FROM SWORN ENEMIES TO NAZI NEIGHBORS TO FOUND FAMILY:

THE IMPACT OF A WORLD WAR II GERMAN POW CAMP

ON A RURAL TENNESSEE COMMUNITY AND THE POWS WHO LIVED THERE

by

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Dr. Carroll Van West, chair

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In loving memory of my grandmother, Syble Nash Kidd, who inspired my interest in history and the German POWs who lived at Camp Lawrenceburg.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My grandmother loved to tell people that even as a little child, I would come sit at her feet and say, “Grandma, tell me about the good old days.” It was the ideal relationship, because she enjoyed sharing stories and I was fascinated by them. Using her words, she painted vivid pictures of life during the 1920s, the Great Depression, and World War II. The first time I heard about German prisoners of war (POWs) in Lawrence County was through one of her tales. Grandma said that while tending their garden, she often saw military trucks drive down Railroad Bed Pike. All she could see of the passengers were the tops of their cotton-blonde hair. She knew the men were German prisoners on their way to cut wood at Napier. Some people may have resented the enemy soldiers, but she did not. She explained to me that not every German was a bad person; some of them were good people forced into circumstances out of their control. Even though Grandma’s brother, Warner Nash, fought against the German army, she resisted the urge to generalize. Her story inspired me to dig deeper and research the camp, which led to this thesis. Even though she will never see the results of the seeds she planted, I will forever be grateful for her influence and guidance.

I owe a debt of gratitude to my parents, Danny and Cindy Burns. Unexpected hurdles manifested during the past two years, but my parents have been my rocks throughout this long process. They have provided reassurance when I needed it most, remained patient, and offered feedback as I brainstormed research ideas. They supported me through hardships and rejoiced in my successes. Throughout my life, both my mom

and dad have taught me to deeply value education. Their life-long encouragement has helped me attain this goal.

The thesis writing and approval process is long and arduous. Dr. West, my committee chair, and Dr. Sayward, my second reader, have been instrumental in all stages of this project. They guided me as I determined the direction of my thesis and shaped my methodology. I am incredibly thankful for their mentorship, kindness, feedback, time, and hard work helping improve my project. Their dedication to student success is inspiring.

Several others made this thesis possible through their contributions. Curtis Peters, President of the Lawrence County Historical Society, kindly shared his extensive knowledge and resources about the camp and local history. He put me in touch with Dr. Elizabeth Rivera, archivist at the Beaman Library Archives and Special Collections. Her friendship has meant a great deal throughout my research and writing. During the many hours I spent combing through letters at Lipscomb University's archive, she helped guide my research. Both Curtis Peters and Dr. Elizabeth Rivera have enabled my project by offering their expertise.

I appreciate the influence of all the professors I have worked with during my time at Middle Tennessee State University. I am particularly grateful for Dr. Benjamin Sawyer for his mentorship, advice, and encouragement while writing my thesis. He has been influential in shaping my practice as a historian.

Finally, I want to thank God. Every good gift is from Him.

ABSTRACT

The United States hosted over 400,000 POWs during World War II. Although these were America's enemies, historians have found extensive evidence that friendships developed between POWs, their camp guards, and even civilians. The difference between Camp Lawrenceburg and other internment locations across the country is that some prisoners developed deeper, family-like relationships with two Lawrenceburg residents. This thesis maps the connection between the Stribling-Brock family and the group of POWs who worked for them: how J. H. Stribling's actions resulted in the camp's establishment, the Brocks' relationships with the POWs during the war, and the family's impact on the German men and their families once they returned home. The research is applied to several public history approaches, presenting opportunities to educate general audiences about this story and its lessons.

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INTRODUCTION

Sometimes unlikely circumstances yield life-altering results. Each encounter, event, or minor moment is the consequence of countless unseen factors. Our choices create a domino effect in not only our own lives, but for others too – this was the case for wealthy businessman and philanthropist J. H. Stribling. His actions, from the day he moved to Texas to make his fortune to lobbying the Tennessee state government for a POW (prisoner-of-war) branch camp location in Lawrenceburg, Tennessee, determined the fate of a group of German soldiers. Germans were the sworn enemy of American citizens–these soldiers carried the stain of German Chancellor Adolf Hitler's bloody transgressions. Despite the "nemesis" label cast onto these individuals, sentiments in the community shifted the longer these men remained stationed in Lawrenceburg. This group, placed in a World War II prison camp in rural Tennessee, found themselves establishing long-lasting relationships because of Stribling, his daughter Jim Brock, and her husband Delmar Brock. The soldiers' identities transformed from sworn enemies fighting against American soldiers to Nazi neighbors occupying the same community as Lawrenceburg civilians and then to the Brock's found family.

Community leaders throughout the South worried about an agricultural labor shortage during the Second World War. When the army offered the solution of rural communities hosting POW camps of German and other Axis prisoners, many local officials jumped at the opportunity. They lobbied state officials and army officers for opportunities to host prisoner-of-war camps in 1943 and 1944. The case of Lawrence County, a sparsely populated county on the Tennessee side of the border with Alabama,

shared similarities with another Tennessee POW camp established outside of Crossville—both were in extremely rural areas, although located on a major federal highway, and both counties had relatively small populations. They needed agricultural labor, but a key factor for army officers was that escaped POWs would really have no place to go.

James H. Stribling, a Lawrenceburg businessman, a successful farmer, and a power in the county courthouse, lobbied the state and the army strenuously to have a POW camp in Lawrence County. Stribling successfully secured the branch camp's location in his hometown. As was typical in the rural county politics of that era, then his daughter, James Lois "Little Jim" Stribling Brock, and her husband, Delmar Brock, quickly gained the opportunity of supervising a small group of POWs who regularly worked on their extensive property holdings.

Then came the unexpected: interaction between two very different cultures—soldiers from the Nazi military machine and a devout farm family, whose international experience was limited to reading about the world in magazines and newspapers, formed a bond of respect, friendship, and faith. Rather than treat the German men as mere employees, Stribling and the Brocks cultivated relationships with them through conversation and listening. Two years after the creation of the Lawrenceburg camp, the Stribling-Brocks and POWs had formed a bond stronger than friendship–it was more akin to family. The war's end caused physical separation, but the group remained connected through letters. When the Brocks discovered the former POWs' impoverishment in a post-war, devastated Germany, they sent aid in the form of food goods, clothing, shoes,

and other unattainable items. The reaching out by this rural Tennessee community impacted the lives of not only these former prisoners but also their wives, parents, siblings, nieces, nephews, and children.

This inspirational story was lost until the 1980s when a chance discovery revealed a box full of letters from former POWs. Local historian Curtis Peters used the correspondence as educational tools for lectures and presentations. Eventually the Brock family donated the letter cache to the Beaman Library Archives and Special Collections, which is when prominent national news stations picked up the heart-warming story.[1] Despite this extensive publicity, many in the area have never heard about the camp: they have no concept of the war's proximity to this small town. The enemy was not a foreign concept nor distant foe seen only through news reels and photographs. The rural area had experienced the mock training battles of the Tennessee Maneuvers, but was geographically removed from the war overseas–until the prisoner of war branch camp was established on the outskirts of Lawrenceburg. Community members and German soldiers became not just neighbors but coworkers. The newcomers were from thousands of miles away, spoke a different language, came from different cultures, and fought for the opposing army. Government propaganda and news reports had taught Americans to fear Germans and label them all as Nazis. Neither the soldiers nor the citizens of Lawrence County knew exactly what to expect from the experience, but there was

[1] "Cereal Box Full of WWII POW Letters Discovered in Tennessee," *NBC Nightly News*, NBC Universal, August 9, 2015, https://archives.nbclearn.com/portal/site/k-12/browse/?cuecard=103196; Susanna Kim, "Letters Found in Cereal Box Show Rare Look at German POWs after WW2," *ABC News*, July 13, 2015, https://abcnews.go.com/US/letters-found-cereal-box-show-rare-german-pows/story?id=32421560; Kim Chaudoin, "Stribling Brock Collection Unveiling Tells Story of Loving One's Enemy," Lipscomb University press release, October 14, 2015, https://www.lipscomb.edu/news/stribling-brock-collection-unveiling-tells-story-loving-ones-enemy.

apprehension on both sides. However, by the end of the war, working together taught each the humanity of the other. The research portion of this thesis is intended for application–educating the community about this important piece of local history and spreading the message that prejudice can be overcome by compassion.

There are hundreds of letters from the German families to the Stribling-Brock family. These primary sources create an invaluable way to explore the impact—both ways—of a prisoner of war camp on a rural Tennessee community, adding vital perspective and information to scholarship about the homefront and POW experience during World War II. This thesis proposes to investigate that interaction between prisoners and a rural family, analyze the value of this unique collection of letters now held in the Special Collections of the Lipscomb University Library from a public history perspective, and create an online exhibit for a fifth- through eighth-grade target audience with the goal of introducing children to the experiences of these prisoners of war and prompting the application of compassion and tolerance in their present lives.

Central to this study is the cache of letters sent from former POWs and their relatives to the Brocks, primarily addressing James “Jim” Lois Brock. After the war ended and the German prisoners were sent home, the former farm hands stayed in touch with their American “kin” through written correspondence. The documents detail the depth of the bond formed between these men and their employers: the relationship was referred to as familial in many letters. Several of the former POWs’ family members communicated with the Brocks as well, ranging from a multitude of lengthy writings to small notes. These sources reveal a great deal about the former POWs’ lives before the

war, the camp environment, their relationships to the Stribling-Brocks, and their circumstances after returning home. By reading the correspondence, one can piece together how the German men and American civilians became like family. The letters list specific items received by the former POWs in order for the Brocks to track what had been lost in transit or confiscated by authorities, which provides general knowledge of the type and quantity of aid sent. The effect the aid had on the lives of the German families can be partially gauged by how they reciprocated the gestures through words and gifts. The correspondence illustrates the family's lasting impact on the Germans during their time in Lawrenceburg and extending long after the soldiers went home.

Since the other half of the letter cache either no longer exists or is tucked away in unknown locations, the Brocks' responses remain unknown. Despite this gap in the sources, the manner with which the German men wrote their correspondence often provides clues or direct reference to previous letters. They also request information from the family, indicating their close relationship. The sources also provide insight into the facilitating character, R. H. Boll, who served as a translator for the German letters. Although he intended to be an invisible mediator, the Brocks never erased the additional notes he sometimes added at the end of interpreted letters. These offer insight into Boll's role in their relationships: how his knowledge assisted the Brocks in the best way to serve their foreign family through advice in certain situations and explanations about cultural meaning.

The Brocks' ability to positively effect former POWs' lives can only be understood by tracing the life of Jim's father, J. H. Stribling. He was a wealthy male

citizen of Lawrence County, so he left a significant paper trail through legal documents. His prominence in the area resulted in the newspaper mentioning him many times. Using these official records in conjunction with newspaper articles enables the reconstruction of his rise to the most important man in the area. Those sources paired with an account from Stribling's much more famous cousin, the novelist T. S. Stribling,[2] produce a roadmap for the serendipitous story. There are fewer references to his daughter, Jim, and scarcely any government documents because of her gender, but the sources that exist speak volumes about her nature. R. H. Boll's influence can be tracked through his publications and newspaper articles. The relationship between these diverse people becomes apparent by connecting the documents, letters, and articles.

Few official documents pertaining to the Lawrenceburg camp seem to remain; this is likely due to its small size and subordination to the much larger Camp Forrest in Tullahoma, Tennessee. Despite the dearth, information can be pieced together using other primary sources. Local newspapers from Lawrenceburg and cities like Nashville provide valuable insight from the perspective of Tennesseans and help track the progress of the site. There are numerous local reports involving the POW camp's creation, the POWs who lived there, and the camp's dismantlement. They provide a solid timeline for the site's existence and information about events that transpired. The language employed in the progression of articles provides telling evidence about the community's shifting

[2] William E. Smith Jr., "T. S. Stribling – Biography: Southern Literary Maverick," University of North Alabama, Collier Library and Information Services, accessed March 29, 2021, www.una.edu/library/collections/t.s.-stribling---biography.html.

perspective about its German neighbors. Photographs also allow for a visual analysis of the camp's construction and the people involved with it.

World War II German POW camps have been analyzed by an array of historians with varying approaches. In 1979, Arnold Krammer revolutionized the field of World War II POW studies by conducting the first general overview of camps across the United States. He covered a broad range of topics in *Nazi Prisoners of War in America*–from capture to final discharge. This research provides valuable insight into the basic structure of the camps and the average POW experience.[3] Due to the nature of the work, he was unable to deeply address certain topics, such as the relationships that developed between employers and workers.

Later works started to analyze the social aspects of POW camp life. In 1988, Allen V. Koop addressed the bonds that formed between guards, civilians, and German prisoners at New Hampshire's Camp Stark in the book *Stark Decency.* The relationships formed in the rural New England town prove that connections were formed despite negative conditions and prejudice.[4] Although he examined a small branch camp similar in size to Lawrenceburg's, the POWs, many townspeople, and the soldiers formed strong friendships rather than familial bonds.

Kevin T. Hall's 2015 article, "The Befriended Enemy," discussed the close friendships that developed between POWs and farmers in Michigan. Hall argues that the POWs' camaraderie with local citizens developed due to the small camp size in contrast

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[3] Arnold Krammer, *Nazi Prisoners of War in America* (Lanham, MD: Scarborough House Publishing, 1992).

[4] Allen V. Koop, *Stark Decency: German Prisoners of War in a New England Village* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1988).

to the larger sites in states like Louisiana. He highlights their deep bond and touches on the farmers' generosity once the war ended but did not thoroughly analyze the lasting impact. The study also focused on the state of Michigan as a whole rather than an individual camp.[5]

Like Hall's approach, most recent scholarship analyzes POW experiences in specific states. Multiple books have been written using this approach, and they tend to emphasize the soldiers' impact on the state and the attitudes of local civilians. [6] Multiple articles focus on geographic regions and POW labor as well.[7]

Little academic attention has been given to Tennessee POW camps. In the *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* (1993), Hazel Wages explored a camp outside of Memphis. She primarily concentrated on conditions at the location and compliance with regulations dictated by the Geneva Convention of 1929.[8] Jeff Roberts' entry on the topic appeared in the *Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture* (1998), providing a general overview of the POW camp experience in Tennessee.[9] Gregory J. Kupsky's 2004

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[5] Kevin T. Hall, "The Befriended Enemy: German Prisoners of War in Michigan," *Michigan Historical Review* 41, no. 1 (Spring 2015): 68.

[6] Gregory D. Sumner, *Michigan POW Camps in World War II* (Charleston, SC: History Press. 2018); Melissa Amateis Marsh, *Nebraska POW Camps: A History of World War II Prisoners in the Heartland* (Charleston, SC: History Press, 2014); Kathryn Roe Coker and Jason Wetzel, *Georgia POW Camps in World War II* (Charleston, SC: History Press, 2019); Cheryl O'Brein, *World War II POW Camps of Wyoming* (Charleston, SC: History Press, 2019); James Van Keuren, *World War II POW Camps in Ohio* (Charleston, SC: History Press, 2018).

[7] Tomas Jaehn, "Unlikely Harvesters: German Prisoners of War as Agricultural Workers in the Northwest," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 50, no. 3 (Autumn 2000): 46-57; Cameron L. Saffell, Robert L. Hart, and Jane L. O'Cain, "Award Winner Spotlight: Prisoner of War Laborers in New Mexico Agriculture during World War II," *History News* 59, no. 1 (Winter 2004): 28-29; Jason Morgan Ward, "'Nazis Hoe Cotton': Planters, POWS, and the Future of Farm Labor in the Deep South," *Agricultural History* 81, no. 4 (Fall 2007): 471-92.

[8] Hazel Wages, "Memphis Armed Service Forces Depot Prisoner of War Camp, 1944-1946," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 52, no. 1 (Spring 1993): 19-32.

[9] Jeff Roberts, "POW Camps in World War II," *Tennessee Encyclopedia,* Tennessee Historical Society, March 1, 2018, http://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/entries/pow-camps-in-world-war-ii/.

master's thesis at the University of Tennessee addressed the camp outside of Crossville. Carolyn Powell's 2010 master's thesis discussed the same site, but from the angle of prisoner-civilian interactions altering preconceived prejudices.[10] In "POWs in the Piney Woods," James E. Fickle and Donald W. Ellis conducted a study of the southern lumber industry. They included the Lawrenceburg camp but based on the nature of the project, it excluded farm labor.[11]

Public historians have been even more remiss. While the Tennessee Division of Archaeology documented prison camp sites in a 2007 archaeological survey of Tennessee's World War II military sites,[12] the state's military history museum ignores the topic. The Tennessee State Museum has no exhibits or objects on display dedicated to this significant piece of local history. The only museum to have an exhibit featuring the Lawrenceburg camp is the Lawrence County Old Jail Museum. Due to the size and income of the institution, the display is confined to one case and additional photographs on the wall–a small installation given its impact on the community, which will be addressed in this thesis.

Scholarship has not, so far, discovered a deeper, kinship-like bond between prisoners and civilians. This thesis aims to fill in the gap by focusing on the familial relationship that developed between a group of POW farm workers and their employers and how that connection endured well after the war's end. Also, historians have yet to

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[10] Carolyn Powell, "Camp Crossville, 1942-1946: Did Good Fences Make Good Neighbors?" (master's thesis, Middle Tennessee State University, 2010).

[11] James E. Fickle and Donald W. Ellis, "POWs in the Piney Woods: German Prisoners of War in the Southern Lumber Industry, 1943-1945," *Journal of Southern History* 56, no. 4 (November 1990): 697.

[12] Benjamin C. Nance, *An Archeological Survey of World War II Military Sites in Tennessee* (Nashville: Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, Division of Archaeology, 2007).

unearth POW-civilian bonds that have had such an overwhelming positive ripple effect after the men returned home. In addition to traditional history, the thesis will attempt to bridge the divide between scholarship and public education by presenting a free interactive online exhibit targeting fifth- through eighth-grade students, then offering research-based educational strategies to incorporate the public history tool into curricula, which will be discussed in the conclusion.

Museums and in-person learning environments have suffered from the COVID pandemic. Both have been forced to grapple with how to make content accessible, engaging, and impactful. This thesis will demonstrate an approach for transforming a body of research-based findings into a relevant educational resource.

CHAPTER I:

SERENDITY: INTERSECTIONS BETWEEN LOCAL STORIES AND AN INTERNATIONAL WAR

Every story has a back story; many moments must fall into place for any particular outcome to occur. Such is the case for the relationship that developed between families of rural southern Middle Tennessee and German soldiers housed at the prisoner of war camp in Lawrenceburg, Tennessee, during World War II. Unlikely friendships grew and the POWs' connection remained even after the men returned home after the war. Under normal circumstances, rural Tennesseans and Germans would not have been in close proximity to one another, much less form a lasting bond. On the surface it seems like the war was what brought them together, but there are more pieces to the puzzle, including a gospel preacher who had immigrated from Germany, a self-made businessman, his prominent daughter, and soldiers taken prisoner from Hitler's army. People from different walks of life became like family, defying the barriers associated with the term "enemy."

Last Things First: Discovering the Letters

After Jim Stribling Leonard passed away in 1988, her great-niece Lynn Pettis started cleaning out her home. Pettis came across something unusual while going through a bedroom closet. She said, "I looked down and there was a Corn Flakes box."[1] She discovered upon inspection that it was stuffed full of roughly four hundred letters.[2] They

[1] "Cereal Box Full of WWII POW Letters Discovered in Tennessee."
[2] Kim, "Letters Found in Cereal Box Show Rare Look at German POWs after WW2."

had return addresses from across Europe–Austria, various German occupation zones, Britain, and more. Most of the senders had one thing in common: they were former POWs who had been interned at Lawrenceburg during World War II. The others were from the ex-prisoners' families, even though they had never met the Brocks.

