United States Military Academy

Discipline: The Foundation of USMA's First Thirteen Years?

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By

CPT Brad Ninness

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In 1801, Mr. George Baron, a civilian mathematics instructor, arrived at West Point by the direction of the Secretary of War. Baron's mission was to begin classes with the junior officers on post and newly appointed cadets in an effort to start a Military Academy. Almost immediately, these "wild youths" started trouble at the fledgling Academy.[1] Even with the Secretary of War's support, Baron was unable to enforce discipline. Highlighting the indiscipline of the period, Lieutenant William Wilson and Lieutenant Lewis Howard convinced Cadet Joseph Gardner Swift to accept an invitation to mess with them against Baron's orders. The two lieutenants had a history of refusing to attend classes, and Baron believed the officers' arrogance and lack of discipline would corrupt the young cadet. When Swift disobeyed, Baron referred to him as a "mutinous young rascal." Feeling insulted, Swift chased Baron to retaliate for this attack against his honor as a gentleman. With Swift in close pursuit, Baron ran to his home, locked his door and screamed epithets from his window at Swift.[2]

The Swift incident was typical of the indiscipline that early leaders of the Academy tolerated. Seen as a young hellion by Baron, Swift challenged authority when his gentlemanly virtue was questioned. Other cadet indiscretions included participating in pranks, missing classes and muster formations, tardiness, leaving post to drink at North's Tavern, making excessive noise during study hours and talking during formation or drill.[3]

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[1] Christopher McKee, *A Gentlemanly and Honorable Profession: The Creation of the U.S. Naval Officer Corps, 1794-1815* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1991), 458. McKee states in Part Eight, Chapter 37 that "Wild Youth" best describes the pre-1815 U.S. social order that embraced a large number of middle and upper class adolescents and post adolescents whose alcohol abuse, embezzling, and fighting revealed an inability to fit into that social order.

[2] Theodore J. Crackel, *The Illustrated History of West Point* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1991), 77-78.

[3] United States Military Academy, *Miscellaneous Book, Rolls, Furloughs, Resignations, Court-Martials, Etc, 1813-1832* (West Point, NY: United States Military Academy, 1813-1832). 175, 199, 235.

Like soldiers in the Army, cadets engaged in prostitution, dueling, gambling and smoking as well.[4]

Discipline has a unique purpose in the military. As the foundation of the Army, discipline serves as the method to obtain obedience. The Army's current leadership doctrine, *Field Manual (FM) 22-100*, expounds on this foundation: "True discipline demands habitual and reasoned obedience, an obedience that preserves initiative and works, even when a leader isn't around."[5] Discipline is fundamental to the Army and the United States Military Academy (USMA).

Many believe that West Point, founded in 1802 by Thomas Jefferson, worked to instill discipline and obedience in cadets from its very inception. The model for USMA came from our French allies' military establishment and their military academy, the Ecole Polytechnique. An insight into how the French perceived Army field discipline comes from the French Field Marshal Count Saxe, who in 1757 stated that "discipline ... if I may use the expression, is the basis and foundation of the art of war."[6] Naturally, if our allies and their academy valued discipline in their Army, America must have done so as well.

This book provided an insight into early discipline infractions including arrests, dismissals and associated punishments, although court-martials did not begin until 1817 at USMA.

[4] William B. Skelton, *An American Profession of Arms: The Army Officer Corps, 1784-1861* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1992), 53, 55-56. See McKee, *A Gentlemanly and Honorable Profession*, 403-406. This book addresses the practice of dueling in the military during this time period. Another reference of typical Army indiscretions is found in Roger L. Nichols, *General Henry Atkinson: A Western Military Career* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965), 22-23, 42-43. He cites drinking and gambling in Atkinson's unit in 1809. The book also outlines a dueling incident in 1814 between Captain Gabriel H. Manigualt and Atkinson.

[5] Department of the Army, *Field Manual 22-100: Army Leadership* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1999), 3-2. The manual in paragraph 3-8, page 3-2 also uses the following sergeant major quote to describe discipline in this context. Discipline is "a moral, mental, and physical state in which all ranks respond to the will of the [leader], whether he is there or not."

