

The Hohenfels Training Area HISTORY AND COUNTRYSIDE

1. Geographical Survey

a. Site: Hohenfels Training Area lays in the Free State of Bavaria, in the Administrative District (“Province”) of the Oberfalz (“Upper Palatinate”), in the former Landkreis County of Parsberg, now Neumarkt and is named after the market town of Hohenfels. The size of the area is 163 square kilometers or 16,300 hectares, which equals approximately 40,000 acres. The average extension from west to east is 17 kilometers or 10.3 miles; from north to south 7.7 kilometers or 4.8 miles (1,148 feet). The average height above sea level of the main area is between 450-500 meters (1,476-1,460 feet).

b. Formation of the Terrain: The Training Area lies in the Frankenalb, which is part of the Jura range that stretches from Switzerland to Bayreuth. The terrain consists of a series of low ridges, twisting valleys, meadows, woods, and some flatland. Its natural boundary to the north is the Hirschenwald and the Lauterach river; in the east the valley of the Vils River, with Velburg on the west and Hohenfels at the south border. Typical of the training area are the dolomite outcroppings, which rise above the limestone plains and deep-cut valleys. The waterless valleys of the training area stretch for miles and are surrounded by cliffs up to 75 feet high. Better that 40% of the training area is covered with woods consisting mostly of pine, fir, and beech trees. The vegetation in the area is typical of the Jura. A wide variety of wildlife can be observed on the training area as well.

2. History

This is a brief history of the Hohenfels Area and its indigenous population beginning from the first traces of known human life up to our days. The first traces of human settlers in the region of the Hohenfels Training Area have been found to go back to the Neolithic Age (circa 3,500 B.C.). Those men seem to have lived in the caves, which abound in the Jura Mountains. The Area of Hohenfels, though nowhere quoted in any text-book, was inhabited at the time when the Romans began to build up their Empire, and during the days of the city democracies of Ancient Greece, 500 years before Christ; it was populated by human beings even as far back as the period of the earliest Egyptian Pharaohs, two or three thousand years B.C. However, that area of Hohenfels together with what we now call Northern Bavaria (north of the Danube), remained unexplored to the civilized world, a blank spot on Herodotus’ map and on the maps of Syrian or Roman tradesmen, until Caesar led his victorious armies over the Alps in order to subjugate the Celtic (or Gaelic) tribes between the Alps and the Danube on or about the year 15 B.C.

We now know that human individuals or rather families with their kin lived in this area since the last glacial period, i.e. 10,000 years B.C. Most of the valleys were flooded in these days, filled with swamps and torrent creeks after heavy rainfall or thaw; the men lived in caves on top of the many hills finding their livelihood from fish and game, both big and small. They hunted fearlessly the brown Bear, the Timber Wolf, the Aurochs, a buffalo type animal, and the Elk, in vast primeval forests.

From that era, an unbroken line of human history can be followed up to our age. Iron ore had been used for some 3,000 years and is still mined within 60 miles of the training area, at Sulzbach and Auerbach. The regions north of the Alps, called “Raetia,” were conquered by

Tiberius and Drusus, the stepsons of Emperor Augustus (15 B.C.), but they did not cross the Donau to the north. That big river was the northern border of the Roman Empire from west of Kelheim (Weltenburg) to the Black Sea.

The habit of using the hills for residence remained unchanged until the time when the first Roman advance guards crossed the Danube River on occasional reconnaissance trips. With their appearance, the natives retreated to their hills well protected by ramparts build from the many loose rocks scattered all over the area. One such retreat fortress was located on top of the "Lindenberg" hill, now the south-end of the reservation (Air Strip). The main rampart (2,000 years old) can still be seen and scarce remnants of an old wall.

