

The
Second World War
At
St. Andrew's Bay



Tyndall Field
Wainwright Shipyard
Naval Section Base Panama City
Panama City Oil Terminal

By
Jack O. Cutchens

“Tommy Oliver Field”

Dedicated November 16, 1945 to Private First Class Thomas E. Oliver, USMC
“Memorial Park”

Dedicated May 30 1947 at Ohio Avenue and Fourth Street to 7 Lynn Haven men who died in WWII
“Bay Memorial Hospital”

Dedicated June 1, 1949 as a memorial to Bay County veterans who died in WWII
“Tommy Oliver Memorial Stadium”

Dedicated September 17, 1954 to Tommy Oliver and all other Bay County High School Graduates who died in
World War II

THE SECOND WORLD WAR

St. Andrew's Bay Florida 1940 to 1945

By
Jack O. Cutchens

In 1938 the U.S. Government began planning for a global war with Axis powers. Sites were surveyed for training soldiers, sailors, airmen and support facilities; shipyards, factories, supply points, etc.

Army officers accompanied by Florida Senator Claude Pepper, State Representative Robert L. F. "Bob" Sikes, and Philip A. Roll, Captain in the Army Air Corps Officer's Reserve Corps and chairman for the Panama City Chamber of Commerce "Aviation Committee," made several trips along the northwest Florida coast. They noted the vast area of water and forests necessary for training, and the "good flying weather."

The area extending from Red Fish Point to near the Bay-Gulf County line, a remotely populated area accessed by the 4,000 foot steel-trussed A. I. DuPont Bridge opened to traffic the last week in March 1929 and the inter-coastal waterway pass opened October 30, 1934, was an imminent site for an Army airfield to train aerial gunners. The area had been part of a section designated as reserved for the Navy when first surveyed in 1833. Only two lots were sold, Lots 10 and 11 in Section 19 to William M. Loftin, a settler to St. Andrew's Bay in 1821. Public Road No. 64 was completed from Apalachicola to the Daleville, Alabama, Courthouse in 1837 by James D. Graham, Major, U.S. Army Engineer Corps. U.S. 98 followed lengths of the original road marked from St. Joseph to Loftin's Ferry at East St. Andrews Bay with 33 "Mile Posts."

The peninsula was named Coe Military Reservation after strategic sites were selected in Florida by Robert E. Lee, Lieutenant Colonel, Engineers Corps, in 1849. A part of Hurricane Island continued as a military reservation in 1940. The freedman settlements at Red Fish and Davis Points were the lingering vestiges of settlers and their descendents who remained after the Federal Navy closed the Civil War government camp established there in 1862 in 1865. A few had purchased homesteads after the U.S. Government opened the area to settlers in 1878. Rev. Dr. William M. Croman and Dr. Phillip D. Railsback platted communities near Palmetto Point in the late 1880s. Auburn and Farmdale were adjoining turpentine communities near Baker Bayou. The Raffield settlement was due west of Auburn on St. Andrew's Sound. The Avondale Mill's Camp Helen and the Episcopal Church's Camp Weed at Beacon Beach across from East Pass into St. Andrew's Sound, were established in the late 1920s. There were 2 active schools. A 1939 survey by the Works Progress Administration recorded 4 churches. Two were active; New Judson midway between Davis and Red Fish Points, and Cromanton Methodist Episcopal on Galausha Avenue. New Judson had replaced the Judson Church built at Davis Lake in 1877. Eight cemeteries were recorded during a veterans gravesite survey by the WPA. Marywood, Davis Lake, Farmdale and Baker Bayou were in use.

Southeast of the 7,525 foot steel-trussed Fons A. Hathaway Bridge, opened to traffic the last week in May of 1929, a site extending from U.S. 98 to the Gulf entrance for the inter-coastal waterway at the pass through Hurricane Island, was a prospective site for a Navy Section Base to protect the entrance and as an escort for vessels entering and exiting St. Andrew's Bay. Northwest of the pass was the site of the 1763 to 1783 town at St. Andrew's Bay named "Wells."

A shipyard, accessible to the waterway and rail communication at the east end of Hathaway Bridge, was designated by the U. S. Maritime Commission at the old site of the West Bay Naval Stores sawmill at Sulfur Point in the St. Andrews District of Panama City. The Commission, organized in 1936, was modernizing the "old World War Merchant Marine." Nine yards were planned.

Little Oyster Point on North St. Andrew's Bay, the westernmost section of the original plat of Lynn Haven in 1911, accessible by barge through "Drummond Cut," the final length of the inter-waterway dedicated June 25, 1938, between West Bay and Choctawhatchee Bay, and the pass and rail communication, was viewed as a site for a Navy fuel storage and transfer terminal called an "Oil Farm."

In September 1940 Brigadier General Walter R. Weaver, commander of the Southeast Air Corps Training Center at Maxwell Field, Montgomery, Alabama, accompanied by Senator Pepper, met with Panama City

and Bay County officials. They determined that the well-drained sandy site covered with palmetto, dog fennel and black jack oaks, but few large trees, across East St. Andrew's Bay, was "ideal for a training site." Most large trees had been cut for sawmills and fuel years earlier.

Maxwell Field was the site of the Wright brothers first civilian flying school organized in March 1910. In 1918 the Army Signal Corps organized an aircraft and engine repair depot at the airfield. It was named Maxwell Field in honor of Alabama native Lieutenant William C. Marshall killed in a military aircraft accident in the Philippines. General Weaver, posted at Maxwell in 1927, was organizing the 80th Air Group.

Before daylight, Thursday December 12, 1940, Brigadier General George S. Patton, ordered by Chief of the Army General George C. Marshall to command the 2nd Armored Division two days after it was established at Fort Benning July 10, began a planned motor march for the division's 10,520 officers and men of the 41st and 67th Armored Infantry Regiments to Panama City. Two columns, one in the direction of Quincy, Blountstown, then to Wewahitchka, and one to Eufaula, then to Cottondale, approached Panama City two days later with 325 medium and light tanks supported by 1,100 halftracks, tank retrievers, command cars, trucks and motorcycles observed by unit light aircraft that had refueled at the Pensacola Naval Air Station's "Fountain Field" 4.7 miles north of Fountain. The soldiers was billeted in tents in the St. Andrews District of Panama City between West Eleventh and West Fourteenth Streets and Frankford and Fairland Avenues. After two days the convoy made a return "panzer style motor march" to Fort Benning.

It was the first of several motor marches to Panama City to train division and regiment staffs for convoy movements. Later marches would be made on Highway 52 (today's Highway 77), crossing the timber trestle North Bay Bridge to Lynn Haven, turning west on East Fifth Street then onto Ohio Avenue to Panama City and the bivouac grounds at today's Oakland Terrace Park. An hour before crossings the North Bay Bridge, the bridge would be "closed to civilian traffic." During one march, Army engineers would rebuild the old "Willis Bridge" before crossing the Chipola River.

Tuesday afternoon at 3 o'clock December 17, Captain Hiram W. Sperry, Commander of Company D, 2nd Battalion, 106th Engineers (Combat), Florida Army National Guard, paraded Company D from the Armory at 110 West Sixth Street onto Harrison Avenue, then to Second Street and east to McKenzie Park where Judge J. Mercer Sapp made a short patriotic address.

Shortly after 4 o'clock 69 men and 3 officers boarded a special Bay Line passenger train for Cottondale to meet an L & N military special. The next day they arrived at Camp Blanding, Florida, where they joined other units of the 31st "Dixie" Division from Alabama, Florida, Louisiana and Mississippi.

The Division was part of the mobilization of 256,000 National Guardsmen ordered by the President November 25 to increase the active strength of the Regular Army from 188,000 trained officers and men as of July 1, 1939, to a total of 535,500 by September 25, 1941. Once again the United States had a military that had been undermanned and under funded. The meager army and navy were no deterrent to Axis powers bent on global conquest. Members of Company D would serve in Alaska, Philippines and European Theatre.

A gunnery school was authorized at St. Andrew's Bay December 19.

During the annual banquet to install Panama City Chamber of Commerce officers Friday evening January 10, 1941, in the ballroom of Hotel Dixie Sherman, Toastmaster Major Philip A. Roll, local attorney who had been called to active duty at Maxwell Field, handed the gavel to incoming President Albert M. Lewis, Sr., owner of the area Texaco dealership. The featured speaker everyone wanted to hear, was Lieutenant Commander Jay J. "Gene" Tunney, a Marine in the World War and former world heavyweight boxing champion stationed at Pensacola Naval Air Station. His entertaining presentation was broadcast live by "590 WDLP" through the station's transmitter on West First Street.

