

Guide to the Janet Worrall POW Camp 202 Collection – 2006.31

Reference code US CoGrCGM 2006.31
Title: Janet Worrall POW Camp 202 Collection
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Finding aid prepared by Cassie Flatt

Name and location of repository Hazel E Johnson Research Center
Greeley History Museum
714 8th Street
Greeley, CO 80631
Phone: (970)351-9219
Email: museums@greeleygov.com
URL: <http://greeleymuseums.com/>

Collection Summary

Dates 1944-2005
Bulk dates 1987-1989 (Note: POW Camps dates 1942-1946)
Level of description Collection
Creator Janet Worrall
Extent 1 cubic foot
Creator(s) Janet Worrall

Administrative/Biographical History

Brief History of Camp 202

During World War II, farmers found themselves with a shortage of labor. Before the war began, the farmers hired large families to work the farms; however, because many of the able-bodied men of these families had been sent overseas to fight in the war, the option to hire these men was no longer available. Therefore, the United States decided to bring over many prisoners of war from overseas to work on farms all across the country.

The first prisoners of war to arrive in Greeley appeared on October 4, 1943. These prisoners first consisted of 143 Italians brought over from a base camp in Douglas, Wyoming. They were stationed in the empty Horace Mann School located on 11th Avenue and 12th Street, Greeley. The Italians were primarily used in the beet fields. Greeley citizens soon grew fond of these Italian prisoners, describing them as being cheerful and hard workers, singing and joking in the sugar beet fields. When Italy surrendered at the end of the year, the Italian POWs were pulled from the farms to work elsewhere.

About the same time, the US Army Corps of Engineers purchased 320 acres approximately eight miles outside of Greeley, along current Highway 34 from local farmer Roy Abbott, and began building a base camp: Camp 202, or Camp Greeley, as many referred to it. On December 13, 1943, this camp was opened to the public, and several thousand visitors made their way to the compound, though due to security measures, civilians were not allowed to photograph any part of the camp. Visitors to the camp described it as a “small city,” having all the necessities including: its own electricity, water, and sewer systems; barracks for 3,000 prisoners and 600 army personnel; fire station; stables; filling station; 300-seat theater; library; classrooms, post office; 150 bed hospital with oak floors; officer’s club; nurses’ quarters; and administrative buildings. Personnel of Camp Greeley were under the command of the Ninth Division of the Army, with headquarters in Omaha, Nebraska, and the camp was directed by Colonel Griffin, who was described as being “an extremely fair and humanly officer”. At the height of the camp, there were about 3,000 prisoners living within a hundred mile radius of Greeley.

The first prisoners, Germans and Austrians, arrived at the camp on March 13, 1944. Approximately 4,000 prisoners made their way to the camp, although only about 1,500 ended up staying while the others were transferred to satellite camps, including nearby Camp Hale, near Leadville, Colorado. A huge majority of the prisoners had been captured during Field Marshal Rommel’s African Campaign launched the end of the previous year, and even Rommel’s own personal mechanic was amongst those captured and brought back to the United States.

Once they reached the camp, the men were given the option as to whether or not they wished to work for the local farmers. The farmers would gather together and decide the going rate for farm labor and would then pay the government the decided rate for each prisoner they had working in the fields. In turn, the prisoners were paid a percentage of this rate and the difference would go to supporting the United States Army.

If the prisoners decided that they wanted to work in the fields, they would gather each morning and would wait for the farmers to pick them up at the camp gates. A farmer would drive up in his truck and the predetermined amount of men was loaded up into the back of the truck. A guard was sent along with the farmer and POWs. The farmers typically put the prisoners to work in the sugar beet and potato fields, though they helped in onion, cabbage, and corn fields and would sometimes help harvest hay.

The German and Austrian prisoners quickly discovered that the majority of the farmers in the Greeley area were primarily Volga Germans—also known as Germans from Russia. These Germans from Russia made a point of maintaining their language and traditions that they had been clinging to since their emigration from Germany.

Oftentimes, these farmers would break the rules stating that the farmers and their families were not to give the prisoners anything. Many of the farmers’ wives would secretly spend the mornings making large noon meals for the POWs. Even many of the more strict farmers would “lose” packets of cigarettes in the truck and fields for the prisoners. Some of the farmers became particularly attached to individual prisoners; staying in touch with these men even after the war ended and the POWs were sent back home. Care packages and correspondence would be sent for years afterwards.

