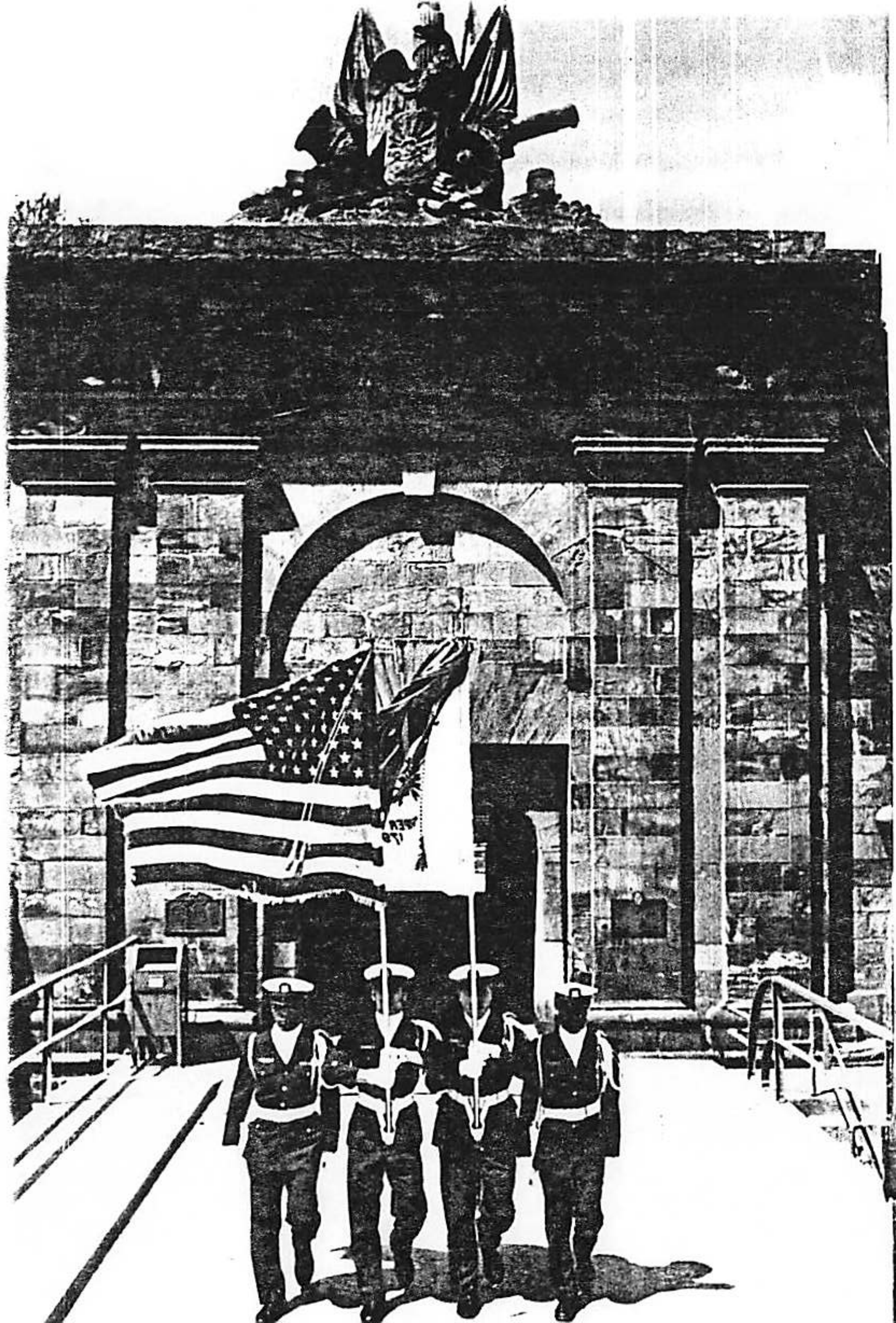


THREE CENTURIES UNDER THREE FLAGS

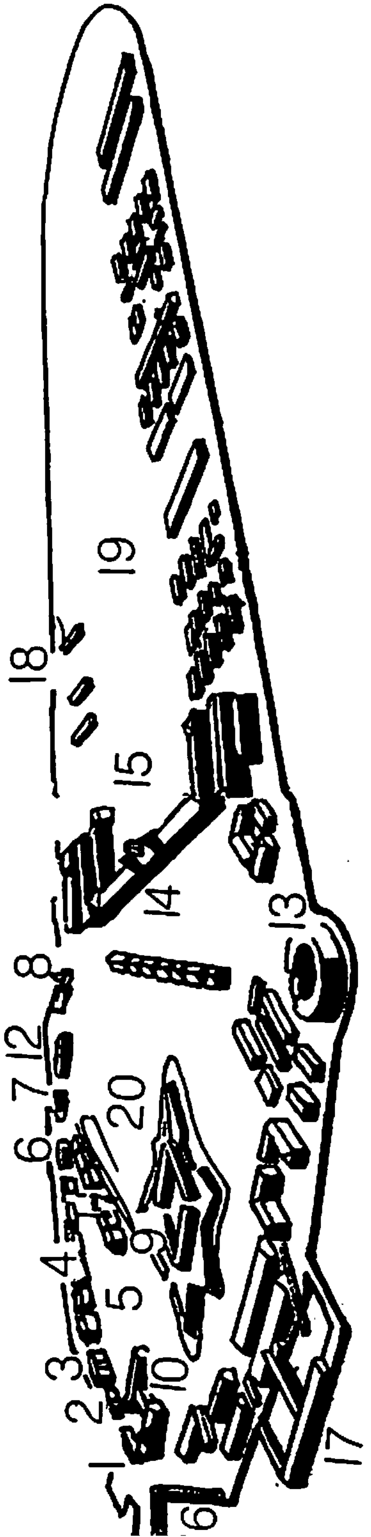
The Story of Governors Island from 1637

Published by

THIRD COAST GUARD DISTRICT

Governors Island, New York

1978



GOVERNORS ISLAND

Key to Points of Interest

1 - "Governors House"
2 - Dutch House
3 - Admiral's House
4 - Generals' Row
5 - Nolan Park
6 - "Block House"
7 - Chapelof St. Cornelius
8 - Catholic Chapel
9 - Fort Jay
10 - Pershing Hall
11 - "Colonels' Row"
12 - South Battery (Officers' Club)
13 - Castle Williams
14 - Building 400
15 - Early Bird Monument
16 - Old Arsenal Buildings
17 - Soissons Dock
18 - Yankee Pier
19 - Athletic Field
20 - Golf Course

INTRODUCTION

Three Centuries Under Three Flags was originally published by the United States Army in 1951 when Governors Island was Headquarters for the First Army. Written by Colonel A. C. M. Azoy, U. S. Army Reserve, the book has long been out of print.

The current edition has been reissued by the Third Coast Guard District, present tenants of Governors Island. The history of the Island from 1951 until the present has been researched by Paul T. Mobley, Public Affairs Specialist, U.S. Coast Guard, utilizing Coast Guard files and microfilmed newspapers. In addition, he has provided the current designations used by the Coast Guard for street names and building numbers, and, generally, has updated and revised this edition wherever necessary to reflect current Coast Guard occupancy.

All photographs are Official U. S. Coast Guard Photographs selected and edited by Photojournalist F.T. Eyre.

CHAPTER I

THE year is 1637, the place is the southernmost tip of the city we now know as New York and which then was called New Amsterdam, and the time is the morning of a fine spring day. It is a day to call people out of doors, and the worthy Dutch burghers of the new world colony of the Netherlands are out in force. All told, there are probably not more than five or six hundred men, women, and children living on the point of land that juts into the confluence of the river Henry Hudson explored for the Dutch traders in 1609 — the Italian mariner Giovanni Verrazano had first found it almost a century before — and its neighbor, the East River, and most of them are stolidly plodding across the still-dewy grass towards the dirt parapets and stone ramparts of Fort Amsterdam that later generations of New Yorkers will recognize as the site of the Customs House at Battery Park.

Obviously this is to be a special occasion, as is evitheir novelty has not yet worn off. The onlookers nod approval of the shining breastplates and harquebuses as the files wheel into line and halt; the drums roll again, and all eyes turn back to the fort gate. A moment of silence, and then there struts forth an extraordinary figure whose pompous bearing and apparel instantly stamp him as one set uniquely apart from the rest of the gathering.

The crown of his hat is higher and its plume more flowing than any other; the velvet of his jacket and knee breeches is glossier; the silk of his hose has a finer sheen; and the silver buckles of his shoes reflect a greater sparkle from the sun. For this exalted personage is no less a dignitary than His Excellency Wouter Van Twiller, Governor and Director General of New Netherland, successor to the great Peter Minuit who in 1621 had set an all-time record for astute real estate bargaining by buying the entire island on which New Amsterdam stands for $24.00.

Mynheer Van Twiller is a weighty personage in more ways than one; he regularly eats four meals a day with copious draughts of beer in between to give him an appetite, and as his circumferential width is greater than his height of 5 feet and 4 inches, he has been aptly described as giving the appearance of "a beer barrel on skids."

But behind the vast, flaccid expanse of his expressionless face, cushioned on its tiers of chins, there is a sharp and conniving mind. When the good ship *De Zoutberg* brought Van Twiller and his hundred soldiers from Holland in 1633, he at first gave no indication that he owed his gubernatorial appointment to the political influence of his uncle by marriage, the immensely powerful landowner Killiaen Van Rensselaer, who had plucked him from his job as a clerk in the Amsterdam offices of the West Indies Company and sent him on two highly successful fur-trading trips to America.

With him the new governor brought the colony's first minister, Everardus Bogardus, as well as trepairs. At first glance it was evident that Governor Van Twiller was a conscientious administrator who was dedicating himself to a regime of municipal improvement for the public good and he was correspondingly popular until it was discovered that the windmills had been thoughtlessly placed in the lee of the fort where no wind could reach them, and that the fort's renovation had unobtrusively included a large and elaborate mansion for the governor.

Shortly thereafter the growing suspicions among the New Netherlanders that the new governor was not the exemplary leader he had at first seemed received added proof. Late in 1633 an English vessel sailed suddenly into the bay on her way up the Hudson to trade with the Indians, and Van Twiller, jealous of his prerogatives, loftily refused permission for her to pass the fort. To give official emphasis to his refusal, he raised the Dutch flag on the fort's staff and fired three guns, but the Englishman was totally unimpressed. Politely he ran up the English flag on his vessel and fired three guns in return; then, to settle the argument, he calmly upped anchor and sailed serenely past New Amsterdam while the governor danced in impotent rage on the fort's bastions. But Van Twiller's frustration did not last long, thanks to his evolving a solution to the problem which was completely characteristic of the man. Hastily summoning all the town's inhabitants to the fort, he tapped a great keg of beer and mounting it, glass in hand, called on the others to drink with him to their mutual protection. The keg was soon emptied and nothing more was done about the impudent Englishman, but by that time everyone had ceased to worry about the incident.

By turns pusillanimous, parsimonious, arrogant and childishly tyrannical, Wouter Van Twiller in 1637 is perilously close to being ordered home in disgrace, and he knows it. But before he goes he is determined to exercise the immemorial right of all grafting politicians and insure his future as a man of wealth and property. Today is to mark the first step in this campaign.

Raising his pudgy hand for silence, the governor haughtily motions two of the Indian braves to stand near — but not too near — him, and then nods an order to Schoolmaster Rolandsen. That scholar unrolls a scroll of embossed parchment he has been clutching, clears his throat nervously, and begins to read. The sonorous phrases are an impressive mixture of Dutch and legal Latin: "The Director Government of their High and Mighty Lords, the States General of the United Netherlands . . . to declare that on this day . . . appeared and presented themselves Cakapetayne and Pehiwas" — the two Indians who have been listening but not comprehending a word of what is being said, start at the sound of their own names and grunt gravely — "and in consideration of certain parcels of goods . . . ceded . . . to the behoof of Wouter Van Twiller, Director General of New Netherland, the Nooten Eylandt, in the Indian tongue called Pagganck" — the Redskins recognize that too, and grunt again — "situate over against the Island Manahatas between the North and East Rivers of New Netherlands . . . this sixteenth day of June in the year One thousand, six hundred and thirty-seven . . . Undersigned by Jacobus Corler, Andrius Hudde, Jacobus Bontyn and Claus Elslant."

An interpreter is explaining matters to the Indians and asking if they agree to the provisions of the deed that has just been read; they say they do and demand that there be forthcoming the "certain parcels of goods" as specified. A councillor steps up and hands the braves two axe heads, a string of beads, and a handful of nails; they count them over solemnly, raise their right hands in token of acceptance, and stalk off. The drums beat the "Recall," the soldiers tramp back into the fort, and Wouter Van Twiller has become the first and only private owner of "Nooten Eylandt," or "Nutten Island," which, as "Governors Island," will go down through the centuries as one of the oldest and most historic of American sites.

Fifteen years before, the West India Company had been formed and received a charter from the States-General of Holland to colonize the American lands reported by Hudson, before anyone else got them. Two hundred settlers forthwith came out to this new colony which they called New Netherland; it extended from eastward of the Hudson (or Hudson's) River, south to the Delaware River, and the early traders were wont to identify these north and south boundaries of their province as the North and the South Rivers, respectively.

The capital of New Netherland was established at the mouth of the North River on the tip of Manahatas Island (later to be "Manados" before it became and remained "Manhattan"), and called New Amsterdam. To provide for the sustenance of its hardy Dutch pioneers, 103 head of cattle were sent oiver to New Amsterdam from Holland in 1625. They were landed on neighboring Nutten Island and, except for occasional Indians, it is believed that these bucolic bovines were the only permanent residents of Nutten Island until Van Twiller interested himself in the property.

As the governor stood by the fort and looked south across the half mile of open water to the shores of his new possession, he had every reason to be pleased with his bargain. In area, his surveyors reported that the Island comprised about 80 Dutch morgens, or some hundred and sixty-odd of our modern acres; the shore line generally was sandy with a few rocks at its northern extremity, and only a narrow sedge-filled creek that was easily fordable at low tide separated Nutten Island's eastern rim from the meadows of Long Island's Vlachte Bos, eventually to be Anglicized into "Flatbush." At its northeast corner the rolling surface of the Island swept up to a commanding eminence that at once commended itself to Governor Van Twiller as the ideal spot for another executive mansion, set in majestic though lonely dignity among the groves of hickory, oak, and chestnut trees which gave the property its name of Nutten (or Nut). For some unknown reason the usually acquisitive Dutchman failed to carry out this project. It was rumored that the tide rips between the New Amsterdam and Nutten Island shores made it usually impractical to cross over in sailboats, and as Van Twiller's overstuffed physique did not permit him to fit in anything as narrow as a rowboat, he had to content himself with building a caretaker's hut and pasturing a herd of 21 pairs of goats on the Island. Then in 1638 he was peremptorily recalled to Holland, and although he came back to his homeland with his ambition for wealth fulfilled — he had become the richest landowner in the colony by his recent acquisition of Ward's and Randall's Islands at Halle-Gat, or Hell Gate in the East River — an unfeeling government declared his purchase of Nutten Island had been illegal and the premises were confiscated and turned into the public domain, henceforth to be considered a perquisite of the local governors. The Island has never since reverted to private ownership.

Wilhelm Kieft succeeded Van Twiller in new Amsterdam's directorial chair and proved to be a yet more unfortunate selection than the doughty Wouter, implausible as that may seem. He came out to America dmirect from a bankruptcy conviction in Amsterdam where his portrait, following the Dutch custom, had been nailed to the city's gallows, and there were persistent rumors that he had stolen government funds entrusted to him for the rescue of certain Christian captives held for ransom by the Turks. The new governor proved to have neither wisdom nor humanity, and his regime was marked by constant and bloody quarrels with the Indians, corruption in his own official family, and political patronage carried to a far extreme.

Being a somewhat shrewder operator than his predecessor, Kieft was quick to turn to his own advantage the natural opportunities offered by Nutten Island. He first restored to usefulness the long-neglected equipment for a saw mill which had been brought over from Holland by some now-forgotten Dutch trader at the time of the original founding of the colony, and had lain rusting on the Island's shores ever since. With plenty of trees to furnish logs for the mill, plenty of wind for the sails that turned the machinery, and plenty of water to float the sawed planks to the New Amsterdam market, Nutten Island was an ideal spot for such an enterprise and Kieft had no trouble in immediately renting the mill to a trio of his countrymen. His lease, in which he optimistically referred to himself as "the Honorable, Wise and Prudent," stipulated that the rent of the mill should be 500 planks a year, one-half to be pine and one-half ash. Encouraged by the success of this private speculation at public expense, the governor next rented out a large tract of land on the Island for a tobacco plantation, again taking his rent in kind, this time for 150 pounds of tobacco annually. Wilhelm Kieft was sent home in disgrace in 1647, but he did not live to enjoy his ill-gotten

gains; he was drowned when the ship on which he was returning to Holland was wrecked off the coast of England with the loss of almost all on board.

The great Peter Stuyvesant, he of the fiery temper and the silver-banded peg leg, came to govern New Amsterdam following the unfortunate Kieft, but his only interest in Nutten Island seems to have been the removal of the saw mill, which had once again fallen into disuse, and the official adoption of the nickname which was in common use to designate the little waterway between the Island and Brooklyn. The passing years had seen this shallow creek widen and deepen itself until it afforded aeAmsterdam market by rowboat, two to an oar. Since one of their chief products was buttermilk, it was inevitable that the stream be called Buttermilk Channel, and so it is to this day.

But for some strange reason the astute Stuyvesant, in company with his predecessors, utterly failed to appreciate the most vital of all the natural advantages that Nutten Island offered to the little Dutch colony — the strategic importance of its location in protecting the city behind it against possible hostile attack and invasion. Although the Island commanded all the water approaches available to enemy action, no fortifications were ever built on the Island by the Dutch, nor even planned; in fact, there is no record of any member of the small military garrison in New Amsterdam having ever set foot on Nutten Island.

Consequently when in 1664 Charles II of England decided to press his country's claim to ownership of the New Netherland colony by right of original discovery by the seafaring Cabots, four British frigates and three hundred men had no trouble whatever in taking possession of the city. Colonel Richard Nicolls was installed as its first British governor, and its name of New Amsterdam was changed to New York, in honor of the king's brother, the Duke of York.

After a quiet and happy regime of 4 years, Nicolls was replaced by Francis Lovelace who held office until 1675, when the dutch unexpectedly showed up with a formidable fleet and force of armed men, and regained possession of their lost New Netherland. The province resumed its original name, but the city changed from New York to New Orange, instead of reverting to New Amsterdam. Then, less than a year later, the British and Dutch successfully adjusted their differences without further resort to force; province and city once more became New York, the Dutch soldiers marched out of Fort Amsterdam for the last time, and the patriotic toast of the town was "God save the King!" instead of "Oranje boven!" And through it all, Nutten Island remained Nutten Island, "a very pleasant place with a garden and several walks of fruite trees," tranquilly waiting there in the bay for someone to turn the next page in its history.

CHAPTER II

THE English rule of New York, which was to continue uninterruptedly for more than a century, was inaugurated by Governor Edmund Andros, but neither he nor his immediate successors did anything to disturb the pastoral calm of the city's nearest neighbor. In 1686 Governor Jacob Leisler did have an idea that something constructive should be attempted about fortifying both New York and Nutten Island and actually got as far as installing a battery of guns on the New York shore immediately opposite Nutten at the spot still called "The Battery." Before he could complement them with a similar installation across the channel he was caught in traitorous actions against his king and incontinently hanged in his own garden, so his administration cannot be said to have had much inspirational effect.

Within the next year the conflicting elements in New York's rapidly expanding social structure forced upon the city the doubtful distinction of acquiring a whipping-post, a cage, a pillory, and a ducking block, but these evidences of an awakening municipal consciousness were lost upon Nutten island; its only population was still the highly rural one furnished by the governors' sheep, cattle, and coach horses, and in the spring an occasional truant lad and his lass from New York enjoying the amorous dalliance common to the vernal season. It was not until September of 1691 that any lasting public attention was focused on Nutten Island, when the Provincial Assembly decreed that the Island together with the two other so called "Oyster Islands" in New York Bay — Bedloe and Ellis — should be removed from their status as independent royal grants and ceded to the County of New York. One Colonel Cortlandt and a Chidley Brooks, Esquire, brought the bill back to a surprised Assembly, requesting that Nutten Island be exempted from the legislation since it belonged to "His Majestie's Fort and Garrison." Although this sudden militaristic aspect of the Island must have been news to the Assemblymen they goodnaturedly agreed, as did the governor; the king gave his approval and so the matter rested until 6 years later when Benjamin Fletcher, then governor, was about to be succeeded by the Earl of Bellomont. Feeling aggrieved over what he considered the injustice of his recall, he spitefully plotted to give away Nutten Island before the noble Bellomont arrived. Fletcher's Council, however, refused to sympathize with his jealous motives and would not confirm the grant.

