were given, at most, 30 days to vacate. Some never recovered emotionally or financially. Homes, barns, gardens, orchards, crops, and schools were destroyed to make way for housing and infrastructure for the Manhattan project and 45,000 workers. All that remains of these once thriving communities is a few foundations, the White Bluffs bank, and Hanford school that would serve as an administration building for the construction of the B reactor and the other nuclear power plants.

In preparing for this piece, I was particularly moved by not only the destruction of the nuclear bombs, 'Trinity' and 'Fat Man' that were built with the plutonium from Hanford, but also the destruction of the lives of the people who made Hanford their home before 1940. This piece depicts what is left of the old Hanford community - the school as seen through barn walls of a lost farm.

*Janice is a practicing occupational health and safety professional at the University of Washington Department of Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences who finds a creative outlet in painting and drawing.*