World War II
Prisoner of War Camp
Fort Leonard Wood
Exhibit Proposal

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Exhibit Proposal for:

The Fallen Foe: Prisoners of War
Fort Leonard Wood
1942-1946

PURPOSE:

Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, opened in 1941 to serve as a training center for infantry and engineer Soldiers. However, in 1942 the installation was identified for a secondary mission—maintaining a Prisoner of War (POW) camp. Nothing remains today of the camp, except some concrete foundations and archeological artifacts that provide little indication of their original purpose. To preserve the history of the camp, the Fort Leonard Wood Museum (later renamed the Engineer Corps Regimental Museum, and hereafter noted as such) developed a large-scale exhibit of the camp built into one of the remaining World War II wooden barracks complexes. Several of these facilities have been relocated and reconstructed in an area approximately one quarter mile south of the current museum.

Each building is identified by its original purpose and also depicts an aspect of Fort Leonard Wood during World War II (including training and daily life). Although the POW exhibit was started, it was never completed, and the original plans have been lost and forgotten.

This proposal seeks to complete the exhibit originally started in the late 1990s. Using the cases and dividing walls already in place, as well as a completed diorama of a POW barracks, this project will build on the existing work to create an educational exhibit exploring the background and history of the POW camp at Fort Leonard Wood, as well as briefly detail relevant background information (including WWII in Europe and POW camps across the United States).
FACILITY FOR EXHIBIT:
The POW exhibit will be housed in Building 1317, one of almost a dozen WWII temporary buildings that remain on Fort Leonard Wood as part of a historic structures exhibit known as “The Hill.” Constructed in 1941, this barracks is built in the style of the 700 series mobilization blueprint. Designed to house sixty-three enlisted men (later doubled with the use of bunk beds), the building has a second story now utilized for storage, while the downstairs has been modified for exhibit use. Heating and cooling are now regulated, and the building’s windows and doors have been made secure. Because the building is open for visitors during the day, all cases are framed in metal and locked. The interior has motion and sound sensors that are set at night for security.

Sketch of typical barracks for sixty-three men. Don Mayes, 1941.
Building 1317 in its current location on "The Hill."

Building 1317 from the rear, with exit.
NARRATIVE SUMMARY:

Constructed in 1941, Fort Leonard Wood was home to the Engineer Replacement Training Center and the site of small and large-scale maneuvers for infantry divisions assembling to deploy to Europe. In mid-1942, the post was identified for a new POW Camp. Activated on December 18, 1942, the camp, designated the Enemy Alien Internment Camp, was commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Vernon H. Vrooman. Shortly after opening, the camp processed 662 Italian POWs, who were held only briefly before being reassigned to Camp Weingarten, Missouri, in 1943. Due to difficulties in keeping multiple nationalities at one facility, Fort Leonard Wood was tasked solely with German POWs and at its peak held approximately 5,200 prisoners.¹

Fort Leonard Wood’s POW compound covered over eighty acres and stood outside the cantonment area. The compound was divided into three living areas and one recreation area. The facilities included a canteen, theater, infirmary, dental clinic, classrooms, library, soccer field, and handball courts. Housing was standard single-story temporary barracks found throughout the entire installation. POWs were contained with a double fence of barbed wire with guard towers placed along the perimeter.²

German POW memoirs suggest that the treatment the POWs received at Fort Leonard Wood was fair.³ They were able to work in a variety of jobs to receive a small income (about eighty cents a day), which they could then spend on amenities in the canteen. Many men worked on maintenance for the post, completing roadwork and general construction. Others worked in service facilities, including the post laundry, the bakery, the shoe-repair shop, and the butcher shop. Still others were put into small

¹ David Fiedler, The Enemy Among Us: POWs in Missouri During World War II (Saint Louis: Missouri Historical Society Press, 2003), 185-186; Adam Smith et al., Fort Leonard Wood Building Survey 1941 to 1956 (Champaign, IL: Engineer Research Development Center, Construction Engineering Research Laboratory, 2003), 2-32.
² Chris Cochran and Adam Smith, Fort Leonard Wood Culvert and Flagpole (Champaign, IL: Engineer Research Development Center Construction Engineering Research Laboratory, 2011), 4-6.
teams and taken off post to help the local community farm the land. A small group of German prisoners were skilled stonemasons, who returned to their civilian careers in various construction tasks on the installation. They installed retaining walls, culverts, stone walks, and steps. Two of the prisoners, both engineers, led the team of masons.4

