

FORT KNOX

Home of U.S. Army
Cavalry and Armor

SELF-GUIDED TOUR



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HISTORY OF FORT KNOX

Fort Knox, Kentucky, located 35 miles southwest of Louisville is known as “**The Home of Mounted Warfare.**” Although famous as the site of the U.S. Bullion Depository, the “**Gold Vault,**” we are also proud to be the home of the U.S. Army Recruiting Command and 2nd Region Reserve Officers Training Corps. We are also the new Army **home of simulation** with our new Closed Combat Tactical Training Facility, Mounted Maneuver Battlespace Lab, and Mounted Urban Training Complex; all paving our way to the 21st Century. Though we are proud to boast new facilities and employ the greatest soldier-civilian workforce in the Army, we have never forgotten that our primary mission is to develop leaders and train soldiers for armor and cavalry forces worldwide.

The traffic circle was once the town center of Stithton, Kentucky, which had a population of about 400 in 1917. After World War I, the U.S. Congress bought about 40,000 acres in and around the town. The property was originally intended to be the Army’s main field artillery training site, so it was named **Camp Knox.**

Major General Henry Knox was Chief of Artillery for General Washington’s Continental Army during the **American Revolution.** Fort Sill, Oklahoma however eventually became the home of field artillery.

After 1918 mainly the Army Reserve and National Guard used Camp Knox for periodic training. In 1929, Lieutenant Colonel Adna R. Chaffee, Jr. and Colonel Daniel Van Voorhis received the mission to design and develop a “mechanized force” using armored vehicles---something like that of the British Army, which pioneered tank warfare.

Since World War I, the U.S. Army’s infantry and cavalry forces had employed armored vehicles, but only in various support roles. Some Army leaders believed that these strange vehicles might have much greater battlefield use and effect if they belonged to a new independent force or branch.

Development of just such a force began at Fort Eustis in coastal Virginia. But Chaffee and Van Voorhis soon discovered that the new “mechanized force” would require a larger area and more varied terrain for training. After searching they decided on Camp Knox. By 1933 Congress had officially designated the post as “**Fort Knox,**” a permanent garrison.

Fort Knox’s main entrance, Chaffee Avenue, and its largest family housing area, Van Voorhis, were named for the original armor force developers. The official development of the armor force began on July 10, 1940 with the establishment of Headquarters Armored Force and Headquarters First Armored Corps.

By the end of World War II, the armor force had grown to 16 armored divisions, plus more that 100 separate tank battalions and mechanized cavalry squadrons. From North Africa to the liberation of Rome, in campaigns throughout

northwest Europe to the city of Berlin itself, America's brand new armor force proved itself in battle during World War II. Since 1940, Fort Knox has grown and changed in many ways, but its critical mission of training America's proud, professional, and dedicated armor force continues.

Fort Knox is centered in Kentucky's Heartland with its relatively mild climate and a variety of recreational activities. The Commonwealth is proud to exhibit the tradition of hospitality for which Kentucky is famous.

Visit us at Fort Knox anytime in person or virtually through the World Wide Web. We are proud to be a member of the community and proud to promote peace throughout the world.

A Self-Guided Tour

This self-guide tour of Fort Knox was developed to help you learn about and see significant points of interest. By following this self guided tour you will learn about the history of Fort Knox as you are guided to the more interesting places on Fort Knox to see. This book will point out place of interest and show you photographs of the places you will see along the tour. Following the street direction in this book, the tour should take about 2 hours. You should start your tour around 9:00 AM, to see all the facilities and have opportunity to visit facilities while they are open to the public. We ask that you keep in mind, Fort Knox is an active military installation and we ask that you be especially careful while driving in the vicinity of marching soldiers and large vehicles. The speed when passing marching soldiers is 5 MPH. The drivers of large vehicles may not be able to see you, so care should be taken around these vehicles. On Fort Knox pedestrians always have the right-of-way and speed limits are strictly enforced as well as other traffic laws of the state of Kentucky.

Persons arriving on 31W traveling south should take the Chaffee Ave exit toward “Chaffee Ave Main Post Entrance”, cross over 31W and continue toward the Main Gate. Persons arriving on 31W traveling north should take the “Chaffee Ave Main Post Entrance” exit and continue straight towards the Main Gate. Your tour starts at the Main Gate or entrance to Fort Knox.

Come to the main entrance on **Chaffee Avenue**, pass the MP booth on right hand side and continue straight through.



PATTON MUSEUM OF CAVALRY AND ARMOR

Turn left onto **Ballard Avenue** make the first left onto **Fayette Avenue** and follow it out. **Keyes Park** is on your right and then you will notice the Amphitheater site, *which is used for traditional patriotic ceremonies and concerts by the Fort Knox Army band the Dragoons*. The **Patton Museum** will be on the right side, continue into the parking lot.

You are welcome to visit the museum and it is open to the public. The hours are 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM Monday thru Saturday.