When the prisoners returned to camp, they were allowed a variety of entertainments. A Christian organization donated a set of musical instruments to the prisoners, which were quickly used to assemble a small orchestra and jazz band that performed not only for the camp, but also for the locals. Nearby colleges donated books and other learning material so that the prisoners could learn English, German, math, and other subjects while they were imprisoned. There was a 300 seat theatre which played movies twice a week. A theatre group was assembled, and prisoners put on plays. In the spring of 1944, a group of athletes asked the administration for a playing field: only weeks later, there was a soccer field, a 100-meter track, a 400-meter track, as well as long-jump and high-jump facilities. Teams from the camp were even allowed to play against local teams at Island Grove Park.

The camp was visited regularly by representatives from the International Red Cross, YMCA, Swiss legation (the neutral power representing Germany) and the United States Army. The POWs chose their own representative to meet with these visitors, who could also ask to have a private conversation with any prisoner. Swiss delegate Verner Tober said, after his visit on May 2-3, 1944, "This is the first camp I have ever visited where I have had no complaints presented."

Following the surrender of Germany, the camp closed February 28, 1946. The prisoners were sent back overseas and Camp 202 shut down for good. Greeley purchased 49 of the buildings: a light and tower went to the municipal airport; a latrine was sold to Island Grove Park; some barracks were moved to the Colorado Teachers College (Now University of Northern Colorado) and used as married student housing until they were razed in 1974. Yet other barracks were cut in half and moved to the corner of 9th Street and 23rd Avenue in Greeley, where they are still being used as rentals. Windsor bought the camp's officers club and converted the building into the American Legion Post 109, moving the building to 624 Ash Street. Loveland purchased 34 buildings as well. Today, all that remains of the site are two pillars that were once the main entryway into the camp.

Biography of Harley Theodore Bjoralt

Harley Theodore Bjoralt was born November 4, 1918 in Fergus Falls, Minnesota to Henry and Theo (Orpen) Bjoralt. Harley was the eldest of five children—Gordon, Joyce, Geraldine and Orval. The family moved to Montana, where Harley worked until his father's death in 1935, after which Harley moved back to Minnesota where he continued working as a hired hand on a farm owned by the Hendrickson family. Harley only had an 8th grade education.

In February of 1941, Harley Bjoralt enlisted in the United States Army and was sent overseas to fight in the European Theatre of Operations, participating in three separate invasions over the course of 22 – 23 months. Some of the various places he visited while in combat overseas were: Tunisia, Sicily, Naples, Foggia, and Algeria, French Morocco. While overseas, Bjoralt was injured in Sicily and Italy.

In 1944, Harley Bjoralt was sent back to the Sam Houston camp in Texas, where he was given a medical evaluation and then given orders to serve at the POW Camp 202 in Greeley, Colorado. Bjoralt was in the first group of combat troop guards to be sent to Greeley. During this time,

Bjoralt was sent to side camps, such as those in Ault and Saratoga, and once to Wyoming due to an emergency. At other times, during work detail, he visited other towns in the Northern Colorado area such as: Windsor, LaSalle, Platteville, and Johnstown. However, Bjoralt spent most of his time at the camp as a guard sergeant.

It was also during this time that Henry Bjoralt met a nurse working in the American ward of the hospital at Camp 202 named Genevieve Garles. On February 22, 1945, Henry and Genevieve were married in Sharon Springs, Kansas. Although they were married in Kansas, Henry and Genevieve lived in Greeley and continued their work at the camp. Their son, David W. Bjoralt was born March 2, 1946.

After the war ended, Henry Bjoralt worked at various auto shops, including: Henry's Auto Paint Shop; the Weld County Automobile Co., where he worked as a truck salesman, beginning this job in February 1953; and finally buying George's Frame and Axle Co., renaming it Auto Alignment and Frame Service. Bjoralt retired in 1981, selling his company. After his retirement, Harley kept busy, picking up hobbies such as leather crafting and wood working, as well as joining various organizations such as Our Savior's Lutheran Church; Pioneer Post 2121, VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars); DAV (Disabled American Veterans), Chapter 8; American Legion Post 18; and Greeley Moose Lodge, No. 909.

