PRISONER OF WAR CAMP

Col. John A Sterling, camp commander, has received word that the proposed enlargement of the Concordia Camp, is out. Plans had been under consideration to enlarge the camp to accommodate 1,000 more German officer prisoners. No reason was given for this decision which was received from Washington.

A side camp is to be established at Hebron, Nebr., 100 German prisoners to be taken to that place the latter part of next week, together with the necessary guards and equipment. The prisoners and guards will occupy quarters in old CCC camp at that place and the prisoners will be used in farm work, on a housing project sponsored by the FHA agency under which 15 houses are to be built and also on cleaning the debris caused by the fire at Deshler, Nebr., six miles west of Hebron. The Thayer County Labor Association, with J. R. Kenner, banker of Hebron, acting as contracting agent, has been organized to sponsor the side camp.
—Concordia Kansan.

W. C. T. U. Meeting

The W. C. T. U. met last Wednesday at the Y. W. C. A. rooms when W. D. Fitton, principal of the Fairbury high school was the main speaker, talking on Post War Plans and the causes of war.

The high school clarinet quartet composed of Audrey Reynolds, Betty Foust, Margaret Calder and Shirley Friesen played several selections.

Mrs. Leo Cawdrey, the new president, presided at the business meeting when the union voted to assist the state W. C. T. U. in raising $200 which will be used for the purchase of a Red Cross, Mobile Field Director's office unit, to be used to carry Red Cross supplies to men on maneuvers.

Mrs. O. W. Stocker led the devotionals and Mrs. Stella Reynolds, treasurer, reported six new members.

—Nuckolls Mortuary, Ambulance service. Phone 114.

1st pub. Nov. 25, last Dec. 9, 1943

NOTICE OF PETITION

E. A. WUNDER
Attorney for Estate

Estate of Paul Scheer, Deceased, in the County Court of Jefferson County, Nebraska.

The State of Nebraska: To all person interested in said estate, take notice, that a petition has been filed for the appointment of Stephen Scheer as administrator of said estate, which has been set for hearing on December 21, 1943 at 10 o'clock A. M., at the County Court Room in said County.

Another Old Timer

I have been very much interested in reading your account of your youthful actions and your account of them as my youth and young manhood was spent at about the same time and in the same manner.

I went into the field with a team at the mature age of 8 years, cultivated corn at 11 years of age, built straw stacks (after a fashion) at 12 to 13, drove a reaper at 12, taught school at 19 and established a home with the help of a faithful partner at 25.

We made our own toys in those days and were more proud of a 2-wheeled cart bought with our own earnings than of a new auto.
Your friend, Charles M. Turner.

F15j Fairburg Journal

Nov. 25, 1943 pg 6 Col. 2

For Carter

Approximately 12,000 German prisoners of war were held in camps all across Nebraska. Nebraska's remoteness made it an ideal location for housing some of these prisoners. Scottsbluff, Ft Robinson and Atlanta (south of Holdredge) were the larger base sites. The Geneva Convention specified that POWs could not work in any war-related industry. Transportation was a major problem with POW labor. Transporting the POWs in the areas where labor was needed had become more difficult because of a shortage of military manpower combined with a scarcity of fuel, tires and repair parts. Guidelines were issued that POW workers could not be used in a distance greater than 35 miles from camp. The German labor was available but the means of getting the men to the job was greatly restricted. The war department solved the problem when it decided to develop even more of the small 100-300 man, branch camps which would be built closer to actual work sites. Nebraska camps at Weeping Water, Hebron and Franklin, along with Hays and Cawker City, Kansas were former Civilian Conservation Corps camps that were used as POW camps during Word War II. During WWII all available men were involved in the war effort and there was a shortage of labor. The farmers were producing more and the work was hard, for instance, the corn had to be hand-shucked.

Nearly 100 groups of POWs left their troop trains and marched up Nebraska Avenue to be housed at Camp Atlanta during the war. Some of these groups had as few as ten men, while others had up to 1,000. Some were processed and shipped out within a matter of days of their arrival. Records were sorted, typed and filed. Each set of records included fingerprints, photographs, classification cards, labor assignments plus personal records of each prisoner.

The POWs were issued uniforms that were U.S. Army issue dyed blue over the original olive color. Outer garments worn by prisoners were marked. The coats, blouses and jackets were marked across the back with the letters "PW" six inches high and in a like manner on the front of each sleeve between the elbow and shoulder with letters four inches high. Trousers were marked in the same way with letters, four inches on the front just above the knee. Because more prisoners arrived than anticipated, the Army ran out of the blue uniforms. Therefore, Army clothing that was not dyed was issued. In all cases, all official U.S. Army buttons were removed, and replaced with buttons of either bone or plastic on the POW clothing.

Prisoners entering the main camp for the first time followed a set administrative procedure for internment. Each man was registered and given a physical examination; searched for unauthorized articles; assigned

to a bed in the barracks: issued one pillow, two blankets, one bed sack or mattress and straw for the sack; and assigned a metal or canvas cot.

The barracks for the prisoners were very similar to the barracks at the CCC camps. Inside the barracks were rows of cots and footlockers. Heat was provided by two potbellied, coal-burning stoves, located in the center aisle at each end of the building.

Camp Weeping Water

After sub-leasing the CCC Camp from the Soil Conservation Service 15 POWs arrived July 18, 1944 to prepare the camp. Only four buildings remained of the eight that were originally built. Four days later, on July 22, 100 POWs were brought to the camp. The camp was on the south edge of Weeping Water and a creek ran by the camp. The prisoners were brought in by train and walked to the camp under guard. New barracks were built along with a twelve foot high woven wire fence with three strands of barbed wire to surround the camp. The prisoners were not permitted outside the fence for anything but work detail, except on Sunday afternoons when the men played Soccer or Football if a field was available.

No one was allowed into the camp except on business. The prisoners could receive no gifts unless

given to a guard and checked and no photographs were permitted of the prisoners. The rules also stated that the prisoners were not to read newspapers. The government did not want the POWs to know what was happening in the war.

The POWs had free mailing privileges and were allowed to send two letters and one postcard per month. The letters were censored and some words could be cut out. They could receive packages, but no books, and all mail was censored. Many of the POWs wanted to lean English. Beginning and advanced classes in English were provided at most of the camps. The POWs also learned English by listening to the military staff and the farmers in their daily conversation. English-German dictionaries were available to facilitate translation. Others learned English from books and magazines. The POW camps had libraries. The Red Cross and the Young Men's Christian Association provided books for the libraries. Some camps used the profits from their POW Canteen Fund to purchase additional books for their library.

There was only a minimum staffing of guards available at the various branch camps. The guards were often a war veteran whose duty was completed,

or those who had been sick or wounded. Authorities believed that there was little chance of attempted escape.

During the 15 month period over 200 prisoners were located here although, at that time numbers were generally kept secret as to not alarm the public.

Prisoners worked digging ditches for storm drainage and at a rock quarry operated by the U. S Army Corps of Engineers. In September 1944, the Jonathan apple crop in southeast Nebraska was ripe and ready to be picked. R. P. Kummel orchards near Nebraska City had one hundred acres of apple trees. The German prisoners of war were brought in from the Weeping Water camp. The prisoners worked at three orchards, including Kimmels. Prisoners also picked tomatoes for the canning factory in Nebraska City. At Nebraska City, the Berthold Greenhouse was damaged by a severe hailstorm. It was completely rebuilt by German POWs from the Weeping Water Branch Camp. Farmers had to provide transportation for prisoners and guards for one round-trip daily. The farmers were allowed a half-cent per mile per prisoner, with a maximum of twenty five cents per day per man. It was up to the employers to show the POW what was to be done and how to do it. Prisoners, by international agreement, could refuse to work, but many found that time passed more quickly working than sitting idle in the compound. The POWs earned about $24 a month. They were not paid in money, but were paid in "canteen scrips" which could only be used at the camp PX canteen. Some of the items they could buy were paper, pens, tobacco, candy, cigarettes and also tools for woodworking.

Farmers paid the government for the labor provided by the POWs. For common farm labor, the farmers paid 40 cents per hour, for detasseling corn 50 cents per hour, for haying, 60 cents per hour. Picking corn was paid depending on how many bushels a POW picked. Prisoners on all other jobs were paid at the rate of eighty cents per day. The balance of the wage paid the prisoners went to the POW camps to provide food, shelter, medical care and recreation at the camp.

A regulation that was rarely followed was the ratio of guards to prisoners on work details. There was to be one guard to eight prisoners on private contracts. Some of the farmers thought guards with the POWs were not necessary. Therefore, the rules were rapidly relaxed. In many cases, there were no longer any military guards with the POWs when they left the camp. Farmers simply drove to the camp to pick the POWs up for work and brought them back in the evening.

The prisoners were sent to work with a brown bag lunch. According to the rules, prisoners were not allowed to eat at the table with the farmer and his family. In the beginning this rule was followed closely. As the farmers got to know the POWs and the POWs the farmers, they relaxed and feeding the POWs inside the house was the most commonly violated regulation. The POWs were frequently even sent back to the camp with cakes and pies.

Another rule that was not adhered to was visiting with the POWs. Most of the farmers felt that good food and communication were essential to good work. Getting to know the German prisoners, the farm families began treating them not like enemies but like any other hired hand. County Extension office records show that 305 local farmers and used POW labor.

Weeping Water camp closed October 1, 1945 and prisoners were sent back to their homes.
Two buildings remain at the site today. After the war, some of the buildings were converted into private residences.

Stories....

Doris Duff lived about a block away from the POW Camp while working outside she could see the activity that was going on there and sometimes the men going by on their way to and from work would wave at her. It struck her that the men were young people just like her.

