

## **Introduction**

The culmination of a three year campaign to bring a new military base to the city of Little Rock was heralded by a forty-four gun salute in December, 1894. Pride and high hopes filled the many Arkansans who gathered at the ground breaking ceremony. Little Rock had won the honor in the face of vigorous national competition from cities like Chicago. Leading citizens hoped the post would both swell Little Rock's population growth and attract a significant amount of capital investment to their growing city. Although the fort contributed a substantial amount of capital investment to Little Rock, it never realized its full potential. It was abandoned by the military just twenty three years after it was garrisoned.

The fort was established during a period of transition in American military history. At the time that Little Rock came under consideration for the new post, the tragedy at Wounded Knee, South Dakota, ended the long cycle of Indian wars that had occupied the United States Army since its founding. The army, for lack of a clearly defined mission, continued to operate as an "Indian Constabulary," distributing new military posts throughout the country accordingly.<sup>1</sup> Two years after its completion in 1896, further expansion of the fort was abruptly disrupted by the Spanish-American War.

The aftermath of the Spanish-American War found the military attempting to counter charges of unpreparedness and struggling to shift its focus from frontier police work to spearheading imperialism. The shift resulted in a diminished mission for military facilities located in the United States. The reorganization of the American military continued until World War I, when the military found itself largely unprepared for the immensity of global warfare. World War I created a crisis that forced the army to use all existing bases to train the massive numbers of recruits as quickly as possible to rescue the weary Allied forces. It was during this period that Fort Logan H. Roots finally began to show signs of fulfilling its potential. But by the end of World War I, it had become obvious to the military that larger, more modern and more accessible bases were necessary, and Fort Roots was replaced by Camp Pike as a training facility. Fort Roots received a new mission in 1921, as the American government began to

recognize and honor its commitment to the multitude of wounded veterans. The story of this fort, like many others, is bound in the annals of American military history. Its significance is not found in the famous people who "slept there" or in the famous battles fought within its boundaries, but in the effects of its changing missions and in its relationship with Little Rock.

### **The State of the American Military, 1890**

The search for a post site in Little Rock began in 1890, when Commanding General of the Army John M. Schofield announced the closure of a significant number of small posts and arsenals, an idea originated by Secretary of War Robert T. Lincoln in 1884.<sup>2</sup> The plan was an effort to concentrate federal troops in a few larger posts to facilitate quick deployment. To this end, the Army proposed twelve new major posts in strategic locations for internal domestic protection.<sup>3</sup>

Following the Civil War, the army was in a state of transition resulting in numerous reorganizations. In 1869, the army had 255 military posts scattered throughout the country, but concentration of troops was so sparse that rarely, even at the regimental level, were troops ever assembled in mass.<sup>4</sup> Between 1870 and 1889, jurisdiction over Arkansas alone was transferred to six different military departments, the state ending up in the Department of Missouri, as territory was redistributed by the War Department.<sup>5</sup> In 1888, Congress created the Army Board of Ordnance and Fortification, and appropriated initial funding to facilitate the closure of smaller posts and the creation of twelve new major military installations in accordance with Schofield's recommendations.<sup>6</sup>

In 1890, Schofield put his troop concentration plan into action. To accommodate a shrinking budget, the War Department located these new posts in areas where they were most likely to reduce the operating cost of shipping goods and supplies. Locating them on major railroads also provided for faster and more dependable deployment, especially considering they did not know from where the next threat might arise. That same year, however, troop strength was increased to 27,089 with the addition of two new artillery regiments.<sup>7</sup>

The redistribution of troops led not only to the establishment of Fort Logan H. Roots, but also to the closing of the Little Rock Arsenal. In a report in support of Senate Bill 113, which proposed the closure of the smaller posts, Schofield stated the arsenal was "inadequate in size, in an undesirable location, and that the United States had no present need of the troops [at the arsenal] at this time."<sup>8</sup> Secretary of War Redfield Proctor wrote to Arkansas Senator James K. Jones that he concurred with Schofield's plans and went on to say that "Little Rock would naturally be selected under the general policy requirements of establishing posts on great lines of transportation and communication."<sup>9</sup>

### **Establishment of Fort Logan H. Roots**

When Little Rock officials first learned of the impending closing of the arsenal in a telegram from Representative William L. Terry, they began to court the federal government to obtain the arsenal land and secure one of the new posts.<sup>10</sup> Senator Jones had known about the new post and had approached Secretary Proctor in January about considering Little Rock for one of the new posts, well in advance of the announced closing of the arsenal.<sup>11</sup> When President Benjamin Harrison passed through Little Rock in 1890, he was entertained by prominent local citizens, including several members of the Post Committee created by the City Council to receive bids for options on land for the post.<sup>12</sup> Even ex-Governor Henry Rector got into the act by proposing to Secretary Proctor that the arsenal property be given to Little Rock in exchange for the land for the new post.<sup>13</sup>

The Little Rock City Council created the Board of Improvement for the City Park District chaired by Colonel Logan H. Roots to decide how to utilize the arsenal property in April 1890.<sup>14</sup> Roots and the Secretary of the Board Judge Eben W. Kimball recommended that the grounds be developed into a municipal park. The Tennessee Brewing Company had expressed an interest in the property, but met with heated opposition from the local Women's Christian Temperance Union, exacerbating the already heated public debate over the property's usage and development.<sup>15</sup>

Senator Jones and Representative Terry at the behest of the Little Rock City Council introduced bills in both houses on December 15, 1891, to establish one of the twelve new posts in Little Rock. Included in the bill was a provision to donate the thirty-six acre arsenal property to the city of Little Rock.<sup>16</sup> The transfer of the property was approved by Congress on April 23, 1892, and the land was deeded to the city of Little Rock on May 7, 1893, on the condition that the property be "forever exclusively devoted to the uses and purposes of a public park for the city."<sup>17</sup> The park was later named in honor of World War II General Douglas MacArthur, who was born on the arsenal grounds in 1880.

As chairman of the Post Committee, Logan Roots also made numerous trips to the headquarters of the Department of Missouri in Chicago and to Washington, D.C. to lobby for the post.<sup>18</sup> He had served in the Union army with Major General Nelson A. Miles commander of the Department of Missouri on several Civil War campaigns and they knew each other well.<sup>19</sup> He also served as the Arkansas First District representative in the 40th and 41st Congresses and used contacts made while in office in the acquisition of Big Rock Post. Years later, the *Arkansas Gazette* praised Roots in his obituary and described him as "a splendid example of the possibilities of the New South" and claimed, "He loved her people and was loved by them."<sup>20</sup>

The irony of Colonel Roots being claimed as a hero of the New South is that he had served as quartermaster on General William T. Sherman's destructive "March to the Sea."<sup>21</sup> Later, he accompanied Sherman to his Western command and was mustered out of the U. S. Volunteers on May 31, 1866, in DeValls Bluff, Arkansas, where he bought a plantation. He lived in Little Rock and became active in local politics by serving as a Collector of Internal Revenue in 1867. Although Roots was a Union officer, those who might be tempted to brand him as a typical "carpetbagger" would have to explain his bequest of one-tenth of his \$1,000,000 estate to the establishment of free city parks, the First Charity Hospital, as well as his setting up an additional trust estimated at \$100,000 to \$500,000 to maintain city indigent care programs.<sup>22</sup>

Major John D. Adams and Major W. P Campbell, both members of the Post Committee and former Union officers, joined Roots in publishing a notice that Little Rock was accepting

bids for not less than 500 acres, located at least four to five miles outside of the city, on or in close proximity to a railroad, with an adequate water supply, and containing areas of at least 1,000 yards of flat land oriented north to south, according to War Department guidelines.<sup>23</sup> Local response to the notice was overwhelmingly positive, but was not unanimous. R. H. Parham, a prominent citizen, countered the City Council's claims that the post would increase Little Rock's population with the fact that the army only had 23,000 men, and that the additional 3,200 when split among the twelve new posts would not leave a significant number assigned to Little Rock. He also challenged the claims that the army would bring four million dollars annually into the local economy by pointing to the "meager" soldiers' pay and the fact that most soldiers spent their pay in the sutler's stores on the post.<sup>24</sup> Whether other citizens harbored the same sentiments cannot be determined as no further expressions of dissent were published in the *Arkansas Gazette* or referred to in subsequent City Council minutes. The issue of the post largely disappeared from the press until Congressman Terry notified the *Arkansas Gazette*, on April 16, 1892, that Little Rock had been accepted by Congress as one of the sites for the new post.

Days later, the *Arkansas Gazette* reported that the newly amalgamated Joint Arsenal and Post Committee met at Mayor W. G. Whipple's house to prepare for the site inspection team due to arrive as soon as President Harrison approved the bill awarding the new post to Little Rock.<sup>25</sup> Harrison signed the bill on April 23, 1892, and approved Secretary of War Stephen B. Elkin's appointees for the site inspection team.<sup>26</sup> The team, consisting of Major General Nelson A. Miles, his aide-de-camp Captain Eli T. Huggins, Quartermaster General D. J. Bingham, and General Medical Director B. J. D. Irwin, arrived on June 17, 1892. The Eagle Light Battery of Little Rock met the dignitaries at the train station with a thirteen-gun salute.<sup>27</sup>

Miles had gained notoriety after the war as Jefferson Davis' jailer, but had regained popularity in the South during the Red River, Sioux, and Nez Perce' Wars, and through his role in quelling the Sioux Ghost Dance uprising.<sup>28</sup> In Little Rock, he was hailed as the "Great Indian Fighter." A storm of applause met him at the reception given in his honor at the Hotel

Richelieu.<sup>29</sup> In an interview with the *Arkansas Gazette*, Miles stated that the post would be the third largest in the South; the other two being, Newport, Kentucky, and Atlanta, Georgia.<sup>30</sup>

In between newspaper interviews and public dinners, Miles and the inspection team reviewed the proposed sites selected by the Little Rock Joint Commission. Roots, Colonel J. H. McCarthy, and Judge Kimball accompanied the team to Nubbin Ridge, Newton Creek, Mabelvale, Ensign, and Three Rock Creek, only to have them rejected one by one.<sup>31</sup> When Miles threatened to return to Chicago, the commission convinced him to keep looking. They took him to two additional sites, even though they did not have bonds on them yet. One, known then as the Nowlin Place, was located in what is now Pulaski Heights. The other was Big Rock Mountain in North Little Rock. The commission preferred Pulaski Heights due to its proximity to Little Rock, although Big Rock was at that time a part of the city's Eighth Ward.<sup>32</sup> General Miles also preferred Pulaski Heights because of closeness to the Arkansas River and Little Rock satisfied the low cost transportation and location criteria of the War Department.<sup>33</sup> Miles returned to Chicago days later, promising to delay his report until the negotiations with the Pulaski Heights landowners had been concluded.

Negotiations broke down shortly thereafter, however, and the commission requested that Senator Jones and Congressman Terry introduce a bill to authorize the Secretary of War to condemn some of the land due to the "exorbitant" asking prices of the owners.<sup>34</sup> The bill never passed and the owners continued to hold out when the leases on some of the other lands had begun to expire. It seemed that the deal for the Arsenal and the Post would fall through if something was not done.