[6] Field Marshal Count Saxe, *Reveries, or Memoirs Upon the Art of War* (London: Lamb, 1757), 83. Lord Cavan also addresses the French attitude on military discipline during this time period in *A New System of Military Discipline, Founded Upon Principle*. Cavan wrote the book in 1773.

Surprisingly, during its first thirteen years, USMA did not stress discipline or obedience while preparing cadets to become commissioned officers in the art of war, as illustrated by the antics of Cadet Swift. In reality, USMA did not accurately represent the French model or even our British enemies' example at the time. Why was there little emphasis on discipline and a lack of formal disciplinary measures implemented at USMA from 1802-1815? In USMA's infancy, the lack of emphasis on discipline was a reflection of its leadership and most importantly the conditions in the U.S. Army and society at large.

Between 1802 and 1812, the Academy's first Superintendent, Jonathan Williams, implemented few formal disciplinary measures for the corps of cadets. The first set of regulations written for West Point came from Secretary of the War Henry Dearborn on July 29, 1802. Rather than establishing rules for cadet conduct, the Dearborn regulations dealt more with garrison issues, such as housing for academy personnel and the building of a store. The regulations also addressed the controversial command hierarchy between the Commanding Officer of West Point and the Superintendent of the Military Academy and garrison support.[7] For reasons unknown, Dearborn wrote nothing concerning the discipline of cadets in that first set of regulations.

The lack of standardized disciplinary measures by the Military Academy did not preclude the chain of command from implementing discipline, however. Like the Army in the field, the discipline meted out usually took the form of physical punishment.[8]

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[7] United States Military Academy, *Regulations for West Point* (West Point, NY: United States Military Academy, 1802), 1-2. Approved by Secretary of War Henry Dearborn and made effective July 5, 1802.

[8] William B. Skelton, *An American Profession of Arms: The Army Officer Corps, 1784-1861* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1992), 267. Also see Elias Darnell, *A Journal Containing An Accurate and Interesting Account of the Hardships, Sufferings, Battles, Defeat and Captivity*

Under Captain William Amhurst Barron, the officer-in-charge at USMA, these informal punishments reportedly included lashes or floggings and extra tours of guard duty. The adjutant, Lieutenant Alexander Macomb wrote to Williams that courts martial and floggings were the norm under Barron.[9] Barron's replacement, Captain Alden Partridge, also implemented informal, physical punishment. According to Major General George Cullum, Partridge's punishments included straddling a cannon, confinement in the "black hole" and marching wearing a placard.[10] Indeed, Cadets Charles Simmons and William Swift both later testified against Partridge in his 1816 court of inquiry that straddling a cannon or baggage wagon were punishments implemented at West Point.[11] Other physical disciplinary measures included marching in extra drill and extra guard tours. Yet, in the absence of consistent standards, Cadet James R. Stubbs summed up the problems with this informal discipline: "this is sometimes used for the most trivial offenses or without any just cause."[12]

One of the main reasons for the Academy's lack of formal disciplinary measures was the background of the first Superintendent. Major Williams had an academic background, not a military one. As Benjamin Franklin's grandnephew, Williams served

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of Those Heroic Kentucky Volunteers and Regulars, Commanded by General Winschester In the Years 1812-1813 (Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott, Grampo, and Company, 1854), 11. In this journal, Elias Darnell outlines how a soldier from Colonel Scott's Regiment felt he was unable to submit to the articles and regulations of the Army was tied to a rail and dunked in the river. On page 20, Darnell referenced a near mutiny during the change of command from General Harrison to General Winchester. He also detailed a court-martial for soldier sleeping at his post on page 27. See McKee, 264-265. This reference cites the prevalence of corporal punishment in the Navy, which reflected common practice in the rest of the military.

[9] Crackel, 86.

[10] George W. Cullum, *Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the United States Military Academy* (West Point, NY: Association of Graduates, 1863), 3:598.

