

University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

Model of Success:

Camp McCoy's Prisoner of War Camp During World War II

History 489

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Abstract

Camp McCoy, as the largest and most important prisoner of war camp in Wisconsin during World War II, had the greatest responsibility of ensuring that the policies of the military and the requirements of the Geneva Convention were carried out. Both the state of prisoner life in the camp and the PW labor program reveal that Camp McCoy's commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Horace I. Rogers, met the objectives of the United States Military and proved committed to the proper treatment of German prisoners of war as stipulated by the Geneva Convention of 1929 and in many respects exceeded its expectations. As a result, Camp McCoy proved to be an effective prisoner of war camp, creating a positive experience for German prisoners and accomplishing the objectives desired by the U.S. Military. This paper examines the experience of German prisoners at Camp McCoy, Wisconsin and the success of McCoy as a POW camp.

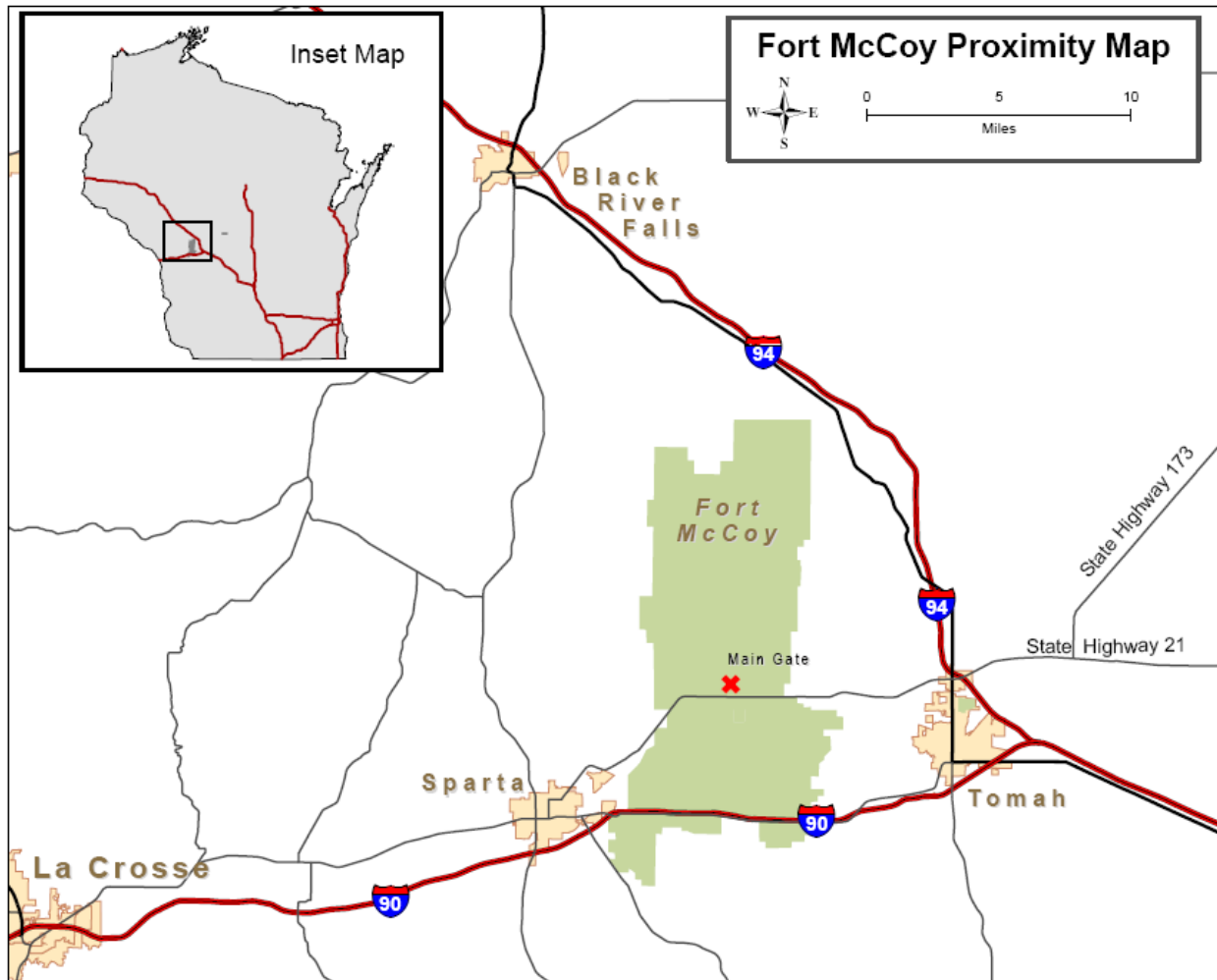
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Present Day Map of the Region of Fort McCoy



Wisconsin Emergency Management
<http://emergencymanagement.wi.gov/docview.asp?docid=5403>

Introduction

On September 1, 1939, Hitler's Germany invaded Poland, marking the commencement of the Second World War. Then on December 7, 1941 the Japanese launched a surprise attack against Pearl Harbor, bringing America into the conflict. Hitler's subsequent declaration of war against the United States made America an official enemy of the Axis Powers.

The United States' entry into the war provided the Allies with a great resource; not only that of military might, but of a vast land for housing allied captured prisoners of war. In 1942 the United States agreed to accept British captured POWs and the May 1943 defeat of the German *Afrika Korps* brought the first substantial shipment of German POWs to the United States. The U.S. subsequently established camps to house the POWs, either in old Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camps, unused "enemy alien" internment camps, or prisoner of war camps specifically created for the massive influx of prisoners.¹

The military developed an infrastructure of camps in order to accommodate the large numbers of prisoners. Initially, they set up large base camps. These tightly secured camps were intended to hold between 2,000 and 4,000 prisoners and contained all of the necessary buildings of a military installation, such as barracks, mess halls, and infirmaries. As more prisoners continued to pour in, the establishment of base camps proved insufficient, so the military created numerous smaller branch camps to accommodate the growing numbers. Branch camps only housed 200 to 750 prisoners and did not contain the permanent facilities of the base camps. Branch camps were often mobile and short lived, established in areas that suffered from labor

¹ Judith Gansberg, *Stalag, U.S.A.: The Remarkable Story of German POWs in America*, (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1977) 4-7. Civilian Conservation Corps were established during the Great Depression to provide jobs and schooling of a quasi-military nature to young men. The programs ended in 1939; *Fort McCoy: Serving America's Army Since 1909, Driving and History Brochure* (Fort McCoy, WI: Defense Automated Printing Service). "Enemy alien" camps were internment camps established by the U.S. Government to detain American citizens and guest workers of German, Italian, or Japanese decent.

shortages. In addition to housing prisoners of war, the base camps became administrative centers, overseeing the various branch camps.²

Between 1942 and 1946 the military established a total of 155 base camps and 511 branch camps in the United States. At their height the camps detained 425, 871 prisoners of war, or PWs as they were often called; 371, 683 of which were German.³ These camps were distributed among forty-four of the forty-eight states.⁴ Wisconsin had 38 branch camps under the jurisdiction of Fort Sheridan, Illinois, and one base camp, Camp McCoy.⁵ Camp McCoy, an abandoned CCC camp, opened in September 1942 as one of America's first internment camps.⁶

Many Americans are not aware of the existence of prisoner of war camps in America during World War II or the vast numbers of the enemy that resided in its borders. As the largest and most important camp in Wisconsin, the prisoner of war camp at Camp McCoy comprises an important episode in Wisconsin history. This paper examines the experience of German Prisoners at Camp McCoy, Wisconsin and the success of McCoy as a prisoner of war camp.

Since World War II, many scholars have addressed the topic of German prisoners of war in the United States. Among the first works on the subject were scholarly articles written during World War II or directly after evaluating the program. Political scientists, psychologists, and

² Arnold Krammer, *Nazi prisoners of war in America* (New York: Stein and Day, 1979), 26-42.

³ Krammer, xiv; Lt. Col. George Glover Lewis and Capt. John Menwha, *History of Prisoner of War Utilization by the United States Army 1777-1945* (Washington D.C.: American Forces Information, Service, 1987), 91. The terms *PW* and *POW* are synonymous and can be used interchangeably. The term used usually depends upon the source or author. Nearly every author who writes about American held prisoners of war refer to them as PWs. The U.S. Military also labeled prisoners as PWs, printing it on their fatigues. For this reason I will use the term PW when referring to American held prisoners of war during WWII, while prisoners of war in general will be referred to as POWs.

⁴ Betty Cowley, *Stalag Wisconsin: Inside WW II Prisoner-of-War Camp* (Oregon, WI: Badger Books Inc, 2002), 11.

⁵ Cowley, 12. Camp Billy Mitchell Field, now General Mitchell International Airport in Milwaukee, was originally a base camp, with Camps Sturtevant, Rockfield, and Hartford under their supervision. In June of 1945 it was demoted to branch camp and all four camps were placed under the jurisdiction of Fort Sheridan (Cowley, 2002, 82).

⁶ Cowley, 11. Originally an internment camp primarily for Japanese "enemy aliens," Camp McCoy was converted to a PW camp for Japanese and German soldiers in 1942.

sociologists were the first to produce these scholarly articles. Their topics included prisoner employment, behavior and attitudes, escape, and reeducation;⁷ however, because much information remained classified, these works were limited.⁸ Between 1962 and 1975, German historians compiled an extensive series on the history of German POWs, yet very few American authors had conducted any research on the subject.⁹

Judith Gansberg and Arnold Krammer are the foremost authorities on German prisoners of war in the United States. Gansberg's book *Stalag, U.S.A.: The Remarkable Story of German POWs in America*, published in 1977, and Krammer's book *Nazi Prisoners of War in America*, compiled just two years later, were the first extensive historical researches on the subject by American scholars. Every subsequent author dealing with German prisoners of war have referenced their books and have relied extensively on the ground work laid by them. Collectively, their works give a detailed overview of the German prisoner of war camps across the country, describing the prisoners' experiences from the moment of their capture to their repatriation at the end of the war.¹⁰ Their works cover camp life and labor, the United States program aimed at reeducating German prisoners of war, and prisoner escapes.

Over the years more authors have written books and articles on German prisoners of war, regarding subjects such as escape, labor, camp life, and reeducation. Others have compared the U.S. to their allies and to the Germans. Those who have studied the topic range from historians to sociologist to psychologists.¹¹ Few works, however, have actually made an attempt to analyze

⁷ Jake W. Spidle, Jr. "Axis Prisoners of War in the United States, 1942-1946: A Bibliographical Essay." *Military Affairs*, 39 (2) (1975), 62.

⁸ The first scholars who studied German prisoners of war in America did not have access to much of the documents available today, which were at that time still classified by the U.S government. Their works were based primarily on newspaper articles and limited information that the military was willing to divulge.

