

# How S.C. helped win World War II

Hundreds of thousands trained in South Carolina as soldiers and aviators during World War II. Others built ships and guarded the shore against German U-boat attacks. A look at who did what and where:



2 A view of the WWII-era Fort Moultrie on Sullivan's Island in 1944

## Army

- 1 **Camp Croft  
Spartanburg**  
Up to 75,000 troops a year trained at Croft during the war before joining infantry units in the field. In addition, as many as 500 German POWs were held at Croft, working on local farms and orchards, and in nearby forests. In 1947, the Defense Department declared the base surplus and closed it. The land became the 7,000-acre Croft State Park and a mix of residential, farming and business developments.
- 2 **Fort Moultrie  
Sullivan's Island**  
The historic fort was the command post for the 8th U.S. Infantry and the Coast Artillery. Anti-aircraft guns and anti-submarine measures were installed to protect Charleston Harbor from air assaults or attacks by German U-boats.
- 3 **Fort Jackson  
Columbia**  
More than 500,000 men received some phase of their training at the fort during the war. The 30th "Old Hickory" Division was one of the units. Other famed units that trained at Fort Jackson were the 4th, "Sightseeing" 6th, 8th, 26th, "Statue of Liberty" 77th, 87th, 100th and 106th divisions. Famed war journalist Ernie Pyle was killed while covering the 17th's invasion of Ie Shima, a tiny island off Okinawa. The public affairs office at Fort Jackson is named in Pyle's honor.

## Army Air Corps

- What today is the Air Force was part of the Army and known as the Army Air Corps during World War II.*
- 4 **Aiken Army Air Field  
Aiken**  
The air field was the training place for liaison squadrons that performed a range of duties from conducting reconnaissance to directing artillery attacks.
  - 5 **Barnwell Army Air Field  
Barnwell**  
Operated as a satellite of the Columbia Army Air Base
  - 6 **Charleston Army Air Field  
Charleston**  
At the beginning of the war, the Army Air Corps took full control of the field, previously shared with the civilian airport. It was first used by aircraft patrolling the coast. In early 1942, anti-submarine planes flew from the base. Later, operations were expanded to include training B-17 Flying Fortress and B-24 Liberator crews before they were sent to Europe.
  - 7 **Columbia Army Air Base  
West Columbia**  
About 1941, the War Department acquired the airport from Lexington County to train B-25 crews. In February 1942, nearly two dozen flight crews trained for a secret military mission, later called the Doolittle Raid, over Tokyo on April 18. It was the first successful U.S. attack on Japanese soil. The Columbia airfield had satellite bases in Barnwell, Greenwood, North and Walterboro. Bombing ranges were at Lake Murray, Pontiac and Poorman's, located north of Charleston. Today, the base is Columbia Metropolitan Airport.
  - 8 **Congaree Marine Corps Auxiliary Air Facility  
Eastover**  
Now known as McEntire Joint National Guard Base, the air base was used in World War II to train U.S. Marine Corps pilots.
  - 9 **Camden Airport  
Camden**  
Training base for pilots, including Royal Air Force trainees. Today, it hosts the annual fall Celebrate Freedom air show.



