

Atterbury Presents Typical Picture Of Big Camp Approaching Death Bed

Vast Military Plant is Slowly Closing Up Shop.

BY ROBERT J. MARSHALL.

Camp Atterbury today presents the typical picture of a big Army camp approaching its death bed, gracefully, quietly. It is part of winding up a war.

The Hoosier Army installation hasn't gone down for the count yet, but its legs are wobbly.

Friday a group of representatives from nearby towns pushed their campaign to give the camp a new lease on life by holding a meeting with Indiana's U. S. senators and then touring the camp.

Atterbury apparently now has until Dec. 31—after that date its doctors can give it only a slim chance, although the camp is slated for at least part-time use by National Guard units.

From a distance the camp looks the same. Row after row of white buildings, sprawled over the landscape with broad expanses of green-covered earth between.

But closer inspection shows

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big blocks of the barracks standing unoccupied. Windows have vacant expressions and here and there a screen dangles loose from a casing. Row after row of buildings are weirdly silent. What a difference from the time they boomed with men, shouts rang up and down company streets, gun butts banged barracks' steps and sergeants barked orders to fall in.

Atterbury still gets good care. But an officer points out a few spots are bad because it is not now advisable to spend much money on their maintenance.

The tour group, sponsored by the inter-city committee heading the "Keep Atterbury" campaign, rode over Atterbury's smooth, hard-surfaced streets and viewed points of major interest. The bakery still turns out bread, but at a fraction of its peak. The laundry is at work—on only one shift, compared to three when the camp was full of men.

Temporary one-story buildings in the extreme west part of the cantonment area have been sold and are being torn down. An officer reports buildings in the former prisoner of war stockade also have been sold.

Buildings Unfinished.

Partly-finished buildings in the south end of the camp, which were under construction for the former Convalescent hospital, during the last days of the war are standing just as they were when work was suddenly halted following V-J day. Some may be sold for the materials they contain. The Reception center is in operation, processing new soldiers, but it, too, is well below peak.

At Wakeman hospital it is a different story. Here are 2,000 patients. Many are bad cases,

requiring utmost care. The touring visitors inspected treatment being given wounds of some men. Some patients said they would be going home soon. Others hoped to be out of Army hospitals by this time next year. But they still could grin. That is part of winding up a war, too,—win, lose or draw.

Wakeman is still big, still an outstanding Army hospital. Said Senator Willis, "If they do need more permanent hospitals, it would seem a shame to close this one."

Present Retreat Parade.

The tour of the hospital over, the group went to the flagpole south of post headquarters where the 798th Military Police battalion presented a retreat parade.

The 355th Army Service Forces band played and the 798th battalion came to present arms, a handful of men compared to thousands who marched across Atterbury's parade grounds before going off to battle.

A 75 mm. gun fired a salute and Atterbury's flag came down for the day. The battalion marched by the reviewing group. One who had been there many times before could almost see the ghost caissons and marching feet of the 83rd, 30th and 106th Divisions and 92nd Division combat team, their colors whipping in a brisk Atterbury breeze as the sun neared the horizon. But that was on another day, before Normandy, St. Lo, Hurtgen Forest, North Apennines and the Bulge.

A tasty supper snack at the Officers club following the retreat parade was an anticlimax, but all went home with determination to carry on the fight for Atterbury.

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