

FORT BENJAMIN HARRISON: FROM MILITARY BASE TO INDIANA STATE  
PARK

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## Acknowledgements

During my second semester at IUPUI, I decided to escape the city for the day and explore the state park, Fort Benjamin Harrison State Park. I knew very little about the park's history and that it was vaguely connected to the American military. I would visit Fort Harrison State Park many times the following summer, taking hikes with my dog Louie while contemplating the potential public history projects at Fort Harrison State Park. Despite a false start with a previous thesis topic, my hikes at Fort Harrison State Park inspired me to take a closer look at the park's history, which eventually became this project. Finishing this thesis would have been nearly impossible without the encouragement and dedication of many people. First, I need to thank my committee: Dr. Philip Scarpino, Dr. Rebecca Shrum, and Dr. Anita Morgan for their criticism, support, and dedication throughout my writing process. I would especially like to thank my chair, Dr. Scarpino for his guidance through the transition of changing my thesis topic so late in the game. After switching thesis topics so late in my studies, your encouragement and advice sharpened interests into the completion of this project.

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Melanie Barbara Hankins

FORT BENJAMIN HARRISON: FROM MILITARY BASE TO STATE PARK

For nearly a hundred years, Fort Benjamin Harrison served as an epicenter of training and organization for United States Army in Indianapolis, Indiana. However, budget cuts pushed the U.S. Congress to close Fort Harrison under the Defense Base Re-Alignment and Closure Act of 1991. Over the following five years, the U.S. federal government, various Indiana state agencies, city governments of Indianapolis and Lawrence, and citizen advocacy groups worked together to develop a reuse plan for the former military base. Succinct planning and compromises allowed 70 percent of the former military base to be converted into an Indiana state park. Over the lifetime of the base a variety of factors resulted in the unintended creation of the largest noncontiguous forest in Central Indiana ---an area perfectly suited as an Indiana state park. As Fort Benjamin Harrison enters its second decade as a state park, park staff must reevaluate the park's military past and its effects on the land as it is today. This thesis examines the transitional years between the closure of the base and opening of the park, analyzes current interpretive practices at the park, and provides new suggestions for future public programming and interpretive practices.

Philip V. Scarpino, Ph.D., Chair

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### **List of Abbreviations**

BRAC	Base Realignment and Closure Commission
CCC	Civilian Conservation Corps
CMTC	Citizen's Military Training Camp
DHPA	Indiana's Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology
DNR	Indiana's Department of Natural Resources
FHTTF	Fort Harrison Transition Task Force
NPS	National Park Service

## Introduction

One sunny fall afternoon in 2001, Fort Benjamin Harrison State Park hosted a popular educational program called Archaeology Day. The semi-new Indiana state park invited visitors to look beyond the park's military past and hiking trails in order to examine archaeological record through artifacts uncovered at the park. Young archaeologists were encouraged to act like Indiana Jones by exploring the park's landscape for evidence of ancient people who lived in this area.<sup>1</sup> For the afternoon, Fort Benjamin Harrison State Park transformed into an active archeological dig, encouraging visitors to look and think about the land and its indigenous inhabitants.

Despite the popularity of this event and others like this at Fort Benjamin Harrison State Park, locals today will often use the park as an escape from hustle of downtown Indianapolis, Indiana. One early visitor at the Archaeology Day event even noted, "It's wonderful that the area [park land] is so pristine and has been so protected, right in the 'urban-ness' of Indianapolis."<sup>2</sup> The 2,500 acres of land has over nine miles of hiking trails through native hardwood forests, several fishing lakes, and preserved historic buildings from the park's former military days. Fort Benjamin Harrison's location in central Indiana near the Indianapolis and Lawrence metropolitan areas it makes the park accessible to Hoosiers from across the state. From casual hikers to visitors attending a history tour, Fort Harrison State Park has the potential to provide people with a plethora of activities on the largest piece of contiguous forest in Central Indiana. This land has a history— shaped and transformed over an extended period as a result of human

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<sup>1</sup> Greg McLaren, "Fort Harrison Park offers Archaeology Day," *The Indianapolis Star*. 21 September 2001.

<sup>2</sup> McLaren, "Fort Harrison Park Offers Archaeology Day," *Indianapolis Star*.

occupation and use. Both the fort and the current state park represent significant chapters in the story of that land, ranging from old-growth, hardwood forest to farms to a military base, and for part of that acreage reversion to forest and incorporation into a state park.

The present-day landscape has emerged as human activity that developed the land fluctuated over time. The forested areas in the park today appears in a more ‘natural’ state but can be viewed as a living artifact with multiple layers—with traces of an early Native Americans community pushed out by nineteenth century white land speculators and farmers. By the end of the nineteenth century, the agricultural village of Lawrence thrived near Fall Creek where the land was eventually purchased by the United States government to be transformed into army barracks, which became Fort Benjamin Harrison for nearly a century. The various chapters of human occupation and use subsequently created the current flora and fauna conditions, without being visibly present today. Drawing on environmental philosopher, Martin Drenthen’s, analogy of palimpsest landscape and reused medieval parchments, state park visitors can find a new meaning in the park’s landscape and its history. Drenthen argues that: “If we conceive of ecological restoration as the uncovering of ancient layers and the cultivation of the lessons learned from reading the older text, then the palimpsest landscape that reflect human history and ‘grounds’ our sense of place in an understanding of the earlier and deeper layers.”<sup>3</sup> This allows visitors to both appreciate the current reforested landscape and hiking trails, while realizing that this landscape reflects the previous chapters of human activity through political, economic, and other social processes.

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<sup>3</sup> Martin Drenthen, “Ecological Restoration and Place Attachment: Emplacing Non-Places?” *Environmental Values* 18, no. 3 (2009): 285–312.

These invisible layers underneath the park's current landscape reveal a complex history filled with political compromises, farming settlements, and defacto-military reforestation. Each layer is a result of social, economic, and political processes that both drastically and subtly altered the terrain over time. Concentrated efforts to clear the woodlands to make way for farming in the nineteenth century were reversed by mixed-use development as an active American military base. Political decisions made in Washington, D.C., rerouted the future of Fort Benjamin Harrison to eventually become part of the Indiana state park system. Together, these unseen strata build upon and intersect with each other to unveil the present-day ecological and cultural landscape at Fort Benjamin Harrison State Park. The interplay of the social, ecological, and cultural layers should be considered when walking along the park's hiking paths or enjoying the solitude while fishing at the park's lakes.

Previous studies on Fort Benjamin Harrison have focused on specific, separated layers of the landscape's history: military, ecological, cultural, and archaeological. The primary military history written about Fort Benjamin Harrison is by Dr. Stephen E. Bowers, a retired Army field historian. Dr. Bowers wrote several regimental and associated histories for the United States Army Soldier Support Center. His works, *The History of Fort Benjamin Harrison 1903-1981* and subsequent book, *The American Army in the Heartland*, chronicle the history of Fort Harrison from the opening of the military base in 1903 to its closing in 1995. Bower's narrative connects the history of Fort Harrison to a story about the Army and its relationship to the Indianapolis community.<sup>4</sup> Bowers' book, *The American Army in the Heartland* sets the stage for the final chapters

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<sup>4</sup> Stephen C. Bowers, *The History of Fort Benjamin Harrison, 1903-1982* (Indianapolis, IN, Command History Office: June 1984), 159.

of Fort Harrison's military era. In addition to the military history, the architectural and archaeological stories of Fort Benjamin Harrison are captured by various archaeological reports and historic preservation plans produced by Indiana's Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology (DHPA).<sup>5</sup> Indiana's DHPA records offer an insight into both the built environment of the former military grounds and deeper history through their archaeological findings.

Finally, the most obvious and physical layer of Fort Harrison State Park's forested landscape was recounted in environmental reports published by the U.S. Army Engineering Corp, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Indiana Department of Natural Resources. The two plans, *1990 Report to U.S. Representative Dan Burton on the Hazardous Waste, Fort Benjamin Harrison's Compliance with Environmental Laws* and *1995 Environmental Impact Statement on Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana, Disposal and Reuse*, documented the cultural resource management and the military's environmental responsibilities on the reuse of the base.<sup>6</sup> Reports by the US Fish and Wildlife Services surveyed the flora and fauna conditions of Fort Benjamin

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<sup>5</sup> Bush, David R. and, Jared R. Cardinal "Fort Benjamin Harrison Historic District." National Register of Historic Places Inventory/Nomination Form. Indianapolis: D.E. McGillem & Associates, March 10, 1989/December 1990. Indiana Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology, "Fort Benjamin Harrison Historic District," *National Register of Historic Places Inventory/Nomination Form* (Indianapolis: 10 March 1989/December 1990). Accessed 12 September 2018 <https://npgallery.nps.gov/NRHP/AssetDetail?assetID=34a2ca0e-7ef6-4e65-a692-81975b28abbb>

<sup>6</sup> United States General Accounting Office, *Report to the Honorable Dan Horton, House of Representatives: Hazardous Waste, Fort Benjamin Harrison's Compliance with Environmental Laws*, (March 1990); Department of the Army Training and Doctrine Command, *Final Environmental Impact Statement on Disposal and Reuse of Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana*, (U.S. Army Engineer District: Louisville, KY, January 1995) accessed 22 January 2019 <https://play.google.com/books/reader?printsec=frontcover&output=reader&id=lfE3QAAMAAJ&pg=GBS.PP1>

Harrison. The ecological and environmental reports reveal how the presence of the military base inadvertently fostered a climate that rehabilitated the ‘natural’ areas of Lawrence Township.

Each of these studies and reports separately examines the social, ecological, and political processes that have molded the land into Fort Benjamin Harrison State Park today. However, these processes did not operate in a vacuum; thus, this thesis analyzes the creation of the current park’s landscape by examining the interaction of these variables over time. The first chapter investigates the cultural and social layers of human impact on Fort Harrison’s land before and after the closure of the fort. This chapter will provide an overview of the land’s history where it is particularly focused on the transitional years between the base closure of the Fort Benjamin Harrison to the opening of the state park. Despite the hyper-development and suburbanization of land surrounding Fort Benjamin Harrison during its military years, the military’s presence and land use practices protected over 1,100 acres of reforested hardwood land that would later become the state park. The U.S. Army’s presence proved to be instrumental in the successful transfer of federal land to the Indiana state park system.

The second chapter analyzes the development of the interpretive and public history practices at Fort Benjamin Harrison State Park. Fort Benjamin Harrison State Park offers various avenues for visitors to experience the park’s environmental and cultural landscape like exhibitions in the visitor’s center, wayside exhibit panels, brochures, and ranger-led programs. The chapter examining the development of the park’s initial interpretive plans through those in use today in order to evaluate how successful the interpretation effectively engages with the interplay of human and natural

history over time. The third and final chapter reviews, evaluates, and offers recommendations in the form of an Interpretive Plan for Fort Harrison State Park. The Interpretive Plan offers recommendations for the existing conditions of the park's interpretation, with an emphasis on fusing together the interpretation of the park's natural, cultural, and historical resources. The deep, history of Fort Benjamin Harrison State Park should encourage state park staff to reconsider their living artifact and landscape.

## **Chapter 1: Fort Benjamin Harrison: From Military Base to State Park**

Fort Benjamin Harrison received alarming news in May 1991. After ninety years of service, the United States Army installation would close its doors to save the Department of Defense millions of dollars. Both military and civilian members of Fort Benjamin Harrison were shocked and unsure about the fort's future. One local reporter commented on the closure, "[s]pending a recent sun-splashed afternoon exploring Fort Ben and its past, there came a feeling of loneliness, a sense of time sadly passing as if all were transient, and fleeting... [A]nd thousands of soldiers who have come and gone and left a part of themselves here might soon be forgotten."<sup>7</sup> The military base, located in Lawrence Township, Marion County, Indiana, about 12 miles northeast of downtown Indianapolis, held a special place in the community of Lawrence, a major source of employment. Spending by military and civilian personnel stationed at the Fort stimulated the local economy. Use of the base for military training also unintentionally created an environmental refuge. At the same time, the closure of Fort Benjamin Harrison offered the Lawrence and Indianapolis metropolitan areas the opportunity to reuse the land in multiple ways. Its location in a fertile watershed with limited commercial and residential development during its years as a military base enabled the preservation of the largest contiguous forested area today in Central Indiana. After the military installation's closure in 1991, environmental groups, scientists, the Fort Benjamin Harrison Transition Task Force, and Indiana state and local government officials worked together to create a state park.

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<sup>7</sup> Rex Redifer, "Fort Ben Gave the City a Kinder, Gentler Military," *The Indianapolis Star*, 26 May 1991.



## Transforming Lands of Fort Benjamin Harrison

Before European settlement in Central Indiana, Native Americans migrated to this area approximately 10,000 years ago. The Miamis, Wea, and Delaware, moved into Central Indiana around the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>8</sup> They led semi-sedentary lives, having fixed villages, but also spending part of the year hunting and fishing along Fall Creek.<sup>9</sup> This area, located in the Tipton Till Plain soil area, was created by glaciers that left gently rolling hills and fertile soil, perfectly suitable for farming.<sup>10</sup> Native Americans used this fertile land to cultivate corn, squash, beans, pumpkins, and melons, initiating the transformation of once-unbroken hardwood forests into patches of farmland.<sup>11</sup> By the 1820s, however, the United States federal policies of forced Indian removal pushed the Miami, Delaware, Wea, and Potawatomi out with the land ceded to the United States government at the Treaty of St. Mary's in October 1818.<sup>12</sup> The larger area in purple (Map 1. below) represents the land Native Americans ceded to the United States under the Treaty of St. Mary's (1818).

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<sup>8</sup> While archaeologists have identified the earliest pre-European contact indigenous groups that lived in East-Central Indiana as the Adena and Hopewell, there is no evidence if they settled in the area today known as Lawrence Township. James H. Keller, *An Introduction to the Prehistory of Indiana* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1983) 61; Chris Flook, *Native Americans of East-Central Indiana* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2016), 42-47.

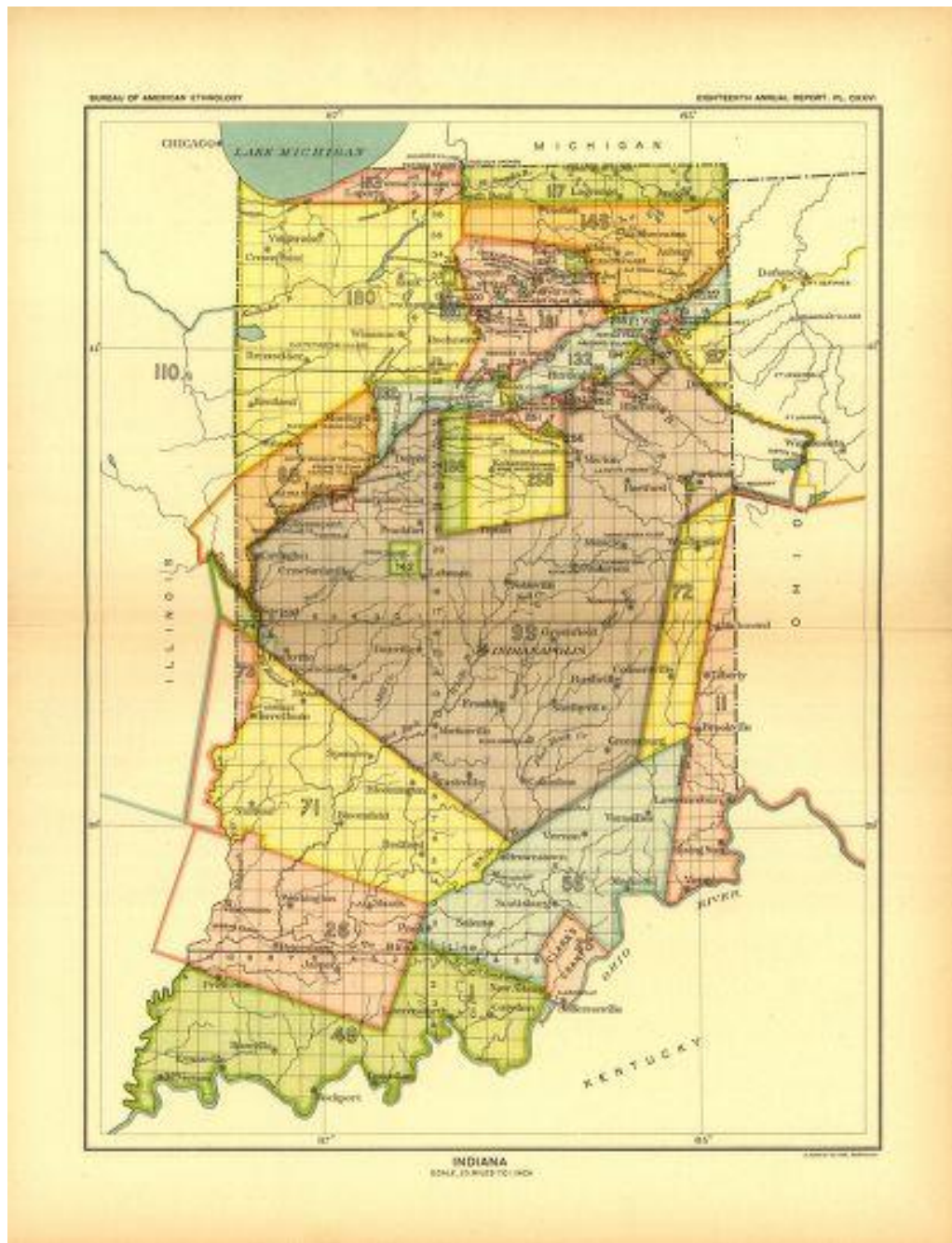
<sup>9</sup> James H. Madison, *Hoosiers: A New History of Indiana* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press and Indiana Historical Society, 2014) 11; Andrew R.L. Cayton, *Frontier Indiana* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 6-17.

<sup>10</sup> Indiana Geological Survey Studies, "Landscapes of Indiana," accessed 29 May 2018 <https://igws.indiana.edu/surficial/Landscapes.cfm>.

<sup>11</sup> Flook, Chris, *Native Americans in East-Central Indiana*, 105-107; Writer's Program of Works Progress Administration (WPA), *Indiana: A Guide to the Hoosier State*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1941), 30, 37.

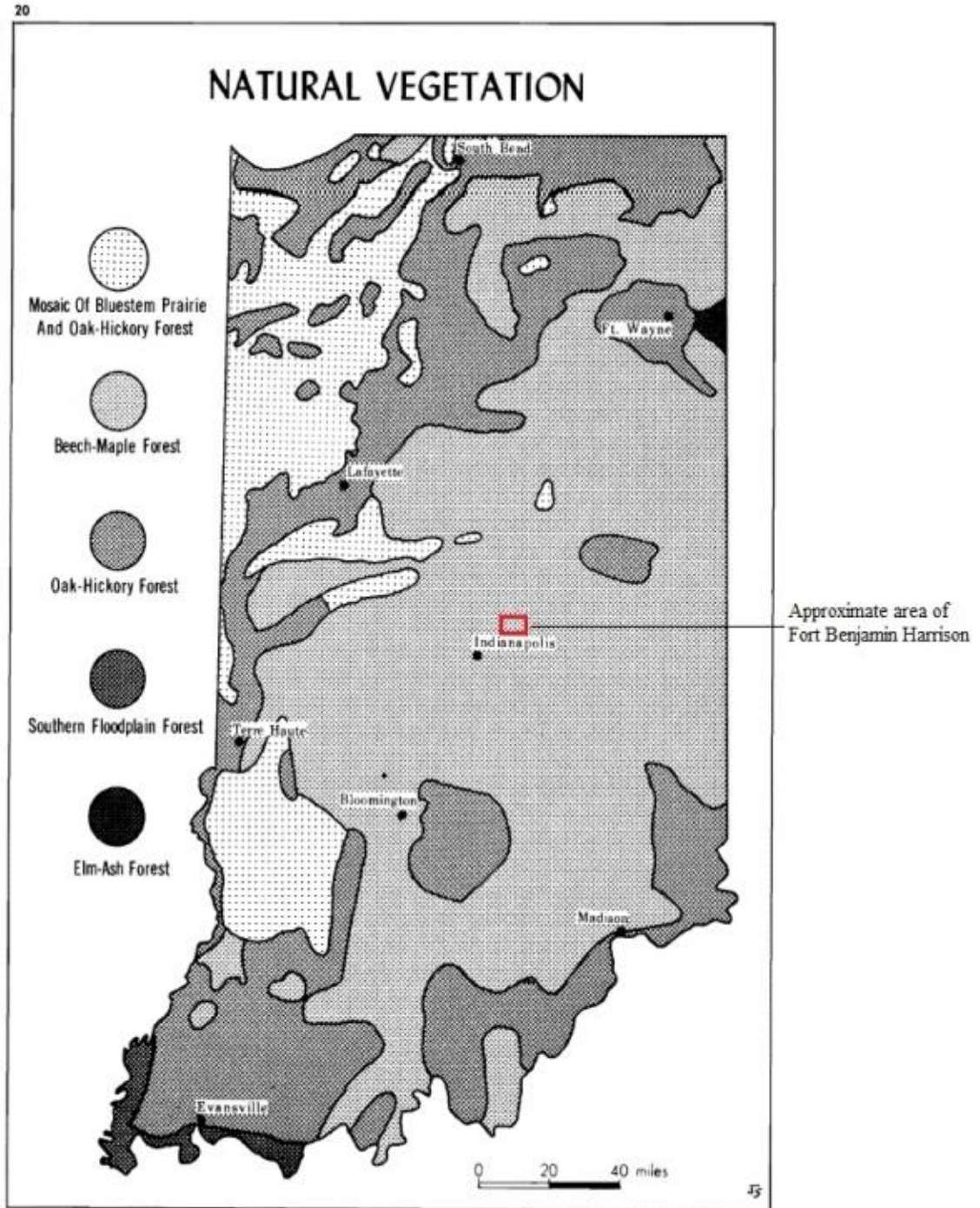
<sup>12</sup> Charles J. Kappler, comp. and ed. "Treaty with the Miami, 1818. Oct. 6, 1818. 7 Stats., 189. Proclamation Jan. 15, 1319 [1819]". *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties*. (Volume II. U.S. Government Printing Office:1904) 171-74.

Map 1. Indian Land Cessions in the United States, Indiana.<sup>13</sup>



<sup>13</sup> Charles C. Royce, and Cyrus Thomas. *Indian land cessions in the United States*. 1899. Online Text. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/13023487>, accessed 6 December 2017.

Map 2. Kingsbury Atlas of Indiana, Natural Vegetation.<sup>14</sup>



The forced removal of Native Americans from Central Indiana opened land for white settlement. Whites, mostly land speculators, purchased land in what would become Lawrence Township as early as 1821. Recorded by the local historian in several interviews with residents of Lawrence Township reflecting its first fifty years, the land that became Lawrence Township was described as "covered with a heavy growth of timber, consisting principally of walnut, sugar, poplar, ash, beech, hickory, sycamore, buckeyes, oak, and hackberry. In the lowlands, the primitive forest abounded with grapevines, frequently growing to enormous height."<sup>15</sup> These land speculators and farmers were attracted to this area for the fertile soil, proximity to water via Fall Creek, and substantial timber.<sup>16</sup> Map 2. (on the previous page) depicts the natural hardwood forest encompassed by Fort Benjamin Harrison. Elisha Reddick became the first white settler to purchase land in what became Lawrence Township and subsequently Fort Harrison. Reddick and his family transformed the native hardwood forest into farmland for corn crops and livestock.<sup>17</sup> Farmers, like Reddick, cleared almost eighty percent of the forest cover, some harvested for building homes and outbuildings and fences but most by girdling and burning to make room for crops and livestock.<sup>18</sup> Map 3 (below) shows the land plats purchased by early settlers in Lawrence Township. Elisha Reddick and his family's plats are highlighted in black. From 1825-1860, Lawrence Township grew in

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<sup>14</sup> Robert C. Kingsbury, *An Atlas of Indiana* (Bloomington: Geography Department, Indiana University, 1970) 20.

<sup>15</sup> Berry R. Sulgrove, *History of Indianapolis and Marion County, Indiana* (Indianapolis: n.p. 1884), 534.

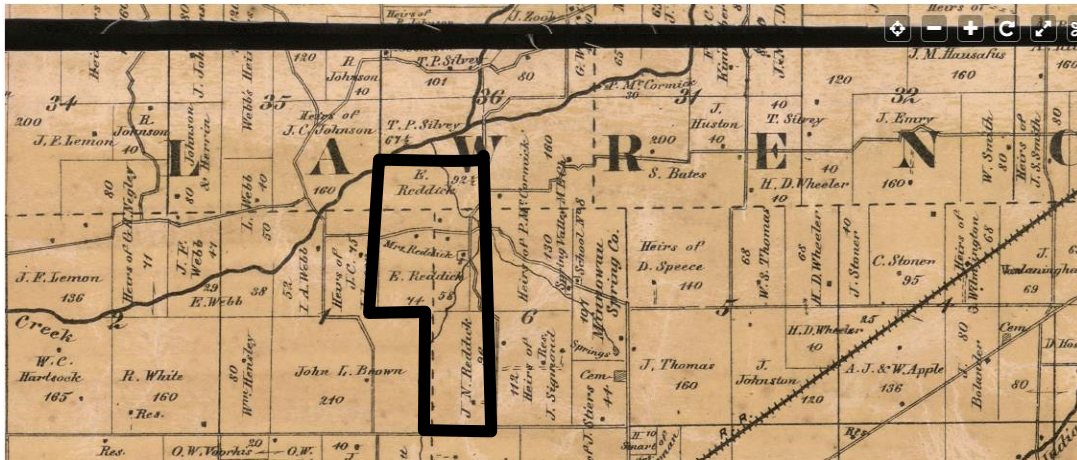
<sup>16</sup> John D. Barnhart and Donald F. Carmony, *Indiana: From Frontier to Industrial Commonwealth*, Vol. 1 (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company Inc., 1954), 241-245

<sup>17</sup> Ancestry.com, *United States Census of 1830*, "List of tax paying residents of Lawrence Township, Marion County, 1830," accessed 12 September 2018 [www.ancestry.com/censusrecords](http://www.ancestry.com/censusrecords).

