

HICKAM FIELD, THE ARMY'S NEWEST AND LARGEST AIRDROME

By Captain H.B. Nurse, Quartermaster Corps

Through weird purple lights of a tropical dawn there came a mighty armada, roaring its way through tranquil skies over these enchanted islands of romantic Hawaii. The 18th Wing of Uncle Sam's mighty air force is "Coming Home." "Home," with all that the word implies, for Brigadier General Barton K. Yount, beloved and respected by every man of his command, has taken possession, for the U.S. Army, of this magnificent air base, which is destined to be, when completed, not only the most important unit of aerial defense within the Hawaiian Department, but the largest airdrome in this broad land of ours.

The young aviator fortunate enough to be assigned to the 18th Wing will find on "reporting in" that the charms of Hawaiian tradition have been interwoven by the creative mind in the development of this beautiful post.

As a kamaaina to a malihini, to one who is coming for his first tour in these tropical islands, let me quote for his enlightenment Mark Twain's early impression: "No land in all the world has any deep, strange charm for me but this one; no other land could so lovingly and beseechingly haunt me sleeping and waking through half a lifetime, as that one has done. Other things leave me, but it abides; other things change, but it remains the same. For me its balmy airs are always blowing, its summer seas flashing in the sun; the pulsing of its surf-beat is in my ear; I can see its garlanded crags, its leaping cascades, its plume palms drowsing by the shore; its remote summits floating like islands above the cloudrock; I can feel the spirit of its woodland solitude; I can hear the splash of its brooks; in my nostrils still lives the breath of flowers that perished twenty years ago." And THIS is Hawaii.

Nestling on these sunny shores, out here in the Paradise of the Pacific, Hickam Field has come into its own. It is situated seven miles northwest of the City of Honolulu, and lies between the Navy Yard, Pearl Harbor and Fort Kamehameha. This new Air Field was officially designated as HICKAM FIELD in commemoration of Lieut. Colonel Horace M. Hickam, Air Corps, who was killed in line of duty at Fort Crockett, Texas, on November 5, 1934, in an airplane accident.

In 1928, the necessity for expanding the air defenses of the Hawaiian Islands became apparent to the War Department, at which time a Board of Officers was appointed to select a suitable airdrome site on the Island of Oahu for this purpose. Several tentative sites were investigated. However, in the opinion of the Board, all but one site failed to possess the necessary characteristics of an

ideal airdrome. Recommendations were made to the War Department that this particular site, consisting of 2225.46 acres, be secured from private owners, comprised of the Bishop Estate, Damon Estate and Queen Emma Estate.

During 1928, the U.S. Attorney General started condemnation proceedings which were later suspended due to lack of funds. Nothing further was done concerning the condemnation of this land until January, 1935, when proceedings were reinstated against the property owners. Title was acquired to the property on April 9, 1935, at a cost of \$1,091,238.12, the funds having been provided for under Public No. 21, of the 74th Congress, approved March 21, 1935.

On July 26, 1935, Captain H.B. Nurse, Quartermaster Corps, arrived in Hawaii to assume the duties of Constructing Quartermaster. After making a thorough examination of the site, a layout plan was prepared for this vast airdrome, and this was approved on August 16, 1935, by Major General Hugh A. Drum, the Department Commander.

Major Don L. Hutchins, Air Corps, arrived in the Department shortly before Captain Nurse, and assumed the duties of Air Corps Representative and Technical Advisor to the Constructing Quartermaster. Major Hutchins and Captain Nurse had worked together on Air Corps construction for more than six years. At the expiration of Major Hutchins' tour, when he was ordered to the Mainland to attend the Industrial College, Major Harold L. Clark, Air Corps, an old-timer in the Building and Grounds Division in the Office of the Chief of the Air Corps, and with whom Captain Nurse had previously served, was ordered to Hawaii as replacement in this important position.

Lieut. Jesse H. Veal, Quartermaster Corps, reported for duty as assistant to the Constructing Quartermaster on November 23, 1935, and was assigned as Executive Officer. The greater portion of his service since graduation from West Point has been with Captain Nurse.

On September 1, 1935, Master Sergeant Harry A. Chapman, Air Corps, was assigned to the project as Assistant to the Constructing Quartermaster and placed in charge of work to be performed by the Purchase and Hire Section; work for which he was well qualified and which he handled very efficiently until impaired health compelled his return to the Mainland, at which time Lieut. Archibald W. Lyon, Quartermaster Corps, a young officer who received his initial grooming during the construction of Hamilton Field, under Captain Nurse's supervision, took charge of this work.

