

# A SURVEY HISTORY OF FORT BLISS

## 1890 - 1940

1

**DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT A**  
Approved for public release  
Distribution Unlimited

DTIC  
S  
MAR 30 1994  
B

AD-A277 986



By  
Perry Jamieson

94-09488



Historic and Cultural Resources Report No. 5

Cultural Resources Management Program

Directorate of Environment

United States Army Air Defense Artillery Center

Fort Bliss, Texas

94-3-28-044 1993

# **A SURVEY HISTORY OF FORT BLISS 1890-1940**

**By  
Perry Jamieson**

**Publication of this report was supported by funding from the  
Legacy Resource Management Program  
of the  
Department of Defense**

**Historic and Natural Resources Report No. 5  
Cultural Resources Management Program  
Directorate of Environment  
United States Army Air Defense Artillery Center  
Fort Bliss, Texas**

**1993**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....	iii
PREFACE .....	v
FOREWORD .....	vi
CHAPTER I The Formative Years of New Fort Bliss (1890-1898) .....	1
Introduction .....	1
Fort Bliss 1890-1898 .....	1
Conclusion .....	7
Essay on Sources for Chapter I .....	7
CHAPTER II Fort Bliss and the Spanish-American War Period (1898-1902) .....	9
Introduction .....	9
Fort Bliss 1898-1902 .....	9
Conclusion .....	11
Essay on Sources for Chapter II .....	11
CHAPTER III Fort Bliss and the Early New Army Period (1902-1910) .....	13
Introduction .....	13
Fort Bliss 1902-1910 .....	13
Conclusion .....	15
Essay on Sources for Chapter III .....	15
CHAPTER IV Fort Bliss and the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920) .....	17
Introduction .....	17
Fort Bliss 1910-1920 .....	18
Conclusion .....	25
Essay on Sources for Chapter IV .....	26
CHAPTER V Fort Bliss and World War I (1917-1919) .....	29
Introduction .....	29
Fort Bliss 1917-1919 .....	29
Conclusion .....	32
Essay on Sources for Chapter V .....	32
CHAPTER VI Creation of a Permanent Cavalry Post (1916-1920) .....	35
Introduction .....	35
Fort Bliss 1916-1920 .....	35
Conclusion .....	39
Essay on Sources for Chapter VI .....	40
CHAPTER VII Fort Bliss in the 1920s .....	41
Introduction .....	41
Fort Bliss 1920-1929 .....	41
Conclusion .....	43

Essay on Sources for Chapter VII .....	44
CHAPTER VIII Fort Bliss in the 1930s .....	45
Introduction .....	45
Fort Bliss 1930-1939 .....	45
Conclusion .....	50
Essay on Sources for Chapter VIII .....	50
APPENDIX Fort Bliss in World War II and the Early Cold War Period .....	53
Fort Bliss in World War II .....	53
Introduction .....	53
Fort Bliss in World War II .....	53
Summary .....	54
Fort Bliss in the Early Cold War Period .....	54
Introduction .....	54
Fort Bliss in the Early Cold War Period .....	56
Summary .....	58
Conclusion .....	58
Essay on Sources for the Appendix .....	58
REFERENCES .....	61

Accession For	
NTIS GRA&I	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
DTIC TAB	<input type="checkbox"/>
Unannounced	<input type="checkbox"/>
Justification	
By <i>perTelecon</i>	
Distribution	
Availability Codes	
Dist	Mail and
<i>A-1</i>	

ST #A, AUTH: USAADAC  
(DR. GLEN DeGARNEO - DSN 978-5140)  
PER TELECON, 28 MAR 94 CB

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study reports on a preliminary effort to identify, evaluate, and document the historically significant roles Fort Bliss, Texas, has played in the history of the Southwest and the nation. Fort Bliss's 1890 to 1940 history can be divided into several significant periods; a chapter is devoted to each period. At the end of each chapter, a section is devoted to historically important questions relating to that chapter's subject matter. The bibliographic essays that follow each chapter review both the published secondary sources on Fort Bliss history and the primary manuscript sources that merit further analysis.

In the 50 years between the post's relocation at its present site and World War II, Fort Bliss gained regional and national significance. Fort Bliss became a great horse cavalry post and the most important U.S. military installation on the border. The army's horse cavalry era ended with the removal of the 1st Cavalry Division from Fort Bliss in 1943. Fort Bliss was the nation's last military base with a strategic mission as a horse cavalry post.

Fort Bliss's rise to prominence is intertwined with a series of historical events. Chapter I relates the first of these, the ending of the Indian wars in the late 1880s. Because fewer troops were needed in the country's interior, military forces could be moved to border garrisons.

The first crucial decision in the history of modern Fort Bliss dates to this important shift in the army's strategic mission. Fort Selden, New Mexico, then rivaled Fort Bliss as a candidate for the region's most important post. However, impressed by Fort Bliss's strategic border location and its proximity to El Paso's railroads, the military decided to expand Fort Bliss in 1890. Crowded by railroad construction at Hart's Mill, the fort was moved to La Noria Mesa, its present location.

The final appearance of the original post on La Noria Mesa largely was the work of the Quartermaster Officer Captain George Ruhlen. The first buildings were completed in 1893. They were first garrisoned in October, 1893; the rest of the decade passed quietly at the fort.

Fort Bliss's contributions to military efforts during the Spanish-American War (1898) and the Philippine Insurrection (1898-1902) are discussed in Chapter II. Fort Bliss's role was small but, for a four-infantry company post, significant. The fort's involvement demonstrated that it deserved consideration in future military planning.

Chapter III describes the first decade of the early New Army period, the first decade of the twentieth century at Fort Bliss. During the New Army period, the U.S. Army was reorganized and modernized. Although Fort Bliss remained a small, isolated infantry post during this period, it soon would expand and increase in strategic significance.

The Mexican Revolution (1910-1920) shaped Fort Bliss's development until World War II. This era is examined in Chapter IV. The revolution drew national attention to the border and to the strategic importance of Fort Bliss. In 1910, Fort Bliss was a remote, small, infantry post. By the end of the Mexican Revolution, it was a large cavalry installation that served a vital strategic mission. At the same time, Fort Bliss made significant contributions to the American effort in World War I by providing training camps.

The Mexican Revolution made Fort Bliss a cavalry post. When the Punitive (Pershing) Expedition returned from Mexico, five cavalry units were stationed at Fort Bliss and its vicinity. On January 30, 1917, Colonel Robert L. Michie submitted a written proposal to the army chief of staff that Fort Bliss be made a major, permanent cavalry post. By 1921, Michie's recommendation was accepted and the 1st Cavalry Division was activated at Fort Bliss. Fort Bliss thus became a major cavalry post even after battlefield experience in World War I had cast doubts upon the future of horse cavalry. Fort Bliss's World War I history and its conversion to a major cavalry post in the years immediately following the war are summarized in chapters V and VI.

Chapter VII deals with 1920s Fort Bliss. Although a decade of isolationism and conservative fiscal policies, the 1920s brought remarkable growth to Fort Bliss. The post grew because of its strategic location, its importance as a rail and air communication center, and its large expanses of land suitable for cavalry and field artillery training.

In the 1930s, the military's problems were compounded by the Great Depression, yet Fort Bliss continued to expand. This expansion is the subject of Chapter VIII. Quarters for noncommissioned officers and their families were constructed at a rapid pace. Using unspent 1920s funds, the post also gained a considerable amount of land in the early 1930s.

The World War II era falls outside the scope of this study. An appendix, however, is included that describes Fort Bliss during the war and the early postwar period. On the eve of World War II, only two great cavalry posts remained in the United States—Fort Riley, Kansas, and Fort Bliss. In 1943, Fort Bliss was stripped of this role. The 1st Cavalry Division, associated with Fort Bliss since its inception in 1921, was sent to the Pacific Theater and its horses and horse equipment were left behind, ending a chapter of American military history. As one veteran put it, "An era ended—*the horse was gone.*"

## PREFACE

Each chapter in this study covers an important period in the history of Fort Bliss. However, the reader is cautioned that, as with all such superimposed temporal divisions, the distinctions implied by these chapters are, to some extent, artificial. The events that shaped Fort Bliss cannot be separated rigidly without distorting the interconnections between them. This qualifier particularly is appropriate to chapters IV, V, and VI. The Mexican Revolution, World War I, and the founding of a permanent cavalry post at Fort Bliss—each discussed in separate chapters—all took place within a brief span of time in the late 1910s. These overlapping events marked Fort Bliss's pre-World War II history, a distinctive period that ended as horses were replaced by automotive transport.

Scholarly historical research is accompanied by footnotes and bibliographies. However, the time limits imposed upon this project prevented traditional footnotes from being included. Direct quotations and facts have been documented and citations will be supplied upon request. Most readers will find the bibliographic essays that follow each chapter to be the functional equivalent of traditional footnotes and a bibliography.

No project of this kind can be completed by a single researcher, and I have benefited from the help of many people. Two in particular stand out: Dr. Glen DeGarmo, Facilities Engineering, Fort Bliss, directed my research; and Stuart L. Butler, archivist in the Navy and Old Army Branch of the National Archives, the most important repository for the materials needed in this study, was of invaluable assistance. I am also indebted to Kent Carter, Fort Worth National Archives and Records Service; Wes Wilson, Southwest Collection, El Paso Public Library; Colonel James Moran (USA, ret.), Government Documents, University of Texas at El Paso Library; Bud Newman, University of Texas at El Paso Archives; Margarita Blanco, Replica Museum, Fort Bliss; Commander Millard McKinney (USN, ret.), El Paso, Texas; Dr. James Day, Department of English, University of Texas at El Paso; Dennis Vetock and Drs. Richard J. Sommers and Wesley Laing, U.S. Army Military History Institute; Dr. Constance Ramirez, Building and Grounds, Office of the Chief of Engineers; Raymond Cotton, Cartographic Division, National Archives; and William Lewis, Washington National Records Center, Suitland, Maryland.

Perry D. Jamieson  
Department of History  
University of Texas at El Paso  
September 1, 1980

## FOREWORD

This report primarily is concerned with the period beginning in the late 1880s with the establishment of Fort Bliss at its present location and ending in the early 1940s. It is designed to be responsive to army regulations and technical guidance that incorporate Executive Order 11593, "Protection and Enhancement of the Cultural Environment," which requires all federal agencies to ". . . locate, inventory, and nominate to the Secretary of the Interior all sites, buildings, districts, and objects under their jurisdiction or control that appear to qualify for listing on the National Register of Historic Places."

An explanation of the strategy used to comply with this directive will help clarify the report's goals and limitations. There are two general investigative strategies that may be used to identify and document the historical significance of an installation's "old" buildings. One of these has the investigator work from "buildings to history," attempting to identify historically significant people or events associated with the buildings of interest.

While this strategy may identify some historically significant buildings, it is a piecemeal method of analysis, tending to generate unsynthesized historical accounts. This strategy does not readily identify the relationships between the post and regional, national, and international historical processes. Therefore, information of a more general and profound significance than that narrowly associated with individual buildings may go undiscovered.

Using the second strategy, the investigator works from "history to buildings," examining the way in which the installation participated in and developed from larger historical processes. Buildings then can be related more completely to their historical context.

The latter strategy has been employed in this study of Fort Bliss history; thus, this report contains few descriptions or discussions of individual buildings. Instead, it provides a preliminary overview of the interrelated events and decisions that shaped the crucial first 50 years of Fort Bliss's history.

Fort Bliss is implementing this investigative strategy in two phases. This report is limited—it represents only the first phase, the scoping phase, of the program.

The goal of the scoping phase was to produce an overview of the post's history through the beginning of World War II. This overview includes the preliminary identification of events and trends of historical significance. To accomplish this task, published sources were studied and, most critically, the holdings of several archival institutions (e.g., the National Archives) were surveyed. Not unexpectedly, archival materials were found to be essential to the successful completion of this phase, and they will be essential to the completion of the study program.

The scoping study has resulted in the preliminary documentation of Fort Bliss's move to its present location and its transformation from an obscure, four-company infantry post to the large, strategically significant horse cavalry installation it became in the 1920s and 1930s. This stage of Fort Bliss's history culminated in the interwar period, a time in which the army simultaneously was being dismantled and made reliant upon motorized forms of transportation.

This report describes, analyzes, and documents this historical process in as much detail as the time allotted to Phase I of the study program permitted. The report also provides the general analytical



"direction" to be taken in Phase II. In Phase II, the history of Fort Bliss from 1890 to 1940 will be investigated more thoroughly--the important unanswered questions identified after each chapter will be examined.

An essential part of the Phase II study will be the investigation of the "other side of the picture." While Phase I has identified the Mexican Revolution as a particularly important force in Fort Bliss's pre-World War II development, the influence of Fort Bliss upon Mexican political and military decision making has not been explored. This important aspect of Fort Bliss's history needs to be examined in order to adequately evaluate the fort's historical significance.

The scoping study has made tangible, important contributions to our knowledge of Fort Bliss history; however, it must be emphasized that Fort Bliss's historical significance remains only partially understood. Therefore, the intent is to continue the study through Phase II and to document the historical significance of Fort Bliss in accordance with the professional standards of historical inquiry. The results of Phase II will provide the basis for informed, intelligent evaluation of which of Fort Bliss's "old" buildings do, and, equally important, which do not have validated historical significance.

GLEN DEGARMO, PH.D.  
Staff Archaeologist  
Cultural Resources Management Branch  
Fort Bliss, Texas

## **Chapter I**

### **THE FORMATIVE YEARS OF NEW FORT BLISS (1890-1898)**

#### **Introduction**

The pre-1910 history of Fort Bliss, Texas, was influenced strongly by the post's strategic location along the U.S.-Mexico border. This early history had much to do with Fort Bliss's emergence as a permanent, major cavalry post in the twentieth century.

In 1890, the Mexican War lay 40 years in the past, the frontier was all but closed, the Indian wars had ended, and a Mexican invasion of the United States was very unlikely. Few Americans believed that either a large standing army or large army posts were essential. Specifically, a large post on the border seemed unnecessary.

However, American military leaders did agree that a series of small two- and four-company posts along the U.S.-Mexico border was appropriate. This decision was responsive to late nineteenth-century border violence. The border had been crossed many times in bandit and Indian fighting between the end of the Mexican War and 1890. These conflicts include the Cortina War (1859-1860), Kickapoo and Mescalero fighting (1873-1877), and Apache fighting (1860-1886). The most famous nineteenth-century border incident was the Andrew Johnson administration's dispatch of the Sheridan Expedition to the border after the Civil War.

#### **Fort Bliss 1890-1898**

The location of Old Fort Bliss at Hart's Mill, the post's location before being moved to its current site, had numerous disadvantages. With the arrival of the railroads in 1881, the Southern Pacific crossed the east side of the post, and the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe cut directly across the parade ground. Colonel E.M. Heyl, inspector general for the Division of the Missouri, toured Old Fort Bliss in December, 1889. He reported, "The space for drill at this post is very limited, being confined to the parade ground through which trains, whether freight or passenger, are constantly passing, rendering it absolutely dangerous at times." Furthermore, the post was small. Four infantry companies exhausted the post's available space: There was no room for depots and warehouses.