⁹ Spidle, 62. I am not aware if these works have been translated into English.

¹⁰ Repatriation refers to the process of returning POWs to their homelands.

¹¹ Amy C. Hudnall, "Humiliation and Domination under American Eyes: German POWs in the Continental United States," *Social Alternatives* 25 (1) (2006): 33-39; Arthur L. Smith, Jr., *War for the German Mind: Re-*

individual camps in-depth. In 2002, retired history teacher Betty Cowley published a work on the prison camps in Wisconsin. In her book, *Stalag Wisconsin: Inside WW II Prisoner-of-War Camps*, Cowley focuses specifically on Wisconsin's camps and the issues of camp life and labor. The first few chapters give an overview of prisoners of war in Wisconsin, the remaining chapters focus on specific camps. The second chapter of her book concentrates on Camp McCoy.

Two students from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire have also written papers specifically on Camp McCoy. Brad Mayer, author of "A Prison With Freedom: German Prisoners of War at Camp McCoy, Wisconsin 1943-1946," written in 1999, attempts to inform the readers of the freedoms enjoyed by the German Prisoners; however, due to a lack of primary sources, this paper makes a number of generalizations based on the works of Gansberg, Krammer, and others, and offers only a vague picture of the actual life of prisoners at Camp McCoy. Mayer cited only four newspaper articles written about Camp McCoy, only one of which had been written during the war. His other primary sources provide a look at other camps across Wisconsin and the United States, but not specifically McCoy. While the experience of prisoners at Camp McCoy was not all that dissimilar to other camps, the primary sources are not conclusive enough to prove his argument. The paper simply scratches the surface and does not offer enough information pertaining to Camp McCoy.¹²

Benjamin Pennings, author of "The Men and Misconceptions: Prisoner Life at Camp McCoy Wisconsin 1942-1946," written in 2000, also attempts to reveal prisoner treatment, this

educating Hitler's Soldiers (Providence and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1996); Günter Bischof and Stephen E. Ambrose, ed., *Eisenhower and the German POWs: Facts Against Falsehood* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1992); Jack Fincher, "By convention, the enemy within never did without," *Smithsonian* 26 (1995), 126-28; Kenneth Paul O'Brien and Lynn H. Parsons, *The Faustball Tunnel: German POWs in America and their Great Escape* (New York: Random House, 1978); Lewis H. Carlson, *We Were Each Other's Prisoners: An Oral History of World War II American and German Prisoners of War* (New York: Basic Books, 1997); Matthias Reiss, "Bronzed Bodies behind barbed Wire: Masculinity and the Treatment of German Prisoners of War in the United States During World War II," *Journal of Military History* 69 (2) (April 2005), 475-504.

¹² Brad Mayer, "A Prison with Freedom: German Prisoners of War at Camp McCoy, Wisconsin 1943-1946" (B.A. thesis, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, 1999).

in light of the portrayal of camps by the media. His work includes both German and Japanese prisoners of war. While more detailed than the previous paper, only a small section of the paper actually deals directly with Camp McCoy. Again, this paper makes generalizations based on information of other camps. Pennings does utilize, however, four reports from visits to Camp McCoy, yet most of his primary sources focus on the national level.¹³

This paper therefore endeavors to take a detailed look at Camp McCoy. When I first broached the topic I wanted to discover what life at Camp McCoy was like for prisoners.¹⁴ The focus of this paper is on the German prisoners of war, though after spending time analyzing sources I believe that there remains a very interesting story of the Japanese at Camp McCoy that has yet to be told.¹⁵ The Japanese experience did not appear to be as pleasant as their German counterparts. The treatment of the Japanese prisoners seemed to be identical to that of the Germans, but an attitude of the Japanese racial inferior prevailed among the Americans. Further research is necessary to uncover the Japanese story at Camp McCoy. Due to constraints, this paper will not cover the Japanese experiences, though there may be some references to them.

The primary sources I have looked at consist mostly of reports from inspectors who had visited Camp McCoy, as well as memorandums between military agencies and personnel and other military documents. The majority of these documents originally come from the National

¹³ Benjamin Pennings, "The Men and Misconceptions: Prisoner Life at Camp McCoy Wisconsin 1942-1946" (B.A. thesis, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, 2000).

¹⁴ Originally I had hoped to focus on the work program and the reeducation program at Camp McCoy. However, after beginning my research I discovered very few sources on labor, though I found enough to devote a section of my paper to it. I also could find no documents on reeducation specifically at McCoy. While McCoy did allow for the education of prisoners, which is discussed later, reeducation was different and involved intentional democratization and de-Nazification through subliminal propaganda and exposure to American life and ideology. The goal of reeducation was to instill democratic and pro-American ideologies into German soldiers in hopes that they would become the future leaders of Germany (Smith, Jr., 1996). As far as I could determine, Camp McCoy did not have such a program. Over the years the government has destroyed many of their records on the prison camps and many of those who were old enough to remember what went on in those camps have passed away. As a result, the questions I have on these topics may never get answered.

¹⁵ German and Japanese PWs were held together at Camp McCoy from 1943 to 1945 when the Japanese were transferred out. For the most part the two were isolated from each other in the camp, though they shared the same canteen and barber facilities (Cowley, 2002, 18).

Archives. They are also located at the Wisconsin Historical Society in a collection compiled by researcher Paul Mueckler. Other authors have utilized some of these documents, such as Cowley and Pennings, however my research is based extensively on them.¹⁶ Betty Cowley has graciously allowed me access to her private collection as well, which contains letters from interviews conducted by Ms. Cowley, personal notes, material from Fort McCoy, photographs given to her by a former guard, which he took while stationed at McCoy, and drawings done by a prisoner of the camp.¹⁷ These sources have added greatly to my research.

Invaluable to my research were the reports from the various inspections of Camp McCoy. I believe these reports provide an accurate portrayal of prisoner treatment and how well the camp functioned. The authors of these reports include the U.S. Military, a representative from the YMCA, and representatives from the International Red Cross. Three separate organizations, each with their own agendas, yet their reports all support the same conclusion. From these sources it will be made evident that internment for Germans was as pleasant as one could expect as a prisoner of war, and that Camp McCoy functioned as a successful prisoner of war camp.

The success of the prisoner of war camps in the United States lies in their observance of the Geneva Convention of 1929 and U.S. Military policies. While the experiences at the prisoner of war camps were uniform throughout the country, each camp faced its own needs and challenges. Therefore, I have used the protocols of the Geneva Convention and objectives of the military to frame my arguments. Other authors in the past have referenced the Geneva Convention, yet none have closely held up individual camps to the standards of the treaty. Only by analyzing camps on an individual basis can their success be assessed. This paper then,

¹⁶ Others authors have relied more on testimonies and newspaper articles. Though the Mueckler Materials have been complete since 1996, they were not utilized by Mayer and Pennings, though a few on Pennings primary sources can be found in the Mueckler collection.

¹⁷ Cowley's private collection also contains many of the documents found in the Mueckler Materials.

examines how well the commanding officer at Camp McCoy complied with the international and military edicts and discusses his successfulness in maintaining a prisoner of war camp.

During the war, the United States Military had the enormous challenge of maintaining prisoner of war camps. They were charged with the awesome responsibility of operating efficient and well run camps, while simultaneously managing the war effort. In the many camps throughout the nation, this task was accomplished through a firm commitment to the adherence of the Geneva Convention of 1929. Camp McCoy, as the largest of the camps in Wisconsin, had the greatest responsibility of ensuring that the policies of the military and the requirements of the Geneva Convention were carried out. Both the state of prisoner life in the camp and the PW labor program reveal that Camp McCoy's commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Horace I. Rogers, met the objectives of the United States Military and proved committed to the proper treatment of German prisoners of war as stipulated by the Geneva Convention of 1929 and in many respects exceeded its expectations. As a result, Camp McCoy received accolades as an effective prisoner of war camp, creating a positive experience for German prisoners and accomplishing the objectives desired by the U.S. Military.

History of Prisoners of War in America

World War II was not the first time the United States held prisoners of war. The country had had a long history prior to it. Throughout the various wars in U.S. history the government had implemented policies regarding their treatment. These policies varied from war to war and often depended upon the enemy faced at the time. No uniform policy existed pertaining to the treatment of prisoners of war in the United States until the First World War.

America's First Wars

The holding of prisoners of war in the United States dates back to the birth of the nation. During the Revolutionary War, American armies captured and held British soldiers. Initially America sought to treat their captives in the tradition of gentleman's warfare, however the mistreatment of American prisoners by the British as rebellious subjects rather than admirable opponents, led American forces to threaten to follow suit if the British did not treat their men humanely.¹⁸ The Americans often held prisoners in local jails until prison camps could be established, where they were then separated by nationality and rank.¹⁹ Officers were typically allowed parole, while enlisted men were confined to barracks, occasionally placed in solitary confinement in retaliation to British mistreatment of American prisoners.²⁰ While policies in each state differed, the confederal government did utilize prisoner labor. British prisoners were allowed to continue in their trades if they desired to do so. Congress paid these men equal to the amount of their rations, the rest was provided by the employers.²¹ Because the treatment of prisoners in the United States lacked uniformity, in 1780 the congress appointed a Commissary General of Prisoners to manage their treatment and exchange.²²

During the war of 1812, the United States again held British prisoners of war. The U.S. ratified a cartel governing the exchange of prisoners and their treatment, which the British adhered to until 1814, but never ratified.²³ During the War with Mexico from 1846 to 1848 the

¹⁸ "Gentlemen's warfare" simply means the European way of conducting war, following an unofficial code of honor during combat and in treatment of the enemy. The British did not believe this unofficial code applied to the American's because they were not a European army but treasonous subjects of the British crown.

¹⁹ Hessian mercenaries fought for the British in the Revolutionary War. Interestingly, the Hessians, a German people, were trusted more than the British and were more likely to be allowed on parole. After the War, about 6,000 Hessians stayed and obtained citizenship in the United States (Lewis and Menwha, 2-20).

²⁰ Lt. Col. George Glover Lewis and Capt. John Menwha, *History of Prisoner of War Utilization by the United States Army 1777-1945* (Washington D.C.: American Forces Information, Service, 1987), 1-3.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 15-18.

²² *Ibid.*, 8.

²³ *Ibid.*, 22-25.

U.S. policy allowed for the parole of prisoners of war and permitted them to return home provided they would not return to hostilities.²⁴

In the Civil War, both the Union and the Confederacy held prisoners. The Civil War marked the first large scale confinement of war prisoners by the United States Military. Due to the large numbers, Congress transferred the Commissary General of Prisoners to the jurisdiction of the War Department, which made its new headquarters in Washington. The Commissary General then received the responsibility of overseeing all POW matters.

