Coastal Region

Amphibious landings were the Marine Corps’ specialty. At Camp Lejeune, the offshore spotters’ chief of Coast amphibious training base, infantrymen stormed ashore on Onslow Beach in dress rehearsals for the real thing in the Pacific.

Negro soldiers from Camp Davis take a recreation break on the beach at Topsail Island. Segregation kept them off most public beaches in North Carolina. African-American sites in this guide map are identified as “Negro,” the term used during World War II.

44 Pender County Museum, 200 W. Bridges St; Th-Sat, 1-4 pm, other times by reservation, 259-8543 or 283-7844; HA; R; Resource.

Penderlea

A memorial in Southport honors merchant seamen killed when the USS Conestoga (ID-1019) was torpedoed by a German submarine just 25 miles off Cape Fear.

41 Montford Point, First training camp for Negro Marines, remained in honor of Sgt. Major Gilbert H. "Hashmark" Johnson. The only Allison counties war was held here, working in industries and on farms. The shipped produced 254 cargo vessels, the port slopped and received war materials and defense industries produced at capacity. The area dispatched thousands of its sons and daughters to fight the enemy. One hundred and ninety-five boys from New Hanover County did not return. The area endured constant civilian defense restrictions and air raid drills, including blackouts and dim-outs. German U-boats marauding offshore spilled debris from sunken Allied ships on favorite bathing beaches. Until 1944, the threat remained from German attack by sea and air. The community coped with a dire housing shortage, and strain on schools, transportation, medical and social services, law enforcement, food supply, security and entertainment. Families rented rooms to soldiers and war workers, and historic houses were cut up into apartments. The population more than doubled with the influx of military personnel, war workers and their families. Government ration allocations of scarce commodities were based, erroneously, on pre-war population. Untold numbers of transient and a weekend onslaught of servicemen from nearby bases flooded downtown establishments and the beaches. Wilmingtonians had to mix with and tolerate diverse newcomers who expanded their horizons, at least temporarily. The community struggled with frequently changing edicts from Washington and Raleigh, and pressures to serve the war effort, manage huge construction projects, handle civic stress and the racial clash, combat the black market and a crime wave, and apply equal justice. Citizens became volunteer airplane spotters, Inland Waterway boat patrolers, air raid wardens and auxiliary police and firemen. Women excelled in the Aircraft Warning Service, war bond and scrap drives, and as Red Cross nurse’s aides. All of this was undertaken from 1942 through continuing low-light dim-outs and beach blackouts.

Racially segregated entertainment and social life proceeded, despite rationing of gasoline, tires, sugar, coffee, and whiskey. Front Street, beaches, and USO clubs teemed with uniforms. Prostitution flourished. Romance boomed. Everyone of an age fell in love, if only for a moment, and multitudes of local girls became engaged to or married their visitors. For many teenage girls and young women, the war was the most exciting time of their life.

At war’s end, the area returned, for a time, to its small-town seclusion. But wartime changes planted the seeds for Southeastern North Carolina’s spectacular growth in the late 20th and early 21st Centuries.

Brunswick County

SOUTHPHORT AND OAK ISLAND

3G Fort Caswell, 100 Caswell Beach Rd, Caswell Beach; not accessible summer months; call 279-4501 for admission; EXT: www.fortcaswellnchistory.com

Parts of original brick fortification constructed between 1926 and 1936 overlook mouth of Cape Fear River. Extensive late 19th-century concrete fortifications, residences, barracks, and mess halls also remain. Fort Caswell was manned in Mexican, Civil, Spanish-American and First World wars. Navy established Submarine Tracking Station and Naval Inshore Patrol base in January 1942. NC Baptist Assembly owns property as a religious retreat and conference center.

37 SS John D. Gilmore Memorial, a stone monument, Riverfront Park. On March 13, 1942, the tanker John D. Gilmore was traveling from Texas to Philadelphia loaded with crude oil. A German submarine torpedoed her 25 miles off Cape Fear. The explosion and fire were visible along the coast. The Coast Guard brought some survivors and bodies of many of the dead to Southport. Some of the bodies were removed from the ship before it was laid out on the waterline and 15 were sent home for burial. One victim, a Filipino mess boy named Catalino Tingson, could not be sent home because the Japanese occupied the Philippines. He was buried in Woodland Cemetery in Southport.

28 Neuse River Maritime Museum, 116 North Hope Street; 457-0003; Tu-Sat, 9-5 pm; fee; children 15 & under; free; HA; R; Resource. www.neuse.org; ncmaritime/museums/neusecenter/default.htm; Memorabilia pertaining to nautical history of Lower Cape Fear area and southeastern NC; a WWII exhibit and research files.