The POWs were encouraged to develop hobbies (several of the remaining artifacts from the camp were created in the POW’s recreational hours), take classes, and participate in group activities like sports, theater, and band. Many of the men bought seed for flowers and grass and cultivated small gardens outside the barracks.5

Although the camp was relatively quiet, some prisoners did manage to escape, briefly. Two men made their escape to Rolla, thirty miles up the road, but were apprehended and returned to the camp after local women identified them as POWs. Only one prisoner managed to leave the state; after his escape it took almost three months for the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) to find him in Orlando, Florida.6

After the installation received orders in early spring, the POW camp was shut down on May 20, 1946. By March the camp had already begun to disband, as equipment, vehicles, and perishables were turned over to other units on post. The prisoners were shipped out in March and April, bound for Germany. After the camp was abandoned, the buildings sat empty for several years. Later, the site was briefly used for training, but eventually all the buildings were torn down and all that remains are half-buried concrete foundations.7

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5 Cochran and Smith, *Fort Leonard Wood Culvert and Flagpole*, 3-5.
7 Ibid., 221-223.
EXHIBIT DESCRIPTION:
In keeping with the floor plan of the building, the exhibit will be broken down into smaller subjects relating to the larger theme of Fort Leonard Wood’s POW Camp. The exhibit will be organized as follows: Introduction to WWII → Fort Leonard Wood in WWII → POWs within the United States → POWs at Fort Leonard Wood. This will allow the visitor to gain a basic background before learning about the life of a German POW on post. All the artifacts included in the exhibit will be provided by the Engineer Corps Regimental Museum’s collection.

Introduction:
Located at the entrance of the exhibit, the introduction will establish the World War II time period and explain the world events that led to the capture of German Prisoners of War by Americans.

This display will feature one exhibit case (Exhibit Case 1), several text panels, one newspaper display, and a wall of graphics. The case will house two WWII Army field service uniforms with full accoutrements (one American, one German) and a German POW uniform denim jacket. The exhibit case will provide a visual contrast between the uniforms of Soldiers and that of the POW, supporting the text that will accompany the display. The text inside the case will be minimal and will only explain the artifacts. All supplementary panels for this case will be hung outside the case on the dividing wall and entry walls (Wall Space 1a).

The newspaper display will be a large wall mount on “Wall Space 1b.” The display will be created with the assistance of the Visual Information Center (VIC) and the Fort Leonard Wood History Office. The display will be a collage of newspaper clippings about the war from the installation’s newspaper juxtaposed with a 1944 copy of NewsMap for the Armed Forces. All clippings on this wall will relate to the installation and the war effort.

Fort Leonard Wood in WWII:
Tying the national history of the previous display to the local area, this graphics-driven display will show the construction of the post, as well as large scale aerial maps to indicate where the POW
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camps would be built two years after initial construction was complete. This display, on “Wall Space 2a and 2b,” will provide the context for the POW camp coming to Fort Leonard Wood.

The display will include approximately thirty color and black and white photographs of the installation from its construction to early stages of completion. Aerial photographs will also be included. Images will be organized on individual wall mounts placed at various depths from the wall, creating a three-dimensional collage. Captions will be general for a group of photographs, unless an image requires specific details.

Panels will include paragraph-based text for general descriptions of the post construction, as well as bullet-based, which will provide statistics and various counts (e.g. building totals, miles of road laid, and lumber required.).

**POWs within the United States:**

This section will provide the visitor with a basic knowledge of the use of POW camps throughout the United States. This space will be graphics driven, with the majority of images from the Library of Congress and National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) collections on Prisoners of War. The purpose of this section will be to explore the idea that there was no real standard for what life was like on a POW camp. Experiences varied from one location to another. This section will also highlight the fact that while Fort Leonard Wood hosted a German POW camp, other camps held other nationalities.

To achieve this, the exhibit on “Wall Space 3” will include quotes of former POWs explaining what their daily life was like, mixed with descriptive text panels providing factual information on the camps. Graphics will include images of typical camp layouts, interiors of different buildings on the camps, a large scatter map showing locations of camps throughout the United States, and POWs working and playing both on and off the camp sites.

