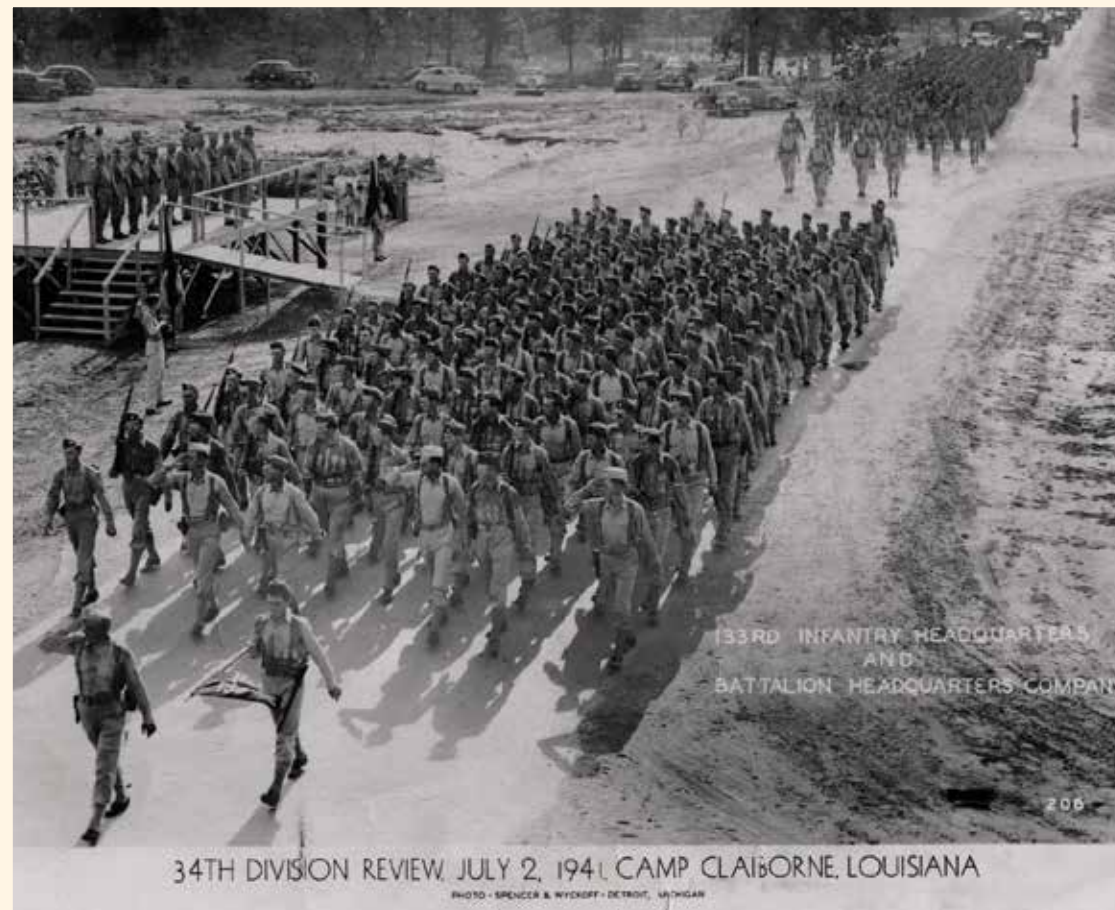




United States Department of Agriculture

# REMEMBERING HISTORIC CAMP CLAIBORNE, LOUISIANA **THE** SACRIFICE



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### PHOTO CREDITS

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**Front Cover:** 34<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division Review at Camp Claiborne, LA, July 2, 1941.

**Back Cover:** Photo collage of pictures from Camp Claiborne from 1941 to 1946.



**Forest Service**  
Research & Development  
Southern Research Station  
General Technical Report SRS-210



**August 2015**  
Southern Research Station  
200 W.T. Weaver Blvd.  
Asheville, NC 28804  
[www.srs.fs.usda.gov](http://www.srs.fs.usda.gov)

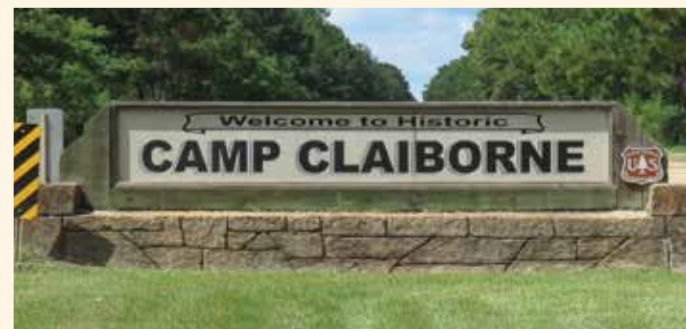
# REMEMBERING

## HISTORIC CAMP CLAIBORNE, LOUISIANA

# THE SACRIFICE



James P. Barnett Douglas J. Rhodes Lisa W. Lewis



Past and present welcome signs to historic Camp Claiborne.

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The current **Camp Claiborne** welcome sign is located at the intersection of US-165 and LA-112, a few miles north of Forest Hill, LA, on the Calcasieu Ranger District of the Kisatchie National Forest.

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Camp Claiborne in central Louisiana.

# PREFACE

**C**entral Louisiana played a vital role in preparing our military troops for war even before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor plunged the Nation into World War II on December 7, 1941. In 1939, the U.S. Army's total troop strength was 175,000 men, which included the U.S. Army Air Corps. The U.S. ranked 17<sup>th</sup> in world-wide military capability, right behind the country of Romania (Nelson 1993). The Army was largely an infantry force with supporting artillery, engineers, and cavalry, with only a few units being motorized or mechanized.

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**Named in honor of Governor  
William C.C. Claiborne, the camp served  
as a major military training  
complex for over 500,000 soldiers.**

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As hostilities heightened in Europe, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Congress, and U.S. military leaders began their program of preparedness. In 1939, the Army National Guard and Reserves were mobilized, and Selective Service Boards and draft procedures were inaugurated. Citizen sol-

diers came pouring in to fill out the ranks of the Army and by 1940, the U.S. Army troop strength had grown to 1,400,000 men (Nelson 1993). As the number of new recruits continued to increase, existing military bases were enlarged; however, there was a need for additional military camps and large tracts of land for military maneuvers.

To meet the need for additional training facilities, the U.S. Army selected a site in the Kisatchie National Forest, just north of the town of Forest Hill, LA, to construct a military training camp. In 1940, the camp was named Camp Claiborne in honor of the first Governor of Louisiana, William C.C. Claiborne. The camp became a major training complex that prepared over 500,000 soldiers for war.

Camp Claiborne was closed in 1946 after the end of World War II, and the site was returned to the Kisatchie National Forest in 1947. Although Camp Claiborne no longer exists as a military installation, it is timely on the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Camp Claiborne to remember the sacrifices of the many military men and women who trained there and went on to the major battlefields of World War II.





# **THE LOUISIANA** **LOUISIANA'S ROLE IN THE BUILDUP FOR WAR** **MANEUVERS**



Army staff meeting with the locals.

In 1939, after Germany overran Poland, the U.S. Government leaders began to gear up for America's inevitable involvement in the war. As America's relatively small and inexperienced army was rapidly expanding due to the mobilization of the Army National Guard and Reserves and newly instituted draft, the military needed an area to train soldiers and test new military tactics.

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**In preparation for the Louisiana Maneuvers,  
representatives from the Third Army  
met with local residents of central Louisiana.**

---

Army Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall believed that the growing military ranks needed a complex training exercise that would closely approximate the realities of the battlefield. General Marshall decided that most of the Army's divisions should train in the Southern United States where weather was less likely to hamper operations. Army reconnaissance teams began scouting across the South, searching for the ideal location for the war games. General Marshall wanted the following criteria: a varied terrain to test soldiers and equipment under different conditions; "thinly populated country" that was "conveniently and economically accessible" to participating divisions; and a willing population who would not demand huge reimbursements for any damage caused by the military (Kane and Keeton 2004).

Marshall called on Lieutenant General Stanley D. Embick, a veteran soldier and commander of the Third U.S. Army, to find a suitable location to host the largest concentration of military maneuvers inside the continental United States. With his aide, Major Mark Clark, Embick traveled to central Louisiana with a tattered road map as a guide. They tramped through Louisiana's backcountry noting the roads, trails, swamps, and forests. The area was described as a "40 by 90 mile sparsely settled, chigger and tick infested bayou and pitch pine section between the Sabine and Red Rivers" (Allen 1947). One of the advantages of the area, in addition to its sparse population and availability of Kisatchie National Forest lands, was the large amount of vast open tracts of land that would allow easy deployment of troops, vehicles, and tanks in large-scale maneuvers. These ideal open conditions resulted from aggressive harvesting of the old-growth longleaf pine forest by steam-powered railroad logging equipment during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Barnett 2011).

It was decided that a 3,400 square mile sparsely populated area in central Louisiana between the Sabine and Red Rivers would be the ideal location to hold the war games. The 1940 and 1941 maneuvers, call the Louisiana Maneuvers, created a flurry of interest throughout the military. The 1940 maneuvers began with 70,000 soldiers who trained and "fought" in separate exercises of 3 days each. These first maneuvers were described by Embick as "experiments" not contests (Perry 2008).



M2 light tanks mired attempting to cross a stream.

Brig. Gen. Lesley “Whitey” McNair replaced Embick, who was retiring, to conduct the 1941 maneuvers (The Big One) that would mobilize nearly 500,000 soldiers from 19 divisions in the largest peacetime exercise in American history (Gabel 1992). Smaller maneuvers were conducted in 1942 and 1943. One scheduled for 1944 was cancelled because of the planned invasion of Europe.

---

The central Louisiana landscape provided optimum testing grounds for large vehicles and tanks.

The M1 combat car was an all-machine-gun tracked vehicle which held a crew of four.

The M2 was an early version of the Stuart light tanks and was used in the early battles of the Pacific War.

---

Units involved in the Louisiana Maneuvers generally had several months to prepare—all but one. The 502<sup>nd</sup> Parachute Battalion, which had just organized in July 1941, received orders for a company to proceed to Louisiana only 16 days before the maneuvers were to begin. The Battalion was an experimental unit formed to test the doctrine and tactics of parachute assault. No one in the chain of command except headquarters in Washington, DC, knew of this type of unit in the Army. So, when 127 men made a combat jump into the area, they caused uncertainty and confusion with the public and disrupted the military maneuvers (Robertson 2014).

During the Louisiana Maneuvers near Clarence, LA, field hands were harvesting cotton as they watched aircraft passing overhead. As they were watching the airplanes, they became confused when they saw men descending from the aircraft under umbrella-like chutes.

Equally confused were the military units involved in the maneuvers. The airborne troops captured ground troops, blew up a pontoon bridge, and were fired upon by the surprised friendly army troops. The maneuvers' umpires disqualified their accomplishments because they were not within the organizational structure.

The 502<sup>nd</sup> Parachute Battalion was re-designated as the 502<sup>nd</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment on March 2, 1942, and joined the newly created 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division in August 1942.

The Louisiana Maneuvers were designed to provide vital training for hundreds of thousands of American soldiers who would go on to fight and win in the battlefields of Europe and the Pacific. Notable Army Officers such as Lieutenant Colonel Omar Bradley, Major General Walter Short, Major General Krueger, Brigadier General Adna P. Chaffee, Colonel George S. Patton, Colonel Dwight D. Eisenhower, General Joseph Stilwell, and Major Mark Clark all participated in the Louisiana Maneuvers and went on to become highly decorated military leaders in World War II.



Lieutenant Colonel Omar Bradley (left) discussing maneuver tactics with General Lesley McNair.



The 502<sup>nd</sup> Parachute Battalion leads an airborne assault during the 1941 Louisiana Maneuvers.





Third Army maneuvers, 1940. The M1 combat car (foreground) was taken out of service in 1943, with only 113 units ever produced.



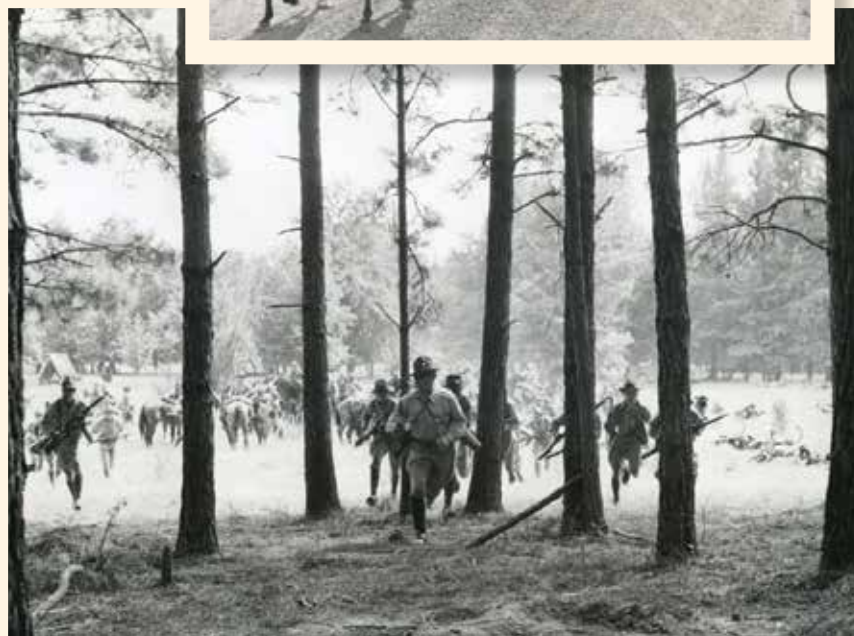
A 367-foot bridge across the Sabine River built in 5 hours by Company A, 7<sup>th</sup> Engineers.



Company A, 7<sup>th</sup> Engineers of the Red Army is constructing a bridge for an assault on the Blue Army near Burr's Ferry in 1940.



Mounted calvary moves along a dusty road.



Calvary dismounts for an assault.

The Louisiana Maneuvers did much to identify weaknesses, develop strategies, and identify leadership potential of officers. General George Marshall, Chief of Staff of the Army, stated before the end of the maneuvers, “I want the mistakes made in Louisiana, not in Europe. If it doesn’t work, find out what we need to do to make it work” (Bailey 2009). The maneuvers also allowed Army strategists to test conventional defenses with attacks from more modern armored vehicles.

The Louisiana Maneuvers helped to bring a close to the once glorious role of mounted cavalry troops as they gave way to tanks. As a result, an important framework for the effective use of tanks in battle was developed. Patton’s observation of the maneuvers resulted in his statement: “If you could take these tanks through Louisiana, you could take them through hell.” Letters sent home from troops involved in the maneuvers told stories of very trying conditions (Larsen 2014).

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**The Louisiana Maneuvers included training exercises for the cavalry, which utilized horses to transport troops, supplies, and artillery.**

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The Louisiana Maneuvers served as a vast laboratory for testing strategies and innovations. Officers were able to evaluate troop adaption to new weapons such as the Garand M-1 semi-automatic rifle and 105-mm howitzer. For the first time, C-rations were consumed by large numbers of troops, and mobile kitchens and hospitals were tested in the field where they adapted to new, faster-moving triangular infantry divisions (Kane and Keeton 2004).





The 1<sup>st</sup> Calvary Division hauls a 75-mm pack howitzer. Note the 1<sup>st</sup> Calvary patch on the ammunition caisson and the hay for the horses above it.



# **CONSTRUCTION** **OF CAMP CLAIBORNE**



Temporary and semi-permanent structures of early Camp Claiborne, circa 1940.

**A**t the close of the May 1940 Louisiana Maneuvers, Lieutenant General Stanley D. Embick, Commander of the Third Army, said “...the state [Louisiana] is ideal for military training.” Louisiana’s importance in the Nation’s military preparedness seemed to be gaining momentum (Kane and Keeten 2004). In August 1940, Army Chief of Staff, General Marshall, visited Louisiana and declared that central Louisiana provided the “finest training areas” he had ever seen. Almost immediately, speculation spread that the military might choose Louisiana for the location of much needed new training camps and maneuver areas.

Within a 50-mile radius of Alexandria, LA, four major camps, four airfields, and numerous bombing and artillery ranges were developed. Lands from the newly established Kisatchie National Forest were transferred to the Department of War to establish Camps Claiborne, Livingston, and Polk. These all received new divisions to train.

An Army division consists of approximately 10,000 to 15,000 soldiers. The U.S. Army had a goal of 100 divisions, but had to settle for 89 divisions. Of the Army's 89 divisions, 45, or over half, of the divisions trained in central Louisiana before going to war in the European, North African, or Pacific Theaters.

## BOOM TOWN

**A**s news of the need for construction workers to build Camp Claiborne spread, thousands of men descended on Forest Hill, LA, eager to find work, earning on average \$1.10 per hour. The first construction workers arrived in 1940 to find no available housing. Worker's had to improvise their own housing, usually with left over or scrap materials from the construction of the camp.

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The need for construction workers attracted thousands of men and their families to the area. But housing and work-site parking were scarce, and the workers had to improvise.

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Workers parked along present-day US-165 and were shuttled to work sites.



A family from Texas sleep in the car and cook and eat in a lean-to. Note the family pet in the foreground.

A market and a café.