The 80th Air Group Headquarters was organized February 28 at Maxwell Field in "Tent City No. 2."

In February the Federal Government directed John L. Young, Sr., the senior land appraiser for the U.S. Government at Mobile, to survey the 25,734 acres selected for the Air Corps gunnery school and range. Using notes by Mrs. Eleanor R. Davis, local teacher who lived at San Blas, enumerator for the 1940 U. S. Census recorded in April, there were 97 households at areas designated San Blas, Cromanton, Red Fish and Davis Points, Beacon Beach, Raffield, Farmdale and Auburn, population 379.

The government's appraisal was for \$204,000. When appraisals were presented to owners, most, except

a few who did not want to leave their homes or vacate waterfront property, were amazed that the values placed on their property were more than they could "have ever sold it." Approximately 16,000 acres were acquired by the government for unpaid state and county taxes.

Property owners and tenants were told they "must vacate property by May 7" when removal of buildings, except for those at Beacon Beach, site of Camp Helen and Camp Weed, would begin.

Condemnation proceedings began for those who refused to leave within 5,000 acres where the airfield and gunnery ranges would be located. Similar proceeding were beginning at Apalachicola where a auxiliary airfield was to be located.

Army engineers, headquartered in the National Guard Armory, were completing a survey for locating buildings, gunnery ranges and runways.

Representative Sikes, elected to Congress in 1940, was notified by the War Department April 24, that \$3,723,567 was authorized for a flexible gunnery school. Facilities for a post cadre of 130 officers and 1,900 enlisted men, housing and training structures for 800 gunnery training cadets in 5-week cycles, were designed by Southern Engineering & Architectural Company of Jacksonville. Initial construction called for 50 one-story barracks, 5 mess halls, 12 dayrooms, 4 officers quarters, 6 school buildings, 5 warehouses, post headquarters with flagpole, chapel and hospital, motor repair shop, telephone exchange, theatre, radio station, post exchange and operations building, all of cement construction. An air control tower and a shed for parachute rigging would be built at the runway. Machine gun ranges just inland from St. Andrew's Sound extending southeast to Davis Beach, 10 trap houses to train in "leading targets" (site of today's small arms range), towers for safety observers, and range radio control centers would be built so that "down range" extended 10 miles beyond the Gulf beach. A wharf was planned for 6 patrol boats.

Lieutenant Colonel Warren A. Maxwell, Commander of the Maxwell Field Gunnery Range at Eglin Field since August 1939, was assigned "projects officer." The range had been established in the Choctawhatchee National Forest in 1931. He established a headquarters at the Armory. Company D, 1st Battalion, Florida Defense Forces, recruited from local men age 18 to 60, commanded by elected Captain A. C. Van Horn, Jr., maintained the Armory in their nickel-grey uniforms with overseas caps trimmed in orange.

Promoted to Lieutenant Colonel March 15, Maxwell was born January 21, 1889, at Indianapolis. He had enlisted in the Indiana National Guard July 3, 1916. A corporal when he entered pilot training in the Aviation Signal Corps November 27, 1917, he was commissioned Second Lieutenant June 26, 1918. He had piloted an aircraft in military air races with an Army team several times in the 1930s in quest of the "Mitchell Trophy" at Selfridge Field, Michigan, and he was a graduate of the Air Corps Tactical School established by General Weaver at Maxwell Field.

Maxwell's flight of 3 airplanes, an AT-6A, a PT-17 and a BT-13A were kept at Atkinson Municipal Airport (northwest across Pretty Bayou from the recently destroyed Panama City International Airport at the north end of Lisenby Avenue) and occasionally Tyson Field north of West Eleventh Street (site of today's Panama City Christian School and Bay County Public Library).

Atkinson Field had been built as a field for land and seaplanes in the late 1920s by Jasper B. Atkinson, Jr., the first licensed pilot at Bay County, and wife Elizabeth M. Brandenburg, also a pilot. In November 1932 they "gave" the 292-acre site with airfield and two 1,800-foot grass runways to the City of Panama City so that Federal funds "would be made available for the complete development of an up-to-date airport." Work began on modernizing the field to be named "Atkinson Municipal Airport" the last week in November. In 1941 Jasper and Elizabeth were living in Montgomery where they had opened Alabama Air Service in May 1938, a flying school and aircraft sales and repair company located at the Montgomery Airport. Elizabeth's mother, Jennie McMullen Brandenburg, had paid for the construction and furnishings for "Jennie Brandenburg Hall," the largest building on the closed Bob Jones College campus at Lynn Haven; and she had given the Women's Literary Society of Lynn Haven the "McMullen Library Building."

Tyson Field was built in late 1930 by George B. Tyson who had served as a Lieutenant in old Company M, Florida National Guard, organized at Bay County in 1913. He enlarged the field to 10 acres and built hangers in 1931. The first commercial passenger plane to Panama City flew from Montgomery and landed at the field Sunday, March 1, 1931. Due to bad weather, it was grounded for two days.

A tent covering wood walls and floor was set up at Atkinson Field for security, maintenance and field operations. First Sergeant Joseph "Joe" B. Young was in charge at the airfield where "the grass had to be cut regularly." Flying Sergeant B. Harvey Liddon, posted at Maxwell Field, was in charge of flight operations headquartered in the Armory. It was told that "Master Sergeant Liddon knows more general officers than any other enlisted man in the army."

A detachment of 133 cooks, administrative personnel, and military police training at Eglin Field, recently transferred from Maxwell Field to Eglin Field, were detailed for security. They were billeted in the well built and maintained cottages at Camps Helen and Weed overlooking the sound and the tall, brilliant white sand dunes of Hurricane Island covered in sea oats. Captain John R. Dunn was Executive Officer, and George W. Gaspard was First Sergeant. The 80th Air Group, 244 officers and enlisted men transferred from tent city to a cotton gin warehouse converted to a barracks at Maxwell Field, were training to operate the flexible gunnery school.

Plans for locating a building at "downtown Panama City" as a recreation center for "soldiers," began April 29 with a broadcast requesting assistance on WDLP by ladies of the Pilot Club, Mrs. Eunice Robinson president.

May 8, Federal Judge A. V. Long issued a decree that parcels occupied by owners or tenants "may remain occupied until July 7."

May 15, Representative Sikes suggested to the War Department that Flexible Gunnery School 9 at Bay County be named "Tyndall Field" in honor of First Lieutenant Frank B. Tyndall, World War ace who brought down 6 German aircraft over France serving with the 22nd Aero Squadron for which he was awarded the Silver Star Medal. The native of Sewells Point, Florida, was killed in the line of duty when the Curtiss P-1 Hawk biplane he was flying crashed near Mooresville, North Carolina, July 15, 1930.

Miss Frederica Riks Payne, 90, died at her San Blas home May 17. Frederica was the first school teacher at the one-room Panama City School when it opened on Luverne Avenue February 7, 1907. She had taught at Panama City, St. Andrews and San Blas until she became postmistress. She was buried next to her sister, Amanda Blanche Payne Birch, in an unmarked grave at Marywood Cemetery. Harold M. "Harry" Felix had just re-painted "Marywood" on the curved sign above the gate he had placed 10 years earlier. Felix Lake, where he and wife Rosa lived on the south hill, was named for them after he dammed Fresh Water Bayou.

May 22, contracts totaling \$3,104,379 were awarded to C. C. Moore Construction Company of Panama City and the Paul H. Smith Company of Tampa to construct runways and build post facilities. Young met with property owners that morning. He reminded them of the July 7 deadline and that, as per their requests, property appraisals were being re-evaluated.

Captain William B. "Bill" Strandberg, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, was appointed in charge of construction for an airfield and gunnery school. The native of Minneapolis graduated from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in 1937 and afterwards the Army Engineer School at Fort Belvoir, Virginia.

Work began May 26. A large force of men grubbing palmetto roots had recently been discharged from Civil Conservation Corps Companies in North Florida. The construction would require over 4,000 employees. Most were paid \$24 a week for a 6-day week, about \$21.50 after deductions. A private in the Air Corps was paid \$21 the "last day of each month."

That morning Steadman Hobbs, owner of the recently chartered Panama City Transit System, began 7 round trips daily to Tyndall Field with his fleet of dark green and yellow buses. Company buses operated by colored drivers were scheduled for a large force of colored employees.

The Atlanta & St. Andrews Bay Railway Company installed a sidetrack west of the "paper mill spur" to a warehouse site and loading platform south of today's Highway 22 to Wewahitchka and along U.S. 98. A chain-link fence with signs labeled "U.S. Government Property" was erected around 3 large metal buildings, guard house, office and flagpole designated "Tyndall Field Warehouse Terminal."

