

Salinas Valley CHAMBER OF COMMERCE BUSINESS JOURNAL



The Blues are Back!
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From left to right: Councilwoman Margaret D'Arrigo, Chevron Representatives Chanel Jolly and Maureen Wruck, MCEI Representative Sara Gong, and Monterey County Sheriff Tina Nieto.

Salinas Valley Cities Seek Opportunities for Their Next Generations

Your Chamber Wants to Help

By Kevin Dayton, Government Affairs Liaison

Chamber leaders and members regularly notice that this organization's name is the "Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce." It's not just for the City of Salinas.

As the most populous city in Monterey County (by far), the City of Salinas of course commands attention from your Chamber.

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Part II of an Exclusive Two-Part Series

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

By Kevin Dayton, Government Affairs Liaison

This two-part series explains the 12 stand-alone Fort Ord chapels and reveals what happened to them. Part 1 last month (in the August issue) provided historical context and described the World War II chapels. Part 2 this month describes the Cold War chapels and clarifies questions about other chapels often associated with Fort Ord. It also suggests topics for undergraduate and graduate-level papers, theses, and dissertations. Finally, Part 2 considers an action plan for readers who believe these chapels offer a useful foundation to visit Fort Ord and understand its role in regional, national, and world history in the 20th Century.

History of the Four Cold War Chapels and Their Fates

Fort Ord remained a major Army base after World War II. On May 17, 1952, the Army dedicated Fort Ord



All four Cold War chapels still remain on Fort Ord as of the summer of 2025, although one is scheduled for demolition and another has been boarded up for years. Clockwise from top-left: Sixth Avenue Chapel, Bayview Chapel, Post Chapel, Durham Road Chapel.

as a permanent post, at a time during the Korean War when 30,000 troops were stationed there. Del E. Webb Construction Company had won a massive contract to convert the base into permanent facilities. Additional Fort Ord building complexes were constructed before and during

the Vietnam War and into the mid-1970s.

During this time, the Army built four permanent chapels in the Mid-Century Modern architectural style. All four still exist within the City of Seaside, although one is now scheduled

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for imminent demolition.

1. Post Chapel (Building P-4280)

Part of the Post Chapel Center, also known as Main Chapel and later known as the Ord Military Community Chapel.

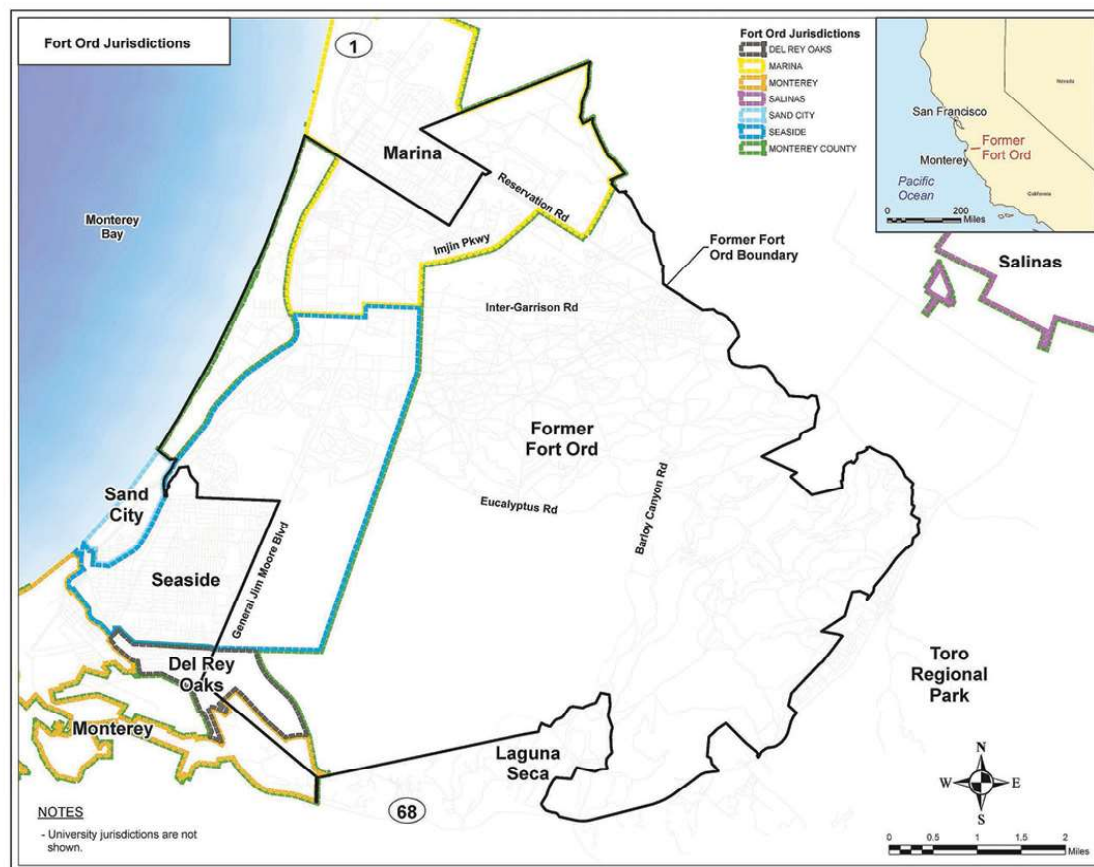
Current Location: 4280 General Jim Moore Blvd. (formerly North-South Road) in what is now the City of Seaside

