Camp Bowie Army Base, Brownwood Texas

Official Base Website: https://tmd.texas.gov/texas-army-national-guard%E2%80%99s-camp-bowie-and-brownwood-grow-together



Current Role: Active Texas Army National Guard Camp Bowie Training Center; portions of the former WWII camp are now private, municipal, medical, recreational, industrial, and FUDS-managed lands

Camp Bowie at Brownwood was a World War II U.S. Army mobilization, training, prisoner-of-war, rehabilitation, and demobilization installation that has a continuing successor identity as an active Texas Army National Guard training center. It should

be understood in two layers. The first was the large federal wartime camp created in 1940, built hurriedly to train infantry, artillery, armored, cavalry, service, and support organizations, and closed as a federal Army installation in 1946. The second is the smaller postwar Camp Bowie Training Center, retained and later expanded by the Texas National Guard from the former wartime impact and training lands. The present training center remains active, but the World War II federal Army camp closed in 1946.

The Brownwood camp was not the first installation called Camp Bowie. The original Camp Bowie was a World War I National Army camp at Fort Worth, where the 36th Division trained before the post closed in 1919. The Brownwood installation reused the name during the next great mobilization, honoring James Bowie of the Alamo, while creating a new military landscape in west-central Texas. That distinction is important because photographs, historical references, and even modern summaries sometimes blur the Fort Worth World War I camp and the Brownwood World War II camp under the same name.

The site was militarily useful because Brownwood lay near the center of Texas, away from coastal attack risk, with enough open ranch and agricultural land to assemble a very large training reservation. The terrain south and southwest of the city gave the Army room for a main cantonment, infantry ranges, artillery ranges, maneuver grounds, tank and armored training, cavalry and reconnaissance movement, service troops, and a later munitions footprint whose legacy still appears in Formerly Used Defense Sites documentation. Brownwood also offered rail and road access, water, a supportive chamber of commerce, local labor, and an inland location suited to mass training without the density of a major city. The wartime reservation ultimately reached roughly 120,000 to 123,000 acres depending on the source and counting method, while the present National Guard training center occupies 9,297 acres.

Camp Bowie was never a permanent Regular Army fort in the older nineteenth-century sense. It was a mobilization landscape: fast-built, modular, expandable, and intentionally temporary. Yet during the war it became one of the largest training centers in Texas. Its mission was to convert National Guard and Army organizations into deployable forces, support large-scale range and maneuver training, house and discipline tens of thousands of soldiers, hold enemy prisoners of war, process soldiers at war's end, and then dispose of land and buildings once the emergency passed. Its afterlife as a Texas Army National Guard training center preserved the name and a portion of the training mission, but on a much smaller footprint than the wartime camp.

Mission Evolution

Camp Bowie's Brownwood mission grew out of the emergency defense buildup of 1940. The war in Europe had already shown that the United States would need a much larger Army, and Congress authorized the first peacetime draft while President Franklin D. Roosevelt gained authority to mobilize National Guard units. Brownwood civic leaders pushed for a camp, the Army selected the area, and federal funds were allocated in September 1940 for a tent city, hospital, and supporting facilities. Construction began almost immediately.

The original mission was to train the Texas National Guard's 36th Division. This made Camp Bowie a bridge between state militia traditions and the federal wartime Army. The men of the 36th Division were mobilized from communities across Texas, assembled at Brownwood, and subjected to the discipline, physical conditioning, weapons training, field exercises, inspections, and garrison routines required before overseas service. Heavy rains during the first months slowed construction and movement, producing the nickname "Camp Gooie," but the Army continued to build while soldiers were already arriving. The first year and a half depended heavily on tentage, including thousands of pyramidal tents and hundreds of wall tents. More durable buildings followed as the camp grew into a temporary military city.

The mission quickly expanded beyond a divisional home station. The World War II Army needed camps able to support repeated unit cycles, specialized training, range firing, and large maneuver requirements. Camp Bowie became an infantry, artillery, armored, and cavalry training center. The Texas State Historical Association identifies Camp Bowie as an infantry and artillery training center for the 36th Infantry Division, but also records the later presence of the 113th Cavalry, Eighth Army Corps, Third Army personnel under General Walter Krueger, medical units, engineer companies, signal battalions, chemical companies, field artillery groups, the 18th Field Artillery Brigade, the 4th Armored Division, and Fourth Army special troops. Brownwood local history and marker accounts also associate the camp with the 31st Infantry Division and the 13th Armored Division. The installation therefore became a throughput camp, not a static single-unit post.

