



Bergen County, Where America Begins

REMEMBERING CAMP MERRITT by John Spring

Cresskill Historian and BCHS President 1983 - 86

With America's entry into the First World War, the United States Army needed an embarkation camp near Hoboken where troops could be assembled for ship transport to France. In June 1917, a board of officers appointed by the War Department inspected several sites in New Jersey. The two sites with the most advantages were the Phelps estate between Teaneck and Englewood, the other being near Cresskill. The board recommended the latter site on July 12 and it was approved. The selection was made, in part because, "the location afforded the speedier and less expensive construction for sewer and water systems, and because the land could be obtained with less expense to the Government." This site was designated as Camp Merritt, named after Major General Wesley Merritt of Civil and Spanish-American War fame. Actual clearing of the location was begun August 20, 1917.



The camp was located in Bergen County, New Jersey with its center at the intersection of Madison Avenue and Knickerbocker Road, occupying 770 acres on the ridge between the West Shore and Erie Railroads with its borders overlapping the towns of Dumont, Cresskill, Bergenfield and Tenafly. This site would also allow troops to be carried by boat from the Alpine Ferry to transatlantic steamers at the Port of Hoboken. MacArthur Brothers Company received a \$5,000,000 construction contract. Work began in September 1917, using materials brought by railroad. During the camp's construction, the workers were housed in tents set up at the site of an old horse-racing track in Demarest where, today, the athletic fields of the Northern Valley High School are located. A total of 1,302 buildings were built to house and train 50,000 men at a time including 611 two-story wooden barracks, capable of quartering sixty-six each; 189 buildings 39 warehouses; 15 post offices 4 fire stations; 5 garages; 93 hospitals and 94 auxiliary buildings,

(which included 7 tailor shops, a 24 –chair barber, a motor repair shop, a refrigerator plant, and a theater capable of seating 2,500 people). Camp Merritt also required the construction of 14 miles of paved roads, (including among which were, for years, the only concrete roads in the vicinity) a mile-long railroad spur connecting the West Shore Railroad to camp warehouses; eleven miles of water lines from the Hackensack Water Company's plant at Oradell; 267 miles of electric wire, requiring 1,029 electric poles, 235 street lamps; two large power plants to supply heat to 126,400 square feet of radiators and a sewage disposal plant connected to 12.5 miles of pipe. Order was maintained by a force of 300 military policemen.

Efforts were made to provide exercise and recreation facilities at the camp. There were regular athletic contests on Wednesday nights. It was the Bakers and Cooks team that won the trophy that was offered. The contests that were held were medicine ball, flag relay, tug-of-war, push ball and jumping. A basketball league was in regular operation at the camp and competition was fierce for its day. Because of its proximity to New York City, camp commanders were able to get famous athletes such as Jack Dempsey to fight exhibitions for the delight of the troops. A big occasion was when “nine or ten big truck loads, including the band” were taken into New York City’s Polo Grounds where they were paraded and feted, then watched a double-header between the World Series-bound Boston Red Sox and the New York Yankees.



MERRITT HALL

Mrs. Wesley Merritt, widow of the Major-General, after whom the camp was named, had long wanted to do something for the enlisted men in the army. In the fall of 1917, she provided \$10,000, which Major-General D.C. Shanks proposed to use to adapt a building near the center of the camp into a club for the common soldier. Using experience at other camps in its renovation, Merritt Hall was turned into, what Shanks called, “the finest soldiers club in America”. It was opened on January 30, 1918 with Colonel Theodore Roosevelt delivering the dedication



address.

Everything was done to make soldiers relaxed and comfortable in Merritt Hall. The entrance lobby was furnished with ferns and poinsettias. The reading rooms were liberally supplied with wicker chairs, reading tables and lamps. The camp librarians and officers encouraged soldiers to read and allowed soldiers being shipped out to take books for reading at sea.

But the central attraction of Merritt Hall was the cafeteria with its own dishwashing machines, ice chests, a fine marble soda fountain and its own machine for carbonating water. The popularity of the food and drink dispensary is told in the almost unbelievable figures for food and drink consumption, "four hundred and fifty dozen eggs for breakfast on an average day between 7:30 and 10:00 am". Nine thousand apples, 400 large crullers, 900 pies and 500 gallons of ice cream were an average day's consumption in Merritt Hall. All this was in addition to the "regular"- and supposedly adequate - food served in the mess halls every day. Near the cafeteria was a large room with 18 tables for "pocket billiards" and other games. There were also Victrolas and coin-operated pianos for the soldiers to use in providing their own music and entertainment.