[11] United States Military Academy, *Partridge's Proceedings of Court of Inquiry* (West Point, NY: United States Military Academy, 1816), 51, 55.

[12] James R. Stubbs to Samuel Perkins, 8 September, 1815, transcript in the hand of James Stubbs, Special Collections, United States Military Academy Library, United States Military Academy, West Point.

with Franklin as a government representative in France during the American Revolution. Williams was a translator for the War Department, a published author and an officer of the American Philosophical Society. With no military leadership experience, Williams had little insight into disciplinary matters.

However, through Williams' studies in France and his translation of de Scheel's *A Treatise of Artillery*, he caught the attention of President Jefferson.[13] Williams' experiments with Franklin, his observations on temperature and barometric readings and his article on sugar production all contributed to his stature as a man of science.[14] Seen as the preeminent American expert in fortification construction with a science background, Williams received a direct commission to major and was appointed as the Superintendent of the Artillerist and Engineer Academy by President Jefferson in 1801.[15] There are numerous examples that support the assertion that the President viewed Williams as a preeminent expert on fortifications. In a letter to Williams on May 22, 1806, Secretary of War Henry Dearborn wrote,

> It being the wish of the President of the United States that every reasonable exertion should be made for improving the fortifications for the protection of our Sea Ports generally, and especially, those of New York, Charleston S.C. and New Orleans; and that there should be no unnecessary delay in the actual commencement of such improvements as are deemed

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[13] George S. Pappas, *To the Point: The United States Military, 1802-1902* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1993), 29.

[14] American Philosophical Society, *Jonathan Williams Papers: 1788-1802* [database online] (Philadelphia, PA: American Philosophical Society, accessed 12 November 2001); available from http://www.amphilsoc.org/library/browser/w/williams.htm; Internet.

[15] Pappas, 29. Another source that cites Williams' appointment and highlights the limited number of engineer officers in the U.S. Army is Thomas H.S. Hammersly, ed., *Complete Regular Army Register of the United States: For One Hundred Years, (1779 to 1879)* (Washington, D.C.: T.H.S. Hammersly, 1880), 49. At the time of the Act of 1802, the U.S. Army had only three engineer officers: Major Jonathan Williams, Captain William A. Barron and First Lieutenant James Wilson.

> expedient. You will please to take upon yourself the immediate direction of those we have agreed upon....[16]

This confidence in Williams' abilities helped to explain his selection as the Chief of Engineers and the Military Academy's Superintendent even without previous military experience.

Without any clear, written guidance from the government, Williams emphasized academic priorities during his Superintendency. These priorities included developing a curriculum, upgrading the library and laboratory facilities and hiring qualified instructors and staff. Given the threat of war with England and the expansion of the army in 1808, West Point received authorization to enlarge the corps of cadets. Williams tried to exploit this expansion and overcome Congressional inaction on a lack of faculty and facilities.[17] In a report to the Secretary of War on the progress and state of the Military Academy in March of 1808, Williams made three primary recommendations to improve West Point. The first was to place the academy under the sole direction of President of the United States. Williams believed that in the President's care the Academy would receive more support and to implement much needed academic reform. The second recommendation made seven suggestions on ways to improve the academic staff, which included hiring a chemistry and mineralogy professor, riding master and teacher of the sword. The third recommendation suggested an increase in the number of officers and men to 22 and 59 respectively.[18] Williams believed these recommendations would

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[16] Henry Dearborn to Jonathan Williams, 22 May 1806, transcript in the hand of Henry Dearborn, Special Collections, United States Military Academy Library, United States Military Academy, West Point.

[17] Crackel, 92.

[18] Jonathan Williams to Henry Dearborn, 14 March 1808, transcript in the hand of Jonathan Williams, Special Collections, United States Military Academy Library, United States Military Academy, West Point.

eliminate current deficiencies and improve the cadet education. If viewed as more than a "mathematical school," the nation would see West Point as a legitimate military academy.