Each letter was addressed to Jim and Delmar Brock, but most were directed specifically at Mrs. Jim Brock. The correspondence contained details about the Germans' postwar lives, their time at the camp, the relationship that developed between the men and the family, and how that bond helped sustain them both physically and spiritually after returning home. Almost every note mentioned heartfelt gratitude over packages sent by the Brocks that were intended to alleviate suffering caused by widespread shortages in postwar Germany. Most letters were written in German then copied in English. Within numerous envelopes were both the originals and a translated version. The Brocks initially had sent the letters to R. H. Boll, a longtime family friend, to decipher the contents. He returned them with his translation in ink, but any additional comments or notes written in pencil so they could be erased.

Curtis Peters, an in-law of the Brock family and president of the Lawrence County Historical Society, took the letters and used them for educational presentations about the POW camp.[3] The story stayed in Lawrence County until one day in 2013 when Peters stopped in the local Square-Forty Restaurant in downtown Lawrenceburg for some breakfast. He was introduced to Dr. Tim Johnson, a professor of history at Lipscomb University, who was visiting for other research. The two conversed, and the topic of the

[3] Chaudoin, "Stribling Brock Collection Unveiling Tells Story of Loving One's Enemy."

letters came up, sparking a chain of events that led to the family ultimately donating them to the Beaman Library Archives and Special Collections at Lipscomb University.[4] Lipscomb was an intentional choice, because the family wanted the collection housed at a faith-based university and to be available to the public.[5]

After years hidden in a dark closet, the audience for the letters suddenly expanded drastically. On Saturday, July 10th, 2015, *The Tennessean* ran an article about Lipscomb University's new collection and its efforts to translate the German letters. The story exploded; news outlets like *USA Today*, ABC-TV, NBC-TV, and the London *DailyMail* published the story.[6] National and global interest was attracted to the beautiful relationships detailed in the correspondence. Media coverage introduced the letters through the camp's backstory and included excerpts that illustrated the depth of their bonds. The various stories expressed hopefulness and faith in humanity, because even in those circumstances, enemies overcame their differences through kindness. Johnson said in an ABC News interview, "It's easy to talk about war when it is at a distance, part of war is to dehumanize your opponent. When you bring in the human element, it's a completely different ballgame. These letters bring you face-to-face with humanity."[7]

A close personal bond between the Stribling-Brock families and former prisoners is apparent through the extensive collection, but on the surface it is unclear what led to

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[4]Adam Tamburin, "Letters Reveal Story of German POWs in TN," [Nashville] *Tennessean*, last modified July 13, 2015, https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/education/2015/07/10/letters-found-cereal-box-tell-story-german-pows-tennessee/29995443/.

[5] Chaudoin, "Stribling Brock Collection Unveiling Tells Story of Loving One's Enemy."

[6] Janel Shoun-Smith, "WWII POW Letters Spark Nationwide Media Coverage," Lipscomb University press release, July 14, 2015, https://www.lipscomb.edu/news/wwii-pow-letters-spark-nationwide-media-coverage.

[7] Kim, "Letters Found in Cereal Box Show Rare Look at German POWs after WW2."

the connections. The story begins with J. H. Stribling. His life decisions created a domino effect, culminating in the familial ties founded during the war and resulting in the famous cereal box that preserved the evidence.

The Rise of James Henry Stribling

James Henry "Jim" Stribling came from a prominent Lawrence County family. He was the son of James Lawrence Stribling, who was born on March 9, 1829, in Giles County, Tennessee. James Lawrence Stribling moved to Lawrenceburg in 1843, and at the time of his death in 1914, the *Lawrence Democrat* stated that he had lived in the town longer than anyone else and was a household name.[8] He became a newspaperman in 1847, purchasing the *Middle Tennessean* with his business partner. Stribling retired from the newspaper in 1850 and engaged in farming but returned to Lawrenceburg in 1872 in order to run a hotel.[9] He later got invested in the local grist mill and soon founded a new paper for the county, the *Lawrence Democrat.*

James Lawrence Stribling married Mary J. Alexander and had six children, of which James H. Stribling was third, born in 1863. Based on the testimony from the elder Stribling's 1914 obituary and a family biography in *The History of Lawrence County* published in 1886, James Lawrence wished to be known for his charity, clear mind, noble characteristics, and as someone who "fought a good fight and with the blessed Savior, whom he loved and served."[10] Important local Church of Christ preacher T. C. King

[8] "Obituary- Colonel J. L. Stribling," *Lawrence Democrat,* 1914.
[9] *History of Tennessee* (Nashville, TN: Goodspeed Publishing Company, 1886).
[10] "Obituary- Colonel J. L. Stribling."

conducted services, but the elder Stribling was buried at Mt. Ararat Cemetery which was associated with the Presbyterian church.[11]

Compared to his father, James Henry "Jim" Stribling had a much smaller local profile, until his much more famous cousin wrote about him in 1941. That cousin was Thomas Sigismund Stribling, who lived in adjacent Wayne County. T. S. Stribling, born in rural Tennessee in 1881, was a renowned, Pulitzer-Prize winning author and sold more books than William Faulkner and Ernest Hemingway in the 1920s and 1930s.[12] Known for his use of local settings and characters in his books, T. S. Stribling wrote a piece about the life of his so-called millionaire family member called "My Cousin Ji-um" and sold it to the *Saturday Evening Post* in 1941.[13]

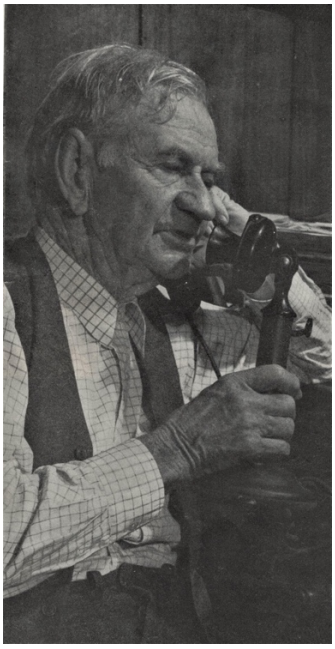

Figure 1. Photograph of James H. Stribling used in Thomas S. Stribling's 1941 *Saturday Evening Post* article. *(Lawrence County Old Jail Museum)*

[11] Ibid.
[12] Smith, "T. S. Stribling."
[13] Kenneth W. Vickers, *T. S. Stribling: A Life of the Tennessee Novelist* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2004), 216.

The *Saturday Evening Post* article about J. H. Stribling gives us valuable information. T. S. Stribling first acknowledged the "casual, almost accidental way" that Cousin Jim acquired his wealth, speculating that was why his cousin "talked poor" despite his prosperity.[14] Jim was inspired to seek his fortune when he encountered an orphan who had a new suit, horse, saddle, and money to spare. If an orphan could succeed, Stribling believed he could also, sparking his drive to pursue wealth. He left the family farm to seek his fortune in a nearby town as a drugstore clerk (really an intern) with C.W. Spotswood where he was paid nothing but given room and board.[15] After working less than a year for Spotswood, Jim was fired, cause unknown.[16]

While Jim could have chosen to return home, he opted to persist. He heard news of a drugstore opening in Linden, the seat of Perry County, which was north of Lawrenceburg. Since Jim had finished training as a pharmacist, he taught the business owner the necessary skills and charged one-hundred dollars. Jim then used the money to reinvest in another store. After working there for one year, he sold his share of the business for thirteen hundred dollars more than he originally paid. At that point he decided to seek his fortune out west and purchased a ticket to Denton, Texas. Stribling established a grocery and found success in Denton because he catered to the many former Confederates living there and formed a friendship with a local judge, who also happened to be a very successful rancher. Business from the judge further boosted profits.[17]

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[14] T. S. Stribling, "My Cousin Ji-Um." *The Saturday Evening Post*, September 1941.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.

Stribling's suppliers noticed his prosperity and extended an offer for him to buy on credit. Business boomed like never before. A photograph of the south side of Denton's square from around 1889 shows the store's sign: Nichols & Stribling Grocers.[18] Stribling obtained a business partner at an unknown point in the venture. The 1890-91 *Texas State Gazetteer and Business Directory* included Stribling & Fain Grocers in its Denton County list.[19] Jim's former associate was either replaced by Jesse E. Fain, or they opened up a different store in the county. He made roughly a quarter of a million dollars in the three years he operated in Denton.[20] The sum would be the equivalent of at least seven million dollars in 2020.

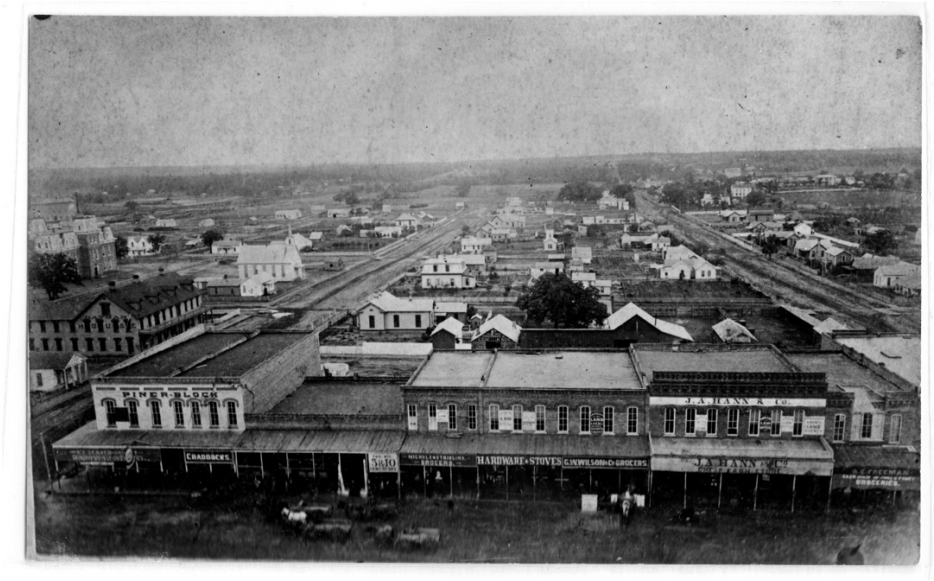

Figure 2. South side of the square in Denton, Texas, circa 1889. Nichols & Stribling Grocers is the middle building. *(University of North Texas Libraries)*

[18] South Side of Denton Square, photograph, 1889, Denton Public Library, https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth12458/m1/1/.

[19] "Full Text of 'Texas State Gazetteer and Business Directory.'" *Internet Archive*, Allen County Public Library, 2013.

[20] Stribling, "My Cousin Ji-Um."

James Henry Stribling returned to Tennessee out of concern for his family in the late 1880s.[21] T.S. Stribling thought Providence brought Jim back to Tennessee, saying, "Probably it meant that his real lifework was here in his old home. There was a touch of the messianic in his attitude. He shifted from being a follower in the West to a leader in the South."[22] The author seems to underestimate Jim's prominence in Texas as one of the wealthiest men in town. A more appropriate assessment would be that he arrived in Denton as a follower and returned to Lawrenceburg with the means necessary to lead.

Figure 3. J. H. Stribling (left) and James Dunn (right). The photograph was taken in the early 1890s, soon after Stribling returned to Lawrenceburg. *(Lawrence County Old Jail Museum)*

[21]Kathleen Graham-Gandy, *One Man's Vision His County's Reward: How the Life of James H. Stribling Affected His Fellow Man* (Lawrenceburg, TN: Shock Inner Prizes, 2013), 51.

[22] Stribling, "My Cousin Ji-Um."

J. H. Stribling's first move once he returned home was to purchase a farm. He spent a small fortune on its improvement, resulting in only modest gains.[23] He decided to open a store in addition to his property investments. A newspaper story in 1891 notifying the community about a new school book shipment indicates J. H. Stribling & Co. sold an assortment of goods.[24] As early as January 11, 1895, the local newspaper published his advertisements for various remedies to cure ailments like colds, pain, rheumatism, whooping cough, and more.[25] He apparently returned to his pharmacist roots, but the venture was doomed to be cut short by a fire. The *Nashville Banner* reported on October 7, 1898 that an incredibly destructive fire ravaged the downtown area. Many buildings were damaged, including Stribling's. It stated, "The flames spread rapidly north and south, completely destroying the drug store of J. H. Stribling & Co." The article listed twenty-one Lawrenceburg businesses impacted by the fire, claiming that despite the fifty thousand dollars worth of damage, the insurance would likely only pay seven thousand.[26]

Although the fire was a difficult blow for Stribling, he picked himself up and focused his attention elsewhere to the region's growing timber industry. T. S. Stribling claimed that there was money in southern lumber in the 1890s – that was putting it lightly.[27] Beginning in the 1880s, logging boomed in Tennessee because of railroad expansion.[28] J. H. Stribling likely got involved in the enterprise right before the turn of the century. He made the sound financial decision to sell lumber rather than drop a small

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[23] Ibid.
[24] "School Books," *Lawrence Democrat,* July 24, 1891.
[25] *Lawrence Democrat,* January 11, 1895.
[26] "A Destructive Fire in Lawrenceburg," *Nashville Banner,* October 7, 1898.
[27] Stribling, "My Cousin Ji-Um."
[28] Margaret L. Brown, "Timber Industry." *Tennessee Encyclopedia*, Tennessee Historical Society, March 1, 2018.

fortune on a sawmill, and by January 1904 his name was listed in the trade magazine "The Lumberman" as the only manufacturer in Lawrenceburg.[29] Through this business endeavor, Stribling got involved with the Louisville & Nashville Railroad. The L & N sent out a call for sealed bids on twenty-two million feet of construction materials, and Jim wanted the contract, knowing it would provide a solid start for his wholesale lumber enterprise. He offered bottom-dollar prices but still felt the need to accompany his sealed bid. Upon arrival, he discovered his quote was six thousand dollars too high. Jim was skeptical of the unrealistically low price and requested to see the invoices from his competitor. He discovered that the other businessman failed to fulfill two previous orders from L & N, so Jim seized the opportunity by offering his lumber instead.[30] The company representative accepted Stribling's proposition, which started a professional relationship between the corporation and the entrepreneur.

J. H. Stribling was the classic small-town civic capitalist, investing not only in businesses but institutions to help the town and country grow. Never stopping at just one venture, Stribling was involved with the organization of the First National Bank in 1902.[31] The earliest mention of the bank in the local newspaper emerged in 1903, listing Stribling as the vice president.[32] By 1914 he was listed as the bank's president in the *Rand-McNally Bankers' Directory and List of Attorneys.*[33] His involvement in the formation of the bank and his other businesses marked him as elite in the small

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[29] John E. MacGowan, ed., *The [Chattanooga] Tradesman* 50, no. 9 (January 1, 1904): 202.
[30] Stribling, "My Cousin Ji-Um."
[31] "First National Bank," *Souvenir Edition of the Times,* April 1909.
[32] "The First National Bank," *Lawrence Democrat,* December 25, 1903.
[33] "Tennessee Banks – Lafayette to Loudon," *The Rand-McNally Bankers' Directory and List of Attorneys* (New York: Kountze Brothers Bankers, January 1914), 952.

community; Stribling became a leader. In 1905 the *Lawrence Democrat* reported that J. H. Stribling had been selected to serve on the Lawrenceburg Fruit Company's executive committee.[34] The organization was created in response to the area's growing importance in the fruit market, likely prompted by a soil survey conducted by the 1905 United States Department of Agriculture. The report stated that the soil in Lawrence County produced superior cantaloupes and strawberries.[35] This endorsement prompted an agricultural boom.

Figure 4. The First National Bank on the Lawrenceburg square as it appeared in 1941. *(Lawrence County Old Jail Museum)*

[34]"Cantaloupe Association," *Lawrence Democrat,* January 27, 1905.

[35] Charles N. Mooney and O. L. Ayrs, *Soil Survey of Lawrence County, Tennessee* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office for U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1905), 12.

The importance of Stribling's committee position emerges through understanding the context for Lawrence County's fruit experiment. In 1905, the area became enthralled with the idea of raising cantaloupes. Prospectors wanted to relocate to the area to grow the crop.[36] Many newspaper articles within a two-year time span mentioned the produce, one headline reading: "Cantaloupe Culture Is Going To Be A Big Thing in Lawrence County."[37] It seemed like the town believed this was its ticket to success, even labeling itself as "The Cantaloupe City."[38] The seemingly strange excitement over the fruit's ability to put the small community on the map shows how respected Stribling was to have been chosen as a committee member of this initiative. He likely invested capital in the venture, making opportunities possible for Lawrence County. Although the cantaloupe craze eventually waned, it was an important part of the area's economic aspirations.

Stribling's actions shaped local economic advancement in agriculture. In 1912, representatives from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the State College of Agriculture met with fifty to seventy-five local farmers at Stribling's farm to discuss the importance of crop rotation.[39] Stribling must have already been utilizing these methods because by November of that year, a representative of the plant industry bureau of Washington declared that his was the best corn crop in the state because of it.[40] In September of 1913, the same man used soy beans from Stribling's farm as a

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[36]"Cantaloupe Culture," *Lawrence Democrat,* November 17, 1905.

[37] "Cantaloupe Culture Is Going to Be a Big Thing in Lawrence County" *Lawrence Democrat,* February 20, 1906.

[38] "July the Fourth! Come to Lawrenceburg, Tenn. The Cantaloupe City," *Lawrence Democrat,* June 26, 1906.

[39] "Farmers' Meeting at Ethridge," *Lawrence Democrat,* July 3, 1912.

[40] "Lawrence Crop Heads the List," *Lawrence Democrat,* November 6, 1912.

demonstration for Lawrence County farmers to prove how beneficial crop rotation could be for them.[41] Stribling led through example.

Before the depression hit, Stribling contacted his acquaintances from Swift and Co. to send a representative to determine if the county was a viable location for a cheese factory. He had forged a friendship with the corporation through his successful grocery venture in Denton and decided to use his influence to bring new industry to Lawrence County. A Swift and Co. representative investigated the area but deemed it unfit, stating in his report, "County doesn't produce enough milk for its own people. Cattle scrubs, no milk-producing strains. No pasturage for cattle. No dairy information among farmers."[42] Stribling found the assessment unsuitable and sent Swift and Co. a strongly worded telegram demanding it dispatch a more cooperative agent. The next representative provided a less definitive – but not glowing – report. Stribling convinced the company to run the business if he financed the cattle for farmers through his bank and constructed the building on his own dime.[43] The Swift Cheese Plant opened on October 2, 1929, as a result of Stribling's efforts.[44] He was also responsible for the establishment of a shirt factory in Lawrenceburg, run by the New York clothing manufacturer Salant and Salant. He and two other associates advanced the money to build the plant.[45]

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[41] "Crop Rotation Value Demonstrated on the Stribling Farm," *Lawrence Democrat,* September 13, 1913.

[42] Stribling, "My Cousin Ji-Um," *Saturday Evening Post*.

[43] Ibid.

[44] "Swift Cheese Plant to Open October 9: Lawrenceburg Plans Big Celebration – Groups Are Named," *Nashville Banner,* October 2, 1929.

[45] "Lawrenceburg Is Conquering Depression with Enterprise and Ideas," *Nashville Banner,* October 16, 1932.

A *Nashville Banner* article from 1932 proclaimed, "Lawrenceburg is Conquering the Depression with Enterprise and Ideas… Citizens Under Leadership of J. H. Stribling Provide Cheese and Shirt Manufacturing Units and Direct Agriculture Program."[46] Stribling played an important role in easing the area's suffering during the Great Depression. The journalist stated, "[Lawrence County] has probably more than any other community in the state and probably in the whole south the assurance that mouths there will not go unfilled because hands cannot find work to do."[47] Stribling's actions resulted in the financial security detailed by the reporter: his investments provided employment opportunities for many in Lawrence County. Whether or not he reached millionaire status as his cousin suggested is not known, but Jim Stribling was one of the country's most successful businessmen.

