Becoming America's Captives, Living Varied Identities: Experiences of European Prisoners of War in the High Plains During World War II

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

With a Major in History

in the

College of Graduate Studies

University of Idaho

by

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December 2021

Abstract

This dissertation examines wartime experiences of German and Italian prisoners of war (POWs) on the American home front through case studies. After Axis soldiers were captured by the Allies on the war front, the United States took over 420,000 prisoners of war from Europe to stateside between 1942 and 1946. Even though the United States had never incarcerated foreign enemy prisoners of war on that scale, the nation abided by the provisions of the Geneva Convention of 1929 as much as possible and offered humane and fair treatment to the Axis POWs.

This is not to say, however, that the United States, American society, and hosting communities accepted America's captives based on purely humanistic ideals. At federal level, on one hand, America employed various top-down approaches to soften their enemies' pro-Nazi or pro-fascist ideologies and make them malleable to the U.S. democratic principles. Almost everything POWs encountered was meant to convince them of America's political, economic, and military greatness incomparable to POWs' home countries while trivializing socioeconomic and political inequalities experienced by racial minorities. At the local level, on the other hand, many hosting communities expended their effort to employ POWs as agricultural laborers. Daily encounters between locals and prisoners helped them conclude that they were not each other's enemies but rather friends. In dominantly white rural communities, what helped them understand each other was their cultural closeness and European POWs' white, Christian, and male identity that offered them a ticket to temporary membership in localities.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my major professor, Dr. Adam Sowards, for his invaluable cooperation and patience with me throughout my slow-paced quest for a Ph.D. degree. Whenever I hit the wall and sought proper guidance, Dr. Sowards was extremely supportive and always offered me to-the-point advice and encouragement in a professional and timely manner. Without his firm reassurance that I can make it, I would never have known that I did have the capacity to complete my study. Thank you for checking my super "drafty" chapter drafts and helping me transform them into a dissertation of my own. I also want to thank my committee members: Dr. Rebecca Scofield for her close help upon my preparation for preliminary exams, especially in the field of the American West; Dr. Mark Warner for accepting me as a volunteer for the summer field school of 2015 in Boise, Idaho, and allowing me to audit his classes to improve my knowledge on artifact analysis; and Dr. Stacey Camp for agreeing to remain on my committee even several years after she joined Michigan State University (before that, thank you for giving me various advice whenever I swung by).

In addition, I would like to thank Dennis Kuhnel, the former center director of the Oglala National Glassland Visitor Center, South Dakota, for his interest in my dissertation project and a generous offer for me to stay at the Hudson-Meng Education and Research Center in Nebraska while conducting my research on WWII POW camps in the area. Also, the U.S. Forest Service Park Rangers who were stationed at Hudson-Meng, especially Alex Miller, cordially welcomed me with respect and showed me the significance of public interpretation and outreach of the site and surrounding area. Arlene Ekland-Earnst, the former director of the Pioneer Memorial Museum in Douglas, Wyoming, and other museum staff were very cooperative and offered me a nice and quiet space in the museum for my intensive archival research. Laura Mooney, Senior Museum Curator at the Nebraska History Museum, showed me various POW artifacts kept in the museum. Andrea Falling, Director of Library/Archives and other staff at the Nebraska State Historical Society (NSHS) swiftly retrieved primary sources for me out of the vast collections of the NSHS and patiently answered my questions.

Finally, I want to express my gratitude to Dana Brolley, Director of the International Services, and other staff of the IPO at the University of Idaho. Dana was very helpful and reminded me of the importance of hanging in there when I got really stuck and held concerns over the timing to complete my study.

Thank you to all the people in academia and other professional communities who encouraged, inspired, and supported me to grow as a scholar; it turned out to be a very long path, but I got to the top of *a* mountain at last and can better see where I can go from here.

Dedication

I feel so thankful to my family in Japan for their understanding to my ambition to further explore my academic interests in the United States. Perhaps they still do not exactly know what I had been working on for these several years (!) because they do not speak English and had once mentioned that my dissertation project sounded all Greek to them. I anyhow appreciate all the family- and community-related updates and stay-healthy-wishes from them a lot, especially in these two years since anybody in any part of the world had to adjust to the "new normal" with tremendous uncertainties brought about by the pandemic.

I also want to thank my long-time friends whom I met in the United States and benefitted from their moral support. Eriko and John Day of Sheridan, Wyoming, have known me since I was a student at a community college in Sheridan. Since then, they have been extremely supportive of me not only as a student from Japan but also as a person who have gone through various daily concerns, and always willing to offer their help. I am also grateful for Kiyoe Alexander and Yuki Yamazaki for staying in touch with me and making time for our occasional reunions even though they got much busier than the days we used to hang around in Laramie. And I particularly appreciate Emi Kimura's friendship and down-to-earth advice as a Japanese female scholar who completed her Ph.D. in America as well as her flexible perspective and realistic thoughts—thank you for all our serious to silly talks.

In addition, my unofficial many thanks to my four-legged companion, Jazzy, the wimpy mountain dog, who has been always by my side and offered me constant emotional support and comfort as well as funny sleep talks and snores. Thank you for being fluffy and goofy Jazzy-chan as per usual.

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Introduction

Who Were America's WWII Prisoners of War?

At any time in history, hardly any society at local, regional, and national levels could be spared from an issue of who was accepted into a particular community as full members. What determined one's inclusion or exclusion into a community was fluid and contingent upon whether an individual belonged to the dominant and thus hegemonic "normative" group in terms of racial, cultural, religious, political, and socioeconomic factors in each society. Alienation of the cultural Other in a society often accelerated when people found themselves in an unprecedented national or global crisis such as war, large-scale political turmoil, or catastrophic natural disaster. These tremendously critical events brought about disorder in a society and left people with unfathomable confusion, uncertainty, and concerns over the survival of their community or even nation-state. On the American home front, the Second World War altered civilians' ordinary life and familiar landscape, often intensified social schisms between different cultural groups rather than bringing them altogether. America's participation in the global war, particularly after Pearl Harbor, created distrust and hostility toward the Other who did not comfortably fit into normative whiteness regardless of their citizenship status and nationalities.

Amid America's collective psyche as such, German and Italian prisoners of war (POWs) arrived in the United States to be incarcerated as the archenemy of the Americans. These prisoners encountered challenges coping with the stress coming from an internal conflict between their pre-capture identity and a newly imposed identity as enemy prisoners of war. Despite these hardships, prisoners of war from Germany and Italy managed to sustain their agency during their captivity utilizing various resources and activities they could access. Even though German and Italian POWs were restricted in their physical freedom and struggled to retain their dignity and cultural identity in captivity, they stayed in wartime America not necessarily as passive, powerless, and underprivileged groups. Because America was a signatory of the Geneva Convention of 1929, which required the detaining power to treat prisoners of war in similar conditions to its own soldiers, POWs were eligible to receive humane treatment in most camps and hosting communities in the United States.

During their captivity in America, POWs confronted various experiences and reconciled their POW identity with multiple roles associated with their experiences such as

consumers at a camp canteen, workers in hosting communities, recreationists of in-camp activities, students of in-camp classes, and artists creating diverse artifacts. These experiences enriched POWs' captive life in America and empowered them to retain and express their agency.

As their time in America elapsed, POWs and residents of the hosting community, who first encountered each other as enemies with fear and suspicions, came to realize that they had more commonalities than disparities and ended up perceiving each other more favorably. Here, I argue that their mutual empathies and fondness were not necessarily the product of their humanitarian ideals. Rather, European POWs and many locals in small rural communities in Western states had similarities that helped them understand each other readily. That is to say, they shared white physical appearance, Eurocentric aesthetic sense and worldviews, and social norms built upon Christian values. These commonalities brought them psychologically closer to each other while racial minority groups struggled to bridge the gap of racial inequalities in the United States.

The purpose of this dissertation is to shed better light on how German and Italian prisoners of war in the Western states experienced their captive life and perceived their wartime identity surrounded by American culture and its people. Through examining these points, I maintain that the relationships between insiders and outsiders, citizens and foreigners, friends and enemies during this critical time were not always static nor mutually exclusive. Rather, they were complex, fluid identities contingent upon one's race, ethnicity, and political ideology in relation to other people who shared the same time and space.

As Americans on the home front got involved in the war, their patriotism offered them a justification to dehumanize their enemy who held beliefs at odds with American democracy. At local levels, however, people shared different stories. POWs and residents in hosting communities went through the war in a unique manner; sharing the same town and spending multiple seasons growing and harvesting crops cooperatively as each other's friends and collaborators. These shared communal experiences at a critical time empowered both sides to perceive each other as temporary good neighbors rather than spiteful enemies.

Ironically, however, European POWs' presence in America further revealed the nation's own social issues that involved multiple racial groups. While the U.S. Army treated the POWs humanely as required by the provisions of the Geneva Convention and residents in

hosting communities expressed hospitality to the prisoners, their treatment looked too good in the eyes of some minority groups that did not enjoy the social privilege bestowed to white citizens. To these groups, America's fair treatment of Axis POWs, even if based on the Geneva Convention, was not a proof of the nation's lofty democratic ideals but a paradox of it. Because of that, the history of WWII POW camps in America is not just about the experiences of prisoners and hosting communities. It is more far-reaching, involving the wartime experiences of marginalized cultural groups as well as the broader society's response to the Other.

In addition to the prisoners' experiences in wartime America, this dissertation aims to illuminate the socioeconomic significance of the WWII prisoners of war camps to hosting communities as well as to the broader American society. Through examining two German and Italian POW camps that existed in the High Plains region, I contextualize how local experiences with the POWs resonated with broader wartime experiences on the American home front. For the case studies, I selected two former WWII base POW camp sites in eastern Wyoming and northwestern Nebraska. Douglas, Wyoming, and Fort Robinson, Nebraska, are slightly over one hundred miles distant from each other and situated in the predominantly agricultural landscape of the High Plains. By exploring these two former camp sites, I seek to understand the impact of POWs' presence on local identity and residents' collective memory of their wartime experiences.

Background

In the midst of World War II, the War Department decided early in 1942 that all prisoners of war captured by the United States should be transferred stateside. Very few prisoners, however, were held by the U.S. Army in 1942 while many were held by European Allies.[1] After the Allied Force invasion of North Africa in November 1942 and the ensuing surrender of the Afrika Korps in Tunisia, Britain requested the United States help to alleviate the problem of housing the escalating number of POWs in the European theater.

Between 1942 and 1946, America held approximately 374,000 German and 51,000 Italian soldiers as captives. In addition to the Axis prisoners from Europe, 4,242 Japanese POWs were taken to the United States from the Pacific Theater. To house these men, 155

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[1] Judith M. Gansberg, *Stalag: U.S.A.* (New York: Crowell, 1977), 4.

base camps and 511 branch camps were opened nationwide.[2] Most of the states, particularly in the South, became temporary home to Axis prisoners of war (Figure 1). Each base camp was designed to house approximately 3,000 prisoners on at least 350 acres, and POW camps in some locations kept larger populations than neighboring towns. For instance, while Camp Douglas in Wyoming held 3,011 prisoners at its peak, the approximate population of the town of Douglas of the day was 2,500.[3] Keeping this in mind, it is understandable that residents originally held concerns about the security of their community hosting a POW camp for enemy soldiers transferred from the war front, even if becoming a hosting community would bring about economic benefits.

Douglas POW Camp was completed in the summer of 1942. The camp comprised of the officers' quarters, clubhouse, softball field, football field primarily for the prisoners, as well as the motor pool, heat plant, warehouses, and corrals for the U.S. military. By the end of 1943, Camp Douglas housed 1,900 Italian prisoners of war, including some of officer rank. In 1944, the Italian prisoners were repatriated to Europe following Italy's surrender and the camp was deactivated in July 1944. However, it was soon reactivated to accommodate more than 2,000 German POWs in October, and the number of German POWs reached over 3,000 at its peak. When the war ended, Douglas POW Camp was no longer needed and nearly all camp buildings except the Officers' Club were scrapped or removed from the original site.[4]

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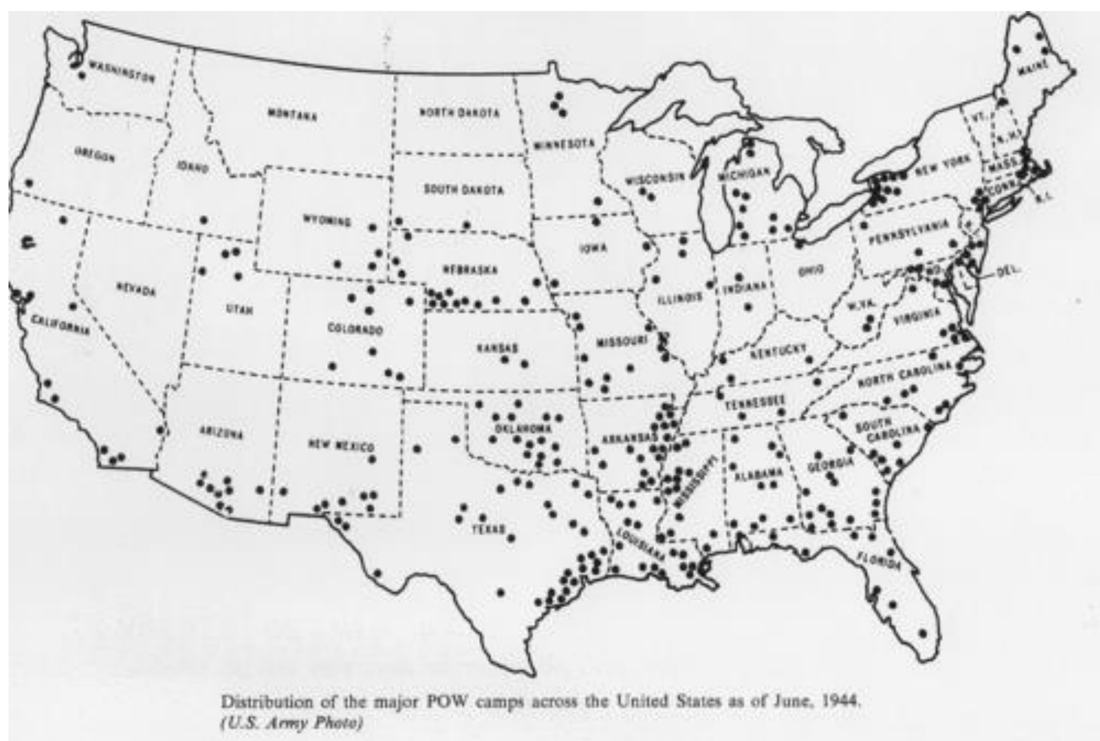
[2] R. Douglas Hurt, *The Great Plains during World War II* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 341. In this dissertation, Japanese POWs in the United States will not be discussed further because they were not imprisoned in the High Plains region and thus few primary sources regarding them were available. POW branch camps were created in remote areas to house prisoners who were sent from base camps to distant small communities to perform seasonal labor. Old CCC camp buildings were often converted to seasonal POW branch camps; because of that, security at branch camps were not as strict as base camps.
[3] "Wyoming POW Camp Moves toward State Historic Site Status," *Casper Star Tribune Online,* March 8, 2012, http://trib.com/news/state-and-regional/wyoming-pow-camp-moves-toward-state-historic-site-status/article_f51750ac-c6e9-5216-bf66-d142569e9ea2.html.
[4] Nancy Weidel, "Officer's Club, Douglas Prisoner of War Camp," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office, Cheyenne, WY, March 29, 2001, http://pdfhost.focus.nps.gov/docs/NRHP/Text/01000965.pdf.



Distribution of the major POW camps across the United States as of June, 1944.
(U.S. Army Photo)

Figure 1. Distribution of WWII POW camps in the United States, including both base and branch camps for German, Italian, and Japanese prisoners of war.

Fort Robinson (two miles south of the town of Crawford, Nebraska) is located about 110 miles east of Douglas and its WWII POW camp exclusively housed German prisoners whose number reached over 3,000 at its peak. The historic fort was in operation from 1874 through 1947 and accommodated various groups including: Oglala Sioux in the 1870s, African American soldiers (Buffalo Soldiers) from the 1880s to the early 1910s, the Quartermaster Corps between 1919 and the early 1930s, Civilian Conservation Corps workers between 1933 and 1935, and K-9 Corps and the German POWs during WWII.[5] As a military post at the vanguard of westward expansion, Fort Robinson played a significant role in the development of the American West and became a site of conflict between the Sioux and the United States. Along with the transition of time, enemies of the United States shifted, and the role of the fort changed accordingly. Like Douglas, most of the former POW camp buildings at Fort Robinson were disassembled and sold to the public after the war.

[5] "Fort Robinson History," Nebraska State Historical Society, September 16, 2002, http://www.nebraskahistory.org/sites/fortrob/history.htm.

Research Significance

Although the scope of WWII histories in America is very broad and some topics attract wider attention than others, history of WWII POWs in the United States, particularly in the American West, deserves better recognition for their contribution at local and national levels and their unique status on the home front. European POWs were a somewhat ambiguous group in America's WWII experience because they were foreign enemy soldiers who stayed only temporarily, not necessarily dispossessed by the United Sates, and not much detailed information on their camp life was available to the public during the war. Still, the history of WWII POW camps has great research potential. The rationale to study WWII POWs' experience in America is twofold. First, there is the impact of the incarceration experience on their agency and identity; POWs did not let themselves be subjugated by their captors or ideologies among themselves through engaging in various activities that the Geneva Convention recommended the detaining power to allow prisoners' regular access. Second, POWs' presence in a locality impacted the sociopolitical landscape and race relations in the area. While the prisoners strived to retain their identity and dignity, their presence and fair treatment in America ironically highlighted the struggle of the people who were excluded from America's white normativity of race, cultural practices, and social values. What is more, in rural areas, the presence of a POW camp and its prisoners in the vicinity was evidence that almost anyone distant from the war front or large industrial cities could still feel the immediate impact of the war on daily basis.

This research intersects with numerous scholarly fields including labor history, agricultural history, regional history, minority studies, whiteness studies, citizenship and race, immigration history, images of the American West, displacement and confinement, material culture study, internment archaeology, collective memory of wartime experience, and many more.[6]

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[6] Several key works that explore race relations and agricultural labor include: Neil Foley, *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Black, and Poor White in Texas Cotton Culture* (Berkley, CA: University of Press, 1997); Erasmo Gamboa, *Mexican Labor and World War II: Braceros in the Pacific North West, 1942-1947* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1990); Kathleen Mapes, *Sweet Tyranny: Migrant labor, Industrial Agriculture, and Imperial Politics* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2009); Ana Elizabeth Rosas, *Abrazando el Espíritu: Bracero Families Confront the US-Mexico Border* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2014); Zaragoza Vargas, *Labor Rights Are Civil Rights: Mexican American Workers in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005). Numerous scholars have examined the images of the American West and its ambiguous identity in connection with America's self-image. Richard Etulain, *Re-imagining the Modern American West: A Century of Fiction, History, and Art* (Tucson, AZ: University of

In addition, by situating into the field of one's identity (re)construction, this study explores experiences of POWs as ambiguous "Other-Self" who spoke a different language and held conflicting political ideologies with Americans but shared commonalities with the hegemonic group and thus were eligible to become "quasi-locals" in hosting communities even temporarily.[7] European POWs looked like "us" to white Americans as opposed to cultural minority groups who kept struggling for inclusion into American society while embracing their cultural heritage. Considering that point, German and Italian soldiers' identity as white men and America's favorable treatment toward them questions the paradoxical relationship between U.S. citizenship and racial stratification where the white normative society barred racial minorities from enjoying economic and political privilege.[8]

As a material culture study of the incarcerated, this work finds itself in a slightly odd position because the German and Italian POWs were not necessarily the dispossessed groups in wartime America in terms of their ethnic or cultural heritage. Although the definition of white race was always slippery and who would be included or excluded reflected political and economic interests of the United States, immigrants from Europe managed to become

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Arizona Press, 1996); Louis S. Warren, *Buffalo Bill's America: William Cody and The Wild West Show* (New York: Alfred A. Knop, 2006); Richard White, *"It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own": A New History* of the *American West* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991) David M. Wrobel, *The End of American Exceptionalism: Frontier Anxiety from the Old West to the New Deal* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1993). For further details on other relevant scholarly fields to this study, see "Historiography of POW Camps in the United States and Relevant Fields," 9-18, in this introduction.

[7] Sami Schalk, "Self, Other and Other-Self: Going Beyond the Self/Other Binary in Contemporary Consciousness," *Journal of Comparative Research in Anthropology and Sociology* 2, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 197-210. Schalk explains that when we find some commonalities with whom we perceived different, an other can suddenly become an other-self, a person with whom we somehow identify, whom we re-incorporate into ourselves.

[8] No matter whether they were immigrants or Americans by birth, people of color struggled with racial discriminations and stereotypes while European immigrants eventually integrated into normative white American society. To preserve white American dominance in the United States, policy makers passed numerous bills to restrict racial minority groups' access to full economic opportunity and political rights. While scholarship of citizenship and race is broad in scope, some scholars focus on racial stigmas imposed on cultural minorities by the American society and government. See Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004); Natalia Molina, *How Race Is Made in America: Immigration, Race, and the Historical Power of Racial Scripts* (Berkley, CA: University of California Press, 2014). Even if non-white groups had to endure prejudice of normative white society against them as outsiders by their look, they developed unique and complex cultural identities that interconnected them between the United States and their ancestors' home country. See for example, Eiichiro Azuma, *Between the Two Empires, Race, History, and Transnationalism in Japanese America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Deborah Cohen, *Braceros: Migrant Citizens and Transnational Subjects in the Postwar United States and Mexico*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

white Americans well before WWII.[9] Moreover, America's conflict with Imperial Japan and the internment of 120,000 Japanese Americans as Others accelerated the incorporation of "white ethnic" groups such as Jews, Italians, and other descendants of the great immigrant wave of 1884 to 1924 into a broader conception of American nationhood.[10] Therefore, once German and Italian prisoners of war arrived in the United States, their European origin became a ticket to the privilege of white men while it amplified the contradicting nature of America as a democratic society.

Also, as a sub-history of the twentieth-century American West, this research underscores a point that the WWII period American West was a more dynamic and turbulent place inhabited by multiple cultural groups that had their own interests and concerns during the war.[11] WWII POW experiences in the American West can be counterposed to the experiences of racial minority groups whose U.S. citizenship or allies' status did not necessarily give them social privilege. The American West during WWII served as a home to Japanese Americans whose freedom was not respected by the nation despite their legal status as citizens; Mexican migrant laborers who supported wartime agricultural production but were not always welcomed in communities; Native Americans who struggled with assimilation policy and had to leave the reservation looking for jobs; and African Americans who had to endure unequal treatment in the military and industrial cities in the

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[9] Numerous Whiteness Studies scholars have examined the process of how diverse European immigrants eventually became white in America. David Roediger claims that New Deal Era public policies helped the integration of ethnic white groups while left out African Americans. For further details, see Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White; The Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs* (New York: Basic Books, 2005). Thomas Guglielmo argues Italian immigrants' identification of themselves as white, which was color classification separate from race, bestowed them social privilege while many still suffered from racial prejudice. Thomas A. Guglielmo, *White on Arrival: Italians, Race, Color, and Power in Chicago, 1890-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004). Matthew Frye Jacobson examines the history of European mass immigration and concludes race was a political and cultural construct rather than natural, and how racial categories shifted over time upon arrival of European ethnic minorities to perpetuate inter- and intra-racial hierarchies in America. Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).

[10] Robert L. Fleegler, "'Forget All Differences until the Forces of Freedom Are Triumphant': The World War II-Era Quest for Ethnic and Religious Tolerance," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 27, no. 2 (Winter 2008): 59.

[11] Gerald Nash discusses how WWII transformed social landscapes pertaining to race relations in the West. Wartime employment offered African Americans and Mexican Americans greater economic opportunities yet that could not help stirring further racial tension. Likewise, Nash argues that WWII demanded Native Americans and Japanese Americans to leave their familiar place yet that had a silver lining. For more details about each cultural minority group's wartime experience in the West. Gerald Nash, *The American West Transformed: The Impact of the Second World War*, (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1985), chapters 6, 7, and 8.

West.[12] These groups sought better economic opportunities and recognition of their heritage by the nation while trying to prove their patriotism through their contribution to the war effort. In a social context as such, prisoners of war from Germany and Italy spotlighted the gap between the ideal and reality of American democracy, equality, freedom, and justice to the people who did not fit into white America.

Historiography of POW Camps in the United States and Relevant Fields

The historiography of WWII POW camps in the United States dates to the 1950s when several scholars started publishing articles about specific aspects of Axis POWs in the United States. The earliest work on America's POWs focused on utilizing POW labor and overall operations of the camps.[13] Other scholars examined prisoners' behavior, attitudes, and education in POW camps.[14] Since the 1970s, several regional studies started incorporating the topic of WWII POW camps in the American West.[15] From these preliminary studies, scholars learned that POW camps were not spaces that were isolated and detached from the American society but rather strongly connected with surrounding communities particularly for labor purposes.

However, the history of WWII POW camps did not fully develop as a scholarly field until the late 1970s with military historian Arnold Krammer's detailed research on WWII German POW camps.[16] Krammer's original study on POW camps in Texas provided extensive descriptions of keeping POWs in the United States in wartime and explained various aspects of POWs' experiences including their arrival to the hosting community, labor, recreation, education, and treatment in the camp. He argues that even if the United States lacked practical experience in accepting hundreds of thousands of foreign prisoners of war, the War Department and the American public managed to care for POWs fairly well. Krammer points out that although there were concerns over security and jurisdictional issues

[12] Nash, Chapters 6, 7, and 8.
[13] George G. Lewis and John Mehwa, "History of War Prisoner Utilization by the United States Army, 1776-1945," *Department of the Army Pamphlet* (Washington: G.P.O., 1955), 20-213; Howard S. Levie, "The Employment of Prisoners of War," *American Journal of International Law* 57 (1963): 318-353.
[14] Michael Walzer, "Prisoners of War: Does the Fight Continue after the Battle?" *American Political Science Review* 63 (1969): 777-786; Henry W. Ehrmann, "An Experiment in Political Education: The Prisoner of War Schools in the United States," *Social Research* 14 (1967): 304-320.
[15] Ralph Busco and Douglas Alder, "German and Italian Prisoners of War in Utah and Idaho," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 39 (1971): 55-72; Jake W. Spidle, "Axis Invasion of the American West: POWs in New Mexico, 1942-1946," *New Mexico Historical Review* 49, no. 2 (1974): 93-122.
[16] Arnold P. Krammer, *Nazi Prisoners of War in America* (New York: Stein and Day, 1979).

on American side and ideological struggles on German POWs' side, the camps succeeded. This success was attributed to hardworking administrators and continual modification in planning. Since then, Krammer's work has been indispensable for scholars of WWII POW camps in the United States, and the field has been expanding gradually.

In general, contemporary scholarly works on WWII POW camps follow the methods of earlier scholars like Krammer. That is, many POW camp studies offer general overview of POW camps in America as well as case studies of specific POW camps. Many scholars then conclude that the prisoners of war in the United States had a decent, or even good, life in captivity thanks to America's observance of the Geneva Convention, and POWs would maintain amicable relationships with the locals for a long while after the war. Although I basically agree with these claims, this favorable argument is mainly based on the amicable interactions between the POWs, Army personnel, and white residents in rural communities and thus lacking perspectives from other contexts. Simply claiming POWs had a good life in America thanks to the American hospitality, generosity, and democracy in a celebratory tone would be short-sighted as POWs' incarceration in the United States involved various political calculations of the U.S. government to make them malleable to American democratic principles and had much wider impact on their identity.

While these POWs' treatment by the United States have been well examined by scholars, not very many works have delved into POWs' impact on or relationship to America's racial minority groups and relations with them during the wartime. Among the few examples on race relations involving POWs, Morgan Ward's study reveals that in southern states, utilizing German POWs' labor for cotton harvesting disturbed racial hierarchy of the South since that type of work had been traditionally associated with African Americans but not with white men.[17] Jack Hamann argues that the charges against African American soldiers without any concrete evidence for the murder of an Italian POW at Fort Lawton, Washington, was the result of national pressure to prosecute someone, and black men made an easy target for the blame.[18] Matthias Reiss elaborates that German and Italian POWs who enjoyed favorable treatment as white men were an affront to patriotic African

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[17] Jason Morgan Ward, "“Nazis Hoe the Cotton”: Planters, POWs, and the Future of Farm Labor in the Deep South," *Agricultural History* 81, no. 4 (Fall 2007): 471-492.
[18] Jack Hamann, *On American Soil: How Justice Became a Casualty of World War II* (Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2005).

American soldiers in the Army, accelerating the civil rights movement after the war.[19] And Barbara Heisler Schmitter's comparative study of Mexican men and German POWs as agricultural laborers reveals that German POWs were treated more favorably by employers owing to various economic, political, and regional factors.[20]

Although the locations were varied, these scholars illustrate how POWs from Europe made America's race relations even more complicated and shed better light on the paradox of the U.S. democracy by favoring European POWs to non-white workers regardless of their citizenship. I agree with their views and would like to emphasize that for many white residents in the hosting community, POWs were similar enough to them in terms of physical appearance and cultural practices that locals had little psychological resistance to fraternizing with them. Even though white residents as local employers had closer interactions with the prisoners, WWII POW camp studies in America should not overlook the impact of POWs on racial minority groups as they were the ones who had to compete with the POWs for better evaluation, credence, favor, and wages from the employers.

Following Judith Gansberg's work on POWs' reeducation that was published in the late 1970s, many scholars of WWII POW camps have examined the quality and rationale of the education program given to the German POWs during their captivity in America.[21] Although it might have been a breach of the Geneva Convention to educate the POWs for democratization purposes, many scholars interpret the reeducation program offered at camps as beneficial for the prisoners when they were repatriated to Germany and started rebuilding their war-torn homeland, and thus it was basically a success.

As opposed to these claims, historian Ron Robin questions the essential nature of the reeducation program because the professors selected by the U.S. authorities to lead the project did not really consider the POWs' cultural backgrounds and psychological dynamics of captivity. Instead, they focused on teaching the POWs anticommunism and American exceptionalism that reflected contemporary social and political values.[22] Robin's argument is convincing because, without carefully considering the POWs' own unique situations before,

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[19] Matthias Reiss, "Icons of Insult: German Italian Prisoners of War in African American Letters during World War II," *Americastuden/American Studies* 49, no, 4 (2004): 539-562.
[20] Barbara Schmitter Heisler, "The Other 'Braceros': Temporary labor and German Prisoners of War in the United States, 1943-1946," *Social Science History* 31, no. 2 (Summer 2007): 239-271.
[21] Gansberg, *Stalag*.
[22] Ron Theodore Robin, *The Barbed-Wire College: Reeducating the German POWs in the United States During World War II* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995).

during, and after the war, those professionals tried to impose on the prisoners what would be ideal to the United States rather than what would be valuable in the post-WWII Germany or Italy in the eyes of the POWs. Therefore, the reeducation program is best understood as a paternalistic attempt at indoctrination by experts rather than reflecting POWs' own academic interests.

Since many POW camps were located in southern states due to the availability of building materials and lower costs for heating, good portions of published works dealing with WWII POW camps focus there.[23] Still, some historians have studied POW camps in the American West and mostly agree that the treatment of POWs was fair and the prisoners contributed to agricultural production in the area while their work outdoors was a good opportunity to refresh themselves. Late Nebraska state historian Thomas Buecker studied the development of Fort Robinson as a military post and its eventual service as a base camp for WWII German POWs, highlighting the contribution of the prisoners to enriching the legacy and cultural diversity of the fort.[24]

In his extensive study on people's WWII experience in the Great Plains, agricultural historian R. Douglas Hurt dedicated a chapter about the economic significance of WWII POW camps and the prisoners' labor force in the Great Plains region where labor shortages were especially critical. Hurt argues that hosting a POW camp offered one of the few significant economic opportunities for small communities in the region even though that prosperity did not last very long.[25] Thomas Jaehn's article on WWII POWs in the Northwest discusses that POWs' labor saved the wartime agricultural sector in the region even if they were not highly experienced workers.[26]

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[23] Ruth Beaumont Cook, *Guests behind the Barbed Wire: A True Story of Hope and Friendship* (Birmingham, AL: Crane Hill Publishers, 2008); Heino R. Erichsen, *The Reluctant Warrior: Former German POW Finds Peace in Texas* (Woodway, TX: Eakin Press, 2001); Robert D. Billinger Jr., *Hitler's Soldiers in the Sunshine State: German POWs in Florida* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2000); Robert D. Billinger Jr., *Nazi POWs in the Tar Heel State* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2008); David Fiedler, *The Enemy among Us: POWs in Missouri during World War II* (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society Press, 2003); Antonio Thompson, *German Jackboots on Kentucky Blueglass: Housing German Prisoners of War in Kentucky, 1942-1946* (Clarksville, TN: Diversion Press Inc., 2008).

[24] Thomas R. Buecker, *Fort Robinson and the American Century: 1900–1948* (Lincoln, NE: Nebraska State Historical Society, 2002).

[25] Hurt, *The Great Plains during World War II.*

[26] Thomas Jaehn, "Unlikely Harvesters: German Prisoners of War as Agricultural Workers in the Northwest," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 50, no. 3 (2003): 46-57.

Scholarship of POW camps in the American West emphasizes POWs' contribution to agricultural production in rural areas, and some scholars touch on POWs' creativity inside the camp. However, hardly any research has been done on POWs' cultural perception of the American West. Because the Western as a genre in popular culture had permeated Europe before the war and helped develop POWs' preconceptions about the United States, this topic requires further attention and examination.

Even though the history of WWII POWs in the United States is a growing scholarly field, POWs' identity construction and reflection in material culture has yet to be explored in depth. For instance, throughout my research on POW camps, I have encountered several bottled ships that were created by POWs and currently exhibited at local museums. It is not very clear, however, what motivated the prisoners to make that specific artifact and what kind of cultural values were embedded in their artifacts. Therefore, I hope my study will contribute to the understanding of the complexities of POWs' identities in the United States.

While Adrian Myers conducted extensive archaeological research on a POW camp in Canada, WWII POW camp studies in the United States have yet to fully integrate historical research and archaeological investigation.[27] One fine exception is anthropologist Michael Waters' historical and archaeological study on Camp Hearne, Texas.[28] Waters and his research team conducted an intensive archaeological survey at a former POW camp site and excavated traces of various landscape modifications by German POWs including fountains, gardens, statues, and basins as well as more than 1,400 POW artifacts. Based on the findings of his vigorous research, Waters concludes that behind the wall of the Camp was not always an orderly and harmonious space as suggested by many historical records and general perception of other scholars. Instead, what they found was a space filled with political conflicts that led to several Nazi ideologues' violence against other prisoners who did not truly support the National Socialism.

In addition to Waters' work, several graduate theses on POW camps incorporating historical archaeology have emerged in the last five years. Christopher Morine's master's

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[27] Adrian T. Myers, "The Archaeology of Reform at a German Prisoner of War Camp in a Canadian Park during the Second World War (1943–1945)" (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 2013). Myers claims that Canadian POW camps treated the German POWs well, but at the same time these camps served as reforming institutions to correct their political ideology through reeducation program.

[28] Michael R. Waters, et al, *Lone Star Stalag: German Prisoners of War at Camp Hearne* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2004).

thesis examines material life of German POWs at Camp Trinidad in southern Colorado and argues that the POWs could exert their power through creating goods they wanted or needed even under the institutional confinement.[29]

As these historical archaeological works suggest, archaeological investigation can play a significant role in WWII POW camp studies that historical records alone may not fully explain especially questions such as who these anonymous POWs were and how they lived in captivity as individuals and in a group. Since the context of objects discovered in situ may not always be consistent with what was written in historical documents, archaeological findings often demand revisions of dominant interpretations built upon the documentary sources. Without sufficient analysis of the context of the artifacts used or created by POWs, it is hard to imagine how these men's identity was challenged, mitigated, reconstructed, or even transformed during their captivity in conjunction with POW camp culture.

Not limited to the United States, archaeologists of displacement and confinement examine diverse institutional confinement sites in various parts of the world such as Nazi concentration camps, female convict prisons in nineteenth-century Tasmania, asylums in nineteenth-century United States, Britain, and South Australia, Native American boarding schools in Arizona, and so forth.[30] One overarching theme throughout these diverse studies is that institutional confinement was used as a legitimate practice to segregate undesirable individuals or groups who did not fit into social norms of the time so that the society could suppress their behavior or ideology, and even reform the mind and body of deviant groups. In response to that, inmates struggled to retain their cultural and personal identity through creation, exchange, or acquisition of artifacts and thus their interactions with material culture served as their means of psychological resistance to the captors that saw them as a social

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[29] Christopher M. Morine, "German POWs Make Colorado Home: Coping by Craft and Exchange" (master's thesis, University of Denver, 2016).

[30] Adrian T. Myers, "Between Memory and Materiality: An Archaeological Approach to Studying the Nazi Concentration Camps," *Journal of Conflict Archaeology* 4, no. 1/2 (2008): 231-245; Claudia Theune, "Archaeology and Remembrance: The Contemporary Archaeology of Concentration Camps, Prisoner-of-War Camps, and Battlefields," *Historical Archaeology in Central Europe* 10 (2013): 241-259; Eleanor Conlin Casella, "To Watch or Restrain: Female Convict Prisons in 19th-Century Tasmania," *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 5, no.1 (March 2001): 45-72; Lu Ann De Cunzo, "On Reforming the 'Fallen' and Beyond: Transforming the Community and the Magdalen Society of Philadelphia, 1845-1916," *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 5, no.1 (March 2001): 19-43; Susan Piddock, *A Space of Their Own: The Archaeology of Nineteenth-Century Lunatic Asylums in Britain, South Australia, and Tasmania* (New York: Springer, 2007); Owen Lindauer, "Individual Struggles and Institutional Goals: Small Voices from the Phoenix Indian School Track Site," in *The Archaeology of Institutional Life*, eds. April M. Beisaw and James G. Gibb, (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 2009), 86-102.

problem to be corrected. Likewise, WWII POWs in America tried to empower themselves through consuming commodities and creating and using artifacts to identify themselves as more than prisoners of war who possessed various personal concerns, interests, and values.

When it comes to the study of incarceration camps in WWII-era America, historical archaeological research on Japanese American internment camp sites has been expanding at a faster rate than study of POW camp sites.[31] Biographies and memoirs of former Japanese American internees are abundant, and they offer detailed social and political contexts for the controversial relocation of the people with Japanese ancestry by the U.S. government. Several scholars have contributed their chapters to edited volumes on archaeology of mass internment in the recent past.[32] In addition, Bonnie Clark has done extensive archaeological surveys on Amache Japanese Incarceration Center (present day Granada, Colorado) and claims that Japanese prisoners transformed harsh landscapes into miniature Japanese towns where gardens were regarded as a gift to every member of the incarceration camp.[33] Anthropologist Jane Dusselier's study on Japanese American internees' artifacts discusses how the internees strived to survive in an unfamiliar and often harsh environment by creating and using the objects that were culturally symbolic and significant to them.[34]

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[31] Whereas it had been an enterprise of archaeologists affiliated with the National Park Service at the turn of the twenty-first-century, historical archaeology of Japanese American incarceration has gained momentum in academia in the last ten years. For an overview of WWII Japanese incarceration sites throughout the United States, see Jeffery F. Burton, Mary M. Farrell, Florence B. Lord, and Richard W. Lord, *Confinement and Ethnicity: An overview of World War II Japanese American Relocation Sites* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003). For specific aspects of Japanese American experiences in incarceration camps such as landscape modification, women's identities, and children's roles, see Laura W. Ng, "Altered Lives, Altered Environments: Creating Home at Manzanar Relocation Center, 1942–1945" (master's thesis, University of Massachusetts Boston, 2014); Dana Ogo Shew, "Feminine Identity Confined: The Archaeology of Japanese Women at Amache, a WWII Internment Camp" (master's thesis, University of Denver, 2010); April Kamp-Whittaker, "Through the Eyes of a Child: The Archaeology of WWII Japanese American Internment at Amache" (master's thesis, University of Denver, 2010).

[32] Jeffry F. Burton and Mary M. Ferrell, "'Life in Manzanar Where There Is a Spring Breeze': Graffiti at a World War II Japanese American Internment Camp"; Ronald J. Beckwith, "Japanese-Style Ornamental Community Gardens at Manzanar Relocation Camp"; Michelle A. Slaughter, "An Archaeological and Ethnographic Examination of the Acquisition, Presence, and Consumption of Saké at Camp Amache, a World War II Japanese Internment Camp"; Dana Ogo Shew and April Elizabeth Kamp-Whittaker, "Perseverance and Prejudice: Maintaining Community in Amache, Colorado's World War II Japanese Internment Camp," all in *Prisoners of War: Archaeology, Memory, and Heritage of 19th- and 20th-Century Mass Internment*, eds. Harold Mytum and Gilly Carr, (New York: Springer, 2013).

[33] Bonnie J. Clark, *Finding Solace in the Soil: An Archaeology of Gardens and Gardeners at Amache* (Louisville, CO: University Press of Colorado, 2020).

[34] Jane Dusselier, *Artifacts of Loss: Crafting Survival in Japanese American Concentration Camps* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008).

As these studies indicate, Japanese American incarceration experience reflected internees' pursuit to transform the hostile environment into a collective livable space where they could share their cultural traditions. While these scholars explore different aspects of camp life (sake consumption, community gardens, craft making, or graffiti, for instance), they highlight Japanese internees' struggles and resilience to retain their cultural identity in extremely difficult circumstances.

As scholarship of Japanese American internment has gained broader recognition, consensus among the Japanese American community has been growing on the point that widely used terminology of WWII Japanese American experiences is U.S.-centric and detaches them from their own experience. Anthropologist Stacey Camp asserts that broadly used terms such as Japanese American "evacuees," "internees," and their "internment" or "relocation" do not reflect WWII American experience from their own perspectives.[35] Since these words are euphemisms that indicate their removal from the West Coast was their own choice, or they were "posing a threat" to America, Camp suggests discussing Japanese American experiences with terms that they prefer.[36] In response to her suggestions, I hereafter refer to Japanese Americans during WWII as "detainees," "incarcerees," or "prisoners," and their confinement by the United States as "detention," "incarceration," or "imprisonment."

Following this trend to portray WWII-era Japanese Americans with more appropriate terminology, recent scholars of Japanese American incarceration point out the significance of studying Japanese detainees as a diasporic population.[37] A diasporic approach calls for more contextual research on Japanese prisoners' pre-incarceration (and even pre-immigration) sociocultural identity to illuminate continuity and changes in Japanese American communities. By doing so, researchers can understand Japanese incarcerees not only as innocent residents of incarceration camps but also as unique individuals who established

[35] Stacey Lynn Camp, "Landscapes of Japanese American Internment," *Historical Archaeology* 50, no.1 (2016): 170.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Koji Lau-Ozawa, "Inscriptions and Silences: Challenges of Bearing Witness at the Gila River Incarceration Camp," *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 25 (2020): 851-876; April Kamp-Whittaker, "Diaspora and Social Networks in a World War II Japanese American Incarceration Center," *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 25 (2020): 828-850.

intricate social networks through their complex family, local, regional, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Although it is not the primary interest of this dissertation, historical archaeology of Japanese American incarceration is highly relevant and beneficial to this study. It offers a keen insight into the complex and paradoxical relationship between U.S. citizenship and race in disguise of justice for national security and America's failure to protect the freedom of Japanese Americans. That is, even if members of a particular cultural group held U.S. citizenship, American public did not necessarily perceive them as their fellow citizens if their cultural heritage appeared to be deviant from white, European descent, Judeo-Christian normativity prevalent in the broader society. Even though they came to the United States as foreigners and repatriated to Europe after the war, German and Italian POWs' experience of imprisonment in America prompts scholars to explore why U.S. citizenship (or lack of it) bestowed privilege to some groups while disadvantaged others in conjunction with their cultural heritage.

Japanese American incarceration and Axis POW imprisonment in WWII-era America complement each other and give clues for how race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexuality, and political ideology can contribute to the entire society's perception of one group's privilege over the other. Priscilla Wegars's research on WWII Japanese detainees in a small community of Kooskia, Idaho, offers a comparison between Japanese descent male prisoners and German and Italian POWs as similarly incarcerated groups with different racial and sociocultural backgrounds.[38] Wegars makes a point that the Japanese prisoners in Kooskia could enjoy relatively a good life owing to not only the healthy natural environment in the area, but also to their non-U.S. citizen status that enabled them to demand the same treatment as prisoners of war as stated in the provisions for the Geneva Convention. This claim is helpful to examine citizenship and race of "internal others" whose culture and physical appearance did not conform to normative whiteness in America.

Even born and raised in America as U.S. citizens, Japanese Americans remained to be perceived as, borrowing immigration historian Paul Spickard's term, "perpetual

[38] Priscilla Wegars, *As Ragged as Terrain: CCC "Boys," Federal Convicts, and WWII Alien Internees Wrestle with a Mountain Wilderness* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2013).

foreigners."[39] As opposed to that, German and Italian POWs came to America as temporary visitors and left for Europe as "perpetual friends" of the locals in rural areas. Even if they desired to migrate to America after the war, their European identity could transform them into white Americans and thus their social citizenship was almost guaranteed on their next arrival in America.

Methods

For this dissertation, I studied two camps: Douglas POW Base Camp in Wyoming that was established at the west side of the town of Douglas and Fort Robinson POW Base Camp in Nebraska built on the premises of the military post. I selected these camps because I was attracted to the western-themed murals at Douglas POW Camp and became interested in exploring POWs' identity in idyllic landscapes of the rural American West. I conducted research with various primary sources and secondary sources available at local and state museums and archives and analyzed the compiled data. Most of the primary sources on the Douglas POW Camp came from the archives at the Pioneer Memorial Museum in Douglas, Wyoming. The museum possessed a vast volume of primary sources including local newspapers, telegraphs, photographs, personal letters, POW camp menus, maps, and approximately thirty artifacts created by the POWs in the camp. In addition, sixteen Western-themed murals created by Italian POW artists were kept intact inside the former Officer's Club building that was standing on the same site.

While Fort Robinson Museum exhibited a few German POW artifacts, most of the primary sources were transferred and kept at the Nebraska State Historical Society (NSHS) in Lincoln. NSHS archived exhaustive volumes of primary sources relevant to Fort Robinson POW Camp as well as other POW base camps in the state. In addition to sources about Fort Robinson, I occasionally utilized primary sources of other POW camps in Nebraska, particularly Scottsbluff POW Camp that was only eighty miles from Fort Robinson, to add more regional context to my study. NSHS collections included a former German POWs' diary (translated into English) throughout his stay at Fort Robinson, POWs' personal correspondence, education material for POWs, local newspaper articles, camp newsletters, POW newspapers, posters of theatrical performances in camp, POW labor reports, camp

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[39] Paul Spickard, *Almost All Aliens: Immigration, Race, and Colonialism in American History* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

building plans, transcripts of oral history interviews with former POWs and Army personnel, reports on regular camp visits by the Swiss representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross, reports on POW education program and religious work. In addition to these sources, I also examined over fifty artifacts created or used by the POWs at the fort and housed at the Nebraska State Museum.

In contrast with rich primary sources available at local archives, no archaeological investigations have been conducted at these former camp sites. More importantly, there was little documentation of the change in the ownership of the sites and demolition or removal of camp buildings immediately after the war. When Douglas experienced a natural resource boom in the 1970s, many workers migrated to the area and subdivisions were created on the former site of Camp Douglas, burying the traces of the camp. The U.S. Army closed Fort Robinson in 1946 and its ownership was transferred to the U.S. Department of Agriculture to establish Beef Cattle Ranch Station. And then in 1971, the property was transferred to the State of Nebraska which led to the transformation of the site into a very popular state park.

Before moving onto following chapters, I would like to clarify that when I generally refer to “POWs,” that means German and Italian POWs and excludes Japanese POWs. I left out the Japanese POWs from this research for two reasons. First and foremost, Japanese POW population in America was far smaller than its German and Italian counterparts and the High Plains did not have POW camps for Japanese soldiers. Second, because Japanese POWs acted upon totally different cultural mindset from European POWs, it was beyond the capacity of what this dissertation can explore along with German and Italian POWs’ experiences. Therefore, even if I did not treat experiences of Japanese POWs in this work, that was simply because they were not incarcerated in the region where I conducted research. Similarly, I discuss more about German POWs than Italians because more Germans were incarcerated in the High Plains (and nationwide as well) and thus more primary sources of German POWs were available than sources about Italian POWs.

Following Chapters

This dissertation consists of three chronological parts and each part contains two chapters exploring different aspects of WWII POW camps and prisoners’ experience in captivity. Part I focuses on POWs’ treatment in America and life in (dis)order inside the camp. Chapter 1 opens with a quick overview of WWII POW camps in the United States,

discusses how America accommodated the enemy prisoners at local and national level. Then the chapter portrays the arrival of POWs in the hosting communities and the U.S. Army's treatment of the prisoners inside the camp. Chapter 2 moves on to in-camp issues mainly caused by ideological gaps and ethnic differences of POWs who were plainly regarded as Nazi Germans or Fascist Italians by the American public.

In Part II, I examine POWs' daily life inside and outside of the camp once they settled in. Chapter 3 explores the POW labor program that enabled the prisoners to work in non-war related sectors with a small payment and how this program benefitted many local employers and agricultural industries suffering from serious labor shortages. While the POW labor program turned out to be a win-win for the prisoners and local employers, it posed a question of who the "good" workers were in rural agricultural areas that heavily outsourced manual laborers. Chapter 4 brings back discussion inside the camp, on recreational and educational opportunities POWs could get when they were not required to perform labor. Prisoners could enjoy reading books, watching films, listening to music, participating in sport games, or theatrical performances as well as taking various academic courses taught at each POW camp. During the final stage of the war, however, the War Department vigorously tried to reorient the direction of POWs' recreational and educational programs toward democracy-oriented ones.

Part III focuses on more intangible aspects, namely cultural perceptions and identity of POWs in America. Chapter 5 studies what their images of America looked like before and during their captivity and how their perception of American West shifted through their in-person experiences in hosting community. Chapter 6 moves onto identity of POWs through examining POWs' material culture and creativity in the camp. POWs' creative activities helped them negotiate their newly assigned identity as prisoners of war, and better adjust to challenging circumstances. Then the chapter concludes with POWs' repatriation to Europe and their postwar experiences as well as their legacy in the hosting communities.

In this dissertation, one overarching theme throughout the chapters is how German and Italian POWs' European Christian male identity transformed into ordinary young white men in the hosting community. Even temporarily, settling into American small towns as white men as a norm enabled them to become quasi-insiders of the community. Many residents expressed their interest and friendship to the POWs partly because they were

foreign newcomers to their community under extraordinary circumstances. But it was even more the case that they came from Europe and thus looked like "us" in the eyes of white residents in hosting communities. As census schedules of 1940 illustrate (Tables 1 and 2), residents in hosting communities and surrounding areas of Douglas POW Camp and Fort Robinson POW Camp were predominantly white and it was unlikely they saw non-whites on daily basis.[40] These areas exemplify what the sociologist Elijah Anderson calls "the white space." According to Anderson, the white space meant, "overwhelmingly white neighborhoods, schools, workplaces, restaurants, and other public spaces."[41] In that sense, POWs were able to adjust their European male identity to that of white Christian male and got accepted in small rural communities as the white space.

American wartime experiences related to POW camps were not always filled with intense fear and hostility toward the presence of national enemy on the home front. Many German and Italian POWs who came to small towns as strangers, enemies, and outsiders could become temporary insiders and longtime friends of locals partially owing to their cultural closeness to residents in small rural towns and white normative social values of the United States. On the other hand, racial minority groups in the United States found it still difficult to be included as part of the broader American society. Therefore, this is not merely a history of one specific group in the corner of the rural American West during World War II, but histories of multiple groups who happened to be present in the same given area and experienced wartime America with different cultural backgrounds.

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[40] Out of the sample population of 1,023 in Converse County in WY, five individuals were non-white; this means 99.5% of the residents in Camp Douglas area were white. Likewise, out of the sample population of 796 in Dawes County in NE, only three people were non-white; that tells 96% of the residents in Fort Robinson POW Camp area were white. Even though my sample population (I collected my data by picking up the first forty individuals on record from each enumeration district) might not perfectly reflect the entire demographics of each county, these ratios still indicate that both areas were overall very white. One thing to keep in mind is that census schedules of 1940 categorized Mexican Americans into white, but assuming from the names on record, it is less likely that many Mexican descents lived in these areas.

[41] Elijah Anderson, "The White Space," *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* 1, no.1 (2015): 10.

Enumeration District	Male	Female	White	Non-white	Sample Number
5-1	17	20	37	0	37
5-2	22	18	40	0	40
5-3	24	16	40	0	40
5-4	20	20	40	0	40
5-5	10	9	19	0	19
5-6	24	16	40	0	40
5-7	23	17	40	0	40
5-8	20	20	40	0	40
5-9	21	19	40	0	40
5-10	21	18	39	0	39
5-11	23	17	40	0	40
5-12	25	7	32	0	32
5-13	26	13	39	0	39
5-14	18	12	30	0	30
5-15	26	14	40	0	40
5-16	27	13	40	0	40
5-17	20	19	39	0	39
5-18	27	13	40	0	40
5-19	11	19	30	0	30
5-20	22	18	35	5*	40
5-21	22	18	40	0	40
5-22	22	18	40	0	40
5-23A†	17	22	39	0	30
5-23B‡	20	19	39	0	39
5-24	21	19	40	0	40
5-25	22	18	40	0	40
5-26	24	16	40	0	40
Total	575	448	1,018	5	1,023

Table 1. Sample of 1940 Census Population Schedules, Converse County, Wyoming.
Source: Population Schedules for the 1940 Census, Bureau of Census, National Archives, RG 29. Entire population of Converse County, where Douglas POW Camp was located, was 6,631 in 1940. I examined the first sheet of each enumeration district as my sample population.

*Five Japanese in the same household (parents who were born in Japan and children born in Wyoming).
†‡ED-23A and ED-23B covered the area within the town of Douglas. Total population of Douglas was 2,205 in 1940.

Enumeration District	Male	Female	White	Non-white	Sample Number
23-1	19	21	40	0	40
23-2	22	17	37	2*	39
23-3	23	17	40	0	40
23-4	22	17	38	1†	39
23-5	21	19	40	0	40
23-6	22	18	40	0	40
23-7‡	19	21	40	0	40
23-8	22	18	40	0	40
23-9	25	15	40	0	40
23-10	22	18	40	0	40
23-11	18	22	40	0	40
23-12	22	18	40	0	40
23-13	15	25	40	0	40
23-14	26	12	38	0	38
23-15	27	13	40	0	40
23-16	21	19	40	0	40
23-17	25	15	40	0	40
23-18	23	17	40	0	40
23-19	18	22	40	0	40
23-20	22	18	40	0	40
Total	434	362	793	3	796

Table 2. Sample of 1940 Census Population Schedules, Dawes County, Nebraska.
Source: Population Schedules for the 1940 Census, Bureau of Census, National Archives, RG 29. Entire population of Dawes County, where Fort Robinson POW Camp was located, was 10,128 in 1940. I examined the first sheet of each enumeration district as my sample population.

