

Commandant opens home to Carlisle Barracks families

Article and photos by Staff Sgt. Corey Baltos, USAWC Public Affairs

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“The neat thing about this house is that it always welcomes people,” said Maj. Gen. Gregg Martin, USAWC Commandant, as he gave a tour of Quarters 1 to the Carlisle Barracks Homeschoolers Group.



Maj. Gen. Gregg Martin, USAWC Commandant, explains the significance of the posters lining the stairs to Carlisle Barracks children during a tour of Quarters 1.

Quarters 1, which has been the home to every commandant since 1969, was originally built for Carlisle lawyer George Barnitz in 1932 on land that used to be known as “Indian Woods”

by the local community because the students at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School used to hike and play there, said Jim McNally, U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center museum curator.

In 1958, as the Army War College was expanding, the Army bought the house from Barnitz’s widow for \$100,000, and used it for bachelor officer quarters. In 1969, Maj. Gen. William McCaffrey and his wife were guests of the bachelor officers when Mrs. McCaffrey suggested that the house would be perfect for the commandant to live in. McCaffrey’s successor, Maj. Gen. George Eckhardt, was the first commandant to live in the house.

Martin hosts approximately 50 events annually at Quarters 1. These events range from dinners to receptions to get-to-gethers. Guests range from the President of the United States and other international leaders, to Army War College students, Carlisle Barracks employees and school children.

The Martins open the house twice a year to post community members. On Halloween trick-or-treaters are treated to a tour of the house, and during the holiday season post employees and Army War College

students, staff, faculty and families are invited to the quarters for a reception.

“This house is billed as the biggest set of living quarters in the Army,” said Martin. “When Maggie and I were here while I was a student and on the faculty we lived in one of the “Smurf Village” houses with our three boys. Now that we have plenty room they are no longer living with us.”

While Quarters 1 is an official residence each commandant is allowed to decorate it to suit his interests and personality. Official furniture that stays with the house mixes with the commandant’s personal furniture, while official decorations sit next to family photos and personal mementos.

Upon moving into the quarters the commandant will traditionally meet with McNally to pick out art and other items that will reflect both the history of the Army and the War College, as well as the interests of the resident.

Portraits of former Secretary of the Army Elihu Root and former Chief of Staff of the United States Army, Lt. Gen. Leonard Wood, hang on the living room wall.

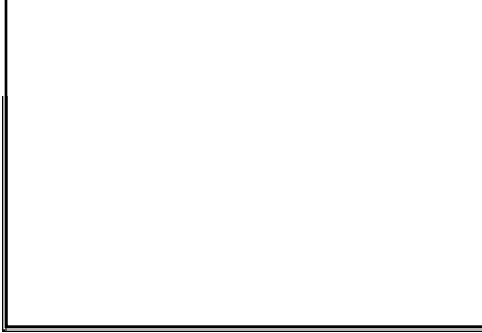
“When I came here I was very interested in learning more about Elihu Root, the founder of the Army War College,” said Martin as he pointed to a photo of Root that hangs in the living room. “I was also interested in General Leonard Wood for two reasons, the initiatives he implemented as Army Chief of Staff laid the ground work for the modern Army and because he was a physician, the commander of the “Rough Riders” during the Spanish American War, military governor of Cuba and Governor General of the Philippines. He was the David Petraeus of his day.”

Historical posters representing each military service, as well as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, hang on the wall going up the stairs.

“Even though this is the Army War College, we have students from every branch of the military,” said Martin. The engineer poster was added as a tribute to Martin’s background as an Army engineer.

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Built during prohibition, Quarters 1 has a secret exit built into the wall of the library. The exit leads from the first floor to the basement, which allowed residents and guests to exit or enter the premises without being seen by the police. Martin entered the library through the secret passage during a tour of the house. Behind him you can see signatures on the wall where guests have signed their names over the years.



One of the highlights of the tour was when the children investigated the secret passage way built within the library walls.

This house was built during prohibition and if the police showed up, the guests needed a place to hide the alcohol and leave the premises without being seen.” explained Martin.

Many of the guests throughout the years have signed the walls of the secret passage by guests of the house.

“President George W. Bush signed the wall when he visited here a few years ago, as did actor James Earl Jones,” said Martin. He then invited his guests to sign the wall.

Martin told the children that one of his favorite rooms was the foyer. “This room is like being in a castle,” he said. On sunny days he enjoys sitting near the window with a book and soaking up the sun, he said.