On August 14, 1970 Genevieve Bjoralt passed away due to health problems. Harley remarried Ellen Kandt on March 11, 1971 in Oahu, Hawaii.

On October 8, 1995, Harley Bjoralt passed away in Greeley, Colorado. He was survived by his second wife, son, daughter-in-law, four grandchildren, and several siblings.

Biography of Henry and Mollie Dietz

Henry Dietz was born to Jacob and Marie (Kammerzelt) Dietz in Brunnenghal, Russia on November 2, 1905. Before Henry had been born, the family had immigrated to Russia from Germany. However, things began to go sour for the family in Russia, so they decided to follow family members to America. They immigrated to the United States in 1914, celebrating Henry's ninth birthday while on the ocean. The family already had a job lined up in Windsor, Colorado (with the Great Western Sugar Company) and moved straight there to begin farming. Henry was the second of four boys: Jacob (Jake), John, and Dave. Henry Dietz received no higher than a sixth grade education.

Mollie Kissler was born to Henry and Catherine (Stroh) Kissler on July 13 1910 in the Greeley area. Both of her parents were also German Russian emigrants, but had arrived in the United States by the time Mollie was born. Mollie was the fourth of six children: John, George, Rosa, Edith, and Katie. Henry married Mollie Kissler on December 15, 1928 in Greeley, Colorado. The couple lived with his parents for several more years before renting their own place. Henry and Mollie had four daughters: Dorothy, Marjorie, Henrietta, and Helen; and four sons: Henry "Willie", Edward, Robert, and George. The family spoke German at home.

Henry Dietz and his family moved to several farms (which they rented) in the Gill, Pierce, Tinmath, Severance, Windsor, Ault, and Greeley areas. For a while, Henry's brother, Dave,

lived with the family helping around the farm. The Dietz's also hired various workers including Jamaicans, southern blacks, Japanese, and the German POWs from Camp 202. While the POWs were working on the Dietz farm, Henry and his brother made friends with the POWs (having the same few every time), most noticeably a man named Erich Noetzel, who showed a great fondness for their children. The Dietzs told the story of how a couple of POWs (Erich and Robert) helped them fix their truck. Mollie Dietz would make sandwiches for the POWs, feeling that the food they were sent with was not sufficient for men working in the fields. After the war, the couple remained in contact with several of their POW friends, writing letters and sending small gifts overseas.

The Dietzs finally moved onto their own farm in Windsor, Colorado. They won the title of "Top 10 Beetgrower" in the Black Hollow Beet Dump in 1969 and 1977. The couple retired in 1980, remaining in Windsor. Henry was a member of the Faith United Church of Christ in Windsor and a board member of the Zion Lutheran Church. He passed away on March 5, 1989 in Windsor, Colorado. Mollie Dietz continued on in Windsor, involving herself in Bible studies and hobbies, such as crocheting, quilting, poetry, and traveling. She passed away on December 9, 1999, leaving behind eight grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.

Biography of John Heckman

John "Shorty" Heckman was born in New Balzer, Russia on February 19, 1906 to Jacob and Mary Heckman, both Germans from Russia. The Heckman family immigrated to the United States in 1907 and settled in Buckingham, Colorado (in the Fort Collins area—now abandoned) to begin farming. The Buckingham area included a mixed group of German Russians and Mexicans, which helped John maintain his own German language as well as learn some Spanish. John Heckman was the fourth of twelve children: Henry, Amelia, Jacob, Mollie, Mary, Benny, Katty, George, Emma, Clara, and Leona. Heckman went to school through the 8th grade.

On June 16, 1929, John Heckman married Lydia Miller, a Colorado native, in Loveland, Colorado. For several years, Lydia's widowed mother, Christine Miller, lived with the couple. John and Lydia's son, Marvin L. Heckman, was born August 19, 1933 in Fort Collins, Colorado. The couple remained married until Lydia passed away on May 13, 1978.