*Black men who worked as a chef and a porter. (ED23-2 covered the city of Chadron, county seat of Dawes County.)
†Native American inmate of the county jail. (ED-4 covered the area that had a county jail.)
‡ED-7 covered the town of Crawford, nearest civilian town from Fort Robinson. Total population of Crawford was 1,845 in 1940.

Part I

Moving from War Front to American Home Front: Active Soldiers to Prisoners of War

Part I examines prisoners of war camps as both a part of broader American society and a small exclusive community on their own. Chapter 1 encompasses POWs' treatment in the United Sates and civilian responses to that. This study adds up to scholarship of war mobilization effort on the home front and American consumer culture during WWII. After prisoners of war were captured and arrived in America, they were transferred and incarcerated in POW camps established nationwide.

While their treatment in America was relatively generous and humane, it also conveyed a message of American exceptionalism and democratic idealism to the foreign enemy prisoners. POWs could perceive America's affluence on a daily basis especially through food rations and commodities available at camp canteens. POWs' treatment by the U.S. Army reflected the captor's desire of how the United States wanted to be perceived by the global society. Whereas POWs could enjoy material abundance without leaving camps, civilians were encouraged to be efficient, frugal, and productive members of American society. American citizens accommodated prisoners of war as a part of their contribution to the war effort, but they did not want their enemies in captivity to be wasteful in camps since it was an unpatriotic and un-American act in their eyes.

Chapter 2 focuses on POWs' conflict inside camps. This study benefits scholarship of dominance and resistance based on one's ethnicity and ideological conviction. Although German and Italian POWs were not necessarily marginalized groups in the United States, their intra-group conflict over ideological dominance and hierarchical power struggle, especially among the Germans, had a considerable impact on their quality of life in the camps. Many German soldiers faced, endured, and resisted the oppression of pro-Nazi extremists who tried to control and homogenize soldiers' ideological affiliation in POW camps.

Although Italian POWs were incarcerated in Douglas POW Camp and Scottsbluff POW Camp, another POW base camp located eighty miles south of Fort Robinson, few sources have surfaced to point at Italian POWs' political tensions in these camps. Because of that, my discussion on POWs' conflicts mainly focuses on German POWs at Douglas POW

Camp and Fort Robinson POW Camp. This does not necessarily mean, however, that Italian prisoners embraced uniform political beliefs and harmoniously lived in captivity. After Italy surrendered to the Allies in September 1943 and the U.S. Army offered Italian POWs the opportunity to join the Italian Service Units (ISU) to support America's war effort, about 45,000 out of 51,000 Italians agreed to join the ISU while the remaining prisoners held onto fascism and refused to collaborate with the United States.[1] Based on that, Italian POWs' political inclination was not uniform and thus it is plausible they experienced internal conflicts with ideologues among themselves even though it might not have been as frequent and intense as their German counterparts.

Whereas the United States established POW camps to treat enemy prisoners of war in a democratic manner, these camps transformed into a contested space rife with prisoners' own ideological conflicts. Although the War Department created separate POW camps for German, Italian, and Japanese prisoners, POWs' internal tensions underscores the point of what they looked like as a group was not a synonym for what they unanimously believed. Locals in the hosting communities eventually realized most of the prisoners were not political fanatics and thus were not real enemies. These points add up to the major theme of this study that one's identity as an enemy or friend of someone was not static but rather fluid contingent upon various factors. Many locals and POWs tried to see more about their cultural closeness than their ideological differences.

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[1] Camilla Calamandrei, "Prisoners in Paradise: Italian POWs Held in America during WWII," accessed October 10, 2021, https://www.prisonersinparadise.com/history/.; Jesse Kratz, The Italian Service Units of World War II in Boston," Pieces of History—A Blog of the U.S. National Archives, July 21, 2020, https://prologue.blogs.archives.gov/2020/07/21/the-italian-service-units-of-world-war-ii-in-boston/.

Chapter 1

Opening POW Camp: Prisoners' Arrival and Treatment

As the Second World War raged on, more and more soldiers among the belligerents were captured and taken as prisoners of war. Once they were captured, the captor had an obligation to move the captives away from the war front. As a member of the Allied Forces and signatory of the Geneva Convention, the United States needed to transfer and incarcerate these enemy prisoners of war on the American home front that spared them from physical attack by the Axis Powers.

When news of the possible establishment of a POW camp in the vicinity reached a community, locals reacted to the news in various ways. While some residents envisioned hiring POW labor for farm work to alleviate labor shortage, others considered economic profit that a camp construction and operation would bring about to the local economy. Still others simply held concerns over hosting foreign prisoners of war about whom they had limited information mainly through the media laden with war propaganda.

Like locals who held uncertainty and fear toward the foreign enemy soldiers coming to their community, POWs themselves were not very sure what their captive life in the United States would look like and what kind of treatment would be awaiting them. Becoming enemy prisoners of war initially induced uncertainty, confusion, fear, resentment, hostility, humiliation, despair, and extreme stress among the soldiers. Yet many prisoners eventually discovered their incarceration in the United States to be a relief from risking their own lives on the battle front. In an exchange for physical freedom, they enjoyed regular access to solid food, shelter, rest, clothes, and other daily necessities inside the camp although material abundance in POW camps occasionally stirred controversy among the American society.

As POWs arrived in camps and settled into their new routine as war captives of the United States, residents started to perceive the prisoners less and less differently, and more and more culturally close to them and often benefited from prisoners' stay in their community. Even if occasional criticisms about POWs arose from hosting communities and the broader public, the complaints generally focused on material abundance inside the camp rather than any questionable speech and behavior of POWs against their captor.

Establishing POW Camps on American Soil

To host ever increasing Axis prisoners of war from Europe, the federal government funded $52 million for the construction of POW camps beginning in the fall of 1942. When selecting locations, the War Department prohibited camps in the blackout area, called the "Zone Sanitaire" that extended approximately 170 miles from the coastline or 150 miles from either the Canadian or the Mexican border, or locations near shipyards, munitions plants, or other industries to prevent POWs' possible sabotage.[1] The Army Corps of Engineers took charge of constructing POW camps, and they preferred locations two or three miles from railroads or towns as this distance would enable easy transportation and supply, yet minimize the opportunities for escape of the POWs.[2] To exemplify these requirements, Fort Robinson in Nebraska was selected as a site for a new POW camp because the Chicago Northwestern and Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroads ran within one-and-half-miles of the camp, and the fort was located three miles south of the town of Crawford (Figure 2). Similarly, Douglas in Wyoming was served by the Fremont, Elkhorn and Missouri Valley Railroad. The POW camp was planned on the west side of the North Platte River that would enable geographical segregation of the POWs from the civilian quarter developed on the east side of the river (Figure 3).

Although Army secrecy and imposed POW campsites were the rule, many congressmen, city officials, and business leaders lobbied the War Department for the establishment of a POW camp because the construction of a camp meant work opportunities for local carpenters, plumbers, and electricians as well as garbage collectors, clerical workers, nurses, and firemen.

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[1] R. Douglas Hurt, *The Great Plains during World War II* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 315-316.
[2] Ibid., 316.

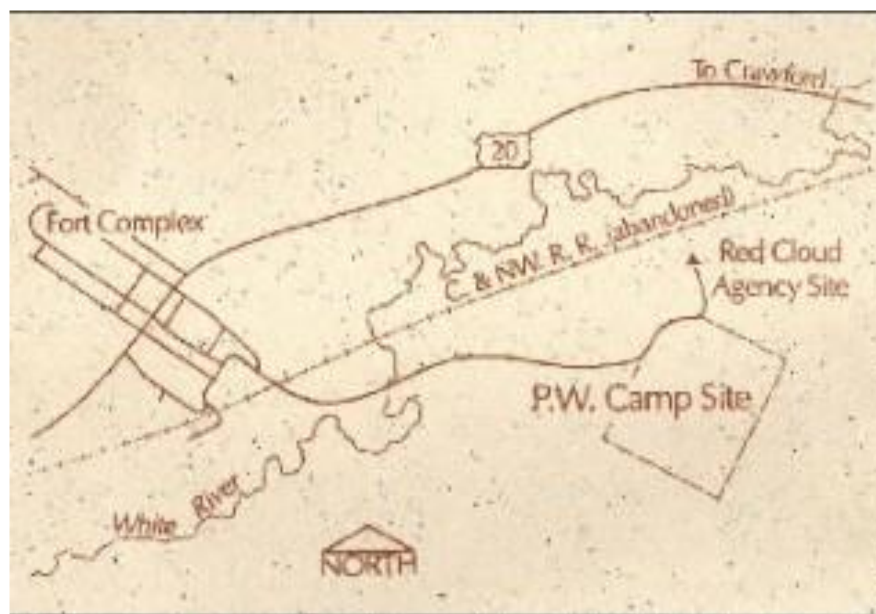

Figure 2. Map of Fort Robinson POW Camp area. POW camp was one and a half miles apart from the main fort complex. Garrison area was constructed on a premise of POW camp site to survey the prisoners. Adapted from Fort Robinson Museum pamphlet.

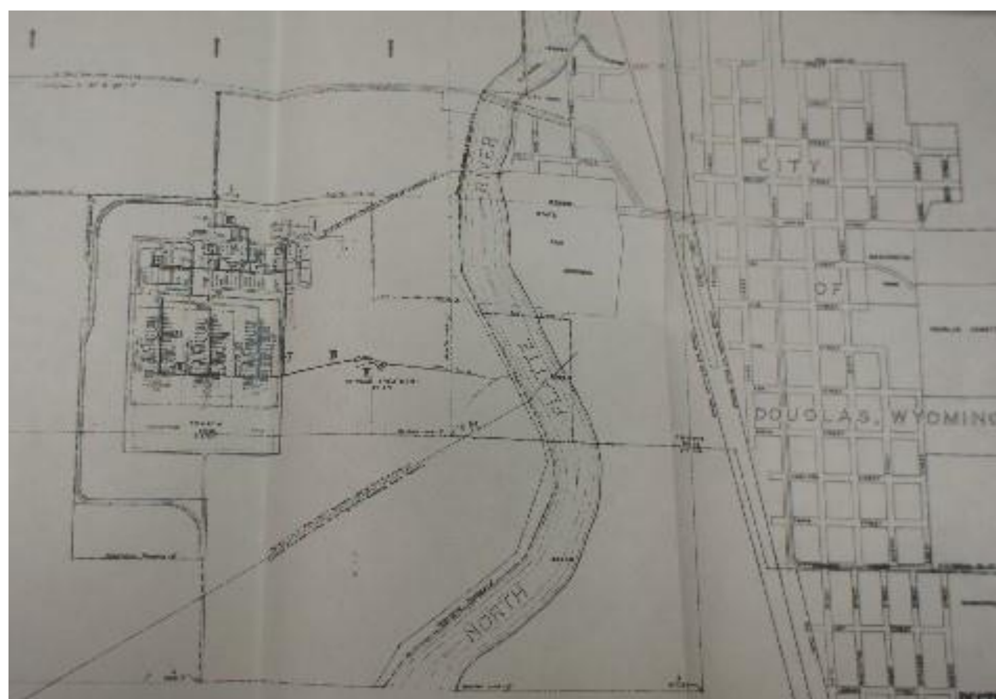

Figure 3. Construction plan of Douglas POW Camp. Courtesy of Pioneer Memorial Museum, Douglas, Wyoming.

In the case of Douglas, Wyoming, Congressman John McIntyre received a wire from the War Department early in June 1942, stating that Douglas would be the only Wyoming site chosen as the possible location for a war prisoner camp.[3] This news left the residents speculating on the nature of the camp. In small towns of the High Plains where residents rarely had opportunities to see hundreds or thousands of "outsiders" on daily basis, people held uncertainties toward the group who would soon arrive in the camp: Who would these detainees be? How large would the group be? Where would they come from? How long would they stay here? Would they be available for local employment? And, would residents be safe from the threats of the possible escapes or sabotages of the prisoners?

In response to the proposal, Congressman McIntyre told residents that, "[I]t will not be such a one as is located at Cody."[4] Heart Mountain near Cody, located on the opposite side of the state, became a site for one of the ten major Japanese American incarceration centers in the nation. McIntyre emphasized that the Cody project was "more of a relocation or resettlement camp," in which Japanese who were "citizens of this country will be given farms on the Heart Mountain project."[5] Considering the nation's paranoia and intensified hostility toward Japanese Americans following Pearl Harbor, McIntyre clarified Douglas would not become another in-state mass internment site for tens of thousands of Japanese Americans. He pointed out that the Douglas site would be "used for a camp in which prisoners of war would be located or one in which aliens may be housed."[6]

Therefore, townspeople could tell that the possible detainees in Douglas would be non-U.S. citizens who would stay temporarily and would leave after the war. As McIntyre's comment illustrates, the possibility of hosting a Japanese American incarceration camp in their neighborhood stirred greater concern than hosting a POW camp. The Japanese American Incarceration Center at Heart Mountain housed nearly ten thousand detainees at its peak, and it became one of the largest communities in Wyoming. The idea that many of them might remain the area after the war and claim the land alarmed the locals. As historian Nick Johnson observes, "the landscape's profitability was ensured by a racial hierarchy in which white landowners and governments exploited largely Asian and Latino base of workers and

[3] "Douglas Probable Prisoner Camp, Says McIntyre," *Douglas Enterprise* (Douglas, WY), June (date unavailable), 1942.
[4] "Internment Camp Approved for Douglas, McIntyre Says," *Douglas Budget* (Douglas, WY), June 4, 1942.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.

tenant farmers."[7] Considering that, white residents seemingly accepted racial minorities as laborers but not as landowners. Landowners were entitled a privilege to exploit resources, and residents did not want cultural Others who would transform the socioeconomic landscape of the area.

As opposed to that, hardly any local newspapers reported opposition to a POW camp based on the prisoners' German or Italian heritage, if not for their Nazi or Fascist ideology. Historian John Morton Blum observes that, even though Americans almost universally despised Hitler, the Germans as a people at first evoked little of the animosity so commonly expressed against the Japanese.[8] This would be especially the case in the Great Plains region in which descendants of German immigrants had settled in and contributed to the development of communities over time. Because the American home front did not receive direct attacks by Germany or Italy, civilians' hostility was mainly directed toward the people with Japanese ancestry who were perceived as "internal outsiders" for their cultural and racial backgrounds no matter whether they were U.S. citizens by birth.

Once it became clear that Douglas would host German or Italian prisoners of war, many locals interpreted the possibility of a POW camp positively with the prospect of employing POWs as temporary agricultural laborers. However, the War Department rejected the camp plan barely two months after the first proposal in June 1942, in a ruling that "no such institution would be placed north of a certain parallel line which runs the middle of Colorado."[9] Also, the War Department preferred the southern States to establish POW camps for economic reasons; the temperate climate in the South would keep the heating cost low, and far more timber was available for construction of camps in the South.[10] Yet Congressman McIntyre believed that the town of Douglas would still have a chance to host a POW camp depending on the war situation and possible increases in the number of the Axis POWs in the European theater, and he told local residents so.[11] Therefore, many local farmers held hope that the War Department would modify its policy and create a POW camp near their town. At the same time, the increasing number of Axis POWs meant that the war

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[7] Nick Johnson, "Workers' Weed: Cannabis, Sugar Beets, and Landscapes of Labor in the American West, 1900–1946," *Agricultural History* 91, no. 3 (Summer 2017): 323.
[8] John Morton Blum, *V Was for Victory" Politics and American Culture during World War II* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), 47.
[9] "M'Intyre [*sic*] Confirms Rejection of Internment Camp Here," *Douglas Budget*, August 6, 1942.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.

situation favored the Allied Forces; hosting a POW camp in their neighborhood served as locals' means to contribute to the war effort from a small town by alleviating POW problems in Europe and accelerating the conclusion of the war with the Allies' victory.

Within half a year, residents in Douglas were indeed rewarded with positive news for the local economy. The swelling numbers of POWs transported to the United States and the pressing demand of agricultural labor in the American West changed the situation drastically. In early January 1943, the *Douglas Budget* reported that the POW camp plan reemerged with higher likelihood than the previous year, and the Army's survey crew was spotted on the same site they had investigated before.[12] Shortly after that news, the construction plan for the POW camp was finalized. The effect of the decision on the community was immediately visible. The newspaper also reported that, "Vacant housing quarters in Douglas are rapidly being taken up… by workmen and their families who are coming in as employees on the project."[13] Constructing a POW base camp required hundreds of temporary workers so that they could complete building a massive camp structure for thousands of prisoners in the shortest possible period. The *Douglas Budget* described the rapidly transforming townscape: "the Lumber and other materials, dirt moving machinery and other building equipment have been coming into Douglas."[14] The POW camp plan called for the construction of "180 buildings which will accommodate approximately 3,500 men," and the contract specified that the camp "must be completed in approximately 120 days."[15] POW camp construction reflected the nation's ideal of efficient war mobilization to be as productive as possible in the shortest amount of time.

At Fort Robinson, the POW camp plan first emerged in December 1942, and the contract called for it to be finished by the first of June 1943 even though it turned out that the first POWs would not arrive until November of that year. Like Douglas, the construction of a POW camp at Fort Robinson brought about a temporary economic boom to the adjacent community of Crawford by catering to food and accommodations for construction workers, and it was expected that several hundred men could be employed on the project. The Crawford housing situation was going beyond the point, where people could not even get a

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[12] "Army Internment Camp Will Be Constructed Near Douglas," *Douglas Budget*, January 7, 1943.
[13] Ibid.
[14] "Construction of Internment Camp Under Way This Week," *Douglas Budget*, February 4, 1943.
[15] "Land Sought for Internment Camp," *Douglas Budget*, February 18, 1943.

spot on the ground to lay out a bed.[16] These construction workers at Douglas and Fort Robinson represented a nationwide mass migration in response to America's war mobilization. According to historian David Kennedy's study, one out of every eight civilians changed their county of residence in the three and a half years after Pearl Harbor. By war's end, one in every five Americans had been swept up in the wartime migration.[17] While Americans became more and more mobile and would-be POW camp hosting communities could feel its surge, the growing demands for housing the construction workers exceeded the actual capacity of small towns. This shortage of accommodations proved how far inland rural towns were left behind by the preparation for war mobilization compared to large industrial cities in the West Coast.

Constructing a POW Camp

Because the Geneva Convention required the detaining power to house the prisoners in equivalent conditions to American soldiers, many POW base camps were equipped with facilities comparable to U.S. enlisted men's training camps. The biggest difference between these camps and normal Army training centers were the watch towers with searchlights and chain link fences surrounding the entire camp and each compound.[18] Every standard compound accommodated a thousand men and included an administration building, four mess halls, a recreation building, an infirmary, a workshop, a canteen, four camp storehouses, a chapel, and a guardhouse.[19] These camp compounds served as self-contained towns behind barbed wire.

For the most part, as historian Robert Doyle observes, this is the case of the American observance of the "Golden Rule" to treat the enemy as one would have the enemy treat their own.[20] This logic was supposed to work upon a reciprocal idea: fair treatment of enemy POWs by the United States had to be met with fair treatment of American POWs in Axis hands. Treating enemy prisoners of war in a fair and democratic manner mirrored America's

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[16] "Prisoner Camp to Be near Here" *Crawford Tribune* (Crawford, NE), December 18, 1942.
[17] David M. Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 747.
[18] Arnold Krammer, *Nazi Prisoners of War in America* (New York: Stein and Day, 1979), 28.
[19] James H. Powers, "What to Do with German Prisoners: The American Muddle," *Atlantic Monthly* (November 1944): 46.
[20] Robert C. Doyle, preface to *The Enemy in Our Hands: America's Treatment of Enemy Prisoners of War, from the Revolution to the War on Terror*, ed. Robert C. Doyle (Lexington; KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2010), xvii.

ambition to present itself as a humanistic nation respecting individuals' rights and equality regardless of their background, although it was not always the case for racial minority groups.

By the middle of June 1943, the construction of the camp in Douglas was complete and immediately open to the locals for public inspection, where visitors would be able to see, "just how prisoners of war are cared for as to health and general comforts," as well as "general provisions of security."[21] The local newspaper mentioned that nearly two thousand people from the town and neighboring community took this opportunity to see the interior of the camp as a slice of POWs' life in their neighborhood. The newspaper reported that, "Most impressive was the manner in which this huge crowd of eager visitors was handled… groups moving in an orderly direction from one point of interest to another. There was no confusion, no traffic jams, no hesitation." In addition, "An itinerary had been previously planned and guards, escorts, and runners has been placed in strategic positions to see that the crowds visited the points of interest in the least possible time and effort." Therefore, the paper emphasized and praised the efficient and orderly guidance by Army personnel as clear evidence of their capability to handle hundreds or thousands of forthcoming POWs, which in turn appealed to the locals that their community could maintain a high level of order and security.

In addition to the Army's efficiency, the camp structures also convinced local visitors that they would not have to be afraid of a POW camp in their neighborhood. The *Douglas Budget* described that, "An inspection of the prisoners [*sic*] compound, surrounded as it is with parallel high wire fences and covered from all directions by lofty guard houses, gave assurance that security of prisoners of war was positive."[22] Based on the tone of the newspaper articles, locals were generally contented to host a POW camp in their vicinity. For a small community with a population of a little over two thousand, public inspection of the camp was an invaluable opportunity to place local residents in the position of POWs and imagine what it would look like to become America's prisoner. Satisfied with the camp facilities and Army's strategy to manage high volumes of visitors with efficiency, the community prepared for the arrival of the first POWs with curiosity, expectation, and local pride to serve as temporary home of U.S. Army's facility.

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[21] "Public Inspection of the Douglas Internment Camp Sunday," *Douglas Budget*, June 17, 1943.
[22] "Over Two Thousand Visit Internment Camp Sunday," *Douglas Budget*, June 24, 1943.

Transporting and Housing Prisoners of War

No matter which side they were fighting for, the prisoners of war were considered to still be soldiers captured in the line of duty and had to be treated as soldiers according to the provisions of Geneva Convention.[23] The provisions consisted of ninety-seven articles and guaranteed war prisoners' right to have sufficient food, shelter, clothing, hygiene, medical care, intellectual and sporting pursuits, payment for their military service, as well as their freedom to keep their political and religious beliefs without being questioned. Based on the provisions of the Geneva Convention, the War Department charted the Army's guidelines and regulations to treat Axis POWs, and in most cases the prisoners received humane treatment in America.

Once they were captured in North Africa, many German and Italian POWs were transported to the United States to alleviate the overcrowding of the POW camps in Europe. When the prisoners finally arrived in the states by ship, trains took them to their destination base POW camps. Even though the ride was not very comfortable, the prisoners traveled in passenger cars and not in freight cars commonly used to transport German soldiers in Europe.[24] Therefore, POWs' very first treatment in America as passengers but not cargo reinforced the U.S. government's message that America had a full capacity to offer anything necessary to satisfy the provisions of the Geneva Convention.

Even though they were assigned their own seats, prisoners of war were not normal passengers who had a choice over their destination and did not have much privacy on board being surveyed by the guards. According to a former German POW at Fort Robinson Dietrich Kohl, "All windows were locked, the doors of the toilettes were unhinged in order to prevent escapes. Signifying we were not common civilian passengers. Two MP's equipped with sub-machineguns were posted on both ends of the wagon, allowing always only one man to stand."[25] Although the military police had to be always alert to POWs' moves to prevent their escape, escaping during transportation rarely took place as prisoners were too exhausted from their transatlantic voyage, still clad in their military uniform, and did not have any U.S. currency. While the Geneva Convention stated belligerents shall determine the

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[23] Krammer, 49. For details of each article of the Geneva Convention of 1929, see Appendix A.
[24] Sheryl Schmeckpeper, "Remembering Camp Atlanta," *Nebraska Life* (September/October 2007): 69.
[25] Dietrich Kohl letter to Mr. Cloyd (first name unavailable), August 24, 1985, RG 0501, Reel 19, Nebraska State Historical Society (hereafter referred to as NSHS).

maximum amount of cash which prisoners of war could retain in their possession, it also authorized detaining power to impound money carried by prisoners after the amount was recorded and placed to the account of each prisoner.[26] Because of that, all money held by the POWs was surrendered and held for the remainder of the war by the United States to minimize the risk of their escape.[27]

During the lengthy transportation of prisoners from the East Coast, trains had to make many stops at multiple stations since the steam engines of the day had to stop every 50 miles or so to take more water and fuel.[28] It inevitably attracted attention of local spectators who had never seen foreign enemy soldiers. According to William Oberdieck, a former German POW at Camp Atlanta in Nebraska, street crowds gathered to look at them at every stop to see if they had "horns or something."[29] As this episode reveals, curious onlookers objectified the POWs and made them a spectacle show for civilians who had known about the Axis soldiers only through the American media. Here, a question arises about how civilians could know the Army's schedule to transport the POWs because it was supposed to be kept secret considering that troop train schedules were not published.[30] If American soldiers' transportation schedule had to be kept secret to the public, then it must have been also the case for POWs' transportation because the Geneva Convention expected the detaining power to treat the POWs as they treated its own soldiers.

Also, civilians' act of gathering to watch the prisoners infringed on an article of Geneva Convention that required the protection of the prisoners "from insults and from public curiosity."[31] Civilians gazing at the prisoners was not always attributed to their

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[26] "Article 6, Capture," Conventions Relative to the Treatment of Prisoner of War, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Geneva, July 27,1929, https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/Article.xsp?action=openDocument&documentId=C4300CD54E5455B6C12563CD00518D95; and "Article 24, Pecuniary Resources of Prisoners of War," Conventions Relative to the Treatment of Prisoner of War, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Geneva, July 27,1929, https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/Article.xsp?action=openDocument&documentId=AC03C960B15F383DC12563CD00518EC1.
[27] Krammer, 46.
[28] "Canteens Greet GIs," Wessels Living History Farm, accessed July 18, 2018, https://livinghistoryfarm.org/farminginthe40s/life_03.html.
[29] "German Ex-POWs Returning to U.S.," *Detroit Free Press* (Detroit, MI), November 6, 1992.
[30] "Canteens Greet GIs," Wessels Living History Farm.
[31] "Article 2, General Provisions," Conventions Relative to the Treatment of Prisoner of War, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Geneva, July 27,1929, https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/Article.xsp?action=openDocument&documentId=F3C789772F4A2CA0C12563CD00518D5D.

hostility toward the prisoners and they might not have considered it a violation of the Geneva Convention. However, the Army's transportation strategy focused too much on the surveillance of the prisoners to prevent their escapes and remained oblivious to taking sufficient measures to protect the prisoners from the probing gaze of the gawkers on the home front.

Except for their unpreparedness and negligence to civilians' curiosity to watch the first cohort of POWs, the Army tried to treat the foreign enemy prisoners in accordance with the provisions of the Geneva Convention. That meant the Army treated the prisoners in the same manner as their own men, yet that made some POWs suspect America's real intentions and connected it with a worst-case scenario. When they reached their destination and were taken to a dining hall, William Oberdieck and other Germans soldiers became worried as the tables were set with real dinnerware and that made him question to himself, "Are they going to shoot us? Is it our last meal?"[32] Oberdieck's reaction revealed his fear for the situation he had not experienced before as well as uncertainty of how the United States would treat their enemies in captivity.

In this case, Oberdick's suspicion reflected what the German military wanted its men to think of the United States. As historian Arnold Krammer articulates, no matter how late in the day the prisoners arrived, it was an unwritten policy to end their first day with a big meal after their long train ride, and to impress the POWs with the good treatment they could expect.[33] By showing American generosity and abundance to the prisoners, the War Department tried to convince them that America would treat them as closely as what the Geneva Convention required. Through offering them good experiences, America tried to prove that no matter how POWs' ideas about America had been negative, their treatment in POW camp told them opposite thing.

Checking Hygiene and Personal Effects

When the POWs first arrived in the base camp, they were immediately registered and given physical examinations before their assignment to the barracks.[34] Dr. E. Mayer and Hans Waecker, who were former prisoners at Fort Robinson later recalled their life in the

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[32] "German Ex-POWs Returning to U.S.," *Detroit Free Press*, November 6, 1992.
[33] Krammer, 48.
[34] *Prisoner of War Camp Fort Robinson Nebraska Guard Regulations*, by John W. Rogers, 2nd Lieutenant, CMP, Adjutant, October 1943, RG 0501, Reel 18, NSHS.

camp poetically with a pun. After a long journey from the war front to America, they "Soon arrived in Old Nebraska, Quickly moved into Hotel, Where the Desk Clerk said quite friendly, 'Get undressed, and Mach Schnell [Hurry Up]!'"[35] Mayer and Waecker perceived that the newly built camp compound at Fort Robinson looked as fine as a hotel. Yet the Army's command reminded them that no matter how nice the compound looked, this state-of-the-art structure was built exclusively for prisoners of war. Until the war would be over, they would not be able to leave their "hotel" freely unlike civilian guests.

Physical examinations at each POW camp not only assured the prisoners' health, but also prevented the spread of sanitary problems throughout the compounds inhabited by thousands of men. The Geneva Convention repetitively emphasized the significance of detaining power's hygienic measures to ensure cleanliness and salubrity of camps as well as prisoners' bodies to prevent epidemics.[36] Casting the entire cleanliness of the camp on every soldier's body reflected the military's value on tidiness as a key for self-discipline. Individual cleanliness summarized the cleanliness of the entire camp and facilitated the smooth operation of the POW camp. Moreover, cleanliness of one's body was deeply connected with normative white American social values of competency. Environmental historian Carl Zimring elaborates on the relationship between cleanliness and whiteness by asserting that ethnic purity, or white identity, was tied to cleanliness and purity was "synonymous with health and with reliability."[37] In that sense, the U.S. Army wanted to transform foreign

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[35] "Aus Dem Leben Eines Prisoners (Episodes from a Prisoner's Life)," Dr. E Mayer, trans. Hans Waecker (n.d.), RG1517.AM Box 12, Fort Robinson Collection, NSHS.
[36] "Article 10, Installation of Camps," Conventions Relative to the Treatment of Prisoner of War, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Geneva, July 27,1929, https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/Article.xsp?action=openDocument&documentId=C92B716DA01CB600C12563CD00518DDD ; "Article 13: Hygiene in Camps," Conventions Relative to the Treatment of Prisoner of War, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Geneva, July 27,1929, https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/Article.xsp?action=openDocument&documentId=3C08539236205066C12563CD00518E10; "Article: 15 Hygiene in Camps," Conventions Relative to the Treatment of Prisoner of War, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Geneva, July 27,1929, https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/Article.xsp?action=openDocument&documentId=2A9A1BCC63691189C12563CD00518E3A.
[37] Carl A. Zimring, *Clean and White: A History of Environmental Racism in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 89. American society's obsession with personal hygiene and cleanliness became even more evident in post-WWII years. For instance, an educational documentary film titled *Body Care and Grooming* (1948) explained the significance of one's "good appearance" by showing how to trim nails, maintain healthy skin, clean teeth, and so forth in order to "behave like human-beings." Ironically, total absence of non-white individuals in the film effectively revealed normative white American society's perception of cleanliness as central aspect of white identity. *Body Care and Grooming*, director unknown, Audio Productions Inc., 1948, Internet Archive, accessed October 12, https://archive.org/details/BodyCare1948.

enemy soldiers into model prisoners with healthy, clean, and docile bodies by grooming like white American enlisted men. That way, the War Department could convince the American public that the Army managed POWs successfully.

In addition to physical examinations, POWs faced the inspection of their personal belongings upon their arrival at their camps. Prisoners were searched under the supervision of an Army officer, and any unauthorized articles such as weapons, money, signal devices (cameras, flashlights, binoculars, codes or cyphers and radio transmitters), and papers or books containing pictures and maps of military or naval installations were confiscated by camp authorities.[38] In an inspection, the Army basically took away items that might aid POWs' sabotage schemes or escape attempts and reminded them that although they were still soldiers, they would not need those items since their prime responsibility in America would be to follow Army regulations as prisoners but not fight against them.

Even though many items were confiscated, prisoners were occasionally allowed to keep some unlikely items. For example, according to Samuel Mitchell, former Army officer at Fort Robinson, one prisoner had a live Chihuahua dog in his overcoat pocket and was allowed to keep the dog with him.[39] It is unclear how he obtained and managed to "smuggle" the dog all the way to Fort Robinson POW Camp in Nebraska. Although Mitchell recalled this episode with humor, it was very problematic security-wise that the POW was able to bring in an object of the size of a small dog to the camp undetected. It meant a failure in the Army's strategy to transfer POWs without any threat on the home front. If a POW could bring in a Chihuahua undetected, it could have been possible for them to carry grenades or other small arms into the camp. At the same time, it was plausible that POWs around him collaborated and helped him hide and bring the dog all the way to Nebraska. While prisoners were on the side to be cared by the United States, taking a role of caretaker for a small animal with attachment helped them retain agency in captivity.

Because POWs lost their physical freedom in POW camps and also had confiscated some of their belongings, they tried to cling onto small items that might have appeared to be trivial to American side. According to Dietrich Kohl, a former German prisoner at Fort

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[38] *Prisoner of War Camp Fort Robinson Nebraska Guard Regulations*, by John W. Rogers, 2nd Lieutenant, CMP, Adjutant, October 1943, RG 0501, Roll 18, NSHS.
[39] Samuel L. Mitchell interview (interviewer unknown), 1979, RG 1517.AM, Box 12, Fort Robinson Collection, NSHS.

Robinson, when the POWs had to undergo searches of their belongings, he and other prisoners tried to save their small personal items including soaps because they were uncertain if they could ever replace them. But the military police told them, “Throw away this damn shit—America has everything better,” and Kohl reminisced, “Soon we found out: They were right!”[40] The military police’s comment summarized American exceptionalism that many U.S. citizens embraced. As Donald Pease puts it, “American exceptionalism authorized U.S. citizens to imagine the nation as a fulfilled ideal.”[41] Henceforth, the military police likely meant America was highly competent in producing anything in quality and quantity, ranging from small items like soaps, to military aircraft or tanks, and even well-equipped incarceration camps for enemy prisoners of war. He took great pride in America’s affluence and technological advantages and almost insinuated that there would be no way that the Axis nations would defeat America’s economic, military, cultural, and political greatness.

In contrast to the military police’s pride in America’s greatness, Kohl’s uncertainty of the access to commodities revealed German POWs’ limited knowledge of real America. Like Kohl, other prisoners soon discovered that they could experience America’s material abundance without ever leaving the camp. When Kart Kohler, a former German POW at Fort Robinson wrote to his family back home, he mentioned: “I shower twice a day in the Post exchange. There we can get the finest soaps, socks, towels, even chocolate.”[42] Owing to their treatment as equal as the U.S. Army troops, Kohler’s letter told his family that his life as America’s POW was actually more abundant and hygienic than many citizens back in Europe.

POWs as Consumers at Camp Canteen

Aside from necessities that were regularly supplied by the U.S. Army, POWs could use nominal amounts of money in a form of scrip. Every prisoner was paid ten cents a day, or three dollars a month which were given as a special camp money. As for German men, they

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[40] Dietrich Kohl letter to Mr. Cloyd (first name unavailable), August 24, 1985, RG 0501, Reel 19, NSHS.
[41] Donald E. Pease, *The New American Exceptionalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 33-34.
[42] Kurt Kohler letter to his family in Germany, April 5, 1944, RG 1517.AM, Box 12, Fort Robinson Collection, NSHS.

were paid by the German government through a settlement with the Red Cross.[43] In addition to that, most POWs had another source of regular income: After the War Department approved POWs' labor for civilian employment, prisoners were paid eighty cents a day by the U.S. government for their work (originally paid by their local employers to the government). With these payments in scrip, they could obtain a variety of goods at the post exchange. Although POWs automatically got paid ten cents a day regardless of their day labor, most prisoners chose to work and receive another eighty cents to buy more beer or cigarettes or to save more in their accounts. Not to mention the benefit to local employers, POWs' labor program became a dual benefit for many prisoners to leave their confinement to work and get paid, which contributed to their self-sufficiency. The significance of POWs' labor program in the United States will be further discussed in Part II, Chapter 3.

Although they were detained, POWs did not have to give up their consumption habits entirely. At the camp canteen, POWs were able to purchase various items including beer and cigarettes that were harder for civilians to obtain during the wartime. According to Wolfgang Dorschel, a German POW interpreter and second spokesman at Fort Robinson, prisoners could buy two bottles of beer each day with vouchers that were issued for their work and daily allowance granted by the Geneva Convention.[44] Similarly, Hurt Fiege, another former POW at Fort Robinson, reminisced, "We got 27 dollars a month. Was a lot of money. A package of cigarettes cost eleven cents. For a beer eleven cents."[45] As these men's accounts testify, the canteen at a base POW camp was well supplied with the usual post exchange commodities, and the prices were below those prevailing outside of the camp.[46] It was somewhat ironic that enemy prisoners of war who were kept behind barbed wire had more opportunities to obtain many commodities cheaper and easier than civilians. No matter whether the American society liked this fact or not, it was POWs' right to receive treatment as close as that of U.S. enlisted men based on the guidance of the Geneva Convention.

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[43] Josef Topp, "Report about My Time as a Prisoner of War in POW Camp Fort Robinson from November 19th 1943 to May 25th 1944," to Thomas R. Buecker, Fort Robinson Museum, November 1, 2010, RG 1517.AM, Box 12, Fort Robinson Collection, NSHS.
[44] Wolfgang Dorschel and Hans Waecker discussion on P.W. Camp, Fort Robinson, Crawford, NE, August 22, 1987, RG 1517.AM, Box 12, Fort Robinson Collection, NSHS.
[45] Hurt Feige interview by Van Nelson, July 2, 1980, Fort Robinson Museum, Crawford, NE, RG 1517.AM, Box 12, Fort Robinson Collection, NSHS.
[46] U.S. Department of State, Special War Problems Division, "Prisoner of War Camp, Fort Robinson, Nebraska," March 28, 1944, RG 0501, Reel 19, NSHS.

In his classic study on wartime American culture, historian John Morton Blum makes a point that despite taxes, rationing, and price and wage controls, the wartime surge of buying was exciting in part because most Americans had had to scrimp for so long during the Great Depression, and they were frustrated at wartime shortages that denied Americans much of what they wanted.[47] Even if many American citizens possessed sufficient buying power and desired to exert it, the fundamental problem was that not enough commodities were available on the market. During the war, the needs of the soldiers outweighed any inconvenience to the home front; providing for troops first meant those on the home front had to wait in line for cigarettes, alcohol, fabric, stockings, and many other items.[48] POWs' better accessibility to resources occasionally caused envy and criticism from civilians. In their eyes, it was unfair that foreign enemy POWs enjoyed America's material abundance for cheaper prices while patriotic citizens had to bear with inconveniences to support the war effort.[49]

As a proof, one hosting community in Wyoming became upset at the neighboring POW branch camp when the prisoners had easier access to American citizens' favorite articles. In August 1944, the town of Dubois, Wyoming, hosted a side POW camp for about 140 German POWs who were employed by a local lumber company. However, public sentiment in the area "soon turned against the prisoners" because, according to a local newspaper, "the army [*sic*] was supplying the Germans with beer and Coca-Cola," which especially aroused "the ire of local citizens."[50] Beer and Coca-Cola were considered as luxuries for citizens that only American soldiers were entitled to consume freely. In their study on the price of Coca-Cola between 1886 and 1959, economists Daniel Levy and Andrew Young explain that in July 1943, "General Dwight Eisenhower sends a classified cable from the Allied Headquarters in North Africa asking for ten bottling plants and enough syrups to provide the U.S. soldiers with 6 million bottles of Coca-Cola a month. Coca-Cola is

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[47] Blum, 92.
[48] Sylvia Whitman, *V Is for Victory: The American Home Front during World War II* (Minneapolis: Lerner Publishing Group, 1992), accessed August 20, 2019, http://ida.lib.uidaho.edu:2168/hrc/results?vid=3&sid=340889a8-35fa-4974-acc1-7d3dbe26bd7e%40pdc-v-sessmgr05&bquery=(JN+%22V+is+for+Victory%22)+AND+FT+Y&bdata=JnR5cGU9MCZzZWFyY2hNb2RlPVN0YW5kYXJkJnNpdGU9aHJjLWxpdmU%3d.
[49] Hurt, 319; Kammer, 77-78; Ron Theodore Robin, *The Barbed Wire College: Reeducating German POWs in the United Sates during World War II* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 6-7; Antonio Thompson, *Men in German Uniform: POWs in America during World War II* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2010), 58-63.
[50] Lowell A. Bangerter, "German Prisoners of War in Wyoming," *Journal of German American Studies* 14, no. 2 (1979): 84.

served in all military training camps across the U.S."[51] Therefore, Coca-Cola was strategically important and culturally symbolic non-alcoholic beverage for the American troops. It became a patriotic act for Americans on the home front to give up the beverage so that their soldiers would be able to obtain more. To some people, it might have appeared POWs were not entitled to enjoy the beverage strongly associated with the United States and the nation's war effort although POWs could obtain equal rations as U.S. soldiers.

Because POWs were able to obtain personal items at the POW canteen easier and cheaper than civilians, broader American society was not very happy about that. To some people in hosting communities, however, things were a little different. As POWs and locals got better acquainted with each other thanks to POWs' labor opportunities outside the camp, some of them started secret trades. According to Glen Wilson, a resident of Crawford that was only three miles north of Fort Robinson, "they [POWs] could buy their cigarettes on their post back at their camp, and we couldn't even get them on ours at that time. I traded a zipper off a jacket, which probably wasn't legitimate but for eight or ten packs of cigarettes, you know that I couldn't get. He brought them in under the hat… I guess they can find ways of doing most anything in camps."[52] While Wilson did not know how the prisoner used the zipper part, it is somewhat surprising that one zipper was worth eight or ten packs of cigarettes even considering the wartime value of metal. Yet Wilson and the POW benefitted from their exchange and obtained items the other did not have easy access to. Like Wilson's case, some local employers and POWs built mutually beneficial relationships that would have been impossible had they clung to hostility and suspicion toward each other.

Even though their physical freedom was restricted, POWs' material consumption at the canteen empowered them to obtain what they wanted and enriched their camp life. The range of merchandise at the Post Exchange became more varied and included carbonated drinks, beer, candy bars, books of all kinds, musical instruments, and even jewelry.[53] As these commodities illustrate, the canteen was well stocked but some of the items were not pragmatic for the daily use of an average POW. For example, prisoners at Fort Robinson

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[51] Daniel Levy and Andrew T. Young, ""The Real Thing": Nominal Price Rigidity of the Nickel Coke, 1886-1959," *Journal of Money, Credit and Banking* 36, no. 4 (August 2004): 773.
[52] Glen Wilson Interview (interviewer unknown), Fort Robinson Museum, Crawford, NE, RG 1517.AM, Box 12, Fort Robinson Collection, NSHS.
[53] "German Prisoner Remembers Time Spent at Camp Atlanta," *Holdrege Daily Citizen* (Holdrege, NE), October 7, 1993.

could buy watches obtained by the commanding officer for $30.[54] Since the possible amount of money an enlisted man could earn in a month was about $27 (daily 10 cents allowance and 80 cents wages for their labor combined), these watches were still considered to be luxuries to many POWs.

Although no record clarified how many prisoners bought watches at the canteen, watches were not an indispensable item for prisoners' camp life that was routinely observed and controlled by the guards. It might have been more suitable for officer POWs who were not required to work, and watches could serve as a status symbol to differentiate themselves from the enlisted men. According to Blum, even though the volume of business from the wealthy declined, war workers avidly purchased diminishing stocks of cigarette cases, lighters, rings, silverware, and watches, particularly jeweled models.[55] With this social context in mind, it makes more sense why pricey watches were sold at the POW canteen: POW canteen became a microcosm of what American consumers wanted to obtain and reflected citizens' social values toward material culture, but not necessarily that of the enemy prisoners of war. Therefore, watches and other pricey items found at camp canteens exemplified American consumers' values in an uncertain period of the global war. In addition, selling these items at camp canteen signified an affluent society that the War Department wanted the prisoners to perceive as America's material abundance and economic superiority to any other nation.

Even though some of the items at the POW canteen were not necessarily appealing to the prisoners, the canteen was a place where they could transform themselves into consumers who had choices and power to buy a wide variety of commodities, often with better selections than the civilians. Upon repatriation, nearly all the German prisoners stuffed their duffle bags full of canteen articles they knew their family would need during the postwar occupation.[56] POWs' experience at the camp canteen gave them a hint of what American consumers' life looked and helped their family after the war even temporarily.

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[54] U.S. Department of State, Special War Problems Division, "Fort Robinson Camp, visited by Mr. P. Schnyder, on January 30, 1944," trans. unknown, October 16, 1944, RG 0501, Reel 19, NSHS.
[55] Blum, 97.
[56] Doyle, 184-185.

Food at POW Camps

Based on the provisions of the Geneva Convention, POWs should receive the same food as U.S. enlisted men in quantity and quality. For instance, the menu for Italian POWs at Camp Douglas in January of 1944 included:

> Breakfast: Cereal, whole wheat; Milk, fresh; Bacon; Bread; Jam; Coffee
> Dinner: Beef w/Gravy; Noodles; Mashed Potatoes; Green Salad; Bread; Butter or Oleo [Margarine]; Apple Butter
> Supper: Baked Beans; Vegetable Salad; Bread; Butter or Oleo; Fruit Cobbler[57]

From this menu, it is evident that the Army tried to feed the prisoners balanced meals consisting of varieties of dishes. At the same time, these dishes exemplify ideal American foods that the U.S. government recommended for New Immigrants to consume for their smooth assimilation into the American society.

While the United States abided by the provisions of the Geneva Convention and treated the prisoners with adequate food, it was not necessarily something all the POWs had originally expected from their stay in America. According to Kurt Kohler, a former German POW at Fort Robinson, "we were really treated like a first class [passenger?]. I think we got the same food that military people got around here. And this was real fair and excellent treatment. I cannot complain about it."[58] Although the POWs could obtain enough food at the camp, Kohler's remark about his treatment might not be free from bias because he made this comment more than thirty years after the war. This time gap might have made him focus on favorable aspects of his captive life in America, glorifying the U.S. material abundance especially because food and material shortage became a norm in postwar Germany.

In reality, not every prisoner of war was happy with the foods served in the camp even if they were generous in amount and balanced in nutrition. Historian Arnold Krammer observes that due to the differences of the dietary preferences, American rations did not satisfy some prisoners and led to the waste of food during the early stage of their camp life. Because of that, if prisoners were to receive food more to their liking, the government reasoned, they would eat more and throw away less.[59] Since the Geneva Convention also

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[57] Headquarters, Prisoner of War Camp, Douglas, Wyoming, "Italian PW Menu for January 1944, for the 2nd, 12th and 22nd Days," January 1944, Douglas POW Camp File, C. A. Knefel Collection, Box 3, Pioneer Memorial Museum, Douglas, WY.
[58] Kurt Kohler interview by Van Nelson, June 13, 1978, Fort Robinson, Crawford, Nebraska, RG 1517.AM, Box 12, Fort Robinson Collection, NSHS.
[59] Krammer, 49.

pointed out that prisoners should be able to prepare their own meal if situations permitted, POWs eventually enjoyed their familiar food prepared by their own cook rather than eating American food prepared by American cook.[60] It became a win-win attempt for prisoners and the Army alike. Through preparing their own food by themselves to their liking, prisoners could gain some more agency in captivity and embrace their cultural identity associated with foods familiar to them. By allowing the prisoners to do so, the Army could also minimize food waste as well as saving some manpower that had been expended for preparing prisoners' meals that did not always satisfy everyone's palate.

Not only could POWs enjoy meals prepared by their own cook, but also the quality of those foods soon drew attention from Army officers and local people alike. At Douglas POW Camp, according to former Army personnel H. G. Gasbarre, "The food in the camp mess hall was awful, but the food in the German compound was terrific…. The food was so good, that our colonel requested the German cooks to come fix meals in our mess hall."[61] At Fort Robinson POW Camp, German cooks also baked cakes for the U.S.O. in the neighboring town of Crawford and the women in town had never tasted such extraordinary cake and managed to get themselves into bakery classes with POWs in one of the kitchens at the post.[62] It reveals not only men but also women in the hosting community had regular interactions with POWs.

As opposed to the popular wartime image of Rosie the Riveter and women's social advancement she represented, most women nationwide, including those living in the Great Plains, remained housewives. According to historian R. Douglas Hurt's study, seven out of eight women nationwide remained home in 1944 when the wartime employment reached its peak.[63] As homemakers, learning new recipes with available ingredients could be also counted toward home improvement and women's competency. Rather than clinging onto the

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[60] U.S. Department of State, Special War Problems Division, "Prisoner of War Camp, Fort Robinson, Nebraska," August 4, 1944, RG 0501, Reel 19, NSHS; "Article 11, Food and Clothing of Prisoners of War," Conventions Relative to the Treatment of Prisoner of War, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Geneva, July 27,1929, https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/Article.xsp?action=openDocument&documentId=8E9C103689020E3BC12563CD00518DED.
[61] H. G. Gasbarre, "POW Camp, Douglas, WY–Memories of H. G. Gasbarre" (n.d.), Douglas POW Camp File, Box 29, Pioneer Memorial Museum Archives, Douglas, WY.
[62] Samuel L. Mitchell interview (interviewer unknown), 1979, RG 1517.AM, Box 12, Fort Robinson Collection, NSHS.
[63] Hurt, 84.

preconceived fear of foreign POWs and avoiding everything associated with them, women in the hosting community were open to the idea of taking cooking lessons from the prisoners. To these women, some of the German POWs' identity as great cooks from whom they could learn new skills had more value than their enemy prisoners of war status.

Salvaging Food and Material in the Camp

Whereas pricey items like watches were available at the POW camp canteen and generous amount of food was served in camp mess halls, the War Department required the prisoners and U.S. Army personnel alike to routinely salvage material in the camp. The Army believed that many shortages which were handicapping the American war effort could be greatly relieved by the salvage of all reusable material.[64] Because of that, they created detailed instructions for salvaging both waste foods that could be still used for animal foods or fertilizer and reusable material such as paper, glass, metal, textile, rubber, leather, and wooden boxes and crates.

These salvaging movements at POW camps resonated with American social trends to produce more and spend less by being time and cost effective. On the home front, people were bombarded with messages asking them to be frugal, to recycle, and to produce at home more of what they consumed.[65] Rationing was also meant to be a symbolic, patriotic action demonstrating public commitment, a sense of community, and democratic ideals.[66] Therefore, American society perceived those who wasted recyclable materials or did not cooperate with a community's scrap metal drive as selfish and even unpatriotic.

In one sense, American society needed a scapegoat for their sacrifice in rationing and material shortages that became a wartime norm although these food regulations were not as bad as commonly thought. Historian Neil Wynn claims that even though rationing and shortages did occur in wartime America, rationing since 1942 was intermittent and limited to some twenty items; rationed items were also acquired through the black market, the use of which a considerable number of Americans felt was justifiable.[67] Even so, people paid much

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[64] Headquarters, Prisoners of War Camp, Douglas, Wyoming, "Administrative Memorandum, No 6: Salvage of Waste Material," Douglas POW Camp File, Pioneer Memorial Museum, Douglas, WY.
[65] Terrence H. Witkowski, "The American Consumer Home Front during World War II," *Advances in Consumer Research* 25, no.1 (1998): 568.
[66] Hurt, 121.
[67] Neil A. Wynn, "The 'Good War': The Second World War and Postwar American Society," *Journal of Contemporary History* 31, no. 3 (July 1996): 468-469.

more attention to what they could *not* obtain rather than what they could still get during the war. Prisoners of war enjoyed more food and commodities than civilians through legitimate means and that led to discontent of some people who thought enemy POWs were given more than what they deserved by the U.S. government.

While many POW camps aimed at salvaging reusable items as civilian households did, one newspaper in Cheyenne, Wyoming, reported in May 1944 that the Douglas POW camp wasted meat products. An article in *Cheyenne Tribune* noted that, "a gasoline and torch was applied to 150 moldy hams and 78 hindquarters of beef on the grounds of the Douglas POW Camp."[68] For Army officials in charge of camp administration at Douglas, it was an insult to be reported that they were wasting food while civilians could not obtain as much food as they could, especially meat. Captain C. F. Knefel, director of the supply and service division at Camp Douglas, made an emphatic denial of the newspaper's charge of wasted meat. In addition to Captain Knefel's denial of the newspaper's report, a thorough investigation by a joint committee of the Douglas Kiwanis and Lions Clubs revealed that the article was completely erroneous and that rather than wasting foods, extreme conservation was the norm at the camp.[69]

As a supporting note to the investigation, by the time first POWs arrived, Douglas POW Camp Headquarters had already published guidelines to salvage specific waste materials in the camp. For instance, it instructed: "Bones, including those boiled for soup stock, and all meat scraps will be placed in a can marked BONES, MEAT SCRAPS from which they will be collected daily… by a contractor."[70] In addition to meat waste, the guidelines repetitively emphasized the need to salvage all the grease by instructing that "No grease which can be used by the kitchen will be discarded as waste," and "Surplus kitchen grease… will be collected by a contractor to be delivered to a rendering plant. These collections can be made as often as the cans fill."[71] Even though the investigation proved that Douglas POW Camp did not waste meat, a report of possible wasting of meat at the Army

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[68] "Camp Official Denies Any Destruction of Fresh Meats," *Douglas Budget*, May 25, 1944.
[69] "Cheyenne Tribune's Charges of Meat Burning at Local Prisoner of War Camp Erroneous, Committee Reveals," *Douglas Enterprise*, May 23, 1944.
[70] Headquarters, Prisoners of War Camp, Douglas, Wyoming, "Administrative Memorandum No. 6: Salvage of Waste Material," August 26, 1943. Douglas POW Camp File, Pioneer Memorial Museum, Douglas, WY.
[71] Ibid.

facility must have upset the locals in the area who were coping with rationing and hosting a POW camp both as a form of their patriotism and sustenance for local economy.

In general, people in rural areas cooperated in conserving food and salvaging material, but they were not prepared to sacrifice more than others in terms of rationing, and their grievances became the most vocal in relation to the rationing of beef and gasoline.[72] This is understandable as many states in the West, especially in the Great Plains, were traditionally beef country and thus beef was an integral part of their daily diet, while gasoline was indispensable for those living in remote area for transportation and operation of farm equipment. As historian Antonio Thompson maintains, soldiers received more meat in their diet than the average citizen, and POWs also became entitled to this privilege and comforts.[73] Also, as historian Paul Fussell argues, "the culture of war" made people pretend that a military was a force for some kind of social good.[74] Therefore, Americans understood that their soldiers deserved more and better food for their service to the nation while civilians had to scrimp. While it would have been interpreted as an unpatriotic and un-American act if civilians had criticized the Army for citizens' inaccessibility to some food items, enemy POWs could become an easy target of Americans' discontent toward the sacrifices they made. It would have been even more the case if there was a possibility of wasting symbolically important food such as meat in a camp. Therefore, like their accessibility to more commodities at the POW canteen, prisoners' equivalent treatment with the U.S. soldiers in terms of daily sustenance frustrated some civilians.

