

CAMP SHANKS, NEW YORK

Early in the war, the American forces in the European theater had no reliable supply line in Europe or Great Britain. The result was a poorly equipped army which many times had to wage battle with very poor quality or damaged equipment.

Camp Shanks became the answer to the supply problem. Located in Orangeburg, New York, about 18 miles north of New York City, it was built to accommodate approximately 50,000 soldiers. In September, 1942, nearly 2040 acres of land was seized from private hands. One hundred thirty homes were lost in order to build the camp. Camp Shanks was in many ways literally thrown together between September, 1942, and May, 1943,

in order to create a reliable staging area for over 1.3 million troops shipping to Europe throughout the war. At first,



Camp Shanks, NY

equipment was collected, repaired or replaced, and sent with the soldiers on the voyage to Europe because no depots existed on the other side of the sea.

From May, 1943, to November, 1944, troops carried with them all of the equipment they required in duffle or barracks bags. After November of that year the aspect of final staging at Camp Shanks ended, as most necessary equipment and supplies could be attained in England. Supply depots had finally been constructed and stocked. Camp Shanks became strictly an embarkation point.

The barracks at Camp Shanks where soldiers were housed were 20' x 100' with two rows of bunks and only three coal-burning pot-bellied stoves providing limited heat in each barrack. Camp Shanks and two other camps nearby became the largest military staging area in the world.

When troops were notified of "Alert" status they knew that within twelve hours they would be shipped out across the Atlantic. Soldiers were told to remove their division sleeve patches. Their helmets were chalked with a letter and a number indicating their marching order from the camp to the train and subsequent rail car they were to board.

After a short train ride of four miles or so, the departing troops arrived at the mile-long dock (Piermont Pier) of Weehawken, New Jersey. There,

a series of harbor boats ferried the soldiers to waiting troop ships. Piermont Pier, also referred to as “Last Stop USA” during the war years, was originally built



Boxcars used to transport soldiers to Weehawken, NJ.

in the mid-1800’s to facilitate loading and unloading steam freight trains travelling to and from New York City. Once safely transferred aboard the harbor ferries, troops were transported across the harbor to Manhattan’s west side. At Pier 88, troop ships waited to take nearly 40,000 anxious soldiers per month to England, Scotland, or France.

This is the procedure that Melvin went through



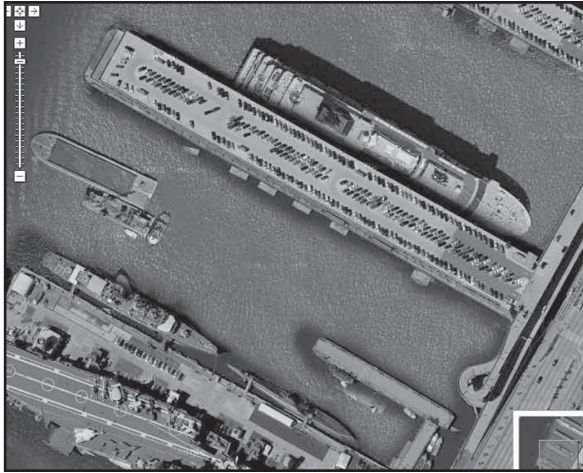
on Saturday, February 24, 1945,

Ferry terminal at Weehawken, NJ. Note the troop transports across the Hudson in Manhattan, NY. Empire State Building in far background.

as he boarded his troop ship. It would be the last time he would see America or walk on American soil for over six months. He was on his way to an unknown destination in Europe, to do who knew what, and come back home who knew when.



Troop transports docked at Pier 88



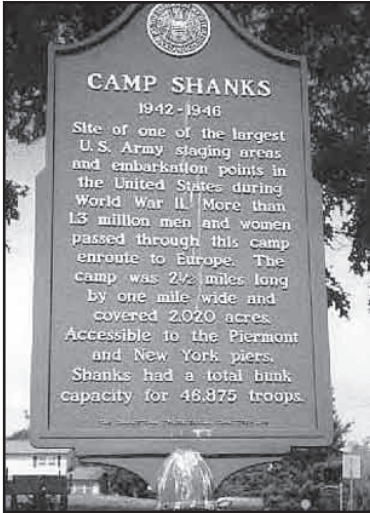
Close up modern aerial of Pier 88



Pier 88



Route from Weehawken to Pier 88



Camp Shanks marker



Camp Shanks monument honoring soldiers who departed for Europe.



Camp Shanks Museum poster showing insignia of divisions which left for Europe. Note 10th armored insignia at lower right.