

FORT KNOX CANTONMENT HISTORIC DISTRICT

Established in 1918, as the United States entered the first World War, Camp Knox was named for General Henry Knox, Chief of Artillery in the Revolutionary War and first Secretary of War. The U.S. War Department constructed the Field Artillery Brigade Firing Center Cantonment as a sub-post to Camp Zachary Taylor south of Louisville, around the agricultural community of Stithton, Kentucky, and occupied some of the older houses in town. Within months, the war came to an end, thus plans for the installation were reduced. By 1921, Camp Knox became an active training center for the National Guard, the Citizens' Military Training Camp (CMTC), and the Reserve Officer Training Camp (ROTC). By 1922, it was the second-largest training center in the country; however, the War Department moved the artillery officers' school to Fort Still, Oklahoma and closed the post as a permanent installation.



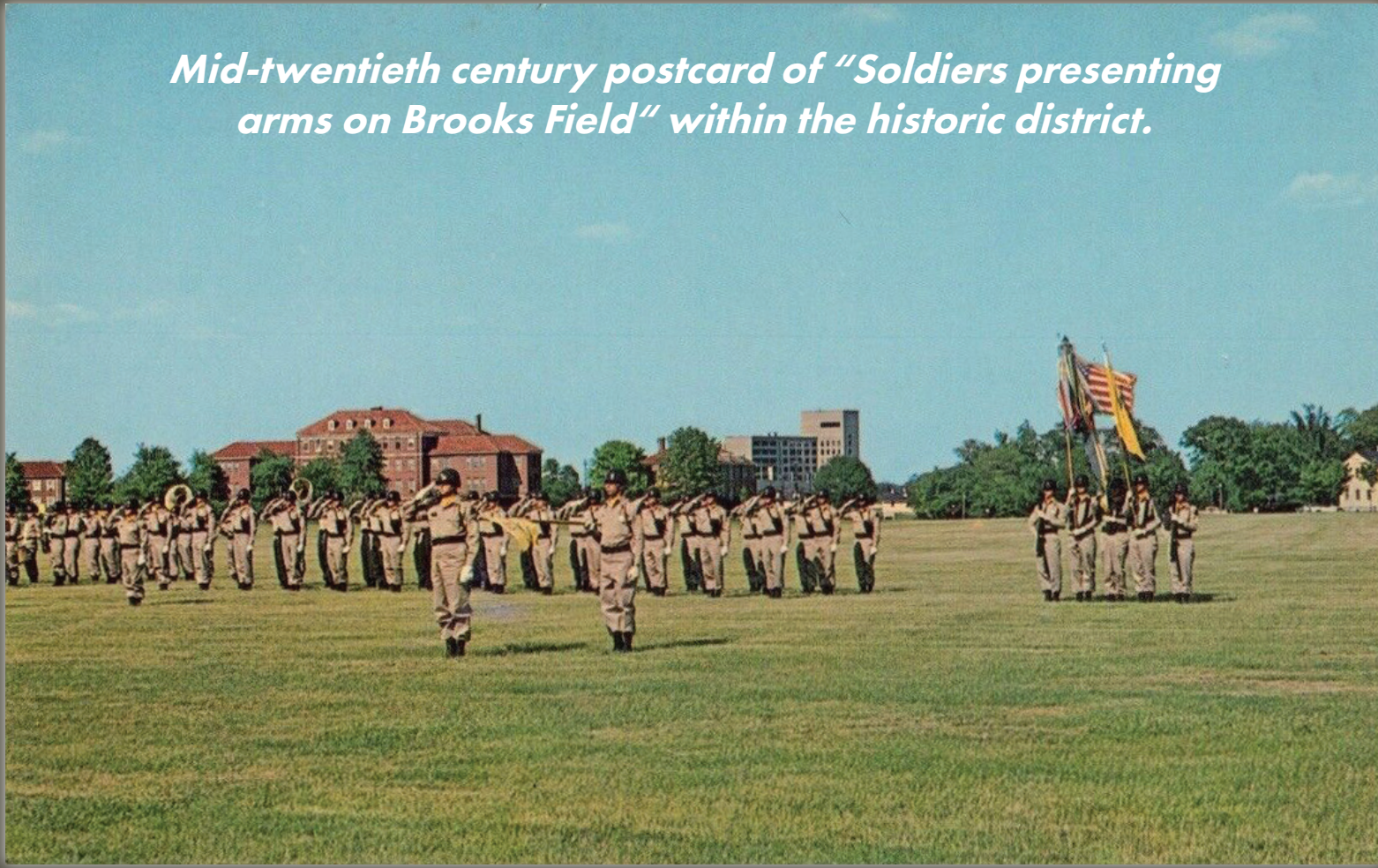
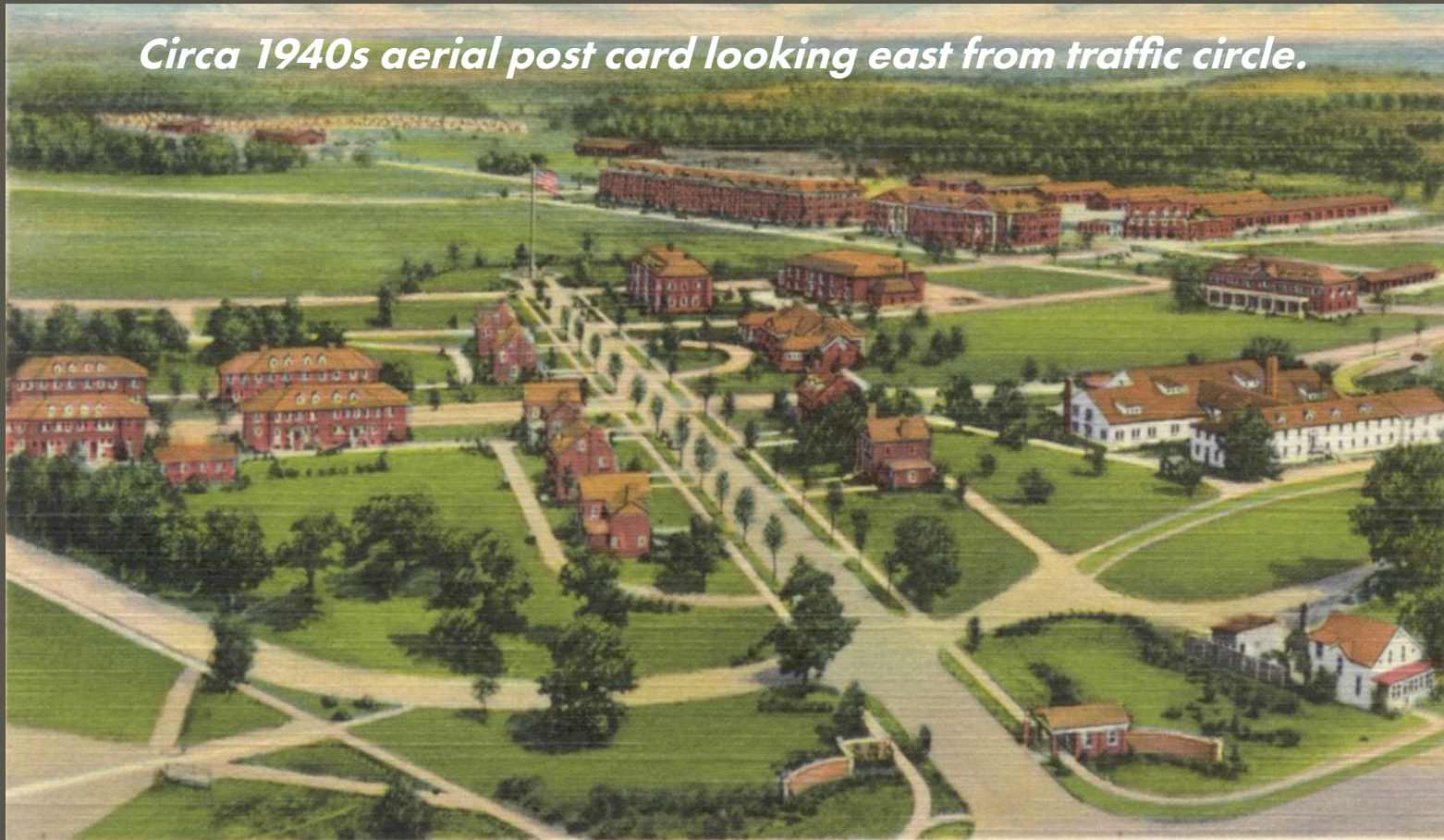
1920s postcard of "The Colors" tinted by "C. T. American Art Colored." F. N. Kirkpatrick of Indianapolis photographed Camp Knox from 1918 through the 1930s and opened a souvenir shop in the historic district.

