Big Changes Coming to the Museum

Over the last decade the Texas Military Forces Museum has evolved in a very dramatic way. Collection storage and archival spaces have been modernized, climate controlled and brought up to current standards in the museum field. The library and photo archives have seen similar upgrades. Staff and volunteers have steadily worked their magic on the museum’s indoor and outdoor exhibits. The Great Hall has seen a major transformation with the addition of the

Continued on page 2

ARCHITECTURAL RENDERING OF PROPOSED NEW ENTRANCE TO MUSEUM

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: Josh Williams

Josh Williams is a 23-year-old, longtime member of the museum’s living history detachment. Josh likes coming in to help out at the museum whenever he gets the chance. But when he got a new full-time job, he wasn’t able to volunteer as often as he wanted. So Josh put away all the money he

Continued on page 5
Big Changes, continued

exhibit rails, removal of all the walls on the north end of the building, and the installation of the F84 Korean War exhibit. Our Cold War/War on Terror exhibit gallery opened in September 2011 and our 19th Century exhibit gallery in November 2013. New outdoor exhibit signs were installed early in 2017, both around the museum and on Camp Mabry’s parade ground. The museum’s gift shop was expanded and renovated just a few months ago.

We’ve also done some work to improve the appearance and functionality of the museum’s main entrance (exhibit banners and docent desk), as well as putting in new exhibit cases, audio-visual displays and exhibit panels in the 36th Infantry Division gallery. Nonetheless, those parts of the museum are obviously not up to the same standard as the rest of the museum. They look old and worn out and do not meet standards for accessibility, ease of group movement, emergency exit or interpretive purpose.

All that is about to change. The Texas Military Department has invested time and money into a completed renovation plan for the museum’s main entrance, Hall of Honor, museum offices, loading dock and sundry exits, stairways and ramps around the museum’s exterior. These plans involve an expansion of the vestibule to the Hall of Honor and improvements to make it a much more elegant space.

At the entrance to the museum, the historic large white doors installed when the building was used as an automobile and radio repair shop by the Department of Public Safety, will be swung into a permanently open position. A sliding glass wall will replace the wooden doors. This will provide security and climate control, which is sorely lacking. The glass doors will slide left and right into special interior pockets, so that we can continue to move large objects in and out of the building. Smaller entry/exit doors will be placed in the larger glass doors (in a manner similar to that at automobile dealerships).

A new concrete floor and wall treatments will greet visitors as they enter the museum. In addition, a rigid canopy will extend outward from the museum toward the street (a smaller version will extend out from the museum office), making it obvious where the main entrance to the museum is located.

In addition to new emergency exits, loading dock and other aspects of the proposal, these renovations will cost about $750,000. The final designs and drawings for this important project are done and have been approved. Funding for construction is expected during the upcoming fiscal year and work will begin sometime in 2018.

Upcoming Events

July 12: Mabry Mixer
July 15: Hands on History
November 11-12: Close Assault 1944
Renovations Begin on 36th Infantry Division Gallery

The museum has finally begun to modernize and update its 36th Infantry Division exhibit gallery. This area, in so many ways, is the core of the museum’s story, covering both world wars. Although some new exhibits cases, audio-visual presentations and exhibit panels have been installed in this space over the last couple of years, the gallery overall was worn out, with patched carpet, a mix-mash of exhibit cases and lacked important parts of the division story.

The World War II area will be out of commission for about eight weeks as we implement the upgrades. New carpet will be installed in the gallery this June. After that, the major changes will begin. Macro-environmental elements will give guests an immersive experience as they go through the gallery, walking among the walls of a shelled-out village, standing in front of dragon’s teeth anti-tank obstacles, and peering into a Siegfried Line pillbox. More artifacts will be on display and the gaps in our story line will be filled. The 142nd Silver will get a new exhibit case—allowing visitors a better and closer view of the cups and punch bowl. New audio-visual components will be added to showcase news-reel footage featuring the 36th Infantry Division in action. There will also be period radios mounted on the wall which will play radio broadcasts related to the division.

