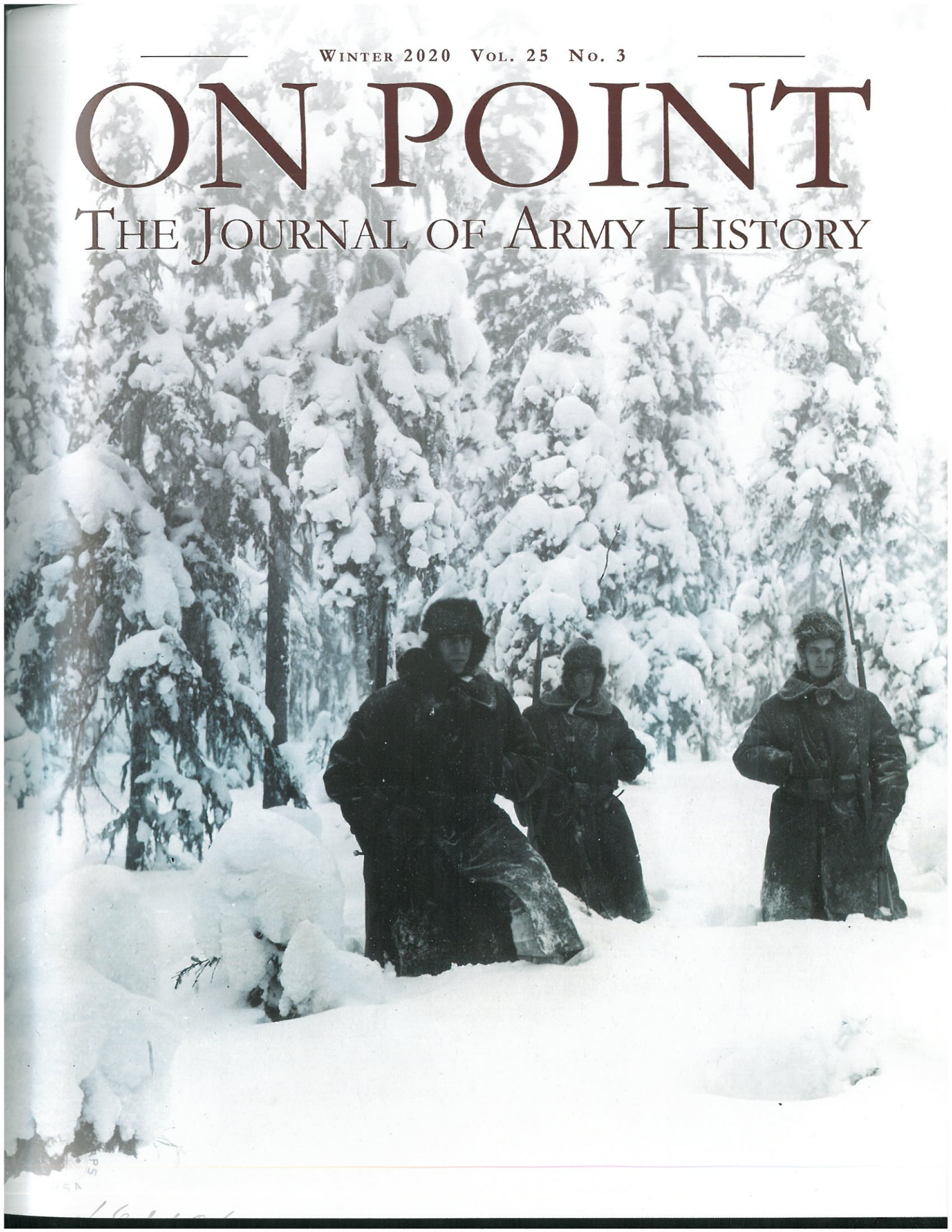


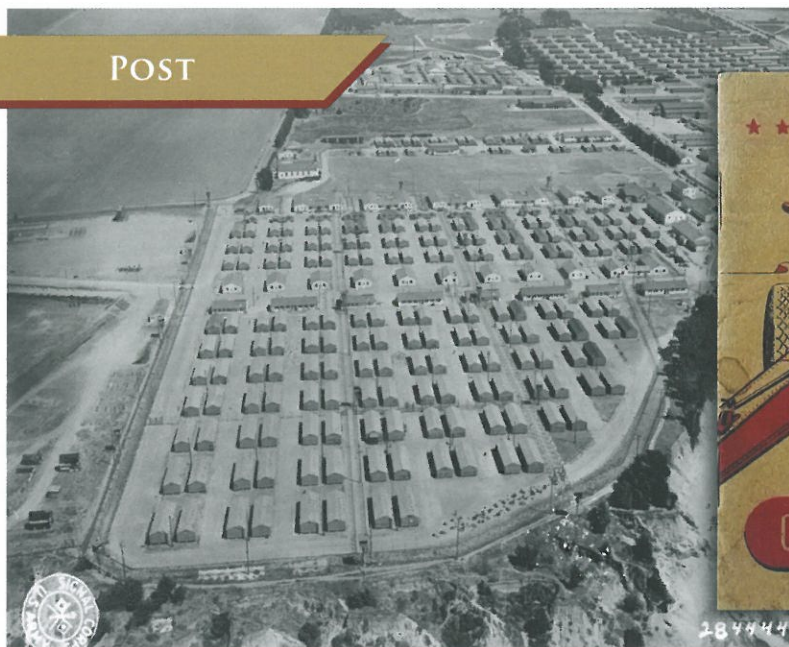
WINTER 2020 VOL. 25 No. 3

ON POINT

THE JOURNAL OF ARMY HISTORY



USA
16111



FAR LEFT: An aerial photograph of Camp McQuaide, California, taken in September 1945 shows barracks, administrative buildings, and training areas at the post. (National Archives)

LEFT: Camp McQuaide was originally established as a training post for Coast Artillery Corps units. In July 1942, it became home to the Camp McQuaide Coast Artillery Replacement Training Center. This handbook was provided to new recruits upon arrival at the post. (California State Library)

Camp McQuaide, California

by Lieutenant Colonel Danny M. Johnson, USA-Ret.

Camp McQuaide, originally located near Capitola and later Watsonville, California, had a number of missions over the course of its lifetime. The post's two locations on picturesque Monterey Bay were ideal for live-fire training against targets in the water. Units and organizations housed at Camp McQuaide