Camp Bowie's mission also broadened into custody, correction, restoration, and wartime labor management. The post operated a rehabilitation center that attempted to return soldiers to duty rather than simply discharge or imprison them. It also housed a German prisoner-of-war camp, with a later German naval prisoner component, and local sources also refer to Italian prisoners associated with the burial ground history. The POW function placed Camp Bowie within the national and Texas system of wartime enemy-

prisoner camps that supplied agricultural and camp labor while operating under Army custody and Geneva Convention rules. By November 1943 the Women's Army Corps had also arrived to take over support and administrative jobs, freeing more male soldiers for overseas service.

At the end of the war, Camp Bowie shifted again. It became a deactivation, demobilization, and disposal installation. Soldiers and units passed through as the Army reduced its wartime strength. Buildings were sold, dismantled, relocated, or reused. Land was declared surplus, sold back, auctioned, or transferred, and the former cantonment gradually returned to civilian, municipal, medical, recreational, residential, industrial, and state military use. The Texas Army National Guard retained roughly 5,000 to 5,520 acres of the wartime impact area for training by 1949, and the state later acquired additional southern acreage in 1993 and 1994, bringing the present training site to 9,297 acres. The mission therefore evolved from emergency federal mobilization to long-term state National Guard readiness.

World War II Mission and Activity

The most important thing Camp Bowie did during World War II was absorb large numbers of men and organizations and move them through a preparation pipeline. Its daily activity was not a single school course or a single branch mission. It was the work of an entire mobilization camp: construction, troop housing, weapons qualification, physical conditioning, parade-ground discipline, range firing, unit field problems, staff work, vehicle movement, maintenance, medical care, recreation, military police duties, prisoner guarding, labor management, and eventual demobilization. A large temporary camp like Bowie functioned as both an Army training institution and a wartime city.

The Army's first challenge was physical construction. Camp Bowie was the first major defense construction project in Texas during World War II. Work began in September 1940, and the pace was intense because the camp was being built for troops who were already being mobilized. At one point more than 15,000 area men were employed on the project. The camp began with tentage and basic facilities, then expanded into thousands of structures, roads, bridges, water lines, utilities, mess facilities, bathhouses, recreation buildings, exchanges, chapels, medical buildings, headquarters, and range infrastructure. Brownwood's local histories emphasize that the camp almost doubled the city's population and created a sudden demand for labor, housing, entertainment, supplies, and transportation.

The early period was difficult because of rain, mud, and speed. Brownwood's official history records 19.50 inches of rain between October 1940 and June

1941. Sixty miles of dirt roads and utility trenches became a mud problem, and workers nicknamed the installation "Camp Gooie." The nickname is more than local color. It captures the reality of U.S. mobilization before Pearl Harbor: the Army was trying to expand faster than its permanent infrastructure could support, and units often began federal training while their camps were unfinished. At Camp Bowie, soldiers lived through that transition in real time.

The main cantonment supported the garrison and troop population. The first major housing phase used 6,072 pyramidal tents and 910 wall tents, with five enlisted men per tent. By March 1, 1941, local accounts reported 213 mess halls and 224 bathhouses. The camp ultimately had 22 recreation centers, one post exchange with 27 branches, three libraries, an 18-hole golf course, a veterinary clinic, three dental clinics, two Red Cross buildings, fourteen chapels, and a hospital capable of caring for 2,000 patients. Those numbers matter because they show the scale of the support system behind the training mission. Camp Bowie did not simply put troops in a field. It fed them, medically supported them, disciplined them, entertained them, transported them, and administered them.

The training mission itself was broad. Infantry units needed rifle, machine-gun, mortar, small-unit tactics, marching, field sanitation, camouflage, communications, and night-movement training. Field artillery units needed larger firing points, observation, fire direction, ammunition supply, survey, and impact areas. Armored units and cavalry needed road networks, maintenance capacity, open maneuver ground, and enough room to practice movement across rough terrain. Engineer, signal, medical, chemical, military police, and service troops needed their own specialized tasks. The size of the reservation made these different missions possible at one installation. The main camp handled troop life and administration; the surrounding training lands handled the physical practice of war.

Artillery and armored activity made the land footprint especially important. USACE later identified an approximately 47,713-acre artillery impact area within the former Camp Bowie property and warned that artillery projectiles, mortars, rockets, and other munitions had been used there. That later safety record confirms that Bowie's training was not limited to classroom or drill-field work. It included live-fire artillery and weapons training at a scale large enough to leave a munitions-response legacy decades later. The former impact area also explains why the postwar National Guard retained part of the training lands rather than the old built-up cantonment.

