CAMP RUSTON:
The prisoner of war camp next door
ORIGINS

D.O.W.E. at Camp Ruston

Merry Christmas
Activated
December 25, 1942

Comprised of over 750 acres. Like other camps, built in the South and Southeast in an area that was in demand of labor.
Watchtower, looking toward the northwest
Eastern perimeter
• Base camps of Camp Ruston (Beginning 1944):
  • Camp Monroe (mostly Nazi)
  • Camp Tallulah
  • Camp McCain
  • Barksdale Field
  • Camp Mansfield
  • Camp Bastrop
  • Lake Providence
Are you a girl with a Star-Spangled heart?

JOIN THE WAC NOW!

THOUSANDS OF ARMY JOBS NEED FILLING!

Women’s Army Corps
United States Army
• 1943, Camp Ruston was activated as Branch “A” of the 5th Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps Training Center.
• Headquarters were an unused old high school building.
• Lodging for staff was a hotel next to a café in downtown Ruston. The café was used as the officer’s mess.
In 1943, the WAACs were given notice to ship out – prisoners of war were on the way.

June 18, 1943 the seventh and final company of recruits graduated.

June 30, 1943 the Fifth WAAC Training Center was deactivated.
August 14, 1943, approximately 300 men from Rommel’s Afrika Korps arrived at Camp Ruston. By October, the camp held 4,315 Afrika Korps members.
1945

Prisoner of War
Camp Ruston

John Hogan
Worked with
the SS (Agtmier)
from Germany
Heinz Hennrich, Afrika Korps
As new camps were constructed in the northwest and the need for manpower increased in that region, members of the Afrika Korps were transferred. By May 1st, the last of the Afrika Korps had shipped out.
THE ITALIANS

• As the Afrika Korps were leaving, Camp Ruston was re-designated as an internment camp for Italian prisoners of war.
• By May 8, 1944, the camp held 2,056 Italian prisoners of war.

Cesare Puelli
Captured and impressed soldiers from Yugoslavia, Russia, Bosnia, Poland, Romania and France were also interred at Camp Ruston. By November 1944, Camp Ruston was a mixed group with very few native Germans.
THE UNTERSEEBOOTEN
Captured at sea west of Africa on 4 June, 1944 by ships and Wildcat aircraft of the US Navy task force 22.3, escort carrier USS Guadalcanal, destroyer escorts USS Pillsbury, USS Chatelaine, USS Flaherty, USS Jenks and USS Pope. 1 dead and 59 survivors.  56 were sent to Camp Ruston.
Captured from the U-505:

- 1,100 lbs of codebooks, charts and maps
- An Enigma code machine
- A new, acoustic torpedo
The officers and crew were kept in isolation from the rest of the camp until the surrender of Germany.

**U-505 under tow**
U-664 was attacked during a fuel transfer on August 9, 1943. One crewmember, declaring himself to be anti-Nazi, was sent to Camp Ruston. The rest were sent to Papago Park, Arizona.
U-664, as her crew abandons ship.
Surrendered May 14, 1945. Of 41 crew members, only one was sent to Camp Ruston.
Found aboard the U-234:

- 1 ton of diplomatic and personal mail
- Technical drawings and blueprints for advanced combat weaponry
- Plans for construction of jet aircraft factories
- Anti-tank weapons and anti-aircraft shells
- Advanced bombsights and fire-control systems
- Airborne radar

- A Henschel Hs 293 glide bomb
- A crated ME 262 jet fighter, the only fighter in existence at that time
- Additional jet engines
- 560 kg of uranium oxide
Personnel captured aboard U-234

- Luftwaffe General Ulrich Kessler, implicated in a conspiracy to kill Hitler.
- Anti-aircraft experts, naval construction engineers, jet aircraft experts (to begin construction of jet fighters in Japan), an air communications experts, radar specialists and a naval judge, sent to stop a spy ring that was sending secrets to the Soviet Union.
CAMP LIFE
Members of the Afrika Korps at rest while working in a cotton field.
Lumber crew from Camp Ruston
CULTURAL ACTIVITIES
• Theatre groups were formed and gave performances at the camp.

• Small orchestras were formed in both the officer’s and enlisted men’s compounds.

• A 40-voice choir was maintained over the years.

• The visual arts were also encouraged...
Sports
stadium
Model of a Rhine castle
Statue of Roland, a Germanic hero
Painted mural in mess hall
The event was a success, attended by many people who enjoyed the beautiful scenery and the music. The weather was perfect, with a gentle breeze and warm sunshine filling the air. The food was delicious, with a variety of dishes to suit all tastes. Overall, it was a wonderful day spent in the company of friends and family, enjoying each other's company and the beauty of nature.
ESCAPES
34 prisoners escaped and remained free for over twenty-four hours.

If not apprehended by the authorities, most escapees came back tired, hungry, dirty and covered in mosquito bites.

Charly King (Karl Westphal) made several escape attempts. In March of 1943 he finally succeeded. King was never recaptured.
Karl Westphal, a.k.a. Charly King, the only Camp Ruston system escapee who was never apprehended.
The U-505 crew dug tunnels from their barracks and scattered the dirt throughout the compound. They also used found material to shore up the tunnels. One prisoner, who was a watchmaker, made a compass to aid them in their escape.
Horst Blumenberg, former crewman of U-664 and the only u-boat prisoner to escape.
Horst Blumenberg, former crew member of U-664.
Meteorologist Heinz Lettau (left) and fellow scientist, the ballistics expert Guenter Loeser. They had been brought back to the United States in Operation Paperclip. They worked for a then new division of the Air Force, the Geophysics Research Directorate. Lettau later became a professor of physics at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Lettau’s family: Katherinia, Ulrich and Ludwig
Alfred Andersch, author and publisher. A Former conscript of the Wehrmacht, On June 6th, 1944, he deserted the Arno Line in Italy and was captured by Allied forces.
Hans Goebeler, U-505 crewman
CLOSING
• **February 3, 1946:** The last prisoners were transferred out.

• **June 5, 1946:** Camp Ruston officially closed.

• **May 27, 1947:** Camp Ruston was formally transferred to the state of Louisiana for use as a tuberculosis hospital.

• **July, 1959:** The camp was reopened as the Ruston State School for the developmentally disabled and was in operation until 2009.