

CAMP WOLTERS:
A HISTORY OF THE US ARMY'S RELATIONSHIP
WITH MINERAL WELLS, TEXAS
1940-1946

by

STACY ELIZABETH CROUSHORN

THESIS

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Supervising Committee:

Gerald Saxon, Supervising Professor

Stephanie Cole

James Sandy

Abstract

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Stacy Elizabeth Croushorn, M.A.

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This thesis focuses on the impact that the US Army camp, Camp Wolters, had on Mineral Wells, Texas during World War II, while turning out an estimated 250,000 soldiers. The US military opened numerous training camps across the nation during the early 1940s in preparation for the possibility of war; Mineral Wells, Texas was selected as a site for an Infantry Replacement Training Center (IRTC) for the Army. An IRTC trained soldiers to replace regular soldiers that were missing from their combat assignments, and also trained them in some specialty. This camp site became the largest IRTC in the nation, turning out 17,000 soldiers per cycle. The length of a cycle changed over the course of the war, from thirteen weeks to fourteen weeks, then seventeen weeks.

When the Army arrived in November 1940, Mineral Wells had a population of 6,303. By 1945, the population had increased to 11,000. The town grew into a city almost overnight and continued to grow. The city built new water and sewer systems, added more schools, increased

the police and fire personnel, and was running out of houses faster than they could be built. During construction of the camp, the weekly payroll was over \$700,000 and reportedly the largest in the state. After construction, the soldiers had a weekly payroll of \$600,000, and Mineral Wells provided them with a wide variety of ways to spend their well-earned money. This money would cause a significant growth in the Mineral Wells economy. In 1941, the banks of Mineral Wells had a combined total deposit of \$3,035,057.36.¹ In 1946, the banks of Mineral Wells had a combined total deposit of \$8,252,856.00, or an increase of 171.9 percent.²

This thesis argues that Camp Wolters played a vital role in the defense of the country during WWII by training 8-10 percent of all replacement soldiers and, at the same time, transformed Mineral Wells into a thriving, robust city. This thesis uses a number of primary sources, including US Government records, Congressional acts, presidential papers, historical newspapers, and oral histories. Secondary sources include monographs, scholarly articles and dissertations, historical websites, and contemporary newspapers. The National Archives were closed due to COVID-19.

¹ “County Banks in Fine Condition,” *Palo Pinto County Star*, 64, April 25, 1941, 43, 1.

² Robert French, “Scholastic Population of Palo Pinto County Specified Years 1935-46,” *An Economic Survey of Palo Pinto County*, 1948, 4.1701, Table 1.

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This study may not have been possible if not for the work of Col. Willie H. Casper, Jr. His forethought for keeping memoranda, newspaper articles, mementos, talking with veterans and former civilians who worked at the camp led to his multivolume set, *A Pictorial History of Fort Wolters*, which is the only work devoted to the camp. Without his work, much of the history of Camp/Fort Wolters would be lost. I also want to thank the members of the Fort Wolters Historical Committee for all their endeavors in keeping the memory of Camp/Fort Wolters alive. The staff at the Boyce Ditto Library in Mineral Wells could not have been nicer in assisting me with microfilm and other local resources. They are wonderful people and really come through for their patrons. Thanks also goes to the staff at the Briscoe Center for American History, located at the University of Texas at Austin, for allowing me to borrow their microfilm longer than normal. No words can describe how thankful I am to the Special Collections Library at the University of Texas at Arlington, especially to Troy Christenson, who obtained digital copies of materials that were essential to this study.

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Dedication

Dedicated in loving memory to my parents,

Capt. George A. Croushorn, USAF,

and

June Shewmake Croushorn.

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Prologue

This study has been a very personal project for me. Growing up in the small town of Mineral Wells, Texas I frequently heard people talk about a place called Fort Wolters and wondered what they were talking about. As a child I thought Fort Wolters was a city, much like Fort Worth, but since my family never went to it, it had to be far off. As I grew older, I learned that Fort Wolters had been a military camp east of Mineral Wells, that my father had met my mother there before they were married, the buildings were still there, crumbling, but mostly standing, and it still had decent roads for teenagers who wanted to practice driving, but that ended my knowledge of the place, and I had no desire at the time to learn more. It was not until college that someone asked where I was from and upon learning I was from Mineral Wells they responded, “Oh, that’s by Fort Wolters isn’t it?” and I was dumbstruck that they knew of such an obscure place. It turned out that their father had trained there during the Vietnam War. I told my mother about this and how shocked I was that somebody knew about this mostly deserted place, she laughed and proceeded to tell me about Fort Wolters and how it played a role in our family’s history. The roots of this study come directly from that conversation.

I came to learn a great deal more about Fort Wolters, and my family. Originally, Fort Wolters had been Camp Wolters, a training camp for the Texas National Guard. During World War II the Army took over the camp, greatly enlarged it, and trained troops there to be sent overseas. My grandfather and great uncles worked on getting the camp ready for the incoming trainees. My grandfather had been a laborer and worked on various projects around the camp, and one of my great uncles helped build the firing range. Then the Army left when the war was over but re-opened the camp during the Korean War. This time it was Wolter’s Air Force Base,

more precisely a Special Category Army Reassigned With Air Force (SCARWAF) base. My father had been assigned there before going overseas. He met my mother there, married her, and that was the beginning of our family. The Army came back to Wolters and said they needed the camp to train helicopter pilots for Vietnam, and the Air Force transferred the base back to them. The Army promised that Camp Wolters would be a permanent installation and would never close. They re-named the camp Fort Wolters because of its permanent status. Fort Wolters became the Army's Primary Helicopter Training School during the Vietnam War. My mother, aunt, and multiple family members were civilian employees of the Department of Defense during that time. In 1975, at the end of America's involvement in the war, the Army broke its promise and closed Fort Wolters, leaving acre upon acre of deserted buildings and desolate land. Oil companies and manufacturers took over some of the buildings, but the base remains an empty shell of itself to this day. That "empty shell" is what I grew up knowing. Yet my mother told me stories of celebrities visiting, presidents and elected officials inspecting the troops, the streets of Mineral Wells being so packed that it took an hour to drive through downtown, big bands playing concerts at the Baker Hotel that were broadcast coast to coast, and the name of Mineral Wells being known throughout the country. Every so often, the local newspaper, the *Mineral Wells Index*, would run an article about the history of the town, or include photographs from the past, and I would eagerly read and cut out everything that was printed to verify my mother's story. I felt like I had found an alternate universe where the world had revolved around Mineral Wells, and I was only one of a handful of people who knew it ever existed. I wanted to tell others about my discovery; since I had "re-discovered" this era, I began to feel responsible for it and could not let this part of Mineral Wells be lost again. It became my mission, my responsibility, to somehow share what I had learned about Fort Wolters and "old" Mineral Wells. I decided to go

back to school and pursue a graduate degree in history so I could learn how to share my information and how to dig for more information about the past. What started as a conversation has now become a passion and that is why this study now exists.

When I began graduate school, I knew that I wanted to write about Fort Wolters and Mineral Wells, though I had no idea how to frame my research question or even what my research question was going to be, so I just started researching. I poured over every website on the Internet, I went through every database that I could access, I searched for any kind of media that had the words “Fort Wolters” or “Camp Wolters” in it. I did find some truly useful information and found that a lot of information was missing. For example, the Briscoe Center for American History, located at the University of Texas at Austin, had a roll of microfilm that contained the Camp Wolter’s newspaper for white soldiers, *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, from June of 1943-December of 1945, missing the critical first two years of the camp (the camp newspaper was first published July 24, 1941). But, online websites, such as fortwolters.com, a historical enthusiast site, had images of some of the 1941-42 camp newspapers that could help fill in the gaps. No copies of the African American soldiers’ paper, the *Bugle*, could be found.

One of the most desired pieces of this puzzle that could not be found were past copies of the town newspaper, the *Mineral Wells Index*. I visited their office in 2013 and was told that they had given all their past copies to the city library. I asked the city librarian if I could see the past copies of the newspaper and was informed that they had been shipped to the University of North Texas where they were to be scanned and added to the university’s history website, the Portal to Texas History. Currently, their site has copies of the *Index* mostly from the 1980’s-2018, with a smattering from previous decades; there were only two issues from the 1940’s. I recently

contacted the Portal to Texas History and spoke with their Imaging Lead asking to view the Index from 1940-1946. After checking their inventory, I was told that there is no material between 1925 and 1949.³ In a way, this shouldn't be a surprise, considering all the paper drives, and such, that happened during the WWII era, but it was quite a blow. On a more positive note, the county newspaper, the *Palo Pinto County Star*, was on microfilm at the Mineral Wells library, and is now on The Portal to Texas History website. Both newspapers are now shuttered. The *Historical Dallas Morning News* database has been invaluable. They had a reporter stationed at the base that reported on Camp/Fort Wolters through all its transformations. Newspapers.com provided access to copies of the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* during the 1940s which were also highly valuable to this study.

The Palo Pinto Historical Society has several books on the history of the county and Mineral Wells. Most of their information focuses on the early settlers and the health resort days, with passing attention given to Camp/Fort Wolters. They did publish one book, actually a thesis, that has aided in determining the true date the military came to Mineral Wells. The book, "A History of Mineral Wells, Texas 1878-1953," by Winnie Beatrice McAnelly Fiedler, a local historian who taught at the high school for several decades.⁴ She submitted this thesis for her Master of Arts degree in History at the University of Texas at Austin in 1953. She was able to talk to many of the leading residents and businessmen, including those that had helped bring the National Guard and Army to town. Colonel Willie Casper, Jr., who was a commander at Fort Wolters during the Vietnam era, collected material from all the different periods of Camp

³ Personal email of author with Ana Krahmer, Director of Digital Programs at The Portal to Texas History, on March 25, 2021, and Brooke Edsall, Imaging Lead of Digital Newspaper Unit on March 30, 2021.

⁴ Winnie Fiedler, "A History of Mineral Wells, Texas, 1878-1953" (MA thesis, University of Texas, 1953): reprinted Palo Pinto Historical Society, 2016.

Wolters and gave his multi-volume set of historical information to the city library. It is also accessible through the Portal to Texas History website.

I contacted local government offices, Palo Pinto Commissioners Court, Palo Pinto Sheriff's Office, Palo Pinto District Court, Palo Pinto County Clerk, and the Mineral Wells Police Department, looking for information during the 1940s. I was extremely disappointed in their responses. While all were courteous, only the County Clerk had some information from this period. I was told that the records are in extremely fragile condition and cannot be handled by the public, but they are working on digitizing their records, working backward, and are currently in the 1990's.⁵

The search for official records from the Army about Camp/Fort Wolters led to the National Archives at College Park, Maryland. I corresponded with several knowledgeable staff members who did locate digital and archival materials for my use. Unfortunately, this was during the COVID-19 pandemic and the archives were closed to researchers and the public. The digital materials were sparse, consisting of raw answers to a survey that Camp Wolters soldiers participated in called "American Soldier Surveys" and building specifications. This was quite another blow to my study; without this archival information I was not able to get certain specific information and numbers, but it was not an end to the study. A great deal of information can be gleaned from the materials I was able to gather, and even though I may not be able to give a specific number as to how many selectees were trained at Wolters during WWII, I am able to give an educated approximation based on the number of selectees that the facility could hold, the length of the training period, the date when selectees first arrived, and the date that the last

⁵ Telephone interview with Amanda Figueroa at the Palo Pinto County Clerk's Office on May 18, 2021.

selectees finished their training cycle. More on this will be addressed in Chapter Three, “Fighting a World War: Wolters’ Role in the Training Replacement System.”

Despite all the information I had found in newspapers, journals, online, and in various books there has not been one “academic” source that focused solely on Camp/Fort Wolters.⁶ I was disappointed about this because it seemed that no one had cared enough about these thousands of men and women who had worked, sweated, and even died to defend our country, to tell their story. I felt this was wrong and had to be corrected. Then I wondered, how does one cover almost seventy years of history adequately in a master’s thesis? After some thought, I concluded that one does not attempt to deal with all this information in a single thesis; each era deserves its own study. I have begun the process and hope other historians will pick up from where I have left off. There was little information about Camp Wolters when it was a National Guard camp, but a good deal was found about the WWII era. This is my chosen area of focus.

⁶ While Colonel Casper’s collection includes “authoritative” information, there are many gaps, and he does not include analysis. However, without his work to build on, this study may not have been possible.

Introduction

The emphasis of this thesis is Camp Wolters, an Infantry Replacement Training Camp (IRTC) in Mineral Wells, Texas during WWII, and the impact it had on the town of Mineral Wells and the residents of Palo Pinto County. It explores the growth of Mineral Wells while Camp Wolters was open, 1941-1946, and attempts to bring understanding to this ‘boom’ time. It is hoped that a clearer sense of this historical period can be revealed and preserved for future generations.

Texas was home to 175 military installations during WW II, and all left their mark on the surrounding towns and areas in which they were located.⁷ There have been some studies of military installations across the South during this time period, but very few in Texas, and none on the Infantry Replacement Training Centers. Three of the most important studies include Craig S. Pascoe’s work on Camp Stewart in Georgia, an anti-aircraft training facility, and its impact on Hineville, Georgia,⁸ Jonathan F. Phillips’ investigation of the economic benefit between Fayetteville and Fort Bragg,⁹ and William Schmidt’s examination of Camp Shelby on the people of Hattiesburg, Mississippi during WWII.¹⁰ Other historians have written about the impact of the military in relation to the South and Southwest in general, including Pete Daniel, David Carlton, and Charles Sullivan.¹¹ All have made clear that the military changed the face and future of

⁷ Texas Historical Commission, Texas Time Travel website, World War II theme, <https://texasimetravel.com/travel-themes/main-world-war-ii>.

⁸ Craig Pascoe, “The Vastest Tract of Crackerland: Camp Stewart’s Impact on Rural Southeast Georgia,” *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 100, No. 3 (2016): 290-331.

⁹ Jonathan F. Phillips, “Building a New South Metropolis: Fayetteville, Fort Bragg, and the Sandhills of North Carolina” (PhD diss., University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 2002), ProQuest Dissertation and Theses.

¹⁰ William Schmidt, “The Impact of the Camp Shelby Mobilization on Hattiesburg, Mississippi, 1940-1946” (PhD diss., University of Southern Mississippi, 1972), ProQuest Dissertation and Theses.

¹¹ Pete Daniel, “Going Among Strangers: Southern Reactions to World War II,” *Journal of American History* 77 (December 1990): 27. David Carlton, “The American South and the U.S. Defense Economy: A Historical View,” in

whichever area they chose. Only one detailed study of a Texas installation and its economic impact on the city in which it was located has been found, it was conducted by Samuel D. Farris, who looked at a Texas military camp in Bastrop for his master's thesis "The Camp Swift Years in Bastrop, Texas: A Rural Community's Social and Economic Transition into an Urban Military Center." Unfortunately, Farris has not allowed his study to be published.¹² Much work needs to be done on the history of the military in Texas during WWII. Every one of the 175 military installations has a story, a story that involves more than learning drills and how to shoot a B.A.R. gun. These stories involve the people, community, and businesses that made the military want to come to that town, that made life a little happier for the trainees, and that forever changed the citizens of the community.

Since the early 1900's Mineral Wells had been known for its mineral waters that supposedly had curative powers. Mineral Wells has advertised itself as "The Town Built on Water."¹³ Crazy Water, the name of the most famous mineral water sold in Mineral Wells, was marketed as a cure-all for everything from rheumatism to schizophrenia. People from all over came to 'take the waters,' which included drinking water from various wells, taking baths in the mineral water, and relaxing in one of the spas or luxury hotels (see Figure one). Many visitors hiked the surrounding scenic hills, enjoyed donkey rides, listened to an array of live music at the numerous open-air pavilions, played dominoes, and ate seven course meals at the local hotels.¹⁴

Carlton and Peter Coclanis, *The South, The Nation, and the World: Perspectives on Southern Economic Development* (Charlottesville, University of Virginia Press, 2003): 159.

¹² Samuel D. Farris, "The Camp Swift Years in Bastrop, Texas: A Rural Community's Social and Economic Transition into an Urban Military Center" (MA thesis, The University of Texas at Pan American University, 2007), ProQuest Dissertation and Theses.

¹³ "Tourism Well Dry: Town Still Crazy After All These Years," *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, July 16, 1978, 18, Infoweb-Newsbank.com.

¹⁴ Fiedler, 52-58.

While Mineral Wells always welcomed visitors, the relaxed pace they were used to was about to be a fond memory as thousands of workers and then thousands of soldiers came swarming into this drowsy little city at the end of 1940. In mere months, their population tripled, their water, sewage, and school system was pushed to maximum capacity, and their police department, fire department, and sheriff's office were plagued with all types of problems resulting from such a huge influx of people in such a short time. But their banks were thrilled, as the biggest payroll in Texas was heading their way. Mineral Wells would never be the same.

WWII has been studied and scrutinized in a myriad of ways, from the most learned historians to Hollywood filmmakers. One aspect of WWII that gets little attention is the Replacement System. The Replacement System refers to how a soldier is replaced when killed, wounded, transferred, or otherwise absent from his assignment. Without replacement soldiers, an army would make little headway in winning a war. For example, on June 6, 1944, D-Day, the US Army suffered 6,603 casualties, 1,465 of those were fatal.¹⁵ Those soldiers had to be replaced for American strategy in the war to proceed successfully. Their replacements were trained at camps across the US, including Camp Wolters. In "The Procurement of Enlisted Personnel," the authors state that "the continuous replenishment of the national stock of young men with such training was an urgent necessity"¹⁶ The Army had to have replacement soldiers, and they needed them quickly. An Army slogan says that the "Infantry is the backbone of the Army."¹⁷ If this is true, then the Replacement System is the brace that keeps the backbone aligned. A detailed study of

¹⁵ The National WWII Museum at New Orleans, "D-Day Fact Sheet,"

<https://www.nationalww2museum.org/media/press-releases/d-day-fact-sheet-0>.

¹⁶ Robert R. Palmer and William R. Keast, "The Provision of Enlisted Replacements," in *U.S. Army in World War II, The Army Ground Forces, Procurement and Training of Ground Combat Troops* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1948): 29,

<https://archive.org/details/TheProcurementAndTrainingOfGroundCombatTroops/page/n111/mode/2up>.

¹⁷ Army slogan used in advertisements, <https://www.goarmy.com/soldier-life/becoming-a-soldier/advanced-individual-training/infantry.html>.

the Replacement System of WWII is beyond the scope of this paper, but it will be touched on in Chapter Three when it affected the training of the IRTC soldiers.

World War I had been a trying time for the small US Army, and it had shown the Army that there were multiple issues that needed to be addressed, and not just in the Replacement System.¹⁸ From discussions within the War Department that took place after WWI, the idea of a Replacement Training Center (RTC) cropped up. Losing a soldier can turn the tide of a battle, therefore replacement soldiers needed to be highly trained and ready to function in their replacement role at a moment's notice. They would need additional training too, as they lacked the combat experience other members of the unit would have. The idea was that when a unit had an opening, instead of taking a soldier from an existing unit to fill that position, the unit with the opening could request a soldier with the specific specialization that was needed and a replacement with that specific skill set could be directly sent to that unit ready to go as soon as he arrived. It was a bit like having a back-up player ready for when the starter went down. The RTC's provided the replacement soldiers with basic training, taught them a specialization, and prepared them to face combat conditions. By replacing soldiers in this way, positions could be filled with qualified soldiers and fewer units were adversely affected. Previously, soldiers had been transferred from other units to take the position that had become vacant. Replacing soldiers in this way created a hardship on not only the unit who needed a soldier, but also on the unit that had provided the replacement.

¹⁸ The U.S. Army had numerous problems before and during World War I, including no mobilization activity before announcement of war, limited materiel and resources, lack of well-trained reserve officers and regular Army personnel, and no formal structure to provide the leadership and coordination that such a massive undertaking would demand. Roger Spickelmier, "Training of the American Soldier During World War I and World War II" (MA thesis, University of Missouri, 1979), <https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a185226.pdf>. Also see, Richard Faulkner, "Gone Blooey: Pershing's System for Addressing Officer Incompetence and Inefficiency," *Army History*, 95 (Spring 2015): 6-25, and Timothy K. Nenner "John J. Pershing and Relief for Cause in the American Expeditionary Forces," *Army History*, 61 (Spring 2005): 20-33.

The first IRTC's to open were in 1941; they were Camp Roberts (Paso Robles, California), Camp Wheeler (Macon, Georgia), Camp Wolters (Mineral Wells, Texas), and Camp Croft (Spartanburg, South Carolina). All except Camp Croft started receiving trainees in March 1941; Camp Croft would receive trainees in June of 1941. Camp Wolters is touted as being the "Nation's largest IRTC, which at its peak housed 30,000 men at one time."¹⁹ This figure is from April 4, 1941.²⁰ However, Camp Roberts in California came to be the largest IRTC in 1944 with a capacity to house 45,000.²¹ Camp Wheeler in Georgia had a capacity of 25,890 men²² and Camp Croft opened with a capacity for 20,000.²³ Exact numbers of the men that trained at these camps are hard to come by. There is no official site, book, or document that lists this information, and the numbers vary from source to source. Col. Willie Casper, Jr., who was a Deputy Commander of Fort Wolters during the Vietnam era, states "The total number trained at Camp Wolters is unknown due to the number was a wartime TOP SECRET."²⁴

In theory, this new training arrangement seemed to be a workable solution to the Replacement System problems. In the long run there were various issues (quality, quantity, misassignments) that were not adequately addressed and as a result the entire Replacement System almost broke down in December 1944, but it managed to limp along until April 1945, when the war in Europe was nearing an end and replacements were not as in demand.²⁵ At the close of the European war Henry Stimson, then secretary of war, ordered a review of the

¹⁹ Willie H. Casper, Jr., *Pictorial History of Fort Wolters, Volume 1: Infantry Replacement Training Center*, 39, The Portal to Texas History.

²⁰ Casper, 35.

²¹ Camp Roberts Historical Museum, "History of the Base," <https://camprobertshistoricalmuseum.com/history-of-the-base/>.

²² Camp Wheeler web, https://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WM7F0W_Camp_Wheeler_Macon_Georgia.

²³ Camp Croft Infantry Replacement Training Center, "History," <http://www.schistory.net/campcroft/history.html>.

²⁴ Casper, 39.

²⁵ Palmer and Keast, 226-234.

Replacement System. He hired a team of civilian advisors, Dr. E. P. Learned and Dr. Dan T. Smith, to review the Replacement System and make recommendations that would benefit the continuing war in the Pacific. The Learned-Smith Committee found several issues that were later echoed by historians: insufficient planning of personnel and resources, no single agency had authority to oversee the entire system, not enough involvement from theaters and major commands, and ground unit replacements were too easily diverted to other assignments.²⁶ The Army released their history of the Replacement System in 1946 and 1948 and would go into further detail than the Learned-Smith Committee, but drawing the same conclusions.²⁷

Military historians have continued to study and debate the Replacement System with the focus on theory, implementation, and systemic problems, but there has been little to no scholarship on the actual Replacement Training Centers themselves.²⁸ At the end of WWII, the RTC's closed, and there ended a chapter in Army history. The RTC's made a profound and lasting impact upon the thousands of men that were trained there and the communities where the RTC's were located, an impact that can still be felt to this day.

This study uses primary sources consisting of newspaper articles, oral histories, archival materials, and ephemera from the time. Secondary sources are in short supply, but consists of county history books, theses and dissertations, historical websites administered by professional educational organizations (The Portal to Texas History, The US Army Center for Military

²⁶ Palmer and Keast, 234-236.

²⁷ Palmer and Keast, 165-239.

²⁸ Eric William Klinek, "The Army's Orphans: The United States Army Replacement System in the European Campaign, 1944-1945" (PhD dissertation, Temple University, May 2014): ProQuest Dissertation and Theses.; also see Patrick Rice, *Transforming the Army's Wartime Replacement System* (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College, 2008), https://archive.org/details/DTIC_ADA481461.

History, the Library of Congress) and historical websites administered by history enthusiasts (Fort Wolters.com, Global Security.org, Fort Wolters History.org).

This thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapter One, “A Site with a History: Mineral Wells as a Resort, The Texas National Guard, and the Background to the Camp Wolters’ Decision, 1915-1930,” discusses the origins of military presence in Mineral Wells, how it came to be chosen as a home for the 112th Cavalry (later the 56th Cavalry) and summer training grounds for the Texas National Guard. This chapter ends with a brief look at the 1940/41 training maneuvers in Arkansas and Louisiana. Chapter Two, “A World War Comes to a Small Town: The Building of Camp Wolters, 1939-1941,” discusses the pursuit of Mineral Wells for an Army base during 1940, a brief look at the events in Europe that warranted attention from the US, the Selective Service, the actual building of the Army camp, and its effects on Mineral Wells. Chapter Three, “Fighting a World War: Wolters’ Role in the Training Replacement System, 1941-1946,” covers the military and focuses on the goals and reasoning behind the IRTC, the preparations for the first arrivals, the training of the men, expansion of the base, problems within the IRTC training framework, and corrections made. Chapter Four “A Camp Transformed by World War and Changing Times: African Americans, Women, and Prisoners of War, 1941-1946,” looks at the African American troops (1941-1944), arrival of the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps (1943-1945) and the Prisoner of War camp, 1944-46. Chapter Five, “Wolters’ Economic Impact: The Transformation of Mineral Wells,” looks at the effects of Mineral Wells due to the camp and the many visitors it brought to town. The study ends with Chapter Six, “Epilogue: Assessing the Long-Term Impact of Camp Wolters.” It looks back over the study and addresses the failure of the Replacement Center System, discusses the success of the camp, the impact on Mineral Wells, the return of the Army, and areas for more investigation.

This thesis argues that Camp Wolters played a vital role in the defense of the country during WWII and, at the same time, transformed Mineral Wells into a thriving and bustling city. The importance of having well-trained, qualified replacement soldiers during WWII was of key concern during the war. Keast writes that by the end of 1945, “For every two men in a unit, three had been trained in a replacement agency.”²⁹ Without the replacement centers, of which Camp Wolters was the largest for the majority of the war, three-fifths of the US Army would not have been trained and adequately prepared to fight against the battle tested Wehrmacht.³⁰

Back on the home front, Mineral Wells began to bounce back from the effects of the Great Depression. By the end of the WWII era (roughly 1946-1950), population for Mineral Wells increased 8.3 percent,³¹ the yearly income³² for Palo Pinto County increased 78.3 percent,³³ and county retail sales receipts increased 64 percent.³⁴ With this monetary increase came a 59.8 percent increase in new home sales,³⁵ an updated and improved septic and water system,³⁶ improved community centers and recreational facilities,³⁷ and an expanded school

²⁹ William R. Keast, *Provision of Enlisted Replacements: Study No. 7* (Washington D.C.: Historical Section Army Ground Forces, 1946): 1, <https://history.army.mil/books/agf/AGF007/index.htm>.

³⁰ “Their Wehrmacht was Better than our Army,” *Washington Post*, May 5, 1985, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/1985/05/05/their-wehrmacht-was-better-than-our-army/0b2cfe73-68f4-4bc3-a62d-7626f6382dbd/>. This article was authored by historian Max Hastings who has written several books on World War II.

³¹ *The Texas Almanac 1941-1942* (Dallas, Texas: A.H. Belo, 1941): 493, The Portal to Texas History, and *The Texas Almanac 1947-1948* (Dallas, Texas: A.H. Belo, 1952): 507, The Portal to Texas History.

³² “Income” as defined by the *Texas Almanac* means “The sum of individual incomes of all people of county named.” “The figure on income is from Sales Management.... This magazine, which is widely accepted as a market authority, bases its estimates of county income on income tax returns, retail sales, and similar factors.” *Texas Almanac 1939/1940* (Dallas, Texas: A.H. Belo, 1941): 386, The Portal to Texas History.

³³ *The Texas Almanac 1941-1942* (Dallas, Texas: A.H. Belo, 1941): 493, The Portal to Texas History, and *The Texas Almanac 1945-1946* (Dallas, Texas: A.H. Belo, 1952): 489, The Portal to Texas History.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ This is the difference between dwelling units reported in 1940 and those reported for 1950 (*Texas Almanac 1952-53*, 97), The Portal to Texas History.

³⁶ “City’s Bond Indebtedness is Reduced, Water Works Bond Now Around \$417,000,” *Mineral Wells Index* 14, 105, 1, 1, February 20, 1946, The Portal to Texas History.

³⁷ “U.S.O. Plans New Centers in Mineral Wells,” *Palo Pinto County Star*, October 24, 1941, 1.

system.³⁸ Not only did Camp Wolters help win WWII, but it paved a bold and bright future for the “Town Built on Water.”³⁹

³⁸ “Federal Funds OK’d for 2 Schools in Texas,” *Dallas Morning News*, March 17, 1944, 2, Infoweb-Newsbank.com.

³⁹ “Tourism Well Dry: Town Still Crazy After All These Years,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 16, 1978, 18.

Chapter One

A Site with a History: Mineral Wells as a Resort, The Texas National Guard, and the Background to the Camp Wolters' Decision, 1915-1930

After WWI military leaders in the United States realized that there needed to be more coordination among the different parts of the Army, and that the training programs needed improvement and modernization. At this time, the Army consisted of three segments, the regular or professional Army, the National Guard, and the Organized Reserves. After military leaders discussed what needed to be changed within their organization, they spoke with political leaders to pass legislation which would bring about these changes. Congress then passed the Defense Act of 1920, which increased the number of men in the armed forces, attempted to bring the training of the different Army groups into line with each other, and required planning for mobilization in the event of another war.⁴⁰ With this increased effort in training came federal money for training camps, uniforms, and supplies for the National Guard. This resulted in the establishment of many National Guard training camps around the country, including Camp Wolters in Mineral Wells, Texas, the summer training camp of the Texas National Guard (TNG or Guard).

The TNG established an infantry company and began using Mineral Wells as an armory in 1915.⁴¹ When federal money became available for the Guard to use, they decided to establish

⁴⁰ US Congress, *The Statutes at Large of the United States of America from May 1919-March 1921*, Vol. XLI (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1921): 759-812, <http://home.hiwaay.net/~becraft/41Stats653.pdf>.

⁴¹ There are conflicting dates concerning the original TNG interest in the Mineral Wells area. Many websites and secondary sources use the date of 1921 or 1925. In her thesis, *A History of Mineral Wells, Texas 1878-1953*, Winnie Fielder says that an infantry company was formed in early 1915 and was designated as "I" Company of the Fourth Texas Infantry. In the *Scrapbook History of Mineral Wells and Palo Pinto County*, Bess Woodruff includes a news article that states, "Military operations first started in Mineral Wells in the early part of 1915 when an Infantry company was organized and designated as Company "I," Fourth Texas Infantry." The oldest newspaper documentation located online was in a newspaper clipping from the *Dallas Morning News* dated May 26, 1916, referring to Company "I" of the TNG from Mineral Wells. In a photograph of the 112th Cavalry Band the caption

more permanent training facilities and began looking for the most appropriate area. With the Guard already in the Mineral Wells it was logical that the town would like to become home to a larger, more permanent facility. The economic impact of such an arrangement could be quite favorable. Holding the annual summer encampment of the Guard gave a city an opportunity to earn some of the \$300,000 in pay and subsistence monies the TNG allocated for this training.⁴² Mineral Wells had many features that benefitted the Guard. It was easily accessible by train, as the Weatherford, Mineral Wells, and Northwestern Railroad opened in 1891 and had a large depot (see Figure 1).⁴³ The T&P (Texas and Pacific Railway) bought out the line in 1902.⁴⁴ The motorcar was welcome in Mineral Wells too as it became the midpoint on the Bankhead Highway, the nation's first highway that stretched coast to coast.⁴⁵ Mineral Wells was regionally known as a "spa resort town," had multiple amenities, and had been welcoming visitors for years.⁴⁶ The mineral waters of Mineral Wells had been drawing crowds of health seekers since 1881, which was before the town was laid out.⁴⁷

states that a unit of the TNG had been established on West Mountain in Mineral Wells in 1919. The *Pictorial History of Fort Wolters, Volume 23*, states, "1921- the 56th Cavalry Brigade of the Texas National Guard was organized and used the Rock Creek/Mineral Wells areas as field training areas." *The Historical and Pictorial Review: National Guard of the State of Texas 1940*, comments that land had been donated to the state for use as a permanent camp in 1926 but does not mention an earlier date. A mention of the TNG having an earlier settlement date in Mineral Wells can be found in the *Honey Grove Signal* from May 4, 1923. It describes eight carloads (freight cars) of horses and equipment being received by the 112th Cavalry of Mineral Wells and "Stables for the horses have been built adjoining the armory." While an exact date is unclear, Fiedler cites a personal letter from a member of the 112th Cavalry, W.P. (Bill) Cameron, stating that "...in early 1915..." the TNG organized in Mineral Wells. Early 1915 is as close to a specific date as possible.

