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The Use of German Prisoners of War in Louisiana's Agricultural Labor Force, 1942 - 1946

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The Use of German Prisoners of War in Louisiana's
Agricultural Labor Force, 1942 - 1946

A Thesis

Submitted to the Department of History
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirement for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
History

by

Ronald N. Brady

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Amy A. Brady, *nee* Colletti. They were children of the Great Depression who came of age during the most destructive war in recorded history. They had little of apparent or material value in life. They never owned a house or a car and never could afford to take a vacation, but what they did have and what they sacrificed for was to create a safe and loving environment in which to raise their three children. They taught the value of patients and wisdom and provided encouragement, advice, common sense, and love.¹ They nurtured and instilled a work ethic, the difference between right and wrong, the value of education, and a love of God and country. In these values, they passed on to their children more wealth than could possibly be imagined. Anything of importance, noteworthiness, praise or good that I have accomplished in this life, is due to them. It is to them I humbly and gratefully dedicate this work.

¹ Jas. 1: 4-6 [KJV].

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Abbreviation

ASF	Army Service Force
CCC.....	Civilian Conservation Corps
CFEP	Committee on Fair Employment Practices
CSC.....	Civil Service Commission
EFL	Emergency Farm Labor
EFLP	Emergency Farm Labor Program
ESC	Eighth Service Command
FSA	Federal Security Administration
LSU Ag	Louisiana State University Agricultural Cooperative Extension Service
OWP.....	Office of War Production
POW	Prisoner of War
SDC.....	Southern Defense Command
SSS.....	Selective Service System
USDA.....	United States Department of Agriculture
WFA.....	War Farm Administration
WMC.....	War Manpower Commission
WPB.....	War Production Board
WMCA.....	Young Men's Christian Association

Abstract

In September 1943, the initial group of ten thousand German prisoners of war began arriving in the United States for distribution throughout forty-six of the forty-eight states. At the same time, some industries in the United States lacked an adequate labor force due to the rapid expansion of the armed forces and war-related essential industries. The Louisiana forestry, dairy, and agricultural industries were among those industries in dire need of labor. To solve these problems several agencies within the federal government, both civilian and military, and representatives of the Louisiana state government arrived at a mutual agreement on the process for using prisoners of war to help solve the labor shortage.

This thesis will describe and explain how these various agencies came together to solve the labor problem facing Louisiana agriculture and the United States during a time of national emergency.

Keywords: Eighth Service Command; Louisiana State University Agricultural Cooperative Extension Service; Prisoners of War; Second World War; Southern Defense Command; War Manpower Commission

Chapter 1: Introduction

By the end of November 1941, the unemployment lines in the United States had shortened but the financial upheaval and resulting unemployment of the Great Depression of 1929 were still very much a part of the American scenery. Some of the improvement in the economic and labor situation was due to President Franklin D. Roosevelt's September 1939 declaration of a state of national emergency brought on by the conflict that engulfed Europe that same month. Then, on September 16, 1940, the United States Congress enacted the Selective Service and Training Act that instituted the first peacetime draft in American history.² A little more than a month later, in November 1940, President Franklin D. Roosevelt called for the mobilization of armed force reserve units, as well as the federalization of state National Guard units

On March 11, 1941, Congress passed the Lend Lease Act.³ This act permitted the United States to supply certain nations with war related materials and partially suspended the Neutrality Acts of 1935 - 1939.⁴ In addition, defense industries also began a slow growth to meet the resulting demands of Lend Lease, the state of emergency declaration, and the expansion of the armed forces. In September 1941, Congress extended the Selective Service and Training Act of 1940. The Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor and Germany's and Italy's declaration of war on the United States slightly over two months later would result in unemployment lines all but disappearing from American streets. Unemployment lines shrank as the armed forces expanded and the dramatic growth in the defense industry created a labor shortage.

² Office of Public Affairs, National Headquarters, Selective Service System. *A Short History of the Selective Service System* (Washington, D.C.: Office, 1984), 9.

³ Edward R. Stettinius, *Lend-lease, Weapon for Victory* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1944), 4.

⁴ Warren F. Kimball, *The Most Unsordid Act; Lend-lease, 1939-1941* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1969), 40-41.

The active duty armed forces of the United States grew from 458,365 in 1940 to a high-water mark of 12,055,844 by 1945, with over 16 million ultimately serving. Mining, food processing, livestock, packaging, textile, lumber, and agriculture were the extractive industries most adversely affected due to the loss of their labor force to the armed forces and defense industries. Several agencies within the federal government had the responsibility to address the vexing labor problems and resolve the deficiencies in the availability of an adequate labor pool. The War Department, the War Manpower Commission, the Department of Labor, the War Labor Board, the Federal Security Agency, and the Department of Agriculture were the major federal agencies that responded to the needs of these affected industries.

In Louisiana, the labor drain most affected the agricultural and forestry industries, and the state could offer little help in dealing with these problems. However, with the arrival of large numbers of German prisoners of war to Louisiana in September 1943, the labor-intensive agricultural and forestry industries saw a potential solution to their dwindling labor force. This paper will illustrate how the problems of Louisiana's agricultural industry during the Second World War were addressed and how the several federal agencies in concert with an international agency and a state government worked together to address the needs of the industries affected by the labor drain.

Chapter 2: Louisiana and Louisiana Agriculture Extension Service

The Louisiana agricultural industry prospered during the first two decades of twentieth century. Demand in 1915 -1919 called for increased productions to meet the needs of the First World War.⁵ The decline of Louisiana agriculture began in 1920 with the collapse of agriculture prices after the November 11, 1918 armistice that ended the demands of the First World War.⁶ The economic calamity that followed the stock market crash of October 1929 and the drought of 1930 further contributed to the crisis that Louisiana farmers faced.⁷ Farmers throughout the United States experienced a fall in prices by more than fifty per cent.⁸

Louisiana in 1940 could boast having 150,007 farms. Louisiana cultivated 9,996,070 acres, approximately one-third of the state.⁹ The early stages of mechanization in the cultivating and harvesting of crops began to replace the traditional horse and mule in Louisiana as well as in other states. In 1940 of the slightly over 150,000 farms in Louisiana, tractors cultivated only 6,937, with the horse, mule and human labor functioning as the predominant mode of plant farming.¹⁰ The 1940 farm population of Louisiana stood at 853,949 of a total population of 2,363,880.¹¹

⁵ Wayne D. Rasmussen, *Readings in the History of American Agriculture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1960), 199.

⁶ *Ibid*, 223.

⁷ Martha Lois Dunlap, *The Administrative Organization, Program Procedures and Personnel Policies of the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service*, PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, 1958, 54.

⁸ Wayne D. Rasmussen and Gladys L. Baker, *Price-Support and Adjustment Programs From 1933 Through 1978* (United States Department of Agriculture, Economics, Statistics, and Cooperatives Services, Washington, DC, 1979), 1.

⁹ Jerry Purvis Sanson, *Louisiana during World War II: Politics and Society, 1939-1945* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999), 190.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 192.

¹¹ Frederick W. Williamson, *Origin and Growth of Agricultural Extension in Louisiana, 1860-1948: How It Opened the Road for Progress in Better Farming and Rural Living* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, Division of Agricultural Extension, 1951), 116.

The system of cultivation and harvesting crops worked well enough in Louisiana until 1940. Farmers planted, weeded, fertilized, and harvested; crops did not waste in the fields because of labor shortages. Louisiana agriculture and farmers survived without any financial catastrophe. All this would change, however, as a direct result of the start of war in Europe in September 1939. Within a year, the plight of the farmers and agriculture in Louisiana increased with the growth of the defense industry and the institution of a military draft in late 1940. The labor force in Louisiana agriculture dropped farther after December 1941. A solution was required or the agriculture industries in Louisiana would most certainly bring ruin to the farmers of Louisiana, the state of Louisiana and the United States. The solution would come, but only after the defeat of the German and Italian armies in Tunisia in May 1943. Another part of the solution for Louisiana agriculture labor shortages would come from the coordination of a number of federal agencies and one of Louisiana's state agencies.

The Louisiana state agency responsible for the coordination between the War Manpower Commission and Louisiana farmers requiring labor was the Louisiana State Agricultural Extension Service (LSU Ag). The LSU Ag grew out of the enactment by the United States Congress of the Smith-Lever Act on May 8, 1914. The Smith-Lever Act sought:

"To provide for cooperative agriculture extension work between the agricultural college in the several states receiving the benefits of an act of Congress approved July second, eighteen hundred and sixty-two, and of acts supplementary thereto, and the United States Department of Agriculture."¹²

¹² Frederick W. Williamson, *Origin and Growth of Agricultural Extension in Louisiana, 1860-1948: How It Opened the Road for Progress in Better Farming and Rural Living*, 295.

In 1941 Harry C. Sanders became the director of Louisiana State University's Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service (LSU Ag). The LSU Ag staff included sixh-three county agents, twenty-eight assistant county agents, and sixty-three home demonstration agents, who served Louisiana's sixty-four parishes.¹³

Among the services provided to those engaged in commercial agricultural in the state were 4-H Club guidance, preparation of meals, preservation of foods, reuse of clothing, and proper sanitation procedures, and conservation projects. LSU Ag also conducted meetings related to agricultural activities and provided expert advice on all types of agriculture.¹⁴ County agents also functioned as the conduit between the federal government's War Manpower Commission, the commanders of the numerous prisoner of war camps in Louisiana, and those in Louisiana's agriculture industry who had a need for the labor force of German prisoners of war.

