

20 Oct 76

Mr John Bell
Assist Librarian
Dalhousie University
Halifax N.S. Canada

Dear Mr. Bell

I hope you will excuse my long delay
in answering your request for info.
on the Internment Camp at Amherst
during WWI. and the "Crude" notes on
Scrap paper. Guess I will never be a
successful author!!

These notes were used by myself in an
interview with Mr Peter Lata, a student
at Mount Allison University, and who
home is in Amherst. He with Major F.C.
Wightman keep is making quite a study
of this bit of history -

Wightman is who is a retired C.E. has made
a plan of the camp layout with bldgs etc
This was done about a month ago, while
I was in N.S. sorry I was not able
to get to Halifax this year -

Maybe if you got in touch with Lata
you could exchange info of mutual interest
Trusting this info as I remember it
will be interesting to you.

Sincerely,
Geo. D. Noles

Memo re P.O.W. Internment Camp
Amhurst N.S. W.W.I. 1914-1919

Most of these P.O.W. were officers and men from the German Navy ships, as follows.

The Kaiser Wilhelm De Grosse, left Cuxhaven Germany on June 10 - 1914 with sealed and proceeded to the South Atlantic with sealed orders to be opened upon outbreak of war. These orders were to raid & sink shipping to ^{England & France}

In Sept 1914 with fuel (coal) and supplies getting low, arrangements were made for the SS Bethonia & SS Spreewald.

Supply ships to replenish the K.W. De G. stores, via wireless.

This wireless message was intercepted and decoded by the British Cruiser Nightflyer, who proceeded to the position given by the K.W. De G. and arrived about the same time as the Bt. & Sp.

As told to the writer by P.O.W. Albert Polneau a fireman on the K.W. De G., there was a running battle that lasted most of the day with the K.W. De G. Capt called for more steam and making every effort to escape - and many of our so - except for a lucky shot from the Nightflyer that

damaged

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but the KW seq. steering gear - thus causing it to be unable to zig-zag. - so was captured along with the two supply ships

The crew of these three ships were brought to the nearest English colony. which was Jamaica? (~~Bermuda~~).

With the tropical conditions on that Island and the housing and food supply a problem, a more suitable location was looked for elsewhere in the British Empire.

A site was selected at Amhurst N.S. in an idle machine iron foundry bldg located on South. side of town. This bldg had all the necessary utilities and interior was rebuilt for POW quarters.

Outside was enclosed in a 4 foot wide and 10 foot high barbed wire barricade, with sentry posts at vantage points.

A large open ^{area} was enclosed on n/w corner. ^{with} for an exercise facilities - which the P.O.W. filled up well with gymnastic bars punching bags etc. - Remember one particular fellow who used to swing himself over the rope bar - one time for each year of age. last year 1919. was 43 times

Inside of Bldg was fitted with three tier bunks. a large dining room, a Warrent Officer section with a recreation room.

In this rec room, was a large map of the Western & Eastern fronts with small flags marking the battle lines, as it was learned from the daily papers.

In the center of the Bldg ^{was} for a Red Cross room with a local Doctor making daily calls. This RC facility was operated by a Sgt & a Cpl. with P.O.W assistance and used ~~both~~ ^{by} P.O.W and ^{the} guard unit

The P.O.W had a very ^{fine} ~~nice~~ German Band and put on ^{many} a good program usually on Fri evening. This music was enjoyed both by P.O.W and local residents who lived in the area. who would listen to the program thru open windows during the summer months

The P.O.W were given ~~many~~ ^{many} opportunities to work around the camp. to pass the time and earn some money. They were paid the same as the German Navy ^{25¢/day} except for work that could be considered some assistance to the Allied cause. Then they were paid the same rate as the Canadian soldiers \$1.10/day

One of the main projects was clearing land on the Dominion Experimental Farm at Napan. - located abt 6 miles from the Camp. - This detail usually consisted of 100-125 P.O.W with suitable guard and lunch facilities - Many days the writer sat on a stump watching these ^{Sailors} ~~men~~ cutting trees. They usually cut ~~it~~ ^{the tree} all around like a beaver then pushed or pulled it over!!

Another major project was building the terminals for the car ferry between N B + P E I ^{Cape Formentine + Borden} and changing the P E I railroad from narrow to standard gauge ~~for~~ to match the main land railroads.

These projects along with maintenance work around the Camp was welcomed by the P.O.W. to break the monotony and earn some money for little extras they enjoyed.

They also were expert craftsmen who made many souvenirs, such as canes, ships on bottles ^{wood carvings} and paintings. that always found a ready market at a fair price.

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I only know of one instance when they refused to work, and that was building a skating rink in front of guard quarters when the C.O. Col Morris was called in to settle the dispute - this was in winter time

The guard consists of 4 platoons with a Lt. commanding each platoon with its complement of NCO and men. This guard was quartered in new bldgs located west side of Camp 31st consisting of 2 bldgs for living quarters, a latrine bldg and a combination mess hall and

Recreation room upstairs ^{and a quarter guard bldg} A 4 M.C.A. man was stationed here to keep with personal problems of guard and P.O.W. A ^{Mr Healy} ^{who could} speak German

Food was generally good ample, except for repetitive menus - The POW were given the same rations as the guard except 20% less bread and meat per day - but that was made up by the good German cooks.

