



FT. ASSINIBOINE. Parade ground, barracks, left,  
band quarters left center, hospital, center,  
and officers' quarters right.

946-913

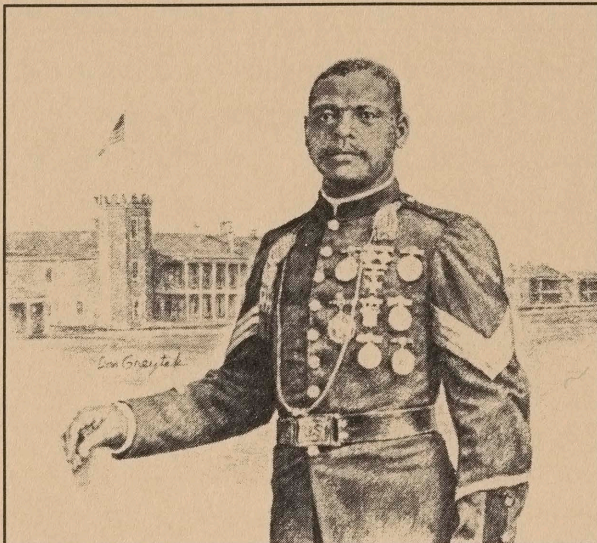




Ft. Assiniboine barracks

946-915





**Horace Bivins**, the Afro-American soldier depicted by Don Greytak, served 32 years in the army. Bivins served at Fort Assinniboine, Fort Custer and Fort Missoula. He was a non-commissioned officer while serving at Fort Assinniboine. Bivins received 32 military medals during his career in the military, including the Silver Star for valour. He held five gold medals for marksmanship in army competition and his record still stands. He was still the most highly decorated Afro-American soldier in the 1930's.

Bivins served with the 10th Cavalry, dubbed the Buffalo soldiers by the Cheyenne Indians. The 10th Cavalry was highly respected by the Native Americans. It was a very disciplined, reliable unit of fighting soldiers whose accomplishments are only now being acknowledged.

The 24th and 25th Infantry black units were also stationed at Fort Assinniboine. The Fort had a multi-racial force that included Native



Officers quarters today

Americans, and whites, as well as Afro-Americans.

The site of old Fort Assinniboine is now the home of the Northern Agricultural Research Center, operated by Montana State University. It is not open to individual visitors; however, the Fort Assinniboine Preservation Association conducts regular guided tours of the site during the summer months. You are invited to join us for one of those visits! Tour schedules and other information may be obtained from the

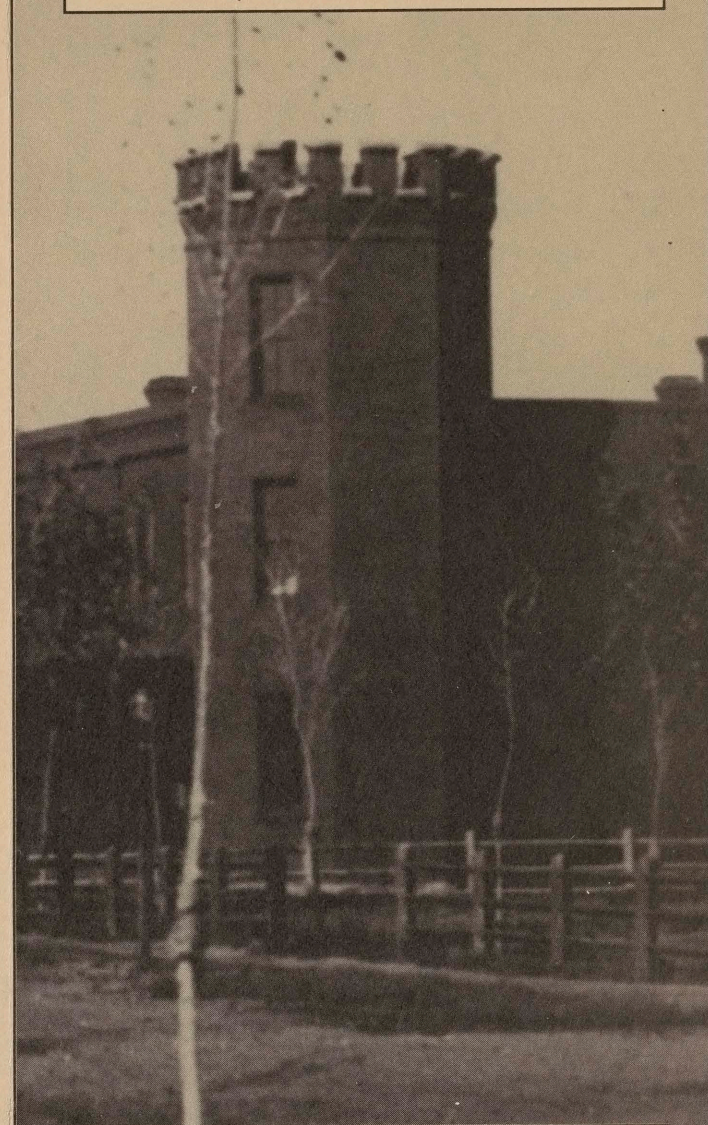
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FT. ASSINNIBOINE PRESERVATION ASSN.  
P.O. BOX 308  
HAVRE, MONTANA 59501

# Fort Assinniboine (1879 - 1911)

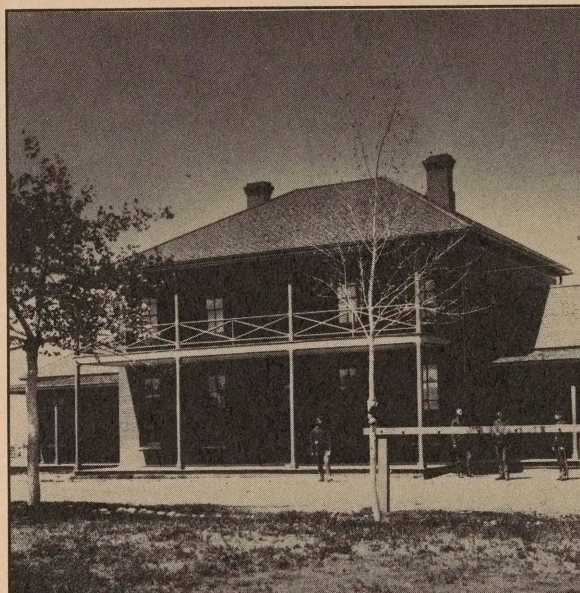


## Historic Site Havre, Montana





Officers relax at Fort Assinniboine,  
photo taken in front of officer's quarters.

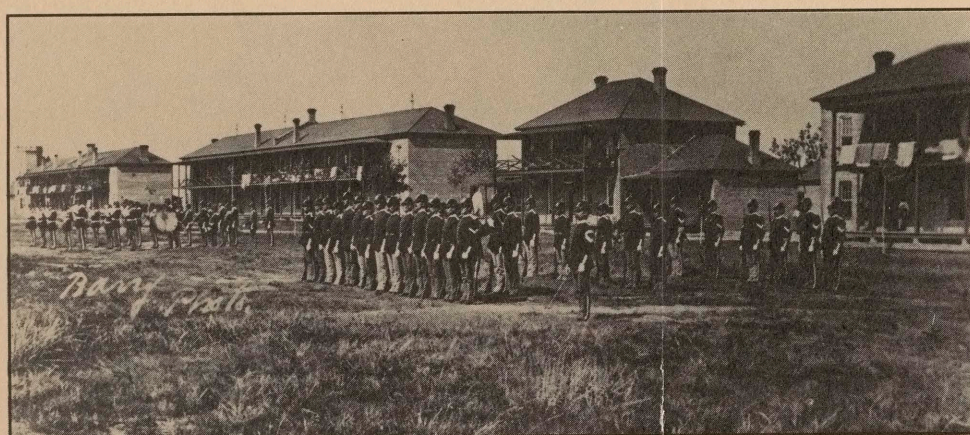


The Administration Building at Fort Assinniboine was an attractive two-story structure built in 1889 for \$2,380.39. Although the brick building is no longer standing, the sidewalks leading to the building are still there.

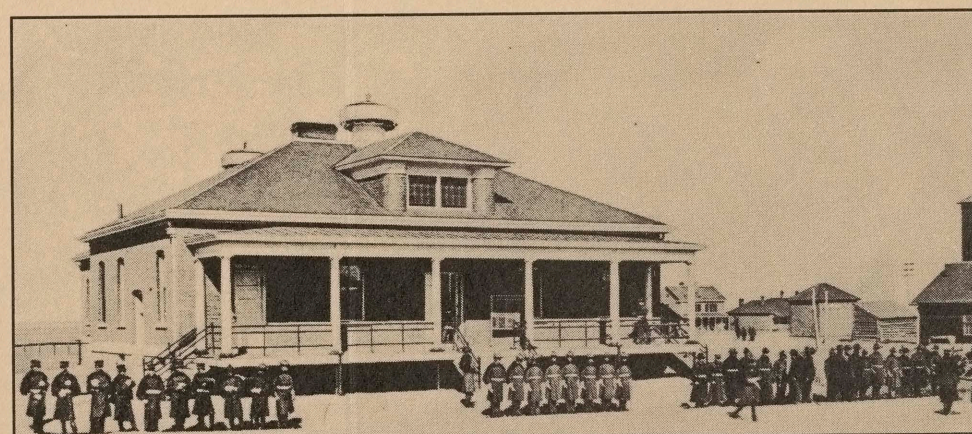


1884 stone Officers Amusement Hall, and 1880 Officer's Quarters with tower.

*Photographs courtesy of the National Archives, Montana Historical Society and the Jim Magara Collection.*



Morning Guard Mount, with Administration building and E.M. barracks in background.



Troopers form up in front of the Fort Assinniboine Guardhouse.



# Fort Assinniboine 1908

## *Fort Assinniboine . . .*

The grandest and once largest military post in Montana.



The pioneer outpost of northern Montana, housing infantry and cavalry units.



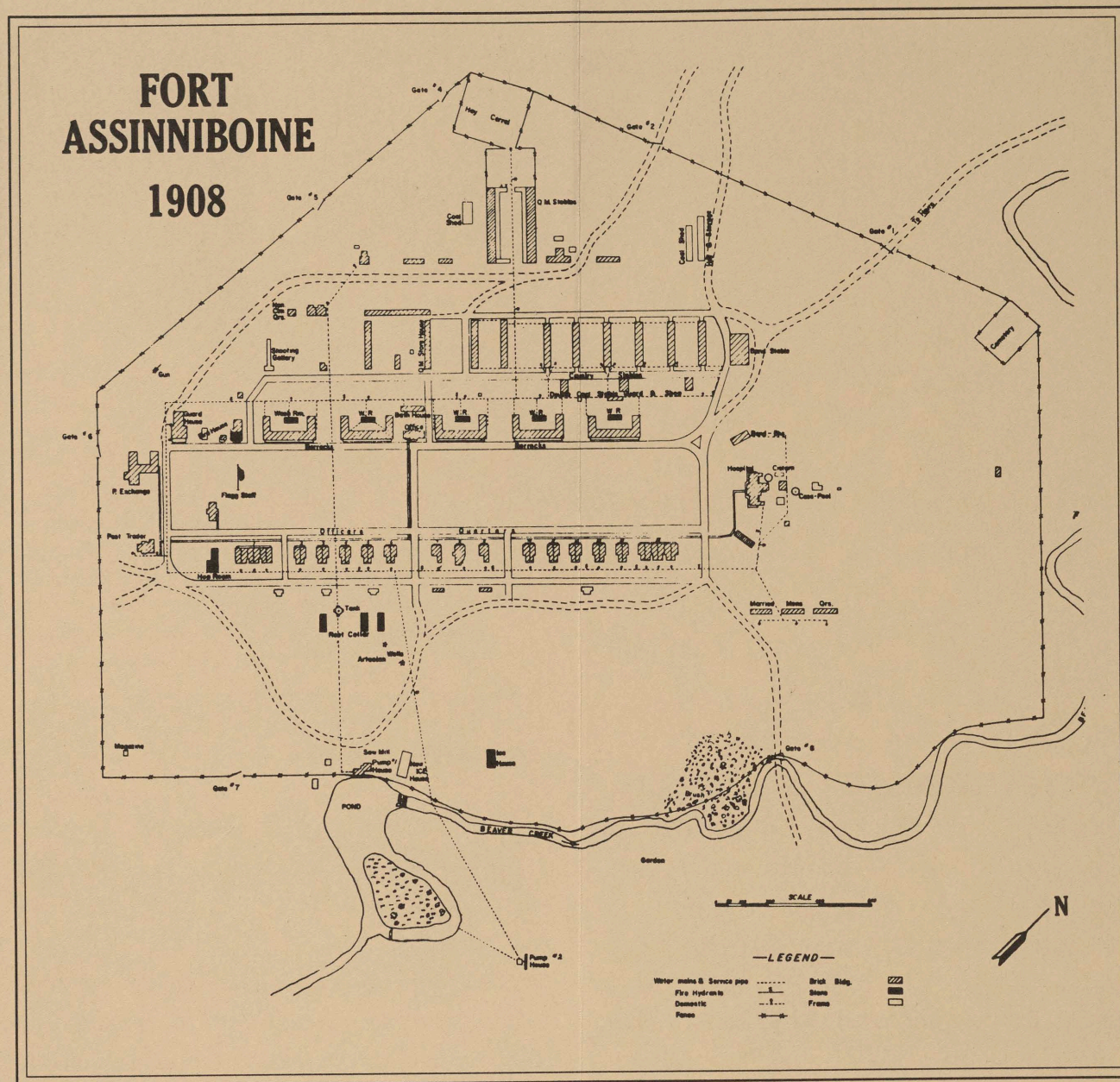
The site of one of 1st Lt. John J. Pershing's early field assignments.



Its surviving buildings stand today as a monument to our state's exciting past.



The 1890's home of the Black Tenth Cavalry Regiment.





## History

**Fort Assinniboine**, the largest military post constructed in Montana, was established in 1879. Within four years, a stately, impressive complex of some one hundred brick, stone and wood buildings, was clustered around the parade ground overlooking the quiet meandering of Beaver Creek, and in the shadow of the beautiful Bear Paw Mountains. The Fort buildings were surrounded by a vast military reservation of a half million acres.

**The Fort** was designed to house ten companies of soldiers, both infantry and cavalry. The troopers were in charge of monitoring the activities of the many Indian

groups living in the region, and protecting them and the citizens of Montana from hostile incursions of Canadian tribal bands. In its heyday, nearly 1,000 officers, enlisted men, and civilians called Assinniboine home.

**The Fort**, one of northern Montana's earliest white outposts, was a busy self contained city. Bakery, laundry, and blacksmith facilities were in operation, as were a general store, post office, hotel and restaurant. For recreation, the post band gave regular concerts, and the men engaged in such sport activities as baseball, track and boxing. Other diversions offered included a library for reading, card-playing and

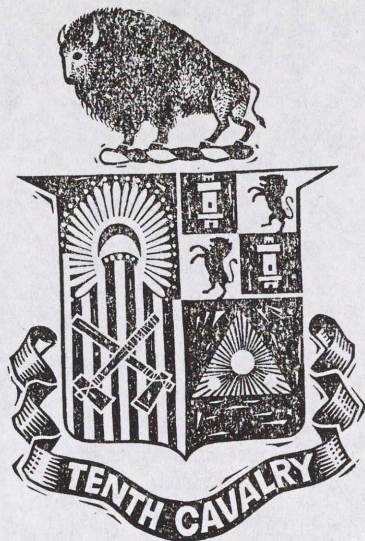
checkers; plus an enlisted man's amusement center housed in the regimental band barracks. The life style was routine, with the men largely spared from battle activity.

**By the early twentieth Century**, Montana's frontier was drawing to a close, and the Fort was surrounded by homesteads and the trappings of "Civilization." The post was finally closed in 1911, and the state of Montana turned the site into an agricultural experiment station. Today much of it is gone, but the surviving buildings are a proud and majestic reminder of Montana's Frontier Heritage.





*The Tenth Moves to the Plains*



*Emblem of the Tenth Regiment, United States Cavalry.*

*Courtesy National Archives*

bed "buffalo soldiers" by their red antagonists. Men of the Tenth, and later of the Ninth, accepted the title and wore it proudly. Indeed, the most prominent feature of the regimental crest of the Tenth Cavalry was a buffalo.<sup>14</sup>

Meanwhile, events were occurring that gave the buffalo soldiers a brief but welcome respite. The federal government was making another effort at a peaceful solution to the Indian problem. In July, 1867, Congress created the Indian Peace Commission for the purpose of conferring with the warring tribes and to remove, if possible, the causes of recurring wars. The Commission met at St. Louis in August, elected N. G. Taylor, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, as president, and quickly agreed that the Indians must be placed on permanent reservations away from the roads and railroads.

<sup>14</sup> The origin of the term "buffalo soldier" is uncertain, although the common explanation is that the Indian saw a similarity between the hair of the Negro soldier and that of the buffalo. The buffalo was a sacred animal to the Indian, and it is unlikely that he would so name an enemy if respect were lacking. It is a fair guess that the Negro trooper understood this and thus his willingness to accept the title.

Considerable difficulties were encountered in making contact with the tribes, but arrangements were finally made to hold a council with the Southern Cheyennes and Arapahoes, Kiowas, Comanches, and Kiowa-Apaches near mid-October on Medicine Lodge Creek in Kansas. Pending the outcome of the talks, Sherman notified subordinate commanders that all offensive military operations should cease.

More than a week of talks at Medicine Lodge brought treaties with all the assembled tribes. The Comanches, Kiowas, and Kiowa-Apaches accepted a reservation of some three million acres between the Washita and Red Rivers in Indian Territory, while immediately to the north the Cheyennes and Arapahoes received in excess of four million acres. The Indians were to be provided with ample food, clothing, and other supplies and retained the right to hunt buffalo anywhere south of the Arkansas River. Resident agents would assist them in adjusting to the "white man's road." In return, the Indians agreed to keep the peace, not to molest the whites, and to stay clear of the great roads.<sup>15</sup>

The treaties of Medicine Lodge brought a cessation of warfare on the Central Plains and strong hopes for a permanent peace, but disturbing factors still remained. Many influential chiefs and headmen, along with their followers, had scorned the talks and their future behavior was in doubt. To the south there was no room for doubt, for bands of Kiowas and Comanches continued to make life miserable for citizens along the Texas frontier and the Civilized Tribes continued to suffer from their incursions. To make matters worse, the Senate and House fell to haggling over financial provisions of the treaties and ratification was long delayed. It was expecting too much of a nomad Indian to understand and appreciate what his more "enlightened" white brethren often failed to comprehend—the vagaries of American politics.

During the winter of 1867–68 Grierson found conditions fa-

<sup>15</sup> *United States Statutes at Large*, Vol. XV, 17; Kappler, *op. cit.*, II, 980–89; Alfred A. Taylor, "Medicine Lodge Peace Council," *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (June, 1924), 100–101; "Report of the Indian Peace Commissioners," *H.R. Exec. Doc. No. 97*, 40 Cong., 2 sess., 2–3. In addition to Commissioner Taylor, other members of the commission were John B. Henderson, John B. Sanborn, S. F. Tappan, General Sherman, and Brigadier Generals Harney and Terry.