¹³ Martha Lois Dunlap, *The Administrative Organization, Program Procedures and Personnel Policies of the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service*, 56-57.

¹⁴ Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service, Narrative and Statistical Reports of County Agents and Home Demonstration Agents, 1913-1975. *Narrative Report and Summary Covering Statistical Record of Work of E. S. Landry, County Agent, Ascension Parish, Louisiana December 1, 1942 - December 1, 1943*, 8-9. Hill Memorial Library, Special Collections, A3000.1, Range 117, Box 4, Folder 36, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

Chapter 3: Federal Civilian and Military Agencies

War Manpower Commission

Paul V. McNutt directed the War Manpower Commission (WMC) throughout the Second World War.¹⁵ The WMC, established by President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Executive Order 9139 on April 18, 1942, came under the supervision of the Federal Security Agency (FSA) and included representatives of the War Department, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Department of Labor, Navy Department, War Production Board (WPB), Selective Service System (SSS), and the Civil Service Commission (CSC).¹⁶

As the primary civilian agency responsible for the utilization of prisoners of war as a labor force, the WMC duties also entailed the recruitment of labor and the training of workers for industries that designated as war essential industries.¹⁷ The WMC made decisions on the advice of the various representatives of other agencies on the commission.

The WMC directed all domestic work force policies designed to compensate for the reduction of the labor force in the United States because of war requirements. The WMC attempted to strike a balance between the needs of the military (as it applied to draft classification, deferments and exemptions), the needs of the civilian defense industries, and those of other civilian industries deemed essential for maintenance of home front morale.

¹⁵ Note: Prior to his appointment to the WMC, Paul V. McNutt had served as governor of Indiana (1932-1936) and High Commissioner to the Philippines (1937-1939).

¹⁶ Records of the War Manpower Commission, Record Group [RG] 211, National Archive and Records Administration [NARA], accessed August 31, 2015, <http://www.archives.gov/research/guide-fed-records/groups/211.html#211.1>.

¹⁷ Ibid.

The WMC underwent a number of changes with other agencies placed under WMC authority; some agencies under WMC became separate agencies or were transferred to other commissions. Two such examples were the Committee on Fair Employment Practices (CFEP), transferred to WMC on July 30, 1942; it became an independent agency under the same name (CFEP) effective May 27, 1943. The SSS came under direction of the WMC on December 5, 1942 by Executive Order 9279, but became an independent agency by Executive Order 9410 on December 23, 1943.¹⁸ Convolutd and inefficient as the bureaucratic system may seem, the eventual outcome satisfied the needs and requirement of war, albeit with some restrictions like rationing and absence of civilian durable goods like household appliances. One of the federal agencies involved in work force allocation was the Selective Service System.

Selective Service System

Executive Order 8545 of September 23, 1940 established the Selective Service System (SSS). On July 31, 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt named Brigadier General Lewis B. Hershey director of the SSS and General Hershey served as director until retiring on December 31, 1946.¹⁹ The SSS functioned under the WMC by Executive Order 9279 until December 5, 1942, finally reverting to its original independent status on December 23, 1943 by virtue of Executive Order 9410 of December 5, 1943.²⁰ In carrying out its function under the WMC or as

¹⁸ Records of the War Manpower Commission, RG 211, NARA, accessed August 31, 2015, <http://www.archives.gov/research/guide-fed-records/groups/211.html#211.1>.

¹⁹ Note: General Hershey, a product of Indiana farm country, remained on active duty the day after his retirement as director of the SSS, finally retiring on February 5, 1970.

²⁰ Records of the Selective Service System, 1940-, RG 147, NARA, accessed September 04, 2015, <http://www.archives.gov/research/guide-fed-records/groups/147.html>.

an independent agency the SSS registered and classified all males in the age groups 21 to 35 for military service. During the Second World War period, the SSS established four major draft classifications, ranging from Class I to Class IV. Within each major draft classification were a number of sub-categories, totaling twenty-one for all four major draft classifications. Those men classified as Class I-A would almost certainly expect to swap their civilian attire for a uniform. Those fortunate enough or unfortunate, depending on the individuals' personal desires, to receive a Class IV-F deferred for a physical unsuitability, were apt to remain civilians for the duration.

Those engaged in farming or the timber business received Class II-C draft classification and remained there until their status changed, depending on work availability in that field. This deferment initially applied only to the farm owners, later expanded to include employees engaged in agriculture. In May 1941, Secretary of Agriculture Claude R. Wickard anticipated the wartime drain on agricultural labor and the needs of the country urged the assistant director of the SSS to look more closely at the need for agriculture labor and to consider this requirement when granting deferments from the draft.²¹

The USDA forecasted that the United States would require slightly over two million agriculture workers by January 1942. But Louisiana, as with other states, experienced a depletion of work force due to higher wages offered in defense industries and the departure of workers for the armed forces.²² A solution was required to ensure an adequate work force to plant, weed, and harvest Louisiana crops. As a short-term solution to this problem, it was suggested that army troops not presently engaged in training could pose a possible answer to the

²¹ Wayne D. Rasmussen, *A History of the Emergency Farm Labor Supply Program, 1943-1947*, 19.

²² *Ibid*, 20-21.

lack of a labor force. The U.S. Army acted on this suggestion and in 1943, several thousand troops to North and South Dakota, New York and Maine in thirty-day increments to harvest crops.²³ Once farmers learned of the utilization of soldiers in harvesting crops, the War Department became flooded with requests and the use of soldiers to solve the agricultural work force problem was abandoned.

The importation of Mexican or Caribbean labor for Louisiana agricultural needs became a consideration, but this idea failed, as the United States Employment Agency wanted the Mexican labor force in the southwestern United States.²⁴ Utilization of labor from the Bahamas and other West Indies islands came under discussion but Great Britain controlled those islands and the British government would not permit their citizens to work in the Southern States due to the segregation policies that existed in the South at that time.²⁵

Fortunately, by this time, the German forces in Tunisia had surrendered and several hundred thousand of POWS were on their journey to Louisiana and other states would fill the need. Accordingly, the War Department and the War Food Administration (WFA) began planning for the use of prisoners of war to replace those troops used as agricultural labor as well as in other labor fields.²⁶ The passage of Public Law 45 offered a small degree of assistance for farmers in that it established exemptions for workers engaged in vital agricultural industry as well as those persons who claimed, and ultimately granted, conscientious objector status.²⁷

²³ Wayne D. Rasmussen, *A History of the Emergency Farm Labor Supply Program, 1943-1947*, 99-100.

²⁴ Joseph T. Butler, Jr., "Prisoner of War Labor in the Sugar Cane Fields of Lafourche Parish, Louisiana: 1943-1944," *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 14, no. 3 (July 01, 1973): 289, accessed October 26, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/4231334>.

²⁵ Joseph T. Butler, Jr., "Prisoner of War Labor in the Sugar Cane Fields of Lafourche Parish, Louisiana: 1943-1944", in *The Louisiana Purchase Bicentennial Series in Louisiana History*. Vol. XVI. (The Center for Louisiana Studies, University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1997), 268.

²⁶ Wayne D. Rasmussen, *A History of the Emergency Farm Labor Supply Program, 1943-1947*, 96-97.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 95-96.

Department of Agriculture

The USDA's duties were to provide directions for research, production, conservation, marketing, extension services of all federal programs related to the agriculture industry as well as to rural development and regulations pertaining to the agricultural field.²⁸ In April 1943, with the impending arrival of German prisoners of war from North Africa, and the decision of the War Department and WFA to utilize prisoners of war in agriculture, the USDA established procedures for their use.²⁹ Wages for prisoner of war labor, housing, security, feeding and transportation issues would be decided through conference with the agencies responsible for those aspects.³⁰ President Franklin D. Roosevelt appointed Claude R. Wickard to the post of Secretary of Agriculture in September 1940, and Wickard remaining in that capacity until he resigned in June 30, 1945.³¹

Southern Defense Command

The War Department established the Southern Defense Command (SDC), by letter AG 320.2 (2-28-41) M-WPB-M on March 17, 1941.³² The SDC included the states of New Mexico, Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Arkansas, Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama and the panhandle of Florida.

²⁸ *Records of the Secretary of Agriculture*, RG 16, NARA. Accessed September 15, 2015, <http://www.archives.gov/research/guide-fed-records/groups/016.html#16.1>.

²⁹ Arnold Krammer, *Nazi Prisoners of War in America* (New York: Stein and Day, 1979), 86.

³⁰ Wayne D. Rasmussen, *A History of the Emergency Farm Labor Supply Program, 1943-1947*, 97.

³¹ Note: Claude R. Wickard was born on his family's Indiana farm. He became an Indiana state legislator and worked in the USDA in a number of positions from 1933 until his appointment as Secretary of Agriculture in 1940.

³² <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/10476796?q=Southern%20Defense%20Command>.

In addition, it also included the waters of the Gulf of Mexico adjacent to those states bordering it and extended roughly to the waters slightly north of Cuba. The SDC, one of five such Defense Commands established immediately prior to the entry of the United States in the Second World War.³³

The SDC established policies related to its primary responsibility for protecting those areas within its designated area of operations (*Figure A*). As it applies to those states having a border on the Gulf of Mexico (Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia and the panhandle of Florida), the SDC established a policy that if allowed to stand, might have spelled disaster to Louisiana farmers and, in part, to American consumers. Fortunately, the Office of the Chief of Staff rejected this policy and the prisoner of war camps were established where they most needed.

