

was of help back home, sitting in an account! Exasperated by this finding, he took the money on a spending spree in Concordia, purchasing among many things, a large collection of neckties.

Concordia's CCC camp offered the following educational classes: Science, English, Spelling, Physical Education, Journalism, Typing, Woodworking, Leathercraft, Modelcraft, Photography, and Radio Code. They also had basketball, football, tennis, volleyball, horseshoes, softball, badminton, and baseball teams.

Men were taught the value of hard work and the importance of a good moral character in obtaining and keeping a job and being a contributing member of society.

Members were sent to many locations in Kansas to do work. Some building new CCC camps, others helping with construction projects, landscaping, and other conservation projects. They also enjoyed beautification projects around Concordia's camp. They planted flowers, gardens, and trees and cared for them. They worked on local farmlands planting trees, constructing ponds, building terraces, outlets, and border fences in addition to other soil conservation practices. The CCC encouraged the

construction of ponds for water conservation and erosion control.

The men at the camp worked hard daily. Here is an example of a typical workday at the CCC according to the camp newspaper the "Concordia Camper."

6:00 am - Reville
6:30 am - Breakfast
7:00 am - Police Up
7:30 am - End of Police Up
7:40 am - Work Call
12:00 pm - Noon
12:15 pm - Dinner
12:55 pm - Work Call
4:00 pm - End of Work
5:00 pm - Retreat
5:05 pm - Supper
6:00 - 9:00 pm - Classes
9:00 pm - Taps

The "Concordia Camper" began monthly publication in March 1940. Their first printing was 500 copies to be distributed to Concordia merchants, citizens, and members of the camp. Each edition had an editorial, a message from the Chaplain, camp news, conservationist's wise thoughts, cartoons, facts, advertisements from merchant sponsors, and this author's favorite...gossip! Oh how they ribbed the men who were off visiting Concordia or Clyde girls, boys who had found themselves in a fist fight, or worried a member had gone A.W.O.L. only to find out he was on leave.

YOUNG LADIES OF THE USO

The USO was established in 1941. It created a "home away from home" for GI's, especially on their time off-duty. Their mission was "to strengthen the well-being of the people serving in America's military and their families." Concordia's local office was located in the building we to-day know as

Sherwin Williams. An officer from Camp Concordia asked if some of the young ladies of the town could attend dances at the camp with the soldiers. He assured their safety, that they would be chaperoned, provided transportation, and bought each young lady a wrist corsage. They had a fine time!



Lady Shirley's SOCIETY PAPERS

Third Edition, April 2025

EXTRAORDINARY PEOPLE,
EXTRAORDINARY STORIES

Dearest Reader,

At times, this author wonders why histories can often be so difficult to recall and research. Often information has been simply lost to time, some histories never fully recorded, and once in a great while they are deleted with purpose. Most often, histories become stories passed from one generation to the next by word of mouth alone, leaving us sorting the truth from memories clouded by the passing of time.

This year, WWII German POW Camp Concordia commemorates 80 years since the closing of our camp. Most government documentation regarding the camp was destroyed by the military at its closing, for reasons unclear. What remains to-day is on accord of people who kept

personal record. Some simply stashed away trivial lists, discarded daily menus, identification badges, or a piece of artwork gifted by a prisoner. Over time, extensive research has been conducted and stories collected from both former prisoners and employees. Uncovering this information, however, is quite the feat. This author is left pondering what other military histories might be uncovered?

Follow me, dear reader, as we explore three military and government operations that were a part of Concordia's past. This author now understands the challenges of uncovering these stories more clearly. Why so secretive one might ask?

*Yours truly,
Lady Shirley*

THAT'S SHORT FOR WHAT AGAIN?

POW, CCC, USO, AI, GI, OMG what in heavens do all of these acronyms mean again? To-day's society has an acronym for practically anything. Throughout this edition of Lady Shirley, you may wish to keep reference to these acronyms.

POW: Prisoner of War CCC: Civilian Conservation Corps USO: United Service Organization AI: Artificial Intelligence GI: Government Issue, used to refer to a soldier. But what is OMG you ask? That is simply, oh my goodness!



POW'S IN CLOUD COUNTY

July 11, 2015, 200 people attended a grand opening of the WWII German POW Camp Concordia Museum. Years of research and planning preceded that summer day. Many of those instrumental to the opening of the museum are still actively involved in its operation, while a few important figures have sadly passed. This author believes they would be incredibly proud of the progress and what the museum has become to-day from the vision of Paul Rimovsky, Everett Miller, Lowell May, Delores Landry, and Everett Ford.