included the 250th Coast Artillery Regiment, the Coast Artillery Replacement Training Center, the Special Training Unit that educated illiterate soldiers, the West Coast Processing Center, and the Pacific Coast Receiving Branch, U.S. Disciplinary Barracks.

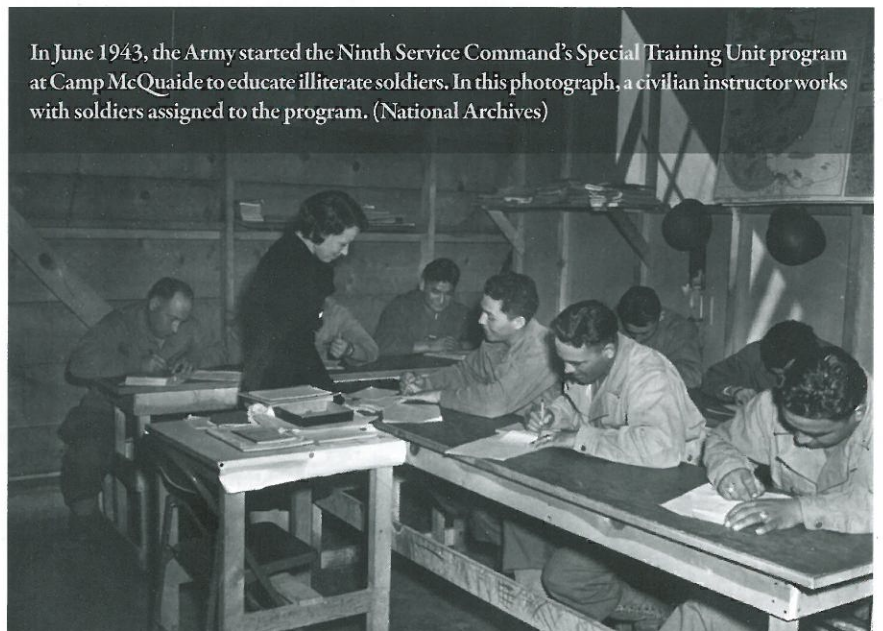
Camp McQuaide was named for Chaplain (Major) Joseph P. McQuaide (1867-1924), a Catholic priest who spent years in the 250th Coast Artillery Regiment and the California National Guard. Father McQuaide was ordained in 1892 and served with the California Volunteers in the Philippines and the Boxer Rebellion in China. Reverend McQuaide would go on to serve in France in World War I with the 62d Coast Artillery, and would later serve as chaplain at Fort Winfield Scott in San Francisco. He returned to the California National Guard after World War I. Father McQuaide was affectionately known by his flock as "Father Joe." Another form of respect by military personnel was to call Major McQuaide "The Fighting Padre."

