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Come Fill Your Glasses Fellows, But Why?

BY

CPT KEVIN M. KLOPCIC

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Come Fill Your Glasses Fellows, But Why?

In the lore of West Point, the name Benny Havens conjures up thoughts of cadets 'running it' and 'blowing'¹ post to go drinking at a local tavern. While Colonel Sylvanus Thayer was Superintendent of the United States Military Academy from 1817 to 1833, cadets regularly left post without authorization. Even though drinking was one of the reasons cadets frequented these establishments, it was clearly not the only reason. More importantly, they went for a good meal, to socialize with their friends, and to make their time at West Point more enjoyable. The facts and stories reveal that cadets left not because of immaturity or lack of discipline, but to bond with their brothers in arms. Graduates fondly remember their company mates, classmates, and roommates throughout the rest of their lives. They have a kinship with their fellow graduates because they have overcome similar adversities that unite them. These life long bonds were formed at places like North Tavern and Benny Havens. The administration, while attempting to enforce regulations, often did not punish cadets for breaking regulations if they were not caught by the person responsible for discipline. There are at least three documented cases where Thayer himself knew cadets had broken regulations but did not punish them. Today, 167 years after Thayer departed West Point, cadets are still blowing post to bond with their fellow cadets. They follow close order behind those who have indeed pointed the way. The Long Gray Line of graduates who have left post without authorization is just that, long. Many great officers and prominent figures in history made a habit of

¹ The terms 'running it' and 'blowing' post are slang terms used to describe leaving post without authorization.

blowing post. Those who were caught did their time and continued as cadets at West Point and some became great officers.

Cadets had to blow post to drink alcohol because Thayer made it illegal for cadets to possess or consume alcohol on West Point. When Thayer arrived at the Military Academy and became Superintendent, he implemented a set of 200 regulations to instill discipline into the Corps of Cadets. Cadets were prohibited from leaving West Point, being absent from their rooms without permission, cooking in their quarters, dueling, receiving money from relatives and friends, and wearing civilian clothes. The intent of these rules was to teach the cadets to listen and obey.² Prior to 1825, cadets were allowed to consume alcohol on July Fourth even though it was normally against regulations. Thayer permitted this to occur to celebrate the birth of the nation. Since Thayer was not a drinking man, he would leave post for the day so he would not see this violation of regulations. However, in 1825, the festivities were extremely wild. A snake dance was organized and the Commandant, Major William Worth was hoisted on cadet shoulders and carried to the barracks. This unprofessional display by the cadets outraged Thayer who ordered that cadets would no longer be allowed to drink alcohol on post, not even on July Fourth and Christmas.³

The first tavern frequented by cadets during the Thayer superintendency was North Tavern, owned and operated by the Gridley family. This tavern, located where the present day administration building stands, was also the only hotel in the area. All that separated the tavern from West Point was the fence circling the wood lot. Enterprising

² Theodore J. Crackel, *The Illustrated History of West Point* (New York: Henry N. Abrams, Inc. 1991), 107.

³ George S. Pappas, *To The Point, The United States Military Academy, 1802-1902*. (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1993), 160.

cadets loosened a board to devise a secret passage through the fence that was so cleverly hidden that an inspector would not find it if he did not know where to look.⁴ The tavern was known for serving outstanding food.

Besides the quality meals, another reason for the tavern's popularity was the ten minute rule. When an officer conducted room inspections and a cadet was absent, the cadet had ten minutes to return to his room to avoid punishment. Because of this rule, the absent cadet's roommate or friend would run to the fence and alert him to report as present in less than ten minutes and then he could return to North Tavern to finish his meal.⁵

Superintendent Thayer knew cadets frequented North Tavern and wanted to be rid of this nuisance. He felt that without a place to eat and drink close to West Point, cadets would remain on post. Since it was the only hotel for visitors, Thayer decided to alleviate this problem by building a hotel on West Point. He built the hotel on Trophy Point. In 1825 Thayer then convinced Congress to expand the size of West Point by purchasing the Gridley property for \$10,000.⁶ Realizing his business would decrease with the opening of a hotel on post, Gridley sold his property, which included Fort Putnam, to West Point. Once West Point purchased the land, the tavern was converted into the Cadet Hospital.⁷