Visitors often ask questions that shock and surprise the docent at the museum. Did we feed the prisoners? Where were the gas chambers? Did you just let them all go when the camp closed? The answers to those questions would be "Of course" ... "There were no gas chambers" ... "Oh my, goodness can you imagine? No." To the frustration of the docent, the inaccurate assumptions of the camp do not stop there. With lack of available information, people and AI (artificial intelligence) are left to form their own conclusions and speculations. The task of dispelling such inaccuracies is never-ending. This author wonders if the powers that be who decided 80 years ago, even considered the possibility of questions such as these when they chose to destroy so much documentation. Perhaps they believed that history could be covered up in camps that did not treat the POWs as well as Camp Concordia had. Perhaps they feared the association of POW camps in the US with Concentration Camps in Germany and felt they could avoid it by erasing documentation. Whatever the motives of those decision

makers in 1945, this author hopes it is a lesson learned in transparency for the present and future.

Camp Concordia treated its prisoners well. Stories passed along from civilians who worked at the camp were all that was available for many years. It took years of research and one man reaching out to the POW Camp Concordia Preservation Society to find true validity to those claims. A diary exists that has been translated telling of the daily life at the camp from a former prisoner's voice. Imagine the excitement of the POW Preservation Society to find that something like this existed and then be asked to keep it within their care. Franz Kuester's story lives and breathes inside the diary's pages as well as the story of thousands of others who found themselves within POW Camp Concordia walls. Those who remain to tell the stories of these encampments are fewer and fewer as the years progress. What a treasure to have this firsthand account. While imprisoned here for 361 days, he wrote short notes in his diary - a day-to-day account of what he experienced. He writes of movies and music, weather, the beautiful sky, and working in gardens. He describes cakes and good meals, playing football and tennis, enjoying cards and conversation in the officer's club, attending mass and his pleasant surprise of what Christians wanted to do to help rebuild after the war. His final entries at Camp Concordia were of positive thoughts of the camp and anticipation of going home. German officers addressed the camp offering a fond goodbye and "God's Blessings to the "best" camp." Franz Kuester's account was not

unlike others. Lowell May, has written books and interviewed many former prisoners. His research revealed German soldiers grateful for the unexpected humane treatment received, opportunities to work with farmers, the ability to roam freely through the camp, enjoyable food and desserts,

comfortable accommodations, payment for labor, exploration of their artistic abilities, entertainment, access to news, a large library, and opportunity to obtain a higher education through the University of Kansas. More than one former POW told May that being at Camp Concordia changed their lives for the better.

JOB WANTED. WILL WORK.

Prior to WWII, before Camp Concordia was a thought, President Roosevelt created a series of New Deal programs, in the 1930's, designed to provide employment and educational opportunities to unemployed young men. The goal of these programs was to help the nation survive the Depression and restore and revive the economy. One such program was named the CCC, Civilian Conservation Corps.

It is well known that the 1930's were a time of great hardship in America, the Great Depression. Times were hard and jobs were scarce. The CCC camps were a helpful answer. The first camps were created in 1933, and they closed in 1942. The number of camps in Kansas varied throughout that timeframe. At the peak in 1936 there were 21 CCC camps. Concordia's camp, referred to as Camp Cloud, moved here from Farmington, Ks in 1940. It was located on the northeast edge of Concordia where the Sale Barn is to-day. It was company #788. They worked with the Soil Conservation Service until the camp closed in 1941.

Camps were created wherever there was a need, often in isolated and remote areas. Each camp was set up the same. They had an administration building, barracks to house 200 men, a reception hall, mess hall, hospital, bath house, shops,

latrine, and a Soil Conservation Service office.

Young men between the ages of 17-28 could enlist in the CCC. Concordia had an enrollment of 110 men. Each man was paid \$30 a month. \$5 stayed with the man and \$25 was sent home to his family, usually his parents.

This author spoke to a community member who told a story about Mr. Don Kerr. Mr. Kerr worked in a CCC camp, unknown to the storyteller if it was in Concordia or elsewhere. From this author's research, most men from Concordia were likely not at Concordia's camp. Perhaps they were sent elsewhere to broaden their horizons? Perhaps a Concordian of to-day knowing more could shed light on the subject. An aside, you may be aware, the T-9 building where the current POW Camp Concordia Museum is housed, was formerly Don Kerr's building. Let's return to the story...Mr. Kerr upon his completion at the CCC returned home. Eager to see how the money he'd been sending home helped the family, he inquired of his parents. His mother replied that they had put it into a savings and hadn't touched it. He was shocked! He had meant for that money to be used to help the family. His mother simply stated that it was un-needed. All that hard work and earnings he believed