West of Kelheim, almost directly over against Weltenburg, the Romans built the famous "Limes," popularly called "The Devil's Wall," which stretched all the way across southern Germany to north of Frankfurt on the Main River. Today a small part of that "wall" (rampart) has been restored-together with a watchtower, near the starting point of the limes (Hienheim). The natural and artificial borders were fortified with smaller (and some larger) military installations (Border Camps). Abusina's foundations can still be seen west of Weltenburg. The most important camp was Castra Regina-a former Celtic settlement (Radaspona)-which was erected under emperors Marcus Aurelius and Commodus in 179 A.D. Castra Regina (modern Regensburg) could accommodate an entire legion. What lay north of the border seems to have been relatively untouched by Roman cultural influence. Soon after the first Germanic tribes invaded the country intense trading of hides, skins, and various ores for products of the civilized world, such as wine, Roman cloths and weapons began. The Germanics, basically farmers and hunters with a certain flair for "fast requisition" and risky adventures were the first to mingle with the Roman occupation troops in fights, in love, and in all other kind of businesses. The Danube River became the Frontier, south of the river was the Roman Empire, and beyond the river there was uncertainty and danger. The Germanics, at that time, were the tallest and the physically strongest race in Euraisa; they were matched in height only by the Illyrians, the ancestors of the Yugoslavs, who too caused the Romans a lot of trouble. The Romans on the other hand were superior in techniques, in discipline, and in the art of war.

Regensburg, formerly a Celtic village, was made a Roman Garrison. The new masters bringing with them all the achievements of a "modern" civilization, such as a well functioning Mail and Transportation System, an excellent administration, and a well-disciplined army, made Regensburg a strong fortress including a fortified harbor for war vessels and a merchant fleet. Engineers became very busy and local contractors became wealthy. It became a booming town, a busy city with a great number of attractions and other selected entertainments. It also became a recruiting center for Germanic and Celtic youngsters. They learned to speak Pidgin-Latin and entertained the Roman society with such performances a swimming on their backs in the Danube and killing flying waterfowl with bow and arrow. Roman civilization and military power displayed across the river became a lure of the younger generation north of the Danube. As the youth would tire of a seemingly impoverished lifestyle and the tilling of a poor soil they took off for Regensburg-or "Castra Regina," as it was called then. After 500 years the Roman regime dwindled away. There was a steadily increasing influx of Germanic tribes; the river was no more a borderline that could hold the permanent pressure of immigrating individuals or tribes from the north. Trade was thriving back and forth, and a great many Roman soldiers married Germanic or Celtic women. Roman money became legal tender all over Central Europe. Despite daily fights between tribes and the continuous rubbing of shoulders between the natives and the Roman troops, those days must have been mind-opening and to a certain extent considered peaceful.

However, changes took place abruptly when the Huns invaded the area around the year 470 AD. These Asiatic, under the strong leadership of their King Attila; riding small but enduring horses, spread all over Central Europe robbing, pilfering, killing, and raping. After the one-year the Huns stayed here, hundreds of thousands of Hun offspring added a new type of blood to the European race, the descendants of whom we can still find in Germany as well as in France or the Netherlands. The Germanic tribes who ruled the country north of the Danube called all their men to arms to defend the country. It is said that the battle was fierce, but none survived the Hun massacre and onslaught. Some graves discovered years ago on the Eichlberg hill (between Unteroedenhart and Siechendorf) remind us of the Hun's invasion. The bodies found were of Germanic warriors; they were extremely tall (far taller than the average German of our day). Sword and spear were lying next to them. The Hun's invasion happened at the same time when the Anglo-Saxons fled the continent establishing their Kingdom in England. After the Huns, the Avaric and the Magyars (Hungarians), brother nations of the Huns, followed while the Western Roman Empire disintegrated, shaken by interior conflicts and paralyzed by the permanent attacks from the outside. Eventually, the Marcomanni and possibly the Slavic tribes moved into the now defenseless territory. The Bavarians, in turn, pushed them, back in the 6th Century. The Bavarians, a conglomeration of various German tribes, had emigrated from Bohemia. The Naab River seems to have been the border between the Bavarians and the Slavs. At that time, Emperor Charlemagne founded Premberg as a commercial outpost on the Naab, near Teublitz, which was a Slavic settlement, as its name indicates. Charlemagne drove back the Asiatics and united all the Germanic tribes. Peace began to reign in the Hohenfels area. Christianity was introduced, and a multitude of castles was constructed.