One soldier, who had complained earlier about the muddiness and flat terrain at Fort Dix, said in a letter to his wife. "This is a fine Camp with lots of walks and nice roads. His next letter simply says, "This is the finest camp you ever saw" A midwesterner who later wrote a book about his experiences here in the states, on board ship and later overseas during the war, recorded this account of his time in Camp Merritt.

"About three in the afternoon of May 3,(1918), we arrived at Cresskill station and at once shouldered our packs for the brief march to Camp Merritt near Tenafly, New Jersey where we were to wait for our sailing orders. We were extremely fortunate in being sent there, for Camp Merritt was probably the most comfortable camp in the United States. The barracks were built in two stories, stained on the outside,(which gave them an air of elegance quite unusual for the army), and were remarkably light and airy. The mess was excellent - But the thing which chiefly distinguished this camp was the extraordinary number, of places of recreation and the lavish way in which money had been spent to make things as cheerful and homelike as possible for the men in the last few days they were to spend in their native land. Besides the enormous structures of the Y.M.C.A. and Knights of Columbus which extended to all men in uniform the social

privileges familiar to us at Oglethorpe, the general public had provided at Merritt many other agencies of relaxation and amusement quite peculiar to the camp. As Merritt was the nearest encampment to New York City, it had naturally come



to be regarded as New York's own, and a proper object of attention for all the benevolent attentions of the great metropolis. On the skirts of the camp was the Hostess House, a homelike place where men who could not get passes might meet their relatives. Within the camp was Merritt Hall, a vast, low structure, finished attractively inside, and looking something like the lobby, grill, parlors and writing rooms of a great hotel. With a library thrown in for good measure. One whole wing was in charge of the American Library Association. Here there were tables for writing, great easy chairs and settees, plants, vases of flowers, a splendid fireplace and, in low shelves about the walls, thousands of books, provided gratis for the soldier's use. He was allowed to take them out to read in camp, and might even carry away a reasonable number with him to France”.

The enlisted men at Camp Merritt got a chance to display their talent and to raise money for the camp when they wrote, directed and produced a show in New York City for four weeks in November 1919. The show did not uncover a George M. Cohan or an Irving Berlin, but it was attended by Henry Ford, David Belasco and Al Jolson and produced a profit of \$34,096 to be used to benefit the enlisted men at the camp.

The support given to Camp Merritt by the County communities was recognized by the men from the camp in 1919. One sergeant proposed that something be done to thank the County community for their hospitality. A committee was set up, contributions received and medals struck, some 37,674 of them. They were then distributed by servicemen to schoolchildren in all 65 towns in Bergen County.

About the Photos, in the order they appear.

1. Airplane view of Camp Merritt 1919, from the pamphlet (see link below).

2. Postcard, the Enlisted Men's Club of Camp Merritt, NJ. Supervised by Army Chaplains.

3. Postcard, Ambulances, USA Base Hospital

4. Postcard, Camp Merritt Inn, Camp Merritt, NJ

5. Postcard, Colored Victory Boys, Camp Merritt, NJ

6. Postcard, the Enlisted Men's Club of Camp Merritt, NJ. Supervised by Army Chaplains.

7. Postcard, Picket No. 3, Main Entrance and YWCA Hostess House,



An plane view of Camp Merritt 1919
THIS INDICATES LOCATION OF BASE CAMP

Camp Merritt, NJ

8. Postcard, Camp Merritt Monument The Camp Merritt Monument on Knickerbocker and Madison in Cresskill marks the center of Camp Merritt, the largest embarkation camp in the US during WWI. It covered 770 acres of Bergenfield, Cresskill, Demarest, Dumont, and Tenafly. More than a million servicemen passed through the site.

578,566 went overseas and 509,515 returned.

About half of the troops left from Alpine Landing by ferry and half left by train for Hoboken where they boarded ships for overseas.

Photo by Charles Szeglin



9. Postcard, WARD 32, USA Base Hospital, Camp Merritt, NJ



AMBULANCES, U. S. A. Base Hospital, Camp Merritt, N. J.



Camp Merritt Inn, Camp Merritt, N. J.



Colored Victory Boys, Camp Merritt, N. J.

