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Abstract

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Title: Nazi Prisoners of War: The Civilian and Prisoner Experience in Agricultural America

Thesis: In this thesis I will provide an analysis of the local experience of German POWs during WWII through the case study of Tucker's Crossing.

Summary: Local histories help explain the daily experiences of the average citizen on a micro level, leading to a better understanding of the collective experience. Ensuring local histories are collected and properly analyzed is important in the understanding of national issues. Prisoner of war camps constructed by the United State military during World War II spotted the rural American landscape for the duration of the war. One such camp was named Tucker's Crossing and located in Corvallis, Montana in the Bitterroot Valley.

This German POW camp provided much needed labor for local sugar beet farms and helped revitalize the economy.

Nazi Prisoners of War:
The Civilian and Prisoner Experience in Agricultural America

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Carroll College Honors Thesis
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I. Introduction

With the start of WWII, the United States War Department understood the need to prepare for all aspects of war. One such aspect of war preparation was providing for the provisions for the incarceration of captured enemy soldiers.¹ In this thesis I analyze the US German POW program on a national and local scale to understand the broad reach of the program and policies in action through a case study of the camp of Tucker's Crossing in Corvallis, Montana. I argue that American policies during WWII allowed for the dignified and safe detainment of POWs while providing a model for any future prisoner of war detainment, though current events may suggest the United States has strayed from the blueprint of WWII.

During WWII, most prisoners were held in rural, agricultural areas. These areas were ideal for housing prisoners as they distance requirements from industrial factories producing materials for the war met War Department requirements. This also provided farmers with labor, which they desperately needed. As a result, thousands of permanent, semi-permanent and mobile camps crisscrossed the United States.²

¹ Antonio Thompson. *Men in German Uniform: POWs in America During World War II, Legacies of War* (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 2010) 1.

² *Ibid.*, 9-10.

Camp environments and prisoner activities help create a context in which to analyze the prisoner experience and military policy, which provides a model to analyze the 1929 Geneva Convention and policies developed by the PGMO that drastically effected the prisoner experience.

This historical investigation of the US POW program frames the analysis of Tucker's Crossing in the Bitterroot Valley. The camp was built on the Bailey Ranch outside Corvallis, Montana and like other local sugar beet farms, was struggling to find labor to harvest the crop.³ With the onset of the war, local young men that normally harvested the sugar beets were sent to fight in WWII, causing a labor shortage in many agricultural areas across the country. This included the Bitterroot Valley. Upon the influx of German prisoners of war that were sent to the United States, the military believed the fairest way to handle the prisoners was to employ them on farms that indirectly supported the war effort and kept them occupied to reduce the likelihood of violence and begin the reeducation and denazification process.⁴

³ Perry Backus, "Pair Hunt for Clues to History of Bitterroot Valley POW Camps," *Missoulian*, February 4, 2012.

⁴ Thompson, Antonio, *Men in German Uniform: POWs in America During World War II*, Legacies of War, Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 2010.

Daily life in German POW camps in rural America was occupied by agricultural labor, sports and intellectual activity. Civilians and prisoners worked alongside one another on farms across the United States and formed unusual and surprising relationships through the process. While prisoners were employed on local farms, social organizations helped supplement military recreational equipment and activities. The Geneva Convention required that, "So far as possible, belligerents shall encourage intellectual diversions and sports organized by prisoners of war."⁵ This meant that camps were required to provide prisoners with approved literature, books, newspapers and sporting equipment. The Red Cross and YMCA ensured these materials were available for prisoners during inspections.⁶

⁵ "Treaties, Conventions, International Acts, Protocols and Agreements Between the United States of America and Other Powers, 1923-37," 1938, Vol. IV, Senate Document 134, Department of State.

⁶ "War Prisoners' Aid of the World's Committee of the Young Christian Associations," May 6, 1943, RG 389, National Archives and Research Administration.