German POWs' Food Became Downgraded

Despite occasional complaints from the civilians, POWs did receive sufficient food during their incarceration, but things changed once the war in Europe approached an end. In 1945, the U.S. government drastically reduced POWs' menus to counter the increasing charges that the Army was "coddling" the POWs and because meat and other food supplies were rapidly being exhausted by the demands of U.S. armed forces.

Whatever the merits of the food conservation program to the war effort would have been, most of the public believed that the new policy was the War Department's response to

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[72] Hurt, 145.
[73] Thompson, *Men in German Uniform: POWs in America during World War II*, 59.
[74] Paul Fussell, "The Culture of War," *Society* 33, no. 6 (1996): 55.

revelations of Germany's poor treatment of its American prisoners.[75] The treatment of American POWs by Germany was worse than what the United States offered to their Axis POWs. On June 5, 1945, the camp administration at Fort Robinson released a memorandum mentioning that a "Prisoner of War will not be subsisted on regular Army rations except under the most extenuating circumstances."[76] The memorandum served as a reminder of instructions from regional Army headquarters in Omaha a month earlier explaining that, "In view of the world shortage of certain commodities, and increased demand upon American stocks, the ration scale established herein will be put in effect immediately."[77] Paradoxically, though, the instruction clarified that, "This directive applies only to the feeding of German prisoners of war. Separate directives will be published for the feeding of Italian and Japanese prisoners of war."[78] If food conservation was the main goal of downgraded ration for POWs, it was a confusing decision to use separate directives for Italian and Japanese POWs. Based on that, it is more plausible that Army's major purpose was to treat the German POWs as close as the German government treated the American POWs.

The instruction from regional headquarters even specified which part of meat would be issued to the German prisoners. It mentioned, "Meat from swine will be limited to feet, hearts, livers, kidneys, tails, neck bones, salted pork, fatbacks, dry salt bellies, and oily pork not acceptable to under existing specifications for Army feeding." Also, beef available for POWs' consumption became subpar: "Meat from veal will be limited to utility grade carcasses and hearts." In addition to meat, "Fish will be limited to the cheaper grades of salted or round dressed fish."[79] With these drastic changes in the food German POWs would receive, the War Department made it clear that America took it very seriously that Germany did not give sufficient food to American POWs. To the War Department, it was German authorities but not American counterparts to be blamed for German POWs' suddenly reduced food in quality at the camp. American society supported the idea that German POWs would

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[75] Krammer, 240.

[76] Army Service Forces Robinson Quartermaster Depot, Remount Fort Robinson, Nebraska, "Administrative Memorandum Number 54, Prisoner of War Feeding," June 5, 1945, RG 1517.AM, Box 12, Fort Robinson Collection, NSHS.

[77] U.S. Department of War, Army Service Forces Headquarters Seventh Service Command, "German Prisoner of War Menu," Omaha, NE, May 8, 1945, RG 1517.AM Box 13, Fort Robinson Collection, NSHS.

[78] "German Prisoner of War Menu."

[79] Ibid.

not deserve the sacrifice the civilians had made through rationing even if it was not the German POWs' fault.

Even though the Army downgraded German POWs' rations, prisoners felt they were still better off compared to the food situation back in Europe. According to Hans Waecker, a former POW at Fort Robinson, "For a while our more fancy [*sic*] rations were cut. For instance, instead of chicken we would get herring that we would have to marinate" although that situation was short-lived. Waecker also mentioned, "Physically, nobody could complain about anything. As a matter of fact, I used to say, 'of course you beef, but once you get home and have been with your wives and girlfriends for a while, you'll wish you were back at Fort Robinson.'"[80] Waecker perceived it was fortunate that at a POW camp, they still had food to eat and did not have to share one person's portion with family members. Alois Siegmund, a former German POW, recalled that at Fort Robinson he was treated very well, "except for a few days right after the war ended." He felt this was because stories came back from American prisoners in Germany that they had not been given much food to eat. Siegmund thought this was a problem because at that time there was very little food anywhere in Germany and "the German soldiers weren't getting much to eat either."[81] In that sense, rather than they did not feed American POWs enough food on purpose, Germany *could not* treat American POWs as well as the standards of the United States. This fact was kept secret as a nation's food stock rate would be correlated with that county's capability to continue the war. If national soldiers did not get enough food from their nation at some point, that likely meant their country was depleting available resources and losing the war.

Until the surrender of Germany, the U.S. government mostly abided by the Geneva Convention and treated the POWs in a fair manner. They failed to remain consistent with that measure when the broader public got extremely upset at the poor treatment of American soldiers by the German government. It appears that the U.S. government reduced POWs' rations to divert American society's criticism toward their government for being so generous to the enemy prisoners of war. In that sense, the War Department tried to save their face by abruptly downgrading German POWs' food.

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[80] "Ex-German Prisoners Return," *Star-Herald* (Scottsbluff, NE), August 22, 1987.
[81] "Fort Robinson Prisoner of War Camp Revisited," *The Northwest Nebraska Post* (Crawford, NE), October (date unavailable), 1987.

Drawbacks of Treatment

Although POWs' treatment in the camp was generally fair and they could obtain most of the necessary supplies with occasional envy and criticism from civilians, it could not really fulfill their urgent need to be informed about the whereabouts of their loved ones. To prove that, the only complaint the German spokesman at Fort Robinson had to offer about POW camp was lack of mail.[82] While POWs were allowed to write and receive mail, each prisoner of war could send only one letter and one postcard per week.[83] Since they did not have any other alternatives to contact their family and friends back home, sending and waiting for mail frustrated the POWs because of frequent delays, losses, and censorship of the content by the authorities.

According to a report of a camp visit to Fort Robinson in March 1944, approximately sixty percent of the prisoners of war had received no mail from Germany since their capture. In North Africa they had received instructions from the American authorities to inform their friends and relatives in Germany that letters might be addressed to them in the United States in care of Provost Marshal General; it turned out, however, few letters had been forwarded by the Office of the Provost Marshal General.[84] Because the arrival of the first POWs in Fort Robinson was November 1943, many of the prisoners had to live without any updates from their family and friends for months. Delay or loss in mail delivery was a persistent issue at many POW camps in the United States because incoming and ongoing mail always faced censorship on both sides of the belligerents.

According to Karl Dehyle, a former German POW at Fort Robinson, even if he wrote letters, his message could not be delivered intact because of the censorship. He mentioned, "I wrote letters home, about both the positive things and the negative. Later I learned that some of the positives were stricken out by the German Censorship."[85] German authorities did not want its citizens to know how well the POWs in the United States were treated in comparison

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[82] Office of Provost Marshal General, Prisoner of War Division, "Report of Visit to Camp," December 19-21, 1943, RG 0501, Reel 18, NSHS.
[83] *Prisoner of War Camp Fort Robinson Nebraska Guard Regulations*, by John W. Rogers, 2nd Lieutenant, CMP, Adjutant, October 1943, RG 0501, Reel 18, NSHS.
[84] U.S. Department of State, Special War Problems Division, "Prisoner of War Camp, Fort Robinson, Nebraska," March 28, 1944, RG 0501, Reel 19, NSHS.
[85] "Notes on Statements Made by Former German Prisoners of War on Saturday, August 22, 1987, at Fort Robinson Nebraska," based on an interview by Thomas R. Buecker, notes taken and compiled by Sally Fletcher Luther. NSHS, RG 1517.AM, Box 12, Fort Robinson Collection.

with German civilians' quality of life. Any positive news about the United States from German soldiers would pose a threat to Nazi propaganda that portrayed America as a nation of "decadent democracy."[86] By the term decadent democracy, Nazi officials likely tried to depict an American society that prioritized individual freedom to pursue self-interest under the name of democracy while discounting the common good. Decadent democracy made the rich richer and the poor much poorer and widened social inequality and disadvantaged people of color who did not have enough economic opportunities and thus remained second-class citizens.

Although POWs' living conditions and treatment in the camp were generally satisfactory for most POWs except for the delay in mail delivery, they could not be free from daily concerns their prisoners of war status created. According to Hans Waecker, a former German POW at Fort Robinson, the treatment and the camp environment at Fort Robinson was excellent, and life as a prisoner was superior to their civilian status in Germany because they had three meals a day, entertainment, intellectual pursuits, and hot and cold water. Waecker said his biggest hardship, however, was "the uncertainty as to when the war would be over," as opposed to a general idea that even a criminal in prison knew he would be incarcerated for a given number of years.[87] Therefore, POWs experienced dual psychological stress in captivity; like any civilian in any place, they were uncertain when the war would be over, and until the war ended, they could not leave the camp and reclaim their civilian status with full freedom.

Religion at POW Camp

When the prisoners were in desperate need of moral support, religion and religious leaders played a significant role in POWs' life in captivity that material aspects of camp life could not always fulfill during their uncertain period of imprisonment apart from their family and friends. Even if the religious facilities at many POW camps were not necessarily elaborate spaces, many German and Italian men expressed their need for emotional support and thus religious services gradually permeated into the prisoners' camp life.

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[86] U.S. Department of War, *Facts vs. Fantasy*, War Department Pamphlet No. 19-2 (Washington D.C.: War Department, 1944).
[87] Dodd Hall interview with Former German POWs at Ft. Robinson, Crawford, NE, August 22, 1987, RG 1517.AM, Box 12, Fort Robinson Collection, NSHS.

Although chaplain and clergy could be found among the POWs, some local religious leaders were willing to help the newly arrived POWs to establish their new life in a camp. According to Wolfgang Dorschel, the second camp spokesman at Fort Robinson,

> The second day at the camp, a civilian priest came up to the camp, that was the Father Albel from Crawford…. he asked me if he could do anything for us. Well, I told him some books in German, something to play in the barracks and if possible a soccer ball. The next day he came again and had not much but the PW's had been happy. He asked me too if he should have a service the following Sunday…. So what I did I went from barracks to barracks, and told all PW's that there would be a Catholic service on Sunday and this civilian priest from Crawford who had taken care of books and the soccer ball would take care of the service and I felt that all Catholic PW's should visit this service and other ones, the protestant too to thank this priest for his kindness.[88]

While the local priest's act alleviated the POWs' psychological stress through religious support, it also made the locals feel more secure about the prisoners as the Father proved that the majority of the POWs were devout Christians like many residents in the area. Religious devotion became a common language for the people on both sides of the barbed wire who lived the wartime with uncertainty.

Like prisoners of war in camps, more American families sought emotional support in religion during the wartime. As families looked for meaning in their sacrifice, the sale of religious books soared, and attendance at worship services also grew during the war.[89] In one sense, pan-Christianity between the POWs and locals helped them discover that they had more commonality than disparity between their cultural backgrounds. The early sociologist Émile Durkheim once argued society was the manifestation of people's religious worldview, which simultaneously meant society worshiped itself. Social codes, customs, practices, and ideals were built upon religious values and thus one's religious practice led to endorsement of his or her society, and vice versa. Therefore, religion served as a backbone of the society, and society also reinforced religious values and practices through people's collective observance of holidays and events.

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[88] "Extract from letter of Wolfgang Dorschel, former PW, Regarding Father Albert Albel at the Camp," August 29, 1994, RG 1517.AM, Box 13, Fort Robinson Collection, NSHS.
[89] Whitman, *V Is for Victory: The American Home Front during World War II.*

In this sense, pan-Christianity between POWs and residents allowed them to belong to the "moral community" in which a group of people shared a common moral philosophy.[90] Durkheim meant that a Church was the representation of the moral community that adhered to everyone who shared the same religious belief. If prisoners held respect to a local priest who served as a moral guide of the community, then they were eligible for their membership in the moral community of the locality where they served as a leader. When former German POW Hans Wollendorf revisited Fort Robinson in 1975, he said that during the first months in the camp they were treated like prisoners, but thereafter they felt like "part of the community" and the Crawford people eventually became friendly to the prisoners and even took up a collection to purchase Christmas gifts for the prisoners.[91] For local Christian residents, the possibility that the POWs spending the holiday in the camp far from their families was regrettable once they started perceiving the prisoners as good fellow Christian neighbors.

While they were incarcerated in the camp, regular religious practices and special events gave the prisoners a sense of normalcy in their captive life as well as reinforcing their cultural identity. At the same time, POWs' religious devotion appeared as a sign that most prisoners desired peace of mind rather than conflicts with others, enabling the hosting community to perceive that most of the captive men in their vicinity were more like "us" to residents.

Like the priest who built friendly relationships with the prisoners, locals realized POWs were not necessarily a threat to their community and developed mutual interest and fondness. For example, at Camp Atlanta in southcentral Nebraska, hardly any locals were afraid of the prisoners or concerned their own safety by hosting a POW camp in their neighborhood. "There was never any scare," local resident Art Oelkers said, "people [in town] would stand by the fence [of the camp] and talk to them [POWs]."[92] Oelkers' recollection tells that the security of the camp was relaxed and none of the Army, local citizens, and prisoners themselves imagined POWs would do any harm. It may not be always the case for other POW camps, but psychological distance between the European POWs and

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[90] Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life,* trans. Joseph Ward Swan (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications Inc, 1915, 2008), 47.
[91] "Fort Robinson Prisoner of War Camp Revisited," *The Northwest Nebraska Post*, September 1987.
[92] Schmeckpeper, 74.

locals was not that great in many small towns. In historian David Kennedy's words, the Pacific War was a war of distances measured culturally as well as geographically.[93] That meant, anything associated with Japanese culture, including people with Japanese ancestry, was perceived by the American society to be incompatible with American ideals. As opposed to that, European POWs were not culturally distant from Americans especially in small towns in the rural West. Many locals and POWs had commonalities in European origin and Christian ideals, which led to pan-white and pan-Christian fraternity between the locals and prisoners in hosting communities.

Conclusion

Overall, most prisoners of war in the United States could enjoy relatively fair treatment in POW camps even though they had occasional issues and that was also the case for the prisoners of war detained in Douglas and Fort Robinson POW Camps. American society and hosting communities accepted POW camps mostly in a positive manner with some occasional discontent toward the POWs' good treatment, especially about their easier access to rationed commodities while wartime regulations required Americans to do without some items they wanted. Yet for many locals, hosting POW camps meant wartime economic opportunity, as well as showcasing their patriotism and contribution to the war effort.

Although POWs had been uncertain about how their life as captives in America would look like, prisoners perceived they were mostly treated well by their captors. Soon they figured out, however, their biggest threat in America was neither the U.S. Army personnel nor American public. The more prisoners adapted to their captive life in America, the more it became evident that some men tried to transform POW camps into a space they could dominate with their political convictions.

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[93] Kennedy, 810.

Chapter 2

Prisoners' Misdemeanors and Ideological Divides: POW Camps Were Not Always United but Contested Space

Once prisoners of war settled into POW camps, they started their new collective life and daily routines as captives instead of as soldiers. Although minor troubles were common in many POW camps, prisoners mostly behaved and did not pose serious threats to the Army and the hosting communities. In reality, however, that did not always mean all the prisoners got along with their cohorts or lived harmoniously in camps. For some groups, incarceration as POWs was not a time to cooperate with their fellow prisoners but rather a time to blame and oppress others for their unwillingness to think and behave the way they did. To the U.S. Army as a captor with authority, POWs collectively appeared Other in terms of their ideology and nationality. But if they had more thoroughly examined each prisoner's background, they would have noticed prisoners were composed of multiple Others who should not have been mixed in the same space.

Minor Offenses by POWs

While general POW camp operations ran smoothly, misdemeanors by the prisoners inside the camp compounds were common and disciplinary actions were taken against them on a daily basis. No matter the cause of the trouble, the Army normally put POWs in confinement and gave them only bread and water. As long as the charge was not serious, the average term of confinement was three days, with two meals of bread and water and one hot meal per day.[1] It is worth noting that many camp reports did not use the word "punishment" very often when they referred to disciplinary measures taken against prisoners. In the provisions of Geneva Convention, articles regarding the prisoners' penal sanctions used the term "disciplinary punishment" profusely although the Convention did not offer clear-cut definition of what it meant by "disciplinary punishment" for the prisoners of war. Because of that, it was contingent upon the detaining power's interpretation, and it appears that the War Department almost intentionally avoided using the term "punishment," superficially creating an impression that the United States treated enemy prisoners of war with respect. That way,

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[1] U.S. Department of State, Special War Problems Division, "Prisoner of War Camp Scottsbluff, Scottsbluff, Nebraska" March 17, 1944, RG 0501, Reel 19, NSHS.

the U.S. government expected the equivalent treatment for the American POWs detained by the Axis powers.

Although many Army personnel and prisoners maintained good relationships, on some occasions cooperation between the captors and captives became greater than it should have been if both sides found advantage in breaking a rule. At Camp Douglas, some of the prisoners earned extra money by setting up and running several stills. These stills were never confiscated even though parts of them were discovered during inspections. American enlisted men even supported the project by purchasing some of the product. The POWs' liquor was well received by Army personnel. It served to "boost the morale of the camp."[2] This is a paradoxical justification made by Army men to purchase POWs' liquor; obviously, the captors should not have allowed prisoners to bootleg, and it was out of the question to pay POWs for their liquor. If locals had heard about this, their trust in the Army's discipline would have been damaged since residents expected Army personnel to be professional and efficient in the camp rather than regularly consuming POWs' secret liquor to uplift the ambiguous "morale" of a camp. Because civilians could not get as much alcohol due to wartime rations, Army enlisted men and POWs' collaboration in the moonshining business could have been severely criticized to be unpatriotic and demeaning had this information become available to the public.

Although it was against War Department's regulations, each POW camp treated prisoners' moonshining projects differently. As opposed to Camp Douglas, Fort Robinson did not turn a blind eye to POWs' bootlegging business. According to Hurt Fiege, a former Army official at Fort Robinson POW Camp, alcohol was detected on the breath of a prisoner one time, and the Army suspected that the still was in the compound, found it, removed it, and destroyed it.[3] Therefore, even though the Army staff at Fort Robinson found out that the prisoners made themselves good liquor, they did not choose to help the POWs with their moonshining, reminding them that they could obtain alcohol at POW canteen.

As each camp's reaction to prisoners' moonshining project illustrates, Fort Robinson POW Camp was stricter than Douglas POW Camp against POWs' misbehavior and that was

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[2] Lowell A. Bangerter, "German Prisoners of War in Wyoming," *Journal of German American Studies* 14, no.2 (1979): 81.
[3] Hurt Feige interview by Van Nelson, July 2, 1980, Fort Robinson, RG 1517.AM, Box 12, Fort Robinson Collection, NSHS.

likely attributed to camp commanders' approaches. At Fort Robinson, the security of the POW camp compound had been rather lax during its inception along with the policies of the first POW camp commander. Things changed once the camp welcomed Colonel Arthur Blain as a new camp commander in summer of 1944. Soon after Colonel Blain's arrival, he ascertained that the prisoners of war were rarely searched on return to the compound from labor detail, and thus he decided to administer a general "shake-down" in the quarters. In this search, an almost unbelievable number of improvised knives, nippers and other articles made from metal were found and confiscated even though the prisoners of war objected to such procedure.[4] Although Colonel Blain's concern about the lack of regular inspections was valid and proved that POWs had multiple chances to procure "unauthorized" items, it does not necessarily mean that the prisoners carried these items in hope of causing subversive activities or making escape attempts. Some prisoners wanted to possess these items just because they were handy tools, or they could serve as valuable trade items between the prisoners and guards in the camp.[5] Even if prisoners kept metal items as weapons, it does not necessarily mean they had intended to attack someone; rather, they hoped to keep metal items for self-defense purposes.

Colonel Blain's concern over POWs' possession of unauthorized items resonated with, or even precipitated what the War Department discovered in 1945. A report published by the Army Headquarters in June 1945 mentioned that at POW camps nationwide, many prisoners of war possessed unauthorized articles, tools, and other implements. Many of these had been stolen, taken from work, or given to prisoners by employers. Because of that, the War Department directed each camp to take immediate steps to ascertain if prisoners possessed any unauthorized articles, and to administer appropriate disciplinary action if they found any.[6] Considering the time the Army Headquarters published this report, however, POWs' possession of such unauthorized articles might have been correlated with upcoming

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[4] U.S. Department of State, Special War Problems Division, Prisoner of War Camp, Fort Robinson, Nebraska," August 4, 1944, RG 0501, Reel 19, NSHS.

[5] Christopher Morine's archaeological survey on the former site of Trinidad WWII POW Camp in Colorado discovered a tin can lid modified into a knife by a POW. In addition, prisoners often exchanged their craft items with Army guards to acquire certain goods they could not easily obtain. Christopher M. Morine, "German POWs Make Colorado Home: Coping by Craft and Exchange" (master's thesis, University of Denver, 2016), 93-4, 106-7.

[6] Headquarters, Army Service Forces, "Prisoner of War—Excess Clothing and Unauthorized Articles," Washington, D.C., June 4, 1945, RG 1517.AM, Box 12, Fort Robinson Collection, NSHS.

repatriation of the prisoners rather than possible sabotage or escape plans. With some unauthorized metal items like knives, some POWs might have tried to create artifacts that memorialized their captive life in America, or they desired to carry metal items to retain some sense of portable security no matter where in Europe they might end up and what they might be required to do.

Therefore, even if the War Department created regulations applicable to all the POW camps in the United States to restrict captive soldiers' agency, prisoners did not always follow these rules passively. They often managed to find collaborators among Army personnel and locals who wanted to pursue their personal interests before observing regulations. Since some camps were more lenient with prisoners' discipline while others were stricter, the frequencies of POWs' misdemeanors varied from camp to camp.

Troubles of Their Own

To POWs, it soon became clear that most of the Army personnel and locals were fair and kind to them. Rather than how the U.S. Army and civilians would treat them, their biggest concern over life as prisoners became more internal in nature. Inside POW camps, some groups tried to dominate camp politics based on their rank in the military or ideological conviction that was deeply intertwined with prisoners' position as ethnic majority or minority in the camp.

As for Italian POWs, even though they experienced fewer conflicts among themselves compared to their German counterparts, they still faced tensions inside POW camps, especially in terms of hierarchical privilege of a few POWs over the rest. While no clear evidence of such tension has surfaced among Italian POWs at Camp Douglas, at Camp Scottsbluff in Nebraska newly arrived Italian officer POWs troubled Army officers by insisting that all orders and communications to and from the prisoners should pass through their hands. Colonel Clyde Dempster of Camp Scottsbluff explained that there were certain policy measures that could not be sent through an Italian officer and that he could not consider an opinion from these officers whom he called "real prima donnas."[7] U.S. Army officers considered the presence of these demanding officer POWs would create an unnecessary confusion in the camp by placing lower ranking prisoners in conflict between

[7] U.S. Department of State, The Special War Problems Division, "Prisoner of War Camp Scottsbluff, Scottsbluff, Nebraska" March 17, 1944, RG 0501, Reel 19, NSHS.

their fellow officers and U.S. Army regulations. While these Italian officer POWs might have intended to serve as intermediaries and still hoped to keep their privilege and leadership inside the camp, the Army did not want self-proclaimed leaders among the POWs who might interfere with the smooth operation of the camp. Because a POW spokesman normally represented all prisoners at each camp and served as an intermediary, the U.S. Army wanted officer POWs to understand their captive status had more meaning in U.S. camps rather than their rank and authority entitled to them in their nation.

As for German POWs, many internal problems were attributed to the ideological dominance of pro-Nazi prisoners over the rest of men who did not always care about National Socialism. As opposed to American society's tendency to regard all German soldiers as hardcore Nazis, not all German POWs were experienced soldiers nor believed in Hitler and National Socialism. Rather, many men had to join the German military out of fear and coercion. Because of that, many German POWs' enlistment was not necessarily proof of their ardent devotion to the Nazism, but rather a choice to avoid much worse treatment by the Third Reich had they refused to join the German military.

In reality, "German" troops that were incarcerated in POW camps in America were not the homogeneous group than the Army's categorized simply as German, Italian, and Japanese men. The Geneva Convention required the detaining power to avoid housing prisoners of different races or nationalities in the same camps and assign the prisoners to respective camps.[8] That meant, it was not necessarily mandatory for captors to incarcerate the prisoners based on their political ideology, which was deeply intertwined with their ethnic identity. Despite that, the War Department had not expected it would be so problematic for some prisoners to be held with ideologues among themselves. As a proof, when the second trainload of prisoners arrived in Fort Robinson POW Camp, a riot ensued among the prisoners. When the riot was subdued by the military police, a Belgium flag was hoisted in front of the barrack by the newly arrived eighty-nine Belgians who were drafted

[8] "Article 9, Prisoner of War Camps," Conventions Relative to the Treatment of Prisoner of War, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Geneva, July 27,1929, https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/Article.xsp?action=openDocument&documentId=0B635321D856363DC12563CD00518DC9.

into the German Army by coercion. The Belgian POWs requested segregation from the Germans, and their request was granted.[9]

Although the War Department separately imprisoned German, Italian, and Japanese POWs as the Geneva Convention mandated, German prisoners, or prisoners in German military uniforms, consisted of diverse nationalities and ethnicities. Because of that, not all the prisoners got along and some groups even despised each other due to their ideological differences and historical backgrounds. In this case, Belgian POWs' display of their national flag became a symbolic act of protesting German dominance over a POW camp as well as their homeland.

In addition to the Belgians, another big group of non-German soldiers who were forced to join the German Army were Austrians. According to Barbara Marshall McMeans, who worked as a secretary at the Camp Atlanta Headquarters Administrative Office, "I remember a small uprising that occurred one night as a group of Austrian prisoners were brought in. It seemed they were conscripted against their will to serve in the German Army, and they had a little set-to with the German prisoners. During the night the American Flag was taken down…. The Austrians were soon shipped out to another camp."[10] In this case, by taking down the U.S. flag, Austrian POWs expressed their discontent and disapproval toward U.S. Army's strategy to herd and place the prisoners clad in German uniforms into the same camp. For Austrian POWs, it probably appeared that the U.S. Army was doing more favors for the German nationals while belittling the differences between the Austrians and Germans.

Therefore, the U.S. Army contributed to the marginalization of non-German groups among the POWs, and the minority groups used multiple national flags to protest German soldiers' dominance in the camp and the Army's insensible normalization of it. Non-German POWs were upset that the U.S. Army focused on POWs' superficialities such as uniforms rather than complicated geopolitical and ethnocultural backgrounds among themselves.

In terms of POWs' military uniform as a quick identifier for the U.S. Army to process the prisoners, Fort Robinson accidentally received a few prisoners of war who were not supposed to be there. According to Samuel Mitchell, a former Army official at Fort Robinson, on the same day the aforementioned eighty-nine Belgians arrived in the camp,

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[9] Samuel L. Mitchell (interviewer unknown), 1979, RG 1517.AM, Box 12, Fort Robinson Collection, NSHS.
[10] "Four Recall Own Stories of Camp Atlanta," *Holdrege Daily Citizen* (Holdrege, NE), October 7, 1993.

> the U.S. personnel had to inspect and search the clothing and possessions of all prisoners. When the prisoners were instructed to disrobe, they complied. However, three German uniformed persons did not comply. They did not seem to comprehend… our linguist was called upon to speak to them. After trying several languages, he discovered they were Italians, and they did comply with his instructions. We later asked them how it happened that they were wearing German uniforms and they said… "Mussolini told us."[11]

This episode reveals that the Army's processing of POWs at the port of disembarkation was somewhat superficial and did not prioritize checking if there was any inconsistency in each captive's true identity by examining documents or interviewing everyone. Although Mitchell's account did not provide the reason why their political leader told them to disguise as German soldiers, German and Italian units collaborated to fight the North African Campaign as Panzer Army Africa under German command and thus some power politics between German and Italian military might have worked on what Italians had to wear. By focusing on what their enemy wore at the time of capture, the War Department allowed enemy POWs to disperse to camp locations throughout the United States without thoroughly checking their true identity.

As the Army had not paid much attention to the ethnic diversity of POWs in German uniforms, they had not really expected POWs' ideological affiliation to be diverse and volatile, either. Historian Arnold Krammer argues that when the War Department felt the need to reeducate them, the most important problem was their failure to plumb the degree and intensity of prisoner's ideology and segregate those prisoners whose attachment to Nazism was transitory and opportunistic from those whose beliefs were deep-seated and unalterable.[12] Therefore, rather than clearly splitting between pro-Nazis and anti-Nazis, there were also groups of prisoners whose political affiliation would be likely modified by war situations, power dynamics in the camp, treatment by the United States, and other circumstances. While WWII German POWs tend to be categorized either as pro-Nazi or anti-Nazi based on their political affiliations, the latter is somewhat nebulous idea. Krammer points out that the term "anti-Nazi" was a loose and "catch-all" label which encompassed nearly any political philosophy short of National Socialism.[13] Considering that, it would be

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[11] Samuel L. Mitchell (interviewer unknown), 1979, RG 1517.AM, Box 12, Fort Robinson Collection, NSHS.
[12] Arnold Krammer, *Nazi Prisoners of War in America* (New York: Stein and Day, 1979), 13.
[13] Krammer, 175.

more appropriate to call some prisoners as “non-Nazi” if they were not supporting Nazism nor bitterly against it, but remained more neutral, ambiguous, or even indifferent about their political beliefs.

According to Alfred Thompson, a former Army interpreter and Staff Sergeant, Nazi influence on the POWs at Fort Robinson was relatively limited. He attributed it to the point that the first large contingent of prisoners, the group that became the nucleus of the within-the-compound administration, was composed of the personnel from the Afrika Korps. And even that contingent was divided essentially into four subgroups. The first and largest group were professional soldiers who were selected by Field Marshal Erwin Rommel for his elite corps. Regardless of their professional soldier status, these men had little political inclination. The second group was a regimental band, a much smaller contingent in which many of the men were professional musicians. Some of them in the band were middle-aged and few had any political convictions which would change their attitudes toward their captors. The third group consisted of men who were serving in the army by compulsion as government employees, holding an equivalent of Civil Service status. These men were compelled to enlist if they were to remain government employees. The fourth group were conscripts of various backgrounds. Some were refugees from Hitler’s concentration camps, given the choice of military service or continued incarceration.[14]

Thompson’s account reveals that against America’s general assumption that Afrika Korps men were fearsome hardcore Nazis, these men were not avid supporters of Hitler; rather, they were mostly non-Nazi or anti-Nazi soldiers. Aside from the fourth group, many Afrika Korps soldiers joined the military out of their occupational status, obligation, necessity, and patriotism that had little to do with Nazi ideology. Also, as the third group illustrates, working for the German government did not mean they wanted to support the Nazi regime, and thus telling that German soldiers’ patriotism and Nazism should not be confused. As for the fourth case, it was ironic that they joined the German military force to avoid incarceration by the Nazi regime but ended up in POW camps in the United States, in which their treatment was relatively humane.

Thompson also noted the presence of some prisoners who tried to prevent the spread of pro-Nazi sentiment throughout Fort Robinson POW Camp. He mentioned that the first

[14] Alfred Thompson statement, November 2, 1989, RG 1517.AM Box 13, Fort Robinson Collection, NSHS.

camp spokesman tried to consolidate his Nazi support, but the Intelligence Office learned early on of his political convictions and objectives through the use of "reliables," particularly the Austrians, political outcasts, and the educated who did not support Nazism.[15] Therefore, some marginalized groups in German POW camp found a means to resist or retaliate against pro-Nazi German POWs' dominance, especially after the Army felt an urgent need to limit the Nazi influence in the camp. Even if they were kept in camps as foreign enemy prisoners of war, POWs' experience inside camps were *not* identical to each other because they acted upon often conflicting political convictions and had different degrees of cooperativeness with their captor.

It appears to be somewhat confusing why the pro-Nazi soldier was selected as the spokesman to begin with, but the spokesperson position was often seized by aggressive Nazis at most of the German POW camps so that they could dominate the POW camps as Nazi domains. At first, Nazi-dominated camps appeared as models of efficiency, and an orderly and well-run camp would give them the continued backing of the American authorities and the continued control over the camp. [16] Because of that, the Army had originally preferred a pro-Nazi faction to lead German POW camps. This trend continued until the War Department realized the significance of reeducating the POWs in a more democratic way and launched an ambitious reorientation attempt called the Intellectual Diversion Program at German POW camps nationwide, which will be further explored in Part II, Chapter 4.

Even though they were less attentive to the ideological and ethnic diversity of the prisoners in German POW camps, the U.S. Army was worried about relations between German POWs and Army staff who had roots in the area occupied by Nazi Germany. Some U.S. Army personnel from the East Coast had Jewish heritage and that could stir concerns of administrative officials to maintain harmony inside camps. At other times, German prisoners and Jewish American officers could get over their differences and contributed to efficient camp administration by observing rules and regulations with respect. According to Wolfgang Dorschel, the second spokesman at Fort Robinson POW Camp, the German government ordered German prisoners of war to use the Nazi salute to all officers including Americans after the attempt on Hitler's life in August 1944. This made Dorschel feel very sorry when

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[15] Alfred Thompson statement.
[16] Krammer, 161.

meeting Captain Silverman because Silverman was Jewish, but the captain reassured him to do as he had to.[17] Like Dorschel, not every German POW was happy to use the Nazi salute, they could not object to the order from their government unless they would not mind being harassed by pro-Nazi leaders. Although the Geneva Convention required the prisoners to salute all officers of the detaining power, it did not prohibit them from using politically questionable salutes.[18] Therefore, German POWs had to follow the decision of their government and Army regulations in the camp without violating either of them. The captain likely understood the dilemma of the German prisoners and perceived the order of the camp was more significant than what German POWs' salute would mean to his cultural heritage and reacted in a professional manner to avoid further conflict.

As Dorschel was upset with Nazi control both in Germany and POW camps in America, he perceived America's interference in limiting Nazi traditions in POW camps positively. In April 1945, which was Hitler's fifty-sixth birthday, he noted, "Thank God the birth celebration [of Hitler] is forbidden by Washington."[19] Dorschel's remark revealed his discontent toward political practices in the camp that reinforced American society's stereotype of all German soldiers to be Nazis. Having built a good relationship with the hosting community through their labor in agricultural fields, symbolic events or practices connected to Nazism such as Hitler's birthday celebration became a nuisance to Dorschel and many POWs who did not support Nazi ideology.

Even though Army personnel like Alfred Thompson perceived that Nazi influence was limited at Fort Robinson and Army officers with Jewish heritage could get along fairly well with German prisoners, POWs could not be entirely free from internal conflicts, and some felt an urgent need to be separated from the rest. Otto Ludwig, an anti-Nazi POW who stayed at Fort Robinson, recalled his hardship of the time that, "they [pro-Nazi prisoners] put some cold water in my bed. And I have been beaten by the other comrades. And yes, they

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[17] Wolfgang Dorschel and Hans Waecker discussion on P.W. Camp, Fort Robinson, Crawford, NE, August 22, 1987, RG 1517.AM, Box 12, Fort Robinson Collection, NSHS.
[18] "Article18, Internal Discipline of Camps," Conventions Relative to the Treatment of Prisoner of War, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Geneva, July 27,1929, https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/Article.xsp?action=openDocument&documentId=8BEF63CFC38B1856C12563CD00518E63.
[19] Wolfgang Dorschel diary entry, April 20, 1945, tran. Ursula Armstrong, Wolfgang Dorschel File, RG 1517.AM Box 13, Fort Robinson Collection, NSHS.

[Army officers] sent me to Camp McCain, Mississippi."[20] As Ludwig's experience illustrates, the Army as captors and the POWs as captives were not always on the same page regarding the in-camp order. Nazi leaders managed to find a loophole in Army guards' surveillance and put psychological pressure on other prisoners by intensively harassing some vocal anti-Nazi prisoners.

Although such cases were rare, pro-Nazi prisoners did not always play the role of perpetrator who threatened anti- or non-Nazi soldiers in POW camps. On February 17, 1944, a riot among the prisoners broke out at Fort Robinson, and six non-commissioned officers requested the commanding officer that they would be placed in protective custody. According to a camp report, "The unrest was caused not alone by reason of an internal conflict between the Nazi and anti-Nazi elements but also by acts of insubordination upon the part of privates who refused to obey the orders of their non-commissioned officers." While these non-commissioned officers were pro-Nazi in their sympathies, "they felt their lives were in danger because they were suspected by the prisoners of having given the names of the leaders of the uprising to the American authorities and were therefore responsible for their transfer from the camp."[21] As this episode reveals, pro-Nazi leaders were not always successful in dominating in-camp politics when other prisoners collaborated to resist their oppression and even struck back. Most men in German POW camps were not Nazi supporters and did not want to be physically and psychologically oppressed by pro-Nazi extremists. Yet they managed to pressure the majority when pro-Nazi non-commissioned officers tried to manipulate the U.S. Army to remove anti-Nazi leaders.

Compared to Fort Robinson, German POWs at Camp Douglas had to go through more conflict-laden moments to live with some avid Nazi supporters. In his study on German POWs in Wyoming, historian Lowell A. Bangerter explains that one of the four compounds at Camp Douglas contained hard-core SS troops, who refused cooperation and had considerable influence on other prisoners. These fanatic soldiers often left their compound at night, cut their way into other compounds and assaulted Africa Korps prisoners. They blamed Africa Korps for General Rommel's defeat, insisting that his troops had not fought

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[20] Otto Ludwig Interview by Tom Buecker, Fort Robinson Museum, Nebraska, September 17, 1987, RG 1517.AM, Box 12, Fort Robinson Collection, NSHS. Camp McCain was a POW camp designated for anti-Nazi prisoners and housed about 7,700 German POWs.

[21] U.S. Department of State, Special War Problems Division, "Prisoner of War Camp, Fort Robinson, Nebraska," March 28, 1944, RG 1517.AM Box 13, Fort Robinson Collection, NSHS.

valiantly enough. As a result of these threats, some prisoners feared for their lives and one young man hid in the attic for nearly a week.[22] At Douglas POW Camp, some hard-core Nazi soldiers acted violently and did not respect other POWs' rights to receive humane treatment inside the camp as stated in the Geneva Convention of 1929 and observed by the United States. After this incident, in order to control such problems, a group of guard dogs was brought to Douglas in November 1944, and the dogs were placed in runs between the double fences around the compounds.[23] Not only individual soldiers but also diverse German military units like the Afrika Korps and the Waffen-SS troops had different political inclinations and did not always get along. Some of them remained belligerent in captivity and actively looked for a cause to attack others whom they perceived to be unpatriotic and unprofessional as soldiers.

As the episode above illustrates, in historian R. Douglas Hurt's words, the soldiers who were not true believers in National Socialism or Fascism became "prisoners among prisoners."[24] As POWs, they no longer had to engage in a physical battle with the Allies, however, some of the prisoners' hostility was re-directed toward those who did not share a political ideology. Until it was banned by the War Department, Hitler's birthday celebration reinforced Nazi dominance over German civil society.

Everyone in a POW camp responded to the pressure from Nazi ideologues differently. Some were passive or receptive and did not take any action while others were openly against it. In many cases, vocal POWs who dismissed National Socialism became an easy target of the Nazi faction in the camp. While there were various reasons, some POW escapes were likely made because they were seriously concerned about their life due to the Nazi threat in the camp. In this sense, they wanted to be free from the oppression by the political fanatics rather than to become free from their physical imprisonment by the United States and its allies.

POW's Escape—What That Meant for Prisoners vs. Americans

Although most POWs were generally satisfied with the treatment they received from Americans, there were those who still dared to escape from the camp. According to historian

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[22] Bangerter, "German Prisoners of War in Wyoming," 79-80.
[23] Ibid.
[24] R. Douglas Hurt, *The Great Plains during World War II* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 339.

Arnold Krammer's study, out of more than 425,000 enemy prisoners of war detained in the United States, 2,222 Germans, 604 Italians, and 1 Japanese managed to escape from POW camps, and all but one prisoner were eventually apprehended.[25] While less than one percent of the Axis POWs in the United States tried to escape, these escapees' motivations were varied and many of the escape attempts were benign in nature. Somewhat surprisingly, Krammer explains that it was legal for the prisoners of war to make escape attempts. In fact, it was their privilege guaranteed by the Geneva Convention of 1929 because a captive soldier was not a criminal and was under no obligation to remain incarcerated unlike civilian criminals.[26] R. Douglas Hurt also states that some POWs tried to escape to return to Europe because they considered it their duty for patriotic soldiers to return to their nation as well as to flee boredom or intimidation by Nazi or Fascist ideologues.[27] Therefore, the motivations for POWs to escape from the camp varied considerably. For pro-Nazi soldiers, on one hand, it was a legitimate and even honorable act to contribute to the war effort of their homeland by proving essential shortcomings in the U.S. Army's capability to manage POW camps. For anti- or non-Nazi prisoners, on the other hand, it became an act of resistance or rejection to the control of the camp by pro-Nazi leaders, or to the regulations of the U.S. Army that required the prisoners to be obedient to their rules, or both of those.

When the escapees were found and captured by the Army and taken back to the POW camp, they did not necessarily have to fear severe punishment. According to the Geneva Convention, theft by a POW, like sabotage and murder, was a criminal offense punishable under the laws of the host nation, and it meant a court-martial in America.[28] On the other hand, prisoners who escaped and were re-captured would be liable only to disciplinary punishment.[29] Therefore, apprehended POW escapees had to stay in the stockade and survive on bread and water for a few days, and then they would be good to go back to their barracks and enjoy regular meals. Owing to the relatively light disciplinary treatment, POWs did not

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[25] Krammer, 146.
[26] Ibid., 115.
[27] Hurt, 334.
[28] Micki Brady, Dan Cotchen, Carolyn Carroll, "Early Life of at Camp Huntsville," *The Enemy Within Never Did Without: German and Japanese Prisoners of War at Camp Huntsville, Texas, 1942-1946*, eds. Jeffery L. Littlejohn and Charles H. Ford (Huntsville, TX; Texas A &M University Press, 2015), 42.
[29] "Article 50, Relations Between Prisoners of War and Authority," Conventions Relative to the Treatment of Prisoner of War, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Geneva, July 27,1929, https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/Article.xsp?action=openDocument&documentId=13EF4D02BB7AF523C12563CD0051906D.

perceive escape from the camp was a serious offense to their captor nor as harmful as committing a theft though it had more impact on American side than their misdemeanors inside camp.

Although POWs' escape was not a daily event at most camps, both Fort Robinson and the Douglas POW Camps had their share. At Fort Robinson, one prisoner fled and made it to York, Nebraska, about 400 miles away from the camp. Freddie Oglesby, who was tending a bar in York reminisced that, "One man came in and wouldn't say anything. He just pointed at a beer." She gave him a beer because she got scared of him. Eventually, a man in town who spoke German talked to him and he admitted he was a POW from Fort Robinson, but to Oglesby and townspeople's relief, the prisoner "very willingly went back [to Fort Robinson when picked up by the guards] because he probably had better treatment there than he did anywhere else."[30] Oglesby's comment was to the point indeed since prisoners of war in America could obtain more food and commodities in a POW camp than civilians and received full medical care at a POW camp hospital. Local newspapers reported this incident and mentioned that the escapee was a 25-year-old from the German navy, trying to get to Canada and had many hand-drawn maps with him but very little money.[31] The POW's escape was reported with a great shock by local newspapers both in York and Fort Robinson area as that meant Army's surveillance was not flawless. Very fortunately to the surrounding communities, POWs did not have regular access to U.S. currency since they were paid money in scrip and that prevented prisoners from traveling like a civilian or purchasing commodities in town. In addition, language barriers and lack of local knowledge made it simply difficult for POWs to continue their escape attempts; if a man in civilian clothes visited a small rural town and acted weirdly, townspeople could not help suspecting his identity and purpose.

At Douglas POW Camp, more POW escapes were reported than Fort Robinson but none of them turned out to be critical. Meanwhile, local newspapers extensively covered the incidents. On October 2, 1944, two prisoners escaped from Douglas's branch camp in Torrington, Wyoming. When captured only a few miles from the branch camp, the two men

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[30] Freddie Oglesby interview in "POWs Work in the Fields." *Wessels Living History Farm*, York, NE, accessed July 18, 2018, http://livinghistoryfarm.org/farminginthe40s/money_04.html.
[31] "German Prisoner Captured Here," *York Republican* (York, NE), May 24, 1945.

thought that they were already crossing the Mexican border.[32] This incident showed the significant gap between the European POWs and the locals in terms of geographical knowledge. Even though most of the POW camps were in rural areas, prisoners could not really fathom the distance between the hosting community and its closest town. Being oblivious of the geography and climate of the area in which they were imprisoned, some prisoners had imagined escaping from a POW camp would be an easy task and it would not be long before they would reach a city.

In another case, in May 1945, three German POWs at Camp Douglas made their escape with the use of papier-mâché dummies and became free, but they were picked up by sheriff while taking a nap in a pasture about twenty miles southeast of the camp.[33] Although the escapees had a clever idea to use paper dummies, it also indicates that, over time, security at the camp became too lax. Army guards did not really care about those who did not show up to the roll call, and that helped the prisoners plot a group escape and succeed in it. Fortunately for the Army guards and the surrounding communities, the fugitives' freedom did not last very long as they were likely more interested in succeeding in breaking the prison rather than pursuing their physical freedom. By the time they got twenty miles away from the camp, they possibly became tired and bored and thus none of them kept an eye on searchers and all took a nap in an open pasture.

Although many German POWs did not necessarily identify themselves as Nazis, American mass culture did not take it as a norm and often reinforced their enemy status when POWs made escape attempts. Upon prisoners' escapes, local newspapers simply called them "Nazis" to stir more sensations and concerns among the locals. In fact, the local newspaper in York, Nebraska, reported on the aforementioned escapee from Fort Robinson that, "The escaped [N]azi prisoner's broken English and mis-matched clothing aroused the suspicions" of the proprietor.[34] The newspaper in Douglas also reported POW escape from Camp Douglas as follows: "The two Nazis… had been spotted Tuesday by a railroad man… and the hunted [*sic*] started at that time."[35] Local newspapers linked all escapees with Nazis, identifying them to be the biggest threat to their community. POWs' escape could be

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[32] Bangerter, 87.
[33] "In Spite of Clever Use of Paper Dummys [*sic*] POW's Quickly Caught," *Douglas Enterprise* (Douglas, WY), May 8, 1945.
[34] "Escaped Prisoner-Of-War Held Here," *York Daily Times* (York, NE), May 21, 1945.
[35] "Escaped Prisoners Have Been Returned," *Douglas Budget* (Douglas, WY), April 12, 1945.

interpreted by American society as a possible sign of espionage or sabotage outside of the camp as well as their intense hostility toward their captor.

Aside from the American side's reactions, German POWs' escape after Germany's surrender could hint at some of the prisoners' unwillingness to be sent back to Europe. These prisoners did not intend to cause subversive activities by fleeing the camp; rather, they wanted to flee from the uncertainty of what their homeland would look like, especially if the prisoners were originally from an area to be occupied by the Soviet Union. Even if pro-Nazi and anti-Nazi conflict in the camp came to an end with Germany's surrender, that simultaneously meant the advent of another ideological conflict in Europe led by their captor and its new ideological opponent.

Conclusion

In an exchange for their full freedom, POWs had materially sufficient life while they were detained in the United States. POWs' biggest concerns did not come from outside, such as mistreatment or harassment by the guards, Army officers, or locals. Rather, ideologues inside the camp posed serious threats for POWs' well-being. To some prisoners it was a blessing to be kept in the POW camp for the duration of the war, while for others their confinement in the camp did not mean their safety until political fanatics among them could be segregated and transferred somewhere else.

As time went by, residents of the hosting community learned that many POWs did not support Nazism or Fascism as opposed to stereotypes created by American popular culture. The attitude of most was that "the German soldiers didn't start the war but Adolf Hitler and some of his bigwigs."[36] Therefore, imagined ideological differences were much wider than the actual difference between the locals and prisoners. Actual ideological differences among POWs were much wider than what Army officials had imagined.

For the duration of the war, tensions between pro-Nazi and anti-Nazi prisoners persisted in many camps. Because the Army had to maintain the camps with the smallest possible drain of Army personnel on the overseas war effort, authorities left internal control of the camp in the hands of the most disciplined prisoner group.[37] At first, this was meant to

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[36] "Fort Robinson Prisoner of War Camp Revisited," *The Northwest Nebraska Post* (Crawford, NE), September 1987.
[37] Krammer, 161.

be the Nazi soldiers who acted upon strict order and disciplines. However, once the War Department realized the need to reeducate German POWs to make them malleable to American democratic ideals, anti-Nazi POWs were considered to be more suitable to lead the camp. While the War Department had originally perceived German POWs as an ideologically homogeneous Other, in-camp conflicts between these prisoners revealed that multiple ideological Others existed in a single camp and often competed against each other.

Part II

Getting into a Rhythm of Captive Life: Workers in Daylight, Recreationists and Students at Night

Part II focuses on POWs' typical daily routine in captivity. The discussion in Chapter 3 revolves around POWs' labor opportunities in hosting communities and how that impacted local employers' evaluation of POWs *and* non-white agricultural workers—mostly braceros from Mexico—they could hire. In many cases, local employers evaluated POW workers more favorably although evaluation standards were unclear.

This study can contribute to the scholarship on agricultural history and race and labor by examining how local employers evaluated POW workers highly partially because of their in-group bias toward European POWs as white workers. Labor-intensive agricultural jobs were associated with non-white cheap seasonal workers, and white employers, the agricultural industry, and the United States perceived Mexicans as a "disposable workforce."[1] The presence of POW workers—who were included in the white group—in agricultural landscapes induced local employers to evaluate their work performance relative to Mexicans, and vice versa. POWs were engaged in a racialized labor force, which was initially meant to racialize Mexican workers, and thus employers likely wanted to defend POW workers by favoring them as "good" workers.

Chapter 4 discusses POWs' recreational and educational opportunities in camp. It reveals that how these activities were utilized with an ideological apparatus by the U.S. government to democratize German prisoners of war toward the end of the war. This piece adds to the broad scholarly field of the origin of the Cold War as well as the role of ideology in America's foreign policy. In addition, this study intersects with educational history in America. Through the recreational and educational materials, U.S. authorities tried to convince German POWs that American democracy should serve as the guiding principle to restructure postwar Germany. The ultimate purpose of the U.S. efforts to democratize the POWs was to prepare for an ideological war with the Soviet Union.

During POWs' captivity in America, the War Department tried to indoctrinate them with democratic principles by normalizing their daily exposure to what American democracy

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[1] Natalia Molina, "The Power of Racial Scripts: What the History of Mexican Immigration to the United States Teaches Us About Relational Notions of Race," *Latino Studies* 8, no. 2 (Summer 2010): 166.

embodied. In agricultural fields POWs interacted with civilian employers who were expected by the U.S. Army to behave as model American citizens with good work ethic. Back in POW camps, prisoners had recreational and educational activities that aimed at familiarizing them with democratic values such as equality, freedom, and justice. America's intention to incorporate European POWs as prospective members of post-WWII global democratic society revealed its own paradox that excluded racial minority groups from access to legal protection and economic benefits. These points resonate with my argument that European POWs were considered white men in the United States and thus they were welcomed in rural small towns almost as temporary quasi-locals while racial minority groups remained outsiders. What the U.S. government wanted the POWs to witness as reality of American democratic life, therefore, was very inconsistent with experiences of non-white groups during the war.

Chapter 3

Out in the Field: POWs as "Good" Workers on the American Home Front

As the United States got involved in the war, the nation's war effort generated various employment opportunities in the lucrative defense industry and attracted workers who were seeking better economic opportunities. While West Coast cities enjoyed an unprecedented economic boom owing to the war-related industry, many agriculture-oriented rural towns in the West, especially in the Great Plains region, found themselves with a dire shortage of labor.[1] Without enough field workers, farmers in the region faced a possibility of letting the crops go unpicked and rotten despite the soaring national and international demand for their agricultural products. As many job seekers preferred employment at war-related industries such as shipyards, aircraft factories, and aluminum plants, farm owners had to find alternative laborers to meet their high production goals and fulfill their mission to contribute to the nation's war effort from the agricultural heartland.

As a partial solution to replenish the plummeting workforce in agricultural and other non-war related sectors, the War Department authorized Axis prisoners of war to work outside POW camps upon the request of civilian employers. For prisoners of war, the POW labor program enabled them to leave confinement and labor in the agricultural fields and connect themselves with the community and people hosting the POW camps. It also bestowed a sense of fulfilment through physical labor that came with a small monetary compensation, where they could transform themselves from enemy prisoners into willing and vigorous workers. In small rural communities, POWs in agricultural fields became a symbol of the grassroots-level rapport and coexistence after people chose to set aside their ideological gaps that had triggered the war. Even though the U.S. Army required local employers not to fraternize with the prisoners, many locals ended up perceiving the POWs favorably, as boys next door, and treated them in a more flexible and personal manner.

While the POW labor program helped alleviate labor shortages in agriculture, non-white migrant workers, particularly braceros from Mexico, were also engaged in farm work in the rural West during the war. Even though POWs and braceros did not necessarily hold

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[1] R. Douglas Hurt, *The Great Plains during World War II* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press), 323; David M. Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear: The American People from Depression and War, 1929-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 748; Gerald D. Nash, *The American West Transformed: The Impact of the Second World War* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1985), 39, 46-48.

rivalries against each other, local employers were inclined to compare them based on their wage scale, diligence, efficiency, productivity, work ethic, and congeniality to work with. These factors, however, were often subjective and reflected employers' biases. In such cases, POWs often had an advantage to receive favorable evaluations because they shared more cultural commonalities with the locals than bracero workers did. In other words, European POW workers were more appreciated and welcomed in small rural communities that strived in, borrowing sociologist Elijah Anderson's phrase, "the white space."[2]

Demand for POWs as Agricultural Laborer, Mainly Sugar Beet

By the early twentieth century, agriculture in the West was increasingly industrialized and extensively relied on irrigation.[3] Owing to the advancement of irrigation and a suitable climate to grow many crops, farmers in the Great Plains grew sugar beets for major sugar companies in the region such as Great Northern and Holly Sugar. In agricultural historian R. Douglas Hurt's words, along with beef, sugar was the most important food rationed during the war since they were considered "high-status," and thus offered the consumers a sense of "personal success and comfort."[4] In addition, sugar and beef were both high in calories and appropriate for soldiers' consumption as they would burn lots of energy for training and fighting. In her study on the WWII victory garden, historian Alesia Maltz also notes that during the war, "Nutritional policymakers recommended very generous nutritional requirements that were 30 percent above the average nutritional needs," and it was evident that American soldiers' rations were lavish, "with hefty portions."[5] For Americans on the home front, giving up a fraction of these food items for the consumption of U.S. enlisted men was therefore the easiest way anyone on the home front could contribute to the war effort.