Camp Bowie's best-known combat connection was the 36th Infantry Division. The division was federalized in late November 1940 and arrived at

Brownwood in December for training. It departed Camp Bowie for Camp Blanding, Florida, on February 15, 1942, then moved through further training and deployment before landing at Salerno, Italy, on September 9, 1943. The battle did not occur at Brownwood, but the division's federal wartime path began there. Brownwood local history ties the division's later service to five campaigns in Italy, France, Germany, and Austria and to heavy casualties. Camp Bowie's role was therefore foundational rather than battlefield-direct: it helped convert Texas National Guardsmen into soldiers who later fought in Europe.

Camp Bowie's other units show how the camp became a rotating training and staging environment. The 113th Cavalry represented the Army's transition from older cavalry concepts toward mechanized reconnaissance and modern ground warfare. The 4th Armored Division and 13th Armored Division required maneuver space, vehicle maintenance, and armored training conditions that differed from infantry cantonment needs. The field artillery organizations, including the 174th and 142nd Field Artillery groups and the 18th Field Artillery Brigade, connected the camp to heavy weapons training and live-fire range use. The presence of medical, engineer, signal, chemical, tank destroyer, service command, and military police units turned Camp Bowie into a combined wartime support ecosystem.

The human tempo was high. Brownwood local history states that approximately a quarter of a million men were processed at Camp Bowie, while the "Wartime Guests" study refers to roughly 125,000 troops trained at the facility. The difference likely reflects different counting methods: troops trained in formal unit cycles versus all personnel processed through the camp during its operating life. Both figures point to the same conclusion. Camp Bowie was a major throughput installation, and its population could swell dramatically. Brownwood's official account states that at least 30,000 men were normally present for training and that the population reached 60,000 at one time.

The war changed Brownwood as much as it changed the Army reservation. Families of soldiers rented rooms throughout Brown and surrounding counties. Downtown Brownwood became crowded with soldiers seeking restaurants, movies, penny arcades, dances, transportation, and weekend passes. USO service clubs, local theaters, rail connections, and civilian businesses became part of the camp's off-post life. Since Brown County was dry, soldiers and service clubs interacted with the realities of local prohibition, imported beer, and bootlegging. Camp Bowie therefore cannot be understood only as fenced military land. It was a wartime urban and rural system that connected the Army to Brownwood's housing, labor, entertainment, transportation, churches, farms, and economy.

The Rehabilitation Center was part of the camp's wartime manpower system. It opened on December 1, 1942, and served soldiers whose conduct or performance placed them at risk of being lost to the Army. Instead of treating every case as a final failure, the center used discipline, marching, drills, field training, and supervision to attempt to return men to duty. Brownwood local history states that 2,294 men were restored to active duty by 1946 and that only 12 percent could not be restored. This was not glamorous history, but it was a practical wartime function. The Army needed to conserve manpower, and Camp Bowie had enough infrastructure to serve as a place where some soldiers could be corrected, retrained, and reassigned.

The Women's Army Corps became part of the camp in November 1943. WAC personnel were attached to support and service organizations, including the Tank Destroyer Group and the Service Command Unit. Their role reflected a broader Army policy: women performed military support jobs so that more men could move to combat or overseas duties. At a huge camp like Bowie, clerical, communications, administrative, logistical, and other support work was essential.

Prisoners of War at Camp Bowie

Camp Bowie's prisoner-of-war history is one of the most important and human parts of the installation's wartime story. Texas held more enemy prisoners during World War II than any other state, largely because it had space, many military installations, agricultural labor demand, and a climate thought suitable for prisoners captured in North Africa. Camp Bowie became one of the Texas military installations used for that system. Its location deep inside the United States, far from the coast and major strategic targets, made it a logical place to house captured enemy personnel.

The Camp Bowie POW camp was activated on July 10, 1943. Brown County Museum material states that it was built in thirty days by Charley Oehler, a Galveston contractor. It was located in the valley immediately below the dam on the Brownwood Country Club property, southwest of the main cantonment and outside the boundary of the modern Camp Bowie Training Center. The compound was surrounded by wire fencing with heavy barbs, guard towers, machine-gun positions, and dog patrols. It had wooden military-style barracks, mess halls, a medical facility, a command building, latrines, offices, library, recreation rooms, shops, administration buildings, a canteen, and other standard POW-camp facilities. Brown County Museum material describes the layout as three compounds with 72 buildings, including 56 barracks. Each barracks measured 48 by 16 feet and housed 18 men, giving the camp a capacity of about 3,000 prisoners.

