

U. S. INFANTRY AND CAVALRY SCHOOL.

Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, August 29, 1886.

General:

I have the honor to submit the report of the United States Infantry and Cavalry School at this post for the academic year ending June 30, 1886. Assuming command of the post and school May 13, near the end of the second session of the first year's course, the instruction to the close of the examination progressed in the same order and conditions existing previous to my taking command.

The standing of the student officers having been determined by the school staff, Orders No. 15, July 3, were published, announcing the same.

At the close of the June examination student officers desiring a leave of absence made applications, which were recommended for thirty days. Early in August the class, with few exceptions, returned for duty.

A course of practical engineering was marked out, the officers making gabions and, fascines, with all kinds of revetments known to modern engineering. A small field work is now being thrown up, the officers making the profile and placing the material constructed on the interior slope. Timber was cut and prepared for stockades and palisades; also the different kinds of entanglements known to modern warfare were placed in front of the work. This is a commencement in practical military engineering,

Early in July a circular letter was addressed to the field officers, captains commanding companies, troops and battery composing the command, also, to the secretary and topographical officers of the school, calling upon them to submit in writing such suggestions, recommendations, or remarks, based upon their experience, that would assist the commandant to a better comprehension of the necessities of the school for its progress and management’;

These papers were submitted by July 20. The next day the school staff was called together, when the views of the commandant were expressed to them in regard to some changes in the course of studies for the coming year.

It was recommended that the greater part of the prescribed law course be eliminated, and the more useful and practical studies substituted: viz, the tactics” of the three arms (not in the course of the present class).. The veterinary art also omitted.

The tactics of the three arms will be thoroughly taught. An extended course in the veterinary art will be taught to the cavalry and artillery officers. A limited course in this subject to the officers of infantry, yet sufficient for them to detect from symptoms all diseases to horses and mules, with a knowledge of the remedies, their use, and application for the same.

Hereafter the working days of the week, from Monday to Friday inclusive, will be devoted to the theoretical and practical instruction of the course of studies laid down for the coming year. Each Saturday of the term, from 9 to 12 o’clock, a. m., will be devoted to instruction in the practical administration of the company, regiment, and post, the quartermaster’s and commissary departments, from the making of requisitions to the closing of accounts

with the Treasury Department. All subaltern officers present at the post to attend this instruction.

Attention is respectfully called to the fact that, besides the field officers on duty at the school, the instructors are necessarily selected from the officers on duty with the companies composing the garrison, and on account of insufficient quarters for other officers the commandant of the school is limited to his selection to those officers, some of whom, by physical disability and want of proper knowledge, are not competent to teach any subject. Hence he does not deem it proper to ask for the intelligent, bright, and progressive officers of our army to be placed on duty as his assistants, there not being sufficient quarters at the post to make them and their families comfortable.

The following recommendations are submitted for the approval of the Lieutenant-General of the Army.

That the candidates for the next year's class, and ever hereafter, be selected by the colonels of regiments one year in advance of the date of entering the school; that each candidate shall have an alternate, nominated at the same time and by the same authority, to take the place of the candidate should accidents of service prevent his reporting at the school or in case of his failure to enter.

No candidate or alternate selected shall be over thirty-five years of age, unless he be a most zealous officer and ambitious to master the course at the school. All candidates and alternates to have served two years with their regiments; also to possess physical health sufficient to perform active field service.

Candidates presenting diplomas from West Point, or any institution of merit, to be admitted without examination. Candidates reporting and not possess-

such diplomas will be examined by the school staff to ascertain if they possess sufficient knowledge of the following subjects to insure their progress at the school, namely: General history and history of the United States; geography; arithmetic and algebra, to include theory of logarithms and geometry.

The latter candidates, having had one year's notice for preparation, and failing to pass the examination for admission, will be without excuse, and should at once be returned to their regiments, and the alternates substituted for them.

That student officers be not attached to companies for any duty but roll call, and that they perform only such military duties as may from time to time be directed by the commandant of the school.

That the companies stationed at the post of Fort Leavenworth be -models in their respective arms in administration, drill, and discipline, and that they may be complete organizations, all officers belonging thereto should be present, performing all the duties of the post prescribed by regulations and the commandant of the school.

Student officers should not be called upon to perform any duties liable to deflect their minds from the regular studies or from the subject for which this school was established.

The student officers should compose one class, study the same theoretical and practical course, thereby permitting each individual officer to strive for the highest standard of excellence attainable at the school.

That the present manner of indicating class standing be changed.

That the class be divided in groups, composed of six members.

That the six most meritorious members of the class compose the first group, but are not to be classified in the group.

That the next six most meritorious students compose the second group, but not Classified, and so on to the end. The advantages of this system to the Army admits of easy explanation. Upon graduation names of the members composing the first group to be forwarded to the Adjutant General of the Army, the staff and commandant recommending them for preferment— foreign details, etc.

That, if during any period of the course a student officer becomes neglectful of his studies, failing to pass the stated examinations, he should, upon the recommendation of the staff and the commandant of the school, be returned to his regiment with a proper reprimand from the Lieutenant-General, to be published to the Army in General Orders. .

I would most earnestly recommend that quarters be erected at this post to accommodate the officers and men of one company of engineer troops of our Army. Modern military engineering, in all the details pertaining to it, should be thoroughly taught at this school. There should be model field works erected upon different points of this reservation. There should be a few ponton boats, enough chess-boards and balks with lashings to build a few bays of a bridge. There is still water near at hand for this exercise. There should also be scaled models of modern military forts, laid in brick and cement, for practical study by the officers of the school. In addition there should be models here of all temporary wooden bridges used in war. We do not, lack engineering ability in the line of the Army, but with the engineering company comes the skilled labor, not to be found in the average company of infantry and

cavalry. The officers of this company, devoting themselves especially to engineering, will prove competent instructors in theory and practical work in the field.

I deem the coming of this company of prime necessity. There is no other point in our country where it could render such valuable service.

The month of September will be devoted to instruction in military reconnaissance on foot and horseback; practical instruction in outpost duty, advanced guards, escort to convoys, and rear guards.

There will also be instruction given to all the command in castrametation-pitching tents of the different styles-to include the use of the shelter tent.

It is most earnestly recommended that sufficient money be allotted to this post to erect sufficient quarters to accommodate the officers sent to the school as instructors and students, as well as the officers on duty at the post of Fort Leavenworth. Each student officer should have two rooms assigned him. The quarters now occupied by most of them are badly lighted, too dark in the day-time for comfort and study, and in addition, are badly arranged and generally uncomfortable.

A. McD. McCOOK,
Colonel Sixth Infantry,
Bvt. Maj. Gen. U. S. Army.

The Adjutant General,
Washington, D. C.