

U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center
950 Soldiers Drive
Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013-50212
7 Mar 2013

Forts and Camps: Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania

CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA

The military history of the post began in the mid-18th century, during the French and Indian War, when the British Army established a fortified camp at Carlisle. It served as a major base for frontier operations, being garrisoned for a while by the Royal American Regiment. During the Revolutionary War, troops of the Continental Regiment of Artillery Artificers were stationed at Washingtonburg, along with officers of the Quartermaster and Ordnance Departments. From 1791 to 1815 Carlisle served as a recruiting depot. In the War of 1812 dragoon and infantry recruits were trained here. By 1815 men of the 3rd and 4th Infantry Regiments occupied the fort, but from 1818 to 1838 the post was relatively inactive.

Captain E.V. Sumner's 1st Dragoons established the Cavalry School here in 1838. Through the 1840's and 1850's, officers and men of the Regiment of Mounted Rifles, 1st and 2nd Dragoons, and 4th Artillery, garrisoned Carlisle. During the Civil War it again served as a recruiting depot and was briefly occupied by Confederates (Ewell's and Stuart's corps) during the Gettysburg campaign. Stuart's troops shelled and burned the post.

Cavalry training activity ceased in 1871; and from 1879 to 1918, the Department of the Interior's Carlisle Indian School was located here with Richard Henry Pratt, 10th Cavalry, superintendent. From 1918 to 1920 General Hospital #31 served as a rehabilitation center for A.E.F. veterans. The Medical Field Service School resided here from 1920 to 1946. From that date until 1950, the post hosted a half dozen Army schools until 1951 and the arrival of the Army War College.

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U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center
950 Soldiers Drive
Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013-50212
7 Mar 2013

Forts and Camps: Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania

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U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center
950 Soldiers Drive
Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013-50212
7 Mar 2013

Forts and Camps: Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania

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U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center
950 Soldiers Drive
Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013-50212
7 Mar 2013

Forts and Camps: Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania

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History of Carlisle Barracks video script, n.d.
Installation maps
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“The US Army's Medical Field Service school” Edgar Hume, n.d.
History of Army Medical Department at Carlisle Barracks booklet, n.d.
USAWC Military History Research Collection prospectus pamphlet, n.d.
Brochure on John M. Carroll’s Collection of Illustrations of the Black soldier in the West, n.d.
Hessian Powder Magazine self-guided tour, n.d.
Booklet “Hispanics in the Military,” n.d.
Medical Field Service School Graduation Program, 1943
5 Aug 1863 issue of Carlisle American, 1863, reprinted 1963
“Washingtonburg,” by Charles F. Himes, 1907
Booklet, Cumberland County Victory-Peace Celebration, 1919
Mimeographed Christmas song sheet, 1921
Booklet, “Boyhood Memories of the Civil War, 1961-’65: Invasion of Carlisle” by James W. Sullivan, 1933
Polo Club game program vs. Troop G/104th Cavalry, 20 Oct 1935
Langley Field Football Program [Langley vs. Carlisle], 1 Dec 1935
Installation Christmas booklets, 1936(?) & 1937
Post Chapel Mother’s Day program, 1938
Cornerstone ceremony for Hoff (now Upton) Hall, 1941
“Practical Exercise in Map Reading” published by Medical Field Service School, 1941
Booklet, “...Lee’s Invasion of Carlisle, 1863” by Samuel M. Goodyear, 1942
Article (MFSS) “Teaching the Doctor” by Charles W. Duke from Philadelphia Inquirer, 23 May 1943
Data card & news clippings on WWII Carlisle POW Camp, 1944
Memos on subversive organizations, 1951
Significance of names of thoroughfares, buildings & areas, 1954
Dedication program, WWII mural, 1957
200th Anniversary ephemera, 1957
Articles on post from Masland Company publication, The Shuttle, including article on AWC carpet, 1957
Post of the Month article, 1959
Dedication Dunham Army Hospital, 1961
Carlisle Civil War Centennial souvenir booklet, 1963
Program, groundbreaking ceremony, AWC Academic Building, 1965