In the 1880s, arguments were advanced for making Fort Selden, New Mexico, the El Paso region's military post. General Philip T. Sheridan, respected veteran of the Civil and Indian wars and commander of the Division of the Missouri, toured the area and in 1881 recommended the Fort Selden site to Army Commanding General William T. Sherman. Sheridan listed several prerequisites for the new post's location: water, grass, Indian surveillance, and reasonable proximity to El Paso. While agreeing El Paso was the strategic center of the region, Sherman believed the physical geography of the El Paso area made the city unsuitable for a major post. Therefore, Sherman accepted Sheridan's recommendation of Fort Selden. Secretary of War Robert Lincoln and President Chester A. Arthur sent requests to Congress for funds to construct a military post at Fort Selden.

## 2) A SURVEY HISTORY OF FORT BLISS

However, several subsequent developments blunted the momentum for the Fort Selden site, and interest increased in building a new post near Old Fort Bliss. In the early 1880s, Sherman drew up a plan dividing U.S. military posts into three categories: those to be made permanent, to be held indefinitely and in some cases expanded; those to be held for 10 years and only temporarily maintained; and, those to be abandoned. Sherman toured the El Paso area in 1882 and became convinced the Fort Bliss site was superior to Fort Selden. In Sherman's plans, Fort Selden was among the posts to be abandoned while Fort Bliss was to be expanded into a permanent regimental post. In support of Fort Bliss, he cited the area's strategic location, its access to railroads, and the possibility of expanding Fort Bliss into an infantry regimental post. Furthermore, Sherman thought the threat of Indian raids in New Mexico and Arizona, one of the arguments made in favor of the Fort Selden location, had been exaggerated.

In light of nineteenth-century border troubles, American military leaders deemed a permanent post at El Paso's strategic border location important. In 1881, Sherman predicted El Paso soon would be a gateway to Mexico. The Report of the House Committee on Military Affairs on Fort Bliss in 1890 stated,

*It is believed that El Paso is the most important military point on the Mexico frontier and is the most central and commanding point from which to reach all parts of western Texas and of southern New Mexico and Arizona; and therefore that the military post at El Paso shall be enlarged and strengthened to such degree as will make the advantages of this location available in any military emergency that may arise.*

Railroads also were an important consideration. Military posts relied on the railroads for transportation and the railroads relied on the army for their security. The commanding general wished to postpone site selection until the location of railroad lines was determined. Sherman understood the building of the western railroads made for a change in military planning in the West. "For a hundred years we have been sweeping across the continent with a skirmish line," Sherman wrote in 1882, "building a post here and another there to be abandoned the next year for another line, and so on. Now that we are across and have railroads everywhere . . . the whole problem is changed." The Report of the House Committee on Military Affairs on Fort Bliss also discussed the importance of the railroads. Five trunk lines entered El Paso in 1890.

Testifying in favor of the new site in 1890, then Army Commanding General John T. Schofield stressed the potential for future expansion at Fort Bliss. In the same year, General David S. Stanley, commander of the Department of Texas, praised the site for its fine view, ample land for buildings and target ranges, fine soil and adequate water. Water was an important consideration. Stanley noted, "Seven thoroughly successful wells on three sides of the survey demonstrate that an inexhaustible body of excellent free stone water underlies [La Noria] mesa."

Another development that worked against the selection of Fort Selden was congressional reluctance to fund either the Fort Selden or the Fort Bliss site. If Congress expeditiously had voted funds for a Southwestern military post in the early 1880s, Fort Selden certainly might have received them instead of Fort Bliss. However, a general apathy about military affairs prevailed in Congress in the 1880s as the Indian wars were winding down and foreign war seemed only a remote possibility. As Sherman, Sheridan's successor as commanding general, said in 1884, "I do not think we should be much alarmed about the possibility of wars with foreign powers, since it would require more than a million and a half men to make a campaign on land against us."

The army's slowness to spend congressional funds contributed to Congress' inertia. After studying the official War Department Reports, Fort Bliss historian Major General George Ruhlen found: "As of July 1, 1883, only about a third of the \$200,000 Congress had appropriated in April, 1880, for construction of posts on the Rio Grande (later modified per War Department request to construction 'in Texas') had been expended."

The 1887 visit of a staff officer sent by Stanley increased momentum towards selection of the Fort Bliss site. This visit caught the attention of the local press and stimulated interest among El Pasoans for a new, expanded Fort Bliss.

The lobbying by prominent local citizens, among them landowners and developers, was of crucial importance in Fort Bliss's victory over Fort Selden. Several powerful El Pasoans had invested in the El Paso and Northeast Railroad, and were well aware of the economic advantages a new and expanded Fort Bliss held for their community. Local citizens prepared a pamphlet promoting "El Paso as a Military Post," formed the El Paso Progressive Association to secure a site for the new post, and raised funds to buy land for the military reservation. Heyl reported in 1889, "The citizens of El Paso are willing and anxious to donate the land" for a New Fort Bliss. Captain George Ruhlen, the Quartermaster Corps officer sent to El Paso to supervise the construction of the new post (and historian Ruhlen's grandfather), later wrote that New Fort Bliss "had its origination in a movement on the part of some citizens of El Paso who took concerted action during the fall and spring of 1889 to induce the government to increase the old post or build a new one."

El Paso also gained an advantage from the position of its congressman, S.W.T. Lanham, on the House Committee for Military Affairs. In January, Lanham introduced a House resolution for the sale of Fort Bliss and its buildings at Hart's Mill and authorizing the purchase of land for a new post. The secretary of war was to purchase between 300 and 640 acres at a price not more than \$20 per acre. The land was to be within 10 miles of the city limits of El Paso, and not more than \$150,000 was to be appropriated for the project. In early 1890, the bill passed the House, the Senate adopted a companion resolution introduced by Senator J.H. Reagan, and President Benjamin Harrison signed the bill into law.

There also were a host of secondary forces that worked to Fort Bliss's advantage in the 1890s: El Paso's vigorous commerce, mining operations, and favorable climate. However, none of these attributes were unique to El Paso among Southwestern cities and alone do not explain the selection of Fort Bliss over Fort Selden. As stressed above, El Paso's strategic location, railroads, and potential for expansion were the most important reasons for its early funding and development.

The construction of Fort Bliss was Captain Ruhlen's responsibility. A fellow quartermaster officer left this description of Captain Ruhlen: "He is active, energetic and practical. He extracts from the contractors everything the specifications and exigencies of the occasion call for, and protects the interests of the Government at every point. He commences work early and is up late." Captain Ruhlen was assisted by Edward H. Offley, his chief clerk, and F.A. Gartner, architect and civil engineer.

Captain Ruhlen's authority in planning New Fort Bliss was broad, but limited by the circumstances and by the military procedures of the day. By 1890, the Office of the Quartermaster General was issuing standardized plans for building construction on army posts, but Captain Ruhlen did not follow these. Instead, he submitted several plans for the general design of the post and blueprints and specifications for the individual buildings on the post. On several specific points, Captain Ruhlen's decisions were directed by the Office of the Quartermaster General, but the post's final appearance largely was Captain Ruhlen's work.

#### 4 A SURVEY HISTORY OF FORT BLISS

Captain Ruhlen submitted his first plans to Quartermaster General R.N. Batchelder in the spring of 1891. These plans were predicated upon the assumption that the new post would be a traditional four-company infantry post providing quarters for a commanding officer, a surgeon, four captains, and eight lieutenants. Captain Ruhlen's plans also provided for the possibility of further expansion and expenditures.

The quartermaster general suggested two major changes in Captain Ruhlen's original design. He advised that the parade ground be reduced in size to decrease the post's size and lower the cost of the water and sewer systems. Also, he recommended the officers' quarters be moved nearer to the edge of the mesa and made parallel to it, instead of positioned in the echelon arrangement Captain Ruhlen had suggested.

In the design of individual buildings, architectural considerations occasionally took precedence. Captain C.P. Miller was the assistant quartermaster who reviewed Captain Ruhlen's New Fort Bliss plans. Miller sent Captain Ruhlen the following suggestions in July, 1891:

*In the Barracks, why not use 3 x 12 floor joist, the same as is used on the second floor, and save the two rows of piers. The posts to support floors should be 8 x 8 instead of 8 x 4. If the ceiling joist of the second story rested on your wall plate and the rafters spiked to them. it would take the thrust of your roof much better than you have it.*

*In all of the buildings where there are basement rooms, if the water table was one foot higher from grade line, the basement rooms would be much lighter and it would add to the appearance and comfort of the buildings.*

It was evident cost consistently was the most important design consideration for the Office of the Quartermaster General. On April 24, 1891, Captain Ruhlen received a response from an assistant quartermaster to his original plans warning him, "The Quartermaster General . . . [wants me] to inform you that you are proposing to put too much money into architectural effect." Five days later the Quartermaster's Office instructed Captain Ruhlen, "The Store-house and other necessary buildings must be of the most temporary character of wooden buildings. The Barrack plan can be made much less expensive if each wing is carried out one width, leaving only the break in plane and roof at the centre of the building." Two months later, Captain Ruhlen was told, "The building for water closets and urinals for barracks would be less expensive if the two rows of water closets were placed against the middle partition."

Sunlight and climate were important considerations in the construction of Southwestern army posts. Batchelder advised Captain Ruhlen on the design of the double-barracks building in November, 1891:

*As it is thought to be a mistake to exclude the sunlight from the men's dormitories, the veranda will be left off of one side of the building.*

*It will be better to construct a building in rear of the barracks in which all of the plumbing fixtures shall be placed, and leave the central portion of the building for the day room and non-commissioned officers' rooms. This will obviate the necessity of rooms at the outer end of the dormitory where they exclude light and circulation of air to the main room.*

Earlier, Batchelder had suggested reducing the width and increasing the length of the double barracks. "This," he told Captain Ruhlen, "will give room for two rows of bunks and give better ventilation for a hot climate."

El Paso's weather persuaded Captain Ruhlen to choose tin instead of slate roofs. Slate was not used in the Southwest and would have had to have been shipped in from Pennsylvania or Vermont. Captain Ruhlen had seen two severe hailstorms in El Paso and was convinced slate could not withstand a Southwestern hailstorm.

Nineteenth-century forts often consisted of temporary buildings built by soldier labor, but New Fort Bliss was to be a permanent fort, with substantial brick structures constructed by professional builders. The decision to use brick had implications for Fort Bliss's future. These brick buildings would survive to the 1910s and beyond--the period during which Fort Bliss's permanent value would be established.

This important decision was made by Batchelder himself. He instructed Captain Ruhlen on April 24, 1891, that "the officers' quarters & barrack buildings" were to be "substantial brick buildings," and on April 29, that the "Officers' Quarters, Guardhouse, Barracks, and possibly the Common-Mess Building, should be permanent in construction, or substantial brick buildings."

Captain Ruhlen considered frame construction for some of the buildings, but the Office of the Quartermaster General held final authority over the choice. In May, 1891, Captain Ruhlen raised the question of frame construction with the Office of the Quartermaster General. Miller replied that Captain Ruhlen could submit plans for frame "Non-Commissioned Staff Quarters," and implied Batchelder would study them and make the final decision. Later, in March, 1892, Miller directed Captain Ruhlen expressly, "A good quality of selected brick had better be used at this post." Miller sent Captain Ruhlen a copy of the brick specifications used at Fort Sheridan, Illinois. Captain Ruhlen was advised to select a brick sample, display it at his office, and tell bidding contractors this sample would be their standard.

While brick construction ensured Fort Bliss would become a permanent post, building with brick was somewhat problematic. By late May, 1892, Captain Ruhlen had become dissatisfied with the bricks provided by El Paso manufacturers. In particular, he was displeased the bricks were not of uniform size. Captain Ruhlen proposed building a steam-powered brick machine and making the bricks at Fort Bliss. The Office of the Quartermaster General replied with a request that Captain Ruhlen send samples of the bricks to be used. Captain Ruhlen tested at least four kinds of bricks before deciding upon the specifications for Fort Bliss. His published specifications required the bricks be "hard burned, new, well-shaped, of uniform size, with smooth surfaces and straight edges."

Captain Ruhlen's misgivings about the local brick manufacturers were justified by later events. By February, 1893, contractor George H. Evans and Company, which made its own bricks, was having trouble with its brick supply. Evans and Company initially had sold bricks to other Fort Bliss contractors but now used all of its own production. A new brickery was opened 16 miles from El Paso in October, 1892. Undoubtedly, Evans and other contractors were counting on this brickery as a source for their Fort Bliss work. However, the new brickery proved a disappointment--it produced poor-quality bricks. Evans and Company appealed to Captain Ruhlen that they could not keep the color of their bricks uniform without sacrificing quality or stopping construction. Captain Ruhlen compromised, directing the contractors to abandon color uniformity and continue work.

## 6 A SURVEY HISTORY OF FORT BLISS

He set another precedent with the quartermaster stables and quartermaster storehouse (buildings 2011 and 2019). These two buildings were built of rubble and block stone rather than brick. Captain Ruhlen informed the quartermaster general of his decision in a letter dated March 30, 1892. "Being in my judgement much better for this particular purpose," Captain Ruhlen wrote, "I have made plans for a good 18 inch rubble stone, instead of a brick wall for this building [the quartermaster stables]."

The Quartermaster Corps officer cited two reasons supporting this choice of construction material. First, limestone was readily available in the area. He wrote,

*Limestone of excellent quality can be found in inexhaustible quantities not more than two miles from the place where the stable will be built, and as the large quantity required will undoubtedly stimulate development of the quarries, I believe that the 18 inch stone wall specified will cost very little, if any, more than would an ordinary 12 inch brick wall.*

Captain Ruhlen's second reason had to do with his estimate that 3,000,000 bricks would be needed for Fort Bliss construction. He anticipated that more brick shortages like the kind Evans and Company had experienced would occur. Captain Ruhlen continued, "The exclusive use of stone on this building will also tend to relieve, to a slight extent at least, the pressing demand for brick that will prevail during the progress of work on other buildings for the post."

The new post's first buildings neared completion at the end of 1892. An examination of the surviving manuscript records of the Office of the Quartermaster General does not reveal which building was completed first. The "Progress of Work" reports of the nineteenth century were less formal than contemporary completion schedules. In September, 1893, Captain Ruhlen reported on the seven buildings then completed, but his Progress of Work forms do not definitively identify the first completed building. Three buildings, the subsistence and quartermaster's storehouse (Captain Ruhlen's temporary office), the guard house, and the pump house, all apparently were completed at about the same time. On December 15, 1892, Captain Oscar F. Long, assistant quartermaster, reported to Batchelder the roof of the subsistence storehouse was "nearly completed," and the guard house was "ready for the roofframes." The following April, Captain Ruhlen reported to Batchelder, "Work Completed: The Water Supply System; the sewerage system; the combined Subsistence and Quartermaster's Store-House; the Guard House." However, Captain Ruhlen did not include any dates with this list. In a June, 1893 letter, Evans and Company contractors reminded Captain Ruhlen the "Subsistence Storehouse, also Engine and Pump House and Guard House, were accepted by you and turned over to the Government several months ago."