[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.

Nashville Banner (Nashville, Tennessee) · Sun, Oct 16, 1932 · Page 13

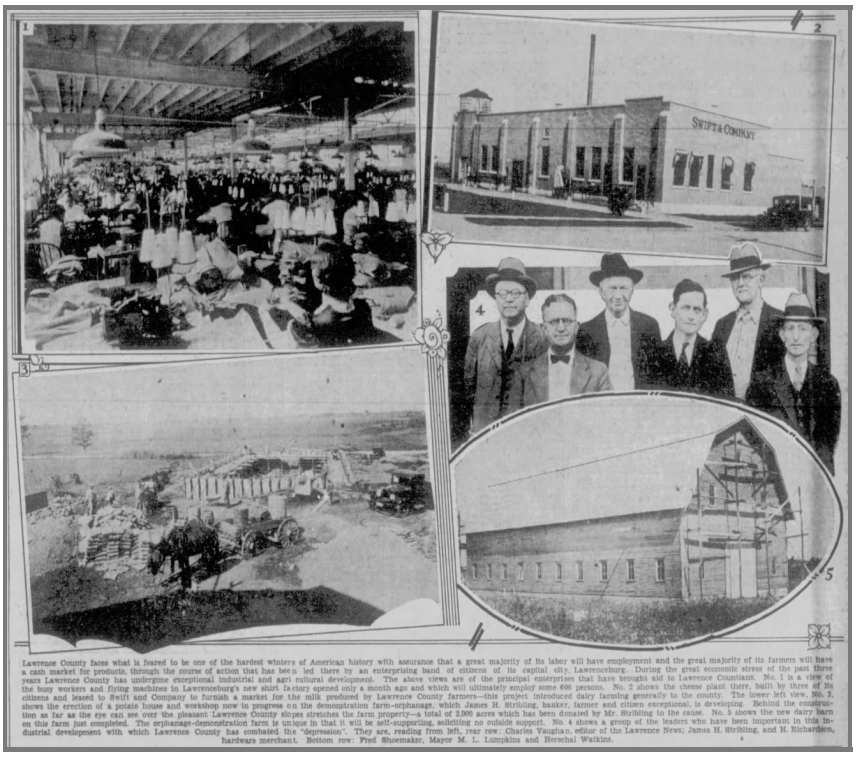

Figure 5. Picture collage used in the *Nashville Banner* article from 1932. The top left corner is the interior of the Salant and Salant shirt factory, the top right corner is the Swift & Company cheese factory, the bottom left shows construction of a potato house at the Christian Home orphanage, the bottom right is the dairy barn also built on the Christian Home property. The six men pictured were community leaders influential in the industrial developments. Left to right back row: Charles Vaughan, James H. Stribling, and H. Richardson. Bottom row: Fred Shoemaker, Mayor M. L. Lumpkins, and Herschal Watkins. *(Newspapers.com)*

During the New Deal, the federal government located a Civilian Conservation Corps camp right outside of Lawrenceburg at Pine Bluff. A 1939 newspaper article from the *Democrat Union* said Stribling bought a lot close to the camp for the young men to play baseball on.[48] In 1944, a newspaper story stated that the former site was Stribling's

[48] Graham-Gandy, *One Man's Vision His County's Reward*, 31.

property.[49] Based on these two sources, it is reasonable to assume he owned the land while the CCC camp was in operation. He likely had a hand in getting the government program located in the county, since it was built on his lot and given his involvement in local affairs. Historian Kenneth Bindas states in *A New Model Army*, "The central purpose of the CCC was to employ young men in order to provide them life and work skills necessary to contribute to the greater good of their families, communities, and the state."[50] The relief program not only helped young people but also communities through public works projects. Carroll Van West discusses the extensive impact of the CCC on the natural and built environment in *Tennessee's New Deal Landscape.* He states the men primarily focused on soil conservation and land reclamation but also constructed buildings, roads, and trails.[51] Photographs show the men of Lawrenceburg's Company 448 splitting wood, laboring at a sawmill, and repairing roads.[52]

Even though the CCC camp closed in late 1941 as World War II loomed, it provided the foundation for Pine Bluff's next phase. On March 17th, 1944, the *Democrat Union* reported for the first time that German prisoners of war would possibly be coming to Lawrenceburg to cut cordwood for Hickman County's branch of the Tennessee Products Corporation, a local company that produced products like wood alcohol, acetic acid, and tar.[53] On March 31st, the paper stated that the POW camp location would be at

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[49] "Nazi Prison Camp Construction Is Under Way: Prisoners to Be Located at Pine Bluff," [Lawrenceburg, TN] *Democrat-Union,* March 31, 1944.

[50] Kenneth J. Bindas, *Modernity and the Great Depression: The Transformation of American Society, 1930-1941* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2017), 46.

[51] Carroll Van West, *Tennessee's New Deal Landscape: A Guidebook* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2001), 151.

[52] Graham-Gandy, *One Man's Vision His County's Reward*, 1, 9, 11.

[53] "German War Prisoners Cutting Wood: 250 Men At Local German Camp," *Democrat-Union,* April 28 1944.

Pine Bluff on J. H. Stribling's property.[54] With Stribling's wealth and influence, it is likely that he pulled a few strings to get the branch camp located in Lawrenceburg to alleviate the impact of labor shortages. Local farms suffered along with the lumber industry from the dearth of available workers: bringing POWs into the area would provide an economic boost. Lawrenceburg offered an ideal choice for the camp because of its rural location and preexisting CCC camp site at Pine Bluff: government officials would have hardly feared enemy sabotage of war industries and the facilities for housing POWs was already in place.

Turning to Sacred Service

Stribling became more religious in his outlook on life after the death of his daughter Gladys, aged four, in 1901.[55] He began to search for answers and his own salvation.[56] After hearing gospel preacher T. B. Larimore give a sermon titled "What Must I Do to Be Saved?" Jim Stribling was baptized and turned to greater local philanthropy.[57]

One of Stribling's first major gifts to the community was a two-story, brick public high school. The original Lawrence County High School was established in 1908 when the local court created a tax to fund the endeavor. J. H. Stribling owned the land and building that the county leaders desired for the school, so he agreed to let them use it.

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[54] "Nazi Prison Camp Construction Is under Way: Prisoners to Be Located at Pine Bluff," *Democrat-Union,* March 31, 1944.

[55] Scott Harp, "James Henry Stribling," *History of the Restoration Movement*, accessed March 30, 2021, www.therestorationmovement.com/_states/tennessee/stribling.htm.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid.

Stribling then decided to fund the construction of a new building for the community to use at no cost, which was completed in 1910.[58] The one stipulation he required in return for the donation: a room dedicated for Bible classes and an instructor of his choice. He selected Robert H. Boll of the Church of Christ to teach the courses. Stribling knew Boll and had been impressed by his teaching abilities.[59]

Figure 6. The original Lawrence County High School building. *(Lawrence County Old Jail Museum)*

The school operated with its Bible classes intact for almost twenty years, when citizens concerned about First Amendment rights asked the County Court voted to end the arrangement in 1929.[60] The court realized that in order to end the courses, Stribling's ties to the high school had to be severed. The county ultimately had to pay $56,000,

[58] John F. Morrison Jr., "Lawrence County Historical Society Report," June 1963.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid.

transferring ownership from Stribling to the county. In 2020, the cost would have equaled a sum of over eight hundred thousand dollars.

After the large payment, Stribling felt compelled to spend the money on another charitable deed: he decided to build an orphanage. The money from the county only scratched the surface of the cost.[61] The Orphan's Home was set to open July 1, 1937. The *Johnson City Chronicle* reported that it was surrounded by a whopping twenty-two thousand acres.[62] An endowment of seventy thousand dollars was granted to the institution, which would equate to over 1.2 million dollars in 2020. Stribling illustrated his wealth and dedication to philanthropy through this gift given in the midst of the Great Depression. The site was named the "Christian Home" by Stribling because he founded it as an institution of the Church of Christ.[63] It was primarily for orphans associated with this specific religious affiliation, but children from all denominations were served.[64] The stipulation shows Stribling's dedication to the Christian faith and also the doctrine proclaimed by the Church of Christ. The orphanage operated until 1991. The property in 2020 served Kids Place, a child advocacy center, and the administrative office for The Shelter, a facility for victims of domestic violence. One thousand acres are still attached to the organization, and a non-profit board oversees the property's upkeep.[65]

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[61] Stribling, "My Cousin Ji-Um."
[62] "Large New Orphan's Home Opens July 1," *Johnson City Chronicle,* May 8, 1937.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Doyce Shaddix, "Historical Society: The Life of James Stribling, Part II," *Lawrence County Advocate,* April 29, 2020.

Figure 7. A boy farming the Christian Home property, circa 1941. *(Lawrence County Old Jail Museum)*

Gospel preacher R. H. Boll described Stribling's dedication to his theology and the Church of Christ in an article published in *Word and Work.* During one of Boll's visits to Lawrenceburg, Stribling asked him to hold a gospel meeting at the Stribling-controlled First National Bank during the opening hour each day. Stribling told Boll, "I wouldn't be in any business in which I couldn't have the Lord Jesus Christ as my Partner. During all this depression, nor at any other time, did we ever foreclose on anybody," he claimed.[66] Stribling served as a leader at the Salem Church of Christ in Lawrenceburg.[67] His sense of business practice was one with his faith, and he began to give large chunks of his fortune away.

[66] Harp, "James Henry Stribling."
[67] Ibid.

After Stribling's death, Boll wrote that his greatest gifts were his "devotion to his God, and his love toward all men."[68] Boll used an encompassing word when describing Stribling's love for mankind – *all.* Boll was possibly thinking of Stribling's wartime dealings that tested his adherence to Jesus' command, "Love your enemies." A journalist wrote in a *Democrat-Union* obituary, "Widely known for his philanthropy, Mr. Stribling was one of Lawrence County's most prominent and beloved citizens. An ardent advocate of conservation and a devoted friend of the farmer, Mr. Stribling was active throughout his declining years to the betterment of the community and the people he loved."[69] The story illustrates the best aspects of local perceptions of Stribling. He became an admired leader through civic service, large donations, and business ventures that economically benefited the town.

The German Evangelist

Robert Henry Boll was an important figure in the Church of Christ and the twentieth-century Restoration Movement. His journey started in an unorthodox location: the Black Forest of Germany, where he was born in 1875. Hans Rollmann wrote about Boll's history, stating that his family was originally Catholic.[70] Boll was among the small portion of the population that had access to a secondary education, whose rigorous coursework prepared him for future intellectual pursuits, including teaching positions.

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[68] Ibid.

[69] "James H. Stribling Dies Wednesday at Local Hospital," *Democrat-Union,* December 8, 1951.

[70] Hans J. Rollmann, "From the Black Forest to the Nashville Bible School: The Conversion of Robert Henry Boll," *Restoration Quarterly* 58, no.1 (2016): 5.

Boll's curriculum included Roman Catholic instruction primarily based on the well-respected intermediate diocesan catechism created by Jesuit Joseph Deharbe.[71]

The catechism Boll used had a specific division for teachings on Means of Grace. Deharbe wrote that we cannot keep God's commandments and be saved without His grace. He describes grace as a supernatural help that can be divided into two types: assistance and transient. Grace of Assistance, or Actual Grace, consists of God enlightening understanding, discouraging evil, and promoting good. Deharbe further explains that although it is available to everyone, it can be rejected. He therefore urged his readers, "Pray daily to God to give you His grace."[72] Sanctifying Grace is defined as a free, supernatural gift given by the Holy Ghost that changes the state of the soul from sinfulness to righteousness.[73] The individual must receive the Sacrament of Baptism or Penance in order to obtain this grace and become blameless. The works that a justified man produces are only through the help of grace, and as more are performed, the individual increases in sanctifying grace and merits eternal salvation.[74] Deharbe writes that the means to obtain grace are through prayer and the seven sacraments: baptism, confirmation, Holy Eucharist, penance, extreme unction, Holy Orders, and matrimony.[75] Boll's views on this subject and other Catholic doctrines would have been largely shaped by the teachings espoused by the catechism chosen for his studies.

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[71] Ibid., 6.

[72] Joseph A. Deharbe, *A Complete Catechism of the Catholic Religion*, translated by John Fander, edited by James J. Fox and Thomas McMillan, 6th American ed. (New York: Schwartz, Kirwin & Fauss, 1924), 242.

[73] Ibid., 245.

[74] Ibid., 246-47.

[75] Ibid., 248-50.

After Boll's father died and his mother remarried, he came to America with his aunt and cousin around 1890 and never returned to Germany.[76] Boll evidently maintained his faith once he arrived in the New World, because he continued to write in a Catholic prayer book. His expression was full of sorrow and strain because of his current lot, working the worst jobs offered because he was unskilled in any trade.[77] He labored in Ohio until a chance encounter changed the course of his life. One night as Boll was searching for work, he fell asleep at the entrance of a drugstore. A police officer woke the young pauper and instructed him to go see his brother, a baggage master at the railroad station. Upon providing his brother's recommendation of Boll, the baggage master told him to get off the train in Nashville and find the nearby Rutherford County farm of a family he knew who needed workers.[78]

While Boll labored as a farm hand, he was exposed to the local Rock Spring Church of Christ located at Smyrna, Tennessee.[79] Many influential preachers of the Restoration Movement visited the congregation, including T. B. Larimore who baptized J. H. Stribling. Boll's Roman Catholic support system was non-existent in rural Tennessee, and his mind was gradually changed through religious conversations with his unnamed employer. He was baptized in 1895 and became a well-known, yet sometimes contentious, figure in the Churches of Christ.

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[76] Rollmann, "From the Black Forest to the Nashville Bible School," 8.
[77] Ibid., 13.
[78] Ibid., 15.
[79] Hans J. Rollmann, "From the Black Forest to the Nashville Bible School: The Conversion of Robert Henry Boll," *Restoration Quarterly* 58, no.2 (2016): 68.

The same year of his conversion, R. H. Boll enrolled in the Nashville Bible School. The school, now Lipscomb University, provided a faith-based education guided by James Harding and David Lipscomb. A former student recalled that in Harding's theology, "salvation by grace … through faith rather than by 'works' or deeds of merit was a cherished truth."[80] The teachings on grace caused a split: it resonated with one faction but was resented by the other. A classmate of Boll's remembered he "drank it in" and that Harding proclaimed of his student, "I wouldn't take a million dollars for him."[81] Boll's personal beliefs were likely shaped by his time at the school and his mentor's teachings.

Boll's first experience preaching came in 1896, the year following his enrollment in Nashville Bible School. He left the school in 1900 and started evangelizing across several southern states. In 1904, the Portland Avenue congregation in Louisville, Kentucky, employed Boll full-time.[82] An article in the *Nashville American* announced Boll's graduation from the Nashville Bible School with the class of 1909.[83]

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[80] Richard T. Hughes, "Grace vs. Works: R. H. Boll and the Premillennial Battle among Churches of Christ," *Leaven* 2, no. 4 (1992): 47.

[81] Ibid.

[82] Scott Harp, "Robert Henry Boll," *History of the Restoration Movement*, accessed March 30, 2021.

[83] "Brilliant End of School Year: Eighteenth Annual Commencement of Bible School," *Nashville American,* May 28, 1909.

Figure 8. Young R. H. Boll. *(Beaman Library Archives and Special Collections)*

In 1909, Boll became the front-page editor for the religious journal *Gospel Advocate*.[84] Tolbert Fanning and William Lipscomb, leaders in the Church of Christ, had founded the magazine in 1855.[85] After Boll's theories about Premillennialism[86] became visible in his writings, the editors temporarily removed him from the position. The digression from typical Church of Christ doctrine involved interpretation of prophecy found in Revelation 20. Boll believed that there would be an earthly reign of Christ with

[84] Harp, "Robert Henry Boll."

[85] "Gospel Advocate Company: About Us," *Gospel Advocate*, accessed March 30, 2021.

[86] Premillennialism is the belief that Jesus Christ's Second Coming will initiate a thousand-year period of peace on earth.

the saints for one thousand years, a literal resurrection of the righteous, restoration of Israel, and that the Biblical prophecies about Christ's kingdom were not yet fulfilled.[87] Church of Christ preachers usually considered the book of Revelation as symbolic. The religious group formed during the Stone-Campbell movement of the Second Great Awakening when reformers called for a return to New Testament Christianity, modeled only after the Bible and the first century church. They believed the kingdom predicted in scripture to be the church established on Pentecost, of which they considered themselves members. By 1915, the issue had sparked such controversy that Boll resigned, but he refused to remain silent about what he believed the Bible taught.[88]

Premillennialism remained a widely debated topic within the Churches of Christ after 1915, but the issue took center stage in 1930 when Foy E. Wallace became the editor of the *Gospel Advocate.*[89] Wallace insisted that premillennialism was not merely a matter of opinion but an issue that would destroy the fellowship; according to church historian Robert Hooper, Wallace loved stirring controversy.[90] Leaders disagreed on how to approach the subject: men like prominent church leader G. C. Brewer believed the disagreement was overblown, while others like Wallace considered it grounds for disfellowship. The divisive doctrine resulted in some premillennial believers leaving.

Church of Christ historian Richard Hughes argues that the views of divine grace so influential at the Nashville Bible School were fading by the 1930s and 1940s. Instead,

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[87] Foy E. Wallace, *The Gospel for Today* (Fort Worth, TX: Noble Patterson, 1967), 403.
[88] Hughes and Roberts, *The Churches of Christ*, 179.
[89] Robert E. Hooper, *A Distinct People: A History of the Churches of Christ in the 20th Century* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001), 141.
[90] Ibid., 142

"leaders and members of Churches of Christ allowed their cognitive grasp of biblical truths and their ability to follow biblical rules to displace the radical vision of grace that still prevailed in the premillennial wing of the movement."[91] Boll retained the NBS teachings espoused by his mentor, Harding. Hughes writes that grace was paramount in Boll's theology: "Our good work is the fruit of the life and of the good blessings before-hand received, and not the means with which we purchase those favors from God."[92] The departure from his Catholic background is evident – no amount of good works will increase the grace one receives. Boll also stated, "If you do God's will, not to make Him love you, but because He loves you; not to obtain His grace, but because that grace works in you mightily."[93] Here Boll expressed his belief that works are done *because* one has received grace, not performed in order to obtain it. He ascribed good works a different role than many of his fellow preachers within the movement. He pushed Christians of the mainstream Church of Christ congregations to embrace the gospel's beauty and resist its interpretation as purely a code of law.

What part of Boll's theology attracted the attention of J. H. Stribling is uncertain when Stribling handpicked Boll to be the Bible teacher at the new Lawrence County High School in 1910. Boll's controversial position within the Churches of Christ makes Stribling's promotion of his teaching more significant. Stribling had considerable influence as a leader in the area and used his position to underwrite Boll's works. The

[91] Hughes, "Grace vs. Works: R. H. Boll and the Premillennial Battle among Churches of Christ," 48.

[92] Ibid.

[93] Ibid.

two men likely shared theological beliefs, since Stribling commended Boll rather than denouncing him.