The first German prisoners arrived from the European Theater in 1943. Brownwood's official history places the first German POW arrival in August 1943 and describes many as members of Field Marshal Erwin Rommel's Afrika Korps. Brown County Museum material says the first group included 70 enlisted men and a few officers, that the number climbed to 1,800 within a month, and that by September 1943 there were 2,724 prisoners at the camp. Other sources give slightly different peak counts: TSHA states that the POW camp housed more than 1,300 German prisoners at its peak, while the local POW history and "Wartime Guests" study indicate that more than 2,700 or 2,800 Germans were housed there before the war ended. The larger figures appear to reflect the full POW population over time or a high early count; the smaller TSHA figure may reflect a different date or occupied-camp snapshot. The safest historical conclusion is that Camp Bowie held a large German POW population, with local sources placing the 1943 strength at roughly 2,700 and the overall total at nearly or more than 2,800.

The prisoners arrived by rail. Brown County Museum's POW history states that they were unloaded at the Brownwood Santa Fe Depot and marched about three and a half miles to the compound. They wore wool field gear and knee-high boots with taps on the heels, and local memory preserved the image of German prisoners singing marching songs as they moved through Brownwood. That arrival scene is historically important because it shows how a global battlefield event became visible in a central Texas town. Men captured in North Africa, Europe, or at sea were transported across the Atlantic, moved by rail, and marched into a guarded camp near Brownwood.

The POWs were used for labor. They worked at jobs on the camp, performed base-beautification and maintenance tasks, and became day laborers for farms and ranches in Central Texas. This fit the national program in which POW labor helped offset wartime labor shortages. TSHA's statewide POW history explains that Texas POWs picked crops, cut wood, baled hay, threshed grain, gathered pecans, and did other agricultural work; at Camp Bowie, local accounts emphasize farm and ranch day labor in Brown and Mills Counties. Farmers paid the government for the labor, and prisoners received canteen compensation rather than ordinary wages. POW labor therefore linked the camp directly to the wartime agricultural economy around Brownwood.

Daily life in the Camp Bowie POW compound was structured but not simply punitive. Reveille was at 5:45 a.m. and lights out at 10:00 p.m., a routine consistent with statewide POW-camp practice. Prisoners received English classes, advanced English classes, and instruction in subjects such as shorthand, farming, forestry, building trades, metal work, electrical work, radio, bookkeeping, political economy, law, history, geography, and

education. TSHA notes that Camp Bowie POWs were offered courses through Howard Payne College, and the local POW history says correspondence courses were also available. The prisoners even produced German-language newspapers titled Die Brecke, meaning The Bridge, and Der Lagerspiegel, meaning The Camp Mirror.

The prisoners also built a rich recreation life behind the wire. Each compound had a theater, woodworking shop, and day rooms with ping-pong tables, billiard tables, and card tables. The camp had a canteen, beer garden, soccer fields, and tennis courts. Movies were shown regularly, including American and German films. The local history describes a camp orchestra and theater group, while the "Wartime Guests" study gives even more detail: the theater seated about 200, films were shown multiple times because of limited seating, and the music program grew to a 14-piece band and an 18-piece orchestra. The POWs formed soccer teams, staged performances, made art and woodworking projects, and improved the appearance of the compounds. These details do not mean the prisoners were free. They mean the War Department deliberately used work, education, recreation, and order to prevent unrest, comply with Geneva Convention expectations, and demonstrate the material advantages of the United States.

The POWs cultivated food and improved their surroundings. Brownwood's official history says they raised their own vegetables. Brown County Museum's POW history describes an outside farm of about 125 acres near the compound, producing much of the prisoners' fruit and vegetables. The "Wartime Guests" study notes that the gardens later returned to pasture and that the former compound, theater, recreation area, and nearby landscape were absorbed into a golf course and residential development. These details help explain why there is little obvious physical evidence of the POW camp today even though it was a substantial wartime installation.

The POW medical and religious systems were also developed. A 1945 inspection cited in the local POW history reported 98 hospital patients, including 74 battle casualties, and identified one American doctor, one American dentist, three German doctors, and one German dental assistant on duty. German Catholic and Protestant chaplains later held weekly services in a dedicated chapel under base-chaplain oversight. The existence of German medical and religious personnel inside the compound shows that the Army treated the POW population as a military custody population rather than as ordinary criminals.

