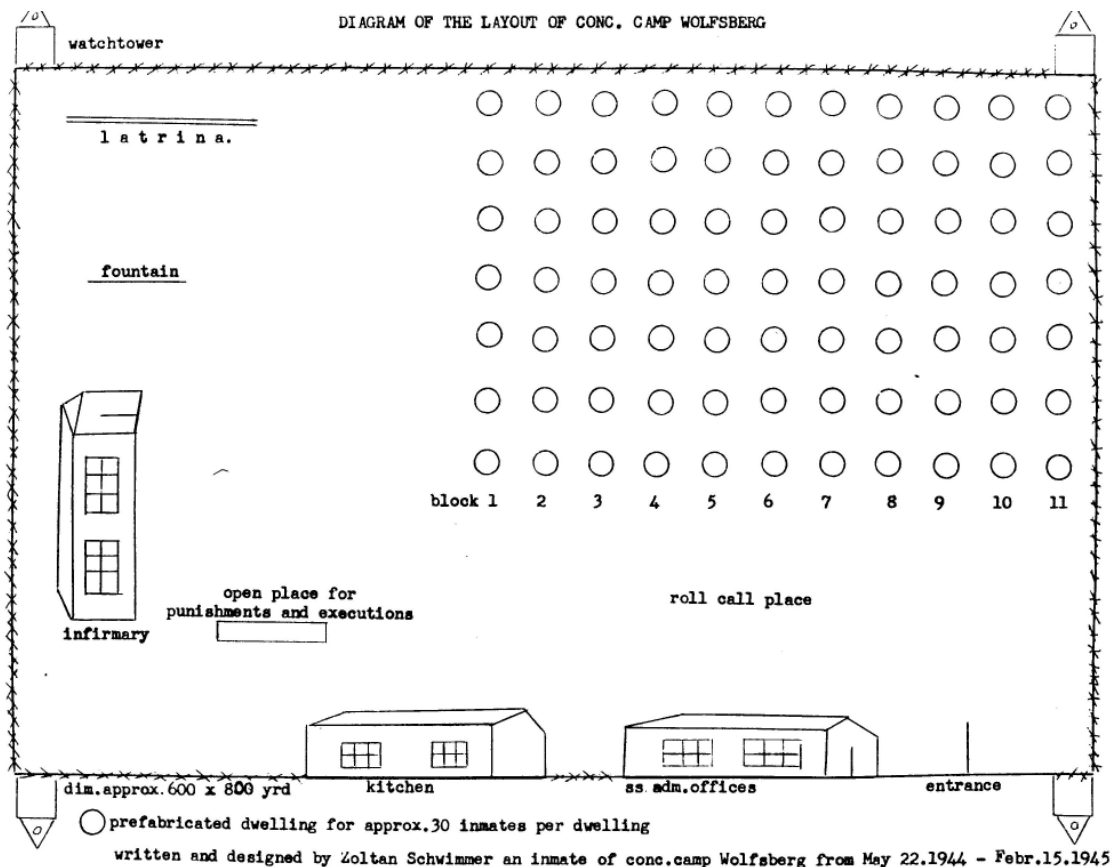


A Map and Description of Wolfsberg Concentration Camp

Courtesy of Sidney SCHWIMMER, USA

Wolfsberg Concentration Camp (illustration below) was one of several camps belonging to Gross-Rosen, the main camp. Because of its mountainous location, the inmates were engaged in building a defense road for the Germans. The inmate population of approximately 2000, consisted mainly of Polish and Hungarian Jews, who were interned at the camp during the summer of 1944.



Their work can be described nothing other than "slave labor". The inmates were forced to carry large 6 to 8 yard iron tracks on their shoulders, that weighed between 500 to 600 pounds, from the bottom to the top of the mountain. Their work also entailed heavy road building maneuvers manually. Digging roads, loading and unloading heavy stones, carrying wheelbarrows filled with earth for several hundred yards were among several of the severe tasks forced upon the inmates.

The food rations were as follows: black coffee in the morning, a ration of one loaf of bread divided into four pieces, which was to last for two days, occasionally a clear soup for lunch at work and a potato or turnip soup with a piece of cheese or marmalade for supper. Each inmate worked seven days from dawn till evening.

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The physical surroundings of the camp were inhuman. Thirty inmates were assigned to each round prefabricated dwelling, where they slept crammed together on the ground covered by scattered straw. These dwellings were replaced before the winter of 1944/1945. The washing facilities consisted of one fountain for the entire camp. Once a month, inmates were led in groups of 200, under SS guards, to the nearby village of Wuestewalsdorf, where public showering facilities were available.

Every morning, inmates were forced to line up in rows of five abreast in front of these cells, for roll call before being led to perform their slave labor tasks.

Clothing was a uniformed striped pair of pants, a jacket, a cap, wooden shoes with felt. Every few weeks, hair was cut off in the middle of the head, to identify inmates and prevent them from escape.

Wolfsberg Concentration camp was approximately two square blocks, surrounded with barbed wire fences three yards high. Each fence contained a watchtower, with SS guards on duty twenty four hours to oversee the camp and prevent any attempts of escape.

An infirmary on the camp's site was utilized only for very ill inmates and provided short term health care for inmates injured at work.

The Block Altester

The Block Altester was a Jewish inmate cooperating with the German SS, that was put in charge of an entire block. His duties were to maintain order in the camp, execute SS orders, or his own orders as he desired. The Block Altester was exempt from work and had many privileges, including sufficient food for himself before distributing food to the block he was in charge of. In many case, the Block Altester was very cruel to his fellow inmates and executed atrocities on orders from the SS. The Germans chose the Block Altester based on his personality characteristics and on his physical strength. Each Black Altester varied in his degree of severity towards the inmates.

The Lager Altester

The Lager Altester was a Jewish inmate, interned in concentration camps for several years. He was fluent in German and selected by the SS commander of the camp. The Lager Altester's task was to carry out SS orders as part of the SS administrative offices in the camp, and was responsible for reporting the exact amount of inmates in the camp.