

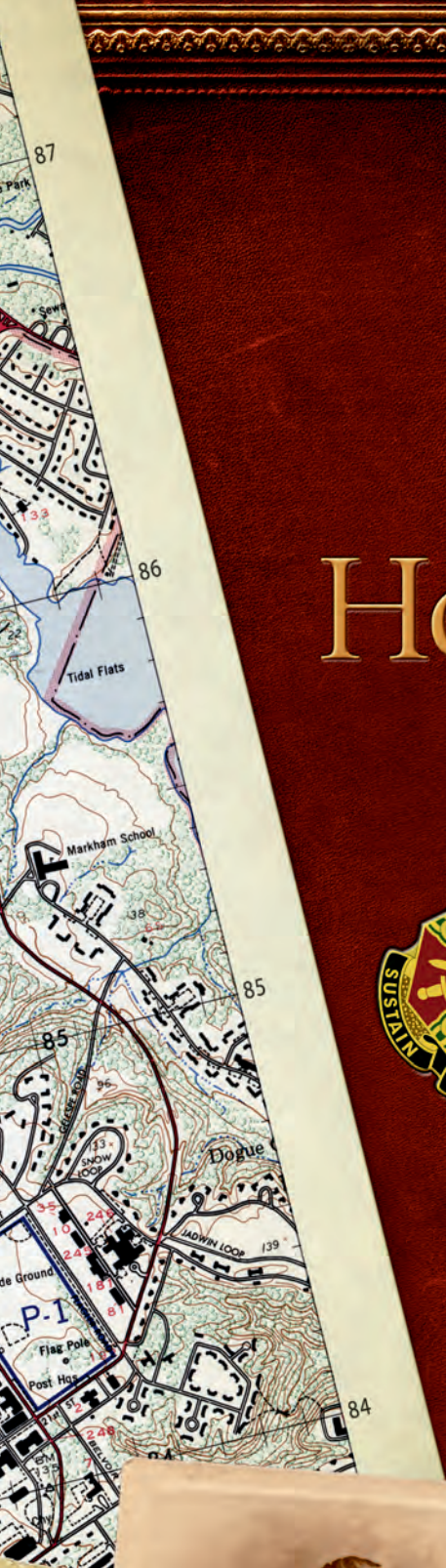
# Fort Belvoir

## Host to HISTORY

*(Second Edition)*



**IMCOM**  
SOLDIERS • FAMILIES • CIVILIANS







429/500  
Frances E. Abbott  
Es

# *Fort Belvoir* HOST *to* HISTORY

*(Second Edition)*

THE FIRST PUBLICATION of this booklet in 1996 was a result of a partnership between the U.S. Army Garrison Fort Belvoir and the Department of Defense Legacy Resource Management Program. The second edition was published in 2010.

*INSIDE FRONT COVER: Painting entitled Flight Over Belvoir, by Jackson Miles Abbott.*

# CONTENTS

FOREWORD .....	1
A Letter from Colonel Blixt	
PREHISTORIC ANTECEDENTS .....	2
NATIVE AMERICANS & EUROPEANS: .....	3
First Contacts	
BELVOIR IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY .....	5
THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY: .....	7
Fairfax County's "Golden Age"	
TRANSITIONS I: .....	9
Belvoir in the Antebellum Period	
TRANSITIONS II: .....	11
Belvoir Enters the Twentieth Century	
ESTABLISHMENT OF CAMP A.A. HUMPHREYS: . . .	13
1917 – 1918	
HISTORIC SITES .....	16
Map of the Fort Belvoir Area	
INTER-WAR PERIOD: .....	18
1919 – 1939	
WORLD WAR II PERIOD: .....	22
1940 – 1945	
COLD-WAR PERIOD: .....	26
FORT BELVOIR PLANS .....	30
FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY	
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	35

FRONT COVER: *The insignia of the Installation Management Command (IMCOM), the Fort Belvoir Garrison logo, the insignia of the Military District of Washington (MDW), and the IMCOM logo. The Fort Belvoir logo includes "Flight Over Belvoir," a painting by Jackson Miles Abbott.*

BACK COVER: *Pictured on a map of Fort Belvoir, ca.1967, are various engineer instruments and possessions, the Coat of Arms of the U.S. Army Engineer School, and the Fort Belvoir U.S. Army Garrison, 2010.*



R. Christopher Goodwin & Associates, Inc.



Post History Office, Fort Belvoir



R. Christopher Goodwin & Associates, Inc.

TOP: Main Post Chapel, constructed in 1957. CENTER: Abbot Hall, Post Headquarters, constructed in 1935. It was originally the main academic building for the Engineer School. BOTTOM: An officer's home in Belvoir Village.





**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY**  
**US ARMY INSTALLATION MANAGEMENT COMMAND**  
**HEADQUARTERS, UNITED STATES ARMY GARRISON, FORT BELVOIR**  
**9820 FLAGLER ROAD, SUITE 213**  
**FORT BELVOIR, VIRGINIA 22060-5928**

REPLY TO  
ATTENTION OF

May 6, 2010

Office of the Garrison Commander

## FOREWORD

Welcome to Fort Belvoir! Our beautiful United States Army Installation is interlaced with the history of our great nation. Founded on the banks of the Potomac River and located adjacent to historic Mount Vernon, Fort Belvoir traces its beginning from the Dogue Indians, serving as the home of Colonel William Fairfax (Belvoir Manor), providing a place of growth and learning for a young George Washington, to hosting the Department of Defense's largest construction effort with over \$4 billion from the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure Act. Present day Fort Belvoir is bustling with activity. The installation serves as home to 135 various organizations and over 30,000 people. The ongoing expansion from BRAC will increase Fort Belvoir to 160 organizations with an estimated 48,000 personnel.

This booklet presents a brief historical overview of Fort Belvoir. The first edition was published in April, 1996, and included extensive information on the installation to that time. Over the past 14 years, various changes have transformed the installation to include: the arrival of numerous organizations from the Department of Defense and other executive agencies, privatized housing for military Families, and the latest widespread transformation initiated by the 2005 BRAC legislation. Fort Belvoir is at the forefront of DOD and Army installation innovation while remaining a champion for environmental stewardship.

For the past two years, it has been my distinct honor to command the United States Army Garrison, Fort Belvoir. During that time, we've embarked on an extensive transformation throughout the Main Post, Fort Belvoir North Area (BNA), the newly acquired Mark Center, and Rivanna Station north of Charlottesville, VA. These changes have added immeasurably to an Army post known as "Beautiful to See." Our Fort Belvoir vision is to serve as the Installation of choice where Soldiers, Families, and Civilians choose to live and work. We know you will enjoy Fort Belvoir and being a part of its history-making transformation.

Jerry L. Blixt  
Colonel, US Army  
Commanding

**"LEADERS IN EXCELLENCE"**



## PREHISTORIC ANTECEDENTS

When people first arrived in the Fort Belvoir area, perhaps 11,500 years ago, Northern Virginia was far different than it is today. The climate was considerably colder, and the great Arctic glaciers covered North America as far south as northern Pennsylvania. Because much of the earth's water was locked in these glaciers, today's Potomac River was a small tributary of the Susquehanna River. Streams like Dogue and Accotink Creeks, if they existed at all, were mere trickles. The region's vegetation and animal life resembled more closely what we today associate with northern Canada or the Arctic tundra. Mastodon, mammoth, and other now-extinct species still roamed parts of eastern North America.

Archeologists know that the earliest Americans wandered throughout Virginia, including present-day Fairfax County. Their stone quarries and living sites have been excavated in the Shenandoah Valley and in the southern Piedmont. At Belvoir, at least one of their fluted projectile points has been found near Davison Army Airfield. Scholars think that these early people traveled in small bands, hunting and gathering the meager edible resources that were available in the colder environment.

During the next several thousand years, the climate moderated, the glaciers slowly receded, and sea levels rose. The Susquehanna River valley gradually flooded to form today's Chesapeake Bay and the Potomac River became the familiar broad stream we know today. The region's vegetation and its animal life changed significantly. Oak and hickory forests appeared, as did "modern" animal species such as deer, bear, elk and bison.

Around 4,000 B.C., as food became more plentiful, the people of the Potomac Valley could gather nuts, berries, and other seasonal resources to supplement the animals they hunted. Archeological evidence suggests that the area's prehistoric population also rose during this period.

After approximately 2,750 B.C., the climate of the Northern Virginia area stabilized close to what it is today. Prehistoric peoples tended to gravitate toward the region's rivers and streams and to adopt a less nomadic existence. They settled in larger base camps and made seasonal food-gathering trips into the interior. Food resources were more abundant and diverse. Fish entered the Potomac estuary to spawn in the spring: oysters and mussels were available in season; and meat could be obtained from a wide variety of small mammals, reptiles, and migratory waterfowl, as well as larger game, such as deer and bear.

To exploit these resources, prehistoric peoples developed tools designed for specialized tasks, including the bow and arrow. After approximately 1,000 B.C., they also mastered the art of making ceramics from local clays. Archeologists believe that the decorative variations on these native ceramics probably represent cultural variations within groups of Native Americans.

Most importantly, the Native Americans who greeted the first European visitors to this region engaged in agriculture. The maize, beans, and other products grown by these Indians would become the commodities that ensured the survival of Virginia's early European settlements.



Fairfax Co. Heritage Resources

*This array of Indian projectile points, all found in Fairfax County, represents over 8,000 years of prehistoric occupation in the region.*





Copyright British Museum

*John White's depiction of a small palisaded village in North Carolina may illustrate what Potomac River villages were like.*

## NATIVE AMERICANS & EUROPEANS: First Contact

John Smith and his companions came to the upper Potomac River in 1608 on a matter of survival—the survival of the colony at Jamestown. Without the Indian corn supplied in part by the native residents of this region, the first settlers at Jamestown would have perished.

Who were these Native Americans who greeted John Smith and his companions as they made their way up the Potomac in 1608? Where had they come from? Archeologists and historians disagree about the origins, the social structure and the relationships among the Indian groups who lived along this section of the Potomac River.

Some archeologists believe that the cultural characteristics of the Native Americans who lived near Belvoir and greeted John Smith may have spread southward from

north central Pennsylvania through Maryland and, ultimately, down the Potomac River. The forms, manufacturing techniques, and decorative motifs of ceramics recovered from sites along the lower Potomac are similar to those found on earlier sites near the headwaters of the Potomac and its tributaries.

Scholars of Native American languages have argued that the forebears of the Potomac River Indians, who spoke an Algonkian language, may have migrated from the Eastern Shore of the Chesapeake Bay, where other Algonkian-speaking peoples lived. In fact, one legend of the Piscataway tribe, which lived across the Potomac from Fort Belvoir, refers to such a migration. Local archeologist Larry Moore has maintained that the Indians of southern Fairfax County spoke a Siouan language, which would suggest that they had come from the west.



