

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

BOARD OF VISITORS

OF THE

UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY,

MADE TO THE

SECRETARY OF WAR,

FOR THE

YEAR 1876.



WASHINGTON:
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE.
1876.

REPORT
OF
THE BOARD OF VISITORS,
JUNE, 1876.

Major General Charles Devens, Jr., *President*.
M. H. Buckham, President of the University of Vermont, *Secretary*.
Henry C. Cameron, Ph. D., D. D., Professor in the College of New Jersey.
Rev. G. D. Carrow, D. D., of Pennsylvania.
Maj. R. P. Hammond, of California.
Rev. A. N. Ogden, of Louisiana.
J. W. Sterling, LL. D., Vice-President of the University of Wisconsin.
Hon. John J. Patterson, United States Senator from South Carolina.
Hon. Theodore F. Randolph, United States Senator from New Jersey.
Hon. Henry R. Harris, Member of House of Representatives from Georgia.
Hon. William A. Wheeler, Member of House of Representatives from New York.
Hon. Alpheus S. Williams, Member of House of Representatives from Michigan.

WEST POINT, June 30, 1876.

The board of visitors, appointed to attend the annual examination of the Military Academy at West Point, herewith submit their report, in conformity with the act of Congress requiring them "to report to the Secretary of War. for the information of Congress, at the commencement of the next succeeding session, the actual state of the discipline, instruction, police, administration, fiscal affairs, and other concerns of the institution."

The members of the board, in view of the public discussion to which the affairs of the academy had been recently subjected, assembled under an impression of the unusual importance of their duties, and with the intention of making their investigations thorough and impartial. All the members were present at an early stage of the work. Most of them were in almost constant attendance during the entire examination of the first class. The evenings were occupied in committee-work and in conference with members of the academic board. Every means was used for getting full information and reaching well-matured judgments on all the topics committed to the supervision of the board. It is due also to the superintendent and to all the instructors and officers of the academy to say that they not only treated the members of the board with the utmost courtesy, which, though expected from high-bred soldiers, was none the less gratifying, but seconded the work of investigation into their several departments with admirable earnestness and sincerity.

GENERAL IMPRESSIONS.

Before passing on to the more detailed account of their investigations, the board desire to express the high estimate they formed of the ability and faithfulness of the professors, the thoroughness of the instruction, the efficiency of the discipline, and the excellent morale of the corps of cadets. In particular they wish to put on record their very high appreciation of the services rendered to the academy by the superintendent, whose broad and well-balanced views of the claims of the different departments and studies have won for him a commanding respect from the academic board, and whose mingled firmness and kindness in discipline have given marked success to his administration. To him, as the controlling head, is due no small share of the high repute which the academy enjoys as its management passes from his hands to those of the gallant soldier who succeeds him. And this well-deserved praise need not detract from the credit due to other members of the academic staff. Several members of the board of visitors have had the opportunity of comparing the gentlemen at the head of the different departments with men in similar positions in other institutions of this country and Europe, and it is their testimony that an abler body of men, taken as a whole, or men more thoroughly qualified to instruct in their several specialties, it would be difficult to find in any institution of learning.

FISCAL AFFAIRS.

The following exhibit, taken from books of the superintendent's office, will show the appropriations and expenditures for the support of the academy, under their various heads, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1876.

