

**A SHORT HISTORY
OF
CAMP PICKETT**

**Compiled by
The
Post Public Information Office**

**Camp Pickett, Virginia
April 1951**

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POST COMMANDERS

CAMP PICKETT, VIRGINIA

6 January 1942 Lieutenant Colonel Edgar F. Padgett, Quartermaster Corps, arrived to direct establishment and organization of the 1318th Service Unit, station complement and to assume temporary command.

24 March 1942 Colonel D. John Markey, Infantry, arrived and assumed command.

11 October 1943 Colonel Frank B. Lammons, Infantry, assumed command.

1 March 1945 Colonel Adam E. Potts, Coast Artillery Corps, assumed command.

30 July 1945 Colonel Frank B. Lammons, Infantry, assumed command.

1 December 1945 Colonel H. G. Paullin assumed command.

6 February 1946 Major General Frederick A. Irving assumed command.

14 May 1946 Lieutenant Colonel Leroy C. Stegeman, Infantry, assumed command.

16 August 1946 Major James C. Lyle, Quartermaster Corps, appointed acting post commander.

23 August 1946 Lieutenant Colonel James D. Mawhinney, Corps of Engineers, assumed command.

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1 August 1948 – 25 October 1948 Brigadier General Wayne C. Zimmerman

25 October 1948 – 15 March 1949 Major General Robert C. Macon

15 March – 9 June 1949 Brigadier General Wayne C. Zimmerman

9 June – 15 June 1949 Colonel William W. Harris

16 June 1949 – 20 August 1951 Colonel Leslie E. Babcock

20 August 1951 - Colonel Kenneth S. Anderson

KEY DATES

- 6 January 1942 – Lieutenant Colonel Edgar F. Padgett, Quartermaster Corps, arrived to direct establishment and organization of the 1318th Service Unit, station complement, and to assume temporary command of the installation.
- 15 June 1942 – Station hospital opened. First patients admitted and first operation performed.
- 3 July 1942 – The camp was formally dedicated and the 79th Infantry Division, commanded by Major General Ira T. Wycke, reactivated.
- 28 August 1942 – 79th Infantry Division departed.
- 5 September 1942 – Third Division arrived commanded by Major General Johnathan W. Anderson.
- 12 October 1942 – Post population was 53,260.
- 22 October 1942 – Third Division and Headquarters Task Force A (North Africa) departed.
- 7 November 1942 – Third Armored Division arrived commanded by Major General Leroy H. Watson.
- 13 January 1943 – 45th Infantry Division arrived commanded by Major General Troy H. Middleton.
- 18 January 1943 – Third Armored Division departed.
- 27 March 1943 – 55th WAAC arrived with 129 enrolled women and 3 officers, the first WAAC to be assigned here.
- 26 May 1943 – 45th Infantry Division departed.
- 6 June 1943 – 28th Infantry Division arrived commanded by Major General Lloyd D. Brown.
- 6 August 1943 – Enrolled members of the WAAC were sworn in as enlisted women of the WAAC.
- 28 August 1943 – 31st Infantry Division arrived commanded by Major General John O. Persons.
- 26 September 1943 – 28th Infantry Division departed.
- 2 October 1943 – 77th Infantry Division arrived commanded by Major General A. D. Bruce.
- 7 January 1944 – German POW camp activated.
- 5 March 1944 – 113th Infantry Division Headquarters departed. Other units of division departed during period 19 January – 5 March.
- 14 March 1944 – 77th Infantry Division departed.
- 29 March 1944 – 113th Infantry Regiment arrived to perform replacement training functions.
- 30 March 1944 – 78th Infantry Division arrived commanded by Major General Edwin C. Parker, Jr.
- 3 July 1944 – The Third Service Command Training School for state guardsmen was established under the command of Captain Joseph W. Sharp.
- 5 October 1944 – 78th Infantry Division departed.
- 30 January 1945 – Temporary USAGH established, Colonel Leonard W. Hasset, commander.
- 12 September 1945 – Separation point was established with daily quota of 100 separations.
- 27 October 1945 – Convalescent hospital and hospital center discontinued.
- 26 November 1945 – Separation point discontinued.
- 1 December 1945 – General hospital discontinued and facilities reverted to station hospital.
- 1 June 1946 – Camp Pickett placed on inactive status.
- 15 April 1951 - Post population approximately 37,000.

SECTION I

ESTABLISHMENT OF CAMP

THE STORY of Camp Pickett - - great sprawling Army base where half a million American men were taught the art of warfare and more than 20,000 wounded were nursed back to health - - must ante-date 7 December 1941 for its inception, though it is wholly a product of World War II.

When Japan was striking the blow at Pearl Harbor which brought America's declaration of war, Camp Pickett already had taken form on the drawing boards of the War Department in Washington, and the machinery already was in motion to acquire more than 48,000 acres of the rolling countryside of Southside Virginia.

Plans called for an installation which would be suitable for the training of virtually every arm, service, and branch in the Army Ground Forces and the Army Service Forces (then Services of Supply). The projected simultaneous development of the Blackstone Army Air Base within the reservation would render the area appropriate for use by the third great component of the Army, the Army Air Forces.

The location of the camp, in the Piedmont belt of the Atlantic coastal plain, less than 100 mile from the coast and the great port of Hampton Roads, and an almost equal distance from the wooded slopes of the Alleghany Mountain Range, was ideal for the great role it was to play in the preparation and shipping of assault troops for the fight against Germany, Italy, and Japan.

The installation is situated in rolling, partly wooded country, admirably adapted to general field training and moderately large-scale maneuvers. For the training in assault landing and in mountain warfare, which stood them in such good stead from Oran to the Po River Valley and the borders of Czechoslovakia. American soldiers could move easily and rapidly from Camp Pickett to the Atlantic coastal beaches or the rugged Appalachian Mountains of Virginia and West Virginia.

Four counties of Southside Virginia and many score farms contributed to the acreage of the camp, which was purchased in 1941. Establishment of the camp necessitated the careful removal of a number of burial plots to two centrally located cemeteries. Still to be seen throughout the broad reservation are typical Virginia farmhouses and log tobacco barns, and several of the homes have been maintained and pressed into use to house personnel of the camp.

The locality of Camp Pickett, steeped in martial tradition dating from the earliest wars of the colonial settlers against the Indians, and including scenes of action in the Revolutionary and Civil Wars, is largely devoted to the growing, curing, and marketing of Virginia dark-fired and bright tobacco. Many of the acres which have trembled under the shock of bursting shells and the rhythm of marching feet during the last four years were planted to tobacco, corn, wheat, and hay crops for generations.

Forty-eight thousand acres in the counties of Nottoway, Lunenburg, Brunswick, and Dinwiddie were purchased by the Government at an average cost of \$25.50 per acre. In circumference, the reservation is approximately 56 square miles.

The war came home in earnest to this part of Virginia in January, 1942, when construction began on the camp. Since that date, the life of the people of this section has been profoundly influenced.

Blackstone, a quiet tobacco-marketing center, is immediately adjacent to the reservation. Its peacetime population of 2,699 (census of 1940) was swollen almost overnight to an estimated peak of 15,000, and most of its families, and the families of the nearby communities and even the farms, were promptly involved in one way or another in the mammoth military project which had sprung up in their midst.

Affected almost as much as Blackstone were the towns of Crewe, Burkeville, Kenbridge, Victoria, Amelia, Nottoway, and a score of smaller communities as far away as Petersburg, 38 miles to the east, and Farmville, 30 miles to the west, the residents felt the direct effect of the coming of Camp Pickett.