Miles' objections to the Big Rock site centered around inadequate transportation access, even though it was located right up the hill from the main line of the Missouri-Pacific-Iron Mountain Railroad and the east-west secondary line of the Rock Island Railroad. The unsavory boomtown reputation of Argenta, located at the base of Big Rock, may have also contributed to his preference for Pulaski Heights as Argenta was later declared, "off limits," to the soldiers who were eventually stationed at Big Rock.<sup>35</sup> Troops on leave would require cheap transportation to

Little Rock to avoid the pitfalls of gambling, drinking and prostitution in the "virtually lawless" Argenta.<sup>36</sup>

A special commission, appointed by Pulaski County Judge Jacob Erb, soon eliminated one of Miles' objections when it recommended in February 1893 that a "free-bridge," a non-toll bridge, be erected to facilitate transportation between Big Rock and Little Rock.<sup>37</sup> The same day the *Arkansas Gazette* reported that Colonel Thomas Lafferty, majority owner of the Big Rock property, had been approached regarding the sale of his land, but that the commission had promised him secrecy about the asking price.<sup>38</sup> It was later revealed that Colonel Lafferty had agreed to a price of \$60,000, which was \$30,000 less than the \$90,000 aggregate cost of Pulaski Heights.<sup>39</sup> The deal had also been sweetened by the commission's promise to secure the right of way for water and sewage pipes to the river at no cost to the army.<sup>40</sup>

Miles filed his final report approving Big Rock on February 8, 1893, eight days prior to the stories in the *Arkansas Gazette*. The reason for the paper's delay in reporting the "deals" was not determined, but it does lead one to suspect clandestine negotiations between the city leaders and Miles, since prior to these occasions the paper had been very timely in reporting post developments. Another interesting item is the seemingly accelerated time table between site approval by the Secretary of War and the ceding of the property by the Arkansas Legislature. Miles' report was approved by Elkins on the sixteenth of February.<sup>41</sup> Big Rock properties were purchased just two days later under General Order No. 31, and ceded by the Arkansas Legislature just seven days later on the twenty-fifth. While it could be argued that the commission had made arrangements with the authorities in anticipation of the announcement, the speed with which the paperwork proceeded was atypical for the times. The reasons behind the accelerated schedule were not determinable, but certainly warrant further investigation.

The entire process of securing the post had taken three long years, but Big Rock Post was finally secured on March 18, 1893 when eleven deeds transferring the arsenal property to the city of Little Rock, and the Big Rock properties to the United States government were filed by Major

Steven W. Groesbeck, Judge Advocate of the U. S. Army.<sup>42</sup> Congress approved the transactions on April 23, 1893.<sup>43</sup>

### **Construction of Fort Logan H. Roots**

In his report, Miles had recommended \$1,000,000 be appropriated for improvements to the property and construction of the post.<sup>44</sup> As the primary usage of the land had been agricultural, the site did not have adequate roads, water and sewage systems, or cleared land to accommodate an extensive military base. The only access to the site was a farm road leading to the river landing below. The army had long since ceased relying solely on river transport to secure goods and supplies as railroads were faster, more reliable, and less expensive. The only access to the railroad was a circuitous route around the base of Big Rock and to the Baring Cross depot. Congress initially appropriated \$194,760 for construction of the post, and the Army Quartermaster General authorized Captain R. R. Stevens to begin accepting construction bids in August of 1894.<sup>45</sup> The new post road allowing better access to the railroads was the first order of business.

Most of the construction on the post was done by local businesses with the exception of the heating, sewage and water systems. The post road contract was awarded to John L McCoppin of Little Rock. R. P. Bateman, also of Little Rock, was awarded the contract for grading and maintaining the original access road until the new post road was complete. Plumbing contracts went to Little Rock's Hughes and Keigh Plumbing. The building construction contracts went to Frederick Kepler of Chicago, who used local materials, including stone quarried privately at the base of Big Rock, and hired several hundred local laborers.<sup>46</sup> The War Department authorized twenty seven buildings in the initial building phase including barracks with supporting kitchens, mess halls, lavatories, a bakery, storehouse, horse stable, officer's quarters, a powder magazine, and a twelve bed hospital. As was typical of most nineteenth century military installations, all of the buildings had simple lines, functional structure, and most were devoid of ornamentation.<sup>47</sup> Likewise they all faced or were in close proximity to the central elliptical parade ground, with the exception of the guardhouse at the



front entrance. The initial building phase ended in 1896. The post was garrisoned by Companies E and G of the 11th U. S. Cavalry on July 2 that same year.<sup>48</sup>

### **Fort Roots Prior to the Spanish-American War**

Big Rock Post underwent the first of many changes on April 23, 1897, when the War Department issued orders to change the name of the post to honor the late Brevet Lieutenant Colonel Logan H. Roots of the U. S. Volunteers.<sup>49</sup> Roots died as the Memorial Day parade passed his home in 1893, never seeing the fruits of his labors. Captain James A. Buchanan and the troops at Fort Roots paid a final tribute to Colonel Roots when they paused in front of his home during the 1897 Memorial Day Parade. This was their first public appearance since arriving at Little Rock, in 1896.<sup>50</sup>

The troops made their second appearance in the Fourth of July parade that same year, accompanied by a band borrowed from another fort. The recently completed Fort Roots was too small to accommodate a band. Despite all the local press attention given to the effort to secure a new military post for Little Rock, it received little mention once it became operational. After the initial phase of construction was completed there was no mention of further expansion. No other buildings were constructed on the grounds until 1905. Fort Roots, which was supposed to be the third largest in the South and contribute an estimated \$1,000,000 annually to the local economy, did not live up to expectations.

The reason for the unrealized potential lay in the army's change of mission. The 1890's was a time of transition for both the nation, and the army. The end of the Indian wars left the army without an adversary. Even the "Great Indian Fighter" Nelson Miles had accepted the transition from war to peace when he explained, "War Department policy now is to concentrate the Army in larger and fewer post . . . with the disappearance of Indian troubles making a greater number [of posts] unnecessary."<sup>51</sup>

In 1891, the army reorganized its command structure by discontinuing the Atlantic, Missouri, and Pacific divisions, while retaining the eight military departments, whose commanders reported directly to the Major General commanding the Army, thereby streamlining

the high level command structure.<sup>52</sup> This reorganization moved Arkansas from the Department of Missouri to the Department of Colorado. Various adjustments in higher level army organization continued, but at the troop level the army operated, "with little training, no modern weapons, and no regimental or divisional command structure."<sup>53</sup> This period of transition left troops at the local level with little to do except appear in parades, and the lack of an impending threat left few funds or reasons to expand Fort Roots any further. The troubles brewing in Cuba would soon demonstrate the War Department's failure to address military preparedness at the local level.

### Spanish-American War 1898

Construction at Fort Roots was halted when the War Department ordered twenty-two regular army infantry regiments to assemble at various ports on the Gulf of Mexico on April 15, 1898. The troops stationed at Fort Roots departed and eventually served in Puerto Rico.<sup>54</sup> Eight days later, McKinley called for 125,000 volunteers, ages eighteen to forty-five, to serve for at least a two-year period in the Spanish-American War.<sup>55</sup> Congress also approved a War Department request that temporarily increased the legal size of the U. S. Army to 64,719 by reorganizing infantry regiments to consist of three battalions with twelve companies apiece, each containing 106 men.<sup>56</sup> In addition, each state was assigned a quota of volunteers according to its population to swell the U.S. Army to wartime strength.

Arkansas Governor Daniel W. Jones issued General Order No.2 on May 2 to raise the two required regiments.<sup>57</sup> The order called for volunteers to assemble and organize at Camp Dodge. Formerly the corner of 17th Street and College Avenue in Little Rock, the property was part of the estate of the late Dr. Roderick Dodge, whose family loaned it to the state in response to Fort Root's commanding officer Lieutenant Edward H. Phillip's opinion that Fort Roots was not "extensive enough" to accommodate 2,000 men.<sup>58</sup>

McKinley, trying to appease the National Guard lobby, had suggested that the state volunteer troops be filled first, from the respective state's guard units, and then supplemented with civilians as necessary. The Arkansas State Guard was called out but it was too small and ill

equipped to fulfill the state's quota.<sup>59</sup> The state had failed to adequately support its State Guard, preferring instead to depend on the federal government for domestic defense. Thus many Guard units were forced to seek private funding to provide equipment, uniforms, armory rent, transportation, and supplies.<sup>60</sup>

The thirteen companies of the 1st Arkansas Volunteer Regiment were mustered in at Camp Dodge on May 20 under the command of a former military instructor at the University of Arkansas, Colonel Elias Chandler. They were sent to Camp George H. Thomas, Chickamauga Park, Georgia, as part of the 1st Brigade of the 2nd Division of the 3rd Corps. They returned, without going overseas to Fort Roots in September 1898, remaining there until mustered out on October 15. The men received roughly forty to eighty dollars a piece for their miserable stay in the squalor of Camp Thomas.<sup>61</sup> The thirteen companies of the Second Arkansas Volunteer Regiment were mustered in at Camp Dodge on May 25 under the command of Colonel Virgil Y. Cook of Batesville. They transferred to the Second Brigade of the Second Division of the Third Corps at Camp Shipp in Anniston, Alabama, where they remained until mustered out on February 25, 1899.<sup>62</sup>

### **Post War Effects**

American military affairs during the Spanish-American war have been described as, "the absence of any planning and preparation, the lack of cooperation among the [War Department] bureaus, and delay caused by red tape"<sup>63</sup> The deficiencies of the War Department and the disastrous effects on the troops became a public scandal resulting in President McKinley appointing retired General Grenville M. Dodge to a commission to investigate the numerous allegations of mismanagement. The Dodge Commission blamed the bureaucracy of the War Department, in particular the Quartermaster and Medical Departments, for the "deplorable conditions" that soldiers and volunteers had endured while serving their country. Congress was also cited for adding to the bureaucratic nightmare by its, "insistence upon monitoring departmental administration in detail."<sup>64</sup> As a result of the Dodge Commission's findings, Secretary of War Russell Alger was replaced by Elihu Root in August, 1899.

Root began a systematic reorganization of the War Department focused on streamlining the bureaucracy and improving military planning and preparedness. One of his first actions was to abolish the position of Commanding General of the Army, then held by Lieutenant General Nelson Miles, creating in its place the office of Chief of Staff under the direct supervision of the Secretary of War. The Army War College was also created under Root to train staff members and function as the planning arm of the military. A March 2, 1899 act of Congress had retained 65,000 regular army and 35,000 volunteers to maintain the newly acquired territories of Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines, but Root persuaded Congress to increase the size of the Regulars still further. He accomplished this by expanding the number of infantry regiments from twenty-five to thirty, cavalry regiments from ten to fifteen, and reorganizing the artillery regiments into an Artillery Corps, made up of thirty field artillery batteries and 126 coastal artillery companies. Those changes brought the legal size of the U.S. Army to 88,000.<sup>65</sup> Root also created a weapons development program to modernize the weapons and munitions of the United States Army.

While Root was revamping the army, the troops at Fort Roots, a detachment drawn from Company D of the 7th U.S. Infantry, "continued to guard and care for the federal property."<sup>66</sup> Secretary Root issued Special Order No. 261, in 1902, convening a board of officers to review and report on the location and condition of all military posts. Their reports focused on the water and sewage systems, probably a result of the abysmal conditions found to exist at Camp Thomas, and found Fort Roots in "good order".<sup>67</sup>

The Fort received no further mention in the press until President Theodore Roosevelt visited and reviewed the troops as part of a regional tour in the fall of 1905.<sup>68</sup> During this visit he was entertained by the "prominent families" in Little Rock. Whether a result of the War Department's new focus on planning and preparation or as a result of President Roosevelt's visit, the second phase of construction began at Fort Roots in 1905. The construction resulted in additional sixty-five-man barracks with supporting lavatories, kitchens and mess halls, a post

exchange, a gymnasium, an administrative building, new quarters for the commanding officer, bachelor-officers quarters, and additional stables.

Following in Root's footsteps, Secretary of War Henry Stimson attempted further modernization of the U. S. Army in 1910, when he and Chief of Staff General Leonard Wood attempted to abolish "hitching post forts left over from the Indian Wars." One of the posts on their list was Fort Logan H. Roots.<sup>69</sup> Their efforts were met with considerable opposition from Congressmen in the effected areas who lobbied to have Wood removed. The uproar in the Congress, coupled with vigorous opposition within the War Department to Stimson's other sweeping reforms, prevented most of the proposed closings.