<sup>18</sup> Sulgrove, *History of Indianapolis and Marion County, Indiana*, 534.

population and industry with new grist and flour mills, distilleries, and lumber mills to sustain its growing population. These technological advancements laid the foundation for continued commercial and residential growth.<sup>19</sup>

Map 3. Plat Map of Marion County, Indiana, 1855.<sup>20</sup>



Lawrence Township flourished as a growing agricultural community in the late nineteenth century. Other parties became interested in this area at the end of the Spanish-American War in 1898. Lieutenant Colonel Russell B. Harrison, son of President Benjamin Harrison, returned to Indianapolis from his position in the Army, when he learned that the U.S. Arsenal located in downtown Indianapolis was going to be phased out.<sup>21</sup> Dismayed by the idea of losing the military's presence in Indianapolis, Harrison worked with the War Department and President Theodore Roosevelt to sell the land

<sup>19</sup> WPA, *Indiana: A Guide to the Hoosier State*, 87-89.

<sup>20</sup> A. Warner, Worley & Bracher and F Bourquin. *Map of Marion County, Indiana*. (Philadelphia: C.O. Titus Publisher, 1866. Accessed 2 June 2018 <https://www.loc.gov/item/2013593173/>).

<sup>21</sup> During the American Civil War, Indiana's Governor Oliver P. Morton established a state arsenal or munitions storage house located on the State House grounds. Its size and black powder capacity made the arsenal too dangerous, and it was relocated to East Michigan Street in Indianapolis. The U.S. Arsenal remained a large storage facility for heavy artillery and lighter arms until the end of the Spanish-American War. David J Bodenhamer, Robert G. Barrows, and David Gordon Vanderstel. *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 1369.

surrounding the Old U.S. Arsenal to purchase new land for a military base. After initial plans to purchase land were determined unsuitable for military use, Harrison suggested an alternative tract located northeast of Indianapolis in Lawrence Township.<sup>22</sup> Harrison assured military planners that this land would be perfect for a military installation:

There are magnificent first growth forest trees which have been carefully preserved; there are running streams; there are rolling lands and moderate hills; green valleys and level fields all of which make a terrain well adapted for military post purposes and Army maneuvers.<sup>23</sup>

Harrison convinced the Army to purchase 2,417 acres from several farmers between 1903-1908, and named the base after the twenty-third president—his father and only president from Indiana—Benjamin Harrison.<sup>24</sup> Barracks at Fort Benjamin Harrison were completed by 1908 in time for the 10<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment to arrive from Fort Seward, Alaska.<sup>25</sup>

In subsequent years, activity at Fort Harrison waxed and waned alongside the United States' participation in wars. The first years at Fort Harrison were bleak; the Indianapolis community was not convinced that the War Department would keep the base active. U.S. entry into the First World War ushered new patriotic energy at the fort,

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<sup>22</sup> The city of Indianapolis purchased the former U.S. Arsenal grounds from the federal government with plans to develop a large educational institution that eventually became Arsenal Technical High School in 1912. Funds from the sale of the Arsenal grounds contributed to the purchase of a new tract of land located on the southwest of Indianapolis, however after a land survey for military development the Army deemed the land inappropriate for military use. The Army favored the second location in Lawrence, Indiana. Bodenhamer, et. al, *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*, 1370; Stephen Bower, *The Army in the Heartland: A History of Fort Benjamin Harrison, 1903-1995* (Indiana Creative Arts: Indianapolis, 1995), 3.

<sup>23</sup> Russell B. Harrison, "Fort Benjamin Harrison", in *Souvenir 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Provisional Regiment, Citizen Training Camp, Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana, 1917* pamphlet (Indianapolis: Fort Benjamin Harrison Publications, 1917) 26 accessed 2 June 2018  
<http://www.indianamilitary.org/FtHarrison/Publications/Souvenir-1917-2/72dpi/Souvenir1917-2.htm>

<sup>24</sup> Stephen Bower, *A History of Fort Benjamin Harrison 1903-1982* (Command History Office, US Army Indianapolis, 1984), 2-3.

<sup>25</sup> Bower, *A History of Fort Benjamin Harrison 1903-1982*, 9.

where it served as a mobilization center for the national defense and training grounds for Regular Army Officers. The interwar period saw the conversion of Fort Harrison into training and organizing grounds for various groups like the Citizens' Military Training Camp (CMTC). The Citizens' Military Training Camp at Fort Harrison was a summer camp that provided fundamental military training and athletic programs for young men who hoped to receive a commission from the Officer's Reserve Corps.<sup>26</sup> Additionally, the New Deal-era Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) was also present at Fort Harrison. The fort served as the headquarters for Indiana District of the CCC where companies assembled before moving to their assigned locations.<sup>27</sup> Indiana had fifty-six CCC companies of which eight were African American. While the legislation that created the CCC prohibited discrimination due to race, color, and creed, the CCC followed the normative patterns of segregated military personnel with white officers and technical staff supervising black enrollees in segregated camps.<sup>28</sup> The Civilian Conservation Corps

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<sup>26</sup> The Civilian Military Training Camps were military training programs popularly held each summer during the Great Depression. The camps provided young men with military training, athletic programs, and other forms of entertainment. During the month of camp life, attendees received free transportation, meals, uniforms, shoes, and laundry. At its peak, the C.M.T.C. at Fort Harrison reached 3,450 participants. National Park Service, "Continuation Form, Camp Glenn at Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indianapolis, Indiana" *National Register for Historic Places* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Indiana Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology:1994) 10 accessed 3 December 2017 <https://npgallery.nps.gov/GetAsset/a9430be3-0acd-4d90-8f7b-470014c6dbd3>; Donald M. Kington, *Forgotten Summers: The Story of the Citizen's Military Training Camps, 1921-1940* (San Francisco, Two Decades Publishing, 1995).

<sup>27</sup> "Forest Workers Arrive At Fort: Indiana Conservation Unit Will Work On Military Reservation," *The Indianapolis Star*, 27 May 1933.

<sup>28</sup> Segregation in the Civilian Conservation Corps was a national trend; African Americans seeking employment with the CCC were assigned to segregated camps that were often in wilderness areas like state or national parks. African American CCC Companies in Indiana were stationed in Corydon, South Bend, Bloomington, Mitchell, Evansville, and several other locations throughout the state. See the following works for more information about segregation and African American CCC Companies: Olen Cole, *The African-American Experience in the Civilian Conservation Corps* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1999); Katie Martin, " 'We Can Take It!': Race and the Civilian Conservation Corps in Indiana, 1934-1941," *Journal of Purdue Undergraduate Research*, vol. 4 (2014) 22-29 accessed 11 August 2018

Company 3350, an all African American CCC company that specialized in conservation and reforestation programs, arrived at Fort Harrison in 1936. Company 3350 worked diligently on a few projects like cutting and clearing trees in the base's forest to allow new growth and straightening some of the waterways located to prevent future soil erosion.<sup>29</sup> Supervisors of Company 3350 at Fort Harrison boasted that:

Lester Cain, a civilian holds the record as having the best workers and most outstanding detail in the company...Bridges are being built by the fellows on the job to replace defective and old bridges...streams are being improved to keep water from settling in one place after a hard rain storm. Old water and drainage pipes have been taken up and new ones laid in order that good drainage can be obtained. Trees and scrubs are being planted to make the surroundings at Fort Benjamin Harrison a beautiful place to be at."<sup>30</sup>

CCC Company 3350 reshaped the landscape and played a vital role in conserving the forest at Fort Benjamin Harrison, ensuring that this area would be preserved for years to come.

By the Second World War, the U.S. Army no longer considered Fort Harrison large enough to accommodate troop training, so it subsequently served as an induction and logistical support center for the Midwest. In order to adapt to these changes, the Army built a new medical complex and the following specialized schools: Finance School, Chaplain School, and Baker and Cook Schools.<sup>31</sup> Fort Benjamin Harrison also briefly had a German and Italian Prisoner of War Camp from 1943-44 and an Army

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<https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1124&context=jpur>; Jeanne Cannella Schmitzer, "CCC Camp 510: Black Participation in the Creation of Mammoth Cave National Park." *The Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 93, no. 4 (1995): 451-452.

<sup>29</sup> Bower, *A History at Fort Benjamin Harrison 1903-1982*, 42.

<sup>30</sup> Company 3350 "News in Brief," *The Fort Ben Banner* (Lawrence, IN: Civilian Conservation Corps, 30 April 1938) 4 accessed 22 May 2018

<http://cdm16066.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/ref/collection/p16066coll49/id/976/rec/9>.

<sup>31</sup> Indiana Division of Historic Preservation and Archeology, "National Register for Historic Places Nomination Form: Fort Benjamin Harrison," Section 8,3.



Disciplinary Barracks from 1944-1947.<sup>32</sup> The years following World War II brought a panic to the fort; the Army had plans to realign it in 1947. By October 1948, the base was briefly transferred to the U.S. Air Force, and then returned to the Army's possession in 1950, where it resumed its mission as a training installation and home to the Army Finance Center.<sup>33</sup> The Army Finance Center, located in Building One at the fort, was the largest Army building in operation and most of the Army's financial obligations and bills were paid on site.<sup>34</sup> From the 1950s to its closure in the 1990s, Fort Harrison remained an Army Training Center for the Midwest.

### **Military Land and Forest Conservation**

For generations, branches of the United States military have utilized forested areas for training. Forests offer varied and naturally isolated areas deemed ideal and suitable for training and battle simulations. Active military training and facilities were located on restricted lands, with intensive development and activity in limited areas of the base and undisturbed swaths of land remaining outside of the training grounds. In many cases like Fort Harrison, former agricultural lands were purchased by the Department of Defense for a military base, where military land-use practices contributed to reforestation. By limiting the impact of human, industrial, and agricultural use, military training grounds become defacto-protected areas where forests and animals could

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<sup>32</sup> Bower, *A History Of Fort Benjamin Harrison*, 62-66.

<sup>33</sup> In 1948, the Army investigated the possibility of moving an Air Force unit to Fort Harrison. The 10<sup>th</sup> Air Force unit in Omaha, Nebraska, would be reassigned to Indianapolis, to allow the Omaha air base to be renovated. Before the 10<sup>th</sup> Air Force could utilize the facilities at Fort Benjamin Harrison, the Department of Defense decided to move the unit to Michigan and transferred the base back to the Army. Bower, *The Army in the Heartland*, 189-191.

<sup>34</sup> Despite Fort Harrison's closure in 1991, the Financial Center remains in operation today. Bodenhamer et. al, *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994): 1368.

flourish. The restricted access practices on military installations inadvertently created spaces for new forest growth, restoration of ecosystems, and greater biodiversity.<sup>35</sup>

Former military land and bases in the United States slated for closure through the Base Realignment and Closure Acts (1988, 1991, 1993, 1995, and 2005) have provided communities throughout the United States with opportunities to reuse former military properties in a variety of ways. Like Fort Benjamin Harrison, other former military properties have become nature preserves and public parks. For example, military history and military land use practices allowed the National Park Service to convert Fort Monroe in Hampton, Virginia, into a National Park Service--managed unit in 2011.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, Jefferson Proving Grounds, a former Army site for munitions testing and firing range located in Southern Indiana, became the Big Oaks National Wildlife Refuge managed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service.<sup>37</sup> These formerly military environments inadvertently allowed the regrowth of woodlands and the restoration of ecosystems for native wildlife. The conversion of Fort Harrison serves an example of successful reuse of military land as a new public park, which includes four nature preserves, and two Historic Districts listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Changes in the forest cover on large portions of Fort Benjamin Harrison can be tracked by employing aerial photographs. Beginning in 1930s, Indiana state government and the United States Geological Survey utilized aerial photography to document and

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<sup>35</sup> David Havlick, "Restoration and Meaning on Former Military Lands in the United States," edited by Edwin M. Martin, *Proving Grounds: Militarized Landscapes, Weapons Testing, and the Environmental Impact of U.S. Bases* (University of Washington Press: Seattle, 2015): 270-71.

<sup>36</sup> Virginia Places, "Fort Monroe Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC)" accessed 22 May 2018 <http://www.virginiaplaces.org/military/fortmonroebrac.html>.

<sup>37</sup> David Havlick, "Restoration and Meaning on Former Military Lands in the United States," Edited by Edwin M. Martin, *Proving Grounds: Militarized Landscapes, Weapons Testing, and the Environmental Impact of U.S. Bases* (University of Washington Press: Seattle, 2015): 270-71.

track changes in the landscape over time. Aerial photographs 1-5 found in Appendix 1., illustrate the expansion of hardwood forests on Fort Benjamin Harrison, especially the northern 1,100 acres, between 1936 and 1962. Darkened areas around the fort demonstrate that the tree cover had thickened, showing a greater preservation of the forested area between 1936 and 1962. This forested area grew during the decades of military use at Fort Harrison. The military's presence at the fort had the unintended consequence of restoring and conserving a biologically diverse and thriving forest. Aerial photograph 6, from 2018, shows how the forest cover has expanded since the land was given to Indiana State Park in the 1990s. Fort Harrison's strategic multi-use of land acted as early military-inspired conservation that protected essential plant, water, and other natural resources to create a new nature preserve or public land (forest or park) after the installation closed.

During Fort Harrison's active years, the Army built a series of hiking trails and promoted outdoor activity at the fort. The developers at the fort also contracted the Army Corps of Engineers to construct two fishing lakes. The man-made lakes at Fort Harrison were designed and completed during the mid-1980s to add to the "natural areas" of Fort Harrison and encourage military personnel to utilize the land at the base. The ponds were stocked with freshwater fish and approved by Indiana's Department of Natural Resource for fishing.<sup>38</sup> Along with fishing, some of the outdoor activities included visiting the duck

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<sup>38</sup> Most of the primary research conducted for this chapter relies on the personal files of Robert Baker, the chairman of the Natural and Historic Resources and Environmental Subcommittee of the Fort Harrison Transition Task Force, who donated his personal papers to Fort Harrison State Park in 2000. His papers chronicle the closure of Fort Harrison and the bureaucratic process of creating the land into an Indiana State Park. The Fort Harrison State Park Archive was undergoing reorganization during my research; thus, no collection numbers were assigned to this collection at the time. Fort Harrison State Park Archive, "Letter to James A. Sabo, U.S. Army Directorate of Engineering and Housing from J.W. McIntosh Conservation Engineer," (Robert

pond, volleyball courts, horseshoe pits, and archery ranges. Fort Harrison also offered scheduled programs like children's fishing tournaments, Fall Creek canoe trips, and euchre tournaments at the shelter houses, and hosted Boy Scout camping visits.<sup>39</sup> Fort Harrison grounds was also the home to an eighteen-hole, state-of-the-art golf course developed in the 1970s. The Fort Harrison golf course was open to members only, restricted to military and other federal-related personnel.<sup>40</sup> Fort Harrison's efforts to attract more visitors and design new recreational opportunities initiated the idea of creating a park-like atmosphere. By building hiking trails and ponds, Fort Harrison paved its way towards a future park.

### **Fort Benjamin Harrison's Final Active Years**

The utility and need for military and defensive training facilities at Fort Benjamin Harrison fluctuated in its final decades. It remained an integral part of the greater Lawrence area. Fort Harrison's first move towards integration in the greater Indianapolis community occurred when the U.S. Army approved the fort's incorporation into Lawrence's city limits in 1970.<sup>41</sup> The annexation increased Lawrence's population by 5,000 and added 26 miles of roads and 2,500 acres of land. Lawrence Community Park incorporated some of the base's land along the parade grounds as part of its community park system.<sup>42</sup> This annexation did not simply increase land in Lawrence, it sought to

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Baker Fort Harrison Transition Collection [1980-1996], 1983). Hereafter, materials from this collection will be cited as Fort Harrison Transition Collection.

<sup>39</sup>"Fort Harrison Outdoor Recreation Booklet," (Fort Harrison Transition Collection, 1985), 1-6.

<sup>40</sup> Bill Pickett, "There's No Word On Disposition of Fort Ben Golf Course," *Indianapolis Star* 4 August 1991

<sup>41</sup> George Lindberg, "Lawrence's Annexation of Fort is Complete," *The Indianapolis Star* 29 August 1970.

<sup>42</sup> "U.S. Army Approves Annexation of Fort Harrison to Lawrence," *Indianapolis Star* 24 July 1970.

create a better relationship between the military and Lawrence's community. Military personnel from the fort dedicated their time to Lawrence's Little League program, where they became coaches and umpires. Neighbors of Fort Harrison had already used the military grounds for many forms of recreation including hiking, biking, running, fishing, and camping. The interest and investment in Fort Harrison by the Lawrence community emphasized its commitment to the base. The mayor of Lawrence, Morris Settles, bragged, "We thought it would be nice, kind of prestigious to have them as an official part of the city. Besides, how many other mayors can brag that that they have their own Army?"<sup>43</sup> Fort Harrison provided Lawrence with job opportunities, schools, and various facilities on the base, where it remained an essential part of the Lawrence prior to its closure in the 1990s.

During the first half of the 1980s, the Department of Defense continually improved and added to its military facilities at Fort Benjamin Harrison. Like other military bases throughout the United States, Fort Harrison benefitted from increases in the military and defense spending during the Reagan administration (1981-1989).<sup>44</sup> Some of the major construction projects at the base included: a \$3.9 million gymnasium and swimming pool complex, a Junior Officer's Club, a 23,000 square foot commissary shop, and five troop barracks to replace the temporary wooden structures built during the Second World War.<sup>45</sup> Construction and investments showed an increased interest in

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<sup>43</sup>Diane Fredick, "City and Fort 'Marriage', a Happy Union," *Indianapolis News* 11 November 1982.

<sup>44</sup> The Reagan's administration asked for an 11% increase in the defense budget for 1984 at about \$247 billion, which President Reagan claimed to be necessary in order to rebuild the United States military strength. Richard Halloran, "1984 Military Budget Request is Reported to Be 11% Greater," *The New York Times*, 3 August 1983.

<sup>45</sup> Bower, *The American Army in the Heartland: A History of Fort Benjamin Harrison 1903-1995*, 372-374.

keeping Fort Harrison and developing a tighter relationship between the fort and the city of Lawrence. Fort Harrison also partnered with the Lawrence Township School District to create a new program called “Partners in Education.” This program exposed high school computer science students to the fort's computer system.<sup>46</sup> At this time, approximately ten percent of Lawrence High School students were connected to the military through the through activities at the fort. The base fostered an atmosphere that would not only teach soldiers, but also integrate the military into community. By 1982, Fort Harrison employed over 10,000 civilian and military personnel. The Soldier’s Support and Finance Center had a combined budget of \$180 million. It was also the fifth largest employer in Indianapolis—and many politicians and local development officials argued that tens of thousands more were affected by the military installation’s presence.<sup>47</sup>

Fort Harrison faced several major setbacks in military activity with the passage of the Gramm-Rudman Hollings Deficit Reduction Act in 1985. This act aimed to cut the federal budget deficit, with the goal of a balanced budget by 1991. If these deficit goals were not met each year, Congress would conduct automatic spending cuts or “sequestration” where the budget cuts would be split between domestic and defense spending. Social Security, Medicare, and antipoverty programs were exempted from these program cuts.<sup>48</sup> The Gramm-Rudman Hollings Deficit Reduction Act cut back on defense spending, causing the slow consolidation of training facilities and schools at Fort

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<sup>46</sup> Nelson Price, "Partners in Education Draws Rave Reviews," *Indianapolis New*, 26 November 1982.

<sup>47</sup> Diane Fredick, "City and Fort 'Marriage', A Happy Union," *Indianapolis News*, 11 November 1982.

<sup>48</sup> Sung DeukHahm, Mark S. Kamlet, David C. Mowery, Tsai-Tsu Su, “The Influence of the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Act on Federal Budgetary Outcomes, 1986-1989,” *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*: 10 1992, 210-212.

Harrison. Under this act, the Directorate of Soldier Advocacy conducted a full evaluation of the missions and necessities of other schools and training agencies at Fort Harrison in 1989.<sup>49</sup> “The USASSI Project,” under the direction of the Fort’s commander, Colonel Foster, assessed the operations of the Soldier’s Support Center (SSC). This project found that the Soldier’s Support Center and commanders in charge of it were inefficient and could not perform the proper roles at their branches without the command and control of the developmental process. As a result, Fort Harrison faced its first reduction in operations: The Soldiers Support and Missionary Integrating Centers were transferred to Fort Lee, Virginia. The Training and Doctrine Combat Development program at Fort Harrison also suffered tremendously in March 1990. This plan consolidated all combat and some training development activity at every school associated with the Combined Armed Services Support Command, affecting the Adjutant General and Finance Schools of the SSC.<sup>50</sup> The consolidations of these schools demonstrated the federal government’s need to reduce defense spending at the end of the Cold War, but these were not the final days of Fort Harrison.

Despite the slow reduction of services and training offered at Fort Benjamin Harrison during the latter half of the 1980s, the fort survived the first round of defense base closures in 1988. The Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC), a commission nominated by the Pentagon, was charged with creating a list of unnecessary military bases throughout the county that could be either reduced or eliminated. The reduction and closing of military bases aimed to save the federal government 5.6 billion

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<sup>49</sup> Bower, *The American Army in the Heartland: A History of Fort Benjamin Harrison 1903-1995*, 380.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 429-434.

dollars in operating costs over a twenty-year period.<sup>51</sup> BRAC 1988 recommended the partial or full closing of 145 military bases and installations in December 1988. At the time, Indiana had nine military bases or installations: Fort Benjamin Harrison and Naval Avionics Center in Indianapolis, Grissom Air Force Base in Kokomo, Crane Naval Weapons Support Center in Miami County, Jefferson Provost Ground near Madison the county seat of Jefferson County, Newport Army Ammunition Plant located in Vermillion County in western Indiana, Camp Atterbury in Bartholomew county southeast of Indianapolis, CASAD Military Storage Depot near New Haven, Indiana in Allan County, and Charles Ammunition Plant in Clark County. BRAC 88 recommended closure of Jefferson Provost Ground and large portion of Charleston Army Ammunition Plant.<sup>52</sup>

BRAC 88 proved to be devastating to some military bases in Indiana; however, Fort Harrison had survived the first round of congressionally recommended closures. The termination of Fort Sheridan in Lake County, Illinois, would bring an estimated 1,300 new jobs to Fort Harrison. BRAC 88 also proposed to move to Fort Harrison the Fourth Army Command and the Army Recruiting Command, the military center responsible for the recruitment of National Guard troops for seven Midwestern states. The movement of the Fourth Army Command brought not only new military personnel but also created over 700 new civilian jobs at Fort Harrison.<sup>53</sup>

Fort Harrison benefitted after BRAC 1988, proving to be a financially viable installation and a major contribution to Lawrence Township and Marion County's

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<sup>51</sup> Jack Edwards and Abraham A. Ribicoff, "Base Realignment and Closures: Report of the Defense Secretary's Commission," *Base Realignment and Closure Commission* (Department of Defense: Washington, D.C. December 1988), 6 Accessed 1 December 2017 <https://www.acq.osd.mil/brac/Downloads/Prior%20BRAC%20Rounds/1988.pdf>.

<sup>52</sup> Bryan Brumley, "145 military Bases on Closing List," *Indianapolis News* 29 December 1988.

<sup>53</sup> McNichol, "Fort could get 1,300 jobs," *Indianapolis News*, 29 December 1988.



economy. Many Hoosier legislators and people working at Fort Harrison remained optimistic for the military base's future. Colonel R.W. Sweeney, the chief of staff at Fort Harrison, acknowledged looming defense budget cuts but asserted, "anyone who is concerned about the premature demise of Fort Benjamin Harrison is ill-informed."<sup>54</sup> The added personnel from Fort Sheridan seemed to diminish the threat of a potential closing and provided the Fort Harrison personnel a sense of hope for their immediate future.

The United States' entrance into the Gulf War also brought a renewed sense of hope for the future at Fort Benjamin Harrison. In August 1990, two mechanized divisions of the Iraqi Army under the leadership of Saddam Hussein invaded the small oil-rich country of Kuwait. This invasion prompted President George H.W. Bush to ask Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney to order over 200,000 National Guard Troops into active duty to be deployed to Saudi Arabia, known as Operation Desert Storm and the Gulf War. The immediate activation of National Guard troops rekindled energy at Fort Harrison, turning it into a recruitment and preparation center for military units heading abroad. From September 1990 to January 1991, Fort Harrison housed, trained, and provided administrative/medical processing for over 2,500 reserve soldiers. Eighty-five percent of these troops were deployed to Saudi Arabia.<sup>55</sup> With a limited time to transition from peace to wartime operations, Fort Harrison managed to assist and prepare troops for the Gulf War. Central Indiana's military base also served the military community in a few other ways during Operation Desert Storm, like postal service support for deployed troops, family support groups composed of friends and relatives of soldiers, and proper

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<sup>54</sup> Gerry Lanosga, "Fort Harrison Seems to Have a Rosy Future," *Indianapolis News* 25 December 1989.

