

The Americans in Wiesbaden

Impact on city planning and architecture

This story series "SEH-GANG" ("sight walk") was initiated by the Wiesbaden City Department for Urban Development & Architecture and produced by the Wiesbaden Kurier newspaper, with the support of U.S. Army Garrison Wiesbaden. The city office features a different architectural topic every year. In 2011, the group wanted to show how the American military presence has shaped the city's architectural development over several decades.

The following articles are translations of the stories that ran in the Wiesbaden Kurier/Tagblatt. *These translations are offered as a service to visitors to the garrison website. They in no way imply endorsement by this Command, the U.S. Army or Department of Defense*

The German-American dream

Guest commentary: The new series of Kurier [architectural] explorations is dedicated to "Americans in Wiesbaden"

By Rolf Troyka

Wiesbadener Kurier, July 21

Translated by: USAG Wiesbaden GRO

Wiesbaden-This year's [architectural] explorations, produced by the Committee for City Planning, Architecture and Building Culture in the city of Wiesbaden in cooperation with the Wiesbadener Kurier, are dedicated to the topic "Americans in Wiesbaden." Our intent is not only to illuminate the historical development and the present, but also to shed light on the future.



Soldiers in the city

Flashback: In the 50s, many German cities were significantly damaged, in many areas there was great poverty and depression. Many American soldiers are living and working in Wiesbaden-named the state capital by the Americans in 1945. The Wiesbadeners experience "the American dream" first hand. For instance, committee member Benita von Perbandt, then still a school child, babysits the children of an officer's family and works her way up into a service position at the then-American-occupied Nassauer Hof. And the chairman of the committee, Hans-Peter Gresser, and his band play at the Eagle Club.

The Americans live in stark contrast: They enjoy abundant and exotic foods, unusual cigarettes, chewing gum, drinks and barbecues. The occupiers are increasingly viewed not as antagonists but as role models worth emulating, not just in their consumption but particularly in their style of life. This is especially true from the mid-50s on, as the first housing areas for American families are constructed under the supervision of architect Herbert Rimple: There are no fences around the gardens, but instead a lush "green carpet" is spread out, on which individual buildings are distributed. There were apartments in which one doesn't enter into tiny, narrow halls but into interconnected rooms that flow into one another and express openness (back then there already were the living and eating areas that have become so customary today). A different world! Stars like Bill Ramsey and Elvis Presley came to Wiesbaden as well.

A model needed

And today? The Americans are a natural part of the Wiesbaden population but are hardly integrated into society. Through the move of the European [Army] Headquarters, great opportunities

are opening to our city. Many new fellow citizens in officer ranks and many employees (with the opportunity to remain longer) will live in Wiesbaden-this raises an urgent need for a model.

In two ways. First, When we speak of integration, we usually think of citizens with immigrant backgrounds. When it comes to our American residents, these efforts have to be expanded over a long period of time. For security reasons, the Army areas will continue in future to be closed [to the public]. So it is all the more important that members of the Army are encouraged to come into contact with the Wiesbadener population. Shouldn't there be a house of German-American friendship? With an Eagle Club?

Second, a city development plan appears to be the order of the day. Not only because of the American residents. Living space in the various price levels is scarce and will become scarcer. The question is: Where can new residential areas be built-and not just on the city's periphery, where new infrastructure is still required? Unfortunately, this is not addressed in the [governing] coalition's agreement! In this area, action is sorely needed.

In Frankfurt, the city parliament passed a resolution to resettle private garden plots in the Niederrad area (of course with adequate compensation and the offer of alternate plots elsewhere), in order to build a residential area close to the city center. The new Wiesbadener coalition partners have positioned themselves: "They will work toward the continued support of private garden clubs. There will be no shrinking of [garden] spaces" This means maintaining the current area, but not necessarily in the same location. Why not use the garden plot colony "An den Nussbaeumen" between Konrad-Adenauer-Ring and Brentanostrasse for the creation of reasonably priced residential space for Americans and Germans, in order to prevent the rise in rents due to increased scarcity? That would be a real contribution to social city planning! Perhaps many of the garden plots could be maintained within the construction.

In sum, we need to make adjustments quickly, so that we can speak of a "German-American dream" and develop deeper German-American friendship in Wiesbaden.

Views of the city: Americans in Wiesbaden – a relationship rich in history

Wiesbaden Tagblatt/Kurier, Aug. 9, 2011

URL: <http://www.wiesbadener-tagblatt.de/region/wiesbaden/meldungen/11035404.htm>

Translated by Anemone Rueger, U.S. Army Garrison Wiesbaden Public Affairs Office

By Jutta Schwiddessen

After the occupation of the city in 1945, when the Americans made Wiesbaden the headquarters of the military government of the Hessian state capital, they have now voted for this city a second time. Starting in fall of 2012, the city will be the headquarters and thus the administrative and control center of the U.S. Army in Europe. By fall of 2013, all Soldiers and civilians of the headquarters will be working in Wiesbaden, and many of them will also live in Wiesbaden.

Challenges for city development

Just like in 1945, this process will bring with itself some urban development challenges. "Seh-Gaenge 2011" is a story series initiated by the Urban Development, Architecture and Construction Culture Committee and focuses on "Americans in Wiesbaden" and the impact of their presence on city planning, architecture and lifestyle.