Both the Union and the Confederacy held the practice of recruiting POWs into their military ranks, however the South often expressed reservations. They also used prisoners as laborers. In the North, POWs were rarely utilized in labor, unless in retaliation to the South. The Confederates often tried to use black soldiers as slave labor and by the end of the war employed white soldiers as well to ease the labor shortage. In general though, most prisoners remained confined in a camp or prison for the duration of the war unless exchanged.²⁵

Following the Civil War, the United States began expanding at an ever increasing rate. This expansion led to conflict with Native Americans. In one of the darkest chapters in U.S. History, most of the prisoners taken by both sides were either tortured or killed. Also a result of American expansion was the Spanish-American War. During the war, both sides made an agreement regarding the detention of prisoners of war, including provisions for rations.²⁶

Treaties Regarding Prisoners of War up to the First World War

While the prisoners of war had existed for thousands of years, until the end of the Revolutionary War, no international agreements had ever been made regarding their treatment.

²⁴ Ibid., 25-26. This policy changed in April of 1847 when the government ordered that officers be detained during the duration of the war.

²⁵ Ibid., 27-42.

²⁶ Ibid., 43-46.

In 1785 the United States signed a treaty with Prussia guaranteeing the rights of prisoners of war and the responsibilities of the captors should the two states again enter into a state of war. While the treaty only pertained to U.S. and Prussian relations, the treaty, and its subsequent revisions, marked the first of its kind and was a precursor to every international treaty regarding prisoners of war.²⁷

In May of 1899, representatives from twenty-six world powers met at The Hague in Russia to delineate the rules of warfare. Twenty-four of the nations present ratified the *Hague Convention of 1899 Respecting the Laws and Customs of War and Land*; the largest number of nations to ever ratify such a treaty. The Hague Convention specified the guidelines for both the captor and the prisoner. The treaty was revised in 1907, stipulating that it only applied if all belligerents had signed. Serbia and Montenegro never signed the agreement, making it null-in-void during the First World War. The 1785 treaty between Prussia, later Germany, and the United States therefore served as the only agreement between the two powers concerning prisoners of war during World War I.²⁸

The Great War

Prison Camps of the European Powers

In 1914, all of Europe plunged itself into the first ever “total war.” The war took its toll on Europe and labor shortages required the forced labor of prisoners of war. Unlike in previous European wars, soldiers and civilians alike were forced into prison camps.²⁹ Because neither Serbia nor Montenegro signed the Hague Convention, the European powers were under no

²⁷ Ibid., 21.

²⁸ Ibid., 47-48.

²⁹ Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker, *14-18: Understanding the Great War*, trans. Catherine Temerson (Great Britain: Profile Books, 2002; New York: Hill and Wang, 2003), 70-72. Many, though not all, civilians in occupied territories were put into prison camps alongside prisoners of war captured in combat.

obligation to abide by the treaty. As a result POW treatment was horrific. Prisoners were transported to the camps in cattle cars, making no distinction between able soldiers and the wounded or civilians.³⁰ The conditions of these camps were atrocious, especially the German ones. One French Prisoner described his internment thus:

The treatment we're subjected to is indescribable. What horrors, what barbarity, war gives rise to. We are crammed into a shed where we can only rest by crouching (for lack of space), and which is exposed to the rain and wind. Every morning we go to and from the front...carrying material for fortifications. Beasts of burden are less exhausted than we. The saddest sight I have witnessed was seeing the most worn out of our comrades collapse from weakness. The food is very inadequate: in the morning black coffee, in the evening a very watery soup, one piece of bread around 300 or 400 grammes and a teaspoon of jam. Also our workplace and quarters are under constant bombardment.³¹

Both sides used their prisoners to perform war related work on the frontlines, forcing them to help in the war effort of the enemy. Some were used as what one author called "human shields." While German prisoners held by the British fared slightly better, camp life was not pleasant for either side.

In response to one army power mistreating their prisoners, another power would retaliate, withholding mail or limiting their food. These retaliations would go back and forth, escalating each time. Prisoners suffered greatly and oftentimes developed psychological illnesses that occasionally led to suicide. The Red Cross, while appalled at these atrocities, had no power to regulate prisoner treatment. Though the international agreements technically existed to protect prisoners of war, no authority existed to enforce them.³²

U.S Prisoners of War Policies

The United States entered the war in 1917 and even though the Hague Convention was no longer binding on them, its general provisions had been incorporated into U.S. military

³⁰ Ibid., 80.

³¹ Ibid., 88.

³² Ibid. 80-90.

polices.³³ American captured POWs received exceptional treatment. Prisoners were provided the same food, clothing, quarters, and medical treatment as American forces and were given various recreational outlets.³⁴ In addition, the Military also set up a work program to help manage the labor shortage, however it was nothing like the virtual slave labor found among the European powers.³⁵ Only a small number of prisoners were ever detained in the U.S. though. All totaled, only 1,346 military and 5,887 non-military personnel were held in the United States during World War I.³⁶

The Geneva Convention of 1929

The horrors of The Great War and the weaknesses of The Hague Convention led to many concerns about prisoners of war in the future. In 1929, representatives from around the world met in Switzerland for the *Geneva Prisoner of War Convention*, commonly known as the Geneva Convention, and the *Geneva Red Cross Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick of Armies in the Field*, to discuss these concerns.³⁷ The states who crafted the Geneva Convention of 1929 did not wish to have a repeat of the atrocities of the First World War should another start. They determined that it was the “duty of every Power, to mitigate as far as possible, the inevitable rigours thereof and to alleviate the condition of prisoners of war.”³⁸ Noting that the Hague was insufficient enough to meet this goal they formulated 97 different

³³ Lewis and Menwha, 48. Because Serbia and Montenegro had not signed the treaty, the United States, who was one of the signatories, were also not obligated to abide by the convention

³⁴ Ibid., 60.

³⁵ Ibid., 54-58.

³⁶ Gansberg, 3.

³⁷ Lewis and Menwha, 66.

³⁸ ³⁸ International Committee of the Red Cross: International Humanitarian Law – Treaties and Documents, *Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, Geneva, 27 July 1929*, Preamble [on-line document], accessed 01 Oct. 2007; available from <http://www.icrc.org/ihl.nsf/FULL/305?OpenDocument>; Internet.

articles governing the capture, detention and repatriation of prisoners of war, defining the rights and obligations of both the captors and the prisoners.³⁹

One very important right of the prisoners regarded the right to express their complaints to authorities. In the camps, prisoners had the freedom to bring complaints about their treatment to their captives:

Prisoners of war shall have the right to bring to the notice of the military authorities, in whose hands they are, their petitions concerning the conditions of captivity to which they are subjected. They shall also have the right to communicate with the representatives of the protecting Powers in order to draw their attention to the points on which they have complaints to make with regard to the conditions of captivity.⁴⁰

Countries were then charged with the responsibility of forming information bureaus to record data on their prisoners and report them to their respective adversaries.⁴¹

In addition, the Geneva Convention gave the International Red Cross the right to establish an independent information agency to monitor the treatment of prisoners and ensure that they received humanitarian aid.⁴² In the United States, inspectors from the military and the International Red Cross frequented camps to inspect prisoner treatment and interview prisoners. Representatives from the American YMCA also visited camps to provide humanitarian relief and act as yet another monitor of U.S. prison camps.

One major difference between the Geneva Convention and the Hague concerned the adherence of the signatories. As cited above, the Hague treaty only remained binding if all of the belligerents took part. The Geneva Convention eliminated this deficiency. According to the treaty “the provisions of the present Convention shall be respected by the High Contracting

³⁹ *Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, Geneva, 27 July 1929, Preamble.*

⁴⁰ *Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, Geneva, 27 July 1929, pt. 3, sec. 5, ch.1 art.*

42.

⁴¹ *Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, Geneva, 27 July 1929, pt. 6, 1 art. 77*

⁴² *Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, Geneva, 27 July 1929, pt. 6, 1 art. 78-79*

Parties in all circumstances.” Regardless if one or more belligerents did not sign, the treaty remained in effect for all of the other signatories.⁴³

U.S. Military Policy and Geneva

U.S. Incentive to Uphold the Geneva Convention

The United States and Germany were among the nations who participated in the Geneva Convention. While Germany may have signed the treaty in 1929, whether or not Hitler’s Third Reich would in fact honor the treaty during World War II remained unclear. Aware of this, the Provost Marshal General’s Office and the War Department committed “to do everything humanly possible to ensure that [U.S. prisoners] in the hands of the enemy have all of the benefits of the Geneva Convention.”⁴⁴ The U.S Military therefore made every effort to guarantee their own prisoners all of the rights afforded them by to the Geneva Convention:

The provisions of the Geneva Convention of 1929 are obviously being carried out to the letter and it is well indeed that such is the case, since the slightest deviation therefrom on our part would instantly result in more retaliatory measures on the part of our enemies against American prisoners of war in their hands.⁴⁵

One of the concerns of the United States military during World War II was the treatment of their men who had been captured by the enemy. They believed that to ensure fair treatment of their soldiers at the hands of the Germans, it was imperative that they themselves adhered to the Geneva Convention; anything less could potentially give the Germans an excuse to renege on their obligations.

⁴³ *Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, Geneva, 27 July 1929*, pt. 7, sec. 1, art. 82.

⁴⁴ *To the Next of Kin of American Prisoners of War in the Hands of the Enemy* (Washington D.C: War Department, Army Service Forces, Office of the Commanding General, March 1945). Folder 1/13. Paul Mueckler, Research Materials, 1941-1946, 1996. WIHV00-A1747. Wisconsin Historical Society Archives. Madison WI.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

PW Labor

With the United States entrance into World War II in 1941, the nation began to suffer from a significant labor shortage. The Geneva Convention did allow for the utilization of prisoner labor and the United States wasted no time putting prisoners to work. However, the treaty placed a number of restrictions and guidelines to ensure that prisoners were not debased into slave laborers. Only those prisoners physically able could be assigned to work, and no job could be assigned which the prisoner was not capable of performing. Prisoners could not work any longer than civilian laborers who performed the same job and international law required that PWs received twenty-four consecutive hours of rest each week. Furthermore, PWs could not be forced to do any work that might be hazardous to their health.⁴⁶ Host countries also could not employ prisoners in any work related to their war effort:

Work done by prisoners of war shall have no direct connection with the operations of the war. In particular, it is forbidden to employ prisoners in the manufacture or transport of arms or munitions of any kind, or on the transport of material destined for combatant units.⁴⁷

Additionally, a country could not force officers to work, yet officers could ask to be assigned to work if they so chose. Non-Commissioned officers could only be asked to work as supervisors, though they could request to work in specific occupations.⁴⁸ The Geneva Convention required that prisoners who performed jobs that did not consist of “the administration, internal arrangement and maintenance of camps” must receive pay for their work and prisoners employed by the government of the host country had to be paid equal to the soldiers of that country for the same work; pay from private contract was negotiated by the military.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ *Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War*, pt. 3, sec. 3, art. 27-32.

