

RG 59 - General Records of the
Department of State

Records of the
Special War Problems Division

Inspection Reports on War
Relocation Centers, 1942-46 [3 of 3]
Inspection Reports on Prisoner
of War Camps, 1942-46 [1 of 10]
[Lot File No. 58 D 7]

Box 21

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DECLASSIFICATION REVIEW PROJECT

NND 893002

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NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION

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Springtown '43

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PRISONER OF WAR CAMP
STRINGTOWN, OKLAHOMA

Visited December 4, 1943.

I OFFICERS IN CHARGE:

Camp Commander: Lieutenant Colonel Henry T. Kent
Executive Officer: Captain O. W. Stead
Intelligence Officer: Lieutenant Harold F. Furlow
Medical Officer: Captain Kazak
German Camp Spokesman: Franz Hox

II CAMP VISITED BY:

Mr. Emil Greuter, representing the Legation of
Switzerland in charge of German interests.

Accompanied by:

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Accompanied by: Mr. Carl Marcy, Special Division,
Department of State.

III PERSONS INTERNED:

At the time of the visit there were 508 prisoners of war held at Stringtown. With the exception of four prisoners, all were former members of the German Navy and most of the prisoners had seen service on U-boats. Four prisoners claimed that they were members of the German Merchant Marine as distinguished from the German Navy.

IV. GENERAL DESCRIPTION AND HOUSING:

There has been no change in the general appearance of the camp and its layout since the visits of Mr. Whitney Young on June 25, 1942, Mr. P. W. Herrick on September 25, 1942, and Mr. Young on August 19, 1943.

Since the visit of Mr. Young on August 19, 1943, the second dormitory building has been opened to accommodate prisoners and at the present time the camp is filled to capacity. Some complaint was made of crowded conditions but the Swiss representative did not believe that this complaint was well founded, although he did suggest that the number of prisoners should not be increased beyond the present figure.

The prisoners said that some difficulty was still being experienced with bedbugs in certain of the living quarters. Questioning revealed, however, that this situation was confined to a small portion of one dormitory building. The camp authorities continue to take steps to remedy this condition.

V WASHING AND TOILET FACILITIES:

Washing and toilet facilities were found to be adequate.

VI FOOD AND COOKING:

No complaint was made with regard to the food and cooking at the camp. The dining rooms have recently been redecorated by the prisoners and present a very pleasing appearance.

VII MEDICAL FACILITIES AND SICKNESS:

The hospital has an average daily roster of from ten to twelve prisoner of war patients. None of the patients at the hospital during the visit was seriously ill. As described in previous reports, the hospital is fully equipped.

Daily sick call usually finds an attendance of from twenty to twenty-five prisoners, a number of whom

report

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report for minor illnesses and some of whom apparently report for no other purpose than to avoid being sent on work details. The camp authorities are dealing vigorously with the latter type of case.

VIII RECREATION FACILITIES:

There is some space available within the prisoners' compound which is used for outdoor recreation but in the opinion of the Swiss representative the recreational area should be increased by rebuilding the stockade fence so that certain adjacent areas may be brought within the confines of the prisoners' compound.

The prisoners now have an adequate library and some of the rooms in the dormitories are now used for hobbies and musical activities. The prisoners are permitted to subscribe to newspapers and to magazines and are permitted to use long wave radios.

IX PAY:

On the day of the visit 101 prisoners were engaged in work for pay. Most of the work is on the reservation or at nearby farms.

Some difficulty has been experienced in getting the prisoners to put in a good days work, but vigorous and prompt action by the camp authorities has prevented work slowdowns from becoming serious.

X COMPLAINTS:

The prisoners spoke to the Swiss representative about the bayoneting of Prisoner of War Schoenfeldt when he refused to work. They did not press the matter, however, and the Swiss representative indicated after consultation with the Camp Commander that it was his personal belief that this treatment may have been justified.

Prisoners mentioned treatment which they had received at Fort George G. Meade, Maryland, during the course of questioning. The Swiss representative suggested that it was likely that American prisoners of war in Germany were subject to similar treatment, whereupon the German prisoners dropped the matter.

The prisoners suggested that four merchant marine prisoners held at Stringtown should be transferred to a civilian internment camp. It appears that the Commanding Officer at Stringtown, as well as the Eighth Service Command, recommended such transfer but the request for transfer was denied. It was apparent that these alleged civilians do not have the respect of members of the German Navy.

Prisoners complained that they had been forbidden to render the open-hand salute when uncovered, stating

that

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that this was the regular German Army salute. It appeared that the Camp Commander had issued an order forbidding this salute upon the basis of an order which he had received from the Eighth Service Command. The representative of the Swiss Legation had in his possession quotations from a letter received by the Legation from the Office of the Provost Marshal General stating that this order would be changed and that the openhand salute rendered by German prisoners when uncovered would be recognized. The representative of the Swiss Legation insisted on giving this information to the German prisoners of war, despite the suggestion of the representative of the State Department that prisoners be informed merely that the matter was under consideration and that formal announcement of the change in the regulation be deferred until such time as the Camp Commander receives instructions that the salute is to be recognized.

XI COMMENTS:

The representative of the Swiss Legation had expected to find a difficult situation at Stringtown because at the time of his visit in August he had found conditions none too satisfactory. After a careful inspection, he expressed his complete satisfaction with the present operation of the camp at Stringtown. He stated that it was apparent to him that the prisoners respected the Commanding Officer, whom they described as a strict military man and one whom they could understand. They respected his fairness. The Swiss representative expressed the opinion that the type of prisoner held at Stringtown makes it one of the most difficult camps to administer.

Carl Marcy
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