The railway company was operating 3 Alco RS1 diesel-electric locomotives, No.'s 901 to 903, received in March in the company's registered "diesel color scheme" of dark blue and aluminum bands. The company was the first in the United States to attempt to do away with steam locomotives. Two Alco S2 switcher locomotives were on order.

Local authorities recognized that there was a severe housing problem facing the area. Charles C. Converse, site inspector for the Federal Works Agency, was considering bids for 30 acre tracts to build "defense housing" for enlisted personnel and civilians with defense related jobs.

Two weeks after construction began at the gunnery school, Lieutenant Colonel Maxwell, City of Panama City Mayor Harry G. Fannin, and other officials were photographed June 5, breaking ground by a *Panama City News Herald* photographer. Maxwell, wearing a campaign hat, wielded an ax on a palmetto; then Fannin, wearing his straw boater, dug into the sandy soil with a shovel.

Fannin was born at Iola near Wewahitchka. He had served as assistant purser on the *S.S. Tarpon* and was the president of Commercial Bank of Panama City.

The shovel and ax were placed with two shovels displayed in the Bay County Court House; one used to turn the first spade of earth January 1, 1907, to build the Atlanta & St. Andrews Bay Railway; and one that turned the first spade of earth April 15, 1930, to build the Southern Kraft Corporation Mill at Bay Harbor, the site of the old Moore Timber Company sawmill.

June 13, the day the Army reorganized the Air Corps and renamed it the Army Air Forces, "Tyndall Field" was officially named. Lieutenant Colonel Maxwell was appointed "Post Commander" effective June 16. General Weaver was appointed Commander of Southeast Flexible Gunnery Schools.

Flag Day, June 14, a recreation area north of East Fourth Street on the west shore of Watson Bayou extending from Bonita Avenue to La Paloma Avenue circling Watson Bayou, was dedicated as the "4th Army Corps Recreation Area." Captain James Keith, with the Public Works Agency, oversaw the construction of 88 "tent units" at the site. Each tent, furnished with six metal bunks, had a wood floor and 6-foot high screened walls covered with a tent. He planned more units at the site and for the St. Andrews camp site.

It was announced the next day that 150 housing units, costing \$350,000, would be built south of East Fourth Street and east of Mercedes Avenue on the west bank of Watson Bayou for non-commissioned and enlisted personnel and their families. "Cove Gardens" would consist of 20 1-bedroom, 92 2-bedroom, and 32 3-bedroom units built of cement and tile in Spanish architecture. The rental would be \$21 for 1 bedroom suites and \$23.50 for the 2 and 3 bedroom units. All apartments would be equipped with stove, electric refrigerator, water heater and an oil burning floor furnace. The units, to house 400 to 500 persons, would be built around a paved circular drive with sidewalks and a community building and park in the center.

Mrs. Robinson told that the ladies were opening a USO club at 208 Harrison Avenue. Plans were made to build a permanent club house at the 2-acre Bay Front Park overlooking East St. Andrew's Bay at the end of Harrison Avenue. Tommy Oliver, athletic director at Bay County High School, was asked to serve as club director. A USO club for colored soldiers was opened in Rosenwald High School managed by principal Richard V. Moore, graduate of Knoxville College. In 1947 he would be the third president of Bethune-Cookman College.

Monday, August 5, the 244 officers and men of the 80th Air Group training at Maxwell Field arrived in convoy at the 4th Army Corps Recreation Area at Watson Bayou.

The construction companies added a night shift that night. There were 4,431 civilians constructing buildings and runways.

Wednesday, the Air Group toured sites where they would train student gunners. They fired at regulation targets at 500 yards and gas filled balloons with water-cooled M1917A1 .30 caliber light machine guns, the first rounds fired down range at "Flexible Gunnery School No. 9," among "swarming flights" of biting dog flies, sand gnats and mosquitoes. Few ventured beyond ranges covered in "sandspurs;" there were "snakes."

The population of Bay County enumerated on the 1940 U. S. Census was 20,686. By August the Panama City Chamber of Commerce estimated that an additional 3,000 were attempting to find living quarters. Another 10,000 were expected before the end of the year.

The Panama City Housing Authority, in conjunction with the Public Works Agency planned to build defense housing projects that would eventually be named Annie B. Sale located at the site of today's Tommy Oliver Memorial Stadium; Hawke Massalina at the site of today's Massalina Government Apartments; Minor C. Keith at the site of today's Everett Junior High School; Wainwright called "Maritime

Housing No. 1” at the site of today’s College on U.S. 98; and J. H. Drummond called “Maritime Housing No. 2” between Michigan and Mound Avenues and extending south between Twentieth and Twenty-Second Streets; and No. 2’s extension, Hillside in the east St. Andrews District of Panama City on Florida Avenue.

The Sale, Massalina, and Keith projects would be of 10 buildings with 4 apartments in each, an office; and a large community hall. Each apartment had new gas ranges, heat and water heaters, but unfinished interior wood walls and floors. The Drummond project would have hundreds of 2 and 3 bedroom houses, apartments and dormitories. A later addition would be of masonry construction; 10 buildings with 10 apartments each. Plans were for 1,085 additional units, and a 185 unit trailer park.

Bids were opened August 14 for “defense housing units” at the Keith, Sale, and Massalina projects to house workers at Tyndall, Southern Kraft Corporation, the Atlanta & St. Andrews Railway Company and government employees at Panama City. I was a resident of Annie B. Sale from 1944 to 1946.

By October barracks and tent bivouac squadron areas at Eglin Field were filled to capacity. Captain Strandberg notified General Weaver’s staff that Tyndall Field would be ready to garrison airmen the third week in December.

Medics from Eglin set up a Post Dispensary in a “tent” in the 4th Army Corps Recreation Area.

In order to provide quarters for trainees expected at Eglin the first week in December, Weaver ordered Major Albert J. Engelberg, Commander of the 80th Air Group consisting of Headquarters & Headquarters Squadron, the 69th Material Squadron, the 69th Air Base Squadron and 5 school squadrons, the 343rd, 344th, 348th, 349th and 350th, about 600 airmen training at Eglin, to move to the 4th Army Corps Recreation Area on Watson Bayou until the post was ready for the permanent party.

Major Engelberg of Virginia, was commissioned Second Lieutenant in 1918 and posted to Ft. Monroe, Virginia. He was an officer in the Army Reserve Corps and an engineer with Bell Telephone of New York when called to active duty February 28.

Major Floyd M. Hyndman was appointed Post Executive Officer. The native of Canada had enlisted as a private in 1914 and retired February 28, 1939 as a Major. He had made his home at Red Fish Point. An Armor Officer, he was recalled to active duty November 26, 1940, assigned to Fort Knox, Kentucky, then Eglin Field. He and wife Perle had vacated their Red Fish Point property in May 1941 and purchased 250 acres across Fons A. Hathaway Bridge and South of U.S. 98.

One of the 150-foot wide by 5,200-foot long 6 inch reinforced concrete runways was completed by Friday, November 2. Saturday morning Master Sergeant Liddon flew the AT-6A “Texan” from Atkinson Municipal Airport, circled the field, then made the first aircraft landing at Tyndall Field.

Benjamin Harvey Liddon was born September 25, 1903, at Marianna, Florida. He enlisted in the Army at Fort Monroe, Virginia, in May 1922, and was posted at Maxwell Field. He was “Chief Technical Inspector” at Tyndall.

Monday morning, November 5, at 1130 hours, Post Commander Maxwell landed the AT-6A with Captain Strandberg in the student seat. It was recorded as the first official landing.

The 80th Air Group began arriving at the recreation area December 5.

Shortly after 1:45 p.m. Eastern Standard Time the afternoon of Sunday, December 7, word of the Honolulu attack by the Japanese reached Washington. A copy was rushed to Secretary of State Cordell Hull awaiting Japanese Ambassador Kichisaburo Nomura and special envoy Saburo Kuruusu who were late for a 1:45 appointment. As Hull read and reread dispatches of continuing bombing at Pearl Harbor, the Japanese envoys arrived at 2:05. He permitted them to enter at 2:20. Smiling and bowing, after formalities they opened a brief case and handed Hull a note from the Japanese government without a mention of the war. He began reading, then, at 2:35, ordered them from his office.

Word of the attack was received at 2:50 p.m. Central Standard Time by the men billeted at the 4th Corps Recreation Area.

That evening the Air Group’s permanent party began moving from the recreation area. Three of the Group’s squadrons at Maxwell Field, the 446th, 447th, and 448th were ordered to Tyndall.