Melvin Dodenhof shared a story that he remembers: The POWs were working for his parents and they gave them some beer. Someone came along from the camp and they quickly threw the beer cans in a 5-gallon bucket.

Glen Stubbendick, Syracuse said:My father used POW labor on his farm. There were no guards and those men were hungry.

Edgar Mogensen's parents used POW labor on their farm. He said they used two of the prisoners and would go pick them up in the morning and bring them back at night. Ed said he even brought them back sometimes and he wasn't supposed to. One of the prisoners was named Frantz. When he worked for the Mogensen's he was 18 years old. He was from Austria. His first duty was on the Russian front where he got a bullet in his shoulder. After his would healed, he was sent to the German front. The main thing they were worried about was getting shot in the back by the Gestapo that was there to make sure they did their

duty in combat. At the German front he was captured by the French. In the U.S., he was in 3 different prison camps-of the last two, one was near Lincoln and the last Weeping Water. The first time he came to work he had a sack with him for his lunch. Otto Mogensen knew how to speak German. Otto asked what he had and he showed him. It was a loaf of brown bread. Mr. Mogensen told him to go into the house and get something to eat in the kitchen. Frantz said no it was forbidden. Otto told him it wasn't forbidden here. Ed said that the reaction the farmers had to the prisoners was amazing that they did not think of them as enemies and the German farmers around the area would have adopted them if they could have. He also said that a prisoner left the camp once but he came back. After the war and Frantz was sent back home, Otto and Frantz kept in contact by letters and Ed and Frantz's family still are in contact today. Ed and his wife were invited to visit them in Austria but Margaret was too ill to make the trip. In the 1980s Frantz, his wife and his son visited Ed and Margaret at their home in Weeping Water. They visited places around here and the camp near Lincoln. All that was left there was a chimney of one of the buildings. While they were there, the farmer who owned the property on the site came out and asked them who they were. Ed explained to him that Frantz

was a POW at the camp there and the farmer shook his hand and invited them to come in his house. Ed also told what happened to the buildings at the former camp. Some of them were tore down and others were sold off. One of the buildings was moved to the Mogensen farm after the war.

They also visited Willy-Bill Oberdieck. He was a POW in the Weeping Water camp, and an officer when he was captured. He picked apples a the orchards in Nebraska City while he was a POW at camp Weeping Water.

William Oberdieck remembered that another man was left at his work site one evening and hitchhiked back to the camp rather than running away.

A film about the POWs in Nebraska was produced in 1980 for NETV called Legacies of World War II. In an interview with Mr. Oberdieck he said "I volunteered for many different labor, met many people and made a lot of friends. They treated us like humans in spite of the war. The kind of people that appealed to me. I ended up in the Nebraska City area and met a lot of nice people there too. I thought if I ever go any place and want to live, it would be Nebraska. In 1946, we were shipped back home. I applied for my visa and in 1950 came back with my family."

He went to work for Kimmel Orchards and

eventually bought the company. He also wrote a book about his experience titled William Oberdieck America's Prisoner of War.

We were told that German POW labor was used to rebuild an elevator that burned. Lyle Thomassen said that it was Philpot's feed store located where Keckler's garage is today. Some of the POWs knew bricklaying and laid blocks for the building.

Marvin Friesel remembers his father, Henry Friesel used POW labor to scoop corn.

Ellen Englemier remembers that her dad used to talk about the POWs. His name was Roy and he just missed getting drafted into the service because he was too old. He spoke German and he had several prisoners, about 6-8, no guards, working on his farm digging water diversion ditches. He would go to the camp and pick them up. He didn't get the same ones all the time, it was whomever was available. The guys were glad to come out, they were bored sitting around the camp and they got a good meal. They were fed lunch at the table with the family and she said her favorite story was her older sister was born around that time and the prisoners would want to hold the baby. They hated Hitler was much as we did. She also talked about how there were church services held in German at that time. There was a Reverend Lentz (possibly he preached at a church in Berlin (Otoe) who

would come to the camp and conduct services for the prisoners. Rev. Lentz had a black walnut coockoo clock that was a gift to him from the POWs. Ellen says it was tall, had the chains and weights and she remembers she was not supposed to touch it.

Sylvia Aronson's husband Herman was a guard at camp Weeping Water.

Vernon Dewey was a guard at camp Atlanta and was sent to camp Weeping Water. He said his job was to watch the prisoners while they were picking corn. He knew some German words but didn't visit with the POWs "they were the enemy"

January 30, 2009
Herbert Heil

Reba:

I very much enjoyed talking with you today. Hope I didn't make you late for work. I understand your coming back to Weeping Water. Although I have not lived in Nebraska since mid July of 1964, when I left for the Navy, home will always be in Cass county in many ways.

Back to the subject.

Dad was also Herbert (Herb) Heil, who with my mom, Amanda Stohlmann Heil ran the turkey farm on "old" highway 50 at Church Road north of Weeping Water spoke of working with the German POWs on their farm.

Dad and mom both spoke German, although not very well as they had not used it since childhood at the outbreak of WWI and what they spoke was "low (flat) German" or "Platt Deutsche," but could communicate with the POWs. This was not unusual as many of the farmers in the area were of German heritage.

Dad said that when explaining what needed to be done; if the work involved shoveling, as in cleaning a barn or shoveling oats or digging the first response of the POWs was, "nicht verstehe" which loosely translated to "not understand" or not understood. In our words today, "I don't get it." They would "get it" after more explanation, but jobs like that were never "understood quickly" by the POWs. He said that if the job involved a seat like driving a tractor or truck etc. It was "verstehe" quickly or "understood" or in our words, "I got it." Dad said he

figured they understood better than they wanted to let on.

There really was not much said about them that I recall, but there was no great hostility toward them and in fact, a number of farmers liked them well enough to sponsor them back to America after the war as many were what was called Dps or "Displaced Persons" in the community. I think the Lutheran Church had a hand in their sponsorship, as most were Lutheran.

This needs to be checked, but I think an Ortlieb family and a Sender family (see Murdock phone listing) were both sponsored back. I could be wrong about this as it has been a long time and I was just a kid and was not paying attention very well. Probably calling them would be the best. The Meeske's might know, as well as Stephen Stohlman, of others.

We had a German couple in our Sonoma church, Kurt and Martha Jahr. Kurt was a POW at Ft. Robinson in the far western part of Nebraska. He said that "guys like him" were sent out to work on farms in the Scottsbluff area. He said that being captured by the Americans was "da best ting dat happened to me, it saved my life." Many German soldiers were killed in fighting in France, Belgium and finally in western Germany that he was grateful that he got captured and sent to Nebraska. We was pleased with the way he was treated by the Nebraska farmers for whom he worked and spoke fondly of Nebraska.

A relative of his sponsored him to Marin county (just south of our county) at the end of the war. His parents lived in Leipzig and after the Russian control became "iron" we was afraid to go back because working-age men,

particularly those who had been in the German army who did go back for visits were not allowed to leave again. I believe his parents both died and he never saw them again after the war. His wife did get in and visited them once before they died to give them "word from their son Kurt."

He said that western Nebraska was so vast and open and sparsely populated, "they did not guard us, there vas no place to go."

The bad news is that most of the people who could help you with this are gone. There are probably "Old Germans" in Germany who are dying now who were in these camps, but there is no good way to contact them.

Again, I enjoyed talking with you. Sorry I can't be of more help.

Sincerely,
Herb (Herbert) Heil

CCC Camp Company 751
(from Nebraska and the CCC Young Men At Their Best
by Suzanne "Sue"(Sarvin) Williams

CCC company 751 started January 5, 1935 to do soil erosion work and provide more efficient farming techniques. On April 13, 1939, 23 men were assigned to Co 751 in Weeping Water. Nebraska camps at Weeping Water, Hebron, and Franklin, along with camps at Hays and Cauker City, Kansas were former CCC Camps that were used as POW camps during WWII. Weeping Water camp opened July 18, 1944 and only four of the CCC barrack buildings remained of the eight that were built so new barracks were built along with a twelve-foot woven wire fence with 3 strands of barbed wire to surround the camp. The POW camp soon reached capacity of 200 prisoners, as demand for labor was very high. Prisoners worked digging ditches for storm drainage, apple orchards and at a rock quarry for the US Army Corps of Engineers.

There were few guards as authorities believed there was little chance of escape in rural Nebraska. Prisoners were not permitted outside the fence for anything but work detail, except for Sunday afternoons, when the men played soccer or football, if a field was available.