The prisoner population changed over time. Brown County Museum material states that in 1945 the camp shifted from Army POWs to German naval

personnel. The larger "Wartime Guests" study also notes that POWs included enlisted men, noncommissioned officers, naval artillery personnel, and briefly a group of about 350 SS and SA personnel who created discipline and morale problems. Army officials learned to separate more ideologically hard-line or disruptive noncommissioned officers from enlisted prisoners. This is an important corrective to overly sentimental local memory. Some prisoners remembered Camp Bowie warmly, and many were cooperative, but political friction and Nazi-sympathizer intimidation existed inside the prisoner body.

Security and restriction remained real. Guards were instructed to be vigilant, respectful, and cautious about communication with prisoners. Incoming letters and reading materials were censored. Prisoners could not bring money, weapons, maps, flashlights, compasses, cameras, or pets into the compound. No prisoner was supposed to leave the stockade without "PW" marked visibly on clothing. The compound had guard towers, machine guns, fencing, and dog patrols. Camp Bowie's POW camp was not a resort; it was a controlled military internment installation whose apparent comfort depended on discipline, surveillance, labor routines, and restricted movement.

The burial history adds a solemn dimension. Brownwood's official history says the POWs had a burial ground near Jordan Springs Cemetery. Brown County Museum's POW page explains that five prisoners were buried there during the war and that the cemetery section was fenced off from the rest of the cemetery. The "Wartime Guests" study states that five POWs died from infection or suicide while in camp, were initially interred near Jordan Springs Cemetery, and were removed in 1946 for reburial at Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery in San Antonio. A related Brown County genealogy PDF identifies the five German POW deaths from 1943 to 1945 and notes causes including natural causes, suicide, an accident involving a moving truck, and traumatic internal hemorrhage. That burial and reburial story is a reminder that even a relatively orderly POW camp was part of a global war that produced captivity, illness, death, and displacement.

The end of the war did not immediately end the POW experience. After Germany's surrender in May 1945, Camp Bowie officials began the process of transferring prisoners out, but many waited months before leaving. TSHA's statewide POW history explains that many former prisoners were returned to Europe beginning in late 1945, and some were used in Britain and France for postwar reconstruction before returning to Germany. The "Wartime Guests" study records that some former Camp Bowie POWs and guards maintained correspondence or renewed contact decades later, while others returned to a devastated Germany and wrote back to Texas

describing shortages and hardship. Camp Bowie's POW history therefore continued in memory long after the compound was dismantled.

Site Design and Facilities

The World War II Camp Bowie reservation consisted of a main cantonment immediately south of Brownwood and much larger training lands extending across Brown and Mills Counties. The original plan called for 61,000 acres, including about 2,000 acres for cantonment, 8,000 acres for infantry ranges, 28,000 acres for maneuver grounds, and 23,000 acres for artillery ranges. As missions expanded, the reservation grew to roughly 120,000 to 123,000 acres. Brown County local history says the War Department owned 123,000 acres by October 1, 1942, with 5,000 acres in the campsite and approximately 118,000 acres used as training grounds. TSHA gives 120,000 acres. USACE gives approximately 120,000 acres in Brown and Mills Counties. These are compatible rounded figures, and the variation reflects different counting and date conventions.

The main cantonment was laid out to support rapid wartime construction. Rows of tents and temporary buildings could be grouped by unit, roads and utility lines could be extended quickly, and the range and maneuver areas could be accessed from the troop housing areas. Early troop housing relied on tents because training requirements outpaced building construction. The 6,072 pyramidal tents and 910 wall tents of the early phase gave the camp a visibly temporary character even while the Army was creating a large and complex support base.

The built environment became much more substantial. More than 8,000 buildings were constructed according to TSHA. The camp had mess halls, bathhouses, service clubs, exchanges, libraries, chapels, medical facilities, dental clinics, Red Cross buildings, a veterinary clinic, recreation facilities, headquarters buildings, and extensive roads, bridges, and utilities. The camp had to care for soldiers, animals, vehicles, weapons, prisoners, and civilian workers. It was a full military town built for wartime speed rather than long-term architectural permanence.

Krueger Hill formed the command high ground. Brownwood history places headquarters atop the highest hill in the camp and identifies it as the hub of camp activity. General Walter Krueger, associated with VIII Corps and later Sixth Army in the Pacific, was stationed there, and the hill took his name. The location gave command staff a view over the camp and symbolized the relationship between topography and military control in a sprawling cantonment.

The POW compound was a separate physical system. It was placed southwest of the main cantonment, near what is now associated with the Brownwood Country Club area, and east of present Brownwood Country Club according to the UTSA cultural-resource study. The compound's three-compound plan, wire fencing, guard towers, barracks, mess halls, theater, medical facility, shops, canteen, and recreation areas made it a specialized sub-installation within the larger camp. It was close enough to the main post and local labor needs to function efficiently, but separated for custody and security.