Christmas Eve the Post Dispensary was moved from the recreation area to Beacon Beach and by the 26, the 80th had been established on base.

Volume 1 No. 1 of the *Tyndall Target*, the base newsletter, was published Friday, January 16, 1942. Post Headquarters was moved from the Armory to the completed Headquarters Building February 13. The first class of 40 students designated Class 42-13 arrived for flexible gunnery training February 23. The 200 patient Post Hospital was opened by Post Surgeon Major John E. Pluemneke March 5.

A \$45,000 USO Club was dedicated at Bay Front Park at 3 o'clock Sunday afternoon, March 14. The club had been constructed by the local Civilian Conservation Corps Company and carried to completion by the business ladies' Pilot Club and director Tommy Oliver. An "Aircraft Warning Spotters" tower was established at the site, and at the corner of Eighth Street and Harrison Avenue by Wade Middlemas, to watch for aircraft and residents not observing "blackouts." Jesse W. Word, principal at Macon, Georgia, who had been employed by the Army in November 1941, set up a second USO Club at 659 East End Street.

A \$5,000,000 Tyndall support field, to be built southwest of Apalachicola, was authorized March 30.

At 6:00 p.m. Saturday, May 30, the 650-seat Post Theatre opened. The first movie was *Fly By Night* starring Richard Carlson, followed by *Saboteur* featuring Robert Cummings.

In July the Tyndall radio station, "Rulers of the Sky," began broadcasting at 7:30 nightly over WDLP.

Colonel Maxwell, with Major Strandburg in the student seat, made the first landing at "Apalachicola Sub-Base" July 11 in a BT-13A.

B17 Boeing Bombers were received in September to train gunners.

The last week in November Second Lieutenant William Clark Gable and his studio friend, cinematographer Andrew J. McIntyre, reported for the 5-week course.

Gable had refused a direct commission in the "First Motion Picture Unit" ordered organized by Lieutenant General Henry H. "Hap" Arnold, Chief of the Air Corps, maintaining that he wasn't trained to lead soldiers. August 12 he enlisted at Los Angeles as a private in the Army Air Corps and applied for Officer Candidate School. He and McIntyre were ordered to report to the Army Air Corps Officer Candidate School at Miami Beach Training School, Florida.

General Weaver had ordered the school established at the Miami Beach Training School February 19 to train "all Air Corps officer candidates, the first class to begin in June."

Candidates Gable and McIntyre were assigned to OCS Class 42-E August 17. The 18 to 36 age regulation was waived for 41 year old Gable to qualify for 13 weeks of intensive officer training; 7-days a week and 18-hour days. During the traditional haircut his mustache was shaved off.

They graduated October 27, commissioned Second Lieutenants October 28 and ordered to report for gunnery training at Tyndall Field.

Post Commander Maxwell had explained that gunnery student Gable would receive "no special recognition" when he reported in or during training. Gate guards told that there was quite a bit "of recognition and excitement" when Lieutenant Gable signed in at post headquarters. He was assigned to "Flexible Gunnery Class 43-1" administered by the 69th Squadron nicknamed the "Gunner Makers." He was recognized by members of the class as "Brother Clark."

Many stories have been fantasized about his partying about town, but the school training schedule was rigorous; 12 hour days. There were squadron calisthenics and running before breakfast, 50 minute classes, maintenance of equipment after supper and hours of study after "lights out" at 2200 hours or mandated "blackouts" for Bay County when the paper mill horn sounded. There were written and oral examinations and "hands on" testing, often at night to teach the handling of weapons "in poor light conditions." Each Saturday morning, the traditional Army inspection was conducted by class commissioned officers.

At the end of the second week of training, a cook at the Apalachicola auxiliary field, asked Lieutenant Gable how he wanted his eggs early one morning and he replied, "one up and one down." Night training began the third week.

The squadron scribe told that "Brother Clark never missed a night in town (5 Saturday nights)" to the nearby Cove Hotel, or a Sunday meal at Hotel Dixie-Sherman, Mattie's Tavern or the Nixon Restaurant at Youngstown, his favorite retreat in the woods, "until the weekend of graduation" January 4, 1943.

"Well, you finally made it," said Colonel Maxwell as he pinned the silver "Gunnery Wings" onto Lieutenant Gable's green uniform coat Wednesday morning, January 6. Photographers snapped the pose,

then Gable descended the platform for the Colonel to pin wings on the next graduate.

Smiling happily, Gable returned to the podium to address his fellow gunners. He expressed hope of seeing action soon exclaiming "I enjoyed the training program here. It's a very thorough course and the men who finish it are well equipped to do a grand job. They're a fine group of chaps, and they have blood in their eyes. They want to see action, and of course I would like to see action, too."

He was photographed admiring the wings of fellow graduate, Staff Sergeant James S. Simpson of South Hadley Falls, Massachusetts. At 5-feet 3-inches and 112 pounds, Sergeant Simpson was the smallest man in the class. One photograph was captioned, "Gable takes time out to pin the coveted wings to the blouse of a fellow gunner, Staff Sergeant James S. Simpson of..."

First Lieutenant Gable would be assigned to the 351st Bomb Group in England. During one of "five recorded combat missions," a crewman was killed and the heel of Gable's flight boot cut off. Sergeant Simpson would die in 1944. A marker was placed for him at West Street Cemetery, Granby, Massachusetts.

Master Sergeant Liddon was discharged March 30, 1943, and commissioned First Lieutenant as Maintenance and Supply Group Commander. He had been commissioned in the Army Reserve in March 1942, but remained a Master Sergeant to continue the duties of technical inspector.

June 5 the first detachment of the Women's Army Air Corps arrived. The 13 enlisted personnel and one officer were billeted in a new two-story barracks marked "Off Limits." Second Lieutenant Natalie W. Yates was commander and Mabel A. Pickett, First Sergeant. They were the first of 150 assigned.

In June it was announced that the famous B-17 "Memphis Belle" would visit Panama City.

August 5, thousands gazed into the sky just past noon as Major Robert P. Morgan and crew circled the "Belle" in low passes again and again over St. Andrew's Bay, then came in for a landing where Post Commander Lieutenant Colonel Jack L. Randall, Mayor Fannin and 500 cheering G.I.'s stood in front of parked B-17 Flying Fortresses received to train gunners. After addressing instructors and students, the crew were royally honored through most of the evening. The next day they flew to Buckingham Field, Florida.

A USO Club for colored soldiers was opened at the base August 12.

Approximately 61,000 flexible gunners were graduated at Tyndall between 1942 and 1945.

Tyndall Field was renamed "Tyndall Air Force Base" January 13, 1948.

Colonel Liddon retired in November 1957 and began as a salesman for Newt Tillman Chevrolet at Panama City. In 1960 he was elected mayor of Lynn Haven, serving until he resigned in 1968.

The Maritime Commission leased 112 acres at Sulfur Point owned by the Atlanta & St. Andrews Bay Railway. The railway company and the St. Andrews Bay Lumber Company Mill site, originally the site of the West Bay Naval Stores Mill, had been sold by the St. Andrews Bay Holding Company of the Keith Consolidated Company in the 1930s to the railway company's owner, International Paper Company.

The Commission signed a \$8,172,102 contract in late March 1942, with J. A. Jones Construction Company of Charlotte, North Carolina, to construct a shipyard of 6-ways and 69 buildings on 72 acres named "Panama City Ship Building Corporation." A total of 33 merchant vessels were to be built.

Residents learned of the yard when they unfolded the April 3 edition of the *Panama City News Herald*.

The company opened an office in the old First National Bank of Panama City Building, closed in 1931.

The J. A. Jones Company was organized in the 1890s. In the early 1930s the company built Albrook Field, Panama, Canal Zone, the hospital at Ft. Benning, and had contracts to build facilities at Ft. Bragg, Camp Shelby, Camp Rucker, Ft. Gordon and most other Army posts and airfields across the country.

The company built a spur for transporting materials to the shipyard commencing just north of today's West Thirteenth Street from the Atlanta & St. Andrews Bay Railway mainline, then northwest crossing West Fifteenth Street (west of Auto-Nation) to Lisenby Avenue, curving west behind Greenwood Cemetery, crossing Beck Avenue, then Michigan Avenue where Maritime Housing No. 2 was being expanded to the northwest, crossing Mound Avenue and paralleling north of West Twentieth Street before curving south within one mile to cross U.S. 98 to enter the yard. Within the shipyard designed by J. E. Serrine & Company of Greenville, South Carolina, were 6 sidetracks and 10 spurs. In accordance with a contract with the railway company, the railway would refund the J. A. Jones Company \$2 per loaded car handled on the spur, "which amount is applied to the cost of the track." After the refund was made for the entire cost of the

track, it would become the property of the railway company.