This development, however, can only be understood when considering the historic context, said Rolf Toyka, director of the Architects and City Planners Chamber of Hesse. He and Professor Benita von Perbandt, Hans-Peter Gresser, Hildebert de la Chevallierie and Thomas Schwendler of the city's Planning Office make up the SEH-Gaenge team.

A friendship grown over the years

The German-American relationship, which has grown into a friendship over many years, initially started out all but friendly. The beginning of the relationship was marked by the confiscation of villas, apartments, hotels, administrative facilities, but also cultural and leisure facilities of the city, resulting in an extreme housing shortage for Wiesbaden residents. The last confiscated apartments were returned in 1956.

In 1946, 3,331 apartments in more than 700 buildings were requisitioned by the occupation forces. In 1948, it was almost 6,000. The way the confiscations were conducted was quite brutal initially, as researched by Professor von Perbandt. Within 24 hours the city had to produce a list of apartment buildings, which had to be vacated immediately. Immediately meant, the tenants had to leave within one hour, and were allowed to take “clothing, bed linens, valuables, 1 plate, 1 cup, 1 knife, 1 fork and 1 spoon per person, as well as food items.” And often, as contemporaries remember, “the Americans were waiting at the door looking at their watches.” The terrible events of the war were still too fresh for the occupiers to be able to show any empathy or consideration.

"Housing areas"

By 1951, the American Community had grown to 16,000, since starting in 1946, the Soldiers stationed here were allowed to bring their families over as well. At the time of the invasion of the Americans, Wiesbaden had 123,000 inhabitants. One year later, the number had risen to 198,000 – an increase of almost 40 percent. The fact that Wiesbaden had less of its housing capacity destroyed than other cities didn't help much. New construction was too slow to satisfy the new demand, all the more since Wiesbaden also had to find accommodation for refugees, foreign workers desiring to stay, and, starting in the 1950s, also the members of the new state government as well as the staff of the two newly established federal agencies – the BKA (Federal Investigation Office) and the Federal Statistical Office.

Closed American housing areas existed in Gustav Freytag Strasse and Lahn Strasse, where the American school was also located. According to research conducted by Perbrandt, nearly 1,000 Americans lived in 130 houses on Biebricher Hoehe hill. The houses were fenced with barbed wire and secured by Polish guard personnel. Another housing area was located in Nassauer Strasse. Villas in Bierstadter Strasse, Park Strasse, Richard Wagner Strasse and Rossel Strasse were requisitioned, and another villa was reserved for Eisenhower. It was not until the 1950s and 60s that the American housing areas on Bierstadter Hoehe hill and Hainerberg were built (see separate SHE-Gang edition.)

Kurhaus in U.S. hands

The golf course, founded at the beginning of the 20th century, was in U.S. hands, just like the Kurhaus and all pretty hotels – the then still existing Neroberg Hotel (Officer's Club,) Opelbad, Palast Hotel (headquarters of the Military Government,) Rose, Schwarzer Bock and Goldener Brunnen. Any earnings from tourism and cure leave guests were blocked by that, said Perbandt.



(photos added by PAO)

The Kurhaus housed the legendary “Eagle Club” operated by the American Red Cross, where internationally renowned stars like Frank Sinatra, Bob Hope, Bill Ramsey, but

also Wiesbaden Jazz musicians like Rudi Breuker and his sextet performed. When the Kurhaus was fully returned to the Wiesbadeners in 1954, the Eagle Club moved to the so-called “White House” in Paulinen Strasse. The entry hall to the main station was packed with the vehicles of the American troops, and also the Reisinger Anlagen compound across the street, today a park, served as a parking lot for the occupiers until 1950.

Not always free of conflict

For about a year, the relationship with the Americans was one of the victors and the conquered, where friendly contacts were unwelcome. Then they were opportune, and – if nothing else, for the sake of the democratic education of the Germans – the doors opened, and the “American way of life,” including ice-cream bombs and Jazz slowly, but surely found their way into the city. Numerous charitable and cultural events brought both sides nearer to each other. Many personal friendships developed, and many a U.S. family that lived in a requisitioned apartment “illegally” returned the property to its German owners. The Berlin Airlift, which started in Wiesbaden-Erbenheim, increased the mutual sympathies.

The co-existence was, however, not free of conflict. One of the main problems up until the 1980s was the lack of discipline of the Soldiers, who were growing tired of Europe, which again and again led to altercations.

Read in the following SHE-Gang editions how the presence of the Americans shaped the architectural image of the city and the development of Wiesbaden, and how things look for the future, for instance concerning the American Arms Hotel in Frankfurter Strasse, which is already closed, or with new housing construction.