The remainder of the organization was

made up of Civil Service employees, many of whom were transferred from mainland posts, and had served previously with Captain Nurse at various stations from Washington, D.C., to as far distant as the Philippine Islands.

When completed, Hickam Field will have barracks that will provide accommodations for six thousand enlisted men and more than eight hundred dwellings to house the commissioned and noncommissioned personnel. There will be eight double hangars with over twelve acres of floor space. The Hawaiian Air Depot, which is also an important part of Hickam Field, will be provided with 380,000 square feet of floor space for the storage of supplies and will be equipped with a most modern shop with more than eight acres of the latest type of machinery and equipment.

The Japanese have a proverb which embodies the theory that beautiful surroundings play a great part in the building of good men. Major General Hugh A. Drum, the Department Commander at the time this work was initiated, was a believer in the building up of "good men," thereby moulding strong organizations, which would in turn result in a decidedly efficient fighting machine.

First, he believed thoroughly in a "Happy Garrison," which is the indication of contentment within the organization; second, he strongly agreed with Ruskin, who once said: "One will so often think that beauty is expensive, which is wrong, - it is ugliness that costs." With this in mind, General Drum in the initial plans tried to make Hickam Field not only a "model of efficiency," but a beautiful place in which to live.

Colonel Delos C. Emmons was Wing Commander at the inception of Hickam Field, and was subsequently relieved by General Yount. Both officers took a keen interest in converting what only yesterday were tangles of Algaroba and lantana jungle into a model Army post which, if General Yount's prophecy comes true, will become one of the show places of Hawaii.

The Quartermaster Corps, charged with the construction of this project, is accomplishing results through the medium of very careful and thorough planning. The day is never so crowded with routine duties but that Colonel C.L. Corbin, the Department Quartermaster, finds time to study the minute details that go into the construction of a post of this magnitude.

Every home is not only being so placed as to avail itself of the prevailing trade winds, but also the mountain scenery or marine view. The homes will be in keeping with the Hawaiian atmosphere and traditions, rather than being set "four square," and each a replica of the other, as were the buildings of our earlier Army Posts, when it was considered essential to follow the lines of a cita-

del, a tradition which was handed down from the time of Caesar.

At Hickam Field, streets curve and wind in an easy, carefree manner, with a leisurely Hawaiian indifference to the Euclidean maxim concerning two points and one straight line; yet, it contains organic unity, as well as direct arteries of circulation leading to various focal points.

In the technical area, however, lethargy is abated and is replaced with an alert efficiency.

Landscaping, in keeping with Hawaiian sub-tropical growth, is keeping pace with the construction. Over 300,000 trees and shrubs have already been propagated at little cost. Had this work been delayed until completion of construction and the necessary trees of proper growth purchased in the open market, it would have resulted in the expenditure of several hundred thousands of dollars. As it is, we have 175 varieties of trees and shrubs with 41 varieties of palms alone. Many of these have been set out along the streets and boulevards and by the time Hickam Field reaches completion, they will have matured into well developed young trees.

Endeavoring to get away from a stereotyped form of building, it is also hoped to develop individuality in the grounds and landscaping as well, so that when completed Hickam Field will be not only a credit to our Government but a source of pride to the good people of fair Hawaii.

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55TH PURSUIT SQUADRON ON THE GO.

The 55th Pursuit Squadron, stationed at Barksdale Field, La., recently returned home from their sojourn at the Floyd Bennett Airport, Brooklyn, N.Y. The News Letter Correspondent states that many lessons were learned of the big city, also that when the Pursuiters arrived at Barksdale Field they stopped there only long enough to secure a clean shirt and a pair of socks, and then seven pilots and fifty percent of the enlisted personnel of the Squadron proceeded to Galveston, Texas, where they were busily engaged in conducting aerial gunnery. "Completion of this phase of pilot training," he says, "will finish our training directive for the Fiscal Year to the satisfaction of all concerned."

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Standardization of the Type A-8, vapor-proof, cabin lamp assembly has been initiated at the Air Corps Materiel Division. This lamp is similar to the Type A-7, except that a 25-watt, 110-volt, double contact bayonet candleabra base lamp is used in lieu of the 21 c.p., 12-16 volt, single contact, bayonet candleabra base lamp.