<sup>55</sup> Bower, *The American Army in the Heartland: A History of Fort Benjamin Harrison 1903-1995* 404.

financial command training through Fort Benjamin Harrison's Finance School to sustain economic and logistical operations in Saudi Arabia.<sup>56</sup> Operation Desert Storm kept the morale at Fort Benjamin Harrison high. Military operations at the fort mobilized quickly and efficiently for what would be their last military deployment. Hoosiers passionately supported the local troops mustering at Fort Benjamin Harrison as they had during previous wars.<sup>57</sup> Fort Harrison did not seem to be in immediate danger of closing as it moved into its ninth decade of service.

### **The End of an Era: Closing Fort Benjamin Harrison**

Fort Benjamin Harrison's military leaders and employees' optimistic thoughts for the fort's future were cut short as the purse strings of the Department of Defense tightened in 1991. Congress had planned for additional defense spending cuts in the form of another round of base realignments and closures. After months of research, Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney and his appointed commission recommended the closure of Fort Benjamin Harrison along with 35 other military installation closures and realignments.<sup>58</sup> Cheney's announcement shocked the communities of Indianapolis and Lawrence; local politicians immediately worked together in protest to prevent the fort's closure. Indiana Senator Richard Lugar asserted in the days following Secretary Cheney's

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<sup>56</sup> Bower, *The American Army in the Heartland*, 401-418.

<sup>57</sup> Fran Richardson, "State's Media See Gulf War as No. 1 Story in 1991," *the Indianapolis News* 28 December 1991.

<sup>58</sup> According to the procedure outlined by the Base Closure and Realignment Act of 1990, a federal advisory committee known as the Base Closure Commission, would review Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney's recommended list, edit or disapprove of military installations on the list before finalizing their findings and submitting them to the President by July 1, 1991, where the President would have until July 15 to accept or veto the Commission's recommendations. See "Public Can Speak on Fort Closing," *Indianapolis News* 1 April 1991 and Benjamin Ginsberg, James A. King, Michael J. Schaengold, and David J. Bertaeau, "Waging Peace: A Practical Guide to Base Closures," *Public Contract Law Journal* 23, (Winter 1994), 174-179.

recommendation that he would "examine this proposal carefully to make sure that the facts were fair and accurate, and the analysis has been done correctly."<sup>59</sup>

Between April and May 1991, Indiana Senators Richard Lugar and Dan Coats, and Mayor William Hudnut of Indianapolis worked together to create a report to present to the Base Realignment and Closure Commission member visiting Indianapolis at a public meeting. Members of the public, politicians, and other interested parties were encouraged to present potential reuse or saving plans for the fort at this meeting scheduled for May 30, 1991. To prepare for this meeting, the Indianapolis Department of Metropolitan Development hired a private consulting firm, Techsoft, to investigate the federal study used to determine why Fort Harrison was selected for closure. Indianapolis' Senior Deputy Mayor Harry Eakin stated, "There's 4,000 jobs at stake out there, let alone the morale problems caused by this decision."<sup>60</sup> They wanted an outside consultant to evaluate the decision to close Fort Harrison in order to convince the BRAC that they did not want to save the fort purely out of nostalgia and to save jobs.<sup>61</sup>

While Indiana politicians pushed Congress to rethink its proposal to close Fort Harrison, other Hoosiers envisioned positive outcomes for a decommissioned Fort Harrison. Private interest groups found the closing of Fort Benjamin Harrison to benefit the Indianapolis/Lawrence communities. Several days after Secretary Cheney's announcement, the Indianapolis Day Center for the Homeless held an open public forum to discuss potentially converting some of the base's buildings into a homeless shelter.

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<sup>59</sup> David L. Haase, "Politics, Principles at Odds, Proposed Closing Bring Hard Choices," *Indianapolis News* 13 April 1991.

<sup>60</sup> Kathleen M. Johnson, "Officials Hope to Save Fort Harrison," *The Indianapolis News* 16 May 1991.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

Under the Stuart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act of 1987, non-profit groups like the Indianapolis Day Center for the Homeless had the first claim on surplus federal property. The former military buildings could potentially become much needed housing for the Indianapolis homeless community.<sup>62</sup> Developers in Lawrence Township also viewed the closing of Fort Harrison as a huge opportunity for new residential and commercial development. The 2,500 acres were assessed to have high property value due to the golf course and private club. The President of Commercial Real Estate Services for F.C. Tucker, David Goodrich, found the site perfectly suitable for residential houses or a college campus.<sup>63</sup> Environmental groups like the Hoosier Environmental Council also argued that the land incorporated at Fort Harrison could easily be converted into a park. The base's property included a large population of Indiana bats (an endangered species), a rookery for blue herons, and a stream corridor with a healthy population of shellfish, indicating that the area was relatively free of pollution.<sup>64</sup> The Environmental Officer at Fort Benjamin Harrison noted that the consistent urbanization surrounding the fort has pushed new wildlife closer onto their property, and they need to be protected. These immediate reactions to the fort's proposed closure demonstrate that BRAC's decision would not be as detrimental as the predicted unemployment and loss of a military base entailed for the Indianapolis and Lawrence communities. The fort's land held financial and preservation opportunities that Hoosier politicians overlooked in their effort to hold onto the former glory of the base. Alternative uses of the fort's land would provide a

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<sup>62</sup> David Mannweiler, "Long Shot is Worth Discussing," *The Indianapolis News* 16 April 1991.

<sup>63</sup> Dustin McNichol and Eileen Ambrose, "Developers Set to March on Fort Ben," *The Indianapolis News* 13 April 1991.

<sup>64</sup> Gerry Lanosga, "Group Targets Fort Land for Park," *The Indianapolis News* 23 April 1991.

change to Lawrence by bringing business opportunities and opening public land as a park.

While many Hoosiers encouraged the closure of Fort Harrison, others remained unsure of the closure's impact. Both the Base Closure and Realignment Commission and Indiana congressional delegation noted that they had received very few calls and letters from the public in opposition to their decision. Military veterans and former Fort Harrison workers denounced the potential closure. They feared that their past connection to the fort would be destroyed. Other veterans like, former Private First Class Christopher Hinkle, worried that "[a]s a disabled veteran, the proposed closure of Fort Benjamin Harrison is a great concern to me and my family. With the prospect of losing hospital, pharmacy and commissary facilities, I am worried about the health and economic impact this will have on us."<sup>65</sup> Others like, Donald Pearson, the President of the Indiana Chapter of the Association of the United States Army, found the BRAC's recommendation to be flawed and not cost effective.<sup>66</sup> These opinions echoed the fears of Hoosier lawmakers, but seemingly had little to no effect on the BRAC 91 decision. Even so, despite the publicity and efforts of the mayors of Indianapolis and Lawrence and other voices of protest, most Hoosiers did not passionately respond to BRAC's recommendation.<sup>67</sup>

Indianapolis Mayor Hudnut, Lawrence Mayor Thomas Schneider, along with Senators Lugar and Coats were unsure of the fort's future as they went into the public meeting with Base and Realignment Commission members on May 30, 1991. The

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<sup>65</sup>Haase, "Hoosiers Mum on Base Closing," *The Indianapolis News* 21 May 1991.

<sup>66</sup>Letter to the Editor, "Why Fort Ben Should Stay," *The Indianapolis News* 21 May 1991.

<sup>67</sup> David Haase, "Hoosiers Mum on Base Closing: very few letters express concern, outrage, or any opinion," *The Indianapolis News* 21 May 1991.

politicians received shaky public opposition to the fort's closure, especially when outside interest groups proposed better solutions for the base's reuse. Other federal government officials urged citizens to support the fort's closure. The General Accounting Office (GAO), completed a study suggesting that there was no suitable reason why the BRAC 91 should not proceed with its scheduled closure. Two private researchers also noted that the public and Indianapolis' government should work with the federal government's recommendations: otherwise, both sides would be spending more money to fight off the closure. One researcher from Indiana University, Stephen Pruitt, noted that "the base is certainly beneficial to the city, but it could be converted to an industrial park that probably would provide more employment in the long run."<sup>68</sup> The other research expert, Patrick Sweeney of the University of Dayton who had studied base closures for over 20 years encouraged those against the closure to stop fighting the closure and the government, and instead steer their energy into counteracting the economic damage and other impact the base closure would have on the community. Fighting the BRAC's decision seemed foolish to these researchers. Hoosier politicians should not be fighting the closure when they could consider other alternative uses for the base that could attract new businesses. The likelihood of flipping the BRAC's decision was slim. The BRAC 91 decision would save on defense spending, create new business or housing opportunities, and preserve the largest forested area in Central Indiana.<sup>69</sup>

Robert Stuart, a member of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission, visited Fort Harrison on May 29, 1991, before the public hearing for BRAC 91's decision the next day. Stuart found the facilities at Fort Harrison to be beautiful and located in a

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<sup>68</sup> Gerry Lanosga, "Two Say Don't Fight Fort Closure," *The Indianapolis News* 28 May 1991.

<sup>69</sup> Lanosga, "Two Say Don't Fight Fort Closure," *The Indianapolis News* 28 May 1991

wonderful city, but he was hesitant to keep the Army's Finance Center's Building One. He found Building One to be completely outdated and in need of significant and costly upgrades and renovations to function properly as the Army Finance and Accounting Offices.<sup>70</sup> After visiting the fort, Stuart attended the BRAC public meeting at the Indiana Convention Center. This meeting hosted many Indiana state and local officials who had petitioned the federal government to stop the pending base closures. The group put together by Mayor Hudnut and Mayor Schneider wanted to uncover any flaws in BRAC's recommendations. Major General Maurice O. Edmonds, former commander of the Soldier Service Center at Fort Benjamin Harrison and the principal spokesman protesting the closure, noted the limitations in the study recommending the closure and transfer of the Warfighting Center to Fort Jackson. He felt that it would be more cost-effective to add two new schools to Fort Harrison than move all Fort Benjamin Harrison's schools to South Carolina. The group also claimed that the commission did not thoroughly analyze the total costs to close Fort Benjamin Harrison. The Army estimated that closing operations at Fort Benjamin Harrison would save the Department of Defense \$118 million, and the base's land could potentially be sold for a total of \$104 million to the highest commercial bidder.<sup>71</sup> The private task force predicted that the closure of Fort Harrison would not save the federal government money, but would cost U.S. taxpayers much more in the long run.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> "Defense Base Closure Part 1," Defense Base and Realignment Commission meeting 30 June 1991 accessed 15 November 2017 <http://www.c-span.org/video/18638-1/defense-base-closure-part-1&start=1386>

<sup>71</sup> Bowers, *The American Army in the Heartland*, 441-444.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 441.

While Indiana politicians and other concerned parties scrambled to convince Stuart and his fellow BRAC commissioners to keep Fort Harrison from closing, a large coalition of environmental groups met outside the hearing. The environmental supporters like including representatives from the Audubon Society, Sierra Club, former Indiana Attorney General Ted Sendrak, and the Hoosier Environmental Council.<sup>73</sup> The environmental groups urged that the military post become a park or nature preserve. Other community action groups like Lawrence Township Citizens Council and the Oaklandon Community Development Association worked alongside the environmental groups to prevent future residential development in Lawrence Township. The unintended consequences of conserving land for military training triggered advocates to protect Fort Harrison for the benefit and enjoyment of the people as a park. Land use at Fort Benjamin Harrison exhibited a form of unintended military restoration and conservation that pleased environmentalists enough to gain their support for BRAC's decision to close Fort Harrison.

Despite extensive studies, pleas, and efforts to save Fort Harrison, the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission of 1991 proceeded with Secretary Cheney's recommendations and voted to close Fort Benjamin Harrison. The Commission acknowledged Indiana's efforts to save Fort Harrison to prevent significant job loss and suggestions to consolidate the training centers at Fort Harrison, but these issues did not influence a change in Secretary Cheney's recommendation. Continual defense budget cuts and reductions of American troops at the end the Cold War outweighed local

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<sup>73</sup> "Environmental Groups Want Fort Ben Made into Park," *The Indianapolis Star*, 29 May 1991.



concerns in the Lawrence/Indianapolis area of central Indiana. On July 1, 1991, the Commission recommended to President Bush:

the closure of Benjamin Harrison; the realignment of the Soldier Support Center to Fort Jackson, South Carolina; and the retention of the Department of the Defense Finance and Accounting Service, Indianapolis Center. We also recommend the revision on Base Realignment and Closure 1988 recommendation relocating U.S. Army Recruiting Command from Fort Sheridan to Fort Knox rather than Fort Benjamin Harrison. The Commission also recommends an adjustment in the DoD recommendation. We find the Secretary deviated substantially from criterion 2, the availability and condition of land and facilities at both the existing and potential receiving locations. Because of this, the Commission also recommends to the President the closure of Building 1.<sup>74</sup>

The fate of Fort Benjamin Harrison was sealed by the Commission's final decision. Over the next six years, the federal, state, and local governments worked together to develop a cohesive reuse plan of the former military base.

### **Devising a Plan for Fort Benjamin Harrison's Future**

The city governments of Indianapolis and Lawrence, and the Indiana state government spared little time mourning the Base Realignment and Closure Commission's decision. The 2,500+ acre base would no longer be the military's property by 1997, and collaboration at all government levels needed to take place to ensure a bright future for the former fort. The first step towards a new use of Fort Benjamin Harrison was the creation of a transition task force that would catalog the existing lands and collaborate with community interest groups about potential uses for the former military base.

Lawrence's Mayor Thomas Schneider wanted to start this project as soon as possible and hoped to form the task force by December 1991 to qualify for a \$100,000 grant from the

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<sup>74</sup> United States Defense Base and Realignment Commission, "Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission Report to the President 1991," (July 1991), 5-4.

Defense Office of Economic Adjustment. Mayor Schneider would become the Executive director of the Fort Benjamin Harrison Transition Task Force (FBHTTF).<sup>75</sup> The Fort Benjamin Harrison Transition Task Force needed to write, complete, and adopt a reuse plan that followed federal regulations before the U.S. Army planned to sell the base in 1997. With several proposals for the military installation projected before the BRAC final recommendation, the task force needed to take into account the demands of former workers at the fort, environmentalists, educators, real estate developers, and Indianapolis/Lawrence community members in their plans.

By February 1992, the Fort Benjamin Harrison Transition Task Force had developed a strategic plan, set goals, and created a timeline for the structure of the task force. FBHTTF would oversee the total reuse planning, but it would work with a professional planning staff, which would deal with technical planning issues. Under the FBHTTF and its planning staff, five subcommittees closely analyzed and developed planning strategies for critical areas on the fort's land, including natural and historic resources and environment, economic impact, social and human services, neighborhood operations and services, and education.<sup>76</sup> These subcommittees reported their findings and proposals to the master task force at monthly meetings.

The Fort Benjamin Harrison Transition Task Force focused on seven sequentially organized steps to delegate the roles of the Task Force and its subcommittees with an eye toward completing a redevelopment plan by May 1994:(1) organizing subcommittees to

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<sup>75</sup> James G. Newland Jr., "Chief of Fort Ben task force may be picked by Dec. 1" *The Indianapolis Star*, 21 September 1991.

<sup>76</sup>"Final Draft for Task Force Review," *Fort Benjamin Harrison: A Strategic Plan For Base Closure, Reuse, And Economic Adjustment*, (Fort Harrison Transition Collection, Indianapolis, Indiana: 26 February 1992) 7.

oversee and study issues and opportunities presented by the Fort's closure between August 1991 and June 1992; (2) compiling an inventory of all assets at Fort Benjamin Harrison between June and October 1992; (3) developing specific goals and objectives from October 1992 to January 1993; (4) identifying a base reuse strategy and development plans from January to August 1993; (5) evaluating alternative strategies and formulating plans from August 1993 to February 1994; (6) finalizing and adopting a plan from February to April 1994; and (7) creating a strategy to implement the redevelopment plan from April to May 1994.<sup>77</sup> Notoriously, most military reuse plans took years to be completed, in contrast to FBHTTF's proposal, which was efficiently and expeditiously produced. The FBHTTF cooperated with over twenty local, state, and federal organizations to develop its plans.

The Natural and Historic Resources and Environment subcommittee of the FBHTTF was instrumental in ultimately converting 1,700 of the 2,500 acres of the fort into a state park. The Natural and Historic Resources and Environment subcommittee oversaw and made all recommendations for the natural resources and historic sites at the former military installation.<sup>78</sup> This subcommittee also coordinated with the Indiana Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology to write a Historic District nomination to the National Register of Historic Places for Fort Harrison and the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers in its preparation of reports on the Environmental Impact Statement for Fort

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid. 9-19.

<sup>78</sup> I will primarily focus on the Natural and Historic Resources and Environment Subcommittee of the Fort Benjamin Harrison Transition Task Force due to its mission and focus on historic preservation and environmental conservation efforts in Fort Harrison's transition. The other subcommittees worked more closely on future commercial and residential economic opportunities at the fort that could disrupt or ruin the historic and environmental integrity of a nature preserve or park. I utilized Robert Baker Fort Harrison Transition Collection (1980-1996) found at the Fort Harrison State Park Archives for my research into the Fort Benjamin Transition Task Force.

Harrison.<sup>79</sup> The Historic Resource and Environment subcommittee had representatives from Indiana's Department of Natural Resources' Division of Nature Preserves, Indianapolis Department of Metropolitan Development and Planning, U.S. Department of Agriculture Division of Soil Conservation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, Groups Advocating Urban Greenspace Environments (GAUGE), Neighborhood Associations of Lawrence Township, Indiana Chapter of the Nature Conservancy, U.S. Army, Hoosier Environmental Council, City of Lawrence's Park Board, Fort Benjamin Harrison's Natural Resource Management Division, Land Use Committee representative from the Sierra Club, Audubon Society, and Mayor Thomas Schneider of Lawrence.<sup>80</sup> This diverse subcommittee brought experience from a number of organizations that showed early interest in converting a portion of Fort Benjamin Harrison into a nature preserve or park.

From its first meeting in April 1992, the Natural and Historic Resources and Environment Subcommittee (hereafter referred to as the Environmental subcommittee) of FBHTTF devoted its time and energy to preserving the forested area and historic structures at Fort Harrison. The Environmental subcommittee inventoried the natural and historic resources on Fort Harrison between April and June 1992. From a number of

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<sup>79</sup> For more information on the National Register of Historic Places see National Park Service, "National Register Bulletin: How to Complete the National Register Registration Form,:" (Washington, D.C., 1997) accessed 22 November 2019. <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/upload/NRB16A-Complete.pdf>; Department of the Army, *Environmental Impact: Statement Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana Disposal and Reuse* (Indianapolis: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 1995) 4-2. Accessed 22 August 2018 <https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=lfE3AQAAMAAJ&hl=en>; Indiana Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology, "Fort Benjamin Harrison Historic District," *National Register of Historic Places Inventory/Nomination Form* (Indianapolis: 10 March 1989/December 1990). Accessed 12 September 2018 <https://npgallery.nps.gov/NRHP/AssetDetail?assetID=34a2ca0e-7ef6-4e65-a692-81975b28abbb>.

<sup>80</sup>Natural Resources and Environmental Subcommittee of Fort Harrison Transition Task Force, *A Proposal to Create A Preserve at Fort Benjamin Harrison Marion County Indiana* (Fort Harrison Transition Collection, Indianapolis: November 12, 1992) 9.

studies conducted at Fort Benjamin Harrison in the years prior to BRAC 91, the Environmental subcommittee identified 1,700 acres of nearly continuous reforested land, 155 plant species, 4 rare plants, tributaries of Fall Creek including Indian, Fort Branch, Camp and Lawrence Creeks, 42 species of fish, 21 species of reptiles and amphibians, 185 species of birds. and a number of mammal species including the endangered Indiana Bat.<sup>81</sup> The subcommittee's protected zone incorporated about two-thirds of the former military installation, leaving about 800 acres available for commercial and other multi-use real estate development. The subcommittee's inventory of resources played a big role in validating value and need for preserving this forested acreage as public land to restrict low-impact development. Robert Baker, the environmental subcommittee's chairman, advocated that his subcommittee develop a formal proposal for Fort Harrison's land by June 1992. Baker aimed to keep the environmental subcommittee ahead of FBHTTF's projected timeline in case the environmental subcommittee faced any potential roadblocks in its planning process in the future.<sup>82</sup>

The Environmental subcommittee of FBHTTF submitted its first draft reuse plan at its June 1992 meeting. *A Proposal to Create A Preserve at Fort Benjamin Harrison Marion County* outlined the natural areas in Fort Benjamin Harrison and recommended that they be preserved in a natural state for public use. The *Proposal* relied on several studies compiled by the United States Department of Agriculture's Division of Soil Conservation; the United States Department of the Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Indiana Department of Natural Resources to determine the best land management

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<sup>81</sup>"Organization of The Natural Resource and Environment Subcommittee Report," (Fort Harrison Transition Collection: n n.d.), 3-5.

<sup>82</sup> Natural Resources and Environmental Subcommittee, "Minutes: April 7, 1992 Meeting," (Fort Harrison Transition Collection:1992), 1.

strategy for Fort Benjamin Harrison. With a large expanse of forest unintentionally reestablished and conserved as a result of its inclusion in a limited-access, limited-use military base for the past 90 years, native plants, birds, and animals recovered and even thrived in this comparatively undisturbed landscape. One study by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources concluded that:

“The forested natural communities found at Fort Ben comprise the largest tract of forest, approximately 1,100 acres remaining in central Indiana. A forested tract of this size is extremely significant, especially in Central Indiana. Large and relatively unfragmented blocks of forest have been shown in recent years to be extremely important and necessary for successful reproduction of a number of species, especially many species of songbirds who are in need of interior forest habitat. A decline in many of these species has recently been documented and it is suspected that this decline is related, at least in part, to the increasing scarcity of large, unfragmented blocks of forest.”<sup>83</sup>

The forests, biologically diverse wetlands, thriving animal species, and extensive archeological resources convinced members of the Environmental subcommittee to recommend the land at the fort to be a nature preserve or park.

Additionally, Fort Harrison offered several recreational activities like hiking, picnicking, fishing, and golf next to the forest. The existing trails allowed people to enjoy varied landscapes with unique diversity of plants, trees, and wildlife. Several smaller parks were also located within the vicinity of Fort Benjamin Harrison; Lawrence Community Park to the south, Fall Creek Park and Lee Road Park adjacent to the north and east respectively, and Camp Belzer (Boy Scout Camp) to the east of base.<sup>84</sup> The Environmental subcommittee’s proposal emphasized limited development in protected

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<sup>83</sup> Cloyce L. Hedge, John A. Bacone, and Colleen Baker. “A Survey of Fort Harrison, Indianapolis, Indiana for Special Plant Series and Natural Areas,” *Indiana Department of Natural Resources Division of Nature Preserves*, (Indianapolis, Indiana: 1992), 2.

<sup>84</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, *Environmental Impact: Statement Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana Disposal and Reuse* (Indianapolis: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 1995) 4-2. Accessed 22 August 2018 <https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=lfE3AQAAAJ&hl=en>.

area at Fort Harrison in order to preserve the land, plants, trees, and wildlife; protect the integrity and seclusion of the floodplain; conserve key areas for future archeological study; and manage the land for low-impact recreational activities.<sup>85</sup> The Environmental subcommittee's plan was the first official suggestion for portions of the former Fort Harrison to be converted into a public park. At a meeting in June 1992, Mayor Schneider of Lawrence assured the subcommittee that Lawrence wanted to save the forested area, but also keep the golf course in order earn a return from the land. "The people of the country own the land, not the military," asserted Schneider, "and the people should make the decision as the ultimate use of the land."<sup>86</sup>

The FBHTTF needed to work in a coordinated and effective manner in order to assure that the land at the former Fort Harrison would be set aside for public use, and not private real estate or commercial development. To transfer Fort Harrison into public land, the Department of Defense was required to comply with the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949. Under this act, the military had to consider any public benefit conveyances for park and recreation and natural resource protection purposes on federal land.<sup>87</sup> The Department of Defense needed the permission of the Department of Interior to assess and identify any land that could potentially be considered for park and recreational uses. With the Department of Interior's permission, land would be transferred by the U.S. National Park Service's Federal Surplus Real

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<sup>85</sup> Environmental Subcommittee, *A Proposal to Create A Preserve at Fort Benjamin Harrison Marion County Indiana*, 5-6.

<sup>86</sup> Robert Baker, "Summary of the discussion by the Natural Resources and Environmental Subcommittee on June 25, 1992," (Fort Harrison Transition Collection, 1992), 1.

<sup>87</sup> U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, "Fort Sheridan Base Closure, Lake County: Final Environmental Impact Statement," (Louisville, U5 Printing Company, 1990) 5-41,-5-42 accessed 22 August 2018 <https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=xvA3AQAAMAAJ&hl=en>.

Estate Property Program (known as the Federal Lands to Parks today), a program designed to help local communities and governments plan the reuse of specific lands designated as public park.<sup>88</sup> If the Department of Interior approved of the FBHTTF's plan for the state park, DOI would allow the Department of Defense to sell or release the excess property at reduced costs to the State of Indiana. If not, the BRAC property would be disposed of through a public auction or negotiated sale at fair market value.<sup>89</sup>

The Environmental subcommittee of FBHTTF halted its planning for a nature preserve and park until the Department of the Interior determined if the fort's land qualified for public transfer. The subcommittee encouraged its members and the public to write letters in support of creating a nature preserve or park to the Department of Interior and National Park Service. Organizations like the Friends of the White River and Groups Advocating Urban Greenspace Environments pushed both the Department of Interior and the Secretary of the Army For Installation and Housing to consider Fort Harrison's unique ecosystem "that is vitally important to urban wildlife and urban recreation... feels it is important to preserve the entire area as a natural area available to future generations of birds, animals, plants, and humans."<sup>90</sup> The outpouring of public and local government support for a nature preserve or park pushed the Departments of Defense and Interior to evaluate the worth of the military base's land as a public land.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> National Park Service, "Reuse of Closed Military Bases (BRAC)," accessed 7 June 2018 <https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1508/base-realignment-and-closure.htm>.