During the war, farmers in the Great Plains were advised that they would experience a shortage of ten thousand agricultural workers due to a forty percent increase in sugar beet

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[2] Elijah Anderson, "The White Space," *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* 1, no.1 (January 2015): 10. As discussed in the Introduction, the white space is overwhelmingly white neighborhoods, workplace, and other public spaces.
[3] Nash, 22-23.
[4] Hurt, 131. Although the ranching industry was very active in the region and locals considered beef as daily food with high nutrition, few POWs engaged in ranch work thus it will not be the major focus of this chapter.
[5] Alesia Maltz, "'Plant a Victory Garden: Our Food Is Fighting:' Lessons of Food Resilience from World War," *Journal of Environmental Studies and Sciences* 5, no.3 (2015): 397.

acreage and a corresponding decrease of forty percent of agricultural workers by hiring women and children instead of men.[6]

Sugar beets were a highly labor-intensive crop that demanded long hours of stoop labor. This drastic increase in sugar beet production and rapid decrease in labor led sugar companies to prioritize securing gang labor from somewhere else.

As available free laborers became fewer and fewer in localities, many small towns in the American West hoped that POW labor would be available for employment in the agricultural sector. In rural parts of the West, young able men left to join the war front or work in defense industries. In his classic study about the impact of WWII on the American West, historian Gerald Nash pointed out that Mexicans and African Americans also followed this trend because of the lessening of racial discrimination resulting from the increasing labor shortage in almost every industry.[7] As the wartime economic boom empowered many workers to choose a job rather than to be chosen by employers, farm work became less attractive to many workers because of long hours of demanding manual labor for lower wages. American society of the time pursued more production and profit with fewer laborers in a shorter period, and the nature of farm work did not quite match with an ideal of maximum output with minimum available resources.[8] Another major blow to farmers came from the shortage of farm machinery and equipment. The War Production Board issued a limitation order in October 1942 to restrict the use of steel.[9] Due to this order, farmers in the Plains region who relied on machine-operated cultivation and harvesting had to seek gang labor, which had already become difficult to find in quality and quantity.

During wartime, the High Plains and Rocky Mountain regions became more dependent on agriculture as a major source of income and relied on migrant laborers because these regions secured a relatively small portion of wartime contracts.[10] To secure more agricultural laborers, wages for farm workers increased by 50 percent in Nebraska, averaging $44.25 per

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[6] Hurt, 193.
[7] Nash, 46-47.
[8] Kennedy, 648-654. Kennedy points out that wartime American society prioritized quantity over quality in order to achieve higher production numbers and aspired to the commodification of virtually everything; Gerald D. Nash, *World War II and the West: Reshaping the Economy* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 46-51, 75-76. Nash discusses mass manufacturing techniques in aircraft and in shipbuilding where a large number of unskilled workers could perform just a few simple tasks in assembly-line to produce a plane or a ship.
[9] Nash, *The American West Transformed*, 48.
[10] Hurt, 200.

month with board. Even with such drastic increase in wages, however, farm work did not attract very many workers compared with lucrative war plant jobs. As a proof of that, one airplane plant in Kansas paid $40 per week, and 80 percent of the plant's workers came from nearby farms.[11] Workers at the airplane plant could earn almost the equivalent amount of farm workers' monthly wages only in a week, while many were still able to commute to the plant from home. It is understandable that people chose the better economic opportunity that enabled them to efficiently earn more money and effectively contribute to the nation's war effort. To civilians, America's war mobilization not only meant a just cause to exhibit their patriotism but also a golden opportunity to jump to a higher-paying job.

Local Efforts to Employ POW Labor

To hire prisoners of war outside the camp, hosting communities needed to solve some technical issues. Before the arrival of the first prisoners, local farmers in the Douglas area met to discuss the limitations posed by their status as local employers since the War Department did not intend to make contracts with individual employers. Because of that, they decided to pursue a possibility of contracting with the government as a county-based association. That way, farmers' request of POW labor as well as their resources could be combined to meet the requirements, making it possible for everyone to utilize prisoner labor.[12] Based on that, they organized Converse Labor Inc., to collectively hire POWs. Like Douglas, similar labor associations were established in other hosting communities to secure POW workforce for local employment.[13]

By the time Converse Labor Inc. was launched in Douglas, many POW camps in other parts of the nation were already in operation, and local farmers in those areas employed prisoners for agricultural work. To promote the community's interest and understanding in the benefit of hiring POWs as alternative farm workers, the *Douglas Enterprise* extensively reported on POWs' work performance in farm fields or military posts in other hosting communities. According to the newspaper, many of the prisoners were tradesmen, including carpenters, stone masons, and house painters while others were farmers and using POW labor

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[11] Hurt, 193.
[12] "Possibility of Using Prison Camp Labor to Be Discussed," *Douglas Enterprise* (Douglas, WY), July 27, 1943.
[13] Hurt, 323-324, 327, 328; Arnold Krammer, *Nazi Prisoners of War in America* (New York: Stein and Day, 1979), 89-90.

would be "confined to those operations which require a dozen or more men at one time."[14] For newspaper readers and potential employers, finding information on prisoners' former occupations helped them realize that these captives had been ordinary citizens before the war and eased their concerns about allowing them to work outside of POW camps. Furthermore, prisoners in the field had to be monitored by the guards at all times. The newspaper clarified that, "Being soldiers, they cannot be placed in the custody of a civilian, and it is impractical to send a guard out with small groups."[15] These guidelines proved the validity of organizing a local association to employ POWs as a pool of laborers. And surveillance of the prisoners by the guards allowed farmers to focus on prisoners' work performance rather than worrying too much about them as enemies who were on the loose without confinement.

Prospective employers in Douglas emphasized that POW labor would be "a decided asset to the community," and the use of this labor "within a radius of fifteen to twenty miles, where most of the best potatoes and grain crops are located, would release free labor for use at more distant points, if available."[16] With this idea in mind, local employers planned to use POWs and any available migrant laborers in the most effective way. If locals categorized the crops grown within a radius of fifteen to twenty miles as the "best crops," it was likely they were more attentive to the workers in that area while less interested in those out of the area. That way, POW workers were normally associated with the best crops in the hosting community while free workers were paired with second quality crops.

Based on the guidelines of the War Manpower Commission, farmers had to employ civilian or seasonal workers if they were available. However, by the second year of POW employment in Douglas area, not very many free laborers were available in the area except "two or three Mexican families who were experienced in beet work," and "some 20 Arapahoe Indians … from Riverton [Wind River Reservation]."[17] Therefore, POWs became the dominant workforce in the area, and migrant workers became less and less visible in the local agricultural landscape. Locals accepted the sight of POWs in farm fields as normal wartime scenes in the area and developed a sense of camaraderie toward them.

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[14] "Prisoners of War Are Held in 17 States: Some Work on Farms and Public Projects," *Douglas Enterprise* (Douglas, WY), June 29, 1943.
[15] Ibid.
[16] "Possibility of Using Prison Camp Labor to Be Discussed," *Douglas Enterprise*, July 27, 1943.
[17] "Prison Labor," *Douglas Budget* (Douglas, WY), October 26, 1944.

Work Details: Types of POW Labor and Priority

Even though many local farmers hoped to employ the POWs as soon as possible, at first the War Department did not have a clear sense of how their labor could be possibly utilized. While the Geneva Convention stated that the detaining power could legitimately employ POWs as laborers, the Army weighed the risk of using them and could not determine how extensively prisoners should be allowed to work during their captivity in America.[18] Alfred Thompson, who served as an interpreter and Staff Sergeant at Fort Robinson mentioned that, hypothetically speaking, "the only purpose of PW camps was detention. Little thought was given either to productive employment, diversionary activity or re-education" at the outset. These opportunities, however, became feasible in that order and thus "it was only as an afterthought that prisoners were permitted to engage in employment which earned them about eighty cents per day."[19] Therefore, what the War Department and the broader American society expected from POWs shifted over the course of WWII along with America's political and economic priorities: first and foremost they had to be transformed into docile prisoners, and then productive laborers, and finally good students appreciative of American democratic systems.

Generally, POWs' work assignments were categorized into class one and class two labor based on the type of work details. For class one labor, prisoners were engaged in general post maintenance work, policing, cooking, interpreting, and usual administrative work. For class two labor, prisoners worked on digging potatoes, harvesting sugar beets or corn, and handling supplies for Post Engineers and Quartermasters.[20] Class one labor, or work based at the perimeter of the military post, assigned POWs to take over some positions of American employees so that more American soldiers and civilians would be able to go to the war front or war plant.

Whereas the Douglas POW Camp in Wyoming and Fort Robinson POW Camp in Nebraska were both situated in the agricultural heartland of the High Plains, POWs' labor assignments took different courses at these two camps. Unlike Camp Douglas that provided

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[18] "Article 27, Work of Prisoners of War - General," Conventions Relative to the Treatment of Prisoner of War, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Geneva, July 27,1929, https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/ART/305-430028?OpenDocument.
[19] Alfred A. Thompson note, May 27, 1988, RG 1517.AM, Box 12, Fort Robinson Collection, NSHS.
[20] Office of Provost Marshal General, Prisoner of War Division, "Report of Visit to Camp, 16-19 December 1943, RG 0501, Reel 19, NSHS.

local farmers with POW labor relatively soon after their arrival, Fort Robinson was slow to approve of civilian employment of POWs because the Army wanted to extensively use POW labor for post maintenance work. Initially, the War Department selected Fort Robinson as a site for a POW camp because that would enable prisoners to help with the maintenance of the military post and its thousands of remount horses and mules.[21] According to Glen Wilson, who worked around the corrals at Fort Robinson, "They [POWs] worked all over the post…, washing windows or whatever." Because the prisoners got paid for their work, Wilson reminisced, "it was quite a large turnout of prisoners that did come in." Since the idea to employ POWs at a military post entailed possible risks, Wilson and his coworkers were required to carry an armed weapon when the first POWs came to work. After a while, however, it became obvious that "none of them wanted to leave so they [camp headquarters] weren't too critical about having firearms around to work them anymore."[22] Rather than interpreting the labor program as a chance to subvert their captors, prisoners were eager to work for its own sake to establish new order and gain some wages. Receiving a regular income for their own labor helped empower them by establishing new identity as workers.

While the POWs at Fort Robinson worked on various projects around the perimeter of the post, Alfred Thompson vividly remembered one project involving many POWs as follows:

> One of the Commanding Officers of the main post decided that the creek running through the reservation was far too tortuous and should be straightened out. To do this he engaged hundreds of German PWs with pick and shovel to cut out the bends in the creek at a cost of eighty cents per day per man, an adventure which took several months at a cost of many thousands of dollars. Even at best no acres were saved in hoof-bare mule pastures. Yet the Army awarded the CO a citation for excellence for his pet project while many nearby ranchers and farmers begged for labor on their farms and ranches.[23]

It reveals that Thompson was skeptical about this project and perceived that the Army personnel at the fort did not use available POW labor very wisely. As Thompson's account illustrates, Army officers prioritized their own projects over civilian employers' request to use POW labor for more agricultural production. To some residents in the area, it was a

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[21] "POWs Far from the Battleground," nebraskastudies.org, 2018, accessed August 27, 2018, http://www.nebraskastudies.org/1925-1949/pows-far-from-the-battleground/.
[22] Glen Wilson, interviewer unknown, Fort Robinson Museum, Crawford, NE (n.d.), RG 1517.AM, Box 12, Fort Robinson Collection, NSHS.
[23] Alfred A. Thompson note, May 27, 1988, RG 1517.AM, Box 12, Fort Robinson Collection, NSHS.

waste of valuable workforce as well as farmers' own time and cost as they were desperately in need of agricultural workers in volume. Therefore, the Army and residents in the surrounding communities were not always on the same page in terms of how, where, when, and to whom POW labor should be assigned.

Aside from some exceptions as mentioned above, utilizing POW labor at the post helped alleviate the shortage of civilian employees and enlisted personnel to a great extent. Even so, it was often Army officers rather than POWs themselves who received credit for that feat. For instance, one report of the post inspection of Fort Robinson POW Camp described that:

> It was agreed that the enlisted strength at Fort Robinson could be reduced by 125. This reduction was made possible by the excellent use which the Commanding Officer is making of the Prisoner of War labor…. K-9 area contained approximately 1600 dogs and the area was in excellent state of police and its administration was well organized…. This kennel area was being maintained with a very minimum of personnel. Practically all of the labor was being done by some sixty Prisoners of War. Dogs, in general, were in excellent condition and receiving the best of veterinary care and supervision.[24]

Thanks to the POW workers, the fort could drastically cut down the number of enlisted men so that more of them could move to the war front or more strategically important posts. Ironically, that meant Axis POWs contributed to the U.S. Army's war effort by freeing up many enlisted men from tedious duties at the post. It is impressive that barely sixty POWs maintained the kennel of 1,600 dogs in a great condition, which possibly meant each prisoner was responsible for caring for 25–30 dogs. Despite that, the report praised the Commanding Officer's management skill of POW workforce rather than the prisoners' own hard work. As Thompson's account above also illustrates, the Army functioned as a hierarchical agency where in-group favoritism was prevalent especially for higher ranking officers.

POWs Work Outside the Camp

When POW labor eventually became available in hosting communities, both the U.S. Army and local media reminded the residents to take precautions against POW workers on the premise that they would escape if given a chance. In the Fort Robinson area, one local newspaper recommended to residents that their "firearms be secured and automotive vehicles

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[24] Army Service Forces Inspection, 1-9, March 1945, RG 1517.AM, Box 12, Fort Robinson Collection, NSHS.

be locked or attended while the Prisoners of War are employed in the vicinity."[25] As the paper indicated, the surrounding community was uncertain of POWs' trustworthiness at first. By regarding POWs as outsiders whose behavior would be unpredictable and could be dangerous, the local media alarmed residents' relaxed mentality of a small community where everyone knew everyone else and had not acknowledged a need for locking the door.

While local newspapers reminded the residents to secure their belongings from the reach of POW workers, the Army was also cautious about prisoners' behavior outside of the camp and prepared guidelines for civilian employers to deal with POW workers. In the guideline, the Army instructed prospective employers that they:

1. Do not try to gain information from Prisoners of War.
2. Do not believe a Prisoner of War likes you; he does not.
3. Do not think a PW works for you because he likes you. He does not. He works because he is ordered to work.
4. Do not think a PW will not escape if he can. He will.
5. Do not take any written letters, slips of papers, or packages from a Prisoner of War.
6. Do not give them anything. If you want to give them anything, go through the PW Camp Commander.
7. Do not talk to PW's except in the line of duty.
8. Do not employ PW's on any work directly connected with the war effort, such as handling ammunition, supplies destined for overseas …, construction of target ranges or other combat training aids.
9. Do not employ PW's on unhealthful or dangerous work.
10. PW's are accustomed to orders, so give your orders to German leader in charge of the detail.
11. Do not try to discipline PW's on the job. That is the Camp Commander's right.
12. Report any violations of above orders at once to the Camp Commander.
13. You are as responsible for the security of PW's as the armed guards.
14. You must get an honest day's work out of all PW's assigned to you.
15. PW's will be returned to the Loading Area at 1145 [11:45 am] and 1630 [4:30 pm] daily.[26]

These instructions reminded the employers that POWs were national enemies who possessed combat skills and thus they should never trust the prisoners nor show personal interest in fraternizing with them. At the same time, the Army was also concerned about employers' exploitation of POW labor so that they would not go against the provisions of the

[25] "Employment of Prisoners of War," *The Crawford Tribune* (Crawford, NE), December 31, 1943.
[26] United States Army, Quarter Master Corps, "Instructions for Persons Using PW Labor," by Captain John Strawbridge Jr., 1944, RG 1517.AM, Box 12, Fort Robinson Collection, NSHS.

Geneva Convention. Therefore, the Army's guidelines basically told the locals to make contact with the POWs as minimal as possible and to only act as employers and treat the POWs only as laborers. Because the Army was responsible for the security of the community from any threat POWs might cause, they warned the civilian employers to expect the worst-case scenario if they would not follow their guidelines.

The Army emphasized negative stereotypes of the prisoners and depicted them as the antithesis of patriotic American citizens. These instructions objectified the prisoners of war as a group of uncooperative and unapproachable Nazis or Fascists whose sociopolitical values were incompatible with the Americans. Against the rigid guidelines created by the Army, however, many farmers chose to treat the POWs workers in a more flexible manner and that helped them develop mutual trust and friendship.

As local employers felt more and more comfortable with POWs working in their community, they saw less and less need for the accompanying guards to observe the prisoners at work. For example, in Phelps County that hosted another POW base camp in Nebraska, some of the farmers said they did not need the guards because "they just slowed down work by talking to the prisoners." In his annual report for the extension office in 1944, County Agent Russ Batie wrote that, "For most of them [POWs], little favors like coffee for morning and afternoon lunch… would encourage them to greater effort," and POW labor in farm fields went relatively smoothly "unless the prisoner was a Nazi soldier."[27] Based on that, most POWs were honest and willing workers especially when employers offered them a small gesture of kindness. As opposed to that, pro-Nazi soldiers did not like the idea of working for American employers and fulfilled the stereotypical image of the spiteful POWs depicted in Army's guideline for civilian employers. With the few exceptions of actual pro-Nazi or Fascist soldiers, POW laborers proved to the employers that they were far from what the Army portrayed in their guidelines.

Although farmers paid the workers prevalent wages in the locality regardless of their POW, migrant, or civilian worker status, POWs could only earn eighty cents per day and the remaining pool of money paid by the employers was collected by the War Department. Even so, most POWs were grateful about their opportunity to leave the boredom of camp and work

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[27] "County Agent Russ Batie Recalls Camp Atlanta Role," *Holdrege Daily Citizen* (Holdrege, NE), October 7, 1993.

in the hosting community, and employers were appreciative of POWs for engaging in menial but physically demanding agricultural labor with small compensation. Most farmers had confidence in POWs' capability and even trusted them to the point to question the significance of the Army guards for POWs' productive work performance rather than seeing the guards as an intermediary between employers and POW workers.

Who Benefitted from POW Labor Program?

While German or Italian soldiers adjusted to their status as POWs in the United States, images of POWs that many Army personnel and civilians held toward them also transformed from enemy captives to temporary quasi-community members who provided them with an invaluable workforce.

In some cases, employing POWs at military posts initially stirred mixed feelings among officers. Beverly Humbert, a daughter of an Army officer formerly stationed at Fort Robinson, reminisced that due to furloughs of some enlisted men, her father was told that he would have to accept some prisoners to work. "My brother was in Patton's 3rd Army in Germany at the time and my father was not happy about accepting prisoners. However, they worked so hard [that] he didn't want his regular men back."[28] No matter whether some officers resented hiring POWs, they had hardly any other choice of labor, and it was the U.S. Army's own policy to utilize POW labor at the post. POWs' general work performance, however, proved that they were efficient, trustworthy, and valuable once these Army officials could get over with their national enemy status and started to see them as workers.

At Fort Robinson, prisoners performed a variety of tasks at the post; they worked as clerks, record keepers in the offices, and helpers around horses and dogs.[29] POWs became the dominant workforce at the military post and even had to show the returning American soldiers their duties because "the prisoners were the only ones who knew the jobs."[30] There is an ironic twist to the fact that POWs played a major role in the maintenance of military posts and showed the returned G.I.s their postwar work responsibilities. While the War Department hoped POWs would learn about America's democratic ideals during their captivity, the first

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[28] Beverly Humbert, "My Life at Fort Robinson," RG 1517.AM, Box 12, Fort Robinson Collection, NSHS.
[29] Alois Sigmund interview by A. J. Hytrek, May 28, 1971, RG 1517.AM, Box 12, Fort Robinson Collection, NSHS.
[30] Ibid.

task of the returned American soldiers was to learn about their postwar duties from their former enemy.

Regarding civilian response to prisoners of war as farm workers, POW workers were generally welcomed to the community and treated with neighborly hospitality by many local employers. Rather than keeping their contact with POWs to a minimum, most farmers ignored the order by the Army not to feed them. As Nebraska-based journalist and historian Sheryl Schmeckpeper mentions, like any other hired men, "prisoners were invited to dine in the kitchen with their host family – sure to be better meal than the lard sandwiches the camp cook often sent with them."[31] To the local employers, POWs' role as "good farm workers" in the community meant more than their status as "enemy prisoners of war" in America. While young American men went to the war, POWs obtained "quasi-local boy" status for whom farmers were willing to offer their favor and kindness as if these men were their neighbors' sons. As a proof, one farm family near Grand Island Branch Camp in Nebraska, about one hundred miles west of Lincoln, baked a large cake and celebrated one POW worker's birthday (Figure 4). This act by the farm owner meant they perceived POW workers more than a group of men who offered them a temporary labor force. Farm families wanted the POWs to have good experiences in their community and voluntarily played a role of host family.

The U.S. Army reasoned that civilian employment of POW labor would be beneficial not only for local employers but also for the prisoners themselves. Through their work for civilian employers, the War Department hoped prisoners would "closely observe the average American citizen, the way he lives, the opportunities afforded him in the United States, and his relationships with his government and with his fellow citizens."[32] Therefore, the War Department positioned the POW labor program as a prime opportunity for enemy prisoners to personally experience the democratic lifestyle of ordinary American citizens.

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[31] Sheryl Schmeckpeper "Remembering Camp Atlanta," *Nebraska Life* (September/October 2007): 71.
[32] U.S. Department of War, Headquarters, Army Service Forces, *Handbook for Work Supervisors of Prisoner of War Labor*, Army Service Forces Manual M 811 (Washington, D.C.: War Department, 1945), 1.

Figure 4. Young German POW smiling and holding birthday cake.
Photo adapted from *Holdrege Citizen*, October 7, 1993.

At the same time, the Army required civilian employers to behave appropriately in front of the POWs to instill positive images of Americans in prisoners' mind. The Army reminded the employers to be "acquainted with the fact that they represent the United States to the prisoners of war."[33] Through the POW labor program, the War Department hoped Axis soldiers could learn about civilian life in small idyllic communities of the agricultural heartland, which exemplified the quintessential (and mythical) good old America where social issues of race relations and socioeconomic gaps were less visible, if not totally absent, than urban areas. In front of the POW workers, civilian employers behaved as model citizens and mentors who embodied American patriotism, democratic philosophy, neighborly love, and virtue of hard work. Henceforth, POW labor programs functioned as a part of America's ambitious strategy to demonstrate the superiority of its democratic principles and government systems to that of POWs' homeland at individual and local levels.

Moreover, POW labor proved to be economically beneficial not only to the employers but also to the nation's war effort. According to historian Antonio Thompson's study, the estimated total cost of POW labor was at fifty to seventy-five percent of the

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[33] *Handbook for Work Supervisors of Prisoner of War Labor*, 1.

normal wage labor.[34] One local newspaper noted that, "a total of $458,135.98 was paid to the government from April 16 to Sep. 15, 1945 for PW labor from outside using agencies. After deduction for transportation, utilities in branch camps, and pay of prisoners, net earnings were $344,845, 22. Earning from some projects averaged $7.00 per day per man."[35] Therefore, the War Department could collect more than two-thirds of the amount civilian employers paid for POWs' labor as a net income. Historian Ron Robin also points out that the government saved twenty-two million dollars from wages of POW labor paid by the employers in 1944, and they estimated ultimately saving eighty million dollars by using POW labor.[36] Henceforth, the economic benefit of POW labor program was not only limited to the hosting communities but also extended to the entire nation's budget for the war effort. Ironically, America's involvement in the war depleted the pool of free laborers and necessitated the employment of POWs in non-war related industry, and that resulted in the additional income for the War Department to pursue the victory over their countries.

Aside from wages for their labor, the POW labor program offered many prisoners a productive means to survive their incarceration which otherwise was monotonous inside the barbed wire fence. POWs' work assignments became a good refreshment for them by leaving their captive environment and connecting with local people. It gave them a chance to spend their time in America as unconventional helpers and enabled the locals to remember them not only as occupants of the neighboring POW camp but also as their peer workers in the farm fields during a challenging time.

Sugar Beets: Labor Intensive, Highly Prized Cash Crop during WWII

While High Plains farmers grew various crops including potatoes, beans, onions, and corn, nothing was superior to sugar beets in the wartime economic context of agricultural industry in the region. Sugar beets were predominantly grown in the High Plains and Northwest and was a highly labor-intensive crop. Because of that, many POWs incarcerated in these regions found themselves working in sugar beet fields. In the High Plains, Holly

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[34] Antonio Thompson, *Men in German Uniform: POWs in America during World War II*, (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2010), 82.

[35] *Victory News*, Oct. 20, 1945, World War II Correspondence, Newsletters and Photographs, Stewart Library, Weber State University.

[36] Ron Theodore Robin, *The Barbed-Wire College: Reeducating the German POWs in the United States during World War II* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 6. The value of one dollar in 1944 equaled to $14.75 in 2020.

Sugar Company held a large share of sugar refining business and had high hopes for hiring POWs as a solution to harvesting more sugar beets in the absence of enough young civilian workers in the area. According to Hurt, "Holly Sugar refining plants in Wyoming produced 1.5 million bags of sugar annually, employed thirteen hundred workers, and generated $700,000 of income," making farmers and refiners consider sugar as a "vital food stuff that occupied a unique position from a defense standpoint."[37] Because of that, sugar beet fields and sugar refinery plants served as a symbolic economic landscape that exemplified corporate power's dominance over the area and community's dependence on sugar as a major source of income for the locality.

Before POW labor was introduced to farm work, sugar beet companies in the Great Plains had helped farmers by recruiting workers from Mexico, Texas, and New Mexico. Companies in the region such as the Holly Sugar and the Great Western "encouraged the recruited workers to settle near the plants and urged farmers to provide some work during the slack season to keep them nearby."[38] As opposed to the Army's policy to transfer POWs from one community to another every three months, large sugar companies' intention to secure sufficient labor for the next sugar beet season contributed to the sedentary lifestyle of the Mexican migrant workers around the community.

In addition, Gerald Nash states that Mexican laborers were "in debt, for car, food or medical bills, and so remained in a particular locality to work off their debts."[39] As opposed to Mexican workers, POWs' necessities were usually taken care by the Army while their housing and transportation were arranged between the Army and community in need of POW labor. As a rule of thumb, the War Department held ultimate responsibility for POWs' safety, sanitation, and humane treatment in America and were explicit in articulating the extent local associations and employers would be responsible to POW workers.[40]

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[37] Hurt, 156-57.
[38] Ibid., 215.
[39] Nash, *The American West Transformed*, 154.
[40] "Article 28, Organization of Work," Conventions Relative to the Treatment of Prisoner of War, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Geneva, July 27,1929, https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/Article.xsp?action=openDocument&documentId=9EE69CAD20CBEDDAC12563CD00518F04; Article 28 explicitly stated that, "The detaining [p]ower shall assume entire responsibility for the maintenance, care, treatment and the payment of the wages of prisoners of war working for private individuals."

While braceros, or Mexican migrant workers are better known as temporary non-citizen laborers during the war, more POWs than braceros engaged in America's wartime agricultural production as non-U.S. citizen workforce. In historian Barbara Schmitter Heisler's comparative study of Mexican and German POW workers on the American home front, German POWs outnumbered Mexican workers employed in the American agricultural sector at the end of the war. In May 1945, a total of 140,000 prisoners of war were working in contract labor, and 85,000 of these were employed in agriculture.[41] Roughly at the same time, in July 1945, 58,000 Mexican workers were working in agriculture.[42] Despite that, the legacy of German and Italian POWs as wartime agricultural laborers was less acknowledged in American society. In one sense, this would be because POWs were transient in their POW worker status and their presence in America; once the war was over, they were no more America's prisoners and returned to Europe as former soldiers but not laborers. Compared to that, as historian Deborah Cohen observes, Mexican workers were transnational in their migrant worker status and their presence in America; that is, even if their wartime labor contract expired, they could reenter or remain in the United States as guest workers with new contract as long as America needed their labor.[43]

As many POWs befriended farmers who employed them, they kept in touch with the locals and exchanged mail after they were repatriated back to their countries. In his letter to a former employer in Clearmont, Wyoming, former German POW Herman Eckert wrote in early 1948 that, "It gives me pleasure to think of the time when I was working with you in the sweet beets. At that time I was feeling like a free man. I was well off even though I was a prisoner of war…. The Mexicans will surely not give you the satisfaction you had with us. I am glad to hear you had good crops last year."[44] Eckert's letter to his former employer indicates a mutual fondness that many POWs and farmers developed during the war as well

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[41] Byron Fairchild and Jonathan Grossman, "The Army and Industrial Manpower," Washington, D.C., Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1959, cited in Barbara Schmitter Heisler, "The Other 'Braceros': Temporary labor and German Prisoners of War in the United States, 1943-1946," *Social Science History* 31, no. 2 (Summer 2007): 240-241.
[42] Ernesto Galarza, *Merchants of Labor: The Mexican Bracero Story* (Charlotte, NC: McNally and Loftin, 1964), cited in Heisler, 241.
[43] Deborah Cohen, *Braceros: Migrant Citizens and Transnational Subjects in the Post War United States and Mexico* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2011). Gerald Nash points out that the bracero labor contracts were to be made for a six-month period and renewable. Nash, *The American West Transformed*, 51.
[44] Herman Eckert, letter to John and Rose Fowler, January 4, 1948, read out by Rose Fowler in "Clearmont Community History Oral History Tape," POWs Clearmont Folder, Pioneer Memorial Museum, Douglas, WY.

as their shared psychological distance toward Mexican workers. With less intensive surveillance in the open field, POWs could relieve the stress of imprisonment and appreciated their privilege to work like free men (Figure 5).

Mexican workers who came to the community after the war had to face local employers' tendency to compare them with POWs as "good workers." Although Eckert did not necessarily question Mexican laborers' productivity at work, he did not really attribute "good crops" to Mexican workers' hard work, either. Rather, he insinuated Mexican workers were not as enthusiastic as POWs to work in the community and build a good relationship with local employers. To Eckert what differentiated POW workers from other labor groups was not necessarily their work efficiency but might have been something quite simple such as gratitude to work in an open field and meet locals, which was not an ordinary thing for the prisoners of war. To support that, one local newspaper in Douglas reported that "everyone using the POW labor was satisfied with the job" performed by POWs, and the prisoners also seemed to be "anxious to work in the fields."[45] As this report illustrates, locals often gave good evaluations for POWs as workers, but they were less explicit in explaining which aspect of POW labor satisfied them, such as their productivity, efficiency, diligence, personality, or any other traits.

Unlike the POWs, Mexican workers were not able to build strong personal ties with their employers and were treated as outsiders before and after the war. When the war concluded and POWs were repatriated, America persuaded Mexico to send workers because of the postwar food situation throughout the world and tremendous burden for America to take care of it.[46] That meant, even if repatriated POWs were oblivious to the bracero workers who replaced them after the war, it was Mexican laborers who supported Europe's reconstruction through producing more food in agricultural fields of the American West. Therefore, through agricultural products sent from America to Europe, former POWs and Mexican workers were connected.

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[45] "Prisoner Labor Saved Crop Harvest in County This Year," *Douglas Enterprise*, December 7, 1943.
[46] Lilia Fernández, "Of Immigrants and Migrants: Mexican and Puerto Rican Labor Migration in Comparative Perspective, 1942–1964," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 29, no. 3 (Spring 2010): 22.

Figure 5. German POWs in Clearmont, Wyoming. Photo adapted from *Casper Star Tribune.*

Race and Labor: What Determined "Good" Workers

Until POW labor became available for civilian employment, farm owners' evaluation of Mexican workers in terms of their efficiency was not necessarily poor, if not always appreciated with respect. Before the arrival of the POWs, employers in the Plains region had perceived Mexicans were "good workers" who did not cause trouble, while the growers and sugar companies quickly stereotyped them as a group who would work hard for long hours for low wages, and thus they were well suited for sugar beet work.[47] In this context, "good workers" to employers were equivalent to "convenient workers" over whom employers could exert power. This stereotype justified and normalized exploitation of Mexican laborers for low wages, and ultimately heightened employers' expectation of them as a silent and subaltern labor group who would not challenge employers.

According to historian R. Douglas Hurt, however, the braceros working in the Great Plains complained about lower and irregular wages than they could earn in California.[48] These complaints from the braceros probably contributed to local employers' general inclination to give more favorable comments on POW workers. The image of complaining

[47] Hurt, 220.
[48] Ibid., 222.

Mexican laborers conflicted with their stereotype to work hard for low wages without any opposition, which was conveniently constructed by sugar industries to gain maximize benefits of the Bracero program.

While many German and Italian POW workers received favorable treatment and positive feedback from their employers, other racial minority laborer groups faced less equal treatment. In addition to POW laborers and Mexican workers, sugar beet growers in the High Plains also employed several thousand Japanese American prisoners who were detained in the Amache Incarceration Center in southeastern Colorado and Heart Mountain Incarceration Center in northwestern Wyoming between 1942 and 1944. The number of Japanese Americans at Amache who made farm labor contracts was 1,401 in 1942, 1,659 in 1943, and 819 in 1944 while it was 1,395, 2,908, and 1,731 respectively at Heart Mountain.[49] Compared to the POW labor program, the idea of using Japanese American workers in these areas further intensified local employers' dilemma between their desperate need for farm labor and paranoia toward the Japanese not only because of Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor but also the detainees' cultural otherness from white normativity. Local leaders did not necessarily welcome the possibility that Japanese Americans would acquire the land and remain in their community after the war. That is, the locals were concerned that their familiar landscape would be altered if too many cultural outsiders settled in their hometown.

Still, economic interest prevailed over fear and hostility to utilize Japanese American prisoners for farm work, and local sugar beet growers eventually perceived that overall as farmhands, Japanese workers were "careful, conscientious, dependable, and well-behaved during off-hours too."[50] Here, the phrase "off-hours too" implies that local farmers perceived Japanese American contract workers as outsiders to the community and thus acceptable only as laborers but not as neighbors, ignoring the fact that they did not commit any offense to be imprisoned and surveyed by guards. No matter whether local employers wanted to see Japanese Americans as mere employees or cohorts to endure challenging times, Japanese Americans were another group in captivity who strived to empower themselves through a

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[49] Department of Agriculture, "Farmers' Attitudes Toward the Use of Japanese Evacuees as Farm Labor," Pt. 1, Jan. 30, 1943, p. 10, RG210, Entry 7, Box 1, cited in Louise Fiset, "Thinning, Topping, and Loading: Japanese Americans and Beet Sugar in World War II," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 90, no. 3 (Summer 1999): 134.
[50] Louise Fiset, "Thinning, Topping, and Loading: Japanese Americans and Beet Sugar in World War II," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 90, no. 3 (Summer 1999): 134.

strong work ethic. Being deprived of their material properties upon displacement and incarceration, labor opportunity served as Japanese American prisoners' firsthand means to demonstrate to the American society that they were not a threat to the community but hardworking and patriotic citizens willing to contribute to America's war effort just like any other Americans on the home front.

Even though time and context were different, at the beginning of the twentieth century, sugar beet growers in the Front Range preferred European descent workers to Mexican or Japanese workers who were available in the area for employment. According to historian Eric Twitty's research on the history of the sugar beet industry in northern Colorado, of the 10,000 migrant workers recorded on the Front Range until 1909, 5,900 were German Russians, 2,200 were Japanese, and 1,000 were Mexican immigrants. While the Japanese and Mexicans were willing to work for lower wages, farmers found that German Russian workers netted higher yields per acre. Hence, local employers favored the German Russians primarily because of the higher profit they would yield, but also due to their commonality in European sociocultural values and practices. Even though the Japanese also demonstrated a strong work ethic and high productivity, their "clannish" quasi-labor union was not well received by farmers.[51] Therefore, even though many employers valued laborers' work efficiency over their cultural background, workers' manageability and predictability based on their cultural practices also mattered to them when they hoped to keep their community and field season in harmony. As the German Russian workers were majority in number, they were the "normative" labor group in the area and their approaches were widely accepted as standard.

Whereas there was hardly any information on African American agricultural laborers in the High Plains, POW workers in the South created tension at the site of racialized agricultural labor. According to historian Matthias Reiss, many prisoners of war believed that that they were on "excellent terms with black Americans," who regarded them as "fellow prisoners of white America."[52] If POWs really believed their prisoner status and African Americans' subaltern status within institutionalized racism bonded them, they were naïve and short-sighted to think about the meaning of their Europeanness in the United States. Socially

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[51] Eric Twitty, "Silver Wedge: The Sugar Beet Industry in Fort Collins," SWCA Environmental Consultants, accessed August 5, 2021, https://www.fcgov.com/parkplanning/files/silver-wedge_the-sugar-beet-industry-in-fort-collins_a-historical-context.pdf.
[52] Matthias Reiss, "Icons of Insult: German and Italian Prisoners of War in African American Letters during World War II," *Amerikastudien/American Studies* 49, no. 4 (2004): 552.

or politically subjugated status and experience did not always bind minority groups together but rather made them compete against each other by comparing which group fared better in white normative American society. Every racial minority group had a different experiences of oppression in American society and tried to be resilient to inequality and injustice they encountered.

Even though German and Italian POWs were national enemies of the United States, they were regarded as white men and thus eligible for social privilege that African Americans could not claim, making them more like collaborators than fellow prisoners of white normative American society. In addition, while POWs' status as prisoners of America was only effective during the war, African Americans knew that the conclusion of the war would not entirely liberate them from racial inequality, and thus they would still have a long way ahead of them to attain full civil rights.

While POWs in the Great Plains induced farm owners to compare their work performance with that of Mexican workers, POWs in Southern agricultural fields prompted white farmers to reconsider sociopolitical meaning of agricultural labor in the region. If sugar beets were a symbolic crop exploiting migrant agricultural workers in the Plains, cotton posed as a crop that symbolized the racialized socioeconomic landscape in the South. In the wartime South, increasing black mobility and outmigration forced cotton planters to look for an alternative source of labor, and resorted to POWs as a possible workforce for cotton cultivation. By doing so, however, Southern farmers stirred racial anxiety among themselves due to the history of cotton cultivation as the racialized work of slaves. As historian Jason Morgan Ward puts it, "In a society that rationalized the subjugation of African Americans through a racialized division of labor, subjecting fair-skinned men to grueling physical work was a sensitive issue."[53] The sight of POW laborers in cotton fields challenged the long-established socioeconomic power structure in the South based on white property owners' normalized dominance over African American workers. History of cotton cultivation was also a history of slavery, and thus utilizing European POWs in cotton fields meant stigmatizing white men even if they were enemy prisoners of the United States.

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[53] Jason Morgan Ward, "'Nazis Hoe Cotton': Planters, POWs, and the Future of Farm Labor in the Deep South," *Agricultural History* 81, no. 4 (Fall 2007): 484.

To alleviate this ambivalence, farm owners in the South devised a peculiar way to evaluate (or not evaluate) POWs' work performance. Even if German POW workers were not very efficient in cotton fields, the employers usually stressed the "higher quality of their work and their greater independence and superior work ethic."[54] That way, white farm owners still held onto their conviction that non-white laborers were not as good as white men. In that sense, Southern farm owners' positive comments on POW workers reflected farmers' own ideas of white men's excellence and justification of it. This would not necessarily be the case for farmers in the Great Plains when many local employers preferred POW workers to Mexican workers, yet it is highly likely that they felt greater cultural closeness toward European POWs than Mexican workers.

Even though the race relations of the West and South were not identical to each other, the presence of European POW laborers and their work performance affected employers in how they determined who were better workers based on political, social, racial, economic, and historical contexts. By employing European POW workers for cash crop cultivation in the region, white farmers in the South had to face the deconstruction of the sociopolitical landscape they had been familiar with while farm owners in the West perceived POWs as better workers than Mexicans in many cases without clarifying the definition of "good workers."

As the image of POW laborers in cotton fields shook Southern white farmers tremendously, Matthias Reiss argues that the visual impression largely determined how most American soldiers and civilians treated the German POWs in the camps and at the work site.[55] Reiss's argument would be valid and white residents in small towns likely perceived the POWs' young white Christian male identity in combination with their congenial nature as the most important factor for locals to treat them at an individual and community level. Even if they had different language and ideological backgrounds, POWs' whiteness paired with ordinary young men identity gave them a chance to become temporary community members working for local employers.

[54] Matthias Reiss, "Solidarity Among 'Fellow Sufferers': African Americans and German Prisoners of War in the United States During World War II," *The Journal of African American History* 98, no. 4 (Fall 2013): 547.
[55] Matthias Reiss, "Bronzed Bodies behind Barbed Wire: Masculinity and the Treatment of German Prisoners of War in the United States during World War II," *The Journal of Military History* 69, no. 2 (April 2005): 476.

Because the criteria to determine good and bad were relative and relational, what constituted "good" workers would have possibly been contingent upon how fondly local employers perceived the POWs more than their actual productivity at work. While the concept of enemy was socially and geopolitically constructed, physical appearance served as a very powerful factor for viewers to instantly categorize people into "us" and "them." Figuratively speaking, it is easy to single out people who wear different colors and separate them from a group in white clothes, but it is often a challenging task to find out the differences in political ideology by their look. POWs did not really have to go through the sorting process by race, consequently hosting communities did not perceive their inner traits including cultural beliefs as being too different or dangerous to include them into the circle of "us" even temporarily.

Employers' Choice: POWs over Braceros

As many farmers were satisfied with POWs as agricultural workers and local newspapers often included residents' praise for them, POWs became a tough competitor for Mexican workers who came to the western states seeking better economic opportunities. According to a supplemental article to *Douglas Enterprise* in December 1943, "Many reports came in [from local employers] that more work was accomplished by them [POWs] than by the Mexican labor of other years."[56] However, the newspaper did not provide readers with any specific numbers, such as a yield rate per man to support POWs' higher work performance. Like the report above, many local employers commented that POWs were better workers than Mexicans, but most of these remarks were personal accounts unaccompanied with specific production output.

As the war situation intensified over time, it is plausible that the demand for agricultural production was greater in 1943 than in 1942 while the number of available farmhands was declining due to America's war mobilization. In 1942, farmers had to grow crops with limited available Mexican workers, and it was not until 1943 that POW labor was utilized for farm work in Western states. Based on that, farmers were likely much more frustrated in 1942 than in 1943 with the imbalance between the growing demand for more agricultural production and decrease in available labor. In such a circumstance, employers

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[56] "The Prisoner of War," *Prisoner of War Camp News* (Douglas, WY), December 7, 1943.

might feel workers' performance did not meet their expectations. Therefore, it is possible that the improved production in 1943 thanks to the availability of POW labor led to more favorable evaluations of the workforce in that year compared to workers' performance in the previous year.

In addition to a general preference for POW workers, some employers even discounted Mexican workers' efficiency in comparison with the POWs. In the area near Mitchell POW Branch Camp, Nebraska, Mexican labor had been used formerly, but employers tended to evaluate POWs' work performance more highly than Mexican workers. According to a camp report by an Army official, one local farm owner mentioned that he "much prefers the Germans" because "one of these German prisoners was doing the work of five Mexicans."[57] Like local newspapers in the region, however, the camp report did not refer to specific production rates and thus it is not clear if the employer's remark was based on actual data or merely based on the farmer's personal impression without regard to other factors such as climate and weather fluctuation, or timing for cultivation and harvesting.

Mexican laborers were often underestimated by their employers and were not considered to be an equivalent of American workers while it was not necessarily the case for European POWs. Historian R. Douglas Hurt's study reveals that some farmers and townspeople in Wyoming were unwilling to accept bracero workers as equals of local white workers, and businesses in one town refused service to them while wage discrimination against bracero workers was also reported.[58] Mexican workers' previous experience in agricultural work did not boost their status equal to white American workers while POWs' inexperience in farm work did not always lower their status as white men. For Mexican workers, it was an insult to get a reputation for considerably less efficiency than enemy prisoners of war because they came to America on their free will to pursue better economic opportunities through hard work, and to help America's war effort as its ally by alleviating wartime labor shortages.

Why was it often the case that the POWs received favorable evaluations by their employers while Mexican workers did not receive the same accolades from the locals? It is plausible that in evaluating the work performance of different groups, economic, social, and

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[57] U.S. Department of State, Special War Problems Division, "Prisoner of War Camp, Scottsbluff, Nebraska, Branch Camps," by Charles C. Eberhardt, October 31, 1945, RG 0501, Reel 19, NSHS.
[58] Hurt, 221-222.

racial factors affected the employers' perceptions of them. Because the majority of WWII POWs in America were Europeans and thus white men, they did not appear be outsiders to the residents of small Western towns with predominantly white populations, making it easier for the locals to feel more connection with the POWs than with Mexican workers.

This point would be even more the case if locals and POWs shared not only white identity but also ethnic heritage. When Paul Schnyder, a Special War Problems Division official, visited Camp Scottsbluff, Nebraska, he noted that the farmers who employed the prisoners were "generally Germans who came from the Baltic provinces twenty-five years ago. Most of them still speak German."[59] As was described in Schnyder's report, many German POWs in the High Plains found their employer had German ancestry. At the turn of the twentieth century, German Russians immigrated to America to flee the "Russification" attempt that targeted their religious freedom, the right to educate their children in German, and an exemption from military service. They eventually migrated into the Great Plains drawn by the burgeoning sugar industry in the region.[60]

Therefore, some farm owners' preference for POWs over Mexican workers was partially attributed to their own family history and ethnic backgrounds. Rather than employing Mexican workers whose cultural backgrounds had fewer overlaps with them, local farmers favored POWs from Europe as their help because of their nostalgia and familiarity toward the region. To these farmers, POWs were almost like their fellows to whom locals with German heritage had to offer friendship and care.

In addition, POW laborers got paid significantly less than free laborers; while the POWs received only eighty cents a day, the wage rate for Mexican sugar beet workers ranged from $9.50 to $11.00 per acre for thinning, $3.00 per acre for the first hoeing, and $2.00 per acre for each subsequent cultivation.[61] When compared to the POWs' fixed rate of eighty cents per day for 0.25 acre for any work assignment, it was possible for Mexican workers to earn nearly three times as much as POW workers for each 0.25 acre depending on the task. If local employers felt psychological closeness to POW workers more than to Mexican workers,

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[59] U.S. Department of State, Special War Problems Division, "Camp Scottsbluff, Nebraska, July 18, 1944" by Paul Schnyder, March 12, 1945, RG 0501, Reel 19, NSHS.
[60] Carl McWilliams, "Germans from Russia and the Great Western Sugar Company," City of Loveland Development Services Department, Loveland, March 2020, http://www.cityofloveland.org/home/showdocument?id=51754.
[61] William L. Hewitt, "Mexican Workers in Wyoming during World War II: Necessity, Discrimination and Protest," *Annals of Wyoming* 54 (Fall 1982): 21-23.

it is possible that they perceived the POWs worked harder with cheaper wages than Mexicans although their labor programs had totally different wartime contexts and their work experience was not equal at all.

Moreover, for local employers, POWs were easier than Mexican workers to deal with thanks to the clear guidance by the U.S. Army. If local employers wanted to hire POW laborers, they often formed a local association and made contracts with the War Department. Because the War Department closely observed the Geneva Convention of 1929 that served to protect POWs' rights and safety in captivity, the Army clarified to what extent civilian employers had to be responsible such as: supplying transportation to and from work sites, finding work supervisors, and preparing appropriate housing when bringing them to a branch camp in remote area.

As opposed to POW labor program closely watched by the War Department to ensure America's observance of the Geneva Convention, the Bracero program during WWII was based on a bilateral contract between the Mexican and the U.S. government. American and Mexican governments' effort to recruit Mexican workers was a top-down initiative in which agencies on both sides that were involved in the program did not always communicate well to keep a close eye on the well-being of the Mexican laborers. For braceros, "health services were poor or non-existent, and they suffered from poor hygienic conditions, inadequate food, and hard labor performed day in and day out. Opportunities to learn English were rare."[62] Ironically, therefore, braceros as free laborers received poorer treatment than the POWs who had a claim for humane treatment and access to the necessities thanks to the Geneva Convention. Coming to the United States as guest workers to support agricultural production, braceros' rights were not taken very seriously by any association, agency, or individuals on the U.S. side that were involved in the program. While consulates of Mexico tried to help braceros receive better treatment, the best solution was restricting employment of Mexicans in the states in which they were exploited.

Historian Barbara Schmitter Heisler observes that the nature of employment between the braceros and POWs were essentially different in scale and geographical areas. She elaborates that although both braceros and prisoners of war worked in agriculture, "the

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[62] Barbara Schmitter Heisler, "The Other Braceros: Temporary Labor and German Prisoners of War in the United States, 193-946," *Social Science History* 31 no. 2 (Summer 2007): 246.

majority of braceros worked in large-scale agribusiness, predominantly in California," while many German prisoners of war worked for mid-size and smaller family farmers in almost every state.[63] Bracero camps were often large and isolated in rural areas with little access to transportation. In that sense, bracero workers were almost as if corralled by their employer and sugar companies so that they would not run away from their isolated ethnic enclave nor encroach upon the tight-knit rural community. Establishing a labor camp for Mexican workers in a remote location functioned as a social barricade to keep out the unwelcomed Other whose membership in the community was not really appreciated by locals.

Moreover, as Heiseler argues, for employers and foremen, "braceros were anonymous field hands, not individuals." If the employers perceived the Mexican workers merely as an impersonal workforce, their relationship was purely profit-oriented and neither side saw a need for knowing the other more personally. Braceros were alienated from the community and their physical isolation perpetuated their psychological exclusion, left them as the "unknowns" while POWs interacted with farmers and became more like "us" rather than outsiders.

Japanese American Prisoners as Farm Laborers

Because sources have yet to surface regarding farm owners' perceptions of Japanese American workers in relation to POW workers, and vice versa, it is difficult to determine which group in captivity the local employers valued more highly. Instead, local farmers left both favorable and poor comments on the Japanese laborers compared with the Mexican workers who previously worked in the area. Louise Fiset's study of Japanese American workers in sugar beet field reveals somewhat conflicting evaluations from local employers in the area. When neighboring communities in the Montana–Wyoming state border area recruited Japanese American workers from the Heart Mountain Incarceration Center, one sugar beet farmer in Billings area remarked that, "They worked pretty nice. They do nicer work than the Mexicans or Filipinos. They wasn't [*sic*] experts at it, but after they got started they done [sic] nice work." As opposed to that, a farmer in Wyoming who owned sugar beet farm near the incarceration center mentioned that, "The [Japanese American] labor was very unsatisfactory…. It takes about four Japanese to take the place of one Mexican. The evacuees

[63] Heisler, 242.

we obtained in this valley had no previous farm experience."[64] As these employers' comments illustrate, while over 92% of Montana farmers in Billings area showed an interest in hiring Japanese workers again, only 32% of Wyoming farmers near the Heart Mountain Incarceration Center felt in the same way.[65]

Fiset mainly attributes these gaps in evaluation to Japanese American workers' prewar farm experience and the two-week delay in approving their employment in Wyoming by the state governor, which enabled the Montana farmers to recruit more experienced or hardworking Japanese American workers at their earliest convenience.[66] Therefore, in addition to the Mexican and Japanese workers' race or citizenship status, external factors such as their prewar job experience or time of employment led to farm owners' critical evaluations of labor groups with different cultural backgrounds.

In general, it is possible to find some correlation between the type of labor and one's race, cultural background, social class, age, health and physique, and gender. These aspects intersect with each other and reinforce stereotypical associations between specific types of labor and the group performing it, often leading to employers' subjective evaluation of the workers instead of objective facts. In this sense, POWs were outliers as laborers because they were young able bodied white men doing cheap manual labor.

Conclusion

All in all, even though not every POW was familiar with farm work, POW labor projects did contribute to wartime agricultural production and their labor agreements also offered the prisoners opportunities to see the real landscapes of small western towns and interact with local people. Even though the civilian employers were initially uncertain of POWs' capability and credibility as workers because of their foreign enemy status, they eventually became satisfied with POWs' work performance and developed a mutual fondness. For each other. Through seeing the prisoners working in the fields, locals realized that POWs were not a threat to their community and could build friendship with them.

Also, POWs' labor had an impact on employers' evaluation of other racial minority groups as laborers. WWII POWs' agricultural labor in western states cannot be discussed

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[64] Fiset, 134.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.

independently from the labor of Mexican workers and Japanese Americans. They were major groups that contributed to the wartime agricultural production in the West regardless of their complex relationships with the United States as its captives or guest workers under extraordinary circumstances while their evaluation by employers differed in many cases. Mostly, employers offered POWs favorable treatment and evaluation because of their cultural closeness to them as well as the contract and payment system that benefitted the War Department. German and Italian POWs came to the United States as European prisoners of war, and their appearance as white men eased employers' wariness over them as enemy prisoners of war.

Through observing POWs working in agricultural fields of the High Plains, locals changed their views about them from an unknown suspicious foreign enemy to diligent and approachable "good guys" working willingly in their farm fields. Like other work sites during the wartime, people with various cultural backgrounds were present in farm fields. They had different motivations and experiences as workers, yet they chose to work to improve their own situations altered by the war. In doing so, they helped local employers with more production and thus contributed to local economy and America's war effort.

Chapter 4

How POWs Spent Their Spare Time: POWs' Recreation and (Re)Education

After a day of labor on farms or at the military post, prisoners could dedicate their spare time inside the POW camp for recreational activities including reading books, watching films, practicing music, creating arts and crafts, and playing sports and games. In addition to these recreational activities, prisoners took the opportunity to enroll in academic courses taught at the base camps such as English, history, physics, and chemistry. Recreational and intellectual opportunities inside POW camps helped prisoners of war find amusement and entertainment even in the confined environment.

Since the early stages of POW camp operations in America, the War Department encouraged POWs' recreational activities to observe the Geneva Convention's requirement for the detaining power to give the prisoners intellectual diversions. In most cases, POWs could have access to various recreational and educational opportunities of their choice upon the approval of the camp commander by late 1944. As the war reached the final stages, however, the War Department shifted the emphasis to divert prisoners' political ideology toward fostering democratic ideals that could be transported back to postwar Germany. This initiative was kept secret from the prisoners. To achieve their goal, the War Department tried to expose the POWs to recreational and educational materials reinforcing American democratic principles while limiting their exposure to literary and visual sources highlighting U.S. racial and economic inequalities. This attempt mainly targeted more than 370,000 German prisoners of war in the United States rather than the Italians whose status transformed from enemy to allies after Italy's surrender to the Allied Force in September 1943. By reeducating German POWs with democratic principles, the War Department tried to transform them into democratic European citizens who would lead reconstruction of postwar Germany under the America's supervision.

Taking advantage of the POWs' need for recreational and educational opportunities in camps, the War Department attempted to formulate a U.S.-led postwar global society by charting "little West Blocs" inside base POW camps with the use of pro-democratic newspapers and magazines, readings, films, and textbooks. POWs' recreational and educational activities in the camps became not only personal matters for the prisoners themselves, but also strategic and political affairs for the War Department to create pro-

democratic German men. Once the War Department set its goal to reeducate the prisoners, POWs' recreational and educational material became a political apparatus for the War Department to indoctrinate the prisoners with democratic principles.

To supervise recreation and education of the prisoners of war in America, the War Department organized a branch office called the Special Projects Division (SPD). Recreational and educational programs for prisoners' reeducation purposes were termed the Intellectual Diversion Program and mainly targeted transforming prisoners' political views through exposure to recreational and educational material that the SPD selected. The SPD sent an Assistant Executive Officer whose main role was to supervise POWs' non-work activities in the camp and mentor the prisoners in cooperation with other Army officials.

