

FORT LAWTON

Fort Lawton is located in the city of Seattle on Magnolia Bluff. From the point of view of natural beauty it is the most beautiful infantry post in the United States. It also has a health record that is unsurpassed by most military posts in this country.¹

From 1866 to 1898 there was little or no military protection for Puget Sound. The only military post was the one at Fort Townsend, which was of no value from a military point of view.

In 1894 the Fortification Board selected eleven points for fortification on Puget Sound. One of the points selected was Magnolia Bluff. The general plan of defense called for four groups of fortifications. The first group or line of defense called for fortifications at Marrowstone Point, Admiralty Head, and Point Wilson. The second line of defense was to include fortifications on Double Point, Foulweather Bluff and Tala Point. The third line of defense was to be Magnolia Bluff, and the fourth line Port Orchard.²

The reason for the decision to fortify Puget Sound was undoubtedly due in part to the recommendations of Generals N. A. Miles, John Gibbon, A. V. Kautz, and W. P. Carlin, all of whom recommended that measures should be taken for the protection of Puget Sound when they were in command of the Department of the Columbia.³

Puget Sound would very probably have gone without defense despite the protests of its citizens, despite the attempts of congressmen and senators and despite the recommendations of the Generals in command of the Department of the Columbia, had it not been for the fact that in 1891 the United States established the Navy Yard at Bremerton; because the plan of defense drawn up was one for the defense of the Navy Yard.

The reason for the development of Fort Lawton may have been the fact that during the anti-Chinese riots in Seattle in November, 1885, and February, 1886, it was necessary to send troops from Fort Vancouver. General Otis says in August, 1894, "The vicinity of Seattle offers the most favorable conditions for location of a post, as that is the center of a small territory in which the future use of troops will be demanded, and the place at which exhibitions of lawlessness beyond the power

¹ Report of Major Chittenden.

² Report of Sec'y of War, 1895, (E. S. Otis in).

³ Report of Sec'y of War.

of the State to control have so frequently manifested themselves. A short distance beyond the city, extending into the waters of the Sound, Magnolia Bluff, one of the most important points selected by the fortification board for defense works, would appear to be the proper site for the post of an infantry garrison, to be succeeded, as it doubtless would be after a few years, by an artillery command. There the Fort Townsend Garrison should be stationed and materially increased."⁴

Senator Dolph of Oregon, who was chairman of the Senate Committee on Coast Defense, was instrumental in the passage of a bill providing for construction of military posts for the defense of the Pacific Coast.⁵ The bill contained an appropriation of \$50,000 for the construction of a post at Magnolia Bluff.⁵ After the passage of this bill, the citizens of the City of Seattle tendered the Secretary of War a tract of 703.21 acres of land on Magnolia Bluff. This site was approved by the Secretary of War, March 2, 1896, subject to the Department of Justice rendering favorable opinion regarding the title.⁶

Between October 14, 1896, and February 17, 1898, twenty-seven parcels of land containing 704.21 acres were deeded to the United States Government. Of this land 640 acres were for the Post and the rest was for dock sites, one on Salmon Bay and one on Shilshole Bay.

The deeds are as follows:

1. John Sullivan, October 14, 1896, 160 acres.
2. State of Washington, June 2, 1897, tidelands.
3. Christian Scheuerman and wife, June 14, 1897, 1.51 acres.
4. Anna Sophia Brygger, June 26, 1897, roadway.
5. Ole Schillestad, June 26, 1927, roadway.
6. Gustaf Anderson, June 26, 1897, roadway.
7. C. F. Anderson and wife, June 26, 1897, roadway.
8. Thomas W. Prosch and wife, June 29, 1897, 310.87 acres.
9. Thomas W. Prosch and wife, June 29, 1897, 20.1 acres.
10. Smith Cove Land Co., July 15, 1897, roadway.
11. State of Washington, July 17, 1897, tidelands.
12. Albert T. Bornan, July 26, 1897, 2.50 acres.
13. King County, July 29, 1897, 150.40 acres.
14. Lena Graham, July 28, 1897, 2.41 acres.
15. Lena Graham, July 28, 1897, 3.05 acres.
16. Sussanne Scheuerman, July 28, 1897, 10.73 acres.