U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center
950 Soldiers Drive
Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013-50212
7 Mar 2013

Forts and Camps: Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania

Dedication ceremony, Truscott Hall, 1966
Dedication, Vandenberg Room...Open Mess, 1966
Dedication, Halsey Room...Open Mess, 1966
Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention Program, 1972
Master Plan, future development plans, 1972 & 1976 (blueprints 1979)
Booklet "Information for Guests," 1973
Historical survey of Carlisle Barracks, 1974
Messages, notes and memos on Base Realignment Program, 1974
"The First Artillery School" by MAJ John Felch, 1976
Womens' History Week brochure, 1985
Memos, messages & blueprints on Installation Master Plan (1986 & 1987)
AAR, Quarters One Halloween Party, 1987
Message Preparation Desktop Guide, 1988
American Heritage Week-Black History Pamphlet, 1989
Post fire regulations, 1991
"Washingtonburg" by John B.B. Trussell, 1992
Invitation to and program for dedication, Moore Child Development Center, 1993
Hispanic Heritage Month pamphlet, 1993
Packet of information on Michael Sanno assembled by Chuck Moody, 1995
Welcome booklets, 1994 (?), 1996 & 1998
Dedication of Shughart Hall, 2002
Commemoration of 11 September 2001, 2002
Groundbreaking ceremony, US Army Heritage & Education Center, 2000

U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center
950 Soldiers Drive
Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013-50212
7 Mar 2013

Forts and Camps: Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania

NOTE: FREDERICK THE GREAT STATUE

The Carlisle Barracks statue of Frederick the Great is a bronze replica of a marble figure in Berlin. Kaiser Wilhelm presented it to President Theodore Roosevelt in 1904 as a personal gift. The statue was erected on the terrace of the War College building at Washington Barracks, DC (now Fort McNair), with President Roosevelt, and a host of officials and dignitaries, attending the dedication on 19 Nov 1904.

During WWI, the statue was removed from public view (15 Apr 1918) in response to critical congressional and public comments, as well as threats to destroy it. It returned to its pedestal on 29 Nov 1927. During World War II the statue again was removed and placed in storage. After the war, the terrace location was taken by an array of guns, anchors, and bombs that symbolized the unification of the three services.

The statue remained crated until 30 Mar 1954, when it was re-erected on the old parade grounds at Carlisle Barracks, the new home of the US Army War College.

Sources:

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Ketcham, D.W. Memo for Chief of Staff concerning removal of the statue, 3 Apr 1918. 4 p.

Lloyd, P.J. Letter to Mr. William Skaggs, 15 Apr 1941. 3 p.

Pappas, Geo S. Prudens Futuri: The US Army War College, 1901-67. Carlisle Barracks, PA: Alumni Assoc AWC, 1968. pp. 45-46 & 303. U413.A1.P36.

Parameters IV (No. 2, 1974): inside back cover. Per.

Sewell, John. Letter to BG A. Mackenzie, Wash, DC, 10 Jan 1905. 2 p.

“Statue of Frederick the Great.” Fact sheets, Public Info Office, Military District of Wash, 29 Jul 1953. 4 p.

Taft, William H. Letter to Mr. George C. Ellis, dated 12 Apr 1905. 1 p.

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U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center
950 Soldiers Drive
Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013-50212
7 Mar 2013

Forts and Camps: Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania

NOTE: IS CARLISLE BARRACKS THE OLDEST US ARMY POST?

