

**THE AMERICAN MILITARY
ON THE FRONTIER**

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Edited by

James P. Tate, Major, USAF,
Air Force Academy

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PREFACE

The Seventh Military History Symposium differed from its predecessors in that its participants and its audience were perhaps more heterogenous than in the past. The nature of the topic for this symposium brought together military historians, frontier historians, western historians, and local historians. Each of these groups addressed the topic from a different perspective. Military historians tended to view the experience of the American military on the frontier as an interesting but relatively insignificant episode in American military history. Frontier historians tended to view the military as one of many forces involved in the century-long expansion of the United States across the American continent. Western and local historians tended to view the military in terms of interest in the trans-Mississippi frontier and the plains Indian wars of the late nineteenth century. While military and frontier historians were often more interested in campaigns and doctrine, the broad sweep of history, western and local historians were often more interested in battles and personalities, the rich detail of history. The planners of the symposium attempted to address the interests of both groups.

The papers in this volume are those presented at the Air Force Academy on September 30 and October 1, 1976. They are arranged into four sections: "The Frontier and American Military Tradition," "Comparison of Military Frontiers," "Impact of the Military on the Frontier," and "Military Life on the Frontier." Papers in the first two sections address the broad sweep of the military experience on the frontier. These papers help provide perspective and conceptual framework within which to fit the more specific studies in the third and fourth sections. The fifth section, "The Seventh Military History Symposium in Perspective" includes the reactions and commentary of three leading military historians. With a few exceptions the papers and commentary in this volume are presented in the order in which they were delivered at the symposium.

The Military History Symposium series began in 1967 as an annual event sponsored by the USAF Academy and the Association of Graduates. Since 1970, the symposia have been held biennially. The purpose of the series is to provide a forum for scholars in military

history and related fields, thereby promoting an exchange of ideas and information between scholars and military professionals, another link between thought and application in military affairs.

The USAF Academy and the Association of Graduates are indebted to the participants whose individual and collective efforts made the Seventh Military History Symposium possible. In addition to the participants, a number of other individuals and organizations were essential to the success of the symposium. The Superintendent of the Academy, Lieutenant General James R. Allen, and the Dean, Brigadier General William T. Woodyard, were steadfast in their support of the Symposium Steering Committee which was responsible for conceiving, planning, and carrying out the program. The committee, chaired by Colonel Alfred F. Hurley, began plans and preparations for the symposium more than 2 years before the first session began. The committee is particularly indebted to Mr. Robert M. Utley for advice regarding the program and the selection of scholars to present papers. Administrative and logistical details were the responsibility of the Executive Director of the symposium, Captain David A. Miles, who made a very difficult job appear easy. Assisting Captain Miles was a secretarial staff of Carol Meredith, Judi Daugherty, Catherine Clowry, and Yvonne Proctor, whose diligence and wholehearted cooperation contributed greatly to the smooth operation of the conference. Acknowledgements would not be complete without mention of Mrs. Robert Jones, without whose patience and typing skill this volume could not have appeared.

THE MILITARY HISTORY SYMPOSIA OF THE USAF ACADEMY

Current Concepts in Military History. (First Military History Symposium, held in May 1967.) Proceedings were not published.

Command and Commanders in Modern Warfare, 2d, enlarged edition, edited by Lt. Col. William Geffen, Washington, GPO, 1971, \$1.60, stock number 0874-0003. (The Second Military History Symposium, held in May 1968.)

Science, Technology, and Warfare: Proceedings of the Third Military History Symposium, 8-9 May 1969, edited by Lt. Col. Monte D. Wright and Lawrence J. Paszek, Washington, GPO, 1971, \$1.25, stock number 0874-0002.

Soldiers and Statesmen: Proceedings of the Fourth Military History Symposium, 22-23 October 1970, edited by Lt. Col. Monte D. Wright and Lawrence J. Paszek, Washington, GPO, 1973, \$1.60, stock number 0870-00335.

The Military and Society: Proceedings of the Fifth Military History Symposium, 5-6 October 1972, edited by Major David MacIsaac, Washington, GPO, 1975, \$1.90, stock number 008-070-00367-8.

Military History of the American Revolution: Proceedings of the Sixth Military History Symposium, 10-11 October 1974, edited by Major Stanley J. Underdal, Washington, GPO, 1976, \$2.70, stock number 008-070-0361-9.

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OPENING REMARKS

Lt. General James R. Allen
Superintendent, United States Air Force Academy

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. It is my pleasure to welcome you to the Seventh Military History Symposium.

We chose *The American Military on the Frontier* as the topic for the 1976 symposium primarily because we wanted to join our fellow Coloradans in their celebration of the centennial of Colorado statehood. The Air Force Academy is located in Colorado for many good reasons, not the least of which is the proud record of this state in pioneering in many things besides the frontier. For almost a quarter of a century, Coloradans have played a significant role in Academy affairs, and we are very pleased by means of this symposium to recognize in some small way our indebtedness to a great state. This is the second of two symposia coinciding with our Centennial/Bicentennial celebration here in Colorado. The first, in 1974, treated the *Military History of the American Revolution*, the proceedings of which were published late in June of 1976 by the Government Printing Office in cooperation with the Office of Air Force History.

In addition to the Colorado Centennial, there are other reasons to justify the devotion of this symposium to frontier history. Whereas the military's frontier experience may appear at first glance to have little relevance to the mission of an air force in the nuclear age, it was nonetheless an experience rich in examples of small unit command, of ventures into the unknown, of courage both physical and moral (as well as of their opposites), of unconventional warfare, and of civil-military relations under trying conditions—all topics of continuing relevance. In addition, it is probably fair to observe, not unlike Frederick Jackson Turner, that the frontier heritage has had an abiding influence on our people in or out of uniform. As a people we are often uncritically proud of that heritage, recalling images of courage, endurance, and commitment—traits that we see as necessary for success on

the modern frontiers of science, technology, and space. And yet much of that heritage is based upon myths fostered by motion pictures, television, and popular literature. Hopefully this symposium can contribute to the on-going effort to separate fact from fancy in the record of the western frontier.

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**THE AMERICAN MILITARY
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I

THE FRONTIER AND AMERICAN MILITARY TRADITION

The first session of the symposium was devoted to the 19th Harmon Memorial Lecture. This lecture series began in 1959 to honor the late Lieutenant General Hubert R. Harmon, first Superintendent of the United States Air Force Academy. Each year a committee of internationally known historians and USAF Academy representatives invites an outstanding military historian or a leading scholar from a closely allied field to present an original lecture on a subject of his choice within the field of military history. Previous lecturers have been, in the order of their appearance: W. Frank Craven, T. Harry Williams, Louis Morton, William R. Emerson, Frank E. Vandiver, Maurice Matloff, Gordon A. Craig, Peter Paret, Michael Howard, Forrest C. Pogue, Elting E. Morison, Theodore Ropp, Sir John Hackett, Martin Blumenson, Russell F. Weigley, I. B. Holley, Jr., John Shy, and Edward M. Coffman.

This year's Harmon lecturer, Robert M. Utley, was introduced by the Acting Head of the History Department, United States Air Force Academy, Lieutenant Colonel Philip D. Caine. Utley's topic, "The Contribution of the Frontier to the American Military Tradition," fitted perfectly as the keynote address for this symposium. He argued that the American military has failed to benefit from the lessons of its frontier experience, that while the frontier has provided inspiration for movie makers to create heroic images of "cavalry to the rescue," and for reformers to create contrasting images of blue-coated troopers brutalizing innocent Indians, it has not inspired enough serious study by military strategists and tacticians. The military therefore has failed to learn from a significant episode in its past, an episode which can offer valuable insights into the problems of training and organizing conventional forces for unconventional war, into the nature of total war between irreconcilable cultures, into the myths behind the American militia tradition, and finally into the role of the military in the integration of minorities into American society. Utley concluded that: "Today the American military tradition must be responsive to the imperatives of nuclear warfare, and nuclear warfare discloses few parallels with the small unit Indian combats of forest, plains, and desert. But the tradition must also be responsive to the 'limited wars' that the nuclear specter has spawned, and these do disclose parallels with frontier warfare."



In these sketches Frederick Remington captured two of the enduring images of the American frontier: the savage Indian attacking a wagon train and the US Cavalry to the rescue. (Courtesy of *Century Magazine*)

THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE FRONTIER TO THE AMERICAN MILITARY TRADITION

Robert M. Utley

It is all a memory now, but what a memory, to cherish! . . . A more thankless task, a more perilous service, a more exacting test of leadership, morale and discipline no army in Christendom has ever been called upon to undertake than that which for eighty years was the lot of the little fighting force of regulars who cleared the way across the continent for the emigrant and settler.¹

So declared Captain Charles King in an address to Indian War veterans after the disappearance of the frontier had indeed made it all a memory. In dozens of novels penned after the effects of Apache arrows and bullets placed him on the retired list in 1879, King verbalized and reinforced the frontier army's view of itself. That the images he evoked fall somewhat short of historical truth does not exclude them from a prominent place in the American military tradition.

Captain King's heroic picture contrasts with images evoked by bumper stickers proclaiming that Custer died for our sins and by motion pictures such as "Little Big Man" and "Soldier Blue" depicting the frontier troopers as brutes rampaging about the west gleefully slaughtering peaceable Indians. These images have been intensified and popularized in recent years by a national guilt complex that would expiate sin by bending history to modern social purposes, but they are rooted in the rhetoric of nineteenth century humanitarians. "I only know the names of three savages upon the plains," declared the old abolitionist Wendell Phillips in 1870, "—Colonel Baker, General Custer, and at the head of all, General Sheridan." Baker's assault on a Piegan village in 1870 inspired a verse that could well have been written in the councils of the American Indian Movement a cen-

¹Quoted in Robert G. Carter, *On the Border with Mackenzie* (1935; reprint, New York, 1961), pp. 46-47. For a sketch of King see Don Russell's introduction to King's *Campaigning with Crook* (Western Frontier Library ed., Norman, OK, 1964), pp. vii-xxii. See also Russell's "Captain Charles King, Chronicler of the Frontier," *Westerners Brand Book*, no. 9 (Chicago, March, 1952), pp. 1-3, 7-8, which lists all 69 of King's books.

ture later:

Women and babes shrieking awoke
To perish 'mid the battle smoke,
Murdered, or turned out there to die
Beneath the stern, gray, wintry sky.²

No more than King's images do these represent historical truth, and no less are they too a part of the American military tradition.

As these contrasting images suggest, I see the American military tradition as in part a record—a record as we perceive it today, not necessarily as it was in fact—of those people and events of the past that we have singled out to provide us with inspiration, edification, guidance, and even, as I have intimated, self-reproach. Besides this record, I take the American military tradition to be the accumulated body of military usage, belief, custom, and practice that has descended to us from the past. It is also policy, doctrine, thought, and institutions as they have evolved by selection, rejection, and modification through past generations to today. Let us examine how the frontier, which formed so long and prominent a part of the nation's military history, may have contributed—or indeed may have failed to contribute—to some of these aspects of the American military tradition.

Today's selective record of our frontier military experience may well be the frontier's most enduring contribution. From this heritage we have drawn a congeries of vignettes that loom conspicuously in the national memory and thus in the national military tradition. "Mad Anthony" Wayne's Legion sweeps with fixed bayonets through the forest debris of Fallen Timbers, routing the Indian defenders and planting the roots of the fledgling regular army. Andrew Jackson's infantry storms the fortifications at Horseshoe Bend, slaughtering more than 500 Red Sticks and crushing a Creek uprising that threatens the Southwest in the War of 1812. Canby dies by assassination during a peace conference in California's lava beds, the only regular army general to lose his life in Indian warfare. The golden-haired Custer falls with every man of his immediate command in the best-known and most controversial of all frontier encounters. To Nelson A. Miles, Chief Joseph utters the moving words: "From where the sun now stands, I will fight no more, forever." This part of our tradition is one that arouses pride, or at least the thrill of adventure. Its symbols are battle and campaign streamers gracing the army's colors, the military art of Frederic Remington, Charles Schreyvogel, and Rufus Zogbaum, and the motion picture depiction of the frontier army.

²Quoted in Robert Winston Mardock, *The Reformers and the American Indian* (Columbia, MO, 1971), p. 69.

Especially the motion pictures. It is difficult to exaggerate their influence. John Ford was the master. In the climactic scene of "Fort Apache," for example, cavalry officer John Wayne philosophizes on the courage, stamina, skill, and jocular nature of the regular army troopers who opened the American west. A cavalry column with banners flying marches in silhouette against a desert sunrise as swelling music proclaims the majesty of their part in the epic of America. With such stirring scenes Ford shaped a whole generation's conception of the frontier army. In a television tribute, John Wayne conceded that Ford was not above perpetuating legends, consoling himself that if this was not exactly the way it happened, it was the way it ought to have happened.

Darker images form part of the picture too. General Winfield Scott's troops uproot Cherokees and herd them, suffering and dying, over the "Trail of Tears" to new homes in the west. "General Jimmy" Carleton's volunteers conduct Navajos on an eastward "Long March" replete with similar tragic scenes to new homes in the sterile bottoms of the Pecos River. Chivington's "hundred-dazers" slaughter Black Kettle's Cheyennes at Sand Creek. Exploding artillery shells shatter Big Foot's Sioux at Wounded Knee. Such scenes, likewise reinforced and distorted by motion pictures and television, take their place beside the stirring and the heroic in the mosaic of the national military tradition.

What we choose to remember and the way we choose to remember it may unduly flatter or unfairly condemn our military forebears, may indeed be more legend than history. Legends thus form a conspicuous part of our military tradition and are often far more influential in shaping our attitudes and beliefs than the complex, contradictory, and ambiguous truth. Our reading of truth, or at least the meaning of truth, changes from generation to generation. What is uplifting to one may be shameful to the next. We select and portray our heroes and villains to meet the needs of the present, just as we formulate doctrine, policy, practice, and other aspects of military tradition to meet the conditions of the present. The US Army's frontier heritage, replete with stereotypes and legends as well as with genuine historical substance, has furnished a galaxy of heroes and villains.

In the people and events of the military frontier we have found a major source of inspiration, guidance, pride, institutional continuity, and, not least, self-depreciation. But several centuries of Indian warfare should have contributed more to the national military tradition than a kaleidoscope of images.

The regular army was almost wholly a creature of the frontier. Frontier needs prompted creation of the regular army. Except for two foreign wars and one civil war, frontier needs fixed the principal mission and employment of the regular army for a century. Frontier needs dictated the periodic enlargements of the regular army in the nineteenth century.³ Frontier needs underlay Secretary of War John C. Calhoun's "expansible army" plan of 1820, which, though never adopted, contained assumptions that shaped US military policy until 1917.⁴ For a century the regulars worked the frontier west. They explored and mapped it. They laid out roads and telegraph lines and aided significantly in the advance of the railroads. They campaigned against Indians. They guarded travel routes and protected settlers. By offering security or the appearance of it, together with a market for labor and produce, they encouraged further settlement. As enlistments expired, some stayed to help people the frontier themselves.

Citizen soldiers also contributed, though less significantly. From King Philip's War to the Ghost Dance, colonial and state militia, territorial and national volunteers, rangers, "minute companies," spontaneously formed home guards, and other less admirable aggregations of fighting men supplemented or altogether supplanted the regulars on the frontier. Often, indeed, the two worked at dramatic cross-purposes.

The contribution of the frontier to American military history was of paramount significance, but its contribution to the American military tradition was not of comparable significance. Inviting particular attention is the influence of the special conditions and requirements of the frontier on military organization, composition, strategy, and especially doctrine. A century of Indian warfare, extending a record of such conflict reaching well back into colonial times, should have taught us much about dealing with people who did not fight in conventional ways, and our military tradition might reasonably be expect-

³The 1st and 2nd Dragoons in 1832 and 1836, the Regiment of Mounted Riflemen in 1846, the 1st and 2nd Cavalry and 9th and 10th Infantry in 1855. The Army Act of 1866 expanded the Regular Army to meet both frontier and Reconstruction duty, but the subsequent reduction of 1869, as Reconstruction needs diminished, left a net gain of four cavalry regiments (7th to 10th) and six infantry regiments (20th to 25th) that may be attributed to frontier needs. (All mounted regiments were restyled cavalry in 1861 and a 6th Cavalry added that was a response to Civil War needs.)

⁴Walter Millis, *Arms and Men: A Study in American Military History* (Mentor ed., New York, 1956), p. 73. Calhoun's plan was an attempt to reconcile the differing needs of war and peace. The frontier, of course, made a peacetime army necessary. See also Russell F. Weigley, *Towards an American Army: Military Thought from Washington to Marshall* (New York and London, 1962), chap. 3.

ed to reflect the lessons thus learned. Some were not without relevance in Vietnam.

In examining the role of the frontier in nineteenth century military history, however, we encounter a paradox. It is that the army's frontier employment unfitted it for orthodox war at the same time that its preoccupation with orthodox war unfitted it for its frontier mission. In this paradox we find the theories of Emory Upton and Samuel P. Huntington contradicting what seem to be fairly evident realities.

Emory Upton first stated the proposition that the army had never been ready for a real war because it had been maintained chiefly to fight Indians.⁵ More recently, Samuel P. Huntington enlarged on Upton's thesis.⁶ As summed up by Huntington, "the requirements of the frontier shaped the strategy and structure of the Army." Organization, composition, command and staff, tactics, weapons, and the system of military education were all, in the Upton-Huntington view, decisively influenced if not altogether dictated by the frontier mission.

If so, all these features of military policy proved singularly unresponsive to frontier conditions. A commanding general was supposedly needed for the operational direction of an active force on the frontier; yet he commanded scarcely more than his personal aides. A staff was needed not to plan for the next war but to support the ones currently under way on the frontier; yet the staff system contained flaws that severely impeded its logistical function. The organization of companies and regiments seems wholly conventional in nineteenth century terms; it is difficult to see how they would have been differently organized for conventional war—and in fact they were not basically changed when conventional war came. The cavalry arm traced its beginnings to frontier needs, but the Mexican War or Civil War would surely have prompted the formation of mounted units anyway. The "rough and unsavory" rank and file that Huntington sees as well fitted for Indian fighting and road building were not well fitted for much of any duty, and the record of federalized volunteer units in the west during the Civil War plainly established the superiority of this class of troops over the typical peacetime regular. Nor, with the possible exception of the revolving pistol, a response to the frontier only insofar as mounted troops found a repeating handgun of great utility, can the evolution of military weaponry be linked to frontier needs.

⁵Stephen E. Ambrose, *Upton and the Army* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1964), p. 106.

⁶Samuel P. Huntington, "Equilibrium and Disequilibrium in American Military Policy," *Political Science Quarterly*, 76 (December, 1961), p. 490.

So far as a system of border outposts constituted strategy, it was of course shaped by the frontier. But these forts represented less a deliberate plan than erratic responses to the demands of pioneer communities for security and local markets. The forts, incidentally, encouraged settlers to move beyond the range of military protection, stirred up the Indians, and led to still more forts, many beyond effective logistical support. Secretary of War Peter B. Porter lamented this trend toward overextension as early as the 1820s, but it continued for the balance of the century.⁷

On the operational level, strategy and tactics are clearly not a product of frontier conditions. Most army officers recognized their foe as a master of guerrilla warfare. Their writings abound in admiring descriptions of his cunning, stealth, horsemanship, ability and endurance, skill with weapons, mobility, and exploitation of the natural habitat for military advantage. Yet the army as an institution never acted on this recognition. No military school or training program, no tactics manual, and very little professional literature provided guidance on how to fight or treat with Indians, although it should be noted in minor qualification that Dennis Hart Mahan apparently included in one of his courses at West Point a brief discussion of Indian-fighting tactics.⁸

⁷Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* (New York, 1973), p. 69.

⁸Had Emory Upton responded to General Sherman's belief that the British experience in India held lessons for the US military frontier, Upton's *The Armies of Asia and Europe* (New York, 1878) might have ventured into the doctrine of unconventional war. In fact, Upton did see some parallels between India and the US frontier. He admired the organization, discipline, and record of native troops led by British officers. He likened the native peoples with whom the British dealt to the American Indians in their disposition to fight one another more than their colonial rulers, and he attributed British success to a policy of mingling in their quarrels and playing off one group against another. He declared that the British Indian army was worthy of US imitation. But except for rotation of officers between staff and line, scarcely a reform of special frontier application, he failed to spell out particulars (pp. 75-80). Continuing to Europe, Upton forgot about India in his enchantment with the Prussian war machine, and he finally concluded (p. 97) that to the armies of Europe the United States must look for its models. See also in this connection Weigley, *Towards an American Army*, pp. 105-6. Captain Arthur L. Wagner's *The Service of Security and Information*, first published in 1893, contained a short chapter on Indian scouting, but it seems almost an afterthought to the substance of the book.

Mahan's West Point lecture on Indian warfare is noted in William B. Skelton, "Army Officers' Attitudes Toward Indians, 1830-1860," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, 67 (1976), pp. 114, 121, citing Thomas E. Griess, "Dennis Hart Mahan: West Point Professor and Advocate of Military Professionalism," (Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, 1968), pp. 300-07.

Lacking a formal body of doctrine for unconventional war, the army waged conventional war against the Indians. Heavy columns of infantry and cavalry, locked to slow-moving supply trains, crawled about the vast western distances in search of Indians who could scatter and vanish almost instantly. The conventional tactics of the Scott, Casey, and Upton manuals sometimes worked, by routing an adversary that had foolishly decided to stand and fight on the white man's terms, by smashing a village whose inhabitants had grown careless, or by wearing out a quarry with persistent campaigning that made surrender preferable to constant fatigue and insecurity. But most such offensives merely broke down the grain-fed cavalry horses and ended with the troops devoting as much effort to keeping themselves supplied as to chasing Indians. The campaign of 1876 following the Custer disaster is a classic example.

The fact is, military leaders looked upon Indian warfare as a fleeting bother. Today's conflict or tomorrow's would be the last, and to develop a special system for it seemed hardly worthwhile. Lt. Henry W. Halleck implied as much in his *Elements of Military Art and Science*, published in 1846, and the thought lay at the heart of Emory Upton's attempted redefinition of the army's role in the late 1870s.⁹ In 1876 General Winfield S. Hancock informed a congressional committee that the army's Indian mission merited no consideration at all in determining its proper strength, organization, and composition.¹⁰ In part the generals were motivated by a desire to place the army on a more enduring basis than afforded by Indian warfare. But in part, too, they were genuinely concerned about national defense. Therefore, although the staff was not organized to plan for conventional war, or any other kind for that matter, the generals were preoccupied with it, and the army they fashioned was designed for the next conventional war rather than the present unconventional war.

However orthodox the conduct of Indian wars, the frontier not only failed as a training ground for orthodox wars, it positively unfitted the army for orthodox wars, as became painfully evident in 1812, 1846, 1861, and 1898. Scattered across the continent in little border forts, units rarely operated or assembled for practice and instruction in more than battalion strength. The company was the basic unit, and it defined the social and professional horizons of most line officers. Growing old in grade, with energies and ambitions dulled by boredom and isolation, the officer corps could well subscribe to General

⁹Weigley, *American Way of War*, pp. 84-85. Ambrose, *Upton and the Army*, pp. 106-7.

¹⁰House Misc. Docs., 45th Cong., 2 sess., No. 56, p. 5.

Richard S. Ewell's observation that on the frontier an officer "learned all there was to know about commanding forty dragoons, and forgot everything else."¹¹

That the army as an institution never elaborated a doctrine of Indian warfare does not mean that it contained no officers capable of breaking free of conventional thought. The most original thinker was General George Crook, who advocated reliance on mule trains as the means of achieving mobility and who saw the conquest of the Indian as dependent upon pitting Indian against Indian. Army organization provided for Indian scouts, but Crook's concept went considerably beyond their use as guides and trailers. "To polish a diamond there is nothing like its own dust," he explained to a reporter in 1886:

It is the same with these fellows. Nothing breaks them up like turning their own people against them. They don't fear the white soldiers, whom they easily surpass in the peculiar style of warfare which they force upon us, but put upon their trail an enemy of their own blood, an enemy as tireless, as foxy, and as stealthy and familiar with the country as they themselves, and it breaks them all up. It is not merely a question of catching them with Indians, but of a broader and more enduring aim—their disintegration.¹²

Had the nation's leaders understood the lessons of General Crook's experience, they would have recognized that the frontier army was a conventional military force trying to control, by conventional military methods, a people that did not behave like conventional enemies and, indeed, quite often were not enemies at all. They would have recognized that the situation usually did not call for warfare, merely for policing; that is, offending individuals needed to be separated from the innocent and punished. They would have recognized that the conventional force was unable to do this and that as a result punishment often fell, when it fell at all, on guilty and innocent alike.

Had the nation's leaders acted on such understandings, the army might have played a more significant role in the westward movement—and one less vulnerable to criticism. An Indian auxiliary force might have been developed that could differentiate between guilty and innocent and, using the Indian's own fighting style, contend with the guilty. Indian units were indeed developed, but never on a scale and with a continuity to permit the full effect to be demonstrated. Such an

¹¹Quoted in Huntington, "Equilibrium and Disequilibrium," p. 499.

¹²Charles F. Lummis, *General Crook and the Apache Wars* (Flagstaff, AZ, 1966), p. 17. This is a series of articles correspondent Lummis wrote for the *Los Angeles Times* during the Geronimo campaign of 1886.

Indian force would have differed from the reservation police, which in fact did remarkably well considering their limitations.¹³ It would have been larger, better equipped, and less influenced by the vagaries of the patronage politics that afflicted the Indian Bureau. Above all, it would have been led by a cadre of carefully chosen officers imbued with a sense of mission and experienced in Indian relations—the kind of officers artist Frederic Remington said were not so much “Indian fighters” as “Indian thinkers.”¹⁴ How different might have been the history of the westward movement had such a force been created and employed in place of the regular army line. How vastly more substantial might have been the contribution of the frontier to our traditions of unconventional warfare.

By contrast, a major aspect of twentieth-century practice owes a large debt to the frontier. Total war—warring on whole enemy populations—finds ample precedent in the frontier experience. Russell Weigley has pointed out how different the colonial Indian wars were from the formal and not very destructive warfare of the European pattern. In King Philip’s War of 1675-76, for example, the Indians almost wiped out the New England settlements, and the colonists in response all but wiped out the Indians. “The logic of a contest for survival was always implicit in the Indian wars,” Weigley writes, “as it never was in the eighteenth century wars wherein European powers competed for possession of fortresses and countries, but always shared an awareness of their common participation in one civilization, Voltaire’s ‘Republic of Europe.’”¹⁵

Examples of total war may be found through subsequent centuries of Indian conflict, notably in the Seminole Wars, but it remained for Generals Sherman and Sheridan to sanctify it as deliberate doctrine. With the march across Georgia and the wasting of the Shenandoah Valley as models, they set forth in the two decades after the Civil War to find the enemy in his winter camps, kill or drive him from his lodges, destroy his ponies, food, and shelter, and hound him mercilessly across a frigid landscape until he gave up. If women and children fell victim to such methods, it was regrettable, but justified because it resolved the issue quickly and decisively, and thus more humanely. Although prosecuted along conventional lines and thus usually an exercise in logistical futility, this approach yielded an occa-

¹³See William T. Hagan, *Indian Police and Judges* (New Haven, CT, 1966).

¹⁴“How an Apache War Was Won,” in Harold McCracken, ed., *Frederick Remington’s Own West* (New York, 1961), p. 49.

¹⁵*American Way of War*, p. 19.

sional triumph such as the Washita and Dull Knife fights that saved it from serious challenge. Scarcely a direct inspiration for the leveling of whole cities in World War II and Vietnam, frontier precedents of total war may nevertheless be viewed as part of the historical foundation on which this feature of our military tradition rests.¹⁶

Another area that might be usefully probed is the relationship of the frontier to the militia tradition, whose modern expression, after generations of modification, is the mass citizen army. Though not exclusively a product of the frontier, the militia owed a great debt to the recurring Indian hostilities that brought pioneers together for common defense, and it figured prominently enough in the American Revolution for Walter Millis to see it as the principal factor in the "democratization" of war that prompted the collapse of the set-piece warfare of the eighteenth century.¹⁷ So firmly implanted was the militia tradition in the thinking of the Revolutionary generation, together with abhorrence of standing armies, that the architects of the nation conceived it as the foundation of the military system, the chief reliance for national defense as well as frontier employment. Frontier experience demonstrated how wrong they were. The Indian rout of Harmer and St. Clair so dramatically exposed the inadequacies of militia as to give birth to the regular army, a contribution of the militia to US military history of no small significance, however negative. The organized militia fell apart after 1820, as foreign threats receded, but the militia tradition, nourished in part by the Indian frontier, evolved through various mutations into the twentieth century.

A clear and undeniable contribution of the frontier to the national military tradition is its large role in the rise of professionalism in the army. Albert Gallatin wrote in 1802: "The distribution of our little army to distant garrisons where hardly any other inhabitant is to be found is the most eligible arrangement of that perhaps necessary evil that can be contrived. But I never want to see the face of one in our cities and intermixed with the people."¹⁸ And rarely for a century except in the Mexican and Civil Wars, were the soldiers intermixed with the people. Physically, socially, and at last in attitudes, interests, and spirit, the regulars on the frontier remained isolated from the rest of the population. This separation, so costly in terms of pub-

¹⁶The role of Sherman and Sheridan is discussed in my *Frontier Regulars: The United States Army and the Indian, 1866-1891* (New York, 1973), pp. 144-46.

¹⁷*Arms and Men*, pp. 19-20, 34.

¹⁸Quoted in Leonard D. White, *The Jeffersonians: A Study in Administrative History, 1809-1829* (New York, 1959), p. 214.

lic and governmental support, had one enduring benefit. Turning inward, the army laid the groundwork for a professionalism that was to prove indispensable in the great world wars of the twentieth century. The postgraduate military school system, original thought about the nature and theory of warfare, and professional associations and publications find their origins in this time of rejection of the soldiers by their countrymen.¹⁹

A final feature of our military tradition with strong frontier roots is the prominent role of minorities. The regular army's black regiments served on the frontier for three decades following their organization in 1866 and wrote some stirring chapters of achievement. They saw harder service than the white regiments and, because they afforded continuous and honorable employment in a time when blacks found few other opportunities, boasted lower desertion rates and higher reenlistment rates. Immigrants, too, found a congenial home in the army, as well as a means of learning the English language and reaching beyond the teeming port cities of the East where so many countrymen suffered in poverty and despair. And not to be overlooked are the Indians themselves, who loyally served the white troops as scouts, auxiliaries, and finally, for a brief time in the 1890s, in units integral to the regimental organization.

Today the American military tradition must be responsive to the imperatives of nuclear warfare, and nuclear warfare discloses few parallels with the small-unit Indian combats of forest, plains, and desert. But the tradition must also be responsive to the "limited wars" that the nuclear specter has spawned, and these do disclose parallels with frontier warfare. It is a measure of the failure of the Indian-fighting generations to understand their task that today's doctrine does not reflect the lessons of that experience. And yet, as we have seen, the American military tradition owes a debt of noteworthy magnitude to the frontier experience. As Captain King observed, it is all a memory now, but a memory to cherish.

¹⁹Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA, 1957), chap. 9. Utley, *Frontier Regulars*, chap. 4.

II

A COMPARISON OF MILITARY FRONTIERS

Two papers were delivered during the symposium on the topic of comparative military history. The first, by Desmond Morton, of the University of Toronto, was delivered during the second session which was devoted exclusively to a comparison of Canadian and American frontiers. The second paper, by Raymond G. O'Connor, of the University of Miami, concerned the United States' naval frontier and was delivered during the fourth session. Commentary on Professor Morton's paper was presented by Robert G. Athearn of the University of Colorado and by Richard A. Preston of Duke University who also served as chairman of the second session.

In his paper, entitled "Comparison of U.S./Canadian Military Experience on the Frontier," Morton noted that Canadian experience with native Americans was considerably less violent, if in the long term no more successful, than the American experience. He argued that "friction between white and native people was not simply a function of time or numbers, but of law, policy and political philosophy as well." The Mounted Police arrived on the Canadian frontier before settlement and they had fewer Indians and fewer white people to deal with than did the United States Army, but they also had fewer restrictions on their authority. Unencumbered by American democratic ideology and its concern for equality and the rights of the majority, the Mounted Police were free to use almost despotic methods to protect the rights of the Indian minority in the Northwest.

O'Connor's paper, "The Navy on the Frontier," was a brief survey of naval involvement in the exploration, expansion, and pacification of the American frontier. He concentrated on naval activities in the Caribbean and along the Pacific Coast. He argued that the United States Navy not only contributed directly to frontier settlement, but that it provided the United States with the freedom to concentrate on its frontier, with "a tangible and at times formidable barrier to continued domination and further exploitation" from Europe.



In these sketches Frederick Remington illustrates the contrast between the Canadian Mounties' "police approach" and the U.S. Army's "military approach" to the Indian problem. (Courtesy of *Century Magazine*)

COMPARISON OF U.S./CANADIAN MILITARY EXPERIENCE ON THE FRONTIER

DESMOND MORTON

In an article in the *Pacific Historical Review* in 1955, Paul F. Sharp renewed Frederick Jackson Turner's invitation to test the frontier thesis in other settings. Sharp had done so in his own pioneering work on the Canadian-American west, finding the differences more significant than the similarities.¹ In the article, he went on to contrast relations between the Canadian government and the aboriginal people of the northwest with comparable developments in the United States and Australia: "Against a background of violence and hatred south of the forty-ninth parallel, the Canadian government conceived and executed an orderly, well-planned and honorable policy."²

The tribute was overly generous. A century of Indian policy has left the Canadian native people in much the same state of poverty and dependence as their brothers south of the border.³ Sharp's contrast between Canadian order and American violence can be questioned in detail although north of the forty-ninth parallel it is established as one of those self-congratulatory myths which bind a nation together.⁴ While the Americans were reputedly electing their sheriffs, summoning the U.S. cavalry and filling the graves on Boot Hill, Canadians were establishing law and order with the aid of a few hundred men of

¹Paul F. Sharp, *Whoop-Up Country: The Canadian-American West, 1865-1885*, 2 vols. (Minneapolis, 1955).

²Paul F. Sharp, "Three Frontiers: Some Comparative Studies of Canadian, American and Australian Settlement," *Pacific Historical Review*, XXIV (1955), p. 373.

³See Roy W. Meyer, "The Canadian Sioux: Refugees from Minnesota" in *The American Indian: Past and Present*, edited by Roger L. Nichols and George R. Adams, for a generous account. On Canadian Indians, see G. F. F. Stanley, "The Indian Background of Canadian History," Canadian Historical Association, *Historical Papers* (1952); Heather Robertson, *Reservations are for Indians* (Toronto, 1970); Harold Cardinal, *The Unjust Society: The Tragedy of Canadian Indians* (Edmonton, 1971).

⁴See, for example, the essays in *Canada: The Peaceable Kingdom*, edited by William Kilbourn (Toronto, 1971).

the North West Mounted Police.⁵ According to Russell F. Weigley, there were perhaps 943 engagements in the American west between 1866 and 1895. In the Canadian northwest there were only six or seven comparable clashes, almost all of them associated with the Northwest Campaign of 1885.⁶

Why were the adjacent frontiers apparently so different? Since whites, not Indians, are found at the root of most trouble in the west, Sharp agreed with most American historians that a 10 year lag in settlement allowed the Canadian tribes and the police to adjust to new patterns of existence.⁷ Robert M. Utley, the major historian of the American army during the Indian wars, conceded that police methods might sometimes have been more effective than conventional military tactics, but he also concluded that the Canadian approach succeeded only "because the sparsity of settlement prevented serious competition between whites and Indians for the lands and resources of the Northwest Territories."⁸

However, friction between white and native people was not simply a function of time or numbers but of law, policy and political philosophy as well.⁹ To quote a young Canadian historian, "The fact

⁵See, for example, S. W. Horrall, "Sir John A. Macdonald and the Mounted Police Force for the Northwest Territories," *Canadian Historical Review*, LIII (1972), pp. 179-80. To illustrate, see D. G. Creighton, *Dominion of the North*, rev. ed. (Toronto, 1957), p. 360; or Douglas Hill, *The Opening of the Canadian West* (London, 1967), p. 133. A perceptive study of one of the most celebrated police-Indian encounters, Inspector James Walsh and Sitting Bull, is C. Frank Turner, *Across the Medicine Line* (Toronto, 1973).

⁶Russell F. Weigley, *History of the United States Army* (New York, 1967), p. 267. (Canadian engagements would include Duck Lake, Fish Creek, Cut Knife Hill, Batoche and Frenchman's Butte, all in 1885, with perhaps the battle with Almighty Voice in 1897 as a final conflict.)

⁷Sharp, "Three Frontiers," p. 373.

⁸Robert M. Utley, *Frontier Regulars: The United States Army and the Indian, 1866-1891* (New York, 1973), pp. 55-56. The sparsity was certainly striking. In 1880, the Dakotas boasted 133,147 people while the 1881 census found only 6,974 whites and Métis in the entire Canadian Northwest. See G. F. G. Stanley, *The Birth of Western Canada: A History of the Riel Rebellions*, rev. ed. (Toronto, 1961), p. 187. The significance of the Métis as a mediating force in white-Indian relations also appears to have little United States counterpart.

⁹See, for example, President Jackson's response to the decision in *Worcester v. Georgia*, 1832. On American Indian policy, see Francis P. Prucha, *American Indian Policy in the Formative Years* (Cambridge, MA, 1962); Lorrington Benson Priest, *Uncle Sam's Stepchildren* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1942; Lincoln, NE, 1969).

that the Police arrived before settlement is not nearly so significant as what they did when they got there."¹⁰ The predominantly conservative political values of post-Confederation Canada allowed the use of both law and authoritarian structures to preserve minority rights. In his study of the Mounted Police, R. C. MacLeod argued that the force succeeded because, in contrast to British and American judicial practice, it combined judicial and administrative functions in a kind of benevolent despotism moderated, at least until 1905, by the presumption that it would be no more than a temporary expedient.¹¹

In the United States prevailing interpretations of liberty and democracy and a recurrent suspicion of militarism repeatedly undermined the army's attempts to resume control of Indian policy after 1849.¹² Congress usually preferred the sometimes inept and frequently corrupt agencies of the Department of the Interior. In Canada, one finds only the palest reflection of the ideal of possessive individualism which, in turn, inspired the doctrine of severalty as the ultimate solution of the Indian problem. For good or ill, Canada produced no equivalent to the Dawes Act of 1887.¹³ Western Indians on Canadian reserves continued to hold their land in common.

Canadian politicians in the Confederation era were preoccupied with avoiding what they regarded as "excesses" in the United States Constitution.¹⁴ That concern was bipartisan, shared by members of both the Liberal and Conservative parties. "Our chiefest care," insisted Sir Richard Cartwright, a Liberal, "must be to train the majority to respect the rights of the minority, to prevent the claims of the few from being trampled under foot by the caprice or passion of the

¹⁰John Jennings, "The Plains Indians and the Law" in *Men in Scarlet*, edited by Hugh A. Dempsey (Calgary [1974]), pp. 50, 54.

¹¹R. C. MacLeod, *The North-West Mounted Police and Law Enforcement, 1873-1905* (Toronto, 1976), pp. 4-6 and *passim*.

¹²On the U.S. Army officers and Indian-white relations, see, for example, Robert G. Athearn, "War Paint against Brass: The Army and the Plains Indians," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*, VI (1956); Priest, *Uncle Sam's Stepchildren*, ch. II; Robert M. Utley, "The Celebrated Peace Policy of General Grant," *North Dakota History*, XX, (July, 1953).

¹³On the Dawes Act, see Priest, *Uncle Sam's Stepchildren*, chs. XIII-XIX; William T. Hagan, *American Indians*, pp. 139-148.

¹⁴On Canadian political attitudes, see, for example, Bruce W. Hodgins, "Democracy and the Ontario Fathers of Confederation" in *Profiles of a Province* (Toronto, 1967), pp. 83-91.

many.”¹⁵ That minority could, of course, be the right;¹⁶ it could also be French Canadians, or Catholics, or English-speaking Protestants in Quebec—or it could be the Indians.¹⁷ Influential Canadians saw the American west as a manifestation of the dangers of democracy and materialism; they wished no imitation on their side of the border. Visiting Edmonton in 1895, the feminist virago, Lady Aberdeen, noted with satisfaction that most of the newcomers were “heartily glad” to become British subjects but “. . . there is a remnant who would like to introduce American ideas as to what conduct in the West should be. These must be dealt with ruthlessly, and the magistrates and N.W. Mounted Police are determined that this shall be the case if they can manage it.”¹⁸

Canadians may explain the contrast between the frontiers by differing ideologies as Americans point to delayed settlement; both, I think, must recognize the role of accidents and of defense considerations. The Canadians did not consciously plan a delay between the advent of the police force and the arrival of white settlers. The government planned that settlement and policing would advance together.¹⁹ It was an error of judgment and an economic downturn that separated the two advances. Macdonald and his cabinet endured years of well-authenticated reports of murder, violence, and illegal whiskey trading in the western territories without displaying any of the purported Canadian devotion to law and order. What moved the government was a consideration which did not bother his Washington counterparts: the threat posed by an expansive and powerful neighbor.

Canadians of Sir John A. Macdonald’s generation were obsessed by the American claim of “Manifest Destiny.” Sir John shared the fears and also used them shrewdly for political advantage. In organizing the North American British federation in 1867, a major goal was to safeguard the huge, empty territories of the northwest from Ameri-

¹⁵Cited in R. C. Brown, “Canadian Opinion after Confederation” in *Canada Views the United States: Nineteenth Century Political Attitudes*, edited by S. F. Wise and R. C. Brown (Seattle, 1967), p. 113.

¹⁶“The rights of the minority must be protected, and the rich are always fewer in number than the poor” (Macdonald’s comment on the proposed Canadian senate, April 6, 1865, *Confederation Debates*.)

¹⁷Jennings, “Indians and the Law,” p. 51.

¹⁸Journal of Lady Aberdeen, August 5, 1895, Public Archives of Canada, Aberdeen Papers.

¹⁹Horrall, “A Mounted Police Force,” pp. 185-88.

can expansion. If in the process Canadians trampled on the rights of Red River settlers in their haste to possess the Hudson's Bay Company territories in 1869, they remembered how the Company's weakness had cost them the rich Oregon territory in 1846.²⁰ After the Civil War, the risk of overt aggression from the United States faded. The British military withdrawal of 1869-71, and the treaty of Washington of 1871 served notice that Whitehall would never again contemplate a rematch of the War of 1812.²¹ The international boundaries had been delineated in principle at all but a few points. By 1872, a joint commission was surveying its location across the prairies. An American threat remained only if the young Dominion failed to sustain authority in what it purported to be its territory. A breakdown in internal order, a movement for secession, a failure to restrain marauding Indian bands, might provoke official or unofficial intervention from the United States. Whatever revisionists may claim, most imperial expansion in the 19th century owed less to capitalism or to missionaries than to disorder or lawlessness on the adjacent frontier. When slave-trading flourished, murder went unpunished, and plundering tribesmen found easy sanctuary, very few in the Victorian era—British or American—thought it reprehensible to forcibly extend government and social order. As the dominant power in the western hemisphere, the United States had shown its willingness to enforce its view of international law on Mexico. The Indian wars drew several US military expeditions deep into Mexican territory in the 1870s.²² Canadians could expect that it might happen to them as well.

S. W. Horrall, the official historian of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, has emphasized Macdonald's view that Canada also could not afford an American-style west: "He feared that a repetition of the American experience would involve the Dominion in a series of costly Indian wars, retard development in the Northwest and strain the country's resources."²³ Indian wars were costing America and American taxpayers about 14 million dollars a year. The entire Canadian

²⁰See, for example, A. C. Gluek, *Minnesota and the Manifest Destiny of the Canadian North West* (Toronto, 1965).

²¹On the implications of the British withdrawal, see C. P. Stacey, *Canada and the British Army, 1846-1871*, rev. ed. (Toronto, 1963), and J. M. Hitsman, *Safeguarding Canada, 1763-1871*, ch. X.

²²Utley, *Frontier Regulars*, ch. VIII, esp. p. 355.

²³Horrall, "A Mounted Police Force," pp. 180-81. The twenty million dollars spent annually on Indian wars by Congress was comparable to Canada's entire federal budget. MacLeod, *Mounted Police*, p. 3.

federal budget was about 20 million. Just as important, Canadian authority had to be firmly imposed so that Americans or their local sympathizers would have no excuse to disrupt the national destiny of a dominion which by its motto declared itself *a mari usque ad mare*, from sea to shining sea. To Edward Watkin, the British railway magnate, Macdonald confessed: "I would be quite willing, personally, to leave the whole country a wilderness for the next half-century, but I fear if Englishmen do not go there, Yankees will . . ." ²⁴

How could peace and order be imposed on a huge and potentially turbulent territory at a cost Canadian taxpayers would endure? The Americans had solved the problem almost absent mindedly by deploying their tiny regular army on the forward edge of settlement. The 19th century saw a growing distinction between police and military functions in English-speaking countries. The realization did not come all at once or all over the place simultaneously. The Hudson's Bay Company, for example, had joyfully combined police and military roles when they occasionally wheedled detachments of British troops from the War Office. "If we succeed in getting a garrison established at Red River," wrote Sir George Simpson, governor of Hudson's Bay Territories in 1845, "we shall be able to put down the illicit trade and keep the settlers in order."²⁵ When Canada acquired the northwest, it had no standing army apart from the small remaining British garrison, and no desire to acquire one. To manage its vast new territories, Ottawa proposed in 1869 to appoint a lieutenant governor and council, backed by a 250-man police force. "It seems to me," Macdonald wrote to the man he had chosen as commander, "the best force would be *Mounted Riflemen*, trained to act as cavalry, but also instructed in the Rifle exercises. They would also be instructed, as certain of the Line are, in the use of artillery. This body should not be expressly Military, but should be styled *Police* and have the military bearing of the Irish Constabulary."²⁶ An order-in-council allowing 50 men to be recruited in eastern Canada (15 of them to be French

²⁴Cited by P. B. Waite, *The Life and Times of Confederation* (Toronto, 1962), p. 307. The most thorough treatment of defence considerations in Canada's policy in the Northwest remains C. P. Stacey's "The Military Aspect of Canada's Winning of the West, 1870-1885," *Canadian Historical Review*, XXI (1940), pp. 1-24.