The „White House“, the Soehnlein Villa in Paulinen Strasse, in 1945. USFET means, Headquarters of the U.S. Forces in Europe, Wiesbaden regional headquarters (the headquarters was in Frankfurt’s IG Fabenhaus)

Foto: Stadtarchiv

“Like a city in the city”

CITY VIEWS – From a horse race track to the U.S. headquarters. A tour of the Wiesbaden Airfield

Translated by Anemone Rueger, U.S. Army Garrison Wiesbaden Public Affairs Office

By Jutta Schwidessen

“It’s like a city within a city,” said Architect Hans-Peter Gresser, referring to the U.S. airfield in Wiesbaden-Erbenheim, which is the first station of the “SEH-Gaenge 2011” tour of the Wiesbaden Architects Advisory Committee, which this time focuses on “Americans in Wiesbaden.” For security reasons, however, one cannot simply walk into this “city within a city.” For the architects team, the gates did open, and after registration, security controls and friendly escort to the location of the Airfield Operations Office, they are standing on the actual Erbenheim Airfield. They look across the

runway, where this very moment a German Air Force plane is landing with German Chancellor Merkel for an appointment at the BKA (German Investigation Office), right onto the former club house and last relic of the Wiesbaden horse race track, which opened in 1910. However, it was not for long that the horses galloped across the historic grounds, where probably in 1184 many a knight of King Barbarossa's 40,000-strong Pentecost Camp camped with their war horses to celebrate the introduction of the king's sons to the corps of the knights.

Even before World War I Wiesbaden looked for a different use of the horse track, which after an initial boom did not turn out so profitable, and thus initiated the history of the Erbenheim Airfield. Together with Mainz, the city worked out plans for a joint civic airport. In 1927 the concession arrived, and on Sept. 8, 1929 the solemn opening was celebrated. Just seven years later, the German Air Force took it over as a military air base, from where bomb raids are said to have been flown on London during WWII.

In 1945 the US Air Force occupied the base and turned it into "Wiesbaden Airbase." Many existing buildings were taken over, including an administrative facility built in 1938 in the style of Nazi architecture for the German Air Force, used by the American Airfield Operations office until today.

What was particularly painful for the Wiesbadeners in the hunger years was the expansion of the Air Base as it caused the requisitioning of fields and farmland, the crops of which were direly needed. Agricultural land (of the Mechtildshausen Domain) was needed again recently in conjunction with the move of the U.S. Army –Europe headquarters from Heidelberg to Wiesbaden, primarily for the construction of the new housing area with 326 housing units – single houses, duplexes and town houses – which started in 2009. The move will increase the number of U.S. community members in Wiesbaden significantly, from a current 16,000 to about 20,000 by 2015. That again requires more housing and an adequate infrastructure.

A view from the Airfield Tower direction south shows that the "city in the city" is currently one big construction site, with the future headquarters building in the middle, of course with significant security precautions, built, by the way, by an Israeli construction company headquartered in Stuttgart. Administrative and office facilities as well as housing units are being renovated, also in the U.S. housing area on Hainerberg, where the new Wiesbaden Army Lodge, which replaced the "American Arms" in Frankfurter Strasse, was opened in March. A new shopping center is expected to follow in 2012. Total investments for renovation and construction measures in conjunction with the headquarters move are estimated at about \$550 million.

Picture captions:

Above: 1912 – Bustling activity at the horse race track opened in 1910.

Left below: 1955 – German boys inspect aircraft at the Erbenheim U.S. Air Base.

Right below: 2011 - The new headquarters building for the U.S. Army in Europe is expected to be ready for occupancy by fall of next year.

„Wie eine Stadt in der Stadt“

STADTANSICHTEN Von der Pferderennbahn zum US-Hauptquartier – unterwegs auf dem Wiesbadener Airfield

Von
Jutta Schwiddessen

WIESBADEN. „Es ist wie eine Stadt in der Stadt“, sagt Architekt Hans-Peter Gresser und meint das US-Airfield in Erbenheim, die erste Station der „Sehgänge 2011“ des Wiesbadener Architektenbeirats, die sich diesmal mit dem Thema „Amerikaner in Wiesbaden“ beschäftigen. In die „Stadt in der Stadt“ kann man allerdings aus Sicherheitsgründen nicht einfach hineinspazieren. Für die „Sehgänger“ öffneten sich die Tore, und nach Anmeldung, genauer Kontrolle und freundlicher Eskorte zum Quartier der Flugleitung stehen sie auf dem Flugplatz Erbenheim. Quer über die Landebahn, wo gerade eine Luftwaffenmaschine mit der an diesem Tag im BKA erwarteten Kanzlerin Merkel aufsetzt, schauen sie auf das einstige Clubhaus und letzte Relikt der 1910 eröffneten Wiesbadener Pferderennbahn. Die Pferde galoppierten aber nicht lange über den historischen Grund, auf dem 1184 wohl auch so manche der 40000 Ritter des Pfingstlagers von König Barbarossa mit ihren Streitrössern campierten, um die Schwertleite von Barbarossas Söhnen zu feiern.

Bereits vor dem 1. Weltkrieg suchte Wiesbaden nach einer anderen Nutzung der Pferderennbahn, die sich nach anfänglichem Boom nicht recht rentieren wollte, und leitete damit die Geschichte des Flugplatzes Erbenheim ein: Zusammen mit



1912: Buntes Treiben auf der 1910 eröffneten Pferderennbahn.

Foto: Stadtarchiv

Mainz erarbeitete man Pläne für einen gemeinsamen zivilen Flughafen. 1927 traf die Konzession ein, und am 8. September 1929 fand die feierliche Eröffnung statt. Sieben Jahre später schon übernahm ihn die deutsche Luftwaffe als Militärflughafen, von dem aus im Zweiten Weltkrieg auch Luftangriffe auf

London geflogen worden sein sollen.