When Lord Bellomont took over the reins of local government in 1698 he promptly forestalled any further attempts at such private disposals of government property by publishing an edict forbidding any governor to grant away any part of the king's domain, and specifically setting aside Nutten Island as "being part of the Denizen of His Majestie's Governors for the time being." So was a tradition born, for as a result of this proclamation the old name "Nutten Island" fell into disuse and the more authoritative title of "The Governor's Island" took its place. Eventually the word "The" was dropped and then the passing years also rubbed out the apostrophe in "Governor's" the name became, without any official action, as we know it today — Governors Island.

Then came Edward Hyde, Lord Cornbury, cousin of England's Queen Anne, to be New York's governor from 1702 to 1708. He was, to put it mildly, a quaint character, much addicted to donning women's attire and mincing along the ramparts of the fort; he also was fond of giving dinner parties that turned into drunken brawls which would last well into the next morning, all to the prejudice of good order and public peace of mind. As a colonial administrator he was a distinct failure, but as an exploiter of the potentialities of Governors Island for pleasure and profit my Lord Cornbury was an unqualified, though unethical, success.

Like Van Twiller, whom he resembled in his more dishonest characteristics, Governor Cornbury was quick to note the advantages the Island provided for an official residence to which he and succeeding executives could retire to "free themselves from business"; the only catch was that there were no funds to defray construction costs. But to a financial manipulator who had left England just one jump ahead of consignment to a debtors' prison, lack of money presented no real obstacle.

Popular opinion was at last awake to the desirability of fortifying Governors Island, and Cornbury seized upon the popularity of this movement to announce new taxes to raise money for the necessary defenses. The classes of assessments were many and varied, and few were exempt from one or more of their applications. Among others, there was a tax for every person who wore a pearl ring, every man who sported a periwig, all slave owners, and every bachelor over 25 years of age. The net result was a fund of 1500 pounds which certainly should have built a very respectable fort, but no fort and no accounting of the money collected ever appeared. Instead, there arose a splendid house on the same high ground so much favored by Van Twiller, which became the permanent home for the British governors or, as Lord Cornbury picturesquely put it, "The smiling garden of the sovereigns of the province."

Official records on this edifice and its exact location are no longer in existence, but tradition places it where Quarters 2 now stands on the hill overlooking the present San Juan Dock; as late as 1840 this building was commonly referred to as "the Governor's House" and with no real proof to the contrary, Quarters 2 may well be the actual house in question. Its architecture indicates early English origin, and it is known to have been built considerably prior to the War of 1812, during which it served successively as a guard house and as headquarters for the Island garrison. Its basement then contained the famous "Black Hole," a cell for the solitary confinement of especially unruly prisoners. Traces of this cell are still discernable, as are the sockets for the heavy bars that covered the windows of its other less exclusive apartments. An interesting legend has it that this house was connected by a tunnel to a private dock on the Buttermilk Channel shore, whereby the governor could make his escape on his official barge if the Island were invaded by hostile forces. The tunnel and barge are reputed to have been large enough to accommodate also the governor's coach and four, so that any forced departure of His Excellency could be made with as little impairment of the gubernatorial dignity as possible. No trace of this rumored exit can now be found.

It was not long after Lord Cornbury established himself with such pomp and ceremony upon Governors Island that reports of his unorthodox financial dealings reached Queen Anne. His royal kinswoman immediately removed the governor from office, his creditors just as immediately put him in jail, and the long-overdue military activation of Governors Island was again postponed.

In June 1710, a convoy of Palatine refugees to the number of seven to ten thousand arrived at New York with orders from Queen Anne that they be lodged and fed by the city. Since a "contagious distemper" had ravaged their ships on the voyage across the Atlantic, killing hundreds of the unfortunate Europeans, the colonial authorities were properly concerned about where and how these unwelcome guests might best be quarantined, and eventually decided that Governors Island was the proper place to put them. Huts were hastily erected on the Island to house them, food was provided, and special courts of justice were established to safeguard their interests. Although more than 250 of the exiles died and were buried on the Island, the contagion of their plague never reached New York. Months later the Palatines were permitted to leave their quarantine, and most of them settled farther up the Hudson in Greene and Columbia Counties where their descendents still live. One of their number, John Peter Zenger, later found fame as publisher of the *New York Weekly Journal* and was the first champion of freedom of the press in this country.

With Governors Island having been used as a lumber stand, pasture, recreation ground, governor's residence, and quarantine station, it remained for Governor William Cosby in 1732 to give it a new role — that of a game preserve. He stocked it with half a dozen brace of English pheasants, which increased so rapidly and in such numbers that the flock spread to Long Island. The Legislature, perhaps not unmindful of the desirability of these birds as a table delicacy, decreed that none of the pheasants should be killed nor their eggs taken for 1 year in the hope that they might thus stock the entire colony. This appetizing ideal was never fully achieved, but at least it helped maintain Governors Island's creditable reputation for interest in animal husbandry, starting with the cows and goats of the early Dutchmen and reaching its climax with the squirrels which were introduced to the Island in 1895, under the official protection of Lieutenant General Nelson A. Miles.

The propagation of valuable game birds was not, however, the limit of official concern with the Island during the early eighteenth century; there was also the constant and increasing threat of war with France. Governor Clarke told the Legislature in 1738 that Governors Island should be fortified, and 3 years later he openly declared "There is great cause to apprehend a speedy rupture with France. Your situation ought thereto awaken you to see the importance of erecting batteries in proper places . . . to prevent the enemy landing upon Governors Island." The English Clinton, who followed Clarke, also urged that something be done to prevent enemy infantry and artillery being put ashore on the Island.

And finally in 1755, something was done. It was not the building of the much-discussed fortification for which the Council in 1745 had authorized a lottery to raise the sum of 3,375 pounds, but it was the placing upon Governors Island of the first armed force ever to be stationed there — the 51st Regiment of the British Colonial Militia, commanded by the finest officer America had yet produced, Sir William Pepperell.

This splendid soldier, a native of Kittery, Maine, was a colonel of militia at the age of 30 and 19 years later was appointed commander-in-chief of the New England force of 4000 men that captured the French fortress of Louisburg. For this service to the Crown he was made a baronet, the only New Englander to be so honored. While he was on duty at Governors Island he received his promotion to major general, thus becoming the first of the long line of distinguished officers of similar rank who have served there down the years. He was raised to the rank of lieutenant general in 1759. To Pepperell's foresight in training his New England men to fight in the Indian fashion rather than in the solid formations of European soldiery we owe the victories some of these same men later would achieve in the American Revolution, when they would be fighting for the Continental cause.

Meanwhile, near the obscure French outpost of Fort Duquesne — it is called Pittsburgh today — occurred the event which would simultaneously prove the wisdom of practising the military tactics Pepperell preached, and prominently and forever place Governors Island in our national military history. This circumstance was the French and Indian massacre of General Braddock's English troops, ambushed while marching through a forest in close order and conspicuous array, and unable to defend themselves against an enemy which they could not see but could feel only too keenly.

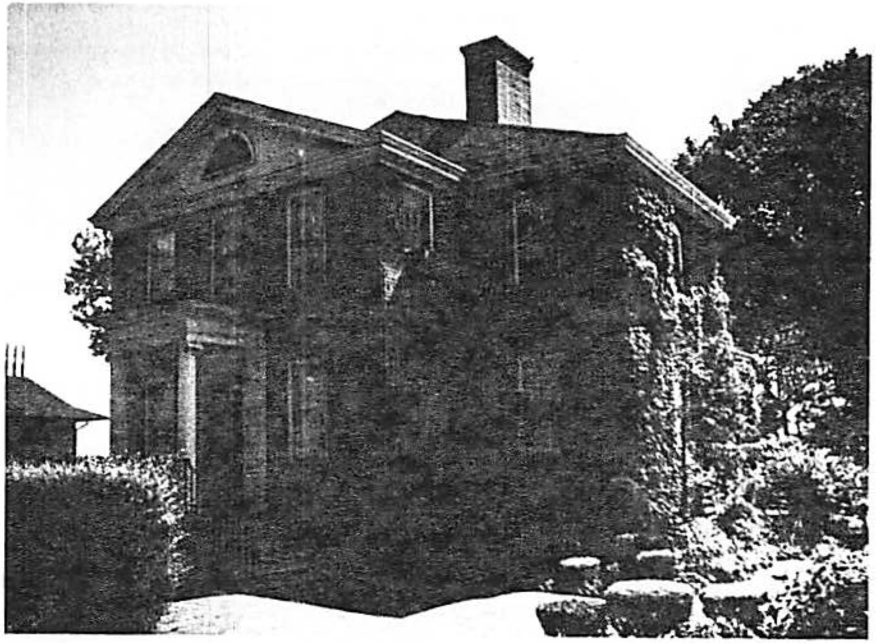
Great Britain's immediate reaction to this disaster was to empower John Campbell, Earl of Loudoun and commander-in-chief of His Majesty's forces in America to raise a light infantry regiment in the Colonies consisting of four battalions and a band totalling 4,000 men. The regiment would be commanded by officers bearing the king's commission. It would be a Regular unit of the British Army, and would be called "The Loyal American Provincial Regiment, 62nd Foot." To aid enlistments in this new force the Virginia Assembly voted 8,000 pounds, Maryland appropriated 5,000 pounds for the same worthy cause, and in addition there was a general bounty of 5 pounds for each man recruited. The rolls were soon filled, chiefly by German and Swiss emigrants from Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and North Carolina; who were antagonistic to the French and were happy to have this chance to fight against their old enemies merely by taking an oath of allegiance which made them naturalized British subjects. Within the year the regiment was formally organized at Governors Island which was designated as its permanent home station, the fourth battalion being known as "The Governors Island Battalion."

Under the interested patronage of George II and with a highly competent officer personnel which contained many foreign veterans of European wars, the Loyal Americans soon became one of the best known and most important of British regiments in America; certainly it must have been one of the best dressed, for its uniform of white knee-breeches, three-cornered black hat, and scarlet coat faced with blue was further elaborated with white lace at the cuffs and throat and two additional blue stripes on the coat front. The hair was worn long, braided into a pigtail, and powdered.

On Christmas Day in 1757 a reorganization of the British Army changed the designation of the Loyal Americans to "The Royal American Regiment, 60th foot" with that famous "soldier of the king," Lord Jeffery Amherst, replacing Lord Loudon as colonel-in-chief. It is interesting to note that Horatio Gates, future Adjutant General of the Continental Army under George Washington, served at one time as a major in this same regiment and was stationed with it on Governors Island.

Created primarily as an experimental and training organization to probe the reasons for such defeats as that suffered by the ill-fated Braddock, and to evolve new infantry tactics that would not only recognize but improve upon the efficient methods of guerrilla warfare as practiced by the French and their Indian allies, the Royal Americans may be said to have established on Governors Island the first infantry school in America. Practical applications and demonstrations of their new techniques were tested by the 60th Foot in various skirmishes with the Redskins in 1757 and 1758. Later the regiment fought with distinction at the Battle of Quebec, and saw violent action at Louisburg, Ticonderoga, and Montreal, clearly establishing its right to the regimental motto *Celer et Audax* (Quick and Brave).

The final stamp of approval was put on the regiment's combat training in 1763 when its Swiss colonel, Henry Bouquet, decisively defeated the Indians at Bushy Run and Fort Pitt, and from then on



The Governor's House, originally built in 1708

The Admiral's House, once the home of General Pershing

The "Dutch House"

The Block House, once the home of Ulysses S. Grant

individual companies and battalions of the Royal Americans were in great demand wherever there was trouble in any of England's colonies. It is small wonder that the 60th Foot, known today as the King's Royal Rifle Corps, with service in both World Wars, is one of the most famous outfits and has the longest list of battle honors in the entire British Army.

While small units of the 60th were on detached service from Governors Island in 1767, two additional regiments came temporarily to swell the Island garrison — the red-and-yellow-coated 44th Foot, and the 22nd Foot in red and light blue. Although they in nowise dimmed the luster of the 60th as a *corps d'elite*, they too must have acquired that military ardor and ability which Governors Island seems continually to have imparted to its inhabitants. Both are still on the active list of England's Army, the 44th as the "Essex Regiment" and the 22nd as the "Cheshire Regiment," and both of them are equally noted for unusually courageous feats of arms.

With the war clouds of the American Revolution gathering close, Britain prudently transferred the combat units of the 60th to her Jamaican possessions where their loyal American sympathies would not be in so great conflict with their Royal American obligations; only the band was left behind to entertain the Tory citizenry of New York with frequent public concerts. At the same time Captain Montressor of the Royal Engineers at last began a series of fortifications on the Island, but they were of a desultory character and afforded neither defense nor offense when the crisis of 1775 exploded over the American Colonies.

CHAPTER III

THE echoes of "the shot heard 'round the world" from Concord on that famous April day of 1775 were not slow in reaching New York, where the strenuous hostility of the more ardent Colonial sympathizers made life distinctly uncomfortable for those who preferred to remain loyal subjects of King George. Immediately Governors Island became, as it has become in every war in our country's history a focal point of martial interest.

The small garrison then remaining on the Island was utterly unable to cope with the constant anti-British demonstrations throughout the city; agitators against royal rule boldly attacked the Redcoats in the streets and taverns, provoking desertions which made the situation even more acute. Finally, there was tried the palliative expedient of putting the soldiers' families in the camp on Governors Island while the troops thus dispossessed were quartered on board H.M.S. *Asis* lying in the harbor. But even this measure failed to produce any beneficial results. It was then decided to remove the English soldiers entirely until such time as they could return in force sufficient to occupy and administer New York in a manner befitting one of Great Britain's most important colonial possessions.

On June 7, 1775, therefore, the Redcoats withdrew from Governors Island and the adjacent city, never again to return as proprietors. For the next few months the Island knew no military activity, but it did continue to live up to its name and prove worthy of the responsibilities it implied. When the Continental Congress began to consider taking into custody the resident crown officers, New York's royal governor William Tryon wisely chose the better part of valor and discreetly removed himself to Governors Island whence, under the protective guns of the *Asis*, he managed the city's affairs as best he could in behalf of those citizens who would still listen to him.

Shortly after the start of the new year, the Continental Army, lately created at Cambridge under General George Washington, had proved more active than the British invasion headquaters in Boston had anticipated, with the result that the English commander, Sir William Howe, and the king's men retired to their ships and sailed off to the more amiable atmosphere of Halifax, there to replenish their supplies of food, ammunition, and personnel. This gave the American commander a chance to move on the Tory stronghold of New York, which he reached without incident in the Middle of April.

And for once no time was lost in promoting the strategic importance of governors Island. In fact, although he knew little of New York, Washington had been thoroughly briefed concerning the combat possibilities of the Island by a report of an inspection of the premises made by Benjamin Franklin to Lieutenant General Charles Lee, as far back as February:

> There is Nutten (Governor's Island) well situated to place Guns and I imagine 300 or 400 men would be sufficient to complete all the works in one night; the greatest difficulty would be to get cannon to Nutten I, 1776, announced: "After getting the works in such forwardness as will be prudent to leave, I propose immediately to take possession of Greceded Washington to Manhattan, shared Franklin's views and on April.

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> There is Nutten (Governor's Island) well situated to place Guns and I imagine 300 or 400 men would be sufficient to complete all the works in one night; the greatest difficulty would be to get cannon to Nutten Island. ***Six Guns would be sufficient upon Nutten Island and 12 pdrs would be heavy enough.
>
> B. Franklin

General Israel Putnam, who preceded Washington to Manhattan, shared Franklin's views and on April 4, 1776, announced: "After getting the works in such forwardness as will be prudent to leave, I propose immediately to take possession of Governor's Island, which I think is a very important post."

Putnam was as good as his word. Within a week he had arranged for the Continental troops already in townto furnish him with a total of 1,000 officers and men to work on the Island fortifications. On April 8 these levies gathered at dusk in lower New York and, laden with entrenching tools, embarked in a fleet of rowboats that ferried them quickly across the Island channel. Remembering the redoubt he had built at night on the summit of Bunker Hill almost a year before, "Old Put" kept his men feverishly at work with pick and shovel straight through the midnight hours and until dawn began to lighten the eastern sky over Brooklyn. By that time an excellent breastwork had been erected that would afford ample protection to its defenders from any naval bombardment.

When Washington reached town from Boston 10 days later he approved the work, and on April 16 ordered Colonel William Prescott's regiment of Bunker Hill fame to encamp on Governors Island and assist in the completion of its defenses. Both the date and the regiment are important because they jointly mark the installation of the first garrison of purely American Continental troops to be stationed on the Island.

A few days afterwards Prescott's men were temporarily joined by Colonel Nixon's 4th Continental Infantry, and with their combined efforts the finishing touches were soon put on the fortifications. The exact plan of these is no longer available, but the known armament included four 32-pounders and four 18-pounders with thirty additional cannon of assorted calibers. It is reasonable to suppose these were mounted in a series of redoubts, so located that they commanded Buttermilk Channel, the New York Channel, and the approaches from the Hudson River and the bay. To further discourage hostile navigation the Americans sank old hulks in the neighboring channels and placed rows of sharpened stakes at intervals along the Island's shore line, and for headquarters of the Island's defense system there was erected a log-sheathed blockhouse called the "citadel." Twenty-six thousand musket cartridges were also ordered for the Island garrison and lines of brush were set to encircle each redoubt to mark the limits of effective musket range against landing parties. Finally, to afford an unobstructed field of fire and at the same time to remove all aids to concealment from possible enemy use, the Island's farmhouse and barn were burned to the ground. Washington viewed the completed project with deep satisfaction and wrote to Lee: "Governor's Island is more strong and better guarded than any other post in the Army."

As imminent events would prove, it was extremely fortunate that this was so. Since early summer rumors had been current that Howe was soon to quit Halifax for New York, bringing a vast armada with him, and on July 2 the advance contingent of the English fleet appeared off Sandy Hook. Fifty ships from Halifax came into New York harbor that day, and more than a hundred the next; then followed Admiral Howe (Sir William's brother), with a battle squadron and fresh troops from England, and the entire British fleet and Lord Cornwallis' army that had just been defeated in an attempt to take Charleston. More than 400 ships totalling 1,200 guns were swinging at anchor in the Lower Bay while the 32,000 British grenadiers, Scotch Highlanders, and Hessian mercenaries they had rought went into camp on Staten Island.

The first active participation of Governors Island in our War of the Revolution occurred on July 12, 3 days after the newly enacted Declaration of Independence had been read to the troops. About 3 o'clock in the afternoon five ships separated themselves from the forest of masts that crowded the harbor and, with a fair wind, set their course up the Hudson with the obvious intention of testing the American defenses. They were the 44-gun frigate *Phoenix*, the 30-gun frigate *Rose*, the schooner *Tryal*, and two tenders, and as soon as they came within range of the Island's guns they received an exceedingly warm reception. For more than an hour there was a brisk interchange of shots in which the shore batteries of New York and Brooklyn joined, and although the English ships eventually made their escape to the vicinity of Haverstraw, it was noted that the *Rose* suffered heavy damage. The Colonial cannon expended 196 pounds in this engagement, and there were no reported casualties.

But this was merely a rehearsal for the important role Governors Island would play when the entire might of Great Britain's invasion force was thrown against New York on August 26. Rightly surmising from the results of the trial run of the *Phoenix* and her escorts that it would be impractical to risk his ships to the Island's fire by making a direct frontal attack on the city, Howe brought his troops across the harbor from Staten Island to Gravesend Bay on Long Island, just beyond the reach of of the Governors Island batteries, and from there launched his advance to flank Washington's defense

line on Brooklyn Heights. With an overwhelming victory almost within their grasp, the British were powerless to halt the American reinforcements from New York who, under the protection of the Governors Island guns, crossed the East River unhindered and temporarily stemmed the Redcoat attack. Had it been possible to bring up any of Britain's great naval power to blockade the New York and Brooklyn shores, the Continental Army would have been caught in a trap from which there could have been no escape and the American Revolution might have died right there, but the British skippers had had one demonstration of what could be expected from the artillerymen on Governors Island and they had no intention of repeating the experience; as a result, Howe's land attack was stymied and under cover of darkness Washington was able to withdraw his forces from their precarious position and make good his escape to Harlem. The Yankee gunners stood to their posts on Governors Island until the Continental rear guard had cleared New York to the north, and then on August 31 they too withdrew. After subjecting the Island to an exploratory long-range bombardment and finding it unoccupied, the British at last moved in.

With his Redcoats now commanding New York from their positions on Governors Island and Brooklyn Heights, Howe felt that the American rebels might be in a mood to give up their struggle for freedom and negotiate a peaceful settlement of their grievances. The subsequent 2 weeks which he spent in devising terms of capitulation which might prove acceptable to Washington were completely fruitless as far as any agreement for peace was concerned, but they did provide an opportunity for Governors Island to participate in the first underwater attack by the first submarine in all the history of warfare.

A Yankee inventor named David Bushnell had evolved a submersible craft which was built of iron-bound oak planking in the shape of an egg, measuring 6 feet in height and 7½ feet from bow to stern. A small conning tower on top gave access to the interior designed to accommodate a one-man crew who not only controlled the lethal functions of the vessel but also supplied the motive power by operating a crank attached to vanes on a horizontal spindle projecting from the bow. This mechanism represented the first successful application of the principle of the modern screw propeller, and by working hard the operator could obtain a forward speed of 3 miles an hour, provided his breath held out. A similar vertical contrivance made possible the ascent and descent of the craft, aided by emptying or filling tanks of water ballast; 700 pounds of lead on the keep kept the boat right side up and could be used as a detachable anchor in emergencies. A rudder and a phosphorescent compass completed the navigational equipment.

