

Tama Hills' history dates back to [b]1938 before World War II (WWII).[b] At that time the Japanese Imperial Army established a munitions processing and storage plant under direction of Arsenal Headquarters in Itabashi located in central Tokyo. Historical records reveal that the plant was constructed exclusively for the production of explosive chemicals. It became an independent facility in [b]1940[b] with 2,085 people, three factories, housing, dormitories and warehouses by the end of WWII.

The Tama arsenal was built according to German specifications. It resembled facilities in Bavaria, a province in Southern Germany. Processed bombs were stored in numerous concrete "bunkers" throughout Tama Depot, many of which remain today. The Japanese Army took full advantage of the natural concealment to hide the facilities. It was so effective, in fact, that the depot remained undetected during the entire WWII.

Shortly after occupation, the U.S. Army took possession of Tama as compensation property. They discovered that large areas of the site had been rendered useless. Before surrendering in an apparent act of sabotage, Japanese soldiers had saturated most of the grounds with picric acid, a highly poisonous chemical. The Army brought in decontamination and demolition teams who cleared the site and checked for live ammunition. The recorded U.S. Military possession date is [b]November 1, 1945[b]. The Army relinquished control of Tama on [b]October 28, 1947 [b]to the newly established U.S. Air Force. Within two months, the Air Force began to stock and store bombs and other ammunition at Tama Depot.

U.S. Forces occupied the area provisionally until the U.S.-Japan Peace Treaty of [b]April 29, 1952.[b] Since then, the area has been controlled by U.S. Forces Japan under the status of Forces Agreement (SOFA).

In the [b>early 1950's[b], primary operations at the depot included receipt, storage, issue, inspection, maintenance, reconditioning, modification and disposal of ammunition components and items.

In support of the Korean Conflict, logistics planning called for three ammunition depots throughout Japan. Two additional sites were acquired from the Government of Japan in 1952: one was Yamada near Kyushu and the other Kohzoji near Nagoya. By [b>early 1952[b], approximately 20,000

tons of aerial bombs were stored at Tama. So massive was the number of bombs that they had to be stored in every available building, cavern, bunker and open area of the Tama compound.

The bombs were transported by truck and rail to Yokota Air Base. They were loaded on to various fighters, bombers or cargo aircraft destined for Korea. Logistically, Tama proved to be as valuable to U.S. Forces during the Korean Conflict as it had for the Japanese Army in World War II.

Both Yamada and Kohzoji were deactivated at the end of the conflict. Tama, on the other hand, continued operations several months after the conflict's end.

In [b]late 1954 and early 1955[/b], an improved Pacific Logistics Plan Order deactivated all Air Force munitions storage sites in Japan. With no military operational value, Tama was turned over to the 6100th Chaplains' Office at Tachikawa Air Base for use as a religious retreat center. In addition, a Boy Scout camp based at Nikko, north of Tokyo, was permanently assigned to the 6100th Support Wing at Tachikawa Air Base on [b]July 1, 1964[/b]. Tama has hosted many Boy Scout campers since then.

[b]In 1967, [/b]the Air Force received total accountability for Tama from U.S. Army in Japan. In September of that year, the site was renamed Tama Service Annex. It consisted of the Tama Recreation Center and a partially completed 18-hole golf course and facilities constructed by the Government of Japan. The new golf course and facilities were part of an agreement between the U.S. Military and the Japanese Government in exchange for the nine-hole Showa Golf Course, located at Showa Air Base near Yokota Air Base, Japan.

The Tama golf course and facilities were completed in September 1969 and accepted from the Japanese Government on [b]December 24, 1969[/b]. The golf course comprises approximately one-half of Tama's 489 acres.

[b]By early 1970[/b], U.S. and Japanese authorities were consolidating U.S. Military facilities in the Kanto Plain. Part of the Kanto Plain Consolidation Plan called for the closing of Tachikawa Air Base and transferring most of its operational responsibilities to Yokota Air Base. Because Tama was controlled by the 6100th Support Wing in

Tachikawa, it was included in the transfer.

[b]In 1971 [b]when the 475th Air Base Wing at Yokota inherited Tama, many original facilities at the site were either abandoned or had fallen prey to forces of nature. Some were able to be renovated by Air Force Civil Engineers and volunteer organizations from the Yokota community. One major facility that still remains today is the Red Horse Lodge. Air Force officials determined that, through development and existing natural resources, Tama had great potential as an off-base recreation complex. However, little was done to develop this potential. Throughout the 1970's, Tama was again operated as a religious retreat center, with the added attraction of an 18-hole golf course. It was also made available to military people who were in-transit for temporary duty or leave. Most facilities, however, were in poor condition and would have remained so without the interest shown by Lieutenant General James D. Hughes, Commander-in-Chief, Pacific Air Force. After a visit to Tama in [b]January 1980[b], General Hughes felt that Tama could be the "Camp John Hay" of the Northern Pacific. [b]In 1980[b], a conceptual plan was drawn up to upgrade Tama. The following two years, only minor housekeeping types of construction were carried out at Tama. Eventually, interest came to a gradual halt and so did what little construction that was in progress.

Interest in the Tama project was revived shortly after Colonel Barry J. Howard assumed command of the 475th Air Base Wing in [b]June 1982[b].

Through his leadership, volunteers donated time and effort to upgrade facilities in one area frequented by Boy Scouts and other youth groups. Other volunteers undertook the cleaning of nature trails and brush from around buildings. [b]In October 1982[b], a crew of seven Airmen with Civil Engineering backgrounds volunteered to live at Tama six days a week to do major renovations. They concentrated on such areas as flooring, structural repair, electrical problems and plumbing essentials. At the end of the twentieth century, a highway expansion traded land for a new lodge, outdoor recreation and support facilities. Today a walk through the beautiful woods at Tama reveals this rich history. Bunkers, foundations, and tunnels still exist. Historical plaques have been erected along points of interest.