

The Story of the **Military Police Corps Museum**

By Mr. Jim Rogers

The Military Police Corps Museum first opened at the Provost Marshal General Center (PMGC) at Fort Gordon, Georgia. Colonel Francis E. Howard (later promoted to brigadier general) is credited with the idea of creating a branch museum. In 1956, the Military Police Corps Museum was opened in a temporary building with the efforts of Brigadier General J. P. Holland, commander of PMGC. In 1960, the museum was relocated to a permanent location in the north wing of the new Provost Marshal General's School library and was opened with a special dedication ceremony.

The Military Police Corps Museum was formally registered with the Office of the Chief of Military History (OCMH) in June 1963 and assigned the



Brigadier General (Retired) Francis E. Howard (center) and other dignitaries at the ribbon-cutting ceremony at the Military Police Corps Museum at Fort Gordon on 19 January 1960

prefix of "MPC" for use when cataloging historic artifacts. The OCMH was the forerunner of the Center of Military History, currently the professional proponent for Army history and Army museums.

In February 1974, Secretary of the Army Howard Calloway confirmed that the Army was moving the Military Police Corps from Fort Gordon to Fort McClellan, Alabama. Renovations began immediately on many of Fort McClellan's existing facilities that were slated for use by the US Army Military Police School (USAMPS). The museum was moved into the east wing of Building 3182 during 1975 and officially opened in July 1976. Although the new museum had twice as much space as in its previous site, the museum shared the building with the Allied Liaison Office (ALO), the US Marine Corps Detachment, and the Unarmed Self-Defense Activity.

Between 1977 and 1986, the museum continued to grow. When the Unarmed Self-Defense Activity relocated in 1983, the museum expanded its collection and storage function into part of the vacated west wing. Part of the additional space



Interior of Military Police Museum at Provost Marshal General Center, Fort Gordon



Military Police Corps Regimental Museum, Building 3128, Fort McClellan, Alabama

was converted into a workshop to be used by museum staff to design, fabricate, and install permanent exhibits at the museum and a variety of exhibits throughout USAMPS.

Between 1985 and 1986, Colonel David H. Stem, the assistant commandant of USAMPS, created a museum gift shop with the allocation of a small space and storage area. As commandant of USAMPS in 1986, Brigadier General Stem established a museum planning committee under the auspices of the Military Police Association to refurbish and expand the museum. The museum work included the design, fabrication, and installation of new exhibits to depict the recent history of the Military Police Corps, including military police operations in Vietnam and Grenada and contemporary military police missions.

On 26 September 1986, the 45th anniversary of the branch, the Military Police Corps was formally placed under the Army's regimental system. The name of the museum was revised to the Military Police Corps Regimental Museum, signifying the growth of the branch. Also in 1986, the US Marine Corps Detachment moved out of Building 3182 and the museum expanded its administrative office into the vacated area and reorganized the gift shop. At the same time, the museum workshop was relocated to Building 1898. The

museum continued to expand its collections and to redesign and fabricate new exhibits for both the east and west galleries.

By 1990, the museum had outgrown its allocated space in Buildings 3182 and 1898. As a solution, Colonel Larry Barrong, the USAMPS assistant commandant, decided that the museum should acquire and occupy all of Building 3182. Another suitable location was found for the ALO and for the first time in its history, the Military Police Corps Regimental Museum had an entire facility for its use. The museum administrative offices occupied the space vacated by the ALO, and some of the space was used for expansion of museum archives and reference material. The gift shop was also in need of additional space and was relocated to the former museum office area. This new location was twice the size of the gift



Exhibit area of Building 3182, Fort McClellan, Alabama

shop's previous site and allowed the shop to increase its inventory and hire a part-time manager.

Although Fort McClellan had escaped closure during the 1991 and 1993 Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) hearings, Congress approved the 1995 recommendation by the BRAC committee to close the installation. Subsequently, the Military Police Corps Regimental Museum was relocated along with USAMPS to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, in 1999. Also involved in the relocation to Fort Leonard Wood was the US Army Chemical School and its associated museum. In 1997, a contract to build a new facility to house the Military Police and Chemical museums, adjacent to the existing Engineer Museum and Fort Leonard Wood Museum, was awarded. The combined facility housing the museums is known as the John B. Mahaffey Museum Complex.

After more than a year of planning and construction, the new Military Police Corps Regimental Museum and a portion of its exhibits were dedicated by Brigadier General Donald J. Ryder, USAMPS commandant, on 29 September 2000. The remainder of the military police exhibit gallery opened to the public in September 2002. The new exhibits feature custom casework, walk-through "immersion" dioramas, and an audiovisual system. Also within the museum's gallery are the Military Police Regimental Association gift shop and the Military Police Hall of Fame Room. The museum's new artifact collections storage area features a space-saving system that was installed in early 2004. There is also a separate storage room for large artifacts and a shared curatorial workspace. Outdoor exhibits include three refurbished Vietnam-era military police vehicles—a V-100 armored car, a UH-1B "Huey" helicopter, and a Mark II River Patrol Boat.

Future plans include the construction of a multipurpose training room for use by the museum staff and branch historians for Soldier historical training and museum orientations. While the major facility and exhibit construction is complete, the museum staff is currently refining and upgrading the exhibits to better serve Soldier training and public visitation.

References:

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Lieutenant Colonel (Retired) Charles F. Donovan, Jr., "History Behind the History," *Military Police*, PB 19-88-2, pages 28-30.

Mr. Scott L. Norton, "Military Police Corps Regimental Museum," *Military Police*, PB 19-88-2, pages 44-48.

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Mr. Terrence J. Gough, "The US Army Center of Military History: A Brief History," *Army History*, PB 20-96-2 (No. 37), Spring 1996, <<http://www.army.mil/cmh-pg/reference/History/gough.htm>>.



Entry to the Military Police Corps Regimental Museum at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri

The John B. Mahaffey Museum Complex at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, houses the Chemical, Engineer, and Military Police Corps Museums. It is located in Building 1607 at 495 South Dakota Avenue. The museums are open from 0800-1600 Monday-Friday, 1000-1600 Saturday, and closed on Sunday.

For more museum information, call (573) 596-0780 or visit <www.wood.army.mil/usamps>.