Regardless of the different opinions regarding the origins of these groups, archeology has provided us some clues to the type of social structure that these early Virginians had developed. Historic accounts frequently refer to large Indian villages enclosed within wooden stockades or palisades. John Smith's map clearly shows that Native American villages and buildings lined both shore of the Potomac River below the Fall Line. The closest of these to Fort Belvoir was the "Chief's Howse," or town of Tauxenent on the Occoquan River, just south of the post. Archeologists have investigated several such village sites along the Potomac River.

Some Indians apparently occupied smaller satellite villages away from the larger town sites. Smith's map distinguishes between chief houses and regular houses. Smith's "regular houses" may represent smaller less substantial unfortified hamlets; at least one of these satellite sites has been found on Mason's Neck, just south of Belvoir. The patterns of various storage pits and house outlines, the bone, stone, and antler tools, and the remains of plant and animal foods found on these sites show that these early Virginians used resources from both the river and the inland forests.

Three separate groups or tribes—the Dogue (also known as the Taux or Moyumpse), the Patowomeke, and the Piscataway Indians—apparently controlled this section of the Potomac River. Historic records leave little doubt that the Dogue Indians were most closely associated with the south-eastern corner of Fairfax County. Early Virginia land records also referred to the "Doeg" or Moyumpse Indians, using a variety of spellings. In the 1650s, the name of "Dogs Island" was applied to a tract of land on what is now Mason's Neck, the next peninsula downriver from Belvoir. Pohick Bay, which borders the western side of the Belvoir peninsula, was sometimes called "Doeg Island Creek" or "Miompse Creek." As late as 1737, a map of the area identified an island in the Occoquan River as "Doge Island once an Indian Habitation in Occoquan Bay now little left of it." Some Dogue Indians also resided with the Piscataway Indians across the Potomac River in Maryland on land between Potomac Creek and Piscataway Creek.

During the rest of the seventeenth century, the Indians of the Potomac River region maintained a mixed relationship with the increasing number of European settlers in the

region. For example, while the Maryland colony generally cultivated friendly relationships with most Indian groups on the Potomac, the colony's relationships with the Dogue were strained. Friction between European settlers and Indians intensified in the 1650s when the Maryland government invited the Susquehannocks, an Iroquoian tribe that originally lived at the head of the Chesapeake Bay, to settle near Piscataway Creek in what is now Prince Georges County. Documentary evidence suggests that in 1675, the Dogue and the Susquehannocks were drawn, perhaps unwittingly into a conflict with colonists



*John Smith's 1608 map showed the Belvoir area and indicated the locations of several villages, including Tauxenent.*

Post History Office, Fort Belvoir



*Sand-tempered cord-marked Potomac Creek pottery is a characteristic ceramic found on sites near Belvoir.*

Fairfax Co. Heritage Resources

in Maryland and Virginia. For the next fifteen years, remnants of these two tribes roamed through Virginia's Piedmont region and Southern Maryland, raiding frontier settlements and terrorizing both Indians and Europeans in Virginia's interior. The sporadic conflicts and raids were not resolved until the 1690s.



*These fragmentary Indian tobacco pipes—one stone, the other ceramic—were found at what is thought to be the site of the village of Tauxenent. The effigy represents an otter.*

Fairfax Co. Heritage Resources

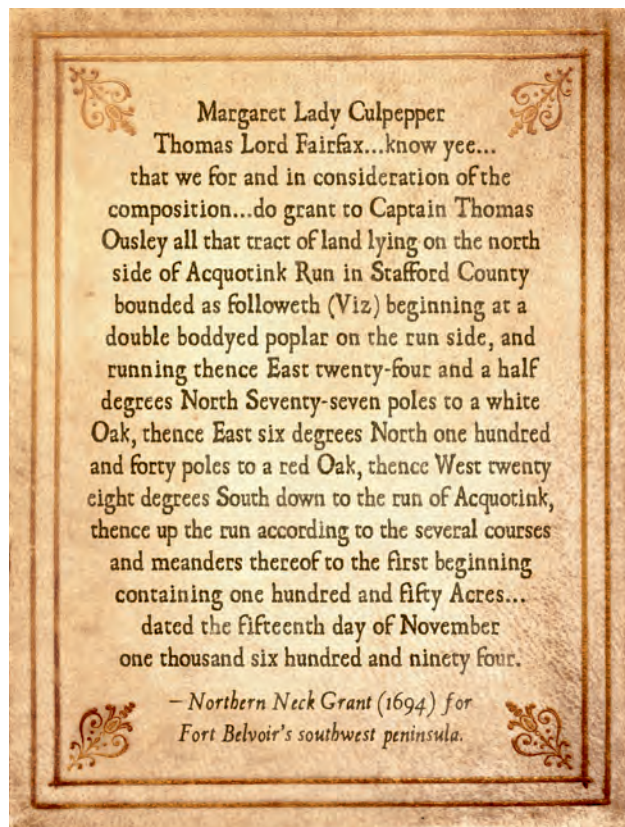


## BELVOIR IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

From the time John Smith entered the upper Potomac River valley until approximately 1650; few Europeans ventured into what eventually became Northern Virginia. Those who did were transients—traders with names like Crenshaw, Hamer, Spelman, Jones, and Fleet—who exchanged Jews’ harps, beads and hoes for beaver pelts obtained from the usually friendly Indians.

However, deteriorating Indian-European relations, and friction with the Maryland colony across the Potomac River discouraged expansion and permanent settlement along the upper Potomac in Virginia until the middle of the seventeenth century. The first land grant in what is now Fairfax County was issued in 1651 for property on the peninsula or “neck” immediately south of Fort Belvoir. The first land grant within the boundaries of what is now Fort Belvoir was issued six years later. John Stoell acquired a parcel of 1,000 acres on Belvoir’s southwest peninsula, the neck of land between Pohick and Accotink Creeks. It is unlikely that Stoell himself occupied the property, for parts of it were sold within a short time to other owners.

The power to grant land in the colony of Virginia originally rested with the colonial assembly in Jamestown. To encourage population growth, the assembly adopted a system known as the “head right,” which enabled a resident colonist to claim fifty acres for every new settler whose passage he paid from England to Virginia. To ensure permanent settlement instead of speculation, the assembly also required that the grant recipient had to erect a minimal house, graze livestock, and/or cultivate one acre of his property with-



*The coat of arms of Thomas, Sixth Lord Fairfax, became the emblem of the newly created County of Fairfax.*

Post History Office, Fort Belvoir

in three years. Failure to comply with the requirements meant that the land could be declared “deserted;” in such cases, the grant could be re-issued to another individual.

Political developments in England led to changes that ultimately disrupted and confused the system of early land grants in Northern Virginia. In 1649, in recognition of services rendered to the Crown, the exiled King Charles II granted to seven of his supporters a vast territory in Virginia that became known as the Northern Neck. This large grant included all of the land between the Potomac and the Rappahannock Rivers. Through marriage and purchase, this vast region came under the ownership of a

single titled family—the Fairfaxes. As proprietor, Thomas, Sixth Lord Fairfax, could rent or sell parcels of land, independent of control by Virginia’s colonial government. Because two agencies now were authorized to grant land, many early patents overlapped, and/or their boundaries were inexact. The confusion led later to many legal challenges over the boundaries of these early landgrants.

Despite conflicting land claims, settlement in Northern Virginia accelerated at the end of the Susquehannock Wars. By 1673, as Augustine Herrman’s

map shows, several permanent residences had been established along the shores of the Potomac River and its tributaries. By 1690, all waterfront property that today is included within Fort Belvoir had been patented and subdivided.

Five major property grants comprised most of the area that today forms Fort Belvoir. In 1694, the 1,000-acre



Stoell grant between Accotink and Pohick creeks, plus an additional 150-acre parcel at the mouth of Accotink Creek, were granted to Thomas Owsley (Owsley) of Stafford County. Owsley, who was captain of a local militia group known as the Potomac Rangers, lived on this property and was buried there in 1700. Thus far, archeologists have been unable to locate either Owsley's grave or the site of his house. By 1718, the McCarty



*In 1994, volunteers from Fairfax County's Heritage Resources Office search for Thomas Owsley's seventeenth century home.*

family had acquired the tract, which ultimately was named "Cedar Grove Plantation."

William Green's 1669 patent for 1,150 acres encompassed most of what is now Fort Belvoir's South Post. Although this property was sub-divided and sold in the early eighteenth century, it was reassembled during the 1730s to create the central portion of William Fairfax's 2,200-acre plantation of Belvoir Manor.

The part of Belvoir Neck that borders on Dogue Creek, now the location of the Dogue Creek Village housing complex, was purchased in 1678 by John Wells and Thomas Derrick, who apparently intended the tract as an investment. Portions of their 363-acre grant were subsequently sold to a variety of landowners, including some residents of Maryland. This portion of Belvoir Neck apparently remained a separate parcel until 1918, when it was acquired as part of Camp A.A. Humphreys, as Fort Belvoir was originally called.

In 1671, John Thomas patented 1,000 acres along the upper reaches of Accotink Creek. The exact location is unclear, because the deed describes it only as lying 'on the head of a creek in Potomac freshes beyond the Doegs Island

and land of Col. Speake adjacent land of Robert Lord and James Magregory." Thomas' property seems to have included almost all of the area now occupied by Davison Army Airfield, as well as portions of the North Post gold course. By 1718, the same Dennis McCarty who had bought "Cedar Grove" also had purchased Thomas' property, which he named "Mount Air."

A 1678 deed conveyed 780 acres of land "on the head of Doug Creek adjacent Mr. Wells and Mr. Thomas" to Colonel William Travers of Essex County, Virginia. In the late eighteenth century, this tract was purchased by George Washington and it became Woodlawn Plantation. Today, Belvoir's Commissary, Post Exchange, the Lewis Village housing and the Fort Belvoir Elementary School are all located on this tract.

The largest grant of land—a total of 2,244 acres "between the main run of Accotink and Dogue run, commonly called...Herryford Manor"—was first patented in 1714. A 300-acre section of this large grant, which adjoined Dennis McCarty's Mount Air property, was sold to the wardens and vestry of Truro Parish for 12,000 pounds of tobacco; this property was known as the Glebe. William Fairfax bought the 300-acre church property in 1752, and added it to his Belvoir Manor Plantation.

By the second quarter of the eighteenth century, population in the region north of the Occoquan River had increased sufficiently to justify the formation of a new political jurisdiction, which was carved out of Prince William County. The new county adopted the cost of arms of the house of Fairfax as its insignia.



