



In 1940, the United States began drafting young men to enhance its military strength. By the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century, the military needed its inductees to be literate. Legal discrimination in the US denied African Americans educational opportunities, and many immigrants were not fluent in English.

In 1943, the military converted over 20 installations into educational facilities, which elevated the educational levels of new soldiers to about the 4<sup>th</sup> grade level.

Fort Ontario, originally built by the British and ceded to the United States following the American War of Independence, was one of the oldest continuously occupied military installations in the continental US.



To address this problem, the army initiated an education program to teach draftees rudimentary reading, writing, and math as part of their induction program.

Recruits used a series of training manuals. Published by the US War Department, these manuals, called the "Private Pete" series, gave the previously illiterate troops the tools to be successful in the modern army.

Situated at the strategic junction of the Oswego River and Lake Ontario, for over two centuries the stone and earthen fortifications of Fort Ontario protected the northern border. By the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the defensive works were obsolete and the fort served as a training and induction center for troops going overseas.