### **Mexican Border 1912-1917**

The new construction at Fort Roots increased its capabilities for training the large number of troops who would soon confront the trouble brewing in Mexico. A series of violent revolutions swept over Mexico beginning in 1911. As the resulting chaos threatened to spill over the border, Lieutenant Colonel Elmore. F. Taggart the commanding officer at Fort Roots received word in early February 1912 to "be ready to move to the Mexican border on short notice."<sup>70</sup> Taggart placed the garrison on "ready alert" and sentries patrolled the grounds to ensure that no soldiers left the fort. <sup>71</sup> This alert passed without deployment and was followed by a series of similar events in the coming months. It was not until March 1914, however, that the 4th Company of the 9th U.S. Infantry was actually sent to the staging area in Laredo, Texas via the "Special" St. Louis-Iron Mountain train. <sup>72</sup> By this time, Victoriano Huerta had seized power in Mexico much to the chagrin of President Woodrow Wilson. Wilson ordered the U.S. Navy to seize and occupy the port of Vera Cruz in April of 1914. Pancho Villa, the leader of a faction opposing Huerta, attacked Columbus, New Mexico, on March 9, 1916.<sup>73</sup> Wilson responded by mobilizing the National Guard units of Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico to augment the regular army troops already stationed at the border.

### **National Guard**

The federalization of the National Guard had long been a point of contention in American politics. The Guard had lobbied the War Department prior to the Spanish-American War to become an integral part of national defense, but as the Dodge Commission had shown, it was not prepared due to lack of funds and professional training.<sup>74</sup> Elihu Root had pushed for federal support of the Guard to ensure an effective reserve for the regulars in time of need. He persuaded Congress to pass the Dick Act of 1903, which authorized increased funding for the militia and payment of guardsmen brought under federal authority.<sup>75</sup> In 1908, the act was amended to require the federal government to call the National Guard into service before calling for volunteers and that once federalized it could be retained for as long as necessary.<sup>76</sup> The Attorney General ruled in 1912, however, that the Guard could not be sent outside of America's territorial limits.<sup>77</sup>

The long-standing debate was settled by the National Defense Act of 1916, which made the National Guard an integral part of the regular army.<sup>78</sup> The National Guard could now, without question, be placed under complete federal control "in time of war or gross public emergency."<sup>79</sup> By July 4, 1916, National Guard units from fourteen states had moved through the four major assembly areas, in Texas and Arizona, and were assigned to various locations along the border.

In Arkansas, Adjutant General Lloyd England issued orders for all Guard units to assemble at their home stations on June 19 and begin training with five hours of drill each day.<sup>80</sup> A total of twenty-four of these companies assembled at Fort Roots for drill and final inspection, as federal recognition of the units was dependent on passing War Department guidelines.<sup>81</sup> The newly organized 2nd Arkansas Infantry Regiment under Colonel Henry Stroupe of Paris was transported in July to Fort Sam Houston in Texas and subsequently assigned to Deming, New Mexico. The Guard units remained on United States soil in support of Brigadier General John J. Pershing and the "Punitive Expedition," which had been launched on March 14, 1916. A month after the Punitive Expedition returned from Mexico in February of 1917, the 2nd Arkansas

Infantry returned to Fort Roots. The regiment remained on active duty status until August 5, 1917, when it was federalized for action in a different part of the world.<sup>82</sup>

Recruiting men to supplement the 2nd Arkansas Infantry Regiment continued back home through January of 1917, when even the recruiter detachments were transferred to Deming. The continued bureaucratic immobilization within the War Department was revealed in a communication between Captain N.M. Cartmell and Major General Frederick Funston. Cartmell, a recruiter for the Arkansas National Guard, requested that he and his officers be allowed to utilize the automobile to enable them to cover more territory. Funston replied "While it is realized that canvassing parties could cover more territory by automobile or other vehicular transportation, existing authority from the War Department does not allow such expenditures to be made and the authority you request cannot be granted."<sup>83</sup> Funston, rather than commending Cartmell's initiative, dismissed the request. Flexibility was obviously one area in which the War Department was still struggling.

### **Reserve Officers Training Corps**

An area in which the War Department began to make strides was the training of reserve officers and troops. The National Defense Act had also authorized the Officers Reserve Corps, Enlisted Reserve Corps, and Reserve Officers Training Corps. Wilson's Secretary of War Newton D. Baker placed two of the newly authorized Reserve Officers Training Corps camps in the 12th Division.<sup>84</sup> One of these camps was established at Fort Roots in April of 1917, perhaps due to the intensive lobbying of General Pershing by the Little Rock City Council and Chamber of Commerce.<sup>85</sup> A new flurry of construction at Fort Roots began in 1917 in conjunction with the new training center opening up a new 30 acre site complete with barracks, kitchens, and dining rooms.<sup>86</sup>

Prior to the establishment of the ROTC, officer training was conducted by roving officers. One such rover, who served at Fort Roots, was George C. Marshall. His original assignment had been with the Fourth Infantry, but he had never served with that unit. He bounced around the country and even overseas until the 1910 "Manchu Law" required that he

and other detached officers serve at least two years with their assigned units.<sup>87</sup> Marshall rejoined the 4th U.S. Infantry, then stationed at Fort Roots, and organized a post graduate garrison school.<sup>88</sup> The 4th Infantry including Marshall was subsequently moved to Fort Snelling in Minnesota, leaving the garrison school largely neglected.

The new ROTC camp began its first training session on May 8, 1917 with 2,465 applicants from Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi.<sup>89</sup> Colonel R. L. Bullard the new commander of Fort Roots ran the camp strictly by the book and by weeks end, 800 of the applicants had been rejected due to a variety of physical reasons or their inability to pass written examinations.<sup>90</sup> The South Carolina High Command was even considering the Fort as a possible site for a 2800 man concentration camp.<sup>91</sup> Former Chief of Staff Leonard Wood, the South Carolina High Commander visited the "hitching post" fort in 1917 and found it to be, "fully utilized."<sup>92</sup>

## **World War I**

The activity at Fort Roots expanded even further as a direct result of America's Declaration of War with Germany on April 5, 1917. Pershing had barely left Mexican soil when he was summoned to Washington to head the American Expeditionary Force in Europe. The War Department had notified National Guard adjutant generals that mobilization for war in Europe was a possibility as early as February 1917, while they still had units on the border.<sup>93</sup> The remaining units had been retained under federal authority to keep them assembled and available for immediate service elsewhere. By May, British and French forces on the Western Front in Europe were growing so weak that it was feared that their resistance would collapse before the United States could train and deploy desperately needed reinforcements. To this end, the War Department pulled the 16th, 18th, 26th, and 28th U.S. Infantry Regiments off the Mexican Border, bolstered their numbers with fresh recruits, reconstituted them as the 1st Division, and shipped them to France.

Further aid could not be sent to France until the training of new recruits was complete. The scope of World War I required immense armies and the United States was again forced to



swell its military forces with untrained civilians. Not all of these men were volunteers. On May 18, 1917, Congress passed the Selective Service Act requiring all males between the ages of twenty-one and thirty to register for the draft. The War Department authorized the federalization of National Guardsmen not then in federal service by August 5, and those already in federal service were drafted under Section III of the National Defense Act.<sup>94</sup>

The day before the Selective Service Act passed, Governor Charles Brough of Arkansas and Fort Roots commander Colonel R. L. Bullard mustered in the 12th Provisional Regiment of Reserves, consisting of ten infantry companies, an engineer company, and three artillery batteries, on the capital grounds.<sup>95</sup> By June 5, 1917, 149,027 Arkansans had registered for the draft.<sup>96</sup> Fort Roots had become a beehive of activity. In addition to the ROTC camp and the regular army detachment, the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Arkansas Infantry Regiments were beginning their ninety day intensive instruction and physical conditioning in an adjacent area of Fort Roots, known as Camp George W. Hays. The troops were subject to fourteen hours of daily training.<sup>97</sup> They also participated in the ongoing construction at the Fort by building a road from the training camp to the parade ground and clearing additional acres of land. Due to the scarcity of ammunition and equipment, artillery training was improvised by mounting stove pipes onto two wheel carts with troops never actually firing live ammunition until graduation day.<sup>98</sup> The mosquitoes infesting the post were so bad that post Sanitation Officer Lieutenant Colonel Clayton informed the Little Rock City Council that the soldiers would be moved unless the city assisted in mosquito abatement activities.<sup>99</sup>

### **Citizens Military Training Corps**

The guardsmen received a total of \$125.00 for the three months of back breaking work and grueling training under a federal program called the Citizens Military Training Corps.<sup>100</sup> The CMTC program had been developed as a reserve training unit based on Major General Leonard Wood's, "Plattsburg Model."<sup>101</sup> While Chief of Staff, Wood had organized summer camps where college students would receive military training at their own expense. The first of these camps were located in Plattsburg, New York, and run with private funds. The CMTC's

were also classified as private citizens, but were trained at the Army's expense. Upon completion of their training they would be accepted into the regular army.

### **Fort Roots and Little Rock**

World War I witnessed the most interaction between Fort Roots and the city of Little Rock. The citizenry supported the men stationed at the Fort by becoming very active in its daily activities. The local Boy Scouts volunteered as message runners between the different training camps.<sup>102</sup> The YMCA set up a facility on the post grounds. A group of Little Rock women organized a free taxi service to transport new arrivals between the train station and the fort.<sup>103</sup> The Little Rock Police, however, shut down an enthusiastic group of jitney operators who were selling whiskey to the troops as they ferried them across the river.<sup>104</sup> Colonel Bullard's appeals for laborers to clear land for additional trainees arriving from Fort Sheridan in Illinois received a quick response.<sup>105</sup> The citizenry became so enamored with Fort Roots that the *Arkansas Gazette* began devoting a daily section of the paper to "Fort Roots News" in the summer of 1917.

As summer faded into fall, Fort Roots seem to fade from the public's consciousness as the first session trainees completed their training. The 1st Arkansas Infantry Regiment under Colonel Charles D. James became the 153rd Regiment of the National Army. The 2nd Regiment under Colonel Henry Stroupe became the 142nd Field Artillery.<sup>106</sup> The 3rd Regiment was divided between the 154th Infantry and the 141st Machine Gun Battalion. All three regiments were transported to Camp Beauregard, Louisiana, in September to help form the 39th Division (Delta Division). Subsequently, Delta Division was shipped overseas where it functioned as a Depot Division based in France.<sup>107</sup>

### **Effects of World War I**

In the meantime, Fort Roots personnel prepared to train the next group of ROTC and CMTC recruits called into service by President Wilson in August 1917, but it was not to be. After the last of Fort Roots' trainees shipped out, local interest shifted to the establishment of a new military base in Little Rock. By 1917, the army had evaluated its current facilities and found some of them lacking. Consequently the War Department began to build new modern

training facilities. A group of Little Rock businessmen formed the Army Post Development Company and obtained the support of General Pershing.<sup>108</sup> Camp Pike was established on 13,000 acres compared to the 1,100 acres of Fort Roots, allowing the army to train and house a greater number of troops. It also had the advantage of being located in a relatively flat wide open area. The hilly heavily forested terrain on Big Rock had hindered previous efforts to expand the facilities at Fort Roots. The terrain of Camp Pike and the use of modern machinery allowed the army to establish and expand bases more economically and much more quickly. Camp Pike was established in June 1917 and was ready to receive trainees by September. Fort Roots initial construction had required three years to complete due to the difficulties of the terrain and the lack of modern equipment. The larger and more accessible Camp Pike took over as the training facility for the recently formed 87th Division, which drew its personnel from Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi. The troops at Fort Roots saw their mission reduced to guarding and caring for federal property until it was transferred to the Public Health Service in 1919.

### **The Final Mission**

Prior to World War I, the Public Health Service and the Bureau of War Risk Insurance had provided separate and disjointed limited health care and benefits to veterans. With 204,000 Americans wounded in World War I the old system needed immediate upgrading.<sup>109</sup> In the face of these staggering numbers Congress passed Public Law 326 on March 4, 1919. Arkansas Senator Joseph T. Robinson sponsored the act to provide hospital and sanitarium facilities for discharged sick and disabled soldiers, sailors and marines. The Treasury Department took control of Fort Roots and transferred its administration to the Public Health Service as a result of PL 326, thus ending the post's days as an active military fort. By August 1921, Congress established the Veterans Bureau in an effort to consolidate benefits, medical care, and vocational rehabilitation for veterans. President Warren G. Harding's Executive Order 3669 of April 29, 1922, directed the Public Health Service to surrender Fort Roots and other hospitals to the

Veterans Bureau. Fort Roots was surrendered, shortly thereafter, and has been maintained by the Department of Veterans Affairs to the present day.

