

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

BOARD OF VISITORS

TO THE

UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY,

MADE TO

THE SECRETARY OF WAR,

FOR

THE YEAR 1888.



WASHINGTON:
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE.

1888.

BOARD OF VISITORS.

Appointed by the President of the United States.

1. Gen. H. W. SLOCUM (*President*).....BROOKLYN, NEW YORK.
2. Dr. A. J. BATTLE (*Secretary*).....MACON, GEORGIA.
3. Hon. EDWARD A. O'NEAL.....FLORENCE, ALABAMA.
4. HENRY FLANDERS, Esq.....PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA.
5. Prof. W. D. F. LUMMIS.....PERRY, IOWA.
6. Hon. JOHN M. ADAMS.....PORTLAND, MAINE.
7. Hon. PETER WHITE.....MARQUETTE, MICHIGAN.

Appointed by the President pro tempore of the Senate.

8. Hon. S. M. CULLOM.....SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS.
9. Hon. JOHN H. REAGAN (*Vice-President*).....PALESTINE, TEXAS.

Appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

10. Hon. R. W. TOWNSHEND.....SHAWNEETOWN, ILLINOIS.
11. Hon. ASHBEL P. FITCH.....NEW YORK, NEW YORK.
12. Hon. HENRY BACON.....GOSHEN, NEW YORK.

REPORT
OF
THE BOARD OF VISITORS TO THE UNITED STATES
MILITARY ACADEMY.

WEST POINT, N. Y., June 11, 1888.

SIR: The Board of Visitors appointed to attend the annual examination of the United States Military Academy for the year 1888 assembled at West Point on June 1, and organized by the election of General H. W. Slocum, president; Hon. J. H. Reagan, vice-president; and Rev. A. J. Battle, secretary.

The following committees were appointed, viz:

Admissions, appointments, etc.—Hon. John H. Reagan, Prof. W. D. F. Lummis, Hon. R. W. Townshend, Hon. J. M. Adams, Dr. A. J. Battle.

Buildings and grounds.—Hon. Henry Bacon, Hon. Peter White, Hon. S. M. Cullom, Hon. A. P. Fitch, Hon. John H. Reagan.

Discipline and instruction.—Prof. W. D. F. Lummis, Dr. A. J. Battle, Hon. S. M. Cullom.

Police administration and fiscal affairs.—Hon. Edward A. O'Neal, Hon. Henry Bacon, Hon. Henry Flanders.

Cadets and supply department.—Hon. A. P. Fitch, Hon. J. M. Adams, Hon. Peter White.

Ordnance and armament.—Hon. R. W. Townshend, Hon. Henry Flanders, Hon. E. A. O'Neal.

The members of the Board spent several days in attendance at the examination of the cadets and in inspecting the public buildings and grounds.

On several occasions the Superintendent and members of the Academic Board met with the Board of Visitors, and these officers and all others connected with the Academy cheerfully gave all information desired.

DISCIPLINE AND INSTRUCTION.

Section 1328 of the Revised Statutes makes it the duty of this Board to inquire into the actual state of the discipline and instruction at the Academy and to report upon the same for the information of Congress. We regard the duties of the Board as simply ministerial, no power being

vested in it to change in the slightest degree the management or administration of the institution. The Board is simply a means of communication between the Academy and the executive and legislative branches of the Government.

The Board takes pleasure in reporting that in its judgment in thoroughness of discipline and instruction the Military Academy is not excelled, if indeed it is equaled, by any other literary or scientific institution in our country. Its excellence in these respects has been a matter of growth, the changes which from time to time have been made having been the result of long experience and careful study on the part of those having charge of the institution.

The views of this Board as to the present condition of the Academy and the steady advance it is making can not be better expressed than by quoting the language of General Totten, in a report made by him to the Secretary of War in 1843 :

In June last, pending the examination, I was at the institution between two and three weeks, devoting all my time to the inspection which my official duty exacts of me. During this time I was careful to visit and examine each department of the Academy, looking into everything with as close a scrutiny as it was in my power to exercise, and it gives me great pleasure to report to you that I found the Academy not less prosperous and not less fully answering the designs of its establishment than at any previous period. Discipline, order, and harmony prevailed, and as perfectly, perhaps, as belongs to human associations.