II. The History of American POW Policy

American military policy in regard to POWs has varied extensively from the Revolutionary War through WWII and into the present day. The United States' first prisoners were captured during the Revolutionary War. The Union did not have a documented policy but conduct with prisoners was readily understood. The military held different standards of treatment for different groups of prisoners, captured British soldiers were held much like any civilian prisoner would be. However, Tories faced much harsher treatment and incarceration was often violent.⁷ America dealt little with prisoners during the Mexican War and simply sent the captured home on parole or signed them up as United States military scouts.⁸

Due to the high numbers of Union and Confederate prisoners during the Civil War, the need for a clear, document policy was apparent. Union and Confederate military officials would understand a POW policy as international law.⁹ In 1862 the Union War Department commissioned West Point professor, political theorist and veteran Francis Lieber to develop an

⁷ Robert Doyle and Arnold Krammer, *The Enemy in Our Hands: America's Treatment of Enemy Prisoners of War, From the Revolution to the War on Terror* (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2010), 3.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁹ Frank Freidel, "General Orders 100 and Military Government," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 32, no. 4 (March 1946), 548.

international prisoner of war policy. The direction of Lieber's policy may have been inspired by some his personal beliefs. He said, "Men who take up arms against one another in public war do not cease on this account to be moral beings, responsible to one another, and to God."¹⁰

Lieber's proposal was named the General Orders 100 and dealt with treatment of prisoners and conduct when capturing enemy soldiers. He had strong beliefs about "unarmed civilians" personal and property rights during a time of war and it was represented in the General Orders 100. The document provided an outline for the Union and Confederacy to follow in regard to conduct in war and the treatment of POWs.¹¹ The General Orders 100 provided the first American policy towards prisoners of war and would be the foundation for subsequent policies in future wars. This document would be the primary governing policy for the United States in regard to POWs until the 1929 Geneva Convention.¹²

¹⁰ Ibid., 549.

¹¹ Ibid., 551.

¹² Ibid., 551.

III. The 1929 Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War

The twentieth century provided an atmosphere for a war much different in nature than any other wars the United States had previously been engaged in. In the first half of the twentieth century WWI and WWII were wars of ideology rather than territory, this created a new dynamic in the war environment. During WWI the United States was careful to abide by the rules of war provided by the 1914 update of the General Orders 100.¹³

Following WWI the international community recognized the need for an agreement pertaining to standards of prisoner of war treatment. The 1929 Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War (the 1929 Geneva Conventions) was drafted and submitted to the Diplomatic Conference in Geneva for adoption to address this issue. The development of POW policy began in 1921 by the International Red Cross and was not implemented until July 27, 1929. The convention stipulates the dignified treatment of prisoners and the conduct required by prisoners. The document is brief and vague.¹⁴ One of the more detailed articles of the convention is as follows:

¹³ Robert Doyle and Arnold Krammer, *The Enemy in Our Hands: America's Treatment of Enemy Prisoners of War, From the Revolution to the War on Terror* (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2010), 6.

¹⁴ Malcolm Shaw, "Geneva Convention" (Britannica).

Art. 2. Prisoners of war are in the power of the hostile Government, but not of the individuals or formation which captured them. They shall at all times be humanely treated and protected, particularly against acts of violence, from insults and from public curiosity. Measures of reprisal against them are forbidden.¹⁵

The International Red Cross was the entity charged with inspections of POW camps during WWII to ensure camps met all requirements of the 1929 Geneva Convention. In most instances the POW camps in the United States exceeded all Red Cross and 1929 Geneva Convention condition stipulations. Many of these camps included libraries, cafeterias, film showing locations and fairly comfortable living situations.¹⁶ The treatment of German POWs during World War II was one point of the conflict in which the United States could be proud of. Actions taken by the PGMO and War Department in regards to enemy prisoners were surprisingly well rounded and consistent considering the vagueness of the Geneva Convention and the slow development of detailed American policy.¹⁷

The War Department viewed upholding and carrying out the 1929 Geneva Convention as a “solemn duty” of the United States government

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Colin Irvine, *A History of Camp Rupert: Removing the Nationality Stereotypes During World War II* (Helena, Montana: Carroll College, 1991).

¹⁷ Antonio Thompson. *Men in German Uniform: POWs in America During World War II*, Legacies of War (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 2010) 9-10.

and military. Based on the 1929 Geneva Convention, the first and most basic responsibility of captor listed in a War Department memorandum on the POW program was ensuring prisoners' dignity. "They (prisoners of war) must at all times be humanely treated and protected particularly against acts of violence, insults, and public curiosity."¹⁸

A policy memorandum created by the PGMO as direction for the War Department's POW Program is one of the most complete of those held in the National Archives and Research Administration. It is written as an explanation of the 1929 Geneva Convention and the importance of the War Department and military to abide by the stipulations in the 1929 Geneva Convention.¹⁹

The memorandum discusses preliminary interviews of German prisoners arriving in the United States, they were asked if "they had been afraid of mistreatment after capture." The War Department reported that most respondents said they were frightened for their life upon capture due to horror stories told by their commanding Nazi officers. The War Department made it protocol to inform all German prisoners that the United States would fully uphold the 1929 Geneva Convention and they

¹⁸ Office of the Provost Marshal General, *Prisoner of War Program*, RG 389 (National Archives and Research Administration, 1945), 1.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.

need not be worried about poor treatment or torture.²⁰ The War Department's emphasis on the 1929 Geneva Convention was a demonstration of its concentrated effort to provide necessary the necessary care and environment for German prisoners during WWII.

