

World War II Prison Camp - Heritage book

During World War II, the Americans shipped captured Germans as prisoners to the United States. These prisoners were split up into groups and sent to Prisoner of War camps in forty-four different states. Geneva was sent a group of war prisoners. The German P.O.W. camp was located on the Enterprise Highway near the home of Mr. and Mrs. Abb R. Smith. The facility had once been used as a convict camp. The prisoners sent to Geneva were sent mainly to help farmers with peanuts. About two hundred prisoners stayed in this camp during the last years of the war, from 1943-1946.

Any farmer in the community could pick up the number of prisoners that he needed. During peanut season, the prisoner had to stack a certain quota of peanuts. If he finished his quota before quitting time and chose to make a little money, he could keep stacking then he would be paid for his extra work. A few of the prisoners could speak English and when a farmer came to pick up the prisoners, he would be given at least one that could understand and speak English so he could act as a translator for the other men.

At the prison camp, they were fed two meals a day, in the morning and at night. They were given a sack lunch to take to the farms. The food was Army rations. The complaint around town was that it was better than our boys were getting. The prisoners' idea of the Americans was that all Americans were rich. We had so much more of everything than they had. During their entire stay in the Geneva area, they did not cause any trouble.

Mr. J.C. Hicks worked several of the prisoners and talked with them about the war. One of the prisoners told Mr. Hicks, "It's a rich man's war but a poor man's fight." That phrase holds true about all wars.

Submitted by: The Geneva County Heritage Committee
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