Given Williams' academic strengths, Williams spent his time and resources developing the United States Military Philosophical Society. With his previous experience as an officer of the American Philosophical Society, Williams saw the military version as a way to validate and further develop West Point. This was a national society meant to invoke national support for the Corps of Engineers and USMA. At the Society's height in 1807, the organization had about 200 members to include prominent members of the public like Thomas Jefferson, James Madison and John Quincy Adams, which gave the Society credibility and USMA recognition.[19] Yet, rather than resolving discipline problems, William's academic priorities and intellectual interests greatly exceeded his interest in instituting discipline.

Another project that preoccupied Williams and pulled his focus from internal discipline was his intense desire to move the Academy to Washington, D.C. He wrote numerous letters to the President and Secretary of War advocating this position. In his 1808 report to the President, he mentioned that,

> Had it been so attached to the government (its real and only parent) as to be always in sight, and always in the way of its fostering care, it would

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Report to the Secretary of War on the progress and state of the Military Academy by the direction of the President of the United States.

[19] Crackel, 84. Samuel Watson, *Jefferson's Academy, Jefferson's Army,Jefferson's Nation: West Point from Williams to Thayer, and Its Impact on Army and Nation* (paper presented at the West Point Bicentennial Conference on Thomas Jefferson's Military Academy at West Point, New York, 2 November 2001), 11-12. Watson's document provides an excellent summary of the history, purpose, members and accomplishments of the MPS at West Point under Williams.

> probably have flourished and have become an honorable and interesting appendage to the national family.[20]

He intended to remove the Academy from isolation. Located in Washington, the academy would sit forefront in the eyes of the President and Congress. Again, as with direct supervision of the President, Williams believed Congressional visibility of USMA would assist in enacting his academic agenda outlined in his report.[21] This political initiative reflected William's attitude that close supervision by the government, not internal discipline, was most important to the development of West Point.

William's dual role as the Army's Chief of Engineers prevented him from supervising internal discipline at the academy. This additional duty title required that he supervise engineering projects away from West Point as the senior engineer in the Army. As already discussed, Williams spent much of his time on the eastern seaboard supervising the construction of fortifications and improving American harbors in New York, Charleston and New Orleans.

During William's resignation between June 20, 1803 and April 19, 1805, and his absences upgrading fortifications around the country, CPT Barron served as the acting Superintendent at the Military Academy. With an academic background, Barron also struggled to administer discipline, despite Secretary of War Dearborn's support.[22] Isolated from Washington, D.C. with infrequent visits and little communication from government and Army leadership, junior officers like CPT Barron commonly exercised

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[20] Jonathan Williams to Henry Dearborn, 14 March 1808, transcript in the hand of Jonathan Williams, Special Collections, United States Military Academy Library, United States Military Academy, West Point. Report to the Secretary of War on the progress and state of the Military Academy by the direction of the President of the United States.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Pappas, 40.

independent commands. Barron resorted to the acts of indiscipline typical of isolated Army posts, such as consorting with prostitutes.[23]

Early in 1805, the cadets accused the unmarried Captain Barron of keeping a prostitute, Sarah Dobbs, in his quarters. This type of indiscipline was one reason that Williams returned to active duty and resumed his duties as the Superintendent. On his return, Williams initiated a court of inquiry on Barron's conduct. Cadet testimony revealed that Dobbs and another woman, Margaret Gee, both only sixteen, were indeed prostitutes. Williams banned the women from post and destroyed the record of the proceedings to protect Barron, who adamantly denied any knowledge that his live-in housekeeper was a prostitute.[24] By 1807, Barron resigned rather than submit to a formal court martial after evidence surfaced that he invited Gee back on post for extended periods of time, as well as several other shady women.[25] Exhibiting common Army officer indiscretions, Barron's example only reinforced a pervasive lack of discipline and exemplified the most important catalyst for indiscipline at USMA.