⁴² "Texas Items," *The Schulenburg Sticker* 30, 40, 2, June 13, 1924; Schulenburg, Texas, The Portal to Texas History.

⁴³ Fiedler, 74.

⁴⁴ "The Weatherford, Mineral Wells, Northwestern Railroad Depot in Mineral Wells," photograph, 1890? The Portal to Texas History.

⁴⁵ John Lumpkin, *Texas Highways*, "Explore Vintage Highways on a Bankhead Highway Daytrip," December 28, 2020, <https://texashighways.com/travel-news/explore-vintage-texas-on-a-bankhead-highway-day-trip/>.

⁴⁶ Janet Mace Valenza, *Taking the Waters in Texas; Springs, Spas, and Fountains of Youth* (Austin, Tx.: University of Texas Press, 2000): 8.

⁴⁷ Valenza, 74.



Figure 1: The Weatherford, Mineral Wells, and Northwestern train at the Mineral Wells Depot, 1899. Mineral Wells had reliable train service and could accommodate several thousand people at once. Both would help bring the Texas National Guard to Mineral Wells, and later, the Army. The Army would build a branch off this railroad that went directly into Camp Wolters. <https://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/lake-mineral-wells/trailway-1>.

Valenza refers to this early period (1890-1919) as the “Golden Age” of health resorts in Texas, and Mineral Wells was one of the largest spa resort towns during this time.⁴⁸ She notes that for a town of roughly 8,000 people, Mineral Wells had over 150,000 visitors a year.⁴⁹ She continues that Mineral Wells “became the model for new resort towns.”⁵⁰ Not only did people come to Mineral Wells for the health benefits, but they came to be entertained too. Mineral Wells

⁴⁸ Valenza, 39-40.

⁴⁹ Valenza, 40. Valenza’s population for Mineral Wells in 1900 is incorrect. The population was 2,048. See William Hunt, “MINERAL WELLS, TX,” <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/mineral-wells-tx>.

⁵⁰ Valenza, 74.

offered all sorts of attractions to keep visitors from getting bored. There were donkey rides going up East Mountain, hiking trips, motor car scenic tours, bowling alleys, nickelodeons, swimming pools, manicured gardens, saloons, barber and hair salons, playgrounds for the children, multiple bandstands, and an amusement park, Elmhurst Park. Elmhurst Park had over a hundred acres, its own lake with boats to rent, multiple cafes, dancing pavilions, bandstands, “high-class vaudeville” entertainment, a skating arena, a merry-go-round, and a 1500 seat casino (see Figure 2).⁵¹ In 1920, Mineral Wells had earned the moniker “The South’s Greatest Health Resort.”⁵² Many well-known entertainers, celebrities, and athletes came to Mineral Wells for a rest or for the health benefits, including D.W. Griffith, Will Rogers, Spanky McFarland, Minnie Pearl, General John J. Pershing, and the town became training camp to the Chicago White Sox, Philadelphia Phillies, Cincinnati Reds, St. Paul Saints, Dallas Steers, Fort Worth Cats, the House of David baseball teams, and the St. Louis Browns.⁵³ Numerous organizations held their annual conventions in Mineral Wells. Fiedler states that “twenty to thirty major organizations” held their annual conventions there.⁵⁴ Among these organizations were the Texas Medical Association, both the State Republican and Democratic Conventions, the General Baptist Convention of Texas, the Texas Bar Association, and the Texas Chamber of Commerce.⁵⁵ What all this meant was, Mineral Wells was no stranger to having thousands of visitors and showing them a good time.

⁵¹ Valenza, 76.

⁵² William Hunt, “Mineral Wells, TX,” <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/mineral-wells-tx>.

⁵³ Gene Fowler, *Crazy Water: The Story of Mineral Wells and Other Texas Health Resorts* (Fort Worth Tx: Texas Christian University Press, 1991): 51, 62 and Bess Woodruff, *Scrapbook History of Mineral Wells and Palo Pinto County*, The Portal to Texas History.

⁵⁴ Fiedler, 93.

⁵⁵ Fiedler, 93.



Figure 2: The Casino at Elmhurst Park was a favorite of many entertainment destinations in early Mineral Wells that was frequented by health seekers, convention goers, and the general public, A.F. Weaver Collection, The Portal to Texas History.

Another fact in favor of Mineral Wells was W.P. (Bill) Cameron. Cameron was supply officer in the 112th Cavalry, but his day job was being business manager for the *Mineral Wells Index*, one of the town's newspapers. He also was a good friend of General Jacob Wolters, Commander of the 56th Cavalry Brigade, who had a say in where the cavalry was permanently housed and spent their summer training (see Figure 3).⁵⁶ Mineral Wells made a good case for their selection and General Wolters made his announcement on January 15, 1927, that Mineral Wells was his decision.⁵⁷ Fiedler states that "Cameron was instrumental" in getting Wolters to settle on Mineral Wells.⁵⁸ On February 24, 1927, the state accepted fifty acres near Mineral Wells in Palo Pinto County⁵⁹ and expressed their gratitude in writing to the Mineral Wells Chamber of Commerce and the donors of the property.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Fiedler, 122.

⁵⁷ Untitled, *Mineral Wells Index*, March 12, 1927, in *Mineral Wells Index*, "The Creation of Camp Wolters," March 25, 2012, 9. This was reprinted in the *Mineral Wells Index* in 2012 from the original story that was published in 1927.

⁵⁸ Fiedler, 122.

⁵⁹ Fiedler states that the camp location is approximately three miles from downtown Mineral Wells, 121.

⁶⁰ Hans P.M.N. Gammel, *The Laws of Texas 1927*, Vol. 25 (Austin, Tx.: Gammel's Book Store): 487-488. This brings up a conflict about the acreage offered. In his dissertation on the TNG, Krenek finds that the actual acreage was a lease, not a property gift. Krenek writes that "...the Mineral Wells Chamber of Commerce paid for the cost of a ten-year lease on 120 acres and the cost of an easement on 1,600 acres..." for the TNG use (see footnote 62). He cites the *Journal of the Adjutant General of Texas*, 1927, 11. This makes sense because Wolters had turned down a



Figure 3: Jacob Wolters, General in the Texas National Guard that brought a permanent guard facility to Mineral Wells. Camp Wolters would be named after him, Nesbitt Memorial Library Archives, <http://www.texasescapes.com/VintagePhotos/Timeless-Men-of-Colorado-County-Texas.htm>.

The federal government was able to allocate \$25,000 for the new encampment.⁶¹ This included fourteen mess halls, five bath houses and sixteen latrines, construction of a water and sewage system, and a supply building.⁶² The state paid \$1,100 for a storage building at the site.⁶³ Facilities were ready by July 10, 1927, when the TNG received fifty carloads of horses for use during the summer training session.⁶⁴ By July 22 all troops had arrived and paraded in front of

previous offer from the city of Waco for “fifty acres for the camp, a ten- year lease on ninety-five more acres, forty acres for a target range, use of a large area for maneuvering...and light, water, and telephone service to the camp for free.” Even though Wolters may had been influenced to take the Mineral Wells offer by his friend, it would stand to reason that the Mineral Wells offer should be as good, if not better, than the Waco offer. Krenek later states that, “a fifty-acre tract of land two miles north of Mineral Wells was deeded to the State for use as a permanent training camp for the 56th Cavalry Brigade. The State was also given a ten-year lease on an additional 120 acres and an easement was provided on a 1,600-acre tract for use as a maneuver area.” He acknowledges the fifty acres, but still lists the additional leased lands as being part of the agreement. Whatever the entire offer was, Mineral Wells’ deed of fifty acres was accepted, signed off by the governor, and was the only part of the offer officially recorded.

⁶¹ Fiedler, 122.

⁶² Harry Krenek, “A History of the Texas National Guard Between World War I and World War II” (PhD diss., Texas Tech University, 1979): 49, ProQuest Dissertation and Theses.

⁶³ Krenek, 49.

⁶⁴ “Guardsmen at Mineral Wells,” *Dallas Morning News*, July 10, 1927, 7.

the governor and other representatives for official review.⁶⁵ Summer training lasted two weeks and was held every July.

The camp was named after the Commander of the 56th Cavalry, Jacob Wolters. He was an enigmatic figure that led the cavalry on some of its most harrowing missions.⁶⁶ Wolters joined the TNG as a private in 1891 and retired as a Brevetted Major General in 1934. He is considered “the Father of the present Texas Cavalry.”⁶⁷ Camp Wolters remained the TNG summer training ground from 1927 until the last training camp was held in 1940 before the outbreak of WWII.



Figure 4: The Entrance to Camp Wolters built by the CCC in the later 1930s. The US Army would pass through these gates as it inspected the camp for the possibility of locating one of their Infantry Replacement Training Centers there, A.F. Weaver Collection, The Portal to Texas History.

⁶⁵ “Governor and High Officials Review Parade,” *Dallas Morning News*, July 23, 1927, 1.

⁶⁶ Brevet Major General Jacob Franklin Wolters, a life-long Texan, was an attorney, soldier, state legislator, author, political strategist, leader, and “Father of the Present Texas Cavalry.” Born September 2, 1871, Wolters grew up in the town of Schulenburg, Texas; he was the oldest of seven children. Wolters joined the Texas National Guard on May 31, 1891, studied law at Add-Ran College (later Texas Christian University) and was admitted to the bar on May 20, 1892, in La Grange, Texas. In November 1892 he was elected Fayette County Attorney. He participated in the Spanish American War, World War I, and in multiple militia actions in Texas between 1919 and 1932. He wrote two books, *Dawson’s Men and the Meir Expedition* in 1927 and *Martial Law and Its Administration* in 1930. In 1925 he chose a site close to Mineral Wells as the home for the Fifty-Sixth Cavalry which he commanded. Camp Wolters was named in his honor. He retired from the Guard in 1934 and returned home to his family in Houston but continued working as legal counsel for the Texas Company (later Texaco) until his death at the age of 64. He died October 8, 1935. Texas National Guard. *Historical and Pictorial Review: National Guard of the State of Texas, 1940*. 1940; Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 429; Frank Lotto, *Fayette County: Her History and Her People*, 1902; Sticker Steam Press, Schulenburg, Texas: 231-235 and 298-300; David S. Walkup, “Wolters, Jacob Franklin,” *Handbook of Texas Online*, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/wolters-jacob-franklin>; Texas Military Forces Museum. “Hall of Honor; Jacob F. Wolters,” <http://www.texasmilitaryforcesmuseum.org/hallofhonor/wolters.htm>.

⁶⁷ Texas National Guard. *Historical and Pictorial Review: National Guard of the State of Texas, 1940*. 1940; Baton Rouge, Louisiana, The Portal to Texas History.

The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Company #1811 came to Camp Wolters on June 17, 1933, and stayed until January 2, 1934.⁶⁸ They improved much of the camp, including covering the buildings with a rock veneer, constructing mess halls, barracks, and warehouses.⁶⁹ The Works Progress Administration (WPA) allotted \$33, 958 for improvement to the camp during 1937-38.⁷⁰ This time they built additional stables, laid rock sidewalks, made stone fences, and an entrance gateway (see Figure 4).

Because of tensions in Europe, on August 31, 1940, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) issued Executive Order 8530, which activated the National Guard for twelve months.⁷¹ The Guard reported for duty September 16, 1940 and began mobilizing and training for war. The TNG stationed at Camp Wolters participated in the Louisiana Maneuvers, a massive undertaking of molding 400,000 men into a coordinated, mobile Army.⁷² These maneuvers allowed the Army to gauge the caliber and effectiveness of training on the first soldiers that would hit the ground in the event of war and revise training plans for any new recruits that entered the Army after this point. There would be millions of men in need of training very soon.

The Defense Act of 1920 enabled the TNG to train, supply, and build permanent facilities. When General Wolters chose Mineral Wells as the permanent location for the 56th Cavalry, Mineral Wells leaders enthusiastically embraced this opportunity to promote the town and make the town's attractions known to a wider population. With the spa resort industry on the

⁶⁸ Civilian Conservation Corps Legacy, "CCC Camps Texas," http://www.ccclegacy.org/CCC_Camps_Texas.html.

⁶⁹ Fiedler, 122-123. One of the rock buildings that was built during this time remains on the campus of the current Mineral Wells High School.

⁷⁰ Krenek, 50.

⁷¹ Franklin Delano Roosevelt, *Executive Order 8530*, August 31, 1940, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/executive-order-8530-calling-out-the-national-guard>.

⁷² Mark Skinner Watson, *United States Army in World War II, Chief of Staff: Prewar Plans and Preparations*, (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1991): 183-237, <https://history.army.mil/books/wwii/csppp/index.htm>.

decline, Mineral Wells needed something to fill the economic void. While the Great Depression wiped out whatever financial gains were made during this time, having the TNG camp added to Mineral Wells' appeal as a military town.⁷³ It also helped the town lure a much bigger fish to its little pond in the next decade, the United States Army.

⁷³ The TNG spent \$300,000 annually for the summer training camp. Not all of this went into Mineral Wells coffers, but a great deal did. Camp Wolters was also used as a camp by the R.O.T.C. and various other groups throughout the year. Fiedler states that in 1927 these groups spent an estimated \$175,000 with local merchants (122).

Chapter Two

A World War Comes to a Small Town:

The Building of Camp Wolters, 1939-1941

Tension ran high around the world as the 1930s ended. Two continents were already at war, and the possibility of bringing others into the fray was rising every day. US leaders had to prepare the nation for a war that they did not want but became drawn into. Military leaders made plans to train and supply the Army, while the US President supported and helped pass the first ever peacetime draft. Millions of men needed to be ready if (or when) war came, and they had to have the facilities and equipment necessary for training and actual fighting. The US economy would boom with millions in contracts for supplying of the military. Cities would try to lure military training bases worth millions of dollars to their local economy. Mineral Wells, Texas was one of those cities that wanted an Army base, and they ended up getting one of the largest Infantry Replacement Training camps in the country, based at Camp Wolters. The Army poured money into Camp Wolters getting it ready to train thousands of men, but first an army of workers had to transform the rocky, cedar-lined hillsides into level ground for the building of a camp capable of housing 17,000 soldiers. The construction effort was momentous, and difficulty a constant companion. From days of endless rain followed by knee deep mud, to stores running out of food and people sleeping in shifts because there were not enough beds, it was a time of extremes that Mineral Wells experienced but was well worth the effort as Mineral Wells became an Army town.

Most Americans had hopes that the new decade of 1940s would be much better than the previous decade. The 1930s had been a rough, agonizing decade of loss, fear, and struggle for

survival for the American people. The decade ended on a more positive note with unemployment dropping and the demand for goods increasing as the US began exporting more goods to Europe, which was at war.⁷⁴ The past decade had ended with the two active wars, one in Europe and the other in Asia (the Second Sino-Japanese War). The US was trying desperately to stay out of both conflicts. As the new year progressed and the Allies struggled, the ability of the US to stay out of war became questionable. Government and military officials knew that the US had to be prepared.

In January 1940, the US President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) submitted the yearly budget to Congress with a \$1.8 billion increase for national defense.⁷⁵ Making his case for this increase the day before, FDR said “we prepare to cooperate in a world that wants peace, we must likewise be prepared to take care of ourselves if the world cannot attain peace.”⁷⁶ FDR had sent Germany’s leader, Adolph Hitler, a letter asking for peaceful negotiations between European parties before the outbreak of war.⁷⁷ Hitler had responded, “The possibilities of arriving at a just settlement by agreement are therefore exhausted.”⁷⁸ FDR knew war was coming and he had to prepare the nation. As the war in Europe continued to ramp up, FDR asked Congress for an additional \$1 billion for defense in May.⁷⁹ In August FDR activated the National Guard and

⁷⁴ Christopher Tassava, “The American Economy during World War II,” *Economic History Association*, EH.Net Encyclopedia, February 10, 2008, <https://eh.net/encyclopedia/the-american-economy-during-world-war-ii/>.

⁷⁵ “House Passes Defense Fund,” *Brownwood Bulletin*, 40, 74, 1, January 12, 1940, Brownwood, Texas, The Portal to Texas History.

⁷⁶ Congressional Record of 1940, *Proceedings and Debates of the 76th Congress 3rd Session, Vol. 86, Part 1, Wednesday January 3rd, 1940-February 7th, 1940*, 9, <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/statutes-at-large/76th-congress/session-3/c76s3ch720.pdf>:

⁷⁷ Franklin D. Roosevelt, *Letter to Hitler*, September 27, 1938, in The American Presidency Project, University of California at Santa Barbara, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/letter-adolf-hitler-seeking-peace>.

⁷⁸ Adolph Hitler, *Letter to Roosevelt*, September 27, 1938, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/adolf-hitler-letter-to-president-roosevelt-on-invasion-of-czechoslovakia-september-1938>.

⁷⁹ U.S. Department of State, Publication 1983: *Peace and War; United States Foreign Policy 1931-1941*, Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office 1943, Defense Measures of the United States 1940, <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/WorldWar2/defense.htm>.

Reserves,⁸⁰ and there was much discussion about the passage of the Burke-Wadsworth Act (Selective Service or draft).⁸¹ The act represented potentially the first time in American history that a military draft would come into effect before a declaration of war. It passed on September 16, the new law required all able-bodied men, between the ages of eighteen and thirty-six, to register for possible induction into the military for a twelve-month period. The first round of trainees were selected on October 29; they had until November 18 to prepare to leave for training.

The legislation also had implications for Mineral Wells. Among the multiple provisions was Section 3 (a) which stated,

That no men shall be inducted for such training and service until adequate provision shall have been made for such shelter, sanitary facilities, water supplies, heating and lighting arrangements, medical care, and hospital accommodations, for such men as may be determined by the Secretary of War and the Secretary of Navy, as the case may be, to be essential to public and personal health.⁸²

This one sentence caused a flurry of economic, martial, and social upheaval. The requirement was welcomed by the multiple businesses which benefitted from this act, though defense manufacturers were pushed to limits that had been previously thought unobtainable. The impossible became possible as the public gave the new soldiers its total support. Training and housing an expanded military also employed thousands of workers across the nation, men and

⁸⁰ Franklin D. Roosevelt, Executive Order 8530, *Calling Out the National Guard*, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/executive-order-8530-calling-out-the-national-guard>.

⁸¹ Defense Measures of the United States, 1940, <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad intrel/WorldWar2/defense.htm>.

⁸² Selective Service Act, Public Law 76-783, <https://govtrackus.s3.amazonaws.com/legislink/pdf/stat/54/STATUTE-54-Pg885a.pdf>.

women, a presage of the rearmament that also rebuilt the economy and brought a glimpse of economic hope.

The military needed numerous military camps and training centers to be erected and activated to house and train these men. Not everyone looked favorably upon passage of the draft, but there were men, businessmen particularly, who were anticipating this moment and who were ready to jump at this economic opportunity once the act passed in Congress. The fact was that many states, towns, and businesses were betting their financial livelihoods on passage of this act, as the stronghold of the Great Depression was still being felt across the country. Securing a government contract would enable an individual or business to put the vestige of the Great Depression in their rear-view mirror and focus on a brighter, more secure future.

The passage of the draft did not come as a surprise to the many defense-oriented businesses or municipalities which stood to benefit. Mineral Wells had been discussing how to lure an Army camp to the city since May. This small town of 6,303 people⁸³ held a national reputation for being a popular resort spot that could accommodate 5,000 people at a time⁸⁴ and annually welcomed over 200,000 visitors.⁸⁵ The town boasted two luxury hotels, the Crazy Water Hotel and the Baker Hotel. The original Crazy Water Hotel opened in 1913 but burned down in 1925. A new Crazy Water Hotel opened March 11, 1927, at a cost of \$1,000,000.⁸⁶ The Baker Hotel (see Figure 5) opened November 20, 1929, just weeks after the economic collapse of Wall Street and cost \$1,200,000. It is the tallest structure in Mineral Wells, standing fourteen

⁸³ *The Texas Almanac; 1941-1942* (Dallas, Texas: Belo Publishing): 93, The Portal to Texas History.

⁸⁴ Paul Ord, "National Health Resort Becomes Doubly Famous with Location of U.S. Army's Largest Infantry Replacement Center," in *U.S. Army Speedometer*, 21, 3, 10, March 1, 1941, The Portal to Texas History.

⁸⁵ Ord, 9.

⁸⁶ Fiedler, 96.

stories high, and having 400 rooms.⁸⁷ Both hotels have welcomed numerous celebrity guests including Judy Garland, Clark Gable, Marlene Dietrich, the Three Stooges, Bonnie and Clyde, Lyndon Johnson, Jim Wright, Sam Rayburn, Ronald Reagan, Mary Martin, and many others.⁸⁸



Figure 5: The Baker Hotel 1948, postcard. The Baker Hotel and other developments in Mineral Wells helped promote the city's image as a WWII training site, <http://www.txgenweb.org/postcards/Towns/MineralWells/MineralWellsBakerHotel2.jpg>.

Along with an entertainment infrastructure, the presence of the Texas National Guard camp, Camp Wolters, located just a few miles east of the city, was in the town's favor. Local businessman Fred Brown (see Figure 6) was credited with coming up with the idea that Mineral Wells would be a perfect location for an Army camp and brought the idea up during a session of the Mineral Wells Chamber of Commerce (CoC).⁸⁹ There, the topic took on new life, other

⁸⁷ Fiedler, 119.

⁸⁸ Bob Hopkins, *A Brief History of the Baker Hotel*, August 2002, <http://www.texasescapes.com/TexasPanhandleTowns/MineralWellsTexas/BakerHotelGhosts3BakerHotelHistory.htm>.

⁸⁹ Ord, 6.

members rallied behind the proposal, and the CoC officially endorsed the idea and began forming committees and laying out plans to hook an Army camp.

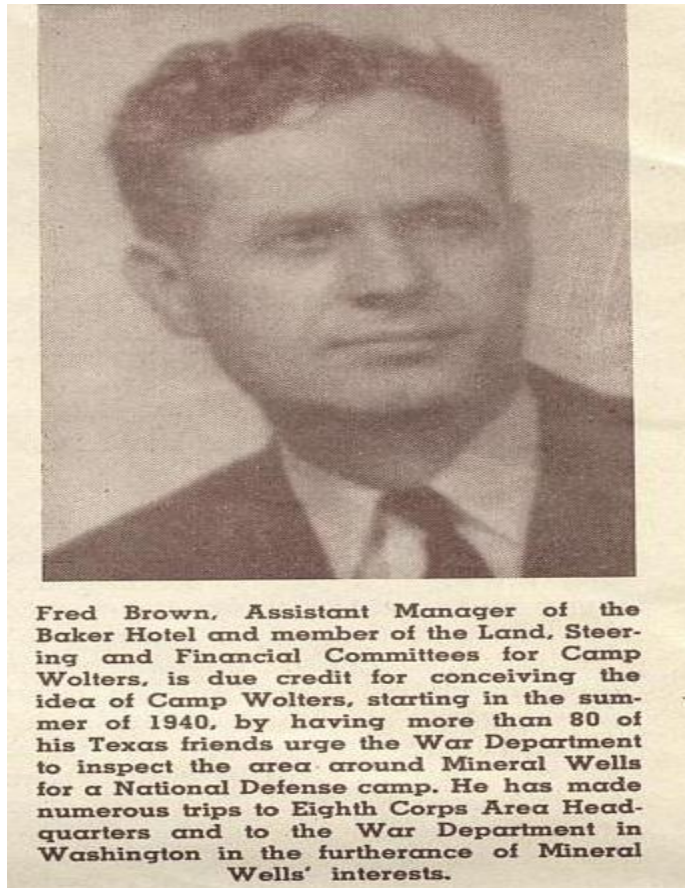


Figure 6: Fred Brown is credited with the idea of trying to get an Army camp for Mineral Wells. He is the man most responsible for getting the Army to Mineral Wells, *U.S. Army Speedometer*, 1941, Palo Pinto County Newspapers Collection, The Portal to Texas History.

The CoC group began busily writing letters, visiting officials, photographing the area, and preparing briefs that showed the advantages of having an Army center located in Mineral Wells. They asked officials to visit and find out for themselves why the town was a perfect fit for an Army base. As Commanding General of the Eighth Corps Area, Lieutenant General Herbert J. Brees made the decision as to which cities would make the final list of potential Army centers.

His staff visited Mineral Wells during the summer of 1940⁹⁰ and, on August 31, a letter arrived at the headquarters for the Commanding General of Area VIII (located at Fort Sam Houston) requesting that Major General Walter Kreuger investigate the possibility of leasing land adjacent to Camp Wolters on behalf of the Army.⁹¹ Mineral Wells had made the cut! They were in the running! Excitement ran through the city. The city and CoC had a long list of things they needed to do and prepare before they could be selected, but everyone was confident that Mineral Wells would get a camp. On a side note, it did not hurt that the President of the CoC, H.A. (Allen) Guinn (District Manager of Texas Power and Light) was married to the niece of Jesse H. Jones,⁹² newly appointed US Secretary of Commerce, and that the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Military Affairs was Morris Sheppard, the same man that just had a new multi-million-dollar dam named for him in the county in which Mineral Wells was located (see Figure 7).⁹³

⁹⁰ Ord, 5.

⁹¹ Col. Willie H. Casper, *Pictorial History of Fort Wolters, Volume 3, Primary Helicopter Center Facility*, "Detailed History of Fort Wolters," point 43, The Portal to Texas History.

⁹² "Spa Citizens to Washington," *Palo Pinto County Star*, 64,14, 3, September 27, 1940, Boyce Ditto Public Library.

⁹³ U.S. Senate, *U.S. Memberships and Assignments*, Chairman of Standing Committees 1789-Present, 46, <https://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/resources/pdf/CommitteeChairs.pdf>.



Figure 7: Photograph of Morris Sheppard, US Senator from Texas 1913-1941. As Chairman of the Senate Committee on Military Affairs, Sheppard knew the economic importance a military installation could have economically on a region. Sheppard represented the area in which Camp Wolters was located and knew his constituents would not forget how he had helped them win the Army camp, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Morris_Sheppard.

The CoC quickly formed two committees to work on getting the camp, 1) the Steering Committee (headed by Irl Preston, President of the City National Bank) and 2) the Land Committee (headed by E.L. Malsby, of Malsby Dairy). Other members of the committees were: Steering Committee, H.H. Collins, E. J. Benavides (Vice-President and Managing Director of the Baker Hotel), John Tom Bowman, and B.A. Yeager (President of the Mineral Wells State Bank) and on the Land Committee, F.C. Myers (local car dealer), W.M. Woodall, Fred Brown (Assistant Manager of the Baker Hotel), R.L. Bowden (Bowden's Department Store), O.H. Grantham (local insurance agent), George Ritchie (attorney), W.O. Gross (attorney) and H.E. Dennis (General Manager of Turner-Wagley Motor Company). A third committee, the Military Finance Committee, chaired by H.E. Dennis, was formed to address the cost of the camp to the

city.⁹⁴ There was a great amount of support from the citizens of Mineral Wells and Palo Pinto County. The CoC thanked private citizens, including John Davidson (Davidson Hardware), W.P. Cameron (*Mineral Wells Index*), C.B. Baughn, and Mineral Wells mayor John Miller for their efforts.⁹⁵ By September 13, the county newspaper, the *Palo Pinto Star*, was already reporting that Mineral Wells would probably receive “the big camp.”⁹⁶ Land was scouted, deeds researched, and chamber members began visiting every rancher and farmer who owned land in the Camp Wolters area. On September 27, Mr. and Mrs. Allen Guinn and Fred Brown flew to Washington to discuss the committee’s progress with military planners.⁹⁷

While the CoC continued their search for land, they also began looking for money to purchase that land, as the War Department had asked for financing.⁹⁸ The CoC committees came together and requested a meeting with the Mayor of Mineral Wells, John Miller, and the city commissioners. Knowing that acquisition of the camp would lead to a huge increase in economic activity (the soldiers would have a monthly payroll of \$600,000),⁹⁹ the city voted to purchase the appropriate land and lease it to the Army.¹⁰⁰ In the meantime, the city would have to expand all their public utilities. Mineral Wells would have to install a new water facility that could deliver the 1.5 million gallons of water that the camp used daily.¹⁰¹ Additional police and emergency services were needed, streets widened and re-paved, permits issued, new housing erected for military families, and all sorts of commercial enterprises were needed (cafes, various types of

⁹⁴ Ord, 6.

⁹⁵ Ord, 7.

⁹⁶ “18,000 Men May Train at Mineral Wells,” *Palo Pinto County Star*, 64, 12, 5, September 13, 1940.

⁹⁷ “Untitled,” *Palo Pinto County Star*, 64, 12, 3, September 13, 1940.

⁹⁸ Ord, 7.

⁹⁹ Ord, 8.

¹⁰⁰ Ord, 8.

¹⁰¹ “Mineral Wells Has Acreage Ready for Training Camp,” *Dallas Morning News*, October 6, 1940, 9.

stores, entertainment facilities, etc.). This was an undertaking unlike anything the city, or county, had ever seen before.

The CoC successfully leased 7,300 acres of land from multiple farmers and ranchers (see Figure 8) and were able to assure the Army that additional land would be available if needed. The land came mostly from three sources, the Loveless tract, which was part of the defunct town of Rock Creek, the Beetham land, and the Howard property that was by Lake Mineral Wells.¹⁰² The additional land they found would be needed, by the end of WWII the Army would lease slightly over 16,000 acres from the city (part of this land included the ROTC site Camp Dallas).¹⁰³ A “master lease” was offered to the Army at the prescribed \$1 per acre that the Army requested.¹⁰⁴ The Army issued a check to the City of Mineral Wells for \$7,300, renewable yearly.



Figure 8: F.T. Maddux was one of many farmers and ranchers that sold or leased their land for the building of Camp Wolters, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram Collection*, October 1940, University of Texas at Arlington Libraries.

¹⁰² David Minor, “Rock Creek, Tx (Parker County),” in *Handbook of Texas Online*, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/rock-creek-tx-parker-county>.

¹⁰³ “ROTC’s Camp Dallas to Be Leased to Army,” *Dallas Morning News*, November 13, 1940, 1.

¹⁰⁴ Willie H. Casper, Jr., *Pictorial History of Fort Wolters, Volume 1: Infantry Replacement Training Center*, point “B,” 43, The Portal to Texas History.

The official announcement came October 13 that Mineral Wells had been selected for an Army camp. The Army required all facilities be ready by March 1, 1941. The camp would have the capacity to train 17,000 men at once, Construction Quartermaster was Major E.S. Armstrong (see Figure 9). This was not going to be just any Army camp; this camp was the largest Infantry Replacement Training Center (IRTC) in the entire nation.¹⁰⁵ Mineral Wells residents were “exuberant” at the news.¹⁰⁶ The War Department appointed General A.G. Kanalser, of Fort Sam Houston, as their leasing agent. It was estimated that the camp would take four months to build, and cost between \$3,000,000 -\$7,000,000 (this amount would double before completion). It was estimated that maintenance costs of the camp would run around \$500,000 a month. Troops were scheduled to arrive March 15, 1941; there would be 15,000 white troops and “2,000 Negroes.”¹⁰⁷ Leases were officially signed on October 24th at Fort Sam Houston, with Col. John P. Hasson¹⁰⁸ signing for the Army, and Mayor John C. Miller signing for the city, along with Mineral Wells representatives Owen Boarman, Allen Guinn, W.O. Gross, Paul Ord, and C.P. Scudder attending.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ Casper, 43.

¹⁰⁶ “Mineral Wells to Get Big Army Camp,” *Palo Pinto County Star*, 64, 17, 1, October 18, 1940.