*ABOVE: Agustine Herrman's 1676 Map of Maryland and Virginia depicted the initial plantations in the southern portion of Fairfax County in the Belvoir area.*

*FACING PAGE: Warner's 1737 survey of the Northern Neck proprietary was the first map to depict the enormous size of the five million acre grant that extended from the headwaters of the Potomac River in West Virginia to the Chesapeake Bay.*



Post History Office, Fort Belvoir

## THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY: Fairfax County's “Golden Age”

In about 1750, if you had journeyed to Northern Virginia from England or from other colonies on the Atlantic seaboard, chances are that you would have arrived by ship. Navigable rivers like the Potomac were the main commercial arteries of the Virginia colony. These eighteenth century highways carried the commodities that established and maintained the great colonial fortunes: tobacco, grain, and slaves. They also wove together the social and political fabric of the colony, for those who lived along and traveled the rivers generally held positions of power. From each plantation's river landing, the sons of Virginia's planters embarked to be schooled in England. One after another, poised upon the bluffs above the river, stood the imposing residences of Virginia's colonial elite—the tangible and visible symbols of each planter's wealth and power.

As your ship sailed slowly north of the Occoquan River, with its small settlement at the town of Colchester, four such manors would slowly have come into view: George Mason's Gunston Hall, Col. Dennis McCarty's Cedar Grove and Mount Air; William Fairfax's Belvoir, and Lawrence Washington's Mount Vernon. Two of these homes—Cedar Grove and Belvoir—lay within the present boundaries of Fort Belvoir. Gunston Hall and Mount Vernon survive, but Belvoir and Cedar Grove remain only as archeological sites.

William Fairfax, builder of Belvoir, arrived in the Virginia colony in the 1730s from Massachusetts, where he had served as Collector of Customs for the Crown. From 1734 to 1741, Fairfax and his wife Deborah lived along the lower Potomac, where William again assumed the position of Collector of Customs and acted as land





ABOVE: In ca. 1932, Colonel Edward Schulz uncovered the massive foundations of the Belvoir Manor House and its dependencies. RIGHT: Belvoir's slaves either made or used coarse unglazed earthenware pots such as this one. BOTTOM: An artist's rendering of the Belvoir Manor.



R. Christopher Goodwin & Associates, Inc.

agent for his cousin, Thomas, Sixth Lord Fairfax, proprietor of the massive Northern Neckland grant.

During this time, he also assembled the property and constructed the dwelling complex at Belvoir Manor. Fairfax's elegant new home was completed in 1741. Historic documents and archeological remains found at Belvoir Manor both attest to the elegant lifestyle enjoyed by the Fairfax family. William Fairfax called his manor Belvoir, a French word meaning "beautiful to see." The mansion itself, described in a 1774 rental notice, was spacious and well-appointed. Its furnishings consisted of "tables, chairs, and every other necessary article...very elegant." Ceramics imported from Europe and the Orient graced its tables. Prominent citizens of the colony, including George Washington, a neighbor and a close friend, visited frequently, and Thomas Sixth Lord Fairfax, the only member of the British nobility ever to reside in the colonies, lived at Belvoir before he moved to the Shenandoah Valley.

Despite the grandeur of their surroundings and the refinement of their furnishings, planters like the Masons, McCartys, Washingtons, and Fairfaxes did not lead indolent lives. Conscious of their civic duty, they were the political, social, economic, and religious leaders of their immediate neighborhood and of the colony at large.

William Fairfax was a case in point. As President of the Governor's Council in Williamsburg, he held a position equivalent to today's Lieutenant Governor; in this position, he represented the colony at an important conference with the Iroquois Indians in 1753. It was he who introduced the bill that created Fairfax County as a separate political jurisdiction in 1742, and he subsequently served as presiding Justice of the County Court, and as County Lieutenant, the county's chief law-enforcement officer. At the same time, he managed his own large properties throughout Fairfax County and served as the land agent for his cousin, Lord Fairfax. George William Fairfax, William's son and heir and a close personal friend of George Washington, continued his father's tradition of public service.



Post History Office, Fort Belvoir

### *To be Rented...*

*Belvoir, the beautiful seat of the  
Honourable George William Fairfax...  
The Mansion House is of Brick, two stories  
high, with four convenient Rooms and a  
large Passage on the lower Floor, five Rooms  
and a Passage on the Second, and a Servant's  
Hall and Cellars below, convenient Offices,  
Stables, and Coach House adjoining, as also  
a large and well-furnished Garden...*

*- Virginia Gazette, June 2, 1774*

While the contributions of these eighteenth century leaders certainly were substantial, their lives must also be viewed in a broader perspective. Planters like William Fairfax comprised a very small portion of Fairfax County's population: most of their neighbors were smaller farmers who sometimes barely managed to make a living. Moreover, the affluence of these planters was based not only on land and imposing buildings, but on the number of slaves they held. Slaves too are in the records—as chattel passed from one generation to another, and as the probable users of the plain unglazed ceramics found in the outbuildings of Belvoir Manor.





## TRANSITIONS I: Belvoir in the Antebellum Period

...But alas, Belvoir is no more! I took a ride there the other day to visit the ruins, and ruins indeed they are. The dwelling house and the two brick buildings in front, underwent the ravages of fire; the walls of which are very much injured: the other houses are sinking under the depredations of time and inattention, and I believe are now scarcely worth repairing. In a word, the whole are, or very soon will be a heap of ruin. When I viewed them, when I considered that the happiest moments of my life had been spent there, when I could not trace a room in the house (now all rubbish) that did not bring to mind the recollection of pleasing scenes. I was obliged to fly from them; and came home with painful sensations, and sorrowing for the contrast.

— George Washington to George William Fairfax, February 27, 1785

When George William Fairfax left Belvoir for England in 1773, the estate was rented and its furnishings were sold. In 1783, the mansion and several of its outbuildings were destroyed by fire, and, as Washington noted, the plantation complex gradually deteriorated into ruins. Ferdinando Fairfax, who inherited the property, apparently did not live there. The bluffs below the former mansion site were quarried for building stone, but the house site itself was not developed. The subsequent history of the Belvoir estate was a microcosm of the fate of many of the large plantations that had graced southeastern Fairfax County during the eighteenth century.

Belvoir Plantation was devastated further during the War of 1812. In August 1814, as British land forces attacked and burned the City of Washington, a British naval squadron sailed up the Potomac River and forced the surrender of Alexandria. Loaded with loot, the fleet then began the 180-mile return trip downriver. On September 1, the British attempted to run the deep-water channel below the Belvoir house site, a position that previously had been identified as a



*This artist's rendering shows American forces building gun emplacements on the bluffs at Belvoir, in preparation for intercepting the British fleet.*

Post History Office, Fort Belvoir

strategic defensive location on the river. Here, a hastily assembled American force, composed of Virginia and Alexandria militia under the command of U.S. Navy Captain David Porter, hurriedly began to mount a battery on the bluffs above the river. For four days, British and American forces exchanged cannon and musket fire. The British fleet eventually passed the American positions, but British shells demolished

what little was left of the old Belvoir Manor.

All of the great eighteenth century plantations in the Fort Belvoir area changed considerably in the years before the Civil War. Soil exhaustion and inheritance prompted the sale and sub-division of these formerly massive tracts of land. As a new generation of landowners took up residence in southeastern Fairfax County, patterns of land use and ownership were altered.

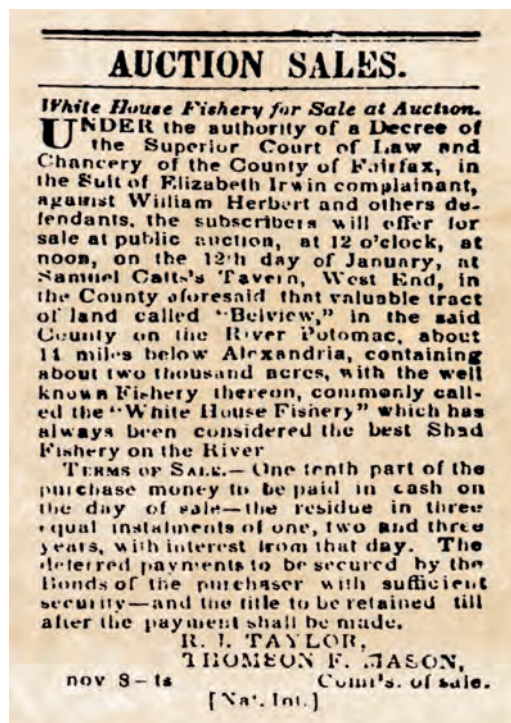
The association of Belvoir Plantation with the Fairfax family ended with the death of Ferdinando Fairfax in 1820. During the next decade, William Herbert of Alexandria acquired the property, which he quickly used as collateral for a loan. During the 1830s, Thomas Irwin, Herbert's creditor, operated the shad fisheries at White



House Point. However, Herbert's continued inability to pay his debts eventually led to the sale of Belvoir at public auction in 1838.

In 1841, Philip Otterback of Washington, D.C. purchased the "Tract of land (and fisheries thereunto appertaining) called 'Belvoir' or the 'White House'" for slightly over \$12,000. The 1860 Federal agricultural census shows that Otterback raised wheat, corn, and oats on approximately one-third of his Belvoir tract. The remaining "unimproved" land, part of which was known as "Otterback's Woods," probably was used for timber and pasture, since he also owned considerable livestock, including horses, cattle, pigs, and substantial numbers of sheep.

Ownership and use of Dennis McCarty's Mount Air and Cedar Grove properties also changed significantly during the early nineteenth century. By 1800, great-grandson Daniel McCarty "the younger" had incurred so much debt that the Fairfax County Court placed liens against all of his land, rental dwellings, slaves, farm animals, and crops. McCarty's wife, Sarah, was allowed to keep Cedar Grove Plantation as her residence, but portions of McCarty's property were mortgaged, sold, or leased within the first two decades of the nineteenth century. Parts of Mount Air, which included some of what is now Fort Belvoir's North Post, were acquired in 1815 by Sarah McCarty Chichester, daughter of Daniel McCarty, and sister of Daniel McCarty, Jr. In 1804, several parcels around the intersection of Accotink Creek and the Colchester Road (U.S. Route 1) were transferred to the partnership of Gardner and Deane. These properties, which now form the lower part of Davison Army Airfield, Accotink, and the area around



Tulley Gate, were developed into a grist mill complex. By the Civil War, the village of Accotink had coalesced around the mill site. Daniel McCarty's sons, William and James, were left with only Cedar Grove and a large parcel of land west of upper Accotink Creek known as the "Whitemarsh Tract."

By the beginning of the Civil War, all remaining McCarty property had passed from family control. Jonathan Roberts, a farmer and surveyor, with his wife Abigail, their five children and two male boarders, occupied the Cedar Grove property he bought from William McCarty in 1848. Roberts, who

was originally from New Jersey, sub-divided portions of his property, selling the Accotink mill site to the partnership of Troth and Gillingham in 1849, and a 95-acre tract to Levi Stiles, also from New Jersey. The land east of the "Whitemarsh Tract" was purchased in 1856 by Samuel and Mary Denty, who raised livestock, wheat, corn, and five children on their 700-acre farm. In 1860, Mount Air and 452 surrounding acres, were purchased by Aristide C. Landstreet, who would later serve as a private in Company F, 6th Virginia Cavalry, CSA during the Civil War.