²⁵E. E. Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company*, vol. III, 1821-1870 (Toronto, 1960), p. 542. See also A. S. Morton, *A History of the Canadian West to 1870-71*, 2nd ed. (Toronto, 1973), p. 809; A. C. Gluek, "Imperial Protection for the Trading Interests of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1857-1861," *Canadian Historical Review*, XXXVII (1956), pp. 119-140.

²⁶Horrall, "Mounted Police Force," p. 181. See also MacLeod, *Mounted Police*, pp. 8-11.

speaking, the usual proportion) and 200 more in the west, where they would reflect the ethnic balance of the population. In short, the prime minister conceived of a force capable of anything, from firing a cannon to achieving racial harmony, all for a dollar a day and a 3 year enlistment.

Macdonald's plan was the genesis for the North West Mounted Police, but its realization was postponed by the first Riel rebellion of 1869-70. In the aftermath of that uprising, Canada felt obliged to grant a premature provincial status to Manitoba. For its own peace of mind, Canada also felt compelled to maintain what it called a "provisional" garrison. The few hundred men of the Manitoba Force swallowed up appropriations which the government might otherwise have spent on policing the rest of the northwest. Constitutionally, Ottawa could not station a police force in a province, but it could maintain a garrison of troops under federal control.²⁷

Louis Riel's challenge to Ottawa and his association with W. B. O'Donoghue, Fenian agitator and unofficial US agent, forcibly reminded Canadians of the vulnerability of their northwest to the Americans.²⁸ A British-Canadian expedition under Colonel Garnet Wolseley set out to meet the Riel challenge but was delayed at the Soo by American control of the locks.²⁹

As the winter of 1871 approached, Ottawa again felt compelled to send troops hurrying over the Dawson Trail to meet a reported Fenian threat on the Manitoba border.³⁰ The militia detachment arrived only to find that the Fenians had been seized at Pembina by a detachment of United States troops. Unfortunately, when Captain Lloyd Wheaton also proclaimed that the Little Hudson's Bay post was on American soil, he illustrated the danger of allowing Americans to cope with frontier law and order. In due course, the international boundary commission restored Pembina to Canada; equally, a Minnesota jury refused to condemn Fenians for looting Canadian property.³¹

²⁷On the Manitoba Force, see Stacey, "Military Aspect," pp. 15-18.

²⁸Stanley, *Western Canada*, pp. 164-66.

²⁹*Ibid.*, ch. VI.

³⁰See C. P. Stacey, "The Second Red River Expedition, 1871," *Canadian Defence Quarterly* (January, 1931), pp. 1ff.

³¹See Return to Parliament, 1884, Public Archives of Canada, Macdonald Papers, vol. 329, pp. 148570-72. On the raid, see J. P. Pritchett, "The Origin of the So-called Fenian Raid on Manitoba in 1871," *Canadian Historical Review*, X (1929); Stacey, "Military Aspect," pp. 12-14.

The Fenian threat of 1871 was pure comic opera. It also demonstrated the loyalty of the Manitoba half-breeds to the Canadian regime. Nonetheless, a militia garrison remained at Winnipeg, largely because winter and the Pre-Cambrian Shield left Manitoba isolated from the rest of Canada for 6 months of the year. And since the main threat seemed to be American, one could hardly save Canada by sending troops via an American route. Moreover, as lieutenant governors soon discovered, negotiation of treaties and land surrenders with Indian bands went somehow more smoothly in the presence of a military escort.³²

That was no help for the vast regions beyond Manitoba and the Northwest Angle. Far from being threatened by crowds of land-hungry settlers, it was their emptiness that brought trouble. Reports in 1871 by Lieutenant W. F. Butler and in 1873 by the Adjutant-General of the Canadian militia, Colonel Patrick Robertson Ross, both emphasized the need for policing, preferably by small bodies of mounted troops. Successive governors of Manitoba revived the idea of a mounted police.³³ But the emptiness of what Butler called the Great Lone Land, generated no political pressure. No one was writing letters to their member of Parliament. Only the Prime Minister could have acted and, beset by illness, family problems and innumerable political crises, Macdonald was unmoved.³⁴ Not until the end of March of 1873 did he invite Parliament to pass enabling legislation for a mounted police force. "They are to be a purely civil, not a military body," he assured the House of Commons, "with as little gold lace, fuss and fine feathers as possible; not a crack cavalry regiment, but an efficient police force for the rough and ready—particularly ready—enforcement of law and justice."³⁵ Still they did not exist.

³²J. L. Taylor, "The Development of an Indian Policy for the Canadian North West, 1869-79" (Ph.D. thesis, Queen's University, Kingston, 1976), p. 56 and *passim*. See Alexander Morris, *The Treaties of Canada with the Indians* (Toronto, 1880), p. 32. ("Military display has always a great effect on savages, and the presence, even of a few troops, will have a good tendency," in A. G. Archibald's report on Treaty No. 2).

³³See W. F. Butler, *The Great Lone Land* (London, 1872); Edward McCourt, *Remember Butler: The Story of Sir William Butler* (London, 1967), ch. VI; Colonel Patrick Robertson Ross, "Reconnaissance of the North West Provinces and Indian Territories of the Dominion of Canada . . ." Canada, *Sessional Papers*, 1873, no. 9, pp. cvii-cxxvii.

³⁴On Macdonald in this period, see D. G. Creighton, *John A. Macdonald: The Old Chieftain* (Toronto, 1955), pp. 111-179. The Prime Minister's best known nickname, "Old Tomorrow," was given by Commissioner A. G. Irvine of the N.W.M.P. in 1881. See E. B. Biggar, *Anecdotal Life of Sir John Macdonald* (Toronto, 1891).

³⁵Canada, House of Commons, *Debates* (reported in the *Toronto Globe*), May 3, 1873. See also *ibid.*, March 31, 1873.

It was Governor Alexander Morris, of Manitoba, backed by sensational reports of the massacre of a party of Assiniboines Indians in the Cypress Hills, plus urgings from Hamilton Fish, the American Secretary of State, that finally got "Old Tomorrow" to move.³⁶ Although responsibility for the deaths lay with American and Canadian wolf hunters from Fort Benton, Montana, Ottawa was left with the confused impression that somehow American whiskey traders from the notorious Fort Whoop-up were to blame.³⁷ "It would not be well for us to take the responsibility of slighting Morris' repeated and urgent entreaties," Macdonald advised the Governor General, Lord Dufferin, "If anything went wrong, the blame would lie at our door."³⁸ On this courageous note, the North West Mounted Police was born. A draft of 150 recruits was hurriedly assembled and sent off by the Dawson Trail to Winnipeg. In the spring of 1874, a second contingent travelled by way of Chicago to Fargo, North Dakota, where they donned their scarlet tunics, mounted nervous horses, and set off on the first leg of what would be the Mounted Police's epic "March West."³⁹

At least two popular myths deserve to be exploded. The first is that the police wore red coats because the Indians had special confidence in the traditional British uniform. The only British red coats to serve in the west were 300 men of the 6th Foot at Fort Garry from 1846 to 1848. Other British and Canadian troops had worn dark green, or, if illustrators are to be trusted, much more bizarre local costumes. Most likely even the red coats wore furs, buffalo hides, rags, blankets, and anything else to keep themselves warm most of the year. The idea of scarlet tunics came from Governor Morris and, more insistently, from Colonel Robertson Ross, a noted devotee of military finery.⁴⁰ Despite the Prime Minister's promise to Parliament about no fuss and feathers, the Mounted Police in full dress resembled British dragoon guards, than whom there were no fussier nor feathery. The

³⁶Horrall, "Mounted Police Force," pp. 192-93.

³⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 192-94. Taylor, "Indian Policy," pp. 88-114.

³⁸Macdonald to Dufferin, September 24, 1873, Public Archives of Canada, Macdonald Papers, vol. 523.

³⁹On the trek, see S. W. Horrall, "The March West" in Dempsey, *Men in Scarlet*, pp. 13-26, reviewing literature.

⁴⁰On Robertson Ross, see D. P. Morton, *Ministers and Generals: Politics and the Canadian Militia, 1868-1904* (Toronto, 1970), pp. 25-26. See also Morris to Macdonald, January 17, 1873, Macdonald Papers, vol. 252.

uniform was elaborate, expensive and, in the eyes of critics, highly unsuitable.⁴¹

A second myth surrounds the alleged alteration of the title of the force from Mounted Rifles to Mounted Police, presumably to soothe American anxieties about a military expedition along their northern border.⁴² The susceptibilities belonged to Sir John A. Macdonald, not the Americans. By 1874, when the N.W.M.P. was at last in existence, the Conservative leader was out of office. His successor, Alexander Mackenzie, a Liberal, was a dull, honest man who held a major's commission in the militia. Frankly, he would have preferred military force and a military expedition. Hewitt Bernard, the deputy minister of justice who just happened to be the former prime minister's brother-in-law, had worked out the detailed scheme for the mounted police force and he refused to allow the project to be cavalierly altered. The new Minister of Justice, A. A. Dorion, a French Canadian, wanted police patronage for his department and, as one of the few experienced members of the new government, he was a formidable ally. The "mounted police" concept survived.

The new Prime Minister also had to be talked out of an even more dangerous notion. Any major expedition, Mackenzie argued, should be conducted jointly with the Americans. After all, they had the experience and the resources. A shocked Lord Dufferin headed off any such venture into internationalism. Not only would Canadian pride be flattered by a national expedition, he said, but: "in the next place, we should appear upon the scene, not as the Americans have done, for the purpose of restraining and controlling the Indian tribes, but with a view of avenging injuries inflicted on the red man."⁴³ Thanks to inexperience and inadequate reconnaissance, the "March West" was a near-disaster, but it immediately established the Mounted Police as a Canadian legend. Perhaps more important for its effectiveness in the ensuing 10 years, the N.W.M.P. proved that it was not simply another regiment of US cavalry. Scarlet jackets were inappropriate for hard service on the prairies but they did create a symbolic distinction between the Mounted Police and the US cavalry in the eyes of western Canadians, white and Indian alike.

⁴¹See Middleton to Duke of Cambridge, July 31, 1885, Royal Archives, Windsor, Cambridge, Papers.

⁴²Horrall "Mounted Police Force," pp. 198-99.

⁴³Dufferin to Kimberley, December 24, 1873, Public Record Office, London, Kimberley Papers.

Uniforms and names would not have signified much to the plains Indians if they had not symbolized more substantive differences in the role and outlook of the Mounted Police and their US counterparts. American cavalymen and Canadian policemen had much in common. Pay was meagre and often in arrears. Traders at military and police posts were equally rapacious. Barracks were often temporary shacks, ill-constructed, frigid in winter and unsanitary. Arms and equipment were sometimes obsolete and often inappropriate for western conditions. In both countries, political influence pervaded every sphere of administration, from forage contracts to promotions. Officers in the N.W.M.P. often owed their commissions to party patronage and men in the ranks were by no means always the muscular, adventurous paragons of popular imagery.⁴⁴ In 1885, after a few months in the Northwest, Major General Fred Middleton reported to the Duke of Cambridge: "... among them are some of the greatest scamps in the country, broken-down gentlemen who in many cases are called here inebriates, sent here by their friends because no liquor is admitted in these territories." Since an important duty of the force was prevention of whiskey smuggling, it might be disturbing to learn from Middleton that the force had "by no means a good character for sobriety."⁴⁵

There were excellent officers and men in both the American and Canadian forces in the west. Frontier conditions, hardships and danger weeded out misfits and chronic failures. Veterans of the Mounted Police played a leading role in many western Canadian communities. Their contribution to the economy of the ranching frontier, both as police and as ranchers, has only begun to be explored.⁴⁶ Presumably comparable work is under way for officers and men discharged from the US Army. The similarity in the strengths and deficiencies in the two organizations indicates that the differences cannot be attributed to the specially fine quality of the Mounted Police, or the less fine qualities sometimes alleged of the American troops. If the Canadian and American west developed differently, the sources of the divergence must be found in time, law, and society.

⁴⁴Ronald Atkin, *Maintain the Right: The Early History of the North West Mounted Police, 1873-1900* (London, 1973), pp. 124-36, 257-269, giving the best review of conditions of service. See also J. P. Turner, *The North West Mounted Police*, 2 vols. (Ottawa, 1950), *passim* together with many personal memoirs of service in the Force. On patronage and politics, see MacLeod, *Mounted Police*, ch. VII.

⁴⁵Middleton to Cambridge, July 31, 1885, Cambridge Papers.

⁴⁶D. H. Breen, "The Mounted Police and the Ranching Frontier" in Dempsey, *Men in Scarlet*, pp. 115-137.

By the time the North West Mounted Police was ready to take up its station in 1874, the outcome of the Indian struggle was really no longer in question. Bravado or gross miscalculation, as at the Little Big Horn, would be sharply punished. Able leadership and tactical skill would allow Chief Joseph and the Nez Percés to inflict setbacks on American military columns. However, most Canadian Indians, even the warlike Blackfoot Confederacy, could sense their relative safety on the north side of the Medicine Line. The Mounted Police was not very successful in capturing white exploiters of the Indians—they, too, could find immunity across an international frontier—but at least the force was eager to chase them away. The development of railroads, the concomitant increase in American military effectiveness, and the remorseless annihilation of the buffalo, were settling the fate of the native people. By the time the Mounted Police arrived, the Indians of the Great Plains were looking for terms, not triumphs. Sent to administer and to accommodate, the police did not adopt the aggressive mode normal to soldiers nor did minor clashes inevitably produce a warlike response. Proudly military in style, the N.W.M.P. was a police force in tactics and attitude.⁴⁷

In contrast to the United States, the Canadian political system reinforced the power of the Mounted Police to provide satisfactory terms to native people. While some American army officers sympathized with the Indians in their plight and sought to offer a paternal protection against white traders, ranchers, and land speculators, they could count on little support in Washington. The anti-militarism of most Americans, both pro- and anti-Indian, almost guaranteed sympathy for any self-professed victim of military tyranny. Far from condemning civilians for the misery inflicted on the Indian, the vocal humanitarians of the "Friends of the Indian" organization in the east were prone to blame the army. "The soldiers demoralize the Indian men by whiskey and cards and debauch the women," claimed former Indian agent Alfred B. Meacham in his famous series, "Abolish the Army."⁴⁸

On the relatively rare occasions when Canadian politicians considered Indian affairs in this period, such sentiments might be echoed. George Landerkin, an Ontario Liberal, suggested benignly that the Indians might soon become civilized "if they were not menaced day

⁴⁷See MacLeod, *Mounted Police*, ch. VIII.

⁴⁸See Arthur A. Ekirch, Jr., *The Civilian and the Military: A History of American Anti-Militarist Tradition* (Colorado Springs, 1972), p. 115. See also Francis P. Prucha, *Americanizing the American Indian: Writings by the "Friends of the Indian," 1880-1900* (Cambridge, MA, 1973).

by day by the force.”⁴⁹ He was one of a minority of opposition members who kept insisting that the Mounted Police was only a temporary expedient to be disbanded when white settlement began in earnest. Significantly, only a very few Canadian politicians and journalists, almost all of them in eastern Canada, ever condemned that enormous power confided in the Mounted Police.⁵⁰ The usual criticism was the annual cost of the force.

In the United States, eastern humanitarians and western expansionists could at least find common ground in condemning the tyranny or inefficiency of the army and its officers. Western interests were vehemently argued in state and territorial assemblies and in Congress. In Canada, the price of a tranquil west was apparently a benevolent police despotism, with the officers of the force sitting in judgment on charges laid by their men against white and Indian alike. Not until 1887 were the first members of an independent judiciary appointed for the Territories. In that year, the territorial council was transformed into an elected assembly; a further ten years would pass before the assembly won the cherished powers of responsible government. Paid and administered from Ottawa, the Mounted Police remained largely immune from local pressures and, as long as Sir John A. Macdonald was alive, it could depend on a powerful guardian against attempts to subvert its authority or discipline for political ends.⁵¹ Settler hostility to the N.W.M.P. as “whiskey police” or, during the 1885 campaign, as “gophers” was at least comparable to American criticism of the army on the frontier; but it did not substantially influence government policy. When Commissioner L. W. Herchmer was under remorseless fire from a swarm of angry western newspapers, an earnest suitor for his position was assured: “Sir John always stands by and defends an ‘official’ and makes every allowance for peculiarities of temper and disposition—and I may say even unpopularity, provided the official’s actions are satisfactory.”⁵² Herchmer was sustained.

In the decade between its arrival and the grim years before the 1885 outbreak, the Mounted Police could help the Indians adjust to the constraints of the treaty system with only occasional concern for

⁴⁹Canada, House of Commons *Debates*, September 1, 1891, p. 4820.

⁵⁰R. C. MacLeod, “The Mounted Police and Politics” in Dempsey, *Men in Scarlet*, pp. 101-5.

⁵¹Jennings, “Indians and the Law,” pp. 57-65.

⁵²Fred White to Colonel W. D. Otter, May 18, 1890, cited in Desmond Morton, *The Canadian General: Sir William Otter* (Toronto, 1974), p. 139.

the impact of white settlement. The early years, when buffalo were still plentiful, the tribal structure still had resilience, and the police were sufficiently trusted that a couple of constables could make an arrest in the heart of an Indian camp, could not last. While Canadians had been suitably apprehensive about the arrival of Sitting Bull and his band of Sioux in the aftermath of the Little Big Horn, the ensuing relations between the Indians and Superintendent James Walsh rapidly became part of a self-congratulatory mythology for both Canada and the Mounted Police.⁵³

If Ottawa had shown some inventiveness in creating the N.W.M.P., other features of its western policy bear a dreary resemblance to American practice. Canadian dealings with Indians, through the treaty system, land surrenders, annuities, agents, and land reserves, had a certain family resemblance to American methods, if only because both were a heritage of pre-Revolutionary British administration.⁵⁴ Like the American Indian administration, the Canadian department was not immune from political patronage, speculation by minor officials, and ill-informed penny-pinching by remote bureaucrats like the notorious Lawrence Vankoughnet.⁵⁵ Faced with the enormous and unfamiliar responsibility of feeding the Indians following the failure of the buffalo, Ottawa and most of its officials were unequal to the task. The best of them, Cecil Denny, a former N.W.M.P. inspector, resigned in disgust. Pressed to reduce public spending, Ottawa officials found logical economies by reducing rations, substituting bacon for beef on the Blackfoot reserves, dismissing junior employees.⁵⁶

It was the era of starvation after 1879 and the civil government's inability to deal with it that cost the Mounted Police its original standing with the native people. Obligated to defend insensitive and sometimes incompetent officials from the wrath of starving Indians, the force no longer appeared an even-handed dispenser of justice. The influence of the chiefs, which had been enormously elevated by the

⁵³Turner, *Medicine Line*, op. cit.; "Sitting Bull Tests the Mettle of the Redcoats" in Dempsey, *Men in Scarlet*, pp. 67-76. See also S. W. Horrall, *The Pictorial History of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police* (Toronto, 1973), pp. 70-74; MacLeod, *Mounted Police*, pp. 30-32.

⁵⁴Taylor, "Indian Policy," pp. 19-22; Morris, *Treaties*, pp. 9-12, 16.

⁵⁵See Stanley, *Western Canada*, ch. XIII; Hugh A. Dempsey, *Crowfoot: Chief of the Blackfeet* (Edmonton, 1972), pp. 108-145.

⁵⁶C. E. Denny, *The Law Marches West*, 2nd ed. (Toronto, 1972), pp. 204-5; Dempsey, *Crowfoot*, pp. 161-62.

arrival of the police, plummeted with the waning of the buffalo. By 1883 making an arrest required a small military operation. The arrival of the Canadian Pacific Railway and of speculators in the vast grazing lands suddenly opened up by the government aggravated a problem created by destitution.⁵⁷

In 1885 came the explosion. Still, the uprising was a half-breed rebellion, not an Indian war. Support for Louis Riel was concentrated in the Métis settlements near Prince Albert. Only in the Cree bands of Poundmaker and Big Bear were more than a small minority of Indians involved. It was the white settlers, panic-stricken by memories of the Minnesota massacre or the Sioux wars of the 1870s, who fled to the police forts and spread their terror by telegraph as far as Winnipeg. Only at Frog Lake, where nine whites and half-breeds were murdered, was the terror justified. Few Indians joined Louis Riel at Batoche; most of them pillaged whatever the settlers had abandoned and waited nervously for retribution they knew would follow. Within 3 months of the outbreak, the campaign was over with the loss of about 80 lives.⁵⁸

For the Mounted Police, expanded to 500 men on the eve of the only Indian war in Canada, the 1885 operations brought little glory. Most of the force, hurriedly concentrated in the troubled district, spent the campaign waiting for orders and protecting the white settlement at Prince Albert. At Fort Pitt, Inspector Francis Dickens, a sad son of the great author, allowed civilian men, women and children to surrender to the Indians and then loaded the remaining policemen on a barge and fled downstream. At Battleford, where about 800 able-bodied men, women and children were jammed into a fort facing approximately 120 Indians, Inspector W. S. Morris used his telegraph to send piteous appeals for help. More redoubtable officers, like Superintendent Herchmer and Inspector Sam Steele, demonstrated unusual fortitude and leadership.⁵⁹ However, it is hard to disagree with General Middleton, the British officer responsible for ending the campaign

⁵⁷Atkins, *Maintain the Right*, pp. 196-211. See *Settlers and Rebels: Official Reports of the North-West Mounted Police, 1882-1885*, facsimile edition (Toronto, 1973), *passim*.

⁵⁸On the campaign, see Stanley, *Western Canada*, pp. 327-380; Desmond Morton, *The Last War Drum: The North West Campaign of 1885* (Toronto, 1972); and, from the viewpoint of a contemporary participant, C. A. Boulton, *Reminiscences of the North-West Rebellions* (Toronto, 1886).

⁵⁹See Atkin, *Maintain the Right*, pp. 217-253.

so quickly, that when good well-trained troops were needed, the Mounted Police did not qualify.⁶⁰

Middleton's solution was to transform the force into mounted infantry, clad in workmanlike khaki uniforms and firmly under military discipline. Instead, it was as apparent to Canadians as it was to Americans that the era of Indian wars was over, and there was no need for a military garrison in the northwest. There was discernible pressure for the elimination of the Mounted Police, an issue brought to a head in 1889 when the government got proposed pensions for members of the force.⁶¹ At last, with the Indians planted disconsolately on their reserves, the tide of white settlement began to have political consequences for the Mounted Police. Liquor prohibition became the bitterest issue until liquor was licensed in 1892. "Why any Mounted Police officer should dictate to any Canadian citizen as to what and when he should drink is more than any fellow can tell," complained the *Fort MacLeod Gazette* in 1887;⁶² most westerners would have agreed. A constable, posted in full uniform to watch a notorious Prince Albert saloon, was arrested and fined \$25.00 for vagrancy by a locally-appointed magistrate. Another magistrate insisted that there was no proof that liquor was an intoxicant and declared Calgary a wide-open town.⁶³ Since the force's own records indicate that some of its more senior officers were notoriously heavy drinkers, the struggle to keep the Canadian west dry was almost hopeless, at least until the triumph of women's suffrage in 1916 brought a new army into the fray.⁶⁴

Although the liquor issue provoked continual conflict within the Mounted Police and between the force and civilians, the prestige of the force grew steadily. Exaggerated accounts of its prowess brought recruits from all the corners of the British Empire and it became the

⁶⁰On Middleton and the N.W.M.P. during the 1885 campaign see Middleton to Caron, May 2, 1885, Public Archives of Canada, Caron Papers, vol. 199. See also Canada, Department of Militia and Defence, *Report upon the Suppression of the Rebellion in the North-West Territories and Matters in Connection Therewith in 1885* (Canada, Sessional Papers, 1886, no. 6a, p. 5); *Telegrams of the North-West Campaign, 1885* edited by Desmond Morton and R. H. Roy (Toronto, 1972), pp. lxxxii, xcii, 230, 357.

⁶¹Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, March 21, 1889; April 15, 1889. See MacLeod, "Mounted Police and Politics," pp. 103-4.

⁶²*Fort MacLeod Gazette*, February 21, 1887.

⁶³Atkins, *Maintain the Right*, pp. 274-77.

⁶⁴On the later history of the issue and correction of the notion of a quiet, law-abiding Canadian west, see J. H. Gray, *Booze: The Impact of Whiskey on the Prairie West* (Toronto, 1972); and *Red Lights on the Prairie* (Toronto, 1971). See MacLeod, *Mounted Police*, ch. X.

beneficiary of the sentimental adulation that marked the late heyday of British imperialism. Commissioner L. W. Herchmer, appointed in 1886, may have been loathed by officers and men, but he restored discipline, improved training, equipment and welfare, and outfought most of his critics.⁶⁵ Of Herchmer's enemies, the most remorseless was Nicholas Flood Davin, an Irish poet, an editor, and Conservative member of Parliament for Assiniboia West. Davin's grievance began when Herchmer's brother fined him \$50 for bringing liquor into the territories,⁶⁶ but it easily encompassed the entire Herchmer family and reached a climax in a sensational judicial investigation of 137 separate allegations against the commissioner. Herchmer emerged with honor and reputation intact. What is significant about the Davin charges is that the editor-politician felt obliged, for the sake of his political career, to accompany his assault on Herchmer with the most fulsome praise for the N.W.M.P. as a whole. Moreover, despite his claim that the commissioner was a tyrant, hated across the west, not a single member of Parliament, westerner or easterner, rose to second his allegations.⁶⁷ One suspects that Davin would have found more friends if he had sat in the US Congress.

The fundamental critics of the force, R. C. Macleod has argued, tended to come from western Ontario and to be heirs of the Clear Grit tradition with its clear links to American democratic ideology. The most articulate of these was David Mills, a former Liberal cabinet minister who attempted in 1877 to negotiate Sitting Bull's return to the United States. Mills' philosophy was evident when he attacked the proposed police pension bill in 1889: "I say that a man who has served fifteen years and, much more, twenty-five years in the force, would be utterly unfit for any other pursuit in life afterwards. The hon. gentlemen know that a man who has served a great many years in the idle life of a soldier or policeman becomes, so far as industrial pursuits are concerned, a poor member of the community."⁶⁸ Later, Mills argued that interposing the police between the whites and the Indians and providing for their welfare frustrated the natural law of the survival of the fittest. The Americans, he insisted, had managed their Indians more wisely.⁶⁹

⁶⁵Atkins, *Maintain the Right*, pp. 257-273; R. B. Deane, *Mounted Police Life in Canada: A Record of Thirty-One Years' Service, 1883-1914* (London, 1916), pp. 30-42.

⁶⁶On Davin, see McLeod, "Mounted Police and Politics," pp. 99-105.

⁶⁷The Davin debate may be found in Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, March 31, 1890, pp. 2674-99.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, March 21, 1889, p. 770.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, May 16, 1892, p. 2688.

Such commitment to Social Darwinism, common enough in American debate on Indian policy, was rare in Canada. Indeed, there was relatively little debate in Parliament or elsewhere beyond the time-honoured propositions that economies could be made and that officials would be more prudent and successful only if they were chosen from the party not currently in power. The Indian as an equal citizen was hardly conceived save by a few idealists or radicals. In 1885, as part of an ingenious extension of the franchise, Sir John A. Macdonald proposed to include all the Indians in the electorate. With a rebellion about to begin, the proposal could hardly have come at a less propitious moment and the absurdity of votes for Indians (as well as for certain categories of women, which Macdonald also proposed) provided the Opposition with ammunition for a successful filibuster. Of course, Macdonald did not expect the Indians to become independent yeomen voters, assessing each party on its merit. He expected them to be marched to the polls under the guidance of dependable Conservative Indian agents.⁷⁰

When the Liberals finally returned to power in 1896, both the reserves policy and the Mounted Police survived the transition. In an aggressive campaign to attract immigrants to the Canadian west from the United States, Britain, and Europe, the presence of a firm, kindly, authoritarian force became a major Canadian selling point. Older settlers were reassured that the Mounted Police guaranteed that the newcomers would rapidly appreciate and respect the principles of British justice. Discovery of gold in the Klondike gave the N.W.M.P. a new frontier just as the old one was running out. Canadians could soon take appropriate mythological pride in the relative order and respectability of Dawson and the Yukon territory in contrast to the sordid regime of "Soapy" Smith at Skagway, Alaska.⁷¹

Pressed by jeering Tories in 1897 to state whether power had indeed altered his party's attitude to the Mounted Police, the new Liberal prime minister rose to the bait. He was, Sir Wilfrid Laurier confessed, "inclined to be rather conservative with regard to this force."⁷² So, indeed, were most Canadians. Perhaps the Mounted

⁷⁰On the Indian franchise, see J. E. Chamberlin, *The Harrowing of Eden: White Attitudes Toward North American Natives* (Toronto, 1975), pp. 200-202 and *passim*; Morris Davis and Joseph Krauter, *The Other Canadians* (Toronto, 1971), pp. 12-14 (The Indian franchise was withdrawn by the Liberals in 1898).

⁷¹Atkin, *Maintain the Right*, pp. 298-359. A personal account with appropriate flourishes, is S. B. Steele, *Forty Years in Canada: Reminiscences of the Great North-West* (London, 1915), pp. 288-337.

⁷²Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, May 10, 1897, p. 2039.

Police deserved only incidental credit for avoiding Indian wars in Canada: it was after all the US Army that demonstrated the invincibility of white weapons. It was easier to mediate the contact of white and Indian when the settlers came in a trickle, not an expected flood. Examined closely, there was little to choose between the blue-clad soldiers below the border and the red-coated Canadian policemen. Both were shabbily treated by the government; both could furnish ample evidence of human frailty; both lived at odds with the surrounding communities, white and Indian.

Many nations are in love with their army; fondness for a police force is so rare as to be almost a perversion. For Canadians, the excuse must be that, almost absent-mindedly, they had created a national institution in a country that really has very few of them. By the turn of the century, Canadians took extraordinary pride in offering the world what they called the "last, best West." They could be excused for believing that their Mounted Police had made it so.⁷³

⁷³MacLeod, "Mounted Police and Politics," p. 113.



Commander Charles Wilkes, the “naval apostle of Manifest Destiny.”
(Courtesy of USAF Academy Library)

THE NAVY ON THE FRONTIER

RAYMOND G. O'CONNOR

The frontier for the United States Navy was both continental and global.¹ The navy opened, and provided means for maintaining relations with countries bordering the seven seas. While the naval frontier may not have influenced American institutions to the extent that Frederick Jackson Turner claimed for the continental frontier, the navy brought oversea frontiers closer to home and provided reciprocal exchange which has broadened and often modified the character of societies and civilizations. Most of the western hemisphere ceased being a part of the frontier of Europe, as Walter Prescott Webb contended, not simply because of the development of capitalism and democracy, but because the US Navy presented a tangible and at times formidable barrier to continued domination and further exploitation. Essentially, the navy enabled Americans to choose between insularity from or contiguity with other lands. The impact of this freedom of choice with its long term influence on American thinking may have an even more lasting effect on the nation than that envisioned by the Turner thesis.

Aside from the suppression of piracy in the Caribbean, certainly a vital American maritime frontier, the navy contributed to the acquisition of the Louisiana Territory. Its valiant efforts in the Quasi-War with France and against the Barbary Powers helped convince Napoleon that the United States was not a paper tiger. President Thomas Jefferson, however ambivalent his views on the navy, was apprehensive that France might close the Mississippi to traffic. He asked for and received from Congress on February 28, 1803 authorization to build a number of river gunboats to maintain freedom of navigation. Bids were invited to construct vessels at Pittsburgh, Marietta, and

¹President James Monroe said of the Navy, "Capable of moving in any and every direction, it possesses the faculty, even when remote from our coast, of extending its aid to every interest on which the security and welfare of our Union depends." Message of January 30, 1824 to the House of Representatives, in *American State Papers: Naval Affairs*, I (Washington, 1834), p. 907. A convenient summary of the various squadron dispositions may be found in Robert G. Albion, "Distant Stations," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, LXXX (March 1954), pp. 265-73.

Louisville to provide a naval force on the Ohio-Mississippi channels to protect produce and settlers, a force that never materialized as the purchase and transfer of the Louisiana Territory was consummated.

During the War of 1812 the navy performed admirably on the frontier. Alfred Thayer Mahan may have been exaggerating when he stated that naval victories on Lake Erie and Lake Champlain gave the American envoys at Ghent "the preponderance of military argument," and that "Perry and McDonough averted from the United States, without further fighting, a rectification of the frontier."² Many factors contributed to the British decision to modify their original demands. Nevertheless their dropping the *sine qua non* of an Indian buffer area and "revision of the boundary line between the United States and the adjacent British colonies" was related, at least to some degree, to the military situation resulting from naval successes. Inland water victories further demonstrated to the Indians that their cause was lost, and helped save the Old Northwest Frontier for American pioneers. In the south, an American squadron on Lake Borgne, Louisiana, by its presence and determined resistance, delayed the British attack on New Orleans for approximately a week and enabled General Andrew Jackson to prepare his defenses. The repulse of the British invasion, as Harry L. Coles put it, "settled the future of Louisiana and, ultimately, of Florida as well."³

A naval station had been established at New Orleans in 1804 to protect the lucrative commerce from the Ohio and Mississippi Valleys, and within two years some 20 gunboats were engaged and thwarting the designs of freebooters masked as privateers. In 1816, when settlers in Georgia were being harrassed by Indian raids from Spanish Florida and war with the Creek tribes seemed imminent, the government decided to erect a fort on the Apalachicola River north of the Florida line. Army transports were to proceed up the river through Florida territory carrying supplies and munitions, and Commodore Daniel T. Patterson, at New Orleans, ordered units under his com-

²A. T. Mahan, *Sea Power in its Relations to the War of 1812*, 2 vols. (Boston, 1905), II, pp. 100-101. See also Kenneth Bourne, *Britain and the Balance of Power in North America, 1815-1908* (Berkeley, 1967), p. 5; and R. Carlyle Buley, *The Old Northwest: Pioneer Period, 1815-1840*, 2 vols. (Bloomington, 1951), I, p. 110.

³Harry L. Coles, *The War of 1812* (Chicago, 1965), p. 236. Jones contended that his efforts at Lake Borgne delayed the British advance by ten days. Claim of Master Commandant Thomas ap Catesby Jones To a Pension on Account of a Wound Received in Battle, *American State Papers: Naval Affairs*, III (Washington, 1860), pp. 895-96. John K. Mahon puts the delay at "about six days" in his *The War of 1812* (Gainesville, 1972), p. 356; and a delay of one week is ascribed in U. T. Bradley, "Thomas ap Catesby Jones: A Personality of the Days of Sail," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, LXIX (1933), p. 1155.

mand to provide an escort “up the Appalachicola [sic] and Chatahoochee [rivers], to such point or points as may be required.”⁴ The trip involved passing a former British fort that had been taken over by fugitive American Negro slaves and some Indians, who on one occasion attacked a boat’s crew. General Andrew Jackson had determined that “this fort must be destroyed,” and he directed Brigadier General Edmund P. Gaines to “notify the Governor of Pensacola of your advance into his Territory and for the express purpose of destroying these lawless Banditti.”⁵

Two navy gunboats, under Sailing-Masters Jairus Loomis and James Bassett arrived at what was known as Negro Fort and coordinated an assault with an army detachment. On June 27, 1816 in a heavy exchange of fire, a hot shot from one of the gunboats struck the fort’s magazine, and the resulting explosion destroyed the fort and killed some 270 of the 300 defenders.⁶ Thus what could have been a bloody attack by the soldiers was rendered unnecessary, and a source of irritation to Americans and Spaniards was eliminated. This incident may not illustrate Mahan’s dictum about the decisiveness of combat on inland waters, but it made a significant contribution to peace on the Georgia-Florida frontier.

When Jackson invaded Florida in 1818 in pursuit of Indians and renegades who had raided American territory and sought refuge on Spanish land, he received support from naval vessels out of New Orleans operating along the Florida coast. That Jackson appreciated the assistance provided by the navy is revealed in his letter of January 10, 1820 to Secretary of War John C. Calhoun. When Spain delayed ratification of the Adams-Onis Treaty, President James Monroe contemplated occupying Florida by force. Jackson, asked by Calhoun for a war plan, gave a detailed response that called for “A strong Naval escort . . . for the protection of our Transports and [which] may be advantageously employed in the reduction of St. Marks and St. Augustine.”⁷

⁴Commodore Patterson to Lieutenant Commandant Crawley, June 19, 1816, *American State Papers: Foreign Relations*, IV, p. 559.

⁵Jackson to Gaines, April 8, 1816, edited by John Spencer Bassett, *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson*, 7 vols. (Washington, 1928-1935), II, p. 239.

⁶Report of Sailing-master Jairus Loomis, August 13, 1816, in *American State Papers: Foreign Relations*, IV, pp. 559-560; and Application for Prize Money on the Destruction of a Fort, Communication to the House of Representatives, March 24, 1818, in *American State Papers: Naval Affairs*, I, p. 502. A good account of the incident is John Spencer Bassett, *The Life of Andrew Jackson*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1916), pp. 238-39; and Marquis James, *The Life of Andrew Jackson*, 1 vol. ed. (Indianapolis, 1938), p. 275.

⁷Jackson to Calhoun, January 10, 1820, *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson*, III, pp. 2-6. The quote is on page 4.

The acquisition of Florida and continued piratical activities in the Caribbean prompted the establishment of a West India squadron in 1822, about the time that Lieutenant Matthew C. Perry, commanding officer of the USS *Shark*, raised the American flag over Key West and claimed the territory for the United States. The following year, when Captain David Porter assumed command of the squadron, five flat bottomed barges were acquired, each equipped with 30 oars. Dubbed "the mosquito fleet," the barges were named the *Mosquito*, the *Gnat*, the *Midge*, the *Sandfly*, and the *Gallinipper*—"insects," as Maclay put it, "with which their crews were destined to be unpleasantly familiar."⁸ (While this mosquito fleet was created to combat freebooters, the name came to be associated with vessels manned by navy crews in the Second Seminole War.) Meanwhile the Florida Legislative Council petitioned for a naval depot at Pensacola to "afford a more complete command over the commerce of the Gulph [sic] of Mexico" and "in time of war give efficient aid in the defence of New Orleans as well as additional security to Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama by presenting a formidable barrier by which inroads through West Florida would be checked and prevented."⁹

As the new Florida frontier became more attractive to American settlers the government decided to remove the Seminole Indians, and in 1835 a naval vessel was assigned to transport the natives to another homeland in the west. About the same time an army column under Major Francis L. Dade was ambushed and massacred, and a series of coordinated Indian attacks revealed a determined effort to resist the migration. The acting governor of Florida appealed for naval assistance, and in 1836 received a commitment from the navy which would last for some 6 years until the government decided to leave the remaining Seminoles in the Everglades. During this period the navy, operating in shallow water craft including canoes, developed through tortuous experience a strategy of riverine or inshore warfare, and eventually functioned in close cooperation with the army. A diary kept by Passed Midshipman George Henry Preble reveals in considerable detail the hardships and frustrations of a naval expedition into the Everglades in 1842 led by Lieutenant John Rodgers, whose report concluded: "On the 11th of April, we returned to Key Biscayne, having been living in our canoes fifty-eight days, with less rest, fewer luxuries, and harder work than fall to the lot of that estimable class

⁸Edgar Stanton Maclay, *A History of the United States Navy From 1775 to 1898*, 2 vols. (New York, 1898), II, p. 30.

⁹Memorial to the President by the Legislative Council, September 2, 1822, in Clarence Edwin Carter, ed., *Territorial Papers of the United States*, XXII, *Florida, 1821-1824* (Washington, 1956), pp. 521-528.

of citizens who dig our canals.”¹⁰ A typical Preble entry read, “Today officers as well as men have been compelled to wade in the mud, saw-grass, and water, and assist the sailors in dragging the canoes.”¹¹ It was scarcely the kind of seafaring life envisioned by the crews of the vessels from which this “landing force” came, although some of the sailors brought this arduous duty on themselves by signing community petitions for naval aid against the Indians in exchange for a “glass of grog.”¹² So, again, the navy was directly involved in pacifying the frontier, and performed a task for which the army admitted it was unprepared. Meanwhile the West India Squadron was charged with preventing Indians from raiding the Florida keys from the mainland (a practice that bothered the Floridians and the federal government)¹³ and naval officers were accused of interfering in local elections in Florida.¹⁴

In describing the march of Americans across the continent, historians have listed successive frontiers, those of the trapper and trader, the rancher, and the farmer. On the Pacific Coast the navy helped create a contiguous “sea frontier.” The first American warship to round the Horn and enter the Pacific Ocean was the frigate *Essex* in 1813. Pursuing the British Pacific whaling fleet, the *Essex*, under the command of Captain David Porter, cruised as far west as the Marquesas Islands.¹⁵ Subsequently naval vessels were dispatched to the Pacific in support of American interests, and, as one historian put it: “The realization of Manifest Destiny on the west coast was partly the

¹⁰Quoted in George Henry Preble, “A Canoe Expedition Into the Everglades in 1842,” *Tequesta*, no. 5 (January 1946), p. 32.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 35.

¹²George E. Buker, *Swamp Sailors: Riverine Warfare in the Everglades, 1835-1842* (Gainesville, 1975), p. 51, footnote 5. This comprehensive account of the navy’s role in the Second Seminole War elaborates on strategic and tactical innovations and draws some parallels with the Vietnam War. See also John K. Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War, 1835-1842* (Gainesville, 1967), who concludes “The navy also gained valuable training” and “played a larger role in this than in any other Indian war,” p. 322.

¹³The Secretary of War to the Governor of Florida, September 10, 1840, in Carter, ed., *The Territorial Papers of the United States, XXVI, Florida, 1839-1845* (Washington, 1962), pp. 213-14.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 325, footnote 96. For navy purchases and attempts to purchase timber land in Florida and Louisiana see *American State Papers: Naval Affairs*, III (Washington, 1862), pp. 917-958.

¹⁵David F. Long, *Nothing Too Daring: A Biography of Commodore David Porter, 1780-1843* (Annapolis, 1970), pp. 80ff.; Patrick W. Strauss, “Captain David Porter: Pioneer Pacific Strategist,” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, 93 (February 1967), pp. 158-160.

result of these operations. Indeed, investigation has shown clearly the intimate relationship between the development and westward expansion of the United States and American utilization of the Cape Horn route to the Pacific."¹⁶

Warships were first assigned to the Pacific Station on a regular basis in 1818. They were placed under a commodore in April 1822. During the Van Buren administration American merchants in California petitioned the government to station a warship in California waters for protection from Mexican injustice. In response to this request, the Pacific Squadron was augmented by additional ships, and the commodore was ordered to assist Americans in California. In June 1840, the sloop *St. Louis*, under Commander French Forrest, proceeded to Monterey and secured legal rights for about 60 American and British citizens who had been arbitrarily imprisoned by the local authorities for allegedly plotting an independence movement.¹⁷ Meanwhile, the expedition commanded by Lieutenant Charles Wilkes, which departed from Hampton Roads on August 18, 1838, reached Puget Sound in 1841 and sent a party overland to rendezvous with the ships at San Francisco. Much information about the country was gathered and its publication stimulated interest in California.

In 1842 a most notorious American initiative took place with the abortive naval seizure of Monterey and the announced occupation of Upper California.¹⁸ While the incident has its humorous aspects, it should be noted that the irascible Commodore Thomas ap Catesby Jones was acting on the basis of information from a variety of sources indicating that the United States and Mexico were at war and that the British were preparing to attack California. His action was consistent with the responsibilities of a naval officer on distant station when communications with Washington took months to reach their destination, and he would have been derelict in his duty if he had not behaved as he did under the circumstances. His indiscretion demonstrated the military weakness of the Mexicans, and may have convinced authorities in London, Washington, and Mexico City that Cali-

¹⁶Raymond A. Rydell, *Cape Horn to the Pacific: The Rise and Decline of an Ocean Highway* (Berkeley, 1952), p. viii.

¹⁷Robert Erwin Johnson, *Thence Round Cape Horn: The Story of United States Naval Forces on Pacific Station, 1818-1923* (Annapolis, 1963), p. 57; Dudley W. Knox, *A History of the United States Navy* (New York, 1936), p. 159; Hubert H. Bancroft, *The History of California* (San Francisco, 1884-1890), IV, p. 36.

¹⁸George M. Brooke, Jr., "The Vest Pocket War of Commodore Jones," *Pacific Historical Review*, XXXI (1962), pp. 217-233; James High, "Jones at Monterey, 1842," *Journal of the West*, V (April 1966), pp. 173-186.

ifornia was ripe for the picking. Jones was relieved of his command but neither court martialed nor reprimanded, and in 1845 President James Knox Polk wrote him that “there has been no disposition to visit you with punishment of any description for conduct actuated by such elevated principles of duty.”¹⁹

When Commodore John D. Sloat assumed command of the Pacific Squadron his secret orders from Secretary of the Navy George Bancroft read: “Should you ascertain beyond a doubt, that the Mexican Government has declared war against us, you will at once employ the force under your command to the best advantage.” In addition, the Secretary said, “If you ascertain with certainty that Mexico has declared war against the United States, you will at once possess yourself of the port of San Francisco, and blockade or occupy such other ports as your force may permit.”²⁰ Arriving at Monterey on July 2, 1846, 2 weeks after the Bear Flag Republic was declared, Commodore Sloat earned the scorn of the leaders of this revolt, of the impetuous Captain John C. Fremont, and of historian Allan Nevins. The latter castigates Sloat for his “inexcusable timidity” and “preposterously belated action” in waiting until July 7 to occupy Monterey and order the commanding officer of the USS *Portsmouth*, in San Francisco Bay, to seize Yerba Buena.²¹ No doubt the Commodore recalled the embarrassing experience of Commodore Jones, and had reread his instructions to “ascertain beyond a doubt” and “with certainty” that Mexico had declared war. According to historian Robert Wilden Neeser, Sloat “acted with all the required energy and promptitude.”²²

In any event, Commodore Sloat began the conquest of California, which was continued and completed under the forthright direction of Commodore Robert F. Stockton. Years later, Secretary of the Navy George Bancroft, writing of the acquisition of California, said, “As we had a squadron in the North Pacific, but no army, the meas-

¹⁹Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 175.

