

EXTRA THE Oflag DAILY BULLETIN EXTRA

Issue 2

June 2022

Welcome

Welcome to *The Bulletin Extra*, created to bring you updates about the on-going projects of the Polish-American Foundation for the Commemoration of POW Camps in Szubin and the Friends of Oflag 64. Our shared mission is to commemorate the history of the POW camps of Szubin.

You may be aware that June 6, 2022, marked the 78th anniversary of the Allied D-Day landings. But, did you know that the date also marks the 79th anniversary of the June 6, 1943, arrival of the first American POWs to Szubin?

During the war, from September 1939 until the Spring of 1943, this POW camp--at one time or another--held Polish, French, Russian, and British Commonwealth POWs, under the camp names of Stalag XXI-B and then Oflag XXI-B. By March 1943, the Germans needed to make space for the influx of American POWs, most of whom they had captured in North Africa. For months, the Germans moved these newest POWs from camp to camp across Italy and Germany. Meanwhile, the Germans transferred Oflag XXI-B's mostly British POWs to other POW camps to prepare the camp in Szubin to be exclusively for American Ground Force Officers.

On June 6th 1943, the first 139 American POWs arrived. They had endured a three-day train trip, locked in box cars or wooden-benched coaches, with little food or water. The exhausted and dehydrated men walked two miles through the cobbled-stoned streets of German-occupied Szubin, to arrive at the gates of the camp, soon to be renamed Oflag 64.

The Germans searched the prisoners, then moved them to the barracks where most of them would stay for the next eighteen months. By January 1945, the camp population had increased ten-fold to approximately 1,500 men, and the POWs had organized sports teams, musical groups, and classes, as well as a POW Security Committee that oversaw organized escapes and the management of the POWs' secret radio.



*German guards wait at the gate of the camp.
Photo: Imperial War Museum*

Inside this issue we are excited to announce the renovation of an original Oflag 64 building, the POWs' Tin Store, which the Foundation is proud to now call our temporary home for upcoming exhibitions. Look inside for the history behind the Tin Store. We also have updates about other Foundation activities, and fascinating museum artifact donations made to the Friends of Oflag 64. We are honored to continue to research, educate, and commemorate the little-known histories of these men and the brave Polish citizens who aided them.

THE POW TIN STORE RETURNS

The Foundation is pleased to announce the renovation of an original camp building, the POW Tin Store. The POWs used this modest building to stockpile and ration a portion of the lifesaving food tins that came in their Red Cross parcels. Today, the renovated Tin Store gives the Foundation a temporary and beautiful space for small exhibits and events.



The original POW Tin Store



The Foundation's renovated Tin Store

The three-month renovation project (led by the Foundation, with support from the town of Szubin and the school on whose grounds the building is located) was made possible



The custom-made bookcase

by generous donations to the Friends of Oflag 64. Improvements included structural repairs, new HVAC and security systems, lighting, a new bathroom, and a new tile floor. The approximately 600 square-foot space will store and exhibit

our artifacts in a safe and comfortable venue.

Among the first furnishings to be moved into the building was a custom-made book cabinet, donated by Mary Louise Hoch Stewart and family in memory of her husband, ex-Oflag 64 POW Captain Donald B. Stewart. The Stewarts' son, Dave Stewart, designed the cabinet, and artisan carpenters in Szubin crafted it beautifully.

Foundation Historian Dr. Jan Daniluk and exhibit designer Gosia Gliwinska visited the Tin Store in mid-May. They were delighted with the space and spent the day studying the artifacts that have been arriving in a steady stream from the Friends of Oflag 64 Artifacts Committee. They are now planning the Foundation's first temporary exhibit, "The Tin Store: A Glimpse from the Past and Into the Future." They found that the combination of our exhibit space and our artifacts collection will make the Tin Store a truly unique destination. Foundation President Mariusz Winiacki said, "The Tin Store is a gem. The high quality of the building renovation, its furnishings, and the exhibit space make it feel like a perfect first step, and more than just a temporary home. In the meantime, we are planning our larger and permanent museum that will be just north of the Tin Store, at the site of the last remaining brick barracks."



Exhibit Designer Gosia Gliwinska and Foundation Historian Dr. Jan Daniluk study artifacts at the Tin Store.

