

WAR DEPARTMENT  
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF STAFF  
WASHINGTON

January 31, 1918

MEMORANDUM FOR THE CHIEF OF STAFF:

Subject: Name for the camp of the selective draft from Puerto Rico.

1. Herewith is a memorandum from the Acting Secretary of the General Staff, wherein the Chief of Staff directs recommendations be made for the name of the camp to be used at San Juan, Puerto Rico, for the training of the selective draft men in Puerto Rico.

2. The name recommended is "Camp Las Casas". Named for Bartolome` de Las Casas, 1474-1566, Bishop of Chiapas, "Protector of the Indians". Ardent advocate of the laws and regulations intended to not merely prevent abuse of the native population of the West Indies, but which provided for their education and training.

As the officers of the Army who held high commands in Puerto Rico are still alive, their names are thus barred. Las Casas, if the Laws of the Indies are remembered correctly, stood for education and training, for those laws were singularly humanitarian, especially for their time. That they were not enforced, does not affect that. It is believed this name will be favorably received by all classes of the population in Puerto Rico. After all, the training in one of these camps is not merely military training; it is also training for a more efficient conduct of life.

3. The War College Division recommends action in accordance with memorandum for The Adjutant General of the Army herewith.

D.W. KETCHAM

Colonel, General Staff,  
Acting Chief of War College Division

1 encl. added.  
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MEMORANDUM FOR THE ADJUTANT GENERAL OF THE ARMY:

Subject: Name for the camp of the selective draft from Puerto Rico.

I. The Secretary of War directs that the camp for the training of the selective draft men in Puerto Rico, at San Juan, Puerto Rico, be named "Camp Las Casas", in honor of Bartolome de Las Casas, 1474-1566.

II. The Secretary of War further directs that the above information be published to the service in the next general order issued, and that advance copies be furnished to the chiefs of all staff corps and departments, Postmaster General, Chairman on Training Camp Activities, the commanding general, Eastern Department, and the commanding officer, training camp, Puerto Rico.

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WAR DEPARTMENT  
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF STAFF  
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM FOR THE CHIEF OF STAFF:

Subject: Naming of Army Cantonments

1. Herewith letters from Albert S. Dickinson (WPD 9699-20) dated March 20, 1918, from Pop Thomas Post No. 30, G.A.R. Department of Minnesota (WPD 9699-21) dated March 21, 1918, and from George H. Thomas Post No. 18, Ottawa, Kansas (WPD 9699-22) dated March 23, 1918, in which it is urged that the name of George H. Thomas be given to one of the army cantonments.

2. The National Army cantonments and the National Guard mobilization camps were named after distinguished soldiers of the United States but in doing so other considerations than commemorating them were involved.

3. These names are the names of post offices. They should accordingly be short and easily written. It must be remembered that in these cantonments there are many whose families know little or no English. It is necessary that addresses written by this class of correspondents should be simple and short. Furthermore, a long name takes more time to write and there is necessarily an increased chance of it being written incorrectly. This eliminated such names as "George H. Thomas". Such a name would inevitably be written in two or three different ways. It was desired to avoid this in order to aid in the ease of distributing mail.

4. It was endeavored to assign names which would have some connection with the troops and [sic] to the camps and which would not conflict with the names of established army posts which were clearly post office addresses. Camp Sheridan, Alabama, is the concentration camp of soldiers from Ohio and West Virginia and there is a Fort Sheridan near Chicago. The distance between these points enabled the name to be used twice.

5. The only camp which could appropriately have been named "Thomas" would have been so close to Fort Thomas, Kentucky, a permanent post, as to have created confusion in the mail.

6. The idea of commemorating distinguished officers was only secondary. These camps are temporary constructions. It is not known what will be done with them at the close of this war. General Thomas already has a permanent post of the U.S. Army named after him.

7. It is not considered expedient to change the name of any cantonment. This will increase difficulties of the mail service. The prompt receipt of communications through the mail is the main consideration. Nothing should be done which will complicate that. It is accordingly considered inadvisable to give the name "George H. Thomas" to any of the existing cantonments.

8. The War Plans Division therefore recommends action as indicated in this memorandum to the Adjutant of the Army herewith.

3 encl. added  
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D.W. KETCHAM  
Colonel General Staff,  
Actg. Director, W.P.D., A.A.C. of S.