Almost none of the original main cantonment lies inside the present-day Camp Bowie Training Center. This is a critical status and mapping distinction. The modern training site is primarily the retained former impact and training area, not the entire wartime built-up camp. The former cantonment landscape is now largely occupied by Brownwood medical facilities, parks, sports fields, the municipal pool area, industrial properties, businesses, residences, and memorial uses. The current National Guard post preserves continuity of name and training function, while the wartime tent city and wooden cantonment largely disappeared through surplus sale, demolition, relocation, and redevelopment.

Units, Organizations, and Systems

The 36th Infantry Division is the central unit in Camp Bowie's history. Mobilized from the Texas National Guard, it came to Brownwood for federal training during the 1940 buildup. It later departed for further training and overseas deployment, and Brownwood memory of the division is closely tied to the Salerno landing and the division's long campaign record in Italy, France, Germany, and Austria. Camp Bowie's connection to the 36th gives the site a direct role in the transformation of a state National Guard division into an overseas combat formation.

The 31st Infantry Division, known as the "Dixie" Division, is also associated with Camp Bowie in local accounts. Its presence reflects the camp's role as a multi-unit training center rather than a single-division cantonment. The same is true of the armored formations associated with the camp. The 4th Armored Division and 13th Armored Division required maneuver, mechanized movement, vehicle maintenance, and range support. Their training use helps explain why the reservation expanded so far beyond the original 2,000-acre cantonment plan.

The 113th Cavalry adds another transitional element. Cavalry in 1940-1941 was changing rapidly as the Army moved from older horse and mixed horse-mechanized ideas toward mechanized reconnaissance and armored warfare.

Camp Bowie's ability to host cavalry, infantry, artillery, armor, engineers, signal, chemical, medical, and service troops made it a useful prewar-to-wartime transition camp where older organizational forms were being adapted to modern war.

The field artillery organizations listed by TSHA, including the 174th and 142nd Field Artillery groups and the 18th Field Artillery Brigade, connect the camp directly to live-fire artillery training and impact-area development. The Eighth Army Corps, Third Army special troops, Fourth Army special troops, medical units, engineer companies, signal battalions, chemical companies, and WAC detachments show the post's wider command and support role. Camp Bowie was not only a home for line combat units. It was also a place where the command, communications, medical, engineering, chemical, administrative, and personnel systems of a wartime Army operated side by side.

The German and Italian prisoner-of-war system at Camp Bowie connected the installation to the War Department's national POW network. The prisoners were not assigned "units" in the normal sense, but their custody shaped camp operations and local life. They required guards, housing, work details, censorship, inspections, medical oversight, religious services, burial arrangements, and eventual repatriation. Their labor on farms and ranches also tied Camp Bowie to the surrounding civilian economy.

The postwar Texas Army National Guard became the inheritor of the Camp Bowie name. By retaining part of the former impact area and later acquiring additional land, the Guard converted a huge temporary federal camp into a smaller but continuing state training center. Modern Texas Military Department reporting identifies Camp Bowie as one of four major Texas Army National Guard training centers, supporting mobilization and unit-training requirements for the Texas Military Forces and hosting Army Guard, Texas State Guard, local emergency responders, and other agencies.

Post-World War II Activity and Current Military Role

The federal World War II camp closed in 1946, but the site did not lose all military value. TSHA states that Camp Bowie was briefly reactivated during the Korean War and that the Army required some of the land it had originally occupied before declaring it surplus in 1962. In 1949 the camp was transferred to the Adjutant General's Department of Texas, and by 1969 the state of Texas had assumed ownership of the site, with the Texas National Guard Armory Board managing grazing leases while Guard units trained there on weekends.

The modern training center developed gradually. Guard units from Brownwood, San Angelo, Ballinger, Brady, Coleman, and other places used the site. In the early 1970s the Texas Guard began constructing buildings on the retained post. In 1993 and 1994 the Texas Military Forces acquired the southern portion of the modern training area, increasing the size and usefulness of the current Camp Bowie Training Center.

Current Camp Bowie is an active Texas Army National Guard training center. Texas Military Department reporting describes it as one of four major Texas Army National Guard training centers and part of the Training Center Garrison Command system. It supports year-round mobilization and unit-training requirements for the Texas Military Forces. Its facilities and activities include billeting, multiple live-fire ranges, digital training aids, land navigation, maneuver space, roadside-bomb and route-clearance defeat lanes, classrooms, and emergency-preparedness exercises. The Army Guard is the principal user, but the Texas State Guard, law enforcement, fire departments, emergency-response organizations, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Texas Department of Public Safety, Texas Forest Service, and other agencies have also used the site.