Reading

Many prisoners preferred to spend their free time reading books in the POW camp library or the barracks. Reading materials both in English and German languages were always censored before they were accepted into a POW camp library or for sale at a camp canteen. Normally, if the War Department regarded the contents of some books as detrimental to the American war effort (i.e., negative descriptions of American culture and society, or reinforcing Germany's National Socialism and racial hierarchy), they would decline introducing those readings to the POWs. Because of that, approved readings written about Germany were those emphasizing the humanistic and democratic trends in Germany's past but not present, while approved books about the United States depicted the nation without class differences, united under universal humanistic values, and free from ethnic tensions.[1] In narrowing down appropriate books for POWs, the War Department particularly recommended them to read books by Ernest Hemingway and William Saroyan for these authors' favorable political evaluations of the United States and their protagonists' individualism. As opposed to these authors' works, the Army disapproved Jack London's books for his leftist leanings and portrayal of "lesser" races.[2] Although the American war effort stirred up patriotism and favored books with unifying themes, the Special Projects

[1] Ron Theodore Robin, *The Barbed Wire College: Reeducating German Prisoners of War in the United States During World War II*, (Princeton University Press; Princeton, NJ, 1995), 95.
[2] Robin, 99-101. Jack London held anxiety toward growing Asian immigrants in the West Coast and supported eugenics of Progressive Era.

Division's elimination of "undesirable" books for POWs reflected their desire to hide the fact that America did not always acknowledge full social citizenship to racial minorities.

In its earlier days, the POW camp library at Fort Robinson was not equipped with very many books. As of February 1945, however, the library contained approximately 1,200 books. More than two thirds of them were printed in German and many of the books were accumulated through private gifts and donation or provided by the YMCA and the International Red Cross.[3] Donating books and other recreational items to the POW camp was a sign of local people's sympathy toward the prisoners. Rather than holding onto hostility toward them, residents in the area tried to help improve POWs' in-camp experience through book donations as well as some musical instruments and sports equipment.

In addition to the books available at the library or sold at the camp canteen, prisoners were able to subscribe *The New York Times* individually but there were no local newspapers or POW camp newspapers during the early days of POW camps despite the great demand for the latter.[4] *The New York Times* was considered a reliable source of information for its openness and frankness of the news reports and thus both the War Department and German prisoners found it to be useful for prisoners to obtain latest information of America and the world, as well as to learn English.[5]

While the Special Projects Division recommended prisoners read other American popular magazines such as *Newsweek*, *Life*, and *Time*, these magazines were not readily available to the POWs since they would likely leave strong impression to the prisoners. These titles were laden with visual images of various aspects of America, and *Life* magazine particularly devoted entirely to photo reporting.[6] The first spokesman at Fort Robinson thought the presence of image-heavy American magazines in public space "would stir up trouble and cause undue dissension in the ranks" and thus made these materials unavailable in the camp reading room.[7] The spokesman rejected these American popular magazines due

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[3] PW Special Services Section, Prisoner of War Branch, "Report on Intellectual Diversion Program, Prisoner of War Camp, Fort Robinson, Nebraska, 27 January 1945," by Helmut J. Knoll, February 5, 1945, RG 0501, Reel 19, NSHS.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Arnold Krammer, *Nazi Prisoners of War in America* (New York: Stein and Day, 1979), 53.
[6] David M. Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press,1999), 256.
[7] Office of Provost Marshal General, Special Projects Division, "Memorandum for Director, Prisoner of War Special Projects Division: Report on Field Service Visit to Prisoner of War Camp, Fort Robinson, Nebraska, 14-15 February 1945, by Major Paul A. Neuland," RG 0501, Reel 19, NSHS.

to his pro-Nazi stance because he was a senior-ranking non-commissioned officer who had been in the German military for thirteen years and thus Hitler's rhetoric had taken root in him.[8] Rather than perceiving American magazines as beneficial for POWs understanding American culture, he regarded magazines full of striking visual images signifying America's affluence as serving to spread U.S. propaganda. The spokesman wanted to limit the chance that German POWs would see images of America and find it better to live in America and question the meaning of their service for Germany.

Even though the first spokesman at Fort Robinson was pro-Nazi, his concern over American media's undesirable influence on the integrity of camp inmates was valid. More than half a year before he declined most American magazines, a highly educated prisoner of war at Fort Robinson read and translated news from American newspapers to other prisoners, the contents of which others did not really believe. Although the detail of the news translated by this prisoner was unknown, he was regarded as a traitor for his deed and was placed in a protective custody due to the threat by other prisoners. In response to that, the Camp Commander wrote to the Army Service Forces Seventh Service Command Headquarters in Omaha, Nebraska, to request the prisoner's transfer to Camp Carlisle, Pennsylvania, suggesting "his anti-Nazi tendencies may make him valuable there." From the commander's request, it is evident that Camp Carlisle hosted ardent anti-Nazi prisoners. The command headquarters in Omaha directed, as a precautionary measure, transfer of the POW in custody to a branch POW camp in Veteran, Wyoming.[9] Veteran Branch Camp was located about one hundred miles south of Fort Robinson and mainly hosted anti-Nazi POWs who were alienated from the rest of the prisoners due to their anti-Nazi identification at Fort Robinson or Scottsbluff base POW camps. Until the War Department found an urgent need to democratize all POWs, most POW camps tried to transfer anti-Nazi soldiers to prevent ideological conflicts among the prisoners on the premise that it was normal for soldiers in German POW camp to support Nazism and those against it were outliers. In reality, though, many prisoners were neither pro-Nazi nor anti-Nazi, and were not willing to openly discuss

[8] Melissa Marsh, "Still the Old Marlene: Hollywood at the Fort Robinson Prisoner of War Camp," *Nebraska History* 86 (2005): 48.
[9] Headquarters, Fort Robinson PW Camp, "Transfer of Prisoner of War," from Colonel Arthur Blain to the Commanding General Headquarters, Omaha, NE, July 12, 1944, RG 1517.AM, Box 12, Fort Robinson Collection, NSHS.

ideological gaps between Germany and the United States for fear of retaliation by hard-core Nazi prisoners who tried to dominate political ideology in the camps.

Films

In terms of POWs' visual entertainment, at an average base camp, prisoners could watch a movie once every five days for a fifteen-cent per film fee.[10] Normally, POWs selected films from catalogues, and they could watch them only after the films were previewed by camp authorities and the prisoner of war spokesman.[11] Because of that, films of POWs' choice had to go through dual censorship to prove the contents would be acceptable from both American and German standpoints. Alfred Thompson, a former Army interpreter and Staff Sergeant at Fort Robinson, recalled that, "From the start, as soon as projectors became available, we screened movies to make them as innocuous—from both sides—as possible."[12] What Thompson meant by "innocuous" films from both American and German perceptions was not clarified by him, but the Army officers most likely tried to get rid of the films that would reinforce negative images of American society as well as the films that reinforced the stereotype of Germans as fanatic Nazis.

As a proof, historian Arnold Krammer notes that, until the inauguration of the Intellectual Diversion Program, the American movies which had been shown in many POW camp locations had been generally chosen by the Nazi leaders to embarrass the United States, mostly the films filled with rampant gangsterism, corruption of morals, and the debilitating effects of American democratic life.[13] Therefore, Nazi soldiers tried to systematically use particular films to amplify POWs' distrust of their captors, and their deliberate selection of low quality American films did bring about some success. Even though entertainment films were frequently shown, and many men attended to watch them, not every film could impress the prisoners. According to a report of an International Red Cross delegate's visit to Fort Robinson, prisoners complained to the camp pastors that "the low quality of content left upon

[10] Office of Provost Marshal General, Special Projects Division, "Memorandum for Director, Prisoner of War Special Projects Division: Report on Field Service Visit to Prisoner of War Camp, Fort Robinson, Nebraska, 14-15 February 1945, by Major Paul A. Neuland." Headquarters Army Service Forces, RG 0501, Reel 19, NSHS.
[11] U.S. Department of State, Special War Problems Division, "Prisoner of War Camp, Fort Robinson, Nebraska, visited by Verner Tobler of the Legation of Switzerland," June 21, 1944, RG 1517.AM, Box 12, NSHS.
[12] Alfred A. Thompson letter to Tom Buecker, March 23, 1990, RG 1517.AM, Box 12, NSHS.
[13] Krammer, 209.

them a deepening impression of an inferior America that there is nothing other than whiskey, drinking, gangsters, wild women, and horse thieves." These low-quality films made the prisoners sum up their image of American society, "'If this is America, America is a century behind us.'"[14]

Some of the films selected by the pro-Nazi spokesman did reinforce POWs' poor evaluation of American films. Examples of entertainment film titles shown at Fort Robinson POW Camp included: *The Flame of New Orleans* (1941) —story of a female charlatan who tricked affluent men, eventually found her true love; *Lady Scarface* (1941) —crime mystery comedy in which a female gang leader in disguise as a man carried out robbery; *Follies Girl* (1943) —low budget film in which the story took place mainly in or around a burlesque house; *Pardon My Sarong* (1942) —comedy film featuring a battle between two bus drivers and a mad scientist who tried to steal sacred jewel from natives on a tropical island; *Hit the Ice* (1943) —comedy film where a gangster confused two photographers with hitmen to help his bank robbery plan.[15] The first three titles depicted non-conventional women as charlatans, gangsters, and showgirls, who did not fit the "good housewife" and thus fit into POWs' image of American women as "wild women." The remaining two films were slapstick comedies featuring gangsters and thieves who would be beaten by ordinary men in unordinary resort settings. POWs did not buy into American films that heavily emphasized people's pursuit of an instant gratification rather than self-control.

As was the case for the films *Pardon My Sarong* and *Hit the Ice*, quite a few films in the early 1940s liked to use resort settings. Historian John Morton Blum's classic study on WWII era American culture and politics notes that the U.S. government counted on the movies to contribute to national morale by supplying "escapist entertainment" especially that there was a shortage of gasoline and tire rubber for out-of-town recreation.[16] Therefore, movie and resorts were a good combination that appealed to Americans' desire to have recreational opportunities separate from their mundane life with rations and material shortages to support the war effort. To POWs, on the other hand, these films represented bad examples of America as a capitalist society celebrating conspicuous consumption.

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[14] U.S. Department of State, Special War Problems Division, "Fort Robinson, Nebraska, visited by Paul Schnyder, July 19, 1944" (translated in English), March 12, 1945, RG 0501, Reel 19, NSHS.
[15] Marsh, 54.
[16] John Morton Blum, *V Was for Victory: Politics and American Culture during World War II* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), 24, 95.

The Special Projects Division tried to select more appropriate films for the prisoners' Intellectual Diversion Program on the premise that German POWs' perceptions of America from films were not favorable. The conference syllabus for Army officers to discuss the Intellectual Diversion Program noted that, "What the U.S. means to the average prisoner of war: Gangsterism, depressions, plutocracy, senile democracy, race riots, lynchings, soulless machine civilization, etc."[17] Therefore, the Army was extra careful not to utilize films that would justify the German prisoners' accusation on the paradox between the U.S. democratic ideal and the capital-oriented twentieth-century American society rife with class and racial tensions.

Ron Robin also points out that the Special Projects Division were concerned about showing too many B movies to the German prisoners. This is not because of the degree of violence in these films, but rather the depiction of women gangsters and the exploitation of children and their eventual transformation to criminals in some films. Robin points out that, rather than the degradation of individuals, these movies portrayed America as a decadent society that pursued self-interests and did not protect women and children who were supposed to represent purity and innocence according to the cultural conventions of the day.[18] That is, failure to protect all women and children as pure and safe at home was a sign of social corruption, not a personal problem of these individuals. From a German perspective, blame was on the entirety of the American society and white American men who were negligent in providing enough protection for socially vulnerable groups.

In his study on Hollywood films between the New Deal and post-WWII period, film historian Nick Smedley points out that because of New Deal liberalism, the United States in the 1930s saw values emphasizing compassion, sharing, self-sacrifice and social justice, and community help in contrast to middle-class, masculine values of personal power and individual achievement.[19] Because of that, normative white American men were no longer protagonists of the films in this period. The depiction of marginalized individuals as main characters inevitably highlighted the social injustice and inequality between them and the white middle class. These films with socially deviant characters were inconvenient for the

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[17] Headquarters, Army Service Forces, Office of the Provost Marshal General Branch Office, "Fifth Orientation Conference Syllabus, May 15-25, 1945," RG 0501, Box 15, NSHS.
[18] Robin, 110.
[19] Nick Smedley, *A Divided World: Hollywood Cinema and Emigre: Directors in the Era of Roosevelt and Hitler, 1933-1948* (Bristol, UK; Chicago, Intellect, 2011), 23.

cause of Intellectual Diversion Program due to the absence of distinct good protagonists and bad guys. The good versus bad dichotomy did not work well in these films because socially "bad" women gangsters and juvenile criminals were victims of American society predominantly controlled by white American men.

While classic western films employed more explicit good versus bad narrative (normally good cowboys and bad Indians), they were not necessarily a perfect genre of movies to achieve the aim of the Intellectual Diversion Program, either. Ron Robin maintains that German popular culture often employed the western as a metaphor for both the faults and virtues of the American society.[20] In western films, the protagonist's individualism helped him or her thrive in a rough environment through hard work, but individualism as one's right also nurtured self-interest before social good. Therefore, western films were ambivalent recreational material for the POWs as they could be not only the object of enchantment but also the contempt for the depictions of violence as a norm for the triumph of individualism in the West.

While western films did not appeal to the War Department's cause to reeducate POWs, the distinct binary between good and bad was also common in war dramas and thus the Special Projects Division approved many of them to show the POWs once the Intellectual Diversion Program was fully operational. War movies emphasized the difference between American and German ideology, often portraying American soldiers acting out of true patriotism and German soldiers out of blind loyalty.[21] America in these films was consistently represented as a nation of rational and courageous citizens united under the democratic government while Germany was depicted as a totalitarian regime of terror filled with fanatics.

Rather than excluding a specific group among them, historian David Kennedy perceives that wartime films entailed "inclusionary sentiment" that portrayed Americans as a people both diverse and unified.[22] For instance, POWs at Fort Robinson had an opportunity to watch G*ung-ho!* (1943), a war film about the Second Marine Raider Battalion composed of men from diverse ethnic, age, family, regional, occupational, and socioeconomic

[20] Robin, 113.
[21] Marsh, 57.
[22] Kennedy, 762.

backgrounds took a difficult mission to raid a Japanese-held island in the Pacific.[23] This film emphasized American citizens' capability of uniting for a common goal regardless of their differences in various cultural backgrounds and depicted all patriotic Americans as national heroes. Aside from the actual unity in the military and the broader American society, war films in the 1940s portrayed the greatness of U.S. democratic ideals that enabled Americans to overcome their differences backgrounds and work together for the war effort.

Even if there was a depiction of violence in war dramas, violence done by American forces became a heroic, rational, and justifiable deed while violence by belligerent powers served as a proof that they were blood-thirsty villains. Therefore, war dramas portrayed not only physical warfare of the United States and its allies against the Axis Powers but also a moral battle between the ideological brutes and the civilized.

In addition to the entertainment films that were not necessarily impressive in the eyes of German prisoners of war, educational and visual aid film strips were also shown in the camps for the purpose of POWs' reeducation. During the final stage of the Intellectual Diversion Program, the Special Projects Division tried to show the POWs more and more educational films focusing on politics and technological advancement of America instead of Hollywood entertainment films. These educational films mainly focused on American statesmen, civics and patriotism, economics and business, labor industries, federal government, and religion and ethics.[24] The Army emphasized the use of subjects which would "give a true picture of United States history and traditions, the growth and development of American democratic institutions, the great industrial and natural powers and resources of this country and American cultural achievements."[25] Ironically, what the War Department hoped to present to the prisoners as America's true picture was only applicable to normative White American society. It marginalized negative aspects of what they prided as the nation's feats such as Native American dispossession, unequal economic opportunities paired with racial inequalities, environmental pollution, and so forth.

In addition to more than a hundred film subjects including American statesmen, civics and patriotism, economics and business, labor relations, education, domestic travel,

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[23] Marsh, 57.
[24] Headquarters, Army Service Forces, Office of the Provost Marshal General, "16mm Educational and Visual Aid Films for Prisoners of War," Washington, D.C., May 8, 1945, RG 0501, Box 15, NSHS. See Appendix B for subjects of the educational films that the War Department selected for POWs.
[25] "16mm Educational and Visual Aid Films for Prisoners of War."

government activities, religion, the SPD prepared three dozen film strips that introduced America's brighter aspects.[26] For instance, the film *America Marching On* (1937) celebrated American progress in the last one hundred years from the perspective of farmers as ancestors of average Americans living in the1930s.[27] This film emphasized how America's technological innovation and cooperation between workers, business managers and money partners eased people's lives and enabled them to attain higher standards of living.

Another film, *Our Shrinking World* (1946) illustrated how technological advancements in transportation and communication brought the international society closer than ever before.[28] The underlying message this film was the celebration of America's modern technology including the telephone, TV, radio, airplane, car, and interstate highway that took a major role in bringing the world much closer. In the film, images of America were mainly associated with these technological advancements while images of non-western nations were represented by natives often dressed in traditional clothes or half-naked, engaging in manual labor. The video entailed colonial sentiment by comparing global travel during Columbus and Magellan as well as America's Manifest Destiny by showing white settlers traveling in covered wagon, juxtaposing the incorporation of America with that of the world.

Understandably, these educational films only dealt with brighter side of the United States and did not explain the flip side. That way, the War Department could avoid the accusation by the prisoners about the marginalization of racial minorities as a significant part of U.S. history. Viewing films that were imposed by the War Department did not necessarily match with the prisoners' idea of what constituted their "recreation" inside the camp.

No matter whether they were recreational, political, or educational in their content, films were powerful and effective media that reflected American society's values and goals. As POWs' time in America elapsed, the content of films available to them got more and more inclined to the taste of the War Department but not to prisoners' own interests. In other

[26] "16mm Educational and Visual Aid Films for Prisoners of War"; Headquarters, Army Service Forces, Office of the Provost Marshal General, "16mm Educational and Visual Aid Films for Prisoners of War," Washington, D.C., May 8, 1945, RG 0501, Box 15, NSHS. See Appendix C for titles of the film strips that the War Department selected for POWs.
[27] *America Marching On*, director unknown, Audio Productions Inc., 1937, Internet Archive, accessed October 10, 2021, https://archive.org/details/america_marching_on.
[28] *Our Shrinking World*, director unknown, Young America Films, Inc., 1946, Internet Archive, accessed October 10, 2021, https://archive.org/details/OurShrin1946.

words, what the POWs were allowed to watch conveyed the SPD's message for them to see the United States through white America's cultural lens but not through their own.

Music and Theater

While the prisoners could listen to records that were recommended by the Special Projects Division, quite a few POWs were talented at playing musical instruments or performative arts and contributed to enriching entertainment programs in the camp. Fort Robinson POW Camp was fortunate to become a temporary home for roughly thirty military band members (Figure 6). These band members had been in the same regimental band, and they were allowed to keep their own musical instruments upon their capture and brought their instruments with them all the way to the camp. Besides the band members, other prisoners had their own musical instruments with them or bought them with the money they earned at day-labor. Some of the POWs even learned how to play musical instruments while being kept in the camp.[29] Therefore, even behind barbed wire, many prisoners tried to stay on the "transmitting end" rather than the receiving end on their own recreational activities.

At Fort Robinson, the band performed weekly concerts in the stockade, and they also furnished music for weekly shows played by members of the different prisoner of war companies.[30] While these concerts were mainly held for fellow prisoners of war, American officers and residents were invited on some occasions. In his letter to the director of Fort Robinson Museum, Anton Feig, a former prisoner of war, mentioned that "The band practiced steadily and played occasionally for the PWs. One day we even had a performance in the Fort theater hall for the American public, an unforgettable evening."[31]

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[29] Alfred A. Thompson, "A Characterization of the Educational and Recreational Diversions at P.W. Camp, Fort Robinson, Nebraska during 1943-1947," May 27, 1988, RG 1517.AM, Box 12, Fort Robinson Collection, NSHS.

[30] Office of Provost Marshal General, Prisoner of War Division, "Report of Visit to Camp, Prisoner of War Camp, Fort Robinson, Nebraska, December 19-21, 1943," RG 0501, Reel 18, NSHS.

[31] Dr. jur Anton Feig, Letter to Van Nelson, February 17, 1984, RG 1517.AM, Box 12, Fort Robinson Collection, NSHS.

Figure 6. POW orchestra at Fort Robinson. Photo by courtesy of Fort Robinson Museum.

This shared recreational experiences between the prisoners and locals helped to connect each other as neighbors outside of work. Leland Hughes, who worked at the veterinary hospital at the fort recalled, “They [German POWs] had a whole musical group and they put on some wonderful concerts here. I think these were some of the higher points of our lives here at Fort Robinson…, except what we could make up ourselves, this was a great blessing like this [*sic*] out here.”[32] As Hughes’ comment illustrates, prisoners of war were incorporated in surrounding communities by offering the locals not only affordable labor but also occasional entertainment. It was a surreal communal event the war situation made possible. It became a privilege for a hosting community in a rural area to appreciate prisoners’ performance that none of the big coastal cities could enjoy.

In addition to music performances, prisoners of war organized theater groups at each POW camp and produced dramas from time to time. In his note on the POW camp at Fort Robinson, Alfred Thompson mentioned that the German POWs formed a theater company that became affectionately called “VARISTA,” an abbreviation for “Variete im Stacheldraht” (Variety in Barbed Wire) (Figure 7). Like music concerts at the camp, VARISTA program

[32] Leland Hughes, interview by Tom Buecker, Fort Robinson Museum, Crawford, NE, N.D., 1517.AM, Box 12, Fort Robinson Collection, NSHS.

offered quality acting performances by POWs for POWs, American military personnel, and sometimes for civilians too in a theater converted out of a mess hall with complete light effects and stage props.[33] Each POW camp had a different degree of emphasis on theatrical performances by the prisoners, and Fort Robinson was one of the few camps that offered very extensive theatrical programs. Since theatrical performances were deeply connected with their creativity in captivity, this topic will be explored more in depth in Part III, Chapter 6: POWs' Creativity section.

Figure 7. POW actors posing in front of the VARISTA building. Photo by courtesy of Fort Robinson Museum.

While the War Department was aware that in-camp performances were a big part of POWs' recreational activity, they did not necessarily perceive it as strategically important as book reading or movie viewing to reeducate the prisoners with a use of pro-democratic

[33] Alfred A. Thompson, "A Characterization of the Educational and Recreational Diversions at P.W. Camp, Fort Robinson, Nebraska during 1943-1947," May 27, 1988, RG 1517.AM, Box 12, Fort Robinson Collection, NSHS.

materials. Partly due to less intervention into POW performance programs by the SPD, prisoners had an initiative to plan, prepare, and perform various theatrical programs for themselves.

Art and Crafts

Although this topic will become a major subject of Chapter 6, it is worth noting here that quite a few prisoners of war were talented in creating artifacts, yet these activities were not immune from the War Department's attempt to reeducate the prisoners.

For their goal to encourage German prisoners' appreciation of American culture and ideals, the Special Projects Division preferred American art instead of German art to be embraced by the prisoners in the POW camp. They recommended each POW camp use "reproductions of American art, photographs, and architecture" whereas "original murals and paintings by prisoners" were approved.[34] Therefore, the Army encouraged each POW camp to display American art in public spaces so that the presence of nostalgic German art would not further intensify German soldiers' nationalism and hostility against the United States. If it was not a reproduction or pastiche of famous German artwork, prisoners could draw or paint landscapes or figures of their homeland and could decorate their living quarters with them. In many cases, POWs' artwork expressed its personal meaning and significance to themselves rather than their national pride or political ideology. POWs' artistic creativity was not necessarily a realm on which the War Department could effectively impose their political values. As a part of their recreation in camp, prisoners created what they wanted, bestowed their own meaning to the objects, and treated them accordingly.

Sports and Games

Depending on the weather and climate of the area where they were incarcerated, prisoners of war could enjoy field and intramural sports. Coming from Europe, soccer–or football for Europeans–was very popular among the prisoners in most POW camps. Because so many soccer games by the POWs were going on at Fort Robinson, the camp operators were obliged to have a referee training course to supply enough arbiters for all the soccer games in the camp, and thirty-two men enrolled in the course under the leadership of sports

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[34] Headquarters Army Service Forces, Office of the Provost Marshal General Branch Office, "Fifth Orientation Conference Syllabus, May 15-25, 1945," RG 0501, Box 15, NSHS.

director who was a professional referee.[35] At Fort Robinson, the recreation grounds were located right in front of a guard tower (Figure 8). POWs' soccer games often attracted large audience of prisoners and Army personnel. Even the guards on the tower likely watched the prisoners playing the sport skillfully with a spectator rather than a surveillance gaze.

Figure 8. German POWs playing soccer game at Fort Robinson POW Camp; notice the guard tower on the left. Photo by courtesy of Fort Robinson Museum.

Soccer games required agility and physical strength of the prisoners, and thus it served as a salubrious recreation to maintain their health in captivity. Also, in many European nations including Germany and Italy, soccer claimed quasi-national sport status for its popularity because games between national teams were dominated by national anthems and flags that helped produced a distinct sense of national solidarity.[36] In this sense, soccer games reflected POWs players and audiences' patriotism and reaffirmed their national identity, if not their devotion to Nazism or Fascism.

When POWs played soccer or other sports, they organized teams based on which compound they stayed. Former German POW Karl Dehyle remembered his days playing sport matches at Fort Robinson as follows: "I was in the main company 'C,' I played football [American football?], I played soccer, I had the championship for the camp that we played

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[35] Office of Provost Marshal General, Prisoner of War Division, Provost Marshal General's Office, "Report on Visit to Prisoner of War Camp, Fort Robinson, Nebraska, January 24-25, 1945," RG 0501, Reel 19, NSHS.
[36] Christos Kassimeris and Charis Xinaris, "Politics and Identity in European Football: Cyprus in Comparative Context," in *Sport and National Identities: Globalization and Conflict*, eds. Paddy Dolan and John Connolly (London: Routledge, 2017), 61.

for. Including the soccer matches. And my company ‘C’ was the champions of the compound at Fort Robinson.”[37] Competitive team sports as a part of in-camp recreation gave some prisoners opportunities to improve their work situations: prisoners who were on a winning team were given a priority to choose more beneficial or privileged types of labor. According to Dehyle, “It happened that those who arrived first and who played in the championship games, they were the ones who got the nicest work assignments. For example, one of the prisoners in the championship games got a work detail to clean the rooms of Captain Ailena and First Lieutenant Schekle.”[38] It is interesting that the prisoners on the best teams could request privileges almost equivalent to that of long-term residents of the POW camp and cleaning higher-ranking American officers’ rooms was a more prestigious POW labor than other work details.

While prisoners were far from the battlefront and unable to exhibit their military prowess, team sports became a good alternative to prove their competitiveness and cooperativeness. Soccer as team sport created both winners and losers, and thus it could be seen as “war by other means” that fulfilled competing groups’ affirmation and celebration of a difference and its superiority through sporting victories.[39] Even though they no more engaged in actual battle on the war front, POWs could feel the thrill of vying for a victory in the soccer fields of POW camps on the American home front.

As various recreational activities above illustrate, most prisoners liked to keep themselves busy in POW camps after coming back from their labor. They chose to join recreational projects not only for alleviating the boredom of incarceration but also their willingness to have as many productive and beneficial experiences as possible in captivity. POWs’ regular involvement in recreational programs testifies that they tried to establish themselves as active members of POW camp community and transform camp culture more vibrant.

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[37] Karl Dehyle interview by Tom Buecker, Fort Robinson Museum, Crawford, NE, N.D., RG 1517.AM, Box 12, Fort Robinson Collection, NSHS. There were compound buildings A, B, and C at Fort Robinson. Each compound housed a thousand prisoners (excluding officers) at its peak.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Liz Crolley, David Hand, and Ralf Jeutter, “National Obsessions and Identities in Football Match Reports,” in *Fanatics!: Power, Identity, and Fandom in Football*, ed. Adam Brown (London: Routledge, 1998), 161.

Army's Intentions toward POW Recreation: National versus Local POW Newspapers

The War Department encouraged prisoners of war to engage in various recreation activities because these were not only good pastimes but also were susceptible to the influence of the Intellectual Diversion Program as they moved in the realm of "social ideas." The Special Projects Division positioned the motion picture programs to be most effective followed by recreational readings, radio programs, and theatrical performances while athletic activities and contests, art and craft exhibits, garden shows, and prisoner of war camp newspapers would also be significant for their goals.[40] It is understandable they valued the film viewing program highly because of the general role of films as "a powerful medium of information and persuasion," which became all the more the case during the wartime, and the U.S. government counted upon movies to contribute to national morale by supplying entertainment.[41] Therefore, the American government used movies for both American citizens and POWs to encourage the entire domestic to be more supportive of America's war effort.

As a part of their attempt to reeducate German prisoners through mass culture, the Special Projects Division facilitated the publication of the national German prisoner of war newspaper *Der Ruf* (*The Call*), claiming it to be written by selected German prisoners of war for the benefit of the entire German POW population in the United States. Prisoners were selected from various camps to write and edit the newspaper for their ability "to comprehend the subtle approach that is necessary in the make-up of the newspaper to make it acceptable to other prisoners."[42] Although the Special Projects Division did not clarify what they meant by the "subtle approach" appealing to other prisoners, they looked for anti-Nazi and pro-democratic POWs who could disseminate American values through an American-style German newspaper without explicit propagandizing. The Army put the purpose of the newspaper as, "to further the Intellectual Diversion Program by giving the German prisoners of war realistic news of all important military and political events, a true picture of the German home front, educational articles, entertainment, and a clear understanding of the

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[40] Headquarters, Army Service Forces, "Prisoner of War Special Projects Letter, Subject: Intellectual Diversion Program," November 9, 1944, RG 0501, Box 15, NSHS.
[41] Blum, 24.
[42] Headquarters, Army Service Forces, "Prisoner of War Special Projects Letter, Subject: National German Prisoner of War Magazine 'Der Ruf,'" February 8, 1945, RG 1517.AM, Box 12, Fort Robinson Collection, NSHS.

American way of life."[43] Therefore, the War Department positioned *Der Ruf* as an intellectual newspaper that would complement POWs' pro-democratic recreational and educational activities.

Despite their hope, however, the newspaper was not received very positively by German POWs at Fort Robinson during its early stage. In one compound, three company leaders bought up the first issue from the camp canteen and destroyed them and the POW spokesman also made a speech against *Der Ruf* and suggested the prisoners not buy it.[44] Pro-Nazi soldiers instantly sensed the objective behind the publication of *Der Ruf*. To the POWs who did not support National Socialism, possessing *Der Ruf* would likely result in pro-Nazi leaders' accusation of failure to support Germany. For the prisoners who did not want too many ideological conflicts in the camp, it was not worth risking their safety by getting the paper at a canteen where anybody could see what others were buying. The tension surrounding *Der Ruf* lingered until it became possible for prisoners to subscribe to it individually instead of buying it at a camp canteen.

Even though it did not start smoothly at some POW camps, the Special Projects Division considered the publication of *Der Ruf* mostly successful as an instrument to instill democratic philosophy into POWs' minds. To the SPD officials, the publication served as a "potent psychological weapon" that could speak to the individual prisoner in his own language and eventually would become a "positive menace to Nazi solidarity," which had been conditioned to psychological warfare.[45] As opposed to this report, historian Ron Robin argues that the creation of *Der Ruf* was not necessarily successful in the eyes of many German POWs. He claims that it puzzled the prisoners as the front pages were focused on overly esoteric literary and philosophical debates while the inner pages about Germany were short on substance.[46] It appears that the SPD deliberately limited POWs' exposure to the news about Germany while bringing up abstract democratic discussions to the front page; ordinary prisoners held more interest in what their nation would look like currently rather than how democratic ideals would hypothetically benefit them in the future. In that sense,

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[43] "Prisoner of War Special Projects Letter, Subject: National German Prisoner of War Magazine 'Der Ruf.'"
[44] U.S. Department of State, Special War Problems Division, "Prisoner of War Camp Fort Robinson, Nebraska, visited by Rudolph Fischer of the Legation of Switzerland, March 30-31, 1945," April 30, 1945, RG 1517.AM, Box 12, Fort Robinson Collection, NSHS.
[45] Headquarters, Army Service Forces, "Prisoners of War Special Projects Letter, No. 10, Subject: Intellectual Diversion Program," February 21, 1945, RG 0501, Box 15, NSHS.
[46] Robin, 77.

Der Ruf was created to satisfy the officials in charge of the Special Project Division rather than to better inform the German POWs with what they really wanted to know.

Historian Arnold Krammer also observes that *Der Ruf* was designed to appeal to the most literate among the prisoners in hope that they might, in turn, influence their less literate comrades.[47] Here, however, the SPD did not really consider if such educated POWs would want to take a risk of being harassed by pro-Nazi soldiers by spreading the democratic message of the magazine. Because of that, *Der Ruf* became a highly exclusive intellectual newspaper for the anti-Nazi or non-Nazi elites rather than an entertaining mass-culture oriented reading that any prisoner would enjoy reading. Robin also asserts that *Der Ruf* failed to accomplish its goals because its editors and mentors were detached from the concerns of the ordinary German POWs and thus it offered nothing new into the lives of POWs and camp communities.[48] Here, writers and editors of the newspaper as well as SPD officials did not take it in consideration that many of the POWs were laymen brought to the war front who did not necessarily care about theoretical debates as much as they cared about their survival in the camp and eventual repatriation at the conclusion of the war.

While the national POW newspaper left out many of the readers it originally targeted, the special Projects Division also paid attention to camp newspapers published at many base POW camps so that they could gauge the intensity of Nazi ideology there. As opposed to *Der Ruf*, local POW camp newspapers better reflected prisoners' personal interests. Alfred A. Thompson, the former interpreter and the Staff Sergeant at Fort Robinson recalled that, "Perhaps the most impressive of all the educational ventures was the establishment of a camp newspaper, *NEUR HORISONT*…. Therein one could find treatises on all nature of subjects, political, social, historical, cultural and technical. The publication of this periodical necessitated source materials in nature of other newspapers, magazines, scientific treaties and visual aids."[49] Thompson's remark suggests that to create their own camp newspaper, POWs had to refer to available sources in America for information. That is, POWs were inevitably exposed to predominantly pro-democratic source materials that reflected America's social values. Considering that Thompson was U.S. Army personnel, the "impressive" camp

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[47] Krammer, 202.
[48] Robin, 88.
[49] Alfred A. Thompson, "A Characterization of the Educational and Recreational Diversions at P.W. Camp, Fort Robinson, Nebraska during 1943-1947," May 27, 1988, RG 1517.AM, Box 12, Fort Robinson Collection, NSHS.

newspaper at Fort Robinson POW Camp would have been significantly pro-democratic in tone. Still, camp newspapers served as more pragmatic sources of information for many POWs compared to *Der Ruf*. Unlike *Der Ruf*, POWs knew which prisoners in the camp were involved in the publication of the camp newspaper and could find more specific information on the camp and locality relevant to their experience in America.

At Camp Douglas, creating the newspaper did not go as smoothly as Fort Robinson. Its first camp newspaper, *Ekkehard* was published in February 1945, but it lasted only one more issue because the censors halted its publication for the rabid Nazi content. It took six months before the publication of a more successful second camp newspaper *Douglas'offene Worte*, which published twenty issues between August 1945 to Christmas of that year when the camp was permanently closed.[50] Rather than *Der Ruf*, these local POW camp newspapers achieved better success for their contents were more familiar and relevant to the prisoners who wanted to know more about the immediate environment where they were kept. In this sense, the War Department's top-down approach to circulate *Der Ruf* did not consider what the prisoners really wanted to know rather than what the War Department wanted them to know about the United States. POWs' creation of local camp newspapers on their own enabled them to reflect their firsthand experiences in the camp and hosting community, helped them stay informed about what was really going on in the places directly relevant to them.

(Re)Education

In addition to the recreational activities mentioned above, prisoners had ample opportunities to take various educational courses taught at POW base camps. While German and Italian prisoners were able to take several courses relatively soon after they were transferred to the POW camps in the United States, it was not until the second half of 1944 that the War Department organized detailed educational programs in response to ever growing numbers of German prisoners. With America's growing concern about the surge of the communist Soviet Union and its possible dominance over the area occupied by Germany, the SPD set its ultimate goal as reeducation of the prisoners with democratic ideology. To

[50] Lowell A. Bangerter, "German Prisoners of War in Wyoming," *Journal of German American Studies* 14, no.2 (1979): 80.

achieve that, the War Department selected academic elites to chart an ambitious educational program to inundate the prisoners with U.S.-centric academic subjects.

Regarding these academic elites, historian Ron Robin explains that many of the Special Projects Division officials had backgrounds in liberal arts and held two central themes to be resolved through the reeducation of the POWs. These two aspects that resonated with American academia in the 1940s were "the decline of the liberal arts" and the beginnings of "the anticommunist university purges" that became prevalent in the 1950s.[51] Historian John Morton Blum's classic study on American politics and culture during WWII supports these points. In early 1942, college enrollment declined because of enlistments and conscription while courses in mathematics, astronomy, navigation, cartography, electronics, and meteorology mushroomed.[52] Behind these science courses, liberal arts courses were less valued not only by students but also by the U.S. government that offered contracts and funding for institutions excelled in scientific research, all of which led to the marginalization of conventional courses in the liberal arts.[53] Discontented with the growing significance of science disciplines at colleges, Special Projects Division officials designed a reeducation program with strong emphasis on liberal arts subjects including U.S. history, political science, philosophy, language, and other subjects that would connect American democratic ideals as a backbone of the courses. Despite the SPD officials' attempt, however, these subjects did not directly benefit every prisoner. Unless the prisoners had already possessed sufficient level of education, the theoretical contents were not going to be absorbed by the POWs.[54] Therefore, the program basically targeted prisoners who had already received higher education and would comprehend abstract ideas and intellectual material employed in the project. Like *Der Ruf,* projects led by the SPD officials often demonstrated the gap between these officials' high hope and actual prisoners' sense of alienation from democratic ideology.

Even though the War Department had a meticulous plan to indoctrinate German prisoners, their attempt did not turn out to be as successful as they had originally hoped. While the Special Projects Division intended to use the POW camps as quasi-boarding schools to instill American values to the prisoners, officials of the SPD were not always on

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[51] Robin, 4.
[52] Blum, 141-142.
[53] Ibid., 142, 144.
[54] Robin, 10.

the same page with Army officers at local POW camps when it came to the major role of the POW camp and the direction of POWs' in-camp activities. According to a report on a field service visit to Fort Robinson by the SPD official in February 1945, the camp commander at the fort did not necessarily welcome the Special Projects Division's attempt to reeducate the German prisoners. The report described that even though Colonel Arthur Blain, the camp commander of Fort Robinson POW Camp, was not opposing the letter of the law concerning the program, he showed "passive resistance" to it. The report continued that his resistance was likely attributed to the belief that the prime mission of the camp commander was "to maintain the physical security of the camp," while he thought the prisoners of war were "helplessly unchangeable."[55] Therefore, the camp commander expected it would be meaningless for both the Army and POWs to educate them in American ways and was skeptical if the prisoners would really appreciate this attempt.

Colonel Blain was not alone among military officers in the field who showed passive resistance to the reeducation of prisoners through the Intellectual Diversion Program. Ron Robin points out that many camp commanders dismissed their wards as hopeless fanatics for whom education was a waste of time, or it would cause tension among the inmates.[56] For some camp commanders, therefore, the major role of the prisoner of war camps was simply to detain the prisoners and maintain the order inside and outside of the camp but not to play the role of a school to teach them democratic principles while many young American men were gone to the war front to fight against the Axis Powers.

Colonel Blain's reluctance was also related to the Assistant Executive Officer's Jewish heritage. Captain Silverman, the first Assistant Executive Officer at Fort Robinson POW Camp, was responsible for leading the prisoners' recreational and educational activities and very enthusiastic about his job. Even though the captain did not have any major trouble with German prisoners for their ethnic backgrounds, Colonel Blain was concerned about possible future conflicts between them and requested the captain's replacement with another

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[55] Office of Provost Marshal General, Special Projects Division, "Memorandum for Director, Prisoner of War Special Projects Division: Report on Field Service Visit to Prisoner of War Camp, Fort Robinson, Nebraska, 14-15 February 1945, by Major Paul A. Neuland." Headquarters, Army Service Forces, RG 0501, Reel 19, NSHS.
[56] Robin, 55.

officer.[57] It does not necessarily mean, however, that the colonel despised Army personnel with Jewish heritage. Rather, it is plausible that Colonel Blain held paternalistic views toward both POWs and Army personnel. No matter how POWs and Captain Silverman actually perceived each other, Colonel Blain likely believed he knew what would be best for them and the entire camp community. Because of that, Captain Silverman was eventually transferred to another camp, and Alfred Thompson, who had served as an interpreter and Staff Sergeant at the camp, became the second Assistant Executive Officer at Fort Robinson.

As Colonel Blain's concern illustrates, passive resistance was derived from military officers' unwillingness to invite unwanted conflicts in the camp due to the Intellectual Diversion Program in which they could not see as directly benefitting the U.S. military, broader American society, and the prisoners themselves.

Rather than encouraging the POWs to pursue liberal arts studies, Colonel Blain recommended they organize engineering schools and the men who followed these courses were exempted from work four afternoons a week.[58] Therefore, the commander was more lenient with vocational training for POWs. This reveals that the commander did not like the idea of democratizing the POWs rather than offering them some sort of technical education. In the colonel's eyes, rather than teaching POWs political ideology that was foreign to them, it was more pragmatic to offer them vocational training that would help them find jobs once they were repatriated to Germany. In addition, engineering and other skill-based courses were a "safe bet" to teach the prisoners without significantly disturbing their preconceived political ideology as opposed to liberal arts courses that required them to reflect their own sociocultural perceptions.

Regardless of the War Department's intentions, POWs were actively involved in various educational courses offered at camps. Alfred Thompson recalled that initially the education program at Fort Robinson was rather "primitive" and mostly focused on English and world history. However, German prisoners embarked on a program of education that covered a multitude of subjects and levels of difficulty from grade school to university, and it

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[57] Office of Provost Marshal General, Special Projects Division, "Memorandum for Director, Prisoner of War Special Projects Division: Report on Field Service Visit to Prisoner of War Camp, Fort Robinson, Nebraska, 14-15 February 1945, by Major Paul A. Neuland." Headquarters, Army Service Forces, RG 0501, Reel 19, NSHS.

[58] U.S. Department of State, Special War Problems Division, "Fort Robinson, Nebraska, visited by Paul Schnyder, July 19, 1944" (translated in English), March 12, 1945, RG 0501, Reel 19, NSHS.

did not take very long to establish a lecture program in science and culture on the university level with the help of educators and professional men of distinguished rank amongst their own.[59] This account by Thompson best describes the period just before the Special Projects Division launched its ambitious reeducation program for the POWs. Until then, prisoners had been given more leniency about what to study and were able to arrange courses at their own initiative.

Once the SPD started interfering with their education at the camp, however, some courses were valued more highly than other classes by the SPD officials. In early 1945, a report on the Intellectual Diversion Program noted that roughly two thousand prisoners studied about thirty different subjects at Fort Robinson with English and German courses as their favorites.[60] However, the report did not specify the number of prisoners enrolled in these courses and thus it is not clear if this report was based on SPD staff's biased impression or actual numbers. Yet it is valid to say liberal arts courses claimed higher position as it was easier for the SPD officials to pair these courses with pro-democratic educational materials.

Compared to Fort Robinson, the education program at Camp Douglas was more limited in scale but the camp had a unique educational approach to expose the POWs to a democratic political system. According to Ernest Worrell, a former U.S. Army personnel stationed at the camp, the "good guys" responded vigorously to the educational program. At Camp Douglas, each barrack represented a county, each compound a state, and the entire camp represented a fictional country with a democratic system. This democratic nation state simulation worked well until the prisoners elected the first "president" of the camp; the person was, however, promptly impeached for his misunderstanding of the presidency as a mandate for dictatorship of the camp community.[61] What Worrell meant by "good guys" were those who were cooperative with Army personnel and showed a sincere interest in an American-style political and social system. The fictional democratic government lesson at the camp was a creative attempt to apply theoretical knowledge of democracy to POWs' in-camp experience. The camp became a little America behind barbed wire, but POWs did not

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[59] Alfred A. Thompson, "A Characterization of Educational and Recreational Diversions at P.W. Camp, Ft. Robinson, Nebraska During the Years 1943-1947," May 27, 1988, RG 1517.AM, Box 12, Fort Robinson Collection, NSHS.
[60] "Report on Intellectual Diversion Program, Prisoner of War Camp, Fort Robinson, Nebraska, 27 January 1945," RG 0501, Reel 19, NSHS.
[61] Peg Layton Leonard, *West of Yesteryear* (Boulder, CO: Johnson Publishing Company, 1976), 199-200.

necessarily perceive Americanization through democratization as something they wanted to achieve during their imprisonment.

To encourage more class attendance of the prisoners toward the end of the war, the Special Projects Division recommended awarding certificates of achievement to the prisoners who successfully completed courses in subjects such as U.S. History, American Government, Civics, U.S. Geography, and the English language that would "particularly fulfill the mission of the Intellectual Diversion Program."[62] That is to say, the War Department and the SPD officials regarded the POWs who successfully obtained certificates from these courses as desirable individuals to rebuild postwar Germany in a democratic way.

According to historian Lowell B. Bangerter, German prisoners were not always cooperative with the Army's reeducation attempt, especially when those attempts criticized conditions in Germany under Nazi dictatorship. At the end of the war, prisoners were required to view films of concentration camps, and if they refused to accept the contents of the films, they were required to view them again and again.[63] Even if the concentration camps were a product of Nazi Germany, it must have been difficult for patriotic POWs to accept the inhumanity their nation committed while they were gone to the war and kept in captivity in America. Arnold Krammer points out that the War Department placed particular emphasis on the showing of atrocity films both as a lesson in "collective guilt" and as a tool in the reeducation effort. Attendance for all prisoners was mandatory.[64] Even if the Special Projects Division tried to change pro-Nazi soldiers' idea of Germany, demanding they view the film became a psychological punishment for their unwillingness to accept American democratic virtues despite Germany's defeat to the Allies. It reveals that the democracy the War Department wanted the POWs to learn was democracy for America but not for the prisoners.

Despite the SPD officials' intentions, as Ron Robin observes, the reeducation program played a marginal role in the transformations of postwar German institutions and political attitudes. Rather, he asserts that, "The magnitude of the defeat, the carving up of Prussia, the decimation of the Junker class, and the division of the country into two distinct

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[62] Headquarters, Army Service Forces, "Prisoner of War Special Projects Letter No. 18, Subject: Intellectual Diversion Program," August 30, 1945, RG 1517.AM, Box 12, Fort Robinson Collection, NSHS.
[63] Bangerter, 79.
[64] Krammer, 210.

ideological camps" are more convincing explanations for the decline of the National Socialism and the ready acceptance of Western values in German society.[65] Robin's argument is valid considering that in order to remain as a nation state, Germany as the defeated side had to change by disposing of the political system that was incompatible with the Allied nations as the victor. External pressure on the society torn down by the war had more immediate impacts on the direction of Germany rather than working on POWs' political views through the democratic education approach. While the Special Projects Division expended great effort on the Intellectual Diversion Program, an ironic point of German POWs' reeducation is that the nature and existence of the program was supposed to be kept secret to the prisoners themselves. The Army believed that "any approach which might lead the prisoners to suspect an attempt to propagandize them will render impossible the achievement of the mission," and because of that, the program was designed to "encourage self-indoctrination on the part of prisoners who may prove susceptible to its influence."[66] Despite the War Department's intentions to keep the ultimate purpose of the program secret to the prisoners, many POWs noticed the role of the education program based on its heavy emphasis on liberal arts courses that embraced overarching theme of American democratic values.

Although every POW camp had to adopt SPD's Intellectual Diversion Program, each camp's degree of success varied for diverse reasons such as the intensity of Nazi ideology in the camp, attitudes of the camp commander and other Army officials toward the program, and biases of individuals who were involved in the program. Alfred Thompson, who served as an interpreter and Staff Sergeant and later as Assistant Executive Officer at Fort Robinson, summarized the degree of achievement of the Intellectual Diversion Program at Fort Robinson POW Camp as follows:

> PW Camp Ft. Robinson was an example of responsible administration [that] can best be exemplified by the acceptance of our policies at higher levels…. I was astonished and pleased to learn that our PW Camp operation procedures had been adopted, book and page, as a model for other camps throughout the United States. Our education program, the establishment of a school of university status…. was unequaled elsewhere in the country. The camp newspaper was a model of worthiness, not only for pleasure, but for instruction. The theatre group, 'VARISTA,' had no counterpart

[65] Robin, 9-10.
[66] U.S. Department of the Army, Office of the Adjutant General, "Intellectual Diversion Program," Headquarters Army Service Forces, Washington, D.C., November 9, 1944, RG 0501, Box 15, NSHS.

> elsewhere among the other four hundred PW Camps in the USA. Finally, when repatriation began, PW Camp Ft. Robinson sent more of its PWs to Ft. Eustis, Virginia for training and service with Allied Military Government, and a higher percentage of its total prisoner population, than any other PW camp in the nation.[67]

Thompson therefore praised the effectiveness of the Intellectual Diversion Program practiced at Fort Robinson and hinted that efficient operation of the camp created model POWs. However, he did not refer to how prisoners who participated in these programs felt about their experiences. In that sense, rather than evaluating POWs' intellectual capacities, Thompson took pride in his effort in developing Fort Robinson POW Camp as one of the most desirable camps in America.

While former U.S. Army officials like Thompson reminisced that POWs' education at the camp was one of the most productive and successful attempts by the War Department, Ron Robin points out that the SPD's Intellectual Diversion Program was built upon the lack of specific regulation in the Geneva Convention. Because the Geneva Convention pointed that "belligerents shall encourage as much as possible the organization of intellectual and sporting pursuits by the prisoners of war" and did not give examples of acceptable or prohibited materials, it was contingent upon the captor's interpretation about what they would offer the prisoners.[68] In addition, although the Convention prohibited the POWs' exposure to the belligerent's propaganda, it did not offer a clear definition of the term "reeducation" itself and still allowed something loosely defined as an "educational project" as a part of intellectual pursuits of the prisoners.[69] Therefore, what reeducation really meant for the captors and the captured was ambiguous and that very point allowed the Special Projects Division to stretch its definition convenient to suit their purpose.

Besides its primary purpose to indoctrinate POWs, Ron Robin observes that the reeducation program represented the Special Project Divisions' attempt to counteract the notion that humanities were "archaic" and "trivial" by proving that hardened Nazis could be transformed when exposed to college-type Western Civilization courses and reading

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[67] Alfred A. Thompson, Letter to Thomas Buecker, November 2, 1989, RG 1517.AM, Box 12, Fort Robinson Collection, NSHS.

[68] "Article 17, Intellectual and Moral Needs of Prisoners of War," Conventions Relative to the Treatment of Prisoner of War, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Geneva, July 27,1929, electronic source, https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/Article.xsp?action=openDocument&documentId=31EC95A8E8583030C12563CD00518E58.

[69] Robin, 22.

material.[70] Here, the officials did not really consider how the POWs' upbringing in Europe helped their understanding of the "Western Civilization" materials taught in the reeducation program. That is, even if German prisoners would get "softened" after their exposure to reeducation program, it is not clear if that would be attributed to their newly acquired knowledge in America or if they were already preconditioned to comprehend white-centric liberal arts courses through their prewar cultural experiences in Europe. Also, some prisoners were more open to respecting different political ideologies while others stuck to the belief of National Socialism. As Thomas F. Naegele, the former Army interpreter at Indianola POW Camp in Nebraska mentions, it was difficult to understand each POW's political worldview considering, "How many subtle gradations of belief, prejudice, education, personal experience, fear, courage, political responsibility and plain character come into play."[71] Therefore, not every prisoner went through his recreational and educational opportunities in captivity in the same manner while the Special Projects Division officials attempted to put them into a mold of pro-American German men who would deeply appreciate U.S. democratic ideals and play a major role in creating a democratic postwar Germany.

In addition, to reform German POWs' political ideology, Robin claims that the Special Projects Division officials who designed the Intellectual Diversion Program had an immediate task during the war years to present "America as a utopia fulfilled."[72] Obviously, this utopia was built upon their perceptions as academic elites that did not pay attention to the invisibility of ethnic minorities in white normative American society. The irony of presenting America as a modern utopian society would be its inconsistency with the actual socioeconomic landscape that did not produce equal opportunities to the people who were deviant from white normativity in the United Sates.

Conclusion

As Ron Robin claims, POWs' educational program reflected university politics and academic controversies of "the continuous search for respectable paradigms of the American cultural greatness," which had nothing to do with the POWs.[73] While there was no specific

[70] Robin, 55.
[71] Thomas F. Naegele, *Love Thine Enemies: Images of a Little Known Chapter in German-American History, 1943-1946* (Gerlingen, Germany: Bleicher Verlag, 1994), 15.
[72] Robin, 186.
[73] Ibid.

explanation for what “cultural greatness” meant for wartime America, it was likely based on American exceptionalism supported by the democratic myth that every citizen was bestowed equal human rights and capable of achieving the American dream. The Special Projects Division staff endorsed an idea of what the sociologist Robert Bella later termed American Civil Religion, the endowing of American political creed with quasi-religious, mystical, and universal significance.[74] Henceforth, American democracy and freedom transformed into quasi-national religion and disseminated its influence on every single aspect of the society, served as political, cultural, and even academic discourse that every citizen must worship. Even though the Special Projects Division officials embraced the ideal of American democracy as “Civil Religion,” they did not question the ethical issues of applying it to the prisoners of war whose presence in the United States was not the result of their own choice.

While the War Department might have embraced their “good intentions” to educate POWs, they failed to consider if the reeducation attempts proposed by academic experts would really reflect the direction that postwar Germany and its nationals wanted to follow. The War Department was overly ambitious and confident with America’s role as a democratic nation to guide other countries toward the right direction, and thus believed Germany’s restructuring would not fail as far as democratized POWs would take a lead in that task. Although American democracy and morality were not necessarily universal truths nor globally respected virtues, officials who were involved in the Special Projects Division did not question that.

Most prisoners did not entirely reject nor fully embrace the democratic message embedded in the Intellectual Diversion Program but rather sorted out what would benefit them from the rest. Inside POW camps, prisoners could take various recreational and educational activities even if some of them strongly reflected America’s desire to present itself as a great society without political, racial, class, and gender oppression. No matter what kind of intentions the Special Projects Division held behind the prisoners’ activities in the camp, many prisoners voluntarily took recreational and educational opportunities to enrich their captive experience in America.