1945 besetzte die US-Air Force den Flughafen, machte aus ihm die „Wiesbaden Airbase“. Viele vorhandene Gebäude wurden übernommen, so wie auch die Flugleitung des Stützpunktes bis heute in dem 1938 im Stil der Nazi-Architektur für die Luftwaffe erbauten Verwaltungsgebäude sitzt.

Was den Wiesbadenern in den Hungerjahren besonders wehtat, war die Erweiterung der Airbase, denn dafür wurden Felder und Äcker eingezogen, deren Erträge man dringend gebraucht hätte. Landwirtschaftliche Flächen (der Domäne Mechtildshausen) wurden auch jetzt wieder im Zuge der Verlegung des Hauptquartiers der US-Landstreitkräfte in Europa von Hei-

delberg nach Wiesbaden benötigt: größtenteils für die 2009 begonnene neue „Housing Area“, die 326 Wohneinheiten in Einzel-, Doppel- und Reihenhäu-

rum erfordert mehr Wohnraum und eine adäquate Infrastruktur.

Der Blick vom Airfield-Tower nach Süden zeigt, dass die „Stadt in der Stadt“ zurzeit eine Großbaustelle ist: mittendrin das künftige Headquarter mit hohem Sicherheitsaufwand, das übrigens eine israelische Baufirma mit Sitz in Stuttgart baut. Verwaltungs-, Wohn- und Bürogebäude werden renoviert, auch in der US-Siedlung Hainerberg, wo im März bereits das neue „Wiesbaden Army Lodge“-Hotel eröffnet wurde, das das „American Arms“ in der Frankfurter Straße ersetzt. 2012 soll zudem ein neues Shopping Center folgen. Investitionen von rund 550 Millionen US-Dollar sind bisher für die gesamten Neuerungen im Zuge der Hauptquartiersverlegung angesetzt.



sem umfasst. Denn mit dem Umzug wird sich die Zahl der Mitglieder der US-Gemeinde in Wiesbaden deutlich erhöhen – nach amerikanischen Prognosen von jetzt 16000 auf etwa 20000 im Jahr 2015. Das wieder-



1955: Deutsche Jungen besichtigen Flugzeuge auf der US-Airbase Erbenheim.

Foto: Stadtarchiv



2011: Das neue Headquarter für die US-Landstreitkräfte in Europa soll im Herbst kommenden Jahres bezugsfertig sein.

Foto: Toyka

Introduction to the loosened up city

City views: The U.S. housing area “Hainerberg” represents the new ideal of city development after 1945

Wiesbaden Kurier, Aug. 30, 2011

Translated by Anemone Rueger, U.S. Army Garrison Wiesbaden Public Affairs Office

By Jutta Schwidessen

More green space, more room, more air. With the Americans, a new housing style made entry to Wiesbaden in the early 1950s. Initially, though, the only beneficiaries were the “occupiers.” The post-war Wiesbaden population, which was suffering from a massive housing shortage, initially was very little excited about the new construction culture, which it co-financed.

Today, one can glance back without the understandable rage of those years. And it shows the beginnings of a new era of neighborhood construction in Germany, as represented by the Hainerberg Housing Area, which was stamped out of the fields at incredible speed in 1954. Fourteen days after the groundbreaking, the first toppings off were celebrated for the finished framework construction of an eventual total of 200 buildings with 1,146 apartments.

New open space

Hainerberg is the destination of the second SEH-Gang walk 2011 dedicated to the Americans in Wiesbaden and the impact of their presence on city planning and architecture.

Today’s observer does not catch the special character of Hainerberg at first glance. But when the first American housing areas were built in the early 1950s, the difference with German neighborhoods at the time was clearly obvious. “The surrounding area, fringed by many trees, gave the impression of a large park, which had a few houses dropped into it,” explained Hildebert de la Chevallerie, member of the architects team conducting the tour, and former Green Space Office chief of Wiesbaden. “The new open areas differed significantly from the narrow, green-less tenement blocks of the Wilhelminian time.”

The housing area, which is characterized by quickly built, but consistently designed housing units, symbolizes the leitmotif of city housing development after 1945 – “the loosened up city,” foregoing the more common closed block construction design and favoring open construction models instead, said Chevallerie.

The three-story housing complexes are spread across Hainerberg, which is (at least for the time being) accessible for the German public, in a generous green neighborhood resembling the spread-out fingers of a hand. The bow-like curved walkways and streets are separated; playgrounds, schools, a kindergarten and the barbecue pavilions – indispensable for the American way of life – are not isolated from each other, but are located in one green, fence-less area accessible to all.

The German architects, such as the Wiesbadener Herbert Rimpl, who at times were at work with 1,000 workers, had free reign only with the overall housing area concept development, the facades and the design of the buildings. The layout of the housing units and the design up to the built-in closets was pre-designed, following a typical program, which then was used for all construction projects of the Americans worldwide. This included the open apartment floor plan without dark hallways and with an integrated kitchen and living area, up until then largely unknown to the Germans.

And there is another thing that was rather revolutionary about Hainerberg: the heating plant, also called “the cathedral” because of its architecture, which supplied all houses centrally, also very unusual for the time.

Later built infrastructure facilities like the entertainment center or style-breaking renovations or added balconies and covered entryways have, however, dimmed the architectural harmony of the neighborhood. The hotel, which was completed in spring, does not trigger much enthusiasm among the SEH-Gang team, either.