With the closing of North Tavern, West Point saw the rise of Benny Havens. Benny worked for the post sutler, John DeWitt, whose store was near the present site of the central sallyport of Eisenhower Barracks and operated a tavern in Buttermilk Falls,

⁴ Albert E. Church, *Personal Reminiscences of the Military Academy, From 1824-1831* (West Point, NY: USMA Press, 1879), 17-18.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 18-19.

now known as Highland Falls. He was fired from his job at the sutler's store for selling rum to cadets in 1825.⁸ He did not have a lot of cadets frequenting his establishment until the Military Academy purchased North Tavern. After the closing of North Tavern, in the words of Albert Church, a 1828 graduate and longtime Professor of Mathematics, said Benny's "became *an institution* for many years of wide renown."⁹

One of the main reasons cadets went to both North Tavern and Benny Havens was because the food in the Mess Hall was very bland. The daily diet was heavy on bread, potatoes, and meat, especially beef, veal, and mutton, but skimpy on green vegetables and sweets.¹⁰ Dinner consisted of boiled, roasted, or baked meat. Breakfast and supper consisted of the same meat sliced and served cold. Twice a week cadets ate beef soup, bread pudding and molasses. Each day during the week the meal was different but the menu repeated weekly. About the only positive comment about the mess hall came from Oliver E. Wood who said "the bread was excellent."¹¹ Another graduate, John Buford, Class of 1848 and distinguished Union cavalry officer, declared "The fare in the mess hall is miserable – bull beef and bread and bread and bull beef continually – it would be quite a luxury to miss a meal."¹² Cadet Samuel P. Heintzelman, Class of 1826 who became a Major General during the Civil War, wrote in his diary about the food served in the mess hall. On 15 April 1825, he stated we had "fish for dinner for the first time this year."¹³ Later that month, on 27 and 29 April, he noted that they had bread and milk and

⁸ Pappas, *To The Point, The United States Military Academy, 1802-1902*, 160.

⁹ Church, *Personal Reminiscences of the Military Academy, From 1824-1831*, 19.

¹⁰ James L. Morrison, *The Best School in the World, West Point, the Pre-Civil War Years, 1833-1866* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1986), 77.

¹¹ Oliver E. Wood. *The West Point Scrapbook, A Collection of Stories, Songs, and Legends of the United States Military Academy*. (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1871), 34.

¹² Morrison, *The Best School in the World, West Point, the Pre-Civil War Years, 1833-1866*, 78. This quote was taken from Morrison and I was unable to determine his source.

¹³ Samuel P. Heintzelman, *Diary*. 01 January 1825 – 22 July 1826, 15.

then mush and milk for supper those two nights.¹⁴ A month later on 31 May 1825 he could finally report, "They have quit giving us mush and milk for supper."¹⁵

Thayer requested the mess hall food be similar to Army field rations which is why the food was tasteless. His decision regarding mess hall food drove cadets away from post to places like North Tavern and Benny Havens.¹⁶ He wanted cadets accustomed to Army rations so when they graduated, they knew what to expect upon joining their first unit. With the food being bland, cadets looked elsewhere to find better fare. Although some cadets were fortunate enough to eat at a boarding house operated by Mrs. Alexander R. Thompson, others had to find a better meal on their own. Thus they went to North Tavern and after it closed, they switched to Benny Havens.

Benny's was everything that the cadet mess hall was not. His tavern was known for the cakes, candies, buckwheat flapjacks, roast turkey and goose, and oysters prepared by Mrs. Havens. In the winter cadets could get a drink called the 'flip.' There are many different accounts of the flip. The "flip was made of a mixture of ale or cider and eggs well beaten, sweetened and spiced, and made hot by means of a red hot iron or 'flip dog' plunged into it. This way of heating it, if the iron was left in just long enough, gave it a delicious caramel-like flavor, but if left in too long, a burnt taste was the result."¹⁷ The flip dog is a piece of iron heated in the fire that Benny would plunge into the warm liquid to heat it enough to change the flavor. Benny was known to be an expert at making the flip and knew to the exact second how long to leave the flip dog in the pitcher. When

¹⁴ Ibid., 16.

¹⁵ Ibid., 22.

¹⁶ Thomas J. Fleming, *West Point, The Men and Times of the United States Military Academy*. (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc, 1969), 92.

¹⁷ Robert J. Wood, "Benny Havens" *Pointer Magazine* 26 February 1937, 8.