*Tenth Cavalry buffalo soldier.*

*Courtesy National Archives*

### *The Ninth in Texas*

The next morning Stance decided to return to his post with the captured animals but had traveled only a short distance when a party of warriors was spied preparing to attack a small train. Once more Stance charged, forced the Indians to flee, and captured five more horses. But the redmen were not quite ready to call it a day. They soon reappeared at Stance's rear and opened fire at long range, but the diminutive sergeant would have none of this. He wheeled about and "turned my little command loose on them . . . and after a few volleys they left me to continue my march in peace."<sup>24</sup> This was Stance's fifth successful encounter with Indians in two years and Carroll was unstinting in his praise. The result was a Congressional Medal of Honor for the redoubtable Sergeant Stance.<sup>25</sup>

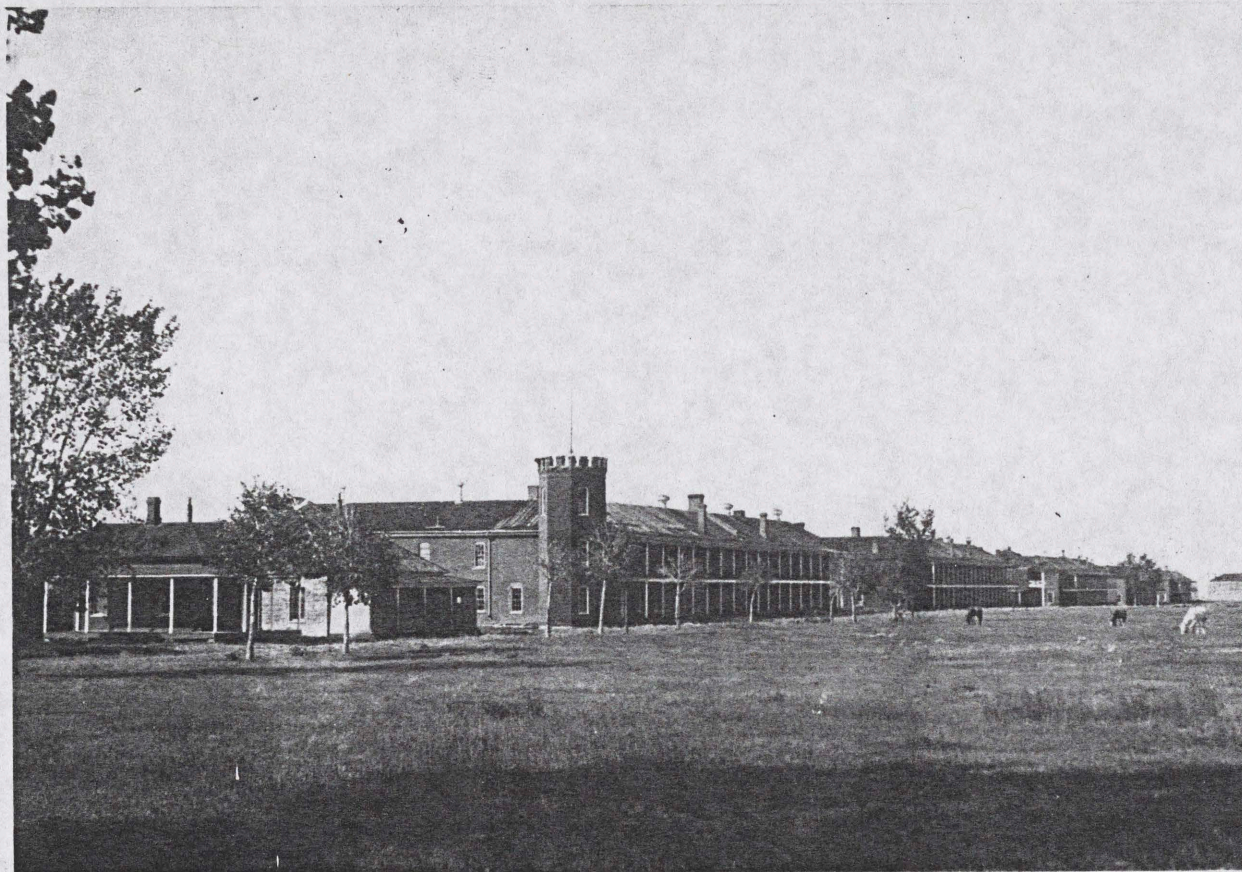
While considerable success had been achieved against the Mesquiteros, the Kiowas, Comanches, Kickapoos, and Lipans remained a sore problem. At Fort Davis, a fuming Hatch believed his regiment could make short work of the latter two tribes if he could only pursue their raiding parties to their villages in Mexico. In October he submitted a plan to General Reynolds for a winter campaign with this objective in view. The Ninth would take the field with every effective trooper that could be mustered, advance toward the Río Grande on a broad front driving every Indian they could flush before them, and, crossing the river, co-operate with Mexican troops in gaining an overwhelming and decisive victory.

Hatch's proposal was sound and won the swift approval of his superiors but just as swiftly struck a diplomatic snag. Mexican officials professed their willingness to co-operate but notified Thomas Nelson, United States minister to Mexico, that foreign troops could operate on Mexican soil only with the express consent of the Mexican Congress and that body would not convene until April, 1871. This situation ruined Hatch's plans for a winter campaign in 1870, but any future co-operation such as he envisioned was shunted aside as well when a suspicious and lethargic

<sup>24</sup> Sergeant Emanuel Stance, F Company, 9th Cavalry, to the PA, Fort McKavett, Texas, May 26, 1870, *ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Stance to the AG, Washington, D.C., July 24, 1870, *ibid.* This was Stance's letter of appreciation for his reward.





FT Assiniboine, NORTH Row, enlisted barracks. 946-947  
Hospital at extreme right



Inhabitants of Fort Assinniboine, Montana in the County of Choteau, Territory of Montana as enumerated by B.M. Boyle in June of 1880.

Description of numerical headings: 1. Name of person. 2. Color: B-black, C-Chinese, I - Indian, Mu - mulatto, W - White. 3. Sex. 4. Age. 5. Relationship to head of family. 6. Profession, occupation or trade of each person, male or female. 7. Marital status: D - divorced, Married - M, Single - S, Widowed - W. 8. Country, State, or Territory where person was born. 9. Same for father. 10 - Same for mother.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Durham, Cass	W	M	34	Capt. 18 Inf.	Captain 18 Inf.	M	Ind.	Ind.	N.J.
" , L. M.	W	F	25	Wife	Keeping house	M	Minn.	Iowa	Minn.
" , Carl G.	W	M	4	Son		S	Ga.	Minn	Minn
" , Raymond D.	W	M	3	Son		S	Mo.	"	"
" , Bessie D.	W	F	1	Daughter		S	"	"	"
Gilfoil, Kate	W	F	26	Servant	Nurse	S	"	"	"
Johnson, Celia	W	F	28	"	Cook	M	Swed	Swed	Swed
Lloyd, Thomas J.	W	M	35		Capt. 18 Inf.	M	Ohio	Ohio	Ohio
" , Emma	W	F	30	Wife	Keeping house	M	N.J.	N.J.	Vmt.
" , Mary D.	W	F	8	Daughter		S	S.C.	S.C.	Va.
Taylor, Ellen	W	F	45	Servant	Cook	W	Eng.	Eng.	Eng.
Schulz, Lizzie	W	F	36	Wife	Seamstress	W	Ger.	Ger.	Ger.
" , Annie	W	F	13	Daughter		S	Mich	"	"
" , Eddie	W	M	11	Son		S	Mont	"	"
" , May	W	F	8	Daughter		S	"	"	"
Boyd, Tabitha	W	F	60		Keeping house	S	Va.	Va.	Va.
Korida, Josephine	W	F	22	Wife	Servant	M	Tenn	Switz	Switz
Potter, Corroll	W	M	40		Capt. 18 Inf.	M	R.I.	R.I.	R.I.
" , C.F.	W	F	38	Wife	Keeping house	M	Mass	Mass	Mass
Linentohl, Etta	W	F	25	Servant	Cook	M	Mich	Ohio	N.Y.
" , Willis	W	M	7M			S	Ohio	Ohio	Me.
Kinna, Mary	W	F	30		Laundress	M	Ire.	Ire.	Ire.
Bomford, G.N.	W	M	39		1st Lt. 18 Inf.	M	N.Y.	N.Y.	Me.
Black, H. M.	W	M	53		Lt. Col. 18 Inf	M	Pa.	Pa.	Pa.
Heall, Foyett	B	M	30	Servant	Servant	S	S.C.	S.C.	S.C.
Anderson, John	W	M	35		1st Lt. 18 Inf	M	Mass	Mass	Mass
" , Ella D.	W	F	31	Wife	House keeper	M	"	"	"
" , Winona	W	F	12	Daughter		S	Tenn	"	"
Ward, Annie D.	W	F	12	Neice		S	Va.	"	"
Bremies, Maggie	W	F	25	Servant	Cook	M	Ga.	Ga.	Ga.
Bornhart, F.C.	W	M	35		1st Lt. 18 Inf.	M	Pa.	Pa.	Pa.
" , Kate C.	W	F	19	Wife	Keeping house	M	Ga.	N.Y.	Mass.
Bessions, D.W.	W	F	45	Mother in law		M	Ga.	"	"
O'Brian, A. C.	W	M	25		2d Lt. 2d Cav.	S	Va.	Va.	Va.
Norburg, Moria	W	F	24		Keeping house	M	Switz	Switz	Switz
Norwind, R.	W	M	45		Capt. 2d Cavalry	M	Md.	Md.	N.Y.
" , A.G.	W	F	29	Wife	Keeping house	M	Ohio	Fla.	Fla.
Gemmin, Tilley	W	F	26	Servant	Cook	S	"	Ger.	Ger.
Perley, H.O.	W	M	27		Asst. Surgeon	S	Me.	Me.	Mass.
Belling, Mellisa	W	F	27		Seamstress	M	Ill.	Ill.	Ohio
" , Wm.	W	M	11	Son		S	Tenn	N.Y.	Ill.
" , Lillian	W	F	4	Daughter		S	"	"	"
Fuller, A.M.	W	M	29		2d Lt. 2d Cav.	S	R.I.	Vt.	R.I.
Willard, Geo. M.	W	M	27		Clerk	M	Vt.	Vt.	Vt.
" , Lottie	W	F	21		Keeping house	M	Me.	Me.	Me.
Poeter, W.D.	W	M	27		2d Lt. 18th Inf.	M	N.Y.	R.I.	R.I.
" , C.T.	W	F	24	Wife	Keeping house	M	D.C.	R.I.	Mass..
" , W.T..	W	M	4	Son		S	D.C.	R.I.	"
" , H.T.	W	M	3	Son		S	"	N.Y.	D.C.
" , L.	W	M	2	Daughter		S	Ga.	"	"



2 Fort Assinniboine Census of 1880

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Boch, Anna	W	F	9	Daughter		S	Ga.	Aust	Aust
" , Mary	W	F	6	"		S	N.C.	"	"
Gallagher, Fannie	W	F	38		Keeping House	M	Ala.	Ala.	Ala.
Kelly, Mary	W	F	32	Wife	"	M	Eng.	Eng.	Eng.
" , Ligie	W	F	15	Daughter		S	"	"	"
" , Edward	W	M	10	Son		S	D.T.	"	"
" , James	W	M	7	"		S	"	"	"
" , Mary	W	F		Daughter		S	Mo.	"	"
" , Willie	W	M	3	Son		S	Ohio	"	"
" , Ellen	W	F	7M	Daughter		S	Mont	"	"
Farrel, Martha	W	F	22		Laundress	M	Ga.	Ga.	Ga.
Schaffer, Freda	W	F	27		Laundress	M	Ger.	Ger.	Ger.
" , John	W	M	10	Son		S	Ky.	"	"
Brady, Mary	W	F	30		Laundress	M	Ire.	Ire.	Ire.
" , Mary	W	F	3	Daughter		S	B.C.	"	"
Kelly, Catherin	W	F	40		Laundress	M	Ire.	"	"
" , Mary	W	F	15	Daughter		S	N.Y.	"	"
" , Katie	W	F	11	"		S	D.T.	"	"
" , John	W	M	9	Son		S	S.C.	"	"
Smith, Tressa	W	F	34		Laundress	M	N.Y.	N.Y.	N.Y.
" , Julia	W	F	12	Daughter		S	N.Y.	N.Y.	N.Y.
" , Charles	W	M	10	Son		S	"	"	"
" , Frank	W	M	8	"		S	B.C.	"	"
" , Juliva	W	M	6	"		S	"	"	"
Glynn, Maggie	W	F	45		Laundress	M	Ire.	Ire.	Ire.
" , Fannie	W	F	9	"		S	Ga.	"	"
" , John	W	M	6	Son		S	S.C.	"	"
" , Georgie	W	M	3	"		S	"	"	"
Woods, L.	W	F	32		Laundress	M	N.J.	N.J.	N.Y.
" , Wm. E.	W	M	11	Son		S	Ga.	"	"
McCabe, Dora	W	F	33		Laundress	M	Iowa	Eng.	Pa.
Hunt, Josphine	W	F	15	Daughter	"	M	Mo.	"	Iowa
McCabe, Wm.	W	M	13	Son		S	"	Ire.	"
" , Julia	W	F	6	Daughter		S	Mont	"	"
" , Mary	W	F	4	"		S	"	"	"
" , John J.	W	M	2	Son		S	"	"	"
" , Margret	W	F	2	Daughter		S	"	"	"
Smith, Bessie	W	F	28		Laundress	M	Mo.	N.Y.	Mo.
" , Lewis	W	F	8	Son		S	Mass	"	"
Shannon, Dora	W	F	35		Laundress	M	Pa.	Ire.	Pa.
" , Lora	W	F	12	Daughter		S	N.C.	"	"
" , Willie	W	M	5	Son		S	Mont.	Ire.	"
" , Mary	W	F	8M	Daughter		S	"	"	"
Moriarity, Mary	W	F	21		Laundress	M	Ala.	Ala.	Ala.
" , Wm.E.	W	M	3	Son		S	Ga.	"	"
Hadley, Geo.	W	M	46		Sawyer	S	Me.	Mass	Mass
Herring, Robt.	W	M	23		Teamster	S	Conn.	"	"
Moin, Robert	W	M	26		Packer	S	Wis	Conn	Ohio
Millier, Chas.	W	M	57		Packer	S	Ger.	Ger.	Ger.
Harwood, James	W	M	30		Guide	S	N.Y.	Pa.	N.Y.
Moran, James T.	W	M	38		Packer	S	N.Y.	Ire	Ont.
Higgins, Henry	W	M	28		Teamster	S	Flor	"	Ire.
Burnes, Martin	W	M	27		Carpenter	S	Wis	"	"
Williamson, J.H.	W	M	29		Saddler	S	N.C.	N.J.	Conn.
Zimmerman, John	W	M	26		Wheelright	S	Ohio	Ger.	Ger
McCauley, John	W	M	20		Teamster	S	Ill	"	"
Washby, Mathew	W	M	20		"	S	Wis.	Prus	Prus



Brady, Mary	W	F	30	
" , Mary	W	F	3	Daughter
Kelly, Catherin	W	F	40	
" , Mary	W	F	15	Daughter
" , Katie	W	F	11	"
" , John	W	M	9	Son
Smith, Tressa	W	F	34	
" , Julia	W	F	12	Daughter
" , Charles	W	M	10	Son
" , Frank	W	M	8	"
" , Juliva	W	M	6	"
Glynn, Maggie	W	F	45	
" , Fannie	W	F	9	"
" , John	W	M	6	Son
" , Georgie	W	M	3	"
Woods, L.	W	F	32	
" , Wm. E.	W	M	11	Son
McCabe, Dora	W	F	33	
Hunt, Josphine	W	F	15	Daughter
McCabe, Wm.	W	M	13	Son
" , Julia	W	F	6	Daughter
" , Mary	W	F	4	"
" , John J.	W	M	2	Son
" , Margret	W	F	2	Daughter
Smith, Bessie	W	F	28	
" , Lewis	W	F	3	Son
Shannon, Dora	W	F	35	
" , Lora	W	F	12	Daughter
" , Willie	W	M	5	Son
" , Mary	W	F	8M	Daughter
Moriarity, Mary	W	F	21	
" , Wm.E.	W	M	3	Son
Hadley, Geo.	W	M	46	
Herring, Robt.	W	M	23	
Moin, Robert	W	M	26	
Millier, Chas.	W	M	57	
Harwood, James	W	M	30	
Moran, James T.	W	M	38	
Higgins, Henry	W	M	28	
Burnes, Martin	W	M	27	
Williamson, J.H.	W	M	29	
Zimmerman, John	W	M	26	
McCauley, John	W	M	20	
Washby, Mathew	W	M	20	
Connore, Wm.	W	M	35	
Jenkins, Edward	W	M	18	
Cunningham, John	W	M	33	
McDonald, P. G.	W	M	34	
Heole, Ben. F.	W	M	23	
Folherd, Mike	W	M	32	
Foglevong, Frank	W	M	30	
Felman, N.C.	W	M	21	
Cosserly, John	W	M	25	
Holms, Martin	W	M	37	
Booth, Geo. C.	W	M	28	

Laundress	M	Ire.	Ire.	Ire
	S	B.C.	"	"
Laundress	M	Ire.	"	"
	S	N.Y.	"	"
	S	D.T.	"	"
	S	S.C.	"	"
Laundress	M	N.Y.	N.Y.	N.Y
	S	N.Y.	N.Y.	N.Y
	S	"	"	"
	S	B.C.	"	"
	S	"	"	"
Laundress	M	Ire.	Ire.	Ire
	S	Ga.	"	"
	S	S.C.	"	"
	S	"	"	"
Laundress	M	N.J.	N.J.	N.Y
	S	Ga.	"	"
Laundress	M	Iowa	Eng.	Pa.
"	M	Mo.	"	Iow
	S	"	Ire.	"
	S	Mont	"	"
	S	"	"	"
	S	"	"	"
Laundress	M	Mo.	N.Y.	Mo.
	S	Mass	"	"
Laundress	M	Pa.	Ire.	Pa.
	S	N.C.	"	"
	S	Mont.	Ire.	"
	S	"	"	"
Laundress	M	Ala.	Ala.	Ala.
	S	Ga.	"	"
Sawyer	S	Me.	Mass	Mass
Teamster	S	Conn.	"	"
Packer	S	Wis	Conn	Ohio
Packer	S	Ger.	Ger.	Ger.
Guide	S	N.Y.	Pa.	N.Y.
Packer	S	N.Y.	Ire	Ont.
Teamster	S	Flor	"	Ire.
Carpenter	S	Wis	"	"
Saddler	S	N.C.	N.J.	Conn
Wheelright	S	Ohio	Ger.	Ger
Teamster	S	Ill	"	"
"	S	Wis.	Prus	Prus
"	S	Ire.	Ire.	Ire.
"	S	Colo	"	"
Painter	S	Mass	Mass	Mass
Blacksmith	M	Ire.	Ire.	Ire.
Teamster	S	Ohio	Ohio	Ohio
Carpenter	S	"	"	"
Teamster	S	Ohio	Ohio	Ohio
"	S	Minn	Wisc	N.J.
"	S	N.J.	Ire.	Ire.
"	S	Ohio	"	"
"	W	Md.	Md.	Md.