Apart from a small housing area in Kastel, there are four U.S. housing areas in the city today. The first one was “Crestview Village.” The so-called “Airlift housing” with approximately 500 housing units on Bierstaedter Hoehe Hill was built in 1950 (primarily from debris of the ruins of Mainz) after the Americans had decided to stay present in Wiesbaden for a longer period of time, the Berlin Airlift being one of the reasons. Almost at the same time, the Aukamm housing area was built, contrasting the Crestview style of block construction with a spacious construction design, including single houses and duplexes, which were reserved for the officers of the then nearly 16,000 Americans in Wiesbaden. Hainerberg followed with a size of nearly 67 hectares. The last one was the housing area on the Airfield in the making.

Since 2009, 326 housing units have been coming up here like mushrooms - about 60 single houses, 50 duplexes, and the rest chain-like row houses, of course with BBQ pavilion. And whoever moves into a house directly neighboring with the Mechtildshausen Domain, can experience a piece of true country life – the intruding crow of roosters and an occasionally whinnying horse. Differing from Hainerberg by straight access streets, despite wide margins of green space, the new housing area appears rather monotone. No accent from a viewpoint of city planning, which would be noted by posterity – that much SEH-Gang architects Rolf Toyka, Benita von Perbandt and Hans-Peter Gresser agree on.

Strict ranking order

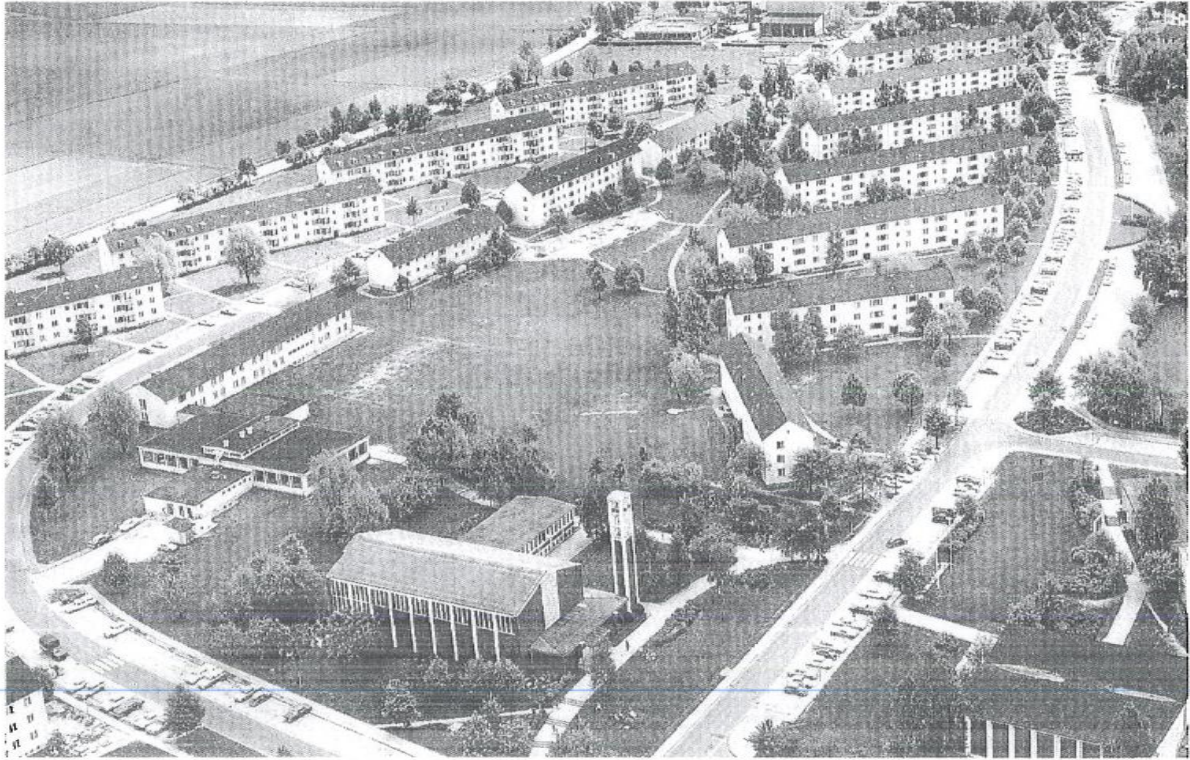
The new Airfield houses, however, offer significantly more space than the post-war housing units, and that space will be needed, also because today about 50 percent of the Army members stationed in Wiesbaden are married and are bringing their families, says garrison spokeswoman Anemone Rueger. A strict ranking order is also mirrored by the assigned square footage in the new housing quarters: 150 to 200 square meters for the lower ranks, 250 square meters for a colonel, 300 for a general.

Cutlines:

Main photo: The aerial view from 1971 shows the structure of the large U.S. housing area “Hainerberg”, which was a novelty in the 1950s

Bottom left: Housing and leisure facilities embedded in park-like green areas are typical for the loosened-up neighborhood.

Bottom right: The trees have grown tall, and Hainerberg has grown green, as shown in this photo from 2007 with the shopping center in the foreground.



Die Luftaufnahme aus dem Jahr 1971 zeigt die für die 50er Jahre neue Struktur der US-Großsiedlung Hainerberg.