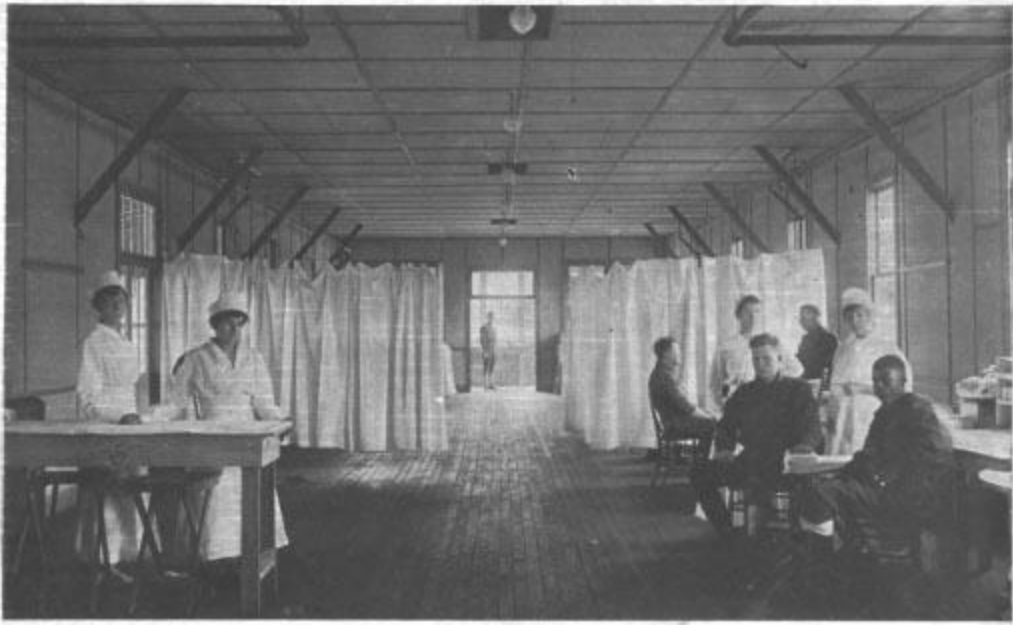


Merritt Hall, the Enlisted Men's Club of Camp Merritt, N. J.
Supervised by Army Chaplains.



Picket No. 3. Main Entrance and Y. W. C. A. Hostess House, Camp Merritt, N. J.





WARD 32, U. S. A. Base Hospital, Camp Merritt, N. J.

CAMP MERRITT, New Jersey September 1917 - January 1920

Scanned from a publication from 1924 - written for the Dedication of the Monument in Cresskill. (No author listed or page missing). Phamplet from the collections of BCHS president, Bob Griffin.

WESLEY MERRITT

CAMP MERRITT was named in honor of the late Major General Wesley Merritt, who graduated at West Point in 1860. His conspicuous service as a Lieutenant and Captain of Cavalry led to his promotion as Brigadier General of volunteers in June 1863. In this grade, he participated in the Battle of Gettysburg. General Merritt's distinguished service as a Brigade Commander of Cavalry, especially at the Battle of Yellow Tavern and the Battle of Hall's Shop, Virginia, led to his advancement to command of a Cavalry Division. The particularly gallant and meritorious services at the battles of Winchester and Fisher's Hill, and at Five Forks, led to his promotion as Major General of Volunteers, and to duty as Chief of Cavalry of the Military Division of the Southwest, and, later, as Chief of Cavalry of the Military Division of the Gulf, so that he was made a full Major General of Volunteers at the age of twenty-seven years.

General Merritt was one of the outstanding officers developed during the Civil War. At the close of the Civil War, he continued with varied staff and command duty, and was conspicuous by his successes in various Indian campaigns until 1882, when he was appointed Superintendent of the Military Academy at West Point, where he served for five years, and was promoted to Major General of the United States Army in 1895, and was in command of the Department of the East, with headquarters at Governor's Island, at the beginning of the Spanish War, and was placed in command of the Philippine Expedition and captured Manila on August 13, 1898. He was the first Governor-General of the Philippine Islands, but was relieved from that duty for conference duty with the Peace Commission in Paris, France. He was retired by operation of law, in 1900, and died at Natural Bridge, Virginia, December 3, 1910. Age 74.

COMMANDING OFFICERS

COLONEL JOHN R. BENNETT, September 17, 1917, to March 18, 1918.

COLONEL JAMES A. IRONS, March 19, 1918, to June 28, 1918.

LT.-COL. JOSEPH A. MARMON, June 29, 1918, to October 14, 1918. MAJOR

MATTHEW J. GUNNER, October 25, 1918, to November 30, 1918. COLONEL LOUIS S. SORLEY, December 1, 1918, to May 1, 1919.

