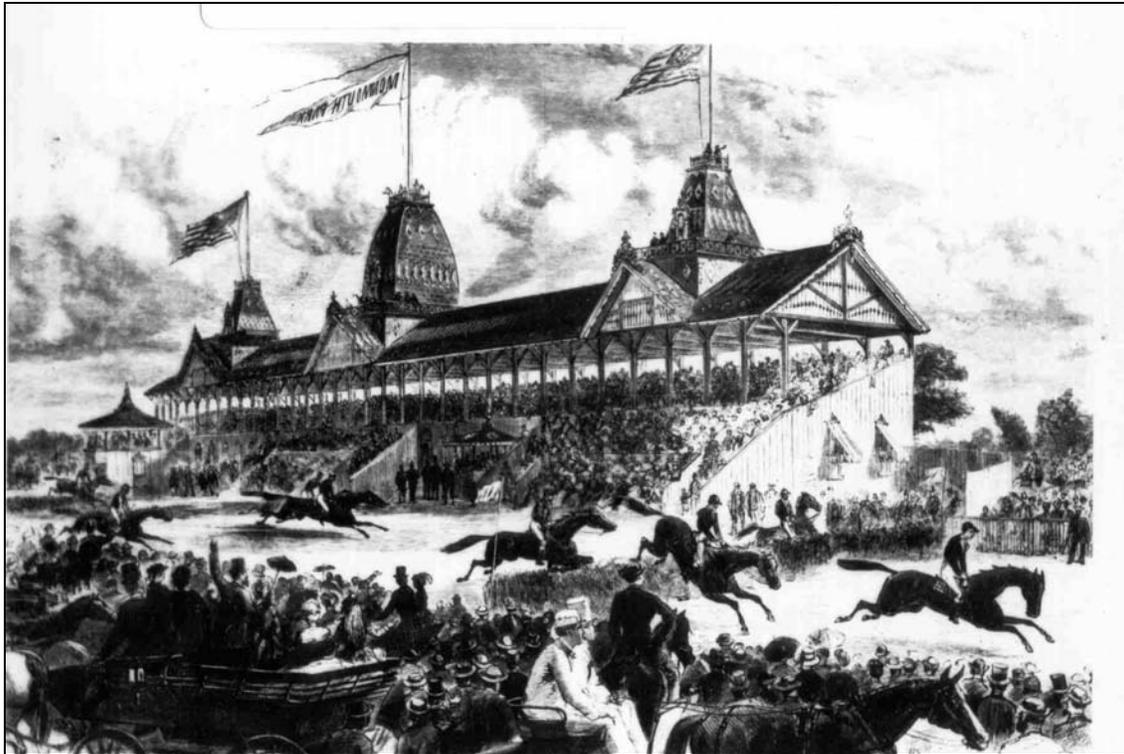


Fort Monmouth and the “Jersey Derby”



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Monmouth Park Race Track and the “Jersey Derby”

“The principle products of New Jersey are its beaches, its peaches, the Camden and Amboy Railroad, the Bergen Tunnel, and fever and ague, and the Monmouth Park Race Course.”

***The New York Times
August 2, 1871***

Introduction

Fort Monmouth has been the site of some of the most significant communications and electronics advances in military history. From carrier pigeons in World War I, World War II, and Korea to Force XXI Battle Command Brigade and Below (FBCB2)¹ in Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, Fort Monmouth has served as an incubator for innovation and technological revolution supporting this country’s Warfighters for over eighty years. The Fort additionally has had and continues to have an enormous economic impact on the surrounding communities.

Originally a tiny cluster of Army tents pitched in 1917 not far from the New Jersey seashore, Fort Monmouth is now the home of the Communications-Electronics Lifecycle Management Command (CE LCMC). The CE LCMC stood up on 2 February 2005 with the mission of developing, acquiring, testing, fielding, and sustaining “effective, suitable, and survivable command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities from the soldier in the combat zone all the way back to the national leadership.”² The major organizations that are now located at Fort Monmouth include the Communications-Electronics Command (CECOM); the Program Executive Office for Command, Control and Communications Tactical (PEO C3T); the Program Executive Office for Intelligence, Electronic Warfare

¹ FBCB2 is a system used by the Army to increase situational awareness and thereby reduce cases of fratricide. The system uses blue symbols on digital maps to represent the location of "friendly forces."

² Michael Mazzucchi, “LCMC Announcement from Major General Mazzucchi,” 2 February 2005.

and Sensors (PEO IEWS); the Communications-Electronics Research and Development Center (CERDEC); and the Project Managers for Defense Communications and Army Transmissions Systems (PM DCATS) and Defense and Army Switched Systems (PM DASS) of the Program Executive Office for Enterprise Information Systems (PEO EIS). Together, these organizations are known as Team Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (C4ISR).³

Fort Monmouth is also home to numerous tenant organizations, including: the U.S. Army Garrison Fort Monmouth, the 754th Explosive Ordnance Company, the United States Military Academy Preparatory School, and Patterson Army Health Clinic.

Despite over eighty years of service to the nation, the site was not always so predisposed. The outbreak of WWI led the Army to search for land for additional Signal Corps Training Camps. Investigation led them to the land where the old Monmouth Park Racetrack had been. This paper will trace the evolution of that land from its inception as a recreational hotspot to its settlement as a “temporary” army encampment in 1917.

Summering at “the Branch”

The Monmouth County Shore region is plagued with a sandy soil that impedes agriculture. Thus, with the exception of “nucleated villages... along major routes,” the area remained sparsely settled until the rise of seashore resorts and tourism in the late nineteenth century.⁴

The Civil War era brought prosperity to much of the North. Businessmen profited handsomely from the war and accumulated excess money. Many bought tracts of land in

³ Michael Mazzucchi, “LCMC Announcement from Major General Mazzucchi,” 2 February 2005.

⁴ Lynn Rakos, Cultural Resources Investigation, Poplar Brook Flood Control Feasibility Study (New York: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 1999), E-5.

rural Monmouth County.⁵ Concurrently, a new type of worker evolved. These salaried, white collar employees regularly received a week or more paid vacation per year. These scheduled, compensated vacations gave people the time and extra money to plan family trips.⁶ This pattern of success, combined with improvements in steamship and railroad transportation during the second half of the nineteenth century, allowed the “Jersey Shore” to become a popular summer vacation retreat for harried New Yorkers.⁷

In 1868, the New York and Long Branch Railroad Company was incorporated. It’s right of way formed the eastern boundary of what would become Fort Monmouth. The railroad was built through Red Bank and Middletown to the north and crossed Horse Neck to the east of Eatontown as it made its way to Long Branch.⁸ Railroad tracks also connected a 5,000 foot pier at Port Monmouth with Eatontown and Long Branch, facilitating travel from New York City to those towns. According to one historian, “The contrast between taking a ship and then a train to the shore (from NYC) as compared to bumping along in a coach was like day and night.”⁹ The New York Times declared, “We know of no more varied and satisfactory a jaunt to be had for less money.”¹⁰

At popular hotels such as the West End, the Continental, the Clarendon, the United States, the Mansion House, the Pavilion, or the Metropolitan, a week’s stay could cost anywhere from \$20-\$35 per person per week. The extravagantly wealthy rented summer cottages at “the Branch,” as they affectionately called the city. John

⁵ *History of Fort Monmouth, 1917-1953* (Fort Monmouth: Signal Corps Center, 1953), 3.

⁶ Howard Green, *Words That Make New Jersey History* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 154.

⁷ Robert Russell and Richard Youmans, *Down the Jersey Shore* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1993), 35; Evaluation of Selected Cultural Resources at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, 1995.

⁸ An Archeological Overview and Management Plan for Fort Monmouth (Main Post), Camp Charles Wood and the Evans Area, 1984.

⁹ Russell and Youmans, *Down the Jersey Shore*, 35.

¹⁰ MONMOUTH PARK. New York Times (1857-Current file). New York, N.Y.: Jul 9, 1874. p. 4 (1 page).

Chamberlain, for example, had a 200 acre retreat. A man named William Henderson was reported to have spent \$10,000 per year maintaining his grounds. Jeremiah Smith, builder of the New York Post Office and Booth's Theater, called the Branch his summer home, as did actor W.R. Floyd. The New York Times reported a Lester Wallack paying \$20,000 for the privilege of summering in style.¹¹

The city of Long Branch was also the favored seaside resort of seven U. S. Presidents: Ulysses Grant (1869-1877), Rutherford B. Hayes (1877-1881), James A. Garfield (1881), Chester A. Arthur (1881-1885), Benjamin Harrison (1889-1893), William McKinley (1897-1901), and Woodrow Wilson (1913-1921). It was even dubbed the "summer capital," due to the frequency of Grant's visits to his five acre cottage in 1873.¹² A visit by the president could mean thousands of dollars in increased revenues per day in Long Branch.¹³

To combat a slight wane in tourism and compete with other resort towns like Saratoga, New York, some of the city's wealthier summer inhabitants clamored for the introduction of horse racing to the area. They strove to make the Jersey Shore the "Newmarket of America."¹⁴ According to the *New York Times*, the "myriads of fashionable visitors unanimously expressed their conviction that to make it the most attractive and delightful of water places, a race-course and racing, properly and

¹¹ AT THE SUMMER RESORTS. From Our Own Correspondent. New. Jul 1, 1870. p. 1 (2 pages).

¹² Richard Bingham, *Fort Monmouth, New Jersey: A Concise History* (Fort Monmouth: Communications-Electronics Command, 2002); John T. Cunningham, *This is New Jersey* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1978), 223; AT THE SUMMER RESORTS. From Our Own Correspondent. New. Jul 1, 1870. p. 1 (2 pages).

¹³ BUSINESS AT THE SEA-SIDE; HOW THE SUMMER HOTELS ARE FLOURISHING. New York Times (1857-Current file). New York, N.Y.: Jul 17, 1881. p. 12 (1 page).

¹⁴ Newmarket, in Britain, was the site of England's first organized horserace. Centuries old, the site was frequented by royalty and world class thoroughbreds.

History of Fort Monmouth, 3; MONMOUTH'S NEW COURSE; A RACE TRACK MODELED AFTER NEWMARKET HEATH. New York Times (1857-Current file). New York, N.Y.: Jan 21, 1889. p. 8 (1 page).

decorously managed, was the only desideratum.”¹⁵ Leading the charge were New York businessman and avid gambler John F. Chamberlain, New Jersey Senate President Amos Robbins, and Adams Express Company President John Hoey.¹⁶

The Original Monmouth Park

John F. Chamberlain was inspired to construct the racetrack at Monmouth Park while on a foxhunt in the area in 1865.¹⁷ He and J. McB. Davison then purchased 128 acres of the Corlies Estate in 1869. The land, located three miles from Long Branch in Eatontown, included a residence, a barn, and a wagon house. It was a two and a half hour trip from New York or a three hour trip from Philadelphia. Davison and Chamberlain fenced the grounds and laid out an oval, eighty foot wide, one-mile racetrack that opened on 30 July 1870.¹⁸

This park was in what is now the southern portion of Fort Monmouth, in the vicinity of Patterson Army Health Clinic.¹⁹ The arched, wooden entrance was located on today’s Broad Street, near Park Avenue.²⁰ In season two steamboats, or “floating palaces,” made daily runs from Pier 28 in New York to Sandy Hook. There, patrons

¹⁵ Bingham, *Fort Monmouth, New Jersey*; George H. Moss Jr. and Karen L. Schnitzspahn, *Victorian Summers at the Grand Hotels of Long Branch, New Jersey* (Sea Bright: Ploughshare Press, 2000), v, 21; RACING AT THE BRANCH; Inauguration of the New Monmouth Park Race-Course. From Our Special Correspondents, New York Times (1857-Current. Jul 31, 1870. p. 1 (1 page).