John Heckman worked as a farmer in the Windsor and Fort Collins areas until he retired in 1965. At first, he rented land, but eventually went on to own his own farm. During his time farming, Heckman was one of the many farmers who hired the German POWs from Camp 202. John's wife Lydia and mother-in-law Christine were some of the women who would feed the prisoners home-cooked lunches, and Christine would talk with the prisoners, despite the fact that it was against camp rules for the families to feed the prisoners and for the women to communicate with the prisoners. Once the German POWs were sent back to Europe, John went on to hire "nationals" (Mexican laborers) as farm hands.

John Heckman passed away on November 25, 1990 in Fort Collins, Colorado. He left behind his son Marvin, two grandsons, four sisters, and one brother.

Biography of Johannes (John) Hemple

Johannes (John) Hemple—originally spelled Hempel—was born to German Russians Johan Georg (George) Hempel and Marie Elizabeth (Mary) (Weinmeister) Hempel in Huck—also known as Splavukha—Russia on October 3, 1909. On June 11, 1912, George, Mary, their older daughter Charlotte, and John all boarded the *SS Russia* in Libau, Latvia and departed to the United States to join Mary's brother in Colorado. The family reached Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada on June 23 and immediately took a train to the US port of entry Port Huron, Michigan, reaching their destination on June 25. From there, George worked as a laborer for several years before the family settled on a farm in LaSalle, Colorado, going on to have five more children: Jake, Mollie, Edward, Alex, and Freda. John went to school for some years, though he never received any higher than an 8th grade education.

On December 4, 1935, John Hemple married Edna Krause, a Colorado native, in the Weld County Courthouse. John worked as a farmer and Edna was a housewife. For at least a short period of time, John's younger brother Alex lived with the couple. John and Edna had two children: William Gene Hemple, born October 7, 1939 and Richard Lee Hemple, born March 20, 1946.

During World War II, John continued working on his beet farm, hiring the German POWs from Camp 202 to help with the farm work. He sold his farm in 1960, and moved to the town of La Salle where he worked as a maintenance man for the next 13 years. Besides working on his farm, John Hemple helped build the La Salle ballpark in 1945 and served as its president for two years. Additionally, he helped organized the La Salle Volunteer Fire Department, and was heavily involved until his illness in 1994, serving as assistant chief in 1944 and being promoted to chief in 1946, 1947, and 1952 – 1954. He then went on to be vice-president of the department in 1950 and was president from 1958 – 1960. In 1990, he was named firefighter of the year, and was actively involved in fund-raising for the department from 1942 – 1994.

John Hemple passed away on March 7, 1995 in Greeley, Colorado. He was survived by his wife Edna, his two sons, four grandchildren, a great-grandchild, as well as several of his siblings.

Biography of Glenn and Shirley Miller

Glenn Miller was a Colorado native, born October 7, 1932, in Johnstown. Miller grew up on the family farm, which produced sugar beets, alfalfa, corn, and peas. Having older parents, Glenn was an only child. When he was about eleven and twelve years old, the Miller family hired some of the German POWs from Camp 202 to work on their farm in Johnstown. During this time, Glenn continued working in the fields, completing tasks such as delivering potato sacks to the prisoners in the fields. The boy received a full education through the Johnstown school system. From 1952 – 1954, Glenn attended the Colorado State University—then called Colorado A&M college—and joined a number of student organizations including: the Livestock Club, the Dairy Science Club, and the fraternity Sigma Alpha Epsilon. On November 21, 1954 Glenn Miller married Shirley Miller in Torrington, Wyoming.

Shirley Slagle Miller was born in Torrington, Wyoming. Her father was a German—though not a German Russian—and her mother was Scotch Irish. Her father and mother had two daughters and several sons. The family owned a farm, harvesting corn, potatoes, hay, and sugar beets, as well as running cattle through Estes Park, Colorado. During the war, the family hired German

POW workers from camp 202, replacing the farm hands they had lost to the draft. While utilizing the POWs, the Miller family—along with their neighbors—ended up cooking the prisoners homemade meals during the work day. Shirley completed her education at Torrington school and went on to the Colorado State College of Education and Barnes School of Commerce in Denver. She lived for a while in California and was a flight attendant for United Air Lines. She moved to Johnstown after marrying Glenn Miller. She served as a county agent for several years.