<sup>89</sup> Every CRS Report, "Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC): Transfer and Disposal of Military Property," accessed 5 December 2017 <https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/R40476.html>.

<sup>90</sup> "Kevin Strunk, Friends of White River Letter to Paul Johnson, Assistant Secretary of the Army," (Fort Harrison Transition Collection, 4 September 1992) 1.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.



By August 1992, the National Park Service, supported by the Department of Interior, announced support for the public benefit conveyance clause for the Fort Benjamin Harrison property. NPS reviewed the portion of the former Fort Harrison and determined (1) that it was not suitable as a national park; and, (2) recommended that the preservation and protection of the land should be accomplished by local or state government.<sup>92</sup> The Midwest Regional Director for the National Park Service noted in a letter to Mayor Thomas Schneider that the NPS would provide technical assistance to FBHTTF through the Federal Lands to Parks Program in order to provide a smooth transition for the land to become a public park.<sup>93</sup> The support of the Department of Interior and National Park Service validated the Environmental subcommittee's work and reuse plan for Fort Benjamin Harrison. The Chairman of the Environmental subcommittee, Robert Baker, presented the committee's revised version of *A Proposal to Create A Preserve at Fort Benjamin Harrison Marion County Indiana* to the full committee meeting of the FBHTTF in November 1992.<sup>94</sup> The Task Force acknowledged the hard work and recommendations of the Environmental subcommittee and they unanimously agreed that 1,700 acres should be converted to a park.

The Environmental subcommittee of FBHTTF moved forward with its plans and discussions for creating a public space or park on Fort Harrison's property throughout 1993. To push for additional public support, the Environmental subcommittee produced a

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<sup>92</sup> U.S. National Park Service News Release: Fort Benjamin Harrison," (Fort Harrison Transition Collection, 26 August 1992).

<sup>93</sup> Don H. Castleberry to Mayor Thomas D. Schneider, "National Park Service Support of Fort Harrison Transition to Public Land," (Omaha, NE: National Park Service, Fort Harrison Transition Collection, September 26, 1992).

<sup>94</sup> "Fort Benjamin Harrison Transition Task Force Meeting Minutes, November 1992," (Fort Harrison Transition Collection, November 1992).

twenty-minute video promoting its proposal for a nature preserve and park during the summer of 1993. This video highlighted how a portion of the military base's land was safeguarded from commercial and residential development since its inception in 1903 and protected the largest tract of undisturbed forest in Central Indiana.<sup>95</sup> Their video argued for conserving the forest, preserving the historic buildings, and protecting the wildlife present at the fort. This video was presented at multiple FBHTTF and other public transition meetings to persuade other public officials to support their proposal for Fort Benjamin Harrison.

The Environmental subcommittee's hard work paid off when on August 30, 1994, Governor Evan Bayh announced that the State of Indiana would incorporate 1,600 acres of the 2,500 acres of the former Fort Benjamin Harrison as a new state park. The rest of the property was slowly redeveloped for other commercial and residential opportunities overseen by FBHTTF.<sup>96</sup> Bayh stated that, "The best use we can make of this property would be to hold it in trust for future generations. Fifty years from now, thousands of our citizens will be able to enjoy this."<sup>97</sup> The forest preserved for military training was now going to become public land and an Indiana state park.

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<sup>95</sup> The Environmental Subcommittee of the FBHTTF created the video titled "A Proposal to Create A Nature Preserve at Fort Benjamin Harrison," Summer 1993. The VHS Tape can be found in the Fort Harrison Transition Collection.

<sup>96</sup> The Fort Benjamin Harrison Transition Task Force culminated their work in a document titled *Fort Harrison Reuse Plan*. This plan emphasized preserving the past, protecting the environment, and maximizing economic growth opportunities. Within this final plan, FBHTTF outline alternative real estate plans for the former military land excluded from the state park. Fort Harrison Transition Task Force, *Fort Harrison Reuse Plan* (Indianapolis: Designplan Inc., Fort Harrison Transition Collection, 1995). Today, over 25 years after the closure of Fort Harrison, the rename Fort Harrison Reuse Authority is still redeveloping the land. Their latest work can be found at <http://www.fhra.org/about/Home/default.aspx>.

<sup>97</sup> John R. O'Neill, "Bayh proposes using Fort Ben as a state park," *The Indianapolis Star*, 31 August 1993.

Members of the FBHTTF were delighted by Governor Bayh's decision to preserve almost two thirds of the land of the former military base as a state park. Even so, much remained to be done before it could be released for public use. Decades of military activity had produced a range of environmental and safety issues. Since BRAC 91's decision, the Environmental Protection Agency and Indiana's Department of Environmental Management completed several environmental reports about the current environmental issues at Fort Harrison.<sup>98</sup> These reports were used to identify "whether the release of hazardous waste or hazardous constituents has occurred at each solid waste management unit, evaluate the nature of the release of hazardous waste...and the media effected, and provide background concentrations of chemicals in soil, ground water, surface water and sediment."<sup>99</sup> To address any contaminated sites that needed remediation and clean up, the Fort Harrison BRAC Clean up Team (BCT) was formed in 1994, consisting of a BRAC Environmental Coordinator, representative of the EPA, and a representative of IDEM. The BCT worked together to alleviate any environmental and contaminated areas.<sup>100</sup> The BCT also coordinated with the Army to conduct an ordnance and explosives search since several sites (like SM25I) was originally identified as a former grenade range. This search would remove any unexploded ordnance and ammunition on the site. Authorities also closed and sealed off a 24-acre landfill located

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<sup>98</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, *Environmental Impact: Statement Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana Disposal and Reuse*; U.S. Army Environmental Center, *Community Environmental Response Facilitation Act (CERFA Report)* (Aberdeen, Maryland: US Army: 1994) accessed 12 December 2017 <http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a281808.pdf>

<sup>99</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, *Environmental Impact: Statement Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana Disposal and Reuse*, 4-51.

<sup>100</sup> Department of the Army, *Record of Decision for 17 No Further Action Sites in the Final Phase II Environmental Investigation Former Fort Benjamin Harrison, Lawrence Indiana* (March 1999) accessed 2 July 2018 <https://semspub.epa.gov/work/HQ/187790.pdf>

west of the Camp Glenn area in 1991, which the EPA continued to monitor to prevent future toxic waste seepage.<sup>101</sup> Towards the end of the transfer process, the “Fort Harrison Environmental Planning Guide” noted with perhaps a hint of irony:

“The one nice thing about base closing is that when the land is finally sold, the installation will be in the environmental position that most forts only dream about. There will be no contamination sites left...all archeological and cultural resource investigations will have been completed...in other words, it will be environmental paradise.”<sup>102</sup>

The base’s environmental planners welcomed the idea of Fort Benjamin Harrison becoming a state park, especially when it validated their hard work and clean-up initiatives.

Governor Bayh’s public announcement ushered in the official planning for the state park at Fort Benjamin Harrison. FBHTTF refocused its plans to allow the smooth transition of the military base to a state park. The Transition Task Force recognized the importance of preserving the forest and protected wildlife land over commercial development. In the Fort Benjamin Harrison Re-Use Plan published in August 1994, environmental impact study areas 1 to 7, as seen in Map 4. (below) were identified as predetermined land awarded to be used for open space and recreation.

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<sup>101</sup> *Fort Harrison Reuse Plan*, 7-5; Kyle Niederpruem, “Leaking landfill won’t ruin plans at Fort Harrison,” *The Indianapolis Star* 27 June 1995.

<sup>102</sup> “Fort Harrison Environmental Planning Guide, 1993-94,” (Fort Harrison Transition Collection: 1993), 4.

Map 4. Preliminary Community Concept Plan.<sup>103</sup>



Study areas 1-7 (featured on Map 4. above) encompassed the installation's undeveloped land, golf course, and land designated on the National Register of Historic Places. While this reuse plan focused on the economic benefits transitioning Fort Benjamin Harrison, it valued the potential high volume of park visitors due to the fort's location in proximity to Indianapolis.<sup>104</sup>

As the transitional planning period wound down in 1995, the Army successfully transferred 1,700 acres of the original 2,500 acres of Fort Benjamin Harrison's land to Indiana's Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The Department of Interior's permission and recommendation to designate a portion of the fort's land under the public use and recreation conveyance allowed the Army to release the land to Indiana at a reoccurring lease price. The lease agreement signed by the Army and Indiana's DNR protected the land from any future deforestation, mining, soil erosion, or pollution and

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<sup>103</sup>Ibid., Map 2.

<sup>104</sup> "Fort Benjamin Harrison Base Re-use Concept Plan, August 1994," (Fort Benjamin Harrison Transition Collection, 1994), 35.

enforced proper actions for historic preservation and archeological research.<sup>105</sup> This lease also allowed Indiana's DNR to rent the land for four-year time periods, and automatically renew the lease if the agency complied with the lease's stipulations. After years of compromising and devising a plan for the former fort's land, Indiana finally leased the land from the former Fort Benjamin Harrison as public land as a state park.

FBHTTF devoted approximately 800 acres from the former military installation for multi-use real estate development. The majority of the 800 acres were already heavily developed and used for Army training facilities, induction center, and other buildings. This area had the potential for new commercial development. The final *Fort Harrison Reuse Plan* advised that the land could support different types of real estate options such as residential redevelopment, office spaces, and light industrial. The new residential opportunities were marketed as the Harrison Village that would utilize 46 buildings erected in the 1960s that contained 232 apartment units.<sup>106</sup> Other buildings previously used for educational training at Fort Benjamin Harrison were set aside for a satellite campus for a local university or other education institutions. The *Fort Harrison Reuse Plan* heavily recommended new economic opportunities for this area.<sup>107</sup>

While the closure of Fort Benjamin Harrison initially appeared to many as major blow to Indiana, concerted efforts by the federal, state, and local governments and a range of interested organizations allowed for 1,700 acres of the 2,500 acres that comprised the fort at the time of its closure to be conserved and transformed into a state

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<sup>105</sup> Department of the Army, "Interim Lease Under the Base Realignment and Closure Fort Benjamin Harrison, Marion County, Indiana," (United States Department of the Army: Fort Harrison Transition Collection, 1995).

<sup>106</sup> FBTTF, *Fort Harrison Reuse Plan*, 8-5.

<sup>107</sup> FBTTF, *Fort Harrison Reuse Plan*, 8-5

park. The military presence and patterns of land use at Fort Harrison made it possible for over 1,100 acres of reforested, but uncut, hardwood forest to thrive in an otherwise densely populated and developed area northeast of Indianapolis. The Transition Task Force capitalized on the military's unintended conservation to form a successful and well-visited state park. In the last ten years, the annual visitation at Fort Harrison State Park has increased from 653,889 in 2008 to 973,599 in 2017.<sup>108</sup> If its visitation follows this trend, it will continue to be one of the most heavily used parks in Central Indiana, all due to its transformation from a military base to public land in the 1990s.

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<sup>108</sup> Indiana Division of State Parks, "State Park Statistics," accessed 22 August 2018 <https://www.in.gov/dnr/parklake/2441.htm>.

## Chapter 2: Find Your Fort: Interpretation at Fort Harrison State Park

Between 1995 and 2000, the staff at Fort Harrison State Park developed a multi-faceted and layered interpretive strategy for the park. The staff set out to create an interpretive approach that blended cultural and natural resources in its storytelling. Jeanine Montgomery, the first Chief Interpretive Naturalist at Fort Harrison State Park explained in *Indianapolis Monthly* that: “It was the military installation that kept this land from development. This is a monument to what you can do when you let nature recover.”<sup>109</sup> This chapter focuses on how the state park staff developed an interpretive strategy that effectively and successfully engaged and explained the interplay of human and natural history over time.

Visitors to Fort Harrison State Park today have multiple ways to enjoy nature at the former military base. The park has numerous trails and natural features for modern park users. Biking, hiking, fishing, birding, various sports fields, a public golf course, picnic areas, horse trails, a dog park and an interpretive center are all available in the largest state park in Central Indiana.<sup>110</sup> From these facilities, park guests can learn about Central Indiana’s native forests and the fort’s history. Some areas in the park like the Camp Glenn Historic District show heavy traces of the U.S. army’s presence and influence, while other acres of the rehabilitated forests mask the park’s military past.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Brian D. Smith, “Army Green: Take a Guided Tour through Indy’s undiscovered nature spot, Fort Harrison State Park,” *Indianapolis Monthly* (May 1998) 87.

<sup>110</sup> Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of State Parks, “Fort Harrison State Park Brochure,” accessed 24 March 2018 [https://www.in.gov/dnr/parklake/files/ftharrison\\_trail.pdf](https://www.in.gov/dnr/parklake/files/ftharrison_trail.pdf).

<sup>111</sup> The Camp Glenn Historic District was listed on the National Register for Historic Places in 1995. Indiana Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology, *Nomination for the National Register for Historic Places: Camp Glenn, Fort Harrison, Indianapolis, IN*. accessed 12 September 2018

[https://secure.in.gov/apps/dnr/shaard/r/21893/N/Glenn\\_Camp\\_Marion\\_CO\\_Nom.pdf](https://secure.in.gov/apps/dnr/shaard/r/21893/N/Glenn_Camp_Marion_CO_Nom.pdf) Hereafter cited as “Camp Glenn Historic District” NR Nomination.



Much of Fort Harrison State Park's visual landscape, including most of its forest cover, was forged as an unintended consequence of the U.S. Army's presence. The invisible layers of park's cultural and historical past may not be overtly apparent in the rehabilitated forests in the park, but they contribute to the ecological topography present today. The military's ownership and restricted access on some portions of the base prevented encroachment of residential and commercial development, which in turn created valuable green spaces that formed the state park.

Fort Harrison State Park carries its military past in its name, and military history is a key component of that place; yet, the current layout of the park and available interpretation means that visitors often do not encounter or learn about its military history.<sup>112</sup> While visitors frequently engage in recreational activities like hiking, walking, utilizing the playground equipment; they may or may not visit the interpretive center, which is the heart of the park's efforts at historical interpretation. Exhibits at the interpretive center trace human activity and land use from the Native Americans to the park's creation in the 1990s. Outside of the interpretive center, material evidence of the park's military history is limited to the Camp Glenn Historic District and the saddle barn.<sup>113</sup> (See: inset, left side of Map 5 below.) Camp Glenn, which preserves the fort's former parade grounds, Civilian Military Training Camp (CMTC), and Civilian

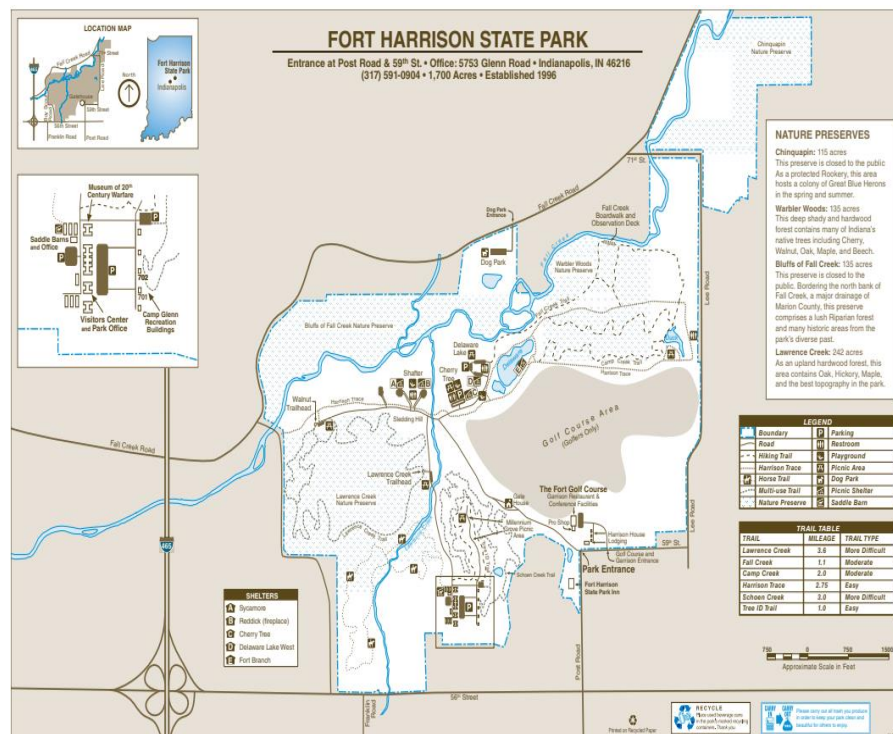
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<sup>112</sup> Author's field observations at Fort Harrison State Park, April 2017, September-October 2017, February 2018, June 2018.

<sup>113</sup> Visitors can also go to the Museum of Twentieth Century Warfare in the Camp Glenn area of the state park. The Museum of Twentieth Century Warfare is an independent, volunteer-run museum that houses exhibits and a small library within one of the former recreational buildings at Fort Harrison State Park. Since it is an independent museum, it is not under the management of Indiana State Park's and is outside my research scope. Further information about this museum can be found at <https://www.facebook.com/M20CW/> and <http://www.museumusa.org/museums/info/21469>.

Conservation Corps (CCC) headquarters, does not address or interpret the military's role in inadvertently reforesting and saving the land that became a state park. The isolated piece of military history documented at Camp Glenn is disconnected from the grander story of how humans, including the US Army, shaped the land that became Benjamin Harrison State Park.

Map 5. Fort Harrison State Park Brochure, 2018.<sup>114</sup>



### Influences on Fort Harrison's State Park Interpretation

After five years filled with lengthy discussions, political compromises, and extensive planning, approximately two-thirds of Fort Benjamin Harrison, the former military base and training center, was incorporated into the Indiana state park system. Fort Harrison State Park joined the Indiana state park system during an era of mixed

<sup>114</sup>Indiana Division of State Parks and Reservoirs, *Fort Harrison State Park Map*. Accessed 12 April 2018 [https://www.in.gov/dnr/parklake/files/ftharrison\\_trail.pdf](https://www.in.gov/dnr/parklake/files/ftharrison_trail.pdf)

expansion. The majority of Indiana state parks were acquired in order to "memorialize the past but would build for the future by practical conservation...they would impress upon the public mind that wastefulness of Nature's beauties and treasures is out of harmony for the spirit for the time."<sup>115</sup> During the early 1990s, Indiana added four parks in eight years to its park system.<sup>116</sup> Charlestown State Park, like Fort Harrison, was acquired in 1994 after the Army closed a former World War II ammunition plant located within the heavily forested area overlooking the Ohio River in Clark County, Indiana.<sup>117</sup>

Fort Harrison and Charlestown State Parks were both acquired after the Base Closure and Realignment Act of 1991, but their development processes differed immensely. Fort Harrison State Park was nearly a premade park; hiking and biking trails existed from its previous military days and most of the land was already managed like a park. Conversely, the challenging typography and policy surrounding Charlestown State Park pushed Indiana's Department of Natural Resources to slowly develop the park. Visitors were limited to specific facilities at Charlestown State Park when it first opened to the public in 1999. Unlike Fort Harrison State Park, Charlestown State Park needed to be built from scratch.<sup>118</sup> Facilities like restrooms and picnic shelters were added slowly as

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<sup>115</sup> David M. Silver, "Richard Lieber and Indiana's Forest Heritage," *Indiana Magazine of History* 67 (March 1971), 54.

<sup>116</sup> During the early 1990s, the Indiana Department of Natural Resources acquired land to create the following state parks: Prophetstown, Falls of the Ohio, Charleston, and Fort Benjamin Harrison. "Governor opens Ft. Harrison State Park," *The Muncie Times* 7 November 1996.

<sup>117</sup> Glory-June Greiff, "Parks for People: New Deal Work Projects in Indiana State Parks," Master's thesis, Indiana University-Purdue University-Indianapolis, 1992. Glory-June Greiff, is a graduate of the masters public history program at Indiana University-Purdue University-Indianapolis (IUPUI) in 1992. Her Master's thesis was in the large part based upon research and field work paid for by a historic preservation grant awarded by the Indiana Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology. Glory-June Greiff, *People, Parks, and Perceptions: A History and Appreciation of Indiana State Parks* (Victoria, BC: Woodsprite Press, 2009), 52.

<sup>118</sup> Grace Lee Uy, "Indiana's Charlestown State Park Will Get \$1 million in road work," *Louisville Courier-Journal* 20 August 1999.

more funds became available, whereas Fort Harrison mainly needed to modify existing structures. While both parks were developed from former military land after BRAC 91, Fort Harrison had the resources in place to support a state park faster than Charlestown.

Before strategic plans for Fort Harrison State Park were finalized, the Natural Resources and Historic Preservation Subcommittee of the Fort Benjamin Harrison Transition Task Force (FBHTTF) worked on education and recreational opportunities at Fort Harrison. The Subcommittee's goal was to highlight the environmentally and historically significant structures and areas to be used and incorporated in the future state park. The subcommittee's efforts to conserve the forest and preserve the built environment at Fort Benjamin Harrison provided necessary research that would later be used to tell the former military base's story. In the early days of the transition period, Robert Baker, the chairman of the Natural Resources and Environmental Subcommittee commented at a meeting in 1992, "[t]he Fort has educational facilities which could support the proposed preserve plan through the development of comprehensive education programs in environmental and natural sciences. Classroom and dormitories are already in place and the natural area is unsurpassed in Central Indiana."<sup>119</sup> The Natural Resources and Historic Preservation Subcommittee hoped to protect about 1,100 acres of hardwood forest and 340 acres of land nominated as a historic district on the National Register of Historic Places.<sup>120</sup> This protected area offered an opportunity to interpret Fort Harrison's natural and archaeological features as well as its military past.

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<sup>119</sup> Robert S. Baker, "Statement for the EIS Scoping Meeting 12 November 1992," Robert S. Baker Files, Fort Harrison Files.

<sup>120</sup> Indiana Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology, "Fort Benjamin Harrison Historic District," *National Register of Historic Places Inventory/Nomination Form* (Indianapolis: 10 March 1989/December 1990). Accessed 12 September 2018  
<https://npgallery.nps.gov/NRHP/AssetDetail?assetID=34a2ca0e-7ef6-4e65-a692-81975b28abbb>

One of the initial goals set for the Natural Resource and Historic Preservation Subcommittee of the FHTTF was to survey and identify the environmental, historic, and archeological structures and areas at Fort Benjamin Harrison. Their inventory included the topography, bodies of water (lakes, ponds, streams, and wetlands), woodlands, geological characteristics, soil characteristics, threatened and endangered species, aquifer locations, and archaeological sites (prehistoric, historic, and military).<sup>121</sup> Various local, state, and federal environmental and historic preservation agencies provided the Natural Resources and Historic Preservation Subcommittee with a variety of recent studies to complete its inventory, which eventually influenced the future interpretive themes and plans for the state park. From its research, the members of the Subcommittee noted the following important natural resources at Fort Benjamin Harrison: 1,100 acres of unregimented forests, 155 plant species (including 4 rare species: wood's sedge, pink turtlehead, goldenseal, and ginseng), 5 major creeks and tributaries (Fall, Indian, Fort Branch, Camp, and Lawrence Creeks), 42 species of fish, 21 species of reptiles and amphibians, 53 nesting bird species, 185 species of birds observed (3 on the endangered list), and the typical mammalian species for the region (including the Indiana bat that is on the endangered species list).<sup>122</sup> The Natural Resources and Historic Preservation

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Hereafter cited as "Fort Benjamin Harrison Historic District" NR Nomination. Nomination forms for sites and structures listed on the National Register of Historic Places can be found at the US National Park Service database at:

<https://npgallery.nps.gov/NRHP/AssetDetail?assetID=34a2ca0e-7ef6-4e65-a692-81975b28abbb>

<sup>121</sup> Fort Harrison Transition Task Force, "Fort Benjamin: A Strategic Plan for Closure, Reuse, and Economic Adjustment Scope of Services," *Final Draft for Task Force Review*, Fort Harrison State Park Archive, 26 February 1992, 10-11.

<sup>122</sup> The following studies were used by the Natural Resources and Historic Preservation Subcommittee in their inventory and proposal for Fort Harrison's future: Cloyce L. Hedge, John A. Bacone, and Colleen Baker, *A Survey of Fort Harrison, Indianapolis, Indiana Special Plants Species and Natural Areas* (Indiana Department of Natural Resources: Division of Nature Preserves: Indianapolis: 1992); Michael S. Litwin, Clark Forest, and, Scott E. Pruitt, *Fish and*

Subcommittee worked closely with Indiana's Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology to identify significant prehistoric, historic, and military archaeological sites at Fort Benjamin Harrison.<sup>123</sup> The collective efforts of the Natural Resources and Historic Preservation Subcommittee provided Fort Harrison's interpretive staff with background research to be used to develop interpretive themes and strategies for the new state park.

Prior to the opening of Fort Harrison State Park in 1996, planners prioritized the renovation of the recreational facilities. Most of the recreational elements at Fort Harrison State Park were remnants of the fort's old picnic and fishing areas making it relatively easy for visitors to enjoy the state park as soon as it opened.<sup>124</sup> The park aimed to repair and add more recreational facilities at Fort Harrison before developing its interpretive facilities. At its grand opening in October 1996, the state park boasted picnic areas with shelter houses, playgrounds, fishing lakes, nine miles of hiking trails, and several smaller service areas.<sup>125</sup>

The expedited transition from military to civilian use caused Indiana's Division of State Parks to be unprepared to launch interpretive programming and open the interpretive center immediately. Fort Harrison State Park developed and opened its interpretive facilities to the public in three stages. During stage one, from 1995 to 1997, the park opened its park office, a bare minimum interpretive center, multipurpose trails,

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*Wildlife Survey with Management Recommendations for Fort Benjamin Harrison Marion County, Indiana*, (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: Bloomington, IN, 1992).