1 Military police at the gate to Camp Croft in Spartanburg



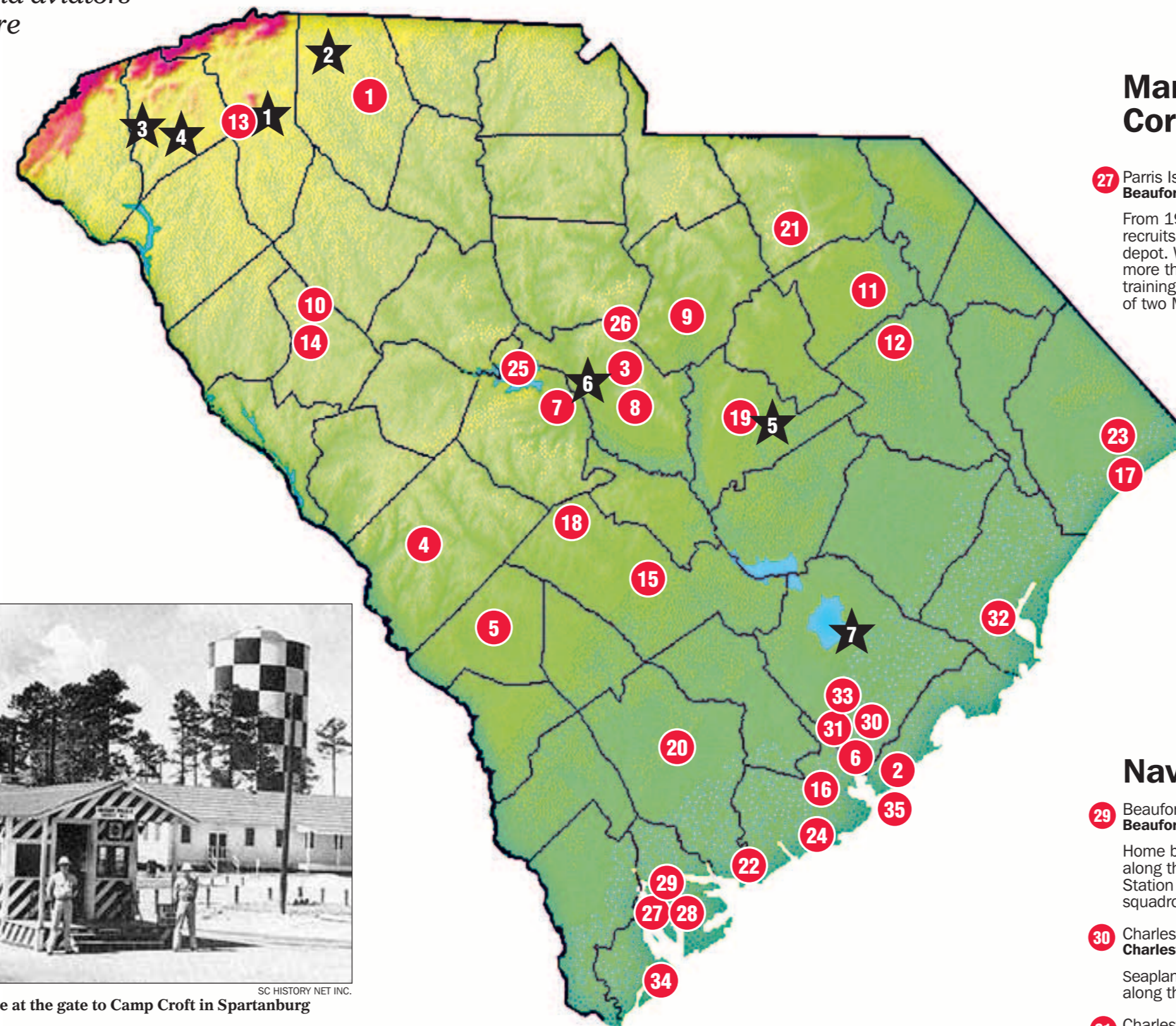
3 Recruits learn the use of bayonets while training at Fort Jackson.



7 The Doolittle Raiders, shown here on the USS Hornet before the raid on Tokyo, trained and flew their B-25s from the Columbia Army Air Base.



15 PT-17 Stearman biplanes were used to train pilots in Orangeburg.



- 16 **Johns Island Army Air Field  
Johns Island**  
The field served as an auxiliary training base — no permanent structures were constructed — and launching point for transatlantic flights.
- 17 **Myrtle Beach Army Air Field  
Myrtle Beach**  
Established in the 1940s, the field was used for coastal patrols. Until the '90s, it continued to operate as an Air Force base. Today, it is Myrtle Beach International Airport.
- 18 **North Army Air Field  
Orangeburg County**  
Served as a satellite airfield for the Army's Columbia air base



19 Republic P-47 Thunderbolt fighter aircraft of the U.S. Army Air Corps were based at Shaw Army Air Base in Sumter.

- 19 **Shaw Army Air Base  
Sumter**  
Construction of the base — named in honor of Sumter County native 2nd Lt. Erwin David Shaw, one of the first Americans to fly combat missions in World War I — began in June 1941. One of the largest flying fields in the United States, Shaw trained more than 8,000 service members to fly. Later, P-47 Thunderbolt fighters replaced Shaw's basic trainers. For a brief time, Shaw also was home to about 175 German POWs, who lived in an encampment near the main entrance and worked on local farms. Shaw had satellite bases in Burnt Gin, Monaghan, Rembert, Sylvia and at Sumter Municipal Airport.
- 20 **Walterboro Army Air Field  
Walterboro**  
Opened in August 1942 as a satellite base of the Columbia Army Air Base, Walterboro was the largest sub-base in the 3rd Air Force. It served as a final training base for pilots, including the Tuskegee Airmen, before they were sent overseas. At the time, the base had a military population of as many as 6,000 as well as hundreds of German POWs.

- BOMBING AND GUNNERY RANGES**
- 21 **Sand Hills**, near McBee
  - 22 **Botany Bay Island**, near Edisto Island
  - 23 **Conway Bombing Range**
  - 24 **Kiwah Island**
  - 25 **Lake Murray**
  - 26 **Pontiac**

## Marine Corps

- 27 **Parris Island  
Beaufort County**  
From 1941 through 1945, 204,509 recruits were trained at the recruiting depot. When Japan surrendered, more than 20,000 recruits were training at the depot. Today, it is one of two Marine training centers.
- 28 **Page Field  
Parris Island**  
Manned in part by female reservists, the field officially was upgraded to a Marine Corps Air Station and serviced a variety of aircraft from anti-submarine patrols and training flights.