The History Behind the Tin Store

The Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War stipulated that prisoners were entitled to receive food parcels once a week from impartial humanitarian organizations like the Red Cross. The parcels, which could weigh no more than 11 pounds each, sometimes arrived once a week, and sometimes did not arrive for months; sometimes every man had his own parcel, sometimes three or more men shared a parcel. Each parcel contained tins of various shapes and sizes of items like corned beef, powdered milk, coffee, oleo, sugar, chocolate, and cigarettes. The food supplemented the meager German rations, and near the end of the war was the only food the men had.

In June 1943, Oflag 64's first Senior American Officer, Colonel Thomas Drake, anticipated times of feast and famine in the POW food supply. He ordered that each POW donate a certain amount of his Red Cross food to a general pantry, the Tin Store. For a time, the one-story compact building was centrally located behind the camp hospital.



A sampling of the tins contained in the typical Red Cross parcel received at Oflag 64.

The POWs in charge of the Tin Store kept precise records of what went into and out of the pantry. On occasional Wednesday nights, POW Mess Chef Lt. Colonel Walter Oakes,

would fry-up the accumulated corned beef in oleo and serve a morale-boosting “banquet” for dinner.

The tins’ usefulness went beyond food. After the POWs had used the powdered milk from the large KLIM cans (the brand name is “milk” spelled backwards), eaten the corn beef from the box-shaped tin, or brewed the few teaspoons of coffee in their lukewarm water, the tins took on new uses. For “cooking” in the barracks, two cans on top of each other, the top one with the bottom cut out, the bottom one stuffed with used newspaper and a dab of oleo and string from the parcels as a wick, became the infamous “Smokey Joe” stove (the more ironic POWs called it the “smokeless heater”) for boiling water or toasting bread. At the POWs’ Little Theater of Szubin, the resourceful 2nd Lt. Lou Otterbein used empty tins to house makeshift footlights. Away from the eyes of the guards, the POWs digging the escape tunnels used tins as shovels or for the underground ventilation system; and, the POWs who built and maintained the camp’s secret radio could use a flattened cocoa tin as an “ersatz” capacitor electrode.

In mid-1944- to prevent POWs from hoarding food to use during possible escape attempts- the Germans decreed that the POWs had to puncture any tins that they kept in their barracks. The Tin Store become even more vital for safe storage of food.

The tins were such an important part of POW existence, that many of the men kept a few labels from their favorite tins for the rest of their lives. Some have been donated to the museum through the Friends of Oflag 64. We look forward to honoring the resourcefulness of our ingenious POWs through the renovated Tin Store and to welcoming you to our first exhibit in Szubin. Watch this space for an announcement of our opening date in the months ahead. If you would like to donate to the next phase of the Tin Store opening please visit the [Friends of Oflag 64 Donation page](https://www.friendsofotlag64.org/donation) online at [friendsofotlag64.org/contact-us](https://www.friendsofotlag64.org/contact-us).

FOUNDATION HELPS ESTABLISH GLOBAL POW CONSORTIUM

On June 9, 2022, our Foundation became part of a new and unique global-scale consortium, the League of Prisoners-of-War Remembrance Network. The group was founded under the leadership of Poland's Central Museum of Prisoners-of-War in Łambinowice-Opole.

The Network's goal is to encourage the cooperation of institutions dealing with the narrative of POWs, in disseminating knowledge about the history of the prisoners and related issues. By working together, the institutions will support and encourage broader interest in their critical activities as related to:

- Research
- Education
- Exhibitions
- Commemorations
- Promotions

To date, the members of the League are:

- Central Museum of Prisoners-of-War in Łambinowice-Opole (Stalag VIII B Lamsdorf) (cmjw.pl/en/muzeum2/)

- Foundation Memory, Education, Culture from Zgorzelec (Stalag VIIIA Görlitz) (fpek.pl/?page_id=2431&lang=en)

- Foundation Gross Born from Borne Sulinowo (Oflag IID Gross Born) (facebook.com/dariusz.czerniawski.547)

- P.O.W. Camps Museum in Żagań (Stalag VIII C Sagan, Stalag Luft 3) (muzeum.zagan.pl/en/)

- Cultural Center in Dobiegniew-Museum Woldenbergczyk (Oflag II C Woldenberg) (dobiegniew.pl/)

- Polish-American Foundation for the Commemoration of POW Camps in Szubin (Stalag XXI B, Oflag XXIB, Oflag 64) (szubinpowcamps.org/en)

We are proud to be a member of the Network's decision-making Consortium Council.

Many of these well-established organizations have been helpful to our Foundation since our inception. We look forward to furthering our cooperation with all of them.



