

CAMP PENDLETON HISTORY

Early History

Spanish explorer Don Gasper de Portola first scouted the area where Camp Pendleton is located in 1769. He named the Santa Margarita Valley in honor of St. Margaret of Antioch, after sighting it July 20, St. Margaret's Day.

The Spanish land grants, the Rancho Santa Margarita Y Las Flores Y San Onofre came in existence. Custody of these lands was originally held by the Mission San Luis Rey de Francia, located southeast of Pendleton, and eventually came into the private ownership of Pio Pico and his brother Andre, in 1841.

Pio Pico was a lavish entertainer and a politician who later became the last governor of Alto California. By contrast, his brother Andre, took the business of taming the new land more seriously and protecting it from the aggressive forces, namely the "Americanos." While Andre was fighting the Americans, Pio was busily engaged in entertaining guests, political maneuvering and gambling. His continual extravagances soon forced him to borrow funds from loan sharks. A dashing businesslike Englishman, John Forster, who has recently arrived in the sleepy little town of Los Angeles, entered the picture, wooing and winning the hand of Ysidora Pico, the sister of the rancho brothers. Just as the land-grubbers were about to foreclose on the ranch, young Forster stepped forward and offered to pick up the tab from Pio. He assumed the title Don Juan Forster and, as such, turned the rancho into a profitable business.

When Forster died in 1882, James Flood of San Francisco purchased the rancho for \$450,000. His friend, Richard O'Neill, managed the rancho, and after 24 years of service was given half ownership.

O'Neill built a dam to form the lake that now bears his name and introduced irrigation. Under his supervision, the ranch prospered; its beef and crops were known throughout the nation.

The O'Neill and Flood families' over 200,000-acres of land holdings occupied a sizeable portion of North San Diego County and extended into Orange County. Early in 1942, the U.S. government purchased 125,000 acres in San Diego County at the cost of \$4,239,062.

The Marine Corps' role in Camp Pendleton history dates from September 25, 1942, when the former rancho was dedicated by President Franklin D. Roosevelt and named in honor of Major General Joseph H. Pendleton.

The Santa Margarita Ranch was then transformed into one of the largest military camps in the United States and would serve as the primary west coast base for combat training of Marines in preparation for the Pacific island hopping campaign of WWII.

The Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton logo is featured throughout the base, yet few know that the T & O logo originated as a cattle brand. Before this vast expanse of hills and valleys became the property of the U.S. Government, it was a thriving cattle ranch known as the Santa Margarita y Las Flores, and the cattle roaming the hills sported the T & O brand. When the Marine Corps acquired the property in 1942, it was given permission to use the brand as the Camp Pendleton logo, hence retaining a visible tie to the past. One of the former owners of the rancho, John J. Baumgartner, Jr., kept the brand and used it on his ranch in San Juan Bautista, CA, until his recent death.

For those interested in the various historical sites on Camp Pendleton, please call the History and Museums Office at (760) 725-5758.

Introduction

On the eve of World War II, as the Marine Corps doctrine of amphibious warfare was being refined and tested, the training of Marines was limited to Quantico and Parris Island on the East Coast, and San Diego on the West Coast. When the expansion of all U.S. Armed Forces was authorized by Franklin D. Roosevelt's proclamation of unlimited national emergency on May 27, 1941, there was an immediate need for additional training areas on both coasts. The creation of Camp Lejeune in North Carolina filled the critical need for training facilities along the Atlantic Coast.

Continued expansion and increased concentration of Marine activities on the West Coast, especially after it became apparent that the Marine Corps would have primary responsibility for Pacific operations, necessitated additional land for training purposes. The Marine Corps base at San Diego had become the center for all activities in the Pacific. Nearby Camp Elliot provided the only area for small unit training, but there was no training facility for the large, division-sized units that would be fighting the upcoming island campaigns against the Japanese.

On March 10, 1942, the Navy Department announced the purchase of approximately 130,000 acres, the "Rancho Santa Margarita y Las Flores," located between Los Angeles and San Diego. Construction of the base started on March 13, 1942, with the awarding of a contract for the construction of training facilities for amphibious forces.

