
PRESS RELEASE

Badger Books Inc.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

'VISIT' WISCONSIN'S P.O.W. CAMPS

OREGON, WI, February 7 -- While Americans fought against the Germans and Japanese overseas during World War II, Wisconsinites back home found themselves in the trying position of playing host to more than 20,000 of the enemy from 1942 to 1947.

Camp McCoy near Tomah was among the first base camps in the United States to house prisoners of war, including America's first P.O.W., Kazuo Sakamaki, the commander of a midget submarine captured at Pearl Harbor on Dec. 8, 1941. At its peak in the mid-1940s, Wisconsin camps held some 3,500 Japanese, 500 Koreans and 5,000 German prisoners in addition to the thousands brought to temporary work camps during Wisconsin's harvest and timber seasons.

Though dozens of Wisconsin communities tolerated a few hundred to several thousand of the enemy working among them, few official records were kept of the prisoners' time in Wisconsin history.

Stalag Wisconsin: Inside W.W. II Prisoner-of-War Camps, a new book to be published in February by Badger Books Inc., finally records that unique segment of Wisconsin history.

Former Altoona, Wis. history teacher Betty Cowley tells not just the overall history of war prisoners in Wisconsin, but through photos, town newspapers and personal memories from townspeople and prisoners alike, details the story of P.O.W. branch camps in 38 Wisconsin towns from Sheboygan to Bayfield and Janesville to Wisconsin Rapids.

"Stalag Wisconsin captures a largely untold story of the war for future generations and, within its pages, paints the picture of how Wisconsin was able to tolerate, live with and, in some cases, even grow to like the enemy. No study of the World War II home front would be complete without understanding what we gained from and gave to our enemy prisoners," notes war historian Kristin Gilpatrick, author of the top-selling *Hero Next Door*TM books about Wisconsinites fighting in World War II.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Betty Cowley, a retired history teacher from Altoona, Wis., began researching *Stalag Wisconsin: Inside W.W. II Prisoner-of-War Camps* to prove a point. "Students disbelieved that Altoona housed 175 German prisoners of war in 1945. To make matters worse, neither of the two local histories of the community mentioned their presence," she writes.

Lack of official POW records was only the beginning as Cowley began digging through long-buried files and newspapers. Her research took her far beyond Altoona and its POW camp stories as she began collecting data and tales from 300 Wisconsinites who'd worked in, lived near or had some memory of the POWs housed in camps in 38 Badger State communities.

The now-retired history teacher spent five years finishing the short, factual report she began for students -- a report that now reads as a 300-page, in-depth look into a unique chapter in Wisconsin history called *Stalag Wisconsin*.



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STALAG WISCONSIN

FACT SHEET

TITLE: *Stalag Wisconsin: Inside W.W. II Prisoner-of-War Camps*

PUBLISHER: Badger Books Inc., P.O. Box 192, Oregon, WI 53575; Phone: 800.928.2372; Fax: 608.835.3638; E-Mail: books@badgerbooks.com; Web site: www.badgerbooks.com.

AUTHOR: Betty Cowley

PAGES: 310 pages, including appendices

PRICE: \$16.95

ISBN: 1-878569-83-X

SUMMARY: An in-depth look into the little known story about the 20,000 German and Japanese prisoners of war held in Wisconsin in the mid-1940s, and the people who guarded and worked with them.

DISTRIBUTION: Available at local bookstores or from Amazon.com or badgerbooks.com.