Café with school bus that was used to transport workers around the camp.



Construction of temporary housing that provided room and board.



It didn't take long, however, for enterprising individuals to start building cafés, general stores, and housing to meet the needs of the workers building Camp Claiborne.

Buildings such as these sprang up almost overnight and provided much needed amenities to the thousands of men who helped construct Camp Claiborne. Land near Camp Claiborne, which was formerly of very little value and difficult to sell, now sold for \$200 per acre.

Basic amenities such as cafés provided a place for construction workers to get a hot cooked meal. Other facilities provided workers a place to take hot showers or get a haircut, while others provided laundry services.

There were also rental properties, which were nothing more than small, hastily constructed cabins which housed multiple workers.

## CAMP CLAIBORNE

In less than 1 year over 8,000 construction workers built hundreds of semi-permanent buildings and thousands of pyramidal-type tents with wooden floors and sides. In addition, they constructed many miles of roads, sewer lines, sewage treatment plants, a complete electrical grid, and natural gas lines. The total cost of construction was \$14,000,000 (Times-Picayune 1941).

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Buildings sprang up almost overnight and provided much needed amenities to construction workers and their families. Cafés were popular places for construction workers to gather in the evenings.

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Small rental properties.

Pyramidal-type tents with partial siding and wooden floors were used initially to house soldiers.



Pyramidal-type tent frames under construction.

Initially constructed to accommodate some 30,000 officers and troops, the camp was officially opened for use in January 1941. Construction was still underway when the 34<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division arrived at Camp Claiborne in March of 1941. The 34<sup>th</sup> Division was housed in pyramidal-type tents which had wooden floors with partial wooden sides.

In January of 1942, to ease a growing shortage of canvas, the Army Quartermaster General urged the conversion of all pyramidal-type tents to wooden hutments. These structures were constructed in two sizes—those for enlisted personnel housing 15 men, and smaller ones that accommodated two officers.

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**Pyramidal-type tents were used initially to house soldiers while hutments were being constructed.**

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These wooden hutments were constructed with ventilated roofs and siding, and the interiors were unfinished bare walls; screened doors and windows were added—essential for the hot, humid summers in Louisiana. It is interesting to note that all hutments at Camp Claiborne contained natural gas heaters.

In the rush to house the soldiers, hutments were hastily constructed using lumber which in many cases was not properly dried. This resulted in excessive warping and shrinkage, causing gaps in the flooring and siding of the buildings. As a result, the exterior of the buildings were covered with construction roofing felt.





Construction workers move a pre-fabricated pyramidal-type tent.



Exterior view of eight-man pyramidal-type tents.

The roof and wood siding is installed on a hutment.



Gas lines and electricity are added.

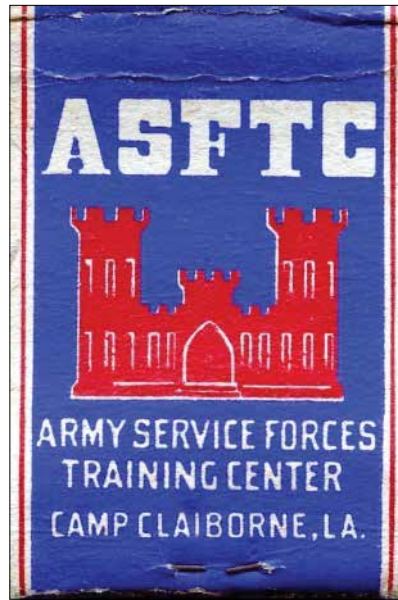


Hutments are completed with screens and roof ventilation.



Aerial view of Camp Claiborne as originally constructed, 1941.

## WEST CAMP CLAIBORNE



Match book cover from Army Service Forces Training Center.

In 1942 with the growing demand for specialized skills needed to support both infantry and armor units, the Army Service Forces Command needed an area to establish an Army Service Forces Training Center. This training center was needed to train new recruits in basic combat survival skills as well as specialized training in various engineering support specialties. These specialties included, but were not limited to: auto mechanics, heavy equipment operators, bridge building, petroleum supply, road construction, building construction, sawmill operations, and railroad engineer companies.

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West Camp Claiborne became a training center for the Army Service Forces, and supplemental housing and support facilities were built to accommodate the additional soldiers.

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In March of 1942, Brigadier General John W.N. Schulz made a visit to Camp Claiborne to determine if it would be a suitable site to house the newly formed training center. In a letter back to the Army Chief of Engineers, Schulz concluded that "...the use of West Camp Claiborne for the Organization Center is not desirable if it can be avoided...[but] there appears to be no alternative..." Within a few months of General Schulz's visit to Camp Claiborne, West Camp Claiborne was officially re-designated as the Army's first Engineer Unit Training Center. General Schulz was named as the first Commander of the Engineer Unit Training Center and remained in command of the training center until October 1943 (Coll and others 1958).

The establishment of West Camp Claiborne as the Engineer Unit Training Center added an additional 20,000 troops. This resulted in the need to build additional housing and support facilities. West Camp Claiborne comprised the largest single concentration of engineer soldiers in the Nation. West Camp Claiborne was attributed with preparing the bulk of U.S. Engineer troops for deployment overseas (Combs 1994). By the fall of 1943, West Camp Claiborne reached its peak, training of 31,000 men at one time.



Brig. Gen. John W.N. Schulz (seated next to driver) with members of his staff, 1942.



# MAJOR UNITS TRAINED AT CAMP CLAIBORNE

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**Camp Claiborne** was unique in the number and type of military units that trained at its facilities. During its brief 6-year existence from 1941 to 1946, over 500,000 soldiers trained there before being deployed to Europe, North Africa, and the Pacific. Some of the major and specialized units that trained at Camp Claiborne are presented in this section.

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Official welcome ceremony of the 34<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, March 8, 1941.  
Note soldiers marching into the review area from three directions.



## 34<sup>TH</sup> INFANTRY DIVISION

**T**he 34<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, consisting of National Guard personnel from North and South Dakota, Minnesota, and Iowa, was activated as part of the buildup for World War II on February 10, 1941. The 34<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division began to arrive at Camp Claiborne on Friday, February 20, 1941. When they arrived, Camp Claiborne was still under construction.

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Soldiers of the 34<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division began arriving at Camp Claiborne in February, 1941, and they were officially welcomed in March.

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The 168<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment of the 34<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division included machine gun crews. The picture to the right shows a crew firing a .30 caliber water-cooled machine gun. The machine gun crew is “dug in” and is using local vegetation to camouflage their position. Note they are still wearing World War I era helmets.

Soldiers in this regiment also received rifle training. Shown here, they are qualifying on the rifle range with their .30 caliber Springfield rifles. Note the troops are wearing denim dungarees which were standard issue between World War I and World War II.

Infantry Division patch. Background is an olla, a Mexican water bottle, with the skull of a bull.



First train load of soldiers to arrive, February 20, 1941.



Machine gun crew, 34<sup>th</sup> Division, 168<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment.



Qualifying on the rifle range, 34<sup>th</sup> Division, 168<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment.



10 Minnesota enlisted men of the headquarters battery 151<sup>st</sup> Field Artillery bite into the "Furlough Sugar Cookie."

Captain C.E. Herring in officer's tent.



Exterior view of an officer tent.

Troops received support beyond Camp Claiborne. On Cookie Day, the girls of Pillsbury's cooking service in Minneapolis, MN, sent to the camp a large cookie, which they named the "Furlough Sugar Cookie." Cookie Day sponsor, Chaplain Deloss I. Marken of the 34<sup>th</sup> Division, stated "It was the largest cookie in Louisiana." The cookie recipe called for 4 pounds of flour, 2 pounds of shortening, 4 pounds of sugar, and 8 eggs. It took 900 raisins to write, "To Camp Claiborne" in the frosting.

When off duty, officers and enlisted men enjoyed leisure time. Officers were housed in two-person pyramidal-type tents. Enlisted men shared larger, eight-person tents. Captain C.E. Herring, with the 168<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, 34<sup>th</sup> Division, is shown relaxing in his two-person officer's tent.

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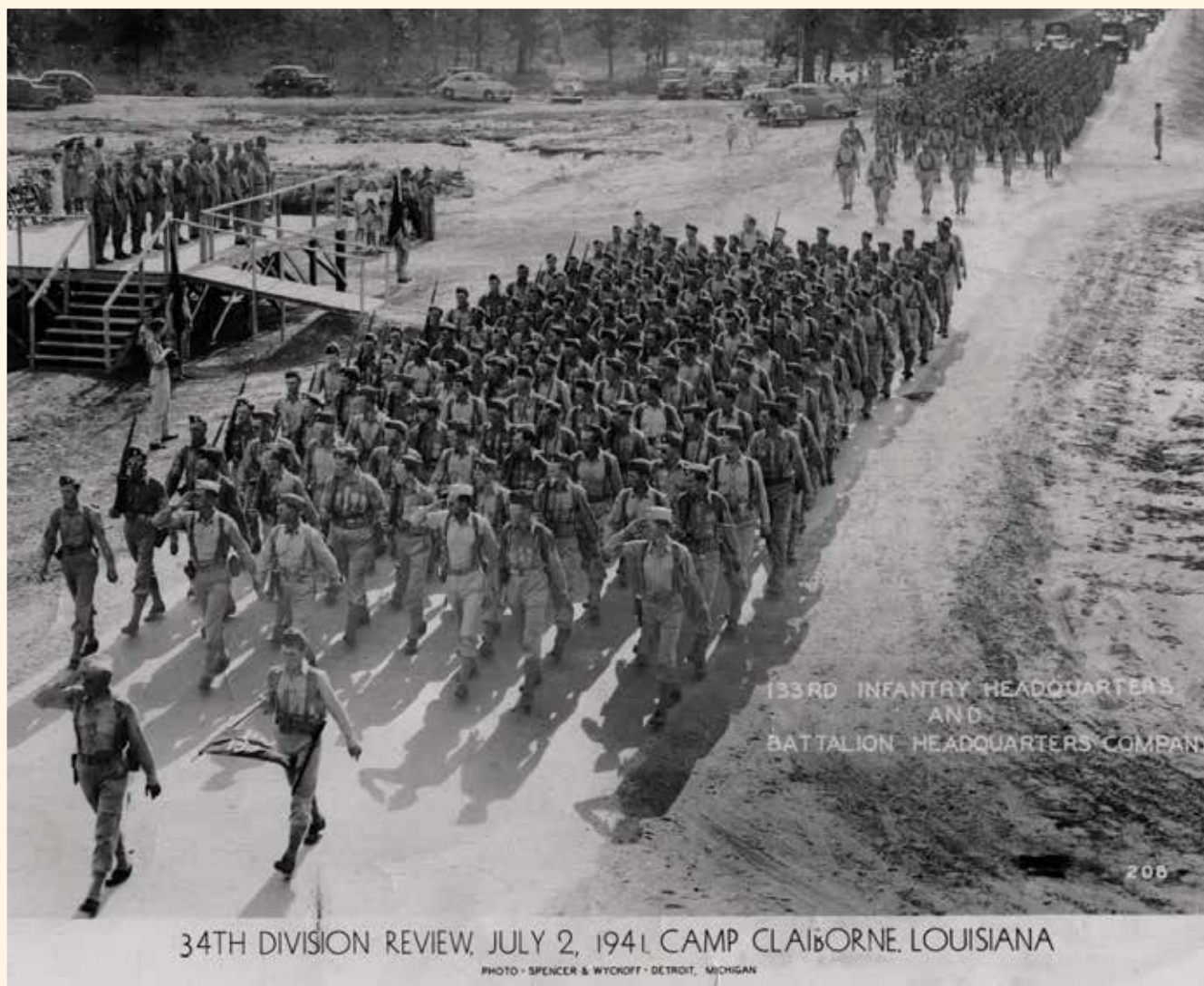
Wooden hutments replaced the pyramidal-type tents. These semi-permanent structures provided amenities such as electricity and gas heaters.

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Interior of pyramidal-type tent for enlisted men.





133<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Headquarters and Battalion Headquarters Company, July 2, 1941, in review in front of their Divisional Headquarters, Camp Claiborne.

The 34<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, known as “Red Bulls”, performed outstandingly during the maneuvers. Because of that, and its advanced state of training, the 34<sup>th</sup> Division was selected as the first American contingent to cross the Atlantic and enter what would eventually become the European Theater of Operations. On January 26, 1942, just 6 weeks after Pearl Harbor, over 4,000 personnel, primarily from the Red Bull Division, arrived at Belfast, Northern Ireland. Rigid training, including amphibious training and maneuvers, became the order of the day. The 34<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division did not remain long in Northern Ireland. In the latter part of October, the Division departed the Belfast area in route to North Africa, where it took part in Operation Torch and conducted amphibious landings in the vicinity of Algiers. The Division would go on to play a key role in major campaigns in North Africa and Italy.

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**By January 1, 1942, the 34<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division was on its way to Fort Dix, NJ, and became the first U.S. Division to be shipped overseas.**

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The U.S. Rangers trace their lineage through the 34<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. It was while training in Great Britain that

volunteers from the 34<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division provided 80 percent of the men for a newly formed 1<sup>st</sup> Ranger Battalion, and many of them participated with the British Commandos in the famous raid on Dieppe, France. The 1<sup>st</sup> Ranger Battalion was formed under the command of one of the Division’s officers, Captain William O. Darby, and they soon became famous as “Darby’s Rangers” (Jeffers 2007).

During World War II, the Red Bulls participated in six major Army campaigns in North Africa, Sicily, and Italy. The Division is credited with amassing 517 days of continuous front line combat, more than any other division in the European Theater. One or more 34<sup>th</sup> Division units were engaged in actual combat with the enemy for 611 days. Casualties in the 34<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division are considered the highest of any division in the Theater. Red Bull soldiers were awarded 10 Medals of Honor, 98 Distinguished Service Crosses, 1 Distinguished Service Medal, 1,052 Silver Stars, 116 Legion of Merit medals, 1 Distinguished Flying Cross, 1,713 Bronze Stars, 51 Soldier Medals, 34 Air Medals, with duplicate awards of 52 oak leaf clusters, and 15,000 Purple Hearts.

The Division returned to the United States on November 3, 1945, and was inactivated at Camp Patrick Henry, Virginia, that same day after nearly 5 years of arduous service.



82<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division Headquarters, 1942.

The AA  
stood for  
"The All-  
American  
Division."



## 82<sup>ND</sup> INFANTRY DIVISION

**T**he 82<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division was formally activated on August 25, 1917, at Camp Gordon, Georgia during World War I.

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The 82<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division was nicknamed the "All American" because it contained draftees from all 48 States.

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The 82<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division was re-activated on March 25, 1942, at Camp Claiborne, Louisiana. Major General Omar Bradley was named the Division Commander, and Brigadier General Matthew Ridgway was named the Assistant Commander. The Division was composed mainly of draftees from Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, and Tennessee.

To stimulate esprit de corps in the 82<sup>nd</sup>, Bradley and Ridgway stressed the Division's outstanding World War I record in every aspect of training at Camp Claiborne (Mrozek 2000).

In June of 1942, General Bradley was transferred to Camp Livingston, Louisiana, to Command the 28<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. Assistant Commander Matthew Ridgway assumed command of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division.

Sergeant Alvin C. York, 82<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division, was one of the most decorated American soldiers in World War I. He received the Medal of Honor for leading an attack on a German machine gun nest, taking 32 machine guns, killing 28 German soldiers, and capturing 132 others. This action occurred during the U.S.-led portion of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive in France. In addition to the Medal of Honor, York was presented with the French Croix de Guerre and Legion of Honor, as well as the Italian Croce de Guerra.

On May 7, 1942, Sergeant York addressed the assembled 82<sup>nd</sup> Division on the parade grounds in front of the Divisional Headquarters at Camp Claiborne. Sergeant York's speech was one of six 15-minute radio programs that were broadcast by CBS from Army camps around the country. The name of the series was titled, *What are we fighting for?*

In his address, York related his exploits in the "Great War" including the events which led to his award of the Medal of Honor (Mrozek 2000).

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Sergeant York told the troops, "...you boys are going to have to finish the job we thought we had finished for all times..." and "...freedom is not anything you can win once and for all... ."

