



Welcome to Fort Bragg! As you embark on this tour of Fort Bragg, past many of the post's historical sites and points of interest, please buckle up and follow the driving directions provided in the narrative. Also, please be patient with the driver and copilot.

Fort Bragg's history as a military installation began during the World War I era, but the land it occupies has been the site of major historical events since the colonial days. Almost three centuries ago, Highland Scot farmers called this area home, with 1729 marking the earliest recorded history of a permanent settlement. The Longstreet Presbyterian Church, founded in 1756 and still a Landmark on the reservation today, became a center of local religious life.

With the outbreak of the Revolutionary War, the Fort Bragg area became a center of Whig (pro-American) and Tory (pro-British) activity. Any hope for peaceful coexistence was shattered with the 1780 "massacre at Piney Bottom." According to historical accounts, the Tories attacked a Whig camp near Piney Creek just south of what is presently Holland Drop Zone.

Although Fort Bragg can't claim "Washington slept here," Cornwallis did! In 1781 the British general and his troops moved through this area on the way to Virginia and eventual surrender at Yorktown. He spent a night in a house on Yadkin Road, which is still a major post thoroughfare.

Following the Revolution, the 100-year peace ended with the Civil War. Fort Bragg again became a site for military action with the 1865 "Battle of Monroe Crossroads." In an area near Longstreet Presbyterian Church, Confederate forces, commanded by General Wade Hampton, attacked Union forces, commanded by Major General Judson Kilpatrick. Although the Confederates had the element of surprise, the Union forces rallied and drove them from their camp. The final casualty count was estimated at 100 killed on each side and several times that number wounded.

Local citizens buried some of the Confederate soldiers in the Longstreet Cemetery. Gravesites for some of the Union soldiers are found in the post cemetery, while others are buried at a site south of Gaddy's Mountain, located in the field training area. Union and Confederate soldiers are buried side by side on Yadkin Road, across from Yorktown Victor Road.

The land once again returned to its pastoral state. Then, in the spring of 1918, the land would return to and retain military prominence. To prepare for World War I, the Army needed to expand its field artillery training facilities. General William J. Snow, then chief of Field Artillery, sought an area south of the Potomac with a climate for year-round training that was near a port of embarkation and the railroads. After a geological survey found this area suitable, Congress allocated 14,500,000 to establish Camp Bragg. On September 4, 1918, construction began.

STOP 1

Your journey begins at the Randolph Street entrance off Bragg Boulevard. Here you will find a marker to the general the post is named for, General Braxton Bragg, a native North Carolinian and Confederate general who was born in Warren County in 1817. He graduated from West Point in 1837 and fought in the Seminole War for three years. During the Mexican War he served under General Zachary Taylor, and for his gallantry and bravery, he attained the rank of lieutenant colonel. Prior to his appointment as President Jefferson Davis' military advisor during the Civil War, Bragg served as a Confederate Corps and Army commander.

As you now proceed down Randolph Street toward main post you will pass housing areas, streets and facilities that were named to commemorate military actions and soldiers. Randolph Street is named for Brigadier General George W. Randolph, a Confederate artillery officer. On your left you will pass the Corregidor Courts housing area, named for the World War II battle in the Philippines.

Also on your left, as you proceed to the intersection of Knox Street, named for Lieutenant Colonel Knox, chief of colonial artillery, you will see Bowley School, the newest of the grade schools on Fort Bragg. Major General Albert J. Bowley commanded Fort Bragg from 1921-1928 and is credited with persuading Congress to retain the post as a major Army installation following World War I. Housed is what was the old Bowley School is the Community Center, which serves as the town hall and is utilized by numerous organizations on Fort Bragg. Turn right on Knox, then left at the first light, onto Macomb Street. From Macomb, turn left onto Armistead. On your right is the XVIII Airborne Corps Headquarters.

STOP 2

The brick structure was originally built in 1932 as the Station Hospital. In fact, what is now the commanding general's office was once the delivery room.

The history of the XVIII Airborne Corps began with its activation as the II Armored Corps at Camp Polk, Louisiana, on January 17, 1942. On October 9, 1943, the unit was redesignated the XVIII Corps.

The next year, the unit adopted the dragon patch to represent cunning, endurance and ferocity against the enemy. On August 25, 1944, the airborne tab was added with the unit's assumption of command of the 82nd and 101st Airborne divisions.

Within a month the corps fought in Operation Market Garden, the Allied invasion of the Netherlands in World War II. Operation Varsity was the Corps' last major airborne offensive near Wesel, Germany, on March 24, 1945.