¹⁰⁷ “Untitled,” *Palo Pinto County Star*, 64, 17, 6, October 18, 1940.

¹⁰⁸ “Mineral Wells Looks Ahead to Boom Days,” *Dallas Morning News*, November 2, 1940, 8.

¹⁰⁹ “Camp a Certainty in Mineral Wells,” *Palo Pinto County Star*, 64, 19, 1, November 1, 1940.



Figure 9: Mineral Wells Chamber of Commerce Members and Military Leaders, after construction began, E.J. Benavides, Maj. E.S. Armstrong, John Miller, and Allen Guinn, *Fort Worth Star Telegram Collection*, November 12, 1940, University of Texas at Arlington Libraries.

Mineral Wells lost no time beginning preparations as the next day the Palo Pinto County Commissioners Court called an emergency meeting. The commissioners declared that having the Army camp located in the county, on un-incorporated land, had caused an emergency situation and they responded to this situation by creating the Sanitary District of the “Unincorporated Town of Greater Mineral Wells.”¹¹⁰ The Commissioners appointed Dr. Edward Yeagar, Dr. J.E. St Clair, and Frank Myers to head this new district and told them they would work closely with all the different parties to make sure “that a consistent and uniform program be carried out and established” for the disposal of waste from this area.¹¹¹ The court also asked contractors to use local laborers first when filling jobs. Harold Reinhart of the Texas Employment Services in Mineral Wells began registering potential employees as soon as the official announcement was

¹¹⁰ “Commissioners’ Court Designates Health District,” *Palo Pinto County Star*, 64, 19, 1, November 1, 1940.

¹¹¹ *Palo Pinto County Star*, November 1, 1940, 1.

issued. Texas Power and Light and the Texas and Pacific Railway had also started hiring new employees at that time.

On November 4, one hundred engineers from the company of Rollins and Forrest began surveying and mapping out the boundaries of the camp. They were treated to an appreciation dinner at the Baker Hotel the next evening sponsored by the Junior Chamber of Commerce.¹¹² People started swarming into the town. Citizens began renting out rooms as hotels filled up. Oscar Rankin, tax assessor for the county, said business had picked up, people were paying their back taxes, and he was receiving all kinds of questions about taxes from people.¹¹³ The Railroad Commission had received an application for a new bus line to run from Mineral Wells to Camp Wolters from Fort Worth businessman Rudy Copeland.¹¹⁴ Colonel C.H. McCall purchased part of the Lawn Terrace and Highland Park additions in the Southwest part of the city where he intended on improving the area and selling to new homeowners.¹¹⁵

Construction contracts were awarded November 8 to Cage Brothers and F. M. Reeves and Sons. The camp would be three times the size of the city and span two counties, Palo Pinto and Parker.¹¹⁶ They estimated they would need between 7,500-10,000 workers to complete the project on time and the price would be \$6,045,000.¹¹⁷ The price tag would include: “280 barracks, 6 barracks for medical personnel, a laundry, bakery, mess halls, headquarters, recreation halls, classrooms, incinerators, cold storage plant, a hospital and quarters, utilities

¹¹² “Appreciation Dinner Big Success,” *Palo Pinto County Star*, 64, November 8, 1940, 20, 4.

¹¹³ “Untitled,” *Palo Pinto County Star*, 64, November 8, 1940, 20, 3.

¹¹⁴ “Bus Permits to New Army Camps Asked,” *Dallas Morning News*, November 13, 1940, 6.

¹¹⁵ “Real Estate Boom on in Mineral Wells,” *Palo Pinto County Star*, 64, November 15, 1940, 21, 1.

¹¹⁶ Casper, *Pictorial History of Fort Wolters, Volume 1: Infantry Replacement Training Center*, 39, The Portal to Texas History.

¹¹⁷ “Cage Brothers Contractors for Big Camp,” *Palo Pinto County Star*, November 15, 1940, 64, 21, 1.

building, etc. approximately 600 or more buildings in all.”¹¹⁸ Actual work began in earnest on November 16 (see Figure 10).¹¹⁹



Figure 10: “Camp Wolters, Texas.” This photo shows laborers (left) laying tar paper for the roof of one of the numerous buildings during the construction of Camp Wolters. With camps going up across the country, building supplies became scarce, which delayed work on several occasions, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram Collection*, January 2, 1941, University of Texas at Arlington Libraries.

Along with the need to build quickly, the town faced a number of problems connected with the rapid population growth. Mineral Wells Mayor, John C Miller, said that the three most pressing problems were “traffic congestion, sanitation, and housing.”¹²⁰ The population of Mineral Wells was 6,303 in 1940, the county population was 18,456.¹²¹ Four months later, the

¹¹⁸ *Palo Pinto County Star*, November 15, 1940, 1.

¹¹⁹ John Binford, “Construction of Camp Wolters One of Greatest Battles Against Time and the Elements,” in *U.S. Army Speedometer*, 21, 3, 10, March 1, 1941, The Portal to Texas History.

¹²⁰ “Three Shifts Working Day and Night at Camp Wolters,” *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, December 4, 1940, 9.

¹²¹ *The Texas Almanac; 1941-1942* (Dallas, Texas: Belo Publishing): 93, The Portal to Texas History.

population of Mineral Wells would reach 25,000.¹²² The sudden influx of people caused immense problems to this small town. All hotels and boarding houses were full, homeowners were renting out rooms,¹²³ barns were transformed into additional boarding houses,¹²⁴ people were sleeping in their cars, and “mushroom accommodations” were springing up on every parcel of land (see Figure 11).¹²⁵ People even altered their tile chicken houses into sleeping quarters.¹²⁶ Rents skyrocketed.¹²⁷ Store owners ran out of inventory as soon as they put it on the shelves. Banks tripled their staff. The post office was overwhelmed by the additional business from camp workers. Previously the post office processed 100 money orders on a busy day, but when construction began they processed an average of 381 per day.¹²⁸ They had been sending out around 25 parcels a day, it quickly became 116.¹²⁹ The post office turned the basement of their building into a post office for the camp and hired an additional fifteen people. The cafes and “food joints” were often sold out and many had to close before dinner because they had run out of food.¹³⁰ Merchants were working seventeen to eighteen hours per day trying to keep up with demand and trying to protect their stores from being robbed.¹³¹ City officials complained about the increase in “police problems, traffic problems, health and sanitation problems, together with housing problems, fire and merchandizing problems,”¹³² all were confronting them at an

¹²² Paul Ord, “Mineral Wells Secures Infantry Replacement Center,” *U.S. Army Speedometer*, 21, 3, 5, March 1, 1941, The Portal to Texas History.

¹²³ Ord, 7.

¹²⁴ “Cows Move Out as Army Boom Makes Barn a Rooming House,” *Dallas Morning News*, November 16, 1940, 1.

¹²⁵ Ord, 7.

¹²⁶ “They’re All Cooped Up, Literally, in This Town,” *Dallas Morning News*, December 22, 1940.

¹²⁷ Binford, 13.

¹²⁸ “Post Office Employees Rushed,” *Palo Pinto County Star*, 64 February 7, 1941, 32, 1.

¹²⁹ *Palo Pinto County Star*, February 7, 1941, 1.

¹³⁰ Ord, 7.

¹³¹ “Star Dust Column,” *Palo Pinto County Star*, 64, January 17, 1941, 27,1.

¹³² *Palo Pinto County Star*, January 17, 1941, 1.

alarming rate. The Mineral Wells police department added more policemen, bringing the police force to nine, and the sheriff's department added two new deputy sheriffs.¹³³



Figure 11: This is an example of many short-term dwellings made by workers from the camp, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram Collection*, December 1940, University of Texas at Arlington Library.

With larger populations, came a number of other disasters. Fires were a constant problem; one example is the nighttime fire at the Lake Charles Hotel on December 10 that resulted in numerous workers losing everything they owned.¹³⁴ The yearly flu bug hit big that year too, and the Red Cross put out an urgent call for 900 nurses needed at all Army posts. Even though the camp hospital had not yet opened, the Red Cross advertised for 100 nurses at Camp Wolters.¹³⁵ Things were getting a bit out of hand during these boom times, but good things were happening too. It was reported that sales receipts had tripled, new permanent home construction had begun, and bank deposits were up \$1.5 million.¹³⁶ The new bus line opened that ran from

¹³³ "Three Shifts Working Day and Night at Camp Wolters," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, December 4, 1940, 9

¹³⁴ "Lake Charles Hotel Burns," *Palo Pinto County Star*, 64, December 13, 1940, 25, 1.

¹³⁵ "900 Nurses Wanted for Army Posts," *Dallas Morning News*, December 29, 1940, 6.

¹³⁶ "Work Slowed Down at Big Camp" *Palo Pinto County Star*, 64, December 20, 1940, 26, 3.

Mineral Wells to the camp, called the Army Camp Bus Line and ran four brand new buses.¹³⁷

The first couple from Camp Wolters to be married were Miss Freida Hight from the Quartermasters staff and Pitt Milner of Dallas.¹³⁸ They were married at the First Methodist parsonage on December 20, three more couples would take the plunge by February 7, 1941.¹³⁹

Problems were not isolated to just the city, there were problems at the camp too, but of the kind that nobody could do anything about, RAIN! It rained consistently for thirty days. Of the four months that construction crews had to work, only two and a half of those months were workable.¹⁴⁰ From the start of construction in November until January 14, 1941, it rained 62 percent of the time.¹⁴¹ According to the US Weather Bureau Mineral Wells received 4.78 inches of rain that November. That was the most rain in the month of November for twenty years.¹⁴² Construction continued during the rain, but the rain caused new problems, as machinery bogged down in mud, roads flooded, rail tracks washed out, all of which created unsafe conditions for the workers (see Figure 12).¹⁴³ When work became impossible, newly hired men became newly unemployed men, as much of the construction could not be done in such bad weather.¹⁴⁴ With no jobs, these men had no money, and their basic needs often went unmet. A reporter for the county newspaper stated, "There was a lot of hungry men in Mineral Wells during this past week. They had no money and no place to sleep. They had come on a shoestring to work, and it

¹³⁷ "Untitled," *Palo Pinto County Star*, 64, December 13, 1940, 25, 5.

¹³⁸ "Camp Wolters Gets First Cupid's Call," *Dallas Morning News*, December 21, 1940, 12. The *Dallas Morning News* erroneously announced the first Camp Wolters newlyweds as Lt. and Mrs. Roy Inman, however, they would marry in March in Mississippi (3/21/1941, 15).

¹³⁹ "Star Dust Column," *Palo Pinto County Star*, 64, February 7th, 1941, 32, 3.

¹⁴⁰ Binford, 13.

¹⁴¹ "Camp Wolters is Half Ready for Trainees," *Dallas Morning News*, January 15, 1941, 4.

¹⁴² Robert French, "Average Number of Days with 0.01 Inch or More of Precipitation, Palo Pinto County 1920-1943," *An Economic Survey of Palo Pinto County Prepared for the Texas and Pacific Railway Company* (Austin: University of Texas): 1948, 2.010201.

¹⁴³ "Camp Wolters is Half Ready for Trainees," *Dallas Morning News*, January 15, 1941, 4.

¹⁴⁴ "Work Slows Down at Big Camp," *Palo Pinto County Star*, 64, December 20, 1940, 26, 3.

was soon used up.”¹⁴⁵ The weather also caused the December draft call to be moved to January so that there was time to finish the facilities before the men started arriving.¹⁴⁶



Figure 12: Rain, mud, and frustrated workers battled the weather on a daily basis while building the camp, *U.S. Army Speedometer*, 1941, Palo Pinto County Newspapers Collection, The Portal to Texas History.

Good things were still happening. The War Department jointly awarded the firms of General Engineering Corporation and Wallace Plumbing a \$1 million dollar contract to provide all the heating, cold storage, and steam distribution for the camp, a development expected to bring 1,000 more new jobs to camp.¹⁴⁷ Shotts Electric Company of Fort Worth and Fishback and Moore of New York were contracted to install a \$700,000 electrical system to the camp.¹⁴⁸ Striplings dairy barn, which was across from the camp, was sold and converted into a boarding house for workers; another planned development included a trailer camp adjoining the property.¹⁴⁹ The Imperial Auction Company sold 638 homesites by auction the week of January

¹⁴⁵ “Boom Town Days in Mineral Wells,” *Palo Pinto County Star*, 64, November 29, 1940, 23, 1.

¹⁴⁶ “Texas Next Draft Call Set in January,” *Dallas Morning News*, December 10, 1940, 10.

¹⁴⁷ “\$1,000,000 Contract Let,” *Palo Pinto County Star*, 64, November 22, 1940, 22, 5.

¹⁴⁸ “Camp Wolters Wiring Under Way,” *Palo Pinto County Star*, 64, January 24, 1941, 30, 1.

¹⁴⁹ “Untitled,” *Palo Pinto County Star*, 64, January 24, 1941, 30, 3.

20, 1941.¹⁵⁰ Tommy Y. Fee, “the only Chinese American in Mineral Wells,” announced that he bought the Oxford Café and would specialize in “chop suey and good American food.”¹⁵¹ Local mattress maker, Karl Walker, had so much business that he had been working from 6:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. for weeks on end. He averaged making seventy-five to one hundred mattresses per week.¹⁵²

When the mud receded to “ankle depth”¹⁵³ most of the men were able to start back to work, except the Construction Quartermaster, who was replaced by Major Paul M. Brewer (January 2, 1941).¹⁵⁴ When Major Brewer (see Figure 13) took over, the camp was ten percent complete.¹⁵⁵ He brought in a multitude of workers to complete the project. Included in the new workers were a mass of 18,000 laborers (union and non-union), and hundreds of auxiliary personnel (ex., forty stenographers had been brought in from Fort Sam Houston alone) and they “dug-in.”¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁰ “Star Dust Column,” *Palo Pinto County Star*, 64, January 24, 1941, 30, 6.

¹⁵¹ “Untitled,” *Palo Pinto County Star*, 64, January 24, 1941, 30, 5.

¹⁵² “Star Dust Column,” *Palo Pinto County Star*, 64, December 13, 1940, 25, 1.

¹⁵³ “Boom Town Days in Mineral Wells,” *Palo Pinto County Star*, 64, November 29, 1940, 23, 1.

¹⁵⁴ “Quartermaster Assumes Duties at Camp Wolters,” *Dallas Morning News*, January 3, 1941, 9.

¹⁵⁵ H. Cleveland Ford, “Cage Brothers & F.M. Reeves & Sons Complete outstanding Construction Job at Camp Wolters,” *U.S. Army Speedometer*, 21, 3, 18 March 1, 1941, The Portal to Texas History.

¹⁵⁶ Binford, 13.



Figure 13: Construction Quartermaster Brewer, the man who ensured the camp would open on time, *U.S. Army Speedometer*, 1941, Palo Pinto County Newspapers Collection, The Portal to Texas History.

All main contractors had offices located at the camp, and many of the executives from these companies were there daily.¹⁵⁷ Mr. F.M. “Cap” Reeves of F.M. Reeves and Sons (see Figure 14) was there “almost twenty-four hours of every day”¹⁵⁸ and their building superintendent (O.K. Johnson) was there “eighteen hours a day to insure its rapid and successful completion.”¹⁵⁹ Workers labored around the clock. There were three shifts (Dawn Patrol, Day Crew, and Night Crew),¹⁶⁰ large floodlights were brought in to assist workers, materials started arriving again (thirty-five to fifty train carloads per day),¹⁶¹ huge machines cut down trees, moved tons of rock and dirt, and started transforming a hilly wooded area into a camp for 17,000 men.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁷ “Work Progressing at Big Army Camp,” *Palo Pinto County Star*, December 6, 1940, 64, 24, 1.

¹⁵⁸ Ford, 18.

¹⁵⁹ Ford, 18.

¹⁶⁰ Binford, 14.

¹⁶¹ Binford, 14.

¹⁶² Binford, 13.



Figure 14: F.M. Reeves, general contractor of Camp Wolters, *U.S. Army Speedometer*, 1941, Palo Pinto County Newspapers Collection, The Portal to Texas History.

Major Brewer's first group of officers and soldiers arrived February 15, and they got construction going in high gear (see Figure 15).¹⁶³ The Major installed a work 'thermometer' sign at the front of the camp that indicated the level of completeness, with the very top of the thermometer being dated March 15. By January 5 the camp was 24 percent complete, by February 1 it was 45 percent, by March 1 it was 85 percent complete.¹⁶⁴ The workers kept working, the train cars kept bringing in material, and the break-neck speed kept up until March 11 when the first soldiers started arriving.¹⁶⁵ When it was all totaled, more than 25,920,000 cubic feet of dirt was moved, thirty-five miles of gravel, asphalt and pavement were laid,¹⁶⁶ and six

¹⁶³ "Troops to Move into Camp Wolters Feb. 15," *Palo Pinto County Star*, 64, January 24, 1941, 30, 1.

¹⁶⁴ Binford, 15.

¹⁶⁵ "First Troops Received by Camp Wolters," *Dallas Morning News*, March 12, 1941, 8.

¹⁶⁶ "Facts About the U.S. Army Replacement Center Mineral Wells, Texas" bookmark, in author's possession.

hundred forty-four buildings were built.¹⁶⁷ It was said that the Camp Wolters workforce had set an all-time construction record for speed with the construction of the new camp.¹⁶⁸



Figure 15: Construction workers framing buildings at Camp Wolters. Framework is completed on two buildings, while stacks of lumber lay in the foreground waiting to be used, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* Collection, December 1940, University of Texas at Arlington Libraries.

The total cost for the project was between \$12,000,000 and \$14,200,00.¹⁶⁹ There were no work-related fatalities that were reported, and few work-related accidents.¹⁷⁰ The Cage and Reeves pay-roll clerks processed “16,000 pay-roll checks in one day and issued 14,000 in one

¹⁶⁷ Binford, 15.

¹⁶⁸ Ford, 18.

¹⁶⁹ Ford, 18.

¹⁷⁰ Ford, 18. A worker was knocked unconscious in February when a ditch caved in on him, but no permanent damage was done, *Palo Pinto County Star*, un-titled item, February 14, 1941, 1.

hour and twelve minutes.” (see Figure 16)¹⁷¹ Workmen were paid after work on Saturday.¹⁷² The first time that the weekly payroll for Cage and Reeves hit \$400,000 it made headlines across the state.¹⁷³ Headlines were made again on January 24, 1941 when the weekly payroll hit \$646,000.¹⁷⁴ Headlines were made for a third time when the payroll exceeded \$850,000 for the week of January 31. Major Colonel Brewer said it was the largest weekly payroll in Texas.¹⁷⁵



Figure 16: Cage and Reeves office staff often set records in issuing checks to the laborers, *U.S. Army Speedometer*, 1941, Palo Pinto County Newspapers Collection, The Portal to Texas History.

¹⁷¹ Ford, 18.

¹⁷² “Banks, Stores Enjoy Brisk Camp Wolters Trade,” *Dallas Morning News*, February 23, 1941, 14.

¹⁷³ “Star Dust Column,” *Palo Pinto County Star*, 64, January 24, 1941, 30, 1.

¹⁷⁴ “Round-Clock Effort Rushes Camp Wolters,” *Dallas Morning News*, January 25, 1941, 4.

¹⁷⁵ “Camp Wolters Will Be Ready for Troops,” *Palo Pinto County Star*, 64, February 7, 1941, 32, 5.

Colonel Fay W. Brabson was put in charge of Camp Wolters on January 1, 1941, and began preparing for the arrival of the first group of trainees due March 15. An additional one thousand soldiers joined him from Fort Sam Houston to act as trainers for the men.¹⁷⁶ They started arriving in February. Lt. Colonel Charles Hall joined Colonel Brabson's staff February 2, as Quartermaster, and Lt. Colonel Arthur Lang was made Quartermaster Executive Officer.¹⁷⁷ On February 3, thirty-six non-commissioned officers arrived from Fort Sill. More arrived February 15, and February 17, bringing the total to three-thousand five-hundred men preparing for the first group of trainees.¹⁷⁸ Dr. W.R. Hornburg of Ft. Worth was appointed to serve as Baptist minister to Camp Wolters by the Baptist General Convention.¹⁷⁹

Such a large installation encountered several problems, some dramatic and others more tedious in character. A 51-year-old German alien was arrested trying to get into the camp with "a quantity of highly flammable chemicals on his person and incendiary sticks."¹⁸⁰ The FBI was investigating the German, B.W. Ehrlich, for sabotage.¹⁸¹ He had tried to get work at the camp under several false names but had been rejected, he also carried multiple social security cards. He was in custody at the Palo Pinto County Jail pending charges. Ehrlich's arrest cranked up the fear and anxiety about possible enemy sympathizers in the area. The local people had already been on the watch for people with pro-German sentiment since the previous May (1940). At that time, a "foreigner" had pulled into a Mineral Wells gas station asking for directions to the small community of Poseidon. In the back seat of the car were "hundreds of pamphlets that were pro-German and had the names of other small communities on them that were known to have a

¹⁷⁶ "News, Commander Leaves for Camp Wolters," *Dallas Morning* January 2, 1941, 7.

¹⁷⁷ "Quartermaster Coming," *Dallas Morning News*, February 1, 1941, 2.

¹⁷⁸ *Dallas Morning News*, February 1, 1941, 2.

¹⁷⁹ "Baptist Clerics Given Places at Army Posts," *Dallas Morning News*, February 25, 1941, 3.

¹⁸⁰ "Alien Arrested During Texas Sabotage Hunt," *Dallas Morning News*, January 9, 1941, 1.

¹⁸¹ United Press, "Seize German with 'Fire' Sticks," *New York Times*, January 10, 1941, 21, ProQuest.com

German population.”¹⁸² The arrest of the German resulted in a mass community meeting being called for June 21, 1941, at the Mineral Wells American Legion Hall. There they discussed local defenses, discussed possible “Fifth Columnists” and how people should be dealt with that exhibited anti-US behavior, and formed a defense council that would “chase down” any possible threat to the community or country.¹⁸³ This new threat greatly upset the citizens of Mineral Wells and they renewed their determination to root out any person that could threaten the camp or the nation at large. The FBI and local authorities were unable to find any additional evidence of sabotage on Ehrlich and released the German on January 20.¹⁸⁴ A steel fence was placed around the camp later in the year.¹⁸⁵

On February 4, a woman was kidnapped from Camp Wolters and forced to leave with her armed assailant and go to Weatherford (a nearby town). Leona Lansford had been sitting in her car at the camp waiting to take a friend into Mineral Wells when a man with a pistol approached, forced his way into the car, and took off. She was able to escape from her captor when they had to stop for gas. Miss Lansford ran screaming to the gas attendant and her assailant fled. The assailant was thought to be bank robber and jail escapee Robert Hill.¹⁸⁶

If possible Fifth Columnists and a kidnapping were not enough to keep Col. Brabson’s attention, he would also encounter the problem of fire. On February 22, a paint sprayer exploded and started a fire that damaged the \$125,000 cold storage building. The building was 95 percent completed.¹⁸⁷ Only minimal damage was done.

¹⁸² “Are There Fifth Columnists in Palo Pinto County?” *Palo Pinto County Star*, 64, May 31, 1940, 48, 1.

¹⁸³ “Resolutions Adopted at Mass Meeting,” *Palo Pinto County Star*, 64, June 28, 1940, 1, 3.

¹⁸⁴ “German Wants to Stay in Jail,” *Palo Pinto County Star*, 64, January 24, 1941, 30, 1.

¹⁸⁵ Untitled, *Palo Pinto County Star*, 64, June 20, 1941, 51, 3.

¹⁸⁶ “Mineral Well Woman Says She Was Kidnapped,” *Palo Pinto County*, 64, February 7, 1941, 32, 2.

¹⁸⁷ “Officers Probe Army Fire,” *Borger Daily Herald*, 15, February 23, 1941, 79, 1, February 23, 1941; Borger, Texas, The Portal to Texas History.

Traffic was a massive problem in the city and on Highway 80 by the camp. Captain E.M. Wells of the State Highway patrol said, "This stretch of highway has become the most dangerous area in Texas. Traffic has multiplied to such an extent that is almost unmanageable."¹⁸⁸ This was the roadway between Weatherford and Mineral Wells. The roads are long and straight in this area, and it is tempting for people to drive at excessive speeds. Captain Wells said that the normal drive between Mineral Wells and Fort Worth should take an hour, now it takes four-hours, and people were not taking that into consideration when they started out.¹⁸⁹ There were multiple proposals and options discussed on what could be done about the traffic problem.¹⁹⁰ People could be stuck in their cars for over an hour during high traffic times. Some would park their cars on the shoulder of the road, walk, and come back for their car later. People often became frustrated and upset. On one occasion a camp worker driving from his home in Fort Worth to the camp became stuck in such a jam and decided to pass cars on the right (emergency) side, which was illegal. While doing this he made a face and stuck out his tongue at the woman in the car in front of him. This infuriated the woman and after getting out of the traffic jam she reported the worker to the county constable and demanded his arrest. The constable found the driver and ticketed him with passing on the right-hand side. The man protested the charge, but later owned up to it and paid the fine.¹⁹¹ The State Highway Patrol commented that they had given out one hundred and seven tickets--quadruple the number of tickets as normal between January 1 and February 5, 1941. Additionally, there had been nine people die, thirty-seven wrecks, and seventy arrests that required bookings.¹⁹² The State Highway Patrol added two more

¹⁸⁸ "Highway Patrol Joins Forces with Officers of Three Counties to Reduce Deaths on Mineral Wells Road," *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, January 28, 1941, 1.

¹⁸⁹ "Highway Patrol Joins Forces with Officers of Three Counties to Reduce Deaths on Mineral Wells Road," *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, January 28, 1941, 1.

¹⁹⁰ "Traffic Over 80-A Big Problem," *Palo Pinto County Star*, 64, February 21, 1941, 34, 1.

¹⁹¹ "Making Faces at Lady Cost Man \$14 Fine," *Palo Pinto County Star*, 64, 32, 1.

¹⁹² "Officers War on Death's Speedway," *Palo Pinto County Star*, 64, February 7, 1941, 32, 6.

patrolmen to the area, bringing a total of six patrolmen to this strip of Highway 80.¹⁹³ On May 12 a soldier was killed on this highway trying to board a bus.¹⁹⁴

Saturday night was the biggest night of the week during this time in Mineral Wells. Most camp workers were paid Saturday evening and with the “weekly payroll of more than \$900,000 the last three months have brought super-prosperity to the city.”¹⁹⁵ The banks, barber shops, restaurants, and merchants stayed open late to assist the newly moneyed workers. Before the doors closed merchants had empty shelves, restaurants were sold out, tired waiters and waitresses would be rubbing their feet, their pockets bulging with tip money, and the local jail filled with drunks.¹⁹⁶

The county paper often carried stories about the problems alcohol caused. On the weekend of January 11-12, 1941, thirty-seven men were arrested and jailed for being drunk.¹⁹⁷ Palo Pinto County Sheriff Edmonson had to refuse a “carload” full of women charged with vagrancy from the Mineral Wells Police Department on February 22. The Sheriff stated that his jail was full and had no more room for “boarders” at the time. In the county jail at that moment were ten Camp Wolters workers who were arrested for gambling, a soldier trying to sell a government overcoat, the man who was going to buy it, and over a dozen drunks.¹⁹⁸

In response to a story which the *Fort Worth Press* printed that “the biggest mythical influenza outbreak in American history” happened at Camp Wolters and referenced people selling a “flu” medication at the camp, the *Palo Pinto County Star* decided to set the record

¹⁹³ “Highway Patrol Joins Forces with Officers of Three Counties to Reduce Deaths on Mineral Wells Road,” *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, January 28, 1941, 1.

¹⁹⁴ “Wolters Soldier Killed,” *Dallas Morning News*, May 13, 1941, 4.

¹⁹⁵ “Camp Wolters Give Town Big Circus Night,” *Dallas Morning News*, February 23, 1941, 14.

¹⁹⁶ “A Year’s History in Mineral Wells,” *Palo Pinto County Star*, 65, November 21, 1941, 22, 5.

¹⁹⁷ Untitled, *Palo Pinto County Star*, 64, January 17, 1941, 28, 2.

¹⁹⁸ “Jail Too Full for More,” *Palo Pinto County Star*, 64, February 28, 1941, 35, 1.

straight and explain what this “flu” medication was. The medication was “whiskey.” Camp Wolters was in a dry county, with legal sales only available to those who were sick and asked for a whiskey prescription at the drug store. During the month of January 1941, the combined total of whiskey prescriptions sold in Mineral Wells was 15,833.¹⁹⁹

A wave of counterfeit checks bearing the name of construction companies working at the camp were cashed by multiple stores in Mineral Wells, Weatherford, and Fort Worth during the week of February 24. The total amount drawn on the Cage Bros. and F.M. Reeves and Sons account totaled \$843.38. All checks were written for the same three amounts: \$62.11, \$79.20, and \$89.10. The Sheriff and Major Dot Smith of Camp Wolters warned local merchants and bankers about the situation.²⁰⁰ Two of the merchants that cashed the forged checks were the Army store and Dan’s Venetian Club (see Figure 17).²⁰¹ The forgers were eventually caught. Mr. and Mrs. E.M. Landrum were arrested in Victoria, Texas and were returned to the county jail. Mrs. Landrum was released on bail, but Mr. Landrum was not. Mr. E.M. Landrum received two years in the penitentiary for this crime.²⁰²

¹⁹⁹ “15,833 Pints ‘Flu’ Medicine Sold in Month,” *Palo Pinto County Star*, 64, February 28, 1941, 35, 1.

²⁰⁰ “Counterfeit Camp Checks Reach Banks,” *Dallas Morning News*, March 1, 1941, 8.

²⁰¹ “Check Forgers Held,” *Palo Pinto County Star*, 64, April 18, 1941, 42, 2.

²⁰² Untitled, *Palo Pinto County Star*, 65, July 25, 1941, 5, 5.



Figure 17: “Dan’s Venetian Club,” a Mineral Wells restaurant during WWII that was popular with officers from Wolters, and victim of a forged check in 1941, <https://www.ebay.com/itm/10xDANS-VENETIAN-CLUB-Mineral-Wells-Texas-Roadside-1940s-Vintage-Linen-Postcard-/273797993856>.

The food servers in Mineral Wells went on strike during the weekend of February 15 and 16. Led by the Hotel and Restaurant Employees International Alliance No. 760 and Bar Tenders International League of America, the workers went on strike because they could no longer afford to pay rent on their current salary. The waiters demanded a minimum wage of \$.30 an hour and the waitresses demanded \$.25 per hour.²⁰³ Results of the strike were not reported.

As the camp neared completion more officials began to visit. Brig. General Joseph Atkins, Chief of Staff of the Third Army Corps, visited February 21, W. H. Harrison of the National Defense Advisory Commission visited March 2. Mr. Harrison stated, “This is one of the best and most complete replacement camps I have visited.”²⁰⁴ He congratulated the workers and staff on a job well done. As the end of construction grew closer more men were being let go. As of February 24, there were only 11,223 workers left at camp.²⁰⁵ On March 7, Camp Wolters was visited by Mexican General Miguel Enriquez Guzman, Commander of the Seventh Military

²⁰³ “Mineral Wells Café Workers Strike,” *Palo Pinto County Star*, 64, February 21, 1941, 34, 1.

²⁰⁴ “Camp Wolters Near Completion,” *Palo Pinto County Star*, 64, March 7, 1941, 36, 4.

²⁰⁵ “Defense Adviser Due at Camp Wolters,” *Dallas Morning News*, February 25, 1941, 9.