³³ Stetson Conn, Rose C. Engleman, and Byron Fairchild, *Guarding the United States and Its Outposts*, (Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, Dept. of the Army, 1964), 28.



Figure A: Southern Defense Area of Operations³⁴

Eighth Service Command

The Eighth Service Command (ESC), established by War Department General Order 35 on July 22, 1942, had the primary responsibility to provide technical assistance to the army in Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas, New Mexico and Oklahoma, an area comprising approximately 560,000 square miles.³⁵ Among the technical services that this command provided, it established and operated all prisoners of war camps in these five states (*Figure B*). As such, this command would have the additional duty of supplying all prisoner of war labor for those industries authorized to utilize prisoner of war in the area of its responsibility.

³⁴ Stetson Conn, Rose C. Engleman, and Byron Fairchild, *Guarding the United States and Its Outposts*, 39.

³⁵ Eighth Service Command, Monthly Progress Report, April 30, 1943, "Records of Headquarters Army Service Force." RG 160, Entry 35, National Archives College Park [NACP], Maryland, 7.

Throughout the war years, the ESC would ultimately control 224 prisoner of war camps, with thirty-eight camps in Arkansas, fifty-two in Louisiana, twenty-two in New Mexico, thirty-two in Oklahoma and eighty in Texas.³⁶

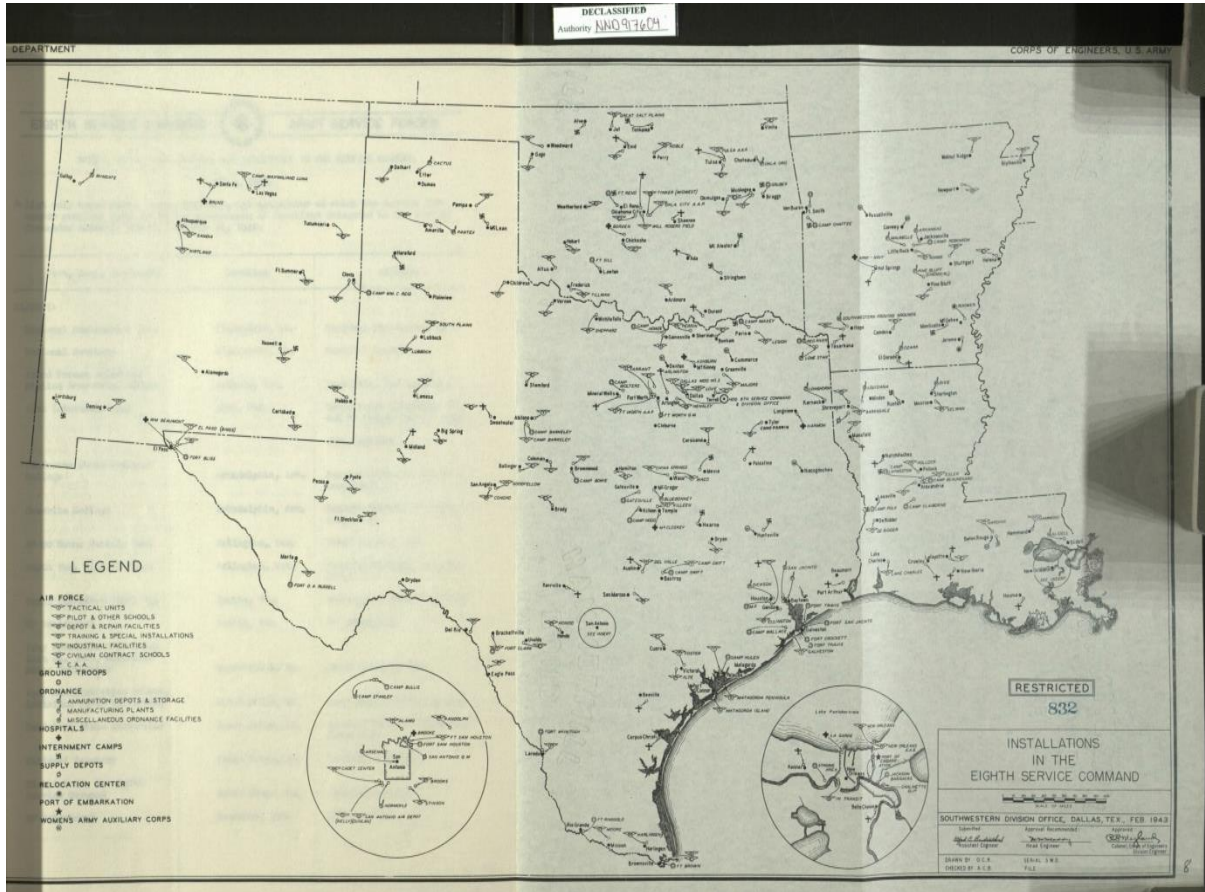


Figure B: Eighth Service Command Area of Operations³⁷

³⁶ Kathy Kirkpatrick, Appendix A to *Prisoners of War Across America* (Salt Lake City, UT: GenTracer, 2012), Kindle edition.

³⁷ Eighth Service Command, Monthly Progress Report, April 30, 1943, "Records of Headquarters Army Service Force." RG 160, Entry 35, NACP, 8.

Chapter 4: Camps and Utilization Process

The exact number of POW camps in Louisiana, the names used to identify some of the camps and the geographic locations of some camps within the state remains incomplete. Kathy Kirkpatrick's *Prisoners of War across America* (fifty-two camps) is most convincing, based on government documents.³⁸ Some misidentifications in this book occur as to the names of some camps but these were minor.³⁹

Military installations in existence in Louisiana prior to the United States' entry into the Second World War were Fort Polk (August 1941), Camp Livingston (1940), Camp Claiborne (1930) and the New Orleans Port of Embarkation (1914), all served as *base camps* for prisoners of war. Camp Ruston, completed in 1942, also served as a base camp. Each of these five *base camps* established branch camps in areas in need of labor during planting and harvesting seasons.

³⁸ Note: Minor errors in the geographic locations and names of some of camps listed in Kirkpatrick's book were found. As an example, Kirkpatrick lists Jackson Barracks as being in St. Bernard Parish when it is in Orleans Parish. Camp Plauché, listed as being in Orleans Parish, is actually in Jefferson Parish. Still another example of confusion is the case of the branch camp at McCain's Gin. In a report of July 1, 1945 listing the number of prisoners of war confined in each camp in Louisiana (as well as those in all camps in the United States), this report lists McCain's Gin as being in Lincoln Parish. However, an extension service report from the same year indicates that McCain's Gin is located in Caddo Parish. Caddo Parish is in the extreme northwest corner of Louisiana while Lincoln Parish is in the north central, four parishes east of Caddo.

³⁹ Note: Camp Ruston is located in the unincorporated village of Grambling, Louisiana. As Grambling did not have a post office, the mailing address became the camps name. Camp Plauché comes up once more in that Kirkpatrick lists this as Camp Plauché New Orleans Port of Embarkation. In 1941, the U.S. Army designated New Orleans Port of Embarkation as their *main* port of embarkation for U.S. Army supplies due in part to its geographic location linking the Mississippi River to Lake Pontchartrain via the Industrial Canal. Camp Plauché, located over thirteen nautical miles further up river from New Orleans, has no port facilities comparable to New Orleans.