Under the command of future commandant, Col. Lemuel Sheppard, 9th Marines and 1st Bn., 12th Marines, had just completed a four-day march from Camp Elliot in San Diego to be the first troops to occupy the newly acquired

West Coast training base, later known as Camp Joseph H. Pendleton. The time was September 1942, building activity aboard the new base was continuing at a frenzied pace to transform a peaceful cattle ranch into a fast-paced, military installation capable of training and transporting a large number of Marines to the Pacific.

Throughout the war years, thousands of Marines and three divisions passed through the camp on their way to the bloody battles in the Pacific, living in rapidly constructed tent camps throughout the sprawling hills. Training areas were constructed to provide realistic preparation for combat. Pillboxes were built exactly like those found in the Pacific. Also during these early days, one of the famed Raider Battalions was formed and trained here under Lt. Col. James Roosevelt, the son of the president.

Combat Marines were not the only people to populate Camp Pendleton. Women Marine reservists arrived here in 1943 and were able to keep the administration of the base running smoothly. The Ranch House Chapel was restored and opened primarily for their use. Wars inevitably produce heroes, and Camp Pendleton eagerly recognized one of its own. Basilone Road, a familiar landmark on the base, was named for Gunnery Sergeant John Basilone, who earned a Medal of Honor at Guadalcanal in 1943 and the Navy Cross posthumously at Iwo Jima in 1945. Following the war, Camp Pendleton was inundated with troops returning from the Pacific and the deserted tent camps were once again bursting with activity. Working overtime, the Redistribution Regiment was able to discharge about 200 Marines a day, and before leaving, each man was issued a discharge emblem to be sewn on his uniform as a badge of honor.

Camp Pendleton was declared a permanent installation in October 1944, and in 1946 General Vandegrift stated the base's future role was to be the center of all West Coast Marine activities and the home of 1st Marine Division, the peacetime strength of which would be 12,500. It was during this period of peacetime that Major General. Graves Erskine, commander of the base, known then as Marine Barracks, Camp Pendleton, was determined to develop the base into "the finest post in the world." Tent camps were torn down and Quonset huts put in their places, former 17 Area barracks were renovated into officers' quarters, a \$130,000 Spanish beach club was opened at San Onofre and a commissary opened in 1948. The base library opened in 1950 in a small frame building across from Division headquarters.

During the war, Pendleton became known as "Hollywood South." Movies were filmed on the base and morale was boosted by watching Hollywood Marines vanquish Hollywood Japanese. Following the war, moviemakers continued to seek out Pendleton's brown hills for movies such as "Battle Cry," "Sands

of Iwo Jima," "The Flying Leathernecks," and in later years "Retreat Hell" and "Heartbreak Ridge."

Relations with surrounding communities have not always been cordial. In 1947, Major General Erskine was embroiled in a bitter dispute with the Oceanside School District over his right to operate a separate school for children of Marines. The "Little Red School" was built in the 17 Area and operated for two years until finally turned over to Oceanside in 1950.

Water was at the root of another controversy that resulted in a long and complicated legal battle involving Camp Pendleton and Fallbrook area residents who felt entitled to use the water flowing from the Santa Margarita River, flowing through base. The water rights trial became the longest in history, in which the two groups are currently working together to find solutions to both of their water problems.

Peacetime activities came to an abrupt halt in 1950 with the outbreak of the Korean War. Reservists crowded into Camp Pendleton, headed for the front faster than the base could process them. Throughout the war years, replacements were hurriedly trained and sent to the Far East. The training, however hurried, was tough and realistic. A combat town was constructed to simulate a North Korean Village where troops were exposed to as much realism as possible. Cold weather training was moved from Idyllwild to Pickel Meadows in the high Sierras because Idyllwild wasn't tough enough. Cold weather training was definitely survival training for those soon to be sent to Korea. Camp Pendleton's role as Training and Replacement Command was reflected in the nearly 200,000 Marines that passed through the base on their way to the Far East. Those same hills and valleys beckoned to Camp Pendleton's civilian neighbors who wanted pieces of the base for their own use. Leases were granted for a California State Beach and a nuclear power plant at the northern edge of the base, but developers eyeing the land for an airstrip and private housing were forced to look elsewhere. At one point, the city of Oceanside even attempted to annex the base to become part of their city's tax base. The purpose for Camp Pendleton's existence has not changed; it was first and foremost a training base, continuing to mold young men and women into the country's finest fighting force.