The several courses of study were marked by the peculiar thoroughness that characterizes this school.

In these courses, though there must from year to year be inequalities in the amount of attainment, owing to the shades of different intellects of the successive classes, the general result shows progressive enlargement; that is to say, there is from year to year an increase in the amount or an improvement in the character of the knowledge communicated, resulting from the experience of the institution itself. The fact of this progress is evident on comparing periods of a few years distant from each other, and is a natural result on the one hand of the zeal, ability, and devotion that have been unceasingly applied to the management and instruction, and on the other of the steady adherence to safe and wise principles.

For more than twenty-five years, while the institution has been thus rising, no change has been grafted on its code of discipline or course of study that has not been the growth of its own experience.

And by force of this wise and cautious process it has been constantly developing new capacities and new fruits of self-cultivation. By continued adherence to this course, we may confidently look for all the improvement the future can bring forth. To arrest this natural progress, or with a strong hand to press it into new and untried shapes at the suggestion of speculation and theory, would surely be an unwise departure from the course of improvement heretofore pursued with such full success.

APPOINTMENTS AND ADMISSIONS.

The Board has considered the subject of appointments and admissions, and after conferences with the Superintendent and members of of the Academic Board and a full discussion of those questions, in which a variety of views were expressed, it does not recommend any change of the law as to the admission of cadets or the standard of the qualifications for their admission.

The question has been considered by the Board as to the propriety of increasing the number of cadets to be admitted by provisions of law authorizing the governor of each State to recommend a person for appointment as cadet in addition to those now provided for by law.

Inasmuch as it is understood that the number of cadets who graduate every year furnishes a greater number of officers than are necessary for the Army as now organized, the Board has not thought it advisable to recommend an increase of their number. For the Government to undertake to educate a greater number of cadets than are necessary to furnish officers for the Army would be, to the extent of the change, an alteration of the character of the Military Academy and the making it an institution for the general education of the youth of the country. The Board thinks this need may be better met by the other educational institutions of the country; and that the purposes for which the Military Academy was established would be better subserved by limiting the course of instruction to the plan now existing of educating the cadets especially for the profession of arms.

The Board has also, to some extent, considered the question as to the propriety of the establishment of a preparatory school for cadets, and, in connection with this, the making of a higher standard of qualification for their admission, as a means of enabling the Military Academy to afford them a more extended course of study in the higher branches of science.

While these questions may well occupy the attention of the Superintendent and Academic Board of the Academy, and of Congress, this Board, in view of its brief term of service and of other duties required of it, has neither the time nor means of making a satisfactory investigation of these questions.

BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS.

The Board has examined the grounds and buildings upon the military reservation, and the adjoining tract of land, containing 200 acres, which it is proposed shall be acquired by the United States for the uses of the Military Academy. They find a number of small buildings used as quarters for the married soldiers and their families, and for storage purposes, in a dilapidated and disgraceful condition. The credit of the Government and a proper regard for the preservation of its property and for the comfort and health of the enlisted men demand that such buildings should be removed and suitable structures substituted. The present condition of these buildings is due to the inadequacy of appropriations for repair and reconstruction of buildings, and not to any failure of the superintendents or officers in charge of the Academy to expend properly the means with which they have been provided. The reconstruction of this class of buildings should be speedily provided for, and should, in our opinion, be done gradually by systematic annual expenditures, to be continued until all the present unsightly and unsafe structures have been replaced by new and proper buildings.

The Academy grounds and buildings are now lighted by gas. The apparatus has been in use for many years and is nearly worn out, and will soon have to be replaced by new works or be repaired at a large expense. The Board is of the opinion that it would be unwise to build new gas-works or to make any expenditure upon the old ones, except such repairs as are imperatively needed to keep the apparatus in working order, and that the lighting of the buildings and grounds at the Military Academy should be done by electricity. We are led to this conclusion from the following consideration :

First. That the cost of lighting by electricity, after the plant has been provided, will be less than by gas.