⁴ Report of Sec'y of War, 1895 (E. S. Otis in).

⁵ Senate Reports, Vol. II, 327, 1st Session, 52nd Congress.

⁶ Report of Q. M. G., 1896.

17. Anna E. Ellicott, July 31, 1897, 31.18 acres.
18. Catherine Scheuerman, July 31, 1897, 10.97 acres.
19. Mary Jenott, August 3, 1897, 7.68 acres.
20. Thomas W. Prosch, August 4, 1897, lots.
21. Bertha Brodowich and husband, August 5, 1897, 5.45 acres.
22. Horace D. Chapin, August 19, 1897, roadway.
23. Jaseph Brodowich and wife, September 4, 1897, 0.25 acres.
24. Christian Scheuerman and wife, September 7, 1897, 1.41 acres.
25. John B. Allen and wife, September 11, 1897, 20 acres.
26. Christian Scheuerman, Jan. 28, 1898, 1.51 acres.
27. King County, February 17, 1898,⁷

On September 13, 1912, the roadway was deeded to the city of Seattle provided that the city would maintain it as a street.⁸

The site of the post was covered with heavy timber and was cut up by deep ravines at the time it was acquired. At the present time, about three hundred acres have been cleared and graded.

Work on the post started in 1898, and the first unit of the post was completed in December, 1899. The first unit included officers' quarters, barracks, non-commissioned officers' quarters, and quartermaster, storehouses. The hospital, which has a thirty-bed capacity, was completed in 1900. All the buildings are of wood frame construction.⁹

The Post was named in honor of Henry Ware Lawton, who was born in Ohio in 1843. He served as a volunteer in the Civil War with the rank of Colonel. After the war he was made a Second Lieutenant in the 41st Infantry. He was transferred to the 24th Infantry in 1869 and to the 4th Cavalry in 1871. He served under Miles in the Apache War against Geronimo, and was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel in 1889. During the Spanish-American War, he was promoted to Brigadier General and put in command of the Second Division of the Fifth Corps at Santiago. After the fall of Santiago he was promoted to Major General and placed in command of the Department of Santiago. He was transferred to the Philippine Islands in December, 1898, as second in command. He was killed in action at the Battle of San Mateo, December 19, 1899.¹⁰

The first detachment of troops to occupy the post was the

⁷ Hay, *U. S. Military Reservations*.

⁸ Records U. S. Engineers Office, Seattle.

⁹ Post Records, Fort Lawton.

¹⁰ M. W. Stryker, *U. S. Generals*, Pamp. V. 1.

32nd Coast Artillery Corps commanded by First Lieutenant M. C. Buckley. They were stationed at the Post from July 26, 1901, until May 13, 1902. The 106th Coast Artillery joined the Post August 13, 1901, and remained until May 12, 1902. The first infantry Company was Company B, 17th Infantry, which arrived May 9, 1902. The Post remained an infantry post until a few months before the World War when a detachment of Coast Artillery was again stationed there.¹¹ After the war, the Post again became an infantry post and at the present time is garrisoned by a detachment of the 4th Infantry consisting of 330 officers and men commanded by Major H. A. Wadsworth.

There were a few buildings of minor importance constructed from year to year. The second unit of the Post was completed in 1904, and there have been no additions since that time, except for stables and corrals which were completed in 1908, and a machine gun shed constructed in 1923.¹²

The Post has accommodations for 419 men in the barracks, each of which has a dining hall and kitchen built as part of the barracks. There are quarters for 16 commissioned officers and there are a number of quarters for married, non-commissioned officers. The stables have room for 840 animals and the corrals have room for 950 animals. The approximate cost of the buildings on the post is \$315,000.00. There is a civilian population of about 140 living at the Post.¹³

The generals who have been in command of the Department of the Columbia and the Department of the Pacific have been wont to bemoan conditions at Fort Lawton. One of the chief causes of trouble has been that there has not been level drill ground, and another is that the Post did not have an adequate range. Some of the difficulty has been overcome, as the Post has three hundred acres of cleared and graded land at the present; time; and a 1,000-yard target range, with ten targets, was completed in 1908.¹⁴

General Funston recommended that the Post be abandoned and a large tract be purchased on the prairie, south of Tacoma. It was suggested at the time of Denny Hill regrade, that the Government wash down the face of the bluff and fill in some of the tide flats to make a more satisfactory post.¹⁵

The plans for making Fort Lawton an artillery post were

¹¹ J. R. Potts, *History of Fort Lawton and the 14th Infantry.*

¹² Post Record.