When the new post was opened, the 18th Infantry Regiment provided its garrison. In October, 1893, four companies of the 18th arrived from Fort Clark, Texas, to serve as the first garrison of New Fort Bliss. The battalion's senior officer was Captain William H. McLaughlin, who thus became the new post's first commander. The 18th's regimental commander, Colonel Henry M. Lazelle, was on sick leave that October. Lazelle rejoined the 18th as commander the following month. By the time the new fort was opened, the Indian wars were over. The remainder of the 1890s passed quietly at Fort Bliss.

## Conclusion

The establishment of New Fort Bliss on La Noria Mesa was the first crucial decision in the present post's history and raises some fundamental questions. The decision to build up Fort Bliss, not Fort Selden, began the sequence of events that led to Fort Bliss becoming the major horse cavalry post on the Southwest border. The crucial factors in this decision are not fully understood. Nor is it completely clear why the establishment of a substantial military post in the Southwest was a priority in 1890.

Other questions remain unanswered. Historians are interested in "firsts." We are not sure which was the first building completed on Fort Bliss. Another unresolved question concerns Captain Ruhlen's decision to construct buildings 2011 and 2019 of rubble and block. All the other original buildings were made of brick. Did construction of other buildings in the area of buildings 2011 and 2019, some completed as late as 1926, simply follow this precedent?

## Essay on Sources for Chapter I

The Fort Bliss-Fort Selden controversy has not been explored fully. Major General George Ruhlen (USA, ret.) is Captain George Ruhlen's grandson and the only author who has investigated the issue (see George Ruhlen, 1974, "The Genesis of New Fort Bliss," *Password* 19:188-198). However, the Fort Bliss-Fort Selden controversy is prefatory to Ruhlen's central theme. His information on the controversy came primarily from published government documents. It is a topic that deserves further attention.

Ruhlen's *Password* article is a fine introduction to the founding of New Fort Bliss and principally is based upon published primary sources. Ruhlen photocopied many of the sources he used in writing the article and donated them, along with his grandfather's ledger book, to the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) Archives. These items can be found in the Major General George Ruhlen III Collection, Accession Number 883. Another useful study of New Fort Bliss is Arthur Crego, July, 1969, "City on the Mesa—the New Fort Bliss 1890-1895," unpublished manuscript.

Two government documents that bear on the origin of Fort Bliss are 51 Congress, 1 session, House Report 28, Report of the House Committee on Military Affairs and the companion Senate Report 28.

Unique and invaluable sources on the creation of New Fort Bliss are in the National Archives, Record Group 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Document File 1800-1914. Many quartermaster files were researched for this report; the most valuable are mentioned here. Quartermaster File 13414, Construction of New Buildings, contains correspondence that passed between Captain Ruhlen and the Office of the Quartermaster General, as well as specifications and blueprints of the first buildings on the new post. Quartermaster File 41571, Officers Quarters 1892, describes some of the brick supply problems the contractors had. Quartermaster Files 57210, Buildings Completed Report, and 61555, "Progress of Work" Reports were used to research the "first building" issue. Several files contain early plans of the post.



**81 A SURVEY HISTORY OF FORT BLISS**

## Chapter II

### FORT BLISS AND THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR PERIOD (1898-1902)

#### Introduction

Between April and August 1898, the United States fought a war with Spain, which, although brief, had long-reaching consequences. After the Civil War, the Industrial Revolution increased American interest in foreign markets and world trade. American involvement in foreign affairs also was fueled by the example set by the major European powers (Britain, France, and Germany) that were colonizing Africa and Asia in the 1880s and 1890s. In 1898, the U.S. government declared war on Spain.

In five months of fighting, the United States won spectacular naval victories at Manila and Santiago, and defeated the Spanish on land in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. Under the Treaty of Paris, which ended the war, the United States acquired the Philippines, Guam, and Puerto Rico from Spain, and shortly thereafter annexed Hawaii. The Spanish-American War confirmed the United States' new expansionist foreign policy and launched the nation into world affairs.

However, the experience of the war and its aftermath were not entirely positive. In mobilizing for its first foreign war since 1848, grievous weaknesses were revealed in the organization and administration of the U.S. Army. More than 2,500 soldiers died of disease, while only 345 were killed in battle. After the war, United States troops, for the first time, were stationed abroad for long periods. The Philippines were won from Spain, but American control was challenged by the Philippine Insurrection, which lasted until July, 1902. During the insurrection, 1,590 American soldiers were killed and 5,500 died from disease. President William McKinley lamented, "If old Dewey had just sailed away when he smashed the Spanish fleet, what a lot of trouble he would have saved us."

The years 1898-1902 were a trying period in American military history, an era in which the United States moved beyond its continental interests and began to experience the difficulties that accompany involvement in foreign affairs. Fort Bliss played only a small role in the Spanish-American War and the Philippine Insurrection, but the period was an important one in Fort Bliss history and deserves attention.

#### Fort Bliss 1898-1902

When Congress declared war on Spain, Fort Bliss was a small infantry post in the remote Southwest. Since October, 1893, Fort Bliss had been garrisoned by four companies of the 18th Infantry Regiment. Troop A of the 5th Cavalry Regiment, a small, one-troop harbinger of the decades ahead when Fort Bliss would become an enormous cavalry post, arrived in January, 1896. These Fort Bliss units first were sent from Fort Bliss to New Orleans and then on to wartime service in the Philippines and Puerto Rico.

Throughout the Spanish-American War, Fort Bliss had only a skeletal garrison. During the wartime months of May-December, 1898, the post garrison never contained many more than 100 soldiers. The average monthly garrison strength from April, 1898, to October, 1901, was less than 120 soldiers. Not until November, 1901, when 508 soldiers were stationed at Fort Bliss, was there a sizable garrison at the post.

## 10A SURVEY HISTORY OF FORT BLISS

From July, 1898, until January, 1899, Fort Bliss was garrisoned by volunteer troops. During these months, Fort Bliss first was manned by a troop of the 1st Texas Volunteer Cavalry Regiment and later by a company of the 3rd Texas Volunteer Infantry Regiment.

Volunteer troops were deployed at garrisons like Fort Bliss because the regular army in 1897 was small, numbering fewer than 28,000 troops. In the mobilization for war, the bulk of the regular army became part of the V Corps, the force that fought in the Cuban Campaign. Other regular units served in the Philippines and Puerto Rico. Volunteer units, such as the 1st Texas Volunteer Cavalry Regiment, were needed for garrison duty while regular units were abroad. During the course of the war, the 1st Texas Volunteer Cavalry served not only at Fort Bliss but also at Fort Sam Houston and at other Texas posts. While one company of the 3rd Texas Volunteer Infantry Regiment was stationed at Fort Bliss, the rest of the regiment was assigned to Fort Clark.

Two units from Fort Bliss served in the Spanish-American War. These units were two battalions of the 18th Infantry Regiment and Troop A of the 5th Cavalry Regiment. The 18th Infantry Regiment had supplied the main garrison of the post when it was founded on La Noria Mesa. The two battalions of the 18th Infantry Regiment, 16 officers and 699 men commanded by Colonel David D. VanValzah, served as part of the Second Brigade, Second Division, VIII Corps in the Philippines. Companies B and G of the 18th Infantry Regiment were the first American units to go into the trenches at Manila. They suffered only a few casualties. Company F formed the advance guard of the American advance on Manila, and discovered the Spanish flying a white flag over the city. The 18th Infantry Regiment held the bridges and patrolled the two main streets of the city. VanValzah reported the Spanish resistance at Manila was "not great"; the 18th was the only regiment that did not suffer losses at Manila.

The other Fort Bliss unit that served in the Spanish-American War was Troop A, 5th Cavalry Regiment. Troop A had been stationed at Fort Bliss from January, 1896, until shortly after the declaration of war. The regiment was commanded by Captain Augustus C. Macomb and served in Puerto Rico with the Independent Brigade, made up entirely of regular units. The troop scouted for its brigade and skirmished with the Spanish at Hermigueras and Las Marias, reporting no losses.

These two units from Fort Bliss also remained overseas during the Philippine Insurrection. The two battalions of the 18th Infantry Regiment were part of the First Separate Brigade, VIII Corps. These infantrymen fought several skirmishes with Philippine insurrectionaries in 1899, during which one was killed and four wounded. Company F of the 18th was credited with capturing the governor of Cadiz. The two battalions remained in the Philippines until 1901, when they returned to the United States.

The 25th Infantry Regiment was a well-known black regiment that had fought at El Caney during the Cuban Campaign. After the Spanish-American War, companies A and H were stationed at Fort Huachuca, Arizona; Company A then was sent to Fort Bliss on May 1, 1899. Company A briefly was posted at Fort Bliss until that autumn, when it was sent to Manila. The company served at several stations in the Philippines until 1902.

Of all these units, only the 18th Infantry Regiment had a very long association with Fort Bliss. None of these units made a substantial contribution to the American effort against the Philippine Insurrection. Their numbers and losses represent only a small fraction of the American total. From the first expedition in 1898 to June, 1901, more than 112,000 American soldiers served in the Philippines. Total American casualties from June 30, 1898, to June 30, 1901, numbered 3,527.

## Conclusion

The contributions of Fort Bliss to the Spanish-American War effort were small, but all the regular army units stationed at the post served in the American war effort.

The relationship between volunteer and regular units is an important theme throughout American military history. No published research exists on the 1st Texas Volunteer Cavalry Regiment or the 3rd Texas Volunteer Infantry Regiment, the units that garrisoned Fort Bliss during the Spanish-American War. We know little about the training these volunteers received or the contributions they made to the history of the post.

Troop A, 5th Cavalry Regiment, at Fort Bliss was the first cavalry unit at the present post site, arriving long before Fort Bliss became a great horse cavalry post. The decision to add a troop of regular cavalry to the Fort Bliss garrison is a topic worthy of further investigation.

## Essay on Sources for Chapter II

Record Group 94, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, M617, Returns From U.S. Military Posts, 1800-1916, Fort Bliss Post Returns documents which units passed through Fort Bliss to serve in the Spanish-American War and the Philippine Insurrection. These Fort Bliss Returns show the changing composition of the fort's garrison; they were of use in all phases of this study. Another basic source used to research this chapter and several others is Francis B. Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army* (2 vols., Washington, D.C., 1903), a standard compendium of biographical entries on army officers and other data. Some statistics in this chapter came from James A. LeRoy, *The Americans in the Philippines* (2 vols., Boston, 1914). LeRoy judiciously derived his figures from official War Department reports.

The Annual Reports of the War Department for the years 1898-1902 are a compilation of amazingly detailed, if not well-indexed, primary sources on the Spanish-American War and the Philippine Insurrection. The Annual Reports of the War Department used in writing this chapter include 1898, 55 Congress, 3 session, House Document 2, Report of the Major General Commanding the Army; 1900, 57 Congress, 1 session, House Document 2, Report of the Commander of the Second Division, Eighth Army Corps; and 1901, 57 Congress, 1 session, House Document 2, Report of the Lieutenant General Commanding the Army and the Report of the Division of the Philippines.

The U.S. Army Military History Institute at the Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, has an extensive collection of unit histories. The following were consulted: Arnold J. Heidenheimer, *Vanguard to Victory* [18th Infantry] (Aschaffenburg, Germany, 1954); John H. Nankivell, *The History of the Twenty-Fifth Regiment United States Infantry 1869-1926* (Fort Collins, Colorado, 1972); Anon., *History of the 5th United States Cavalry from 1855 to 1927* (Fort Clark, Texas, n.d.); and Anon., *History Outline 5th U.S. Cavalry* (Fuchinole, Japan, 1946). The Institute also holds the papers of the 1st Regiment Texas Cavalry, in its Spanish-American War Survey.

**12\ A SURVEY HISTORY OF FORT BLISS**

## Chapter III

### FORT BLISS AND THE EARLY NEW ARMY PERIOD (1902-1910)

#### Introduction

American military historians sometimes call the years between the Spanish-American War and World War I the New Army period. In just less than two decades, a new, twentieth-century U.S. Army began to emerge. The army underwent several reorganizations, including major ones in 1901 and 1903. The service schools grew stronger as did the movement to create a professional officer corps. Twentieth-century technology produced the machine gun; the airplane; improved artillery; and new, motorized forms of transportation.

Fort Bliss, however, remained a small post on a distant frontier and the early years of the New Army period passed quietly there. Not until the Mexican Revolution would Fort Bliss assume its role as a great border cavalry post. The most important development at Fort Bliss during the early New Army period was a major repair program. Funds were approved to restore Fort Bliss buildings for the same general reasons that had made the post important in the 1890s—its strategic border location and its proximity to El Paso's railroads.

#### Fort Bliss 1902-1910

Fort Bliss's buildings fell into disrepair after the turn of the century. Lieutenant Colonel H.H. Adams, of the 18th Infantry Regiment commanded the post in 1902. Adams reported that year that only nine of the post's thirty-nine buildings were in "good" condition. He described the temporary pump house as "worthless" and characterized the pump house itself as being in "bad condition." The hospital steward's quarters needed "extensive repairs." Also, Adams reported that the other 27 buildings on post were "in need of repairs."

Colonel Frank West, assigned to the Inspector General's Department, visited Fort Bliss in 1902. In 1913, as commander of the 2nd Cavalry Regiment, West wrote a memorandum describing Fort Bliss that probably was based on his earlier observations. West found the post's buildings "very badly cracked through the brick work and in some instances through the sandstone trimmings. The buildings were considered to be in a very unsafe condition." At some time between 1902 and 1913, according to West's report, "Iron rods and clamps [were] put through the buildings to hold the walls together. These buildings are two and a half stories high, and in a high wind shake so as to be uncomfortable."

West was unrelievedly critical of the housing at Fort Bliss. "I live in a Captain's set," wrote West, "and [it] is the most uncomfortable building I have lived in, of the modern type of quarters." West's remarks cannot be discounted altogether as the sort of exaggerated complaints that, throughout recorded history, have typified soldiers' writings. West was a career officer who had entered West Point in 1868, and his criticisms were quite detailed:

*The ceilings of the rooms are too high and the doors of the lower rooms are nine feet high, making the doors [unwieldy] and they are badly warped. The houses are heated by*

#### 14 A SURVEY HISTORY OF FORT BLISS

*fireplaces and it is impossible to heat all the rooms when a cold wind is blowing. The buildings are very warm in summer. The narrow hall and bad arrangement of bedrooms of the Captain's quarters especially, do not allow of free passage of sufficient air.*

*To build a narrow high building with reentrant angles such as these quarters are in a very windy country is neither safe nor comfortable to the residents. When the wind blows there is considerable discomfort on account of these tall buildings shaking and the windows and blinds constantly rattling as well as a sense of the building being liable to collapse.*

West was not the only early twentieth-century critic of Fort Bliss buildings. In his 1903 report, the inspector general found the Fort Bliss hospital was one of several in the Department of Texas showing "defective construction due to inferior material or poor workmanship, or both." The commander of the Department of Texas agreed in the same year, "A new hospital at Fort Bliss is undoubtedly needed." In the summer of 1904, a new department commander, Brigadier General Jesse M. Lee, toured Fort Bliss and wrote a report generally critical of the post. Lee reported a new hospital was being built and a new post exchange and gymnasium had been finished. "This [gymnasium]," he said, "is one of the few attractions at the post." While conceding Fort Bliss had some positive features, Lee concluded, "Fort Bliss is one of the most unattractive posts in the department."

