



ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
INTERVIEW ABSTRACT

CONSULTANT: Mary E. Dowell

DATE OF BIRTH: January 20, 1912 GENDER: Female

DATE(S) OF INTERVIEW: September 26, 2000

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Dowell residence, Artesia, New Mexico

INTERVIEWER: Marcie Palmer

SOURCE OF INTERVIEW: NMF&RHM x OTHER_____

TRANSCRIBED: Yes: November 21, 2000

NUMBER OF TAPES: One

ABTRACTOR: Marcie Palmer

DATE ABSTRATED: December 12, 2000

QUALITY OF RECORDING (SPECIFY): Good

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE: An Artesia resident's perspective on a nearby prisoner of war camp during World War II.

DATE RANGE: 1943-1946

ABSTRACT (IMPORTANT TOPICS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE):

TAPE ONE:

During World War II when housing was scarce, Mary Dowell rented an apartment in her Artesia home to Lt. George B. Leckner and his family. Lt. Leckner was in charge of the Artesia sub-camp for prisoners of war. Mrs. Dowell says she became good friends with the lieutenant and his wife, but he only spoke about the camp once, at a time when one prisoner was temporarily missing.

Dr. Stroup of Artesia visited the camp each morning to eat breakfast and see any prisoners who needed treatment. He insisted that the POWs eat their lunches in the shade of a tree when they were on work detail at farms in the area.

Treats like candies and chewing gum were rare because of rationing during war, but the POWs could get them at their canteen. They would give treats to Dr. Stroup for his grandchildren.

Mrs. Dowell says she was told that the prisoners stayed in small houses in back of the Alfalfa Growers Association before the sub-camp was completed.

Mrs. Dowell cannot remember the townspeople talking about the sub-camp coming to Artesia. To Mrs. Dowell's knowledge, the people of Artesia were not nervous about having prisoners of war near town. She and other mothers were not protective of their children playing in the yards and "hardly ever" locked their doors.

There was a widespread rumor during that time, Mrs. Dowell recalls, that two prisoners escaped and tried to steal a car near Dayton. It was rumored that one prisoner was shot by a farmer. After that, she understands, none of the other prisoners tried to escape because they knew that farmers had guns.

Mrs. Dowell feels that the prisoners here were probably treated well or some of them would have not come back to visit or live in New Mexico.

The Johnson's and Quentin Rogers employed POWs, Mrs. Dowell says.