Biography of Janet Worrall

Janet Worrall is a professor emeritus of Latin American History and Immigration History (as of the creation of this finding aid 2013) in the history department at the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley, Colorado. Worrall earned her PhD from Indian University. She has been involved in research on Italian and German prisoners of war for several years. She published several articles on this subject matter, including an article on Italian prisoners of war in the 1988 Proceedings from the Twenty-first Annual Conference of the American Italian Historical Association, and an article on reactions to German and Italian POWs in Northern Colorado, 1943-1946 in the Colorado Heritage magazine, 1990, issue 1.

Scope and Content

This collection consists of research material created by Janet Worrall, who is a professor of Latin American History and Immigration History (as of the creation of this finding aid 2013) in the history department at the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley, Colorado. Predominant material types in this collection include photographs and negatives, oral histories, correspondence and newspaper clippings.

System of arrangement

As no original order could be established, materials from this collection have been interfiled in an imposed order.

Conditions governing access

There are no restrictions on the access of this collection.

Conditions governing reproduction and use

There are no restrictions on the use of this collection.

Languages and scripts of the materials

English

Custodial history

The materials in this collection were created and assembled by Janet Worrall.

**Immediate source
of acquisition**

The collection was donated by Janet Worrall.

**Related archival
materials**

A German Odyssey: The Journal of a German Prisoner of War; Helmut Horner (Author), Alan Kent Powell (Translator), 1991

How Our POW's Made 'Little Americas' Behind Nazi Barbed Wire... The Story of THE YANKEE KRIEGIES; Col. C. Ross Greening, Sgt. Angelo M. Spinelli in collaboration with John R. Burkhart, 1946. (2006.25)

City of Greeley Museums documentary files – POW

“Inside Greeley, March 2011” (2011.05)

Photographs of POW Camp 202 (2012.92)

General Site Plans for POW Camp 202 by Crocker & Ryan, Architect Engineer, ca. 1942-42. (2013.24)

Photographs of a Colorado State College of Education (CSCE) Band Concert presented at Prisoner of War (POW) Camp 202 (2008.115)

German WWII POW CAMP Letter written by Kurt Stolze from the Greeley POW Camp 202 (2007.25)

Audio cassette of Colorado farmers discussing how they used POW camp 202 prisoners on farms from 1943-1945. (1993.29.0002)

POW Camp 202 paperweight (2005.16.0001)**Notes** Preferred citation: City of Greeley Museum’s Permanent Collection, #2006.31.

Persons

Bjoralt, Harley
Dietz, Henry
Dietz, Mollie
Heckman, John
Hemple, Johannes
Miller, Glenn
Miller, Shirley
Worrall, Janet

Places

Gould (Colo.)
Greeley (Colo.)

Subjects

Dogs of War
Germans from Russia

Military Camps
Military Officers
Military Personnel
POW Camp 202
Prison Laborers
Prisoners of War

Document Types Audiocassettes
 Compact Discs
 Correspondence
 Negative Film
 Newspaper Clippings
 Photographs
 Transcriptions

Contents

Series I: Oral Histories

Subseries A: Harley Theodore Bjoralt

An interview between Janet Worrall and Harley Bjoralt about Camp 202.

Subseries B: Henry & Mollie Dietz

An interview between Janet Worrall and Henry and Mollie Dietz about Camp 202.

Subseries C: John Heckman

An interview between Janet Worrall and John Heckman about Camp 202.

Subseries D: Johannes (John) Hemple

An interview between Janet Worrall and John Hemple about Camp 202.

Subseries E: Glenn & Shirley Miller

An interview between Janet Worrall and John Hemple about Camp 202.

Series II: Photographs

A series of photographs pertaining to Camp 202. The majority of the photographs are black and white and depict images of the camp, the guard dogs, POWs in the field, camp personnel, and parts of the Colorado Teachers College campus. There is one colored photograph of a small group of personnel standing in front of the buildings and several more colored photographs of the ruins of another camp. Some of the photographs were owned by Barbara Carlin, the wife of an officer at Camp 202, while others are photographs that Janet Worrall took of the original photographs owned by the Dietz family. The more recent photographs are originals taken of various relevant locations by Janet Worrall herself.