Foto: Stadtarchiv

Wiesbaden: When the casernes in "Camp Lindsey" became a residential area

By Jutta Schwiddessen

Wiesbadener Kurier, Sep 16, 2011

Translated by USAG Wiesbaden PAO

WIESBADEN-- Vhs, government authorities, housing, and a lot of green - those who do not know the past would hardly notice it: Only the NATO-building numbers on the houses at "Europaplatz", the style and size of the Wilhelmine administrative buildings are still a reminder that the "Europa-Viertel" used to be a military area until 1993, first in the 19th Century for the Prussians and at the end for the Americans.



For over a century soldiers grounds

"Camp Lindsey" is a term most Wiesbadeners still view as a picture of U.S. shacks at the entrance of Schiersteiner road. The recovery of the former (U.S.) military land for urban use was the subject of the fourth Kurier's "Sehgangs" with architect and planning advisory council speaker Thomas Schwendler having the lead that time. With the partial withdrawal of the Americans in the 90s, the casernes in various locations in the city were turned into residential areas. The largest area and the biggest challenge was "Camp Lindsey."

In 1993 the city recovered the roughly 30-acre site, and the newly formed Urban Development Society (SES) designed the now familiar face of the neighborhood. With this it bounded to the city an area that was soldiers grounds for over a century. First used as a training area in 1868, then the "Gersdorff-

Infantry-Kaserne" was built in 1868 which was followed in 1908 by the "Oranien-Artillery-Kaserne" in the area of Homburger Strasse and Waldstrasse.

Civilian interlude

The user changed very soon,: After World War I, the French followed in 1925 the British Rhine Army. In 1930 there was a brief civilian interlude it 1930 with barrack rooms turning into housing, workshops and offices. But in 1936, colorful life was over. The grounds were remilitarized.

After World War II, "Gersdorff-Kaserne" was called for a short time "Camp 563" and was a stopover station for the repatriation of the so-called "displaced persons", homeless foreigners, forced laborers and prisoners of war.

Then in 1945 began the era of "Camp Lindsey," which was home to the U.S. Air Force until 1973 when they moved to Ramstein. Victor DiMarzo, now director of the U.S. Army housing office in Erbenheim and from 1977 to 1981 a medic at the Wiesbaden U.S. hospital, has this time joined the Sehgängern.

When Priscilla Presley went to highschool at Hainerberg

DiMarzo is one of the few who still remembers those days when U.S. soldiers were bowling in the today's casino in the Hessian Police Academy on George-Marshall-Strasse, when the father of Priscilla Presley was stationed here, and his daughter went to the Hainerberg highschool (and then met Elvis), and when today's Willy-Brandt-Allee 14 was the address of the "best U.S. officers' club in Europe."

In 1993 the Americans emptied the former Prussian training area, the land was returned to the Federal Republic who reserved one section for the BKA [Federal criminal agency]. The State located there the police authorities, and the rest became an urban district.

Housing benefits

And not only "Camp Lindsey" made room for civilian housing in the 1990s. The former German "Freudenberg" caserne, named "Camp Pieri" after the U.S. takeover, disappeared and made room for row houses. The U.S. caserne on Schiersteiner Rheingaustraße, was cleared in 1992 and made room for duplexes and city apartments over the 1.7 acres now known as Schiersteiner garden city. The former police caserne in Pfaelzer Strasse in Biebrich, where the Americans had operated a laundry, is now the address of a school for behaviorly-disturbed, with next to it subsidized housing.

The Schiersteiner harbor caserne, where shortly after the end of the war the U.S. Navy lied anchor, was handed over in 1956 to the Bundeswehr, which maintained there until 1987 a base to ensure a smooth crossing of the Rhine. Today one could also live there, in the Schiersteiner harbor. For those who know it, there is one more reminder of the arrival of the Navy. Some of their landing crafts were rebuilt and painted red, and are still used today as fire fighting boats.

For the future development of Wiesbaden, the city is counting on further conversions of sites that are still used by the U.S. Army. This includes an area in Kastel, on Wiesbadener Strasse where a small housing area and AAFES, the trade and service center, are located. Also the former star hotel in Frankfurter Strasse where since the closure of the hotel section this March, there is only the Army administration for its European schools.

Thursday, 6 October, 2011

URL: <http://www.wiesbadener-kurier.de/region/wiesbaden//11185003.htm>

WIESBADENER KURIER

Wiesbaden

The leisure facilities the Americans bestowed on Wiesbaden

09/22/2011 - WIESBADEN

By Jutta Schwiddessen



Golf-lovers in the Rhine-Main area ought to love the U.S. Army. Nature-lovers perhaps not as much. Without the U.S. Army there would certainly be no Rheinblick Golf Course, with its picturesque park setting and athletic challenge, on which Germans are also allowed to play.

The sixth Kurier “Sehgang” (architectural walking tour), including members of the city’s architectural committee, focused on the leisure facilities the Americans bestowed on Wiesbaden after the war. Among the facilities: a golf course atop Freudenberg and three hotels, one of which still fulfills its original purpose, and the American Chapel in Hainerberg.

The search began in 1950

But first, back to the golf course. When the Americans came to Wiesbaden in 1945, they first occupied the available golf course at Chausseehaus. No more golf for the German population. When Germans wanted to get back onto the green, a replacement was needed for the Americans. The search began in 1950. The Wiesbadeners were able to prevent a takeover of Rabengrund, a local favorite among the Americans and located near the recreational area.