At Lawrenceburg, Boll's classes included both Old and New Testament, and the school had one hundred twenty students enrolled, according to the *Lawrence Democrat*.[94] Boll later wrote that during his one-year stint, he taught all day to anyone who would come. In addition to the religious courses, he taught German. His after-school schedule was packed with community outreach: he spent Monday nights preaching to African American citizens in Lawrenceburg, Friday nights he lectured at the courthouse, and Sundays he split between the church in town and the congregation in Mars Hill, Alabama.[95]

In 1911, the Portland Avenue Church of Christ wanted him to return, so Boll moved back to Louisville, Kentucky. He periodically visited Lawrenceburg to hold gospel meetings even as a full-time preacher in Louisville. Stribling's support of Boll as an evangelist and friend remained strong even after he left. Once when Boll was in town holding a gospel meeting, Stribling insisted that he hold services in the lobby of the First National Bank. The tone Boll used when writing an article in J. H. Stribling's memory illustrates how close the men were. He expressed admiration and respect for his longtime friend.[96]

<u>"Little Jim" Stribling</u>

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[94] "High School Notes: The Bible Department of the High School," *Lawrence Democrat,* March 6, 1912.

[95] Harp, "James Henry Stribling."

[96] Ibid.

In 1906, Jim and Dena Stribling were able to have another child two years after losing Gladys. They had another little girl, but instead of giving her a distinctively feminine name as was tradition, they named her James Lois Stribling, taking the name from both of her parents. She became known as "Little Jim" throughout her youth. This departure from the norm could have symbolized what her father expected from her. Although her cousin T. S. Stribling described young Jim as "silent" and having the "compound demureness of ten violets and eight field mice," she would grow up to be a determined, forceful woman.[97]

Little Jim grew up in Lawrence County's wealthiest and most prominent household. She frequently travelled with her parents for both business and pleasure because of her father's enterprises and status. From an early age, newspaper articles mentioned Little Jim's accompaniment on trips to places such as Atlantic City, Washington D.C., Sewanee, and Monteagle.[98] The travels exposed her to more than most children her age from rural Tennessee. The column relating local actions in the *Lawrence Democrat* reported about Jim spending days on the family farm.[99] She would have spent a great deal of time on her father's property learning about the daily operations and how to effectively run a holding of that size. R. H. Boll marveled at J. H. Stribling's adept handling of all his business ventures, taking calls and making difficult choices.[100] Children often pay close attention to their parents and seek to emulate them, which was

[97] Graham-Gandy, *One Man's Vision His County's Reward*, 95.
[98] *Lawrence Democrat,* July 31, 1912.
[99] *Lawrence Democrat,* May 14, 1913.
[100] Harp, "James Henry Stribling."

likely the case for Little Jim; she got exposure to her father's professional dealings even as a child, as she spent time on the farm and listened while he took calls.

Figure 9. Young Jim Stribling. Her dress and accessories are indicative of the Stribling family's wealth and status. *(Lawrence County Old Jail Museum)*

Little Jim Stribling grew up going to the Salem Church of Christ and remained a member until her death in 1988.[101] She ascribed to the teachings of that branch of the Christian faith as her father did, and it likely influenced her motivations. J. H. Stribling underwrote the teachings of multiple evangelists in the region, so Little Jim probably knew the preachers. R. H. Boll was particularly close to the family. In 1912, the *Lawrence Democrat* reported that Mrs. Stribling and Little Jim spent a weekend away in

[101] "Mrs. Jim Stribling Brock Leonard Dies at Age 84," *Democrat-Union,* February 2, 1988.

Lynnville where Boll was conducting a meeting.[102] The women travelled without Mr. Stribling, illustrating their independent personal connection to Boll. Journeying over thirty miles for a gospel meeting shows their support for Boll's message, his work, and their affection for him in general. The long-distance friendship remained strong until his death in 1956.[103]

Little Jim married World War I veteran Delmar Brock on January 3, 1923.[104] Based on a letter from T. S. Stribling sent just a few days later, the couple eloped.[105] Little Jim also increasingly became known as merely Jim for the rest of her life. Jim and Delmar remained married for thirty-one years and took care of J. H. Stribling's farm as he grew older. Following his death in 1951, Delmar Brock became the First National Bank's next president. The *Nashville Banner* photographed the group of officers and directors. They were a homogenous group of men with one exception: Jim Brock.[106] She was the sole woman in a leadership position at the bank. A woman serving on a bank's board of directors in the rural South, or any place actually, during the 1950s was a novelty. In her book *Homeward Bound,* Elaine Tyler May argues that the American dream during the Cold War was "successful breadwinners supporting attractive homemakers."[107] Jim defied the stereotypical gender roles during the era to serve in a

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[102] *Lawrence Democrat,* October 2, 1912.

[103] Stribling Brock Letter Collection: German Prisoner of War Letters, Beaman Library Archives and Special Collections (BLASC), Lipscomb University, Nashville, TN.

[104] Graham-Gandy, *One Man's Vision His County's Reward*, 93.

[105] Ibid, 95.

[106] "Lawrenceburg Bank Observes 50th Year," *Nashville Banner,* January 24, 1952.

[107] Elaine T. May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 2017), 18.

leadership position. She later became the bank's president, chairman of the board, and secretary of the Christian Home orphanage.[108]

Nashville Banner (Nashville, Tennessee) · Thu, Jan 24, 1952 · Page 2

Lawrenceburg Bank Observes 50th Year

—Photo by Willis Studio, Lawrenceburg

These are the officers of the First National Bank of Lawrenceburg, which is celebrating its fiftieth anniversary this week. Seated left to right: T. H. Hughes, director, E. G. Parkes, vice-president; Delmar H. Brock, president; A. D. Boynton, cashier; John W. Davis, assistant cashier. Back row standing left to right: G. A. Dugger, John Roberts, Mrs. Jim Stribling Brock, Foster F. Locke, G. C. Gambill, Dr. W. H. Neal, and G. K. Vaughan, all directors.

Figure 10. Newspaper clipping from the *Nashville Banner* showing the First National Bank officers in 1952. Jim Stribling Brock is located on the back row, third from the left. *(Newspapers.com)*

These biographical sketches illustrate how individuals' lives intersected in serendipitous ways. Their choices connected them and ultimately resulted in the surprise letter discovery. The former POWs experienced kindness, compassion, and generosity

[108] "Mrs. Jim Stribling Brock Leonard Dies at Age 84," *Democrat-Union,* February 2, 1988.

during their internment in Lawrenceburg, and the Brocks persisted in these virtues after the men went home. Through their donations, the family strove to aid their former workers struggling to survive in postwar Germany. Each actor played a role in the circumstances that allowed the Brock family to positively impact the former POWs and their families.

CHAPTER II:

NAZI NEIGHBORS OR GERMAN BOYS:

LAWRENCEBURG, TENNESSEE'S WWII POW CAMP

Lawrenceburg's camp was created for the same reason as many others across the nation: labor shortage. The Tennessee Products Corporation logging company employed most POWs, but others worked on farms. Jim and Delmar Brock, a prominent local family, consistently used prisoner labor on their extensive property holdings. The experiences of the two groups were vastly different. While the woodcutters labored under more dangerous conditions, the farm hands developed deep relationships with their employers. The small group of POWs seemingly had no strong connections to the Nazi party, which likely influenced their selection for employment with the couple. The German men working for the Brocks expressed their lasting affection in postwar letters. Instead of friendship, a bond more akin to family formed between them. Jim Brock in particular treated the men with such kindness that they considered her a maternal figure. Connections formed as the Germans spent time with other individuals associated with their employers or the camp. Eventually the rhetoric used to describe the men changed, illustrating the altered attitudes of some in the community.

There are numerous gaps in our knowledge about the roughly two-hundred and fifty prisoners who arrived at the Lawrenceburg camp, but the available fragments of information from letters provide clues to the Germans' backgrounds. The correspondence primarily comes from the group who worked for the Brock family. The soldiers came from Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia. Nazis were the ruling political party in

Germany at the time, but their name was often used synonymously with "German" in American media. Antonio Thompson argues that as Hitler's army started failing, replacements included many opposed to the Führer's political party.[1] German men who did not support Hitler's regime were still conscripted. A United Press report from March 16th, 1935, stated that Hitler declared immediate military conscription, blaming other European power's failure to disarm as forcing the need for protection.[2] Johannes Hartmann, a draftee, shed light on his feelings toward conscription in a postwar letter. He discussed the situation in Germany and said, "The poor boys, which are pressed to become soldiers and became prisoners, or are injured in the war, will never find the way to the black market."[3] He purposefully excluded men who volunteered for service by using the word "pressed," meaning the "poor boys" he referenced were forced into the military. Hartmann conveyed sympathy for the suffering experienced by men required to fight in the war.

According to Hartmann, Germans unaffiliated with the Nazis were not automatically considered to become officers. He wrote, "All men who didn't belong to Hitler's party were put at first to the soldiers." His officers wanted to put him in officer's school, but he refused.[4] The German army promoted based on education and combat

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[1] Antonio Thompson, *Men in German Uniform: POWs in America during World War II* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2016), 15.

[2] "Hitler Orders Military Conscription in Germany," UPI, March 16, 1935, https://www.upi.com/Archives/1935/03/16/Hitler-orders-military-conscription-in-Germany/5124911384073.

[3] Johannes Hartmann to Brock family, June 3 1947, and Gustav Kiess to Brock family, May 17 1947, both in SBLC.

[4] Johannes Hartmann to Brock family, February 20 1948, in SBLC.

effectiveness in the first years of the war before it prioritized political affiliation.[5] Hartmann turned down the opportunity, because he claimed to hate Hitler and opposed the war based on Christian principles.

It is unknown how many others of the Lawrenceburg POWs held opinions similar to those of Hartmann, but other former prisoners such as Eugen Hirth, Johann Vaculik, Alfons Leeb, Alfons Mailhammer, and Heinz Mayk mentioned their religious faith in post-war letters. Their expressions ranged from brief mention to pious devotion. Most of their religious affiliations are unknown, but it is a reasonable assumption that the majority were Protestant and a smaller number adhered to Catholicism. Although Catholic Christians represented a minority, they still comprised approximately one-third of the German population in 1933. Protestant was the dominant Christian faith, with roughly forty-five million individuals ascribing to that branch of Christianity.[6] The men chose not to include specific doctrines and denominations in their letters, instead focusing on their general faith. Other than Hartmann, it is unclear whether the men's Christian beliefs played a role in their political positions.

Language used by several other former POWs expressed their opposition to the regime after the war, like Alfons Leeb, Gustav Kiess, and Eugen Hirth. It is reasonable to assume that most of the captives at the Lawrenceburg camp were not committed ideologues based on measures taken by the United States government to separate the different categories of political groups. In order to divide the most committed Nazi

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[5] Macgregor Knox, "1 October 1942: Adolf Hitler, Wehrmacht Officer Policy, and Social Revolution," *Historical Journal* 43, no. 3 (September 2000): 804.

[6] The Holocaust Explained, "Everyday Life: Religion," Wiener Holocaust Library, https://www.theholocaustexplained.org/life-in-nazi-occupied-europe/controlling-everyday-life/religion/.

supporters from those less devoted, they conducted a basic screening process before prisoners were shipped to America. The division was ultimately superficial and inadequate, but roughly 4,500 Nazis were interned at a special camp during the war due to their status as ideologues.[7] Additional observation took place at Camp Forrest, and members of the Nazi party were supposed to remain at that camp. POWs reported their political affiliations after the war ended, making it difficult to know how much the loss impacted their testimonies. Although several said they were not members of Hitler's party, they still fought in his army. Historian Omer Bartov stresses the complexity of soldiers' motivations and that one theory cannot explain such a diverse group.[8]

The United States received a massive influx of prisoners after the North Africa Campaign began yielding successes for the Allied armies in 1942. The men were from German General Erwin Rommel's renowned, elite Afrika Korps. [9] A multi-front war meant that military force could not be concentrated in one location and sacrifices would be necessary. Although the Axis forces had success for a while, Germany's victories in Russia stretched resources too thin: Rommel's forces paid for it. The powerful Afrika Korps began to see a change in the tide when panzers were challenged by Grant tanks, the Royal Air Force strengthened attrition, American forces joined, and the Enigma code was broken. After the initiation of Operation Torch, the Führer decided to finally grant Rommel seventeen thousand reinforcements after denying them for twenty months.[10]

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[7] Krammer, *Nazi Prisoners of War in America*, 14.

[8] Omer Bartov, "Soldiers, Nazis, and War in the Third Reich," *Journal of Modern History* 63, no. 1 (March 1991): 49.

[9] Krammer, *Nazi Prisoners of War in America*, 2.

[10] Max Hastings, *Inferno: The World at War, 1939-1945* (New York: Vintage Books, 2012).

Since Hitler held out on sending support for so long, it is likely that many of the Lawrenceburg POWs were among this group of men sent in after November 1942. Men like Hartmann and Mayk would have certainly been among the latter group of solders sent into North Africa, because their timelines do not line up with Rommel's initial invasion.

Based on Mayk's statement that he was a POW for four and a half years before his return home in August 1947, his capture took place anywhere from January to May 1943, depending on how specific he was in the year tally. The number of POWs taken by the Allied armies increased substantially from March to May 1943 because their victories in North Africa started increasing. After Eugen Hirth arrived in America, he painted a picture of his last night in Africa as a POW. It shows great darkness looming in the distance, heading for the men on shore. There was a great deal of uncertainty associated with the trip: the men were bound for an unknown land full of citizens from an enemy nation.

Lawrenceburg's POW camp was not built completely from scratch: the Army used the architectural bones of Lawrenceburg's former Civilian Conservation Corps camp. Lawrence County was not exempt from the economic suffering, and men turned to Roosevelt's program for aid. Unemployed young men from the ages of eighteen to twenty-five took advantage of the opportunity. They lived at the camp location, received three meals a day, a job, recreational opportunities, clothing, medical care, and steady wages.[11] The camps were built to hold about two hundred men; they contained wooden

[11]Robert Fechner, "The Civilian Conservation Corps Program," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 194 (November 1937): 131.

barracks, a mess hall, kitchen, recreational areas, bath houses, and other buildings. The *Democrat-Union,* a local newspaper, reported that the camp was officially shut down in late 1941.[12] An article on April 24, 1942 stated the camp was being dismantled after its abandonment for some time.[13] The lot sat vacant for almost three years as the United States prepared to enter World War II.

After several years spent as a ghost town, plans began for the camp's reincarnation in early 1944. Prominent local citizen James H. Stribling owned the plot of land that formerly housed the camp.[14] Writers for the local newspaper started publishing reports about the property's future in March 1944; the earliest article came out on the 17th stating that the town "may be "host" to German prisoners of war."[15] It also mentioned that the Tennessee Products Corporation and the War Production Board were working to bring two or three hundred captives to cut chemical wood,[16] but the plans would not be confirmed for some time. A week later the reporter updated the situation, stating that the "concentration camp of German prisoners" would be located at the former CCC site at Pine Bluff, half a mile west of the town.[17] The camp plans were first mentioned in a small story at the bottom of the *Democrat-Union*'s front page. Within two weeks, it became the

[12] "CCC Camp to Be Put back in This City: Unofficial Advices Say Unit Will Be in Operation Shortly," *Democrat-Union,* January 9, 1942.

[13] "Buildings at CCC Camp Dismantled," *Democrat-Union,* April 24, 1942.

[14] "Prisoners to Be Located at Pine Bluff: Barbed Wire for Fencing, Barracks; Material Moves in," *Democrat-Union,* March 31, 1944.

[15] "German War Prisoners May Be Nearby Guests," *Democrat-Union,* March 17, 1944.

[16] Chemical wood is any type of wood that is used as a raw material for chemicals such as acetic acid, wood alcohol, and acetone.

[17] "German War Prisoners to This County: Going to Make Them Cut Wood for War Effort," *Democrat-Union,* March 24, 1944.

headline story in the local newspaper and received lengthy treatment from the editors.[18] Here was breaking news indeed, of interest to everyone.

Obtaining government approval for the Lawrenceburg branch camp was not easy. A reporter first wrote about the topic on March 17th and said officials of the Tennessee Products Corporation were working with representatives of the War Production Board to bring prisoners into the area to cut chemical wood.[19] The corporation was one of the largest employers in the state from the 1920s through 1930s and owned massive tracts of land.[20] Despite its size, even large companies suffered from the widespread wartime labor shortage. Men left serious gaps in the workforce, as they were drafted into the military. Businesses and farmers across the nation faced the same problem: increased wartime demand for all goods, but less manpower. Southern lumber production in general fell drastically starting in 1942. The companies could not keep up with output even after employing handicapped individuals and women, so the government stepped in with assistance the same year. A journalist for the *Johnson City Press Chronicle* reported on March 25th, 1944, that the vice president of the firm stated that labor shortages had reduced the wood pulp distillation plant in Hickman County to half capacity for the past two months.[21] The War Manpower Commission classified major forest industries as essential in September 1942. Prisoners began filling in the holes as the government gave high priority to these types of businesses.[22] The Tennessee Products Corporation had an

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[18] "Prison Camp Construction Is under Way," *Democrat-Union,* March 31, 1944.
[19] "German War Prisoners May Be Nearby Guests," *Democrat-Union,* March 17, 1944.
[20] Bill Carey, "Tennessee Products Once Owned a Large Part of Tennessee," *Tennessee Magazine*, March 23, 2017, https://www.tnmagazine.org/tennessee-products-owned-large-part-tennessee/.
[21] "Nazi Prisoners of War to Cut Wood," *Johnson City Press Chronicle*, March 25, 1944.
[22] Fickle and Ellis, "POWs in the Piney Woods," 697-99.

advantage in its petition to receive workers because of this stipulation. The Tennessee Products Corporation announced on March 25th, 1944 that the War Manpower Commission and War Department had approved two hundred and fifty prisoners to work for the company.[23]

Employers seeking POW labor had to jump through many bureaucratic hoops. After the inquiring company detailed the project in an application and assured the War Manpower Commission of a sufficient labor dearth in the area, the WMC provided a Certification of Need. Then the employer had to guarantee the WMC that it would not discriminate, that employing POWs would not lead to lower wages for American workers, and that it would not violate the prisoners' rights.[24] The government organization also stipulated that if there was no main camp within one hour's drive of the industry, the company was required to build a sufficient branch camp. [25] The employer would sign a ninety-day contract with the War Department once the process had been completed. This would have been the situation for the Tennessee Products Corporation, since its operations were nowhere near the large POW concentrations of Camp Crossville and Camp Forrest in Tullahoma. Instead, it arranged for the Camp Forrest auxiliary site creation in Lawrenceburg.

Workers were granted to the Tennessee Products Corporation after they signed a contract with the government. A journalist for the local newspaper reported that the men would be employed as wood cutters. The Germans were required to cut chemical

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[23] "Nazi Prisoners of War to Cut Wood." *Johnson City Press Chronicle*, March 25, 1944.
[24] Krammer, *Nazi Prisoners of War in America*, 87.
[25] Fickle and Ellis, "POWs in the Piney Woods," 697.

cordwood for the Wrigley plant in Hickman County.[26] The government had built the facility during World War I to produce wood alcohol, acetic acid, and tar for military purposes.[27] Products like these were used to weatherproof planes, and for fuel, antifreeze, and adhesive. The plant continued to function in this capacity through World War II when the government deemed it necessary for the war effort.

Lawrenceburg was an ideal location for a prisoner of war camp. The government positioned many prison labor camps in the rural South and Southwest. The government feared sabotage from the enemy, so they wanted to keep prisoners far away from urban manufacturing centers. Another bonus was the cheaper cost of housing them in the southern states due to milder winters: less cold, fewer clothes provided, and little insulation for buildings.[28] Lawrenceburg fit government qualifications because of its distance from any major cities, lack of vulnerable war production, temperate winters, and the new camp could be built on the foundations of a former CCC camp.

Army engineers used barbed wire fencing, prefabricated barracks, and other materials to construct the prison camp. The city made arrangements for the location to have electricity and sewage.[29] The *Democrat-Union* writers published that the camp was a "miniature city, with commissary mess hall, kitchens, sewerage and drainage facilities,

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[26] "Nazis to Be Here Soon: Prison Camp Will Soon Be Complete," *Democrat-Union,* April 14 1944.

