

Camp Logan - a World War I Training Base on Buffalo Bayou by Linda C. Gorski and Louis F. Aulbach

One of the most interesting chapters in Houston's history was written in Memorial Park along the banks of Buffalo Bayou. For it was here that the U.S. Army's sprawling Camp Logan was built in the middle of the First World War to train soldiers for combat. The thing that surprises us is how little you will hear or read about Camp Logan in any of the books dedicated to Houston's history. Even the Handbook of Texas dedicates just one paragraph to it!

Camp Logan was an emergency training center in World War I, located on the earlier site of a National Guard Camp just beyond the western city limits of Houston. It was named for Major General John A. Logan, a prominent Civil War Union officer. The land was leased by the United States from the Hogg family who, by World War I had assembled the block of land that includes Memorial Park in their vast real estate holdings.

Construction of the center began on July 24, 1917 in the area that is now Memorial Park. The developed area of Camp Logan was 3,002 acres within a tract of 9,560 acres.

The next time you visit Memorial Park or paddle along its banks imagine this ... in 1917 Camp Logan was a tent camp supplemented by 1329 wooden buildings with a troop capacity of 44,899 men. Photographs of the camp depict row after row of tents on raised wooden platforms along graded streets near mess halls and latrines. Most tents had wooden walls about 4 feet high. The streets in Camp Logan were unpaved or surfaced with oyster shell or cinders. The City of Houston hired Layne & Bowler Company to drill a 600 foot deep water well south of Washington Avenue to service the camp and that well produced over 1 million gallons of water per day!

A complete sewer and trench system was installed. Sewer lines were of ceramic pipe with brick and mortar manholes. In addition to the main camp, a Remount Depot was constructed just west of the main camp. The Base Hospital was at the southeastern corner of Camp Logan. A rifle range was built 8 miles west on Hillendahl Road. Drill fields were between 1 and 2 miles northwest of the camp proper. In short, Camp Logan was a big place!

Completion of the first phase of the camp was accomplished by August 15, 1917 setting a record for construction of World War I camps. Within three months, more than 30,000 men were living and training at Camp Logan.

Training at Camp Logan was in drill, practice marches and rifle marksmanship with details to schools for chemical warfare, bayonet practice, hand grenade use, and cooking. Practice marches of 8 miles were made every few days. Breaking of horses was a recreational activity at Camp Logan as well as a serious duty. The 108th Engineers are known to have held impromptu rodeos at Camp Logan.

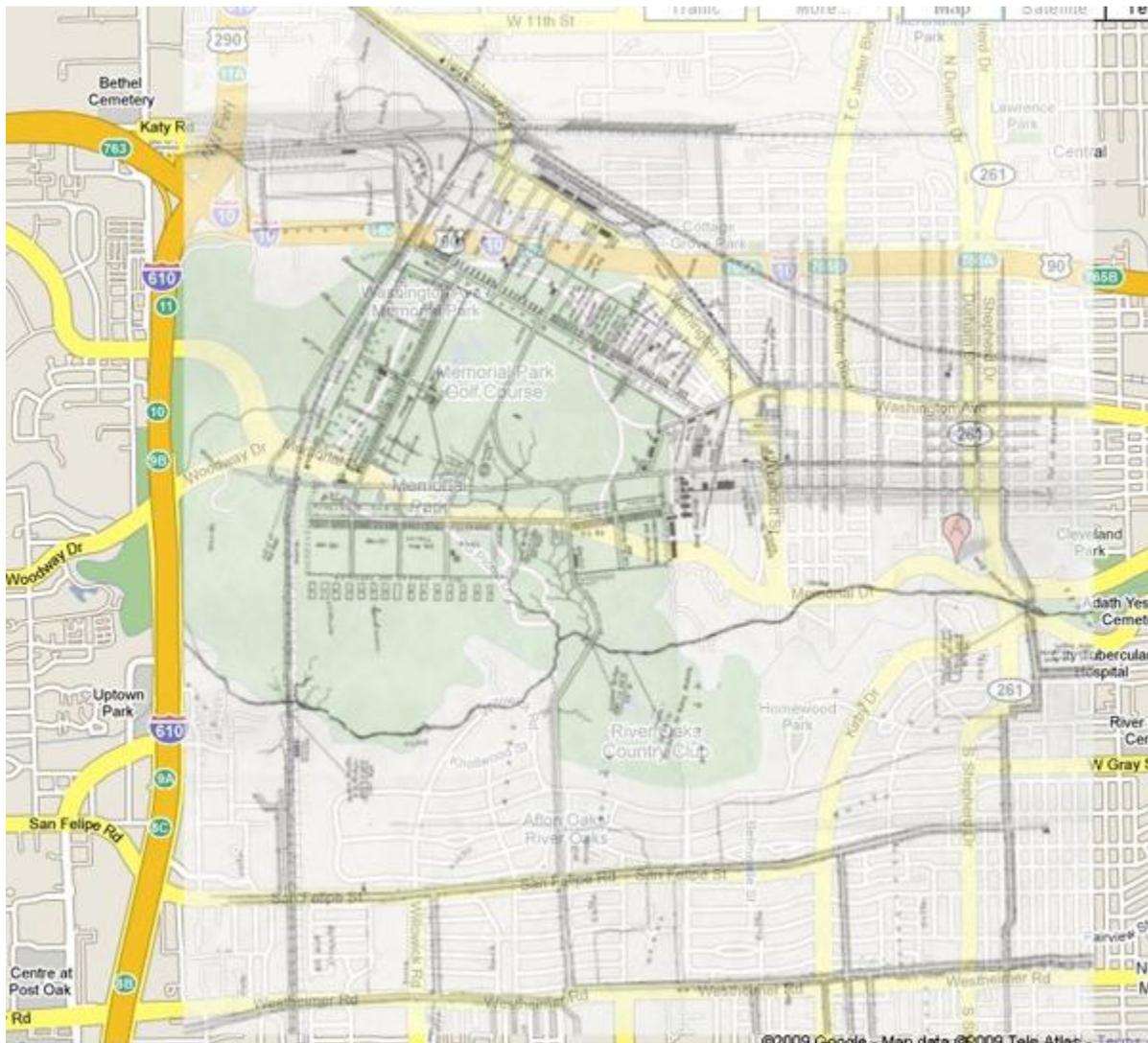
Houston may also have faced the first overcrowding of its school system in 1917. The First World War and the establishment of Camp Logan brought 500 school age children to Houston and the new City Auditorium was converted to a schoolhouse to educate them.

Despite the enormous amount of work that went into building Camp Logan, it only operated as a military establishment for 20 months, from 1917 - 1919. On March 20, 1919 it was turned over to the U.S. Public Health Service. In 1919 a building at Camp Logan, used by the American Red Cross during WW I, was converted into a hospital for charity purposes.

Shortly after World War I, Mike and Will Hogg regained possession of the tract on which Camp Logan was built. The City of Houston acquired the property from them for the development of Memorial Park in 1925.

We may not be able to see any of the buildings at Camp Logan above the ground today, but according to a recent archeological survey, the camp has left its mark on Memorial Park. "The imprint of Camp Logan remains clear to this day. The system of roads and drainage ditches form visible lineations matching the camp map grid where ground disturbances have been minimal."

The next time you paddle by Memorial Park, you might give a silent salute to the soldiers who trained there in World War I.



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