

PRISONER OF WAR CAMPS IN JAPAN & JAPANESE CONTROLLED AREAS
AS TAKEN FROM REPORTS OF INTERNED AMERICAN PRISONERS
LIAISON & RESEARCH BRANCH AMERICAN PRISONER OF WAR INFORMATION BUREAU
by JOHN H. GIBBS 31 July 1946

MUKAISHIMA A DIVISIONAL CAMP OF THE HIROSHIMA GROUP ON THE ISLAND OF HONSHU

1. LOCATION:

By reason of the partial annihilation of Hiroshima by air in Aug. 1945, (the atomic bomb), there was some speculation as to what might have happened to American prisoners of war in Japanese camps thought to be located in that city. Uncertainty as to the fate of these men was set at rest by the receipt of a cable from the Swiss Delegation in Tokyo stating that the Hiroshima camps had been transferred before the bombardment.

There were 8 camps in the Hiroshima group, 3 of which contained more than 100 American prisoners. The remaining 5 camps housed from 1 to 7 prisoners.

This report covers only the camp at Mukaishima, (Hiroshima # 4), a small island in the Inland Sea between Honshu and Shikoku, about 30 miles due east of Hiroshima, the coordinates of which are 34°23'N, 133°12'E.

Size of compound, approximately 75' x 150', enclosed by a 8' wood fence.

2. PRISONER PERSONNEL:

This camp was first occupied by the British prisoners from Singapore and Java in Nov. 1942. The first detail of American prisoners, 116 men, reached this camp from the Philippines on 7 Sept. 1944, divided from stand-point of services as follows: Army 109, & Navy 7=116. Upon arrival of the Americans there were interned at this location 78 British prisoners including 1 Canadian. The only American Officer in this camp from 7 Sept. 1944 to 20 Aug. 1945 was Maj. (later Lt. Col.) R. Townsend Artman, USA - MC, who was Sr. American Officer as well as camp doctor in charge of all prisoners. One of the prisoners, in writing about Col. Artman said: "Maj. Artman remained an officer throughout his prisoner career and did everything in his power to comfort and protect the American & British prisoners under his command. In doing so he maintained the respect of his own men as well as the Japanese. Without his presence, I can truthfully say that the death rate of prisoners in both camps he served would have been much higher." (Before being transferred to Japan Col. Artman was medical officer in one of the Philippine camps.)

An air crew of 4 officers and 6 enlisted men were shot down on 8 Aug. 1945 from a B-29 over the Sea of Japan and were taken to the camp on 20 Aug. 1945. These men spent 7 days on a life raft and were picked up by a Japanese fisherman. They were blindfolded and tied the next 5 or 6 days until reaching Mukaishima where they learned of the surrender.

3. GUARD PERSONNEL:

The camp commandant was Lt. Ichimatsu, Japanese Army, from Nov. 1942 to April 1945, who was succeeded by Lt. Okubayashi, Japanese Army, and who remained in command until surrender. Second in command was Sgt. Yamaji, Adjutant. Supplementing the officer staff was a sgt. guard, Kondo and 2 interpreters, namely, Futoni & Masutoni.

4. GENERAL CONDITIONS:

(a) Housing Facilities: The barracks, divided into 3 rooms for the Americans, & latrines under the same roof, was approximately 30' x 100'. The barracks for the American prisoners contained double deck sleeping platforms. The British barracks measured about 40' x 150', and contained only 1 sleeping deck.

All the camp buildings were of rough wood, unpainted inside and out. The roof of the barracks was of wood covered with fireproof paper. The floors were made of rough boards. The barracks were not insulated. None of the buildings were heated, but were adequately lighted.

(b) Latrines: wooden box with 6 holes covering a concrete pit which had to be emptied every week. The urinal was on the partition that separated the last sleeping room from the latrine. There were 6 spigots in which to wash. The water was not drinkable.

(c) Bathing: The bath-house was in the British compound and was used by all the prisoners. Hot bath in the community tub was prepared twice weekly. There were water faucets at the rear of both barracks for face, hand and clothes washing. The large wood bath tub would accommodate 10 men at one time.

(d) Calley: A separate wood building with concrete floor. It was equipped with

built-in fire boxes with 4 cauldrons, capacity of each cauldron was about 20 gallons. The food was prepared by American & British cooks who, it is said, "did the best they could" The mess was served in the barracks

(c) Food The mess consisted of rice, or beans, or barley, with soup made of whatever vegetables were in season, 3 times per day. At times the soup was omitted. At other times a very inferior grade of fish was served. The mess in quantity varied from 350 to 700 grams per man each 24 hours, depending upon the character of the work being done. The degree of work was classed as heavy worker, light worker, non-worker or on sick list. The latter would draw only 350 grams. The quantity of all the food was inferior, but the Japanese authorities are credited with having done their best.