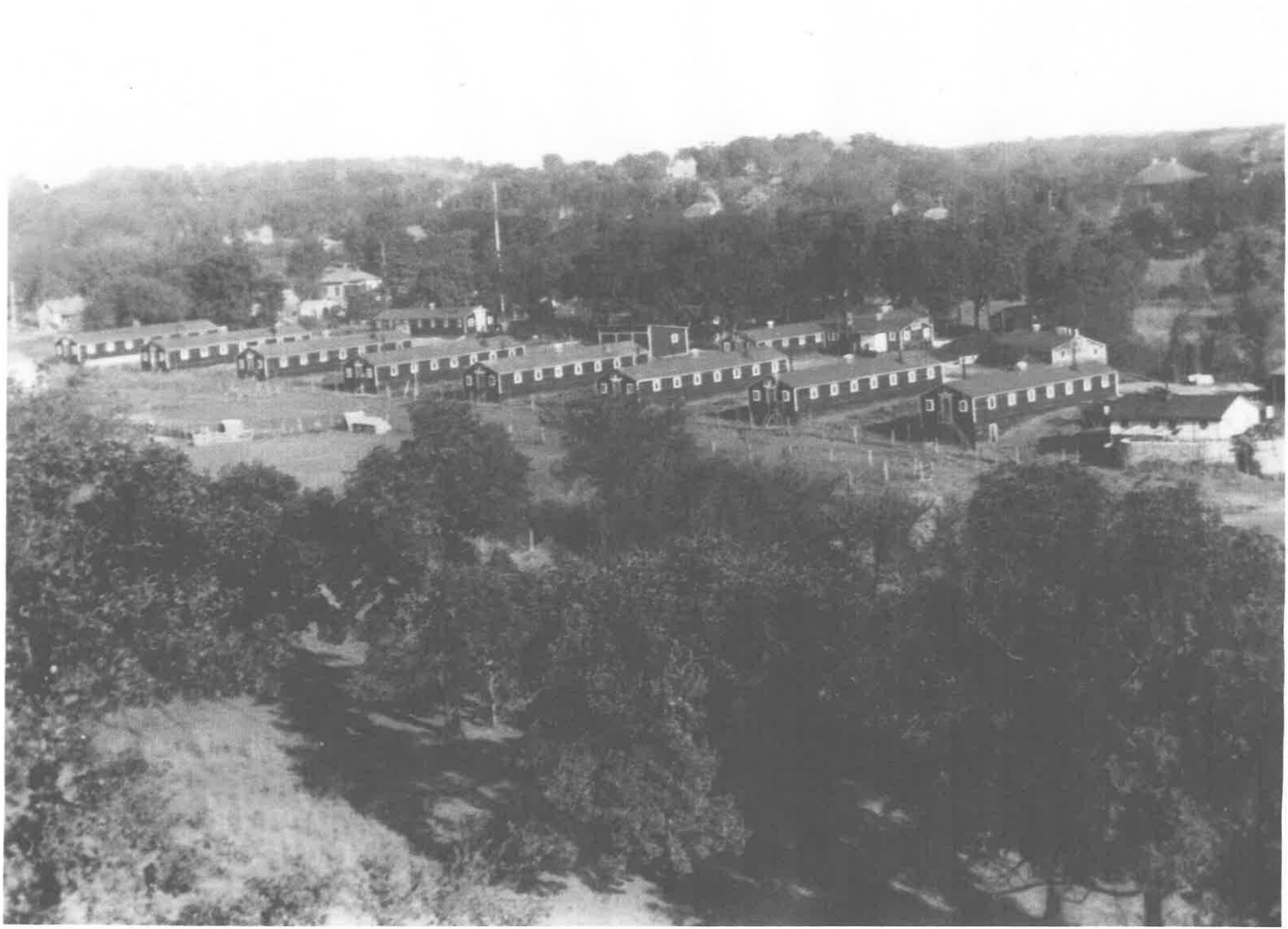
On July 27, 1944, the Weeping Water Republican reported that the farmers must furnish transportation for the prisoners and guards for one round-trip daily. The farmers were allowed a half cent per mile per prisoner, with a maximum of 25 cents per day per man.

Roger Luhring was 8 years old in 1944 and remembers the Weeping Water POW Camp. He lived two blocks from the POW Camp. The Camp was on the south edge of Weeping Water and a creek ran by the camp. Train tracks were a mile away and Roger would watch prisoners brought in by train and walked to the camp under guard. No one in town concerned about the camp or prisoners, it was part of daily life. People felt safe and did not lock doors. Prisoners did not try to escape. Older German prisoners did not support support Hitler's war. Younger prisoners not as critical.

September 1944 prisoners picked apples for R.P. Kimmel orchard near Nebraska City. POW Bill Oberdieck picked tomatoes for a canning factory in Nebraska City and Kimmel apple orchards. Berthold Greenhouse damaged by hailstorm completely rebuilt by POWs.

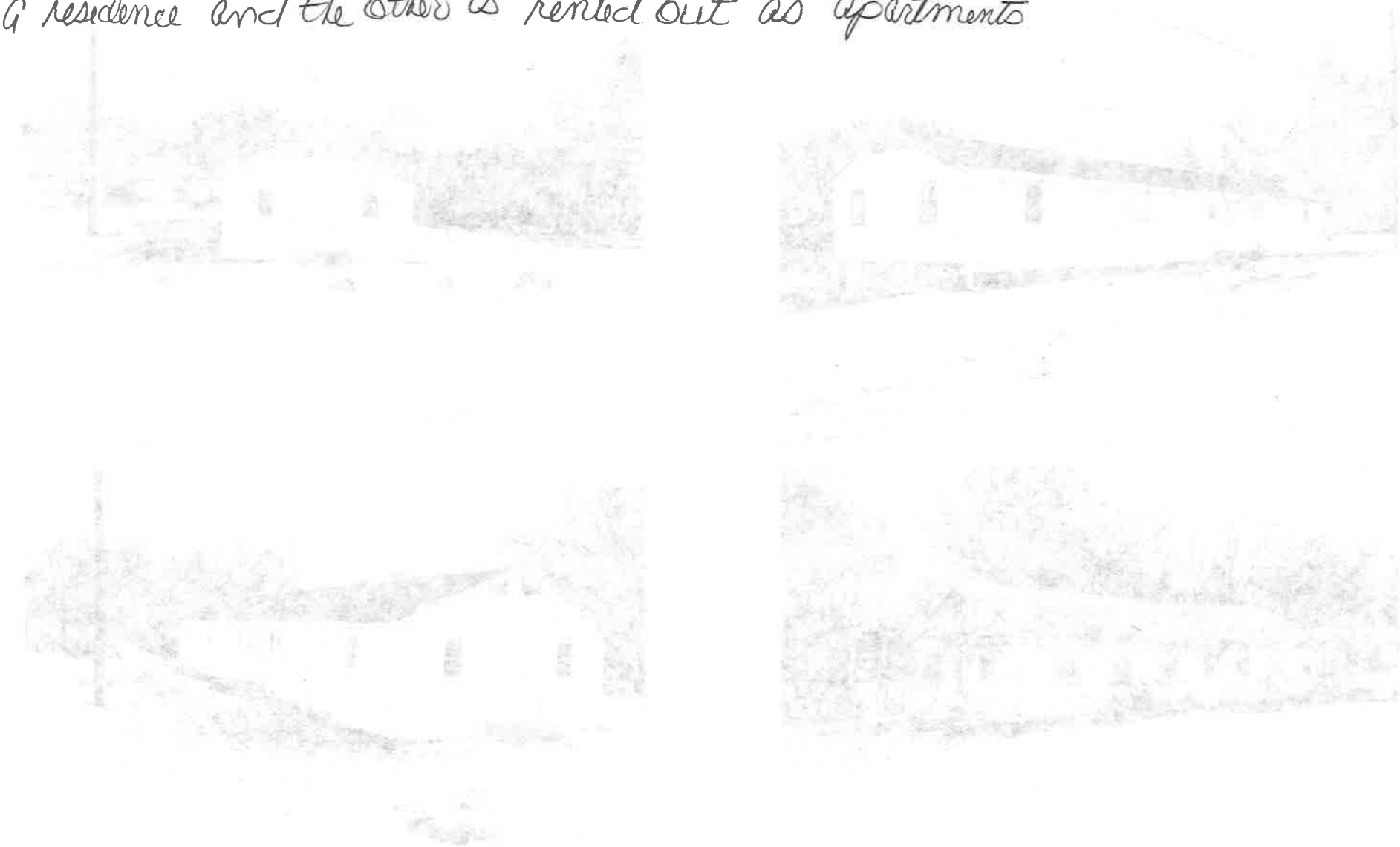
After the war, prisoners were sent back home and the camp was empty. One of the apple pickers returned and worked at Kimmel orchards, later becoming owner. The city of Weeping Water obtained rights to buildings. Later, Darwin Salestrom, the Weeping Water High School coach from 1952 to 1955 obtained permission to convert one of the buildings into a home.

Three of the original buildings still stand today, converted into private homes. The most prominent building was the hospital.