In early 1926, the California National Guard negotiated a deal with Santa Cruz County to lease the former Hihn Tract for the initial 250th Coast Artillery Training Ground. The site soon became known as the Santa Cruz-Capitola Military Campsite and Airport. A few months later, on 25 June, California Governor Friend W. Richardson and California's Adjutant General M.E. Mittelsteadt dedicated the training ground as

Camp McQuaide. The 250th Coast Artillery Regiment used the camp as its summer training ground for years, and some Regular Army coast artillery units trained at Camp McQuaide as well. There was also a small landing strip on the property; aircraft could land and pick up small targets that could be dropped by air.

As early as 1930, residents from Capitola and surrounding areas began to complain to the California National Guard about the noise from the large guns and the 0500 bugle calls coming from Camp McQuaide. In 1938, the California National Guard identified a new training area of some 300 acres bordering the Ives Ranch on the San Andreas Road near La Selva Beach approximately six miles west of Watsonville. This new training area was

In June 1943, the Army started the Ninth Service Command's Special Training Unit program at Camp McQuaide to educate illiterate soldiers. In this photograph, a civilian instructor works with soldiers assigned to the program. (National Archives)



soon named Camp McQuaide

The property came with a 3,300-foot frontage on Monterey Bay, perfect for coast artillery firing. Units would fire their 155mm tractor-drawn guns at moving targets towed by small boats on Monterey Bay. One of the boat operators, Malio Stagnaro, was quoted in the *Santa Cruz Sentinel* as saying, "It's not bad getting shot at by Uncle Sam's coast artillery, as long as you know they won't hit you."

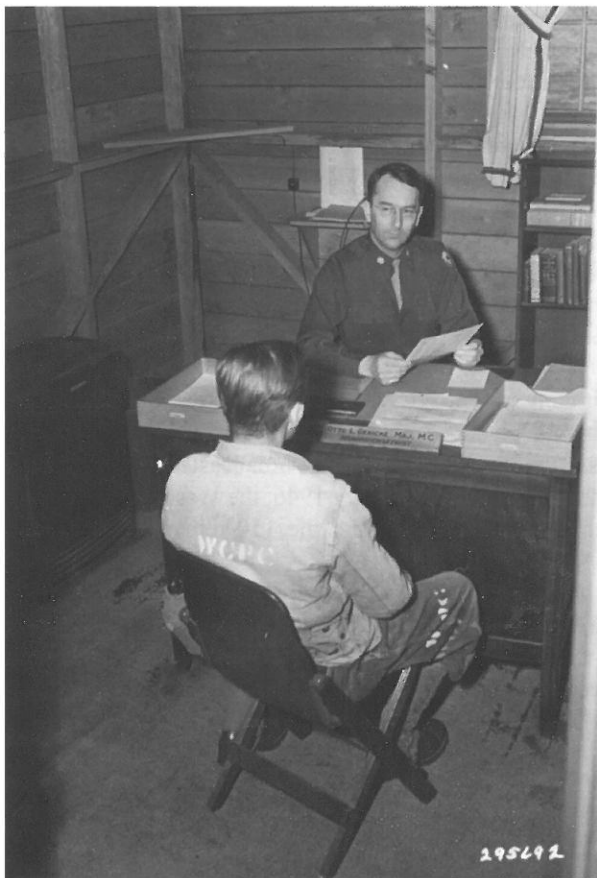
The Works Progress Administration constructed the road down to the National Guard camp along the waterfront. A large-scale building program including officers' quarters, administrative buildings, mess halls, tent platforms, electrical plumbing infrastructure, parade grounds, recreation fields, and a parking lot took place to get the camp in order to meet the 9-23 July 1938 summer encampment schedule.