Even though their country lost the war in the end, POWs did not necessarily spend their life in the camp as powerless victims, because they could stay active and spend healthy

[74] Robin, 187.

and productive “ordinary life” of young men that was not granted for everyone during the war. What constituted one’s ordinary life during the war would be varied, but for their status as enemy prisoners of war, POWs in America were guaranteed not only shelter, food, and clothes, but also spare time in which they could pursue their hobbies, artistic expressions, intellectual curiosity, and physical health even behind barbed wire. Prisoners of war made use of recreational activities and educational courses for their own sake, but not for the United States that intended to instill American political and cultural greatness in their minds.

Part III

Embracing Cultural Images and Creativity in Captivity: Western Landscape Viewers and In-Camp Artists, and Going Back to Civilian Life

Part III discusses POWs' connection with the place and material culture they encountered in captivity. Chapter 5 explores POWs' images of the American West that they developed and the real Western landscape they saw as prisoners of war in America. This study intersects with scholarship of regional studies, images of the West, popular culture, and local identity. I contrast cultural images of the West that prisoners had held with real images of the West and point out that the lived West POWs saw in person had diverse facades because of different modes of interaction between the residents and surrounding environment. Yet at the same time, the West as an ambiguous and mythic place survived in the minds of not only POWs but also residents, and they both accepted the local identity as somewhere in the West.

In chapter 6, I explore the role of POW camps as a social institution of confinement and material culture surrounding the prisoners of war and impacts of creative activity on POWs' identity. To do so, I mainly relied on archival sources available at Nebraska State Historical Society (NSHS) and Pioneer Memorial Museum of Douglas, Wyoming, consulted newspapers, camp reports, personal accounts of former POWs, American soldiers, and civilians, as well as letters exchanged between them after the war. These primary sources reveal how prisoners of war interacted with material culture that surrounded them, and how their acts of creativity helped them improve their life in captivity as well as their relationship with American neighbors. Prisoners' creativity behind barbed wire served as one of their survival tactics in the camp. I refer to anthropologist Jane Dusselier's idea that, "creating art aided internees in a process of re-territorialization by altering living units, collective gathering spaces, and outside landscapes into more survivable places."[1] When this idea is applied to POWs and their artwork, creating artifacts not only served as prisoners' instant outlet to relieve stress but also as a medium to adjust to captive life through retaining or

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[1] Jane Dusselier, *Artifacts of Loss: Crafting Survival in Japanese American Concentration Camps* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2008).

modifying their identity. When the war ended, their artifacts became items that memorialized their time and experience as prisoners of war.

Chapter 5

POW' Cultural Perceptions: The Global Imagined West vs. the Lived West (And the Masculine Self in Camp)

What would it have been like for the European POWs to be brought to the place they had known only through popular culture and see these American "symbols" in person no matter how similar or different they looked from their expectations? What did it mean for POWs to live in the United States and perceive American landscapes in person, particularly in the West for the duration of the war? Would that be an opportunity for them to be become more attached to the place, or to make them realize essential differences between them and Americans?

Like Americans who reflected their social values in western films and novels, German and Italian POWs also held images of the United States before they came to the nation as prisoners. Through western novels and films popular in Europe, they visualized the American West as a mythic place where cowboys thrived. In actuality, however, the real West they experienced was a hybrid of various local identities and sometimes a contradictory place where economic, political, regional, and social situations interplayed to create a unique local landscape that prisoners had not necessarily associated with the West.

POWs' captive life in the American West, especially in the High Plains, might not have been as dramatic and eventful as western films they had seen in prewar years, yet prisoners obtained an opportunity to place themselves in a microcosm of the real West. During their stay in POW camps in the region, prisoners were often transferred to seasonal branch camps that were established in remote areas for labor purposes. In their trips to and from branch camps, prisoners could see vast arid plains with big ranches and agricultural fields, mountains and forests at high altitudes, industrial sites extracting various natural resources such as coal mines or sawmills, and several tourist destinations that represented the United States and its democratic ideal. WWII POWs' experience in the American West was unique because of their status as national enemies, foreigners, and inmates of self-sustainable POW camps surrounded by barbed wire fences. To the POWs, hosting communities in the rural West became a haven where wartime destruction was hardly existent, and most locals offered compassion toward the prisoners perceiving cultural closeness more than distance from them.

Images of the American West: POWs vs. Americans

For more than a century and a half, the American West has fascinated not only Americans but also people all over the world—especially Europeans—and the imagined West served as a powerful cultural ambassador for America. Many scholars of the images of the West examine how and when the imagined West was introduced to the world and perpetuated by whom, and what these images say about American society. Historian Richard Slotkin's monumental work on the frontier myth examines Hollywood western films and other forms of popular culture and point out that they served as media to spread and justify America's expansionism.[1] Louis Warren focuses on William Cody's promotional tactics to incorporate myth and fact in his Wild West Show and argues that his shifting identity between Buffalo Bill and William Cody reflected ambiguous border between authenticity and imagery of the West.[2] L.G. Moses explores representations of Native Americans as Show Indians in the Wild West Show, and points out that they were not gullible victims of white entrepreneurs' cultural exploitation, but persons who earned a good living by choosing to act out Cody's imperial dramas.[3]

As the images of the American West have been conceived internationally, scholarship of the global imagined West has been expanding and discuss how global audiences relate themselves with the American West. Emily Burns explores transnational dimensions of the Wild West introduced to France by Buffalo Bill and suggests that the Wild West should be viewed through "a lens that encourages 'multidimensional' and 'pluralist' interpretations."[4] Gerrit-Jan Berendse attributes German fascination with Indians to western novels by German author Karl May whose American West, as opposed to actual American society, had evolved into a Promised Land in which all signs of modernism were abolished and Indians were portrayed as noble friends of white cowboy hero.[5] And Renee Laegreid discusses Italian people' tendency to align themselves with the cowboys rather than Native Americans reflect

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[1] Richard Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992).
[2] Louis S. Warren, *Buffalo Bill's America: William Cody and the Wild West Show* (New York: Knopf, 2005), 543.
[3] L.G. Moses, *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Identities, 1883–1933* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), 272.
[4] Emily C. Burns, *Transnational Frontiers: The American West in France* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2018),10.
[5] Gerrit-Jan Berendse, "German Anti-Americanism in Context," *Journal of European Studies* 33, no. 3–4 (December 2003): 341.

Italians' disconcertion to find the disconnect between literature-based stereotypes and their personal experience with Indians as opposed to their fascination with Buffalo Bill.[6]

As these scholarly works demonstrate, the imagined West and the lived West are intricately intertwined. On many occasions, what people believed to be authentic aspects of the West turned out to be artificial or fake and that blurred the boundary between the imagined West and the experienced West. Behind the ambiguous images of the American West, promoters' commercial and political interests of how to present the West as well as audiences' desire of how to perceive the West based on social and historical contexts exist.

For many prisoners of war, the most famous icon of the American West were cowboys. As folklorist J. Frank Dobie puts it, "The cowboy became the best-known occupational type that America has given the world."[7] Aside from real cowboys, cultural images of the mythic cowboy became so powerful that it affected the way both cultural insiders and outsiders perceived the American West.

Well before the outbreak of World War II, American popular culture had been widely commodified in shows and plays, dime novels, paintings, photographs, films, and exported to Europe in volume. These mass culture genres helped shape Europeans' image of the American West. Rather than dime novels that required the readers to visualize characters and landscape, Western films by Hollywood offered the audience instant visualization of the mythic American West that created stereotypes of what the American West *should* look like. For that purpose, as cultural geographer Gary Hausladen observes, certain kinds of places—wide open spaces, with grand vistas, often in desert lands—persisted as settings of western films and made the mythic West "more psychological than geographical" space.[8] That is to say, the mythic West as a psychological space did not have to be a specific physical place. It just had to be convincing enough for the audience to believe what they saw should belong somewhere in the West.

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[6] Renee M. Laegreid, "Finding the American West in Twenty-First-Century Italy," *Western Historical Quarterly* 45, no. 4 (Winter 2014): 414.

[7] J. Frank Dobie, *Guide to Life and Literature of the Southwest*, rev.d (Dallas, TX: Southwestern Methodist University Press, 1942, 1952), 89, quoted in Paul F. Starrs, "An Inseparable Range, or the Ranch as Everywhere," in *Western Places, American Myths: How We Think about the West*, ed. Gary J. Hausladen (Reno, NV: University of Nevada Press, 2003), 65-66.

[8] Gary J. Hausladen, "Where the Cowboy Rides Away: Mythic Places for Western Film," in *Western Places, American Myths: How We Think about the West*, ed. Gary J. Hausladen, (Reno, NV: University of Nevada Press, 2003), 302.

As a proof, in the summer of 1943, when townspeople of Douglas, Wyoming, asked newly arrived Italian POWs if they knew where they were, one Italian prisoner replied: "Certainly, we are somewhere in the Far West, where Tom Mix lives."[9] This Italian man's innocent remark was strikingly powerful to summarize a cultural outsider's perception of the American West. For Italian POWs who had seen western films, the most famous icon of the American West was a cowboy performed by a Hollywood actor Tom Mix. In that Italian soldier's mind, there was an equation of Tom Mix = cowboy = American West, and his fellow POWs likely held similar perceptions. This mix-up of actor's role and his real life was a product of film industry's promotional tactics to sell low budget B western films during the 1930s.

According to Richard Slotkin, for the film industry the key to establishing a viable B series was the creation of a series star with a distinctive style whose real identity was merged with his screen persona, and many series encouraged a confusion of identities between the actor and his role.[10] Such confusions became possible through audiences' repetitive viewing of the same actors in western films with similar plots. B westerns were normally developed in series based on recurring characters or performers.[11] Therefore, the Italian POW's remark served as good evidence of the film industry's commercial success in B westerns by constantly casting the same actors. Appearing in almost 300 films and playing a cowboy over and over, Tom Mix's identity as a cowboy was cemented not only among Americans but also international audiences.

In the case above, the Italian POW first perceived Douglas as an ambiguous place situated "somewhere in the Far West." What the American West meant for that prisoner was not bound to actual geography but a very broad cultural image of land of cowboys, and Douglas as a small Western town was eligible for claiming its mythic cowboy past and continuity to the present. Aside from geographically delineated regional Wests, the American West is broad and embraces multiple Wests that are slippery to define geographically or culturally: Far West, Mountainous West, Mythic West, Frontier West, Old West, Wild West,

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[9] "412 Italian War Prisoners are Now at Douglas," *Glenrock Independent* (Glenrock, WY), August 19, 1943. The first 412 Italian prisoners to arrive in Douglas in August 1943 were captured in Tunisia and traveled from New York to Wyoming by train. While Tom Mix was a native of Pennsylvania, he appeared in almost 300 western films.
[10] Slotkin, 272.
[11] Ibid., 271.

Rural West, Urban West, and many more. What POWs as foreigners had initially associated with the American West was the place where cowboys and Indians lived, but not necessarily a place with dams, irrigation, sugar mills, or sawmills. Nevertheless, they would find out these industrialized landscapes were vital aspects of the American West.

In one sense, POWs came to the West expecting to encounter its Frontier identity rather than its "New West" characteristics that embraced diverse groups of people in various places and climate with numerous contemporary issues and struggles. The West POWs had known mainly through films was an imaginary place that existed, borrowing Media and Culture Studies scholar Nanna Verhoeff's phrase, "elsewhere" and "elsewhen" inhabited by "the Other."[12] Elsewhere and "elsewhen" (meaning at other times) detached the American West from regional and time context of the real world and negated specificity of the place, time, and inhabitants. In this sense, it is understandable that the Italian POWs identified the town of Douglas located in the arid and desolate High Plains as somewhere in the Far West.

In his classic study written just after the cowboy craze on television and the movies, historian Gerald Nash claims that the cowboy is a regional hero who gained national and international recognition. Nash explains that the images of cowboy made him:

> a symbol of the traditional values embraced by the Protestant Ethic in America. Beset by rapid changes in their lives and values, successive generations of urbanized Americans in the twentieth century looked longingly back to simpler—and supposedly-golden age which they often associated with the frontier West…. Then Americans had shared many common values such as Individualism, Simplicity, Adventurism, Moralism, Courage, Self-Reliance, Personal Freedom, and virtually unlimited opportunities, belief personified by the western cowboy.[13]

Nash's statement reveals that the American public held a nostalgic sentiment toward the cowboy and his down-to-earth interactions with the surrounding environment because that was how Americans desired to live but were unable to do in a highly modernized society. The cowboy symbolized everything about America's "good old days" in which society

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[12] Nanna Verhoeff, *West in Early Cinema: After the Beginning* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 13, 16, 191.

[13] Gerald D. Nash, *The American West in the Twentieth Century: A Short History of an Urban Oasis* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973), 302-303. Blake Allemdinger's study on the cowboy's work culture illuminates cowboys' perceptions of themselves as well as concerns outside their work, hinting at their less heroic images different from the romanticized cowboy. For more details, see Blake Allmendinger, *The Cowboy: Representations of Labor in an American Work Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

looked less complicated and one's ties with other members in a community was much stronger.

This ideal, however, was not necessarily inclusive. To claim nostalgia for "good old America," one had to be white, Christian, and middle-class; people of color were unable to obtain citizenship in "good old America" because white normative American society did not allow them to claim the role of good American hero. As opposed to that, ironically, POWs from Europe had white, Christian, physically capable male identities that were compatible with stereotypical images of the cowboy reinforced by mass culture. Even if they could not become real cowboys because of their foreign enemy status, they could likely pass as cowboys if they wore western wear.

For European POWs, especially those from Germany, "Indians" were as popular as cowboys as a cultural icon of the American West. According to Samuel Mitchell, the former Camp Sergeant Major at Fort Robinson, when the first cohort of German POWs arrived at Fort Robinson, they were given information on the history of the place they would stay. A historical sketch of Fort Robinson was available for them and described the war between the Sioux and Crow and later the takeover by the U.S. Cavalry including the story about the imprisonment and death of Crazy Horse in the Red Cloud Agency. The prisoners were greatly interested in the history and legend of the area and were given a copy of the pamphlet which they translated into German. Mitchell remembered that "the prisoners were truly happy at being at Fort Robinson, because they were familiar with western movies and now were where it all took place."[14] Although German prisoners had an interest in the history of the fort and its role in Native American conflicts, Mitchell's perception of POWs being grateful for their imprisonment at Fort Robinson was too optimistic and paternalistic from the standpoint of U.S. Army personnel. Since the historical sketch of the fort must have been written from the perspective of the U.S. military, historical events between the Army and native people at the military post were events of dispossession to the natives for their opposing stands against the U.S. expansion into the West.

In addition, not all the native groups shared the same experience and memory of the fort; the Crow sided with the U.S. military and fought against the Sioux, and thus the historical sketch likely portrayed the former group more favorably than the latter. Moreover,

[14] Samuel L. Mitchell statement, Fort Robinson, 1979, RG 1517.AM, Box 12, Fort Robinson Collection, NSHS.

Fort Robinson POW Camp was established virtually across a road from the site of former Red Cloud Agency, which became the site of institutional confinement of the dispossessed cultural group by the United States.[15] That possibly reminded POWs that, like the Lakota Sioux during the late nineteenth century, they came to Fort Robison as America's prisoners to be incarcerated under surveillance of the U.S. Army, but not as happy international tourist-consumers in peacetime.

At POW camps, prisoners did have plenty of opportunities to watch western movies as a part of their recreation program. Even if many of them did not speak English, they did not have much difficulty comprehending the story owing to western films' straightforward formula. Because the American film industry had introduced western movies into Europe before the war, POWs had general knowledge in the normal plot of western films; also, pictures were filled with action and were easy to follow for the viewers.[16] At Fort Robinson, German POW interpreter and spokesman Wolfgang Dorschel kept a diary and he mentioned about some western films he watched during his imprisonment. On January 30, 1944, Dorschel watched a "16mm film, cowboy and 2 dirty men."[17] On June 15, 1944, he saw, "*The Spoilers* with Marlene Dietrich…. Gold in Alaska around 1900," but he thought the film starring the German native actress was "Nothing special."[18] On September 10, 1944, Dorschel recorded, "Indian movie, *Valley of the Sun*. Just the dance was good."[19] And on September 21, 1944, he viewed "*Ride 'Em Cowboy* with Bud Abbot[t] and Lou Costello," and found it "Very, very funny."[20]

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[15] Robert V. Hine and John Mack Faragher, *The American West: A New Interpretive History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 254-256; Charles M. Robinson, *A Good Year to Die: The Story of The Great Sioux War* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995). Even though Custer's defeat at the Little Big Horn was the highlight of the Great Sioux War of 1876-1877, the U.S. government won the war by cutting off rations and starving the Indians into submission at the Red Cloud Agency in Nebraska and ensuing cession of the Black Hills. Crazy Horse was stabbed and killed by an Army guard at Fort Robinson on September 5, 1877, when he resisted to the Army's attempt to imprison him to prevent his escape from the reservation. For more details about conflicts between Oglala Sioux at Red Cloud Agency and the U.S. Army at Fort Robinson, see Thomas R. Buecker, *Fort Robinson and the American West, 1874-1899* (Lincoln, NE: Nebraska State Historical Society, 1999).

[16] "German Prisoners of War Here Resigned to Defeat of Reich, Turn to Religion in Time of Adversity, *Star Herald* (Scottsbluff, NE), February 13, 1945.

[17] Wolfgang Dorschel, Diary entry, January 30, 1944, tran. Ursula Armstrong, RG 1517.AM Box 13, Fort Robinson Collection, NSHS.

[18] Wolfgang Dorschel, Diary entry, July 15, 1944.

[19] Wolfgang Dorschel, Diary entry, September 10, 1944.

[20] Wolfgang Dorschel, Diary entry, September 21, 1944.

Dorschel's diary included some more entertainment film titles until September of 1944, when the War Department launched the Intellectual Diversion Program; after that, hardly any mention of western films appeared in his diary although the prisoners could still watch different genres.[21] Assuming from that, it is plausible that the War Department perceived the violence depicted in western films would not make these movies an ideal material for their ambitious project to educate prisoners with American democratic principles. For American audiences, the cowboy hero's violence in western films was an evil necessity, or even a desirable deed, to subjugate the villain and thus resonating with America's war effort to win the war for their democratic cause. To POW viewers on the other hand, violence in western films conveyed different messages; the cowboy justifies his violence for social good, and it juxtaposed with the American society that dispossessed and alienated the Other from American democratic ideals in the true sense.

Creating (Replicated) Images of the West Inside POW Camp

Although not very many WWII POW camp structures survive to the present nationwide, the town of Douglas still preserves the former Officers' Club building on the original site. If one enters the building, it becomes clear why this building has been spared from demolition: it houses sixteen elaborate murals whose motifs all belong to Western landscape. Three Italian prisoner artists at Douglas POW Camp created these murals inside the building between 1943 and 1944 (Figure 9). They depicted the scenes of the mythic Old West including cowboys at work, an Indian scout, a shootout at a saloon, the natural landscape and wildlife of the American West. Romantic images of the cowboys and other cultural icons of the West captured in the murals were the antipode of confinement, surveillance, obedience, and collectivism associated with their life in captivity as a reality.

Even though local and state historical societies and area residents had long believed that the American cinema inspired the POWs' vision of the American West to create these murals, they created murals as replicas of famous western artists' paintings and sketches. About five

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[21] Wolfgang Dorschel, Diary entry, January 13, 1945. Dorschel mentioned in his diary, "Evening film, [*The South of*] *Pago Pago*. Accuse of the white race. Extremely good. *The South of Pago Pago* was an adventure film on a Pacific Island. The natives on the island were depicted as exotic and innocent and fooled by greedy white men seeking pearls, but the island chief's son defeated and expelled the villains with the sacrifice of a white woman whom he loved. By saying that the film was about accusation of the white race, Dorschel likely meant to criticize Western nations' colonialism to subjugate and exploit the indigenous people including Native Americans.

of these images belong to William Henry Jackson and the local newspaper points out that the death of Jackson almost perfectly coincided with the time frame of the Italians at Camp Douglas.[22] It is valid to say, then, that the reason for selecting some of Jackson's paintings for the murals could be commemorating his contribution to the state of Wyoming and the establishment of its world famous first American national park just three hundred miles away from Douglas. Hailing from New York, Jackson ventured to the West and eventually became a pioneer photographer of the American West, explored Yellowstone area as a member of Ferdinand Hayden's geological survey expedition in 1871 and popularized the place among Americans through his photographs.

Figure 9. Interior of Officers' Club at Douglas POW Camp. POWs' murals were painted on the walls of the lounge and banquet room of the building. Photo by author.

[22] "Legends," *Douglas Budget* (Douglas, WY), April 18, 2012.

According to historian Richard White, as it was the case for movie cameraman, early western photographers had "imagined a West" rather than simply captured what appeared before their lenses.[23] Because Jackson had to sell what he produced as an artist, he promoted the American West by selecting the most visually appealing and enticing images for his customers. Therefore, Jackson's West in his photographs and captured what the American society wanted to see rather than what he saw in person.

Although Jackson was best known for his western photographs, he also explored his talent as a painter before and after his career as a photographer. Between 1862 and 1864, Jackson joined the Union Army and worked on drawing map and sketches of fortifications. He then took a retouching job at multiple photographic studios until he jointly opened a photographic studio with his brothers in Omaha, Nebraska, in 1869. In 1924, Jackson retired his photographing business and started painting western landscapes.[24] These paintings, however, were less than an accurate portrayal of the contemporary West; he was inclined to depict the iconic images of the mythic West and its frontier past.[25] Therefore, along with the shift in his career as well as America's progress and primary interest, images of the West Jackson portrayed also transitioned.

While five of the murals were replicas of Jackson's paintings, the remaining murals imitated Charles Russell's paintings or rough sketches of western scenes. Born in Missouri and attracted to the images of the Wild West, Charles Russell established his residence in Great Falls, Montana, prolifically depicted images of the Old West and was dubbed as "the cowboy artist." According to art historian Brian Dippie, while Russell's earlier paintings portrayed Indians as "dispossessed refugees in their own land, pathetic when they were not dangerous," Russell began to express his empathy for the Indians in the 1890s as "nature's noblemen," mainly by isolating the Indians in a world without whites and depicting them in domestic situations. Indian perspectives matched Russell's own as he saw the West

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[23] Richard White, *"It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own": A New History of the American West* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 627.
[24] Rebecca Hein, "William Henry Jackson: Foremost Photographer of the American West," WYoHistory.org, Wyoming State Historical Society, November 8, 2014, https://www.wyohistory.org/encyclopedia/william-henry-jackson-foremost-photographer-american-west.
[25] Peter B. Hales, *William Henry Jackson and the Transformation of the American Landscape* (Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1988), 286-287.

increasingly hemmed in by fences and lamented the lost freedom of his cowboy youth.[26] Therefore, Russell reflected his own concerns into his Indian paintings; through Indian bodies that symbolized nature and traditions, he expressed his anxiety toward modernizing western landscape. What Russell's Indian paintings symbolized was his own desire to portray and preserve the West as pristine natural space and Indian traditions as a part of it, both would be vanished from the West.

The West depicted in Jackson and Russell's paintings differed in scope. Jackson tended to paint the West as a land to be explored, conquered, and settled by white settlers. He depicted symbolic scenes of westward expansion such as expedition to Yellowstone (Figure 10), men working at an Army post while being alert to Indian attack (Figure 11), a Pony Express rider traveling by himself to the next station (Figure 12), and Oregon Trail emigrants passing the Independence Rock (Figure 13). In comparison to Jackson's paintings, Russell depicted the American West as a place after conquest in which white settlers claimed the land from Native Americans. Russell's West is a place where cowboys worked and herded cattle in an open land while Native Americans lived on a reservation with their cultural traditions (Figures 14 and 15). Therefore, Jackson depicted the West as a landscape while Russell preferred to capture the West as a space where people, both Americans and Indians, lived and sustained in their quarters.

[26] Brian W. Dippie, "'… I Feel That I Am Improving Right Along': Continuity and Change in Charles M. Russell's Art," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 38, no. 3 (Summer 1988): 57.

Figure 10. Scene of the Hayden Exploration; as opposed to other murals, Italians POWs re-created this piece after Jackson's photo image of the same scene. Photo by author.

These differences could be attributed to the artists' individual values, experiences, and relations with the West as a physical space, but the time gap between their careers likely played a significant role in their depictions of the West. While Jackson was born in 1843 and started his painting career as a teenager, switched to photography in 1868, and then resumed painting in 1924, Russell was born in 1864 and did not become a full-time artist until 1897 though Jackson outlived Russell until 1942.[27] It indicates that within a few decades, the West transformed significantly from the land of unknown, a wild place of daily subsistence and occasional conflicts between individuals and cultural groups, and to a romantic place that was detached from the modernizing West. Yet both Jackson's West and Russell's West popularized and perpetuated the images of American West as a mythic place of adventure and opportunity.

[27] "About the Collection," William Henry Jackson Collection, BYU Library, accessed August 5, 2021, https://lib.byu.edu/collections/william-henry-jackson-collection/about/.; "Meet Charlie," C. M. Russell Museum, accessed August 5, 2021, https://cmrussell.org/meet-charlie/.

Figure 11. Italian POWs' replicated mural of Jackson's painting titled "Three Crossings Station" in Sweet County, Wyoming. Photo by author.

Figure 12. Italian POWs' mural of a Pony Express rider borrowing a hint from Jackson's painting titled "Pony Express Rider." Photo by author.

Figure 13. Italian POWs' replicated mural of Jackson's "Independence Rock." Photo by author.

Figure 14. Italian POWs' mural of cowboy working at the corral, replicated from Russell's painting of the same scene. Photo by author.

Figure 15. Italian POWs' mural of Indians smoking pipe, replicated from Russell's painting of the same scene. Photo by author.

When it comes to the decision-making process behind the creation of the western themed murals at Camp Douglas, not much detail had surfaced until very recently and I had assumed that Italian POW artists were commissioned to create murals while U.S. Army officers chose the motifs and themes of the paintings for the POW artists to recreate. As a part of her research project on studying Italian POWs' creativity in America, Cultural Studies scholar Laura Ruberto located one of the Italian mural artists' surviving brother and conducted a phone interview with him.[28] In that interview, he told Ruberto that "my brother was asked to paint on the walls of the American officers' club scenes that represented the colonization of the USA," and the three Italian artists chose the nineteenth century ending with the "last massacre of the Indians in 1890" as the time frame to be captured in their

[28] Laura E. Ruberto, "An Italian Painter in a Wyoming POW Camp," WyoHistory.org, Wyoming State Historical Society, November 2, 2020, https://www.wyohistory.org/encyclopedia/italian-painter-wyoming-pow-camp.

paintings.[29] Ruberto's study reveals a striking parallel between America's conquest of the West in the late nineteenth century and the nation's determination to conquer its foreign enemies half a century later. In a broader sense, then, this parallel showcases Army officers' desire to pose themselves and the U.S. Army as a heroic conquer that would beat the Axis Powers and spread American democratic values to the global society.

Therefore, rather than Italian POW artists' expression of their obsession with the imagined West, these murals served as a communal space for the Army officers to worship heroic cowboys as a national, quasi-religious icon during a national crisis. According to American Studies scholar Joanna Eagle, the genre of western action painting was organized around the "melodramatic pathos as well as the thrilling spectacle of violence and action."[30] Here, western paintings stick to the formula of cowboys as good white men versus villains as outliers of white male normativity. In western films and novels, violence made by white men, normally by cowboys, was interpreted as an act of vigilante justice rather than irrational brutality. It was juxtaposed with the U.S. armed forces' physical combat against foreign enemies to defend the nation and its people. Both mythic and real, the cowboy became America's symbolic hero to represent the nation's virtue, courage, strength, democracy, and individualism.

The American West that the POWs recreated in the murals was a land of white male normativity where women and non-whites were treated as foils to white men. What white men valued the most became the norm and was reinforced through popular culture such as western movies, magazines, novels, paintings, and lyrics of country song, and it eventually became how America presented itself to the world during the war. Likewise, European audiences envisioned their West based on limited information on the American West.

POWs' Perceptions of the Lived Western Landscape

Although POWs had developed their image of the Western landscape through popular culture, what they personally witnessed in their daily life in and out of the POW camps was not necessarily quintessential cowboy-ness and Indian-ness of the area. The real Western

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[29] Sergio Tarquinio quoted in Ruberto, trans. Laura E. Ruberto. Ruberto assumes that "the last massacre" refers to the Wounded Knee Massacre; her interpretation is valid as it was a momentous event to conclude the Indian resistance against the U.S. government and thus marked the completion of the colonization of America.

[30] Joanna Eagle, "Virtuous Victims, Visceral Violence: War and Melodrama in American Culture," in *The Martial Imagination: Cultural Aspects of American Warfare*, Jimmy L. Bryan Jr. ed. (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2013), 151.

landscape most relevant to many prisoners of war was farm fields that required stoop labor, where their work performance was under surveillance of military guards and local employers.

What distinguished the rural West from other landscapes is not the lack of characteristics, but vastness, remoteness, and desolateness as major defining aspects of the region. This becomes obvious when locals travel to different regions and are asked where they come from. They might answer that they are from the middle of nowhere that does not offer much to explore. By using that cliché to describe their locality, residents convey that their hometown has characteristics, but they are too subtle for outsiders to appreciate. Absence of a famous landmark or other defining features as a local identifier relates back to the Italian POW's first impression of Douglas as a place "somewhere in the Far West, where Tom Mix lives," upon his arrival to the town. The imagined West depicted in western films embraced universality of vast arid landscape, and that enabled Douglas and other small western towns in the region to fit into the frame of "likely enough" place for a setting of a western film. Rather than being upset with the Italian prisoner's comment, residents of Douglas reaffirmed a local identity as cowboy West that represented America to the world although they knew the popular image was not always consistent with the reality of the contemporary American West.

Other than cowboys and Indians as popular images of the West, POWs had perceived simple quiet life in the woods as an ideal and indispensable feature of the American West as portrayed in films and novels. For many POWs in the Great Plains, being sent to a remote branch camp away from a crowded base POW camp was a privilege to have more personal experience in the West as a real place. For instance, Rudolf Ritschel, a German POW at Scottsbluff Base POW Camp in Nebraska received an assignment to build a lumber camp in the mountains near Dubois, in western Wyoming, situated only fifty miles southeast of Grand Teton National Park. Ritschel reminisced, "That was really something, to get out of the camp for once and make a trip by cars into the Rocky Mountains. Up in the mountains we lived in log cabins as we knew them from wild west films."[31] Ritschel and other POWs were sent from Camp Scottsbluff, where there were large-scale sugar refineries and sugar beet fields that prisoners worked in. For POWs who were assigned to a remote branch camp like

[31] Rudolf Ritschel account, German POW at Dubois Branch Camp, WY, quoted in Lowell A. Bangerter, "German Prisoners of War in Wyoming," *Journal of German American Studies* 14, no. 2 (June 1979): 95.

Ritschel, their trip from a base camp to branch camp was a rare opportunity to see the diverse landscape of the West. Most POWs had favorable impressions of what they saw far from the base camp even though many of the features were part of an ordinary life for locals and not as dramatic as western films. Ritschel described his trip to Dubois Branch Camp as follows with much amazement:

> Even during the long journey there [to a branch camp in Dubois, Wyoming], there was much to see, cities and villages, oil fields and large industrial sites! Endless prairies with enormous herds of cattle and real cowboys appeared. Yes, real cowboys, the dream of every boy, as we ourselves up until now have known them only from films and books. They are really audacious fellows who appear to be completely grown together with their horses. And then the Rocky Mountains with their natural beauties, the overpowering giant mountains and the nearly infinite forests. It was a special kind of romanticism for me to have lived up there among the loggers, cut off from the outside world.[32]

As opposed to anonymous barren landscape of western films, the experienced American West was a tangible place where locals' daily activities took place. For Ritschel as a German POW, everything he saw outside the camp stirred his amazement. Even random sightings of small communities and nearby oil fields made him feel he was witnessing the lived West rather than trivializing them as ordinary and boring scenes in the countryside. Ritschel's travel experience revealed to him the vastness, remoteness, and desolateness of the rural West and the locals' thrivability were not mutually exclusive but rather deeply intertwined and constituted each other's identity.

In this trip, however, Ritschel saw some of the real Western landscape through his cultural lenses. His comment on the cowboys to be "audacious fellows" was coming from stereotypes he had developed from watching western films rather than actual interactions with them. He hoped to see cowboys in his trip and when that dream came true, he could not help bestowing them his own images of cowboys. As a prisoner of war who could not travel freely like civilians, Ritschel was infatuated with his personal experience in traveling the West and romanticized every aspect of his trip from the Rocky Mountains and cowboys to oil fields and industrial sites and remembered them as special to him.

As Ritschel described many Western landscapes he saw with appreciation, another POW left a note on his sighting of ordinary scenes of the rural West. During his trip from

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[32] Excerpt from 'Thoughts about Wyoming,' by Rudolf Ritschel, quoted in Lowell A. Bangerter, "German Prisoners of War in Wyoming," *Journal of German American Studies* 14, no. 2 (June 1979): 99.

Fort Robinson to a side camp in Fort Mead in South Dakota, slightly less than two hundred miles due north, German POW Hermann Brennicke described that:

> On approaching villages, smaller and bigger towns, a water-tower, school and athletic fields and well kept [*sic*] parks strike you first. New for us and interesting are open campsites in these parks with brickbuild or iron stoves. Everyone on a trip by foot or by car builds up his tent, does his cooking, cleans the place and disappears again…. In almost all towns there are big sawmills with immense saw dust halls, gasoline refineries, on the whole industrial plants. Bigger and smaller farms with pretty lodgings and well tilled grounds, crowds of cattle—all marked with the sign of the owner—were littered in the futile landscape.[33]

Like Ritschel who went to Dubois Branch Camp in Wyoming, Brennicke observed ordinary landscapes of small towns in the West with much curiosity and appreciation. These tiny communities were a slice of what the contemporary rural American West looked like in reality. The West they saw included sawmills and oil refineries, roaming cows in the vast landscape, large scale ranches and farms, and parks and campgrounds for recreation. These features were all parts of daily sceneries for locals, but for POWs whose homeland was ravaged by the war, it was a surprise that civilian life in the American West, as opposed to the imagined West seemed orderly and peaceful with clear evidence of industrialization. In addition, "industrial plants" dotted in the landscape served as proof that the contemporary West was not self-sufficient but co-dependent on the massive capitalist economy controlling natural resources. Moreover, cattle "marked with the sign of owner" (probably with a branding iron) meant that ranching industry dominated the area and thus contemporary cowboys were not necessarily self-sustained people and had clear demarcation of their land, property, and rights unlike their counterparts in western films.

Hermann Brennicke's trip from Fort Robinson to Fort Meade Branch Camp enabled him to see various landscapes of the American West including tourist destinations of the area. He noted that, "In an immense, famed national preserved park I saw free moving herds of elks, buffalos, antilopes [*sic*], deers [*sic*] and other animals. Bears unfortunately seemed to be freting [*sic*]. There were signs that no cars may stop. I can imagine a wild attacking bison is a no trifling matter."[34] This "national preserve park" must have been Wind Cave National Park in South Dakota. As bears normally did not inhabit in the grassland of the area, his

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[33] Hermann Brennicke, "America's Black Forest" (part of the first issue of POW camp newspaper at Fort Robinson to be issued on July 8, 1945), RG 1517.AM, Box 12, Fort Robinson Collection, NSHS.
[34] Ibid.

comment on no bear sighting was associated with his image of American national parks in general as a sanctuary for large wild mammals, located in the forest at high elevation such as Yellowstone and Yosemite. In reality, natural landscapes of the West had more diversity than mountains and forests; it ranged from prairies, badlands, basins, deserts, sand dunes, plateau, rolling hills, and many more places with ecosystems unique to each area.

Not only nature parks, but the West Brennicke saw included a resort town. During his trip to Fort Mead, South Dakota, he "passed a few clean towns, noted well dressed [*sic*] people, saw a large military hospital built on a big scale—a recreation place with wonderful gardens and parks, a swimming pool, fed of a natural sulphur [*sic*] source—and arrived in the Black Mountains, America's Black Forest."[35] The town he mentioned was Hot Springs in South Dakota. It was home to multiple health resorts and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs hospital (normally dubbed "National Military Home") that was built in 1907 to care for the veterans suffering from rheumatism or tuberculosis. The hospital was conspicuous to anyone not only for its scale but also for its Victorian architectural style. The landscape in the town of Hot Springs was not necessarily something POWs would have expected to see in a small town of the Great Plains as it was more sophisticated and strikingly different from the image of a cowboy town in the imagined West.

It is intriguing that Brennicke called the area "Black Mountains" instead of the Black Hills after the translation of its Lakota name. To him, "mountains" rather than "hills" seemed more appropriate for the landscape he saw with an awe, as sublime as "Black Forest" in Germany. He tried to comprehend the scenery and geography of the Black Hills by relating it to what he was familiar with. Black Forest was one of the most defining and symbolic natural landscapes of Germany, and he tried to make personal connection with the scenery of the Black Hills by casting the image of the Black Forest.

On their way to Fort Meade, Brennicke and other POWs had a chance to see Mount Rushmore. He remarked that:

> On the road through wonderful, deep brown green forests and through rocky gorges we meet suddenly a highland, bearing one of the biggest monuments of the world—built in the natural rocks—the American National Monument. The heads of the most famous presidents of the United States of America… standing in front of the

[35] Brennicke, "America's Black Forest."

> monument only somebody without feeling at all would not be impressed of the greatness of these ideal democrats and of the art and skill of the sculptor.[36]

Mount Rushmore embodied American democratic ideal and an atmosphere of (artificial) sublime while the carving on a rock surface transformed the sublime mountains into picturesque. Although Brennicke did not leave any critical comment upon seeing the monument, there is an ironic twist that they saw an ideological symbol of what they had been fighting against and became prisoners of war. It was highly plausible that Army officials accompanied with them deliberately included Mount Rushmore as a highlight of their itinerary. That is, their trip to a side camp by way of the Black Hills served as a firsthand opportunity to expose German POWs to a prime example of technological and ideological greatness of the United States that reeducation program intended to spread to the prisoners.

Another irony is that Mount Rushmore has been a symbol of white America; the area was sacred to the Native peoples who were dispossessed of their land by the U.S. government and white people in search of gold. POWs viewed the monument through cultural lenses of white Americans rather than that of Native Americans, as one of the most symbolic sites of American democracy and patriotism in the West. As cultural studies scholar Stephen Germic observes, Mount Rushmore as a national symbolic place embodied an official story to Americanize the diversity of peoples in America.[37] Therefore, if one saw the monument and could not help revering the Founding Fathers, he or she accepted an official story of the place as a fact, and that was what the monument intended to do.

As a spokesman of Fort Robinson POW Camp, Wolfgang Dorschel also visited Fort Mead with Brennicke to check the living conditions of the POWs there. While Dorschel's diary entry about his trip to Fort Meade overlapped with Brennicke's descriptions of the scenery on their way, Dorschel observed several other features that Brennicke did not pay much attention. On June 20, 1945, he wrote:

> The land is completely flat, then and when a small hill [*sic*: assuming from geography of the area, "then a small hill appeared"?]. As we got into [South] Dakota, the picture of the nature is changing. A small stream beside the road. Houses are built from stone…. We [are] driving deeper in the forest. Hill City, plenty wood industry, not a

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[36] Brennicke, "America's Black Forest."

[37] Stephen A. Germic, *American Green: Class, Crisis, and the Deployment of Nature in Central Park, Yosemite, and Yellowstone* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2001), 75-76.

> uniformed style in buildings. I can see once the beginning of the town. Everything was very nice there.[38]

Dorschel was sensitive to a changing landscape from Nebraska's prairie to South Dakota's forest as they traveled north, and the presence of a timber industry that they could not find around Fort Robinson. What he meant by houses "built from stone" would be locally quarried Romanesque sandstone architecture in the town of Hot Springs.[39] To the German POWs, Hot Springs must have appeared a unique town that did not really fit into the image of the Wild West for its sophisticated ambience and consistent Romanesque-style built environment using the local sandstone. As opposed to Hot Springs as a resort town, Hill City originated as a mining town before it switched to timber industry and thus matched with Dorschel's image of a small town in the West as a rugged place tucked in the deep forest.

On his way back from Fort Mead to Fort Robinson, Dorschel had an opportunity to see another town in the Black Hills. On June 23, 1945, he mentioned in his diary, "At lunchtime we [are] driving through the Black Hills, which reminds me of the Black Forest, except more romantic…. Lead is the town of the goldmine, a big goldmine! In that town a 15,000 PS. [metric horsepower] steam locomotive taking care of all electrical needs. The town lies up on the hill…."[40] Like Hermann Brenincke, Dorschel also associated the Black Hills with Germany's Black Forest. While western films reinforced the image of the American West as a mythic and ambiguous place among European prisoners of war, visiting the Black Hills of the American West led to nostalgia by German POWs toward their familiar Black Forest.

As he got attracted to the built environment of the cities of Hot Springs and Hill City, Dorschel also showed his strong interest in local industry's powerful impact on the cultural landscape of the town of Lead. Lead was a company town of the Homestake Mining Company and the hilly landscape of the town was made possible by the relocations of the buildings due to a concern of cave-ins of the tunnels under the goldmine.[41] Since its first operation in 1876 through closure in 2002, the Homestake Mine was the largest, deepest, and most productive goldmine in North America yielding more than $1 billion in gold, and

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[38] Wolfgang Dorschel, Diary entry, June 20, 1945.
[39] "History," City of Hot Springs, SD, accessed October 10, 2021, https://hs-sd.org/history.
[40] Wolfgang Dorschel, Diary entry, June 23, 1945.
[41] "History of Lead," Lead Historic preservation, accessed October 10, 2021, https://leadhistoricpreservation.org/about-lead/history-of-lead.

became a prototype for a large multiethnic company town composed of miners from most of the Eastern European countries.[42] As Dorschel witnessed, goldmining in the American West was not a business of self-employed individuals who pursued striking it rich, but a hierarchical corporate business that employed thousands of workers coming from different national, ethnic, and racial backgrounds where continuous power struggle was the norm between the employer and laborers with various backgrounds.

Through their stay in hosting communities and occasional trips between base POW camps and branch POW camps, prisoners could perceive various aspects of Western landscapes as differing from stereotypical images they had seen in popular culture. POWs came to the hosting communities with their cultural perceptions of the frontier West. What they came to realize about the West was a vibrancy of the place impacted by wartime labor shortages and economic gaps with other parts of the region, inhabited by people with different personal interests and concerns specific to the area they lived in. Rather than timeless images of independent cowboys, the actual West they experienced was filled with daily activities of local people engaging in farm work or other labor with a mission to produce more for the war effort.

POWs' Perception of Masculine Identity

As physically fit young men, POWs' incarceration experience put limitations on their ideals of masculinity and their sexual interest in women (or at least their ability to act on it). Based on historian Alon Rachamimov's study on WWI German POWs in Russia, the circumstances of captivity heightened what was already a vulnerable situation for the POWs, and some of the men experienced capture by the enemy as a metaphoric castration and as a precipitous loss of status in the social and gender hierarchy.[43] For WWII prisoners of war in America, however, this idea did not always apply. POWs were still able to retain or reconstruct their masculinity during their captivity by adapting American ideals of masculinity as well as consuming U.S. ideals of femininity to reaffirm their masculine self.

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[42] Malcom J. Rohrbough, "Mining and the Nineteenth-Century American West," in *A Companion to the American Wes*t, ed. William Deverell, (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 120-121; Andrew L. Yarrow, "Beneath South Dakota's Black Hills," *The New York Times*, August 9, 1987, accessed August 5, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/1987/08/09/travel/beneath-south-dakota-s-black-hills.html.
[43] Alon Rachamimov, "The Disruptive Comforts of Drag: (Trans) Gender Performances among Prisoners of War in Russia, 1914-1920," *The American Historical Review* 111, no. 2 (April 2006): 364.

To conceptualize what constitutes one's gender identity, I borrow Judith Butler's idea that gender is always performed in accordance with the assumptions of female or male roles imposed by the society. People repeat obeying these assumptions to avoid punishment by the society. Gender identity, therefore, has been always influenced by the imbalance of power between men and women, elite and subaltern, and old and young. Because of that, Butler claims that "gender proves to be performative—that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always doing."[44]

In other words, gender identity and performativity keep reinforcing each other. This does not mean, however, one's gender identity is immutable. As Butler argues, "Gender ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*."[45] If one's gender identity is not static but constructed through repetitively performing specific gendered acts as Butler observes, then it was still possible for prisoners in captivity to claim their masculine identity through socially defined gendered acts. That is to say, POWs performed socially approved men's roles—either those of America, their homeland, or both—that were still doable for them inside camps to solidify their male identity.

Even hard-core pro-Nazi soldiers' masculine identity was not static but rather constituted through the dynamic of military masculinities that Nazi Germany idealized. In his study on complex masculine identity of soldiers in the Third Reich, historian Thomas Kühne claims that their male identity was a product of hegemonic masculinity and protean masculinity.[46] He explains that the former meant physical, emotional, and moral "hardness" of the soldier who was tough and aggressive while the latter allowed for the display of affection, tenderness, empathy, caring, and tolerance *toward their comrades* in principle, if not always in practice.[47] Therefore, German national soldiers were expected to construct their military masculine identity by performing seemingly contested masculinities.

[44] Judith Buter, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990, 1999), 34.
[45] Ibid., 191.
[46] Thomas Kühne, "Protean Masculinity, Hegemonic Masculinity: Soldiers in the Third Reich," *Central European History* 51, no. 3 (September 2018): 390.
[47] Ibid., 418.

As German soldiers' military masculinities illustrate, one's gender identity is built through an integration of multiple identities that often appear an antipode of each other. In addition to that, Butler articulates: "The abiding gendered self will… be shown to be structured by repeated acts that seek to appropriate the ideal of a substantial ground of identity, but which, in their occasional *dis*continuity, reveal the temporal and contingent groundlessness of this 'ground.'"[48] This point is better understood when applied to POWs' situations. Before they became prisoners of war, they performed masculine identity of brave and patriotic soldiers in their national military and on the war front. Their surrender to enemies and ensuing captivity meant discontinuity of the ground to act socially approved wartime masculinities embodied by heroic soldiers. When this happened to them, POWs had to find new stylized acts that represented idealized masculinities of the new ground they were situated.

One of the acts that helped the prisoners to remain conscious about their masculine bodily strength and integrity was gardening to grow vegetables inside POW camps. The provisions of the Geneva Convention stated that prisoners should be afforded the means of preparing for themselves such additional articles of food as they may possess.[49] This meant the prisoners could grow their own food if situations would permit. Indeed, upon his visit to Scottsbluff POW Camp in Nebraska, Major Paul Neuland of the War Department noted, "An area of seven acres has been set aside and broken down into 1600 gardening plots, all of which have been signed up for by individual prisoners of war."[50] POWs' gardening was a common practice throughout many POW camps, and it gave the prisoners a sense of control and order about the Self through observing their plants growing if they took good care of them.

In Western society, tending house gardens was normally associated with women's domestic work, but inside the POW camp solely composed of men, it became POWs' own

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[48] Butler, 192.

[49] "Article 11, Food and Clothing of Prisoners of War," Conventions Relative to the Treatment of Prisoner of War, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Geneva, July 27,1929, https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/Article.xsp?action=openDocument&documentId=8E9C103689020E3BC12563CD00518DED.

[50] Headquarters Army Service Forces, Office of the Provost Marshal General, Prisoner of War Special Projects Division, Field Service Branch, "Report on Field Service Visit to Prisoner of War Camp, Scottsbluff, Nebraska, 12-13 February 1945, by Major Paul A. Neuland," Headquarters Army Service Forces, New York, March 1, 1945, RG 0501, Reel 19, NSHS.

responsibility to take care of plants for themselves. POWs' practice of gardening in captivity did not blur their masculine identity nor made them emasculated domestic beings considering America's wartime social context to appreciate what agricultural historian Katherine Jellison terms the "farm masculinity."[51]

While POWs did not have full capacity to perform soldierly masculine identity, many American men chose to join the U.S. military. Because of that, as discussed in Chapter 3, the agricultural sector was left with dire labor shortages whereas the U.S. government encouraged more agricultural production by farmers. As a part of their strategies to motivate farmers and prevent further loss of male agricultural workers, the Office of War Information (OWI) launched a campaign to convince farmers that they were "soldiers of the soil" and thus it was "obligations of male citizenship" to produce more crops for America's war effort.[52] In this campaign, the OWI utilized posters that depicted hyper-masculinized farmers to encourage young men to work in farm fields (Figure 16).

As Jellison claims, these hyper-masculinized farmers depicted in OWI posters were "white, broad-shouldered and their bared, well-muscled forearms were ready for action" by rolling up their sleeves "in anticipation of strenuous labor."[53] Being considered as white men in America, European POWs were able to appropriate the image of masculine farmers and perform farm masculinity. As long as they could drop the point that an ultimate message of American farm masculinity was to contribute to the war effort, hyper-masculinized image of farmers likely inspired the prisoners to tend their in-camp garden plots as an extension of masculine act.

[51] Katherine Jellison, "Get Your Farm in the Fight: Farm Masculinity in World War II," *Agricultural History* 92, no. 1 (Winter 2018): 5.
[52] Ibid., 7.
[53] Ibid., 9.

Figure 16. OWI poster "Get Your Farm in the Fight." Source: National Archives, World War II Posters, RG 44, NARA identification no. 514376.

In addition to that, in his study on the significance of victory gardens to American citizens, historian Char Miller discusses that freedoms offered by gardening could aid in the conception of self-valuing.[54] Caring one's own garden juxtaposed with "the care a person takes over his or her own body."[55] Miller's idea can be also applied to POWs' gardening inside the camp. Prisoners were given a small tract of land that they could tend on their own and thus it helped them play a role of farmer who had control over their plots as if their properties. At the same time, gardening activities offered them an opportunity to prove their masculinity to their cohorts. Jellison points out that the OWI posters often "characterized the farmer himself as a fighting man" with a mission to feed America and allies abroad; in such an environment, "male brawn was associated with successful agricultural production."[56]

[54] Char Miller, "In the Sweat of Our Brow: Citizenship in American Domestic Practice during WWII- Victory Gardens," *Journal of American Culture* 26, no. 3 (September 2003): 407.
[55] Ibid., 397- 398.
[56] Jellison, 10.

Therefore, by appropriating American farm masculinity, prisoners would be given credit from their peers if they successfully produced vegetables on their own.

During WWII, Axis POWs were not the only group in captivity in the United States who tended gardens for their own cause. In her study on Japanese American incarceration from an environmental history perspective, Connie Chiang claims that Japanese Americans at incarceration camps adopted the U.S. victory garden campaign but their motivation was not necessarily attributed to a desire to express their support for America's war effort. More than trying to prove their patriotism, Japanese American prisoners produced food in their garden for their refreshment and self-sustenance.[57] In terms of self-sustenance, if Japanese Issei and Nisei prisoners' diet in camp were culturally specific, that likely needed ordering seeds from the West Coast to grow Asian vegetables to retain their cultural identity and foodways.

While POWs' gardening served as an opportunity to prove one's individual strength and ability as a grown man through tilling the soil, caring the plants, and harvesting them, Japanese American detainees' gardening practice helped them reaffirm their identity as a family unit and community member. Because Japanese American prisoners were assigned partitioned living quarters per household unit side by side, they had to build a good relationship with their neighbors next door. Depending on their age, each family member could contribute to gardening their plot, and harvested crops that could be shared with their neighbors and consumed in family; that way, every family member could connect with their neighbors and vice versa. Therefore, both POWs and Japanese American prisoners used gardening as a strategy to reaffirm their identity; through raising food in their gardens, POWs pursued to maintain masculine identity with healthy body and mind while the Japanese American prisoners tried to retain their identity within family and collective camp community in relation with each other.

Another tactic POWs used to retain their masculinity was simply expressing their heterosexual interest in attractive women—or performing heterosexual masculinity. In terms of POWs' approach to showcase their sexual orientations, local newspaper described that, "The Germans kept their barracks in trim military order, and their taste in barracks decorations ran to pin-up girls, in contrast to the Italians who preceded them at the Camp

[57] Connie Chiang, *Nature Behind Barbed Wire: An Environmental History of the Japanese American Incarceration* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 124-128.

Scottsbluff. The Italians were not blind to feminine beauty, but their taste in barracks pictures leaned to their religious types."[58] As this episode illustrates, German and Italian POWs had different tastes in decorating their private space to alleviate their stress of camp life. Among German POWs, their taste in pin-up girls served as a message that their incarceration experience did not cripple their masculinity and desire for attractive women, if not in person. The Army did not consider the pin-ups inappropriate and allowed the POWs to keep them posted on the walls of the barracks interpreting it as "normal" and healthy practice for young men.

In his study on German POWs' strategy to retain masculinity, historian Matthias Reiss claims that women not only featured in the POWs' discourses as objects of heterosexual desires, but also as representatives of the home country.[59] Therefore, pin-up girls embraced not only American standard of beauty and femininity but also the nation's democratic and capitalist ideals; in that sense, they were hypersexualized image of America itself (Figure 17). Reiss observes that if women came to represent the nation in times of war, prisoners' admiration of the American pin-up girls was a step in the right direction for the War Department that tried to democratize the German prisoners.[60] Henceforth, the U.S. Army let the German POWs decorate their walls with American pin-up girls because, in their eyes, this practice ultimately meant that they were admiring American sociocultural values. For German men, on the other hand, posting pin-up girls served as the easiest medium to exhibit their masculine strength and heterosexual interest even in captivity. Interestingly, POWs used images of both hypersexualized American men (masculine farmers with rolled up sleeves) and women (pin-up girls clad in short pants and showing off long legs) to solidify their masculinity in captivity.

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[58] "German Prisoners of War Here Resigned to Defeat of Reich, Turn to Religion in Time of Adversity," *Star-Herald* (Scottsbluff, NE), February 13, 1945.
[59] Matthias Reiss, "The Importance of Being Men: The Afrika-Korps in American Captivity," *Journal of Social History* 46, no. 1 (Fall 2012): 30.
[60] Reiss, 32.

Supplement of the Douglas Enterprise

THE STOCKADE

Douglas Prisoner of War Camp

"BeGorra" It Rained!

Camp Bowling League Starts

Figure 17. Image of a pin-up girl in Camp Douglas newspaper *The Stockade* (Douglas, WY), March 21, 1944.

As opposed to German POWs, it is unclear why Italian men did not put pin-up girls in their barracks, but it is likely because majority of the Italian soldiers embraced Catholicism instead of Protestantism. For Italians POWs, images of Madonna were more appropriate to decorate their bedsides and it reflected their religious devotion and identity as Italians. To prove their religious devotion, an Italian POW at Camp Douglas depicted an image of Madonna with a possible intension to decorate his living quarters (Figure 18). Judging an autograph he left on it, he was one of the artists who painted the western themed murals in the Officers' Club. Even if he created murals as a part of his work assignment, it is interesting to consider that the same person painted the Virgin Mary and the American West because the former was sacred while the latter was more secular perpetuated by popular culture.

While Italian Catholics had religious images to decorate on the wall that were incompatible with pin-ups girls, German Protestants did not have religious figures as objects of worship and thus they had more options to decorate the barracks with more secular taste. Even though they had different tastes in decorating the barracks, many German and Italian soldiers were religious and held heterosexual desire, but they had different outlets to express these ideas.

