

Camp White

By George Kramer

Camp White, a U.S. Army Cantonment, was built on the Agate Desert, near Medford, Oregon, at the start of World War II. First the home of the 91st "Fir Tree" Division under Major General Charles Gerhardt, Camp White trained the 96th Division as well as engineering, medical, and artillery units between 1942 and 1945. Camp White is named for George A. White, longtime adjutant general of the Oregon National Guard.

During 1941, Medford's business leaders promoted the terrain of the Agate Desert as the perfect location for a military training facility. The Rogue River bisects the mountainous landscape around Camp White, and the area's heavy forests and arid plains earned it the nickname the "Alcatraz" of training camps under General Gerhardt because of its tough conditions.

Construction of the \$27 million camp began in January 1942 and continued around the clock for six months. The first troops arrived by summer, and more than 1,300 buildings were completed for the 91st Division's reactivation ceremony on August 15, 1942. At its peak, more than 40,000 soldiers were stationed at the base, including (beginning in late 1943) German POWs.

After the end of the war, most of Camp White's buildings were salvaged for their materials. Some were moved intact for use at the University of Oregon, and the brick structures of the Station Hospital became the Veteran's Administration Domiciliary. The hospital is now operated by the Veteran's Administration as the Southern Oregon Rehabilitation Center and Clinics.

Camp White's building core provided the infrastructure for the White City Industrial Park, supporting the post-war expansion of southern Oregon's timber industry. Along with the unincorporated community surrounding the industrial area, the former Camp White building core was renamed White City in 1960.

Sources

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