IV. The Development of the POW Program

German prisoners began arriving in the United States as early as 1941.²¹ The War Department tasked the Office of the Provost Marshal General (PGMO) to find a remedy for the lack of specific policies or protocols regarding the regulations and treatment of prisoners of war (POW).²² The first German POWs of WWII were transferred to American hands through the British Armed Forces. Although, in late 1941 and beyond the United States began filling POW camps with their own German detainees.²³ German prisoners' journals discuss how relieved and then terrified most were upon being captured and transferred across the

²⁰ Ibid., 3.

²¹ Antonio Thompson. *Men in German Uniform: POWs in America During World War II*, Legacies of War (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 2010) 1.

²² Edward Pluth, "The Administration and Operation of German Prisoner of War Camps in the United States During World War II" (Thesis (Ph.D.), Ball State University, 1970) abstract.

²³ Arnold Krammer, *Nazi Prisoners of War in America* (Lanham, MD: Scarborough House Publishing, 1996) 2.

Atlantic Ocean. Most were relieved when captured by Americans rather than the Soviets who rarely followed the Geneva Convention and were brutal towards prisoners. Another reason for the relief included the lack of supplies and food many German soldiers were experiencing. Starvation was frequent on the German front lines.²⁴

The War Department had a terrible time creating system of recording and tracking prisoners. One of the most difficult issues at the beginning of the acceptance of prisoners was finding secure locations to send the prisoners. Eventually, the War Department found placing prisoners in former CCC camps and agricultural areas with high needs for labor would suffice.²⁵ Prisoners were surprised by the courteousness in which they were treated and the care the American soldiers took to keep them comfortable while incarcerated.²⁶

Once German prisoners arrived at their camps were often employed by civilian business owners in the area. The War Department soon realized that they must provide other recreational activities to occupy prisoners' time as work only consumed eight hours of the twenty-

²⁴ Ibid., 14-15.

²⁵ Ibid., 27-28.

²⁶ Ibid., 16.

four in the day.²⁷ In accordance with providing intellectual and physical activities as stipulated by the Geneva Convention and in order to keep good relations between prisoners and structure in the camp, the War Department encouraged sports, reading and classes in the camps. Any equipment or books that the military could not provide, social organizations like the Red Cross and YMCA assisted.²⁸

Prisoners engaged in boxing, soccer, theater productions, educational courses, reading and watching films in the camp. Group and team activities were popular and often required large numbers of equipment to be brought in.²⁹ German prisoners practiced and preformed musical concerts and plays. Occasionally locals would be permitted to attend performances and engage with the prisoners through recreational means.³⁰ These recreational activities would eventually lead to reeducation programs with the camps.³¹

As most able-bodied American men were sent into WWII, there was a substantial lack of labor in the United States. This labor shortage hit

²⁷ Ibid., 45.

²⁸ Ibid., 51-54.

²⁹ Ibid., 53.

³⁰ Ibid., 60.

³¹ Ibid., 78.

agricultural areas particularly hard. With thousands of German prisoners entering the United States, constituents and agricultural organizations began pressuring Congress and the War Department to allow POWs to be employed as an agricultural labor source.³² The military's primary concern was ensuring the Geneva Convention was followed in regards to prisoners' treatment and that newly crafted US POW treatment policies guided the order in the camps and during employment.

Prisoners were required to be paid at least a minimum wage, which ended up helping many local economies. Prisoners would buy supplies brought in from towns to the camps and also helped the farms recover economically after losing labor sources so quickly and just a decade after the Great Depression.³³ The labor program provided a dignified experience and something worthwhile for prisoners to engage themselves with while in incarceration. Close relations and contact between civilian farmers and German prisoners also helped in cultural understanding and ending stereotypes of one another.³⁴

Escapes in the POW camps were not extremely prevalent but did

³² Ibid., 90-92.

³³ Ibid., 85.