1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Quinn, Ed A	W M	26			Master Transt.	S Kan.	Ire.	Ire.	
Wilson, J.E.	W M	21			Tele. Operator	S N.Y.	Vt.	Ger.	
Hamilton, John	W M	26			Laborer	S Ire	Ire.	Ire.	
Kimler, Benj.	W M	29			Stock Grower	S Pa.	Pa.	Pa.	
Lefettier, D. C.	W M	22			Bookkeeper	S Iowa	Can.	Can.	
Hermon, G. J.	W M	24			Clerk	S Ind.	Md.	Ky.	
Semon, Jas. H.	W M	37			Clerk	M Ire.	Ire.	Ire.	
McCullopp, Robt L.	W M	34			Bookkeeper	M PA.	Pa.	Pa.	
Johnson, Jas C.	W M	57			Laborer	S Ver.	N.C.	N.C.	
Adams, A. B.	W M	22			Herder	S N.Y.	N.Y.	N.Y.	
Healihan, Jas.	W M	23			Teamster	S Ill.	Ire.	Ire.	
Christmas, Aron	W M	26			Butcher	S Den.	Den.	Den.	
Brooks, Henry	W M	43			Butcher	S Prus.	Prus.	Prus.	
Geary, John	W M	32			Laborer	S Mass.	Ire.	Ire.	
Spitzley, D.	W M	40			Hotel Keeper	S Ger.	Ger.	Ger.	
Ringwold, Henry	W M	24			Clerk	S Mich.	Ger.	Ger.	
" , Geo.	W M	25			Waiter	S "	"	"	
Chrest, Geo.	W M	25			Cook	S Ohio	Ohio	N.Y.	
Pippin, Danl.	W M	38			Wagon Master	S Can.	Can.	Can.	
Smith, Chas. E.	W M	23			Barber	S Ohio	Ohio	Ohio	
Lambert, John	W M	30			Carpenter	S Eng.	Eng.	Eng.	
Futherford, R. C.	W M	29			"	S Tenn.	Tenn.	Va.	
Benson, Austin	W M	33			Laborer	S Nor.	Nor.	Norw	
Brocon, W.L.	W M	52			Major 18th Inf.	M Pa.	Pa.	Pa.	
" , R.T.	W F	46	Wife		Keeping House	M "	"	"	
" , E.W.	W M	9	Son			S Ariz.	"	"	
Cat, John	W M	30	Servant		Cook	S Pa.	"	"	
Robinson, F.W.	W M	34			1st Lt. 2d Cav.	N.Y.	N.Y.	Conn	
Hoyt, Geo. S.	W M	38			1st Lt. 18th Inf.	M N.H.	N.H.	N.H.	
" , F.R.	W F	26	Wife		Keeping House	M Mass.	"	"	
Vaughn, Bettie	W F	24	Servant		Cook	M Va.	Va.	Va.	
" , Bell	W F	5	Daughter			S N.C.	"	"	
Joy, L. B.	W M	21			Forage Master	S D.C.	Pa.	"	
Prine, Chas H.	W M	29			Teamster	S Mass.	Mass.	Mass	
Stirens, Jas.	W M	25			"	S Ky.	Ky.	Ky.	
Heoys, Pat.	W M	50			"	S Ire.	Ire.	Ire.	
Davis, John	W M	40			Engineer	W N.Y.	"	"	
Kelogg, G.R.	W M	35			Captain 18th Inf.	M "	N.Y.	N.Y.	
" , Mary E.	W F	35	Wife		Keeping House	M Ohio	"	N.H.	
" , D. W.	W M	13	Son			S "	"	Ohio	
" , L. P.	W F	5	Daughter			S Ga.	"	"	
" , Lizzie D.	W F	4	"			S "	"	"	
Hunter, Dina	B F	28	Servant		Cook	S Ala.	Va.	Va.	
Gibbs, Rachel	B F	29	"		House Gir.	S S.C.	S.C.	S.C.	
Bates, Robt P.	W M	38			Adj. 18th Inf.	M N.Y.	Eng.	Eng.	
" , M. H.	W F	38	Wife		Keeping House	M D.C.	Va.	D.C.	
Dillon, Thos.	W M	54			Laborer	W Ire.	Ire.	Ire.	
McCarroll, Mike	W M	22			Teamster	S N.J.	N.J.	N.J.	
Nolon, John	W M	52			Miner	M Ire.	Ire.	Ire.	
Murphy, Patrick	W M	35			Laborer	S "	"	"	
Graham, Jos.	W M	36			Teamster	S Miss.	Scot.	Miss	
Duniny, Jas.	W M	42			"	S Can.	Ire.	Can	
Callahan, John	W M	30			Cook	S Ill.	"	Ire.	
Leigh, Samuel L	W M	25			Teamster	S Utah	"	"	
Hawkes, James	W M	43			Laborer	W Ire.	"	"	
Leighton, P. W..	W M	53			"	S Me.	Me.	Me.	
Johnston, Wm.	W M	50			"	S Ind.	Scot	Frar	
Dean, Thos.	W M	23			Blacksmith	S "	Ohio	Ind.	
Davis, L. P.	W M	42			Teamster	W Ky.	Ky.	Va.	
Smith, Chas.	W M	24			Packer	S Ohio	Scot	Chi	



Healman, Jas.	W M	23	
Christmas, Aron	W M	26	
Brooks, Henry	W M	43	
Geary, John	W M	32	
Spitzley, D.	W M	40	
Ringwold, Henry	W M	24	
" , Geo.	W M	25	
Chrest, Geo.	W M	25	
Pippin, Danl.	W M	38	
Smith, Chas. E.	W M	23	
Lambert, John	W M	30	
Futherford, P. C.	W M	29	
Benson, Austin	W M	33	
Brocon, W.L.	W M	52	
" , R.T.	W F	45	Wife
" , E.W.	W M	9	Son
Cat, John	W M	30	Servant
Robinson, F.W.	W M	34	
Hoyt, Geo.S.	W M	38	
" , F.R.	W F	25	Wife
Vaughn, Bettie	W F	24	Servant
" , Bell	W F	5	Daughter
Joy, L. B.	W M	21	
Prine, Chas H.	W M	29	
Stirens, Jas.	W M	25	
Heoys, Pat.	W M	50	
Davis, John	W M	40	
Kellogg, G.R.	W M	35	
" , Mary E.	W F	35	Wife
" , D. W.	W M	13	Son
" , L. P.	W F	5	Daughter
" , Lizzie D.	W F	4	
Hunter, Dina	B F	28	Servant
Gibbs, Rachel	B F	29	"
Bates, Robt P.	W M	38	
" , M. H.	W F	38	Wife
Dillon, Thos.	W M	54	
McCarroll, Mike	W M	22	
Nolon, John	W M	52	
Murphy, Patrick	W M	35	
Graham, Jos.	W M	36	
Duniny, Jas.	W M	42	
Callahan, John	W M	30	
Leigh, Samuel L	W M	25	
Hawkes, James	W M	43	
Leighton, P. W..	W M	53	
Johnston, Wm.	W M	50	
Dean, Thos.	W M	23	
Davis, L. P.	W M	42	
Smith, Chas.	W M	24	
Coil, John	W M	39	
Harwood, J.D.K.	W M	31	
Brown, J.J.	W M	44	
" , Susan	W F	30	Wife
" , William	W M	12	Son
" , Mary	W F	4	Daughter
Brooks, Armstrong	W M	35	
Pote, J. H. J.	W M	17	
Heraly, Michael	W M	21	
Bromburger, John	W M	40	

Teamster	S Ill.	Ire.	I
Butcher	S Den.	Den.	D
Butcher	S Prus.	Prus.	P
Laborer	S Mass.	Ire.	I
Hotel Keeper	S Ger.	Ger.	G
Clerk	S Mich.	Ger.	G
Waiter	S "	"	
Cook	S Ohio	Ohio	N
Wagon Master	S Can.	Can.	C
Barber	S Ohio	Ohio	O
Carpenter	S Eng.	Eng.	E
"	S Tenn.	Tenn.	V
Laborer	S Nor.	Nor.	N
Major 18th Inf.	M Pa.	Pa.	P
Keeping House	M "	"	
"	S Ariz.	"	
Cook	S Pa.	"	
1st Lt. 2d. Cav.	N.Y.	N.Y.	C
1st Lt. 18th Inf.	M N.H.	N.H.	N
Keeping House	M Mass.	"	
Cook	M Va.	Va.	V
"	S N.C.	"	
Forage Master	S D.C.	Pa.	
Teamster	S Mass.	Mass.	M
"	S Ky.	Ky.	K
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Engineer	W N.Y.	"	
Captain 18th Inf.	M "	N.Y.	N
Keeping House	M Ohio	"	N
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"	S Ga.	"	
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Cook	S Ala.	Va.	V
House Gir.	S S.C.	S.C.	S
Adj. 18th Inf.	M N.Y.	Eng.	E
Keeping House	M D.C.	Va.	D
Laborer	W Ire.	Ire.	I
Teamster	S N.J.	N.J.	N
Miner	M Ire.	Ire.	I
Laborer	S "	"	
Teamster	S Miss.	Scot.	M
"	S Can.	Ire.	C
Cook	S Ill.	"	I
Teamster	S Utah	"	
Laborer	W Ire.	"	
"	S Me.	Me.	Me
"	S Ind.	Scot	Fr
Blacksmith	S "	Ohio	In
Teamster	W Ky.	Ky.	V
Packer	S Ohio	Scot.	O
Laborer	S "	Ire.	"
Guide	S N.Y.	Pa.	N
Interpreter	M Mo.	Ky.	K
Keeping House	M Mont.	Mont.	M
"	S "	Mo.	"
"	S "	Mo.	"
Butcher	S Ger.	Ger.	Ger
Teamster	S Fla.	Ohio	O
Wagon Master	S Ire.	Ire.	I
Teamster	S Mo.	"	"



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5 pp.

# JOHN J. PERSHING

"I AM getting some new experience up here . . .," wrote Lieutenant John J. Pershing to a friend early in 1896. "It is not quite as pleasant as being on college duty, but I had gotten tired of that"<sup>1</sup>

The "up here" referred to Fort Assiniboine, Montana Territory, a lonely but impressively solid frontier post thirty miles south of the Canadian boundary. It was a cold place (temperatures that January went down to -20°), situated nowhere in particular as far as civilization was concerned, but near enough to groups of Indians to remind them of authority. Young Pershing reported there in October, 1895, and commanded a troop of the 10th Cavalry, a Negro regiment.<sup>2</sup>

Service with Negro troops was not especially sought after then. It meant more work for the officers, more attention to paper work, reports and returns. But Pershing's attitude towards the Negro was, in his own words, "that of one brought up among them"—a reference to the fact that as a child in Laclede, Missouri, some of his playmates had been Negro boys and girls. He treated his Negro troops just as he had treated the Sioux Indians a short time before and

Harry DeLano Andrews, *My Friend and Classmate, John J. Pershing* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Military Service Publishing Co., 1937), p. 51.

Statement of Military Service of John J. Pershing, 01, U.S. Army Records Center to the author, May 9, 1960.



MILITARY ACADEMY ARCHIVES, WEST POINT

## AT FORT ASSINIBOINE

by DONALD SMYTHE, S. J.

Winter 1968

19



Officers at Fort Assiniboine enjoyed solid and comfortable family quarters at the post built in the grand manner to quiet settlers' nerves when Sitting Bull and his band fled to Canada after the Custer Battle. The post, for which Congress appropriated \$100,000, was partially built of bricks made in kilns located nearby. By the time John J. Pershing served here briefly in 1895-96, Sitting Bull was dead and only a few displaced Crees concerned the military contingent.

AL LUCKE COLLECTION, HAYRE



was later to treat the Philippine Moros, i.e., with respect and consideration. In all three cases his relations with those he commanded were admirable. Pershing seemed to have a knack for dealing with those who were not of his own race.<sup>3</sup>

Affairs at Fort Assiniboine were generally routine, but there were a few exceptions. Lieutenant Letcher Hardeman always remembered the hunting trip he took with Pershing where they both spied a deer and fired simultaneously. Each claimed credit for the kill, citing as proof that the bullet was exactly where he had aimed. "It was the only time I ever saw Pershing really get excited," Hardeman said.<sup>4</sup>

Remembered, too, was the play rehearsal where Pershing stopped the show by kissing the leading lady. The script called for it, to be sure, but in those Victorian days, it was not thought quite proper to kiss during practice; that should be reserved for the night of the performance. When Pershing planted a kiss anyway, the leading lady got so embarrassed she forgot her lines and such a commotion resulted that the rehearsal was called off.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> John Pershing, "Autobiography," ch. vi, pp. 8-9, John J. Pershing Papers (Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.), Box 380. The Pershing "Autobiography" will hereafter be cited thus: PA; the Pershing Papers, thus: PP.

<sup>4</sup> PA, ch. vi, p. 9, PP 380; George MacAdam, "The Life of General Pershing," *The World's Work*, XXXVII (March, 1919), 544-45.

<sup>5</sup> PA, ch. vi, no pagination, but between pp. 6 and 7, PP 377.

IN JUNE, 1896, Pershing saw some action. A group of Cree Indians, international vagabonds for ten years, had to be rounded up and returned to Canada. It was Pershing's job to collect some five to six hundred of them scattered over northern Montana and take them to Coutts Station on the border.<sup>6</sup>

On June 13, 1896, Pershing's Troop D left from Fort Assiniboine and headed for Great Falls, ninety miles to the southwest, where some Crees were reported. Speed was important; the Crees were beginning to scatter as only Indians could.

The Marias River, swollen and dangerous, delayed them 18 hours, forcing them to convert wagons into ferry boats by stretching canvas tent flies over the sides and bottom. The troops performed splendidly, except for one man whom Pershing noticed was goldbricking. While others were wading into the river waist deep, he carefully avoided getting even his feet wet. Pershing marched up to him.

"Get down in the water like the rest."

The trooper made no move.

Pershing's fist exploded on the soldier's jaw, knocking him full length in the water with a splash.

There was no more shirking after that. In fact a saying developed in Troop D

<sup>6</sup> MacAdam, p. 544; Major J. M. J. Sanno to Pershing, June 13, 1896, PP 369.





Bachelor officers found life at Fort Assiniboine tedious except for occasional hunting trips and social occasions. Located near Havre in Northern Montana, this was Montana's most solidly built fort. Castle-like towers attached to the end buildings of each orderly row were more decorative than tactical. The brick buildings, one of which is seen here, faced an immense parade ground, seen on the next page.

AL LUCKE COLLECTION, HAVRE

whenever anyone began loafing: "You better git at it, fella, or ol' Red'll knock you into the river."<sup>7</sup>

They arrived at Great Falls on June 17 and captured 107 Crees nearby. Some trouble arose with a lawyer who obtained a writ of habeas corpus for the Indians, but Pershing (who had a law degree himself) insisted that the State had no jurisdiction and disregarded it. By the time the court threw it out, the first group of Indians was on the way to Canada.<sup>8</sup>

All but one, that is. On departure day a Cree emerged from his tent with a rifle. Facing sure execution if expatriated because he was wanted for murder, he sat down, placed the muzzle against his chest, and kicked off the trigger with his toe. The slug passed completely through him, narrowly missing Pershing some 15 feet behind. Had it been eight inches closer, the Pershing story might have ended right there.<sup>9</sup>

The rest of this campaign was more of the same, although there were no more bullets whizzing past Pershing nor, he was happy to say, did he have to kill any Indian during the roundup.<sup>10</sup> It was

mostly hard riding, investigating rumors, rounding up stragglers, reassuring frightened Indians they were not going to be hurt, provisioning them with food, and putting them (under guard) on railroads for Canada.

A birth and a death occurred during the roundup, an outbreak of measles, and a flash flood in the middle of the night which made the camp pandemonium: dogs howling, squaws crying, babies wailing, men cursing, Indian ponies dispersing to the four winds, and everyone wet and miserable.<sup>11</sup>

Yet the job was done. It took two months and covered more than 1,000 miles, much of it over mountainous ground, including the Continental Divide. Of the 525 or so Crees turned over to Canadian authorities, all but about 125 were either arrested or deported by Pershing's command.<sup>12</sup>

There was only one hitch—almost. On August 6 Pershing reached the border at Coutts with the final batch of 190 Crees. There the Canadian authorities refused to accept them because some had had measles. In vain Pershing argued that under the international agreement the Canadians were bound to receive their wards and hold them in quarantine on

<sup>7</sup> Report of Pershing to Major J. M. J. Sanno, August 15, 1896, p. 1, PP 369; PA, ch. vi, pp. 10-11, PP 380.

<sup>8</sup> PA, ch. vi, p. 11, PP 380.

<sup>9</sup> George N. Green to Pershing, February 17, 1933, PP 369; Pershing to Sanno, August 29, 1915, PP 313; Pershing to Captain Stewart, September 8, 1896, PP 369.

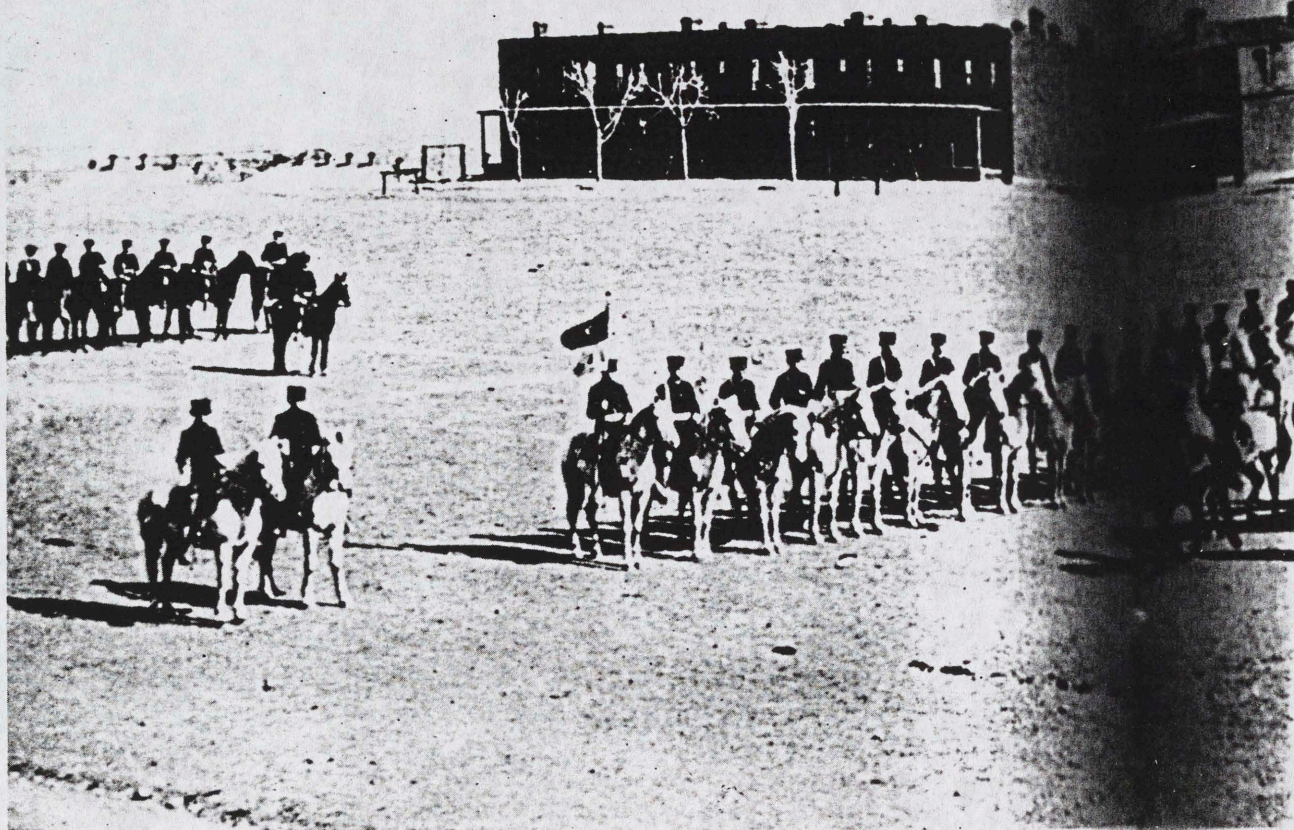
<sup>10</sup> PA, ch. vi, p. 11, PP 375.

<sup>11</sup> PA, ch. vi, pp. 11-12, PP 380; Pershing to Stewart, September 8, 1896, PP 369; Report of Pershing to Sanno, August 15, 1896; pp. 1-6, PP 369.

<sup>12</sup> Pershing to Stewart, September 8, 1896, PP 369; Report of Pershing to Sanno, August 15, 1896, p. 6, PP 369.



CAVALRY INSPECTION, FORT ASSINIBOINE, M. T.



their own soil if need be. The Canadians still said no.<sup>13</sup>

With his rations used up, Pershing wired his superior officer, explaining his predicament. Soon the telegraph lines were buzzing between Washington and Ottawa. The next day, August 7, Ottawa ordered the Crees received.<sup>14</sup>

Pershing's conduct in the roundup merited this tribute from his superior:

"Lieutenant Pershing exhibited soldierly qualities of high order and his conduct throughout is worthy of the highest commendation. He made long, tedious and tiresome marches, maintain-

ing his horses in good condition. He showed judgment and discretion, particularly in using the railroad to cross the Flathead River, to avoid delay which might have proved very troublesome by allowing the Indians to escape. He showed patience under great and trying annoyances and importunities which always accompany dealings with the Indians."<sup>15</sup>

Pershing's service at Fort Assiniboine was short. He left there in October, 1896, just one year after he had come. Before he did, however, General Nelson A. Miles, Commanding General of the Army, visited the post and Pershing was assigned to him. Apparently he made an impression.