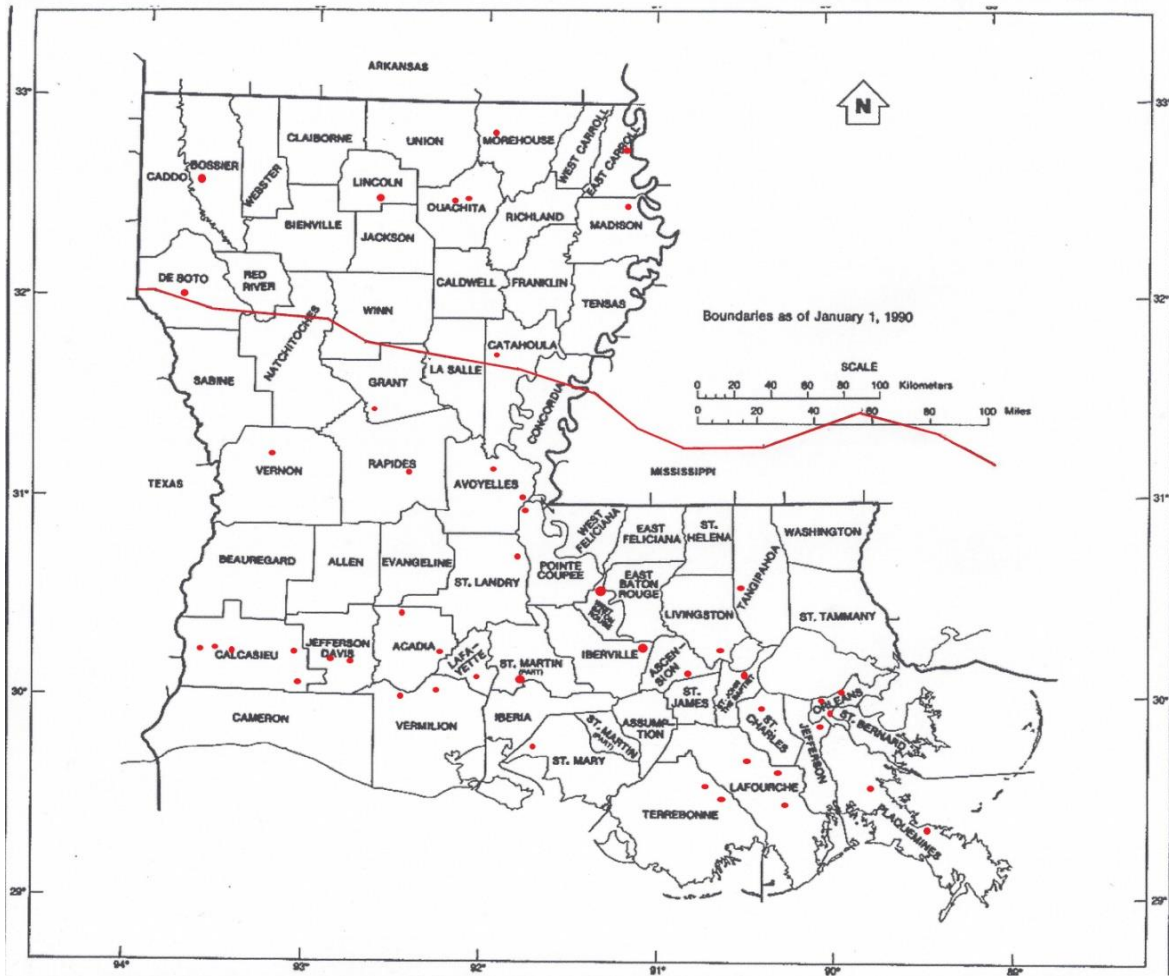


Figure C: Exclusion Zone and Prisoner of War Camp Locations⁴⁰
 (Camp locations and Exclusion Zone added by author)

What can be deduced from Kirkpatrick's sources, within a reasonable degree of certainty, is that thirty-six of Louisiana's sixty-four parishes had at least one POW camp located (in two instances, at least partially) within its geographic boundaries.⁴¹ Not all Louisiana parishes had POW camps within their geographic boundaries. If work was required in one of the thirty parishes not having a POW camp, POW labor was none-the-less available in the form of the

⁴⁰ Economics and Statistics Administration, Bureau of the Census, *U. S. Department of Commerce*.

⁴¹ Note: Eunice is located in both St. Landry and Acadia Parishes.

POW camps closest to the work site requiring a labor source.⁴² The POWS could not be required to work any longer than the normal daily work hours of U.S. residents, which in that time in history was ten hours. Additionally, Article 30 of the 1929 Geneva Conventions stipulated that the daily work hour included time traveled to and from the work site.⁴³

The use of POWS in parishes not having POW's camps within their geographic boundaries can be illustrated by a EFL Form 19, *Certification of Need for Employment of Prisoners Of War, (Figures D & E)* document from the Commanding General, Eighth Service Command to the Director, Agricultural Extension Service. The document indicates that POWS from the branch camp in Hammond (present day Hammond Regional Airport in Tangipahoa Parish) would be performing work between July 1 and October 31, 1945, for Bogalusa Tung Oil, Inc. at their Tung oil groves twelve miles north of Covington, St. Tammany Parish.⁴⁴ The maximum number of days permitted for POW labor usage on the EFL contracts was restricted to ninety days by War Department policy.⁴⁵

Branch camps sites came and went from month to month and as the use of POWS were no longer needed in a particular area, the POWS moved to other branch or base camps depending

⁴² Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service, Narrative and Statistical Reports of County Agents and Home Demonstration Agents, 1913-1975. *Narrative Report and Summary Covering Statistical Record of Work of E. S. Landry, County Agent, Ascension Parish, Louisiana, December 1, 1943 - December 1, 1944*, 9. Hill Memorial Library, Special Collections, A3000.1, Range 117, Box 4, Folder 36, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

⁴³ The Avalon Project - Laws of War: Laws and Customs of War on Land (Hague II); July 29, 1899. Accessed October 4, 2015, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/hague02.asp.

⁴⁴ Judge Leon Ford, III Collection, Local History, *EFL Form 19, dated June 23, 1945, from Commanding General, 8th Service Command to Director, Agricultural Extension*, Box 15, Folder 6, Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies and Archives, Southeastern Louisiana University, Hammond, Louisiana.

⁴⁵ James E. Fickle, "POWs in the Piney Woods: German Prisoners of War in the Southern Lumber Industry, 1943-1945," *The Journal of Southern History* 56, no. 4 (November 01, 1990): 697, accessed February 26, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/2210933?ref=search-gateway:7420b3aea6e2876dd0060ab0078ecc23>.

on the harvesting time and availability of local labor. An illustration of this is in a comparative look at the POW camps during the months of April and May 1945. The April 1, 1945 monthly reports of ESC lists twenty-eight named camps in Louisiana. The ESC report of May 1, 1945 lists thirty-five named camps in Louisiana.

CERTIFICATION OF NEED FOR EMPLOYMENT OF
PRISONERS OF WAR

EFL Form 19
Revised June 1, 19

To: Commanding General
8th Service Command

The Director, Agricultural Extension certifies that:

1. The employer to whom this certificate is issued and whose name, address and place of business are listed below, has need for the labor hereinafter described for essential work at his establishment or farm.

- a. Name of employer Bogalusa Tung Oil Inc, m
- b. Address Bush, La. Parish St. Tammany
Branch camp Hammond, La. Base Camp Livingston
Type of payment guarantee to be furnished Check
- c. Type of business Farming
- d. Location of work (if not at above address) 12 miles north
of Covington
- e. Labor needed: From 7/1/45 to 10/31/45
(date) (date)
For period of approximately 90 days - ~~months~~
(number) (cross out one)

f. Detail of type of work, number of prisoners, and wage rates:

Number :	Occ. Title and Code for Industry:	Man days:	Unit:	Prevailing
Needed :	Nature of work done for agric.:	Required:	Work:	per unit
8	Tractor Drivers	624	hrs.	35¢ per hr.
17	Farm Laborers	1326	hrs.	25¢ per hr.

- g. If at piece rate, average civilian labor will complete 10 units per day.
(number)
- h. The employer usually furnished the following services free of charge to civilian labor: *
- Transportation
- i. The employer will supply transportation to and from prisoner of war enclosure.
(will or will not)
- j. The employer will not provide the noon day meal.
(will or will not)
- k. Length of work day in this locality for this type of work is customarily 10 hours.
(number)

* Enter if appropriate, one or more of the following: transportation to and from work; noon meal; housing accommodations.

- Over -

Figure D: EFL Form 19, dated June 23, 1945, from Commanding General, 8th Service Command to Director, Agricultural Extension (Front side)⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Judge Leon Ford, III Collection, Local History, *EFL Form 19, dated June 23, 1945, from Commanding General, 8th Service Command to Director, Agricultural Extension*, Box 15, Folder 6, Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies and Archives, Southeastern Louisiana University, Hammond, Louisiana.

2. Conditions of employment offered by this employer are not less favorable than those for other workers in the same or similar employment at this establishment or farm, or less favorable than those prevailing in the locality for similar work.
3. The prevailing wage, or price per unit, certified above is that paid to free labor in this locality for this type of work. (For agricultural work, the prevailing wage, or price per unit, certified by the State Director of Extension may be based on public hearings conducted by County Farm Wage Boards.)
4. It has been impossible to secure the necessary workers for this employer through an active campaign of recruitment which has taken into account not only all persons normally engaged in the activities listed above, but also potential workers from other fields of activities.
5. The employer is willing to use, through contract with the Government, the labor of prisoners of war detained by the United States of America and in the custody of the War Department. It is the understanding of the undersigned that such contract will follow substantially War Department contract Form No. _____, and that amount to be paid and conditions stated in the contract will be in accord with those certified in this statement.

ENDORSEMENTS

I. Approval of the above certificate is recommended:

Tom W. Smith County Agent
 (Signature) (Title)

June 20, 1945 Govington, La.
 Date Address

II. The above certificate is approved:

H. C. Sanders Director, Agricultural Extension
 (Signature) (Title)

JUN 23 1945 University Station, Baton Rouge, Louisiana
 (Date) (Address)

Figure E: EFL Form 19, dated June 23, 1945, from Commanding General, 8th Service Command to Director, Agricultural Extension (Reverse side)⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Judge Leon Ford, III Collection, Local History, *EFL Form 19, dated June 23, 1945, from Commanding General, 8th Service Command to Director, Agricultural Extension*, Box 15, Folder 6, Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies and Archives, Southeastern Louisiana University, Hammond, Louisiana.

One camp listed on April 1, 1945 is missing from the May 1, 1945 report while eight new camp names appear.⁴⁸ *Figure F* shows a list of named POW camps in Louisiana for the first and fifteenth day of April, first of May, October, November and December, 1944, and the first and fifteenth of January, 1945, and the first day of April and May, 1945, illustrates this fact most clearly.

An additional example of the establishment of branch camps and disappearing of others is that of the branch camps at Bell City in Calcasieu Parish. The 1 October 1944 monthly report of the ESC lists Bell City as being *authorized construction*.⁴⁹ The 1 November 1944 monthly report of the ESC lists Bell City as having 223 POWS and the 1 January 1945 monthly report lists 115 POWS.⁵⁰ Bell City never appears again in any monthly report.

⁴⁸ April and May 1945 Monthly List of Prisoner of War Camp locations by State. Special Collections, RG 319, Box 1, NACP.