The Vietnam years again saw a buildup of men and machines bound for Indochina. The movement of the 1st Marine Division to the Far East occurred more gradually than in Korea or World War II. Replacements were rotated in and out of combat zones through Staging Battalion, which took a Marine arriving at the camp and gave him 15 intensive training days before sending him to Vietnam. The Korea combat village became the Vietnamese jungle village, complete with deadly booby traps. The combat environment and training methods had changed over the years, but the purpose remained constant: train Marines to fight and get them to battle.

Unlike their World War II counterparts, Marines discharged from the Vietnamese conflict did not receive badges of honor, but could still hold their heads high, as they had fought bravely and honorably in the highest Marine Corps tradition. Camp Pendleton continues its proud tradition of training top-quality Marines and maintaining its combat readiness while it prepares itself to face the 21st century.

The Corps broadened its mission capabilities in the 1980s as "amphibious" became "expeditionary." Marines combined infantry, armor, supply and air power according to the task at hand, then demonstrated the effectiveness of the air-ground team in Granada, Panama and the Persian Gulf. The rapid projection of self-sustaining military power was clearly shown when Camp Pendleton forces and their equipment were deployed halfway around the globe in days. Operation Desert Shield, Desert Storm and Enduring Freedom are the latest in a 230-year history of unequalled national service, and it was training here at Camp Pendleton that made those successes possible.

Development

In 1942, along with a base headquarters, three Marine Regiments were developed in tent camps at the Las Pulgas, San Onofre and Cristianitos areas. The intent was that troops using these areas would live under field conditions, carrying with them their tents and other equipment.

Each tent camp had its own combat and qualification range. The ranges were laid out for rifle, machine gun and mortar firing, and were situated to facilitate training in small arms combat, the use of grenades and bayonets, and other infantry tactics. During this period the expeditionary airfield (now Marine Corps Air Station) was built, and the boat basin at Del Mar was completed just north of Oceanside to provide a sheltered berthing area.

After the assault on Tarawa in November 1943, training in amphibious operations became a top priority for the Marine Corps. The amphibious training facilities at Camp Pendleton were expanded to 10 times their earlier capacities.

In 1946, Camp Pendleton would become the center of all Marine Corps activities on the West Coast, and home to the 1st Marine Division. Quonset huts and hastily erected temporary wooden structures, many still in use, housed Marines here.

With the outbreak of the Korean conflict in 1950, \$20 million was spent on Camp Pendleton to expand and upgrade existing facilities, including the construction of Camp Horno. In 1955, the initial Las Flores tank park and maintenance facilities were constructed with more added in 1965.

Between 1958 and 1961, permanent messing, billeting, administrative and training facilities were constructed at Del Mar (21) Area. The Edson Range rifle qualification complex, an annex of Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego, was constructed in two increments on land that had been in agricultural use (Stuart Mesa). All facilities required to support groups of recruits for two weeks of training were provided at this site. In 1972, a special research and development complex was developed west of Interstate 5 across from Edson Range for the Marine Corps Tactical Systems Support Activity (MCTSSA).

During the 1970s, dispensaries and dental clinics were upgraded; a modern correctional center and a shopping center at the north end of the base were constructed. Today Camp Pendleton's improvements include more than 3,100 buildings and structures, more than 600 miles of roads and over 900 miles of utility lines. The estimated total value of lands and improvements, including housing, is more than \$8.9 billion. (See the attached FACTS & STATS document for more information on the current description of Camp Pendleton.)

Names in History

Marines get an "at home" feeling at most bases when they see streets and locations named in honor of well-known Marines or battles. Names such as Tarawa, Bougainville and Lejeune are seen on street signs or in housing areas throughout Marine Corps installations. Camp Pendleton, however, may confound and confuse many Marines with such unfamiliar names as Pulgas or Horno. Remaining true to the heritage of this historic Land, officials of this vast training base decided in 1942 to keep the names given to geographic locations by Spanish explorers and the descendants.

