



# BUSINESS JOURNAL



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Part I of an Exclusive Two-Part Series

## Twelve Stand-Alone Fort Ord Chapels Have Potential to Inspire Tourism

By Kevin Dayton, Government Affairs Liaison



There are five remaining World War II chapels out of the original eight on Fort Ord. Clockwise from top-left: North Chapel, Tenth Street Chapel, Eighth Street Chapel, title block for the chapel blueprints, First Street Chapel, East Garrison Chapel.

Two generations have grown up since Fort Ord closed on Sept. 30, 1994. For many Monterey County residents and visitors, knowledge of the decommissioned U.S. Army base is limited to driving by dilapidated buildings and ruins.

Nevertheless, some older Monterey County residents vividly recall Fort Ord and the base closure at the end of the Cold War. Another group that remembers Fort Ord is the steady stream of older veterans who visit (often with family members) to recall their

training and service there.

There's not much to see. And there isn't an established group to guide and inform their explorations. People must create their own itineraries. Landmarks are missing,

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### Into the Ditch: Agricultural and Urban Drainage from the Lower Salinas Valley Contributes to Regional Water Solutions

By Kevin Dayton, Government Affairs Liaison

A cover story in the May 2025 Salinas Valley Business Journal explained how some City of Salinas industrial wastewater goes to the treatment plant of the Monterey One Water (M1W) regional wastewater agency.

Using the Pure Monterey Water Monterey/ Groundwater Replenishment Project (PWM/ GWR) facilities, M1W can recycle that industrial wastewater to produce Monterey Peninsula drinking water, Marina Coast Water District landscape irrigation water, and Castroville Seawater Intrusion Project (CSIP) agricultural irrigation water.

Chamber leaders have learned since publication of that article that many readers didn't know about the existence of the Salinas industrial wastewater conveyance and treatment system. Nor did they know that the M1W Regional Treatment Plant recycles City of Salinas industrial wastewater as well as City of Salinas municipal wastewater (sewage). A few asked if M1W recycles any other wastewater from Salinas.

In fact, Monterey One Water does recycle

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unrecognizable, or transformed. Even street orientation has changed.

As time passes, is there regional interest in creating a public-private partnership to develop cohesive tours of the former Fort Ord? With adequate funding and qualified professional leadership, this entity could prepare a guidebook (written by professional historians using credible sources) and install directional/way-farer signs and interpretive signs.

How would this entity organize tours for a general audience that's unfamiliar with Army military organization and has limited historical knowledge of World War II and the Cold War? One possibility is to revolve the tours around visits to sites of the original eight World War II chapels and the later four Cold War chapels.

This two-part series explains these 12 chapels and reveals what happened to them. For this month, Part 1 provides historical context and describes the eight World War II chapels.

Part 2 next month will describe the four Cold War chapels and clarify questions about other chapels. Part 2 will also reference sources and suggest topics for undergraduate and graduate-level papers, theses, and dissertations. Finally, Part 2 will propose an action plan for readers who believe these chapels offer a useful foundation for visiting Fort Ord to understand its role in regional, national, and world history in the 20th century.

### Historical Context of Military Chapel Construction for World War II

President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Selective Training and Service Act on Sept. 16, 1940, more than a year before the Dec. 7, 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor and the U.S. declaration of war on the following day. About 17 million young men were required to register for potential military service. In addition,

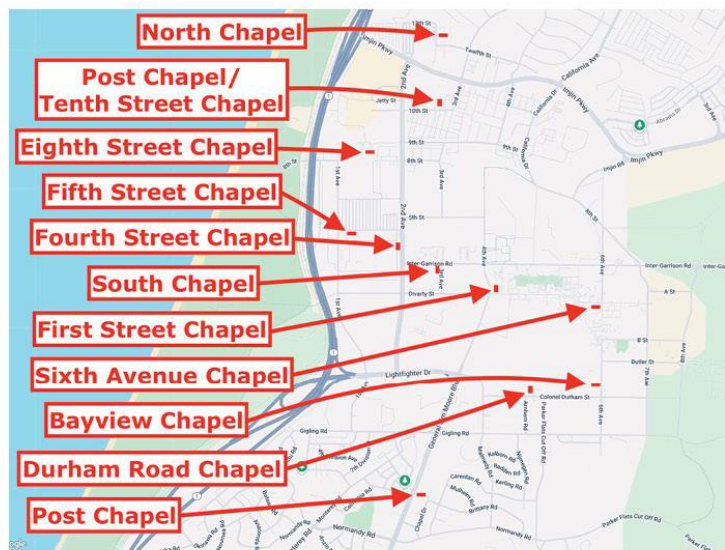
up to 900,000 young men were to be drafted at any one time for a year of compulsory military training and service. In response to this military conscription, the Army Quartermaster Corps began implementing a massive and speedy construction program.