CCC Camp View looking NW

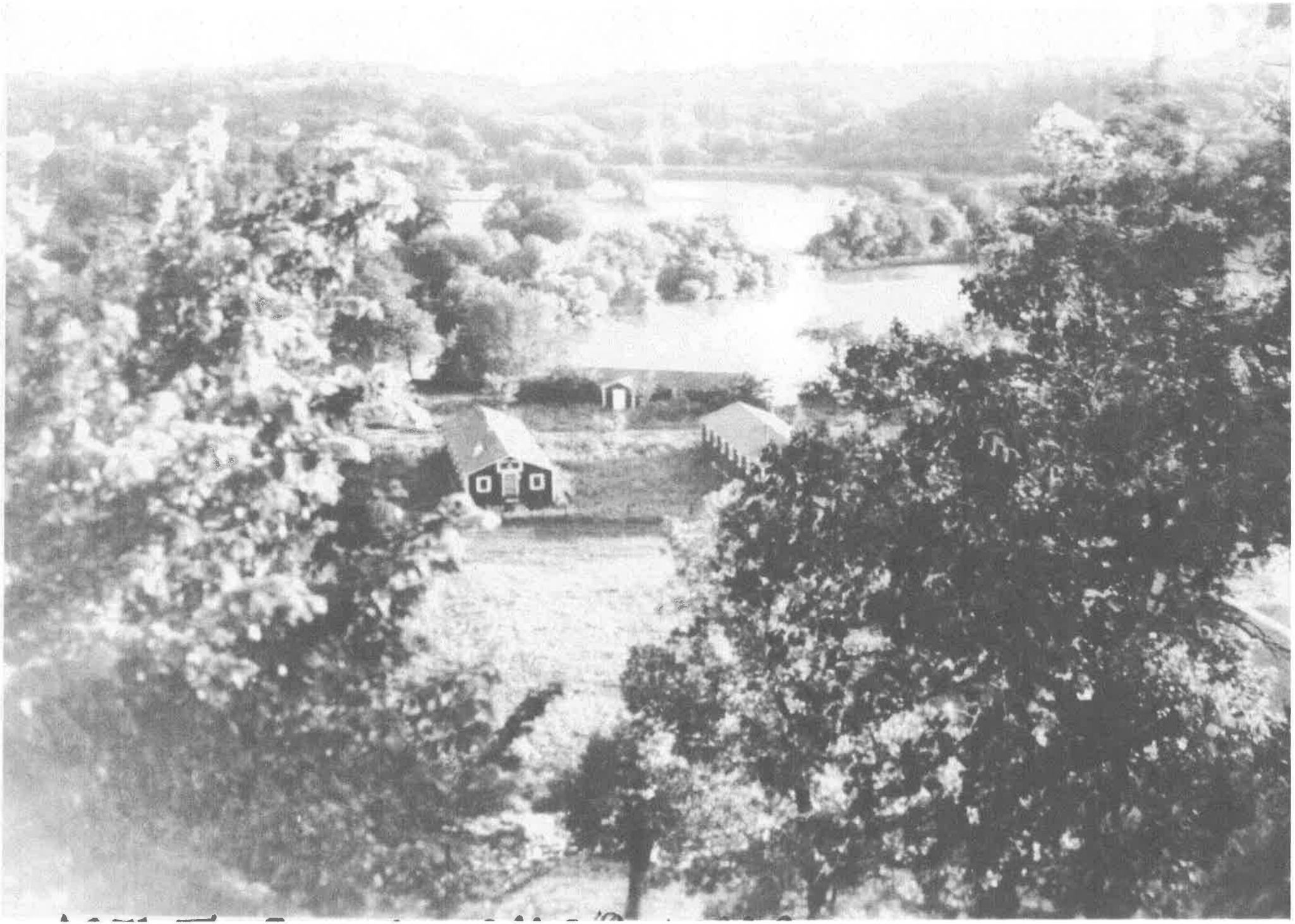
remaining buildings - this is two of them but I'm pretty sure there is another one that is now a day care center. The one on the lower left was converted into a residence and the other is rented out as apartments



used as apartments

Same building

daycare



Feature Story

By Jeanene Wehrbein

Weeping Water Camp plays historic role

The time: 1933. Economic times were at their toughest. The president of the United States, Franklin D. Roosevelt, decided something had to be done to help his countrymen find a job. Consequently, the Civilian Conservation Corps camps sprung up all over the country...offering jobs! Jobs that didn't pay much but in those stressed times, it was a job.

Company 751, a C.C.C. camp, was formed at Ft. Crook, Nebraska, on April 25, 1933. When first formed, the company was composed of men from Missouri and Nebraska. But Company 751 did not stay long at Ft. Crook. During the next 18 months, the camp moved to California and then to Minnesota. Finally, the camp came back to Nebraska and in October of 1934, settled in Tekamah, in northeast Nebraska.

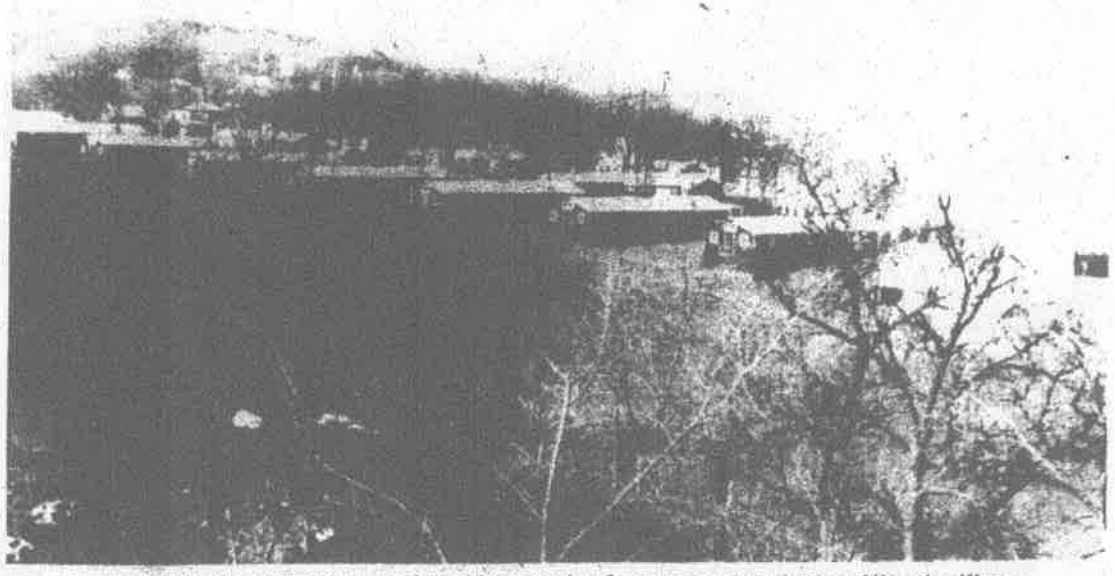
As camp moves seemed to be the norm, they were soon on the road again. This time to Weeping Water, Nebraska. On January 5, 1935, Company 751 set up a home on the south edge of the "blooming little city located on Weeping Water Creek," where they stayed until they closed permanthe camp at that time and our job was to work in the fields, plant trees and buffer strips and build conservation dams."

Ed went on to share other reflections about camp life. "Most of the campers were my age but some were in their thirties and even fifties. On weekends, I could go home to see my folks." What was the pay at the camp?

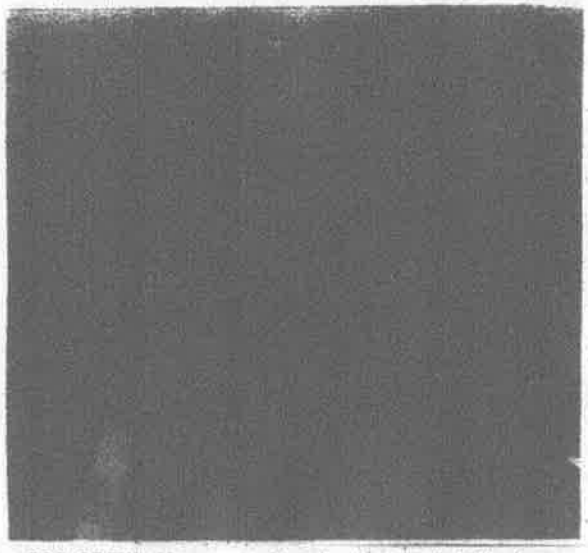
Paid $30.00 a month salary

"We were paid $30 a month salary and $25 of that was automatically sent to my folks. The five dollars that was mine was enough though; because everything was furnished for us," Ed remarked.

After substantial duty at Weeping Water, VanHorn moved on to other conservation camps. When he ended up at a C.C.C. camp in Burn, Ore., "The mosquitos were so bad, I said I'd had enough and came home to Weeping Water." Outside of a World War II stint in the Navy, Ed has



HISTORIC SITE 1935 photo of Civilian Conservation Corp. camp on south edge of Weeping Water. (Photo courtesy of Weeping Water Museum)



CCC CREW—Men pause for a break at Leslie Wiles farm. Pictured in 1936 photo are Sedlak, Liddick, Hicks, Voss.

Camp home to new residents

Little is known or has been written about the camp's occupants in the early 1940s. The former C.C.C. camp was home to another group of individuals...conscientious objectors.

According to an October, 1941 issue of the Nebraska State Journal, a story was written on these residents. "The 144 conscientious objectors at Nebraska's civilian public service camp on the outskirts of Weeping Water were under the direction of the federal soil conservation service and were doing a lot of physical labor connected with conservation practices," the story stated.

The Peace churches: Mennonites, Quakers and Brethren, provided most of the objectors. The S.C.S. furnished only the buildings and technical supervisors. The camp residents (through their church) paid for the food, clothing, utilities, etc.

in all, there were a total of 23 prisoner-of-war camps in Nebraska during the war.

Nebraska's remoteness made it the perfect place for camps. In addition, the midwest suffered from a labor shortage; all available men were involved in the war effort.

That's where the old Weeping Water C.C.C. camp came to life again. Under the direction of Willard Waldo, the Cass County Extension Agent at that time, a new opportunity arose for the camp's use.

As the war progressed, farmers were trying to produce as much crops as they could to do their part for the war effort. In 1944, Waldo decided to do what he could to help the farmers who were having trouble getting enough labor to increase their production.

fences, cut weeds and worked in the local quarries.

If you had a large group of prisoners on a work detail, armed guards were often used. A Weeping Water man who once was one of those guards shared his experiences with me about his involvement in the P.O.W. camp. Vernon Duwe had just returned from three years overseas duty and found that his next Army assignment was a guard at one of Nebraska's prisoner-of-war camps. He started at Atlanta, then moved on to Grand Island. "These German soldiers didn't know one thing about corn," Duwe related. "I had to teach them how to harness and drive a team of horses, how to pick the corn, everything."

Eventually the Army asked if he'd like to be closer to his Iowa home and in February of 1945, he

When the war was over, Vernon Duwe mustered out of the service and returned to Weeping Water. He had met his future wife, Berdina (Christensen) Hanson, while stationed here so it seemed natural to return. After going to aircraft mechanic school in Lincoln, he worked at Browns Airport for many years. He and Berdina still live near Weeping Water.

