

Bird's Eye View of Camp Lewis, Washington



Photographed by Boland and Parikh, Camp Lewis, Washington

THIS MONTH in MILITARY HISTORY

- 1898 23 The "Rough Riders" being their landing at Daiquiri, Cuba.
- 1903 11 Douglas MacArthur graduates from the U.S. Military Academy and is commissioned.
- 1916 12 American Expeditionary Forces clash with federal Mexican forces at Carrizal.
- 1942 9 The Battle of Midway results in a decisive and game-changing American victory.
- 1943 2 The Tuskegee Airmen fly their first combat mission near Tunisia.
- 1944 6 The D-Day Invasion, as the Allies make their first gains in France.
- 1965 7 GEN Westmoreland submits his request for 44 battalions deployed to Vietnam.
- 1991 8 A victory parade is led through Washington D.C. following Operation *Desert Storm*.
- 2003 16 Abid Hamid Mahmud al-Tikriti, Saddam's right hand, is captured by British forces.
- 2006 7 Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, Osama bin Laden's replacement, is killed in Iraq.

TRIVIA

- 1 After establishing Camp Lewis what was one thing that flew at the Camp that Tacoma residents took pride in?
- 2 When was Camp Lewis renamed to Fort Lewis?
- 3 What is the difference between installations with Camp as their title instead of Fort?

ANSWERS FOR MAY 2022 QUESTIONS

- 1 You can still visit Cher Ami to this day. What museum is he displayed in?
➤ The Smithsonian Institution
- 2 During what major WWI battle did the "Lost Battalion" earn its name?
➤ The Meuse Argonne offensive
- 3 Speaking of Jeeps what was the average life expectancy of a Jeep in WWII?
➤ Average expected lifespan in the field was 90 days.



The 91st Division's distinctive "Fir Tree" patch was selected to show its Pacific Northwest roots. However this was only decided in the waning days of the war due to an AEF directive. Decided by the Division's primary Staff Officers in a destroyed Belgian bar. Given limited tools the Fir Tree was decided upon because of the accessibility of a Christmas tree cookie cutter and a wrecked pool table where the first patches were cut from.



Trivia answers, digital newsletters, and more history is available on the ASC History website:

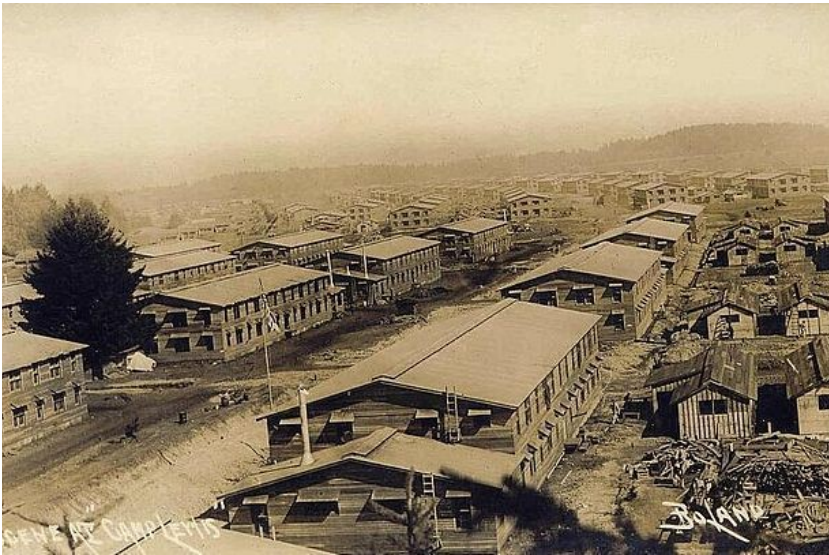
<https://aschq.army.mil/About-Us/History>

1. Camp Lewis museum website.
2. ASC historian (previous 91st Training Division historian).

Camp Lewis, Washington

In late 1916, Major General J. Franklin Bell, Commander of the Western Department of the U.S. Army, began to investigate possible sites for a military post in the Pacific Northwest to train its Soldiers. The American Lake area, through the encouragement of local advocates, was identified as a possible location. Captain Park, escorted by the local advocates, visited the area and found it acceptable. General Bell would later inspect the potential location and was impressed describing it as: "...the most magnificent field I have ever seen for military maneuvers." After much effort community leaders voted to pass a bond for 20 years to raise \$2,000,000 to purchase 70,000 acres to be donated to the federal government for use as a military base. This act would create the U.S. Army installation eventually known as Camp Lewis which would have the unique distinction of being the first military installation in the history of the U.S. to be created as the direct result of an outright gift of land by citizens themselves. It became the property of the United States Government when the deed for 62,432 acres was recorded in the County Auditor's Office in Tacoma. The deed provided that in the event the U.S. should ever cease to maintain the tract for the uses named, title to the land would revert back to County ownership.

On 3 April 1917, just three days prior to the U.S. entry into World War One, surveying would begin on the cantonment. Construction would begin on 5 July 1918 and in the first three days the first building was finished. In the next 90 days 10,000 contractors built 1,757 buildings and 422 other structures, lighted, plumbed, and heated. Streets, roads and railroad spurs were underway. The camp stood ready for its planned 50,000 men. General Orders Number 95, 18 July 1917, declared the National Army Camp at American Lake, Washington, to be named Lewis, in honor of Captain Merriwether Lewis, Commander of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Camp Lewis was the first National Army cantonment for draftee training to be opened. The 91st Infantry Division would be the first Division to be trained with over 37,000 Soldiers on Camp Lewis by the end of 1918. The 13th Infantry Division would follow the 91st however the 13th was still in training when the Armistice marked the end of the war.¹



"Powder River, Let'er Buck!"

The 91st Infantry Division was officially constituted on 5 August 1917 at Camp Lewis, Washington, and was made of volunteers and inducted Soldiers from primarily the Pacific Northwestern states. These Soldiers would earn reputations as hard fighting cowboys, on and off the battlefield and soon affectionately referred to as the "Wild West Division." The Division's motto would be this cowboy tradition "Powder River, Let'er Buck!" The story goes that as the fresh Soldiers were exiting the train and making their first formations a lone cowboy still wearing his leather chaps and carrying his saddle. A 91st Division Officer yelled to him where he was from, in an attempt to direct him to the right mustering area, the cowboy responded that he was from "Powder River, Let'er Buck" followed by cowboy "hooting and hollering" as the saying was a common greeting for people from the Powder River area in Wyoming. The Division would be responsible for establishing much of the infrastructure. The Division Surgeon COL Peter C. Field would found the first official hospital on the Camp Lewis as one of the many examples.

Following the completion of training the Division would live up to their "Wild West" persona by routinely getting into fights with the English sailors manning the ships carrying them to France. The Division would go on to serve in a reserve role during the St. Mihiel offensive and would see their first combat as one of the front line divisions during the Meuse Argonne. The Division would also have the distinction of being one of four American Divisions to serve in Belgium under British Command.²



History is being made every day at this command.

Presented to you by your friendly ASC History Office. Feel free to call or stop by our office for any of your history needs.



Kevin Braafladt
Mark Struve

Command Historian
Assistant Historian

kevin.d.braafladt.civ@mail.mil
mark.j.struve.civ@mail.mil



ASC.PUB 870-1