⁴⁷ *Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War*, pt. 3, sec. 3, ch. 1, art. 27.

⁴⁸ *Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War*, pt. 3, sec. 3, ch. 3, art. 31.

⁴⁹ *Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War*, pt. 3, sec. 3, ch. 5, art. 34.

With the work shortage in the United States growing, the need for utilization of PW labor became essential, so the military established a clear definition as to the type of work PWs could be employed at. On January 10, 1943 the War Department stated that camps could utilize prisoners in “any work outside the combat zones not having direct relation with war operations and not involving the manufacture or transportation of arms or munitions or the transportation of any material clearly intended for combatant units, and not unhealthful, dangerous, degrading, or beyond the particular prisoner’s physical capacity...”⁵⁰

Utilization of PW labor by the military soon became vital as well. Due to the vagueness of the Geneva Convention in regards to the specific work the military could employ prisoners in, the Prisoner of War Employment Reviewing Board established further guidelines for prisoner labor with a list of jobs prisoners could and could not be employed at:

- (1) Maintenance and repair work is authorized on any vehicle designed for the carriage of cargo or personnel, in contradistinction to vehicles designed as combat weapons carriers.
- (2) Work on the organic transportation equipment of a unit which has been alerted for oversea duty is prohibited.
- (3) Work on the preparation of motor vehicles against hazards incidental to oversea transportation is prohibited.
- (4) Steam cleaning tanks and their motors is prohibited.
- (5) Primarily scraping operations may be performed by prisoners of war on any type of vehicle. Minor incidental salvage does not prohibit this type of employment.
- (6) Salvage work for the primary purpose of recovering parts for reissue is authorized only on vehicles of a type on which the prisoners of war may do repair or maintenance.
- (7) Scrapping operations are only authorized in connection with gun parts, gun mounts, empty ammunition boxes, carbine, or rifle cases.
- (8) Work in connection with rifle ranges or bayonet courses, or any training aids used for training personnel in the use of combat weapons is prohibited.
- (9) Work connected with guns of any kind is prohibited.
- (10) Work on gas masks is permitted.⁵¹

With clear guidelines and an understanding of the Geneva treaty, the United States Military could now effectively employ prisoners of war. On December 26, 1944, the War

⁵⁰ Lewis and Menzies, 89.

⁵¹ John Brown Mason, “German Prisoners of War in the United States,” *The American Journal of International Law* 39, no. 2 (April 1945): 211.

Department ordered camps to “attain maximum employment on essential work” in order to alleviate the work shortage in the United States.⁵² All work previously being done by military and civilian personnel that could be preformed by prisoners, was transferred to the PWs.

Camp McCoy

According to the agreement made at the Geneva Convention, “prisoners of war shall at all times be humanely treated and protected.” It required countries to “provide for the maintenance of prisoners of war in its charge.”⁵³ Camp McCoy, for their part, met the provisos of the Geneva Convention in their treatment of prisoners. The responsibility of following these conditions fell upon Camp Commander, Lt. Colonel Horace I. Rogers.⁵⁴

PW Labor at Camp McCoy

The state of Wisconsin primarily suffered an agricultural labor shortage. As early as October of 1942, Monroe County locals requested contract labor from Camp McCoy. At this time many of the prisoners were not PWs, but rather interned enemy aliens. The locals believed that many of the prisoners were patriotic people who desired to work for the cause of freedom. Primarily farmers, the locals needed strong men to help with the harvest. They believed that the contracting out of prisoner labor would not only help them, but the increased production the labor would create would benefit the war effort as well. The farmers committee of Plainfield,

⁵² Lieutenant General Brehon Somorvell (Washington D.C: War Department, Army Service Forces, Office of the Commanding General, 26 December 1944). Betty Cowley Private Collection.

⁵³ Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, pt. 1, art. 2; pt. 1, art. 4.

⁵⁴ I am unaware of any further information on Lt. Colonel Rogers or if he has any personal papers. Further research is necessary.

Wisconsin expressed they would commit one hundred percent of their production to the government if the military would work out a deal for contract labor.⁵⁵

Despite the agricultural needs of Monroe County, very few prisoners were actually contracted out by Camp McCoy. According to Lt. Colonel Rogers, the geography around the camp was not very favorable for contact labor.

There is unquestionably an agricultural labor shortage in the vicinity of Camp McCoy, Wis., but due to the terrain of hills and valleys, the land is only conducive to small dairy farming. Prisoners of War working in large groups could not be used to advantage of these small dairy [farms.]⁵⁶

Moreover, the top priority for the allocation of PW labor in the United States was operating and maintaining military installations within the parameters defined by the War Department; contract labor was secondary.⁵⁷ Most work done by the PWs at Camp McCoy was therefore on camp.

Finding work for the prisoners did not prove to be an issue for Rogers. One of the initial concerns of the camp was clearing brush and cutting down trees to prevent fires.⁵⁸ Other jobs performed by PWs included repairing and maintaining vehicles, working in the warehouse, distributing the coal for heating, carpentry, laundry duty, and working in the camp art studio.⁵⁹ German medical personnel were also employed to assist the camps medical staff. In 1943, eight

⁵⁵ A.C. Steenburg, Letters, 14-15 Oct, 1942. Folder 1/10. Paul Mueckler, Research Materials, 1941-1946, 1996. WIHV00-A1747. Wisconsin Historical Society Archives. Madison, WI.

⁵⁶ Lieutenant Colonel Horace I. Rogers, memo to Alien Division, Provost Marshal General (Washington, D.C.). Folder 1/13. Paul Mueckler, Research Materials, 1941-1946, 1996. WIHV00-A1747. Wisconsin Historical Society Archives. Madison, WI.

⁵⁷ Lewis and Menwha, 108.

⁵⁸ DeKoven L. Schwieger, *Report of Visit to Camp* (Washington D.C.: Prisoner of War Division, Provost Marshal General's Office). Folder 1/2. Paul Mueckler, Research Materials, 1941-1946, 1996. WIHV00-A1747. Wisconsin Historical Society Archives. Madison, WI.

⁵⁹ Dr. Rudolph Fischer, *Prisoner of War Camp, Camp McCoy, March 18, 19, 20, 1944* (Washington D.C.: Special War Problems Division, Department of State, 13 April 1944). Folder 1/2. Paul Mueckler, Research Materials, 1941-1946, 1996. WIHV00-A1747. Wisconsin Historical Society Archives. Madison, WI; A. Cardinaux, *Camp McCoy* (Washington D.C.: Special War Problems Division, Department of State, 23 October 1944). Folder 1/2. Paul Mueckler, Research Materials, 1941-1946, 1996. WIHV00-A1747. Wisconsin Historical Society Archives. Madison, WI.

German enlisted men had been assigned to work in the infirmary.⁶⁰ In addition, McCoy utilized German cooks to prepare ethnic German food for their fellow prisoners.⁶¹

On occasion, prisoners were contracted out. One woman recollected that her brother had hired a German PW to run the tractor in his field. The prisoner however did not know how to drive a tractor, requiring her to switch jobs with him. She drove the tractor while he mowed the lawn. As the woman recalled, the PW did not make much progress mowing the lawn, apparently he had spent most of the day watching her drive the tractor.⁶²

Another woman remembered her husband hiring German PWs in 1944 to help pick sweet corn. They were asked to provide the prisoners with water and sandwiches. As she recalled the PWs appeared to be very friendly and would smile and waive to them.⁶³ Those prisoners who did work off camp usually encountered very hospitable locals. German PWs from Camp McCoy working at the local canning factory regularly received visits from locals, who often brought fudge, popcorn, or other treats.⁶⁴

As the need grew greater and more camps had been established, many of the German PWs found themselves farmed out to the neighboring military camp. The jobs were similar to those at McCoy, including automotive maintenance and warehouse work, as well as sewer

⁶⁰ DeKoven L. Schwieger, *Report of Visit to Camp*. Folder 1/2. Mueckler.

⁶¹ A. Cardinaux, *Camp McCoy* (Washington D.C.: Special War Problems Division, Department of State, 23 October 1944). Folder 1/2. Paul Mueckler, Research Materials, 1941-1946, 1996. WIHV00-A1747. Wisconsin Historical Society Archives. Madison, WI.

⁶² Allene, Hatz Richgruber, *German Prisoner of War Story*. Betty Cowley Private Collection.

⁶³ Vava Norwood Gilbert, postcard to Betty Cowley. Betty Cowley Private Collection.

⁶⁴ Cowley, 25. Wisconsinites had mixed feelings about German prisoners of war in their state. Local authorities feared panic by civilians of escaping prisoners and revenge against them. Some civilians protested, others welcomed prisoners and were hospitable to them, most were in-between. It stands to reason that those who utilized prisoner labor were more accepting of German PWs than others (Cowley, 2002, 12).

construction, chauffeuring, and the construction of a fish pond. Additionally, these prisoners were also hired by local farmers as contract labor.⁶⁵

Figure 1: German Prisoners Going to Work



(Courtesy of Robert Gard. Betty Cowley Private Collection)

Figure 2: PW Illustration of Prisoners Working Laundry Duty (1945 or 1946)

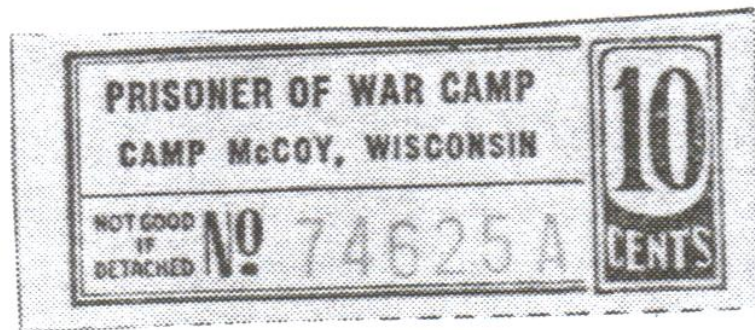


(Betty Cowley Private Collection)

⁶⁵ Messrs. Cardinaux and Metraux, *Camp McCoy, Wisconsin* (Washington D.C.: Special War Problems Division, Department of State, 29 March 1945). Folder 1/2. Paul Mueckler, Research Materials, 1941-1946, 1996. WIHV00-A1747. Wisconsin Historical Society Archives. Madison, WI.