After the surrender of the Philippines May 6 by Major General Jonathan M. Wainwright, affectionally called "Skinny" since his days as First Cadet Commander at West Point, the company suggested to the commission that the shipyard be named for General Wainwright. The site was dedicated "Wainwright Shipyard" May 22. The shipyard newspaper was named *Wainwright Liberator*. Workers felt that their production would contribute to the "liberation of General Wainwright and the 70,000 soldiers, sailors and airmen imprisoned with him."

A vocational school was established at Panama Grammar School to train thousands of unskilled workers.

The first yard keel was laid July 9. When the 10,500 deadweight ton, 450 foot long, 57 foot beam "Liberty Ship" slid down the ways December 30, it was christened the *E. Kirby Smith* by Mrs. Raymond A. Jones, wife of the company's vice-president. Whenever a ship was christened, usually at 11:00 a.m., a sponsor and flower girl were present. The company had received a contract for 33 more Liberty Ships.

The Atlanta & St. Andrews Bay Railway received the 2 Alco S2 switchers in November, No. 1001 and 1002. The railway company had been notified that the Maritime Commission was requisitioning locomotives 901 to 903 in January 1943 for wartime service on the Trans-Iranian Railway. The railway company leased several coal and oil burning steam locomotives, and ordered 5 diesel locomotives.

By July 1943, the month with the most number of employees while the shipyard was operating, there were 14,154 employees. Approximately 1,300 were women. Wages were from \$.63 per hour to \$1.75. Bay County High School students were paid about \$9.10 per week as clerks and runners, about \$.22 per hour. The Federal government estimated there were 40,500 people at Bay County in July.

On the eve of her husband's birthday, Mrs. Adele Wainwright launched the *Victor Herbert* August 22 at 3 o'clock. It was one of the few launchings at Wainwright Shipyard opened to the public.

A contract was received for 8 vessels in October to transport boxed tanks. This was followed by a contract for 28 vessels to transport boxed aircraft.

In January 1945 a contract was received to build 6 oil tankers for Great Britain.

The first atomic bomb was detonated near Los Alamos, New Mexico, July 16, 1945. With Japan vowing to defend the home island to the last person, a lone B-29 Boeing Bomber dropped one atomic bomb on the military-base city of Hiroshima. Still the fanatical Japanese refused to surrender. A second atomic bomb was dropped on the naval-base city of Nagasaki August 9. The next day Japan sued for peace.

As everyone celebrated Monday, August 13, the 104th ship, the airplane transport carrier *Charles H. Cugle* slid down the ways at 11:00 a.m. Friday, the 105th ship, the oil-tanker *M.S. Tannaquil* slid down the ways at 11:00 a.m. She was the last vessel of the 6 tankers built for Great Britain and christened *Tancred*, *Tandora*, *Tannadice*, *Tantallon* and *Tannora*. The 5 tankers had been towed by tug to Beaumont, Texas.

Monday, August 20, 1,300 employees were laid off.

August 28, at 11:00 a.m., the airplane carrier *S.S. Robert A. Burns* was christened, and September 11, the airplane carrier *Edward W. Burton* slid down the ways.

The last ship, the 108th to be christened, was scheduled to be launched September 26. General Wainwright was invited to attend. Due to his physical condition following 4 years as a prisoner of war, he respectfully sent his regrets.

Wednesday, the airplane carrier *Ora Ellis* slid down the ways to join the *Edward W. Burton* and *M. S. Tannaquil* being trimmed out.

Thursday, January 17, 1946, as a small number of the Maritime staff remaining at the yard watched, the tug *Sands Point* towed the *M. S. Tannaquil* toward the pass to join the 5 other oil-tankers at Beaumont. The tankers were towed because no crews would be sent from Great Britain for the "lend lease" vessels. The shipyard had launched 108 vessels between July 42 and September 45; 66 Liberty Ships, 8 Army Tank Transports, 28 Boxed Airplane Carriers and 6 Oil Tankers.

Within days, the Wainwright Shipyard gates were chained and locked.

Two-story frame buildings at the site, built on the same plan as thousands of barracks buildings at army posts across the country, would be the first classrooms for Gulf Coast Junior College opened at the site in 1957.

The continued threat posed by German submarines to shipping in the Gulf and the approaching launching of the first merchant vessels from Wainwright Shipyard, warranted a Navy presence at St. Andrew's Bay.

For several months in the summer of 1942, area residents were aware of officials of the 8th Naval District and the Bureau of Yards and Docks with maps and charts visiting bayous at East St. Andrew's Bay. Small Navy craft, fueling at the Gulf Oil Refinery at the end of Frankford Avenue, were entering and exiting Alligator Bayou south of the Fons A. Hathaway Bridge. Property at the site extending south from U. S. 98 to about a quarter of a mile south of the bayou, had been purchased by the government from Lieutenant Colonel Hyndman, Daniel Sowell and William C. Holley, and "U.S. Government Property" signs posted. Several fishery companies and local boat owners had been approached with offers by Navy officers asking if they would rent vessels to be manned by sailors for patrolling the pass and Gulf beach.

Then, during the first week in November, it was announced that a \$775,000 Naval Section Base designed by Smith & Gillespie Company of Jacksonville, would be built on 373 acres at the site "as a shore station for convoy escort." The Hillyer & Loran Construction Company of Jacksonville was contracted to build roads and sidewalks, administration and barracks buildings, a dining facility, warehouses, power house, refrigeration storage, and out buildings on the north side of the bayou. A channel would be dredged in the bayou and a wharf built to replace an old fishing dock. Plans were made for a coast artillery battery of 3 guns at the pass entrance, and 4 observation towers built on the Gulf beach.

Thursday, April 22, 1943, the Wainwright Shipyard Band began a 30 minute concert at 11:00 a.m. as officials arrived for the commissioning of the base. Mayor Fannin, master of ceremonies, asked Rev. Frank Dearing to deliver the invocation at 11:30, then proceeded to introduce officers of the 8th Naval District who made short addresses, and Lieutenant Commander Virgil A. Smith, Commander of the Coast Guard detachment. As the National Anthem was played, the colors were raised. Captain R. J. Carstarphen turned "Panama City Naval Section Base" over to Lieutenant Commander William H. Henszey. Henszey read his orders, then turned the watch over to Lieutenant Raymond H. Luke, executive officer, who instructed Lieutenant Dwight W. Shaver, senior watch, security and maintenance officer, to put the 606 men manning the base and 3 assigned vessels to their duties.

A noon meal planned at the Cove Hotel was held in the base dining hall due to damage caused by a barge to the Fons A. Hathaway bridge.

By early 1944 there was no longer an immediate threat to merchant vessels in the Gulf. February 4, the base was re-designated "U. S. Naval Amphibious Training Base St. Andrews Bay." It would be a "shake-down training base for LST's, Landing Ship Tanks."

In June 1945, the base was inactivated and placed in a caretaker status while the Navy was surveying sites for research and development. The waters of the Gulf and types of bottom off St. Andrew's Bay were determined to be desirable characteristics for mine countermeasures research and development. "Bob" Sikes, the "influential northwest Florida Congressman for the military," convinced the Navy to reopen the base as the "U. S. Navy Mine Countermeasures Station." The station was approved July 20 and commissioned September 1.

As a defense against German submarines sinking tankers transporting vital oil along the Gulf and Atlantic coasts, the Office of the Petroleum Administration announced December 16, 1942, that a "coastal pipeline terminal" was approved at Panama City.

In early 1943, construction of a military oil terminal was begun with the greatest possible secrecy west of Lynn Haven.

The U. S. Army Corps of Engineers crossed Lynn Haven Bayou at the end of West Tenth Street to the peninsula of land east of Upper Goose Bayou known as Little Oyster Point, with a military railroad to the site designated for an oil storage and distribution terminal called an "Oil Farm."

From the mainline of The Atlanta & St. Andrew's Bay Railway (northeast of the junction of East Avenue and U.S. 231), the Army built the 5 mile military railroad northwest through Lynn Haven to the shores of North Bay. Lynn Haven Bayou was bridged for the railroad at West Tenth Street with spoil dredged south of the site from Lynn Haven Bayou and a canal dug along the north side of the West Eleventh Street right-of-way to Upper Goose Bayou to continue the exchange of water to the bayou.

On 193 acres surrounded by the bay and bayous, contractors erected 10 huge fuel storage tanks dismantled and shipped from Venezuela, South America. A 10 foot high square earth retaining dike was built around each tank. Four wood docks, each 750 feet long, supporting pumps, pipes and moorings for barges and tugs, were built into the bay to transfer oil from barges to the storage tanks.