<sup>13</sup> Pershing to Major J. M. J. Sanno, August [6], 1896, PP 369.

<sup>14</sup> Report of Pershing to Sanno, August 15, 1896, p. 6, PP 369.

<sup>15</sup> Report of Major J. M. J. Sanno, September 5, 1896, in Pershing's Military Record as of January 1, 1901, PP 281.

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for on December 11, 1896, he received a letter from Army Headquarters in Washington: "General Miles . . . desires to retain you on duty for a short time at these Headquarters . . . if the same would be agreeable to you."<sup>16</sup>

Pershing said yes and a short time later was detailed in Washington. It was temporary duty then, but years later—after a brilliant career which culminated in his successful command of the A.E.F. in World War I—he returned again, this time as Army Chief of Staff from 1921 to 1934.

John J. Pershing's work at Fort Assiniboine was a step in his rise to the heights.

<sup>16</sup> *Life of John J. Pershing*, p. 13, PP 340. Samuel Breck, Assistant Adjutant General, to Pershing, December 11, 1896, PP 315.

DONALD SMYTHE, S. J., now on the faculty of John Carroll University, Cleveland, Ohio, appears in this magazine for the second time with an article based on a facet of the distinguished career of John J. Pershing. For our Spring, 1963, issue, Father Smythe contributed a manuscript on Pershing's near-fatal look at the Grand Canyon in 1889. The current article concerns his short but significant (in terms of Pershing's future in the Army) tenure at Montana's Fort Assiniboine. These articles are side results of the deep study Father Smythe has been making for several years on this remarkable military figure, a study which will result in a multi-volume biography. During the 1965-66 academic year, the author was on leave of absence from John Carroll touring the battlefields of World War I. He has published in such other journals as *The Pacific Historical Review*, *Nebraska History*, *Missouri Historical Review*, *Philippine Studies*, and the *New Mexico Historical Review*.

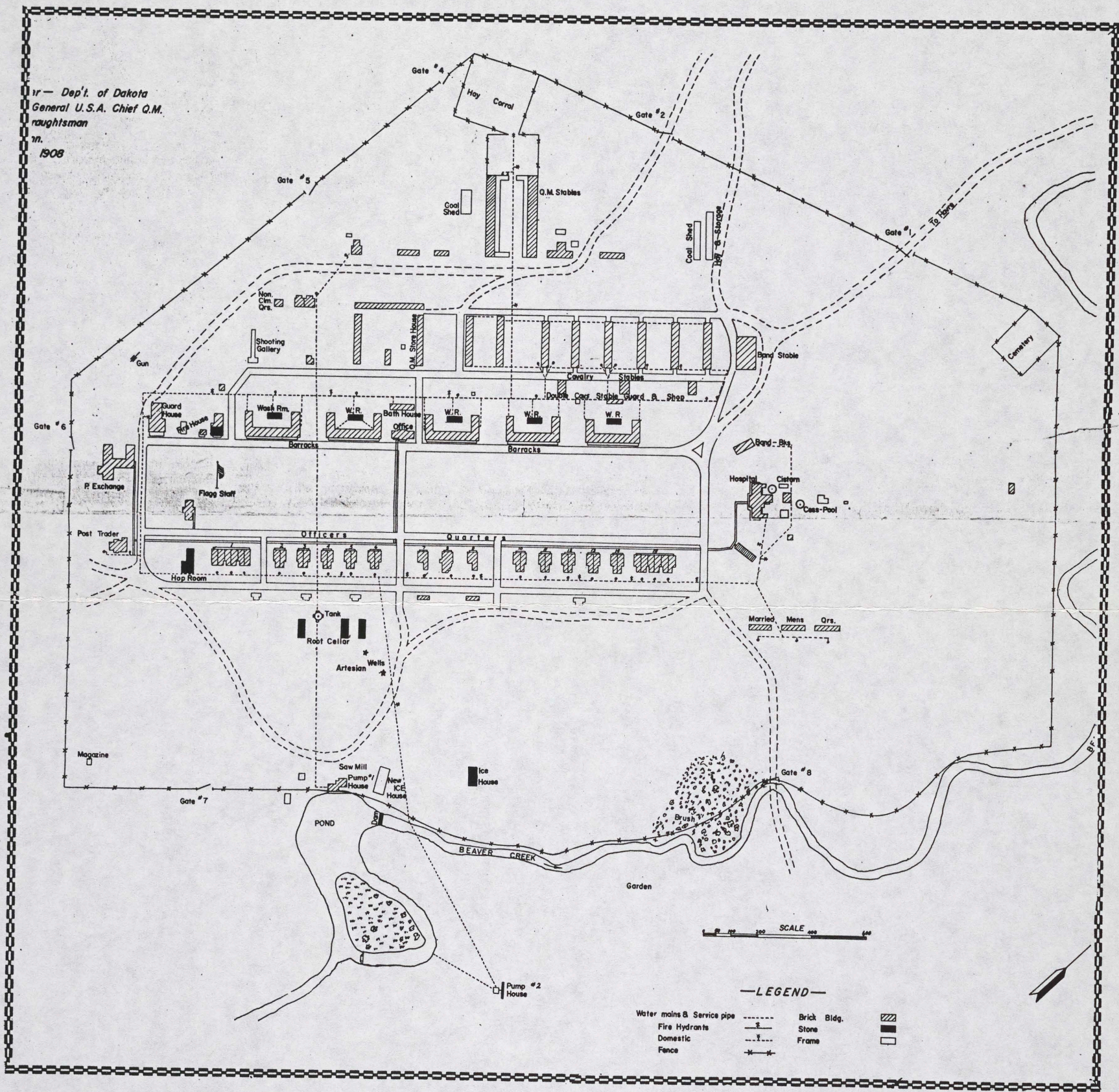


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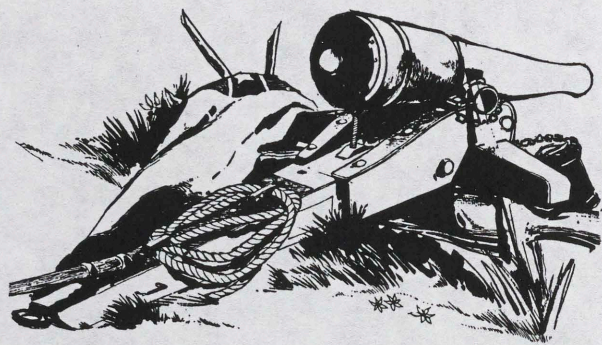
North of the Missouri  
A Supplement  
Of The **Hi-line HERALD**  
1965  
HAVRE, MONTANA

Reproduced from collections in the Montana Historical Society Archives

# THE HISTORY OF ---- FORT ASSINIBOINE ---- A MILITARY POST



also



- FORT BELKNAP
- FORT WALSH
- CAMPS ALONG THE MISSOURI



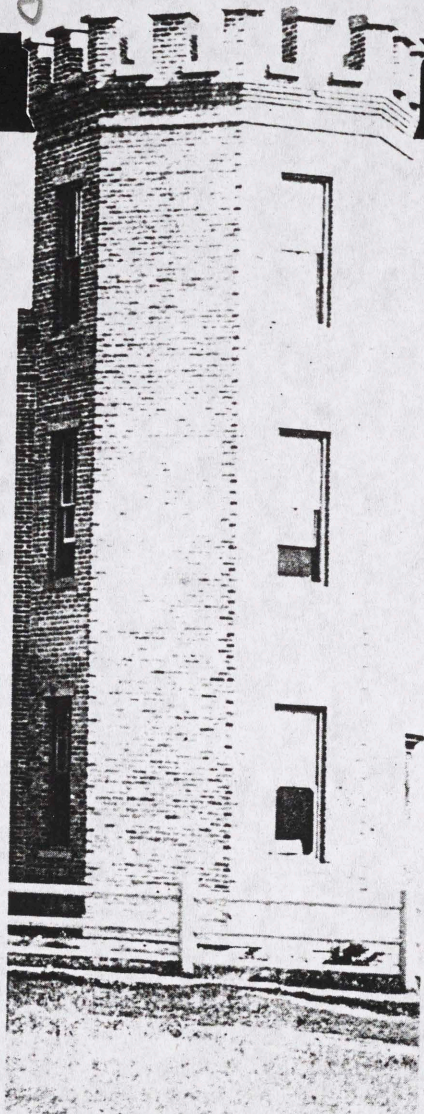
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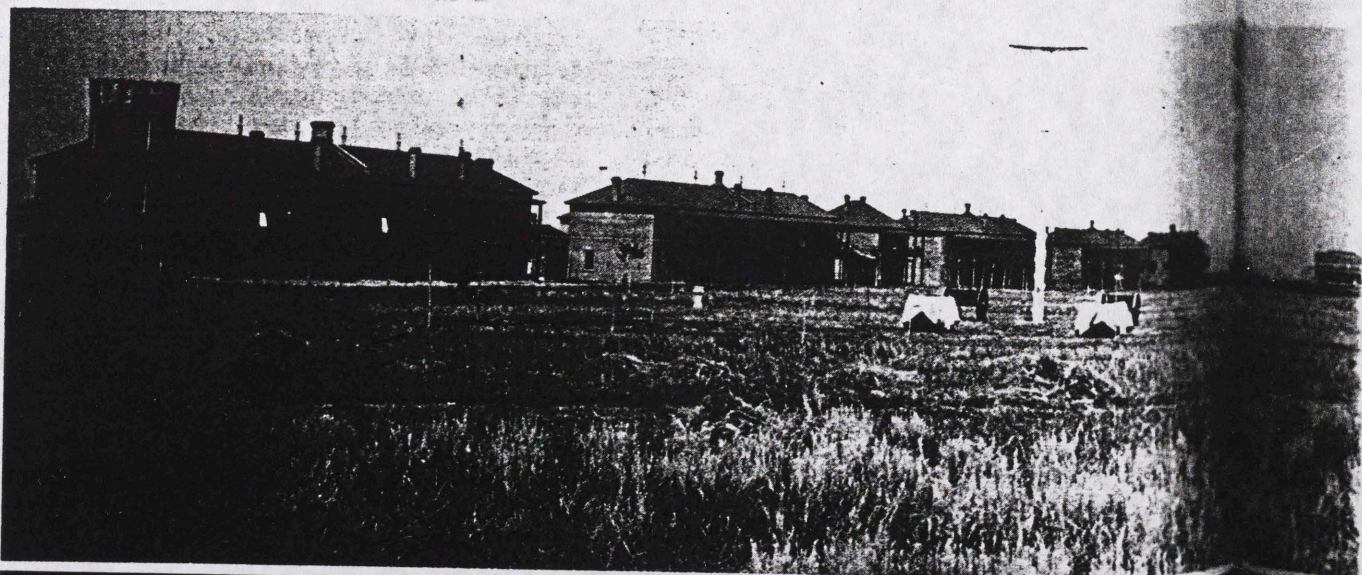
All photos in MHS collections unless otherwise noted



"Very dull, nothing doing," wrote action-hungry John X. Beidler in his journal day after dragging day. Beidler, portly vigilante, scout, lawman, and pioneer of more than two decades on the Montana frontier had checked in at Fort Assinniboine during the dead of winter. It was January 1881. The Sioux, Blackfeet, and Gros Ventre were quiet, as were the Cree and Crow. Lawless and floater elements which habitually gravitated to remote outposts were for the moment relatively quiet. Beidler noted in his diary that two deserters, hands frozen, were brought in from the nearby Bear Paw Mountains. John Hegg was robbed; the mixed-blood who had killed Ed Gravoline showed up; horse thieves French Felix and Owens were in the area as was Wilson who had killed a Dutchman in Montana; and Mose whipped a sick Indian woman until she cried.

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# ON OLD OF THE BORDER

## Fort Assinniboine, 1879-1911

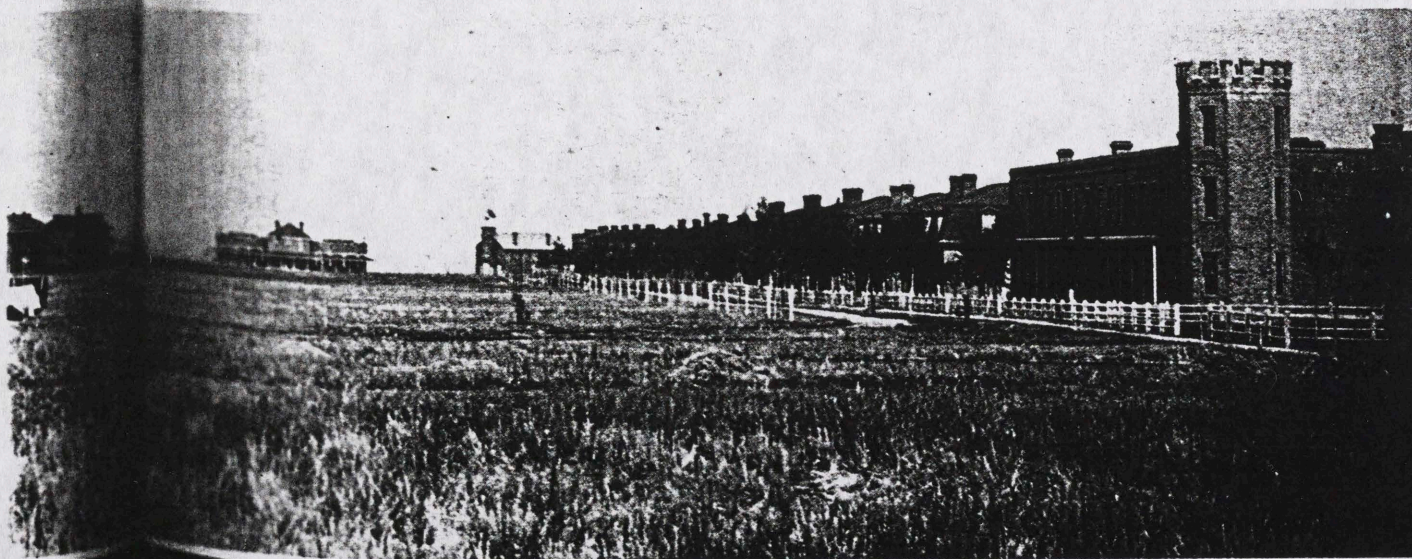
by Nicholas P. Hardeman

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What Beidler recorded might be considered a fair sample of the fort's seemingly uneventful history. "Too much and too late" has been said of this big, sprawling ten- to fourteen-company post of the Far Northwest. True, it lacked the drama which visited such Montana establishments as Fort Ellis, Fort Keogh, and Camp Cooke, witnessing no battles and attracting scant notice during its life of thirty-two years. Whether the government added an extra "n" to its name or dropped the fort altogether appeared to matter little to the country.

Yet, it would be a gross injustice to leave the final assessment of the fort and its history to the pens of impetuous frontier types who were not content unless steeds were galloping and guns blazing. Assinniboine had its own level of signifi-

cant and interesting activity—involving nomadic Cree Indians and demanding cattlemen, outlaws and impetuous miners, railway labor squabbles and "buffalo soldiers." And the absence of pitched battles may be considered a monument to the post's preventive triumphs—successes attributable to its large size, sturdy construction, strategic location, and high mobility of armed forces. Plains Indians rarely attacked military forts directly, and the solid masonry buildings of Assinniboine, despite some shingle roofs among the tin, proved the rule rather than the exception. Insofar as armed combat was concerned, accounts of soldiers at the base indicate that, like Lincoln in the Black Hawk War, they were engaged only in bloody battles against mosquitoes. But they were involved in much else which was vital to the pursuit of the nation's interests in the West.





**A**SSINNIBOINE WAS ONE among a rash of Montana forts built in the aftermath of the Custer debacle at the Little Big Horn—including Fort Keogh in 1876; Forts Custer, Missoula and the temporary Fort Fizzle, 1877; and Fort Maginnis, 1880. Largest by far, and northernmost of these, Fort Assinniboine was established primarily to ward off possible thrusts by Sioux Chief Sitting Bull from his redoubt in the Cypress Hills close at hand on the Canadian side of the border, and by the Nez Perce, some of whom were also in Canada following defeat and capture of Chief Joseph by the army in the Bear Paw Mountains in 1877.

There were some secondary reasons for the structure. General of the Army William Tecumseh Sherman had envisioned a line of forts near the northern and southern boundaries of the United States. When half-starved Indians pursuing buffalo pressed south from Canada, cattlemen, miners and other settlers applied pressure for federal troops to intercept and eject these “renegades.” Control of the large Blackfeet Reserve in northern Montana Territory, protection of trade routes between several northwest settlements and uneasiness over the Riel Rebellion across the Canadian border were additional reasons for the fort.

Finally, there were whispers that the influential Maine Senator James G. Blaine was pressing for a strengthened military position in the northern states and territories to advance his dream of acquiring Canada.<sup>1</sup>

Following some timely lobbying in the nation's capital by Montana Territorial Delegate Major Martin Maginnis, Congress, on June 18, 1878, appropriated \$100,000 for the establishment of a Montana fort near the Canadian line. Lieutenant Colonel John R. Brooke of the Third Infantry was designated to select an appropriate site. By the end of July he had surveyed the general area and chosen a location thirty-eight miles from the Canadian border on an elevated tongue of plain about four miles south of the confluence of Milk River and Beaver Creek. The latter stream skirted the post's position on the south, and windswept, undulating plains stretched far to the north. Surrounding the site

was a forty-by-fifteen-mile military reservation. Colonel Thomas H. Ruger, in a radical change of climate, brought the Eighteenth United States Infantry from Atlanta, Georgia, and formally established Fort Assinniboine on May 9, 1879.<sup>2</sup>

The meaning, and indeed the spelling, of the post's name have been subjects of some dispute. “Boine,” it is widely agreed, referred to Sioux. Depending on which interpretation one wishes to accept for the meaning of “Assinni,” the Assiniboine Indians may have been the Stone or Mountain Sioux, the Sioux from the bullberry country, or the “stone boilers.” Although the Postal Department held out for one “n” in the middle—Assiniboine—(sometimes spelled Assinaboine), on December 3, 1884, the War Department fixed the spelling officially as “Assinniboine.” Some accounts contend that postal officials balked at this, but postmarks show that, however reluctantly, the War Department decision was accepted.<sup>3</sup>

Transforming a paper post into a real-life military establishment was no small task in one of the most isolated areas of the remaining frontier. Assinniboine was conceived as an offensive fort, and since this was horse country, it was fitting and necessary that the infantry would soon be joined by cavalry. There would be no stockade ringing the compound. Nor would there be the usual resin-dripping pine or warping, splitting cottonwood as at Forts Keogh and Custer. The initial plan called for the kind of structural material employed at Fort Benton—adobe. Somewhere along the line the fine clays and sands of Beaver Creek and its embankments changed the planners' minds and most of the buildings were made of brick. Other materials and goods such as hardware, glass, cloth, and stoves were brought by steamboat up the Missouri River to Coal Banks or by rail to Corinne, Utah. From these points, snakelike wagon trains carried them to the “tent city” which was the first Fort Assinniboine.<sup>4</sup>

Such a major construction project inevitably had a great impact on the economy of the region. L. K. Devlin, later a resident of the town of Havre ten miles north of Assinniboine, was selected by the Chief Quartermaster of the

1. *River Press* (Fort Benton, Montana), Nov. 27, 1889.

2. *Helena Weekly Independent*, Nov. 21, 1889; Robert W. Frazer, *Forts of the West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965), p. 79.

3. *The Anaconda Standard*, Dec. 16, 1900; letters from Lt. Letcher Hardeman to Dr. Glen O. Hardeman, Fort Assinniboine, Montana, 1894-96, Hardeman MSS, State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia, (SHSM).