Historical reports became scarce between 500 and 800 AD. All we know is that more Germanic tribes arrived in the course of a worldwide migration. With the access to power of Charlemagne, the Franconian King, who made himself Roman Emperor and Protector of Christian Creed, the German History begins. He drove the Asiatics back and pacified the Slavs, followers of the Huns. Charlemagne was successful in uniting all Germanic tribes in Italy, France, and Germany; his face since appears on many of today's playing card. He holds the absolute world record of reproduction of his portrait. For the first time after 300 years of continuous warfare, peace entered the country again, a proper administration was set up, and the Eastern borders were protected by means of a multitude of castles (Burgen) and a militia system.

Christianity was introduced or re-introduced and the Bishopries of Salzburg, Freising (near Munich), Regensburg, and Passau were founded. These bishops, usually scions of aristocratic Frankish families, were the local heads of the church, landowners, and belligerent protectors of the Empire simultaneously. We now know that a pygmy type of race (the dwarfs on the fairy tales) lived in Central Europe in the earliest days of our history. They engaged in mining of ores and gems, and were known to be excellent manufactures of jewelry and weapons (swords). There were "giants" too; we have seen their skeletons in the graves on the Eichlberg. In the course of a millenary migration of tribes and donations a great variety of human races mixed and smelted together to a new type, forming new classes of the social order. There was one literary and international language; Latin and a multitude of local languages and dialects composed chiefly of the Gothic element with loans from other languages. Hence the modern German language developed and took root.

The area west of the Naab thus became the starting ground for the Germanization of the Slavs east of the Naab. The country was called the "Nordgau" (Northern District), a name that it

kept up to the 16th Century. The Bavarian tribes soon accepted the Christian faith, which had already found followers among the Roman soldiers, settlers, and merchants, also. The first missionaries came from Ireland. Holy men like Agilus, Agrestius, and Eustasius are still held in honored memory. Besides the faith, they introduced into Bavaria the beautiful greeting "Grüss Gott!" More important, however, was the fact that they founded the first monasteries in southern Germany. Weltenburg is the oldest Bavaria (early 7th Century). The Irish missionaries were succeeded by West-Franconian missionaries, among whom the most famous and successful were Emmeran (Regensburg), Rupert (Salzburg), and Korbinian (Freising). These early missionaries were great workers for the Christian faith, but they failed to give Bavaria a solid ecclesiastical organization. This was done by the Anglo-Saxon missionaries with St. Boniface as their leader and head. He founded the dioceses of Regensburg, Freising, Salzburg, Passau (739 AD), and a little later Eichstaett and Wurzburg.

Around the year 900, the Bavarian Princes (of Anglo-Saxon descent) encouraged another migration. They sent expeditions out into the vast forest of Northern Bavaria and Bohemia where they established permanent settlements. Eger, Weiden, Amberg were so founded. County chiefs were instituted to enforce law and public safety and to take care of trade and commerce.

In 936, Count Graf von Hohenfels, began to expand his territory around Hohenfels. The castle of Hohenfels on the steep rock above the valley was gradually built up to the size and shape we find it on an etching of the 17th Century. There were two towers (one round, one square) on either side of a long stretched narrow building and a stone wall that gave only little room for the occupants of the castle to move and have physical exercise within their premises. From the top of the square tower a guard would be able to see the tower of the castle of Parsberg; they in turn were able to watch the castle in Kastl (hence the place's name). From that point, the view opened to Hohenburg and from Hohenburg the castle of Burglengenfeld could be seen. In this way the occupants of the castles were able to signal each other using smoke signals by day and lights in the dark. At any approach of an enemy the county chiefs called their men to arms, sent advance guards out, blocked the roads, and stockpiled food within their fortified places. Often the farmers too sought refuge in the castles from the menace of a ruthless enemy. As time past, Hohenfels began to lose much of its importance as a German Empire as her borders extended eastward. Instead of wars with aggressors, the noblemen of Hohenfels henceforth engaged in local feuds and at least in one case had a part in the intrigues surrounding the political fight for hegemony on Europe. It is believed that Hohenfels was already established as town by 1366. However, because of the inefficient administration and exorbitant taxes imposed by the notorious Robber Knights of Hohenfels and others afterwards, the town never prospered.