Patton Museum



Amphitheater



Armor Park in front of museum

The **Patton Museum** owns and maintains historic armored vehicles of the past and was first established in 1949 at another location on post. The “Cavalry/Armor Foundation” a public non-profit group with donations from individuals and groups from all over the world funded the current building. The Museum's new structure was built in phases between 1972 and 1992. This structure houses the principle exhibits of the Museum.

The Patton Museum is the Armor Branch Museum for the U.S. Army. It began from a collection of captured equipment that was sent to Fort Knox for testing and evaluation during World War II. Since many of the items came from the Third Army Era, the collection became known as the Patton Collection. In 1949, a museum was formed and dedicated to General George S. Patton, Jr. Since that time, the collection has grown to include Armor from all nations, from World War I to Desert Storm.

In addition to the exhibits, the Museum provides information and historical objects for the training of soldiers at Fort Knox. The Davis Memorial Library and Abrams Auditorium, part of the greater museum complex, serve to assist the Armor soldiers training.

ARMOR MEMORIAL PARK

The Armor Memorial Park is located to the left and behind the Patton Museum.

World War II veterans of the 6th Armored Division placed the first monument here in 1986.



Memorial Park Plaque

The United States Army Armor Center Memorial Park is dedicated to the soldiers who fought with Armor in the Twentieth Century. All branches of service that fought with Armor are included, since armor has always represented the combined arms team. The Park speaks of organizations, but it is about people- soldiers who served long and faithfully and others who served briefly, some contributing their lives. Each who served with a unit recognized here is bonded for life with that unit. 38 units are dedicated here. All are a part of this Park.

St. Patrick's Cemetery And Post Cemetery

Exit the Museum and return to **Chaffee Avenue**, turning left, at stop sign, on Chaffee Avenue. Continue to stoplight and turn right onto **Park Road**. Turn right on to **701st Tank Destroyer Bn. Road**. Continue straight to the cemeteries.

St. Patrick's Cemetery (on the right) was used by St. Patrick's Church from 1831 until 1819 when the government acquired the church in Stitton and then by St. Brigid's church until around 1965. Here you can observe the "Children's Section" Used by the Army for dependants of military personnel. The original St. Patrick's Church's foundation exists as an outline for this area. The Post Cemetery (on the left) was established in 1920. Stone from the original St. Patrick's church were used to build the wall surrounding the cemetery and Caretakers House.



Grounds Keepers Building



Post Cemetery

THE UNITED STATES BULLION DEPOSITORY

Return to **Park Road** and turn right. On the right side you will notice **Lindsey Golf Course**, proceed until you come to the stop light, make a right onto **Bullion Boulevard**, about a block away you will see the “Gold Vault” on the right. *DO NOT ENTER the depositories road.* Make a left onto **Gold Vault Road**.

The **Fort Knox Bullion Depository** is one of the institutions under the supervision of the Director of the Mint, an official of the United States Treasury. A large portion of the monetary gold stocks of the United States is stored in the Depository vault, the balance being held in the Philadelphia and Denver Mints and the New York and San Francisco Assay Offices.

Construction started on the United States Bullion Depository in 1935 and was completed in December 1936 at a cost of \$560,000. The exterior dimensions of the two-story basement and attic building is 105 by 121 feet; its height is 42 feet. Within the building is a two-level steel and concrete vault, divided into compartments. The vault doors weigh nearly thirty tons. The Depository is equipped with its own emergency power plant, water system and other facilities.

The gold in the Depository is in the form of standard mint bars of almost pure gold or coin gold bars resulting from the melting of gold coins. The bars are somewhat smaller than an

ordinary building brick. The approximate dimensions are 7 x 3-5/8 x 1-3/4 inches. The fine gold bars contain approximately 400 troy ounces of gold.



Photo from Patton Museum

Operations started when the gold was moved to the Depository by railroad in January 1937. Completion of the series of gold shipments was made in June of that some year. R. J. Vanhome, an official with the United States Mint at San Francisco, was appointed first head of the Depository. It belongs to the U.S. Treasury Department, not Fort Knox nor to the U.S. Army, there are no tours and this facility is not open to the public.

US Army Confinement Facility

Continuing on **Gold Vault Road**, you will see the US Army Confinement facility at Fort Knox on the right.

The confinement facility is *NOT* open to the public. This confinement facility can house 100 personnel. Military personnel confined here, are confined for the less violent offenses.

NOTE: Taking photographs is NOT allowed.

Shopping Complex

Continuing on **Gold Vault Road**.

On the left you will see the Commissary, Banking and Post Exchange (PX) facilities. They are *NOT* open to the public. The Commissary is a grocery store very similar to what you shop at. The banking facilities are a full service credit union and bank. The Post Exchange is very similar to a retail store you shop at every day. Included in the shopping facilities are retail goods, a barber shop, beauty salon, video rental store, florist, optical shop, food court, furniture store, cellular phone store, electronic department, garden shop, health food store, balloon and card shop.

Main Post Chapel

Turn left on **Dixie St.** Stay on Dixie St. The post chapel is on the right.

The **Main Post Chapel** is the oldest building on post. It was built in 1899; long before an Army post was established here. It was originally the Catholic parish church in the village of Stithton, which was a part of acreage purchased by Congress in 1917 as a military training area.