The original 1,100 acre site of Fort Roots no longer exists in its entirety. Over the years, it was broken up through sale or donation leaving only 178 acres intact. 656 acres was declared surplus and turned over to Burns Park in 1955. Many of the original buildings have been lost to weather, fire, and the bulldozer, but the buildings surrounding the parade ground have been preserved and were placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974. A twenty-two acre site consisting of the original buildings and the parade ground were declared a National Landmark in 1975.

### **Conclusion**

Mrs. Pat (Miriam) Crawford, daughter of Logan H. Roots, said this about the fort and her father in 1959: "Times have changed and so many things are gone . . . I was surprised that anybody was interested today."<sup>110</sup> This statement may be shared by those who measure historical significance by the famous people who "slept there" or by the famous battles fought within its boundaries. But to those who can look beyond the trivial, Fort Roots witnessed not only the transformation of Arkansas, but the transformation of the American military in its struggle to protect and serve the citizens of the United States. It rose amid hopes of glory during the Gilded Age largely through political manipulation. After an unpromising start, the post attained prominence early in World War I, and then faded quietly into the background. Fort Roots expanded and contracted in direct correlation to the changing needs of the American military. The history of the American military during the years 1890 to 1921 and the Fort's historical relationship with Little Rock are etched upon the remaining walls of Fort Logan H. Roots.

- <sup>1</sup> Russell F. Weigley, *History of the United States Army* (New York: MacMillan, 1967), 313.
- <sup>2</sup> Annual Report of the Secretary of War, House Ex Doc. No. 1, Part 2, 48th Congress, 2nd Session, Serial 2277, 1884, 4-8.
- <sup>3</sup> James L. McDonough, *Schofield: Union General in Civil War and Reconstruction* (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1972), 92.
- <sup>4</sup> Weigley, 267.
- <sup>5</sup> U. S. Army, *Guide to Military Post and Reservations* pages 261-262, J.N. Heiskill Collection, Pam 5618, University of Arkansas at Little Rock Archives, Little Rock, Arkansas.
- <sup>6</sup> Weigley, 267.
- <sup>7</sup> Weigley, Appendix.
- <sup>8</sup> House Committee on Military Affairs, *Report No. 757*, prepared by Mr. Belknap, 52nd Congress, 1st sess., March 17, 1892) 3. Military Affairs file, Arkansas History Commission Archives, Little Rock, Arkansas. Ironically, Schofield had been the presiding Union commander of General Davidson and General Steele who during the Civil War had reclaimed the Arsenal from the Confederacy. James L McDonough, *Schofield: Union General in Civil War and Reconstruction*, 44.
- <sup>9</sup> *Arkansas Gazette* (Little Rock), 27 March 1890.
- <sup>10</sup> Little Rock City Council Meeting Minutes, February to April 1890. City Hall, Little Rock, Arkansas.
- <sup>11</sup> *Arkansas Gazette*, 27 March 1890.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 April 1890.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 24 April 1890.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 April 1890.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 16 December 1891.
- <sup>16</sup> National Register of Historic Places Application (prepared by the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, 1974), 2. North Little Rock Historical Society, North Little Rock, Arkansas.

- <sup>17</sup> House Committee on Military Affairs, 2.
- <sup>18</sup> *In Memoriam, Logan Holt Roots* (Little Rock: Democrat Co., 1893), 10.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.
- <sup>20</sup> *Arkansas Gazette*, 31 May 1893.
- <sup>21</sup> Dallas Herndon, ed., *Centennial History of Arkansas*, vol. 1 (Little Rock: S. J. Clarke, 1922), 70.
- <sup>22</sup> *Arkansas Gazette*, 6 June 1892. 1st Charity Hospital was originally named Roots Hospital and is often confused with Fort Roots hospital. The hospital was renamed shortly after Big Rock Post was changed to Fort Logan H. Roots.
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 April 1890.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 4 November 1891.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 23 April 1892.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 26 April 1892.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 17 June 1892.
- <sup>28</sup> Trevor Dupuy, Curt Johnson, and David L. Bongord, *The Encyclopedia of Military Biography* (New York: Harper Collins, 1992), 506.
- <sup>29</sup> *Arkansas Gazette*, 19 June 1892.
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 18, June 1892.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 21, June 1892.
- <sup>32</sup> Tim G. Nutt, "Floods, Flatcars, and Floozies: Creating the City of North Little Rock, Arkansas." *The Pulaski County Historical Review* 44 (Summer 1993): 31.
- <sup>33</sup> *Arkansas Gazette*, 15 February 1893.
- <sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 16 February 1893.
- <sup>35</sup> Evelyn K. Eubank, *Indelible Footprints* (Little Rock: privately printed, 1975), 31.
- <sup>36</sup> Tim Nutt, 28.

- <sup>37</sup> James R. Fisher and Edith Pendergraft, *History of Fort Roots: Old to New* (Little Rock: V.A. Hospital Graphic Arts Clinic, 1986), 5.
- <sup>38</sup> *Arkansas Gazette*, 15 February 1893.
- <sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 16 February 1893.
- <sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>41</sup> U.S. Army, *Guide to Military Posts and Reservations*, 261.
- <sup>42</sup> Janette Miller and Edith Pendergraft, *Chronicle of a Century: The Story of Fort Roots* (Little Rock: EEO Centennial Committee, 1993), 8.
- <sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>44</sup> *Arkansas Gazette*, 7 March 1893.
- <sup>45</sup> National Register of Historic Places Application, 2.
- <sup>46</sup> Fisher and Pendergraft, 10.
- <sup>47</sup> National Historic Landmark Nomination, (prepared by the Historic Landmarks Project Company of Nashville, 1975), 2. North Little Rock Historical Society.
- <sup>48</sup> Arkansas was transferred from the Department of Missouri to the Department of Colorado in 1891. U.S. Army, Special Order No. 49 of 1896 garrisoned the post, Record Group 393, National Archives, Washington, D.C.
- <sup>49</sup> U. S. Army, General Order No. 24 of 1897. Record Group 393, National Archives.
- <sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 28 May 1897.
- <sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 18, June 1892
- <sup>52</sup> U. S. Army, *Guide to Military Posts and Reservations*, 155.
- <sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 290.
- <sup>54</sup> Frazer, 16.
- <sup>55</sup> Gregory J. W. Urwin, *The United States Infantry: An Illustrated History 1775-1918* (New York: Sterling, 1991), 136.

- <sup>56</sup> Ibid., 139.
- <sup>57</sup> Bertha Davidson, "Arkansas in the Spanish-American War." *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* V (Autumn 1946): 210.
- <sup>58</sup> *Arkansas Gazette*, 30 April 1898.
- <sup>59</sup> The Arkansas State Guard was renamed the Arkansas National Guard in 1907. Nathan L. Barlow, "Brief History of the 153rd Infantry." *Arkansas Military Journal* 2 (Winter 1993): 9.
- <sup>60</sup> "Arkansas Militia: Pre-World War I, 1874 to 1916." *Arkansas Military Journal* 5 (Winter 1996): 8.
- <sup>61</sup> Davidson, 210.
- <sup>62</sup> Ibid., 213.
- <sup>63</sup> James E. Hewes Jr., *From Root to McNamara: Army Organization and Administration 1900-1963* (Washington: U.S. Army Center for Military History, 1975): 6.
- <sup>64</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>65</sup> Weigley, 317.
- <sup>66</sup> U.S. Army, Annual Report of the Major General Commanding the Army. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1899): 14
- <sup>67</sup> U.S. Army, *Guide to Military Posts and Reservations*, 262.
- <sup>68</sup> *Arkansas Gazette*, 5 October 1905.
- <sup>69</sup> Forrest C. Pogue, *George C. Marshall: Education of a General* (New York: Viking Press, 1963), 112.
- <sup>70</sup> Miller, 46.
- <sup>71</sup> *Arkansas Gazette*, 6 February 1912.
- <sup>72</sup> Adams, 129.
- <sup>73</sup> Urwin, 152.
- <sup>74</sup> Hewes, 6.



- <sup>75</sup> Clarence C. Clendenen, *Blood on the Border: The U. S. Army and the Mexican Irregulars* (New York: MacMillan, 1962), 287.
- <sup>76</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>77</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>78</sup> Urwin, 153.
- <sup>79</sup> Clendenen, 288.
- <sup>80</sup> General Order No. 10 of 1916. Arkansas National Guard file, B-1, 137. UALR Archives.
- <sup>81</sup> General Order No. 29 of 1916. Arkansas National Guard file, B-1, 137. UALR Archives.
- <sup>82</sup> "Brigadier General Elgan Clayton Robertson: Mexican Border War, World War I, and World War II." *Arkansas Military Journal* 2 (Spring 1994): 12.
- <sup>83</sup> Major General Frederick Funston to Captain N.M. Cartmell, 19 December 1916. Arkansas National Guard file, B-1, 137. UALR Archives.
- <sup>84</sup> Secretary Stimson had succeeded in reforming the organization of the Army into Divisions and Brigades. Arkansas as of April 1917 was in the 12th Division under Pershing.
- <sup>85</sup> *Arkansas Gazette* 18 April 1917.
- <sup>86</sup> Ibid., 28 April 1917.
- <sup>87</sup> Pogue, 117.
- <sup>88</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>89</sup> *Arkansas Gazette*, 15 May 1917.
- <sup>90</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>91</sup> Arkansas had been transferred from the Southern District to the Southeastern District when Pershing was called to Washington, D.C.
- <sup>92</sup> *Arkansas Gazette*, 14 May 1917.
- <sup>93</sup> "Arkansas Guard during World War I." *Arkansas Military Journal* 2 (Winter 1993), 5.
- <sup>94</sup> Arkansas National Guard. Memorandum from Adjutant General to Guard commanders of

May 23, 1917. Arkansas National Guard file, B-1, 137. UALR Archives.

<sup>95</sup> Fisher, 22.

<sup>96</sup> Dallas T. Herndon, ed., *Centennial History of Arkansas*, vol. 1, (Little Rock: S. J. Clarke, 1922), 718.

<sup>97</sup> *Arkansas Gazette*, 16 May 1917.

<sup>98</sup> Miller, 49.

<sup>99</sup> *Arkansas Gazette*, 16 May 1917.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 47-48.

<sup>101</sup> Weigley, 342.

<sup>102</sup> *Arkansas Gazette*, 14 May 1917.

<sup>103</sup> Jim Lester and Judy Lester, *Greater Little Rock* (Norfolk: Donning Co., 1986), 157.

<sup>104</sup> *Arkansas Gazette*, 19 May 1917.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 20 May, 1917.

<sup>106</sup> The men of the 2nd Arkansas Infantry Regiment built a rock monument in honor of their transformation into the 142nd Field Artillery, which still stands on the property.

<sup>107</sup> Depot Divisions provided replacements for other Divisions and established additional training facilities for newly arriving units.

<sup>108</sup> Herndon, 722.

<sup>109</sup> Robinson E. Adkins, *Medical Care of Veterans* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1967), 102.

<sup>110</sup> *Arkansas Gazette*, 26 April 1959.