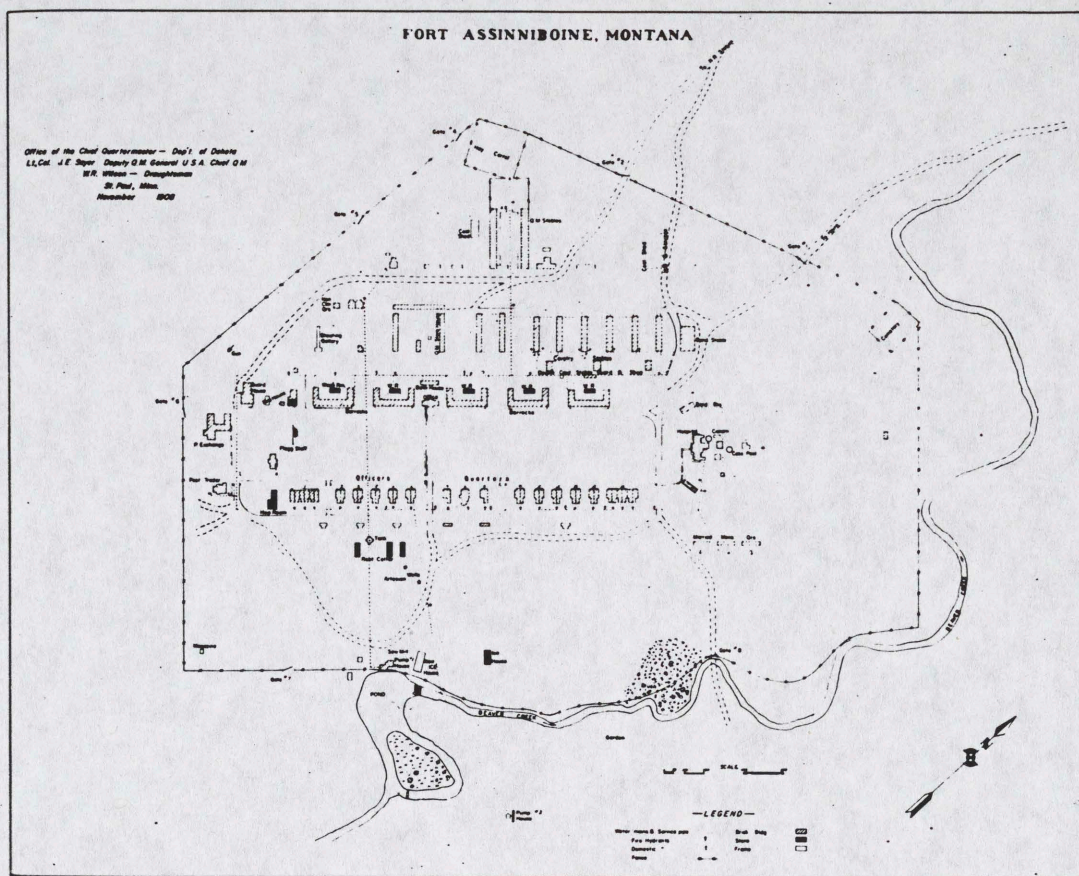
4. Phyllis Field, “Establishment of Fort Assinniboine,” MS, MHS, (n.d.), p. 4.

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Department of Dakota to undertake construction. Foundation limestone was quarried from Black Butte north of the fort. Colonel Charles A. Broadwater, later to become the first sutler or storekeeper for the post, received a contract to supply timber (available in the Bear Paw Mountains a few miles south of Assinniboine) and to make bricks. He hired 500 Metis Indians from the Red River Valley of the North to perform jobs such as burning lime and feeding his brick-making machine, a contraption which turned out as many as 25,000 bricks a day.<sup>5</sup> Soldiers augmented the work force, and an additional 350 civilian laborers came from the East to speed the construction process. "In five months the work was practically finished at a cost of \$500,000. It may be incidentally remarked that Col. Broadwater's business sagacity was rewarded with a good part of this sum, and in addition he secured a post trading sinecure."<sup>6</sup> Buildings were erected at such a pace,

that, in the view of local Indians, the fort "rose out of the ground."<sup>7</sup>

What had seemingly emerged from the earth was an unprecedented number of structures for military posts in that region and reportedly one of the largest forts in the United States in total building capacity at the time. Ultimately there would be 104 buildings, including a two-story administration headquarters; ten long, two-story barracks for enlisted men; a barracks for government Indian scouts; a series of commissioned officers' cottages (arranged like duplexes of today); guard house; hospital; adjutant's office building; sutler's store; several quartermaster and commissary warehouses; four large stables for saddle horses, draft animals, and pack mules (with capacity for 300 animals); corrals, wagon sheds, and many other buildings.<sup>8</sup>

7. The Anaconda Standard, Dec. 16, 1900.

8. Herman Werner, *On the Western Frontier with the U. S. Cavalry 50 Years Ago* (n.p., 1934), pp. 79-80; River Press, Apr. 13, 1881; Plan of Fort Assinniboine, Quartermaster, Dept. of Dakota, 1908, copy at MHS.

5. Helena Weekly Herald, Aug. 26, 1880. Whatever the origin of the soldier's title, it was not a regular army commission.

6. Helena Weekly Independent, Nov. 21, 1889.



THE FORT'S REMOTE LOCATION dictated that it be practically a self-contained town. Reflective of its diverse functions were band quarters, a bakery, steam-powered sawmill, oil magazine (for lamp kerosene), a Signal Corps weather station, chapel and post school building, a granary capable of holding one million bushels of oats and other grains for horses and mules, and a series of quartermaster specialty buildings. These included shops for blacksmithing, wagon wheel making, and saddlery, all operated by civilian employees. A large, earth-banked root cellar (52,252 cubic foot capacity) and several ice houses (one of 1000-ton capacity) helped to solve food storage and preservation problems.

The fort's water supply first came from Beaver Creek and a series of spring-fed wells.<sup>9</sup> These eventually proved inadequate and were supplemented by two reservoirs. Pipes were laid eight feet underground to protect against breakage from freezing, particularly at times when the snow blanket was light. The contractor also constructed a 100,000-gallon water tower large enough to prevent freezing, to provide gravity pressure as well as storage for the system.

Cold weather presented other difficulties. Wood, cut and hauled from the Bear Paw Mountains (both under civilian contract and by troops), and coal, stored in a large shed at the post, fueled stoves and steam heaters. When fuel was short, soldiers had to huddle together in crowded quarters to keep each other warm with body heat.<sup>10</sup> In the winter the soldiers used an indoor shooting gallery. The post command also requested riding and drill halls, but they were never built.<sup>11</sup>

One winter problem was serious enough to involve commanding officer Colonel C. S. Otis of the Twentieth Infantry. Post personnel, particularly officers, complained about the construction of the latrines. When the temperature dropped to -50°F, as Otis explained to his superior, "The expressed views of the officers . . . that the closets are very uncomfortable during the extreme weather of winter, because of

the constant rushing of cold air into the boxes beneath the seats are correct, and I doubt that many men delay in attending to calls of nature for that reason. We can however always maintain a good state of police with proper care."<sup>12</sup> What he meant by the last sentence is not clear. Latrine chores at bayonet point?

The boxes referred to were wooden bins (later replaced by metal ones) which were open and accessible from the outside behind the closets. They, along with the readily available kerosene cans which were used as urine receptacles beneath six-foot wood troughs, were emptied nightly by the "post scavenger." He hauled the contents by tank wagon and scattered them over the prairie "a good distance from the post . . . so that the atmosphere soon carries off all stench."<sup>13</sup> By the mid-1890s disposal of wastes was handled by a cesspool system which was inadequate; then in 1897 the post requested a more modern and elaborate sewage system.<sup>14</sup>

As a large frontier settlement, Assiniboine received sustenance through a number of supply arteries. Construction materials, for example, came by way of steamboats to Coal Banks and Rocky Point on the Missouri, and Union Pacific rail cars to Corinne, Utah. Wagons brought the cargo from these points to Fort Assiniboine during the early period. For a number of years post sutler Broadwater was a part-owner of the Diamond R freight line which was operated from Utah through Helena to the Beaver Creek bastion. Broadwater also ran a stage line from Fort Benton to Assiniboine.<sup>15</sup> In 1893, he returned to Helena and was succeeded as sutler by the former construction engineer, L. K. Devlin. I. G. Baker and Company of Fort Benton had the contract to haul the supplies from Coal Banks.

Completion of the northern rail lines greatly shortened wagon hauls to the fort. Particularly at low-water seasons on the Missouri River after 1882-1883, grain was carried over Canadian Pacific rails to Maple Creek, Northwest Territory, and by wagon to Assiniboine.<sup>16</sup> A linkup

9. Fort Assiniboine Correspondence Register, July-Sept., 1896, passim., microfilm roll 54, MHS.

10. Letter, T. A. Baldwin to Adjutant, Dept. of Dakota, Nov. 29, 1897, Fort Assiniboine Correspondence Register, MHS.

11. Letter, John K. Mizner to Adjutant, Dept. of Dakota, Aug. 17 and 24, 1896, Fort Assiniboine Correspondence Register, MHS.

12. Letter, C. S. Otis to Commanding Officer, Fort Custer, Montana Terr., Aug. 3, 1888, copy at MHS.

13. Ibid.

14. Letter, T. A. Baldwin to Adjutant, Dept. of Dakota, July 9, 1897, Fort Assiniboine Correspondence Register, MHS.

15. Helena Weekly Herald, Aug. 26, 1880.

16. Havre Daily News (Montana), June 14, 1968.



with the Northern Pacific line was brought about through the machinations of James J. Hill and Charles Broadwater in 1887. This track carried freight north from Helena to Assiniboine Station, one and one-half miles from the post. Iron horses of Hill's St. Paul, Minneapolis, and Manitoba were soon puffing to the station from the east. By the early 1890s, Hill was serving most of Fort Assiniboine's distant transport needs through his conglomerate, the Great Northern Railroad, which passed through Havre.

Not that wagons lost importance in the fort's economy. For short hauls from the station and for transporting supplies from the adjacent countryside, wagons and sleds remained important throughout the lifetime of the base. And in 1898, the nearby rail and telegraph station was abandoned. Horse- and mule-drawn conveyances then assumed renewed importance for the ten mile shuttle run between the railhead at Havre and the post.<sup>17</sup>

Isolation, rough terrain, and severe weather gave rise to some transport problems which were other than routine. Mrs. Robert T. McCullough, who was married to Broadwater's post business partner, told of road agents menacing stages, sleds, and wagons, and of sleds being overturned many times on hauls to or from the fort in blinding snow storms.<sup>18</sup> Tenth Cavalry commander T. A. Baldwin vigorously criticized the army wagons used at Assiniboine, contending that, as opposed to the vastly superior "citizen wagons" (manufactured by Fish Brothers of Racine, Wisconsin) the service vehicles capsized easily from topheaviness, had to be held upright with ropes, carried only one-half the load, required as many animals to pull, and were too short and difficult to turn around.<sup>19</sup>

Assiniboine, like most isolated settlements, procured supplies locally, a practice that usually saved the fort money and time. Buying locally also fostered good relationships with civilians who had some just reasons to look with apprehension on nearby soldier

camp, for servicemen in most times and places have been inclined to take advantage of their "liberty" passes. At Assiniboine, where a high degree of self-sufficiency was desirable, soldiers tended gardens and hunted wild game to vary the menus in mess halls. Lieutenant Letcher Hardeman described a method of balancing books for his Tenth Cavalry troop at Assiniboine:

17. Letter, J. M. Kelly to Adjutant, Dept. of Dakota, June 13, 1898, Fort Assiniboine Correspondence Register, MHS.

18. *Havre Daily News*, June 14, 1968.

19. Letter, T. A. Baldwin to Adjutant, Dept. of Dakota, Dec. 20, 1897, Fort Assiniboine Correspondence Register, MHS.



Courtesy Al Lucke, Havre, Montana

Assiniboine soldiers display spectacular-sized produce from the gardens (below) that bordered the fort and enlivened its daily fare.





I invested in a couple of hogs for my troop the other day. Expect to utilize the scraps from the Troop mess in feeding hogs. The Troop was turned over to me in debt and I have been trying every way to get them out and am just beginning to see daylight now.<sup>20</sup>

Mrs. B. F. Herron supplied milk from the family dairy which she and her husband, Sergeant Herron, established on Beaver Creek. The post surgeon regularly inspected her operation to assure that "sanitary measures are taken in handling the milk furnished the post."<sup>21</sup> Local contractor Broadwater provided wood and meat for Assinniboine, and he and T. C. Power, the enterprising Fort Benton trader, supplied hay and grain for the hundreds of draft animals and cavalry horses.

It was essential that cavalry horses be in top condition at Assinniboine. Patrolling Montana's expansive plains and mountain country placed extraordinary demands on man and animal alike. The first garrison stationed at Assinniboine was infantry, clearly inadequate to fulfill the basic purpose of the post—intercepting Indians, many of whom were mounted. Assinniboine troops carried out other duties, too: defending stockmen and miners from hostile Indians; aiding railroad management in disputes with striking laborers; and occasionally protecting reservation Indians from poaching miners.<sup>22</sup>

**A**S AT MOST WESTERN FORTS, Indians and soldiers were the lead actors in the drama around Fort Assinniboine, but their roles were not highly active ones. Sitting Bull's Sioux in the Cypress Hills area were less numerous and aggressive than feared, and the Nez Perce were at no time a direct challenge to the post. Blackfeet, Assiniboine, Crow, Flathead, and Gros Ventre as a rule confined themselves peacefully to their appointed fate on their respective reservations. For the most part this left the garrison with the task of occasionally rounding up and returning half-starved Cree tribe members who had wandered south from Canada.

20. Letter, Letcher Hardeman, Fort Assinniboine, Dec. 12, 1894, Hardeman MSS, SHSM.

21. Letter, N. H. Barnum to Post Surgeon of Fort Assinniboine, Nov. 17, 1897, Fort Assinniboine Correspondence Register, MHS.

The Cree, relatives of the Chippewa and Ojibwa, had for the better part of a century occupied the plains and mountain areas in southern Canada and the northern United States. There they came into sharp conflict with the Blackfeet, Sioux, and other tribes, although the Cree generally remained on good terms with whites. But the uprisings of half-Cree Louis Riel (1869-1885) against the Canadian government (over the issue of rights of mixed bloods, Indians, and some whites in western Canada) and the resultant bloodshed at Duck Lake, Cut Knife, and Frog Lake put the tribe in a precarious position in western Canada, Montana, and Dakota. The Riel Rebellion involved issues much more complex than Indian versus white, but many Montanans reacted fearfully, apprehensive that Crees might engage in such hostilities south of the Canadian line.

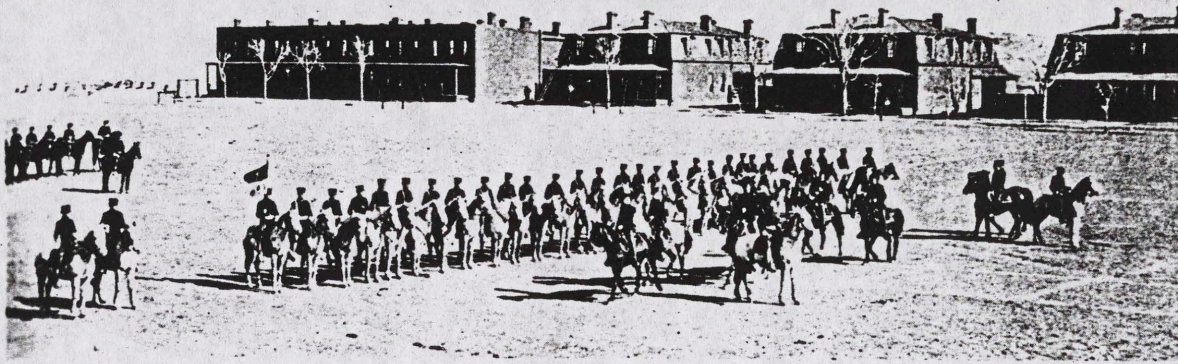
Reservation Indians, whites and the army objected to the presence of the Crees. All considered them to be a threat to peace and property, and the army feared that if they were not apprehended and returned to Canada more would come. There were two reasons for these countless southern "invasions" by Crees. The Indians were hungry and buffalo, their natural food, were more plentiful south of the Milk River. Secondly, after the Frog Lake massacre, the suppression of the rebellion, and the execution of Louis Riel in 1885, five or six hundred Crees, led by Chief Little Bear, moved south into Montana. Here they secured a kind of "political asylum," and led a semi-nomadic, hunter-based existence for about ten years.<sup>23</sup>

Army patrols from Fort Assinniboine were almost constantly engaged in tracking, watching, heading off, rounding up, or otherwise controlling the various Indian tribes of the area. One of the early operations, conducted during -55°F temperatures in January 1880, was briefly described by Sergeant J. V. Carroll, post soldier, and later a civilian in Montana. Twelve companies of men and fifty Indian scouts pushed north from the fort in a massive attempt to head off a threatened move by Sitting Bull's Sioux warriors. Carroll reported that three Indian scouts for the Sioux chief

22. Letters from Letcher Hardeman to Glen O. Hardeman, Fort Assinniboine 1894-96, passim., Hardeman MSS, SHSM.

23. Verne Dusenberry, "Montana's Displaced Persons: The Rocky Boy Indians," *Montana the Magazine of Western History*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Winter, 1954), p. 2.





Elite cavalry unit leads a drill at the recently-completed Fort Assinniboine.

died in the encounter.<sup>24</sup> If Sitting Bull's intentions were hostile, they were thwarted.

As there were numerous Cree migrations, so there were countless roundups by patrolling soldiers. Lieutenant Gustavus C. Doane of the fort's garrison wrote of several apparently typical expeditions against Cree encampments. On October 19, 1881, he noted, "Day before yesterday we went out and jumped up thirty-five lodges of Crees at the lakes near Woody Island Creek. They packed up and went north without difficulty . . . Found a camp at Woody Island Creek—about 138 lodges of Crees and half breeds. These we go after tomorrow." Another of his terse descriptions of Cree roundups was dated March 6, 1882. "Burnt 100 shacks yesterday—only twelve men with me. Cold as Greenland."<sup>25</sup> Captain R. Norwood of Troop "L", Second Regiment of Cavalry, was sent in pursuit of Crees who reportedly had stolen seventeen horses on the Teton River. April 17, 1883. Six days later Captain Thomas J. Lloyd and Company "F" of the Eighteenth Infantry were ordered to escort sixty-nine Cree prisoners from Fort Assinniboine to the Canadian boundary, give them ponies and property (except firearms), and see that they crossed into "their own territory," although the Crees' prospects of killing game without firearms were very limited.<sup>26</sup> In October, 1885, two scouting parties were sent to intercept 100 Crow Indians who had left their reservation and were somewhere in the area of Clagett and Eagle Creek.<sup>27</sup>

Such were the typical field assignments out of Assinniboine during its first 16 years; recovering "lost" mounts (for which rewards were sometimes offered); scouting and rounding up "renegade" Indians—usually Crees—putting the torch to their shacks, and escorting the hapless, half-starved people to the border. The Indians went peacefully. They had no treaty terms to cite in their defense and had learned the futility of resistance, recognizing that they would probably be able to recross the lonely border southward before their uniformed tormentors had returned to the post at Beaver Creek. There were occasional indications of sympathy toward the "poor devils" who ventured forth only in search of meals to stave off starvation. The physical discomforts of the soldiers were many, not the least of which were thirst, heat, and numbing cold. Almost as disagreeable as extremes of weather were saddle soreness, and mosquitoes.

In 1895 and 1896, the anti-Cree campaign was greatly intensified. Those Crees who came to the Great Falls area under Chief Little Bear in 1885 had remained in their north-central Montana range with relatively little molestation for about a decade. But white population pressures continued to build and the black Tenth Cavalry was instructed to escort the red "intruders" out. Orders came directly from Washington, where a special \$5,000 Congressional appropriation had been designated to finance removal. Local newspapers editorialized pro and con, for the Crees had done no visible harm, and they provided cheap labor for some communities.