¹⁶ Race tracks in New Jersey were not a new concept. While generally meeting the approval of the townspeople where they were located, tracks in Jersey City and Camden closed in 1845 after the public complained about “bookmakers, hoodlums, and drunken crowds.”

Moss and Schnitzspahn, *Victorian Summers*, 21; John T. Cunningham, *New Jersey: A Mirror on America* (Andover: Afton Publishing Company, 1997), 158.

¹⁷ Lawrence Galton and Harold J. Wheelock, *A History of Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, 1917- 1946* (Fort Monmouth: Signal Corps Publication Agency, 1946), 12.

¹⁸ Historical Properties Report, Fort Monmouth, New Jersey and Sub installations Charles Wood Area and Evans Area, July 1983; Moss and Schnitzspahn, *Victorian Summers*, 21, 35; George H. Moss Jr., *Twice Told Tales: Reflections of Monmouth County’s Past* (Sea Bright: Ploughshare Press, 2002), 35, 46; RACING AT THE BRANCH; Inauguration of the New Monmouth Park Race-Course. From Our Special Correspondents. New York Times (1857-Current. Jul 31, 1870. p. 1 (1 page).

¹⁹ Bingham, *Fort Monmouth, New Jersey*.

²⁰ Moss and Schnitzspahn, *Victorian Summers*, 21; Helen C. Pike and Glenn D. Vogel, *Eatontown and Fort Monmouth* (Great Britain: Arcadia Publishing, 1995), 81.

could make a connection to the park by rail.²¹ The round trip price was under two dollars.²² It was said that from the 400 foot long, 7,000 seat grandstand every foot of the course could be seen. This was a trait that other tracks, such as Jerome Park, lacked.²³

Opening day was a slight disappointment despite the fact that the *Jesse Hoyt* and *Plymouth Rock* steamships brought hundreds of people from New York City to Sandy Hook to get the train to Long Branch. Financiers Jim Fisk and Jay Gould, as well as the infamous Boss Tweed, were among those present. While “Tammany politicians were as plentiful as they are on the eve of an election around the precincts of City Hall,” at least 2,000 of the grandstand seats went empty.²⁴ President Ulysses S. Grant was noticeably absent, despite the fact that his statue adorned the front of the track.

That first season lasted just five days, with races on the 30th of July and 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th of August. Races were sponsored by local hotels and businessmen, with a total of \$31,000 in purses posted. Boss Tweed even donated money for the “Tweed Purse.”²⁵ The New York Times declared the overall opening “highly credible...though not crowded.”²⁶

²¹ Bingham, *Fort Monmouth, New Jersey*; Historical Properties Report, Fort Monmouth, New Jersey and Sub installations Charles Wood Area and Evans Area, July 1983; Galton and Wheelock, *History of Fort Monmouth*, 12.

²² MONMOUTH PARK. New York Times (1857-Current file). New York, N.Y.: Jul 9, 1874. p. 4 (1 page).

²³ Jerome Park opened in 1866 near Fordham, New York. It was the headquarters of the American Jockey Club.

²⁴ MONMOUTH PARK. New York Times (1857-Current file). New York, N.Y.: Jul 9, 1874. p. 4 (1 page); AT THE SUMMER RESORTS. From Our Own Correspondent. New. Jul 1, 1870. p. 1 (2 pages).

²⁴ Moss and Schnitzspahn, *Victorian Summers*, 21; Moss, *Twice Told Tales*, 46; Russell, *Down*, 35.

²⁵ Moss and Schnitzspahn, *Victorian Summers*, 21, 26; Moss, *Twice Told Tales*, 46; Sarah Allaback, et al, *Resorts and Recreation: An Historic Theme Study of the NJ Coastal Heritage Trail Route* (Mauricetown: The Sandy Hook Foundation and the National Park Service, 1996), 13; AT THE SUMMER RESORTS. From Our Own Correspondent. New. Jul 1, 1870. p. 1 (2 pages); Galton and Wheelock, *History of Fort Monmouth*, 12.

²⁶ RACING AT THE BRANCH; Inauguration of the New Monmouth Park Race-Course. From Our Special Correspondents. New York Times (1857-Current. Jul 31, 1870. p. 1 (1 page).

While the 1871 season was declared “fair, though not flattering,”²⁷ President Grant eventually capitulated and purchased a box. The masses soon followed suit. By 1872, a record crowd of 25,000 watched the Monmouth Cup Race.²⁸ Race-goers filled hotels to capacity.²⁹ By 1873, it was said by the *New York Times* that Monmouth Park denied the famous Saratoga Resort “her fair chance” at making a profit during racing season³⁰

The races even offered a measure of sexual equality in the stifling Victorian era. Betting by females was acceptable at Monmouth Park, whereas in hotels and betting parlors it was frowned upon.³¹ The methods women used to make bets were usually dismissed as whimsical. Women were often accused patronizingly of “betting upon their sympathies in a very charming and decidedly feminine fashion.”³² While the *New York Times* did concede that “some of these (women) who can overcome the peculiar prejudices and whims which so often control a woman’s judgment, have been very successful as betters, and can count their winnings from a small original investment by thousand,” they generally maintained that:

Their entrance into the fascinating game is attended by many queer notions. They are ignorant as to the merits of horses and riders. The novice then looks over a list of horses, and finds a name that pleases her, and places her first \$5 in the mutual pool box to bank a horse whose name she fancies. Old betting men say that Caramel has probably been more favored in this way than any other horse on the turf, and hundreds of women have lost their first \$5 dollars because that is ‘such a sweet, pretty name.’ The women learn better after a while. Another stumbling block for the novices are the colors sported by the jockeys. A favorite color on a spruce jockey often draws out from the pocketbook of some fair one the first \$5 she has ever bet on the uncertain chances of a dash around the track. If

²⁷ LONG BRANCH RACES. *New York Times* (1857. Aug 2, 1871. p. 8 (1 page).

²⁸ Moss and Schnitzspahn, *Victorian Summers*, 26

²⁹ MONMOUTH PARK. *New York Times* (1857. Jun 29, 1872. p. 5 (1 page).

³⁰ SUMMER AT THE SPRINGS. From Our Special Correspondent. *New York Times* (1857-Current file). New York, N.Y.: Jul 15, 1873. p. 1 (1 page).

³¹ Moss and Schnitzspahn, *Victorian Summers*, vi, 24

³² MONMOUTH PARK. *New York Times* (1857. Jun 29, 1872. p. 5 (1 page).

she wins the color ever remains her favorite. If she loses that color also loses for her all attractiveness it may have before had. Once a woman is 'in the swim' of the running track, however, she will remain there just as long as her money holds out, and even then the fascination of the track clings to her and she is ever its slave.³³

These women, often of high esteem in the community, could hire escorts to accompany them to the tracks. The escorts would help them find their seats, offer betting tips, provide physical protection, and purchase the women's tickets for them. Most importantly, according to sources, attending the races with an escort as opposed to a husband secreted frivolous gambling expenditures. According to one escort:

Women, you know, have the betting fever just as badly as we do, and some of those who have it the worst couldn't gratify it if it wasn't for fellows in my profession. You see, some of them play the races on the sly. They don't have their husbands to bring them to the tracks, and even if they did they wouldn't bet as much as they do, for their husbands wouldn't let them. So they hire escorts to go to the races with them.³⁴

The escorts were required to have "good address, a fair education, a thoroughly controllable temper...a good knowledge of turf events, the breeding of horses and their performances, and familiarity with the merits and demerits of jockeys. He must always have good clothes and seem the gentleman escort rather than the professional." They were paid around two dollars a day plus expenses.³⁵

The female-friendly park changed ownership in 1878 when it was purchased by a company headed by George L. Lorillard, D.D. Withers, G.P. Wetmore, and newspaper publisher James Gordon Bennett. That year, a race could easily sell as many as 13,500 tickets for a total gross of at least \$69,880. In 1882, the longest racing season to date took

³³ WOMEN WHO BET ON RACES. New York Times (1857-Current file). New York, N.Y.: Aug 24, 1885. p. 5 (1 page).

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

place. Gamblers avoided Saratoga, Sheepshead Bay, and Jerome Park in favor of Monmouth. Not even Coney Island threatened the track's popularity.

The New Jersey Central and Pennsylvania Railroads reorganized themselves to accommodate racetrack-goers, running trains over the same track between their terminal at North River and Long Branch. A round trip steamboat ride from New York to Long Branch cost sixty cents; the round trip ferry ride from Coney Island, thirty cents; and the round trip railroad ride, one dollar and fifty cents (with that price expected to drop in order to remain competitive). 1885 saw crowds larger than ever reported at any U.S. racetrack. By 1888, purses had jumped from \$12,600 to \$210, 850. The track became so popular that expansion was a necessity.³⁶

Expansion

A bigger, fancier Monmouth Park was built just north of the original track. Designed by David D. Withers, it opened on 4 July 1890 and featured a one and one half mile oval track, centered on what later became Fort Monmouth's Greely Field; a one-mile straight-of-way; a 700 by 210 foot steel grandstand for 10,000 spectators (reputedly, the largest in the world); and a luxury hotel, fronting Parker Creek. The new park was three times the size of the original, and encompassed 640 acres – almost all of Fort Monmouth's "Main Post." It was touted as the largest racetrack in the world.³⁷

The railroads again made adjustments to accommodate the racetrack. According to newspaper reports

³⁶ Moss and Schnitzspahn, *Victorian Summers*, 26; Cunningham, *This is New Jersey*, 223; MONMOUTH PARK RACES. New York Times (1857. Jul 5, 1878. p. 1 (2 pages); PROSPECTS AT LONG BRANCH.; THE SEASON OF 1882 PROMISING TO BE BRILLIANT. New York Times (1857-Current file). New York, N.Y.: Apr 2, 1882. p. 3 (1 page); KINNEY BEATS PONTIAC; New York Times. Jul 5, 1885. p. 2 (1 page).

³⁷ "Race Track Memories Linger Here," *The Signal Corps Message*, 4 January 1946; Bingham, *Fort Monmouth, New Jersey*; Moss and Schnitzspahn, *Victorian Summers*, 26; An Archeological Overview and Management Plan for Fort Monmouth (Main Post), Camp Charles Wood and the Evans Area, 1984.