[27] Tennessee Department of Health, Environmental Epidemiology Program, *Health Consultation: Industrial Plastics Site Fire Located On The Wrigley Charcoal Superfund Site Lyles, Hickman County, Tennessee*, May 27, 2014, https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/health/documents/hc-e-Industrial_Plastics_052714.pdf..

[28] Hall, "The Befriended Enemy," 63.

[29] "Nazi Prison Camp Construction Is under Way: Prisoners to Be Located at Pine Bluff," *Democrat-Union,* March 31, 1944.

and the quarters are apparently as comfortable as a home."[30] The journalist exaggerated in his or her estimation of the living space, because a photo of the barracks shows relatively small, hastily constructed buildings.[31] A more appropriate evaluation would have been that the conditions were generally of decent quality for prisoners. The POW living quarters looked more like semi-permanent tents rather than solidly constructed barracks. Photographs show the roofs of the square buildings made of tarp material and staked down. The quarters were not large enough to hold many men. Based on the size of the buildings and a former POW's letter, there were probably four men in each room.[32]

Figure 11. POW living quarters. The structure was built to be quickly erected and semi-permanent using tarp and canvas materials. *(Lawrence County Old Jail Museum)*

[30] "Nazis Have Arrived: Prison Camp Setup Is Completed," *Democrat-Union,* April 21, 1944.
[31] Photograph courtesy of the Lawrenceburg Old Jail Museum.
[32] Alfons Mailhammer to Brock family, August 7, 1947, in SBLC.

The German prisoners arrived in Lawrenceburg roughly a month after plans for the POW camp went into effect. Between 250-400 POWs reached their new home on Wednesday, April 19th, 1944, after former internment at Camp Forrest. The new subordinate camp was much smaller than others across the state, like the Tullahoma location.[33] Lodging space allotted to each POW was determined by rank. Since the Lawrenceburg prisoners were all enlisted men, their living quarters would have been built with forty square feet per individual.[34] The prisoners' stay at the "Fritz Ritz," as camps were sometimes referred to, was not a vacation. The men were given dark blue work clothes, because their German uniforms were supposed to be saved for their down time. Clothing was marked with a white "PW" to distinguish them as prisoners and provide an easy target if needed.[35] Removal of the letters violated regulations.[36]

A photograph from the camp illustrates the distinguishing mark: the letters are stamped on the seat of two men's pants and in another the "W" is visible on the thigh.[37] Americans realized Germans possessed no visual attributes to denote them as the enemy. The distinguishing mark emphasized the difference between POWs and their American counterparts, because they often looked too similar without it. [38]

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[33] Fickle and Ellis, "POWs in the Piney Woods," 697.
[34] Krammer, *Nazi Prisoners of War in America*, 33.
[35] Ibid., 47.
[36] Matthias Reiss, "Bronzed Bodies behind Barbed Wire: Masculinity and the Treatment of German Prisoners of War in the United States during World War II," *Journal of Military History* 69, no. 2 (April 2005): 483.
[37] Photographs courtesy of the Lawrenceburg Old Jail Museum.
[38] Reiss, "Bronzed Bodies behind Barbed Wire," 483.

Figure 12. Two POWs pose on the Stribling farm. "PW" is visible on their work pants. *(Lawrence County Old Jail Museum)*

POWs adhered to a tight schedule. Lawrenceburg's routine would have resembled the nearly identical schedules from camps across the nation: reveille at 5:30, breakfast at 6:00, clean up at 6:30, 7:30 they boarded the trucks bound for their jobsites, 12:00 was lunch, back to work at 1:00, at 4:30 they were sent back to the camp, and finally dinner was served between 6:00 and 7:00.[39] The men also aided in day-to-day camp upkeep and chores. This routine can be seen in a photograph of POW Emil, the camp cook, posing in his apron with a guard in front of the mess hall tent.[40] If the men wanted anything in addition to their meals, they could go to the canteen. The commissary carried items like

[39] Krammer, *Nazi Prisoners of War in America*, 48.
[40] Photographs courtesy of the Lawrenceburg Old Jail Museum.

sweets, crackers, and produce at the market price.[41] It carried more than just food though, because Hartmann wrote that he bought twenty-five fire stones in a little box (likely flint) and paid fifteen cents at the canteen in Lawrenceburg.[42] Based on the beer bottles recovered through excavation of the camp site, POWs were also able to purchase the beverage. They did not use American dollars or German Reichsmark to compensate for the goods, instead they were paid with non-transferable currency. The internees received eighty cents per day in camp scrip, which was enough to get eight packs of cigarettes or eight bottles of beer, scarce items at the time.[43]

Figure 13. POW Emil and camp guard Edward A. Wernet in front of the mess hall in September 1944. *(Lawrence County Old Jail Museum)*

POW woodcutters typically toiled on land at the edge of Lewis County near Napier, north of Lawrenceburg.[44] Each POW adhered to a one cord of wood per day

[41] Krammer, *Nazi Prisoners of War in America*, 48.

[42] Johannes Hartmann to Brock family, August 20, 1947, in SBLC.

[43] Paul J. Springer, *America's Captives: Treatment of POWs from the Revolutionary War to the War on Terror* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2010), 142.

[44] "German War Prisoners Cutting Wood: 250 Men at Local German Camp," *Democrat Union,* April 28, 1944.

quota, whereas civilian workers had to cut two per day.[45] Usually the quotas were met, and the "no work, no eat" program typically served as enough of a motivating factor, but sometimes prisoners still refused to work. J. W. Krick was interned at a German POW camp and after his liberation, the Army sent him home to the United States where he was offered a guard position in Lawrenceburg. Krick noticed two prisoners not laboring while the others were cutting wood, and upon inquiry discovered they were Nazi party members who had slipped through the political screening. After spending time interned at an enemy camp, his tolerance for rebellious behavior was low. He told his commanding officer that he would either get them to work or "leave them in the woods," meaning he would shoot them. The men were purposefully told about his sentiments, and the next day when he was on duty Krick shot squirrels while the men were working, proving his expert marksmanship. He said they never caused trouble again.[46]

Understandably, some locals were wary of their new neighbors. As in every community across the nation, many of Lawrence County's men served in the armed forces. According to 1940 census records, 28,726 people lived in the county.[47] Of these, 3,083 men later enlisted or were drafted during World War II. There were approximately eighty-five casualties, but seventy-five percent of these deaths were on the European front.[48] These statistics illustrate why many citizens of Lawrence County might have felt like others across the nation, that there was no such thing as a good German. Leo, a

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[45] Fickle and Ellis, "POWs in the Piney Woods," 711.

[46] "FYI Update: Former Guard Says There Were Nazis in Lawrenceburg," *Lawrence County Advocate,* June 26, 2011.

[47] U.S. Census Bureau, "Tennessee Decennial Census," 1940, https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1940/population-volume-1/33973538v1ch09.pdf.

[48] "World War II Casualty List," Lawrence County Military Records, https://www.tngenweb.org/lawrence/lawrmili.htm.

former POW, wrote that the Germans faced hostility when encountering civilians while working in the woods. He said, "Their already miserable life was made a real pain. This is how unequal the feelings and actions of mankind are. Although every German soldier has become quite tough throughout the many years of war, he still believed he could be regarded as a man and treated as such, which probably did not correspond to all Tennesseans sometimes."[49] His statement indicates that some locals acted on bitter feelings. Apprehension is evident in the article title from April 7, 1944: "Nazis To Be Here Soon."[50] The journalist likely reflected community concerns when informing readers about the number of heavily armed guards, barbed wire fences, floodlights, and machine gun towers. It reassured feelings of security and assuaged fears of escape.

In early April the local newspaper stated that there would be a "heavy guard" on the laborers, likely trying to ease any civilian anxieties.[51] Once the first day came around, this promise was not true.[52] An initial group of 79 prisoners were sent to cut wood under the watch of five guards on April 23rd. The nearly sixteen-to-one ratio reflects the American soldiers' feelings of safety and low expectation of escape. The testimonies of locals confirm the assumption, because a newsperson wrote, "Those who saw them say the men were model prisoners and require but little overseeing by the guards, who allow them unusual privileges while they are at work."[53] The specific "privileges" are unclear, but it further shows the soldiers' trust in the POWs. The remote location fostered feelings

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[49] Leo to Brock family.

[50] "Nazis to Be Here Soon: Prison Camp Will Soon Be Complete," *Democrat-Union,* April 14, 1944.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Ibid.

[53] "German War Prisoners Cutting Wood," *Democrat Union,* April 28, 1944.

of security, and as time progressed, guards relaxed. A visitor to a camp in Minnesota noted the prisoners being given "full privileges of the honor system," so this could be what the journalist was referencing.[54] POWs drove trucks for the Tennessee Products Corporation in addition to their woodcutting duties. They operated the vehicles without supervision until eventually getting pulled over by local law enforcement who objected to the prisoners lacking an American driver's license.[55] The company assigning this role to POWs and the army's permitting it further illustrates the extent of their trust.

Certain POWs and guards developed camaraderie during their shared time at the camp. Pictures from the camp illustrate the rapport between the men. One photograph shows a prisoner and guard sitting side by side relaxing, and another captured POW Emil and guard Edward Wernet posing propped up against a sign at the mess hall. Although the photographs are telling, the true depth is unearthed through a woman's memories. Linda Peña was the daughter of Camp Lawrenceburg's commander Captain Jesse Andress. She was born while he was stationed in Lawrenceburg. Peña recalled hearing stories about how the men loved her father and their postwar letters detailing his gentleness.[56] When Peña was born, the POWs made a heart-shaped locket with her initials as a gift for her mother. She shared that the German men would come in the evening and sing lullabies to her and her sister.[57] These tender moments illustrate the bond that was formed between German prisoners and their guards.

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[54] Barbara Schmitter Heisler, "The 'Other Braceros': Temporary Labor and German Prisoners of War in the United States, 1943-1946," *Social Science History* 31, no. 2 (Summer 2007): 253, 255.

[55] "Ruling on Prisoners' Driving Licenses Set," *Democrat-Union,* October 25, 1944.

[56] Chaudoin, "Stribling Brock Collection Unveiling Tells Story of Loving One's Enemy."

[57] Gabrielle Cintorino, "Lipscomb University Exhibit Reveals Friendships between Local German POWs and Their American Friends during World War II," TheNews: Nashville Community Newspapers,

Figure 14. A POW (left) and camp guard (right) relaxing together. *(Lawrence County Old Jail Museum)*

Lawrenceburg was no stranger to racial discrimination; it was segregated like most other towns across the Jim Crow south. German POWs held a complicated status in this hierarchy. Historian Mattias Reiss argues that both African Americans and the prisoners were located at the bottom of the economic system because they frequently performed the same unskilled and unpleasant labor.[58] Although they occupied similar roles in the workforce, skin color influenced how civilians viewed the prisoners. White Americans were surprised to discover that their German enemy looked similar to themselves; the PW mark on their clothing was often the only visual differentiation between POWs and "the boy next door."[59] Ideological differences were frequently less

September 16, 2015, http://www.gcanews.com/lipscomb-university-exhibit-reveals-friendships-between-local-german-pows-and-their-american-friends-during-world-war-ii.

[58] Matthias Reiss, "Solidarity among 'Fellow Sufferers': African Americans and German Prisoners of War in the United States during World War II," *Journal of African American History* 98, no. 4 (Fall 2013): 532.

[59] Reiss, "Bronzed Bodies behind Barbed Wire," 478, 480.

important than similar appearances.[60] Mutual whiteness elevated Germans above their African-American coworkers in the highly race-conscious society. Many prisoners were allowed to use facilities reserved for whites in the South, which illustrates how the men were ranked.[61] Lawrenceburg local Luzonne McKelvey Couch's testimony shows how she viewed the Lawrenceburg prisoners. Couch recalled the quality, intellectual men interned at the camp. She stated, "As president of the War Mothers' Club,[62] I made many visits to the prison camp … and made some wonderful friends. They were like our boys, fighting not because they wanted to, but because they had to."[63] Couch befriended the POWs even though her son served in the 50th Signal Battalion and fought against Germans. She compared the men to American soldiers. She referenced the perceived similarities in motivations, but it is difficult to imagine the comparison without the physical resemblance.

The Germans' time spent in the Lawrence County community changed how locals saw them. When news first broke about the camp coming to Lawrenceburg, the newspaper called the men "Nazis" many times and ensured their readers of the high level of security with a "heavy guard."[64] The tone of news reports shifted toward the end of their stay in the town. On December 7th, 1945, the *Democrat Union* stated, "German Boys to Be Taken to New Camp." It further said that they had been "engaged chiefly in

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[60] Ibid., 477.

[61] Reiss, "Solidarity among 'Fellow Sufferers,'" 539.

[62] The War Mother's Club was an organization founded by a group of Lawrenceburg women with the mission to help American soldiers.

[63] Ann Toplovich, "The Tennessean's War: Life on the Home Front," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 51, no. 1 (Spring 1992): 41.

[64] "Nazis to Be Here Soon: Prison Camp Will Soon Be Complete," *Democrat-Union,* April 14, 1944.

cutting wood" and that during their stay "no serious trouble ever occurred."[65] The language difference is stark: they went from Nazis to German boys. The change likely went unnoticed by local readers but represented an altered attitude in the community. Their proximity to the enemy and the prisoner's involvement in the county softened their views of who a German was. Instead of "make them," they opted to say, "engaged in cutting wood." The newspaper also made sure to include that there had been no major problems caused by the POWs. The journalistic tone and rhetoric softened drastically at the end of the camp's occupation. The intangible idea of America's enemy was given a face, and interacting with the prisoners altered their perception of the German soldiers.

Although the Tennessee Products Corporation was responsible for the camp's existence, not all of the POWs worked for the lumber industry. Agriculture suffered the most from the manpower shortage during the war, and POWs filled in the labor gap in that sector more than any other.[66] The communities surrounding Lawrenceburg's camp experienced the prevailing struggles. Prisoners were hired out and helped in various capacities and locations. Many had no background in agricultural labor but still aided area farmers who were desperate for assistance. Journalist Etha Green detailed the dire circumstances facing many Middle Tennessee farmers in a newspaper article from the *Nashville Banner* under the headline "War Prisoner Labor Helps Save Crops."[67] POWs were dispatched from Camp Forrest to multiple locations across the mid-state, harvesting crops like potatoes and tobacco. She wrote about men from Lawrenceburg's branch camp

[65] "German Boys to Be Taken to New Camp," *Democrat-Union,* December 7, 1945.
[66] Thompson, *Men in German Uniform,* 89.
[67] "War Prisoner Labor Helps Save Crops," *Nashville Banner,* October 24, 1944.

helping on a smaller scale. She further discussed how the Germans were exceptionally cooperative, and "the farmers welcome the prisoner aid, showing no discrimination and voicing few "kicks" about the men.[68] The employers' "discrimination" and "kicks" would have involved their concern and disdain for the Germans' status as enemy prisoners. Instead the farmers expressed appreciation for the help and overlooked their differences. Although just mentioned briefly, the Lawrenceburg POWs also contributed to saving local farmers' livelihoods.

The Stribling and Brock families used POW labor more than any other family in the area. They employed Germans for projects on their extensive property holdings. A group of ten men comprised the core group who typically worked for the family, although others were also employed by them at times. Helmut Lau, Eugen Hirth, Leo Klackl, Gottfried Rest, Erich Thimann, Rudi Lorenz, Heinz Mayk, Gustav Kiess, Johannes Hartmann, and Alfons Leeb were their usual helpers. Hirth recalled the first time the men worked for the family. He said they initially went to the Children's Home, the orphanage founded by J. H. Stribling.[69] They did other jobs on the Stribling-Brock farm like cutting wood, harvesting crops, tending the garden, caring for livestock, restoring artificial fertilizers, and building structures.

[68] Ibid.
[69] Eugen Hirth to Brock family, July 24, 1947, in SBLC.

Figure 15. Group photograph of the Brock family, their pets, and farm hands. Back row left to right: Abe Potter, Delmar Brock, Gustav Kiess, POW, Heinrich Mayk, Jim Stribling Brock. Front row left to right: Sam Buchanan (holding lucky the dog), Erich Thimann, POW, Eugen Hirth. *(Lawrence County Old Jail Museum)*

The POWs spent most of their waking hours at the Stribling farm; contact with the family was inevitable. Historian Kevin T. Hall makes a connection between positive experiences and small farm size, because employers were then able to work closely with the POWs. Friendships frequently formed between the two parties due to the extended interaction.[70] J. H. Stribling, his daughter Jim Brock, and her husband Delmar Brock developed personal relationships with the men working for them. A letter from Leo Klackl to the Brock family reveals how the former POW felt about the experience. Leo thanked the Brocks for sending a photograph that would "be a reminder to [him] all [his]

[70] Hall, "The Befriended Enemy," 68.

life."[71] He said visitors would ask who was in the picture, but his daughter Anni would beat him to the reply: "That is the farmer and his wife from America, where father as a prisoner of war was so well treated."[72] Anni's quick response means that Klackl discussed his positive experiences with the Brocks repeatedly. The context of the letter reveals that the photo served as a happy reminder of Leo Klackl's time in Lawrenceburg.

Klackl confirmed his daughter's testimony on his behalf: "Yes, it was really so – I would not have dreamed when I was put aboard ship in Africa, that fate would bring me to such noble and good people. Many of our comrades in Camp Lawrenceburg envied us, for with you we prisoners had only happy, bright days."[73] Klackl was one of the many men captured in North Africa after Allied forces started succeeding. The United States admitted the first group of POWs in August of 1942.[74] New prisoners would have likely known little about their future, but it would have been difficult for any man to imagine receiving the type of positive treatment experienced by the POWs like Leo. The jealous feelings expressed by his comrades would have been partially due to the difficult working conditions faced by woodcutters.

Laborers for the Tennessee Products Corporation faced different conditions than the men employed by the Brocks. The Geneva Convention of 1929 listed rules governing prisoner-of-war treatment, but as historian Arnold Krammer argued, the takeaways for nations were inconclusive.[75] Under the agreement, prisoners could not be compelled to

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[71] Leo Klackl to Brock family, January 4, 1947, in SBLC.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Krammer, *Nazi Prisoners of War in America*, 2.
[75] Ibid., 81.

take on dangerous work or live in an intemperate climate but captors could interpret these regulations in various ways.[76] The two stipulations were questionably adhered to at the Lewis County job site. Contemporary sources cited logging as one of the most dangerous jobs, but a government committee decided to soften the hazard by having prisoners cut smaller trees. It did little to lessen workplace injuries. A Red Cross inspection report of the Lawrenceburg camp stated, "The state of health [of the prisoners] would be good, if the accidents resulting from work were not so numerous."[77] Steel shards from their axes would often fly off and injure the loggers. The physical act of cutting the wood was not the only danger but also transportation. A journalist for the *Democrat-Union* reported on February 15, 1946 that a truck carrying 28 POWs caught fire.[78] No injuries were reported, but the accident proves everyday tasks could threaten their safety.

The men were also subjected to a climate questionably appropriate under Geneva Convention guidelines. While Tennessee weather can vary greatly, the first summer that the Germans were in Lawrenceburg was abnormally intense. The January 1945 Monthly Weather Review from Washington, D.C., reported that in 1944, Tennessee had the driest and warmest May to July period in its history.[79] The National Weather Service notes that on June 18, 1944, the temperature on a thermometer in Clarksville, Tennessee topped out at a record-setting one hundred and nine degrees.[80] Both groups would have experienced

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[76] Fickle and Ellis, "POWs in the Piney Woods," 700.
[77] Ibid., 701, 703.
[78] "P-W Truck Burns, Men Watch Idly," *Democrat-Union,* February 15, 1946.
[79] J. L. Baldwin, "The Weather of 1944 in the United States," *Monthly Weather Review* 73, no. 1 (January 1945): 4-7, https://doi.org/10.1175/1520-0493(1945)073<0004:TWOITU>2.0.CO;2.
[80] National Weather Service, "Calendar of Significant Weather Events in Middle Tennessee," National Weather Service, last modified February 4, 2019, https://www.weather.gov/ohx/calendar.

extreme temperatures, but Klackl's statement about their fellow POWs' jealousy implies that conditions were much more favorable for the Brock's workers.