Onslow County

Holly Ridge

39 Camp Davis, 30 miles north of Wilmington. US 17 at NC 50; EXT. In 1941, Wilmington Air Armament Artillery Training Center, later renamed Camp Davis, opened at Holly Ridge. It became a boomtown, the population growing from 28 in 1940 to 110,000 at the peak of military operations in 1945. The War Department bought and leased over 40,000 acres, including then-unnamed Topsail Island, now a popular Pender County beach resort. Negro troops occupied Camp Gibbins. *Prisoner of war camp was here. Camp Davis was a center for bizarre balloon training and provided antiaircraft gunnery training and search and rescue. Female WAC pilots tested torpedoes over target ocean. The Navy used Camp Davis briefly after the war as a missile research site. Some evidence of camp remains, including former Camp Davis Restaurant. Marine Corps has incorporated a portion of the Camp Davis site into nearby *Camp Lejeune.

40 Camp Lejeune & Montford Point, visitor’s day pass and self-guided tour brochure available from Visitors’ Center, main gate, main NC 24; 451-2148; HA; R. www.leece.com; militarybeach.org.

World War II Wilmington Home Front Heritage Coalition

The Home Front:

WORLD WAR II HERITAGE GUIDES

of Wilmington and Southeastern North Carolina

Produced in 2008 by the

World War II Wilmington Home Front Heritage Coalition

PO Box 425, Wilmington, NC 28402  910-753-6303

JoanWDL@aol.com

Printing and distribution of the 2008 Edition are provided courtesy of the City of Wilmington, which is very proud of its cultural heritage and strives to preserve it.

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KEY:

HA = handicapped accessible.

R = restroom available (under admission conditions).

EXT = view extended hours.

M = historical marker only.

* = indicates sites described elsewhere in the brochure.

If the current site name differs from the historic name, the latter is in parentheses.

Days and hours of operation shown are subject to change. Admission in fees unless otherwise indicated.

Area codes are 910 unless otherwise noted.

PRINCIPAL SOURCES:


MAPS:

John Meyer, © 2005-08, Cape Fear Images, Inc. Used by permission.

Richlands

43 Onslow County Museum, 501 S. Wilson St; 324-5008; T-F 10 am-4:30 pm; Sat-Sun 1-4 pm; free; fee for youth under 12; HA; R; Resou urce.

Exhibit, “The Water and the Wood. The History of Onslow County,” discusses impact of WWII through establishment of Camp Davis, “Camp Lejeune, and other military facilities. Featured are women in military and their experiences as WASPs and as first female Marine Corps Women Reservists (MCWR).

Pender County Burgaw

47 Duplin County Veterans Memorial Museum, L.P. Beaze House, 1/9 East Hill St; Th-F, 1-4 pm; Sat-Sun, 2-4 pm; 202-1700; HA; R; Resource.

42 Jacksonville, 1944 Queen Anne house, museum is dedicated to Camp Lejeune servicemen and women; displays military artifacts and medals; includes Crissey Family items; Woman in home of oldest continu ing Veterans Day Celebration in nation, inaugurated on Armistice Day 1918, the end of World War I.

IC:\2\:W:\World_War_II_Heritage_Guide\Wilm]{Pender County Museum, 200 W. Bridges St; Th-Sat, 1-4 pm, other times by reservation, 259-8543 or 283-7844; HA; R; Resource.

Penderlea

A twin to Wilmington’s *Second & Draper streets* is the *First & Draper streets* neighborhood. Although site of several industries has been modified, many original features remain. Served continuously as USO club since opening in 1942. Only center in Onslow now housed in original WWII building and the only operating USO in NC. A Negro USO on Neurey Street served 3,000 patrons a month.

28 Neuse River Maritime Museum, 116 North Hope Street; 457-0003; Tu-Sat, 9-5 pm; fee; children 15 & under; free; HA; R; Resource. www.neuse.org; ncmaritime/museums/neusecenter/default.htm; Memorabilia pertaining to nautical history of Lower Cape Fear area and southeastern NC; a WWII exhibit and research files.

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World War II Wilmington Home Front Heritage Coalition

The Home Front:

Early trials of the bazooka, a shoulder-mounted anti- tank rocket launch er, were conducted at Fort Fisher. The bazooka was an important weapon for U.S. troops.
RAILROADS
Atlantic Coast Line Railroad (ACL) was principal land transportation for military and civilian products, and war materials. Gamiers rail line made railroad transportation the only viable alternative. ACL served South Atlantic states, including Wilmington, on a 5,100-mile track. Three lines from Wilmington tied into main line from Virginia to Florida. A fourth line ran to New Bern, NC.