Among the most exciting changes in the World War II section will be the introduction of a 50-inch interactive monitor that will allow visitors to search for the names of men who served in the division during the war. The names will be searchable by surname, state and unit. Where possible, we will pair a photo with a name and copies of the service cards typed up at the end of the war by division staff using German POW labor will also be tied to each name. All of this information will be placed on the museum’s website, making it accessible to visitors around the world 24/7. We will also have the ability to easily update the information, add new photos and correct errors. This interactive will replace the books and wall-mounted photos currently housed near the entrance of the gallery. Currently there is no space to put up additional photos, the books are in disrepair, and it’s almost impossible to add new names or data. The interactive will solve all of those problems and also engage guests, especially younger visitors, with technology that is such a daily component of their lives.

We hope to have the World War II gallery back up and in full operation by early July. Most of the exhibit cases and artifacts removed from the exhibit during the renovations will be put on display in the museum’s Great Hall until they can be brought back into the original space.

The World War I exhibit, which has had an undeservedly tiny footprint up to now, will see a major expansion. Visitors will enter the space through the troop compartment of a transport ship that carried the newly created 36th Division to France in the late summer of 1918. From there they will walk into a front-line trench, complete with exhibit cases built into the sides of the fortification, a Hotchkiss machine gun nest, and light/sound effects to simulate the rumble of artillery in No Man’s Land. There will also be trench periscopes for visitors to look through to see an ongoing assault against German positions around St. Etienne—scene of the division’s biggest battle during the War. The story of the Choctaw Code Talkers will receive a significant upgrade. The plan is to have the WWI exhibit up and running by mid-September of 2017.
It’s time! Some of you know already, the 36th Infantry Division in the World Wars Gallery renovation is ongoing. The timing took us by surprise, not that we didn’t have plans, but because the help we needed to protect the east wall from humidity became unexpectedly available in early May. The 36th gallery (and the entirety of the museum’s east foundation wall) has always been susceptible to water infiltration due to the composition of the brick used to construct the museum. This is evident in the exfoliation of the paint in the main room and the condition of the original carpet.

Now that corrective measures to deal with that problem are in place, we are prepared to install new carpet in mid-June. The carpet, in truth, is the piece of the puzzle that instigated the big move to renovate the gallery. Last year’s budget had money designated to replace the much-stained and unraveled carpet, and once obligated, the money has to be spent before the end of the state fiscal year on August 31. It made little sense to install the carpet with the same narrow doorways, so we redesigned the gallery spaces to accommodate school tours and the foot flow of groups of at least 20 children.

The design points in the new 36th Gallery I am most pleased with are the WWI ship and gang plank, the WWI trench, and the WWII Siegfried Line bunker complete with dragon’s teeth. If there are no budget surprises, the entire first room will represent the troop hold on a transport ship where soldiers slept and spent the majority of their time during the transatlantic crossing. Our aim is to represent this as closely as possible using steel for the floors and walls. A visitor will cross the gang plank up into the ship and have to then step down into the communication trench of some European battlefield. We plan to build exhibit cases into the trench walls of the parapet and parados. The exhibit is to be a nighttime scene with the way through to the next space lit by case lighting. The removal of a wall opens the space for an installation of a machine gun nest situated over the interpretation of the Choctaw Code-talker story. This last room of WWI serves as a transition between the wars and to a more familiar WWII story.

The significant changes to the World War II spaces include enclosing the battle of the Rapido River diorama within the shell of a building to better interpret the nighttime scene and the development of new display cases for the regimental silver. We are already preparing to make more immersive environments for large parts of the 36th Infantry Division’s World War II story, including the construction of a Siegfried Line bunker, dragon’s teeth anti-tank obstacles and more. A cut-out hallway gives a slice of the bunker experience from the inside with a static display of German gear.