It was Bushnell's idea that his boat, which he had appropriately named *Turtle*, could destroy the British ships in the harbor by detonating explosive charges under their hulls, and he succeeded in obtaining General Putnam's approval to make the attempt. With what seems a strange lack of faith in his own handiwork Bushnell then secured the services of an Army sergeant named Ezra Lee to work the boat, and on the night of September 6 the sergeant set off from the New York shore. Whatever else he may have been, Sergeant Lee must certainly be regarded as one of the bravest men our Army ever had; sealed in a pitch black vault that at any minute might prove to be his coffin, surrounded by a maze of cranks, pedals, pumps, levers, wheels, and instruments that needed constant attention, Lee nonchalantly took the *Turtle* beneath the waves and set off for his goal, aided by a strong tide. In fact, the tide was so strong that when the sergeant surfaced his boat at what he figured would be the proper time, he found himself being carried rapidly out to sea past the English fleet. By dint of industriously paddling for more than 2 hours, Sergeant Lee got back to a favorable position to attack Admiral Howe's flagship H.M.S. *Eagle*, and submerged under her stern. The *Turtle's* magazine was a wooden chest filled with a charge of 150 pounds of gun powder, with a timing device for igniting it; this was carried aft of her conning tower and at the opportune moment was to be released and attached to the hull of an enemy vessel by means of an augur, operated from within the submarine. At least that was the way it was planned, but when Lee tried to affix his bomb below the water line of the *Eagle* his drill was powerless against the copper sheathing of the hull.

Discouraged, he rose to the surface and found to his dismay that it was now daylight. Discovery would be disastrous, so down he went again and with what must have been limitless energy, swung around and started back for New York as fast as he could twirl his propeller. Then he noticed that his compass was no longer working and when he came to the surface to get his bearings he saw himself to be only a few hundred yards from Governors Island. An alert Redcoat sentry spotted the unusual-looking *Turtle*, and a barge was speedily manned and sent out to investigate. Lee once more submerged but had presence of mind enough to release the bomb and trip its timing device, craftily hoping that the Englishmen might be prompted to seize it. They, however, viewed the fatal bait with definite skepticism and allowed it to float away from them into midstream where it eventually exploded with a tremendous roar. Lee in the meantime actually managed to buck the tide successfully back to the wharf in New York where Putnam and Bushnell had been awaiting his return with understandable anxiety.

On September 13 Governors Island loosed its last shots in the Revolution, and ironically enough they were discharged against New York itself by the newly arrived British inhabitants of the late Yankee stronghold. This topsy-turvy situation was brought about when three English frigates and a 40-gun ship stood up the East River towards Hell Gate, firing as they came, as if they meant to undertake an all-out attack on the city. The last American troops remaining in New York returned a few salvos from the shore batteries, at which Governors Island went into action with a roaring volley across the channel that killed three innocent bystanders, one shot striking within 6 feet of General Washington as he was riding into the fort. Two days later the British marched into New York.

Beyond the fact that Governors Island was kept fully garrisoned and fortified by the Redcoats, very little is known of this era of the Island's history. Such data as have survived show that the ruined fortifications abandoned by the Americans were repaired with the help of some 300 Tory civlians from New York who volunteered for the task; they refused all financial remuneration for their labors but did accept pay in terms of food, beer, and rum, and there is no record of any complaint or dissatisfaction with the wages. There is also evidence to indicate that on the 1st of September, 1779, the Island was used for an army hospital and in December of the same year a guard room was erected there to house a special squad of men whose sole duty it was to protect the guns in the bastions from being spiked by infiltrating Yankees. Otherwise, life on the Island seems to have returned to its former idyllic state of rural peace while the war roared off up the Hudson and down into Virginia, and finally ended when Cornwallis gave up his sword in a green meadow in Yorktown.

Following the British surrender, preparations were immediately started to remove King George's troops from Governors Island. Most of them left with the formal British evacuation of New York on November 25, 1783, and on December 3 Governor George Clinton of New York received from Rear Admiral Robert Digby of the Royal Navy the official surrender of the Island garrison with all fortifications and buildings intact.

CHAPTER IV

THEN the Redcoats finally marched off Governors Island and the new flag of the United States replaced the ensign of old England on the Island's flagstaff, the American garrison was immediately reestablished by the victorious Colonials who found that the Island's erstwhile inhabitants had made considerable improvements and additions to the premises.

Before their surrender the British had removed almost all guns from their emplacements but the rather extensive fortifications remained unharmed. Also intact were the military buildings put up by the English troops; these included a captain's quarters, another set of quarters for junior officers, barracks for enlisted personnel, several kitchens, the guard house already mentioned, a convalescent hospital, a barn, a summer house, a gardener's hut, and a wharf. None of them seemed to need much in the way of repair, but in the natural lessening of civilian interest in military matters which is characteristic of all postwar periods there was little if any public support for properly maintaining the Island as an Army post. It is therefore hardly surprising to find that Governor Clinton himself was so forgetful of the primary importance of Governors Island that he leased it for use as a race track almost as soon as the State of New York had regained possession of it.

The unique utilization of civil prerogatives and property did not last long, for in 1786 the Island again became a quarantine station and remained one until 1790, when Columbia College obtained a franchise for the Island in the hope that it might be used to raise funds for the college. Exactly how this was to be accomplished was not definitely stated but apparently the sporting example of Clinton was not lost upon the fund-raising committee, for a contemporary advertisement from the *New York Journal* reads:

> *November 30th*, 1790. This day at 11 there will be a Horse Race on Governors Island which, if the weather is fine, will give satisfaction to the Public.

Whatever satisfaction the race (and the weather) might thus have given to the public and Columbia, it did not please the Government in view of a sudden recurrence of the traditional fear of a war with France, and New York State again took over the Island for a quarantine station and the erection of new fortifications to replace those now fallen into disrepair.

In a message of January 4, 1794, to the United States Congress, Governor Clinton reminded the lawmakers of "the naked and exposed condition of our principal seaport and urg *(sic)* the necessity of immediately providing for its defense." Congress thereupon made a survey of the construction needed to put the Island on a proper war footing, reporting that the expense of installing batteries, embrasures, and platforms for 24 guns, plus a redoubt, powder magazine, and blockhouse, would total around $3,500.

This did not seem nearly enough to Clinton, and he said so with such vehemence that Congress grudgingly provided an appropriation of $150,000. The governor was still far from satisfied with what he felt was a woefully inadequate sum for the work needed; he was a soldier of a family of soldiers — his brother James was a Continental brigadier and his cousin was Sir Henry Clinton of His britannic Majesty's forces — and he was determined that Governors Island should provide something more than a theoretical hazard to hostile advances. So when Congress turned down his pleas for yet more money, he followed the precedent set in 1779 by the royalist sympathizers in New York and improvised his own system of free labor for the desired fortifications.

Appealing to the patriotism of selected groups of citizens such as the Columbia College students and faculty, German and Irish social clubs, the Tammany Society, and the trade guilds of coopers, masons, stone-cutters, carpenters, and — implausible as it may seem — tallow chandlers, wig-makers, and hairdressers, Clinton secured enough skilled volunteer workers to begin his building program. The governor himself organized the working parties and, despite his 55 years, took his turn at pick, shovel, and barrow. With the savings thus effected in labor costs Clinton was able to provide the essential materials and equipment needed. By spring the Island's new defenses were sufficiently impressive to give authoritative support to the governor's order that hereafter the warships of all foreign powers must keep 1 mile south of Governors Island, even though the resident forces at that time consisted of only 1 captain, 1 surgeon, 2 first lieutenants, 1 cadet, 4 noncommissioned officers, 4 musicians, 4 artificers, and 34 privates. (One may be excused for wondering how it was possible to obtain the services of even these few troops, for our Army's pay scale of the period ran from $8 a month for a private to a munificent $200 a month for a major general.)

Hardly had the new works been completed before they were suddenly called upon to take part in an actual Franco-American crisis, although fortunately not of the bellicose nature that had been anxiously anticipated for so long. Early in the fall of 1794 the French frigate *Semillante*, Admiral Sura commanding, nosed her way through the Narrows and obediently dropped anchor far south of Governors Island; in accordance with naval etiquette she thereupon fired a salute of 15 guns. International courtesy required that Governors Island return the salute, gun for gun, without delay, but the Island preserved the silence of the tomb. Outraged, the French admiral dispatched a staff officer to call upon the American commanding officer for an explanation of his discourteous reticence, and the consequent report of the occurrence to Governor Clinton shows that even then protocol had its problems:

> Governors Island,
> October 11, 1794
>
> SIR:
>
> Yesterday morning Admiral Sura Sent a Lieutenant to this Island to learn from me as a commanding officer whether it would be proper or whether it had been Customary to Salute the Flag of the United States at such a distance and what number of guns would be given. In answer to his Salute, I informed the Lieut. that the Admiral lay at such a distance I thought it improper to Salute but should it so Happen that the Admiral did Come Up

within 1 mile in a Southerly Direction of this Island according to Your Excellencies orders I should Return his Salute. But as to Stipulate for the number of Guns it was out of my power, but that Our National Salute was thirteen at present.

Agreeable to Your Excellencies Order some time ago, I shall attend to Returning the Salute should the Admiral come up. Your Excellencie will please to understand that Admiral Sura lays at the Watering place so called nere Staten Island.

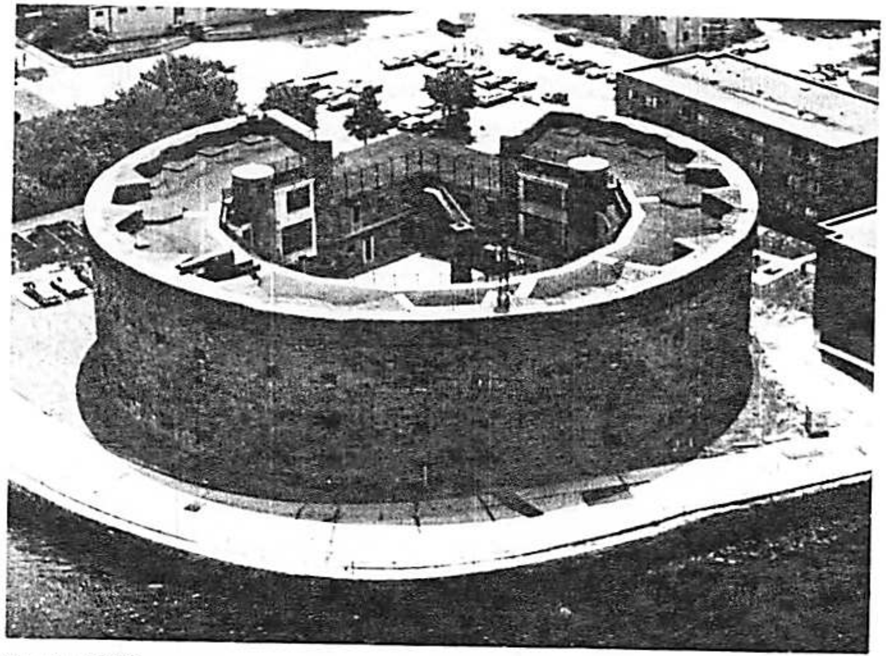
I am Sir, Your Excellencies
Most Obt. & Humbl Svt.,
CORNS. R. SEDAM, Capt.

But the dictates of diplomacy carried the matter to even higher levels and a month later Secretary of War Knox informed the commanding officer on Governors Island that the Minister of the French Republic had made the affair the subject of an official protest to President Washington, and that the president ordered the Island command to fix a time when the salute in question would be fired. Whatever the immediate action on this directive may have been, there remains a report to Governor Clinton dated April 19, 1795, that the French man-of-war had that day left the North River and the required 15-gun salute had been rendered her by the Island batteries. So was honor satisfied and the amity of nations preserved.

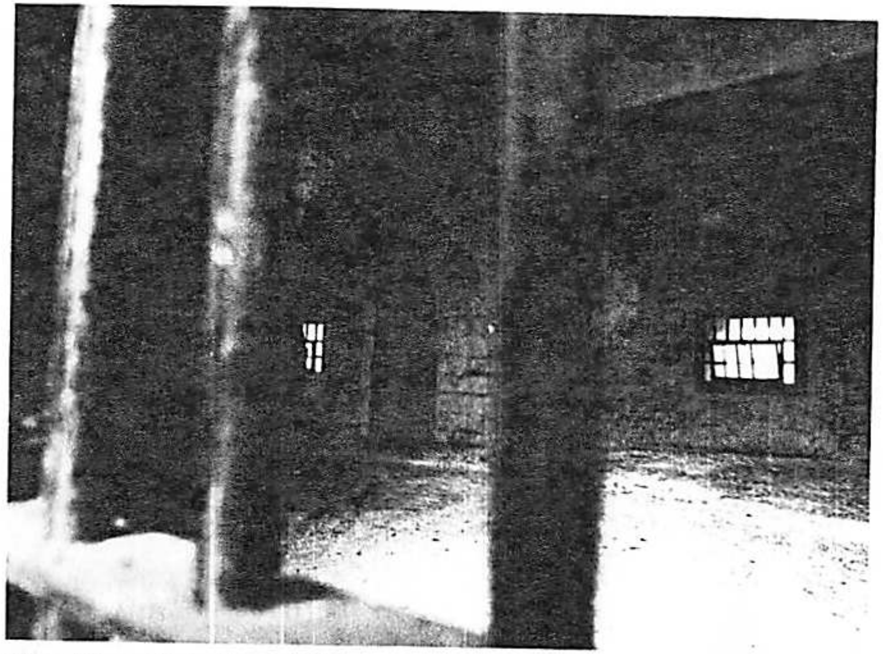
The Secretary of War had also interested himself in Governors Island to the extent of reporting to Congress that the Island fort begun in 1794 should be repaired and enlarged, with the result that a further sum of $100,000 was appropriated for the work. In 1797 another $30,117 was granted, followed by $30,116 in 1779, $20,124 in 1800, and $10,338 in 1801. As the century turned, this total of more than $330,000 at last put the Governors Island fortifications in what a correspondent of that time described as "a respectable state of defense."

These were ramparts of sodded earth and included a battery overlooking Buttermilk Channel, another on the southern rim of the Island facing the lower bay, and a third commanding the water approaches from the Jersey shore and the Hudson River to the northwest. All of them served as outposts to the main defensive work which was located where it is today and named Fort Jay, in honor of John Jay, the Congressional Secretary of Foreign Affairs who had helped to draft the treaty of peace with England and later became the first chief justice of our Supreme Court.

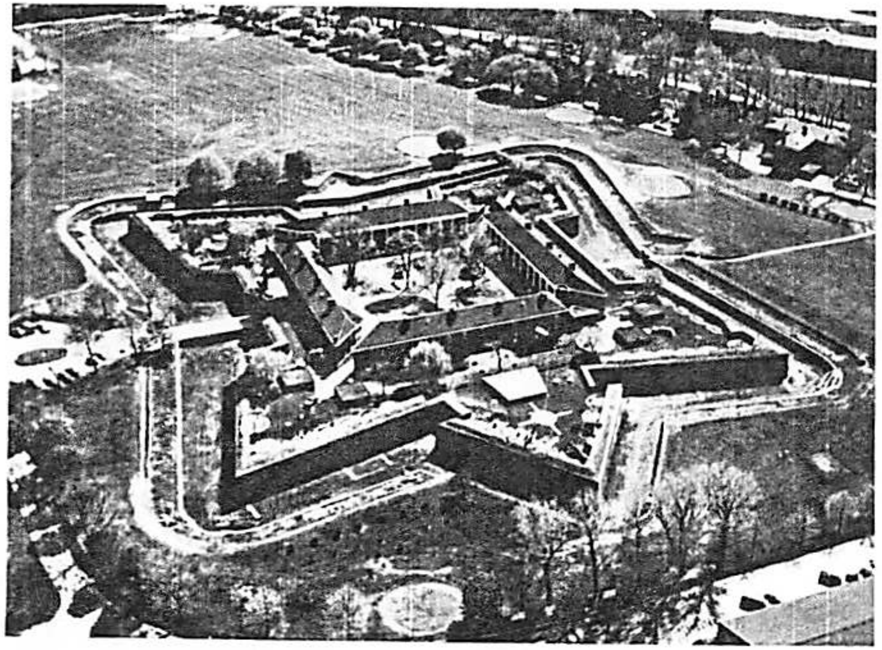
On February 15, 1800, Governors Island was ceded by the State of New York to the United States Government, and, with the bugaboo of another war with England now looming large in the immediate future, the federal authorities demolished the Island's impermanent emplacements and began to install more durable con-



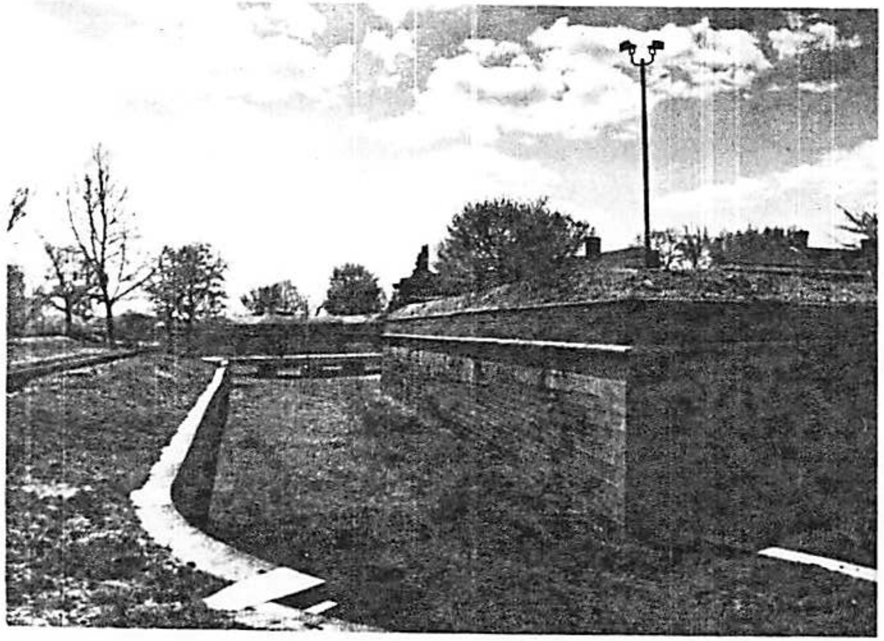
Castle Williams



One of the cells in Castle Williams



Fort Jay, as seen from the air



One of the parapets of Fort Jay

struction that would preserve the fort intact and solid for generations not yet born. Nor were the alterations all of a physical nature; John Jay's popular fame was suffering a temporary eclipse as a suspected adherent of England, so in 1810 the name of Fort Jay was changed to Fort Columbus.

The plan of the renovated fortifications was prepared by the French engineer Vincent and represented the latest developments in this class of military establishment. Surrounded entirely by a moat which was crossed by a drawbridge, Fort Columbus consisted of an outer pentagonal parapet of earth backed with brick, and enclosing four masonry bastions, the whole arranged that the walls of each parapet could be protected by enfilading fire of the next adjacent parapets. This design also made it possible for the fort to bring fully half its entire armament into play at one time against enemy shipping seeking to pass into the East River. Within the fort were erected barracks for 1,000 men, kitchens, bake ovens, a hospital, a pump for a fresh water well, and a powder magazine to hold sufficient ammmunition for the 96 guns which the fort boasted. All the guns were mounted with the pivot of the lateral movement of each piece directly under its muzzle so that the muzzle always occupied approximately the same space irrespective of what portion of its 54 degree field of fire it was covering; this permitted the opening of each embrasure to be so small that an enemy shot could not enter between the gun and the embrasure walls. And while of no direct defensive value, the fort also contained another feature which then, as ever since, drew the admiration of soldier and civilian alike. This was, and still is, the elaborate carving in red sandstone surmounting the main gateway and representing the original seal of the former War Department. It was sculptured by an Army prisoner who had formerly been a stonecutter and, so the story goes, it was responsible for obtaining his freedom. According to tradition, the small daughter of the fort's commander happened to pass beneath the gateway just as a large portion of stone broke loose under the finishing blows of the sculptor's chisel; realizing the danger to the little girl, the sculptor quickly interposed his body so that he received the full force of the falling block, thereby saving the child's life at serous injury to himself. He immediately was rewarded with a full pardon.

The whole project was a highly ambitious undertaking and its successful completion reflects great credit on those who pushed it through in the face of violent objections from New Yorkers who felt that their city should enjoy the glory of having the fort placed on Manhattan Island. Press, pulpit, and political forums engaged in acrimonious discussions of the subject and no less than Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Paine, and Washington Irving were embroiled in what rapidly became an important political issue. The final word was said posthumously by Baron von Steuben who, according to the *New York Post* of December 22, 1807, had once remarked that if

New York were to be defended by a fort, the Narrows was the place for it. Should a hostile fleet be permitted to get safely through that marine bottleneck, the baron reputedly opined, the city would be open to bombardment from which no fort within its boundaries could possibly save it. No one dared question the military wisdom of Washington's great aide, and by 1810 Governors Island presented a fort of first-class military worth.