²⁰Quoted in Johnson, *Thence Round Cape Horn*, p. 72.

²¹Allan Nevins, *Fremont: Pathmarker of the West* (New York, 1939), p. 272.

²²Robert Wilden Neeser, “The Navy’s Part in the Acquisition of California, 1846-1848,” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings XXIV* (1908), p. 268.

ures for carrying out this design fell to the Navy Department.”²³ Further, it appears that naval activities along the Pacific Coast for nearly 30 years helped convince other nations, especially England and France, that this area was in effect a United States preserve.

In some respects the occupation of California following the conquest proved more of a challenge to the navy than had the war. The first alcalde of San Francisco under the American flag was Lieutenant Washington A. Bartlett, US Navy. But the institution of a new system of law and the preservation of order was rendered virtually impossible by the explosive gold rush. The crews of warships were depleted by desertion to the gold fields, and by the use of the ships’ men to control Indians and police settled areas.²⁴ Even the contentious Commodore Jones, now returned to command the squadron, was unable to halt the exodus in spite of the most repressive measures. At this time Congress was in the process of enacting legislation to prohibit flogging as a punishment in the navy, and Captain Samuel F. Du Pont predicted, “As soon as the abolition order was read on board any ship in the Pacific, the crews would seize the vessel and head for the California gold fields.”²⁵ The Reverend Walter Colton, the Alcalde of Monterey, wrote of a breakfast at his home where, bereft of servants, “A general of the United States Army, the commander of a man-of-war, and the Alcalde of Monterey, [were] in a

²³Quoted in Nevins, *Fremont: Pathmarker of the West*, p. 246. One writer concludes, “Strangely enough, the conquest of California by the United States could not have been accomplished when it was had not these naval forces been present.” Oakah L. Jones, Jr., “The Pacific Squadron and the Conquest of California, 1846-1847,” *Journal of the West*, V (April 1966), p. 187. Josiah Royce contends that Commander John B. Montgomery, commanding the USS *Portsmouth*, is the unsung hero of the seizure of California. Josiah Royce, “Montgomery and Fremont,” *Century Magazine*, XIX, New Series (November 1890 to April 1891), p. 780. The lack of enthusiasm for land operations is revealed by one sailor, who upon return to his ship wrote, “Here we are at last and God grant we may never have to go ashore soldiering again.” Joseph T. Downey, *The Cruise of the Portsmouth, 1845-1847: A Sailor’s View of the Naval Conquest of California*, edited by Howard Lamar (New Haven, 1963), p. 235.

²⁴One expedition was dispatched to defend Sutter’s Fort from a rumored Indian attack. Fred Blackburn Rogers, *Montgomery and the Portsmouth* (San Francisco, 1958), pp. 77-78.

²⁵Harold D. Langley, *Social Reform in the United States Navy, 1798-1862* (Urbana, 1967), p. 175. Jones himself was not immune from the gold fever or land speculation. C. Norman Guice, ed., “The ‘Contentious Commodore’ and San Francisco: Two 1850 Letters from Thomas ap Catesby Jones,” *Pacific Historical Review*, XXXIV (August 1965), pp. 337-342.

smoking kitchen grinding coffee, toasting a herring, and peeling onions."²⁶

From the time that Commodore Stockton, on August 17, 1846, proclaimed himself Commander-in-Chief and Governor of California, the navy played a prominent role in domestic affairs.²⁷ The navy assumed primary responsibility for the protection of the territory, participated in its administration, and aided in its development. A naval station was established at Monterey in 1847 and a navy yard was authorized at Mare Island in 1852. As Secretary of the Navy Abel Parker Upshur had said, naval expenditures "gave employment to industry, encouragement to enterprise, and patronage to genius." Warships guarded steamers carrying gold, and at the request of San Francisco merchants Commander Cadwalader Ringgold conducted surveys of the California coast in 1849-50. His findings, published in *A Series of Charts, with Sailing Directions . . . To the Bay of San Francisco* (1851), and *Correspondence to Accompany Maps and Charts of California*, proved invaluable to mariners, businessmen, and settlers.²⁸ During the 1850s vigilante committees sprang up in response to lawlessness in California, and in 1856 the governor asked the military authorities to intervene. The army commander refused, as did Captain David G. Farragut, who claimed it was a matter beyond his jurisdiction. But the captain of the sloop USS *John Adams* dropped anchor off San Francisco and by threat of bombardment secured the release of prisoners from the local vigilante group.²⁹ California's eligibility for statehood was hastened by the navy's efforts, and the continued presence of American warships and their crews served as a constant reassurance to Californians during these troubled days.

To the north in the disputed Oregon Territory, the first naval involvement occurred when John Jacob Astor decided to set up a headquarters near the mouth of the Columbia River to pursue the fur trade. The expedition by sea left New York on September 8, 1810 in a ship commanded by Lieutenant Jonathan Thorn, US Navy, on leave for this purpose. He was escorted early in the voyage by the USS *Constitution* to prevent harassment by the Royal Navy searching for

²⁶Walter Colton, *Three Years in California* (New York, 1850), pp. 247-48, excerpt in *The American West: A Source Book*, edited by Clark C. Spence (New York, 1966), pp. 165-66.

²⁷For the impropriety and illegality of Stockton's establishment of a civil government, see K. Jack Bauer, *The Mexican War, 1846-1848* (New York, 1974), pp. 168, 174, 176.

²⁸Allan Westcott, "Cadwalader Ringgold," *Dictionary of American Biography*, edited by Dumas Malone, 22 vols. (New York, 1946), XV, p. 617.

²⁹Johnson, *Thence Round Cape Horn*, pp. 107-8.

British seamen. Senator Thomas Hart Benton declared that this settlement was “done with the countenance and stipulated approbation of the government of the United States,” and that “an officer of the United States Navy . . . was allowed to command his [Astor’s] leading vessel, in order to impress upon the enterprise the seal of nationality.”³⁰ In 1813, when Astor learned of an impending British attack on Fort Astoria, the government ordered the frigate *Adams* to the mouth of the Columbia, only to divert it for other duty. Astor then sold the fort to a British firm, but after the war he sought its return, as did the United States government. On July 18, 1815 secretary of State James Monroe notified the British chargé that the post would be reoccupied. After some two years of delay the sloop-of-war *Ontario*, James Biddle commanding, was ordered in September 1817 to proceed to the Columbia River and reassert American sovereignty over the territory. These orders were carried out, and although the matter of returning the fort was settled later by negotiation, the *Ontario* was the first American naval vessel to enter the area. Biddle used this opportunity to explore portions of the Pacific Coast.³¹

The next naval encounter with the Pacific Northwest occurred when the expedition commanded by Lieutenant Charles Wilkes spent nearly four years—August 18, 1838 to July 6, 1842—exploring the Pacific Ocean. Arriving on the northwest coast in April 1841, Wilkes charted harbors and the coastline, sent parties into the interior of the Oregon territory, and discouraged settlers from seeking independence. In his report, Wilkes wrote of “the terrors of the bar of the Columbia,” where one of his vessels, the *Peacock*, was beaten to pieces. By his account of the hazards facing mariners attempting to enter the mouth of the Columbia River and his glowing descriptions of the harbor at Puget Sound and the lush Willamette Valley, Wilkes played a decisive role in establishing the northwest boundary at the 49th parallel and in popularizing the appeals of this area to settlers. “These shores which hitherto were little more than myths in the world’s mind,” said Hubert Howe Bancroft, “were now clothed in reality.”³² Because of the impact of Wilkes “praising the agricultural and commercial potential

³⁰Thomas H. Benton, *Thirty Years View*, 2 vols. (New York, 1854), I, p. 109.

³¹Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of the Northwest Coast*, 2 vols. (San Francisco, 1884), I, pp. 143-44, 201-2; II, pp. 290-94; J. B. McMaster, *A History of the People of the United States from the Revolution to the Civil War*, 8 vols. (New York), IV, pp. 472-74.

³²Bancroft, *History of the Northwest Coast*, I, p. 684. But Bancroft is critical of Wilkes for not making the most of his exploring opportunities.

of the Willamette Valley," Geoffrey Smith declared him "a naval apostle of Manifest Destiny."³³

Mounting interest in this vast but little known area was reflected in 1841 when for the first time the geographical mission of vessels on the Pacific Station was defined. The squadron was to cover "All the west coast of America, and westward from the meridian of Cape Horn to the 180th degree of longitude; and southward between those meridians to the South Pole."³⁴ This pronouncement neither extended nor restricted what the ships on the Pacific Station had been doing, but it more clearly delineated the area of responsibility, that portion of the globe where the commodore could send his vessels without too much fear of court martial, and it revealed a specific government commitment to the coast and to the Eastern and Central Pacific as far west as Midway Island. In 1845, when the dispute over the Oregon boundary with Great Britain was approaching the crisis stage, the Pacific Squadron was ordered "to display the flag of the United States in the Columbia" and gather more information about the territory. In 1846, responding to orders from the Secretary of the Navy, Commodore Sloat sent the schooner USS *Shark* to the Columbia River, where it shared the same fate as the *Peacock* some five years before. The Oregon Question was settled through negotiation.

One of the navy's more notable contributions in the pacification of the frontier occurred during the Indian War of 1855-56 in the new territory of Washington. The governor appealed for naval assistance, and the sloop-of-war *Decatur*, anchoring off Seattle on October 4, 1855, furnished shore parties to seek out and destroy the hostiles and garrison the town in anticipation of an attack. The morning of January 26 found some seven or eight hundred armed Indians converging on Seattle, and the battle waged for about 6 hours before the attackers were repulsed with heavy casualties. During the following months the *Decatur*, along with the steam powered USS *Massachusetts* and other vessels that appeared subsequently, was employed in bolstering

³³Geoffrey S. Smith, "Charles Wilkes and the Growth of American Naval Diplomacy," in *Makers of American Diplomacy, From Benjamin Franklin to Henry Kissinger*, edited by Frank J. Merli and Theodore A. Wilson (New York, 1974), p. 148. "Recent scholarship . . . has accorded Wilkes a crucial role in determining the 49th parallel as our Northwest boundary." William H. Goetzmann, *Exploration and Empire: The Explorer and the Winning of the American West* (New York, 1966), p. 238. See also Geoffrey S. Smith, "The Navy Before Darwinism: Science, Exploration, and Diplomacy in Antebellum America," *American Quarterly*, XXVIII (Spring 1976), pp. 41-55. Wilkes "demonstrated the 'Pacific consciousness' that characterized so many antebellum navalists, an attitude that in Wilkes' words underlined the destiny of 'this western coast' to 'fill a large space in the world's future history.'" *Ibid.*, p. 45.

³⁴Quoted in Johnson, *Thence Round Cape Horn*, p. 58.

the defenses of Seattle and visiting other settlements and Indian reservations in the territory.³⁵ One writer, with pardonable license, wrote that the *Decatur* "helped in no small way in making the great empire of the West and in rendering possible an immigration unequalled in history."³⁶ A more judicious appraisal would, nevertheless, assign the navy a significant role in convincing settlers and immigrants that the territories of the Pacific Northwest were reasonably safe for exploitation.

One of the lesser known episodes of the navy's frontier experience is its participation in the settling of Alaska. Congress made no provision for the governance of this huge wilderness occupied by Americans, Russians, Indians, and half-breeds, and army troops were withdrawn in 1877 as an economy move. In 1879 fear of an Indian uprising brought frantic appeals from the white residents for protection, and a British warship responded and remained until it was relieved by the schooner USS *Jamestown*, under Commander Lester Anthony Beardslee. His somewhat vague orders from the Secretary of the Navy basically placed him in the position of a proconsul representing the United States government to maintain order and administer affairs. For 17 months Commander Beardslee, his crew, and a handful of Marines, worked closely with local dignitaries, restored peaceful relations between the various ethnic groups, prodded settlers into establishing local government, reduced crime, suppressed the production of a dangerous alcoholic beverage, and sponsored elementary education. Beardslee was succeeded by Commander Henry Glass, who continued the policies of his predecessor. Naval administration of Alaska so improved conditions that settlers began to bring their wives and children into the territory. With the passage of the Organic Act of 1884 the navy was relieved of its role in administering

³⁵For participant accounts see Gardner W. Allen, ed., *The Papers of Francis Gregory Dallas, United States Navy: Correspondence and Journal, 1837-1859* (New York, 1917). The portion of Dallas' journal relating to the *Decatur's* experience in Washington Territory is on pages 199-211. An account by the then Passed Midshipman Thomas S. Phelps is included as an appendix, pages 266-299.

³⁶John H. Brandt, "The Navy as an Indian Fighter," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, LVI (1930), p. 691. See also Truman Strobridge, "When the Navy Fought the Indians," *ibid.*, XCI (1965), pp. 156-58.

affairs. But the psychological and practical stabilizing impact of its presence was not forgotten by the inhabitants of this last American frontier in the Northern Hemisphere.³⁷

This brief and scarcely definitive survey reveals that naval activities were not restricted to a maritime or seafaring frontier. The mobility of naval vessels permitted their dispersion to any existing or anticipated trouble spot that could be reached by water, and provided the government with flexibility that often meant the difference between submission to or mastery of circumstances. The navy's frontiers were successive—the unknown, the unexplored, the unsettled, the unpacified. The navy's westward movement was across the Caribbean to the Pacific, where it continued to follow the setting sun and American aspirations. It operated on oceans, lakes, rivers, swamps, and dry land. It brought order where there had been chaos and civilization where there had been barbarism. The highways it traversed led to foreign and continental frontiers, and it served as an all purpose instrument for the expansionist urge that propelled thirteen colonies huddled on the Atlantic to hemispheric dominance and world supremacy.

³⁷Ted C. Hinkleley, *The Americanization of Alaska, 1867-1897* (Palo Alto, 1972), pp. 131-38; Jeannette Paddock Nichols, *Alaska: A History of its Administration*, reprint (New York, 1963), pp. 131-38; Henry Glass, "Naval Administration in Alaska," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, XVI (January 1890), pp. 1-19; Mel Crain, "When the Navy Ruled Alaska," *ibid.*, LXXXI (February 1955), pp. 198-203. "This rule," says Crain, "which directly influenced the course of Alaska's turbulent political history, furnishes one of the most unusual chronicles in Navy annals." *Ibid.*, p. 198.

COMMENTARY

The commentary in the second session concerned Desmond Morton's paper on comparison of Canadian and American frontier experiences. Robert G. Athearn, Professor of History at the University of Colorado, commented from the American perspective. Richard A. Preston, W. K. Boyd Professor of History and Director of Canadian Studies at Duke University, commented from the Canadian perspective.

ROBERT G. ATHEARN

In his paper Professor Morton makes several conclusions, among them that different approaches to peace-keeping on the Canadian and American frontiers were necessary, in part, because of different rates of settlement. He quotes Paul Sharp and Robert Utley on this point. Comparative population figures for 1880 and 1881 document his assertion.

What might be added, from the American point of view, is that the Civil War, as well as the political impasse that preceded it, tended to dam up the process of westward migrations until that unpleasantness was settled. Despite counter-arguments to the effect that during those years the westering tendencies of Americans, especially those of military age, kept the movement alive, and that the mining frontier continued to have its attractions, the kind of settlement that seriously disrupted white-Indian relations did not effectively penetrate the west until after the war. In the post-war years, however, capital, both domestic and foreign, had a tendency to ignore the wartorn south, and to be drawn instead toward the undeveloped west. The 20 years that followed the close of the war saw most of the western lines emerge and with that development came the agrarian legions.

It was during this period that the so-called Indian wars occurred, a series of police actions undertaken by a post-war army that was not trained for that type of duty and usually did not perform it very well. General William Tecumseh Sherman, in command of the high plains country in the immediate post-war years, admitted this freely, remarking that when the troops were obliged to act as a police force in difficulties between Indians and settlers the army usually came in for

severe criticism, particularly when efforts were made to prevent westerners from slaughtering Indians. Therefore, as he wrote in 1868, he had tried hard to avoid war, only to be "abused therefor by citizens generally, and even my soldiers felt I did not sympathize with them, when I restrained them from resenting insults and murders on them and their comrades, by the Indians."¹ Phil Sheridan agreed that the army's was a thankless task, commenting that it was almost impossible to satisfy the public in an Indian campaign because the enemy refused to stand still long enough to receive a fatal blow. Army men, accustomed to an enemy better grounded in the rules of formal warfare, found this kind of duty disconcerting and frustrating.²

The American army's problem was made even more difficult by the fact that, in a sense, it served as a police force in the west for another department of the government, that of Interior. When the Indians remained upon reservations managed by that department they were good Indians; when they strayed from those confines, or got out of hand at the agencies, calls were made for military assistance. In commenting upon this situation Professor Morton has said that "In the United States, prevailing interpretations of liberty and democracy and a recurrent suspicion of militarism repeatedly undermined the army's attempts to resume control of Indian policy after 1849."

Perhaps more than a suspicion of militarism—an uneasy feeling that has simmered beneath the surface from the early days of the nation until present—it arose from the normal reaction to the military immediately following any war and the enthusiastic intervention of eastern humanitarians, many of whom were former abolitionists looking for a new cause. The recent attraction of this group to the anti-slavery issue now easily turned to the plight of the natives whose existence was threatened by the post-war rush into the west. The old-line abolitionists were experienced propagandists and their weight was felt among congressmen who were not averse to cutting military expenditures and were glad to have reasons for such actions supplied by important complainants.

In comparing living conditions of the Mounted Police and the cavalymen—the use of the term is somewhat misleading because a good many of the western outposts were manned by infantry as opposed to the expensive-to-maintain cavalry—Professor Morton refers to the badly constructed, cold and often unsanitary conditions in

¹Robert G. Athearn, *William Tecumseh Sherman and the Settlement of the West* (Norman, 1956), p. 237.

²*Ibid.*, p. 313. See also Robert M. Utley, "The Frontier Army: John Ford or Arthur Penn?" in Jane F. Smith and Robert M. Kvasnicka, *Indian-White Relations: A Persistent Paradox* (Washington, 1976), p. 142.

which men existed and the obsolete arms with which they were expected to combat the hostile plains Indians. While such comparisons no doubt are perfectly fair, and it cannot be argued well that these conditions did not exist, it should be mentioned that, in general, frontier life meant this kind of an existence for a good many westerners in the early years of their settlements. Nor, until more recent times at least, have troops lived under particularly attractive conditions even in more settled portions of the country. The habitations of gold miners, for example, often were "... temporary shacks, ill-constructed, frigid in winter and sometimes unsanitary," to use Professor Morton's description of the facilities assigned to the Mounted Police and the American troops. That they were regarded as constituting a hardship depended upon who had to endure them; in the case of the miners they lived that way because they accepted it as a part of the price they had to pay to pursue their trade. Military men complained because complaint was basic to military life, an antidote to the boredom of garrison routine. This does not deny the reports of the Inspectors General who frequently found western military living quarters deplorable; it does argue that such situations were not unique in the west, generally, or in military barracks elsewhere.

With regard to personnel, Professor Morton comments that "There were excellent officers and men in both the American and Canadian forces in the west. Frontier conditions, hardship and danger weeded out misfits and chronic failures." With the first sentence, I agree; there were *some* excellent officers and enlisted men. With the postulation that frontier conditions weeded out misfits and chronic failures, I would take exception. Not a few of the officers were misfits who had done very little that was commendable in the late war and who spent the post-war days at the bottom of a bottle, hoping that time would pass quickly and retirement would materialize before alcoholism won the battle. Among the troops were enough who represented the dregs of society to cause comment both from their officers and from the civilians with whom they sometimes came in contact. Not infrequently, in the case of both officers and men, they stayed on in the post-war army because military life was absolutely all they knew and they had no choice but to take what assignments were given them, some of the duties being in remote western posts which were professional graveyards.

Professor Morton's comparison of Canada's political system with that of the United States, in which he suggests that the former gave support to the Mounted Police while the American Congress showed very little enthusiasm for the army because of a long tradition of anti-militarism, gives food for thought. I think the explanation too simplis-

tic. A number of forces were at work in congressional minds and emotions. While some members felt pressures from constituents sympathetic to the natives and antagonistic to the army, there were congressmen who complained about the administration's habit of making treaties right and left with Indians, after which it was expected that Congress would pay the bills. General Sherman touched upon the complexity of the question when he remarked that the army could settle a good many of the Indian difficulties easily, but "Congress wants the patronage of the Indian Bureau and the Bureau wants the appropriation without any of the trouble of the Indians themselves."³

Further complicating the relationship with the Indians was the treaty system. Although it was terminated in the early 1870s, that ancient method of dealing with the natives added a dimension to an already difficult problem, the heritage of which lingered long after its abandonment. Therefore, it is possible to say that while anti-militarism influenced the application of Indian policy—if, indeed, the Americans ever really had one—it was only one of many threads in an intricate mosaic of governmental response to a problem Americans inherited from the British at the time of independence. So far as the army was concerned, its role was, of necessity, a difficult one and, as in any matter being debated publicly, that role had both its supporters and its critics. Alfred B. Meacham, well-known for his work in the Indian Rights movement, argued that at least half of the Indians needed no military supervision and that the natives generally regarded the army as an oppressor. In contrast, General Stephen Joselyn, who spent a great part of his career in the west, contended that the army was the best friend the western Indians ever had and that, as a rule, they were aware of this.⁴

In his conclusions Professor Morton says that while the Mounted Police deserved only incidental credit for avoiding Indian wars in Canada, it was the US Army that "demonstrated the invincibility of white weapons" in the west. Earlier he commented that American "Arms and equipment were sometimes obsolete and often inappropriate for western conditions." Perhaps his reference to white weapons was intended to be taken in the larger sense, something more than arms and equipment. His contention that "It was easier to mediate the contact of white and Indian when the settlers came in a trickle, not an expected flood," comes closer to explaining the fate of the

³Athearn, p. 307.

⁴Robert Winston Mardock, *The Reformers and the American Indian* (Columbia, MO., 1971), p. 165; Stephen Perry Jocelyn II, *Mostly Alkali* (1953), p. 150.

American Indians. It was the mass, the sheer numbers, of settlers, not victorious soldiery, that smothered tribal remnants. I agree with Robert Utley's statement that "Although the army may be credited with precipitating the final collapse of most of the Indian tribes, other frontier settlers—trappers, traders, miners, ranchers, farmers, railroad builders, and merchants—share largely in the process that led to the collapse. They, rather than the soldiers, deprived the Indians of the land and the sustenance that left them no alternative to collapse."⁵

In another of his conclusions, Professor Morton holds that both the Mounted Police and the soldiers were shabbily treated by their respective governments and that both lived at odds with the surrounding communities, white and Indian. It would take further documentation to make a convincing argument in either of these cases. It already has been conceded that western troops, along with other westerners, lived a hard life. That theirs was unrewarding work, in a monetary sense or in terms of gratitude or even understanding by the American public, is hard to deny, but that could be said of many governmental employees. If this was shabby treatment, the western army was shabbily treated. Professor Morton's statement that "Many nations are in love with their army; fondness for a police force is so rare as almost to be a perversion" should be applied more closely to the American situation. Certainly the Americans have not been in love with their army during the course of the nation's development. They had had brief romances with it during wartime, followed by periods of sharply diminished ardor between wars, coolness that was regarded by the army family as one bordering upon neglect. If, then, the military normally was not looked upon with affection, and often without respect, and it was saddled with the task of policing an obstreperous but romantically regarded minority, it is small wonder that this branch of government felt aggrieved. It might even have called its treatment shabby.

That army men lived at odds with surrounding communities, both white and Indian, is a generalization to which some exceptions may be made. It is arguable, and someone is going to do it in an interesting book yet to be written, that the officers moved freely in civilian communities and that there were numerous exchanges in social events between town and fort. A study of life at Fort Lewis, Colorado, for example, would show that officers stationed there generally were well received at nearby Durango and that the townsmen participated frequently in entertainments sponsored by the military.

⁵Utley, p. 143.

Enlisted men had a far harder time, generally, and it may be argued more cogently that they, as army representatives, lived at odds with white communities. As a rule girls who had any regard for their reputations simply refused to associate with enlisted men, and the men usually found their entertainment in bars and brothels. Controversies with local authorities, who tried to preserve municipal order, were not unusual. However, so far as being at odds with the Indians, the enlisted men frequently had little to do with them, except to fight them, and upon other occasions they simply ignored the natives. There were exceptions here, too. Young Augustus Meyers, stationed at Fort Pierre, Dakota during the 1850s, frequently visited an Indian camp near the fort. He and his fellow troopers watched Indian games with interest and tried to teach the natives some American favorites, one of which was poker. The latter effort met with some discouragements because the Indians admired the jacks, which they dubbed "chiefs," more than they did the kings, and they insisted that any card, even a deuce, could beat a queen, which they argued was a mere woman. Meyers, who never had seen a "wild Indian" before, thought the Yanktonnais Sioux he visited quite inoffensive.⁶ He never felt at odds with them. Nor did a great many white settlers, not a few of whom rarely, if ever, saw an Indian.

⁶Robert G. Athearn, *Forts of the Upper Missouri* (Englewood Cliffs, 1967), p. 45.

RICHARD A. PRESTON

The objective in comparing the Canadian and American frontiers is fourfold: First we are to consider whether there was, in fact, any difference between American and Canadian attitudes to, and policies in, western expansion, particularly in law and order and the treatment of the aborigines. Secondly, if we accept that a difference did exist, we must decide what form it took. Thirdly, we must attempt to explain why there was a difference. Finally, we must assess its significance. My part in this effort is described as "the Canadian dimension," which I take to mean the Canadian elements and factors that made for difference, and Canadian opinion of that difference.

Professor Morton's comparative study has already effectively established that there was a difference, and also what it was. However, as he informed us in the opening paragraph of his paper, he concentrated his attention more on the Canadian scene than the American. He therefore covered much of the Canadian dimension. He outlined its history with effective documentation; and he provided a penetrating and balanced analysis.

What I propose to do, therefore, is to discuss some inferences that might be drawn from some of the things he said, carry some of his major suggestions rather further than he did, and question some minor points.

Dr. Morton's thesis may be shown fairly by restating some of his conclusions as he expressed them in the course of his paper. Early in it he discussed the Canadian belief that there were differences in ideology, namely that Canada had a policy in the west consciously different from American policy and that this was derived from differences in "law, policy, and political philosophy." He told us that in Canada conservative political values permitted the use of law and authoritarianism to protect the Indians; whereas in the United States, the American version of liberty and democracy, and American suspicion of militarism, led in effect to wars of extermination (he did not use that phrase, but I think he meant it).

In the middle of the paper, however, he qualified this interpretation somewhat. He incorporated there the explanation given by some American historians that settlement at a later time, the effect of dem-

onstrated American military superiority, and comparative sparsity of settlement in Canada, were also important factors. Hence he concluded that, "If the Canadian and American west developed differently, the sources of divergence must be found in *time*, law, and society."

Finally towards the end of the paper he returned to his former thesis, accepting contemporary Canadian opinion that Americans had managed their Indian policy in accordance with the principles of social Darwinism, "the survival of the fittest," a policy rarely advocated in Canada.

Professor Morton's conditional statement that "if the Canadian and American west developed differently" may not actually indicate that he personally has any doubt about the existence of a difference. Nevertheless, he does at times seem to think that any difference was not solely, or perhaps even mainly, the result of consciously different philosophies and policies.

Finally, both at the beginning and the end of the paper he asserted that, even though native policies in both countries may have been different, the present plight of Canadian Indians is the same as that of American Indians, a state of poverty and neglect.

Professor Morton was perhaps too equivocal, too judicial, too much of a good scholar. Therefore, I will restate what may be called "the Canadian dimension," giving more prominence to what I believe are widely-held Canadian views.

First let me state what the actual difference was. Professor Morton tells us that the acquisition of Indian lands by Canada bore close resemblance to American methods because both practices were derived from pre-Revolutionary British practice; but that there was nothing in Canadian policy like the Dawes Act used in the United States to deprive Indians of their common ownership of reservations. Since Britain and the American colonies separated in part because of differences over methods of western expansion, it is not surprising that, despite some similarities in the making of treaties and land surrenders, subsequent policy came eventually to include significant differences. However, the most important difference, as all authorities agree, was in the violence of the confrontation between white man and red man. Here Morton contrasts Weigley's estimate of 943 military engagements in the American west between 1866 and 1895 with a mere six or seven (all connected with the North West campaign of 1885) in Canada. Another Canadian source tells us that between 1868 and 1882 the Indians inflicted over a thousand casualties on the US Army; and that the cost of Indian wars to the United States was an

astonishing \$202,994,506.¹ Canada could never have afforded such a drain of men and money at that stage of its development. We can accept therefore that the most important difference between the American and Canadian frontiers was that there were costly wars on the one hand, and inexpensive peaceful administration on the other.²

The first question which we have to ask is to what extent this more peaceful alternative was made possible for Canada because the settlement of the Canadian west had come later than the parallel movement in the United States. It is true that during the 1880s and 1890s settlement in Canada was sparser than in the American west. But, although settlement was thin in Canada, it had already grown enough to make Manitoba into a province; and there were others than the métis settled further west in Saskatchewan. So perhaps sparseness is not the complete answer. Secondly, we must ask if a peaceful Canadian policy was possible because the Americans had already demonstrated white military superiority? In this regard we should note that Custer's defeat in 1876 showed that Indian military inferiority was still not fully established at a date when Canadian policy was already in effect. Although the victory of the force of 4000 Sioux and Northern Cheyenne at Little Bighorn in 1876 over a weak US cavalry force was followed by Indian fear of American reprisals, there is little reason to argue that the native peoples (who were well aware of the significance of the so-called "Medicine Line" or border) extrapolated their fear of American might into an area where they knew it did not penetrate. Putting these arguments together, the theory that the Indians had learned to respect the white man's strength and so were more easily handled in Canada, does not jibe with the argument that the Canadian west was sparsely settled, nor with the circumstance that into the 1890s Americans continued to find them hostile.

Hence, if time was a cause of difference between frontiers north and south of the 49th parallel, it was for other reasons than sparse Canadian settlement and demonstrated white military superiority. Canada came into the game late, it is true, but if time had been the only factor or the chief factor, it would possibly have worked to provoke a violent Indian reaction in Canada rather than the reverse.

A better case could be made for geography, rather than for the passage of time, as the basic cause of the difference between the

¹D. McEachern, *A Journey over the Plains* (Montreal, 1881).

²G. M. Hogarth, "The Canadian Military Tradition in Western Canada, 1870-1900," (R.M.C., M.A., 1973), referring to E. J. Chambers, *The Royal Northwest Mounted Police: A Corps History* (Montreal, 1906), p. 5, n. 1.

frontiers. After all, the later settlement of Canada was in part a consequence of geographic factors. There are even more important fundamental differences in the topography of the two countries than the fact that most of Canada has much more severe winters than does most of the United States. In the United States the chief barrier to the settlement of the west was the Appalachians. In Canada it was the Laurentian Shield. The Appalachians were a formidable obstacle; but once they were crossed in the late eighteenth century Americans entered rich cultivable land—and into conflict with the Indians. Beginning with *Fallen Timbers* that conflict lasted until the 1890s.

The Shield in Canada was also formidable—but because of its extent rather than its height. The Laurentian Shield extends from the Atlantic to the prairies in mid-continent. It was in fact crossed earlier than were the Appalachians, but by traders rather than by settlers. It was the Shield north of the Great Lakes that penned Canadian settlement in the St. Lawrence and Lakes valley until after the middle of the nineteenth century, a century later than the Americans broke out of their coastal plains and began to settle the Ohio and the Mississippi basins. During that century, the US Army pushed Indian tribes into the Indian territories and, then, when it was discovered that that Indian territories also were capable of white settlement, out of most of them. The US Army was thus earning Indian hostility and building up a pattern of policy while traders to the north (first the French and later those of Hudson Bay) were going peacefully through Indian country between forts that were trading rather than military posts. For the Bay Company, like the voyageurs in the west, did not occupy Indian lands in the way American settlers did. Geography, which delayed settlement in the north for a century, also conditioned the Indians to expect different treatment north of the Medicine Line and at the same time provided a different precedent for later Canadian policy.

But geography and the time lag were not the fundamental causes of a difference. They were only the conditions that made a different policy in Canada possible. They did not initiate the difference. As Dr. Morton suggested, the fundamental reason for difference in western policy was a difference between the philosophy of the American republic and that which Canada inherited from Britain. It was in this connection that Dr. Morton spoke of social Darwinism on the one hand and of Conservatism on the other. He also referred to the fact that nineteenth century British imperialism was not merely an expression of economic cupidity or of missionary zeal but was aimed at extending authority in order to protect native peoples against exploitation by rapacious individuals, British and others. We tend to forget that the peoples and tribes with whom western imperialism came into

contact did not have the political or legal institutions to cope with an invasion of foreign intruders keen on developing (or depriving them of) their natural resources. Imperialism, particularly that exerted by Britain, was thus in a sense beneficent for them and not invariably evil as is often assumed in this anti-colonial age.

The imperialist heritage tended to restrain in Canada impulses which, as in the United States, could have led to concepts of Manifest Destiny and to the use of force. For Canadian policy in the west was directed more towards controlling the whites than towards suppressing the Indians. The North West Mounted Police marched against the whiskey traders rather than against the Indians. It matters little that, as Morton pointed out, Macdonald took that step to forestall American penetration into Canada's new western heritage; or that the reason he opted for police, rather than for cavalry on the American model, was because he knew that Canada could not afford an American-type policy. Nor should Dr. Morton have given so much attention to the fact that Macdonald endured "several years" of disorders before he acted. When you consider that Canada acquired the west only in 1869, was faced by a rebellion the next year, and had to send a second force to Manitoba a year later, it is not surprising that Macdonald did not get around to deal with problems further west until 1873 when the Manitoba problem had been settled. More important than all these things is the fact that Macdonald's policy was a projection of the basic philosophy of British imperialism in Canada.

Before we examine that philosophy and its significance let us examine another theory. Some have suggested that the chief difference between American and Canadian policy is that in the former case the government followed settlement with an assertion of power in the Indian country while in the latter it anticipated it. However, Macdonald's slowness to react to reports of disturbances in the west seems to suggest that this difference in the sequence of expansion was less important. One might add also that, although it is true that American settlers often flooded into the west faster than government could cope with the effects, the American army regarded itself as responsible for opening up new territory in advance of settlement and for providing security for incoming settlers and for travellers to new territories acquired beyond the Indian country.³ Therefore the different sequence of authority and settlement does not seem to be the significant cause of difference of policy and action in the two countries.

³Robert M. Utley, *Frontier Regulars: The United States and the Indians, 1865-1891* (New York, 1973), p. xiii.

What is significant, as Dr. Morton suggested, is the spirit in which authority was exerted and the methods that were employed. There is a fundamental difference between the use of force by police and its use by the military. While police may properly exert only as much force as is necessary to overcome the force that may be brought against them, no such inhibition controls the military, except insofar as it is necessary to conserve manpower and material for other purposes, a principle of war known as economy of force. Tackling the Indian problem was not invariably and inevitably a military problem. An unstable people, frightened as well as ferocious, the native peoples were of uncertain disposition, sometimes hostile, at other times friendly. Indian problems were often more akin to criminality than to enemy action. What was needed was something much more subtle than military force, a force that could isolate offenders and bring them to justice without arousing the opposition of all their fellow tribesmen; that is a police force rather than a military force.⁴

The US Army had to resort to force because Congress had adopted the policy of Manifest Destiny. The American army therefore went to the west in the spirit and with the methods that it would have used against a foreign foe that threatened the United States. But Congress did not provide the means to carry that policy out adequately. The US cavalry in the west was almost always understrength, barely sufficient for the formidable task of fighting the belligerent Indian tribes arrayed against it. However the army was big enough to *attempt* to carry out US policy. Its method was conquest in order to maintain the peace. But as a conventional military force it was unable to distinguish between the guilty and the innocent. As a result retribution fell on guilty and innocent alike. Furthermore the army did not possess the legal powers to forestall and prevent problems. It asserted deterrence only by threat of major retribution, not by tackling problems at their source.

The different ways in which American troops and Canadian police were deployed demonstrates the differences in their approach to their task. The US cavalry was organized in companies and stationed in military-type forts built for defense. It is important to remember that the US Army was in the west to deal with Indian tribes and not with white malefactors. The North West Mounted Police was charged with controlling both. The Mounted Police were distributed throughout the west in small detachments, usually in undefended police posts. In addition to dealing with specific instances of criminality,

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 10, 55-56; Utey, *Frontiersmen in Blue: The United States Army and the Indians, 1848-1865* (New York, 1967), pp. 345-49.

they operated a system of small routine patrols of one or two men which extended police influence peacefully. Nothing more effectively illustrates the difference between the two policies. Furthermore in the early days the police in Canada were also magistrates. They possessed extraordinary power to both apprehend criminals and sentence them. The kind of authority possessed by the Canadian police would probably have been challenged in the American territories had it been exercised from Washington to the extent that it was exerted from Ottawa. It would have seemed excessively arbitrary.

So we can sum up the difference in the Canadian and American approaches to western problems by saying that in Canada it was possible to extend federal police power into the remote parts of the territories, while in the United States such an extension of power would have been unacceptable to the citizenry although they expected the federal government to use maximum force against the Indians. As Dr. Morton has said, in Canada the power of the state was exerted to protect all minorities, while in the United States fear of undue federal power on the one hand, and emphasis on the rights of the individual citizen and local democracy on the other, led to the decimation of Indians rather than to the protection of their rights and interests.

This difference in policy flowed from two very different concepts of the nature and function of the state. In Canada, as in Britain, the maintenance of law and order was regarded as the first imperative. This required protection of the individual and of minorities. In the United States, as a result of the Revolution, American democracy put emphasis on individual rights and liberties first; and majority interests overrode those of minorities that were not fully part of the political community. The result was a peaceful Canadian west that contrasted markedly with a violent American frontier. This is, I believe, the "Canadian dimension" in this comparison of Canadian and American experience on the frontier.

That this Canadian experience on the frontier was a direct result of the nature of the Canadian state is, I believe, widely accepted in Canada, at least among scholars and intellectuals.⁵ But Dr. Morton seems inclined to qualify it, not merely by suggesting that geography and time-lag were important contributing factors in bringing it about, but also by asserting that the difference was not as stark as my outline of the "Canadian dimension" has claimed. For instance, when he noted that American historians like Paul Sharp drew attention to the peculiar phenomenon that the Canadian frontier was much more

⁵See Hugh A. Dempsey, *The Scarlet Force* (Toronto, 1972).

peaceful than the American because of Canadian policies and attitudes,⁶ he declared these Americans "over-generous." Although he may have simply been reciprocating politeness to his Academy hosts, it should also be noted that he found Canadian claims savouring too much of "self-congratulation." As a political cynic he cannot accept the thesis that Canadian western policy was all good and American all bad. Others have also pointed to the unreality of this rosy presentation of a "Canadian dimension" by showing that it suggests the impossible, that Canadian development of the west was the work of "monks, eunuchs, and vestal virgins interested only in debating such ethereal issues as free trade, the Manitoba schools question, and discriminatory freight rates."⁷ James Gray, who expressed this opinion in those words, declared that booze and brothels were just as widespread in western Canada as they were in western United States. Nevertheless Gray added that in Canada the west was almost "unbelievably law-abiding," so much so that when rum-runners conflicted they moved to sue rather than to shoot.⁸ The black-white contrast may be too sharp, yet the difference is apparently something more than two close shades of grey.

This concept of Canadian experience in the west as an extension of the Canadian view of the state has had considerable expression in scholarly study and debate in Canada. It may be less well-understood or accepted in American intellectual circles. But there is reason to believe that it is also either not known to ordinary Canadians, or in danger of being forgotten by them. Pierre Berton, in his *Hollywood's Canada*, showed that the American film industry has almost completely ignored Canada as a subject except insofar as it portrays the Canadian west (usually called "The Great North Woods"). He goes on to show that the image of the Canadian west which the movies invariably offer is completely false. What in pictures (although not always so named) is clearly meant to be western Canada is actually a reproduction of the American west. It has mounties who are portrayed as elected sheriffs dressed in red tunics, saloons with typical American western bars with swinging doors in territories which throughout most of their history were dry, and shoot-outs in the American western style. As there is no native Canadian commercial film industry, this is the only portrayal of their own west that has been seen by most Ca-

⁶Paul F. Sharp, *Whoop-Up Country: The Canadian-American West, 1865-1885*, 2 vols. (Minneapolis, 1955).

⁷James Gray, *Red Lights on the Prairies* (Toronto, 1971), pp. 11-12.

⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 2-3, 5, 134-135. See also his *Booze: The Impact of Whiskey on the Prairie West* (Toronto, 1972).

nadians for a half century.⁹ It is not surprising then, that many Canadians do not appreciate that Canada has important fundamental differences from the United States, both in the west and generally—differences which a distinguished American scholar, John Dickey, recently said must at all costs be preserved by the retention of an independent Canada because it is in the best interests of the United States.¹⁰

Nothing is more important for the survival of an independent Canada than that both Canadians and Americans should understand and appreciate the reality of what I have called the Canadian dimension. They should appreciate the nature of western settlement in Canada and its relation to the creation of Canada. But there are many who doubt that reality. For instance, even Professor Morton in several places speaks of it as a “myth” and as “mythology.” Myth is a traditional telling of historical events that explains the accepted self-image of a people and their present characteristics. While scholars and intellectuals are inclined to emphasize that myth is part of the makeup of a people, and assume that it may be a retelling of the past which cannot be verified but may have a high degree of probability, popular usage puts stress on the fiction angle. Dictionary definitions indeed define myth as “ostensible historical events”; and some definitions suggest the possibility of fabrication. In other places and connections, about which I will speak in a moment, Professor Morton uses “myth” in that sense as something that is untrue. Furthermore, his general proposition, “north of the 49th parallel the contrast [between Canadian and American experience in the west] is one of those self-congratulatory myths which build nations together” seems to show that he is somewhat skeptical about the importance and reality of the Canadian dimension. (In one way his statement is in fact quite inaccurate or erroneous in the way he expressed it, contrasting between beliefs held north and south of the 49th parallel. For the so-called myth is held by most intellectual Canadians throughout the country and not merely in the west. And in eastern Canada, the vast majority, live *south*, and not north, of the 49th parallel.)

Two other instances of Professor Morton’s usage of the word myth show that he does tend to use it to mean “fictitious.” One such use is in connection with the alleged reason for the red tunics of the police—because the Indians remembered red as the uniform of the Queen’s troops. His second use of myth to mean fictitious concerns

⁹Pierre Berton, *Hollywood’s Canada: The Americanization of our National Image* (Toronto, 1975).

¹⁰John S. Dickey, *Canada and the American Presence* (New York, 1975).

the theory that Macdonald adopted the idea of sending police because he thought the Americans might react against the appearance of Canadian troops in the west.

Professor Morton tells us that in this latter case, the susceptibilities were Macdonald's, not the Americans. He may be right in saying that that theory is untrue. But I am less sure that he is right that there was no deliberate adoption of red tunics because the Indians regarded scarlet as the uniform of British soldiers. He reminds us that the last British soldiers in red tunics in the west were the 300 men of the 6th Foot who were at Fort Garry from 1846 to 1848, 25 years earlier. He believed that the introduction of the scarlet was due only to the desires of Governor Morris and of Adjutant General Colonel Robertson Ross, the latter a noted devotee of military finery. He and I have argued this point before. I may add here that Ross stated in a report that he wanted to clothe the *Militia* in Winnipeg in red tunics in 1872 for the same reason, namely that it would impress the Indians; and Dr. Morton has told me that he had found no evidence that orders for those tunics for the *Militia* ever went to Ottawa. However, I believe that this does not disprove the statement that the Indians regarded red as the dress of their friends, the Queen's soldiers. What I think Dr. Morton has failed to understand is, that, among a people who do not communicate in writing or possess written records, oral tradition lasts a very long time. Thor Heyerdahl's fascinating book on his investigations at Easter Island shows that oral tradition lasted there through many generations and that it preserved extraordinary details of remote events and circumstances.¹¹ It seems to me that the preservation of the association of red tunics with friendly soldiers is not merely not surprising but actually very probable, especially when it is remembered that, even though the last British troops to leave Canada in 1870 were green-clad riflemen and blue-clad artillerymen, the last redcoats had left the east only two or three years earlier. And information about such things as the color of soldiers' tunics travels easily in a primitive society both geographically and through generations. This question is raised here not merely to revive in public an old private dispute between us, so much as to show that Dr. Morton uses the word "myth" to mean untrue. If that is the sense in which he uses it in connection with the Canadian dimension in the west, I believe that it is misleading—perhaps even dangerous.

I have dealt with the importance of this debate to the understanding of Canada and the Canadian question as a whole. It remains to consider one other point raised by Dr. Morton, namely the fact that

¹¹Thor Heyerdahl, *Aku-Aku: The Secret of Easter Island* (New York, 1974).

Canada's Indians appear to have derived little advantage in the long run from the different policy pursued by Canada in the west. In some ways the policy was in fact not very different. Although there was no Dawes Act, Indians on Canadian reservations who receive annual bounty money and are guaranteed certain rights of communal possession, lose all those rights if they leave voluntarily. Furthermore, conditions on many Canadian reservations are as deplorable as in the United States. Finally there is the familiar intellectuals' complaint about western society's destruction of Indian culture without providing an alternative except assimilation, a complaint which Indian orators repeat with considerable heat.

Indian grievances in Canada are expressed in Heather Robertson's *Reservations are for Indians*¹² and in Harold Cardinal's *The Unjust Society: the Tragedy of Canadian Indians*.¹³ The arguments in these books are similar to those of disadvantaged groups everywhere. So in Canada, today, supported by government funds, lawyers are searching old treaties to find evidence that Canadian Indians, like Alaskan Indians, ought to receive compensation for the loss of their tribal lands and for the nonfulfillment of treaties.

Canada's paternal protective policy thus appears in the long run to have brought no better fate to the Indians. Why this is so is a difficult question which raises problems of a fundamental nature about the contacts between peoples of very different cultures and economic and political capacities. The question is raised here merely to suggest that the present grievances of Canadian Indians, whatever their cause, may be one factor that now helps to cast new doubt on whether there was, indeed, any really significant difference between the attitude and policies of Canadians and of Americans to the problems that arose from contact with North American aborigines in the course of western expansion. The Canadian dimension may be important for Canada and Canadians; but in view of the conditions of present day Indian society, it appears to mean little for the Indians.