⁴⁹ 1 October 1944 Monthly list of Prisoner of War camp locations by state. Special Collections, RG 319, Box 1, NACP.

⁵⁰ 1 November 1944 and 1 January 1945 Monthly list of Prisoners of War camp locations by state. Special Collections, RG 319, Box 1, NACP.

	April 1, 1944	April 15, 1944	May 1, 1944	October 1, 1944	November 1, 1944	December 1, 1944	January 1, 1945	January 31, 1945	April 1, 1945	May 1, 1945
1	Claiborne	Claiborne	Claiborne	Bell City	Bastrop	Bastrop	Arabi	Arabi	Arabi	Arabi
2	Franklin	Franklin	Franklin	Claiborne	Bell City	Bell City	Bastrop	Bastrop	Barksdale Field	Barksdale Field
3	Houma	Houma	Houma	Donaldsonville	Claiborne	Claiborne	Bell City	Claiborne	Bastrop	Bastrop
4	Jeanerette	Jeanerette	Jeanerette	Ederly	Donaldsonville	Donaldsonville	Claiborne	Donaldsonville	Claiborne	Claiborne
5	Livingston	Livingston	Livingston	Eunice	Ederly	Ederly	Donaldsonville	Eunice	Donaldsonville	Donaldsonville
6	Plauche	Plauche	Plauche	Franklin	Eunice	Eunice	Ederly	Franklin	Eunice	Eunice
7	Port Allen	Port Allen	Port Allen	Gueydan	Franklin	Franklin	Eunice	Gueydan	Franklin	Franklin
8	Polk	Polk	Polk	Hahnville	Gueydan	Gueydan	Franklin	Hahnville	Gueydan	Gueydan
9	Ruston	Ruston	Ruston	Hammond	Hahnville	Hahnville	Gueydan	Hammond	Hahnville	Hahnville
10	Tallulah	Tallulah	Tallulah	Houma	Hammond	Hammond	Hahnville	Jeanerette	Hammond	Hammond
11	West Monroe	West Monroe	West Monroe	Iowa	Houma I	Houma I	Hammond	Kaplan	Houma	Houma
12	Youngsville	Youngsville	Youngsville	Jeanerette	Houma II	Houma II	Houma	Livingston	Jeanerette	Jeanerette
13				Jennings	Iowa	Iowa	Iowa	Lockport	Kaplan	Jonesville
14				Kaplan	Jeanerette	Jeanerette	Jeanerette	Mathews	Lake Charles AAF	Kaplan
15				Livingston	Jennings	Jennings	Jennings	New Orleans AAB	Livingston	Lake Charles AAF
16				Lockport	Kaplan	Kaplan	Kaplan	Plauche	Lockport	Livingston
17				Mathews	Livingston	Livingston	Livingston	Polk	New Orleans, POE	Lockport
18				Plauche	Lockport	Lockport	Lockport	Port Allen	Point Ala Hache	Marksville
19				Polk	Mathews	Mathews	Mathews	Ruston	Polk	Mathews
20				Port Allen	Plauche	Plauche	Plauche	Reserve	Port Allen	Melville
21				Rayne	Polk	Polk	Polk	St. Martinsville	Port Sulphur	New Orleans, POE
22				Ruston	Port Allen	Port Allen	Port Allen	Tallulah	Reserve	Point Ala Hache
23				Sulphur	Rayne	Rayne	Ruston	Terbonne	Ruston	Polk
24				Tallulah	Ruston	Ruston	Reserve	Thibodeaux	St. Martinsville	Port Allen
25				Welch	Reserve	Reserve	St. Martinsville	W. Monroe	Tallulah	Port Sulphur
26				W. Monroe	Sulphur	St. Martinsville	Tallulah	Youngsville	Thibodeaux	Reserve
27				Youngsville	Tallulah	Sulphur	Terbonne		W. Monroe	Ruston
28					Thibodeaux	Tallulah	Thibodeaux		Youngsville	St. Martinsville
29					Welch	Thibodeaux	W. Monroe			Simmesport
30					W. Monroe	Welch	Youngsville			Tallulah
31					Youngsville	W. Monroe				Terborne
32						Youngsville				W. Monroe
33										White Hall
24										Woodlawn Plantation
35										Youngsville

Figure F: List compiled by author based on Army Service Forces monthly reports ⁵¹

In implementing policies related to their responsibilities to protect that portion of the Continental United States assigned to them from attack (both external and internal), the SDC

⁵¹ April, May, October, November and December 1944, and January, April and May 1945, Monthly list of Prisoner of War camp locations by State. Special Collections, RG 319, Box 1, NACP.

enforced a policy that stipulated that POW camps could not be located within 150 miles of any coastline. The establishment of this "exclusion zone" addressed the concerns by the SDC that POWS could use the waterways as an avenue of escape but also preventing sabotage by POWS housed in areas in close proximity to vital war industries or other sensitive areas.⁵² Resistance also came from Louisiana Senator Allan J. Ellender, who initially voiced objections to the use of POWS because he did not believe the system would work.⁵³

Fortunately, the Chief of Staff's Office did not view the justifications of the SDC in establishing the 150-mile exclusion zone in a favorable light.⁵⁴ However, the SDC was simply enforcing the established policies of the War Department in implementing the 150-mile exclusion zone.⁵⁵ The exact reason for this position by the Chief of Staff is unclear, however, it probably has some basis in political pressure brought to bear by the American Sugar Cane League. What is clear is that the American Sugar Cane League carried a respectable amount of political power, along with local county agents, the extension service and the WMC to lobby Washington on its behalf.⁵⁶ A number of factors may explain Senator Ellender's change of position on the use of German POWS. Firstly, Senator was a staunch Democrat and supporter of President Roosevelt and had personal financial interest in the sugar cane industry. Secondly, Senator Ellender relied on political support from the American Sugar Cane League for his political career.

⁵² Letter dated July 19, 1943 from Headquarters Southern Defense Command to Chief of Staff. Office of the Chief of Staff, RG 165, Entry 13, NACP.

⁵³ Thomas Becnel, *Senator Allen Ellender of Louisiana: A Biography* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995), 110.

⁵⁴ Letter dated July 30, 1943 from Assistant Chief of Staff, Personnel Division. Office of the Chief of Staff, RG 165, Entry 13, NACP.

⁵⁵ Joseph T. Butler, *Prisoner of War Labor in the Sugar Cane Fields of Lafourche Parish, Louisiana: 1943-1944*, 287.

⁵⁶ Thomas Becnel, *Labor, Church, and the Sugar Establishment: Louisiana, 1887-1976* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), 286.

Finally, there was the stipulation by the WMC that the usage of POW labor would have no adverse effect on the use of local labor. These factors in all probability may have played some part in Senator Ellender's change of position on this issue. Senator Ellender later wrote Chief of Staff Marshall on the issue of using German POWS indicating his change of mind in regards to this issue.⁵⁷ Of course sugar cane constituted the majority of crops in Louisiana, it was not the only crop, albeit the one most used by POW labor. Rice and cotton, like sugar cane, were seasonal crops. POWS moved from one location to another to coincide with the various harvesting seasons for each type of crop to ensure the fullest employment of the POWS.⁵⁸

The 150-mile exclusion zone established by the War Department, if allowed to stand, would have effectively eliminated over 82% of all POW camps in those Louisiana parishes needing labor in the agricultural field. The imposition of War Department and SDC policy would have negatively affected the sugar cane, rice, cotton and other agricultural products. The map in *Figure C* illustrates the 150-mile exclusion zone and its negative effect on Louisiana agriculture. As can be seen, only nine POW camps in Louisiana would have survived the 150-mile exclusion zone recommended by the SDC, the remaining thirty-nine would not have. Seventeen parishes were beyond the exclusion zone while the major portions of five and all of the remaining forty-two parishes were within the zone.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Thomas Becnel, *Labor, Church, and the Sugar Establishment: Louisiana, 1887-1976* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), 287.

⁵⁸ Jason Morgan Ward, "Nazis Hoe Cotton: Planters, POWS, and the Future of Farm Labor in the Deep South," *Agricultural History* 81, no. 4 (October 01, 2007): 485, accessed January 31, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/20454754>.

⁵⁹ Economics and Statistics Administration, Bureau of the Census, *U. S. Department of Commerce*.

The security concerns of the SDC about mass escapes ultimately evaporated along with the fear of sabotage caused by POWS confined in the United States, two of the reasons listed by the SDC for the exclusion zones. The photograph in *Figure G* shows the buildings comprising the Consolidated-Vultee Aircraft (Franklin Avenue at Lakeshore Drive in New Orleans by Lake Pontchartrain). On the opposite side of Franklin Avenue is the western portion of New Orleans Army Air Base (now University of New Orleans' East Campus).⁶⁰ *Figure G* shows the location of the POW camp, within New Orleans Army Air Base and in relation to the Consolidate-Vultee plant.