Roberts, Stiles, Troth, Gillingham, Denty and Otterback all represent-



TOP: This auction notice in the Alexandria Gazette mistakenly called the old Fairfax plantation "Belview". BOTTOM: This survey map, showing the Accotink grist mill area, was made in 1859 for a court case. Note the large marsh, which today is a prominent feature of the Accotink Wildlife Refuge.

ed the changes that had occurred in the Belvoir area. Large manorial holdings, manned by dozens of slaves, were a thing of the past. Tobacco, which had depleted the soils, no longer reigned supreme. The influence of the Tidewater aristocracy had waned. Instead, there appeared a new set of entrepreneurs and farmers who shepherded the Belvoir area into the twentieth century.



## TRANSITIONS II: Belvoir Enters the Twentieth Century



Post History Office, Fort Belvoir

*Benjamin Otterback surveys the Potomac River from the shoreline of his White House shad fishery, ca. 1900.*

Chalkley Gillingham and Paul Troth, two of the partners who purchased the run-down Woodlawn estate in the 1840s were in the vanguard of the new arrivals in the Belvoir area. To them, Fairfax County's depleted soils, low real estate prices, and general economic decline in the 1840s, presented an outstanding opportunity. Troth and Gillingham, who supplied lumber to Northern shipbuilders, were interested primarily in the vast timber resources of the Woodlawn property.

Many attributes distinguished these new residents from established Tidewater families. Many were from Northern states such as New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maine, New Hampshire, and even New Brunswick, Canada. They represented a diverse assortment of occupations. Some were members of the Society of Friends, or Quakers, a religious sect that had been present in Virginia since the seventeenth century, and whose presence was strong in Alexandria. Quakers were committed to non-violence, education, the use of progressive farming methods, and opposition to slavery.

By 1850, the Quakers had created a thriving community in the emerging neighborhood in the Accotink/Woodlawn area. The 1860 Federal census showed that residents of Accotink worked as lawyers, doctors, millers, merchants, blacksmiths, boatmen nurserymen, laborers, wheelwrights, surveyors, carpenters, and farmers. Farm labor was provided by a family members or hired help, some of whom were immigrants from Europe and Canada. The Woodlawn and Accotink communities included a Quaker Meeting House and cemetery, the Accotink Mill, a school, and one or more stores.

The decline and subdivision of the great tobacco plantations brought about another profound demographic change in nineteenth century Fairfax. With smaller farms and the introductions of agricultural machinery, large numbers of slaves were no longer needed. Although many slaves were sold or taken by their owners to states in the Deep South, others were freed. The Quakers assisted many of these freed African-Americans to acquire land in the Woodlands/Accotink area.





Post History Office, Fort Belvoir

ABOVE: Accotink Village, ca. 1900. BELOW, LEFT: The grave of Chalkley Gillingham, a leader of the two groups that developed the Belvoir area in the post-Civil War years. BELOW, CENTER: A company street at Camp Belvoir, 1915.

Archival sources show that these former slaves not only survived, but often prospered. Felix, Lewis, Philip and Ausa (Osman) Quander, probably related to Nancy Quander, a Washington slave who was freed in 1802, worked as laborers and apparently owned no property in 1850. But within a decade, all had acquired small tracts, located north and west of Woodlawn Plantation on what today is part of North Post. Other African-American property owners in the area before the Civil War included the Holland and Jasper families. The farms that these ex-slaves owned ranged in size from 3 to 28 acres.

plantations here are fast being divided up into smaller acres, and practically where ‘One blade of grass grew before, two blades now grow.’”

Decreasing farm sizes also meant that fewer people could support themselves solely by farming; more and more were employed in providing services. In general, whites tended to hold such skilled or salaried positions such as carpenter, miller, postmaster, salesman, schoolteacher, and blacksmith. P. Hillman Troth, who owned the Accotink Mill and several rental properties in the village, was one of Accotink’s most prominent citizens.



R. Christopher Goodwin & Associates, Inc.

During the Civil War, both Union and Confederate forces foraged in southeastern Fairfax, disrupting the daily lives of the Belvoir area’s residents. However, the closest major battles, First and Second Manassas, took place far to the south and west. Belvoir Neck also was too far from Washington, D.C to be included in the city’s perimeter defenses. Compared to other parts of Fairfax County the Accotink and Woodlawn communities continued to develop in relative stability.

The same families that had moved into the region before the war remained there during the post-war period. The children of many neighboring families intermarried, and farms became smaller as they were subdivided among increasing numbers of heirs. When the Army acquired the southwest peninsula in 1918 for use as a target range, 14 separate deeds were drawn up for properties that at one time had been part of McCarty’s Cedar Grove plantation. As one 1907 promotional brochure pointed out, “Old



Post History Office, Fort Belvoir

Both the black and the white communities developed strong social and cultural institutions in the post-Civil War years. The Woodlawn Methodist Church and cemetery, a school, and the Mount Vernon Enterprise Lodge of the Odd Fellows formed the physical and social

nucleus of the area’s burgeoning African-American community. The social and cultural life of the area’s Euro-American residents revolved around the Episcopal, Methodist, Baptist, and Quaker churches at Woodlawn, Pohick, and Accotink, the schools at Potter’s Hill and in Accotink village, and the Woodlawn Farmer’s Club, which held annual agricultural fairs and published a journal on progressive farming.

As the War Department prepared to acquire property in the area, Fort Belvoir’s eighteenth century sites lay forgotten and overgrown. One historian who visited the site of Belvoir Manor in 1888 wrote: “All was a tangle of brushwood and fallen trees: but such an enchanting view over the river! There were some heaps of bricks, and a poor old fig tree in the clearing, which I suppose, was once the garden.”



## ESTABLISHMENT OF CAMP A. A. HUMPHREYS: 1917–1918

The U.S. Army began utilizing the Belvoir peninsula as an engineer training facility in 1915, which they named Camp Belvoir. The facility evolved from the U.S. Army's Engineer School, which was established in 1866 at Willet's Point (now Fort Totten), New York. In 1901, the school relocated to Washington Barracks (now Fort McNair) in Washington, D.C. Although Washington Barracks provided ample classroom facilities, that installation lacked adequate field training areas and rifle ranges. As a result, the school was forced to seek additional training space.

In 1912, the Engineer School began conducting summer training exercises on a government-owned parcel in Virginia, located approximately 15 miles south of Washington along the Potomac River. The District of Columbia had acquired the 1,500-acre tract on the Belvoir peninsula in 1910 from the Otterback family, for development of a children's reformatory. However, local community groups and patriotic organizations, such as the Daughters of the American Revolution, opposed the establishment of a reformatory on ground so closely associated with George Washington and the other "founding fathers" of the country. Thus, the reformatory never materialized at Belvoir, but was later constructed in nearby Lorton.



*A recruiting poster utilized during World War I to encourage men to enlist with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.*

In 1912, Congress transferred the Otterback property to the War Department, following an Army request to use the land as a training site. This site was chosen by the Engineer School because of its proximity to the existing school, its adequate water supply and its challenging terrain. Here, engineer students conducted rifle practice, trained in building ponton bridges, and billeted in temporary Camp Belvoir.

America's entry into World War I in April 1917 led to the first wave of military construction at the Virginia training site. Construction of the semi-permanent cantonment, named Camp A. A. Humphreys in honor of Civil War commander and former Chief of Engineers (1866-79), Major General Andrew A. Humphreys, began in January 1918 under

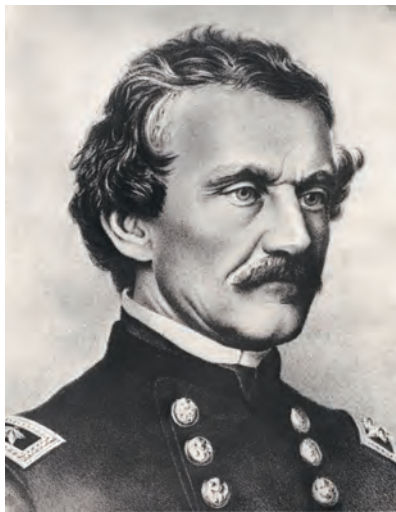
very difficult conditions. The Winter of 1918 was remembered for its extremely cold temperatures and unusually heavy snowfall. Despite these severe conditions, some 5,000 soldiers and 6,000 civilians cleared, surveyed, and constructed camp facilities in only 11 months. Much of the heavy labor was performed by segregated African-American service battalions. According to the first issue of the camp newspaper, *The Castle*, Camp A. A. Humphreys was "the wonder city in the midst of an unbroken





wilderness of forest and swamp” where “the Washingtons and the Fairfaxes hunted the fox.”

The development of Camp A.A. Humphreys transformed the agrarian neighborhood around Accotink and Woodlawn; one historian described the establishment of the camp as “the second invasion by the armed forces” of the Woodlawn neighborhood. Many residents were displaced from their homes and farms, sometimes unwillingly. Many of the members of the Woodlawn Quaker Meeting, who had lost properties, moved elsewhere, and as a result, the long-standing Quaker influence in the Woodlawn neighborhood declined. Through purchase or condemnation, the Army acquired additional acreage during 1917 and 1918, fourteen farms on the peninsula between Accotink and Pohick Creeks were transformed into target ranges, two large parcels along Dogue Creek were taken through government condemnation proceedings, and the purchase of a 3,300-acre parcel that today comprises most of the North Post and Davison Army Airfield was in process by 1918.



Post History Office, Fort Belvoir

Transportation systems and utilities also were improved. Previously, the most direct access to the Belvoir Peninsula had been by boat down the Potomac from Washington – the most efficient way of supplying the camp with building materials and other necessities. Road systems therefore were improved: the unpaved Washington-Richmond Highway was surfaced in concrete within six months (October 1918), and a plank road was constructed that linked the camp to the Washington-Richmond Highway. Standard gauge and narrow gauge railways followed. The Mount Air property was used to construct a railway linking Camp Humphreys with the Richmond,

Fredericksburg and Potomac Railroad. Building these transportation system not only facilitated deliveries to the camp, but provided valuable engineer training experience for troops sent to the battle lines in Europe.

To accommodate the 20,000 men anticipated at the camp, plans called for the construction of 790 temporary wood-frame buildings. Quarters were filled as soon as they were completed. A consistent supply of fresh water was assured through the construction of a dam across Accotink Creek and a water filtration plant on the site of the former Accotink Mill. Within only four months of the start of the construction, Camp A.A. Humphreys operated in full swing.

Several schools operated at Camp A.A. Humphreys during World War I. One of the most vital components of the camp was the Engineer Replacement and Training Camp, where enlisted men were trained. Camp A.A. Humphreys was also active in training officers during the war. The Engineer Officers’ Training Center operated at Camp Humphreys until February 1919. Its program was designed to select the most qualified enlisted men for training as junior officers. Another school located at Camp A.A. Humphreys was the Army Gas School, necessitated by the advent of chemical warfare. The school of Military Mining taught trench warfare and field fortification techniques. The schools conducted most of their training on the South Post although parts of the southwest peninsula were used for rifle ranges. By the end of the war, over 50,000 enlisted men and 4,900 officer candidates had been trained at Camp A.A. Humphreys.