(f) Medical Facilities Under the caption "Prisoner Personnel" reference was made to the thorough medical attention rendered by the American Medical Officer. He was assisted by 2 American corpsmen. The medical care of the dock yard workers by the medical staff of the Company was very inefficient. Practically all of the medicine & medical supplies came from the shipments of the Red Cross. The American Med Officer, for the benefit of sick prisoners, held sick call in the camp each night.

(g) Supplies (1) Red Cross - YMCA - Other Relief About 5 Red Cross food parcels were given the prisoners during their internment in this camp. No mention is made of Red Cross medicines & medical supplies other than their use for the benefit of sick prisoners.

(2) Japanese Issue Upon the arrival of the Americans at this camp in Sept 1944, they were issued 1 cap, 1 shirt, 1 coat, 1 pair trousers & 1 pair of canvas shoes with rubber soles. In Dec 1944 the camp authorities issued a Japanese army winter uniform & overcoat, to be worn only in the camp. There were no other Jap issues of clothing.

(h) Mail (1) Outing All prisoners were allowed to write monthly postcards. Few of them ever reached the addressees. It is probable they never left camp.

(2) Incoming Mail was received 3 or 4 times throughout the year.

(i) Work Officers did general work about the camp. The only American Officer was the camp surgeon as his time, night & day, was devoted to professional work.

The enlisted men worked at the dockyard cleaning ships, hauling lumber & supplies, welding, black-smithing and shop labor in general. The working conditions were poor in that the prisoners were exposed to the weather--cold or wet--and forced to work in dangerous places around unguarded machinery & equipment. There was inadequate protection against air raids while work. This project was obviously a military target.

(j) Treatment No atrocities were committed but there were minor beatings and slappings. Whenever the Nips could humiliate the prisoners, they did not hesitate to do so.

(k) Pay (1) Officers The same as Japanese officers of comparable rank.

(2) Enlisted Men Sergeants, the equivalent of 20¢ per day, privates, 10¢ per day.

(l) Recreation None.

(m) Religious activities There were no chaplains among the prisoners. The Japanese did not arrange church services, however, the Nips did authorize the prisoners to hold services of respective faiths 3 or 4 times during the year.

(n) Morale Fairly good.

5. MOVEMENT

This camp was liberated 12 Sept 1945 and the original 116 men went by special train of day coaches, including separate hospital and baggage coach, with a seat for every man bound to Yokohama through Onomichi, Fukiyama, Napoya and Osaka.

EXPLANATION OF SKETCH AMERICAN COMPOUND

1 Living quarters of PWs, each room housed 33 men. Approximate dimension was 25' square. Double wooden bay platforms to sleep on. No heating facilities or air conditioning.