With the resignation of Jonathan Williams in 1812, Joseph G. Swift became the Superintendent and experienced many of the same problems instituting discipline as his predecessor. Serving as the Chief Engineer for General Wilkinson at the start of the War of 1812, Swift was unable to focus his attention on his duties at West Point. By 1814, Swift was improving fortifications along the American coastlines. In his memoirs, he

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[23] Edward M. Coffman, *The Old Army: A Portrait of the American Army in Peacetime, 1784-1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 311-314.
[24] Crackel, 87-88.
[25] Ibid, 89.

only once wrote about visiting West Point, and that was in June.[26] During this year, he spent time in Philadelphia, Germantown, Boston, Rhode Island, Maine, Brooklyn and Baltimore.[27] In Swift's absence, and already the acting Superintendent under Williams, Captain Alden Partridge remained in control and exercised almost independent command.

In the time Swift did devote to the Academy, he focused on improving the academics and infrastructure. His priorities were updating the curriculum, selecting new faculty members and enhancing instruction, upgrading the buildings on West Point as well as obtaining operating funds for West Point. In 1815, by order of the Secretary of War, Swift had to negotiate loans from banks due to a lack of funds for USMA.[28] Swift attended to the immediate needs of the academy, which did not include discipline.

Of significance, however, was Swift's acknowledgment of the state of discipline within the officer corps during the War of 1812. At Plattsburg, according to his memoirs, "British officers acknowledge our dauntless courage, but observed we were undisciplined and fought without order, and indeed scenes of that day justify these observations."[29] To implement his vision of discipline in the corps of cadets, Swift used genteel socialization, the chaplaincy and an ethics course to improve deportment and indirectly enhance

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[26] Joseph Gardner Swift, *The Memoirs of General Joseph Gardner Swift, LL.D., U.S.A.: First Graduate of the United States Military Academy, West Point, Chief Engineer U.S.A. from 1812-1818: 1800-1865: to which Is Added a Genealogy of the Family of Thomas Swift of Dorchester, Mass./ by Harrison Ellery* (Worchester, MA: F.S. Blanchard, 1890), 132.

[27] Ibid, 127-135.

[28] Ibid, 139-140.

[29] Swift, 121. Quote taken from correspondence with Major General James Wilkinson. Alan Aimone, USMA's Chief Archivist, described the performance of officers who graduated from West Point versus the officer population at large during the War of 1812. Aimone also referred me to the following article, Alan Aimone, "West Point's Contribution to the War of 1812," *The Journal of America's Military Past* 25 (Fall 1998): 37-48. This article gave me an insight into the officer corps, USMA's graduates and the U.S. Army during the war as well.

discipline at the Academy.[30] Swift tried to put discipline into the broad context of the early 1800's. Indeed, these systems were a reflection of the times. Although tough to measure, this indirect approach failed to translate into any tangible reform in cadet discipline.

The lack of formal disciplinary measures at West Point reflected the limits of the U.S. Army. Neither the Military Academy nor the Army had many official regulations. West Point utilized Baron Von Steuben's *Regulations for the Order and Discipline of the Troops of the United States* and the *Rules and Articles of War*. Von Steuben wrote his regulations in 1779 during the Revolutionary War primarily as a drill manual and only glossed over discipline and punishment. In outlining responsibilities of the commander, the "Blue Book," a term the Academy still uses today for its regulations, stated,

> In a word, the commanding officer of a regiment must preserve the strictest discipline and order in his corps, obliging every officer to a strict performance of his duty, without relaxing in the smallest point; punishing impartially the faults that are committed, without distinction of rank or service.[31]

The problem was the "Blue Book" did not outline those duties, faults or punishments. These disciplinary measures were left to the discretion of the commander, who in many cases were junior officers exercising independent commands like Barron at USMA.

The Rules and Articles of War were more specific. Reestablished by Congress on April 10, 1806 and copied almost verbatim from the British, the *Rules and Articles of*

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[30] Samuel Watson, *Jefferson's Academy, Jefferson's Army,Jefferson's Nation: West Point from Williams to Thayer, and Its Impact on Army and Nation* (paper presented at the West Point Bicentennial Conference on Thomas Jefferson's Military Academy at West Point, New York, 2 November 2001), 21-22.