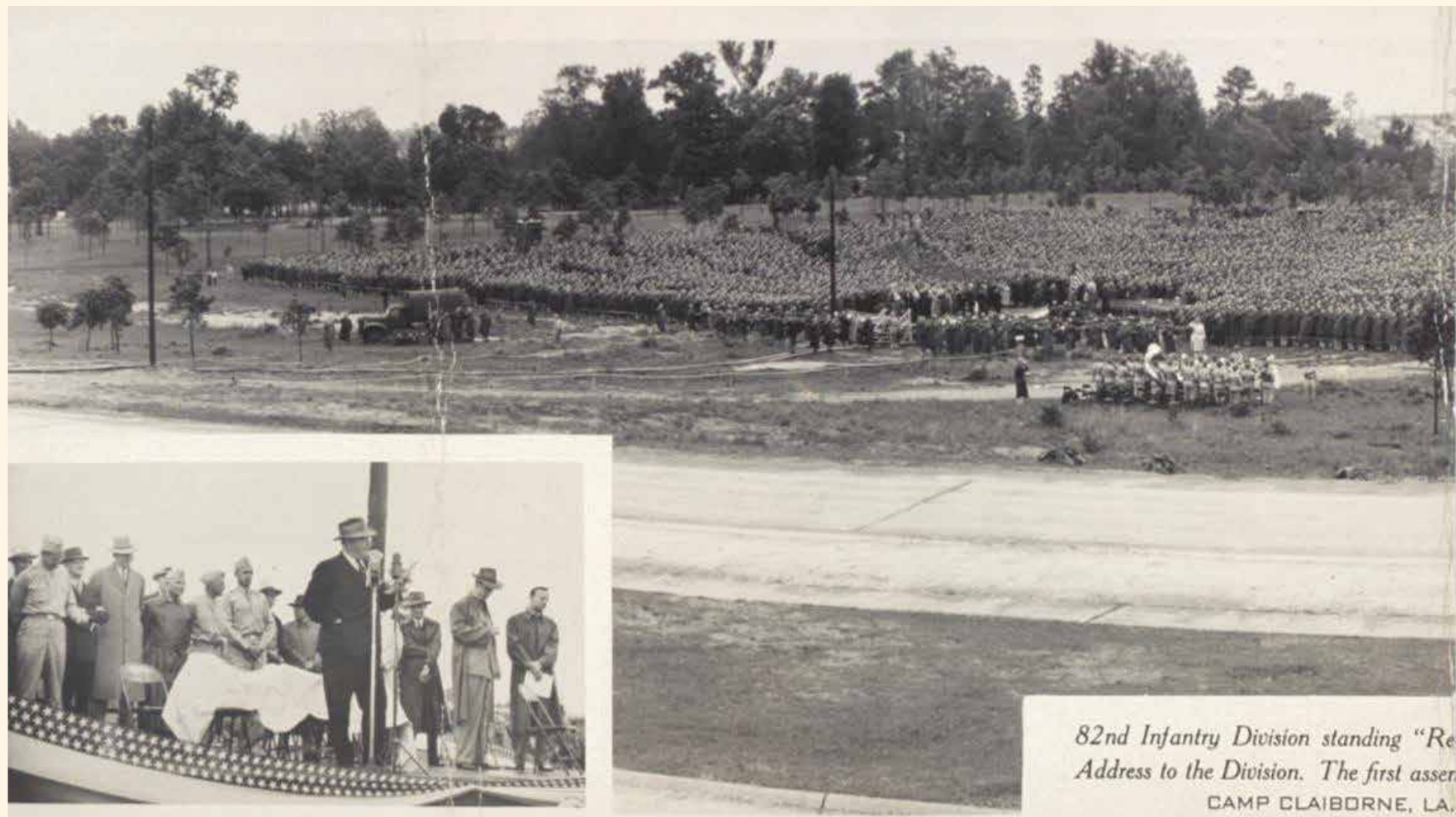
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You can hear Sergeant Alvin York's entire address to the 82<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division broadcast from Camp Claiborne at [https://archive.org/details/WhatAreWeFightingFor\\_496](https://archive.org/details/WhatAreWeFightingFor_496).



Sergeant Alvin C. York during World War I.





*82nd Infantry Division standing "Re  
Address to the Division. The first asser  
CAMP CLAIBORNE, LA.*

Sergeant Alvin C. York's address to the 82<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division, May 7, 1942, at the parade grounds in front of the Division Headquarters. Sergeant York was promoted to the rank of Major in the U.S. Army by Major General Omar Bradley that same day.





"treat" following Sgt. Alvin C. York's  
nibly of the Division since Re-activation.  
MAY 7, 1942

PHOTO - SPENCER L. WYOMING - DETROIT  
© 1942



## 82<sup>ND</sup> AIRBORNE DIVISION

**O**n August 15, 1942, 82<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division Commander, General Matthew Ridgway, informed the Division that they would become the Nation's first airborne division.

The 325<sup>th</sup> and 326<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiments became the 82<sup>nd</sup>'s Glider Infantry. After 6 months of training, the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division moved from Camp Claiborne, LA to Ft. Bragg, NC. The 325<sup>th</sup> Glider Infantry, along with the 504<sup>th</sup> and the 505<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry, rounded out the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division.

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**The 82<sup>nd</sup> Infantry was re-designated as the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division in front of their divisional headquarters at Camp Claiborne.**

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The 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division left Fort Bragg, NC, on April 20, 1943, for a journey that would take the Division to nine countries. The Division fought in Sicily, Italy, and France. The Division was relieved and then moved to England to prepare for the invasion of Holland, during Operation Market Garden.

On September 17, 1944, the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division took off from airfields in England in route to German-occupied Holland.

C-47 transports towed the Waco-CG-4A gliders. The CG-4A gliders could carry up to 13 troops and their equipment. Cargo loads could be a 1/4-ton truck (i.e., a Jeep), a 75-mm howitzer, or a 1/4-ton trailer, loaded through the upward-hinged nose section.



First and last review of 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division.

On December 16, 1944, lead elements of a German offensive broke through the American line in the Ardennes Forest of Belgium. The only reserve forces available were the 82<sup>nd</sup> and 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Divisions. The 82<sup>nd</sup> was alerted on December 17, 1944 and by the next evening was in Wevermont, Belgium, on the northern shoulder of the bulge created by the enemy attack.

On the morning of December 19, 1944, the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne took up defensive positions along the Salm River in Belgium. On the morning of December 23, 1944, a Sergeant in a U.S.-tank destroyer spotted an American soldier digging a foxhole. The soldier, Private First Class Martin of Company F, 325<sup>th</sup> Glider Infantry Regiment, looked up and asked the Sergeant, "Are you looking for a safe place?" "Yeah," answered the tanker. "Well buddy," he drawled, "just pull your tank in behind me... I'm the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne, and this is as far as the bastards are going!"

It was there along the Salm River that the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne stopped the German armored offensive into Belgium.

In the fierce fighting of the Battle of the Bulge, First Sergeant Leonard Funk of C Company, 508<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry, earned the Medal of Honor.

The Division became renowned for its role in Operation Overlord (the D-Day landings starting June 6, 1944, in Normandy, France), Operation Market Garden, and the liberation of the Netherlands.

General Matthew Ridgway (left),  
82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne, 319<sup>th</sup> Field  
Artillery Battalion.



Platoon moving through company  
area at Camp Claiborne.



325<sup>th</sup> Glider Infantry Motor Pool at Camp Claiborne.



The Waco glider which carried Thomas Kent from Baton Rouge, LA, into occupied Holland.



The 325<sup>th</sup> Glider Infantry, known as "Glider Riders," sits ready for takeoff in England.



Thomas Kent's company commander's glider after crashing into a hedgerow in Holland. The jeep carried in the glider broke loose upon impact breaking the company commander's leg.



325<sup>th</sup> Glider Infantry in the Ardennes, Belgium.

## 101<sup>ST</sup> AIRBORNE DIVISION

**O**n August 16, 1942, the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division was stood-up at Camp Claiborne with a cadre of officers and NCO's furnished from the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division. The 327<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment was reassigned from the 82<sup>nd</sup> to the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division. The 327<sup>th</sup> furnished some of the training cadre for the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division. The 501<sup>st</sup> and 502<sup>nd</sup> Parachute Infantry also joined the newly created 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division.

On August 19, 1942, Major General William C. Lee, the 101<sup>st</sup> Division's first Commander, addressed the newly formed 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division at Camp Claiborne. In his address, he stated to his troops that "...the 101<sup>st</sup> had no history, but had a rendezvous with destiny!" His pronouncement was certainly correct. The 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne played a major role in the invasion at Normandy.

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The 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne became known as the "Screaming Eagles," taking the name from "Old Abe," the American eagle mascot of the Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry in the Civil War.

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October 15, 1942, the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division was reassigned to Fort Bragg, NC, to complete their airborne training.

Unfortunately, Major General Lee would not lead the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division in combat. On February 5, 1944, General Lee, who had championed the airborne cause from the beginning, suffered a heart attack while in England. He was



101<sup>st</sup>  
Airborne  
Division  
patch.



Major General William C. Lee, reviewing the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne on August 19, 1942.





First and last review of 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division at Camp Claiborne. Joe Phillips, pictured 5<sup>th</sup> from the left on the front row, was a native of Alexandria, LA.

relieved of his command and returned to the United States. Brigadier General Maxwell D. Taylor, former Commander of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division Artillery, assumed command of the 101<sup>st</sup> on March 14, 1944.

After the Normandy invasion, the Germans counter-attacked in what became known as the Battle of the Bulge. A small force of American soldiers—including the now famed 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, tank destroyer crews, engineers, and artillerymen—were completely surrounded by German armies in the Belgian town of Bastogne. Taking the town was imperative to Hitler's desperate plan to drive back the Allies and turn the tide of the war. The final attack would come on Christmas day. The German commander demanded that the Americans surrender. General Anthony McAuliffe's (acting Commander of the 101<sup>st</sup>) response of "NUTS" and his Christmas letter to his troops inspired a determined response to defend Bastogne (Elstob 1968).

As the outnumbered, undersupplied Americans gathered in church for services, or shivered in their snow-covered foxholes on the fringes of the front lines, freshly reinforced German forces attacked. The fighting was fierce where the 327<sup>th</sup> Glider Infantry Regiment, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne, held two-thirds of the perimeter in the defense of Bastogne. Outnumbered 15 to 1, they held their ground during intense fighting. These and Engineering General Service Regiments 332<sup>nd</sup> and 346<sup>th</sup>, who were also trained at Camp Claiborne, were involved in the Battle of the Bulge and suffered heavy losses of men in the effort.

For the heroic defense of Bastogne, the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division was awarded the Distinguished Unit Citation, the first ever to be awarded to an entire Division.



Acting Commander of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division during the Battle of the Bulge, Brigadier General McAuliffe (left) and Lieutenant Colonel Kinnard (right). Commander of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 501<sup>st</sup> Parachute Infantry in Bastogne, Belgium.



Company K, 327<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment while still assigned to the 82<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division at Camp Claiborne.





## 84<sup>TH</sup> INFANTRY DIVISION

84<sup>th</sup> Division patch  
"The Railsplitters."



Private Henry A.  
Kissinger, circa 1943.



Members of the 309<sup>th</sup> Engineer, Combat Battalion  
prepare to cross the Roer River in Germany.

The 84<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division trained at Camp Claiborne for approximately 1 year. Its nickname, "Railsplitters," was derived from the divisional insignia, an ax splitting a rail. This design was created in World War I. Known as the "Lincoln" Division, this unit represented the States that supplied most of the Division's soldiers: Illinois, Indiana, and Kentucky.

The unit was mobilized and received basic training beginning in January 1943, at Camp Howze in north Texas. The 84<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division was moved to Camp Claiborne in September 1943 to participate in the Louisiana Maneuvers. While at Camp Claiborne, the 84<sup>th</sup> trained extensively to enhance the effectiveness of platoon and squad leaders. To avoid losses in future amphibious operations, hundreds of Railsplitters learned to swim in Valentine Lake, which is located on the Kisatchie National Forest near Gardner, LA. The 84<sup>th</sup> continued to train at Camp Claiborne until they were transferred to England in September 1944.

Henry A. Kissinger, who later became Secretary of State and gained worldwide recognition, was assigned to the 84<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division while at Camp Claiborne. Kissinger underwent basic training at Camp Croft in Spartanburg, SC, and he became a naturalized U.S. citizen on June 19, 1943. He was then reassigned to the 84<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division.

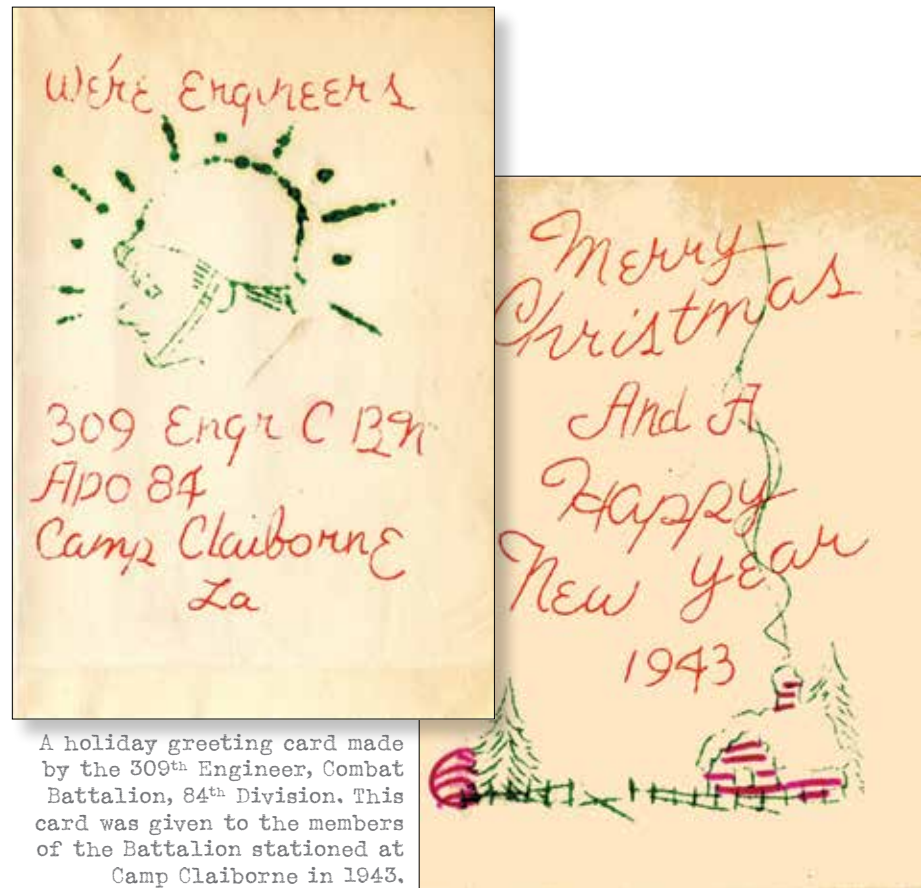
Because of Kissinger's fluency in German, he was assigned to the military intelligence section of the Division. Kissinger saw combat with the Division and volunteered for hazardous intelligence duties during the Battle of the Bulge. During the American advance into Germany, Kissinger, only a private, assisted in the administration of the city of Krefeld.



Kissinger was then reassigned to the Counter Intelligence Corps, with the rank of Sergeant. He was given charge of a team in Hannover assigned to track down Gestapo officers and other saboteurs; for this assignment, he was awarded the Bronze Star. This experience gave Kissinger recognition for his organizational and administrative skills. After the war, he attended Harvard University under the G.I. Bill, and upon graduation he entered a long career as an educator and statesman.

The 84<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division landed on Omaha Beach in Normandy in early November 1944, 5 months after D-Day. From France, the unit moved quickly into the Netherlands in preparation for an offensive into Germany. However, during the Battle of the Bulge, the 84<sup>th</sup> was diverted into Belgium to help stop the German offensive. Rarely had a division been moved from the States to the western front as quickly as the 84<sup>th</sup>. As an example of its capability, the Division battled from the Roer to the Rhine in 10 days—an advance of nearly 50 miles. During this time, the Railsplitters had accounted for more than 9,000 Germans killed, wounded, or captured (Bolling 1945).

In March 1945, the 84<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division moved into Germany, capturing the city of Hannover, and eventually made its way to the Elbe River where it made contact with the Soviet armed forces in early May 1945. During their move into Germany, the 84<sup>th</sup> liberated a number of German concentration camps. The conditions in these camps were horrific, and the gruesome conditions had a significant and long-lasting effect on many of the unit's soldiers.



A holiday greeting card made by the 309<sup>th</sup> Engineer, Combat Battalion, 84<sup>th</sup> Division. This card was given to the members of the Battalion stationed at Camp Claiborne in 1943.

103<sup>rd</sup> Infantry soldiers at Camp Claiborne training with their half-track armored vehicle.



103<sup>rd</sup> Infantry soldiers bivouacking in a two-man "pup tent" during the 1943 Louisiana Maneuvers.

## 103<sup>RD</sup> INFANTRY DIVISION

**T**he 103<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division was activated at Camp Claiborne on November 15, 1942. The 103<sup>rd</sup> was composed of National Guard units from New Mexico, Arizona, and Colorado. The "Cactus Division" adopted the green Saguaro cactus growing on blue earth with a yellow-sky background.

A month before the formal activation, key staff began assembling at Camp Claiborne to begin the arduous task of organizing the 103<sup>rd</sup> Division for the job that lay ahead. The 103<sup>rd</sup> Division began to receive filler personnel on December 4, 1942 when officers and enlisted men were shipped to Camp Claiborne from the 4<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup> Service Command induction centers. A total of 14,654 personnel joined the 103<sup>rd</sup> from these commands.

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**The 103<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division conducted its initial basic training at Camp Claiborne, which culminated with the 1943 Louisiana Maneuvers.**

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On November 15, 1943, one year after activation, the 103<sup>rd</sup> was reassigned to Camp Howze, TX, to continue their training.

