

THE POSTWAR PERIOD AND THE BEGINNING OF THE KOREAN WAR

After World War II

From the end of World War II to the advent of the Korean War, the Marine Corps was faced with numerous challenges to meet postwar obligations and to carry on with the usual conduct of business. The Corps first had to demobilize quickly from its peak wartime strength of 485,833 to the authorized peacetime level of 108,200, but at the same time it had to maintain effective occupation forces in Japan and North China. The Corps also sought to reorganize into a smaller and more efficient peacetime organization with qualified personnel. Finally, the challenge of responding to the birth of the atomic age and the subsequent proclamations that there would never be another amphibious assault also occupied the attention of the Marine Corps.

Demobilization of the Troops

Commandant of the Marine Corps General Alexander Archer Vandegrift's (1887-1973) vision of the peacetime Corps, as outlined in Basic Post War Plan No.2, foresaw a personnel strength of some 100,000 officers and men; an FMF of two divisions, one on the West Coast and one on the East Coast, with the latter headquartered at Camp Lejeune; force troops for each division; and a comparably sized Supporting Establishment. Congress allotted the Corps a peacetime strength of 108,200, and the Secretary of the Navy directed that this goal be met by 1 October 1946, along with the discharge of all Reservists and draftees.

In quick succession Marine divisions disbanded to meet the demobilization goal. The 4th MarDiv disbanded on 28 November 1945 at Camp Pendleton; the 3rd MarDiv disbanded on 28 December 1945 on Guam; the 5th MarDiv disbanded on 5 February 1946 also at Camp Pendleton; and the 6th MarDiv demobilized on 26 March 1946 at Tsingtao, China. Separation centers were established at existing facilities, such as Camp Lejeune, and special units were organized there to handle the processing of Marines back to civilian life, as well as the provision of replacements.

Demobilization at Camp Lejeune

August 1945 found Camp Lejeune operating at nearly full capacity in fulfillment of its primary mission of training personnel and organizing replacement drafts for duty with the FMF. The most significant impact of the war's termination was to change the base's emphasis from intensive training programs to the discharge of eligible personnel and reassignment of regulars and other Reservists. At that time Camp Lejeune consisted of Headquarters, Service, Guard, Medical, First Control, Women's Reserve, and Redistribution Battalions; Women's Reserve Schools; Montford Point Camp; and the Marine Training Command (previously identified as TTC). The latter consisted of the Range, Quartermaster, Engineer School, and Signal Battalions; the Cooks and Bakers,

Field Medical Service (FMSS), and War Dog Training Schools; and the Specialist Training and Infantry Training Regiments (ITR). Tenants aboard the base included the U.S. Naval Hospital, to which four additional wards had been added in January 1945, the U.S. Coast Guard Detachment, and the Field Medical Research Laboratory.

At the war's conclusion in August 1945, 31,000 Marines were stationed at Camp Lejeune, a sharp reduction from the wartime peak of 42,000 the previous year. The numbers continued to decrease throughout the rest of the year, so that the base's average population for 1945 was only 26,178. Demobilization affected not only the Operating Forces, but also the Supporting Establishment forces. By May 1946 the base population was only 12,000, and by June the Marine Corps had been reduced to 68 percent of its V-J Day strength. The Corps reached its required peacetime strength by 1 October 1946; Camp Lejeune's average Marine population for that year was only 9,943.

The Marine Training Command and its Headquarters Battalion had been disbanded by 1 December 1945. In January 1946 the Rifle Range Battalion was reduced to a Range Detachment of one officer and 21 enlisted men. By that summer the Signal Battalion, with facilities located on Onslow Beach, had been transferred to Camp Pendleton. The Specialist Training Regiment was eliminated on 15 July 1946, and its various battalions and schools were either discontinued or transferred to other military organizations. The Cooks and Bakers School was transferred to the Quartermaster Battalion, and the regiment's War Dog Training School was disestablished in August 1946, followed by the disbanding of the Engineer School Battalion in July 1947. The FMSS, the FMF's source of combat-oriented corpsmen and surgeons, fell by the wayside on 1 September 1945. Perhaps the greatest indicator of the ongoing reduction of the Marine Corps in capability and strength was the passing of the ITR in September 1945 and with it "Tent Camp University," where tens of thousands of boots from Parris Island had been sent for postgraduate training in the methods of combat. Colonel Lewis B. "Chesty" Puller closed both ITR and the Tent Camp as their last commander, put the padlock on the gate, and left them in caretaker status, until the Korean War resurrected their vital role along with those of other combat specialist schools.