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JEŃCÓW WOJENNYCH**



**MUZEUM
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Polish-American Foundation
for the Commemoration of POW Camps in Szubin

FRIENDS OF OFLAG 64 ARTIFACTS COMMITTEE

In 2019, the Friends of Oflag 64 established the Artifacts Committee to collect treasured artifacts from the families of Oflag 64 POWs and other sources. Since then, our generous families have donated over 1,000 artifacts for the future museum.

The Committee utilizes a detailed spreadsheet, which lists information about

each donated item as well as notes about the Kriegy who originally possessed it. Committee Chairman Dave Stewart, and members Rosa Lee, Ann Rogers, Marianne Merriam and Elodie Caldwell, all descendants or relatives of ex-Kriegies, meet on a regular basis to discuss ongoing requests, donations, and preparations of the artifacts for shipment to Poland.



Documents and keepsakes brought back from Oflag 64

Each artifact has been classified into one of six different categories as follows:

- **Artifact I:** 3D item which was actually in Oflag 64 or carried by a Kriegy while he was a POW
- **Artifact II:** WWII 3D item involving a Kriegy (printed articles, Red Cross bulletins, official telegrams, etc.)
- **Artifact III:** Approved WWII Oflag 64 3D replica purchase
- **MISC IV:** Post WWII 3D item involving a liberated Kriegy or the POW Camps in Szubin (photos, newspaper articles, magazine articles, YouTube videos, etc)
- **Digital:** PDFs and JPGs which can be electronically stored in the Kriegy's Historical Records folder
- **Library:** Donated books, newspapers, periodicals, and magazines written by or about the Kriegies

A signed Friends of Oflag 64, Inc. donation form is required with each artifact donation sent to the Chairman. It can be downloaded at www.friendsofotlag64.org under Documents. Contact Chairman Dave Stewart if you have any questions at: dslvtx@gmail.com.

Over a dozen carefully packed shipments of artifacts have already been sent or hand carried to Szubin and are now in safe storage at the renovated Tin Store, the temporary exhibit facility.



Documents and keepsakes brought back from Oflag 64

The following is a sample list of artifacts that the Artifacts Committee is looking for:

- Identity cards or paperwork for Oflag 64 POWs 1943-45
- American and German dog tags for Oflag 64 POWs 1943-45
- Pictures of family members with the Oflag 64 POW before or after WWII (can be digital)
- Pictures taken of the Oflag 64 POW taken while in the Army between 1943-45, particularly any pictures taken in Oflag 64
- Telegrams, letters, postcards, books, diaries, and mementos that the Oflag 64 POW had during 1943-45
- Local newspaper articles about Oflag 64 POWs being captured or released 1943-45
- Banners or flags that the family members flew to honor the Oflag 64 POW, or any flags that the POW brought home from WWII
- WWII uniforms, boots or shoes, hats, coats, and other clothes that the Oflag 64 POW wore before, during, and after being captured (1943-45)
- Military insignia and commendation medals for an Oflag 64 POW from 1943-45
- Bedrolls or other bedding that the Oflag 64 POW used between 1943-45

- Personal items that the Oflag 64 POW brought back from WWII, including but not limited to combs, toothbrushes, razors, eating utensils, dishes, scissors, and sewing kits
- Cigarette lighters, pipes, or other tobacco products (1943-45)
- MIS-X items such as playing cards, maps, shaving brushes, baseballs, German money, and cribbage boards as well as solitary military brass or plastic buttons, as some may contain a secret MIS-X compass
- Recreational items such as artwork or sporting equipment used in Oflag 64
- Printed material from the Oflag 64 POW camp printed in English or German



1. YMCA intramural sports medal (1st place)
2. German POW ID tag
3. The Oflag 64 Item
4. Russian shirt given to Oflag 64 POW at Odessa
5. U.S. Army dog tag

Thank you to all our artifact donors. Your cherished items will educate future generations and bring to life the history of Oflag 64.

Families or individuals who have sent artifact donations as of this publication are:

Patricia Bender	Randolph Holder Family	Julius Paull Family
Barbara Bickers	Allen Humphrey	Gail Rahal
Monica Stewart Bishara	Catherine Joyner	Ann & Don Rogers
Steven Burgauer	Lynn Kanaya	Ted Roggen
Bill & Elodie Caldwell	Anne Kreutzer	Wilbur Sharpe
Susanna Connaughton	Rosa DeFrancesco Lee	Seymour Shefrin Family
Neal Cory	F. Gene Liggett Family	Thornton Sigler
Kay Godfrey Cruise	David Little	Jane Slavin
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David Durgin	Lucy Lussenden	Jaine Herring Summers
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Jon David Henry	Annette Nelson	Pat Waters
Barney & Kathleen Stewart	John Otterbein	Karin White
Herrera	David Palluconi	Nancy Wyatt
Clyde Herring Family	Walter Parks Family	

We are grateful to all our artifact donors, and wish to give everyone full credit. If you donated and your name is not on this list, please contact Friends of Oflag 64 Chairman Cindy Burgess at cindyburgess92@gmail.com.