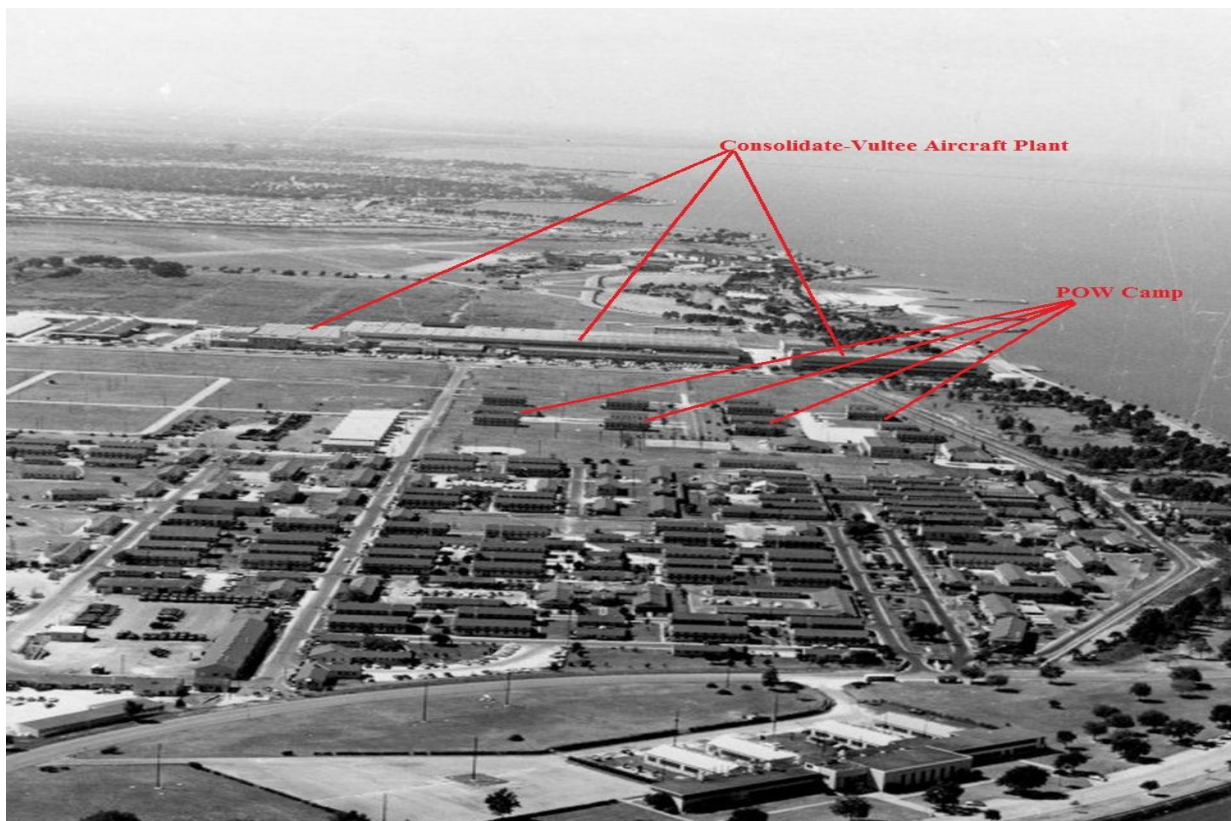


Figure G: New Orleans Army Air Base at Industrial Canal and Lake Pontchartrain Looking West (Depiction of location of POW camps and aircraft plant added by author)⁶¹

⁶⁰ Note: The eastern portion of New Orleans Army Air Base (not shown) is now New Orleans Lakefront Airport (formerly Shushan Airport).

⁶¹ "Our Times: POWs on the Streets of New Orleans," *Times-Picayune* (New Orleans, Louisiana), March 3, 2012. Photo is from 1960's.

The twelve or so wooden structures standing apart from the mass of other buildings are the POW compound. The large cluster of buildings in the foreground was for the Army Air Forces Personnel assigned to the airfield. As with the security of all POW camps, U.S. Army Military Police personnel guarded the POWS and the area housing the POWS consisted of security perimeter fencing consistent with a prison facility. Initially the U.S. Army established a guard to prisoner ratio of 1 to 10. Later as concerns for sabotage and escapes diminished this ratio changed to 1 to 32.⁶² This reduction in the ratio of guards to POWS was set at a February 1944 conference of the commanding generals of the eleven Service Commands at a conference in Dallas, Texas. As it was becoming clearer that U.S. POW camp military police personnel were becoming more experienced in handling POWS, a policy of "calculated risk" was adopted, and less and less guards were used in guarding the POWS from this point until the last of the POWS departed the United States in July 1946.⁶³

Not all POWS lived in wooden barrack as at New Orleans Army Air Base (*Figure G*). Some, in more remote areas, lived in military tents, as in St. Martinville, Louisiana (*Figure H*) and had rather primitive guard towers (*Figure I*). Former Civilian Conservation Corps camps, unused portions of existing military camps, fairgrounds, tents and auditoriums were parts of a plan submitted by the Provost Marshal General's Office in September 1943 to accommodate the influx of German POWS.⁶⁴ During the era of the Civilian Conservation Corps' existence (1933-1942), Louisiana has eighty-four CCC camps throughout the state.⁶⁵

⁶² Kathy Kirkpatrick, *Managing the Camps in Prisoners of War Across America*.

⁶³ Matthais Reiss, "Bronzed Bodies behind Barbed Wire: Masculinity and the Treatment of German Prisoners of War in the United States during World War II," *The Journal of Military History* 69, no. 2 (April 2005): 292-93, accessed October 12, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3397407>.

⁶⁴ Arnold Krammer, *Nazi Prisoners of War in America*, 26-27.

⁶⁵ James P. Barnett and Anna C. Burns, *The Work of the Civilian Conservation Corps: Pioneering Conservation in Louisiana* (Asheville, NC: United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Southern Research Station, 2012), 4.

A few statistical facts about the prisoners of war incarcerated in the United States reveal their benign captivity. Of the more than 476,000 German, Japanese and Italian prisoners of war incarcerated in the United States between 1941 and 1946, 2,499 prisoners tried to escape from detention. As of January 1946, there were still twenty-four Italian and twenty-nine German POWS of that number still at large. Of the total number of Japanese POWS held in the United States, fifteen escaped but recaptured. Twelve Italian and ninety-two German POWS committed suicide (some German POWS may have been forced to commit suicide by rabid pro-Nazi POWS) and nine murdered by other POWS and forty-three POWS shot to death by prison guards while attempting to escape.⁶⁶ None of the Japanese POWS chose suicide.



Figure H: POW Camp St. Martinville, Louisiana
Courtesy of James B. "Bill" Bailey⁶⁷

⁶⁶ "All POW to Be Out of Country in Four Months," *Morning Advocate* (Baton Rouge, LA), January 7, 1946.

⁶⁷ James B. Bailey, *St. Martinville Prisoner of War Camp*. Private Collection of James B. Bailey, New Iberia, Louisiana. (Note: Eighth Service Command Insignia above St. Martinville)



Figure I: POW Camp St. Martinville, Louisiana
Courtesy of James B. "Bill" Bailey ⁶⁸

Deaths by accidents occurred. In Louisiana, the amount of accident fatalities involving motor vehicles apparently required a written notice by Colonel Tom B. Martin, Commanding Officer, Camp Livingston Prisoner of War camp in late October, 1945. Colonel Martin, citing the numerous fatalities, sent instructions to all safety officers and branch camp commander: be cognize of, and adhere to, the provisions of Army Service Forces (ASF) Manual M-811

⁶⁸ James B. Bailey, *Guard Tower St. Martinville Prisoner of War Camp*.

(Handbook for Work Supervisors of Prisoners of War) in addition to ASF Manuals M-805 and M-806.⁶⁹

The rate of escapees to the POW population almost disappeared at a rate of .0052%, an exceedingly low figure. The suicide rate was even lower at .00021%. In its policy of treatment and adherence to the provisions of the Geneva Conventions, the United States must have had some effect on the POWs. Proportionately speaking, the vast majority chose to sit-out the war rather than escape and make their way back to their country of origin so they could again take up arms and once more, place themselves in harm's way.

The Geneva Conventions of 1929 addressed a number of issues regarding the treatment, housing, feeding and caring for prisoners of war. It also stipulated which POWs could be required to perform labor, which ones could not⁷⁰, the number of work hours per day, and numbers of workdays per week allowed. In addition, it established rules as to payment for labor performed, type of labor, religious issues, sanitary conditions, recreation and medical treatment prisoners were entitled.

While the United States made every attempt to fully comply with all articles of the Geneva Conventions of 1929, one instance of deliberate non-compliance bear mentioning in some detail as they related to fifty-eighty special German POWs incarcerated in Louisiana. This most interesting incident occurred less than a year before Germany's surrender on May 7, 1945, and is one of the few instances where the United States, a signatory to the Geneva Conventions of 1929 deliberately violated at least two provisions of that document.

⁶⁹ Jules A. Dornier Collection, *Letter dated October 18, 1945 from Lieutenant Colonel Tom B. Martin, 8th Service Command to Safety Officers and Branch Camp Commanders*. Call Number 50:15, Box 1, Hill Memorial Library, Special Collections, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

⁷⁰ Note: Officers were not required to perform labor; non-commissioned officers could if they desired but only in a supervisory role.