Zone for Mexico. He came to Camp Wolters to see a “sample of what America is doing in its preparedness program.”²⁰⁶

While visiting Camp Wolters, General Guzman admired the firing range (see Figure 18) that was still being built. The firing range was one of the largest in the nation. Its construction required the removal of 500,000 yards of dirt and the pouring of 30,000 yards of concrete. The range was 3,100 feet long and 1,800 feet wide. The range had 250 targets, was equipped for rifle, machine gun, trench mortar, and anti-aircraft fire. There was also space reserved for grenade practice. Men worked in ten hour shifts to get the range ready. The range was ready by March 15. The cost was estimated to be \$300,000.²⁰⁷

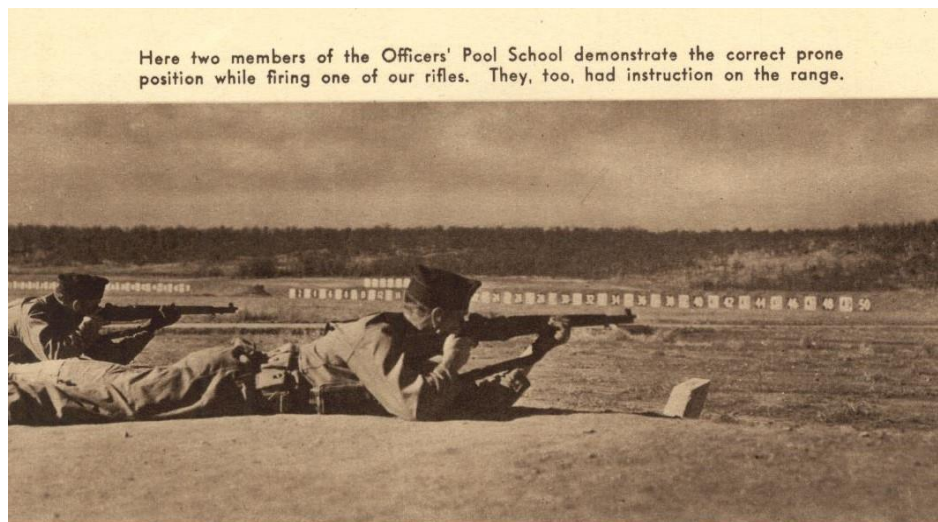


Figure 18: The firing range was an integral part of training at Wolters and one of the biggest in the nation, in *A Camera Trip Through Camp Wolters: A Picture Book of the Camp and its Activities*, A.F. Weaver Collection, The Portal to Texas History.

With the deadline for the camp coming quickly into view, Mother Nature decided to step in once again and slow things down. On March 1 it started raining, bringing ice cold winds, and

²⁰⁶ “Mexican Aid Pledge to U.S. Renewed,” *Dallas Morning News*, March 8, 1941, 3.

²⁰⁷ *Dallas Morning News*, March 8, 1941, 3.

even a few snow flurries. Rain continued for six days bringing heavy machinery and most outside work to a standstill. Interior workers continued around the clock hours and made great progress with the bakery and radio station nearing completion. But they had just broken ground on the laundry facility when the rain began to fall. Despite the setback, the camp still expected the first arrival of selectees sometime between March 11 and 20. Minor construction would still be going on when the first selectees arrived.²⁰⁸

With the camp near completion, Washington requested Construction Quartermaster Major Paul Brewer to take another job. Major Brewer had set an Army construction record for speed with Camp Wolters. When he took over as Construction Quartermaster on January 1 only 10 percent of the work was completed, as of March 6 it was 87.5 percent complete. Appointed Acting Construction Quartermaster, Captain Houston Gaddy, oversaw the camp to its completion.²⁰⁹ Before his departure, a testimonial dinner was given for Major Brewer at the Baker Hotel by the CoC.²¹⁰ At the dinner it was stated that Major Brewer had "...pulled the camp out of the mire...to win one of the greatest battles against time and the elements ever recorded in the annals of Texas Construction history."²¹¹

Captain Jay Russell, chief architect for Camp Wolters, made use of the newly finished Service Club (see Figure 19) on March 8 by presenting gold watches to the four men responsible for getting the camp built; Capt. F.M. Reeves (General Contractor), Will O'Connell (General Manager), O.K. Johnson (General Superintendent), and Sam Owens (First Assistant General Superintendent).²¹²

²⁰⁸ "Camp Wolters Nears Completion," *Palo Pinto County Star*, March 7, 1941, 64, 36, 1, 4.

²⁰⁹ "Major Who Scored Camp Wolters Record to Get New Project," *Dallas Morning News*, March 7, 1941, 8.

²¹⁰ "Camp Builder Honored," *Dallas Morning News*, March 14, 1941, 17.

²¹¹ "Camp Wolters Turned Over to Government," *Palo Pinto County Star*, 64, March 28, 1941, 39, 1, 5.

²¹² "Camp Wolters Builders Given Gold Watches," *Dallas Morning News*, March 9, 1941, 7.

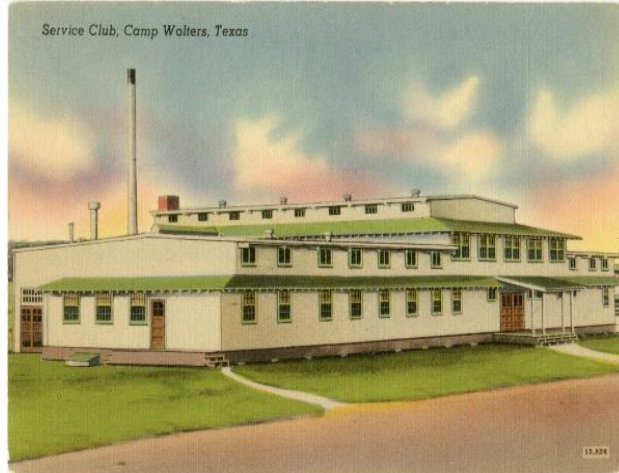


Figure 19: Service Club postcard. The Service Club, for white soldiers, was ready and open as the recruits started arriving, Casper, Willie H., Jr. *Pictorial History of Fort Wolters, Volume 1: Infantry Replacement Training Center, 1940*, The Portal to Texas History.

The building of the camp had tested the determination of the workmen, contractors, store owners, citizens of the county, banks, and local government. Mother Nature did not cooperate with the construction. She threw almost everything she had at them and most assuredly was their biggest obstacle. However, the men and women involved in this project kept coming back day after day, unwilling to be defeated. Their tenacity won out as the camp opened in time for the new selectees. This Herculean effort would not be in vain, as 17,000 men would soon be arriving to put the new facilities to use. Construction was finished, now the work of war began.

Chapter Three

Fighting a World War: Wolters' Role in the Training Replacement System, 1941-1945

The monumental effort put forth by the construction workers of Camp Wolters was microscopic in comparison to the job that the Army was just starting. The Army, numbering 189,839 men in 1939,²¹³ was about to start growing at an exponential rate that did not stop until the end of the war in 1945 when the Army numbered 8,267,958.²¹⁴ This expansion was spearheaded by General George C. Marshall, Army Chief of Staff (see Figure 20). He led an experienced group of Army men, all of whom had seen battle during WWI, and knew intimately the problems of war and specifically the problems with the replacement system. They looked to this new replacement system to end the problems of the past and act as a springboard to catapult the replacements into the position they needed to be in when it came their time to take over.

When the Army's experiment with Replacement Training Centers began, neither the Army nor the soldiers knew exactly what to expect. The Army had planned and made projections, but until the first replacement training soldier was put into the field, nobody knew if this system was going to work. Everyone had a positive outlook when training started, the soldiers worked long, hard hours to be ready when called, and the Army provided them with everything that they thought a soldier needed. However, the RTC system encountered many unforeseen problems that

²¹³ "Research Starters: US Military by the Numbers," National WWII Museum of New Orleans, <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/students-teachers/student-resources/research-starters/research-starters-us-military-numbers>, as of April 1945.

²¹⁴ "Research Starters: US Military by the Numbers," National WWII Museum of New Orleans.

continued to burden them throughout the war. As Wolters was a replacement center, it is important to understand the replacement system and its importance to the Army. Rather than a detailed look at the replacement system overall, this chapter reflects briefly on the process and concentrates on how the Army implemented it at Wolters, including the problems encountered there. This overview helps to explain why Wolters was established and what was expected of the men of Wolters.



Figure 20: General George C. Marshall, 1946, approved the creation of Replacement Training Centers, <https://www.marshallfoundation.org/blog/marshall-five-star-rank>.

Marshall and his staff agreed that the Replacement Training Centers should be established here, on the home front, so that when the replacements arrived overseas, they would be ready for action. There were various kinds of Replacement Training Centers, some for cavalry, signal

corps, infantry, field artillery, and more.²¹⁵ Camp Wolters was the largest of four Infantry Replacement Training Centers that opened in 1941.²¹⁶ General Lesley McNair, Chief of Staff for Army Ground Forces (AGF) and later Commander of AGF (1942), designed the training programs that were used in the Replacement Centers.²¹⁷ The replacement soldiers would have the same basic training as all soldiers, but their education would include some type of specialty. The number of replacements that were needed was based on the Table of Organization.²¹⁸ This table showed how many soldiers were required for mobilization and estimated how many losses could be expected in battle.²¹⁹ These numbers would fluctuate throughout the war and were not very reliable.

Just as Replacements Centers across the nation were taking shape, General Marshall's Army began to take shape. He was quick to see that the Army organization for 189,839 men was not going to work for an Army that would number in the millions. On March 9, 1942, General Marshall announced a re-organization of the Army. The re-organization would simplify the Army into four parts: 1) General Staff, 2) Army Air Forces, 3) Army Ground Forces, and 4) Army Service Forces.²²⁰ This was very agreeable to General McNair, who as Commander of the Army Ground Forces, had control over all training.²²¹

²¹⁵ The Military Yearbook Project, "Army Replacement Training Centers, 1940-1941," <https://militaryyearbookproject.com/references/general-references/army-replacement-training-centers-1940-41>.

²¹⁶ "General Simpson Honored at Weatherford," *Dallas Morning News*, March 9, 1941, 6.

²¹⁷ "Lesley J. McNair," *Military Wikia.org*, https://military.wikia.org/wiki/Lesley_J._McNair.

²¹⁸ Robert R. Palmer and William R. Keast, "The Provision of Enlisted Replacements," in *U.S. Army in World War II, The Army Ground Forces, Procurement and Training of Ground Combat Troops* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1948): 171,

<https://archive.org/details/TheProcurementAndTrainingOfGroundCombatTroops/page/n11/mode/2up>.

²¹⁹ Robert R. Palmer and William R. Keast, "The Provision of Enlisted Replacements," in *U.S. Army in World War II, The Army Ground Forces, Procurement and Training of Ground Combat Troops* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1948): 171,

<https://archive.org/details/TheProcurementAndTrainingOfGroundCombatTroops/page/n11/mode/2up>.

²²⁰ Palmer and Keast, 867.

²²¹ Palmer and Keast, 872.

Camp Wolters was officially activated as an Army installation on March 19, 1941 and was turned over to the Army on March 22. Construction Quartermaster Major Paul Brewer handed over more than 6,000 keys, weighing over two hundred pounds, to Colonel Brabson.²²² The opening of the camp and arrival of men were a cause for celebration and concern for the Army. The Army was more than ready to begin training their badly needed troops, but there was concern in that they had never used the replacement center method before and were unsure of the results. The system was tried on a limited basis during the simulated conditions of the Louisiana maneuvers of September 1941. While reviewers offered recommendations to address these issues, they were apparently insufficient under combat conditions, as communications issues once again arose. Most issues with the replacement system can be boiled down to problems of communication. The Army also had concerns about the vast numbers of soldiers to be trained, specifically if they had enough men to train them, but with the situation in Europe and the Pacific rapidly heating up, they had no time to waste.²²³

Training at Wolters officially began March 24, 1941.²²⁴ With the training cycle being thirteen weeks, the camp would have an output of 64,000 trainees yearly, if at full capacity during all training cycles.²²⁵ This meant that Wolters was designed to produce in one year a third of the original size of the Army. The first group of selectees at Wolters was limited to half capacity, 9,000 men, as there were only 225 regular officers and 1,446 enlisted men available at camp to train the men. When fully staffed with 2,407 officers and enlisted men, the camp could train at full capacity, 17,000 men.²²⁶ Most of the reserve officers went through a special training

²²² "Camp Wolters Now Belongs to U.S. Army," *Dallas Morning News*, March 22, 1941, 12.

²²³ Leonard L. Lerwill, *The Personnel Replacement System in the U.S. Army* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office): 1954, 254, <https://history.army.mil/html/books/104/104-9/index.html>.

²²⁴ "Camp Wolters Range Firing to Commence," *Dallas Morning News*, March 27, 1941, 2.

²²⁵ The length of the training cycles changed throughout the war.

²²⁶ "Mineral Wells Training Center Hoists Old Glory," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 24, 1941, 2.

course at Fort Benning, Georgia in preparation for their new assignment. Wolters had seventeen battalions, training battalions Fifty-One through Sixty-Seven. The Army was segregated at this time, and two of the battalions were composed of “Negro” soldiers, battalions Sixty-Six and Sixty-Seven.²²⁷

Selectees had started arriving at Wolters as early as March 11, 1941, when the first arrivals, 181 African American men, entered the Camp Wolters depot.²²⁸ The two companies from Oklahoma arrived in six sleeper cars and detrained in time for breakfast. Col. Brabson greeted the group, mustered them into the Sixty-Sixth Training Battalion and marched them toward the mess hall.²²⁹ More arrived daily until there were nine full battalions.

When the selectee arrived, he underwent a thirteen-week basic training course, assignment to his battalion, and received a camp handbook.²³⁰ The thirteen-week course consisted of “seven fundamental military requirements” and specialized training.²³¹ These were the building blocks that all training proceeded from. The first requirement was learning the basic rules of military life and elementary military training, which included instruction in discipline, courtesy, hygiene, close order drill, interior guard duty, and familiarization with the Articles of War and Army Regulations. The second requirement was caring for and maintaining weapons in the field (see Figure 21). The third requirement was to be in adequate physical condition to be out in the field. The fourth requirement concerned the use of weapons. The fifth requirement was a course on chemical weapons. The sixth requirement involved the use of various kinds of maps and

²²⁷ *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 24, 1941, 2.

²²⁸ “Selectee” is what they called the men arriving to camp, as they had been selected randomly. While at camp the terms “selectee” and “trainee” were both used.

²²⁹ “First Troops Received by Camp Wolters,” *Dallas Morning News*, March 11, 1941, 8.

²³⁰ The camp handbook was officially titled “Camp Wolters, Infantry Replacement Training Center, Mineral Wells, Texas,” and was in pamphlet form. It will be referred to in the shorter form “camp handbook.”

²³¹ B.N. Harlow, “Training for Military Service,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political Science*, March 1942, 47.

techniques in concealment. The last requirement was to practice the duties of a soldier in various locations. This requirement often involved overnight trips to different training areas that were designed to look like the different theaters of operation, the terrain of France, European cities, and jungles of Asia. The soldiers also learned a specialized skill, such as radio operation, clerical duties, cooking, auto mechanics, defense against aircraft and mechanized units (tanks).²³²



Figure 21: Part of Army life included knowing how to maintain and care for your equipment in the field. This photo shows an officer inspecting a trainee's gun, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram Collection*, August 9, 1941, University of Texas at Arlington Libraries.

As the men trained, the camp continued to grow. In March, the Army had announced that they were planning to expand Wolters to twice its present size with construction beginning in

²³² Harlow, 47.

June.²³³ In April they signed a lease for 8,000 more acres,²³⁴ and the next day announced that a 1,000-man Reception Center would be included in the expansion. The cost of the new construction was estimated to be around \$496,300.00.²³⁵ That was not the end of growth at Wolters. Over the course of six years, they built sports arenas, chapels, motor repair shops, day rooms, storage buildings, mess halls, more barracks, service clubs, and much more. It came to dwarf neighboring Mineral Wells. Construction was an ever-present reality in the life of the camp until the end of the war.

The first training group ended, and soldiers began shipping out June 17 to their duty stations. General Marshall worried about this step of the process. He was concerned that when the selectees finished their training cycle that they would be used to flesh out the staff at non-combat installations instead of being sent to actual combat units.²³⁶ General Marshall was correct, this did happen, and was one of multiple problems in the replacement system. The camp prepared for its first full capacity training cycle to begin on July 1, when 17,000 men were to be in camp.²³⁷

Originally, the men that were selected for the draft had a duty obligation of twelve months service. The situation in both Europe and the Pacific continued to crumble, and this caused the President and military leaders much concern as the first selectees were completing their service just as war seemed imminent.²³⁸ On August 18, FDR signed the Selective Service Extension

²³³ "Camp Wolters Turned Over to Government," *Palo Pinto County Star*, 64, March 28, 1941, 5.

²³⁴ "Leases Signed for Land at Camp Wolters," *Palo Pinto County Star*, 64, April 18, 1941, 1.

²³⁵ "Reception Centers at Texas Camps to be Increased," *Dallas Morning News*, April 24, 1941, 2.

²³⁶ Lervill, 229.

²³⁷ "Camp Wolters Sends Trainees by Batch to Permanent Camps," *Dallas Morning News*, June 20, 1941, 3.

²³⁸ Germany began its invasion of the Soviet Union June 22, 1941. The German and Italian consulates were closed in the US December 11, the Japanese invaded French Indochina on July 28, and accused the US of invading its territorial waters in Sukomo Bay on July 31.

Act.²³⁹ This act increased the selectees' Army service from twelve months to thirty months.²⁴⁰

This act passed Congress by one vote. It was not popular with many people, and many grumbled about it. Some soldiers threatened to desert after their twelve months were up. When asked about the attitudes of selectees coming into service since the length of service had changed, General Simpson, Commander of Camp Wolters (see Figure 22), said that the morale of men entering the Army was high. He said, "They are men. Men of purpose and vision and patriotism. And none of them likes to hear the plea of the tearful appeaser as he pities their plight and demands that they be sent back home to mamma."²⁴¹ General Simpson insisted that it was civilian morale that needed attention, not his troops.

²³⁹ Thomas H. Eliot, "Did We Almost Lose the Army?" *New York Times*, August 12, 1991, Section A, <https://www.nytimes.com/1991/08/12/opinion/did-we-almost-lose-the-army.html>. The vote for the extension was 203-202. The vote was taken August 12, 1941.

²⁴⁰ U.S. Congress, U.S. Code 1982 Edition, *Title 50: War and National Defense*, Appendix, Chapter 7: Service Extension Act of 1941, Sections 351-362, 229-230, <https://www.loc.gov/item/uscode1982-019050a007/>.

²⁴¹ "Morale of Army is Okayed by Commander of 15,000," *Dallas Morning News*, August 25, 1941, 4.



Figure 22: General William Hood Simpson, First Commander of Camp Wolters, 1941. He would later command the Ninth US Army and be on the cover of both *Look* and *Time* magazines in 1945 for his action in France and Germany, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram Collection*, University of Texas at Arlington Libraries.

General Simpson was not the only person concerned with morale. In an address at Trinity College in 1941, General Marshall himself said, “It is the morale that wins the victory. Morale is a state of mind. It is a steadfastness and courage and hope. With it all things are possible, without it everything else, planning, preparation, production, count as naught.”²⁴² With that in mind, Marshall tried to ensure the morale of his Army would be high at all times.²⁴³ Each camp had a

²⁴² George C. Marshall, “Speech at Trinity College, June 15, 1941,” <https://www.marshallfoundation.org/library/digital-archive/speech-at-trinity-college/>.

²⁴³ Marshall was adamant about the role morale played in the Army. However, when the African American soldiers arrived at camp there were no recreational activities or Service Club ready for them.

morale officer and a recreation officer. Captain Roy T. Falkenburg was the first Morale Officer at Wolters²⁴⁴ and Lt. J.O. McMahan was the first Recreation Officer.²⁴⁵ Together, they worked hard to keep the men's spirits up and have them enjoy their off-duty time, and they offered the men the ability to participate in a variety of activities.

The most popular activities were dances, movies, and athletics, with baseball, basketball, football, and boxing garnering the most participants. There were weekly dances, three movie theaters, and during the season there were intercamp games, and boxing competitions. These often drew large crowds and were extremely popular. The first intercamp baseball game was played at Wolters April 11, 1942. The Doughboy Nine (see Figure 23) went against the 120th Quartermaster Regiment representing Camp Berkley. Heading the line-up for Wolters was Pvt. Charlie Stanceu of the 62 Battalion, who had pitched for the World Champion New York Yankees the year before, and Pvt. Dick Midkiff, former pitcher for Baltimore.²⁴⁶

²⁴⁴ "Camp Wolters Men Entertained at Denton," *Dallas Morning News*, July 1, 1941, 9.

²⁴⁵ "USO Dance Committee Fears Unbalanced Budget," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 30, 1941, 9.

²⁴⁶ "Former Yank to Hurl for Soldiers Sunday," *Dallas Morning News*, April 5, 1942, 6.

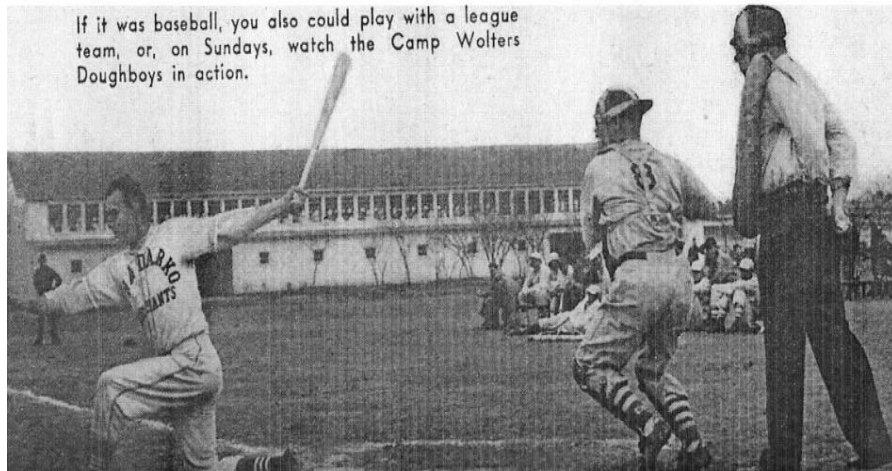


Figure 23: The Camp Walters Doughboys featured talent from the major leagues and were very popular with soldiers and civilians that were allowed to attend games. Casper, Willie H., Jr. *Pictorial History of Fort Wolters, Volume 1: Infantry Replacement Training Center, 1942*, The Portal to Texas History.

The Army also enlisted the help of Hollywood in raising the morale of soldiers and civilians by producing such movies as *Sergeant York* (1941), *They Died with Their Boots On* (1942), and *Casablanca* (1942). These are just a few of the multitude of war films Hollywood cranked out during the war years that were seen in the camp theaters. Hollywood went a step further and sent movie stars to Army camps to meet the soldiers. Wolters had its first group of visiting celebrities the weekend of June 21 and 22, 1941. Chico Marx arrived with a “Pullman-load of talent,” including Harry Savoy, Toni Lane, Janice Williams, Marjorie Gainesworth, and Tommy Trant.²⁴⁷ That was just the beginning, other celebrities who visited were Judy Garland (see Figure 24) and husband David Rose,²⁴⁸ Carmen Miranda, Dale Evans, Joan Blondell, Bill Holden, and many others, including professional boxers Joe Louis and Sugar Ray Robinson who put on an exhibition match. Samuel Goldwyn, Hollywood producer and director, visited the

²⁴⁷ “Chico’s Bit for Uncle Sam,” *Dallas Morning News*, June 21, 1941, 10.

²⁴⁸ “Judy Garland to Appear at Camp Wolters,” *Mineral Wells Index*, January 22, 1942, reprint in *Mineral Wells Index*, January 22, 2017.

camp and spoke with men when his son was stationed at Wolters. He emphasized the importance of movies in keeping up the morale of the soldiers.²⁴⁹



Figure 24: Judy Garland arrives at Wolters with husband David Rose. She sang at the Service Club and bought a war bond from the post office, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram Collection*, January 30, 1942, University of Texas at Arlington Libraries.

The seriousness of the situation struck home December 7, 1941, as Japanese planes bombed the US Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor and war was quickly declared. Richard Scholl, a selectee at Wolters at the time, had a weekend pass and stayed overnight in Fort Worth with a friend. That Sunday, they were at a movie theater when it was announced that Pearl Harbor had been attacked

²⁴⁹ “Goldwyn Emphasizes Movie’s Place in Maintaining Morale of GI Joe,” *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, December 29, 1944,1, Briscoe Center for American History.

and all military personnel were to return to their base immediately. When the theater audience received the news, he says everyone was shocked. That was his first and last leave for four years.²⁵⁰ Seven officers from Wolters had already departed for duty in the Philippines on November 1 and more were quickly leaving.²⁵¹

The Replacement Centers kept cranking out soldiers and all seemed to go well that first year of war. The Army's main concern at this time was to get troops trained and transported to the theater of operation.²⁵² However, in late 1942 and early 1943, the first indication that there was a problem with the replacement system appeared. Officers in the field sent the War Department requests for massive numbers of replacements. This concerned mostly the troops in North Africa. Units bound for the European or Mediterranean theaters often stopped in North Africa to refuel and restock their supplies. North Africa was also an active theater and had their own replacement needs. Upon arrival in North Africa, many replacement soldiers bound for other locations were taken by US provisional units and issued new orders that allowed the replacement soldiers to become members of the provisional unit. This redirection by the provisional units was allowed by the US commanding officers only when the mission of the provisional unit was deemed critical to the overall success of the Army and the unit was needed for a short period of time. After the unit completed the mission, the replacement soldiers were to go on to their original assignments.²⁵³ However, this did not always happen, as the commanding officers in North Africa oftentimes wanted to keep the soldiers and incorporated them into regular units. This caused great confusion on the part of the War Department and the generals

²⁵⁰ Richard Scholl, "Early Life, Enlisting, and Freezing in Texas," The Digital Collections of the National WWII Museum, 2015, 2:29 mark, <https://www.ww2online.org/view/richard-scholl#early-life-enlisting-and-freezing-in-texas>.

²⁵¹ "Camp Wolters Officers Sent to Philippines," *Dallas Morning News*, September 27, 1941, 2.

²⁵² Lerwill, 269.

²⁵³ Lerwill, 275. A provisional unit is a group organized for a short time for a specific action or task.

who had asked for replacements that never appeared because communications were slow and problematic.

Another problem with the replacement system was how the Army counted soldiers. An example is given in Lerwill of how soldiers on their way to India or China might stop in North Africa before continuing to their assigned base, and their total was added to the base strength amount for North Africa.²⁵⁴ Strength of numbers and accounting problems continued to plague the Army throughout the war.

During the summer of 1943, the Army was organizing the upcoming calls for service when they realized that they were going to be short 446,000 men by the end of the year.²⁵⁵ This led to a memorandum being sent to the local draft boards that they needed to reclassify the men on their rolls. The largest group that was being deferred was men aged 18-37 who were fathers but did not participate in agricultural work.²⁵⁶ The initial decision to quit deferring this group—that is to draft men who were fathers as long as they were not agricultural workers-- caused an uproar among draft boards and the general population. One Senator called for the permanent deferral of all fathers and wanted an emergency session of Congress to address just this issue.²⁵⁷ The House and Senate worked out a compromise that was passed in December that fathers were to be called to service only if all other similarly classified people had already been called. Specifically, the bill states, “on a national basis, fathers maintaining a bona fide family relationship, if classified I-A, would not be called into service until all other persons in class I-A at that time had been called.”²⁵⁸ The result was the drafting of only 90,000 more men, which fell

²⁵⁴ Lerwill, 292.

²⁵⁵ Lerwill, 271.

²⁵⁶ Lerwill, 270.

²⁵⁷ Lerwill, 271.

²⁵⁸ Lerwill, 272.

far short of the number needed. The Selective Service failed to provide an adequate number of men for the Armed Services during the period of September 1, 1943-April 30, 1944, according to Lerwill, and the number was not small. The Selective Service failed to send 443,967 men.²⁵⁹

In July 1943, the Army announced that basic training was being extended a week and officer training school was extended one month.²⁶⁰ The camp newspaper for the white soldiers, the *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, claimed that this change was being done to “round out” the soldiers’ training. There had been earlier complaints about the quality of the soldiers coming out of the Replacement Centers and that they needed more training. A meeting was called in Washington D.C. to discuss the replacement problem in May. At the conclusion of that meeting it was concluded that “training currently conducted in Replacement Training Centers was not adequate.”²⁶¹ There was much discussion about how long to extend the training and what additional training to include. The decision was made to add an extra week to training, but it was revised in August to a seventeen-week cycle.²⁶² The additional weeks were to be spent on field training and tactics.²⁶³

Some of the improvements made at Wolters due to this change was the inclusion of training at a “German Village” that had been set up at Hell’s Bottom (see Figure 25), one of the camp’s training grounds. This training focused on hand-to-hand combat and mentally preparing the soldier for street fighting.²⁶⁴ The trainees also spent two straight weeks “in the field” going

²⁵⁹ Lerwill, 272.

²⁶⁰ “Cycles Change to 14 Weeks,” *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, July 2, 1943, 2.

²⁶¹ William R. Keast, “The Training of Enlisted Replacements,” in *The Procurement and Training of Ground Combat Troops* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office): 1991, 402, <https://archive.org/details/TheProcurementAndTrainingOfGroundCombatTroops/page/n111/mode/2up>.

²⁶² “54th Battalion,” *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, August 6, 1943, 3.

²⁶³ Keast, 405.

²⁶⁴ “House by House,” *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, August 18, 1943, 2.

from one problem area to another to help build up stamina and strength.²⁶⁵ Four 11-ton tanks were delivered to Wolters by the end of July to assist with training.²⁶⁶ Next they added a new machine gun range,²⁶⁷ a bayonet trainer, and a flame thrower for the soldiers to use during training.²⁶⁸



Figure 25: Selectees at the Hell's Bottom Training Area, January 2, 1944. Hell's Bottom was one of the primary training sites for Wolters. Willie H. Casper, Jr. *Pictorial History of Fort Wolters, Volume 1: Infantry Replacement Training Center*, The Portal to Texas History.

In the early months of 1944, the shortage of replacement soldiers became very serious.

The Army severely curtailed the Army Specialized Training Programs (ASTP) in February 1944

²⁶⁵ "17-Weeks Cycle Explained," *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, September 3, 1943, 2.

²⁶⁶ "Camp Wolters Gets 11-Ton Tanks to Aid in New Training Program," *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, July 9, 1943, 1.

²⁶⁷ "New Machine Gun Range Named After Wolterite," *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, September 8, 1944, 1.

²⁶⁸ "Hell's Bottom Gets New Bayonet Trainer," *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, October 20, 1944, 1:

"Camp Adds Newest Flame Thrower to List of Practical Training Aids," *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, October 20, 1944, 5.

to have more men in the field.²⁶⁹ By April, they hoped to graduate 10,000 ASTP men per month, which would add to the Army's dwindling numbers.²⁷⁰ They also discontinued recruitment in the Replacement Centers for any special program, such as the paratroopers or coast guard. All Army theaters were to fill vacancies with able bodied men, who were to be re-trained in the field, and leave their jobs (clerks, communications, supply) to the men of limited assignment.²⁷¹ The re-assignment and graduation of men from the ASTP program proceeded at a rapid pace. On February 25, the camp newspaper reported of the expectation that by April 1, 110,000 men from the program would be re-assigned for active duty.²⁷²

In April 1944, representatives from the North African and European theaters reported to Washington to discuss the replacement situation. This resulted in the directive of May 4th, 1944, that went to all theaters, including the Pacific. In the directive the Army gave very specific and clear instructions on how to count classifications of men, ordered them to create and maintain a replacement pool, added medical personnel to help determine a soldier's fitness for duty, and created personnel audit teams.²⁷³ The Army Air Force also returned 30,000 men who had not completed pilot training to the Army.²⁷⁴ These measures patched the replacement situation for a while, but it would not last.

In December 1944, the War Department called another meeting about the replacement situation. The US was in some of the heaviest fighting of the war and casualties were taking a

²⁶⁹ Lerwill, 273. Army Specialized Training Programs were a way that enlisted men, under the age of twenty-one, who had completed basic training, and met minimum requirements on an Army test, could continue to go to college instead of joining the military at that time. If they failed at their college work, they immediately had to join an Army unit.

²⁷⁰ "10,000 ASTP Graduates per Month Will Meet Vital Needs of Army," *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, February 11, 1944, 2.

²⁷¹ Lerwill, 277.

²⁷² "110,000 ASTP Men Reassigned," *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, February 25, 1944, 5.

²⁷³ Lerwill, 291-292.

