



History of Fort Leonard Wood

Fort Leonard Wood was constructed under provisions of the Army expansion program of 1940. Initial construction began December 3, 1940, and by the first of May 1941 the post consisted of approximately 1,600 buildings of the now famous World War II wooden structure type. At the peak of construction, there were 32,000 workers employed at the post.

The post was first designated as the Seventh Corps Area Training Center. Following its official activation by War Department Orders on January 3, 1941, the fort was named in honor of Major General Leonard Wood (1860-1927). An Army surgeon, he was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for service in the campaign against Geronimo and the Apaches. Preceding Theodore Roosevelt, he was the first commander of the "Rough Riders" in Cuba and was the military governor of Cuba from 1898 to 1902. General Wood was Army Chief of Staff from 1910 to 1914. During World War I, he organized and trained the 89th Division and then trained the 10th Division. He

made a respectable bid for the Republican nomination for President of the United States in 1920, but lost on the 10th ballot to the dark-horse candidate, Warren G. Harding, who was elected President. President Harding appointed General Wood as Governor General of the Philippines, a post he held until his death in August 1927.

WORLD WAR II

In April 1941 the first contingency of trainees arrived after Brigadier General Ulysses S. Grant, III had taken command of the station complement responsible for training engineer replacement units. May 1941 saw the first of a number of major units, the 6th Infantry Division, arriving from Fort Snelling, Minn., for training. In July 1943, "The Sight-Seeing Sixth" departed to the Pacific Theater where the division set a record for consecutive days of combat against the Japanese from New Guinea to the Philippines and was awarded the Philippine Presidential Unit Citation.

Other major units that

trained at Fort Wood were the 72nd Field Artillery Battalion, the 8th Infantry Division, the 70th Infantry Division, the 75th Infantry Division, and the 97th Infantry Division. The 75th was activated at Fort Wood on April 15, 1943, and was the first division ever to be activated in the state of Missouri.

The initial mission of the installation was the training of engineer replacement troops, Army ground forces, and Army service forces units. The buildings, with accessories and training facilities, were designed to accommodate a maximum of 45,000 troops. During the first half of 1943, an average of more than 40,000 troops were continuously in training at Fort Wood and as many as 56,000 during the peak of World War II. In addition to the five infantry divisions, other units received engineer, ordnance, quartermaster, medical, chemical, military police, armor, artillery and postal training. Another function for which additional facilities were constructed was assigned in the fall of 1943, when a 3,000-man

prisoner of war camp began operation.

By the time training was approximately 320,000 of halted on March 23, 1946. (Continued On Page 27)



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Ft. Leonard Wood

(Continued From Page 25)

ficers and men had received training at the post.

SLOWDOWN - REBIRTH

On March 31, 1946, the fort was inactivated and placed in caretaker status. During this time, it was used during the summer season of each year for training of National Guard forces.

On August 1, 1950, shortly after opening of the hostilities in Korea the fort was reactivated. The first troops arrived in September 1950, and training activities at the fort have continued since that time. Upon reactivation of the post, the 6th Armored Division (Training) operated the fort and performed a program, and in October

1955 the first group of volunteers in the six-month replacement training mission, providing basic infantry, advanced engineer and engineer specialist training.

A United States Army Reception Station was established at Fort Wood in 1953, and upon closing of other reception stations in 1954, became the only such station in the Fifth United States Army area. In 1955, when Congress passed the Reserve Forces Act, the role as an Army training center grew. Fort Wood was designated the 5th Army's training camp for the new program, and in October 1955 the first group of



Calvary training at Ft. Leonard Wood.

volunteers in the six-month active duty program for the Army reserves arrived.

Effective March 16, 1956, the Sixth Armored Division (Training) was formally inactivated and the post was redesignated the United States Army Training Center, Engineer.

PERMANENCY

In that same month, a local civilian group, which worked with United States Senators Symington and Hennings and Representative Dewey Short to have Fort Leonard Wood made permanent, achieved its goal when Secretary of the Army Wilbur M. Brucker signed the order making Fort Leonard Wood a permanent installation.