Finally, a new interactive will ultimately provide a searchable database of the 35,000 wartime members of the 36th Infantry. The exit door from the World War II exhibit will lead into the Great Hall and intersect with the Korean War exhibit, which brings both the Great Hall and 36th Gallery time lines into sync.

It’s almost like someone planned it.
VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: Continued

earned working overtime and last April made a $2,500 donation to the museum toward the $10,000 we need to buy new tracks for our Sherman Tank. Josh’s parents chipped in some money to help him hit that very generous amount. Thanks to the entire Williams family for their support!

Josh crews the Sherman at Close Assault.

THANK YOU, CIVIL WAR VOLUNTEERS

The Living History Detachment presented a Civil War program for students at Taylor Middle School.

Thanks to Shawn Murray, Bobby Moore, and Bill Treadway for sharing their expertise with students in Taylor.
My apologies, it has been a long time since our last newsletter but the museum staff and volunteers have been very busy.

We have taken in over 60 separate donations in the past year. Some donations are only one or two items, some have upwards of 200 items! Many of these donations have already been cataloged.

I'd like to highlight some of the WWI-era donations which have come into the museum recently. On April 6 of this year, we entered the centennial of America’s involvement in WWI. This summer we will celebrate the 100-year anniversary of the formation of the 36th Infantry Division. The number of donations of material related to WWI has increased.

One of the big items we received is a Lewis Machine Gun (pictured on page 6). This gun, although designed by an American, only saw limited use by United States troops during the “Great War.” Ours is in excellent, still-working condition. It will make a wonderful addition to the new WWI exhibit.

**A few examples of Great War/WWI collections we have received:**

- **Items related to Levi N Cox, who served with Company H, 142nd Infantry Regiment.** Items included his tunic, helmet, gas mask, and a book made by the family which includes transcriptions of the letters he wrote home.

- **Another collection contains items from the service of Selmer Johnson, a bugler with the 90th Infantry Division, including his bugle!**

- **A collection of material from Sgt. William Van London who served with the 5th Engineers with numerous maps including one of listening posts and one of “enemy artillery.”**

Volunteers, docents and interns continue to be the backbone of the museum as they work every day to welcome and educate our visitors to the history of the Texas Military Forces. We couldn’t manage without these wonderful people. Our current interns are Chris and Shannon, who have been here through last fall and this spring. They are a wonderful asset to the museum and are always willing to lend a hand, no matter what the job.

Be sure to visit our newly renovated gift shop. The Texas Military Forces Historical Foundation, which runs the gift shop, has added many new and interesting items in the last four months. Items include a huge stuffed tank, stuffed bats with museum dog tags, magnets with the museum logo or pictures of equipment, and a wider selection of new books. They also have some really impressive and rare books for the used books section which is always a treasure hunt as new books are constantly being donated.

We continue to take donations of documents and artifacts related to Texas Military Forces, and Texas military history.

I am happy to answer any questions about the donation process or the museum’s artifacts. You may call or email me at the museum.
In the last year, the Texas Military Forces Historical Foundation has grown by leaps and bounds. We’ve provided materials and financial assistance as the north end of the museum’s Great Hall has undergone a complete transformation, including the installation of an F-84 Thunderjet.

We, along with our incredibly supportive community partners, Lowe’s Home Improvement and Valspar Paint, have enabled the expansion and remodeling of the museum gift shop, along with securing the donation of enough custom-mixed paint to cover the entire Great Hall. We’ve also worked hard to grow our membership, expand our community presence, and upgrade the software and technology systems we use to allow our visitors to support the museum with ease and in a manner of their choosing.

TMFHF has also finally been able to offer some very special perks for our members in the form the Mabry Mixers—an evening of education and libation held quarterly and specifically designed to thank our members for their support. All of these achievements are wonderful and it’s been a very busy year, but perhaps the most important event of all is unexpectedly upon us—the renovation of the 36th Infantry Division in the World Wars Gallery.