MAJ.-GEN. CHAS. H. MUIR, May 18, 1919, to May 21, 1919.

MAJ.GEN. GEORGE B. DUNCAN, May 22, 1919, to January 30, 1920.

EXECUTIVE OFFICERS

MAJOR MAX W. SULLIVAN, October 6, 1918, to June 9, 1919

COLONEL GEORGE K. WILSON, Inf., June 10, 1919, to July 16, 1919.
MAJOR MAX W. SULLIVAN, July 17, 1919, to January 1, 1910•

ADJUTANTS

MAJOR JOSEPH A. MARMON, January 15, 1918, to June 15, 1918.
MAJOR MAX W. SULLIVAN, June 16, 1918, to October 5, 1918
MAJOR FRANCIS G. LANDON, October 6, 1918, to November 3, 1918
MAJOR CHAS. C. SMITH, November 4, 1918, to January 15, 1920.

CAMP QUARTERMASTER

COLONEL JOHN FAWCETT, Q. M. C.
INSPECTOR-GENERALS
LT.-COLONEL GEORGE C. SHAW.
LT.-COLONEL EDWARD R. CASSETT.
COLONEL WILLIAM A. CARLETON

CAMP SURGEON

COLONEL JOHN A. CLARK, Medical Corps.

CHAPLAINS

CHAPLAIN JOHN M. THOMAS, December 1918
CHAPLAIN JOHN T. DEBARDELEBEN, May 4, 1919.
CHAPLAIN JOSEPH H. WEBSTER, September 20, 1919

CAMP MERRITT was situated ten miles northwest of New York City, on a ridge midway between the towns of Cresskill and Dumont, Bergen County, New Jersey. It occupied an area of 770 acres, 580 acres of which were occupied by the camp proper. The remaining 190 acres were taken up by warehouses, railway areas, an athletic field, and a truck garden of some 60 acres which produced a large quantity of garden truck for the various messes. The camp was one mile long and three-quarters of a mile wide.

It had the following buildings:

611 two-story, 60-man barracks.
189 lavatories.
165 company kitchens and mess halls.
40 two-story battalion officers, quarters.
4 one-story battalion officers' quarters
17 administration buildings.
15 post exchanges.
39 warehouses.
4 fire station houses.
5 garages.

93 hospital buildings.
94 miscellaneous buildings.
28 welfare organization buildings.
Total 1314

Capacity of the camp:

Officers2,000
Enlisted men 40,000
Total..... 42,000

143 miles of concrete road was constructed in camp, and 3.6 miles outside. Railway spur and trackage about four miles from the West Shore Railway. Water supply from the Hackensack Water Company's supply at New Milford, 2-1/2 miles from camp; 12-inch main throughout the camp, with a total of 19 miles of pipe. A disposal camp at New Milford for sewerage, 2-1/2 miles from camp; two trunk line sewers in camp, to inches, 3 miles in length, with 10 miles of smaller sewers. The septic tank's capacity at New Milford was 725,000 gallons.

260 miles of wiring, 1029 poles, 235 street lamps, 29,000 lamps in buildings, is the story of the electric installation. This was the only camp in which every building was painted. A total of 6,500,000 square feet of surface painted, using 40,000 gallons of paint.

ADMINISTRATION

The personnel necessary to operate the camp at its maximum (at the time of signing the Armistice) was approximately 500 officers, 7,000 enlisted men. The building of the camp started in August 1917, the Cost approximating \$11,000,000.

The first troops to arrive were Company F, 22nd Infantry, 65 men all told, on August 30, '1917. The 49th Infantry arrived September 17, 1917, strength 2,010 all told. As there were no buildings then ready,. these troops were quartered under canvas, about a mile north of the camp on the old race-track.

The first troops to arrive for overseas duty were the 501st, the 502nd, the 503rd, and the 504th Battalions of Engineers, which arrived between October 1 and 8, 1917.

The last troops to arrive at Camp Merritt from overseas consisted of a Casual Attachment of 9 officers and 400 enlisted men, who arrived on January 26, 1920.

Camp Merritt was the camp of the Casuals, over 200,000 of which passed through it on their way to the War. For the purpose of administration, the camp was divided into 7 Districts, a permanent officer known as District Commander in command of

each District. A Liaison Officer was stationed at each railway station to direct troops to camp

BASE HOSPITAL COMMANDING OFFICERS, Base Hospital

Major LESSON. TARLETON, M.C., January, 1918, to February 8, 1918

Major Arthur W. CUTLER, M.R.C., February 8, 1918 to May, 1918.