3 Coast Line Convention Center, 501 N Street; 763-6739. EXT, interior accessible for disabled visitors; HA.

One of only three railroad buildings remaining. A warehouse from its construction in 1895 until its conversion to a convention center in 1989. Plans call for building to be incorporated into a new hotel in 2008-09.

4 Wilmington Railroad Museum, 505 N Street; 763-2634. March 15-Sept 16, Mon-Sat 10-4 pm; Oct 1-15, Mon-Sat 10-4 pm; free; HA; R. Resource.

1936 WPA-constructed building displays exhibit on wnrroay transportation.

5 Cape Fear Museum (Amory), 814 Market St; 341-4350. 8-9 am-5 pm; Sun 1-5 pm; free; 1st Sunday of month. Located one block from convention center.

Converted to museum in 1969; enlarged and renovated in 1991 to exhibit Lower Cape Fear history, including WWII.

6 Thalian Hall, 300 Chestnut St; 343-3660. Self-guided tour M-F 12-6 pm; Sun 2-6 pm, suggested donation; group tours arranged by calling ahead; HA.

Area's premier venue staged professional boxing and wrestling matches, military shows, jazz bands, war bond drives, demonstrations, plays, musicals and concerts including Minnie Pearl and her Grand Ole Opry Gang.

USO CLUBS
United Service Organizations, Inc. (USO) was joint project of the YMCA, National Catholic Community Service, Salvation Army, YWCA, National Jewish Welfare Board, and National Tewan Aid Association. Centers provided welfare and recreation for military personnel, defense workers, and their families. Activities included dances, theater, counseling and child care. Nine full-time clubs and five smaller facilities in the county, including clubs at Wrightsville and *Carolina Beaches. Thousands of area residents volunteered their support.

Hannah Black Historic USO Building (formerly Community Arts Center), 230 S. Second St; 763-7609. Self-guided tour available M-Th 9-4 pm; Sat 9 am-10 pm; free; HA; R. Building erected by federal government in 1941, largest club in US at the time. More than 2.3 million servicemen through 1946, when city acquired building. Still used for civic purposes. A major renovation project, including restoration of the lobby to its wartime appearance, to be completed by summer 2008.

Interior retains many original features and allows visitors to experience spirit of wartime era. Identical club at 9th and Ninos streets (no longer stand- ing) entertained Negro soldiers, 1941-1946. The modern building of the Community Boys and Girls Club displays photos of the Negro USO.

8 H.B. Ellers House, (Fifth and Orange USO) 124 S. Fifth Ave. EXT.

National Catholic Community Service, USO member organization, rented building for women's center, offering kitchen facilities, temporary accommodations, and welfare and support services to war workers and service- men’s families. Carriage house was used for sports, bandanna and theater.

9 U.S. Post Office (Fisher Center), 152 N Front St.

M-F 9 am-5 pm; Sat 9 am-12 pm; free; HA.

During WWII, the 1936 WPA-built post office was hub of activity— war bond drives, patriotic rallies, and displays of military equipment, includ- ing captured enemy arms. Basement housed Fisher Center, still used today a hours a day by women volunteers who chartered aircraft movements from information planned in offices at the basement. Armed forces recruiters occupied second floor. Most interior features are virtually unchanged.

10 New Hanover High School, 1307 Market St; 251-6100.

Opened in 1922. Plaque honors Charles P. Murray, Jr. (Class of 1938) and David William Hrabutan, Sr. (Class of 1943), both of whom received the Medal of Honor. New Hanover is believed to be only school in the US to have graduated two WWII Medal of Honor recipients.

11 Lake Forest Baptist Church, 1620 Lake Branch Dr. EXT; Chapel from *Camp Davis, was moved to Wilmington after the war to the site of *Lake Forest Community. "The Alley" shops (C's & C's) for the Maffitt Village "Family" 22, private shopping lines. Owned by Newport News Shipbuilding and Drydock Company, shipyard was largest in world at that time, employing over 21,000 in 1943. Launched approximately 11 ships every month. In 1946, NC State Port Authority acquired site for shipping terminal. Remaining shipyard buildings still in use include suburban, foreman's trailer, office, shop buildings, fabricating shop, compressed air compressor, storage warehouse, and records storage build- ing. Park on Sunset Drive (Apprentice Dormitory), 240 Bridge Blvd; 343-0098; EXT housing personnel who learned shipbuilding trades.