³⁴ Ibid., 107-109.

occasionally occur. Most escape plans were extensively thought out and often included a number of prisoners. Planners tried to enlist fellow prisoners of different skill sets for different planning stages. These included welders, clothing and fabric repair, strategic planning, etc.³⁵ Of the 370,000 German prisoners there were only 2,000 escapees during the six years Germans prisoners were held in the United State. All but a handful were recaptured shortly after being discovered missing.³⁶ Punishment for captured escapees was not extremely harsh by the US military and included a fine and a bread and water diet for two to three days.³⁷

Often the only violence to ever arise in the German POW camps was between the prisoners themselves. It often included pro-Nazi prisoners threatening and harassing non-Nazi prisoners for their disloyalty and lack of support to the Third Reich. In fact, most prisoners were not Nazi supporters and simply got involved in the war through Hitler's draft.³⁸ The War Department quickly learned it was important to understand who was a dedicated Nazi Party member and who was not, and keep the two

³⁵ Ibid., 119.

³⁶ Ibid., 142.

³⁷ Ibid., 141.

³⁸ Ibid., 149.

groups separated.³⁹ Violence was rare in the camps and only arose when precautions were not taken to keep opposing groups separated.

In the last few years of WWII, the War Department realized the need to implement a reeducation program within the POW camps. The programs were designed to use propaganda, pop culture and intellectual materials and literature to support democratic ideals and values.⁴⁰ Americans understood that “post-war Germany would be a political vacuum, and if democracy were not to fill the void, the dreaded specter of communism might.” This notion drove policy to show democratic films and newspapers in the camps. The programs proved to be fairly successful and most German prisoners agreed and adopted many democratic ideals upon their release after the war.⁴¹

The War Department’s handling of German POWs during WWII was executed very well and gave prisoners a dignity in the midst of incarceration. Using German prisoners to fill the labor void assisted in producing food for a nation at war and stimulated local economies. The US military worked diligently to follow the Geneva Convention and its own policies in the treatment of prisoners and provided quality care while on

³⁹ Ibid., 151.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 190-191.

⁴¹ Ibid., 194-195.

US soil. Successful reeducation will be a lasting legacy of the German POW camps and the entire experience can provide a model for US policy in all regards to POW treatment.

V. Camp Recreation & Activities

The reeducation of German prisoners can be best understood through the local, micro analysis- rather than a large collective group. Reeducation started with the literature and environment POWs were presented with. As stated by the Geneva Convention, the American military was responsible for the mental and physical well being of the German prisoners. This ensured that prisoners would have access to intellectual material like books and other literature and sporting equipment would be provided. The United States was helped greatly by social organizations like the Red Cross and YMCA in providing adequate amounts and qualities of such materials. As the war effort took up most resources it was often difficult for camp leaders to obtain suitable materials.⁴²

⁴² Antonio Thompson, *Men in German Uniform: POWs in America During World War II*, Legacies of War (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 2010) 110.

The PMGO censored and approved all materials made available to prisoners, especially literature and movies. The military was careful to exclude any materials that discussed Nazis, Adolf Hitler, fascism or was negative towards the United States or democracy. The United States integrated and leveraged the materials provided to prisoners as a step in reeducation and denazification. The majority of German prisoners, not including German officers, did not care much what materials they were given as most were not dedicated Nazi Party members or devoted supporters of the Third Reich.⁴³

Another aspect in which social organization were helpful to the military in providing materials, was gaining access to literature and film in German. The approved lists of books and movies gave the author and title. Most lists included approximately 40 options of German books, however, prisoners had access to thousands of other American books.⁴⁴ Books were checked out regularly and assisting in combating violence and uprisings due to the lack of boredom of prisoners.⁴⁵

⁴³ Ibid., 110-116.

⁴⁴ "War Prisoners' Aid of the Worlds's Committee of the Young Christian Associations," May 6, 1943, RG 389, National Archives and Research Administration.

⁴⁵ Antonio Thompson, *Men in German Uniform: POWs in America During World War II*, Legacies of War (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 2010) 112.