Letters from former POWs Eugen Hirth and Gustav Kiess provide insight into how affectionately the men viewed the Brock family. Kiess wrote in his first letter after arriving home that he had helped an uncle during harvest season. He said, "My thoughts at [harvest time], were often with you. I have been relating much about you and your wife. I'm always wondering who is running the big tractor now."[81] The tone expresses fondness for his time working on the farm in Lawrenceburg and for his employers. He even closes the letter by saying, "Your ex-tractor driver sends greetings."[82] The expression, along with instances in other letters, shows the pride he felt in his former role. Kiess says later in the letter, "[I] have always felt thankfully obliged to you. I trust you were always pleased with our work, although we knew so little of English. Where there is a good will there's always a way."[83] Kiess' statement demonstrates his desire for the family's approval. Language differences proved a difficulty in POW camps across the United States, but the barrier seems not to have significantly hindered the Brock's laborers. Kiess' last expression leads to the conclusion that they were determined to communicate and adequately complete their tasks despite the linguistic difficulties.

[81] Gustav Kiess to Brock Family, December 12, 1946, in SBLC.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid.

Figure 16. POWs at work on the Stribling farm. *(Lawrence County Old Jail Museum)*

Kiess' letter provides the first instance of a POW referencing the Brocks as more than mere friends. He writes, "No doubt Mrs. Brock had a lonesome summer – she had such a large family to see after last year. It will be a constant memory to me and others how at dinner time under the shady oaks we ate our meal."[84] Kiess referenced the German men not as employees or friends, but *family.* The German word *familie* has the same definition as its English equivalent; it describes people connected by blood or legal bond. Labeling the POWs as Mrs. Brock's kin asserts a deep attachment. He writes how

[84] Ibid.

she would take care of the men and then recalls meals on the farm. Based on the sentence sequence, Mrs. Brock would ensure the workers were well fed. The "lonesome summer" statement implies that Kiess believed she was often busy tending to the POWs and thought she enjoyed their company. Jim and Delmar Brock had no children, so adopting the POWs greatly expanded their family unit.

Figure 17. POWs during their lunch break on the Stribling farm. Pictured from left to right: POW, Gustav Kiess, Heinrich Mayk. *(Lawrence County Old Jail Museum)*

Many of Kiess' letters had a longing tone. He wrote, "If it were not for the big water between, I might pull up one of these days on Pulaski St, in front of your house. If it only were not for that little word "if"!"[85] His tone expresses longing to see the family again, which underscores the relationship developed between them during the war. After discussing another former POW friend who had worked for the Brocks, Kiess said, "We all feel so close to one another because of our common experience as prisoners of war,

[85]Gustav Kiess to Brock Family, November 3, 1947, in SBLC.

and because we all belong to the great family of Mr. and Mrs. Brock. That was the happiest time for us in the U.S.A. I am hoping that it may be possible to spend a time at our place of work."[86]

Shared circumstances often unite people, so it is no surprise that POWs felt a mutual bond. The aspect that differentiates the connections from other POW friendships is that part of their link was from being a part of the Brock family. In the original German letter, Kiess used *gehoren* to describe their relationship, which translates "to belong." Belonging carries connotations of safety, possession, and closeness. Like Klackl, Kiess mentions the positive emotions associated with their experiences. He argues that their entire time in the United States was happy. When comparing Klackl's testimony and Kiess' own statements, it is evident that the main factor causing the emotion was working for the Brocks. While many POWs experienced conditions that would deter them from such an expression, Kiess uses the superlative form of happy when describing his time in America. Based on the surrounding context, the "place of work" Kiess references would be the Brock farm; again expressing his desire to return to his former employers.

Kiess further wrote about the last time he had seen Helmut Lau, another former POW. They spent time swapping memories from their time in Lawrenceburg. Kiess said, "We lived it over again – as if we were working in the woods, and Mr. Brock came and called us to dinner. I am sure if we should find ourselves suddenly on the farm in the dark, we could find our way."[87] The story has a fond tone similar to the letter's entirety. The men discussed happy reminiscence rather than war-time trauma. It implies extended

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[86] Ibid.
[87] Gustav Kiess to Brock Family, November 3, 1947, in SBLC.

time spent by the POWs on the Brock's property. Knowing a path well enough to navigate without sight takes immense familiarity. The Germans and Brocks would have spent many weeks together because of the farm labor. At the conclusion of his letter, Kiess signs, "Your German boy Gustav."[88] The closing demonstrates the affectionate relationship between the two parties. Using the possessive "your" makes it more personal and denotes their bond.

By calling himself a "German boy," Kiess mirrors the language used in the *Democrat-Union* article about the men leaving Lawrenceburg's camp.[89] The original letter to the Brocks was written in German, except these words which he penned in English. Kiess was not fluent in English, because he primarily used his native tongue in correspondence. His usage of the phrase therefore proves that people said it often enough to easily stick with him. The terminology describing POWs transitioning from "Nazis" to "German boys" was not coincidental, but widespread across the community. The semantics illustrate how Lawrenceburg citizens' perceptions of their foreign neighbors shifted. The prisoners, who they were highly skeptical of at first, were humanized.

Eugen Hirth wrote to the Brocks for the first time in December 1946. His second letter was composed in the last moments of December 31st, and he reminisced on the eventful year. His greeting, "My dear Family Brock!" expresses fondness for the family.[90] Instead of only using the traditional "dear," Hirth added the possessive "my." He then writes, "It's New Year's Eve, just a few minutes before midnight. I have been

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[88] Ibid.
[89] "German Boys to Be Taken to New Camp," *Democrat-Union,* December 7, 1945.
[90] Eugen Hirth to Brock Family, December 31, 1946, in SBLC.

studying until now, and want to write you these lines in the last minutes of the year 1946."[91] He specifically set aside time to compose their letter as the year was ending, showing how he wanted to remember them on the holiday. He said, "If I think back one year, at that time, we would still cut wood for you. Full of joy and pride, I think back on this nice time, because you made it nice for us. You knew how to make us forget all the misery."[92] As Hirth stated, POWs faced struggles. The greatest concern for many men was their family's safety.[93] Civilians in Germany experienced hardships like food shortages and bombings, so numerous POWs were concerned for the people left back home. Hirth argues the Brocks' treatment alleviated much suffering associated with being a war prisoner. He recalls their internment period with "joy and pride," not adjectives a captive would typically use to describe his detainment time. Calling it a "nice time" contrasts the experience with the POWs who were laboring for the Tennessee Products Corporation and experiencing worse conditions.

Like Kiess, Hirth specifies the familial tie to Jim Brock. He writes, "You were like a mother to us, who couldn't be any better to her own children. Again, before we start a new year, thank you so very much for that."[94] Hirth's comparison of Jim Brock to a mother figure reveals the depth of their bond and the type of care the men received. Arguing that she could not have treated her biological offspring better implies the extent of her kindness. Jim Brock was in her early 40s at the time, which made her age similar to some POWs' mothers, which likely contributed to the men considering her a maternal

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[91] Ibid.
[92] Eugen Hirth to Brock Family, December 31, 1946, in SBLC.
[93] Hall, "The Befriended Enemy," 70.
[94] Eugen Hirth to Brock Family, December 31, 1946, in SBLC.

figure. The POWs faced extended separation from their families and the Brocks, in a way, filled that void. Historian Mattias Reiss argued gender was an important issue in POW camps. He stated that the Army particularly attempted to separate American women from the captives.[95] Although their primary concern was attraction, the dearth of women in POWs' lives would have resulted in an absence of mother figures as well. Jim Brock cared for the men when they had little correspondence with their biological mothers and few feminine influences. She extended kindness that endeared her to the German men during a difficult, isolating time.

Hirth continued to contemplate the events of that year. He wrote, "As sinister and dark the year 1945 was for us, 1946 was successful for me. The time came to leave Lawrenceburg. You can believe me that saying goodbye to you was very hard for me, but I was going home, even if it was with uncertainty."[96] It seems Hirth did not believe the darkness was due to his imprisonment, based on his description of his experiences as a POW. By "us," he is likely referring the German people as a whole. They lost the war in 1945, and the nation was in shambles. Hirth found it difficult to leave the Brocks but was still excited to return to his homeland, even with the ambiguous circumstances. His desire for home was not deterred by their treatment as POWs. The men had a newfound "family," but they still longed to see their biological kin. The Brocks did not act as a replacement but as an addition to their preexisting family. The men did not forget the couple after they returned home. They proved their attachment was not merely temporary

[95] Reiss, "Bronzed Bodies behind Barbed Wire," 494.
[96] Ibid., 480.

by consistently writing letters after they left Lawrenceburg. Hirth signed his letter, "Your Eugen Hirth." Like Kiess, his chosen salutation expresses their lasting connection.

Work served as a vital tool for bridging divides in Lawrenceburg. Deep relationships formed because the Brock family chose to employ numerous POWs on their farm. Growth of the familial bond between the men and the Brocks would have been impossible without the extended opportunities for interaction. Individuals in the town also developed friendships with the German men despite linguistic, racial, and cultural differences. Both parties–Americans and Germans–had been humanized through the experience. Their respective governments encouraged them to despise one another as enemies. When able to put a face to the opposition, it is easier to see the individual rather than the group. Historian Omer Bartov argued, "The sense of identification with one group, and the abhorrence of the other, are in both cases dependent on an abstraction, whereas personal familiarity may only weaken the individual's commitment by revealing the less than ideal aspects of his own side and the human face of his opponents."[97] This observation applies to soldiers and civilians: fraternization can unite people formerly divided by national barriers.

[97] Bartov, "Soldiers, Nazis, and War in the Third Reich," 50.

CHAPTER III:

A BOND UNBROKEN:

POWs' POSTWAR LIVES AND THE BROCKS' GENEROSITY

The unconventional, blended "family" in Lawrenceburg could not physically stay together forever. After World War II came to an end, the army began closing camps and initiating the process of returning the soldiers to Europe. On November 23, 1945, two months after the war's official conclusion, the *Democrat-Union* reported that thirty POW camps in the southeastern states had been closed, reducing the captive population by 21,000.[1] The end of Camp Lawrenceburg was obviously nigh. The newspaper reported in early December that the camp was in the process of disbanding, and POWs were being relocated to Camp Forrest.[2]

Heinrich Mayk confirmed that the prisoners were supposed to go back during that time frame – until J. H. Stribling used his political influence to shift the date. Mayk reported in a postwar letter that Stribling flew to Washington with the mission of prolonging the Germans' stay at Camp Lawrenceburg. His motives are a mystery, but it is reasonable to assume that his family's relationship with its farmhands was one influence while local farmers wanting to keep the German labor as long as possible was another. Whether Stribling's deed was practical or personal, Mayk attributed his speedy return home to it. He said that a fellow prisoner who left when they were slated for departure was still interned in France and that if they had taken the same route, the Lawrenceburg

[1] "Prisoners of War Being Sent Back to Europe," *Democrat-Union,* November 21, 1945.

[2] "German Boys to Be Taken to New Camp: Prisoners of War to Be Taken over to Camp Forrest," *Democrat-Union,* December 7, 1945.

group would have ended up there as well.[3] Mayk believed that the POWs' longer stay in Lawrenceburg resulted in avoiding extended relocation to other Allied camps in France. Although Stribling's act may or may not have altered their tenure as captives, the episode illustrates the Stribling-Brock family's ability to impact the fate of the German POWs. The German men returned to their desolate home country ripped apart by war, but their former employers impacted theirs and their family's quality of life through benevolence.

Postwar Germany: A Nation in Shambles

The closure of Camp Lawrenceburg did not mark the beginning of a new, happy chapter for all the prisoners. Barbara Hately-Broad and Bob Moore propose three factors that impacted homecomings for returning captives: "the attitude of the detaining power, that of the home country and the wishes of the liberated prisoners themselves."[4] The main problem was the first in the list. Once arriving in Europe after detainment in America, many POWs were randomly assigned to new labor camps in Great Britain or France, where they remained for months or even years.[5] At least half of the Brock's German friends faced these unfortunate circumstances: Rudi Lorenz, Erich Thimann, Heinrich Mayk, Helmut Lau, and Leo Klackl. Mayk stated his desire to return home but many POWs were detained.[6] Continued imprisonment after the war's end fostered difficult situations for all, but for some, the circumstances were exponentially worse. Thimann

[3] Heinrich Mayk to Brock family, June 13, 1948, in SBLC.
[4] Barbara Hately-Broad and Bob Moore, *Prisoners of War, Prisoners of Peace: Captivity, Homecoming, and Memory in World War II*, English ed. (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2005), 18.
[5] Krammer, *Nazi Prisoners of War in America*, 247.
[6] Heinrich Mayk to Brock family, February 13, 1947, in SBLC.

wrote to the Brocks and expressed the miserable conditions he faced at a camp in England. He said the "prisoner state here as compared to USA is day and night. I have not had any happy hours here."[7]

Family problems compounded suffering. Erich Thimann knew nothing about his relatives until early 1947. The news was a hard blow–he could never go home. His mother, sisters, and entire village had been forced to flee and were now penniless. He wrote that the Poles drove them away-this move was likely a result of the Potsdam Agreement that moved Poland's border west, requiring the compulsory relocation of German residents. According to Thimann, 28 people died during the exodus, and five of those left behind perished. He wrote that before the war, he was with these people every day.[8] The war destroyed property, shifted territorial boundaries, and forced population movements, resulting in many situations similar to Thimann's. Helmut Lau was another victim of World War II's displacement. He was unable to find his family after being released. Gustav Kiess, another Brock farmhand, took in Lau until he located his parents.[9] Even some who quickly reunited with their loved ones experienced heartache. Johannes Hartmann returned home to find all his valuables sold and his wife living with another man. She robbed him, he claimed, leaving the ex-POW with nothing to provide for himself or his aging mother.[10]

Germany was left in tatters after the war: the landscape and economy were devastated. Throughout the war, Germany was targeted by the Royal Air Force and the

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[7] Erich Thimann to Brock family, March 29, 1947, in SBLC.
[8] Eugen Hirth to Brock family, April 6, 1947, in SBLC.
[9] Erich Thimann to Brock family, June 21, 1947, in SBLC.
[10] Johannes Hartmann to Brock family, January 19, 1947, in SBLC.

U.S. Air Corps. Nighttime bombing, navigation errors, and all the attendant difficulties of strategic bombing during the war meant that both major cities and small towns were often victimized.[11] These air raids impacted several of the POWs and their families. Gustav Kiess hailed from the city of Hannover, Germany. An attack destroyed the homes of 250,000 civilians there in 1943.[12] Heinrich Mayk's hometown of Gelsenkirchen was damaged due to its significance as a mining town.[13] By the war's end, most major cities had been impacted. Historian Toby Thacker writes that the Allies selected "targets of opportunity" with little purpose as the war drew to a close.[14] The medieval city of Hildesheim, the town where Johannes Hartmann and his family lived, was victim in one of these random assaults. Allied air raids left countless Germans homeless and destitute. Even if their residences remained intact, the bombings impacted their lives: businesses and roads were destroyed, citizens evacuated, and mail delayed or destroyed.

German civilians also experienced wartime rationing and food shortages. Widespread rationing was introduced in 1939 and food shortages were prevalent.[15] German citizens endured the consequences of war long after surrender because the scarcity persisted. Although farming would have offered an option for self-sustainability, the timing of the war's end prevented personal gardens. The Lawrenceburg POWs

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[11] Debbie Robinson, "Bombing, States and Peoples in Western Europe, 1940-1945: The Bombing of Germany 1940-1945," University of Exeter Centre for the Study of War, State and Society, accessed April 2, 2021, https://humanities.exeter.ac.uk/history/research/centres/warstateandsociety/projects/bombing/germany/#:~:text=Numerous%20cities%2C%20medium%2Dsized%20towns,%2C%20Cologne%2C%20Schweinfurt%2C%20Jena%2C .

[12] Ibid.

[13] Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich at War* (London: Penguin Books, 2008), 441.

[14] Toby Thacker, *The End of the Third Reich: Defeat, Denazification and Nuremburg, January 1944-November 1946* (Stroud, Gloucestershire, UK: Tempus, 2006), 82.

[15] Evans, *The Third Reich at War,* 257.

returned to this broken nation: displaced and starving families, destroyed homes, and a poor economy.

German Letters to an American Family

The former captives started writing to their American family soon after arriving in Europe; some penned letters from POW camps, while others wrote from their family homes. They all shared a common desire but also a serious problem: the men longed to correspond with the Brocks, but none were adept at the English language. While the former POWs were able to communicate with their friends while in America, writing in a foreign language is much more difficult, since fluency is required. The Brocks faced the same conundrum, because they could not read the letters written in German.

Fortunately, the Brocks had a close family friend whose first language was German: R. H. Boll. Jim Brock had known Boll since childhood due to her father's friendship with the Church of Christ preacher. Boll moved to Louisville, Kentucky, when Jim Brock was only five years old, before she would have many memories of him, but Boll periodically had travelled to Lawrence County to hold gospel meetings throughout her young life. J. H. Stribling's bond with the controversial preacher allowed for Jim Brock to cultivate her own friendship with him. Boll had spent his youth in Germany, so he not only could read and translate the letters but also understand linguistic nuances and provide cultural context to certain phrases. Additionally, Jim Brock could be relatively sure of his trustworthiness due to their former acquaintance and her father's high regard for him. The Brocks likely considered this an important factor since the translator would

be reading all of their incoming correspondence, thus learning a lot about their lives, the POWs, and their families. Since Boll was a devout Christian, they could assume that he would keep in mind the best interest of all those involved.

After Boll agreed to act as facilitator, the Brocks organized a system for the letters to be translated. The correspondence was all mailed to the Brocks' home in Lawrenceburg. When received, they sent them to Boll in Louisville, Kentucky. Boll then translated the letters to English and sent both versions back. He always used ink when representing the POWs' words and pencil if including any of his own commentary. Boll consciously chose a non-permanent option for his own remarks, illustrating that he either intended them to be erased once read or at least permitting the option of removal. Yet the Brocks never cleared away Boll's comments. Their choice permits further insight into the POWs' experiences and how Boll was able to assist in the Brock's benevolent works.

Relatives of the former POWs also began writing letters. The primary authors were parents and siblings. Quickly the Brock family realized the terrible conditions in war-torn Germany, likely based on a combination of news reports and testimonies from their German friends. Europe suffered from an abnormally cold winter in 1946-47 and a lack of fuel for heat: February 1947 became the coldest February on record since they started tracking in the 17th century.[16] Germany was still recovering from wartime devastation, and the weather only compounded their struggles. Johannes Hartmann

[16] Arnd Bernaerts, *Climate Change and Naval War: A Scientific Assessment* (Victoria, BC: Trafford, 2005), 247.

lamented about the lack of firewood, stating that no one had the means to keep a fire burning.[17]

Johannes Hartmann wrote in mid 1947, "Your Nashville-paper showed the true to the American people and you can feel now, what is going here."[18] Word had spread about the defeated nation's state of affairs. Hartmann continued his letter, describing the black market and exorbitant prices for common goods. Purchasing bread required waiting in line for approximately four hours.[19] In his correspondence from September 1947, Eugen Hirth wrote about the great lengths he went to in order to obtain sustenance for his family. He and his brother traveled to an undisclosed location in Bavaria to get groceries. Hirth said, "If you are not careful in getting food, you can starve, especially with these "wonderful" expectations for this winter and the coming spring."[20] The statement is obviously laced in sarcasm, denoting the poor prospects for a better winter in 1947-48.