¹²Heather Robertson, *Reservations are for Indians* (Toronto, 1970).

¹³Harold Cardinal, *The Unjust Society: The Tragedy of Canadian Indians* (Edmonton, 1971).

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

R. H. Roy, University of Victoria, commented on the importance of Hudson's Bay Company in Canadian frontier history. The company was in Canada from 1670 through much of the 19th century and its charter gave it governmental rights including rights to wage war, make peace, sign treaties, and deal with the Indians. Roy noted that in order to be successful fur traders, the Hudson's Bay Company had to maintain good relations with the Indians and establish law and order in western Canada. He concluded that the Hudson's Bay Company "played a major role" in Canadian treatment of the Indians, indeed, in Canadian and American relationships with the Indians on both sides of the border. Desmond Morton replied that Hudson's Bay Company was a very important factor in Canadian relations with the Indians. He suggested, however, that the importance of Hudson's Bay Company traders was more in their intermarrying with the natives than in their maintaining the law.

Robin Higham, Kansas State University, emphasized the need for more study of the impact of veterans all over the world on their getting out of the services and becoming colonists.

Brigadier General Noel F. Parrish, USAF (Ret.), pointed out that many historians, particularly colonial historians, have contended that American attitudes were formed in the colonial period so strongly that they divided the United States ever since. Could the different attitudes of Canadians and Americans towards Indians have roots in different colonial experiences? Americans, ever increasing in number, fought Indians and supplanted them as white settlement moved west. Canadians, first French and then British, were few in number and forced to ally with the Indians to resist the Americans. Desmond Morton replied that there was something to the point made by General Parrish. The French and then the British did mobilize Indians to fight Americans. Indian chiefs like Tecumseh and Joseph Brandt are heroes in Canadian history, and while Canadians could be quite racist in their attitudes towards Indians, they nonetheless always felt that Indians, unlike some other groups, were capable of great things. Indians were, above all, a fighting race, and were admired as such.

Robert M. Utley, National Park Service, asked Professor Preston whether the Canadian experience would have been all that different if Canadian westward expansion had proceeded at the same rapidity and intensity as the American westward movement. Preston replied that more rapid Canadian development would have created a different Canada. There is plenty of evidence of racism and thoughts of manifest destiny in 19th century Canada, but Canadians were simply too few in number to transform such ideas into effective policy. Preston concluded that "if the population had been the same, if the geography had been the same, no doubt the policy would have been the same."

Reverend Francis Paul Prucha, S.J., Marquette University, reminded symposium participants that American humanitarian reformers in the post-Civil War period made continual reference to the Canadian Indian policy, that while modern scholars may have forgotten the Canadian experience in dealing with Indians, such was not the case in the late 19th century.

Richard Preston suggested that overconfidence in one's strength might be a source of danger in relations between competing societies. He pointed to the British experience in New Zealand as an example. In 1870 New Zealand settlers were at war with the Maoris because of the settlers' practice of seizing Maori lands. After the British removed their garrisons from New Zealand settlers who had been bold and seemingly irreconcilable when backed by the power of the British Army became conciliatory and the war ended.

III

IMPACT OF THE MILITARY ON THE FRONTIER

Martin Ridge, Professor of History at Indiana University and Editor of the *Journal of American History*, chaired the third session which addressed topics of particular interest to historians of the American west. Two papers were read during the session. The first, by Richard N. Ellis of the University of New Mexico, was entitled "The Political Role of the Military." The second, by Jack D. Foner of Colby College, was entitled "The Socializing Role of the Military." A third paper on the general topic of this session was delivered at the symposium banquet by Marshall Sprague, a noted Colorado historian. Sprague's paper was entitled "The Military and the Colorado Frontier." Commentary on the papers of Professors Ellis and Foner was presented by Roger L. Nichols of the University of Arizona.

Richard Ellis concentrated his study on the political activities of the military in the New Mexico and California territories. He described the experiences of New Mexico and California under military governments and concluded that while the army occasionally generated political activity, as it did during the military administration of these territories, on the whole the military was relatively unimportant in frontier politics. He noted that westerners understood that the army was an essential institution on the frontier, that they accepted it with little question. "Only rarely was the army directly involved in frontier politics, and it was even less frequently a factor in politicizing the frontier population."

Jack Foner presented a brief survey of what he considered the "remarkably complex" interrelationship of the frontier and the army in the post-Civil War era. He noted "that the army was in the vanguard of western economic development, . . . that the army had a profound impact on the frontier." But his principle concern was with the impact of the frontier on the army rather than the impact of the army on the frontier. He argued that in general the military did not appear to have been "particularly successful in adapting to frontier conditions." An exception to this generalization was the experience of the army's black troops who not only adapted well to the frontier, but saw it as an opportunity to improve their lot in society. Foner concluded his paper with a call for more study of "the relationship between military policy and western economic development, the genesis of the army's policies toward labor, the impact of black troops on black life in this period, and the political pressures affecting military decision-making."

At the symposium banquet Marshall Sprague described what he considered to be the three most significant military episodes in Colorado frontier history. These were Zebulon Pike's expedition in 1806-07 which helped define the southern boundaries of the Louisiana Purchase and bring attention to what was to be the Colorado Territory, Gilpin and Chivington's victory over Sibley's Texans at Glorietta Pass in 1862 which saved the Colorado gold fields for the Union, and the Meeker massacre of 1879, which resulted in removal of most of the Ute Indians to reservations outside of Colorado and for practical purposes ended "Indian troubles" in the state.

LEYES

para

EL GOBIERNO DEL TERRITORIO DE
NUEVO MEXICO

TESTAMENTARIAS.

Section 1 Las leyes hasta ahora vigentes relativas á herencias, repartimientos, ultimas voluntades y testamentos segun estan contenidas en el tratado sobre estas materias escrito por Pedro Murillo de Lara, quedarán vigentes en todo lo que son conformes con la constitucion de los Estados Unidos y estatutos tambien vigentes.

2 Los Prefectos concederan letras credenciales para testamentarias y para Abintestatos.

3 Las letras para testamentarias y Abintestatos serán concedidas en el condado en que el hogar ó lugar de residencia del difunto estubiere ubicado. Si no tenia hogar ó lugar de residencia al tiempo de su muerte y poseyera tierras las letras credenciales se concejran en el condado en que estubieren las tierras ó parte de ellas. Si el difunto no tenia hogar ó lugar de residencia y no poseía tierras, las letras podrán concederse en el condado en que murió ó donde estubieren la mayor parte de sus bienes. Si

LAWS

for

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE TERRITORY OF
NEW MEXICO.

ADMINISTRATIONS.

Section 1 The laws heretofore in force concerning descents, distributions, wills and testaments, as contained in the treatise on these subjects written by Pedro Murillo De Lara, shall remain in force so far as they are in conformity with the Constitution of the United States and the State laws in force for the time being.

2 The prefects shall grant letters testamentary and of administration

3 Letters testamentary and of administration shall be granted in the county in which the mansion house or place of abode of the deceased is situated. If he had no mansion house or place of abode at the time of his death, and he possessed of lands, letters shall be granted in the county in which the lands or a part thereof lies.

If the deceased had no mansion house or place of abode, and was not possessed of lands, letters may be granted in the county in which he died or where the greater part of his

A page from the Kearny Code. With this code General Stephen Watts Kearny established a military government in New Mexico. (Courtesy of the Museum of New Mexico)

THE POLITICAL ROLE OF THE MILITARY ON THE FRONTIER

RICHARD N. ELLIS

In the spring of 1976 the United States Senate conducted hearings on the nature of army actions at Wounded Knee Creek in South Dakota in 1890. The hearings received national attention as one senator criticized the frontier army for its participation in the battle of Wounded Knee. The atmosphere created by the Viet Nam War and the anti-war movement had, during the preceding decade, generated criticism of the army that utilized past events such as the Sand Creek massacre and the battle of Wounded Knee to support modern anti-army attitudes. Because of such recent political criticism of the frontier army, this is perhaps an appropriate time to assess the relation of the army and politics on the frontier.

Until the 1890s the United States Army was primarily a frontier institution, and it might be expected that if the army was involved in politics or caused political controversy that it would be on the frontier. In general, however, the army was an unimportant issue and did not serve to politicize the frontier population. When the army did become politically important, it was most often because of chronic Indian problems in a particular area, or because it did something unique such as administering government in California and New Mexico.

The conquest of California and New Mexico in 1846 provided unique tasks for military officers, for both were governed by occupation forces until legal acquisition in 1848 and continued under military rule until the Compromise of 1850. There previously had been brief periods of military government in Louisiana and Florida, but neither caused the dissatisfaction evident in California and New Mexico.

Americans in California expected representative government and as early as 1846 two newspapers were espousing that demand. In

August the *Alta California* urged "the immediate establishment of a well organized government." The first issue of the *Californian* carried an editorial entitled "Civil Government" and recommended a constitutional convention and the election of a delegate to Congress. The *California Star* also advocated civil government.¹ As months passed there were frequent complaints regarding the form of government and the continuation of Mexican laws and political institutions.²

Americans demanded all the rights of American citizens and became more insistent after learning on August 6, 1848 of ratification of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Although Colonel Richard Mason predicted that Congress would quickly create territorial government, some Californians, apparently sensing the impact of the slavery issue in Congress, were not so sure, and the question of government was under constant discussion. Some advocated the organization of a temporary civil government and argued that the military commander had the authority to take such action. The *Californian* urged that the people take action if Mason, the Colonel in charge, refused.³

Popular discontent increased with the gold rush although Mason and his successor, Bennett Riley, agreed with the need for civil government. In an editorial entitled "Shall We Have a Civil Government?" the *California Star and Californian* urged popular action in December 1848.⁴ In December and January public meetings were held and a number of communities announced in favor of provisional government and recommended a general convention for that end. In February some 400 to 500 citizens of San Francisco met to create a legislative council for the town because of the ineffectiveness of local government.⁵

Bennett Riley, who became military governor in April 1848, ap-

¹Quoted in Joseph Ellison, "The Struggle for Civil Government in California, 1846-1850," *California Historical Society Quarterly*, vol. 10, no. 1 (1931), p. 16. The history of military government in California is found in Theodore Grivas, *Military Governments in California, 1846-1859* (Glendale, 1963).

²Ellison, pp. 16-18, 23.

³*Ibid.*, pp. 129-130.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 138.

⁵See *House Miscellaneous Document 44*, 31st Congress, 1st Session (Serial 581), Grace E. Tower, *Sentiment in California for American Government and Admission into the Union* (Los Angeles, 1927), pp. 39-44. Peter Burnett, a participant in the movement for civil government recalled, "We were of the opinion that we had the right to establish a *de facto* government . . ." Burnett, *Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer* (New York, 1880), p. 294.

preciated the reasons for discontent with military rule and tried to reduce prejudice against military government by announcing that he was, in fact, civil governor. He also took steps toward the creation of popular government, and when it was learned that the last session of Congress had failed to act on the California issue, he proposed that the people of California develop a state constitution for congressional approval and on June 3, 1849 issued a call for a constitutional convention.⁶

Californians met and voted unanimously that the new government should go into operation with ratification and without waiting for congressional approval. Riley doubted the legality of such action but explained to his superiors that unless he received orders to the contrary he would follow the wishes of the people and surrender his civil powers to the new executive. "Whatever may be the legal objections to putting into operation a *State* government previous to its being acknowledged or approved by Congress," he explained, "these objections must yield to the obvious necessities of the case; for the powers of the existing government are too limited, and its organization too imperfect, to provide for the wants of a country so peculiarly situated, and of a population which is augmented with such unprecedented rapidity."⁷

Meanwhile in New Mexico the military also became involved in government, much to the distaste of the local population. Following the peaceful occupation of New Mexico, General Stephen Watts Kearny authorized the development of a body of laws that became known as the Kearny code. Kearny functioned as governor for a brief period before appointing Charles Bent to the office, whereupon Kearny departed for California.

When President James Polk announced the existence of new governments in New Mexico and California in his annual message to Congress in December 1846, it raised a storm of controversy and caused the repudiation of the government created by Kearny. Nevertheless, the government continued to function with army officers serving as governor from October 1848 until New Mexico became a territory in 1850.

Even before legal acquisition of New Mexico in the Treaty of

⁶"California and New Mexico," *House Executive Document 17*, 31 Congress, 1st Session (Serial 573), pp. 233, 748. See also Burnett, pp. 311-12, 322, 330-31.

⁷"California and New Mexico," pp. 819, 850-51.

Guadalupe Hidalgo citizens voiced their opposition to military government, and in December 1847 the legislature established by the Kearny code called a convention that met in Santa Fe in October 1848 and petitioned Congress to establish civil government.⁸ In September of the following year a convention met in Santa Fe and sent a delegate to Congress with instructions to seek regular territorial status for New Mexico. The convention complained of the “paralyzing effects of a government undefined and doubtful in its character,” but Colonel John Washington, who had assumed the position of “civil and military governor,” refused to recognize the actions of the convention and Congress refused to seat the New Mexico delegate.⁹

New Mexicans, like their counterparts in California, demanded the rights and privileges of American citizens and opposed the continuation of military government, but while they were united in opposition to military governors, they were divided into two political factions—one favoring statehood and the other territorial status. The latter group included men who associated with the military government and undoubtedly received support from army commanders. In this instance the presence of military governors provided a divisive political issue.¹⁰

By 1850, despite bitter political factionalism, opposition to military government was so great and political disputes so serious that Colonel John Munroe called a constitutional convention that met in May. A constitution was ratified by an overwhelming majority of 6771 to 39, indicating that both factions were able to unite to terminate military rule. The legislature also adopted a resolution against what it called the “sinking, ineffective and abhorrent” military government.¹¹

In New Mexico, as in California, the presence of military governors, especially after the end of the Mexican War, made the army a political issue. Americans considered military government unacceptable and demanded normal political institutions. In New Mexico, in particular, they protested the influence of the army in political factionalism. It is also noteworthy that in both areas military governors took positive steps toward the creation of civil government.

⁸Robert W. Larson, *New Mexico's Quest for Statehood, 1846-1912* (Albuquerque, 1968), pp. 14-15.

⁹*House Report No. 20*, 31st Congress, 2nd Session (serial 606), pp. 1-3

¹⁰Larson, pp. 29-32.

¹¹*House Report No. 20*, 31st Congress, 2nd Session (Serial 606), pp. 3, 6-7.

While these experiences with military government were not the only situations in which the army found itself in the center of political controversy, they were certainly the most notable. Except for the War of 1812, the Mexican War, the Civil War and the occupation of the south that followed, the primary task of the army was to protect white citizens on the frontier. This involved garrison duty in isolated posts, protecting routes of travel, and occasionally campaigning against Indians. The army also was active in exploration and road building. Despite the number of engagements with Indians there was never any question that the army, as small as it was, could ultimately crush any Indian resistance. There were complaints, usually about the inability of the army to prevent raids or to soundly defeat hostile groups, and army officers, especially in higher ranks, were sensitive to any criticism, but on the whole westerners did not engage in organized and sustained attacks upon the army. The army and its relations with Indians did not serve as a major issue in politicizing the population or in dividing political parties or factions in frontier regions.¹²

There are exceptions to this generalization, and there were also instances in which the army became a topic of national and international discussion. Recurring proposals to transfer the Indian office back to the War Department caused considerable controversy. In debates on this issue, along with those on Indian policy and the role of the army in Indian affairs, westerners tended to support the army while easterners were generally critical of the army's treatment of Indians.¹³ At the same time military campaigns against hostile Indians, particularly the Sioux and Apaches, generated diplomatic discussions about hot pursuit across international boundaries, but again these issues did not serve to politicize frontier citizens.¹⁴

Westerners did criticize the army for failing to control Indians

¹²Officers frequently complained that they were attacked by both east and west. General John Pope is but one example. Richard Ellis, *General Pope and U.S. Indian Policy* (Albuquerque, 1970), pp. 134-35; *House Executive Document 269*, 41st Congress, 2nd Session (Serial 1426), p. 10.

¹³Indian policy was a major issue among westerners and did politicize them. The Indian Office was constantly criticized by the western press, legislatures, and congressmen. Transfer was frequently debated in congress and by special interest groups. See Donald J. D'Elia, "The Argument Over Civilian or Military Indian Control, 1865-1880," *The Historian*, vol. 24, no. 2 (1962), pp. 207-225. An example of western support for transfer can be found in "Transfer of Indian Bureau," *House Report 240*, 44th Congress, 1st Session (Serial 1708), pp. 5-6, 18-20.

¹⁴Albin C. Gluek, Jr., "The Sioux Uprising: A Problem in International relations," *Minnesota History*, vol. 34 (1933), pp. 317-324; Clarence C. Clendenen, *Blood on the Border: The United States Army and the Mexican Irregulars* (New York, 1969), p. 100.

while at the same time demanding more troops and additional military posts. A recurrent proposal was that local troops should be raised to fight the Indians. Westerners argued that militiamen would be far more effective than regulars because they knew the country and were familiar with local Indians. "It is a conceded fact," proclaimed the *Santa Fe New Mexican* in 1866, "that the New Mexican troops will accomplish twice the results . . . of any equal number of troops raised from any other portion of the Union." Virtually every western state and territory made similar proposals time and again, although when local units did exist, they invariably proved to be ineffective.¹⁵

The army did generate brief political debate when it was involved in something dramatic such as the defeat at the Little Big Horn, the massacre at Sand Creek in 1864, or the attack on a Piegan camp in Montana by Major Eugene Baker in 1870. It also received criticism when it opposed popular sentiment as it did in California and in the northwest where the army often protected Indians from attacks by frontiersmen. The army was subjected to political pressure when it was involved in long term hostilities in a particular area or when politicians chose to make the army an issue for political reasons.

Excellent examples of continuous Indian hostilities, which also involved debates over Indian policy, are the Second Seminole War, relations with the Sioux in the 1860s, with Navajos in New Mexico Territory from 1846 to the 1860s, and with Apaches in Arizona from the creation of the territory in 1863 to the surrender of Geronimo in 1886. The Second Seminole War, lasting from 1835 to 1842, became a political issue in Florida Territory and eventually became involved in the national debate on the institution of slavery. For a number of reasons, including the length of the conflict, it caused an anti-war movement somewhat similar to that of the 1960s and 1970s.¹⁶

The Sioux campaigns that followed the uprising in Minnesota in 1862 were quite different. Demands for protection actually caused modifications in military strategy, but more importantly politicians in Dakota Territory became convinced that continued conflict retarded

¹⁵The *Santa Fe New Mexican* (weekly), November 24, 1866. In 1870 the territorial legislature memorialized congress for local regiments. "Cavalry for New Mexico," *House Miscellaneous Document 95*, 41st Congress, 2nd Session (Serial 1433). Annual Messages of Governor Richard McCormick, October 8, 1866 and September 9, 1867, Department of State, Territorial Papers, Arizona, National Archives microcopy 342, roll 1.

¹⁶John Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War, 1835-1842* (Gainesville, 1967), pp. 139-140, 266, 291-92, 297-98, 313-14.

territorial growth. They in turn convinced Washington officials to seek a peace offensive despite army objections.¹⁷

In Arizona Territory the army was definitely a political issue. Arizona citizens continually petitioned Congress for better protection; governors personally lobbied with military commanders for more effective officers; political leaders sought the removal of unpopular officers; newspaper editors constantly debated the issue of the army and Indian policy; public meetings were held to discuss the Indian problem; and in one instance a group of Tucson citizens actually massacred Apaches living under military protection at Camp Grant. The Apache problem, which involved the army, was clearly a long term issue in Arizona Territory, but it was not a divisive political issue.¹⁸

Perhaps the best case study of the army and politics can be found in New Mexico Territory where the army and Indian policy were basic issues from the time of Kearny's conquest in 1846 until 1868. Kearny had promised protection from Indian raids, but he and his successors were unable to fulfill that promise. The period from 1846 to 1863 was marked by a confusing sequence of raids, treaties, military campaigns, and disagreements between civil and military authorities.¹⁹ By 1860 combined efforts of the Indian office and the army to solve the "Navajo Problem" had failed, and according to one undoubtedly exaggerated report Navajos killed 300 people and made off with property valued at \$1.5 million in 6 months.²⁰ This led to charges of army inefficiency and a dispute between irate civilians and Colonel Thomas Fauntleroy, the departmental commander. At a public meeting in Santa Fe in August 1860 a resolution was adopted criticizing the army and calling for a regiment of volunteers. Later in the month at another mass meeting New Mexican citizens ignored Governor Abraham Rencher, voted to raise a regiment, selected officers, and actually sent some 500 men into the field.²¹

¹⁷Richard N. Ellis, "Political Pressures and Army Policies on the Northern Plains, 1862-1865," *Minnesota History*, vol. 42 (1970), pp. 43-53.

¹⁸Annual messages of Governor McCormick, October 8, 1866, September 9, 1867, November 16, 1868, and McCormick to Seward, December 20, 1866, Department of State, Territorial Papers, Arizona, National Archives microcopy 342, roll 1. See also Jay J. Wagoner, *Arizona Territory, 1863-1912: A Political History* (Tucson, 1970), pp. 103-5, 121-22, 124-132, 138, 141, 232.

¹⁹Frank McNitt, *Navajo Wars: Military Campaigns, Slave Raids and Reprisals* (Albuquerque, 1972), covers this subject in considerable detail.

²⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 282-83, 366.

²¹Santa Fe *Gazette*, November 10, 1860.

Following the interruption of Indian campaigning caused by the Confederate invasion of New Mexico, General James Carleton, a regular Army officer who had served previously in New Mexico, rounded up the bulk of the Navajos and Mescalero Apaches and moved them to a reservation at Bosque Redondo in the Pecos Valley. Governor Henry Connelly, and Santa Fe's two newspapers, the *Gazette* and the *New Mexican*, praised Carleton and the Bosque Redondo experiment, but it was not long before Carleton and his Indian policy became one of the most important, perhaps the single most important, political issue in the territory.²²

Historians have suggested that the Bosque Redondo dispute developed because of honest differences of opinion, and for some that may indeed have been the case, but evidence also indicates that others made the Bosque Redondo an issue for political reasons.²³ General Carleton, Indian Superintendent James Collins, and Governor Connelly were Democrats as were other territorial officials. The Territorial Secretary, William Arny, was a Republican and an energetic advocate of partisan politics. Arny had used political influence to advance from Indian agent to territorial secretary to acting governor when Governor Connelly was forced to take leave from his duties for medical reasons.²⁴ Arny quickly launched a campaign for the removal of Democratic officeholders, especially the Indian Superintendent, whose job Arny sought for himself. After failing to gain the Indian superintendency, Arny became involved in a bitter fight with Chief Justice Kirby Benedict, who had been appointed to the bench by President Franklin Pierce. Other Democrats, including territorial delegate Francisco Perea, were attacked by memorials and letters from Arny and his associates. Arny even went to Washington to carry on the political fight.²⁵

It was not long before Carleton, and with him the army and its Indian policy in New Mexico, were swept into the vortex of partisan

²²Annual message of Governor Henry Connelly, December 9, 1863, Department of State, Territorial Papers, New Mexico, National Archives, T-17, roll 2. Santa Fe *New Mexican*, January 9, 1864. The Santa Fe *Gazette* was allied to Carleton throughout this period.

²³William A. Keleher, *Turmoil in New Mexico, 1846-1868* (Santa Fe, 1952), pp. 104-7, McNitt, pp. 389-392.

²⁴Lawrence R. Murphy, *Frontier Crusader—William F. M. Arny* (Tucson, 1972) is a good biography.

²⁵Benedict to Carleton, January 10, 1864; Perea to William Seward, February 20, 1864, Territorial Papers, New Mexico, T-17, roll 2.

politics. Martial law, which existed in the territory from August 1861 to July 1865, provided an initial issue, as one Supreme Court Justice, a Wisconsin Republican, objected and also opposed the requirement for military passes to travel in the territory.²⁶ Soon Carleton and his Indian policy were the subject of attack as the *New Mexican* became the mouthpiece for Republicans and engaged in a bitter newspaper war with the Democratic *Gazette*.

Arguments against Bosque Redondo were varied, but throughout ran a political theme. Carleton was described as a “wriggling political general” who was responsible for “sweet Carletonia” as the Bosque was labeled and who was noted for his “personal and official hostility” toward “federal civil officers.” He was, said the *New Mexican*, a “thimble-rigger politician,” a Democrat, a friend of Clement Vallandigham, a supporter of General McClellan in the presidential race of 1864. “This Major Pomposo” was “a ‘regular’ copperhead,” “a powerful and unscrupulous enemy,” declared the editors.²⁷ At the same time Army was writing Secretary of State William Seward of “the importance of having good reliable Republicans in office in the Territories of Arizona and New Mexico” and was asking for the removal of incumbent civil and military officials. Theodore Greiner, an Army ally, also protested to Seward that the copperhead elements in New Mexico coalesced around the regular army while also attacking Governor Connelly as an enemy of Republicans.²⁸

In the 1865 territorial election Carleton and his Indian policy were basic issues. Republicans elected the territorial delegate and gained control of the legislature, but their efforts to secure the removal of Carleton failed, and it was not until July 1866 that Carleton was replaced.²⁹ Although Republicans claimed credit for this, virtually every officer in the army was reassigned in 1865 or 1866 and with army reduction Carleton was assigned to a regiment in the regular army. The evidence indicates therefore that Carleton and his Indian

²⁶Keleher, pp. 400-408. Justice Joseph Knapp carried his fight to Washington but was told that the President had accepted his resignation.

²⁷The *New Mexican* had defended Carleton and the Bosque experiment. By September, as the election was approaching, it now opposed both and was allied with the Republicans. *Santa Fe New Mexican* (weekly), September 2, 1864; November 18, 1864; December 2, 1864; December 16, 1864.

²⁸Arny to Seward, January 6, 1865; Greiner to Seward, September 11, 1865; Territorial Papers, New Mexico, T-17, roll 3.

²⁹Gerald Thompson, *The Army and the Navajo: The Bosque Redondo Reservation Experiment, 1863-1868* (Tucson, 1976), pp. 105-6. Unfortunately Thompson fails to deal with the political ramifications of the Bosque. Keleher, pp. 368-69.

policy became an issue for political reasons. Martial law and Carleton's control of Indian policy at the expense of the Indian Office provided suitable targets for political attack. It is of interest that in 1868 after the departure of Carleton and Republican ascendancy in the territory the *New Mexican* opposed the return of the Navajos to their homeland although it did continue to criticize the general.³⁰

The New Mexico experience provides a good example of army involvement in politics, but that situation was rather unique. Except for events such as those noted above the army was only infrequently the subject of discussion in territorial or state legislatures. Moreover, frontier regions had limited influence at the national level, and the actions of westerners in Congress demonstrates the nonpolitical role of the army in the west.

If the army was an important political issue to frontiersmen, one might expect western congressmen and territorial delegates to seek assignments on the military affairs committees of the House and Senate, to propose legislation reflecting their interests, and to speak out on army appropriation bills and related legislation. However, in the last half of the nineteenth century such was not the case. In the first session of the 44th Congress there was not a single westerner on the Senate committee for military affairs while the only individuals on the eleven member house committee who could be considered westerners were from Missouri and Minnesota. On the senate committee on public lands, however, seven of nine members were from states west of the Mississippi River. In the second session of the 49th Congress the Senate Military Affairs Committee had one westerner, but five of the seven members of the committee on mines and mining came from the west. The contrast is not so dramatic in other sessions, but throughout this period western congressmen demonstrated a greater interest in assignments to committees on public lands, mines and mining, and Indian affairs than they did in military affairs.³¹

Westerners infrequently spoke about the army in Congress even during debates on army appropriations bills. If the *Congressional Record* provides any kind of a barometer of western thought, the main interest in the army was for construction of military roads and for river and harbor work on the Pacific Coast. Only on the question of the transfer of the Office of Indian Affairs back to the War Depart-

³⁰Santa Fe *New Mexican* (weekly), April 21, 1868.

³¹*Congressional Record* and *Congressional Directory* include committee assignment, introduction of bills and speeches.

ment did westerners really become vocal, and western politicians were unified in support of that proposal.

There is other evidence to suggest that the army was not a major political issue in the west. Even the involvement of military personnel in unusual and highly volatile incidents failed to generate much political controversy. In 1878 in New Mexico's Lincoln County War soldiers from Fort Stanton under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Nathan Dudley assisted a posse representing one faction in the climactic battle in the town of Lincoln, but political lines in New Mexico were already drawn, and army involvement had minimal impact on political opinions in the territory.³²

Several years later the army had the unenviable task of enforcing presidential proclamations and keeping Boomers, who wished to open part of Indian Territory to settlement, out of that region. Military units patrolled the area, arrested intruders, and delivered them for trials, frequently arresting the same individuals a number of times over the course of several years. Boomers objected, but they protested more against the policy than against army enforcement of federal policy. There were loud boasts and talk of violence. C. C. Carpenter, a Boomer leader, announced while challenging an army officer to a fight, "If the administration attempts to 'stamp out' the invasion by military force, we shall appeal to the God of Battles and the United States Congress to protect us, the invaders, in our constitutional rights."³³ As the years passed, tensions increased with soldiers, mainly black troopers of the 9th Cavalry, who were subjected to racial slurs, but clashes were avoided. While the Boomer movement itself and the policy of the federal government were political issues, the work of Carl Rister and other scholars indicates that there was relatively little discussion of army involvement in these controversies.

Another event in which troops participated that might have generated political debate was the Johnson County War in Wyoming in 1892 when an invading army of gunmen employed by large cattlemen was besieged by local law officers and citizens. The governor and both Wyoming senators, who were associated with the cattlemen, managed to convince President Benjamin Harrison to dispatch troops to the scene. A unit from Fort McKinney prevented further blood-

³²William Leckie, *The Buffalo Soldiers* (Norman, 1967), p. 203; William Keleher, *Violence in Lincoln County* (Albuquerque, 1957), pp. 226-244.

³³Carl C. Rister, *Land Hunger: David L. Payne and the Oklahoma Boomers* (Norman, 1942).

shed and delivered the invaders for trial, and while convictions were not forthcoming for a number of reasons, local citizens were not critical of the army.³⁴

The army had a mixed impact on frontier politics during the nineteenth century. At times it generated political activity, and certainly in California and New Mexico the governance issue politicized the local population. On other occasions, as in New Mexico during the mid 1860s, the army was singled out for political reasons. On the whole, however, it seems safe to suggest that the army was relatively unimportant in frontier politics although more thorough research in territorial and state records will be necessary to prove this contention.



³⁴Helena Huntington Smith, *The War on Powder River* (New York, 1966), pp. 223-25, 235. The soldiers clearly were sympathetic to local residents of Johnson County.

This is not to say that the army was not a political issue in the nation as a whole. The army during the Mexican War was certainly enmeshed in issues of national importance; the American people debated the role of the army in American life for the first century or more of its existence; military reconstruction in the south was an issue of vital national importance; the army became a natural target for eastern humanitarians who took up the cause of American Indians after the Civil War; and the use of soldiers to quell labor disturbances in the latter part of the nineteenth century antagonized a large segment of the population. But for the frontier the army was an essential institution. It may have been relatively ineffective and unable to adjust well to the nature of Indian warfare, but it was still relied upon for protection. It may have been small, but it was not so small that ultimately Indian hostility could not be brought to an end. It was an institution with which the frontier could live. Westerners felt free to criticize the army and frequently called for additional troops or military posts, but the complaints had little impact and the actions of westerners in Congress indicates that they accepted an army of limited size without great complaint. Only rarely was the army directly involved in frontier politics, and it was even less frequently a factor in politicizing the frontier population.



Black troopers of the Tenth Cavalry. (Courtesy of the Montana Historical Society)

THE SOCIALIZING ROLE OF THE MILITARY

JACK D. FONER

Few aspects of American history have been the subject of such persistent scrutiny by historians as the effect of the frontier on American life. Long before Frederick Jackson Turner expounded his famous "frontier thesis," nineteenth century Americans were accepting without question the idea that westward expansion was the key to the social differences between American and European societies, and that the continued presence of free land provided a potential for mobility for Americans to advance from the status of wage-earners to that of independent proprietors—a possibility that simply did not exist in Europe. Since Turner, there have been a large number of both defenses and criticisms of his analysis of the frontier as a "safety-valve" for discontented eastern labor, as a nationalizing influence that created a homogeneous American character, and as the basis for American economic development. Despite the fact that some aspects of the frontier theory have been largely discredited—we know, for example, that few eastern workers moved to western farms—more recent works have again placed westward expansion at the center of such crucial episodes as the slavery controversy, the course of economic development, and the rise of American overseas expansion.¹

Since the impact of the frontier is still very much a live issue among historians, it is appropriate that American military historians devote attention to the interrelationship of the army and the frontier in the post-Civil War era. This has not been done fully, and further research in this area is needed. It is possible, however, to sketch the state of our knowledge as of 1976.

The army, of course, was by no means the most important institution in western life in the post-Civil War years. In his last report as

¹Ray Allen Billington, *Frederick Jackson Turner: Historian, Scholar, Teacher* (New York, 1973); Jack D. Forbes, "Frontiers in American History and the Role of the Frontier Historian," *Ethnohistory*, XV (1968), pp. 203-235.

commanding general of the army, General Sherman listed in order the railroads, the influx of white civilians, and the army as responsible for the changed situation on the frontier. From a fairly substantial authorized strength of slightly more than 57,000 officers and men in 1866, the army was repeatedly reduced during subsequent years, until it reached a low point of 27,000 in 1874. And despite urgent recommendations from its leading officers, this figure remained essentially unchanged until the Spanish-American War. In 1870, the 111 frontier posts had a combined total of 22,789 men—an average of 205 men per post.²

Nonetheless, the frontier and the army interacted upon each other. This point is important because, too often, the relationship between the two is regarded as a “one-way street,” with only the frontier affecting the army, and not the other way around. Yet the very presence of the military altered conditions of life in the west. In fact, the main function of the army during this period consisted of enforcing federal Indian policy, protecting the lives and property of western settlers, guarding mail routes, railroads, and telegraph lines, assisting emigrants to western territories, and upholding federal law in several frontier areas. The frontier army also engaged in extensive road-building activities, opened new roads, mapped vast areas of uncharted country, and pinpointed waterholes. It was, in other words, an active force in the settlement of the west.³

The truth is that the army was in the vanguard of western economic development. It even performed the function of transporting much-needed labor to the frontier areas. Many enlisted men remained in the west after being discharged, “working at a variety of jobs from butcher to United States marshal.”⁴ Some did not even wait to be discharged before staking their claim. Officers bitterly attributed the high desertion rate to the fact that many recruits from the east enlisted only for the purpose of obtaining free transportation to the west, in order to secure higher-paying jobs in mining, railroading, and other

²Russell F. Weigley, *History of the United States Army* (New York, 1967), p. 267.

³Richard Guentzel, “The Department of the Platte and Western Settlement, 1866-1877,” *Nebraska History*, LVI (Fall, 1975), pp. 389-417; Edgar B. Wesley, “The Army and the Westward Movement,” *Minnesota History*, XV (December, 1934), p. 377.

⁴Don Rickey, Jr., *Forty Miles a Day on Beans and Hay: The Enlisted Soldier Fighting the Indian Wars* (Norman, 1963), p. 349; William D. Dobak, “Yellow Leg Journalists: Enlisted Men as Newspaper Reporters in the Sioux Campaign of 1876,” *Journal of the West*, XIII (January, 1974), p. 95.

activities.⁵ One Secretary of War was even quoted as remarking, "Let them desert, they build up the West."⁶ This may account for the fact that there was little sentiment in the west against deserters; many were readily concealed and aided by the civilian population.⁷ And those soldiers who remained in the army also demonstrated an interest in western opportunities. The Billings, Montana *Post* reported in 1884, for example, that "Private John Stanley, of the 5th Infantry, stationed at Fort Custer, came over last week, and invested about \$1500 in Billings lots. He has unbounded confidence in the future of Billings. . . ."⁸

Also worthy of attention is the army's role as a publicist for the west. Major James Brisbin was nicknamed "Grasshopper Jim" by the enlisted men because of his "great . . . interest in the agricultural potentialities of the district where he was stationed."⁹ Brisbin was the author of *The Beef Bonanza: Or, How to Get Rich on the Plains*. Published in 1881, this work began with a paean of praise for western opportunities reminiscent of the rhetoric of the 1850s of Horace Greeley. (Brisbin, himself, came out of the free soil anti-slavery tradition.) He wrote:

The mighty West! . . . where the poor professional young man, flying from the over-crowded East and the Tyranny of a monied aristocracy, finds honor and wealth; where the young politician, unopposed by rings and combinations, relying upon his own abilities, may rise to position and fame; where there are lands for the landless, money for the moneyless, briefs for lawyers, patients for doctors, and above all, labor and its reward for every poor man who is willing to work. . . . No industrious man can make a mistake in moving West, and if I had a son to advise, I should by all means say to him, 'Go West as soon as you can!' . . .¹⁰

What is striking about this paragraph is how outdated it seems. "Go West, young man" may have been sound advice in 1850, but by 1880, it should have been abundantly clear that the homestead ideal was dying fast. Indeed, the entire idea of the west as a refuge from eastern capitalism was no longer tenable. As Henry Nash Smith reminds us, "Eastern capital financed the railroads, eastern insurance companies bought the mortgages upon which so much of the develop-

⁵Jack D. Foner, *The United States Soldier Between Two Wars: Army Life and Reforms, 1865-1898* (New York, 1970), pp. 6-7.

⁶James Parker, *The Old Army: Memories, 1872-1918* (Philadelphia, 1924), p. 122.

⁷New York *Times*, December 25, 1883.

⁸Rickey, Jr., *Forty Miles*, p. 56.

⁹Edgar L. Stewart, *Custer's Luck* (Norman, 1955), p. 103. See also *Army and Navy Journal* (ANJ), August 29, 1885.

¹⁰James S. Brisbin, *The Beef Bonanza* (Philadelphia, 1881), pp. 13-14.

ment of farm lands was based, and many of the great cattle companies were owned in the East."¹¹ The future of western agriculture lay not in small homesteading, but rather in mechanized bonanza wheat farming. The irony is that through its policies of assisting the railroads and using troops to break strikes, such as at Coeur d'Alene, the army was, albeit unwittingly, helping to undermine the very vision of western society that Brisbin was so avidly propagating.¹²

It is clear then, that the army had a profound impact on the frontier. By the same token the circumstances of the frontier uniquely shaped the life and style of the army. Like many frontiersmen, officers were often rough, addicted to gambling, drink, and cursing. They were also energetic, individualistic, and determined. In June, 1872, Colonel Abner Ranford Doubleday wrote to Colonel Henry C. Merriam from Texas:

Now speaking confidentially between overselves I have seen Nixon eat pancakes with his fingers covering them with grease, and then he puts the blade of his knife in his mouth. . . . Now the latter fact would be quite sufficient to exclude him from any table frequented by ladies and gentlemen in any of the cities of the Union. Then he and Shafter both use shocking English. They say 'them things' 'I done it' and 'I seen it,' etc. Still they both have many sterling qualities.¹³

The younger officers assigned to the frontier regiments often found life on the plains uncommonly congenial. "The country was beautiful and full of game," noted one historian, "while the element of danger, always present, added a charm for the younger officers and men."¹⁴ But others found the physical environment difficult to bear.

"We had quite a severe journey in consequence of the great heat and sandy roads," wrote Colonel Doubleday to Colonel Merriam. And he went on:

My wife is utterly exhausted. . . . I am still suffering from the sting of some venomous reptile which stung me in the night. . . . Ann our servant woke up one night with a king snake twined around her neck trying to choke her to death. . . . The same one or one like it was killed in Crandall's tent.¹⁵

¹¹Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land* (New York, 1950), p. 214.

¹²James Marvin Cooper, "The Army and Civil Disorder: Federal Military Intervention in American Labor Disputes, 1877-1900." (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1971), pp. 294-301.

¹³A. Doubleday to H. C. Merriam, June 27, 1872, Henry C. Merriam Papers, Colby College, Waterville, Maine.

¹⁴Edward J. McClernand, "Service in Montana, 1870 and 1871," *Military Affairs*, XV (Winter, 1951), p. 195.

¹⁵Doubleday to Merriam, September 21, 1872, Merriam Papers.

For others, the isolation, monotony, and boredom of confinement at small posts in the most disagreeable sectors of the frontier caused severe personal and emotional problems. Deprived of even the activities that occasionally enlivened garrison existence at the larger, more accessible posts, and required to repeat the same routine daily, the men quite understandably grew quarrelsome, and tensions sometimes reached the breaking point.¹⁶ In one extreme case, such an atmosphere culminated in "the trial by court-martial of every officer at a post of charges put each against the other."¹⁷ The *Army and Navy Journal* bemoaned the fact that officers were often limited for amusement to bad whiskey and to gambling for each other's pay.¹⁸

Officers and men had to rely on their own ingenuity if they wanted any entertainment and relaxation. Colonel H. B. Grierson, a former music teacher, organized a band for his unit. Upon discovering that no issue of instruments could be obtained, he and other officers contributed to a fund to purchase them, and each enlisted man chipped in fifty cents.¹⁹ During the winter months, minstrel shows and theatricals were popular, and they were sometimes presented to the citizens of nearby communities. One officer said that it was wonderful to discover the amount of talent that existed among "the boys in blue."²⁰ In time, literary societies were set up at a number of posts. Papers were read, debates were conducted, and funds were collected for books and other literature. Masonic lodges were also a popular outlet and allowed officers and men to meet on equal terms.

Even though regulations made no provision for officers' wives, they were to be found at almost every post. Their presence introduced "an element of grace, refinement and comfort to garrison life."²¹ As one officer observed: "Army officers at remote stations

¹⁶Marion (Kansas) *Record*, July 21, 1893; *ANJ*, March 21, June 6, 1868; February 2, 1878; June 7, 1884.

¹⁷*Journal of the Military Service Institution*, VIII (1887), p. 298.

¹⁸*ANJ*, July 20, 1872. See also *New York Times*, May 24, 1883.

¹⁹Manfred S. Sand, "The Military Career of Benjamin Henry Grierson, 1866-1890," (M.A. thesis, Northern Illinois University, 1961).

²⁰*ANJ*, January 25, 1868. See also May 21, August 27, October 22, November 12, 1870; Foner, *The United States Soldier Between Two Wars*, p. 24; Peggy Dicky Kirkus, "Fort David A. Russell," *Annals of Wyoming*, IV (April, 1969), p. 91.

²¹Robert M. Utley, *Frontier Regulars: The United States Army and the Indian, 1866-1891* (New York, 1973), pp. 87-89.

are apt to be domestic . . . and I have frequently heard ladies assert they made grand husbands."²²

In general, however, the military does not seem to have been particularly successful in adapting to frontier conditions, at least if we are able to judge by the constant complaints from both enlisted men and officers about virtually every aspect of frontier military life. For it was not only the enlisted soldier who had problems. The officers, too, were profoundly discontented. Their deep-seated and fundamental complaints had the effect of seriously impairing morale.²³

Their monetary rewards, they insisted, were less than those earned by men in comparable civilian positions. The pay of army officers was increased during the Civil War, but as soon as the war ended, Congress reduced the salaries of all officers to their pre-war level, even though the cost of living had risen greatly during the intervening years. In 1870, Congress put an end to the system of commutation by providing a fixed salary for each commissioned grade in the army. The new pay scales granted company and field grade officers annual salaries ranging from \$3,500 for a colonel to \$1,400 for an infantry second lieutenant.²⁴ These sums were insufficient to meet the many drains on the resources of an officer serving with the troops. Officers stationed on the frontier pointed to the cost of replacing clothing that wore out rapidly in the field and to the exorbitant prices for many necessary articles of food. If they wished to furnish their quarters with just the ordinary comforts, they could do so only at great expense, and since traveling expenses were paid for officers only, and not for their families, the cost of a change of station was simply staggering.²⁵ "In this way," wrote one officer, "money saved has to be spent and an officer is always kept poor."²⁶

Those officers who managed to keep out of debt did so by denying themselves and their families many of the comforts of life. It is no wonder that some declared bitterly that Congress ought either to

²²Colonel Frank Wheaton to General O. O. Howard, March 11, 1879, O. O. Howard Papers, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, Maine.

²³*ANJ*, February 22, May 23, 1868.

²⁴James B. Fry, *Military Miscellanies* (New York, 1889), p. 36; *ANJ*, September 7, 1867; August 31, 1872; January 9, February 16, 1873.

²⁵*ANJ*, December 19, 1874; January 19, 1878; June 23, 1883.

²⁶*ANJ*, December 19, 1874.

pay them enough to support their families, or else simply forbid them to marry.²⁷

In addition to the new pay scale, the Act of 1870 provided that officers must be furnished with quarters. Assignment of living quarters at an army post was governed by strict military protocol. The post commander occupied the best and largest house, and other officers were given a choice of available quarters in the order of rank. Lieutenants came last, and bachelor officers frequently had to share their quarters with each other.

The regulation which allotted living quarters according to rank assigned one room and a kitchen to a second lieutenant and his family, with an additional room for each succeeding grade. It was not unusual to find second lieutenants with as much as 15 or even 20 years' service compelled to live with large families in such a limited allotment of space.²⁸ The plight of a lieutenant's wife was noted in a poetic lament sent to the *Army and Navy Journal* from Fort Sill, Oklahoma, which concluded:

I know 'Uncle Sam'
Must be an old bachelor,
For he made no provision for an officer's wife;
And the very worst fate
That I ever can wish him
Is one room and kitchen
The rest of his life.²⁹

In order for officers to retain an interest in their profession, they must have a reasonable opportunity for advancement in rank. But in the years following the Civil War, a stagnation in promotion developed that was unprecedented even for our army, until recently notorious for its slow rate of advancement. Officers who had served all through the war found themselves practically riveted to the lowest grades, serving longer as second lieutenants than it had previously taken to become a captain.³⁰ The *New York Times* declared: "The proposition that men . . . should find themselves only lieutenants at the age of fifty-odd years seems preposterous."³¹

The situation was not lacking in irony. One officer estimated that

²⁷ *ANJ*, August 31, 1872.