Two buildings still remain

All that remains of the original Weeping Water camp today are two buildings. One is a private home which used to be the hospital of the C.C.C. camp and the other structure is an apartmen

CCC CREW—Men pause for a break at Leslie Wiles farm. Pictured in 1936 photo are Sedlak, Liddick, Hicks, Voss, Lancaster, Winch, Stoll, Jensen, Gormally, Gill, Weiss, Hindman, Robbins, Fitzpatrick, Bressman, Van Horn and Stapleton. (Photo courtesy of Ed Van Horn)

ently seven years later.

There starts the crux of this story. The Weeping Water C.C.C. camp eventually will reveal quite an historical journey. This camp location that started as the base for C.C.C. work projects under the auspices of the Soil Conservation Service (1935-1941) to a holding camp for World War II conscientious objectors (1942), to a prisoner of war camp for German soldiers (1944-45).

After researching the state historical society archives and the county and Weeping Water Museums, little has been written of the broad historical past that

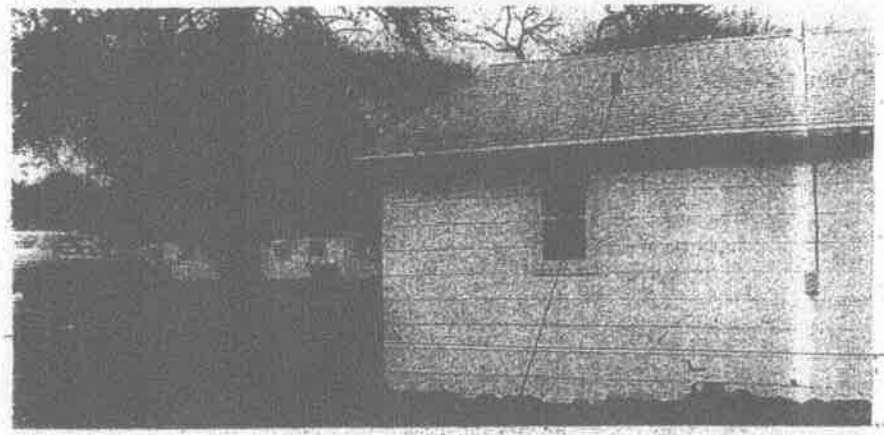
lived in Weeping Water ever since. Working at the Western Lime Quarries and running a bulk tank wagon service and gas station on the west edge of town filled his life until 1983 when he started helping out at the Soil Conservation Service part-time... interestingly, just 50 years after his first job with the same government agency.

Another man who played an important role in the Weeping Water C.C.C. camp is Jack Hays. Jack was a cook at the camp from 1935 to 1941. Then he turned his culinary skills into operating his own restaurant in Weeping Water. Jack still owns one of the

sors. The camp residents (through their church) paid for the food, clothing, utilities, etc.

While at the camp, they devoted their efforts entirely to soil conservation practices. The Lincoln paper went into great detail sharing the many fine conservation projects the crews were engaged in while in this area. A caption under a picture in the story describes the workers solid-sodding part of a grassed waterway on the Frank Buell farm, three miles south of Murdock. Buell, along with other farmers in the area, gave high praise for the outstanding work the C.O.s did through the public service camp program.

At the end of September, 1942, the Weeping Water men were transferred to work with the forest service in the northwest. Again, the C.C.C. camp at Weeping Water was empty.



ALL THAT'S LEFT - These two buildings are all that remains of the CCC camp built in Weeping Water in 1934. The building on the left which was the hospital for the camp is now the home of Paul and Neva Bauer. The partial view of the building is now an apartment house. It was the home of the Soil Conservation officers who were in charge of the camp program and activities. (Photo by Jeanene Wehrbein)

his camp ground will reveal. Ironically, all I had to do was talk to some of the local people who were a part of the camp at various times through its history. Many wonderful, emotional stories have surfaced.

Hays, Potts, Blake, Dixon, Kirkpatrick, Lancaster, Long, VanHorn come to the surface when names of past C.C.C camp members are revealed. Many camp residents were from the Weeping Water area but others came to the camp looking for a job from Plattsmouth, Nehawka, Palmyra, Syracuse, etc.

One such enrollee was Ed VanHorn. "I was 18 years old and needed to find a job. My folks who lived in Union, moved to Weeping Water in 1936 so I could enroll in the camp." He went on,

few C.C.C. camp annual reports with pictures, names, etc., that proved to be invaluable in doing this story.

Later Jack Hays was drafted into the Army. His war experiences, especially at the Normandy invasion, are some Jack will never forget. After his war service was over, he returned to his home and ran the line-o-type at the Weeping Water Republican and the Plattsmouth Journal newspapers. He has since retired.

Local labor shortage felt

In 1941 when World War II started, the United States Army found themselves collecting German soldiers as prisoners. What to do with them? It was felt that it would be impractical and pretty impossible to keep them in their native land. So... the German soldiers were shipped to our soil to be contained as prisoners-of-war.

Approximately 12,000 German prisoners were held in camps all across Nebraska. Scottsbluff, Ft. Robinson and Atlanta (south of Holdrege) were the larger base sites and smaller camps were located at other towns. All

LOTS OF MEMORIES - Three men who were a part of the life of the campsite at Weeping Water, (left to right) Ed Van Horn, Vernon Duwe and Jack Hays. (Photo by Jeanene Wehrbein)

"I remember we had a lot of farmers who wanted help and I got so tired of telling them I didn't know where they could get labor. So, I started advertising in the World Herald to get people that had time.

"I knew there was a prisoner-of-war camp at Atlanta. That was where German prisoners came to the United States," Waldo continued. There was a possibility of getting a labor camp, supplying prisoners from out there, so he put in an application. "They sent me the requirements on what I would have to do. Later, they visited the old C.C.C. site and before long, we were picked."

At first, everyone thought their county agent was crazy, Waldo told me. "I wasn't too enthused about it, either, but I had to do something to help the farmers." After subleasing the C.C.C. camp from the Soil Conservation Service, 15 P.O.W.s arrived on July 18, 1944 to prepare the camp for its first "guests." (Only four barracks remained of the eight that were originally built.)

Four days later, on July 22, 100 P.O.W.s were brought to the Weeping Water camp. During the 15 month duration, over 200 German prisoners at one time were located at the Cass County camp.

The prisoners as a general rule were very good workers and the farmers were very pleased: They helped with the corn detasseling and corn harvest, picked apples and other fruits, harvested vegetables for the Plattsmouth canneries, fixed livestock

was stationed at the Weeping Water camp... still as a guard.

There were about 100 P.O.W.s at the camp at that time, Duwe estimated. What did Vernon think of these men who were under his supervision? "They were a bunch of guys just like we were, They didn't want to be here but we got along real well." He especially remembers a German doctor. "He was really good. I can't remember his name but he was really a nice guy."

Duwe's job was to work with the prisoners at the quarries east of town. William Bates owned the quarries but leased it to the government. While reflecting on his guard duties, Duwe smiled and remembered the time one prisoner escaped. Duwe had loaded the bus already so he took his group back to the camp. "About two hours later, the prisoner came back to the camp, half frozen. There wasn't anywhere else for him to go so he came back home."

One of the German prisoners Duwe remembers who was at the camp the same time he was is Bill Oberdink. Bill worked on a camp detail in the apple orchards in Nebraska City and after the war was over he was taken back to Germany. He was only there long enough to say good-bye because he learned to love the people here so much he could hardly wait to get back to U.S. soil.

As most of us know, Bill is now one of the owners of Kimmel Orchard, the very same orchard he worked on as a prisoner-of-

house which once use to house the Soil Conservation Service officers who ran the camp. All eight barracks are no longer at the site.

The P.O.W. camp at Weeping Water closed its doors on October 1, 1945. The bomb at Hiroshima in August had signaled the end of the war, and within weeks, the prisoners were sent back to Germany.

According to Waldo, who lives at DeWitt, his job as county agent at that time was to be in charge of the labor and charges for all the prisoners. His old records revealed that 305 different farmers used P.O.W.s from the Weeping Water camp. Their payment to the government for labor during this time amounted to $47,140.38.

In retrospect, what did Willard Waldo think of this program and its benefits? "I don't give Roosevelt credit for all things he did but I think he did some wonderful things. The C.C.C. camps were put up throughout the country to find jobs for young men who couldn't find work. We were able to use those buildings for prisoner-of-war camps. It sure helped out the farmers."

Cass County, and especially Weeping Water, served an important function through the difficult times of the 1930s and 1940s. Many folks who still live in this area today, have memories of the important part their families played in the war effort.

Weeping Water history

By Bonnie Hazlett
Journal staff

"Mama, who are those men helping Pa in the field?"

That question may have been asked more than once when life in Weeping Water took an unexpected turn during World War II. German prisoners of war were kept under guard in a camp south of town originally built by Depression-era Civilian Conservation Corps workers. Doris Duff, Weeping Water Historical Society president and third-generation lifelong Weeping Water resident, remembers seeing prisoners being transported to and from area farms where they were put to work during the day. She said, "It changed the way I thought about Germans. You think all those at war are bad and frightening but I saw a lot were kids just like me." Many of the prisoners became friends with the farmers they worked for and some came back to visit after the war. Duff said she knew some of the farm wives saw the young men working hard and hungrily eating up their lunch rations by 10 a.m. so they would bake treats like cakes and pies for them and feed them again at lunchtime.

Duff shared a mix of memories and facts during the June 13 noontime brown bag session at Cass County Historical Society Museum in Plattsmouth. This was the final brown bag lecture scheduled for 2006 at the museum.