In 1955, Congress approved spending for a new large Post Chapel. As part of a contract that included new housing and other structures, the Post Chapel was built in 1958 by Riverside-based Army Corps of Engineers contractor Sun Gold, Inc. and Inland Empire Builders, Inc. It was dedicated on July 8, 1958. Various sources claim it was the largest U.S. Army chapel at the time, with capacity of 700 people in the main sanctuary.

After Fort Ord closed in 1994, the Ord Military Community (a surviving remnant of Fort Ord) continued worship services and religious gatherings at the Post Chapel. The Army ended services at the chapel in 2018 and ended all religious meetings there in 2019. The Army also declared the chapel unavailable for lease.

At the time, there was public outcry about the fate of Post Chapel records and interior decorations and furniture, as well as concern that the Army would outright demolish it. The Army in 2019 moved the stained-glass windows to the U.S. Army Institute for Religious Leadership (USA-IRL) at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. The steeple was removed in 2020.

In the early 2020s, the Army announced plans to convert the chapel into a Presidio of Monterey Fire Department (POMFD) facility for the Ord Military Community, as the City of Seaside planned to demolish the existing POMFD fire station at 4400 General Jim Moore Blvd. to make way for the future Campus Town



Boundaries of the former Fort Ord in relation to local government jurisdictions, from a map on the U.S. Army Fort Ord Cleanup website.

development. However, in 2024, the City of Seaside amended its agreement with the Campus Town developer, thus allowing the City of Seaside to retain ownership of the fire station leased by the POMFD. The City of Seaside suggested that the Army could offer use of the chapel for a "cultural museum and arts center." As of today, the Post Chapel remains boarded up.

2. Sixth Avenue Chapel (Building P-3701)

Also known as the 3rd Brigade Chapel or 9th Regimental Chapel.

Current Location: 5270 Sixth Ave., in what is now the City of Seaside, on Cal State University Monterey Bay campus

In addition to providing funding

to build the Post Chapel, Congress provided funding in 1955 to build the first of what was originally planned as two new regimental chapels. The Sixth Avenue Chapel was designed for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers by John Carl Warnecke, who designed numerous prominent Modernist buildings that remain landmarks in the United States today. Chapels with this design are still extant at other bases, and the Durham Road Chapel (described below) has this design.

The Sixth Avenue Chapel was built in 1958 and often identified as the Third Brigade Chapel. After decommissioning with a service on July 9, 1993, it was converted into a building for California State University Monterey Bay. Originally called the

Teledramatic Arts and Technology Building, the chapel building is now called the Cinematic Arts and Technology Building (Building 27). The steeple was removed in 2002.

3. Durham Road Chapel (Building P-4483)

Also known as Durham Chapel and the Aviation Brigade Chapel.

Current Location: 2699 Colonel Durham St., in what is now the City of Seaside

Built in 1970 as part of a base expansion complex of 27 buildings, this chapel served Headquarters Command / Combat Development Command. Its design is the same as the Sixth Avenue Chapel, although photos show a round window on the Sixth Avenue Chapel steeple

and a rectangular window on the Durham Road Chapel steeple. (Both steeples have been removed.) A decommissioning service for the chapel occurred on June 8, 1993. It was transferred to the City of Seaside as part of a public benefit conveyance.

In 1999, the Christian Memorial Community Tabernacle Church began using the chapel. In 2018, after seven years of trying to get the church to vacate, the City of Seaside sued the church to force it to leave. The city contended the church never had a lease to use the chapel and never paid the city to use it. After reaching a settlement agreement with the city, the church moved out by the end of 2018.