The Brock family doubtlessly heard many news reports about the misery faced by German citizens in addition to their foreign friends' testimonies. The suffering likely troubled them, but they lived over four thousand miles away – what could be done? The Brocks' wealth and America's post-war recovery provided an ideal opportunity for the family to help their suffering friends. The Cooperative for American Remittances to Europe, or CARE organization, may have inspired them, because they decided to send their own parcels filled with items unattainable or expensive in Germany.

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[17] Johannes Hartmann to Brock family, March 17, 1947, in SBLC.
[18] Johannes Hartmann to Brock family, June 3, 1947, in SBLC.
[19] Johannes Hartmann to Brock family, April 26, 1947, in SBLC.
[20] Eugen Hirth to Brock family, September 29, 1947, in SBLC.

Aid from America

The returning POWs had little time to reacclimate to civilian life–they felt the duty to provide for their struggling families. The most pressing concern was food insecurity. During the war, the Reichsmark collapsed while the black market grew exponentially. POWs heard about the conditions while still interned and worried about relatives–Rudi Lorenz was among these men.

When Lorenz wrote to the Brock family in January 1947, he was still captive in a French prison camp. Based on his letter, the Brocks had inquired after his parents and offered to send them aid. He answered, "In fact they are in need. Therefore, I can't refuse your kind offer."[21] Later in the letter he stated that although there was no chance of returning home soon, he was "badly needed there."[22] Even if Lorenz's father was an able bodied worker with a job, they were still scraping by. Lorenz was obviously concerned for his parents' welfare but aware that he had no power to help them in the situation. When he accepted the offer from the Brocks, the family provided much-needed assistance, likely easing some weight on Lorenz's mind.

[21] Rudi Lorenz to Brock family, January 5, 1947 in *Stribling Brock Letter Collection*: German Prisoner of War Letters, Beaman Library Archives and Special Collections (BLASC), Lipscomb University, Nashville, TN.

[22] *Ibid.*

Figure 18. Rudi Lorenz, German POW who worked for the Brock family. *(Lawrence County Old Jail Museum)*

The Brocks filled packages with groceries that many consider common but constituted luxury items in postwar Germany. Some goods included coffee, sugar, soap, starch, bacon, garden seeds, lard, spices, tea, and detergent. Most of these products are not necessary for survival individually, but when combined with scarcity and rationing, they become vital sources of nutrients. Veronika Hirth, Eugen's mother, wrote to the Brocks: "The allotment on the [ration] card is so minimal that people who do not have the opportunity to receive support from America are susceptible to tuberculosis. We [the country] have unhealthy living conditions."[23] She likely meant that malnutrition and dirty living conditions had led to increased illness among many Germans.

Some items had a more direct impact on driving away disease. Johannes Hartmann assumed care of his aging mother when he returned from the war. He wrote to

[23] Eugen Hirth to Brock family, May 30, 1948, in SBLC.

the Brocks about an illness she was suffering from. The doctor said that coffee was the best medicine to treat the condition–a rare and expensive commodity in Germany at the time.[24] Hartmann likely would have been unable to acquire it without the Brock's help. His heartfelt gratitude was evident in the letter when he stated that he "loves his mother so much" and expressed he was "indebted to [Jim] Brock because of what she did for her."[25]

Figure 19. Portrait of Johannes Hartmann's family. Pictured are Hartmann (top right corner), his two sisters, two brothers, and their elderly mother. *(Lawrence County Old Jail Museum)*

The packages were no small investment for the Brocks. Although they were wealthier than the average American, the volume of provisions sent to the POWs and their families added up. They sent regular parcels to the ten former farm hands and their

[24] Johannes Hartmann to Brock family, October 17, 1947, in SBLC.
[25] Ibid.

families in addition to several other ex-prisoners from Camp Lawrenceburg. Purchasing one pound of lard, bacon, sugar, and coffee cost approximately $1.69 in the mid-south, the equivalent of $19.82 in 2021.[26] Based on the volume of letters that mention foodstuffs, the Brock family devoted a significant amount of money to aiding those in need. They spent a small fortune when the other goods included in the packages, the volume of parcels sent, and shipping cost is factored in. Including the time necessary to coordinate such an extensive relief effort further illustrates their dedication to serving their former German POW workers.

The Brocks sent more than just grocery items; they included clothing as well. Textiles were in short supply due to the Reich's poor policies early in the war. They refused to ration civilian supplies at the outset, multiplying later suffering from shortages. Allotment cards proved useless by the war's end because there were no textile goods to purchase through legal avenues.[27] The Brocks sent Eugen Hirth a big fur coat as a gift in December 1946, the first Christmas he was home with his family after being freed. Hirth wrote of the present, "I find so much joy in it. I could do a polar expedition with it."[28] His sister Anna penned a thankful letter to the Brocks in response to her gifts as well. She said that after seeing her present from Mrs. Brock under the tree, "I was so happy that I cannot describe it. I could hardly believe in such mind-reading. It has been 3 years since I bought a pair of stockings. You can perhaps imagine how I worked to keep my old ones

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[26] *Retail Prices of Food, 1946 and 1947 (*Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office*,* 1948), 47-49.

[27] Rachel Maines, "Wartime Allocation of Textile and Apparel Resources: Emergency Policy in the Twentieth Century," *Public Historian* 7, no. 1 (January 1985): 39-40.

[28] Eugen Hirth to Brock family, December 1946, in SBLC.

in any sort of condition; and you can imagine how glad I was!"[29] The fur coat and stockings were luxuries, since very few clothing items could be purchased legally.

Figure 20. Portrait of the Hirth family. Right to left: Eugen Hirth, Anna Hirth, Mr. Hirth, Veronika Hirth, and Anna and Eugen's unidentified brother. *(Lawrence County Old Jail Museum)*

Johannes Hartmann's family benefitted from the Brocks' gifts. One of his sisters lost her home during the Allied bombings and had only been able to buy herself a chemise afterward. The Brocks sent her new shoes, making them her first pair in years.[30] Hartmann's other sisters soon received the same gift. Hartmann said they had not gotten new shoes in eight years.[31] He seldom specifically asked for items, but he implored the couple to send shoes for his beloved little niece who had a lung sickness.[32] Two months later, Hartmann had the pleasure to deliver the package. He said, "It was very big joy to

[29] Anna Hirth to Brock family, December 27, 1946, in SBLC.
[30] Johannes Hartmann to Brock family, August 20, 1947, in SBLC.
[31] Johannes Hartmann to Brock family, November 8, 1947, in SBLC.
[32] Johannes Hartmann to Brock family, September 11, 1947, in SBLC.

see the luck in his brother's eyes when handed shoes for his daughter."[33] Hartmann's sisters and niece were no longer forced to endure footwear tattered from years of use.

Different types of clothing are required in different professions and social settings. Most POWs found employment after returning home but lacked the resources to procure proper attire. Heinrich Mayk went back to his job as a waiter. Servers at decent establishments are usually asked to wear nice clothing, which Mayk lacked. He requested dress shirts for when he worked at the restaurant.[34] Gustav Kiess had a similar problem in his profession. He wrote, "I have been home for a year now. I have not yet had the opportunity to buy any kind of work clothes. It would be a delight for me if you could help me little with this matter."[35] The Brocks assisted in the ex-POW's ability to provide for themselves by enabling professional and functional attire in the workplace.

[33] Johannes Hartmann to Brock family, November 19, 1947, in SBLC.
[34] Heinrich Mayk to Brock family, October 21, 1947, in SBLC.
[35] Gustav Kiess to Brock family, August 1, 1947, in SBLC.

Figure 21. Heinrich Mayk dressed in his work uniform, likely supplied by the Brock family. *(Lawrence County Old Jail Museum)*

Figure 22. Gustav Kiess (right) and unidentified woman with moving trucks. Kiess worked as a truck driver before and after the war. *(Lawrence County Old Jail Museum)*

Gifts promoted professionalism in other ways. Eugen Hirth wrote to the Brocks about his long hours working as a dentist and that he needed razors, since he had to shave

every morning. He was constantly reusing the few dull ones he had left.[36] R. H. Boll added a note at the end of Hirth's translated letter offering his wisdom. Boll worried that if the Brocks merely sent new blades, they would not fit his holder and recommended they send both. Unfortunately, this gift would only be a temporary solution to a long-term problem. Knowing this, Boll sent a sharpening device intended for Gillette razors saying it was "his present to Eugen."[37] Hirth expressed particular gratitude for the gift because of his daily routine and the scarcity of shaving supplies.[38] The gifts permitted Hirth to maintain a professional appearance while working as a dentist.

In war-torn Germany, access to many medicines was limited or nonexistent. Hirth requested myrrh resin to treat his patients' diseased gums. Boll queried the local druggist and determined that the item could be ordered from New York.[39] This herbal compound has been used for centuries due to its natural antibacterial properties. "In dental literature, myrrh has been found to be effective in treating several oral conditions such as gum swelling, aphthous sore mouth, and intramucosal wounds."[40] When Hirth received the resin, he said that the amount would last for years.[41] The effective ointment would ease the suffering of Hirth's patients and encourage healing. Happy customers sharing good experiences reaps more business, so the Brocks' gift likely aided in establishing Hirth as a successful practitioner.

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[36] Eugen Hirth to Brock family, August 29, 1948, in SBLC.
[37] Eugen Hirth to Brock family, March 8, 1948, in SBLC.
[38] Eugen Hirth to Brock Family, August 29, 1948, in SBLC.
[39] Eugen Hirth to Brock family, March 7, 1948, in SBLC.
[40] Talal M. Zahid, and Jazia A. Alblowi, "Anti-Inflammatory and Anti-Plaque Effects of Commiphora Myrrh Mouthwash: A Preliminary Pilot Clinical Study," *Open Dentistry Journal*, last modified January 1, 2019, https://opendentistryjournal.com/VOLUME/13/PAGE/1/FULLTEXT/ #:~:text =In%20dental%20literature%2C%20myrrh%20has,also%20been%20demonstrated%20%5B22%5D.
[41] Eugen Hirth to Brock Family, May 30, 1948, in SBLC.

Gratitude and Gifts

The former POWs and their families had few valuables after the war; some were left virtually penniless by the mass destruction and displacement. When the Brocks started to send packages filled with expensive goods, the recipients were painfully aware that they could never monetarily repay their kindness. A certain sense of guilt sometimes accompanies accepting charity. Johannes Hartmann echoed this sentiment, saying it is "hard to know [he] can do nothing for it," but "in [the Brocks'] thoughtful way [they] succeeded in taking away the feeling of embarrassment that comes to one who has to receive a gift."[42] The Brocks did not make their aid conditional or treat the poverty-stricken individuals with contempt.

The couple actively offered support and encouraged the men to express their needs. Gustav Kiess' letter shows the Brocks inquired into what the German family lacked. He replied that food and personal care items constituted the greatest concern, but that "Mrs. Brock always knew what we needed, and she always cared for us as no mother could have done better. So I'm willing to leave it entirely to Mrs. Brock to do whatever she would think to help us in our situation."[43] Kiess' statement illustrates trust that the Brocks, Jim Brock in particular, would ensure their welfare. Because of the couple's humble approach and established trust, the Germans received assistance with minimal damage to their pride.

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[42] Johannes Hartmann to Brock family, January 19, 1947, and April 10, 1947, both in SBLC.
[43] Gustav Kiess to Brock family, January 12, 1947, in SBLC.

The German families could often only offer words of gratitude in return for the presents. They strove to represent their deep feelings within the letters. Eugen Hirth wrote after receiving a package filled with coffee, milk, soap, and canned sausages: "You cannot imagine how much joy you have brought to us with that."[44] This short sentence carried weight. It was not merely an exaggeration, rather a reflection of thankfulness from a family struggling to put food on the table. Johannes Hartmann wrote on behalf of his family regarding their Easter clothing, all gifts from the Brocks. During their walk after church, Hartman said, "We only spoke about you. And we wished you both could see us … My sisters are so very thankful and happy. Can you understand a little how we are feeling to you?"[45] His writing shows his diligent effort to communicate the depth of gratitude for the many presents bestowed on their family. Gustav Kiess expressed this feeling without using the usual words or phrases. After receiving a shipment of clothing, he claimed to wear everything with "special pleasure" and added, "When asked where I got them I answer proudly – "These things I received from my friends in America.""[46]

Although the former POWs and their families had little money or resources, they occasionally used their skills to create homemade gifts as expressions of gratitude. Johannes Hartmann's sister was adept at needlework and even won an award for her work.[47] Using her talent, she crafted an intricate bedspread as a present for the Brocks. Eugen Hirth's parents sent a wooden carved bowl and handcrafted lace for Jim Brock's

[44] Eugen Hirth to Brock family, November 7, 1947, in SBLC.
[45] Johannes Hartmann to Brock family, March 31, 1947, in SBLC.
[46] Gustav Kiess to Brock family, November 3, 1947, in SBLC.
[47] Johannes Hartmann to Brock family, June 24, 1947, in SBLC.

birthday in 1948.[48] Despite their meager living conditions, the families used what they had to reciprocate the Brocks' generosity. Even photographs seem to be used as tokens to express appreciation. Twelve POWs and two relatives sent a total of seventy-one pictures that provided a glimpse into their lives in Germany and put a face to the individuals the Brocks aided. Although the gestures may seem small, developing photographs cost time and money – an additional expenditure for families already struggling to financially survive.

Figure 23. Painting on fabric gifted to the Brock family by Maria Rest, wife of POW farmhand Gottfried Rest. *(Lawrence County Old Jail Museum)*

Ex-POWs also used their talents to craft presents for their American friends. Eugen Hirth was an able artist who had previously painted Jim Brock a birthday surprise while he was interned at Camp Lawrenceburg. Hirth's dental school studies and job occupied most of his waking hours once he returned home: his busy schedule made free

[48] Eugen Hirth to Brock family, February 29, 1948, in SBLC.

time precious. He chose to work on a painting for the Brocks using his few moments of Sunday leisure. Hirth wrote, "I hope you'll like it. This is the only thing I can do for you right now."[49] He desired to repay the Brocks' kindness any way he could, so he used the only things he had to offer: time and talent. Hirth stated that he would make them some wooden carvings, but he would "first mold some sculptures out of clay in order to gain experience."[50] He was not simply using preexisting abilities but also developing different skills in order to craft new gifts. This dedication illustrates his desire to return some kindness that had been extended to his family.

Figure 24. Painting by Eugen Hirth for the Brock family. It is captioned, "A little hand-painted chapel – do you like it?" *(Lawrence County Old Jail Museum)*

[49] Eugen Hirth to Brock family, November 30, 1947, in SBLC.
[50] Ibid.

Figure 25. Wooden horse carving likely gifted to the Brocks by Eugen Hirth. *(Lawrence County Old Jail Museum)*

Gifting Hope

The Brocks ensured the families' physical welfare, but the packages provided an additional gift: hope. The intangible side effect was equally important to recipients. The war left Germany broken economically, materially, and emotionally. POWs longed to return home during their imprisonment, but once they returned, many were stunned by their devastated homeland.[51] Homecoming for former captives involved no laurels of victory: instead, they were seen as the losers.[52] The average citizenry coped with complex emotions. Historian Gilad Margalit argues that German society developed an awareness of national shame once information spread about the atrocities, and the Allies emphasized their blame for enabling Hitler's regime.[53] A sense of collective suffering also cemented itself in the populace. Many Germans considered themselves victims of Hitler's

[51] Frank Biess, *Homecomings: Returning POWs and the Legacies of Defeat in Postwar Germany* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 64.

[52] Hately-Broad and Moore, *Prisoners of War, Prisoners of Peace,* 20.

[53] Gilad Margalit, *Guilt, Suffering, and Memory: Germany Remembers Its Dead of World War II: Germany Remembers Its Dead of World War II* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 21-22.

manipulation, the Allies' violence, the regime, and the war's consequences in general.[54] These two emotions battled within the minds of the German people.

The Brocks' POW family expressed their struggle to persevere. Rudi Lorenz shared the temptation faced by many: "Dear Mrs. Brock, we must not start thinking over these hard times in order not to lose the courage to life."[55] The men returned to circumstances that deeply impacted their psyches, like Johannes Hartmann. He arrived home full of fervent expectation, only to be met with betrayal. Hartmann's wife allegedly robbed him and abandoned him for another man. He felt the heavy burden of providing for himself and his aging mother without his savings. In a letter, he expressed his original stress and despair regarding the situation, but then says, "Then, unexpectedly, came your help; I [sic] now we are confident of our ability to weather the crisis."[56] He also wrote within the same week, saying, "All that gave me in the hardest time of my life the best help for my heart and soule [sic]."[57] Aid from the Brocks gave Hartmann the encouragement he desperately needed by feeding his spirit with kindness.

Joy extended to the POWs' families. Happiness was in short supply, even on occasions like birthdays. Celebrations looked much different than before the war because few people could afford gifts or even the ingredients for a cake. In 1948, the Brocks made Anna Hirth's birthday special with a simple gesture. Jim Brock wrote that they would send two pairs of socks. Although it sounds like a small present, her brother described her reaction: "It was for her the best birthday surprise … She was so joyful about it that she

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[54] Ibid., 52.
[55] Rudi Lorenz to Brock family, November 4, 1947, in SBLC.
[56] Johannes Hartmann to Brock family, January 19, 1947, in SBLC.
[57] Johannes Hartmann to Brock family, January 13, 1947 in SBLC.

sang the whole evening."[58] The size of the present did not denote its value. The socks' worth came from their scarcity and status as a birthday surprise. Anna Hirth likely expected nothing because of her family's poverty but instead received the promise of something new.

Figure 26. Photographs sent from Anna Hirth to the Brocks. In the picture on the left, Anna is on the right. In the top middle photograph, Anna is on the left and Eugen is in the middle. Anna is in the middle of the back row in the bottom photograph. In the right picture, Eugen is on the left and Anna is in the middle. *(Lawrence County Old Jail Museum)*

A letter from Willi Müller, another former farmhand for the Brocks, provides an additional example of immense joy resulting from receiving basic necessities.

> To-day was a day of great surprise and joy for me. When I came home from work everybody was so excited. I asked the reason for their excitement and they told me that a package from U.S.A. had arrived. So I immediately started unwrapping the parcel. You should have heard the joy when they saw all the nice things in the package, my sister even cried with joy and words are too poor to express our thanks for your kind and most welcome package of food, they did not see things like these for a long time. I divided the package between my two sisters and my brother and they asked me to tell you how grateful they are and that God may bless you for your kindness … The children danced in the kitchen tasting the

[58] Eugen Hirth to Brock family, June 27, 1948, in SBLC.

> delicious sweets, the poor kids don't get such nice things nowadays … We certainly had a good time due to your kindness.[59]

These goods were unattainable without aid, which transformed the packages to treasures. The gifts represented means to provide for their family, a distraction from the devastation surrounding them, and an excuse to feel happiness.

Although the volume of letters slowed in the 1950s, the friendships lasted a lifetime. In 1972, Eugen Hirth's last documented letter stated that although he had not written much, his thoughts were always with Jim Brock. He said he was "filled with gratitude for the many, many good blessings that we were allowed to receive from you; both during the time as POW, with you in Lawrenceburg, and later at home in Germany again."[60] The Brocks helped the German prisoners get through the toughest period of their lives – first the war, then poverty in their shattered nation. Both parties looked past the "enemy" label and formed a lasting bond that created a ripple effect, influencing the lives of the POWs, their families, and others who reached out for help. The Brocks left a lasting impact by providing encouragement during a dark time. Through the packages, the Germans found solace for their physical and emotional needs.