Not content with adding Fort Columbus to the local defenses, the War Department also authorized the erection of what has become one of Governors Island's most prominent landmarks and one familiar to all who have ever seen New York Harbor. This is the round stone structure at the extreme northern tip of the Island, once called merely "The Tower" but since November of 1810 officially known as Castle Williams in honor of Colonel Jonathan Williams of the U.S. Corps of Engineers who designed it. A nephew of Benjamin Franklin, Williams was the first superintendent of the u.s. military Academy at West Point, president of the American Philosophical Society, chief engineer of the Army, and in charge of the defenses of the Port of New York, yet he not only found time to build the fort which bears his name but also to erect a complementary structure over at the Battery in New York. This was called Castle Clinton and after its deactivation as an Army post saw varied service as a concert hall where the fabulous Jenny Lind first sang in America, an immigration station, and a municipal aquarium, until its recent acquisition by the Federal Government for restoration as a national historical monument. Early in July 1812, when the War Department wished to compliment Colonel Williams by appointing him to command his namesake fort on the Island, the Corps of Artillery almost went into open mutiny at this unheard-of assignment of an engineer officer to an artillery post. Nor was the situation materially helped when, a few days later, a Major Alex Macomb of the corps of Engineers was appointed colonel of the 3d Artillery Regiment! A fine intra-mural dispute was averted only when Colonel Williams, bitter at the possibility of being deprived of the command to which he felt himself entitled by rank and length of service, resigned his commission in the Army on July 31.

Castle Williams was built on a foundation of solid masonry resting on a ledge of rocks that had long endangered passing shipping. Its walls, rising sheer to a height of 40 feet, form three-fifths of a circle of 210 feet in outer diameter; they are of red sandstone 8 feet thick, and are casemated with two tiers of bombproof arches which were designed to contain 100 pieces of heavy ordnance. Along the lower tier were ranged 35-pounders, on the second tier were 20-pounders, and on the terrace over the bombproofs was a barbette battery of 45 Columbiads — giant muzzle-loaders for throwing 50-pound shot and shell at high angles of elevation. Despite the great weight which the galleries had to support, they were cleverly constructed so that if the lower tier were broken through, the wall would still be supported by

the upper tier acting as a bridge over the opening; similarly, the outer cut of the walls was laid with all the stones so dovetailed into each other that no one stone could be knocked out of place nor even dislocated without first being broken into pieces.

Within Castle Williams were located two stone buildings, one to house 200 barrels of powder and the other to serve as a guard house; there was also a well of fresh water from which vessels docking at the Island could replenish their casks. Barracks were built in the inner quadrangle, and a sunken passageway connected the Castle with Fort Columbus; the door that led to this passageway is still visible inside the fort, but the passage is blocked. Contrary to popular belief, there were no dungeons beneath Castle Williams, although their lack must have been a severe handicap to Colonel Henry Burbeck of the Artillery Corps when he assumed command of the Island in 1810.

The colonel, who was a veteran of the continental Artillery in the Revolution and then for 3 years held a commission in the Engineers, instituted a regime of rigid discipline that brooked no excuses for deficiencies in soldierly dress, deportment or appearance, on or off duty. As a result, the penal pens of the guard house must have been as constantly full of malefactors as the Orderly Book was of their misdemeanors.

One week after his arrival at his new post Colonel Burbeck issued his first corrective order to standardize the manner of calling "All's well" from the various sentry posts, and a week later he got out another one forbidding "all officers, noncommissioned officers, soldiers, and all other persons of every description from getting on the parapet." But that wasn't all they couldn't do; still another edict states that "as the smoaking *(sic)* of pipes and segars in the open air is both dangerous and indecorous, it is strictly forbidden (except in quarters)." Nor was tobacco the only bad habit of which Burbeck took a jaundiced view; a companion directive to the above forbade "the landing of rum, brandy, gin, spirits, cordials, or ardent spirits of any kind except for the Officers of the Garrison and the liquor ration."

The troops of those days were frequently rough and rowdy characters who were determinedly indifferent to the requirements of good soldiering when it pleased them to be otherwise, but the Island's new commander knew how to handle them as his Garrison Order of September 23, 1810, testifies:

> It is a subject of regret to the Comdt. that he has already had an opportunity to witness that some soldiers of this Garrison should so far abandon the strict principles of military honor as to bear the stigma of a black eye or bruised face. These are disgraceful marks and no soldier, thus disqualified, will be permitted to appear on parade or mount his Guard but will, during its continuance, be

put on daily fatigues, and all tours of Guard omitted in consequence of it will be punctually made up when such disqualification cease.

Although Colonel Burbeck's strict sense of the fitness of things does not seem to have been upset by the omnipresent stray dogs which since time immemorial have disturbed the equanimity of all post commanders, he had his troubles with other four-footed visitors and early issued this order especially in their behalf:

> The Comdt., considering swine a nuisance to a Garrison and improper animals to range or be harbored on public ground, hereby directs, that after those which now belong here shall have been killed or otherwise disposed of, that none will be suffered to be carried or landed or kept upon the Island on any pretense whatever.

It seems safe to assume that there was a preponderance of bacon, ham, and other porcine products in the Island's mess for some time after this.

It took a little while for the rugged individualists among the Island's personnel to reconcile themselves to the fact that their commanding officer could be as tough as they were, and at one point it was necessary to prohibit all boats from landing at or near Castle Williams because "it gives a facility for desertion," but in the end the hard-boiled colonel had his command shaken down into an efficient organization. When continuous bickerings and irresponsible actions between England and the United States brought the War of 1812 to our shores, Governors Island was ready for it.

CHAPTER V

OUR second war with England began on June 18, 1812, and on August 14 Governors Island fittingly marked the event by holding a rousing target practice for the benefit of the artillery Militiamen who had supplemented the Regular garrison.

Target practice in those days was not only a training exercise but a social event for civilian enjoyment that ranked second only to a full dress parade. Specially invited guests, attired as for an afternoon tea, were permitted vantage points close by the various emplacements from which they could watch the troops at work, admire their gleaming regimentals, and — after some shrieks of well-bred dismay from the feminine portion of the audience when the guns were fired — applaud the marksmanship of the gunners. The less-fortunate spectators had to be content with a long-range but quieter view of the proceedings. On this occasion, with the new war the chief topic of conversation in New York, it is safe to assume that her citizens crowded the seawall at the Battery as well as the grassy slopes of Governors Island and proudly watched Castle Williams and Castle Clinton go into action against an old hulk anchored in the Hudson about 1000 yards equidistant from each.

The twin forts blazed away for 2 hours, by the end of which time a total of 384 shots had been fired; 317 had hit the target, and the hulk had been set on fire by the experimental use of red hot cannon balls heated in a portable forge belonging to one of the regiments.

Almost immediately after this target practice New York was thrown into a turmoil of dismay by a rumor that the troops stationed on Governors Island had been ordered to duty along the Canadian border. So great and widespread was the alarm over the fact that the city might thus be left defenseless — a newspaper of the day sadly observing "There had been no marriage in the city during the past week, the citizens probably too busy digging fortifications" — that the authorities could not ignore it and were obliged to allay the public distress by issuing through the papers an official denial that any part of the Governors Island garrison would be sent away anywhere at any time.

In the same year a small permanent fort to guard Buttermilk Channel was completed on the south shore of the Island. This installation (the present Officers Club) was named the "South Battery" and brought the total of guns mounted on the Island to about 600, with a consequent increase of officers and men to more than 1000 by 1814. Inasmuch as there were available for garrison duty on the Island only 200 artillerymen of the Regular Army, it was necessary to enlist the services of various Militia outfits from New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and New York, all of whom were tutored diligently by the redoubtable Colonel Burbeck in artillery drill on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, and in infantry drill on Tuesday, Thursdays, and Saturdays. Considerable emphasis was also placed on manning the fortifications in case of a surprise attack, but so great was the reputation of the strength and ability of Governors Island that the British could never bring themselves to risk the attempt to capture the great prizes of New York which her citizens fearfully expected. This permitted the Island to serve the additional purpose of an infantry recruiting station, which was transferred from Poughkeepsie.

The happy circumstance was therefore brought about that the only time the guns of Governors Island were brought into action following the target practice at the start of the war was by the following General Order issued at its close:

Adjt. Gen. Office
3d Military District, New York
Feb. 6th, 1815

> A Martial Salute will be fired tomorrow from Governors Island in honor of the *Glorious Victory* obtained over the enemy at New Orleans on the 8th January by the troops under Major Gen. Jackson.

Another order called for a "Martial Salute to be fired on February 21 in honor of the signing of the peace treaty between Great Britain and the United States," the salute to be followed by a "feu de joie" or general discharge of musketry, with an "Extra Ration of Liquor to be offered to the troops to drink the glorious termination of an honorable war." And apparently to make sure that everybody got in on the celebrating, an order of February 25 directs that "the day should be passed by the Troops of this Garrison in festivity and rejoicing and in the evening an illumination of the Officers' Quarters and Barracks and Guard House to begin at dusk and continue until 9 o'clock. At half after 7 o'clock in the evening 18 rockets will be discharged from the castle under the direction of the Artillery Quartermaster." At the conclusion of this serialized saturnalia it is highly probable that officers and men alike were sighing for a return of the sterner but less wearing days of wartime discipline.

Not that service on the Island under war conditions had been a sinecure. The long period of enforced idleness to which the garrison was subjected, unrelieved by any counterparts of our modern Service Clubs, Special Services, or U.S.O., and the highly restricted character of its station, could not help but breed a certain amount of disaffection among the more rambunctious characters in the command, and the administrative officers — Burbeck, Stoddard, Irvine, Talmadge, and Delafield — were forced to use stern measures to maintain martial law and order. Some of the soldier crimes and their punishments may seem trivial and amusing now, but they loomed large at the time when our Army and its members were all too new to their jobs for their responsibilities to be taken even slightly for granted.

The records of the courts-martial held on Governors Island in this period give some interesting reflections of conditions then commonly existing, with the appropriate remedial actions. The most minor infractions of regulations were punished by daily diets of bread and water in the guard house or "Black Hole"; a noncommissioned offender was customarily reduced to the ranks by having his identifying insigne of a worsted epaulette cut off "by the smallest drummer in the battalion." One private who stole some whiskey, naturally got drunk on it, and then completed the job by getting the two guards who arrested him equally drunk, was sentenced to the "Black Hole" for 4 days and to be drummed off the Island. Another 3-day transient in the "Black Hole" was a sentry who permitted unauthorized visitors to enter the South Battery and then swore at the sergeant of the guard who reprimanded him; the extra punishment which he probably felt most keenly was having his whiskey ration stopped for 30 days.

More elaborate punishments were reserved for the really serious evil-doers, as witness the private who stole another's watch. His sentence was "to be drummed once up and down the Parade with the Rogue's March, with his coat turned and the word THIEF written thereon in large letters; further, that he stand within view of the evening parade each day for one week with his coat in the same manner except when on guard duty and to have his whiskey stopped for one month." Perhaps it was this same sentinel who was the cause of a robust reprimand administered to one "Mary of Capt. Watson's Company" who had added to what was apparently her time-honored profession the equally illicit conveyance of whiskey to sentinels; she was ordered "to be drummed off the Island and never to be suffered to return." Although as a civilian Mary was not properly subject to court martial action, there is no doubt that the erring maiden went and did not come back.

In line with the general severity of the military legal code of this post-colonial period, capital punishment was frequently visited upon the criminally guilty, and Governors Island witnessed several such executions for which the procedure was as definitely prescribed as for the Manual of Arms. These death sentences were usually carried out about 11:30 in the mornings, when the troops would be paraded to form three sides of a square before the fort — artillery on the right side, infantry on the left, and in the center the execution party of a sergeant and 12 privates under the command of the Provost Marshal. To this grim formation would then come the prisoner, preceded by fifes and muffled drums playing "Roslyn Castle," the dirge traditionally reserved for such occasions, and escorted by the Provost Marshal and guards. Arrived at the square the condemned man would kneel on his coffin in the center, the Provost Marshal would signal the music to stop, the execution party would fire, and there would be one less disciplinary case to worry about.

But there was a more cheerful side to life on Governors Island, as evidenced by the happy correspondence exchanged between a group of public-spirited ladies — who would be Red Cross workers today — calling themselves "The Stocking, Hood and Mockason Society of New York," upon the occasion of the Society sending to the Island "46 Hoods and 46 prs of mittens to be presented to the Soldiers and Sentinels on Duty." The record of Governors Island in the closing days of the period of the War of 1812 could not enjoy a more fitting finale than that offered by the Island's gallant commanding officer in officially acknowledging the gift just before peace was declared:

> I beg leave, madam, to assure you that this flattering attention to the wants and privations of the Soldier from so respectable a Body of Ladies cannot fail to animate every

bosom with a degree of Chivalrick ardour when it is recollected that the service in which they are engaged is the defense of the City of their amiable and virtuous patronesses.

CHAPTER VI

WITH the latest war safely over and peace assured for the time being, Governors Island settled back into a calmly ordered existence, as becoming one of the nation's most important artillery posts. Inevitably the postwar Army fell heir to those destructive influences from which the minutiae of regulated discipline must always suffer under combat conditions, and the Island garrison was no exception. In an initial effort to offset this casual indifference of both rank and file to their spiritual and sartorial responsibilities, headquarters at Fort columbus published the famous order of March 14, 1815, relative to all such details, concluding with the following admonishment:

> A long standing General Order regulating the cut of Hair and Whiskers has for some time past been too little attended to and there appear in the ranks as many fashions with regard to this part of the dress as there are kinds of men. There may be some excuses for these irregularities in new-raised regiments, but it ought to be expected that so old and respectable a corps as the Artillery would set the example of neatness. ***At the next weekly inspection every non-commissioned officer and soldier will appear with his whiskers trimmed off in a line from the tip of his ear to the bottom of the nose and the Hair cropped, and it is expected that Officers of Companies will set the example.

Not the least among the problems posed by the Island's population was the matter of water transportation for Army personnel to and from New York. Since the days of the Dutch there had always been boat service available in one form or another — the English maintained large rowing barges at a dock at the Battery which has ever since been called the barge office — but the schedules were highly elastic and undependable; under the pressure of increased usage this informal ferry system bid fair to collapse entirely. A Garrison Order issued in September 1815 "for the preservation and better regulation of the boats belonging to the Island" set matters straight by directing that "the boats formerly in the use of Lt. Col. House, Major Hall and Adjutant Anthony and the yellow oared barge are assigned to the use of the Corps of Artillery at this post . . . For the use of the Infantry are assigned the Green six-oared barge, the whale boat and the seven-oared barges . . . The four-oared Green boat is reserved for the Gen. Hospital. The 12-oared barge known by the name of Genls. Barge and the 6-oared Green boat are reserved for the use of the Commandant. No interference is to be made by either Corps with the boats assigned to the other." But even that failed to make smooth sailing for the Island navy and it was later necessary to remind the ferrymen that "Neither shore to be left destitute of a ferry boat for more than 20 minutes between the rising and the setting of the sun . . . Where one boat starts from one shore, leaving no boat there another boat starts at the same moment from the opposite shore, whether with or without a passenger."

In 1821 the local Army headquarters was transferred from new York City to Governors Island and a year later, when Castle Clinton was ceded to New York, the troops stationed in Clinton came over to join the Island garrison.

Further importance was given to Governors Island in 1823 when it was designated as one of the signal stations then being established to announce to New York the arrival of incoming ships. This system of visual signals, offering a valuable service to the commercial life of the city in the days before the telegraph, provided for a primary observation post at Sandy Hook to flag the news of incoming vessels to another station on Staten Island. From here the bulletins were relayed to a lookout tower on the ramparts of Castle Williams, and thence sent on to the city's receiving station in a lofty cupola on fashionable Holt's Hotel in Fulton Street, where they were made public.

Two years later one of the ships so reported brought to New York and to Governors Island the distinguished person of His Grace, the Duke of Saxe-Weimar, and the first of those "VIP's" who, from that day to this, have honored the Island's hospitality as an enjoyable item on their travel itineraries. (The Island guns had previously saluted the Marquis de Lafayette in 1824 as he sailed up the bay to his formal reception at the Battery, but the Frenchman did not visit the post.) His Grace was received with the traditional 21-gun salute, inspected the 2d Artillery Regiment and was taken on a tour of Fort Columbus and its barracks where, he was pleased to note in his memoirs, "I found a Bible in each room."

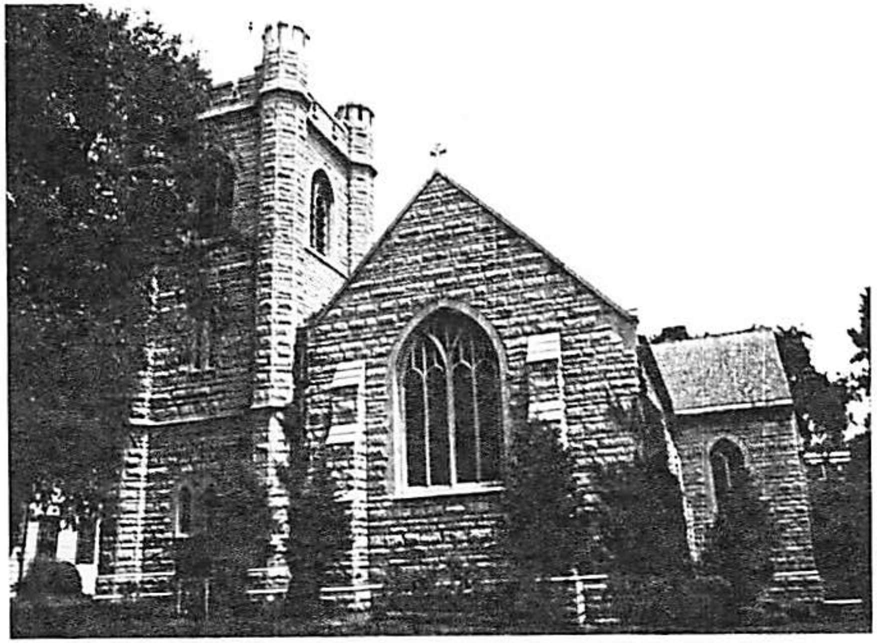
Long-needed repairs to various parts of the Island fortifications and buildings were begun in 1832 but had to be halted in August of that year because of an outbreak of cholera among the troops. Fortunately, the epidemic was a light one and work could be resumed in September, when portions of the emplacements were completed and another barracks built to accommodate those of the personnel who had previously been obliged to live in tents around the fort.

The following year the sum of $30,000 was appropriated for further repairs to Castle Williams and Fort Columbus which specified sodding all the parapets, installing three new magazines, finishing four cisterns under the ramparts, and grading the approaches to the walls. At the same time, the Ordnance Department of the Army selected Governors Island as the site for one of its most important arsenals and began building operations.

The Arsenal reservation occupied about 6½ acres of waterfront area, extending between the present Omaha and Soissons Docks and containing a total of 12 buildings — machine shops, warehouses, and quarters for the Ordnance staff. Many of these structures still remain and are easily identified by the beauty of their weathered brick walls, and their perfectly proportioned windows and doors. The former residence of the commanding officer of the Arsenal (now Quarters 135) is especially noteworthy because of the fine old ironwork around the porch which frames a magnificent vista of the New York skyline that has figured in countless photographic studies; the interior of the house boasts not only fireplaces with black marble mantels in many rooms, but also the only parquet floor on the post. A contemporary historian states that the Arsenal had "a charm and beauty all its own," and it retained this agreeable individuality until 1920 when it was consolidateraritan Arsenal in Metuchen, New Jersey, and its grounds and buildings merged with the Army headquarters on the Island.

During 1836 Governors Island received an additional grant of $20,000 to complete its construction program, and at the same time the exclusive occupancy of the Island by artillerymen was rudely disturbed by the arrival of a large detachment of recruits for the 2d Dragoons whose commanding officer ranked the current post commander. This critical situation was happily cleared up in December when the artillery was ordered to Florida for the Seminole War and left the "yellow legs" as sole tenants. Their stay, however, was brief, for the 1st Artillery came back to dispossess them in April of 1837, the Island thereafter continuing its status as an artillery stronghold through 1852 when the War Department designated it as a General Recruiting Depot.

Also in 1836 the Island's Field Music Detachment of 50 drummers and fifers, nicknamed the "Music Boys," were moved into the casemates of the South Battery, their barracks room being the present grill room of the Officers Club. They were in charge of Sergeant (later Lieutenant) Michael Moore and belonged to the "permanent party" of the post, a group of selected personnel whose specialized services and abilities made them ineligible for transfer. This pleasing circumstance, plus the privacy of the new quarters, notably aroused a sudden enthusiasm for music among the enlisted men of the garrison and prompted swarms of applications for assignment to the "Music Boys."