New Role and New Tenants

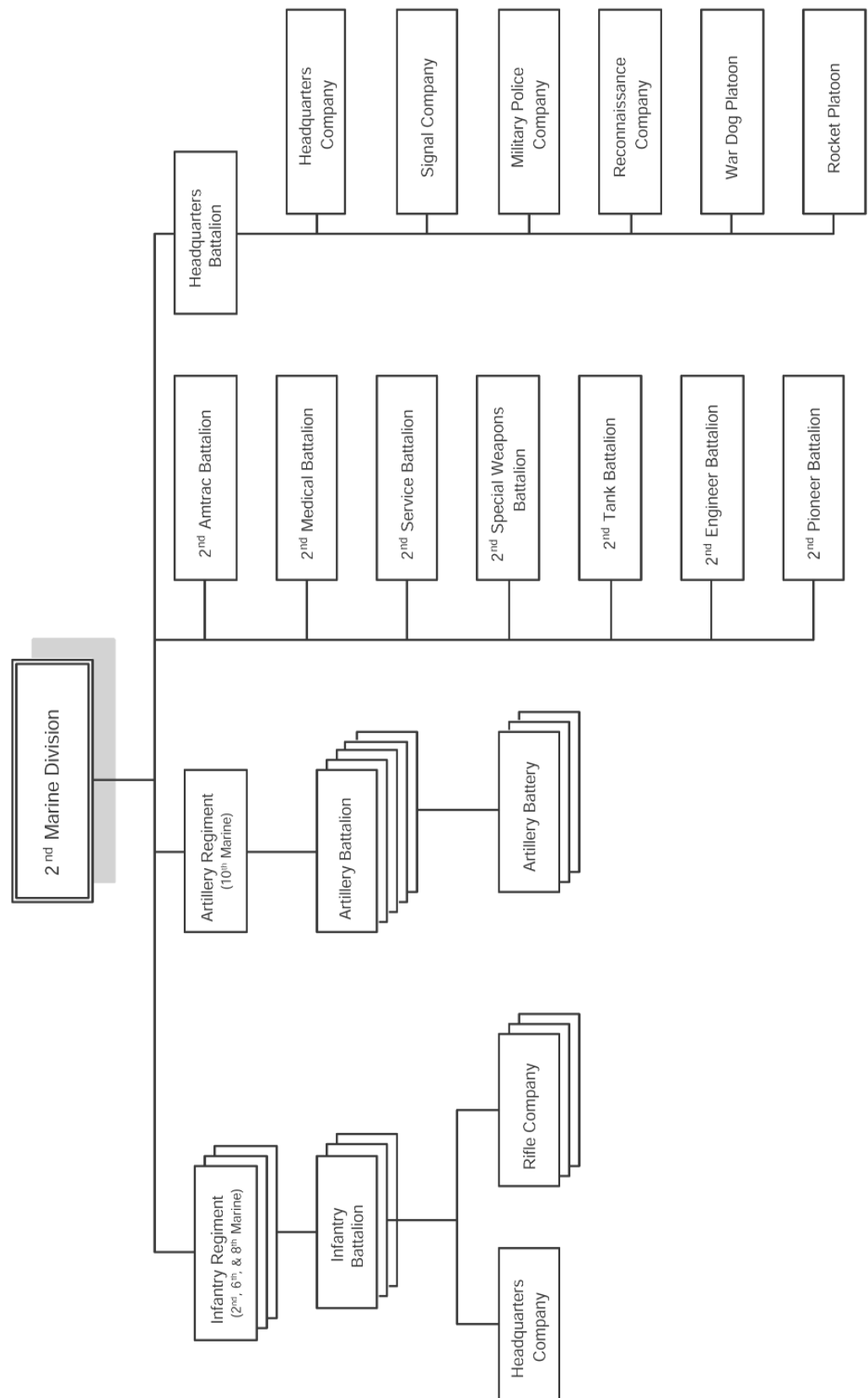
Although designated as a permanent base in 1942, Camp Lejeune's continued peacetime existence was reaffirmed during hearings before the House Appropriations Committee on the First Supplemental Appropriations Reduction Bill of 1946. With Europe becoming the immediate focus of American foreign policy, Lejeune's location on the East Coast helped entrench its role in the Cold War. The Fleet Marine Force, Pacific (FMFPac) had served as operational headquarters on the West Coast since 1944, but a new need existed for a counterpart to control the Operating Forces on the East Coast. Thus, on 16 December 1946 Fleet Marine Force, Atlantic (FMFLant) was activated at Camp Lejeune and the Commanding General of the 2nd MarDiv, Major General Thomas E. Watson, was named the force commander.

