

Corps still building strong on Fort Knox



(Left) In 1941, the Louisville District completed the A.C. Operations Hanger on Godman Field at Fort Knox. (Right) Photo from 1942 shows elevations of the completed regimental post exchange where the barber shop and cleaners were located. More than 60 years later, the Louisville District is still constructing projects at Fort Knox, including the newly completed 883,180 sq. foot Human Resource Center of Excellence that opened in May.

By John Neville, public affairs

World War I was slowly becoming a war of attrition, but U.S. war planners were still in a ‘build the force’ mindset. They had to be. The entire map of Europe, parts of Asia and the Middle East were about to be redrawn, and not everyone was going to be happy.

Part of the nation’s war planning included an area 30 miles south of Louisville. Their vision: a space for 60,000 men and 27,000 animals, suitable for artillery practice and large-scale maneuvers. To meet the demand, the federal government purchased 36,330 acres in Hardin, Meade, and Bullitt counties in 1918.

When the Armistice was signed Nov. 11, 1918, 12,000 troops were stationed at Camp Knox. Funding dropped significantly following the war, but the installation again saw major expansion in the months leading up to Pearl Harbor. The number of structures on post grew from 864 in 1939 to more than 3,000 by 1942.

Up until 1941, military construction needs were met by the Quartermaster Corps. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers met the nation’s civil works demands—mainly navigation along inland waterways and flood control. However, the Corps did build coastal fortifications here at home, and it also met engineering demands in combat theaters abroad.

But in 1941, President Theodore Roosevelt directed the consolidation of the Quartermaster Corps into the Corps of Engineers. The Louisville District was assigned the massive military mission of constructing airports for the Civil Aeronautics Administration as well as construc-

tion of Army Air Force facilities. The Quartermaster Corps began construction on Knox’s Godman Field on Jan. 23, 1940 and the Louisville District took over work in 1941.

That same year, the district’s military mission expanded to building cantonment structures, munitions and ordnance plants, supply depots, airfields and hospitals.

Since the massive buildup in the early 1940s, growth on Fort Knox has ebbed and flowed. Today, the post is nearing the end of construction growth it hasn’t seen since World War II. The growth is due mainly to the most recent Base Realignment and Closure recommendations that were passed into law in 2005, as well as the reactivation of the 1st Infantry Division’s 3rd Brigade Combat Team.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is, again, leading the Army’s building efforts on Knox. They turned over the biggest single project ever built on post, the Human Resource Center of Excellence, to its customer June 3. Building officially began on the HRCoE in November 2007.

The HRCoE houses the staff and headquarters functions of the U.S. Army Accessions Command—relocating from Fort Monroe, Va.—and the U.S. Army Human Resources Command, which is relocating from three sites—Arlington, Va., Indianapolis, and St. Louis.

The HRCoE was a massive undertaking. Its 883,180 sq. feet would measure 7.5 football fields if the buildings were laid end to end. There are 1.5 miles of corridors, 1,330 windows, 1,290 doors, and 3,695 tons of structural steel. More

than a million man hours were invested, and about 4,400 Soldiers and civilians will work there.

The complex was named and dedicated in honor of the late Lt. Gen. Timothy Maude, who perished Sept. 11, 2001 in the attack on the Pentagon. At his time of death, Maude was serving as the U.S. Army Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel (G1), and had served more than 35 years in the military.

The HRCoE, like any project, wasn’t without its challenges, but the biggest obstacles were buried underground more than half a century ago.

“Our largest challenge on the project has been the finding of munitions debris, pre World War II Stokes mortars,” said Fort Knox Resident Engineer Karen Sweeney. “All were found to be inert training rounds. We found more than 100 rounds at various times and ended up suspending construction activities for most of a summer (May through August 2008).”

Unexploded ordnance experts monitored the site until excavation ceased, and Sweeney and her resident office team continued to work with the contractor to get the job done. Despite the delay, the original occupancy date didn’t change.

The Corps also built several new facilities for the 1st Division’s 3rd Brigade Combat Team. Two barracks complexes house 1,442 single Soldiers who began arriving last summer following a deployment to Afghanistan. Each barracks unit houses two Soldiers, and each Soldier has a separate room. The two share a bath-
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