All prisoners employed on post received \$0.80 a day. In February of 1944, prisoner earnings averaged nineteen dollars a month, two dollars less than an American enlisted man.⁶⁶ Officers, though not required to work, received monthly salaries. Lieutenants earned \$15 a month, Captains earned \$25, and the ranks of Major and higher earned \$35.⁶⁷ McCoy paid Prisoners in camp script, which could only be used at the canteen.⁶⁸ While there is no evidence if prisoners at McCoy took advantage this, the military allowed all prisoners to set up a savings account, which they could redeem after repatriation.⁶⁹

Figure 3: Camp McCoy Script



(Albert I. Donn, *World War II Prisoner of War Script of the United States*. Betty Cowley Private Collection)

Overall the prisoners were quite cooperative with performing their work duties. Many PWs actually were glad to work in the professions they had practiced back home.⁷⁰ Early after arriving at the camp, one group of prisoners did challenge the administration by not reporting for

⁶⁶ Dr. Rudolph Fischer, *Prisoner of War Camp, Camp McCoy, Wisconsin, March 18, 19, 20, 1944*. Folder 1/2. Mueckler; Cowley, 21.

⁶⁷ *Fort McCoy Prisoner of War Camp*. Betty Cowley Private Collection.

⁶⁸ Krammer, 46-47.

⁶⁹ Cowley, 21.

⁷⁰ A. Cardinaux, *Camp McCoy* (Washington D.C.: Special War Problems Division, Department of State, 23 October 1944). Folder 1/2. Mueckler.

work duty. However, Lt. Colonel Rogers handled the situation by ordering the prisoners be taken on a long disciplinary walk. Afterwards, no further instances had been reported.⁷¹

While the labor program at Camp McCoy was not as extensive as other camps across the country, which utilized many of their PWs for contract labor, it still proved to be a success. Prisoner labor freed up Wisconsin laborers and military personnel to work towards the war effort, and thanks to the PW labor, many improvements were made to Camp McCoy; improvements that not only allowed the camp to run efficiently, but bettered conditions for prisoners as well. Those who worked off camp often found fair employers and friendly locals, exposing PWs to the American way of life. Prisoners appeared quite pleased to work during their days, avoiding idleness, and those prisoners who received pay for their work were given the opportunity of saving it or spending it at the canteen. Far from the slave labor camps found in Germany, Camp McCoy effectively utilized PW labor, while at the same time maintaining a suitable working environment for the prisoners as prescribed by the Geneva Convention and the U.S. Military.

Structure of the Camp

One of the prime concerns of the Geneva Convention was prisoner living conditions.

Chapter 1, Article 10 of the Geneva Convention stipulated:

Prisoners of war shall be lodged in buildings or huts which afford all possible safeguards as regards hygiene and salubrity.

The premises must be entirely free from damp, and adequately heated and lighted. All precautions shall be taken against the danger of fire.

As regards dormitories, their total area, minimum cubic air space, fittings and bedding material, the conditions shall be the same as for the depot troops of the detaining Power.⁷²

⁷¹ Dr. Rudolph Fischer, *Prisoner of War Camp, Camp McCoy, Wisconsin, March 18, 19, 20, 1944*. Folder 1/2. Mueckler.

⁷² *Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War*, pt. 3, sec. 2, art. 10

Camp McCoy continually underwent improvements to meet the standards required by the treaty. In 1942, Camp McCoy only had the capacity to hold 100 PWs and interned civilian aliens.⁷³ Do to poor fencing and an inadequate flood light system the military deemed Camp McCoy unfit as an internment camp.⁷⁴ At one point early in the war Major General Allen W. Gullion ordered all inmates held at Camp McCoy to be transferred and the premises vacated; he still believed the camp to have some value as a possessing station, though.⁷⁵ Upon the request of the Provost Marshal General's office, Camp McCoy implemented plans to improve their facilities. The plans called for the installation of new fences to ensure prisoners would be unable to climb over or dig under, the extension of the height of the guard towers, and improvement of lighting on the camp grounds.⁷⁶ No one knew that in a few short months these improvements would allow Camp McCoy to operate as a fully functioning POW camp.

The Camp McCoy prison camp began as a converted Civilian Conservation Corps camp. When the camp first converted, nearly all of the building designated for prisoners had been structures in the CCC, which were built in 1935.⁷⁷ As a former CCC, the camp met the requirements that all lodging be "the same as for the depot troops of the detaining Power."⁷⁸ The initial barracks held fifty men per 20 feet by 120 feet space.⁷⁹ Each compound measured 480

⁷³ George Glover Lewis and John Menwha, 84-85.

⁷⁴ Lieutenant Colonel B.M. Bryan, memo to Colonel Harold T. Weber, 20 March 1942. Folder 1/10. Paul Mueckler, Research Materials, 1941-1946, 1996. WIHV00-A1747. Wisconsin Historical Society Archives. Madison, WI.

⁷⁵ Major General Allen W. Gullion (Washington D.C.: War Department, SOS, PMGO, 26 May 1942), memo to the Assistant Secretary of War. Folder 1/10. Paul Mueckler, Research Materials, 1941-1946, 1996. WIHV00-A1747. Wisconsin Historical Society Archives. Madison, WI.

⁷⁶ Colonel P.H.M. Converse, memo to Lt. Col. B.M. Bryan *Subject: Construction of Stockade at Camp McCoy*, 21 March 1942. Folder 1/10. Paul Mueckler, Research Materials, 1941-1946, 1996. WIHV00-A1747. Wisconsin Historical Society Archives. Madison, WI.

⁷⁷ DeKoven L. Schwieger, *Report of Visit to Camp*. Folder 1/2. Mueckler; Dr. Rudolph Fischer, *Prisoner of War Camp, Camp McCoy, Wisconsin, March 18, 19, 20, 1944*. Folder 1/2. Mueckler.

⁷⁸ *Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War*, pt. 3, sec. 2, ch. 1, art. 10.

⁷⁹ DeKoven L. Schwieger, *Report of Visit to Camp*. Folder 1/2. Mueckler.

feet by 190 feet and the recreation area measured 560 feet by 650 feet by 400 feet by 620 feet.⁸⁰ Barracks bunks were double decked and each prisoner had their own steel framed bed.⁸¹ In 1945 the German barracks consisted of a two story former military police housing building, equipped with central heating, well lit, and well ventilated.⁸² While space for personal items and clothing was substandard, barrack arrangements followed according to Army Regulations for American troops.⁸³

Figure 4: PW Illustration of Barracks at Camp McCoy (1945 or 1946)



(Betty Cowley Private Collection)

⁸⁰ Dr. Rudolph Fischer, *Prisoner of War Camp, Camp McCoy, Wisconsin, March 18, 19, 20, 1944*. Folder 1/2. Mueckler.

⁸¹ Dr. Rudolph Fischer, *Prisoner of War Camp, Camp McCoy, Wisconsin, March 18, 19, 20, 1944*. Folder 1/2. Mueckler, Research Materials; DeKoven L. Schwieger, *Report of Visit to Camp*. Folder 1/2. Mueckler.

⁸² Paul Schnyder, *Prisoner of War Camp: Camp McCoy, Wisconsin* (Washington D.C.: Special War Problems Division, Department of State, 2 October 1945). Folder 1/2. Mueckler. Research Materials, 1941-1946, 1996. WIHV00-A1747. Wisconsin Historical Society Archives. Madison, WI.

⁸³ Dr. Rudolph Fischer, *Prisoner of War Camp, Camp McCoy, Wisconsin, March 18, 19, 20, 1944*. Folder 1/2. Mueckler.

With the influx of prisoners imminent, Camp McCoy began the process of adding an additional 60,000 acres to accommodate them.⁸⁴ In September of 1944, Lt. Colonel Rogers approved the remodeling and constructing of buildings at Camp McCoy. By the time the buildings were completed, Camp McCoy could lodge 6550 prisoners.⁸⁵ Besides increasing barracks capacity, the additions also included latrines and mess halls.⁸⁶ Following all the renovations, living conditions and camp structures at McCoy met all of the standards of the Geneva Convention.

⁸⁴ Lieutenant Colonel Horace I. Rogers, *Subject: Prisoners of War* (Camp McCoy, WI: Headquarters, The Alien Enemy Internment Camp, 1 April 1943). Folder 1/10. Paul Mueckler, Research Materials, 1941-1946, 1996. WIHV00-A1747. Wisconsin Historical Society Archives. Madison, WI.

⁸⁵ Captain Vader H. Van Slyke, Jr., *Subject: Prisoner of War Capacity, Camp McCoy Wisconsin* (Chicago, Ill.: Army Service Forces Headquarters, Sixth Service Command, 29 Sept. 1944). Folder 1/3. Paul Mueckler, Research Materials, 1941-1946, 1996. WIHV00-A1747. Wisconsin Historical Society Archives. Madison, WI.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

Figure 5: PW Illustrations of Camp McCoy (1945 or 1946)



(Betty Cowley Private Collection)

Providing for Prisoner Needs

Chapter 3 of the Geneva Convention gave instructions for the health and hygiene of prisoners.

Art. 13. Belligerents shall be required to take all necessary hygienic measures to ensure the cleanliness and salubrity of camps and to prevent epidemics. Prisoners of war shall have for their use, day and night, conveniences which conform to the rules of hygiene and are maintained in a constant state of cleanliness. In addition and without prejudice to the provision as far as possible of baths and shower-baths in the camps, the prisoners shall be provided with a sufficient quantity of water for their bodily cleanliness.⁸⁷

Lt. Colonel Rogers insured that Camp McCoy did their best to comply with these regulations. During the early stages of the camp, in 1943, inspectors deemed McCoy's sanitary conditions "excellent."⁸⁸ The bathhouses had wash troughs lined with galvanized iron "with an ample supply of hot and cold running water," and twelve laundry tubs in each bathhouse. In addition to standard lavatories, Camp McCoy had sufficient water and sewage disposal as well.⁸⁹ As noted by inspectors, the kitchen and mess halls were also kept "absolutely clean."⁹⁰ Sanitary conditions remained satisfactory throughout the war, and no complains regarding sanitation were ever reported.⁹¹

In accordance with international treaty, PWs received suitable medical care as well. In 1943, Camp McCoy contained one infirmary and designated two large wards within the camp hospital to accommodate the at that time 600 prisoners of war.⁹² In October of 1945, when prisoner numbers had reached near 3000, reports confirmed that the medical facilities at Camp

⁸⁷ *Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War*, pt. 3, sec. 2, ch. 3, art. 13.

⁸⁸ DeKoven L. Schwieger, *Report of Visit to Camp*. Folder 1/2. Mueckler.

⁸⁹ Dr. Rudolph Fischer, *Prisoner of War Camp, Camp McCoy, March 18, 19, 20, 1944*. Folder 1/2. *Wisconsin*, Mueckler.

⁹⁰ A. Cardinaux, *Camp McCoy* (Washington D.C.: Special War Problems Division, Department of State, 23 October 1944). Folder 1/2. Mueckler.

⁹¹ Paul Schnyder, *Prisoner of War Camp: Camp McCoy, Wisconsin*. Folder 1/2. Paul Mueckler.