Stand-alone chapels were not in the original Army plan for religious activities at military installations. It was assumed these would happen at recreation buildings and theaters. However, on March 17, 1941, President Roosevelt signed into law a supplemental defense appropriations bill that included the first funding intended for chapel construction. Three days later, the War Department announced a master plan to build 604 chapels in six months "where soldiers of the Protestant, Catholic and Jewish faiths may make their devotions in appropriate settings."

Army Chief of Chaplains Major Gen. William Arnold reportedly influenced the War Department decision to develop this plan and seek Congressional funding. He also reportedly oversaw design and construction to ensure chapels had a standard non-denominational appearance and stayed within budget parameters.

At the Fort Ord East Garrison Chapel today, an interpretive sign repeats a common but unsubstantiated assertion: "The Army was convinced to build a chapel with a traditional appearance by Eleanor Roosevelt, who believed it made a big difference to soldiers' morale." This claim invites more research into how the First Lady may have influenced World War II military construction.

At the opening of a chapel in Arlington, Virginia on July 27, 1941, Gen. George Marshall noted his intent to "have a clean army, morally and physically, and these chapels are very important contributions to that end." The Quartermaster General then spoke about chapel symbolism: "There is nothing in construction



Locations of the 11 World War II and Cold War stand-alone chapels built at the Fort Ord Main Garrison.

that could stamp it as so distinctively American...because only in a free country could you find a church built to be used for worship by Catholic, Protestant and Jew alike."

### Building Fort Ord Chapels

On April 25, 1941, the U.S. War Department announced plans to build chapels at Fort Ord. All chapels would include a \$1,000 electric organ. On June 2, 1941, the War Department Office of the Fort Ord Constructing Quartermaster advertised for bids for construction of numerous buildings, including eight chapels with 362 seats each. A partnership of two construction companies (Ford J. Twaits Company and Morrison-Knudsen Company) was already the general contractor for three previous contracts to build Fort Ord wooden structures, and this partnership was expected to submit another bid for this contract.

At many Army bases, including Fort Ord, building construction before World War II used Quartermaster Corps standardized cantonment (military camp) architectural plans called the 700 Series. The 700 Series had more than 300

building designs. Standardized construction plans for regimental chapels included series numbers 700-1800, 700-1801, 700-1802, and 700-1803. Fort Ord chapels were based on 700-1802 plans.

An original blueprint for the seven Main Garrison chapels (the East Garrison chapel not included) still exists.

Wood used was predominately Douglas fir from Oregon. Reportedly the local T.A. Work Lumber Company was among the companies involved in wood supply and preparation for Fort Ord construction. This company operated a facility in Monterey where rough-cut, seasoned lumber from sawmills was processed into finished, dimensioned lumber.

The U.S. Army organized a "V-for-Visitors Day" at Fort Ord on Oct. 19, 1941. This event was claimed to be "the first occasion since the start of national defense activities that the general public has been invited to a major cantonment to learn how the soldiers live." The public was invited to "ride in jeeps to barracks, mess halls, recreation halls, chapels and service clubs" and "visit one or more of the seven chapels."

## History of the Eight World War II Chapels and Their Fates

Five of the eight World War II chapels still exist: two within Marina city limits, two within Seaside city limits, and one in the East Garrison community of unincorporated Monterey County. Primary names listed below for the chapels were their “permanent designations” established after World War II began. However, they were also referenced by other names — especially in the 1960s — often in association with military units housed in proximity to them.

Each chapel was also assigned a distinct Fort Ord building number that was retained until the base closed. The “T” prefix for World War II chapels means temporary; the “P” prefix for later Cold War chapels means permanent.

### 1. Fourth Street Chapel (Building T-1817)

Known as the 53rd Infantry Chapel when built, later called the Infantry 1 Chapel.

(Former location: West side of Second Avenue, south side of Fourth Street in what is now the City of Marina.)

Dedicated on Oct. 26, 1941, this chapel was eventually used by the 4th AIT (Advanced Individual Training) Brigade, 7th DIVARTY (Division Artillery), and 127th Signal Battalion. It was decommissioned on Sept. 6, 1993. Along with 15 other buildings, it was demolished in 2003 under a Fort Ord Reuse Authority (FORA) contract to prepare a right of way for the 2nd Avenue Widening Project.