The multifarious ramifications of that question have been examined elsewhere and we may concede that West Point, NY, is the oldest active US Army post. However, if one takes into consideration the colonial period to the history of present Army posts, Carlisle Barracks could well qualify as the oldest post, since Fort Marion, FL, and Fort Independence, MA, are no longer active. This assumes that buildings and entrenchments erected during the British period (1753-75), although originally near the Carlisle square and along the opposite bank of LeTort Creek, had by 1776 come to encompass the armory that had been established near the present Root and Upton Halls in 1769. (Bining, 59; Frontier Forts, 508-12; and Tousey, 60, 78). If one considers only the period of American history since the Declaration of Independence and neglects the “continuous service” proviso, the following analysis should be considered.

-CARLISLE BARRACKS

Between 1769 and 1776, the British fortification at Carlisle fell into ruin, but, when war came, the armory was brought to the attention of the Continental Congress by James Wilson (Tousey, 78.) In January-February 1776, “workmen were building the first American structure on the old British Camp which was to house the salt-petre works...” (Zuver, 33), but it is not believed they were acting on behalf of the Continental Congress. The Congress sent an inspection committee to Carlisle in Sep 1776. (Zuver, 34.) On 27 Dec Congress resolved to erect a magazine at Carlisle. (American Archives, 1479.)

Exactly when the armory was taken over by the Continental Army cannot be determined from sources here. In a letter of 16 Jan 1777, Gen Washington ordered Colonel Benjamin Flower to York, where a magazine, laboratory and foundry were, by earlier Congressional resolution, to be established. In the same letter, he assigned Captain Isaac Coren to the laboratory. The letter ends with this remark about Carlisle:

“The Continental Congress have resolved, that it is their Opinion, that Carlisle in Pennsylvania, is a proper place for a Magazine &c. You are therefore, not to make any preparations in York Town, which cannot be removed from thence to Carlisle. I shall write to the Congress concerning this matter, and let you know the result as soon as possible”...(Writings of Washington, 22.)

By April 1777, construction at Carlisle had proceeded to the point that powder and stores in Baltimore were ordered to the armory. (Journal of Continental Congress, 219.) As early as May 1777, Hessian prisoners were here, as well as a quartermaster. (Tousey, 83, 85.) Therefore, one can state with confidence that Carlisle Barracks was a Continental Army post in 1777.

U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center
950 Soldiers Drive
Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013-50212
7 Mar 2013

Forts and Camps: Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania

-WEST POINT

Before the Rev War, West Point was “little else than a wilderness of rugged hills and virgin forests.” (Reeve, 139.) Troops began constructing fortifications on Constitution Island, across the Hudson from the West Point highland, as early as 29 Aug 1775. (Reeve, 43-44.) Although West Point itself was considered as a site for fortifications in 1776 and 1777, defense of the west shore rested upon Forts Montgomery and Clinton, five or six miles to the south. (Reeve, 143, 148.) During the Saratoga campaign (Sep-Oct 1777), the British, under Sir Henry Clinton, occupied Forts Montgomery and Clinton and Constitution Island. At that time West Point itself “was neither garrisoned nor fortified by either the Americans or British.” (Reeve, 149.)

The British success awoke General Washington to the necessity for improving the river's defenses. A committee under General Israel Putnam examined West Point in the period 9-14 January 1778. On 20 January 1778, as a result of that investigation, Gen Samuel Parsons' brigade crossed to the Point from the east shore fortifications and began building what has “remained an American garrison from that day to this.” (Reeve, 154; see also Palmer, 137-40.)

-CONCLUSION

Since West Point military reservation now encompasses Constitution Island on the east shore of the Hudson, it can lay claim to being the oldest Army post, with Carlisle Barracks second and, probably, Fort Monroe (1819) third. Several forts older than Monroe exist, but are presently outside the Army's jurisdiction--e.g., Independence (Boston harbor) and McHenry (Baltimore harbor). Interestingly, Carlisle predates the garrison on the Point itself. Incidentally, the earliest publication found referring to Carlisle as the second oldest Army post is dated 1940, viz:

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U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center
950 Soldiers Drive
Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013-50212
7 Mar 2013

Forts and Camps: Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania

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