⁹² DeKoven L. Schwieger, *Report of Visit to Camp*. Folder 1/2. Mueckler,

McCoy remained satisfactory.⁹³ Sick call was held daily for prisoners suffering from illness and those with more serious conditions were afforded full utilization of the camp hospital.⁹⁴ Each of the four compounds also now had a medical dispensary for the treatment of prisoners. In 1945 alone camp medical facilities treated 14,717 Japanese and German prisoners of war.⁹⁵ During a visit to Camp McCoy, one observer noted that prisoners “enjoy excellent medical and dental care.”⁹⁶

Not only did Camp McCoy treat the physical needs of their prisoners of war, they also allowed their spiritual needs to be met as well. While not explicit as to the extent, the Geneva Convention did charge the responsibility of meeting the “intellectual and moral needs of prisoners.”⁹⁷ Protestant services were conducted by a German speaking pastor from nearby Sparta, Wisconsin and the Catholic services were preformed by the post chaplains.⁹⁸ Early on, the German prisoners showed little interest in religious services. Prisoners reportedly refused to attend unless the clergy would pray for a German Victory.⁹⁹ While clergy eventually held regular services, attendance never climbed very high, averaging only 20 to 25 percent of the German prisoners; nonetheless, Lt. Colonel Rogers continued to make services available.¹⁰⁰

⁹³ Paul Schnyder, *Prisoner of War Camp: Camp McCoy, Wisconsin*. Folder 1/2. Paul Mueckler.

⁹⁴ Dr. Rudolph Fischer, *Prisoner of War Camp, Camp McCoy, Wisconsin, March 18, 19, 20, 1944*. Folder 1/2. Mueckler.

⁹⁵ Captain John B. Suino, *Annual Report 1945* (Camp McCoy, Wis.: Headquarters Post Medical Division, Dispensary Service). Folder 1/13. Paul Mueckler, Research Materials, 1941-1946, 1996. WIHV00-A1747. Wisconsin Historical Society Archives. Madison, WI.

⁹⁶ Captain Shepard Traube to Major Paul Horgan, 8 June 1944. Folder 1/2. Mueckler.

⁹⁷ *Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War*, pt. 3, sec. 2, ch. 4.

⁹⁸ Howard Hong, *Prisoner of War Camp: Camp McCoy, Wisconsin* (Washington D.C.: Special War Problems Division, Department of State, 14 August 1945). Folder 1/2. Paul Mueckler, Research Materials, 1941-1946, 1996. WIHV00-A1747. Wisconsin Historical Society Archives. Madison, WI.

⁹⁹ Dr. Rudolph Fischer, *Prisoner of War Camp, Camp McCoy, Wisconsin, March 18, 19, 20, 1944*. Folder 1/2. Mueckler.

¹⁰⁰ Combination of A. Cardinaux, *Camp McCoy* (Washington D.C.: Special War Problems Division, Department of State, 23 October 1944); Howard Hong, *Report on a Visit to Prisoner of War Camp, Camp McCoy, Sparta Wisconsin, January 5-7, 1944*. Folder 1/2. Paul Mueckler, Research Materials, 1941-1946, 1996. WIHV00-A1747. Wisconsin Historical Society Archives. Madison, WI; Messrs. Cardinaux and Metraux, *Camp McCoy, Wisconsin* (Washington D.C.: Special War Problems Division, Department of State, 29 March 1945). Folder 1/2.

Figure 6: Church Service for PWs at Camp McCoy (April 1944)



(Courtesy of Robert Gard. Betty Cowley Private Collection)

To meet the prisoners' intellectual needs, Camp McCoy gave them access to an extensive library of reading materials. In 1944, the camp library contained roughly 600 German books and 1,000 English. Prisoners also had access to the *Chicago Tribune*, *Sun*, *New York Times*, and *Christian Science Monitor*, as well as an American German language newspaper of their choice.¹⁰¹

In addition, prisoners had the option of furthering their learning by taking educational courses at the camp. Not long after a new group of German prisoners arrived in late 1943, they formed classes in basic mathematics, algebra, chemistry, physics, technical drawing,

Paul Mueckler, Research Materials, 1941-1946, 1996. WIHV00-A1747. Wisconsin Historical Society Archives. Madison, WI; 1st Lieutenant Robert W. Mess and Captain Lyle T. Dawson, *Report of Visit to Prisoner of War Camp, Camp McCoy, Wisconsin*. Folder 1/2. Paul Mueckler, Research Materials, 1941-1946, 1996. WIHV00-A1747. Wisconsin Historical Society Archives. Madison, WI; and Howard Hong, *Report on Visit to Prisoner of War Camp McCoy, Sparta Wisconsin, February 5-7, 1945*. Paul Mueckler, Research Materials, 1941-1946, 1996. WIHV00-A1747. Wisconsin Historical Society Archives. Madison, WI. Rough estimate, based on the likely number of prisoners in the camp and average number of prisoners who attended services.

¹⁰¹ Dr. Rudolph Fischer, *Prisoner of War Camp, Camp McCoy, Wisconsin, March 18, 19, 20, 1944*. Folder 1/2. Mueckler.

stenography, musical instruction, and English language, and hoped to start courses in German, classical literature, biology, agriculture, geography, and history. At this time McCoy did not have the necessary books to accommodate these courses, but the YMCA promised to supply the camp with ample learning materials.¹⁰²

Initially courses were entirely prisoner led with no supervision from camp authorities.¹⁰³ By 1945, the University of Wisconsin offered to donate learning materials to Camp McCoy for the prisoners to use and Lt. Colonel Rogers made arrangements made for an instructor from the University to be brought to the camp to teach a course in English.¹⁰⁴ Courses were held Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday from 6:30pm to 11:00pm and Sunday's from 10:00am to 11:30am and 7:00pm to 8:00pm.¹⁰⁵ Courses did not stop in the summer either. While attendance was lower, during the summer of 1945, the camp still ran courses in English, French, geography, and shorthand writing.¹⁰⁶ The variety of courses offered throughout the war and the number of prisoners in attendance suggest that the majority of the PWs wanted to improve their education, taking full advantage of the instruction offered at the camp. It seems the program proved quite successful, especially the English language courses. A number of German prisoners had learned English well enough to teach their fellow prisoners.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰² Howard Hong, *Report on a Visit to Prisoner of War Camp, Camp McCoy, Sparta Wisconsin, January 5-7, 1944*. Folder 1/2. Mueckler.

¹⁰³ Dr. Rudolph Fischer, *Prisoner of War Camp, Camp McCoy, Wisconsin, March 18, 19, 20, 1944*. Folder 1/2. Mueckler.

¹⁰⁴ 1st Lieutenant Harold G Hoffman, *Subject: Participation of American Educational Institutions in Educational Activities in Prisoner of War Camps* (Camp McCoy, Wisc., Army Service Forces Sixth Service Command, 6 Jan. 1945). Folder 1/1. Paul Mueckler, Research Materials, 1941-1946, 1996. WIHV00-A1747. Wisconsin Historical Society Archives. Madison, WI.

¹⁰⁵ 1st Lieutenant Harold G. Hoffman, *College of the German Company, the P.W. Camp Mc. Coy* (Camp McCoy Wisc., 14 January 1945). Folder 1/1. Paul Mueckler, Research Materials, 1941-1946, 1996. WIHV00-A1747. Wisconsin Historical Society Archives. Madison, WI.

¹⁰⁶ Howard Hong, *Prisoner of War Camp: Camp McCoy, Wisconsin* (Washington D.C.: Special War Problems Division, Department of State, 14 August 1945). Folder 1/2. Mueckler.

¹⁰⁷ Messrs. Cardinaux and Metraux, *Camp McCoy, Wisconsin*. Folder 1/2. Mueckler.

Figure 7: Course Schedule of German Prisoners (January 1945)

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McCoy the 14 January 1945

College of the German Company, the P.W. Camp Mc.Coy

	From: 1830-2000	2000-2100	2100-2200 O'clock	
Monday:	German Approx 20 Students	Stenography Approx. 20 Students	Geography 30 Students English 80 Students	150
Wednesday:	Mathematics 15 Geometry 15 Algebra	History of literature Approx 45 Students	History Story 25 Sing in chorus 30 Mouth-Harmonica 25	150
Friday:	German - 20 Students	Engineering School 15 Everything concerning motor cars - 25	English 80	140
Saturday:	History of Literature Mathematics 15 Geometry 15 Algebra 15	Mathematics 20	Stenography 30 History Story 25 Mouth-Harmonica 25	145
Sunday:	From 1000 - 1130 - Sing in chorus From 1900 - 2000 - Stenography	30 20		

German	Schmidt, Johann
History of Literature	Schmidt, Johann
Mathematics	Liske, Nikolaus
Mathematics	Schmidt, Johann
Geometry	Liske, Nikolaus
Algebra	Liske, Nikolaus
Engineering School	Sikorra, Franz
Everything concerning cars	Sikorra, Franz
English	Klickow, Karl-Heinz
Stenography	Kretschmer, Kurt
Sing in chorus	Klóos, Eugen
Mouth-Harmonica	Adamski, Franz
History of Literature, Ancient, Medieval and Modern	

Beginning with the school: Monday the 15 January 1945
 Class-Room: Mess-Hall, in the Supply Room and in the Day-Room of Company #3.

The allegiance of the pupil

First: Accurate appear
 Second: Conscientiousness assist
 Third: Is the pupil on a class hour prevent, then he must this the teacher communicate.

/s/ Karl Heinz Klickow, Uff.

/s/ HAROLD G. HOFFMAN
 1st Lieut., C.M.P
 Prisoner of War Camp, Camp McCoy, Wis.

(1st Lieutenant Harold G. Hoffman. Folder 1/1. Paul Mueckler Research Materials)

Another specification of the Geneva Convention required that prisoners receive the same provisions as the home army.¹⁰⁸ Lt. Colonel Rogers not only met, but exceeded the requirements of the Geneva Convention and the U.S. Military. According to one report, the food provided to prisoners at Camp McCoy was “identical to those provided the American troops.”¹⁰⁹ For example on March 18, 1944, for every 100 prisoners, the food ration that day included 90 pounds of Pork loins, three dozen eggs, 35 quarts of fresh milk, and 117 pounds of potatoes.¹¹⁰ As noted above, these foods were prepared to the national tastes of the Germans.¹¹¹ In August 1945, when the PWs meat rations had been cut off, Lt. Colonel Rogers even secured extra meat for the prisoners from the camp hospital to ensure his prisoners had enough meat.¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ *Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War*, pt. 3, sec. 2, ch. 2, art. 11.

¹⁰⁹ Dr. Rudolph Fischer, *Prisoner of War Camp, Camp McCoy, Wisconsin, March 18, 19, 20, 1944*. Folder 1/2. Mueckler.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ DeKoven L. Schwieger, *Report of Visit to Camp*. Folder 1/2. Mueckler.

