A Brief History of College Arms Housing

1952-2013
On 23 June 1952, ground was broken for College Arms housing, intended primarily for US Army War College (USAWC) students and their families. The USAWC had moved to Carlisle Barracks in the summer of 1951, but the amount of housing available was nowhere near what was needed. Deputy Commandant Brigadier General Arthur Trudeau, instrumental in getting the USAWC to Carlisle, had a part in setting up student quarters in accordance with the Wherry Housing Act of 1949. Adjustments had to be made to comply with that program. The three bedroom homes, notoriously small, could have been a bit larger except for regulations--two feet had to be trimmed off the length and width to get the construction price below $9,000 each.¹ College Arms housing overall cost $925,700.² Ten to twelve of the homes were to be ready for occupancy by 1 September 1952.³ By the next academic year, one hundred small white houses dotted the northeast section of post. Those College Arms homes, numbering 501 to 600, lined all or parts of today's Wright and Forbes Avenues and Liggett, Davis, Craig, Pershing, Butler, Sumner, and Patton Roads. Around 1960, half of the homes were expanded from three bedroom, 1,265

² Army War College Archives, Curriculum Development, Department of Academic Affairs, General Files, Box 1, Folder 12, US Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.
³ Edward M. Almond Papers, Box 92, Folder 1, US Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. News clipping (where above photo is also from) has no newspaper name or date. It was in a scrapbook with 1952 clippings.
square foot homes (left, below) to four bedroom, 1,570 square foot homes (right).

Throughout the years, senior enlisted lived in five of the homes. More recently, a few USAWC geographic bachelor students, civilian students, and other officers and enlisted have also lived in College Arms.4

The size of the homes led to the nickname “Smurf Village,” from a popular 1980s cartoon that originated as a comic strip in Belgium in 1958. Smurfs, tiny blue people who lived in a village in a forest, were described as three apples high. The current and previous USAWC commandants, Major Generals Anthony Cucolo III and Gregg Martin, both remembered living in “Smurf Village” when they were students. USAWC end-of-year survey comments have included everything from “Bulldoze ‘Smurf’ houses. I will even volunteer to drive one!” (2004) to “We quite enjoyed our ‘smurf’ home and our return to small-town America” (2009).5

Since 2006, housing at Carlisle Barracks has gone through upgrades, including The Meadows neighborhood being added beside the golf course and new homes replacing the red houses on Marshall Ridge. In the “final phase” of the housing improvements, College Arms homes are being replaced by Heritage Heights duplex houses. Phase I, completed in 2009, demolished 31 homes and replaced them with 24. The individual homes cost between $267,000 and $275,000, depending on size. Phase II, a $22 million project, will replace 69 College Arms homes with 56, and all should be ready for the USAWC Class of 2015.6

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Pre-demolition photos
US Army War College Photo Lab, November 2012

larger kitchen
(smaller kitchen pictured on page 3)
living room and dining room

second floor
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College Arms then and now (photographs taken from Young Hall)

Aerial view
Carlisle Barracks Collection Photographs, Box 76, Folder 8, US Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. Circa mid-1990s.