Benny first started serving cadets, he would only serve the cider flip. It was not until about five years later that he started serving the ale flip. During his first years of operation, he refused to serve alcohol to cadets. As time passed, more cadets asked for something stronger, so he obliged.¹⁸

There were other reasons that cadets frequented Benny's. He allowed cadets to either barter goods or purchase on credit what they wanted from his store. Benny would not take uniform items such as shoes because he knew that came from the cadet's account. He would however take the Macintosh blankets cadets had because they could be sent from home.¹⁹ The cadets who purchased on credit could run an account throughout the year. He operated in this manner because he knew cadets were honorable and would pay their debts. Another reason he treated cadets well was because after graduation they might return to West Point either on leave or as instructors, and they would again frequent Benny's because of the good cheer and caring way he treated them as cadets. Benny also earned the cadets' loyalty and trust by sitting them at the table closest to the door on the river side of his establishment so they could make a quick escape when an officer was seen approaching the tavern from the road.²⁰

Benny was also known as a good listener and a great story teller. He liked to surround himself with quick witted people to make the evenings more enjoyable. One such cadet who spent much time at Benny's was Edgar Allen Poe. He discovered Benny's and quickly became a regular at the establishment. Poe went to Benny's for two

¹⁸ Pappas, *To The Point, The United States Military Academy, 1802-1902*, 160.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 160.

²⁰ James B. Agnew, *Eggnog Riot, The Christmas Mutiny at West Point* (San Rafael, CA: Presidio Press, 1979), 46.

reasons, to drink and to talk with Benny. He and Benny became friends from their first meeting. The two would sit and talk for hours on end. This led to Poe's shortened stay at the Military Academy. He was court martialed in 1831 for continued absences. While many sources say Poe's stay at West Point would have been longer if it had not been for Benny Havens, Benny himself suggested that if it had not been for him, Poe's time at the Academy would have been even shorter. Upon leaving the Academy Poe called Havens "the sole congenial soul in the entire God-forsaken place."²¹

Another well known cadet who frequented Benny's was Albert Church. He was at Benny's one night with friends enjoying a meal when word came that the officers were coming to the tavern to look for cadets. Benny had planned for this and devised hiding places for all the cadets except Church. He quickly hid in a flour barrel and Benny threw a cloth over his head to hide him. Unfortunately, the officer found the cadets and they were court martialed. Somehow, Church was the only cadet found not guilty and was allowed to remain at the Academy.²²

Benny Havens almost led to the dismissal of another cadet. Cadet Jefferson Davis, Class of 1828 and later Secretary of War and President of the Confederate States of America, regularly frequented Benny Havens. He too went there for the food, camaraderie and the alcohol. Jefferson Davis holds the distinction of being the first cadet caught and court martialed for going to Benny Havens in 1825. He pleaded guilty to leaving post and going to a public house that served alcohol, but not guilty to drinking

²¹ Crackel, *The Illustrated History of West Point*, 110.

²² This story is related by both Dupuy, Richard, E in *Where They Have Trod, The West Point Tradition in American Life*, and Wood, Robert J. in his articles in *Pointer Magazine* but neither goes into detail about how Church escaped expulsion.

while there. Pleading on his own behalf, Davis said that cadets knew visiting Benny Havens was generally illegal, no such published order. He also argued that he did not believe that malt liquors, cider, and porter were "spiritous." At the end of his plea, he stated "It is better that a hundred guilty should escape than one righteous person be condemned."²³ Even though he was found guilty of the charges, he was allowed to stay at the Academy because of his prior good conduct and his respectful request for readmission.²⁴

The fact that he had been caught and court martialed once did not stop Jefferson Davis from returning to Benny Havens. Another trip almost led to Davis not graduating from West Point. One evening he and his friend, Cadet Emile Lassere, were enjoying themselves at Benny Havens and word came that an instructor was on his way to the tavern. Davis and his compatriot ran off through the woods to avoid the main road and take a short cut back to the barracks along the river. While traversing through the woods, Davis slipped and fell off a sixty foot bluff onto the river bank. A tree broke his fall and softened the blow of hitting the ground. His friend looked over the bluff in horror and yelled, "Jeff, are you dead?"²⁵ Unable to talk because the wind had been knocked from him and in great pain, Davis showed signs of life by waving the one hand he could move. After returning to post, he spent a long time in the infirmary and "for a while he was expected to die."²⁶

²³ Fleming, *West Point, The Men and Times of the United States Military Academy*, 55-56.