Second. That the light itself, by the use of incandescent burners, in the cadet quarters will be much less trying upon the eyes of the cadets. And by reason of its not making any heat, it will affect the atmosphere less and will add to the healthfulness of the quarters.

Third. It will afford a much more effective system of lighting the grounds surrounding the buildings.

The Board further reports that they have particularly examined the building designated as the academic building. This building was erected in 1838, and was originally intended as the hall of instruction for the cadets. Its lower story was formerly used for a riding school and has since been used as a gymnasium. The building long since ceased to afford accommodation sufficient for the purposes for which it is needed. A portion of the library building has been used as an academic building, and as the library is constantly growing, all the room in that building will soon be needed for the proper arrangement of the books and their convenient use. The academic building is also badly lighted and ventilated. Several plans have been suggested for repairs of the present building, and one was adopted involving the expenditure of \$70,000 upon this building and the erection of a separate building for the department of natural and experimental philosophy; also a separate building for the gymnasium. An appropriation of this amount was made by Congress. Bids were called for and when opened the least proposal involved an expenditure of over \$100,000. Thereupon the Academic Board reconsidered its action and caused to be prepared, without expense to the Government, plans for a new building to take the place of the present structure, and to include with the other departments the accommodations necessary for the department of natural and experimental philosophy. Those plans were approved by the Academic Board, submitted to and approved by the Secretary of War. A bill has been introduced in the House of Representatives, and favorably reported by its Committee on Military Affairs, providing for the erection of the building in accordance with those plans and at an expense not to exceed \$190,000. The plans have been submitted to the Board, and we have also been informed as to the method by which the cost of the erection of the building has been estimated. We are satisfied that the old building is worn out and insufficient, and we think it

can not be repaired so as to make it proper and sufficient for the requirements of the Academy without a larger expenditure than is prudent, and that if repaired it would soon become insufficient by reason of the natural growth of the Academy. The plans submitted to us provide for a building which will be proper and sufficient for the present needs of the institution, and for those which will accompany its growth for many years. We are convinced that the estimate of the cost of its erection has been carefully made and will be found to cover all the expenditures required for its completion.

We therefore recommend that all plans for the repair of the old building be abandoned and that the building be removed, and a separate building be erected for the department of natural and experimental philosophy, as shown upon the plans referred to, and provided for by the bill now reported favorably to the House of Representatives.

The Board also recommends that there be erected at once a building for the use of the Military Academy as a gymnasium. The destruction of the present academic building will deprive the Academy of any gymnasium. The present one is unfitted for such use. A building of this nature is absolutely necessary for the well being of the cadets, particularly in the winter and spring, when drilling cadets out doors is impossible. The plans for the building have been prepared by the members of the Academic Board and submitted to and approved by the Secretary of War. The amount necessary for the purpose is included in the bill above mentioned, now pending in the House of Representatives, the estimates for which have been prepared by the Board and submitted to us, and we are convinced that the estimate covers all the expenses necessary for the completion of the building.

We recommend its erection at a cost not to exceed \$100,000.

The Board has also examined the tract of land which it is proposed to purchase for the use of the Academy, and finds that it consists of about 200 acres, lying contiguous to the south line of the reservation between it and the village of Highland Falls. It has been heretofore used as a place of residence by Edward Kinsley, now deceased, and, owing to his death, must be sold for the purposes of distribution amongst his heirs.

In the opinion of this Board it is desirable and necessary for the welfare of the Academy and the maintenance of the discipline required in such an institution that this land should be purchased and added to the Military Academy Reservation. A plot of this land showing its contiguity to the Military Academy is herewith submitted, marked Exhibit A.

POLICE ADMINISTRATION AND FISCAL AFFAIRS.

The Board has examined into the management of the fiscal affairs of the Academy and the police department, and has visited the several departments having charge of these matters, and have found that the affairs of each are conducted in a systematic and exact manner, and are unable to suggest any improvement in the methods now used.

They have also examined the books of the treasurer, quartermaster, and commissary of cadets, who keep the accounts of the money belonging to the cadets individually, or appropriated for their use and support, and are perfectly satisfied with the same.

