

Fort Sam Houston



Quadrangle construction 1876

Fort Sam Houston encompassed an area of land just north of downtown San Antonio. The oldest JBSA installation and one of the oldest posts in the U.S. Army, the origins of Fort Sam Houston went back to 1876, when the Army began construction of a Quartermaster supply depot on 92 acres of land donated by the city of San Antonio. The Army constructed the supply depot, eventually known as the Quadrangle, from limestone cut from a local quarry.

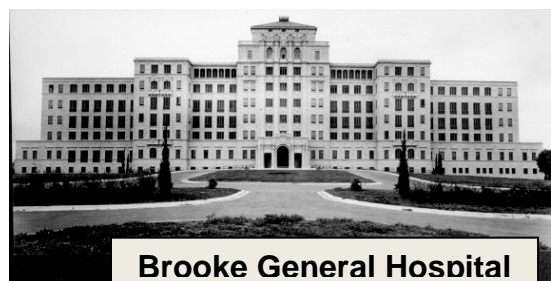
Though designed as a supply depot, the Army expanded the Quadrangle in 1877-78, to house the Headquarters, Department of Texas, as well as the 1880 construction of fifteen houses — the Staff Post — for the officers who staffed the department. Line officers and Soldiers lived in tents and temporary wooden barracks. The post became known simply as The Post at San Antonio.

The Army continued expanding the Post at San Antonio throughout the 1880s to meet its needs in the western territories, to include the addition of the Infantry Post. Despite the growth and significance of the installation, it still bore the name “Post at San Antonio.” This changed with the issuance of General Orders No. 99 Sept. 11, 1890. Acting Secretary of War L.A. Grant signed the orders which designated the Post at San Antonio as Fort Sam Houston. Named for the larger-than-life Texas general, the post — a mere supply depot 14 years earlier — now was the second largest Army post in the US.

Following the Spanish-American War, another major expansion brought a Cavalry Post and Light Artillery Post. The construction of support buildings, barracks and housing pushed Fort Sam Houston’s boundaries further. With additional land purchased for training areas, the post soon became the largest post in the Army. With the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution, Fort Sam Houston was used as a staging point for troops mobilized as a show of force along the border in 1911 and again for the 1916 Punitive Expedition.

The Army established Camp Wilson on the east side of Fort Sam Houston in 1916 to handle the troops needed in Mexico. In 1917, Camp Wilson was renamed Camp Travis and another expansion occurred in order to support training a division. Camp Travis became an induction and training center for Soldiers who soon went to France during World War I. After the war, Camp Travis became a demobilization center for returning troops and remained open into the 1920s to house the 2d Division. Camp Travis was absorbed into Fort Sam Houston in 1922. Fort Sam Houston’s boundaries now stretched to the north and northeast and settled to its current boundary.

In the late 1920s, the Army began improving the post’s infrastructure. The hastily erected buildings on Camp Travis quickly



Brooke General Hospital

deteriorated after World War I and the Army planned improvements using city planning techniques. From 1929 to 1939, new housing and support buildings replaced the failing structures. The use of the popular Spanish Colonial Revival architecture gave the post a distinctive appearance. The construction included a new eight-story, 418-bed hospital which opened in 1938. The War Department soon funded another 200-bed addition to the building to stem potential overcrowding. In 1942, the hospital was named Brooke General Hospital.

During World War II, Fort Sam Houston once again became packed with soldiers. Another 500 temporary buildings went up — 400 in the first year alone — during the war to house the Soldiers who transitioned through the post. A recruit reception center at Dodd Field, the airfield on the northern tip of the post, processed up to 1,000 recruits a day. From 1943 to 1946, Dodd also contained a prisoner of war camp for 1,600 Axis prisoners.

Brooke General Hospital also continued to expand. During the war, many of the temporary buildings that went up saw use as wards, administration buildings or staff housing. Four barracks built in the 1930s were converted to hospital Annexes I, II, III and V, while a new building, completed in 1942, became Annex IV, a psychiatric ward. This pushed the capacity to 7,800 beds and the entire complex became Brooke Hospital Center in 1945.

At the end of the war, Fort Sam Houston again became a demobilization point and 500,000 Soldiers were processed back to the civilian world. The growth of San Antonio, as well as improvements in weapons range and infantry division needs, meant Fort Sam Houston could no longer support a combat mission. The 1946 transfer of the Army's Medical Field Service School to the post marked the beginning of Fort Sam Houston's role as the home of Army medicine. At the same time, Brooke Hospital Center and several other medical activities on the post were all organized as Brooke Army Medical Center (BAMC).

During the Korean War, Fort Sam Houston again became a reception center for draftees and new recruits. The Medical Training Center also activated to train enlisted medical personnel. In the meantime, BAMC provided treatment for Soldiers wounded in Korea. In the years after the war, the Medical Training Center continued to train medics for the Army. In 1967 the Medical Training Center reached its peak of 29,000 graduates. In 1972, a reorganization of the Medical Field Service School resulted in its redesignation as the Academy of Health Sciences. The reorganization consolidated the Army's medical training, making the Academy one of the largest medical training institutions in the world. In 1991, it was redesignated as the Army Medical Department Center and School (AMEDDC&S), with the Academy of Health Sciences becoming the school arm of the AMEDDC&S.

BAMC also continued its growth, adding new clinics in 60s, 70s and 80s. Despite its growth and reputation for healthcare, it remained scattered across Fort Sam Houston. In 1987, officials broke ground on a new hospital facility. The state-of-the-art medical center was dedicated in 1996. The 2005 BRAC not only made Fort Sam Houston a part

of Joint Base San Antonio, it also consolidated medical training for all branches of the military on the old post.