Chapel of St. Cornelius the Centurion

Historic flags line the nave of the Chapel of St. Cornelius

Building 135, showing intricate wrought iron work

The old Clock Tower Building once served as an Army museum

A new set of quarters for the Commanding General was completed in 1840 in the position it still occupies, as was the present Quarters 9 which has since served in turn as a blockhouse, headquarters, hospital, and officers' quarters. Another dual-purpose structure was the brick building erected 5 years later, immediately south of the "Governor's House." This was originally designed for a commissary storehouse and was so used until 1920, when it was converted to its present status of officers' quarters. The house is of special interest because it offers an authentic copy of the Dutch style of architecture used in the local homes of the early settlers from Holland. Further building was held up by the impending Mexican War which in 1847 again saw Governors Island playing a leading role in the national excitement.

Public opinion in New York was decidedly against our invasion of Mexico, and the Army's call for volunteers met with bitter and abusive opposition. The newspapers published lurid articles denouncing all military activities, but in spite of all this the 1st New York Volunteer Infantry was successfully mustered on Governors Island under the command of Colonel Ward Burnett. Notwithstanding a particularly libelous denunciation by the *New York Tribune* — which the newspaper had the good grace to retract the next day — the City of New York presented the regiment with a stand of colors which were the first U.S. flags to be carried over the walls of the Castle of Chapultepec when the Mexican stronghold was stormed on September 13, 1847. Previously the 1st New York had served gallantly in the battles of Vera Cruz, Cerro Gordo Pass, City of Puebla, Contreras, and Churubusco, and was to be with our 1st Division when that outfit triumphantly entered Mexico City on September 14th. These historic colors are now preserved in the Chapel of St. Cornelius the Centurion.

It was in this era of constantly changing conditions and personnel on Governors Island that there came to the garrison a man who would have a more permanent and beneficial effect on the little Army community than any other individual in its history.

The Reverend John McVickar, D.D., was born in New York City in 1787 and after entering the ministry of the Episcopal Church, occupied the chair of moral and intellectual philosophy at Columbia College, then at Park Place near the Battery. A person of great culture and distinction in the city's literary and ecclesiastic circles, Dr. McVickar was also active in mission work through his association with Trinity Church, and the reputation of his particular concern with soldier problems brought him in 1844 an invitation from the War Department to become chaplain of Fort Columbus. As he was then 57 years of age his family and friends tried to dissuade him from adding the duties of an Army chaplain to his academic responsibilities, but the good doctor was adamant in his determination to accept the offer and, since the Government call came during the summer recess of the college, Dr. McVickar entered upon his new work without delay. For the next 18 years in winter and summer, in fair weather and foul, this devoted priest commuted daily between his civil and military assignments; wearing a soldier's cap and long cloak, he soon became as familiar a figure on the Island as on the college campus.

When Dr. McVickar first entered upon his chaplaincy, he found no place on the Island reserved for religious worship and was forced to hold his services in a small grove of trees near the present Colonel's Row or in a large room in Post Headquarters, provided it was not needed for military business. Possessed of considerable initiative, the doctor soon determined to make an effort to obtain a chapel, but his first attempts were unavailing. There was at that time no set program of religious guidance in the Army; few if any church services had been held on Governors Island since the days of the English occupation, and the War Department was appalled at this highly irregular idea of providing a chapel for Chaplain McVickar. It announced that it was not accustomed to build chapels; it would provide no appropriation to build a chapel and, to make its refusal complete, would not allow anyone else to build a chapel on Government property even though erected with private funds. But that didn't stop John McVickar. He marched straight down to Washington to put the matter before his friend Winfield Scott, who was the Army's Commanding General. As a result the Government suddenly saw its way clear to lease — subject to the exigencies of war — about 150 square feet on the south side of Governors Island, and here in 1846 there was constructed a small frame chapel from plans drawn by Dr. McVickar and paid for with funds given and collected by him. This he appropriately named the Chapel of St. Cornelius the Centurion, after that Roman warrior described in the 10th Chapter of Acts as "a just man and one who feareth God."

For almost two decades Chaplain McVickar continued his ministrations to his Governors Island parish; he led it thorugh the Mexican crisis and the fearful cholera epidemics of 1854 and 1857, and only in 1862 when his span of service brought him at the age of 75 to another war, was he finally persuaded to relinquish the great work he had performed so faithfully. In the present stone Chapel of St. Cornelius, which replaced its wooden predecessor in 1906, a marble tablet memorializes Dr. John McVickar with the well-deserved tribute "The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips," but if left to his own choosing it is probable that the reverend soldier-teacher would for his epitaph have vastly preferred the doggerel which his Columbia students frequently sang to his huge delight:

Oh, Johnny McVickar's a warlike man;
He's built on the preaching and fighting plan —
He's chaplain of Governors Island!

With the end of our Mexican operations the 7th and 4th Artillery were successively stationed on Governors Island, together with various staff officers. Among the latter was a young Quartermaster lieutenant breveted a captain for "gallant and meritorious service" in Mexico, who lived in Quarters 13 from April to July of 1852 and whose connection with the garrison began a tradition which his son and grandson would follow in their turn. His name was Ulysses S. Grant. One of Lieutenant Grant's letters from Fort Columbus to his wife gives an interesting account of the post life of that period:

> We are now pretty well settled in camp with the usual comforts; that is, a chest and a trunk for seats and a bunk to sleep in . . . The weather has been exceedingly warm for the last few days and very unpleasant for the camp . . . We can go to the city at almost all hours of the day in small boats belonging to the government which ply regularly for the convenience of us all. But while it keeps so warm there is but little pleasure in visiting the City. Most of the day we get the benefit of the sea breeze here, while in the City we would get but little of it . . . Two companies of our Regiment go around Cape Horn, in a sailing vessel . . . It is impossible to tell when they will start.

The troop movement to which Grant referred apparently was the one that eventually saw almost all of the 3d Artillery sail away December 22, 1853, on the side-wheel steamer *San Francisco* for a new station on the Pacific Coast. Their voyage was to take them around South America, but hardly had they cleared New York Harbor when they ran into a terrific storm of tornado proportions; one huge wave swept from the main deck of the steamer 175 passengers who had sought refuge there, and in a short time the vessel was in grave danger of foundering. A passing ship, too small to be of any immediate assistance herself, raced to Boston with news of the wreck and rescue vessels at once started for the scene. Two American ships and one Britisher reached the *San Francisco* just in time to save the 600 surviving passengers from certain death, for, with the leaking steamer's boats washed away and her engine fires extinguished, all on board were completely helpless against the raging seas. The survivors finally returned to Governors Island by various circuitous routes, and votive shields emblematic of the voyage and the rescue now hang in the Post Chapel.

New York was swept by a new epidemic of the dread cholera in 1854, followed by a visitation of yellow fever in 1856, and another siege of cholera in 1857. In each instance the disease took its toll on Governors Island, crowding to capacity the little Post Cemetery inherited from British days, and necessitating the consecration of a second graveyard. A portion of the old iron fence that once surrounded this half-acre plot in the vicinity of the chapel — the first cemetery was located near the present Colonel's Row — now stands by the original cobbled road immediately in the rear of Quarters 2 and 3. Both cemeteries were closed in 1878, and in 1886 the remains of those who lay therein were reinterred in the National Cemetery, Cypress Hills, Brooklyn.

But fortunately the year 1854 was made memorable for Governors Island by events other than those concerned with illness and death. For one thing, the use of whale oil and kerosene lamps was introduced for interior lighting to replace the candles that hitherto had been the only means of illumination; for another, 21-year-old David Robertson of Edinburgh, Scotland, enlisted in the Army and was assigned to the Medical Corps at the Governors Island hospital.

From then on, for the unbelievable span of 64 years of continuous active duty at one post, David Robertson served his community with conspicuous fidelity and ability. Although his final rank was that of Master Sergeant, he combined so aptly the professional skills of doctor, druggist, and nurse that everyone called him "Doctor" and none questioned his right to that title. When the cholera and yellow fever plagues hit the post, Dr. Robertson, with complete disregard for his own safety, ministered unremittingly to the sick and dying but miraculously escaped contagion. The overworked and pitifully few medical officers were loud in their praise of his labors and unhesitatingly accepted him as one of themselves.

Early in his Island life Robertson married Mary Moore, daughter of the leader of the "Music Boys," and from then on until his death in 1918 lived in the frame bungalow, now Quarters 25, just to the northeast of the Chapel. The garden which Mrs. Robertson lovingly tended there was long one of the sights of the Island. When Dr. Robertson was laid to rest, mourned by thousands of the Army's rank and file and their families to whom he had endeared himself by his kindly nature and unusual ability so unsparingly given, he and his late father-in-law together represented a total of 123 years of uninterrupted Army service, a record which is unequalled in our military annals.

Building activities on the Island were resumed in 1855 with the erection of a group of quarters now known as "General's Row." This construction lasted through 1857 and during that time a Commissary building also was put up.

Then the Island relaxed for a few years before the arduous activities to be asked of it when another fort named Sumter would provoke another war.

CHAPTER VII

WHILE the War between the States sooner or later involved all of our southern coast defenses, Fort Columbus and Castle Williams were so far north of the zone of operations that they offered no opportunity to engage in actual combat; however, they and their Island were intimately associated with the Federal war effort in many important phases.

And even if Governors Island was not able itself to participate in direct hostile action, it at least could enjoy the vicarious fame of shining in the reflected glory of some of those it had sent forth to battle. The gallant John C. Pemberton who wore the gray and gold of a Confederate lieutenant general was the same officer who, as a 4th Artillery shave-tail, had commanded Fort Columbus in 1837; General "Fighting Joe" Hooker had been plain Lieutenant Hooker when the 1st Artillery was on Governors Island in 1840; Major Samuel P. Heintzelman, whose family name was on our Army's rolls continuously for a century and a half, was one of Fort Columbus' doughboy subalterns in '61; and Brevet Captain "Sam" Grant would in the fullness of time go from the "usual comforts" of his room in Officers' Quarters 9 to the equally drab parlor of a farmhouse at Appomattox.

But the secluded garrison actually had plenty to do on its own account. As the central Army recruiting agency for our eastern seaboard, volunteers and draftees began to flow to Governors Island in a steady stream for processing and assignment; in addition, the Island was a convenient assembly point for out-of-State Militia organizations while en route to the South. At one time seven State regiments were encamped within the limited borders of the Island — a Wisconsin outfit alone had 1,200 men — and it is not hard to credit the statement of an onlooker that when these seven regiments with their seven bands simultaneously presented seven individual evening Retreat parades, it was a "thrilling spectacle."

Of considerably less appeal to many of those affected was the Army Regulation then in force which required the troops to attend divine service every Sunday. Immediately upon the sounding of Church Call all organizations fell into ranks and were marched in strict military formation to the reserved seats in the chapel, only those being excused who were on necessary guard or fatigue or who could plead anti-religious scruples. In the latter instance however, the agnostics were obliged to remain in quarters during the period of the church service and have the Articles of War and appropriate texts from the Regulations read to them. Tradition holds many amusing instances of soldiers of that period who, after comparing the Regualtions and the chaplain's sermons, decided in favor of the sermons as the lesser of two evils.

Minor activities of the permanent station complement included the erection of a hospital at the north end of the park in front of the Commanding General's quarters and the establishment of a steam ferry service from New York. The first boat used was named the *General Scott*, followed by the *General McClellan*, both of the small tugboat type and operated only during daylight hours.

But, small though they were, these vessels once were contributory factors in bringing to Governors Island a war-time crisis of no mean proportions. When the Draft Riots of 1863 were raging through New York, all available troops on the Island were hurriedly taken to the city to guard the Sub-Treasury on Wall Street, leaving the Army post totally unprotected except for the usual sentries. Word of this situation soon reached the rioters who immediately decided to seize the Army ferries, invade the now-defenseless Island, and capture for their own use the great stocks of guns and ammunition they knew to be stored there. Learning of this plot, the authorities hastily withdrew the ferryboats to safety. Nothing daunted, the rioters promptly commandeered all the rowboats they could find around the Battery and determinedly set off across the channel. There were at that time 80 civilians employed in the Ordnance Arsenal on the Island and, when they saw the water-borne mob approaching, they constituted themselves an official reception committee. Hurriedly grabbing up whatever clubs, guns, axes, or knives they could lay hands on, they lined up along the shore and ordered the invaders to halt or be fired on. To carry further conviction to their demand, some of the Ordnance workers ostensibly busied themselves about a couple of cannon in a nearby battery, although they had neither powder nor shot for the pieces. Noting with dismay these unexpectedly belligerent preparations for their reception, the rioters reversed their convoy as rapidly as possible, with the Island and the Islanders unharmed.

Early in the war Washington provided added responsibilities for Governors Island by establishing there one of the country's most important prison camps for captured Confederate officers and men. There were frequently as many as a thousand "Johnny Rebs" in confinement in Castle Williams and its adjacent stockade, and over in the basement of the building on the east side of the Fort Columbus quadrangle there was a special compartment for particularly noteworthy prisoners. This consisted of an outer cell which gave entry to an inner cell; when the prisoner was safely locked in the inner chamber a guard was locked in the outer one and could thus keep his charge under constant surveillance. The duplex dungeon usually was reserved for those unfortunates who were awaiting execution, its most celebrated occupant being Captain John G. Beall, the erstwhile naval officer who practiced piracy on Yankee shipping and paid for his depredations with his life.

Needless to say, the necessity of properly caring for so many newcomers stretched the post's facilities to the utmost, but sometimes even that was not enough if we are to credit the following letter, perhaps not entirely unprejudiced, dated from Castle Williams, September 30, 1861, to Secretary of War Cameron:

> The undersigned are orderly sergeants of the companies taken prisoners at the surrender of Fort Hatteras on the coast of North Carolina, on the 29th ultimo. Our men are now suffering very greatly from disease. Today 115 of the 630 are confined by disease which threatens to prostrate us all. In this conflict now being waged by two sections of our country, prisoners have been discharged by both parties, as at Rich Mt., Springfield and Lexington, upon their parole not to bear arms until released from their obligations. We ask for our men that they may be permitted to return to their homes upon the same pledge. We are assured that a knowledge of our condition would incline you favorably to consider this application. The officer having the care of us, Lieutenant Casey, of this post has been active in kindness, to us, but the want of room, the presence of contagious diseases among us us unused as we are to this climate defy all his efforts to protect us against its force. Four of our men have died within the past five days and many others are dangerously ill.
>
> Andrew Norman, Actg. Orderly Sgt.
> Co. "E", Seventh Regt. Infantry
> North Carolina Volunteers (and 633 men)

Other prisoners dared more direct but anonymous action in attempting to obtain their release from the grim Castle, and some of their adventures were as amusing as they were audacious. One of the best was that of the spry young rebel who incredibly contrived to squeeze unnoticed through the stockade gate, but then found himself faced with the serious difficulty of getting by an unanticipated sentry who was walking post directly across his only possible line of escape. When the sentry had passed him the suddenly inspired southerner dashed out and then boldly turned to retrace his steps towards the gate just as the sentry also started back. The guard immediately challenged the other, stated that visitors were not permitted near the stockade, and peremptorily ordered the Confederate away. Nothing could have coincided more exactly with the views of the Southern tourist; he at once obeyed his instructions and since he was not seen or heard from again it has always been assumed that he safely made his way back to the other side of the Mason-Dixon line.

The happiest bit of history in all this grim time, however, was furnished by Captain William Robert Webb, one-time adjutant of the 2d North Carolina Cavalry, to which swashbuckling band of bravos he had transferred after a serious wound made it impossible for him to continue foot-soldiering with his original doughboy regiment. But his hurt was not serious enough to keep him on the inside of the Castle Williams stockade when he could see the lights of New York on the outside. The mere fact that the city also was on the opposite shore of a waterway notorious for its raging tides and whirling eddies made no difference to the valiant cavalryman, and one dark night he slipped silently from the Castle wall into the racing waters and set off across the channel.

In the years to follow several other unwilling guests of Castle Williams would attempt to take their leave in the same manner only to turn up as water-logged corpses weeks later and miles away, but this time fortune was on the captain's side. Without incident he negotiated the treacherous currents and at length clambered wet and disheveled up the rocks at the Battery. Immediately a passerby noticed him without recognizing the Confederate uniform he was wearing and, roaring with laughter at his appearance, asked him how he ever came to fall in and if he wanted any help. Considerably nettled at what he considered the callous attitude of his unappreciative audience, Webb haughtily introduced himself by name as a captain in the Confederate Army and an escaped prisoner from Governors Island. To any other explanation the New Yorker might have paid some serious attention but this truthful statement obviously struck him as merely a highly humorous sally and he sauntered off chuckling in amusement.

Left alone and properly reluctant to swim back to the Island, Webb walked boldly into the city where he was several times accosted by various people who inquired the cause of his bedraggled dampness and offered help. To all of them the captain told the same story he had told his first interrogator and like him, all of them refused to believe a word of it. Lee surrendered to Grant a few days later, so Webb was relieved from further fruitless attempts to convince skeptical Yankees of his identity. After negotiating the water passage from Governors Island to New York City, arranging a trip by land from New York to the South must have been child's play to him and he was next heard from as a senator from Tennessee.

Its prisoners at last released and its stockades torn down, Governors Island was ready for peace, but the start of the postwar period was to plunge the garrison into a bitter struggle with a new and unseen foe against whom no retaliatory measures seemed availing. The pestilent conditions consequent to the overcrowding of prison camp and barracks during the war years bred disease that contagiously spread into virulent epidemics. In 1866, again in 1867, and once more in 1868 the Island was scourged by outbreaks of cholera, and there were few days during that frightening period when the sounds of rifle volleys and "Taps" did not echo from the Post Cemetery.

Then the plague went its foul way, never to return, and Governors Island was belatedly free to look forward to a long period of peaceful existence and development, richly deserved.

CHAPTER VIII

THE quiet and uneventful year of 1869 gave Governors Island just the breathing spell it needed to initiate long-delayed improvements and additions to its existing facilities.

A sea wall was built along the southwest side of the Island, extending from Castle Williams to the South Battery; the barracks on the west side of the quadrangle in Fort Columbus became officers' quarters on the basis of two rooms and a kitchen for each set of quarters; the Music Boys were found to be overcrowding their billets in the South Battery and half of them went into a tent camp; and an enterprising sergeant nammed Gubbins augmented the ferry service to New York with his privately owned tug *Madden*, charging 25 cents for the round trip. Elaborate plans were made for the installation of a barbette battery to cross the parade from the Castle in a southeasterly direction but actual work on this was not started for another 10 years, and then only to be halted and the entire battery removed in the early nineties. The one real deterrent to this general spirit of progress was offered by the unfortunate destruction by fire of the Post Library, located in a frame building on the site of the present Chapel of St. Cornelius the Centurion.

But 1870 was a different story. In August a case of yellow fever was discovered on the Island, and before the month was out there were 172 cases of the dread "yellow jack" on the sick reports. September saw the total reduced to 66, but in October the number jumped to 131, and the Island was quarantined against itself. The hospital could not possibly receive all the patients and a pest house was constructed, but even this did not help the situation materially and those infected were cared for wherever they lived by volunteer nurses. In one barracks there were 21 cases of the disease out of 22 inhabitants; in another 33 out of 40; and the epidemic was finally curbed only by removing all patients from the Island to a quarantine hospital on West Bank about 10 miles from the bay. Many died as the result of exposure suffered during this transfer. The exact toll of the fatal seizures was never computed, but it is known that Chaplain Alexander Davidson and the sexton of the Post Chapel were among those who succumbed to the disease.

Early in 1871 all the buildings in which the plague had existed were destroyed. Among these was a line of one-story wooden houses, nicknamed "Rotten Row," which extended across the present Park near Quarters 18, and had been erected originally to accommodate the builders of Fort Jay after the Revolution. In removing these structures it was found that the supply of earth available to fill in their cellars would not permit the fill to be brought up to a level with the surrounding ground, which accounts for the curious depression that may still be noted in this section of the Park.

The more spiritual depression which the yellow fever attack bequeathed to the Islanders was happily dissipated a year later when the garrison was honored by a state visit of the Grand Duke Alexis of Russia, brother of the Czar. A gala reception and dance was held for his entertainment in the old hospital, a marquee being erected on the lawn in front of the building. Full dress blues were brought out of moth balls, gold epaulettes were reburnished, the ladies as usual nobly upheld the tradition of attractiveness of all Army wives, the post orchestra furnished special music, and the distress of the past months was so completely forgotten that the royal visitor regarded the occasion as one of the high spots of his American tour.

For the next 6 years the calm serenity of Governors Island as a recruiting station continued undisturbed by anything more notable than the replacement of Sergeant Gubbins' ferryboat *Madden* by his new *Governors Island*, and the elimination of the drum in favor of the bugle for sounding drill calls.

The row of quarters on the west side of the park, now known as "Colonels' Row" was also commenced during this period. Then with the coming of 1878 the War Department ordered the Headquarters of the Military Division of the Atlantic and the Department of the East from New York to Fort Columbus, marking the final transformation of Governors Island from the status of a purely military fortification to that of an Army administrative center, a role which it has ever since played with increasing importance.

