



Buckingham Army Air Field (Images of America)

Chris Wadsworth, Matt Johnson

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For most people in Southwest Florida, the name Buckingham is just one more dot on a map--a rural area east of U.S. Interstate 75. But for a few years, it was so much more. Starting in 1942, it was the site of the Buckingham Army Air Field--home to some 16,000 men and women supporting the United States' World War II efforts. Airplanes roared in the skies over Lee County and reflected off the azure waters of the Gulf of Mexico as tens of thousands of young men trained as aerial gunners. Learning to target and bring down enemy aircraft with their guns was critical to America's success in both the European and Pacific theaters. On the ground, trucks rumbled across the mammoth base, soldiers marched in review under the hot Florida sun, and an entire town sprang up on what was once swampland. Barracks were built, along with stores, nightclubs, churches, and even a hospital with its own baby ward. Today the memories of Buckingham Army Air Field can be found hiding in plain sight, including a working airport that was once the heart of the base.



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