

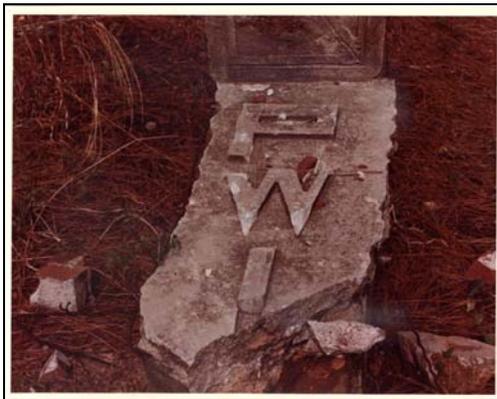


Context, Inventory, and Heritage Tourism Assessment of World War II Prisoner-of-War Camps on DoD Installations

Project #
05-256

Background:

Immediately after the onset of World War II (WWII), plans were made for the internment of enemy alien civilians within the United States. As early as December 9, 1941, preparations were started for the construction of the first permanent alien enemy camp on the Florence Military Reservation in Arizona, and ten emergency camps on Army posts located on each coast and land frontier of the United States. Populations housed within these camps remained small (less than 4000 enemy aliens and 1881 POWs) through the end of 1942.



POW Monument, Fort Benning, Georgia

In anticipation of housing more than 150,000 POWs from Great Britain late in 1942, the Provost General submitted plans for the distribution of the first 50,000 among existing facilities, and construction of new facilities for the second wave of 100,000 POWs. By September 1942, seven permanent internment camps were completed, eight other permanent camps were under construction, and six more were authorized for construction. All aspects of POW life, from the layout of the camps, the facilities available, processing, transport, and work and recreation programs abided by the Geneva Convention of 1929.

The total number of POWs interred in the U.S. ultimately reached over 428,000, and were housed in 155 base camps and 511 branch camps located in 45 of the 48 states. Of this total, approximately 370,000 were Germans, 53,000 were Italians, and 5,400 were Japanese. The repatriation of POWs from the U.S. was completed by June 30, 1946, except for 162 POWs who were serving prison terms in penal institutions.

Objective:

While POW camps took several forms, including both permanent and temporary encampments, a significant number were incorporated into military installations. As a result, a number of current Department of Defense (DoD) installations include the locations of former POW camps. Many of these camps exist only in ruins or in installation records; others consist of extant buildings, POW cemeteries, and POW-constructed landscape features.

To date, no historic context document or inventories of extant POW camps have been completed for DoD installations. Not only do these camps represent cultural resources that may be eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, but they represent an important facet of history on the home front during WWII that remains largely undocumented.

Summary of Approach:

Building on the context information provided by the National Park Service in the theme study *World War II and the American Home Front* (NPS 2003), and information found in DoD records held at the National Archives regarding POW camps, conditions, and transfer, deliverables for the proposed project will include a historic context regarding development and use of WWII POW camps in the United States, an inventory of WWII POW camps on DoD lands, evaluation and documentation of 10 representative WWII POW Camps on DoD lands, and creation of an on-line guide to WWII POW Camps on DoD lands for use in heritage tourism and public education initiatives.

Benefit:

The project will provide a streamlined, comprehensive approach to the inventory and evaluation of WWII POW camps and features on DoD installations. The products from this study could serve as the basis for a nationwide Programmatic Agreement for evaluation and management of POW camps on DoD installations; thereby streamlining future compliance actions required for this category of resource. In addition, completion of this project satisfies the requirements of Executive Order 13287 "Preserve America" for WWII POW camps, both by creation of an inventory and by inclusion of a heritage tourism assessment of specific resources in the inventory.

Accomplishments:

Drafts of the first two deliverables, the historic context and the inventory of WWII POW camps on current DoD installations, were submitted to the Legacy Management Program in January 2006. The research for the context has revealed a rich, although somewhat unevenly preserved, record of the WWII POW experience in the United States, including numerous photographs, copies of POW newsletters, and maps and plans of the former camps. Work on the inventory has indicated that, of the original 200 camps located on military installations, only 93 remain in DoD control.

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