The change in status from a temporary to permanent post did not change the training mission. However, it did begin a construction boom which is ongoing. Immediate effort was expended to improve the buildings and facilities and to construct permanent structures. The initially approved project was for 33 family quarters, construction of which commenced in the fall of 1956. On February 27, 1958, groundbreaking ceremonies were conducted, commencing the first Capehart Housing Project. Family housing units were urgently needed to improve morale and esprit of married personnel who encountered difficulty in obtaining living quarters for their dependents in the surrounding communities. To date, nearly 3,000 family housing units have been constructed.

The second great step toward improving Fort Wood came with ground breaking for the first permanent troop housing in August 1958. By

the end of calendar year 1972, the majority of the training base was operating in permanent facilities while many installation staff agencies were still housed in World War II type temporary buildings. The construction of permanent facilities, a continuing project, reached a high level in 1975. Contracts for the construction or expansion of permanent facilities totaling approximately \$60 million were in progress during the year. The programmed transfer of certain additional engineer courses from Fort Belvoir, Virginia, to Fort Wood added impetus to the construction efforts.

Since 1956, construction investment here has totaled more than \$280 million. General Leonard Wood Army Community Hospital was built in 1965 and is being expanded. Ten new bachelor officer apartment buildings provide additional living quarters. The Post Exchange-Credit Union-Commissary complex is brand new; two of the three theaters on post are new modern brick structures. A new Officers Club and Education Center were completed in 1974 and in 1979 a 932-room enlisted men's barracks complex was completed.

During the Vietnam

buildup, the training load reached its peak in 1967 when approximately 123,000 enlisted men received training in basic combat and engineer skills.

Other additions to Fort Wood's training program include: Project Steadfast, which streamlined organizational relationships on July 1, 1973; the training in 1975 of U.S. Air Force, U.S. Marine Corps and Canadian forces personnel under the Interservice Training Program as construction equipment operators; and in 1976 the Combat Engineer One Station Unit Training (OSUT).

Ties To Bloodland

Strong Ties
To Bloodland

By Larry E. Wood

THERE IS A SEGMENT of Pulaski County, Missouri, which holds ambivalent but vivid memories for me. The memories are mainly of long marches in 90 degree July heat, of M-16 firing on desolate rifle ranges, and of hand grenades tossed at imaginary enemy bunkers. For my father, this same land held very different memories. His were of growing up, of going to school, and of starting a family.

It has been over 33 years now since the U.S. Army swallowed up 95,000 acres of isolated Ozarks hills in the southern part of Pulaski County for construction of the Seventh Corps Area Training Center named Fort Leonard Wood. The urgent World War II buildup spurred by Hitler's marches across Europe meant the complete wiping out of all the small communities within the boundaries of the proposed Training Center. For families residing in the area it meant evacuation from their homes. For some persons it meant they would never be able to return to the place they had called home for many years except to visit what would be left of their communities—the cemeteries where loved ones were buried.

My father was one such person. He had lived in and around Bloodland, the largest of the villages engulfed by the construction, most of his life. Bloodland was located on old Highway 17 near the center of what is now Ft. Leonard Wood. At the time of the Army takeover in the spring of 1941, my father and mother, recently married, operated one of two general stores in the town. There were also three service stations, a post office, a school, and a church in the sleepy community where horseshoe pitching was a

favorite pastime.

Today Highway 17 is routed to the west of the fort, and the old highway, which was a gravel road in 1941, is now paved. Few landmarks remain to indicate that there ever existed such a place as Bloodland, Missouri. Soldiers travelling the road which passes thru what was once Bloodland hardly notice even the most noticeable of remaining landmarks—a graveyard marked "Bloodland Cemetery." To them Bloodland represents only two or three more rifle ranges among the seemingly endless number of stark-looking training areas on the huge military reservation.

My own earliest memories of my father's boyhood stomping grounds are of visiting the Bloodland Cemetery where both of my father's parents are buried. It became an established annual ritual for former residents whose loved ones were buried in the community's cemeteries to return on Memorial Day to honor the dead and to renew old friendships and memories. Today the custom has about disappeared as many of the close relatives of those buried in the area cemeteries are themselves deceased.

As a child when I would make that annual Memorial Day journey to the Bloodland Cemetery, little did I suspect that years later I would be marching by it on old highway 17 almost daily with a field pack on my back headed for the rifle range. During Basic Training in the summer of 1969 as I would go by the cemetery, I would remember my childhood visits and I would also try to imagine the Bloodland area as my father had known it 30 years earlier. What I was actually doing at the time seemed somehow incongruous with my memories and my imagination.

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