### 2. Fifth Street Chapel (Building T-1885)

Known as the 32nd Infantry Chapel or Infantry 2 Chapel when built, later known as Fifth Street CDEC (Combat Developments Command Experimentation Command) and as DISCOM (Division Support Command) Chapel.

(Former location: South side of Fifth Street between First Avenue and Second Avenue in what is now the City of Marina.)

First morning worship at this chapel was on Oct. 12, 1941. It was decommissioned with a service on July 26, 1993. In 2005, the City of Marina entered into a development agreement that included the transfer of a land parcel, including this chapel, to a private developer, Marina Community Partners/Shea Homes. The developer removed the deteriorated chapel in late 2022 as part of wide-scale demolition in preparation to build Phase 3 of The Dunes.

### 3. Eighth Street Chapel (Building T-2229)

Known as 17th Infantry Chapel and the Engineers Chapel when built, later known as 3rd Brigade Chapel and then as the Former 3rd Brigade Chapel, now sometimes called the First Chapel.

(Current location: South side of Eighth Street roundabout in what is now the City of Marina.)

This was the first completed chapel at Fort Ord. A groundbreaking ceremony was held in early July 1941, with four battalions of the 17th Infantry standing at attention for the turning of the first shovel of dirt. It was opened and dedicated at an outdoor ceremony on Sept. 25, 1941 in front of hundreds of soldiers and members of the public who responded to a general invitation to attend.

It was decommissioned on March 2, 1993. Today the Eighth Street Chapel is owned by the City of Marina, which acquired it in 1998 from the U.S. Army through the National Park Service (NPS) Federal

Lands to Parks Program. This transfer requires public community uses for the chapel. It sat seemingly neglected among deteriorated barracks for a couple of decades and inspired grassroots community efforts to save it from ruin. Marina Community Partners/Shea Homes recently demolished the barracks that surrounded this property, and the City of Marina plans to renovate it into a community meeting room if it gets funding.

### 4. South Chapel (Building T-1599)

Known as Special Troops Chapel when built.

(Former location: South side of Third Street, west side of Third Avenue in what is now the City of Seaside.)

*‘On March 17, 1941, President Roosevelt signed into law a supplemental defense appropriations bill that included the first funding intended for chapel construction. Three days later, the War Department announced a master plan to build 604 chapels in six months.’*

This chapel opened on Oct. 12, 1941. By the 1960s, published schedules of base worship services no longer mentioned this chapel. A 1986 aerial photo of Fort Ord shows the South Chapel still at its original location, but by the time Fort Ord was preparing for closure, there are no documented records of its presence. It’s likely the Army demolished the chapel in 1987, when Third Street was closed for realignment between Second Avenue and Third Avenue. New buildings were subsequently constructed at that location and then demolished. In 2007, the Monterey Peninsula College Child Development Center was built in that general area.

### 5. Post Chapel (Building T-2661)

Known as the Medics Chapel or the First Medical Chapel when built, later known as the 10th Street Chapel (rather than the Post Chapel, likely because of the opening of the

new Post Chapel Center in 1958), still later known as the Patton Park Chapel.

(Current location: North side of 10th Street between Second Avenue and Third Avenue in what is now the City of Marina.)

This chapel opened on Oct. 12, 1941. It was the chapel designated for a racially segregated service at 11:00 a.m. on Sundays. (Fort Ord was the first U.S. military facility integrated by the federal government, but that was in 1948.) On April 14, 1970, clergy from the San Francisco Bay Area protesting the treatment of Fort Ord Stockade prisoners held a service in this chapel, “liberated” it, and dedicated it to St. Maximilian of Tebessa, a patron saint of conscientious objectors.

It was decommissioned on July 5, 1993. Goodwill Industries acquired this chapel in 1997 through a public benefit conveyance, along with the neighboring Red Cross Building and a garage, for use as its Shoreline Training Center. Today Goodwill has a memorandum of understanding with the Central Coast Baptist Church for use of the chapel.

### 6. North Chapel (Building T-2878)

Known as the 19th Engineers Chapel when built, later used as an administrative building.

(Current location: East side of Second Avenue between 12th Street and 13th Street in what is now the City of Marina.)