It was common practice for Catholic missionaries to name a point of arrival or a rest stop for the patron saint whose holy day coincides with time they arrive. Thus, a majority of Camp Pendleton locations can be traced to Spanish padres and explorers who traveled Southern California in the late 18th Century. Examples include:

Cristianitos: Spanish priests of the Portola-Serra expedition as they made their northward trek through the base in 1769 to northern California named this area. The site of their encampment was named after St. Apollinaris, but due to the fact that the priests conducted California's first Christian baptisms for two dying Indian infants, the Soldiers referred to it as "Los Cristianitos" or the little Christians. The baptismal site is today a California Historical Site.

Las Pulgas: On July 21, 1769, Father Crespi with the Portola-Serra expedition camped at the site where Las Pulgas is located today. Admiring the wild Castilian roses which grew in the canyon, he named the place La Canada de los Rosales (Rose Canyon). The name didn't stick, however,

because years later, Soldiers accompanying a survey party for the San Luis Rey Mission, camped in the same location and were constantly bothered by fleas (las pulgas). The tiny pests made a stronger impression than the physical beauty of the area.

Las Flores: The way station or asistencia to Mission San Luis Rey was established in 1827 near what is today the Las Pulgas exit to Interstate 5. Seeing wild roses and flowers at the mouth of the canyon and remembering the name given by Father Crespi years earlier, the name Las Flores, meaning "the flowers," was given to the area.

Chappo: The name is believed to be derived from the word Chapala that was the thick undergrowth found in the area.

Horno: This is the Spanish word for the clay oven or kin used by early settlers. Camp Horno is nestled below the coastal mountains, which block the cooling ocean breezes. As any Marine stationed there can attest, it can get hot as an oven in the summer.

San Onofre: (The grammatical accent is on the "no"). In keeping with the Padres' tradition of naming areas after patron saints, this area was named after the obscure Egyptians, Saint Onuphrius.

San Mateo: Saint Matthew- a saint whose name was a favorite with the Catholic missionaries. DeLuz: An Englishman by the name of Luce kept a corral of horses in the area north of the village of Fallbrook. The Spanish-speaking neighbors knew it as Coral de Luz, which was later shortened to the name we use today.

Lake O'Neil: This is a man-made lake created for the irrigation of the fields on Rancho Santa Margarita in the late 1800s. It is named for Richard O'Neil who managed the ranch and later became part owner.

Vado Del Rio: At one time the Margarita River was much deeper and wider. Small trading boats actually sailed up the river from the ocean to trade goods behind the Ranch House. A bridge was constructed so that travelers could easily cross the river, thus Vado Del Rio means "river crossing" since it overlooks the bridge over Basilone Road.

Pendleton

Other names around base were selected in the traditional Marine Corps manner, honoring well known Marines or battles. Following the purchase of the vast rancho, the new West Coast Marine Corps training base would be named Camp Joseph H. Pendleton, in honor Major General Joseph H. Pendelton. He pioneered Marine Corps activities in the San Diego area during his 46-year career from 1878-1924.

Born in Rochester, PA., June 2, 1860, "Uncle Joe" Pendleton, as he would later be known, graduated from the U.S Naval Academy and was commissioned

a Second Lieutenant in the Marine Corps July 11, 1884.

Major General Pendleton's distinguished service career included duty in the jungles of Nicaragua, Santa Domingo, Guam and the Philippines, in addition to several stateside and ship tours. In 1914, the 4th Marine Regiment was reactivated and Pendleton was ordered to organize and command this expeditionary force. Major General Pendleton and his regiment served on board the USS South Dakota and Jupiter, when it withdrew to land at Camp Howard, North Island, San Diego, July 10, 1914.