Originally this building was located at the Post Cemetery; this church was located here in 1899 by the Stithton Catholic Community. The main post church was converted to an auditorium in 1920 and restored as a church in 1938. Housed in the steeple is the original bell inscribed “St. Patrick’s Church, Stithton, Kentucky 1904”. This is one of the few remaining building of the former Stithton community.



Stithton Community, Now a Traffic Circle

Continue on Dixie St. Arriving at the traffic circle.

The center of the traffic circle marks the approximate center of the original community of Stithton Kentucky, founded by Thomas Stithton in the early 1850's. In 1918 Stithton had about 400 inhabitants. Stithton served as a station for the Louisville-Nashville turnpike. The Illinois Central Railroad passed through here providing daily passenger and freight service.



Visitor's House

Driving around the traffic circle to **Chaffee Ave**, continue under the railroad trestle and turn right onto **Bullion Blvd**. On the left side will be the "Visitor's House"

Completed in the summer of 1919, it was built for families and friends visiting soldiers stationed at early Camp Knox. This building had 14 guest rooms, a lounge, writing rooms, a cafeteria and dining room. Later it was converted to a post hospital and later as a hospital annex.

This building has served various purposes ever since.



HQ US Army Recruiting Command

Continue on **Bullion Blvd.** taking the right exit at the cloverleaf onto **Eisenhower Ave.** on the right. Make the right on Eisenhower Ave and turn right at the traffic light onto **Knox St.** Turn left onto **Third Ave.** Continue on and USAREC (US Army Recruiting Command) will be on the left, at the drive circle.

This building is not open to the public. The USAREC building complex serves as the Head Quarters for the U.S. Army's Recruiting Command, worldwide.



Chaffee Hall, Post Headquarters

Continue on **Third Ave** to **Old Ironsides Ave**. Turn right on Old Ironsides Ave. Continue on Old Ironsides Ave to Chaffee Ave. Post HQ (Headquarters) will be on the right.

This building was constructed in 1934 to accommodate the headquarters of the new mechanized force, which was activated at Fort Knox in 1932. In front of the HQ Building you will notice a unique light pole. This light was manufactured in Germany and donated to the 3rd Armored Division on Drake Kaserne, Frankfurt Germany in 1986 and relocated here in December 1992.

The Court of Honor, which surrounds the flagpole, was dedicated in 1953 to the original 16 Armored Divisions of the U.S. Army. It was later expanded to include additional units. Today there are 22 plaques dedicated.



Ireland Army Community Hospital

Continue on **Old Ironsides Road** to **Spearhead Div. Ave.** Turn left onto Spearhead Dive Ave. Ireland Army Community Hospital will be on the left at **Cooke St.**

Ireland Army Community Hospital is the largest element of the MEDDAC. Ireland Army Community Hospital is a 67-bed facility and is fully accredited by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations. The MEDDAC staff provides a wide range of health and preventive medicine services to eligible active duty military, military retirees and their family beneficiaries at Fort Knox and in the surrounding community.



Armored Force Replacement Training Center

Continue on **Spearhead Div. Ave.** to the traffic light. At the light you will see the original stone structure for the entrance to the first location of the Armored Force Replacement Training Center.

The Armored Force Replacement Training Center was established in 1940 and operated here until 1945 when other areas of what is now Fort Knox started to be used. Several of the original wooden buildings can still be seen in this area.

Today the last remaining buildings are used for various training units and activities.



Conclusion

This concludes your self-guided tour of Fort Knox. We hope this was an informative and enjoyable tour. You are welcome to see other historic sites in the area. If you have friends or family living or working on Fort Knox, they will be more than happy to direct you to additional sites and provide you with information on the surrounding area.

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Authors Notes

This self-guided tour is not all inclusive of the history of Fort Knox. It is designed as a general tour only. To include all historical locations would make this guide extremely large. To gather an in-depth knowledge of the history of Fort Knox, visit the Patton Museum or your local library. Gary Kempf wrote a very in-depth history of Fort Knox and the cemeteries located throughout the post. This book is located at the Patton Museum. The Louisville Corps of Engineers report "Analytical/Environmental Assessment Report-Fort Knox, KY, 1987" is another in-depth report. Of interest to some is the Boone and Lincoln Cemeteries located on Fort Knox. They are not list in this book as they are located in "Off Limits" areas of the post.

Some locations eluded me in finding the original buildings and they have been torn down over time. Over time I may find the original Patton Museum and Post Hospital. Other buildings are known to be long gone, such as the original Post Office. Many of the original building were constructed of wood frames and have succumbed to time and weather.

Most of the better photographs of Fort Knox are the property of individuals living in the Fort Knox area and were not available to me. For the purpose of historical preservation, authorities of Fort Knox should make a concerted effort to obtain copies of these photographs.

It would be very interesting to see an in-depth history of Fort Knox.

Melody Legrant wrote the original Self-Guided Tour of Fort Knox. It was used as the basis for this one and some of the original text was used here.

James Sinclair
12 Nov 2000