Major JESSE I. SLOAT, M.C., May, 1918, to September 15, 1919

ADJUTANTS, BASE HOSPITAL 1st LIEUT. JESSE I. SLOAT, M.C., January 9, 1918, to May 2, 1918. CAPT. WM. R. TATUM, M.C., May 3, 1918, to September 15, 1919

Opened January 9, 1918

Sick men - 55,611, of which

27,320 returned to duty

20,443 transferred to other hospitals

551 died

610 discharged on surgeon's certificate of disability

460 assigned to domestic service only.

PERSONNEL

At its opening-

20 officers,

11 nurses

97 enlisted men, with a total bed capacity of 416. By November 1, 1918, this had increased to

90 officers

300 nurses

800 enlisted men

2,500 bed capacity.

During the epidemic of influenza, October 1918, the emergency bed capacity was increased to 3,800, which was further increased to 3,800 during the debarkation period following the Armistice.

As to the sick rate, Camp Merritt had the lowest of any camp in the country.

Considering the nature of the camp and the number of men passing through, this wonderful record is something to remember. Even during the awful epidemic, September 30 to November 15, 1918, and with this tremendous shifting population, the death rate at Camp Merritt at that time was lower than any other military camp in the country.

For the nurses attached to the Base Hospital there was built by the American Red Cross a recreation house which contained a library, a piano, and other attractive features; and there weekly dances and entertainments were held.

NUMBER OF MEN LEAVING CAMP MERRITT FOR OVERSEAS DUTY

November 1917-November 1918

1917

November ...8,190

December ... 5~579

1918

January ...6,415

February ... 44,227

March ... 50,562

April... 52,393

May ... 47,184

June ... 56,066

July ... 67,184

August ... (record month, going)... 84,232

Sept ... 84,404

October ... 47,620

November ... 34,810

Total... 578,566

Largest number of troops in a single day, August 31, 1918. 397 officers and 15,217 enlisted men left camp, via Alpine Landing for Port of Embarkation. Total, 15,596.

In this connection it might be interesting to note the number of troops from the various camps in this vicinity that embarked at the port at Hoboken: From Camp

Merritt ... 578,000

Mills ... 54,000

Upton ... 315,000

Dix ... 72,000

Devens ... 65,000

Meade ... 31,000

Crane ... 15,000

Humphreys 10,000

Total. ... 1,618,000

Number of Men Arriving at Camp Merritt from Overseas

From Dec, 1918 to Jan, 1920

1918

Dec .. 14,937

1919

Jan ... 36,416

Feb ... 27,998

March ... 74,788

April ... 48,786

May ... 50,360
June ... 55,580
July ... 84,928
August ... 72,292
Sept ... 21,988
Oct ... 11,442
Nov, Dec & Jan 1920 ... 10,000

Total ... 509,515

This makes a total of troop movement through Camp Merritt to and from overseas as follows:

Troops going overseas ... 578,566
Troops from overseas ... 509,515
Total. . . . 1,088,081

This includes men from every State in the Union and our overseas possessions. More troops moved through Camp Merritt than in any camp in the history of our country.

CAMP ACTIVITIES

Camp Merritt was a city of a shifting population of from 25,000 to 35,000 souls, the vast majority of whom did not stay in camp over three or four days. These men had to be supplied daily with ice, coal, meat, vegetables, milk, butter, etc., etc., and there had to be removed from the various kitchens and barracks garbage and refuse. The camp had to be kept spotlessly clean, and this was done throughout its life.

The organization of this fast "moving-out" required constant work of the Quartermaster Department which was equipped with army trucks and side cars, whose motive power was mules, horses, and gasoline, all told manf: hundred vehicles. Their work never ceased during the twenty-four hours, and never failed. There were enormous warehouses to thoroughly equip with all articles of clothing every man who left camp. For the returning troops a similar work was done. The Inspector General's Department made three inspections of all troops going overseas, one medical and two equipment inspections.

The outgoing troops moved out of camp between midnight and five o'clock in the morning, the entire movement being conducted under cover of darkness. There was not one minute of the twenty four hours in which the camp was not alive and active.

In addition to the Base Hospital, the Camp Surgeon had supervision over the health of the camp. There was a well-equipped dental infirmary with a complement of twenty-six dental surgeons and twenty-nine complete equipments.