The change-over took place on July 1, on which date the Recruiting Service was transferred to Fort Slocum on Long Island Sound, and Batteries A and D of the 1st Artillery relieved the Island garrison which at that time consisted of Companies A, B (the "Music Boys"), C (the "Permanent Party"), D, Recruit Companies E and F, and the "Coloured Infantry" Company H, all of the 10th Infantry. As Department Commander there was assigned Major General Winfield Scott Hancock, and with his arrival began a true renaissance for the Island.

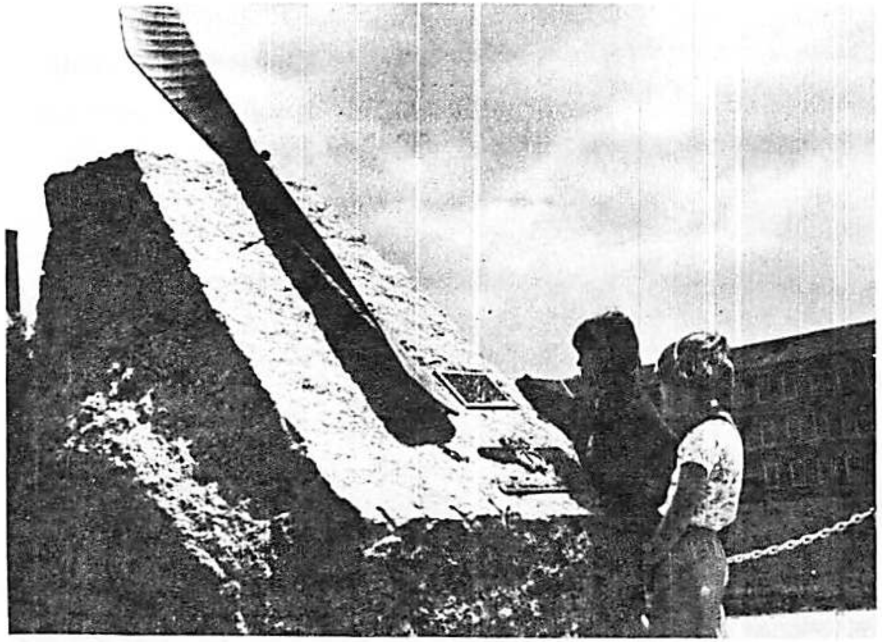
One of General Hancock's first moves was to secure a large appropriation from Congress to augment and modernize the living accommodations on the post, supplementing this by the removal of various unsightly and unsafe structures which had been allowed to accumulate in a haphazard fashion over the years. Most important among these improvements was the elimination of a two-story wooden barracks from the center court of Castle Williams where it had long been a serious fire hazard to the powder magazines in the Castle's walls.

The general's program for the betterment of the professional, social, and economic conditions of his new headquarters was as effective as it was continuing. No detail of garrison routine seemed too small to escape his attention, and the efficiency and morale of the Island perked up noticeably. One of the immediate and major improvements which he effected in behalf of his command was the

Snow blankets Nolan Park

Regimental Row in winter

Building 400, home of the Coast Guard Training Center



The Early Bird Monument features a propeller cast from a wooden one used by the Wright brothers

establishment of a ferry service that was completely Army-controlled and — more important yet — free to Army personnel and their families. The harbor steamer *Atlantic*, purchased from the Cunard Line, became the new ferryboat and rendered faithful service until 1898 when she was replaced by a specially built vessel appropriately named *General Hancock*. A striking contrast to the Island's water transportation system of today is offered by the following high-ranking correspondence of 1879:

> February 12, 1879
>
> To General Hancock.
> General:
>
> A number of officers desire to attend a reception at the Army and Navy Club tonight and on application of the Post Commander in their behalf I have in your name directed the "Atlantic" to make a trip tonight, leaving the Battery at 1 o'clock vice 12.
>
> Yours truly,
> JAMES B. FRY
> Major General.
> 1st Ind.
>
> To General J. B. Fry:
> Very well. This is the way the thing can be done.
> WINFIELD SCOTT HANCOCK
> Major General.

However, when it is remembered that civilian ferrymen were wont to charge $15 for special night crossings from the city to the Island, the cooperation of two-star generals in promoting a free trip seems no more than right.

In the presidential election of 1880, General Hancock was the Democratic candidate opposed to the Republican James Garfield, marking the only time in our history that a Regular Army officer on active duty was a candidate for political office. He lost.

Another great boon for which Hancock was responsible was the bringing of city water to Governors Island in 1880, large mains under Buttermilk Channel bountifully supplanting the five pump wells and rain cisterns upon which the Islanders hitherto had been forced to depend. (The geological formation beneath the Island precluded the use of artesian wells.) A new hospital was built in the same year.

In line with such improvements was the general's installation of exterior lighting on the Island. Previous to his coming there were no street lights at all except for one lantern on a pole near the dock, but thereafter posts with kerosene lamps were set out at all important locations and regularly tended.

The Governors Island Club, or "Officers Club" as it is more commonly called, also owes its beginning to General Hancock who ordered the establishment of an Officers' Mess in the South Battery on June 20, 1879, under the supervision of the Post Quartermaster and with one John Rolf as the first Steward of the Mess. From this grew the Governors Island Club as constituted today; the exact date of the founding of the Club is uncertain but the records show that the original By-laws and Constitution were adopted at a meeting held February 3, 1881. At that time the club membership totaled 31, with these officers: Major General James B. Fry, President; Colonels John Mendenhall and T.C. Baylor, Vice Presidents; Colonel C.T. Larned, Treasurer; and Leiutenant J.L. Chamberlain, Secretary.

One of the most important of General Hancock's contributions to our entire military establishment was his sponsorship of the Military Service Institution of the United States, an organization incorporated in June 1884, for "literary, historical and scientific purposes and by the establishment of a museum, publishing of essays, etc., to promote the military interests of the United States." General Scott was the first president of this society with General T.F. Rodenbough as Secretary, whose office was in the old Clock Tower Building (Building 104). The organization's museum was also located here, its chief and most picturesque exhibit being the mounted remains of "Rienzi," the famous charger of General Sheridan who carried that warrior on his celebrated ride to the battle of Cedar Creek "from Winchester, twenty miles away."

The society also maintained a military and technical library and published the *Military Service Institution Journal* which inspired the establishment of the present-day publications of the individual Services, and was eventually supplanted by them. The museum continued to be a popular and instructive feature of the Island until 1917, when the building was needed for more immediate military uses and the exhibits were transferred to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington where "Rienzi," veteran of fifty battles and engagements, is peacefully stabled in a glass case.

While her husband was busy with the administration of his required military responsibilities, Mrs. Hancock devoted herself to providing sorely needed assistance to the chaplain in furthering the religious interests and activities of the Island community. Under her zealous direction a most efficient chapel choir was organized, with Mrs. David Robertson, wife of the famed hospital sergeant, as leader. Mrs. Hancock played the organ and took general charge of the musical parts of the chapel services, as well as arranging various musical entertainments for the benefit of the chapel. Mrs. Hancock also embroidered several altar cloths and ecclesiastical vestments, and headed a group of ladies of the garrison who aided in the adornment of the chapel with contributions of sacramental vessels, candles, reading desks, and chancel vases which were the work of their own hands or purchased by them, and presented as offerings of love and remembrance. This devotional work has been carried forward by the wives of succeeding commanding officers, and provided the inspiration for the Altar Guild of today.

General Hancock continued his beneficient direction of Governors Island and the Eastern Department until 1886 when he was relieved by Major General John M. Schofield, who had won a Medal of Honor as an infantry major in the Civil War. From then on through the rest of the century the line of commanders on the Island would include most of those Army stalwarts whose heroic services in the South, on the western prairies, or amid the tropical jungles and fever-ridden swamps of Cuba and the Philippines made them almost legendary figures in our national history — Howard, Miles, Ruger, Merritt, Frank, Gillespie, Shafter, and, as 1900 came over the horizon, Merritt again.

Meanwhile the Division of the Atlantic had been discontinued on July 3, 1891, but the greatest of all changes on the Island occurred 3 years later. On October 2 and 3 of 1894 the station complement of Batteries B, H, and M of the 1st Artillery was replaced by Companies B, C, and D of the recently reactivated 13th Infantry under command of Captain P.H. Ellis, and the post formally became an infantry garrison.

The 13th remained until April 19, 1898, when the doughboys left to join the Third Brigade of our expeditionary force to Cuba, and to participate in the charge of San Juan Hill on the first of July. Since that gallant action not only began but practically ended the Spanish-American War, the infantrymen were back in their Island home in September, where their places had been taken temporarily by Battery A of the 1st Artillery. However, the 13th's occupancy of Fort Columbus and the Castle was to be short-lived, for the following April the regiment was dispatched to service in the Philippines, and a battalion of the 11th Infantry moved in.

At that time, the Island's armament consisted of thirty-six 10-inch and five 15-inch Rodman guns, two 8-inch siege howitzers, five 100-pound Parrott guns, two 4½-inch rifles, two 8-inch and two 10-inch siege mortars, one 13-inch coast defense mortar, three Gatling guns, and two 24-pound brass Coehorn mortars remaining from the British occupation. Most of these were removed shortly thereafter, so that when the Infantry buglers blew "Taps" for the dying century at midnight of New Year's Eve of 1899, Governors Island was feeling completely settled in its new identity.

After the Coast Artillery Corps of the Army had been formed in 1901 three of its companies, the 49th, 52d, and 83d, and the 8th Coast Artillery Band were assigned to garrison Fort Columbus as interim tenants between the sudden departure of the 11th for foreign service and the arrival of the Headquarters, 2d Battalion, and Band of the 8th Infantry in 1902.

Also at this time there was begun on the Island an engineering operation of major importance. In the more than 200 years which had elapsed since the purchase of the land by Van Twiller the erosion of the tides had reduced the original area of the Island to slightly less than 70 acres; indeed, so closely had the harbor waters encroached on the reservation that during stormy weather the brick houses of Regimental Row, built in 1889 aand 1890 along the south shore, were wet with flying spray. Twenty years previously the State of New York had graciously ceded to the Federal Government all the submerged land adjacent to Governors Island to the south and southwest, and it was this area which the Army now proposed to reclaim at an estimated cost of approximately $10,000 an acre.

The Corps of Engineers, under the direction of Colonels W.L. Marchall and S.W. Roessler, prepared the plans and the work went forward without delay. A bulkhead was constructed to surround the reclamation area, including the shoal southwest of the Island, and this was filled in with dirt and rock from dredged channels and the excavations for New York's 4th Avenue subway, then under construction. More than 4,787,000 cubic yards of fill were used behind the sea wall 7,219 feet in length, with the result that when the project was completed in 1912, new land to the extent of 103 acres had been restored to the Island premises and marked by a lighthouse, a signal bell, and fog horn. Even before its completion, this extension had given an indication of the important role it would play in our future defense plans when Wilbur Wright, in the autumn of 1909, took off from the new land in his airplane for what the newspapers called a "record-breaking flight" up the Hudson as far as Grant's Tomb and back. The next year America's other aviation expert, Glenn Curtiss,landed on the extension at the finish of a pioneering flight from Albany. Exposed to such aerial influences, it is not to be wondered at that a young Infantry lieutenant stationed on the Island asked his commanding officer to approve his transfer to the aviation section of the Signal Corps, then being formed. The colonel gave his consent but warned his subordinate, "Young man, I know of no better way for a person to commit suicide!" Fortunately this forbidding prospect failed of realization, for the air-minded youngster lived to become General of the Army H.H. Arnold, five-star commander of our Air Corps in World War II.

Meanwhile Major Generals Arthur MacArthur and Adna Chaffee, famous fathers of famous sons, had succeeded in turn to the Island command, until the creation of the Atlantic Division in 1904 brought to the post as commanding officer Brigadier General Frederick Dent Grant, famous son of a famous father.

Between the administrations of Chaffee and Grant, the resident commander was Major General Henry C. Corbin, destined to be the Army's most renowned Adjutant General, and to him fell the gratifying privilege of publishing the War Department's General Order No. 18 of January 25, 1904, retracting an undeserved and spiteful slight to a great American statesman and acknowledging a long-overdue recognition of his worth:

> The fortification on Governor's Island, New York Harbor, partly built in 1794-1795, enlarged and completed in 1798-1801, and partly rebuilt 1806-1808, now known as Fort Columbus, is hereby restored to its original name of Fort Jay; and the said fortification and the Military post located on the said Island will hereafter be known and designated as Fort Jay.
>
> ELIHU ROOT
> Secretary of War.

A welcome modern touch was given to the Island on May 10, 1904, when electric current from New York's powerhouses was at last made available to the garrison, and its buildings and streets no longer needed to depend upon candles, oil, or acetylene gas for their illumination.

The original Chapel of St. Cornelius the Centurion, after more than 60 years of constant use, was now found to be in a state of such decay and deterioration that it was no longer safe for occupancy. Window frames had fallen out, the floor had rotted, there were leaks in the roofs and sides, and it was impossible to heat the building during the winter. The Corporation of Trinity Church in New York, which had maintained the Chapel, decided that it was beyond repair and requested permission from the War Department to replace it with a modern structure. This generous offer was gratefully accepted and erection of the present Chapel was started in 1905 on a site near the South Battery, formerly occupied by the house that had been first used for band quarters and later as a Post Library. Plans for the edifice, built of granite in the English Gothic style of the fourteenth century, were prepared by the eminent architect Charles C. Haight, himself a Union veteran and father of the celebrated cavalryman, Colonel Sydney Haight. This new Chapel of St. Cornelius was consecrated with imposing ecclesiastical and military ceremonies by Bishop Greer of the Episcopal diocese of New York on October 16, 1906, and has ever since enjoyed a well-merited reputation as one of the most beautiful and influential of military chapels. The Chapel, which is open to the public, contains many memorials, battle flags, and other military relics of great historic interest and value. These include the stained glass window above the High Altar in memory of General and Mrs. Hancock; General Pershing's flag from World War I; and the First Army Headquarters flag from World War II. In 1949 a set of electronic chimes was installed in the belfry of the Chapel, made possible by voluntary contributions from the entire garrison to a fund collected through the indefatigable efforts of Mrs. Willard G. Wyman, wife of the First Army's then chief of staff, Major General Wyman.

Coincident with the completion of the new Protestant Chapel, arrangements were made to hold weekly Catholic services in a special hall in the South Battery. Such services had formerly been held in an old building near the hospital and later in the barracks. The present Catholic Chapel of the post, The Star of the Sea, was provided through the energetic efforts of Lieutenant General Hugh A. Drum, while he was commanding at the Island headquarters just before World War II.

In connection with the religious welfare of Governors Island it is interesting to note that in 1868 the post was dropped by the War Department from the list of stations to which chaplains of the Regular Army could be assigned, it being felt that the proximity of the Island to New york made its devotional activities a logical responsibility of the city's churches. As Trinity Church was already closely associated with the garrison through the work of Dr. McVickar, the vestry of that parish immediately proposed to support a minister as Post Chaplain at their own expense. A similar arrangement was made by St. Peter's Church and the State Street Mission in behalf of the Catholic communicants on the Island. This system continued through World War I.

As the peaceful years went their quiet way the Army cycle of succeeding commanders and troops on the Island turned through its accustomed course. In mid-February of 1906 the Headquarters, band, and one battalion of the 12th Infantry relieved the 8th regiment, to be relieved in turn 3 years later by similar details of the 29th Infantry. They stayed until April 1, 1917, when the entire 22d Infantry moved in under the shadow of impending war.

General Grant, succeeded in 1904 by Major General James F. Wade, came back to the post in 1907 for a year, and returned again in 1910 as a major general to head the Eastern Division, which supplanted the Department of the East on July 1 of that year. He lived only a scant 9 months and, following his sudden death in April 1912, his duties were taken over by a series of general officers who served for periods varying from 5 to 12 months, until Leonard Wood arrived on the scene on the 1st of July, 1914. Wood had served previously as commander of the Department of the East just before its discontinuance, but it was this second tour of duty on the Island that would make him in the words of a contemporary historian, "the best-known soldier in the Army."

An alumnus of Harvard's Medical School, a contract surgeon with the Army in the Indian Wars, holder of the Medal of Honor, White House physician to President McKinley, organizer and first colonel of the famous 1st Volunteer Cavalry (alias "Rough Riders") in the Spanish-American War, fortuitously heir to the stars of a brigade commander, military governor of our occupation of Cuba, protege of Theodore Roosevelt, governor general of the Philippines, Chief of Staff of the Army, this officer with the torso of a football player and the limping walk of an arthritic found at Governors Island

the perfect opportunity for spreading the doctrine of national preparedness to which he had dedicated his career.

With the outbreak of the European War in 1914, General Wood felt that we would be drawn into it sooner or later, and he gave every ounce of his boundless energy and forceful personality to warn the nation that if drastic steps were not immediately taken to bolster our defenses there would soon be no nation to defend. He spoke his warnings to schools and colleges, at social clubs and patriotic societies, before church gatherings and scientific and business associations, and little by little he awakened a public consciousness of the need for military preparedness. During this period the Federal administration was doing its best to maintain the neutral attitude expected of it as a non-belligerent, and since many of Wood's activities and forthright statements proved extremely embarrassing to Washington it was finally necessary to order the Eastern Division commander "to decline all public expression."

Without making any more speeches Wood practiced what he had been preaching; he briefly announced a "business man's military camp" for 5 weeks in the summer of 1916 at Plattsburg, N.Y., at which 1200 men of all ages and from all walks of life sweated out at first-hand the knowledge that it takes more than wishful thinking to make a good soldier.

So did Governors Island stand as sponsor for the "Plattsburg idea" which was to prove such an important cog in our military machinery. During the winter months that followed this summer training period an aroused citizenry carried on the lessons they had learned on the shores of Lake Champlain. Military training courses were organized at many colleges, and in New York and its suburbs older men nightly went through the manual of arms and the intricacies of close and extended order drill under the tutelage of officers and noncoms supplied by Fort Jay.

Provision was also made for issuing commissions as Reserve officers to qualified applicants. In addition to taking a written examination, all candidates were required to demonstrate their abilities in actually commanding troops, and a long-suffering platoon of the 22d was kept constantly available at the Island upon which the embryonic second lieutenants could try out their ideas of infantry tactics.

Some failed their tests, many passed, but all contributed their bit, so that when the fateful April of 1917 came to the United States it found the little island at New York's nose militantly enlarging the niche it had so long and so honorably occupied in the nation's service.

CHAPTER IX

THE United States Congress declared war on Germany and the central European powers at 3:12 A.M. on April 6, 1917, and at 3:30 of that same Good Friday morning Governors Island provided the conflict's first hostile act in behalf of our country.

Since nightfall of the day before, a battalion of the 22d Infantry had been standing by under arms in Fort Jay, waiting for the signal from Washington that would put the nation on a war footing. When the flash came, the men were in ranks almost before the sergeants had finished calling "Fall in!" and in a matter of minutes were whipping on the double across the Island to board boats of the Revenue Cutter Service waiting at the docks. This service was the forerunner of the modern Coast Guard, the present tenant of Governors Island. Sweeping up the Hudson, this modest armada closed in on the dark hulks of the ocean steamers of the Hamburg-American and North German Lloyd lines berthed at Hoboken, manned, and for all anyone knew, armed by German crews. Working with the cold efficiency of a disciplined team, the 22d's doughboys had seized all the German ships and interned their men at Ellis Island before noon. So well had the operation been planned and expeditiously executed that not a shot was fired in the opening action of the United States in World War I.

Immediately, Governors Island was designated as an embarkation point for troops and a supply base, and plunged into a maelstrom of intense activity. Some years before, a set of comprehensive plans for the progressive development of the Island's potential facilities had been prepared, but under the pressure of wartime expediency these plans were shelved and construction of new warehouses, barracks, hospitals, offices, and docks proceeded on the basis of what could be furnished quickest where it was needed most. More than 70 buildings were erected on the new-made ground of the Island's extension; their floor areas totalled more than 30,000,000 square feet and provided storage for war materials of endless variety to a value of at least $75,000,000. A million dollars worth of such items were cleared through the Island daily. To service this gigantic undertaking the garrison constructed 5 miles of additional motor roads, and built the "Governors Island Railroad" —a tiny, narrow gauge affair with a total right of way of only 8 miles but complete with steam locomotives and freight cars, operating on a round-the-clock schedule. Also quartered on the Island during this period, in addition to the normal complement of the station, were the district offices of the suddenly expanded Quartermaster Corps and Ordnance and Intelligence Departments, plus such new activities as the War Risk Insurance Agency. Within a month General Wood had departed to a divisional command, and Major General J. Franklin Bell came in his place. This handsome, urbane officer — one of the very few whose battlefield exploits were honored with the triple reward of Medal of Honor, Distinguished Service Cross, and Distinguished Service Medal — stayed but 4 months, when the veteran Brigadier General Eli D. Hoyle was called out of retirement to take over the command. The third generation of Grants was now serving on the post for the third generation of war, in the person of Colonel Ulysses S. Grant II, who was Chief of Staff for the Headquarters.