Incorporated in 1870 and populated primarily by Germans, Danes and Swedes, the railroad found Weeping Water in 1884 and forever changed the town from a primarily agricultural center to a more commercial one. Of the abundant natural resources, limestone is most prevalent. Mining operations contribute heavily to the local economy. Evidence indicates that early Indian tribes as well as pioneers dug out the rocks for constructing homes and other buildings. Nowadays most of the work is done by industrial machinery but the pioneers used pickaxes and hauled the rock with horses and "hoodlum" wagons. So important is limestone to the area, Weeping Water residents whoop it up annually with a Limestone Days festival, celebrated this year June 24.

Past archeologists have discovered both relics and bones in the area from which much can be learned about early inhabitants.

Legendary versions of Weeping Water's origin usually credit an Indian tale recounting a time when many of the local tribe's warriors were lost in a critical battle and the tears of their women were so profuse that Weeping Water Creek was formed. Early French traders called the creek *L'Eau qui Pleauve*, but the Indian name for it was *Nigahoe*. *Ni* meant water and *gahoe* meant the sound of water running over low falls. Literally, *nigahoe* would mean rustling water but non-Indians apparently confused *gahoe* with *hoage*, which means weeping. Weeping Water was a catchy name with slightly romantic undertones and that's the version that stuck.

In Weeping Water the past is kept fresh by a group of volunteers who comprise the local historical society. Supported entirely by donations, Weeping Water Historical Society members look after its own four-building Heritage House Complex as well as voluntarily maintain the city's local library.

• Dr. Fate's office is a rarity among preserved examples of


POW
WeepingWater

This photo is of a carving made by a POW at Camp Weeping Water. It was given by him to Erna Dodenhof of Avoca where he worked on her and her husband Henry's farm. The family believes it was either a Christmas present or birthday gift. Since her death, it is now in possession of her son Melvin Dodenhoff of Omaha.

Henry and Erna Dodenhof (now deceased) Avoca, Nebraska

1 of 4

Over three million prisoners of war were captured by Allied forces during World War II. Of these, 370,000 Germans and 50,000 Italians were transferred from the battlefront to the United States at the request of our European allies, who were holding all the prisoners they could. Prisoner-of-war troops were typically referred to as P.W. or POWs.

Prisoners were brought to the U.S. to be safely confined and to supplement a depleted civilian work force. The PWs lived at 126 large camps, each housing several thousand men, some built in conjunction with military installations.

In Nebraska, approximately 12,000 prisoners of war were held in camps across the state. Scottsbluff, Fort Robinson, and the village Atlanta (outside Holdrege) were the main base camps. There were many smaller satellite camps at Alma, Bayard, Bertrand, Bridgeport, Elwood, Fort Crook, Franklin, Grand Island, Hastings, Hebron, Indianola, Kearney, Lexington, Lyman, Mitchell, Morrill, Ogallala, Palisade, Sidney, and Weeping Water. Altogether there were 23 large and small camps scattered across the state.

For More Information within Nebraska Studies:
The War: Nebraska Stories — The Horrors of War: Concentration Camps
The War: Nebraska Stories — The Horrors of War: Revenge, Justice, Forgiveness

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POWs Far from the Battleground 3 of 4

Work Details Away from the Camp

By the summer of 1943, when German prisoners of war began to arrive in Nebraska, the agricultural work force in the state was severely depleted. Farmers needed workers. So, prisoners were allowed to work in the surrounding communities. There seemed to be little risk that the POWs would escape since they were thousands of miles and an ocean away from home. In fact, one prisoner, William Oberdieck, remembered that another man was left at his work site one evening and hitchhiked back to the camp rather than running. Most of those working outside the camp worked on farms or ranches, and were paid wages guarenteed by the Geneva Convention rules.

Video German POW in front of a camp truck at Fort Robinson, Nebraska, probably getting ready for a work detail.

To see video about work details, with an interview of a POW who came back after the war, click here.

Lois Jurene Meter Odell was a grade school student in Bayard when her father employed POWs:

> "Six of them worked on our farm. Dad picked them up and returned them daily. I remember the big, high fence around the prison yard. Mom felt sorry for them and fed them a hot meal at noon. They were so appreciative. The Bayard prison camp was within view of Chimney Rock, and one of the prisoners did a chalk drawing of the rock and gave it to my parents. I looked at it many times in my life, and regret that I cannot find it now."

When the war ended, prisoners were sent back to their homelands where many faced an uncertain future. The last of them left Nebraska in early 1946. But many prisoners had found their treatment here to be better than their lives at home. A few found American sponsors and later returned to live in Nebraska. William Oberdieck, for instance, had been housed at the Atlanta Camp in the middle of the state. Eventually, he got a job 200 miles away in the apple orchards at Nebraska City. After the war, he returned to work for the well-known Kimmel Orchard and eventually bought the company.

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Video

German POW in front of a camp truck at Fort Robinson, Nebraska, probably getting ready for a work detail.

PRISONERS ON THE PLAINS

The German POWs at Camp Atlanta

By Glenn Thompson

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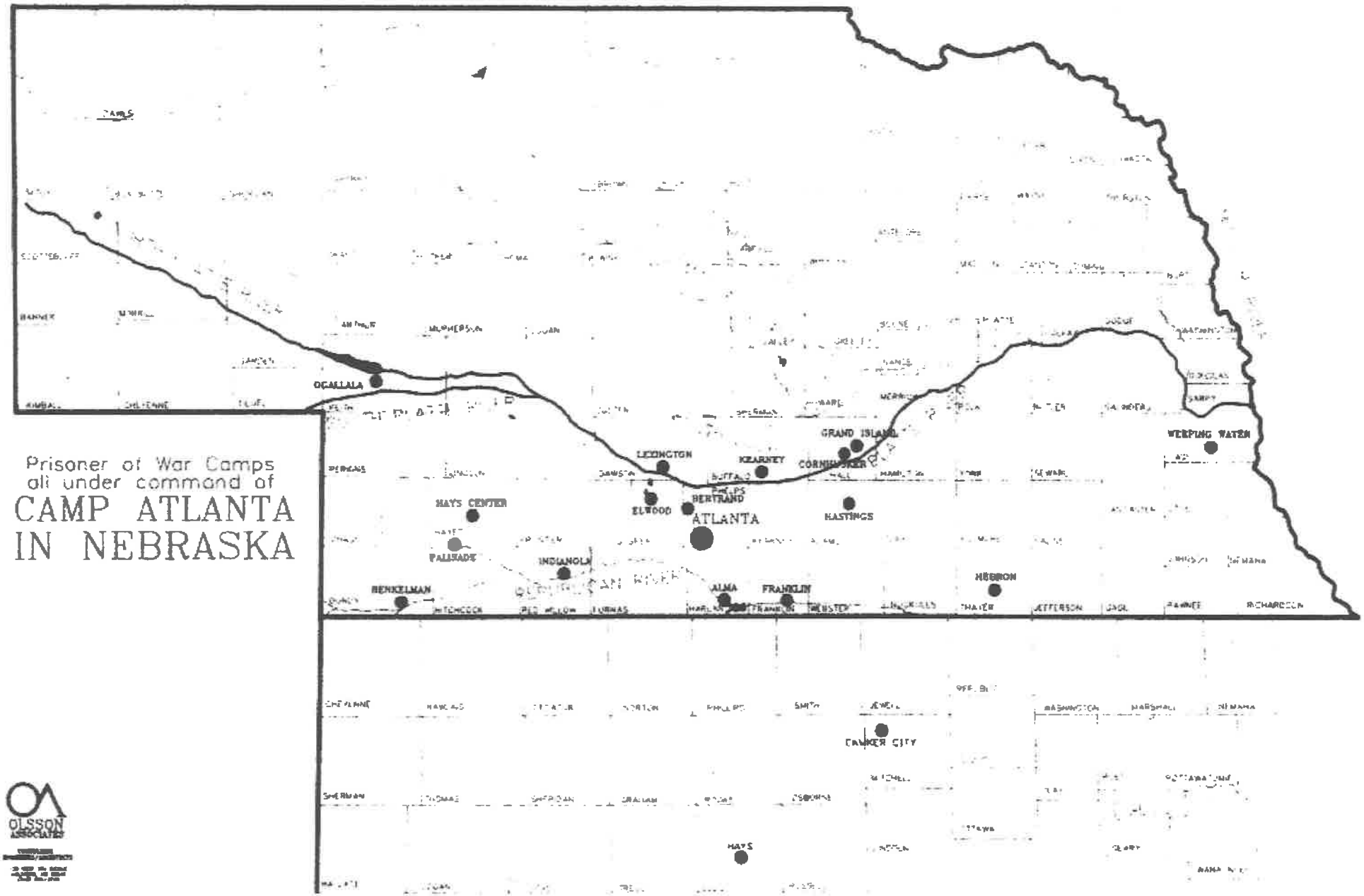
This map shows all of Camp Atlanta's branches in Nebraska and Kansas. The eighteen camps were not all operational at the same time. Some branch camps were built by other base camps and later assigned to Atlanta. Map designed by Olsson and Associates, Holdredge NE. Photo courtesy of Dale Sall, Holdredge.