¹³ Post Record.

¹⁴ Report Sec'y of War, 1908.

¹⁵ Chittenden Report.

abandoned, when it was decided to construct Fort Whitman as a protection for Deception Pass.¹⁶

It would seem that Fort Lawton is destined to remain what it is now—a post where two or three companies of infantry are stationed in peace time, for it is too rugged to become an airport, too small to become a training camp, and too close to a great city to become a coast defense fortress. However, there is no thought of abandoning it, because a year ago, when some of the military reservations in this district were being disposed of by the government, the Secretary of War issued a statement that Fort Lawton would not be discontinued.¹⁷

The following is a list of military organizations that have been stationed at Fort Lawton with approximate dates: Coast Artillery Corps, 1901-1902; 17th Infantry, 1902-1903; 8th Infantry, 1902 (three weeks); 19th Infantry, 1903-1904; 10th Infantry, 1904-1906; 3rd Infantry, 1906-1909; 1st Infantry, 1909 (two months); 25th Infantry, 1909-1913; 14th Infantry, 1913-1916; Coast Artillery Corps, 1916-1919; 58th Infantry, 1919-1921; 4th Infantry, 1921.

The following officers have commanded the post at Fort Lawton: First Lt. M. C. Buckley, C.A.C.; Capt. C. P. Summerall, C.A.C.; Col. Tully McCrea, C.A.C.; Maj. R. H. Wilson, 8th Inf.; Col. William Dougherty, 8th Inf.; 1st Lt. J. R. Thomas, 17th Inf.; 1st Lt. James E. Bell, 17th Inf.; Capt. Henry G. Lyon, 17th Inf.; 1st Lt. Llewellyn U. Busfield, 17th Inf.; Col. Thomas C. Woodbury, 3rd Inf.; Maj. William Y. Stamper, 3rd Inf.; Capt. William R. Sample, 3rd Inf.; Capt. Samuel P. Lyon, 25th Inf.; Col. Ralph W. Hoyt, 25th Inf.; Maj. J. M. F. Partello, 25th Inf.; Maj. Charles W. Penrose, 25th Inf.; Lt. Col. Samuel W. Miller, 25th Inf.; Capt. William G. Doane, 25th Inf.; Col. William P. Evans, 25th Inf.; Col. Robert C. VanVleit, 25th Inf.; Maj. Vernon A. Caldwell, 25th Inf.; Col. Jas. B. Jackson, 25th Inf.; Col. Lyman W. Kennon, 25th Inf.; Capt. H. W. Bunn, C.A.C.; Capt. C. Marshall Childs, 25th Inf.; Capt. Alexander J. McNab, 14th Inf.; Col. Richard H. Wilson, 14th Inf.; 1st Lt. Clarence K. LeMotte, 14th Inf.; Maj. Henry B. Moon, 10th Inf.; Capt. James B. Gowen, 10th Inf.; 2nd Lt. Fred T. Black, 10th Inf.; Col. Charles H. Noble, 10th Inf.; Col. N. A. Charles, 58th Inf.; Capt. Jas. W. McAndrew, 3rd Inf.; Capt. Fredrick G. Lawton, 19th Inf.; Lt. Col. Joseph E.

¹⁶ Chittenden Report.

¹⁷ *Seattle Times*, Jan. 10, 1926.

Houston, 19th Inf.; Lt. Col. Frank Taylor, 19th Inf.; Capt. A. B. Foster, 19th Inf.; Maj. H. A. Wadsworth, 4th Inf.; Col. H. G. Daniels, 4th Inf.

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