

## **German War Prisoners Quartered At Spencer Pond Lumber Operation**

At three o'clock in the morning of July 10, a train bearing 250 German prisoners of war and the usual accompaniment of U.S. soldiers, pulled into the Maine Central Railroad Yard at Bingham, bound for New England's fourth War Prison Camp. Their destination a lumber project.

A few citizens who had heard a rumor of the event, and others who were aroused by the commotion of the arrival of the Army trucks, also that of the lighted passenger train, the first to arrive in town since 1933, went to the railroad station, and stood in the darkness watching the prisoners of war in the lighted cars. They were just an average group of young men ranging from 18 to 27 years of age, blond and blue-eyed, all looking older than their years. Dressed in clothing like the U.S. soldiers, they wore white caps with visors and had the letters W.P. in red on the back of their shirts or jackets. They were quite accustomed to the routine, having been a year in prison camps.

The disembarkment was prompt and efficient. The prisoners of war were transferred to the waiting trucks of the Hollingsworth and Whitney Company,, the townspeople stood quietly in the background. A realistic scene as the caravan of trucks with U.S. soldiers and cars with officers of various ranks made its way out of the little town at daybreak.

Near Lake Parlin, some 50 miles north, the caravan left the Quebec highway for the camp site at Hobbstown, Somerset County, the so called Spencer Field on the old Attean Road. A new road has been constructed which is a valuable adjunct to fire protection in that area as well as being a means of access to the camp

The surrounding woodland is owned by the Hollingsworth and Whitney Company and the lumber operation is the project of that company.

Lieut. Col. Walter B. Smith is in command of the camp assisted by Capt. James F. McFarland and Lieut. William B. Moore, Jr., all residents of the camp. Omar A. Sawyer of Bingham, manager of Woodlands, will have general supervision for the Hollingsworth and Whitney Company. His assistant, William H. Wentworth of Waterville, is the resident manager at the camp and James Kinsley of Skowhegan is the operating woods boss.

The United States Forestry Service will cooperate with the Army and the Hollingsworth and Whitney Company in instructing the prisoners of war in the cutting of pulpwood. The men at work take their instructions from German officers in the camp.

The camp site covers about one and one half acres of cleared land and contains 22 buildings, set up under Army regulations. T.W. Cunningham, Inc. of Bangor were the contractors with James Blenkhon supervising the set up. A visit to the camp two days before the arrival of the prisoners of war showed the camp complete except for a few details, all of which had been accomplished in eight weeks.

The camp has the usual quarters for the U.S. Soldiers and civilian help, a pump station for the water supply, and a generating plant for the electric service and behind a barricade of barbed wire, the stockade. The cell block near the gate house and the sentry towers at each corner are just outside the barricade. Inside there is a mess hall, wash house, barracks, a building which houses the workshop and post exchange and serves as a chapel and the hospital building. This is a neat compact affair, its ward of several beds, each with sheets and extra blankets, a modern surgery, doctors' office and a supply room.

The wash house, a building by itself, contains showers, lavatories and laundry equipment with hot and cold water.

The barracks are five buildings, 100 feet by 20 feet, with double bunks and regular army equipment. A bit of interest regarding two of the barracks buildings; one was taken from the roof of the North Station at Boston and one from the roof of the Wigen<sup>1</sup> Terminal. These were knocked down and shipped to the camp site.

The mess hall, a building 140 feet by 20 feet, will seat the 250 men. The store room with electric refrigeration, is in one end of the building. The cooking is done on three U.S. Army ranges.

The buildings are insulated and built for year round service.

The pulpwood cut on this operation will be driven down Spencer lake, through Little Spencer stream and Dead river, and down the Kennebec river, boomed across the 14 miles of Wyman lake, sluiced at Wyman dam and then driven down the Kennebec to the mills of the Hollingsworth and Whitney Company at Madison and Winslow.

The camp at Spencer Field is the fourth war prison camp in New England and the third in Maine to be established for the purpose of cutting timber and pulpwood. The other camps are at Stark, N.H., on Brown Company operations; at Princeton where several companies are included and at Seboomook on the Great Northern Paper Company land.

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<sup>1</sup> Probably Wigen Terminal, Charlestown, MA