It was the same story that was being written in feverish, crowded communities across the nation as the United States girded herself for possible conflict.

SECTION II

CONSTRUCTION AND FACILITIES

A VISIT BY War Department representatives to Blackstone in May 1941 had started the ball rolling. The vicinity was under consideration as a possible site for an Army camp as the war clouds on both sides of the world grew rapidly darker and the nation's preparedness program got underway.

On 25 June 1941 the Land Acquisition Division, Soil Conservation Commission had opened offices in Blackstone under the direction of James E. Donahue. Mr. Donahue began immediately the appraising of the land included in the plots of the camp. Important assistance was rendered by the Norfolk and Western Railway, who's main line, served the site in the acquiring of the desired land.

Wiley and Wilson, consulting engineers, made their report to the War Department on 5 December 1941 while the Japanese fleet was steaming toward Hawaii, and 14 days later the War Department ordered construction of a camp on the site.

Preliminary work was underway early in January, and by the latter part of February hundreds of workmen were swarming over the site selected for the cantonment area. Already the nucleus of the military personnel had arrived. Tractors and bulldozers roared as they leveled and excavated the red Virginia soil, railroad workmen sped the laying of sidings and spurs, and carload upon carload of building materials was rushed in.

A minor miracle of speed – part of the greater miracle of American mobilization for war – was wrought in the quiet Virginia countryside during those early months of 1942. In a period of something under five months, the verdant acres were transformed completely into an Army Camp capable of housing approximately 38,500 troops, and providing them with facilities for learning to use the weapons and tactics of modern warfare.

Architect engineers for the camp were the firm of Wiley and Wilson of Lynchburg, Virginia. Their draftsmen laid out the plans for the reservation, surveyed the land to locate the warehouse area, the railhead, the cantonment area, the hospital, the utilities, and the training facilities, and their engineers supervised the construction.

Principal contractors for the construction were the firm of Grannis, Higgins, Thompson and McDevitt of Charlotte, N. C. A score of sub-contractors was involved before the job was done.

The whole project was under the supervision of the Army area engineer, Captain M.C. Fox, and his military and civilian staffs.

Thirteen thousand carpenters, plumbers, electricians, metal workers, steam-fitters, masons, every type of construction workers, were called on as work went forward 24 hours a day. The need was urgent. It must be done in the shortest possible time. The workers put in a total of 13 million man hours before the camp was ready for formal dedication.

Blackstone suddenly bulged with the newcomers. Resident's of the town, many with sons and husbands already serving in uniform, consolidated their own living quarters and opened their homes to renters, but they could not begin to accommodate the throng of construction workers and the hundreds of new employees of old and new business establishments in the town. They spilled over into the adjacent farm homes, and still further into all communities within the radius of 25 to 30 miles. These homes and communities, meanwhile, were themselves providing many of the civilian employees who were constructing the camp and later would aid in its operation.

The camp buildings ere for the most part of the temporary frame construction known as "mobilization type," and were painted in grim, mottled camouflage style. A considerable number of the tarpaper "theatre of operations" type of buildings added to the capacity of the cantonment area. Buildings to house the camp utilities, including the filtration plant, the incinerator, and the like, were of a permanent brick and concrete construction.

Without waiting for the building of the camp to be completed, and while the reservation was still swarming with workmen, trucks, and bulldozers, Camp Pickett tackled its job of training men to fight the Axis powers.

The first military personnel arrived in January 1942, with Lieutenant Colonel Edgar F. Padgett, QMC, as senior officer in temporary command. Colonel Padgett, with 32 years of service as a commissioned officer and civil service employee of the War Department quartermaster division, came to Camp Pickett 6 January 1941 form Third Corps Area Headquarters in Baltimore, Md., to direct the establishment and organization of the 1318th Service Unit and its affiliates, and later to serve as quartermaster and director of supply for the post.

During the late winter and early spring of 1942, the military personnel who were to operate the new post were assembled, living and working in the first buildings completed.

In the midst of the ordered confusion of these days of construction and organization, Colonel D. John Markey, veteran of World War I and a Maryland National Guardsman, arrived on 24 March 1942 to take command of Camp Pickett. He held that position until this retirement on 30 September 1943.

To Colonel Markey fell the major task of establishing a military organization at Camp Pickett capable of meeting the vast demands to be made upon it during the war years. He did not have long to wait before those demands took definite form.

By the first week in May, the 79th Infantry Division, scheduled for reactivation at Camp Pickett, had already begun to take shape here as Major General Ira T. Wycke, the commanding general, and his staff arrived with the nucleus of the division cadre. General Wycke was joined almost immediately by Brigadier General Geoffrey P. Baldwin, assistant commander, and Brigadier General Augustus M. Gurney, artillery commander. Not long afterward came the first of the non-divisional special troops, including units medical, signal, quartermaster, and engineer soldiers, all wearing the shoulder insignia of the 2nd Army headquarters here. On the 18-21st of June the Medical Replacement Training Center moved from Camp Lee and established itself in a third of the Camp Pickett cantonment area.

The Post Headquarters building was occupied on 13 June 1942 with scarcely a noticeable interruption in the work of the officers and enlisted men who staffed it. On Flag Day, 14 June, the permanent post colors were dedicated in the plaza in front of Post and Division headquarters buildings. The water filtration plant had already been completed in May, and the post quartermaster laundry had begun operation a week or two earlier. There was still mud, and everywhere about were piles of scrap lumber. The sound of carpenters' tools still predominated over the more martial tones of drill sergeants' commands, but the cantonment area was rapidly taking shape.

While barracks and recreation buildings, officer's quarters and warehouses, headquarters structures and hospital wards were springing like magic from the red earth, crews were swarming over the outlying areas, cutting roads, laying out ranges, building target pits and firing embankments. Work was going forward rapidly on the long concrete dam on Nottoway River, six miles south of Post Headquarters, which was to impound seven hundred fifty million gallons of water covering 40 acres to provide a water supply not only for Camp Pickett but for the nearby town of Blackstone as well.

Three other artificial lakes within the reservation also came into the master plan for providing training facilities and recreation for the thousands of troops who were to be trained here. Twin Lakes, comprising 30 acres, is located about six miles northeast of Post Headquarters, and provides good fishing and bathing. Tommeheton Lake, of 40 acres, is five miles east of Post Headquarters, providing excellent fishing but closed to troops most of the time because it lies within the impact area of the ranges. Birchin Lake, a 30 acre body of water which is most accessible of the four, is about three miles southeast of Post Headquarters, has good fishing and boating, with natural bathing facilities improved by construction of piers, bath houses, and a sandy beach.

An impact area of some 20,000 acres – almost half the reservation – was laid off, and around its perimeter were constructed firing ranges for the training of troops in the use of every weapon up to and including the 155mm howitzer. Light and medium artillery observation posts on the hilltops directed the fire. Rifle, pistol, and carbine known – distance and transition ranges were constructed along with facilities for anti-tank fire practice. Ranges were built for rocket, sub-machine gun, and tank and grenade practice, village fighting, and woods combat. An infiltration course was constructed to accustom men to the sound and feel of overhead fire.

Nature and generations of farming had provided broad areas within the reservation which were admirably suited for construction of tank traps, road blocks, and field fortifications by the trainees, as well as for maneuvers, marches, and other field exercises. The terrain, while not rough, was sufficiently varied to give units extensive opportunity to develop skills in the field.