A coal-fired boiler house, built of cement block with a tall metal chimney and conveyor, capable of generating 2,500 horsepower, was built to supply pumps, steam for heating oil in cold weather, and to build pressure in 2 locomotives at the site used to move 145 to 350 tank cars loaded 20 at a time in two and a half minutes per tank car. Eighteen side tracks, totaling 12 miles, provided for the loading of 120 cars at one time. The main track extended through a rear gate and paralleled the east shore of Upper Goose Bayou. A water tank and concrete reservoir, supplied by 2 wells with water-softening equipment, were east of the fire engine house, laboratory, and office. South of the loading area at a barren area filled from the bayou, 2 one-story barracks housed soldiers assigned for guard duty and operation of locomotives.

To handle waiting tank cars, the Atlanta & St. Andrews Bay Railway built a 7,464-foot side track, patrolled by soldiers, along the company's mainline at U. S. 231.

\$5,000,000 was expended to construct the "Panama City Oil Terminal" built by civilian contractors, supervised by Army engineers and financed by the Reconstruction Finance Corporation. A General officer arrived from Washington, D.C., the first week in September to inspect the terminal the morning the installation Army engineer reported it was completed. It was described as "the most modern and most flexible terminal in the world. The actual operation is of a nature to exhaust superlatives."

The U.S. Government contracted operation to General American Tank Storage Terminals, a division of General American Transportation Corporation of Chicago. M. F. Rumery of Chicago was Terminal Superintendent. Eighty-five employees were necessary to operate the terminal 24 hours each day, 7 days a week. Operation began Tuesday night, September 14 with the arrival of the first barges.

A fleet of assigned barges brought oil from Texas through the Army Corps of Engineers inter-coastal waterway. The Atlanta & St. Andrews Bay Railway was the first rail link in moving 225 cars each day filled with 9,000 to 12,000 gallons of "Navy Special Oil" to the U.S. Navy Petroleum Pool at Craney Island near Norfolk, Virginia. The average was 145 per day. Cars were returned for reloading every 6 days. Between September 1943 and August 1945, 58,954 tank car loads of oil were shipped from the terminal by rail.

There were no shipments by costly truck transportation which would have consumed indispensable fuel. The approach crossing the bayou had been built for rail transportation and access to the terminal.

Before wartime operation ceased August 9, 1945, plans were made to dredge a 27 foot deep channel in North Bay to access the terminal by ocean tankers.

The United States Air Force reopened the terminal July 21, 1949, for receiving and transporting high octane aviation gas and jet fuel by barge, rail and truck through a civilian contractor. Two fuel pumping areas were built to fill 4 trucks simultaneously.

My father and uncle worked on the Atlanta & St. Andrews Bay, or as they called it, "The Bay Line."

They told of numerous trips pulling passenger, special troop, freight, and solid trains of tank cars to and from Dothan. The Bay Line transported materials to and from the paper mill, to Wainwright Shipyard, the Tyndall Field warehouse terminal, and the Panama City Oil Terminal at Lynn Haven.

One month during the war, 390 trains were operated between Panama City and Dothan, 13 a day. At the time, the Bay Line had huge coal and oil fired steam locomotives. When it rained, the heavy engines and loaded tank cars were covered with mud as they rocked back and forth on the much traveled, 83 mile roadbed. As conductor, my uncle told of being ready to jump from the back of the caboose as he watched freight cars derail ahead. I tagged along to several wrecks with them over the years, most man made, caused by tampering with switches.

As a little fellow, I remember going to the depot at the end of West Sixth Street to board the train for Cottondale and being handed up to engineer, E. Marvin Hodges, in the cab of a hissing and rumbling locomotive, red clinkers falling from beneath. Marvin was a distant relative. Willie B. Carpenter usually sat as fireman. Others I remember were: engineers O. E. "Pop" Henderson, Tom Gaylord, and John L. "J. L." Grant; conductors Luke Mauldin, Jake Manor, and Jack Gaylord; and brakeman, Howard Pennington, a

distant cousin who would help clean-up Phenix City, Alabama, and later serve as mayor of Lynn Haven. Alex Mathis, Superintendent of Transportation, was a family friend from Henry County, Alabama. Our families had lived on opposite sides of Mathis Mill Branch near Tolbert Baptist Church since the 1850s.

January 1, 1947, the Bay Line was designated a Class I Railroad. The line was operating locomotives 1001, 1002 and 904 to 911, and had on order a 1500 horsepower General Electric EMD F-3 diesel-electric locomotive to be used for passenger service. It would be numbered No. 1501.

While attending Jinks Junior High School, I rode special passenger trains for students pulled by locomotive No. 1501 to Youngstown, then a school bus back to school. Passenger service was discontinued July 15, 1956.

During summer months, I rode locomotives pulling box and tank cars from the Bay Line's Sherman Yard, named for Walter C. Sherman, to the paper mill, "Texas Spur" at the Texaco terminal on Watson Bayou, the shipyard, and the oil terminal, blowing the whistle at every road crossing and signaling to the brakeman as cars were switched. I would step off the locomotive at Highway 77 on the return trip from the oil terminal and walk home.

While attending Gulf Coast Junior College, I and several school buddies worked at the oil terminal. We cut grass, spot painted pipes, loaded tank cars and trucks, climbed steep metal stairs to the tops of storage tanks to gauge for water, walked along pipes looking for leaks, cranked and drove one of two huge fire trucks (one wouldn't crank), and, on weekends, walked the grounds as night watchmen.

When a storage tank was cleaned and painted it was one less that watchmen were required to circle looking for leaks in the rain, wind or cold. Useable fuel was pumped off and the residue of water mixed with fuel discharged onto the ground about a tank. It became a dark rust colored smelly, sticky goo that sort of dried if it didn't rain. Flaking paint was sandblasted, the tank primed red or grey and repainted white.

I fished from the wood docks, of which only two were serviceable, and swam in the reservoir. Behind the fenced area towards Little Oyster Point, there were huge pecan, fig and persimmon trees. Tracks had been removed at the rear gate, but the overgrown railroad bed continued to the shore of Upper Goose Bayou where coarse gravel, the ballast for the track, and part of the roadbed was eroded into the water.

The day after the beginning of the "Cuban Missile Crisis" October 22 to November 20, 1962, I was called to work early the morning of October 23. There were tank trucks extending along West Tenth Street to Ohio Avenue, onto side streets, and around the perimeter of the terminal into the truck loading area. Tank cars lined side tracks to the entrance gate.

The loading of tank cars and trucks was carried on 24 hours a day. When I didn't have classes, I was pumping gas. At night, as "gate guard" I wore a bake-a-lite helmet and carried an ancient .32 caliber pistol.

The terminal closed in the 1980s. In recent years the U.S. Air Force wanted to create a military recreation facility at the site open to the public, but Lynn Haven city officials refused to participate and the acreage was donated to the city and a university for future development. In 2000 the track from the terminal to the main line at U.S. Highway 231 was overgrown. In February 2019, the rails were removed.

After the Second World War thousands of veterans returned to Northwest Florida. Many, who had first seen the area during their military service, had determined to make St. Andrew's Bay their future home.

At Tyndall Field, the Mine Countermeasures Station and the Petroleum Depot, the United States Government converted hundreds of regular tasks, once performed by airmen and sailors, to civilian status.

At St. Andrew's Bay, the Southern Kraft Panama City Mill, and the new employees at Tyndall Air Force Base and the Mine Countermeasures Station, provided the jobs to support new businesses, necessitating enlarged and new schools, and enhancing government.

Many who were employed as a result of this growth, or those who created jobs, moved their families to Bay County. They were "the last settlers" at St. Andrew's Bay.

I was one, arriving at Lynn Haven in the second grade, January 5, 1950.

References: *Territorial Papers Of Florida*; *Pensacola Gazette*; *St. Joseph Telegraph*; *St. Joseph Times*; *Floridian*; *West Florida Messenger*; *Panama City Pilot*; *Panama City News*; *Panama City Herald*; *Tyndall Target*; *Wainwright Liberator*; *The Bay Liner*; *Atlanta & St. Andrew's Bay Railway Reports*; *A History of Lynn Haven On St. Andrew's Bay*; and the *Archives of Jack O. Cutchens*

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July 2000 updated 2019

Clark Gable

The last week in November 1942, 2Lt William Clark Gable and his studio cinematographer-friend 2Lt Andrew J. McIntyre, reported for the 5-week flexible gunnery course at Tyndall Army Air Field.