For several months after the end of World War II, the 2nd MarDiv (its infantry regiments were the 2nd, 6th, and 8th) had served on occupation duty on the southern Japanese island of Kyushu. As part of the FMF's postwar mission,



(2) 2nd Marine Division organization during its last major campaign of WWII, the seizure of Tinian (24 Jul - 1 Aug 1944).

F-Series T/O



U.S. Marines occupied several southern Japanese islands and an area in North China to serve as a barrier to Soviet expansion. Occupation duty for the 2ndMarDiv ended in July 1946; the division, soon to be the major component of the newly formed FMFLant, arrived at Camp Lejeune 12 July 1946. The 4th Marines, formerly part of the 6thMarDiv, deployed from China to be assigned to the 2nd MarDiv and arrived at Camp Lejeune on 1 October 1946, but were later deactivated. The 8th Marines, also later deactivated, arrived at Camp Lejeune on 15 July, and the 10th Marines, the artillery regiment, arrived shortly afterwards on 26 July. The division was far from being a Table of Organization (T/O) wartime division of 19,176 officers and men, under which the Corps had finished World War II, and the situation would only worsen until the outbreak of the Korean War. Therefore, by 1949 the 2nd MarDiv consisted of only a depleted artillery regiment and two understrength infantry regiments, the 2nd and the 6th Marines; two infantry battalions per regiment and two rifle companies per battalion. This was the organization of the 2nd MarDiv when the Korean War began in 1950.

In late 1946 a naval squadron was returned to the Mediterranean as part of a traditional diplomatic role in that area of the world that continues today. Beginning 5 January 1948, FMFLant Marines deployed from Camp Lejeune to accompany the squadron, going once again to the "Shores of Tripoli," to reinforce the American presence in that troubled area and to support the U.S. policy of containment. The first battalion that deployed from the 2nd MarDiv was the 2nd Marines. This was the beginning of Camp Lejeune's role as home base for the semi-annual rotation of afloat battalions from the 2nd MarDiv, and later the Marine Expeditionary Units (MEU), into the Mediterranean.

The Reserves

Another clearly apparent reality to Marine planners following World War II was that the rapidly diminishing active-duty strength of the Corps would severely limit the ability to field a wartime strength unit, even one division, should a contingency arise. In late 1946, once the Corps had reached its peacetime strength, it would have taken 50,000 additional Marines to fill out two divisions and two aircraft wings. The only alternative to ensure a ready supply of personnel was the Reserves. Thus, the reduction in the Regular Establishment required a correspondingly heavy reliance on the Marine Corps Reserve; this was also the case in other branches of the service.

The Marine Corps therefore undertook to create and maintain a strong and militarily proficient Reserve Component. In 1946 Headquarters Marine Corps (HQMC) revived the Division of Reserve and ordered it to form 18 infantry battalions, 10 supporting arms battalions, and a corresponding number of aviation units. That year the Regular Establishment numbered 155,592 and the Reserve Component 19,807. By 1947 the strengths were 92,222 and 45,536, respectively, and by 1950 they were 74,247 and 128,959, the number of Reservists being almost double that of the Regular Establishment.

Camp Lejeune played a significant role in creating its share of militarily proficient Reservists. In the summer of 1947 large-scale reserve training was resumed, implemented under the program developed by the Division of Reserve. Every summer thereafter, until the onset of the Korean War, Reservists were put



through two weeks of intense training with smaller numbers undergoing training at Camp Pendleton and Quantico.

Postwar Construction

By the end of World War II construction at Camp Lejeune had resulted in the completion of a fully equipped training center. Over 2,634 buildings and structures, 974 Homosote huts, and 1,440 tents had been erected at the base since April 1941.