If you’ve already read Edward Zepe da’s article describing the plans for the renovation, you know what an amazing and difficult transformation this will be. It will be long, expensive, and incredibly hard work, but vital to furthering the museum’s mission of preserving the history of the 36th Infantry Division. Not only does the gallery hallmark the very beginnings of this historic and storied unit, but it also represents the last major area of the museum yet to be overhauled to best represent the importance of this slice of Texas Military Forces history, and that’s where you come in.

I’ve written it before and can’t stress strongly enough that EVERY SINGLE DOLLAR we receive in donations, sponsorships, memberships, and materials counts! The museum receives no state budget outside the salaries of the three staff members, so it largely falls to the TMFHF to supply the money and materials necessary to execute the incredible plans put forth by the museum staff. They know how best to honor the contributions and sacrifices of the 36th Infantry Division through exhibits, displays, and interactivities, and we need your help to allow them to do it.

We appeal to all lovers of history, to all supporters of the military, to all proud Texans, and to the descendants of, families of, and members of the 36th Infantry Division to do what you can to support the continued preservation, with professionalism, dignity and honor, of the history of the “Fighting 36th” in World War I and World War II.

WAYS YOU CAN HELP

1 DONATE FUNDS
   www.tmfhf.org
   PayPal (txmilmuseum@gmail.com)
   Or at the museum through the gift shop, donation box, or donation envelopes.
   By check:
   Texas Military Forces Historical Foundation
   Attn: Executive Director
   2200 W 35th Street, Bldg. 6, Austin, TX 78703

2 BECOME A MEMBER
   www.tmfhf.org or inquire at the museum.

3 MAKE A PURCHASE
   Make a purchase at the museum gift shop or online at www.texasmilitaryforcesmuseum.org

4 OTHER SUPPORT
   If you are interested in sponsoring an event, donating building materials, providing labor or have any questions about the 36th Infantry Division in the World Wars gallery renovation, contact Brooke Adams, TMFHF Executive Director, at badams@tmfhf.com or (704) 408-1756.
Tim Weitz Steps Down as President of the Foundation

In January 2016, after serving from 2008 as a member of the board of the Texas Military Forces Historical Foundation and as its president since November 2011, Tim Weitz has stepped down from his position to concentrate on other priorities. During his tenure as president, Tim drew inspiration from the vision of his predecessor, Lieutenant Colonel Al Lloyd, USAF (ret), to create a support organization worthy of the magnificent story the Texas Military Forces Museum has to tell. Tim’s dedication to that task was evident from the beginning, and his record of accomplishment speaks for itself.

A talented and respected attorney, and someone with much experience with friends groups and organizations, Tim brought his expertise to the TXMFHF. Under his leadership the foundation facilitated unprecedented expansion and improvements to the museum’s exhibits and programs. He brought the foundation’s bylaws into the 21st century, ensuring they were in line with current law and best practices, in addition to providing the flexibility and accountability needed to allow the foundation to grasp new opportunities. Fundraising increased dramatically during Tim’s time with the board, the foundation financed the modernization of the museum’s website, the first employees of the foundation were hired, and the process of serious strategic planning began.

It would take many pages to detail all of the contributions Tim Weitz made to the museum and the foundation. Testimonials from his fellow board members, the museum staff, volunteers and interns to the tremendous job he has done would require the entire newsletter. Thank you, Tim, for your service and for the lasting legacy of excellence you leave behind.

Bill McMeans: New President of the TXMF Historical Foundation

The Texas Military Forces Historical Foundation Board voted Bill McMeans to be interim president of the foundation shortly after the resignation of Tim Weitz from the position. Bill has been a faithful and hard-working member of the board since 2008 and a supporter of the museum for more than a decade.

A native Texan and 1980 graduate of the University of Texas with a degree in Economics, Bill has made a sterling reputation as a businessman and entrepreneur. An avid follower of Longhorn sports and a serious student of history and politics, he enjoys golf, sporting clays and exercise as hobbies. He and Tracie, his wife of 32 years, reside in Austin. Bill is also an active participant in numerous charitable organizations in Central Texas.