With the capture of *U-505* by the United States Navy on June 4, 1944, the United States recovered codebooks as well as Germany's Enigma coding machine. In order to maintain the illusion that *U505* sunk along with its codebooks and Enigma coding machine, the crew of *U-505*, incarcerated at Camp Ruston, Louisiana, and held incommunicado for the remainder of the war in violation of Articles 8⁷¹ and 36⁷² of the Geneva Conventions of 1929. The United States deliberately concealed the existence of the crew of *U-505* from inspection teams of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Swiss Legation and the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) during their regular inspection of Camp Ruston.⁷³

The captivity of German POWS confined in Louisiana POW camps became more bearable by the humane treatment they received from the local civilian population. The German POW's were both "*shocked and overwhelmed at how they were treated.*"⁷⁴ No doubt, this attitude by the locals and its effect it had on the German POW's, most certainly contributed to the absence of the much-feared mass escapes. Certainly, the quantity and quality of food the POWS consumed also had some positive effect as well. A typical day's meal consisted of:

Breakfast - Corn flakes, cake or bread, marmalade, coffee, milk, sugar
Lunch - Potato salad, Roast Pork, Carrots, Ice water
Dinner - Meat Loaf, Scrambled Eggs or Boiled Eggs, Coffee, Milk, Bread⁷⁵

⁷¹ Note: Article 8 required all belligerent parties to notify each other of their capture of prisoners within the shortest period and to supply an official address so the captured prisoners could correspond with their families.

⁷² Note: Article 36 required each of the belligerents to allow a certain number of letters and post cards to be sent by each prisoner per month and shall not delay or prevent the sending of correspondence as a means of punishment. Further that the prisoners shall be allowed to send correspondence within no more than one week after arrival at the camp.

⁷³ William L. Shea and Merrill R. Pritchett, "The Wehrmacht in Louisiana, Louisiana History," *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 23, no. 1 (January 01, 1982): 9, accessed January 2, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/4232135>.

⁷⁴ David Clarke, *The Utilization of P.O.W. Labor in Louisiana During World War II: A Comparison of Wehrmacht P.O.W. Labor Production With That of Prewar Civilian Agricultural Labor*, Master's thesis, University of New Orleans, 1994, 49.

⁷⁵ Arnold Krammer, *Nazi Prisoners of War in America*, 48-49.

In retrospect, the process involved in obtaining POW labor for agricultural efforts while relatively easy, once the interactions between the ASF, CFEP, CSC, EFLP, ESC, FSA, SDC, SSS, USDA WFA, WPB and WMC is understood, became nonetheless, a laborious one. The process began once the POWS were in their respective detention facilities and their availability and the necessary steps taken made known to those in need of the services.

The guidelines on this issue were very specific indeed, as can be seen by the policy portion of a WMC bulletin 63 of August 14, 1943 that states:

Prisoners of war will be employed only when other labor is not available and cannot be recruited from other areas within a reasonable length of time. Before the War Manpower Commission certifies to the need or using prisoners of war, all supplies of labor, including secondary sources, within the area from which workers normally come to perform work of this type must be exhausted. Prisoners of war shall not be used in any way which will impair the wages, working conditions, and employment opportunities of resident labor, or displace employed workers.

As evidence of the fact that the use of prisoners of war will not affect local conditions of employment adversely, the employer must place a bona fide order for the workers needed within the local employment office. It is advisable to allow the local office a reasonable time to fill the order before preparing a certification of the need for prisoners of war.⁷⁶

In implementing this policy, the WMC bulletin defined their interpretation of exhausting the labor supply as,

- 1 Determination of the availability of workers registered with the local employment office.
- 2 Advertisement for workers through newspapers, radio, posters, trade papers, and other suitable media.
- 3 Solicitation of the cooperation of labor organizations and other community group to direct qualified workers to the local employment office.
- 4 Active recruitment of workers by visiting their homes, canvassing places of business and other places where workers congregate.
- 5 Recruitment of workers on relief rolls.
- 6 Utilization of Selective Service Questionnaires.

⁷⁶ War Manpower Commission, *United States Employment Services Headquarters Bulletin No. 63, dated August 14, 1943*, Records of the War Manpower Commission, RG 211, Entry 11, NACP.

- 7 Recruiting auxiliary labor supplies, if they can be used, such as youth, women, organizations of volunteers.⁷⁷

The various steps required in the process of obtaining POW labor, to the exclusion of native labor, created a typical governmental bureaucratic nightmare in the instance of identifying a need for POW labor in the agriculture field. In accordance with the request for POW labor, the State Extension Service Director Harry C. Sanders, prepared and transmitted EFL (Emergency Farm Labor) form 19 (*Figures D & E*) to the directors of the State War Manpower Commission. The director sends the form to the appropriate office in the War Department for action.⁷⁸

The War Department transmits the form to the ASF who then forwarded it to the ESC for Louisiana. The ESC sends the form to the POW camp commander closest to the farm requesting POW labor. The locations chosen for the camp, determined initially by the locations of permanent U. S. Army camps, i.e., Camp Ruston, Camp Livingston and Fort Polk. Next, camps closest to the fields requiring labor were next to be utilized. Finally, if none of these camps were near enough to the fields, the farmers or company owning the fields, would have to provide acceptable accommodations for the prisoners.⁷⁹

The number of camps grew as the number of POWS increased. The United States initially agreed to accept 50,000 POWS from the British in August 1943 to relieve their overcrowding.⁸⁰ As the war progressed and more Germans became POWS, the number of

⁷⁷ War Manpower Commission, *United States Employment Services Headquarters Bulletin No. 63*, dated August 14, 1943, Records of the War Manpower Commission, RG 211, Entry 11, NACP.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Joseph T. Butler, "Prisoner of War Labor in the Sugar Cane Fields of Lafourche Parish, Louisiana: 1943-1944, Louisiana History." *The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 14, no. 3 (July 01, 1973): 290, accessed October 26, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/4231334>.

⁸⁰ Arnold Krammer, *Nazi Prisoners of War in America*, 2.

POWS arriving in the United States likewise grew, at a rate of approximately 10,000 to 20,000 per month beginning in September 1943.⁸¹ The high-water mark for POWS occurred in May 1945 when the United States held 425,871 POWS of which 371,683 were Germans.⁸²

In some instances, would be employers of POW labor attempted to use existing state or parish facilities closest to the work by offering these locales in lieu of those farther away. This required an inspection team from the POW camp to ensure the site met those conditions in accordance with the Geneva Conventions of 1929. Among agricultural products designated as war essential were the various products obtained from the Tung Oil tree. In Louisiana, St. Tammany Parish had the sole Tung Oil industry in the state. The Tung Nut Growers requested the use of seven locations in St. Tammany Parish to house POWS. After an inspection by representatives of Tung Oil Growers, local county agent and officers from the POW camp, two of the seven sites were determined to be unacceptable, in their existing conduction, to Army requirements (*Figure J*).⁸³

The type of work performed by the POWS came in three categories: Class I type work ranged from beautifying the camps to planting gardens. Class II work involved laboring in agriculture, factories and lumbering thought contracts with local employees. Class III work consisted of menial task such as picking up trash.⁸⁴

⁸¹ Arnold Krammer, *Nazi Prisoners of War in America*, 41-42.

⁸² *Ibid*, 272.

⁸³ Judge Leon Ford, III Collection, Letter dated 17 July 1944 from Lieutenant Colonel Tom B. Martin, commanding officer, Eighth Service Command, to Mr. L. O. Murrell, County Agent, Washington Parish, Franklin, Louisiana. Local History, Box 15, Folder 6, Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies and Archives, Southeastern Louisiana University, Hammond, Louisiana.

⁸⁴ Antonio S. Thompson, *Men in German Uniform: POWs in America during World War II* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2010), 86.

St. Tammany Parish
Permanently

ARMY SERVICE FORCES
Eighth Service Command
Prisoner of War Camp
Camp Livingston, Louisiana

JUL 25 1944

TEM:CNL:rd:d:lk

FWCH 255.

17 July 1944

Mr. L. O. Murrell,
County Agent,
Washington Parish,
Franklinton, Louisiana.

Dear Mr. Murrell:

On 6 July an inspection team from this Camp visited several camp sites in company with you, Mr. Naquin, County Agent, Covington, La., and representative of Tung Nut Growers. Of the seven (7) sites inspected, only two (2) were not acceptable. These sites are as follows:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. St. Tammany Parish Fair Grounds, Covington, La. | not acceptable
(sanitation standpoint) |
| 2. Bogalusa Tung Nut Farms | acceptable |
| 3. Franklinton (NYA Bldg and surrounding area; Armory to be used for housing American Personnel) | acceptable |
| 4. Franklinton Fair Grounds near Base ball Field and Stable Area | acceptable |
| 5. Franklinton CCC Camp site | acceptable |
| 6. Open plot one-half ($\frac{1}{2}$) mile North of Franklinton | not acceptable |
| 7. Folsom, La. open plot of ground | acceptable |

Before the inspecting party left Folsom, La., Mr. Hegwen Green of Green Eros. Tung Farm, and Mr. C. W. Goodyear, Jr., of Bogalusa Tung Oil Corp., stated that they could not agree at that time on a definite location, but they would arrange to have a meeting with the others concerned, and notify the Commanding Officer, Prisoner of War Camp, Camp Livingston, La., as to their selection of a camp site. It was explained by Major Coyne that nothing further could be done by this Headquarters until the Tung Nut Growers or the County Agent decided on a location.

Please contact the four (4) Tung Nut Companies concerned, and advise at what location they desire to construct the camp, and how much of the construction work they expect the Army to perform.

TOM B. MARTIN
Lt. Col., Infantry
Commanding

cc: CG, SSC, Dallas 2, Tex.
AES, Baton Rouge, La.
Mr. Geo. P. Naquin, County Agent,
St. Tammany Parish, Covington, La.