There were fourteen post exchanges, seven tailor shops, a twenty-four-chair barber

shop, which earned in the eighteen months of their existence \$2,250,000. The refrigerating plant had a capacity of 110 cattle, 40,000 lbs. of butter, and 100,000 lbs. of miscellaneous. The bakery had a capacity of 11,000 2-lb. loaves per day, making 22,000 lbs. per day. The coal trestle had a capacity of 4,000 tons. The School for Bakers and Cooks had entire supervision over all messing arrangements. There were 164 kitchens in operation under their management. Connected with the post exchange buildings were reading and lounging rooms where magazines and newspapers were on file and where music could be had from automatic coin pianos.

It was the camp of the "Casuals," over 200,000 of whom passed through the camp. Card catalog of these was kept upon which changes were noted daily, and during the busiest part of the camp averaged 10,000 changes per day. This office was run by two shifts --one night and one day; in addition to the card catalog, replying to correspondence averaged 2,000 letters daily.

There was a Bureau for the Exchange of Foreign Money.

There were naturalized in the camp 8,000 men, representing 40 different nationalities, naturalized at 98 sessions of the court.

There was a Labor Representative to help with advice and suggestion, who distributed vocational pamphlets upon every home going troop train, which were issued as a circulating library en route, and which were helpful to the men.

The Insurance department and the department that handled the sale of Liberty Bonds were as efficiently managed as the other departments in the camp.

There was a splendid Fire Department with three houses, equipped with the latest engines, hook and ladders, hose, and so forth, that could be procured.

SALVAGE OPERATIONS

Capt. C.J. Morelle

This was one of the products of the war. The following statistics will give you some idea of its activities:

Personnel: to officers, 330 enlisted men.

Organized March 1918 and housed in various buildings. July 1918 obtained standard warehouses.

Tailor Shop equipment:

13 sewing machines,

4 steam clothing presses

1 flat button sewing machine

1 sock darning machine. All motor driven.

Repaired and returned for re-issue - 339,104 uniform garments.

SHOE SHOP

17 racks, shoe,

1 block cutting,

1 mallet, rawhide,
2 dies, cutting,
1 stamp, steel,
10 cobblers' benches,
33 jacks, numerous other tools.
Repaired and returned for re-issue - 153,321 pairs of shoes.
6,699,896 ,tides of clothing and equipage were received, inspected, sorted and disposed of. Junk - 222,719 articles as: iron cots, canvas cots, wire mattresses, field ranges, typewriters, adding machines, tables, lawn mowers, shovels, rakes, spades, stoves, etc., etc.

CAMP UTILITIES

POST OFFICE

THE following statistics will give some idea of its work:

Personnel 28
Letters dispatched 9,415,000
Letters received 13,771,000
Total ... 23,186,000
Registered letters handled 124,910
Special delivery letters received 203,300
Sacks, parcel lost dispatched 48,168
Sacks, parcel post received 63,255
Money Orders issued 28,873 Amt. \$950,168
Money Orders paid ... 29,437 Amt. 556,429
Total 58,310 \$1,506,597

Western Union Telegraph Company

The following statistics will give you some idea of its work:

Personnel ... 45
Executives ... 4
Operators ... 9
Clerks ... 15
Messengers ... 17

Average number of telegrams sent and received, 100,000 per week. It ran as high as 200,000 per week. Money paid by money transfers, \$3,000,000. In addition, there was an efficient Express and Telephone service.

AMERICAN RED CROSS

Organized for duty in Camp Merritt September 1917

Field Directors

Mr. George W. Johnson ... Sept 1917

Major F.G. Landon ... Oct 8, 1917

Lt. Col Robert McLean ... Oct 5, 1918

The Red Cross distributed 550,000 knitted goods in addition to thousands of other small articles usually comprised in Comfort Kits. Letters on home service, allotments and discharges, 26,000. In addition, thousands of telegrams and telephones messages. Many loans to soldiers made where the emergency seemed necessary and hundreds of checks cashed for officers and enlisted men; writing letters and telegrams for patients in Base Hospital; all kinds of personal service rendered daily. Supplied the Hospital with frames, writing paper, jam, jelly, fruits and other delicacies in quantity amounting to tons; also Property bags and Comfort Kits.

The American Red Cross had complete charge over the civilian work in the base hospital, in which work all the other welfare organizations participated most harmoniously under their direction.

