

**David Fiedler.** *The Enemy among Us: POWs in Missouri during World War II.* Saint Louis: Missouri Historical Society Press, 2003. xiv + 466 pp. \$29.95, cloth, ISBN 978-1-883982-49-2.

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David Fiedler's work examines the brief history of thirty prisoner of war (POW) camps established in Missouri during World War II. The camps were populated by more than 15,000 prisoners between 1942 and 1946, the majority of whom came from Germany. While in the camps, the prisoners were well-fed and allowed to pursue a wide variety of diversions. Most of the enlisted prisoners were incorporated into a POW labor program, and were paid by the government for their exertions in coupons that could be redeemed for luxury items at the camp canteens.

The experiences of prisoners within the camps varied widely, and Fiedler argues that the most important factor in this variance was simply where a prisoner was held. Fiedler believes that most of the prisoners had similar experiences in the period immediately after their capture. All enemy prisoners were processed in the same manner, but upon arrival in Missouri, the prisoners found that the character of each camp was unique. He devotes much of his analysis to a comparative study of the four main camps in Missouri, Camp Weingarten, Camp Clark, Fort Leonard Wood, and Camp Crowder. Each of these locations housed thousands of prisoners and was in continuous operation for years. As such, the records for each were more thorough than for the smaller, temporary camps.

The construction of each main camp brought controversy, as the federal government took farmland that had been held in families for many generations for the construction of prison camps. Accompanying the thousands of prisoners of war were camp officers, guards, support personnel, and civilian jobs. As a result, each main camp had a significant if temporary effect upon the local economy. Hundreds of local civilians were employed at each of the main camps, serving primarily in clerical and support positions. The arrival of large numbers of young men also had a distinct, if not always encouraged, social impact. Some Americans living near prisoner camps were afraid of the prisoners, but many young civilians, particularly young women, treated the prisoners primarily as a curiosity. Fiedler also recounts a number of occasions in which prisoners were able to pursue romantic relationships with local American women.

After a thorough discussion of the main camps, Fiedler turns to the branch camps established primarily to utilize POW labor. He breaks this discussion into regions, specifically the camps near St. Louis and Kansas City, the so-called "boothel camps" of southeast Missouri, and the central Missouri camps near the Missouri River. The branch camps were directly tied to a specific main camp for certain support and administrative control, but were capable of maintaining prison-

ers in secure facilities for long periods of time, if necessary. The smaller camps were often seasonal, as the need for agricultural labor increased, the number of branch camps increased as well. As traditional agricultural laborers obtained jobs in factories, American farmers experienced an extreme shortage of manpower for planting, tending, and harvesting their crops. POW labor was credited with saving numerous crops in Missouri, although farmers initially complained that the prisoners were not as efficient as American workers. Fiedler correctly observes that the prisoners were often unfamiliar with American crops, but that upon receiving proper instructions for their tasks, their output was similar to that of traditional farm labor in the region.

Fiedler notes that while the initial reaction to enemy prisoners was often hostile, both the local populations and the American personnel working in the camp soon became comfortable, and even openly friendly with the prisoners. Security was often lax, particularly within the labor program. Despite the light oversight, escapes were extremely rare, and prisoners who did escape were often eager to return to their camps after a day or two. The author believes that this was largely due to the excellent treatment received by the prisoners, in particular the generous diet allowances. Those prisoners who escaped quickly discovered that returning to Europe was a virtual impossibility, and that even remaining free of the prison compound was a difficult proposition.

The POW experience in Missouri during World War II was similar for Italian and German prisoners, who were never allowed to simultaneously reside in the same camp. American perceptions of the two groups differed widely, as the Italian prisoners were typically seen as happy-go-lucky and friendly, while the Germans were often considered gruff and difficult. The situation changed in the fall of 1943, when Italy formally joined the Allies in the war against Germany. At that time, Italian prisoners in the United States were offered the opportuni-

ty to leave their prison camps and join Italian Service Units (ISUs) to aid the American war effort. Members of the ISUs were given much more freedom than their POW counterparts, while those who did not choose to join the new units remained in their original camps. The treatment of all POWs changed after the surrender of Germany, with the quality and quantity of food given to prisoners undergoing a marked decrease. This reduction was caused by a number of factors, including the discovery of Allied prisoners in Germany, ongoing wartime shortages, and political pressure within the United States to stop "coddling" enemy prisoners.

After the surrender of Japan, the return of prisoners to Europe brought a new controversy. American commanders of the POW program instituted a re-education effort among German POWs, seeking to instill the values of democracy into prisoners who demonstrated anti-Nazi tendencies. These prisoners were intended to serve as the nucleus of postwar Germany. Within the Missouri camps, the program was instituted on an irregular basis, depending upon whether or not the individual camp commander believed in instituting the policy.

Fiedler's work is a long-overdue study of the Missouri POW camps. He does an exceptional job of relating experiences at each camp to the overall POW situation during World War II. In particular, his analysis of the impact of POW labor on agriculture in the Midwest is very useful to others studying similar topics. He relies heavily upon individuals who experienced the camps, either as prisoners, camp personnel, or residents of the areas near the camps. However, with the sheer number of POWs held at the camps, and the intervening sixty years since the end of the war, many of the first-person descriptions should be examined closely. Fiedler does an admirable job of cross-checking facts presented by his sources, and incorporates the records maintained by each camp into his analysis. Research conducted at the National Archives, while not predominant in his study, is sub-

stantial enough to allow the author to generalize from the Missouri experience to the overall POW situation. The work is filled with illustrations and well- chosen photographs, which greatly enhance the value of the work, particularly for the lay reader.

The organization of the work, unfortunately, is weak. Within the chapters on individual camps, information is presented in an almost haphazard fashion, with almost no chronological order. Although the topical shifts are delineated by subheadings, the sheer number of subheadings is distracting to the reader. Much of the information provided for the main camps is repeated in the beginning of each chapter, and could probably have been organized into one general introduction to the subject. Likewise, certain subheadings appear in each chapter as if part of a general list to be covered for each camp. The decision to cover the main camps separately is useful, as there were significant differences in the experiences at each camp, but an introductory chapter might have improved the flow of the work.

Fiedler's work is a fascinating discussion of the POW situation in Missouri during World War II. His work underscores the fundamental aspects of the POW situation in the United States during the war, while remaining rooted in the discussion of individuals and specific events. He maintains a balanced view of the prisoners and their captors, and presents both sides of an uncomfortable situation with grace and style. Fiedler's book is a must-read for scholars of POW issues, or anyone who wishes to examine the role of the

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