Life at Camp A.A. Humphreys did not consist solely of military training. Considerable attention was paid to maintaining troop morale. At least six charitable service organizations—the YMCA, Knights of Columbus, the Jewish Welfare Board, the Red Cross, the YWCA, and the Library Board—maintained a permanent presence on the installation. These groups offered social and recreational events for both enlisted men and officers. World War I trainees could participate in inter-installation athletics; improve their basic reading and writing skills; learn to speak French; watch movies and vaudeville shows; visit Washington, D.C.; and attend dances. Troops at Camp Humphreys suffered severely during the late



Photos on this page: Post History Office, Fort Belvoir

Summer and Autumn of 1918 during the world-wide Spanish Influenza pandemic. The number of troops treated at the camp was at least 4,000; with a mortality rate of 35%.

At war's end in November 1918, Camp A.A. Humphreys became a demobilization center where troops were

prepared for their return to civilian life. By the close of 1919, more than 14,000 men had been demobilized at Camp A.A. Humphreys. The camp retained a small garrison after the war. In 1919, the 5th Engineer Regiment from Camp A.A. Humphreys was called to Washington D.C. to help quell racially motivated civil disturbances.



CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP:

*Panorama of Camp Humphreys.*

*Route 1, Winter 1918: Soldiers worked in cold and snowy conditions during the construction of Camp Humphreys.*

*Barracks of the Engineer Officer Training School at Camp Humphreys, 1918.*

*St. Martin's Chapel, Fort Humphreys, 1920.*

*Portrait of Major General Andrew Atkinson Humphreys.*





Woodlawn Friends' Meeting House



Woodlawn Methodist Cemetary



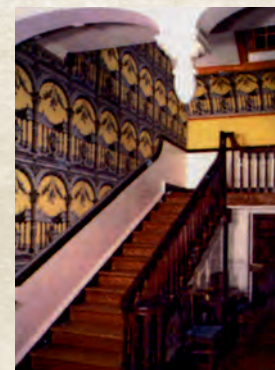
Accotink Methodist Church



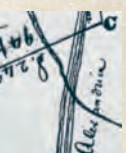
Pohick Episcopal Church  
(Truro Parish)



Officers' Housing (ca. 1935), Fort Belvoir



George Mason's Gunston Hall  
(Courtesy Gunston Hall)



## HISTORIC SITES Of the Fort Belvoir Area





*Woodlawn Plantation*



*George Washington's Grist Mill*



*Historic Abbot Hall, Fort Belvoir*



*Mount Vernon (Courtesy Mount Vernon Ladies' Association)*



*Fairfax Family Grave Site and Manor Site*



*Historic Officers' Housing (ca. 1925), Fort Belvoir*







## INTER-WAR PERIOD: 1919 – 1939



Post History Office, Fort Belvoir

*Bridge building exercises, Camp Humphreys, 1921.*

Unlike many temporary Army installations established during World War I and closed following the war, Camp A.A. Humphreys remained active and continued to expand. By 1919 the camp had grown from its original 1,500 acres to approximately 6,000 acres.

The Army's commitment to the post was demonstrated by the official relocation of the Engineer School from Washington Barracks to Camp A.A. Humphreys in 1919. Although the school had been utilizing the area as a training site since 1915, it was not until 1919 that the camp became the "home" of the Corps of Engineers. Following the Engineer School's move, Camp A.A. Humphreys was designated a permanent post in 1922 and renamed Fort Humphreys. Throughout the inter-war years, the Engineer School trained new engineer officers in the technical requirements of their duties. Programs offered included forestry, road and railroad construction, camouflage, mining, surveying, ponton bridge construction, photography, printing, and cooking.

The school also provided compressed courses for National Guard and Reserve officers. The four-week ROTC (Reserve Officers Training Corps) camps, which drew

would-be Army engineers from universities across the country, continued the facility's pre-World War I tradition of using the original 1,500-acre site as a summer training camp. ROTC cadets received basic training in standard military tactics through such courses as bayonet drill and target practice; military administration and military law; first aid and sanitation; and two levels of engineering courses in such specializations as bridge-building, demolition, reconnaissance, and railroad construction. Of course, ROTC camp experiences were not all work; the camp had a yearbook, an orchestra, and an organized program of athletic competition. The camp hostesses also made certain that the would-be officers socialized with acceptable young ladies from the surrounding neighborhood.

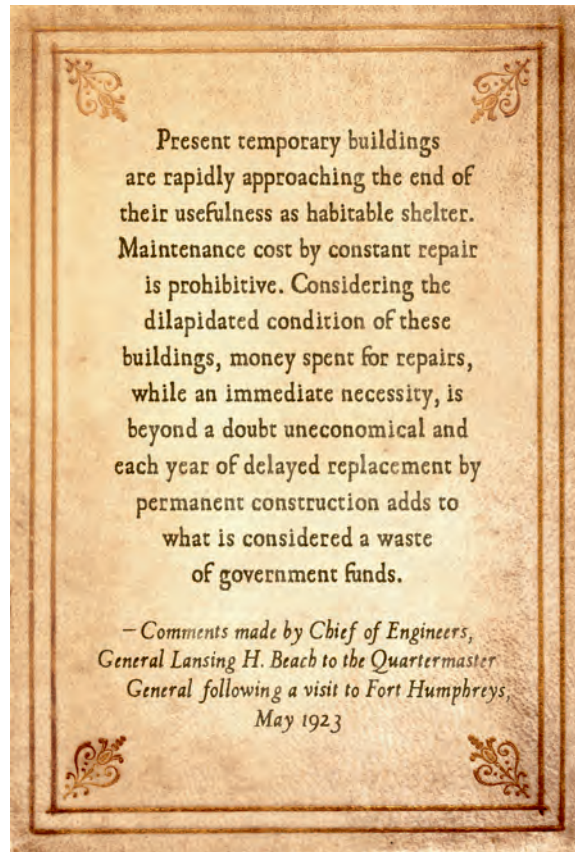
Another addition to Fort Humphreys during the inter-war period was the Engineer Board, which relocated to Fort Humphreys in 1924. The Engineer Board, forerunner of the Belvoir Research, Development and Engineering Center, was founded in 1870 to test engineering equipment. At Fort Humphreys, the Board's mission was to develop specialized engineering equipment. Its establishment marked the beginning of the installation's role in military research

and development. During the inter-war period, the Board developed numerous items to make troops more effective and more comfortable in combat. Among the many innovations were assault boats, portable steel bridges, mine detectors, and even portable bathing units.

One of the more dramatic changes to Fort Humphreys during the inter-war period was its physical transformation. By the 1920s, the installation's original temporary buildings had deteriorated, as had most of the Army's other temporary training cantonments that were hastily built during World War I.

In 1926, the Army initiated an ambitious, nation-wide building program designed to address growing concerns over the deplorable living conditions reported at the nation's military installations. The program aimed to replace the World War I temporary wooden buildings with permanent buildings. The program was financed through the sale of 43 military installations; money received from the sales was deposited into a special fund designated the "Military Post Construction Fund."

The Army's nationwide re-building program resulted in a massive construction effort that involved both military and civilian architects, planners, and designers. Standardized architectural plans were developed by the Army's Quartermaster Corps to carry out the construction program effectively and economically. These plans included designs that adapted to local climatic conditions and that reflected local architectural history. The Georgian Colonial Revival style, characterized by red brick facades, strict symmetry,



and pedimented central pavilions, was used most often in the eastern areas of the country, where English settlements were clustered in the colonial period. The Spanish Colonial Revival style, characterized by stucco walls and clay tile roofs, was favored for posts in the south and the west, in areas of traditional Spanish influence.

Many of Fort Belvoir's most important buildings were constructed as a result of the nationwide rebuilding program. Most of Fort Humphreys' temporary wood-frame World War I buildings were demolished; in their place, new permanent masonry construction buildings were erected. At Belvoir, the new buildings included officers' housing,

barracks, a school and a hospital; all designed in a Georgian Colonial Revival style.

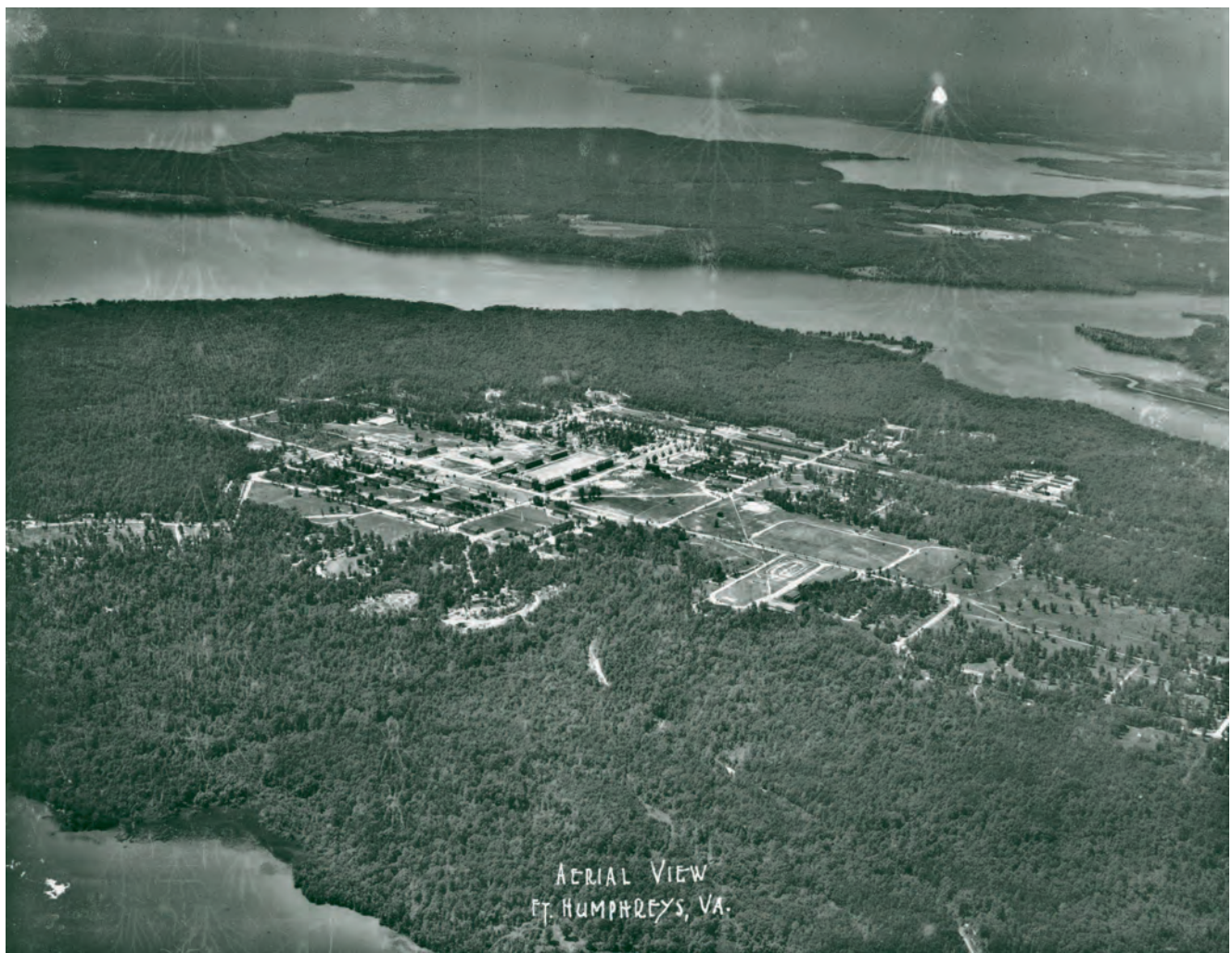
The landscape plan adopted for Fort Humphreys also exemplified the Army efforts to improve the quality of life for its personnel and the aesthetic beauty