So extensive were these areas and facilities, that the 45th Infantry Division was able to take the field in its entirety for a three-day problem in the spring of 1943, making a simulated beach landing against defending troops of the 2nd Army and advancing through fields and woods from the "beach" to take their objectives.

Utilities were a major portion of the construction problem of the post, for Camp Pickett was to be a military city, virtually self-contained and providing its own services.

The water supply system, for example, had to be equivalent to that required for a city of 75,000 to 100,000 population. The dam, constructed on Nottoway River within the reservation early in 1942, impounded sufficient water of suitable quality for all camp purposes. A pumping station forces the raw water, which is treated semi-monthly by depositing chemicals on a cross-section system over the entire reservoir area, to the filtration plant approximately seven mile away. The plant, of the rapid sand type, was built near the station hospital, on the edge of the principal cantonment area, to have a filter capacity of 5,000,000 gallons every 24 hours. A million-gallon clear will for treated water is part of the filtration plant, and the water is pumped from that well into approximately 99 miles of distribution mains. Connected to this system of mains are three elevated storage tanks with a total storage capacity of 1,050,000 gallons of filtered water, thus providing a constant standby storage of 2,050,000 gallons of filtered water at all times.

Of similar magnitude is the camp's sewage system which, incidentally, provides another good example of the cooperation of the Army with nearby communities. For the sewage pumping plants of Blackstone and Victoria, adjoining towns which have carried a large part of the load of housing civilians employed in the camp, and the families of military personnel stationed here, are connected with the camp's sewage disposal system, and the sewage of those two communities is pumped into camp for treatment.

The sewage system consists of some 55 miles of collecting mains and one separate treatment plant of the digestion type, of the most modern design, where treatment of the sewage is controlled by laboratory analysis.

The two facilities, operated by the Post Engineer, give a clue to the vast planning and construction job necessary to make Camp Pickett a healthy, livable place for soldier trainees and later for wounded combat veterans. The Engineer also operates the post refrigeration plant, of type GS-1, with 120 connected horsepower compressors; the gasoline distribution system which consists of nine dispensing stations with one main bulk pumping station and about seven miles of distribution mains; the hospital heating plant, which has an 1800-horsepower boiler and supplies steam at 110 pounds pressure to the entire hospital system; the post laundry boiler plant, of 624 connected horsepower, which furnishes steam at 120 pounds pressure to the Class V laundry, which has a capacity of 20,000 troops daily, or 18,000 bundles a week.

Under construction in those spring months of 1942 also were the 37 miles of hard-surfaced roads and 125 miles of gravel stabilized or soil roads, making use wherever possible of existing roads. Approximately 11 miles of railroad trackage were laid to the camp's railhead to facilitate the movement of men, material, and supplies via the Norfolk and Western Railway.

Nor were these all the services which must be provided for. There was the post bakery, utilizing modern equipment, with a capacity of 23,000 pounds of bread a day. A dozen chapels to provide religious services for all major denominations and sects; a Field House for indoor athletics and large entertainments, seating 4,000; seven motion picture theaters with total seating capacity of 6,200; a large amphitheatre, seating 8,000; for outdoor entertainments; a horse shoe shaped stadium, capable of holding 20,000 for outdoor athletic contests and large ceremonies; several smaller outdoor amphitheatres – all these were in the plans to make Camp Pickett a complete installation where the religious and recreational needs of men could be adequately met.

The foregoing does not by any means list all the factors which had to be considered in the laying out and building of Camp Pickett. Rather does it provide a glimpse of the magnitude of the tasks, the better to emphasize the miracle of the speed and completeness of the construction job in those early days of America's participation in World War II.

SECTION III

DEDICATION

THUS IT WAS that by summer of 1942 little more than five months after the ground was broken for the first building, Camp Pickett was already deep in its task of training men for war and was ready to be dedicated to the cause for which America was fighting the greatest war in history.

Those who planned the dedication were not unmindful of the heritage of courage, hatred for oppression, and willingness to fight for an ideal which strengthened the hands and hearts of the young soldiers of 1942.

The new installation had been named Camp Pickett to honor the memory of the gallant Confederate leader, Major General George Edward Pickett, whose ill-fated charge on the bloody field of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, on 3 July 1863, holds a unique place in the history of warfare.

It was to be dedicated to the cause of a re-united nation in ceremonies at 1500 on 3 July 1942, exactly 79 years to the day and hour after the launching of the valiant charge by Pickett's division of gray-clad men against the Federal positions on the heights of Gettysburg.

Dr. Douglas Southall Freeman, Richmond, Virginia, editor, historian, and Pulitzer Prize winner, wrote this brief sketch of General Pickett for the pictorial booklet, "This is Camp Pickett" published in 1943 by the Camp Pickett Public Relations Office:

"George Edward Pickett, whose name was given this camp, had Richmond, Virginia, as his birthplace and Quincy, Illinois, as the scene of his early schooling. Appointed to West Point from Illinois, he was graduated in the class of 1846 and was sent almost immediately to Mexico. In the Vera Cruz Campaign, he displayed the courage that distinguished every stage of his subsequent career. He was the first to go over the parapet of Chapultepec and to raise the American Flag over the fortress.

"His later duty in the United States Army was marked by a fine and intelligent but inflexible adherence to orders. largely through his firmness, a clash with Great Britain over the occupation of San Juan Island, Puget Sound, was avoided.

"When Virginia seceded from the Union in April, 1861, he resigned his commission as captain in the United States Army and placed his sword at the disposal of this native State. Steady advancement made him a brigadier general

in February, 1862, and a major general in October. Wounded at Gaines' Mill, he recovered in time to head his division on the march into Pennsylvania. At Gettysburg, July 3, 1863, he sent his division forward in the charge against the center of the Federal position and he so directed charge against its advance that all the brigades converged flawlessly on their objective. They were repulsed with ghastly losses.

Thereafter, until the summer of 1864, Pickett was on garrison duty and was engaged in an effort to rebuild his shattered division. It fought at the siege of Petersburg, and at Five Forks, 1 April 1865, it was almost destroyed again. Pickett went to Appomattox where he surrendered 9 April 1865.

“His distinction as a soldier was the sanity of his discipline, the magnetism of his personality and the high spirit of his troops. The army of 1862 called his men the “Game Cock Brigade.” Its fighting deserved the compliment.

The theme of the impressive ceremonies held that day in the newly completed stadium was a two-fold one the example of courage and determination set by the camp's namesake and his men in that long-ago battle, and the heritage of the same martial qualities passed on to the men of the new 79th Division by their forerunners who won fame for the unit during the first World War. For the occasion itself combined the dedication of Camp Pickett with the formal re-activation of the 79th.

A galaxy of important state and national figures, civilian and military, was hand for the big occasion, and more than 20,000 persons including the troops of the 79th, of the 2nd Army, and of the 1318th Service Unit, filled the stands and overflowed onto the freshly turfed field.

Eleven descendants of General Pickett gathered, too, to see honor done to their valiant ancestor. Among them were Lieutenant George E. Pickett, III, grandson of the Confederate commander; his wife and three children; Cadet George E. Pickett, IV, student at West Point; and Misses Virginia and Suzanne Pickett, all of Fayetteville, North Carolina; and Charles Pickett, III, great-nephew; Charles Pickett, IV, USNR, great-great-nephew; Edward Watts Pickett; Mrs. Henry Clay Pickett, the little girl's grandmother; and Miss Sophie Johnston Pickett, Fairfax, Virginia, only living niece of the General.