[31] Joseph R. Riling, *Baron Von Steuben and His Regulations* (Philadelphia, PA: Ray Riling Arms Books, 1966), 131. Complete facsimile of the original *Regulations for the Order and Discipline of the Troops of the United States*. The first real set of comprehensive set of regulations for USMA came out in

War provided U.S. Army's commanders with disciplinary guidance.[32] Article 2 stated that when officers acted in an indecent or irreverent manner at a place of divine worship they would receive a general court martial and be publicly and severely reprimanded by the President.[33] For the same act of indiscipline, non-commissioned officers and soldiers paid one-sixth of a dollar for the first act and one-sixth of a dollar and 24 hours in confinement for the second as well as subsequent offenses. The article even specified that the money collected by the captain or lieutenant would go towards the care of the sick soldiers in the company of the offender.

For most articles, officer violations required a general court martial. As cadets, they were not subject to court martial. While officers took an oath of allegiance to the United States of America, the President, and orders of senior officers according to the *Rules and Articles of War*, cadets did not because they were considered. In fact, a letter from Dearborn to Williams dated May 11, 1808, stated as such. "As a general principle, I think Courts Martial ought not to be resorted to for cadets, but if... there appears satisfactory evidence of improper conduct that admonition or discharge should follow according to the circumstances of the case."[34] In fact after a court of inquiry, Williams dismissed Cadet Henry Burchstead from the Academy in 1810 for fighting with a fellow cadet, refusing to go to his quarters and threatening to "cut the Officer of the Day's head off—use his sword up to the hilt, split him down—and other threats of a similar

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1821. Written solely by General Scott, these Army regulations officially linked themselves to the academy in Article 78. This article outlined the USMA's distinct regulations.

[32] Trueman Cross, ed. *Military Laws of the United States; Including Those Relating to the Marine Corps, to Which Is Prefixed*, 2d ed. (Washington City: George Templeton, 1838), 107-108.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Henry Dearborn to Jonathan Williams, 11 May 1808, copy of transcript, Special Collections, United States Military Academy Library, United States Military Academy, West Point.

nature."[35] Then, Williams ordered Burchstead to Fort Columbus to Colonel Henry Burbeck, Commandant of the Artillery, to receive a general court martial. According to Williams, "after his dismissal from the Academy, he is considered to be under the Rules and Regulations of his own Regiment."[36] However, the newly appointed Secretary of War, Doctor William Eustis, repealed the court martial, overturned the dismissal, reinstated Burchstead at the Academy and commissioned him in 1811.[37] Von Steuben's regulations and the *Rules and Articles of War* served as disciplinary guides, but they offered little detailed guidance to the Army or the Military Academy.

A good example of the inadequacy of these rules is the article on conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman. The American Army took this article from the highly aristocratic British Army. As William Skelton points out in his book addressing the roots of the American military profession, this clause was too vague to serve as a guide for the wide diversity of men within our officer corps.[38] Individualism was rampant within the officer corps and corps of cadets. Because of their upbringing in a republican society, American officers believed themselves to be morally and socially equal to anyone else.[39] Throughout the Army, this sense of individualism combined with self-righteousness led to fighting and dueling. Baron's altercation with Swift, as previously mentioned, is just one example. Burchstead's incident is another. Burchstead fought with Cadet Henry

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[35] Charles Gratiot, *Academy Orders* (West Point, NY: United States Military Academy, 1810), 1-2. True copy of order signed by Jonathan Williams on 17 July 1810.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Pappas, 58. In Hammersly, 331, Burchstead was commissioned 1 March 1811 as a Second Lieutenant in the Infantry. Promoted to First Lieutenant on 5 May 1813, he was killed in action with Indians in Alabama that same year.

[38] Skelton, 38-39.

[39] Samuel J. Watson, interview by Brad Ninness, 9 November 2001. United States Military Academy, West Point, New York.