In 1995, Fort Knox Cantonment Historic District was determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places with 180 contributing resources designed in the Art Deco, Georgian Revival, Federal Revival, and Modern Movement styles. Fort Knox gained significance because it embodies distinctive characteristics of permanent military architecture and engineering constructed between the United States' involvement in World War I (1917-1918) and World War II (1941-1945). It was also the primary site for the development, training, and practice of mechanized warfare in the 1930s as well as armored warfare in the 1940s. The War Department became the U.S. Army in 1947.

After the Army reduced forces, the post was closed as a permanent installation in 1922. In 1925, the U.S. designated 22,660 of its 31,390 acres as the Camp Henry Knox National Forest, while the military retained unrestricted use and trained civilians and soldiers from the Fifth Corps Area, the National Guard, and CMTC. In April 1928, the executive order that established the forest was rescinded and repairs to quarters began for the arrival of the Third Field Artillery to the post. During this period, a strong military police presence was established as the surrounding towns complained of dances, shootouts, and illegal activity on and off the post, including the use and bootlegging of alcohol during Prohibition (1920-1932).

In 1930 and 1931, advances in automobiles and air travel prompted the War Department to create the Mechanized Cavalry, which headquartered at Camp Knox. The following year, Congress redesignated the camp as a permanent garrison, thus renaming it Fort Knox. As part of a nationwide program during the Great Depression (1929-1939), the Quartermaster Corps (now the Army Corps of Engineers) constructed new housing and support facilities around Brooks Parade Field to support the Mechanized Cavalry. The Corps followed standardized plans, while applying the Georgian Revival architectural style favored in much of Kentucky at the time. By the end of the decade, around 1,000 buildings including pre-1918 structures stood on the base.

As tensions mounted in Europe, the War Department created another new command in 1940. Headquartered at Fort Knox, the Armored Force required rapid expansion to accommodate the Armored Force Replacement Training Center, later renamed the Armored Replacement Training Center (ARTC). By August of 1943, the base tripled in acreage, while the Corps built over 2,900 buildings, many of which still stand today though they were intended to be temporary. During and after World War II, Armored Force (later known as Armored Center) soldiers trained in various arms, big tank guns, tank driving and maintenance, chemical warfare, and many other subjects. By the late 1960s, more than one million trainees passed through ARTC as the U.S. engaged in Cold, Hot, and Proxy wars.



1932 panoramic view northeast of the historic district from Water Tower 1. That year, Congress redesignated the camp as a permanent garrison and renamed it Fort Knox. The historic district and installation at large later became a popular setting in Hollywood films.



FORT KNOX EST. 1918
HERITAGE TRAIL