The chapel has been vacant and boarded up since then. During COVID-19 public health orders in 2020 and 2021, the Seaside City Council allowed people living in vehicles to park overnight in the chapel parking lot. A staff report to the Seaside City Council, dated Sept. 17, 2020, reported 32 vehicles using the lot.

On July 17, 2025, the City of Seaside awarded a bid for demolition of some Fort Ord structures, including the Durham Road Chapel, to prepare for the Campus Town development. During his presentation to the City Council, the Public Works Director observed that "staff has trouble securing" the chapel, with "many break-ins over time." As typical with Fort Ord structures, demolition includes lead and asbestos abatement.

4. Bayview Chapel (Building P-4426)

Also known as the Bay View Chapel, the 2nd Brigade Chapel, and the 9th Regiment Chapel.

Current Location: 3220 Sixth Ave., in what is now the City of Seaside, on Cal State University Monterey Bay campus

Opened in November 1977, the Bayview Chapel was the last of the 12 stand-alone chapels built at Fort



Saint James Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church at 285 Calle Cabu in Salinas is indeed a World War II U.S. Army chapel, but it was relocated from the Salinas Army Air Base, not Fort Ord.

Ord. Photos of the chapel when it was operational appear to show bells in the tower.

On July 29, 1986, a dedication service was held at this chapel for a stained-glass window relocated from South Korea. It depicts an American soldier kneeling in prayer facing the Imjin River and surrounding mountains. This window was originally installed in 1953 during the Korean War in the South Post Chapel of Camp Casey, at what is now U.S. Army Garrison (USAG) Yongsan-Casey near the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). The U.S. Army 7th Infantry Division was at Camp Casey during the Korean War. In 1974, it reactivated at Fort Ord. When the Army scheduled the South Post Chapel for demolition and replacement in the mid-1980s, the window was shipped to Fort Ord and repaired, framed, and installed by volunteers.

A decommissioning service for this chapel was held on June 16, 1993. It was used in 1995 to host larger Cal State University Monterey Bay university meetings and then

was converted into the university's Music Hall (Building 30). Further research would be needed to determine the fate of the stained-glass window and tower bells.

Other Chapels Often Associated (Rightly or Wrongly) With Fort Ord

Stockade/Confinement: Two chapels were in the Main Stockade Building (Building P-4953). One was on the first floor in the building built in 1953 that replaced the original 1941 stockade. It was described in a newsletter of the contractor Del E. Webb Construction Company as "attractive in its simplicity, featuring artistic wood paneling." A Stockade Annex Chapel was later built on the second floor of an additional wing. Listings for religious services in the 1970s identified a Stockade chapel as "Confinement."

Health Care Facilities: There was a chapel in the old Army Hospital (Ward D-14) and then in the Silas B. Hayes Army Community Hospital (Building P-4385), opened in 1971. The Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division Building (Building T-3051)

reportedly also had a chapel.

1st Brigade Chapel: It appears that Building P-4438 on the southeast corner of Durham Road and Sixth Street may have been used as the 1st Brigade Chapel in early 1960s. This was no longer the case a few years later. When Fort Ord closed, the building was described as a "Battalion Headquarters Building." The building has been demolished.

Young Nak Presbyterian Church of Monterey: This church operates at 235 10th St., in the City of Marina, next to the former Tenth Street Chapel. It does not occupy a former Fort Ord chapel. Rather, the church entered into an agreement with the City of Marina in 1999 to reuse abandoned Fort Ord properties on Eighth Street and Second Avenue, including a General Instruction Building (Building T-2233) for reuse as a chapel and a Calibration Facility (Building T-2217) for reuse as an educational building. The church made an agreement with the City of Marina in 2003 to purchase empty land at 235 Tenth St., and move those two buildings to that location. In 2005, the Fort Ord Reuse Authority (FORA) transferred the property to the City of Marina. The church was then able to obtain the parcel and move the two buildings.

Presidio of Monterey Chapel: The Army Presidio of Monterey is located about nine miles south of Fort Ord in the City of Monterey. It has a non-denominational chapel (Building 325, at 324 Stilwell Road) built at the same time (1941, just before World War II) in the same Series 700-1800 design as the Fort Ord chapels. Minor exterior changes have apparently been made to the chapel, such as new windows above the front entrance. That chapel is used today. It also has an annex (Building 325) used for religious purposes.

St. James CME (Christian Methodist Episcopal) Church in Salinas: Located at 285 Calle Cebu

in Salinas, this is indeed a former World War II Army chapel with the same design as the Fort Ord chapels. However, it does not originate at Fort Ord.