²⁴ Kenneth W. Rapp, *West Point, Whistler in Cadet Gray, and other Stories about the United States Military Academy*, 105.

²⁵ Hudson Strode, *Jefferson Davis, American Patriot* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1955), 42.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 43.

Based on Davis' two trips to Benny's, one would think he would have learned his lesson about leaving post without authorization. This was not the case. There is at least one other documented case where Davis blew post. He went off post to secure rum for his fellow cadets to celebrate Christmas in 1826. Because of the cadet's behavior on July 4th 1825, Thayer would not allow the cadets to drink even on Christmas. The cadets decided to make alcoholic eggnog in the barracks that evening. At least four different cadets purchased alcohol for the celebration. One group rowed across the river to Martin's Tavern hoping to purchase alcohol at a better price than Benny Havens was asking. They bought two gallons of liquor, one of brandy and one of wine. Jefferson Davis and his friends obtained their alcohol from Benny Havens. Since they were regular customers at his tavern, they haggled with him for a better price. Another cadet, Thomas M. Lewis purchased a gallon jug of liquor from Benny on credit and smuggled it into the barracks until the day arrived. Other cadets blew post to secure eggs and milk for the eggnog and to get food for the feast. Davis convinced Benny to donate cinnamon and nutmeg for the eggnog and some mutton for the cadets to eat.²⁷

When the night arrived numerous cadets came to the party. As Davis was inviting more cadets he heard that tactical officer Captain Ethan Allen Hitchcock was coming. He returned to the party and gave the warning, "Put away the grog, boys, Old Hitch is coming."²⁸ While Davis was speaking, Hitchcock arrived at the room. He placed Davis under arrest and sent him to his room. Davis saved his cadet career by following that order because many of the cadets did not want the party to end. They then started to fight

²⁷ Agnew, *Eggnog Riot, The Christmas Mutiny at West Point*, 53.

²⁸ Strode, *Jefferson Davis, American Patriot*, 43.

with Hitchcock and the event became known as the Egnog Riot of 1826. During this event, fights occurred in the barracks and furniture was broken up and thrown at the tactical officers. One cadet even attempted to shoot a tactical officer, but his pistol misfired. This led to the dismissal of eleven cadets and provided an example to those cadets remaining at the academy.²⁹

A fourth famous visitor to Benny Havens was Lieutenant Lucius O'Brien. Lt. O'Brien has great significance at West Point even though he is not a graduate of the Military Academy. He was an Assistant Surgeon in the Army and received his commission in 1838 with the 8th Infantry, while the unit was fighting the Indians in the southwest. Prior to joining his unit, he stopped by West Point to visit his friends. He frequented Benny's on numerous occasions with both cadets and officers. He was so affected by the atmosphere at Benny Havens that he penned the words to the song "Benny Havens, Oh!" still sung by cadets today.³⁰ While the Academy does not condone cadets leaving post without authorization, it immortalized O'Brien's visit and cadets blowing post in the Gray Room of the West Point Club in a series of three paintings. The first shows cadets 'running it' to Benny's, in the second the cadets are opening the door to Benny's and see numerous officers eating and drinking, and the third painting is of the cadets racing back to West Point with an officer chasing them.³¹ In the center picture a lieutenant is seen with a pen in his hand. This is O'Brien writing the words to "Benny Havens, Oh!" Standing over O'Brien is Benny Havens with a pitcher in one hand and a

²⁹ Robert Maddox, "The Grog Mutiny: One Merry Christmas at West Point." *American History Illustrated*. (1981), 37.

³⁰ Richard Ernest Dupuy, *Where They Have Trod, The West Point Tradition in American Life*. (New York: Fredrick A. Stokes Company, 1940), 261.