As alternatives, there were the north side of the airbase in Erbenheim and the Rheinblick area, “where no golf course would probably not be approved today,” said architect and Sehgang member Hans Peter Gressner. At that time, the dreamy landscape was still a military training area and was used as a tank training range.

‘A lucky chance’

The course was opened in 1957, and since the Americans opened it to external players in 1977, it has been a meeting place for Germans and Americans. “A happy chance,” says Mark Smith, the American manager of the golf course. The committee members see it less happily: The newly constructed caddy hall above the parking lot is a purely functional building out of prefabricated components and doesn’t fit into the landscape optically.

Around the same number of Germans and American military members currently play on the golf course. The German contingent, however, is adjusted to the Americans’ participation and could rise again after the move of the U.S. headquarters from Heidelberg to Wiesbaden. Administrative personnel play more often than soldiers, who have to spend time in the field.

A piece of history

An additional specially constructed facility that the Americans opened in 1955 is the chapel in the U.S. housing area in Hainerberg. According to architect Hans Peter Gressler, it is the largest American church outside the United States. Theoretically, this could also be a place for Germans and Americans to meet. The Catholic and Protestant services are open to everyone and take place in the chapel that was renovated and outfitted with new stained glass windows two years ago.

According to Sehgang member architect Rolf Toyka’s research, at the chapel’s grand opening in 1955, “the German national anthem was played before the American anthem for the first time.” This shows how far German-American friendship had advanced at the political level.

In the 1950s, the Americans’ three large hotels in Wiesbaden were built, enabling the return of previously confiscated buildings. In 1955, the Amelia Earhart Hotel was opened on the Second Ring. The nine-story building, with its strictly modern divisions of row after row of windows, is Wiesbaden’s only architectural reminder of Le Corbusier’s houses as “a machine for living in.”

Three hotels

It is also historical in this respect: It was built for the many Americans who came to Wiesbaden because of the U.S. hospital located next door. For many years, until its closing in 1993, it was the U.S. Air Force’s largest military hospital outside the United States. It put Wiesbaden in international headlines as the delivery point for released hostages or U.S. soldiers returning from the Middle East.

The Amelia Earhart hotel next door, in which President Nixon once stayed (the bathroom of his suite still exists), was used as a hotel until 1995. Today, it houses the U.S. Corps of Engineers, responsible for planning and construction for the U.S. Army in Europe. At specific times, however, Germans also go in and out of the building. Amelia Earhart contains a playhouse of the same name, a small theater in which Germans participate in productions or attend as guests.

Amelia Earhart was the second hotel that the Americans built. In 1951, they constructed the star-shaped (now closed) American Arms on Frankfurter-Strasse and in 1956, on Auguste-Viktoria-Strasse near the train station, the General von Steuben, which is still a hotel: the Dorint Hotel Pallas Wiesbaden.

URL: <http://www.wiesbadener-kurier.de/region/wiesbaden/meldungen/11203901.htm>

WIESBADENER KURIER

Wiesbaden

‘The Kastel Wall should fall’ – Plans for the move of the Army installation

09/28/2011 - WIESBADEN

By Jutta Schwiddessen

“The Kastel wall should fall,” says the Wiesbaden architectural advisory council, by which the members mean that the U.S. Army’s satellite installation for AAFES should be moved from the heart of AKK (Amöneburg, Kastel, Kostheim) to Erbenheim in the near future in order to free up room downtown and create more residential space. In the Americans’ view, this is possible, at least in the long term.

AAFES stands for Army and Air Force Exchange Service, which means that the 23.5 hectare base, formerly belonging to the German Wehrmacht, houses the central administration for the Army’s European retail network, including stores, gas stations, Burger King, administrative and security offices, all accessible to military personnel alone.

Creating new residential space

The American retail and service center, with its Kaserne charm, was the last stop for the Kurier’s 2011 Sehgang (architectural tour) with the Wiesbaden architectural committee. It’s not a coincidence that the series focused on “Americans in Wiesbaden” this year: The move of the European headquarters to the Hessian capital will grow the American military community from around 16,000 members to roughly 20,000 and will bring great challenges in the residential situation, according to the committee.

The increase, particularly in Army civilian employees, will mean increased demand in the residential market. Around 1,000 additional housing units will be needed within a 25-kilometer radius of the Erbenheim airfield, surmises Roger Gerber, chief of the office in charge of stationing and restructuring for the Army in Erbenheim.

Avoiding conflicts

“The coexistence of Germans and Americans has not always been easy in the past,” says Rolf Toyka, spokesman of the architectural committee and CEO of the Hessian Architectural and City Planning Association. Now the path needs to be set for “the creation of new residential space in various price ranges,” he says, “in order to avoid future conflicts because of bottlenecks and a steep increase in rents due to shortages.”

According to Roger Gerber, the “release” of a portion of the AAFES installation—and thereby the fall of at least a portion of the “Kastel Wall”—is already being discussed informally. For one thing, the construction of a new shopping center in Hainerberg in 2012 will make the majority of the AAFES stores redundant. However, according to Gerber, other facilities would have to be accommodated on replacement land elsewhere.