M. NC center Shipyard Blvd; Charleston Rd.

14 New Hanover County War Memorial, High MacRae Park, Lake Avenue entrance from South College Road, 8 am-midnight.

Erected in 1918 by American Legion Post 10 to honor New Hanover County men who died in service between WWI and Vietnam.

15 Robert Strange Park, 4108, Eighth St.

M. Main camp was between Eighth, Tenth, Ann and Carrie Streets. POWs were housed in a one-story building, which sur- rendered in Tunis in 1943. They helped relieve labor shortage at pulpwood antiquity. future port area. Some prisoners in this section were ship's workers for whom they worked long after they were repatriated. POW camps also were located at:

16 *Camp Davis, 2101 S. Second St. EXT; Gardens at Hewlett drives.

W. EXT. Two pale storage buildings along fence to left of driveway house small number of German POWs who worked at *Bluethenthal Field.

17 Carolina Beach Road & Shipyard Boulevard, M. SE corner.

WILMINGTON & NEW HANOVER COUNTY
www.nhcs.k12.nc.us/nhhs

HISTORIC WILMINGTON
Wilmington, 225 Market St; 762-6570. T-Sat 10 am-4 pm; last tour at 3 pm; free; R. www.wilmen.com

Historic house museum interpreted as 18th century gentleman’s town- house. During WWII, city operated officers’ club here.

2 George Davis statue, 3rd & Market Streets. Residents gave soldiers directions to the liquor store by telling them to go to the Davis statue and follow where his hand raised pointed.

22 Maffitt Village, Vance Street south of Shipyard Blvd. EXT;

Prefabricated wooden houses built in Mississippi and brought to Wilmington in two trains. Many of units are still providing low-income housing.

23 Wilmington International Airport (Bluford Field Airway Race), 740 Airport Blvd; 341-6433; parking fee; HA; R. Resource; EXT.

Wartime construction transformed grass flying field into modern airport with control towers and many of runways and hangars. Hangar A, 1942, 752 ft; Oct Gen. George C. Marshall inspected base during construction. Air Force and Civil Air Patrol programs launched at Bluebird Field, part of World War II anti-aircraft patrols. P-47 Thunderbolt fighter pilots trained here. Large quilt-style metal hangar in commercial aviation era and cargo buildings used as part of prison camp are only period structures remaining. Security precautions limit airport access and visitors should obey all signs. Call for air show and access information.

25 Battlefish Cemetery, 10 Veterans Rd; 341-8777, daily, down to dusk. Opened in 1867, cemetery contains graves of World War II soldiers killed in action or at home, both Negro and white, from all branches of the Armed Forces. No special WWII burial section.

26 Leland (US Army), 1,000-acre site for officers’ quarters near the river, erected by local Pearl Harbor (December 7, 1941) survivors.

28 Wrightsville Beach
Wilmington transformed Beach towns from a celebrated summer retreat to a town of year-round residents, catering primarily to officers. Year-round population rose from 252 in 1940 to more than 1,500 by 1945. Improvements included installation of piped water, electric service, improved streets, modern sewervage system, andmotorized and police fire department.

29 Beach housing: Large influx of military personnel into Wilmington and nearby *Camp Davis encouraged beach cottage owners to convert some of their cottages into housing for soldiers. The Carolina Temple Apartments (501 Wainwright Blvd, 256-2773 EX; www.carolinatempleapartments.com), still in place today, was built in 1940 housed military officers and other visitors; still accepts overnight guests now. War-time personal also founed shelter at Patterson Cottage (Turtle Inn), 500 N. Lumina Ave., EXT. For 1942, war workers and their families occupied 113 apartment units at Wrightsville Beach.

32 The Village at Greenfield, 305 West Schubert St., Wilmington Beach, 256-2569; T-F 10 am-4 pm; Sat 12-5 pm; Sun 1-5 pm; free; HA; R; Resource.

The Waterfront offers light-drift vessels sheletered passage along the coast. Uss rivers, bay, coastal sounds, and canals to provide a navigable channel. (USS North Carolina,) a National Historic Landmark, 2401 N. Lake Park Blvd.; 458-0502; www.carolinacruises.com/; still accepting guests.

33 Beaches: The Village at Greenfield, 305 West Schubert St., Wilmington Beach, 256-2569; T-F 10 am-4 pm; Sat 12-5 pm; Sun 1-5 pm; free; HA; R; Resource.

Wrightsville Beach
Wrightsville Beach
www.wbmuseum.com

WILMINGTON
Wilmington, 225 Market St; 762-6570. T-Sat 10 am-4 pm; last tour at 3 pm; free; R.

www.wilmen.com

Maffitt Village is one of several large complexes of defense housing built for shipyard workers.

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