Colonel D. John Markey, commanding officer, opened the ceremonies at three o'clock, after the thousands of troops had marched into the stadium and taken their seats, to the music of the 79th Division and Medical Replacement Training Center bands. After the welcome there was a pause, and exactly at 1315 a signal gun was fired just as at the same hour 79 years before a signal gun had sent Pickett's division into the jaws of death and a defeat immortal for its gallantry.

Governor Colgate W. Darden, Jr., of Virginia, reviewed the notable career of General Pickett. Addresses were made by Major General Milton A. Rockford, by Major General Ira T. Wycke, commanding general of the 79th Division; by Brigadier General William R. Dear, commanding general of the Medical Replacement Training Center; by Colonel Leonard S. Arnold, commanding officer of the 2nd Army troops at Camp Pickett; by Lieutenant Colonel John D. Brewster, post operations officer; and by Captain Mark D. Fox, the area engineer.

Colonel Brewster, who was a captain of engineers with the 79th Division in France in the First World War, fighting with them in the Keuse-Argonne and in the St. Mihiel offensives, represented the Seventy-Ninth Division Association, and presented the battle-proven flag of the old 79th to General Wycke in an act of formal re-activation.

Colonel Markey, in dedicating the camp's facilities and personnel to the task of maintaining the record of its illustrious namesake, announced that four of the principal camp streets would be named for Pickett's officers, Garnett, Kemper, and Armistead, brigade commanders, and Dearing, artillery officer. The same scheme has been carried out in the naming of other roads and streets in the camp since that time.

SECTION IV

BASIC TRAINING CENTER

EVEN FROM ITS inception in mid-summer of 1942, Camp Pickett began to serve the numerous needs involved in the preparation and functioning of a hug war machine. This was apparent at the dedication of the camp on 3 July 1942, when 20,000 representative troops of the Medical Replacement Training Center, 79th Infantry Division, 2nd Army Special Troops, and Services Unit forces were present to witness the official opening of what was soon to become one of the largest installations of its kind on the east coast.

White German Field Marshal Rommel was on the offensive in North Africa and the Soviet Union was in the process of evacuating the city of Rostov before the Nazi eastern blitz, the creation of what was to become one of the greatest fighting forces the world had known was taking form in the military centers of the United States.

In its embryonic stage the vast area of 43,000 acres that forms Camp Pickett became home to an army that was in its infancy and in somewhat of an embryonic status itself.

SEVENTY-NINTH DIVISION

First among the fighting units to take shape here was the famed 79th Infantry (Cross of Lorraine) Division. A cadre of several thousand formed the 313, 314th, and 315th Infantry Regiments and the 310th, 311th, 312th, and 904th Field Artillery Battalions and began to process and train thousands of recruits and hold them into one of the finest assault outfits in the European Theatre of Operations.

Re-activated in Camp Pickett 3 July 1942 the 79th under the command of Major General Ira. T. Wycke began two months of basic training that served as the foundation for the more arduous days it was to face.

Making seasoned veterans of new soldiers was no simple matter. Before many days passed, the newly completed rifle ranges were already resounding to the practice fire of thousands of rookies, many of whom had never before held a gun in their hands. Being one of the newest rifle ranges in the country it contained features that were infrequently found in other military installations. Among the innovations was a ten-foot dyke that split the range in two and made possible simultaneous long and short range rifle practice. Another feature was the moving target range, making possible a training which provided its value in combat.

Leaving Camp Pickett in late August, 1942, the 79th moved to Camp Blanding, Florida, to undergo further training prior to engaging in 2nd Army maneuvers in Tennessee from April to June 1943. Before going overseas where it landed on the Normandy Coast six days after D-Day, the division tasted of the desert in Camp Laguna, Arizona.

Although it began its combat duty with the First Army, the division saw action with all four armies in the European Theatre of Operations, and included among its many achievements several “first.” It was the first unit to reach the Belgian border, the first to reach the Rhine River, and the first to penetrate into Germany at Lauderburg. Credited with five battle stars, it is one of the few infantry divisions to have remained under the same commander throughout its training and combat periods.

The division fought through Normandy, Northern France, the Rhineland, Central Germany, and Czechoslovakia and is reported to have had almost 90 percent of its infantry personnel replaced as casualties.

MEDICAL REPLACEMENT TRAINING CENTER

Arriving at Camp Pickett almost simultaneously with the 79th Division were several thousand cadre and trainees of the Medical Replacement Training Center, moving here from Camp Lee, Virginia. The medical soldiers marched the 35 miles from Lee to Pickett in three days and two nights, saving 5,000 gallons of gasoline and 300,000 tire miles “in the interest of the national welfare,” according to Brigadier General William R. Dear, its commanding general.

General Dear took command of the MRTC at Camp Lee 28 May 1941 and initiated a highly geared training program which reached its peak at Camp Pickett. During its 16 months at Pickett the MRTC trained some 150,000 medical soldiers.

Primarily a training center for medical field men, the MRTC also established and operated a number of specialist schools for cooks and bakers, clerks, ambulance drivers and mechanics, non-commissioned officers, and pre-officer candidates.

The training period of the average MRTC soldier lasted 13 weeks, during which he qualified as one of the following: ambulance driver, litter bearer, administrative or clerical worker, mess sergeant, cook, baker, or supply worker. The greater portion of trainees became medical field soldiers, aides to surgeons in field or basic hospital units or aid stations, and in general were trained to “cut the casualties of the combat troops to an absolute minimum and to conserve the army’s fighting strength.”

All of the field training was carried on under conditions as realistic as the situation and ingenuity could make them. One of the feats accomplished was the damming up of small stream to form an artificial lake over which the cadre had constructed a cable with pulleys to give the trainees practice in moving a loaded litter over an obstacle.

Stamina and sound physical conditioning were the watchwords in the medical training program. The men took long hikes and overnight bivouacs and when they completed the cycle of thirteen weeks; training they felt like soldiers. General Dear’s 33 years of experience as a Medical Corps officer had taught him the necessity of producing soldiers who had endurance, strength, and courage, as well as technical knowledge. The medical trainee learned that there were other men in the army just as important as the one who carried a rifle – and that he was one of them. He also found that he had to be as tough as any infantryman. On the battlefields of France and Germany and the Philippines and Okinawa, the value of the medical soldier was never underestimated by his fellows.

In addition to this the trainee had to learn the finer skills of first aid. He spent hours in the classroom, becoming familiar with the basic facts of human anatomy. When he had finished the charts and the study of human skeletons and plaster models, he knows about the tibia, femur, and ulna, and how to handle a case of a fractured bone before professional medical aid arrived.

Also include were classed in physiology which encompassed the study of pressure points, blood circulation, and the administration of first aid in wound cases. The use and administration of sulpha and other emergency type drugs, of plasma and of field expedients were added to his store of technical knowledge to be used to save lives and limbs. He qualified in the principles of field sanitation. And whether he was trained as a hospital or field medic; every graduate of MRTC was equipped to do his job.

From the nine battalions which marched from Camp Lee to Camp Pickett the LRTC expanded to 14 battalions by 25 March 1943 and continued to remain at that strength until its deactivation in September 1943.

SECTION V

ADVANCED TRAINING AND STAGING AREA

With the departure of the 79th Infantry Division in August 1942 began a new period in the history of Camp Pickett, relating its extensive training facilities more closely to the great events then in preparation – an Allied offensive in Europe and Africa.