²⁷⁴ "Air Forces to Return Cadets," *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, April 14, 1944, 3.

substantial toll; replacements were needed badly. After many days of discussion, it was decided that the European theater would call in 10,000 of its men from the Air Force and 20,000 of its men from the communications zone, re-train them and put them in the field.²⁷⁵ In January 1945 it was reported that 80,000 men from the Army Air Force and Army Service Force had been transferred to AGF for field training.²⁷⁶ In February, there was a shortage of training instructors at Wolters,²⁷⁷ this caused some Army officials to worry about the quality of training. This resulted in a personal inspection by the new AGF Commander, General Joseph Stillwell.²⁷⁸ Replacements were critically needed. One such example is the Twelfth Army Group, led by General Omar Bradley.²⁷⁹ They reported on May 9, 1945, as having 745,114 casualties, it had received only 700, 285 replacements.²⁸⁰ The reassignment and retraining of soldiers did not solve the problem, but time would.

While the audits, re-directed forces, and inspections helped, it was the developments in the war that mitigated the situation. On May 8, 1945, at 5:01 p.m. Camp Wolters' time, the war in Europe was declared over. The thousands of men at camp gathered on Scott Hill (see Figure 26) and listened as their leaders spoke of the war in Europe. But they also reminded the men that the war with Japan was not over, there were further sacrifices to be made, and not everyone was going home yet. The camp band played the National Anthem, and Chaplain Robert Hardee said a prayer.²⁸¹

²⁷⁵ "Air Forces to Return Cadets," *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, April 14, 1944, 3.

²⁷⁶ "WD Transfers 80,000 to AGF," *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, January 5, 1945, 2.

²⁷⁷ "IRTC's Wheel System of Training Offsets Shortage of GI Instructors," *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, February 2, 1945, 2.

²⁷⁸ "General Stillwell Arrives Here for Tour," *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, February 16, 1945, 1.

²⁷⁹ Military Wikia.org, "Twelfth United States Army Group," https://military.wikia.org/wiki/Twelfth_United_States_Army_Group.

²⁸⁰ Lerwill, 301.

²⁸¹ "Troops Hear Speakers Stress Continued Effort," *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, May 11, 1945, 1.

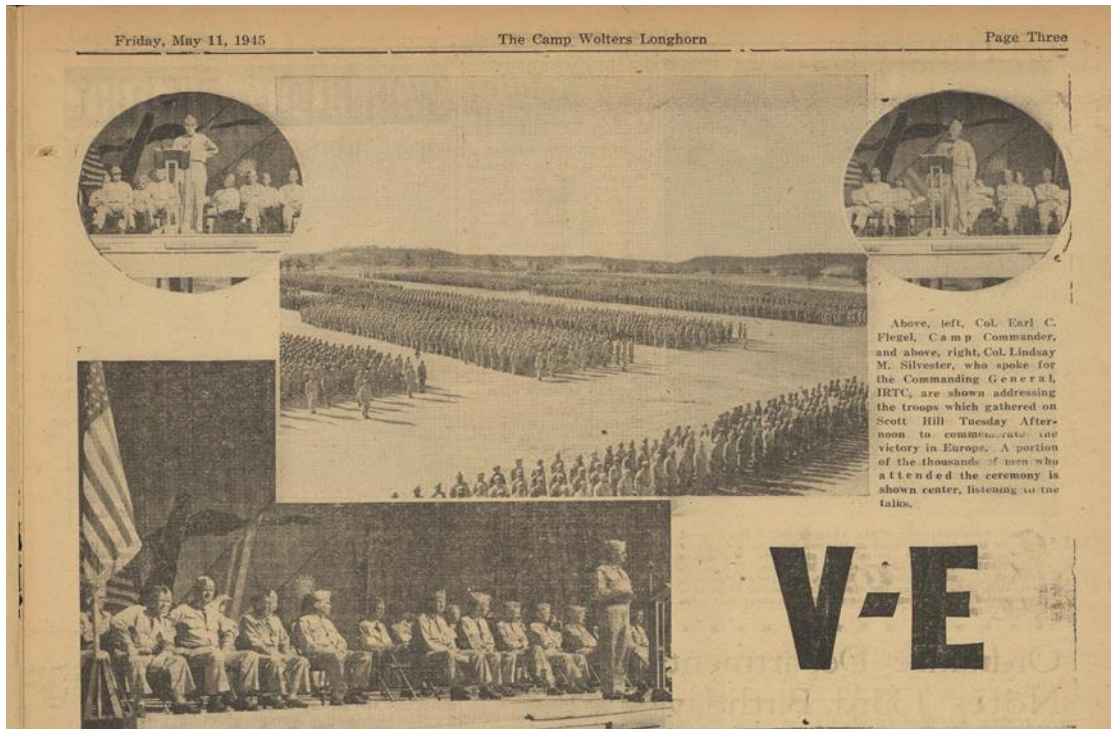


Figure 26: Photograph of the ceremony at Scott Hill on V-E Day. The men were reminded that war continued with Japan. *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, May 11, 1945, 3.

With the war over in Europe, the Army could now put all its manpower into fighting the war with Japan. The replacement problem was still an issue but could be put on the back burner for the moment. General Marshall hired Dr. E.P. Learned and Dr. Dan T. Smith on June 9, 1945, to study the replacement problem and make suggestions.²⁸² The study's conclusions were wide-ranging. They noted that the Army had not appropriately planned personnel or resources, there were too many agencies involved in the process of getting replacements, that replacements were often diverted from original assignments, and that the various theaters and commanders were not

²⁸² Lervill, 305.

as involved in the process as they should be.²⁸³ The study presented multiple suggestions that could be started right away to address these problems.

The suggestions made by the Learned -Smith study did not have an opportunity to take effect, as victory over Japan came rapidly. News of the defeat came the evening of Tuesday, August 14. The camp had a ceremony the next day, and several smaller ceremonies were conducted at the camp chapels.²⁸⁴

With the war over, people worried about the future of Wolters. The soldiers were not sure if they could go home or sent overseas to be used in the occupation. They wondered if the camp would continue to train soldiers. Many of the civilian workers worried about the loss of their jobs. This was a time of uncertainty and anxiety for many. Initially, the trainees kept training and the civilians kept working. Yet in one month, by September 14, camp administrators began making small cuts in the civilian workforce,²⁸⁵ with most employees remaining on in some capacity until the end of the year.²⁸⁶

As Camp Wolters started winding down operations, the camp's long-term fate was still uncertain. Soldiers went home or were transferred, battalions were combined for lack of soldiers, a Separation Point was opened and closed, the IRTC accepted its last, and smallest, class in November,²⁸⁷ and then closed in December. The camp newspaper issued its last edition on December 28, 1945.²⁸⁸

²⁸³ Lervill, 305.

²⁸⁴ "Camp Takes News of Surrender Quietly," *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, August 17, 1945, 1.

²⁸⁵ "Graded Civilians Due for Cut Here," *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, September 14, 1945, 1.

²⁸⁶ "Camp Will Remain Open Indefinitely; Large Reduction in Civilian Workers," *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, December 14, 1945, 1.

²⁸⁷ "IRTC Trainee Strength Tumbles to 6,229 Men," *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, November 23, 1945, 1.

²⁸⁸ "Swan Song of Reporter Who Covered Them All," *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, December 28, 1945, 1.

January 1946 was a devastating month for the camp. On January 6, the service clubs closed and on January 19, the IRTC was inactivated; by January 23 the Army announced that Wolters was surplus.²⁸⁹ This was quite a blow to the people of Mineral Wells. Then, on January 31, Army engineers arrived, took over, and started dismantling the camp for salvage.²⁹⁰

It took the next several months to dismantle, transfer, clean up, and sell the various parts of the camp that remained. The POW camp was one of the last groups to leave. They were transferred to Camp Bowie in Brownwood, Texas on April 5. On August 15 the flag came down for the last time at Camp Wolters (see Figure 27).



Figure 27: Closing ceremony at Camp Wolters, Col. Coing, the last commander, is holding the flag, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* Collection, August 15, 1946, University of Texas at Arlington Libraries.

²⁸⁹ “Most Camp Wolters Declared Surplus,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 24, 1946, 3.

²⁹⁰ Edward E. Coing, “The Last Days of Camp Wolters,” *15 August 1946*. 2. The Portal to Texas History.

The replacement system trained 2,500,000 soldiers, or 30 percent of the 1945 Army total.²⁹¹ Camp Wolters would train between 200,000-250,000 soldiers, or 8-10 percent of the total replacement system force.²⁹² The exact number of men trained at Wolters is not known. There are two sources that can be relied upon for accuracy, one is the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram's* interview with Colonel Edward Coing, the last commander of Wolters, on the day Camp Wolters closed. He set the number at "more than 250,000 soldiers."²⁹³ In the article, he commented that "More than a quarter of a million were taught here."²⁹⁴ The second source, the camp newspaper, the *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, offered a slightly lower number. In its final issue, on the front page, it states, "nearly 200,000 civilians" were trained.²⁹⁵

On peak capacity, numbers also range greatly, though no official tally exists here either. Colonel Willie Casper, who was a Commander of Fort Wolters in the 1960s, states that Wolters "housed as many as 30,000 soldiers at one time."²⁹⁶ However, in the same book, but different article, he states the number being "50,000."²⁹⁷ David Minor, writing for the *Handbook of Texas Online*, sets the number at 24,973.²⁹⁸ An estimate of 25,000-30,000 is appropriate.

²⁹¹ William R. Keast, "Importance of the Replacement Problem," in AGF Study, No. 7: *Provision of Enlisted Replacements*, 1946, 1, <https://history.army.mil/books/agf/AGF007/index.htm#Contents>.

²⁹² "Flag Goes Down at Camp Wolters but Hopes Held for Hospital There," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 16, 1945, 1; "Last Battalions to Complete Training Tomorrow," *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, December 28, 1945, 1.

²⁹³ "Wolters May Become Vet Rehabilitation Center," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 16, 1946, 10.

²⁹⁴ "Flag Goes Down at Camp Wolters but Hopes Held for Hospital There," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 16, 1945, 1.

²⁹⁵ "Last Battalions to Complete Training Tomorrow," *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, December 28, 1945, 1.

²⁹⁶ Willie Casper Jr., "Detailed History of Fort Wolters," *Pictorial History of Fort Wolters, Volume 3: Primary Helicopter Center Facility*, 43. The Portal to Texas History.

²⁹⁷ Casper, "History of Camp Wolters, Texas," 33.

²⁹⁸ David Minor, "Fort Wolters," *Handbook of Texas Online*, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/fort-wolters>.

There are also a variety of answers as to how large the camp was in acreage. Most sources state that Camp Wolters was 7,500 acres.²⁹⁹ Camp Wolters did start out with 7,500 acres in 1941³⁰⁰ but they started leasing more land almost as soon as it opened.³⁰¹ The Camp Wolters IRTC Handbook of 1941 states that the camp includes 16,000 acres,³⁰² however, according to Colonel Casper, the camp leased over 23,000 acres before closing in 1946.³⁰³

There were high hopes when Camp Wolters opened that this was the answer to the replacement problem. Camp Wolters itself was an exemplary camp, from estimations made by both the Army³⁰⁴ and former soldiers.³⁰⁵ But it did not solve the replacement problem because of problems within the system. The need for experienced troops continued to worsen throughout the war, not because the camps failed in their jobs, but because the system failed to prepare adequately for the excessive growth the Army had in such a short time. The Army failed to recognize and anticipate even mundane problems, including how many soldiers were assigned to a battalion, how many were on leave, and how many were in the hospital. Lerwill says, “Efficient use of military manpower can only be achieved when there is an effective replacement system.”³⁰⁶ He also notes that in every study of the replacement system since WWII a

²⁹⁹ Websites https://www.pbase.com/keith1959/fort_wolters,: https://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WMYEBX_History_of_Camp_Wolters_and_Fort_Wolters_Mineral_Wells_TX, <https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=119159>: <https://texashillcountry.com/fort-wolters-former-military/>.

³⁰⁰ Binford, 13.

³⁰¹ “Leases Signed for Land at Camp Wolters,” *Palo Pinto County Star*, 64, April 18, 1941, 1: “Reception Centers at Texas Camps to be Increased,” *Dallas Morning News*, April 24, 1941, 2.

³⁰² Camp Wolters, Infantry Replacement Training Center, Mineral Wells, Texas, pamphlet (handbook), 1, The Portal to Texas History.

³⁰³ Willie H. Casper, Jr. *Pictorial History of Fort Wolters, Volume 1: Infantry Replacement Training Center*, 22, The Portal to Texas History.

³⁰⁴ “Camp Wolters is considered the outstanding replacement center of the country,” stated Major General Courtney Hughes, Chief of the Infantry, in *Dallas Morning News*, May 24, 1941, 3.

³⁰⁵ Paul Reed, “Parachute School,” *World War II*, September 2005, 18-20, in author’s collection.

³⁰⁶ Lerwill, 469

recommendation has been made to have officers trained in personnel administration and planning.³⁰⁷

World War II was an unprecedented event, and the Army may not have been able to foresee such problems. Whatever the problems with the replacement system were, Wolters turned-out battle-ready soldiers as the amount of Medal of Honor Winners from Wolters indicates. They will be discussed in the conclusion.

³⁰⁷ Lerwill, 477.

Chapter Four

A Camp Transformed by World War and Changing Times: African Americans, Women, and Prisoners of War, 1941-1945

Camp Wolters was active during World War II, and segregation of the races was legally practiced in the United States during this time, especially in the South. African Americans and other non-white citizens were not given the same rights and respect as white citizens and were kept separate from them. This study does not intend to discuss the multitude of problems that segregation caused in the military, or the mistreatment non-white civilians faced during that time, but it will look at what evidence is left of the two African American battalions that were trained at Wolters and try to reconstruct as much of their lives while at camp as possible.³⁰⁸ This chapter will also look at the Women's Auxiliary Army Corp (WAAC) unit that began arriving in June 1943 and what role they played at camp. Before the war, most married, white women did not work outside the home, but with the men off to war women got the opportunity to show what they could do if given a chance, but they had to fight for that chance. Lastly, the German Prisoners of War that arrived in 1944 and were kept in a separated area of the camp will be discussed. These three groups all offer a different view of Wolters that the regular selectee did not get, the regular selectee being a white male US citizen. As their challenges were different from those of enlisted or fully employed white men, they provide by way of contrast a sense of what advantages the privileges of race and gender entailed.³⁰⁹

³⁰⁸ Camp Wolters, *Infantry Replacement Training Center, Mineral Wells, Texas*, pamphlet (handbook), 6, The Portal to Texas History. The government used the term "colored" for African Americans, while the newspapers used the term "negro" or "negroes." The author will use "African American" when not directly quoting.

³⁰⁹ A few words need to be said about the sources that are used in this chapter. Very few sources could be found on all three groups. Little mention of the African American selectees and the German POWs appeared in the camp newspaper, the *Camp Wolters Longhorn*. From that source it was almost like neither group existed. What little

Before any troops arrived at Wolters, the subject of African Americans being in the Army and used in combat positions was controversial.³¹⁰ The thought of African Americans with a loaded gun put fear in the hearts of many Southerners.³¹¹ Most of the newly built military camps were located in the South. Out of 118 Army training facilities across the nation, 53 were in former Confederate states.³¹² Northern African Americans were not familiar with the Jim Crow traditions of the South, and many had difficulty adjusting. African American leaders requested more African Americans be allowed in the military and to serve in all areas, as opposed to limiting them to the service units. This was met with opposition from leaders that represented the South and military leaders representing the different armed branches. As late as August 1942 US Senators from the South were still calling for the removal of African American troops from their states.³¹³ The Selective Service and Training Act of 1940 set the limit for any minority group joining the Army at the same proportion as that they were represented in the overall population.³¹⁴ For African Americans at this time, that was around 10 percent. Many African Americans found this threshold unfair and continued to push for higher induction limits, but they were guaranteed the ability to apply for any military position they desired.

information about these two groups that was found came from local or regional newspapers, oral histories, and a few secondary sources. The African American battalions did have their own camp newspaper, *The Bugle*, but no copies are known to exist. The camp newspaper announced that German POWs were to be located at camp and it was accompanied by a brief article, and that is practically all they mention of the German POWs. The camp newspaper did feature stories on the WAACs (WACs) once they arrived, but the content is very limited. However, this is the only source we have for them. Despite the lack of material, it is still important that these groups be mentioned and remembered as a part of Wolters.

³¹⁰ Ulysses Lee, *The Employment of Negro Troops*, 1966 (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office) 74, <https://history.army.mil/books/wwii/11-4/index.htm#contents>.

³¹¹ Lee, 349.

³¹² "World War II Army Mobilizing Training Camps," GlobalSecurity.org, <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/facility/camp-ww2.htm> .

³¹³ "South Protests Negro Troops," *Santa Maria Daily Times*, Santa Maria, California, August 15, 1942, Newspapers.com.

³¹⁴ "Selective Service and Training Act," *U.S. Code Title 50*, <https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/ll/uscode/uscode1940-00505/uscode1940-005050a003/uscode1940-005050a003.pdf> .



Figure 28: The first troops that arrived at Wolters were African Americans from Oklahoma, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 1941, University of Texas at Arlington Libraries.

It was a cold morning when the very first troops arrived at Wolters, March 11, 1941. These troops were comprised of 181 “shivering Negro boys” from Fort Sill, Oklahoma (see Figure 28).³¹⁵ They became part of the two African American training battalions formed at Wolters, battalions Sixty-Six and Sixty-Seven. The first commander of the Sixty-Sixth Battalion was Lt. Col. William H. McCutcheon, and Major Hal C. Granberry, executive officer, both from Fort Huachuca in Arizona.³¹⁶ There were 1,500-2,000 African American soldiers in training at Wolters when the camp was fully functional.³¹⁷ No official number of African Americans that

³¹⁵ “First Troops Received by Camp Wolters,” *Dallas Morning News*, March 12, 1941, 8, (see Figure 29).

³¹⁶ “Camp Wolters Initiates Its New Technique,” *Dallas Morning News*, March 14, 1941, 3. Fort Huachuca had been the home for African American soldiers since 1913 when the Buffalo Soldiers were stationed there. It would see over 30,000 African American soldiers during WWII, see <https://home.army.mil/huachuca/index.php/about/history>.

³¹⁷ “Facts about the U. S. Army Replacement Center, Mineral Wells, Texas,” Mineral Wells Chamber of Commerce, bookmark, The Portal to Texas History.

were trained at Wolters is extant, however, the last issue of the camp newspaper states, “there were nearly 15,000 colored troops (trained here).”³¹⁸

As in the rest of the South, segregation was a part of the African American soldiers’ experience at Camp Wolters. The African American selectees were housed in Area Six (see Figure 29) in the southeast part of camp.³¹⁹ Area Six also contained a theater (Theater Three), PX, a guest house, a chapel, and a bus stop. The buses that connected the camp to Mineral Wells ran from 5:45 p.m. to 11:30 p.m. The buses for whites ran from 5:00 a.m. to 11:30 p.m.³²⁰ First Lt. S.F. Guilbeau was an African American chaplain at Wolters.³²¹ The African American service club was south of Area Six.³²² The Sports Arena was reserved for their use only on Thursday nights.³²³

³¹⁸ “Last Battalions to Complete Training Tomorrow,” *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, December 28, 1945, 1.

³¹⁹ Camp Wolters, *Infantry Replacement Training Center, Mineral Wells, Texas*, pamphlet (handbook), 3, The Portal to Texas History.

³²⁰ Camp Wolters, *Infantry Replacement Training Center, Mineral Wells, Texas*, pamphlet (handbook), 3, The Portal to Texas History.

³²¹ “Tuskegee, Ala.,” *Chicago Defender*, August 15, 1942, 6, from ProQuest.

³²² Camp Wolters, *Infantry Replacement Training Center, Mineral Wells, Texas*, pamphlet (handbook), 5, The Portal to Texas History.

³²³ Camp Wolters, *Infantry Replacement Training Center, Mineral Wells, Texas*, pamphlet (handbook), 6, The Portal to Texas History.

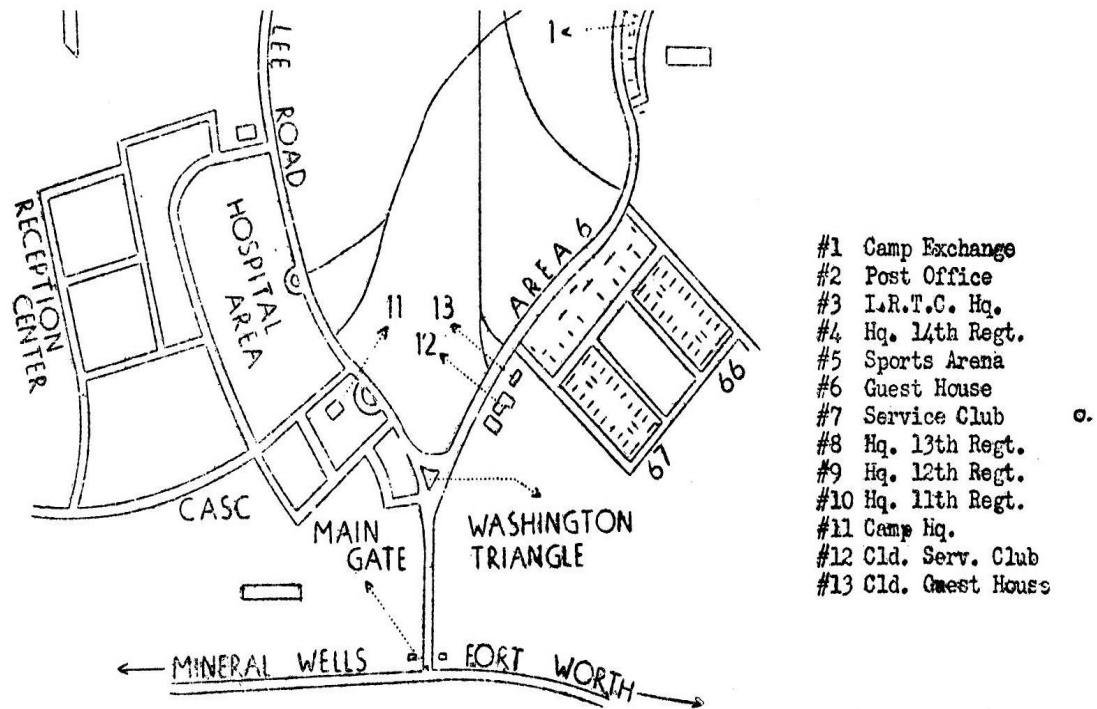


Figure 29: Partial map of Camp Wolters showing Area Six. From *Camp Wolters Infantry Replacement Center, Pictorial History of Fort Wolters* Collection, The Portal to Texas History.

When the new selectees arrived at camp, the camp was in the final stages of construction. During inspection in April 1941, an officer asked if any of the new African American selectees knew how to work with wood or do some carpentry. One man from the Sixty-Sixth Battalion came forward, Pvt. Floyd Wise. He had some experience but was concerned that nobody else had stepped forward. The officer assigned him a crew and told him to get to work finishing the surrounding buildings. When the selectees were not drilling or involved in other training exercises, they were found working on these buildings.³²⁴

³²⁴ "Ex-Chicagoan Proves to be Henry J. Kaiser of Guinea," *Chicago Defender*, September 4, 1943, 3.

The first cycle of training was completed in June 1941 and the men started shipping out. The first group of 544 African American soldiers left for San Francisco to join the 394 Quartermaster Battalion. A group of seventy-two African American soldiers was sent to the Twenty-Fifth Infantry Regiment at Fort Huachuca, in Arizona.³²⁵ A group of 535 was sent to Oakland in July.³²⁶ Overseeing this movement and training was Col. Louis B. Knight, who became the commander of the Sixty-Sixth Battalion on May 26, 1941.³²⁷

On June 6, 1941, the county newspaper reported the arrest of an African American soldier.³²⁸ He was arrested for carrying “concealed weapons.” It is highly possible that this soldier was Corporal George M. Shuffer Jr., who had been transferred from Fort Huachuca to Wolters to train the African American M.P.s. In an interview, he recounts how the first time he came into Mineral Wells, the white M.P.s rejected his authority, arrested him, and took him back to headquarters. He was released, but with no apology. Corporal Shuffer later became Brig. General Shuffer.³²⁹

In June 1941, an African American soldier, Pvt. Lee C. Netherly (see Figure 30), drowned in a stock tank trying to save the life of a friend.³³⁰ The soldiers (members of the Sixty-Sixth Training Battalion) were completing a night march at the Baker Hollow Maneuver and Camping Site, northwest of Mineral Wells. The soldiers were washing and swimming when Pvt. George C. Butler, who could not swim, fell in. Pvt. Netherly noticed that his friend was struggling and jumped in to save his life. Pvt. Netherly managed to get Pvt. Butler to shore, but somehow Pvt.

³²⁵“Many Trainees Will Depart,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 30, 1941, 3.

³²⁶ “3,000 Trainees Go to Army Stations,” *Dallas Morning News*, July 8, 1941, 5.

³²⁷ “Lieutenant Colonels Given Assignments,” *Dallas Morning News*, May 27, 1941, 10.

³²⁸ “Untitled,” *Palo Pinto County Star* 64, June 6, 1941, 1.

³²⁹ “Brigadier General George Macon Shuffer, Jr.,” *On Point*, 16,4, 17-20.

³³⁰ Untitled, *Palo Pinto County Star* 65, July 4, 1941, 2, 3.

Netherly fell back into the water and his body was found ten minutes later. Pvt. Netherly was posthumously awarded the Soldier's Medal for Heroism.³³¹



Figure 30: Pvt. Lee C. Netherly drowned trying to save another soldier, <https://www.fold3.com/page/90211644/1-c-netherly>.

Vernon J. Baker was an African American from Wyoming who arrived at Wolters in June 1941. He had grown up in an area where multiple races coexisted without much hostility or discrimination. Then he came to Camp Wolters and got his first taste of the Jim Crow South, or as he says, “Segregation hit me full in the face.”³³² Baker gave an oral history interview to the

³³¹ “Medal Given for Rescue,” *Camp Wolters Longhorn* 1, July 24, 1941, 1.

³³² “Vernon J. Baker,” The Digital Collection of the National WWII Museum, <https://www.ww2online.org/view/vernon-baker#segment-2>.

National World War II Museum where he discusses his initial encounter at Camp Wolters with a bus driver and how he quickly learned to “conform.” When Baker entered the bus, he took a front seat. The (white) driver said, “Hey n-----, get your bag and get to the back of the bus where you belong.” Baker wanted to punch the driver, but an elderly African American man caught him, led him to the back of the bus, and explained how life worked in the segregated South. He knew if he wanted to survive, he had to follow the rules of a segregated society, no matter how demeaning it felt. In 1945, Baker led a platoon against a heavily defended German stronghold, Castle Aghinolfi, took out a machine gun emplacement by himself, and led his platoon in taking the stronghold. For his actions he won the Bronze Star. When re-evaluated in 1993, an Army commission found that Baker, and several other African Americans, had been racially discriminated against by the US Army and it was decided his actions should have earned him the Medal of Honor. He went to the White House in 1997 and was awarded his long over-due award (see Figure 31).³³³

³³³ Howard Cabiao, “Vernon Baker, 1919-20,” Blackpast.org, <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/baker-vernon-1919-2010/>.



Figure 31: Medal of Honor recipient Vernon J. Baker faced racism and segregation at Wolters, The National WWII Museum, <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/medal-of-honor-recipient-vernon-baker>.

The African American battalions did have a newspaper, *The Bugle*. *The Bugle* was founded by Sgt. Morris DuBois, editor,³³⁴ Corporal Clifford McFarland, associate editor,³³⁵ and managing editor Sgt. Hillard McFall Jr., who had been a reporter for the African American paper in Chicago, the *Chicago Defender*.³³⁶ The reason we know about the battalion newspaper is solely because of the *Chicago Defender*. McFall, having been a former *Defender* reporter, sent back snippets of camp life that the *Defender* printed. Many of the African American soldiers

³³⁴ “Editor Transferred,” *Chicago Defender*, January 23, 1943, 10.

³³⁵ “In the Service,” *Chicago Defender*, May 29, 1943, 9.

³³⁶ “Everyone Goes when the Wagon Comes,” *Chicago Defender*, January 31, 1942, 13.

were from the Chicago area and the *Defender* often mentioned the soldiers by name who were stationed at Wolters and in return many of the soldiers wrote back. The *Defender* mentioned Wolters at least weekly, if not more often. Almost all the information we have about the African American troops at Camp Wolters comes from the *Defender*. The fact that *The Bugle* existed speaks to the vibrancy of the African American community at the camp, and to the marginalization and separateness of the time. It is possible that the lack of extant issues may reflect the prejudices of archivists in the years after the war, since copies of the white newspaper were kept.

Despite the excellent job Mineral Wells had done to entertain and provide recreational activities for the white soldiers, little had been done to provide similar opportunities for the African American selectees. One example is “Army Day” in Mineral Wells, April 7, 1941. The town had a huge celebration for Camp Wolters with entertainment, food, and dances lasting all day and well into the night.³³⁷ However, this was for the “white” soldiers. According to the article in the county paper, “The colored troops were entertained by the colored people of Mineral Wells.”³³⁸ What this entailed was not given. Sometime between April and June of 1941, Mineral Wells decided that they needed to provide some activities for the African American soldiers and announced in June 1941 that they were planning to build an African American recreation center,³³⁹ which opened March 15, 1942.³⁴⁰ A white recreation center also opened the same day, both cost \$77,500 and were run by the USO.³⁴¹

³³⁷ “Army Day Big Success,” *Palo Pinto County Star* 64, April 11, 1941, 41, 4.

³³⁸ *Palo Pinto County Star* April 11, 1941, 4. There was not an African American newspaper in Mineral Wells.

³³⁹ “Camp Wolters Soldiers Won’t Lack Recreation: Citizens of Mineral Wells to Open Center,” *Dallas Morning News*, June 13, 1941, 9.

³⁴⁰ “Mineral Wells to Dedicate Two Community Buildings,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 15, 1942, 4. Mr. E.E. McMillan conducted the opening day ceremony for the African American recreation center.

³⁴¹ “Two Recreation Centers in Mineral Wells Are Ready,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 12, 1942, 18.

It took Mineral Wells nine months to build the African American recreation center. During that time, the War Department stepped in and provided some recreational opportunities. The War Department, knowing the importance of keeping up morale, announced in July 1941, that they would be funding “Jim-Crow” service clubs for African American troops across the nation, to be built and equipped for \$254,000.³⁴² The War Department put a rush job on the project and had it opened by September 1941.³⁴³ In August, 1941 the War Department also authorized funds for the formation of seventeen “Jim-Crow” bands.³⁴⁴ At Wolters auditions were quickly held and organized by Pvt. C.D. Woods. The band was led by First Lt. Frank W. Choate.³⁴⁵ Before the end of August another band was formed.³⁴⁶

Wolters was a temporary home to many professional African American musicians, one was Floyd Ray, an orchestra leader, who had made eight recordings with Decca records. He was made a part of the Special Services Department in Company “D” of the Sixty-Seventh Battalion.³⁴⁷ He formed a “Swing Recruit” band that made quite an impression with white and African American troops alike. Ray would be assigned to the morale office in 1942 and permanently stationed at Wolters.³⁴⁸

When the Area Six Service Club opened, professionally trained painter, Pvt. Garrett Whyte, created a large mural, 6’ x 16’, on the east wall. Whyte, who was trained at the

³⁴² “27 Jim Crow Units Tabbed for \$254,000,” *Chicago Defender*, July 5, 1941, 7. The size of the service club was based on the size of units at each camp that housed African American soldiers. Camp Wolters had 1,500- 2,000 African American troops and received a small club (for 500-3000 soldiers). It had a library of five hundred volumes, a junior hostess, and a kitchen for short order cooks. It cost about \$5,000.00.

³⁴³ “Camp Wolters Club,” *Chicago Defender*, October 4, 1941, 24.

³⁴⁴ “Army of U.S. Will Form 17 New Jim-Crow Bands,” *Chicago Defender*, August 16, 1941, 6. Thirteen of the bands were formed at Infantry Replacement Training Centers, and four others in regular regiments. They were organized like other Army bands and had the usual twenty-eight pieces.

³⁴⁵ “Auditions Being Held for Negro Soldier Band Members,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 21, 1941, 9.