*The Station Hospital, later named Flagler Hall, under construction in 1932.*

of its installations. George B. Ford, planning adviser to the War Department during the 1920s, encouraged installations to turn away from more formal, traditional planning practices, particularly the use of straight lines and rigid geometric patterns. He advocated creating useful and aesthetically pleasing environments that took advantage of natural vistas and used irregular lines. Quartermaster Corps officer, First Lieutenant Howard B. Nurse, also influenced Army planning at this time. Like Ford, he advocated the integration of natural topography in the design and layout of streets, especially in residential areas. The results of Nurse's and Ford's





Post History Office, Fort Belvoir

philosophies were most apparent in the configuration of the officers' housing sections at Belvoir today.

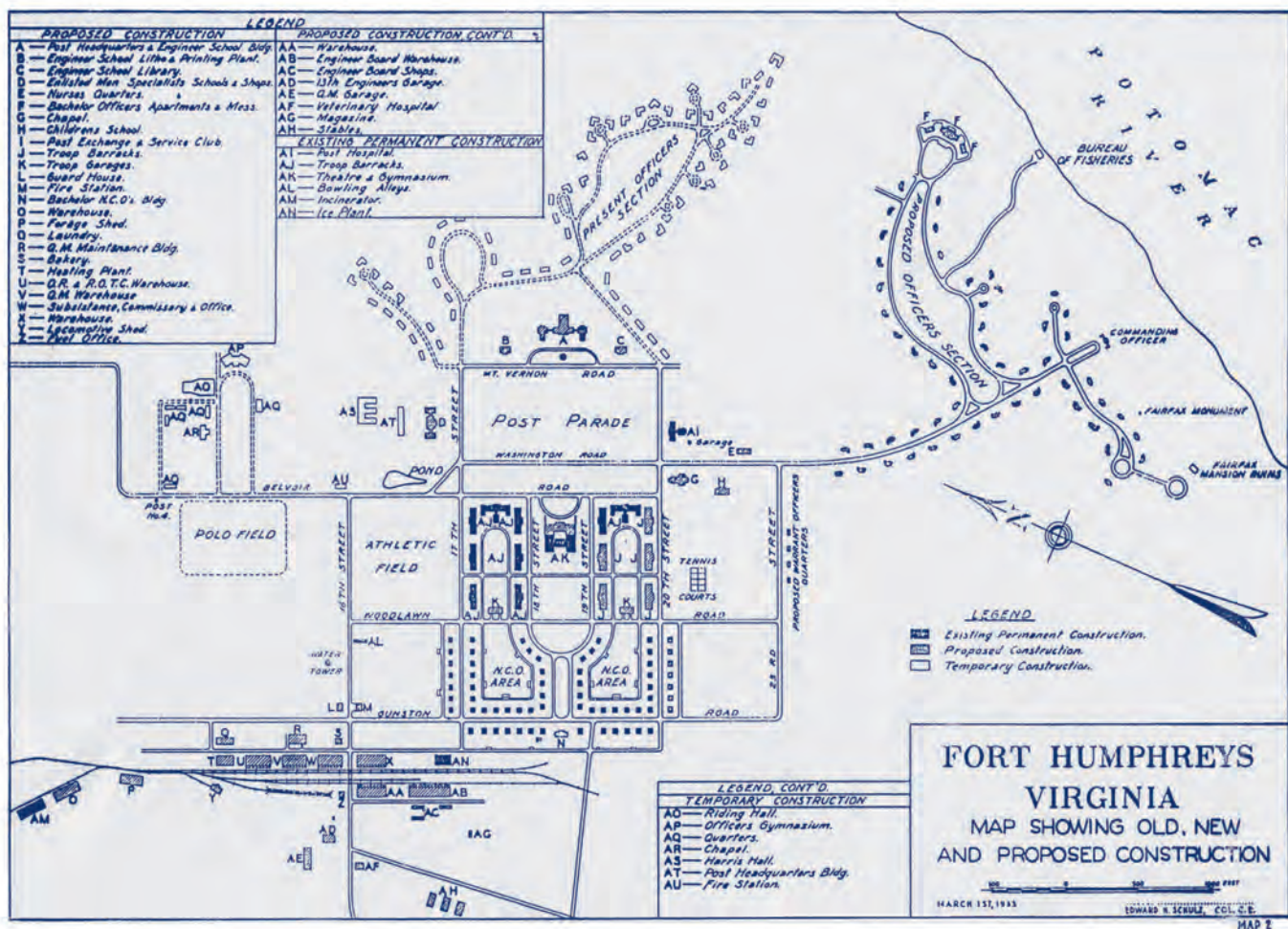
These new planning concepts were implemented at installations nation-wide, including Fort Humphreys. The elaborate new layout for Fort Humphreys called for separate functional areas united in a formal plan. Administrative and instructional buildings were arranged along one side of the parade ground, with barracks, theater, gymnasium, post exchange, and post office in two squares on the opposite side of the parade ground. Non-commissioned officer housing was arranged in two blocks behind the barracks area, while the officers' housing was placed along a picturesque, curving road in a park-like setting. Warehouses and support buildings were located at the edge of the new post plan.

Another development at the post during the inter-war period was a renewed interest in the history of the area, particularly of William Fairfax's Belvoir plantation. During the 1920s, two lieutenants at the post, Karrick and Kohloss, surveyed and described the ruins of the old Fairfax mansion and attempted to reconstruct its

historic appearance and layout. At about the same time, Fairfax Harrison, a locally-prominent historian and president of the Southern Railroad, sponsored the construction of the monument obelisk that today marks the graves of William Fairfax and his wife. In 1931, Colonel Edward H. Schulz, commanding officer of Fort Humphreys, initiated the first archeological project at the plantation ruins. Vegetation was cleared, and excavation revealed the foundations of the large mansion, its outbuildings, and the outline of an elaborate walled flower garden with two garden houses that overlooked the Potomac River from the 100-foot bluff.

While Schulz' excavation techniques were somewhat primitive by modern standards, the archeological project generated a tremendous amount of public interest. There was some talk of reconstructing the manor house to serve as the commanding officer's quarters, and, in 1935, the name of the installation was changed from Fort Humphreys to Fort Belvoir. It is said that the name change occurred after President Franklin D. Roosevelt's visit to neighboring Gunston Hall, whose owner informed the president of the post's historic past.





Post History Office, Fort Belvoir

*The First Day In Camp*  
 Rode to Camp on the Humphreys River.  
 Arrived at Camp.  
 Uniform too Large.  
 Saw Shower Baths, but It Isn't Saturday Night.  
 Received rifle plus ten pounds of grease.  
 Cleaned same.  
 When do we eat?  
 How was that Hash made?  
 Cleaned rifle some more.  
 Went to Service Club.  
 Forgot Barracks number.  
 Taps,  
 Try my bunk!  
 - From the Sketching Board, ROTC Engineer Camp,  
 Camp A.A. Humphreys, Va. 1921

FACING PAGE: Aerial view of Fort Humphreys, 1932.

ABOVE: Fort Humphreys Virginia map showing old and new proposed construction.





## WORLD WAR II PERIOD: 1940 – 1945

The outbreak of World War II in Europe in 1939 and Japanese expansion in Asia and the Pacific motivated the United States government to begin preparing for possible involvement in the expanding world conflict. As in World War I, Army engineers would be needed to provide critical support to Allied forces by building roads and bridges, clearing obstacles, providing maps, and engineering demolitions. To prepare engineers adequately for their wartime role, Fort Belvoir once again became one of the Army's primary engineer training sites.

Fort Belvoir again expanded. To accommodate the influx of draftees after 1940, an additional 3,000 acres north of U.S. Route 1 were acquired to make room for the new Engineer Replacement Training Center (ERTC). As in the past, numerous local families were displaced from their small farms by this acquisition. It was during this phase of Belvoir's expansion that the small historic African-American community at Woodlawn disintegrated. The Woodlawn Methodist Church and many residents moved north to the community of Gum Springs along U.S. Route 1. The new Army housing complex known as Young Village was constructed on the site where the community's school, church and Odd Fellows Hall had stood.

In March 1941, the ERTC facility began to provide basic military engineer training to draftees. Originally, the ERTC



A 1942 recruiting poster designed by Jes Wilhelm Schlaikjer illustrating the dual role of Army engineers in combat: to block the enemy and to "clear the way."

Post History Office, Fort Belvoir

program was designed as a 12-week course, but its duration was shortened to eight weeks early in 1942, when the demand for troops escalated dramatically after Pearl Harbor. A similar curriculum was offered at the ERTCs at Fort Leonard Wood in Missouri and later at Camp Abbot in Oregon. Recruits were schooled in reconnaissance, unit coordination, road and obstacle construction, and demolition. After mid-1942, Belvoir began training engineer specialists in operating construction machinery, carpentry, drafting, and surveying. Instruction also was offered for such non-engineering specialties as truck driving, cooking, and baking. As the

war progressed and new weapons were developed, specialized courses in weapons operation were added to the curriculum. Engineers learned about tanks and their uses, flamethrowers, and anti-aircraft guns. By the end of the war in 1945, the ERTC at Fort Belvoir had trained roughly 147,000 engineer troops.

One of the most innovative troop training strategies developed during World War II was the obstacle course, invented by Brig. Gen. William Hoge, who later commanded the Engineer School (1947-48). A Fort Belvoir invention, the course was designed to teach recruits how to handle themselves and their equipment in simulated field conditions. Belvoir's obstacle course incorporated





Post History Office, Fort Belvoir

walls to climb over, hurdles to jump over, barbed wire to crawl under, ditches to swing over, and pipes to crawl through. The course was put into operation at the ERTC during the spring of 1941, and was replaced in November 1941 with a more rigorous one designed by Major Lewis Prentiss. Proven to be a highly effective training exercise, the obstacle course was adopted at Army installations throughout the country.