<sup>123</sup> Resource Analysts Inc., *Archaeological Survey and Historic Building Inventory, Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana* (National Park Service: 1986); U.S. Army Engineer District, St. Louis, Mandatory Center of Expertise for the Curation and Management of Archaeological Collections, *An Archaeological Collections Summary for Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana* (U.S. Army Environmental Center, Aberdeen Proving Grounds, MD: 1995).

<sup>124</sup> "Fort Harrison Outdoor Recreation Booklet," (Fort Harrison Transition Files, Robert Baker, 1985), 1-6.

<sup>125</sup> Diana Penner, "Fort Benjamin Harrison: Old Place, New Face," *The Indianapolis Star*, 25 October 1996.

hiking trails, shelters, picnic areas, lodging facilities, the horseback riding trails and stables and the golf course. Stage two featured the expansion of interpretive services at Fort Harrison between 1997 and 1999. Park naturalists planned to complete the development of the interpretive center programming and guided tours of the heron nesting areas and open an environmental education center by 1999. The third and final stage of park planning at Fort Harrison State Park included further expansion of the interpretive center and park office, and construction of a parking lot for the environmental education center between 1999-2001.<sup>126</sup> The gradual interpretive development allowed park naturalists to explore the natural, historic, and archeological resources preserved at Fort Harrison State Park. Most of the early developments in the park's themes involved interpreting the forest and native wildlife found at the park, while its former military past and patterns of land use would be explored in other exhibits and wayside markers later.

### **Developing an Interpretive Narrative at Fort Harrison State Park**

The landscape of Fort Harrison State Park offers visitors miles of hiking trails along Fall Creek, several fishing ponds, and nature preserves filled with native birds and animals, and historic Camp Glenn. This diverse environment challenged park staff during the interpretive development process. They needed to address the natural environment, to include the large tracts of mature forest, wetlands surrounding Fall Creek, rugged terrain and hills (for Central Indiana), and the Great Blue Heron rookery. The built environment at Fort Harrison, specifically the former Camp Glenn area, was also a significant asset that park staff needed to acknowledge in their interpretive planning. The intertwining of

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<sup>126</sup> Skip Hess, "Fortified," *The Indianapolis Star*, 4 March 1996.

natural and human history at Fort Harrison challenged park staff to address the cultural, historical, and environmental resources within the same interpretive strategy.

The interpretive center at Fort Harrison State Park opened in 1999, and when it did, it fit into a context of interpretive planning developed and refined by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in the previous half century. A summary document generated by the Indiana DNR titled “Interpretation by the Decade A History of ‘Nature Guiding’ in Indiana State Parks and Reservoirs,” highlights the interpretive priority assigned to nature and naturalists in Indiana State Parks from the 1920s through the early 2000s. During the “environmental decade” of the 1960s, employment of naturalists in Indiana’s State Parks expanded significantly. In 1961, “fourteen naturalists worked in 8 parks (Dunes, Pokagon, Turkey Run, Shades, McCormick's Creek, Brown County, Spring Mill, Clifty Falls),” while by the mid-1960s, 19 naturalists and a Chief Naturalist served 13 state parks (Dunes, Pokagon, Turkey Run, Shades, Raccoon Lake, Shakamak, McCormick's Creek, Brown County, Versailles, Whitewater, Spring Mill, Lincoln and Clifty Falls). “Interpretation by the Decade,” notes that “with the opening of Fort Harrison State Park and its long and varied history and natural resources, a full- time naturalist was hired.” “Interpretation by the Decade” ends by explaining that “in 2003, the Interpretive Services includes 18 full time interpretive naturalists, 1 historian, [and]approximately 50 seasonal interpretive naturalists.” Even in cases where state parks incorporate history into their public interpretation, that work is nearly always carried out by naturalists and not historians.<sup>127</sup> In 1973, leadership at DNR decided to expand

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<sup>127</sup> Indiana Department of Natural Resources, “Interpreting by Decade: A History of “Nature Guiding” in Indiana State Parks And Reservoirs,” accessed 12 June 2018 <https://www.in.gov/dnr/parklake/2423.htm>



interpretive services within the state's parks by opening new interpretive centers staffed by year-round interpretive naturalists at six state parks and by adding seasonal naturalists at other parks during the busy summer seasons.<sup>128</sup> The title of "naturalist" was reflective of the fact that most front-line interpretation offered at Indiana state parks highlighted nature and the environment over history and culture.<sup>129</sup> The fact that most parks employed naturalists to explain history and related cultural resources speaks volumes about DNR's interpretive priorities. Indiana DNR's interpretive practices coincided with broader trends in the Nation's National Parks. An important assessment of National Parks published in 2011, *Imperiled Promise: the State of History in the National Park Service* observed that there is an "artificial separation of natural resources interpretation from cultural and historical interpretation."<sup>130</sup> *Imperiled Promise* explains that more funding, staffing, and federal initiatives are directed towards natural resource preservation and education without acknowledging that the "natural" landscape is a product of both human and environmental factors.

With this background on interpretive trends in mind, staff at Fort Harrison State Park centered their formal interpretive strategies on the new interpretive center, which opened to the public in 1999. Over 1,700 acres of Fort Harrison provided visitors places to engage with the park's natural and cultural resources. Hiking trails along Fall Creek and the secondary hardwood forest growth in several nature preserves allowed visitors to explore the largest area of uncut forest cover in Central Indiana. Visitors who wanted to

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<sup>128</sup> Greiff, *People, Parks, Perception: A History and Appreciation of Indiana State Parks*, 46-7.

<sup>129</sup> Indiana Department of Natural Resources, *Annual Report of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources 1972* (Indianapolis, INDNR, 1972), 79.

<sup>130</sup> Anna Mitchell Whisnant et, al. *Imperiled Promise: the State of History in the National Park Service* (Bloomington, Organization of American Historians, 2011), 6, 80.

learn more about the history of Fort Harrison could spend time walking around the Camp Glenn Historic District viewing the former Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) encampment and the parade grounds for troops stationed at Fort Harrison during the early twentieth century. Camp Glenn Historic District and park trails also became the prime locations for park naturalists to conduct public and educational programming.

During the first couple of years after Fort Harrison State Park opened to the public, it hosted educational nature programs like archeology camps, wetlands, workshops, free birding walks, and a history lecture series.<sup>131</sup> These programs utilized the acres of wetlands and forests throughout the park and aimed to encourage Indianapolis and Lawrence residents to explore their local park and habitats in Indiana. It was easier for the first park naturalists to plan nature programming before historical or cultural programming, due to the hiking and wetland resources readily available compared to the built environment at Camp Glenn that was still undergoing preservation work. Early programming at Fort Harrison State Park often relied on collaborations with outside partners like as the Indiana State Museum, Indiana Audubon, and retired U.S. Army historians. Park partnerships forged during the transition process and parties interested in preserving the former military base proved to be essential to successful first programs at the new state park.<sup>132</sup> Experts in birding, history, and natural sciences from partner organizations offered to help with early programming that freed up park naturalists to work on other projects and provided the public with new ways to interact with Fort Harrison right away.

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<sup>131</sup> “Indy Boasts two of the world’s best birding parks,” *The Indianapolis Star*, 3 October 1997; “Wetland Workshop Set Fort Harrison State Park” *The Indianapolis Star*, 9 July 1997; “Passport to the Past Lecture Series,” *The Indianapolis Star*, 10 May 1998.

<sup>132</sup> Skip Hess, “Fortified,” *Indianapolis News*, 4 March 1996.

## Fort Harrison State Park's Interpretive Center

Throughout much of 1998, park staff developed the themes, text, and exhibits to be put on display in the interpretive center. Brochures, interactive exhibits, wayside markers, were added to the interpretive center and the Camp Glenn Historic District several years after the initial interpretive planning. These materials focused on creating an overview of Fort Benjamin Harrison's environmental and cultural history in a series of four exhibit areas. The original exhibits were still on display at the interpretive center as of May 2018, with several newer interactive exhibits added about the park's natural resources and certain eras of the military installation.

Fort Harrison State Park's environmental history is linked to nature and human interaction from 6,000 BCE (Native Americans) to its current life as an Indiana state park. To demonstrate the park's interconnected story between land, humans, and natural events, park interpreters expanded their timeline to before European contact to its current, and future land management plans. The overall theme for the interpretive center's exhibits was "to make visitors aware of the human and natural events that have shaped the continual changes in the outdoor 'rooms' of Fort Harrison State Park...visitors will realize that their current environment is connected to complex past and current influences, as well to choices for the future."<sup>133</sup> Their concise approach demonstrates the long history of the military installation and its plans for the future.

The four exhibit areas (1998) are chronologically organized to follow patterns of land use at Fort Harrison State Park over a long sweep of time. Exhibit Area 1, *Forests*

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<sup>133</sup> Fort Harrison State Park Interpretive Services, "Exhibit Mission Statement and Outline," (Indianapolis, Indiana Department of Natural Resources, February 1998), 1-2. Fort Harrison State Park Archives

*Forever*, addresses geological/environmental change as well as Native American presence. *Forests Forever* highlights the transformation of climate and plants as the floodplain and forests developed over time.<sup>134</sup> It also includes panels that demonstrated that the Native Americans, living in Central Indiana, minimally affected the landscape. Exhibit Area 2, *Farming a Forest* (1800-1890s) discusses removal of trees for farmland due to the Anglo-American migrants settling, farming, and growing a community in what would become Lawrence. Exhibit Area 3, *Fort Benjamin Harrison: Return to Woodland* (1898-1991) covers the years of Fort Harrison as an active U.S. Army base and how it transformed the land. Visitors get a brief, but concise overview of Fort Benjamin Harrison's history in approximately thirteen exhibit panels that highlight the acquisition of land for Fort Harrison, U.S. Army and National Guard training camp during World War I, interwar time as a Citizens Military Training Camp and CCC headquarters, large induction center for recruits for World War II, the largest training center for officers, the location of the Army finance center, and other activities at the base during the Korean, Vietnam, and Gulf Wars. Exhibit Area 4, *Sanctuary for Man and Beast* (1995-present) discusses the status of land management, wetland habitats, and human usage at Fort Harrison State Park. The replenished forest becomes both a home to various native plants and animals, but also invites human to explore the park grounds.<sup>135</sup>

The interpretive center exhibits planned in 1998 successfully reveal the environmental and human impact on the condition of the land over time. As with most interpretive centers in the state park system, Fort Harrison's center serves as an

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<sup>134</sup> Fort Harrison State Park Interpretive Services, "Exhibit Mission State and Outline," (Indianapolis: Department of Natural Resources, December 1998) 4-5. Fort Harrison State Park Archives

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 11-12.

introduction to the park's history. The exhibits focus on the major changes in the land over time, especially between pre-European contact, Anglo-Americans settling, and subsequent military years. The juxtaposition of the limited effects of the Native American on the land reflected in Exhibit Area 1 and forest removal for farmland, introduction of non-native plant species, "water diversion, equipment noise, and increasing water pollution," in Exhibit Area 2 shows the drastic transformation in the landscape due to Anglo-American settlement.<sup>136</sup> The removal and regrowth of the forest remains the most significant natural and historic resource at Fort Harrison State Park. The interpretive center exhibits (1998) encourage visitors to view the forested area within Fort Benjamin Harrison as evidence of continual human and environmental influences that shaped its conditions today.

Despite the planning that went into them, the four initial exhibit areas at the interpretive center, are stark and rigid in style. The exhibit texts are simple but generic in interpretive writing, and mostly accompanied by two-dimensional photographs, maps, and some artifacts. The chronological set up of the exhibits is helpful to follow the fort's development, but it does not allow visitors to interact or respond to the subjects of the exhibits. This style of bare-minimum interpretation encourages visitors to walk through the interpretive center exhibit hall in a few minutes without engaging with the material. Timeline style exhibits often seem like the obvious choice for an exhibit layout, but they oversimplify the narrative to a series of cause and effects without relating the complexity

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 6-7.

and nuance of the story.<sup>137</sup> Other styles of exhibits were needed in the interpretive center if the park wanted to capture the attention of park visitors.

### **Additions to the Interpretive Center's Exhibits: Reddick Family and Interactive Exhibits**

Professional staff at Fort Harrison State Park worked with outside partners to create short term special exhibits for the interpretive center, one such example was a small-scale exhibit about the Reddick family who in 1823 were among the first American farmers to settle in the location that later became Fort Benjamin Harrison State Park. Elisha Reddick bought 132 acres from land speculators. This exhibit was developed in 2003-2004, in the form of a one-panel display combined with a walking tour that featured the approximate locations of the Reddick family farmstead.<sup>138</sup> The panel used the Reddick family as an example of the land use and impact of white settlers on the natural environment and the lifestyle of a typical farm family in the early 19th century. While the exhibit design was simple, the accompanying walking tour not only allowed visitors to learn more about Fort Harrison's history prior to the 1903 establishment of the military installation, but also to identify locations where Anglo-American settlers had lived and farmed prior to the founding of Fort Benjamin Harrison. The walking tour emphasized the transformation of the pre-agricultural landscape from dense forest and swamps in low-lying lands to the clearing by the Reddick family of approximately 80 acres of forest for livestock and farming, and finally to the development of a small farming community

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<sup>137</sup> Steve Lubar, "Timelines in Exhibitions," *Curator: The Museum Journal* 53 (April 2013) 178-180.

<sup>138</sup> Cindy M. Cronk and Katherine Kuntz, "Reddick Family Exhibit, Fort Benjamin Harrison State Park," Fort Harrison State Park Archives, 3. Cindy M. Cronk and Katherine Kuntz were contracted historical consultants working to develop interpretive panels for the Interpretive Services at Fort Harrison State Park.

of Lawrence in the middle of the nineteenth century.<sup>139</sup> The combined impact of Anglo-American settlement resulted in significant environmental transformation as an agricultural landscape replaced the forests. This exhibit and walking tour reinforced the interpretive center's interpretive theme: "The interplay of human actions and natural events shaped and reshaped the property that became Fort Harrison State Park property from the Ice Age to the present."<sup>140</sup>

Between 2004-2006 professional staff at Fort Harrison State Park added seven interactive exhibits to encourage visitors to spend more time in the interpretive center. Interactive museum exhibits encourage visitors to touch materials, answer questions, or perform an activity associated with the exhibit's subject. Interactive exhibits allow visitors, especially children, to explore and discover new information through informal learning styles.<sup>141</sup> A combination of standard text-based and interactive exhibits provides visitors with a multi-sensory learning experience.<sup>142</sup> The interpretive center incorporated new interactive science/nature and history exhibits to provide varied experiences besides the traditional timeline exhibits. The first science/nature exhibit, *Compare and Contrast*, allows visitors to match and identify species of native plants and trees found in the park by viewing leaves from different trees under a magnified glass. (Refer to Image 1 below). Another interactive exhibit, *Animal Detective*, encourages visitors to examine a variety of

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid, pp. 4-6, 12.

<sup>140</sup> Fort Harrison State Park Interpretive Services, "Exhibit Mission State and Outline,"4.

<sup>141</sup> M., Csikszentmihalyi and K. Hermanson. "Intrinsic Motivation in Museums: What makes visitors want to learn?" *Museum News* 74, no. 3 (1995):34–37, 59–61; Beverly Serrell, *Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach Second Edition*, (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 190-202; Kris Wetterlund, *If You Can't See It Don't Say It: A New Approach to Interpretive Writing*, (Minneapolis: Museum Ed, 2013).

<sup>142</sup> Kathleen Mclean, "Museum Exhibitions and the Dynamics of Dialogue," *Daedalus* 128, No. 3 (1999), 91.

animal skulls and identify the types of animals and birds that can be found in the park (Refer to Image 2 below). Both exhibits utilize objects that park guests can handle, look at, and study. Interactive exhibits like these commonly found in Indiana state park interpretive centers, are more effective and engaging than simple text and photograph exhibit panels.<sup>143</sup>

Image 1. *Compare and Contrast* Exhibit.<sup>144</sup>



<sup>143</sup> Fort Benjamin Harrison State Park does not have a complete Interpretive Master Plan, but the exhibits displayed at its interpretive center are very similar to those found at Mounds State Park. Mound State Park is located in Anderson, Indiana, approximately Indiana Department of Natural Resources, *Mounds State Park Interpretive Master Plan 2011*, accessed 12 June 2018 [https://www.in.gov/dnr/parklake/files/sp-Mounds\\_State\\_Park\\_IMP\\_2011.pdf](https://www.in.gov/dnr/parklake/files/sp-Mounds_State_Park_IMP_2011.pdf)

<sup>144</sup> “Be an Animal Detective” and “Compare and Contrast” museum exhibits at Fort Harrison State Park Interpretive center, photograph taken by author February 2018.



Image 2. *Animal Detective* Exhibit



Another interactive exhibit, *Pack a Pack*, allows visitors to gain insight into the daily lives of American soldiers who might have been stationed at Fort Benjamin Harrison by selecting items to pack in their personal rucksacks. It has an introductory panel (Images 3a, 3b, 3c below) with examples of items carried by soldiers over the years. On the floor is an open storage box that allows visitors to “be” soldiers by choosing what they would take for their packed bags. This simple but effective exhibit allows visitors to imagine what it would be like to pack a bag as a soldier. It poses questions like: “Which items would be necessary for survival? Which would you leave behind?”<sup>145</sup> Some of the materials are much heavier than others, so visitors need to make a decision about what would be essential and less strenuous for training or other military operations.

<sup>145</sup> Pack a Pack Exhibit Label 2,” Fort Harrison State Park Interpretive center, photograph taken by the author February 2018.

Image 3a: *Pack A Pack* Exhibit Label <sup>146</sup>

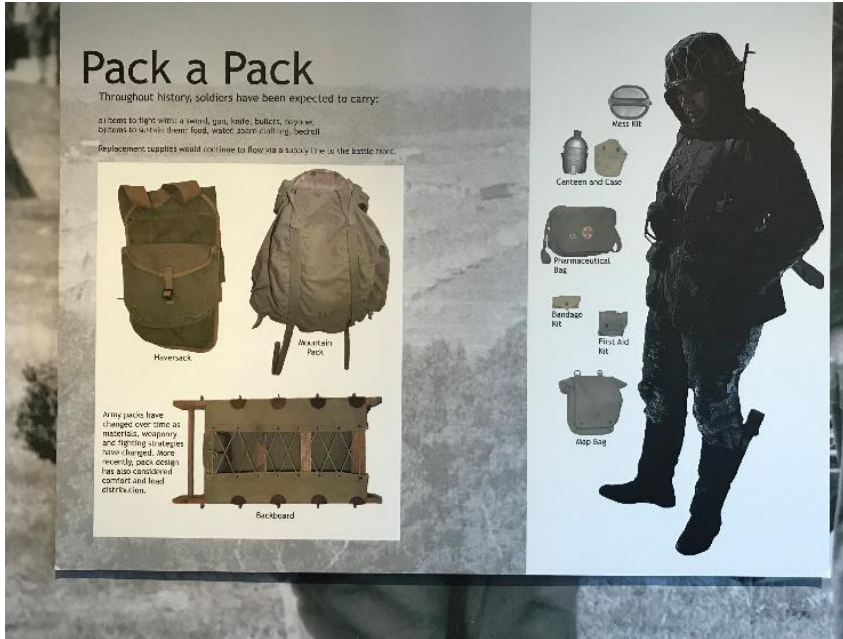
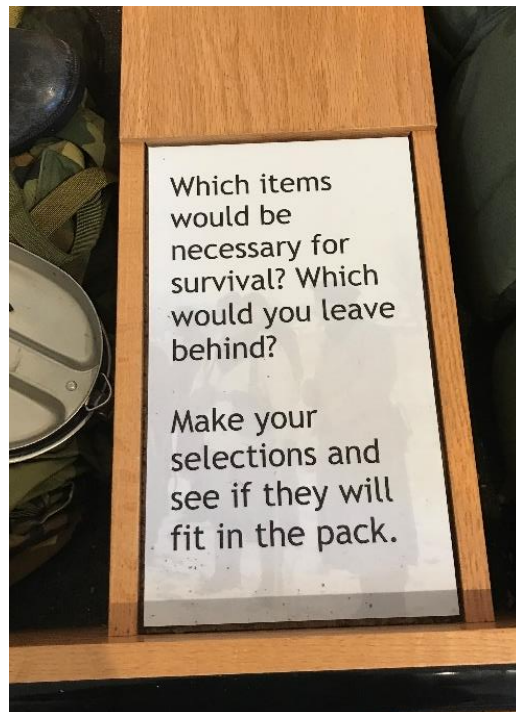


Image 3b: *Pack a Pack* Exhibit Label



<sup>146</sup> Photograph taken by author at Fort Benjamin Harrison State Park Interpretive center, February 2018.

Image 3c. Objects for *Pack a Pack* Exhibit



Two additional interactive exhibits at the interpretive center deal with weapons manufacturing and ammunition used by the military. The manufacturing exhibit addresses the standardization of weapons manufacturing and faster production during the First and Second World Wars that produced greater numbers of shoulder-fired weapons. Underneath this panel, there is an area where the visitor is asked to assemble a rifle out of pre-cut pieces of wood, which is an effective, hands-on way for visitors to learn about the interchangeable parts of a rifle. The other exhibit considers varieties of weapons training at Fort Harrison; it features holes drilled into the exhibit to illustrate the caliber of weapons used in training. (Both weapons exhibits are featured in Images 4 and 5 on page 69).

These exhibits heavily focus on the weapons aspect of military life at Fort Harrison while other key historical themes such as social and environmental impact of military life are ignored. In taking this topical approach, they narrow the focus about the base's history, concentrating on more traditional artifacts found in a military history exhibit like firearms to entice some visitors. The content falls outside the scope of the

interpretive center's exhibit mission to explore how the landscape at Fort Harrison State Park has altered over the years. The initial objective for the military history section of the interpretive center was for viewers to identify examples of "site elements that changed during this time period, the cause and date for the change, and the effect if made on the landscape during this time period."<sup>147</sup> The weapons are removed from the context of their design, purpose, and function in war, and dominate the interpretation of the military training conducted at Fort Benjamin Harrison. Combat and weapons training were only one aspect of training at Fort Benjamin Harrison, officers and soldiers also received medical and engineer training during the Great War, civilian training in the interwar years, and other non-combat training programs after World War II.<sup>148</sup> The focus on weapons training overshadows the depth of interpretation that could be offered to the visitors. The interpretive center exhibits could expand upon environmental impacts of the military on the land, by addressing subjects like firing ranges causing soil and ground water pollution, and the Army's black walnut plantation planted in the 1980s as a kind of investment in trees that could be harvested and used for wood to produce rifle stocks.<sup>149</sup> While the firearms exhibits are flashy; they reflect only one aspect of the everyday reality of living or working on a military base.

The nature/science interactive exhibits are more conducive to informal learning than the military history exhibits. Nature/science exhibits connect visitors with the environment and flora and fauna they can find in the park, whereas the history exhibits

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<sup>147</sup> Fort Harrison Interpretive Services, "Fort Harrison Interpretive Center Exhibition Mission Statement," (Indianapolis: Dept Natural Resources, September 1998) 2.

<sup>148</sup> Bowers, *The American Army in the Heartland: A History of Fort Benjamin Harrison 1903-1995*, 23, 45, 150.

<sup>149</sup> FH Interpretive Services, "Interpretive Center Exhibition Mission Statement," 12.

seem to be peripheral to the military base's history. The nature/science interactive exhibits are also more user and age appropriate for a younger audience while the military exhibits aim for predominantly male audience. Overall, both sets of interactive exhibits enhance the narrative at Fort Harrison State Park's interpretive center by providing their audience with more options for learning about the environment, nature, and history of the former military base.

Image 4. Weapon Assembling Exhibit.<sup>150</sup>



Image 5. Weapons Training Exhibit<sup>151</sup>



<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

## Interpretation at Camp Glenn Historic District

Following the creation of Fort Harrison State Park in 1995, development of Camp Glenn began with the listing of a historic district on the National Register of Historic Places, followed by an interpretive plan for that district, and finally a full-blown Camp Glen Master Development Plan. Historic preservation preceded the interpretive development of Camp Glenn. When the park opened, many of the buildings within the Camp Glenn needed preservation work and basic maintenance before they could be utilized for public programming. State Park staff worked with Indiana's Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology (also in the Indiana Department of Natural Resources) to develop a preservation plan to maintain the historic integrity of buildings located within Camp Glenn, including the Building 700-704 (identical housing used for CMTC), Buildings 705 and 707 used as mess halls for Camp Glenn.<sup>152</sup>

A key component of the preservation activity involved contracting the Technical Assistance Center of the US Army Corps of Engineers for the preparation of a district nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, which passed the state and federal review processes and was listed in 1995.<sup>153</sup> The built environment at Fort Harrison had

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<sup>152</sup> Tom Shafer, *Fort Benjamin Harrison Historical District*, (Indianapolis: Fort Harrison Transition Files, 1994).

<sup>153</sup> Camp Glenn Historic District is 18 acres on the southeast side of Fort Harrison State Park. This historic district contains 19 buildings primarily used as lavatories, mess halls, warehouses, and a dispensary for the military installation during the interwar period. These buildings are currently incorporated on the "Camp Glenn Historic District" Nomination Form completed in 1995. The National Register of Historic Places is a federal listing of properties maintained by the National Park Service that are significant in the Nation's history and prehistory measured against four Criteria: Criterion A, events and patterns in American History; Criterion B, historically important individuals; Criterion C, architecture and construction; and Criterion D, properties that are likely to yield important information related to pre-history. Listing on the National Register provides federal government recognition of the significance of a historic district, site, building, or property. For further information on listing in the National Register, as well as the limits and protections of National Register listing see: United States National Park Service, "National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply for National Register Criteria for Evaluation," accessed 15

rapidly expanded in the interwar period, and many of the current buildings are original. Fort Harrison's plans to restore several historic structures at Camp Glenn would allow visitors to visualize the Camp as it appeared in the 1920s-30s. After the completion of the preservation work and other repairs at Camp Glenn, Fort Harrison staff developed a short interpretive plan for the historic district.