**LISA D. THILO**



289 Sellers Road ◆ Vilonia, Arkansas 72173  
Home Phone 501-796-8756 ◆ Email lthilo@uca.campus.mci.net

August 28, 1997

Mr. Slade A. McPherson  
7819 Highway 107  
Sherwood, AR 72120

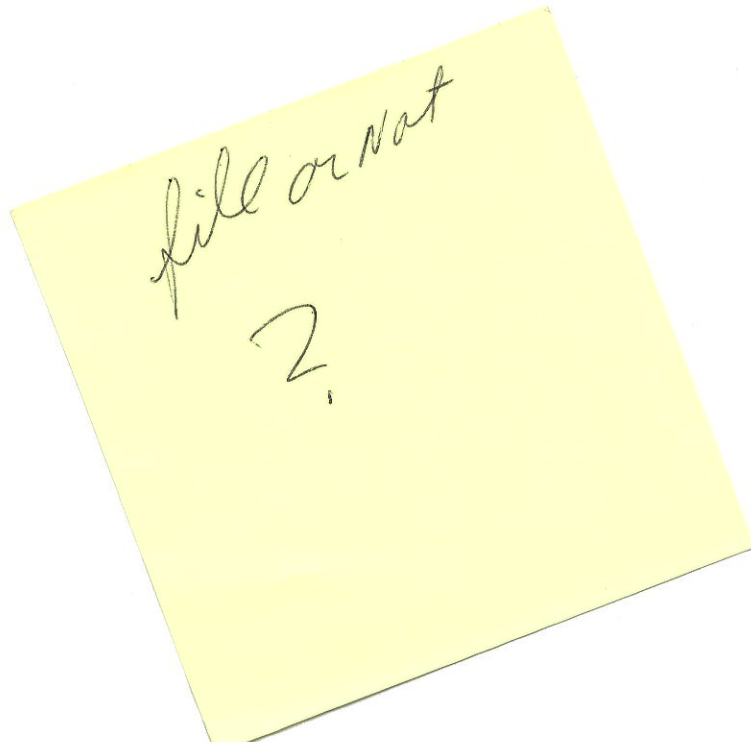
Dear Mr. McPherson,

I have enclosed a copy of my piece on Fort Logan H. Roots as per our phone conversation. Thank you again for your interest in my article. Please do not hesitate to call or write if I can be of further assistance. I was unable to locate the name of the chaplain at the VA with an interest in Guard history, but I will keep looking and will forward as soon as possible.

Sincerely,



Lisa D. Thilo



file or not?  
?

## Introduction

The culmination of a three year campaign to bring a new military base to the city of Little Rock was heralded by a forty-four gun salute in December, 1894. Pride and high hopes filled the many Arkansans who gathered at the ground breaking ceremony. Little Rock had won the honor in the face of vigorous national competition from cities like Chicago. Leading citizens hoped the post would both swell Little Rock's population growth and attract a significant amount of capital investment to their growing city. Although the fort contributed a substantial amount of capital investment to Little Rock, it never realized its full potential. It was abandoned by the military just twenty three years after it was garrisoned.

The fort was established during a period of transition in American military history. At the time that Little Rock came under consideration for the new post, the tragedy at Wounded Knee, South Dakota, ended the long cycle of Indian wars that had occupied the United States Army since its founding. The army, for lack of a clearly defined mission, continued to operate as an "Indian Constabulary," distributing new military posts throughout the country accordingly.<sup>1</sup> Two years after its completion in 1896, further expansion of the fort was abruptly disrupted by the Spanish-American War.

The aftermath of the Spanish-American War found the military attempting to counter charges of unpreparedness and struggling to shift its focus from frontier police work to spearheading imperialism. The shift resulted in a diminished mission for military facilities located in the United States. The reorganization of the American military continued until World War I, when the military found itself largely unprepared for the immensity of global warfare. World War I created a crisis that forced the army to use all existing bases to train the massive numbers of recruits as quickly as possible to rescue the weary Allied forces. It was during this period that Fort Logan H. Roots finally began to show signs of fulfilling its potential. But by the end of World War I, it had become obvious to the military that larger, more modern and more accessible bases were necessary, and Fort Roots was replaced by Camp Pike as a training facility. Fort Roots received a new mission in 1921, as the American government began to

← *Need to get*

recognize and honor its commitment to the multitude of wounded veterans. The story of this fort, like many others, is bound in the annals of American military history. Its significance is not found in the famous people who "slept there" or in the famous battles fought within its boundaries, but in the effects of its changing missions and in its relationship with Little Rock.

### **The State of the American Military, 1890**

The search for a post site in Little Rock began in 1890, when Commanding General of the Army John M. Schofield announced the closure of a significant number of small posts and arsenals, an idea originated by Secretary of War Robert T. Lincoln in 1884.<sup>2</sup> The plan was an effort to concentrate federal troops in a few larger posts to facilitate quick deployment. To this end, the Army proposed twelve new major posts in strategic locations for internal domestic protection.<sup>3</sup>

Following the Civil War, the army was in a state of transition resulting in numerous reorganizations. In 1869, the army had 255 military posts scattered throughout the country, but concentration of troops was so sparse that rarely, even at the regimental level, were troops ever assembled in mass.<sup>4</sup> Between 1870 and 1889, jurisdiction over Arkansas alone was transferred to six different military departments, the state ending up in the Department of Missouri, as territory was redistributed by the War Department.<sup>5</sup> In 1888, Congress created the Army Board of Ordnance and Fortification, and appropriated initial funding to facilitate the closure of smaller posts and the creation of twelve new major military installations in accordance with Schofield's recommendations.<sup>6</sup>

In 1890, Schofield put his troop concentration plan into action. To accommodate a shrinking budget, the War Department located these new posts in areas where they were most likely to reduce the operating cost of shipping goods and supplies. Locating them on major railroads also provided for faster and more dependable deployment, especially considering they did not know from where the next threat might arise. That same year, however, troop strength was increased to 27,089 with the addition of two new artillery regiments.<sup>7</sup>

The redistribution of troops led not only to the establishment of Fort Logan H. Roots, but also to the closing of the Little Rock Arsenal. In a report in support of Senate Bill 113, which proposed the closure of the smaller posts, Schofield stated the arsenal was "inadequate in size, in an undesirable location, and that the United States had no present need of the troops [at the arsenal] at this time."<sup>8</sup> Secretary of War Redfield Proctor wrote to Arkansas Senator James K. Jones that he concurred with Schofield's plans and went on to say that "Little Rock would naturally be selected under the general policy requirements of establishing posts on great lines of transportation and communication."<sup>9</sup>

### **Establishment of Fort Logan H. Roots**

When Little Rock officials first learned of the impending closing of the arsenal in a telegram from Representative William L. Terry, they began to court the federal government to obtain the arsenal land and secure one of the new posts.<sup>10</sup> Senator Jones had known about the new post and had approached Secretary Proctor in January about considering Little Rock for one of the new post, well in advance of the announced closing of the arsenal.<sup>11</sup> When President Benjamin Harrison passed through Little Rock in 1890, he was entertained by prominent local citizens, including several members of the Post Committee created by the City Council to receive bids for options on land for the post.<sup>12</sup> Even ex-Governor Henry Rector got into the act by proposing to Secretary Proctor that the arsenal property be given to Little Rock in exchange for the land for the new post.<sup>13</sup>

The Little Rock City Council created the Board of Improvement for the City Park District chaired by Colonel Logan H. Roots to decide how to utilize the arsenal property in April 1890.<sup>14</sup> Roots and the Secretary of the Board Judge Eben W. Kimball recommended that the grounds be developed into a municipal park. The Tennessee Brewing Company had expressed an interest in the property, but met with heated opposition from the local Women's Christian Temperance Union, exacerbating the already heated public debate over the property's usage and development.<sup>15</sup>

Senator Jones and Representative Terry at the behest of the Little Rock City Council introduced bills in both houses on December 15, 1891, to establish one of the twelve new posts in Little Rock. Included in the bill was a provision to donate the thirty-six acre arsenal property to the city of Little Rock.<sup>16</sup> The transfer of the property was approved by Congress on April 23, 1892, and the land was deeded to the city of Little Rock on May 7, 1893, on the condition that the property be "forever exclusively devoted to the uses and purposes of a public park for the city."<sup>17</sup> The park was later named in honor of World War II General Douglas MacArthur, who was born on the arsenal grounds in 1880.

As chairman of the Post Committee, Logan Roots also made numerous trips to the headquarters of the Department of Missouri in Chicago and to Washington, D.C. to lobby for the post.<sup>18</sup> He had served in the Union army with Major General Nelson A. Miles commander of the Department of Missouri on several Civil War campaigns and they knew each other well.<sup>19</sup> He also served as the Arkansas First District representative in the 40th and 41st Congresses and used contacts made while in office in the acquisition of Big Rock Post. Years later, the *Arkansas Gazette* praised Roots in his obituary and described him as "a splendid example of the possibilities of the New South" and claimed, "He loved her people and was loved by them."<sup>20</sup>

The irony of Colonel Roots being claimed as a hero of the New South is that he had served as quartermaster on General William T. Sherman's destructive "March to the Sea."<sup>21</sup> Later, he accompanied Sherman to his Western command and was mustered out of the U. S. Volunteers on May 31, 1866, in DeValls Bluff, Arkansas, where he bought a plantation. He lived in Little Rock and became active in local politics by serving as a Collector of Internal Revenue in 1867. Although Roots was a Union officer, those who might be tempted to brand him as a typical "carpetbagger" would have to explain his bequest of one-tenth of his \$1,000,000 estate to the establishment of free city parks, the First Charity Hospital, as well as his setting up an additional trust estimated at \$100,000 to \$500,000 to maintain city indigent care programs.<sup>22</sup>

Major John D. Adams and Major W. P. Campbell, both members of the Post Committee and former Union officers, joined Roots in publishing a notice that Little Rock was accepting

bids for not less than 500 acres, located at least four to five miles outside of the city, on or in close proximity to a railroad, with an adequate water supply, and containing areas of at least 1,000 yards of flat land oriented north to south, according to War Department guidelines.<sup>23</sup> Local response to the notice was overwhelmingly positive, but was not unanimous. R. H. Parham, a prominent citizen, countered the City Council's claims that the post would increase Little Rock's population with the fact that the army only had 23,000 men, and that the additional 3,200 when split among the twelve new posts would not leave a significant number assigned to Little Rock. He also challenged the claims that the army would bring four million dollars annually into the local economy by pointing to the "meager" soldiers' pay and the fact that most soldiers spent their pay in the sutler's stores on the post.<sup>24</sup> Whether other citizens harbored the same sentiments cannot be determined as no further expressions of dissent were published in the *Arkansas Gazette* or referred to in subsequent City Council minutes. The issue of the post largely disappeared from the press until Congressman Terry notified the *Arkansas Gazette*, on April 16, 1892, that Little Rock had been accepted by Congress as one of the sites for the new post.

Days later, the *Arkansas Gazette* reported that the newly amalgamated Joint Arsenal and Post Committee met at Mayor W. G. Whipple's house to prepare for the site inspection team due to arrive as soon as President Harrison approved the bill awarding the new post to Little Rock.<sup>25</sup> Harrison signed the bill on April 23, 1892, and approved Secretary of War Stephen B. Elkin's appointees for the site inspection team.<sup>26</sup> The team, consisting of Major General Nelson A. Miles, his aide-de-camp Captain Eli T. Huggins, Quartermaster General D. J. Bingham, and General Medical Director B. J. D. Irwin, arrived on June 17, 1892. The Eagle Light Battery of Little Rock met the dignitaries at the train station with a thirteen-gun salute.<sup>27</sup>

Miles had gained notoriety after the war as Jefferson Davis' jailer, but had regained popularity in the South during the Red River, Sioux, and Nez Perce' Wars, and through his role in quelling the Sioux Ghost Dance uprising.<sup>28</sup> In Little Rock, he was hailed as the "Great Indian Fighter." A storm of applause met him at the reception given in his honor at the Hotel



Richelieu.<sup>29</sup> In an interview with the *Arkansas Gazette*, Miles stated that the post would be the third largest in the South; the other two being, Newport, Kentucky, and Atlanta, Georgia.<sup>30</sup>

In between newspaper interviews and public dinners, Miles and the inspection team reviewed the proposed sites selected by the Little Rock Joint Commission. Roots, Colonel J. H. McCarthy, and Judge Kimball accompanied the team to Nubbin Ridge, Newton Creek, Mabelvale, Ensign, and Three Rock Creek, only to have them rejected one by one.<sup>31</sup> When Miles threatened to return to Chicago, the commission convinced him to keep looking. They took him to two additional sites, even though they did not have bonds on them yet. One, known then as the Nowlin Place, was located in what is now Pulaski Heights. The other was Big Rock Mountain in North Little Rock. The commission preferred Pulaski Heights due to its proximity to Little Rock, although Big Rock was at that time a part of the city's Eighth Ward.<sup>32</sup> General Miles also preferred Pulaski Heights because of closeness to the Arkansas River and Little Rock satisfied the low cost transportation and location criteria of the War Department.<sup>33</sup> Miles returned to Chicago days later, promising to delay his report until the negotiations with the Pulaski Heights landowners had been concluded.