It was 1250 when Kaiser Conrad the IV visited Regensburg to punish the Bishop for the many feuds he was accused of provoking. One night the Bishop persuaded the Count of Hohenfels to kill the Kaiser in his bed. The murderer, however, who sneaked into the Kaiser's apartment successfully entered the wrong room; pulled the drapes away from a large bedstead and stabbed one of the Kaiser's knights to death. The killer never heard about this fatal mistake because of a deadly bolt of lightning that struck and killed him on his way home. The Kaiser sent his troops after the assailant; when they were unable to find the culprit alive they pilfered the castle thoroughly as a substitute punishment. This incident marked the future of the House of Hohenfels. The counts, now reduced to common knights, discriminated, condemned, and excluded from their society, determined to resort to forced violence, robbery, and crime as a permanent habit. They became a threat to the merchants traveling the road between

Nuremberg and Regensburg. For almost 100 years they were now known as the Robber Knights of Hohenfels.

The Robber Knights of Hohenfels:

The Robber Knights developed a simple plan of violence and scheming. After they raided a couple of convoys on the road between Nurnberg and Regensburg, they offered themselves as protective guards to the merchants. So long as the reward was high enough they stuck to the guard business. As soon as the pay rate decreased-because there were no more holdups naturally-the peaceful mask was dropped and robbing continued until the "guard salaries" jumped high enough to satisfy the demands of a robber knight. The Kaiser's Provost Marshal in Regensburg, of course, appeared frequently up in Hohenfels to search the castle for contraband and substantial evidence. However, because of lack of evidence the robbers were never brought before Court. Since the Robber Knights forgot to collect the scheduled contributions from the farmers and citizens-they so little compared to what they caught on one single successful raid-the general population of Hohenfels approved of the robbers' style and showed a hostile attitude toward the Kaiser's police forces. The life of crime allowed none of the Robber Knights to die in bed. When the last was killed in 1383 or drank himself to death, there was only one little girl left as the last descendant from the House of Hohenfels. The Bavarian Dukes took possession of the castle and town, and kept it until 1804 when it was sold and dismantled. The lonely girl, Anna from Hohenfels, entered a nunnery to expiate for the sins of her ancestors.

Politically, the Nordgau was separated from Bavaria since 976 and made a Markgrafschaft (margraviat). It was studded with castles and forts to defend its inhabitants against the Czechs. In 1368, the Nordgau was handed over to Wittlesbach dynasty. The local knights and counts of Parsberg, Hohenfels, Kastl, Hohenburg, Velburg, Lupburg, and Lutzmannstein contributed much to the development of the area by clearing the forests, cultivating the land, founding towns and villages, building churches, and erecting monasteries. Disasters frequently swept the area with swarms of migratory locusts (of the size of a finger) destroying the complete crop in 1338 and 1340. In 1427, the Hussites, Czechish religions and social revolutionaries, set fire to the town. Later a pestilence ravaged Central Europe from 1480 to 1489, the so-called "Black Death," which did not spare Hohenfels.

In the 13th/14th centuries, a large portion of the Nordgau was separated from the Dukedom of the Wittlesbach dynasty and annexed to the Palatinate of the Rhine. To distinguish that part of the Palatinate which lay in the Nordgau from the Palatinate proper, a new name came into use. It was called the "Ober Pfalz" (Upper Palatinate). This name was commonly accepted in the 16th century. Up to the 16th/17th centuries, the Nordgau was the "Iron Country" of Germany. Dozens of hammer mills, forges, and iron foundries processed the iron ore which was found in the area. The water of the streams provided the power necessary to operate the plants, and the woods furnished the furnaces with fuel. At that time, Amberg was the industrial capital of Bavaria.

The Reformation had a profound influence on the religious situation of both the people and the country. According to the principle: "Curius region eius et religio" (the ruler determines the religion of his subjects), the people had to change their religious affiliations several times in the course of only one century. First, they became Lutheran, then they were compelled to become Calvinists, then they were reconverted to Catholicism (1613) and have remained Catholics every since. Religious troubles were not the only hardships that haunted the people 400 years ago.