In addition to literature, prisoners put on plays, concerts and sporting events while incarcerated. Many prisoners adopted the pastimes of their American guards, such as American football and looking at pinup magazines.⁴⁶ Films were very popular in the camps and would often play on weekends for the prisoners. As projectors were in short supply from the military, local civilians, churches and the YMCA often donated projection equipment to the camps. These films were almost always anti-Nazi, with titles like " Watch on the Rhine."⁴⁷

The YMCA and Red Cross frequently inspected the camps and took account of the educational courses offered in the camps, approved books, films and plays and the quantity and quality of sporting equipment. Reports would then be sent to the camp officers, the prisoner spokesperson, the Third Reich and the PGMO. If quantities of materials were lacking the report would give options for acquiring such equipment, these options often were donations from the social organizations.⁴⁸ From all appearances and reports, prisoners seemed to not only be

⁴⁶ Arnold Krammer, *Nazi Prisoners of War in America* (Lanham, MD: Scarborough House Publishing, 1996) 50-52.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁴⁸ "War Prisoners' Aid of the World's Committee of the Young Christian Associations," May 6, 1943, RG 389, National Archives and Research Administration.

comfortable in the camps but also enjoy their time, many camps began to have the appearance of a boys' club.

VI. A Case Study of the Agricultural Experience: Tucker's Crossing

Prisoner housing and grounds were built on the Bailey Ranch and farmers in the area picked up prisoners each morning to help harvest crops in the area. Locals and the Bailey family were immediately thrust into the realities of war as German prisoners lived next to their farmhouse. This situation was a sensitive one for Elizabeth (Betty) Bailey, co-owner with her husband Homer of the farm, as both of her brothers were simultaneously being held prisoner in Germany. One of her brothers would be killed helping Americans escape their prisoner of war camp in Germany.⁴⁹

The War Department named the camp Tucker's Crossing for recording purposes. This, however, was a misnomer as the camp was actually located on acreage on the corner of Bailey Lane and the Eastside Highway. The actual Tucker's Crossing is located across the highway headed west. This leads one to the East Fork of the Bitterroot River and the location of remains of a bridge that had been washed out in the 1980s called Tucker's Bridge.

⁴⁹ Perry Backus, "Pair Hunt for Clues to History of Bitterroot Valley POW Camps," *Missoulian*, February 4, 2012.

The national consensus from the agricultural community was a positive when in regards to the new labor source. The enemy prisoners of World War II that were relocated to the United States had a significant socio-economic impact on the communities that employed the prisoners. German prisoners filled the void brought on as young American men who previously held the jobs were sent into war.⁵⁰ This supply of labor would in the future also help many farms compete their economic recovery less than a decade after the Great Depression. These farms also helped supply greater amounts of food for the war effort and providing for the nation.

The Bailey ranch, like many other sugar beet farms, was in a market that needed more supply than was being produced. Due to World War II much of the sugar produced in the United States was sent overseas to support the Allied war effort. Only what supply was left over was sold to the American public, creating an inconvenient shortage in the United States.⁵¹ Sugar beet growers were willing and but unable to fill the need for sugar in the general public. One of the main reasons for this inability was due to the lack of labor in rural America.

⁵⁰ Irvine, Colin. *A History of Camp Rupert: Removing the Nationality Stereotypes During World War II*. Helena, Montana: Carroll College, 1991.

⁵¹ Sugar Brokers, "Sugar Conditions Will Be as Difficult in 1946 as Currently Unless-," *Lamborn Sugar-Market Report* 23, no. 27 (July 10, 1945).

Prior to the movement of POWs into the Bitterroot Valley, the Bailey ranch experienced the same shortage of labor. Sugar beet harvest is a highly labor intensive exercise and requires large numbers of laborers. Prior to WWII the ranch employed migrant Filipino and Mexican laborers. However with the turn into WWII these labor groups became difficult to keep in the Bitterroot Valley and employ. With the construction of the German prisoner of war camp on the farm in 1945, labor was once again available and used. In a *Ravalli Republic* article chronicling the history of the sugar beet industry in the Bitterroot Valley, Homer Bailey explains that there were about ten separate sugar beet farms in the Bitterroot Valley. All were located along the rail lines to ensure easy transportation for the beets in and out of the area.⁵²

Area farmers were conscious to ensure all farms had adequate amounts of labor for harvest. The arrival of the prisoners of war not only meant a supply of labor for the Bailey ranch, but enough to promise all beets would be able to be harvested on all area farms.⁵³ This influx of labor would help increase the yield that could be sold domestically after the adequate amounts of sugar were sent to the warfront. This jump in harvested acres was very apparent in comparison with previous years. For example in Montana the average acreage of beets harvested from

⁵² Pat Rhodes, "Sugar Beets in the Bitterroot," *Ravalli Republic*, October 22, 1997, sec. History.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

1934-1943 was 68,000 acres. In 1945 that number jumped to 82,000 acres with projections even higher for 1946.⁵⁴ The demand for beets helped drive the need for labor and in the Bitterroot Valley, German prisoners of war shored up the labor shortage during World War II.