The 250th Coast Artillery Regiment, a San Francisco-based California National Guard unit was federalized on 16 September 1940 and was one of the first National Guard units to be mobilized in the months leading up to the United States involvement in World War II. Colonel David Hardy, then Deputy Superintendent of Schools for San Francisco County, was regimental commander. 1,900 officers and men were housed at the camp which consisted of one regimental headquarters battery, three battalion headquarters batteries, Batteries A-F, three combat trains, one service battery, a medical detachment and a band. The National Guard equipped the unit with twenty-four M1918 155mm *Grande Puissance Fil-loux* (GPF) artillery pieces mounted on carriages with rubber-tired wheels and distributed in six firing batteries. Each gun weighed ten tons and had a range of over 17,000 yards. Each projectile weighed ninety-five pounds. The unit did not stay long at Camp McQuaide. On 11 September 1941, the last of the 250th Coast Artillery personnel at Camp McQuaide left by train to Seattle and then by troop transport to Alaska. They would remain there until March 1944.

Three Coast Artillery Corps replacement centers began operation in March 1941. By March 1942, the Army had separated them into two antiaircraft artillery centers and one seacoast center. The Camp McQuaide Coast Artillery Replacement Training Center, handling the seacoast establishment function, was activated 12 July 1942 under the Replacement and School Command (Richmond, Virginia). Since the camp had already been a coast artillery regimental headquarters, Camp McQuaide became the Coast Artillery Replacement Training Center (Seacoast). It consisted of a training regiment and seacoast artillery training battalions 101-125. The new commanding officer was Brigadier General Frank S. Clark.

The new training and replacement center at Camp McQuaide housed up to 5,000 soldiers. The typical stay for trainees was thirteen weeks. Types of subjects covered during training were infantry drill, small arms firing, first aid, map reading and other basic military subjects. In addition, specialized training included familiarization on the 12-, 14-, and 16-inch fixed seacoast guns, as well as the lighter 6-, 8- and 10-inch guns and the 12-inch seacoast mortars. Soldiers also trained on rapid-fire 3- and 6-inch guns used to defend mine fields. Camp McQuaide's story as a seacoast training center, however, would be a short one. After training thousands of personnel for the Coast Artillery Corps, the Army discontinued the Coast Artillery School at Camp McQuaide on 4 December 1943.

At the same time as the Coast Artillery Replacement Training Center operated at Camp McQuaide, on 1 June 1943, the Army



An Army psychiatrist meets with a soldier assigned to West Coast Processing Center (WCPC), 6 March 1945. The Army established the WCPC at Camp McQuaide in January 1944 to train and rehabilitate soldiers charged with relatively minor offenses. (National Archives)

launched the Ninth Service Command's Special Training Unit program, commanded by Colonel Benjamin B. Bain, at the post. The Army estimated that ten percent of World War II inductees were illiterate. As a result, it established nineteen units at various installations throughout the nation for the purpose of training illiterate soldiers to read, write, and compute at a fourth-grade level. Soldiers identified for this program were transferred from their induction stations to Camp McQuaide for up to twelve weeks of instruction and then reassigned back to the induction station for further assignment. Initially, instructors were military personnel, but later in the program, military personnel were replaced by civilian instructors who used a method developed by a UCLA professor of psychology, Dr. Grace M. Fernald. Her assistant, Perine Piziali, remained at Camp McQuaide to train instructors and supervise the work of the most deficient students. The Special Training Unit at Camp McQuaide was finally discontinued on 17 November 1945.

Soldiers at Camp McQuaide had plenty of opportunity to participate in extra-curricular activities as the post had very robust sports and music programs. Beginning in 1940, soldiers could participate in wrestling, baseball, tennis, golf, riflery, basketball, handball, boxing, bowling, chorus, orchestra, and band. Officers with prior experience in an activity led each group. Sports teams often played games outside of the camp, and musicians offered programs to the community. In addition, service members also enjoyed going to the USO in downtown Santa Cruz.

