

THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES IN THE REGIONS...

August 2008

A MONTHLY CALENDAR OF EVENTS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

A Historical Sketch of Camp Kilmer

Toward the end of 1941, with the threat of war imminent, the War Department chose a site between Edison and Piscataway, New Jersey, as a staging area for troops. They named the camp for the poet Joyce Kilmer, who was killed in action in the Aisne-Marne offensive in World War I. Construction began at Camp Kilmer in January 1942 and was completed in six months. The facility covered over 1,500 acres and consisted of 1,120 buildings, including rows of wooden barracks, 7 chapels, 5 theaters, 9 post exchanges, a gym, 3 libraries, 4 telephone centers, a post office, a 1,000-bed hospital, 28 miles of roadway, and about 11 railheads that fed into the main line.

From its opening in 1942 through the end of the War, Camp Kilmer was a major transportation hub for U.S. soldiers traveling to and from the European Theater. More than 20 divisions with over 1,300,000 servicemen staged at Camp Kilmer before being deployed to Europe. The site also hosted various Allied units before they were sent elsewhere for training.

With the ending of hostilities in 1945, the camp became the main receiving center for soldiers returning from Europe and the Pacific. By September 1945 over 300,000 of these returnees had been processed, and at times over 5,000 a day were coming through the Camp. In December 1945, Sgt. Melford Fabricant became the one millionth soldier to pass through Camp Kilmer.

Camp Kilmer operated more like a small city than a typical army facility, and servicemen enjoyed all types of entertainments and activities. The camp had its own baseball and football teams and hosted exhibition games with professional clubs from New York. There were 20 softball diamonds, 30 volleyball courts, and 160 horseshoe courts available for recreation. The camp had their own band and orchestra, and there were also dances and movies.

USO Camp Shows put on productions of plays at Camp Kilmer, and the troops had visits from professional athletes and top Hollywood stars like Betty Grable. Benny Goodman performed on the first radio program to be broad-

cast from the camp on March 15, 1945. As many as 21,000 returning troops a day would be entertained by the USO's eight-hour continuous shows.

Joe DiMaggio and comedian Red Skelton, both serving with the Army, were temporarily assigned to the Camp. DiMaggio autographed baseballs for wounded soldiers and gave hitting and fielding lessons, while Skelton made unannounced visits to the hospital for his version of "laugh therapy."

With the end of the war, the activities at the camp began to wind

down, and it was deactivated in the fall of 1949. It was briefly reactivated for the Korean War, but by the mid 1950s nearby Fort Dix had overtaken it as the major processing point in the area. Camp Kilmer's last major role came near the end of 1956 when it served as the receiving center for those fleeing the Hungarian Revolution during "Operation Mercy."

By the 1960s much of the camp's properties and land were dispersed. Today, there is a Vocational Training Center located at the site as well as housing and schools.

The Northeast Region—New York office has records from the Office of the Chief of Transportation (RG 336), which was established in the War Department's Services of Supply (SOS), Transportation Division, in 1942. The Office was abolished in 1964. Within the United States, this agency administered a variety of field installations and functions, including ports of embarkation, port agen-

cies, transportation depots, offices, and zones. The records document the movement of troops and materials, and include correspondence, orders, reports, and unit histories. The Northeast Region's RG 336 holdings include a Historical Record of Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, 1945.



Mourning of FDR at the Kilmer Bowl, 1945

Like the rest of the stricken nation, Camp Kilmer mourned the untimely passing of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. The gathering for the special memorial service in his honor filled the Kilmer Bowl to capacity.



First Baby Born in the Station Hospital at Camp Kilmer

The eight pound, 11 1/2 ounce boy, named Edward, Jr., was born on March 2, 1945 was considered to be "strictly GI" with his mother being a former WAC and his father a Staff Sergeant.

NARA West Coast August 2008

**Car Fallen Over the Edge of a Washed Out Road in
Burbank, CA, 1938**

Los Angeles River and Tributaries Storm Damage Photos
RG 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers;
NARA-Pacific Region, Laguna Niguel



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1	2
Exhibit: Seattle, WA Picturing the Century in the Pacific Northwest 5/6/08-Ongoing					San Bruno, CA NARA Japanese Internment Records Resources Workshop General Public 415-921-5007	
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
					San Bruno, CA Preserving Your History Workshop/Genealogists 650-238-3485	
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
				Seattle, WA Brick Wall Discussion Group Workshop/Genealogists 206-336-5115		
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
Seattle, WA Primarily Teaching Workshop Workshop K-12 Teachers 206-336-5115 8/18-8/22/08						
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	San Francisco, CA Society of American Archivists Professional Meeting Conference Professional Archivists 866-406-2379 8/26-8/30/08					