<sup>24</sup> *Indian Basin Star* (Hobson, Montana), Jan. 31, 1930.

<sup>25</sup> Letter from Gustavus C. Doane to Mrs. Doane, Doane MSS.

<sup>26</sup> Orders No. 49 and 52 from Adjutant Robert F. Bates, Fort Assinniboine Post Records, MHS.

<sup>27</sup> *River Press*, Oct. 7, 1885.





Col. Mizner (standing, center) with officers of the 10th Cavalry and 25th Infantry at Fort Assiniboine, 1897; Lts. Pershing and Hardeman are seated, right. Standing, l. to r.: Postmaster's Clerk, Postmaster, Maj. Kelley, Lt. Ryan, Capt. C. P. Johnson, Maj. Wint, Capt. Jones, Mizner, Chaplain Bateman, 10th; Lt. Col. A. S. Daggett, Lt. Wilder, 25th; Capt. Grierson, Capt. Woodward, 10th; Lt. Sturtevant, Capt. Scott, 25th. Sitting, l. to r.: Lt. Littlebrant, 10th; Capt. Ritzius, 25th; Lt. Malvern Hill Barnum, Lt. Fleming, Lt. McDonald, Lt. John J. Pershing, Lt. Letcher Hardeman, 10th.

Orders were orders: the Indians must go. In mid-June of 1896, Lieutenant Letcher Hardeman took a detachment from Troop "C" to round up Crees near Chinook.<sup>28</sup> At about the same time, Lieutenant John J. "Black Jack" Pershing was dispatched to Great Falls with a troop of cavalry to take the 600 Crees under Little Bear to Coult's Station (in what has been the Province of Alberta since 1905).<sup>29</sup> The Canadian government had agreed to take the Indians back if the army delivered them to the border. Although devoid of bloodshed, the task was not easy. The Crees had broken up into small groups and concealed themselves in gullies and thickets. Apprehended piecemeal and taken to Great Falls for imprisonment, the entire group was sent to Canada by rail. The whole operation took more than two months. The roundup of Indians by Pershing's detachment was the largest, but by no means the last, such Assiniboine assignment. Similar campaigns occurred annually, as the Crees, prisoners of cold and starvation, understandably sought game and handouts wherever

these could be had. The army tried picket fences as a containment device and on one occasion an epidemic of measles caused Canadian authorities to resist repatriating the Crees. The Indians' white problem was partially solved in 1916 when the related Cree and Chipewewa, under Chief Stone Child, obtained 56,000 acres in northern Montana, Rocky Boy's Reservation.<sup>30</sup>

28. Muster Roll of Field, Staff, and Band, 10th Regiment United States Cavalry, Apr. 30-June 30, 1896, National Archives, Washington.

29. Letter, John K. Mizner to J. M. J. Sanna, June 12, 1896, Fort Assiniboine Correspondence Register, MHS; Michael Koury, *Military Posts of Montana* (Bellevue, Nebr.: The Old Army Press, 1970), p. 78. For an account of John J. Pershing's military activities in the West, see Frank E. Vandiver, *Black Jack: The Life and Times of John J. Pershing* (College Station, Texas: Texas A & M University Press, 1977), vol. I.

30. Verne Dusenberry, "Montana's Displaced Persons: The Rocky Boy Indians," p. 13. This reservation was later extended to 105,472 acres.

31. Edward L. N. Glass, *The History of the Tenth Cavalry, 1866-1921* (Tucson: Acme Printing Co., 1921), p. 30.

32. Letter, Letcher Hardeman to Glen O. Hardeman, Fort Assiniboine, July 8, 1894, Hardeman MSS, SHSM. Eugene V. Debs, leader of the American Railway Union, was a central figure in the 1894 Pullman strike.

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**N**UMEROUS AS WERE the sorties against Indians who broke out of their assigned lands, they were not enough to keep the soldiers occupied a high percentage of the time. Nor did railroad labor disputes, the Great Northern strike and the Pullman Palace Car Company strike of the American Railway Union in April and May 1894, provide more than nuisance diversion to the Tenth Cavalry troops of Fort Assinniboine who were called upon in April 1894 to see that the mails went through on the Northern Pacific line.<sup>31</sup> As one Assinniboine officer observed, "I don't know how the matter seems there but from this distant point it looks as though there is going to be serious trouble unless that man [Eugene V.] Debs can be squelched."<sup>32</sup> A logical view, perhaps, from a quartermaster officer whose economic responsibilities would be rendered somewhat formidable by cutting the post's life line.

Military commitment to the work ethic was much in evidence at Assinniboine. Soldiers' hours must be filled with useful pursuits lest idleness breed mischief and laziness. Drill exercises were frequent, including Saturday morning marches on the parade ground with music played by a reputedly excellent post band. Target shooting, training marches and maneuvers in the field were commonplace,<sup>33</sup> as were assignments of soldiers to burn lime, cut timber in the Bear Paw Mountains for the post sawmill, erect buildings, and tend gardens (which involved experimentation with dry farming techniques).<sup>34</sup>

In a forward-looking program, demonstrating that the mind also mattered to Army leadership, the post created a school for the enlisted men. Daily attendance was compulsory for those not on duty assignments; fundamental subjects such as geography, English, the sciences, and mathematics were taught. The faculty included the post chaplain who directed the school, officers and enlisted men.<sup>35</sup> For edification of the officers, various commissioned personnel were assigned to prepare and deliver lectures on their specialties or on other topics related to military duty.<sup>36</sup>

Keeping as many as 500 men properly busy and out of mischief on a frontier post, as would be expected, was an impossible job. Inevitably some soldiers were called upon to deal with the misconduct of others. Guard and

guardhouse duties generally rotated among the men as did court-martial obligations among the officers. Desertion and drunkenness were the most common charges heard by Assinniboine military courts. With pay at thirteen to fifteen dollars per month and service life somewhat dreary for some of the soldiers, enlisted men occasionally tried to cut short their five-year enlistment "sentence" by exchanging uniforms and brass buttons for civilian garb and catching a train east. Reportedly, many deserters succeeded except those who were foolhardy enough—and some were—to desert in winter. The foolish ones paid a price in frozen hands or feet.<sup>37</sup>

Officers were aware of the relationship between poor food and desertion, and there were special instructions for company commanders to see that all men were served warm, well-cooked food with extra portions whenever requested. The records of Subsistence (Commissary) stores show that the post made unusual efforts to please the appetites of its personnel. Besides staples such as bacon, ham, potatoes, beans, flour, vegetables, cheese, vinegar (used largely to prevent scurvy), seasonings, and the like, the mess personnel served canned asparagus, clams, lobster, sardines, oysters, and mushrooms.<sup>38</sup> It was a far cry from offerings of earlier years.

Ole Oleson dispensed beer and stronger drinks from his trail house at Cypress on Big Sandy Creek five miles from the fort. But many soldiers craved closer and more accessible beverage supplies. The *Helena Weekly Independent* wrote that at Assinniboine "the old black bottle is the greatest enemy of the soldier. It will find its way inside the post in spite of all the precautions that may be devised. The ingenuity shown by the men in getting whisky would make eternal fortunes if turned to another line."<sup>39</sup> Post records reveal that on one occasion, brandy from the

33. Letter, R. G. Rutherford to Adjutant, Fort Assinniboine, Aug. 24, 1903, Fort Assinniboine Correspondence Register, MHS.

34. *Helena Weekly Herald*, Oct. 3, 1881; *Helena Weekly Independent*, Nov. 21, 1889.

35. *River Press*, Nov. 27, 1889.

36. Fort Assinniboine Correspondence Register, passim., MHS.

37. *Helena Weekly Independent*, Dec. 19, 1889.

38. Memorandum from Adjutant Robert F. Bates, Apr. 11, 1883, Fort Assinniboine Post Records; Subsistence Stores Records, Fort Assinniboine, 1879-91 passim., MHS.

39. *Helena Weekly Independent*, Dec. 19, 1889.



surgeon's bottles had been removed and replaced by water. There were complaints about "unsightly and dangerous" empty bottles being thrown behind the barracks.<sup>40</sup> Enlisted men faced possible court-martial and civilian government employees flirted with dismissal if they brought intoxicating beverages into barracks or public buildings of the Fort.

Fort Assiniboine had other social diversions. A well-equipped and much-used gymnasium adorned the grounds, as did a library and tennis courts. Although the Chaplain complained about poor attendance, the post had Sunday school and church services. And there were card parties, dinners, concerts, amateur theatricals, charades, evening serenades, gambling, and dancing. The twenty or more women at the fort in 1889, including officers' wives and visitors, enlivened the "hops."

"Dancing is one form of amusement that every officer has learned whether he liked it or not."<sup>41</sup>

A wide range of pastimes lured men beyond the post limits. Sergeant Herman Werner recalled that during the early 1880s, there was

a notorious hangout on Beaver Creek just a mile from the fort inhabited by prostitutes, fakirs, gamblers, and narcotics traffickers. "Hog Pens," the soldiers often called prostitution houses, very commonly sprang up near army posts. There was sleigh-riding in winter, picnicking, camping, and fishing in the warmer seasons, and hunting in the fall. Segregation of officers and enlisted men was an official policy in social affairs.

Young men from rural environments, such as fellow Missourians and West Point classmates John Pershing and Letcher Hardeman, took particular pleasure in hunting. On one occasion the two of them fired simultaneously at a deer. The animal fell, and both officers claimed the kill. "It was the first time I ever saw Pershing really get excited," Hardeman later commented. Hardeman was an avid hunter and owned hounds for chasing foxes and wolves.<sup>42</sup> When Assiniboine Commander John Kemp Mizner wrote Commanding General of the Army Nelson A. Miles before the latter's

42. Herman Werner, *On the Western Frontier*, pp. 81-82. Unlike most forts Assiniboine was near the border of the military reservation, hence the proximity of civilian mischief.

43. Donald Smythe, S. J., "John J. Pershing at Fort Assiniboine," *Montana the Magazine of Western History* Vol. 18, No. 1 (Jan. 1968), p. 20; letter, Letcher Hardeman to Glen O. Hardeman, Fort Assiniboine, Dec. 12, 1894, Hardeman MSS, SHSM.

40. Orders No. 24, Feb. 27, and 38, March 27, 1883, Fort Assiniboine Post Records, MHS.

41. *Helena Weekly Independent*, Nov. 21, 1889.



Courtesy Al Lucke, Havre, Montana

Scenes  
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visit to Montana in 1896, he described the fine hunting near Assinniboine for both small and large game. It was Lieutenant Pershing who drew the assignment to take Miles hunting prairie chickens. A bond developed between the two men which, according to many observers, played a role in Pershing's subsequent rapid advancement in rank and responsibility. His World War I record indicates that Miles' confidence in his abilities was not misplaced.

Lieutenant Hardeman, last frontiers member of what was probably the most persistent westering family in the nation's history, also found his career significantly shaped by his duties at Fort Assinniboine. Arriving in 1894 from Arizona with the Tenth Cavalry as a heliograph specialist, he soon became a remount expert in the Quartermaster Corps at the Montana post. After serving in Cuba and the Philippines and commanding Fort Apache, he came out of retirement (apparently at the suggestion of his friend Pershing) to head the Army's remount service during World War I. He requisitioned for the Army, and later supervised the postwar sales of hundreds of thousands of horses and mules.<sup>44</sup>

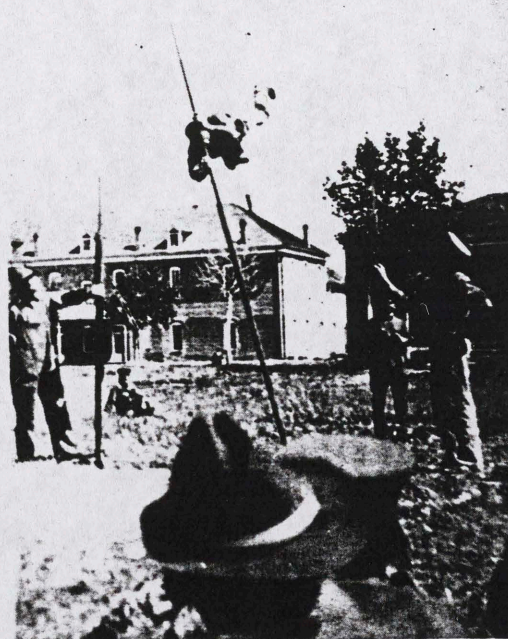
Pershing and Hardeman were among the

men who came to Fort Assinniboine as commissioned officers of the Tenth Regiment of Cavalry, all the enlisted personnel of which were black. Officers volunteered for this duty, and all of them, by regulation, were white. Apparently because of the troopers' curly hair, the Indians called black cavalrymen "buffalo soldiers." Black cavalry regiments, created in recognition of changing official postures toward black Americans in the post-Civil War era, served throughout the West. Colonel Mizner had commanded the Tenth in Arizona, and in 1891, he had requested for the regiment a "gradual change" to a cooler climate. "For twenty consecutive years," he stated, "the Tenth Cavalry had served south of the 36th latitude, in the most undesirable stations as to quarters or barracks."<sup>45</sup> He could have said more. His men were given the worst mounts in all the cavalry and, because of their race, had no chance to become officers. Mizner's cavalry got its change, arriving in Montana to the welcome of a blinding blizzard.

44. For an account of Letcher Hardeman's military activities in the West, see Nicholas P. Hardeman, *Wilderness Calling: The Hardeman Family in the American Westward Movement, 1750-1900* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1977), Chap. 14.

45. As quoted in Edward L. N. Glass, *The History of the Tenth Cavalry 1866-1921*, p. 28.

Scenes from life off-duty at Fort Assinniboine include: an officer's family poses before their substantial quarters; an outdoor wrestling match draws an audience that includes some of the fort's women residents, while a hardy pole-vaulter prepares to land on bare ground.







Lunch break for a contingent of 10th Cavalry soldiers on escort duty at St. Mary's in August 1894, not long after their transfer to Assinniboine from Arizona.

**A**SSINNIBOINE BECAME the regimental headquarters in 1894. Because of the relatively peaceful nature of this assignment, the buffalo soldiers did not achieve the distinction there that they gained on other fronts—Arizona, Cuba, the Philippines, and Mexico. A local newspaper later summed up the experience with the regiment. “The Tenth Cavalry Trooper is willing and a fighter but he is also much on show. . . . He will adapt himself to the conditions which prevail. . . . Havre always had a good word for these ‘blackbirds,’ and so has every other town near where they have been stationed.”<sup>46</sup>

Not all was as harmonious and adaptive as the journalist's observation implies. Post records and correspondence of Tenth Cavalry officers indicate a studied avoidance of references to racial problems at Assinniboine. Such

comments about the soldiers as “completely worthless,” and “devoid of ambition” may have carried unstated undertones of racial prejudice.

If the terms “colored” and “negro” were avoided or went unspoken in the language of the fort, they were not unfamiliar in the town of Havre. On the night of August 20, 1902, Corporal Traylor, a black soldier from Assinniboine, crossed the “color” line and went on the white side at a Havre bar. A fight ensued in which Traylor shot and killed a white enlisted man named Poag. Another white enlisted man, Wall, drew a pistol and killed Traylor, reporting later that he “fixed the nigger that shot Poag.” In another incident, Private Green, one of three men returning to the base on a freight train from an absence without leave in the fall of 1897, stabbed and wounded a brakeman who attempted to put him off the train.



Lieutenant Letcher Hardeman located the three men and "fixed the crime on Private Green," who was jailed.<sup>47</sup>

Unwittingly, the Tenth Cavalry at Fort Assinniboine, like the other garrisons at western posts, was in effect "mothballed." The "Ghost Dance" alarm had come and gone. Buffalo had largely given way to cattle; the "iron horse" was fast replacing mule, mare, stallion, and ox on the transportation scene. States mushroomed where territories had been. And with the near demise of the Indian's nomadic life and the rise of miner, rancher, and farmer, the soldier had little to do but await some unexpected duty such as a call to action in the Spanish-American War. For those soldiers who liked sleigh rides, wide horizons, majestic mountains, cold snaps mellowed by warm chinook winds, the sight of rose-of-the-prairie in bloom, the nearness of those lords of the wild kingdom—buffalo, bear, elk and deer—and a chance to hunt and fish and be alone, Fort Assinniboine was considered good duty. For those who did not, it was dreary.

After the war against Spain, Assinniboine never regained its military preeminence. Its complement of men was little more than a guard. The Third Cavalry was assigned there in 1903, and fragments of other units followed.

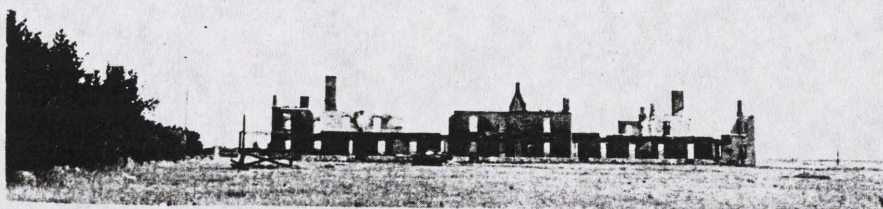
The post was abandoned by signature of President William H. Taft in 1911. All the military reservation except the buildings and about 2,000 acres of land was sold in a lottery. The State of Montana bought the buildings and remaining lands in 1915 and turned much of the site over to Northern Montana College of Havre in the following year.<sup>48</sup> It has since been variously employed as a used-brick yard, a transients' camp in the 1930s and a college agricultural experiment station.

Was Fort Assinniboine a case of "too much and too late"? or was it "an ounce of prevention"? During its first two decades, there were ample social, racial, political and economic ingredients present to generate conflict in the area served by the base. Perhaps more than any other post in the region, this isolated redoubt shepherded the Far Northwest from an era of potential turbulence to one of tranquility. If peace through strength was the objective—and it was—Assinniboine, though unheralded, must rank high among the nation's successful forts.

46. *Great Falls Daily Tribune*, Aug. 6, 1909.

47. Statements of enlisted men of troops G and H, Thirteenth Cavalry regarding the shooting at Havre, Montana, on the night of Aug. 20-21, 1902, MHS; Letter, Fort Assinniboine Correspondence Register, MHS.

48. *Dillon Examiner* (Montana), March 1, 1926.



The remains of an Assinniboine enlisted men's barracks a year after destruction by fire in 1954. National Park Service photo by R. H. Mattison.

Nicholas Perkins Hardeman, Professor of History at California State University, Long Beach, found what all historians dream of discovering—an attic full of family papers stretching back several generations. And better yet, the papers documented his own family's remarkable westward movement, including Lt. Letcher Hardeman, who was stationed at Fort Assinniboine. In addition to this article, Prof. Hardeman has written up the entire Hardeman story in *Wilderness Calling: the Hardeman family in the American Westward Movement, 1750-1900* (Univ. of Tenn. Press, 1977).



MT trip  
June '02

Ft. of sin. line:

- Bearpaw Mts
- bowl-rim benchlands around horizon S of fort
- rough (broken) hills to E-NE; sharper country to SE
- bowl of prairie behind
- creek to E
- sagebrush
- red-brown of dark blks
- tall snakes!
- ogdons 7 clouds & shadows



#7A pics:

#1 - old ft bldgs

#2 - bottle to SE .