³¹ Crackel, *The Illustrated History of West Point*, 109.

hot iron flip dog in the other making one of his famous cider or ale flips. For many years after the writing of this song, classes would add a verse when they graduated. There are verses in the song in remembrance of the passing of both O'Brien and Benny Havens.³²

Cadet William Tecumseh Sherman also frequented Benny Havens tavern. Since the food in the mess hall was so poor, cadets would steal bread, butter, meat, and any other items they could pilfer from the mess hall, then they would return to their rooms to cook it up as hash.³³ Many cadets considered Sherman the best "hash maker" in the Corps of Cadets. Cadets would bring the food they pilfered from the mess hall to Sherman's room where he would prepare his hash. While enjoying the meal, they would tell stories. On the nights Sherman did not feel like cooking, they "would all risk expulsion by going down to Benny Havens at night to eat oysters."³⁴ While Sherman was known for regularly 'running it' to Benny Havens, his future boss, Ulysses S. Grant was said to have only went to Benny's once while a cadet at the Military Academy.

Cadet Samuel P. Heintzelman, Class of 1826 and Civil War General, also wrote of 'running it' to Benny Havens in his diary. He and six of his friends went to Benny's for supper 15 February 1825. The only details he gives of the meal is that they went down for supper before tattoo and returned about one o'clock. Additionally he states "We had a pretty good supper."³⁵ He writes only of the meal they ate, not of any drinking or causing trouble.

³² See Appendix 1 for some verses of "Oh Benny Havens, Oh!"

³³ In *They Lie Forgotten, The United States Military Academy 1856-1861*, Mary Elizabeth Sergent defines hash as any food eaten outside the mess hall.

³⁴ Fleming, *The Men and Times of the United States Military Academy*, 101.

³⁵ Heintzelman, *Diary*, 9.

There was a group of cadets in the Classes of 1842 and 1843, who formed the Independent Roystering Club 27 February 1840. This organization developed its own constitution, by-laws, and regulations for its members. The purpose of the club was given in Article II of their by-laws: "The object of this club shall be the promotion of social intercourse among its members."³⁶ This club grew to 16 members over the course of two years. They would meet weekly at a location only referred to as Gunger Hall and Roystering Hall to smoke either pipes or cigars and tell anecdotes. Their meetings would last from the end of dinner until the announcement of call to quarters. Each person in the club received a club name and could only be addressed by their club name during the meetings. Also, each member of the club had to compose their own version of the club song to sing at various meetings. Failure to abide by the rules resulted in being punished in pipes of tobacco. Included in their by-laws was Article VII which stated "The club shall adjourn to some public house, for the purpose of getting dinner, at least once a month, if practicable. The day for such adjournment shall be determined by the club, at some regular meeting. This day shall be at least two weeks after the meeting."³⁷ This group planned unauthorized off post excursions at least two weeks in advance of the date to ensure everyone in the club would be able to attend the meal.

A Condensed History of the Independent Roystering Club contains their constitution, by-laws, rules, and the minutes of their meetings. The only off post meal recorded in the book was their Christmas Dinner on 24 December 1841. They spent over a month planning this meal. It consisted of three turkeys, six chickens, sausage, rolls,

³⁶ Richard W. Johnston, aka Nicholas Gunger Ripper. *A Condensed History of the Independent Roystering Club* (1842), 2.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

buckwheat cakes, pies, and honey. They did not have any alcohol at this meal because they had pledged abstinence from consuming alcohol.³⁸ The night started off with the members sneaking off post in groups of two or three and meeting at the public house. Once they all arrived safely, the hostess set the table. After each person had eaten their fill, they retired to the sitting room to enjoy cigars and the reading of a 'vision' by one of their members, after which they returned to the table to have dessert. While eating dessert, the door to the street opened up and Gregory,³⁹ an orderly from West Point entered and stared at the cadets eating. The cadets thought they were caught because Gregory was considered a "minion of Major D.'s who would report them to the major."⁴⁰ However, this was not the case. Gregory was only coming to the tavern located in the house and had entered the wrong door.

As time passed, the members found it more difficult to meet because of their notoriety throughout the Corps of Cadets. In March 1842 they decided to suspend meeting again until "they could do so without jeopardizing the secrecy of their association, and the safety of their beloved pipes and weeds."⁴¹ The Class of 1842 had 55 graduates, 14 of which were members of this society. Of these 14 members seven became general officers in the Confederate Army and one became a general in the United

³⁸ In James Morrison's *The Best School in the World, West Point, the Pre Civil War Years, 1833-1866*, page 79, the abstinence pledge is discussed as a tool used by West Point to keep cadets from consuming alcohol. When a cadet was caught drinking either on or off post, the rest of the class could pledge not to consume alcohol for the remainder of their time at West Point in order to prevent that classmate from being expelled.

