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# Updating Homes, Conserving History

*Nearly 100 years after their original construction, historic homes at Fort Leavenworth now house military college students.*

By Jeanne Chandler

The history books tell us that in 1908, the School of Application for Infantry and Cavalry at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, had grown at a rapid pace. The expansion of the school, and the importance it was gaining, necessitated adding additional, specialized Non Commissioned Officers (NCOs) to the staff. Among their duties were the operation of departments of the school—the print shop; the file room; the mimeograph shop; the book bindery; the lithography, the drafting and photographic department; the typing pool; and the book department. Each shop was led by a master sergeant or warrant officer and run with “rigid economy.”

In response to this staffing need, Fort Leavenworth built eight brick duplex homes to house 16 NCOs and their families. The street on which the homes were built was named Wint Avenue, in honor of Brigadier General Theodore J. Wint, who served in the Civil War. The 39-by-27-foot buildings with two 14-by-8-foot wings in the south elevation reflect influences of Georgian style architecture. The construction cost of the 4,671-square-foot, two-story structure with a basement was about \$9,211 in 1908.

In March 2006, when Michaels Military Housing (MMH) partnered with the Army as part of the Residential Communities Initiative (RCI) to form Fort Leavenworth Frontier Heritage Communities (FLFHC), the row houses still stood like stately dowagers, but only one home on Wint Avenue was occupied. Over the years, the homes

The buildings reflect Georgian and Queen Anne influences, including fish-scale siding, board and batten siding, and chamfered columns with carved arches.

had been well maintained by the Army but needed modern updating to accommodate today’s military lifestyle. FLFHC began the process in June 2006.

The updates have consisted of installing new floor coverings (carpet and vinyl); refurbishing wood flooring; refurbishing bathroom cabinets and countertops; replacing kitchen

cupboards and appliances, including installing dishwashers, icemakers, stainless steel back splashes, and range hoods; repairing bathroom fixtures; upgrading HVAC systems; and historically reconstructing rear porches, steps, and decks. As the homes came back online, the residences were offered to students at the Command and General Staff College (CGSC), as their location is ideal for student families.

During June and July, FLFHC also updated the homes of the Garrison Commander and the Deputy Commandant to the Command and General Staff College. The identical homes were built in 1883 for officers on the staff of General John Pope, Civil War hero and Commander of the Department of Missouri, whose headquarters was assigned to Fort Leavenworth. These three-story homes have 4,557 square feet of living space and a full basement. The original cost of construction was not documented.

The buildings reflect Georgian and Queen Anne influences, including fish-scale siding, board and batten siding, and chamfered columns with carved arches. These homes, when originally built, had five operational fireplaces and chimneys.



The major updates to these homes included remodeled kitchens, new cabinets, new flooring, appliances, fixtures and faucets, complete lead removal in the area four feet above the floor, and water diversion landscaping to protect the basement. Minor upgrades were performed as needed, including spot repair, porch repair and painting, wall painting, and installation of new showers.

Once a plan of action is created for a historical unit, FLFHC contacts the Fort Leavenworth Historic Architect/Cultural Resources Manager to review the plan. If the scope of the project exceeds regular maintenance and repair to require major modification that will impact character-defining features, the

project plan must be sent to the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) for review and comment. If the project does not require SHPO review, the work can commence but care must be taken at all times to observe the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.

The standards are neither technical nor prescriptive, but are intended to promote responsible preservation practices that help protect irreplaceable cultural resources. For example, they cannot, in and of themselves, be used to make essential decisions about which features of the historic building should be saved and which can be changed. But once a treatment is selected, the standards

*Above left: As part of a groundbreaking ceremony in June, Interstate Realty Management Co. (IRM), the property management arm of Michaels Military Housing (MMH), presented \$3,500 scholarships to five Fort Leavenworth youth, shown here with: (front left) Bob Greer, President of MMH; Holly Petraeus, spouse of Fort Leavenworth Combined Arms Center Commanding General; and Jim Henderson, President of IRM.*

*Top and above right: Major upgrades to eight historic homes at Fort Leavenworth include remodeled kitchens with new appliances, new cabinets and flooring, and much more. When the homes were originally built in 1908, they had five operational fireplaces and chimneys.*

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provide philosophical consistency to the work. The four treatment approaches are Preservation, Rehabilitation, Restoration, and Reconstruction, outlined and explained below in hierarchical order:

- ◆ **Preservation**—places a high premium on the retention of all historic fabric through conservation, maintenance, and repair. It reflects a building’s continuum over time, through successive occupancies, and the respectful changes and alterations that are made.
- ◆ **Rehabilitation**—emphasizes the retention and repair of historic materials, but more latitude is provided for replacement because it is assumed the property is more deteriorated prior to work. (Both preservation and rehabilitation standards focus on the preservation of

materials, building features, finishes, spaces, and spatial relationships that, together, give a property its historic character.)

- ◆ **Restoration**—focuses on the retention of materials from the most significant time in a property’s history, while permitting the removal of materials from other periods.
- ◆ **Reconstruction**—establishes limited opportunities to re-create a non-surviving site, landscape, building, structure, or object in all new materials.

As well as historic renovations, FLFHC is currently conducting minor to major renovations on newer homes and in June held a groundbreaking ceremony for the construction of 708 new housing units.

During the ceremony, Interstate Realty Management Co., the property management arm of MMH, presented

five \$3,500 scholarships to residents of Fort Leavenworth. The scholarships are awarded through the Interstate Realty Management Co. Scholarship Foundation, and the opportunity to apply is open to all residents in its 220 communities. Foundation funds are raised through the financial support of corporations, companies, families, private trusts and individuals.

Mike Levitt, founder and CEO of Michaels Development Company, of which IRM and MMH are affiliates, contributes \$2 for each \$1 raised by the foundation. Since 1991, more than 900 scholarships worth more than \$1.5 million have been awarded. ■

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*Jeanne Chandler is the Director of Marketing for Michaels Military Housing. Reach her at [jchandler@mmhusa.com](mailto:jchandler@mmhusa.com).*

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