Because it had been designated as a permanent base, Camp Lejeune was allotted \$3 million in 1946 for expansion and modification of its facilities in anticipation of the arrival of the 2ndMarDiv from the Pacific. Because of the base's isolation and relative lack of wholesome diversion within the nearby communities, much of the new construction was directed toward the goal of enhancing the quality of life and providing recreational facilities for the Marines. After the war the base commander and namesake of Marston Pavilion, Major General John Marston, who had taken the 1st Marine Brigade (Provisional) to Iceland in 1941, embarked on making Camp Lejeune the most attractive of military facilities in addition to its self-proclaimed title of the "Marine Corps's Largest All-Purpose Base." Marston supplemented the base's natural beauty by planting in select vistas and along the main thoroughfares thousands of flowering trees, roses, camellias, japonicas, rhododendrons, and almost 200,000 azaleas.

By 1949 the 3,154 buildings and structures of Camp Lejeune represented a total construction investment of \$83,815,573, and included 195 barracks with an approximate capacity of 52,000. In 1946 separate beach pavilions for officer, enlisted, and African-American Marines were constructed near the former Signal School facilities to permit better enjoyment of the uncluttered stretches of Onslow Beach. On summer Sundays as many as 10,000 Marines and their dependents visited the beach. Camp Lejeune had one of North Carolina's largest and most comprehensive library systems, with 13 branches and just under 75,000 volumes. Other "special services" facilities included 11 movie theaters and gymnasiums, five service clubs, and 14 post exchanges (Building 37 was the Central Exchange). And the Wallace Creek Pavilion, later named the Marston Pavilion, and its 11,000-square-foot dance floor constituted one of the grandest entertainment facilities on any military establishment.

In 1948 stained glass windows designed by artist Katherine Lamb Tait were installed in the base's Protestant and Catholic chapels, which had been constructed in 1942. The windows in the Protestant chapel are characterized by archangels and scenes from Marine Corps history, and those in the Catholic sanctuary feature scenes of saints and organizational emblems. A window in the Protestant chapel, representing Marines on board the USS Kearsarge in her victorious engagement with the CSA Alabama, is the only monument to Marines in the Civil War on the base. The tenth window in each series shares a common feature, the first escutcheon or emblem of Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune. Camp Lejeune's emblem was first designed as a medallion for placement in the chapels' windows by Private Margaret Kellenberger, who worked in the base's Graphics Section. The emblem is diamond-shaped, featuring a silhouetted pine tree against a rising sun in hues of blue, reddish-orange, and black.

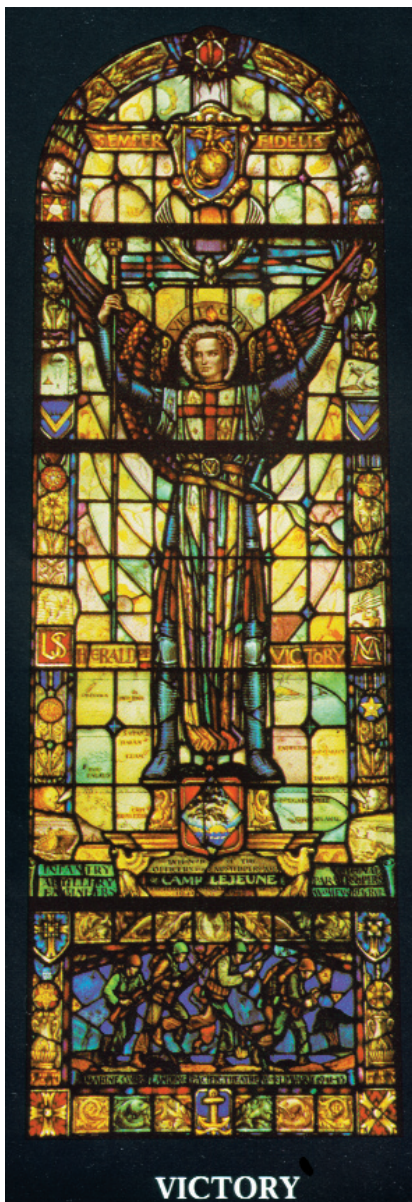


Marston Pavilion, Camp Lejeune, N. C.