Fort Bliss was refurbished in 1905 and 1906. In 1905, Lee submitted a report that strongly contrasted with his earlier statements. "The material improvements as to repairs of buildings, constructing roads, fences, general improvements of grounds, etc.," Lee wrote, "has not been equalled elsewhere in the department." The department commander gave greatest credit for the "conspicuous progress . . . to relieve some of the many unattractive features and conditions at Fort Bliss" to Post Commander Major Ammon A. Augur. Lee's successor, Brigadier General William S. McCaskey, concurred in 1906 that the post had "shown considerable improvement within the past two years."

In spite of its poor condition, the same considerations that led to the 1890s development of Fort Bliss—its strategic location and its proximity to railroad transport—made it worthy of repair in 1905 and 1906. "This post is considered of much importance in connection with the control of the border," Brigadier General Albert L. Myer argued in 1909, "and should be taken care of." Brigadier General Frederick D. Grant, son of the famous Civil War general/U.S. president, and, in 1903, commander of the Department of Texas, pointed to the importance of the railroad communications:

*One of the first considerations which must enter into the maintenance of military stations along the Mexican frontier is the necessity for absolute command or control in time of war or other great public danger of any or all of the great international railroad lines which have so extensively grown in the past twenty years. For this reason El Paso must always be regarded as a strategic point, on account of being the most important railroad junction, next to Fort Worth and Houston, in [the] Southwestern United States.*

The border was quiet during the New Army period, but in 1904 Lee predicted Fort Bliss and other points in the region would become important during future border troubles:

*At the present time, the infantry garrisons on the border may be regarded as ample, but should any unforeseen trouble occur (such troubles usually come unexpectedly) cavalry and possibly artillery will be at once needed. . . Troops of all arms could be soon concentrated by rail at Fort Bliss, Camp Eagle Pass, Fort McIntosh and Brown, and probably cavalry from Fort Sam Houston sooner than Fort Clark.*

Lee's remarks were concerned with possible future events. When he inspected Fort Bliss in 1904, the post was much the same as when it had been founded, with quarters for 14 officers, barracks for enlisted men consisting of four buildings each housing 100 men, and stables for one cavalry troop. The garrison was a battalion of the 29th Infantry Regiment, recently arrived from the Philippines and its companies "reduced to mere skeletons." There were only 77 enlisted men in the command; 100 "raw recruits" arrived to fill out these skeleton companies on the day Lee inspected the post. While Lee thought Fort Bliss might become more important in the future, in 1904 he pronounced its four companies "ample in every respect."

The 29th Infantry's stay at Fort Bliss was brief. The regiment remained at Fort Bliss until it left for Fort Logan, Kentucky, in 1906.

### Conclusion

The early New Army period was the last lull in Fort Bliss history. In 1910, the Mexican Revolution began. Its events would focus national and international attention on Fort Bliss, and it would result in Fort Bliss becoming a great cavalry post. The early New Army years were Fort Bliss's last as a small infantry post.

The early New Army period was a quiet time at Fort Bliss. This period raises few historical questions. One issue, however, does deserve further consideration. Fort Bliss, the major horse cavalry post of the 1920s, arose from Fort Bliss, the small and tranquil infantry post of the 1890s and 1900s. For Fort Bliss to play a major role during the Mexican Revolution and the 1920s, it first had to survive until 1910. Therefore, the revitalization of Fort Bliss in 1905 and 1906 was a turning point for the post, confirming Fort Bliss's place in the army's future plans. The fort's strategic value has been documented. The other factors involved in the decision to refurbish Fort Bliss in the early New Army period remain to be identified.

### Essay on Sources for Chapter III

As for the Spanish-American War period, the Annual Reports of the War Department are fundamental primary sources for Fort Bliss's early twentieth-century history. This chapter draws from 1903, 58 Congress, 2 session, House Document 212, Report of the Inspector General, and House Document 2, Report of the Commander of the Department of Texas; 1904, 58 Congress, 3 session, House Document 2, Report of the Commander of the Department of Texas; 1905, 59 Congress, 1 session, House Document 2, Report of the Commander of the Department of Texas; 1906, 59 Congress, 2 session, House Document 2, Report of the Commander of the Department of Texas; and 1909, 61 Congress, 2 session, House Document 103, Report of the Commander of the Department of Texas. The report of Lt. Col. H.H. Adams cited in this chapter also was found in a government document: 57 Congress, 1 session, House Document 618, A Letter from the Secretary of War Transmitting Results of Preliminary Surveys and Examinations of Sites for Military Posts.



## 16 A SURVEY HISTORY OF FORT BLISS

Colonel Frank West's extensive criticisms were quoted from a third (May 18, 1913) endorsement to a letter from the chief quartermaster, Southern Department to the Acting Department Adjutant, May 13, 1913, Quartermaster File 439510, Buildings-Construction, Document File 1890-1914, Record Group 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, National Archives.

On the tenure of the 29th Infantry Regiment at Fort Bliss, the Post Returns were supplemented by consulting M.H. Thomlinson, *The Garrison of Fort Bliss 1849-1916* (El Paso, 1945). Although Thomlinson did draw primarily from the Post Returns, his entries sometimes include additional material.

## Chapter IV

### FORT BLISS AND THE MEXICAN REVOLUTION (1910-1920)

#### Introduction

The Mexican Revolution is one of the great events of Latin American history. In 1910, Mexico had been independent from Spain for nearly a century. Independence had not, however, been without problems. A landholding oligarchy, the Catholic church, and the military dominated the country. Arable land was scarce and was controlled by a small number of families and institutions.

The revolution was rooted in opposition to the Porfirio Diaz government. After gaining the presidency in 1876, Diaz had arranged his own re-elections for decades. In 1910, his opponents called for "Effective suffrage, no re-election."

Diaz was overthrown in 1911; the revolutionary leaders who struggled for power included Francisco I. Madero, Victoriano Huerta, Emiliano Zapata, Alvaro Obregon, Venustiano Carranza, and Francisco "Pancho" Villa. In the ensuing years of chaos, hundreds of towns were destroyed, and an estimated 250,000 people lost their lives.

Some date the end of the revolution to the drafting of the Mexican Constitution in 1917, others to Carranza's death in 1920. After a decade of turmoil and bloodshed, the revolution ended with a new constitution and the promise of democracy.

The Mexican Revolution led to Fort Bliss becoming a major horse cavalry post. Fighting in northern Mexico spilled across the Rio Grande. Border violations, violence, and arms smuggling made an increased American police presence along the border necessary. During the Mexican Revolution, Fort Bliss played a significant role in local, regional, and national history for the first time. Also, because of its strategic border location, the fort became important in the international confrontations that occurred during the revolution. The Punitive (Pershing) Expedition and the Zimmerman Telegram affair kept international attention focused on the border.

The Punitive Expedition (1916-1917) is the best-known episode of American involvement in the Mexican Revolution. The expedition represented a turning point in American military history. It was the first major test of the new American Army of the twentieth century. Airplanes were used for the first time in a field operation, and other new transport systems and logistical techniques were tested. American military historian Clarence C. Clendenen wrote, "It is no exaggeration to say that the Punitive Expedition of 1916 gives continuity between the American soldier of the Civil and Indian wars, and the American soldier of World War II, Korea, and Vietnam." The army demonstrated it could mobilize a small force and move it quickly. This accomplishment contrasted sharply with the comedy of errors that had characterized the mobilization for the Spanish-American War 18 years earlier. Clendenen also commented, "It is not too much to say that the Mexican Punitive Expedition of 1916 and 1917 was a training school for the greater war [World War I] which was soon to follow."

Political intrigue in World War I led to the Zimmerman Telegram episode. The war had begun in August, 1914, engaging Germany in a monumental struggle against Great Britain, France, and Russia. Germany was

## 18\ A SURVEY HISTORY OF FORT BLISS

concerned that the United States eventually would join her enemies, tipping the balance of power against Germany and her allies. German diplomats looked for a way to distract American attention from the European war and believed they had found it in Mexico.

In January, 1917, British Intelligence intercepted the Zimmerman Telegram, an encoded diplomatic telegram from German Foreign Secretary Artur Zimmerman to the German ambassador to Mexico. The Zimmerman Telegram proposed that Germany offer Mexico an alliance against the United States. Germany would offer "generous financial support, and an understanding on our part that Mexico is to reconquer the lost territory in Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona." The "lost territory" was the land Mexico had lost to the United States in the Mexican War (1846-1848). The British turned this diplomatic note over to the U.S. State Department, expecting it would raise a furor in the United States and move the Americans closer to intervening in Europe on Britain's side. Zimmerman himself admitted the telegram was genuine and not a British fraud as some believed.

President Woodrow Wilson gave the Zimmerman Telegram to the Associated Press and in March, 1917, the Zimmerman Telegram was published widely in American newspapers. It had much the effect on the American people the British had hoped—public opinion was inflamed against Germany. The Zimmerman Telegram, made public a matter of weeks after the Punitive Expedition had returned from Mexico, also justified American fears of a German-Mexican alliance.

The Zimmerman Telegram episode is central to the interplay of American, Mexican, and German relations on the eve of the United States' entry into World War I. The Zimmerman Telegram connects the Mexican Revolution to World War I, and it represents one reason for the United States' great interest in events in revolutionary Mexico.

Events associated with the Mexican Revolution drew American attention to the border. The Zimmerman Telegram focused that attention and connected Mexico with Germany in the minds of most Americans. This international background set the tone for Fort Bliss history during the Mexican Revolution.

### Fort Bliss 1910-1920

At the beginning of the Mexican Revolution in 1910, Fort Bliss was one link in a chain of American military posts near the border. These posts included forts McIntosh, Sam Houston, and Clark in the Department of Texas, and forts Apache and Huachuca in the Department of the Colorado.

This chain of forts was maintained for both economic and strategic reasons. In 1910, Brigadier General Earl D. Thomas, commander of the Department of the Colorado, reporting on Fort Huachuca, made statements that applied to the larger region:

*The strategic and political importance of a military post somewhere in southeastern Arizona is apparent. The mines being developed are numerous and important and are rapidly increasing in number, new projects of railway construction are rumored, and it is not only in a district where trouble may be looked for at home, but in the vicinity of an annoying frontier section. Twice during the period covered by this report [fiscal year 1910] the troops from Huachuca have been called upon to investigate reports concerning the organization of*

*armed revolutionary bands and to adopt precautions to enforce the neutrality agreements between our Government and Mexico.*

At about the time Thomas was writing his report, the commander of the Department of Texas recommended Fort Bliss be enlarged to accommodate a regiment of infantry. In June, 1910, Fort Bliss still was garrisoned by only four companies of the 23rd Infantry Regiment—a regimental band, a machine gun platoon, and a handful of casual troops. In April, 1911, Secretary of War Jacob M. Dickinson opposed expanding Fort Bliss to a regimental post but did concede the possibility of enlarging it in the future. His strategic thinking was that with the Indian wars over, "mobile troops" no longer were needed in the interior, and it would be best "to concentrate them in large garrisons at strategic points near our frontier." In June, 1912, one American officer predicted, "Owing to the prospect of continued troubles in Mexico and the strategic position of [Fort Bliss], it will probably have to be garrisoned for an indefinite period."

During the Mexican Revolution, Fort Bliss served a number of strategic and logistical functions. Fort Bliss's most important role was as a base camp for patrol operations. These patrol operations culminated in the Punitive Expedition. Contemporaneous with the Punitive Expedition, a ring of base camps was built around Fort Bliss to house newly mobilized National Guard troops. Also, troops operating from Fort Bliss attempted to control the flow of weapons into Mexico, and escorted Mexican troops back across the border. The post played an additional role as a reception center for Mexican refugees, the wounded, and prisoners. Finally, Fort Bliss served as a supply point for American troops in the Southwest throughout the decade. These roles are summarized below.

A typical and uneventful border patrol operation from Fort Bliss in the early years of the Mexican Revolution was led by Captain Hilden Olin. Olin and 45 men spent the last week of January, 1911, near Polvo, Texas, "for the purpose of assisting civil authorities in enforcing neutrality laws."

As the revolution progressed, however, the Taft Administration became dissatisfied with such small-scale patrol operations. The administration decided on a major mobilization on the Mexican border and on March 6, 1911, ordered the formation of the Maneuver Division at Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, Texas. Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson reported the Maneuver Division was created "for the purpose of maneuvers and to render the civil authorities any aid that might be required to secure the proper observance and enforcement of neutrality laws on the Mexican border." It is uncertain how the plans for this large-scale mobilization originated. Clendenen, who thoroughly studied both military and diplomatic affairs during this period, concluded, "It is quite likely that the plan originated within the General Staff [of the War Department]."

The Maneuver Division was the largest American military mobilization since the Spanish-American War. Major General William H. Carter was put in charge of the operation. By May 31, 1911, Carter's Maneuver Division had a total strength of 12,809, nearly half of the total American deployment along the border, which numbered almost 23,000 troops.

In spite of War Department claims to the contrary, most observers, including many in the army, assumed the Maneuver Division was being mobilized for a strike into Mexico. The commander of the Department of the Missouri was quoted as saying he was sure maneuvers were not the sole mission of the Maneuver Division. When Colonel James Parker of the 11th Cavalry Regiment arrived at Fort Sam Houston, he was told by a general staff officer, "Conditions were such that we would probably be on the other side of the Mexican border within a week." Parker's regiment immediately was brought up to almost war strength.

## 20\ A SURVEY HISTORY OF FORT BLISS

There was considerable activity at Fort Bliss during the period of the Maneuver Division mobilization. The 3rd Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, was brought in from Fort Meade, South Dakota, on February 2; the headquarters, two additional cavalry troops, and a machine gun platoon of the 4th Cavalry followed four days later; and, the 2nd Squadron, 4th Cavalry, arrived from Fort Snelling, Minnesota, on March 13. Of these units, the headquarters, the machine gun platoon, and three troops of the 4th Cavalry Regiment were stationed at Fort Bliss.

Colonel E.Z. Steever, commander of the 4th Cavalry, was placed in command of the El Paso District, which stretched from Fabens, Texas, to Columbus, New Mexico. (The army divided the border into four districts: Brownsville, Laredo, El Paso, and Columbus.) The 4th Cavalry thus patrolled an 80-mile front "assisted, in the city of El Paso as guards for bridges and forts, by parts of the Twenty-third Infantry from Fort Bliss." Steever later succeeded Brigadier General Joseph W. Duncan as department commander, and made Fort Bliss the department headquarters. Steever wrote on June 30, 1912, "Since Gen. Duncan's death [May 14] my time has been completely taken up with conditions along the Mexican border, especially in the vicinity of El Paso."