**POWs at Fort Leonard Wood:**

The largest of the exhibits, this will encompass the rest of the gallery floor and will be broken down into smaller topics. This portion will introduce the visitor to the German POWs at Fort Leonard...
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Wood, explore their greatest legacy to the post, highlight the artwork generated within the camp, and provide a full scale diorama of a typical POW barracks.

The first set of panels, located on “Wall Space 4,” will include the one identified picture of POWs at Fort Leonard Wood, blown up to a large scale. The rest of these panels will be text-based and will provide the information on the construction and occupation of the camp in 1943. This will include information on the US Army guards, the daily tasks and entertainments of the POWs, and some of the problems that arose in the camp (escapes, fights, and deaths).

The second set will include a combination of physical artifacts and approximately thirty to forty pictures of the German masonry work on Fort Leonard Wood. This section will highlight the detailed and painstaking labor by a group of the German POWs who were stonemasons in their civilian lives. Throughout the installation they created culverts, paths, steps, and signposts. The exhibit, on “Wall Space 5,” will include a short text panel explaining the stonemasons’ work, but the section will center on the images. The two artifacts will be placed directly on the floor and open for the visitor to explore in greater detail. The first is a large stone heart originally set into a now destroyed walkway (see Figure 2). It will accompany a large stone sundial on a pedestal and raised stone dais set by the masons (see Figure 3). The photographs will show the different stone features on post, as well as show detailed shots of specific traits within the stonework (initials, drawings, color layouts). Simple labels will accompany these pictures, showing where the stone is or was located on post. This will encourage the visitor to continue exploring the POWs on Fort Leonard Wood beyond the exhibit doors, as they go out and seek some of the many features shown within this section.

The stone exhibit will open onto the diorama already in place and “Wall Space 6” and “Wall Space 7.” These two displays show the work of two artists who were in the POW camp. The back wall, “Wall Space 6,” is dedicated to a large-scale mural (approximately 5x9 feet) painted originally on the mess hall within the POW camp, showing a German countryside scene, with a milk maid and a cottage
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(see Figure 1). This display will focus on the painting and text support will be limited to a small label identifying the original location, artist, and year. The second display, located on “Wall Space 7” will be reproductions of fifteen watercolor paintings created by a German artist reflecting on life in the POW camp (see Figure 4). Designed as caricatures, these 8x10 inch paintings will be printed to scale and arranged on the wall in a collage style. The text panel accompanying these will briefly touch on the artistic pursuits open to the prisoners, who used their pocket money to buy paints at the small Post Exchange or traded with guards for supplies.

The small exhibit case (Exhibit Case 2) located near the exit of the building will show the small POW artifacts maintained by the museum. These include various pieces of handiwork, specifically four wooden jewelry boxes with inlaid designs and small metal pieces, including an airplane and a truck. Little information is known on these pieces, other than that they were created by prisoners, so the labels will provide some specifics on the objects themselves but speak in general terms about how POWs spent their personal time working in various hobbies.

Finally, across from the small exhibit case, “Wall Space 8” will discuss the shutting down of the camp and the return of the prisoners to Germany. This section will be text-focused, and graphic accompaniment will be limited to pictures taken by the archeology team showing the remnants of the camp—primarily the building foundations.
SELECT OBJECTS FOR EXHIBIT:
These reflect only some of the artifacts currently being gathered for display.

POW Mess Hall Mural, 1944. Painted by P. Lorenze
Figure 1

Full mural.

Detail photograph showing the segmented wood panels.

Thickness of the mural.
Stone Heart. Cut by unknown German Prisoner of War.
Originally set into sidewalk on Artillery Circle.

Figure 2

Stone Sundial. Constructed by unknown German Prisoners of War.
Originally erected in front of the WWII Officers’ Club (no longer in existence).

Figure 3

Stone Heart.

Front view of stone heart.

Side view showing thickness of stone.

Stone Sundial.

Sundial set on platform. The Latin inscription reads, “Hora non numero nisi serenas.” This translates to “Don’t count the hours unless peaceful.”