The railroad facilities will be even better than they were at the old track, and those were the best in America. The railroad sidings reaching the track are a show in themselves. They are eighteen in number, and the most remote one is nearer to the main entrance to the grandstand by one half than was the nearest one at the old track. The turntable used in connection with them is the largest ever constructed in America. These facilities will enable the railroad companies to handle 20,000 people and get them away from the racetrack in a quarter of an hour after the conclusion of the races.³⁸

“The exuberantly colorful” people of the era, such as financier and philanthropist Diamond Jim Brady, actress Lily Langtry, and opera singer Lillian Russell, frequented the races and the Monmouth Park Hotel.³⁹ Other notable attendees included oil tycoon John Warne “Bet a Million” Gates; tobacco millionaire Pierre Lorillard; English poet Alfred, Lord Tennyson; society playboy Freddie Bebbart; boxer James Corbett; and Jessie Lewisohn of the banking family. Lavish suppers were hosted by Mike and Charlie Dwyer, who’s stable included the world’s finest thoroughbreds. The Drexel family of bankers from Philadelphia gave exclusive soirees. Even politicians like Governor Bowie of Maryland and Senator Stockton of New Jersey tried their luck at the races.⁴⁰

One of the most amusing anecdotes from the era is that of Lillian Russell riding to the track on a bicycle studded with diamonds. The bicycle was a gift from Diamond Jim Brady.⁴¹ The duo also reportedly drove about in a custom built electric automobile.⁴² Reporters and artists (latter day paparazzi) from the popular periodicals of the day followed the moneyed and famed in order to capture exploits such as these.⁴³

However, not all accounts were so glowing. One *New York Times* critique asked

³⁸ HORSES AND HORSEMEN. *New York Times* (1857-Current file). New York, N.Y.: Jan 12, 1890. p. 6 (1 page).

³⁹ *Fort Monmouth Yearbook* (New York: Yearbooks Publishing Company, 1947); Allaback, *Resorts*, 14; Cunningham, *This is New Jersey*, 223.

⁴⁰ Moss, *Twice Told Tales*, 47; Russell, *Down*, 55-56.

⁴¹ “Twenty-six Years Ago They ‘Got the Message Thru’,” *The Signal Corps Message*, 9 July 1943; Galton and Wheelock, *History of Fort Monmouth*, 12.

⁴² Russell, *Down*, 56.

⁴³ Moss and Schnitzspahn, *Victorian Summers*, vi.

Is it really necessary...that the food served at the so-called refreshment stands on the track and in the boats should be so very vile, that the plates should be so very dirty, and the waiters so slovenly and ill-trained?

This article ultimately concluded, however, that “even greater drawbacks could diminish but little the pleasure of this really delightful trip.”⁴⁴

The Monmouth Park experience proved so delightful that people were reluctant to leave. The Monmouth Park Hotel was built on Parker’s Creek to accommodate these attendees of the races. The massive building had 153 rooms. Amenities included an electric elevator, a smoking room, and a billiard room.⁴⁵ It was described as “the zenith of Victorian opulence with a surfeit of gold braid, silk tapestries, glass chandeliers, oriental rugs, and baroque staircases.”⁴⁶

The End of an Era

The new race track was opened for only one year when an anti-gambling faction began pushing more strongly for the end of legalized betting. The park had briefly closed in 1877 as the result of a law that “classed betting booths with disorderly houses,” and by 1891 the Monmouth Racing Association had moved most of the races to Jerome Park.⁴⁷ According to the New York Times,

This transfer will be regretted by very many people because of the hot and dusty trips to the two tracks that will be necessary for people who remain in the city. The rapid and perfect service of the New Jersey Central and Pennsylvania Roads will be greatly missed, as will also the cool and pleasant nights at the Branch which have been so pleasurable to racegoers during the Monmouth Park season in past years.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ MONMOUTH PARK. New York Times (1857-Current file). New York, N.Y.: Jul 9, 1874. p. 4 (1 page).

⁴⁵ Pike and Vogel, *Eatontown*, 112.

⁴⁶ Galton and Wheelock, *History of Fort Monmouth*, 12.

⁴⁷ An Archeological Overview and Management Plan for Fort Monmouth (Main Post), Camp Charles Wood and the Evans Area, 1984.

⁴⁸ THREE STAKE RACES RUN; New York Times (1857-Current file). New York, N.Y.: Jun 28, 1891. p. 3 (1 page).

The transfer was also regretted by local farmers, merchants, and hotel owners because the “closing of the track near Long Branch last summer entailed a loss of hundreds of thousands of dollars to the various seashore interests.”⁴⁹ The railroads alone were expected to lose \$5,000 per day in the absence of racing at Monmouth Park.

The racetrack reopened for its 1892 and 1893 seasons. Louisiana gambling magnate John A. Morris secured control of the track in 1893 after the death of D. Withers. Some 30,000 people (apparently were not concerned with the morality of racing) were estimated to attend the 1892 opening. The *New York Times* called Monmouth Park “a perfect race track, and far and away the best in the country.”⁵⁰

Shortly thereafter, Morris entered into a very public feud with the *New York Times* after that newspaper ran a series of scathing exposes about the supposedly fixed races and unbeatable odds at Monmouth Park. Morris banned reporters from the Park. The paper in return labeled Morris “the lottery king, who was spewed out of the state of Louisiana after he had prostituted that state to his purposes until the people would stand it no longer.”⁵¹ By 1893, the same newspaper which had declared Monmouth a “perfect race track” one year earlier was warning readers that “the trail and slime of the lottery serpent about the race track is a little too much for decent people.”⁵²

⁴⁹ WANT RACING AT MONMOUTH. *New York Times* (1857-Current file). New York, N.Y.: Jan 25, 1892. p. 2 (1 page); MONMOUTH PARK CLOSED.; RED BANK AND LONG BRANCH FEEL VERY BADLY ABOUT IT. *New York Times* (1857-Current file). New York, N.Y.: Mar 24, 1891. p. 2 (1 page); RACING NEWS AND NOTIONS; LITTLE CHANCE FOR MUCH MORE RACING IN NEW-JERSEY. *New York Times* (1857-Current file). New York, N.Y.: Mar 23, 1891. p. 2 (1 page).

⁵⁰ MONMOUTH PARK OPENED; *New York Times* (1857-Current file). New York, N.Y.: Jul 5, 1892. p. 3 (1 page).

⁵¹ THE END OF MONMOUTH PARK.; Both the Old and the New Track to be Sold at Auction in April -- History of the Courses. *New York Times* (1857-Current file). New York, N.Y.: Mar 14, 1897. p. 4 (1 page); LEGISLATIVE BRIBERY.; Laws for the Protection of Gamblers Secured at Trenton. *New York Times* (1857-Current file). New York, N.Y.: Oct 22, 1893. p. 21 (1 page).

⁵² WARNING TO DECENT PEOPLE; BAD ASSOCIATIONS ENCOUNTERED AT MONMOUTH PARK. *New York Times* (1857. Jul 16, 1893. p. 3 (1 page).

The racetrack was forced to close again at the end of the 1893 season when the “moralist movement” championed by senator James A. Bradley enveloped the state. The movement led the New Jersey legislature to outlaw gambling in 1894. While many legislators tried to protect the tracks, they were overwhelmingly opposed and ultimately defeated by “ministers, priests, lawyers, and others.” They were labeled “Race-Track Politicians”⁵³ and accused of making legislation

a matter of purchase and sale...In their greed the racetrack managers have overstepped all bounds of prudence and decency. They have antagonized the law abiding and peace loving citizens of the state. The festering sores these gambling aliens have created have been torn open and their putridity and other rottenness exposed.⁵⁴

Compromises such as funneling five cents from every admission ticket sold to the state or confining gambling to certain areas such as the race tracks, and only on designated days, were discarded.⁵⁵ Anti-gambling proponents could not be swayed in their belief that gambling meant “the ruin of young men by the thousands...the influx to this section of a base, pestilential multitude, the shame of all moral people; in short, the offering of ourselves as a swill barrel, into which New York, Philadelphia, and adjacent cities may empty their slops.”⁵⁶ The Reverend S. Edward Young asserted that the “main magic that entices people to the track is the opportunity to gamble and get drunk, and

⁵³ RACE-TRACK POLITICIANS. *New York Times* (1857-Current file). New York, N.Y.: Oct 27, 1893. p. 2 (1 page).

⁵⁴ Cunningham, *New Jersey*, 256; Thomas Fleming, *New Jersey: A History* (New York: Norton and Co., Inc., 1977), 146-147; Moss and Schnitzspahn, *Victorian Summers*, 28; Russell, *Down*, 55; Pike and Vogel, *Eatontown*, 83; LEGISLATIVE BRIBERY; Laws for the Protection of Gamblers Secured at Trenton. *New York Times* (1857-Current file). New York, N.Y.: Oct 22, 1893. p. 21 (1 page).

⁵⁵ NEW-JERSEY LEGISLATURE; TWO RACE-POOL BILLS PRESENTED IN THE ASSEMBLY LAST NIGHT. *New York Times* (1857-Current file). New York, N.Y.: Feb 9, 1892. p. 3 (1 page).

⁵⁶ THE RACE TRACK DENOUNCED; WAR AGAINST THE REOPENING OF MONMOUTH PARK. *New York Times* (1857-Current file). New York, N.Y.: Apr 4, 1892. p. 1 (1 page).

more evil will be wrought at the track in eight weeks than all the pulpits can correct in fifty-two.”⁵⁷

The prime stake of the season, called the “Jersey Derby,” reportedly was moved to Louisville, Kentucky and renamed the “Kentucky Derby.”⁵⁸ In 1895, the property was divided into four parcels and auctioned under foreclosure proceedings by the Farmer’s Loan and Trust Company. While the Withers estate held \$384,000 of the park’s mortgage, the syndicate that held the other 1/6 forced the sale. It took place at the court house in Freehold. There was little bidding. Lots sold for much less than their appraised value. Five hundred and ninety acres, including the original and new tracks, grandstand, clubhouse, and stables, went undisputed to Judge A.C. Monson (executor of the Withers’ estate) and A.J. Cassatt for \$50,000. Twenty acres, including the hotel, also went undisputed. Forty acres, including the yearling stables, went to Augustus Carson (D. Withers’ nephew) after some less than spirited bidding against Lucien Appleby (“master mind” of the Linden track and stockholder of the Monmouth track.)⁵⁹ The fourth and final plot of 4.5 acres, with two dwellings, went to Mr. Cassatt and Judge Monson for \$2,500. At the auction’s end, the entire property was held by the Withers’ estate.⁶⁰

Unfortunately for the estate, an 1897 constitutional amendment against gambling and bookmaking squashed any hopes of a Monmouth Park revival.⁶¹ While horse racing

⁵⁷ DENOUNCED FROM THE PULPIT; THE REV. MR. YOUNG'S ATTACK ON MONMOUTH PARK RACING. *New York Times* (1857-Current file). New York, N.Y.: Jul 4, 1892. p. 2 (1 page).

⁵⁸ Untitled manuscript, Communications Electronics Command Archives, Fort Monmouth; Galton and Wheelock, *History of Fort Monmouth*, 12.

⁵⁹ NEW-JERSEY RACING ENDED; Owners of Tracks Satisfied that the Decision Is Effective. *New York Times* (1857-Current file). New York, N.Y.: Jan 9, 1894. p. 8 (1 page).

⁶⁰ MONMOUTH TRACK SOLD. *New York Times* (1857-Current file). New York, N.Y.: Mar 22, 1895. p. 3 (1 page).