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[59] Willi Müller to Brock family, June 7, 1947, in SBLC.
[60] Eugen Hirth to Brock family, April 1, 1972, in SBLC.

Figure 27. Eugen Hirth and his family in 1972. Left to right: Lisa Hirth (wife), Doris Hirth (daughter), and Eugen Hirth. *(Lawrence County Old Jail Museum)*

CONCLUSION:

REMEMBERING CAMP LAWRENCEBURG

After turning off West Gaines Street onto Watson Drive in Lawrenceburg, a driver will find an area dotted with houses, much like many other side roads in the town. No structures remain to provide clues about the site's former use almost eighty years ago. Passersby could not identify the location as a former POW camp at all until a Tennessee Historical Marker was installed in 2016. Although there is now a sign distinguishing the area's local significance, its distance from the main road limits its viewers to Watson Drive residents, those who are looking for the marker, and people who run across it by accident. I have talked to many lifetime residents of Lawrence County who have never heard about the POW camp, much less its importance in the area. The lack of awareness is not due to the county's apathy toward local history. The majority of Lawrenceburg natives know that David Crockett lived there or at least that he is connected to the town in some way. The city makes the relation hard to miss: a state park, two theaters, a life-size bronze statue, a motel, a civic organization, a street, an elementary school, an apartment complex, and a restaurant all bear his name or visage.

Unlike tributes to Crockett, memorials of Camp Lawrenceburg are scant. The state historical marker and exhibit at the Lawrence County Old Jail Museum are the only physical indicators. Unfortunately, the county is missing an opportunity to illuminate a positive event in its history. The POW camp's story is multifaceted: it reveals the kindness displayed by some citizens, the prisoners' impact on the area through labor, and a change in the community's attitude after the nearly two years of close proximity to their

supposed enemies. The narrative presents multiple options for public history opportunities that would educate the community about this widely forgotten tale.

National Register of Historic Places

Lipscomb University representatives unveiled a Tennessee Historical Marker at the Lawrenceburg POW camp site in 2016. Although the sign denotes the Watson Drive area as the camp's location, several properties significant to the wartime story have no indicator. A National Register of Historic Places nomination for sites associated with the Lawrenceburg POW camp would serve to acknowledge its importance, assist preservation efforts, and provide a tourism boost for the community. The Stribling House, Kid's Place Child Advocacy Center/The Shelter, Inc., and the former camp commander's home could potentially qualify based on the National Park Service's criteria for age, integrity, and significance.

Figure 28. Tennessee State Historical Marker commemorating the Lawrenceburg POW Camp, located on Watson Drive.

Figure 29. The Stribling-Brock's family home located on Pulaski Street.

The nomination process is lengthy. First, the site is evaluated according to the National Register's criteria. Applicants must fill out an extensive form that is then sent to the appropriate state's historic preservation office. The state approval takes a minimum of ninety days. Nominations are then submitted to the National Park Service in Washington, D.C., for final review. The Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places then adds the property to the master list. The decision can take up to forty-five days.[1]

The strenuous nomination process can reap great rewards. Certain benefits are reserved for properties deemed worthy of being listed on the register. Sites are considered in planning for federally-assisted projects. Benefits are available for landowners, too. Tax provisions are available for the rehabilitation of these historic spaces and also federal grants that assist in preservation.[2] These results help ensure the longevity of the site, which conserves the memory of its local significance.

Outdoor Exhibit

No original structures or buildings remain at the POW camp site. A Tennessee Historical Marker is positioned beside the road in the yard of a nearby homeowner. Only the most imaginative viewer can picture the residential area during World War II: bustling with German prisoners, guards patrolling, and tents scattered across the land. Many have no frame of reference to picture what a POW camp would look like, causing a

[1] National Park Service, "National Register of Historic Places: How to List a Property," U.S. Department of the Interior, last modified November 26, 2019, https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/how-to-list-a-property.htm.

[2] National Park Service, "National Register of Historic Places: FAQs," U.S. Department of the Interior, last modified May 6, 2020, https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/faqs.htm.

disconnect between the plaque's information and visitor comprehension. There was a camp by Shoal Creek, but what does that *mean*?

Outdoor exhibit panels would solve the visualization problem. Plenty of images remain that provide clues as to the camp's layout including pictures of the entrance, mess hall, post exchange, barracks, and guard towers. These photographs coupled with text would serve to orient viewers so that they can imagine their surroundings as they existed eighty years ago. Signs would be strategically placed facing the location of the structure pictured. For example, an ideal location for the panel installation would be at the intersection of Watson Drive and Bluff Drive. Based on a local map from 1946, that is the contemporary location where the photograph of the camp's entrance was captured. The plaque would face north so that the visitor could view the image of Camp Lawrenceburg's entrance from the correct angle and envision the modern houses and new foliage growth cleared away, replaced by tents, a flagpole, and the dirt road.

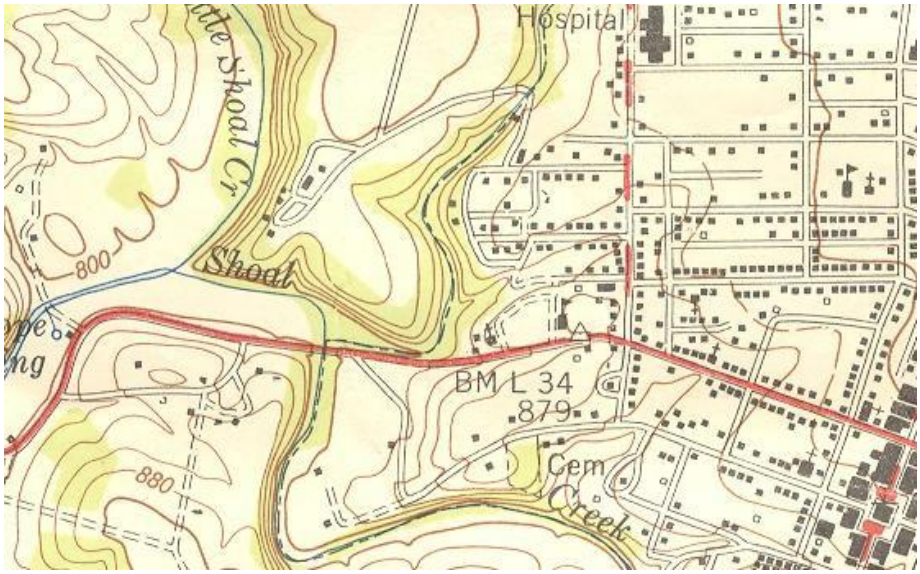

Figure 30. 1949 map of Lawrenceburg. The POW camp structures are visible beside Shoal Creek. *(Lawrence County Old Jail Museum)*

Figure 31. Lawrenceburg POW camp. Guard tents on the left, mess hall is center-left, and camp offices on the right. *(Lawrence County Old Jail Museum)*

Figure 32. The photograph from figure 30 was taken in this location on Watson Drive.

The panels would include interpretive text that educates visitors about this part of local and national history. General information about World War II, POW camps, and homefront labor shortages is necessary to provide context. These topics help prepare the learner to understand why the tiny, rural town of Lawrenceburg was chosen to house a branch camp. Text can also explain camp basics like the daily schedule and meals, which according to historian Arnold Krammer, were similar in most locations across the United

States.[3] Aspects specific to local labor and housing situations can be ascertained from government reports, photographs, and testimonies.

QR codes would be another helpful addition to the outdoor panels. All smartphones are enabled with the technology to scan them without the need for an app, which makes the tactic highly accessible for multiple audiences. The codes would link to an audio recording where listeners would be introduced to the "speaker" – either a POW, camp guard, or child of an American soldier stationed at Camp Lawrenceburg. All the information would be based on actual testimonies from eyewitnesses or primary sources. Most people involved with the camp are gone, but their voices can still be heard through their stories.

Linda Andress Peña was born during her father's tenure as camp commander in Lawrenceburg. Although they left before she turned one year old, her family passed down stories about the experience. Peña shared heartwarming anecdotes during her visit to Lipscomb University in 2015. She said, "When I was born, the prisoners made and offered a heart shaped locket stamped with the initials LA that I still wear even today. I have held this dear for 70 years."[4] Peña also remembered hearing that the German men sang lullabies to the Andress' two young daughters. Recounting Peña's stories would help visitors gain a better understanding of Camp Lawrenceburg's dynamics – the kindness shown, the relationships between guards and prisoners, and camp culture.

The Stribling Brock Letter Collection provides another opportunity to talk about the camp using eyewitness testimony. The POWs frequently mention memories from

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[3] Krammer, *Nazi Prisoners of War in America*, 48.
[4] Chaudoin, "Stribling Brock Collection Unveiling Tells Story of Loving One's Enemy."

their years of internment, offering a glimpse into their experience in captivity. An audio recording could be from the perspective of a prisoner like Eugen Hirth who included multiple snippets about his experience at the camp. In order to provide thorough representation, negative narratives must be included as well. Examples could include J. W. Krick's testimony about threatening Nazis who refused to work or information from Leo, a POW who wrote to the Brock family. He described how the Germans experienced hostile treatment from some local citizens.

Additional recordings could describe the camp's layout geographically. The audio would aid visitors in holistically understanding Camp Lawrenceburg, but the method would be particularly beneficial for the blind and vision impaired communities. The story could come to life for them without having to see the panels. Individuals would have the ability to orient themselves spatially while imagining the structures and hearing the "interviews" with camp residents.

Living History

In 1987, learning theorist and educator Neil D. Fleming developed the VARK model to help students become better learners by determining which strategies are most effective for their individual needs. There are four categories: visual, aural, read/write, and kinesthetic. The learning styles address "gathering, processing, interpreting, organizing and thinking about information."[5] Many educators try to craft lessons that

[5] Vanessa Marcy, "Adult Learning Styles: How the VARK Learning Style Inventory Can Be Used to Improve Student Learning," *Perspectives on Physician Assistant Education* 12, no. 2 (Spring 2001): 118.

incorporate all four modes, but it is a difficult task. These styles do not simply fade away once a student graduates from school, rather, they influence adult education as well. To maximize the learning experience of all audiences, the VARK model should be incorporated into history education. Living history events provide excellent opportunities to engage all four categories and target diverse learners.

Living history events seek to simulate an environment where visitors can experience the past through active participation. Interpreters become "characters" who usually reenact certain elements and allow viewers to interact. Public historian Aja Bain argues that tangibility provides opportunities to bridge the gap between past and present by illustrating universal themes that transcend time.[6] The Camp Lawrenceburg story offers multiple relevant lessons that could be communicated through hands-on interactive learning.

The first step would be recruiting a team to coordinate the various parts of the event. Different members would be responsible for tasks like structure organization, volunteers, marketing, research, interactive booths, and scheduling. Varying skill levels are necessary for the different responsibilities. The main interpreters should be adept at interacting with audiences and have experience in educational roles. To accurately portray the character, they must be willing to research the historical figure, the camp, and the World War II time period.

POW historiography and primary sources reveal general traits shared by most camps. These facts can shape the schedule and activities. For example, one station can

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[6] Aja Bain, "Peopling the Past: Living History and Inclusive Museum Practice," *Museum Scholar*, 2 (2019), http://articles.themuseumscholar.org/tp_vol2bain.

show audiences how military men were required to make their beds. The actor can show audiences the proper technique, then allow visitors to try it themselves. To illustrate POW labor, 1940s-era trucks could transport groups to a separate area where characters will be cutting wood. The interpreters would explain that their job was to harvest chemical wood for a local plant and detail the struggles faced by the Germans. Another character could act as the guard and tell J. W. Krick's story in order to show two perspectives. To provide a kinesthetic learning opportunity, the "POWs" would discuss their daily quota of one cord and offer for visitors to gather up the equivalent amount. Even food can be used to foster the camp atmosphere. Items can be offered at the "mess hall" that the POWs actually ate, like meatloaf, bread, and coffee. Visitors could even meet "the Brocks" by questioning actors versed in the family's history. Through the interactive experiences, audiences would gain a better understanding of prisoner labor and their captive experiences in Lawrenceburg.

The living history approach also enables the inclusion of diverse voices. Sam Buchanan was employed by the Brock family and worked alongside the POWs. He left no known paper trail that could be used to interpret his inner thoughts, but there are other sources that provide insight into the African-American community's perspective. Bain writes, "Instead of lamenting the lack of material culture to inform inclusive interpretation, a people-centered approach can help reassert missing voices and repopulate the historical landscape with a more accurate depiction of its inhabitants and its relevance to today."[7] She argues that this is the true strength of the living history

[7] Ibid.

approach. Matthias Reiss has analyzed the relationship between African Americans and German POWs, and his scholarship sheds light on Jim Crow's impact on this dynamic. Lawrenceburg POW letters coupled with Reiss' work would inform appropriate interpretation that could release a silenced voice. Historical representation for Buchanan and Lawrenceburg's African-American community could illuminate the multifaceted impact of white war prisoners on the south's racial hierarchy, ethnicity's role in acceptance, and universal themes of prejudice.

Educators and parents could continue the learning experience through additional resources. Supplementary materials can be tailored to different grade levels using age-appropriate methods. Tennessee State Standards would be incorporated into the lessons, allowing for easy incorporation into pre-existing curricula and classroom settings. This can scaffold learning that took place at the event by better understanding context, using critical thinking, prompting dialogue, and promoting textual analysis. A free website could be crafted to hold lesson plans, activities, reading materials, and tools for teachers that coordinate with the living history event.

Virtual Exhibit

The COVID-19 pandemic has put immense strain on all in-person learning environments. After March 2020, classrooms across the nation went online, and museums closed their doors. These efforts, while necessary for safety, have caused an education crisis. Both classrooms and museums have grappled with new ways to successfully reach their audiences in order to ensure learning continues. The Lawrence County Old Jail

Museum, the small organization dedicated to local history, stopped giving tours during the health emergency. This is the only institution in the county or state that addresses the POW camp or Stribling-Brock letter collection, so without physical access to the museum, people have little access to historical interpretation involving Camp Lawrenceburg.

After considering these issues, I decided an online exhibit offered the best solution. I selected the ArcGIS StoryMaps platform because of the features offered. It allows the developer creative freedom to shape the site's layout and present information in various formats. Websites that use the builder are modern and aesthetically pleasing, which is an important factor for educational resources. Educational specialist Alicia David and analyst Peyton Glore argue, "There is a significant amount of research that supports the view that design, aesthetics and usability are inexorably linked."[8] The concept applies to young students as well: they are more likely to reject media that appears outdated. ArcGIS offers interactive aspects that can help keep students engaged along with formatting options that provide for a clean design. The following web address links to the site:

https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/54361b1889e0495f8b03240767ad6856

The goal of the virtual exhibit is to foster an understanding of life at Camp Lawrenceburg for POWs, the relationship that developed between the Stribling-Brock family and their German farmhands, and the long-term impact of the friendship. I debated

[8] Alicia David and Peyton Glore, "The Impact of Design and Aesthetics on Usability, Credibility, and Learning in an Online Environment," *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration* 13, no. 4 (Winter 2010), https://www.westga.edu/~distance/ojdla/winter134/david_glore134.html.

the best way to present my research to the young target audience chosen, fifth through eighth graders, and decided to format the story like a journal so that students could read the text like a POW was stating it. Former prisoners included information in their letters about their experiences while at the camp and working for the Brock family. I created fictional journal entries by supplementing the quotes from their correspondence with information gleaned from POW historiography. In *Nazi Prisoners of War in America*, Krammer includes a typical daily schedule used in camps across the United States, which I used to timestamp the journal entries.[9] I chose genuine corresponding photographs to accompany each account. The format promotes the categorization of their daily schedule using time blocks and related photographs, which is helpful for visual learners. The last part of the exhibit presents modern application, using the relationships between the Brocks and POWs to overcome prejudice and promote kindness amongst people today.

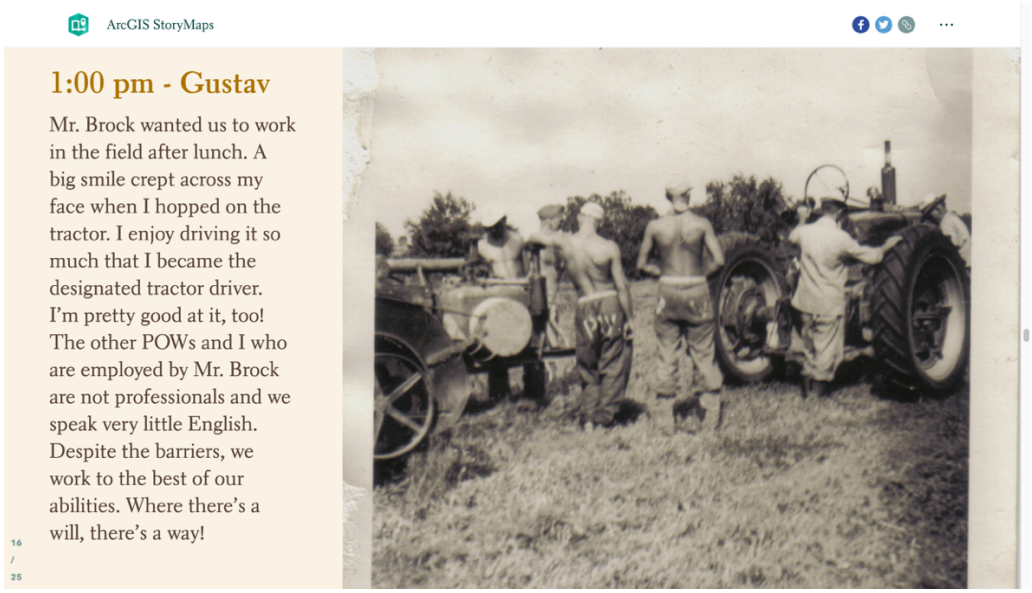

Figure 33. Screenshot from the ArcGIS StoryMaps exhibit *Journal From Captivity.*

[9] Krammer, *Nazi Prisoners of War in America,* 48.

I plan to create corresponding lesson plans to be used in conjunction with the website to help guide educators and parents. Each will be ready to insert into preexisting curricula by including key components like state standards, objectives, academic language, and instruction. Activities will promote critical thinking and target English Language Arts standards in addition to history. They will also be formatted to allow flexibility for teachers to tailor the lessons to fit their students' needs. The "Say Something" activity from Learning for Justice is an excellent example of a tactic that educators can adjust to benefit diverse learners.[10] To use this approach for the POW lesson, the teacher would pair students to read the exhibit text. Children will take turns reading aloud and pause occasionally to say something about the text, prompted by sentence starters provided to help build confidence and adapt to varying skill levels. Student responses must be based on the specific themes from the reading, like the central idea. This tactic improves fluency and scaffolds students by collaborating with peers. Children of varying skill levels can benefit from this activity, because they will be supported by the teacher, their partner, and guided sentence starters.

The story of Camp Lawrenceburg and the relationships formed there present multiple public history opportunities because of its universal themes, importance in the local community, and relevance in an overarching narrative. The first option encourages long-term recognition and preservation for associated sites, while the latter three apply historical research to create educational resources. Each goal presents both shared and

[10] "Teaching Strategy: Say Something," Learning for Justice, accessed April 2, 2021, https://www.learningforjustice.org/classroom-resources/teaching-strategies/community-inquiry/say-something.

unique challenges, but they also offer immense rewards. Aspects of this local narrative differ from any other POW experiences documented to date. The community could benefit culturally from capitalizing on the tale. Implementing these public history approaches would foster better knowledge of local history while building a shared sense of community. Most importantly, the lessons learned from the Stribling-Brocks and German POWs are not bound by time. Overcoming prejudice, building friendships despite differences, and acting compassionately are themes needed today. Their applicability will not change, because no matter the era, society consistently faces hate- the antithesis of these ideas.

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