³⁹ In Johnston's *A Condensed History of the Independent Roysterer Club*, the person is only referred to as Gregory, it is not written whether that was his first or last name.

⁴⁰ Johnston, aka Nicholas Gunger Ripper. *A Condensed History of the Independent Roysterer Club*, Major D. is referred to by the members of the Independent Roysterer Society throughout their minutes and by laws by this name only. Though never named, the Superintendent at this time is Major Richard Delafield.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 129-130. By weeds they mean their tobacco.

States Army. The members of their ranks included: LTG (CSA) James Longstreet, LTG (CSA) A.P. Stewart, LTG (CSA) Richard Anderson, MG (USV) John Newton, MG (CSA) Mansfield Lovall, MG (CSA) Earl Van Dorn, MG (CSA) Gustavus Smith, and MG (CSA) Lafayette McLaws. These future generals met to socialize and made their time at West Point more enjoyable. They often left post, but not to drink, but to enjoy the company of their fellow cadets. The bonds they built while in the Independent Roystering Society lasted a lifetime. In 1883, Lovall sent a letter to the son of Richard Johnston, aka Gunger, and gave him an update on the member of the society and what they were doing. Four of the members had met in New York for a reunion of the Roysters.⁴²

During Thayer's time as Superintendent, he knew of many of these excursions, yet did not punish the guilty cadets. The main reason for doing this was he did not feel it was the Superintendent's duty to catch cadets. The Commandant of Cadets and tactical officers were responsible for that. He refused to overstep the chain of command in their responsibilities.⁴³ Until 1825, he turned a blind eye to the cadets drinking on July Fourth. Even though it was against the rules, he allowed it to happen by absenting himself from post the day the cadets were celebrating. Three more examples of Thayer allowing indiscretions to go unpunished follow.

The first documented instance of a cadet leaving post for the pleasure of a meal and good company and getting caught happened when a cadet was invited to dinner across the river. The cadet asked Thayer if he could receive a pass to attend the dinner.

⁴² Included with *A Condensed History of the Independent Roystering Club* in the letter sent by Lovall to Ned Johnston, son of Richard Johnston aka Gunger.

⁴³ Dupuy, *Where They Have Trod, The West Point Tradition in American Life*, 158.

Thayer denied the request, yet the cadet decided to go anyway. He eluded the sentries and rowed a boat across the river to attend the dinner. Upon his arrival he was introduced to the guest of honor, Colonel Thayer, Superintendent of the United States Military Academy. Thayer spent the evening engaged in small talk with the stunned cadet. As soon as dinner was over, the cadet excused himself and returned to West Point. The next day he waited to hear his name called during the morning rolls for being off limits. Much to his surprise his name was not called. He found out years later that Thayer severely reprimanded the Commandant of Cadets and the tactical officer on duty for allowing this to happen at cadet to blow post and not be caught.⁴⁴

Lieutenant Oliver E. Wood, Class of 1868 and future Brigadier General write of another instance. A cadet received \$10 from his father through the mail. At that time cadets were not allowed to receive money from home. The cadet did not get in trouble, however, his father received a copy of the regulations of the Military Academy with specific reference to the rule forbidding money to be sent to cadets. When the cadet was visiting home, his father showed him the letter and the cadet recognized the hand writing as that of the Superintendent, Colonel Thayer.⁴⁵

The final example of a time a cadet was found to have broken regulations but not punished by Thayer was when two first class cadets received permission to ride over the mountain to Newburgh. Upon reaching the city, both of the cadets were tired, as were their horses so they stopped to rest at a hotel. One cadet went into the hotel and the other only walked on the piazza. After the rest, they returned to West Point. The next day, the

⁴⁴ Fleming, *The Men and Times of the United States Military Academy*, 50.