While almost one-half of the cantonment area continued to be devoted to the basic training of medical soldiers and unit training of 2nd Army Special Troops, the divisional cantonment area was to house seven divisions – six infantry and one armored. All these units came to Pickett for their final advanced training before departing for overseas. Five of them ended up in the European Theatre, while two made combat history in the Pacific.

Early in September Camp Pickett became the headquarters of the Atlantic Fleet Amphibious Force, and as such, the core of planning and training for a part of the forthcoming invasion of North Africa. Five Pickett-based divisions trained in amphibious warfare on the simulated assault equipment on this reservation and by actual sea-borne assaults on the sandy beaches of Solomons, Maryland, on Chesapeake Bay.

Preceding their boat and beach landings in the Bay, the divisions trained for a number of weeks on the mock-ups at Camp Pickett. First it was climbing up the net and going over. Then, as the confidence and skill of the troops increased, they shouldered full packs and rifles and climber up one side of the 50-foot towers and down the other, always under the supervision and guidance of men who had trained months ahead of them.

As the troops grew accustomed to the landing nets, rough ocean conditions were simulated and soldiers stationed at the bottom of the towers swung the nets out and back again as they climbed, giving them a taste of what the real thing was like. Just before entraining for Newport News, Virginia, to board ship for their final practice landings, the amphibious infantrymen perfected their techniques in complete blackout at night.

Meanwhile, the soldiers were training in beach assault methods similar to those developed in combat by the U. S. Marine Corps. They learned how to rush from landing craft, and again and again they jumped with packs and rifled from the ramps of simulated assault boats. By that time nautical terms were slipping into the vocabularies of these tough foot soldiers.

All through the pre-amphibious training the divisions were instructed in boat-loading tactics. They learned where their materials would be stored board ship, just what each man's function means to the whole operation.

The ten of fourteen days the troops spent in actual amphibious landings on the Solomons coast put the finishing touches on a long and arduous training period. Here, too, there was practice first by daylight and then in darkness and complete blackout.

Just as in the case of amphibious training, night training became a final feature for all troops scheduled to go overseas. When the resounding fire of the 105 and 155 howitzers began to thunder through the nights, the men were well aware that their turn at shipment was soon to come.

The final training period at Camp Pickett assumed a serious air and throughout their stay here the fighting men who helped to defeat the Axis forces in Africa, Europe, and the Pacific islands were intent upon learning their job and learning it well. This seriousness of purpose paid off in combat.

Four of the divisions, the 45th, 28th, 31st, and 77th took to the Appalachian Mountains of Western Virginia and West Virginia for training in mountain warfare before departing for overseas. Up and down the rugged slopes they maneuvered, toughening their legs, increasing their wind, discovering for themselves the secrets of mountain fighting and how to fight a war with nothing more than they could carry on their own backs and the backs of mules.

Before the divisions left Pickett for ports of embarkation, individual records were brought up to date, the physical unfit were culled out and replacements secured and overseas-bound troops got their final immunization inoculations and their final issue of clothing and equipment. Vehicles of the assault divisions were waterproofed, their exhaust pipes intended, and then were given the final test in a huge concrete tank.

THIRD INFANTRY DIVISION

Arriving in Camp Pickett from Fort Lewis, Washington, in early September, 1942, the Third Infantry (Rock of the Marne) Division was the first to go through the amphibious training at Camp Pickett. It had already completed similar instruction on the West Coast. The Third was first to use the newly built mock-ups (landing towers), and the first to use Pickett as its base while it took amphibious training in Chesapeake Bay.

Under the command of Major General Jonathan Anderson, the Third Amphibious Division rehearsed for its momentous landing on the North African coast at Fedala, where it comprised the center striking force of "Task Force A". With the headquarters of the Atlantic Fleet Amphibious Force at Pickett, and General Anderson as commander of the Third Amphibious Division, the planning for the center striking force in the African invasion took place in Camp Pickett. Here every detail of the now famous landing on the beaches of Fedala, part of the largest amphibious operation up to that time, was developed.

It was during the stay of the Third Division in Pickett that the post reached its peak strength of some 60,000 troops.

The division, for which Camp Pickett served as a port of embarkation, left the post fully equipped and supplied for combat, paused at Camp Patrick Henry on the coast, and boarded troop ships to head for the African coast. Comprising the 7th, 8th, 15th, and 30th Infantry Regiments and the 10th, 41st, 39th, and 9th Field Artillery Battalions, the Third Amphibious Division left here with only first echelon troops.

Remaining behind were the so-called spare parts, organized here into the Pickett, Armistead, and Kemper Brigades. These were rear echelon forces, most of whom performed administrative and supply functions for the combat echelons. The brigades also included anti-aircraft and tank units plus the spare parts of the 2nd Armored and 9th Divisions. These units were under the command of Brigadier General Donald A. Stroh, then assistant commander of the 9th Division. Most of the units followed their parent organizations to Africa shortly after the landings there.

The Third Infantry Division has a combat record that is rivaled by few fighting units. One of the few divisions to have been cited as a whole with the Distinguished Unit Citation, it participated in four amphibious invasions – North Africa, Sicily, Anzio, and Southern France. It has a record for having sustained heavier casualties than any other division, and its troops have earned 32 Medals of Honor in 531 days of combat. One of three Regular Army divisions active at the outbreak of the war, it has been assigned the task of occupation duty on the European continent.

THIRD ARMORED DIVISION

Coming closely upon the heels of the Third Infantry Division, and at first slated to head for North Africa, the Third Armored Division arrived in Camp Pickett in October, 1942, under the command of Major General Leroy H. Watson. The division stayed here until January 1943, and went through a general training period in which it used the reservation's range facilities and maneuver areas to give its tankmen further experience. It also took advance training in preparation for overseas movement. However, with Field Marshal Rommel's Afrika Korps on the run, another armored division was determined not to be needed there.

Moving from Camp Pickett in January, 1943, the Third Armored remained in the United States until September of that year and did not enter combat until the following year. On 28 June, 1944, the division, comprising the 32nd, 33rd Armored Regiments, the 54th, 37th, and 391st Field Artillery Battalions, and the 36th Armored Infantry Regiment, entered combat as part of the First Army in Normandy. To its combat credit have come four "firsts", including first to fire on German soil, first of its type to enter Germany, first in Cologne, and first to capture a German city. Presently assigned to duty in Germany, the division lost its commanding general, Major General Maurice Rose, when he was captured and killed by German troops.

FORTY-FIFTH INFANTRY DIVISION

Just as the Third Armored left Pickett, the famed 45th Infantry (Thunderbird) Division pulled into the reservation's railhead in January, 1943. Coming from the freezing temperatures of Pine Camp, New York, where it had undergone a short period of physical toughening, the 45th was prepared for its final training. It entered immediately upon a period of arduous work, under command of Major General Troy H. Middleton.

At the time of its activation, 16 September 1940 at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, the 45th had 1500 American Indians and included men from the states of Oklahoma, Colorado, New Mexico, and Arizona, comprising the 157th, 170th, and 180th Infantry Regiments and the 158th, 160th, 171st, and 189 Field Artillery Battalions. Profiting from the experience of the amphibious landings of its predecessors on the North African coast, the 46th Division added the Appalachian Mountains near Natural Bridge and Buena Vista, Virginia, to its maneuver grounds and was the first Pickett-based division so trained. Shortly before its departure for the

Mediterranean Theatre of Operations, the 45th received an inspection visit from General George C. Marshall, Chief of Staff, which proved to be one of the high spots of the post's history.