White and ultimately drew his sword and challenged the Officer of the Day because he felt they had slighted him.[40] Eustis' handling of the Burchstead incident showed that superiors were not immune to interpreting the *Rules and Article of War* either. As a result, conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman had a different meaning for both superiors and subordinates. Therefore, the article was ineffective in establishing discipline in the Army or the cadets.

Like the rest of the Army, USMA used general orders to supplement its disciplinary manuals. Although these orders clarified general rules and regulations like the conduct clause, the quality of orders was inconsistent. At the Army level, the War Department failed to consolidate them, codify them, fix authority and provide copies of them to the officer corps.[41] Whether a manual or an order, these documents were almost impossible to find in print and USMA rarely received a copy of them. Internally, West Point used the same system and struggled with the same issues. Officials at the Academy announced new rules through general orders. Captain Partridge concluded in a March 31, 1809 order, "The foregoing regulations will be read in the presence of the gentlemen of the Academy; and that no one may be ignorant of them, each will be required to provide himself with a copy."[42]

Due to the lack of a formal standardization through Army regulation, the need for accountability led Williams to publish another general order. This order was meant to instill discipline and affix responsibility in future engineers. Army engineers wielded

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[40] Gratiot, 1.
[41] Skelton, 39.
[42] Alden Partridge, *Academy Orders, March 31, 1809* (West Point, NY: United States Military Academy, 1809), 3. Copy of orders written by Alden Partridge and approved by Jonathan Williams at West Point.

enormous power through the stroke of a pen. As the engineer on a fortification project, the officer was given huge responsibilities over large sums of money with little or no supervision. Secretary of War Dearborn wrote as such in a tasking letter to Williams.[43] The engineers wrote the orders for construction, contracted for the men and materials for the project and disbursed the funds in question. Their signature obligated the government. Williams wanted cadets to understand that their signature could only be affixed to accurate statements. This 1808 order dictated that the Academy would record military delinquencies and require a written explanation from cadets for absences.[44] Williams required this written explanation to encourage cadets to take responsibility for their actions and reinforce honesty.

Partridge went a step further towards standardization when he published his 1810 and 1814 regulations. In 1810 as the acting Superintendent, Partridge received permission from Eustis to write the first set of internal rules for the Academy. He outlined discipline, codified several offenses, discussed dismissal and courts of inquiry and attached them to Eustis' regulations for distribution to the cadets. In 1814, Partridge went further by standardizing inspections, roll calls, the daily schedule, and specific conduct detrimental to good order and discipline.[45] Although codifying the Academy's first internal regulations and generally increasing the state of discipline at USMA up to

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[43] Henry Dearborn to Jonathan Williams, 22 May 1806, transcript in the hand of Henry Dearborn, Special Collections, United States Military Academy Library, United States Military Academy, West Point. Letter from the War Department to Jonathan Williams on May 22, 1806.

[44] Alden Partridge, *Order Issued at West Point, Nov 8, 1808* (West Point, NY: United States Military Academy, 1808), 1. Written Copy of an Order issued by Alden Partridge and approved by Jonathan Williams at West Point, NY dated November 8, 1808. Order addressed sick call procedures for the Corps of Cadets to include the responsibilities of cadets and the surgeon.

[45] Alden Partridge, *Orders, West Point April 1, 1814* (West Point, NY: United States Military Academy, 1814), 1-2.

1815, Partridge ultimately failed to establish a lasting legacy of discipline. Partridge reflected many of the officers typical of the Army at that time. His individualism and capricious behavior eventually led to his dismissal in 1817 and final resignation from the Army shortly thereafter.[46]

In addition to the state of the Army at large, societal factors also contributed to a lack of discipline during the first thirteen years at the Military Academy. Society then accepted very young students at institutions of higher education. West Point admitted cadets as young as 11 years old. Based on examination records printed on December 7, 1806, 6 of the 16 enrolled cadets were 16 or under; 10 of 16 were 18 or younger.[47] Needless to say, the maturity level of many cadets was low. Younger cadets produced several adolescent rebellions at USMA, rebellions that were also common in the rest of American civilian society, especially at colleges between 1798 and 1815.[48] At Harvard in March of 1807, for example, the freshman, sophomore and junior classes submitted a complaint to the President of the College citing poor food and living arrangements in their commons. Without waiting for an investigation, many students openly criticized Harvard's leaders. In turn, the college admonished and suspended several students for their rebellion against the school's governmental body.[49]

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[46] Watson, *Jefferson's Academy*, 19.