The 103<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division arrived at Marseilles, France on October 20, 1944 where they joined the Seventh Army. On November 11, 1944, the 103<sup>rd</sup>, as part of the VI Corps of the Seventh Army, launched its attack through the Vosges Mountains. After crossing the Meurthe River and taking a key hill near St. Die, Company I of the 411<sup>th</sup> staked a claim to being the first Seventh Army unit to reach German soil when it fought its way into Wissenbourg.

On January 25 and 26, 1945, the Cactusmen defeated the Germans at Schillersdorf. The 103<sup>rd</sup> Division soon crossed the Palatinate border at the same spot the Seventh Army had occupied 3 months earlier, before the German counteroffensive had forced it to withdraw.

After its junction with the Fifth Army, the 103<sup>rd</sup> moved to Innsbruck and went on guard duty there. The 103<sup>rd</sup> Division returned to the States in September 1945, and was then deactivated.



103<sup>rd</sup> Division  
patch "Cactus  
Division."



Soldier of the 103<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division mans his position in front of a log dugout near the woods of Groshilederstroff, France, near Saarbrücken.



Soldiers of the 103<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division man a .30 caliber machine gun near Niefem, France, on March 15, 1945.

## 761<sup>ST</sup> TANK BATTALION

**T**he 761<sup>st</sup> Tank Battalion was an independent tank Battalion made up primarily of African-American soldiers, who by Federal law were not permitted to serve alongside white troops. (The military did not officially desegregate the Army until after World War II.)

The 761<sup>st</sup> was activated at Camp Claiborne on April 1, 1942. The unit began training in M5 Stuart light tanks. They learned how to maneuver, mount, dismount, and maintain the vehicle's 37-mm main gun and .30 caliber machine guns. The 761<sup>st</sup> served under the command of the 5<sup>th</sup> Tank Group. The soldiers were known as "Black Panthers" after their distinctive unit insignia, and their motto was, "Come Out Fighting."

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**The 761<sup>st</sup> Tank Battalion became one of the most highly trained units, a quality that did not go unrecognized by Gen. George S. Patton.**

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The African-American troops were housed in the southern part of Camp Claiborne where they had all the same amenities as the other soldiers, such as theaters, chapels, Post Exchange, service club, and library. However, they were not allowed to move freely around the camp.

The unit was reassigned to Fort Hood, TX, for final training where they upgraded to M4 Sherman medium tanks. The men of the unit trained for almost 2 years, conscious of the fact that white units were being sent overseas with lesser amounts of training.



Members of the 761<sup>st</sup> Tank Battalion cleaning their weapons at Camp Claiborne, circa 1942.





In 1944, General George S. Patton, who was familiar with the unit, requested the 761<sup>st</sup> to be assigned to his command. As they were about to enter combat in France on October 10, 1944, Patton made a speech to the men of the 761<sup>st</sup> where he stated,

*Men, you are the first black tankers to ever fight in the American Army. I would never have asked for you if you weren't good. I have nothing but the best in my Army. Everyone has their eyes on you and is expecting great things from you.*

The 761<sup>st</sup> fought through France, often at the leading edge of the advance. The unit endured 183 days of continuous operational involvement. In December 1944, the Battalion was rushed to the aid of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division at Bastogne. After the Battle of the Bulge, the unit opened the way for the 4<sup>th</sup> Armored Division to enter into Germany during an action that breached the Siegfried Line.

In the final days of the war in Europe, the 761<sup>st</sup> was one of the first American units to reach the Steyr River in Austria, and at the Enns River they met with Ukrainians of the Soviet Army. The 761<sup>st</sup> became one of the most famous units of African-American soldiers serving during World War II.

Over the course of 183 days in the front lines, the 761<sup>st</sup> helped liberate more than 30 towns under Nazi control, 4 airfields, 3 ammunition-supply dumps, 461 wheeled vehicles, 34 tanks, 113 large guns, and a radio station. Collectively, they were awarded 11 Silver Stars, 70 Bronze Stars, 250 Purple Hearts, and a Medal of Honor (Sasser 2004).



A tank with the 761<sup>st</sup> crossing the Seille River in France.





The 8<sup>th</sup> Service Command unit patch.



Company B, 346<sup>th</sup> Engineers in review, July 4, 1942.

## ENGINEER UNIT TRAINING CENTER

**T**he Engineer Unit Training Center (EUTC) was established at Camp Claiborne on June 29, 1942, as part of the 8<sup>th</sup> Service Command. The mission of the EUTC was to train men in engineering-related skills needed to support combat troops. The EUTC replaced the Army Service Forces Training Center at Camp Claiborne and provided basic military training in addition to specialized combat engineering skills needed for their assignment in combat units (Coll and others 1958).

The 8<sup>th</sup> Service Command insignia is a white star composed of two squares. The white design was selected because it represented all of the Army's arms and services, and the eight-pointed geometric design represented the Command's numeric designation.

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**The molding of a civilian into a military engineer was the task of the EUTC (Combs 1944).**

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Combat engineer battalions were capable of performing most engineering tasks (including demolitions, obstacle emplacement, fortification, and light bridge building) for the Division. These battalions tended to have high esprit de corps; they rightly considered themselves to be elite specialists (Anderson 2000). They could also act as infantry and did so frequently. In the Battle of the Budge, a handful of engineer battalions proved to be a vital asset to the beleaguered American Army.

Engineer general service regiments and battalions performed construction, repair, and maintenance duties of all kinds behind the front lines. The EUTC also had special service regiments which included a variety of specialties, such as mechanics, carpenters, construction foremen, welders, quarrymen, sawmill operators, and truck drivers.

The EUTC engineers at Camp Claiborne were trained in the use of dump trucks, bulldozers, draglines, and other equipment. Four companies of truck drivers at a time worked on the Claiborne-Polk Military Railroad. Other regiments laid railroad track, built roads and bridges, and constructed buildings with wash rooms and septic systems at Camp Claiborne.



EUTC survey crew training, circa 1943.



Engineers working on the Claiborne-Polk Railroad. Notice the 8<sup>th</sup> Service command insignia on the door of the truck.



Engineer Unit matchbook cover.

## 91<sup>ST</sup> AND 93<sup>RD</sup> ENGINEER GENERAL SERVICE REGIMENTS

General Service Regiment track-laying crew working on the Claiborne-Polk Railroad.



EUTC engineers constructing a wooden bridge on the Claiborne-Polk Railroad.

**T**he 91<sup>st</sup> and 93<sup>rd</sup> Engineer Battalions were formed primarily with African-American personnel and in 1941, were attached to Camp Claiborne for training. There, the 91<sup>st</sup> and 93<sup>rd</sup> Engineer General Service Regiments were assigned to assist in the construction of the Claiborne-Polk Military Railroad (CPMR). The 711<sup>th</sup> Railroad Operating Battalion began construction on the CPMR in October 1941.

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**The 91<sup>st</sup> and 93<sup>rd</sup> Engineer Battalions were assigned to assist the 711<sup>th</sup> with railroad construction.**

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Although the railroad was only 50 miles in length, the road bed consisted of a wide variety of conditions, including gumbo soil, logs, quick sand, and swamp muck, making construction difficult.

Upon completion of the CPMR project, the 91<sup>st</sup> Battalion was shipped overseas to support combat troops, and they made significant contributions to the war effort. They arrived in Brisbane, Australia, in April 1942, and worked on airfields on several bases that would support American forces. The regiment received a Presidential Unit Citation for its service in Papua, New Guinea, from July 23, 1942, to January 23, 1943.

The unit became the only major United States engineer unit in the Port Moresby area of New Guinea, and was charged with a full range of base maintenance functions. They were shipped to Biak, Indonesia, in October 1944, and then moved to the Philippines in August 1945.



The 91<sup>st</sup> received a Meritorious Unit Commendation for the time it served in Indonesia. It served proudly and effectively in supporting combat forces in major battles in the New Guinea and Philippines campaigns.

The 93<sup>rd</sup> Engineer Battalion left Camp Claiborne and was re-assigned to assist with construction at Camp Livingston, LA. Once construction projects were finished at Camp Livingston, the 93<sup>rd</sup> was assigned as 1 of 7 engineer regiments responsible for constructing the Alaska-Canadian Highway (ALCAN) across Canada to connect the lower 48 States with Alaska.

The 93<sup>rd</sup> Engineer Battalion along with other engineer battalions worked in freezing temperatures to construct the highway across the Canadian wilderness. Each battalion working on the ALCAN Highway was assigned a strip of land 350 miles wide, with the goal of completing their work before winter set in (Rogers 2014).

During the spring and summer months, daylight could last up to 20 hours with twilight for the remaining 4 hours. This allowed construction crews to work three 8-hour shifts, around-the-clock. The 93<sup>rd</sup> Engineer Battalion is still an active unit in the Army and is currently stationed at Fort Polk, LA.

Footings for an overpass being built for the Claiborne-Polk Railroad over the Red River and Gulf Railroad.



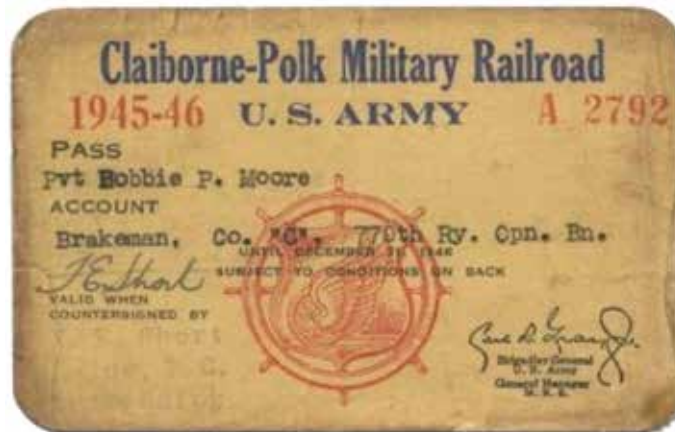
Logs being placed on top of permafrost using a corduroy technique along the ALCAN Highway.



Wooden bridge being constructed out of logs on the ALCAN Highway.



## 711<sup>TH</sup> AND RELATED ENGINEER RAILWAY OPERATING BATTALIONS



Claiborne-Polk Military Railroad pass carried by Company "C" 770<sup>th</sup> Railway Operating Battalion.

One of the lessons of the 1941 Louisiana Maneuvers was that the Army would have to learn to supply itself in the field and that use of railroads would be critical. To provide training in operating railroads, negotiations began for the purchase of a railroad. An agreement with the Red River and Gulf Railroad, owned by the Crowell Lumber Company at Long Leaf, LA, was reached, but the purchase fell through.

The Army decided instead to construct the Claiborne-Polk Military Railway (CPMR) using portions of the abandoned Hillyer-Deutsch-Edwards Lumber Company logging railroad. This would connect the Missouri Pacific Railroad near Camp Claiborne with the Kansas City Southern Railroad at Camp Polk near Leesville, LA. The 50-mile long railroad was used to transport troops and supplies between the camps; it was also used to simulate wartime damage to the railroad and carry out repairs needed to restore railroad operations.

The 711<sup>th</sup> Engineer Railway Operating Battalion—the first of its kind in the Army—was originally scheduled for activation at Camp Claiborne; however, facilities to house the battalion were still under construction. Instead, the 711<sup>th</sup> was activated in June 1941 at Fort Belvoir, VA. The 711<sup>th</sup> was then re-assigned to Camp Claiborne in August 1941 with the assignment to construct and operate the Claiborne-Polk Military Railroad.

The construction of the railroad was difficult due to the numerous creek crossings which required 25 wooden trestles to be built. To supplement the 711<sup>th</sup> troops, other units were assigned, primarily the 91<sup>st</sup> and 93<sup>rd</sup> Engineer Battalions sta-



Map showing location of the Claiborne-Polk Military Railroad.



The Golden Spike ceremony, July 11, 1942.

tioned at Camp Claiborne. These units helped to build bridges and stabilize the road bed (Fowler 1944).

The track of the CPMR, referred to as the “Crime and Punishment Railroad” by the railroaders, was essentially complete by July 1942 when a “golden spike” was driven in celebration of its completion. A number of other engineer railway operating battalions came to Camp Claiborne for training using the CPMR.

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**The Commanders of Camp Claiborne and Camp Polk shook hands at the Golden Spike ceremony, marking the completion of the 50-mile military railroad that connected the two camps.**

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The 711<sup>th</sup>, however, was unlike the units that followed. The 711<sup>th</sup> Battalion was made up entirely of Army troops, while most other railroad battalions were sponsored by American railroad companies. These battalions were filled by civilian railroad employees who were incorporated into the Military Railway Service and served overseas.

In December, 1942, the 711<sup>th</sup> was shipped to Iran to operate the Iranian State Railway, an important supply route by which the United States and Britain were providing the Soviet Union with arms and other supplies to combat the German advance in Eastern Europe. The 711<sup>th</sup> had responsibility for 258 miles of the track that ran for nearly 700 miles.

Operating the Iranian State Railway, the Military Railway Service handled about 4 million tons of freight and special passenger cars carrying 16,000 Iranian military personnel, 14,000 Polish war refugees, 40,000 British troops, and 15,000 Russian ex-prisoners of war (Newell 2013).



Claiborne Railroad Depot and Dispatch Station.



Interior of the Dispatch Station.



Railroad dispatcher.



Telegraph Operators at the Claiborne Dispatch Station.



View of Claiborne rail-yard looking west.



Claiborne receives a new diesel-electric engine used to move railcars around the yard.

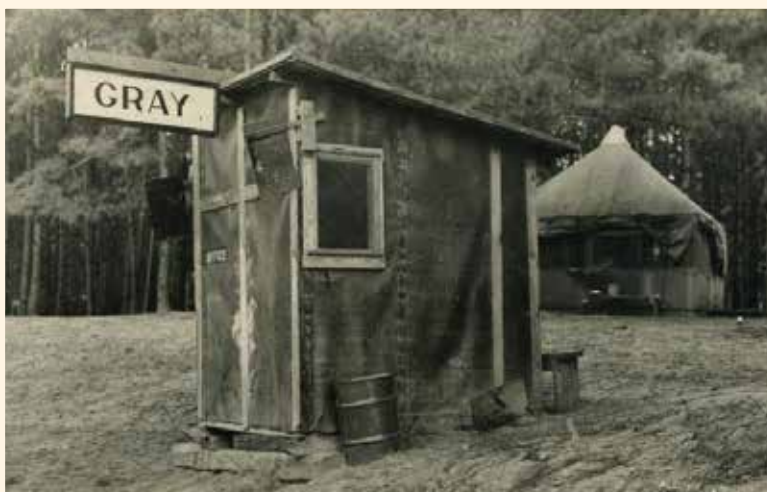


Loaded train departing for Camp Polk.

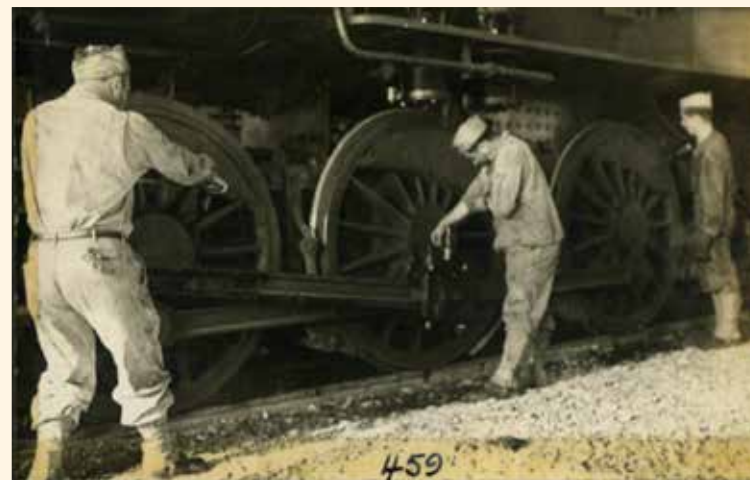


Camp Claiborne rail-yard. Note repair crew working on rails.

Maintenance crew servicing locomotive.



Gray Way-Station along the Claiborne-Polk Military Railroad located south of present day Hineston, LA.



Engine maintenance crew.

## 796<sup>TH</sup> ENGINEER FORESTRY BATTALION

Typical portable sawmill used by Engineer Forestry Battalions.



Log truck used by Engineer Forestry Battalions.

The goal of the Army's Engineer Forestry Battalion in World War II was to produce lumber and timber for the Army fighting in combat. The forestry companies duplicated civilian lumber camps and sawmills. The 796<sup>th</sup> Engineer Forestry Battalion was activated in June 1943, at Camp Claiborne. Each forestry company was an independent unit organized in three platoons: (1) the logging platoon, which made stumpage estimates, felled timber, and moved the logs to the mill; (2) the sawmilling platoon, which milled the logs into timber and sorted and stockpiled lumber; and (3) the headquarters group, which provided administration, mess, and supplies (Coll and others 1958). Each unit received 5 weeks of basic military training, followed by 8 weeks of tactical and technical work, and then 13 weeks of forestry field work.

Although other national forest areas offered more mature timber than the Kisatchie National Forest, the engineers wanted to train the forestry companies at Camp Claiborne because of the extensive basic military and tactical training facilities available there. The engineers found what they considered an adequate stand of timber near the camp. The forestry companies became almost too competent, and additional sources of timber stands had to be located for forestry field work.