Negotiations broke down shortly thereafter, however, and the commission requested that Senator Jones and Congressman Terry introduce a bill to authorize the Secretary of War to condemn some of the land due to the "exorbitant" asking prices of the owners.<sup>34</sup> The bill never passed and the owners continued to hold out when the leases on some of the other lands had begun to expire. It seemed that the deal for the Arsenal and the Post would fall through if something was not done.

Miles' objections to the Big Rock site centered around inadequate transportation access, even though it was located right up the hill from the main line of the Missouri-Pacific-Iron Mountain Railroad and the east-west secondary line of the Rock Island Railroad. The unsavory boomtown reputation of Argenta, located at the base of Big Rock, may have also contributed to his preference for Pulaski Heights as Argenta was later declared, "off limits," to the soldiers who were eventually stationed at Big Rock.<sup>35</sup> Troops on leave would require cheap transportation to

Little Rock to avoid the pitfalls of gambling, drinking and prostitution in the “virtually lawless” Argenta.<sup>36</sup>

A special commission, appointed by Pulaski County Judge Jacob Erb, soon eliminated one of Miles’ objections when it recommended in February 1893 that a “free-bridge,” a non-toll bridge, be erected to facilitate transportation between Big Rock and Little Rock.<sup>37</sup> The same day the *Arkansas Gazette* reported that Colonel Thomas Lafferty, majority owner of the Big Rock property, had been approached regarding the sale of his land, but that the commission had promised him secrecy about the asking price.<sup>38</sup> It was later revealed that Colonel Lafferty had agreed to a price of \$60,000, which was \$30,000 less than the \$90,000 aggregate cost of Pulaski Heights.<sup>39</sup> The deal had also been sweetened by the commission’s promise to secure the right of way for water and sewage pipes to the river at no cost to the army.<sup>40</sup>

Miles filed his final report approving Big Rock on February 8, 1893, eight days prior to the stories in the *Arkansas Gazette*. The reason for the paper’s delay in reporting the “deals” was not determined, but it does lead one to suspect clandestine negotiations between the city leaders and Miles, since prior to these occasions the paper had been very timely in reporting post developments. Another interesting item is the seemingly accelerated time table between site approval by the Secretary of War and the ceding of the property by the Arkansas Legislature. Miles’ report was approved by Elkins on the sixteenth of February.<sup>41</sup> Big Rock properties were purchased just two days later under General Order No. 31, and ceded by the Arkansas Legislature just seven days later on the twenty-fifth. While it could be argued that the commission had made arrangements with the authorities in anticipation of the announcement, the speed with which the paperwork proceeded was atypical for the times. The reasons behind the accelerated schedule were not determinable, but certainly warrant further investigation.

The entire process of securing the post had taken three long years, but Big Rock Post was finally secured on March 18, 1893 when eleven deeds transferring the arsenal property to the city of Little Rock, and the Big Rock properties to the United States government were filed by Major

Steven W. Groesbeck, Judge Advocate of the U. S. Army.<sup>42</sup> Congress approved the transactions on April 23, 1893.<sup>43</sup>

### **Construction of Fort Logan H. Roots**

In his report, Miles had recommended \$1,000,000 be appropriated for improvements to the property and construction of the post.<sup>44</sup> As the primary usage of the land had been agricultural, the site did not have adequate roads, water and sewage systems, or cleared land to accommodate an extensive military base. The only access to the site was a farm road leading to the river landing below. The army had long since ceased relying solely on river transport to secure goods and supplies as railroads were faster, more reliable, and less expensive. The only access to the railroad was a circuitous route around the base of Big Rock and to the Baring Cross depot. Congress initially appropriated \$194,760 for construction of the post, and the Army Quartermaster General authorized Captain R. R. Stevens to begin accepting construction bids in August of 1894.<sup>45</sup> The new post road allowing better access to the railroads was the first order of business.

Most of the construction on the post was done by local businesses with the exception of the heating, sewage and water systems. The post road contract was awarded to John L McCoppin of Little Rock. R. P. Bateman, also of Little Rock, was awarded the contract for grading and maintaining the original access road until the new post road was complete. Plumbing contracts went to Little Rock's Hughes and Keigh Plumbing. The building construction contracts went to Frederick Kepler of Chicago, who used local materials, including stone quarried privately at the base of Big Rock, and hired several hundred local laborers.<sup>46</sup> The War Department authorized twenty seven buildings in the initial building phase including barracks with supporting kitchens, mess halls, lavatories, a bakery, storehouse, horse stable, officer's quarters, a powder magazine, and a twelve bed hospital. As was typical of most nineteenth century military installations, all of the buildings had simple lines, functional structure, and most were devoid of ornamentation.<sup>47</sup> Likewise they all faced or were in close proximity to the central elliptical parade ground, with the exception of the guardhouse at the

front entrance. The initial building phase ended in 1896. The post was garrisoned by Companies E and G of the 11th U. S. Cavalry on July 2 that same year.<sup>48</sup>

### **Fort Roots Prior to the Spanish-American War**

Big Rock Post underwent the first of many changes on April 23, 1897, when the War Department issued orders to change the name of the post to honor the late Brevet Lieutenant Colonel Logan H. Roots of the U. S. Volunteers.<sup>49</sup> Roots died as the Memorial Day parade passed his home in 1893, never seeing the fruits of his labors. Captain James A. Buchanan and the troops at Fort Roots paid a final tribute to Colonel Roots when they paused in front of his home during the 1897 Memorial Day Parade. This was their first public appearance since arriving at Little Rock, in 1896.<sup>50</sup>

The troops made their second appearance in the Fourth of July parade that same year, accompanied by a band borrowed from another fort. The recently completed Fort Roots was too small to accommodate a band. Despite all the local press attention given to the effort to secure a new military post for Little Rock, it received little mention once it became operational. After the initial phase of construction was completed there was no mention of further expansion. No other buildings were constructed on the grounds until 1905. Fort Roots, which was supposed to be the third largest in the South and contribute an estimated \$1,000,000 annually to the local economy, did not live up to expectations.

The reason for the unrealized potential lay in the army's change of mission. The 1890's was a time of transition for both the nation, and the army. The end of the Indian wars left the army without an adversary. Even the "Great Indian Fighter" Nelson Miles had accepted the transition from war to peace when he explained, "War Department policy now is to concentrate the Army in larger and fewer post . . . with the disappearance of Indian troubles making a greater number [of posts] unnecessary."<sup>51</sup>

In 1891, the army reorganized its command structure by discontinuing the Atlantic, Missouri, and Pacific divisions, while retaining the eight military departments, whose commanders reported directly to the Major General commanding the Army, thereby streamlining

the high level command structure.<sup>52</sup> This reorganization moved Arkansas from the Department of Missouri to the Department of Colorado. Various adjustments in higher level army organization continued, but at the troop level the army operated, “with little training, no modern weapons, and no regimental or divisional command structure.”<sup>53</sup> This period of transition left troops at the local level with little to do except appear in parades, and the lack of an impending threat left few funds or reasons to expand Fort Roots any further. The troubles brewing in Cuba would soon demonstrate the War Department’s failure to address military preparedness at the local level.

### **Spanish-American War 1898**

Construction at Fort Roots was halted when the War Department ordered twenty-two regular army infantry regiments to assemble at various ports on the Gulf of Mexico on April 15, 1898. The troops stationed at Fort Roots departed and eventually served in Puerto Rico.<sup>54</sup> Eight days later, McKinley called for 125,000 volunteers, ages eighteen to forty-five, to serve for at least a two-year period in the Spanish-American War.<sup>55</sup> Congress also approved a War Department request that temporarily increased the legal size of the U. S. Army to 64,719 by reorganizing infantry regiments to consist of three battalions with twelve companies apiece, each containing 106 men.<sup>56</sup> In addition, each state was assigned a quota of volunteers according to its population to swell the U.S. Army to wartime strength.

Arkansas Governor Daniel W. Jones issued General Order No.2 on May 2 to raise the two required regiments.<sup>57</sup> The order called for volunteers to assemble and organize at Camp Dodge. Formerly the corner of 17th Street and College Avenue in Little Rock, the property was part of the estate of the late Dr. Roderick Dodge, whose family loaned it to the state in response to Fort Root’s commanding officer Lieutenant Edward H. Phillip’s opinion that Fort Roots was not “extensive enough” to accommodate 2,000 men.<sup>58</sup>

McKinley, trying to appease the National Guard lobby, had suggested that the state volunteer troops be filled first, from the respective state’s guard units, and then supplemented with civilians as necessary. The Arkansas State Guard was called out but it was too small and ill

equipped to fulfill the state's quota.<sup>59</sup> The state had failed to adequately support its State Guard, preferring instead to depend on the federal government for domestic defense. Thus many Guard units were forced to seek private funding to provide equipment, uniforms, armory rent, transportation, and supplies.<sup>60</sup>

The thirteen companies of the 1st Arkansas Volunteer Regiment were mustered in at Camp Dodge on May 20 under the command of a former military instructor at the University of Arkansas, Colonel Elias Chandler. They were sent to Camp George H. Thomas, Chickamauga Park, Georgia, as part of the 1st Brigade of the 2nd Division of the 3rd Corps. They returned, without going overseas to Fort Roots in September 1898, remaining there until mustered out on October 15. The men received roughly forty to eighty dollars a piece for their miserable stay in the squalor of Camp Thomas.<sup>61</sup> The thirteen companies of the Second Arkansas Volunteer Regiment were mustered in at Camp Dodge on May 25 under the command of Colonel Virgil Y. Cook of Batesville. They transferred to the Second Brigade of the Second Division of the Third Corps at Camp Shipp in Anniston, Alabama, where they remained until mustered out on February 25, 1899.<sup>62</sup>

### **Post War Effects**

American military affairs during the Spanish-American war have been described as, "the absence of any planning and preparation, the lack of cooperation among the [War Department] bureaus, and delay caused by red tape"<sup>63</sup> The deficiencies of the War Department and the disastrous effects on the troops became a public scandal resulting in President McKinley appointing retired General Grenville M. Dodge to a commission to investigate the numerous allegations of mismanagement. The Dodge Commission blamed the bureaucracy of the War Department, in particular the Quartermaster and Medical Departments, for the "deplorable conditions" that soldiers and volunteers had endured while serving their country. Congress was also cited for adding to the bureaucratic nightmare by its, "insistence upon monitoring departmental administration in detail."<sup>64</sup> As a result of the Dodge Commission's findings, Secretary of War Russell Alger was replaced by Elihu Root in August, 1899.

Root began a systematic reorganization of the War Department focused on streamlining the bureaucracy and improving military planning and preparedness. One of his first actions was to abolish the position of Commanding General of the Army, then held by Lieutenant General Nelson Miles, creating in its place the office of Chief of Staff under the direct supervision of the Secretary of War. The Army War College was also created under Root to train staff members and function as the planning arm of the military. A March 2, 1899 act of Congress had retained 65,000 regular army and 35,000 volunteers to maintain the newly acquired territories of Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines, but Root persuaded Congress to increase the size of the Regulars still further. He accomplished this by expanding the number of infantry regiments from twenty-five to thirty, cavalry regiments from ten to fifteen, and reorganizing the artillery regiments into an Artillery Corps, made up of thirty field artillery batteries and 126 coastal artillery companies. Those changes brought the legal size of the U.S. Army to 88,000.<sup>65</sup> Root also created a weapons development program to modernize the weapons and munitions of the United States Army.

