

In August 1918, construction officially began for facilities at Camp Knox, Kentucky. After World War I and reductions in Army numbers, Camp Knox served as a training center for various military units and civilian support groups until 1932. In that year Congress designated Camp Knox a permanent garrison and officially changed its name to Fort Knox.



Fort Knox History

CAMP KNOX

1918-1931

The Cultural Resources Office invites you to share any information or images you may have about the time period when Fort Knox was known as Camp Knox.

Fort Knox Cultural Resources Office
Environmental Management Division

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The Visitors House was constructed at Camp Knox in 1919 at the cost of \$50,000.

This building is among the last few buildings at Fort Knox to date from the WW1 era. It is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places

Background Image: Tents at the Camp Knox cantonment in West Point, Kentucky, ca. 1918.



Soldiers at Camp Knox in the 1920s
Fort Knox Cultural Resources Collection

CAMP KNOX

America's involvement in World War I made it necessary to establish new military installations. In April 1918 the War Department looked to the area of West Point, Kentucky to establish a permanent artillery camp. According to the Louisville Courier, "The West Point range would become the artillery training center of the army."



Major W. H. Radcliffe, Oct 1918.

On April 6, 1918, the first field artillery units arrived at West Point. Additional units making up the Field Artillery Brigade of the 84th Division arrived the following month. With the number of troops arriving, it was not long before the Army began looking for additional space. That summer the Army leased 20,000 acres of property in the area of Stithton, Kentucky, a small farming community in Hardin County. Stithton was desired for its close proximity to the railroad and for its higher elevation. Under Major W. H. Radcliffe, Constructing Quartermaster at Camp Knox, construction of buildings began in August of 1918. The "tented" camp at West Point would temporarily remain while permanent construction occurred in Stithton.

The land at Stithton was soon acquisitioned by the Army and more land was acquired from Bullitt and Meade Counties. Many of the houses in the town of Stithton were utilized for the Army's purposes. Modest Victorian architecture once occupied by Stithton residents became homes used by Army officers and their families. Barracks and warehouses were built to accommodate and support the growing population of Soldiers arriving by train. Standardized plans were used to build most of these World War I mobilization buildings and identical buildings could be found on most other installations around the country. In this era and locality of the country, horse drawn equipment was still regularly used along with automobiles. It was World War One and Camp Henry Knox had come into existence as a permanent post for the United States Army.

In September 1918 it was decided to permanently move the artillery camp in West Point to Stithton. The following month the Camp Knox News was founded as the post's first newspaper. That October, Camp Knox's Godman Field became the first airfield in Kentucky when it was built for the 29th Aero Squadron. On November 11, 1918, America celebrated the armistice that ended World War I and construction at Stithton slowed down dramatically. Later that month the first troops were transferred from West Point. Near the end of December, most of the troops there had been moved to the permanent camp at Stithton and the maximum number of troops on post reached a high of 9,000. Troops returning from overseas were brought to Camp Knox to be discharged from the service over the next year. Much of their equipment was turned in and stored in the warehouses that still remain at Fort Knox.

The Army's force was reduced in the early 1920s and it was deemed necessary to close the post as a permanent installation in 1922. Although closed as a permanent installation, Camp Knox remained an active training center for the Army. Camp Knox was used by the 5th Corps Area for Reserve Officer training, the National Guard, and Citizen's Military Training Camps (CMTC). For a brief time, during 1925 to 1928, the area was designated as "Camp Henry Knox National Forest" until two infantry companies were assigned to the post in 1928. In the following year the War Department created the mechanized force. Upon the recommendation of Lt. Col. Adna R. Chaffee Jr. and Col. Daniel Van Voorhis, Camp Knox was chosen to be the new headquarters for the Mechanized Cavalry in 1931. The size and terrain of Camp Knox made this a suitable area for such training.



CMTC Candidates arriving at Camp Knox.
From the CMTC 1923 yearbook, *The Mess Kit*.

On January 1, 1932, Camp Knox was made a permanent installation once again and from then on has been known as Fort Knox. Two weeks later the 1st Cavalry Regiment, the Army's oldest mounted unit, arrived at Fort Knox and exchanged its horses for armored combat cars. In the years following the establishment of Camp Knox, Fort Knox has played a proud role as America's "Home of the Armor and Cavalry."