From February 1943 to June 1944, 15 forestry companies—or about 2,250 men—received complete or partial training in basic and technical subjects at Camp Claiborne. All of these units shipped overseas by December 1944. As many as 20 companies could have been employed. To make



up this shortfall, other general service regiments, civilians, and prisoners of war were enlisted for the forestry companies (Coll and others 1958).

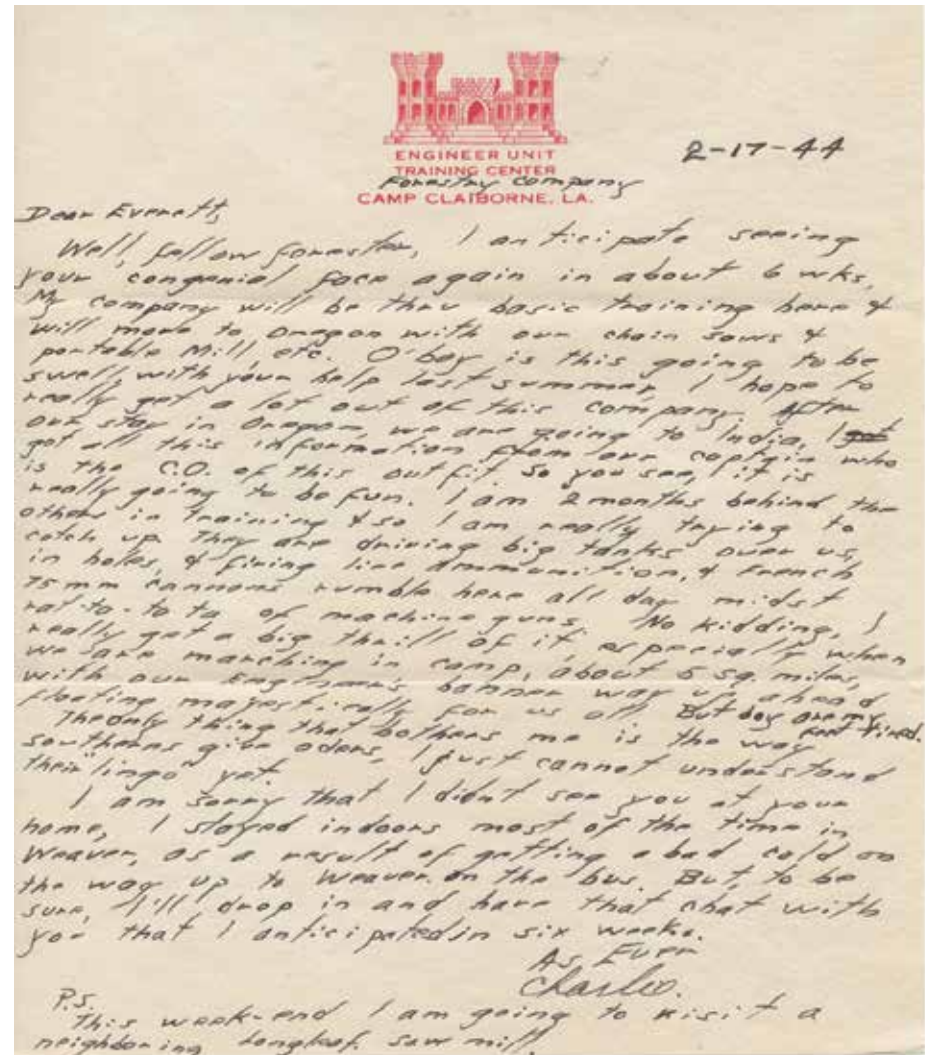
Most of the companies of the 796<sup>th</sup> Engineer Forestry Battalion that received their training at Camp Claiborne saw service in France, Belgium, and Germany. At least one of the battalion's companies, the 1389<sup>th</sup>, was involved in the Battle of the Bulge in Belgium—some of the unit's men were killed and buried in the American cemetery developed there following the war.

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Forestry batalion engineers worked directly  
with the Forest Service, as well as private  
logging companies and sawmills.

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A number of companies were assigned to the 796<sup>th</sup> Engineer Forestry Battalion. These included the 1388<sup>th</sup>, which helped build the infamous Ledo Road into Burma, 1389<sup>th</sup>, 1390<sup>th</sup>, 1391<sup>th</sup>, and 1392<sup>nd</sup> companies. While Company 1388 served in the India-Burma campaigns, the others served in the European Theater.



ENGINEER UNIT  
TRAINING CENTER  
Forestry Company  
CAMP CLAIBORNE, LA.

2-17-44

Dear Everett,

Well, fellow forester, I anticipate seeing your congenial face again in about 6 wks. My company will be thru basic training here & will move to Oregon with our chain saws & portable Mill, etc. O boy is this going to be swell with you help last summer, I hope to really get a lot out of this company. After our stay in Oregon, we are going to India, I got all this information from our captain who is the C.O. of this outfit. So you see, it is really going to be fun. I am 2 months behind the others in training & so I am really trying to catch up. They are driving big tanks over us in holes & firing live ammunition, & trench 75mm cannons rumble here all day amidst rat-to-to to of machine guns. No kidding, I really got a big thrill of it especially when we are marching in camp, about 5 sq. miles, floating majestically for us all. But boy are the southern girls adeas, I just cannot understand their lingo yet.

I am sorry that I didnt see you at your home, I stayed indoors most of the time in Weaver, as a result of getting a bad cold on the way up to Weaver on the bus. But to be sure, I'll drop in and have that chat with you that I anticipated in six weeks.

As Ever  
Charlie.

P.S. This week-end I am going to visit a neighboring Longleaf saw mill.

Letter from PVT C.A. Mitchell of the 1389<sup>th</sup> Engineer Forestry Company to a Forest Service officer with notice of an impending visit to a local sawmill. Mitchell most likely visited the Crowell Sawmill in Longleaf, LA, which now houses the Southern Forest Heritage Museum.



2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. William  
Buford's range  
score card on  
the M1 rifle.

**\*SCORE CARD**

Course B Rifle model M-1

Name William T. Buford

Serial number 0-1112057 Grade, company, and regiment 2nd Lt. Co. D, 1312th E.S. Regt.

**SLOW FIRE**

Target 80 200 YARDS Total 19

Order 2 Kneel 3 3 4 3 3 3

Date 10-17-43 Stand 45 2 3 3 3 3

Position Prt. St. 39

(Signature of scorer) William T. Buford (Signature of officer)

Target 80 300 YARDS Total 28

Order 1 4 4 4 4 4 4

Date 10-17-43 4 4 4 4 4 4

Position Prt. St. 47

(Signature of scorer) William T. Buford (Signature of officer)

Target 9 500 YARDS Total

Order

Date 10-17-43

Position

(Signature of scorer) (Signature of officer)

**POSITION RAPID FIRE**

Target 80 200 YARDS Total 58

Order 1 5 4 3 2 0

Date 10-17-43 0 7

Position Prt. St.

(Signature of scorer) William T. Buford (Signature of officer)

Target 80 300 YARDS Total 37

Order 1 5 4 3 2 0

Date 10-17-43 4 2 3

Position Prt. St.

(Signature of scorer) William T. Buford (Signature of officer)

**RUSH AND RAPID FIRE**

Target 200 YARDS Total

Order 5 4 3 2 0

Date

Position

(Signature of scorer) (Signature of officer)

Target 200 YARDS Total

Order 5 4 3 2 0

Date

Position

(Signature of scorer) (Signature of officer)

Target 300 YARDS Total

Order 5 4 3 2 0

Date

Position

(Signature of scorer) (Signature of officer)

Qualification: GRAND AGGREGATE 161

Date 10-17-43 W. D. Bailey

Commanding Co. D, 1312th E.S. Regt.

\*This form will be used for the record of scores kept at firing point for all courses, modifying the form to show the course, firing position, time, and the range fired.  
W. D. A. G. O. Form No. 83  
June 1, 1938

## 1312<sup>TH</sup> ENGINEER GENERAL SERVICE REGIMENT (SAWMILL)

The 1312<sup>th</sup> Engineer General Service Regiment was an African-American sawmill unit that trained at Camp Claiborne before being sent to the South Pacific.

2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant William Buford was assigned to the 1312<sup>th</sup> Engineer General Service Regiment, Company D (Sawmill). Buford's rifle qualification range score from Camp Claiborne indicated that he qualified with his M1 rifle. On December 21, 1944, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Buford received a Memorandum of Receipt for his company's sawmill equipment before being shipped overseas.

**MEMORANDUM OF RECEIPT**

Serial No. \_\_\_\_\_ Ser. No. \_\_\_\_\_

Regt. No. \_\_\_\_\_ No. of sheets \_\_\_\_\_

Sheet No. \_\_\_\_\_

Battalion

HEADQUARTERS 22nd Battalion Headquarters DATE 31 December 1944

UNIT 1312th Engr. G.S. Regt. Sawmill OFFICER \_\_\_\_\_

DESTINATION \_\_\_\_\_ RE. No. \_\_\_\_\_

REMARKS \_\_\_\_\_

QTY.	DESCRIPTION	UNIT	REMARKS
1 Bush	Duster, Caterpillar, D-8 w/blade Ser. No. 8-B-1833-22 USA 923001		
1 Bush	Duster, Caterpillar, M1. D-8 w/blade, hyd. Ser. No. 8B879		
1 Bush	Duster, International, M-9 w/winch, Ser. No. DGB-102424 Winch No. A169486 USA925623		
1 Bush	Duster, crawler, Caterpillar D-7 w/blade Ser. No. 7A1006		
1 Bush	Sawmill, Corinth, E/L-90A1-B-15 power units L-90 Ser. No. 4081-A, B-15 #3-74477		
1 Bush	Winch, double drum, Assy S.H.C.		

The above listed items drawn from Ordnance Service Center by 1312th Engr. G.S. Regt.

Received the above articles in apparent good order and condition (except as noted) this date \_\_\_\_\_

(Signature)

2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. William  
Buford's receipt  
for sawmill  
equipment.



Caterpillar and International crawler tractors similar to those signed for by 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. William Buford at Camp Claiborne.

## 20<sup>TH</sup> GENERAL HOSPITAL



The first nurses assigned to Camp Claiborne were inducted at Camp Beauregard on January 21, 1941.



In 1940, the U.S. Surgeon General called upon the University of Pennsylvania to organize an overseas military hospital along the lines of one organized by the University in France during World War I. In response, a University medical faculty committee organized the 20<sup>th</sup> General Hospital, with a staff consisting of 59 medical, surgical, laboratory and dental specialists; 120 nurses; and approximately 600 enlisted men who had ties with the University. The newly formed staff began preparations for mobilization.

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The unit's nurses worked mornings in the hospital, drilled and studied military subjects in the afternoons, and socialized in the evenings (Sarnecky 2014).

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The unit entered the military service on May 15, 1942, and departed Philadelphia for Camp Claiborne. Once at Camp Claiborne, the hospital group began military and medical training at Claiborne's large hospital complex. The group stayed at Claiborne for nearly 8 months being trained for field service.



Nurses of the 20<sup>th</sup> General Hospital marching in formation at Camp Claiborne.





Nurses of 20<sup>th</sup> General Hospital at Camp Claiborne, April 1942.

Nurse in front of the  
Hospital Headquarters. Note  
gas mask over her shoulder.





Hallways connecting adjacent hospital wards. Note x-ray department sign.



Nurses preparing patient supplies, Camp Claiborne.



20<sup>th</sup> General Hospital operating room, Camp Claiborne.



Nurses' dining facilities, Camp Claiborne.



Ambulance Service.



Nurses' barracks,  
Camp Claiborne.



Relaxing in the common area of the nurses' barracks.



Nurse Barbara Green,  
one of the original  
nurses assigned to the  
hospital, enjoying a  
game of tennis.



Nurses at the Station Hospital,  
Camp Claiborne.

20<sup>th</sup> General Hospital nurses' barracks at Ledo, India.



Entrance to the 20<sup>th</sup> General Hospital at Ledo, India.

The 20<sup>th</sup> General Hospital left Camp Claiborne in early February 1943 in route to India. Forty-three days later, on March 21, 1943, they arrived in the jungle areas surrounding Ledo. Ledo was a tiny railroad town surrounded by jungle in the Assam region of northeast India.

The Japanese invasion of China had forced the Chinese government into the interior, with Burma offering the only possible route for land communication between the Chinese and the Allies. To re-open land contact with China, General Stilwell chose Ledo as the western terminal for a road to be built into northern Burma. As a huge military installation sprung up at Ledo, the 20<sup>th</sup> General Hospital took on the mission of providing care to the Allied-Chinese forces fighting the Japanese in Burma and constructing the Ledo road (Army Heritage Center Foundation 2014).

When the staff members of the 20<sup>th</sup> General Hospital first arrived in Ledo, there were only three small buildings with concrete floors, tin roofs, and open fronts, as well as a group of bamboo huts with dirt floors and openings showing through thatched roofs. In this area of heavy rainfall, malaria and dysentery were constant; leeches and mites presented even more dangers than the snakes, tigers, elephants, bears, water buffalo, and rhinoceroses. The doctors had to deal with battle casualties in an environment that not only made medical treatment difficult, but actually added to the problems (Lloyd 1999).

When the hospital was finally completed several months later, it had been transformed into a first-rate 1,000-bed hospital with 148 buildings that provided laboratories, x-ray and blood storage facilities, and all other necessities of medical and surgical practice. It was filled almost from the beginning beyond its rated capacity, and at one time it sheltered



2,560 patients. During the entire period of activity, it received 73,000 patients, with only about 300 deaths from all causes (Kalita 1990).

Dr. Isidor Ravidin, head of surgical service, had air conditioners flown in from Delhi to control the temperature-critical portions of the hospital. Lord Louis Mountbatten, the Supreme Allied Commander of Southeast Asia, flew to Ledo to dedicate the first air-conditioned ward in the whole of India.

After being on British field rations of canned fish, meat, and tea for a few months, Dr. Ravidin started a vegetable garden, which was eventually expanded to 36 acres. It provided the unit with year-round fresh vegetables. The hospital also began raising pigs and a flock of geese for meat.

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**The concept of intensive care originated  
with the 20<sup>th</sup> General Hospital  
during its time in Ledo, India.**

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The 20<sup>th</sup> General Hospital was cited by many for its outstanding work. These included Lord Louis Mountbatten, General Joseph Stillwell, and the Commanding Generals of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Chinese Armies. “The 20<sup>th</sup> General Hospital would be outstanding anywhere in the world and equal of university hospitals” was a description given the hospital. The concept of intensive care, now taken for granted, originated in the 20<sup>th</sup> General Military Hospital in the jungles of southeast India during the 1940s (Kalita 1990).



Operating room, 20<sup>th</sup> General Hospital at Ledo, India.



Military Police checking soldier's drivers log.



Civilian clerks assisting with administrative duties.

## CORP AREA SERVICE COMMAND STATION COMPLEMENT (GARRISON COMMAND)

**T**he Station Complement managed and maintained the day-to-day operations of Camp Claiborne. These soldiers with their civilian counterparts were responsible for providing Camp Claiborne soldiers with all the services that a city would provide for its citizens, in addition to housing, food, and medical services. They also provided transportation, legal assistance, laundry, postal services, and numerous other services for the soldiers.

The Station Complement were responsible for maintaining all training lands, firing ranges, and ammunition supply points. They were also in charge of fueling facilities for military training.

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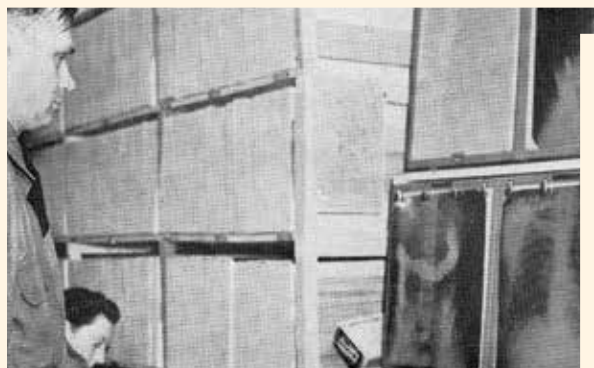
These unsung heroes insured our men and women were prepared to deploy overseas and carry the fight to the enemy.

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Corp Area Service  
Command patch.

Radiologist reading x-rays at the camp hospital.



Cafeteria for soldiers and civilians.



## QUARTERMASTER DETACHMENT (CI'd)



FRONT ROW: 2nd Lieut. E. E. Holland, 1st Sgt. S. Jackson, Sd. Sgt. L. Brown, Tech. 3rd Gr. M. D. Layne, Pvt. C. H. Bishop, Pvt. R. Taylor, Pvt. S. G. Peterson, Pvt. R. Smith, Pvt. J. B. Jones. SECOND ROW: Sgt. B. T. Moreland, Pvt. S. Franklin, Pfc. W. Ellis, Pvt. C. Muddox, Jr., Tech. 5th Gr. C. G. Allen, Pvt. W. Wilson, Pvt. L. Ford, Sgt. R. Moran, Sgt. J. R. Parnell. THIRD ROW: Pfc. A. Faggins, Pvt. E. Frazier, Pvt. R. Harris, Pfc. W. Camper, Cpl. A. Barbins, Pvt. B. Monroe, Pvt. J. Farmer, Jr., Pvt. S. Allen.