The writer can testify to that, as during the time the flu deadly Spanish flu was on in 1916-17 he was quarantined away from the rest of guard - as at the time he was assigned to the Quartermaster Dept. supplying clothes and camp supplies to the P.O.W. and assisted the Red Cross with the POW who got the flu, altho I was opposed to it dadly was never sick a day and

Gained 16 lbs weight during that time (2 or 3 months)

I do not remember just how many of the P.O.W died from the flu - but know there is 12 graves in a special plot in the Amhurst Cemetery - Only one of these graves belong to a P.O.W. who was shot trying to escape, and believe the guard who fired that shot did not intend to kill as he fired from the hip as the P.O.W run

Believe there was only 2 attempts for group escapes - one as mentioned above when 4 or 5 jumped from a box car that was transporting them to the Experimental farm and the other was a group of 12 who dug a tunnel under the north wall of bldg under the barbwire barcade and under the sentry walk and ^{was} a 12' wide bldg used to store coke for the laundry a distance of approx 30 ft.

This escape was well planned and carried out. It occurred just before midnight on a stormy nite, when the P.O.W covered there "good" clothes with sheets, crawled out thru the tunnel. Broke out at the end, and quickly walked to the C & N R depot where one of the P.O.W ^{who could speak good english} Dat tickets for St John. telling the station agent he had a party of men

These graves have now been moved to a central location in Canada - only 5 monuments with the POW names remain

going to St John to work in the lumber woods they got aboard the minute express and behaved like lumbermen. No one noticed and they were not missed until next morning "count" at the Camp. When Lt Kiirstead noticed with his one good eye what he shot was a "dummy" standing in the ranks. Further a closer check revealed more dummies.

Of the 12 Escapes believe I was caught as they tried to get to the U.S.A. border, but 4 did get across the line, and I have heard that one did make his way back to Germany - and that he did write a letter to Cal Morris ^{The Camp Co} for the good treatment he received while a P.O.W.

There was other isolated cases of escape and attempted escape including one of the few civilian P.O.W held. He was nick named Johnnie Canuck, believe he was an acrobatic person and usually went out over the roof and park wire barscales.

During the last year of internment there was a group sent in from another P.O.W camp in Kapustasny Out. and

Maybe a few from another POW camp that was located in Alberta. believe this was to group them together to go on the Exchange ship ~~or not mind?~~

Although the armistice was signed on Nov 11/18 these POW were not exchanged until July 1919 - They were taken from Amhurst to Quebec where they sailed on SS — for Amsterdam or Rotterdam?

To point out the calibre of men these POW were. I will relate the following incident.

During the last 2 yrs of the war I was assigned to the Quartermaster Stores. then a good friend, Corp James Warr who was an experienced coal mine Supt and was called out of the service to produce coal that was needed for the war effort

During this time I was assigned two POW. Albert Polnan and Karl Boege, the former I have mentioned and the latter quite a different type of man, who had great faith in the German war machine

Robert Almonted. would look up who was on the coast may know the name of the ship

When the word came that they were going home, Albert who was about my size asked me to get him a few pieces of better clothes. Such a white shirt - good pants, a sweater and cap - don't remember the exact prices but they cost me abt \$36.00, over one month's pay at that time.

Albert was supposed to get money due him just before the put them on the train, ^{at Lambert there} but orders were changed for obvious reasons. And they were paid off after - empancung on the boat - When he learned of this change he came to me and asked that I point out a close friend ^{in the coast} who he could put the money in an envelope and give to him - sure enough. When my friend Bob, Olmstead of Woodstock N. B. returned abt 3 months later he handed me the envelope with every cent.

I later heard from Albert who was very discouraged with conditions in Germany

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He planned to take what family he had left and go to the Argentina. His mother had died and his sister lost her sight thru malnutrition - one of the awful products of war.

I will now go back to say a bit more of the guard unit.

As I mentioned it consisted of 4 platoons 1-2-3-4 with their complement of Officers and N.C.O. Col Arthur Morris C.O. a

Regular British Army Officer a firm but fair man. Adjutant was Capt F.C. Wightman. A Capt H.H. Hopkins, and several Lieuts that I do not remember all their names. Except J.J. Janning in charge of the Quartermaster stores with Sgt Major Wm. Vergie and Sgt Major Wooldley.

Although the normal strength of the Guard was less than 200 men, many more passed thru its ranks - getting 3 to 6 months training before volunteering to go overseas as reinforcements for other Canadian units, such as the James 5th + 25th Battalions

In those days - it was said the Recruiting officer got a fee and the Examining Doctor got a fee. So if you could walk and could talk you was in the army!!! ~~At that time I was 15 years old~~ ~~at age 15!!!~~

Guess there was something to this as I was less than 16 yrs of age when I enlisted in 1916. Being a big farm boy got along O.K. - was able to hold up my end on every assignment

Last but not least I must mention the incident of Leon Trotsky's interment

As the quartermaster's stores were just across the hall from the CO office I remember Trotsky being escorted to that office several times, and sometimes hearing loud voices coming from that area, believe Trotsky met his match in Col Morris but believe that due to political pressure he was released and got back to Russia - guess he was held at Amhurst about 6 weeks - often wonder if the world history would be different if we had kept ~~held~~ him at Amhurst

Aplin band concerts. XII

Also remember, Trosky grabbing the lime light and getting up in the tables in the P.O.W mess room and spouting off about Bolshevism^{sp?} He was a small man with whiskers, but a loud voice and no doubt the P.O.W mints were fertile area for his propaganda to fall upon.

Another incident I must mention is going into the P.O.W quarters early morning on Armistice Day, Nov 11-18, a very great display of different emotions - some crying with sorrow but mostly crying with joy knowing they would soon have their freedom.

All in all it was a good experience for a farm boy with grade 8 education. I learned a lot about life and during the time the flu was on became acquainted with one of the warrant officers of the ICW de G. with electrical experience - so became interested in that work and made it my life vacation.

Trust this will be of interest to you but very sorry I have been so long in answering your request.
George D Norles #2699949 - 50449st
Kermehunk name 00043