Hheads of appropriations.	Appropriated.	Expended.
1. For additional pay of officers, and for pay of instructors, professors, cadets, and musicians.....	\$235,000 00	\$179,918 43
2. Current and ordinary expenses:		
For repairs and improvements.....	22,500 00	22,482 68
For fuel and apparatus.....	14,000 00	13,998 15
For gas-pipes, gasometers, and retorts.....	600 00	597 45
For fuel for cadets' mess-hall, shops, and laundry.....	3,500 00	3,499 89
For postage and telegrams.....	300 00	299 90
For stationery.....	600 00	586 06
For transportation of materials, discharged cadets, and ferrisages.....	1,800 00	1,785 64
For printing, type, materials for office, diplomas, registers, and blanks..	900 00	744 06
For compensation to pressman and lithographer, \$50 each.....	100 00	50 00
For clerk to disbursing-officer and quartermaster.....	1,650 00	1,650 00
For clerk to adjutant.....	1,500 00	1,500 00
For clerk to treasurer.....	1,500 00	1,500 00
For department of instruction in mathematics.....	80 00	30 90
For department of artillery, cavalry, and infantry tactics.....	970 00	876 08
For department of civil and military engineering.....	3,100 00	931 28
For department of chemistry, mineralogy, and geology.....	3,860 00	2,740 72
For department of natural and experimental philosophy.....	5,950 00	1,849 85
For department of practical military engineering.....	200 00	152 22
For department of French.....	200 00	188 10
For department of Spanish.....	50 00	24 52
For department of drawing.....	420 00	376 68
For department of law.....	100 00	99 93
For department of ordnance and gunnery.....	600 00	593 31
For expenses of the board of visitors.....	4,200 00	3,597 36
Total.....	68,680 00	60,154 78
3. Miscellaneous items and incidental expenses:		
For gas, coal-oil, &c., for lighting academy, mess-hall, hospital, &c.....	4,000 00	3,947 51
For water-pipes, plumbing, and repairs.....	2,000 00	2,000 00
For cleaning public building, (not quarters).....	560 00	549 00
For brooms, brushes, tubs, pails, soap, and cloths.....	200 00	134 58
For chalk, crayons, sponge, slates, and rubbers for recitation-rooms.....	100 00	100 00
For compensation of chapel organist.....	200 00	200 00
For compensation of librarian.....	120 00	120 00

* The amount \$179,918.43 is that paid to cadets. The salary of officers, professors, and musicians is paid by the Pay Department of the Army, and is not taken up on the books of the academy.

Heads of appropriations.	Appropriated.	Expended.
3. Miscellaneous items and incidental expenses—Continued.		
For compensation of non-commissioned officer in charge of mechanics ..	\$50 00	\$50 00
For compensation of soldier, writing in adjutant's office	50 00	50 00
For pay of engineer of heating and ventilating apparatus	1,500 00	1,500 00
For pay of assistant engineer	720 00	720 00
For pay of five firemen	2,200 00	1,848 00
For increase and expense of library	2,000 00	2,034 81
For pay of librarian's assistant	1,000 00	1,000 00
For contingencies for superintendent	1,000 00	999 70
For furniture for cadet hospital and repairs	100 00	98 06
For printing catalogue of library	700 00	693 10
For renewing furniture for academic section rooms and offices	1,000 00	1,000 00
For paper and periodicals for cadet hospital	60 00	60 00
For carpeting and repairs to chapel for cadets, officers, &c.	1,000 00	997 29
Total	18,560 00	18,102 05
4. Building and grounds:		
For repairing roads and paths	500 00	499 99
For continuing superstructure of new hospital for cadets	30,000 00	29,999 51
For continuing construction of sewerage from barracks and quarters ...	3,000 00	3,000 00
For repairs to reservoirs and increasing capacities	500 00	499 53
For construction of school-house for soldiers' children, and furniture ...	8,000 00	8,000 00
For parapet wall on road along cliff leading to south wharf	500 00	500 00
Total	42,500 00	42,499 03
* Grand total	364,740 00	300,674 29

* From the balance unexpended a few small payments have yet to be made for contracts not yet completed.

A committee of the board made a careful examination of the books, accounts, and vouchers in the superintendent's office, and found them kept systematically and in such a manner as to guard against error or fraud, so far as the system of book-keeping employed will permit. The board are of opinion, however, that the single-entry method does not furnish the requisite checks and safeguards for accounts so extensive in amount and so various in kind. They therefore recommend a change to the double-entry system.

Considering the ability secured and the unusual expense of living at the post, the board regard the salaries of the professors as not extravagant. The "longevity pay," so called, or the added allowance for every five years of service, after a certain period, the board consider—one member dissenting—as just in principle and wholesome in effect, being both an incentive to fidelity and a reward for meritorious service, and they therefore recommend its continuance.