²⁸ *ANJ*, April 7, 1883; *Kansas City Times*, December 13, 1892.

²⁹ *ANJ*, December 26, 1874.

³⁰ *ANJ*, October 6, 1877; January 12, 1878; March 25, 1882; December 12, 1884.

³¹ *New York Times*, August 11, 1883. See also *New York Tribune*, June 3, 1878.

at the snail's pace of advancement, a lieutenant who entered the army at 22 would be about 102 years of age when he became a colonel.³² Another computed that a junior captain of the infantry had an average chance of becoming a major in about 124 years.³³ And still another expressed the officers' bitterness at the slowness of promotions in a poem which went in part:

I have children married and daughters fair,
For any young subaltern with money to spare.
And I'm getting so blind that I can't see a star,
But I do see an old and a well-tarnished bar.³⁴

Aside from the unfair hardships that this stagnancy in promotions caused, the interests of military efficiency demanded a change. There were continual complaints that the army was overweighted with officers who were too old to perform their duties efficiently.³⁵ In 1878, an officer warned the House Military Committee that an army led by aged company officers could never conduct vigorous warfare.³⁶ And in 1884, an officer declared that few field officers were capable of withstanding the rigors of an active campaign for any length of time or even of mounting their horses without the aid of a camp stool, supplemented by a stalwart orderly.³⁷

Of course, the roots of these problems lay far beyond the challenges posed by the frontier. But there does seem to have been a significant east-west split within the army. It was a universal complaint that advancement by selection usually depended on social and family connections or political influence, while ability and long and difficult service generally counted for little.³⁸ It was charged that generalships were regularly passed out for political and social reasons and that most transfers and promotions to the staff departments had their ori-

³²*ANJ*, April 1, 1882.

³³*ANJ*, December 29, 1873.

³⁴*Kansas City Times*, April 4, 1892.

³⁵*ANJ*, November 6, 1880; December 27, 1884; *New York Times*, March 13, 1882; Emory Upton to William C. Church, August 18, 1879, William C. Church Papers, Library of Congress.

³⁶45th Congress, 2nd Session, House Misc. Documents, No. 56, p. 146.

³⁷*ANJ*, August 30, 1884.

³⁸*Kansas City Times*, April 9, November 11, 1889; *New York Times*, August 4, 1878; March 3, 1890.

gin in "pull."³⁹ One officer asserted that the word of a senator or a member of Congress was more significant than the finest record compiled amidst the dangers and privations of the field.⁴⁰ The *New York Tribune* agreed:

Every incentive is offered to political wire-pulling. Honest and arduous service in the western posts is unrecognized and unrewarded. There is altogether too much politics in the administration of the Army.⁴¹

Western officers constantly complained of favoritism within the army. Indeed, hardly an issue of the service journals appeared without some angry communication from line officers, protesting that in practically every feature of military life, staff officers possessed some unfair advantage over them.⁴² They pointed out that line officers were virtually doomed to endless service on the frontier, exposed to the privations of Indian warfare, pestilential disease, severe climate, and to all the drawbacks of life far from the cities. Staff officers, on the other hand, were characterized as having "soft snaps"—serving in Washington or other cities, with fine offices, regular hours, numerous clerks, none of the responsibilities involved in caring for troops, and with all the comforts and advantages of "civilized society."⁴³ "There are two classes of officers, sir," wrote one line officer, "the pack mules and the hangers-on of the ----- staff. We are the pack mules."⁴⁴ And the *Omaha Bee*, taking up the cudgels for the line

³⁹John Gibbon, "Needed Reforms in the Army," *North American Review*, CLVI, p. 215. See also William T. Sherman to Philip H. Sheridan, March 5, 1878; July 31, 1881, Philip H. Sheridan Papers, Library of Congress.

⁴⁰*New York Times*, September 26, 1874. See also *Chicago Herald*, August 17, 1885.

⁴¹*New York Tribune*, November 18, 1893. See also *New York Times*, July 1, 1889.

⁴²The two basic components of the army were the line and the staff. The line of the army—its fighting force—consisted of 40 regiments, including 25 of infantry, 10 cavalry, and five artillery.

In the years after the Civil War, the term "staff" referred primarily to those agencies charged with administering the army through the purchase and distribution of supplies, the payment of the troops, and the performance of other administrative duties. To carry these functions, the staff was divided into 10 administrative and technical bureaus, officially called departments or corps, each with a bureau chief and a number of subordinate officers, and all serving under the immediate supervision of the Secretary of War. R. Williams, "Army Organization in the United States," *The Galaxy*, XXIV (November, 1877), pp. 591-602; "The Staff of the United States Army," *The Atlantic Monthly*, XLI (March, 1878), pp. 379-380; Utley, *Frontier Regulars*, pp. 31-32.

⁴³*ANJ*, February 29, 1868; August 21, 1871; April 6, November 26, 1872; April 11, 1874; March 9, 1878; *Kansas City Times*, June 2, 1890, February 25, 1892; *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, February 22, 1890; *New York Sun*, February 5, 1899; *New York Times*, January 31, 1867; January 18, February 18, 1879.

⁴⁴*ANJ*, November 15, 1873.

officers, presented their grievance in these vivid terms:

No army in the world exacts the same hardship from its line officers as the United States. Instead of being on "soft service" duty the great majority of young lieutenants and captains are forced to vegetate . . . in rickety frontier posts thousands of miles from their homes with the smallest possible hope of a transfer to civilization until they become old enough to retire. . . . There is mighty little "soft service" in the line on the frontier and a great deal of patient and poorly required hard work.⁴⁵

Line officers complained that since they were of necessity far removed from the national capital, they could have but little voice in the shaping of legislation for the army. Staff officers, on the other hand, were present in great numbers in Washington, with the heads of bureaus always on the spot to take care of them. They were therefore able to guide all army legislation in order to serve their own interests. As a consequence, the army was considered over-burdened with the staff officers, even though much of their work was actually performed by line officers. Similarly, as a result of favorable legislation, the staff had contrived to obtain a preponderance of rank compared with the line.⁴⁶ "It is pertinent to ask," wrote on line officer in 1875, "why . . . while each Congress cuts off a portion of the fighting army, does it add to the rank of the staff corps?"⁴⁷ And in the same year, Colonel W. P. Hazen wrote to Representative (later President) James A. Garfield, from Fort Buford, Dakota:

You know how we have been cut off from nearly all hope of promotion. . . . The staff in the meantime having advantages of being at the seat of government has constantly gained rank for themselves by managing special legislation. . . . Can you conceive anything so unjust and so wrong in principle than adding these advantages to easy, favorable duty, away from the battle and putting them above those who go to war and fight the battles? . . .⁴⁸

Leading army officers repeatedly pointed out that the favored position of staff officers was the reason why officers of the line, with few exceptions, were constantly looking to staff positions as the highest object of their ambition.⁴⁹ This was also the basis for "the disgraceful scrambles for soft details and dead men's shoes" whenever

⁴⁵Omaha *Bee*, May 14, 1883.

⁴⁶Kansas City *Times*, June 4, 1890; February 19, 1894; New York *Tribune*, May 8, 1875; *ANJ*, November 23, 1872; Utley, *Frontier Regulars*, p. 30.

⁴⁷*ANJ*, March 13, 1875.

⁴⁸W. P. Hazen to James A. Garfield, January 19, 1875, James A. Garfield Papers, Library of Congress.

⁴⁹*ANJ*, March 9, 1878; May 1, 1880; New York *Sun*, March 5, 1893; New York *Times*, January 3, 1867; William T. Sherman to William C. Church, William T. Sherman Papers, Library of Congress.

vacancies occurred in the staff.⁵⁰ One officer said that it was impossible to condone a system in which a captaincy in the staff departments was infinitely more desirable than a majority or even a lieutenant colonelcy in the line.⁵¹

Thus, the life of the frontier officer was in many respects a bleak one. But it would be wrong to conclude that the frontier had no creative impact upon the army in this period. Ironically, the one group whose military experience seems to fit the Turner thesis better than any other is the black soldier. As the Reconstruction experiment was abandoned, the army offered a rare "safety valve" for black recruits. It also was a training ground for black leadership and a forum for the development of black racial and national self-consciousness.

Blacks were added to the regular army for the first time when Congress established four black regiments in 1866 and 1869, two of cavalry and two of infantry, and in the years after the war, blacks constituted about 10 percent of the effective strength of the army. To the black recruit, enlistment in the army meant a steady income, food, clothing, and shelter, plus the chance for some basic schooling, and an "elevation of status." Because their economic opportunities outside the service were so few, substantial numbers of the black regulars reenlisted. The *Army and Navy Journal* noted that there were "seldom any vacancies in the colored regiments," in contrast with the white regiments. Regimental pride and morale in the black units were high; alcoholism, "the bane of most frontier regiments," was virtually unknown among the black regulars, and their desertion rate was the lowest in the army. A number of black soldiers won Congressional Medals of Honor.⁵²

Throughout the period of the Indian wars, black regulars were stationed at posts located in the frontier regions, either in the southwest or in the northern Rockies. Few black people resided in the small towns that grew up near these posts, and the arrival of the black troops generally evoked less than enthusiastic reactions from the local residents. Newspapers frequently published derogatory

⁵⁰Chicago *Inter-Ocean*, February 22, 1890.

⁵¹New York *Times*, February 4, 1884. See also May 4, 1890.

⁵²For a history of these units see Jack D. Foner, *Blacks and the military in American History* (New York, 1974), Chapter 4; William H. Leckie, *The Buffalo Soldiers: A Narrative of Negro Cavalry in the West* (Norman, 1967); Arlen L. Fowler, *The Black Infantry in the West, 1869-1891* (Westport, CT, 1971); Ulysses Lee, *The Employment of Negro Troops* (Washington, D.C., 1966), pp. 23-29.

statements about them. And when they were outside the fort gates during their leisure hours, or on other occasions, black soldiers were often the objects of hostility, prejudice, and harassment from the civilian population.⁵³

The presence of racial groups even lower on the frontier social ladder than blacks—Mexicans, Chinese, and especially Indians—tended to temper somewhat this hostility. “In fact,” declared Frank Schubert, who has written extensively on this subject, “the Indian reservation may well have exerted a greater positive influence on black and white relations than American egalitarian rhetoric of the frontier itself.”⁵⁴

Certain economic and military factors also helped to neutralize the resentment among townsmen near posts garrisoned by black troops. Many merchants invited the business of black soldiers. Moreover, black troops helped to furnish the military protection that frontiersmen needed. One historian concludes:

Racial conflict frequently marred relations between Negro soldiers and white civilians, but the need for military security and the purchasing power of the blacks convinced many westerners of the folly of antagonizing the Negro soldiers and contributed to an uneasy racial truce in garrison communities.⁵⁵

At times it went beyond a mere “truce.” While the black 24th Infantry was stationed in New Mexico, its black chaplain, Allen Allensworth, was selected as director and manager of New Mexico’s education affairs in the National Education Association—the only black to occupy this position in the history of the Association. Allensworth was convinced that a soldier needed a basic education to perform efficiently in the service and to adapt himself to civilian life afterwards.⁵⁶ He also sought to encourage black enlistment in the army, and frequently wrote to the black press, advising young blacks that the military offered opportunities not readily available elsewhere.⁵⁷ As he stated in the course of an interview:

⁵³Thomas D. Phillips, “The Black Regulars,” in Allen G. Bogue, Thomas D. Phillip and James E. Wright, *The West of the American People* (Itasca, IL, 1970), p. 140.

⁵⁴Frank Schubert, “Black Soldiers on the White Frontier: Some Factors Influencing His Relations,” *Phylon*, XXXII (1971), p. 415.

⁵⁵Phillips, “The Black Infantry,” p. 140.

⁵⁶Fowler, *The Black Infantry in the West*, p. 133; Charles Alexander, *The Battles and Victories of Allen Allensworth* (New York, 1914), p. 133, 343, 346-47.

⁵⁷St. Paul *Appeal*, July 26, 1890; Allen Allensworth, “Military Education in the United States,” *National Education Association Journal of Proceedings and Addresses* (New York, 1891), pp. 221-234.

I hold the army out to the colored man as an opportunity to save up sufficient capital to go into business. It is a good chance for our folks—a better chance than they have almost anywhere, much better than they have in the South.⁵⁸

Allensworth encouraged thrift and sobriety within the regiment, and many of the men kept bank books which they entrusted to him. There was a strong feeling of pride among the members of the 24th Infantry—a fact that became evident in 1896. In September of that year, the War Department announced the transfer of the 24th Infantry to Fort Douglas, Utah, removing the regiment from the frontier for the first time in 22 years.⁵⁹ The Salt Lake City *Tribune* published an editorial entitled “An Unfortunate Change,” describing the serious apprehension prevalent among “the best people in the city” lest they be forced into “direct contact with drunken colored soldiers on the way from the city to Fort Douglas.”⁶⁰ Private Thomas A. Ernest of Company E responded to this editorial in a letter to the newspaper:

We object to being classed as lawless barbarians. We were men before we were soldiers, we are men now, and will continue to be men after we are through soldiering. We ask the people of Salt Lake City to treat us as such.⁶¹

A year later, on the occasion of the first anniversary of the regiment’s arrival, the *Tribune* apologized for its misgivings, and observed that the black troops were “now appreciated at their worth, as citizens and soldiers above reproach.”⁶²

The army did not provide black newspapers for post libraries and reading rooms. Consequently, black soldiers would subscribe to the different newspapers and circulate them among the troops as a way of maintaining contact with the black community. The arrival of the *Cleveland Gazette* at Fort Elliott, Texas, in December, 1885, is reported by Sergeant Jacob C. Smith of the 24th Infantry in a letter to that paper:

The night that the GAZETTE is due you should hear the men of my company crying: What is in the Gaz., Smith? Let me have her when you get through. And I

⁵⁸San Francisco *Chronicle*, July 2, 1899. See also Helena (Montana) *Independent*, August 27, 1904.

⁵⁹New York *Times*, September 19, 1896.

⁶⁰Salt Lake City *Tribune*, September 20, 1896.

⁶¹Salt Lake City *Tribune*, October 22, 1896. See also *Broad Axe* (St. Paul), October 31, 1896.

⁶²Salt Lake City *Tribune*, October 23, 1897.

verily believe I could not comfortably exist myself without it. A happy New Year to you and staff, a larger paying circulation and long life to the Gazette.⁶³

The circulation of black newspapers at frontier posts is paralleled in an interesting way in the widespread readership among Irish soldiers of the *Irish World*, published in New York City. Indeed, at many frontier posts Irish-American soldiers gathered contributions for Parnell's Land League in 1881, forwarding the money to Dublin, via the *Irish World*.⁶⁴

In addition to reading the black press, black soldiers succeeded in maintaining a strong link with the black communities, where they were held in high esteem. Lithographs of black soldiers in action hung in many black homes as "symbols of hope for a better day."⁶⁵

This attitude of blacks toward black soldiers is in striking contrast to the way in which the white civilian public generally viewed white enlisted personnel. In May, 1878, Private David Barrow wrote to the New York *Herald* from the frontier that no one was thought of as poorly in that part of the country as a soldier.⁶⁶ Enlisted men occasionally faced the generally hostile communities as a unified group. In March, 1890, for example, the citizens of Mobita, Texas—a town close to Fort Eliot—sold tickets to the men at the post for a grand ball to be held on St. Patrick's Day. However, when the soldiers presented themselves at the ballroom door, they were refused admittance. The indignant men returned to the post and held a meeting, where they unanimously passed a resolution to boycott the Mobita merchants. To add impact to their protest, they further resolved to

⁶³Cleveland *Gazette*, January 9, 1886.

⁶⁴*The Irish World*, July 31, 1880; March 19, April 9, 23, September 3, 1881.

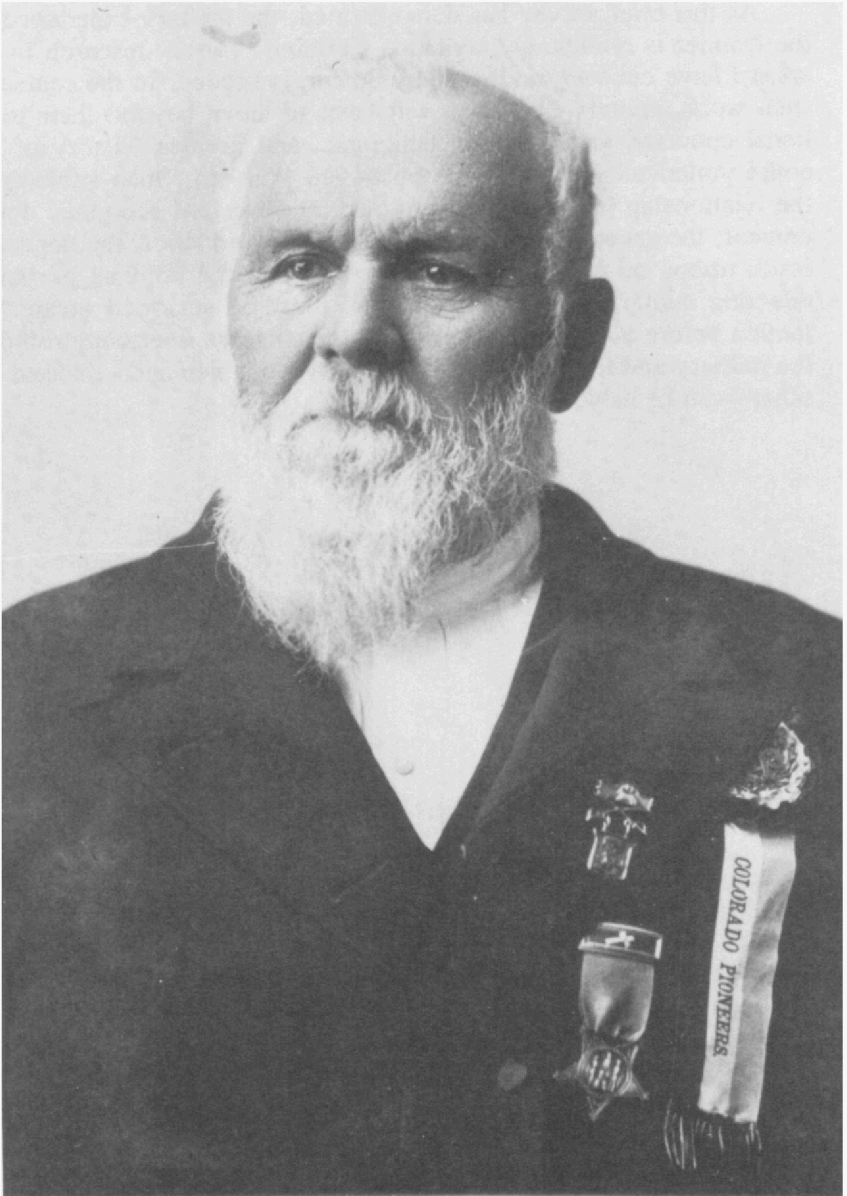
⁶⁵*ANJ*, January 27, 1877; Foner, *Blacks and the military*, p. 53; Rayford W. Logan, *The Betrayal of the Negro* (New York, 1954), p. 335.

⁶⁶New York *Herald*, April 6, 1878. See also Foner, *The United States Soldier Between Two Wars*, pp. 74-75, 98-100.

“avoid all kinds of monetary transactions and association with any person or persons who claim to be citizens of Mobita.”⁶⁷

As this brief survey has demonstrated, the military experience on the frontier is remarkably complex. Certainly, further research in the areas I have covered, and in many others, is needed. In the course of such work, military historians will have to move beyond their traditional concerns to the social, economic, and political history of the entire American society in the post-Civil War era. Such subjects as the relationship between military policy and western economic development, the genesis of the army’s policies toward labor, the impact of black troops on black life in this period, and the political pressures affecting military decision-making—all must be accorded greater attention before a full understanding of the complex interrelationship of the military and the frontier—and the ways in which each changed the other—can be achieved.

⁶⁷Kansas City *Times*, March 26, 1890. See also *ANJ*, April 5, 1890.



John M. Chivington, the hero of Glorieta Pass and the villain of Sand Creek. (Courtesy of Denver Public Library)

THE MILITARY AND THE COLORADO FRONTIER

MARSHALL SPRAGUE

Men in uniform have been a familiar sight in Colorado throughout most of the area's history. They explored the area, fought with Indians, and garrisoned the plains and mountains. In this long history three military events stand out, three simple frontier affairs which I blame for bringing about Colorado as we know it in 1976. These were: Zebulon Pike's expedition in 1806-07; Gilpin and Chivington's victory over Sibley's Texans at Glorieta Pass in 1862; and the Meeker massacre in 1879.

Pike's expedition into Colorado came about as a result of the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. President Jefferson was an ardent pacifist, partly perhaps because he failed badly as Virginia's military chief during the Revolution. Science was one of his passions. He saw to it that the Academy at West Point was primarily a scientific school when it was established in 1802. After the purchase of Louisiana, Jefferson's pet army project was the Lewis and Clark expedition, which he probably considered more scientific than military. Lewis and Clark's accomplishments have overshadowed those of Captain Zebulon Pike even though Pike explored twice as far as Lewis and Clark on his two treks in the same period. In 1805 he explored almost to the source of the Mississippi. In 1806 he explored almost to the source of the Arkansas. It is easy to thrill to the grandeur of heroes breaking a path to the Pacific. Pike's feat is harder to glamorize, especially nowadays since he had no heroine along, no Sacajawea. Pike had to try to solve a riddle posed by La Salle in 1682 when the Frenchman put the southern boundary of what became the Louisiana Purchase along the most southerly river draining into the Mississippi from the west, which was the Red River. That boundary stream came into the Mississippi a couple of hundred miles downstream from the next big western tributary, the Arkansas.

For centuries, fierce Indians, Apaches or Comanches, had barred passage up the Red River much above the present site of Shreveport,

but geographers agreed that the Red had to start at the Continental Divide in the Rockies, in the manner of the Platte, Missouri, and Arkansas. So Pike's task was to discover what Jefferson had bought from Napoleon in the southwest by ascending the Arkansas to its source to avoid the Comanches on the Red, and then by moving south along the Continental Divide until he struck the boundary Red near its source. Oddly, Pike got his orders not from Jefferson, who was preoccupied with Lewis and Clark, but from General James Wilkinson, the commander of the US army, and the first governor of the Louisiana Territory.

Wilkinson was perhaps the greatest four-flusher in military history. To achieve this distinction he took pay from the Spaniards to bring about the return of Louisiana to Spain even while he plotted with Senator John Brown of Kentucky and others to separate trans-Appalachia from the seaboard of the United States. Aaron Burr took over this Wilkinson design while Pike was heading west. The plot collapsed when Wilkinson saw that it would not work, and warned Jefferson about it. Burr went into exile. Wilkinson flourished on as a revered senior general of the army until 1814, when he ran out of the kind of skulduggery that had brought him fame and fortune.

Captain Pike, aged 27, was a small, attractive, exceedingly sturdy officer in November of 1806 when he and his 15 companions rowed up the Arkansas pass past Pike's Peak and into the intervalle above the site of the Canon City penitentiary. He was Wilkinson's protege and he must have known that the general was sending him to the Spanish borderlands to learn things of military value, not of value to the US Army but of value to the Army that Wilkinson and Burr would command when they set up their southwestern empire with the help of Senator Brown's Kentuckians. Pike's suspicions could have been aroused also by things he learned from his wife, Clarissa, a Louisville belle who happened to be the daughter of Senator Brown. Nevertheless, there is nothing but circumstantial evidence that Pike was a part of Wilkinson's wild schemes.

It was early in December of 1806 when Pike's small party reached the impassable entrance to the Royal Gorge of the Arkansas (above the present site of the Colorado State Penitentiary), and veered a few miles north to strike Current Creek, which the men mistook for the Arkansas, above the Royal Gorge. They passed the source of that stream, crossed South Park, and bent southerly over Trout Creek Pass to spend Christmas on a new river which logic told them had to be the Red. They descended it only to find it was really the Arkansas bringing them back to the Royal Gorge. Pike was un-

daunted; and he trailed his men south along the Sangre de Cristo on foot, since the horses had been eaten, while Pike and his men were looking for the Red. They all hiked through January and nearly died of starvation and freezing as they made their way up Wet Mountain Valley and over Medano Pass to come upon an eerie sight, the Great Sand Dunes of San Luis Valley.

Soon after crossing the Great Sand Dunes they were overjoyed to reach the Red River at last, or so they thought until Spanish soldiers arrived to tell them that they were camped deep in New Spain on the Rio Grande, not the Red. The Spaniards conducted them to Santa Fe, and then to Chihuahua where Pike was held until July, 1808, before being released and escorted north to the Louisiana border town of Natchitoches on Red River. And so, after all those miles of trouble, Pike found the Red at last, but not the part he wanted to find.

Though Pike failed in his aims, he was in good company. In 1820, Major Stephen Long, of the Corps of Engineers, rode south past Pike's Peak and across the Arkansas and found what he thought was the Red just over Raton Pass, only it turned out to be the Canadian. Captain Randolph Marcy had better luck in 1852 tracing the headwaters of the Red to a spring in eastern New Mexico 300 miles east of where the geographers had had it starting in the Rockies. The source of the Mississippi escaped discovery until 1832, when an army troop led by a civilian, Henry Schoolcraft, traced the start to Lake Itasca.

Pike's journals were valuable to later army visitors in Colorado, including John Charles Fremont in the early 1840s, General Kearny in his conquest of New Mexico, and Captain John Gunnison, who explored over Cochetopa Pass during his Pacific Railway survey of 1853.

William Gilpin first came to Colorado in 1843 as part of Fremont's expedition of that year. Fremont seldom met his match at self-glorification, but this Gilpin was his master, "one-upping" him daily with his tales of his exploits in the Seminole War, of how he advised President Jackson, and of how President Tyler was sending him to Oregon now to show the settlers how to form a government. Gilpin stressed that he was a West Pointer, whereas Fremont was a mere navy man, who owed his army commission to the political muscle of his father-in-law, Senator Benton, and to Van Buren's Secretary of War, Joel Poinsett. To Fremont's relief, Gilpin left his party after some weeks, to continue his remarkable career alone, in Oregon and elsewhere. That career, in Gilpin's view, included organizing Oregon,

military adroitness in the Mexican wars, serving as Colonel Doniphan's aide in capturing Chihuahua, and being sent by Lincoln to Denver in May, 1861, as the first territorial governor of Colorado.

Through the last 1850s, Gilpin had passed his time orating on the virtues of Lincoln for president. His second theme had to do with the wonders of Colorado with its farmlands richer than the vale of Cashmere and its mountains laced with immense stores of gold and silver. After the election of 1860, President Lincoln rewarded Gilpin for his support by making him an honorary guard on the inaugural train. Gilpin had a way of holding people by their buttons, while haranguing them; and it is said that while on the ride to Washington, he got hold of Lincoln's vest button and would not let go or stop talking until the President-elect promised him the Colorado governorship. That office gave Gilpin the power to raise volunteer troops to oppose any threat of the Confederacy to capture the territory and cut off California from the rest of the Union.

A year after Gilpin took office in Denver, word came to him that the former Union general turned Confederate, Henry Sibley, and 3,000 Texans had captured Santa Fe and were on their way to Colorado to seize its gold mines for Jefferson Davis to use as collateral for foreign war loans. The territory had no soldiers to speak of in its posts at Fort Lyon and at Fort Garland. Lincoln had withdrawn from the west most of the regular army for duty along the Mississippi. Gilpin, the one-time West Pointer, sprang into action, creating an army of his own, nicknamed "Gilpin's Lambs." It was composed of a motley horde of miners, bartenders, lawyers, preachers, con men, bankers, shoe clerks, pimps, actors, and mule skinnners. To raise money to equip them from Denver stores, Gilpin issued drafts on the US treasury, bearing his signature. The colonel of this first regiment of Colorado volunteers, John P. Slough, was a Denver lawyer without military experience. The major, the Reverend John M. Chivington, was presiding elder of the Rocky Mountain District of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Such was the mob of "hoofers" who crossed Raton Pass on March 18, 1862, to save Colorado for the Union.

Word came to them that Sibley's Texans at Glorieta Pass planned to seize Fort Union, the big army supply center north of the New Mexican capital. To save time, Gilpin's Lambs dropped most of their equipment and marched 92 miles on the double through a raging blizzard to reach Fort Union ahead of the enemy. For two weeks they practiced shooting there, and then marched toward the Texans inside Glorieta Pass. The show-down came two days later as Sibley's tough Texans, frightening fellows in huge sombreros, moved confidently over

the pass, red Texas flags flying. At 10 A.M. Gilpin's novice warriors met the Texans head-on at Pigeon's Ranch.

For several hours a bloody battle raged in that narrow passage of the old Santa Fe trail. In late afternoon, neither side could take any more. Having suffered 50 dead and 66 wounded, Colonel Slough ordered Gilpin's exhausted lambs to retreat east down the pass a few miles. It is likely that they would have been forced to accept defeat had it not been for the action of a small unit led by the Methodist Episcopal presiding elder. The Reverend Major Chivington was a vast bearded man, as oracular as Moses, weighing nearly 300 pounds. While the noisy Texans had marched east that morning over the pass, he had marched west with 430 men, but not on the Santa Fe Trail. His hidden route was through San Cristobal Canyon, just to the south, bringing his brigade to the top of the hill at Apache Canyon into the pass overlooking Sibley's supply train of 73 heavily loaded wagons.

The time was 1:30 P.M. For an hour Chivington made plans as he watched the 250 unsuspecting guards and teamsters, 1,000 feet below him. Then he gave the order to charge and led his volunteers down the mountain, sliding, slipping, howling like Comanches. Within minutes they seized and spiked the sole enemy cannon, while the guards were killed or captured and the teamsters scattered. The next four hours were spent in an orgy of burning and smashing. Everything Sibley's army needed to capture Denver went up in smoke. Half a million dollars worth of ammunition, saddles, subsistence, clothes, and baggage. Chivington had the 600 mules and horses corralled and shot in relays. At nightfall the job was done and the major led the weary force up the hill to rejoin the Slough contingent at daybreak at Pigeon's Ranch. By then the Texans had learned of the disaster to their wagon train and they knew that without supplies and horses the Civil War was over as far as the southwest was concerned. There was nothing for them to do but bury their dead at Glorieta Pass, abandon their wounded in Santa Fe, and head for home with all possible speed before Union forces could be called to cut them off.

Major Chivington returned to Denver, the hero of the hour, his head full of dreams of greater glory, political and military. No more preaching for him. He had found a more exciting career. But the man who had made it possible was no hero. Governor Gilpin was in disgrace. The city was in financial chaos because the US treasury had refused to honor the drafts totalling \$375,000 which Gilpin had issued to Denver merchants. With a terrible and costly war on his hands, President Lincoln had no way of handling Gilpin's debt. Reluctantly

he removed Gilpin from the governorship and put in his place an Illinois financier, John Evans, famed for fiscal responsibility. It was many years before Congress finally honored some of Gilpin's drafts.

Chivington went on to less heroic exploits. Late in November, 1864 at Sand Creek, north of Lamar, he led a force of volunteers in a dawn attack on a village of Indians who supposed themselves to be under the protection of army officers at Fort Lyon. As the families ran from their teepees to surrender, some 200 men, women, and children were shot down by Chivington's men. That massacre inspired thousands of plains Indians from Texas to Montana to resist further pressure on their lands by white Americans. The resistance was intensified by the westering of the railroads, leading to the destruction of the buffalo on which the civilization of the plains Indians was based.

When troops were released from service after the Civil War, army posts were manned along the stage routes to Denver—Fort Sedgwick near Julesburg, Fort Morgan, Fort Collins, and Fort Reynolds near Pueblo. All of these guard posts were abandoned in a few years and the plains Indians of Colorado were removed to reservations in Oklahoma. Only one army post, Fort Garland, in the San Luis Valley, continued to keep an eye on 3,000 Ute Indians, a friendly tribe, the six bands of which were scattered throughout the Colorado Rockies.

These Utes had never caused much trouble, mainly because the white settlers had no interest in the western slope lands that the Utes occupied, no interest, that is, until gold was discovered in a high, remote corner of the Ute reservation. It was in the San Juan Mountains, where Silverton is now. With that discovery in the early 1870s Coloradans became aware that 16 million acres of the region's most beautiful mountain lands, more than half of the mountain total, belonged to these Utes by treaty with the United States Senate in 1868. These "ignorant savages" were blocking all progress in Colorado—mining progress, railroad progress, homestead progress, city-making progress, stage road progress—west of the Ute reservation line. That line ran along the 107th parallel from the New Mexico border for 240 miles north through the present site of Pagosa Springs, Gunnison, Aspen, Gypsum, Glenwood Springs and up to 20-Mile Park in the Yampa River area. All those future townsites and all the country west of them to the Utah border were in the Ute reservation.

The Utes had to go. But how could Colorado, celebrating its promotion to statehood in 1876, get rid of a peaceful tribe whose

members had been guaranteed their reservation forever by an act of the United States Senate? The answer to the question was in the making in 1878, when Colorado Senator Henry Teller paid a political debt by appointing a former New York newspaperman named Nathan Meeker to serve as the new Indian agent at the Ute post on White River, near the present lovely and serene western slope town of Meeker.

Nathan Meeker was one of Colorado's most fascinating characters—a tall, lean agnostic, whose mind was forever aboil with off-beat notions to improve the lot of mankind. His Colorado career began in 1870 when he founded the town of Greeley, as a socialistic paradise. The place was so successful that his fellow socialists became wealthy, which soured them on socialism, and poor Meeker was out of a job. He went to the White River Agency full of dreams of saving that small band of Utes from the pain of losing their lands, which he knew was bound to come, by teaching them what fun they would have when they learned to live on small lots like white men, with all the delights of piling up wealth, dwelling in houses with privies, keeping up with the Joneses, playing poker at the Elks Club, attending ice cream socials, watering the lawn, learning to read and write, and all the rest.

White River had to be reached by way of Rawlins, Wyoming. Meeker went there with his wife and an agency staff consisting of his pretty daughter, Josie, a young married couple, and several Greeley boys. For a year he worked at converting the Utes to his views, applying patience, reasoning, bribes in the form of federal handouts, humor, kindness, and sympathy. He made no progress whatsoever. The Utes insisted that roving far and wide, hunting, loafing, gambling, raising horses, were the kind of activities that made their lives worthwhile. When at last Meeker plowed up their horse pastures for a cornfield and told them that their herds of horses were economically unsound in the wonderful world which he was preparing for them to enjoy, they got so ugly that he sent word to the nearest army post, Fort Steele, near Rawlins, to protect him and his staff from bodily harm.

Fort Steele was a dreary place, guarding the Union Pacific tracks in the Red Desert of Wyoming. Its deariness was accentuated by the temper of the times. The decade of the 1870s was the bottom of the army barrel of discontent. It was a period when big business was anti-military, because soldiers did not sell and make things. It was a period of national remorse over the loss of half a million young men in the Civil War. That wave of humanitarianism expressed itself also in

sympathy for the Indians of the west, which hampered the efforts of the understaffed, unpopular, underpaid army, isolated in the wilds, to control Indian rampages. Such rampages rose chiefly from rash promises made to the Indians by Congress which had no intention of keeping its word. Fort Steele's commander, Major Thomas T. Thornburgh, was a handsome 6'4" West Pointer, class of '67. His wife, Lida, was a sister of a West Point classmate. The couple had two children at Fort Steele, Olivia and Bobby. When Thornburgh got his orders from General George Crook in Omaha to go to Meeker's defense, he was not pleased. Thornburgh liked the Utes and did not consider them dangerous. Meeker was always complaining to Thornburgh about something minor.

Thornburgh's thoughts about Meeker were not complimentary when he kissed Lida, Olivia, and Bobby goodbye on September 22, 1879, and rode south from Steele toward White River with four companies of cavalry. Some days later, a Ute sub-chief named Jack came to Thornburgh and asked him to stop his troops at the Milk Creek boundary of the reservation and come in alone to the agency to discuss matters with Meeker and the head chief Douglas.

But on September 29 the troops did not stop at Milk Creek though Thornburgh saw Jack's armed Utes on the high ridge ahead and waved his hat at them. After some silent minutes a rifle pinged somewhere and then many shots were fired. One slug struck the major above the ear as he trotted briskly forward to see what was up. His long lithe frame toppled from his horse. Besides Thornburgh 11 soldiers died on that tragic Monday before the survivors, 42 of them wounded, barricaded themselves at Milk Creek behind dead horses and mules, and began the long wait for reinforcements. The siege was lifted and the Utes faded away on Thursday with the arrival of a single company of black troops from the 9th cavalry which had galloped through the night to Milk Creek from 20-Mile Park.

On Sunday morning, October 5, Colonel Wesley Merritt arrived at the scene from Cheyenne, with four companies of cavalry, 150 infantrymen, and a wagonload of reporters from Denver. More troops came from Fort Snelling. Merritt pushed on to the White River agency, which the Utes had destroyed totally. Scattered on the paths were the mutilated bodies of the male employees of the agency, including Meeker, with a flour barrel stave rammed down his throat. It was learned later that Mrs. Meeker and the two younger agency women were held in the wilds as hostages by Douglas' men for 23 days before they were released unharmed.

Because of these tragic events, the white residents of Colorado found the excuse they needed to get rid of the Senate treaty of 1868 that was blocking them from the wealth of 16 million acres on the western slope of their state. In 1881, the last of these northern bands of Utes were escorted by the army to new bleak homes in eastern Utah. The two remaining bands in the state had had no connection with the Meeker massacre and they live still on two small reservations of southwestern Colorado.

COMMENTARY

Roger L. Nichols of the University of Arizona critiqued the papers of both Richard Ellis and Jack Foner. Marshall Sprague's paper was presented as the address at an evening banquet for symposium participants and was therefore not critiqued.

ROGER L. NICHOLS

The issue of the relationship of the military to the American frontier has been under consideration by historians for at least three or four decades. During that time both established historians and graduate students have beaten paths to historical societies and various research libraries. They have produced books, articles, and papers on topics as varied as army-Indian relations, the army and exploration, and the army as an agent of the government in national expansion. Moreover, numerous studies of individual military men as well as army activity in local and regional areas have been made. In general much good work has been done on these topics.

It is safe to say that most scholars accept the generalization that the military—or the regular army—had a significant impact upon American territorial expansion and the extension of settlement into frontier regions. At least few have bothered to debate the point. This being the case, you can imagine my surprise at finding at least one paper, if not two, which tends to support my sometimes lonesome contention that rarely did the army have more than a slight impact in most frontier regions. Despite the continuing flood of studies which focus on the frontier army, both authors call for more research on their respective topics. Thus, at least by inference, they admit that existing work does not adequately support generalizations about the significance of the army on the frontier.

Turning to the papers themselves it is clear that both authors employ similar approaches. While there seems no call for them to do so, both define the frontier as the west. Except for a brief, passing notice of Florida, at least half of the national frontier is simply

pushed aside. A second tactic, tied to regional limitations, is that of time. If a frontier existed prior to the Mexican War, one is hard pressed to locate it in either of these papers. Certainly time and space limitations imposed by the scholarly meeting format help explain the authors' choices, yet one cannot help but wonder if it is really necessary to delete half of the frontier and half of the 19th century.

The authors share still another approach. They equate the term military with the regular army. Certainly one would be hard pressed to support a claim that militia activities became a major political or social issue on most frontiers. Nevertheless it was mostly volunteer militiamen who campaigned against Black Hawk in Illinois and Wisconsin, who committed the atrocities at Sand Creek, and who helped defeat the Sioux in Minnesota during the 1862 war. Indeed, it was the frontiersman's basic distrust of the government and of the regular army throughout much of the 19th century which helps explain why the army had such a modest impact.

Another question which both authors must consider is that of how to approach the frontier army. Is it an institution, representing the government in the west, or should the local actions of individual officers and men be used as the criteria for measuring the army role in frontier society? Such questions are not easily answered.

Having looked at both papers in general it is time to consider them individually. Professor Ellis's paper examines the "Political Role of the Military." In it he faces a dilemma because there was only limited political activity by the soldiers so he concentrates on the exceptions to his thesis that they really did not have all that much impact. For much of the era he discusses, the frontier population was thin and scattered. At the same time the troops themselves were spread across the country in relatively small and isolated garrisons. With few civilians and often fewer troops in many frontier areas it is unlikely that there would be much political interaction.

For historians, a negative thesis is difficult to prove, and the results are more likely to be treated with a shrug or a "so what?" than any degree of enthusiasm. An obvious difficulty which Ellis faces is that to support his thesis of little army political impact, he needs to examine the political development of many states and territories in the west. Few military historians have dealt with frontier politics in much detail, so one must turn to the work of political historians. Despite citations to items dealing with Arizona, California, and New Mexico, he seems not to have carried out this task thoroughly. The works of Howard Lamar, Kenneth Owens, and Al Larson, just to cite

a few examples, do not appear to have been used. If such studies discussed few or no cases of army political activity, then they could have been used in support of the thesis that the military really had little impact.

Another problem which causes some difficulty is that of definition. Exactly what is a political action by the military? Unlike what has happened in some nations, the American army has never been a major power block within the political system. The military does not endorse candidates or parties, does not participate in political campaigns, does not threaten to overturn the results of elections, or to seize control of the government to ensure that its views are carried into action. Another question is what do the terms "involved in politics," "political controversy," and "politicize the frontier population," mean? In studies of frontier political life such expressions might be considered as self-explanatory. In studies of military activity that is not necessarily so. Ellis has interpreted these terms narrowly, and concludes rightly that the army played an insignificant political role on the frontier.

Had he not chosen to by-pass the earlier frontiers he would have had more exceptions to consider. There was, for example, Andrew Jackson's hot pursuit into Florida in 1817. It not only resulted in a congressional investigation of his conduct and divisions within the cabinet and administration, but also a diplomatic crisis with Britain and Spain as well. Certainly the so-called Mormon War of the 1850's stirred both debate in the east and action in the west. Such examples indicate the difficulty in deciding whether an issue is a frontier one or a national one. Without some clear-cut definition or focus one is left a little unsure.

Obviously then, the fundamental question is should Ellis focus on his thesis that the military played an insignificant role, and how much effort should he expend discussing the exceptions to that general idea. From the paper it seems that he felt forced into the latter position, and that perhaps he would have preferred being able to show that the army indeed had more impact than it did. He is unwilling to venture beyond his evidence, however, and therefore limits himself to considering the two major examples of California and New Mexico. In his treatment of them we see that in California the army constituted more a local irritant than a major issue. But in New Mexico that was certainly not the case. There, because of the Navajo at the Bosque Redondo and Carleton's supposed Democratic, pro-southern leanings, the army clearly became a partisan issue. Thus Ellis gives one clear example of direct political impact caused by the frontier army. Even

if he had included less clear-cut examples or added cases where an indirect impact could be shown, it is likely that he could not have reversed his thesis. In his conclusion, Ellis writes that "the army had a mixed impact on frontier politics during the nineteenth century." Perhaps, but it seems likely that a stronger case could have been made by focusing on evidence of why the army lacked political clout, rather than concentrating on the exceptions to his thesis.

In the second paper, Professor Foner discusses "The Socializing Role of the Military." At first glance his task appears easier than that of Ellis, because the socializing role of the army is a broader topic than its political role. Yet the author did not take advantage of this. Rather, he chose to sidestep the thrust of this session and, at least in part, the title of his own paper. In addition to dealing with the socializing role of the army he enlarges the scope of the paper and considers the impact which the frontier had upon the army. He accepts as a given factor the idea that the army contributed to western development. After a short discussion of military economic, defense, transportation, and publicity efforts, he turns his attention to the other side of the issue. He claims that historians often overlook the dynamic inter-relationship between the frontier and the army.

As did Professor Ellis, Professor Foner limits his frontier to the trans-Mississippi west. He limits himself even more, however, by compressing the time considered to the post-Civil War decades. But even more disturbing than the narrow time limit, is the lack of clear focus. Professor Foner neglects to say what the socializing role or process was. Therefore such duties as the protection of civilians, law enforcement, mapping, and road building are seen as a part of the process. At the same time the author does not say why this is true. Is socialization the process of civilizing a crude frontier population, the rough environment of the west, or both?

After a discussion of routine army matters, we are told "that the army had a profound impact on the frontier." Then Professor Foner shifts to the reverse—the impact of the frontier on the army. Among the problems soldiers encountered were low pay, inadequate housing, monotonous diet, alcoholism, desertion, and slowness of promotions. Although the author assumes that these difficulties resulted from frontier conditions, he provides little evidence to support that assertion. Throughout history armies limited to garrison duty have encountered similar problems. I would suggest that long enlistments, low pay, and boredom had little to do with the west. Similar conditions may well have existed in the mid-west, in the south, and even in the east, at

the same time. The officers' complaints about their lack of opportunity and slow promotions existed throughout most of the 19th century. With the exception of the War of 1812, the Mexican War, and the Civil War, rapid promotion was almost beyond the realm of possibility. So it seems to me varied assignments and rapid promotion were the exception and not the rule. Rather than resulting from the frontier, such problems came in large part from the basically anti-military views held by many Americans and certainly by the Congress. The idea that a strong army was needed only in times of major crises held sway. In fact, the frontier provided more excuse for having an army than there would have been without it, and thus it may well have made conditions better not worse!

The part of this paper which has the most possibility is that dealing with the experience of black soldiers in the army. The author contends that the frontier army gave blacks steady "income, food, clothing and shelter, plus the chance for some basic schooling, and an 'elevation of status'." His material supports the generalization, but leaves one major question unanswered: To what extent was the frontier necessary for the army to provide these benefits for blacks? Perhaps to the extent that western society had fewer people, there were likely to be fewer bigots there. Most recent studies of American racial attitudes, however, conclude that whites in all parts of the country disliked, feared, or even hated blacks. If that were true, then westerners were just as likely to despise them as anyone else, and the frontier army would provide no more opportunity for the "elevation of status" than an eastern army would have done at the same time. It is difficult to see how black soldiers could gain much status in society as a whole because they served as enlisted men at the bottom of an essentially forgotten or despised institution. Still, soldiering does provide more opportunity than day labor in the east or tenant farming in the south. Except for the continuing need for troops caused by difficulties with the western Indians, which may have provided some social mobility for blacks, there is slight evidence to support the contention that the frontier had a significant impact on the army in racial matters.