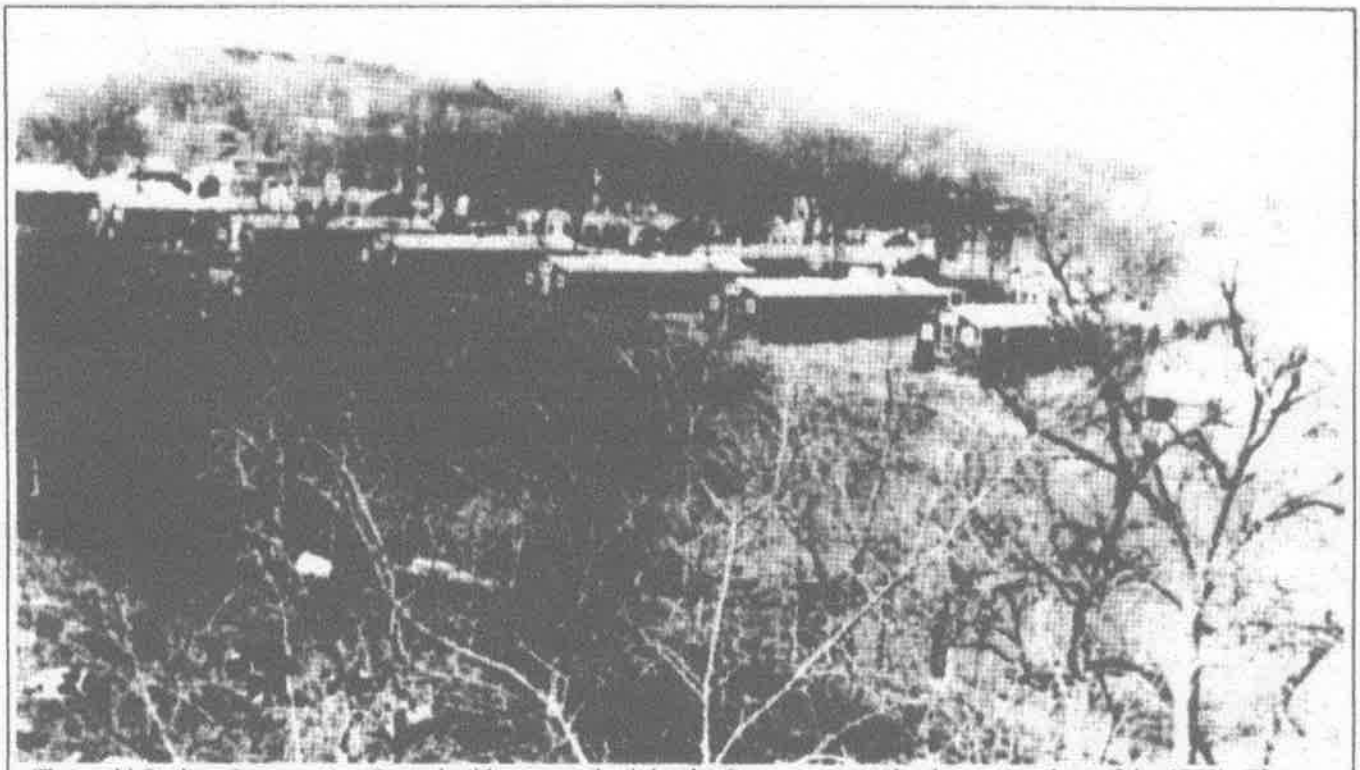
Prisoner of War Camps
all under command of

CAMP ATLANTA IN NEBRASKA

OLSSON ASSOCIATES

THE WEEPING WATER BRANCH CAMP: The camp at Weeping Water, Nebraska, was also in former Civilian Conservation Corps buildings. It soon reached its capacity of 200 prisoners as the demand for labor in that area was very high. The camp was located about 210 miles east of Atlanta. The prisoners worked in agriculture, including apple orchards, and at a rock quarry for the United States Corps of Engineers. The Weeping Water camp was opened July 18, 1944. A twelve foot wire fence surrounded the camp. Prisoners were not permitted outside the compound area except for work details. The exception was on Sunday afternoons when a football field was made available to the Germans for soccer games.

There were few guards as authorities believed there was little chance of an attempted escape. The camp was open to persons who had business there, but not to sightseers. People could drive by and look from the road, but were not allowed to



These old Civilian Conservation Corps buildings were built by the Government in the depression days of the 1930's. They found new life when County Agent Willard Waldo arranged for them to become the Weeping Water POW branch camp, some 210 miles east of Camp Atlanta. — Photo courtesy Weeping Water Historical Society.

stop their cars. The prisoners could receive no gifts unless given through a guard and checked at the camp. No photographs were permitted of the prisoners.

When guards accompanied prisoners, employers were reminded that they were simply guards and were not work supervisors. It was up to the employers to show the men what was to be done and see that the POWs did it. If necessary, an interpreter was provided. However, only two members of the U.S. military staff at the Weeping Water camp spoke German and that was on a very limited basis. It was a great help that several of the POWs spoke English. [35]

In October 1941, an article in the *Nebraska State Journal* had said that the CCC camp at Weeping Water had previously been used to house American Conscientious Objectors to the war-time draft. "The 144 Conscientious Objectors at Nebraska's

camp, and the other is an apartment house which was once used as officer quarters. The Weeping Water POW camp was closed on October 1, 1945. [40]

THE ALMA, NEBRASKA BRANCH CAMP: Other branch camps had less conventional housing for the POWs. At Alma, 25 miles south of Atlanta, prisoners were housed in a former brick school building which was steam heated. This camp was opened November 13, 1944, and housed 109 prisoners when the Red Cross group visited. The total capacity was 125. Prisoners worked in agricultural labor, but also at a poultry and creamery plant operated by the Cudahy Packing Company.

The only major problem discovered during the inspection was a problem with the steam heating and difficulties with heating water at the Alma camp. Since the boiler was unusable and the sponsoring Harlan County group did not feel they could get a replacement because of wartime shortages, water was temporarily being heated by a pipe extending into the furnace. The branch camp commander was instructed to press the local sponsoring group to correct the matter in the most effective manner possible.

Then a fire was discovered in the old Alma High School building where German prisoners of war were being held. One of the prisoners smelled smoke which apparently was smouldering in the southeast corner of the second floor. The Alma Volunteer Fire Department was called to assist in extinguishing the blaze. A considerable amount of cooking and baking had been completed by the POW cooks that day, and this apparently caused some material stored near the flue to catch fire. The prisoners and guards went to work immediately trying to put out the fire using what fire fighting equipment they had, and the blaze had been extinguished by the time the local fire unit arrived.

Captain Frank Conrad, who was in charge of the branch camp at Alma, thanked the Alma department for responding. He also thanked the POWs and camp guards for preventing what could have been a serious loss, not only to the government, but to local residents who were depending upon the prisoners of war for harvesting a huge crop in this area. [41]

Another interesting incident occurred at Alma and is related by Rundall Peterson: "Somebody took an old piano to the Alma camp out in front of their 'school house home.' About one hundred or so POWs began an impromptu vocal concert that went on for about an hour. You couldn't get down the street for the cars that were parked with the occupants listening to that, and the many other concerts that followed. It was cheap entertainment, and it was also good," Peterson remembers. [42]

THE LEXINGTON BRANCH CAMP: Otto Meyer, Manager of the Meyer Milling Company of Lexington, Nebraska, announced on March 5, 1945, that his company would begin using POWs in the alfalfa dehydrating plant east of the city. Lexington is about forty miles northwest of the Atlanta camp site. Then on March 25, seventy-one POWs began work for his alfalfa drying plants, in other industrial labor and on the farms. His company had leased the old Lexington Country Club south of the town and had contracted for 100 prisoners of war to be housed in a camp there.

He used most of these men at his plants, but later other men were contracted for farm labor in the area. Farmers desiring prisoner labor were required to transport the men from and back to the camp. No guards were used on the job and the farmer

satisfy the American outrage for Nazi war crimes and poor conditions for some U.S. POWs, those German POWs doing the hardest work outside the camp usually had their diets supplemented by their employers.

At Atlanta, and in many other camps prior to the rations cut-back, providing three meals per day for men working off the post had resulted in some waste of food. Most of these men were eating only two meals per day of the camp food, and either eating the lunches provided by the camps early in the day before work or simply throwing them away. The noon meal was almost always provided by the POW's employers, despite the War Department's original steadfast objection to civilians doing this.

However, overall food cutbacks were still most obvious in the branch camps. Access to food supplies from the main camps was not always easy. There was a lack of sufficient American military people manning the camps to provide transportation of the food. Ernest Matuschka, of Kearney, Nebraska, was then a child living at home with his parents in Bertrand. He remembers going with his father, a Lutheran Minister, to the Bertrand branch camp located on the main street in that town: "They got bread and coffee for breakfast," Matuschka said, "Then they got a large meal, often served at the tables of the farm families of the area for whom they worked. Then the evening meal once again consisted of bread and coffee. Those guys really stuffed it away at noon."

The strict food rationing policy for the POWs was quite short lived. In a matter of months, as civilian food supplies also increased, a normal diet was resumed; however, some items that were in short supply for the civilian population were still plentiful for the POWs if they wished to buy them. For example, at Nebraska City, a Cass County farmer said he was well supplied with cigarettes. Cigarettes were rationed to American civilians at the time. The farmer explained his source of the smokes. "I had six prisoners of war working for me from the Weeping Water camp. They had more cigarettes than they needed. They could buy them by spending the canteen scrip they earned from their jobs and buying cigarettes at the POW PX. I got the overflow." (When it was learned that cigarettes were available unrationed to POWs, it did not go over at all well with the local population, and the practice was brought to a rapid end.)

Many of the facilities within the Atlanta camp were shared by the American service men and the POWs as the war wound down. For example, the theater was used by both sides, on an alternating basis. A barber shop was also used by both. Occasionally large religious services were held for the Americans and the Germans at a single location. Signs designating these dual-use facilities were always listed first in English and then in German. The boycott by the POWs over the Russian flag hanging in the theater with that of other allies had long since been forgotten.