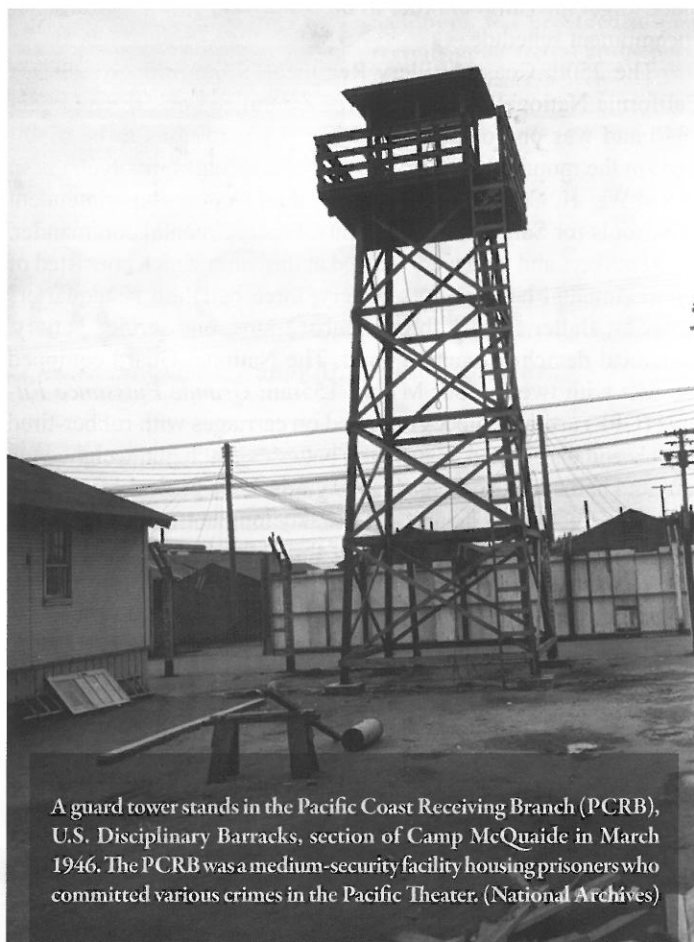
On 31 January 1944, the Army established the West Coast

Processing Center (WCPC) at Camp McQuaide under the command of Colonel Edward J. Gleeson. The WCPC compound encompassed several acres within Camp McQuaide and included barracks, mess halls, supply facilities, and other buildings. The major changes were the inclusion of armed guards, guard towers, and concertina wire fencing. Soldiers charged as Absent Without Leave (AWOL) participated in this program. The short version of the WCPC mission was to train, condition, and rehabilitate soldiers for shipment overseas. The training regimen was a complete one. Individuals assigned to lettered companies for approximately twelve weeks received intense infantry-type basic training. Trainees were also provided access to psychologists and chaplains throughout their stay in WCPC. Soldiers listened to talks on current events and practiced expressing themselves in discussions. There was a loudspeaker system that broadcasted the news each day at noon. Effective 15 February 1946, the West Coast Processing Center was discontinued, and the 150 remaining personnel were transferred out.

Shortly before the Army discontinued the WCPC, it established the Pacific Coast Receiving Branch, U.S. Disciplinary Barracks, at Camp McQuaide on 20 January 1946. The Pacific Coast Receiving Branch mission was to incarcerate soldiers returning to the United States under guard for offenses committed in the Pacific Theater. This correctional institution housed 2,000 medium-security-level prisoners. Approximately fifty officers and 850 enlisted personnel operated the camp and guarded the prisoners. On 25 March 1946, the Pacific Coast Receiving Branch became the Pacific Coast Branch, U.S. Disciplinary Barracks, Camp McQuaide.

Several soldiers held at the Camp McQuaide disciplinary barracks attempted escapes. On 15 April 1946, eleven prisoners charged with desertion or AWOL escaped. Colonel Roy S. Gibson, post commander said, "...the prisoners made a getaway between 10 and 11 p.m. They cut a hole in the fence to escape from the

barracks, then crawled down a drainage ditch." Another major disturbance occurred on the evening of 1 July 1946 when 600 rioting prisoners at the disciplinary barracks set fire to thirty-six hutments. None of the 600 prisoners were injured nor did they escape. Guards used tear gas to restore order, and the fire was ultimately brought under control. On 10 July 1946, seven prisoners escaped from a Union Pacific train that was carrying 250 prisoners being transferred from Camp McQuaide to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. These prisoners had been able to pick the locks on their handcuffs. They then made their escape through the train windows one at a time. The seven were apprehended within a few days. On 15 July 1946, Camp McQuaide became Branch, U.S. Disciplinary Barracks (as



A guard tower stands in the Pacific Coast Receiving Branch (PCRB), U.S. Disciplinary Barracks, section of Camp McQuaide in March 1946. The PCRB was a medium-security facility housing prisoners who committed various crimes in the Pacific Theater. (National Archives)

The newly formed Camp McQuaide pistol team practices at a range on post in 1947. Sports and other forms of recreation provided a welcome break from training at Camp McQuaide. (National Archives)



a branch of the U.S. Disciplinary Barracks at Fort Leavenworth). Although the name changed, its mission remained the same.