¹¹² William F. Thompson, *World War II POW Returns to Camp McCoy* (The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 18 Aug. 1988). Folder SC 2726. Joan Paulson Research Papers, 1998. WIHV05-A10096. Historical Society Archives. Madison, WI.

Figure 8: German Mess Halls Before and During a Meal (April 1944)



(Courtesy of Robert Gard. Betty Cowley Private Collection)

Back in Europe, the families of most prisoners were unaware that their sons and husbands were being fed well. One prisoner recalled his family occasionally sending him a cake in the mail, which had grown moldy by the time it reached Camp McCoy. Aware of the hardships in

Europe, he instructed his family not to send him any more food, knowing that they needed it more than he did.¹¹³

Each prisoner also received standard issue clothing, including among other items: one wool coat, a wool shirt, two cotton and two wool undershirts, shoes, and boots, as well as necessary toiletries and bedding. In addition to food and clothing provisions, prisoners could purchase items from the camps canteen. McCoy's canteen had been reported as being "completely stocked with all the merchandise appropriately found in camp canteens."¹¹⁴ Besides being able to buy essentials, prisoners could also buy jewelry, and limited amounts of beer, soda and sweets.¹¹⁵ Early on, the canteen manager would even fill requests for items not in stock from nearby Sparta.¹¹⁶

Camp McCoy, under the command of Lt. Colonel Rogers, appeared to adequately provide for the physical and spiritual well being of the prisoners at Camp McCoy. He not only satisfied the criterion of the Geneva Convention, but made a conscious effort to meet the needs of the men.

Recreation, Sports, Entertainment, and Hobbies

Besides furnishing the health and wellness needs of the prisoners, most camps supplied them with various activities to spend their free time. At Camp McCoy Lt. Colonel Rogers made sure prisoners were not short of ways to occupy themselves.

¹¹³Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Dr. Rudolph Fischer, *Prisoner of War Camp, Camp McCoy, Wisconsin, March 18, 19, 20, 1944*. Folder 1/2. Mueckler.

¹¹⁵ William F. Thompson, *World War II POW Returns to Camp McCoy*. Folder SC 2726. Paulson; Paul Schnyder, *Prisoner of War Camp: Camp McCoy, Wisconsin*. Folder 1/2. Mueckler.

¹¹⁶ A. Cardinaux, *Camp McCoy* (Washington D.C.: Special War Problems Division, Department of State, 25 Nov 1944). Folder 1/2. Paul Mueckler, Research Materials, 1941-1946, 1996. WIHV00-A1747. Wisconsin Historical Society Archives. Madison, WI.

While not required by the Geneva Convention, Rogers provided prisoners with ample recreational amenities. An entire two story building had been set up for prisoner recreation, well furnished with sofas and armchairs purchased with canteen funds and equipped with a juke box.¹¹⁷ The room included a stage, game room, wood floored reading room, and a moveable divider.¹¹⁸ In front of the recreation building the prisoners had been allowed to construct a pool, which they used as a large fish tank.¹¹⁹ In their free time, prisoners had access to games such as chess, checkers, ping pong, and pool, and a miniature table-high bowling ally, which had been constructed by the prisoners.¹²⁰ During the winter of 1944 and 1945, the prisoners occupied much of their free time with a chess tournament.¹²¹ Though certainly not obligatory, camps commonly offered prisoners a number of such recreational amenities.

¹¹⁷ A. Cardinaux, *Camp McCoy* (Washington D.C.: Special War Problems Division, Department of State, 23 Oct. 1944). Folder 1/2. Mueckler; DeKoven L. Schwieger, *Report of Visit to Camp*. Folder 1/2. Mueckler.

¹¹⁸ Howard Hong, *Report on a Visit to Prisoner of War Camp, Camp McCoy, Sparta Wisconsin, January 5-7, 1944*. Folder 1/2. Mueckler.

¹¹⁹ Messrs. Cardinaux and Metraux, *Camp McCoy, Wisconsin*. Folder 1/2. Mueckler.

¹²⁰ Dr. Rudolph Fischer, *Prisoner of War Camp, Camp McCoy, Wisconsin*. Folder 1/2. Mueckler; Howard Hong, *Report on a Visit to Prisoner of War Camp, Camp McCoy, Sparta Wisconsin, January 5-7, 1944*. Folder 1/2. Mueckler.

¹²¹ Howard Hong, *Report on Visit to Prisoner of War Camp McCoy, Sparta Wisconsin, February 5-7, 1945*. Folder 1/2. Mueckler.

Figure 9: German Day Room, Camp McCoy (April 1944) and PW Illustration of Recreational Activities



(Betty Cowley Private Collection. Photo Courtesy of Robert Gard)

Camps were required however to provide “facilities for engaging in physical exercises and obtaining the benefit of being out of doors.”¹²² Outside at Camp McCoy prisoners could utilize the large athletic field any time of the day. Lt. Colonel Rogers even installed benches around the field to accommodate spectators.¹²³ Activities included soccer, football, volleyball and horseshoes.¹²⁴ Also in the winter of 1944 and 1945, Roger allowed a small ice rink to be created outside, with six pairs of skates for prisoner use.¹²⁵

Figure 10: German PWs Playing Volleyball (April 1944)



(Courtesy of Robert Gard. Betty Cowley Private Collection.)

¹²² *Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War*, pt. 3, sec. 2, ch. 3, art. 13.

¹²³ Messrs. Cardinaux and Metraux, *Camp McCoy, Wisconsin*. Folder 1/2. Mueckler.

¹²⁴ Dr. Rudolph Fischer, *Prisoner of War Camp, Camp McCoy, Wisconsin*. Folder 1/2. Mueckler.

¹²⁵ Howard Hong, *Report on Visit to Prisoner of War Camp McCoy, Sparta Wisconsin, February 5-7, 1945*. Folder 1/2. Mueckler.

If prisoners wanted a change, every weekend they had two opportunities to see films. Saturdays the camp provided a film to all the prisoners at a small cost and on Sundays guards escorted a set number of prisoners to town for a free show.¹²⁶ Betty Grable and Danny Kaye were reportedly among prisoners favorite movie stars.¹²⁷

Figure 11: German PWs going to Movies, (April 1944)



(Courtesy of Robert Gard. Betty Cowley Private Collection)

¹²⁶ Dr. Rudolph Fischer, *Prisoner of War Camp, Camp McCoy, Wisconsin, March 18, 19, 20, 1944*. Folder 1/2. Mueckler.

¹²⁷ Captain Shepard Traube to Major Paul Horgan, 8 June 1944. Folder 1/2. Mueckler; Howard Hong, *Report on a Visit to Prisoner of War Camp, Camp McCoy, Sparta Wisconsin, January 5-7, 1944*. Folder 1/2. Paul Mueckler, Research Materials, 1941-1946, 1996. WIHV00-A1747. Wisconsin Historical Society Archives. Madison, WI.

Prisoners also formed their own acting troupes, which preformed autumn through spring, and music groups that gave concerts throughout the year.¹²⁸ The recreation room had a piano and a few violins and thanks to donations from the YMCA prisoners even formed an orchestra and a harmonica band. Some of the prisoners had organized into a male chorus as well.¹²⁹ On Christmas Eve, 1944, the German Company Christmas party featured musical numbers by many of the prisoners.¹³⁰

Figure 12: PW Illustration of Prisoner Orchestra (1945 or 1946)



(Betty Cowley Private Collection)

¹²⁸ Howard Hong, *Prisoner of War Camp: Camp McCoy, Wisconsin* (Washington D.C.: Special War Problems Division, Department of State, 14 August 1945). Folder 1/2. Mueckler.

¹²⁹ Howard Hong, *Report on a Visit to Prisoner of War Camp, Camp McCoy, Sparta Wisconsin, January 5-7, 1944*. Folder 1/2. Mueckler; Howard Hong, *Report on Visit to Prisoner of War Camp McCoy, Sparta Wisconsin, February 5-7, 1945*. Folder 1/2. Mueckler.

¹³⁰ *Christmas Party of the German Company, POW Camp Mc. Coy, Wisc.*, Betty Cowley Private Collection.

Figure 13: Program of German Company Christmas Party

Appendix B

CHRISTMAS PARTY OF THE GERMAN COMPANY, POW CAMP NC. COY, WISC.1. Part. (Day - room)Beginning of the party, Sunday, 24 December 1944, 05.30 P.M.

1. Chorus (Holy night) Chorus
2. Appeal of the Company - leader
3. Piano - Solo Klobz
4. Christmas - Trio Wietusch, Stria,
Rzesnitze
5. Christmas - popular music
6. Poem about Christmas Moczall
7. Ideas about Christmas Schmidt, Johann
8. Christmas - music, violin - solo Klobz
9. Song for everybody (Holy night)

2. Part (Mess - Hall)

1. Coffee - Party
2. Music
3. Distribution of the gifts, (Santa Clause)
4. Supper
5. Lottery
6. Bed - check

For prisoners who wished to take up a hobby, Camp McCoy offered woodworking at the camp's workshop and the use of gardening tools outside.¹³¹ At one point Camp McCoy had its own vegetable garden, which was maintained by about twenty prisoners, and many of the prisoners' recreational items, such as the miniature bowling alley, skates, and refurbished instruments, were fashioned by the prisoners in the workshop.¹³²

Figure: 14: German PW in Workshop (April 1944)



(Courtesy of Robert Gard. Betty Cowley Private Collection)

Though the options presented to prisoners for spending their free time were similar to that of other camps, these activities played an important part in keeping up prisoner morale. Lt. Colonel Rogers made certain to make available a variety of games, sports, entertainments, and hobbies to keep high morale among the prisoners.

¹³¹ DeKoven L. Schwieger, *Report of Visit to Camp*. Folder 1/2. Mueckler.

¹³² A. Cardinaux, *Camp McCoy* (Washington D.C.: Special War Problems Division, Department of State, 23 October 1944). Folder 1/2. Mueckler.

Communication with Friends and Relatives

Quite possibly one of the most important rights guaranteed the prisoners by the Geneva Convention was communication with those outside the camp. With Europe ravaged by war, many prisoners were likely anxious to discover the status of their friends and family back home. In addition, because of the devastation that existed in Europe prisoners wanted to assure their families that they were safe and treated well by their captors. According to the Geneva Convention:

Each of the belligerents shall fix periodically the number of letters and postcards which prisoners of war of different categories shall be permitted to send per month.¹³³

Prisoners of war shall be authorized to receive individually postal parcels containing foodstuffs and other articles intended for consumption or clothing.¹³⁴

Figure 15: Camp McCoy Mail Room (April 1944)



(Courtesy of Robert Gard. Betty Cowley Private Collection)

In March of 1944, about 70 percent of the prisoners at McCoy reportedly received some form of communication from family or friends since their arrival.¹³⁵ There was no restriction on

¹³³ *Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War*, pt. 3, sec. 4, art. 36.