The American Red Cross at Camp Merritt had a Personnel vary from twenty to thirty men and women. The following figures show the distribution of their knitted goods:

Sweaters ... 107,261

Helmets ... 111,198

Socks, pairs, ... 150,198

Mufflers ... 79,433

Wristlets, pairs ... 102,433

Total ... 550,902

The above in addition to all personal and individual work attached to Red Cross work.

CONVALESCANT HOME

Organized for duty in Camp Merritt, July 4, 1918

Associate Field Director

Mr. Leslie Cotton ... July 4, 1918

This was attached to base hospital, and was donated by the American Red Cross, for patients from the hospital, and had a personnel of about ten active workers and any number of volunteers. House supplied with books, musical instruments, writing paper, music, billiard table, etc., and regular entertainment four times a week.

The Young Women's Christian Association, Knights of Columbus, National Catholic War Council, Jewish Welfare Board all provided services and entertainment at the camp.

AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

The Camp Library was situated in Merritt Hall, "The Enlisted Man's Club." The recorded number of books loaned to soldiers was about 28,000, which is estimated to be about one-half of the actual number used. Before the Armistice there was a

heavy demand for books on Military Science and the sciences and trades relating thereto; also books on the French language. Non-fiction circulation reached as high as 40%. After the Armistice, the demand for military science ceased completely. Then came an overwhelming demand for books of the trades and professions; also on literature, history and travel. Non-fiction reached as high as 50%. During the quarantine about 80,000 magazines were distributed. TO men going overseas books were given without restriction. 60,000 magazines have been put on troop trains carrying troops home. The demand for fiction concentrated on red-blooded western stories and tales of mystery and imagination. 27,500 books were received into the Camp Library; 16,000 were distributed to branch libraries in the welfare organizations' buildings. After September, an A. L. X. Librarian (woman) was assigned to the base hospital where a branch library of 5,500 volumes was maintained, accessible to convalescent patients and brought to patients confined to bed, by the Librarian. The A. L. A. was well organized and with a personnel of five men rendered all service demanded of it.

WAR CAMP COMMUNITY SERVICE

Headquarters Englewood

Organized for duty in Bergen County, Sept 2, 1917

The War Camp Community Service activities were conducted outside of camp in the surrounding towns. This service aimed to make time spent on leave as enjoyable as possible. Information booths were established at the railroad stations at Tenafly, Dumont, Cresskill and at the Ferry Station at Edgewater. Comfortable, homey soldier clubs were established in Englewood, Cresskill, Dumont, Kergenfield, Leonia Junction and Hackensack. Music, reading and writing rooms, pool and billiard tables, bowling alleys and gymnasium facilities were to be found at the Clubs. A program of the week's entertainments, together with a list of the Clubs, was found in the "Smiles Bulletins." These bulletins were issued weekly and could be had at Y. M. C. A., K. of C., J. W. B., Hostess House, Visitor" House, and Merritt Hall.

Seven hundred soldiers were given home dinners weekly. "Community Sings" were one of their great features, seven of which they held in one week, with an attendance of 4,000 men. Weekly dances averaged between twenty and thirty. In addition to all this, they did work at the Base Hospital, furnishing pillows, comfort kits, flowers, jellies, etc., etc., by the thousands. They also secured employment for the men.

All the welfare organizations, in addition to the activities outlined in their individual reports were busy with a thousand and one details such as writing wills, marriages, care for the illiterate, helping with foreign languages, legal advice on domestic troubles, changing foreign money, expressing, letters home, organizing athletics, arranging weekly entertainments in the various halls managed by women's organizations from nearby towns, meeting troops en route, vaudeville

entertainments, education. They distributed chocolates, smokes, games, circulars, books, and so forth and so forth, and each in their own way did work along religious lines. The greatest work they did was their untiring work in the hospitals, where they did everything humanly possible for the men, giving religious services whenever asked for and giving books and pamphlets to read and eats, smokes and entertainments.

MERRITT HALL

This was donated by Mrs. Wesley Merritt as a memorial to her husband after whom the camp was named. This was the enlisted men's club, very commodious and comfortable, with a cafeteria, billiard tables, and reading and lounging room. It was always the home of the library, established by the American Library Association. The camp chaplains had their headquarters there.

CAMP NEWSPAPERS

A journal published every Friday at Camp Merritt, N. J., under the direction of the Commanding General, by and for the men of Camp Merritt and the overseas men who return this way.