³⁴⁶ “Organize Camp Band,” *Chicago Defender*, August 30, 1941, 9.

³⁴⁷ “Everybody Goes When the Wagon Comes,” *Chicago Defender*, June 30, 1941, 12.

³⁴⁸ “Pvt. Floyd Ray’s Army Musicians Score Hits,” *Chicago Defender*, September 8, 1942, 23.

prestigious Hampton Institute of Art in North Carolina, had worked as an artist and cartoonist for several national newspapers including the *Chicago Defender*, and was the cartoonist for the *Bugle* while at camp.³⁴⁹ He named his mural, “In Training,” as it showed different parts of the selectee’s experience at Wolters; it had taken three months to create.

The African American USO opened the afternoon of October 5, 1941, in Mineral Wells. The soldiers provided their own entertainment³⁵⁰ and, as was common in white military clubs, the African American soldiers had the opportunity to dance the night away as buses loaded with women arrived from various cities came to dance.³⁵¹ At the first anniversary of the African American USO, there was a large celebration. The director, Robert Wilkerson, and his associate Frances G. Elliott made sure everyone had a great time. Cake was served by the Y-Anna club, a part of the USO. Ladies from the Dallas USO came and gave a stage performance during the celebration.³⁵²

The Dallas African American community, and African American communities in the area, often reached out to the soldiers at Wolters. On October 13, 1941, the Camp Wolters drill team joined the parade in Dallas celebrating Negro Day at the State Fair and marched with pep squads from both schools during halftime at the Prairie View-Wiley College football game.³⁵³ Two African American groups from Dallas visited with the soldiers at the African American USO in Mineral Wells on June 6, 1942. The group from the Psi chapter of the Iota Phi Lambda

³⁴⁹ “Camp Wolters, Texas,” *Chicago Defender*, August 29, 1942, 24.

³⁵⁰ “Negro USO Opened,” *Dallas Morning News*, October 7, 1941, 5.

³⁵¹ “Negro Girls Will Go to Camp Wolters,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, October 18, 1941, 15.

³⁵² “Social Calendar,” *Chicago Defender*, May 8, 1943, 6.

³⁵³ “Bronze Queen to Be Crowned at Negro Day at Fair Monday,” *Dallas Morning News*, October 11, 1941, 1.

sorority performed “There’s A Man in the House”³⁵⁴ and the USO Girls of Dallas welcomed and encouraged the soldiers by giving away free trips to Dallas as door prizes.³⁵⁵

Sports was a very popular way to pass the time, but the African American troops were not allowed to play with the white teams because of segregation. However, they could play against other African American teams located at various camps and even semi-professional teams located around the North Texas area. They had some very good players, and many were from the National Negro League, including Pvt. Lafayette N. Dumas (pitcher, Memphis Red Sox, aka “Big Boy” or “Jim”), Cpl. William Robinson (pitcher, played 3rd base for St. Louis Stars, aka “Bobby”), Cpl. Jake Dunn (Joseph P. Dunn Jr. Philadelphia Stars), Bill “Doc” Savage (Memphis Red Sox), Cpl. Lonnie Summers (Chicago American Giants), and Pvt. Eldridge Mayweather (1st baseman, NY Black Yankees, selected to the East-West All Star Game in 1937 and 1940).³⁵⁶

The Texas Negro League’s team, Fort Worth Black Spiders, played a baseball team composed of members from “negro soldiers stationed at Camp Wolters.”³⁵⁷ August 10, 1941, at La Grave Field in Fort Worth. The “Negro soldiers from Camp Wolters” played an exhibition game with the Dallas Wonders at Rebel Stadium in Dallas in 1942. Festivities began at 5:30 with a jitterbug contest.³⁵⁸ The “Camp Wolters Negro Nine” played against the Green Monarchs at Rebel Field in Dallas April 22, 1943. Reflecting that a tradition had developed, the reporter

³⁵⁴ “Present Drama at Camp,” *The Chicago Defender*, June 27, 1942, 17.

³⁵⁵ “Entertain Wolters Soldiers at USO Club,” *Chicago Defender*, June 27, 1942, 17.

³⁵⁶ “Camp Wolters, Texas,” *Chicago Defender*, July 18, 1942, 8.

³⁵⁷ “Black Spiders Will Play Negro Soldiers,” *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, August 7, 1941, 8.

³⁵⁸ “Negro Soldier Nine Will Play Wonders Tonight,” *Dallas Morning News*, July 19, 1942, 8. The Dallas Negro League team was the Dallas Black Giants. The Fort Worth Negro team was the Fort Worth Wonders. Rebel Stadium is in Dallas and was where the Black Giants played. This must have been an error caused by newspaper staff.

noted that the Camp Wolters team had an exceptionally strong line up the previous year and were expected to be hard to beat.³⁵⁹

Families of the African American selectees had the same problem with housing as the white families, but possibly on a worse scale because of segregation. On August 30, 1941, the Federal Works Commission approved money for defense housing in Mineral Wells and fifteen of the one hundred houses would go to African American soldiers and their families.³⁶⁰ The name of their housing units was Huachuca Place.

William H. Hastie, a civilian aide to the secretary of war and former Dean of Howard University Law School, came to inspect the African American selectees and their facilities at Camp Wolters on July 11, 1941. He inspected the current 1,400 African American soldiers and was shown the African American Service club that was being built and the African American guest house which was still under construction. Hastie praised the camp and the soldiers' efficiency.³⁶¹ Hastie had been an appointment of President Roosevelt who was to help with race relations. He later (1943) resigned in protest of the US military policy of segregation and discrimination.³⁶² The only African American general at that time (1942) was General Benjamin O. Davis. He inspected the facilities at Wolters for African American selectees, as part of a routine inspection of training camps throughout the country.³⁶³

In October 1941 a reporter touring four camps in Texas said that morale was high at Camp Wolters. He listened to the famous "Singing Battalion," formed by the two African

³⁵⁹ "Monarchs Play Wolters Team Here Thursday," *Dallas Morning News*, April 18, 1943, 8.

³⁶⁰ "Defense Housing Unit Names Are Approved," *Dallas Morning News*, August 30, 1941, 2.

³⁶¹ "Civilian Aide Lauds Camp Wolters, Tex.," *Chicago Defender*, July 12, 1941, 7.

³⁶² Jerry Ness, "Oral Interview with William H. Hastie," January 5, 1972, <https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/library/oral-histories/hastie#transcript> .

³⁶³ "Negro Army Officer to Inspect Camp Wolters," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 9, 1942, 13.

American companies at Wolters. Their theme song was “John Brown’s Body” and “their rendition of ‘God Bless America’ is a camp institution.”³⁶⁴ It was noted in the county newspaper by editor Mary Whatley, that Mineral Wells citizens often drove out to the camp to watch the review on Saturday mornings and listen to “the colored soldiers singing ‘God Bless America’.” She stated, “As we listened, we thought if everyone in the nation would sing this song as enthusiastically as they were singing it and mean every word-- that no matter how many dangers lurked around this corner—America was safe.”³⁶⁵

A new commander took over the Sixty-Seventh Battalion in late October 1942. Lt. Col. John W. Oliver personally asked to be given command of an African American battalion.³⁶⁶ Asking to command African American soldiers was not common. In fact, most of the white officers that worked with African American soldiers had been placed there because they had proved to be inept or had poor leadership skills.³⁶⁷ Second Lt. Albert Evans, an African American soldier who came to Wolters in September 1941, states, “I’ve seen white officers who hardly knew how to give a marching command to a platoon. They were inept; it was pathetic.”³⁶⁸ Lt. Col. Oliver apparently was not this kind of man. Oliver had been a commander of an interracial mixed unit at Fort Sam Houston and greatly enjoyed that experience.³⁶⁹

³⁶⁴ “Soldier’s Volunteer Acts Shows High Morale of New Forces,” *Dallas Morning News*, October 22, 1941, 6.

³⁶⁵ “Star Dust Column,” *Palo Pinto County Star* 65, 14, 1.

³⁶⁶ “Camp Wolters, Tex.,” *Chicago Defender*, January 23, 1942, 10. Each battalion commander selected one soldier each day to be his “orderly.” The soldier had to be neat in appearance and have an authoritative bearing. It is uncertain if this practice had been started at the opening of the camp but had become ingrained by 1943. In January 1943, the “orderly” duty fell to Pvt. Nicholas L. Gerren. Before serving in the Army, he had been a renowned violinist from Kansas, was the first African American in the University of Kansas Symphony Orchestra and had studied at the Moscow Conservatory of Music. He would go on to receive a doctorate in music at the University of Kansas. His papers were donated to the university upon his death in 2002.

³⁶⁷ Robert T. Starks, “Reviewed Work: *The Invisible Soldier: The Experience the Black Soldier, World War II*,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 428 (November 1976), 62-63.

³⁶⁸ Mary Penick Motley, *The Invisible Soldier: The Experience of the Black Soldier, World War II* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press):1987, 98.

³⁶⁹ “Camp Wolters, Texas,” *Chicago Defender*, October 24, 1942, 9.

While entertainment and sports reflected the possible richness of the life of the African American soldiers, limitations also existed. Elsewhere in the country, violent conflicts came as early as 1941 (Fort Benning) and continued to increase until the infamous “bloody summer” of 1943.³⁷⁰ No record of violence or protest has been found concerning the African American soldiers at Camp Wolters. But, a “disturbance” happened in Dallas on January 3, 1943, that caused the military to put Dallas “off-limits” to any African American soldier. This “disturbance” involved the arrest of seventy African American soldiers.³⁷¹ M.P.s stated that a mob of “more than 500 Negro soldiers” had surrounded their car during the disturbance.³⁷² The military allowed African American soldiers back into Dallas the next day and an investigation began. Most of the soldiers that had been arrested came from Hensley Field, a military camp in Dallas. Those that were arrested were taken back to their headquarters and were left to face their commanding general, however, thirteen of the seventy that had been arrested were facing a potential court-martial.³⁷³ That was just the start of 1943, by the end there was an estimated “242 racial battles in forty-seven cities.”³⁷⁴ Not all of these involved the military, but enough did that the calls for the African American troops to be sent out of the South became louder and louder.

During 1943, the Army Service Forces became desperate for units that could perform and fill actual labor, construction, transportation, and communication positions. These types of

³⁷⁰ Harvard Sitkoff, “Racial Militancy and Interracial Violence in the Second World War,” *The Journal of American History*, December 1971, 58, 3, 671.

³⁷¹ “Dallas ‘Off Limits’ for Negro Soldiers,” *The Decatur Daily Review* (Decatur, Illinois), January 4, 1943, 20, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/84657792>.

³⁷² “Civilians Surround Police in Hall-Thomas Area; Provost Marshal Arrests Seventy after Disturbance,” *Dallas Morning News*, January 4, 1943, 1.

³⁷³ “13 Negro Soldiers Face Possible Court-Martial,” *Dallas Morning News*, January 5, 1943, 1.

³⁷⁴ Sitkoff, 671.

positions (non-combat) had previously been delegated to African American soldiers.³⁷⁵ The Army Ground Forces also needed soldiers to fill numerous transportation companies. By August 1943, 30,000 African American soldiers had been sent overseas to fill these positions. By October 1943, the War Department recommended “that no further Negro combat units, other than those then active, be provided.”³⁷⁶ This was due to a revision of troop allocation and the inactivation of multiple units that were deemed “unneeded or less useful.” The Army deemed forty-three African American combat battalions as unneeded and made them into service units. Lee states, “The disproportionately high number of Negro battalions (being deemed unneeded) was traceable to the relatively less advanced state of training among Negro units.”³⁷⁷ With more African Americans being sent overseas to fill the service positions, and no African Americans going to IRTC’s in the South, there was a decline in racial disturbances and violence during 1944-1945.³⁷⁸

In the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* dated October 5, 1943,³⁷⁹ and the camp newspaper dated October 8, 1943, it is noted that the IRTC at Wolters would stop training African American soldiers after the current cycle was over and the African American cadre would be sent to other units. It gives no explanation as to why the training of African American troops was being discontinued, but this was the time the order to stop training African Americans in combat positions was handed down, however, this was not addressed in either article.³⁸⁰ The Sixty-Sixth Battalion became another white battalion, and the Sixty-Seventh Battalion became the replacement battalion. No date could be found as to when the African American battalions were

³⁷⁵ Sitkoff, 667.

³⁷⁶ Lee, 426.

³⁷⁷ Lee, 426.

³⁷⁸ Sitkoff, 680.

³⁷⁹“Wolters Will Train No More Negro Soldiers,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, October 5, 1943, 10.

³⁸⁰ “Colored GIs Vacate Camp,” *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, October 8, 1943, 1.

shipped out, however, there is a *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* article that says, “In 1944, when Negro troops were removed from Camp Wolters”³⁸¹ and the camp paper mentions that the Literacy School is using the former African American rooms in an article dated April 7, 1944. It can only be assumed that the soldiers left sometime between January 1, 1944, and April 7, 1944.³⁸²

From what evidence is left, it seems that the African American battalions had a similar experience in training as that of the white battalions, but with such scant evidence, an accurate conclusion cannot be drawn, too many pieces of the puzzle are still missing.³⁸³ The white soldiers did have an advantage, they did not have to endure segregation, racism, and the inhumane treatment heaped upon them as the African American soldiers did in the Jim Crow South. Such a comparison cannot be made between groups when one group has been given multiple advantages at the expense of the other group. It can be said that the African American troops at Wolters rose above these obstacles, made their time at Wolters productive, and went on to serve their country with pride and integrity.

While not as contentious as African Americans in the Army, the public did not like the idea of women serving in the military much better. Just as African Americans, women have been

³⁸¹ “City of Mineral Wells Buys USO Building,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 20, 1946, 2.

³⁸² “Literacy Schools Use Colored Rooms,” *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, April 7, 1944, 4.

³⁸³ Even with the African American troops being gone, there still seems to be some African American soldiers left at the camp. There are a few references that indicate this; however, it does not give any indication as to what kind of jobs they had or what units they were attached to, except for the camp band “The Easiest Job in the World Is Not That of Army Bandsman,” *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, March 3, 1944, 5. States that there are three bands at camp, “the 219th is the Colored band, which when split into a dance orchestra plays the hottest music this side of Hades.” “Corporation Court,” *Corsicana Daily Sun*, April 17, 1944, 5. “Soldier Is Killed, One Hurt by Bolt,” *Dallas Morning News*, May 20, 1944, 10, states that two “Negro” soldiers were hurt. “All Colored Revue to Show in Camp,” *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, May 26, 1944, 3. “Negro Soldiers Hold Open House at RC,” *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, June 23, 1944, 3, states that it was in celebration of Emancipation Day in Texas, also known as Juneteenth. Visitors toured the new African American guest house, recreation hall, barracks, and watched the movie, “The Negro Soldier” in Theater Two.

a part of every war that the US has ever fought, but not officially. They volunteered through different organizations (American Red Cross) and occupations (mostly nursing). On the eve of WWII, Congresswoman Edith Nourse Rogers (Republican, Massachusetts) met with General Marshall and discussed war manpower and how women could be used in certain skilled areas, thereby freeing more men for combat.³⁸⁴ She introduced the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) bill in May 1941. Most Senators and Congressmen opposed the bill, and many completely dismissed the bill outright, until Pearl Harbor. Once the scope of the war and the need for human labor was clear, the bill became serious business and was passed, with concessions from both sides, and signed by President Roosevelt on May 15, 1942. Secretary of War Henry Stimson appointed Oveta Culp Hobby as WAAC director. Hobby, a native Texan and wife of former Texas governor William Hobby, immediately got things rolling with recruitment drives and setting up training centers.³⁸⁵

Though they faced doubt from their male colleagues at first, the WAAC trainees proved to be a success, and as the war progressed, calls came for more and more WAACs from all military branches.³⁸⁶ The WAACs proved their worth and were accepted as part of daily military life, something that did not happen with the African American soldiers. In March 1943 Congress began discussing making the WAACs officially part of the Army. In July 1943 the bill passed and WAACs officially became Women's Army Corps (WACs). Over 150,000 women served in the Army by the end of the war.³⁸⁷

³⁸⁴ Judith A. Bellafaire, "The Women's Auxiliary Army Corps," *The Women's Army Corps: A Commemoration of World War II Service*, Center for Military History Publication 72-15, <https://history.army.mil/brochures/WAC/WAC.HTM>.

³⁸⁵ Bellafaire, "Recruitment and Training."

³⁸⁶ Bellafaire, "Services of Supply."

³⁸⁷ Bellafaire, "Conclusion."

An advance group of WAACs (before the name change) arrived at Camp Wolters June 13, 1943. There were eight women, led by Second Lt. Hattie I. Slott and Sgt. Lena L. McMinn, both from Camp Ruston, Louisiana. They were greeted by Major Kenneth Foster, commander of the Reception Center, where most WAACs worked. There were no African American WACs at Wolters. The majority of WAACs were used as instructors for the men that could not pass the Army exams, others worked in various positions throughout the camp, such as being drivers, dispatchers, clerks, translators, communications operators, and more.³⁸⁸ For three months they were housed at the Baker Hotel,³⁸⁹ until temporary quarters could be prepared for them at the Reception Center.³⁹⁰ They had to wait on their permanent quarters for several months as the contract for their building was not awarded until September 4 of that year.³⁹¹ They finally moved into their permanent quarters January, 1944.³⁹²

More women continued arriving throughout the summer and started becoming part of camp life. The men were uncertain about having women at an Army camp and this unease could be felt in the first few articles and interviews that the camp newspaper ran on the unit. The first article, which ran on the front page, poked fun of them because they had missed their train and had to ride in a caboose to get to camp. It was accompanied with a photo of the WAACs being helped off the caboose by soldiers.³⁹³ The WAACs had a column in the camp newspaper to report on happenings within their unit, "WAAC News" and later called "The Soldier is a Gal."

³⁸⁸ "The Soldier is a Gal," *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, October 13, 1943, 5.

³⁸⁹ "First WACCs to Arrive at Camp Miss Train, Take Freight Caboose," *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, July 24, 1943, 1. It is stated in the July 7, 1944, edition of the *Camp Wolters Longhorn* that the WAAC's stayed at the Baker from June 13, 1943-August 2, 1943. They then moved into quarters at the Reception Center, and finally into their own quarters in January of 1944, *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, May 11, 1945, 2.

³⁹⁰ "Camp Wolters WACS Celebrate Third Anniversary of Corps," *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, May 11, 1945, 2.

³⁹¹ "Contract Awarded," *Dallas Morning News*, September 5, 1943, 4.

³⁹² "Camp Wolters WACS Celebrate Third Anniversary of Corps," *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, May 11, 1945, 2.

³⁹³ "First WAACs to Arrive at Camp Miss Train, Take Freight Caboose," *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, June 24, 1943, 1.

Their first column was printed July 9, 1943.³⁹⁴ In this first column the WAACs introduced themselves, thanked everyone for welcoming them, and made sure everyone knew that they had gone through the same basic training as male soldiers had, except without guns.³⁹⁵ Their column was preceded by a photograph of a young lady dancing in a leotard with one leg held high up while she wore a top hat. The newspaper was quick to add their smiling faces to its' pages. First Officer Ruth Chamberlain took over command of the WAACs when she arrived in August.³⁹⁶ The whole detachment journeyed to Dallas on August 17, 1943, to meet with other WAACs, learn about the insurance they were eligible for as members of the Army, and watched a movie at the Majestic Theater on how the British and Canadian Women's Service worked.³⁹⁷ The WACs felt so comfortable at Wolters that they even took on the officers at the Reception Hall for a softball game August 23, 1943. The officers won.³⁹⁸

On August 30, 1943, the Camp Wolters WAACs officially became WACs.³⁹⁹ Major Foster held a special swearing in ceremony for the WACs in front of the Reception Center.⁴⁰⁰ The main USO in Mineral Wells welcomed the WACs to the Army with a celebration dance that weekend.⁴⁰¹

WACs, like their male colleagues, participated in many sports and recreational activities. Their sports included ping pong, archery, badminton, volleyball, and basketball.⁴⁰² Later it would also include bowling, horseback riding, swimming, golf, tennis, and they had competitive

³⁹⁴ "WAC News," *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, July 9, 1943, 5.

³⁹⁵ "WAC News," *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, July 9, 1943, 5.

³⁹⁶ "First Officer Ruth Chamberlain, Has Assumed Command," *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, August 13, 1943, 4.

³⁹⁷ "WACs See Allied Movie," *Dallas Morning News*, August 17, 1943, 11.

³⁹⁸ "Pvt. Alpha J. Hull, WAC, Transportation Section, Keeps Her Eyes on the Ball," *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, August 27, 1943, 6.

³⁹⁹ "Confusion About WAC Titles Ends Officially Wednesday," *Dallas Morning News*, 1,8, August 30, 1943.

⁴⁰⁰ "WACs Are Eligible for Life Insurance," *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, August 27, 1943, 3.

⁴⁰¹ "Welcome WAC Hop Featured at USO," *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, September 3, 1943, 3.

⁴⁰² "Sports Program Set for WACs," *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, September 24, 1943, 7.

basketball⁴⁰³ and baseball teams.⁴⁰⁴ Many editions of the camp newspaper would feature WACs participating in a sport, especially during the summers of 1944 and 1945 when the WACs had a competitive swim team (see Figure 32).⁴⁰⁵



Figure 32: Camp Wolters WAC Swim Team, *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, July 28, 1944.

In November 1943, the WACs at Wolters encountered a situation that few other WAC enlisting stations had come across, a Japanese American applied to become a WAC. This

⁴⁰³ "Wolters WAC Cagers, Lose Overtime Tilt," *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, February 18, 1944, 7.

⁴⁰⁴ "The Soldier is a Gal," *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, April 7, 1944, 5. The article states that the name of the WAC baseball team was the "Eager Beavers."

⁴⁰⁵ "Camp Wolters WAC swimming team," photograph, *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, July 28, 1945, 1.

would be the only Japanese American in the entire WAC organization if she passed her enlistment exams. She had tried twice before to enlist and had been turned down because she was too young and too short.⁴⁰⁶ Her husband was stationed at Camp Wolters, she was a civilian employee at the PX, and was well known throughout the camp.⁴⁰⁷ Prior to her coming to Camp Wolters, she had been in a Japanese relocation camp for seven months but had been able to leave because the FBI had been able to establish her loyalty to the US. She was very hopeful her third attempt to join the WACs would find success, as she was now older and had grown in stature. Unfortunately, the third attempt proved futile as a heart defect had been found during the required physical.

January 1944, there were over 120 WACs stationed at Wolters,⁴⁰⁸ by March there were 160.⁴⁰⁹ The Camp Personnel Officer, Arthur L. Shumate, praised the WACs, stating that, “we wish we had 160 more like the ones we have.”⁴¹⁰ The WACs at Wolters were so effective at recruiting and doing their jobs that the Eighth Service Command made Camp Wolters WAC District Headquarters and Enlisting Station for nine surrounding counties in 1944.⁴¹¹

The WACs had numerous recruitment drives but tried a different tactic in June 1944. They invited the public to come to camp and gave tours of their facilities for those that may be interested in becoming a WAC. The visitors were driven around in an Army vehicle, shown classrooms where WACs were studying the Articles of War, taken to the Reception Center where most of the WACs worked, shown the barracks and mess hall, and concluded the tour in

⁴⁰⁶ “U.S.-Born Japanese Girl Joins Air WAC,” *Dallas Morning News*, November 7, 1943, 4.

⁴⁰⁷ “WACs Reject Japanese Girl,” *Dallas Morning News*, November 8, 1943.

⁴⁰⁸ “WAC Detachment News,” *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, January 7, 1944, 5.

⁴⁰⁹ “WAC Detachment Has Grown from Eight Original Members to Strong Unit of 160,” *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, March 17, 1944, 13.

⁴¹⁰ “WACs Win Praise for Work Here,” *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, March 17, 1944, 3.

⁴¹¹ “Camp Wolters Selected for District Headquarters in WAC Recruiting Drive,” *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, May 12, 1944, 5.

the dayroom of the Reception Center where the visitors were given refreshments and shown photos of the various recreational activities available to WACs at Wolters.⁴¹² The success of this recruitment drive was not reported.

In August 1944, it was announced that the Reception Center and Literacy School would close.⁴¹³ The Reception Center was closed as part of the Army's move to consolidate programs and economize.⁴¹⁴ Inductees continued to be processed at Fort Sam Houston, Fort Bliss, or Fort Sill.⁴¹⁵ The Literacy School was closed due to a policy change in how to treat men that were considered illiterate.⁴¹⁶ If the illiterate men spoke English and were in good physical and mental condition they would go into special units, work with construction crews, maintenance units, become stevedores, and do other manual labor jobs.⁴¹⁷ The loss of these units was lamented in that week's "The Soldier is a Gal," column in the camp newspaper as it meant that many of the WACs would be transferred to other stations.⁴¹⁸ Before any WACs left, they had a final party with all the Reception Center staff on Morrison Hill and dubbed it "the best party the RC has ever had."⁴¹⁹ The remaining WACs did not have long to miss their old friends who had been transferred, as new WACs arrived the next week. The WAC unit 4824 joined the 1866 and took on new positions in various areas of the camp.⁴²⁰

⁴¹² "Mineral Wells Citizens Visit Wolters' WAC Detachment on Inspection Tour," *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, June 16, 1944, 5.

⁴¹³ "Literacy School Discontinued," *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, August 11, 1944, 1.

⁴¹⁴ "Camp Wolters Reception Center to Be Inactivated," *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, July 18, 1944, 7.

⁴¹⁵ "Reception Unit Closing at Wolters," *Dallas Morning News*, July 18, 1944, 1.

⁴¹⁶ Lee, 261.

⁴¹⁷ Lee, 264. Please see Lee's full discussion for more on this topic.

⁴¹⁸ "The Soldier is a Gal," *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, August 11, 1944, 4.

⁴¹⁹ "The Soldier is a Gal," *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, August 11, 1944, 4.

⁴²⁰ "The Soldier is a Gal," *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, August 18, 1943, 5.

The WACs had the smallest canteen at camp. It was an 8' x 8' former linen closet that they had converted into their PX.⁴²¹ It was opened September 19, 1944 and was only open during the hours of 6:30-9:30 p.m. Sgt. Anne Lorenzo ran the PX, she worked as a dispatcher for the Ordnance Motor Pool during the day. The WACs had the longest wait time of any other detail in getting a PX, as they had already been at camp a year and three months before their PX opened.

Not long after V-E Day, the WACs celebrated their third national birthday, May 15, 1945. Things had changed for the better since they began this trek, but they were still facing war with Japan. They celebrated with a picnic but knew they may be called overseas at any time. Many had already left for places like the Philippines, Guam, India, and many countries in Europe. At that point, most of the WACs worked in the hospital or in other medical sections.⁴²² They were starting another recruitment drive and hoped it would not be long before Japan was defeated.

The hopes of the WACs came true, and Japan surrendered August 14, 1945. Washington called for a stop to WAC recruiting and demobilization began.⁴²³ WAC director Hobby resigned after V-E Day, and the new director, Lt. Col. Westray Boyce, oversaw the demobilization after V-J Day.⁴²⁴ While everyone was happy about the war being over, not all the women were happy about losing their jobs. For married women, this was the first time they had been able to get a job

⁴²¹ "WACs Boast Own 'PXette,'" *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, November 3, 1944, 2.

⁴²² "Camp Wolters WACs Celebrate Third Anniversary of Corps," *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, May 11, 1945, 2.

⁴²³ "Recruiting Halted for WAC and WAVE," *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, August 17, 1945, 3.

⁴²⁴ Bellafaire, "The WAC Overseas."

away from home and many enjoyed working and earning their own money. With the war over, and men coming back home, the WACs knew their employment outlook was not good.⁴²⁵

It is unclear as to when the WACs left Wolters. According to the camp newspaper, the last “The Soldier is a Gal,” column was published in the June 1, 1945, issue,⁴²⁶ three WACs are mentioned on the sports page in the August 3, 1945, issue,⁴²⁷ and the last mention of Wolters WACs is in the August 31, 1945, issue. It states that released WACs are eligible for job assistance⁴²⁸ and that the WAC First Sgt. left for a new assignment.⁴²⁹ The WAC program became a permanent part of the Army June 12, 1948. Initially, there had been doubts about their ability to perform their jobs under stressful situations, and often were written off as ‘just another pretty face’ by soldiers and officers alike who insisted that there was no place for women in the Army. Still, the WACs hung in and never gave up, going overseas and performing their duties even when they were under enemy fire. They more than proved their worth to the Army, they proved themselves to be soldiers. After the war, General Eisenhower stated, "During the time I have had WACs under my command they have met every test and task assigned to them . . . their contributions in efficiency, skill, spirit and determination are immeasurable."⁴³⁰

While the WACs entering the Army initially went against the grain of American culture, they were eventually accepted and appreciated, unlike the African American soldiers, and as opposed to the POWs who were imprisoned at Wolters, who were never wanted, hated by most, but found some appreciation from local farmers through hard, laborious work. As the possibility

⁴²⁵ Ruth Milkman, “Women’s Labor Force Participation, by Marital Status 1890-1987,” in *On Gender, Labor, and Inequality*, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press), 2016, 263.

⁴²⁶ “The Soldier is a Gal,” *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, June 1, 1945, 5.

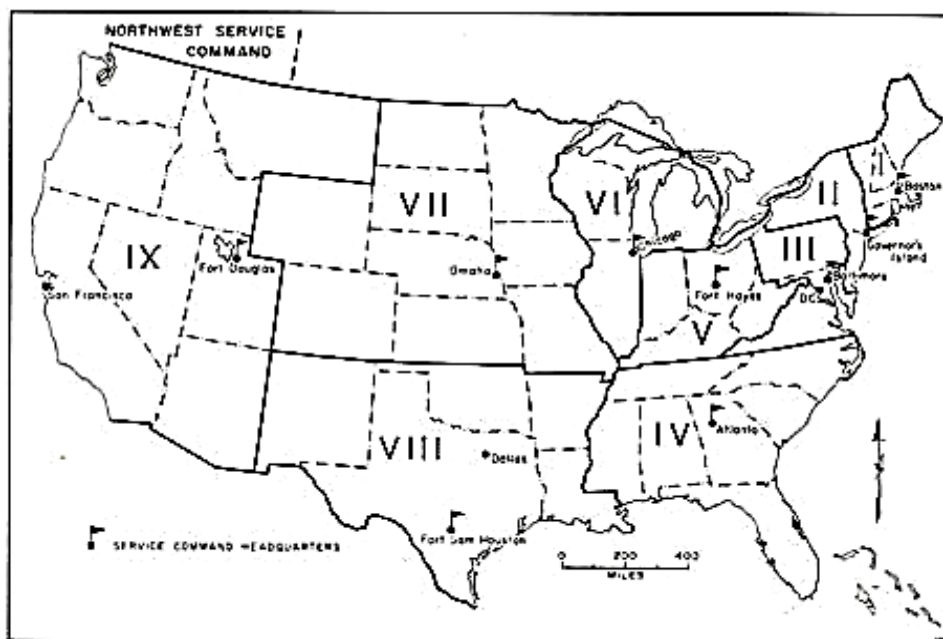
⁴²⁷ “Don’t Look Now, but...,” *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, August 3, 1945, 6.

⁴²⁸ “Released WACs Have Job Rights,” *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, August 31, 1945, 8.

⁴²⁹ “WAC First Sergeant Leaves Detachment,” *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, August 31, 1945, 1.

⁴³⁰ Bellafaire, “Services of Supply.”

of war loomed closer, General Marshall and his staff began preparations for war. This included what would happen to captured enemy soldiers. General Marshall emphasized to his staff that all prisoners of war (POWs) were to be treated in accordance with the Geneva Conventions of War of 1929. Prisoner of war matters fell to the Provost Marshal General's office (PMG) and they started formulating plans.⁴³¹ At the onset of war, there were not many POWs and there was not a problem housing them. Following the PMG's plans, unused military camps would be utilized until permanent prisoner of war camps could be built. The decision was made to put the permanent prisoner of war camps throughout the Southwest, due to the warmer climate.⁴³² Many of these camps were under the Eighth Service Command (see Figure 33).⁴³³



MAP 2.—Service Commands, August 1942.