The board are unable to see how the academy can, without loss, dispense with the services of any of the clerks at present employed. They advise against any reduction of the clerical force.

For the benefit of their successors and for the credit of the government, the board recommend that the present law compelling members to render every small item of expense in traveling to and from their homes to the post be modified so as to give members of the board of visitors the mileage allowed to members of Congress serving on special committees. If gentlemen competent to render the service expected of visitors at West Point give their time to the Government without compensation, they should at least have their traveling expenses paid, without being annoyed by the petty requirements of existing laws.

BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS.

Most of the buildings belonging to the post are well constructed, durable, and kept in repair at a moderate outlay. The average cost of

repairs, estimated upon the original cost of the building, does not exceed one and a half per cent. The delay in completing the new hospital, in constructing a reservoir, and providing a system of sewerage, should be only temporary. All these constructions, though not absolutely necessary, are, for reasons of health and economy, highly desirable, and ought to be proceeded with at the earliest moment when the condition of the Federal Treasury will permit. The grounds are in excellent condition.

DISCIPLINE.

The first impression received by those who come to West Point from the free life of a literary institution or from the amenities of a home is that the discipline is unnecessarily severe, and the life of the cadet one of almost unrelieved hardship. Subsequent reflection on the peculiar character of the military service, to which this cadet-life is preparatory, and further acquaintance with the system as a whole, materially change this first impression. It is true that the discipline is strict and unyielding; no other would make thorough soldiers. The life of the cadet is one of hardships; but the young men become robust in enduring them, and soon learn to make light of them. The board were met by complaints from parents and friends of cadets—in no case from cadets themselves—that slight offenses were visited with extreme punishments; in short, that the code of the academy was Draconian in failing to distinguish between peccadilloes and crimes. A committee of the board took pains to trace out, through the records in the adjutant's office, every case which was brought to their attention, and while they were, of course, unable to arrive at the exact merits of individual cases, they were convinced that the discipline, as a whole, is characterized by fairness and moderation, the demands of the military service being considered. The results of the system, in the opinion of the board, amply justify it. The fine physical development secured; the erect carriage, the open, ingenuous face and frank manners, contrasting delightfully with the hard, dissipated look of so many unrestrained youth; the deferential courtesy which so well became the manly bearing, and which it seemed so easy to render; the promptness and precision in infantry exercises, the dash and brilliancy in cavalry drill; and, in general, the manhood secured, physical, intellectual, and moral, vindicate, in the main, the system of discipline pursued as admirably accomplishing the end for which it is designed. To carry out such a system, however, with firmness, discretion, and even-handed justice, requires very rare qualities, both intellectual and moral, in every person associated in its responsibilities, from the commandant down to the orderly for the day. While, therefore, the commendation of the board given to the general results of the system is a commendation also of those who were charged with the difficult duty of carrying out the system, the board would feel that they had not done their duty if they failed to urge strongly the necessity of exercising the utmost care in the selection of the younger tactical officers, whose personal character, as well as their soldierly qualities, should carry respect where their position confers official authority.

COMMISSARY DEPARTMENT.

A committee of the board went carefully through the various details of this department and found it in a state of commendable efficiency. The methods of procuring the requisite material, the processes of man-

ufacture and repair, the character of the articles supplied and their cost, are such as to call for no comment from the board except in the way of approval.

MESS.

Repeated inspections of the mess, and careful inquiries into the way in which the purveying, cooking, and serving are conducted, satisfied the board that the cadets' table is, in general, wholesome and abundant. Not deeming it safe to rely on the character of the mess while it was liable to inspection at any meal, the members of the board encouraged the cadets to furnish them with any information, which, for the proper discharge of its duties, the board ought to possess. From information thus given, verified so far as the nature of the case would admit, the board came to the conclusion that while the failures to provide the palatable and nourishing food which such young men require, are rare and exceptional, their recurrence is possibly not sufficiently guarded against by the present system of inspection and reporting. An article of food may not be "unsuitable for use," [Reg. 267,] and the cadet may not think it worth while to make himself responsible for reporting it, while it may still not be such as it should be, palatable and nutritious. The cost of the table to cadets, about \$20 per month, should ensure an abundance of plain, wholesome food, well cooked and neatly served. The board are of the opinion that such a table is generally furnished.

