

Ontario P.O.W. Camps

World War II



KINGSTON, ONTARIO

Each year, thousands of tourists visit Old Fort Henry, the limestone fort overlooking the grey-blue expanse of Lake Ontario. The old fortification has seen many years pass and more than one or two wars come and go. As you walk down into the fort with its austere grey walls, you feel like you are in a prison. It was used for prisoners of war in both the First and Second World Wars. If you walk to the east side of the fortress and duck your head as you enter the Officers' Mess, you will find a low vaulted room with restored roof paintings of a knight on a white charger and a drinking scene. Both scenes were painted by German POWs during World War Two. To both right and left are display cases which give a glimpse of photos and artifacts from the stay of prisoners in both wars. Escapes took place from Old Fort Henry in both wars.

BOWMANVILLE, ONTARIO

Bowmanville is a relatively quiet town, east of Toronto. You need to ask directions to the former Home of Delinquent Boys on the north east side of town. The facility was a delinquent boys' home prior to the outbreak of war in 1939, it was soon used to house German officer prisoners of war. The setting is lovely with rolling emerald green lawns, flower beds, many trees, a swimming pool and a number of substantial brick and stucco buildings.

In 1998 most of the buildings still stand and the site is used by a Christian Fellowship organization with a portion of the site leased to the Roman Catholic school board for use as a high school. New housing developments are rapidly crowding on the site and perhaps it will be taken over as a housing development.

Where were the camps?

The following Ontario communities served as POW camps during WWII:

Angler

**Chatham
Espanola
Fingal
Hansen
Ingersoll
Mimico
Monteith
Neys
Petawawa
Port Arthur**

**Smoth Rock
Falls
South River
Welland**



German Officer POWs march through the streets of Gravenhurst, Ontario, during WWII.

GRAVENHURST, ONTARIO

The old POW site in this town north of Toronto is difficult to find. Either people are embarrassed that German prisoners lived there or they don't know much about the camp, or perhaps memories have just become terribly hazy. Some German POWs came to Gravenhurst for convalescence (recovering from wounds inflicted during battle). The site is perched on and around rocks on the shore of Pine Lake in Muskoka country. In 1978 the old concrete pilings of the main building remained in addition to a decrepit guardhouse, a tired, lonely old red fire hydrant amidst the weeds, as well as a desolate pump house by the lake. Old bits of roofing material refused to decompose even after thirty five years of abandonment. In the tall brush, I found a well preserved piece of canvas fire hose with solid brass fittings, but other than that, memories seem to be few at Gravenhurst. In 1998, no physical evidence remains on site.

(Source: David Carter's Website. www2.memlane.com/djcarter/notes.htm)

Did you know?

As well as having a POW camp, Muskoka was also the training ground for the Royal Norwegian Air force-in-exile. The name of the camp was "Little Norway"