

*A HISTORY OF  
CAMP BLANDING*

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Camp Blanding owes its location on the shore of Kinglsey Lake to the U.S. Navy's desire to establish a naval air station on the banks of the St. Johns River south of Jacksonville. The site was already the location of the Florida National Guard's Camp Foster and negotiations were started for a land-swap. In mid-1939, the transaction was accomplished and the state armory board chose as compensation a tract of 30,000 acres in Clay County as a National Guard camp and training site. The National Guard Officers Association of Florida recommended that the new camp be named in honor of Lt. Gen. Albert H. Blanding. The War Department agreed and Camp Blanding's history began.

General Blanding (9 Nov 1876 - 26 Dec 1970) was one of Florida's most distinguished soldiers. He graduated from the East Florida Seminary (now the University of Florida) in 1894 and began his military service to the state and nation. He was promoted to colonel in 1909 and commanded the 2nd Florida Infantry during the Mexican Border Service in 1916 and 1917. During World War I, he commanded the 53rd Brigade, 27th Division. He was promoted to major general in 1924 and commanded the 31st Infantry Division until 1940. He also served as chief of the National Guard Bureau until his retirement and promotion to lieutenant general in 1940.



LT. GEN. BLANDING  
1876-1970

In 1940, Camp Blanding was leased to the U.S. Army as an active duty training center. The post was originally used by New England and Southern troops preparing for deployment overseas. However, during the course of the war, Camp Blanding served as an infantry replacement training center, as induction center, the site of a prisoner-of-war compound and a separation center. At the height of the war, thanks to leases with local landowners, Camp Blanding sprawled over more than 170,000 acres. From 1940 to 1945, more than 800,000 soldiers received all or part of their training here.

After the war, the state's 30,000 acres were returned to the armory board and by 1948 most of the buildings were sold or moved off post. In the early 1950s, the federal government deeded additional land to the state for use as a National Guard training facility, but until 1970, the post saw only limited use by the military.

In the 1970s, an expansion program began upgrading the post facilities and in 1981, the federal government redesignated Camp Blanding as a Class A military installation. The designation qualified the post for use by greater numbers of troops



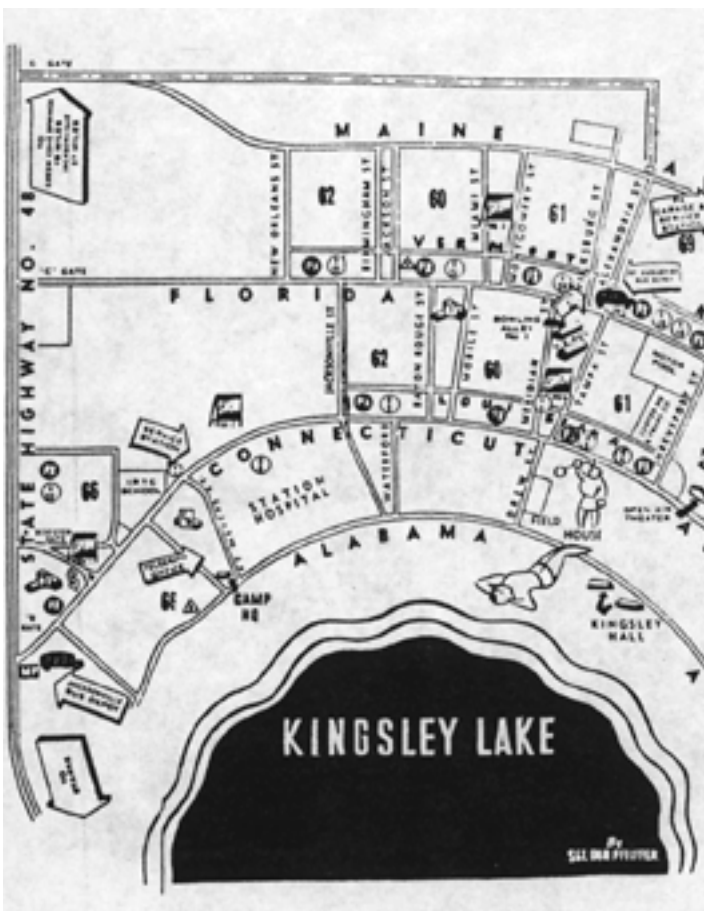
with more diversified training. Upgrading of facilities and training areas continues to this day.

In 1983, the first 105mm artillery firing points were used since WWII. Tank ranges have been upgraded and Tank Tables I through VI can be fired. In addition to improved facilities and ranges, a parachute drop zone and an airfield have expanded Camp Blanding's training capacity and the Navy utilizes a bombing and strafing target in the southern portion of the post.

The E. I. Du Pont de Nemours and Co. mines a restricted area on the western edge of the post where ilmenite and other heavy minerals are removed from the soil. The armory board uses the income from the sale of mineral rights and timber pro-

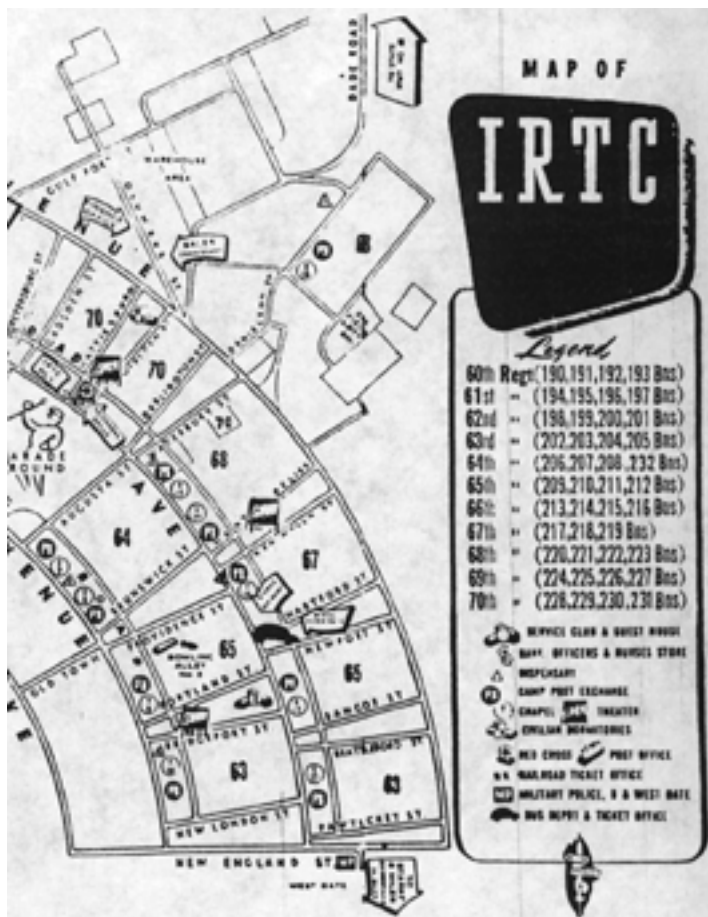


World War II aerial of Camp Blanding.



ducts for general post maintenance, operations and improvements. To help preserve the environment, DuPont has instituted a procedure whereby the topsoil is stripped and stockpiled before the mining operation is started. After mining, the topsoil is redistributed.

Today, Camp Blanding is a vibrant military installation with a training schedule that continues almost year-round to meet the training needs of tens of thousands of National Guardsmen, active Army and Reservists from all over the United States.



A 1944 map of Camp Blanding showing unit headquarters

*THE EVENT*

*PETRIFIED LIGHTNING FROM CENTRAL FLORIDA*

A PROJECT BY ALLAN MCCOLLUM

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