- series and horizon

- panorama camera



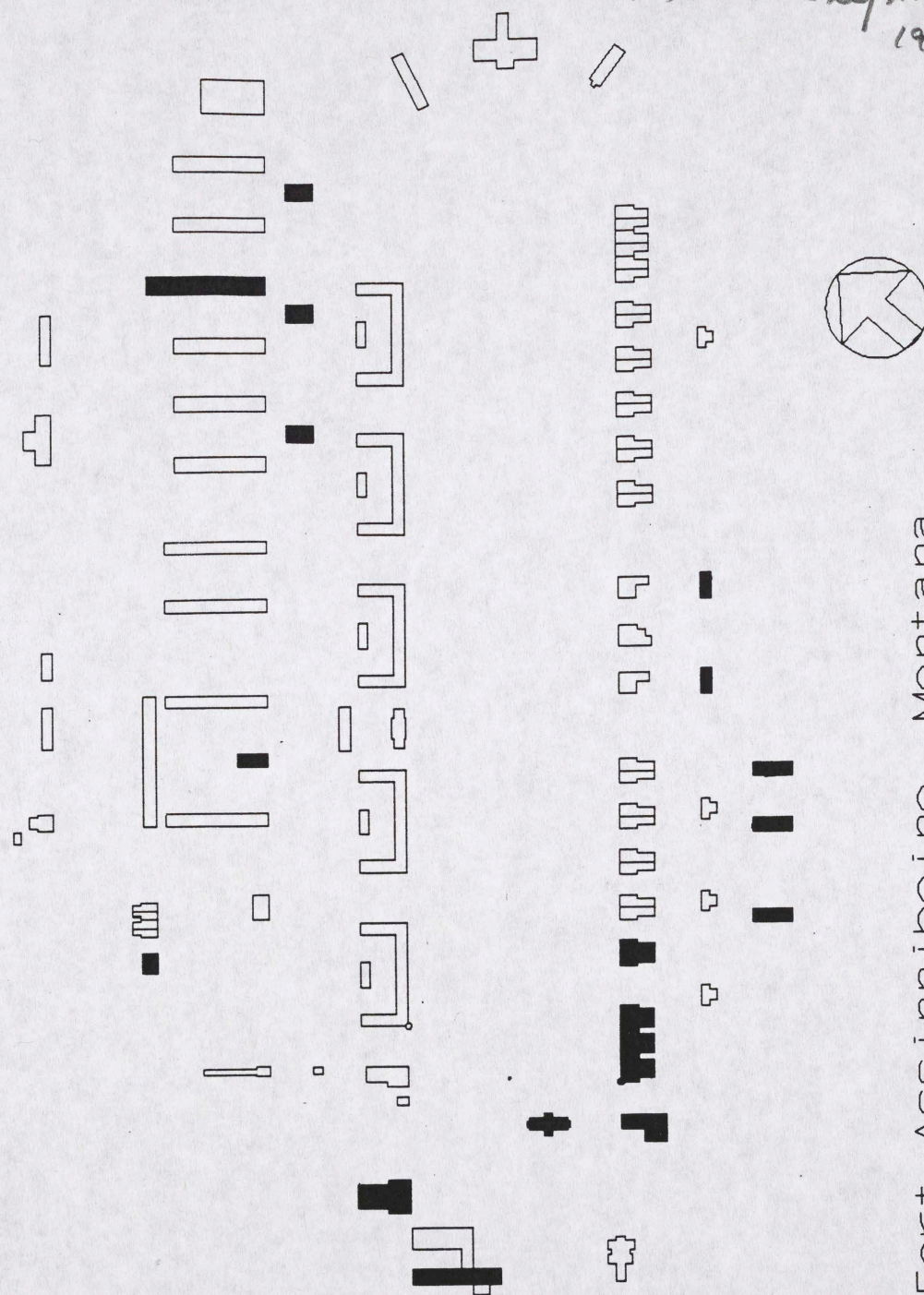
MHS  
June 102

Ft. Assinniboine, MT.

Historic & Architectural Overview

- Mark R. Upstetter  
1990

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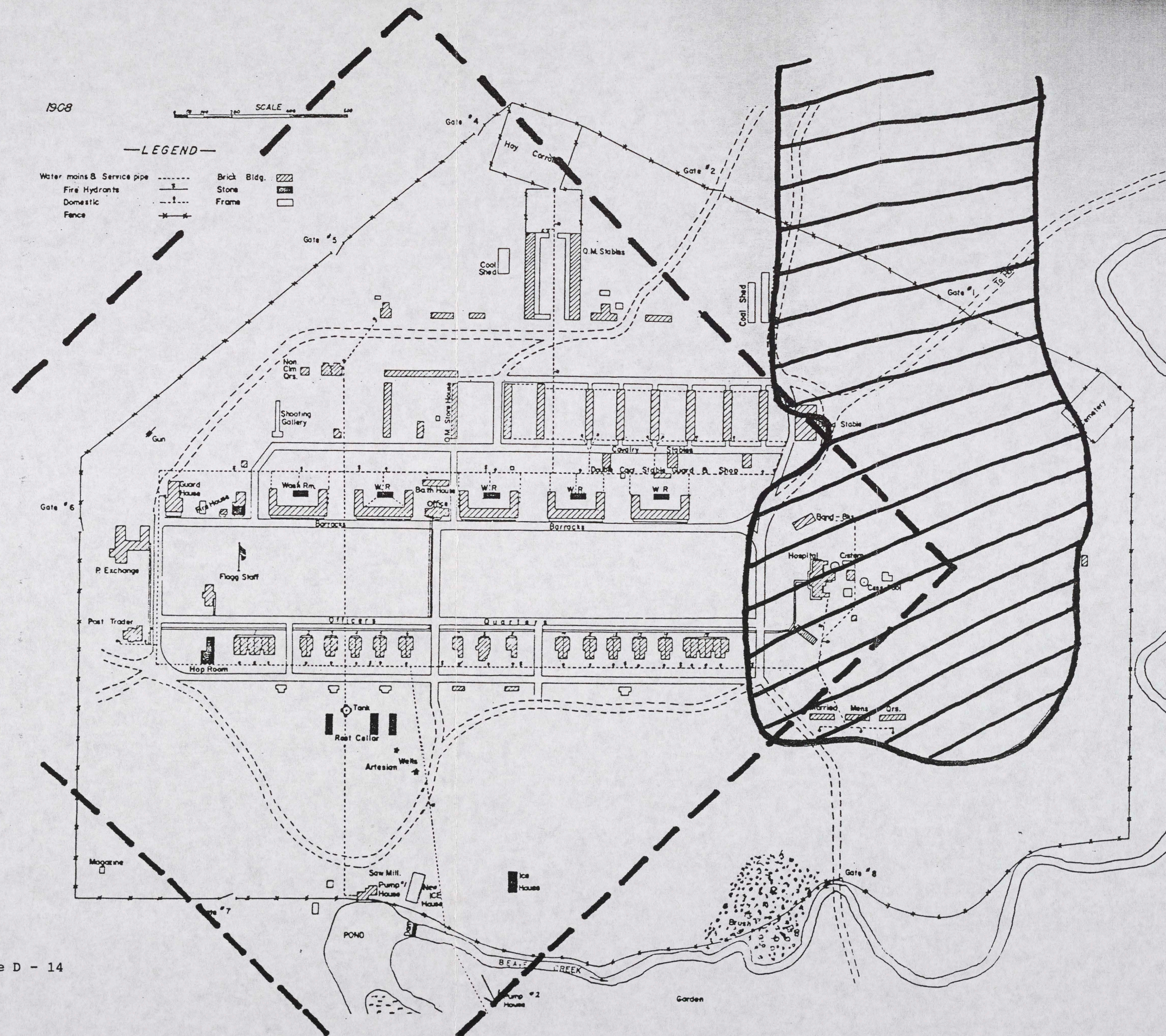
Map 1: the Fort Assinniboine parade ground area in 1989.  
Filled areas indicate extant buildings  
Outline areas indicate major building sites  
Only military buildings are shown.



# 1908 Map of Fort Assinniboine

broken line indicates  
approximate 1989 National  
Register boundary

shaded area indicates  
approximate extent of 1979  
gravel pit activity





This brief essay describes the basic organizational structure of the United States Army during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It also provides brief definitions for common military organizational terms. The information is not intended to be complete, but merely to serve as a reference for those studying Fort Assinniboine and its literature.

Much of the following data was synthesized from historical essays presented in the second edition of *The Army Lineage Book* (Volume I, pp. 31-41; Volume II, Part II, pp. 26-37).

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The basic unit of America's frontier army was the **Regiment**. During the post-Civil War Nineteenth Century the Army maintained 25 regiments of Infantry (foot soldiers) and 10 regiments of Cavalry (mounted, or horse soldiers). This number was increased with the Spanish-American War. Regiments are referred to by number (such as the "18th Infantry" or the "10th Cavalry"). The number of men in a regiment varied greatly over the years, from fewer than 500 to over 1,000. In addition to its combat troops, each regiment contained a "Headquarters Detachment," a band, and other support units. A regiment was normally headed by a Colonel. The **Brigade** was a large unit, headed by a general, consisting of multiple regiments.

The **Battalion** was a sometimes-used subdivision of the regiment. Before 1898 a regiment consisted of a single battalion. After 1898, however, each regiment was divided into three battalions. Battalions were designated by number. The senior officer of a battalion was usually a Major.

The primary subunit of the regiment, however, was the **Company** (or "Troop"). During the latter nineteenth century, most regiments consisted of ten companies; after 1898 there were 12 companies in a regiment, four assigned to each battalion. Companies were designated by letter (such as "Company K" of the 24th Infantry). The number of enlisted men authorized to a company varied greatly over the years. During lean military times a company might contain fewer than 40 enlisted men (the low was 37 in 1876); in contrast, during the Spanish-American War each company was authorized at least 112 enlisted men. (Often, however, the actual size of a military unit was much smaller than its authorized strength.) A typical company at Assinniboine contained approximately sixty enlisted men. The senior officer of a company held the rank of Captain.



There were a number of subdivisions below the Company level. A **Platoon**, for example, consisted of one-half a company. The Squad was a still smaller unit, containing (in the 1890's) seven privates and one corporal. A **Detachment** was generally a temporary subunit of a company, formed for a specific task.

During the frontier period, the continental United States was divided into a number of administrative units called **Departments**. Montana and other northern plains states were located in the "Department of Dakota," which was headquartered in St. Paul, Minnesota. A smaller administrative unit was the "District of Montana," which operated in Helena for a time. Both Fort Shaw (west of Great Falls) and Fort Assinniboine are also mentioned as one-time headquarters posts for the District of Montana.





Photo by Morris & Kirby, Chinook and Assinniboine, Mont.  
Cavalry Inspection, Fort Assinniboine, Mont.

946-921





HOSPITAL, FT. ASSINIBOINE

946-943



History of Ft. Assiniboine by Elinor Clack, Pamphlet 1503, MHS

Education and Recreation at Ft. Assiniboine

Chaplain S.G. Dodd, graduate of Princeton, was spiritual advisor for the garrison for 10 years and had supervision of the post schools and was assisted by 5 enlisted men teachers. School was held mornings for the children and afternoons for enlisted men. It was held in the rooms under the chapel. Of the enlisted men there were about 100 who were thought to need the instruction in the ordinary English branches. These were designated from the different companies and their attendance at school was made a military duty. The government was not generous with supplies and textbooks were badly needed.

It was suggested at one time by the River Press that instruction should also be given in the Australian ballot system as many of these soldiers might become Montana voters at some time. A correspondent from the River Press observed, as result of visits to precincts 'ballots cast at the last election were fearfully and wonderfully made past all understanding'. This same correspondent also said, 'the discipline and average intelligence of the troops was excellent. Many of them take the River Press.'

There was a gymnasium at the Fort, a library of 1000 volumes and an amusement hall. The library also contained the leading daily and weekly newspapers including the River Press. It was in the brick building at the end of the parade grounds and was not particularly artistic outside but comfortable inside. Books were furnished by the officers and many were left to the library by officers when they were transferred.

Dancing and theatricals were held in the amusement hall occasionally. It was the intention to start a Post Exchange or Canteen after the custom of the British Army with billiard tables, sandwiches, beer and light wines, etc.

Adjoining the Fort Store was the West End Hotel and Restaurant where a tourist is "always sure of a square meal and good accommodations and where, if he is musically inclined, he will be delighted with the melodious strains of the cook (who has been secured at a good salary."

Mr. L. S. Hazeltine who was interested in several mines in the Sweet Grass District operated a photography gallery. The barber shop was run by Sam Spaulding.

(Fort Assiniboine) RIVER PRESS

According to the Helena Record of Nov. 21, 1889, there were 20 ladies at the Post, some of them from the East. Dancing classes were held for the youngsters each Wednesday afternoon.

The men at the Fort considered themselves Officers on the frontier but not a part of the frontier. Their commercial connections with civilians were limited and they did not go beyond Fort business. Social exchange was not sought. Senator Cowan says, "Army officers were in a class by themselves and remained absolutely distinct in their social relationships from that of the few settlers who were around and from the government employees." Gentlemen by Act of Congress was the saying. The consensus of opinion was that the officers considered themselves a little above their associates.

Trout fishing was one bone of contention. The streams on the reservation were stocked. Civilians would stun the fish with dynamite and then pick them up. This caused the civilians to be called 'poachers'.

In a letter from Col. Mezner regarding a proposed visit of General Miles to the Fort, it was brought out that there was good chicken and duck hunting within 20 miles of the Fort. A few deer could be found in the Bear Paw Mountains and in the Bad Lands of the Missouri, but the best hunting was in St. Mary's Country 250 miles northeast.



The fort had two packs of hounds; wolf and fox.

There was a well equipped Officers' Club with a dining room and theater. Polo matches were held. There was drama offered by the garrison officers and their ladies, horseback riding, bowling, weekly hops and family camping trips to the Bear Paws. One of the main social events were the 8 and 10 course dinners given and exchanged by the Officers Wives.

For the enlisted men there were gospel services, a reading room with 33 newspapers and 15 magazines, a gymnasium, theater, and bowling alley. Just outside the fort there was gambling and drinking. Life at the Fort was monotonous at its best. There were many desertions and the River Press claims many of these were due to the low wages.





*Photograph 3: interior, Fort Assinniboine barracks, ca. 1895*  
*National Archives photograph*



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William H. Leckie

Buffalo Soldiers: A Narrative of the Negro Cavalry in the West

p. 157 - 1877, 10th fought Mescalero Apaches & Comanches  
p. 167 - 1879 " "



4 Miles S. Havre on U.S. 87

# Falls Resident Recalls Childhood Days At Fort Assinniboiné

HAVRE—A smile lingered on the gentle face of tiny Lorena Spaulding as she strolled the grounds at Fort Assinniboiné and reminisced about childhood days at the fort in the 1890s.

"I can still hear the fine music of the Army musicians as they played for the big parades on Saturdays," Miss Spaulding, a resident of Great Falls since 1929, said during a recent visit to the fort, six miles from Havre.

"Those musicians were really crack ones and all they did was practice," she said. "But the big parades, with the men all in full dress uniform, were a sight for a child to see." The band headed the parades, followed by the infantry detachments and then a cavalry unit when she was at the fort, Miss Spaulding recalled.

Miss Spaulding, who lives at 1225 6th Ave. S., said her father, Samuel Spaulding, was a civilian barber who cut the hair and trimmed beards for officers at the fort, then one of the most important military installations in the Northwest. Her mother was a cook for the officers' mess.

"I remember many times when my mother would send a telegram to St. Paul to order a barrel of chickens for a party the officers

planned," Miss Spaulding said. There were many gay parties and dances at the fort, she added.

Commenting that the fort was a busy place when she was there, Miss Spaulding, who came from her birthplace at Fort Buford, N.D., to Montana when a child, remembered the stone quarters for officers extended for about a mile. She said the tower, shown in the accompanying photo, was used as a lookout station to watch for Indians.

The Spauldings moved to Havre so Miss Spaulding and her two sisters, now residents of Spokane, could attend school. Her father was a barber in Havre and also had a homestead about four miles west of Havre. Miss Spaulding still owns the homestead land and recently visited the home on it where she lived when young.

Fort Assinniboiné, now an agricultural experiment station for Montana State College, was constructed in 1879-80. Its establishment was brought about by a plan of Gen. Phil Sheridan to construct a line of forts along the Canadian border. An act of Congress in May, 1878, called for its establishment, mainly to protect settlers in northern Montana from raids by the Sioux, who fled to Canada under

(Continued on page 13)



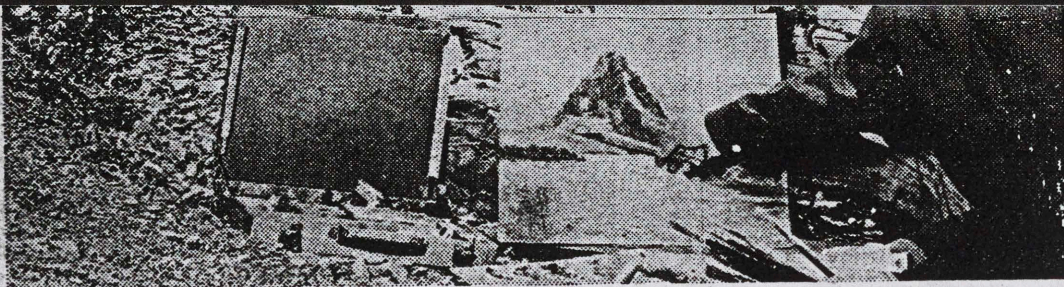
**RECALLING CHILDHOOD DAYS**—Lorena Spaulding of Great Falls stands beside the historical marker at Fort Assinniboiné, recalling happy days she spent there as a child more than 60 years ago when the fort was an important frontier military post. The marker spells the name "Assinaboiné" because there was a conflict in the spelling for years. In 1884, the war department ruled it should be "Assinniboiné." (Tribune photo)

MHS #1. Assinniboiné

vertical file #1

GT Trib Aug 9, '59





**PERFECT FOR ART**—To the artist, professional or novice, Glacier Park is paintable in a thousand aspects. Here an amateur painter choses Two Medicine Lake and Mount Rockwell as the scene to put on canvas. (Great Northern Railway photo)

## Early Days at Fort Assinniboinne

(Continued from page 12)

**Sitting Bull after the famous Custer massacre on the Little Big Horn a few years earlier.**

The fort was a strategic post of wide importance, located so troops could be dispatched from it to points over a wide stretch of territory should the occasion arise. It must have served its purpose because from the time it was garrisoned there was no serious outbreak of Indians in all of northern Montana.

Work on the fort started May 9, 1879. The first buildings were constructed of adobe, because of the fine state of preservation of the adobe buildings at Fort Benton, which had been built in 1846. All the lumber and supplies were brought up the Missouri River to Coal Bank, about 40 miles from the fort site, and hauled the rest of the way by bull teams belonging to I. B. Baker & Co. of Fort Benton.

Bricks were made on the site. Rock for the buildings was brought from Black Butte, north of the fort.

Hayre historians say there were 104 buildings at the fort. The buildings occupied a space 3,600 feet long by 1,900 feet wide. The buildings included 35 sets of officer quarters and a barracks for 10 companies of soldiers. There was a hospital, a chapel and two post schools, one for children and one for enlisted men who were offered the opportunity to take evening classes. One building housed a gymnasium, a bowling alley and a theater. The parade ground was 2,000 feet long and 400 feet wide.

Col. T. H. Ruger of the 18th Infantry was the first commanding officer. His soldiers, who had been stationed in Georgia, traveled to Bismarck, N.D., by train and from there up the Missouri by steamboat, disembarking at Coal Bank.

In 1885, the 18th Infantry was replaced by the 20th Infantry and a detachment of the First Cavalry. These troops figured in events following the Reil rebellion in Canada when the suppressed Cree In-

dians crossed into Montana and kept the area in a state of alarm.

The years from 1887 to 1889 were anxious ones because of the large number of Indians gathered at Belknap and in the Bear Paw mountains. In 1890, when the outbreak of Sioux Indians occurred at Pine Ridge, S.D., the northern Montana Indians were restless and a large part of the Fort Assinniboinne force was transferred to Fort Peck to better keep them in control.

Since there were no Indian troubles in Montana at all after 1892, the force at Fort Assinniboinne was greatly reduced. On April 25, 1898, the whole garrison was transferred to Cuba for the Spanish-American war and there were only a few men at the post from that time until after the return of troops from Cuba.