The energy and enthusiasm Bill brings to his new post are remarkable, and needless to say, he has hit the ground running. As far as Bill is concerned, there are no limits on what the foundation can help the museum accomplish.

Read Bill’s message on page 11
The 36th Infantry Division trained at Camp Bowie outside of Fort Worth for slightly more than a year (this is a different Camp Bowie than the one near Brownwood, Texas where the division trained in WWII) and then went “Over There” in late summer of 1918. In early October the division went into combat as part of the French 4th Army, operating on the left flank of the U.S. 1st Army, which was engaged in the Meuse-Argonne Offensive. The 36th Division would first see action at the Battle of St. Etienne on October 7-8 after which it would pursue the Germans to the Aisne River and overwhelm an enemy bridgehead at Forét Farm in a textbook-perfect attack. Overall, the 36th saw 24 days of combat and suffered some 2,500 casualties during the war.

The Texas Military Forces Museum is commemorating these momentous events in a number of ways. On April 6, museum director, Jeff Hunt, and members of the museum’s living history detachment—Jeremy LeCrone, Damon Lopez and Jeff Cantrell—attended an event at the State Capitol hosted by the Texas Historical Commission to mark the anniversary of U.S. entry into the war. The team, wearing WWI-era uniforms, manned a display of World War I artifacts and provided a color guard for the event. The living history detachment is also gearing up to put on a large WWI battle reenactment at Camp Mabry, complete with a WWI tank, machine guns and vehicles, in October 2018, to mark the centennial of the Battle of St. Etienne.

Museum Director Jeff Hunt and Deputy Director/Curator Lisa Sharik are staying very busy giving talks to a wide variety of groups on the role of the Texas National Guard in the First World War and the WWI resources available at the museum. Among those resources are maps used during the division while it was engaged in the fight at St. Etienne and the pursuit of German forces to the Aisne River. The museum staff worked with the Texas General Land Office to have these incredible maps digitized and made available for sale at the GLO website:

www.glo.texas.gov/history/archives/map-store/index.cfm#search/0/texas%20military%20forces%20museum
Bill McMeans Shares Vision for the Foundation

Honoring those humble heroes that have met the call to duty from our greatest of states is not just a challenge, but a privilege, a calling, an endowment of responsibility I and we on the board and museum staff relish without reservation.

To paraphrase an intrepid President that stated an audacious (and many thought impossible) goal to put a man on the moon by the end of the decade in 1962, we chose to take on the mission of building a permanent and internationally recognized state-of-the-art museum recognizing and honoring Texas Military Forces from the first militia in 1823 to the current significant and important effort in the global war on terror.

My vision is to develop and execute this goal over the next decade by aggressive marketing efforts, state of the art outreach efforts utilizing technology and social media, networking to maximize grants, corporate and individual donations, all while adhering to organizational best practices principals.

We chose to do this not because it is easy, but because it is difficult, because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one which we intend to execute. I have met with each board member and I will be asking nothing more of them than I am asking of myself.

Honoring those humble heroes that have met the call to duty from our greatest of states is not just a challenge, but a privilege, a calling, an endowment of responsibility I and we on the board and museum staff relish without reservation.

I look forward to meeting every member and welcome your comments.

Let’s Roll!

Thank You, Volunteers and Interns

During the month of May alone, we had 11 tours of 100-140 kids scheduled! During the summer we have summer school tours scheduled for all but nine days between June 1 and August 15.

A big thank you to our volunteers and interns. We could not do these tours without them. Shout out to Robby, Kathy, Bob, John, Norm, other Bob, Chris, Shannon, Brooke and Paige. They have all gone above and beyond with this busy tour season.
RECENT EVENTS

GUNS OF 1863
MUSTER DAY
COURTESY OF JEFF CANTRELL
A SPECIAL THANKS TO LOWE'S AND VALSPAR FOR THEIR SUPPORT

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www.flickr.com/photos/akachrishunt/albums
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