2 Latrine--description under heading of Latrines.

3 Camp water supply pump house.

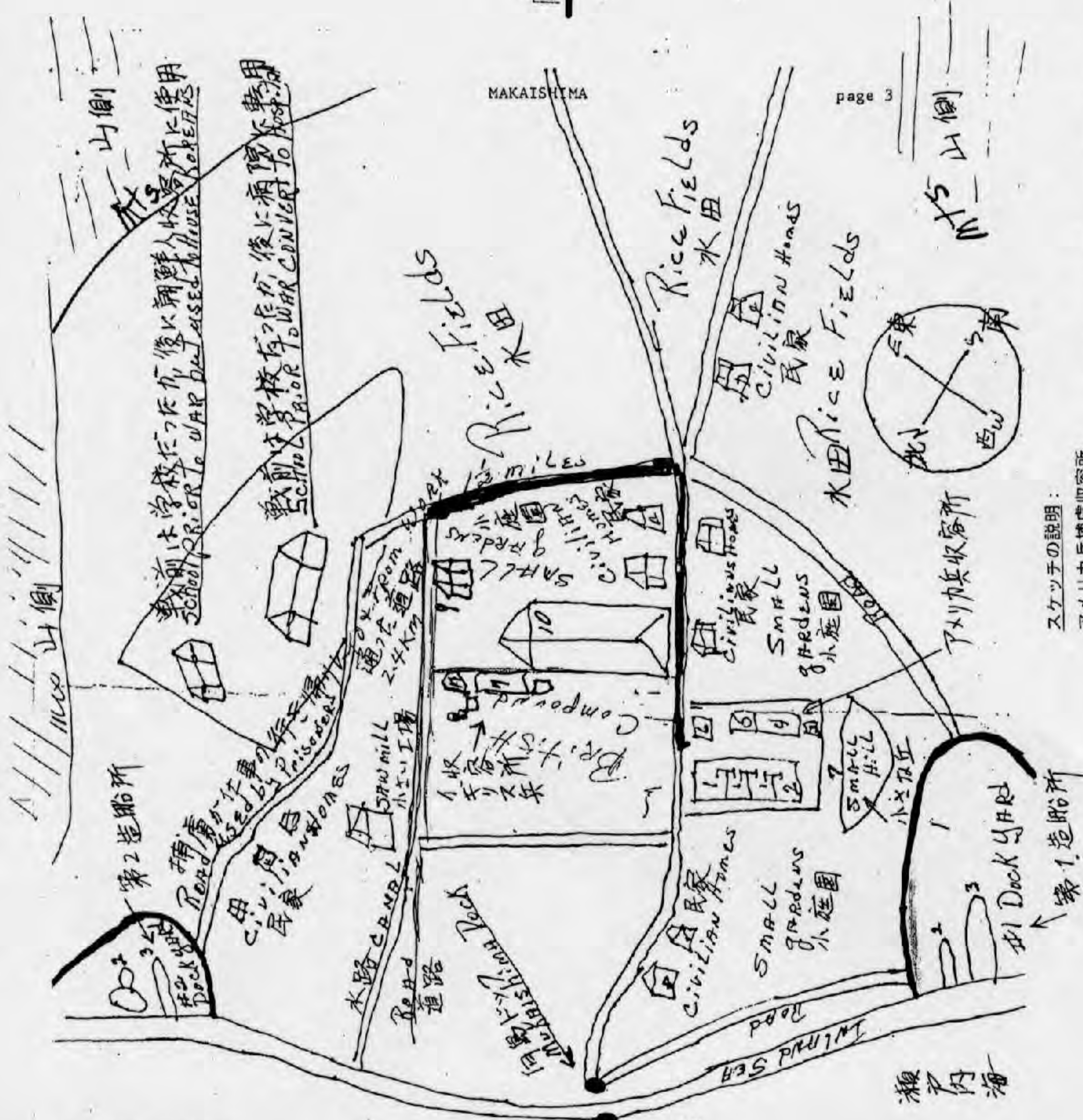
4 One burner with supplied drinking water for the Americans. This job was done by a patient on convalescence.

5 Japanese storehouse.

6 Jap guard house where sentry was on duty 24 hours a day.

7 Air raid shelter undergoing construction in the side of a small hill also by patients on convalescence.

8 8-ft pine board fence around entire compound.



BRITISH COMPOUND:

7. Kitchen. Wooden frame bldg, about 20' x 35'.
8. Supply room for food.
9. Japanese commandant's quarters.
10. A large Japanese Naval food warehouse which made most of the wall along the southeast side of the British compound.
11. Bath-house. About 25' x 15' divided in half; 1 division for changing clothes; the other for bathing. Tub--5' square. When cold water was heated. After soaping & rinsing each man was allowed to use the tub.

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スケッチの説明:

アメリカ兵捕虜収容所

1. 捕虜の居住地区: 各部屋は 33 人収容。大きさは約 25 7'x7' (7.6m) の正方形。2つの部分からなる木製の仕切り付きの台一睡眠用。暖房装置、空調は無い。
2. 便所: 上記に記述。
3. 収容所の給水ポンプ室より供給。
4. 供給飲料水の加熱器 1 台。これは回復期にある 1 人の患者の仕事であった。
5. 日本人の貯蔵倉庫
6. 日本人の番兵の建物。24 時間見張りが行われた。
7. 小さな丘の側に建設中の防空壕があった。これは又、回復期にある患者たちの仕事でもあった。
8. 全体の敷地を囲む高さ 8 7'x7' (2 m) の木製のフェンス。

イギリス兵捕虜収容所

7. 台所。木製の建物、約 20 x 35 7'x7' (6 x 11m)
8. 食糧供給室
9. 日本側司令室
10. 大きな日本海軍の食糧貯蔵所。イギリス兵捕虜収容所の南東側に沿って、ほとんど壁で作られていた。
11. 浴場。約 25 x 15 7'x7' (7.6 x 4.6m) で、半分に仕切られていた。半分は脱衣用、半分は入浴用。風呂は 5 7'x7' (1.5m) の四角。寒い時は水を加熱。石鹸で洗った後、1 人ずつ風呂に入ることが許された。