The many wars often wrought havoc among them. The memory of the Hussite wars after 1420 still lingers on in the old tales. The Landshut War of Succession (1503-1505), the Peasant's War (1524-1525), and above all, the Thirty Year's War (1618-1648) are still strong memories. The Thirty Year's War the troops from all parts of Europe passed or were billeted in Hohenfels. They took with them what they found and left expectant mothers behind. The population of Germany was cut in half by the Thirty Year's War; Entire villages disappeared from the countryside by the Swedish troops under King Gustavus Adolphus; never to be rebuilt. In 1631, after the great General Tilly was finally defeated, possession of the castle was returned to Bavaria in 1724. In 1628, the Upper Palatinate was returned to Bavaria. Elector Maximilian I, Bavaria's greatest prince, tried to rule his territories well and reinstalled a good and effective administration. But the new wars, the Spanish and Austrian Wars of Succession (1701-1714 and 1741-1748), and the Napoleonic Wars before and after 1800 laid heavy burdens on the population of the Upper Palatinate.

As a consequence of the Napoleonic wars and the secularization, Bavaria became practically a new state with new administrative centers and provinces. The area in which Hohenfels lies was incorporated first into the "Naabkreis", and then into the "Regenkreis", which finally received back its old name of "Oberpfalz" in 1837. When the age of industrialization set in, much of it bypassed the Oberpfalz. The new roads that were built avoided the mountainous Jura regions as much as possible and the railroads followed the valleys and connected the better-developed areas and towns. Thus the main source of income was agriculture. For some time the Upper Palatinate could justly be called "The Poorhouse of Germany." The only riches were its children. So it happened that many had to leave their homes and flock into the large cities, especially Munich and Nurnberg. The more daring ones immigrated to the new World before the turn of the century. In the old church registers one can often read the following entry: Ausgewandert nach Amerika" (immigrated to America).

Though very faithful to the Kings of Bavaria, the area of Hohenfels became or remained the most neglected part of Bavaria and of Germany until 1933. The population received new hope ushered in by Adolf Hitler and with Hohenfels under Nazism their situation had improved. Irrigation was brought to the valley and by the late mid 30s the Hohenfels Training Area was being established. People found employment plentiful and German Soldier's spending money increased the income of the Hohenfels people. A tunnel was built through the rock on top of which the remnants of the castle are sitting, in order to irrigate the valley. A recreational center was built for the children next to the old tower and in 1937 the Hohenfels Training Area was established. Considering these factors a training area would not effect the population too deeply and in this case it was expected that it would be of certain economical advantage to the people of adjacent villages because people could find employment on the training area. At that point in time the eight restaurants of the town were crowded each night with dining and signing soldiers on pass. Contractors found work and laborers employment. The Hohenfels' people were experiencing some prosperity with the modest increase of their income.

In 1937, the Army High Command approved the acquisition of the area contained by Hohenfels-Rohrbach-Schmidmuehlen-Hohenburg-Martinsberg-Jedenfeld-Schmidheim-Grossbissendorf. The former Reichsumsiedlungsgesellschaft Berlin (resettlement organization) tasked with recompensing the owners for the land required for the training area, began its activities on April 1, 1938. A total of 544 properties and farms were taken over. The market town of Hohenfels was hit particularly hard by these acquisitions as it not only lost part of its communal land, but also sustained a substantial loss in revenue by a decrease in

business turnover. The former Army High Command refused any claim for compensation, because they took the view that the initial negative effects would later on prove to be assets.

After consultation of the Reich and Land authorities concerned, the “Oberkommando des Heeres (OKH)” (Supreme Army Command” in 1937 approved the acquisition of an area of 100 square kilometers (24,710 acres) located between Hohenfels, Rohrbach, Schmidmuehlen, Hohenburg, Martinsburg, Judeneidenfeld, Schmidheim, and Grossbissendorf. Originally it was contemplated to name the area “Troop Area Schmidmuehlen” because acquisition and evacuation started from Schmidmuehlen and there was the “Single Track” railroad Schmidmuehlen-Amberg. Because of the administrative reasons and the fact that most of the area belonged to Landreis Parsberg and that the camps, water works, and sewage system were located near Hohenfels and construction of a road and railroad to Parsberg was planned, the Commanding General of VII Army Corps, General der Infantry Ritter von Schobert (later killed in Russia) decided to name it “Hohenfels Troop Training Area.