With the capture of Ciudad Juarez in May, 1911, by Madero's forces, and the resignation of President Diaz, Steever observed, "Insurreccional activities along the international border in the vicinity of El Paso gradually ceased." The 4th Cavalry Regiment "was distributed among more permanent stations" at Fort Bliss and elsewhere. The headquarters and one battalion of the 23rd Infantry left Fort Bliss for Fort Benjamin Harrison on January 22, 1912. Early in 1912, Steever said, "The only troops at the disposal of the district commander . . . were the First Squadron of the Fourth Cavalry at Fort Bliss."

This period of quiet did not last. In his Annual Report for 1912, Stimson contended it was still "necessary to patrol the frontier in aid of the neutrality laws," and Fort Bliss remained a center of activity. A battalion of the 18th Infantry Regiment was sent from the Whipple Barracks, Arizona, and arrived in El Paso on February 13, 1912.

The 2nd Cavalry Regiment returned from the Philippines and was sent to Fort Bliss that year, the first full regiment of cavalry assigned to the post. The 13th Cavalry Regiment was moved from Fort Riley, Kansas, to the El Paso area. Stimson reported these regiments "assisted in Texas in the suppression of Gen. [Bernardo] Reyes' attempt to instigate an insurrection against Madero's government . . . And after the [Pascual] Orozco forces had broken up or scattered, and were raiding the border, there was considerable active patrol duty performed by our troops to prevent raids upon American ranches in Texas and Arizona."

The deployment of the 2nd Cavalry Regiment from Fort Bliss in 1912 was typical of the way in which cavalry was used on the border during the revolution. According to the regimental historian of the 2nd Cavalry,

*When the Second Cavalry reached Fort Bliss, Texas, in 1912, the Mexican border trouble was at [its] height, causing a constant patrol of the area near the international line. The regiment remained at the post, except for the Second Squadron, which was sent southeast from Fort Bliss to protect an area often attacked by Mexican bandits. The troops were stationed as follows: Squadron Headquarters and Troop E at Sierra Blanca, Troop H at Fort Hancock, Troop G at Finlay, and Troop F at Presidio in the Big Bend of the Rio Grande River . . .*

*The work of the troops consisted of guarding property, patrolling the area for signs of bandits, and an occasional chase after a party of them who raided a ranch.*

Some American officers believed border garrisons like Fort Bliss should be strengthened further. In June, 1912, Steever suggested at least three cavalry regiments be stationed in the Department of Texas. In his 1913 report, Brigadier General Tasker H. Bliss, commander of the Southern Department (Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico), listed additional units being sent to Fort Bliss "due to conditions existing along the border in that vicinity," and recommended additional construction at Fort Bliss.

Border violence escalated when fighting resumed in Mexico, this time between the forces of General Carranza and General Huerta, who had deposed Madero. Bliss reported that both Carranza's Constitutionalist forces and Huerta's Federal troops were warned not to allow firing across the border "and they invariably replied that they would try to observe this requirement." But, Bliss was to complain, "Many shots did fall on the American side and in the American towns and among the American troops. These troops were engaged in keeping back crowds of curious citizen sightseers as well as guarding the border to prevent use of American territory by the contending parties."

The Punitive Expedition began after the forces of the ex-Carranzista General Villa struck Columbus, New Mexico, on March 9, 1916. The U.S. border was crossed, 17 Americans killed, and 7 wounded. According to a sergeant stationed at Douglas, Arizona, "[The Columbus Raid] meant much work for all of us stationed along the border." Wilson decided to send military forces into Mexico. On March 10, Bliss was directed to organize "an adequate military force under Brigadier General John J. Pershing to pursue the outlaws who had attacked Columbus." Pershing had arrived at Fort Bliss on April 27, 1914, and had assumed command of the post and all forces from Columbus to Sierra Blanca, Texas.

Pershing assembled the Punitive Expedition at two points, Columbus and Culberson's Ranch, New Mexico. The Columbus column included the 6th and 16th infantry regiments, which had arrived at Fort Bliss four days after the Columbus Raid. These troops were moved by rail from El Paso to join the Punitive Expedition. The other units of the expedition were two battalions of the 17th, and the 24th infantry regiments; three batteries of the 4th and the 6th field artilleries; the 5th, 6th, 7th, 10th, 11th, 12th, and 13th cavalry regiments; the 1st Aero Squadron; the 2nd engineers; two wagon companies; two ambulance companies; and a Signal Corps detachment.

When the Punitive Expedition entered Mexico on March 15, the 8th Cavalry Regiment remained behind at Fort Bliss. Army Chief of Staff Major General Hugh L. Scott said, "To have pursued at once with troops then on the border would have left the important border points, Douglas, Bisbee, Columbus, and El Paso, and intervening sections exposed to like raids."

Nevertheless, Fort Bliss played an important role during the months of the Punitive Expedition. The day after Pershing entered Mexico, the Fort Bliss post hospital was designated the base hospital for all troops of the Southern Department. Supplies for the Punitive Expedition were moved by rail from El Paso to Dublan, Mexico. In the Glenn Springs raid, made on May 5, 1916, a Mexican force crossed the border, killed three soldiers and a boy, and wounded two soldiers. American pursuit was made by troops A and B of the 8th Cavalry Regiment stationed at Fort Bliss. When National Guard units were called into service beginning in May, 1916, thousands of guard troops from 13 states and the District of Columbia were mobilized at Fort Bliss and at camps in its surrounding area.

## 22A SURVEY HISTORY OF FORT BLISS

The auxiliary camps built to accommodate the National Guard mobilization included Camp Stewart, Camp Cotton, and Camp Owen D. Beirme. Camp Stewart was on the Newman Road, about 3 miles from El Paso. The Camp Cotton site was on the Rio Grande near the Franklin Canal. Camp Beirme was located on the northeast edge of the main post.

Camp Stewart was a sizeable military installation. It housed 15,098 National Guard troops from Pennsylvania and 3,208 from North Carolina. In 1916, Corporal Oswald D. Moore, of the 1st Pennsylvania Cavalry Regiment (National Guard), wrote that Camp Stewart had "a water pipe line through the camp streets and shower baths, and it seems as though some improvements were constantly being added." When the Punitive Expedition returned from Mexico in January, 1917, the 5th, 7th, 11th, and 13th cavalry regiments encamped at Camp Stewart.

National Guard troops from Georgia, Massachusetts, and Michigan were stationed at Camp Cotton. The Michigan guardsmen numbered 4,363. Tennessee National Guard units and 2,395 Kentucky guardsmen mobilized at Camp Beirme.

The final American military operation associated with the Mexican Revolution occurred in 1919. The 5th Cavalry Regiment, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 82nd Field Artillery Battalion and other units crossed the Rio Grande and broke up a Villista force near the present Juarez Race Track. The 24th Infantry Regiment mobilized for this operation at Camp Beirme.

Preventing arms smuggling across the border was one of the most difficult tasks assigned to troops in the auxiliary camps and Fort Bliss. In 1912, Stimson remarked that after Congress had legislated the presidential authority to stop arms exportation, units at Fort Bliss "assisted in the enforcement of that legislation, which was primarily responsible for the unsuccessful end of the insurrection led by General [Pascual] Orozco in Chihuahua." Steever claimed, "The maintenance of this patrol against munition exports . . . has most materially contributed toward the success of the Mexican Federal troops." Steever also believed "experience has proved the greatest and most persistent efforts toward smuggling munitions of war have been made in the immediate vicinity of El Paso." He observed that when the Rio Grande was high, arms smuggling declined, but when the river dropped to its usual low level, smuggling increased. Steever concluded, "It is highly probable that a good-sized force will be needed in the district of El Paso for some time to come."

While the Carranzistas fought Huerta's forces in 1913, Bliss complained about the army's inability to stop the arms flow into Mexico. "Practically the whole border population on the American side is in sympathy with the [Carranzistas], this either through interest or because the predominating population is Mexican," wrote Bliss. "As a consequence every hardware store along the Mexican border is in constant receipt of large consignments of arms and ammunition, obviously in excess of any legitimate demand." Bliss reported that the largest arms capture in the Southern Department in 1913 was made in El Paso, "where a carload of ammunition was seized in the railway yard as the boxes were being covered with coal."

Earl D. Seaton, a soldier in the 16th Infantry Regiment, wrote about his service with an outpost patrol deployed along the border in 1917 to stop arms smugglers. Seaton said his patrol identified one car carrying empty suitcases, which he thought would have been used to pick up ammunition in the United States. A neighboring patrol "caught a spring wagon with 18 rifles." Seaton, who had only recently come to the border from Illinois, added with marvelous understatement, "I guess there was a civil war going on in Mexico."

American troops sometimes escorted Mexican troops back across the border. Colonel Charles M. O'Connor reported that troops in the Department of the Colorado were used in 1911 in "overhauling and

intercepting the passage across the line into Mexico of armed or organized parties." In June of that year, Captain John S. Fair and 24 men from the 4th Cavalry Regiment, then stationed at Fort Bliss and its vicinity, escorted 209 Mexican troops from El Paso to Calexico, California.

Mexican wounded, refugees, and prisoners from fighting near the border presented a serious problem for Fort Bliss. Mexican wounded were treated by both American civilian and military doctors. Bliss reported a serious refugee problem in 1913:

*The American border towns were filled with refugees from across the line, as practically the whole population of the Mexican towns would cross to American territory until the fight was over, and these refugees went to swell the number of curious sightseers whom our troops tried to keep out of the zone of danger.*

Mexican prisoners posed an even more difficult problem. In 1913, many soldiers from both Mexican armies were crossing the border and surrendering to American troops. On April 18, the War Department instructed that these troops be released a few at a time and be allowed "to filter back to their own people." Some of the Constitutionalist troops were released in this manner.

This War Department directive, however, was unworkable for Federal troops and fugitive women and children held at Naco and Nogales, Arizona. The Carranzistas controlled the Mexican border area west of Ciudad Juarez. Federal soldiers released in that area were in danger of being executed.

Therefore, the War Department approved the removal of all Federal prisoners at Naco to El Paso, where they could be repatriated at Ciudad Juarez. "Upon the arrival of the prisoners at El Paso," wrote Bliss, "and just as the special train bearing them was about to approach the bridge, telegraphic orders from the War Department were received directing the prisoners be stopped and retained in the United States."

There were 5,325 Mexicans held as prisoners at Fort Bliss. The Adjutant General's Office instructed Fort Bliss on the care of these prisoners in a telegram of January 15, 1914. The telegram read, "In a word, make these people comfortable, using to as great extent possible articles they have brought with them, drawing on our supplies only to supplement." A camp about 60 acres in size was prepared and an electric lighting system was installed. The camp was well guarded and surrounded by wire. Clendenen described the incarceration:

*Every refugee was vaccinated and given anti-typhoid inoculations. A school for the numerous children was established at once, and the men were put to work mixing adobe to build Mexican style huts. Native arts and industries were encouraged, and the greater part of the fugitives settled down happily to being guests of the United States. A few escaped, but it is alleged the vast majority could not have been forced to leave. In the late spring of 1914, when war was seriously threatened, the internees were transferred to Fort Wingate, New Mexico.*

Bliss reported in 1914 it had cost the army more than \$719,883 to feed and maintain these prisoners. Eventually, they were released and Bliss reported, "The enlisted men amongst them returned to their own country."



## 24\ A SURVEY HISTORY OF FORT BLISS

Two distinguished prisoners were Maximo Castillo and General Ynez Salazar. Both men were photographed under guard at Fort Bliss in 1914. Castillo was photographed with his guards, troopers of the 15th Cavalry Regiment. Salazar was accompanied in his captivity by his secretary.

Fort Bliss also served as an important supply point during the Mexican Revolution. Many of the American troops along the border in New Mexico and Texas at one time either were stationed at, or supplied from, Fort Bliss. The report of the Chief Commissary for the Department of Texas in 1911 shows troops from the El Paso area to Sanderson, Texas, were supplied from Fort Bliss. Undoubtedly responding to the increased demands made on the post since the beginning of the revolution, the Fort Bliss Depot quartermaster wanted to establish a new supply depot at the post in 1912. In the spring of 1914, the El Paso depot was maintaining a three-month clothing supply for about 5,000 soldiers.

After the 1916 National Guard mobilization, supplies for the auxiliary camps around Fort Bliss were managed through the main post. One quartermaster sergeant recalled all the supplies to Camp Stewart "were shipped from El Paso in full car load lots, spur tracks running along the back of our warehouse. Our business consisted of about 40 freight cars per month." The quartermaster soldiers "did not live in [Camp Stewart] but came out each morning and returned at night via a small delivery truck." Each auxiliary camp, probably from their opening in 1916, had its own camp quartermaster and several supply officers. A 1919 radiogram from the Southern Department Headquarters to the district commanders documents this arrangement.

The Mexican Revolution thrust Fort Bliss into national prominence. The Revolution brought major figures in American military history to the fort and spurred the fort's growth.

Pershing, George S. Patton, Jr., and James L. Collins were among the well-known military personages at Fort Bliss during the Revolution. Pershing's association with Fort Bliss, discussed above, is well known. Patton, the famed commander of the Third Army during World War II, was stationed at Fort Bliss as a second lieutenant with the 8th Cavalry Regiment. The 8th Cavalry was left behind at Fort Bliss during the Punitive Expedition. Patton made a personal appeal to Pershing and won an assignment to Pershing's staff for the expedition. First Lieutenant Collins, brother of J. Lawton "Lightning Joe" Collins of World War II fame, also served Pershing as an aide de camp in 1915. Colonel Payton March was stationed at Fort Bliss with the 8th Field Artillery in 1916, and went on to become army chief of staff in May, 1918. March served as chief of staff until June, 1921. Scott, army chief of staff from November, 1914, to September, 1917, came to the border during the spring of 1916.

While the Punitive Expedition was in Mexico, Scott and Major General Frederick Funston, then commander of the Southern Department, conducted unsuccessful negotiations with Mexican War Minister Obregon for the withdrawal of the Punitive Expedition. Lieutenant Colonel Selah R.H. "Tommy" Tompkins, of the 7th Cavalry Regiment, was a colorful figure who participated in the Punitive Expedition and was associated with Fort Bliss into the 1920s. One veteran remembered that during the Punitive Expedition, Tompkins "took after a bunch of Bandits for about 30 miles out in the Desert, and it took 3 direct orders from [the] Southern [Department] Before he turned Back, he sure wanted to capture the rest of the Bandits." Tompkins commanded the 7th Cavalry Regiment at the Juarez Race Track skirmish of 1919. His brother Frank Tompkins was a major in the 13th Cavalry Regiment and wrote a valuable primary account of the Punitive Expedition, *Chasing Villa*.

