

WWII Prisoners of War at Fort Lewis

***"A prisoner of war is a man who tries to kill you and fails,
and then asks you to not kill him." -Winston Churchill***

German prisoners of war arrived at Fort Lewis as early as 1942.

The prison camp began small but quickly grew to five separate compounds on post along with branch camps at Fort Lawton, Spokane, Walla Walla, Vancouver Barracks, and Toppenish. The main camp was set up north of Gray Airfield in the area near 41st Division Drive and Pendleton Avenue. The Prisoners were housed using the same World War II wooden buildings occupied by American troops.



Fort Lewis POW Camp Photo
Ralph Tilton Collection

The Return Home

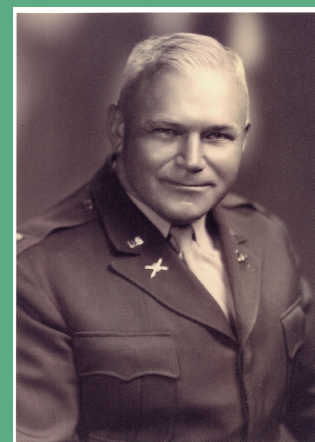
The camp closed September 1946 when the prisoners were repatriated back to Germany.

Prisoner Population

The prisoner population consisted of mostly German soldiers from the Afrika Korps captured in Tunis North Africa, Italy, France, and Greece. The camp held approximately 4,000 to 5,200 prisoners.



Fort Lewis POW Camp Photo
Ralph Tilton Collection



Captain Ralph Tilton was the stockade commander of the Fort Lewis Prisoner of War Camp from 1943-1946. He had thirteen officers, between three and four thousand prisoners and the entire stockade operations under his command.