⁶¹ Cunningham, *New Jersey*, 256; Fleming, *New Jersey: A History*, 146-147; Moss and Schnitzspahn, *Victorian Summers*, 28; Russell, *Down*, 55; Pike and Vogel, *Eatontown*, 83.

itself was not outlawed, the “prohibition of gambling brought about the same result.”⁶² The “flush prosperity” of Long Branch was doomed.⁶³ The property was put up for auction at the Real Estate Exchange Rooms in New York City on 22 April 1897 by Adrian Muller and Sons. The decision to auction the property was made by the heirs of David Withers, who, according to the New York Times, “have probably concluded that there is no chance for racing over that magnificent piece of property in the near future.”⁶⁴

The April 3, 1897 edition of *The Thoroughbred Record* reported:

The news will be received with regret that it has been definitely decided to put up the magnificent Monmouth Park race track at auction on April 22, 1897. Up to the last minute, the owners and mortgagees had hoped for a turn in the tide of public sentiment, but it is doubtful whether during the next ten years any favorable amendments to the existing laws in the State can be urged with any fair chance of success.⁶⁵

Deserted, the grandstand, track, and hotel fell into ruin. The grandstand was decimated by a storm in 1899, and the hotel burned to the ground in 1915.⁶⁶

Ownership of the plot had changed several times by the time the U.S. Army Signal Corps obtained the land.⁶⁷ Notwithstanding the desolation of the overgrown and poison ivy infested site in 1917, it afforded the Army significant advantages: access by

⁶² An Archeological Overview and Management Plan for Fort Monmouth (Main Post), Camp Charles Wood and the Evans Area, 1984.

⁶³ Galton and Wheelock, *History of Fort Monmouth*, 12.

⁶⁴ Indeed, betting on horse races in New Jersey would not be legalized until 1939. The current Monmouth Park Racetrack, located in Oceanport, was not opened until 1946.

THE END OF MONMOUTH PARK.; Both the Old and the New Track to be Sold at Auction in April -- History of the Courses. New York Times (1857-Current file). New York, N.Y.: Mar 14, 1897. p. 4 (1 page).

⁶⁵ Ron Hale, *The Haskell and the Travers* (<http://horseracing.about.com/library/blhandt.htm>, 2000).

⁶⁶ *This is Fort Monmouth* (Fort Monmouth: 1950); Moss and Schnitzspahn, *Victorian Summers*, 28; Pike and Vogel, *Eatontown*, 112.

⁶⁷ Historical Properties Report, Fort Monmouth, New Jersey and Sub installations Charles Wood Area and Evans Area, July 1983.

rail and proximity to the passenger terminal in Little Silver, as well as good stone roads and access by water.

In the turmoil of WWI, Major General (retired) Charles H. Corlett was tasked by Lieutenant Colonel (retired) Carl F. Hartmann, the Signal Officer of the Eastern Department in New York City, to “go out and find an officer’s training camp.” Corlett recalled his initial discovery of the Monmouth Park land in a 1955 letter addressed to Colonel Sidney S. Davis, Chairman of the Fort Monmouth Traditions Committee. He reported that after examining several other sites, he “finally stumbled on to the old Race Course near Eatontown. I found part of the old steel grandstand with eleven railroad sidings behind it, the old two mile straight away track and two oval race tracks, all badly overgrown with weeds and underbrush.” Corlett went on to describe how he arranged a meeting with the owner of the land. “Upon inquiry, I learned that the land belonged to an old man who lived in Eatontown who was very ill (on his death bed in fact), but when he learned my business, he was anxious to see me.”⁶⁸

Corlett learned that the owner, Melvin Van Keuren, had offered to give the land to the Army free of charge during the Spanish American War. Van Keuren regretfully informed Corlett that he could no longer afford to do so. He offered instead to sell the land for \$75,000.⁶⁹

Corlett returned to his superior officers to report his findings. With authorization of the Adjutant General of the Army, LTC Hartmann leased 468 acres of the tract from

⁶⁸ Personal letter from Major General Charles H. Corlett to Colonel Sidney S. Davis dated 3 December 1955.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

Van Keuren, on 16 May 1917 with an option to buy.⁷⁰ The land, which was a potato farm at the time, was considered ideal as it was close to both river and rail transportation.

⁷¹ The Red Bank Register dated 6 June 1917 reported that the land leased by the government had been “farmed for the past four years by Charles Prothero. He will continue to work the farm south of the railroad tracks but all property north of the tracks has been leased by the government. On this property is a 70 acre field of potatoes. The government will recompense Mr. Prothero for this crop.”⁷²

Camp Little Silver, Camp Alfred Vail

The first 32 Signal soldiers arrived at Fort Monmouth in June 1917 in two Model T Ford Trucks. The installation was originally named Camp Little Silver, based merely on its location. General Orders dated 17 June 1917 named LTC Hartmann the first commander.⁷³

Corporal Carl L. Whitehurst was among the first men to arrive at Camp Little Silver. He later recalled that the site appeared to be a “jungle of weeds, poison ivy, briars, and underbrush.” While remnants of the old Monmouth Park Racetrack seemed to be everywhere, only one building remained habitable. It was there, in that former ticket booth, that he and his comrades stayed while awaiting the delivery of tents.

⁷⁰ Bingham, Richard. “Fort Monmouth, New Jersey: A Concise History.” Communications-Electronics Command, December 2002; Pike and Vogel, *Eatontown*, 80; PASSING OF MONMOUTH PARK.; Once Famous Race Course of Jersey Cut Up Into Building Lots. Special to The New York Times. New York Times (1857-Current file). New York, N.Y.: Apr 10, 1910. p. 6 (1 page); An Archeological Overview and Management Plan for Fort Monmouth (Main Post), Camp Charles Wood and the Evans Area, 1984.

⁷¹ Stenographic record of interview with COL Carl F. Hartmann, Signal Corps Retired, 26 October 1955 in the Office of the Chief Signal Officer; An Archeological Overview and Management Plan for Fort Monmouth (Main Post), Camp Charles Wood and the Evans Area, 1984; Historical Properties Report, Fort Monmouth, New Jersey and Sub installations Charles Wood Area and Evans Area, July 1983.

⁷² Galton and Wheelock, *History of Fort Monmouth*, 12.

⁷³ Stenographic record of interview with COL Carl F. Hartmann, Signal Corps Retired, 26 October 1955 in the Office of the Chief Signal Officer; Untitled manuscript, Communications Electronics Command Archives, Fort Monmouth; *History of Fort Monmouth*, 5.

Railroads soon brought the tents, as well as lumber with which to build barracks. Unfortunately, most of the lumber was green. According to CPL Whitehurst, “By the time the wood was dried out it was winter, and in December there were cracks you could put your finger through. The winter of 1917-1918 was a tough one, and sometimes the snow would pile up on your blankets, coming through the gaps in the boards.”⁷⁴

The men survived that first winter, and Signal Corps Training embarked “amid the fire-gutted ruins of Monmouth Park and Charles Prothero’s potatoes.”⁷⁵ By the end of 1918 it was the “best equipped Signal Corps camp ever established anywhere.”⁷⁶ Just nineteen months after its acquisition by the military, 129 semi-permanent structures had been built. Forty-seven of these were used exclusively by the radio laboratories. Housing was available for 2,975 soldiers and 188 officers. Should those men fall ill, there was a hospital equipped to handle forty patients. Two temporary stables could house up to 160 horses. Transportation was possible on hard surfaced roads. One swamp was converted into parade grounds. Another was converted into four company streets, which would be lined by 200 tents.⁷⁷ The Chief Signal Officer authorized the purchase of the Camp Vail in 1919. The Signal Corps School relocated to Camp Vail from Fort Leavenworth in that year. The Signal Corps Board followed in 1924. The installation was granted permanent status and renamed Fort Monmouth in August 1925.

The sudden growth of the camp brought to the area a prosperity which had been absent since the height of Monmouth Park’s popularity. The soldiers proved to be “good spenders” and “their relatives, sweethearts, and friends swelled the trade of the

⁷⁴ “Shore Veteran Recalls Early Days of Post,” *Monmouth Message*, May 18, 1967 p. 14.

⁷⁵ Galton and Wheelock, *History of Fort Monmouth*, 16.

⁷⁶ “Fort Monmouth Locale Steeped in American Military Tradition,” *Monmouth Message*, May 18 1967 p. 12.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

storekeepers.”⁷⁸ The Red Bank Register remarked that the “Little Silver mail route has been extended to take in the camp. This will probably bring an increase in the salary of Arthur Ryerson, the mail carrier.”⁷⁹

While it is uncertain if Ryerson ever got his raise, the Army did have and continues to have an undeniable economic impact on the community. Today, Fort Monmouth injects some \$3.2 billion into the State’s economy and supports over 23,000 jobs. The installation is one of the largest employers in Monmouth County, providing over 5,000 jobs. Each dollar spent by the Fort generates \$1.29 in output for New Jersey businesses. The Army may have cured the economic ills brought about by the demise of gambling in New Jersey, but the opulence and frivolity of the Monmouth Park Racetrack days prove far too interesting to ever be forgotten.

⁷⁸ *History of Fort Monmouth*, 6.

⁷⁹ Galton and Wheelock, *History of Fort Monmouth*, 16-17.

