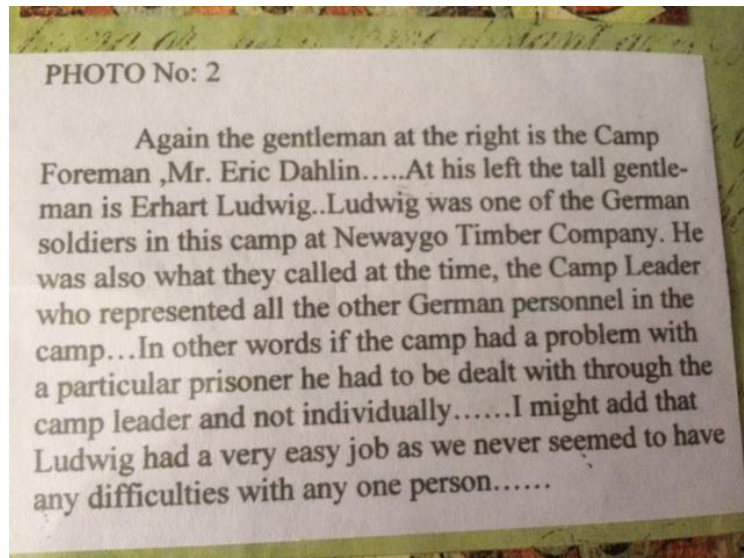


GERMAN POWS IN HEARST - FRIEDRICH ALBERT JEPPEL

by Ernie Bies March 2021 Photos courtesy Liz Dahlin Bisson and Mauno Jansson.

In 1943 the Canadian Government decided to use interned prisoners of war to ease the labour shortage in lumber camps and on farms. The Newaygo Timber Company participated in this program and were assigned POW project 2BB with 229 POWs in several camps south of Bradlo and in the Mead area, south of Hearst, which included Camps 7, 75 and 78.



The Veteran's Guard of Canada (WW1 Vets) provided the security. The prisoners were paid 30 cents a day with a production bonus of 20 cents. They were given scrips that could be used to make purchases at the company stores.



Many would meet their quotas which allowed them some leisure time back at camp where they made beautiful crafts and art objects.

One of the advantages of housing these prisoners in isolated bush camps was their remoteness and the extreme

cold made escape attempts rare. Sometimes a prisoner would wander off through the bush and approach a Bradlo farmer seeking shelter from the cold. They did not need much encouragement to go back to their warm bunk houses. Since most of the Bradlo farmers were recent immigrants from Czechoslovakia they were labelled as enemy aliens so the farmers could not be seen to be sheltering these runaways. One of these POW bush camps was a couple of miles from the Jan Bies farm in Bradlo. Bies would winter in the camps with his team of horses, hauling the pulpwood to the rail line and he befriended some of the prisoners.

A more structured prison camp was located at the Gravel pit on Lac Ste Therese Road with higher security and fences. The so called incorrigible prisoners were housed there.

When the POWs were repatriated in 1946 one of them had a faithful dog named Flora that he could not take with him. The prisoners were brought out by motorcar to the concession road now known as Bradlo Road. The one room school, Kendall No. 4, was at this intersection and the school children watched in awe as these German soldiers, now in uniform, assembled in formation waiting to board the open stake trucks which brought them to Hearst for their travel home. With a click of their heels they mounted the trucks and a piece of local history ended, but not before Flora's master approached Jan Bies and asked if he'd take Flora in. Flora was beside herself for days and had to be locked in a shed, but this did not stop her from digging a hole under the wall for her own great escape and disappearing. Jan searched up and down the concession road, then walked back

to the now abandoned lumber camp where he found Flora under her master's bed which was now stripped to the bare frame. After walking her around the camp to show her there was no one there she reluctantly came home and became a good family pet. Katherine O'Hara, who taught at the Bradlo school in 1946-47, arranged for a field trip to the abandoned POW camp. The students boarded a flat car pulled by the motor car and made the trek to view the empty bunk houses. Photo courtesy Catherine O'Hara Bies.



Friedrich Albert Jeppel, A POW in Hearst.

One of these temporary visitors was Friedrich Albert Jeppel. Memories of his stay as a guest of the crown in Hearst were not pleasant as he rarely spoke to his family about that time, did not keep in touch with fellow prisoners. Though he never revisited Hearst he and his family crossed paths several times with former Hearstites.



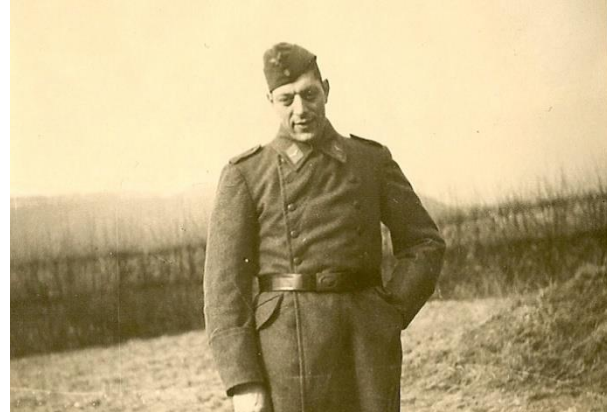
Born on April 9, 1909, Fred Jeppel was a non violent man with a flair for art. He married Frieda Louise Peter on August 12, 1939 and they were soon



blessed with three children, Egbert (Bert), Hedy and Peter.

Working as a painter and designing advertising posters for theatres, he was conscripted into German Army in 1942. Putting his artistic skills to use he worked in military offices making maps and drawings as well as doing clerical work.

In 1944 while in transit with an S.S. Officer carrying maps and plans, he was captured by the Canadian Army in Normandy France. The S.S. Officer wanted to trade uniforms with Jeppel before their imminent capture but he refused.



After his capture he was sent to England for a short time to a camp where he picked apples before being transferred to a POW camp in Alberta, Canada. Then he was transferred to a POW



Lumber camp in Hearst Ontario where he and another prisoner conducted Evangelical church services on Sundays in the German language.

Released in 1946, Jeppel returned to Germany then immigrated to Ottawa, Ontario in 1951 with his wife and children where they lived at 1166 Shillington Ave till 1960. (Coincidentally Ernie and Sandy Bies lived at 1196 Shillington Ave in 1970-72, about a block away from the Jeppel House).

Fred worked as an interior and exterior house painter in Ottawa. The Jeppel family were active members of the Bethel Pentecostal Church on Waverly Street where Rev. John Spillenaar, formerly from Hearst, was an occasional guest preacher. In 1960 he returned to Germany with his wife and son Peter to begin street mission Evangelical endeavours in the Moers area.



His son Bert Jeppel, who provided the family photos, lives in Barrhaven, Ottawa, about two blocks from Ernie and Sandy Bies. Fred visited often but the connection with Hearst was not made till Feb. 26, 2012, so an opportunity was missed to ask about his time in Hearst. Fred passed away in Nov. 1999.