Major General William A. Mann relieved General Hoyle in January 1918 and in the following August General Bell returned, just in time to witness the victorious finale of our war effort at the garrison where he had seen it start.

The new year of peace brought to Governors Island the same Major General Thomas H. Barry who had been there before, in 1912 and 1913. He was to exercise merely routine responsibility of his post until October when Lieutenant General Robert Lee Bullard would arrive to assume more permanent command.

Slim as a ramrod and as straight, with a deceptively mild voice and ascetic appearance cloaking the flaming temperament of the born fighter, General Bullard was one of the Army "greats." In a career that began at West Point in 1885, this grand old veteran of three wars had learned all there was to know about field soldiering, from platoon leader to army commander. His administrative experience had been equally valuable for he had governed a Moro province in the Philippines, helped to implement the Plattsburg training camps, and established and directed the schools for the A.E.F. in France. To his duties at Governors Island Bullard brought a personality that perfectly personified the Army standards of "officer and gentleman"; to the delight of his associates, he also brought and defiantly wore the incredible and completely non-regulation wolfskin greatcoat with which he had been wont to hide from the medical officers abroad his susceptibility to neuralgia in the damp winters of France.

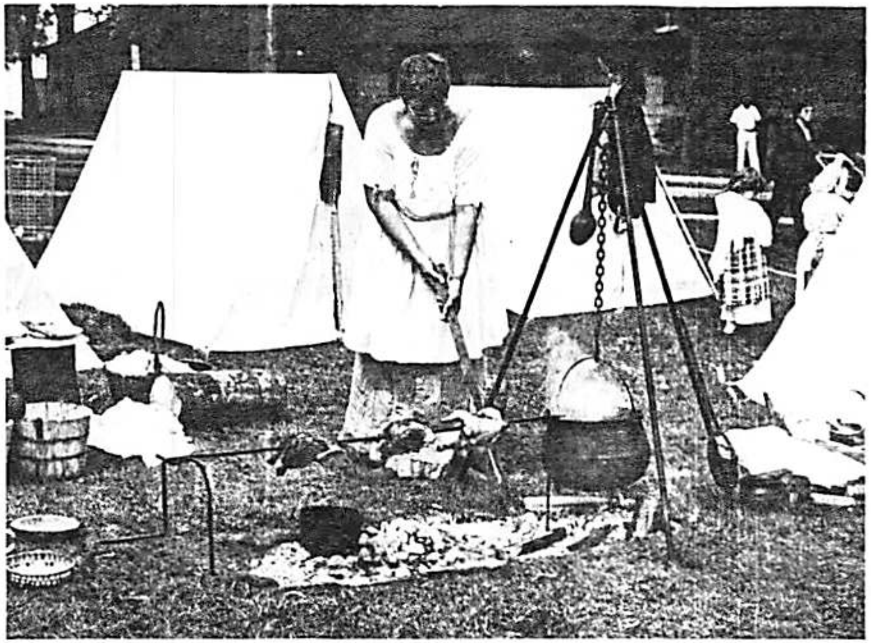
By this time the Island was ready to forget the war, but the war was not quite ready to forget the Island; there still was to be the Bergdoll affair, which would plague the command for another 20 years.

Grover Cleveland Bergdoll, wayward scion of a wealthy German-American family in Philadelphia, had in 1918 climaxed a notoriously misspent youth by becoming the most outstanding draft dodger of World War I. Not content with deliberately disregarding his summons to duty with the Army, Bergdoll arrogantly announced that he would never bear arms against his Fatherland and challenged the Federal authorities to do anything about it. The authorities replied by attempting to take him forcibly into custody, but Bergdoll successfully eluded them and for 2 years the best efforts of the Secret Service to apprehend him were unavailing. Finally, in January 1920, an alert operative tracked the fugitive to his widowed mother's castle-like mansion in the outskirts of Philadelphia, where he was captured at pistol point and with difficulty dragged off through a howling mob of outraged citizens, who for a time threatened to seize the prisoner and give the Quaker City its first lynching bee.

As a technical deserter the 21-year-old German-American was brought to Governors Island and placed in Castle Williams to stand trial by a court-martial, which found him guilty and sentenced him to a dishonorable discharge and 5 years at hard labor. To one and all it seemed fairly certain that Mr. Bergdoll's career as a governmental liability was finished, but they reckoned without considering the culprit's attitude in the matter. On May 21 Grover Cleveland Bergdoll escaped from custody, through circumstances as fantastic as any crime fiction writer could imagine.

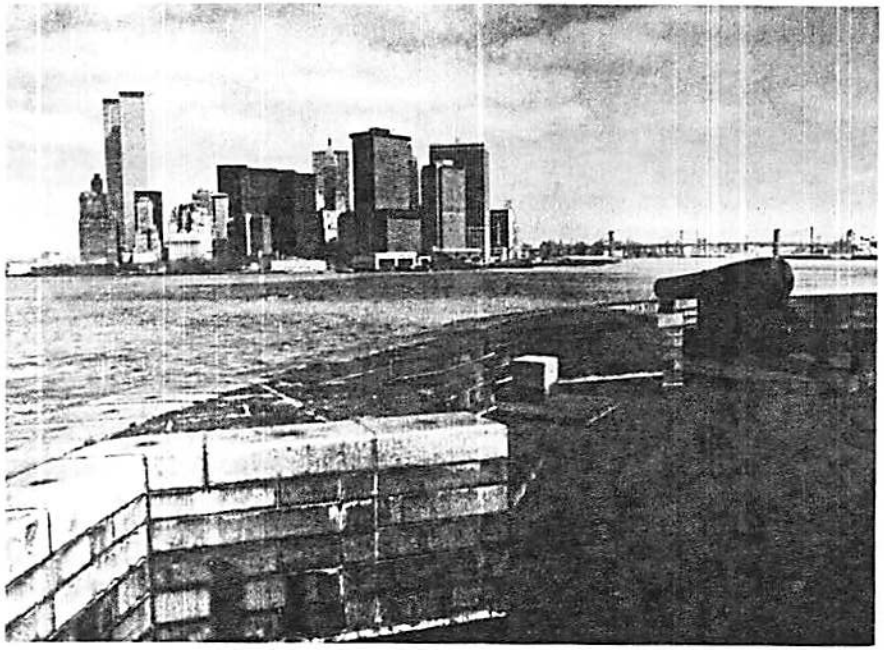
This amazing series of events began when Bergdoll requested permission to visit a farm near Hagerstown, Maryland, and secure a hoard of $125,000 in bills which he said he had cached there while a fugitive from justice. Unbelievable as such a story may seem now, it nevertheless was accorded favorable consideration and orders were issued at Washington — whether by The Adjutant General or the Secretary of War has never been divulged — that Bergdoll should be permitted to retrieve his hidden wealth. Accordingly, the prisoner left Governors Island on the morning of May 21, accompanied by two armed sergeants of the Military Police. The trio boarded a southbound train at the Pennsylvania Station with Hagerstown supposedly their next stop, but as the train neared Philadelphia, Bergdoll suggested that they drop off in that city for lunch at his home, after which he would have his chauffeur drive them the rest of the way to Maryland.

The guards afterwards professed to see nothing wrong with this idea, nor with the odd coincidence that Bergdoll's car and German chauffeur happened to be at the North Philadelphia station when they arrived there; and certainly not with the lavish meal which their charge served them in the family mansion. Following this gastronomic orgy Bergdoll made his guests comfortable with cigars and real German beer, as an agreeable prelude to the drive to Hagerstown; to these pleasures of the flesh the host provided intellectual stimulus by reading aloud from the plays of Shakespeare. The two sergeants, though understandably surprised at this cultural demonstration, were not disturbed by it; the cigars were good, the lager was cool against the spring warmth of the day, and they felt indolently at peace with the world. Naturally, they offered no objection when Bergdoll politely excused himself to answer a telephone which was ringing in the next room, and it was only after their prisoner had been gone some 15 minutes did the noncoms suddenly realize that neither of them actually had heard the phone bell which Bergdoll so promptly answered.



During open houses, Revolutionary camps are often set up

A mock battle on the Village Green



Manhattan, as seen from Castle Williams

Cunningham Apartments offers a spectacular view of New York harbor

White with fear the two soldiers flung open the door through which their charge had gone; the adjoining room was empty both of telephone and Bergoll. Racing to the street they found that Bergdoll's car had also vanished and with it the chauffeur. A hasty search of the house from cellar to attic proved equally fruitless and the military policemen took their dispirited way back to Governors Island where their report of the day's events immediately provided incredulous headlines for the press. Courts-martial were ordered for the commanding officer of Fort Jay as well as the guards who had let Bergdoll escape. All were found culpable, but inasmuch as no proof could be offered that anyone concerned had profited financially from Bergdoll money, the trials ended in acquittals.

Meanwhile Bergdoll and his chauffeur had been traced to Canada, but before they could be caught and held for extradition to the United States the fugitives slipped aboard a ship bound for Europe and were not heard from again until they turned up in Germany. Here two operatives of our Criminal Investigation Division tried to kidnap the deserter. Their abortive attempt was thwarted by an angry mob of local Bergdoll sympathizers from whom they barely escaped with their lives, the whole affair so ruffling the feelings of the provisional German government that the commander of our occupation forces was forced to the humiliating necessity of tendering a formal apology, disclaiming official responsibility for the actions of the C.I.D. men. Another kidnap attempt a year later also failed and from then until well into 1939 Bergdoll in Germany and his mother in America provoked a continuing series of pleas, arguments, charges, and countercharges to establish his innocence and effect his repatriation. Nothing came of these efforts and on May 26 Bergdoll himself suddenly arrived in New York Harbor, just one day ahead of proposed Congressional action specially designed to bar him forever from this country. Two Army officers were waiting for him and once again the German-American found himself behind bars on Governors Island. This time there were no special privileges for the prisoner before or after his court-martial which was held in the basketball court of the Y.M.C.A. He was found guilty as charged and on October 6 was sentenced to 7½ years in the Leavenworth penitentiary. After serving 5 years of his term, Bergdoll was released for good behavior on January 16, 1944.

While all this was going on, the Governors Island command had been rechristened. On the 1st of September, 1920, the Eastern Department of the Army went out of existence with the reorganization of the Army into nine Corps Areas throughout the country. The garrison then became headquarters for the new Second Corps area to include the States of New York, New Jersey, and Delaware and General Bullard remained as the initial Corps Area Commander.

January 1921 offered the occasion for a most unusual and poignant New Year's gift to the garrison. As an expression of the fraternal affection and comradeship felt by the British Army for their American brothers-in-arms who had fought for their cause in World War I, the officers and men of the King's Royal Rifle Corps indicated to our War Department their desire to present to Governors Island one of the original Regimental Colors of their ancestral 60th Royal American Regiment, which had been created and stationed on the Island in 1757.

Needless to say, this graciously thoughtful offer was accepted with alacrity and thanks, and the formal presentation took place on January 9 under the command of General Bullard. Special guests of honor were the Marquis Carisbrooke, cousin of King George V; the military attache of the British Embassy; a special representative of the Rifles; the British Consul General in New York; and many high-ranking U.S. Army officers and members of patriotic societies.

The ceremonies began when the special custodian of the color, Chaplain Edmund Banks Smith of Governors Island received a color guard and honor company of the 22d Infantry at his quarters, and there turned over to them the eighteenth-century silk banner. The massed buglers of the regiment sounded "To the Color" while the troops presented arms, and then escorted the color to the Chapel of St. Cornelius. Here Chaplain Smith read the Deed of Gift for the color from Field Marshal Lord Grenfell, Colonel-Commandant of the King's Rifles, in which the Field Marshal hoped that "this color may serve as a memento that the Royal American Regiment and the regiments of New York fought shoulder to shoulder not only during the many years of warfare which ended in the conquest of New France and the subjection of the Indian tribes bordering on the Great Lakes, but also, after a century and a half, against a common enemy in a more terrible European contest."

The priceless relic of Colonial service in Canada, Jamaica, and South Africa was formally accepted by the Reverend Dr. William T. Manning, rector of Trinity Church, and, after being blessed, was hung over the High Altar. The congregation then joined in singing "God Save the King" and "The Star-Spangled Banner." This brought the service to a close and the troops were played back to barracks by the 22d Regimental Band to the tune of "The March of the 1st Battalion, 60th Regiment," composed in 1780 and dedicated to Lady Amherst. Carefully boxed in glass, the English color is now on exhibition in the Chapel.

The following summer was one of highly diverse activities for the Island. General Bullard instituted a series of polo tournaments between Regular Army and National Guard teams, as well as teams from those eastern colleges which maintained mounted R.O.T.C. units, the broad expanse of the new extension providing a perfect playing field. The famous 16th Infantry, its battle honors of the Civil, Indian, and Spanish Wars now augmented by the Soissons, Cantigny, and St. Mihiel actions of World War I, was added to the station complement on August 1; and on August 15 Castle Williams officially became the Eastern Branch of the United States Disciplinary Barracks.

To reciprocate the generous gesture of the gift of the Royal American battle flag by the Royal Rifles, the garrison now proposed to present to the British regiment one of the two brass Coehorn mortars remaining on the Island from the time it was the depot of the Royal Americans. This proposition was cordially entertained by our Secretary of War and the British War Office and on September 12 Chaplain Smith formally presented the mortar in the name of Governors Island to the 1st battalion of the Rifles, then at its home station in Winchester, England. The chaplain was accompanied by Secretary Thurston of the American Embassy and Major D.H. Gillette, our military attache in London. In the absence of Field Marshal Lord Grenfell, the Rifles' junior colonels-commandant, Lieut. Gen. Edward T. H. Hutton and Lieut Gen. Sir W. Pitcairn Campbell, accepted the mortar with appropriate honors after which it was enshrined in the Regimental Mess.

Other interesting cannon trophies on public display on the Island include the two handsome bronze pieces captured in the Spanish-American War, which are emplaced before the quarters of the Commanding General; the three small Moro guns from the Philippine Insurrection, in front of the Officers Club; the 10-inch Rodman guns mounted on the Fort Jay parapet on either side of the main gate; the German field howitzer from World War I, at the north end of Building 400; and the brass Civil War field guns used as landscape decorations around the post.

While Chaplain Smith was returning from his journey of peace and good will, his Island parish was abruptly plunged into a situation in New York that was grimly reminiscent of war. At 12:15 P.M. of September 16 a dilapidated and horse-drawn delivery wagon that had been parked in front of the Sub-Treasury on Wall Street suddenly exploded with an earth-shaking roar. Iron slugs tore into the noontime crowds and against the walls of the nearby buildings (you can see the scars to this day); the concussion shattered windows for blocks in all directions, and dead and wounded men and women littered the sidewalks. Sensing that the blast was of incendiary origin and fearing that it might betoken further lawless action against the Sub-Treasury as well as the great banking house of J.P. Morgan and the Stock Exchange which stood across the street, the Deputy U.S. Treasurer telephoned Governors Island for an emergency guard of troops.

Upon the verbal orders of the Corps Area Commander, Companies M and K of the 22d Infantry were dispatched to the Sub-Treasury with full field equipment and a hundred rounds of ammunition per man, while Company L was held in reserve on the Island. The troops reached the scene of the disaster at 12:45, where they threw a cordon of sentinels around the affected area and cleared the adjacent streets, thus permitting the city Police and Fire Departments to give their entire attention to the restoration of normal conditions. This was quickly accomplished and the troops returned to the Island on the 3:15 P.M. ferry. The mystery of who was responsible for the explosion has never been solved, but there is ample reason to believe that the consequences would have been far more serious if it had not been for the swift and efficient cooperation of the Island.

When General Bullard retired in 1925, he was succeeded in the Island command post by the V Corps' Major General Charles P. Summerall, the taciturn artilleryman who had followed Bullard as combat leader of the 1st Division in which his characteristic and Indian-like stoicism had won him the affectionate nickname of "Sitting Bull."

Summerall went on the retired list 2 years later and Major General James H. McRae, late of the 78th Division, assumed Corps Area Command, to be followed in less than a year by the massive Hanson E. Ely of the iron jaw and gimlet eyes, who had led the 5th Division in France.

During General Ely's tour of duty a long-awaited improvement in the Island's housing conditions was begun. No new buildings and practically no repairs on existing structures had been accomplished since the war, and a large proportion of the post personnel were obliged to live in wretched, damp, rat-infested habitations that were little better than hovels. The situation finally became so bad that the New York newspapers took up the cudgels in behalf of the Islanders and forced remedial action that was as immediate as it was imperative.

The first result of the new building program was the completion in 1930 of the massive barracks building designed by the famous architectural firm of McKin, Mead and White now known as Building 400, which stretches completely across the northern end of the Island extension and was the first Army structure of its kind to completely contain an entire regiment with squad rooms, day rooms, offices, kitchens, mess halls, and all the other ncessary facilities. A contemporary rumor had it that Ely placed Building 100 in its present location in order to forestall certain commercial aviation interests who were lobbying for the Government to lease the Island for a municipal airport, but the doughty general never publicly commented upon this.

A consolidated mess and various administrative offices occupy an annex building, directly north of "400."

Concurrently, various thoroughfares and premises on the Island received their present official names memorializing men and actions connected with the Island's history. Among these are Andes, Carder, Clayton, Comfort, Craig, and Evans Roads, and King and Wheeler Avenues, named in memory of officers of the 1st Division

who were killed in action in France. Of special interest are Enright, Gresham, and Hay roads honoring Corporal Gresham and Privates Enright and Hay of F Company, 16th Infantry, who were the first American casualties of World War I, losing their lives simultaneously in a trench raid by the Germans near Barthemont, France, on the night of November 3, 1917.

The San Juan and Soissons Docks are similarly named after important victories of the 13th and 16th Infantry in the Spanish-American and World Wars; Sergeant Diehl and Corporal Van Horne of the 16th planted the first U.S. flag on the crest of San Juan. Barry Road is named for Major General Thomas H. Barry who commanded on the Island in 1912, 1913, 1914, and 1919.

Caught up in the whirl of all this activity, an arboreal enthusiast on the staff was inspired to attach name tags to the trees in the residential areas of the Island, so that they might be identified by those interested in forestry. The serious intent of this pleasant little scheme fell somewhat short of success when a careless sign painter permitted the Island's handsomest trees to break out in a rash of labels reading "Popular."

Within the next 4 years the new Hospital, Headquarters Building, Post School, Y.M.C.A., and Noncommissioned Officers' Apartments were erected — the foundations of those built on the extension being placed on piles sunk in harbor bedrock because of the porous condition of the made ground — and the Quadrangle quarters and the Commanding General's house were completely renovated. At the same time the latter also received a new commanding general in the person of Major General Dennis E. Nolan who had been Pershing's Chief of Intelligence. He administered the command from 1931 to 1936, when he was relieved by Major General Frank R. McCoy who had an Infantry brigade overseas with the 32d Division.

In 1937, under General McCoy's direction, Governors Island fittingly observed its Tercentenary with a daily schedule of special events during the week of June 13-20. All the units on the Island held "open house" and gave public exhibits and demonstrations of their duties and abilities, in addition to which there were special parades and reviews, a historical pageant, polo matches, band concerts, and appropriate religous services.

In 1938 Second Corps Area Headquarters received the general who would command it through the troublous times immediately ahead and the dark days of our entry into World War II — Major (later Lieutenant) General Hugh A. Drum. The outstanding record of this brilliant officer began with his original direct commission as second lieutenant by special Act of Congress to mark the heroic death of the young man's father, Captain Drum, on the slopes of San Juan. He had risen to an Infantry majority when he went to France on Pershing's staff in 1917 where he became the First Army's Chief of Staff, and later achieved a star and an enviable reputation for his work in the Meuse-Argonne offensive. (One of his assistants was a young colonel named George C. Marshall.)

General Drum, by nature an unusual combination of gregariousness and military dignity, proved one of the most popular officers ever to be stationed in New York, and the city proudly assumed the proprietary interest in the Island and its garrison which it has ever since so generously exhibited. the 16th Infantry became known as "New York's Own" and participated in all civic and military parades and celebrations in the metropolis, as well as supplying color guards and the services of the regimental band for countless veteran and patriotic events. In 1939 General Drum selected the band to become the Headquarters Band; it was then redesignated the Fort Jay Band and awarded a plaque by Colonel C.H. Rice of the 16th Infantry "in grateful appreciation of the outstanding and faithful service rendered the 16th Infantry." Five years later the organization was renamed the 321st Army Service Forces Band and in 1947, when the A.S.F. was discontinued, the name became simply the 321st Army Band. Finally, in 1949 the unit was doubled in size to a complement of 56 musicians, and called the First Army Band.

The rest of the garrison had also been undergoing a period of reorganization, with the designation of Fort Jay in 1938 as headquarters of the reactivated First Army of World War I, and the appointment of General Drum as Army Commander. He also assumed direction of the Eastern Defense Command in 1941, when the security of our Atlantic Coast States against the threat of the warring European nations forced the establishment of that agency on Governors Island.