The North Chapel opened on Oct. 12, 1941. In 1969, this chapel was still used for religious purposes, but at some later date it became an administrative building in an area known as CDEC Hill (referring to the Combat Development Experimentation Center). Its proximity to the base’s administrative headquarters buildings may have inspired a change in its function. A 1994 report categorized its function as “Administration General Purpose” and a 2003 report labeled it as the Lightfighter Conference Building.

Monterey Peninsula College

(MPC) acquired the chapel in 2004 as part of a land conveyance from the Army. (The MPC Marina Education Center, established in 2011 and now known as Monterey Peninsula College, Marina Campus, is nearby.) The college currently uses the building for storage.

## 7. First Street Chapel (Building T-1136)

Known as the 76th Field Artillery or Division Artillery Chapel when built, later known as the Jewish Chapel and then the DIVARTY (Division Artillery) Chapel.

(Current location: 3040 Divarty Street in what is now the City of Seaside, on Cal State University Monterey Bay campus.)

This chapel was dedicated on Oct. 26, 1941 and decommissioned with a service on April 28, 1993. It was then transferred to California State University Monterey Bay through a land conveyance and now serves as a meeting house for the college as Building #98.

## 8. East Garrison Chapel (Building T-135)

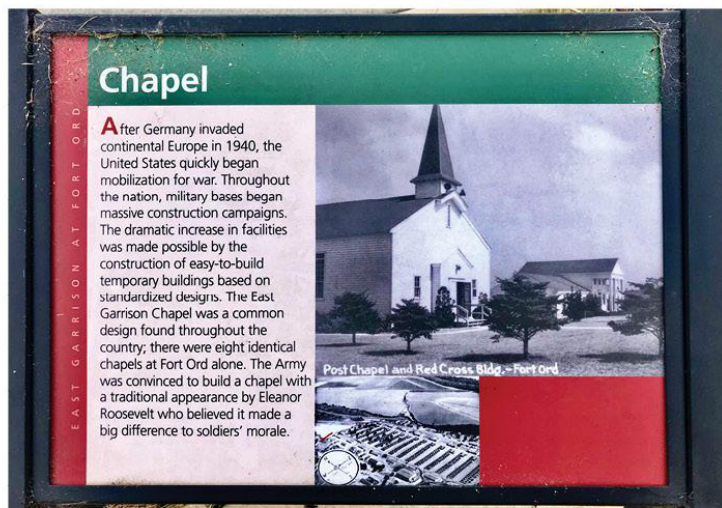
(Current location: Northeast corner of East Garrison Drive and Kit Carson Drive in the East Garrison community of unincorporated Monterey County.)

Four miles east of the Main Garrison, the Army built the East Garrison and included a chapel. Opening on Nov. 2, 1941, it was the last of the eight World War II chapels to be completed.

The now-dissolved Fort Ord Reuse Authority (FORA) acquired East Garrison from the U.S. Army and transferred it in 2005 to the County of Monterey. A 2004 staff report to the Monterey County Planning Commission stated that "The chapel will be used as a Vision Center and house a historical interpretive exhibit while the community builds out and can be used as a non-denominational facility for the community." In 2005, the County of Monterey Specific



Location of the World War II stand-alone chapel built at the Fort Ord East Garrison.



Educational interpretive sign at the East Garrison Chapel.

Plan, which identified the chapel as a structure to be "retained and enhanced."

The County of Monterey then entered into an agreement with East Garrison Partners for development of the site. After East Garrison Partners defaulted on its loan obligations in 2009, Union Community Partners acquired the site. In

2018, Union Community Partners completed a merger with Century Communities, which now owns the chapel. The East Garrison Chapel remains unused and fenced off. The historic photo included on the interpretive sign at this chapel shows the Post Chapel/10th Street Chapel and not the East Garrison chapel.

In 2012, the Monterey County

Board of Supervisors, following a recommendation from the county's Historic Resources Review Board, added the East Garrison Chapel to the Monterey County Official Register of Historic Resources. This is the only Fort Ord chapel with government-recognized historic status. This 2012 historic designation is separate from the 2006 Board of Supervisors designation of the "East Garrison Historic District at Fort Ord."

Other than these two county historical designations and the 2014 addition of the Fort Ord Station Veterinary Hospital to the National Register of Historic Places, no other Fort Ord building has official historic status.

In the next issue, Part 2: Cold War chapels, other chapels related to Fort Ord, potential student paper topics related to the chapels, and an action plan to use the chapels to promote tourism.

To submit questions, corrections, and additional information about these chapels, or to request source material, contact Kevin Dayton at (831) 869-6592 or by email at Kevin@salinaschamber.com. 📧