Gable had refused a direct commission in the "First Motion Picture Unit" ordered organized by Lt General Harry H. "Hap" Arnold, Chief of the Air Corps. August 12, he had enlisted at Los Angeles as a private in the Army Air Corps and applied for Officer Candidate School at Miami Beach Training School, Fla. Maj General Walter R. Weaver, commander of the Southeast Air Corps Training Center, had ordered the school established February 12, 1942, at the Miami Beach School to train "all Air Corps officer candidates."

Candidates Gable and McIntyre were assigned to OCS Class 42-E August 17. The 19 to 36 age regulation was waved for 41 year old Gable to qualify for 13 weeks of intensive officer training: 7-days a week and 18-hour days. During the traditional haircut his mustache was shaved off.

They graduated October 27, commissioned 2Lt October 28 and ordered to report for flexible gunnery training at Tyndall Field.

Post Commander Warren A. Maxwell had explained that gunnery student Gable would receive "no special recognition" when he reported in or during training.

Gate guards told that there was quite a bit of "recognition and excitement" when he signed in at post headquarters.

Lt Gable was assigned to Class 43-1 administered by the gunnery school squadron nicknamed the "Gunner Makers." He was recognized by members of the class as "Brother Clark."

The 3-phase training schedule was rigorous; 6-day weeks and 12-hour days. Squadron calisthenics and running before breakfast; 50-minute classes; maintenance of equipment after supper followed by hours of study until "lights out" at 2200 hours (10:00 p.m.); and oral examinations, hands on testing, often at night to teach handling of weapons and equipment "in poor light conditions." Each Saturday morning the "traditional Army inspection" was conducted by class officers, then training continued until 1700 hours.

At the end of the second week of training a cook at the Apalachicola auxiliary field, called the "sub-station," asked Lt Gable how he wanted his eggs early one morning and he replied, "one up and one down." Night training began the third week.

The squadron scribe wrote: "Brother Clark never missed a night in town (possibly 5 Saturday nights to the Cove Hotel, or a Sunday dinner at Hotel-Dixie Sherman or Mattie's Tavern) until the weekend of graduation" January 4, 1943.

"Well, you finally made it," said Colonel Maxwell as he pinned the silver "Gunnery Wings" onto Lt Gable's service coat Wednesday morning, January 6.

Smiling, Gable addressed his fellow gunners. He expressed hope of seeing action soon exclaiming: "I enjoyed the training program here. It's a very thorough course and the men who finish it are well equipped to do a grand job. They're a fine group of chaps, and they have blood in their eyes. They want to see action, and of course I would like to see action, too."

He was photographed admiring the wings of S/Sgt James S. Simpson, 33, of Hadley Falls, Mass. At 5-feet 3-inches and 112 pounds, Sgt Simpson was the smallest man in the class.

Lt Gable would be assigned to the 351st Bomb Group in England. During one of "5 recorded combat missions" in a B-17 Flying Fortress, one crewman was killed, two wounded and the heel of Gable's flight boot cut off by shrapnel.

Gable was ordered to the United States in June 1944 as "over age." He was awarded the Distinguish Flying Cross and the Air Medal. Major William Clark Gable resigned his commission September 26, 1947.

Sgt Simpson, flexible gunner, died in 1944. A marker was placed for him in West Street Cemetery, Granby, Mass.

References: *Tyndall Target*; *Panama City News Herald* and the Archives of Jack O. Cutchens



Storytellers

From The Archives of Jack O. Cutchens
January 1999; updated April 2020; July 2021

There were inhabitants at St. Andrew's Bay who told "stories." Three "storytellers" have been of interest to me.

One told that General Andrew Jackson court-martialed British agents who were buried in unmarked graves at a lake (Court Martial Lake) in today's northern Bay County "when the storyteller lived in the area as a young boy." The storyteller wasn't born until 1826, eight years after the court-martial at Fort St. Marks April 26, 1818. He had lived at Sumter County, Georgia until about 1858, when he was first recorded on Washington County, Florida Tax Records.

He told that during the American Civil War he discharged the first shot of a bombardment to burn St. Andrews City from the *U.S.S. Restless* December 11, 1863. He told he was given the honor because he was a survivor of a party of sailors ambushed during the St. Andrews City skirmish March 19. He was a Landsman on the warship and the story may be true, but he wasn't named in precisely written after action reports.

He also told that years after the war ex-Confederate officers led by General William Miller, the hero of the Battle of the Natural Bridge, dug up the skull of Seaman Ralph B. Snow identified in the reports as killed in the skirmish and buried on the bluff, then used it "for target practice" during one of their "Sunday afternoon drinking parties." This tale was often repeated by "Cincinnati Boomers" of the 1880s who settled at the recently organized "City of St. Andrews."

One well known storyteller may have been the beneficiary of others who may have originated stories told of his "military service" and "longevity." It was related that during the Civil War he enlisted in the Federal Navy on the *Restless* and served for 14 years. If so, at the time of his enlistment he would have been about 10 years of age. When his name first appeared on U.S. Census records in 1860, he was 7. Also, guardians were required for those over 12. They were appointed by the court for his father, mother and older siblings in 1860. He wasn't named. His birth was listed on census records as or about 1853 until about the time of his father's death in 1902. Thereafter his birth was listed as 1841 or 1842. By 1930 it was 1840 and remained so until his passing. He was actually 13 years younger than the age listed at the time of his death. Older brothers, 17, 18 and 20, enlisted on the *Restless* in February 1864.

His next door neighbor visited the area in 1924, purchased the Henry Gainer home place from Henry's widow Eliza, commenced a home in 1925 painted green and white called "Beachwood," and moved to the area from Illinois. Attempts by the neighbor to obtain for him a Federal pension for Civil War service were unsuccessful.

The neighbor was the first commander of St. Andrew's Bay Camp No. 32 United Spanish War Veterans chartered June 5, 1930. Other charter members were H.M. Felix, M.B. Hawkins, J.H. Drummond, Roy Hodges, W.C. Sherman, Edgar F. Atherholt, Joseph Harrison, Bryan Maddox, and Irwin W. Birch who organized the camp in March.

The Spanish War, most often called the Spanish-American War, has been one of my favorite periods in history ever since I enrolled in a Latin American History class at Bay County High School in 1958. I wrote an assignment on the probability that businessmen and influential newspaper owners had the modern armored battleship *U.S.S. Maine* commissioned in 1895, blown-up to incite a war with Spain occupying Cuba and the Philippines. I received an "A" for content but a "C-" for writing. I had typed the report, the ribbon was worn-out, and, I didn't know how to type!

In later years the neighbor told that he "rode up San Juan Hill" with Colonel Roosevelt July 1, 1898. His "riding with Roosevelt's Rough Riders" was printed in the December 13, 1967 and July 27, 1974 issues of the *Panama City News Herald*. He told that "he fought in the Spanish-American War and rode with Roosevelt at San Juan Hill. He was in his senior year at military school when called into action. He got his commission at the end of the war."

Noting a picture (mentioned in 1974) "of him with Roosevelt where the General (Colonel) Roosevelt had his arm raised high in the famous gesture he always assumed (an illustrated charge on horseback which did not occur)," someone asked "if he (Roosevelt) rode to battle in that fashion." He replied "Heck No! If he had he'd have got his head shot-off. What saved us in that battle was a contingent of colored soldiers (10th Cavalry and 24th Infantry United States Colored Troops) moved up just at the right time to cut off the Spanish and saved the day for us."

I was attending Command And General Staff College at the time I read the article, and I was impressed. I believed that a local veteran who had ridden with Roosevelt, though a transplant, was worthy of recognition.

Written in the 1974 article was "his familiar tale of being at Kitty Hawk with the Wright brothers... I just lucked into being at the right place at the right time when those boys flew their first plane." He and Barney Oldfield, the famous auto racer "who wanted the brothers to build him a bicycle," bumped into each other and he urged him into going with him. "We got to see them put that plane in the air about three times."

I reread my notes for the "storyteller" riding up San Juan Hill and the Kitty Hawk flight while I was writing about

the establishment of Tyndall Army Air Field, and my original fascination and curiosity was aroused. I began to believe that I was reading a neat turn of a couple of tales.

Written in a sketch of the storyteller in a history of Kane County, Illinois, printed in 1908 was: "During his senior year (1898) at Pennsylvania Military College, he enlisted as a Private in Company B, 4th Wisconsin. Near the end of the war he stood for examination and was commissioned First Lieutenant... and with his command he was mustered out in 1899. He took a job with his father, President of the Elgin National Bank and owner of a cannery. In 1907 he was the dealer for Ford and Rambler automobiles." There was no mention of serving with the "Rough Riders" or a Kitty Hawk flight. He was enumerated in 1900 at Elgin as "Office Clerk," and not in the Army as he tells in 1953.