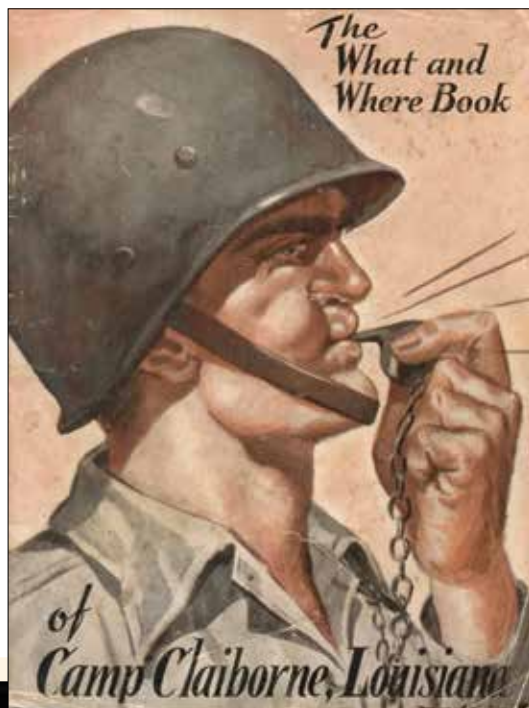
Civilians instructing soldiers on engine repairs.

One of many Quartermaster units stationed at Camp Claiborne.



# LIFE AT CAMP CLAIBORNE





Cover of *The What and Where Book of Camp Claiborne, Louisiana*.



A dance at Camp Claiborne.

A 47-page booklet, *What and Where Book of Camp Claiborne, Louisiana*, was prepared by the Camp Public Relations Office (1943) to acquaint individuals arriving at Camp Claiborne of its facilities and offerings for off-duty activities. According to the publication,

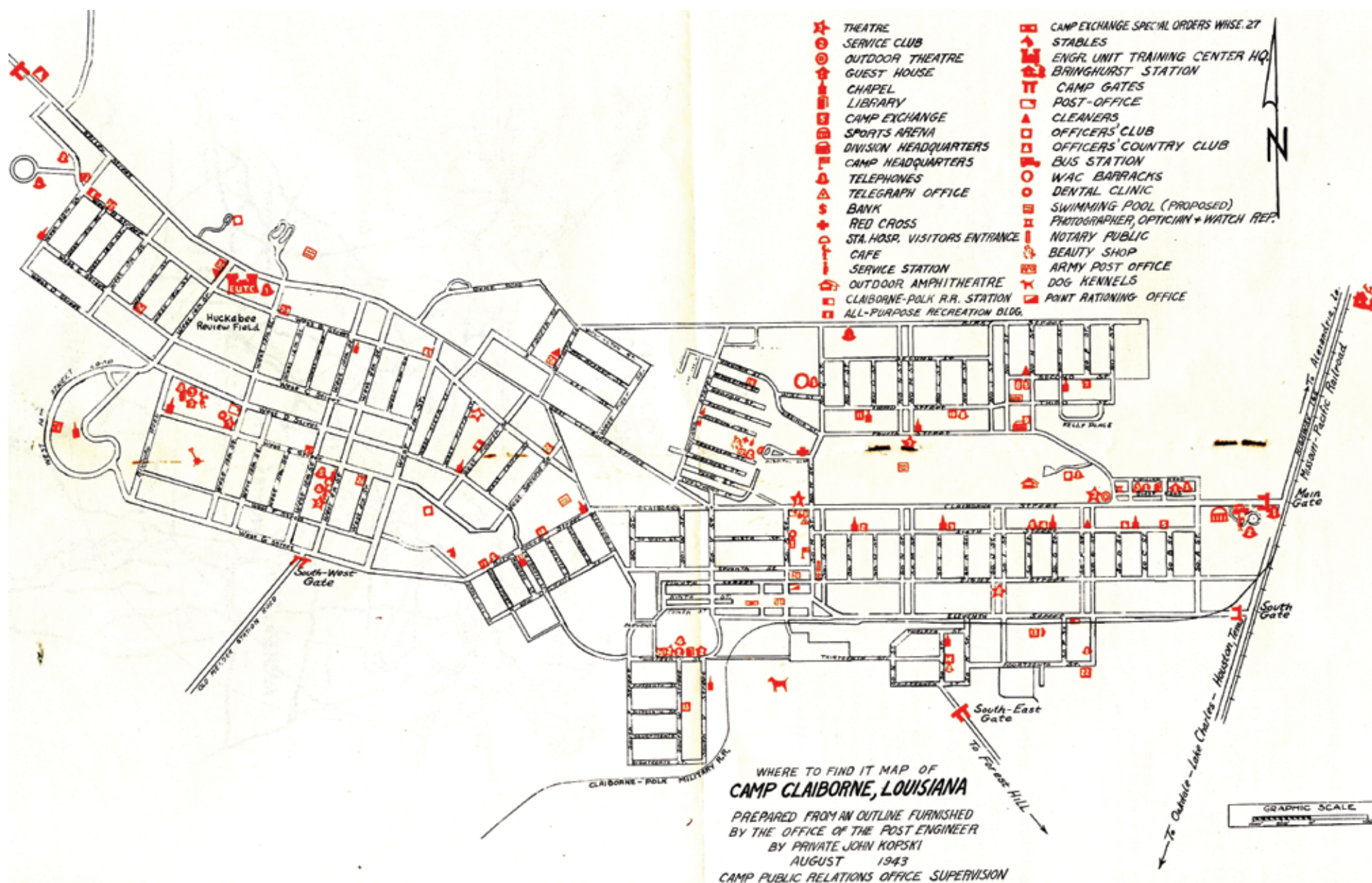
*...We have all of the makings of a city including our own laws, police force, traffic lights, laundry, bakery, railroad, gasoline station, water supply system, electric system, local officials, bus lines, restaurants, newspaper, theatres, churches, and clubs.*

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**Camp Claiborne was touted as the third largest city in Louisiana and that it provided all the services that a city of that size needed.**

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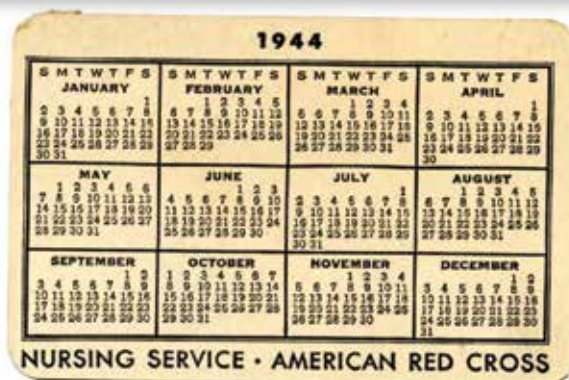
Information in the *What and Where Book*... was refreshingly frank. For example, barber shops were located in every Camp Exchange where civilian barbers provided a haircut for 35 cents. There were a total of 31 stores and barbershops. If one receiving a haircut was asked if "you would like something on your hair," it meant "do you want a tonic?" The tonic could cost more than the haircut, so they were advised they should decline if they did not want to spend more money. And, the final advice was, "Don't gripe after it is too late." A private's base pay was \$54.00 per month, so soldiers did not have a lot of extra money to spend.



Information map given to new arrivals.



Red Cross building at Camp Claiborne.



1944 American Red Cross pocket calendar.

One of the most important facilities at the Camp was the Red Cross building. The Red Cross was available for assistance when soldiers were faced with family illness, death, or serious distress back home.

The Red Cross could provide counseling regarding family problems and could contact family members back home. Hospital facilities were available at the Red Cross building for visiting family members, if needed. If a soldier's presence was necessary back home to attend to a family emergency, the Red Cross would advance funds for transportation, if approved by the company commander.

In addition, the Army Emergency Relief program was located in the Red Cross building. The Army Emergency Relief was a lending agency of the Army and supplemented activities of the Red Cross.

Due to the sprawling base and the rural location of the camp, availability of bus transportation was essential to meet the needs of the troops. To move around the large camp, two intra-camp bus lines operated. One was operated by the Interurban Transportation Company of Alexandria and the other by the Camp Exchange. The fare on either was 5 cents.

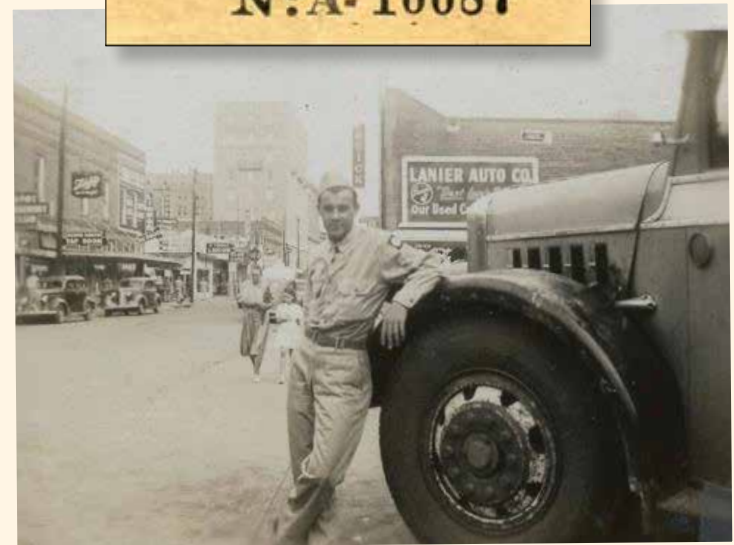
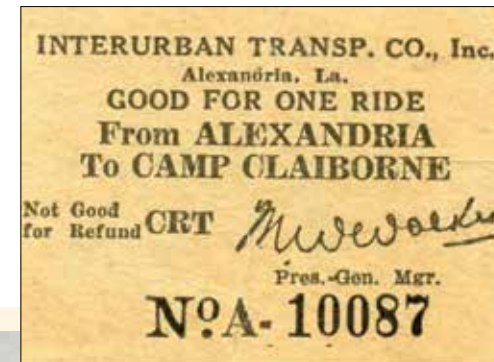
Transportation to Alexandria, LA, the largest nearby city, was provided by the Interurban Transportation Company.

The fare was something over 50 cents for a round trip from camp to town. There were three different colored buses: olive drab, blue, and orange. The olive drab and blue buses would take soldiers to Alexandria, LA, and the orange colored buses would take soldiers to Forest Hill and Oakdale, LA.



Postcard showing Bus Station at Camp Claiborne, which included a café.

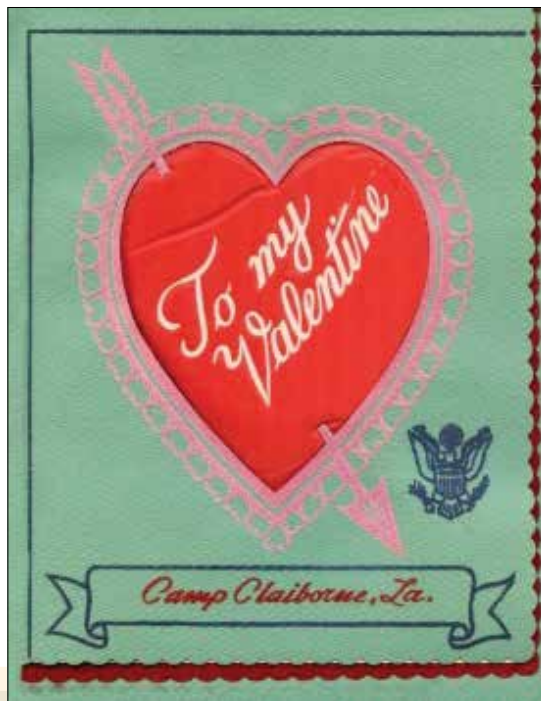
A one-way ticket on the Interurban bus line.



Camp Claiborne soldier enjoying a pass to downtown Alexandria with Hotel Bentley in the background.



A Valentine Card sold at the camp exchange.



Camp shows, usually sponsored by the United Services Organizations (USO), added some life and sparkle to camp routine. To quote the camp's *What and Where Book...*,

*The girls (there's always girls) are usually shapely. As a matter-of-fact, they're usually more shapely than pretty. Soldier audiences seem to prefer it that way.*

In addition to the chorus, each show usually had an orchestra, a master of ceremonies or comedian, and several novelty acts from vaudeville's upper strata.

The shows customarily opened in the Amphitheatre (capacity of 10,000) or Sports Arena and then moved out to the EUTC (West Camp Claiborne) for the "benefit of foot-weary Engineers." No charge was ever made for a USO show. In addition to the USO shows, movies were shown in eight theatres located throughout the camp.



One of the camp theaters.



The Post Exchange Service Station for Claiborne automobilists, dispenses a regular service station function for the soldier drivers.

THE Post Exchanges at Claiborne are the most popular spots for all soldiers when time permits for a little relaxation. Here the "Coke" bar does a rushing business and all shopping needs are well served in pleasant surroundings and at economical prices.



Interior pictures of several of the many Post Exchanges located on Camp Claiborne.



U.S.O. show for soldiers.



Sweet and ball. Fine music right from the camp itself.



After the entertainment the floor is cleared for the dance.

The boys and their "dates" dance on a Saturday night.

An excerpt from *A Camera Trip Through Camp Claiborne* showing a USO show and dance.



A postcard and a photograph of the Sports Arena at Camp Claiborne.



Sports were an important aspect of life at Camp Claiborne. Most units participated in a variety of sports ranging from boxing, baseball, football, and wrestling. Not only did sports build teamwork and promote esprit de corps, they were a good way to help the troops relieve some of the stress of military training.

The Sports Arena, located near the main entrance of the camp, was a huge building where dozens of different sports could be played. Among the favorites were boxing, basketball, wrestling, volleyball, table tennis, badminton, and general exercise equipment. The Sports Arena was also used for social events such as dances and USO entertainment.



# FOOTBALL

34th DIVISION

— 0 —

37th DIVISION

## CAMP CLAIBORNE, LA.

### 2:00 P. M.

No.      34th Division

35. Sgt. Vernet Anderson

10. Pvt. E. Arnold

26. Pvt. J. Ball

14. Cpl. Robt. Chapin

21. Sgt. Donald Crowe

23. Pvt. R. Dropp

34. Pvt. E. Fryberg

13. Pvt. Wm. Huckle

     Ranniger

11. Cpl. Riley Morgan

30. Sgt. Wm. Musegades

     Kuchera

32. Pvt. Don Schneider

     Stuible

18. Pvt. Dwight Patterson

27. Cpl. C. Johnson

12. Pvt. Ed. Keiffers

     Kelso

37. Pvt. Ed. Eck

22. Pvt. Norris Trickey

24. Sgt. R. Brooks

17. Sgt. R. Carron

15. Cpl. R. Elhot

28. Pvt. R. Elhot

20. Cpl. T. Ramelot

36. Pvt. C. Dale

38. Sgt. Joe Pazandack

19. Sgt. Art Posey

29. Sgt. W. Evans

     Pvt. Ray Hladick

31. Pvt. Ed. Saeger

33. Pvt. R. Tyson

40. Pvt. F. Tofanell

     Oshlo

     Gevo

No.      37th Division

70. Sgt. Harvey Bolser

92. Capt. R. J. Novotny

88. Sgt. Howard Wright

81. Sgt. John Collins

69. Sgt. Frank Crockell

47. Sgt. Herbert Trattner

66. Sgt. Frank Toth

62. Sgt. Ross Donnelly

82. Sgt. Myron Jacobs

60. Sgt. Steve Palachek

63. Cpl. William Luther

90. Cpl. Frank Parry

87. Cpl. Hamel Yankovich

76. Cpl. Jule B. Mayer

73. Cpl. Howard Duckwall

80. Cpl. John Slauta

79. Cpl. Jack Westall

72. Cpl. John Kulka

67. Pvt. Dominick Berarducci

78. Pvt. Chas. Makowski

74. Pvt. John Branchik

83. Pvt. Stanley Rypka

64. Pvt. Paul Williams

86. Pvt. Leinard Semlar

84. Pvt. Geo. Fingers

85. Pvt. Dave Nemeth

89. Pvt. Thomas George

61. Pvt. Ben Clements

75. Pvt. Carlos Evans

68. Pvt. Robt. Ramshaw

11. Pvt. Joe Fitzgerald

COACHES:

Lt. Col. C. Finnegan  
1st. Lt. A. H. Arndt  
Capt. Robt. E. Coffey  
Div. Morale Officer

COACHES:

Lt. Col. M. J. Meyer, Referee  
Capt. W. J. Cornwell, Umpire  
Lt. Sol Ragdon, Head Linesman  
Lt. F. Bovac, Field Judge

(Over)

Roster for the 34<sup>th</sup> vs. 37<sup>th</sup>  
Divisional football game.



1941 Camp Claiborne baseball team.





A postcard and a photograph of a typical chapel at Camp Claiborne.

There were 17 chapels within easy reach of every training area in the camp. In addition, most units had chaplains assigned to them. To ensure that no one was deprived of the right to worship, services were also held in the stockade and in the hospital.

After the close of Camp Claiborne in 1947, the Sports Arena was dissembled and moved to Dry Prong, LA, where it was used as the high school gymnasium. Today at Camp Claiborne only the skeletal concrete supports remain of the Sports Arena, located near the main entrance just off of U.S. Hwy-165.