Series III: Negatives

These are all black and white negatives of the POW with various subjects such as the camp dogs, the POWs in the field, and a couple of photographs of a returned POW with his family. Nearly all of the negatives were taken by Janet Worrall of photographs originally owned by the Dietz family, and many of these Dietz negatives correspond with photographs in Series II.

Series IV: Documents

Subseries A: Harley Theodore Bjoralt

A set of documents collected by Janet Worrall pertaining to her interactions with Harley Bjoralt, a former guard of Camp 202.

Subseries B: Henry & Mollie Dietz

A set of documents collected by Janet Worrall pertaining to her interactions with Henry and Mollie Dietz: farmers who hired POWs to work on their farm for the duration of World War II. Also included are copies of letters between the Dietz family and returned POWs and photocopies of pictures and address cards of several POWs.

Subseries C: John Heckman

A set of documents collected by Janet Worrall pertaining to her interactions with John Heckman, a farmer who had POWs working on his farm for the duration of World War II.

Subseries D: Johannes (John) Hemple

A set of documents collected by Janet Worrall pertaining to her interactions with John Hemple, a farmer who had POWs working on his farm for the duration of World War II.

Subseries E: Glenn & Shirley Miller

A set of documents collected by Janet Worrall pertaining to her interactions with Glenn and Shirley Miller, a couple who, as children, had POWs working on their family farms for the duration of World War II.

Subseries F: Miscellaneous Documents

A set of documents—primarily newspaper clippings—collected by Janet Worrall while she conducted research on POW Camp 202.

Container List

Series I: Oral Histories

Subseries A: Harley Theodore Bjoralt

Box

AV-012	2006.31.0027 (original analog)
B242	C1-C2_2006.31.0027 (access analog copy)
AV-005	C3_2006.31.0027 (digital copy)
AV-005	C4_2006.31.0027 (access digital copy)

Subseries B: Henry & Mollie Dietz**Box**

AV-012	2006.31.0023 (original analog)
B242	C1-C2_2006.31.0023 (access analog copy)
AV-005	C3_2006.31.0023A-B (digital copy)
AV-005	C4_2006.31.0023A-B (access digital copy)

Subseries C: John Heckman**Box**

AV-012	2006.31.0026 (original analog)
B242	C1-C2_2006.31.0026 (access analog copy)
AV-005	C3_2006.31.0026 (digital copy)
AV-005	C4_2006.31.0026 (access digital copy)

Subseries D: Johannes (John) Hemple**Box**

AV-012	2006.31.0025 (original analog)
B242	C1-C2_2006.31.0025 (access analog copy)
AV-005	C3_2006.31.0025 (digital copy)
AV-005	C4_2006.31.0025 (access digital copy)

Subseries E: Glenn & Shirley Miller**Box**

AV-012	2006.31.0024 (original analog)
B242	C1-C2_2006.31.0024 (access analog copy)
AV-005	C3_2006.31.0024A-B (digital copy)
AV-005	C4_2006.31.0024A-B (access digital copy)

Series II: Photographs**Box Folder(s)**

1	1	(photographs, 1944/02/20)	2006.31.0001.1-.3
1	2	(photographs, 1944-1946)	2006.31.0002-.0015; 2006.31.0019-.0020
1	3	(photographs, 1987-1989)	2006.31.0048-.0064; 2006.31.0066
1	4	(photographs, 1987-1995)	2006.31.0016-.0018; 2006.31.0021-.0022

Series III: Negatives**Box Folder(s)**

1	5	(negatives, 1944-1946. 1987-1989)	2006.31.0028-.0047; 2006.31.0065
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Series IV: Documents**Subseries A: Harley Theodore Bjoralt****Box Folder(s)**

2	1	2006.31.0067
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Subseries B: Henry & Mollie Dietz

Box	Folder(s)	
2	2	2006.31.0068

Subseries C: John Heckman

Box	Folder(s)	
2	3	2006.31.0070

Subseries D: Johannes (John) Hemple

Box	Folder(s)	
2	4	2006.31.0069

Subseries E: Glenn & Shirley Miller

Box	Folder(s)	
2	5	2006.31.0072

Subseries F: Miscellaneous Documents

Box	Folder(s)	
2	6	2006.31.0071