Figure 33: Map of various Service Command in Continental US, 1942. In 1942 the Eighth Service Command consisted of Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas, New Mexico, and Oklahoma. <https://texaspowerwagon.com/8th-Svc-Cmd.htm>.

⁴³¹ George G. Lewis and John Mewha, *History of the Prisoners of War Utilization by the United States Army, 1776-1945*, (Washington D.C.: Center for Military History, 2004), 94, https://history.army.mil/html/books/104/104-11-1/cmhPub_104-11-1.pdf.

⁴³² Lewis and Mewha, 84.

⁴³³ In 1942, the Eighth Service Command included Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas, and New Mexico.

By August 1942, Great Britain was asking the US for help in housing the POWs they had taken.⁴³⁴ The US agreed but needed time to get facilities ready to house the 150,000 POWs that Great Britain wanted to send.⁴³⁵ By the time the POWs started arriving in late 1942/early 1943, the US was taking more Axis prisoners itself from North Africa. The number of POWs held in the US in August 1942 was 65, by August 1943 it was 130, 299.⁴³⁶ That number would keep on growing until it peaked at 425,871 in May 1945.⁴³⁷ The dramatic increase in prisoners would call for some creative thinking on the part of the PMG's office and the Eighth Service Command.

The Eighth Service Command announced November 12, 1943, that German and Italian POWs that had been at permanent prisoner camps were being moved to various military posts throughout the Eighth Command district to be used as temporary laborers. There was a labor shortage at this time, especially in agriculture, and the POWs were to be used to fill this shortage. One of the many camps chosen to house POWs temporarily was Camp Wolters.⁴³⁸ The POWs did various kinds of labor; painting, agricultural work, maintenance, carpentry, and such. They were paid eighty cents a day for their work and would be able to buy things from the PX with this money. The camp paper initially predicted 500 prisoners at the site, noting that while Italian prisoners had given their previous guards no problem, German prisoners had been "...tough customers- haughty and cocky."⁴³⁹

The actual date that the POWs started to arrive at Wolters is in question. Some internet articles suggest that they arrived as early as 1942, this is inaccurate considering the

⁴³⁴ Lewis and Mewha, 83.

⁴³⁵ Lewis and Mewha, 83.

⁴³⁶ Lewis and Mewha, 104.

⁴³⁷ Lewis and Mewha, 104.

⁴³⁸ "German, Italian Prisoners to Labor at Army Posts," *Dallas Morning News*, October 13, 1943, 11.

⁴³⁹ "500 Prisoners of War Will be Confined Here," *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, October 22, 1943, 1, 8.

announcement of the Eighth Service Command that was made in late 1943 (see above). A former Deputy Commander of the camp, Colonel Willie H Casper, Jr. (see footnote 441) has research indicating that German POWs were at Wolters from 1943-1945.⁴⁴⁰ The October 22, 1943, edition of the camp newspaper says the POWs are coming but doesn't mention a possible arrival date. Nothing is mentioned of the POWs being at Wolters in the camp newspaper until the June 23, 1944, edition.⁴⁴¹ A search of regional newspapers from 1943-1944, and the *Texas Almanacs* for those years, also did not turn up any information on a more specific date. The only certainty is that at some point between October 22, 1943, and June 23, 1944, Axis POWs arrived at Wolters.

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According to Casper, the vast majority of POWs at Wolters were Germans that had been taken in North Africa.⁴⁴³ They were housed in the old Camp Wolters buildings that had been constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s. Additionally, the Army had to erect temporary buildings constructed of "heavy tarpaper over pine frames with sheetrock interiors" to house all the POWs.⁴⁴⁴ Casper states that there were 300 POWs, not the 500 as reported in the camp paper.⁴⁴⁵ The total enclosure was 600' x 2,500' and was surrounded with a double fence of

⁴⁴⁰ Willie H. Casper, "Timeline of Fort Wolters in Mineral Wells, Texas," in *Pictorial History of Fort Wolters, Volume One, Infantry Replacement Training Center*, 245, The Portal to Texas History.

⁴⁴¹ "Course in Practical German Offered Wolters Personnel Working with POWs," *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, June 23, 1944, 1.

⁴⁴² Col. Willie H. Casper, Jr. was a Deputy Commander at Fort Wolters during the Vietnam era. He took it upon himself to write a history of the camp, starting with WWII and ending with Vietnam. He compiled multiple volumes which he graciously allowed the public library at Mineral Wells to display and let patrons consult. In the section about Prisoners of War, Col. Casper said he had to rely on oral histories of longtime residents and writers from several of the local and regional newspapers as the Army ordered all records of individual camps destroyed "...due to poor record keeping." He gave his history of Wolters to the Boyce Ditto Library in 2003. Most of the sources he mentions are no longer extant, including local and regional newspapers. Those that are still around were checked for accuracy. Col. Casper's history of the Prisoners of War camp at Wolters is likely the most accurate account that exists.

⁴⁴³ Casper, 88.

⁴⁴⁴ Casper, 89.

⁴⁴⁵ An article in the *Denton Record Chronicle* dated January 1, 1946, states that there were 907 prisoners of war at Wolters at the end of 1945. This was unable to be verified.

barbed wire. The inside fence was eight feet high, and the outer fence was ten feet high with twenty-one strands of barbed wire at the top, and six feet between fences. The barbed wire was attached to iron rods that angled inward and included trip alarm wires. Each corner of the enclosure had a sentry tower and flood lights were used at night.⁴⁴⁶

Within this enclosure was an administrative building for management of the POWs, a chapel, nineteen barracks, two mess halls, a kitchen, and a recreational area.⁴⁴⁷ The chapel was a part of a recreation room. The barracks were 40' x 80' and slept fifty POWs. The POWs slept on folding metal cots covered with straw mattresses. The POWs painted some murals on these walls and in the mess halls (see Figure 34). They were able to have a radio, receive mail and packages, and send mail. The mess halls were made of two converted barracks. Their tables seated eight and were in rows, they were fed three meals a day, the kitchen was between the two mess halls and had a serving line for each mess hall. Their clothes were laundered in the Camp Wolters laundry where some of them worked. Their outside recreation area was 200' x 500', and they could play basketball, volleyball, soccer, croquet, horseshoes, or tennis. Inside they could play bingo, cards, dominoes, backgammon, or checkers.⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴⁶ Casper, 89.

⁴⁴⁷ Casper, 89.

⁴⁴⁸ Casper, 90.



...Art By German POWs

Figure 34: Mural from POW Mess Hall, Willie H. Casper, Jr. *Pictorial History of Fort Wolters, Volume 1: Infantry Replacement Training Center, The Portal to Texas History.*

There were two diets for the prisoners, one for those that had active work duties and one for those that did not work. Active workers got 3,000 calories a day, while those that did not work got 2,000 calories a day.⁴⁴⁹ Some of the prisoners did not like their ‘American’ food and refused to eat it. This led to a lot of food waste. The PMG’s office chose to solve this problem by lowering the daily calorie intake by 500 calories and closing the canteen during meals. The POWs grumbled about this, and the Red Cross was called in to investigate. The food was considered good, but of limited quantity. The calorie intake was increased by 200 calories a day. A strike was threatened by the prisoners, but no actions were taken.⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁴⁹ Casper, 89.

⁴⁵⁰ Casper, 89. Casper does not indicate what year this happened.

When outside of their enclosure, POWs wore blue work coveralls with a large “PW” sewn onto the front and back. In the enclosure, they could wear their uniforms or khaki pants and a shirt with a “P” on the left sleeve and a “W” on the right sleeve.⁴⁵¹ In May 1945, the Army had to issue a warning to the citizens of Mineral Wells and surrounding area that if they were caught wearing clothing with PW written on it and failed to halt when told to do so, they could be shot. It had become somewhat of a joke that the “high school students and other civilians” would paint PW on their clothes and run through town. Only POWs were to wear clothing with PW written on them and the Army wanted to emphasize how unsafe this ‘joke’ could be.⁴⁵²

There were not many discipline problems with the prisoners. The prisoners policed themselves and “often lived in fear of their fellow prisoners than their captors.”⁴⁵³ However, there were a handful of times when problems did arise. The most serious occurred in July 1945 when around seventy prisoners decided that it was too hot to work outside and refused to work. There were too many to put in the guardhouse, so the commander had a small, fenced compound made for them. He put them on bread and water and forced them to work at hard labor for two weeks. When their time was up, they no longer complained about the weather conditions.

Casper describes the process of hiring out POWs to work in the community on page 91 of his book, *“Pictorial History of Fort Wolters, Volume One, Infantry Replacement Training Center.”* Local businessmen and farmers could request that POWs work at their businesses or farms if the person making the request agreed to the terms of the Geneva Convention and provided protection for the POWs. Prisoners had the option to choose if they wanted to work outside the enclosure or not, but most agreed. At Camp Wolters, most of those that requested

⁴⁵¹ Casper, 90.

⁴⁵² “Civilian ‘PWs’ Draw Warning,” *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, May 4, 1945, 3.

⁴⁵³ Casper, 90.

POW workers were ranchers and farmers. They could request two to twenty-five workers. If more than ten were requested, a guard had to accompany them. The POWs at Wolters were used mostly for agricultural work, working with farm animals, building farm buildings, and mending fences. The employer fed the POWs lunch, and sometimes gave them cigarettes and 'home brews.' Casper states that their pay ranged from seventy-five cents to one dollar. This contrasts with the eighty cents reported by Lewis and Mewha.⁴⁵⁴ Their pay was exchanged for coupons that could be used at the canteen to purchase food or personal items. What money was left over was put into an account in their name at the Camp Controllers office. When the war was over, they collected their money, which had accrued interest.⁴⁵⁵

By March 1944, there were 183,618 POWs in the US.⁴⁵⁶ Their labor was of high importance to the agricultural industry where they had been used in the fields. They also did maintenance work around the camps. From June 1943 to March 1944, it was estimated that the POWs had worked 19,300,321 man-days.⁴⁵⁷

There were only two reported incidences of Wolters' POWs running away from their place of employment.⁴⁵⁸ The first time two POWs went missing was July 11, 1944, from Burrus Mills where they had been working. They were last seen unloading grain at the mill. When the truck from camp came to get the prisoners at the end of the day, neither were there. A search was started for them.⁴⁵⁹ Casper reports that they both returned within a few days as the POWs realized they had no money, did not know the language, and "survival was questionable."⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁵⁴ Lewis, 77.

⁴⁵⁵ Casper, 91.

⁴⁵⁶ "POW Labor Has Saved Army Over 19,000,000 Man Days," *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, May 26, 1944, 8.

⁴⁵⁷ *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, May 26, 1944, 8.

⁴⁵⁸ Casper, 90.

⁴⁵⁹ "POWs Fail to Show Up," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 12, 1944, 2.

⁴⁶⁰ Casper, 90.

The other time was March 20, 1945 and those prisoners had disappeared from camp. The POWs were Alfred Runge and Karl-Heinz Huth, both spoke English. They were captured March 22 in Bennett, Texas, sleeping near a brickyard.⁴⁶¹ Mr. and Mrs. R.C. Nall saw the prisoners taking baths and notified police. They had maps of south Texas, Mexico, and food in their possession.⁴⁶² They were arrested and returned to Wolters.⁴⁶³

In February 1945, Major Kolbein Johnson, who had been commander of the POW camp at Wolters was transferred and Captain Clayton H. Erskine took over. He had previously worked at the POW camp at Fort Russell.⁴⁶⁴

Chaplain John G. Elser, a Lutheran minister that spoke German, became chaplain to the POWs at Wolters.⁴⁶⁵ He conducted the funeral for three POWs that were accidentally killed September 21, 1945, in an explosion at the salvage yard on base.⁴⁶⁶ Two American soldiers and three other POWs were injured in the blast. The POWs were buried close to the POW compound. Three hearses and the other POWs accompanied the bodies to the cemetery. An American squad fired three rounds for the dead.⁴⁶⁷ Casper states that the cemetery was 500 yards east of the present-day Mineral Wells High School.⁴⁶⁸ The cemetery was enclosed by a rock wall the prisoners built.

⁴⁶¹ "Escaped German Prisoners Retaken," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 23, 1945, 25.

⁴⁶² "Nazi POWs Taken Near Mineral Wells," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 23, 1945, 9.

⁴⁶³ "2 Missing PWs Returned Here," *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, March 23, 1945, 1.

⁴⁶⁴ "Capt. Erskine Replaces Major Johnson as Commander of Wolter PW Camp," *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, February 9, 1945, 4.

⁴⁶⁵ "Chaplain for PWs Assigned to Camp," *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, July 27, 1945, 5.

⁴⁶⁶ "Three PWs Killed in Explosion Here," *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, September 28, 1945, 1.

⁴⁶⁷ "3 POWs Killed in Camp Wolters Blast," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, September 22, 1945, 2.

⁴⁶⁸ Casper, 91.

Casper states that seven POWs died at Wolters.⁴⁶⁹ From information he found at the National War Museum he lists the three discussed above as being Alfred Daries, Heinrich Bobo, and Werner Goetz. A Martin Karebeck (POW) was killed April 23, 1944, when he was working at a ranch.⁴⁷⁰ A woman is listed as being buried in the POW cemetery, though no woman is on any record as being a POW to verify this. The woman is known as Mildred Morie Schulls, she died September 26, 1945, no cause of death is listed.⁴⁷¹ Local residents stated that three POWs died of pneumonia, but no record of them could be found.⁴⁷² After the war, four POW bodies were flown back to Germany, three were left unclaimed. Their remains were transferred to Camp Bowie, Texas.

When the war was over, POWs were quickly sent back to their home country. In January 1945, there was an estimated 41,455 POWs in Texas, by January 1, 1946, the number was down to 23,967.⁴⁷³ With the majority of POWs gone, the POW camp at Wolters closed April 5, 1946, and the few POWs that were left were shipped to Camp Bowie.⁴⁷⁴

In 1991, Ed Dombrowsky, a former German POW that had been kept at Wolters, returned to Mineral Wells. He was seeking the grave of his friend that had died in the salvage yard explosion.⁴⁷⁵ Dombrowsky was unable to locate the cemetery, but made friends with a local man, Cecil Ward, who knew the old camp's area. Dombrowsky showed Ward where the "huts" they stayed in as POWs were located and where other POW buildings had been.

⁴⁶⁹ Casper, 92.

⁴⁷⁰ This also implies that the latest date of arrival can be pushed back from June 23, 1944, to April 23, 1944.

⁴⁷¹ Casper, 95.

⁴⁷² Casper, 91.

⁴⁷³ "Prisoners of War in Texas Rapidly Being Repatriated," *Denton Record Chronicle*, January 1, 1946, 10, accessed April 29, 2021, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/5192371>.

⁴⁷⁴ Edward E. Coing, *The Last Days of Camp Wolters, 15 August 1946*. The Portal to Texas History. Casper has it incorrectly listed as April 1945.

⁴⁷⁵ "Mineral Wells man holds on to postcard from former German POW who returned to Wolters," *Mineral Wells Index*, November 11, 2014, 1-2. Property of author.

Dombrowsky had been twenty-one years old when he left Wolters. After the war, he moved to Canada and that was where he was living at the time of his visit.

None of the groups discussed in this chapter had an easy time during the war, but their efforts were rewarded in the long run. President Truman ended segregation in the Army in 1948, and the following war, The Korean War, saw all races of soldiers in the same units. The WACs continued to be a separate group within the Army until 1978, when they became integrated with the regular Army. In 2016 they were allowed to hold any position within the Army, including combat units. The German POWs went back to their homeland, which had been destroyed and subsequently divided between the West and East at Berlin. It is not known what happened to the German POWs at Wolters, except for Dombrowsky (discussed above), however, their time in the US would have provided them with a life changing experience that would be hard to forget.

Chapter Five

Wolters' Economic Impact: The Transformation of Mineral Wells

While the Army focused on getting the soldiers trained for combat, the city of Mineral Wells focused on making sure the soldiers made the most of their free time. The city hosted every kind of entertainment imaginable, everything from parades to wolf hunts; if a soldier could think of something he wanted to do, the city did its best to provide it. The *Dallas Morning News* wrote an article about Mineral Wells in June 1941, which glowingly said, "No Army town could be approaching the problem of providing recreation for these homesick kids with more zest than Mineral Wells."⁴⁷⁶ Mineral Wells was really becoming the place to be and started making record-breaking financial gains, but a myriad of problems came along with this economic boost, problems that other military towns across the nation also faced, such as major housing shortages, increased crime, health, and safety issues, overburdening of the school system, and traffic troubles. Mineral Wells faced all these challenges and many more during its time as home to an active Army camp but would find that its efforts readily paid off with short-term economic gains, and long-term infrastructure investments.

In the June 1941 article from the *Dallas Morning News*, referenced above, it detailed the lengths to which the town had gone to get a recreation center for the soldiers. Private donations had allowed the local Defense Recreation Council chairman, Harold Dennis, to rent two floors above a Safeway grocery store to use as the recreation center; this became home to the first USO.⁴⁷⁷ Equipment for the center came from old WPA recreation halls and private citizens that

⁴⁷⁶ "Camp Wolters Soldiers Won't Lack Recreation; Citizens of Mineral Wells to Open Center," *Dallas Morning News*, June 13, 1941, 9.

⁴⁷⁷ "U.S.O. Plans New Centers in Mineral Wells," *Palo Pinto County Star*, 65, October 24, 1941, 18, 1.

donated tables, chairs, a piano, games of all types and even their own furniture. Dennis was quick to remind people that the current recreation center was temporary. The town had applied for funding from the Federal Security Agency to build a brand-new building in the near future. The city had already donated a 200' X 400' lot in the downtown area to be used for the new building.



Fig. 35: North Oak U.S.O. 1940's postcard. This was the main USO building in Mineral Wells. <https://www.ebay.com/itm/Postcard-MINERAL-WELLS-Texas-TX-North-Oak-USO-Building-view-1940s/321713195444>.

Funds for the recreation center were approved in October 1941 by the WPA Defense Project for \$77,500.⁴⁷⁸ Bids were taken, and the former site of the Standard Pavilion on North Oak became a construction site.⁴⁷⁹ The new USO building (see Figure 35) officially opened March 15, 1942.⁴⁸⁰ It was located at 607 N. Oak Street. It had “a large auditorium, lounges, reading and writing rooms, telephones, soda fountain, ping-pong tables, radios, pianos,

⁴⁷⁸ “Untitled,” *Palo Pinto County Star*, 65, October 17, 1941, 17, 2.

⁴⁷⁹ “Bids Let for Recreational Building,” *Palo Pinto County Star*, 65, October 24, 1941, 18, 1.

⁴⁸⁰ “Question Marks Mean Girls Looking for Group Name,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 5, 1942, 9.

newspapers and magazines.”⁴⁸¹ There were weekly dances on Saturday night, bingo parties, musicals, and occasional special entertainment. This was not the only USO in Mineral Wells; there was a total of five, about which the city boasted. The USO located at 200 W. Hubbard was run by the National Catholic Community Service.⁴⁸² It had many of the same features as the main club but also contained recording machines for the soldiers to make a special recording for their family. They also had Saturday night dances, community sings, party nights, movie nights, and always provided refreshments. The club located at 316 Southeast 1st Street was a women’s center. It was run by the USO for the soldiers’ wives. Women could turn here for entertainment, but also found help getting a job, finding housing, and support from other Army wives. The club at Southeast Sixth Avenue and Fourteenth Street was for non-commissioned officers and opened on January 10, 1942. This was the first club of its kind for non-commissioned officers.⁴⁸³ There were 3,000 non-coms assigned to Wolters, and over 500 were married with children. It had similar accommodations as the main USO club on North Oak, as did the “Colored USO Club,” which was located at 700 South Oak.⁴⁸⁴ The “Colored USO” (see Figure 36) opened the afternoon of October 5, 1941, with entertainment provided by soldiers from the camp.⁴⁸⁵

⁴⁸¹ Camp Wolters, *Infantry Replacement Training Center, Mineral Wells, Texas*, pamphlet (handbook), 17, The Portal to Texas History.

⁴⁸² *Infantry Replacement Training Center, Mineral Wells, Texas*, pamphlet (handbook), 17

⁴⁸³ “Mineral Wells to Open Non-Com Club Saturday,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 8, 1942, 9.

⁴⁸⁴ The Camp Wolters IRTC Handbook refers to this USO as “The Colored USO,” however, the *Dallas Morning News* article refers to the same building as the “Negro USO.”

⁴⁸⁵ “Negro USO Opened,” *Dallas Morning News*, October 7, 1941, 5.

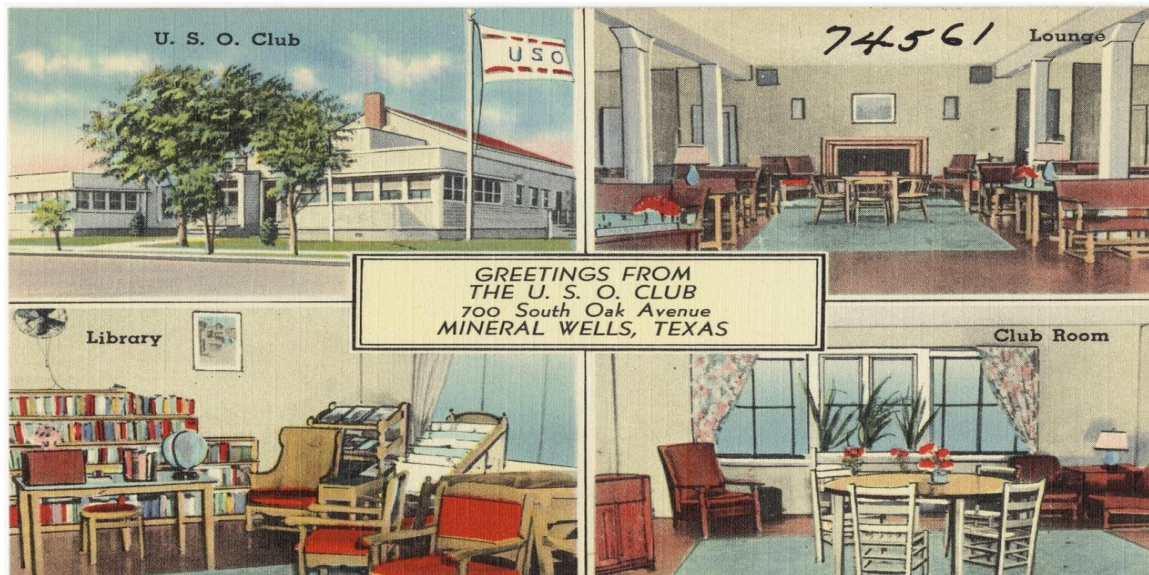


Figure 36: The African American USO in Mineral Wells, it later became a community center.
<https://www.digitalcommonwealth.org/search/commonwealth:zk51w184h>.

The nationally known Baker Hotel opened its pool nightly for use by the trainees, and the local country club would let the men play a round of golf on their eighteen-hole course, clubs and balls included, for 50 cents. The town purchased lights for the softball and baseball fields so that trainees could play after dark. If none of this activity appealed to the trainees, there were also two bowling alleys and five movie theaters. On Sunday afternoons citizens volunteered to take the trainees on scenic tours of the county, and one rancher even volunteered to take some on a wolf hunt.⁴⁸⁶ While Mineral Wells certainly rolled out the red carpet for the white soldiers, this was still the segregated South. None of the mentioned activities or places, besides the “Colored USO,” were open to the African American troops. The African American newspaper, *The Chicago Defender*, does discuss some activity for the African American troops, which were discussed in chapter four.

⁴⁸⁶ “Camp Wolters Soldiers Won’t Lack Recreation; Citizens of Mineral Wells to Open Center,” *Dallas Morning News*, June 13, 1941, 9.

In addition to the USO clubs, the soldiers were also allowed to use the Convention Hall (see Figure 37) on North Oak Avenue. Here they had variety shows on Tuesdays, folk and square-dancing classes on Thursday, and weekly Saturday night dances. The Convention Hall also offered a basketball court, a stage, badminton, and volleyball courts.⁴⁸⁷



Figure 37: Mineral Wells Convention Hall, Mineral Wells, Texas. Mineral Wells was a popular site for conventions before the war. <https://www.ebay.com/itm/Mineral-Wells-TX-1940-Linen-Postcard-Convention-Hall-Texas-Tex-/254638359767>.

Officers of Camp Wolters, members of the Mineral Wells Chamber of Commerce, and officials from the American Legion planned the first “Army Day” celebration with Camp Wolters for April 7, 1941. This first celebration welcomed the new Commander, Brig. General Simpson, and his wife. The day included a parade, an inspection by the public of soldier drills,

⁴⁸⁷ “Camp Wolters Soldiers Won’t Lack Recreation; Citizens of Mineral Wells to Open Center,” *Dallas Morning News*, June 13, 1941, 9.

formal troop retreat, tour of the camp, and night entertainment, including a free amateur show and dance at the Convention Hall for the enlisted men.⁴⁸⁸ Army Day celebrations became a yearly fixture throughout the war and were a way to get the community behind the war effort.

Music from live bands and orchestras could be heard every weekend as dances were held at multiple locations throughout the town. To ensure that the men had someone to dance with, a master index file was created listing hundreds of women that would be willing to attend (see Figure 38). There was one chaperone for every eight “girls,” and a girl could not get in unless she had a special card.⁴⁸⁹ To ensure a partner for the Saturday night dance, a soldier signed up by Thursday to receive a ticket that he pinned to his coat, for admission.⁴⁹⁰ It was estimated that there were four soldiers for every female. The biggest dance held at the camp was the New Year’s Eve Dance of 1944, which was at the Sports Arena. That night, the Sports Arena held 3,500 soldiers with dates. Five busloads of women came from Fort Worth and the surrounding areas to ensure everyone had a partner to dance with. Lines formed around the building, and couples were seen dancing outside in the streets.⁴⁹¹

⁴⁸⁸ “Army Day a Big Success,” *Palo Pinto County Star* 64, April 11, 1941, 41, 4.

⁴⁸⁹ “Camp Wolters Soldiers Won’t Lack Recreation; Citizens of Mineral Wells to Open Center,” *Dallas Morning News*, June 13, 1941, 9.

⁴⁹⁰ “It’s a Treat to Visit the Soldiers,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 22, 1942, 16.

⁴⁹¹ “3,500 Attend New Year’s Dance,” *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, January 5, 1945, 5.



Figure 38: Women waiting for the dancing to begin, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* Collection, May 30, 1941, University of Texas at Arlington Libraries.

Along with all this entertainment came a few problems. The largest problem faced by Mineral Wells and military towns throughout the nation was the problem of housing. Most military towns were not equipped to deal with the onslaught of people that came with the Army, not even a town that billed itself as “the South’s greatest health resort” could house the families and visitors of over 20,000 men.⁴⁹² Add in the number of workers needed to take care of these visitors and men and Mineral Wells was literally bursting at the seams.⁴⁹³

⁴⁹² Ord, 8.

⁴⁹³ See Chapter Two, which discusses the housing problem during the building of the camp.



Figure 39: This photo is of the lobby of the Camp Wolters Housing Office. People are filling out paperwork requesting housing, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* Collection, January 5, 1945, University of Texas at Arlington.

The men and families of Camp Wolters did receive some help in finding living quarters through the Camp Wolters Housing Office (see Figure 39). This was one of the few Camp Wolters' offices NOT located at the actual camp. It was on the second floor of the post office in Mineral Wells, and a smaller office was located at the Chamber of Commerce in Weatherford. Families were discouraged from coming to visit for any more than a weekend, and arrangements had to be made far in advance and approved by the Housing Officer, Captain W. E. Davis.⁴⁹⁴ Local hotels filled up rapidly on weekends and holidays. Rental prices for rooms and houses were approved by the Housing Office before occupancy, and a form had to be filled out within

⁴⁹⁴ "Palo Pinto May Benefit Further from Camp," *Palo Pinto County Star*, 64, May 2, 1941, 44, 2.

twenty-four hours of vacancy.⁴⁹⁵ Later, in May 1942, a private organization, Army Emergency Relief Incorporated, opened to help Army families with various problems including housing.⁴⁹⁶

If you were a civilian, with or without a family, there were not many places to turn to for help. The Red Cross served meals to some, but they mostly worked with the Army. Even workers that originally had a place to live were turned away by their landlords because they were not able to pay the newly increased rents. The strike by food workers in February 1941, demanding a wage increase because they could no longer afford to pay rent with their current salary illustrates how the lack of adequate housing affected everyone, not just the military.⁴⁹⁷

Officials from Washington visited with General Simpson, his staff, Mineral Wells Mayor John Miller, and the Army Advisory Board during the week of May 5, 1941. The problem with housing had become so severe that without more living quarters, many officers were being forced to move to surrounding towns.⁴⁹⁸ In fact, Weatherford, a neighboring town about eighteen miles east of the camp, was already building new homes for the incoming military families.⁴⁹⁹ In May 1941 FDR approved a defense housing program that would bring one hundred new homes to Camp Wolters' families. Each home was to cost no more than \$3,500 as set by law.⁵⁰⁰

The Houston Redy-Cut House Company received a contract from Camp Wolters for 100 prefabricated homes. These were for the noncommissioned officers and civilian employees of the camp. The houses were completed within sixty days.⁵⁰¹ On August 29 the Federal Works Administrator, John M. Carmody, approved and named the defense housing projects for Camp

⁴⁹⁵ Camp Wolters, *Infantry Replacement Training Center, Mineral Wells, Texas*, pamphlet (handbook), 16-17, The Portal to Texas History.

⁴⁹⁶ "AEF Program Gets Started at Wolters," *Dallas Morning News*, May 2, 1942, 4.

⁴⁹⁷ "Mineral Wells Café Workers Strike," *Palo Pinto County Star*, 64, February 21, 1941, 34, 1.

⁴⁹⁸ Untitled, *Palo Pinto County Star*, 64, May 9, 1941, 45, 5.

⁴⁹⁹ "Construction Work Brisk at Weatherford," *Dallas Morning News*, April 16, 1941, 4.

⁵⁰⁰ "Mineral Wells to Get Defense Housing Units," *Dallas Morning News*, May 27, 1941, 7.

⁵⁰¹ "Contract Awarded for Prefabricated Houses," *Dallas Morning News*, July 21, 1941, 8.

Wolters. The Elmhurst Park project would house eighty-five families of white soldiers. The Huachuca Place project would house fifteen African American families.⁵⁰² On November 29, 1941, the housing officer announced that 100 new houses were available for buying or leasing. By the end of that day 303 people had already applied.⁵⁰³ These housing projects helped only a small fraction of the people that needed housing. By January 1942, two thousand of the Camp Wolters permanent cadre lived outside of the camp.⁵⁰⁴ Housing became one of the most persistent problems that the Army and other military towns faced throughout the war.

To assist with the housing problem Washington created a section within the Price Administration and Civilian Supply (PACS) department specifically for housing issues. In some military towns, landlords had more than doubled the price for rent, which placed the rental property out of reach for the common soldier or everyday civilian worker. Frank C. Ralls was the senior field representative for the Rent Section of PACS and investigated the housing situation in Mineral Wells and Weatherford for several days in August 1941. After speaking with General Simpson and the Committee on Fair Housing and Rent, Ralls concluded that Mineral Wells had everything well in hand. He said, "The fact that rentals have been reduced to a fair level in Mineral Wells and Weatherford, except for a few isolated cases, evidences a close co-operation between the Army, the citizens, the Chamber of Commerce, city, county, and school district officials."⁵⁰⁵ He further stated that, "The plan adopted by General Simpson to handle the rent situation in the Mineral Wells area show that voluntary efforts produce results." General Simpson and his committee members had worked out a plan where the camp housing officer and a public inspector would inspect the proposed rental property, talk with the owner, and together

⁵⁰² "Defense Housing Unit Names Are Approved," *Dallas Morning News*, August 30, 1941.

⁵⁰³ "Camp Wolters Opens Two Housing Projects," *Dallas Morning News*, November 30, 1941, 13.

⁵⁰⁴ "Mineral Wells Birthplace of Army's Rent 'Ceiling'," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 29, 1942, 10.