The POW orchestra played for numerous camp functions for both the Americans and the Germans. The Germans frequently provided dinner music for the U.S. Army officers for important military events or other special occasions. The instruments were provided by Service Command, the international YMCA, both the German and Papal humanitarian funds, and local donations. Some instruments were also

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402-267-4925 or 402-267-5139

OPEN FORUM

Dear Editor,

Former German P.O.W. remembers the great country and it's nice people and still likes to read about the American way of life. The first Americans I met in the Kasserine fightings during the Tunesian campaign.

Taken prisoner I was among the first P.Ws. to arrive in New York aboard the Queen Mary. I worked all over the state, also in the Willow County on some farms.

Our main camp had been in Atlanta near Holdrege. There was some side camp from where the farmers took us and brought us back again.

Sorry, by jove, I can't recall any names. Some didn't even introduce themselves to us. Some again must be over a hundred by now, because it is 43 years since. But some were my age (65 now). They always called me by my first name. One may be surprised that I remember now at last but I never in my working life had much time to come to my senses.

I'd appreciate it very much if you print this card with my address in your paper and send me a copy of the same. Maybe somebody recalls me.

As mentioned above I still like to read and have much time to do so. I'd be very grateful if somebody sends me some old magazines.

Rudi Vester
Theodor Heuss Str82
7147-Eberdingen.3
West Germany

Indianola POW Camp

McCook Daily Gazette
July 24, 1986

POW Camp – Indianola

April 21, 1942
Gazette
Camps For Evacuees In Sight Here...Republican Valley Group Favors Location of Camps in This Region
There was an extremely ripe possibility today that from one to three Japanese-American work camps may be established in Southwestern Nebraska. If the camps are decided upon, they'll come quickly—with construction of them to begin almost immediately.

Directors of the Republican Valley Conservation Association...about 50 representatives of the towns included in the association...were advised of the work camp prospects at a meeting in McCook last night. M.O. Ryan, executive-secretary of the association, said that investigation of possible camp sites in the territory was being made today.

Residents of this area need have no qualms about accepting such camps, Ryan told the valley group. Ninety-eight percent of the Japanese-American evacuees given shelter in the camps are intensely loyal to the U.S. The loyal ones are perfectly able to take care of any disloyal ones among their number, but in addition they would be kept under adequate military guard.

The evacuees want to work and earn at least part of their own way as a patriotic gesture, Ryan said. Camps would be established on good farm lands, the Japanese would put down their own irrigation wells and condition the land for irrigation. They would farm the land and at the close of the war they would all be returned to the communities from which they came.

The Republican valley group went on record with a motion favoring employment of the evacuees in this area, if desirable sites can be found and an adequate guard is maintained over them.

5/12/1943 Gaz
Prisoners of War May Soon Be Put to Work on Farms in U.S., Canada; Many Eagerly Awaiting Trip to U.S.
By Phil Ault...Allied Headquarters, North Africa

Most of the 150,000 prisoners who will be in allied hands in a few days are likely to find themselves working in the farmlands of the United States and Canada within two months.

Final plans for moving them out of the theater of war are not complete, according to well informed sources, but some German prisoners already have been sent to the United States and Canada. The Germans appear willing to go and the Italians are eager. As the Italians pace back and forth behind the barbed wire of the prisoner cages, they grin at Americans, hold their fingers aloft in the V-for-Victory sign and ask" "When do we go to America?"

Three German prisoners have asked me seriously in the past few days what their chances were at being taken to the United States and remaining there after the war.

You never hear talk of them wanting to get back to Berlin or Rome. They all want to go to New York, which they regard as a fabled city with buildings towering into the clouds.

An incident that occurred here recently illustrates how the war-weary Italians long to get to the United States. A group of them was being herded into a prison cage when an American soldier passed by and grinned at them. One of the prisoners shouted:

"What are you laughing at us for? You are going to Italy, but we are going to New York."

Sending the prisoners across the Atlantic will help solve two problems---it will reduce the number of persons to be fed in this crowded theater of war and will help the manpower situation in the United States and Canada. It is assumed that prisoners captured by the Americans will be sent to the United States and the ones taken by the British will be sent to Canada.

It has been suggested that the prisoners could be used in Tunisia to repair roads and villages devastated by fierce fighting. The chief objection to this is that a plentiful supply of Arab labor is on the ground. The Arabs enrolled in the British sapper and pioneer organizations have done a remarkable job of keeping roads cleared and facilitating the advance of the allied armies. The men receive 50 francs a day and feed themselves, thus easing the allied supply problem.

There are ample precedents to using prisoners for labor in homelands. When the first Italian prisoners began streaming into the cages after the victory of Field Marshal Sir Archibald Wavell in Africa, many were sent to Britain where they are now at work. Thousands were sent to Australia and throughout the war Canada has been receiving a steady stream.

5/12/1943 Gazette

Prospect For Camp Is Seen...Italian Prisoners Might Be Detailed to Work on Valley's Program

A.J. Howard, architect and P.K. DeVoe, sanitary engineer with the U.S. Army Engineers at Omaha, today are checking the proposed detention campsite between Bartley and Indianola.

The site originally planned for five thousand Japanese lies north and east of Bartley, approximately five miles north of highway No. 6 and within a few miles of the Medicine reservoir site. Development of plans for the camp was halted about a year ago when it became impossible to secure priorities on copper wire to extend power lines.

With the thousands of prisoners taken recently by the allies, detention centers are again becoming necessary and the Cambridge site already surveyed and approved is receiving first consideration.

M.O. Ryan, executive secretary for the Republican Conservation association, who has been working on the project in Washington for the past 60 days, together with other features of the valley's development program says that the present demand is largely for Italian prisoners, who will be concentrated in smaller groups than the original Japanese planned centers which called for a minimum of 5,000. The groups will be smaller, probably from 2,000 to 3,000 and spread over the country.

From these camps the men will be permitted to work within a radius of 50 miles, either on farm work or on such projects as development of the Medicine reservoir and dam, which is largely a matter of common labor. The medicine project is one of a select list of projects over the United States which have been approved in a program of development during the war to accelerate food production.

5/14/1943
War Prisoners Offer Problem…Brining Them across to Work on Farms Needs Extensive Planning
…many of the prisoners will be put to farm work in this country and in Canada, in accordance with terms of the Geneva convention which permits use of prisoners for farm work but not for production of munitions. The prisoners, however must agree voluntarily to do the farm work and must be paid.

5/14/1943 Gaz
Prison Camp Sit Checked…Cambridge Location Will Get Favorable Report on Engineers' Study

A. Howard and P.K. DeVoe, Army engineers from the Seventh corps area headquarters, Omaha, who had been sent into the field to make inspections of potential prison camp sites for Italian prisoners, returned to Omaha Thursday night.

In company with officers of the Republican Valley Conservation association at Cambridge, the army engineers went over a site near Cambridge, checking and rechecking work which had been done previously by engineers when the site was proposed a year ago for a Jap camp. Upon their return to McCook Thursday afternoon, the officers told the Gazette they were very favorably impressed with the camp location and would make a favorable report to their superiors.

The site as originally planned, consisted of a tract of land lying north and east of Bartley and northwest of Cambridge, and within a few miles of the site of the proposed Medicine creek reservoir. In this project it was proposed to establish a camp for several thousand prisoners.

A second site was later considered on the lowlands between Bartley and Cambridge as a retention camp for aliens many of whom are American citizens. This project was one in which it was proposed to assemble some 5,000 aliens where they might do intensive farming on a basis of two acres for each alien family. Both projects failed to develop on account of absence of priorities on necessary materials.

The camp now proposed would be strictly a prison camp for Italian soldiers, where they would be located under heavy guard for the duration of the war and where their labor would be available either on individual farms, in small groups on irrigation and flood control work, or on the actual construction of the Medicine creek reservoir. Personnel of the camp would probably be between two and three thousand prisoners, who would be permitted to work under guard within 50 miles of the camp.

The project has been approved by the number of federal agencies in Washington, and is now up to the Army provost marshal's office for his final decision.

5/14/1943 Gazette
Prisoners of War Get Pay…U.S. to Give Troops Put on Farms 80 Cents Per Day, Plus Keep
Washington…Axis enlisted men captured in North Africa will receive 80 cents a day plus food, clothing, medical care and housing if they are brought to this country for farm work, it was learned today.

President Roosevelt told a press conference yesterday he had Winston Churchill the disposition discussed with Prime Minister of the estimated 175,000 prisoners seized in Tunisia and that he assumed a substantial part of them would be brought to this country. He said methods of transportation must be devised before determining where the prisoners will be sent and to what use—if any—they will be put.

Enlisted men captured by the United States receive 10 cents per day plus maintenance when they ar3e not put to work. However, under the articles of the Geneva Convention, all captured enlisted personnel may, at the will of their captors, be ordered to work at any job which does not directly aid the war effort, such as handling munitions.

Commissioned officers are exempted from this rule and may be given work suitable to their rank only if they request it. When not working, the officers receive from the U.S. government $20, $30, or $40 per month, depending on their rank. As far as could be learned no plans have yet been made for the pay of captured officers who might elect to work.

The American allowances for prisoners are considered extremely generous and were made so in the hope that better treatment will be received by U.S. soldiers who are captured by the enemy. It is believed that both German and Italy have reciprocated by making equivalent payments, based on their national economies to captured Americans.

5/15/1943 Gazette
The Bystander…

///When the site near Cambridge was considered as a possible Jap trap, some folks hereabouts screamed their protests. Now that it is being considered as a work camp for Italian prisoners of war, they are for it as strong as horseradish. They seem to think they'd like to mimic Mussolini in dealing with some of his boys, but they don't want to ape Tojo—the ape.