

CONTRIBUTOR COLUMN

To The Giddings News.
Leesville, Louisiana,
Aug. 3, 1942

Dear Mr. Bishop:

It gives me great pleasure to write to the Giddings News again, and we are now down here on the biggest Louisiana maneuvers that ever were made. This section is so hot that some days we don't know what to do.

Here is a story about Fort Sam Houston.

The old watch tower in the Fort Sam Houston quadrangle looks down once more on that government reservation as the U. S. is engaged in another war. The old tower has looked down on men preparing for the Spanish-American, and World War I. Again it stands tall and imposing as more soldiers than ever occupy the post.

The post today (Ft. Sam) crowded with the army's famed 2nd Division, which I am in, Eighth Corps area, and auxiliary troops, more than 25,000 men and 1,500 officers, is little like the small garrison of 15 officers and 142 enlisted men who established the fort 65 years ago. Growth of the fort has been steady. It has kept pace with the changing frontiers and conditions of the country to become the stronghold of the army in the Southwest.

In 1937 it became the largest military post in the United States, and likewise surpasses all present day army posts in beauty and tradition.

Work on the quartermaster depot, with buildings of natural rock, in what is now known as the "quadrangle" was started in August of 1876 on 40 acres of land donated to the Federal Government by the City of San Antonio.

When the depot was finished on Dec. 22, 1879, the army quartermaster department moved its equipment from the "Government Hill" as the new military station became known.

The following year, plans for the first of many future expansion programs were made. Work was started on a hospital and 15 sets of officers' quarters. The adjoining land was purchased and barracks, a gymnasium, a guard house (jail), and other buildings were built on what is now called the "Infantry Post," which I am in and am proud to be in it.

From its beginning, the post was the headquarters of the department of Texas. Following the war with Spain and up to 1910 various improvements, such as the cavalry and artillery posts were added and there are some Lee County boys in there now.

The Post Chapel was erected about this time from a \$50,000 fund contributed by citizens of San Antonio and army personnel. It was dedicated by President William Howard Taft.

The year 1911 saw the first major mobilization of manpower at Fort Sam Houston, when President Taft ordered preparations during border troubles with Mexico. About the same time, Lieut. Benjamin D. Foulois, later Major General Foulois, chief of the army air corps, and a small crew of men experimented at Fort Sam Houston with a Wright biplane.

Success of their experiments led to formation of the aviation section of the Signal Corps, construction of the first airplane of the Air Corps.

Mexican border trouble in 1916 brought the concentration

of thousands of soldiers at the post. This made necessary the construction of adjoining military areas designated as Camp Wilson and Camp Travis. Expansion continued until the Fort broadened into a National Army Cantonment.

There are a few girls from Lee County working in the supply depot, and it's really a nice place.

Now Fort Sam Houston is growing again in the present emergency, with new frame buildings springing up by the hundreds.

Named after the first president of the Republic of Texas, Fort Sam Houston stands today as one of the most modern army posts in the Nation, 3,000 acres sprawling under the Texas sun, and amply protected by the wings of the Nation's finest army air fields, Randolph, Kelly and Brooks Field.

So let us all do our part in buying bonds, and whip the Japs.

Be Loyal To Your Flag

"I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America,
And to the Republic
For which it stands,
One Nation, indivisible,
With Liberty and Justice for All."

If any of you people in Giddings want to write to me, I will be more than glad to hear from you all.

I remain as one of the News readers,

P.f.c. T. W. Gersch.

Co. H. 9th Inf., A. P. O. No. 2
c/o Postmaster, Leesville, La.