Postcard showing Marston Pavilion during the 1950s.



Camp Lejeune's Catholic Chapel was first dedicated as St. Aloysius in 1942. The chapel was rededicated as St. Francis Xavier in 1943.



The "Victory" window is one of ten stained glass windows in Camp Lejeune's Protestant Chapel, constructed in 1942. The windows were designed by New Jersey artist Katherine Lamb Tait and installed in 1948. The windows depict the history of the U.S. Marine Corps from its founding in 1775 to World War II.

More Housing

By February 1946 Jacksonville's population had swelled to 2,826 residents, a 224 percent increase from 1940, as a result of the military presence. During the same period the number of dwellings had increased 264 percent to 780 units. Developments such as the Bayshore Estate, begun in 1944 and initially planned for 225 units, along with the 150-unit Chaney Heights development of June 1945, helped alleviate the overcrowded conditions existing in Jacksonville; however, as noted in the Jacksonville Record on 14 January 1944, "it will not solve the housing problem confronting those who come here to make their home." The problem facing the new wave of arrivals in the postwar period paralleled that of their predecessors at the beginning of World War II: too many people and not enough housing. By 1950 Jacksonville's population was approaching 4,000.

In response to the Korean War mobilization and the subsequent influx of personnel, new housing was built at Camp Lejeune. On 20 June 1951 Major General Ray A. Robinson, the base commander, turned the first shovel of dirt and officially initiated construction for the planned 1,054-unit housing development of Tarawa Terrace I, named for the Marine battle in the Gilbert Islands (November 1943). In September 1952 construction was begun for a virtually identical 1,054-unit development, Tarawa Terrace II, which was located further west in a training area formerly used by the War Dog Training School. The following November a modern shopping center with a supermarket, drugstore, beauty and barber shop, filling station, and post office was opened at Tarawa Terrace II to serve the residents. Midway Park and Tarawa Terrace, having been built on federal property, came under Title VIII of the National Housing Act. The Tarawa Terrace housing area with its large dependent population required the construction of the Tarawa Terrace Elementary School, which opened in 1953. Two other developments under Title IX, that is, those built on civilian property with government assistance, were begun concurrently in Jacksonville: the 862-unit New River Apartments, which were identical to those of Tarawa Terrace, and the 150 units of the Northwoods Homes Development. Housing in both developments was made available to civilian and Marine families assigned to Camp Lejeune.

From 1951 to 1953 military housing, which included trailer parks at Piney Green, Camp Knox, and Camp Geiger, had more than doubled. The housing situation, although not yet sufficient, had been improved as a result of increased funding for the base and special Congressional funding spurred by a 1951 report by the Preparedness Subcommittee of the Senate Armed Services Committee. In an investigation of "Substandard Housing and Rent Gouging of Military Personnel," the committee found that lower pay grade military personnel faced long waiting lists for poor quarters, an overcrowded market, and price gouging by unscrupulous landlords in the Jacksonville area.

On 3 December 1952 the New River Shopping Center, initially consisting of eight stores, opened to serve the approximately 4,500 residents expected eventually to reside in the New River Apartments. Six additional stores had been added by April 1953; others followed, and by the time the shopping center was completed, it had become the new commercial center of Jacksonville and the biggest shopping attraction in coastal North Carolina, drawing customers

from as far as Wilmington, Kinston, and New Bern. In 1953 the privately funded Sabiston Heights development opened, offering an additional 200 units.

Relationship with Jacksonville

In 1953, in an effort to continue and improve relations with the military in all respects, Jacksonville suggested and, with the base's concurrence and participation, organized a Civilian/Military Liaison Committee, consisting of an equal number of base officers and city businessmen, that met and still meets once a month to achieve those ends. They were later joined by the Chamber of Commerce's Military Affairs Committee, which promotes good will through the sponsorship of various activities that bring the two communities together. Jacksonville, which by 1950 had gained a population of sufficient size to be considered a "city" and given Onslow County its first "urban population," and the base were growing together for their mutual benefit.



Tarawa Terrace Housing Units, 1952.