Sundial and part of the stone dais it originally stood on near the Officers’ Club.
POW Caricatures. Painted by Walter Malaka between 1943 and 1944.
Figure 4

POWs playing cards.

A guard in the tower, surrounded by barbed wire.

POWs doing laundry.

POWs on scullery duty.
VISUAL SAMPLES:
These images reflect only some of the graphics currently being gathered for display.

**German Prisoner of War Stonework**

- Old Post Headquarters steps.
- Red Cross Building steps and culvert.
- Garlington House barbeque.
- Garlington House chimney and patio.
German Prisoners of War

Only positively identified photograph of the POW camp at Fort Leonard Wood, date unknown.

POWs completing building maintenance at Camp Crowder, Missouri, 1944. (NARA)

POW camp canteen at Fort Knox, Kentucky, 1944. (NARA)

POWs in a camp infirmary, date and location unknown. (NARA)

POW orchestra, date and location unknown. (NARA)

POW mess hall, date and location unknown. (NARA)
The following text represents one section of the four display areas to be presented in the exhibit.

Text Panels for “Fort Leonard Wood in World War II”

**The Army Comes to Missouri:**

Even before formally entering into the conflict overseas, the United States military worked to greatly expand its fighting strength, placing a strain on training centers nationwide. The Army sought new areas to locate these training facilities. Following a decision to place a center within the VII Corps area—a command encompassing the Central Plains’ states, surveyors began to evaluate the feasibility of an area near Leon, Iowa. After Congress approved the land acquisition in 1939, a corps area board investigated the proposed location. Seeing no major issues, the Army approved Leon for the camp. Upon discovering a discrepancy in the cost of acreage in Leon, Iowa, architect engineers more thoroughly evaluated the land in late October of 1940 and discovered a severe shortage in the local water table. With this in mind, the Army made a rapid decision to halt work in Leon and move the cantonment to the Gasconade portion of the Mark Twain National Forest, just south of Rolla, Missouri.

**Construction Begins:**

The new location was ideally suited for training recruits due to the many variations in terrain and the proximity to water elements. With a stable water supply, defensively secure location, and proximity to US Route 66, the area met all the requirements for hosting a training center. The Department of Agriculture had been in the process of buying land for timber crops and already had federal ownership of some 15,800 acres. Further land was acquired through a combination of purchase and eminent domain, making the total reservation some 67,700 acres. Marked by a sense of urgency, the official groundbreaking occurred on December 3, 1940, and massive construction efforts began immediately, a General Order establishing Fort Leonard Wood as a military reservation going into effect a month later in January of the new year.

Approximately 30,000 workers were hired and brought in to build the post. With only a few months to complete the initial infrastructure, construction workers toiled twenty-four hours a day, working shifts to keep a consistent pace. Shortly after construction started, Soldiers also began to filter into the cantonment. The priority for completion then became buildings with roads a secondary concern.

Adding to the pressure of time was unrelenting winter weather. With heavy rainfall in both December and January, the temporary dirt roads became difficult at best and impassable at worst, a major obstacle for construction workers. Despite minor construction problems and the impediments of nature, the construction company passed control of the post to the War Department on May 31, 1941, and finished the last of the initially contracted facilities on June 21, 1941.
Highlight Quote
(untitled panel, will be printed in larger font to accompany photographs)
Major Frank Reed, in charge of the Construction Quartermaster Command, told one newspaper that “his chief enemy has been ‘general’ Mud, a tough, unrelenting foe with little regard for military or construction tactics.”

Quoted in “Building Ft. Leonard Wood Bring A Mighty Boom to the Ozarks,”
The Kansas City Star, February 9, 1941.

Installation Missions:
With an influx of Soldiers due to report to Fort Leonard Wood concurrently with the slated completion date for initial construction, workers rushed to meet their deadlines. Barracks went up continuously, and by the time Soldiers began to arrive, over 4 ¾ million square feet of barracks and quarters were complete. Equivalent to a city of roughly fifteen to twenty thousand, Fort Leonard Wood was ready to commence its training mission. While initially identified as a training center for Infantry, the post’s mission expanded—before construction had even been completed. Along with serving as training grounds for five Infantry Divisions, the post would also host a second Engineer Replacement Training Center (ERTC) to assist Fort Belvoir’s ERTC in offsetting the Army’s need for trained engineers. Only one year after construction was completed, the mission would again expand, as Fort Leonard Wood was assigned the duty of a POW Camp.
PANEL SCHEME and PRESENTATION METHOD:

Text panels will be simple in design, with a flat white background and a 1 inch weight green frame around the text. All panels will be consistent, with Calibri font in black. Each panel will have title text in size 60 font while the body text will be size 48. Labels within the exhibit cases will be styled the same, with the font reduced in size to 48 and 36, respectively.

