



106 SUCCESS STORY

Montford Point Camp Shares History of First African American Marines Camp Lejeune, Jacksonville, North Carolina

“The consultation ... was instrumental in strengthening Camp Lejeune’s relationship with the Montford Point Marine Association, and has resulted in the formation of close working ties and a closer bond with the Association ... furthering the recognition of the significant role that the Montford Point Marines have played in our U.S. Marine Corps and our nation’s history.”

— RICK R. RICHARDSON
base archaeologist and cultural resources program manager,
Camp Lejeune



THE STORY

Prior to World War II, African Americans were not allowed to participate on a basis of equality in the armed forces of the United States. On June 25, 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued an Executive Order establishing fair employment practices to erase discrimination in the armed forces. In 1942, he followed with a presidential directive giving African Americans the opportunity to join the U.S. Marine Corps. Segregation was the established practice and policy of the time, and Montford Point Camp (later renamed Camp Johnson in honor of a distinguished alumnus) was built at Marine Corps Base (MCB) Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, to train African American recruits separately from existing Marine boot camps. The first 1942 facilities were temporary frame construction with 108 portable huts. With the 1943 draft, Montford Point Camp became the recruit depot for mustering African American troops. The rapid mobilization required new facilities, which were constructed of tile block with stucco veneers, most of which still can be seen today. In July 1948, President Harry S. Truman issued Executive Order 9981 mandating the end of segregation in the armed forces, resulting in deactivation of Montford Point Camp. Montford Point Camp Historic District I and Camp Nos. 2/2A were determined to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places in 2000.

THE PROJECT

In 2001, the Marine Corps planned a new consolidated academic instruction facility at Camp Johnson. Its construction as originally planned required demolition of three buildings associated with the early World War II segregationist years of the Montford Point Camp.

THE 106 PROCESS

The Marine Corps carried out this project under the National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 process. Section 106 requires federal agencies to identify historic properties and assess the effects of the projects they carry out, fund, or permit on these properties. Federal agencies also are required to consult with parties that have an interest in the

Photos from left: View of the two sides of the Congressional Gold Medal; recruits go through a drill at Montford Point Camp during the WWII era; a group of Marines salute outside one of the original structures in the historic district at Camp Lejeune (photos courtesy Montford Point Marine Museum)



Two of the original surviving Montford Point Camp buildings that remain to inform present generations about the important history that took place here. (photos courtesy Marine Corps Installations East-MCB Camp Lejeune)



fate of the property when adverse effects are likely to ensue.

The project brought together the Montford Point Marine Association, a nonprofit organization honoring the African American Marines who had trained at Montford Point Camp, the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and MCB Camp Lejeune. The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation was notified and invited to be a party to the consultations but was satisfied the process was proceeding properly and declined to directly participate. The consulting parties agreed in a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) to minimize impacts to the Montford Point Camp historic district and extensively document the three buildings slated for demolition. Ultimately, only one of the three structures had to be demolished. In addition, under the MOA, the Marine Corps agreed to expand the existing interpretive material at the Montford Point Museum, which is a tenant facility at MCB Camp Lejeune operated by the Montford Point Marine Association, and install additional interpretive media in the new academic facility constructed on the site of the former buildings.

Consulting Parties:

- United States Marine Corps, Marine Corps Base, Camp Lejeune, NC
- North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office
- Montford Point Marine Association

THE SUCCESS

The Section 106 process raised the visibility of this important chapter in civil rights history through documentation, museum and interpretive exhibits, and greater public and media attention. Perhaps most significantly, this process of planning and consultation strengthened the relationship among the Montford Point Marine Association, the North Carolina SHPO, and the Marine Corps, bringing to life the history of this special place and the Americans who made that history. The unique history highlighted by the Section 106 process garnered support at the national level when the Marine Corps promoted awareness of this historic place by making it the subject of a “Defending Our Cultural Heritage” poster telling how oral histories are being preserved from those who served there. The importance of preserving Montford Point Camp and its legacy has been further heightened by the awarding of the Congressional Gold medal, the nation’s highest civilian honor for distinguished achievement, to the Montford Point Marines in June 2012.

For more about Section 106 and the ACHP go to www.achp.gov

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