The Corps Integrates

During World War II a total of 19,268 African-American Marines served in the Marines Corps, with 12,738 going overseas, all graduates of Montford Point Camp. By October 1944 African-American Marines made up 3 percent (15,131) of the Marines' total strength (450,000). After the war the requirements of rapid demobilization, budgetary limitations, and postwar reorganization proportionally reduced the number of African Americans serving in the active Corps. The peacetime Corps had only 2,800 African-American members, which later fell to a low of 1,500. As during the war, African-American Marines were restricted to segregated units and to the Steward's Branch.

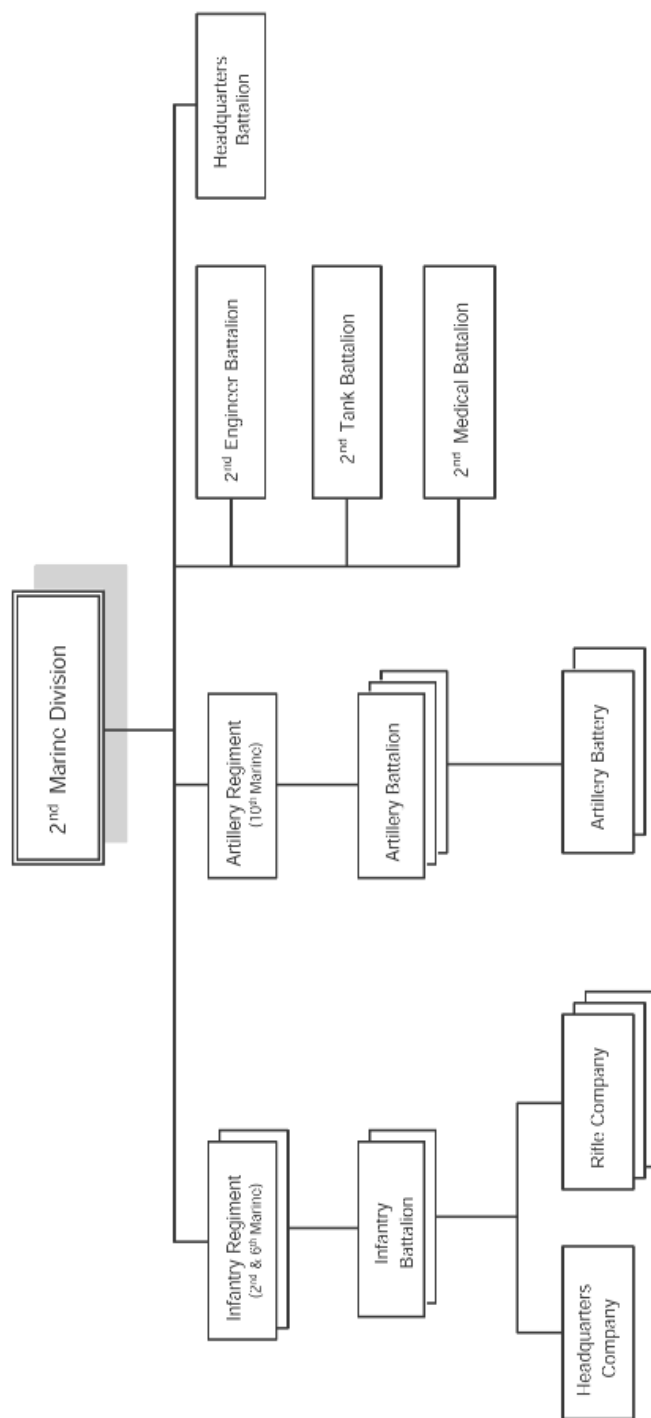
On 10 June 1946 a new recruit depot and training company was reactivated at Montford Point Camp. Sergeant Major Gilbert "Hashmark" Johnson, later the namesake of Camp Johnson, served as the sergeant major of the new depot, and First Sergeant Edgar R. Huff became the field sergeant major.

Executive Order 9981 of 26 July 1948 eliminated color bias in the armed services, and it was also becoming increasingly apparent that the maintenance of a separate facility was uneconomical. The Marine Corps accepted desegregation and switched African-American recruit training to Parris Island in the spring of 1949.

In 1974, Montford Point was renamed Camp Johnson in honor of Sgt.Maj. Gilbert "Hashmark" Johnson, who is depicted in this mural on Building M516.



(3) 2nd Marine Division organization on the eve of the Korean War during the Spring of 1950.
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* The Division has lost its traditional triangular structure due to the austere defense budgets of the late 1940s.