THE CORPS OF CADETS.

In answer to inquiries made with a view to ascertain the number of graduates furnished by the Academy to the Army, and the ratio of graduates to the number appointed in each year, and to the number admitted after examination, the board were furnished with the following statistics :

Statement showing the number of candidates for cadetship appointed to the United States Military Academy, number admitted, and number graduated from 1850 to 1876.

Years.	Number appointed.*	Number admitted.*	Number at close of first year.	Number at close of second year.	Number at close of third year.	Graduated.	Ratio of graduated to appointed.	Ratio of graduated to admitted.
1850.....	91	90	57	53	40	40	.44	.44
1860.....	84	72	33	29	27	27	.32	.37
1865.....	90	74	49	43	36	36	.40	.49
1870.....	140	65	45	39	38	37	.26	.57
1871.....	108	76	47	39	36	34	.31	.45
1872.....	130	95	64	56	47	45	.35	.47
1873.....	192	118	87	77	74	.....	.....	.....
1874.....	155	89	56	47	.....	.....	.....	.....
1875.....	188	121	79	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
1876.....	154	98	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Averages.....	133	90	.....	.....	.....	37	.35	.45

* From the column "Number appointed" are excluded all those rejected by the medical board, those whose appointments were canceled, those who declined their appointments, and those who failed to report; so that the difference between this column and that headed "Number admitted" shows the number rejected by the academic board at the examination for admission.

The following statement gives in detail the history of the

CLASS ADMITTED 1872.	
Appointed to academy.....	165
Rejected at preliminary examination.....	55
Failed to report.....	14
Declined appointment.....	1
	70
Admitted.....	95
Discharged for deficiency January, 1873.....	17
Discharged for deficiency June, 1873.....	7
Separated from class by various other casualties.....	24
	47
Joined from preceding class.....	3
Graduated June, 1876.....	48

These figures are highly instructive. It appears that only a few more than one-third of those who are appointed and fewer than half of those who are admitted to the Academy, are finally graduated. The process by which 45 are selected out of 100 is expensive. Of the 55 who are dropped out in the progress of the class, many are carried on a considerable distance in the course at the cost of the Government, occupying places in the class which cannot be filled by others, and thus entailing upon the Government both the loss of the places and the unrequited cost of their maintenance and instruction. Meanwhile the Academy is furnishing only 50 per cent. of the officers required for the Army. Considerations of economy as well as those looking to the efficiency of the military service, urge a careful inquiry into the causes of this waste and its remedy. The board are clearly of the opinion that the falling off is not chargeable to any excessive rigor in the course of instruction and discipline at the Academy, and that any relaxation of the standard of scholarship would tell disastrously on the character of the men sent out, on the reputation of the Academy and the prestige of the Army. The question, in the judgment of the board, reduces itself to this: How can the method of appointment, or the mode of selecting the appointees, be changed, so that a larger percentage of those appointed can be relied on as capable of bearing the strain of this necessarily rigorous discipline? The method of selection by competitive examination does not seem to meet the case, because the qualifications tested by such an examination and those tested by the discipline of the Academy are not the same. An examination in the elementary English studies would often select mediocrity favored in its previous training instead of talent capable of high training. The qualities which win at West Point are robust health, capacity to work and to endure, and aptitude for mathematics. Candidates should be preferred for their promise rather than for their attainments. If the appointing power is to remain in the hands of members of Congress they should hold themselves and be held by the public responsible, in a degree, for the successful career of those appointed by them. A member who should desire to do his duty in making an appointment could not turn it over to some committee of teachers to settle by competitive examination, but should take the pains necessary for ascertaining who among those desiring the position gives promise of the greatest ability of the kind required. It might serve to keep up the sense of responsibility in making these appointments, if, in the Academy Register, the name of the cadet should be accompanied by the name of his patron.

COURSE OF STUDY.