As a first impression and introduction to the Training Area, troops would be marched from Parsberg to the reservation where they deployed them over the area under field conditions. The troops camped in 4 man tents, they had no shower, no warm water for shaving, no mess hall, and no theater; the drinking water was to be carried along in the canteen and food was carried in the knapsack. The whole training period was considered to be a field exercise from the moment they left the railroad station until they remounted the train. The Commanding Officer (for some time a General) lived in the Nainhof Farm Building (now Quartermaster) next to cow stables and pigsties. The following projects were planned for 1938 and 1939, but the outbreak of war caused suspension for almost all of them:

1. Camp Nainhof for permanent party to accommodate “Kommandantur” (Post Headquarters, “Standortverwaltung” (Post Administration), and “Heeres Forstamt” (Army Forestry Administration) and a dependent housing area.
2. Food Warehouse in the “Steiner Tal” near Willertsheim northwest of Albertshof with railhead.
3. Post hospital at the southern slope of the “Haidlberg” near Grossbissendorf.
4. A housing area with elementary school for 250-300 permanently employed workers between Camp Nainhof and Oberlinder.
5. Reconstruction of the road to Parsberg and the road to Hohenfels-Kallmunz.
6. Water works (6 wells, 5 reservoirs)
7. Sewage disposal plant.
8. Water hydrants in the entire training area.
9. Single track railroad from Parsberg via Hoermannsdorf to Willertsheim-Grossbissendorf (later changes of the project planned the railhead to be located at Grossbissendorf).
10. Big camp for troops in the area Nainhof-Grossmittersdorf-Albertshof-Hirschau (brick construction, company size buildings).
11. Construction of a road from Nainhof to EnslwantpHohenburg.
12. Bunkers and artillery targets in the area Enslwantp-Gergheim-Schneideroed and Egra.
13. Ammunition dumps near Oberoedenhart.
14. Small airfield on the ridge between Unteroedenhart and Mehlhaube.
15. Anti-aircraft range between Hohenburg-Vielhausen and Martinsburg.
16. Forestry buildings at Dietldorf, Hohenburg, and Schmidmuehlen.

Only the following projects were completed:

1. A provisional camp at Unteroedenhart, which since the beginning of war was

- used as POW camp.
2. Camp Poellnricht for accommodation of 1st Infantry Regiment in wooden barracks (completed in 1940).
 3. Camp Nainhof for smaller units (company size). In 1938, a camp for 1,000 workers was established at Nainhof, which was no longer used when the main construction projects were suspended at the outbreak of the war.
 4. Camp Oberlinder (6 barracks-later only used as storage space for food and equipment).
 5. Camp Albertshof (240 barracks) to accommodate 11,000 men.

There were further constructed 3 forestry buildings at Schmidmuehlen and one in Hohenburg, a water system, sewage system, sewage disposal plane with effluent canal, and several roads in the camp areas.

The first authorities of the training area, the “Kommandantur” (Post Headquarters) and the “Standortverwaltung” (Post Administration) moved on 1 Dec 1938 into barracks in Camp Nainhof, while the “Heeresforstamt” (Army Forestry Administration) occupied office space in the old castle at Schmidmuehlen. In order to be soon able to billet troops on the training area, Camp Oberoedehart (provisional) was established where on Mountain Regiment could be billeted. Already on 1 April 1939, a medical company moved into the camp. Since the beginning war also units of XIIIth Corps and temporarily line units were on the Hohenfels Training Area. Besides small arms the following weapons were fired on the troop training area: mortars, 20 mm and 37mm anti aircraft guns, 75mm mountain guns, and 105mm field artillery pieces (howitzers). In winter 1939-1940, a bunker line was constructed in the Albertshof-Grossmittendorf area where troops received training for the attack against the “Maginot Line” in France.

Of the units which trained at Hohenfels prior to World War II were the especially well known 1st Mountain Division (Regiments 98,99,100) from the battle around Lemberg (Poland) in Sep 1939 and the Caucasus (taking of Mt. Elbrus) in 1941. Various regiments and/or battalions have been training at Hohenfels, but in each case only for very short periods; often only for firing exercises so that none of the units and/or their commanders had any closer connection to the training area. New units were not established at Hohenfels, nor were any famous commanders stationed at this training area, however, Generals Kasper (VII A.K.) and Leisner (XXII) visited the installations of the POW's on Hohenfels Post several times.