No major post-World War II overseas combat event occurred at Camp Bowie in the same sense that Salerno, southern France, or later Army campaigns occurred overseas. The post's modern military role has been readiness support rather than direct combat operations. Its activity since World War II has included National Guard field training, state and local emergency-preparedness support, annual training encampments, live-fire qualification, land navigation, route-clearance training, and community-interface events. The 2006 wildfire referenced in Texas Military Department reporting is part of the modern relationship between the training center and surrounding residents, illustrating the risks and practical management challenges of keeping a live training site beside civilian property.

Closure and Postwar Reuse

Camp Bowie's federal wartime mission began to wind down after victory. By 1945 the camp was serving deactivation and demobilization purposes. On August 31, 1946, the War Department declared the camp surplus according to the UTSA cultural-resource study and TSHA's Texas Day by Day entry. Brownwood local history states that the U.S. flag came down for the last time on October 1, 1946. Property disposal began in 1947. Buildings were sold, taken apart, moved, or reused; land was sold back to earlier owners, auctioned, or transferred to public and private uses.

The postwar disposal process reshaped Brownwood. The former cantonment did not remain a preserved Army ghost town. It became civilian space: medical facilities, parks, sports complexes, industrial properties, businesses, homes, roads, and memorial landscapes. Brownwood's city history notes that few physical reminders of the camp remain at the former cantonment and describes the area's conversion into medical, recreational, residential, business, and manufacturing uses. This is typical of World War II temporary camps, whose lumber, utility lines, roads, and land parcels were rapidly absorbed into local development.

The military story did not entirely end. The Texas Army National Guard retained approximately 5,410 to 5,520 acres of the impact area for training, depending on source and survey convention. This retained land formed the northern half of the modern Camp Bowie Training Center. In 1993 and 1994 the Guard acquired the southern portion of the modern post, effectively doubling its size. The present training site therefore represents a selective survival of the wartime reservation: not the full federal camp, not the old main cantonment, but enough former training land to preserve a military function.

Current Status

Camp Bowie today is an active Texas Army National Guard training center south of Brownwood. The modern site is 9,297 acres. The northern portion is state-owned and the southern portion is federally owned according to the UTSA cultural-resource information used in the prior v1 file. Texas Military Department reporting describes Camp Bowie as one of four major Texas Army National Guard training centers and a facility used to meet mobilization and unit-training requirements for the Texas Military Forces.

Current training is not identical to the World War II mission, but it preserves the basic purpose of the land: field readiness. TMD describes facilities and activities including billeting, live-fire ranges, digital training aids, land navigation, maneuver space, route-clearance defeat lanes, classroom space, and support for emergency-preparedness exercises. The Texas State Guard has held annual training at the facility, and local public-safety agencies have used the training environment.

The present site also carries cultural-resource and munitions legacies. The Texas Army National Guard's cultural-resource program surveyed nearly all of the 9,297-acre post in the 1990s, identifying 186 archeological sites, structures, or groups of structures, including prehistoric sites, historic-period farmstead or infrastructure remains, and World War II-era training features such as bunkers. Texas Beyond History emphasizes the prehistoric burned-

rock midden landscapes that predate the Army by thousands of years. At the same time, USACE identifies a large former artillery impact area on the broader former Camp Bowie property and warns that military munitions may remain in parts of the former training lands.

Chronology

- **1917**The first Camp Bowie was established in the Arlington Heights area west of downtown Fort Worth for World War I training of the 36th Division.
- **1919-08-15**The World War I Fort Worth Camp Bowie closed after demobilization.
- **1923**The Army considered a Brownwood training camp as a possible replacement for Camp Hulen or Camp Mabry, but the plan was not implemented.
- **1934-1936**CCC Camp 3818 operated in Brown County, contributing to the broader New Deal landscape that preceded Camp Bowie.
- **1936-1941**CCC Camp 849 operated in the area; TSHA notes that in 1941 it built a stone masonry arched bridge on Farm Road 45 within the original Camp Bowie boundary.
- **1940-09-04**State Representative Charles L. South announced that the Army would establish a training center at Brownwood.
- **1940-09-14**Congress authorized the first peacetime draft and gave President Roosevelt authority to mobilize National Guard units.
- **1940-09-17**Construction began at the new Brownwood Camp Bowie site according to the UTSA cultural-resource history.
- **1940-09-19**The War Department announced that a camp would be built at Brownwood, and federal funds were allocated for the camp, including a tent city, hospital, and other facilities.
- **1940-09-27**Brownwood local history records this date as the beginning of work at the camp site.
- **1940-11-25**The Texas National Guard's 36th Division was ordered to report to Camp Bowie.
- **1940-12**The 36th Division began arriving for federal training at Camp Bowie.
- **1940-10 to 1941-06**Heavy rains and mud during early construction produced the nickname "Camp Gooie."
- **1941-03-01**Camp Bowie had 213 mess halls and 224 bathhouses reported complete or in use.
- **1941-1942**Most National Guard troops at Brownwood were housed in tents while the cantonment continued to expand.
- **1942-01**TSHA dates the establishment of the rehabilitation center for Eighth Service Command posts and camps to January 1942.
- **1942-02-15**The 36th Infantry Division departed Camp Bowie for Camp Blanding, Florida.
- **1942-10-01**The War Department became owner of approximately 123,000 acres in Brown and Mills Counties according to Brownwood local history.
- **1942-12-01**Brownwood local history records this date as the opening of the Camp Bowie Rehabilitation Center.
- **1943-07-10**The Camp Bowie POW camp was activated.