Photographs, panels, and labels will be printed using a color laser printer on matte finish paper. Panel sizes will vary according to text length and photograph size. Panels and photographs will not exceed 16 x 20 inches. The size and method of printing allows for easy, in-house replacement of panels as needed, due to normal wear and tear.

All images and text panels will be dry mounted on ½ inch GatorBoard and invisibly mounted using finishing nails which are sunk into the back of the GatorBoard. Panels and graphics will be mounted on the wall no lower than three feet from the floor. All labels will be dry mounted on 3/16 inch GatorBoard and placed with artifacts. Photographs, labels, and panels will all be cleanly trimmed with a beveled edge to hide the GatorBoard polystyrene foam core. Photographs will be trimmed to edge of image, while labels and panels will retain the solid white border surrounding the green frame.
TEXT STANDARDS:
Text panels should not exceed 300 words per panel.

Artifact labels should not exceed 100 words per label.

Dates will be written month, day, year (e.g. December 15, 2010).

The term “Soldiers” will be capitalized in all instances.

Unit ordinals will not include superscript (e.g. 87th, 23d, and 1st).

Prisoners of War will be abbreviated to POW.

State postal codes and the abbreviation US will not include internal periods.

The Second World War will be written as either “World War II” or “WWII.”

All whole numbers from zero through one hundred will be spelled out.

Lists will use serial commas.

Mention of rank will use current Army abbreviation standards, unless comparable rank no longer exists:
Officer: 2LT, 1LT, CPT, MAJ, LTC, COL, BG, MG, LTG, GEN
Enlisted: PV1, PV2, PFV, SPC, SGT, SSG, SFC, MSG, 1SG, SGM, CSM
TIMETABLE:

Week One and Week Two:
- Gather all photographs
- Collect artifacts
  - Assemble uniforms
  - Inspect for conservation needs
  - Work with Cultural Resources Office (post archeologist) to inspect stonework artifacts
- Gather resources for text
- Outline text panels

Week Three and Week Four:
- Write artifact labels
- Work with VIC to complete NewsMap collage
- Initiate stonework conservation as needed, through the Cultural Resources Office
- Complete basic conservation on mural, as needed
- Write drafts of all panels
- Begin to print photographs

Week Five and Week Six:
- Gather NewsMap collage from VIC
- Create loose layout design for panels and photographs using design wall
- Finish printing photographs
- Edit text panels, labels

Week Seven and Week Eight:
- Dry mount all photographs and NewsMap collage
- Final edit of text panels, labels
- Print text panels, labels
- Wall mount NewsMap collage
- Clean facility, prep walls for hanging items
- Create final layout design of graphics and panels

Week Nine and Week Ten:
- Load display cases with artifacts
- Wall mount mural
- Hang all photographs and text panels
- Move stonework artifacts to facility
- Clean diorama
  - Dust
  - Clean glass planes
  - Lay new insect traps

Week Eleven:
- Complete final walk through with museum staff, post historian, and post archeologist
- Advertise opening on official Facebook page
- Grand opening
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**BUDGET:**

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**Items already on hand:**
- Dry mount press
- GatorBoard cutting tools
- Finishing Nails
- Laser printer
- Matte finish paper

**Staffing:**

The Engineer Corps Regimental Museum staff and the post historians will be responsible for all stages of the POW exhibit. As this display falls under their purview and the completion of the exhibit part of their daily mission and tasks, outside hiring will be unnecessary. All staff at the Engineer Corps Regimental Museum and the post historian are civil service; as such their salaries are paid by the federal government and are not a budgetary concern. Overtime is currently not in the scope of necessity for this exhibit to reach completion. The following table shows estimated man-hours and labor costs.

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<td>$19.92</td>
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SOURCES:


