

## “Internment Camp at the Lakehead”

For quite some time at the beginning of the war the commonly held belief in Port Arthur and Fort William was that the two cities would have their own internment camp for the interned ‘aliens’ to stay at. On 18 December, 1914, the *Port Arthur Daily News* reported on this common belief saying that the grounds of the West Algoma Agricultural Association would be used to house the interned men and that the new addition to St. Joseph’s hospital would house the women and children.<sup>i</sup> The article also said that not only will hostile ‘aliens’ be interned, but also those without means and out of work.<sup>ii</sup> This announcement by the Dominion government was based on recommendations of the city’s mayors.<sup>iii</sup> However, it also stated that if an ‘alien’ conducted themselves peaceably and had employment that they could retain their liberty.<sup>iv</sup>

The next reported update in regards to an internment camp being located in the twin cities region came on 18 December, 1914 in the *Fort William Daily Times Journal*. The article reported that the Port Arthur and Fort William Board of trade have been working together to retain ‘alien’ labor in the district.<sup>v</sup> Also within the article is the upheld proposition of keeping the men, under guard, at the Agricultural park while the women and children stay at St. Joseph hospital. By January 6, 1915, negotiations between the militia department and the Agricultural Association were underway to decide on a price to pay for buildings used for the internment of ‘enemy aliens.’<sup>vi</sup> At this time, the Agricultural Association was asking for four hundred dollars a month for rent, which according to the paper was not much money when considering the property value but it was still too expensive for the militia.<sup>vii</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Little, commanding officer in the district, had wired his superiors requesting a reasonable price that the militia is willing to pay.<sup>viii</sup>

On January 11, 1915, the *Port Arthur Daily News* reported that an internment station for ‘alien enemies’ was to be established in Port Arthur and Fort William immediately. According to the article, “arrangements for such action have been in progress since appointment of registrars

in the two cities some weeks ago and today Lieut.-Colonel Little, commanding officer of the Ninety-Sixth regiment, was notified from Winnipeg, the headquarters of the military district, that he had been appointed commandant of the internment camp.<sup>xix</sup> It continues by stating that the CPR bunkhouses are to be leased to hold as many people as possible and that more buildings will be needed to house all of the 'aliens.'<sup>x</sup> The article also specifies who will be kept at this internment camp: "Austrians, Germans and Turks who are at present in destitute circumstances and, therefore, considered as a possible menace to the country."<sup>xi</sup> What is not mentioned now is the previous idea of holding the 'aliens' at the agricultural grounds.

By January 15, 1915 the issue of where to place the 'aliens' in the district and where to employ them became serious enough to warrant a visit from General Otter, the man in charge of internment camps all across Canada. On the 18<sup>th</sup> of January, General Otter was in the Two Cities where he announced the main internment camps for the province at Petewawa, Kapuskasing, and Hurricanaw which are all located along the National Transcontinental Railway.<sup>xii</sup> However, during this interview with the *Daily News* General Otter did not specify whether or not 'aliens' of the Port Arthur and Fort William district would be sent to the main internment camps or not.<sup>xiii</sup> He does however explain how the internment camps will be structured; the camps will operate using a military system with the commandant being of Lieutenant-Colonel or Major.<sup>xiv</sup>

Before the end of the month closed however, it had become fairly clear that an internment camp would not be held at Port Arthur and Fort William. Due to room constrictions within the cities and more importantly, lack of unpatented land within 4 miles of railway for the 'aliens' to work on an internment camp was not likely.<sup>xv</sup> At the end of January, 'aliens' from elsewhere in the province began to be sent to the internment camps to begin clearing land for the experimental farms. By April 29, 1915, the announcement that 'aliens' from Thunder Bay district will be transported to Kapuskasing to work on the experimental farm within the next

couple weeks was reported in the *Port Arthur Daily News*.<sup>xvi</sup> On August 11, 1915, as he was passing through Fort William, the *Port Arthur Daily News* reported General Otter as saying that there was “little chance of there being internment camps established at these points.”<sup>xvii</sup>

## References

- “1500 Prisoners of War are to be Kept Here.” *Port Arthur Daily News*, 11 January, 1915.
- “Gen. Otter Tells Daily news of Arrangements For Interning Camps.” *Port Arthur Daily News*, 18 January, 1915.
- “Interning Camp For Aliens At Head Of Lakes.” *Port Arthur Daily News*, 18 December, 1914.
- “Interning Station To Be Established Here.” *Port Arthur Daily News*, 6 January, 1915.
- “Internment Camps Cannot be Located at Head of Lakes.” *Port Arthur Daily News*, 11 August, 1915.
- “No Place to Put Aliens to East of City.” *Port Arthur Daily News*, 26 January, 1915.
- “Port Arthur is Endeavoring To Hold Aliens In The Two Cities.” *Fort William Daily Times Journal*, 18 December, 1914.
- “Send Aliens to Camps Next Week.” *Port Arthur Daily News*, 29 April, 1915.

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<sup>i</sup> “Interning Camp For Aliens At Head Of Lakes.” *Port Arthur Daily News*, 18 December, 1914.

<sup>ii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>iii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>iv</sup> Ibid.

<sup>v</sup> “Port Arthur is Endeavoring To Hold Aliens In The Two Cities.” *Fort William Daily Times Journal*, 18 December, 1914.

<sup>vi</sup> “Interning Station To Be Established Here.” *Port Arthur Daily News*, 6 January, 1915.

<sup>vii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>viii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>ix</sup> “1500 Prisoners of War are to be Kept Here.” *Port Arthur Daily News*, 11 January, 1915.

<sup>x</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>xii</sup> “Gen. Otter Tells Daily news of Arrangements For Interning Camps.” *Port Arthur Daily News*, 18 January, 1915.

<sup>xiii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xiv</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xv</sup> “No Place to Put Aliens to East of City.” *Port Arthur Daily News*, 26 January, 1915.

<sup>xvi</sup> “Send Aliens to Camps Next Week.” *Port Arthur Daily News*, 29 April, 1915.

<sup>xvii</sup> “Internment Camps Cannot be Located at Head of Lakes.” *Port Arthur Daily News*, 11 August, 1915.

# PORT ARTHUR IS ENDEAVORING TO HOLD ALIENS IN THE TWO CITIES

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That the alien enemies of the British empire, who are at present residing in the cities of Fort William and Port Arthur, and who number approximately fifteen hundred, be placed—the men only, under guard in the buildings at the Agricultural park, and their women folk and children in the new annex to the St. Joseph's hospital, Port Arthur, was a suggestion made yesterday to the Port Arthur board of trade and which caused some serious discussion. The Port Arthur trade board, in conjunction with the local board of trade, are doing everything in their power to discourage the reported proposal of the Ontario government to use alien labor from all parts of Ontario for the particular advantage of certain portions of eastern Ontario.

A committee was chosen yesterday from the members of the Port Arthur board of trade, to obtain accurate statistics of the alien enemies in Port Arthur and prepare a vigorous protest against the reported plan of the government. Another meeting of the board of trade is being held in Port Arthur this afternoon for the purpose of dealing with the same subject and the Fort William board of trade will meet tonight and it is expected, will add their protest to that of Port Arthur's.

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the Dutch border continuous firing can be heard.

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# INTERNING CAMP FOR ALIENS AT HEAD OF LAKES

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PEOPLE WHO ARE CITIZENS OF  
ENEMIES' COUNTRIES AND  
WITHOUT MEANS WILL BE  
TAKEN CARE OF.

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BUILDINGS AT AGRICULTURAL  
GROUNDS TO BE USED FOR  
THE PURPOSE WITH MILITIA-  
MEN IN CHARGE.

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All alien enemies in the Twin Cities without means and out of work are to be interned. This move has been decided upon by the Dominion government following recommendations from the mayors of the two cities, as a means for taking care of them and not on the ground that they constitute a menace. Alien enemies in both cities who have means or work and who conduct themselves peaceably will retain their liberty. Any suspicious individuals, of whom the percentage is very small, will be interned.

## Number of Aliens

This was explained to the Daily News today by Mr. J. M. McGovern, government registrar of the aliens at the head of the lakes.

Mr. McGovern gave as figures for internment in Port Arthur based upon present conditions, 223 men, 111 children and 62 women. In Fort William there are three times as many aliens registered.

The government is to bear all expense in connection with their internment and it is probable the buildings

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Sea Wednesday night and sank in three minutes, were brought into Grimsby today by a trawler, which found them clinging to an upturned life boat.

Thirteen other members of the crew of the Vaaren and her English pilot either were killed or wounded.

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## INTERNING CAMP

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at the grounds of the West Algoma Agricultural Association will be used to house the men. It is possible that the new addition to St. Joseph's hospital will be used as a place to take

care of the women.

### Militia In Charge

The problem is expected soon to be taken out of the hands of the city officials altogether and placed with the military authorities. A guard will be stationed over those who are interned on the ground that they constitute a menace to the peace of the city.

At the Board of Trade meeting last night Mr. F. B. Allen in speaking on this problem suggested that these men be used on construction work, and mentioned the proposed national highway across Canada as one project on which work might be found for them.

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Daily News ten cents a week.

# GEN. OTTER TELLS DAILY NEWS OF ARRANGEMENTS FOR INTERNING CAMPS

**This Paper Gets One of Most Extended Interviews the Distinguished Soldier has Ever Given—Announces the Main Camps for Ontario—Is Here to Decide Upon Care of Aliens Registered in Port Arthur and Fort William.**

In one of the most extended interviews he has ever given a newspaper, Sir William D. Otter, Canada's most distinguished soldier, yesterday told the Daily News many hitherto unpublished details of the arrangements for the internment and treatment of aliens in the Dominion of Canada.

General Otter, who has retired from active connection with the militia, is acting at present as a special officer in charge of the internment of aliens throughout the Dominion and is here to make arrangements for the care of the 1500 men and women of Austrian, Hungarian, German and Turkish nationality who have been registered in Port Arthur and Fort William by specially appointed registration clerks during the past few weeks.

## Gives Few Interviews

A soldier all his life, and thus kept apart largely from controversies or discussions of public matters, and naturally quiet and reserved in his manner, General Otter has been one of the least interviewed of the prominent men of Canada. Newspapers seldom record him as having given them information or comment. As a rule, when they have, it has been only to the extent of a few words, but yesterday afternoon at the Prince Arthur hotel the general talked for a full half hour to a member of the staff of the Daily News, on the distinct understanding that whatever he said might be published.

The general had just returned from a visit to the agricultural buildings and grounds, in company with Lieut.-Col. Little of the Ninety-Sixth regiment. He had been looking over the buildings and grounds with a view to learning how they might be used as an internment camp.

## No Announcement Yet

"I cannot tell you whether we will use them for internment purposes or not," the general said, in answer to a question from the reporter.

"Are they suitable?"

"Oh, yes, under certain conditions and arrangements. I am to meet committees of the Port Arthur and Fort William city councils and the agricultural association tomorrow (Monday) to go more fully into the matter of their use but no decision

will be made until I return to Ottawa."

General Otter returns to Ottawa this evening. After closing up some business in hand there he will leave again on a trip west which will take him as far as the Pacific coast. He told the Daily News that the registration of aliens was still going on and would be in progress for some time yet. In anticipation of the finishing of the work he did not care to make any estimate as to the number who would be registered.

"How do the aliens seem to feel towards the registration and plans for their internment?" the Daily News asked.

"I have not seen or heard of much, if any, resentment. A great many of them are more or less indifferent. There may be a few isolated cases of hostile feeling having been expressed. The attitude of these people is one of the things I am studying."

## Attitude of Aliens

The Daily News told the general of the incidents in Port Arthur last week when a steamer near the government elevator was burned, evidently by an incendiary, and the firing upon a militia guard in the same vicinity the next night.

"Yes, those are the kind of cases I am interested in," said the general. "Of course it is hard to tell sometimes just what they mean. The man who fired at the sentry may have wanted to kill him, or he may only have been trying to stir up some excitement for the fun of it."

This, however, took the general into an explanation of the government's reason for selecting remote points for the main internment camps, such as those along the N.T.R. The reason is, he explained, to get the men as far as possible from contact with the general public and into places where any individuals with such hostile intentions as the man who fired on the local sentry apparently had, would have no opportunity of carrying them into effect.

## Treated As Prisoners Of War

"We will treat these interned aliens as actual prisoners of war," General Otter said. "We are bound to do that under our agreement at The Hague convention. They will have to work but we will pay them, besides feeding

# GEN. OTTER TELLS NEWS

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and housing them. The pay, however, will not be much, about twenty-five cents a day, or enough to keep them in tobacco."

General Otter said that arrangements had been made for three principal concentration camps in Ontario.

One will be at Petewawa, the military training grounds, where it is proposed to put from 600 to 800 men at work cleaning up the grounds, which amount to about thirty thousand acres.

Another main camp will be at Kapuskasing, on the Transcontinental railway, between Hearst and Cochrane and one will also be located at Hurricanaw, on the N.T.R., 175 miles east of Cochrane, on Lake Abitibi. To each of these latter about 1900 or 1200 men will be sent.

The sites on the N.T.R. at Hurricanaw and Kapuskasing have both been selected by the provincial government, and will be cleared by the aliens for use as experimental farms.

## Not Used For Competitive Labor

General Otter said it was not the present intention to use the prisoners of war in making roads. "That is work where they would enter into competition with ordinary labor," he said, "and it is not our intention to do anything of that kind. The clearing up of the camp at Petewawa and the experimental farms is work that would hardly be done under normal conditions. Our principal reason for putting them to work is that while they are busy there will not be so much discontent."

A gang of 150 men have already gone to Hurricanaw to prepare the camps and as soon as they are ready the prisoners will be sent up from the centres of population where they have been registered.

## The System At The Camps

General Otter also explained to the Daily News the system under which the internment camps will be conducted. "As far as caring for and keeping the prisoners is concerned, the system will be purely military," he said. "Each camp will be in charge of a commandant of the rank of lieutenant-colonel or major. The three principal departments, commissary, medical and guard, will be military. The labor will be directed by foremen, chosen not as soldiers, but as being capable of having the work done in a way satisfactory to the government, according to its purpose of using the land for experimental farm purposes."

General Otter said that it had not been decided whether the aliens of Port Arthur and Fort William would be sent to any of the main internment camps. If they are, it will be to the closest.

Women of the alien nationalities must also be taken care of when left destitute. Special provision will be made for them in the registration districts and they will not be concentrated at large camps like the men.

General Otter asked that he be not quoted as making any comment or reference to the military activity in Canada, or to the war.

# INTERNING STATION TO BE ESTABLISHED HERE

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## Big Question to be Settled First is Rate of Payment for Fair Grounds—Will Care for Thousand Men.

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Indications point to the establishment at Port Arthur and Fort William of an interment station for the interned aliens of whom it is said there are from one thousand to twelve hundred to be taken care of in this district.

Negotiations are under way for the use of the Agricultural Association's buildings and grounds between the two cities. The association has asked for four hundred dollars per month as rent. This is not very high when considered as interest on the value of the property but the militia depart-

ment says it is more than it can afford to pay for the property for such a purpose.

Lieut. Colonel Little has wired Ottawa asking what it is willing to pay and is expecting an answer any time.

Lieut. Colonel Little, as commanding officer here, has the authority to appropriate the buildings for military purposes at whatever figure the government may deem proper but he does not wish to do this unless the step becomes necessary in the event of a failure of the Agricultural association and the militia department in reaching an agreement.

# 1500 Prisoners of War are to be Kept Here

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**Lieut.-Col. Little Appointed Commandant of the  
Internment Camp—Use Railway Bunk Houses  
and Other Buildings.**

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An internment station for the detention of alien enemies will be established at Port Arthur and Fort William immediately.

Preliminary arrangements for such action have been in progress since appointment of registrars in the two cities some weeks ago and today Lieut.-Colonel Little, commanding officer of the Ninety-Sixth regiment, was notified from Winnipeg, the headquarters of the military district, that he had been appointed commandant of the internment camp. He was also asked to conclude a lease of the C.P. R. bunk houses at Fort William for the accommodation of as many as it will take, which is about 450.

## Other Buildings Needed

Further arrangements will be made for the use of other buildings as it is expected there will be between ten

and twelve hundred men and four and five hundred women and children to take care of.

They will be treated as actual prisoners of war and kept within restricted areas with a military guard, which means that the local force will have to be again augmented considerably.

The men and the women and children will be kept in different camps.

The prisoners will be Austrians, Germans and Turks who are at present in destitute circumstances and, therefore, considered as a possible menace to the country. They will be provided for by the government and one of the matters to be arranged, after the establishment of the internment station, will be the employment of the men, as the general policy is to put them to work at clearing land making roads or in other convenient ways.

# NO PLACE TO PUT INTERNEED ALIENS TO EAST OF CITY

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ANOTHER EFFORT WILL BE  
MADE TO FIND LAND—OTHER-  
WISE ALL WILL BE ALLOWED  
TO GO TO UPSALA

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MAYOR MOONEY REPORTS ON  
HIS TRIP TO TORONTO AND  
TERMS STATED BY GENERAL  
OTTER AND GOVERNMENT

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Mayor Mooney, in reporting to the City Council last evening on his trip to Toronto, said the provincial government and General Otter agreed that the interned aliens of the two cities should be put at any useful work. The big question was to find unpatented land, not more than four miles from a railway, for clearing. Using them on roads was not feasible.

"It is for us to tell the government where four hundred men can be used. If we cannot do that it looks as if the whole eight hundred would be placed in the township of Upsala, some eighty miles west of Fort William," said the mayor. "It is not now proposed to intern the men at the agricultural grounds. The matter is urgent and calls for immediate attention."

Mr. E. J. Blaquier suggested McGregor township.

The Mayor: "I understand McGregor is all patented."

Mr. Blaquier: "Couldn't we put them more than four miles from the railway?"

The Mayor: "General Otter would not agree to it."

Lieut.-Col. Ray: "General Otter has given us his terms definitely and it is up to us to meet them. I like Mr. Blaquier's idea of sending cruisers to look over McGregor. I think some arable land could be found there."

Ald. Sidney Smith saw no particular reason why the men should not all be allowed to go to work at Upsala. "It's eighty miles from here and means as much to Port Arthur as Fort William."

Ald. Burriss: "Let them all go together."

Cruisers will be asked to look over McGregor and if suitable land cannot be found shortly the men will be allowed to go all to Upsala without objection from Port Arthur, the whole matter being left with the mayor.