¹³⁴ *Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War*, pt. 3, sec. 4, art. 37.

the amount of mail received, and some prisoners regularly received mail.¹³⁶ Prisoners were however only allowed to send one postcard every two weeks and a letter the alternate week.¹³⁷

Once a month prisoners were also allowed visitors. One prisoner had a sister who lived in Chicago and she frequently drove to Camp McCoy to visit him. On the days she visited, Lt. Colonel Rogers granted the prisoner the day off of work, allowing the two time to sit and visit in the picnic area.¹³⁸

These visits, parcels, and letters probably meant more to the prisoners than all of the other guarantees of the Geneva Convention. True, mail was subject to censorship and visits monitored, but prisoners still were able to have contact with friends and relatives outside of the camp. While this right did not always bring good news, having it contributed greatly to prisoner morale.

Issues of Concern

Even though Lt. Colonel Rogers strived to accommodate his prisoners, Camp McCoy still had its fair share of difficulties. Like most camps, prisoner escape, while not prevalent, was not all that uncommon. Primarily escape attempts were by Japanese prisoners, though several German's also tried over the existence of the camp. The prisoners were generally caught within a few days of escape and rarely put up much resistance.¹³⁹ Often, prisoner escapes were the

¹³⁵ Dr. Rudolph Fischer, *Prisoner of War Camp, Camp McCoy, Wisconsin, March 18, 19, 20, 1944*. Folder 1/2. Mueckler.

¹³⁶ A. Cardinaux, *Camp McCoy* (Washington D.C.: Special War Problems Division, Department of State, 23 October 1944). Folder 1/2. Mueckler.

¹³⁷ Cowley, 30.

¹³⁸ Notes. Betty Cowley Private Collection.

¹³⁹ Cowley, 39-43.

result of boredom, most simply wanted to have a change of venue and have some fun outside of the camp.¹⁴⁰

One major concern of the military was the influence of Nazi prisoners in the camps. Authorities did their best to screen for Nazis before they were transferred to camps, however not all managed to be discovered. Prisoners identified as anti-Nazi were isolated from known or suspected Nazis, in most cases for their own safety.¹⁴¹ In 1944 several Nazis at Camp McCoy used a near riot as an opportunity to beat the known anti-Nazis. The perpetrators stood trial and were sentenced to the military prison at Fort Leavenworth.¹⁴² That same year, nine German prisoners who had been classified as anti-Nazi were ordered to be transferred to a sector where other anti-Nazis had been designated.¹⁴³ Either for the safety of the prisoners or the fear of Nazi propagation, segregation of Nazis from the rest of the prisoners remained a priority at Camp McCoy.

Despite some of these issues, Camp McCoy managed to function very smoothly. Most of the resistance came from the Japanese at McCoy. Due to the pristine treatment, the German prisoners had no reason to escape and often passed at opportunities to escape or resist.¹⁴⁴

Assessment of Camp McCoy

Many prisoners established close relationships with the guards and camp administration, who went above and beyond in demonstrating good will to their prisoners. For example, during

¹⁴⁰ Notes. Betty Cowley Private Collection.

¹⁴¹ Not all German soldiers were Nazis; some even wholly disliked Nazism, but out of patriotism for Germany served their country. According to military intelligence, only 15-20 percent of German soldiers were hard-core Nazis (Cowley, 36).

¹⁴² Gansberg, 53-54.

¹⁴³ Lieutenant Colonel Earl L. Edwards (Washington D.C: War Department, Army Service Forces, Provost Marshal General's Office). Folder 1/4. Paul Mueckler, Research Materials, 1941-1946, 1996. WIHV00-A1747. Wisconsin Historical Society Archives. Madison, Wisconsin.

¹⁴⁴ Cowley, 43.

repatriation prisoners received a booklet that contained drawings and photographs of the camp, and guards would also give pictures they had taken to the prisoners as gifts. In another example, following an accident leading to the death of one of the prisoners, Lt. Colonel Rogers allowed him to be buried on camp, even though Camp McCoy did not have a cemetery.¹⁴⁵ By the end of the war the German prisoners had obtained substantial freedom within the camp. During work PWs were often times allowed to go about their duties unguarded and after time the guards rarely carried rifles.¹⁴⁶ Prisoners would even regularly use the American latrines and converse with the American personnel.¹⁴⁷ Arguably the relationships cultivated between the prisoners and the camp staff facilitated the successful administration of Camp McCoy.

The administration at Camp McCoy continually met and often exceeded the expectations of inspectors who gauged the prisoner of war camp. Lt. Colonel Rogers and his staff received acclamation for their job in administering the camp. One Swiss observer during a visit in 1944 “praised the manner in which the camp was conducted.” During that same visit another observer noted that Camp McCoy was “unusually well run” and that “the commanding officer and executive officer are unusually capable in their performance of their duties.”¹⁴⁸ Another inspector noted that Lt. Colonel Rogers had excellent relations with the prisoners and genuinely interested in the prisoners concerns. Consequently, he cited that “the morale, discipline and health of the prisoners are perfect.”¹⁴⁹ McCoy was hailed as a “well ordered, well run” camp,

¹⁴⁵ William F. Thompson, *World War II POW Returns to Camp McCoy*. Folder SC 2726. Paulson.

¹⁴⁶ Cowley, 17; William F. Thompson, *World War II POW Returns to Camp McCoy*. Folder SC 2726. Paulson.

¹⁴⁷ Cowley, 17.

¹⁴⁸ Dr. Rudolph Fischer, *Prisoner of War Camp, Camp McCoy, Wisconsin, March 18, 19, 20, 1944*. Folder 1/2. Mueckler.

¹⁴⁹ A. Cardinaux, *Camp McCoy* (Washington D.C.: Special War Problems Division, Department of State, 23 Oct. 1944). Folder 1/2. Mueckler.

leaving “an excellent impression” on observers.¹⁵⁰ During the various camp inspections, German prisoners offered no complaints to the inspectors, often quite satisfied with their treatment. Lt. Colonel Rogers and the other American officers were well liked by the prisoners and committed to meeting their needs.¹⁵¹

Conclusion

This paper has only discussed the German section of Camp McCoy. As noted above, the camp also held a substantial number of Japanese prisoners. Though it would appear that the Japanese received the same treatment as the Germans, they had a much more negative response to their captivity. Why did the Japanese view their experience so negatively compared to the German prisoners? How much did racial prejudice affect the treatment of the Japanese? Were the Japanese in fact treated the same as the German prisoners? What role did the Japanese views of honor and capture play in their attitudes? Further research needs to be conducted to discover answers to these questions. As the camp which held the first Japanese prisoner of war, and the main Japanese POW camp in the United States until the autumn of 1945, a major part of the Camp McCoy story remains untold.¹⁵²

Another angle that should be discussed is the role of the various organizations inspecting the camps. What was the function of each of the three groups (the International Red Cross, the YMCA, and the U.S. Military)? What were their agendas? Who were the individual inspectors and what role did they play in influencing the decisions of Lt. Colonel Rogers and his staff?

¹⁵⁰ Paul Schnyder, *Prisoner of War Camp: Camp McCoy, Wisconsin* (Washington D.C.: Special War Problems Division, Department of State, 2 October 1945). Folder 1/2. Mueckler.

¹⁵¹ Messrs. Cardinaux and Metraux, *Camp McCoy, Wisconsin*. Folder 1/2. Mueckler.

¹⁵² Cowley, 14; Fort McCoy, "90 Years of Service to America's Army: A chronicle of our past...The 1940s" [on-line source], (Fort McCoy, Wisconsin, accessed on 28 Nov., 2007); available from; <http://www.mccoy.army.mil/ReadingRoom/Triad/90th%20anniversary%20triad/chronicle%201940s.htm>; internet.

More research also could be done on Lt. Colonel Rogers. Rogers played a large role in the success of Camp McCoy. Did Roger's truly care about the prisoners as much as the reports claim he did, or was he simply doing his job? Did the character and personality of Rogers lend to the admiration of the prisoners and the efficiency of the camp? Did he have a hands-on approach to governing the camp that caused it to run so smoothly or did he delegate much of the responsibility to his subordinates? If Lt. Colonel Rogers or his family has any papers, they would lend much needed insight into the commanding officer of Camp McCoy and help to explain its success.

Whatever his reasons, the unwavering adherence by Lt. Colonel Horace I. Rogers to the protocols of Geneva Convention of 1929 and the policies of the United States Military directly resulted in the successful administration of Camp McCoy's German prisoner of war camp. By providing for the prisoners' needs and treating them with respect and dignity, he quickly gained the respect and admiration of the Germans. Though occasionally issues did occur, in general, the prisoners offered little resistance and often cooperated. With the prisoners content and cooperating, Rogers could operate the camp smoothly and effectively. Camp McCoy therefore achieved two of the military's top objectives: Camp McCoy played its part in the military's objective of maintaining camps that would ensure the reciprocal treatment of American prisoners of war in the hands of the Germans, and they effectively utilized the prisoner labor to help relieve the work shortage. Camp McCoy, the comparatively small base camp in West Central Wisconsin, hence proved to be a valuable prisoner of war camp.

While certainly not the lap of luxury, prisoner life at Camp McCoy also proved quite amiable for German PWs. Prisoners had a warm dry roof over their heads, food to eat, and clothes on their backs, more than could be said for much of war torn Europe. Lt. Colonel Rogers

provided all of the prisoners' basic needs and allowed for many others to be met. Prisoners had ample access to physical, social, and intellectual diversion and were permitted much freedom. He treated prisoners fairly and respectfully; quite literally treating them as he would want himself and his men to be treated. More than simply humane, life at Camp McCoy not only excelled in living up to the requirements of the Geneva Convention but surpassed what was expected of them. This unwavering commitment of Lt. Colonel Rogers and his staff produced fond memories for the former prisoners and an affection for America. While visiting Camp McCoy in 1988, by this time renamed Fort McCoy, one prisoner expressed his feelings toward his experience, and likely the feelings of his comrades as well, when he said in perfect English: "I love your country and I love your people."¹⁵³

¹⁵³ Camp McCoy was renamed *Fort McCoy* on September 30, 1974 (Fort McCoy, "90 Years of Service to America's Army: A chronicle of our past...The 1970s" [on-line source], (Fort McCoy, Wisconsin, accessed on 29 Nov., 2007); available from <http://www.mccoy.army.mil/ReadingRoom/Triad/90th%20anniversary%20triad/chronicle%201970s.htm#1970>; Internet; William F. Thompson, *World War II POW Returns to Camp McCoy*. Folder SC 2726. Paulson.

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