Camp Claiborne had four service clubs with cafeterias located throughout the base. These were social centers for the camp. Each had a hostess to plan a program of entertainment. The clubs were “always on the very proper side and rowdies were strictly not welcome.” Open-house dances were the most popular entertainment. Something was happening almost every night.

Three of the Service Clubs had libraries. Anyone could obtain a library card and up to five books could be borrowed for a period of 13 days. There was no charge for this service.



Postcard of Service Club #1 located near the main gate.

Interior view of a library located within one of the Service clubs.



Interior view of one of the many telephone exchanges with two duty operators to assist in making calls.





Three guest houses were maintained for the accommodation of those who came to visit enlisted men.

These accommodations were operated in connection with the Service Clubs One, Two, and Three. There was no charge for the use of the room, but a bed cost 50 cents a night. It must be noted that husbands could not visit their wives in guest house rooms.



One of the guest houses maintained for the accommodation of those who came to visit enlisted men.

Camp Claiborne Officers' Club located at North 4<sup>th</sup> Street and Club Drive. The second one was located at West Camp Claiborne.



Officers' riding stables adjacent to the Officers' Country Club.





# LEADERS WHO ESTABLISHED THEIR CREDENTIALS AT CAMP CLAIBORNE

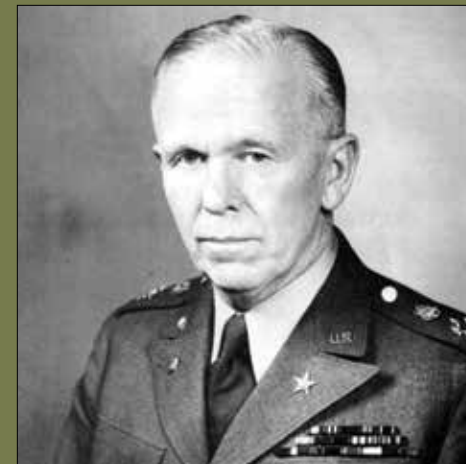
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Many of the generals who served with distinction while leading the American forces during World War II spent some time at **Camp Claiborne**, either during the Louisiana Maneuvers or later when over 500,000 troops were trained at the camp.

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Generals Dwight Eisenhower and George Marshall arriving at an Army Air Field to review personnel and view planned activities.



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Marshall was heavily involved in the Louisiana Maneuvers. Responding to Congressional critics of the costs of conducting the Maneuvers, he said, "I want the mistakes made down in Louisiana, not over in Europe..."

---

## GENERAL GEORGE C. MARSHALL

**G**eorge Marshall graduated from the Virginia Military Institute in 1901 and served in many significant capacities before and during World War I. In 1939, he became Army Chief of Staff and foresaw the upcoming war in Europe, urging the build up and training of American troops.

Marshall was heavily involved in the Louisiana Maneuvers. Responding to Congressional critics of the costs of conducting the Maneuvers, he said,

*I want the mistakes made down in Louisiana, not over in Europe, and the only way to do this is to try it out, and if it doesn't work, find out what we need to make it work.*

As much as the Maneuvers were a training exercise, they too were a teaching tool in battle management for an officer corps that would virtually overnight be tasked to lead mass armies in the field. Marshall kept a black book noting names of officers who he thought could become leaders of the armed forces. During the Maneuvers, 31 officers would be relieved or pushed aside to make way for young, more capable leaders (Citino 2011). Dwight Eisenhower would be an example of a young officer who was advanced in rank because of his unique ability.

Marshall spent the next 6 years building and running an army charged with winning the greatest military conflict the world had ever known. He proved such a gifted administrator and global strategist that President Franklin Roosevelt was forced to give the job Marshall coveted—the command of Operation Overlord for the invasion of France—to Dwight Eisenhower, saying to Marshall, “I didn’t feel I could sleep at ease with you out of Washington.” Winston Churchill probably came closest to describing Marshall’s importance in the war effort when he cabled Washington late in the war: “He is the true organizer of victory.”

President Harry S. Truman appointed Marshall Secretary of State on January 21, 1947. Retiring from military service a month later, Marshall became an advocate for ambitious plans to rebuild Europe. On June 5, he outlined his “Marshall Plan” during a speech at Harvard University.

Officially known as the European Recovery Program, the Marshall Plan called for around \$13 billion in economic and technical assistance to be given to European nations to rebuild their shattered economies and infrastructures. For his work, Marshall received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1953. George Marshall was both a great soldier and a great statesman.





General Omar Bradley conferring with 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division Commander Major General Terry Allen during the Sicilian Campaign.



Bradley was called the "Soldier's General," reflecting his mild temperament and affinity for wearing a common soldier's uniform in the field. His polite demeanor, however, was coupled with a demanding nature and the mind of a brilliant tactician.

## GENERAL OMAR N. BRADLEY

**A** native of rural Missouri, Omar Bradley entered West Point in 1911. He was interested in military history and studied the campaigns of William T. Sherman during the Civil War. Impressed with Sherman's campaigns of movement, Bradley concluded that officers of World War I in France had been misled by the experience of static warfare (Hickman 2014). He believed that the rapid mobility of troops was more effective.

Bradley was on General Marshall's staff in Washington when planning began for the 1940 Louisiana Maneuvers. He became involved in the effort as a courier and observer in the field, and this provided invaluable experience for the future assignments (Robertson 2012). In March 1942, he was assigned Commander of the 82<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division at Camp Claiborne and streamlined training so it was more effective for newly recruited citizen soldiers. He was relieved by his Assistant Commander Matthew Ridgway in June 1942 and moved to lead and train the 28<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division activated at Camp Livingston, LA. As a result, Bradley's efforts in 1942 produced two fully trained and prepared combat divisions (Hickman 2014).

The first major campaign in which the U.S. Army fought was in North Africa in early 1943. The inexperienced American II Corps was defeated at the Kasserine Pass by the Germans. General Eisenhower, the American Commander, sent Omar Bradley to study the situation and make changes. Upon reaching North Africa, Omar Bradley was first the eyes and ears of General Eisenhower and would soon become Commanding General of II Corps.

When the II Corps next went into battle in North Africa, it drove the Germans back and captured 40,000 soldiers. The army was learning to fight well, and Bradley was the main reason for it. It

was during this campaign that he received the title of "the Soldier's General" from Correspondent Ernie Pyle. This title reflected Bradley's uncharacteristically mild temperament and his affinity for wearing a common soldier's uniform in the field. His polite demeanor, however, was coupled with a demanding nature and the mind of a brilliant military tactician.

General Bradley then served in the invasion of Sicily. With Sicily conquered and the invasion of the Italian mainland imminent, General Bradley was tapped to lead the planning of what would become Operation Overlord and the cracking of German-held Europe. Two months after the allied landings on D-Day, June 6, 1944, Bradley was given command of the newly formed 12<sup>th</sup> U.S. Army Group, which consisted of the First, Third, Ninth, and Fifteenth Armies. It was the largest single command of American troops ever fielded, which he would lead until victory was achieved in May 1945 (Hickman 2014).

Shortly after the end of World War II, General Bradley was appointed Director of the Veterans Administration. This job would prove to be one of his hardest and one of his most rewarding as he aided those he led in time of war. By 1948, Bradley succeeded General Eisenhower as Chief of Staff of the Army. Only a year later he was selected as the very first Chairman of the newly organized Joint Chiefs of Staff. On September 22, 1950, he was promoted to the rank of General of the Army. He would prove to be the last of the five-star generals.

Perhaps no other individual in the history of the U.S. Army exemplifies the ideal of a soldier more than General Omar N. Bradley exhibited towards the country he served.



Troops leaving a landing craft during the D-Day invasion of France on the Normandy coast. General Lesley McNair was killed by friendly fire in a foxhole on the beach.



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As Commanding General of the Army, McNair was responsible for the organization, training, and preparation of the Army for overseas service. He was instrumental in preparing large-scale exercises that simulated actual combat.

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## GENERAL LESLEY J. McNAIR

**L**esley “Whitey” McNair graduated from West Point in 1904 and was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant of Artillery. He served in World War I in France and for his outstanding service was awarded the Army Distinguished Service Medal and the French Legion of Honor. He was quickly promoted to Brigadier General (one star) in October 1918 and became the youngest general officer in the Army at the time at the age of 35.

McNair became an assistant to Army Chief of Staff Marshall in July 1940. In that position, he assumed responsibility for the training programs being developed for the Louisiana Maneuvers, replacing General Stanley D. Embick who retired.

In March 1942, General McNair became Commanding General of the Army Ground Forces. In this position, he was responsible for the organization, training, and preparation of the Army for overseas service. He was instrumental in preparing large-scale divisional and corps exercises to provide Army commanders with some experience in controlling large forces in simulated combat.

McNair created a standardized training system to answer the challenges of transforming ordinary citizens into soldiers. To accomplish this task, he relied on making the training as realistic as possible: starting with basic skills, then small unit training, and finally making the transition to training at the division level. Regardless of where a soldier was inducted and initially trained, the same pattern of building on his basic skills followed throughout the war (Blackburn 2014).

McNair was not swayed by arguments that tanks and airplanes had changed the face of battle. In McNair’s mind, a balance

in forces required the right mix of infantry, armor, and artillery. He believed in compact but mobile infantry and armored divisions. His insistence on smaller, more mobile formations was the focus of the most consistent criticism leveled at his policies.

A review of the American combat performance in World War I highlights how adaptive and innovative the Americans were in the European and Pacific theaters. While the resources available to the United States and its allies played a role in victory, an understanding of McNair’s tactics emphasizes the manner in which these resources were used. His influence on the formation of the U.S. Army during World War II is finally being recognized (Blackburn 2014).

On July 29, 1944, Lieutenant General Lesley McNair was killed in his foxhole on the Normandy coast during a massive air bombardment that was the prelude to the invasion of France. General Omar Bradley, his forces stymied, had decided to use carpet bombing of the enemy lines to break the German lines. Unfortunately, McNair and about 100 other Americans were killed by friendly fire. He was buried at the Normandy American Cemetery and Memorial in Normandy, France.

Sadly, his son, Colonel Douglas McNair was killed 2 weeks later by sniper fire on Guam. He is buried at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Hawaii.

General Eisenhower, who was on hand at Normandy, determined that he would never use heavy bombers in support of ground troops again. But, the bombing had achieved its intended purpose and the German line was broken (Blackburn 2014).





General Dwight Eisenhower (left) with General Omar Bradley congratulates General George Patton on the success of his 3<sup>rd</sup> Army ending the siege of Bastogne during the Battle of the Bulge.



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Eisenhower's leadership in planning and carrying out the Louisiana Maneuvers resulted in his promotion to Brigadier General. Two years later, he was a four-star General, perhaps the record for rate of promotion.

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## GENERAL DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

**D**wight “Ike” Eisenhower was born in Denison, TX, but grew up in Abilene, KS, and his childhood memories there were cherished throughout his life. He applied to West Point, not because he was particularly interested in the military, but because there he could get a free education. He was a star on the football team until an injury sidelined him.

Eisenhower graduated from West Point in 1915. Several years later while serving as executive officer to General Fox Conner in the Panama Canal Zone, Conner urged him to apply to the Army’s prestigious Command and General Staff School. He did and was accepted. He graduated first in his class with a firm reputation for his military prowess (Anonymous 2014a).

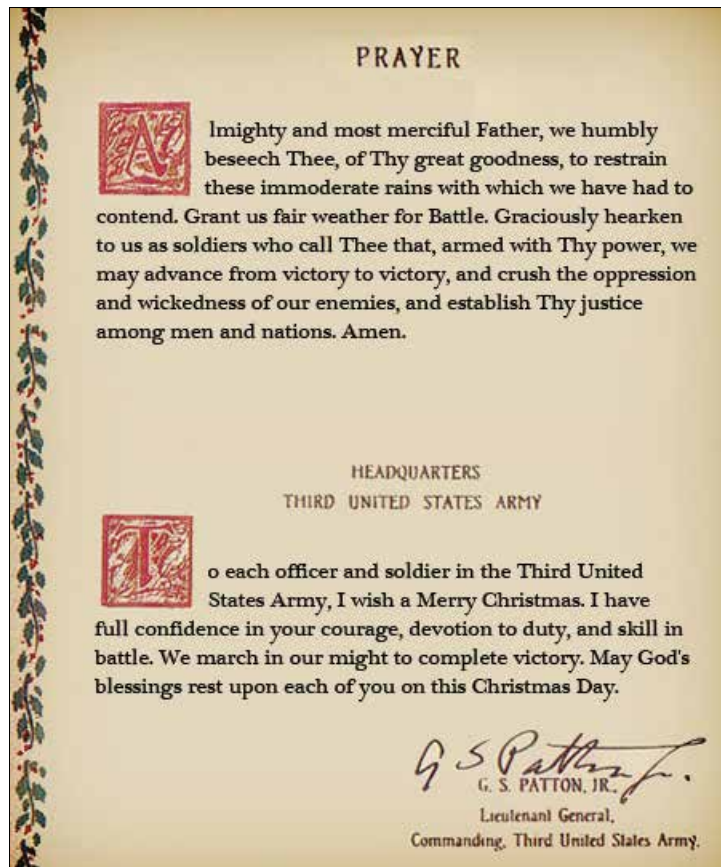
In 1941, after a transfer to Fort Sam Houston, as a Lieutenant Colonel he became Chief of Staff for the Third Army which was involved in planning the Louisiana Maneuvers. Eisenhower’s leadership in planning and carrying out the maneuvers resulted in his promotion to Brigadier General. Two years later, he was a four-star General, perhaps the record for rate of promotion.

He became Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Forces in 1942

and led Operation Torch, the Allied invasion of North Africa. As soon as that operation was underway, he was moved to London to begin planning for the invasion of Europe. This required meticulous training, something in which Eisenhower excelled.

On D-Day, June 6, 1944, Eisenhower commanded the Allied Forces in the Normandy invasion. In December of that year, he was promoted to five-star rank—General of the Army. After Germany’s surrender in 1945, he was made military governor of the U.S. Occupied Zone. A few months later, he was appointed U.S. Army Chief of Staff.

In 1948, he became the president of Columbia University, a position he held until December of 1950, when he left Columbia to accept an appointment as first Supreme Allied Commander of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). While serving in this position, he was approached by Republican leaders to run for President of the United States. On November 4, 1952, after winning the election by a landslide, Eisenhower was selected to be the 34<sup>th</sup> President of the United States.



A copy of General Patton's 1944 Christmas message and prayer for good weather that would allow his forces to break through German lines and end the siege of Bastogne.



Patton was from a long lineage of military men, and he grew up listening to stories of their brave exploits. As he rose through the ranks, he became a successful, yet controversial leader, once stating, "There are no rules in war."

## GENERAL GEORGE S. PATTON

**O**ne of the most complicated military men of all time, George S. Patton, Jr., was born in 1885 in San Gabriel, CA. Patton decided during his childhood that his goal was to become a hero. His family had fought in the Revolutionary War, the Mexican War, and the Civil War, and he grew up listening to stories of their brave and successful endeavors (Anonymous 2014b). He attended the Virginia Military Institute for 1 year and then went on to West Point. He graduated in 1909 and represented the United States in the 1912 Stockholm Olympics in the first modern Pentathlon (originally open only to military officers).

During World War I, Patton became the first member of the newly established United States Tank Corps. Along with the British tankers, he and his men achieved victory at Cambrai, France, during the world's first major tank battle in 1917.

After World War I, Patton remained an outspoken advocate for tanks, but Congress was unwilling to appropriate funds until the German Blitzkrieg began in Europe in the late 1930s. When the Armored Force was formed in 1940, Patton was named Commanding General in April 1941. In late summer 1941, Patton and his tanks became an important component of the large Louisiana Maneuvers and he demonstrated his “thinking outside the box” approach in battle. He led his tank corps from southern Louisiana into east Texas, stormed north to re-enter Louisiana again north of Shreveport, the opposing army's headquarters. When his defeated opponents claimed that he did not follow the rules of the maneuvers, his response was, “There are no rules in war.”

In November 1942, Patton was commanding the Western Task Force, the only all-American force landing in the Allied invasion of North Africa. After succeeding there, he commanded the

Seventh Army during the invasion of Sicily in July 1943. Patton was always controversial. His “blood and guts” speeches attracted attention and concern among some. But, as the successful Sicilian campaign ended, the volatile Patton slapped two sick GIs in field hospitals saying they were shirkers. In truth, both were ill and one was suffering from malaria. Public outcry forced General Eisenhower to pull Patton from command for several months.