Figure 18. Painting of Madonna by an Italian POW at Camp Douglas. The autograph left on it revealed that the POW was one the artists who painted the Western themed murals. Photo by courtesy of Pioneer Memorial Museum.

Not contented with pin-up girls alone, some POWs were enamored with American women whom they could regularly see inside or outside of the camp. For example, Bernice Ullom, a young woman worked at the Douglas POW Camp Hospital, received dozens of love letters, drawings, and paintings from her patients.[61] No matter how serious or just flirtatious these prisoners were, they liked to be befriended by attractive women as prisoners normally had to live in highly homosocial space. According to Reiss, for German prisoners, expressing desire for female company was part of the ritual behavior through which they constantly reconstituted their identity as masculine soldiers.[62] Therefore, showing no interest in women would possibly be interpreted not only as a crisis to prisoner's masculine soldier identity, but also a deviation from the in-camp social norm to behave like men.

[61] "P.O.W. Unclassified, Camp Douglas: A Multiple Week Journey through the Past," *Douglas Budget*, March 28, 2012.
[62] Reiss, 31.

Some POWs even managed to get intimate with local women with a help of their fellow POWs to deceive the guards' surveillance. William Oberdick, former German POW at Camp Atlanta in Nebraska, remembered hiding a young German soldier under some trash one night to drive him into town to see an American girl. Even though neither spoke the other's language, that did not prevent her from proposing that they, "run away together to Mexico." The German soldier declined it after seeing a violent romance movie and concluded, "American girls, if you even smile at another woman, will shoot you."[63] Like western films that influenced POWs' general image of the American West, a romance film had a powerful impact on the soldier's view of all American women as emotional, jealous, and impulsive. While this couple's case might be too extreme, romance between POWs and American women bloomed in some places even though the U.S. Army tried to limit contact between POWs and American women. The Army did not want the enemy prisoners of war to take advantage of the absence of many American men who were fighting for the nation and its citizens.

To German POWs, especially those who were more mature and assumed responsible positions at the POW camp, their own soldiers' intimacy with American women was not necessarily desirable, either. Wolfgang Dorschel, who worked as an interpreter and later as a German POW spokesman at Fort Robinson, wrote in his diary on Wednesday of April 18, 1945 that "A new girl [is] going to start on Monday."[64] However, he then left a note on Monday of April 23 saying that, "The girl [is] going to stay at Head Quarters, and not coming to us—I am glad."[65] His remarks reveal that Dorschel was concerned that the presence of a young female employee would disrupt German POWs' discipline, which would likely end up in a competition among them over her attention and too much drama. Because Dorschel cooperated with the U.S. Army's operation of the POW Camp, he did not want his cohort upsetting Army officials by picking up American women.

As long as women would not invite disorder in the camp, however, Dorschel thought the images of women in popular culture was welcoming to their recreational time inside the camp. Local newspapers reported that they liked to watch movies, particularly western films

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[63] "Cynthia Mayer, WWII German Prisoners Held in U.S. Plan Reunions," *Salt Lake Tribune*, November 26, 1987.
[64] Wolfgang Dorschel, Diary entry, April 18, 1945.
[65] Wolfgang Dorschel, Diary entry, April 23, 1945.

for recreation. In addition, the newspaper mentioned that "they like American musicals, too. They like the music and the pretty girls."[66] To support that, Dorschel noted on February 24, 1945, "Film tonight: *Too Many Girls.* Sounds like a nice one."[67] While it is not clear Dorschel had known the plot of the film, the title of the movie must have sounded enticing to the POW audience, expecting to find charming American women like the pin-up girls. With numerous opportunities to reaffirm their masculinity through repetitive acts of cultivating their gardens, decorating their personal space with pin-up girls, watching hyperfeminine women in Hollywood films, and showing interest in some local women, POWs proved themselves and their captors that becoming inmates did not cripple their masculine identity.

Becoming a "Real" Cowboy in the West

When the war ended, some POWs came back to live in the area where they were incarcerated because they were deeply attached to the American West and its culture, both as a mythic and real place. Eric Kososik, a former German POW at Camp Ogden, Utah, immigrated to America with his wife and settled in Ogden after he went back to Germany and got married. Kososik's wife Eleanor noted her first impression of the American West: "Eric fell in love with the countryside – the mountains… and the closer we came to Utah, the more scared I became of the countryside. I could only see boulders and mountains; I was used to living in flatland. The only thing I knew about the United States was the Indians. In the movies we saw, *we* [emphasis added] were fighting the Indians."[68] Eleanor's use of "we" in fighting with Indians indicates that her German identity transformed into white American Westerner; she adapted white normative American cultural images and values associated with classic western films by accepting the stereotypical binary of "good" cowboys and "bad" Indians.

The Kososiks' migration experience to the American West resonated with that of many settlers of European descent who ventured into the West in the nineteenth century.

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[66] "German Prisoners of War Here Resigned to Defeat of Reich, Turn to Religion in Time of Adversity," *Star-Herald*, February 13, 1945.
[67] Wolfgang Dorschel, Diary entry, February 24, 1945. The film is a college musical taking place at a school where the ratio of male students to female students is 1:10. Daughter of an entrepreneur decided to go to a college far from home and her father employed four football players secretly as her bodyguards. The men joined her college's football team and turned the team into one of the best.
[68] Eleanor Kososik interview by Ruby Licona, World War II POW Oral History Project, November 22, 2005, Stewart Library, Weber State University.

According to historian Richard White, even though daily trail journals in the late nineteenth century had mentioned little Indian contact or friendly exchanges with Indians, memoirs tended to reimagine this past by inserting Indians as an omnipresent danger.[69] Posing actual and imagined Indians as threatening Others enabled white settlers to glorify their overland trail experience and perpetuated the images of the West as white people's utopia. Although the motives of former POWs' immigration to America might have varied, the lived West became their second home during WWII and served as a pulling factor for their postwar migration.

After they immigrated to the United States after the war, most former POWs successfully integrated themselves into their adopted community in the American West. Caesar Oriano, former Italian POW at Camp Douglas and later at Fort Warren in Cheyenne, permanently left Italy after the war and made a new home in the West with his wife, Jennie, whom he met while he was detained in Cheyenne. Oriano returned to Wyoming in 1946 and the two were married in Cheyenne, home of "Cheyenne Frontier Days," a major western themed annual event in the High Plains since 1897 in which locals and visitors experience various western themed events and attractions including rodeo, country music concerts, Indian Village, and Old Frontier Town. In Orianos' first Cheyenne Frontier Days rodeo, where they decked out in matching western outfits, a tourist stopped them and asked if they could take a picture of a "real" cowboy.[70] This episode reveals that the border between cultural authenticity and cultural replication is very fluid and nebulous while his attire made him appear a real cowboy. While Caesar Oriano could pass as a white American male and acquired his cultural citizenship after he immigrated to America, becoming a U.S. citizen did not always guarantee one's ascendancy to an insider of white normative American society. Owing to their white, male, and Christian identity, former POWs enabled themselves to become real insiders of predominantly white communities in the rural West and claimed their eligibility to become real cowboys.

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[69] White, 628.
[70] "The Unlikely Cowboy," Oral history and reflections of Cesar F. Oriano (n.d.), Douglas POW Camp File, Pioneer Memorial Museum, Douglas, WY.

Conclusion

To WWII prisoners of war, hosting communities in the rural West became their lived West. POWs' experienced West was far from the war front and served as a safe haven where they did not have to be always scared of an enemy's attack. Unlike mythic and individualist cowboys depicted in western films and murals of Douglas POW Camp, they collectively lived in captivity and worked as temporary farm laborers and helped local farmers grow more crops for America's war effort somewhere in the vast agricultural landscape of the West. Rather than to prove their courage, they had to exhibit cooperativeness and a good work ethic while they stayed in the wartime West. In addition, POWs' occasional travel to seasonal branch camps enabled them to see the West as diverse places where residents' interaction with the surrounding environment and resources created diverse cultural landscapes of the contemporary West.

Chapter 6

POWs' Creativity in Captivity: Roles of In-Camp Apparatus Versus Artifacts on POWs' Identities and War's End

This final chapter will focus on POWs' resiliency mainly through their creativity behind barbed wire and its legacy to the present. Prisoners of war, of both German and Italian origins, expended their time and effort to improve their life in captivity and created numerous arts and crafts in various sizes, using materials, and portraying many themes. While POWs often created artifacts for their own sake, it was also the case that they made artwork as gifts to express their gratitude to locals or Army personnel with whom they befriended. No matter whether they were professional artists by occupation or amateurs who found creative activities to be fulfilling, POWs created arts and crafts as an effective strategy for easing their psychological stress of imprisonment as well as leaving tangible memorabilia of their own struggle for survival.

While Axis POWs in America were detained in self-contained camps with a new identity as foreign enemy prisoners of war, that did not necessarily mean they became a victimized or dispossessed groups of the unprecedented global conflict. Rather, they tried to mitigate their original identity with a new one as prisoners of war, and then created various arts that reflected their strong attachment to the homeland or their interest in American cultural landscapes. Through their creative activities, POWs enabled themselves to retain, rediscover, reaffirm, or recreate their identity in connection with their gender, ethnicity, nationality, religious affiliation, and personal skills and talents.

WWII confinement institutions in America symbolized paradoxes of American patriotism and democratic ideals in contrast to race relations of the nation. While American citizens with Japanese ancestry received unfair treatment from the federal government and broader American society, Axis prisoners of war under the protection of the Geneva Convention were treated more favorably by many communities that hosted POW camps. Although POWs' experiences in America tend to be overlooked in histories of American experiences during WWII, the cultural legacy of the POWs and their artifacts are an invaluable asset to communities' history and cultural heritage today. Examining the prisoners' material culture they used, consumed, and created gives a hint of how they coped with the

stress of confinement and strived to maintain their national, ethnic, religious, and gender identities during their captivities on American soil.

POW Camp as Institutional Apparatus of Incarceration

It is often the case that former sites of incarceration camps incite uncomfortable feelings among locals and visitors alike, and thus these sites have been treated with a dark past in the locality. In general, war inevitably creates numerous victims, and incarceration camps are categorized as an institution for those who were socially ostracized or dispossessed and thus it becomes difficult for the broader society to embrace "their" side of war experiences that would be strikingly different from the people who were not incarcerated during wartime. According to anthropologist Claudia Theune, concentration camps or other places associated with terror do not produce positive connotations. Instead, they are remembered as "evil places" or "reluctant places of memory."[1] Therefore, former incarceration sites including POW camps are often imagined as a place people—captors, captives, locals, military and government officials, or anybody who had connection with them—want to suppress (or repress) their existences. Nevertheless, these places also embraced incarcerees' hope for returning to normal life and a better future once they would be set free.

Confinement in camps drastically changed lives of the POWs from soldiers on duty to wartime captives of the belligerent side. Anthropologist James Gibbs observes, "institutions permeate our lives, and their actions—and incarceration—ramify for generations; they structure our lives, …. they create irregular, often ill-defined boundaries to behavior."[2] Once captured and sent to POW camps, prisoners were subject to the captors' rules and had to accept a new set of rules and daily routines surveyed by the guards. At Fort Robinson POW Camp, former German POWs E. Mayer and Hans Waecker reminisced, "Life begins with pacifier, rum goes well with spot of tea, but the new job, that of prisoner starts with spray of D.D.T."[3] This description illustrates how the global war altered ordinary men's normal life from civilians to soldiers to enemy prisoners of war. Being disinfected

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[1] Claudia Theune, "Archaeology and Remembrance: The Contemporary Archaeology of Concentration Camps, Prisoner-of-War Camps, and Battlefields," *Historical Archaeology in Central Europe* 10 (2013): 254.
[2] James G. Gibb, Introduction to *The Archaeology of Institutional Life*, eds. April M. Beisaw and James G. Gibb, (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2009), 2.
[3] E. Mayer and Hans Waecker, "Episodes from a Prisoner's Life" (n.d.), RG 1517.AM, Box 12, Fort Robinson Collection, NSHS.

following their capture entails the detaining power's juxtaposition of the POWs as "foreign enemy" with dangerous "foreign disease" that had to be contained and sanitized before entering in America. Even so, Mayer and Waecker's tone was not necessarily critical of their treatment by the United States; rather, they tried to describe how volatile one's ordinary life and status in his society could be in a global crisis.

POW camps as incarceration facilities controlled and regulated prisoners' behaviors as "inmates" and took away their full freedom, normalcy, unlimited access to resources, and identity they had previously claimed as a given in the society they had belonged. In these institutions, the inmate was "treated as an object in order to forge a new identity: that of the inmate subject."[4] Their individual uniqueness was ignored, and they were subjugated as faceless "objects" whose bodies and behaviors were surveyed and controlled by strict rules and orders.

While a POW camp as an institution of confinement transformed detainees' identity and controlled their behaviors, not only rigid institutional codes but also visible and tangible in-camp material culture shaped their identity as "inmates" under surveillance. Anthropologist Lu Ann De Cunzo elaborates that "institutions are places where material culture—architecture and landscape, furnishings, tools, dress, art, texts, food, all of it—is consciously as well as unconsciously planned to play a proactive role in accomplishing the institution's goals and purposes."[5] That is to say, in addition to always being seen by the guards, almost anything POWs interacted with inside the camp helped them recognize their new identity as the "subjects" of the institution created by the detaining power. Prisoners were often assigned identical living quarters, supplies, uniforms, and food; this homogeneous treatment trivialized POWs' individuality and eventually normalized their camp life and made them adjust to a collective social environment that could not be separated from the guards' surveillance gaze.

At WWII detention facilities, authorities used spatial demarcation as a tool to impose their power on the surveyed, and these power dynamics can be still traceable today at former

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[4] Eleanor Conlin Casella, *The Archaeology of Institutional Confinement* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2007), 22.

[5] Lu Ann De Cunzo, "The Future of the Archaeology of Institutions," in *The Archaeology of Institutional Life*, eds. April M, Beisaw and James G. Gibb (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2009), 208.

sites of incarceration. In her study on historical archaeology of institutional confinement, Eleanor Conlin Casella describes:

> The physical remains of perimeter stockades, room partitions, monotonous site layouts, workshop facilities, metal-alloy whistles, industrial machinery, obsolete ceramic assemblages, uniforms, and food remains to reveal how power was materially exerted over those confined. Equally, archaeology has demonstrated how inhabitants co-opted their surrounding material world to retain some measure of control.[6]

Visiting the former incarceration site and just strolling around the perimeter of the camp offers traces of incarcerees' life in a remote landscape; objects left behind after the closure of the camp also embrace voices of the people who were confined and separated from the broader society. In the case of Fort Robinson, hardly any building structures remain standing at the former POW camp site except "a tall wooden post used as a radio tower" as well as "the collapsed, wood and barbed wire remnants of a back gate to the compound" that still reveal tensions between the captors and captives, and the Army's effort to contain the POWs and prevent their escapes.[7] Inside the remains of the barbed wire fence, what still exists today is "the concrete foundations of the 160 barracks and other PW buildings… amid the grass and weeds," yet near the latrine buildings, "a bed of irises attests to the prisoners' love of gardening."[8] Even decades after the war, these irises reveal the POWs' desire to diversify their experiences in captivity through creative activities that spoke more about their cultural heritage and personal interests than their prisoner of war status. In one sense, a stark contrast between thriving irises and disbanded camp structure almost juxtaposes with POWs' struggle and prevalence over U.S. Army's attempt to contain them as a homogeneous group.

Surveillance and Internalizing Discipline

When it comes to studying internment facilities, a concept of panopticism popularized by Michel Foucault is beneficial in analyzing how the captors exerted their power over the captives.[9] Designed as a ring of open cells arranged in a circumference around a central

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[6] Casella, 2-3.
[7] WWII Prisoner Recalls Fort Rob Fondly," *Omaha World Herald* (Omaha, NE), April 1, 1991.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Michel Foucault, *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (Pantheon Books: New York, 1984), 206-213. Foucault's concept of panopticism came from an architectural model of a "Panopticon," a centralized penal institution of the 18th century designed by Jeremy Bentham that enabled optimum and efficient surveillance of the inmates by fewer guards without being seen by those being surveyed.

inspection tower, the penitentiary was intended to provide guards with complete surveillance over all activities and communications in the institution.[10] By optimizing spatial layout and architectural design of the building, the major purpose of the Panopticon was to "transfer the exercise of subordination to the inmates themselves" which would result in the prisoners' self-reform by forcing them to "internalize the prison's disciplinary regime as they adjusted under the constant threat of discovery."[11] In such an environment, inmates were continuously required to perform the role of a model prisoner in order to avoid any potential accusation of suspicious activities. Prisoners were made to become psychologically alert and afraid of guards' omnipresent gaze, and their repetitious play of self-disciplined inmates led them acquire that role as their real identity.

Although the layout of an average POW base camp (with a capacity of 3,000 prisoners) was not the same as original Panopticon, the principle of panoptic surveillance was respected at POW camps. Except for the guard towers, POW base camps basically had the same layout as U.S. Army compounds and Foucault claimed the military camp was an institutional apparatus that exemplified the discourse of self-discipline through the notion of hierarchical observation that was not only top-down in direction but also bottom-up. He observed that,

> Institutions as social observatories had an almost ideal model: the military camp—the short-lived, artificial city, built and reshaped almost at will; the seat of a power that must be all the stronger, but also all the more discreet, all the more effective and on the alert in that it is exercised over armed men. In the perfect camp, all power would be exercised solely through exact observation; each gaze would form a part of the overall functioning of power.[12]

Moreover, Foucault perceives military camp architecture as functioning to "permit an internal, articulated and detailed control—to render visible those who are inside it."[13] Therefore, intra- and inter-group observation with hierarchical power was the norm in a military camp, making it only natural to for the U.S. Army to survey the enemy prisoners of war in a military facility whose layout allowed the captors' systematic and perpetual observation of the prisoners and their own men. While POWs were observed by the guards, the guards were also observed by Army officers, and Army officers were observed by the

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[10] Casella, 19.
[11] Ibid., 20.
[12] Foucault, 189.
[13] Ibid.,190.

prisoners and enlisted men so that they all had to behave appropriately and perform their respective roles inside a camp.

While military and POW camps shared common features, the latter had special structures to control the behaviors of enemy prisoners that the former would not need. At Fort Robinson POW Camp, for example, there were "Six of the small type guard towers with hexagonal building mounted on the platform surrounded the stockade," and each tower was "equipped with two searchlights…. One machine gun is mounted on the platform of each tower and two guards are on duty at all times."[14] While Panopticon was a high tower located in the middle of the penitentiary and enabled the guards to observe every inmate from any angle, guard towers at POW were normally situated at both ends of each compound. The hexagonal shape of the guard towers enhanced efficient surveillance in a POW camp; like the classic observation tower of Panopticon, the more polygonal in shape the tower was, the more effectively and better the guards could survey multiple directions inside and outside of a camp. That way, POW camps' surveillance system was not only meant to contain the prisoners behind barbed wire, but also to isolate and protect them from any unwanted external threat.

As guard towers were situated at both ends of each compound, prisoners wearing POW uniforms had hardly any chance to evade the guards' gaze if they made a suspicious move. The fear of being suspected, accused, or even possibly shot internalized POWs' self-discipline in the camp and made them acquire their role as docile prisoners. Eleanor Casella mentions that institutional uniforms helped create a "reinscription of personal identity" of the wearers.[15]

Any clothes the prisoners received from the U.S. Army reinforced their identity as America's prisoners of war and perpetuated self-discipline. POW uniforms served as an instant and efficient institutional apparatus that stripped one's personal uniqueness and created a new identity of the wearers and imposed a set of appropriate behaviors expected for a model prisoner.

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[14] Office of Provost Marshal General, Prisoner of War Division, "Report of Visit to Camp," by DeKoven L. Schweiger, December 19-21, 1943, RG 1517.AM, Box 12, Fort Robinson Collection, NSHS.
[15] Casella, 67.

What Was in a Uniform

During WWII, many prisoners of war had to change their uniforms multiple times as their status changed from active soldiers to captives of the belligerents. In POW camps, they had two different uniforms with separate functions and social messages. During work details, prisoners wore blue denim pants and coats stenciled with the letter's "P" and "W" while their national military uniforms were worn only on Sundays or during special events, such as the New Year's Eve military ceremony.[16] While POWs' uniforms were associated with their quotidian life as captives, the military uniforms they brought from the war front bestowed them a different appearance and identity even during their captivity. These different uniforms were worn collectively as their social identifier as war prisoners, soldiers, Germans or Italians in respective military unit and rank.

To the U.S. Army as the surveyor of the POWs, it was not necessarily desirable that prisoners kept their national military uniform. At Camp Hearne in Texas, for instance, all the German POWs recalled that they were encouraged to discard their German uniforms when they arrived in the United States and were told they would receive new and better clothes once they were processed.[17] In addition to hygiene concerns, it is plausible that the U.S. Army hoped to make them more obedient by having them give up a symbol of their active soldier identity. Those new and clean "better clothes" the Army prepared for them was designed to change their mindset from combatants to captives. Any clothes the prisoners received from the U.S. Army reinforced their identity as America's captives.

Despite the recommendation to discard their uniforms, however, many of the German men chose to keep their uniforms and wore them on Sundays and holidays, while attending theater productions and special events, including funerals.[18] Even though they were kept behind barbed wire and required to wear POW uniforms normally, their national military uniform functioned as formal attire to observe ceremonial events and bestowed them visible soldier and masculine identity. Moreover, prisoners who lost their national uniforms but desired one even modified American uniforms to look like their own. Many American uniform pieces, especially the cotton and canvas jackets, were bleached by the camp tailors

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[16] WWII Prisoner Recalls Fort Rob Fondly," *Omaha World Herald*, April 1, 1991.
[17] Michael R. Waters, et al., *Lone Star Stalag: German Prisoners of War at Camp Hearne* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2006), 157.
[18] Ibid., 158.

to imitate the appearance of German tropical tunics.[19] This act illustrates German POWs' willingness to express their patriotism and collective national identity through military uniforms. While there were variations in each camp in terms of pro-Nazi and anti-Nazi POW population dynamics, national military uniforms had an overarching symbolic meaning to represent their devotion to homeland, family, and friends. Hence, at most of the POW camps, modified national military uniforms could be one of the first camp-made artifacts by the prisoners of war to reaffirm their national identity and in-group solidarity during captivity.

Although POWs preferred to retain their national uniform upon their arrival in America, their perspective shifted as it became more and more evident that they would not win the war. According to Tom Buecker, a curator at Fort Robinson Museum, once Germany surrendered, the soldiers were urged to discard any vestiges of Hitler's Nazi regime, including their uniforms. Many POWs burned or buried their military uniforms upon their return to Germany.[20] This episode reveals that the U.S. Army wanted to segregate German POWs from anything that would pose a threat to the War Department's democratic reeducation of the POWs, while German men's intense reactions to their military uniform implies that they possibly felt shame and resentment toward what they had been fighting for. Destroying their national uniform served almost as a terminus ritual, or a rite of passage, to transform themselves from subjects of the Nazi Regime into citizens of postwar Europe where they would not have to wear a military uniform and be sent to war anymore.

In POW camps, prisoners were neither actual convicts nor free men while they kept dual status as enemy prisoners of war and Axis soldiers. Due to the peculiarity of their circumstances, POWs could not depart from this up-in-the-air, or liminal status, until the war finished. With the end of the war, however, their POW status became their past identity and so was their Axis soldier identity; neither national nor POW uniforms would define who they would become after the war. In that sense, destroying their national uniforms became a threshold to end their liminal period in POW camp. For the POWs, destroying their own uniform became a symbolic killing of their identity that led to their capture and incarceration by the belligerents. Through this act, they could destroy their old wartime Self and create new postwar Self.

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[19] Waters, et al.,158.

[20] "WWII Prisoner Recalls Fort Rob Memory Fondly," *Omaha World Herald*, April 1, 1997.

Due to their nation's armistice with the Allies, Italian soldiers took a different course from the Germans, and they responded differently to their own national uniform. According to local newspapers of the time, "They [Italian POWs] can receive clothing from the United States Army, but they prefer to wear their own country's uniform."[21] Since this news was published barely three months after Italy's armistice with the Allied Force, many Italian POWs were still in the midst of confusion about their reversed status in America while still being kept behind barbed wire. Some likely chose national uniforms out of patriotism while others were not ready to accept the surrender of Italy and afraid of forthcoming changes in many respects. Italian soldiers' willingness to keep their national uniform indicates their in-between status during the war and their resistance to the United States that had been their belligerent not long ago.

As time progressed, however, the U.S. Army became more specific on what Italian soldiers should wear at POW camps in America. When former Italian POW Sergio Bologna was transferred from Camp Scottsbluff, Nebraska, to Fort Bliss, Texas, he and other Italian soldiers were told to wear American uniforms with Italian symbols on the arm.[22] With this shift after Italy's surrender, Italian soldiers became quasi-American subjects under supervision of the U.S. Army. Their national uniform still symbolized the days Italy was on the belligerent side of America, and civilians also regarded men in Italian uniform, or any non-U.S. military uniform, to be suspicious. Henceforth, uniforms served as a readily visible social identifier to distinguish who were insiders, outsiders, and those in-between. At POW camps and hosting communities, rather than *who* was in a uniform, *which* uniform an individual wore defined who he was.

POWs' Creative Activities: Artifacts and Stage Performance

During their camp life, POWs' creation of arts and crafts became a significant way to retain their pre-incarceration identity as well as to accept their not-very-honorable captive identity. According to anthropologists Gilly Carr and Harold Mytum, creativity of some sort was practiced by nearly all POWs and was a therapeutic outlet which enabled them to

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[21] "'The Prisoner of War,'" *Prisoner of War Camp News* (Douglas, WY), December 7, 1943.
[22] "Italian POW Returns to Area to Revisit Past," *Star-Herald* (Scottsbluff, NE), April 15, 1999.

survive emotionally, psychologically, and physically.[23] Although the prisoners could not enjoy unbounded freedom, POWs' creativity enabled them to acquire, modify, and control resources to pursue their intellectual and artistic freedom, at least to a degree. They could freely create artwork that reflected their depression, uncertainty, frustration, anger, and occasional joy derived from their incarceration experiences.

While POWs' creativity had multiple functions, one of the most valuable aspects of making arts and crafts in the camp is that it enabled prisoners to "mediate the multiple identities of internees, whether subtly encoded, obviously suppressed or clearly audible."[24] Through creating artifacts, POWs expressed their ethnicity, gender, age, cultural values, personality, and struggles to survive the difficult time behind barbed wire. Although POWs' arts and crafts are a very useful source to analyze, Carr and Mytum claim that the items of creativity are "not easy to understand individually, even at fixed points in their lives such as the moment of creation."[25] Therefore, POWs' creative activity was a complex in-camp phenomenon contingent upon various factors including camp environment, relations with the hosting community, and their own mental state of going through battles, capture, and ensuing voyage to the United States.

POWs' creativity became closely tied with their desire to demonstrate and record their experiences at the camp. According to Harold Mytum, identity maintenance could be a major coping strategy and gave internees a focus for their attention, allowed them to associate together toward a common end.[26] With plenty of time available to them, prisoners took "a chance to express and fulfill aspects of personal development that would have been impossible in normal circumstances."[27] Therefore, POWs often engaged in creative activity to find out what they could still do in captivity rather than what they could not. It is valid to say that POWs' creativity was connected to their pursuit of self-reflection that they had not necessarily prioritized before the war in their normal environment. Although confinement in

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[23] Gilly Carr and Harold Mytum, "The Importance of Creativity Behind Barbed Wire: Setting a Research Agenda," in *Cultural Heritage and Prisoners of War: Creativity Behind Barbed Wire*, eds. Gilly Carr and Harold Mytum, (London; New York: Routledge, 2012), 2.
[24] Ibid., 8.
[25] Ibid.,14.
[26] Harold Mytum, "Commentary: Intimate Memories and Coping with World War II Internment," *Historical Archaeology* 52, no. 3 (September 2018): 610.
[27] Ibid.

camp modified their identities, it was also a time for the POWs to discover possibilities within themselves that they would be able to continue pursuing after the war.

While POWs' motivation for creative activities varied, it functioned as a strategy to meld their prewar identity that they had shaped over the years and a new identity as prisoner of war that was immediately imposed on them upon their capture. According to Gilly Carr, "material produced in camp can often express a continuation of identity and previous ways of life before incarceration…. Expression of identity, ethnicity and culture were often resistant in intent and manifestation as a way of keeping up morale."[28] For example, POWs' paintings of German or Italian landscapes expressed their nostalgia and yearnings for their homeland; a bottled ship could be evidence of the soldier's affiliation with the naval force, or his origin from a coastal area (Figures 17 and 18). For the artists themselves, these arts and crafts helped them maintain their national and ethnic pride while for the captors, they might have appeared to be a sign of the artists' determination to remain loyal to their homeland.

While POWs created artifacts more actively at base camps than at seasonal small side camps, prisoners who were sent to those branch camps were also engaged in creating artifacts. According to Royal Draime, who served as Master Sergeant at Fort Robinson, one of the largest projects that the German prisoners built at Fort Meade Side Camp in South Dakota was a sailboat. This boat had "dovetail corners at the rear," and required two weeks to build.[29] A dovetail corner was a technique specific to German carpenters, and thus the boat instantly revealed cultural heritage of the crafters. Since no other documentary record described this sailboat made by the Germans, it is difficult to tell who told them to make it or for what purpose.

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[28] Gilly Carr, "'God Save the King!': Creative Modes of Protest, Defiance and Identity in Channel Islander Internment Camps in Germany, 1942-1945," in *Cultural Heritage and Prisoners of War: Creativity Behind Barbed Wire*, eds. Gilly Carr and Harold Mytum (New York: Routledge, 2012), 169.
[29] R. E. Draime, "Historical Sketch, Prisoner of War Camp" (n.d.), RG 1517.AM, Box 12, Fort Robinson Collection, NSHS.

Figure 19. Landscape painting by a German POW at Camp Douglas; the POW possibly portrayed the scenery of his hometown. It was gifted to an Army officer and now exhibited at Pioneer Memorial Museum in Douglas, WY. Photo by author.

Figure 20. Bottled ship created by a German POW at Fort Robinson POW Camp; one gallon glass jar encases a miniature ship made with matchsticks. Courtesy of Nebraska State Museum. Photo by author.

Because Draime was running a woodshop at Fort Robinson and supervising POWs making furniture and other items for the camp, it is plausible those German men crafted the boat as a part of their labor assignment at the side camp, not as a part of their recreation. Still, dove corners must have been their creative attempt to add some uniqueness to the boat. Draime remarked that, "If we saw a need for something, we made plans and started to work. The Germans loved it, and I learned that it was a privilege to work in the carpenter's shop and there was a waiting list."[30] Draime's account reveals that many German POWs had skillsets and perceived a job at a carpenter shop as an opportunity to upgrade their work detail from menial labor in farm fields or maintenance jobs at the military post. That is, carpentry work was traditionally considered higher in status than farm labor and skilled men's job.

In her significant study on Japanese Americans prisoners' creativity in WWII incarceration camps, anthropologist Jane Dusselier claims that, "art created and sustained a myriad of intricate and layered connections," and "helped internees connect with one another in the context of…almost limitless differences."[31] It was also the case that German or Italian POWs in camps related to each other through sharing and appreciating some form of collective art even though their former occupation, military rank, hobbies, and personality were varied. POW camp theater would be one of the most successful examples of creative activity that was relevant to everyone in the camp. Prisoners of war created their own stage costumes and settings, signs, posters, and performed various programs to offer entertainment for POWs by POWs. Every prisoner took some part in camp theater either as artists or carpenters, performers, or audience, and thus POW camp theater became a reciprocal creative activity and collective experience appreciated by every single member of a camp.

POWs' theater performances were highly regarded not only by the POWs but also U.S. Army personnel. For example, Alfred Thompson, who served as Army interpreter at Fort Robinson described, "The PWs had a performing arts group called 'VARISTA'… which put on many plays, carnival-type performances which were open to the American personnel. I remember in particular their production of 'FLEDERMAUS,' an excellent job, considering

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[30] Draime, "Historical Sketch, Prisoner of War Camp, Part Two."
[31] Jane E. Dusselier, *Artifacts of Loss: Crafting Survival in Japanese American Concentration Camps* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 4.

they had no females for female parts."[32] (Figure 19). At Fort Robinson, POWs' theater performances ranged from operettas, music concerts, juggling, and even their own "Varista-March" composed by one of the POWs at the camp.[33] For Christmas, they had extensive holiday programs including "4 Robinsons, Juggling Pirates" (4 POWs juggling), "Match Tricks and Illusions," "Willi Schwind's Clown Parade and Parodies on some World-Famous Clowns."[34] In addition, actors on stage could switch their identity from prisoners of war to a role they played.

As Alfred Thompson's comment on their operetta *Die Fledermaus* illustrates, some men who played female roles transformed themselves into women during the play. Several other plays offered through VARISTA included Chinese and Arab men, black sailors, medieval aristocrats, and clowns. Within these plays, POW actors could transcend not only their captive identity but also boundaries of gender, race, ethnicity, and even time and place.

In that sense, rather than retaining their original identity, theater performances helped them acquire new identities only valid on the stage, which could be interpreted as prisoners' creativity of a third identity. POW theatergoers could also enjoy their experience as an audience who could set aside their concerns about incarceration and war situations at least for the duration of the show. These theater performances became positive features of a POW camp and the proof of POWs' willingness to pursue creative entertainment that could uplift their morale in hard times.

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[32] Alfred Thompson, Response to questionnaire for Fort Robinson Veterans, May 15, 1987, RG 1517.AM Box 13, Fort Robinson Collection, NSHS. *Die Fledermaus* is a German operetta all about a light-hearted revenge plotted by a man on his friend who played a prank on him in the past. It is plausible that the operetta was a part of Varista's Christmas festival program as *Die Fledermaus* was traditionally performed on New Year's Eve.
[33] "Varista" Program, February 1945, RG 1517.AM Box 13, Fort Robinson Collection, NSHS.
[34] Varista Christmas Festival Program, 1945, NSHS, RG 1517.AM Box 13, Fort Robinson Collection, NSHS.

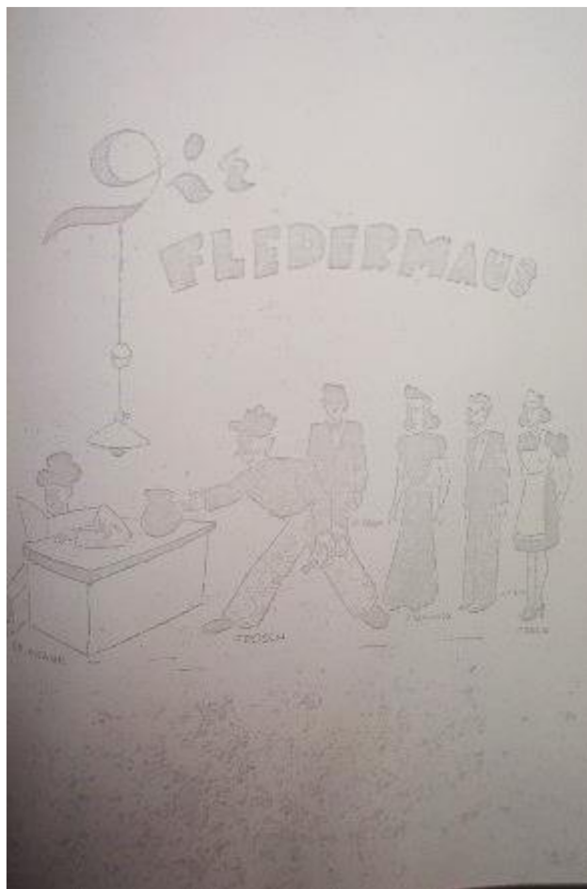

Figure 21. Poster of POWs' operetta *Die Fledermaus*. Although few photo images of theater plays of VARISTA have been surfaced, POW artist at Fort Robinson created numerous posters of performance programs offered through VARISTA. Courtesy of NSHS Archives.

Although theater performances at Douglas POW Camp was not as extensive as the VARISTA Program at Fort Robinson, programs at Camp Douglas also helped to diversify POWs' spare time in a monotonous camp environment. At the POW camp in Douglas, Italian prisoners who were imprisoned before the Germans also exerted their creativity to build a theater from scrap wood. Caesar Oriano, former Italian POW at Douglas POW Camp recalled that the prisoners "made costumes for performances from flour sacks."[35] Since POWs normally had to prepare supplies for their performances by themselves, they tried to salvage fabric, wood, metal, or glass to save costs.

In addition to creating artifacts for self-expression, camp-made arts enabled prisoners to connect themselves with locals in hosting communities. POWs often gifted their artwork

[35] Peg Layton Leonard, *West of Yesteryear* (Boulder, CO: Johnson Publishing Company, 1976).

to locals as a symbol of their friendship and gratitude. Gerald Kennedy, who employed six prisoners of war from Fort Robinson, described an artifact that one of the prisoners gave him: "He gave me a plaque, it has wood carving on it which was made out of the end of apple box…. Then I also had two or three bottles with ships in them. They used to make a lot of those."[36] Borrowing anthropologist Marcel Mauss's idea of gift exchange, POWs' gift giving to locals signified their reciprocal relationship.[37] POWs found irreplaceable value in locals' hospitality and friendship that could be identified as a gift, and reciprocated by sharing handmade gifts with the locals.

In her study on Japanese American detainees' artifacts, anthropologist Jane Dusselier observes that creative activities in internment camps helped Japanese Americans construct themselves as "more than internees by keeping their connections with the outside world alive and relevant."[38] This concept was applicable to the POWs in small western towns as well. Prisoners of war often created art that was inspired by regional culture. As exemplified in Western-themed murals at Camp Douglas discussed in Chapter 5, prisoners' art often incorporated landscapes and symbols of the American West including Indians and cowboys as an expression of their interest and appreciation toward their temporary home (Figure 20).

Creativity Meant More than Making Artifacts

Even though POWs were in captivity, they held their freedom of choice to create or not to create arts and crafts, and many chose the former to empower themselves through creative activities. According to anthropologist Eleanor Conlin Casella, by making creative use of surrounding resources to cope with the austerity, deprivation, and humiliations of the institutionalization, inmates collectively and individually produced their own material records.[39] Based on her argument, it is valid to say that the prisoners of war managed to leave tangible proof of their legacy separate from the official documents prepared by the War Department. POWs' voluntary artwork hinted at what they really liked, excelled at, and were concerned about living in captivity that official documents could not fully grasp.

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[36] Gerald Kennedy, interview by Tom Buecker, Fort Robinson Museum, Crawford, NE (n.d.), RG 1517.AM Box 13, Fort Robinson Collection, NSHS.
[37] Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange and in Archaic Societies* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1990).
[38] Dusselier, 102.
[39] Casella, 143.

Figure 22. Western themed artifacts crafted by German POWs at Fort Robinson.
Left: decorative wood carved and painted plaque featuring cowboy on bucking horse.
Right: wood carved Indian warrior; it was a gift to a local man who worked with a POW at a blacksmith shop in the camp. Possession of Fort Robinson Museum. Photo by author.

As a quote from Casella illustrates, prisoners' creativity meant more than simply an act of making some artifacts. It also meant discovering unconventional and unique resources and methods to create artifacts by understanding their immediate environment. No matter whether they were professional or amateur artists, POWs tried to obtain good materials for making crafts by sometimes scavenging the dumpsite. According to Gordon Humbert, who was a son of an Army official and stayed at Fort Robinson, "I remember an incident one time when I met a German soldier at the Ft. Rob. dump site sorting through cans of C-Rations for something to eat that he liked. Apparently, the pull date had expired, and they were replaced by a better tasting ration…. The next day nearly all of the cans were gone."[40] It is possible that the POW rummaged through the dumpsite not only to salvage food, but also to obtain metal cans that he could use for some craftworks. As they were given three square meals a

[40] Gordon Humbert account, July 24, 1998, RG 1517.AM, Box 12, Fort Robinson Collection, NSHS.

day in the camp, it makes more sense to consider that the POW salvaged the expired canned foods mainly this episode reveals that cheese was an integral part of their diet that was so familiar to them that they knew the properties of fresh and dried cheese.[41] to procure metal cans rather to obtain extra food. And the disappearance of nearly all the cans in a day indicates the growing demand for metal among many POWs as apt material for arts and crafts.

Although they could obtain art supplies at the camp canteen, many POWs were good at finding scrapped materials that would be suitable for making artifacts as the example above illustrates. In addition, prisoners knew a unique alternative for art supplies: At Camp Douglas, Italian POWs used to save cottage cheese from meals and dry it, and then mix it with water to use it as glue.[42] It is not clear if that was their newly acquired knowledge as prisoners to substitute a glue with cheese, but

Some of the prisoners were truly skilled artisans who could make highly elaborate crafts with scrapped material. Jack Hanlin, a former Douglas town clerk, noted, "They [POWs] were always on lookout for an old pitch or cedar fence post, an apple crate or a piece of wire or most anything. And they'd turn out beautiful things. Even clocks and violins!"[43] As Hanlin's account indicates, POWs' labor in hosting communities was also an opportunity for them to procure the extra material they would use for their creative projects. Although it is not clear if it was the same man Hanlin described, regional historian Lowell A. Bangerter mentioned in his study on WWII POW camps in Wyoming that at Camp Douglas, there was a German violin maker who cured native cedar and used it to make violins, selling it for $275.[44] In addition to these objects, some prisoners had sufficient dexterity and precision to make a compass out of a razorblade and a needle that worked just fine.[45] Therefore, even if they could not find the right supplies at the camp canteen or were unwilling to pay for the

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[41] In many societies, people utilize staple food for different purposes. For instance, a tiny portion of leftover cooked rice is often mashed and used as makeshift glue in Japanese households. While many people do so when they ran out of normal glue, others prefer rice glue as it sticks well, or simply because they want to use up leftovers rather than throwing away. Similarly, Italian POWs' choice to use cheese as glue could be attributed to various reasons.
[42] Leonard, 199.
[43] Jack Hanlin quoted in Leonard, 199.
[44] Lowell A. Bangerter, "German Prisoners of War in Wyoming," *Journal of German American Studies* 14, no. 2, (1979): 80.
[45] "POW Camp Douglas, WY–Memories of H. G. Gasbarre" (n.d.), Douglas POW Camp File, Pioneer Memorial Museum, Douglas, WY.

supplies, POWs held flexible and creative ideas of obtaining and recycling various materials readily available to them to make arts and crafts. Whenever and wherever possible, many POWs were attentive to find unique material they could transform into artwork no matter how unlikely what they obtained appeared to residents and Army personnel. With some knowledge and decent skills, prisoners transformed cold and ubiquitous material into fine pieces of artworks special to them.

Therefore, creativity as an activity and concept occupied a large part of incarcerees' camp life. While their occupational status had served as their social identifier before the war, prisoners of war had to look for an alternative way to establish themselves in a new environment. POWs' creativity involved reorientation of the Self through interpreting their situations, determining what they could create, and then "reterritorializing" their new environment with their artwork.

POWs' creativity in camp meant that they were not deprived of their agency entirely. It signified their hope for the future with restored freedom and civility and make the broader society understood their hardships behind barbed wire as foreign enemy prisoners of war (how this demonstrates their hardships more specifically?) As anthropologist Claudia Theune claims, some of the archaeological finds belonged to prisoners demonstrate powerlessness, oppression, and humiliation, but also "self-assertion and self-respect."[46] Therefore, by creating art, POWs still managed to maintain their motivation and high spirits to survive the camp life and return to "normalcy" once the war would be over. POWs' creativity conveyed their message to the captors that incarceration could not suppress their creative minds and desire to express that.

End of the War, Repatriation, and Beyond

With the surrender of their nations, POWs in the United States were expected to follow the orders of the War Department, and some of their practices became unacceptable in the camp. German prisoners were fully under American law and control until repatriation, and their use of Nazi salute was forbidden, as well as the end of military organization.[47] When asked about his reaction to the official end of the war between Germany and the Allies,

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[46] Theune, 250.
[47] Thomas Buecker, "Treatment of German Prisoners of War in the United States, 1943-1946," RG 1517.AM, Box 12, Fort Robinson Collection, NSHS.

Wolfgang Dorschel, the German POW spokesman at Fort Robinson replied, "Lord be praised. An announcement came from the camp commander, something about 'Rule L,' which was obey only the American law. A few 'die-hards' were sad, but most were glad and relieved."[48]

Therefore, Germany's surrender transformed German prisoners of war into quasi-American subjects. Most of the German POWs desired to return to their country immediately and become free men. Even if they could generally receive good treatment in the United States, their life as captives kept them challenging their own national, ethnic, political, masculine, and sexual identities and thus retaining their agency was not always an easy if not unattainable.

By May 1945, new POWs were no longer being transferred to the United States, and repatriation gradually began. For many German prisoners in America, however, the greatest surprise and shock came at the end of the war. Against their expectation to be repatriated to Germany as soon as possible, fewer than 75,000 of 374,000 German POWs in the United States made it back home in 1945. Because of continued scarcity of Mexican and domestic labor, those remaining continued to work in the United States at least until July 1946, when the U.S. government returned its last German prisoner to Europe.[49] In addition, even after America transferred all the POWs back to Europe, many of them had to spend additional time working in former Allied nations in Europe. In less than a week after the official end of WWII, Wolfgang Dorschel noted with a great shock that, "An article in *The London Times* wrote that 3,000 POW all German, will be transferred into France for work purpose. This hit like a lightning!"[50]

While it turned out far more POWs had to work in former Allied nations before they were finally released in Germany, the Geneva Convention of 1929 did not clearly refer to the use of the repatriated prisoners' labor by the detaining power's allies. Article 75 of the Geneva Convention regarding liberation and repatriation at the end of hostilities claimed that:

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[48] Wolfgang Dorschel and Hans Waecker, Discussion concerning various aspects of the Fort Robinson POW Camp, August 22, 1987, RG 1517.AM, Box 12, Fort Robinson Collection, NSHS.

[49] Lewis H. Carlson, *We Were Each Other's Prisoners: An Oral History of World War II American and German Prisoner of War* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), ix; Thomas Jaehn, "Unlikely Harvesters: German Prisoners of War as Agricultural Workers in the Northwest," *Montana: The Magazine of the Western History* 50, no. 3 (Autumn 2000): 57.

[50] Wolfgang Dorschel, Diary entry, September 8, 1945, tran. Ursula Armstrong, RG 1517.AM Box 13, Fort Robinson Collection, NSHS.

> When belligerents conclude an armistice convention, they shall normally cause to be included therein provisions concerning the repatriation of prisoners of war. If it has not been possible to insert in that convention such stipulations, the belligerents shall, nevertheless, enter into communication with each other on the question as soon as possible. In any case, the repatriation of prisoners shall be effected as soon as possible after the conclusion of peace.[51]

While German POWs interpreted this clause as their legal right for immediate release, former Allied nations took it as an opportunity to utilize their labor to compensate for the destruction caused by the war by pointing out that the war concluded with unconditional surrender of the Axis but not an armistice. Therefore, at the very end of the war, the Geneva Convention failed to protect the prisoners from being exploited by America's allies due to its own ambiguity on exactly how and when the detaining power should transfer the prisoners. The European Allies interpreted the Geneva Convention conveniently for them, and the United States prioritized its relationship with these nations rather than questioning the validity of exploiting POW labor by countries that did not actually incarcerate them.

Fort Eustis Project upon Repatriation

Prior to their repatriation, for POWs who appeared to be model prisoners in the eyes of the U.S. Army, were recommended to participated in further intensive democratization courses at Fort Eustis, Virginia. Democratic education at Fort Eustis targeted at wrapping up what each POW learned through the Intellectual Diversion Program at their respective POW camps. America hoped cooperative POWs would take a lead in reconstructing postwar Germany. In total, 22,000 POWs were accepted to Fort Eustis, and they fell into groups: 1) persecuted for religious, racial, or political reasons by the Nazi regime; 2) former members of parties or organizations which opposed or conducted opposition to the Nazi regime; 3) Protestant and Catholic POWs who continued membership in their established churches; 4) prisoners who have shown cooperative attitudes, and no hostility toward the Allied purposes in Germany.[52]

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[51] "Article 75, Liberation and Repatriation at the End of Hostilities," Conventions Relative to the Treatment of Prisoner of War, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Geneva, July 27,1929, https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/Article.xsp?action=openDocument&documentId=45DA65E4927F4B97C12563CD00519203.

[52] Office of the Provost Marshal General, Special Projects Division, "Fact Sheet Concerning the PW Special Project Center Ft. Eustis, VA," Washington, D.C., March 5, 1946, RG 0501, Box 15, NSHS.

According to the War Department officials, the prisoners slated for final processing at Eustis presented the “cream of the prisoners of war crop.” Camp Commanders selected the trainees on the basis of many months of close observation, after which the War Department carefully screened them.[53] The comparison between a crop and prisoners of war suggests that the War Department firmly believed they succeeded in cultivating and nurturing democratic ideals among the German POWs through the Intellectual Diversion Program. And the “cream” of them, or best of the best among them, equaled prisoners who embraced American social values rather than someone merely opposing National Socialism or communism.

According to historian Ron Robin, however, this meant that the War Department had deliberately sought students who were not in the mainstream of the POW camps. Rather, they were marginal men who retained their sense of alienation upon returning home.[54] Robin’s claim does not necessarily mean “mainstream” German POWs were pro-Nazi soldiers. Rather, many prisoners refrained from openly criticizing Nazi ideology and kept silent to protect themselves from physical or psychological harassment by hardcore Nazi soldiers. Therefore, what the U.S. government considered the best POWs were not always ideal men to other German POWs because they would bring intense ideological conflict among the POWs. These prisoners were more like outliers and less of an impartial representation of the entire POW population in the camp. The War Department picked up men who would meet its expectation of building democratic Germany reflecting American economic, political, and social values while excluding anti-America and anti-democratic men no matter whether they were well-educated. Because of this skewed selection process, the Fort Eustis project was a very subjective and U.S.-centric final attempt at indoctrination by the War Department.

At Fort Eustis, selected POWs were oriented in one of eleven 6-day cycles consisting of lecture, classroom discussions, films, supplementary media, and final exercises. When the POWs arrived, they were barracked in an “Entrance Pool” until the start of their designated cycle, and then moved into the orientation compound. After completion of the six-day course, they were moved into an “Exit Pool” and finally to a port of embarkation.[55] POWs at

[53] U.S. Department of War, Bureau of Public Relations Press Branch, “20,000 Selected German Prisoners of War Given Chance to Learn about Democracy,” March 6, 1946, RG 0501, Box 15, NSHS.
[54] Ron Theodore Robin, *The Barbed Wire College: Reeducating German POWs in the United States during World War II* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 168.
[55] “Fact Sheet Concerning the PW Special Project Center, Ft. Eustis, VA,” Office of the Provost Marshall General PM Special Projects Division, March 5, 1946, RG 0501, Box 15, NSHS.

Fort Eustis were indeed "crops" cultivated with democratic education, harvested, and polished to be exported to Europe as a product of America's democracy education. Although the War Department wanted to emphasize the efficient operation of the Fort Eustis Project, with only six days, the program was mere a crash course rather than heightening the selected POWs' knowledge and appreciation of democracy. Obviously, the War Department was more enthusiastic than the prisoners themselves about this capstone project. The War Department's re-education program always took a top-down approach instead of bottom-up acts of the prisoners about what they wanted to do for themselves to improve postwar Germany in a democratic way.

Back Home

Aside from the War Department's intention to re-educate German POWs, many prisoners firmly expected a conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union in postwar Europe, in which they would have to choose sides.[56] Rudolf Ritschel, former POW at Camp Scottsbluff, mentioned that, "After a democratic re-education in a camp… we were informed that we would be given preference over the others in being released.[57] For many who went through democratic re-education, being released in the area occupied by communist USSR did not make much sense and it would nullify what they had learned about American democracy. After leaving Fort Robinson, former German POW Wolfgang Losche made it to Fort Eustis for farther democratic education. After Fort Eustis, he decided not to return to his home because it was in the zone occupied by the Russians. In such cases, the U.S. Army gave the returnees the option of choosing where they wished to be released, and Losche selected a city in the U.S. occupied zone.[58] Like Losche's experience upon repatriation, for some POWs choosing the democratic side meant leaving their loved ones with uncertainty of ever seeing them again. In other cases, some POWs no longer had physical homes to go back. Due to the mass destruction, changes in territorial boundaries,

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[56] Matthias Reiss, "The Nucleus of a New German Ideology? The Re-education of German Prisoners of War in the United States during World War II," in *Prisoners of War, Prisoners of Peace: Captivity, Homecoming, and Memory in World War II*, eds. Barbara Hatley-Broad and Bob Moore (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2005), 101.
[57] Rudolf Ritschel account, quoted in Lowell A. Bangerter, "German Prisoners of War in Wyoming," *Journal of German American Studies*, 14, no. 2 (June 1979): 96.
[58] Wolfgang Losche account, NSHS, RG 1517.AM, Box 12, Fort Robinson Collection.

and population drift, many people had neither a family nor a native country to return to.[59] War changed not only physical but also geopolitical, cultural, and economic landscapes of the Europe prisoners of war had been familiar with. With these changes in mind, POWs had to make a choice where their postwar home should be.

Although many POWs who went through the Fort Eustis education chose to be released in U.S. occupied areas, they soon figured out that the democratic education they received in America was nothing more than an armchair theory in postwar Germany in which daily subsistence was a more urgent issue to many citizens. Because of that, the experience of the returning prisoners who received special education was generally a negative one. Even if they chose to be released in West Germany, what they encountered in occupied Germany bore little relation to what they had learned in re-education classes in America and many became disillusioned.[60] Ironically, POWs who went through further democratic education to rebuild postwar Germany were the people who really appreciated American ideals and material abundance, and thus they were the group willing to immigrate to the United States rather than remain in Germany and grapple with the reconstruction of their homeland.

As opposed to POWs who went through the Fort Eustis program and had the privilege to be sent back to Germany directly, POWs who did not take Eustis courses had a longer way home. According to Beverly Humbert, whose father was an Army officer at Fort Robinson, "One of the prisoners working for my dad did not want to return to Germany. He wrote my dad a heart-rending letter in English requesting his help—hoping he would be allowed to stay at Fort Rob."[61] Although Humbert did not refer to the reason why the POW wanted to remain, there were multiple possible reasons German POWs desired to stay in the United States. They received good treatment and had befriended the locals, enjoyed material abundance as a norm, or preferred democratic ideology and American culture. But the biggest reason to some of the prisoners would be the fear for where they would find themselves next. If they were to be sent to the area occupied by Soviet or other European Allied nations. They would likely be exploited to work for the damage caused by the German military as a form of reparation, and their humane treatment was not necessarily guaranteed by the provisions of

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[59] Rüdiger Overmans, "The Repatriations of POWs once the Hostilities are Over: A Matter of Course?," in *Prisoners of War, Prisoners of Peace: Captivity, Homecoming, and Memory in World War II*, eds. Barbara Hatley-Broad and Bob Moore (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2005), 18.
[60] Reiss, 96.
[61] Beverly Humbert, "My Life at Fort Robinson," RG 1517.AM, Box 12, Fort Robinson Collection, NSHS.

the Geneva Convention once the detaining power released them. Many German POWs were afraid that if they were to be sent to labor camps in Europe, they would have to live like slave laborers with less humane treatment compared to their captive life in the United States.