Like the Third Infantry Division, the 45th carried out a dress rehearsal in Chesapeake Bay of its forthcoming amphibious landings, but the 45th struck one step further along the road to victory, on the beaches of Sicily. And like the Third, it left Camp Pickett combat-loaded for a voyage almost direct to its assault objective. The Third and 45th Divisions were destined to fight side by side through the Sicilian campaign, on the beaches of Anzio and in the mountains of Southern France. It became almost a byword that "Wherever you see the 3rd, there you also find the 45th".

The 45th was one of the first infantry divisions to leave the states fully equipped with amphibious ducks, being amply prepared for its four D-Days-beach assaults in Sicily, at Salerno, Anzio, and in Southern France. It was instrumental in the breakthrough from the Anzio beachhead and helped to clear the approaches at Cassino. Its record of 511 days of combat is second only to that of the Third Infantry Division. Out of the Thunderbird Division came the most famous soldier cartoonist of World War II, Bill Mauldin. After drawing for the "45th Division News" in the United States and through Sicily and Anzio, Mauldin transferred to Stars and Stripes in the Mediterranean Theatre, and his work was seen by American soldiers and American civilians through service and civilian papers.

TWENTY-EIGHTH INFANTRY DIVISION

With the departure of the 45th Division came the 28th Infantry (Keystone) Division to utilize the training facilities of Camp Pickett for their final polishing up. With the Allied advance continuing in Italy, more troops were needed for an Allied offensive elsewhere against Germany. Pickett already had contributed two of the most famous combat infantry outfits for assault operations against the Nazi war machine. Now it was to train units for other theatres and later offensives.

The 28th Infantry Division, comprising the 109, 100th, and 112th Infantry Regiments and the 107th, 109, 229, and 108th Field Artillery Battalions arrived in Camp Pickett under the command of Major General Lloyd Brown. During its stay at Pickett, it completed the same type of training as its predecessors here. Moving overseas in October, 1943, it remained in the British Isles until its landing on the Normandy beach July 22, 1944. Known to the Germans as the "Bloody Bucket Division," the 28th scored its big feat during the Battle of the Bulge in December, 1944, when it defended positions against nine German divisions, despite heavy casualties.

* * * *

During this time, also, Pickett bade farewell to the last of the Medical Replacement Training Center personnel. The MRTC, which had been continuing its work of turning out enlisted medics while the rest of Camp Pickett was devoted to advanced unit training, was discontinued in the fall of 1943, its cadre being transferred to other training centers.

THIRTY-FIRST INFANTRY DIVISION

One of the two Pickett divisions scheduled for the Southwest Pacific, the 31st Infantry (Dixie) Division arrived here in October, 1943, on the heels of the 45th and completed its full course of amphibious and mountain training in a little more than four months. Commanded by Major General John C. Persons during its stay at Pickett, the division was made up of the 124th, 155th, 167th Battalions. The components of the 31st Division left Pickett at intervals, sailing for overseas as combat teams.

The division went into action as a whole on the island of Morotai in September, 1944, having earlier won its baptism of fire in two engagements as combat teams. Following its successful push on Morotai under the command of Major General Clarence A. Martin the 31st landed on Mindanao, Philippine Islands, in April, 1945. For its work in splitting the Japanese defenses on Mindanao, the division won the praise of Lieutenant General Robert L. Eichelberger.

SEVENTY-SEVENTH INFANTRY DIVISION

Almost before the Dixie Division men had gotten settled in Camp Pickett, the 77th Infantry (Statue of Liberty) Division arrived, directly from desert training. Under command of Major General Andrew D. Bruce, the 77th early showed the stuff that was to make it one of the outstanding divisions in the Pacific war. Composed of the 305th, 306th, and 307th Infantry Regiments and the 304th, 305th, 306th, and 902nd Field Artillery Battalions, the division took amphibious and mountain training in March, 1944, at the end of four months of general training at Pickett.

July, 1944, found the 77th Division in an assault action on the beaches of Guam, where they overran entrenched Japanese forces who had taken the American island early in the war. After a brief rest, the 77th was sent into Leyte with the mission of landing behind the Japanese lines at Ormoc, and their successful landing and drive inland contributed in large measure to the American victory in that first re-invasion of the Philippines. The division next went into action on Ie, tiny island in the Ryukyu Group, in April, 1945. It was here, while covering the action of the 77th, that Ernie Pyle, famed war correspondent, was killed by enemy fire. Shortly thereafter the 77th moved on to Okinawa where it fought in the final land campaign of the war up to May 21, 1945, when all resistance ended. It was then sent to occupation duty on Honshu Island following Japan's surrender.

SEVENTY-EIGHTH INFANTRY DIVISION

With the departure of the 77th Infantry Division ended the period of Pickett's use as a base for amphibious training. But the value of this big installation as a training base was not gone, and as long as fighting men were needed in the European Theatre of Operations, the cantonment area of Pickett would not be empty.

Arriving in Camp Pickett in April, 1944, the 78th Infantry (Lightning) was fresh from Tennessee maneuvers. Almost immediately it sent many of its men overseas as replacements to the European Theatre.

To fill its depleted ranks it received more than 4,000 replacements from the Army Air Corps and the Army Specialized Training Program – both training programs undergoing sharp curtailment about that time. There was increasingly urgent need for infantrymen in the ETO, and army troops had to be converted and retrained.

After five and half months of extensive general combat training the 78th Infantry Division departed for England and the Continent in October, 1944, and went into action about December 1. Caught in the December German offensive, the division regained its footing by the end of January, 1945, and distinguished itself in a 12-day period of decisive action, helping to establish and hold the Remagen bridgehead over the Rhine. During this time, the 78th captured a dozen German towns, overran approximately 30 square miles of enemy territory, and destroyed 200 Seigfried line pillboxes, taking its place in history beside the other Pickett-trained divisions.

Commanded by Major General Edwin P. Parker, Jr., the 78th Division was composed of the 309th, 310th, and 311th Infantry Regiments and the 307th, 308th, and 309th Field Artillery Battalions.

NON-DIVISIONAL SPECIAL TROOPS

Along with division combat troops and basic trainees of the MRTC, Camp Pickett served as the training area for more than 500 non-divisional units of virtually every type to be found in the Army Ground Forces and Army Service Forces. Even before the official dedication of the camp, special troops of the 2nd Army, under command of Colonel Leonard S. Arnold, had moved into the installation. Consisting primarily of engineer, quartermaster, and medical units, the special troops went through both basic and advanced unit training on the ranges and bivouac and maneuver areas of Camp Pickett. The number of special troops continued to increase and in April, 1943, with the retirement of Colonel Arnold, Colonel Byron Q. Jones assumed command of the headquarters here.

Camp Pickett's special troops later came under the jurisdiction, successively, of the XII Corps, commanded in succession by Colonels Elliot Watkins, Oliver J. Holman, and Roger B. Harrison. The 2nd Army took command of the special troops here again on November 23, 1944, with Colonel Robert O. Wright as commanding officer.

Included among the non-divisional troops trained in Pickett were ASF evacuation and station hospitals, mobile general hospital units, combat engineer battalions, airborne engineers, anti-aircraft units, field artillery battalions, chemical warfare companies, signal companies, firefighting units, quarter bakery, laundry, trucking, gasoline, and other units, ordinance companies of all types, and bands. Unique among the units trained here were a balloon barrage company and two joint assault signal companies, activated here and composed of both Army and Navy personnel for combined operational purposes. The 514th Quartermaster Trucking Company, which became the nucleus of the famed Red Ball Line in the ETO, completed its training at Pickett.