In fact the opposite case could be made. Despite several centuries of conflict and difficulties with the Indians, army attitudes and practices toward these people changed little. Most officers denounced soft-headed civilian humanitarians for mishandling Indian problems. Their view was that Indians were a military people and would understand a military solution. Defeat them soundly and then deal fairly and firmly with them and the issue would be settled.

In conclusion, these two papers have attempted to deal with broad and complex issues. Both have succeeded partially. Professor Ellis states that the army had little political impact on the frontier, and supports this by discussing exceptions to his thesis. To have explored the topic more convincingly he needed to have asked four questions: (1) What was the nature of frontier military institutions? (2) What were the probable circumstances under which military actions or policies would cause political controversy? (3) How often did such circumstances arise? (4) To what extent did political controversy result from those circumstances? The answers to these questions would have allowed him to explain more satisfactorily why the army had only a minimal political impact on the frontier.

Professor Foner was to have considered the social role of the army on the frontier, but shifted his discussion. In addition, he chose not to clarify what he meant by the socializing process. As a result, while his material seems related to his new focus, it left me with a sense of incompleteness or, more accurately, imprecision. Many of the claims made for the inter-relationship between the frontier and the army could be made for the army in non-frontier areas at the same time. To avoid these criticisms he might have considered a couple of questions also. (1) To what extent were social developments in frontier communities near army camps similar or different from frontier communities farther away from the troops? (2) In what ways were frontier army problems different from or similar to general military problems at the same time? Even if complete answers to these questions cannot be given, the effort would help to clarify parts of the issue.

Both authors acknowledge a mass of scholarly literature on the general topic of the army on the frontier, yet both call for more work on the relationship between the army and the frontier. If they were correct, what we have is an immense body of knowledge which fails to answer obvious, general questions. If more research on the frontier is really needed, any new studies must ask different questions. Military historians need to utilize the work of political and social historians to a far greater extent than they have done so far.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

Martin Ridge opened the discussion with an invitation to Richard Ellis and Jack Foner to respond to the critique of their papers.

Ellis noted that he had narrowed intentionally the chronological and geographical scope of his paper because of length limitations and because his basic research had been in California and New Mexico.

Foner explained that he had confined his study to the post-Civil War period because of his special interest in that phase of American history and in the socializing impact of the army on black troops who did not enter the regular army until after the Civil War when the desertion of white troops on the frontier created a need. He also explained that his concept of "elevated status" for blacks in the army was related largely to the image of black troops within the black community where they had considerable prestige.

Lt Colonel John H. Napier, USAF (HQ Air University), pointed out that there was a great deal of interaction between politics and the military on the "earlier frontier" during the Colonial period of American history. It was as a frontier military officer that George Washington began the reputation which eventually led to the presidency. The list of political leaders who either began or boosted their public careers through military service on the frontier is long and impressive. It includes such notable figures as William Henry Harrison, Andrew Jackson, Sam Houston, and Davy Crockett.

Henry P. Walker noted that neither Ellis nor Foner had mentioned the great impact of nation-wide political struggles on the army. In one case an army appropriation act failed because of a conflict between Democrats who controlled the House of Representatives and Republicans who controlled the Senate. This Congressional impasse left the army without pay for more than six months, a situation which clearly affected the frontier since approximately three-fourths of the army was stationed in the west.

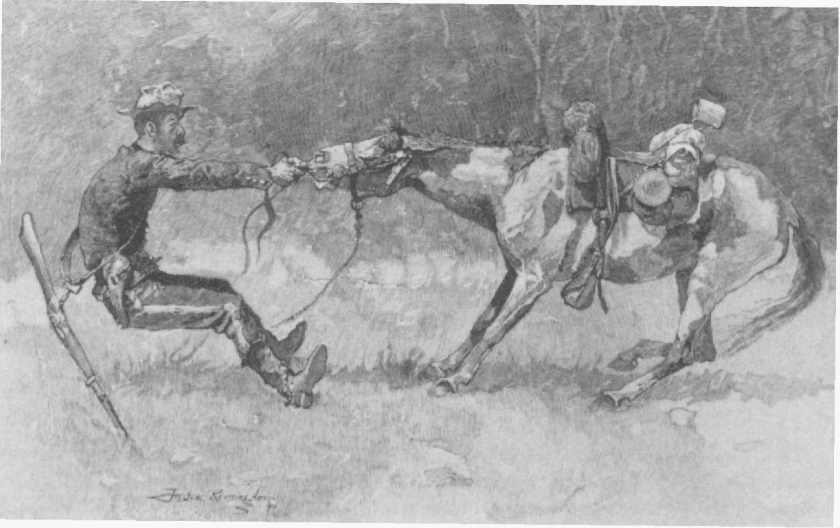
IV

MILITARY LIFE ON THE FRONTIER

The fourth session of the symposium was chaired by John K. Mahon of the University of Florida. Papers were read by Henry P. Walker of Tucson, Arizona, and by Sandra L. Myres of the University of Texas at Arlington. A commentary on the papers was delivered by James T. King of the University of Wisconsin.

Henry Walker's subject was "The Enlisted Soldier on the Frontier." He described the training and discipline of soldiers on the western frontier following the Civil War and concluded that contrary to popular myth frontier soldiers were poorly trained and poorly led. Walker suggested that the inability of United States cavalrymen to ride and shoot contributed to the embarrassing number of military disasters on the frontier including the infamous Custer Massacre.

Sandra Myres' paper, entitled, "The Ladies of the Army—Views of Western Life," is a survey of ten books written by army wives between 1858 and 1929. She points out that when these "ladies of the army" arrived on the frontier "they shared certain preconceived ideas and prejudices about the west, Indians, Mexicans and army life," and that they were apparently more apt to write about the details of frontier life than their husbands who were preoccupied with their military duties. Myres concludes that "a careful analysis of their books can aid us in gaining a better understanding of Victorian views of the west, add greatly to our knowledge and understanding of life on the nineteenth century frontier and help dispel many myths of army life and the role of women which still exist in western literature."



In these sketches of a “mounted” infantryman and of troopers of the Tenth Cavalry Frederick Remington captured some of the essence of the frontier enlisted man’s relationship with the horse. (Courtesy of *Century Magazine* (top) and *Harper’s Weekly* (bottom)).

THE ENLISTED SOLDIER ON THE FRONTIER

HENRY P. WALKER

LITTLE BIG HORN RIVER, MONTANA TERRITORY, 25 JUNE 1876—7th REGIMENT UNITED STATES CAVALRY, 611 STRONG; AMMUNITION EXPENDED, CARBINE 38,030 ROUNDS; PISTOL 2,954 ROUNDS: 282 KIA, 46 WIA. THE OPPOSITION, A COMBINED SIOUX AND CHEYENNE FORCE, APPROXIMATELY 2,500 STRONG, ABOUT 60 KIA AND 100 WIA.¹

WHITE BIRD CANYON, IDAHO TERRITORY, 17 JUNE 1877—TROOPS F AND H, 1st REGIMENT UNITED STATES CAVALRY, 100 STRONG: 34 KIA, 4 WIA. NEZ PERCE INDIANS, ABOUT 60 WARRIORS, 2 WIA.²

This is certainly not the impression of the frontier army as portrayed in motion pictures directed by John Ford or pictures starring John Wayne. Why is there such a difference? Admittedly Lieutenant Colonel George Armstrong Custer, at the Little Big Horn, and Captain David Perry, at White Bird Canyon, committed egregious errors but more than once well-trained soldiers have compensated for the folly of their leaders. In neither of these cases did this happen—something was missing.

What was missing was opportunity and encouragement for the

¹Stephen E. Ambrose, *Crazy Horse and Custer: The Parallel Lives of Two American Warriors* (Garden City, New York, 1975), pp. 392, 409; Edgar I. Stewart, *Custer's Luck* (Norman, OK, 1955), p. 481, each man started out with one hundred rounds of carbine ammunition, p. 179; W. A. Graham, *The Custer Myth* (New York, 1953), pp. 47, 54, 63; Kenneth M. Hammer, *The Springfield Carbine on the Western Frontier* (Crow Agency, Montana, 1962), p. 4. Monthly Return, June 1876, 7th Cavalry, Returns from Regular Army Cavalry Regiments, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1780s—1917, [RAGO], Record Group 94, National Archives.

²S. L. A. Marshall, *Crimson Prairie: The Wars Between the United States and the Plains Indians during the Winning of the West* (New York, 1972), p. 188.

enlisted man to learn his trade. Simply stated, the soldier on the frontier, mounted or afoot, was almost untrained and sometimes incompetent. The reasons for this situation are not hard to make out—too much country to control, too many “housekeeping” duties, too little training in the soldier’s basic skills.

Then as now the man behind the gun had to be trained and disciplined. Otherwise he might fail to perform his duties under extreme pressure. There is the famous case of the rifle found on the Gettysburg battlefield with a dozen charges of powder and ball—all because the soldier, in the heat of battle, forgot to put a cap on the nipple of his gun.

Even with training and discipline, however, the soldier must not be asked to perform the impossible. From the beginning of the army’s frontier experience there were too few men to control too much. The “frontier” was elastic and as time went on it expanded faster than the army. In 1825, the so-called Permanent Indian Frontier was established. This was a line beyond which it was thought no white man could, or would, settle, and west of which the Indian could roam at will. To hold this line, a string of 10 military posts was established, reaching from Fort Jesup in Louisiana to Fort Snelling in Minnesota. All lay in the fertile valley of the Mississippi-Missouri river system.³

In the two decades between the formation of the Permanent Indian Frontier and the Mexican War, there were a number of expeditions westward from the forts. In 1829 Major Bennet Riley with four companies of the 6th Infantry—there were no mounted troops in the United States Army at the time—escorted the annual caravan of Santa Fe traders as far as the Arkansas River which was then part of the Mexican border. Five years later nine companies of the newly formed Regiment of Dragoons marched from Fort Gibson, in the eastern part of the present state of Oklahoma, to the country of the Kiowa and Comanche in the vicinity of present-day Fort Sill, Oklahoma. Another major expedition was the march by 250 men of the 1st Regiment of Dragoons and a battery of mountain howitzers to South Pass in central Wyoming. In all these cases, and numerous other marches, the troops returned to their home stations on the edge of civilization.⁴

³Frederick J. Turner, *The Significance of the Frontier in American History* (El Paso: Academic Reprints, 1960), p. 2; Henry P. Walker, *The Wagonmasters: High Plains Freighting from the Earliest Days of the Santa Fe Trail to 1880* (Norman, OK, 1968), pp. 227-28.

⁴Otis E. Young, *The First Military Escort on the Santa Fe Trail, 1829* (Glendale, CA, 1952), *passim*; Willis B. Hughes, “The First Dragoons on the Western Frontier,” *Arizona and the West*, XII (Summer 1970), pp. 115-138.

The settlement of the Oregon question with Great Britain in 1846 and the treaty with Mexico two years later vastly increased the territory of the United States and the area of responsibility of the army. On the Pacific Coast, United States troops took up positions in the Presidio of San Francisco and the Presidio of Monterey in California in 1847 and established Fort Steilacoom and Vancouver Barracks two years later. In New Mexico, Fort Marcy was built at Santa Fe in 1846 and posts at Taos and Albuquerque were founded in the next year. With Oregon Territory opened for settlement, there was a great increase in traffic on the Overland Trail; and Fort Kearny was setup on the Platte River in central Nebraska, some 250 miles west of Fort Leavenworth, its supply base. The California Gold Rush, beginning in 1848, saw the purchase of Fort Laramie from the American Fur Company. This was another 300 miles west. United States soldiers were now scattered over the whole of the trans-Mississippi west.⁵

Not only was the army spread out, but it was spread very thin. The 10,317 officers and men authorized in 1848 were distributed from coast to coast in generally company-sized garrisons. So few soldiers, scattered in such small units, well out of supporting range of each other, would seem to call for the very best type of soldier—well trained and tightly disciplined. However, this was not the case.⁶

General Winfield, Scott, in his annual report to the Secretary of War for 1858, said: "Incessant calls for reinforcements received from the frontiers compel us, habitually, to forward recruits without the instruction that should precede service in the field, and on joining their regiments, perhaps in the act of pursuing an enemy, it is long before the deficiency can be supplied."⁷

General Scott did not mention the fact that even when the troops were not "pursuing an enemy," they could not get on with their training. There was too much else to do. Small though the garrisons were, they required a considerable number of buildings: barracks, officers' quarters, warehouses, stables, and probably quarters for laundresses. In the trans-Mississippi west, labor was scarce and expensive, and as a result, the soldiers had to be responsible for the erection and maintenance of the buildings. Colonel Archibald McCall of the

⁵Francis P. Prucha, *A Guide to the Military Posts of the United States, 1789-1895* (Madison, WI, 1964), *passim*.

⁶Francis B. Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army*, new ed., 2 vols. (Urbana, IL, 1965), II, pp. 594-95.

⁷*Annual Report of the Secretary of War, 1858*, p. 762.

Inspector General's Department reported that the officer commanding at Cebolleta, New Mexico, in October of 1850 was doing his best to maintain discipline but little attention could be paid to drill because of the urgent need for repairing their quarters. The colonel also noted that the garrison at Rayado, Companies G and I, 1st Dragoons, were not proficient in the prescribed drill "in consequence of the increased fatigue duty incident to the establishment of a new post."

Three years later Colonel Joseph K. F. Mansfield, also from the IG Department, reported that the status of discipline at Fort Massachusetts, Colorado, was good. The troops had received very little instruction in drill for the past year because of "the constant labor . . . in building the post." Mansfield, in writing to General John Wool, commanding the Pacific Department, recommended the employment of civilian mechanics and laborers in the construction of military posts, thus releasing soldiers for drill. He also decried the attempt by the War Department to reduce the cost of transportation of supplies by having the western posts operate farms for the production of cereal grains for the use of the men and long and short forage for the use of the animals.⁸

It was little compensation to the enlisted men on extra duty that their monthly wage of six to eight dollars was augmented by fifteen cents per diem and commutation of the whiskey ration. Over and over again the men complained that they had enlisted to fight Indians, not to work as "brevet architects" or common laborers.⁹

While the army was building its own living quarters and other essential buildings, its mission was to protect settlers and travelers from hostile Indians. To fulfill this mission the one overarching requirement was the ability of the individual soldier to shoot effectively with his weapon, be it rifle, carbine, or pistol. The casualty figures from the Little Big Horn and White Bird Canyon indicate that the soldiers involved were anything but "Deadeye Dicks." The generally low state of marksmanship displayed in these two engagements was of long standing. Colonel Mansfield in his 1853 report said:

My impressions are that the practice of firing at the target with ball and buck shot is

⁸*New Mexico in 1850: A Military View*, edited by Robert W. Frazer (Norman, OK, 1968), pp. 124, 146, 158; *Mansfield on the Condition of the Western Forts, 1853-54*, edited by Robert W. Frazer (Norman, OK, 1963), pp. 40, 69, 189.

⁹Henry P. Walker, "The Reluctant Corporal: the Autobiography of William Bladen Jett," *Journal of Arizona History [JAH]*, XII (Spring 1971), pp. 1-50, (Summer 1971), pp. 112-44; *Annual Report of the Secretary of War, 1857* (Washington, 1858), p. 12. Testimony of Edward D. Townsend in "Reduction of the Military Establishment," *House Report 384*, 44 Congress, 1 session (Serial 1624), p. 39.

not sufficient. The mere discharge of the guard of the previous day at the target to get rid of the load is not sufficient practice, and there is not interest enough taken in it by the men to produce any real improvement. It requires great use of the ball cartridge to make the soldier confident in what he can do with his musket . . . the soldier frequently flinches at the recoil, which practice alone can correct.

In his letter of September 29, 1854, to General Wool, Mansfield said, "I am of opinion that the practice of firing by the soldiers at long distances to familiarize them with the use of the ball cartridge is by no means sufficient. . . ." ¹⁰

The low state of weapons training prior to the Civil War cannot be blamed on lack of ammunition. Colonel Mansfield reported twelve to eighteen thousand rounds on hand in many of the west coast forts. At Benecia Arsenal, California, he condemned three barrels of rifle powder, one barrel of musket powder, 7,000 ball and buck cartridges for the musket, and 1,500 ball cartridges for the rifle, all because the powder had caked with time. ¹¹

Writing from Santa Fe in 1855, a civilian clerk for the army reported that the camp of a detachment of recruits, some 500 strong, on the march from Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, to Santa Fe had been swept by a prairie fire. Many muskets discharged from the heat of the fire, actually killing one soldier and wounding others. After things had calmed down a bit, the charges were drawn from approximately 325 weapons and it was found that 140 had been loaded with the ball first and then the powder. The officers in charge of the detachment expressed their unhappiness with the quality of the troops they were marching across the plains. In the detachment were 150 Dragoon recruits, described as "being mostly Americans," who might have put up a fight if attacked except for the fact that each man had a lead horse to worry about and did not have a weapon anyway. ¹²

Captain William J. Hardee's book, *Rifle and Light Infantry Tactics*, prepared under the direction of the War Department, appeared in 1855 and went through many editions for both the Union and Confederate armies. This drill manual led the individual soldier, step by step,

¹⁰Mansfield, pp. 67, 196.

¹¹*Ibid.*, pp. 152, 157, 169.

¹²John H. Moore, "Letters from a Santa Fe Army Clerk," *New Mexico Historical Review*, XL (April 1965), p. 143.

through the operations of loading and pointing his rifle, but it did not cover marksmanship training.¹³

In the introduction to *A System of Target Practice for the Use of Troops When Armed with the Musket, Musket-rifle, Rifle or Carbine* published in 1858, Captain Henry Heth, 10th Infantry, said:

The inaccuracy of the soldiers of our army in firing has been a matter of surprise and regret to many officers. This has been especially remarked upon since the introduction of the expanding ball [Minié Ball] into our service.

When we reflect that many of the rank and file composing our army have never fired a gun previous to their enlistment, indeed, that some have never had a gun in their hands, it would be truly surprising were such men good shots.

At this time, the typical enlisted man was foreign-born, chiefly German or Irish in origin. An additional complication in training was the fact that a number of men were recruited who could neither speak nor understand English.¹⁴

Two years before the publication of his manual, Captain Heth had received a copy of the *London Illustrated News* from his friend, First Lieutenant Winfield Scott Hancock. In the magazine was an article by Lord Hardinge of the British Army which described, with illustrations, the school of rifle practice recently established in England. Heth tried out the system in his company and remarked that by keeping a record of each shot fired, he found that in a six-week period the accuracy of his men improved by 300 percent. Many years later in writing his *Memoirs*, Heth, in the wisdom and conservatism of age, reduced the improvement to 75 percent.

Based on this experience, the Captain prepared a pamphlet, with plates, that spelled out the details of his system. He was on the point of sending a copy to the Adjutant General when he received a circular from the General-in-Chief, Winfield Scott, directing all officers having independent commands to forward, through channels, "their views as to the best method of obtaining greater accuracy of fire in the Army." The pamphlet was duly forwarded and, when he passed through Washington on leave, Captain Heth called on Secretary of War John B. Floyd, who prided himself on being a rifleman. The sec-

¹³William J. Hardee, *Rifle and Light Infantry Tactics* . . . (Philadelphia, 1861).

¹⁴Henry Heth, *A System of Target Practice for the Use of Troops when Armed with Musket, Rifle-musket, Rifle, or Carbine* (Philadelphia 1858), p. 9; Mansfield, p. 70; Marcus Cunliffe, *Soldiers and Civilians: The Martial Spirit in America, 1775-1865* (Boston, 1968), p. 119.

retary put Heth on special duty to prepare an official manual. With all the reports from the field, Heth went to work and submitted a final draft on February 8, 1858.

Heth's final system was essentially a translation of the French manual *Instruction provisoire sur la Tir, a l'usage des bataillons de Pied* [Light Infantry]. It pointed out that men who consistently fired inaccurately had no knowledge of ballistics or the principles of shooting. The complete system called for annual target practice with competition at company, regiment, and army levels. Records were to be kept at the company and reports forwarded to higher headquarters. The practice of unloading the guns of the old guard by firing at a target was continued. The range to be fired was prescribed: 100 yards from January through March and then by 100-yard increments for each subsequent quarter of the year. The manual suggested that "when practicable, the best shot will be credited with a tour of police or fatigue duty."¹⁵

Unfortunately for the troopers at Little Big Horn and White Bird Canyon and numerous other engagements with hostile Indians, there was a great gap between theory and practice. Target practice varied widely and was controlled chiefly by the whim of the commander, the tradition of the various regiments, and the availability of ammunition. When General E. O. C. Ord commanded the Department of California in 1869, he took steps to encourage improved marksmanship in his department. General Orders No. 42, Headquarters Department of California, San Francisco, June 30, 1869, directed weekly target practice and monthly reports detailing the number of shots per man, size of target, etc. The best shot was to be excused from a tour of guard or fatigue duty. The worst shot was to be presented, at company parade, "with a leather medal, colored green." This order allowed the local commander a great deal of leeway in compliance.¹⁶

Colonel Philip St. George Cooke, in his book *Cavalry Tactics*, written on the eve of the Civil War, set forth a course of target firing, both mounted and dismounted, at different ranges and at different gaits of the horse. He stated, "—there will be a record of target firing in every 3 months in every squadron." However, there was no prescribed course of preparatory training. The cavalry's chief weapon, the carbine, kicked like a mule, requiring much practice to avoid

¹⁵Henry Heth, *The Memoirs of Henry Heth*, edited by James L. Morrison, Jr. (Westport, CT, 1974), pp. 135-42.

¹⁶Russell F. Weigley, *History of the United States Army* (New York, 1967), p. 231; *General Orders No. 42*, Headquarters Department of California, San Francisco, June 30, 1869, RAGO, RG 94.

flinching. Cooke's manual did not make clear how many rounds were to be fired by each man.¹⁷

Most of the enlisted men who left recollections of their recruit training mention "drill" but make no mention of target practice as part of that training. Some rifle or pistol firing may have been encompassed in the word "drill," or, as seems more likely considering the novelty of the experience, the omission from the recollections came about because there was no such practice. Even the most professional leaders did not carry training beyond the parade ground. Drill consisted of the maneuvers needed to move troops on the battlefield and to assure control during the confusion of close combat.¹⁸

Things were little, if any, better after the Civil War. In 1874 the War Department issued General Order No. 103 which said, in part, "The limited appropriation available for the supply of small-arm ammunition, renders it imperatively necessary that the utmost economy, consistent with the interests of the service, be practiced in its expenditure." Officers conducting recruit training were authorized almost unlimited use of blank cartridges (which produced no kick) during the first year's enlistment and 10 rounds of ball cartridge per month per man thereafter. A note, added to the order, said that allowance of 120 rounds per man per year for an army of 25,000 men would consume all the ammunition that could be manufactured with the appropriation of \$75,000. Therefore any additional demands would have to be met from the small stock on hand. Guards would no longer unload their piece by shooting at a target. Instead they would withdraw the cartridge and return it to the cartridge box. In the following year, with the appropriation for the manufacture of metallic cartridges still \$75,000, General Order No. 83 increased the ammunition allowance to 15 rounds per man per month for target practice but only for the cavalry service.¹⁹

Since the days of the long rifle and the turkey shoot, a considerable body of Americans had taken an interest in rifle shooting as a sport. After the Civil War, Captain George W. Wingate, of the 22nd Regiment of the New York National Guard, prepared a *Manual of Rifle Practice* which was published in six installments in the *Army and Navy Journal*, late in 1870 and early 1871. In the next year an

¹⁷Philip St. G. Cooke, *Cavalry Tactics* . . . (Philadelphia, 1861), pp. 69, 115-16.

¹⁸Weigley, *History of the United States Army*, p. 231.

¹⁹*General Order No. 103*, War Department, Adjutant General's Office [WD-AGO], Washington, August 5, 1874 (Washington, 1875); *General Order No. 83*, WD-AGO, September 23, 1875 (Washington, 1876).

expanded version was published as a book which was quite generally adopted by the National Guard.²⁰

The regular army did not pay much attention to Wingate's work. However, to arouse interest in better shooting, hunting was encouraged wherever practicable. Cartridges could be bought for hunting, if supplies allowed, at the rate of 2-1/2 cents for carbine ammunition and 3 cents for rifle ammunition. Obsolescent weapons could be retained for hunting purposes, as long as the ammunition was available. There can be little doubt that this was a help only to the men who could already shoot effectively.²¹

The catastrophes of Little Big Horn and White Bird Canyon finally roused the War Department to undertake an effective program to improve the marksmanship of the army. On September 15, 1877, Brigadier General Stephen Vincent Benét, Chief of Ordnance, directed Colonel T. T. S. Laidley to prepare a system of target practice, with illustrative plates. A month later, General Benét explained to Secretary of War G. W. McCrary that the system then in use had been published in May of 1862 "when the metallic cartridge was in its infancy, and the breechloading rifle, depending on the cartridge for its success, still classified among the probabilities."²²

The manual was very complete, starting with the construction and maintenance of the rifle and cartridge, and proceeding through dry-run aiming practice, firing positions, record keeping and the construction of ranges. Officers were recruited to fire some rounds each year to show that they were qualified to act as instructors. Colonel Laidley stated that, early in his training, the soldier should have it impressed upon him that one of his most important duties was to learn to shoot well, "that his own safety and that of his companions may depend upon his ability to deliver his fire with effect. . . ."²³

Laidley's manual was adopted by General Order No. 86 of 1879 as the officially approved system of instruction in the use of the rifle. The final paragraph of the order read:

Until there shall be provided by proper legislation a system of rewards involving the expenditure of money to encourage good marksmanship. Department Com-

²⁰*Americans and Their Guns*, compiled by James R. Trefethen and edited by James E. Serven (Harrisburg, PA, 1967), pp. 31-32.

²¹*General Order No. 103*, 1874; *General Order No. 47*, WD-AGO, June 9, 1876 (Washington, 1877).

²²Theodore T. S. Laidley, *Course of Instruction in Rifle Firing* (Philadelphia, 1879), p. iii.

²³*Ibid.*, pp. 14-16.

manders will grant such indulgences to the best marksmen in their commands as they may think proper.²⁴

It may be noted that this manual of rifle marksmanship was prepared by an Ordnance officer—not by an infantryman.

The issuance of General Order 86 drew prompt reaction. In the following year, in General Order 36, there was published a letter from an unidentified correspondent who recommended the use of round balls and greatly reduced propelling charges, in lieu of the standard load, for shooting gallery type practice. Targets were to be scaled down in proportion to the reduction in range. It was claimed that this system would allow almost unlimited shooting at very little cost.²⁵

In 1880 army rifle teams, properly trained and armed with the new Springfield rifle, ran roughshod over the National Guard teams at the Creedmore range on Long Island. Finally, in May of 1881 an army-wide marksmanship program was initiated by General Order No. 44. The competition was to be organized on three levels: department, division, and army. Firing was to be done at 220 yards, standing; 400 yards, kneeling; and 600 yards, prone. At division level, the first prize was to be a gold medal of \$500 valuation; the next three prizes were to be “marksman” rifles with the winner’s name duly inscribed on the butt. The next eight men were to receive silver medals valued at \$5.00 each. Publicity was given to the program when the winners in the divisions of the Atlantic, Missouri, and Pacific were announced in General Order 83 of the same year. The Arizona marksmen did not enter the competition—the troops were busy shooting at moving targets whenever they could bring their weapons to bear on elusive Apaches.²⁶

As far as the mounted soldier was concerned, next in importance to the ability to handle his individual weapon effectively, was the ability to ride and care for his horse. Though there was more training of recruits in equitation than in marksmanship, it was very uneven in quantity, if not in quality. An anonymous dragoon recruit at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, in 1859, recalled that Reveille was at day-break. Stables started fifteen minutes later and lasted for an hour,

²⁴*General Order No. 86*, WD-AGO, August 16, 1879 (Washington, 1880).

²⁵*General Order No. 36*, WD-AGO, May 13, 1880 (Washington, 1881).

²⁶Trefethen, *Americans and Their Guns*, pp. 86-87; *General Order No. 44*, WD-AGO, May 10, 1881; *General Order No. 88*, WD-AGO, December 13, 1881 (Washington, 1882).

then came breakfast. Guard Mount was at 9 o'clock, followed by carbine drill on foot until 11:00. Sabre exercise was from 12:00 to 1:00. Dinner was at 2:00 P.M. followed by mounted drill until half an hour before sunset. Stables again for an hour and then supper. The evening was devoted to maintenance of uniform and equipment. Tattoo came at 9:00 P.M. and Lights Out 15 minutes later.²⁷

When Percival G. Lowe enlisted in the 2nd Dragoons in October of 1849, he was sent to the school for recruits for the mounted service at Carlisle Barracks. As a boy he had had good horses and the reputation of being a reckless rider. Horses were kept at the school specifically for training recruits. Drill consisted of mounting bareback, then with saddles on which the stirrups were crossed over the pommel, and then going through the evolutions at a walk. In a few days, a squad of the more advanced riders, still with stirrups crossed, drilled at a trot and then at a gentle gallop.²⁸

Ami F. Mulford enlisted in 1876 in the 7th Cavalry, then called "Custer's Avengers." He went through recruit training at Fort Leavenworth; but it was not until he reached the camp of Company B, outside Fort Abraham Lincoln, North Dakota, that he was introduced to a horse. The first experience lasted about an hour and resulted in numerous saddle blisters. The horse was a veteran. As Mulford turned away after trying his mount to the picket line, the beast reached around and nipped him right on the sorest part of his anatomy.²⁹

When William Bladen Jett enlisted in 1881, the cavalry recruit school was at Jefferson Barracks, Missouri. Jett remarked that

"It was very amusing to see some of the men, who had never been on a horse before, learning to ride. One day a horse with a recruit on him, turned deliberately out of column and walked back to the stable. His rider had his legs up like a frog and was holding onto the reins with both hands."

On another occasion, while riding in the ring at a walk, trot, and gallop, a recruit fell off his horse and was trampled by some of the following horses. The officer in charge said, "Get up, you will never make a good soldier till you get killed two or three times." The re-

²⁷Anonymous, "Reminiscences of Some Incidents in the Career of an United States Dragoon between 1819 and 1844," *Texas Quarterly*, IX (Autumn 1966), pp. 7-20.

²⁸Percival G. Lowe, *Five Years a Dragoon ('49 to '54) and Other Adventures on the Great Plains*, new ed. (Norman, OK, 1965), pp. 4-7.

²⁹Ami F. Mulford, *Fighting Indians in the 7th United States Cavalry: Custer's Favorite Regiment*, new ed. (Bellvue, NB, 1970), p. 28.

cruit apparently did not enjoy the prospect of multiple deaths; he went over the hill during the night.³⁰

Possibly the most biting comment on the state of equitation in the frontier army came from Captain Charles B. Throckmorton, 4th Artillery, in 1878. Eight batteries of the 4th had been in the field, serving chiefly as infantry, against the Nez Perce. After observing some of the units of the 1st Cavalry, he said:

There did not appear to be that confidence between men and horses that should exist to make a perfect cavalryman, but the height of the men's ambition seemed to be, to be able to stick to their horses' back from one camp to another, many with difficulty keeping their seats when a sharp trot was taken up.

It is interesting to note that, writing some 30 years after the event, General O. O. Howard, when referring to Captain Perry's troops of the 1st Cavalry as they marched out on the trail that was to lead to White Bird Canyon, wrote, "One never saw two finer troops of cavalry than those which set out for the front on the evening of the 15th of May."³¹

Poor horsemanship was more than a matter of stiff legs and sore buttocks. Ignorance or indifference on the part of the soldier could very soon ruin a horse, and a dismounted cavalryman could be a danger to himself and to his buddies. Private Jett recalled that "some men never seemed to learn how to ride with any ease either to themselves or the horse. Sitting back in the saddle and with toes pointed out they would wobble around in the saddle to their own discomfort and also to that of the horse, frequently making the horse's back very sore." One of his fellow troopers, whose horse developed a sore back on a long march, was made to walk for ten days carrying the saddle. He commented on another soldier who, while mounting, had to pull on the pommel and cantle of the saddle "wriggling and climbing very much as a man climbs the trunk of a tree."³²

Even training in such a daily and routine operation as Guard Mount seems to have been very erratic. An anonymous private of the

³⁰Walker, "Reluctant Corporal," *JAH*, XII (Spring 1971), p. 8.

³¹Oliver O. Howard, *My Life and Experiences Among our Hostile Indians*, new ed. (New York, 1972), p. 280; Oliver O. Howard to J. C. Kelton, Headquarters, Department of the Columbia, Portland, Oregon, January 19, 1876, in Report of the Army Equipment Board, WD-AGO, Letters Received, 1806-1889, RG 94.

³²Unpublished portion of autobiography of William Bladen Jett ("Reluctant Corporal") in author's files.

Regiment of Dragoons recalled that while he was at Carlisle Barracks for training he pulled guard duty about once a week, as he said, "More for instruction than use." On the other hand, James Larson, who enlisted in the 1st Cavalry (later redesignated 4th Cavalry) just before the Civil War, went through recruit training at Jefferson Barracks without any instruction in Guard Mount. It was not until he reached Fort Riley, Kansas, that his name came up on the roster for guard. Fortunately for him, he was well down the line at Guard Mount and was able, out of the corner of his eye, to observe the more experienced men and get through the inspection of arms without a blunder.³³

Some training was carried out by the enlisted men without the help, or even knowledge of, their officers, and possibly the non-coms as well. Augustus Meyers, who enlisted in 1854, recalled that one soldier of filthy habits was taken to a creek and thoroughly scrubbed with sand and water until his skin was raw. Undoubtedly one such treatment was sufficient. Petty thieves were soundly thrashed, but not a single one of them complained to the officers.³⁴

The poorly trained recruit may not have been any great threat to hostile Indians, but at times he could be a distinct menace to his fellow soldiers. A sergeant of Company B, 3rd Infantry, writing during the Rogue River War of the early 1850s, reported that one night a corporal of the guard, while making his round of the sentries, was shot and killed by a recruit on sentry duty. He added, "This is the third corporal of the guard whom I have known shot by green sentinels."³⁵

Nervous overreaction by green troops under combat conditions is understandable to some extent, but there seems to have been no attention paid to field exercises simulating combat that would help to steady new men. The practice march and bivouac by a party of some 15 recruits of the 6th Cavalry in 1879 seems to have been the exception rather than the rule. A lieutenant and 25 Apache scouts acted as hostiles to add realism to this training operation.³⁶

³³Anonymous, "Reminiscences," *Texas Quarterly*, IX, 1; James Larson, *Sergeant Larson, 4th Cavalry* (San Antonio, TX, 1925), pp. 61, 66-70.

³⁴Augustus Meyers, *Ten Years in the Ranks, U.S. Army* (New York, 1914), p. 43.

³⁵Anonymous, "Soldiering in Oregon," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, XIII (September 1856), pp. 522-24.

³⁶Don Rickey, Jr., *Forty Miles a Day on Beans and Hay: The Enlisted Soldier Fighting The Indian Wars* (Norman, OK, 1963), pp. 86-87.

It was not often that the army acquired a recruit like English-born Reginald Bradley. Born in 1867, he came to the United States in 1888, worked for a while in Virginia, then as a cowboy in New Mexico. When his job ran out, he enlisted at Fort Bowie, Arizona, in C Troop of the 4th Cavalry. He said, "After only a few days of training, I began regular duty in the troop." Reginald had learned to ride in England and, presumably, to shoot, as he bought a 41/40 Winchester and a Colt six-shooter before leaving home. He had had some military training at school and found it very easy to adapt to the American drill. As a result he was joshed about being a deserter from the British Army. Eventually he held certificates as Marksman and Sharpshooter for proficiency with the carbine.³⁷

Not until the late seventies were effective steps taken for improving the training of the man in the ranks. In 1878 First Lieutenant (Brevet Lieutenant Colonel) Edmund V. Rice, 5th Infantry, testified before the Committee on Military Affairs of the House of Representatives in reference to a proposed reorganization of the army. He stated unequivocally that enlisted men should be drilled in the States before being sent to the frontier. After a recent increase of 150 recruits, the 5th had an average of 50 men to a company. Of these only about half were for duty because of calls for guard, drivers, teamsters, and other post details. He went on to say that "when there is a small number of troops at a station it is impossible to send out anybody." He added that "one-half of the posts of the army have no drills. The companies are so small that all the men are occupied in taking care of the post." Training certainly was impossible under such conditions. The officers on the frontier cannot be faulted too heavily if their men were not the finest of soldiers. Altogether too often there was only one officer on a small post and he was Post Commander, Post Quartermaster, Post Commissary of Subsistence, as well as Commander of Troops.³⁸

By 1887, a new day was beginning to dawn. A young woman visiting at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, in that year, wrote: "There is to be a cavalry and infantry drill every day now, much to the disgust of every-

³⁷There were men in Bradley's troop who were technically deserters from the British Army as they had left England during their period of seven years reserve time following a regular five-year enlistment. Reginald Bradley Collection, Arizona Historical Society, Tucson, Arizona.

³⁸Testimony of Edmund V. Rice in *House Miscellaneous Document 56*, 45 Congress, 2 Session (Serial 1818), pp. 243-46.

one except the commanding officer. The former officer was an easy going sort of man and the folk are spoiled.”³⁹

Just as the army, at long last, was paying attention to the matter of improved shooting, another major development occurred which enabled the army to pay more attention to overall efficiency. The rapid expansion of the railroad net in the western territories and the increased density of population made it advisable to abandon many small posts. Beginning about 1884, the troops were concentrated in larger garrisons as quickly as permanent quarters could be built for them. This concentration resulted in improved economy of post operation and more time for training.⁴⁰

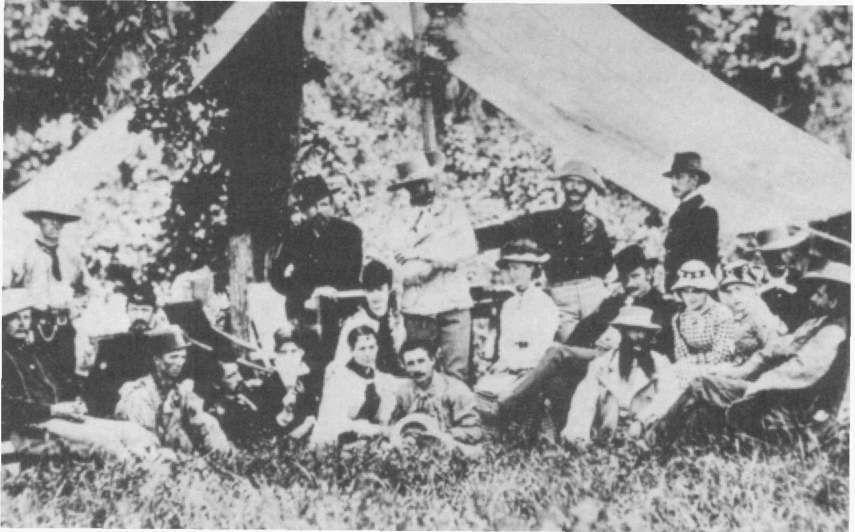
The irregularity of recruit training was directly traceable to the seasons of the year. As recruit detachments were usually dispatched as guards for wagon trains carrying supplies to the frontier depots, they had to wait until the spring grass was high enough to provide forage for the draft and saddle stock. Men who enlisted for one of the frontier regiments in the fall or winter usually spent 3 to 6 months in one of the recruit depots. Soldiers who joined up in the spring or early summer were sent out as soon as possible. It took the tragedies of Little Big Horn and White Bird Canyon to shock headquarters into establishing a program to improve army marksmanship. As the Indian wars tapered off, training programs were instituted. General Nelson Miles in Arizona sent companies of cavalry out with the mission of reaching another fort despite blocking efforts of other units.

When the Spanish-American War erupted in 1898, whatever the blunders in planning and lack of preparation, the enlisted soldier of the United States Army proved himself to be ready. While there was no need for mounted service, man for man, he was probably the world's best military marksman “compared with the soldiers of any of the world's standing armies.”⁴¹ Thank Goodness!

³⁹Marion T. Brown: *Letters from Fort Sill, 1886-1887*, edited by C. Richard King (Austin, TX, 1970), p. 56.

⁴⁰Prucha, *Guide to Military Posts*, p. 34.

⁴¹Rickey, *Forty Miles a Day*, p. 105.



Elizabeth Custer (center wearing small black hat) and her famous husband enjoying an outing with friends. (Courtesy of Denver Public Library)

THE LADIES OF THE ARMY—VIEWS OF WESTERN LIFE

SANDRA L. MYRES

Americans generally, the easterners particularly, have traditionally shared an interest in and fascination for that vaguely defined region known as "the West." As G. Edward White points out in his provocative work, *The Eastern Establishment and the Western Experience*:

Of the three regions broadly conceived as subdividing the continental United States, the West has had the most dramatic impact upon the American imagination . . . and far more than . . . other regions, has tended to elicit imaginative responses . . .¹

Concepts of the west and the frontier also have had a profound effect on American literature and letters. From the early years of the colonies to the present day there has been a consistently large production of articles, journals, essays, histories and novels exploring every aspect of western life and attempting to define, describe, explain and interpret the west and the frontier experience. In the pre-Civil War years, many major American authors (including Cooper, Hawthorne, Poe, Thoreau, Melville and Irving) dealt with western themes² while narratives of exploration and discovery, western journals, emigrant guides, and fiction and nonfiction works extolling the exploits of the mountainmen, fur-traders, frontier scouts and the first hardy pioneers poured from eastern presses and attracted reading audiences throughout the United States and Europe.

Following the Civil War, the dime novels produced by Beadle and Adams' "literary factory" attracted thousands of readers while the more sophisticated devoted themselves to the contemplation and

¹G. Edward White, *The Eastern Establishment and the Western Experience* (New Haven, 1968), p. 1.

²These themes are discussed at length in Edwin Fussell, *Frontier: American Literature and the American West* (Princeton, 1965).

enjoyment of Theodore Roosevelt, Owen Wister, and Frederick Remington.³ Americans and Europeans alike followed the adventures of Buffalo Bill, Calamity Jane, and Wyatt Earp and read with interest and curiosity in newspapers, weekly "gazettes" and monthly magazines vivid, if somewhat inaccurate accounts, complete with illustrations from "artists in the field," of battles between soldiers, frontiersmen, and Indians and life in raw and often violent western towns.

Most observers and writers on or about the western scene were men, but as Jo Beth Jacobs has pointed out, "some of the most reliable and richly detailed journals," were produced by women.⁴ Another author, male historian Merrill Mattes, has praised the "female journalists" as "superior observers and recorders."⁵ Prominent among these "female journalists" were some of the most perceptive and unheralded observers of the western scene—the wives of the frontier army's men in blue. Almost unnoticed among the more flamboyant and famous writers of the period, the army wives' journals, diaries and letters provide one of the richest sources of information on life in the west during the last years of the American frontier. The army authoresses offer comments and insights into western life which, if not as exciting as the hordes of bloodthirsty savages, armed desperados, death defying heroes and delicate heroines of the popular press, nor as elegant in literary tone as the diaries and travel guides produced by European noblemen and gentlewomen and eastern tourists, still give a vivid and detailed view of western life.

In retrospect, the literary production of the army wives is prodigious in relation to their numbers. The post-Civil War frontier army was never large, and the entire officer corps numbered no more than 2,000 at any one time.⁶ Many of the officers were never stationed in the west, and many who were either did not marry or left their wives and families in the east. Yet, from the relatively small group of army wives who did accompany their husbands west, a surprising number

³White's *The Eastern Establishment* includes a discussion of the work of these three men and their influence on Eastern opinion.

⁴Jo Beth Jacobs, "The Westering Male Through Victorian Eyes," paper presented at the Thirteenth Annual Conference of the Western History Association, October, 1973, Fort Worth, Texas.

⁵Quoted in *ibid.*

⁶The army appropriation act of 1874 provided funds for an army of 25,000 enlisted men and approximately 2,000 officers, but the companies were usually far below strength. This situation persisted until the end of the Indian wars. See Robert M. Utley, *Frontier Regulars, The United States Army and the Indian, 1866-1891* (New York, 1973), pp. 14-18.

of journals and reminiscences appeared in print in either article or book length form prior to 1920, and many more have been discovered and published since that time.

I have chosen for discussion ten books written by army wives between 1858 and 1929. All were prepared for publication by the authoresses rather than by editors or professional historians and, with the exception of Alice Baldwin's work, were printed by large eastern houses.⁷ In chronological order, these include books by Teresa Vielé, Margaret S. Carrington, Elizabeth Custer, Lydia S. Lane, Mrs. Orsemus Boyd, Ellen Biddle, Martha Summerhayes, Frances Roe, Frances Carrington, and Alice Blackwood Baldwin.⁸ These ten women came from similar eastern, middle-class backgrounds, all spent several years at western posts and, again with the exception of Alice Baldwin, returned east following their years of frontier service. At the time they arrived on the frontier, they shared certain preconceived ideas and prejudices about the west, Indians, Mexicans, and army life; and their diaries and books reflect not only their interest in the west but, in some cases, new insights and viewpoints gained from their years of personal experience.

Many of the ladies "joined the army" with dreams of leading a romantic, even heroic, life in the "Great West." They had all sorts of misconceptions about the glamour and excitement of the military life, and most approached frontier service with a sense of adventure and a desire to see new places and explore new things. For example, after an exciting, fun-filled year in Germany with the family of General Weste, Martha Dunham returned to the States anxious to continue a "military existence." "I concluded," she wrote, "the only thing to do was to join the army myself."⁹ She promptly married Second

⁷Although other journals and reminiscences were published during the period, they appeared in western papers or magazines or were privately printed in limited editions. Since one of the purposes of this study is to assess the army women's influence on eastern opinions of the west and the army, these ten books were selected on the basis of their date of publication and on the premise that they probably received fairly wide distribution in the east. Although Teresa Vielé's book first appeared in 1858, a third edition was published in 1864, and I have thus included it on the basis that it was in circulation during the post-Civil War period. Alice Baldwin's work, although published in the west, was intended for eastern distribution and, despite the title, includes a long section of personal reminiscences originally intended for separate publication under the title "Tales of the Old Army by an Old Army Girl."