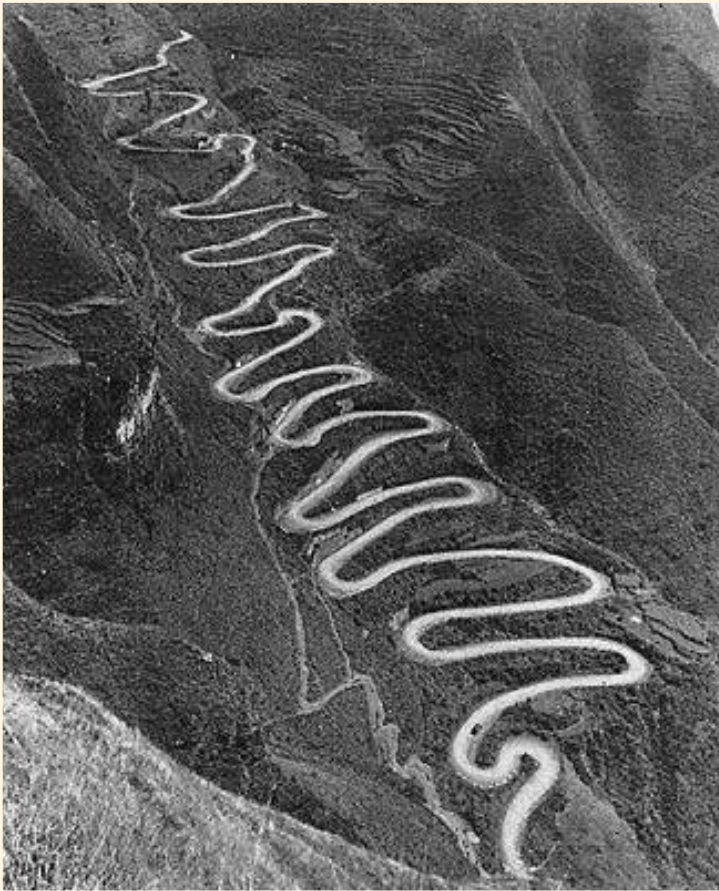
Soon after D-Day and the invasion of France, Patton was given command of the Third Army and he and his troops headed east toward Germany.

In mid-December 1944, the German command launched a gigantic counteroffensive through the Ardennes region. Eisenhower met with Patton and they agreed to turn Patton's forces northward toward Bastogne. As soon as the meeting was over, Patton called his Chief of Staff and the Third Army was on the move.

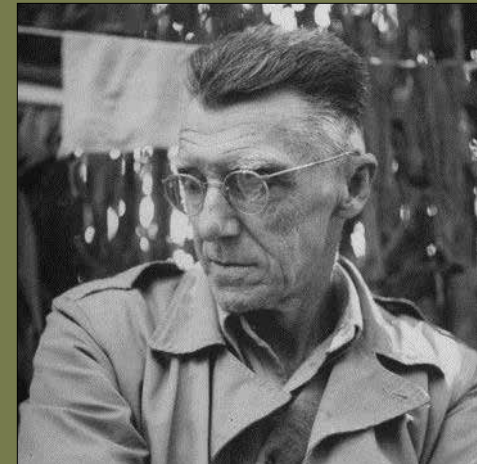
Without supply lines and other support, they moved out, but the weather remained terrible and slowed the movement. Patton directed a reluctant chaplain to compose a prayer for good weather. The mimeographed prayer was issued throughout Third Army to be offered by everyone in supplication for the opportunity for killing more Germans. The prayers were answered by good weather on December 23, and Patton forthwith decorated the chaplain with the Bronze Star medal (Eisenhower 2005). On December 26, the Third Army forces broke through the German lines and ended the siege of Bastogne.

Patton would die tragically from injuries sustained in a freak car accident in December 1945, not long after the German surrender. He is the highest ranking military officer buried on foreign soil and is interred in the Luxembourg American Cemetery and Memorial with troops from his command (Hanson 2014).





Ledo Road in India, which was renamed the Stilwell Road in honor of General Joseph W. Stilwell.



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Nicknamed "Vinegar Joe," Stilwell first distinguished himself during World War I while serving with the American Expeditionary Force in Europe. As a Commanding General during World War II, he led the China-Burma-India Theater, which was called "the worst command in the war."

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## GENERAL JOSEPH W. STILWELL

**J**oseph Stilwell was born in Florida in 1883 and was a 1904 graduate of West Point. He distinguished himself during World War I while serving with the American Expeditionary Force in Europe as well as the Philippines. Stilwell was a student of the Chinese language—not only fluent in Mandarin, he could curse a blue streak in a number of Chinese dialects. He had a position as military attaché in Peking from 1935 to 1939. He bonded well with the Chinese people (he and his wife considered China their second home), but developed distrust, if not contempt, for Chinese political leadership (Zimmerman 2012).

After participating in the 1941 Louisiana Maneuvers, he was summoned by General George Marshall in January 1942 while planning for the military landings in North Africa. General Marshall wanted to talk about China. President Roosevelt ordered that a high ranking general be sent to China to be a buffer between the British and Nationalist Chinese allies, and to keep China in the war.

Stilwell became the Commanding General of the U.S. Army Forces in China and Burma as well as Chinese Nationalist leader Chiang Kai-shek's Chief of Staff. The position needed an individual possessing tact, patience, and diplomatic skills, but in March 1942 they got a newly-minted American Lieutenant General with the nickname "Vinegar Joe" (Zimmerman 2012).

Chiang was primarily interested in obtaining American Lend-Lease supplies from the United States and was less interested in fighting the Japanese. So, the relationship was a difficult one. Stilwell was placed in charge of the Chinese Fifth and Sixth Armies in Burma and had as an objective to keep the India-to-China Burma Road supply route open. However, in June 1942, the superior Japanese routed the Chinese forces. The operation was so disastrous that the Chinese forces stopped taking orders. Most of his forces were evacuated by plane, just hours away from capture. Stilwell's last message was "I prefer to walk," and he did with 115 others that included nurses, soldiers, and civilians. He and the others arrived in India after an

agonizing 140-mile jungle trek beset by bouts of food poisoning, a withering sun, and malaria (McLaughlin 2010).

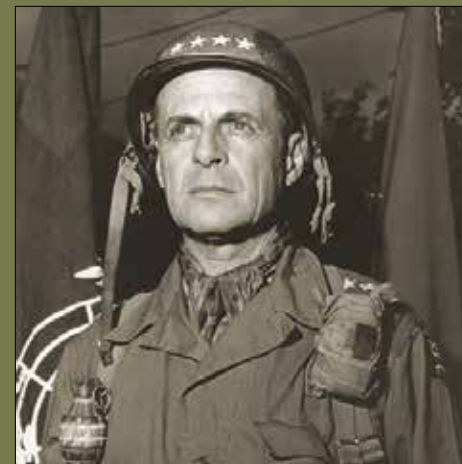
Because of the closure of the Burma Road, Stilwell suggested a road be constructed from Ledo in northeast India into northern Burma and China. Its purpose was to provide a land route to send supplies to Allied forces fighting with the Japanese. It was a major construction problem since it followed trails through mountainous jungles. The road was built by 15,000 American soldiers (60 percent of whom were African-Americans) and 35,000 local workers. About 1,100 Americans died during the construction, as well as many more local workers and soldiers. The 20<sup>th</sup> General Hospital, which trained at Camp Claiborne, was located at Ledo to provide medical support to the massive effort. The Ledo Road was renamed the Stilwell Road in 1945 by Chiang Kai-shek. While the road was being built, it served as a combat road enabling Merrill's Marauders and the Chinese Army forces better access through the jungle.

In the fall of 1943 and spring of 1944, largely with Chinese troops he had personally trained, Stilwell led a force into Burma that drove the Japanese from Burma and reopened the Burma Road. But, conflicts with Chiang Kai-shek resulted in Stilwell's removal in 1944. He then served as Commander of the 10<sup>th</sup> Army on Okinawa and received the surrender of more than 100,000 Japanese troops in the Ryukyu Islands.

Stilwell led the China-Burma-India Theater of World War II, which took a back seat to Europe and the Pacific in terms of manpower, resources, and press coverage. It was called the "the worst command in the war." But its stories of daring pilots who "flew the hump" of the mighty Himalayas, freewheeling guerrilla fighters known as Merrill's Marauders, dedicated nurses, and crafty intelligence agents cutting deals with natives in three diverse countries were as colorful as those from the more heavily documented areas of World War II.



General Matthew Ridgway, second to the left, with other officers in Sicily, 1943.



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Former comrade Omar Bradley remarked that General Ridgway's command of the 8<sup>th</sup> Army in Korea was "...the greatest feat of personal leadership in the history of the Army." At Ridgway's burial, General Colin Powell stated, "Every American soldier owes a debt to this great man."

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## GENERAL MATTHEW B. RIDGWAY

**M**atthew Ridgway was born in March 1895 in Fort Monroe, VA, to an army artillery officer and lived in various military bases throughout his childhood. He remarked that his “earliest memories are of guns and marching men, of rising to the sound of reveille gun and lying down to sleep at night while the sweet, sad notes of taps brought the day officially to an end” (Matthew B. Ridgway Center 2014).

Ridgway graduated from West Point in 1917 and regretted that he had no combat experience during World War I. After various duty stations in the 1920s and 1930s, he was assigned by General Marshall to the War Plans Division shortly after the outbreak of World War II in Europe in September 1939. In March 1942, he became Deputy Commander of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Battalion formed at Camp Claiborne, with General Bradley commanding. In June 1942, Bradley was reassigned to the 28<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division and Ridgway became Commander of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division. On August 15, 1942, the 82<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division was converted to the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Battalion.

The conversion of the division to an airborne unit required rigorous training of his men, but Ridgway was credited with turning the unit into a highly effective combat division. Ordered to North Africa, the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne began training for the invasion of Sicily. Ridgway led the Division into battle in July 1943—the first airborne operation in United States history. The 82<sup>nd</sup> was also involved in the invasion of Italy, but in November 1943, the 82<sup>nd</sup> was sent to Britain to prepare for the Normandy invasion. Ridgway with his 82<sup>nd</sup> Division was one of three Allied airborne divisions to land in Normandy on the night of June 6, 1944 (Matthew B. Ridgway Center 2014).

After the war, Ridgway continued to earn promotions. In 1950, he was assigned to the beleaguered Eighth Army, whose commanding officer was killed in a road accident. The Eighth Army was in a weeks’ long retreat from a Chinese onslaught during the Korean War. An aggressive leader, Ridgway immediately began working to restore his men’s fighting spirit. Removing defeatists and the defensive-minded, Ridgway rewarded officers who were aggressive and conducted offensive operations when able. Within a year, General Ridgway succeeded in a counteroffensive that regained a great deal of lost territory (Hickman 2014). In April 1951, President Harry S. Truman relieved General Douglas MacArthur as leader of United Nations forces and military governor of Japan, and he promoted Ridgway to assume MacArthur’s role.

In May 1952, Ridgway left Korea to succeed General Eisenhower as Supreme Allied Commander, Europe for the newly formed North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Ridgway took over the Army’s top job, Chief of Staff, a year later. He retired in 1955.

A dynamic leader, his former comrade Omar Bradley once remarked that Ridgway’s performance with the Eighth Army in Korea was “...the greatest feat of personal leadership in the history of the Army” (Matthew B. Ridgway Center 2014).

The wonder is not that Korea is still divided, but that there is even a South Korea—a nation saved only because of the long ago appearance of a maverick general when there were not others to be found. General Colin Powell stated at Ridgway’s burial in 1993, “Every American soldier owes a debt to this great man.” So do millions of South Koreans and Americans (Hanson 2013).





**CLAIBORNE TODAY**



Today, 75 years after Camp Claiborne was established, only a few scattered concrete foundations and streets remain to remind us that over a half-million men and women passed through its gates. Company areas that once housed thousands of soldiers are now occupied by a pine forest. Streets that once were busy with jeeps, buses, and troop formations are empty. The sounds of rifles and artillery no longer can be heard in the distance, only the sounds of wind whispering through the pine trees.

The main entrance into Camp Claiborne is located at the intersection of US Hwy-165 and LA-112 where you will find the concrete foundation of the guard station and foundation which once held the 10-foot tall sign that welcomed you to Camp Claiborne.

The Calcasieu Ranger District, Kisatchie National Forest, maintains an interpretive kiosk at the main gate. The kiosk below is located in front of what was once the civilian administration and engineer's buildings. Today, all that remains of the two buildings are two vaults that housed records, which can be seen behind the kiosk.



The bus station located just south of the main gate was constructed of a concrete base that was formed to look like cut stone. The wooden part was constructed of timbers and resembled a log house. Pictured right is a postcard showing the bus station as it looked then. Pictured below are the remains of the bus station's concrete foundation where the skill of the workers can still be seen.

Also located near the main gate was the Sports Arena shown in the postcard below. Today, only the skeletal concrete support and floor can be seen in the photograph below.







The Divisional Headquarters site, in the black and white photo far left, housed the 34<sup>th</sup>, 82<sup>nd</sup> and 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne, 84<sup>th</sup>, and 103<sup>rd</sup> Divisions.

The site is located approximately 1.5 miles from the main entrance. It is known locally as the "York flag-pole" site because Sergeant Alvin C. York, hero of World War I, addressed the 82<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division at this location.

Pictured below far left is the Post headquarters flag pole site which was located directly across from the Post Headquarters.

The inset photo below left is the bank vault which is all that remains from the civilian bank that was located across from the Post Headquarters.



Pictured left (facing page) is one of seven theaters at Camp Claiborne located along what is now LA 112. Below that picture is the theater foundation and side steps leading out of the theater.

To the right is the exterior and interior view of an intact machine gun training bunker which was used to simulate assaulting an enemy "pillbox" or machine gun nest.

Below is one of three 1,000,000 gallon surface water storage tanks. Water was pumped from these surface storage tanks into seven elevated water tanks which supplied the camp with water.

Pictured below right is the foundation of the two-story officers club located in West Camp Claiborne. Associated with the officers club was an in-ground concrete swimming pool and a reflecting pool.





# CONCLUDING REMARKS



34<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, 135<sup>th</sup> Infantry,  
Company A, Camp Claiborne, September 1941.

**D**uring Camp Claiborne's brief existence from 1941 to 1946, lasting just over 6 years, over one-half million men and women passed through its gates. Here in the remote woods of central Louisiana, these courageous men and women trained for military service before being sent to serve in all of the major theaters during World War II which included Europe, Northern Africa, and the Pacific.

Major units such as the 34<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, 82<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division, 84<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, 103<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division, and the 20<sup>th</sup> General Hospital trained at Camp Claiborne. The storied 82<sup>nd</sup> and 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Divisions were established here at Camp Claiborne.

Camp Claiborne was also home to the Engineer Unit Training Center, which was the largest single concentration of engineer soldiers in the Nation. The Engineer Unit Training Center trained new recruits in basic combat survival skills as well as engineering support specialties. Major units that trained at the Engineer Unit Training Center included the 91<sup>st</sup> and 93<sup>rd</sup> Engineer Battalions, the 711<sup>th</sup> and related Railroad Operating Battalions, 769<sup>th</sup> Engineer Forestry Battalion, and related Sawmill Engineer General Service Regiments.

Many of the military units which trained at Camp Claiborne became some of the most decorated military units of World War II. Also remarkable, was the officer corps that spent time in Louisiana leading Divisions during the Louisiana Maneuvers, or at Camp Claiborne. Generals such as George C. Marshall, Omar Bradley, Lesley McNair, Mark Clark, Dwight Eisenhower, George Patton, Joseph Stilwell, and Matthew Ridgway all distinguished themselves in the battlefields of Europe, North Africa, and Asia.

Camp Claiborne was closed in 1946 after the end of World War II, and the site was returned to the Kisatchie National Forest in 1947. Seventy-five years after the establishment of Camp Claiborne, all that remains is a few standing concrete structures and a network of concrete roads to remind us that the third largest city in Louisiana was once there.

We hope this book will preserve the legacy and honor the sacrifices of all of the men and women who trained at Camp Claiborne and who served our Nation with dedication, commitment, and valor during World War II.



Camp Claiborne circa 1947 as the camp was being dismantled and sold for scrap. Note the photographer's car. He was from the New York Times working out of the New Orleans Bureau.



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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



Train in rail-yard at Camp Claiborne.

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# ABSTRACT

## REMEMBERING THE SACRIFICE: HISTORIC CAMP CLAIBORNE, LOUISIANA

James P. Barnett, Douglas J. Rhodes, and Lisa W. Lewis

In 1940, construction began on numerous military installations in central Louisiana that would train millions of young men and women entering the U.S. Army for service during World War II. Over 500,000 troops trained at Camp Claiborne alone during its 6 years of existence. The area was selected because of availability of Federal land from the Kisatchie National Forest, access of about 3,400 square miles of land for maneuvers through cost-free agreements with private landowners, and open conditions that favored deployment of men and equipment for training purposes. Camp Claiborne became the largest of these installations. Although it was designed for about 30,000 troops, it was enlarged by another 20,000 by the addition of the Engineer Unit Training Center that was developed in West Camp Claiborne. Claiborne became the third largest city in Louisiana at the time. Many of the units which trained there became the most decorated during World War II and suffered heavy casualties in combat around the world. It is now 75 years after the establishment of Camp Claiborne. We need to continue to remember the sacrifices of all those who served with dedication, commitment, and valor.

**Keywords:** Kisatchie National Forest, Louisiana Maneuvers, military camps, military preparedness, World War II.



Barnett, James P.; Rhodes, Douglas J.; Lewis, Lisa W. 2015. Remembering the sacrifice: historic Camp Claiborne, Louisiana. Gen. Tech. Rep. SRS-210. Asheville, NC: U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service, Southern Research Station. 111 p.



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