The corps was deactivated at Camp Campbell, Kentucky, after the war but was reactivated in 1951 at Fort Bragg. Since that time the corps has remained the only airborne corps in our nation's defense.

As the itinerary progresses, you will see that Fort Bragg has become a vanguard of the nation's defense. Today, the mere mention of Fort Bragg conjures up images of combat soldiers.

STOP 3

Continuing down Armistead, your next stop will be at the 15-foot statue dedicated to the Airborne trooper who is always watching, waiting and alert. "Iron Mike," the post's most prominent symbol since 1961, was the creation of Leah Heibert, wife of a former deputy post chaplain. His stance is that of an airborne soldier who has completed a combat jump. The statue was originally inspired by Private First Class Michael A. Scambellure, an 82nd Airborne Division soldier, who received the Silver Star for his heroic actions in Sicily.

As you loop around the statue, the Officers' Club can be seen on the left at the end of Armistead Street and the corps' commanding general's quarters can be seen at #1 Dyer Street, named for a major in the field artillery. The original commanding general's quarters were in a farmhouse in the grove of trees directly in front of #1 Dyer Street. The quarters in this housing area are 1930's vintage.

Drive a short block down Ridgway Drive to the Main Post Parade Field. At the end of Ridgway Drive, named for General Matthew B. Ridgway, the first commander of the 82nd Airborne Division and a pioneer in airborne warfare, are plaques commemorating the post's major commands.

STOP 4

Take a right at the yield sign at the end of Ridgway Drive. On the parade field are monuments dedicated to the 9th Infantry Division, which was reactivated at Fort Bragg in 1940 and deployed from Fort Bragg to distinguish itself in North Africa and Europe during the Normandy Invasion, and to prisoners of war and those missing in action.

STOP 5

Turn left at the end of the parade field and you will see the Main Post Chapel. Completed in March 1932, the chapel is considered one of the loveliest in the region. Nonsectarian, the chapel represents one of the first military religious buildings funded by the government. The stained-glass windows, composed of more than 14,000 tiny pieces of antique glass from around the world, were installed in 1945. More than 1,000 pieces in the center window, directly behind the altar, depict the American eagle and the motto "In God We Trust."

At the intersection, turn right on Reilly Street, named for a field artillery colonel. At the second traffic light, turn left on Longstreet Road, named after the Longstreet Presbyterian Church located about eight miles from post. Although local lore attributes the road's name to Confederate General James Longstreet, the name is more likely linked to the church.

STOP 6

On your right you will see Lee Physical Fitness Center, named for Major General William C. Lee, the "father of the airborne." A native of Dunn, North Carolina, General Lee oversaw the organization and training of airborne units from 1940-1942. (General Lee's home in Dunn is approximately 30 miles north of Fayetteville on I-95 and is open to the public.) On your left is Hedrick Stadium, named after a 17th Airborne Division World War II Medal of Honor recipient. The posthumous award honored Hedrick for his gallantry at Lembeck, Germany, in March 1945.

On your left, you will pass a part of the site of the almost one-million-square-foot medical center that replaced the old facility on Normandy Drive. This new medical center is situated on a 163-acre wooded site that has more than 2,500 parking spaces. The new, approximately 300 bed medical center is the hub of health care treatment for more than 153,000 beneficiaries in North Carolina. This figure includes active-duty soldiers, their family members and retirees and their family members. Womack Army Medical Center is the first medical center to be named after an enlisted soldier, Medal of Honor recipient, Private First Class Homer Womack, a native North Carolinian killed during the Korean Conflict.

Further down Longstreet you will pass St. Mere Eglise and Cherbourg housing areas, named after famous World War II battles in which airborne soldiers played a predominant part.

At the flashing light, turn left on Ardennes Street, named for the battle area in Belgium and Germany, where the corps fought for 60 days during 1944-45 in one of the fiercest land battles during the height of the German counteroffensive.

Your journey down Ardennes Street will be filled with the sights and history of the 82nd Airborne Division, "America's Guard of Honor," which has served for more than fifty consecutive years. (This section is the "new division area." To view the "old division area," you would have to turn right at the flashing light on Longstreet and Ardennes.)

The "All American Division" traces its history back to 1917. Its nickname and red, white and blue patch with the double A were adopted during World War I when it was realized the division was comprised of soldiers from every state across the country. On August 15, 1942, the division was designated the Army's first airborne division. Its troops made the first large-scale airborne assaults in World War II. As you proceed on Ardennes Street, you will pass the headquarters buildings for the Division Support Command (DISCOM), whose motto is "Try Fighting Without Us;" 1st Brigade, known as the "Devil Brigade;" and Division Artillery.