Nor did Governors Island neglect the potentialities of the Army's local civilian components — the National Guard and the Organized Reserves. Under the guidance and training offered by the Corps Area Headquarters, with the patriotic support of such leading citizens as Julius Ochs Adler, Howard S. Borden, Charles F.H. Johnson, and Cornelius Wickersham, these units were brought to a high state of efficiency and materially aided the cause of national defense. This activity was given further public emphasis through the Corps Area's cooperation with the Military Order of the World Wars in originating and sponsoring the observance of Army Day, now grown into the nationally observed Armed Forces Day.

Under General Drum's brilliant administrative prowess the First Army rapidly grew from its original status as a "paper" organization to a well-trained field force, and during the fall of 1941 it participated in North and South Carolina in the largest field manuvers ever held in this country. The troops were all peacefully back in their home stations on December 4; three days later Pearl Harbor was attacked and the troops returned to a combat footing.

Overnight the serenity of the Governors Island scene disappeared. Officers and men, singly and en masse, were there one day and gone the next, with others just as suddenly taking their places.

Warehouses, barracks and extra hospital wards went up almost overnight, a great prison stockade stretched its walls of barbed wire along the western shore line, and New York's scattered induction stations were concentrated on the Island in a single unit that had its own medical, mess, and processing facilities for the reception of draftees.

But even these increased accommodations were not sufficient to take care of the continuously expanding scope of the Island's war service. Extra space was requisitioned for various Corps Area bureaus and departments throughout New York City — in the Army Building at 39 Whitehall Street, the federal Office Building at 90 Church Street, and sundry office buildings heretofore devoted entirely to civilian usage. For a time there was even talk of moving the Island headquarters to the Empire State Building, but this was judged to be unnecessary.

The ferry service, already augmented by the acquisition of the good ship *Major General William H. Hart* in 1940, was further improved when the *Lt. Colonel Robert E. Shannon* was added to the run in 1941, thus permitting trips on 15-minute schedules, day and night. So great was the traffic that a relief boat was soon necessary and the Navy helpfully provided the FB-84 a year later. All three of these boats were obtained from the City of New York and were maintained by the Quartermaster Corps until the new Transportation Corps was activated August 1, 1942, and assumed administration of the Island's navy.

General Drum by that time had been relieved as Corps Area Commander by Major General Irving J. Phillipson who, when the Corps Area was changed in 1942 to the Second Service Command, was succeeded by Major General Thomas A. Terry. This incidentally marked the first time the Island troops could wear a shoulder patch of their own, their pleasure in this distinction being somewhat soured by their less fortunate comrades who dubbed the new design of two superimposed white rectangles on a blue field, as "interlocking blockheads."

The First Army left for overseas service on October 12, 1943, just 5 days after the inexorable law of retirement had taken General Drum from its command. Interim administrations of the Island during 1945 and 1946 were exercised by Major Generals Thomas B. Larkin and James A. Van Fleet, and then the First Army Headquarters returned in glory to its old home under the leadership of its World War II boss, General Courtney H. Hodges. In so doing, the First kept alive the symbolic tradition of its numerical identification: it had been the first on the beaches of Normandy, first to enter Paris, first to break the Siegfried Line, first to cross the Rhine, first to contact the Russians, and now it was to give to Governors Island the first four-star General ever to be stationed there.

The "Big A" sleeve insigne and the First Army shoulder cord of black, white, and red became noteworthy additions to the metropolitan picture, while the Army band and honor guard added to the impressiveness of their official activities by once again appearing in full dress blue uniforms.

In 1949 also there was completed a postwar building program to provide additional quarters for the increased personnel now permanently assigned to headquarters. Generally these consisted of apartments converted from the temporary barracks the war had brought to the open ground south of Building 400; the inhabitants were wont to refer to this new housing area as "Splinter Village" but it was far preferable to the alternative of living sometimes as much as 25 miles away in a New York or New Jersey suburb and commuting to the Island daily. (Another Island structure was completed in 1949, but has no connection with the garrison. This is the octagonal tower of white masonry at the Island's northeast tip, which provides ventilation for the Brooklyn-Battery Vehicular Tunnel.)

General Hodges completed his span of active duty in 1949 and was followed by Lieutenant General Walter Bedell ("Beetle") Smith, ex-Chief of Staff to General Eisenhower and ex-ambassador to Russia. But the mills of the military gods grind fast and as 1950 waned, General Smith left to head the Central Intelligence Agency in Washington with Lieutenant General Willis D. Crittenberger from the United Nations Military Staff as his successor.

Literally holding the Fort during these sudden and rapid shifts of command, Major General Roscow B. Woodruff, as Deputy Army Commander, exercised the benign influence of a steel hand in the velvet glove.

And so Governors Island enters into its fourth century of existence. Directly or indirectly, it has contributed to every war in our nation's life and to every peace which those wars have made increasingly worth living. Its soldiers have worn every uniform in our Army's catalog from the homespun hunting shirt breeches, and leggings of the Colonial riflemen clear around the cycle back to the wool shirt, breeches, and combat boots of today's G.I. It has watched many of our greatest generals pass through its high command echelons. The Infantry, Cavalry, Artillery, Engineers, Ordnance, Medical Service, Transportation Corps, Corps of Military Police, and Quartermaster Corps have contributed troops to its station complements — not forgetting the feminine touch offered by the 1203d WAC Detachment which arrived in July of 1946. Year by year it has noted and kept pace with the science of arms to which it is dedicated — only a few months ago a helicopter landed for the first time on that same polo field from which all planes were once forbidden, as the latest addition to the First Army's Air Section. All in all, Governors Island can look back with satisfaction upon a past that lacks nothing in justification of its position as one of the most important of our military posts and one of the most interesting of our historic centers.

Whatever the future may offer, it can bring no change in this status of one of the most beloved of Army garrisons.

And so, rather than close this latest chapter in the continuing story of Governors Island with the traditional finality of "The End," the temptation is justifiably irresistable to offer to the years that lie ahead this apposite alternative —

CHAPTER X

TIME passed and a new flag was raised over Governors Island. In the early 1960's reorganization and consolidation of Army activities foreshadowed the closing of Governors Island. First Army Headquarters was to be moved to Fort George G. Meade, Maryland, and the Island was declared excess to the needs of the Army.

The United States Coast Guard, smallest of the five armed services, had long been accustomed to accepting "hand-me-downs" from its big sisters. When, in 1855, after one year of use, the Navy declared the *Bear* unfit for further service, the Revenue Cutter Service gladly took her, and the famous old ship went on to sail for another 78 years.

When Governors Island became available, the Coast Guard viewed this as the perfect solution to many of its problems. In addition to the central location and the ideal docking facilities for large Coast Guard cutters, the Island would provide housing for Coast Guard personnel who were scattered throughout the five boroughs of New York. Essentially, government quarters had never been available to Coast Guard personnel before.

As they had been in the past, the Chapel of St. Cornelius the Centurion and Fort Jay were the key sites in the transfer ceremonies on June 30, 1966.

At 2 p.m. a Coast Guard bugler sounded Church Call and the Chapel organist struck up "Onward Christian Soldiers" as a Coast Guard Color Guard entered the chapel. The Lord's Prayer and the Prayer for the Coast Guard were recited by Chaplain Samuel R. Hardman and the Reverend Canon Newman, Acting Rector of Trinity Parish, read Psalm 20.

Rear Admiral I.J. Stephens, at that time Commander of Eastern Area Coast Guard and Third Coast Guard District, received the Coast Guard standard from the Color Guard and it was blessed at the high altar by the Protestant Episcopal Bishop of the Armed Forces before taking its place with the array of historic flags already in the Chapel.

At 2:30 the Coast Guard Band and the First Army Band gave a half-hour concert at the entrance to Fort Jay, playing alternate selections, and at three o'clock the Army presented a pageant depicting its history on the Island.

The Fort Jay Deactivation Orders were read and the firing of one of the Rodman guns atop the parapet of the Fort was the signal for the Army to lower the National Ensign for the last time. The folded flag was presented to Admiral Stephens and was then re-hoisted on the flagpole atop the Fort.

Following the transfer ceremonies, Rear Admiral J.A. Alger assumed command of the Eastern Area and Third Coast Guard District.

Thus, the oldest military installation in continuous service in the United States became the largest Coast Guard Base in the world. At this writing (1978) there are 2,165 Coast Guard men and women permanently assigned to Governors Island, another 450 attending service schools, 2,800 dependents, and more than 1,000 civilian employees.

For Coast Guard personnel and their families, the change was a big one. Most Coast Guard installations are very small with limited, if any, housing for married personnel. They were accustomed to doing their grocery shopping in commissaries operated by other services, often having to travel a considerable distance. Suddenly, there existed a Coast Guard base with housing to accommodate 526 families.

Governors Island, the largest military installation in New York City, is a town of its own. There is a large commissary, an exchange, bank, library, churches, gas station, bowling alley, golf course, swimming pools, and a school. Later, another apartment complex would be raised on the Island that would house an additional 160 families.

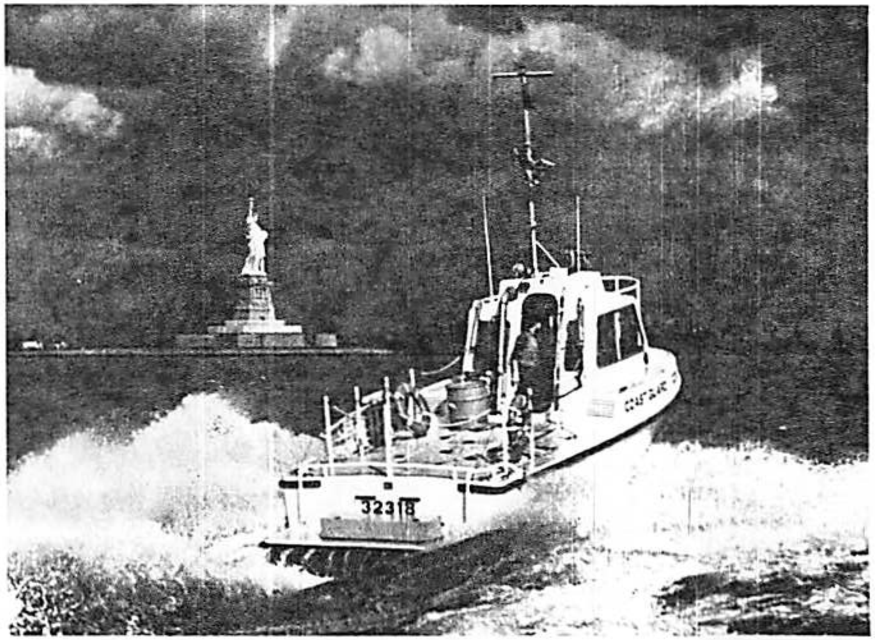
While this "town" has no official mayor, it does have its own police force and fire department. "Town Meetings" are held on a regular basis by the Commanding Officer and staff of the base, now known as Coast Guard Support Center, New York.

There is a cafeteria, a snack bar, a "country store" and clubs for Officers, Chief Petty Officers, and Enlisted Personnel. The movie theater shows first-run films and, while they don't dim the lights of Broadway, a community theatre group on the Island draws a large audience to its productions.

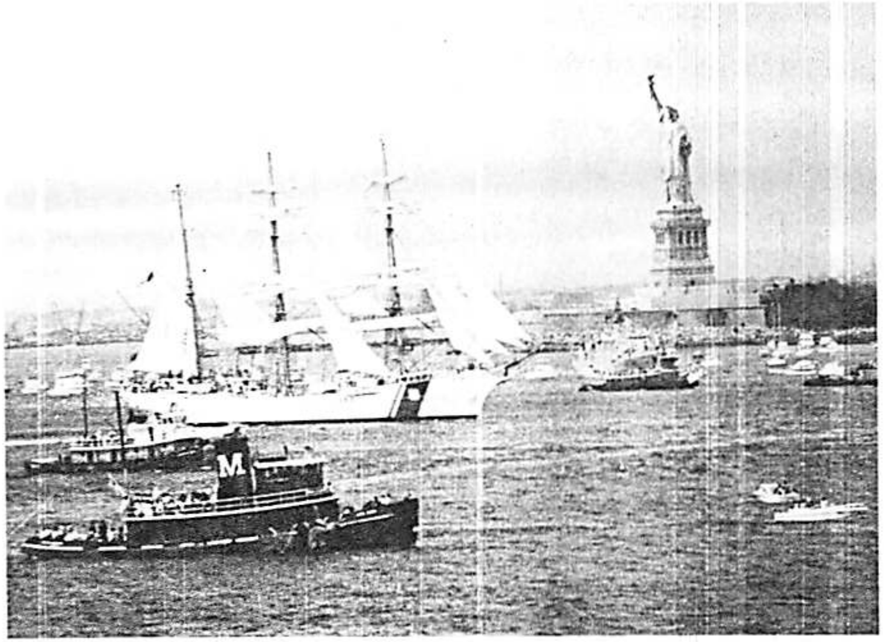
There are playgrounds, tennis courts, sports fields, picnic areas, and, in the winter, ice-skating rinks. When snow blankets the Island, the slopes of the golf course surrounding Fort Jay become popular sledding sites for the Island's children. There are Scout troops, organized children's sport teams, and a Teen Club. For the working mother, there is a low-cost Day Care Center and a pre-school.

Special Services offers arts and crafts facilities for woodworking, ceramics, photography, and an auto repair shop. A complete gym-

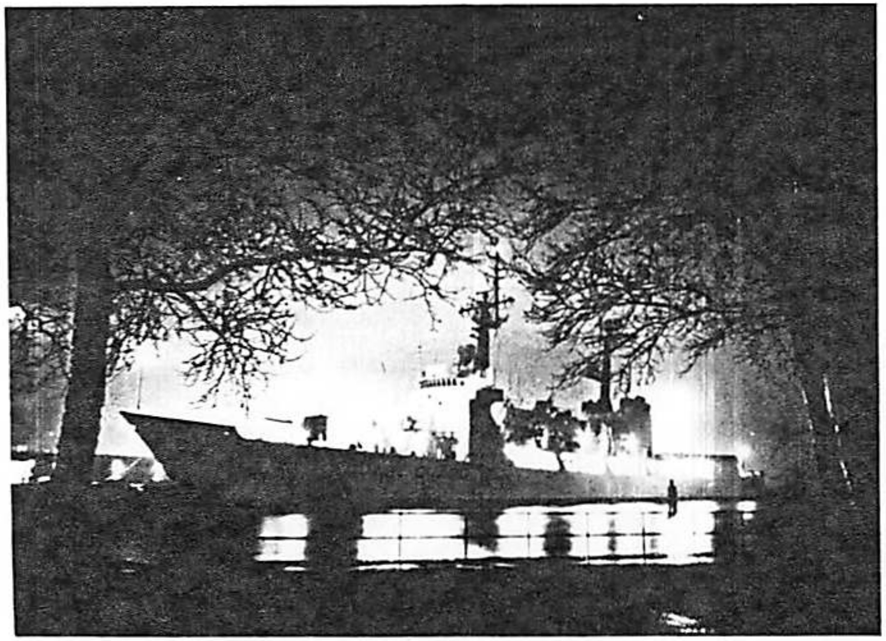
A long-silent Rodman gun marks the entrance to Governors Island



A Coast Guard 32-foot patrol boat speeds toward the Statue of Liberty



Governors Island served as host for 1976's Operation Sail



A Governors Island-based 378-foot Coast Guard cutter by night

nasium is maintained in Building 400. Special Services also maintains camping equipment for check-out and offers many free and half-price tickets to Broadway plays, concerts, and sporting events.

There are a variety of religious activities on the Island for Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish personnel at the three Chapels. The ecumenical movement is very much in evidence here and the three religious communities often hold joint services.

With less than 40,000 personnel, members of the Coast Guard have always been a close-knit group. With so few people, Coast Guardsmen are always running into old friends and shipmates at new assignments. Now, with the largest single population in the Coast Guard, the spirit of "We're a Coast Guard Family" was doubly reinforced at Governors Island.

Residents of the Island are quick to come to the aid of one another in times of need or illness, as they had in the smaller communities from which they came.

Perhaps Governors Islanders unconsciously have a quotation from Henrik Ibsen in mind: "A community is like a ship; everyone ought to be prepared to take the helm."

CHAPTER XI

ALTHOUGH the Coast Guard didn't officially come to Governors Island until 1966, the service has a long connection with the history of New York and the United States. The Nation dates from the Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776, but the constitutional government we know today did not start until 1789. That was the year George Washington was inaugurated as the first President and that the first Congress convened. The next year, on August 4, 1790, Congress passed a bill authorizing construction of "ten boats" for guarding the coast against smugglers. One of those boats, the *Vigilant*, with Patrick Dennis as Master, was stationed in New York.

During the American Revolution, smuggling had been regarded as a patriotic business as part of the struggle against "taxation without representation." Respectable citizens such as John Hancock and Samuel Adams had engaged in smuggling.

Alexander Hamilton, the first Secretary of the Treasury, realized that one of the best ways that the new Nation could rid itself of the debts incurred during the Revolutionary War was to rigidly enforce customs laws and collect the duties rightfully owed to the fledgling country. Thus, he asked Congress for the first ten boats to ply the East Coast and put an end to smuggling. Through the efforts of Hamilton's ten boats, the $70,000,000 national debt was repaid in a very short time.

Alexander Hamilton, known as the "Father of the Coast Guard" is buried in Trinity Churchyard. In recent years, the Area Commander has placed a wreath on Hamilton's grave on Coast Guard Day, August 4.

At the end of the Revolution the Navy had been disbanded and was not reorganized until 1798. During those eight years, the Revenue Cutter Service, as the service was then known, was America's only Navy.

The Coast Guard has served in every United States war and skirmish except the war with Tripoli. Of 22 enemy vessels seized during the undeclared quasi-war with France in 1798-99, 18 were captured by the Revenue Cutter Service. The first capture afloat in the War of 1812 was made by a revenue cutter. The first naval shot in the Civil War was fired by the cutter *Harriet Lane* on the eve of the bombardment of Fort Sumter. As was noted earlier, the first action of World War I was the seizure of all German ships in New York harbor, an action made possible by ships of the U.S. Coast Guard. In 1918, the Coast Guard cutter *Tampa* was sunk by a German submarine with the loss of all of its 115 officers and men and 12 passengers. This is regarded as the second worst American naval disaster of that war and the Governors Island library and the street adjacent to it have been named in memory of the *Tampa.*

Vessels of the service served in the Seminole Indian War, the Mexican War, and the Spanish-American War.

The Coast Guard cutter *Taney* is the only ship still in commission that took part in the battle of Pearl Harbor. A series of pylons and a Coast Guard monument in Battery Park commemorate the deeds of valor performed by Coast Guardsmen in World War II. Even the venerable old *Bear,* at the ripe age of 67, participated in the first naval capture of that war.

In 1915, the United States Lifesaving Service and the Revenue Cutter Service merged to form the Coast Guard. In 1939, the U.S. Lighthouse Service became a part of the Coast Guard and a year later, the Bureau of Marine Inspection was absorbed by the service as well.

Until the 1966 move to Governors Island, the Coast Guard base of operations in New York was at Base St. George on Staten Island. The offices of the Third Coast Guard District and Eastern Area (now Atlantic Area) were located in the old Customs House in Manhattan. The move of the Coast Guard's training Center from Groton, Connecticut to Governors Island meant the shift of another thousand men.

Even though the mission of the Island had changed drastically with the Coast Guard takeover, physically it remained basically the same. As a spokesman said at the time, "the major change will be more anchors and fewer cannons."

Building 400 was converted to a barracks and contains classrooms for most of the Service Schools located on the Island. A new dining hall, capable of feeding 2,000, was built and a new elementary school was constructed. 1972 saw the erection of a Coast Guard designed high-rise containing 160 duplex apartments which has to be unique in government housing. After studying the needs of enlisted men, the architectural firm reported, "We found that Coast Guard men are unusually prolific. A three-bedroom apartment was the smallest required unit and we needed to provide four bedroom units, too." This building was named Cunningham Apartments in memory of Boatswain's Mate Second Class Earl Cunningham who sacrificed his life to rescue two fishermen near Charlevoix, Michigan in 1936.

In 1975 the Athletic Field complex was rebuilt and named in honor of Signalman First Class Douglas Munro, the first Coast Guardsman to be awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.

In 1977 the streets that had borne only numbered designations were named after famous Coast Guard cutters of the past. The names Bear, Escanaba, Kimball, Yeaton, Chiconteague, Half Moon, Icarus, Mackinac, Triton, and others took their places along with the names bestowed by the Army.

One of the biggest events in the history of the Island took place during America's bicentennial celebration. Island residents donned colonial attire and gave guided tours to thousands of visitors. The Island theatre group staged a production of Shaw's "The Devil's Disciple."

Most spectacular, however, was the Parade of the Tall Ships, or International Naval Review, for which Governors Island was host on July 4, 1976. About 20,000 visitors and residents had a vantage viewing point for this procession of the most beautiful sailing ships from around the world. This was followed by the largest fireworks display in the history of America, part of which was fired from Governors Island.

Under the United States Coast Guard, Governors Island continues to change to meet its new missions. Even with the changes, however, it remains "the smiling garden" that Lord Cornbury dubbed it.

The End