According to the history of the 4th Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry Regiment, the unit was organized June 30, 1898; mustered in at Milwaukee July 11 (10 days after the renowned charge up San Juan Hill); arrived at Camp Shipp (today the site of Ft. McClellan), Anniston, Alabama, September 17; and mustered out at Camp Shipp February 28, 1899. The unit, commanded by Colonel Horace B. Seaman, "never left Anniston." An Armistice had been signed with Spain August 13, 1898. The storyteller's name wasn't on the official roster for the "Rough Riders."

A member of the Chicago Motor Club, he was an organizer of the Elgin Road Racing Association organized May 13, 1910 to promote racing at his hometown of Elgin, Illinois. He was selected as "chief flagman." A driver for several years was legendary Barney Oldfield. A visitor to the town of Elgin in 1910 was Colonel Theodore Roosevelt.

In 1917 the United States Government recognized the Army was in need of trained "motor engineers." The Signal Corps Motor Mechanics was organized for the World War December 9. The storyteller, age 41, a successful automotive salesman, racer, mechanic and boat builder, was commissioned Captain in the special unit and assigned to the 3rd Motor Mechanics Regiment January 31, 1918, at Camp Hancock, Georgia. March 28 the unit was sent to Camp Greene, North Carolina. July 5 the unit was shipped to Romorantin, France. He was designated "technical expert," Air Division, Signal Corps, 3rd Motor Maintenance Regiment, Air Production Center No. 2 where aircraft were assembled. He was discharged with the unit April 15, 1919, as "Captain, Signal Corps, Special Order No. 177."

In 1953 the 50th Anniversary of the Kitty Hawk flight December 17, 1903, was planned for the week of December 14, at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. He appeared that day with his daughter, "a member pilot of the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association." He told a gathering of aviation enthusiasts, air force officials, and aviation industry representatives "he was one of the tiny band who witnessed with his own eyes several of the historic flights by the Wright brothers. He had just gotten out of the 'Army in 1903...' and had run into Barney Oldfield in Washington. They saw printed in one of the newspapers... that the Wrights had gone to Kitty Hawk for gliding experiments... It took us three days..." The story, printed in the December 15, 1953 *Chicago Tribune*, told that his daughter had heard of "her father's appearance at Kitty Hawk in conversation with him three months ago. All others hitherto known to have been present at the time, December 17, 1903, are dead. His story was not challenged by the Wright authorities here, altho many were puzzled by the fact Oldfield, also dead, never claimed to have seen early Wright flying."

Oldfield was a well known auto racer. While driving the "No. 999" June 20, 1903, a 1154 cubic inch racer designed by Henry Ford, he became the first person to travel a measured mile in one minute.

The first flight, December 14, resulted in Wilbur Wright making an adjustment to the elevator. The storyteller told "Oldfield made suggestions to the brothers relating to the elevator" and in 1967 told "I corrected a sticking valve which made the first flight a success." In 1969 he told a Pennsylvania Military College interviewer that they witnessed "3 flights on December 14." There was one attempt that day. Five named men witnessed the 4 flights December 17.

Camp No. 32 was disbanded March 15, 1932. March 3, 1937, the storyteller was mustered into Panama City Camp No. 37, United Spanish War Veterans organized July 25, 1936 at Stanton Hall just south of the G.A.R. Monument at Lynn Haven. His Spanish War service was recorded in the Camp Record: "Mustered In, Private, Co. B, 4th Wisconsin 1898; Mustered Out, 1st Lieutenant, 1899, Anniston." There was no entry for "Rough Rider" service. In 1938 the Camp was given the Johnson Drug Store Building, today Harry Jackson Lodge No. 314 F&AM.

The storyteller never resigned his 1898 to 1899 Lieutenant's commission, or the 1917 promotion to Captain, and, according to regulations pertaining to reserve officers, may have been administratively promoted to Major in the Officers' Reserve Corps, a rank he claimed and title he was "courteously addressed locally."

The Friends of the Pennsylvania Military College Association identified him as the "Storyteller," Class of 1899.

It has been interesting to ponder upon the "recollections" of these "storytellers." References: *Some Who Passed This Way* Hutchison Pages 186-188; *African-American Civil War Sailor Index 1861-1865*; *Washington County Florida Tax Records*; *Panama City Pilot*; *News Herald*; *Chicago Tribune*; *A History of Kane County*; *The 4th Wisconsin*; *Pennsylvania Military College*; *Ancestry.com*; *U.S. Censuses*

The First Military Societies At Bay County

Grand Army of the Republic - founded March 1866

Headquarters Post No. 40, for Federal Veterans of the American Civil War, was organized at St. Andrew's in 1889. "Comrades" assembled at St. Andrew's First Presbyterian Church. Private Joel Lipes, late of Company E, 30th Indiana Infantry, who died in 1894, was the first Post Commander.

Stanton Post No. 2 was organized July 4, 1911 to assemble with Ladies Circle No. 7, Grand Army of the Republic, chartered July 17 at Lynn Haven. The ladies built and owned Stanton Hall completed in 1912 one lot south of the Grand Army of the Republic Monument at "G.A.R. Park" dedicated February 12, 1921. Private Elias Stanton was the first Federal veteran of the Civil War to die at Lynn Haven.

Kimbell Post No. 39 was organized April 12, 1912 at Panama City. Comrades and Ladies Circle No. 39 assembled at Acme Lodge No. 222 Free & Accepted Masons Temple.

American Legion - founded March 16, 1919

The first Bay County serviceman to die in the World War was Lewis Thomas Lemieux of Southport, September 15, 1918 in France. Private Lemieux was a member of Company M, 3rd Battalion, First Florida Infantry, National Guard of Florida, organized at Millville. After the war he was interred in the Southport Cemetery. Beginning November 11, 1919 survivors of Company M met each Armistice Day.

The first American Legion Post at Bay County was St. Andrew's Post No. 66 organized May 1, 1920 at the Bay County Courthouse and chartered August 20 to assemble at St. Andrew's. In 1925 Post No. 66 was reorganized, dedicated and chartered July 13, 1926 to the memory of Corporal James Hileray McKnight who had enlisted in the U.S. Army from Noma, Holmes County, Florida. He died in France September 30, 1918. After the war he was interred in the Millville Cemetery at Millville where his parents had moved from Holmes County. Many area residents believed the Post should have been renamed for Private Lemieux. The Post assembled at Millville.

Roy Hett Post No. 56 was organized October 18, 1921 at Lynn Haven. It was dedicated in memory of Private Artie Roy Hett who died in France November 4, 1918. A native of Missouri, his mother, Mrs. Sallie Mallory, and his sister, Mrs. Mary H. Dickson, lived at Lynn Haven in 1920. Private Hett was buried in Bethel Baptist Cemetery, Clinton County, Missouri. The Post assembled at Stanton Hall.

Millville Post No. 83 was organized at Millville May 19, 1922.

United Spanish War Veterans - founded May 20, 1899

St. Andrew's Bay Camp No. 32 was organized June 5, 1930 to assemble at the Bay County Courthouse. The Camp was disbanded March 15, 1932.

Panama City Camp No. 37 was organized July 25, 1936 at Stanton Hall. In 1938 the Camp was given the Johnson Drug Store building, today Harry Jackson Lodge No. 314 Free & Accepted Masons Temple. A monument to Camp No. 37 stands on the front lawn of the Bay County Courthouse.

Veterans of Foreign Wars - created 1899 by Spanish War Veterans

Coley L. Sellars Post No. 2550 was organized April 30, 1932 in memory of Corporal Sellars, "Missing In Action". He was one of 470 who perished after the troop transport *HMS Otronto* was accidentally rammed by the *HMS Kashmir* off Scotland the morning of October 6, 1918. He was the son of John D. Sellars of Panama City. The title **Veterans of Foreign Wars** was decided upon in 1914.

Florida Army National Guard Association of Bay County

Organized in 2000 to "continue bonds established in the Florida National Guard". Lieutenant Colonel Leland "Lee" W. Singleton and wife Virginia Dean developed a roster of members, 1913-2000. The first muster for quarterly assemblies was January 2001 at the Ramada Inn Restaurant. The association established a museum in 2015 in memory of Lieutenant Colonel Singleton at the Brigadier General Hiram W. Sperry Armory. Gary Rodgers, George Mercer and John Roberson willingly assumed the Association's administrative duties. Prepared by: MAJ Jack O. Cutchens, USA (Ret) FLARNG.