Arriving in March, 1944 after doing coastal defense duty the 113th Infantry Regiment trained and processed several thousand troops to serve as infantry replacements, serving as a basic training center.

When the offensive against Japan was gaining momentum, Pickett served as a redeployment point for two joint assault signal companies, which had completed their job on the beaches of Normandy and whose experience and training were vitally needed in the Pacific. The bivouac areas of Camp Pickett served as a field training ground for more than 5,000 ordinance basic trainees of the Army Service Forces Training Center, Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland.

SECTION VI

THE HOSPITAL CENTER

DEPARTURE OF the 78th Infantry in October, 1944, left activity at Camp Pickett at a low ebb – the lowest since the first truckloads of workmen began to pour into camp. And when the last 2nd Army Special Troops entrained on January, 1945, and the last overseas unit of Army Service Forces troops, the 83rd Field Hospital, followed them by only two days, the post was virtually dead, indeed.

This state of affairs did not continue for long, however. In orders dated January 30, 1945, the War Department announced its plan to enlarge hospitalization facilities by establishing four temporary general hospitals, and one of these was to be located at Camp Pickett, Virginia, gotten underway in early February than a Convalescent Hospital was established.

The first hospital train pulled into the Camp Pickett railhead some ten days alter, bearing 194 veterans of the European Theatre of Operations, ill or wounded. Some were able to walk from the train into the receiving station, set up in a warehouse, and board ambulances for the hospital. Others were brought up in a warehouse, and board ambulances for the hospital. Others were brought but on litters. Once the flow of patients began, it continued without interruption, several shipments arriving by train each week and other shipments of a few at a time flying in to Blackstone Army Air Base in hospital planes.

Medical personnel, officer and enlisted, at the former Station Hospital meantime were called upon for maximum effort to convert the institution, which had been largely idle and closed with only the station complement personnel to care for, into a full-scale General Hospital. Medical officers and nurses, enlisted Men and WACS, civilian employees and borrowed help threw themselves into the Herculean task of reopening, cleaning, and furnishing the closed wards. Repairs and improvements, including concrete sidewalks to each ward, linoleum floor throughout, and sealing of the miles of corridors, were rushed at maximum speed as the early patients poured in.

The bed capacity was increased from the previous 2,012 of Station Hospital days to 2,700 by opening a dozen wards formerly occupied as barracks by hospital overhead personnel.

Colonel Leonard W. Hassett, veteran Army surgeon who had been post surgeon and commanding officer of the Station Hospital, was immediately designated to command the General Hospital.

Colonel Hassett, who came to Pickett as a battalion commander with the Medical Replacement Training Center in 1942, was named to command the Station Hospital December 21, 1943. He was appointed Post Surgeon February 5, 1944, and he remained as Post Surgeon and in command of the General Hospital until immediately prior to his death July 25, 1945.

The first flurry over, the General Hospital settled down to providing for the combat veterans the finest medical, surgical, and psychiatric care possible. It functioned through these main divisions and services: Mess and Dietetics Division, Medical Detachments of enlisted personnel, man and women, Adjutant, Registrar, and Supply Division; and Nursing Service, Medical Service, Reconditioning Service, Surgical Service, Laboratory Service, Dental Service, X-Ray Service, and Out-Patient Service (operating post dispensaries, providing prophylaxis stations, and operating pharmacy.)

Colonel Hassett was succeeded as General Hospital commanding officer by Colonel Oramel H. Stanley for a short period and then by Colonel Neville H. McNerney.

A total of approximately 15,000 patients, most of them orthopedic cases, were treated at the General Hospital. To handle this work load the hospital was staffed with 60 medical officers and 200 nurses, as well as medical technicians among WAC' and enlisted men, and civilian clerical and ward assistants.

Tons of plaster of paris was used in casts for the thousands of broken limbs treated at the hospital, and the hospital's own orthopedic brace shop made 1,200 braces, each tailored for a particular patient.

CONVALESCENT HOSPITAL

Following close on the heels of the establishment of the U.S. Army General Hospital at Camp Pickett came an order setting up a 5,000 bed Convalescent Hospital on the post.

As soon as the two were in operation, their activities were brought under the supervision and coordination of the Hospital Center, which consisted only of a headquarters with a commander and an adjutant, his staff and a liaison officer.

The Hospital Center was first commanded by Colonel Frederick H. Potters, Buffalo, New York, himself a veteran of 29 years as a medical officer and nearly 32 months in the Southwest Pacific. He was succeeded by Colonel Oramel H. Stanley, who moved to the command from his post in charge of the U.S. Army General Hospital here.

Lieutenant Colonel John D. Brewster, on loan from the post, was the activating officer for the Convalescent Hospital when its first 17 patients arrived on February 16, 1945. On February 28 Colonel Frederick H. Potters arrive to take permanent command, and when he, Colonel Potters, was moved to command the Hospital Center exactly a month later, Colonel Henry S. Blesse was made commanding officer of the Convalescent Hospital.

The hospital has processed almost 12,000 patients, keeping them from two to four weeks and giving them during that time a course in physical reconditioning carefully attuned under the direction of medical officers to their individual needs, and choice of a wide variety of exploratory and prevocational courses in practical subjects. For the most part the patients were discharged from the service through the hospital's own disposition company at the conclusion of their reconditioning courses.

The Convalescent Hospital is housed in an area of the cantonment area which had been constructed originally for the Medical Replacement Training Center, and the usual barracks and headquarter buildings in the area were supplemented with a number of classroom buildings and warehouses admirably suited for conversion to use in the hospital's educational programs.

More than a million and a quarter dollars was expended in a program of complete renovation of the area to house the Convalescent Hospital. All buildings were repainted a cheerful cream, eliminating the grim war-time camouflage paint. Barracks were remodeled inside to provide more room for each man, and were sealed and painted. Grounds were landscaped and a new drainage system installed. Circular fire escapes were constructed for each barracks.

In line with the basic philosophy of the Convalescent Hospital, which called for a program to readjust and reorient the wounded and ill combat veterans to civilian life or to return to active duty, emphasis was placed upon counseling services and the educational and physical reconditioning programs. Woodworking shops,

machine shops, mechanic shops, art and photographic studios, shops for practical work in house construction, electrical wiring, plumbing, metal work, and schools in blueprint reading, home planning, interior decorating – these are only a part of the courses that were in operation.

Meantime, a huge five-acre athletic field, equipped for a dozen outdoor games, half a dozen smaller athletic fields similarly equipped, and six remedial gymnasiums were constructed so that the convalescent soldiers could be carefully led back to full strength and vigor.

The hospitals handle principally men whose homes were in the Third Service Command the states of Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia.

SECTION VII

SERVICE COMMAND FUNCTIONS

FOR HALF a million men and more Camp Pickett was a home for time before they sailed across the Atlantic or the Pacific to put to the acid test the training and conditioning they had received. For many thousands, as has been seen. Camp Pickett was the last base before the Port of Embarkation. For all, Camp Pickett was a place where they learned to shoot straight and fast, to drive their trucks or build their bridges or operate their radar or repair their ordnance, or carry out whatever their specialized jobs might be; a place where they grew tough and hard from long marches and innumerable trips over obstacles courses.

Camp Pickett was a place where they trained for weeks or months for the job ahead and in the case of many thousands of them the place where they received the new clothing and new weapons, sometimes even the ammunition and field rations, which they would use on the beaches and battlefields.