What was even worse, for German ethnic Russians, if they were to be sent to the Soviet Union, it meant possible execution because they were thought to be traitors for joining the German military. Their fear heightened when British Prime Minister Anthony Eden gave Stalin his word that all Russians captured in German uniforms would be repatriated ahead of all others.[62] Even if America could tell these soldiers' fate, the U.S. government could not interfere with the agreement between Britain and the Soviet Union. Therefore, not every POW took his repatriation to Europe in the same way. While some men were happy with their return and family reunion even though their home would no longer look the same, other soldiers were feeling doomed because they expected things would get drastically worse if they went back to their homes.

To be sent back to Europe meant they would have to do without enough commodities that they could obtain in volume at POW camps in the United States. One prisoner who had been transferred to a camp in Holland from Fort Meade Branch Camp in South Dakota wrote to his former employer complaining he only received 40 cigarettes per month there while that was as many cigarettes as he had previously smoked at Fort Meade in three days.[63] Lack of enough food and supplies posed a threat to the wellbeing of the repatriated POWs and their families.

In his letter to his former employer in Clearmont, Wyoming, former German POW Herman Eckert mentioned, "When I was working with you in the U.S.A., I was weighing about 175 pounds. Now, after two years of being home, I came down to 130 pounds. Well, it is not difficult to calculate when I shall be near to starvation.... If I were allowed, I would not hesitate to immigrate to the U.S.A. Here we have little or no hope at all that things will improve in the near future."[64] Eckert's letter illustrates how materially abundant wartime America was even though rationing was the norm. Although POWs were happy to reunite

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[62] Thomas F. Naegele, *Love Thine Enemies: Images of a Little Known Chapter in German-American History, 1943–1946* (Gerlingen, Germany: Bleicher Verlag, 1994), 68.
[63] "Germans Were POWs Here during '40s" *Black Hills Press* (Sturgis, SD), July 11, 1991.
[64] Herman Eckert letter to Mr. and Mrs. Fowler (n.d.), in transcription of "Clearmont Community History Oral History Tape" by Alik Kaufman, Rose Fowler, Ralf Kaiser, and Dan Ingraham, POWs Clermont File, Pioneer Memorial Museum, Douglas, WY.

with their family, the conclusion of the war did not make their life easy at all. And only for a few POWs, the Intellectual Diversion Program and democratic education benefitted because majority of them had to prioritize their daily subsistence with limited food and resources. Postwar material and food shortages were the norm in many countries while America was the only nation that could spare from its spell. Therefore, it was no wonder many POWs sought a way to come back to the United States to start life anew without constantly worrying about their survival. Eckert's letter above insinuated he would like his former employer to help him immigrate to America although former POWs' immigration to the states was not as easy as they had imagined.

For some POWs, the postwar period was a time to give up trying to return to a home that was absorbed into the Eastern Bloc, and seriously seek a way to immigrate to America as a refuge from communism. Alois Siegmund, former POW at Fort Robinson, never returned to his home after the war as his hometown area was part of Poland. Siegmund spent another year in a camp in England before being released in Germany although he had no home address in Germany. He was then offered a job by an ex-sergeant in charge of the bakery at Fort Robinson POW Camp upon his opening of a bakery in the town of Rushville, located about sixty miles east of Fort Robinson. It took four years, however, for the quota to open for him, and by the time Siegmund finally made it to the states, the ex-sergeant had closed his bakery being unable to find help. Siegmund made Nebraska his new home anyhow and had an interior decorating business instead.[65] Therefore, if former POWs really hoped to immigrate to the United States, they had to find a sponsor first and clear the quota system. Like Siegmund, many POWs chose not to go back to their homeland that became part of the Eastern Bloc even though that meant they might not be able to see their family and friends again.

Many former POWs who migrated to the United States had to start from scratch without enough money, but some became very successful in their new home. Hans Waecker, a former German POW at Fort Robinson, reminisced his return to America in 1949, "with 50 cents in my pocket when I arrived." From there he was able to relate a story of the "great American Dream": first started as a soda jerk, later as a photographic salesman, and within

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[65] Dave Cook, "Fort Robinson Prisoner of War Camp Revisited," *The Northwest Nebraska Post*, (Crawford, NE), October (no date), 1987.

three years Waecker built his own house in Maine, went back to college, and became a physician.[66] By way of their experience as POWs, they made America from temporary to permanent home and claimed their eligibility for independent, hardworking, self-made American men with European heritage. Still embracing their identity as Germans or Italians, they formed an identity as new American citizens appreciating the nation's democratic principle that they perceived in and around POW camps during their previous stay as America's captives.

End of the War and Memory in Material Culture

The conclusion of WWII also meant an end to POWs' camp life surrounded by the material culture of confinement. Edwin Munson, a former guard at Camp Hearne in Texas, recalled when the POWs left the camp, they discarded most of their equipment because of the limited weight and space allowed for personal items on the return trip to Europe.[67] POWs' equipment provided by the authority was a part of institutional apparatus that reinforced their wartime identity as prisoners of war. As opposed to that, some functional items were kept by POWs for reasons which had more to do with pleasant memories of friendships and bonds of community rather than unpleasant memories of the hardships of internment which had to be erased by recourse to camp-made inventions.[68] Therefore, not all the POW camp-related artifacts should be categorized into items of the dark past with bitter loss and incarceration; some of the items stirred more favorable and nostalgic memories among them. After the war, some of them were destroyed on purpose, misplaced and lost, brought back with prisoners as memorabilia, or given to residents to celebrate their friendship. No matter which course POWs' artifacts took, they all embraced legacies of their existence and experiences in captivity.

Conclusion

POW camps and its material culture impacted not only the prisoners but also collective memories and place identity. Thus, rather than leaving former WWII POW camp sites as a negative heritage of human conflict, it is beneficial to preserve legacies of the site to shed light on the local experiences of WWII from the standpoint of the POWs. In terms of

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[66] Cook, "Fort Robinson Prisoner of War Camp Revisited."
[67] Waters, et al., 170.
[68] Carr and Mytum, 5.

the significance of the POW artifacts to the hosting community, in Douglas Wyoming, for instance, the former Officers' Club building appears on the National Register of Historic Places, owing to its sixteen murals that were painted by three Italian POWs (Figure 21). As discussed in the previous chapter, the theme of these murals is "mythic West" that depicted symbols of the American West including Indians, cowboys, wagon trails, and geysers in Yellowstone National Park. Although murals were painted at other POW camps in America, only a few survive today due to demolition of buildings. The murals at the former Douglas POW Camp may be the only remaining collection painted by Italian POWs as most others were believed to be created by German POWs.[69] Because many murals created by Italian POWs at other camps tended to be more religious in character, these western themed murals are even more unique in terms of historical, social, and cultural contexts of the hosting community and POW artists' perception of regional culture of America.

Figure 23. Camp Douglas Officers' Club building. It is the only structure that stands on the same site. Owing to community members' effort, this structure is now registered on the National Register of Historic Places. Photo by author.

[69] Nancy Weidel, "Officer's Club, Douglas Prisoner of War Camp," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office, Cheyenne, WY, March 29, 2001, http://pdfhost.focus.nps.gov/docs/NRHP/Text/01000965.pdf.

Figure 24. Former site of Fort Robinson POW Camp. Although concrete foundations are still visible, no building remains today. The site is now a part of Fort Robinson State Park and accessible for park visitors. Photo by author.

After the war, the Officers Club of Douglas was used as a communal gathering space for weddings, proms, and family reunions.[70] By transforming the building into a public gathering space for residents, community members bestowed new functions and meanings to the former camp building and the murals painted there. Painted by Italian POWs, Western themed murals have been adopted by the community as one of the most distinct cultural identifiers of the locality. Even today, these murals connect the residents with the men who made it to the area as WWII prisoners of war, and wartime experience of a small town served as a hosting community. Although no structure remains at the former site of Fort Robinson POW Camp, the site is now part of Fort Robinson State Park, and a historical marker sign acknowledges the presence of thousands of German men there (Figure 22). Former POW camp sites that were once off-limit to civilians now welcomes park visitors to discover

[70] City of Douglas, WY, "Douglas WWII P.O.W. Camp - Officers Club & Murals," accessed December 6, 2014, http://www.cityofdouglaswy.com/index.asp?Type=B_BASIC&SEC={4AC09743-38E8-473A-A91-FC5723D99B5B}&DE={FC6EC219-D62C-4E33-ADEF-C4F3964714C4}.

lesser-known local history of WWII. Today, locals' collective memory of the WWII experience has been fading away, and thus it is an extremely time-sensitive issue to (re)introduce the legacy of rapport and coexistence of European POWs and community members during the war.

While incarceration restricted POWs' physical freedom and they resorted to creating artifacts to alleviate the stress of confinement, these objects do not automatically speak about behavioral patterns of the prisoners. Rather, these arts and crafts serve as tangible legacy of the men labeled as enemy prisoners of war who struggled to cope with sudden transformation of their identity and tried to retain a fraction of power and order to survive their life as captives with dignity and sense of fulfillment. Through gifting camp-made artifacts to residents, which can be often found at local museums today, POWs made visible signs of their presence that deserve deep appreciation of the hosting community and broader American society.

Conclusion

Legacies of WWII POWs in America—Friends and Enemies in Crisis

Throughout any time and place, the breakout of a war or an equally catastrophic event alters ordinary people's lives. It becomes even more the case if they were suddenly deprived of their physical freedom, removed from familiar environments, and incarcerated in unfamiliar temporary "homes," no matter whether the accusation against them is legitimate.

In WWII-era America, multiple groups experienced institutional confinement due to what their status and identity meant to the United States: civilians of Japanese ancestry and Axis prisoners of war of German, Italian, and Japanese troops found themselves surrounded by barbed wire and surveyed by the guards as America's enemies. As for Japanese Americans, racial and cultural otherness became the biggest factor, as they were labeled as enemies and incarcerated without responsibility. On the other hand, Axis POWs' incarceration was mainly attributed to their ideological otherness to the United States which turned out to be widely varied at individual levels.

Like other regions in America, many communities in the High Plains hosted incarceration camps reserved for these Others who were perceived as enemies of the United States. Before POWs' arrival to their town, residents of the hosting communities were uncertain of how similar or different the POWs would be in terms of their appearance, sociocultural values, and collective behavior. It turned out, however, that actual interactions between the locals and POWs were not bitter but rather amicable. By providing their labor with civilian employers, these soldiers not only contributed to localities' subsistence but also left their legacies to survive the war on the American home front as Axis POWs while embracing various identities they encountered during captivity. Even if it could be a humiliating experience, becoming prisoners of America and living in POW camps served as these soldiers' strategy to survive the war and later reclaim their freedom and normal life as civilians. On the war front, they had to make choice to surrender to save their lives. On the American home front, they had to choose what to purchase and consume, whether to fraternize with locals, what to do in their spare time, how to create arts and crafts, and that all helped them live as captives with some agency within constrained circumstances.

POWs' Identity in America: What Constituted Enemy?

While POWs struggled to orient themselves in a new environment with a different status, residents in the hosting community also tried to discern who these foreign enemy soldiers were. Many locals in the hosting communities reflected what they wanted to see in the images of European POWs. To the residents, prisoners of war did not appear too different from local young men, except that they wore enemy uniforms and fought for their nations. Many local newspapers published residents' stories of their interactions with the POWs and their perception of the German or Italian prisoners. For instance, Byron Nelson of Holdrege, Nebraska, worked for the fire department at nearby Atlanta POW Camp and reminisced that "people started to realize they [German POWs] were people just like the rest of us."[1] Nelson's idea resonated with what many residents in hosting communities thought about the European POWs. By mentioning POWs were "like the rest of us," locals like Nelson evaluated not only the prisoners but also themselves to be ordinary white, Christian, kind, and patriotic people whose normal lives were disrupted by the war.

Based on the locals' general response to the POWs, I contend that America's enemies had to appear quintessentially different from normative white Americans, or should not be "like the rest of us" to the residents of rural towns in "the white space" as discussed in earlier chapters. In such spaces, cultural minorities could feel uneasy and consider them to be informally "off limits." For white people, however, the same settings were unremarkable, or normal, "taken-for-granted reflections of civil society."[2] In that sense, European POWs were not necessarily outsiders of the white space, and that helped them interact with the locals comfortably and explore their commonalities as friends rather than differences as enemies.

Even if WWII POWs' presence in America was not always remembered, their experience in America is important as a way to understand how American society defined and acknowledged enemies. As discussed in previous chapters, the locals and European POWs perceived more similarities than differences in each other. POWs from Europe possessed what I term "intersectionality of cultural hegemony" which was normalized in the broader American society. In other words, they had white, Christian, and heterosexual male

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[1] "Prisoners on the Plains: Nebraskans, German POWs Learned to Help Each Other," *Omaha World-Herald* (Omaha, NE), October 3, 1993.
[2] Elijah Anderson, "The White Space" *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* 1, no.1 (2015): 10.

identities that were deeply engrained in the American social system and had been rarely questioned by those in power as a norm.

During their captivity in America, POWs' intersectionality of their race, ethnicity, gender, and religious identity coalesced with images of white Christian male normativity in American society and contributed to the development of their quasi-local identity in hosting communities. While the concept of intersectionality has been traditionally used in cultural studies, ethnic studies, or women's studies to describe subordinated groups because of their race, gender, and socioeconomic status, it is a useful concept to use to study a group on the other side of a continuum as well.[3] That is, POWs' intersectionality of white, European, male, Christian identity provided an advantage; allowed them to pass as temporary members of small towns. Henceforth, setting aside the fact that they came to America to be incarcerated, POWs' intersectionality of cultural hegemony enabled them to stay in the rural West as members of the powerful majority—white, Christian, and male—in the United States. Owing to that, prisoners of war from Germany and Italy did not always have to suffer from otherization in the United States while locals figured out POWs were not necessarily their cultural enemies.

Future Research Questions

As this dissertation focused on German and Italian POWs' experiences in America, it has yet to explore relevant topics to WWII POW camps in the United States. First, it left out experiences of some 4,000 Japanese POWs in America on purpose. This is *not* because they were a minority in number and thus trivial to examine as a component of American experience of the Second World War. Because the Geneva Convention of 1929 recommended the detaining power accommodate one racial group in one camp and the Japanese soldiers were the smallest group, few POW camps in the area that I conducted

[3] Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (July 1991): 1241-1299. Recent scholarly debate on intersectional analysis points out that the field needs to move beyond subordinated groups and explore multiple axes of difference an individual possesses. For more discussion on intersectionality of socially privileged and normative identities, see Devon W. Carbado, "Colorblind Intersectionality: Theorizing Power, Empowering Theory," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 38, no.4 (Summer 2013): 811-845; Abby L. Ferber, "The Culture of Privilege: Color-blindness, Postfeminism, and Christonormativity," *Journal of Social Issues* 68, no.1 (March 2012): 63-77; Cynthia Levine-Rasky, "Intersectionality Theory Applied to Whiteness and Middle-Classness," *Social Identities* 17, no. 2 (March 2011): 239-253; Bob Pease, *Undoing Privilege: Unlearned Advantage in a Divided World* (London: Zed Books, 2010).

research housed them and thus no primary sources were available. However, research on WWII POW camps in America would never be complete without the history and experience of them. Japanese POWs had different racial, cultural, and ideological backgrounds from European POWs, and it is a great interest to me to explore how the U.S. Army, hosting communities, and broader American society reacted to the enemy prisoners from the Pacific and treated them.

Probably Japanese POWs' incarceration experience in America would reveal significant differences between them and Japanese American detainees in terms of their patriotism, political ideology, and social values. If significant gaps between their incarceration experiences would be found, it will further highlight the injustice that was done to Japanese Americans simply because they had Japanese ancestry rather than how they identified themselves as U.S. citizens.

In addition, as I mentioned earlier in the Introduction, not very many material culture surveys have been conducted on former POW camp sites nationwide. As this dissertation exemplifies, historical archaeological study on POW camps does not always have to include an on-site archaeological investigation contingent upon the availability of sufficient historical documents and artifacts for analysis. Still, excavating the site and finding more physical traces of POWs such as glass bottles, tin cans, or gaming pieces in high frequency offers more context of what they could obtain and favored, which ultimately reflects their consumption habits and cultural values as well as better insight into America's treatment of the POWs.

Moreover, hosting communities' collective memories need further appreciation by the public and researchers alike. While Douglas and Fort Robinson are two sites that take pride in their past serving as hosting communities of WWII POW camps, not every community desires to remember its wartime experience positively and thus wants to leave it untouched as a dark past. Yet inside POW camps, foreign soldiers tried to survive the war as active players of multiple individual roles that were available to them in captivity. Their struggles and resilience as well as locals' contribution to the war effort through hosting camps deserve to be celebrated and remembered at individual, local, regional, and national levels. Because of that, future research on POW camps requires exploring possibilities of how localities and the

public can find the middle ground in preserving the legacies of WWII POW camps for the next generation.

Because it has been over three-quarters of a century since the conclusion of WWII, the number of surviving former POWs and residents in hosting communities keeps dwindling and resulting in the loss of collective memory of the communities in many places. WWII POW camps in the United States deserve much broader recognition from the public for their association with the direct impact of World War II on hundreds of small communities and residents living there. WWII POW camp sites are a significant cultural heritage that speak about unique wartime experiences of idyllic rural towns in the United States, which demonstrates that everyone in any locality got involved in the war and played their roles in the war effort no matter whether they liked it or not.

In terms of how POW camps impacted the transformation of post-WWII socioeconomic landscape of the West, they oddly made former hosting communities even more dependent on agricultural industry. This is because former POW camp sites were selected for their remoteness from the bustling commercial hub of the region or heavily populated industrial cities with strategically important war plants. With the conclusion of the war, economic benefits of POW camps were halted, and localities resumed agriculture-oriented means of subsistence, but without the help of prisoners of war. By the war's end, POW camps and prisoner workers became defining characteristics of the rural West. In that sense, POW camps not only contributed to the economy of hosting communities but also the formation of wartime local identity.

When POWs first arrived in the American West, their knowledge about the place was mainly coming from the images of popular culture. The West they encountered, however, was an ambiguous place where many locals lived as farmers to make profits but not as independent mythic cowboys. This ambiguous place inspired prisoners, Army personnel, and locals to connect themselves with the mythic West as one Italian POWs' comment about Tom Mix upon his arrival and western themed murals of Douglas POW Camp exemplify. As POWs settled in camps, they lived in the rural West as their temporary home where their national enemy status was not always an impediment to develop reciprocity and friendship with the locals.

Finally, even though WWII POWs in America had relatively fair treatment and were accepted by locals, that does not mean they were entirely free from conflicts and struggles as captives of their belligerents. No matter which region in the United States prisoners of war were sent, their incarceration experience shook their identity at multiple levels: Their imprisonment regardless of diverse ethnic backgrounds made some men more conscious about their cultural heritage; ideological differences among themselves necessitated many POWs to resist to ideological extremists' dominance; uncertainty for their future made them turn to religion; their containment and control by the U.S. Army challenged their soldierly strength and capacity to perform various tasks; their nation's surrender and ensuing change in geopolitical landscape asked them to embrace a new postwar world as Germans, Italians, Europeans, or even future Americans; and where they would be able to have a good life with or without their loved ones. POW camps served as a place they could reaffirm their pre-war identity and experiment with their temporary status as consumers, workers, recreationists, students, and artists in captivity.

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G.O. #13, November 17, 1944
G.O. #4, May 19, 1945
Report of Visit, December 19,1943
Visits (in reverse order), 1943–1945, March 1945–November 1943
Field Service Camp Surveys (in reverse order), July 31, 1944–June 28, 1945
Visits to Scottsbluff Camp, 1943-1945
Camp Visit, Scottsbluff, February 12, 1945

Series Seven: Prisoner of War Camps
Box 15:
POW Indoctrination Material
Prisoner of War Special Project Center, Fort Eustis, VA, March 1946
Special Project Letters re POW's, 1944–1945
POW Orientation Manual, 5th Orientation, May 1945
Camp Newsletter
Hans Wallendorf POW Records

RG 1517.AM: Fort Robinson (Neb.) Reference Collection
Box 12: War Dogs; Prisoners of War Folder
P.W. Camp General File
PW Personnel Files
Enemy PW Information Bureau Subpost File, 1942–1946
P.W. Camp Inspection Reports, 1943–1945
PW Camp Interview Transcripts
Joseph Topp Narrative File

Box 13: Prisoners of War Folder
Camp Educational Work
Royal Draime Correspondence
Wolfgang Dorschel Diary
A.A. Thompson—PW Camp Staff Papers & Correspondence

Pioneer Memorial Museum, Douglas, Wyoming

Douglas POW Camp File, Box 29
POWs Clearmont Folder

Douglas POW Internment Camp, C.A. Kneffel Collection, Boxes 1–3
Douglas POW Internment Camp, Capt. Kneffel Papers, Box 4

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Appendix A: Geneva Convention of 1929[1]

PART I

Articles 1, 2, 3, and 4: General Provisions

Article 1. The present Convention shall apply without prejudice to the stipulations of Part VII:
(1) To all persons referred to in Articles 1, 2 and 3 of the Regulations annexed to the Hague Convention
(IV) of 18 October 1907, concerning the Laws and Customs of War on Land, who are captured by the enemy.
(2) To all persons belonging to the armed forces of belligerents who are captured by the enemy in the course of operations of maritime or aerial war, subject to such exceptions (derogations) as the conditions of such capture render inevitable. Nevertheless these exceptions shall not infringe the fundamental principles of the present Convention; they shall cease from the moment when the captured persons shall have reached a prisoners of war camp.

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.

Art. 3. Prisoners of war are entitled to respect for their persons and honour. Women shall be treated with all consideration due to their sex.
Prisoners retain their full civil capacity.

Art. 4. The detaining Power is required to provide for the maintenance of prisoners of war in its charge.
Differences of treatment between prisoners are permissible only if such differences are based on the military rank, the state of physical or mental health, the professional abilities, or the sex of those who benefit from them.

PART II

Articles 5 and 6: Capture

Art. 5. Every prisoner of war is required to declare, if he is interrogated on the subject, his true names and rank, or his regimental number.
If he infringes this rule, he exposes himself to a restriction of the privileges accorded to prisoners of his category.
No pressure shall be exercised on prisoners to obtain information regarding the situation in their armed forces or their country. Prisoners who refuse to reply may not be threatened, insulted, or exposed to unpleasantness or disadvantages of any kind whatsoever.

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[1] Adapted from "Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War," International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Geneva, 27 July 1929. Accessed August 27, 2018, https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/INTRO/305?OpenDocument.
While there are 97 articles in the Geneva Convention of 1929, articles 81 to 97 (Parts VII and VIII) are not very relevant to this dissertation and thus they are not listed here. For articles 81 to 97 and Annex, refer to the weblink above.

If, by reason of his physical or mental condition, a prisoner is incapable of stating his identity, he shall be handed over to the Medical Service.

Art. 6. All personal effects and articles in personal use -- except arms, horses, military equipment and military papers -- shall remain in the possession of prisoners of war, as well as their metal helmets and gas-masks.
Sums of money carried by prisoners may only be taken from them on the order of an officer and after the amount has been recorded. A receipt shall be given for them. Sums thus impounded shall be placed to the account of each prisoner.
Their identity tokens, badges of rank, decorations and articles of value may not be taken from prisoners.

PART III

Articles 7 and 8: Evacuation of POWs

Art. 7. As soon as possible after their capture, prisoners of war shall be evacuated to depots sufficiently removed from the fighting zone for them to be out of danger.
Only prisoners who, by reason of their wounds or maladies, would run greater risks by being evacuated than by remaining may be kept temporarily in a dangerous zone.
Prisoners shall not be unnecessarily exposed to danger while awaiting evacuation from a fighting zone.
The evacuation of prisoners on foot shall in normal circumstances be effected by stages of not more than 20 kilometres per day, unless the necessity for reaching water and food depôts requires longer stages.

Art. 8. Belligerents are required to notify each other of all captures of prisoners as soon as possible, through the intermediary of the Information Bureaux organised in accordance with Article 77. They are likewise required to inform each other of the official addresses to which letter from the prisoners' families may be addressed to the prisoners of war.
As soon as possible, every prisoner shall be enabled to correspond personally with his family, in accordance with the conditions prescribed in Article 36 and the following Articles.
As regards prisoners captured at sea, the provisions of the present article shall be observed as soon as possible after arrival in port.

Article 9: Prisoners of War Camps

Art. 9. Prisoners of war may be interned in a town, fortress or other place, and may be required not to go beyond certain fixed limits. They may also be interned in fenced camps; they shall not be confined or imprisoned except as a measure indispensable for safety or health, and only so long as circumstances exist which necessitate such a measure.
Prisoners captured in districts which are unhealthy or whose climate is deleterious to persons coming from temperate climates shall be removed as soon as possible to a more favourable climate.
Belligerents shall as far as possible avoid bringing together in the same camp prisoners of different races or nationalities.
No prisoner may at any time be sent to an area where he would be exposed to the fire of the fighting zone, or be employed to render by his presence certain points or areas immune from bombardment.

Article 10: Installations of Camps

Art. 10. Prisoners of war shall be lodged in buildings or huts which afford all possible safeguards as regards hygiene and salubrity.
The premises must be entirely free from damp, and adequately heated and lighted. All precautions

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

Articles 11 and 12: Food and Clothing of POWs

Art. 11. The food ration of prisoners of war shall be equivalent in quantity and quality to that of the depot troops.
Prisoners shall also be afforded the means of preparing for themselves such additional articles of food as they may possess.
Sufficient drinking water shall be supplied to them. The use of tobacco shall be authorized. Prisoners may be employed in the kitchens.
All collective disciplinary measures affecting food are prohibited.

Art. 12. Clothing, underwear and footwear shall be supplied to prisoners of war by the detaining Power. The regular replacement and repair of such articles shall be assured. Workers shall also receive working kit wherever the nature of the work requires it.
In all camps, canteens shall be installed at which prisoners shall be able to procure, at the local market price, food commodities and ordinary articles.
The profits accruing to the administrations of the camps from the canteens shall be utilised for the benefit of the prisoners.

Articles 13, 14, and 15: Hygiene in Camps

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

Art. 14. Each camp shall possess an infirmary, where prisoners of war shall receive attention of any kind of which they may be in need. If necessary, isolation establishments shall be reserved for patients suffering from infectious and contagious diseases.
The expenses of treatment, including those of temporary remedial apparatus, shall be borne by the detaining Power.
Belligerents shall be required to issue, on demand, to any prisoner treated, and official statement indicating the nature and duration of his illness and of the treatment received.
It shall be permissible for belligerents mutually to authorize each other, by means of special agreements, to retain in the camps doctors and medical orderlies for the purpose of caring for their prisoner compatriots.
Prisoners who have contracted a serious malady, or whose condition necessitates important surgical treatment, shall be admitted, at the expense of the detaining Power, to any military or civil institution qualified to treat them.

Art. 15. Medical inspections of prisoners of war shall be arranged at least once a month. Their object shall be the supervision of the general state of health and cleanliness, and the detection of infectious and contagious diseases., particularly tuberculosis and venereal complaints.

Articles 16 and 17: Intellectual and Moral Needs of POWs

Art. 16. Prisoners of war shall be permitted complete freedom in the performance of their religious duties, including attendance at the services of their faith, on the sole condition that they comply with the routine and police regulations prescribed by the military authorities.
Ministers of religion, who are prisoners of war, whatever may be their denomination, shall be allowed freely to minister to their co-religionists.

Art. 17. belligerents shall encourage as much as possible the organization of intellectual and sporting pursuits by the prisoners of war.

Articles 18, 19, and 20: Internal Discipline of Camps

Art. 18. Each prisoners of war camp shall be placed under the authority of a responsible officer.
In addition to external marks of respect required by the regulations in force in their own armed forces with regard to their nationals, prisoners of war shall be required to salute all officers of the detaining Power.
Officer prisoners of war shall be required to salute only officers of that Power who are their superiors or equals in rank.

Art. 19. The wearing of badges of rank and decorations shall be permitted.

Art. 20. Regulations, orders, announcements and publications of any kind shall be communicated to prisoners of war in a language which they understand. The same principle shall be applied to questions.

Articles 21 and 22: Special Provisions Concerning Officers and Persons of Equivalent Status

Art. 21. At the commencement of hostilities, belligerents shall be required reciprocally to inform each other of the titles and ranks in use in their respective armed forces, with the view of ensuring equality of treatment between the corresponding ranks of officers and persons of equivalent status.
Officers and persons of equivalent status who are prisoners of war shall be treated with due regard to their rank and age.

Art. 22. In order to ensure the service of officers' camps, soldier prisoners of war of the same armed forces, and as far as possible speaking the same language, shall be detached for service therein in sufficient number, having regard to the rank of the officers and persons of equivalent status.
Officers and persons of equivalent status shall procure their food and clothing from the pay to be paid to them by the detaining Power. The management of a mess by officers themselves shall be facilitated in every way.

Articles 23 and 24: Pecuniary Resources of POWs

Art. 23. Subject to any special arrangements made between the belligerent Powers, and particularly those contemplated in Article 24, officers and persons of equivalent status who are prisoners of war shall receive from the detaining Power the same pay as officers of corresponding rank in the armed forces of that Power, provided, however, that such pay does not exceed that to which they are entitled in the armed forces of the country in whose service they have been. This pay shall be paid to them in full, once a month if possible, and no deduction therefrom shall be made for expenditure devolving upon the detaining Power, even if such expenditure is incurred on their behalf.
An agreement between the belligerents shall prescribe the rate of exchange applicable to this payment; in default of such agreement, the rate of exchange adopted shall be that in force at the moment of the commencement of hostilities.

All advances made to prisoners of war by way of pay shall be reimbursed, at the end of hostilities, by the Power in whose service they were.

Art. 24. At the commencement of hostilities, belligerents shall determine by common accord the maximum amount of cash which prisoners of war of various ranks and categories shall be permitted to retain in their possession. Any excess withdrawn or withheld from a prisoner, and any deposit of money effected by him, shall be carried to his account, and may not be converted into another currency without his consent.
The credit balances of their accounts shall be paid to the prisoners of war at the end of their captivity. During the continuance of the latter, facilities shall be accorded to them for the transfer of these amounts, wholly or in part, to banks or private individuals in their country of origin.

Articles 25 and 26: Transfer of POWs

Art. 25. Unless the course of military operations demands it, sick and wounded prisoners of war shall not be transferred if their recovery might be prejudiced by the journey.

Art. 26. In the event of transfer, prisoners of war shall be officially informed in advance of their new destination; they shall be authorized to take with them their personal effects, their correspondence and parcels which have arrived for them.
All necessary arrangements shall be made so that correspondence and parcels addressed to their former camp shall be sent on to them without delay.
The sums credited to the account of transferred prisoners shall be transmitted to the competent authority of their new place of residence.
Expenses incurred by the transfers shall be borne by the detaining Power.

Articles 27 to 34: Work of Prisoners of War

Art. 27. Belligerents may employ as workmen prisoners of war who are physically fit, other than officers and persons of equivalent statue, according to their rank and their ability.
Nevertheless, if officers or persons of equivalent status ask for suitable work, this shall be found for them as far as possible.
Non-commissioned officers who are prisoners of war may be compelled to undertake only supervisory work, unless they expressly request remunerative occupation.
During the whole period of captivity, belligerents are required to admit prisoners of war who are victims of accidents at work to the benefit of provisions applicable to workmen of the same category under the legislation of the detaining Power. As regards prisoners of war to whom these legal provisions could not be applied by reason of the legislation of that Power, the latter undertakes to recommend to its legislative body all proper measures for the equitable compensation of the victims.

Art. 28. The detaining Power shall assume entire responsibility for the maintenance, care, treatment and the payment of the wages of prisoners of war working for private individuals.

Art. 29. No prisoner of war may be employed on work for which he is physically unsuited.

Art. 30. The duration of the daily work of prisoners of war, including the time of the journey to and from work, shall not be excessive and shall in no case exceed that permitted for civil workers of the locality employed on the same work. Each prisoner shall be allowed a rest of twenty-four consecutive hours each week, preferably on Sunday.

Art. 31. Work done by prisoners of war shall have no direct connection with the operations of the war. In particular, it is forbidden to employ prisoners in the manufacture or transport of arms or munitions of any kind, or on the transport of material destined for combatant units.

In the event of violation of the provisions of the preceding paragraph, prisoners are at liberty, after performing or commencing to perform the order, to have their complaints presented through the intermediary of the prisoners' representatives whose functions are described in Articles 43 and 44, or, in the absence of a prisoners' representative, through the intermediary of the representatives of the protecting Power.

Art. 32. It is forbidden to employ prisoners of war on unhealthy or dangerous work. Conditions of work shall not be rendered more arduous by disciplinary measures.

Art. 33. Conditions governing labour detachments shall be similar to those of prisoners-of-war camps, particularly as concerns hygienic conditions, food, care in case of accidents or sickness, correspondence, and the reception of parcels.
Every labour detachment shall be attached to a prisoners' camp. The commander of this camp shall be responsible for the observance in the labour detachment of the provisions of the present Convention.

Art. 34. Prisoners of war shall not receive pay for work in connection with the administration, internal arrangement and maintenance of camps.
Prisoners employed on other work shall be entitled to a rate of pay, to be fixed by agreements between the belligerents.
These agreements shall also specify the portion which may be retained by the camp administration, the amount which shall belong to the prisoner of war and the manner in which this amount shall be placed at his disposal during the period of his captivity.

Pending the conclusion of the said agreements, remuneration of the work of prisoners shall be fixed according to the following standards:
(a) Work done for the State shall be paid for according to the rates in force for soldiers of the national forces doing the same work, or, if no such rates exist, according to a tariff corresponding to the work executed.
(b) When the work is done for other public administrations or for private individuals, the conditions shall be settled in agreement with the military authorities.
The pay which remains to the credit of a prisoner shall be remitted to him on the termination of his captivity. In case of death, it shall be remitted through the diplomatic channel to the heirs of the deceased.

Articles 35 to 41: POWs and Mails

Article 35. On the commencement of hostilities, belligerents shall publish the measures prescribed for the execution of the provisions of the present section.

Article 36. Each of the belligerents shall fix periodically the number of letters and postcards which prisoners of war of different categories shall be permitted to send per month, and shall notify that number to the other belligerent. These letters and cards shall be sent by post by the shortest route. They may not be delayed or withheld for disciplinary motives.
Not later than one week after his arrival in camp, and similarly in case of sickness, each prisoner shall be enabled to send a postcard to his family informing them of his capture and the state of his health. The said postcards shall be forwarded as quickly as possible and shall not be delayed in any manner.
As a general rule, the correspondence of prisoners shall be written in their native language. Belligerents may authorize correspondence in other languages.

Article 37. Prisoners of war shall be authorized to receive individually postal parcels containing foodstuffs and other articles intended for consumption or clothing. The parcels shall be delivered to the addressees and a receipt given.

Article 38. Letters and remittances of money or valuables, as well as postal parcels addressed to prisoners of war, or despatched by them, either directly or through the intermediary of the information bureaux mentioned in Article 77, shall be exempt from all postal charges in the countries of origin and destination and in the countries through which they pass.
Presents and relief in kind intended for prisoners of war shall also be exempt from all import or other duties, as well as any charges for carriage on railways operated by the State.
Prisoners may, in cases of recognized urgency, be authorized to send telegrams on payment of the usual charges.

Article 39. Prisoners of war shall be permitted to receive individually consignments of books which may be subject to censorship.
Representatives of the protecting Powers and of duly recognized and authorized relief societies may send works and collections of books to the libraries of prisoners, camps. The transmission of such consignments to libraries may not be delayed under pretext of difficulties of censorship.

Article 40. The censoring of correspondence shall be accomplished as quickly as possible. The examination of postal parcels shall, moreover, be effected under such conditions as will ensure the preservation of any foodstuffs which they may contain, and, if possible, be done in the presence of the addressee or of a representative duly recognized by him.
Any prohibition of correspondence ordered by the belligerents, for military or political reasons, shall only be of a temporary character and shall also be for as brief a time as possible.

Article 41. Belligerents shall accord all facilities for the transmission of documents destined for prisoners of war or signed by them, in particular powers of attorney and wills.
They shall take the necessary measures to secure, in case of need, the legalisation of signatures of prisoners.

Article 42: POWs’ Complaints Respecting the Conditions of Captivity

Art. 42. Prisoners of war shall have the right to bring to the notice of the military authorities, in whose hands they are, their petitions concerning the conditions of captivity to which they are subjected.
They shall also have the right to communicate with the representatives of the protecting Powers in order to draw their attention to the points on which they have complaints to make with regard to the conditions of captivity.
Such petitions and complaints shall be transmitted immediately.
Even though they are found to be groundless, they shall not give rise to any punishment.

Articles 43 and 44: Representatives of POWs

Art. 43. In any locality where there may be prisoners of war, they shall be authorized to appoint representatives to represent them before the military authorities and the protecting Powers.
Such appointments shall be subject to the approval of the military authorities.
The prisoners' representatives shall be charged with the reception and distribution of collective consignments. Similarly, in the event of the prisoners deciding to organize amongst themselves a system of mutual aid, such organization shall be one of the functions of the prisoners" representatives. On the other hand, the latter may offer their services to prisoners to facilitate their relations with the relief societies mentioned in Article 78.
In camps of officers and persons of equivalent status the senior officer prisoner of the highest rank shall be recognized as intermediary between the camp authorities and the officers and similar persons who are prisoners, for this purpose he shall have the power to appoint an officer prisoner to assist him as interpreter in the course of conferences with the authorities of the camp.

Art. 44. When the prisoners representatives are employed as workmen, their work as representatives of the prisoners of war shall be reckoned in the compulsory period of labour.
All facilities shall be accorded to the prisoners' representatives for their correspondence with the military authorities and the protecting Power. Such correspondence shall not be subject to any limitation.
No prisoners' representative may be transferred without his having been allowed the time necessary to acquaint his successors with the current business.

Articles 45 to 67: Penal Sanctions

Art. 45. Prisoners of war shall be subject to the laws, regulations and orders in force in the armed forces of the detaining Power.
Any act of insubordination shall render them liable to the measures prescribed by such laws, regulations, and orders, except as otherwise provided in this Chapter.

Art. 46. Prisoners of war shall not be subjected by the military authorities or the tribunals of the detaining Power to penalties other than those which are prescribed for similar acts by members of the national forces.
Officers, non-commissioned officers or private soldiers, prisoners of war, undergoing disciplinary punishment shall not be subjected to treatment less favourable than that prescribed, as regards the same punishment, for similar ranks in the armed forces of the detaining Power.
All forms of corporal punishment, confinement in premises not lighted by daylight and, in general, all forms of cruelty whatsoever are prohibited.
Collective penalties for individual acts are also prohibited.

Art. 47. A statement of the facts in cases of acts constituting a breach of discipline, and particularly an attempt to escape, shall be drawn up in writing without delay. The period during which prisoners of war of whatever rank are detained in custody (pending the investigation of such offences) shall be reduced to a strict minimum.
The judicial proceedings against a prisoner of war shall be conducted as quickly as circumstances will allow. The period during which prisoners shall be detained in custody shall be as short as possible.
In all cases the period during which a prisoner is under arrest (awaiting punishment or trial) shall be deducted from the sentence, whether disciplinary or judicial, provided such deduction is permitted in the case of members of the national forces

Art. 48. After undergoing the judicial or disciplinary punishment which has been inflicted on them, prisoners of war shall not be treated differently from other prisoners.
Nevertheless, prisoners who have been punished as the result of an attempt to escape may be subjected to a special régime of surveillance, but this shall not involve the suppression of any of the safeguards accorded to prisoners by the present Convention.

Art. 49. No prisoner of war may be deprived of his rank by the detaining Power.
Prisoners on whom disciplinary punishment is inflicted shall not be deprived of the privileges attaching to their rank. In particular, officers and persons of equivalent status who suffer penalties entailing deprivation of liberty shall not be placed in the same premises as non-commissioned officers or private soldiers undergoing punishment.

Art. 50. Escaped prisoners of war who are re-captured before they have been able to rejoin their own armed forces or to leave the territory occupied by the armed forces which captured them shall be liable only to disciplinary punishment.
Prisoners who, after succeeding in rejoining their armed forces or in leaving the territory occupied by

the armed forces which captured them, are again taken prisoner shall not be liable to any punishment for their previous escape.
Art. 51. Attempted escape, even if it is not a first offence, shall not be considered as an aggravation of the offence in the event of the prisoner of war being brought before the courts for crimes or offences against persons or property committed in the course of such attempt.
After an attempted or successful escape, the comrades of the escaped person who aided the escape shall incur only disciplinary punishment therefor.

Art. 52. Belligerents shall ensure that the competent authorities exercize the greatest leniency in considering the question whether an offence committed by a prisoner of war should be punished by disciplinary or by judicial measures.
This provision shall be observed in particular in appraising facts in connexion with escape or attempted escape.
A prisoner shall not be punished more than once for the same act or on the same charge.

Art. 54. Imprisonment is the most severe disciplinary punishment which may be inflicted on a prisoner of war.
The duration of any single punishment shall not exceed thirty days.
This maximum of thirty days shall, moreover, not be exceeded in the event of there being several acts for which the prisoner is answerable to discipline at the time when his case is disposed of, whether such acts are connected or not.
Where, during the course or after the termination of a period of imprisonment, a prisoner is sentenced to a fresh disciplinary penalty, a period of at least three days shall intervene between each of the periods of imprisonment, if one of such periods is of ten days or over.

Art. 55. Subject to the provisions of the last paragraph of Article 11, the restrictions in regard to food permitted in the armed forces of the detaining Power may be applied, as an additional penalty, to prisoners of war undergoing disciplinary punishment.
Such restrictions shall, however, only be ordered if the state of the prisoner's health permits.

Art. 56. In no case shall prisoners of war be transferred to penitentiary establishments (prisoners, penitentiaries, convict establishments, etc.) in order to undergo disciplinary sentence there.
Establishments in which disciplinary sentences are undergone shall conform to the requirements of hygiene.
Facilities shall be afforded to prisoners undergoing sentence to keep themselves in a state of cleanliness.
Every day, such prisoners shall have facilities for taking exercise or for remaining out of doors for at least two hours.

Art. 57. Prisoners of war undergoing disciplinary punishment shall be permitted to read and write and to send and receive letters.
On the other hand, it shall be permissible not to deliver parcels and remittances of money to the addressees until the expiration of the sentence. If the undelivered parcels contain perishable foodstuffs, these shall be handed over to the infirmary or to the camp kitchen.

Art. 58. Prisoners of war undergoing disciplinary punishment shall be permitted, on their request, to present themselves for daily medical inspection. They shall receive such attention as the medical officers may consider necessary, and, if need be, shall be evacuated to the camp infirmary or to hospital.

Art. 59. Without prejudice to the competency of the courts and the superior military authorities, disciplinary sentences may only be awarded by an officer vested with disciplinary powers in his capacity as commander of the camp or detachment, or by the responsible officer acting as his substitute.

Art. 60. At the commencement of a judicial hearing against a prisoner of war, the detaining Power shall notify the representative of the protecting Power as soon as possible, and in any case before the date fixed for the opening of the hearing.
The said notification shall contain the following particulars:
(a) Civil status and rank of the prisoner.
(b) Place of residence or detention.
(c) Statement of the charge or charges, and of the legal provisions applicable.
If it is not possible in this notification to indicate particulars of the court which will try the case, the date of the opening of the hearing and the place where it will take place, these particulars shall be furnished to the representative of the protecting Power at a later date, but as soon as possible and in any case at least three weeks before the opening of the hearing.

Art. 61. No prisoner of war shall be sentenced without being given the opportunity to defend himself. No prisoner shall be compelled to admit that he is guilty of the offence of which he is accused.

Art. 62. The prisoner of war shall have the right to be assisted by a qualified. advocate of his own choice and, if necessary, to have recourse to the offices of a competent interpreter. He shall be informed of his right by the detaining Power in good time before the hearing.
Failing a choice on the part of the prisoner, the protecting Power may procure an advocate for him. The detaining Power shall, on the request of the protecting Power, furnish to the latter a list of persons qualified to conduct the defence.
The representatives of the protecting Power shall have the right to attend the hearing of the case.
The only exception to this rule is where the hearing has to be kept secret in the interests of the safety of the State. The detaining Power would then notify the protecting Power accordingly.

Art. 63. A sentence shall only be pronounced on a prisoner of war by the same tribunals and in accordance with the same procedure as in the case of persons belonging to the armed forces of the detaining Power.

Art. 64. Every prisoner of war shall have the right of appeal against any sentence against him in the same manner as persons belonging to the armed forces of the detaining Power.

Art. 65. Sentences pronounced against prisoners of war shall be communicated immediately to the protecting Power.

Art. 66. If sentence of death is passed on a prisoner of war, a communication setting forth in detail the nature and the circumstances of the offence shall be addressed as soon as possible to the representative of the protecting Power for transmission to the Power in whose armed forces the prisoner served.
The sentence shall not be carried out before the expiration of a period of at least three months from the date of the receipt of this communication by the protecting Power.

Art. 67. No prisoner of war may be deprived of the benefit of the provisions of Article 42 of the present Convention as the result of a judgment or otherwise.

Part IV

Articles 68 to 75: Repatriation of POWs

Art. 68. Belligerents shall be required to send back to their own country, without regard to rank or numbers, after rendering them in a fit condition for transport, prisoners of war who are seriously ill or seriously wounded.
Agreements between the belligerents shall therefore determine, as soon as possible, the forms of disablement or sickness requiring direct repatriation and cases which may necessitate accommodation in a neutral country. Pending the conclusion of such agreements, the belligerents may refer to the model draft agreement annexed to the present Convention.

Art. 69. On the opening of hostilities, belligerents shall come to an understanding as to the appointment of mixed medical commissions. These commissions shall consist of three members, two of whom shall belong to a neutral country and one appointed by the detaining Power; one of the medical officers of the neutral country shall preside. These mixed medical commissions shall proceed to the examination of sick or wounded prisoners and shall make all appropriate decisions with regard to them.
The decisions of these commissions shall be decided by majority and shall be carried into effect as soon as possible.

Art. 70. In addition to those prisoners of war selected by the medical officer of the camp, the following shall be inspected by the mixed medical Commission mentioned in Article 69 with a view to their direct repatriation or accommodation in a neutral country:
(a) Prisoners who make a direct request to that effect to the medical officer of the camp;
(b) Prisoners presented by the prisoners' representatives mentioned in Article 43, the latter acting on their own initiative or on the request of the prisoners themselves;
(c) Prisoners nominated by the Power in whose armed forces they served or by a relief society duly recognized and authorized by that Power.

Art. 71. Prisoners of war who meet with accidents at work, unless the injury is self-inflicted, shall have the benefit of the same provisions as regards repatriation or accommodation in a neutral country.

Art. 72. During the continuance of hostilities, and for humanitarian reasons, belligerents may conclude agreements with a view to the direct repatriation or accommodation in a neutral country of prisoners of war in good health who have been in captivity for a long time.

Art. 73. The expenses of repatriation or transport to a neutral country of prisoners of war shall be borne, as from the frontier of the detaining Power, by the Power in whose armed forces such prisoners served.

Art. 74. No repatriated person shall be employed on active military service.

Art. 75. When belligerents conclude an armistice convention, they shall normally cause to be included therein provisions concerning the repatriation of prisoners of war. If it has not been possible to insert in that convention such stipulations, the belligerents shall, nevertheless, enter into communication with each other on the question as soon as possible. In any case, the repatriation of prisoners shall be effected as soon as possible after the conclusion of peace.
Prisoners of war who are subject to criminal proceedings for a crime or offence at common law may, however, be detained until the end of the proceedings, and, if need be, until the expiration of the sentence. The same applies to prisoners convicted for a crime or offence at common law.

By agreement between the belligerents, commissions may be instituted for the purpose of searching for scattered prisoners and ensuring their repatriation.

Part V

Article 76: Deaths of POWs

Art. 76. The wills of prisoners of war shall be received and drawn up under the same conditions as for soldiers of the national armed forces.
The same rules shall be followed as regards the documents relative to the certification of the death.
The belligerents shall ensure that prisoners of war who have died in captivity are honourably buried, and that the graves bear the necessary indications and are treated with respect and suitably maintained.

Part VI

Articles 77, 78, 79, and 80: Bureau of Relief and Information Concerning POWs

Art. 77. At the commencement of hostilities, each of the belligerent Powers and the neutral Powers who have belligerents in their care, shall institute an official bureau to give information about the prisoners of war in their territory.
Each of the belligerent Powers shall inform its Information Bureau as soon as possible of all captures of prisoners effected by its armed forces, furnishing them with all particulars of identity at its disposal to enable the families concerned to be quickly notified, and stating the official addresses to which families may write to the prisoners.
The Information Bureau shall transmit all such information immediately to the Powers concerned, on the one hand through the intermediary of the protecting Powers, and on the other through the Central Agency contemplated in Article 79.
The Information Bureau, being charged with replying to all enquiries relative to prisoners of war, shall receive from the various services concerned all particulars respecting internments and transfers, releases on parole, repatriations, escapes, stays in hospitals, and deaths, together with all other particulars necessary for establishing and keeping up to date an individual record for each prisoner of war.
The Bureau shall note in this record, as far as possible, and subject to the provisions of Article 5, the regimental number, names and surnames, date and place of birth, rank and unit of the prisoner, the surname of the father and name of the mother, the address of the person to be notified in case of accident, wounds, dates and places of capture, of internment, of wounds, of death, together with all other important particulars.
Weekly lists containing all additional particulars capable of facilitating the identification of each prisoner shall be transmitted to the interested Powers.
The individual record of a prisoner of war shall be sent after the conclusion of peace to the Power in whose service he was.
The Information Bureau shall also be required to collect all personal effects, valuables, correspondence, pay-books, identity tokens, etc., which have been left by prisoners of war who have been repatriated or released on parole, or who have escaped or died, and to transmit them to the countries concerned.

Art. 78. Societies for the relief of prisoners of war, regularly constituted in accordance with the laws of their country, and having for their object to serve as intermediaries for charitable purposes, shall receive from the belligerents, for themselves and their duly accredited agents, all facilities for the efficacious performance of their humane task within the limits imposed by military exigencies.
Representatives of these societies shall be permitted to distribute relief in the camps and at the halting

places of repatriated prisoners under a personal permit issued by the military authority, and on giving an undertaking in writing to comply with all routine and police orders which the said authority shall prescribe.

Art. 79. A Central Agency of information regarding prisoners of war shall be established in a neutral country. The International Red Cross Committee shall, if they consider it necessary, propose to the Powers concerned the organization of such an agency.
This agency shall be charged with the duty of collecting all information regarding prisoners which they may be able to obtain through official or private channels, and the agency shall transmit the information as rapidly as possible to the prisoners' own country or the Power in whose service they have been.
These provisions shall not be interpreted as restricting the humanitarian work of the International Red Cross Committee.

Art. 80. Information Bureaux shall enjoy exemption from fees on postal matter as well as all the exemptions prescribed in Article 38.

Appendix B: Sample List of Desirable 16mm Visual Aid Film Subjects[1]

Biography, American Statemen Series:

Franklin
Jefferson
Hamilton
Abraham Lincoln
George Washington
The Benefactor (Edison)
Flag of Humanity (Clara Barton Red Cross)
Life of Edison
One against the World (Dr. MacDowell, first major operation)
The Story of Dr. Carver

Civics and Patriotism:

Betsy Ross
Constitutional Government
Give Me Liberty
Let Freedom Ring
Main Street on the March
Milestones of Democracy
Postmark, USA
Scientists for Democracy
We, the People

Economics and the Business:

Consumer Cooperation
Turn of the Tide

Labor and Labor Relations:

Factory Farmers
Labor Front
52 Paychecks a Year
Men, Metals and Machines

General:

America Marching On
America – Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow
Growth of Cities
New Roadways
Work of the Stock Exchange

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[1] Headquarters, Army Service Forces, Office of the Provost Marshal General, "16mm Educational and Visual Aid Films for Prisoners of War," Washington, D.C., May 8, 1945, RG 0501, Box 15, NSHS.

Education:

Campus Frontiers
Men of Muscle
Portrait of a Library
West Point of the South
Young Farmers

United States – Travel:

New England States
Mount Vernon
Niagara Falls
Maine Coast
New Hampshire Sketches
Ohio Travelogues
Vermont Around the Calendar
Beautiful Caverns of Luray
Modern Dixie

U.S. Government Activities:

The Archives
Coast Guard in the Arctic
The Iceberg Patrol
Inside the Capitol
Inside the Library of Congress
Inside the White House
The Mail
Making Money (Manufacture of Currency)
The Mint
The Post Office
Smithsonian Institute
The Work of the U.S. Health Service

Religion and Ethics:

Ave Maria
Christianity
Beyond Our Horizon
The Bible in a Warring World
A Certain Nobleman
The Book for the World of Tomorrow
Coronation of Pope Pius XII
The Crown of Thorns
The Eternal Gift
The First Easter
Fishers of Men

Glories of Rome
Golgotha
The Good Samaritan
Go Ye into All the World
The Great Commandment
I Am the Way
In Hallowed Paths
In the Footsteps of St. Patrick
Journey into Faith
The Kindled Flame
Life in a Benedictine Monastery
Life of Christ
Life of St. Paul
The Life of Wm. Tindale
The Lord Will Provide
Martin Luther
Messenger of the Blessed Virgin
Mission Bells
My Beloved Son
No Greater Power
Power of God
The Prodigal Son
Sacrifice of the Mass
Shepherd of the Seven Hills
Starlight Night
This Is Our Earth
The World at Prayer

Additional Films Available on Following Desirable Subjects:
U.S. Histories and Current Events
Industry and Engineering
Power
Natural Products and Processes
American Literature
Transportation

Appendix C: List of Film Strips for German Prisoners of War[1]

Training in Democracy
Via Railroad
Cowboy on the Range
Power from Boulder Dam
One Every Eight Minutes
Mass Production
Bridge of Ships
Father of Waters
Traffic in the Skies
Iron and Steel
Forest Ranger
Brazil, A United Nation
Our Shrinking World
The Thirsty Land
The Forest Fights Too
The Last Frontier
A Man and His Family
We Will Deliver
The News Goes to Press
The 4-H Clubs
Our National Parks
County Fair
Town Meeting
Pacific Slope
Weather Forecasting
Making a Movie
Boy and Girl Scouts
Electing a President
For Better Living
Harvest from the Sea
The Red Cross
Children's Museum
Tale of Two Cities
T.V.A
Nurseries for War Workers [sic] Children

[1] Headquarters, Army Service Forces, Office of the Provost Marshal General, "Film Strips for Prisoners of War," Washington, D.C., July 22, 1945, RG 0501, Box 15, NSHS.