The economic impacts of the surplus of German prisoner of war laborers were positive. The 1929 Geneva Convention stipulated that prisoners of must be paid for labor preformed and can only be employed by independent contractors, not for war purposes. While able-bodied locals worked for the government either in the service or for the war effort, the need for labor on farms was great. German prisoners of war filled this void and in turn their pay helped stimulate local economies due to many prisoners spending their pay within the communities where camps were located, the Bitterroot Valley was no exception.⁵⁵

Industry organizations like the American Sugar Cane League lobbied the military and government officials to allow prisoners to work on rural farms to help increase harvest yields and meet demand. The War Manpower Commission and the War Food Administration administered the access to prisoner labor and created the protocols necessary to

⁵⁴ Sugar Brokers, "Sugar Conditions Will Be as Difficult in 1946 as Currently Unless-," *Lamborn Sugar-Market Report* 23, no. 27 (July 10, 1945).

⁵⁵ Arnold Krammer, *Nazi Prisoners of War in America* (Lanham, MD: Scarborough House Publishing, 1996), 80.

ensure all stipulations of the Geneva Convention and US military prisoner treatment policies were followed.⁵⁶

Prisoner labor proved to be a successful labor source for farmers in terms of profits. In addition to fully harvesting all crops, sugar beet farmers in Montana produced more than \$1.5 million in sugar beets in 1945. Of this amount Homer Bailey had the highest beet yield of any Montana farm.⁵⁷ Much of the success on the Bailey farm was due to the availability of labor and German prisoners provided that.

VII. Denazification and the Post-War

Leading to the end of WWII, the War Department realized the need to implement a reeducation program within the POW camps. The programs were designed to use propaganda, pop culture and intellectual materials and literature to support democratic ideals and values. Due to the War Department's attention to detail in regards to what literature and films had been in the camps through the duration of the war, the process of denazification and reeducation had already begun, especially with prisoners with no real commitment to the Third

⁵⁶ Ibid, 86.

⁵⁷ John Forssen, "Sugar Beets Bring Growers \$1,500,000 Annually; More Planted This Year," *Missoulian*, May 26, 1946.

Reich.⁵⁸

Americans understood that “post-war Germany would be a political vacuum, and if democracy were not to fill the void, the dreaded specter of communism might.”⁵⁹ This notion drove policy to show democratic films and newspapers in the camps. Through the integration of films and literature favoring democratic values the program was able to move quickly and successfully to reeducation. The programs proved to be fairly successful and most German prisoners agreed and adopted many democratic ideals upon their release after the war.⁶⁰

It is difficult to calculate the exact number of former German prisoners that returned to the United States after they were freed and sent back to Germany. As Germans returned to Europe, they found a nation demolished by war, with little economic promise and hope for the immediate future. It was common to find records of German families immigrating to the same areas of the camps they were held in. This is likely due to their familiarity with the area, promise of employment and the comfortable nature of their time in the camps.⁶¹

⁵⁸Arnold Krammer, *Nazi Prisoners of War in America* (Lanham, MD: Scarborough House Publishing, 1996), 190-191.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 194.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 194-195.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

VIII. Conclusion

The War Department's handling of German POWs during WWII was executed very well and gave prisoners a dignity in the midst of incarceration. Using German prisoners to fill the labor void assisted in producing food for a nation at war and stimulated local economies. The impact prisoners had on the local communities in which camps were located were substantial and helped each side understand the others' culture and nationality. The close interaction between prisoner and civilian is an experience unique to WWII, American camps and German POWs.

The US military worked diligently to follow the Geneva Convention and its own policies in the treatment of prisoners and provided quality care while on US soil. By upholding and abiding by the Geneva Convention and social organization inspection recommendations, prisoners were able to be comfortable in POW camp thousands of miles away from Europe.

The successful reeducation of German prisoners will be a lasting legacy of the German POW camps and the entire experience can provide a model for US policy in all regards to POW treatment. Not only did this contribute to the influx of German immigrants in the post war, but helped bridge the cultural divide and prevent the spread of communism

in Western Europe.

The experience of German prisoners and American civilians is one that can be studied from a national context but also a local one. The local histories, like that of Tuckers' Crossing, provide a lens to the daily experiences and a real understanding of the individuals involved in an often forgotten part of American history.

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