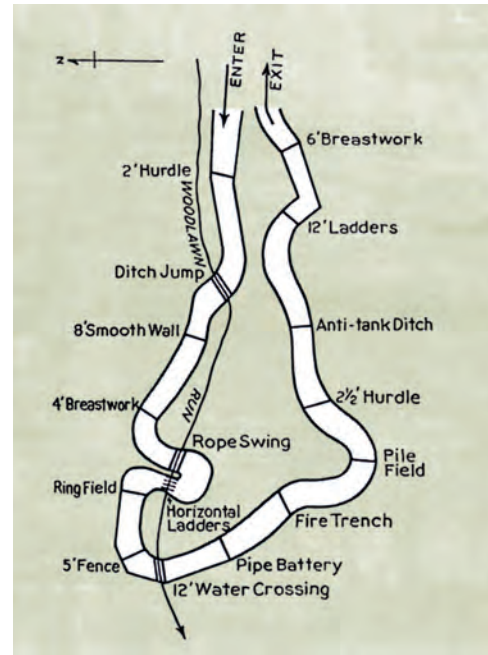
The demands of the global conflict created personnel shortages, and various strategies were developed to overcome these shortfalls. To remedy the shortage of qualified engineer officers during the early years of the war, an Engineer Officer Candidate School (EOCS) was established at Fort Belvoir in July of 1941. During the course of the war, EOCS commissioned over 22,000 new second lieutenants.

The Engineer Board, responsible for the Corps' research and development activities, also grew dramatically during the war years. The Engineer Board conducted most of its testing and development at the Engineer Proving Ground (EPG), acquired in 1940. The EPG was later renamed the Fort Belvoir North Area in 1963. In 1942, the organization moved from its original location off the Parade Ground to the southern end of Gunston Road. In 1947, the Engineer Board changed its name to the Engineer Research and Development Laboratories (ERDL) to more accurately convey its mission. The latest title was the U.S. Army Research Development and Engineering Center.

World War II also brought women into the Armed Forces on a regular basis for the first time in American history.

The first detachment of Women's Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC) personnel arrived at Fort Belvoir in March 1943. Members of the WAAC communications, clerical, and service platoons worked as post office clerks, telephone operators, stenographers and typists, motor vehicle drivers, and mechanics. By April 1943, the 50th Headquarters Company WAAC had become a permanent unit at Fort Belvoir.

The social and regulatory dilemmas created by the presence of female military personnel at Fort Belvoir



Office of History, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers



National Archives

TOP: Engineers training in bridge building at Fort Belvoir during World War II. CENTER: The layout of the obstacle course introduced at the Engineer Replacement Training Center during the spring of 1941. Note that the course crosses Woodlawn Run several times in order to incorporate various types of water obstacles. BOTTOM: Soldiers training on the new obstacle course, July 1941.





were common topics of discussion in the two installation newspapers, *The Castle* and *The Duckboard: Breezy Bits from Belvoir Barracks*.

Belvoir's military personnel soon learned, for example, that female Warrant Officers, WAAC officers, and Army nurses were "entitled to the same privileges with reference to salutes as customarily enjoyed and prescribed for commissioned officers."

Marriages between base personnel were reported under such headlines as "Come hell or high water, cupid marches on at Belvoir."



The massive influx of inductees at Fort Belvoir prompted another wave of temporary construction at the post during World War II. Housing was constructed for approximately 24,000 enlisted men and officers. Like the temporary structures built during World War I, the World War II-era, wood-frame buildings were designed to be simple and inexpensive to construct. Unlike the World War I facilities, however, these newer structures incorporated such improvements as indoor plumbing, central heating, and electricity. These temporary buildings were constructed at U.S. Army installations throughout the country as the country mobilized for war.

As before, maintaining troop morale throughout the war years became just as important as technical training. The post offered numerous recreational outlets, from dances and art classes to amateur theatrical productions and a library. Fort Belvoir's two weekly newspapers devoted more space to the social aspects of life at

## WAACS Are Ladies Says Army Brass

The Army and the Navy, acting to end complications in rules of courtesy which have arisen since they acquired the Women Army Auxiliary Corps declared that a WAAC and a WAVE are first and at all times, except on strictly military occasions, ladies, and should be treated as such by service-men and civilians alike...

The Army said that while Army courtesy rules technically apply at all times, it hoped that its officers and men were gentlemen. "When a WAAC and a man of higher rank come to a door, the WAAC, showing Army courtesy, should pause to let the man proceed," the Army said. "But, of course, the man, being a gentleman, would motion the WAAC to precede him."

— *The Castle*, commenting on rules of etiquette, June 1943

Belvoir than they did to military news. Their pages carried barracks gossip; news of team sporting events; notices about dances; advice on etiquette; cartoons and jokes; helpful hints for surviving Army life; reports on visiting officials, dignitaries, and movie stars; and capsule





Photos on this page: Post History Office, Fort Belvoir



biographies of officers and enlisted men. Not until late in the war did these publications concentrate on hard military news.

At the end of World War II in 1945, Fort Belvoir once again became a demobilization center with facilities designed to ease the transition between military and civilian life. However, the relative calm of the post-war years was short-lived.



*TOP: Panorama of the Engineer Replacement Training Center (ERTC) in 1942. CENTER: Drafting class at the Replacement Training Center during World War II. BOTTOM: Engineer Board testing a floating bridge with a light tank, December 1941.*





## COLD WAR PERIOD: 1946 – 1989



Post History Office, Fort Belvoir

*The SM-1 Nuclear Plant was the first nuclear plant to be designed as a training facility for military personnel. It was in operation from 1957 to 1973.*

Following World War II, the engineer training role at Fort Belvoir waxed and waned according to wartime needs. In 1945, both the Engineer Replacement Training Center and the Engineer Officer Candidate School were phased out; however, both programs were reactivated in the 1950s during the Korean Conflict, and again in the 1960s with the Vietnam build-up. Both conflicts required a reassessment of the installation's training function and methods, and a revamping of its physical plant.

For example, by 1950, many World War II temporary barracks had been adapted for other uses. When new enlistees and draftees arrived on the post, they had to be housed in six-man tents while the barracks buildings were reconverted back to their original function. The

types of training offered also reflected shifts in warfare technology and philosophy; a Close Combat Range was installed on the peninsula south of the village of Accotink, and on North Post, a Chemical/Biological/Radiological School was instituted.

In general, emphasis at Fort Belvoir in the 1950s began shifting from training to research and development. Throughout the decade, the Engineer Research and Development Laboratories (ERDL) were involved in experimentation with a wide range of technical military applications. The laboratories developed and tested new techniques for electrical power generation; camouflage and deception; methods of handling materials and fuel; bridging, and mine detection. They experimented with portable map copying machines, fungicides for use in



tropical environments, and heavy earth-moving equipment. The Castle reported on ERDL's development of pre-fabricated buildings for use in Arctic environments, and the subsequent testing of these structures in Greenland and Canada. During the 1960s, the primary focus of research at Fort Belvoir shifted to the development of Army vehicles.

Perhaps no structure on the post illustrated more graphically Fort Belvoir's research and development phase than the SM-1 (Stationary, Medium Power, First Prototype) Nuclear Plant. This facility was developed to generate electricity for commercial use, and to cut back the Department of Defense's dependency on fossil fuels. The SM-1 Plant, which represented the first national nuclear training facility for military personnel, became operational in 1957 and remained in operation until its de-commissioning in 1973.

The innovative initiatives pursued at Fort Belvoir during the post-war period were also illustrated in its residential architecture. In 1948, the well-known architectural firm of Albert Kahn & Associates designed the Thermo-Con House. This house form was intended to provide a prototype for low-cost, mass-produced housing. The construction of the house employed an innovative technique that used chemically-treated concrete that rose from its foundation like bread rising in a pan. Another major residential project during the 1970s was the McRee Barracks, a complex of mid-rise buildings constructed in 1975 to house 1,200 single enlisted Soldiers.

Fort Belvoir's mission expanded in other directions between 1950 and 1980. The post began playing host to a variety of organizations, including the DeWitt Army Hospital, the Defense Systems Management College (DSMC), and the Defense Mapping School (DMS). The DeWitt Hospital, constructed in 1957, provided regional healthcare services. DSMC, founded in 1971, was a graduate-level institution that offered advanced courses of study in weapon systems acquisition management for both military personnel and civilians. DMS, a component of the Defense Mapping Agency (now the National Geospatial-Intelligence



*TOP: The U.S. Army Engineer School was officially transferred to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri on June 1, 1988. At the same ceremony, the Military District of Washington (MDW) assumed operational control of Fort Belvoir.*

Post History Office, Fort Belvoir

School), was established in 1972 to provide instruction in tactical mapping, land geodetic surveys, and cartographic drafting.

Fort Belvoir's educational role also expanded in new directions. Every summer from the 1950s through the 1970s, the post hosted a group of United States Military Academy (USMA) cadets for a week-long training visit. The course was designed to emphasize military engineering as a field of specialization for career development. Fort Belvoir's USMA Preparatory School also provided a year-long course of academic study to prepare selected enlisted personnel for entry into West Point; until it moved to Fort Monmouth, New Jersey.

Fort Belvoir personnel also became intimately involved with two of the most poignant events of the post-war years. In 1963, engineers from Belvoir surveyed the first temporary

John F. Kennedy gravesite, and designed a prototype eternal flame—all in less than a week. Lt. Gen. Walter K. Wilson recalled the events of that weekend. "...they decided suddenly...[that] they were going to bury him in Arlington. That really put us in the middle of things. We had to get over there and locate the grave, work with the cemetery staff, survey the plot, and recommend its location." After the President's widow requested the installation of an eternal flame, recalled Wilson: "We all got together on the floor of an Engineer School building...where we laid out different things that might work. We designed it right on the floor there, the concept of what would be the eternal flame."

In 1982, divers from the installation's 86th Diving Detachment assisted local disaster management agencies in recovering victims and debris from the frozen Potomac River following the disastrous crash of an Air Florida Boeing 737 jet in the midst of a heavy January snowstorm. The post's 11th Engineer Battalion installed float bridging out to the wreck site. Map personnel from the 30th Engineer Battalion also surveyed the wreck site and produced a series of maps that identified each fragment of baggage or equipment on the river bottom.





Post History Office, Fort Belvoir

Fort Belvoir remained the home of the Engineer School and Center until 1988. Due to a shortage of land for training at Belvoir, the Engineer School relocated to Fort Leonard Wood in Missouri, thus ending the 70-year association between the Engineer School and Belvoir.

Although its role as an engineer training center diminished after the move in 1989, Fort Belvoir continued to fulfill an important and valuable role. The 8,600-acre post was one of the larger installations in the Military District of Washington (MDW), which also included Fort McNair, Fort Myer, Fort Meade, and Fort Hamilton. The post's mission was to provide essential administrative and basic operations support to its tenant organizations. Fort Belvoir housed tenants from all armed forces, as well as such Department of Defense agencies as the Army Management Staff College and the Defense Acquisition University. To carry out this



Post History Office, Fort Belvoir

mission effectively, Fort Belvoir evolved from a traditional military installation to a more broadly based community. It functioned in many ways like a small city, with its own ordinances, land use plan, building codes, utilities, public parks, and academic institutions.





