

HONORING AMERICAN LIBERATORS



UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM

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For almost two decades, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the U.S. Army's Center of Military History have worked together to define, recognize, and honor all the U.S. Army divisions that took part in the liberation of prisoners from Nazi concentration camps and other sites of incarceration.

In February 1985, two Holocaust survivors, Sigmund Strochlitz and Benjamin Meed, then serving as co-chairpersons on the United States Holocaust Memorial Council's Days of Remembrance Committee, formally requested permission from the Secretary of the Army, John O. Marsh, Jr., to display in the future Museum the flags of all the U.S. units that participated in the liberation of the Nazi camps. They also requested permission to present these colors at the Days of Remembrance ceremony held annually in the U.S. Capitol Rotunda in Washington, D.C. Several weeks later, the U.S. Army agreed to cooperate with the Museum in this important joint program.

In 1985, the Museum and the Center of Military History recognized some army divisions as liberating units: the 3rd, 4th, 6th, 10th, and 11th Armored Divisions and the 42nd, 45th, 80th, 90th, and 103rd Infantry Divisions.

Within two years, this program generated so much interest on the part of veterans' associations that the Museum and the Center of Military History developed further guidelines and procedures for handling future requests for liberator status. It was decided to recognize units only at the divisional level; to accord the honor of liberator status on the basis of unit records housed at the National Archives and Records Administration, not oral testimony; to accord liberator status to those divisions arriving at the site within 48 hours of the initial division's encounter. To further facilitate this process, requests for recognition were to come through a formal petition to the Center of Military History or the Museum from the divisional association or individual members of a division. As a result of these new guidelines ten more U.S. Army divisions were recognized as liberating units: the 12th, 14th, and 20th Armored Divisions, and the 4th, 8th, 71st, 89th, 99th, and 104th Infantry Divisions, along with the 82nd Airborne Division.

In the 19 years since this program was inaugurated, the Museum and the Center of Military History have recognized 35 U.S. Army divisions for their heroism, gallantry, and help in liberating prisoners from brutal Nazi rule. Each year, the names and flags of these units are presented in a moving tribute at the U.S. Capitol Rotunda for the Days of Remembrance ceremony. In addition, the Museum displays 20 divisional flags at its 14th Street entrance. The flags are rotated so that all the liberating units' colors are prominently exhibited for the two million visitors who walk through our doors each year.

To commemorate the unveiling of the National World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C., in 2004, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum once again honors the brave men and women who risked their lives to free their fellow human beings from bondage.

U.S. Army Divisions Recognized as Liberating Units by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the Center of Military History

INFANTRY DIVISIONS

1st Infantry Division
2nd Infantry Division
4th Infantry Division
8th Infantry Division
26th Infantry Division
29th Infantry Division
36th Infantry Division
42nd Infantry Division
45th Infantry Division
63rd Infantry Division
65th Infantry Division
69th Infantry Division
71st Infantry Division
80th Infantry Division
83rd Infantry Division
84th Infantry Division
86th Infantry Division
89th Infantry Division
90th Infantry Division
95th Infantry Division
99th Infantry Division
103rd Infantry Division
104th Infantry Division

ARMORED DIVISIONS

3rd Armored Division
4th Armored Division
6th Armored Division
8th Armored Division
9th Armored Division
10th Armored Division
11th Armored Division
12th Armored Division
14th Armored Division
20th Armored Division

AIRBORNE DIVISIONS

82nd Airborne Division
101st Airborne Division

For further information about the origins of this program, see Edward J. Drea, "Recognizing the Liberators. U.S. Army Divisions Enter the Concentration Camps," *Army History. The Professional Bulletin of Army History*, Fall/Winter 1992/1993, 1–5.

2ND INFANTRY DIVISION



Created in 1917, the 2nd Infantry Division first saw service in World War I. During World War II, the "Indianhead" division stormed Omaha Beach on D-Day (June 6, 1944) and broke out of Normandy before moving into Belgium. The 2nd tenaciously held its position during the Battle of the Bulge, preventing further German attempts to reconquer Belgium. In March 1945, the unit moved into the interior of Germany and captured the city of Leipzig on April 19. When the war in Europe ended on May 8, 1945, the 2nd had advanced to Plzen (Pilsen) in the present-day Czech Republic.

As the 2nd Infantry Division marched across Germany, it uncovered several sites of Nazi crimes. In early April 1945, the unit captured the German town of Hadamar, which housed a psychiatric clinic where almost 15,000 men, women, and children were killed between 1941 and March 1945 in the Nazi "euthanasia" program.

In April 1945, the 2nd Infantry Division overran Leipzig-Schönefeld, a subcamp of the Buchenwald concentration camp, where the camp staff forced the prisoners to work for the Hugo Schneider AG (Hasag) firm. The SS had permitted the Hasag's Leipzig field office to establish an ammunition factory for the German military in 1944. On March 28, 1945, Schönefeld housed some 4,765 female prisoners; however, at the beginning of April, the SS evacuated many of the inmates to prevent them from falling into Allied hands. When the 2nd Infantry Division arrived on April 14, 1945, only some 250 prisoners remained in the camp. According to the 2nd's report, the SS killed between 400 and 600 prisoners from December 1944 to April 1945. After occupying the camp, the members of the 2nd Infantry Division arranged for proper burial of the dead and collected evidence to be used in the prosecution of the SS personnel.

Around April 15, 1945, the 2nd Infantry Division liberated some 1,000 prisoners incarcerated in the "labor education" camp at Spergau/Zöschen. The U.S. soldiers interviewed prisoners and interrogated captured SS guards to ascertain conditions in the camp, identify and locate perpetrators, and gather evidence for war crimes prosecution.

The 2nd Infantry Division was recognized as a liberating unit by the U.S. Army's Center of Military History and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in 1993.

2ND INFANTRY DIVISION

Casualty figures for the 2nd Infantry Division, European theater of operations

Total battle casualties: 16,795

Total deaths in battle: 3,512

Division nickname

The nickname of the 2nd Infantry Division, "Indianhead," was derived from its World War I insignia. This insignia was developed from an emblem a truck driver in the division had painted on his truck.