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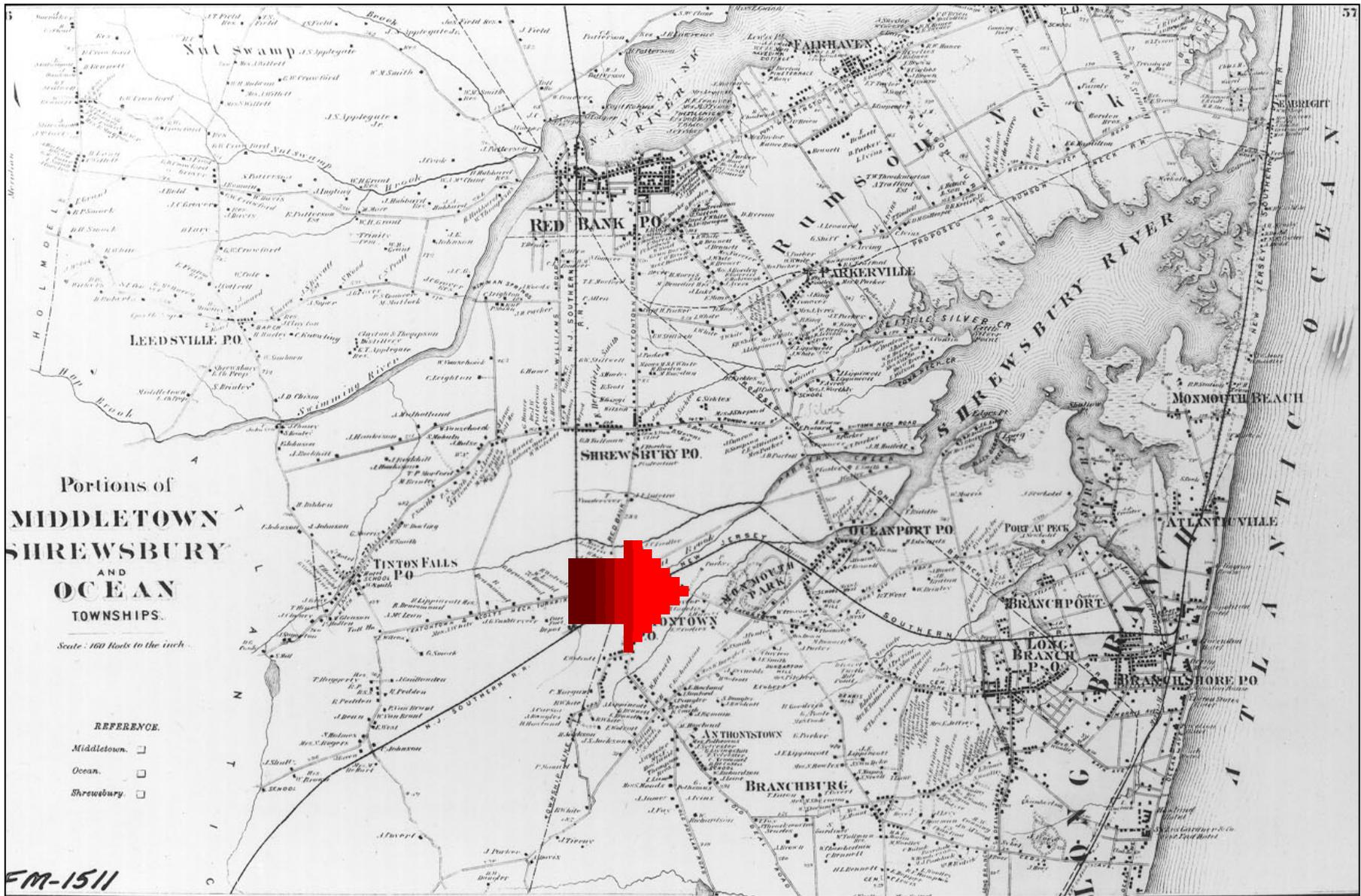
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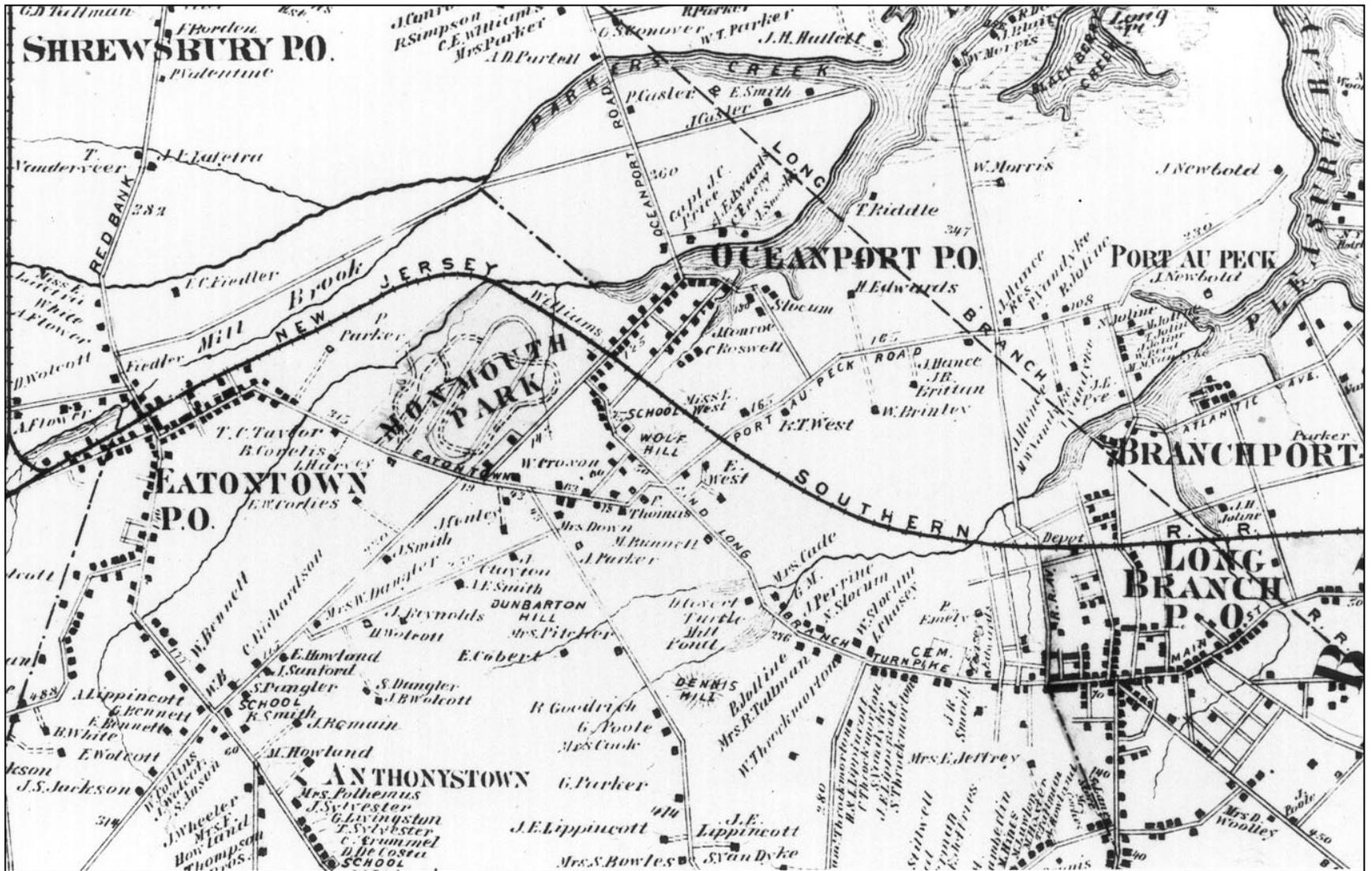
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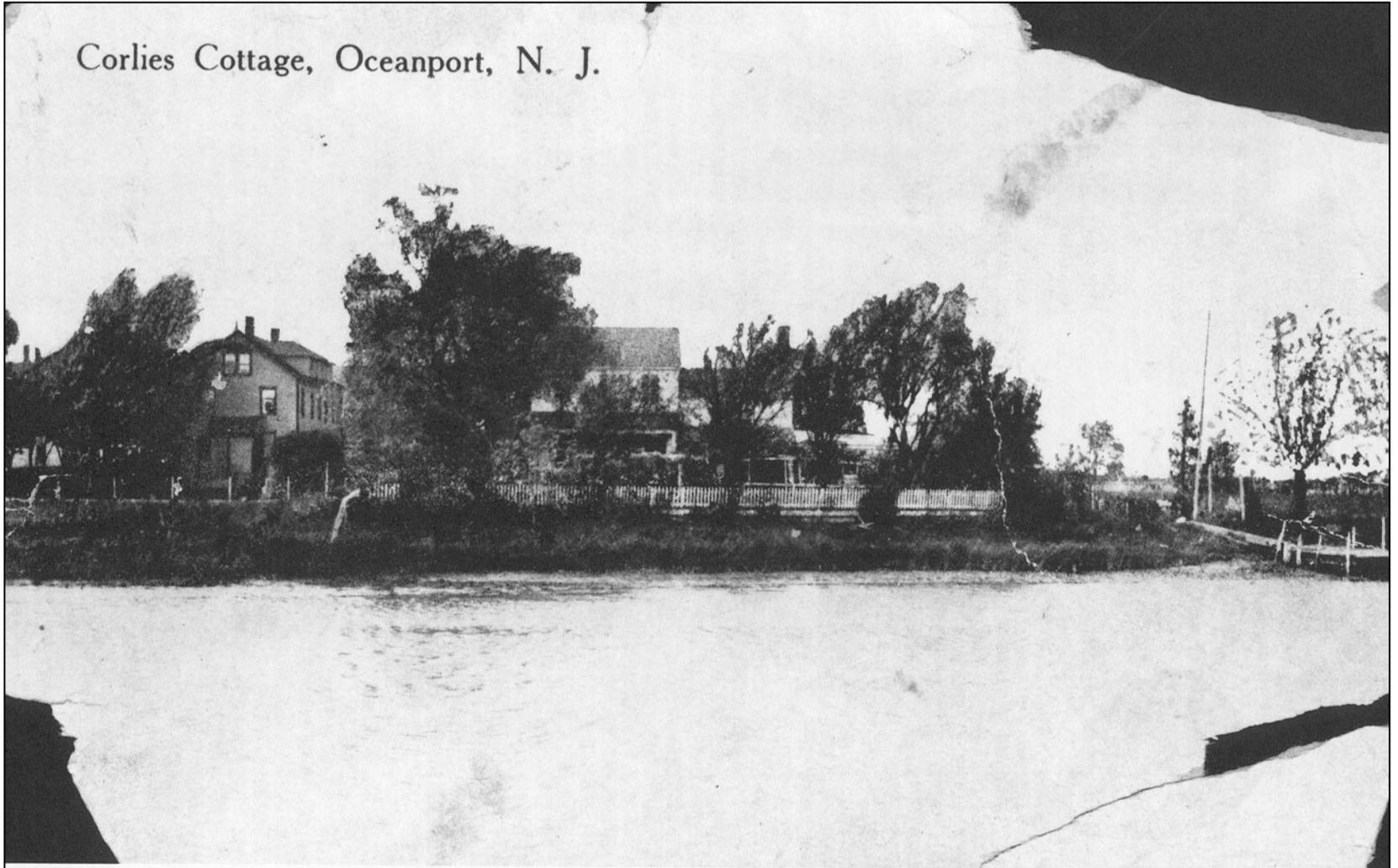


Map courtesy of the Communications Electronics Command Archives, Fort Monmouth, N.J.

