

Ponca Military Academy

Ponca Military Academy was the only proprietary military school in Oklahoma. PMA was established in 1940 by the late Colonel William V. Cox and his wife Blanche. Dedicated to the growth and advancement of young men, Ponca Military Academy opened its doors to young men from Oklahoma and throughout the country. It also had students from other countries from time to time. (<http://www.poncacity.com/history/pages/1960/1962.htm>) Originally located on 56 acres of land the academy was previously a training center and later a country club, the Quah-Ta-See-Da Club, which E.W. Marland built in the 1920s. Executives of Marland Oil Company utilized the facility and after a merger, then the Continental Oil Company (Conoco). (<http://www.poncacity.com/history/pages/1940/1940-1942.htm>)

The three principal buildings which constituted the academy included the administration building, barracks, and gymnasium. The property also included a parade ground, athletic fields, tennis courts, and a playground. The Marland administration building housed the academy administration offices, classrooms, dining hall, lounge, auditorium, gun range and library. (***Ponca City News, April 15, 2018***) The academy buildings were constructed of white stucco in the southwest Spanish style of architecture with Indian and Spanish interiors. Marland brought architects, engineers and builders from all parts of the country and Mexico. The administration building in particular was still considered “awe inspiring” in the 1940s when Cox purchased it. (***J. Landis Fleming, Moore Messenger, October 16, 1947***) The Conoco logo (a triangle with a bar through it) was embedded in the stucco over the entrance to the building. Many of the architectural features of the building mirrored those of the Marland Mansion, such as the hand carved wooden ceiling beams, hand crafted metal chandeliers, inlaid tile, and hand

carved balustrades. It is likely both buildings shared many of the same artisans, since both were constructed during the same time period. **(David Burr, "The School an Idea Built", *The Sooner Magazine of the University of Oklahoma*, Norman, October, 1952)**

Starting in 1940 with eighteen students, the school eventually became fully accredited. In the beginning it was financially touch and go until enrollment reached a critical mass. However, financial assistance came from a surprising source. After World War II broke out, British flyers were being trained at the Ponca City airport. They needed room and board. PMA stepped in and that contract lifted the school out of the red. **(*Ibid.*)**

PMA was one of only two military academies in the state, the other being Oklahoma Military Academy in Claremore. Unlike OMA which was state supported, PMA was a proprietary school owned and operated by Colonel Cox and his wife. The unpopularity of the Vietnam War caused many military academies around the nation to lose their appeal. In the late 1960s enrollment began to dwindle at PMA. After 34 years the decision was made to close the academy in 1974. Approximately 4,000 young men attended PMA during its operation.

(*Ardmore Daily Ardmoreite*, May 24, 1974)

William Cox was born and raised in Alfalfa County. He graduated from the University of Oklahoma in 1921 where he was a letterman and a member of Sigma Nu fraternity. From there he held several teaching and coaching positions at Carmen and Henryetta in Oklahoma and then at Wentworth Military Academy (MO) and Missouri Military Academy. He used that experience to return to Oklahoma and establish his own academy in Ponca City. There he located a property that exactly met his needs. **(David Burr, "The School an Idea Built", *The Sooner Magazine of the University of Oklahoma*, Norman, October, 1952)**

PMA was a business and made a significant contribution to the economy of Ponca City. At its height it had approximately 14 full time faculty plus other staff. The academy accommodated as many as 150 students, third grade through high school. Many community vendors were required to support the facility. The families of students also filled up hotel rooms for school functions and athletic events. Academy cadets had town privileges two or three afternoons a week spending money at many local retail outlets. (***The P.M.A. Chatter, Reunion Edition, 1983***)

The Ponca Military Academy Memorial Park was established in 1988. The sculpture "Serve with Pride" which stands at the former entrance of the Ponca Military Academy property was dedicated in 2008. Miniature replicas to scale of the three academy buildings are also located in the park. A long narrative about the park accompanied by several pictures is located on the internet. (<https://www.legion.org/memorials/240398/ponca-city-oklahoma-ponca-military-academy-pma-memorial-park>)

Ponca Military Academy has long been intertwined with the legacy of E.W. Marland. Accordingly, a PMA Museum opened about ten years ago and is housed in the Oil Museum building on the grounds of the Marland Mansion Estate in Ponca City. Many items of PMA memorabilia are preserved there including yearbooks, uniforms, videos and architectural items taken from the administration building before it was razed in 1983.

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