⁴⁵ Oliver E. Wood, *The West Point Scrapbook, A Collection of Stories, Songs, and Legends of the United States Military Academy*. (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1871), 33.

cadet who entered the hotel was placed under arrest for being absent from post after tattoo. The other cadet was not punished even though he had committed the same offense, the only difference being that one cadet entered and unauthorized establishment. A few days later Colonel Thayer told the cadet he did well not to enter the hotel but to only walk on the piazza.⁴⁶

While some historians believe these stories of cadets leaving post prove that the Southern cadets were wilder and more willing to take a chance, that is not the point of this paper. However, what this paper intended to show is twofold. First, the main reason cadets blew post was not to drink alcohol, it was to eat a good meal and to socialize or bond with their fellow cadets. Second, this paper shows that just because a cadet blows post and gets caught does not mean the cadet is not going to make a good officer. The list of names in this paper alone is long and distinguished. Many of the men found in this paper have written the history of our country with their words and deeds. Cadets in the present day Military Academy continue to blow post and many get caught. They too are punished for their disregard for regulations. However, what happens to them after they are finished with their well deserved area tours? Are they accepted back into the Corps of Cadets in full standing as Jefferson Davis and Albert Church were? Or do their actions label them as bad cadets who have little to offer West Point and the United States Army? It is important for the leaders of the United States Military Academy to realize that just because a cadet gets caught blowing post that cadet still has the potential to succeed as a cadet and as an officer in the United States Army. Tactical officers need to continue to develop those cadets into the leaders of character the nation needs in its armed forces.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 33.

They can not hold this one incident against the cadet for the rest of the cadet's time at West Point. Once the punishment tours are served, the cadet should return to their place in the Corps of Cadet and be treated as a cadet in good standing within the company. The leaders of the Army of tomorrow may well be the cadets walking the area today. The second class cadet private spending every weekend on the area may be the next Grant, Sherman, Longstreet, or Davis. It is important to realize that the cadets of today and those from Thayer's era have much in common. They are here to learn and to serve their country. West Point's Spartan lifestyle has survived for many years and cadets continue to do what their predecessors did, they try to make their stay at West Point a little more enjoyable and adventuresome.

APPENDIX 1

“Oh, Benny Havens, Oh!”

Come fill you glasses, fellows, and stand
up in a row,
To singing sentimentally we are going
for to go;
In the Army there's sobriety,
promotion's very slow,
So we'll sing our reminiscences of
Benny Havens, oh!

Chorus:
Oh! Benny Havens, oh! – oh! Benny
Havens, oh!
O we'll sing our reminiscences of Benny
Havens, oh!

Let us toast our father's father, the
Republic as you know,
Who in the paths of science taught us
upward for to go;
And the maidens of our native land,
whose cheeks like roses glow,
They're oft remembered in our cups, at
Benny Havens, oh!

Chorus

Of the lonely maids with virgin lips, like
roses dipped in dew,
Who are to be our better halves, we'd
like to take a view;
But sufficient to the bridal day is the ill
of it, you know,
So we'll cheer our hearts with chorusing
at Benny Havens, oh!

Chorus

To the ladies of our Army our cups shall
ever flow,
Companions of our exile, and our shield
'gainst every woe;

May they see their husbands Generals,
with double pay also;
And join us in our choruses at Benny
Havens, oh!

Chorus

Come, fill up to our Generals, God bless
the braves heros,
They're an honor to their country and a
terror to their foes;
May they long rest on their laurels, and
trouble never know,
But live to see a thousand years at Benny
Havens, oh!

Chorus

To our regiments, now fellows, we all
must shortly go,
And look as sage as parsons when they
talk of what's below;
We must cultivate our graces, do
everything just so,
And never speak to ears polite of Benny
Havens, oh!

Chorus

To our comrades who have fallen, one
cup before we go,
They poured their life blood freely out
“pro bono publico”;
No marble points the stranger to where
they rest below,
They lie neglected far away from Benny
Havens, oh!

Chorus

May the Army be augmented, promotion
be less slow,
May the country in the hour of need be
ready for the foe,
May we find a soldier's resting place
beneath a soldier's blow,
With space enough beside our graves for
Benny Havens, oh!

Chorus

When you and I and Benny, and all the
others too,
Are called before the "final board" our
course of life to view,
May we never "fess" on any point but
straight be told to go,
And join the Army of the Blest at Benny
Havens, oh!

Chorus

To our kind of Alma Mater, our rock
bound Highland home,
We'll cast back many a fond regret as
o'er life's sea we roam.
Until on our last battle-field the lights of
Heaven shall glow,
We'll never fail to drink to her and
Benny Havens, oh!

Chorus⁴⁷

The traditional verses sung are 1, 8, and
10.

⁴⁷ This version of Benny Havens can be found in
Webb, Ernie, Hart, John D., and Foley, James E.
West Point Sketch Book. (New York: Vantage
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