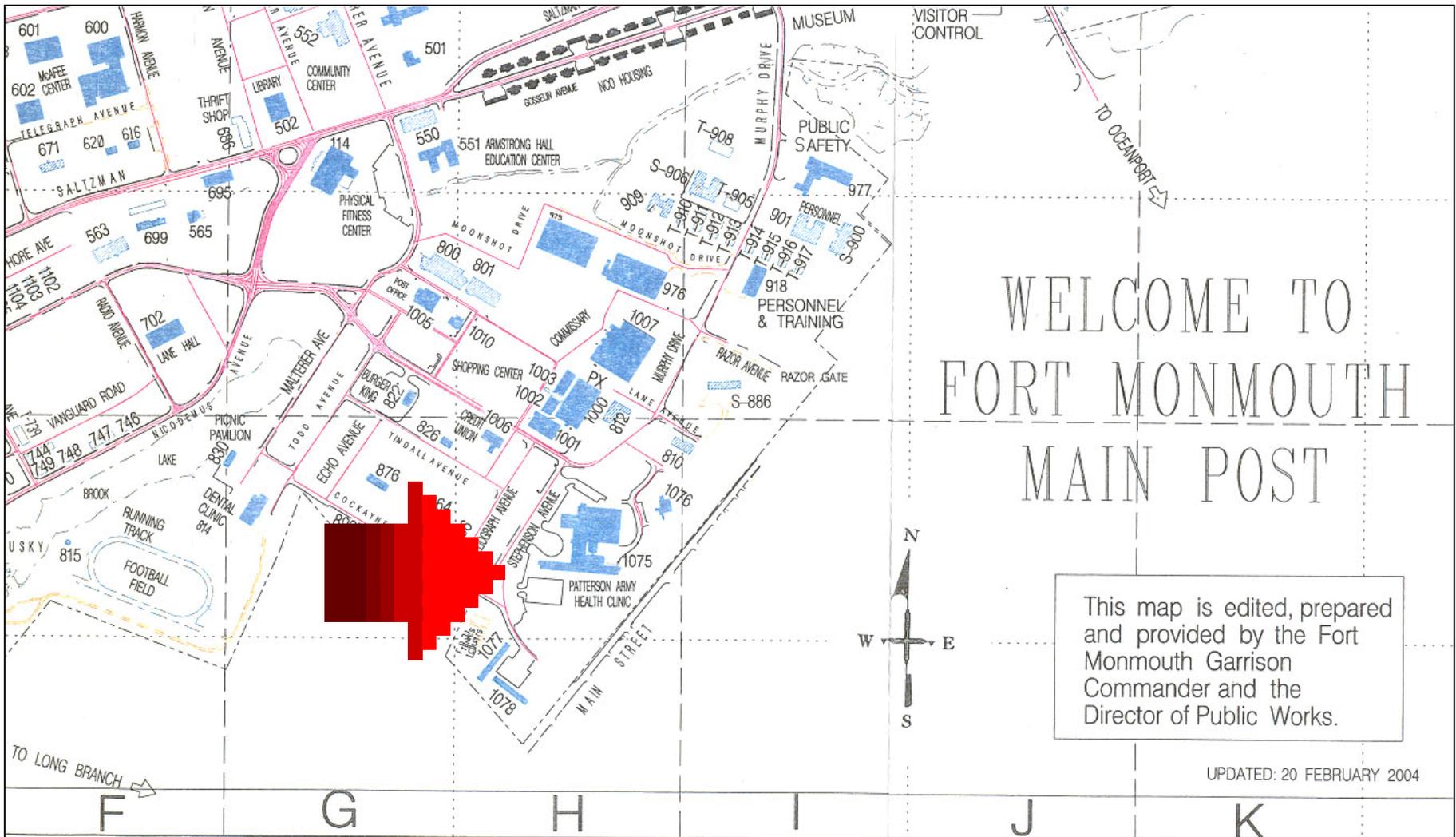


Map courtesy of the Communications Electronics Command Archives, Fort Monmouth, N.J.

Corlies Cottage, Oceanport, N. J.



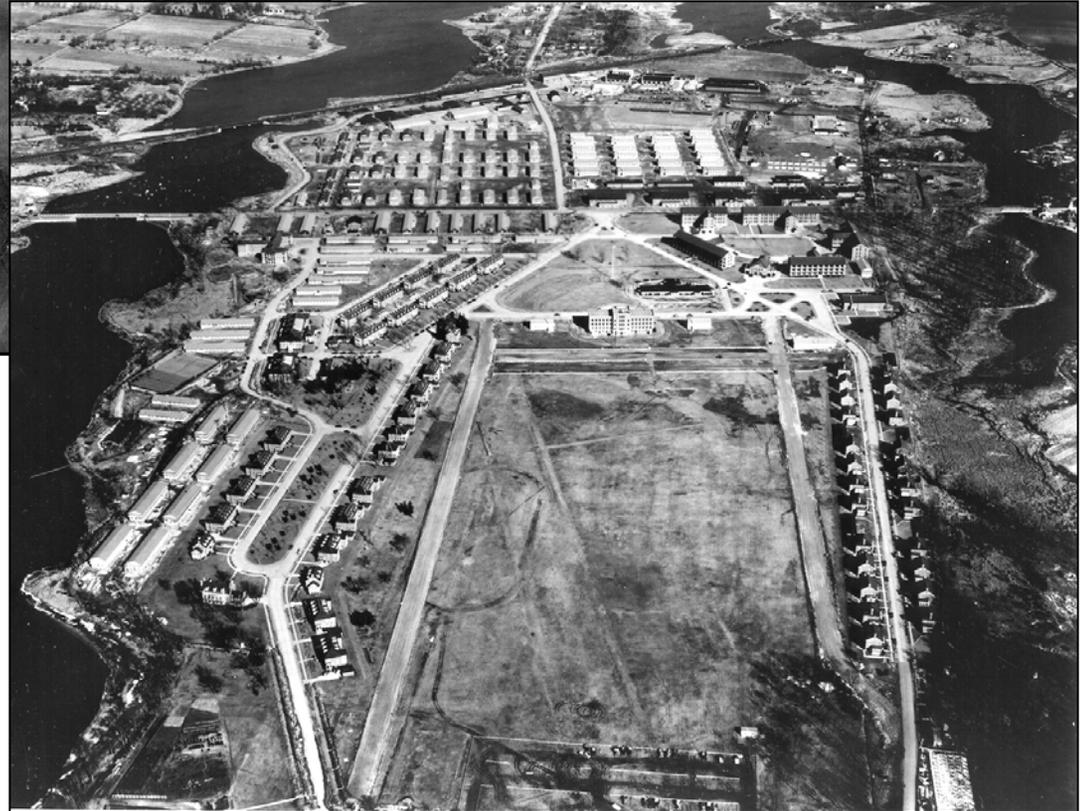
Photograph courtesy of the Communications
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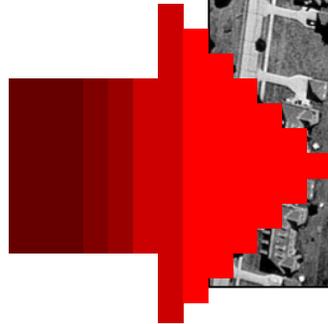
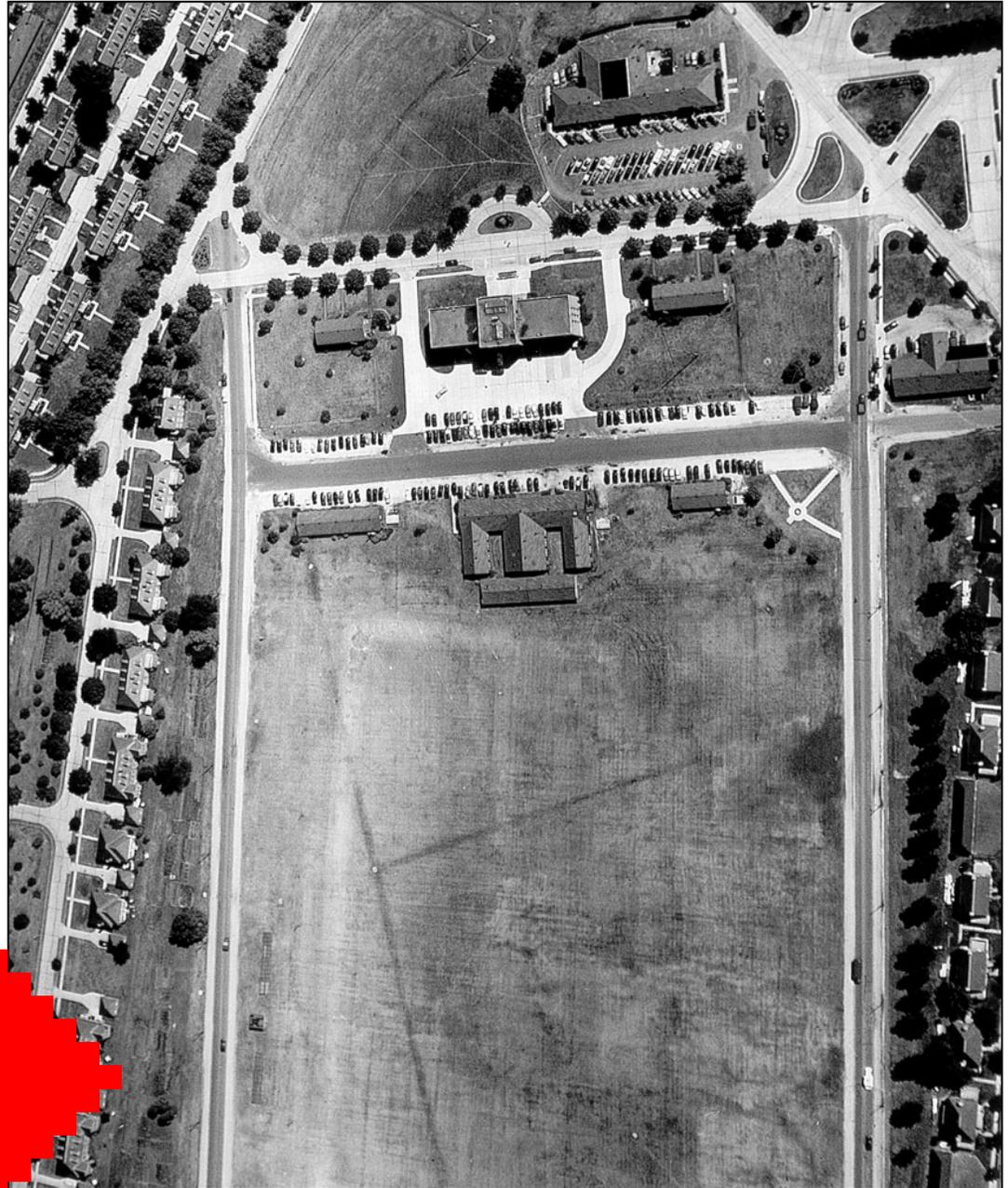
The arched, wooden entrance of the original track was located near the corner of Park Ave and Broad Street.

Map courtesy of MapQuest.



The outline of the second Monmouth Park Racetrack is clearly visible in these undated aerial photographs. U.S. Army Photographs.

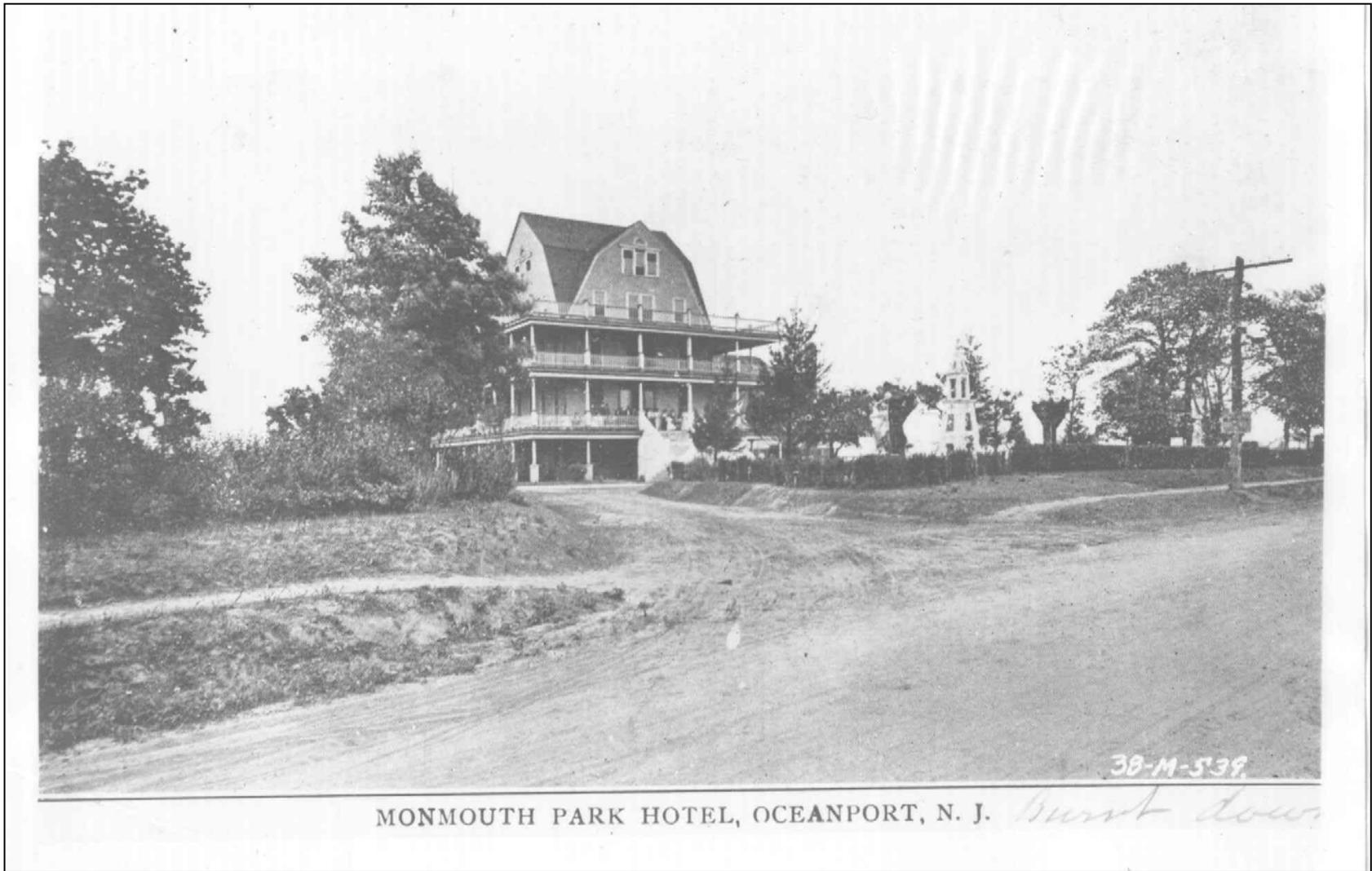
Today, no impression
of the track remains.
U.S. Army
Photograph.





