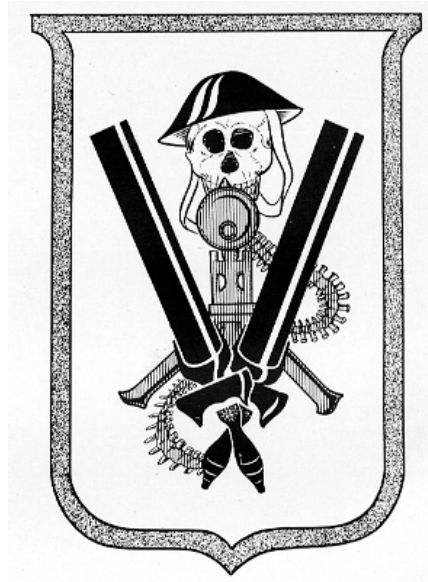


## History of the 31st Infantry Training Battalion



The 31st Infantry Training Battalion was born February 20, 1941, at Camp Croft, South Carolina. Its personnel consisted of a cadre of officers and enlisted men transferred from the 12th Infantry at Arlington Cantonment, Virginia, together with officers transferred from the Infantry School, Fort Benning, Georgia. Although activation occurred on February 20, preparations and actual organization began three months earlier when Lieutenant Colonel L. E. MacGregor was placed on duty at Arlington Cantonment for the purpose of selecting and training a group of officers and men to form what was then known as the Sixth Training Battalion, a heavy weapons company unit for the Fourth Corps Area Replacement Center No. 2 at Spartanburg, South Carolina. Shortly thereafter, Lieutenant Colonel Wallace B. Hackett arrived to assist Colonel MacGregor. Officers and men actually arrived at Camp Croft February 19 and the battalion was formally activated the following day.

The original officers and men will long remember the mud, the unfinished buildings and the general hustle and bustle of a newly organized post which not only was apparent upon arrival but continued for some time thereafter. However, the leadership of Colonel MacGregor and the intensive training which had occurred at Arlington Cantonment soon began to bear fruit and the spirit and high performance which has characterized this battalion in the intervening year soon became apparent. The 31st Battalion, although it was activated along with the original units at the camp, did not move into its permanent quarters for some time. It was a proud day when during the latter part of March, permanent quarters were assigned in the Fifth Regimental Area and moving day arrived. The busy days obtaining lumber and other materials for completion of barracks, mess halls, and administration buildings, and the many individual feats of magic in obtaining

necessary materials out of thin air, will be long remembered not only by these involved but also by the many who have enjoyed the benefits of the early labors since then. Roads, paths, and duck-board walks soon conquered the mud, and real existence began.

It was an exciting moment when early on the morning of April 30, after numerous false alarms, our first trainload of trainees actually pulled into the Camp Croft siding and the real work for which we had prepared for so many months began. Within 24 hours, our strength increased from 150 officers and men to over 1,300 and the trials and tribulations of Company A in operating three mess halls simultaneously will long be remembered, particularly by those who consumed beans continuously until other rations could be obtained. However, the excess men were soon transferred to their proper organizations and the real training began.

The real worth of the officers, noncommissioned officers, and other members of the permanent cadre soon became apparent as the original group of trainees became organized and developed the same spirit and pride in themselves which originally had been noticeable in the others. The caliber of instructions and the manner of performance soon became a matter of general discussion and served as a real objective for the other two heavy weapons battalions upon their formation some time later. The real accomplishments became known later, however, after the original group of trainees had completed the scheduled 13 weeks and had departed for duty at Indiantown Gap with the 28th Division. The rapid advancement of the men in their new units, together with the many commendations from both men and others who saw them in operation, indicated beyond doubt that their basic training had been complete and that the well known spirit and performance of the 31st Battalion would not soon be lost.

The battalion was filled the second time September 15 and the new men likewise soon found their places. This second group was aided materially by the many instructors who had been retained from the first group and who were splendid examples of what our training could accomplish. The high state of morale as evidenced by the absence of men AWOL and the low confinement, hospital and venereal rate resulted in a commendation from the Commanding General to our Commanding Officer, Colonel MacGregor. Early in November, Colonel MacGregor received orders transferring him to the new Infantry Replacement Training Center at Neosho, Missouri, and left on leave. Major M. D. Harris who had originally commanded Company D and had then served as Adjutant and Executive Officer assumed command. Colonel MacGregor's orders were subsequently changed and after a brief tour of Executive Officer, Ninth Infantry Training Regiment, he reported to Fort McClellan, Alabama, where he became Executive Officer of the Replacement Training Center. The second group graduated one week short of the full cycle and left two days after "Pearl Harbor." Although some joined the earlier group at Indiantown Gap, the majority were spread between Forts Dix, Meade, Bragg, and Jackson. They were a sober and thoughtful group as they left.

The increased tempo of affairs was noticed immediately, since new troops started arriving before the others had left and the men of the third cycle thus became real "War Babies." There was a marked change in the new men and their eagerness to learn and to

do was outstanding. The famous split training schedule first became a fact at this time since the Battalion was not filled completely until the middle of January. However, the two and one half companies of old men and the one and one half companies of new men pulled together in grand shape and the same old spirit and pride in the organization was instilled in the new men. Lieutenant Colonel J. R. Urquhart was transferred to Camp Croft from duty with the Organized Reserves in Syracuse, New York, and assumed command of the Battalion February 12. As this book goes to press, the old men of this cycle are approaching their commencement and they, as well as the new men, are beginning to wonder about geography, and what the future holds.

**Taken from "Historical and Pictorial Review, 31<sup>st</sup> ITB, 9th Training Regiment, Camp Croft, SC". Transcribed by Ron Crawley for the Camp Croft Home Page.**

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