OUR HISTORY

The Bulletin Extra borrows its name and layout from *The Oflag Daily Bulletin*, a hand-lettered wartime daily news-sheet published by a small group of Oflag 64 POWs. From the Fall of 1943 until their last days at camp in January 1945, POW reporters posted news and photos about the war and the world. The first few issues were called *Headlines by the A.P.* (Associated Press), led by prisoner and Pulitzer Prize winning war correspondent, Larry Allen. Allen sometimes added “the Szubin Bureau of the A.P.” to the byline. In the Spring of 1944, when Allen was sent home in a prisoner exchange, the remaining “news hounds” launched *The Daily Bulletin*.

Throughout, Allen’s and the prisoners’ sources of information—interpreted by a few German-speaking POWs on the news-sheet’s staff--included the German Propaganda Ministry’s German and English language radio broadcasts blasted over camp loudspeakers, and newspapers and magazines that the guards distributed. Unbeknownst to the Germans, the POW staffers used finesse to supplement these sources with the information they heard each night over the BBC on the POWs’ secret radio.

The Bulletin staffers used paper and ink donated by the International YMCA to hand write their articles in tidy columns on large poster-sized sheets of paper. Twice a day they tacked up the latest issue on the bulletin board outside of their Mess Hall. By January 1945, more than 1,400 POWs gathered around the bulletin board twice a day to read the latest news. Even the Germans came to depend on it for its honest reporting.

Our masthead honors the one the POWs used which is now archived at the U.S. Army Heritage & Education Center in Carlisle, PA. Of course, our issues of *The Bulletin Extra* are a lot easier to publish than *The Daily Bulletin*. We hope to keep you as well informed as the original *Bulletin* staffers would have liked, as we continue to commemorate their remarkable history.



The Oflag 64 POWs hand-lettered this masthead for their daily news-sheet. The original is archived at the U.S. Army Heritage & Education Center. Photo courtesy of Susanna Bolten Connaughton.



Friends of Oflag 64

MISSION: Friends of Oflag 64 supports the Polish-American Foundation by fundraising, collecting artifacts, publicizing and promoting the Museum of POWs in Szubin, so that the history of the POW camp in Szubin and the courageous Polish citizens who assisted them will be preserved for generations to come.

Visit our website for more history and photographs, follow us on Facebook to keep up to date, and contact us to volunteer, donate, or say hello:

[friendsofotlag64.org](http://www.friendsofotlag64.org)

[@FriendsOfOflag64](https://www.facebook.com/FriendsOfOflag64)

office@friendsofotlag64.org

[donate to Friends of Oflag 64](#)

Mailing Address:

Friends of Oflag 64

12768 Turberville Lane

Herndon, VA 20171-2214 US

Cindy Sharpe Burgess, Chairman



The staff of "Headlines by the AP," (l-r) 1st Row: Leonard Feldman, Gerald Long, Seymour Bolten. 2nd Row: Richard Rossbach, Larry Allen. Photo taken January 1944 at Oflag 64. Photo courtesy of Susanna Bolten Connaughton.



Polish-American Foundation

for the Commemoration of POW Camps in Szubin

MISSION: The Foundation contributes to the knowledge of World War II by studying and commemorating the experiences of Allied prisoners-of-war. In addition to the history and operations of the German POW camps, its projects focus on the thousands of POWs who the Germans incarcerated in Szubin, Poland, and the brave Polish citizens who assisted those prisoners. Its cornerstone project is the creation of a museum in Szubin at the original site of one of the camp's barracks.

Visit our website for more history and photographs, follow us on social media for the latest discoveries and updates, and contact us to volunteer, donate, or say hello:

[szubinpowcamps.org](http://www.szubinpowcamps.org)

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office@szubinpowcamps.org

[donate to Polish-American Foundation](#) (via Friends of Oflag 64)

Mailing Address:

Polish-American Foundation for the
Commemoration of POW Camps in Szubin
ul. Gen. Jarosława Dąbrowskiego 17/1
89-200 Szubin, Poland

Mariusz Winiecki, President