Monmouth Park Hotel, looking north.

Photograph courtesy of the Communications Electronics Command
Archives, Fort Monmouth, N.J.

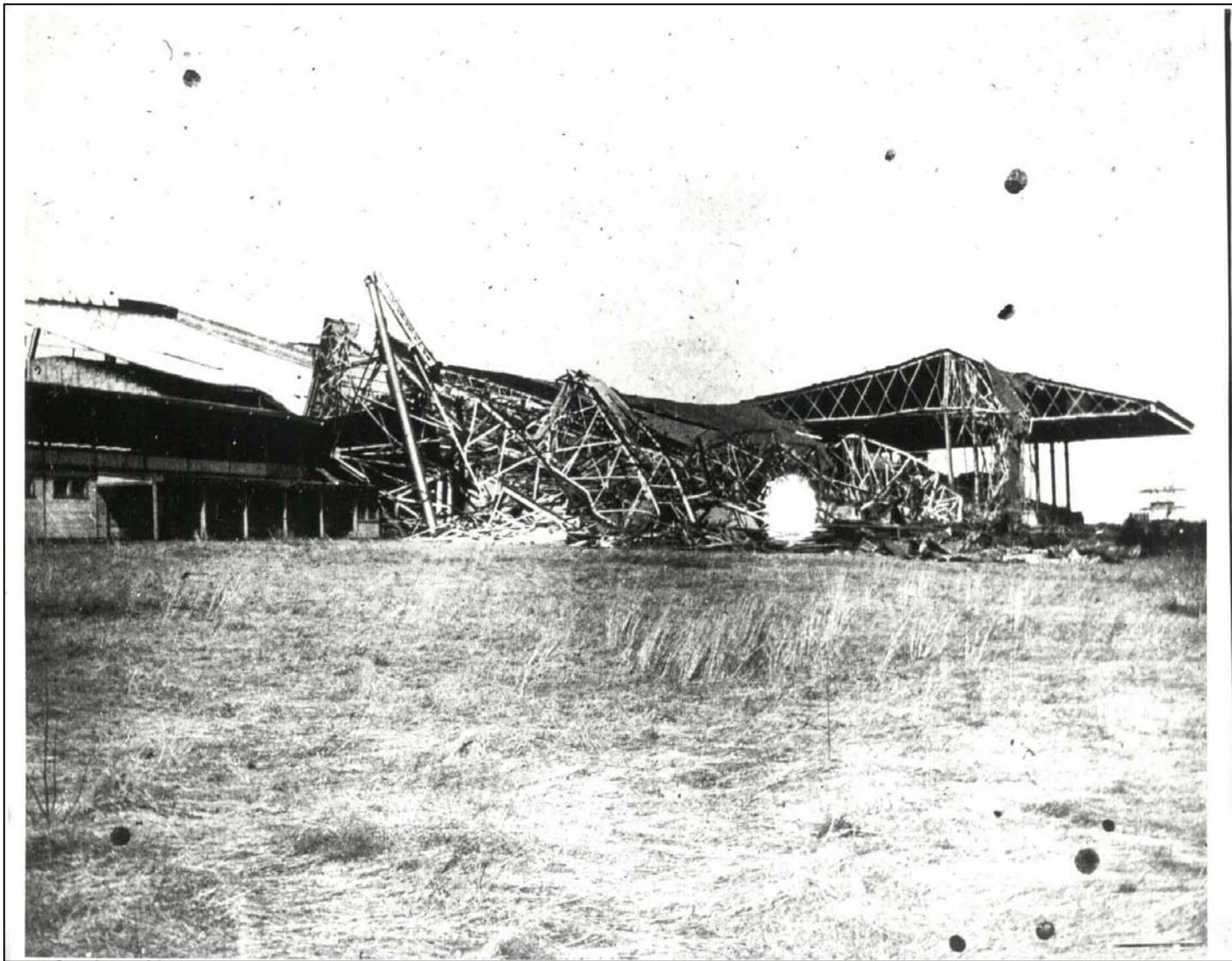


Photograph courtesy of the Communications Electronics
Command Archives, Fort Monmouth, N.J.



Monmouth Park Hotel.

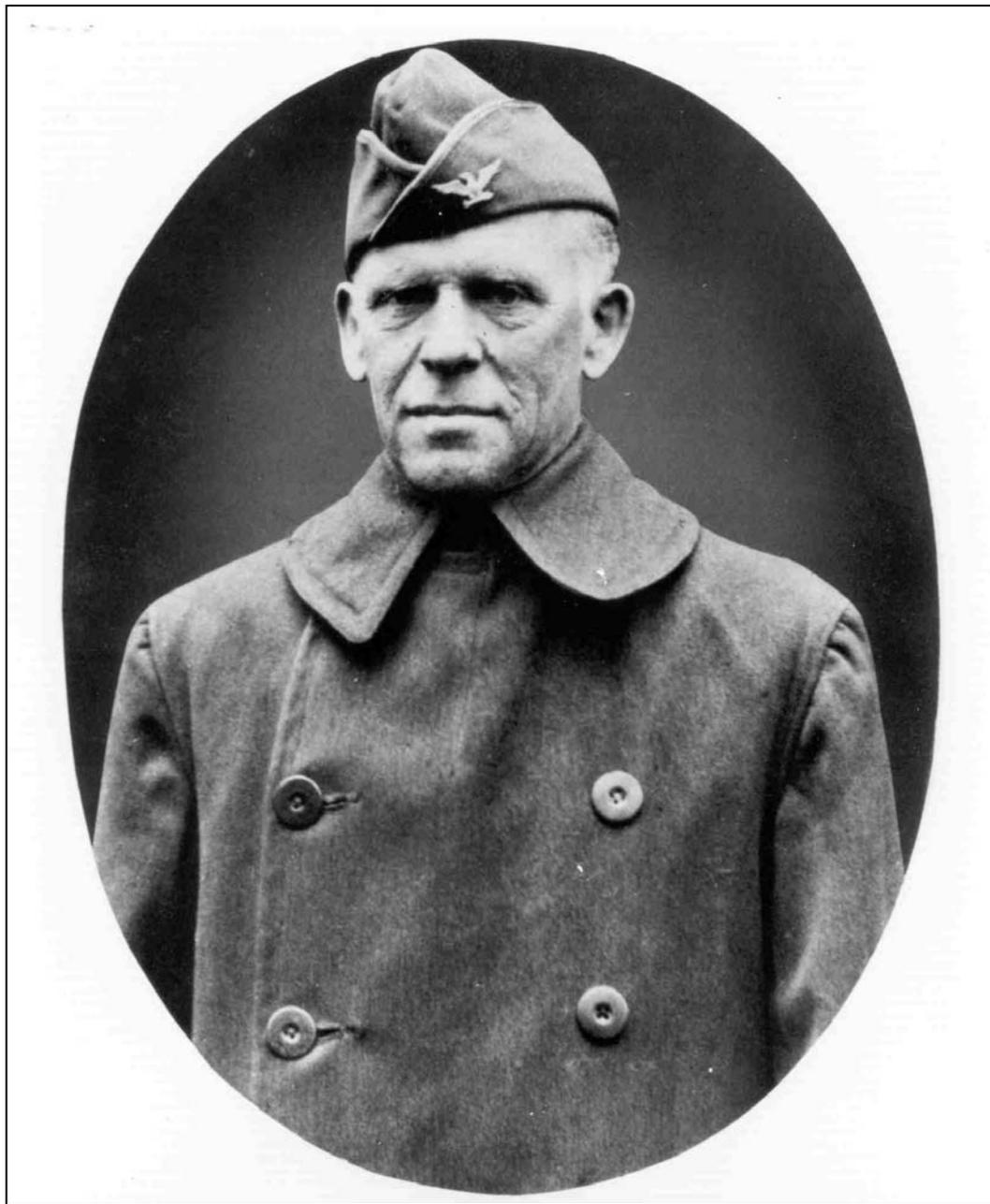
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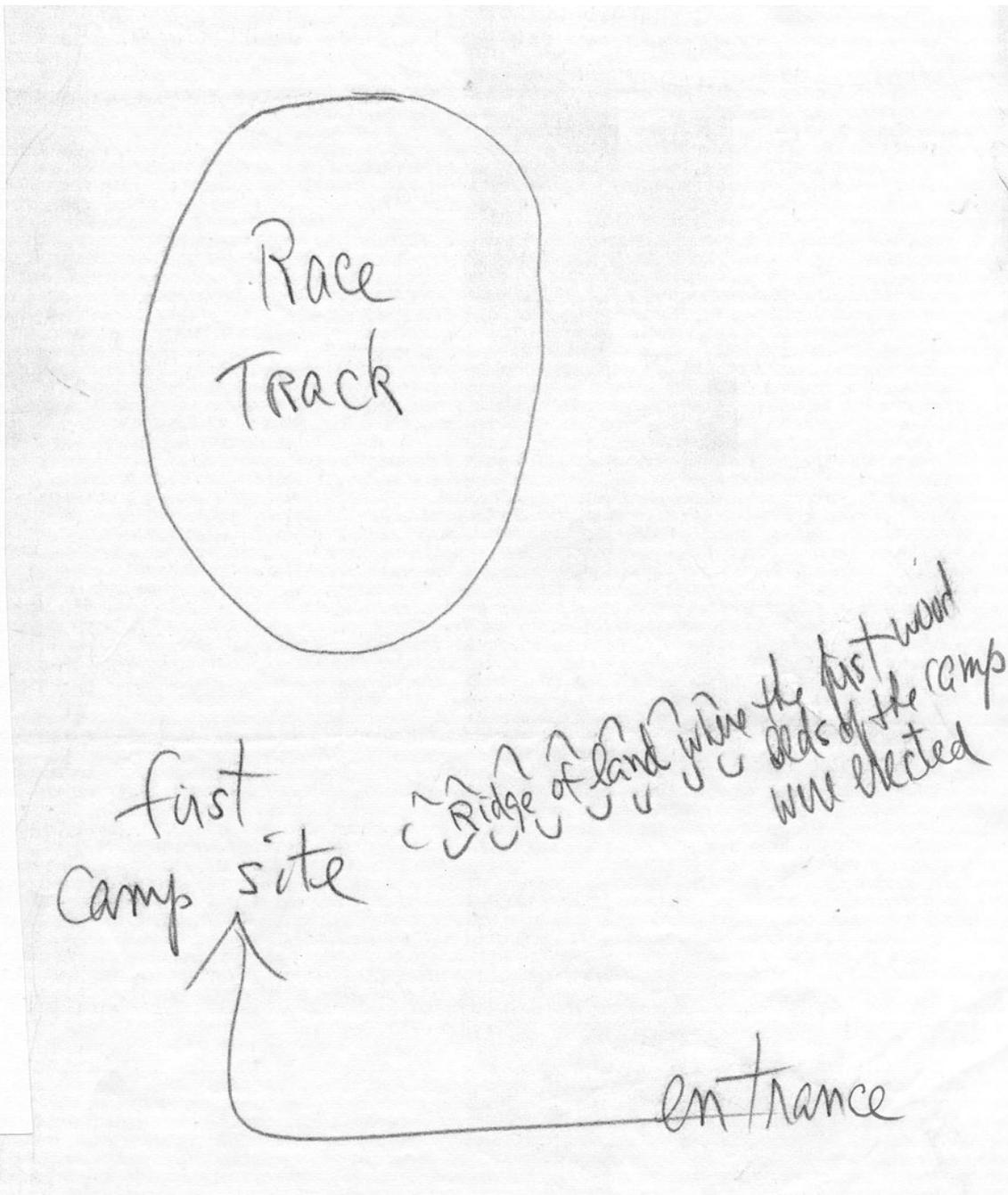
The sad remains of the world's largest grandstand.