The Board has examined with care the food and clothing supplied to the corps of cadets and the system under which the same are purchased and distributed. It also inspected the laundry, kitchen, tailor-shop, and the supplies on hand. Every opportunity was given by the officers in charge for a thorough and complete investigation of the manner in which the physical wants of the cadets are met.

Inquiry has also been made of the cadets themselves as to the quality and quantity of the food and other supplies furnished them. Such inquiry has developed the fact that the cadets are entirely satisfied in these respects and that they contrast favorably their treatment at this Academy with that at the boarding-schools which they had attended. From statements made by graduates of former years it is believed that an important and praiseworthy improvement has taken place.

In view of the general satisfaction with the food, clothing, and other supplies which the Board finds now existing, it desires to make no suggestion of any change from the present system.

The Board desires in particular to express its gratification with the personal bearing and conduct of the cadets and with the admirable harmony and sincere interest in their professional work which is apparent in each member of the corps of instructors, to whose earnest and faithful work the results achieved by the cadets are clearly due.

The establishment of a military academy was suggested and advocated by Alexander Hamilton, and the suggestion was approved by Washington in the following letter, written only two days before his death :

MOUNT VERNON, *December 12, 1799.*

SIR: I have duly received your letter of the 23th ultimo, inclosing a copy of what you had written to the Secretary of War on the subject of a military academy.

The establishment of an institution of this kind, upon a respectable and extensive basis, has ever been considered by me as an object of primary importance to this country; and while I was in the chair of Government, I omitted no proper opportunity of recommending it in my public speeches and otherwise to the attention of the legislature. But I never undertook to go into a detail of the organization of such an academy; leaving this task to others, whose pursuit in the path of science, and attention to the arrangement of such institutions had better qualified them for the execution of it. For the same reason, I must now decline making any observations on the details of your plan; and, as it has already been submitted to the Secretary of War, through whom it will naturally be laid before Congress, it might be too late for alterations, if any should be suggested.

I sincerely hope that the subject will meet with due attention, and that the reasons for its establishment which you have so clearly pointed out in your letter to the Secretary of War will prevail upon the legislature to place it upon a respectable and permanent footing.

With my great esteem and respects, etc.,

GEORGE WASHINGTON.

ALEXANDER HAMILTON,
Major-General.

That this Military Academy has fulfilled its military purpose as conceived by Washington and amply justified his wisdom and foresight, the history of our great wars abundantly testifies. But it has done more than this. Its pupils, trained in subordination as well as in leadership, have always aided and directed progress along those paths through which our country is now advancing; they have been among the foremost in every community in improving the methods of education, in advancing science, in developing the material interests of the country, and in the practice of good government.

These fruits of peace are no less valuable to the country than the legitimate laurels of war, and they have been possible because the institution implants and fosters in its pupils, during the formation period of youth, that self-reliant strength of character and of integrity by means of which such results can only be attained.

While West Point can not create men, its history shows that it does develop whatever of manhood its pupils originally possess, and that it does lay a broad and solid foundation for those arts and sciences by which they become masters of their profession; and we may safely trust the guardianship of the military profession so necessary to every nation to the graduates of this institution, feeling sure that they will ever be ready to render just accounts of their stewardship.

In conclusion it is gratifying to be able to say, that in the happy adjustment of the duties of the body of professors, who have themselves seen service, and of an ever-changing corps of active officers fresh from the exercise of their duties in the Army, we find the certainty of freedom from the danger of too much conservatism on the one hand, and too radical and sudden changes on the other. Hence any important modifications of the institution can safely be left to so admirable a guardianship.

Respectfully submitted.

H. W. SLOCUM,
President.

A. J. BATTLE,
Secretary.

E. A. O'NEAL.

JOHN M. ADAMS.

HENRY FLANDERS.

W. D. F. LUMMIS.

PETER WHITE.

JOHN H. REAGAN.

S. M. CULLOM.

R. W. TOWNSHEND.

ASHBEL P. FITCH.

HENRY BACON.

Hon. WILLIAM C. ENDICOTT,
Secretary of War.



Map of the
MILITARY RESERVATION
West Point, N.Y.

Scale: 1/10,000