⁸Many of these works appeared in several editions. See Appendix A for a list of the early editions and post-1930 reprints.

⁹Martha Summerhayes, *Vanished Arizona: Recollections of the Army Life of a New England Woman* (Glorieta, New Mexico, 1970), p. 20.

Lieutenant Jack Summerhayes and left for Fort Russell, Cheyenne, Wyoming Territory. Teresa Griffin was even more enamoured with the idea of "joining the army." Of her marriage in 1850 to Lieutenant Egbert Vielé, she recalled, "No recruit ever entered the service with more enthusiasm than I did or felt more eager to prove himself a soldier. Mars would have gloried in the wonderful female that my imagination loved to point, and to follow her heroic footsteps seemed a high ambition. . . ."10

But such illusions were quickly shattered by the realities of dreary, windswept posts, inadequate medical and educational facilities and the monotony of daily existence. The women soon found that army regulations made no provision for wives, other than laundresses, and the army's "benign neglect," coupled with the many inconveniences of frontier life brought frequent complaints.¹¹ All the journalists commented on the difficulties of western travel, poor transportation and inadequate allowances for the frequent, and often untimely, changes of station and the inconvenience of disposing of household possessions at one post and acquiring new ones at the next. Another favorite theme was the lack of suitable quarters and furnishings and the army's quaint custom of allowing senior officers to dispossess families of lower rank from already established homes (what Merrill Mattes called the army's game of "musical chairs"¹²). In fact, sudden and unexpected changes of quarters were so common that a sort of folk literature developed about these incidents. A favorite story, repeated frequently by the ladies, was about a lieutenant's wife who was moved from a three room "suite" to a single room to a hallway in only a few months. When a major moved on post and evicted the family from the hallway the lieutenant was purported to have resigned his commission in disgust.¹³ The ladies also make frequent mention of the monotony of army rations and the exorbitant prices extracted by post sutlers and local storekeepers for canned goods and

¹⁰Teresa G. Vielé, "Following the Drum": *A Glimpse of Frontier Life*, edited by James Day (Austin, 1968), pp. 13-14.

¹¹Undoubtedly the wives would have agreed with Elizabeth Custer who noted indignantly, "The book of army regulations enters into such minute detail in its instructions giving the number of hours that bean soup should boil, that it would be natural to suppose that a paragraph or two might be wasted on an officer's wife." Elizabeth Custer, "Boots and Saddles" or *Life in Dakota with General Custer*, edited by Jane R. Stewart (Norman, OK, 1961), p. xv.

¹²Merrill J. Mattes, *Indians, Infants and Infantry: Andrew and Elizabeth Burt on the Frontier* (Denver, 1960), p. 8.

¹³There are several versions of this story. The one included here is from Mrs. Orsemus Boyd, *Cavalry Life in Tent and Field* (New York, 1894).

fresh produce.¹⁴ Low pay, the economies necessary to “make ends meet,” lack of schools, churches, feminine companionship and recreational facilities, and the difficulties in locating and keeping household servants also elicited comment.

Along with their complaints, however, the ladies also documented the more pleasant aspects of garrison life—parties and dances, amateur theatricals, colorful parades and band concerts at the larger posts, fancy dinners for visiting dignitaries, an occasional wedding or special holiday celebration, hunting, fishing, picnics, athletic competitions and long rides across the prairies and plains and the comings and goings both in “officer’s country” and along Sud’s Row. The army wives’ descriptions of camp and garrison life have been the subject of several excellent studies,¹⁵ and it does not seem profitable to reiterate them in detail. Rather, I should like to briefly discuss several topics of more interest to modern historians—the women’s sympathetic, if sometimes erroneous, opinions on western geography, “aboriginal” inhabitants, both Indian and Mexican, and on western society, mores, manners and prospects for future development.

Although without exception the ladies found reason to complain about the climate—searing desert heat; sudden, violent, bone-chilling northers; Gulf Coast hurricanes and northern blizzards; unexpected rainstorms and flash floods followed by prolonged droughts—most of them also found much to admire in the western landscape. Understandably, the spectacular mountain country of New Mexico and Colorado came in for a great deal of praise, but the less obviously attractive plains and deserts also received favorable comment.

For example, Alice Baldwin was generally unimpressed by the western scenery and made few comments on local geography, but she did record of her first journey west from Council Bluffs:

... the passing scenery was often extraordinary and grotesque in the formations of

¹⁴For example, Teresa Vielé noted that at Ringgold Barracks, Texas, “post stores usually consisted of ‘mouldy flour and rancid pork’ and a few beans.” Vielé, *Following the Drum*, p. xiii. Mrs. Boyd complains of “\$2.00 a dozen, *gold*” for eggs and \$2.50 for a pound of butter. Boyd, *Cavalry Life*, p. 62.

¹⁵See especially, Patricia Y. Stallard, “Glittering Misery: Lives of Army Dependents in the Trans-Mississippi West, 1865-1898” (M.A. thesis, East Tennessee State University, 1972); Forrest R. Blackburn, “Army Families in Frontier Forts,” *Military Review*, XLIX (October 1969), pp. 17-28; and John R. Sibbald, “Camp Followers All,” *American West*, III (Spring 1966), pp. 56-57, as well as shorter summaries on the same subject in Mattes, *Indians, Infants and Infantry*, pp. 7-8 and Utley, *Frontier Regulars*, pp. 88-90.

rock and sandstone, at times resembling castles and parapets, domes and towers and turrets, or pinnacles reaching high into the heavens.¹⁶

After an initial, unfavorable impression, Teresa Vielé was overcome by both her sense of the romantic and the actual beauty of some parts of Texas. "The cactus and other plants . . . grow in luxuriant beauty," she wrote and "the oriole boldly lights on the low flowering bushes, knowing no fear in these rarely interrupted solitudes."¹⁷ Frances Roe, too, was disappointed with her first view of the plains, but she soon became enamoured by hunting, fishing and riding and upon being ordered to Omaha in 1888 complained, "I am almost heartbroken over it, as it will be wretched life for me—cooped up in a noisy city."¹⁸

Most of the women were fascinated and delighted by the natural beauty and resources of the country. Margaret Carrington devoted the first two chapters of *Ab-sa-ra-ka* to a discussion of western topography, flora and fauna and became almost lyric in her descriptions of the "Home of the Crow . . . a region of the country which has no peer in its exhaustless game resources, and is rarely surpassed in its production of wild fruits."¹⁹ Frances Carrington, too, rhapsodized on "the grandeur" of the plains, "appealing to the senses as both picturesque and sublime."²⁰

Although all the ladies found something to admire in the western country, in their reactions to western inhabitants, they are somewhat less unanimous. To some extent their attitudes towards Indians, Mexicans and Anglo settlers depended on the particular part of the country where they were stationed or were colored by the dangers, real or imagined, which they faced.

Like their husbands, their attitude towards the Indians was ambivalent. As Robert Utley has succinctly phrased it, "fear, distrust, loath-

¹⁶*An Army Wife on the Frontier: The Memoirs of Alice Blackwood Baldwin, 1867-1877*, edited by Robert C. and Eleanor R. Carriker (Salt Lake City, 1975), p. 20.

¹⁷Vielé, *Following the Drum*, p. 100.

¹⁸Frances Roe, *Army Letters from an Officer's Wife, 1871-1888* (New York, 1909), p. 35.

¹⁹Margaret S. Carrington, *Ab-sa-ra-ka, Home of the Crows* (Philadelphia, 1868), p. 2.

²⁰Frances Carrington, *My Army Life and the Fort Phil Kearney Massacre* (Philadelphia, 1911), p. 66. Also see Ellen Biddle, *Reminiscences of a Soldier's Wife* (Philadelphia, 1907), pp. 85 and 199; and Lydia S. Lane, *I Married a Soldier or Old Days in the Old Army* (Albuquerque, 1964), pp. 45, 137 and 147, for other descriptions of western scenery and geography.

ing, contempt, and condescension, on the one hand; curiosity, admiration, sympathy, and even friendship, on the other.”²¹ At one time or another, most of the wives lived in, or traveled through, hostile territory, and they had all heard, and were terrified by, stories of Indian atrocities. But despite possible dangers, the women were fascinated and visited Indian camps and villages and reported on the customs and lifestyle of various native peoples. Teresa Vielé, who was so frightened of Indians that she “pictured a lurking Comanche [sic] in the shadow of each bush,” nonetheless visited a Carese village near Ringgold Barracks and later “regaled” a visiting tribesman with French bonbons.²² Both Ellen Biddle and Mrs. Boyd were impressed by the Piutes and Shoshones. “I soon regarded them as fearlessly as if I had been accustomed to them all my life,” wrote Mrs. Boyd, and she went on to describe their camps, customs, dances and mode of dress in some detail.²³ Even Lydia Lane, who like Teresa Vielé, was frightened by tales of Indian atrocities, grew accustomed to seeing them in and about the posts, although, “I never could become accustomed to the Indians staring at me through the window when I was sewing or reading.”²⁴ Like several of the other wives, Mrs. Lane was somewhat distressed, and amused, by the Indians’ dress, or lack thereof, but she also became accustomed to this and might have agreed with Martha Summerhayes that native dress was better suited to the Southwestern climate than that affected by the “Anglos.”²⁵

Understandably, given her husband’s well-known attitudes and eventual fate, Elizabeth Custer was not particularly sympathetic towards any Indian group and was especially derogatory in her comments on the Sioux and Cheyenne. Nonetheless, she describes several visits to Indian camps, and a note of sincere compassion for the hard life of the Indian women occasionally slips into her more ascerbic descriptions of Indian cruelty and villainy. For example, in *Following the Guidon*, Mrs. Custer describes an incident in which “an old squaw” ceased her cooking momentarily, snatched up a knife and plunged it “into a soldier who was unsuspecting of a woman as a warrior,” and then resumed her chores “imperturbed, not even looking at the dead soldier at her side.” Yet a few pages later Elizabeth sympathetically describes some of the Indian women as suffering “from the hardest toil, and the most terrible exposure to every kind

²¹Utley, *Frontier Regulars*, p. 45.

²²Vielé, *Following the Drum*, pp. 216-17.

²³Boyd, *Cavalry Life*, pp. 70-72. Also see Biddle, *Reminiscences*, p. 83.

²⁴Lane, *I Married a Soldier*, p. 66.

²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 133.

of weather and hardship," and praises the beauty, intelligence and trustworthiness of a young Cheyenne girl, Mo-nah-se-tah.²⁶

Frances Carrington, whose first husband was killed in the Fetterman "massacre" and Margaret Carrington, whose husband commanded Fort Phil Kearney at the time, were also more inclined towards charity than hatred. Both blamed the tragic events of December 1866 more on the impatience and foolhardiness of the officers involved and the refusal of the district commander to "furnish more troops and supplies" to the besieged fort than the supposed treachery of the Indian who had been forced to "surrender a fair portion of his favorite hunting-grounds . . . upon which his living depended."²⁷ Margaret found the northern plains tribes an interesting and generally handsome people and devoted several chapters of her book to a detailed description of their history, life and customs; Frances openly admired the Indians' attempts to protect their homes and lands "with spirit akin to that of the American soldier of our early history."²⁸

Nor were the Carringtons the only women to express admiration of the Indians' courage and gallantry. Alice Baldwin was deeply impressed by Chief Joseph's defense of his people and considered him "a wonderful Indian."²⁹ Even Teresa Vielé, who generally regarded Indians as "thieves, marauders, and murderers . . . found many excuses for the Comanches' 'tiger-like ferocity and bitter hatred' for the Anglo-Americans whom they considered to be the aggressors."³⁰ Of all the wives, only Frances Roe could find no redeeming virtue in the Indian way of life. "Almost all my life I have wanted to see an Indian, a noble redman," she wrote. "Well, I've seen a number of Indians but they were not . . . noble redmen. They were simply, and only, painted, dirty and nauseous smelling savages."³¹

Thus, despite their fears and frequent misconceptions and misinterpretations of Indian history and customs, with the single exception of Frances Roe, the women diarists expressed some degree of admiration and sympathy for the native Americans. Nor do the ladies con-

²⁶Elizabeth Custer, *Following the Guidon*, edited by Jane Stewart (Norman, OK, 1966), pp. 84, 87 and 90-97.

²⁷M. Carrington, *Ab-sa-ra-ka-*, pp. 245, 269; F. Carrington, *My Army Life*, p. 44.

²⁸F. Carrington, *My Army Life*, p. 45.

²⁹Carriker, *An Army Wife on the Frontier*, p. 109.

³⁰Vielé, *Following the Drum*, p. xvii.

³¹Roe, *Army Letters*, p. 10.

form to modern day stereotypes of “greaser haters” in their attitudes toward the Mexican inhabitants of the southwest. Far from viewing all Mexicans as “lazy, dirty and sneaky,” the women generally found them a charming and pleasant people.³² Wives whose husbands were stationed near San Antonio, Santa Fe and Tucson were fascinated by the old style Spanish architecture, local customs and the “delightful society, both Spanish and American.” After a summer in Arizona, Martha Summerhayes recognized that many of the Mexican-American habits of work and dress condemned by Anglos were simply sensible adaptations to the vagrancies of the climate. “Oh! if I could only dress as the Mexicans!” she wrote, “Their necks and arms do look so cool and clean.”³³ She tried to learn something of the history and religion of the Mexican residents of Arizona and devoted several sections of her book to a description of the people and their way of life. Lydia Lane, too, was fascinated by Mexican customs and although not as open in her admiration as Martha Summerhayes she still described their homes, the reputation of their women and their religious practices in sympathetic terms.³⁴ In fact, of the wives stationed in the southwest, only Teresa Vielé employs the usual clichés in describing the Mexican population as lazy, backward and slovenly.³⁵

Although the Spanish-American cities held a special attraction for the women, as did Saint Louis and San Francisco, they were less charmed by other western towns which they found ugly, crowded and lacking the comforts and amenities of civilized society. For example, Teresa Vielé found Galveston “melancholy.” “There was but little animation in the streets,” she reported, “and I was thankful that ‘my lot had been cast in more pleasant places.’”³⁶ Elizabeth Custer also found much of Texas dreary and uninviting. “Small, low, log huts, consisting of one room each . . . were the customary architecture and the windows and doors were filled with the vacant faces of the filthy children of the poor white trash and negroes.”³⁷ Nor was Arizona attractive. Gila City, said Martha Summerhayes, was “not exactly a

³²Biddle, *Reminiscences*, p. 199. Also see Summerhayes, *Vanished Arizona*, pp. 271-78, 284-85; Lane, *I Married a Soldier*, p. 142; and Boyd, *Cavalry Life*, pp. 300-1 for other wives’ impressions of the three cities.

³³Summerhayes, *Vanished Arizona*, p. 158.

³⁴Lane, *I Married a Soldier*, pp. 94-97, 117, 142.

³⁵Vielé, *Following the Drum*, pp. 147-49, 176-190.

³⁶*Ibid.*, p. 84.

³⁷Elizabeth Custer, *Tenting on the Plains*, edited by Jane Stewart, 3 vols. (Norman, OK, 1971), I, p. 120.

city . . . at that time, whatever it may be now," and Ehrenberg she dismissed as a "wretched place," consisting of "a row of low thatched hovels, perched on the edge of the ragged looking river bank. . . ."38 As for the northern towns, Frances Carrington noted that Omaha was distinguished only by its location as the "initial point on the Union Pacific Railroad," and she had nothing but disdain for "little 'Dobey Town,' dignified by the ambitious *sobriquet* of Kearney City. . . ."39 Trinidad, Colorado, reported Alice Baldwin, was a "squalid little town" while in Hays City, Kansas, "Numerous dance parlors and saloons were interspersed with the one millinery and dressmaking establishment, next door to 'Mike's Place,' and he in turn to a butcher shop, contiguous to a pig pen."40

Nor were the women much more impressed by the inhabitants. The larger towns and cities offered cordial hospitality and "pleasant society," but generally the journalists viewed the western Anglo population as uncouth, ill-mannered and often violent. The ladies were appalled by the crude manners and rough customs of many westerners. Swearing, gambling, drinking and tobacco chewing (and spitting) were frequently criticized while both the accommodations of most western hostelrys and the habits of their proprietors left much to be desired. At one such establishment, Teresa Vielé was amused by the rules of the house which included such admonitions as "Gents requested not to spit on the walls" and "Keep boots off the bed cloths."41 Martha Summerhayes reported that many towns were "full of desperados"42 and both she and Margaret Carrington declared that although western ranches, which catered to overnight guests, offered "special care and protection" for both man and beast, they also reeked of "everything unclean morally and physically."43 Most of the women would undoubtedly have agreed with Alice Baldwin that the "typical specimen of the frontier towns of that day" afforded "at best scant comfort and rest to the traveler."44

38Summerhayes, *Vanished Arizona*, pp. 204, 53-54.

39F. Carrington, *My Army Life*, pp. 26, 28.

40Carriker, *An Army Wife on the Frontier*, pp. 59, 91.

41Vielé, *Following the Drum*, p. 81. Also see Carriker, *An Army Wife on the Frontier*, pp. 86-89; and Lane, *I Married a Soldier*, p. 156 for other descriptions of western hostelrys.

42Summerhayes, *Vanished Arizona*, p. 239.

43M. Carrington, *Ab-sa-ra-ka*, p. 58; and Summerhayes, *Vanished Arizona*, p. 146.

44Carriker, *An Army Wife on the Frontier*, p. 91.

Even when they did not have to avail themselves of the crude facilities offered by western stagestops and “hotels,” the ladies generally found western society rough and uninviting. “Vermin are the scourge of this country, and cleanliness certainly not one of its virtues,” reported Teresa Vielé, while the female inhabitants of Texas reminded her of “the baboon’s sister in nursery tales.”⁴⁵ As noted earlier, Frances Roe preferred the open prairies to life in Omaha, while Mrs. Custer, and most of the other wives, chose camp and garrison life in preference to “western society.” Of course, as a commanding officer’s wife, “Libbie” Custer felt a special responsibility for the morals of the younger officers and was especially concerned by the numerous “hog ranches,” saloons, and other establishments of ill repute which flourished in most western towns. Perhaps Lydia Lane best summarized the wives’ attitudes toward western settlers when she concluded:

We are told to take in the stranger, as by so doing we may entertain an angel unawares. I do not think that class of guests often travelled in Texas and New Mexico . . . and if they did . . . their disguise was complete.⁴⁶

Considering their views of western towns and society, it is not surprising that the ladies all returned to more “civilized” part of the country, there to look back with some nostalgia on life in the west and write their reminiscences. Mrs. Boyd seemed to regret leaving the west when she wrote, “My heart was so bound up in frontier life I had hoped until the last moment that the spring rains . . . would keep us storm-bound in Texas.” But a few paragraphs later she admitted that her concern was less for the frontier than her “fears that I should not feel at home in civil life.”⁴⁷ Although Frances Roe frequently declared that she loved the west and “all the things that it brings to me—the grand mountains, the plains, and the fine hunting,” she was delighted and excited when her husband received orders to return east for staff duty.⁴⁸ Perhaps Martha Summerhayes best expressed the women’s feelings when she concluded, “with the strange contradictoriness of the human mind, I felt sorry that the old days had come to an end. For somehow, the hardships and deprivations we have endured lose their bitterness when they become only a memory.”⁴⁹

⁴⁵Vielé, *Following the Drum*, pp. 81, 105.

⁴⁶Lane, *I Married a Soldier*, pp. 146-47.

⁴⁷Boyd, *Cavalry Life*, pp. 300-1.

⁴⁸Roe, *Army Letters*, p. 102.

⁴⁹Summerhayes, *Vanished Arizona*, p. 233.

If, as noted at the beginning of this paper, easterners were curious about and interested in the west, and western literature of all kinds was widely distributed and read, one would anticipate that the army wives' published reminiscences of their western experiences would have been widely publicized and reviewed and would have quickly topped the "best seller" lists. However, I have been able to find little evidence to support such a conclusion. In fact, just the opposite seems to have been true. In selecting the books for review in this paper, I had hoped that by choosing works published by well-known eastern presses, to show, through publication and sale records, correspondence and reviews, what influence, if any, the army wives' publications had on eastern opinions of the west and the frontier army. Although one might assume, as I naively did, that such information would be reasonably easy to secure, such is not the case. Of the 10 books surveyed, two (Boyd and Vielé) were published by firms which either closed or were absorbed by other publishing houses and their records lost. Elizabeth Custer's three books were brought out in several editions by Harpers and Brothers and C. L. Webster (which was purchased by Harpers about 1895), but their pre-1900 records, deposited in the Butler Library at Columbia University, include only contract books and a few items of miscellaneous correspondence between the authoress and Harper's and Webster's editors. No royalty or sales records, which might show the number of copies printed or sold, were retained, and no reviews or similarly enlightening materials are included in the collection. D. Appleton, which published Frances Roe's book, as well as the memoirs of several army officers, have retained few of their records for the period. Margaret and Frances Carrington, as well as Lydia Lane, Ellen Biddle and Martha Summerhayes contracted with J. B. Lippincott of Philadelphia, but an unfortunate fire at that prestigious old firm destroyed most of their early records.

I was able to obtain some publication information on only four of the books. Although one very unreliable source reported in 1893 that Elizabeth Custer's *Boots and Saddles* "has gone well up towards its fiftieth thousand,"⁵⁰ Mrs. Custer's correspondence with Harper's edi-

⁵⁰Frances E. Willard and Mary A. Livermore, *Women of the Century* (Chicago, 1893), p. 224.

tors and several friends certainly does not suggest such a large sale.⁵¹ However, a letter from Mrs. Custer to C. L. Webster and Company in December 1892, mentions their offer of a guarantee of "no less than two thousand dollars" in royalties for the sales of *Tenting on the Plains* for the first year after publication, a figure which would amount to approximately 10,000 copies.⁵² Martha Summerhayes became disgruntled with Lippincott and brought out a second edition of *Vanished Arizona* in 1911. In her preface to the new edition, she noted that the 1,000 copies printed by Lippincott were "exhausted in about a year."⁵³ The last of the 10 books published, Alice Baldwin's *Memoirs*, was brought out by Wetzel of Los Angeles in an edition of an unknown number of copies. However, only about 300 were distributed before a fire in the company's warehouse destroyed the remaining copies, and the book was never reprinted.⁵⁴

An attempt to survey book reviews has been almost as unrewarding. Although I was able to locate at least one review on all but three of the books (Biddle, Baldwin and Vielé), the works of our authoresses were generally overlooked by both literary critics and historians, evidently on the basis that the books were not "literature" and the material was too recent to be considered "history." Mrs. Custer's *Boots and Saddles* and *Following the Guidon* received favorable comment in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, but since the periodical was produced by the same firm that published her books, this is not surprising. *Nation* briefly reviewed all three of Mrs. Custer's works (under the heading "Minor Notices"), and the 1899 edition of *Following the Guidon* includes some brief excerpts from newspaper reviews of all three books.⁵⁵ However, considering that there were

⁵¹William H. Briggs to Elizabeth Custer, March 2, 1922; Custer to Briggs, same date; Custer to Edmund Stedman, February 6, n.y., Special Manuscript Collections, Butler Library, Columbia University and Custer to Michigan Governor Russell Alger in Custer, *Tenting on the Plains*, I, pp. ix-x.

⁵²Custer to C. L. Webster Company, December 2, 1892, Special Manuscripts Collections, Butler Library, Columbia University. The estimated number of copies is based on a 10% royalty, as per Mrs. Custer's contracts, on a \$2.00 copy, the list price of the book.

⁵³Summerhayes, *Vanished Arizona*, p. 304. Mrs. Summerhayes also includes eight very laudatory letters in her appendix, but all but one are from army officers or close personal friends.

⁵⁴Robert L. Carriker to Sandra Myres, December 5, 1975.

⁵⁵The reviews of Mrs. Custer's books include two from western newspapers, one from the New York *Commercial Advertiser*, one from a New York paper called the *Evangelist* and two from Boston papers, the *Traveller* and the *Boston Advertiser*. In contrast, an advertisement for four of Charles King's books, printed in the same volume, gives excerpts from reviews in *Literary World*, the New Haven *Palladium*, *Boston Commonwealth*, one New York magazine (*Epoch*) and two Philadelphia papers.

five editions of *Boots and Saddles*, six of *Tenting on the Plains* (plus a British edition) and two of *Following the Guidon*, one would have expected wider critical notice. As for Margaret Carrington's *Ab-sa-ra-ka*, I was able to locate only one highly uncomplimentary review, although obviously the book sold well enough to justify continued publication since seven editions were produced between 1868 and 1896. Of the pre-1900 publications, Lydia Lane's and Mrs. Boyd's works received the longest and most flattering reviews, both published in *Dial*. However, since Mrs. Lane was reviewed by Captain Charles King, an army officer turned novelist, one might expect him to have a favorable opinion of her work. The comment on Mrs. Boyd's book is not signed, but it may also have been written by Captain King.⁵⁶

For the post-1900 publications, I could find no reviews of Ellen Biddle's or Alice Baldwin's books (although in the case of Baldwin this is not surprising). Roe, Frances Carrington and Summerhayes were all reviewed in the *New York Times*. Mrs. Roe also received favorable notice in several periodicals, and Mrs. Carrington elicited kind, if rather bland, comment from reviewers in *Dial* and *Nation*. Of all the books, only Martha Summerhayes' work received wide critical acclaim including two highly laudatory notices in the *New York Times* and shorter, but equally positive comments in such diverse journals as the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* and *Engineering News*.⁵⁷ Yet even the eight major reviews of Martha Summerhayes' book are in distinct contrast to the many reviews of Mary Hallack Foote's novels about life in western mining camps and towns which cover three pages in Eichelberger's definite *Guide to Critical Reviews of U.S. Fiction, 1870-1910*, and the reviews of the more than sixty books and novels produced by Charles King in such prestigious periodicals as *Saturday Review*, *Literary World* and *Independent*.⁵⁸

Nor have modern critics been any more responsive. Considering the many reprint editions of the women's books and the demand for

⁵⁶These reviews, and those discussed below are listed in Appendix B.

⁵⁷It is quite possible that I did not find all the reviews since the field of nineteenth century guides to periodicals leaves much to be desired. *Poole's* usually indexes reviews only by the name of the reviewer and the *Reader's Guide to Nineteenth Century Periodicals* does not begin until 1890. Thus I was forced, in most cases, to go through each periodical for the years in which the books were published. However, I did survey all major periodicals for the period.

⁵⁸Clayton Eichelberger, *Guide to Critical Reviews of U.S. Fiction, 1870-1910* (Metuchen, New Jersey, 1974). However, it should be noted that Eichelberger includes "important memoirs and reminiscences" in his compilation (Eichelberger to Sandra Myres, September, 1976).

materials on the "Old West," one would expect to find reviews and comment in recent literary and historical journals.⁵⁹ But again, such is not the case. Aside from brief notices of publication, the modern reprint editions have not been reviewed in either the major literary periodicals or historical journals, and the women's work has gone generally unrecognized by bibliographers and anthologists. Aside from Lawrence Powell's long review of Martha Summerhayes' work in *Southwest Classics*, a survey of six major anthologies of western literature produced only one brief reference to Elizabeth Custer's books and none to the other publications.⁶⁰ James Day notes a similar neglect of the women's work in his introduction to the 1968 edition of Vielé's *Following the Drum*. The ladies have also been generally ignored by the compilers of biographical references. Only four of the authoresses (Margaret Carrington, Custer, Summerhayes and Vielé) are included in W. Stewart Wallace's "definitive" *Dictionary of North American Authors Deceased Before 1950*; none of the 10 appear in the *Dictionary of American Biography*; and only Elizabeth Custer and Frances Carrington are listed in Marquis' *Who Was Who in America* and Appleton's *Cyclopedia of American Biography*.

While some observers may assume such neglect is based on sexist biases, the army officers' memoirs for the same period have not been much more highly regarded. Possibly the exigencies of the publishing business hindered circulation. Some of the "army books" were printed in only limited editions and were not widely publicized. Moreover, it may be that novels and more "scholarly" nonfiction works were more popular. Many readers undoubtedly preferred the more lurid and exciting accounts of Indian warfare in the popular press and dime novels while nineteenth century humanitarians may have eschewed anything written by persons associated with the military. More likely, however, the seeming lack of popularity of the women's works was due to apathy. As Robert Utley has pointed out, during the late nineteenth century the army became increasingly "isolated in attitudes, interests, and spirit from other institutions of government and society, and, indeed, from the American people themselves."⁶¹ The frontier army had "no strong constituency or interest group in the East," and except for an occasional report of a particularly bloody Indian war, the affairs of the western army received little

⁵⁹All but Biddle and Boyd have appeared in at least one modern edition. See Appendix A.

⁶⁰Lawrence Powell, *Southwest Classics* (Los Angeles, 1974), pp. 273-284.

⁶¹Utley, *Frontier Regulars*, p. 59.

public attention.⁶² Thus, books by officers and their wives who wrote realistically and often sympathetically of army life lacked wide popular appeal. Recent anti-militarism and lack of publicity may partially account for the neglect of the wives' memoirs by any but a few modern historians.

Yet the army wives have much to tell us of the nineteenth century west and its inhabitants. A careful analysis of their books can aid us in gaining a better understanding of Victorian views of the west, add greatly to our knowledge and understanding of life on the nineteenth century frontier and help dispel many of the myths about army life and the role of women which still exist in western literature. More important for military historians, the army wives' books can help provide a more balanced and accurate assessment of the role of the frontier army. In recent years, the views of nineteenth century humanitarians who viewed the frontier regulars as stupid, inhumane butchers slaughtering "peaceful Indians and taking special delight in shooting down women and children" have gained new credibility and popularity.⁶³ Yet there is another side to the army's official and private attitudes and actions, and the women's journals provide an important source for discovering and interpreting these views.

⁶²*Ibid.*, p. 65. Undoubtedly the publicity surrounding the Battle of the Little Big Horn and the Fetterman "Massacre" help account for the many editions of Mrs. Custer's and Margaret Carrington's books.

⁶³Utley, *Frontier Regulars*, p. xiv.

APPENDIX A

BOOKS BY OFFICERS' WIVES

- Baldwin, Alice (Blackwood). *Memoirs of the Late Frank D. Baldwin, Major General, USA*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Co., 1929.
- . *An Army Wife on the Frontier*. Edited by Robert C. and Eleanor R. Carriker. Salt Lake City: Tanner Trust Fund, University of Utah, 1975.
- Biddle, Ellen (McGowan). *Reminiscences of a Soldier's Wife*. Philadelphia: Press of J. B. Lippincott Co., 1907.
- Boyd, Mrs. Orsemus Bronson. *Cavalry Life in Tent and Field*. New York: J. S. Tair & Sons, 1894.
- Carrington, Frances (Courtney). *My Army Life and the Fort Phil Kearney Massacre With an Account of the Celebration of "Wyoming Opened."* Philadelphia & London: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1910.
- . Second edition, 1911.
- . Reprint edition. Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1971.
- Carrington, Mrs. Margaret Irvin (Sullivant). *Ab-sa-ra-ka: Home of the Crows, Being the Experiences of an Officer's Wife on the Plains. . . .* Philadelphia: n.p., 1868.*
- . Second edition. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1868.
- . Third edition, 1869.
- . *Ab-sa-ra-ka, Land of Massacre . . . With An Outline of Indian Operations and Confernces from 1865 to 1878 by Col. Henry B. Carrington. . . .* Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1878.
- . Same title as above, "5th edition," 1879.
- . *Ab-sa-ra-ka, or Wyoming Opened. . . .* Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1890.
- . Same title as above, "7th edition," 1896.
- . *Ab-sa-ra-ka, Home of the Crows*. Edited by Milo Milton Quaife. Chicago: R. R. Donnelley, Lakeside Press, 1950.
- Custer, Elizabeth (Bacon). *"Boots and Saddles:" or Life in Dakota with General Custer*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1885.
- . Second edition, "with portrait and map," 1885.

- . Third edition, 1885.
- . Fourth edition, 1899.
- . Fifth edition, 1902.
- . Sixth edition with "Appendix with extracts from letters written by General Custer, 1873-1876 and 'Custer's Farewell Address to his Troops at the close of the Civil War.'" 1913 (2 editions)
- . "*Boots and Saddles*". With an introduction by Jane R. Stewart. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961.
- . *Following the Guidon*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1890.
- . Second edition, 1899.
- . *Following the Guidon*. With an introduction by Jane R. Stewart. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1966.
- . *Tenting on the Plains; or General Custer in Kansas and Texas*. New York: C. L. Webster & Co., 1887.
- . English edition. London: Sampson, Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, Ltd., 1888.
- . Second U.S. edition, 1889.
- . Third edition, 1893.
- . Fourth edition. New York: Harper & Brotehrs, 1895.
- . Fifth edition, 1915.
- . *Tenting on the Plains; or General Custer in Kansas and Texas*. 3 vols. With an introduction by Jane R. Stewart. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971.
- Lane, Mrs. Lydia Spencer (Blaney). *I Married a Soldier; or Old Days in the Old Army*. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1910.
- . Reprint edition. Albuquerque: Horn & Wallace, 1964.
- Roe, Mrs. Frances Marie Antoinette (Mack). *Army Letters from an Officer's Wife, 1871-1888*. New York & London: D. Appleton & Co., 1909.
- . Microcard edition. Louisville: Lost Cause Press, 1964.
- Summerhayes, Martha. *Vanished Arizona: Recollections of My Army Life*. Philadelphia: L. P. Lippincott & Co., 1908.
- . Second edition. Salem, MA.: Salem Press, 1911.
- . *Vanished Arizona*. . . . Edited by Milton M. Quaife. Chicago: R. R. Donnelley, Lakeside Press, 1939.
- . *Vanished Arizona*. . . . Edited by Ray Brandes. Tucson: Arizona Silhouettes, 1960.
- . *Vanished Arizona* . . . With an Introduction by W. Turrentine Jackson. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1963.
- . *Vanished Arizona*. . . . With an Introduction by R. B. McCoy. Glorieta, N. M.: Rio Grande Press, 1970.
- Vielé, Teresa (Griffin). "*Following the Drum*": *A Glimpse of Frontier Life*. New York: Rudd & Carleton, 1858.
- . Second edition, 1859.**
- . "*Following the Drum*" by Mrs. Brigadier General Egbert L.

Vielé. Philadelphia: T. B. Peterson & Brothers, 1864.

———. *“Following the Drum”’: A Glimpse of Frontier Life*. With an introduction by James M. Day. Austin, Texas: Steck-Vaughn Co., 1968.

*The first edition of Carrington is erroneously listed in the Library of Congress Union List of pre-1956 imprints as 1860—(obviously a typographical or transcription error).

**The 1859 edition of *Vielé* is not included in the pre-1956 Imprints, but is documented by Day in the 1968 edition.

APPENDIX B

REVIEWS OF BOOKS BY OFFICERS' WIVES

- Boyd, Mrs. Orsemus. *Cavalry Life in Tent and Field*. *Dial*, 17 (October 16, 1894), p. 234.
- Carrington, Frances. *My Army Life and the Fort Phil Kearney Massacre*. *Dial*, 49 (August 16, 1910), p. 94; *Nation*, 91 (October 13, 1910), p. 345; *New York Times*, August 6, 1910, p. 436.
- Carrington, Margaret. *Ab-sa-ra-ka: Land of the Crow*. *Nation*, 7 (December 3, 1868), p. 462. Also mentioned in *Dial*, 14 (February 1, 1893), p. 80.
- Custer, Elizabeth. *Boots and Saddles*. *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, 70 (April 1885), pp. 813-14; *Nation*, 40 (April 30, 1885), p. 369.
- . *Following the Guidon*. *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, 82 (January 1891), pp. 316-18; *Harper's Magazine Supplement*, 81 (August 1890), p. 486; *Nation*, 51 (October 9, 1890), p. 296.
- . *Tenting on the Plains*. *Nation*, 46 (May 31, 1888), p. 455.
- Lane, Lydia. *I Married a Soldier*. *Dial*, 14 (February 1, 1893), pp. 80-82. (Reviewed by Capt. Charles King.)
- Roe, Frances. *Army Letters from an Officer's Wife*. *American Library Association Booklist*, 6 (November 1909), p. 83; *Dial*, 47 (November 16, 1909), p. 390; *Literary Digest*, 39 (November 6, 1909), p. 787; *Nation*, 89 (November 25, 1909), p. 518; *New York Times*, December 25, 1909, p. 818.
- Summerhayes, Martha. *Vanished Arizona*. *American Library Association Booklist*, 8 (October 1911), p. 85; *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, 38 (November 1911), p. 949; *Catholic World*, 94 (October 1911), p. 115; *Engineering News*, 66 (September 14, 1911), supplement p. 24; *Independent*, 71 (September 7, 1911), p. 548; *Literary Digest*, 43 (October 7, 1911), p. 582; *New York Times*, July 18, 1908, p. 400; *New York Times*, August 27, 1911, p. 519.
- Vielé, Teresa. *Following the Drum*. Mentioned in *Dial*, 14 (February 1, 1893), p. 80.

COMMENTARY

The critique of Sandra Myres' and Henry Walker's papers was delivered by James T. King, Professor of History and Director of the Area Research Center at the University of Wisconsin.

JAMES T. KING

The two papers we have just heard contribute substance to the historiography of the military frontier, and, in their respective areas, are of material assistance in scholarly efforts to counter the popular stereotype of the frontier army. That stereotype is firmly imbedded in the public imagination, both in this nation and abroad. The very term "military frontier" calls forth the image of grim-faced, well-disciplined and blue-clad troopers—usually cavalrymen—charging in line of battle to join a contest with an aboriginal foe. While scholars do their best to dispel the old stereotypes, the popular imagination seems to continue to insist, in the manner of Walter Cronkite or the Bi-Centennial Minute, that "That's the way it was."

In the case of Dr. Walker's paper, "The Enlisted Soldier on the Frontier," we find a scholar insisting that the old impression is not the way it was. "Simply stated," he has told us, "the soldier on the frontier, mounted or afoot, was almost untrained and sometimes incompetent," and he went on to suggest, fully and accurately, the many reasons why this was true. One of the examples Dr. Walker cites is the use of "the labor of the troops"—as it was called—in building and maintaining posts in New Mexico and Colorado in the 1850s. The situation during the post-war period, of course, was little better, and one of the many officers who condemned this practice was Captain John G. Bourke, aide-de-camp to General George Crook. "This 'labor of the troops' was a great thing," Captain Bourke commented sardonically. "It made the poor wretch who enlisted under the vague notion that his admiring country needed his services to quell hostile Indians, suddenly find himself a brevet architect, carrying a hod and doing odd jobs of plastering and kalsomining." Captain

Bourke believed that that practice not only contributed to the inability to provide proper training to the frontier soldier, but that it was also an important cause of the chronic desertion problem of the army in the west. "The soldier," the captain wrote, "felt discontented because no mention had been made in the recruiting officer's posters, or in the contract of enlistment, that he was to do such work, and he not unusually solved the problem by 'skipping out' the first payday that found him with enough money ahead to risk the venture." Existing evidence clearly sustains both Bourke's complaint and Dr. Walker's conclusions, for it appears that the soldier on the frontier spent time mixing cement or hammering nails when he might better have been practicing the craft for which he had enlisted.

A second shortcoming in the training of the frontier soldier, as Dr. Walker points out, was in marksmanship—in the soldier's opportunities for target practice. Even in the 1880s, after the marksmanship program was initiated, there was still room for improvement. One of the most enthusiastic supporters of target practice was Major Andrew Burt, the husband of one of Professor Myres' sources, Elizabeth Reynolds Burt. Yet it was only the sharpshooting skill of Major Burt himself which made possible the victory in 1884 of his Eighth Infantrymen over a group of civilians, and that by a score of 224 to 223. Troop C of the Second Cavalry lagged behind the civilians with a score of 215.

It should be noted in this connection that if the frontier soldier was a poor marksman, his Indian adversaries were generally little better. In the same shooting contest Burt helped to win, a group of Paiutes ranked last. The northern plains tribes produced better marksmen than the Paiutes, as a rule, but even their accuracy was undistinguished. While fiscal constraints and other reasons limited target practice for the army, the Indians often found their sources of powder, balls and cartridges extremely uncertain, and they too would often inspect their careful hoards to find their ordnance supplies ruined by dampness or decomposition. Under such conditions few warriors cared to squander ammunition on such things as target practice. This situation on both sides of the military line helps to explain why, in so many instances, the army and their Indian opponents could spend a good portion of the day blasting away at each other and inflicting relatively few casualties. It also helps to explain why, until the end of the Indian wars, so many of the best military men among the Sioux and Cheyennes preferred to rely upon the bow and arrow, leaving the rifle as a supplementary weapon.

Whatever the many reasons for what Dr. Walker terms the "in-

competence” of the frontier soldier, that situation is rarely, if ever, recognized by popular assumption, conditioned as it has been by John Wayne spectaculars. While some scholars in the field of frontier history have failed to take it into account, others have not. No one, for example, has made more strongly a case for the consequences in a particular instance of the lack of training on the frontier enlisted man than has the late Dr. Thomas P. Marquis. In one of his last manuscripts—still unpublished and entitled “The Custer Soldier Suicidal Panic”—Dr. Marquis asserted that the lack of training of the newly enlisted Seventh Cavalrymen was the fundamental cause of the army’s defeat at the Battle of the Little Big Horn. Whatever the merits of Dr. Marquis’ case, it underscores the fact that the United States Army on the frontier was in a shockingly poor state of preparation for serious warfare.

There were of course exceptions to the rule—or so, at least, a good deal of testimony indicates. The post trader at Fort Laramie in 1876, John S. Collins, evaluated the enlisted men he had known in this way: “The soldiers during my stay,” he wrote, “were a rough, devil-may-care assortment from all states. Many of them were refugees from justice, some had been former penitentiary convicts, and nearly all were as tough a lot of men as could be sifted through the mesh. To them no service was a hardship, no order too strict to obey; scouting for Indians, sleeping without tents in the coldest weather, wading through mud knee deep, and frozen streams and snow. When the march was over for the day many of them were employed by officers to pitch tents, cook, make beds, carry wood and water and prepare meals, for an additional compensation of \$2.00 to \$5.00 per month over the regular pay of an enlisted man, of \$13.00 per month.” It appears that a goodly number of frontier soldiers were willing to march with determination to the field of battle, whether or not they could hit anything with a bullet once they got there.

Officers in the field attempted to solve the problem of training green troops as the opportunities to do so presented themselves. General Eugene A. Carr took advantage of months of garrison duty to whip his cavalry regiment into such good shape—at least by the standards of the 19th century US Army—that it became known as “The Dandy Fifth,” and of course the reputations of the black regiments, the Ninth and Tenth Cavalry, are well known. General Nelson A. Miles, on his way to the 1876 summer campaign against the Sioux, and finding himself with many green recruits in his infantry command, used each landing of the river steamer as a training session. “At almost every stopping place,” he wrote his wife, “we have disembarked (in three minutes) and had battalion and scout drill, so that

this command at least will be in fine condition and quite strong.” But such efforts were stop-gap measures, and the comparisons sometimes made in the 19th century between Britain’s “thin red line” and America’s “thin blue line” were strained at best.

Professor Myres’ paper counters stereotypes in a somewhat different way. In much popular fiction, whether written or film, the military frontier is pretty much womanless, except perhaps for an occasional colonel’s daughter strategically introduced for romantic interest. Professor Myres’ study of the perspectives on western life of these “Ladies of the Army” emphasizes the fact that women were very much a part of the military frontier. Of the numerous perceptions Professor Myres has found in the works of these military wives, several stand out in my own mind as themes I have found repeated consistently in my rather limited use of that literature. One is the mixture of awe and excitement they expressed as they adjusted to their new environment. The reaction of Mary Magwire Carr, wife of the General, perhaps is typical. “I had at last reached ‘the plains’,” she wrote of her arrival at Fort McPherson in Nebraska, “and understood what that comprehensive word meant. It was like the sea. As far as the eye could reach, vast stretches of vacant land, blank and nothing in sight. . . . There were no trees, but the air was clear and bracing, and there were still deer and antelope and prairie chickens to be hunted. . . . We would ride out on our horses and an ambulance would follow with the dogs to find the deer. Sometimes it was all hunting, and no finding, but it was a beautiful sight to see the deer at a distance even though the dogs could not overtake them.” As Professor Myres suggests, such evocative passages are rarely found in the works of the authors’ husbands, for when frontier officers wrote recollective pieces, and it is fairly rare that they did, they tended to be far more concerned with changes of station, military campaigns and other matters which related directly to their profession.

A second consistent theme which has impressed me was the tendency of these “Ladies of the Army” to become captivated by life on the military frontier. Professor Myres cites Mrs. Roe’s dismay at being “cooped up in a noisy city.” That same reaction recurs constantly in the books and journals of these ladies who—reared as most of them were in the material comforts of eastern civilization—followed their husbands from the frozen wastes of a Dakota winter to the broiling sun of an Arizona summer.

Just as important, Professor Myres’ paper reminds us that the military frontier was not just a line of soldiers. It was an entire socie-

ty, and it was recognized as such by its members at the time. The popular image of the west leaves the impression that the military west was pretty much complete once it included rattling guns, snorting horses, dusty troopers and snapping guidons. Yet the soldier's frontier also included wives, mothers and children as well as other non-military personnel. No matter that school might depend upon the ability of one or another trooper to add or subtract or to parse a sentence or that church might await an itinerant exhorter—the institutions of a society were there and no one had a greater opportunity or inclination to report the character of that society than these "Ladies of the Army." At this point I was going to offer up an invocation to the profession to create a social history, a wide-ranging social history of the frontier army, but in talking with Professor Coffman yesterday, I found out that he is doing just that. So somewhat belatedly, let me simply offer encouragement, and say that we will all be waiting to see it when-it comes out. When that work is done, I suspect it is the kind of investigation that Professor Myres has undertaken that will be of fundamental value to putting together a study of this nature.

The people who bound this frontier society together, who gave it its character, its tone, were the commanders of these ill-trained men, and the husbands and fathers of these "Ladies of the Army," the officer corps. These men were well-educated, particularly by 19th century standards, and with notable exceptions far better equipped for their work than were the enlisted men. Most were West Point graduates, and many of those who were not held college degrees or normal school diplomas. The officer corps was remarkable for its stability. Standing at the head of the army for virtually the entire period of the trans-Mississippi Indian wars were men who had begun their frontier service in the 1850s, who had earned laurels in the Civil War, and who spent a quarter of a century thereafter growing old together in the service of their country.