Photograph courtesy of the Communications Electronics Command Archives,
Fort Monmouth, N.J.

COL Carl F. Hartmann
(1868-1961)
U.S. Army Photograph.

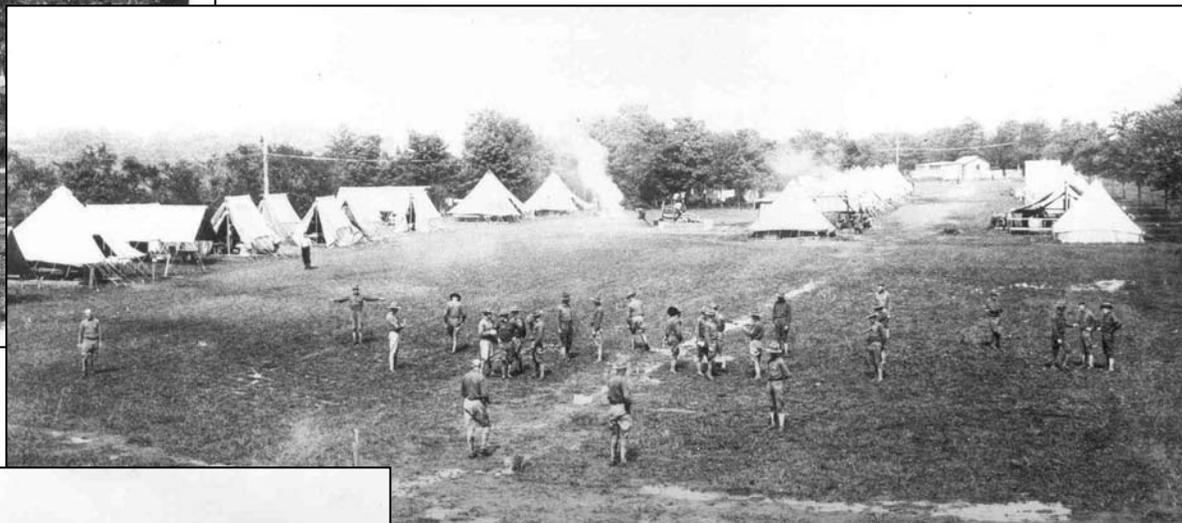
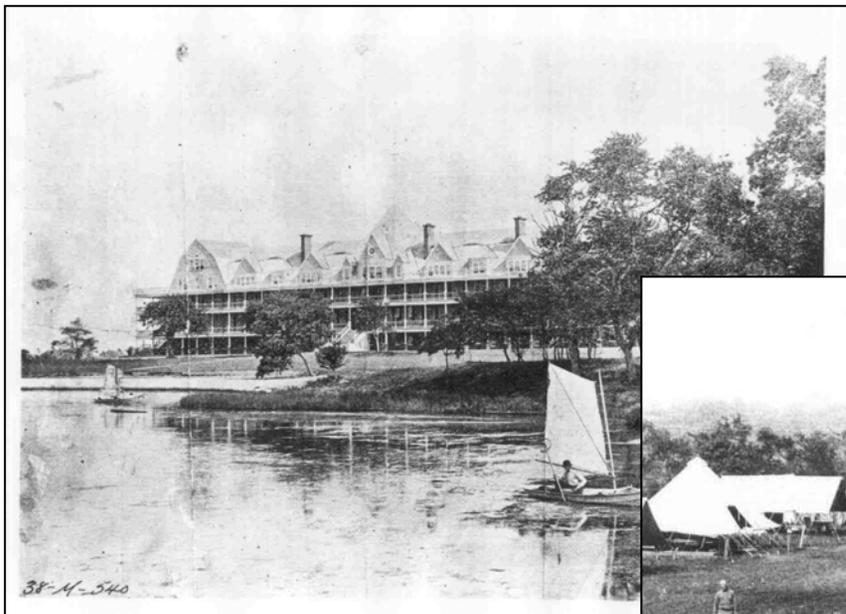


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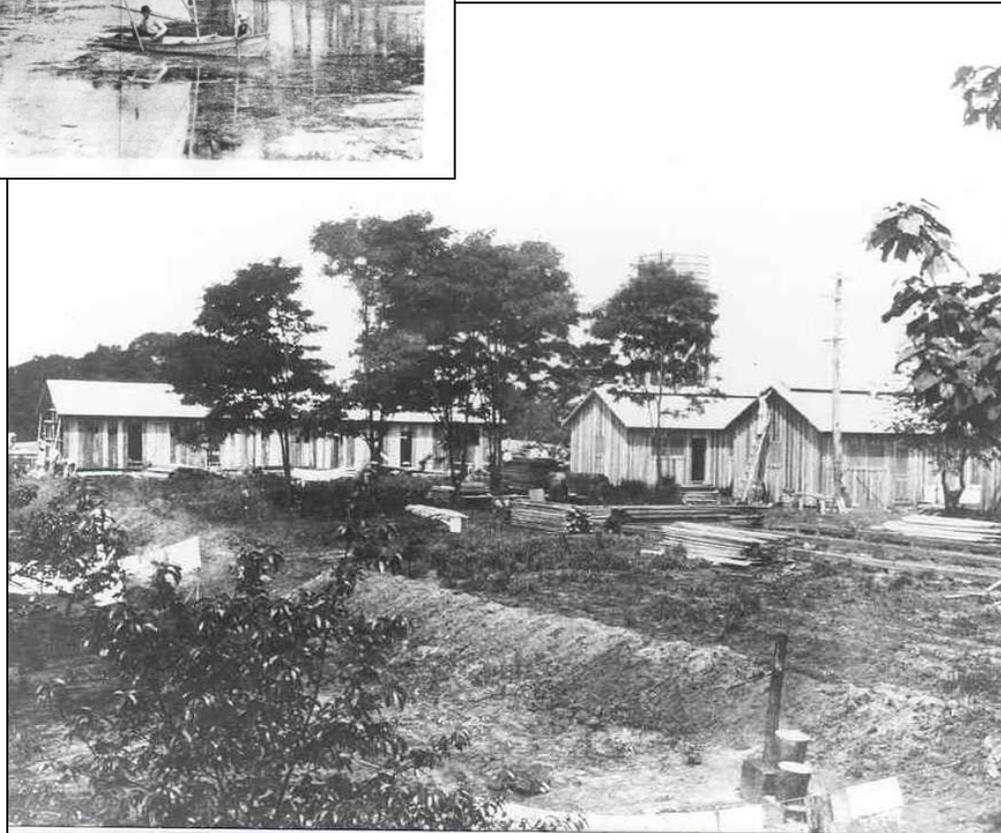
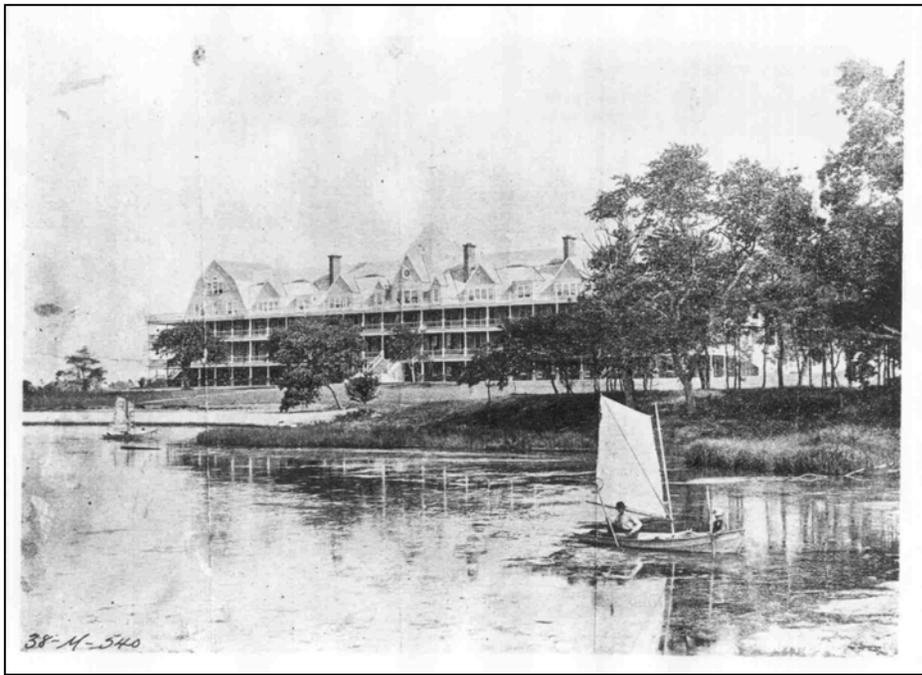


A rough sketch which COL Carl F. Hartmann drew to locate the approximate site of the first Signal Corps Camp at the Monmouth Park Race Track, Little Silver, N.J.

Monmouth Park Hotel, c. 1890



Tent City, Camp Little Silver, 1917.
U.S. Army Photograph.



These
spartan
wooden
barracks
are a far cry
from the
opulent
racetrack
that
preceded
them.

U.S. Army
Photograph.