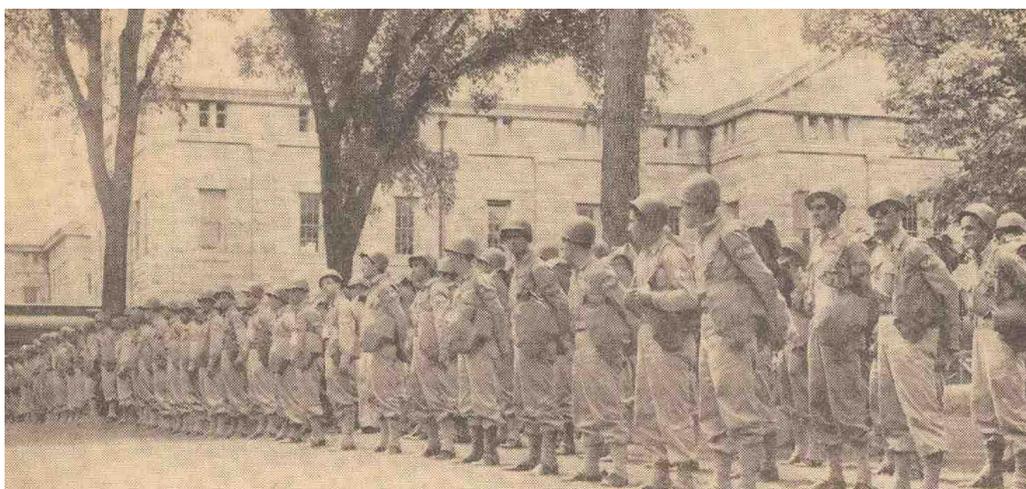


Italian Quartermaster Services Companies at Rock Island Arsenal
July 16, 1944 - September 22, 1945

The 39th and 40th Italian Quartermaster Services Companies were assigned to Rock Island Arsenal during the Second World War. There were a total of 192 Quartermaster Service Companies of 33,000 men working at 67 military installations in 25 states. Technically the Italian soldiers were no longer prisoners of war, as Italy had surrendered and joined Allied Forces against Nazi Germany. The Italian soldiers were permitted to volunteer for non-combat duty in special service units of the US Army. Each volunteer signed a pledge to perform any assigned duty except combat on behalf of the US against the common enemy, Nazi Germany.

The 39th and 40th trained at Pine Camp, New York, as part of the Quartermaster Corps of the US Army. They arrived by train from Pine Camp on July 16, 1944. Captain Gordon R. McIntyre (39th) and Captain Leslie W. Jackson (40th) were the US Officers in charge of the units. Twelve Italian-speaking American Soldiers were assigned to assist the 426 Italian signees as interpreters.



While at Rock Island Arsenal, the Italian signees performed general depot and warehouse work, maintained grounds and equipment, packed supplies, and loaded supplies into freight cars. They worked in the reclamation department, salvaging lumber and operating buffing machines and nail pulling machines. Individuals with special talents and training were assigned duty as mechanics in the motor pool or as chemists in the Rock Island Arsenal Laboratory.



They were paid prisoner of war pay of \$24 a month, as determined by the Geneva Convention. They received \$8 in cash and the balance in Post Exchange or canteen coupons. Any Italian Commissioned Officers were paid \$30 (Lieutenant) or \$50 (Captain).

The Italian signees wore US Army enlisted men's uniforms with plain buttons. They had the word "Italy" on their left sleeves and caps. Each individual carried an identification card.

They lived in Barracks Building 90 and two other quarters. They were allowed off-duty recreational activities such as soccer, showing films, and playing cards. Originally they were restricted to the area surrounding the barracks and a small field used as their soccer playing field.

In September 1944, the Commanding Officer of Rock Island Arsenal established a limited pass policy for Italian signees. A group of five, under the escort of American Soldiers, could be granted an off-island pass. Only two groups were allowed passes each Sunday to attend Catholic Mass in Davenport, Iowa, or Rock Island, Illinois.

They departed Rock Island Arsenal on September 22, 1945, on a special troop train to begin their journey back to Italy.