The number of men stationed at the post and in the region is one measure of the military importance of Fort Bliss and the Southwest during the Mexican Revolution. In June, 1910, there were only 336 officers

and men posted at Fort Bliss; by March, 1916, when the Punitive Expedition entered Mexico, there were 1,078. In June, 1910, there were fewer than 3,000 troops in the Department of Texas. Six years later its successor, the Southern Department, was made up of more than 42,000 troops. In June, 1916, almost 60 percent of the regular army's total strength was deployed along the border in the Southern Department.

With these troop increases, Fort Bliss grew in size. In 1910, Fort Bliss was a four-company post. The following year, the War Department opposed Fort Bliss's expansion to a regimental post. When a full regiment of cavalry, the 2nd, arrived in 1912, its troops were made "fairly well comfortable in semipermanent barracks recently completed." Fort Bliss then was made a permanent regimental post. By early 1915 and 1916, Senator Morris Sheppard (Democrat, Texas) was trying to have Fort Bliss expanded to a permanent infantry brigade post. The War Department blocked Sheppard's proposal.

In 1911, Duncan asserted, "The value of [Fort Bliss] as a strategical point has been fully demonstrated during the recent Mexican border trouble." Fort Bliss continued to prove that value over the duration of the Mexican Revolution. The fort served as a basis for border patrols, and made important contributions during the months of the Punitive Expedition. The main post and its auxiliary camps were the scene of the enormous National Guard mobilization of 1916. Troops from Fort Bliss tried to prevent arms smuggling and served as escorts for Mexican troops. The post became a reception center for Mexican refugees, wounded, and prisoners; and a supply point for troops in the region. These services were the genesis of Fort Bliss's future as a large and permanent cavalry installation.

### Conclusion

The Mexican Revolution period is the most critical one in Fort Bliss history. It marks the transition of Fort Bliss—the four-company infantry post—to Fort Bliss—the permanent horse cavalry post. The dramatic events of the Mexican Revolution—the Columbus Raid, The Punitive Expedition, the Glenn Springs raid, the National Guard mobilization, the Juarez Race Track skirmish, and other episodes—drew attention to the Southwest border and to the strategic importance of Fort Bliss.

This important period in the history of Fort Bliss has not been given the historical attention it deserves. Significant questions remain unanswered.

At the beginning of the chapter, the chain of garrisoned forts established along the border in 1910 was described. These posts were intended to defend the border and were of first-line strategic importance. There also were many small, temporary stations and patrol outposts between the major forts. Fort Bliss's role in supplying these outposts and its role as part of this chain of forts should be investigated.

Fort Bliss's emergence as a cavalry outpost began in the first years of the Mexican Revolution. The brief flurry of activity that accompanied the mobilization of the Maneuver Division in 1911 included the first assignment of a sizeable cavalry force to Fort Bliss. When the post garrison was reduced in early 1912, it was a cavalry unit, a squadron of the 4th Cavalry Regiment left at the post. Later that year, the first full regiment of cavalry, the 2nd, was brought to the fort and the 13th Cavalry Regiment also arrived in the El Paso area. Because this decision to assign these first cavalry units to Fort Bliss prestates the later decision to make Fort Bliss a permanent horse cavalry post, it should be further investigated.

The Punitive Expedition made the first field use of aircraft in American military history. The 1st Aero

Squadron, which accompanied the Punitive Expedition, came from San Antonio, Texas. It remains to be determined if the 1st Aero Squadron returned to San Antonio after the Punitive Expedition, or, as is more likely, went to Fort Bliss. Was this mission an impetus for the establishment of an airfield at Fort Bliss? The origins of the Fort Bliss Flying Field (later Biggs Field) should be determined.

The issue of the Mexican prisoners of war is an unusual and important one. Although the United States had not declared war on Mexico, more than 5,000 prisoners were held at Fort Bliss. Although these prisoners received, given the circumstances, very good care, their detention was unprecedented. The origins of the order to hold these prisoners are not known, nor is the location of the prison camp. Also, the experiences of the two distinguished prisoners, Maximo Castillo and Ynez Salazar, merit further research. How did these men arrive at Fort Bliss? How long did they remain at Fort Bliss? How does their captivity fit into the larger history of the Mexican Revolution?

The sources used in this study do not locate the American site of the Scott-Funston-Obregon negotiations. These talks represented a real effort to improve American-Mexican relations and to establish terms for the withdrawal of the Punitive Expedition. The American meeting site may have been in El Paso or at Fort Bliss and should be identified.

#### Essay on Sources for Chapter IV

Fort Bliss's history during the Mexican Revolution deserves, but has not received, a full and scholarly treatment. There are some secondary sources on more general and related topics that include Clarence C. Clendenen's two books, *The United States and Pancho Villa: A Study in Unconventional Diplomacy* (Ithaca, New York, 1961) and *Blood on the Border: The United States Army and the Mexican Irregulars* (London, 1969).

There is extensive literature on the Columbus Raid and subsequent Punitive Expedition. Four starting points are Haldeen Braddy, *Pershing's Expedition in Mexico* (El Paso, 1966); Herbert Molloy Mason, Jr., *The Great Pursuit* (New York, 1970); Frank Tompkins, *Chasing Villa: The Story Behind the Story of Pershing's Expedition* (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, 1934); and Frank Vandiver, *Black Jack: The Life and Times of John J. Pershing* (2 vols., College Station, Texas, and London, 1977). The reader then may wish to proceed to a host of other works that put these events into their larger context or concentrate on specific aspects of them. (Villa's motivation in the Columbus Raid has been the most debated topic in recent historiography.) These works include Charles Harris III and Louis R. Sadler, "Pancho Villa and the Columbus Raid: The Missing Documents," *New Mexico Historical Review*, 83 (February, 1978), 101-130; Arthur S. Link, *Wilson: Confusion and Crisis, 1915-1916* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1964) and *Woodrow Wilson and the Progressive Era 1910-1917* (New York, 1954), 136-144; Tom Mahoney, "The Columbus Raid," *Southwest Review*, 17 (Spring, 1932), 161-171; Francis J. Munch, "Villa's Columbus Raid: Practical Politics or German Design?," *New Mexico Historical Review*, 44 (1969), 189-214; James A. Sandos, "German Involvement in Northern Mexico, 1915-1916: A New Look at the Columbus Raid," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 50 (February, 1970), 70-88; Donald Smythe, *Guerilla Warrior: The Early Life of John J. Pershing* (New York, 1963); Michael L. Tate, "Pershing's Punitive Expedition: Pursuer of Bandits or Presidential Panacea?," *The Americas*, 32 (1975), 46-72; Robert S. Thomas and Inez V. Allen, *The Mexican Punitive Expedition under Brigadier General John J. Pershing, United States Army, 1916-1917* (Washington, D.C., 1954); and H.A. Toulmin, *With Pershing in Mexico* (Harrisburg, 1935).

Many of the Annual Reports of the War Department contain valuable primary sources on this critical

period: 1910, 61 Congress, 3 session, House Document 1002, Report of the Department of Texas and Report of the Department of the Colorado; 1911, 62 Congress, 2 session, House Document 116, Reports of the Secretary of War, the Adjutant General, the Department of Texas and the Department of Colorado; 1912, 62 Congress, 3 session, House Document 929, Reports of the Secretary of War and the Department of Texas; 1913, 63 Congress, 2 session, House Document 428, Reports of the Secretary of War and the Southern Department; 1914, 63 Congress, 3 session, House Document 1409, Reports of the Chief of Staff and the Southern Department; and 1916, 64 Congress, 2 session, House Document 1378, Reports of the Secretary of War, the Chief of Staff and the Adjutant General.

The Moses Thisted Papers are the most outstanding collection of their kind in the U.S. Military History Institute. Thisted was national historian of the Mexican Border Veterans, Incorporated. His papers contain considerable information on the border mobilization. There also is useful information in the William Carey Brown Papers, Box 2; Arthur L. Koch Papers; Leon B. Kromer Papers; Kelley B. Lemmon Papers, Box 2; and the Richard H. McMaster Papers. [Richard H. McMaster was the father of Richard K. McMaster, author of *Musket, Saber, and Missile: A History of Fort Bliss* (El Paso, 1962).] The World War I Survey includes the Thomas Hanley Papers and the Earl D. Seaton Papers.

Three unit histories at the Military History Institute were drawn upon in this chapter: Anon., *First Battle Group Sixteenth Infantry 1861-1961 Centennial* (1961); Anon., *History Outline 5th U.S. Cavalry* (Fuchinole, Japan, 1946); and Joseph I. Lambert, *One Hundred Years with the Second Cavalry* (Fort Riley, Kansas, 1939).

There is a wealth of primary information on Fort Bliss and the Mexican Revolution in the National Archives; almost none of it has been used by scholars. The valuable Quartermaster Files in Record Group 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, Document File 1800-1914, include 368352, Circulars, Office of the Quartermaster General; 368545, Camp Fort Bliss; 379581, Monthly Report on Mexican Prisoners; 439510, Enlargement of Post; 450015, Camp, Mexican Prisoners; and 500148, Mexican Prisoners (a misleading title; the file actually contains weekly reports concerning the border situation).

Other valuable items include Record Group 393, U.S. Continental Commands, Correspondence of the El Paso District 1918-1920, Box 20, File 323.7 Station Report, and Box 43, Memoranda; Record Group 120, World War I Organization Records, Miscellaneous Camps, El Paso District, Box 236; Record Group 94, Office of the Adjutant General, Central Files 1926-1939, Entry 331, Fort Bliss, Adjutant General's Office File of May 26, 1919; and Adjutant General's Office Document File 1917, Adjutant General's Office Files 1696577 and 2393926 (filed with File 146965).

**28\ A SURVEY HISTORY OF FORT BLISS**

## **Chapter V**

### **FORT BLISS AND WORLD WAR I (1917-1919)**

#### **Introduction**

World War I was a cataclysm in American and world history. The most destructive war to its day, World War I eradicated the last vestiges of nineteenth century Europe while it set in motion the political problems that would lead to the Second World War.

The Great War brought increased involvement by the United States in European and world affairs, which, in spite of attempts to resurrect isolationism during the 1920s and 1930s, would be permanent. The American war effort was remarkable for its scope. The American Expeditionary Force (AEF) was the largest force mobilized in the 142 years of American military history. By September, 1918, the AEF was more than five times the size of the largest Civil War armies. The contributions of Fort Bliss to the American war effort are important and the years 1917 to 1919 are important in the post's history.

The United States entered World War I in April, 1917, about three months after the Punitive Expedition returned from Mexico. The Great War came to Fort Bliss when the post was involved heavily with the ongoing Mexican Revolution. The Fort Bliss of 1917-1919 was shaped by two great events, the Mexican Revolution and World War I.

#### **Fort Bliss 1917-1919**

Fort Bliss contributed to the American war effort in a variety of ways, none of which, however, appear to be unique or unusual. By the time the United States entered World War I, the Mexican Revolution had made Fort Bliss a major military installation. Fort Bliss's first service to the war effort was as an enlistment post. During the war years, Fort Bliss was surrounded by a ring of auxiliary camps where support units were stationed and troops were mobilized for the European war. Several training schools also were established at Fort Bliss during the war. Many units passed through Fort Bliss on their way to the Western Front. After the war, the post served as a demobilization area. Also, Department Base Hospital No. 2, organized in 1916 during the Punitive Expedition, became a U.S. Base Hospital during the World War I years.

The Report of the Adjutant General for 1917 showed Fort Bliss was a depot post for enlistments during the first year after American entry into the war. In 1917, 1,262 recruits for enlistment were examined at Fort Bliss. Of these, 120 were rejected and the balance enlisted.

The encampments and auxiliary camps that ringed Fort Bliss during World War I had much in common with the camps established in the mobilization that accompanied the Mexican Revolution. At least two prewar camps, Camp Stewart and Camp Beirne, continued to be in service during World War I.

The auxiliary camps of the World War I period were camps Boyd, Courchesne, Fort Bliss, Newton D. Baker, Stewart, and Beirne. Camp Boyd included a temporary motor transport camp (located on Fort Bliss proper), Mechanical Repair Shop Unit No. 315, the Office of Motor Transport District "G," and the Motor

### 30\ A SURVEY HISTORY OF FORT BLISS

Transport General Depot. While many units moved through these auxiliary camps during the war period, Camp Courchesne primarily was the engineers' camp, Camp Stewart a Pennsylvania National Guard camp, and camps Fort Bliss and Beirne cavalry camps.

Camp Baker was used as a mobilization and Signal Corps camp. Among its many activities, the Signal Corps trained carrier pigeons during the spring and summer of 1918. An official return of 1918 boasted of "a number of excellent flights by the pigeons."

There were several other installations in the El Paso area separate from Fort Bliss. Among these were the Office of Finance Zone 12; General Supply Depot, Quartermaster Corps; General Supply Depot, Signal Corps; Headquarters, El Paso District, Mexican Border Patrol; Medical Supply Depot; and Zone Transportation Office (Subzone 11).

The auxiliary camps built around Fort Bliss during World War I were not intended to be more than temporary encampments. A memorandum from the El Paso District Headquarters to the commanding general of the Southern Department, June 7, 1919, explained that these camps were "of the most temporary nature in their construction, the materials were almost wholly obtained from salvaged camps after the withdrawal of the militia from the border." The memo recommended that after the World War I demobilization, the camps be salvaged and useable materials be put into new construction, but that none of the buildings be converted to permanent structures. The memo concluded, "No buildings now in use are worth saving."

Several training schools operated at Fort Bliss during the war years. Between June 30 and Armistice Day, 1918, 132 soldiers graduated as second lieutenants from the Fort Bliss Cavalry School. The 4th Officers' Training School had 285 students in May, 1918. (At least one soldier, Sergeant Arthur L. Koch, thought the officers' training program "a hard grind." Koch dropped out after three weeks, and remained a sergeant.) The Southern Department machine gun school opened in October, 1918, with a class of 50 officers and noncommissioned officers. The school continued in operation long after World War I.

Fort Bliss had become a sizable post during the Mexican Revolution, and, even in the early stages of America's involvement in World War I, could accommodate large units. Some units passed through Fort Bliss to participate in the earliest American combat in Europe. After the American declaration of war in April, 1917, part of the 7th Infantry Regiment went immediately from Fort Bliss to Europe. The 7th Infantry had not finished its training in Europe, when, in June, 1918, it relieved the 4th Marine Brigade in the bloody fighting in Belleau Wood. The following month, the 7th Infantry again saw heavy fighting, this time along the Marne River.

The 16th Infantry Regiment was stationed at Camp Baker and Fort Bliss until May, 1917. Sergeant Leslie J. Martin of Company L complained about his stay at Camp Baker, "The water was all warm, and the sand blowing." The 16th Infantry became part of the 1st Infantry Division. Three of its soldiers were the first AEF casualties in Europe. In the first Allied action involving only American troops, the 16th Infantry relieved the 28th Infantry Regiment at Cantigny. During the last week of the war, the 16th again distinguished itself with rapid marching in the Sedan sector.