NARA's Pacific Region

Laguna Niguel 949-360-2641
laguna.archives@nara.gov

San Bruno 650-238-3501
sanbruno.archives@nara.gov

NARA's Rocky Mountain Region

Denver 303-407-5740
denver.archives@nara.gov

NARA's Pacific Alaska Region

Seattle 206-336-5115
seattle.archives@nara.gov
Anchorage 907-261-7800
alaska.archives@nara.gov

NARA East Coast August 2008

**Cheer Cart Bringing the Hospital PX to
Bedridden Patients, 1945**
RG 336; Records of the Office of the Chief
of Transportation
Historical Record of Camp Kilmer, N.J.
NARA-Northeast Region, New York



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1	2
Exhibit: New York, NY Communism Goes to Court 7/1-9/30/08		Philadelphia, PA Melting Pot Woes: Ethnic Suspicions on the Home Front, 1917-1918 9/24/07-8/31/08			Philadelphia, PA First Friday Genealogy Open House Open House, Noon General Public 215-606-0112	
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	Waltham, MA Introduction to Genealogy, 1.30 P.M. Tour/General Public 866-406-2379					
	Waltham, MA Introduction to Genealogy, 2 P.M. Lecture/General Public 866-406-2379					
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
				Pittsfield, MA Using Federal Census Records Workshop/Genealogists 413-236-3600	Philadelphia, PA Quest for Freedom Live and Learn Weekend Conference/General Public www.visitpa.com/freedom 8/15-8/16/08	Pittsfield, MA Finding Your Immigrant Ancestor at NARA Genealogy on the Internet Using Federal Census Records Beginning Your Genealogy at NARA Workshop/Genealogists 413-236-3600
17	18	19	20	21	22	
	Waltham, MA Passport Agency Facility Intro 10 A.M.-12 P.M. On-site Tour & Lecture/ General Public 866-406-2379		Pittsfield, MA Freedmen's Bureau Records Workshop/Genealogists 413-236-3600	Ellis Island, NY Family History Game Show Workshop/Genealogists 866-840-1752	Morrow, GA Naturalization Ceremony Open House & Tour/ General Public 770-968-2555	
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

NARA's Northeast Region
Pittsfield 413-236-3600
pittsfield.archives@nara.gov

Boston 866-406-2379
waltham.archives@nara.gov
New York 866-840-1752
newyork.archives@nara.gov

**NARA's Mid Atlantic
Region**
Philadelphia 215-606-0100
philadelphia.archives@nara.gov

NARA's Southeast Region
Morrow 770-968-2100
atlanta.archives@nara.gov

NARA Midwest August 2008

Double Ice Cream Cone Patent, circa 1930
 RG 21, U.S. District Court, Chicago
Maryland Baking Co. v. Milko Cone & Baking Co.
 NARA—Great Lakes Region, Chicago



Exhibit:
Cinema in the Stacks
The Man and His Dream
The Great White Hope
Anatomy of a Murder
 9/1/2007–1/1/2009

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Exhibit: Raytown, MO Lewis and Clark in Court 7/21–8/3/08	Exhibit: Lee Summit, MO Civil Rights, Civil Liberties 8/4–8/18/2008					Indianapolis, IN Federal Indiana Records in the Age of Lincoln Lecture/K–12 Teachers 1-800-447-1830
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
					Kansas City, MO Back to the Basics: Beginning Indian Genealogy Lecture/General Public 816-268-8071 <hr/> Augusta, GA Augusta Genealogical Society Conference/Genealogists 706-722-4073 8/15–8/16/08	Exhibit: Leavenworth, KS Mugged! 8/16–11/30/2008
17	18	19	20	21		23
Chicago, IL 28th International Conference on Jewish Genealogy Information Booth Genealogists www.chicago2008.org/ 8/17–8/21/08				Exhibit: Independence, MO Mugged! 8/21–9/4/08		
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

NARA's Great Lakes Region
 Chicago 773-948-9001
 chicago.archives@nara.gov

NARA's Central Plains Region
 Kansas City 816-268-8000
 kansascity.archives@nara.gov

NARA's National Personnel Records Center (NPRC)
 Archival Programs Division
 St. Louis 314-801-0850

NARA's Southwest Region
 Fort Worth 817-831-5620
 ftworth.archives@nara.gov