

## Fort Hayes – The Federal Arsenal

In the early 1860s several cities vied to have the Federal Arsenal located in their area. William Deshler and a committee of prominent citizens convinced a U. S. congressman that “Columbus [Ohio] was the exact center of the Earth” and, therefore, the best and most logical location for the arsenal. The deal was done.

The new armory site was selected by General Catharinus Putnam Buckingham and in 1861 Robert Neal deeded 77.9 acres to the federal government for \$16,000.

During the Civil War the facility served as a distribution point for Union Army supplies. After 1865 it served as a recruiting and training post for men from all over the country. In the 1920s it became headquarters for the 5th Army Corps which directed activities for troops from Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky and West Virginia. In 1922, the name “Fort Hayes” was officially adopted in honor of Rutherford B. Hayes, a former Ohio governor and U.S. president.

During World War II, more than 200,000 recruits were processed through the post. The most recognizable building on the grounds remains the Shot Tower, built during the Civil War (1863) and originally used as a structure for making the “shot” for the rifles of that era. Through the years there have been as many as 65 buildings on the grounds as well as a golf course and a small pond named Lake Lulu after a colonel’s daughter. Many band concerts and military exhibits have fascinated Columbus citizens at the fort.

After WWII the site was declared surplus, but has continually been used for many different purposes. In 1970, the barracks was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Fort Hayes is currently used by the Columbus City Schools and Army Reserves.

### Sources:

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