Part of the 23rd Infantry Regiment was at Fort Bliss before going to Europe. Between June 1 and June 25, 1918, the 23rd suffered 855 casualties at Chateau Thierry and Belleau Wood. On July 18, the same regiment made a long and heroic advance at Soissons.

Many other units that had been stationed at Fort Bliss served on the Western Front, including one infantry regiment, one infantry brigade, three field artillery batteries, and one trench mortar battery. Other units went from Fort Bliss's auxiliary camps to Europe. Among these were three engineer units, three infantry regiments, one machine gun battalion, and three field artillery batteries.

In 1919, both Fort Bliss and Camp Beirne were designated demobilization centers. The entire 19th Infantry Regiment was demobilized at Fort Bliss. Parts of the 126th Field Artillery and 109th Ammunition Train demobilized at Camp Beirne. The returns of the Headquarters, Demobilization Camp, Camp Beirne, showed that from April 5 to May 31, 1919, 82 officers and 869 men were demobilized at that camp.

In April, 1918, Department Base Hospital No. 2 became a U.S. base hospital. It treated all post medical cases as well as medical, surgical, tuberculosis, and venereal disease cases from the Western Front. The hospital was in operation until September 1, 1918.

In all these areas, Fort Bliss made important contributions to the American war effort. Fort Bliss, however, was a typical American military installation of the World War I era. The contributions the post made in this period were integrated into the mobilization effort and were not unique.

For example, Fort Bliss's role as an enlistment depot post was duplicated by 12 other depot posts, 6 recruit depots, 4 military camps, and many other undesignated posts across the country that received recruits. Of the 12 other depot posts, all but three examined more recruits in 1917 than did Fort Bliss. All of the six recruit depots also examined more recruits than did Fort Bliss. Nor was Fort Bliss the largest enlistment post in its region. Fort Sam Houston examined four and a half times as many recruits as did Fort Bliss in 1917.

Of the 56 posts, camps, and stations in the Southern Department of Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, and Oklahoma, many, like Fort Bliss, were circled by auxiliary camps during World War I. There were 12 sites with auxiliary camps in Texas and three others—Camp Cody, New Mexico; Post Field, Oklahoma; and Fort Sill, Oklahoma—in the other Southern Department states.

Fort Bliss's role in combat training, supply, and troop demobilization also can be viewed from this regional perspective. Five other posts in the Southern Department had three or more schools in operation during World War I. Each large post conducted training and mobilized combat units for European service. According to the Adjutant General's Report for 1919, Fort Bliss was one of 36 demobilization posts across the country. The Report of the Secretary of War for 1919 listed 13 mobilization camps in Texas but did not list Fort Bliss.

There were nine military hospitals in the Southern Department besides Fort Bliss. Five were elsewhere in Texas. The others were The United States Army General Hospital, Fort Bayard, New Mexico; Camp Base Hospital, Fort Sill; and General Hospital No. 20, Whipple Barracks, Arizona.

On a preliminary basis, it can be said Fort Bliss made significant, but not unique, contributions to the American war effort in World War I. It was the Mexican Revolution, not the Great War, that led to the fort's future as a major horse cavalry installation.



### Conclusion

Much remains to be learned about the World War I period at Fort Bliss. Many questions raised in this period are important to understanding the post's subsequent growth.

The Fort Bliss Cavalry School was important to the subsequent development of the fort as a permanent cavalry installation. The relationship of the Cavalry School to the subsequent cavalry mobilization at Fort Bliss should be determined.

One year after the 1916 National Guard mobilization at Fort Bliss, World War I brought a second set of extensive training programs to the post. These training programs should be researched in the camp training entries of the National Archives Record Group 165, Records of the War Department General and Special Staffs. Did Fort Bliss become known for any particular type of training? How were its firing and artillery ranges established? Where were its field training areas located? The locations of camps Courchesne, Fort Bliss, and Baker also should be determined. This study has reached the preliminary conclusion that Fort Bliss's contributions to the war effort were not unique. Examination of Fort Bliss's World War I training programs, however, might alter this view.

During World War I, a new and vital arm of the military, the Army Air Service, came into being. Yet unanswered are questions regarding the type and location of Army Air Service training at Fort Bliss during World War I.

### Essay on Sources for Chapter V

A basic primary source on World War I mobilization, permanent and auxiliary camps and units is World War I Group, Historical Division Special Staff United States Army, *Order of Battle of the United States Land Forces in the World War (1917-1919) Zone of the Interior* (3 vols., Washington, D.C., 1949). This compilation is supplemented by the surviving Fort Bliss Post Returns, 1917-1920, which include some scattered records of units stationed in the auxiliary camps.

The units that passed through Fort Bliss on their way to Europe are identified in the Order of Battle; their service on the Western Front is detailed in Historical Division, Department of the Army, *United States Army in the World War 1917-1919 Military Operations of the American Expeditionary Force* (17 vols., Washington, D.C., 1948), and supplemented by a secondary source, Laurence Stallings, *The Doughboys: The Story of the AEF, 1917-1918* (New York, 1963).

The Annual Reports of the War Department that provided information used in this chapter include 1917, 64 Congress, 2 session, House Document 1378, Report of the Adjutant General; and, 1919, 66 Congress, 2 session, House Document 426, Report of the Secretary of War and of the Adjutant General.

The following sources at the Military History Institute were researched for this chapter: Papers of the First Division, World War I Survey; Arthur L. Koch Papers; Anon., *First Battle Group Sixteenth Infantry 1861-1961 Centennial* (n.p., 1961); Editors of the *Army Times*, *The Daring Regiments: Adventures of the AEF in World War I* (New York, 1967); Regimental Chaplain, Sixteenth Infantry, *The Story of the Sixteenth Infantry in France* (Frankfort, Germany, 1919).

The manuscripts in the National Archives consulted for this chapter include those found in Record Group 393, U.S. Continental Commands, Correspondence of the El Paso District 1918-1920, Box 43, Memoranda; Record Group 120, World War I Organization Records, Miscellaneous Camps, El Paso District, Box 236; Record Group 94, Office of the Adjutant General, Central Files 1926-1939, Entry 331, Fort Bliss, Adjutant General's Office File of June 28, 1918; Adjutant General's Office Document File 1917, Adjutant General's Office Document File 1917, Adjutant General's Office File 2418706, Detail of Officer; and Record Group 407, Office of the Adjutant General, Central Decimal Files, Project Files 1917-1925, Box 1158.

**34\ A SURVEY HISTORY OF FORT BLISS**

## Chapter VI

### CREATION OF A PERMANENT CAVALRY POST (1916-1920)

#### Introduction

Late in the second decade of the twentieth century, it was decided Fort Bliss would be a permanent horse cavalry post and the major military installation on the border. This chapter outlines the process that culminated in this momentous decision in Fort Bliss history.

Considering interwar military history, Fort Bliss's emergence as a great cavalry post is something of an anachronism. Fort Bliss became a major horse cavalry installation when the cavalry arm was in decline. Trenches, barbed wire, and defensive artillery had dominated World War I battlefields. This tactical deadlock was to be resolved with the airplane and the tank, the weapons of the future. Cavalry virtually had no opportunities in World War I. In 1919, the future of the cavalry was bleak.

In the 1920s, the cavalry service shrank. Cavalry ranks decreased by 7,816 officers and men over the course of the decade. The greatest single reduction occurred in 1922, when the 15th, 16th, and 17th cavalry regiments were deactivated. The size of the cavalry decreased by 53 percent in the 1920s, and lost numerical strength relative to the rest of the army.

Fort Bliss became a great horse cavalry post even while the military's cavalry arm was in decline. Several general causes contributed to Fort Bliss's cavalry role: the events of the Mexican Revolution; the surrounding terrain, well suited for horse cavalry operations but not for cross-country automotive travel; Fort Bliss's strategic border location; and, the post's proximity to El Paso's railroads. However, the decision to make Fort Bliss a major cavalry post is not fully explained by these broad considerations. The decision-making process itself played a part and also must be examined.

#### Fort Bliss 1916-1920

By 1921, the 1st Cavalry Division had been formed at Fort Bliss and appropriate facilities had been constructed on post. The decision to make these changes evolved over several years and involved a number of factors. This section first will examine this decision-making process, then identify the units and buildings associated with the original assignment of cavalry to Fort Bliss.

On August 19, 1916, while the Punitive Expedition was in Mexico, Funston outlined to the Adjutant General's Office his strategic plan for the border's future. Funston proposed maintaining four permanent posts in the Southern Department: forts Bliss, Huachuca, Sill, and Sam Houston. Two cavalry regiments and an artillery battalion would be stationed permanently at Fort Bliss. These units were to be deployed "as soon as border conditions will permit." Funston recommended the building program required by his proposed deployment "be commenced at once, although it seems probable that troops will be engaged in border work or perhaps be in Mexico for two or three years."

When the Punitive Expedition began to leave Mexico in January, 1917, Funston set about implementing his plan. On January 23, he advised the Adjutant General's Office that he intended, as soon as Pershing's

### 36 A SURVEY HISTORY OF FORT BLISS

regulars returned, to organize a provisional division "in [the] vicinity of El Paso," that is, at Fort Bliss and its auxiliary camps. Upon the arrival of these troops, Funston ordered the 1st Battalion, 4th Field Artillery; and the 5th and 7th cavalry regiments (two regiments that eventually would belong to the 1st Cavalry Division) to Camp Stewart. They joined the 8th Cavalry Regiment, which had remained at Fort Bliss.

On January 29, Funston explained to the Adjutant General's Office the reasons for his deployment. He said he wanted to locate "reserves consisting of all arms but especially of cavalry at both El Paso and San Antonio. These reserves will be available at the two main railroad centers to meet, without the delay experienced in the past, any sudden emergency demanding a rapid movement across [the] border. In addition this location of reserves facilitates supply and organization and training of larger commands."

Funston wanted a cavalry concentration at Fort Bliss, but held that it should contain fewer cavalry regiments than already were present at the post. After their service with Pershing, the 11th and 13th cavalry regiments followed the 5th and 7th to Camp Stewart. At the end of January, 1917, five cavalry regiments were in the vicinity of Fort Bliss: the 5th, 7th, 8th, 11th, and 13th. On January 31, Funston complained to the Adjutant General's Office that five regiments were too many. If the 11th and 13th remained near Fort Bliss, "instead of affording opportunity for instruction of [a] larger unit this will lead to congestion and therefore retard instruction in view of [the] limited ground available for training at El Paso." Further, if the 11th and 13th remained, they would need cantonments. Funston wrote that cantonment construction funds should "be placed where [they] will be permanently required."

The status of cavalry at Fort Bliss was determined for almost a generation into the future by a memorandum written by Colonel Robert L. Michie, a War Department general staff officer. Michie proposed to Scott a plan that eventually would lead to a cavalry division being mobilized at Fort Bliss, a division that would dominate Fort Bliss history until World War II. Michie submitted his proposal on January 30, 1917, one day before Funston argued against concentrating five regiments of cavalry at Fort Bliss.

Michie envisioned a six-regiment cavalry division stationed at Fort Bliss. The six regiments would be comprised of the five already near the post and the 17th Cavalry. Michie listed several considerations in support of his plan to Scott. The colonel argued a cavalry division "organized at Fort Bliss . . . will afford a most excellent opportunity to try out the new Cavalry Drill Regulations recently issued to [the] troops, as well as to engage in extended maneuvers on a scale which has not heretofore been practicable and for which a similar opportunity may not again present itself in the near future, and also save at this time the cost of rail transportation of two cavalry regiments [the 11th and the 13th] between Forts Bliss and Sam Houston." Michie favored the establishment of a large cavalry division at Fort Bliss rather than at Fort Sam Houston because "should cavalry be required for use at any point along [the] border from [and] including the Big Bend section westward to Yuma, it can be sent more economically and expeditiously from El Paso than from San Antonio."

Michie's views prevailed in Washington. On January 30, the same day Michie had submitted his proposal, Brigadier General Henry P. McCain of the Adjutant General's Office advised Funston the 11th and 13th cavalry regiments should be kept at Fort Bliss and "there organize a complete cavalry division." McCain recited Michie's reasoning for Funston: Fort Bliss offered the opportunity to test the new cavalry drill regulations and to practice extended maneuvers, and the army would save money by not moving the 11th and 13th cavalry regiments.

Two days later, February 1, Scott endorsed Michie's plan. Scott declared it "highly desirable to maintain at El Paso for the present a thoroughly organized and equipped mobile force as contemplated in the proposed

cavalry division of six regiments." Scott repeated Michie's arguments regarding cavalry regulations and maneuvers. He then listed his own reasons for favoring Fort Bliss over Fort Sam Houston. "Fort Bliss being immediately on the border," Scott wrote, "such a force will be much more in evidence there than at San Antonio, and it is believed will be a deterrent to disturbing factions in both Chihuahua and Sonora." The chief of staff had been at both posts "comparatively recently" and believed Fort Bliss's higher elevation and climate made it preferable to Fort Sam Houston. Scott concluded, "There is ample ground to be found in the vicinity of Fort Bliss for the requisite camp and maneuver grounds for the division. The necessary cantonment and shelter for animals can be constructed there at no greater expense than at Fort Sam Houston."

With Scott's endorsement, Michie's plan became the position of the War Department. Secretary of War Newton D. Baker issued a directive that the 11th and 13th cavalry regiments be kept at Fort Bliss and that a cavalry division consisting of the 5th, 7th, 8th, 11th, 13th, and 17th regiments be organized at the post. On February 2, McCain telegraphed this order to Funston.

Cost appears to have been the War Department's final consideration. The Office of the Quartermaster General had estimated it would cost \$44,332 to move the 11th and 13th cavalry regiments to Fort Sam Houston. "Should it be necessary to return these regiments to the El Paso section for duty," McCain wrote Funston, "the cost will be as much again. In this connection it is desired that expenditures incurred for the movement of troops be limited to meet urgent border contingencies . . ."

The organization of Fort Bliss's original cavalry units changed in these early years. The 15th Cavalry Division was an interim World War I organization and existed from December, 1917, until March, 1919. Its headquarters troop was stationed first at Camp Beirne and then at Camp Fort Bliss until the division's demobilization. The 5th, 7th, and 8th cavalry regiments were assigned to its 2nd Brigade. The 17th Cavalry, the sixth regiment included in Michie's plan, was brought to Fort Bliss in April, 1917, and assigned to the 3rd Brigade, 15th Cavalry Division. The 11th and 13th cavalry regiments never were associated with the 15th Division.

On September 21, 1921, the 1st Cavalry Division was activated formally as a regular army division at Fort Bliss. Its first commander was Major General Robert L. Howze. The division consisted of a Division Headquarters unit; a 1st Cavalry Brigade, composed of the 1st and 5th cavalry regiments; a 2nd Cavalry Brigade, made up of the 7th and 8th cavalry regiments; the 82nd Field Artillery Battalion (horse); the 8th Mounted Engineers; the 1st Medical Squadron; the 1st Signal Troop; and, the Division Trains. The 1st and 5th cavalry regiments were posted at Camp Marfa and Fort Clark, the other units at Fort Bliss.