[47] Jonathan Williams and William Barron, *Statement of the Examination of the Cadets of Engineers and of Artillery* (West Point, NY: United States Military Academy, 1806), 1-2. Examination statement dated December 17, 1806.

[48] Skelton, 55.

[49] F.O. Vaille and H.A. Clark, eds. *The Harvard Book: A Series of Historical, Biographical, and Descriptive Sketches* [book online] (Cambridge, MA: Welch, Bigelow, and Company, University Press, 1875, accessed 12 November 2001), The Harvard Book Web Site; available from http://hbook.harvard.edu/navigation.html; Internet. Taken from 1:105-106.

In USMA's 1810 regulations, the Superintendent tried to remedy the age issue by increasing the minimum age of cadets from 12 to 15 years.[50] While all the Superintendents realized that age was a factor in cadet's maturity levels, the Secretary of War supposedly fixed the problem by insisting that the Military Academy conform to the congressional Act of April 29, 1812, which set the age at 14. Yet neither the act nor the regulations were followed. According to muster rolls as late as July of 1813, the Military Academy admitted Cadet Henry Brewerton at 11 years, 11 months old.[51] In fact, the average age of cadets attending West Point in August 1813 and August/September 1814 was 15 years old.[52] This codification problem reflected a general Army problem in executing the directives of the day. In this case, the problem contributed directly to internal discipline problems of West Point.

In the Academy's first thirteen years, discipline was not the foundation of the Military Academy because Jonathan Williams did not have the military background to properly instill discipline, because of his academic priorities, his preoccupation with moving the Academy and his dual role as the Chief of Engineers. Under Joseph Swift's Superintendence, USMA began to codify rules and regulations, but general discipline did not improve. He was just as unsuccessful as Williams in implementing specific disciplinary measures to ensure obedience and enforce compliance within the Corps of

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[50] William Eustis, *Regulations Relative to the Military Academy at West Point* (Washington, D.C.: Secretary of War's Office, 1810), 1-2. Eustis wrote regulations on 30 April 1810 and sent to Jonathan Williams at West Point. Regulations were significant because Eustis authorized Superintendent at USMA to write and implement internal regulations as long as they did not counteract existing regulations. Alden Partridge added 15 articles to the 1810 regulations that Jonathan Williams approved on 25 May 1810.

[51] United States Military Academy, *Muster Roll of the Cadets Attached to the Military Academy, April 1813-November 1814* (West Point, NY: United States Military Academy, April 1813-November 1814), August 1813. Henry Brewerton would eventually become the Superintendent of the Military Academy in 1845.

[52] Ibid, August 1813, August/September 1814.

Cadets, because he was unable to monitor daily operations and monitor the implementation of those regulations.

The most important reason for the lack of emphasis on discipline and why USMA did not stress discipline or obedience while preparing cadets to become commissioned officers was the state of the Army at large. Common practices within the Army greatly influenced the state of discipline. Isolated and in the absence of the Superintendent, with few formal regulations, policies and orders to guide them, junior officers like Captain Barron and Captain Partridge exercised independent command according to their personal views. This resulted in an excessively informal socialization process for cadets. Poor role modeling and conflicting priorities produced inconsistency and partiality, which directly affected cadet discipline. Although all responsible authorities frowned upon indiscipline, USMA still experienced disciplinary problems with officers and cadets drinking, using prostitutes, fighting and dueling and dabbling in private economic ventures. Societal factors like youth and individualism also shaped the state of discipline. The influence of societal and army forces shaped early academy priorities as they still do today. Under the circumstances, the first priority for effective professional socialization after 1815 was to improve the level of discipline within the corps of cadets and, in the long run, the rest of the officer corps and the United States Army.

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