These men were the product, in part, of Camp Pickett. When they swept successfully up the beaches of Africa, Sicily, Italy, Normandy, New Guinea, Morotai, Guam, and Leyte, they won with the weapons and the skills which Camp Pickett had helped to give them. When they outfought and outlasted the Italians and Germans and Japanese, they called upon the stamina and endurance acquired in long, weary hours and days of strenuous training on these roads and in these fields and woods.

Hence, their victories were victories, also, for the men and women, soldiers and civilians, officers and enlisted personnel, of Camp Pickett's station complement.

The equivalent of half a division of men and women, typists and warehousemen, range sergeants and bakers, personnel clerks and ordnance repairmen, colonels and captains and sergeants and privates, and civilians participated in those victories and went on working harder to assure more victories.

The principal job of the station complement of Camp Pickett, organized as the 1318th Service Command Unit within the framework of the Third Service Command, was to provide housing, food, training facilities, supplies, and certain services for the hundreds of units and the hundreds of thousands of men trained here.

SUPPLY

The task of supplying the training troops was a major one, and the combined efforts of the post S-4, the Post Quartermaster, the Post Engineer, the Chemical Warfare Service Officer, the Ordnance Officer, the Signal Officer, and other branches were required to accomplish it.

Clothing, field equipment, food, medical supplies, ordnance materials, publications were but part of the long list of materials which were essential to the training and equipping of the troops headed for combat theatres.

Extensive ordnance maintenance shops were established early and gave essential service to the training units.

MEDICAL SERVICES

A large station hospital of the cantonment type was built in the spring of 1942 to provide for the medical needs of the thousands of training troops. First commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Franklin T. Hallam, it was for almost two years under the command of Colonel Leonard W. Hasset, who came to Camp Pickett as a regimental commander with the Medical Replacement Training Center, and served its establishment in January, 1945, until just before his death in July, 1945. Colonel Hasset also served for many months as post surgeon, having succeeded Colonel T. W. Burnette in the task of looking after the health of the troops at Camp Pickett.

The station hospital with its 67 wards and 2,012 beds was equipped to handle every type of illness and injury. Its clinics and laboratories were modern and complete; and it carried on a thorough program of physical and educational reconditioning to speed the complete recovery of sick and injured men.

Another phase of the camp's medical program was comprised in the system of four dental clinics and a laboratory, all under the direction of Colonel Earl L. Hering for a large part of Pickett's history.

WOMENS ARMY CORPS

The Women's Army Corps, and its predecessor, the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, played a major role in the work of Camp Pickett over since the first WAACS arrived here on March 27, 1943 – the 35th Headquarters Company of 127 women soldiers. The WAACS promptly took over jobs in Post Headquarters offices in the Post Motor Pool, in the Quartermaster and Ordnance and Engineer offices and warehouses and shops. Soon there was added a WAAC Medical Company to work at the Station Hospital.

Along with other posts, Camp Pickett celebrated the incorporation of the auxiliary into the Army and the establishment of the Women's Army Corps with a ceremony swearing in the women stationed here on August 6, 1942. Two weeks later a third company, this time of Negro WACS, arrived. With the opening of the U.S. Army General Hospital in early 1945 many more WACS were sent to Pickett, most of them medical technicians.

REHABILITATION CENTER

For a period of almost a year Camp Pickett was the site of a Rehabilitation Center where soldiers who had been convicted and sentenced by courts martial were put through a process of re-training and given another chance to make good as soldiers if they responded to the treatment.

PRISONERS OF WAR

From November, 1943, Camp Pickett housed German prisoners of war, administering during that period two base camps in the Camp Pickett reservation and a maximum of nine branch camps through the central and western portions of Virginia. The total of prisoners held here reached a peak of 6,000 in September, 1945.

The German prisoners under the jurisdiction of Camp Pickett were employed in a wide variety of tasks within the reservation and worked on contracts with civilian employees at such jobs as pulpwood cutting, operation of fertilizer plants, and harvesting and canning of fruits and vegetable crops.

SECTION VIII

BLACKSTONE ARMY AIR BASE

BLACKSTONE Army Air Base operated in conjunction with Camp Pickett throughout the period covered by this history. Construction of the field with four concrete runways, 5,300 feet in length and 300 feet wide, paved taxi strips and parking areas, a hangar equipped for extensive repair and overhauling, fuel storage facilities, suitable headquarters buildings, barracks and a Civil Aeronautics Authority weather station and radio transmitter, was begun at about the same time work began on the camp itself.

The field is capable of handling large transports and bombers.

Located on the Camp Pickett reservation the airfield is under the Post Commander of Camp Pickett for subsistence and maintenance only. The base was constructed as an auxiliary field and was operated by the First Air Force of the Army Air Forces, which maintained a garrison of two training squadrons until the summer of 1945, when the field was inactivated and placed on stand-by status.

During the greater part of 1945 the field was used to some extent by the U.S. Navy, which has made use of the extensive range facilities at Camp Pickett to give its pilots practice in dive-bombing. A small Navy maintenance detachment to service these planes was maintained at the field.

The Air Base is now in operation again.

SECTION IX

INTERIM PERIOD

IN FEBRUARY, 1946, Camp Pickett was placed on a caretaker status with a small permanent staff of military and civilian personnel responsible for the maintenance and security of the post and post property.

Standby status continued until May, 1948, when the advance detachments of the 17th Airborne Division arrived to prepare for the re-activation of that famous wartime unit in August. Until June, 1949, the division was active as a training unit for newly enlisted personnel. Over 12,000 men received their basic training in this organization. Decreases in Army wide strength and post war stabilization of the permanent military establishment necessitated the deactivation of the 17th Airborne Division in mid-1949, when Camp Pickett again reverted to its caretaker role with a small, permanent staff.

In November, 1949, the Post was alerted to prepare to furnish logistical support for the 3rd Infantry Division, scheduled to be a major unit in Operation Portrex. With service support troops added to its normal complement, the Post staged about 10,000 troops from January to March, 1950, when the last of this division closed out.

With the completion of Portrex, preparations were immediately begun to provide facilities for the summer training of the Virginia-Maryland National Guard during July and August of 1950. Major units included the 29th Infantry Division, 176th Regimental Combat Team, and the Virginia Air Guard, totaling about 10,000 troops.

SECTION X

CAMP PICKETT TODAY

CAMP PICKETT was reactivated in August, 1950. The month of August was primarily spent in organization with a constant flow of new officers reporting for permanent assignment. The headquarters sections and other post sections were established and staffed during this month. Strafing and bombing exercises were carried on by the Detachment C, 213th Air Service Group, Virginia National Guard, through the 22nd and 24th. The station Hospital was redesignated as a U.S. Army Hospital. At present it has an authorized strength of 1,500 beds.

In the month of September elements of the 43rd Infantry Division (National Guard) arrived at Camp Pickett. Various post services, such as laundry, clothing sales stores, PX's, and theatres were activated. Also, during this month refresher courses for 43rd Division personnel were given in Ordnance matters. The 43rd Infantry Division completed its arrival about the middle of September. By the end of this month approximately 880 civilians were employed at Camp Pickett.

During the month of September many non-divisional units of the NG and ORC called to active service arrived at Camp Pickett and started their initial AFF training program. The gradual build-up of post strength caused the opening of additional service clubs, theatres, and PX facilities.

In January, 1951, the last of new training courses demanded by the realistic combat training ordered for new units was completed, including infiltration course, a combat village course, and a close-combat course.