When World War II ended, various federal, state, and local government agencies started taking a serious look at what would happen to Camp McQuaide if declared surplus. The California National Guard's Adjutant General stated on 26 August 1946, "... [the] postwar [California] national guard does not contemplate use of Camp McQuaide." Also, in August 1946, discussions took place with the California Department of Corrections about using Camp McQuaide as a temporary prison for 1,200 prisoners to help with California's overcrowded correctional facilities, but in October 1946, the the Department of Corrections decided not to use Camp McQuaide. On 2 January 1947, Colonel E.A. Everett, post commander, provided 31 January as the tentative closing date for Camp McQuaide. Sixth Army reported on 18 January 1947 that it had transferred 242 general prisoners from Camp McQuaide to the new branch disciplinary barracks at Camp Cooke near Lompoc. Then in June 1947, the Army transported the remaining prisoners to Camp Cooke and discontinued the Branch, U.S. Disciplinary Barracks, altogether.

The War Department declared Camp McQuaide surplus on 28 March 1947. At the time, there was a rumor circulating in Sacramento that the California Youth Authority might be interested in using the former Camp McQuaide as a work camp for delinquent boys and young men. However, the Watsonville Chamber of Commerce filed a strongly worded protest with the state on use of the camp for that purpose. Again, In May 1947, the director of American Youthland, Incorporated, a nonprofit organization, expressed an interest in using the camp for youth farms. None of these suggestions came to pass. On 24 June 1947, the Corps of Engineers took over the Camp McQuaide property. In December 1947, the War Assets Administration (WAA) announced that it would sell 300 acres of land from Camp McQuaide at auction. Priority buyers (federal and state agencies and local governments) had until 22 December 1947 to purchase the property, while other bidders had until 15 January 1948 to make an offer. In December 1947, Santa Cruz County expressed an interest in the property at the camp but only on the condition that the state buy the property and lease back certain portions to the county. On 19 December, the WAA let it be known that it wanted at least \$634,000 for the 300 acres of land and buildings. Santa Cruz county had nowhere near those kinds of assets, and all other bids submitted by priority bidders were considered too low.

On 7 February 1948, the WAA again offered the opportunity to bid on Camp McQuaide. New bids had to be in by 12 April 1948. In March 1948, the Assistant State Superintendent of Public Instruction proposed an idea to use the camp for a location for Santa Cruz County Junior College. Unfortunately, during the week of 11 April 1948, the State Department of Education ruled that the cost of renovations at Camp McQuaide would be too high and would cost approximately \$500,000; hence, the project was ruled as unfavorable. The property remained unsold.

In September 1948, veterans in need of housing had the op-

portunity under the State War Surplus Housing Program to purchase former Army buildings at Camp McQuaide. Commencing on 18 September, the sale went seven days a week until all buildings were sold. According to the *Santa Cruz Sentinel* of 21 September, "...more than 300 [wood] frame buildings...were sold in three days."

On 16 August 1948, prior to the sale of buildings at Camp McQuaide, the WAA announced that since no one had bid the appraised value of \$350,000 of the land that comprised the post, it would donate the property to the Central California Conference of the Seventh Day Adventist Church. The transfer of the property took place a few weeks later. The Seventh Day Adventist Church had plans to convert the former Army post into a high school-level boarding academy now called the Monterey Bay Academy. The academy has been in existence at the former Camp McQuaide since 1949. ☐



The staff of the station hospital at Camp McQuaide assemble for a photograph, 25 January 1946. (National Archives)

About the Author

Lieutenant Colonel Danny M. Johnson USA-Ret, worked as a civilian on the Headquarters, Department of the Army, staff at the Pentagon, and Command Historian for both Headquarters, U.S. Army Information Systems Command, and Headquarters, 5th Signal Command. He served a short tour in Operation IRAQI FREEDOM in 2003 documenting Signal Corps involvement in the invasion. As a private military scholar, he has made numerous contributions to *On Point*. He authored *Answering the Call in Time of War: The History of Camp Kohler and the Western Signal Corps School* (2018) and *Military Communications Supporting Operations in the Balkans* (2000) and edited *The European Signal Corps Order of Battle* (2001). He contributed numerous entries for *The Oxford Companion to Military History* (2001) and *Military Communications from Ancient Times to the 21st Century* (2007). He currently resides in Sacramento, California.