This chapel was built at the Salinas Army Air Base and dedicated on April 2, 1944. In 1947, after World War II ended, the War Assets Administration declared this chapel to be surplus (along with the entire base, which is now Salinas Municipal Airport). Choosing among many proposals to buy the chapel, the Army Chief of Chaplains determined based on need to sell the chapel to St. James CME in Salinas for \$2,900. (It was built at a cost of \$18,633). The church pastor, Rev. J. E. Young, announced that St. James CME was about to lose its church location and it would move the chapel to land it had purchased on Calle Cebu.

Santa Rita Chapel in Salinas:

Although it may resemble a World War II Army chapel (or even an old schoolhouse), the Santa Rita Chapel on 2215 North Main St. in Salinas (north of the Northridge Mall) was not moved to its location from Fort Ord or any other Army base. Also known as Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe, it appears to have been built and dedicated as a Roman Catholic church in 1911. The Diocese of Monterey still owns it.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to Marshall A. Yokell, Archivist of the Command History Office of the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center (DLIFLC) of the Presidio of Monterey, for providing guidance on key documents related to Fort Ord chapels.

For Students: Potential Topics for Papers, Theses, and Dissertations

1. What reasons were offered publicly and internally within the military and Roosevelt Administration to build chapels for World War II and the Cold War? Is there evidence that

these chapels were meant to reassure the public — especially parents — that America's young men would not go astray from God while in military service?

2. Did these chapels have meaning for the average Fort Ord soldier? Did this meaning change for soldiers over time, from 1941 to base closure in 1994? Were sermons at chapels oriented toward a universal audience (with topics such as "the power of positive thinking") or were the chapels evangelical and oriented toward creedal, doctrinal ideas of salvation and morality? Were any soldiers deeply influenced by chaplains assigned to these churches? What are their stories? What did non-religious soldiers think about chapels on the base?
3. Does First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt deserve major credit for inspiring the construction of these chapels, or is that a modern historical misinterpretation? What role did she play in the design and order of World War II military bases?
4. Can a list be compiled (based on substantiated records) of all couples married at the Fort Ord chapels? Under what circumstances did these marriages occur? Similarly, can a list be compiled of all individuals who
5. Based on symbolism, function, aesthetics, architectural interest, and general community interest, the Fort Ord chapels seem to be special and significant. But many were left empty and allowed to deteriorate after Fort Ord closed. What were the reasons for that? And more generally, why was it concluded during the closure process that so few Fort Ord buildings (including the chapels) would have any historic interest or value?
6. In 1947, the Army declared unused World War II chapels as surplus and sold them at relatively low cost to churches that needed buildings. (St. James CME Church in Salinas is an example.) From 1994 to today, there were surely local churches that would have eagerly sought opportunities to lease Fort Ord chapels or move them to another location nearby. (In fact, it appears a church may have simply moved into one of the chapels after it was vacant for five years.) Why didn't community leaders and the Army pursue such a reuse plan?

underwent religious ceremonies (baptism, Bar/Bat Mitzvah, etc.) at the chapels? Would such a list be a valuable resource for those couples and individuals who are still living — and their descendants?

7. Why are paper and electronic materials about the Fort Ord chapels so often incomplete, inconsistent, and inaccurate? Would Army records from paper boxes stored away in warehouses reveal complete stories about these chapels? (Chaplain records and recollections may be the best sources for such a project.) Would it be feasible to obtain, consolidate, and catalogue historical material about the chapels, perhaps in conjunction with a larger project for Fort Ord historic material as a whole?
8. When considering the function of Fort Ord in its time and the occasional tragic and unsettling incidents that occurred at the base over half a century, some people question why any of it should be preserved as a historical site. Has enough time passed for a balanced, thoughtful historical perspective on Fort Ord?

Action Plan for Tourism Based on the Fort Ord Chapels

Please contact Kevin Dayton at (831) 869-6592 or at kevin@salinaschamber.com to do the following:

1. Provide additional or corrected information about these 12 chapels that the public may find interesting and useful.
2. Get involved in an action plan to develop a chapel-based tour itinerary and install wayfinding and accurate interpretative signs at the chapel sites.
3. Get involved in an action plan for historical preservation of the remaining chapels that aren't already in advanced decay.
4. Get involved with an action plan for preserving documents about the chapels and making those documents accessible and understandable for the public.
5. Provide ideas on funding sources to implement action plans related to Fort Ord tourism. 🌱



Locations of the four Cold War chapels at the former Fort Ord.