It is the policy of this paper to reflect all that is best in military life, to present to the soldier all matters concerning him, in an intelligent manner, and to furnish to the public with information concerning troop movements and camp news worth mentioning.

This was a camp weekly paper, first issue, January 28, 1919, and thereafter weekly, the last issue appearing on August 8, 1919. The Morale Officer in Washington stated that it was the most ambitious and well-published camp paper issued in the country. It started a movement to mark the spot where Camp Merritt stood, contained the names of those who died in camp during the war. This was then taken up by the Bergen County Historical Association, then by the Freeholders of Bergen County, and lastly by the State of New Jersey. It was authorized to issue an official program of the great Victory Loan Parade which took place in New York City on May 3, 1919. On May 30, 1919 -Memorial Day it issued 100 page edition containing a most complete history of "Camp Merritt." THE JOLLY SNORTER, published by the 13th Infantry, a regimental paper, was very successful.

THE MESS-KIT, published by the enlisted men of U. S. A. Base Hospital. This was a monthly publication, and ran for about ten months. It was devoted exclusively to Base Hospital news and doings, and was also successful.

OPEN AIR THEATRE.

This was built in the early summer of 1919, where shows were given in the evening to practically the entire garrison. "Good luck Sam." This play was produced by the enlisted men, and ran for four weeks in New York City, and

cleared above all expenses \$35,000, which money was spent for the benefit of the enlisted men. They also produced a musical show which was given in camp and nearby towns; and a genuine Wild West Show at a time when there were many western cowboys in camp, with real bucking mules, horses, etc., etc. With part of the money made in their theatrical adventures was financed the Coney Island Trip, an interesting and novel entertainment. Two iron steamboats were leased for two successive days, and every man in camp was taken from Alpine Landing to Coney Island and return. Through the courtesy of the Amusement Agencies in Coney Island, the men were given a certain number of tickets to the various entertainments. Dinner was served on the boat, and the band accompanied them.

ATHLETICS

THERE were thirty baseball nines, fifteen basketball teams, football teams, and boxing, wrestling, hand-ball, tennis, squash and track athletics. The most interesting events, however, were the mass athletics conducted on the parade, the prizes being passes for the enlisted men; and close to 50% of the permanent garrison took part in these mass athletic contests.

July 4, 1919, Was the gala day at Camp Merritt. In the morning there were track athletics, in the afternoon, a baseball game, in the evening, at the Open Air Theatre, an all-star vaudeville performance, and later on a magnificent display of fire-works.

Mother's Day and Arbor Day were combined in a giant celebration which took place May 11, 1919.

TOKEN OF APPRECIATION TO BERGEN COUNTY PEOPLE

A SERGEANT at Camp Merritt, who had enjoyed the hospitality of the people of the community surrounding the camp remarked: "The people of this county have taken such pains to make soldiers enjoy themselves that I think it's about time for us to say, thank you.' "

It was suggested that a small medal be presented to every school child in Bergen County, and committees were promptly appointed, contributions received, and the plan was a success. These medals were presented in January 1919, at which time 147 schools were visited and 37,624 medals were distributed to the children. The medal had on its face "The boys of Camp Merritt are grateful to you, 1919."

ALPINE LANDING

This is where most of the troops embarked and it is an historic spot. In the year 1776 when the British were preparing to occupy the Hudson River Valley, General Cornwallis made his headquarters here in an old Dutch farmhouse which had been previously an old Dutch trading post. This house still stands and was passed by the thousands of men going overseas.

The Camp Merritt Memorial Association
Requests the Honor of Your Presence at the
Dedication
of the
Camp Merritt Memorial
on Friday, the Thirtieth of May
One Thousand, nine hundred and twenty-four
at eleven o'clock
Camp Merritt, New Jersey

IN MEMORY OF THOSE SOLDIERS WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES FOR
THEIR COUNTRY WHILE ON DUTY IN CAMP MERRITT
THIS MONUMENT MARKS THE CENTER OF THE CAMP AND
FACES THE HIGHWAY OVER WHICH MORE THAN
A MILLION AMERICAN SOLDIERS PASSED ON THEIR WAY TO AND
FROM THE WORLD WAR 1917-1919
ERECTED BY THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY THE COUNTY OF BERGEN,
THE BERGEN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY OFFICERS
AND MEN OF CAMP MERRITT MANY PATRIOTIC CITIZENS AND
THE CAMP MERRITT MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION

The above is the Inscription on the Monument

Sculptor
Captain Robert Aitken