27 A recruit executes a butt stroke with his weapon on the bayonet course at Parris Island.

## Navy

- 29 **Beaufort Naval Air Station  
Beaufort**  
Home base for advanced training and operation of anti-submarine patrols operating along the Southeastern seaboard, the base was re-designated Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort in 1956. Today, it hosts seven Marine and two Navy F/A-18 squadrons.
- 30 **Charleston Naval Air Station  
Charleston**  
Seaplanes flew patrols from the base. In addition, one or two blimps flew daily patrols along the shore.
- 31 **Charleston Naval Shipyard  
Charleston**  
Established in 1901, the shipyard built 216 ships between 1939 and 1945. Included among them were 39 destroyers and destroyer escorts, nine troop transports, 150 landing ships and 18 support ships. When the United States entered the war, the yard employed 2,355 people. By 1943, 26,000 workers were on the job. The influx of workers and their families prompted the construction of 15,000 residences in the Charleston area. The base was closed during a '90s round of base closings.
- 32 **Georgetown  
Georgetown**  
Served as base for shore patrols
- 33 **Naval Weapons Station  
Charleston**  
The depot received ammunition from inland plants and issued it to ships being built at the Charleston Naval Shipyard. The base still is operated today.



## Coast Guard

- 34 **Beach Patrol  
Hilton Head Island**  
Home of mounted Beach Patrol and Dog Training Center, where Coast Guard personnel trained horses and dogs so they could assist them in patrolling the coastline.
- 35 **Captain of the Port  
Charleston**  
Provided surveillance of the S.C. shore, watching for possible landings from German submarines. Using dogs and horses, the Beach Patrol covered the beach shore. The station also oversaw protection of waterfront facilities, supervised explosives loading, and conducted port security operations against sabotage and espionage.



20 Walterboro was an advance training base for the African-American pilots called the Tuskegee Airmen.

## THE MEDAL OF HONOR

### SOUTH CAROLINA'S WWII HEROES

Five South Carolinians were awarded the Medal of Honor, the nation's highest military decoration, for their service during World War II.

★ **Sgt. Robert Allen Owens**  
Greenville, Marine Corps  
Owens was honored for action at Cape Torokina on Bougainville in the Solomon Islands. On Nov. 1, 1943, Owens helped charge a Japanese bunker that was firing on Marines landing on the island, causing heavy casualties. After repeated assaults against the bunker failed, Owens decided to attack it head-on. Getting four Marines to assist him, he charged "into the mouth of a steadily firing cannon," entered the bunker and drove out the gun crew, "ensuring their destruction before he himself was wounded," the citation says. Owens was awarded the medal posthumously.

★ **Pvt. Thomas E. Atkins**  
Campobello, Army  
In fighting on the Villa Verde Trail in Luzon, Philippines, Atkins occupied a ridge outside the perimeter defense established by his platoon on March 10, 1945. About 3 a.m., two companies of Japanese attacked, wounding Atkins and killing two others. Despite a barrage of enemy fire aimed at driving him from his foxhole, Atkins continued to fight for four hours. By 7 a.m., 13 Japanese lay dead. Atkins left for medical treatment. During his escape, he saw and killed another Japanese soldier. Atkins died in 1999.

★ **Pvt. Furman L. Smith**  
Six Mile, Army  
Smith was among a group of soldiers attacked by 90 Germans near Larauko, Italy, on May 31, 1944. Although his squad leader and others were seriously wounded, Smith refused to leave his comrades. He "placed them in shell craters and then alone faced a strong enemy counterattack, temporarily checking it by his accurate rifle fire at close range. Against overwhelming odds, he stood his ground until shot down and killed, rifle in hand." Smith was awarded his medal posthumously.

★ **Pfc. William A. McWhorter**  
Liberty, Army  
In December 1944, McWhorter was manning his machine gun in the Philippines when Japanese soldiers launched a heavy attack. McWhorter killed several attackers before Japanese soldiers were able to toss an explosive into his entrenchment. McWhorter picked up the device and held it close to his body, saving a nearby buddy. He was killed instantly. McWhorter was awarded his medal posthumously.

★ **Lt. Col. George L. Mabry Jr.**  
Sumter, Army  
During a fierce battle with German troops in November 1944, Mabry was commanding the 2nd Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment, in the Hurtgen Forest. When his troops were stopped by a mine field and enemy fire, Mabry moved through the mines, ahead of scouts, and found several enemy soldiers in foxholes. He captured them at bayonet point, then attacked a series of bunkers, capturing or killing 15 more Germans with the assistance of scouts. Mabry, later a major general, died in 1990.

## Living in S.C.

According to the Congressional Medal of Honor Society in Mount Pleasant, two other men now living in South Carolina were awarded the Medal of Honor during World War II.

- ★ Maryland native **Charles Murray**, a first lieutenant in the Army, was recognized for helping repel an attack by 200 Germans on a U.S. position near Kayserberg, France, in December 1944. Murray lives in Columbia.
- ★ Army Sgt. **Francis Currey**, a New York native, received his medal for attacking German tanks and troops in Malmédy, Belgium, in December 1944. Currey lives in Bonneau.



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