⁵⁰⁵ "Mineral Wells Area Praised for Voluntary Control of Rentals," *Dallas Morning News*, August 22, 1941, 4.

agree on a fair rental price. If an agreement could not be reached, then the case was taken to a subcommittee of the Fair Housing and Rent Control Board. There, each party would present their side and, with the help of the subcommittee, come up with an agreed upon price.⁵⁰⁶ Subsequent research based on oral history suggests that the “voluntary” control perhaps included intimidation by a citizens committee.⁵⁰⁷ Despite these measures a lack of supply meant that rent continued to rise. Between September 1941 and January 1942, rent in Mineral Wells increased 46 percent.⁵⁰⁸ The average rate for a three-bedroom furnished apartment, with all bills paid was \$30-\$35 a month. The average rate for a four-bedroom, unfurnished house was \$40 per month.⁵⁰⁹ In June 1942 the government stepped in and threatened maximum rents would be fixed as of January 1943. That meant the landlords had to go back to the price they were charging on January 1, 1941.⁵¹⁰ This did not happen as many of the landlords and public officials agreed to a rent reduction. However, a rent attorney was appointed for the Camp Wolters area, Homer Bouldin, who began strict enforcement of rent controls for Palo Pinto-Parker area.⁵¹¹ Bouldin was also president of the Mineral Wells Chamber of Commerce.

In addition to the families of commissioned officers moving to town, it was estimated that as many as 400 families of non-commissioned officers made Mineral Wells their new home.

⁵⁰⁶ “Towns Effect Own Controls Over Rentals,” *Dallas Morning News*, August 29, 1942, 8.

⁵⁰⁷ In 1972, a dissertation about Camp Shelby’s impact on Hattiesburg, Mississippi during 1940-1946, was completed at the University of Southern Mississippi. In that dissertation, the author provides an answer to Mineral Wells’ “voluntary” control. He says, “The village of Mineral Wells, Texas, immediately adjacent to Camp Wolters, an infantry training center larger than Camp Shelby, was one of the very few mobilization communities which succeeded in controlling rents without federal assistance. The author was informed by several prominent citizens who had served on the rent control committee that they formed a “vigilante committee of twenty committee members which called in the night on landlords who refused to cooperate.” Today, the citizens of Mineral Wells consider their success in controlling the wartime inflation of rents as their proudest achievement during World War II.” William T. Schmidt, “The Impact of the Camp Shelby Mobilization on Hattiesburg, Mississippi, 1940-1946” (PhD diss., University of Southern Mississippi, 1972): 44, footnote 78.

⁵⁰⁸ “Rents Advance in Three Cities,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 26, 1942, 9.

⁵⁰⁹ “Mineral Wells Birthplace of Army’s Rent ‘Ceiling’,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 29, 1942, 10.

⁵¹⁰ “7 Texas Areas Face Rent Cuts,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 24, 1942, 6.

⁵¹¹ “Rent Attorney Named for Camp Wolters Area,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 24, 1942, 4.

Not only did this add to the housing problem, but also placed stress on the school system. The Mineral Wells superintendent went to Washington in the fall of 1941 to ask help for the dramatic increase in students that the new camp brought to the district. Mineral Wells had a total scholastic population of 1,710 students for the 1940-41 school year, for the 1941-42 school year that number increased to 2,511, an increase of 46.8 percent.⁵¹² Schools throughout the country were dealing with the same issue wherever military camps had been built. The schools had no money to accommodate all the new students, and school districts desperately needed assistance. Congress stepped in and passed legislation that helped school districts in defense areas with \$115,000,000 in additional funds.⁵¹³ The Mineral Wells schools were awarded an initial grant of \$518,390 by the Federal Works Agency for school improvements in November 1941.⁵¹⁴ MWISD passed a school bond of \$70,000 early in 1942 and started building new schools right away. The government added \$503,000 to the expansion.⁵¹⁵ Later, in 1944, the Federal Works Agency gave \$10,884 to Mineral Wells for additional school facilities.⁵¹⁶ By that time (1944), Camp Wolters had increased the overall estimated population of Mineral Wells by 114.8 percent.⁵¹⁷ Mineral Wells was also able to spend more money per student as funding increased. In 1940-41 Mineral Wells spent \$32.98 per white student, and \$15.60 per Negro student. In 1945-46 they spent \$59.53 on white students, an increase of 80.5 percent and \$35.32 per Negro student, or an increase of 126.4 percent.⁵¹⁸

⁵¹² French, "Scholastic Population of Palo Pinto County Specified Years 1935-46," *An Economic Survey of Palo Pinto County*, 1948, 4.1701, Table 1.

⁵¹³ "Supt. Ross Returns from Washington," *Palo Pinto County Star*, 64, March 7, 1941, 36, 1.

⁵¹⁴ "Mineral Wells Schools to Be Improved," *Palo Pinto County Star*, 65, November 7th, 1941, 20, 2.

⁵¹⁵ "School Bonds Voted," *Dallas Morning News*, January 16, 1942, 2.

⁵¹⁶ "Federal Funds OK'd for 2 Schools in Texas," *Dallas Morning News*, March 17, 1944, 2.

⁵¹⁷ *The Texas Almanac 1939-1940* (Dallas, Texas: A.H. Belo, 1941): 111 The Portal to Texas History, and *The Texas Almanac 1945-1946* (Dallas, Texas: A.H. Belo, 1952): 121 The Portal to Texas History.

⁵¹⁸ French, "Per Capita Instructional Costs in Palo Pinto County Specified Years 1940-1946," Table 5, 4.1701-02.

As previously stated in chapters two and three, there were continuous problems with water, sewage, and traffic. Initially, the base started with a new water treatment plant, settling basins, and pumping units to bring the more than two million gallons of water per day from Lake Mineral Wells to the camp.⁵¹⁹ However, by the fall of 1941 the city was once again looking to enlarge its water system. A dual water line was installed running from Lake Mineral Wells to the camp,⁵²⁰ and the system was enlarged with a grant of \$211,000 from the government combined with a \$26,000 loan by the city.⁵²¹ These improvements still did not meet the demand of the city and camp. In February 1942 it was announced that the Federal Works Agency would supply the bulk of \$402,000 in water and sewer upgrades that were needed.⁵²² The hot Texas summers also caused problems. The 100+ degree temperatures and lack of rain frequently brought drought conditions and forced water restrictions during the summer months.⁵²³ When the work was finished in April 1944, the city had the capacity to carry 6 million gallons of water per day.⁵²⁴

The water and sewage issues were problematic, but they were not deadly like the traffic problems. State troopers increased patrols on US 80 from Weatherford to Mineral Wells, and the camp newspapers warned soldiers that the speed limit of 35 MPH would be strictly enforced.⁵²⁵ However, traffic problems were part of a national problem for all cities that had a military base or defense manufacturing. In 1941, the Texas Public Safety Department recorded “13 accidents, 6 deaths, and 12 major injuries in six-weeks on a three-mile segment of US 80.” from the eastern Mineral Wells city limits to the entrance of Camp Wolters. Government agencies collaborated on a plan to reduce this problem and publicized their efforts. On this same three-mile segment,

⁵¹⁹ “Contract Let for New Water System,” *Palo Pinto County Star*, 64, January 10, 1941, 27, 1.

⁵²⁰ “Untitled,” *Palo Pinto County Star*, 64, September 26, 1941, 14, 2.

⁵²¹ “Mineral Wells Water System to be Enlarged,” *Dallas Morning News*, October 28, 1941, 4.

⁵²² “Mineral Wells Projects Set,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 8, 1942, 2.

⁵²³ “Water Restrictions Still the Camp Dry,” *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, 3, August 20, 1943, 8, 1.

⁵²⁴ “Filtration Plant Praised,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 17, 1944, 3.

⁵²⁵ “Police Patrolling Highway to Town,” *Camp Wolters Longhorn*, 3, October 22, 1943, 17, 2.

traffic officers switched from cars to motorcycles, warning signs were posted at both entrances to the camp, a walkway was put in that went from the camp to the city, no parking was allowed from the middle of Mineral Wells to the eastern city limit, city traffic lights were operated manually during shift changes, highway patrol schedules were changed that coincided with peak times of congestion and more arrests were made when accidents did happen. The plan proved very successful. For the next forty-three weeks after implementation, there were “only five accidents, one death, and five injuries.” This plan was then adapted and applied to other military sites throughout Texas and the country.⁵²⁶

Among the many problems military towns faced was increased criminal activity. Palo Pinto was a “dry” county at the time and the only legal way of obtaining liquor was with a doctor’s prescription. However, many workers and soldiers found a way around that requirement, and when inebriated, they sometimes participated in unlawful activities that kept the police and sheriff busy. For example, Mineral Wells policemen “arrested thirty men” on Sunday, May 31, 1941, for various crimes including public intoxication, gambling, shooting craps, and carrying a concealed weapon.⁵²⁷ These problems would continue throughout the war.

A health issue that plagued many military towns, and the Army, was venereal disease. Gus Blass, a trainee at Wolters during the summer of 1942, joked that “some of the boys called Mineral Wells “Venereal Wells.”⁵²⁸ Venereal disease was a widespread problem at several of the newer Army camps in the area. Two of the camps in North Texas had seen an increase in this problem due to “camp followers” -- prostitutes. Camp Bowie and Camp Barkeley had reported

⁵²⁶ “State Police Curb Deaths on Camp Road,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 28, 1942, 13.

⁵²⁷ “Youngster Fined \$100 for Selling Intoxicated Liquors,” *Pinto Palo County Star*, June 6, 1941,1; “Untitled” *Pinto Palo County Star*, June 6, 1941,1.

⁵²⁸ Gus Blass, “Entering the Army,” from World War II Digital Collection, <https://www.ww2online.org/view/gus-blass#entering-the-army>.

travel trailers parked along the roads at night with women trying to lure men into parting with their money. This gave rise to an increase in visits to the camp medical units and caused men to get behind in their training schedule. Abilene, where Camp Barkeley was located, began a clinic for prostitutes and stepped-up arrests. Brownwood, where Camp Bowie was located, increased arrests and fines for vagrancy.⁵²⁹ General Simpson of Camp Wolters addressed community leaders on April 14, 1941 and assured them that Camp Wolters did not have this problem. He said that he did not expect this to be a problem until the camp reached capacity in June, but he would address the issue immediately if it did. Each of the six areas at the camp had a prophylaxis station in its dispensary. Here, trainees could pick up information before a night on the town and be reminded that they were to seek treatment within two hours of exposure.⁵³⁰

Prostitution and venereal disease are problems that come with war. It has been a problem in almost every town that hosted a military camp across the nation and was not a new problem to the Army. George Washington had to deal with these issues in the Revolutionary War.⁵³¹ Towns dealt with this problem in various ways, usually by arresting the women, making them leave town, or forcing them to have medical treatment, as stated in the previous paragraph. Honolulu took unique measures that worked for them and could have been implemented in other cities across the nation if it had been acceptable to more people. Honolulu worried about the safety of their women with the onslaught of military personnel that arrived after Pearl Harbor. Even though prostitution was illegal, the police and civil leaders ‘looked the other way’ and registered female “entertainers.” In the years of 1941-1944, two-hundred and fifty prostitutes registered as

⁵²⁹ “Texas Army Centers Solving Big Problem of Prostitution,” *Dallas Morning News*, April 15, 1941, 10. Vagrancy was often the word used in polite society instead of prostitution.

⁵³⁰ Camp Wolters, *Infantry Replacement Training Center, Mineral Wells, Texas*, pamphlet (handbook), 13, The Portal to Texas History.

⁵³¹ Mount Vernon.org, *Camp Followers*, <https://www.mountvernon.org/library/digitalhistory/digital-encyclopedia/article/camp-followers/>.

“entertainers.” They paid \$1.00 for a license, reported earnings, and paid taxes. They were given a health inspection and certified “disease-free.” By doing this, Honolulu kept venereal disease numbers down, added a layer of protection for their women, and caused less problems for the overworked police.⁵³² One can only wonder at how this strategy could have helped with the problems caused by prostitution and venereal disease here. The local and military leaders here continued with the traditional methods of arrest and forced treatment that never solved the problem.

Mayor John C. Miller and Mineral Wells Chief of Police Frank Granbury “ordered questionable women out of the city.” The cities of Abilene and Sweetwater issued similar warnings.⁵³³ Before running the women out of town, the police arrested twenty-seven men over the weekend (April 12-13, 1941) for excessive drinking and dice playing. Most alarming for the police was when they arrested two Camp Wolters soldiers for robbing a man of \$85.00. They were held at the city jail.⁵³⁴ Crime statistics for this time period are not available through the Palo Pinto County Clerk⁵³⁵ or District Clerk’s⁵³⁶ offices. The county weekly newspaper, the *Palo Pinto Star*, often printed information about arrests and incidents that happened the previous week which involved the police⁵³⁷ or sheriff’s offices, and larger city newspapers, such as the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* and the *Dallas Morning News* often printed those stories too. From the numerous newspaper articles printed about events that included law enforcement activity in

⁵³² Beth Bailey and David Farber, *The First Strange Place: Race and Sex in World War II Hawaii* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press): 1992, Chapter three.

⁵³³ “Questionable Women Ordered Out of Mineral Wells,” *Palo Pinto County Star* 64, May 2, 1941, 44, 1.

⁵³⁴ “Untitled,” *Palo Pinto County Star*, 64, October 10, 1941, 42, 3.

⁵³⁵ A letter dated October/21/2021, from Palo Pinto County Clerk Janette K. Green stated that they do not have statistical records for this time period, but did provide statistical information for me on births, deaths, and marriages from 1938-1945. Her cooperation is greatly appreciated.

⁵³⁶ Phone calls to the district court personnel stated that they had no information for this time that could be shared and a letter to Palo Pinto County District Clerk Jonna Banks went unanswered.

⁵³⁷ Calls to the Record Department of the Mineral Wells Police Department and the Palo Pinto County Sheriff’s Department proved unfruitful as well.

Mineral Wells, one can conclude that criminal activity was not slowing down during the Army's stay at Mineral Wells.

A new campaign was sponsored by the Army, city, county and state health authorities, the police and sheriff's department, the district attorney, county judge, and the liquor control board the week of October 6, 1941, to clean up Mineral Wells. This campaign was not aimed at people picking up their garbage, rather it was a campaign for them to clean up their morals. The Army named twenty establishments as being "off limits" to the soldiers. This included cafes, bars, and dance halls. These places would be patrolled by M.P.s and city police. The campaign also wanted to clean up "diseased women." "All women found in the city with venereal disease were to be locked up and put under treatment until cured."⁵³⁸ The campaign to clean up Mineral Wells made progress. It was reported the weekend of October 11-12, 1941, ten women having venereal disease were locked up and charged with vagrancy.⁵³⁹ On October 16, 1941, the sponsors inspected various establishments and placed twelve more establishments on the "off limits" list. The list now contained thirty to thirty-five establishments that soldiers could not visit. This time the sponsors had looked at the actual cleanliness of the establishments, trash in alleyways, and such. The committee members told establishment owners to clean up or risk losing soldiers' business for good.⁵⁴⁰ This campaign did seem to work; a headline from a July 1942 *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* article read "Camp Wolters Has Less Social Disease."⁵⁴¹ The article also gave credit to the May Act which was passed in June 1941 and gave local authorities more control over "vice in areas near military establishments."⁵⁴² In 1944, the state health

⁵³⁸ "Campaign on to Clean Up Mineral Wells," *Palo Pinto County Star*, October 10, 1942, 2.

⁵³⁹ "Untitled," *Palo Pinto County Star* 65, October 17, 1941, 17, 3.

⁵⁴⁰ "12 Business Places Put 'Off-Limits,'" *Dallas Morning News*, October 20, 1941, 8.

⁵⁴¹ "Camp Wolters Has Less Social Disease," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 11, 1942, 6.

⁵⁴² "Camp Wolters Has Less Social Disease," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 11, 1942, 6.

department's Rapid Treatment Center in Mineral Wells was slated to become one of seven venereal hospitals in Texas.⁵⁴³ These hospitals were a "war-time measure" that quickly treated infectious diseases of all kinds. At that time, they offered to "treat prostitutes and promiscuous women found to be infected."⁵⁴⁴ By May 1944 they were deemed a success,⁵⁴⁵ and by the end of June Washington was giving them more money so the hospitals could be expanded.⁵⁴⁶ By 1946 and 1947 venereal disease was under control with a reported sixty-one cases in 1946, the last year Camp Wolters was open, and a low of only twenty-two cases in 1947, a year after the camp closed.⁵⁴⁷ While Mineral Wells did not go as far as Honolulu in registering prostitutes, by having facilities and resources to treat them, the authorities hesitantly looked away, knowing they could not stop this activity, but they could stop the infection that made soldiers and civilians ill and contagious.

Camp Wolters did adversely affect the spa and convention business. Mineral Wells was well known for its healing waters, and many people traveled from all over to "take the cure." When the Army moved in, the bathers did not come back. It has been speculated that many bathers feared they would not be able to find comfortable lodging. While the hotels and boarding houses did not suffer any loss in business, some owners did state that the bathing business decreased by at least fifty percent.⁵⁴⁸ Mineral Wells was also well known for having conventions, but during the housing shortage in 1942 some conventions planners decided to relocate fearing there would not be enough housing or eating facilities to accommodate their

⁵⁴³ "First 3 Cases Sent Center," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 27, 1944, 4. This does seem rather ironic as the Mineral Wells Venereal Clinic just had four women escape from the same facility in February. See *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 13, 1944, 4.

⁵⁴⁴ *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 27, 1944, 4.

⁵⁴⁵ "Success is Reported for Rapid Treatment," *Fort-Worth Star-Telegram*, May 26, 1944, 14.

⁵⁴⁶ "More Funds Allotted Mineral Wells Hospital," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 30, 1944, 4.

⁵⁴⁷ French, 4.1710-11, "Occurrence of Communicable Diseases, Palo Pinto County 1946-1947," Table 15.

⁵⁴⁸ "Star Dust Column," *Palo Pinto County Star*, 65, October 3, 1941, 15, 1.

attendees. One of these conventions was the American Legion of Texas convention, which held prior to the war brought several thousand attendees to town.⁵⁴⁹

The county newspaper, the *Palo Pinto County Star*, ran a review of the year 1941 in their November 21 edition. It had been one year since construction had begun on the camp and the paper maintained that Palo Pinto County and Mineral Wells were no longer the same, listing countless changes that had happened in the previous months. Construction began November 12, 1940, within three months 18,000 workers had worked around the clock to get the camp ready for the March 1 deadline. Weekly payrolls were upward of \$700,000. All kinds of new businesses had come and gone. There were multiple problems obtaining just the basics of life. Food was in short supply, often people stood in line for hours to get a hot meal only for the restaurants to be sold out by the time they got to the door. Housing was such a terrible problem that people were forced to sleep in their cars or pitch a tent by the side of the road. People who thought they had housing were stunned to find themselves out on the street when the landlord doubled or even tripled their rents. Traffic problems abounded, what had been less than a two-mile drive between Mineral Wells and the camp took up to an hour to drive during times of heavy traffic. This problem was helped with the placement of parking meters. The population of Mineral Wells grew from 6,000 to 10,446 during that time. There had been two movie theaters, which turned into five. During the height of the camp's construction, population reached 30,000. Two hundred and twenty-five new homes had been built. The camp, originally estimated to cost between \$5-6,000,000, ended up costing closer to \$15,500,000. When construction finished at the end of the year, there was room for over 20,000

⁵⁴⁹ "Texas Legion Will Change Session Site," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 13, July 29, 1942.

at the camp.⁵⁵⁰ The post office had increased business also. Postmaster D.C. Harris reported that gross receipts had increased 225 percent between 1940 and 1941, from \$40,000-\$130,000.⁵⁵¹

The city and county did thrive having the camp in Mineral Wells. The county banks had shown a great deal of growth between 1940-1941, as an analysis of deposits were from March 1, 1941, to the previous year's deposits (deposit totals on March 1, 1940). The two banks of Mineral Wells showed the largest increases. The State Bank had deposits of \$1,043,384.25 in 1940 and deposits of \$1,658,823.47 in 1941, a 62.8 percent growth. The City National Bank had deposits of \$972,461.52 in 1940 and deposits of 1,376,233.89 in 1941, a 70.6 percent growth, but this was just the beginning.⁵⁵² The 1946 statement of the City National Bank showed deposits of \$4,240,348 and the State National Bank showed \$4,012,508.⁵⁵³ The deposits of both banks combined -- \$3,035,057 in 1941 to the 1946 deposits, \$8,252,856 --indicate an increase of 171.9 percent.

Along with income, the towns infrastructure also grew. With the increased military traffic, the Civil Aeronautics Authority (CAA) decided that Mineral Wells needed a larger airport costing \$300,000. The District Airport Engineer, J. D. Church, surveyed a proposed area on July 26, 1941. The CAA needed room enough for runways a mile long and 500 feet wide. Facilities included a weather observatory, beacons, and lighted fields.⁵⁵⁴ Construction began in September of 1942 and included two runways, each 4,500 feet long. Total costs estimated at \$579,000.⁵⁵⁵ By 1946, the Mineral Wells Airport was rated a Class Three field, had four

⁵⁵⁰ "A Year's History in Mineral Wells," *Palo Pinto County Star*, 65, November 21, 1941, 1, 5.

⁵⁵¹ "P.O. Receipts Rise 225 Pct.," *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, June 29, 1942, 17.

⁵⁵² "County Banks in Fine Condition," *Palo Pinto County Star*, 64, April 25, 1941, 43, 1.

⁵⁵³ French, "Resources and Liabilities of Individual Banks in Palo Pinto County 1947," 4.1301, Table 2.

⁵⁵⁴ "Mineral Wells to Have Big Airport," *Palo Pinto County Star*, 65, August 1, 1941, 6, 1.

⁵⁵⁵ "Contract on Airport is Let," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, September 11, 1942, 15.

runways, and was home to Pioneer Airlines, which flew six flights per day and serviced fourteen Texas cities.⁵⁵⁶

A larger infrastructure supported an increase in manufacturing and related businesses. In 1941 Palo Pinto County had fourteen manufacturing companies, employing 141 people, with wages totaling \$104,710.⁵⁵⁷ In 1943, W. W. Bateman opened a steel plant that would remain in operation until the end of the century,⁵⁵⁸ in June 1945 the Jaques Power Saw Company opened an eleven-acre steel yard,⁵⁵⁹ and in August 1945 the McGaugh Hosiery and Manufacturing Company signed papers to open a hosiery mill.⁵⁶⁰ In 1947, the year after the camp closed, Palo Pinto County reported nineteen manufacturing companies,⁵⁶¹ employing 358 employees, with wages totaling \$695,000 or an increase of 563.7 percent.⁵⁶² During the same time period (1941-1946), the county saw a change in county retail receipts from \$4,171,000 to \$6,843,000 or an increase of 64 percent.⁵⁶³ The county income increased from \$7,893,000 to \$14,078,000 or 78.3 percent.⁵⁶⁴ Houses increased countywide from 5,599 in 1940 to 6,490 in 1950, or 15.9 percent, with the largest increase in Mineral Wells (1,932-3,089, or 59.8 percent).⁵⁶⁵ Southwestern Bell Telephone service increased connections from 1,850 in 1940, to 2,964 in 1945 or 60 percent.⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁵⁶ French, "Airport Facilities," 4.1003.

⁵⁵⁷ *The Texas Almanac 1941-1942* (Dallas, Texas: A.H. Belo, 1941): 493, The Portal to Texas History.

⁵⁵⁸ "Mineral Wells Steel Plant in Operation," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 12, 1943, 3.

⁵⁵⁹ "Steel Casting Plant to open at Mineral Wells," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 12, 1945, 13.

⁵⁶⁰ "Hosiery Mill Secured by Palo Pinto Silk Industry," *Fort-Worth Star-Telegram*, August 6, 1945, 3.

⁵⁶¹ In French's report he states that there are thirty-one manufacturers in Palo Pinto County in 1947, but does not list number of employees, salaries, etc. His source is the *Directory of Texas Manufacturers* for 1947, which the author is not able to locate.

⁵⁶² *Texas Almanac 1949-1950* (Dallas, Texas: A.H. Belo, 1941): 304, The Portal to Texas History.

⁵⁶³ *The Texas Almanac 1941-1942* (Dallas, Texas: A.H. Belo, 1941): 493, The Portal to Texas History, and *The Texas Almanac 1945-1946* (Dallas, Texas: A.H. Belo, 1952): 489, The Portal to Texas History.

⁵⁶⁴ *The Texas Almanac 1941-1942* (Dallas, Texas: A.H. Belo, 1941): 493, The Portal to Texas History, and *The Texas Almanac 1945-1946* (Dallas, Texas: A.H. Belo, 1952): 489, The Portal to Texas History.

⁵⁶⁵ This is the difference between dwelling units reported in 1940 and those reported for 1950 (*Texas Almanac 1952-53*): 97, The Portal to Texas History.

⁵⁶⁶ French, "Telephone Facilities in Mineral Wells," 4.1102-04.

Population in the county went from 18,456 to 20,000 or 8.3 percent.⁵⁶⁷ Mineral Wells population went from 6,303 to 11,000 or 74.5 percent.⁵⁶⁸ Marriages increased from 191 in 1940 to 490 in 1945, or 157 percent⁵⁶⁹ and births increased from 351 in 1940 to 580 in 1945, or 65 percent.⁵⁷⁰

Mineral Wells made quite an impression on many of the Army wives. An article entitled “Mineral Wells Pleasant ‘Home in Texas’ for Wives of Army Officers” interviewed several army wives living in the Baker Hotel. The wives praised the town, the facilities of the hotel, the local USO that cared for Army children twice a week, and the “ability to go outside almost every day, even in winter.”⁵⁷¹ The wives had lived in other Army towns before, some even in Texas, but said they had “never had a town open their hearts to us like this town has.”⁵⁷²

Mineral Wells encountered a number of problems when the Army arrived, including severe housing shortages, problems with sanitation, water, traffic, school overcrowding, health issues, and criminal activity. Nevertheless, the city took each problem in turn, and with generous financial help from the federal government, it managed to conquer each one, except the housing shortage. The housing shortage did not let up until after V-E Day, then there was plenty of housing, which in turn ended up helping the citizens of Mineral Wells by letting those who had been confined to small rooms and boarding houses have a chance to buy or rent a one-family

⁵⁶⁷ *The Texas Almanac 1941-1942* (Dallas, Texas: A.H. Belo, 1941): 493, The Portal to Texas History, and *The Texas Almanac 1947-1948* (Dallas, Texas: A.H. Belo, 1952): 507, The Portal to Texas History.

⁵⁶⁸ *The Texas Almanac 1941-1942* (Dallas, Texas: A.H. Belo, 1941): 493, The Portal to Texas History, and *The Texas Almanac 1945-1946* (Dallas, Texas: A.H. Belo, 1952): 489, The Portal to Texas History. Many of the full-time staff bought homes in Mineral Wells and are counted as residents. The staff that lived on the base, as well as the trainees, were not considered residents.

⁵⁶⁹ Letter from Janette K. Green, Palo Pinto County Clerk, October 21, 2021.

⁵⁷⁰ Letter from Janette K. Green, Palo Pinto County Clerk, October 21, 2021.

⁵⁷¹ “Mineral Wells Pleasant ‘Home in Texas’ for Wives of Army Officers,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 29, January 31, 1943.

⁵⁷² *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 29, January 31, 1943.

home with room for the whole family. Population increased, new businesses opened, and economic gains were substantial. The Army and Mineral Wells had worked well together, and this experience would lay the foundation for additional growth in the future.

Chapter Six

Epilogue: Assessing the Long-Term Impact of Camp Wolters

This thesis began by seeking the answer to two questions: did Camp Wolters play a vital role in the defense of the country during WWII and, at the same time, transform the small town of Mineral Wells into a thriving and bustling city? Based on exhaustive research into the available sources, this thesis has proven that the answer to both questions is a resounding “YES!”

The Army’s struggle to make millions of civilians into battle-hardened soldiers has been presented. Camp Wolters, the largest IRTC when opened, trained an estimated 200,000-250,000 raw selectees to go directly into battle situations and take over when called on. The soldiers trained at Wolters made up roughly 8-10 percent of the total Army. While this may not seem like a large amount to some, seven of these men would win the highest honor that can be given to a soldier, the Medal of Honor.⁵⁷³ Men such as Audie Murphy, widely known as the most decorated soldier of WWII, arrived at Camp Wolters June 1942.⁵⁷⁴ Vernon Baker, who met southern racism for the first time when he arrived at Wolters in June 1941, was one of three African American soldiers trained at Wolters who received the Medal of Honor. The other two were Edward Carter, 1941, and Charles L. Thomas, 1942. The remaining recipients are Jack L. Knight, Eli L. Whiteley, and Robert Waugh. The Army admitted there were problems with the replacement system, but the replacement soldiers trained at Wolters were effective soldiers on the battle lines and in the defense of their country.

⁵⁷³ “And Then There Were Fifteen,” *Weatherford Democrat*, May 30, 2016, 1, https://www.weatherforddemocrat.com/mineral-wells/and-then-there-were-15/article_fa78cf68-24f3-5528-b2bc-8f64c3997f02.html.

⁵⁷⁴ “A Memorial Day WWII Hero is Winning New Glory,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 24, 1998, 1, Infoweb-Newsbank.com.

With the coming of the Army came significant growth for Mineral Wells. The population of the town exploded overnight. When the Army arrived in November 1940 Mineral Wells had a population of 6,303, but within two months the city had welcomed a legion of construction workers numbering 18,000.⁵⁷⁵ Before all the construction workers were gone, the Army brought in their first 9,000 selectees. Then the base fully opened in June 1941 with 17,000 selectees in training. By 1945, the city had a population of 11,000. By locating the Army base in Mineral Wells, it led to rapid economic growth, but it also caused multiple problems throughout the town. Nevertheless, Mineral Wells handled every problem that it faced, and benefitted from the results.

The partnership that the Army and Mineral Wells forged during this time would bring them back together again and again. The Army left Camp Wolters and Mineral Wells in August 1946 but returned in 1951 for the Korean War. This time Camp Wolters became known as Wolters Air Force Base, a SCARWAF (Special Category Army Reassigned with the Air Force) facility. Then in 1956, the Army would take back Wolters and made it into Fort Wolters, the Army's Primary Helicopter Training School for the Vietnam War. Fort Wolters closed for good in 1975. Had it not been for this initial partnership during WWII, Mineral Wells may not have had these additional opportunities that continued to cause the city to grow for decades.

The area that Camp Wolters covered is now dotted with various businesses, some homes, a church, cattle, and a few remains testifying to its past. A private prison bought some of the land, upgraded the barracks, fenced off the area, and held non-violent prisoners for several years. It is now closed. There is one remaining brick building left from the National Guard days; it sits on the campus of Mineral Wells High School (see Fig 40), now designated by a historical marker. It is also a building that housed POWs during WWII. The Texas National Guard still has a

presence at the camp, though greatly reduced. A group of historically minded citizens formed the Fort Wolters Gate Committee and returned the entrance to Fort Wolters back into how it looked during the Vietnam era (see Figure 41), they also built a memorial to those soldiers that trained at Wolters who had been awarded the Medal of Honor (see Figure 42). The committee came together and built The National Vietnam War Museum, which will be having its Grand Opening June 2022.



Figure 40: The only remaining building from Camp Wolters when it was a training camp for the Texas National Guard, <https://www.waymarking.com/gallery/image.aspx?f=1&guid=d7765e05-692a-45d2-a257-5b2cdf1ba5bf>.



Figure 41: Current entrance to Fort Wolters after Gate Restoration Project, <https://i.pinimg.com/originals/07/00/e0/0700e040c4189575d83c8d4231abfbf9.jpg>.



Figure 42: Medal of Honor Memorial, Mineral Wells, Texas, <https://assets.atlasobscura.com/media/>.

Mineral Wells is in a state of revival now. Restoration of many of the old buildings and interest in the past is flourishing. New investors are building housing additions across the county and opening new businesses in anticipation of the tourists that they hope will come to see the re-opened hotels and many historical venues. The newly opened dance hall in the heart of downtown may not be packing the soldiers in on Saturday night like the ones in the past did, but the memory still lingers. The current Chamber of Commerce members are just as active as those

members from 1940, who actively sought to bring Camp Wolters to Mineral Wells and where this story began. By looking to its past, the city is looking for a new beginning, and that story is waiting to unfold.

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