Camp Glenn Historic District is in the southwest part of Fort Harrison State Park, where the interpretive center and various park offices are today. As a district listed on the National Register of Historic Places, Camp Glenn, named for the former post commander of base (Colonel Edwin F. Glenn, 1912-1913, and 1917), was the heart of daily life during the first half of the twentieth century. During the interwar period (1920-1941), this portion of the military camp was primarily a training grounds and housing for different military and civilian groups stationed at Fort Benjamin Harrison. Some of the training groups included the Organized Reserved troops, Reserve Officer Training Corps, and the Citizens' Military Training Camp.<sup>154</sup> The Citizens Military Training Camp was a new program offered in the interwar period that was designed to prepare young men for military training. Camp Glenn also served as a headquarters for the Civilian Conservation Corps during the Great Depression. Many CCC companies passed through Fort Harrison their way to their assigned locations. Other CCC companies, like Company 3350, were stationed at Camp Glenn to work on reforestation and other nature rehabilitative projects

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September 2018 <https://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/pdfs/nrb15.pdf>; United States National Park Service, "National Register Bulletin 16A" accessed 15 September 2018 pdf; William J. Murtagh , *Keeping Time: The History and Theory of Preservation in America* , 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (John Wiley & Sons, 2006). Philip V. Scarpino, "Planning for Preservation: A Look at the Federal-State Historic Preservation Program, 1966–1986, *The Public Historian*, Vol. 14, No. 2. (Spring, 1992), pp. 49–66.

<sup>154</sup> "Fort Benjamin Harrison Historic District," NR Nomination, pp. 9-11

at the fort. During the Second World War, a small area of Camp Glenn was transformed into an Italian and German Prisoner of War Camp. Camp Glenn was the center of the action, from military training to conservation work, to POW camps. An area so rich with history is the ideal location for park staff to talk about the evolving landscape (both environmental and built) at Fort Harrison State Park.

Park staff decided to improve the interpretation of Camp Glenn, and subsequently wrote the Camp Glenn Master Development Plan (2004-2005). It served as a “guide that intended to facilitate sensitive and planned development at Fort Harrison State Park Site, especially within the Camp Glenn Historic District.”<sup>155</sup> The plan shaped interpretive themes for the rest of the park, especially with regards to historic preservation and the military history. The plan expanded beyond the natural resources at Fort Harrison and aimed to bolster the site’s military history. It recommended restoring elements from the original Camp Glenn like a section of fencing along the site of the Prisoner of War Camp from World War II, the “boulevard” or landscaped, white bollard (small trees and shrub) lined walkway leading to an informational kiosk, and the restored tent city. “Tent City” refers to the area where men from the Civilian Military Training Camp and CCC camps lived. This temporary housing area was proposed to be recreated with the two rows of existing cement tent pads but decked with a center tent pole, stakes, and roping as representative tent skeleton for the camp. Oil drum trashcans, and high utility poles with accompanying signs reading “Company A and B” would add to this area.<sup>156</sup> Planners intended this recreated area to highlight the significance of Fort Harrison’s military

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<sup>155</sup> J. Swearingen Jr, *Fort Harrison State Park: Camp Glenn Master Development Plan* (Fort Harrison Transition Files, 2004) 1.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 9-11



activities during the interwar period (1920-1939). Unfortunately, the rehabilitation of the Tent City and POW Camp were not completed, while other small preservation projects on the surrounding buildings were finished to maintain the integrity of Camp Glenn. The Master Plan for Camp Glenn meticulously lists each structure and recommended work on each building. By 2003-2004, many of the larger stabilization projects were accomplished, but smaller projects were still needed to revitalize Camp Glenn.<sup>157</sup>

The Camp Glenn Interpretive Plan (2004) does not address any wayside exhibits or programming. However, in the following decade, the park has developed a series of wayside exhibits to depict the story of the Civilian Military Training Camp within the context of Camp Glenn. There are one introductory upright wayside exhibit and three additional low-level wayside exhibits interpreting the buildings and history of the Civilian Military Training Camp. The introductory wayside welcomes visitors to Camp Glenn, provides a map of the historic layout of the area and timeline with accompanying historic photographs of different uses at Camp Glenn. The other three wayside exhibits cover different areas of Camp Glenn.<sup>158</sup> The first one is located outside the interpretive center (where the former camp headquarters was located), that provides an overview of the Civilian Military Training Camp program at the base. It combines historic photographs of the camp, graphics from the program, with a short history of the Civilian Military Training Camp. The second low-level wayside exhibit labeled *Civilian Military*

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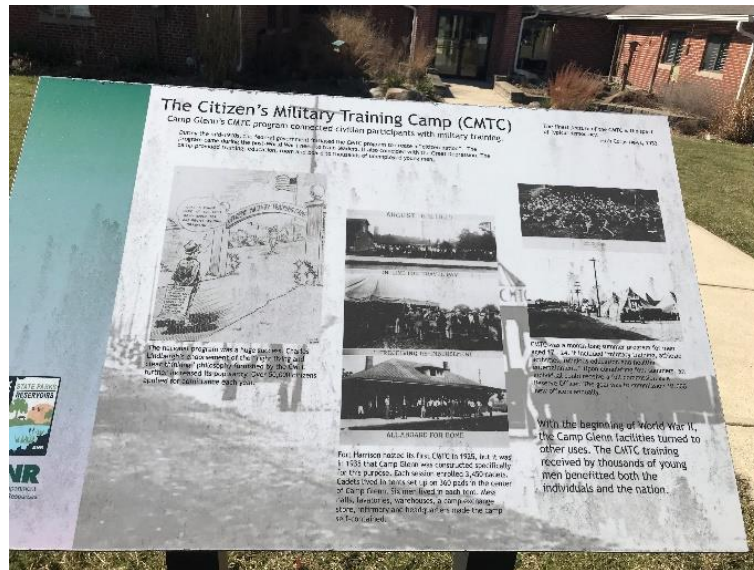
<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>158</sup>As defined by the United States National Park Service, a wayside exhibit is a weather durable, outside exhibit usually used to make a direct and meaningful connection between the visitors and landscapes. Waysides can be low level, giving site specific information about a landscape, or upright wayside that inform visitors about a general area or subject. Most of the wayside exhibits used at Fort Harrison State Park are low level waysides. National Park Service, "Wayside Exhibit: A Guide to Developing Outdoor Interpretive Exhibits," (Harpers Ferry, WV: U.S. National Park Service, October 2009), 7.

*Training Camp Latrine* is situated in front of the old latrine buildings. The material on this wayside discusses the restroom situations for the training camps and how the buildings are used today. The third wayside low-level exhibit is located along the parade grounds and near the former “Tent City.” This panel discusses camp life and camp’s facilities.

These wayside exhibits favor the history of the Citizens Military Training Camp at Camp Glenn without mentioning other uses for the buildings, training, and area around Camp Glenn. An example of the wayside Camp Glenn wayside exhibit is displayed in Image 6 on the page below. The wayside exhibits fail to talk about either the Civilian Conservation Corps or the POW Camp at Camp Glenn. The exclusion of these significant parts of Fort Harrison’s history is neglectful on both accounts. The predominantly African American Civilian Conservation Corps companies’ work during the interwar period was integral to not only rehabilitating the forests at Fort Harrison, but also to working on land located in several other Indiana State Parks. Additionally, the omission of the prisoner of war camp within the Camp Glenn interpretation obscures a difficult chapter in the fort’s history. In the future, new wayside exhibits should be placed in other locations around Camp Glenn to incorporate these subjects into Camp Glenn’s interpretation. This would bring a more balanced interpretation of the Camp Glenn Historic District and ultimately help connect the Camp Glenn’s military history to the environmental history of the park through the discussion of the CCC’s work at Fort Harrison.

Image 6. *The Civilian Military Training Camp* low level wayside exhibit located outside the Fort Harrison State Park Interpretive Center.<sup>159</sup>



### Other Forms of Interpretation at Fort Harrison State Park

For most visitors to Fort Harrison State Park, the first encounter with any type of interpretive material is the park map and brochure. These materials, which are typically given out at the park's gatehouse provide a "front line" introduction to Fort Harrison. Brochures are a traditional fast and easy way for a museum, historic site, or park to inform the public about its facilities. From the detailed topographic maps of larger Indiana State Parks like McCormick's Creek to the smaller museum/park brochures or maps, these materials orient visitors in a concise manner. The first piece of interpretation Fort Harrison State Park worked on before it opened in 1996 was its brochure. The early brochure had a very brief paragraph describing the environmental significance of Fort

<sup>159</sup> *Civilian Military Training Camp* wayside exhibit at Fort Harrison State Park, photograph taken by the author in February 2018.

Harrison and its resources, a map of the park grounds and various hiking trails, and a short list of park facilities, park regulations, and logistics. Due to the limited facilities open, this early brochure emphasized the potential growth and new features that would be available at the park in the future.<sup>160</sup>

Today, Fort Harrison State Park has improved its park brochure to match the standard layout and design of all Indiana state park brochures. These standardized brochures are helpful by orienting park visitors to the site's natural and cultural resources, as well as providing basic logistical information about the park. Fort Harrison State Park's brochure has four short paragraphs describing the cultural significance of Fort Harrison that begins with Native American presence to white settlement in the 1820s, and finally the creation of the military post from World War I to Operation Desert Storm. Visitors using the brochure receive an overview of Fort Harrison's past and are encouraged to "experience forests and meadows, wildlife [that] reveal glimpses into our past."<sup>161</sup> The brochure also lists the park's rules and regulations, activities and facilities, and thorough descriptions of the hiking trails. The opposite side of the brochure (map found on page 50) contains a detailed map of the park, complete with marked hiking trails, nature preserves, and other interpretive features. While the historical content the brochure is brief, visitors get a "big picture" sense of the changes in the park's landscape over the years and encouragement to explore their park.

The park also offers other brochures about the park's history, Indiana State Park rules and regulations, and information about the Junior Indiana Master Naturalist

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<sup>160</sup> Fort Harrison Interpretive Services, *Fort Harrison State Park Brochure*, (Indianapolis, Division of State Parks and Reservoirs, 1996).

<sup>161</sup> *Indiana Department of Natural Resources, State Parks*, "Fort Harrison State Park Map," accessed 13 March 2017 [http://www.in.gov/dnr/parklake/files/ft Harrison\\_trail.pdf](http://www.in.gov/dnr/parklake/files/ft Harrison_trail.pdf).

program. The Junior Indiana Master Naturalist program is an educational program designed to introduce children (ages 9-12) to Indiana's plants, water, soil, and wildlife as well as promote volunteer service to local communities.<sup>162</sup> This program is available statewide at different Indiana state parks, and Fort Harrison State Park offers it several times during the summer. Another brochure that is site specific to Fort Benjamin Harrison, titled *The Story of Camp Glenn National Historic District*, outlines the seventy-year history of Camp Glenn. Unlike the wayside exhibits in Camp Glenn, this brochure moves beyond the role of the Civilian Military Training Camp's influence on Camp Glenn to include information about the Civilian Conservation Corps at Fort Benjamin Harrison, and the location of a POW Camp during the Second World War.<sup>163</sup> This brochure is a helpful addition to the wayside exhibits located throughout Camp Glenn by providing a complete story of the grounds. Overall, the brochures offered at Fort Harrison State Park add to a park visitor's experience by providing them with more site-specific information, whether it is about programs offered in the park, rules and regulations, or more park history.

Like other national and state parks, Fort Harrison State Park has a webpage created by Indiana's Division of State Parks and Reservoirs. Most first-time park visitors will reference webpages like Fort Harrison's to learn more about the site and what facilities it has to offer. The webpage includes links to the park brochure and map, a list of rules and regulations, calendar of upcoming events and programming, and a brief

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<sup>162</sup>“Welcome to the Junior Indiana Master Naturalist Program,” Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of State Parks and Reservoirs, accessed 12 April 2018 <https://www.in.gov/dnr/parklake/files/sp-imn-jr-overview.pdf>.

<sup>163</sup>Fort Harrison State Park Interpretive Services, *The Story of Camp Glenn National Historic District* Brochure, (Indianapolis: Division of State Parks and Reservoirs, n.d.)

overview of park's history. The park's history is consolidated into a short introductory sentence:

“At Fort Harrison, landscape and history blend together at this unique setting on the north-east side of Indianapolis. The 1,700-acre park features walking and jogging trails, picnic sites, fishing access to Fall Creek and two national historic districts. The former Citizen's Military Training Camp is preserved around the park office in what was once known as Camp Glenn. Visitors may also want to stop at the park's Museum of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Warfare to view exhibits about the lives and history of soldiers who once marched the grounds of Fort Harrison.”<sup>164</sup>

While this description provides visitors with enough information about the facilities and trails offered at the park, it minimizes the historical significance of the former military fort. It mentions two areas designated as historic districts but fails to explain what the areas are preserving and why they are important. Without the historical context, Fort Harrison State Park's webpage undervalues the fort's history and thereby limits the scope and effectiveness of an otherwise good introduction to the park.

Fort Harrison State Park also includes a series of other wayside exhibits especially located on hiking trails or near the nature preserves. These wayside exhibits mainly discuss the different types of plants, animals, and the biodiversity found at Fort Benjamin Harrison. One of these wayside exhibits examines the military fort's impact on the environment, but overall these exhibits are geared towards the biology, geology, and environmental resources found at Fort Harrison State Park. Additional signage especially around the former testing and firearms range areas at the park would provide visitors with a more rounded interpretation of Fort Benjamin Harrison's past and the state park's present conditions.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>164</sup>*Indiana Department of Natural Resources, State Parks*, “Fort Harrison State Park: Description,” accessed 21 March 2018, <http://www.in.gov/dnr/parklake/2982.htm>.

<sup>165</sup> Author's field observations at Fort Harrison State Park, April 2017, September-October 2017, February 2018, and May 2018.

Fort Harrison State Park offers its visitors diverse ways to learn about the grounds, current facilities, and its future operations. Interpretive services encourage visitors to learn and walk among the park's natural and historic features. They utilize the historic structures within Camp Glenn for interpretive signs and walking tours. Even so, the interpretive strategy developed for the park largely separates human stories from nature, leaving visitors with a static impression of how the land within the park has transformed over the years as a direct result of the interplay between people and place. Interpretation at Fort Harrison State Park favors the environment and nature, while the human history is limited to a few specific locations. The environment and human historical interpretation should be intertwined throughout the park since the land at Fort Harrison State Park has matured with geological/climate changes and human interactions. The history of Fort Harrison State Park is both an environmental and human history. By separating them in its interpretation, the park fails to acknowledge how the landscape was shaped by both result of human impact and environmental factors over time.

### Chapter 3: Interpretive Plan for Fort Harrison State Park

As the final chapter of this thesis, this section will review, evaluate, and offer recommendations in an Interpretive Plan for Fort Harrison State Park. Indiana's Division of State Parks and Reservoirs utilized interpretive plans to "focus interpretive efforts of site-specific themes, identify needs for guided and self-guided interpretation, and recommended action to fill those needs."<sup>166</sup> This plan provides an overview of Fort Harrison State Park's natural and cultural resources, summary of existing conditions for interpretation, and interpretive recommendations for the park. My recommendations include an evaluation of the interpretive center's exhibits, Camp Glenn Historic District, and interpretive opportunities found throughout the park.<sup>167</sup> From these recommendations, this chapter will draw conclusions as to how Fort Harrison State Park can improve its interpretation in the future.

Fort Harrison is unique part of the Indiana state park system in the following ways:

- It was obtained through the Base Realignment and Closure Act of 1991, as the result of closure of former U.S. Army Base, Fort Benjamin Harrison.
- It is a small park with the largest uncut forest cover in Central Indiana.
- Former land use practices conducted by the US Army protected and created areas that later became four nature preserves along Fall Creek.

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<sup>166</sup> Indiana Division of State Parks Interpretive Services, *Pokagon State Park Interpretive Plan*, accessed 29 July 2018 [https://www.in.gov/dnr/parklake/files/SP-Pokagon\\_S\\_IMP2008.pdf](https://www.in.gov/dnr/parklake/files/SP-Pokagon_S_IMP2008.pdf), 8

<sup>167</sup> This interpretive plan utilizes the methods and design used in other interpretive plans developed by Indiana Division of State Park and Reservoirs. Two examples used for this interpretive plan are from Mounds State Park located in Anderson, Indiana, and Pokagon State Park in Angola, Indiana. These interpretive plans can accessed at [https://www.in.gov/dnr/parklake/files/sp-Mounds\\_State\\_Park\\_IMP\\_2011.pdf](https://www.in.gov/dnr/parklake/files/sp-Mounds_State_Park_IMP_2011.pdf) (Mounds State Park) and [https://www.in.gov/dnr/parklake/files/SP-Pokagon\\_S\\_IMP2008.pdf](https://www.in.gov/dnr/parklake/files/SP-Pokagon_S_IMP2008.pdf) (Pokagon State Park). Accessed 22 May 2018



## Resource Overview

### Natural History

#### a. *Geology*

##### i. Ice Age:

Fort Harrison State Park lies within the Tipton Till Plain, natural region that covers most of Central Indiana. Over 10,000 years ago, this region was blanketed by a thick layer of ice, until increasingly higher and warmer temperatures in the summer caused glaciers to melt. Seeds blown in on the wind or deposited in bird droppings allowed plants to colonize the exposed, recently glacier-covered soil. This environment was part of an extremely thick and seemingly endless forest stretching from the Atlantic Ocean to the Mississippi River.<sup>168</sup>

##### ii. Fall Creek

Gravel, sand, and clay glacial till deposits laid down by large volumes of meltwater formed the building blocks for new soil units and streams like Fall Creek.<sup>169</sup> Fall Creek and its tributaries (Camp Creek, Lawrence Creek, Mud Creek, and Indian Creek) in Fort Harrison State Park became a source of water and transportation for Native Americans living in the area. Map 6. (below) depicts the area that became Fort Harrison State Park.

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<sup>168</sup> John R. Hill, “Surficial Geology-Landscapes of Indiana,” *Indiana Geological & Water Survey* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University, 2018) <https://igws.indiana.edu/surficial/Landscapes.cfm> accessed 12 August 2018

<sup>169</sup> U.S. Army Environmental Center, *Community Environmental Response Facilitation Act (CERFA) Report: Fort Benjamin Harrison* (Cambridge, MA, Arthur D. Little, 1994) 14.

Map 6. Lawrence Township and Fall Creek featuring in USDA Soil Map, 1907 (right).<sup>170</sup>



When European settlers arrived in the 1820s, Fall Creek and its tributaries were compromised. The European settlers within this area cleared the trees along Fall Creek for agricultural land that caused water temperature to rise due to the lack of shade, and erosion on the stream banks. Between 1820s and 1860s, people living in the growing village of Lawrence built several combined grist/sawmills on the banks of Fall Creek and Indian Creek. These technological advancements laid the foundation for continued commercial and residential growth in Lawrence Township. Transforming routes of waterways and water pollution were minor issues compared to the benefits of growth in and around Lawrence.<sup>171</sup>

*b. Plant Communities*

i. Pre- White Settlement Conditions

Indianapolis historian, Berry Selgrove described this region as largely wooded, "covered with a heavy growth of timber, consisting principally of walnut, sugar [maple],

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<sup>170</sup> United States Department of Agriculture Bureau of Soils, "Soil Map of Marion County, Indiana," (Washington, D.C.: US USDA, 1907), Sheet 1. Accessed 18 May 2018, <http://ulib.iupuidigital.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/HIM/id/45/rec/19>.

<sup>171</sup> More information about the early white settlement in the area around Fort Benjamin Harrison can be found on pages 3-5 in the first chapter of this thesis. Cindy M. Cronk and Katherine Kuntz, "Reddick Family Exhibit Plan: Fort Benjamin Harrison State Park," 9-11, Fort Benjamin Harrison State Park Archive

poplar, ash, beech, hickory sycamore, buckeyes, oak, and hackberry. In the lowlands, the primitive forest abounded with grape-vines, frequently growing to enormous height."<sup>172</sup>

ii. Current Conditions

Most of wooded area was cleared and removed for farming during the nineteenth century, however, military land use practices restored around 1,000 acres of forest. Tree species include red oak, green ash, sugar maple, American beech, and cotton wood. Approximately 60 percent of Fort Harrison State Park is undeveloped and protected forest habitats today.<sup>173</sup> Other features found in the park include a 27-acre black walnut plantation, and 3 manmade lakes. Four endangered plant species found in park include: wood's sedge, pink turtlehead, goldenseal, and ginseng.<sup>174</sup>

Fort Harrison State Park also has four nature preserves: Chinquapin- a 115-acre preserve that is closed to the public. It is a protected rookery that hosts a colony of Great Blue Herons during the spring and summer months. Warbler Woods: a 135 acre preserve, a deep shady hardwood forest containing many native Indiana trees like cherry, walnut, oak, maple, and beech. Bluffs of Fall Creek: 135-acre preserve that is closed to the public. This preserve borders the north bank of Fall Creek, a major drainage of Marion County. It is comprised of a lush riparian forest and many historic areas for the park's diverse past. Lawrence Creek: a 242-acre preserve comprised of an upland hardwood forest with the most diverse topography found within the park.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> Sulgrove, *History of Indianapolis and Marion County, Indiana*, 534.

<sup>173</sup> Arthur D. Little, *CERFA Report: Fort Benjamin Harrison*, 13-14.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-14.

<sup>175</sup> Indiana DNR, "Fort Harrison State Park Map," accessed 13 June 2018, [http://www.in.gov/dnr/parklake/files/ftharrison\\_trail.pdf](http://www.in.gov/dnr/parklake/files/ftharrison_trail.pdf).

*c. Fauna:*

The fauna of Fort Harrison State Park is typical of Central Indiana. Common mammals: birds, insects, reptiles, and amphibians reside in Fort Harrison.

*i. Endangered Species*

Fort Harrison is home to several protected and rare bird species that include: the northern harrier, upland sandpiper, black tern, golden-winged warbler, brown creeper, broad winged hawk, red-shouldered hawk, worm-eating warbler, and hooded warbler.<sup>176</sup>

The federally protected and endangered Indiana Brown Bat is also found in Fort Harrison State Park. The Indiana Brown Bat, which usually dwells in caves during the winter months, has recently been displaced due to human disturbance. The park provides a refuge for the Indiana Brown Bat from human disturbance.<sup>177</sup>

*ii. Great Heron Rookery*

Fort Harrison State Park is also the home to the Great Blue Heron. Due to the large heron population near Fall Creek, the Great Heron Rookery area (located in the Chinquapin Nature Preserve) is closed to the public.

*Cultural History*

*d. Native American Presence*

Native Americans, like the Miami, Wea, and Delaware, lived in the Fort Benjamin Harrison area in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. They led a semisedentary life, having fixed villages, but also spending part of the year hunting and fishing along the Fall Creek. They utilized the fertile land to cultivate crops of corn,

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<sup>176</sup> Little, *CERFA Report: Fort Benjamin Harrison*, 6.

<sup>177</sup> U.S. Fish and Wildlife, *Indiana Bat (Myotis sodalis)*, " accessed 22 May 2018 <https://www.fws.gov/midwest/endangered/mammals/inba/index.Html>.

squash, beans, pumpkins, and melons, inducing the transformation of hardwood forests into farmland.<sup>178</sup>

*e. The Reddick Family*

Elisha Reddick became the first white settler to purchase land in this area. Reddick and his family transformed the native hardwood forest into farmland. Elisha and his brother-in-law Charles Johnson worked together to clear almost eighty percent of the valuable timber from the densely forested rural area to make room for crops and livestock.<sup>179</sup> Elisha sustained his family by farming wheat and corn as well as raising livestock. Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Reddick family and other white settlers in this area developed the small village of Lawrence. Lawrence grew in population and industry with new mills, distilleries, and lumber mills to sustain this community. These advancements laid the foundation for continued commercial and residential growth. By the 1880s, farmers had cleared most of the forest for more crops and an expanded community.<sup>180</sup>

*f. Military Base*

i. Acquiring land

After the Spanish-American War, the closure of the Old Arsenal in downtown Indianapolis left Central Indiana without a military outpost. Lieutenant Colonel Russell B. Harrison, son of President Benjamin Harrison, was determined to relocate the military installation. He worked together with the U.S. Department of War and President

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<sup>178</sup> Please reference pages 8-10 in Chapter 1: Fort Benjamin Harrison: From Military Base to State Park of this thesis for more information about indigenous settlements at Fort Benjamin Harrison.

<sup>179</sup> Sulgrove, *History of Indianapolis and Marion County, Indiana.*, 534.

<sup>180</sup> Please reference pages 10-12 in Chapter 1: Fort Benjamin Harrison: From Military Base to State Park of this thesis for more information about the white settlement in Lawrence, Indiana.