3. Prisoners of War on Hohenfels Training Area

After the autumn of 1939, prisoners of war were garrisoned here for various periods of time and Hohenfels also served as a POW staging area from which internees were sent to work on the farms or in German factories. British, Polish, Belgian, Yugoslavian, and American prisoners of war predominated. From fall 1939 to spring 1940, 3,000 Polish noncoms and men were accommodated at Unteroedehart. There were 2 Generals, field grade officers, and company grade officers. Some of them were released in February 1942, while the others were transferred to other officer's camps or sent to work in factories, farms, etc. In the summer of 1941, 3,000 Belgian soldiers and noncoms were brought to Unteroedehart but were soon released from captivity. At the same time 500 French soldiers (prisoners) arrived and were billeted separately. Most of these prisoners were legionnaires at Unteroedehart where they stayed until the end of the war and were brought to this camp in March 1942 from a camp in Jaroslau. They remained there for about a quarter of a year. These were

employed in the industry as laborers in German factories and farms. During September-October 1942, around 7,000 NCOs, who refused to work, from the British Empire were permanently billeted in Camp Unteroedenhart. They were members of all three branches of service. All were natives from Britain, the dominions, and the colonies. In Spring of 1943, the Hohenfels Administration had to rent and furnish a castle plus chapel and a large park to house 50 English Officers with ranks from Lieutenant to Major. This camp remained without a fence and did not show any signs of a Prisoner of War camp. The castle was furnished according to the desires of the Officers. On parole, they could move around free from 9 o'clock in the morning until 8 o'clock in the evening, receive separate rations, and had special assistance from a representative of the Supreme Headquarters in regards to cultural and sport entertainment. They were never put to work. Each prisoner of war received a gift parcel weighing 5 kg every 14 days from the allied Red Crosses. To avoid the so-called camp complex, larger groups of these POWs could alternately take walks to the close vicinity being, however, under steady control. By day they used to trade coffee, tea, and cigarettes received in Red Cross parcels against items they needed; at night they returned to their quarters. In fall of 1943, a camp was established next to the imprisoned American soldiers. They had been attached to the engineer command of the 7th Engineer Battalion (Ingolstadt) and worked on the construction of the small track railroad of Schmidmuhlen-Rohrbach-Hohenfels (completely destroyed at end of war). The occupation by US troops ended the war imprisonment of these soldiers.

On 22 April 1945, the American Army entered the training area with 9 tanks coming from Velburg/Hohenburg via Willertsheim-Albertshof releasing 7,000 British noncoms and 300 Americans. There was no resistance from the German side. Units of the German division "Goetz von Berlichingen" as well as other weak units had already left in the direction of Regensburg. The "Adolf Hitler Corps", billeted in Camp Poellnricht, left without fighting during the night of 21 April 1945. The Hungarian "Honved" troops failed to hoist a white flag and did not give any signs of surrender. Allegedly 40-50 were killed and injured during this shooting. The US tanks, with infantry following, were able to continue unhampered via the town of Hohenfels. Without resistance, the US tanks and following infantry units could move to Hohenfels and proceed from the Lauterach valley via Schmidmuhlen to the Naab at Burglengenfeld. The permanent party of the training area administration had orders to withdraw via Roding to Cham, but those who could not reach the southern bank of the Danube River were captured near Fishbach in the Bayerischer Wald.

The British POWs then freed, stayed in town a couple of weeks before they could be sent home. Polish DPs took over the barracks in the Poellnricht Area where a camp was established, housing more than 3,000 persons. Public Safety Officers of the US Military Government became very busy with continuous pilfering of textile stores, bakeries, flour mills, butcher stores, and the shoemakers' shops during the turmoil of the collapse of the German Reich. Woods were cut illegally; cattle, sheep, and goats were slaughtered in the fields, and the scarcity of food brought about an increase in criminal offenses. American law enforcement, and later accompanied by German police, were busy day and night to fight crime after the war ended. In May 1945, after the area was secure, the first displaced persons arrived at Hohenfels (most of them former internees from the German concentration camps of Flossenburg, Hersbruck, and Buchenwald). By July 1945, a total of 13,000 displaced persons (Poles, Ukrainians, Jews, etc.) were billeted in camps Nainhof, Poellnricht, and Oberlinder.