Climate change

According to Renate Friedel-Dammrau, of the city’s planning office, plans for development of the AAFES installation into a residential and green area have been in one of the organization’s desk drawers since the beginning of the 80s. Now it is also possible to think about the future of the shuttered American Arms hotel complex on Frankfurter Strasse, in which several U.S. administrative offices are still located. The return of the area is expected in 2013, says Roger Gerber.

In view of the increased demand for housing, architectural advisory council spokesperson Toyka feels that a “full picture for the city’s development is necessary, including the (still) Army areas in the long term.”

Sehgang member and architect Benita von Perbandt fully supports this idea. What she is missing in the previous discussion “about inner-city crowding and the conversion of unused spaces” is: “the topic of climate change, which is paid too little attention in politics and the public. For city development, this aspect means not building too densely, creating green areas with climate-mildening vegetation and strictly observing air corridors that ventilate the city.”

‘Americans as an opportunity’

The council sees the improved integration of Americans as a challenge, one that is also close to the heart of Lord Mayor Helmut Mueller (CDU) and has found an open ear among U.S. commanders for several years.

In this connection, Toyka would like to see targeted PR work in order to explain to the public the positive aspects of Americans’ presence in Wiesbaden: “The city’s significance will increase through the headquarters, and the new Army members in higher grades will bring economic stimulus,” because they are more ready to shop outside of their installation.

Architect and city planner Toyka would also view as appropriate a reminder of “the important role the Americans played in the history of the Federal Republic of Germany.” Toyka imagines an “Airlift memorial in Erbenheim, near the A66.”



The American Arms Hotel on Frankfurter Strasse was the initial destination for the U.S. Armed Forces' new arrivals for years. Archive photo: RMB / Friedrich Windolf

Aircraft, comics and chewing gum

CITY POINTS OF VIEW--A look back at the time when the Americans came to Wiesbaden as occupiers

By Jutta Schwiddessen

Wiesbadener Kurier, November 15, 2011

Translated by: USAG Wiesbaden GRO



WIESBADEN - "The Americans in Wiesbaden" was the theme of this year's "Sehgang" architectural series, presented by the city's Committee for City Planning, Architecture and Building Culture and the Wiesbadener Kurier.

Starting in fall 2012, the city will be the seat of the U.S. Army's European headquarters and the administrative and command and control hub for all U.S. Army units in Europe. By fall 2013 at the latest all of the headquarters' soldiers and civilians will work in Wiesbaden, and many of them will also live in Wiesbaden.

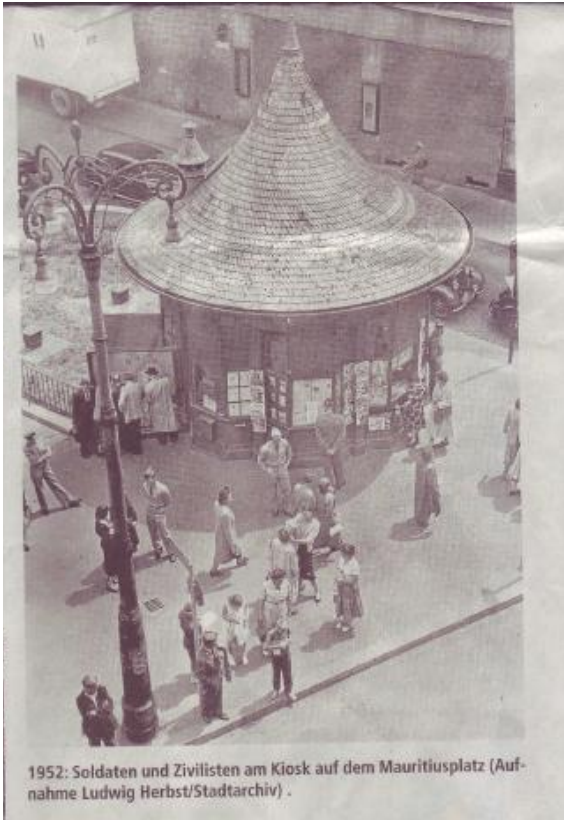
The "Sehgang" members looked back on the history of the Americans' architecture in Wiesbaden since the occupation, as well as their effects on city planning and Wiesbaden's lifestyle. And the latter in more ways than just in the form of omnipresent chewing gum.



The Wiesbaden archive's photos that show how the Americans shaped the cityscape are real treasures. The pictures from the 1950s especially fascinate Kurier readers. For some people it is because they experienced that time themselves. For others, because the photos depict local history that they didn't have an opportunity to experience.

So, to conclude the series we will take a photographic stroll through time “when the Yanks arrived...”

Left picture -- 1912: Before the military and aircraft took over the grounds, one went to Erbenheim for horse racing.



*Left picture--
1952: Soldiers
and civilians at a
kiosk on the
Mauritiusplatz.
(Photo by Ludwig
Herbst/City
Archive).*



*Right picture--
1955: students
from Dilthey were
allowed to watch
mechanics at the
Air Base*



*Right picture—1956: German and American children, some
from Camp Lindsey, exchanging comics.*



*Right picture—1954: American boy
scouts posing for an Air Force flight
line poster at the Erbenheim Airfield
(City archive).*

Deutsche Pfadfinder machen auf dem Erbenheimer Flugplatz Werbung für die Luftwaffenlaufbahn.

Fotos: Stadtarchiv