Theodore Roosevelt to purchase a tract of land northeast of Indianapolis for a new military post. Harrison found this land to be composed of, “rolling lands and moderate hills; green valleys and level fields all of which make a terrain well adapted for military post purposes and Army maneuvers.”<sup>181</sup> Harrison convinced the U.S. Army to purchase about 2,500 acres of land between 1903 and 1908 for a new military base that was named for Indiana’s only president, Benjamin Harrison.

ii. World War I

The first decade of Fort Benjamin Harrison brought the 23<sup>rd</sup> Regular Infantry Regiment and several Indiana National Guard units to train in Indianapolis. The First World War brought new patriotic fervor to Fort Harrison where it served as a major mobilization center for the national defense and training grounds for Regular Army Officers.<sup>182</sup>

iii. Camp Glenn

The interwar years at Fort Harrison witnessed a conversion of training facilities and organizing grounds. Organizations like the Civilian Military Training Camp and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) constructed a new training area later known as Camp Glenn. The Civilian Military Training Camp (C.M.T.C) provided fundamental military training and athletic programs for young men who hoped to receive a commission from the Officer's Reserve Corps at Fort Harrison. Fort Harrison also served as the headquarters for the CCC and several CCC Companies worked on reforestation project at the base. Company 3350, an African American CCC company, worked diligently on

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<sup>181</sup> Russell B. Harrison, “Souvenir 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Provisional Regiment, Citizen Training Camp, Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana, 1917,” 26.

<sup>182</sup> Bowers, *The American Army in the Heartland*, 9-12.

number of projects like cutting and clearing trees on the base's forest to allow new growth, and to straighten of some of the waterways located in Fort Harrison to prevent future soil erosion.<sup>183</sup>

iv. World War II

During World War II, Fort Benjamin Harrison became the nation's largest induction center, where selection and training personnel varied from quartermaster clerks to chaplains. The military base also briefly held a German and Italian Prisoner of War Camp from 1943-44.

v. Post War Development

October 1948, the base was briefly transferred to the U.S. Air Force, and then returned to the Army's possession in 1950, where it resumed its mission as a training installation and home to the Army Finance Center. The Army Finance Center, located in Building One at the fort, was the largest Army building in operation and most of the Army's financial obligations and bills were paid on site.<sup>184</sup> From the 1950s to its closure in the 1990s, Fort Harrison remained an Army Training Center for the Midwest.

vi. Base Closure

After many years of defense spending, the U.S. Department of Defense decided to reduce its costs by closing or reducing active U.S. military base in the late 1980s. Fort Harrison survived the first round of closures in 1989, but excessive operation costs pushed Congress and the Army to close Fort Benjamin Harrison under the Base Realignment and Closure Act of 1991.

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<sup>183</sup> Bower, *A History at Fort Benjamin Harrison 1903-1982*, 42.

<sup>184</sup> Bodenhamer et. al, *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994): 1368.

g. Park History

Hoosier lawmakers at the local, state, and federal level opposed the initial plans to close Fort Harrison but many changed their minds when presented with the potential opportunity to preserve two-thirds of the former military base as an Indiana state park. From 1991-1995, various government agencies at the local, state, and federal levels worked together to devise a plan to transform Fort Benjamin Harrison into a state park. Fort Harrison State Park was dedicated and opened in October 1996.

### **Existing Conditions**

I. Audiences

a. *Public Park Users*

Due to its proximity to the cities of Indianapolis and Lawrence area, it can be assumed that many park visitors come from the greater metropolitan area as day use visitors. Fort Harrison serves as city park, drawing many daytime users, picnickers, hikers, and joggers. Fort Harrison is also noted and advertised as a destination for family reunions, class reunions, and annual company picnics.<sup>185</sup>

b. *Interpretive Programs*

The interpretive services at Fort Harrison State Park are primarily staffed by summer seasonal interpretive naturalists. Most programs at the park are scheduled in the spring and summer months. A variety of hikes, talks, and activities are offered by the interpreters. The most popular public programs include: Craft/hand-on activities programs, talks, lectures, audio/video presentations, night hikes, animal talks (including

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<sup>185</sup> I do not have the specific demographics (geographic, reason for visiting, etc.) about Fort Harrison State Park visitors. A detailed internal study would need to be completed by Fort Harrison State Park which is outside the scope of this project.



live animal programs), and Camp Glenn Historic District walking tours. The former military base also offers non-personal service programs with facilities for activities like: hiking, walking, jogging/rollerblading, fishing, picnicking/shelter houses, sledding, birdwatching, nature studies, canoeing, and cross country skiing/snowshoeing.<sup>186</sup> Paper brochures and historic markers, bulletin boards for events and park information, and websites/exhibits/news releases are used for other non-personal services to disseminate information.<sup>187</sup>

Fort Harrison partners with the Museum of Twentieth Century Warfare (a small private museum located on Fort Harrison State Park grounds) to host living history events throughout the year. The living history programs cover the Spanish-American War, World War II (both European fronts), and the Korean War. These events attract many visitors who might not otherwise visit Fort Harrison.<sup>188</sup>

## II. Facilities

### *a. Interpretive Center*

The Interpretive Center is located within the Camp Glenn Historic District, not far from the park entrance. It also houses the park office. The facility and most of its exhibits opened 1999. The interpretive center includes an exhibit space, wildlife viewing room, office, storage space, a multi-purpose room and restrooms. The exhibit space has a series

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<sup>186</sup> Non-personal interpretation is an alternative way information is disseminated to visitors in a park without interacting with a park interpreter or naturalist. Examples of non-personal interpretation include brochures, displays, exhibits, self-guiding materials, wayside exhibits, and websites. Wyoming State Park, Historic Sites, and Markers Department, "Proposed Interpretive Services Guidelines," (2012), 4 accessed 12 October 2018 <http://wyoparks.state.wy.us/pdf/Planning/InterpServGuide.pdf>.

<sup>187</sup> Indiana Division of State Parks, *Fort Harrison State Park: Camp Glenn Master Development Plan* (Fort Harrison Transition Collection: 1993): 3.

<sup>188</sup> A list of living history programs at Fort Harrison State Park partnered with the Museum of Twentieth Century can be found at [https://www.facebook.com/pg/M20CW/events/?ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/pg/M20CW/events/?ref=page_internal).

of exhibits, but it will be addressed in more detail in the Recommendations section of this interpretive plan.

The multi-purpose room serves as workshop and meeting room. It has also been used as a prep room for events and programs. The room has several tables and some audio/visual capabilities if needed for a presentation. Programs are conducted in the interpretive center and many hikes originate from the building. The building is open daily, 9 a.m. to 5p.m. Monday through Saturday, during all seasons.

*b. Camp Glenn Historic District*

Camp Glenn Historic District is adjacent to the Interpretive Center and covers approximately 18 acres, with 6 buildings originally constructed in 1933 as lavatories that have been converted for recreational use and equipped with kitchenettes and lavatories. Today the recreation buildings can be rented out for small special events and picnics.<sup>189</sup> There are also four wayside exhibits positioned throughout Camp Glenn Historic District highlighting the history of the Civilian Military Training Camp that was posted in the historic district between the World Wars. Visitors can follow these wayside exhibits when visiting the park.

*c. Museum of Twentieth Century Warfare*

The Museum of Twentieth Century Warfare is a private, non-profit museum housed within one of the recreation buildings in Camp Glenn Historic District. This museum has a partnership with the park and displays several exhibits that emphasize the “technology, artifacts, uniforms, and [American] soldiers of the twentieth century.” The

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<sup>189</sup> Indiana State Park, "Reservation at Fort Harrison State Park," <https://indianastateparks.reserveamerica.com/camping/fort-harrison-state-park/r/campsiteDetails.do?siteId=10961&contractCode=IN&parkId=570024&offset=0&arvdate=6/12/2018&lengthOfStay=1> accessed 9 June 2018

museum also coordinates with Fort Harrison State Park to host reenactments and living history camps throughout the year.<sup>190</sup>

*d. Saddle Barns*

The Saddle Barns are located behind the Interpretive Center and Park Office. Soldiers at Fort Benjamin Harrison relied on horses and mules to transport people, suppliers, and equipment until the end of World War II. Large stables (seen today) were constructed to accommodate these animals. Today, Fort Harrison State Park partners with Hoosier Trail Rides to offer seasonal trail rides, pony rides, and hay rides. The Saddle Barns are open daily 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. March 29<sup>th</sup> to November 5<sup>th</sup> and offer either 2.5 or 1.5 mile trail rides, parent-assisted pony rides, and riding lessons.<sup>191</sup>

*e. Trails*

Fort Harrison State Park has 6 trails that range from easy to moderate to difficult and from 1 to 4 miles in length. One paved route is 3.2 miles and follows the rolling uplands above Fall Creek. Trails are primarily loops and include destinations such as Delaware Lake, Fall Creek, and remnants of old military infrastructure. Trails travel through wetlands and forests, and alongside several man-made ponds. Meeting locations for most hikes are at the Interpretive Center or the Delaware Lake Parking Area.<sup>192</sup>

*f. Fort Harrison Inn*

The Fort Harrison Inn and Garrison Restaurant was the former military officers club, and junior officers' quarters located on the southeast part of the park. Within this

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<sup>190</sup> Museum of Twentieth Century Warfare, "Information," <http://www.museumsusa.org/museums/info/21469>; <https://www.facebook.com/M20CW/>.

<sup>191</sup> Indiana Division of State Parks, "Saddle Barns," <https://www.in.gov/dnr/parklake/3055.htm>

<sup>192</sup> Indiana Division of State Parks, "Fort Harrison State Park Map," [https://www.in.gov/dnr/parklake/files/ft-harrison\\_trail.pdf](https://www.in.gov/dnr/parklake/files/ft-harrison_trail.pdf).

complex, there are 3 different homes where you can rent lodgings and event spaces. The Main Lodge offers 27 lodging rooms, an exercise room and wedding/conference facilities. The Harrison House offers suites and overnight lodging rooms, and the Officers Homes are 3 fully furnished 3-bedroom houses. The Garrison Restaurant is located adjacent to the golf course, and is open for Lunch Monday through Saturday, 11:00 am to 2:00 pm, weekend buffets on Friday and Saturday, 5:00 pm to 8:30 pm, and for Sunday Brunch from 11:00-2:30 pm.<sup>193</sup>

*g. The Fort Golf Course*

The Fort Golf Course dates to the military period, where it was a private golf course used by active and retired military personnel and their guests. After the military base's closure in 1995, renowned course designers, Pete Dye and Tim Liddy redesigned the golf course. Today, the Fort Golf Course is open to the public and features an 18-hole course and driving range open Tuesday-Sunday, 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. and Mondays, 10 am to 6:00 pm.<sup>194</sup>

III. Interpretive Programming

*a. Traditional Park Programs*

Hikes, talks, and activities for the public are offered at the park. Public programs are typically offered Friday through Sunday from April to October. Other larger Indiana state parks typically offer daily public programs throughout the summer, but due to limited staffing and small overnight accommodations Fort Harrison State Park does not

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<sup>193</sup> Indiana Division of State Parks, "Dining Options at Fort Harrison State Park," accessed 14 June 2018 <https://www.in.gov/dnr/parklake/inns/ftharrison/dining.html>.

<sup>194</sup> The Fort Golf Course, "Course History," accessed 14 June 2018 <http://www.thefortgolfcourse.com/>.

schedule programs Monday through Thursday. There is a small overnight population of visitors at the Fort Harrison Inn, but a large day-use visitation coming from the greater Indianapolis metropolitan area. An up-to-date schedule of programming at Fort Harrison State Park can be accessed on the park's website:

<https://www.in.gov/dnr/parklake/2982.htm>.

Program topics focus on the natural and cultural themes of Fort Harrison State Park. Hikes are led to destinations and focus on the ecology and geology of the area. These types of programs are also offered for special groups (scouts, clubs, and churches) who might reserve programs in advance.

Fort Harrison State Park also participates in Hoosier Quest Program that encourages children and their families to get outside and active at Fort Harrison State Park. There are three levels in the Hoosier Quest program: Discover, Challenge, and Explore.<sup>195</sup> Roving Interpretation at Fort Harrison State Park is limited to interactions with visitors at the interpretive center and fee booth.

*b. Special Events*

Special events may last several hours or an entire weekend depending on the theme or topic. Special events usually include several activities for all ages, interests, and abilities. Some topics are interpretive (living history encampments), while others are more recreational such as walks and 5-kilometer races. Many of the special events, such as the annual Soldier's Haunt and Halloween Bash, Soldiers Through Time living history encampment, and various military and jazz band concerts attract larger crowds. The

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<sup>195</sup> Indiana Division of State Parks, "Fort Harrison State Park Information," <https://www.in.gov/dnr/parklake/2418.htm>.

interpreter may be directly leading programs, serving as an organizer, or providing roving interpretation.

#### IV. Interpretive Media

##### *a. Exhibits*

The Interpretive Center exhibits were designed and installed in 1999 and 2004. The content was developed by Interpretive Services of the Indiana State Parks, but the panels were designed and installed by a professional exhibit firm. The exhibits are a mixture of passive cases/panels and interactive exhibits. They chronologically follow the property's history from Native American contact, white settlement, military base, and park's history. In addition to the changes in land management over time, the exhibits cover the following topics: geology, environment, and the park's flora and fauna.

The exhibits use a variety of different interactive components like a magnifying glass used in a leaf identification, shape matching interactive (artifacts and ammunition), pack a military bag, and construct a rifle interactive. The aquariums also feature live animals and fish to allow observation of animals.

The exhibits are attractive and provide a thorough overview of the park's history.<sup>196</sup> However, there are several problems with the exhibits: (1):Too much text on many of the panels. (2). Disorganized layout of the chronology of the site's history (3). No specific space dedicated to temporary or seasonal exhibits A comprehensive exhibit evaluation appears in the Recommendations section.

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<sup>196</sup> Comprehensive descriptions and accompanying pictures highlighting the interactive and other exhibits at Fort Harrison State Park can be found in Chapter 2 of this thesis.

*b. Wayside Exhibits*

Fort Harrison State Park has several wayside exhibits that interpret various cultural and scientific topics like: Camp Glenn Historic District, four waysides stationed throughout the area, Saddle Barns, Environment, Flora and Fauna ,and Invasive Species.

*c. Brochures*

Brochures currently available at Fort Harrison include: Park brochure and trail maps, Hoosier Quest Programs, The Story of Camp Glenn National Historic District, and Museum of Twentieth Century Warfare.

### **Interpretive Themes**

*Original Overarching Interpretive Theme: “To facilitate the recognition of the worth, quality, and importance of Fort Harrison State Park’s past, present, and future.”<sup>197</sup>*

This interpretive theme was developed by the Interpretive Services Staff at Fort Harrison State Park when it first opened in 1997. As a big idea, it is very vague; it states that Fort Harrison State Park was significant but does not indicate how or why visitors should care about it. The big idea theme serves as a clear statement that will clarify, limit, and focus the scope of the museum exhibit or interpretive approach.<sup>198</sup> A more cohesive, new interpretive theme (big idea) for Fort Harrison State Park should be centered around the continual changes of the park’s landscape over time. As suggested, a revised overarching theme could be: *Geological, environmental, and human activities at Fort Harrison State Park have continually shaped the contours of its landscape as it exists today.*

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<sup>197</sup> Fort Harrison State Park, “Camp Glenn Historic Master Plan Redevelopment,” 2.

<sup>198</sup> Serrell, *Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach*, 7-8.

### **Sub-Themes:**

- I. Geological activity, natural climate cycles, and human induced changes shaped the Fort Harrison property from the last ice age to the time of white settlement in the 1820s.<sup>199</sup> The Pleistocene is the geological epoch that lasted from about 2,580,000 to 11,700 years ago, spanning the world's most recent period of repeated glaciations.

#### *Objectives:*

- Visitors will understand conditions that caused climate changes that brought about the advance and retreat of Pleistocene ice sheets.
  - Visitors will understand that the lowering of temperatures and sea levels created allowed Beech-Maple forest canopy to form from glacial tills and soil units.
  - Visitors will be able to follow animal and bird migration into this area.
  - Visitors will understand that Native Americans like the Delaware, Potawatomi, and Wea moved into this area and transformed the land through their settlement patterns of farming, hunting and gathering along Fall Creek.
- II. White Settlement on the Fort Harrison property throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century reshaped the landscape before the creation of the military reservation.
- Visitors will recognize patterns of land use like forest removal, farming, and hunting caused vegetation and animal removal.

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<sup>199</sup> John Swearingen Jr. "Fort Harrison State Park Interpretive Center Exhibition, Approved Exhibit Outline, *Fort Harrison State Park* (Indianapolis: September 1998) 1-2.



- Visitors will understand how the development of mills and damming of streams affected the flow of Fall Creek and other streams in this area.
- III. Land management practices enacted by the military during the tenure of Fort Benjamin Harrison inadvertently rehabilitated and preserved forest land on their property.
- Visitors will see how the abandonment of agricultural land management allowed the return of forest elements in sections of the military post.
  - Visitors can follow the development and expansion of the base during its 90 years as a military post.
  - Visitors recognize the different operational uses of the military and its effect on the land like the shooting ranges, CMTC, POW Camp, and CCC presence.
  - The closure of Fort Benjamin Harrison under the Base Realignment and Closure Act of 1991 allowed this land to become an Indiana state park.
  - Visitors will learn about the bureaucratic procedure that allowed the former military base to become a state park.
  - Visitors will be able to identify the changes made by Indiana's Department of Natural Resources to transform the militarized elements of the site to function as a state park.
  - Visitors will learn about the current flora and fauna found on the state park property as well as witness the park's current wildlife management and conservation efforts.

## **Recommendations**

### **I. Introduction**

Fort Harrison State Park exists due to the closure of Fort Benjamin Harrison in the 1990s and the U.S. Army's land management patterns. The unintended consequences of creating specific spaces for military training and the Civilian Conservation Corps' rehabilitation and reforestation projects in the 1930s led to the restoration of mature forests over a multi-decade period. The park's story is intertwined with the evolution of the park's landscape, from prehistory to its management today. Recommendations for the park's interpretation focus on the property's landscape as it changed over time.

Fort Harrison State Park should elevate the level of historical interpretation throughout the park. Currently, the park favors nature and natural history over human history and culture. Human impact has played a dramatic role in shaping the land at Fort Harrison State Park; from Native American land use practices to heavily deforested farmland of early white settlers to limited development in large portions of the military base. The park land exists as a result of the interplay of people and place over time; therefore, the human action and history and nature/natural history should not be held in separate interpretive stories. The park has ample opportunities to discuss the transformations in land use. In such locations, the historical interpretation should balance both the military and environmental history to demonstrate how they are interrelated. These changes and suggestions are discussed in this section of the plan.

Naturalists provide the Interpretive Services at Fort Harrison State Park. Many of the park's naturalists are trained in environmental science or parks and recreational management but provide programming that explains and interprets history. If Fort

Harrison State Park wants to expand its historical interpretation, the naturalists should consult professionals with historical training. National organizations like the National Association for Interpretation or the Eppley Institute for Parks and Public Lands at Indiana University Bloomington provide free or reduced priced resources like online webinars, online training modules and training programs in heritage interpretation that would be helpful to the Fort Harrison staff to learn how interpret history.<sup>200</sup> In addition to new training in historical interpretation, the park could hire public history professionals to work on new historical interpretive strategies for the park.

## II. Interpretive Center

### *a. Facility:*

The Interpretive Center also houses the park offices, and that co-location functions well in many regards. Park staff are housed within the same building, providing a consistent presence to help orient visitors and answer their questions. One drawback is that visitors sometimes overlook the exhibits available at the Interpretive Center even though it is next to the orientation desk. Interpretive staff should direct visitors to check out the exhibits available in the next room.

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<sup>200</sup> I have completed webinars and online training from both the National Association for Interpretation and the Eppley Institute in basic principles of interpretation and program design and implementation. This training would be incredibly helpful for new interpreters who might not have experience in interpreting history. More information on both of these programs can be found at National Association for Interpretation, "Certification and Training Program," [https://www.interpnet.com/NAI/interp/Certification/Overview/nai/\\_certification/NAI\\_Certification.aspx?hkey=fa8b1be4-ee12-436d-ac61-7cdd7efd3926](https://www.interpnet.com/NAI/interp/Certification/Overview/nai/_certification/NAI_Certification.aspx?hkey=fa8b1be4-ee12-436d-ac61-7cdd7efd3926) accessed 22 August 2018; Eppley Institute for Parks and Public Land at Indiana University-Bloomington, "Training and Education," <https://eppley.org/services-2/>.

*b. Media and Exhibits:*

The Interpretive Center exhibits were installed between 1999 and 2004. The Interpretive Center utilizes the overarching interpretive theme by following the changes of Fort Harrison's property from prehistory to its current state. Visitors who read and engage with these exhibits can learn about the evolution of land use and management. While the exhibits have held up well and depict the overall history of Fort Benjamin Harrison, it is necessary to evaluate their effectiveness and implement changes.

*c. General Comments:*

The Interpretive Center blends nature and history in its exhibits and other materials, clearly covering the four sub-themes for the park by chronicling how the climate, geological factors, and humans have shaped the landscape of Fort Harrison State Park over time.

There is no exhibit space dedicated to temporary exhibits. Temporary Exhibits, lasting between 4-6 months can address new subjects not covered in the permanent exhibit displays. This exhibit space would allow the park to expand its historical interpretation in new ways like incorporate voices from the military, Lawrence/Indianapolis community, or other subjects related to Indiana state parks. For example, a temporary exhibit could highlight the effects of the fort's closure on the surrounding community in Lawrence. This subject also discusses the patterns of land use adjacent to the state park, and how the base's closure in the 1990s affected the community outside of the creation of the park. The temporary exhibit space would allow new subjects to be discussed at the Interpretive Center, improving the exhibit space without changing its initial interpretive goals.


The exhibition space should be rearranged so the layout of the exhibits has a better flow in its interpretation. The exhibits discussing the human impact, like panels discussing Native Americans and early white settlers should be moved before the introduction to the military era. If the exhibits cannot be moved, arrows pointing towards the progression of Fort Harrison as military base should be placed on the floor of the exhibit space. These arrows can be labeled with different periods of the fort’s history that would allow visitors to clearly follow the changes in the property’s landscape over time.



The interpretive center exhibits should include information on how military presence negatively affected the environment, such as the environmental impact on ammunition testing sites and live-fire ranges used for training.



### **Interpretive Center Exhibits Evaluations**



The following table provides an image, evaluation, and recommendation to the individual exhibit panels at Fort Benjamin Harrison’s Interpretive Center. The researcher took these photographs, over the course of field work for this project.

