



**ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
INTERVIEW ABSTRACT**

CONSULTANT: Louis E. Archer

DATE OF BIRTH: 1914 GENDER: Male

DATE(S) OF INTERVIEW: June 8, 2000

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Archer's farm in La Mesa, N. M.

INTERVIEWER: Ron Nelson

SOURCE OF INTERVIEW: NMF&RHM

TRANSCRIBED: July 15, 2000

NUMBER OF TAPES: One

ABTRACTOR: Ron Nelson

DATE ABSTRATED: June 26, 2000

QUALITY OF RECORDING (SPECIFY): Good

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE: Sources of labor and use of POWs during this period.

DATE RANGE: 1940 - 1945

ABSTRACT (IMPORTANT TOPICS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE):

TAPE ONE, SIDE A:

In 1943 there was a lack of farm labor attributed to the choice of crops grown in the area, which were alfalfa and cotton. Both Hispanic and African-American families worked on area farms doing irrigating and weeding. In those days it did not matter if they were illegal or not, and some housing was provided for these workers.

In 1944 or 1945 Archer and his brother heard that POWs would be available for farm work, and they were relieved that there would be more labor available. They were allotted twenty POWs to work their crops. The POWs were housed in the old CCC building on Mesquite Street in Las Cruces. The farmers picked up the POWs for work, and returned them at the end of the day. The prisoners were paid about fifty cents an hour, and the salary was paid to the camp. Archer used POW labor only during the cotton picking season.

The first POWs in the area were Italian, followed by German POWs from the Rommel's Africa Corps. Archer states that they were in wonderful physical shape and very intelligent. The farmers were not supposed to associate with the POWs too much. The Italians were lazy and did not seem to care whether they did the work or not, but the Germans were very intelligent and knew how to work. They picked their quota in two or three hours, whereas it took the Italians all day long to pick their one hundred pounds. The Germans would pick their quota in a hurry and then play around, kidding each other. The GI Guard was an American wounded veteran. The German POWs were not about to try to run away because they were treated very well.

Farmers could not get new machinery and cotton prices were low due to price controls. Archer believed that the POW program was well-administered because he never heard of any trouble. He believes there were three hundred to four hundred POWs housed in Las Cruces, and all the farmers in the area used them for labor. He also believes that most of the POWs he used were enlisted men, and not officers.

From 1943 to 1947 the Las Cruces area was in need of farm workers. The Bracero program brought farm laborers from Mexico. Many of the braceros finally got their papers, and Archer states that he had one fellow that worked for him for fifty years. This man was covered by the Bracero program, got his citizenship, brought his family to the area, and all of them became citizens.

TAPE ONE, SIDE B: Blank