Figure J: July 17, 1944 Letter from Lieutenant Colonel Tom B. Martin to County Agent L. O. Murrell.⁸⁵

⁸⁵ Judge Leon Ford, III Collection, Letter dated July 17, 1944 from Lieutenant Colonel Tom B. Martin, commanding officer, Eighth Service Command to Mr. L. O. Murrell, County Agent, Washington Parish, Franklin, Louisiana. Local History, Box 15, Folder 6, Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies and Archives, Southeastern Louisiana University, Hammond, Louisiana.

Not all POWS worked in the physically demanding agricultural industry in Louisiana. Those fortunate POWS housed at New Orleans Army Air Field on the lakefront in New Orleans tended to have less physical jobs. As can be seen in the photograph in *Figure K*, the POWS are removing plants from the 1000 block of Leonidas Street in uptown New Orleans for eventual transplanting at LaGarde Army General Hospital at 421 Robert E. Lee Boulevard, a few blocks from the airfield where the POW camp was located.⁸⁶ POWS from Camp Harahan performed similar duties and this gave the POWS performing this type of labor, a sense of freedom.⁸⁷



Figure K: Photograph of German POWS working in uptown New Orleans⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Note: LaGarde Army General Hospital was located on the entire land mass between the north side of Robert E. Lee Boulevard to Lakeshore Drive and between West End Boulevard and Canal Boulevard. All land reclaimed from Lake Pontchartrain in the 1930's as part of a Works Progress Administration project.

⁸⁷ David Clarke, *The Utilization of P.O.W. Labor in Louisiana During World War II: A Comparison of Wehrmacht P.O.W. Labor Production With That of Prewar Civilian Agricultural Labor*, 49-50.

⁸⁸ "Our Times: POWs on the Streets of New Orleans," *Times-Picayune* (New Orleans, Louisiana), March 3, 2012. Photo is from either 1944 or 1945.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

How then, could a country, burdened with so many layers of bureaucracy and the inherent inefficiency and time delays associated with it, managed to produce and supply products for its own not only population, but also supply vast quantity of those goods for shipment to its allies? With all the various programs and agencies discussed in the preceding pages, and many more not mentioned, how did the United States manage to accomplish the extraordinary feats of production and distribution that helped achieve victory?

Given their totalitarian regimes, certainly some, if not all the Axis Powers suffered through similar adversities, as did the United States? Germany, known for its orderliness and precision in so many areas, failed to accomplish what the United States managed to accomplish. One critical factor that is most telling is that the industries and populations of the United States never was subjected to the massive aerial bombing campaign that Germany and Japan had to contend with and this most certainly played a decisive part.

That it worked at all is an amazing story considering all the internal hurdles to overcome. There were the obvious human factors of personal power desires, individual prestige concerns, and personal animosities that came into play. Additionally, there were genuine differences of opinions on how to address specific problems or if it needed addressing. In addition, there were policies poorly written that caused confusion as well as agency territorial prerogatives within the bureaucracies of the various federal agencies involved needed resolution as well. It is the overriding element in explaining the processes involved as it applies to the telling of this story.

Then one must consider that President Roosevelt managed to retain all his essential administrators, both civilian and military, in place during the United States participation in the Second World War. This most certainly had some impact on the continuity of operations of the

various branches of government. Their familiarity with each other, contrary to breeding contempt,⁸⁹ must have served to overcome any differences they many have had. That factor must have some positive results that helped to ensure victory. Coincidentally, the fact that the heads of the WMC, USDA, and SSS were Indianans from farming families or farming areas must have influenced their identification with the plight of those engaged in the agricultural industry, even if sub-conscientiously.

The inescapable fact that it did indeed work is certainly a testimony to the political system of the United States and the perseverance and determination of its people in what they believed to be a just cause. Louisiana farmers harvested their crops and other non-military types of work provided for. The much-feared sabotages never occurred and the equally feared mass escapes held to a minimum and all escapees eventually apprehended.

Kurt Richard Westphal, Louisiana's last German POW escapee, discovered by German authorities living in Hamburg in 1954, escaped from Camp Ruston in August 1945.⁹⁰ The last German POW to escape and remain at-large longer than any other was Georg Gaertner. Gaertner, captured in Tunisia in 1943, surrendered to federal authorities in California in September 1985, forty years after escaping from Camp Deming, New Mexico on September 21, 1945.⁹¹

There were monetary benefits for all parties involved as well. All prisoners of war who chose to work were paid eighty cents per day, for a maximum of ten hours work per day and a

⁸⁹ Mark 6:1-6 [KJV].

⁹⁰ Arnold Krammer, *Nazi Prisoners of War in America*, 38.

⁹¹ "After 40 Years, POW Gives up", *Times-Picayune/The States Item* (New Orleans), September 11, 1985, A-11 sec.

maximum of six workdays per week during those months when needed. However, an incentive program was in place that allowed POWS to make as much as \$1.50 per day if the prisoner worked hard.⁹² Each POW had a bank account opened in his name and the money earned placed in it until the POW was repatriated to Germany in late 1946. Given the Germany economy at that time, the U. S. dollar, no matter the amount, had a greater worth than the Reich mark or Deutschemark.⁹³

The Louisiana agricultural industry also experienced as benefit from the use of German POWS beyond the obvious that Louisiana farmers harvested their crops rather than have them rot in the fields. The statistical data all indicate an improvement in production. Overall, agricultural production increased.⁹⁴ Taking into account the sugar cane production alone, the figures show an increase in output compared to the period before the use of POWS and the output during their employment.⁹⁵ The increase in sugar cane production is evident in a comparison of the Office of War Production (OWP) estimates of the maximum capacity of Louisiana sugar cane capabilities in 1941 and the actual acreage of sugar cane harvested during the years that German POWS labor was use. The OWP projected a harvest of approximately 300,000 acres in 1942, the year prior to arrival and usage of Germans POW labor. During the 1942-1944 periods, Louisiana sugar cane harvest stood at 772,000 acres or approximately 384,000 acres per year an increase of 84,000 acres on yearly average.⁹⁶

⁹² Arnold Krammer, *Nazi Prisoners of War in America*, 68.

⁹³ Note: The Reichmark was Germany's currency from 1924 until replaced by the Deutschmark in 1948.

⁹⁴ David Clarke, *The Utilization of P.O.W. Labor in Louisiana During World War II: A Comparison of Wehrmacht P.O.W. Labor Production With That of Prewar Civilian Agricultural Labor*, 35-37.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 48.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 35-36.

The monetary benefits can be more clearly understood when viewing statistics from the fourth quarter of 1943, the infancy of POWS labor in Louisiana. The monies paid by farmers for POW labor totaled \$1,479,216.26. By 1944, that amount had grown to \$17,780,357.44. By July 31, 1945, it had reached a staggering \$25,422,220.52.⁹⁷ The American investment in utilizing POW labor resulted in a profit of \$46,000,000.00.⁹⁸ This represents \$611,244,382.02 in 2016 dollars.

The United States and its allies successfully prosecuted the war and brought it to a victorious conclusion. The federal government realized a monetary profit, produced and supplied the needed resources and managed to successfully incarcerate hundreds of thousands of prisoners of war. Louisiana farmers brought in their crops and thus maintained their livelihood. Louisiana farmer and Louisiana's county agents feeling for the work provided by German POWS was expressed in their gratitude for the labor qualities of the German POWS, when they claim the Germans POWS were, "*the salvation of Louisiana agriculture.*"⁹⁹ A 1945 statement by the chairman of the Labor Committee of the American Sugar Cane League stated most succinctly that, "*the labor return of PWs has become so efficient . . . it is practically equivalent to, or even sometimes exceeds the return of our own labor.*"¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Note: This 1945 figure in 2016 is equivalent to \$337,808,466.76.

⁹⁸ David Clarke, *The Utilization of P.O.W. Labor in Louisiana During World War II: A Comparison of Wehrmacht P.O.W. Labor Production With That of Prewar Civilian Agricultural Labor*, 51.

⁹⁹ Matthew J. Schott, "Bayou Stalags of the Deep South: The POWS' "Good War" Providence", unpublished manuscript, October 1984, chap. IX, 224. Note: Emphasis added by author.

¹⁰⁰ Shea and Pritchett, "The Wehrmacht in Louisiana, Louisiana History". *The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 23, no. 1 (January 01, 1982): 18, accessed January 2, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/4232135>.

The majority of Louisianans who used German POWS expressed satisfaction with their hard work ethic.¹⁰¹ Louisiana's agriculture survived and the state profited financially, and when the German POWS arrived in their devastated homeland they, at least, had money in their pockets to survive and start life anew.

¹⁰¹ David Clarke, *The Utilization of P.O.W. Labor in Louisiana During World War II: A Comparison of Wehrmacht P.O.W. Labor Production With That of Prewar Civilian Agricultural Labor*, 41.

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Vita

Ronald Brady was born and raised in New Orleans, Louisiana. In 1968, Ronald received his General Education Diploma (GED) from Francis T. Nicholls Senior High while serving in the United States Marine Corps. Ronald began his undergraduate studies at Saint Mary's Dominican College in 1974, eventually transferring to Loyola University of New Orleans in 1977, where he received a Bachelor of Criminal Justice in January 1979. Ronald began his graduate studies at University of New Orleans in August 2012.

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Ronald is married and resides in Covington, Louisiana with his wife of forty-three years. Ronald and Jeanne have four sons and four grandchildren. His hobbies are genealogical research and collecting U. S. military decorations.