In the beginning they were taken care of by the American Army, then “UNRRA” took over. Through repatriation, emigration, and/or transfer to other camps the number of displaced persons in the camps of Hohenfels decreased to 5,000 in fall 1947. In spring 1949, the displaced person camp was dissolved.

Since 1946, German refugee farmers were settled on the Hohenfels training area. Military Government and later HICOG showed much interest in this program (under the Land Reform Law) and also rendered much assistance. Thus by October 1951, almost all former villages on the Hohenfels training area were resettled. Barracks from the camps had been moved and re-erected at these places and were used as temporary dwellings, stables, and barns. In several villages, new permanent farm buildings had been constructed with German Federal and REP funds. After the displaced person had been evacuated from the camps at Nainhof and Poellnricht, German expellees were accommodated there in 1949. Two elementary schools were built (one at Nainhof and one at Enslwang) and a small church was constructed at Enslwang with the assistance of the Norwegian Red Cross. The construction of a water supply system was commenced.

In 1948, the training area was opened for the resettlement of refugees and expellees from Soviet-occupied German territories. The arable land, which had lain fallow, was ploughed and the ruins of the battered farm buildings of the hamlets were turned into rough-and-ready habitations. With untiring industriousness and hard work new life was brought back into the wasted land. All new settlers were integrated in the community of “Hohenfels-Nainhof”, which thus became one of the largest rural communities in Bavaria. At this time, the Bavarian State Secretary for Agriculture and Forestry visited Hohenfels. In holding a speech, he emphasized that ‘no more will this soil be used to train men in the art of war’, and “never again, so long as we live, will Hohenfels become a center for militaristic activities of any kind.”

In 1951, the US Forces claimed the area again for military training purposes and requested its expansion to the west. In a meeting between German Federal Government, Bavaria State Government, Land Commission of Bavaria, and US Army Representatives, held on 17 August 1951 at Parsberg, agreement was reached to extend the old German Wehrmacht area to the west. 780 families numbering 3,256 persons were evacuated from the area. On or about 1 October 1951, the American Army moved an advanced party into Camp Nainhof. Compensation to the owners of the land required for this new training area was carried out within a very short period and led to hectic activity everywhere. Lumber merchants, real estate agents, and all other kind of businessmen poured in by the thousands from all over Germany to Hohenfels to bid for the approximately 200 hectares of forest to be felled and hauled away. Contractors went to work; the sound of hammers, caterpillar vehicles, cranes, bulldozers, scrapers, crusher plants, and the blasting rocks dominated for almost one year. Approximately 100 Million Marks (24 Million Dollars) were turned over that year of construction. Hohenfels began to prosper when the training center was opened up. Roads were built, lumber cut, and real estate prices soared. Money began to be spent freely and from October 1951, in the villages, all available living space was let to strangers at usury rates, the restaurants were busy from morning till night with people who spent money as fast as they made it. Hohenfels was experiencing its highest economic period in over 1000 years. In January 1953, the economic boom subsided and the locals sobered from this moneymaking period and returned to the ways of the past of tilling the soil once again.

The first unit to move onto the training area was Company C, 406th Engineer Battalion. In 1952, a massive construction program was initiated in the current field camps know as Camps

Albertshof, Poellnricht, Mehlhaube, and Linderberg. Motor pools were excavated; troop billets erected and mess halls built. Camps Albertshof and Poellnricht received the majority of permanent structures while Camps Melhaube and Linderberg were developed for use primarily as tent cities with the only permanent structures being the mess halls and latrine facilities. The training area was primarily used by US Forces from 1951-1956. In 1955 the German Bundeswehr was reconstructed and in 1956 the first German unit, the 5th Panzer Division was stationed in Camp Poellnricht. Since 1956, Hohenfels Training Area has been utilized by NATO Forces consisting primarily of American, German, Canadian, and occasionally British and French Forces. In 1956, Bundeswehr Headquarters was established in Camp Poellnricht and their first task was the initiation of the 5th Armored Division (which transferred a year later to Koblenz. Approximately one year later, the first Liaison Officer to the US Headquarters was appointed. His staff and the employees of the Bundeswehr added up to a work force of about 200 people, most of them citizens of Hohenfels and the surrounding communities.