

Annalise Bates

12th grade

Louisiana School for Math, Sciences & the Arts

The Untold History of Louisiana's POW Camps

As WWII's tumultuous battles continued thousands of miles away from the United States' southern coastline, Louisiana faced a peril of its own: labor shortages. Much of Louisiana's working class had volunteered or been drafted to help the war effort, leaving the state's workforce severely lacking. A solution presented itself in the numerous prisoners-of-war captured by the U.S. military overseas. These prisoners were put to work in Louisiana and 45 other states (Chastant), leaving behind traces of their daily lives and experiences, such as the water fountain of Prisoner-of-War Sub-Camp No.7 in Port Allen (Fisher).

Though most such prisoners-of-war were incarcerated for only a couple of years, it is important to remember their experiences and impact as they were major facets of a war that left humanity forever changed. The existence of these POW camps in America are reminders that WWII was not simply confined to Europe or the Pacific, nor did America exempt itself from such wartime practices as taking prisoners. While not as morally abhorrent as the internment camps constructed in America for Japanese immigrants, it must be remembered that life at these POW camps must not have been easy for anyone who lived there.

Thus, preservation of such camps is valuable to American history because it reminds future generations that war is not painless for any party involved. It is hard to see glory and justification in war when the plight of these ordinary POW soldiers is considered; most low-ranking soldiers did not submit to Hitler's extreme beliefs and some were even inhabitants of other countries that had been forced to serve (Chastant). Nevertheless, some POWs fell in love

with Louisiana, returning with their families or even settling down with Louisianian women, attesting to the determination of humanity to make the best of any situation (Chastant).

Works Cited

Chastant, Rusty. "Thousands of German POWs in Acadiana During WWII - German POWs Helped with Severe Labor Shortages During WWII." *Acadiana Historical*, 26 April 2018, acadianahistorical.org/items/show/52, accessed 6 September 2020.

Fisher, Bernard. "Port Allen Prisoner-Of-War Sub-Camp No. 7 Historical Marker." *Historical Marker*, 29 January 2020, www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=88781, accessed 6 September 2020.

Ouchley, Kelby. "Camp Ruston." *64 Parishes*, 23 April 2019, 64parishes.org/entry/camp-ruston, accessed 6 September 2020.