Montanans fought to keep the

fort alive but in 1911, President Taft signed a bill abolishing the largest military reservation in the nation. The reservation, with the exception of the buildings and about 2,000 acres was disposed of through a lottery. The buildings and remaining land were sold in 1915 to Montana. The legislature passed a bill creating a state school at the fort but when money was not made available, the land was turned over to MSC for an agricultural experiment station.

Fires in 1921 and 1955 burned many of the buildings of the old fort.

Many well-known officers were stationed at the fort during its history but John J. Pershing, a young lieutenant when he was there in the 1890's, was the outstanding one. He later became the general in charge of the U.S. expeditionary forces in France in World War I.

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SUNDAY, AUGUST 9, 1959



World War I. In his manuscript *Memoirs*, Pershing recalled the effort as "an interesting piece of service" and remarked that the trek would have made an epic story, so filled with episodes was this strange cavalcade of typical American aborigines. It was an odd procession of vehicles, a few serviceable, the rest creaking old wagons, worn out buggies, often breaking down, pack ponies, and a few travois. Then came the five hundred Indian ponies herded by the Indians themselves. In contrast, my troop of negroes in blue field uniforms with campaign hats of that period were here and there urging and assisting along the slower units.<sup>10</sup>

Pershing's roundup of 1896, along with a number of smaller efforts which preceded and followed it, could not have been considered a success. As soon as the Indians had been formally deported and the soldiers had left for Assinniboine most of the Indians quietly slipped back across the border into Montana. The Cree problem remained active throughout Assinniboine's period of use. Ironically, it was the fort's eventual closure which finally provided a solution to the dilemma: in 1916 a portion of the former Assinniboine military reservation was given to the Cree as their first permanent home in the United States.<sup>11</sup>

As the years passed, Assinniboine's garrison found itself less and less occupied with Native American issues. The region's Indian population became smaller and more bound by reservation lines as the number of white settlers in Montana simultaneously increased. As this evolution progressed, Assinniboine served a limited role as a peacekeeper between white and Indian groups. Often, the whites involved were prospectors, repeatedly searching for a still-elusive gold deposit in the area. The Sweetgrass Hills west of Assinniboine was the scene of prospecting activity in the 1880's, and a temporary sub-post of Assinniboine soldiers was established in the hills in 1885 to protect the prospectors. There is little evidence of actual conflict, however.<sup>12</sup>

Occasional reconnaissance and survey missions also took place from Assinniboine, especially during the post's early years. Many of these activities were limited to the Bear Paw Mountains and the Assinniboine Military reservation (such as federal boundary surveys), but other excursions were more far-ranging, such as this trip to what is now Glacier National Park (reported in the October, 1891 *Post Return*):

Troop "C" 1st Cavy, accompanied by 1st Lieut F.S. Foltz, 1st Cavy and Asst Surgeon Smith, under command of 1st Lieut H. C. Brown, 1st Cavy, left Post Sept 21, 1891 (1st Lieut J. F. Morrison, 20th Infy joined Troop Sept 26, 91) for St. Mary's Lakes, Mont. for the purpose of fishing, hunting and making reconnaissance of the adjacent country per telegraphic authority from Hdqrs Dept Da. . . . Returned to Post October 30, 1891. Distance marched going and returning 221 miles.<sup>13</sup>



Assinniboine's presence also provided an economic stimulus to several components of the civilian community. The fort annually purchased substantial quantities of hay, grains and foodstuffs from local farmers, and employed blue-collar civilians such as blacksmiths, bakers, and laundry workers. (The laundry workers were often Chinese, presumably brought to the region through employment by the railroad.) Construction and renovation projects were also awarded to local civilian contractors, although most large-scale construction projects went to Great Falls and Helena firms. The Havre business community also profited greatly from spending by off-duty Assinniboine soldiers. Much of this money probably went into the hands of local saloonkeepers and brothel operators; places such as the Half-way House and the Montana Concert Hall were favorites of soldiers.

The interaction between Assinniboine's troops and the Havre community was not always pleasant, however. Many of the criminal acts committed in early Havre were performed by current or former Assinniboine soldiers. Most such events were instigated, directly or indirectly, by alcohol consumption, and many involved disagreements among the soldiers themselves. With some regularity, Havre newspapers reported drunken saloon fights, battles over local prostitutes, and long-standing personal feuds that erupted into gunplay. Thefts and other crimes were committed by Army deserters or discharged soldiers who continued to loiter in the vicinity of the post.

Racial prejudices often played a significant role in these events. The black and white soldiers who simultaneously lived at the post lived largely separate lives during duty hours, but the opportunity for conflict existed in Havre's nightspots. Many such Havre establishments were formally or informally segregated to some degree; the Montana Concert Hall, for example, had a large painted line bisecting the dance floor to segregate the races. One of the city's most dramatic shooting sprees occurred in 1904 when a black soldier who "crossed the line" <sup>20</sup> was murdered by a white, who in turn was shot by a third soldier. \*

After 1905, Fort Assinniboine had only a minimal influence on the daily life of the Havre area. The post's garrison had been substantially reduced in size, while the civilian population in the area continued to grow. Although Havre "boosters" initially hoped for a resurgence in local military activity to enhance the local economy, by the time the fort closed in 1911 that dream had been largely forgotten. Instead, Havre's promoters, ever looking for a growth opportunity, watched the fort's closure with a feeling approaching eagerness -- hoping for a windfall from the new homesteaders that would surely settle on the former military reservation.



material, including annual property inventories (beginning in 1931) and incomplete correspondence files dating from the station's earliest days.

The center also holds an original copy of a manuscript military building inventory book for the fort. This valuable resource was maintained by the post Quartermaster from 1905 to 1911; it includes a historic photograph, a description, and a list of improvements for every military building at Assinniboine.

6. Archival Materials at Custer Battlefield National Monument, Crow Agency, Montana:

The Custer Battlefield National Monument archives holds fifteen miscellaneous historic photos of buildings at Fort Assinniboine, gathered from a variety of sources. The archives here also contains rudimentary information on those individuals who were buried at Assinniboine's post cemetery (the occupants of Assinniboine's cemetery were reinterred at Custer Battlefield after Assinniboine's abandonment).

7. Archival materials at the Library of Congress:

The Library of Congress holds many of the personal papers of General John Pershing, who served at Assinniboine as a lieutenant in 1896 and 1897. Of local interest are various drafts of Pershing's manuscript *Memoirs*, which includes a brief chapter (Chapter 6) on his tenure at Assinniboine.

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**FORT ASSINNIBOINE, MONTANA:**  
**HISTORIC AND ARCHITECTURAL OVERVIEW**

**Mark Hufstetler**

**1990**



It was the monitoring of local Native American groups, however, which occupied the largest amount of Assinniboine's garrison's time. The level of intensity of white-Indian conflict in the area was never high, though. Military records indicate that some of the post's soldiers received credit for "battle duty" during the early 1880's, but these brief skirmishes (in the lower Milk River area) apparently resulted in only minor injuries to a few soldiers; the engagements were generally not even considered worthy of mention in Assinniboine's monthly *Post Returns*. Far more common were border patrols and generally fruitless searches for small-scale Indian raiding parties (which were generally molesting other Indian groups). The following entry from Assinniboine's March, 1892 *Post Return* is typical:

March 18, 1892. 2nd Lieut. Edward Anderson, 1st Cavy, left Post in command of twelve Indian Scouts, per verbal order of the Post Commander, for the purpose of intercepting a small war party of Canadian Blood Indians reported to be moving toward the Gros Venture reservation to steal horses. Nothing was seen or heard of the Indians sought. Returned to Post March 19th and 20th 1892. Distance traveled about 55 miles.

Such minor "police actions" were the mainstay of Assinniboine's professed Indian control activities over the years, but other military actions relating to Canadian Indian groups were of perhaps greater historical significance. The Indians involved were bands of the Cree tribe who, although they had United States roots, had lived in Saskatchewan for a number of years. In 1885, some of these Indians sided with rebel Canadian Métis leader Louis Riel during his second rebellion and participated in the Frog Lake Massacre in Saskatchewan. To avoid capture and trial by the Canadian government many of the Cree fled southward to Montana, and that December the group asked for "asylum" at Fort Assinniboine. The Indians were released by the American government, but their status remained unresolved and for the next two decades bands of essentially homeless Cree wandered through much of northern Montana. The rebellion Cree were joined by numerous others; semi-permanent Cree encampments sprouted in the immediate vicinity of Fort Assinniboine and Havre, and other large camps were in the Great Falls region. Many of the Cree suffered from hunger and disease, and their presence was a continual source of concern for the increasing number of white settlers in the region.

Assinniboine's troops were regularly engaged in monitoring and regulating Cree activity, and border patrols were made to prevent additional unauthorized immigration. This military activity climaxed in 1896 when Congress authorized a military effort to forcibly deport the Canadian Cree. Much of this work was carried out by troops from Assinniboine; it was probably the most significant military operation undertaken by the post. One troop of the Tenth Cavalry engaged in the work was led by Lieutenant John J. Pershing, who later rose to lead the Allied forces in



The following table lists the number of desertions among Fort Assinniboine's enlisted men during each month of the post's existence. This data was compiled from information recorded in Assinniboine's monthly *Post Returns*.

Secondary sources frequently describe a high desertion rate from Assinniboine and other isolated western posts. While the following data generally confirms these assumptions (as much as ten percent of the post's enlisted garrison would desert over the course of a year), the data indicates a substantial fluctuation in the number of desertions from month to month and year to year. Many of these desertions were probably due to social and personality factors that are lost to time, but other causes may be inferred as well. For example, it is interesting to note the total lack of desertions during Montana's brutal 1886-1887 winter. The following summer saw the local arrival of the Great Northern Railway and its easy means of escape, and the desertion rate saw a rapid and sustained increase. Additionally, members of Assinniboine's black regiments (the 10th Cavalry, 24th Infantry and 25th Infantry) deserted much less frequently than members of white regiments.

Month:	Desertions:	Month:	Desertions:	Month:	Desertions:
May, 1879	0	January, 1882	2	September, 1884	2
June, 1879	2	February, 1882	4	October, 1884	0
July, 1879	2	March, 1882	4	November, 1884	0
August, 1879	3	April, 1882	15	December, 1884	2
September, 1879	13	May, 1882	14		
October, 1879	5	June, 1882	6	January, 1885	0
November, 1879	0	July, 1882	9	February, 1885	1
December, 1879	0	August, 1882	12	March, 1885	0
		September, 1882	4	April, 1885	1
January, 1880	0	October, 1882	4	May, 1885	3
February, 1880	0	November, 1882	2	June, 1885	4
March, 1880	7	December, 1882	1	July, 1885	3
April, 1880	2			August, 1885	1
May, 1880	0	January, 1883	1	September, 1885	5
June, 1880	11	February, 1883	0	October, 1885	0
July, 1880	5	March, 1883	4	November, 1885	0
August, 1880	10	April, 1883	4	December, 1885	1
September, 1880	0	May, 1883	11		
October, 1880	0	June, 1883	5	January, 1886	0
November, 1880	0	July, 1883	7	February, 1886	0
December, 1880	0	August, 1883	2	March, 1886	0
		September, 1883	2	April, 1886	1
January, 1881	0	October, 1883	1	May, 1886	2
February, 1881	0	November, 1883	0	June, 1886	1
March, 1881	8	December, 1883	0	July, 1886	4
April, 1881	1			August, 1886	0
May, 1881	13	January, 1884	3	September, 1886	0
June, 1881	3	February, 1884	0	October, 1886	0
July, 1881	10	March, 1884	4	November, 1886	0
August, 1881	1	April, 1884	1	December, 1886	0
September, 1881	1	May, 1884	6		
October, 1881	0	June, 1884	2	January, 1887	0
November, 1881	4	July, 1884	5	February, 1887	0
December, 1881	0	August, 1884	2	March, 1887	0



The following list of Assinniboine's daily bugle calls was transcribed from the *Record of the Medical History of the Post* volume for Fort Assinniboine [Adjutant General volume no. 804, p. 69]. The material in the volume probably dates from 1879.

Calls	Time of Sounding	
	Winter	Summer
Reveille	7 A.M.	6 A.M.
Stable call	immediately after	immediately after
Breakfast call	7:10 A.M.	6:10 A.M.
Fatigue "	8 A.M.	7 A.M.
Surgeon's "	8 A.M.	7 A.M.
Guardmounting	9:30 A.M.	9 A.M.
1st Sergt's call	11:30 A.M.	11:30 A.M.
Recall from fatigue	11:45 A.M.	11:45 A.M.
Dinner call	12 M.	12 M.
Fatigue "	12:45 P.M.	1 P.M.
Drill "	2 P.M.	2 P.M.
Recall from drill	3 P.M.	3 P.M.
Stable call	1 1/2 hours before retreat, winter and summer	
Recall from fatigue	15 minutes before retreat	in summer one hour before
Retreat	sunset	sunset
Tattoo	8 P.M.	9 P.M.
Taps	9 P.M.	9:30 P.M.
Sunday morning inspection	9:30 A.M.	9 A.M.
Church call Sundays	6:30 P.M.	7:30 P.M.

Dress parades held triweekly in summer, "Weather permitting"



HAND AT THE POST. During the long winter months an occasional entertainment is given by "home talent." The Fort Assiniboine Minstrel Troupe is a modest organization that prefers rather to keep to old time minstrelsy than to produce the gorgeous spectacular performances of the modern time. An announcement gotten up by a local printer informed the public of an entertainment to be given on November 1, at the Assiniboine opera house. "The troupe, with new scenes, effects and talents will endeavor to surpass all preceding performances. A great array of talent has been engaged. Several cards of the following programme will be seen for the first time this evening." the promising announcement of the manager. Juggling, sword swallowing, jig and clog dancing, singing and several farces were features of the programme. Popular prices prevailed at fifty and seventy-five cents.

The old black bottle is the greatest enemy of the soldier. It will find its way inside the post in spite of all the precautions that may be devised. The ingenuity shown by the men in getting whisky would make eternal fortunes for them if turned in another line. It rarely happens, however, that one of them is found drunk. The little guard-house at the end of the ground throws open its doors for him when he is caught in that condition and it is not an inviting place for a residence of any length of time.

When the soldier's enlistment is finished he finds a snug sum of money at his disposal if he has taken care of it. This is further increased by five years interest at 6 per cent. which the government allows on deposits. After the avaricious worldlings have completed the consumption of this fund it often happens that "Johhy comes marching home" to his former haven at the military post.

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F THE ARMIES

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omplete victory."<sup>59</sup>

## FOUR

# Getting Organized

(July-August 1917)

**A**LTHOUGH PARIS HAD seen Pershing and his staff, it had not seen many American troops, and the French authorities badly wanted some of them to march through to make an impression. On July 4, American Independence Day, Pershing reluctantly allowed a battalion of the 16th Infantry Regiment of the 1st Division, recently arrived at St. Nazaire, to parade through Paris from Les Invalides, site of Napoleon's tomb, to Picpus Cemetery, burial place of Lafayette. He was reluctant because he knew the inexperience of the recent arrivals and feared lest the French military judge that these men, known to be Regulars at least in name, represented the American soldier at his best.<sup>1</sup>

He judged correctly. The 16th Infantry looked exactly like what it was: civilians in uniform. One seasoned French veteran turned to his companion in the crowd and said: "And they send *that* to help us."<sup>2</sup>

But the civilian crowd, less discriminating and weary unto death with the war, was thrilled beyond measure. Here were the Americans, the "Sammies"; here was hope incarnate. The three-mile parade route was bedlam; women linked arms with the outer flanks of the soldiers, kissing them, weeping almost hysterically. Many dropped to their knees in reverence as the column passed. With wreaths around their necks and with flowers projecting from their hatbands and rifle barrels, the 16th Infantry looked from a distance like a moving flower garden. As far as the eye could see there were people, people, people, laughing, shouting, weeping, stirred to a frenzy of excitement by the crowd spirit, the martial music, and the fact that, in truth, the Americans did represent the salvation of France.<sup>3</sup>

The parade culminated at the grave of Lafayette, buried, according to his wish, in earth brought from America. Pershing laid a wreath of five hundred roses on the grave and delegated Col. Charles E. Stanton, who had command of French and a reputation of being an orator, to speak for him. Stanton gave a regular Fourth of July speech, waving his arms, pounding the podium, annihilating the Kaiser and the whole German army in purple-patched prose. The French loved it, wildly applauding, especially his final words: "Lafayette, we are here!" Thus was born



the most famous American quotation of World War I, a remark erroneously attributed to Pershing because he was there and, despite his disclaimer, still attributed to him.<sup>4</sup>

Although he had not intended to speak, the French insisted, so Pershing made a few remarks. Brand Whitlock, who had never seen him before, was impressed. "He said a few words, very simply, very quietly, very dignifiedly; precisely the right thing, in perfect taste."<sup>5</sup>

The following day, July 5, Pershing organized his General Staff. Based on consultations with British and French counterparts, it eventually contained five main sections: Administration, Intelligence, Operations, Co-ordination, and Training. It also embraced a Technical and Administrative staff composed of the chiefs of some fifteen separate Departments, Corps, and Services (e.g., Inspector General Department, Medical Corps, Air Service, etc.).<sup>6</sup>

The Administration Section, dealing with general matters of policy and organization, was under Maj. James A. Logan, Jr., an exceedingly able man who had been stationed in France at the outbreak of the war. In August 1918 he was replaced by Col. Avery D. Andrews, a Pershing West Point classmate.<sup>7</sup>

The Intelligence Section was capably commanded throughout the war by Maj. Dennis E. Nolan, whose chewing gum cud and slow speech belied an exceedingly sharp mind. Inconceivable as it seems, America entered the war with an Intelligence Section of the General Staff numbering only four men: two officers and two clerks. Under Nolan, AEF Intelligence expanded enormously, so that by the end of the conflict Pershing felt that America had the best intelligence of any army in Europe.<sup>8</sup>

Lt. Col. John McAuley Palmer headed the Operations Section until sickness forced him to give way in November to Col. Fox Conner, a West Pointer from Mississippi, who became, next to Harbord, the man on whom Pershing relied most. Fluent in French, frank-talking, extremely competent, and utterly loyal, Pershing said of him, "I could have spared any other man in the A.E.F. better than you." After the war he had a great influence on a young officer named Dwight D. Eisenhower.<sup>9</sup>

Until April 1918 Lt. Col. William D. Connor headed the Co-ordination Section, which dealt with matters of supply; he was replaced by Col. George Van Horn Moseley, an equally capable officer. Lt. Col. Paul B. Malone headed the Training Section.

The staff was a good one. Logan, Nolan, Conner, and Malone had all known each other on a nickname basis for years, as had Frank R. McCoy, Secretary of the General Staff, Harold B. Fiske, who replaced Malone in February 1918, and Robert C. (Corky) Davis, the Adjutant General. So they got along well. Harbord doubted that any commanding general was ever better served by his staff.<sup>10</sup>

The most important officer on the whole staff, of course, was Harbord himself, the Chief of Staff, the man directly under Pershing and over the five main sections and the fifteen technical sections. As the principal adviser and alter ego of the commander, whom he accompanied to all important conferences, he supervised and coordinated the work of all other staff heads. He relieved Pershing of much

## Getting Organized

that was burdensome, together as a team. He turned around to justify the neck of the bottle short, a tremendously

Harbord, who he ing occasionally hard what he meant; he th actions got a little hot. Pershing tended to overasked Harbord what doubt that he was doing efficiently.<sup>12</sup>

Pershing dominated top officers to rotate with human beings, may not have been a that he would not make mistakes . . . , many of them."<sup>13</sup>

The AEF General Staff College at Fort two hundred by the handle large groups mistakes. Man for professionally trained in the world.<sup>14</sup>

The only trouble around. Pershing ea but it was like robbery. "Frequently officers with operations he

On July 6 Pershing "at least one million every effort, the million 635,000. Combined at St. Nazaire, the discrepancy was a power problem: what was possible

Two days later successfully met Pershing sailed for



# SEPARATION NOTICE

The following items have been removed from Box 174, Folder 2, Collection 2602, for oversize storage elsewhere.

## Items Removed:

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