- **1943-08**The first German prisoners of war arrived at Camp Bowie according to Brownwood local history.
- **1943-09**Brown County Museum's POW history states that 2,724 prisoners were housed at the camp by this month.
- **1943-09-09**The 36th Infantry Division, whose federal mobilization path had begun at Camp Bowie, landed at Salerno in Italy.
- **1943-11-16**The first Women's Army Corps personnel officially arrived at Camp Bowie.
- **1944**TSHA records the presence of various Army, corps, artillery, armored, service, WAC, and support organizations at different times during the camp's wartime use.
- **1944-10**The "Wartime Guests" study notes that a large number of battle-casualty POW patients had been brought to Camp Bowie for treatment by this period.
- **1945**The POW camp shifted from German Army prisoners toward German naval personnel according to Brown County Museum's POW history.
- **1945-05-08**Germany surrendered, beginning the process that eventually transferred Camp Bowie POWs out of Texas and back toward Europe.
- **1945-07-01 to 1945-07-03**The last inspection cited by Brown County Museum's POW history reported 2,032 German prisoners held at Camp Bowie.
- **1945**With the end of World War II, Camp Bowie shifted increasingly to deactivation and demobilization functions.
- **1945-12-25**The 36th Infantry Division demobilized after returning from overseas service.
- **1946**Five POW burials associated with Jordan Springs Cemetery were removed and reburied at Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery.
- **1946-08-31**The War Department declared Camp Bowie surplus property.
- **1946-10-01**Brownwood local history states that the U.S. flag came down at Camp Bowie for the last time.
- **1947-03**Disposal of Camp Bowie property and equipment began.
- **1949**Camp Bowie was transferred to the Adjutant General's Department of Texas.
- **1949-03**By this date, 77,440 acres had been sold, while the Texas Army National Guard retained roughly 5,520 acres of the former impact area for training.
- **Korean War era**Camp Bowie was briefly reactivated, and the Army required some of the land it had originally occupied.
- **1962**The Army declared the reactivated or required land surplus according to TSHA.
- **1968**Camp Bowie received a Texas Historical Marker.
- **1969**The state of Texas assumed ownership of the remaining Camp Bowie site, with the National Guard Armory Board managing grazing leases.
- **Early 1970s**The Texas Guard began constructing buildings on the retained training site.
- **1993-1994**The Texas Army National Guard acquired the southern portion of the modern Camp Bowie Training Center, effectively doubling the retained training-site acreage.
- **1994-1997**Texas National Guard cultural-resource staff surveyed almost all of Camp Bowie's 9,297 acres.
- **2006**A related prisoners-of-war historical marker was erected on Farm Road 45E.
- **2006**Texas Military Department reporting later noted a wildfire incident involving Camp Bowie training lands and nearby property, part of the modern community-interface history of the site.

- **2008**The Enlisted Men's Recreation Hall became a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark outside the current camp boundary.
- **2013**Texas Military Department reporting described Camp Bowie as one of four major Texas Army National Guard training centers and an almost 9,000-acre training site supporting Texas Military Forces readiness.
- **2015**USACE published a former Camp Bowie artillery impact-area safety guide identifying the former camp as a FUDS property and warning of possible remaining munitions hazards.
- **2023**TSHA described Camp Bowie as an active military training facility of approximately 8,944 acres.
- **Present**Camp Bowie remains an active Texas Army National Guard training center south of Brownwood, while the much larger World War II federal camp remains closed and largely reused for civilian, private, municipal, and state military purposes.