While Root was revamping the army, the troops at Fort Roots, a detachment drawn from Company D of the 7th U.S. Infantry, “continued to guard and care for the federal property.”<sup>66</sup> Secretary Root issued Special Order No. 261, in 1902, convening a board of officers to review and report on the location and condition of all military posts. Their reports focused on the water and sewage systems, probably a result of the abysmal conditions found to exist at Camp Thomas, and found Fort Roots in “good order”.<sup>67</sup>

The Fort received no further mention in the press until President Theodore Roosevelt visited and reviewed the troops as part of a regional tour in the fall of 1905.<sup>68</sup> During this visit he was entertained by the “prominent families” in Little Rock. Whether a result of the War Department’s new focus on planning and preparation or as a result of President Roosevelt’s visit, the second phase of construction began at Fort Roots in 1905. The construction resulted in additional sixty-five-man barracks with supporting lavatories, kitchens and mess halls, a post

exchange, a gymnasium, an administrative building, new quarters for the commanding officer, bachelor-officers quarters, and additional stables.

Following in Root's footsteps, Secretary of War Henry Stimson attempted further modernization of the U. S. Army in 1910, when he and Chief of Staff General Leonard Wood attempted to abolish "hitching post forts left over from the Indian Wars." One of the posts on their list was Fort Logan H. Roots.<sup>69</sup> Their efforts were met with considerable opposition from Congressmen in the effected areas who lobbied to have Wood removed. The uproar in the Congress, coupled with vigorous opposition within the War Department to Stimson's other sweeping reforms, prevented most of the proposed closings.

### **Mexican Border 1912-1917**

The new construction at Fort Roots increased its capabilities for training the large number of troops who would soon confront the trouble brewing in Mexico. A series of violent revolutions swept over Mexico beginning in 1911. As the resulting chaos threatened to spill over the border, Lieutenant Colonel Elmore. F. Taggart the commanding officer at Fort Roots received word in early February 1912 to "be ready to move to the Mexican border on short notice."<sup>70</sup> Taggart placed the garrison on "ready alert" and sentries patrolled the grounds to ensure that no soldiers left the fort. <sup>71</sup> This alert passed without deployment and was followed by a series of similar events in the coming months. It was not until March 1914, however, that the 4th Company of the 9th U.S. Infantry was actually sent to the staging area in Laredo, Texas via the "Special" St. Louis-Iron Mountain train. <sup>72</sup> By this time, Victoriano Huerta had seized power in Mexico much to the chagrin of President Woodrow Wilson. Wilson ordered the U.S. Navy to seize and occupy the port of Vera Cruz in April of 1914. Pancho Villa, the leader of a faction opposing Huerta, attacked Columbus, New Mexico, on March 9, 1916.<sup>73</sup> Wilson responded by mobilizing the National Guard units of Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico to augment the regular army troops already stationed at the border.

### **National Guard**



The federalization of the National Guard had long been a point of contention in American politics. The Guard had lobbied the War Department prior to the Spanish-American War to become an integral part of national defense, but as the Dodge Commission had shown, it was not prepared due to lack of funds and professional training.<sup>74</sup> Elihu Root had pushed for federal support of the Guard to ensure an effective reserve for the regulars in time of need. He persuaded Congress to pass the Dick Act of 1903, which authorized increased funding for the militia and payment of guardsmen brought under federal authority.<sup>75</sup> In 1908, the act was amended to require the federal government to call the National Guard into service before calling for volunteers and that once federalized it could be retained for as long as necessary.<sup>76</sup> The Attorney General ruled in 1912, however, that the Guard could not be sent outside of America's territorial limits.<sup>77</sup>

The long-standing debate was settled by the National Defense Act of 1916, which made the National Guard an integral part of the regular army.<sup>78</sup> The National Guard could now, without question, be placed under complete federal control "in time of war or gross public emergency."<sup>79</sup> By July 4, 1916, National Guard units from fourteen states had moved through the four major assembly areas, in Texas and Arizona, and were assigned to various locations along the border.

In Arkansas, Adjutant General Lloyd England issued orders for all Guard units to assemble at their home stations on June 19 and begin training with five hours of drill each day.<sup>80</sup> A total of twenty-four of these companies assembled at Fort Roots for drill and final inspection, as federal recognition of the units was dependent on passing War Department guidelines.<sup>81</sup> The newly organized 2nd Arkansas Infantry Regiment under Colonel Henry Stroupe of Paris was transported in July to Fort Sam Houston in Texas and subsequently assigned to Deming, New Mexico. The Guard units remained on United States soil in support of Brigadier General John J. Pershing and the "Punitive Expedition," which had been launched on March 14, 1916. A month after the Punitive Expedition returned from Mexico in February of 1917, the 2nd Arkansas

Infantry returned to Fort Roots. The regiment remained on active duty status until August 5, 1917, when it was federalized for action in a different part of the world.<sup>82</sup>

Recruiting men to supplement the 2nd Arkansas Infantry Regiment continued back home through January of 1917, when even the recruiter detachments were transferred to Deming. The continued bureaucratic immobilization within the War Department was revealed in a communication between Captain N.M. Cartmell and Major General Frederick Funston. Cartmell, a recruiter for the Arkansas National Guard, requested that he and his officers be allowed to utilize the automobile to enable them to cover more territory. Funston replied "While it is realized that canvassing parties could cover more territory by automobile or other vehicular transportation, existing authority from the War Department does not allow such expenditures to be made and the authority you request cannot be granted."<sup>83</sup> Funston, rather than commending Cartmell's initiative, dismissed the request. Flexibility was obviously one area in which the War Department was still struggling.

### **Reserve Officers Training Corps**

An area in which the War Department began to make strides was the training of reserve officers and troops. The National Defense Act had also authorized the Officers Reserve Corps, Enlisted Reserve Corps, and Reserve Officers Training Corps. Wilson's Secretary of War Newton D. Baker placed two of the newly authorized Reserve Officers Training Corps camps in the 12th Division.<sup>84</sup> One of these camps was established at Fort Roots in April of 1917, perhaps due to the intensive lobbying of General Pershing by the Little Rock City Council and Chamber of Commerce.<sup>85</sup> A new flurry of construction at Fort Roots began in 1917 in conjunction with the new training center opening up a new 30 acre site complete with barracks, kitchens, and dining rooms.<sup>86</sup>

Prior to the establishment of the ROTC, officer training was conducted by roving officers. One such rover, who served at Fort Roots, was George C. Marshall. His original assignment had been with the Fourth Infantry, but he had never served with that unit. He bounced around the country and even overseas until the 1910 "Manchu Law" required that he

and other detached officers serve at least two years with their assigned units.<sup>87</sup> Marshall rejoined the 4th U.S. Infantry, then stationed at Fort Roots, and organized a post graduate garrison school.<sup>88</sup> The 4th Infantry including Marshall was subsequently moved to Fort Snelling in Minnesota, leaving the garrison school largely neglected.

The new ROTC camp began its first training session on May 8, 1917 with 2,465 applicants from Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi.<sup>89</sup> Colonel R. L. Bullard the new commander of Fort Roots ran the camp strictly by the book and by weeks end, 800 of the applicants had been rejected due to a variety of physical reasons or their inability to pass written examinations.<sup>90</sup> The South Carolina High Command was even considering the Fort as a possible site for a 2800 man concentration camp.<sup>91</sup> Former Chief of Staff Leonard Wood, the South Carolina High Commander visited the “hitching post” fort in 1917 and found it to be, “fully utilized.”<sup>92</sup>

### **World War I**

The activity at Fort Roots expanded even further as a direct result of America’s Declaration of War with Germany on April 5, 1917. Pershing had barely left Mexican soil when he was summoned to Washington to head the American Expeditionary Force in Europe. The War Department had notified National Guard adjutant generals that mobilization for war in Europe was a possibility as early as February 1917, while they still had units on the border.<sup>93</sup> The remaining units had been retained under federal authority to keep them assembled and available for immediate service elsewhere. By May, British and French forces on the Western Front in Europe were growing so weak that it was feared that their resistance would collapse before the United States could train and deploy desperately needed reinforcements. To this end, the War Department pulled the 16th, 18th, 26th, and 28th U.S. Infantry Regiments off the Mexican Border, bolstered their numbers with fresh recruits, reconstituted them as the 1st Division, and shipped them to France.

Further aid could not be sent to France until the training of new recruits was complete. The scope of World War I required immense armies and the United States was again forced to

swell its military forces with untrained civilians. Not all of these men were volunteers. On May 18, 1917, Congress passed the Selective Service Act requiring all males between the ages of twenty-one and thirty to register for the draft. The War Department authorized the federalization of National Guardsmen not then in federal service by August 5, and those already in federal service were drafted under Section III of the National Defense Act.<sup>94</sup>

The day before the Selective Service Act passed, Governor Charles Brough of Arkansas and Fort Roots commander Colonel R. L. Bullard mustered in the 12th Provisional Regiment of Reserves, consisting of ten infantry companies, an engineer company, and three artillery batteries, on the capital grounds.<sup>95</sup> By June 5, 1917, 149,027 Arkansans had registered for the draft.<sup>96</sup> Fort Roots had become a beehive of activity. In addition to the ROTC camp and the regular army detachment, the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Arkansas Infantry Regiments were beginning their ninety day intensive instruction and physical conditioning in an adjacent area of Fort Roots, known as Camp George W. Hays. The troops were subject to fourteen hours of daily training.<sup>97</sup> They also participated in the ongoing construction at the Fort by building a road from the training camp to the parade ground and clearing additional acres of land. Due to the scarcity of ammunition and equipment, artillery training was improvised by mounting stove pipes onto two wheel carts with troops never actually firing live ammunition until graduation day.<sup>98</sup> The mosquitoes infesting the post were so bad that post Sanitation Officer Lieutenant Colonel Clayton informed the Little Rock City Council that the soldiers would be moved unless the city assisted in mosquito abatement activities.<sup>99</sup>

### **Citizens Military Training Corps**

The guardsmen received a total of \$125.00 for the three months of back breaking work and grueling training under a federal program called the Citizens Military Training Corps.<sup>100</sup> The CMTC program had been developed as a reserve training unit based on Major General Leonard Wood's, "Plattsburg Model."<sup>101</sup> While Chief of Staff, Wood had organized summer camps where college students would receive military training at their own expense. The first of these camps were located in Plattsburg, New York, and run with private funds. The CMTC's

were also classified as private citizens, but were trained at the Army's expense. Upon completion of their training they would be accepted into the regular army.

### **Fort Roots and Little Rock**

World War I witnessed the most interaction between Fort Roots and the city of Little Rock. The citizenry supported the men stationed at the Fort by becoming very active in its daily activities. The local Boy Scouts volunteered as message runners between the different training camps.<sup>102</sup> The YMCA set up a facility on the post grounds. A group of Little Rock women organized a free taxi service to transport new arrivals between the train station and the fort.<sup>103</sup> The Little Rock Police, however, shut down an enthusiastic group of jitney operators who were selling whiskey to the troops as they ferried them across the river.<sup>104</sup> Colonel Bullard's appeals for laborers to clear land for additional trainees arriving from Fort Sheridan in Illinois received a quick response.<sup>105</sup> The citizenry became so enamored with Fort Roots that the *Arkansas Gazette* began devoting a daily section of the paper to "Fort Roots News" in the summer of 1917.