To this subject the board gave a large share of their thought and deliberation. Whether the course of study should be mainly disciplinary or largely technical; whether, in either case, liberal studies, such as history, literature, and ethics, should be excluded as they now are; whether the discipline is too engrossingly mathematical, both in amount and in method; whether studies, recognized to be of paramount importance, had usurped more than their due share of time, while others, unable to hold their ground against so formidable rivals, had been compelled to yield part or all of their space; and whether, taking the course as a whole, it is the one best adapted to secure for the Army men of the largest ability and the highest character—these questions, and such as these, elicited earnest and prolonged discussion; and while the board saw much to commend and admire in the present course of instruction, they found themselves brought, in the progress of almost every investigation, to the irresistible conviction that the time had come when the whole system of instruction and discipline in the Academy needs a searching examination and a thorough revision. This conviction is shared by the academic board, by many of the most prominent graduates of the institution, and by previous boards of visitors, as is manifested by their reports. The board were the more impressed with the need of such action by feeling their own incompetency to reach permanent conclusions on so large and complicated a subject after a few days' investigations. The work of revising such a course of study can be adequately done only by a commission of able men, taken partly from military and partly from civil life, sitting with ample time to get complete information on all the subjects and interests involved, and maturing their conclusions with the utmost patience and caution. It is now many years since any such commission has sat, or since any prolonged study has been given to the West Point course as a whole. Meanwhile it has been materially changed in its several parts, extended here and abridged there, without any due regard to its integrity as a system, until it is, in the judgment of the board, seriously out of proportion and deficient of certain important elements. This board, therefore, strongly recommend the appointment by Congress at an early day of a

COMMISSION TO REVISE THE COURSE OF STUDY AND DISCIPLINE.

Without intending to forestall the action of such a commission, this board, after as full and careful investigation as was possible for them, have arrived at certain results, which they present in their report either as suggestions to such a commission should it be appointed, or as recommendations to those who, in any other event, may be charged with the supervision of the academy.

These suggestions they group under three heads: 1. Certain recommendations on which the board are unanimous and their convictions clear; 2. Points on which a majority of the board are agreed; and, 3. Points which are deemed important, but on which the board were able to come to no precise conclusion.

I. UNANIMOUS RECOMMENDATIONS.

1. *Instructions in English.*

On the desirableness of restoring studies in English, there seems to be no diversity of opinion. Cadets are at their entrance lamentably deficient in their knowledge of English. "To require proficiency in

English grammar," says the superintendent in his report for 1871, would result in the rejection of much the greater portion." In the present course there is no provision for remedying this deficiency. A few of the foremost men in the several classes gratified the board by the propriety and accuracy of their language, both spoken and written. But the greater number blundered and stumbled badly in their oral sentence-making, and much of the correspondence filed in the adjutant's office is ungrammatical and slovenly in the extreme. The board recommend the substitution of English studies for French in half the first year, or the alternation of English with French during the whole of the year.

2. *Instruction in ethics.*

The board were unable to learn that there was any other reason for dropping English and ethics from the course than that in the change from a four years' course to a five year's course and back again to four years some of the studies had been expanded, and, not readily submitting to contraction, had crowded others out. That an institution should make itself responsible for a young man's education and give him no instruction whatever in the science and practice of good morals is certainly an anomaly. The board very strongly recommend that the "chaplain and professor in ethics" give instruction in ethics twice a week to the members of the first class.

3. *The professorship of law.*

In view of the extreme importance of this department, growing out of the grave responsibilities resting on officers of the Army, in connection with civil, martial, and international law, it is recommended that, in any new adjustment of studies, more time be allotted to this department. It is also recommended that the professor of law be commissioned in the same manner as the other professors.

4. *Recent graduates as officers.*

The board, while appreciating the reason for selecting the junior instructors from those who are fresh from their studies, see so strong objections to elevating immature young men to positions of command over their former comrades, that they advise against the returning of graduates to duty in the departments of instruction or discipline until four years after their graduation.

5. *Time allowed for sleep.*

The board heartily concur in the recommendation repeatedly made by former boards that the cadets be allowed, at all seasons of the year, eight hours for sleep.