Regimental and company commands as well were dominated for many years by veterans of the Civil War. Many of them carried back into the regular army brevet commissions which were much higher than their permanent rank. Before uniform regulations were changed, troops might be treated to a spectacle remembered by many enlisted men of the era—that of an officer perhaps wearing a brigadier's stars, leading his men in review before his commander, who might have a major's insignia on his shoulders.

The stability of the officer corps, as well as its strict adherence to seniority, made promotion in the frontier army painfully slow. An officer's file would ordinarily advance only through the attrition which

resulted from death or retirement, and service in grade was long enough that “the gray-haired lieutenant” became a stock figure in novels and stories about the military frontier. Under these conditions, such matters as brevet rank or mention in reports and orders took on an importance they might not otherwise have had, and there was considerable encouragement for the animosities, rivalries and resentments over real or fancied slights which marked so much of the life of the frontier army.

The officer corps displayed a great dissimilarity of background and experience. The Seventh Cavalry, for example, which one newspaper praised, after the Custer debacle, as “the most American of regiments,” included among its officers, besides three West Pointers, a Frenchman, a Prussian, a former member of Congress, a mixed-blood Indian, a former Papal Zouave, and a grandson of Alexander Hamilton. It was at least more “American” than the Fifth Cavalry, whose company commanders included three Irishmen, a Prussian, two Englishmen and a German.

That hardship would be a feature of frontier service was taken for granted by these officers. Towards the end of his career, General Carr jotted down a quick sketch of his years in the army: “I have been nearly 40 years in service,” he wrote, “of which above 30 [were] west of the Mississippi, and over 8 of these [years] without a roof [over my head] and some without a tent—37 to 40 fights (16 with Indians, 13 since the War)—2 sieges—4 times wounded; through 4 cholera epidemics—health injured 4 times by malarious climates—marched 24,000 miles and over—and travelled 110,000 and more. . . .” But hardship was usually met with equanimity. During General Crooks’ famous “Starvation March” in the 1876 campaign, Carr, as he saw food supplies dwindling, began to discuss with wry humor the science of “Hippophagy”—that is, converting wiry cavalry horses into a delicacy for the mess. Finally, supplies ran out. “The deed is done!” he exclaimed at last, “I am a hippophagist!” He proclaimed cavalry horse to taste “better than Texas beef often does,” which perhaps reveals more about Texas beef than it does about filet of cavalry horse. But even a veteran campaigner like Carr could become discouraged. “The ration of hard bread last night was two crackers,” he wrote after about two months in the field. “Tonight none. I believe they have no bread except for the sick. . . . I miss my quinine very much as it helps to keep off headache and is a tonic against taking a cold. . . . This is the longest and hardest campaign I have ever been on yet. The others have been nearly as hard, and this I have been doing ever since I left West Point [25 years ago].”

But frontier service was not a matter of continuous campaigning. Much time was spent in garrison, which gave an officer time to indulge his hobbies and avocations. The officer corps included many men of genuine attainment in fields other than soldiering. Captain John G. Bourke, for example, carved for himself a permanent niche among American men of science through his studies in anthropology and ethnology. Major George Washington Patten's poetry was a favorite among many Victorian Americans. General A. H. Terry spent much of his leisure time translating works into English from their original Creek. The list could go on for far more time than is available to us. Some aspiring military authors were doomed to frustration. Both Crook and Carr, for example, wrote recollections, which were unpublished in their lifetimes. Crook's articles for a boy's magazine were not accepted, while Carr's massive work on cavalry tactics, which is still stored in the National Archives, is probably fated never to become an army handbook.

There was an endless number of other avocations, including rock collecting, music, fossil-hunting, ornithology and taxidermy, to name just a few, but perhaps almost universal among officers was the sport of hunting. And most legendary among all the hunters of the army was General Crook. His interest in the sport had begun when he was a child; his brother Walter liked to recall the morning, when they were children, that they had heard ducks overhead, and young George dashed out with his gun, without bothering to put on his suspenders. A short while later Walter emerged from the house to find George, his pants around his ankles, firing happily away at the mallards. Crook's interest in hunting continued in his mature years, and his "bags" of animals would send chills down the spines of almost any present-day ecologists. On one expedition, for example, Crook brought back 4 bear, 18 elk, 16 deer, 10 antelope, and an uncounted number of grouse and sage hens. Lest Crook be condemned for wastefulness, it should be noted that the game was turned over to the officers' and enlisted mens' mess, and that to the end of his life, Crook was a strong supporter of game laws to preserve wild animals of the west.

Members of the officer corps perceived the purpose of their frontier service in various ways. Not all of them put down on paper just what their perceptions were, but of those who did, some saw themselves simply as a part of the cutting edge of the American frontier—or, as George A. Custer put it, as a kind of advance guard of American civilization, "propelled and directed by Yankee ingenuity, [which had] adopted the motto: Westward the star of empire takes its way." Major Eben Swift put the point even more baldly. "Civilization ap-

proached the American Indians," he wrote, "with a Bible in one hand and a paper treaty in the other, a bludgeon in her sleeve, and a barrel of whiskey in her wagon, not to mention the blight that goeth unto the third and fourth generation. The task of the soldier was to punish the Indian when he applied his crude ideas of justice or revenge, and to force him to obey when he could not be cajoled or scared." Taken together, these statements suggest that the role of the army in the west was a combination of conquest and police duty, and of course both of these were facets of frontier service. These statements would go a certain way to support the 19th century observation that "There are two classes of people who are always eager to get up an Indian war—the army and our frontiersmen." In fact, however, the conviction was widespread among frontier officers—particularly the higher-ranking ones—that war was something to be avoided, if possible, rather than waged. In the course of avoiding war, it was necessary to understanding something of the situation of the prospective enemy, and the result of that understanding was quite often a degree of sympathy with the Indian cause which the popular mind identifies more with eastern humanitarianism than with the frontier military. Shortly before the affair at Wounded Knee, for example, Nelson Miles was railing at government policy towards the plains peoples. "We have taken away their land and the white people now have it," he wrote. "The Indians have been half fed or half starved. Neither I nor any other official can assure the Indians that they will receive anything different in the future. They say, and very justly, that they are tired of broken promises. I do not think the government should disregard its promises and get the Indians into such a condition, and then order the military to prevent an Indian War." The viewpoint of Miles' archival and personal enemy George Crook was not substantially different. Crook on one occasion held the Apaches up as an example: "The Apache knows his rights," he wrote, "and is not afraid to maintain them. Were he a Greek or a Roman, we should read with pride and enthusiasm of his determination to die rather than suffer wrong; but looking at him as a native of our own soil and as the feeble barrier which stands between ourselves and the silver mines and gold measures supposed to exist on his Reservation, it is not always possible to do justice to his virtues or to consider his faults as identical with those of which we ourselves should be guilty under similar provocation."

Whether they considered themselves conquerors, mediators of peacemakers, if we were to ask those frontier officers why they exposed themselves to the hardships and dangers of the American west, why they took their "Ladies of the Army" and their families into the discomfort and isolation of distant posts and why they continued to

accept the burden of commanding ill-trained, sometimes incompetent troops, they would perhaps respond at first with many reasons. But when pressed, many might answer with the comment made by Captain Guy V. Henry as he lay terribly wounded on the Rosebud battlefield in 1876. The comment was reported in several versions, but one was particularly favored by frontier officers. As a comrade attempted to comfort him, it is said, Captain Henry turned to him and remarked, "It is nothing. For this we are soldiers."

V

THE SEVENTH MILITARY HISTORY SYMPOSIUM IN PERSPECTIVE

The purpose of this session was to allow opportunity for a panel of prominent historians to comment on the proceedings as a whole. Reverend Francis Paul Prucha, S. J., a prominent frontier and military historian from Marquette University, chaired the panel. He was joined by noted military historians Theodore Ropp of Duke University (presently Distinguished Visiting Professor of Military History at West Point) and Harry L. Coles of Ohio State University. Each of these men delivered prepared comments and then opened the session for discussion.

COMMENTARY

THEODORE ROPP

Robert Utley's paper was extremely well honed, the best statement of his case I have yet seen. I could not possibly disagree with anything except the paper's major premise, which from the standpoint of the Hudson highlands in this bicentennial year I find truly difficult to accept. The problem as we see it is whether the white ensign will come upstream or the redcoats will come down stream, and I think that was the chief concern of the founding fathers. From the standpoint of the hindsight of what some historians have called our century of free security, the Thayers, the Mahans, the Uptons, are open to the familiar charge of preparing to fight the last war over again, but other than expressing my general disagreement with the thesis that our major military problem—even as visualized by our small 19th century service establishment—was the frontier, we must surely congratulate Dr. Utley for an exceptionally expert Harmon Lecture and Dr. Morton for an original contribution to comparative history.

Since my function is to provide an outside dimension, and not criticize the details of any paper, I hope that the next four authors will not resent my feeling that their excellent microcosmic works on the impact of the army and the military on the frontier in American life all run into problems of time and scale which are the main problem facing this whole symposium. We had two splendid papers on major problems in American military history and in comparative military history, and then we had four excellent monographs on relatively narrow subjects related to the relatively narrow focus of the whole symposium. Perhaps in those fields we need a study entitled *Comparative Military Frontiersmanship*. My comments here are not really directed to the authors, but to the theme of the symposium itself, the contention that "Throughout the course of American history the military in the west has exerted a strong influence on developing American institutions, attitudes, ideals, and culture." My own reading of American military history, perhaps from the Highland Falls, West Point view, is that by comparison with French or German history,

West Point's influence and the military influence in general on American history has been very marginal, and that one key to our military success has been precisely the fact that our regulars have succeeded in adapting themselves to civilian and even to anti-military institutions, attitudes, ideals and culture.

In addition, much of our discussion has focused on the trans-Mississippi west in the post-Civil war era. This may have been inevitable for this particular symposium in Colorado on its centennial, but a number of critics have called attention to the fact that this may have been the very era in which the American military—even in numbers in relation to its total population—was least influential in American life, by contrast with the vast forces of a still expanding cash crop agriculture, the growth of big business, industrialization, and the new wave of immigration. Public reaction to these problems of populism, progressivism, agrarianism, business conservatism, and even ethnicity to a large degree still shape American political and cultural life. There has been little mention of the fact that the frontier problem was most serious before 1815, when technological and numerical disparity between new and old Americans were least, and when the latter could still bring other Europeans to their aid. That the only good Indian was a dead one still had some military meaning, while a "civilized" or converted one was potentially an economic asset. By 1870, as Professor Morton points out, both American and Canadian societies could safely regard the Indians as wards, and a constabulary was a far more effective instrument of pacification.

Though Professor Foner did not say so specifically, the army's "role in the vanguard [of Far] western economic development" was probably less than it had been in the development of roads, ports, rivers, harbors, and of great coastal fortifications in the east. Here comparisons are exceptionally difficult, because the government also worked through very many other agencies, but one does get the feeling that the new historians may be correct about this particular period, that from the 1840s through the end of the century the military were merely hired guns for the railroad and mining companies, that the army engineers' greatest contribution to development came later, and that in the west and the east the idea that the military were simply the tools of land speculators, railroads, cattlemen, and so on, had more validity than it would have had earlier or later.

If one relates this to the idea that the army failed to develop a useful doctrine for pacification, think again. Time and circumstances are very important here. Problems are not military problems until they are officially declared so by military services. From 1860 until

1876, our army and our military generally were caught up in problems of what was then the greatest war in our history. From 1876 to 1890, when the army might have developed an Indian war doctrine, the Indians were mere remnants, while rapid changes in European military technology clearly demanded attention. During this period, as Huntington has pointed out, there was the "growth of a kind of scientific military community, . . . international in its scope, of which Americans and officers, naval and military, were fully a part." The study of this community, and its attitude towards weapons, tactics, and so on, was a principal duty of United States armed forces in this period.

For the late 19th century—a period in which Custer had fewer men than the number of historians at this conference—the influence of the military on American life seems to have been, as several papers have remarked, chiefly on the entertainment industry, turning out a product as standardized and industrialized as contemporary British *Gunga Din*, or French camel operas. How this affected American ideals about guns, machismo, racial supremacy, is a question which is not at all frivolous.

I think the papers here indicated about all there is to be said about this particular problem at this particular time. The task of the historian from now on will be to relate this material to the course of American history and what I still regard as its great formative period of the late 80s and early 90s.

HARRY L. COLES

To be one of the last speakers at the last session of a 2-day conference presents one with both an opportunity and a problem. The opportunity to have nearly the last word is very welcome to a naturally argumentative and contentious person like myself. It gives one the comfortable illusion of maybe having won in the tug of war of ideas. The problem is that after 2 days of discussion by scholars and military professionals, the subject has been nearly exhausted and it is very difficult to convince oneself that one really has something original and worthwhile to say. Since our time is limited I shall try to be brief even if I have little hope of being very different or profound.

I will begin by speculating on why the planners of the symposium thought it desirable to have a wrap-up session and why they asked me to take part in it. I attended the first symposium, in 1967, and have attended several since. In those years, when I have not been a participant, I have sometimes been asked by the editors of historical journals to review the published proceedings. Generally these reviews have been favorable. But as we all know, there is often a lapse of 2 or 3 years between the time the conference takes place and the published review. Evidently Colonel Hurley and his colleagues became impatient with this dilatoriness. This year they wanted to have their bouquets promptly so they asked me to come out here and give an instant evaluation.

Seriously, I have watched the development of these symposia over the years with mounting interest and admiration. The History Department of the Air Force Academy has extended such generous hospitality and has planned the programs so well, that these meetings have become a major event, both for professional military men and historians generally. I am confident that the Seventh Symposium will go down as one of the best in a distinguished series. But I was not asked to come out here and simply say "a job well done." I think you want to know if I have any ideas about how a good job might have been even better.

First, let me say how I think the planning of the conference might have been improved. My experience with conferences leads me

to believe that there are two main steps. First one tries to think of a good idea or theme that will have appeal and relevance throughout one's constituency. Then you try to persuade people who have written on or about the chosen subject to do papers. One always tries to find the best available people to handle the topic. Having accomplished these two difficult tasks, there is a great temptation to let nature take its course, and hope for the best.

In the case of the Seventh Symposium, the individual papers have been good. Each of the authors has taken his assignment seriously, has done his research conscientiously, and has presented his results with good organization and pleasing style. But what I am wondering is what they all add up to. The only thing that I can find is that they all relate somehow to soldiers on the 19th century frontier of the United States and Canada. In my judgment, this is too vague. If unity and coherence are to be achieved, a conference must have a general theme or topic and this topic must be broken down in its component parts and developed thematically or chronologically or with a combination of the two. I wonder, for example, why one man should be asked to read a paper on the socializing role of the military frontier and another on the enlisted soldier. These papers not only overlap each other, but have some of the same material to be found in Professor Coffman's Harmon Lecture of last spring, and the paper Mr. Utley gave at the beginning of the symposium. Again, each of these papers is good, but instead of covering various aspects of a general theme, they overlap each other rather seriously.

The implications of certain topics were not thought through. For example, in the third session, having planned a paper on the social role of the frontier, somebody evidently thought that the political aspect should also be covered. In order to cope with his vague assignment, Professor Ellis had to deal with several subjects yielding largely negative results. Nevertheless in the military government of New Mexico and California, the army had a direct and little appreciated political role. I think it might have been more enlightening had he entitled his paper, "The Role of the Army in Western State-Making," and dealt in more detail with some of the few incidents in which the army had a clearly defined political role.

Possibly I am being a bit too dogmatic and critical. But in general I think the symposium might have been improved by more rigorous planning and better articulated structure.

Perspectives Suggested by the Papers Themselves

But the title of this session is "perspectives," and I should get

on to this question. In this regard I shall first try to point out—and point up—some of the perspectives suggested by the papers themselves and then provide some of my own observations. While all of the papers have provided us with some orientation and each has given us at least glimpses of the larger picture, I found Mr. Utley's opening remarks and Professor Morton's paper on the comparative history especially helpful. Professor Morton performed the difficult but necessary task of separating myth from reality. I have always been a staunch believer in comparative history, and his paper confirms and strengthens my convictions. By its very nature, comparative history forces the historian to interpret, to generalize, and to sift the essential from the trivial. In my opinion one of the main virtues of Professor Morton's paper is to remind us that military institutions are a reflection of the society of which they are a part, and that differences between the frontier army and the mounted police derived from differences in the societies which they served.

Mr. Utley's trenchant remarks on the influence of the Civil War as applied in total war against the Indians I think bears out the central theme of Professor Morton's paper. I thoroughly agree with Mr. Utley's thesis that the Indian wars in the far west were merely an extension of the type of warfare that Sherman and Sheridan had practiced in the south. General Sherman has often been hailed as a prophet who saw what was coming and attempted to destroy the capacity of the enemy to make war. You know if you have read Liddell Hart's biography of Sherman that he makes him the greatest general of World War I. It has always seemed to me that while there was something of the prophet in Sherman, he was not applying something new, but simply bringing into greater perfection the type of warfare that had been applied against the Indians since colonial days. The contribution of the Civil War was to bring modern technology and organization to bear in accomplishing results more ruthlessly.

Other Perspectives.

Having noted some of the perspectives provided by, or at least suggested by, the papers themselves, I should like to pass on to comment on this symposium in relation to the broad sweep of American history.

It has not been adequately explained that the frontier army was an all-purpose army, and that the soldier, like the frontiersman himself, was a jack-of-all-trades. Dr. Walker has pointed out the lack of expertise of the frontier soldier's marksmanship and equitation. While it is valuable to be reminded of such inadequacies, I suggest that even if our soldiers had been expert in these arts, they would have had lit-

the opportunity to apply them. While certainly there was considerable Indian fighting, I suspect that if someone made a study of the hours spent in various tasks, he would find that the army spent most of its time in chasing squatters off the public domain, building roads and telegraphs, guarding railroad builders, building forts, carrying out explorations and just plain soldiering. At any rate, the essentially peacetime army had to have various ways of justifying its existence. Indian fighting was only one of many tasks.

I am afraid that with all the emphasis this conference has given to Indian warfare, the subject may have gotten out of focus. By this time we should all know that plains Indians were mounted on swift ponies, they were excellent horsemen, they were deadly marksmen—at least I had thought so until this time—and they had incredible bravery and endurance. But I agree with Professor Ellis' statement that "there never was any question that the army, as small as it was, could ultimately crush any Indian resistance." While as individuals the Indians possessed many qualities that made them formidable opponents, they were not organized, or were organized on a much too primitive basis to be able to accomplish much militarily. Dr. Athearn correctly pointed out that the Indians west of the Mississippi suffered more from the march of "progress" than from the US Army.

The Nineteenth Century in Perspective

Now, my final point. This symposium has been concerned primarily with the military frontier of the United States in the 19th century, the period roughly from the end of the War of 1812 to the beginning of World War I. As nearly all of our papers have pointed out, it was in some way a constructive and heroic period, and in some ways a destructive and cruel period of our history. But in any case, it was colorful, even romantic, giving rise to much folklore and legend. Without discounting the importance of the 19th century, I think we ought nevertheless to ask how typical it was; how relevant to modern day concerns.

By failing to give adequate attention to the colonial era, I am afraid that we distort our history. Despite the impressions conveyed by the bicentennial celebration, our history did not begin 200 years ago. It began nearly 400 years ago. While the American people were still a part of the British empire, Britain and France waged four major wars for empire and trade. These wars can be, and have been, called world wars because the two principal antagonists drew various nations into shifting coalitions and the scenes of hostilities extended beyond Europe to North America, India, and other parts of the world. Though each of these world wars was centered principally in

Europe, each had its American counterpart. The War of the Second Coalition against Louis XIV (1689-1697) is known in U.S. history as King Williams' War, the War of Spanish Succession (1701-1714) is known in our history as Queen Anne's War; the War of Austrian Succession (1744-1748) is known as King George's War and the Seven Years' War is known to our history as the French and Indian War.

At the end of the fourth world war there began quarrel between the colonies and the mother country. The quarrel waged hot and cold, and the colonies accused England of many abuses and usurpations, but as the movement for independence gained momentum, freedom from world wars was discussed increasingly. The phrase "The war to end wars" we associate with the great war of 1914-18 and the idealism of Woodrow Wilson. But exactly the same idea was used by the advocates of American independence.

It is ironical that the original American war to end all wars soon became a fifth world war. In time, the American Revolution involved not only Britain and their colonies, but France, Spain, the Netherlands, and a coalition of countries called the Armed Neutrality. And again the fighting took place, not only in North America but in Europe, the West Indies, and India.

Having achieved their independence, the statesmen of the early republic tried valiantly to steer clear of European wars and to disentangle the United States from the European balance of power system. But their best efforts were unavailing. When the French Revolutionary War broke out, we fought the undeclared naval war, sometimes called the Quasi War with France. This then was the sixth world war which had touched the United States. After a brief respite, brought about by the peace of the Amiens, the Napoleonic Wars broke out again in 1803 and raged until 1815. This country has never had two presidents more resolutely opposed to war than Presidents Jefferson and Madison. Both exerted extraordinary abilities to avoid becoming involved, but again their best efforts were unavailing. The War of 1812 was merely the American counterpart of the Napoleonic Wars and we may designate this as World War VII.

1815 is a watershed in both American and European history and the scene shifts dramatically. A country that had participated in seven world wars is now vouchsafed a century of peace and there is not another World War until 1914. The story since then is familiar to all of us. But I suggest that the two world wars of the 20th century ought to be called World Wars VIII and IX.

I have gone through this exercise of renumbering our world wars (an idea suggested several years ago by Arthur M. Schlesinger) merely to try to get you to thinking in larger terms, and I hope better perspective. If we view our military history as a whole, we have nearly three centuries of worldwide conflict bisected by a century of peace. The nineteenth century was a long period free from outside perils in which the country could grow, expand territorially and economically. But a part of our past is often mistaken for the whole. The century of free security, as Professor Van Woodward has called it, was a classical period of isolation, unlike anything that had gone before or anything that came after. Seen in this light the period we have been talking about the last two days was a typical, an aberration. It has been suggested that if our military men had studied the Indian wars they would have been better prepared to fight in Vietnam. I am afraid I find this notion a bit far-fetched. All war experiences have something in common—problems of morale, supply, command, and leadership, for example. But not all experiences are equally relevant. I might suggest that the Philippine Insurrection (1899-1902), or the intervention in Cuba (1906-07), would have more relevance to Vietnam than Indian warfare.

I would not leave you on a negative note. The 19th century helps to explain what we are today, and this symposium has added greatly to our understanding. I have merely tried to show that our past is a long one and we must always make the effort to see any part of that background in relation to the whole.

FRANCIS PAUL PRUCHA

Pre-Civil War Period

I was struck—as were Professors Ropp and Coles—with the heavy emphasis on the post-Civil War period, the mere 25 years from 1865 to 1890. It was almost as though the “army on the frontier” were equated with the “Indian fighting army” of the plains and mountains. Had the symposium speakers, I wondered, been captured by the romantic, popular—I was almost tempted to say Hollywood—concept of the west? If we are to look at the truly significant military influence of the army on the frontier, should we not turn our attention instead, as Professor Ropp has suggested, to the earlier decades in American history? Should we not turn to the 75 years between the Revolution and the Civil War, a period when the frontier was proportionately more important in the total national picture, when the Indian nations still exercised large elements of sovereignty and for a considerable time could expect succor from foreign powers, and when the army’s role was not fighting Indians and protecting settlers but vindicating United States authority in the west, a role of paramount importance.

Let me expand just a bit on this last point. The United States was granted the land up to the Mississippi at the end of the Revolutionary War, but it was necessary to exert authority if the territory was indeed to be American—exert authority against British-Indian encroachment in the northwest (with their living dream of an Indian buffer state between the Ohio and the Great Lakes) and against Spanish pretensions in the south, to say nothing of the vague French schemes for recapturing the Mississippi Valley that so disturbed Alexander Hamilton in the late 1790s.

And after 1803 there was the vast Louisiana Purchase, its boundaries unclear and its contents unknown, to be brought effectively under American control. We need to recall that Pike’s explorations and the Lewis and Clark expedition, were army enterprises.

Equally worth remarking were the visionary plans of Secretary of War John C. Calhoun after the War of 1812 to establish American presence in the west. It was the frontier army that was the national

instrument in this great task—building a cordon of military posts along the Great Lakes and the western rivers, to make clear to the British and to the Indians that United States sovereignty in fact extended over the land it claimed.

The army was the chief agent in the exuberant nationalism that marked the post-1815 years, a nationalism strikingly exhibited in Calhoun's directions to General Thomas A. Smith in 1818, for establishing a military post at the mouth of the Yellowstone River on the upper reaches of the Missouri. Calhoun admitted that the remoteness of the post would make it unpleasant for the soldiers. But he wrote: "I am persuaded that the American soldier, actuated by the spirit of enterprise, will meet the privations which may be necessary with cheerfulness. Combined with the importance of the service, the glory of planting the American flag at a point so distant, on so noble a river, will not be unfelt. The world will behold in it the mighty growth of our republic, which but a few years since, was limited by the Alleghany; but now is ready to push its civilization and laws to the western confines of the continent."

Army Influence on Indians

We have heard a good deal about army life in the west and about political and social influence of the military. The points, however, have been made primarily if not exclusively with regard to influence upon white society. Is it not time to expand this viewpoint and to ask what effect the army had on Indian society, with which it was so intimately concerned? There was great debate about this in the post-Civil War years. Army advocates in the great controversy over transfer of the Indian Bureau to the War Department that raged between 1865 and 1880 maintained that military men could best handle the "Indian problem" and lead the Indians down the road to civilization. I would like to know what, if anything, different happened when army officers were in charge of Indian agencies—for example, when they were appointed to the agencies in the 1890s.

On the other side, there was great fear among the Christian humanitarian reformers that army contact with the tribes would inevitably result in the demoralization and destruction of the Indians. Commissioner of Indian Affairs National G. Taylor expressed the view in extreme but not untypical terms in his report of 1868: It is "unhuman and unchristian . . . to destroy a whole race by such demoralization and disease as military government is sure to entail upon our tribes." Military posts in the Indian country are subversive of domestic morals, and "most loathsome, lingering and fatal diseases" are spread broadcast. "If you wish to exterminate the race, pursue them with

ball and blade; if you please, massacre them wholesale, as we sometimes have done; or, to make it cheap, call them to a peaceful feast, and feed them on beef salted with wolft bane; but for humanity's sake, save them from the lingering syphilitic poisons, so sure to be contracted about military posts."

Was this a fair charge? Or did the troops get syphilis from the Indians rather than vice versa? Or did it really matter whether military or civilian agents were in charge? Was there a more fundamental set of problems in Indian-white relations in the post-Civil War era which should be looked at instead, and which would help us to place military history in the proper perspective?

Lack of Conceptualization

There has been a wealth of information presented in this symposium and a great many worthwhile ideas. Our Canadian participant, to single out only one paper, presented a masterful example of comparative history. But at the risk of sounding ungracious, I would like to make one general and somewhat critical comment.

After reading the perspectus of the symposium, which spoke of "original and innovative research on the military aspects of the American West," I was a bit disappointed that there was not more boldness in conceptualization, more testing of hypotheses, more analysis and interpretation in the papers presented. I would have liked to see a greater number of provocative themes, in place of the emphasis on description of colorful items, the sort of thing which seems to have laid such a heavy hand upon American frontier history as a whole.

Are there not ways in which the "new social history" could be brought into play? Would it not be possible to investigate an army post as a social community in the way that New England villages and western cattle towns have been explored and analyzed? Would it not be possible to apply new demographic techniques to a study of the army in the west? Could we not investigate more thoroughly the place of the army in the social and intellectual milieu of the times? Were frontier officers and men, fundamentally, much different in their outlook from the Christian humanitarians who clashed with them so bitterly over the *means* of reforming Indian policy? Were the army men one with the westerners who supported them—or were they outsiders who could take an independent stand on vital questions? What *in detail* was the economic, social, and political contribution of the army to western development? We have been relying on broad generalizations about significance and influence until we begin to believe them out of sheer repetition.

I am reminded of a critical review of my book, *Broadax and Bayonet: The Role of the United States Army in the Development of the Northwest*. Writing in *Military Affairs*, a reviewer noted that I had said "the army's role in the development of the northwest cannot be easily overstated." Nonsense, said the reviewer, not only *can* it be overstated, the author overstates it on every page!

His strictures on my work, *mutatis mutandis*, are still worth listening to today:

The quantitative aspects of the subject, so vital for seeing things with some degree of perspective and with some justness of proportion, are almost entirely ignored: how large the garrisons and how numerous the civilian population; how long and how many the roads built; how great the supplies procured and the markets provided in relation to the total volume of civilian trade; how much law enforcement by military and civilian agencies, respectively. Where more than two thousand square miles of frontier territory and scores of thousands of people are involved, it is not enough to assert that "for four and onehalf decades the army was a vital force in the area to the west of Lake Michigan." It is necessary to supply data which adequately support and not simply illustrate the thesis.

So let us not wrap up the symposium papers and put them away. Let us use them and the symposium discussions as jumping off places for a continuing and, we may hope, increasingly sophisticated and rigorous analysis of the American military on the frontier.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

Burton Greenhous, Department of National Defence, Ottawa, Canada, pointed out the need for a broader comparative approach to the study of frontier history, and not one entirely focused on the North American experience. He agreed with the comments of Professor Preston in the discussion during the second session of the symposium that a comparison of American, Canadian, and the New Zealand experience could be very useful, adding that comparative studies might include the South African experiences and the British experience in India. Regarding this symposium's comparison of American and Canadian frontiers, Greenhous noted that the American pattern of violence on the frontier in the northern trans-Mississippi west was set while the Indian was still assured a fairly adequate food supply from the buffalo, whereas when the frontier environment moved north to Canada the Canadian Indians were already suffering quite severely from the lack of an adequate food supply. In this respect the American army was engaged in two kinds of violence, the active violence of going out and shooting Indians and the passive violence of denying food to Canadian Indians by burning a swath across the northern border, thus stopping buffalo from moving north. He added that it is doubtful that Sitting Bull and his warriors having moved across the border would have been so susceptible to the blandishments of two or three mounted policemen if they had been assured an adequate food supply. Greenhous also pointed out the need to study the comparative density of Indian populations on the American and Canadian frontiers. He suggested that the density of Indian populations might have affected their tendency to react violently to white intrusion.

Professor Coffman, University of Wisconsin, suggested that the concentration of study on the trans-Mississippi, post-Civil War period is largely a result of the availability of sources. There is much more available in memoirs, diaries, and other literature, on the trans-Mississippi, post-Civil War frontier than is available on the earlier frontier. Coffman also pointed out that people are more interested in the later frontier because it seems closer—it occurred on the very edge of

modernity. "When the Wright brothers were small boys and Henry Ford was already tinkering in a machinist shop people were still out fiddling around with the Indians almost like the Romans and Gauls." World War II leaders were young officers in an army officered by men who had served in the Indian Wars. So the interest in the later frontier has not been solely dependent upon the myths created by John Ford movies.

Henry P. Walker noted that in his research on the enlisted men on the frontier he had very little material dealing with the earlier period. Indeed, for the earlier period, he had found no reminiscences by enlisted men except for those of an Englishman who had served as a hospital steward during the Seminole War. Walker explained that this lack of sources in the earlier period was one of the main reasons why he had concentrated on the post-Civil War frontier.

PARTICIPANTS



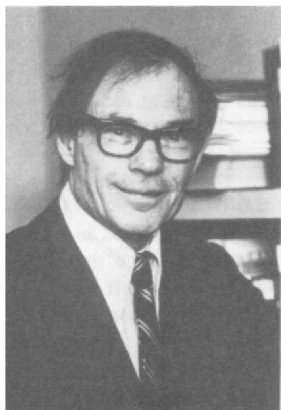
ROBERT G. ATHEARN. Born Kremlin, Montana, August 1914. B.S., 1936, M.A., 1938, and Ph.D., 1947, University of Minnesota. Has taught at University of Minnesota, 1945-47, and University of Colorado, 1947 to present. Has guest lectured at University of Leeds, of Liverpool, St. Andrews (Scotland) and of Wales in 1960; at Conference of Benelux Teachers, Bearn, Netherlands in 1961; at Universities of Florence, Bologna, and Perugia (Italy) in 1961; at the University of Montana (Missoula), summer 1962; and at University of Maine (Orono), summer 1972. Served as Line officer, United States Coast Guard, 1943-45. Books: *Thomas Francis Meagher: An Irish Revolutionary in America* (1949); *Westward the Briton* (1953); *William Tecumseh Sherman and the Settlement of the West* (1956); *Centennial Colorado: Its Exciting Story* (with Carl W. Ubbelohde) (1959); *High Country Empire: The High Plains and Rockies* (1960); *Rebel of the Rockies: The Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad* (1962); *The American Heritage Illustrated History of the United States* (1963); *Forts of the Upper Missouri* (1967); *Union Pacific Country* (1971); and *America Moves West* (with Robert E. Riegel) (1971, 5th ed.)



HARRY L. COLES. Born April 30, 1920. A.B., 1939, Ph.D., 1949, Vanderbilt University. Has taught at the Ohio State University since 1949, most recently serving as Chairman of the Department of History (1967-1973). Historian, Headquarters Army Air Forces, Washington, D.C. (1943-46). Historian, Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army (1946-49). Ernest J. King Professor of Maritime History, The Naval War College. Visiting Professor, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College. Books: *Ohio Raises an Army in the Civil War* (1962); *Total War and Cold War: Problems in Civilian Control of the Military* (ed., 1962); *The Public Lands: Studies in the History of the Public Domain* (contributor, 1963); *Soldiers Become Governors: Studies in Military Government in World War II* (1964); *The War of 1812* (1965).



RICHARD N. ELLIS. Born Brooklyn, New York, June 6, 1939. B.A., 1961, M.A., 1963, and Ph.D., 1967, University of Colorado. Has taught at Murray State University, the University of Maryland, and the University of New Mexico. Directed Doris Duke American Indian History Project. Books: *General Pope and U.S. Indian Policy* (1970); *New Mexico, Past and Present* (ed., 1971); *The Western American Indian* (ed., 1972); *New Mexico Historic Documents* (ed., 1975); contributed chapters to *The Changing Ways of Southwestern Indians* (1973) and *A Guide to the Sources of U.S. Military History* (1975).



JACK D. FONER. Born New York City, December 14, 1910. B.A., 1932, City College of New York; M.A., 1933 and Ph.D., 1968, Columbia University. Has taught at City College of New York, the New School and Colby College. Military service, U.S. Army, 1942-1945. Books: *Modern European History* (co-author, 1936); *The United States Soldier Between Two Wars: Army Life and Reforms, 1865-1898* (1970); and *Blacks and the Military in American History* (1974).



JAMES T. KING. Born Hastings, Nebraska, April 22, 1933. A.B., Hastings College, 1955; A.M., 1957, and Ph.D., 1962, University of Nebraska. Has taught at the University of Nebraska and is presently Professor of History and Director of the Area Research Center at the University of Wisconsin, River Falls, Wisconsin. He has served as a member of the Council of the Western History Association and is consultant to several university presses and historical associations. Books: *War Eagle: A Life of General Eugene A. Carr* (1963); co-author, with Walker D. Wyman, of *A Centennial History: The University of Wisconsin, River Falls, 1874-1975* (1975); and is presently completing a biography of General George Crook.



JOHN K. MAHON. Born Ottumwa, Iowa, February 8, 1912. B.A., 1934, Swarthmore College; Ph.D., 1950, University of California, Los Angeles. Has taught at Colorado A & M College (now Colorado State University), 1950, at UCLA, 1950-51, and at the University of Florida since 1954. He has been Civilian Military Historian, Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1951-54, and also Acting Chief, Organizational History and Honors Branch, Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1953-54. He served in the United States Army during the Second World War. Was inducted as private in 1942 and discharged as a captain, field artillery, in 1946. Books: *History of the Organization of the United States Infantry*, in *Army Lineage Book* (GPO, 1953); *International Tensions and Security Organizations* (manual published by Air University, 1957); *The American Militia: Decade of Decision* (1960); editor of *Reminiscences of the Second Seminole War* by John Bemrose (1966); *History of the Second Seminole War* (1968); *The War of 1812* (1972); and editor of *Indians of the Lower South: Past and Present*, vol. V, Proceedings of the Gulf Coast History and Humanities Conference (1975).



DESMOND PAUL MORTON. Born Calgary, Alberta, September 10, 1937. B.A., 1959, College Militaire Royal De St-Jean, Royal Military College of Canada; M.A., 1966, Oxford University; and Ph.D., 1968 University of London. Served in the Canadian Army, 1954-1964, retired with the rank of captain. Assistant Provincial Secretary, New Democratic Party of Ontario, 1964-1968. Federal Council and Provincial Executive of the Ontario and National NDP, 1968-1972. Broadcasts daily news commentary on CHIC, Brompton. Has taught at University of Ottawa, 1968-69, at University of Toronto since 1969. Is presently Associate Dean for Humanities, Erindale College, for a three year turn, 1975-1978. Books: *Ministers and Generals: Politics and the Canadian Militia, 1867-1904* (1970); *The Last War Drum: The Northwest Campaign of 1885* (1972); *Mayor Howland: The Citizens' Candidate* (1973); *The Canadian General: Sir William Otter* (1974); and *NDP: The Dream of Power* (1974). Is also responsible for four videotape productions and three tape-slide productions on topics in Canadian military and labour history.



SANDRA L. MYRES. Born Columbus, Ohio, May 17, 1933. B.A., 1957, Texas Tech; M.A., 1960, Texas Tech; and Ph.D., 1967, Texas Christian University. Has taught at Schreiner Institute, Texas Christian University and University of Texas at Arlington and served as Executive Director, Texas Committee for the Humanities and Public Policy, 1973-76. Books: *S. D. Myres: Saddlemaker* (1961); *Force Without Fanfare: The Autobiography of K. M. Van Zandt* (1968); *The Ranch in Spanish Texas* (1969); *Essays on the American West* (contributor and co-editor, 1969); *One Man, One Vote: Reapportionment vs. Gerrymandering* (1970); *Indian Tribes of Texas* (contributor, 1971); *Essays on U.S. Foreign Relations* (co-editor, 1974); *Forked Tongues and Broken Treaties* (contributor, 1975); and *Cavalry Wife: The Diary of Eveline M. Alexander* (1976).



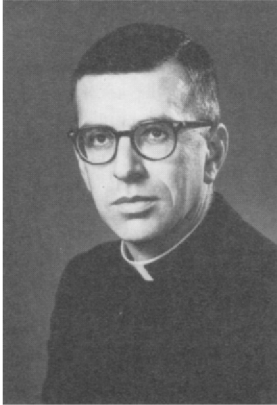
ROGER L. NICHOLS. Born Racine, Wisconsin, June 13, 1933. B.S., 1956, Wisconsin State College—LaCrosse; M.S., 1959, and Ph.D. 1964, University of Wisconsin. Has taught at Wisconsin State University—Oshkosh, University of Georgia, University of Maryland, and University of Arizona where he presently is professor of History. Books: *General Henry Atkiason* (1965); *The Missouri Expedition* (ed., 1969); *The American Indian* (co-editor, 1971); *The Study of American History* (contributor, 1973); *Sources of Military History* (contributor, 1975).



RAYMOND G. O'CONNOR. Born June 6, 1915, St. Louis, Missouri. M.A., 1948, American University; Ph.D., 1957, Stanford University. Has taught at the University of California, Stanford University, University of Kansas, Temple University, and since 1969 the University of Miami. Has guest lectured at the University of Costa Rica, Stanford University, the University of California, Santa Barbara, and Brown University. He also served as Ernest J. King professor, U.S. Naval War College (1967-68). U.S. Navy (1935-55). Books: *Perilous Equilibrium* (1962); *History of American Military Policy* (ed. and co-author, 1962); *Readings in Twentieth Century American History* (co-editor, 1963); *American Defense Policy in Perspective* (ed. and co-author, 1965); *Presidential Powers in Foreign Affairs* (co-author, 1966); *The Japanese Navy in World War II* (ed., 1969); *Diplomacy for Victory: FDR and Unconditional Surrender* (1971); and *Force and Diplomacy: Essays Military and Diplomatic* (1972).



RICHARD A. PRESTON. Born Middlesbrough, England, October 4, 1910. B.A., 1921, and M.A., 1932, Leeds; Ph.D., 1936, Yale. Has taught at the University of Toronto, University College (Cardiff), the Royal Military College of Canada, and at the University of British Columbia (summer school). Has lectured at the Canadian National Defence College, the Canadian Staff College, and the U.S. Naval War College. Royal Air Force, 1940-45. W. K. Boyd Professor of History at Duke University since 1965 and Director of Canadian Studies since 1973. Books: *A Short History of Kingston as a Naval and Military Centre* (co-author, 1950); *Gorges of Plymouth Fort* (1953); *Men in Arms: A History of Warfare and its Interrelationships with Western Society* (co-author, 1956, 1962, and 1970); *Can We Disarm?* (1957); *Royal Fort Frontenac* (co-author, 1958); *Kingston Before the War of 1812* (1958); *Canada in World Affairs, 1959-1961* (1965); *Canada and the "Imperial Defense": A Study of the Origins of the British Commonwealth's Defense Organization, 1868-1919* (1967); *Canada's RMC* (1969); *Contemporary Australia: Studies in History, Politics, and Economics* (ed., 1969); *Canadian Defence Policy and the Development of the Canadian Nation, 1867-1917* (1970); *The Influence of the United States on Canadian Development: Eleven Case Studies* (ed., 1972); *For Friends at Home: A Scottish Emigrant's Letters from Canada, California, and the Cariboo, 1844-64* (ed., 1974).



REVEREND FRANCIS PAUL PRUCHA. Born River Falls, Wisconsin, January 4, 1921. B.S., 1941, Rivers Falls State Teachers College; M.A., 1947, University of Minnesota; Ph.D., 1950, Harvard. U.S. Army Air Force, 1942-1946. Entered Jesuit order, 1950; ordained to the priesthood, 1957. Has taught at Marquette University since 1960; served as visiting professor at University of Oklahoma and Harvard Summer Session. Books: *Broadax and Bayonet* (1953); *Army Life on the Western Frontier* (ed. 1958); *American Indian Policy in the Formative Years* (1962); *A Guide to the Military Posts of the United States* (1964); *The Sword of the Republic* (1969); *Indian Peace Medals* (1971); *Americanizing the American Indian* (ed. 1973); *American Indian Policy in Crisis* (1976).



MARTIN RIDGE. Born Chicago, May 7, 1923. B.E., 1944, Chicago Teachers College; M.A. 1949, and Ph.D., 1951, Northwestern University. Has taught at Westminster College, San Diego State University, University of California, Los Angeles, Northwestern University, and Indiana University. Editor of the *Journal of American History* since 1966. Books: *Ignatius Donnelly: The Portrait of a Politician* (1962); *California Work and Workers* (1963); *The American Adventure* (co-author, 1964); *America's Frontier Story* (co-author, 1969); and *Bibliography and the Historian* (contributor, 1967).



THEODORE ROPP. Born Hollywood, Illinois, May 22, 1911. A.B., 1934, Oberlin; A. B., 1935, and Ph.D., 1937, Harvard. Has taught at Harvard and, since 1938, Duke University. Has served as Ernest J. King Professor of Maritime History at the Naval War College and as Distinguished Visiting Professor of Military History at the Army War College and at the United States Military Academy at West Point. He is perennial President of the American Military Institute and former Chairman, Historical Evaluation and Research Organization. Books: *War in the Modern World* (1959; 2nd revised ed., 1962); and *The Historical Development of Contemporary Strategy* (1970).



MARSHALL SPRAGUE. Born March 14, 1909, Neward, Ohio. B.S., 1930, Princeton University. Reporter for the *Women's Wear Daily*, the *North China Star*, Tientsin, China, and the Paris edition of the *New York Herald Tribune*. Feature writer, book reviewer, *The New York Times*. Has written some 500 articles for various publications. Books: *Money Mountain, The Story of Cripple Creek Gold* (1953); *Masacre, The Tragedy at White River* (1957); *Newport in the Rockies, The Life and Good Times of Colorado Springs* (1961); *The Great Gates, The Story of the Rocky Mountain Passes* (1964); *A Gallery of Dudes* (1967); *The Mountain States* (Time-Life Books, 1968); *So Vast So Beautiful a Land, Louisiana and the Purchase* (1974); *One Hundred Years Plus, A Centennial Story of Colorado Springs* (1972); and *Colorado* (1976).



ROBERT M. UTLEY. Born Bauxite, Arkansas, October 31, 1929. B.S., 1951, Purdue University; M.A., 1952, Indiana University; Hon. Doctor of Letters, Purdue, 1974 and University of New Mexico, 1976. U.S. Army (private to captain), 1952-56. Historian, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Department of Defense, 1954-57. Served with National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, as historical aide at Custer Battlefield National Monument summers of 1947-52; Regional Historian, Southwest Region, Santa Fe, N. M., 1957-64; Chief Historian, Washington, 1964-72; Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, 1972-73; Assistant Director of NPS for Park Historic Preservation, 1973 to present. One of founders of the Western History Association in 1961 and President, 1967-68. Books: *Custer and the Great Controversy* (1962); *The Last Days of the Sioux Nation* (1963); *Frontiersmen in Blue: The U.S. Army and the Indian, 1848-1865* (1967); *Frontier Regulars: The U.S. Army and the Indian, 1866-91* (1973).



HENRY P. WALKER, LTC, USAR-RET. Born Schenectady, New York, February 8, 1911. A.B. and 2nd Lt. USA, 1933, Harvard; M.A., 1935 (Mining Geology), Harvard. Active duty, 1940-1960. Foreign Service: Panama, Italy, Korea, Germany. M.A., 1961 (History), Texas Western College; Ph.D., 1965, University of Colorado. Assistant Editor, *Arizona and the West* and occasional lecturer in Western American History, University of Arizona. Book: *The Wagonmasters* (1966). Articles on military subjects in: *Montana, Journal of Arizona History, Arizona and the West, and Military Review.*

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