Table 1. Interpretive Center Exhibit Evaluation

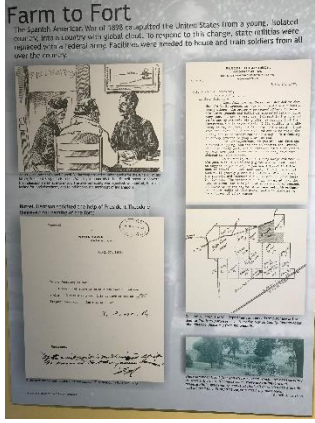

Exhibit	Image	Evaluation	Recommendation
Fort Harrison Underground		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This exhibit discusses the basic geological resources found in the park and allows visitors to handle them as well</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add geological resources not found at Fort Harrison to encourage visitors to differentiate the types of rocks found at Fort</li> </ul>

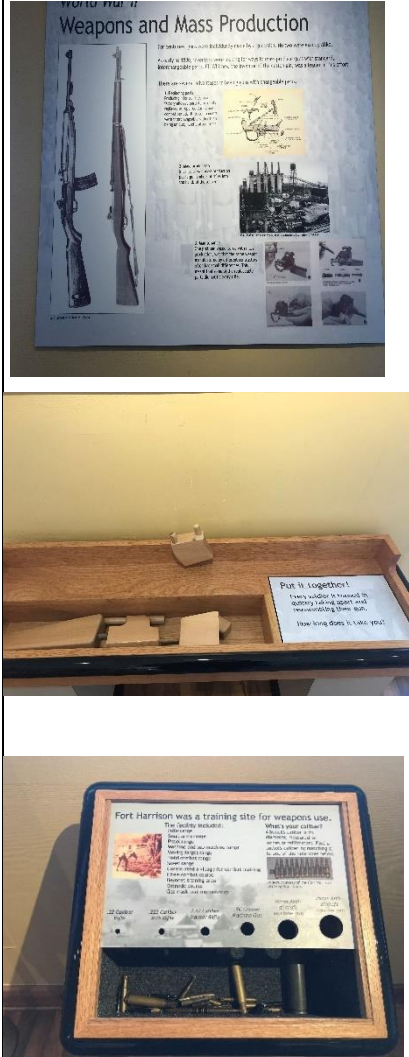
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Simple text and great tactile examples of the resources</li> </ul>	<p>Harrison State Park</p>
<p>Compare and Contrast: Leaves.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This simple identify and compare interactive exhibit allows visitors to match the leaves with their corresponding species to identify the flora found in the park</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No changes needed.</li> </ul>
<p>Native American Exhibit 1.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides vague information about which Native Americans lived on this land</li> <li>• Sparse images and artifacts associated with Native Americans.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add another text panel discussing which Native Americans lived on these lands</li> <li>• And add archaeological artifacts if available from recent archeological digs on site.</li> </ul>



<p>Native American Exhibit 2, Stone Tools</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cohesive and simple interactive exhibit to display the different tools utilized by Native Americans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No changes needed.</li> </ul>
<p>Farming a Forest (Settler Exhibit 1)</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This exhibit works well to introduce how white settlers altered the land when moving to the area, which is expressed in the artifacts on display</li> <li>• Reflection from overhead lights prevents visitors from clearly looking at the artifacts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fix the glare with the lights on the exhibit case.</li> <li>• An additional sentence or new text block can describe why white settlers were attracted to this land</li> </ul>

<p>Farming a Forest (Settler Exhibit 2)</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Content explains how white settlers removed the forest to create farms</li> <li>• White Settlers introduced non-native plant and animal species as an unintended consequence of agricultural settlement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No change necessary.</li> </ul>
<p>Be an Animal Detective</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interactive exhibit allows visitors to handle the skulls of native animals</li> <li>• Simple interactive that discusses the fauna found at Fort Harrison</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Like the leaf activity above, this activity is a generic exhibit used to discuss the animals found within the state park.</li> <li>• Make this more exciting and interactive.</li> </ul>



<p>Farms to Fort (Introduction to Fort Harrison)</p>	 <p>The Spanish American War of 1898 required the United States from a young, isolated country to find a country in a global divide. To respond to this challenge, army officers were required to find a federal army. Facilities were needed to house and train soldiers from all over the country.</p> <p>General Sherman selected 12 days of 1898 &amp; 1899 to establish the fort.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Content clearly depicts how this area was chosen for a military base</li> <li>• Primary sources document and show the land purchased by the US War Department</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No changes necessary.</li> </ul>
<p>The New Fort During World War I and II</p>	 <p>The New Fort</p> <p>World War I</p> <p>10th Infantry</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This section of the exhibit haphazardly covers the history of Fort Harrison during the First World War</li> <li>• The panels discuss the different training facilities offered at Fort Harrison during the war, but it is accompanied by too many photographs and that do not match the appropriate text that is often hard to read due to faded photographs in the background.</li> <li>• The exhibit contains many artifacts from this period, but some of the items are not</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New descriptions should be added to the artifacts in the last photograph</li> <li>• The content and photographs in these exhibits are good, but the font and design of these panels should be updated so they are easier to read.</li> <li>• There could be a timeline of events where one side depicts events on the national</li> </ul>

		<p>labeled and seemed to be outside the scope of the initial exhibit plan.</p>	<p>and international scale, and the other side follows the activities at Fort Harrison</p>
<p>World War II: Weapons and Mass Production, and Training Site for Weapons Use</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This series of exhibits demonstrates the mass mobilization efforts seen during World War II. The content utilizes great primary sources</li> <li>• The interactive portion of this exhibit works well and demonstrates how a soldier would need to learn how to take care of his weapon and put it together fast.</li> <li>• The other interactive exhibit discusses the different types of weapons training offered at Fort Harrison and allows visitors to match the different sized calibers in the properly sized caliber holes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Might want to include the types of weapons most likely carried by officers and soldiers stationed at Fort Harrison during WWII.</li> <li>• No other changes necessary.</li> </ul>

<p>Miscellaneous events and activities at Fort Harrison</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This exhibit does not follow any specific theme but displays various training opportunities found at Fort Harrison over the years.</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This exhibit should be redesigned with a proper heading for as a case discussing the training programs at Fort Harrison over time.</li> </ul>
<p>Fort to Park</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Final panel discussing the Fort's transition from military installation to state park.</li> <li>• Ends with the creation of the park but does not discuss current activities at the park</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Another panel or section to be added to discuss recent changes made at the park within the last 10 years, could include preservation projects or wildlife rehabilitation completed at the park.</li> </ul>

The first series of exhibits at the Interpretive Center serve as the introduction to Fort Harrison State Park. They attempt to start at the geological level and build upon how climate and environmental changes have influenced the landscape at Fort Harrison. These exhibits utilize the interpretive sub-theme 1: *Geological, climate, and human changes shaped the Fort Harrison property from the ice age to the time of white settlement. The*

order and placement of these exhibits is quite confusing, they follow vaguely in chronological order but fail to introduce Fort Harrison State Park's location in Indiana. The park's location in Central Indiana in the Tipton Plain, close to Fall Creek and its tributaries has influenced how the land has developed over time. A panel that includes a topographical map of the property in Indiana would be highly useful for visitors to understand what environmental and climate forces shaped the landscape. While visitors would be aware of where Fort Harrison State Park is located geographically in Indiana, a topographical map and further discussion of the natural resources found at the park today would allow visitors to compare the state of Fort Harrison in different time periods. The first section also does not address the initial impact Native Americans had on the land. The panels elusively talk about "Native Americans" but do not specifically name the indigenous tribes who lived and developed this land. An updated text panel can address these issues.

The second set of panels titled: "Farming a Forest" work well with the second interpretive sub-theme: *White Settlement on the Fort Harrison property throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century reshaped the landscape before the creation of the military reservation.* In these panels, the land was not only cleared for farming, but also changed due to the introduction of new non-native species, such as the honeybee (*Apis mellifera*), chicory (*Cichorium intybus*), and common mullein (*Verbascum thapsus*). These exhibit panels are concise and follow the interpretive themes by addressing human impact upon the land. The area of uncut forest was quickly transformed to farmland and developed into a growing village throughout the nineteenth century.

The next exhibit panels (Farms to Fort, New Fort During World War I and II, and panels on miscellaneous events and activities at Fort Harrison) concentrate on the history of the land as a military installation. The exhibits incorporate the base's contributions during U.S. participation in various wars and the base's peace time duties. These exhibits do a credible job of encompassing the ninety years as a military base, but often lose sight of the sub-theme 3: *Land management practices enacted by the military personnel during the tenure of Fort Benjamin Harrison inadvertently rehabilitated and preserved forest land on their property*. Instead, the exhibits jump around in content and chronological order to talk about some of the activities during World War I, World War II, Korean and Vietnam Wars. The panels allude to the land management practices that set aside some land for training, weapons training causing pollution, and the CCCs work in the interwar period. These training programs and practices inhibited the slow return of forest cover on Fort Benjamin Harrison: however, this unintended consequence is hardly mentioned. The final panel in this series mentions how Fort Harrison closed and magically turned into an Indiana State Park. This limited interpretation refers to a simple and smooth transition with citing how or why the fort closed in the early 1990s.

Overall, the exhibits at the Interpretive Center provide a balanced perspective to how the landscape at Fort Harrison State Park has developed overtime. The exhibits use a logical approach to the land's history by chronicling its environmental changes and different stages of human impact, but the order and layout of the exhibits are not always chronological and often feel arbitrary. From glacier formations to the closure of a military base, this land has undergone dramatic changes to become the Indiana State Park that it is

today. These exhibits move beyond the usual themes found at state park visitor centers by threading a cohesive story about humans and nature at the site.

It is telling that the most information in the Interpretive Center's exhibit space is dedicated to the military years of Fort Harrison. These exhibit panels and wayside exhibits around the Camp Glenn Historic District specifically acknowledge the military background and development of the land at Fort Harrison State Park. Fort Benjamin Harrison served as a hub for military activity in Central Indiana during the twentieth century, and its history should be represented in the park's interpretation. This history and interpretation are necessary for understanding how the forest was rehabilitated over the last century and for the state park's existence.

### III. Camp Glenn Historic District

Camp Glenn Historic District directly relates to the park's interpretive sub-theme: *"Land management practices enacted by the military personnel during the tenure of Fort Benjamin Harrison inadvertently rehabilitated and preserved forest land on their property."*

#### *a. Restoration*

Camp Glenn Historic District has a great opportunity to interpret the interwar period (1919-1939) of Fort Benjamin Harrison's history. During the years following the closure of base and before the park opened, park staff, with help from the Indiana's Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology, stabilized and worked on the restoration of the recreational buildings located within Camp Glenn. In 2004, the park reevaluated Camp Glenn with additional plans to restore elements from the original Camp Glenn like a section of fencing along the original site of the Prisoner of War Camp

from World War II, the “boulevard” or landscaped, white bollard (small trees and shrub) lined walkway leading to an informational kiosk, and the restored tent city.

Unfortunately, like most good plans, these elements were never rehabilitated due to extra costs. These restoration goals could be useful for the future in order to allow visitors to better visualize what the Camp Glenn looked like in its former military days.

*b. Media*

Camp Glenn Historic District currently has four wayside exhibits that tell the story of Civilian Military Training Camp (CMTC) at Camp Glenn. These wayside exhibits are a good introduction to the site but exclude the stories of the Prisoner of War Camp and Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). The Civilian Conservation Corps for Indiana was headquartered in Camp Glenn during the 1930s. Many young men registered and were first housed in rudimentary camps at Camp Glenn before they reached their assigned positions throughout the state. The New Deal era workers were vital to the development and work in Indiana state parks.<sup>201</sup> Additionally, some CCC companies were stationed at Fort Benjamin Harrison to work on reforestation and stream control projects. Their work at Fort Harrison was just one step in the rehabilitating the former forest at the base, and the omission of the CCC story at Camp Glenn leaves a large interpretive gap. A series of waysides exhibits that describes CCC work at Fort Harrison could demonstrate how the work of CCC crews affected the landscape. Their story

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<sup>201</sup> Glory-June Greiff, “Parks for People: New Deal Work Projects in Indiana State Parks,” Master’s thesis, Indiana University-Purdue University-Indianapolis, 1992. Glory-June Greiff also worked with Indiana’s Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology to conduct field work to complete a survey of New Deal era properties on Indiana State Land in Glory-June Greiff, “New Deal Era Resources on Indiana State Lands,” *National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Nomination Form*, (Indianapolis: DHPA,1996). accessed 12 October 2018 <https://npgallery.nps.gov/pdfhost/docs/NRHP/Text/64500216.pdf>.

connects the CCC beyond the built environment of Camp Glenn and demonstrates that land at Fort Harrison was not nearly as “untouched” in the early twentieth century.

An additional wayside exhibit about the Prisoner of War Camp in the Camp Glenn would flesh out the history of Camp Glenn. While the Italian and German POWs did not serve long sentences at Fort Harrison, their presence is an important chapter in Fort Harrison’s World War II history. The former CMTC barracks were converted to hold prisoners of war in 1944-1945, transforming the peacetime shelters into prison facilities.<sup>202</sup> This wayside exhibit would address how the U.S. military utilized their own buildings for multiple uses, especially within a short period of time.

#### IV. Hiking Trails and Wayside Exhibits

There are six hiking trails throughout the forested area of Fort Harrison State Park that range in difficulty. Along these trails, visitors will find several wayside exhibits that highlight the biological and geological resources found in park. Some waysides along the trails discuss the different species of birds found in the park and water erosion along Fall Creek.<sup>203</sup> These exhibits are important when discussing the flora and fauna found in the park but do not take into account how this land was “rehabilitated” during its military days. Potential new topics for wayside exhibits include the CCC’s reforestation, Reddick Family’s home site and their connection to the land and use of forested land in military training during World War I. Additional research would need to be completed to locate areas of where soldiers trained in the forest, and how the military shaped the landscape.

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<sup>202</sup> Division of State Parks and Reservoirs Interpretive Naturalist Service, *Fort Harrison History: World War II Prisoners of War* (Indianapolis: Indiana Department of Natural Resources, 2000) 2.

<sup>203</sup> These wayside exhibits and their subjects were recorded during the author’s field study in February 2018.



The one exception to the wayside exhibits found along the trail system discusses invasive non-native species like the Amur honeysuckle, which was introduced to this area with the arrival white settlers in the nineteenth century. This wayside exhibit highlights how humans have impacted the ecological landscape of tree and plant species found in the park, which clearly fits into the second sub-theme: *White Settlement on the Fort Harrison property throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century reshaped the landscape before the creation of the military reservation*. This wayside helps connect the environmental history to human impact and its effects on resources found in the park today.

Park interpretive naturalists also can create new hiking tours that would highlight the military use of the forested areas of Fort Harrison over time. They could trace the early training grounds from World War I to the CCC reforestation projects in the 1930s, and finally to firing range and ammunition testing sites. These areas would show how the military presence at Fort Harrison both preserved forest areas and polluted the environment during ammunition testing. According to the park brochure, hikers can “pass by an old army rubble pile,” on the Camp Creek trail, so the interpretive naturalists might utilize these features in their walking tour.<sup>204</sup>As recommended earlier, additional research about the military’s patterns of land use is needed to locate where on park grounds it took place.

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<sup>204</sup> IN State Parks, “Fort Harrison Brochure,” 2.

## Conclusion

From uncut hardwood forests to farmland to a military base and finally a state park, the terrain of Fort Harrison State Park is the product of a series of human action on the Central Indiana hardwood forest over time. The geological shifts at the end of the Wisconsin Glaciation created new landforms and allowed for the introduction of diverse flora and fauna. The forest was slowly cleared as Native Americans moved into this area. This land saw further, significant changes as white settlers removed most of the wooded landscape for farming. The creation of Fort Benjamin Harrison allowed the military to revert some of the farmland into dense woodlands. The preserved woodlands at FBH became an ideal location for a nature park or preserve during the base closure decision and planning in the 1990s.

When this land finally opened as an Indiana state park in 1996, the new state park landscape displayed a rehabilitated forest, new park amenities, and the former encampment buildings in Camp Glenn, while the geological strata, environmental and human history lay hidden underneath. Indiana's Department of Natural Resources had the opportunity to interpret and create a sense of place in a unique state park but largely failed to intertwine the environmental history with the human history at Fort Benjamin Harrison. In some areas of the park, like the interpretive center and Camp Glenn Historic District, the park's interpretative strategy aptly captures the sense of place described by environmental philosopher Martin Drenthen – a sense of place rooted in the tangible ecosystem and the intangible, invisible layers of early human habitation and development on land. Interpretation in these spaces value the relationship between the park's landscape and human activity, and reiterate the political, social, and economic processes that

formed the park as it is today.<sup>205</sup> Visitors to both the interpretive center and Camp Glenn Historic District will understand how the park today reflects past human impact.

Wayside exhibits around the park and specific panels within the interpretive center reflect upon the evolution of the park's landscape whereas other interpretive features of the park focus entirely on the park's physical conditions within the park.

Other recreational elements, such as hiking trails and fishing ponds, are usually only valued in park interpretation for their recreational or natural resources. The interpretive preference towards natural science and resources is not only found in Fort Harrison State Park but also is commonly found in US National Park Service interpretive practices. In a recent report developed by the Organization of American Historians (OAH) and NPS, natural and cultural resources remain as separate interpretative strategies and “[the] NPS should integrate nature and culture more fully, taking every opportunity to highlight the histories of the supposed natural areas...have been shaped by human activity and by evolving (and thus historically shaped ideas about nature.”<sup>206</sup> Nevertheless, this division between cultural and natural resources undermines the obvious interdisciplinary nature of environmental history in public parks, and interpretive divisions at both the state and federal levels should fuse history and science together in their educational programming and other interpretive materials.

In order to bridge the interpretive gap between cultural and natural resources, the human stories at Fort Harrison should be told in more unorthodox areas of the park like

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<sup>205</sup> Martin Drenthen, “Ecological Restoration and Place Attachment: Emplacing Non-Places?” *Environmental Values* 18, no. 3 (2009): 285–312.

<sup>206</sup> Anna Mitchell Whisnant et, al. *Imperiled Promise: the State of History in the National Park Service* (Bloomington, Organization of American Historians, 2011), 6, 80.

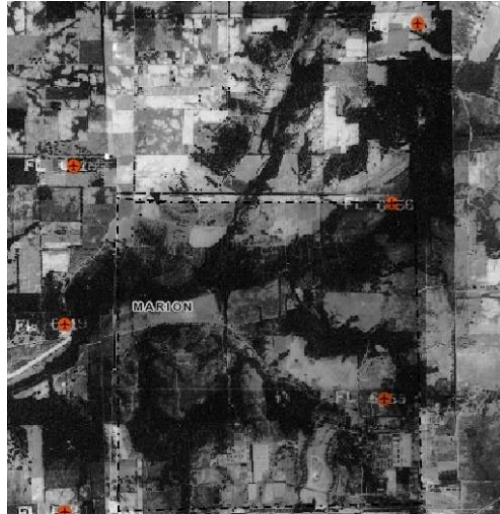
the forest. Currently, the human stories are solely interpreted in the twentieth century era through the built environment, like Camp Glenn Historic District. Camp Glenn seems like the obvious place to connect visitors the park's military past; however, the present day land has a much broader story to tell. Ever since indigenous people first began to live in what is not Fort Benjamin Harrison State Park, the land's history has unfolded through the interaction of people and place. therefore, the park should utilize the spaces along the hiking trails to interpret the ways in which human use shaped the flora and fauna and landscape over time. New walking tours, history-based programs, and additional wayside exhibits at Fort Harrison State Park would broaden the park's interpretation and reintroduce the human stories onto Fort Harrison's landscape. Fort Harrison State Park would also benefit from hiring professionals trained in public history to expand the range of interpretation and research conducted by the staff. For example, new wayside exhibits could be installed about former military training infrastructure found along the current hiking trails. These exhibits could explore how the Army used the wooded areas for training as well as the negative effects of ammunition training had on the environment. These small adjustments, like installing new wayside exhibits, would introduce a broader and more balanced approach to the park's interpretation.

This Indiana state park should not be viewed solely as a by-product of government budget cuts, but as a landscape rich in native Indiana plant and animal species and human history. Elevating the historical interpretation at Fort Harrison State Park will allow park visitors to not only use the park as a recreational space but also to learn why it is historically significant. With the largest acreage of second growth hardwood forest in Central Indiana conserved within the park, Fort Harrison offers more

than just hiking trails and fishing ponds; it has become a nature refuge embedded with military and social history. New temporary exhibits in the interpretive center, public history-oriented park staff, and imaginative, interdisciplinary educational programs will unearth the invisible layers of Fort Harrison's past.

## Appendix 1.

Aerial Photograph 1. Indianapolis Aerial Photograph covering Fort Benjamin Harrison, 1936.<sup>207</sup>



Aerial Photograph 2. Indianapolis Aerial Photograph covering Fort Benjamin Harrison, 1941.<sup>208</sup>



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<sup>207</sup> United States Geological and Water Survey, "Indiana Historical Aerial Photo Interactive map: Marion County aerial photograph, 1936," (Bloomington: Indiana University Geology Department, 2011) accessed <https://igws.indiana.edu/IHAPI/Map/>.

<sup>208</sup> United States Geological and Water Survey, "Indiana Historical Aerial Photo Interactive map: Marion County aerial photograph, 1941," (Bloomington: Indiana University Geology Department, 2011) accessed <https://igws.indiana.edu/IHAPI/Map/>.

Aerial Photograph 3. Indianapolis Aerial Photograph of Fort Benjamin Harrison, 1950.<sup>209</sup>



Aerial Photograph 4. Indianapolis Aerial Photograph of Fort Benjamin Harrison, 1956.<sup>210</sup>

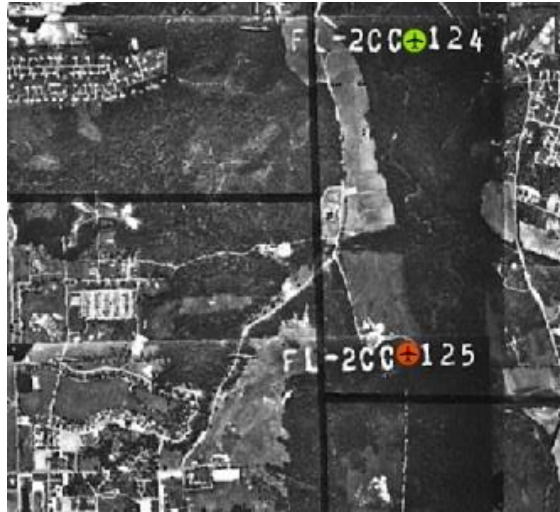


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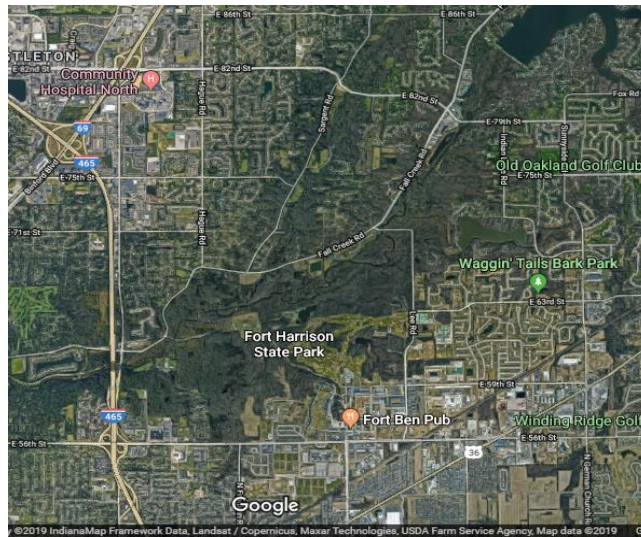
<sup>209</sup> United States Geological and Water Survey, “Indiana Historical Aerial Photo Interactive map: Marion County aerial photograph, 1950,” (Bloomington: Indiana University Geology Department, 2011) accessed <https://igws.indiana.edu/IHAPI/Map/>.

<sup>210</sup> United States Geological and Water Survey, “Indiana Historical Aerial Photo Interactive map: Marion County aerial photograph, 1956,” (Bloomington: Indiana University Geology Department, 2011) accessed <https://igws.indiana.edu/IHAPI/Map/>.

Aerial Photograph 5. Indianapolis Aerial Photograph of Fort Benjamin Harrison, 1962.<sup>211</sup>



Aerial Photograph 6. Satellite View, Google Maps, Fort Benjamin Harrison State Park, 2018.<sup>212</sup>



<sup>211</sup> United States Geological and Water Survey, "Indiana Historical Aerial Photo Interactive map: Marion County aerial photograph, 1962," (Bloomington: Indiana University Geology Department, 2011) accessed <https://igws.indiana.edu/IHAPI/Map/>

<sup>212</sup> GoogleMaps, "Fort Harrison State Park, Satellite Map," <https://www.google.com/maps/place/Fort+Harrison+State+Park/@39.8663725,-86.0417443,7233m/data=!3m1!1e3!4m5!3m4!1s0x886b4c7c38b5cab3:0x113172404232ba5!8m2!3d39.8683896!4d-86.019344>.



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## CURRICULUM VITAE

Melanie Barbara Hankins

### Education

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Master of Arts, National and Transnational Studies, 2018-present.  
*Indiana University at IUPUI*, Indianapolis, IN  
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### Professional Experience

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<b>English Editorial Student Assistant</b>	May 2019-December 2019
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<b>Collections and Library Intern</b>	August 2017-August 2018
Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana, USA	
<b>Special Initiatives and Outreach Intern</b>	August 2016-May 2017
Indiana Division of Historic Preservation and Archeology, Indianapolis, Indiana.	
<b>Tour Guide and Education Intern</b>	August 2015-July 2016
Indiana Capitol Tour Office, Indianapolis, Indiana	
<b>Park Ranger</b>	June 2013-August 2015
Springfield Armory National Historic Site, Springfield, Massachusetts.	
<b>Winter Intern</b>	December 2012-January 2013
Pennsbury Manor, Morrisville, Pennsylvania	
<b>Visitor Services and Education Intern</b>	May-August 2012
Appomattox Court House National Historical Park, Appomattox, Virginia	

### Research and Publications

<b>Research Assistant</b>	May-August 2018
Ruth Lilly Special Collections and Archives and Polis Center, Indianapolis, IN	

### Public History Portfolio

Collection Guides for Manuscript Collections for the Indiana Historical Society, Examples include “Janet S. Ellis papers, ca. 1987-2002 Collection Guide,” <https://indianahistory.org/wp-content/uploads/janet-ellis-papers.pdf> and “Bryan Fonseca, Oral History Interview and Transcript, 23 January 2015 Collection Guide.”

<https://indianahistory.org/wp-content/uploads/bryan-fonseca-oral-history-interview-and-transcript.pdf> , Fall 2017

Online Exhibition, "Reconnecting to Our Waterways: A History," *Voices from the Waterways: An Oral History Exhibition Exploring Water Cultures*,

<http://www.voicesfromthewaterways.org/maps-row/>, Spring 2017

Online Exhibition, *Historic Round and Polygonal Barns of Indiana*,

<https://indnr.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=719a9594341f43a8a420268eca0a8910>, Spring 2017

Writing Contributor for "Indiana Bicentennial: Outsiders Tour", *Discover Indiana*, Web Application, <https://indyhist.iupui.edu/>, Fall 2015

Writing Contributor for Educational Programming and Junior Ranger Program for Springfield Armory National Historic Site, U.S. National Park Service, Spring 2015

Writing Contributor for the National Park Service Civil War to Civil Rights Trading Cards Program, "Springfield Armory National Historic Site," October 2014-April 2015

Podcast Tour of Gettysburg National Military Battlefield: "A Sharpshooter's Tale: How Photography Distorted History at Devil's Den." Published and available through the Civil War Institute at Gettysburg College, Fall 2011

### **Public Presentations and Exhibitor**

"For the Benefit and Enjoyment of the People: Public History and the US National Park Service," Class Lecture for Public History program at Uni-Köln. 21 January 2020.

Exhibitor for Indiana University Purdue University-Indianapolis Public History Program at the Annual National Council on Public History Annual Meeting, April 2017

Moderator of Networking Lightning Round at "National Council on Public History Mini-Con: Careers in History Symposium," IUPUI, 12 November 2016

Walking Tour Guide, "Hartford Blooms Tour: Colt Armory Facilities," Coltsville National Historic Site, Hartford CT, May 2015

Public Lecture, "The Road Home from Appomattox," Springfield Armory National Historic Site, Springfield, MA, April 11, 2015

Public Lecture, "From the Factories to the Frontlines: Women Ordnance Workers at Springfield Armory," Springfield Armory National Historic Site, Springfield, MA March 2015

### **Honors and Awards**

Service Learning Assistance Award, IUPUI Academic Year 2015-2016

Dean's Scholarship awarded from Gettysburg College for the academic years: 2009-2013

### **Extracurricular Activities**

Member of Graduate Student History Association at Indiana University Purdue University-Indianapolis, Fall 2015-May 201

Indiana National History Day Judge, 2017-2018

Tour Guide, Indiana Humanities Historic Bar Crawl, June 2016 Member of IUPUI

## **Professional Organizations**

National Council on Public History, 2015-present

International Federation for Public History, 2017-present