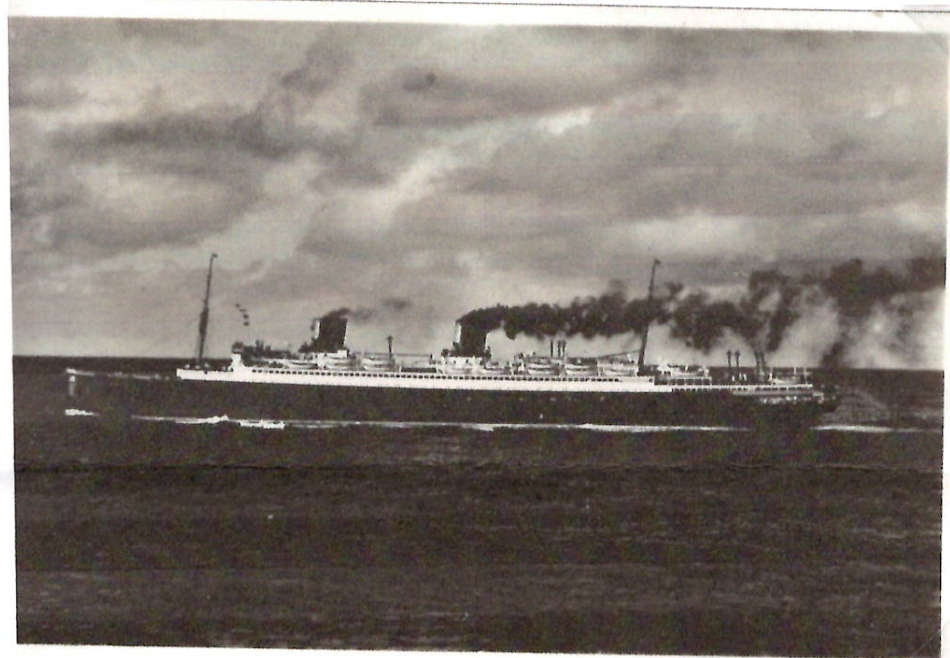


THE STORY OF HOW A SHIP, A MAN, AND A FORT CAME TOGETHER DURING WORLD WAR II

Using covers, letters, postcards and photos the story of how
hundreds of German Civilians that were interned from 1939 to
1945 will be told.

THE SHIP

GERMAN STEAMSHIP "COLUMBUS"



Above is a real photo postcard of the German Luxury Liner
"Columbus". Her maiden voyage was in 1924. She was 750
feet long with 1,750 cabins for luxury, first, second and tourist
class passengers. In 1939 on her last voyage there were about
775 passengers (it could carry up to 1,750) and 577 crew
members. Her home port was Hamburg, Germany. Her captain
sank her on Dec 19, 1939 as a British War Ship closed in.

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THE MAN

WALTER EDUARD SCHEIBNER



Walter Scheibner was born on July 10, 1914 in Lehe, Germany. His mother's name was Minna Scheibner. Walter was #326 on an alphabetical list of Civilian Alien Enemies in custody at Fort Stanton. His official Alien Registration # was 2407417. He had been a crewman on the "Columbus" before it was sunk. He was 24 years old when first held and by the end of the war in 1945 he was 31.

After being picked up by the U.S. Navy, he and the others spent time in Ellis Island, NY., and Angel Island near San Francisco but mostly at Fort Stanton in New Mexico.

He became acquainted with Helga Guzek (later Gasek), who lived in St Albans, Long Island, New York. She appears to have been an American citizen but could write and speak German. It is the 50 letters that Walter wrote to Helga during this period of 1939-1942 that this exhibit is built from. There is evidence that she got a job at Estes Tool Co, Inc in Brooklyn N.Y. in 1944 (probably in the defense industry.)

From the letters to Helga, it appears that Walter liked to drink beer (like many of the other shipmates) and often got drunk. Like most Germans during this time, he was hard working and liked doing physical work. Notice in the above photo that Scheibner stands proudly by the crops they grew at the fort.

THE FORT

FORT STANTON, NEW MEXICO

In 1855 Fort Stanton was established as a base to fight off the Mescalero Apache Indians. There were numerous campaigns between 1855 into the late 1880's. The fort is located out in the middle of nowhere 160 miles north of the Mexican border. During the Civil War, Confederate Soldiers took over the fort and burnt the buildings when they left. The fort was abandoned by the Army in 1896. In 1899 the US Public Health Service took over the fort and used it as a tuberculosis hospital for the Merchant Marines. The 5,000 patients that they served between 1899-1953 needed the fresh dry air and sunshine as there were no known cures at the time. Many new buildings were constructed during this time.

In 1941 the German Crew Members of the Columbus were moved to the fort where they were confined until after the war in 1945. They were then released with many of them returning to Germany.

The arial photo postcard sent on Feb 25, 1941 by Scheibner was how the fort looked after the German Internees build up the area. Notice how the censors had no problem with a photo of the fort being sent by a German with German writing in the message area.



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