As summer faded into fall, Fort Roots seem to fade from the public's consciousness as the first session trainees completed their training. The 1st Arkansas Infantry Regiment under Colonel Charles D. James became the 153rd Regiment of the National Army. The 2nd Regiment under Colonel Henry Stroupe became the 142nd Field Artillery.<sup>106</sup> The 3rd Regiment was divided between the 154th Infantry and the 141st Machine Gun Battalion. All three regiments were transported to Camp Beauregard, Louisiana, in September to help form the 39th Division (Delta Division). Subsequently, Delta Division was shipped overseas where it functioned as a Depot Division based in France.<sup>107</sup>

### **Effects of World War I**

In the meantime, Fort Roots personnel prepared to train the next group of ROTC and CMTC recruits called into service by President Wilson in August 1917, but it was not to be. After the last of Fort Roots' trainees shipped out, local interest shifted to the establishment of a new military base in Little Rock. By 1917, the army had evaluated its current facilities and found some of them lacking. Consequently the War Department began to build new modern

training facilities. A group of Little Rock businessmen formed the Army Post Development Company and obtained the support of General Pershing.<sup>108</sup> Camp Pike was established on 13,000 acres compared to the 1,100 acres of Fort Roots, allowing the army to train and house a greater number of troops. It also had the advantage of being located in a relatively flat wide open area. The hilly heavily forested terrain on Big Rock had hindered previous efforts to expand the facilities at Fort Roots. The terrain of Camp Pike and the use of modern machinery allowed the army to establish and expand bases more economically and much more quickly. Camp Pike was established in June 1917 and was ready to receive trainees by September. Fort Roots initial construction had required three years to complete due to the difficulties of the terrain and the lack of modern equipment. The larger and more accessible Camp Pike took over as the training facility for the recently formed 87th Division, which drew its personnel from Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi. The troops at Fort Roots saw their mission reduced to guarding and caring for federal property until it was transferred to the Public Health Service in 1919.

### **The Final Mission**

Prior to World War I, the Public Health Service and the Bureau of War Risk Insurance had provided separate and disjointed limited health care and benefits to veterans. With 204,000 Americans wounded in World War I the old system needed immediate upgrading.<sup>109</sup> In the face of these staggering numbers Congress passed Public Law 326 on March 4, 1919. Arkansas Senator Joseph T. Robinson sponsored the act to provide hospital and sanitarium facilities for discharged sick and disabled soldiers, sailors and marines. The Treasury Department took control of Fort Roots and transferred its administration to the Public Health Service as a result of PL 326, thus ending the post's days as an active military fort. By August 1921, Congress established the Veterans Bureau in an effort to consolidate benefits, medical care, and vocational rehabilitation for veterans. President Warren G. Harding's Executive Order 3669 of April 29, 1922, directed the Public Health Service to surrender Fort Roots and other hospitals to the

Veterans Bureau. Fort Roots was surrendered, shortly thereafter, and has been maintained by the Department of Veterans Affairs to the present day.

The original 1,100 acre site of Fort Roots no longer exists in its entirety. Over the years, it was broken up through sale or donation leaving only 178 acres intact. 656 acres was declared surplus and turned over to Burns Park in 1955. Many of the original buildings have been lost to weather, fire, and the bulldozer, but the buildings surrounding the parade ground have been preserved and were placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974. A twenty-two acre site consisting of the original buildings and the parade ground were declared a National Landmark in 1975.

### **Conclusion**

Mrs. Pat (Miriam) Crawford, daughter of Logan H. Roots, said this about the fort and her father in 1959: "Times have changed and so many things are gone . . . I was surprised that anybody was interested today."<sup>110</sup> This statement may be shared by those who measure historical significance by the famous people who "slept there" or by the famous battles fought within its boundaries. But to those who can look beyond the trivial, Fort Roots witnessed not only the transformation of Arkansas, but the transformation of the American military in its struggle to protect and serve the citizens of the United States. It rose amid hopes of glory during the Gilded Age largely through political manipulation. After an unpromising start, the post attained prominence early in World War I, and then faded quietly into the background. Fort Roots expanded and contracted in direct correlation to the changing needs of the American military. The history of the American military during the years 1890 to 1921 and the Fort's historical relationship with Little Rock are etched upon the remaining walls of Fort Logan H. Roots.

- <sup>1</sup> Russell F. Weigley, *History of the United States Army* (New York: MacMillan, 1967), 313.
- <sup>2</sup> Annual Report of the Secretary of War, House Ex Doc. No. 1, Part 2, 48th Congress, 2nd Session, Serial 2277, 1884, 4-8.
- <sup>3</sup> James L. McDonough, *Schofield: Union General in Civil War and Reconstruction* (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1972), 92.
- <sup>4</sup> Weigley, 267.
- <sup>5</sup> U. S. Army, *Guide to Military Post and Reservations* pages 261-262, J.N. Heiskill Collection, Pam 5618, University of Arkansas at Little Rock Archives, Little Rock, Arkansas.
- <sup>6</sup> Weigley, 267.
- <sup>7</sup> Weigley, Appendix.
- <sup>8</sup> House Committee on Military Affairs, *Report No. 757*, prepared by Mr. Belknap, 52nd Congress, 1st sess., March 17, 1892) 3. Military Affairs file, Arkansas History Commission Archives, Little Rock, Arkansas. Ironically, Schofield had been the presiding Union commander of General Davidson and General Steele who during the Civil War had reclaimed the Arsenal from the Confederacy. James L McDonough, *Schofield: Union General in Civil War and Reconstruction*, 44.
- <sup>9</sup> *Arkansas Gazette* (Little Rock), 27 March 1890.
- <sup>10</sup> Little Rock City Council Meeting Minutes, February to April 1890. City Hall, Little Rock, Arkansas.
- <sup>11</sup> *Arkansas Gazette*, 27 March 1890.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 April 1890.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 24 April 1890.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 April 1890.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 16 December 1891.
- <sup>16</sup> National Register of Historic Places Application (prepared by the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, 1974), 2. North Little Rock Historical Society, North Little Rock, Arkansas.



- <sup>17</sup> House Committee on Military Affairs, 2.
- <sup>18</sup> *In Memoriam, Logan Holt Roots* (Little Rock: Democrat Co., 1893), 10.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.
- <sup>20</sup> *Arkansas Gazette*, 31 May 1893.
- <sup>21</sup> Dallas Herndon, ed., *Centennial History of Arkansas*, vol. 1 (Little Rock: S. J. Clarke, 1922), 70.
- <sup>22</sup> *Arkansas Gazette*, 6 June 1892. 1st Charity Hospital was originally named Roots Hospital and is often confused with Fort Roots hospital. The hospital was renamed shortly after Big Rock Post was changed to Fort Logan H. Roots.
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 April 1890.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 4 November 1891.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 23 April 1892.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 26 April 1892.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 17 June 1892.
- <sup>28</sup> Trevor Dupuy, Curt Johnson, and David L. Bongord, *The Encyclopedia of Military Biography* (New York: Harper Collins, 1992), 506.
- <sup>29</sup> *Arkansas Gazette*, 19 June 1892.
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 18, June 1892.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 21, June 1892.
- <sup>32</sup> Tim G. Nutt, "Floods, Flatcars, and Floozies: Creating the City of North Little Rock, Arkansas." *The Pulaski County Historical Review* 44 (Summer 1993): 31.
- <sup>33</sup> *Arkansas Gazette*, 15 February 1893.
- <sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 16 February 1893.
- <sup>35</sup> Evelyn K. Eubank, *Indelible Footprints* (Little Rock: privately printed, 1975), 31.
- <sup>36</sup> Tim Nutt, 28.

- <sup>37</sup> James R. Fisher and Edith Pendergraft, *History of Fort Roots: Old to New* (Little Rock: V.A. Hospital Graphic Arts Clinic, 1986), 5.
- <sup>38</sup> *Arkansas Gazette*, 15 February 1893.
- <sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 16 February 1893.
- <sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>41</sup> U.S. Army, *Guide to Military Posts and Reservations*, 261.
- <sup>42</sup> Janette Miller and Edith Pendergraft, *Chronicle of a Century: The Story of Fort Roots* (Little Rock: EEO Centennial Committee, 1993), 8.
- <sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>44</sup> *Arkansas Gazette*, 7 March 1893.
- <sup>45</sup> National Register of Historic Places Application, 2.
- <sup>46</sup> Fisher and Pendergraft, 10.
- <sup>47</sup> National Historic Landmark Nomination, (prepared by the Historic Landmarks Project Company of Nashville, 1975), 2. North Little Rock Historical Society.
- <sup>48</sup> Arkansas was transferred from the Department of Missouri to the Department of Colorado in 1891. U.S. Army, Special Order No. 49 of 1896 garrisoned the post, Record Group 393, National Archives, Washington, D.C.
- <sup>49</sup> U. S. Army, General Order No. 24 of 1897. Record Group 393, National Archives.
- <sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 28 May 1897.
- <sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 18, June 1892
- <sup>52</sup> U. S. Army, *Guide to Military Posts and Reservations*, 155.
- <sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 290.
- <sup>54</sup> Frazer, 16.
- <sup>55</sup> Gregory J. W. Urwin, *The United States Infantry: An Illustrated History 1775-1918* (New York: Sterling, 1991), 136.

- <sup>75</sup> Clarence C. Clendenen, *Blood on the Border: The U. S. Army and the Mexican Irregulars* (New York: MacMillan, 1962), 287.
- <sup>76</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>77</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>78</sup> Urwin, 153.
- <sup>79</sup> Clendenen, 288.
- <sup>80</sup> General Order No. 10 of 1916. Arkansas National Guard file, B-1, 137. UALR Archives.
- <sup>81</sup> General Order No. 29 of 1916. Arkansas National Guard file, B-1, 137. UALR Archives.
- <sup>82</sup> "Brigadier General Elgan Clayton Robertson: Mexican Border War, World War I, and World War II." *Arkansas Military Journal* 2 (Spring 1994): 12.
- <sup>83</sup> Major General Frederick Funston to Captain N.M. Cartmell, 19 December 1916. Arkansas National Guard file, B-1, 137. UALR Archives.
- <sup>84</sup> Secretary Stimson had succeeded in reforming the organization of the Army into Divisions and Brigades. Arkansas as of April 1917 was in the 12th Division under Pershing.
- <sup>85</sup> *Arkansas Gazette* 18 April 1917.
- <sup>86</sup> Ibid., 28 April 1917.
- <sup>87</sup> Pogue, 117.
- <sup>88</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>89</sup> *Arkansas Gazette*, 15 May 1917.
- <sup>90</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>91</sup> Arkansas had been transferred from the Southern District to the Southeastern District when Pershing was called to Washington, D.C.
- <sup>92</sup> *Arkansas Gazette*, 14 May 1917.
- <sup>93</sup> "Arkansas Guard during World War I." *Arkansas Military Journal* 2 (Winter 1993), 5.
- <sup>94</sup> Arkansas National Guard. Memorandum from Adjutant General to Guard commanders of

May 23, 1917. Arkansas National Guard file, B-1, 137. UALR Archives.

<sup>95</sup> Fisher, 22.

<sup>96</sup> Dallas T. Herndon, ed., *Centennial History of Arkansas*, vol. 1, (Little Rock: S. J. Clarke, 1922), 718.

<sup>97</sup> *Arkansas Gazette*, 16 May 1917.

<sup>98</sup> Miller, 49.

<sup>99</sup> *Arkansas Gazette*, 16 May 1917.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 47-48.

<sup>101</sup> Weigley, 342.

<sup>102</sup> *Arkansas Gazette*, 14 May 1917.

<sup>103</sup> Jim Lester and Judy Lester, *Greater Little Rock* (Norfolk: Donning Co., 1986), 157.

<sup>104</sup> *Arkansas Gazette*, 19 May 1917.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 20 May, 1917.

<sup>106</sup> The men of the 2nd Arkansas Infantry Regiment built a rock monument in honor of their transformation into the 142nd Field Artillery, which still stands on the property.

<sup>107</sup> Depot Divisions provided replacements for other Divisions and established additional training facilities for newly arriving units.

<sup>108</sup> Herndon, 722.

<sup>109</sup> Robinson E. Adkins, *Medical Care of Veterans* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1967), 102.

<sup>110</sup> *Arkansas Gazette*, 26 April 1959.