With the arrival of Major General Pendleton's regiment in San Diego, his love affair with the area began. He immediately recognized the value of San Diego with its good weather and harbor as an ideal choice for the Marine Corps' Advance Base Force to be stationed on the West Coast. Major General Pendleton openly advocated for the need of a major Marine Corps installation to be established in the San Diego area from his first stay on North Island until after his retirement ten years later. Between July 1914 and June 1916, Major General Pendleton and his regiment improved facilities at North Island while the Marines made a favorable impression on the San Diego community. Meanwhile visits of high-ranking dignitaries to various expositions during this period helped to win government approval for a large Marine Corps base at San Diego. Major General Pendleton himself bought a house in Coronado near the harbor and became active in civic affairs in the city. He served as mayor of Coronado from 1928 to 1930. Married to the former Mary Helen Fay, he died in February 1942 in San Diego at the age of 81.

Vandegrift

General Alexander Archer Vandegrift earned the Medal of Honor in World War II, and served as the 18th Commandant of the Marine Corps.

The General was born March 13, 1887, in Charlottesville, VA., and was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in 1909.

He commanded the 1st Marine Division, Reinforced, in the battle for Guadalcanal, and the 1st Marine Amphibious Corps in the landing at Empress Augusta Bay, Bougainville, during World War II.

For outstanding service as the commanding general of 1st Marine Division, Reinforced, during the attack on Guadalcanal, Tulagi, and Gavutu in the Solomon Islands on Aug. 7, 1942, he was awarded the Navy Cross. For the subsequent occupation and defense from Aug. 7 to Dec. 9, 1942, he was awarded the Medal of Honor. His citation for the latter reads in part:

"With the adverse factors of weather, terrain, and disease making his task a difficult and hazardous undertaking, and with his command

eventually including sea, land and air forces of the Army, Navy and Marine Corps Major Gen. Vandegrift achieved marked success in commanding the initial landing of the United States Forces in the Solomon Islands and their subsequent occupation.

His tenacity, courage and resourcefulness prevailed against a strong, determined and experienced enemy and the gallant fighting spirit of the men under his inspired leadership enabled them to withstand aerial, land and sea bombardment, to surmount all obstacles and leave a disorganized and ravaged enemy."

General Vandegrift declared in October 1944 that Camp Pendleton would be a permanent installation. During his visit to the base in July 1946, he outlined the base's future role. It was to remain the center of all Marine Corps activities on the West Coast. It was also to be permanently maintained as the home of the 1st Marine Division.

The General died at the age of 86. Camp Pendleton's main east-west road is named Vandegrift Boulevard in his honor.

Basilone

At Guadalcanal at 9:30 p.m., Oct. 24, 1942, thousands of Japanese attacked 600 Marines of 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, shouting at the Americans, yelling in English, "Blood for the Emperor! Marine, you die."

The order came for Colonel Lewis B. Chesty Puller... "Commence firing." It was an order that was to be obeyed almost non-stop for 72 hours.

The extraordinary bravery and tenacity shown by the American troops, who in that weekend defeated an estimated 15,000 Japanese Soldiers, changed the course of World War II. It might not have happened but for the heroism of Gunnery Sergeant John Basilone.

As Japanese plans for their offensive matured, U.S. leaders judged that the main thrust of the enemy ground attack would come against "Bloody Ridge", where Basilone and his gunners anchored the main line of resistance.

They were right. The enemy came in waves, each attack lasting some 15 minutes, sometimes several attacks in an hour. Again and again a report reached Basilone that the right flank, similarly manned, had been hit. Both guns were out; five of the seven men were killed or disabled. Taking one of the guns from the left flank Basilone pushed his agonizing way through wet undergrowth to the right flank, about 40 yards.

On the way he encountered and killed eight Japanese. Grabbing a disabled gun, he disassembled it in complete darkness, discovered the problem and fixed it. He then, reassembled the weapon, set it up and began to fire.

Commanding two men with rifles to cover him, Basilone took his pistol and dashed back to where the supplies lay. He returned more slowly, burdened by 100 pounds of belted cartridges for the machine guns.

These acts of heroism earned Basilone the highest military award, the Medal of Honor. After several months in the United States, Basilone turned down a commission and a tour of duty in Washington D.C., to return to the front lines. He was killed Feb. 19, 1945 in the first wave attack on Iwo Jima.

The north-south road, which winds past numerous infantry units on base, is named Basilone Road in his honor.

Throughout the Base's family housing areas, many of the roads are similarly named after heroic Marines who died in battle or performed valiantly in the service of their country.