Post History Office, Fort Belvoir



Post History Office, Fort Belvoir



Post History Office, Fort Belvoir

#### FACING PAGE:

*TOP: Tanks and infantry small arms fire support the assault troupes in a river crossing exercise, 1955.*

*BOTTOM: Engineer students building a wooden bridge across a stream at Fort Belvoir, 1963.*

#### THIS PAGE:

*TOP: DeWitt Army Hospital, May, 1957.*

*MIDDLE: McRee Barracks, a housing complex for single enlisted soldiers, was constructed at Fort Belvoir in 1975.*

*BOTTOM: Humphreys Hall, home of the Army Management Staff College.*





www.accotink.org

*Accotink Creek. A trail meanders along the bank.*

## FORT BELVOIR PLANS For the Twenty-First Century

No history of Fort Belvoir would be complete without mentioning the active role that the installation played in preserving its natural and historic resources.

As Fort Belvoir entered the twenty-first century, care was being taken to ensure the continued protection of its resources through compliance with environmental and preservation laws, restoration of damaged environments, adoption of measures to prevent problems in the future, and continually to conserve and preserve its natural and cultural resources. Since the 1930s when archeological investigations were first undertaken at the Belvoir Manor site under the director of Colonel Edward Schulz, the installation maintained a consistent interest in and commitment to its cultural resources. The decade

of the 1970s saw a renewed interest in recovering the remains of Fort Belvoir's eighteenth century heritage. Working in a unique relationship with the Fairfax County Public Schools, the Engineer Museum supported a three-year archeological investigation of the former home of William Fairfax. As a result, the Belvoir Manor site was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1973. Since that time, the installation initiated additional studies to identify its other architectural and archeological resources, so that they could be preserved for the education of future generations.

The Eleanor U. Kennedy Shelter, located near Tulley Gate on U.S. Route 1, exemplified the thoughtful considerations that had been given to the preservation of Fort Belvoir's historic buildings. The homeless shelter was housed in the post's former water filtration plant. Constructed





Courtesy U.S. Army

*Artist's representation of the Missile Defense Agency Headquarters, adjoining Long Parade Field.*

in 1918 as part of the original water supply system for Camp A.A. Humphreys, the structure was one of the installation's earliest permanent buildings. The facility, leased by Fairfax County, provided temporary housing for 52 homeless persons.

Fort Belvoir also displayed a great sensitivity towards the natural resources under its jurisdiction. Beginning in the 1950s, Lt. Col. Jackson Miles Abbott, a conservationist and wildlife artist, observed that timber removal, road construction, stream pollution, and insecticide use were threatening the native bird and animal life on the installation. Abbott noted that 28 species of mammals and more than 228 bird species, ranging from hummingbirds to bald eagles, had been observed on the installation. Thanks to improved habitat management, bird species, whose numbers had been declining in Lt. Col. Abbott's day, reappeared, including ospreys, trumpeter swans, and bald eagles.

More than one-third of the installation's acreage had been preserved as a designated wildlife sanctuary. The Accotink Bay Wildlife Refuge was established in 1980 and included over 1,300 acres of marsh and hardwood forest in the

southwestern corner of the post, in an area formerly used for target ranges. The Jackson Miles Abbott Wetlands Refuge, dedicated in October 1989, incorporated 150 acres of non-tidal wetland and forest near the Woodlawn Village Housing area along Dogue Creek. Both refuge areas were open to the public, and provided miles of trails, including a one-mile handicapped-accessible trail. In 1991, as a result of its efforts to preserve the natural environment, Fort Belvoir received a Natural

Resources Conservation Award from the Department of Defense.

The future stewardship of Fort Belvoir's vast natural and cultural resources was furthered by the development of a comprehensive land management plan. The plan, which earned a national honor award from the American Planning Association in 1991, sought to manage growth in a way that protected and maintained the installation's unique assets, while maintaining the ability of the installation to pursue its assigned military mission.

Beginning in 1989, Fort Belvoir, like many other Department of Defense (DoD) installations, was subject to a series of the new Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) legislations. In subsequent BRAC actions, a number of



Marny Malin



Marny Malin

*TOP: Houses in Park Village, occupied by senior non-commissioned officers. BOTTOM: Houses in Fairfax Village, occupied by company-grade and warrant officers.*





Courtesy U.S. Army

*Artist's representation of the new Fort Belvoir Community Hospital, scheduled to open in 2011. Note the environmental features such as the curved rainwater collector panels on the roofs.*

large agencies, such as the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) and the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) closed their doors in the National Capital Region and re-located to new facilities on Fort Belvoir. Along with the installation's world-wide role following the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001, the post initiated new security requirements for access onto the post. Force protection and anti-terrorism measures continued to play a major role in the operation of the installation. A number of agencies in local leased facilities also began to move to Fort Belvoir for security purposes.

In the latest round of BRAC proceedings, the 2005 legislation eventually directed that Fort Belvoir would receive a net gain of 19,300 personnel on Main Post and its sub-installations. Approximately \$4 billion was spent on building a new Community Hospital and the Missile Defense Agency (MDA) on Main Post, the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) on the Fort Belvoir North Area, two large office buildings at the Mark Center in Alexandria for the Washington Headquarters Service; the Joint Use Intelligence Analysis Facility (JUIAF) at Rivanna Station in

Charlottesville, Virginia; and a host of associated infrastructure improvements on and off post. These improvements included the construction of the final section of the Fairfax County Parkway along the southern border of the North Area.

In 1994, Fort Belvoir partnered with the Fairfax County Public Schools to construct the new Fort Belvoir Elementary School on North Post to replace the three DoD schools currently in operation. The new elementary school soon became the largest such educational facility in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Additionally, the Army selected Fort Belvoir to host the construction of the new National Museum of the United States Army (NMUSA), superintended by the Army Historical Foundation. The museum was projected to be built on a 41-acre preferred site on North Post.

As part of an effort to focus more directly on their primary mission, installations were directed to privatize many of their support services. Gas was first in 1992 with



Courtesy U.S. Army

*The Mark Center in Alexandria, Virginia, near the intersection of I-395 and Seminary Road, the home of the 6,400 Washington Headquarters Service personnel, associated with the 2005 BRAC legislation.*





Courtesy U.S. Army

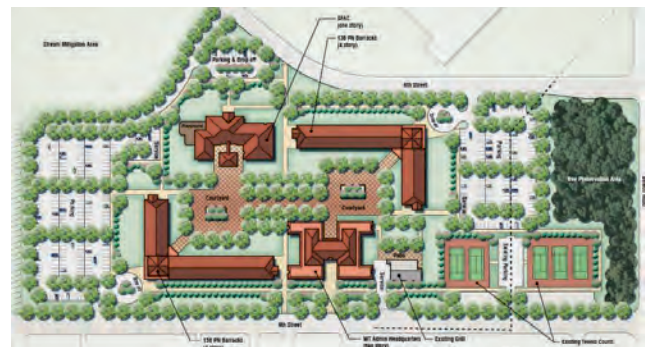
*Artist's representation of the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency at the New Campus East on the Fort Belvoir North Area.*

the switch to Washington Gas. Housing followed in 2001 to Clark Pinnacle under the Residential Communities Initiative (RCI), with the goal of providing quality housing on post comparable to any such dwellings in the surrounding civilian communities. Electrical services were transferred in 2009 to Dominion Virginia Power, and water and sewer services to American Water in 2010. These partnerships afforded Fort Belvoir the opportunity to better support the Army's mission, and received a number of prestigious design and environmental awards such as the 2009 LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design)-NC (New Construction) Platinum Military Project Certification for the new Fairfax Village Community Center by the U.S. Green Building Council.

In 2009, General Ann Dunwoody was appointed to command the Army Material Command (AMC) at Fort Belvoir. She was the first female Army officer to be promoted to 4-star rank.

Fort Belvoir is a part of the Northeast Region of the Army's Installation Management Command (IMCOM). The post's senior command is the Joint Force Headquarters-National Capital Region/Military District of Washington (JFHQ-NCR/MDW).

Today, Fort Belvoir continues its historic transformation, expanding its role as a strategic sustaining base for America's armed forces worldwide. The missions fulfilled here are vital to the success of the goals and objectives of the nation's defense strategy. Meanwhile, the post continues to be the Army's installation of choice for Soldiers, Families, Civilians, and Retirees.



Courtesy U.S. Army



R. Christopher Goodwin & Associates, Inc.



Courtesy U.S. Army

*CENTER: Artist's rendering, aerial view of the Warrior Transition Unit (WTU) barracks and the Warrior and Family Assistance Center (WFAC), adjoining the new Community Hospital.*

*BOTTOM LEFT: Camp Humphreys' original water filtration plant, built in 1918, was converted into the Eleanor U. Kennedy Shelter for the Homeless in 1989.*

*BOTTOM RIGHT: Artist's rendering of the JUIAF building at Rivanna Station.*





## MODERN ACTIVITIES AT FORT BELVOIR



All photos this page by Manny Malin

*TOP: Color Guards in period uniforms at the annual Army Birthday/Flag Day ceremony, 2008.*

*RIGHT: The annual Oktoberfest 2008, celebrating the German-American partnership.*

*LEFT: A Fort Belvoir Garrison Headquarters Battalion formation run, 2010.*





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Directorate of Public Works, Fort Belvoir, Virginia  
 Paciulli, Simmons & Associates, Inc., Reston, Virginia  
 History Office, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Fort Belvoir  
 Directorate of Public Affairs and Installation  
 Historian, Fort Belvoir  
 R. Christopher Goodwin & Associates, Inc.  
 Heritage Resources Branch, Fairfax County Office of  
 Comprehensive Planning, Falls Church, Virginia  
 Woodlawn United Methodist Church  
 Woodlawn Friends' Meeting House  
 Library of Congress, Geography and Maps Division,  
 Washington, D.C.  
 National Archives, Cartographic and Still Photos  
 Divisions, College Park, Maryland  
 Virginiana Room, Fairfax County Public Library,  
 Fairfax, Virginia  
 Multimedia and Visual Information Service Center,  
 Fort Belvoir

### RELATED WEBSITE LINKS:

[www.belvoir.army.mil](http://www.belvoir.army.mil)  
[www.belvoirnewvision.com](http://www.belvoirnewvision.com)  
[www.belvoirhousinghistory.com](http://www.belvoirhousinghistory.com)  
[www.fairfaxcounty.gov](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov)  
[www.armyhistory.org](http://www.armyhistory.org)  
[www.accotink.org](http://www.accotink.org)

*ABOVE: Jackson Miles Abbott, a conservationist and wildlife artist, was a lieutenant colonel at Fort Belvoir in the 1940s. His oil painting entitled American Eiders was featured on a United States Postage Stamp.*





JUNE 2010