II. CHANGES RECOMMENDED BY A MAJORITY OF THE BOARD.

1. *Sunday parades.*

After a prolonged discussion and a full hearing of the reasons for the present practice, the board passed a resolution "earnestly recommending that all public military exercises of the corps on the plain be suspended on the Sabbath day."

2. *Use of tobacco.*

Considering it well established by general observation and physiological research that the use of tobacco during youth enfeebles the vital energies and dulls the intellect; and finding the opinion prevalent among many of the officers and graduates of the academy that large numbers of the cadets are suffering both physically and mentally from this cause; and believing that the Government has a right to the full and unimpaired powers of the young men whom it is maintaining and educating, the board recommend that the use of tobacco be forbidden to the cadets.

3. *The military band.*

The board find that the band consists of a teacher of music, who is paid \$90 per month, and thirty-nine enlisted musicians, who are paid from \$30 to \$43 per month, making the total expense of the band about \$17,000. While fully appreciating the positive value of such a band to the institution, and though finding it hard to grudge to the cadets and the families at the post their one luxury in their secluded and monotonous life, the board are of the opinion—or a majority of them—that in the present financial condition of the country, and in view of the demand for economy in all branches of the public service, “the military band at this post is unnecessarily expensive, and that it ought to be reduced to its number prior to July 1, 1875.”

III. QUERIES.

Several topics engaged the attention of the board which they deemed of great importance, but upon which they had not time to mature any definite recommendations. They present two of them in the form of queries:

1. Whether the academy should not be under the care of a board of trustees, empowered by Congress to carry into effect, as circumstances require, the general legislation of Congress relative to the institution? Experience has shown that such institutions are best managed by an administrative body, independent of and superior to the body of instructors. The sole duty and responsibility of all such changes in the departments of instruction and discipline as the law admits now rests with the Secretary of War, whose multifarious duties interfere with his giving the time and personal inspection to the affairs of the academy which such responsibility requires. The board of visitors, a body wholly new every year, coming to the work of investigation with no experience to guide them, spending but two or three weeks in the discharge of their duties, must be very inadequately fitted to advise the Government as to the needs of such an institution. The academic board, each member pardonably solicitous to magnify his own department, unable to adjust among themselves their conflicting claims, would gladly defer to a supervising body their individual opinions and preferences. These considerations, and many others that would present themselves in a fuller discussion, justify the board in presenting this question as one worthy of serious attention.

2. Whether, as all cadets are under training to be officers in the Army, and as the object of the military exercises is not to bring the battalion to the most complete efficiency but to familiarize the individual cadet with his future duties as an officer, it would not be advisable to take all the officers from the first class, and by rotation? The objections to

this plan readily present themselves, but the arguments in favor of it are strong, and, in the judgment of the board, deserve to be reconsidered.

CONCLUSION.

In closing their report, the board desired to commend the academy to the thoughtful and liberal care of the Government. They are well aware that some of the changes they have recommended are important and are open to question, and they would be among the last to favor any hasty and ill-considered innovations in the policy of an institution which already stands so high in the estimation of the country and of the world.

But having become firmly convinced that some changes are imperatively called for, and believing that the method suggested would insure the most considerate and thorough adjustment of the many questions that present themselves, the board respectfully ask for their recommendations, and particularly for their recommendation of a committee of revision, the earnest attention of the Secretary of War and of Congress.

CHARLES DEVENS, JR., *President.*

M. H. BUCKHAM, *Secretary.*

HENRY C. CAMERON.

G. D. CARROW.

R. P. HAMMOND.

A. N. OGDEN,

J. W. STERLING.

JNO. J. PATTERSON.

THEODORE F. RANDOLPH.

WM. A. WHEELER.

A. S. WILLIAMS.

Official copy of the report of the Board of Visitors to the Military Academy for 1876, signed, in behalf of the members whose names are hereunto affixed, by the secretary on their written authorization.

M. H. BUCKHAM,

Secretary.

The Hon. SECRETARY OF WAR.