The 1st Cavalry Division's association with Fort Bliss was the longest of any unit in Fort Bliss history. Although it underwent several organizational changes after 1921, the 1st Cavalry Division dominated Fort Bliss history until it turned in its horses and left for the Pacific Theater in the summer of 1943.

Construction of facilities for Fort Bliss's cavalry units was accomplished in 1919 and 1920. In 1918, the El Paso Chamber of Commerce suggested new cavalry cantonments be built for the five cavalry units stationed near Fort Bliss. The federal government subsequently leased the 728-acre Alhambra Heights tract from the city. Nine days after the War Department entered the lease agreement, peace came to Europe. The plan to build a six-regiment cavalry cantonment on the Alhambra Heights tract collapsed.

Howze, then commander of the El Paso District, defended this project as a "justifiable failure." Howze contended if construction at Alhambra Heights had been started, the Armistice would have prevented its

### 38 A SURVEY HISTORY OF FORT BLISS

completion. Later, when the 7th and 8th cavalry buildings and 8th Corps Area Depot warehouses had been constructed on the post, Howze wrote, these "great additions . . . would not, in my opinion, [have] ever been considered or put through without the actual and effective existence of the Chamber of Commerce lease."

The last months of 1918 passed and the problem of adequate cavalry quarters remained unresolved. On December 6, 1918, Post Commander Brigadier General James J. Hornbrook asked the Southern Department to defer a shipment of 67 horses to Fort Bliss because the post lacked sufficient stable room. Major J.C. Donald, head of the Maintenance and Repair Division of the Quartermaster Corps at Fort Bliss, explained in an April, 1919, memorandum that permanent quarters were needed at Fort Bliss for the 7th Cavalry Regiment, 82nd Field Artillery Battalion, and 8th Mounted Engineers. Donald called particular attention to the plight of the 8th Mounted Engineers, who were "on leased land, and it is proposed to move them immediately to the old camp previously occupied by the 34th Infantry; the Detachment at Camp [Beirne] is also being moved to the same location." Correspondence of the El Paso District commander showed the 7th Cavalry, 82nd Field Artillery, and 8th Engineers still were in temporary camps at Fort Bliss on December 20, 1919.

Construction of the 7th Cavalry Regiment's buildings began in the summer of 1919 with funds from the Mexican Border Project of the Quartermaster General's Corps. The Mexican Border Project funds came from the line item "Barracks and Quarters" under the "Quartermaster Funds" appropriation in the annual War Department budget. No hearings or separate appropriations were required to award these moneys. Bids were received and expenditures approved by the Construction Division of the Quartermaster Corps. As a formality, they also were approved by the Secretary of War. The 7th Cavalry buildings at Fort Bliss thus were funded out of a general appropriation.

The Mexican Border Project's programs were rushed through in the summer of 1919. On June 3, El Paso District Headquarters sent a radiogram to the commanding general at El Paso requesting, "Urgent construction work Mexican Border Project be expedited. Assist Constructing Quartermaster at all stations until June 30th with all available transportation needed."

Major F.G. Chamberlain was head and constructing quartermaster of the Mexican Border Project. From his headquarters at Camp Travis, Texas, Chamberlain directed Mexican Border Project construction at forts Bliss, McIntosh, Sam Houston, and Ringgold, Texas; camps Stanley, Marfa, and San Benito, Texas; and Nogales, Arizona.

The 7th Cavalry cantonment buildings were constructed following standardized blueprint plans drawn in the Office of the Quartermaster General. They were designed to accommodate 100 officers and 1,625 enlisted men. Two standard plans existed for "Northern or Southern climatic conditions." Although stables, wagon sheds, and gun sheds were allowed to vary in length, construction otherwise was standardized.

The buildings were constructed on tight funds. Each day, 40 to 60 men were hired to unload building materials shipped to the post for the 7th Cavalry buildings. Major L.D. Blauvelt, constructing quartermaster at Fort Bliss, wrote a memorandum on April 23, 1919, warning the cost of this labor could not be met with his project's funds. "It will require every cent allotted for the 7th Cavalry Cantonment to complete same," Blauvelt wrote, "and we cannot divert any of the fund for other purposes." Chamberlain assured him the next day, "We can allot funds to help you out."

Frame construction originally was proposed for the 7th Cavalry buildings. However, perhaps with the funds Chamberlain had offered, Blauvelt used brick. On December 13, 1919, Blauvelt reported to the El

Paso District commander, "Brick buildings, plastered inside, and with plaster board ceilings have been constructed within an appropriation intended to provide for temporary frame buildings without any lining of walls or ceilings." Blauvelt boasted of other completed construction that was not part of the original authorization: the construction of wagon sheds, two brick laundry buildings, a brick garage for officers' cars, a wheelwright shop, and concrete instead of gravel roads.

By November 28, the 7th Cavalry cantonment was constructed partially and the 82nd Field Artillery cantonment was nearing completion. Although the surviving completion reports are sketchy, it appears the final buildings of the 7th Cavalry cantonment were completed in February and March, 1920. On April 19, 1,575 men of the 7th Cavalry Regiment were being housed in 15 barracks buildings. Thirteen barracks housed 1,165 men belonging to the 8th Cavalry Regiment. Thirty buildings were constructed in the 7th Cavalry group; ten stand today. These buildings are numbered in the 400s.

Within six years of their construction, the 7th and 8th cavalry buildings were in disrepair. Photographs taken in 1926 show these cavalry buildings in need of repair. On May 4, 1926, the commander of Fort Bliss, Brigadier General Edwin B. Winans, wrote to the 8th Corps Area commander, "It is needless to stress the inadequacy and improper construction of the buildings of these [cavalry cantonment] areas and it seems urgent at this time that they be replaced within the next ten years."

The decision to make Fort Bliss a major cavalry installation also led to the construction of a new large warehouse complex (present buildings 1101-1124). The Mexican Revolution period put new logistical demands on Fort Bliss and the National Guard mobilization of 1916 overburdened the post's storage facilities. Funston complained in an August 22, 1916, telegram he no longer could rent "suitable storage" space in El Paso to supplement his inadequate storage areas on post. In January, 1919, six warehouses at Camp Cody were scrapped and the salvaged material sent to Fort Bliss so the six warehouses could be reconstructed there. On April 22, Donald wrote, "A great quantity of supplies are being received which should be stored under cover, and it is urgently recommended the funds previously requested be allotted at the earliest possible moment in order to erect the necessary warehouses for this purpose."

The increased demands for storage space generated by the decade of the Mexican Revolution were met in 1921 by the construction of a 24-building storage complex. A document in the El Paso District correspondence dated April 9, 1920, described the projected complex as 24 storehouses with "a complete set of spur tracks" in front of them. The storehouses all were to be one size—80 by 200 feet. Today, the complex stands much as it was planned originally with the exception of two commissary buildings. One was built somewhat larger than the storehouses, the other somewhat smaller.

### Conclusion

This chapter documented the decisions that led to Fort Bliss becoming a permanent cavalry installation. This study is the first to record the events involved in this decision.

On January 30, 1917, Colonel Robert L. Michie proposed a six-regiment cavalry division be mobilized at Fort Bliss. Michie's general plan was adopted and was to shape the history of the post for the next quarter century. However, not all details of Michie's proposal were accepted. The 1st Cavalry, as constituted in 1921, was not the unit Michie had envisioned. Important questions remain regarding the final composition of the division. Why were the 11th, 13th, and 17th cavalry regiments, included in Michie's 1917 plan, not



#### **40\ A SURVEY HISTORY OF FORT BLISS**

included in the 1st Cavalry Division of 1921? Why was the 1st Cavalry added to the 1st Cavalry Division? How did the interim 15th Cavalry Division organization (December, 1917-March, 1919) affect the organization of the 1st Cavalry Division?

For its day, the 8th Corps Area warehouse complex was a large and sophisticated undertaking. It remains to be determined what its larger role was in the logistics of the 8th Corps Area and if it served any new functions in the regional management of army logistics.

#### **Essay on Sources for Chapter VI**

The establishment of a permanent cavalry post was the most important single development at Fort Bliss between 1890 and World War II. This chapter was written almost entirely from previously unused manuscript sources in the National Archives.

Several entries in Record Group 92, Office of the Quartermaster General were researched: General Correspondence File 1922-1935, Box 193; Records of the Construction Quartermaster, Mexican Border Project 1918-1920, Box 1; History of the Construction Division of the Army 1917-1919, Box 1; Blueprints for Various Construction Projects, 1916-1919, Box 1; and Annual and Historical Reports of the Construction Division, 1917-1919, Box 1.

Two areas of Record Group 94, Office of the Adjutant General contain useful items: Central Files 1926-1939, Entry 331, Fort Bliss; and the Adjutant General's Office Document File 1917, which includes several files on the concentration of cavalry at Fort Bliss.

Information important to this chapter was located in three other record groups: Record Group 120, World War I Organization Records, Miscellaneous Camps, El Paso District, Box 236; Record Group 393, U.S. Continental Commands, Correspondence of the El Paso District 1918-1920, Box 43, Memoranda; and Record Group 407, Office of the Adjutant General, Central Decimal Files, Project Files 1917-1925, Box 1159.

The best primary sources on the size of the regular army and cavalry in the 1920s are the Annual Reports of the War Department, Reports of the Secretary of War and Adjutant General (Table A), for the years 1920-1929. A distinction must be made between the authorized strength of the army—the maximum strength Congress would permit—and the army's actual strength—the number of troops actually in service.

## Chapter VII

### FORT BLISS IN THE 1920s

#### Introduction

In the early 1920s, Fort Bliss emerged from the Mexican Revolution as a major cavalry installation. Its strategic mission was to safeguard the Southwest border.

World War I left most Americans war weary and resistant toward further involvement in European affairs. The Republican administrations of the 1920s pursued an isolationist foreign policy and reduced the army to peacetime strength. The greatest reduction came in 1922 as President Warren G. Harding cut army manpower from about 227,800 to 146,500. The regular army's troop strength would not exceed a quarter million troops again until 1940. The War Department spent 48.8 percent of federal outlays in 1919; by 1929, its share had fallen to 13.6 percent. Nevertheless, Fort Bliss grew during this period.

#### Fort Bliss 1920-1929

Fort Bliss remained important for many of the same reasons that had contributed to the post's original development in the 1890s. Its strategic border location, proximity to a railroad center, and potential for training and expansion continued to make it a valuable site.

Newton D. Baker, who had been secretary of war during World War I, reminded the chairman of the Senate Committee on Military Affairs on December 26, 1919, of the strategic location of Fort Bliss. "Due to conditions existing on the Mexican border," Baker wrote, "it is not deemed advisable to reduce the garrison now maintained at Fort Bliss." Three months later, Baker referred to Fort Bliss as "indispensable for the proper and reasonable safeguarding of the interests of this Government on that sector of the Mexican border." At the same time, the House Committee on Military Affairs argued it was necessary to keep Fort Bliss garrisoned, "under the present disturbed conditions on the border." On January 1, 1925, Howze, commander of the 8th Corps Area, including Fort Bliss, also argued Fort Bliss's strategic location made it worthy of further expansion. Howze told a congressional committee:

*Fort Bliss is, and will continue to be, the most important strategical point along the United States-Mexican border, as long as the international boundary remains where it is. The "Paso del Norte" is the natural route from Mexico into the United States and vice versa . . . It must be protected; hence the present and continued necessity for a military post of importance in the vicinity of El Paso.*

A second long-time Fort Bliss selling point was its proximity to a railroad hub. Howze testified, "Six railroads—four American and two Mexican—converge in El Paso. If this place is left unprotected, raids on the American railroads would seriously interfere with the transcontinental railway traffic of the country."

The development of the airplane raised the possibility that air communication might become as important as railroad communication. Commenting on the private landing field used by the 12th Observation Squadron

#### 42\ A SURVEY HISTORY OF FORT BLISS

stationed at Fort Bliss, Howze said, "[I]t is on one of the best coast-to-coast air routes, particularly so in wintertime. Its importance will continue to increase with the development of flying."

In Howze's assessment of Fort Bliss's importance, strategic location, railroad communications, and air communications were interrelated. Howze testified:

*From the tactical point of view the landing field is of special importance. By holding in readiness a considerable force at Fort Bliss and by constant airplane reconnaissance of the border, any concentration or hostile movement on the other side can be detected in sufficient time to send troops in sufficient force by rail to a threatened point, thus giving the best practical protection to American settlements along the border.*

Fort Bliss was a suitable area for training field artillery and cavalry and had the potential for future expansion. While these attributes were not unique to Fort Bliss, they did distinguish the post from others in the more urbanized North and East. In 1925, Howze emphasized the need for artillery and cavalry training grounds. He testified the Fort Bliss area was suitable for such training.

Strategic location, railroad and air communications, room for training and expansion combined to help explain Fort Bliss's growth during a decade of isolationism and austerity. In the context of national military and fiscal policies, the expansion of Fort Bliss in the 1920s was remarkable.

In 1919, the House Committee on Military Affairs reported on overcrowding at Fort Bliss and congressional approval was sought to buy land to expand the post. Of the approximately 1,200 acres originally purchased by citizens and donated to the government to found the post, fewer than 200 acres were available for drill and recreational use. The rest of the reservation was occupied by barracks, quarters, and stables for the 7th and 8th cavalry regiments, the 82nd Field Artillery Battalion, the 8th Mounted Engineers, a battalion of the Signal Corps, Motor Transport Corps units and their repair shops, storage warehouses, a wireless station, water works, an incinerator, and a military cemetery. The garrison was manned by about 8,000 soldiers, "of which nearly all [were] mounted." There were no drill or maneuvering grounds "for practically 7,000 mounted troops," nor any landing field for the Army Air Service, which then had about 40 airplanes at Fort Bliss. A proposal was made to purchase 2,000 acres adjoining the east side of Fort Bliss. It failed, a victim of the prevailing policies of isolationism and austerity.

In spite of this setback, the efforts to expand Fort Bliss continued. In 1925, Secretary of War John W. Weeks said the expansion of Fort Bliss "has been more or less constantly before the War Department since 1919. There is a real need for the additional lands." Weeks went on to explain Fort Bliss had not been enlarged in the early 1920s "because of the necessity for economy and retrenchment and the resulting displacement from the War Department budget [by] items considered more urgently necessary."

In 1925, House Bill 8267 proposed the purchase of 3,613 additional acres for Fort Bliss. The House Committee on Military Affairs amended the bill to delete the acreage and in its place provided that a sum "not to exceed" \$366,000 could be spent for land. The bill then moved through the Senate Committee on Military Affairs and the Senate, and was signed by President Calvin Coolidge. In 1926, Fort Bliss expanded by about 1,059 acres. Fort Bliss's 1920s expansion included Biggs Field, Castner Range, and William Beaumont Hospital.

In November, 1919, Howze had stated additional land for the Army Air Service was "indispensable." A viable air arm at Fort Bliss was compatible with the decision to concentrate cavalry at the post. As late as 1936, a high-ranking War Department official remarked, "It is considered very desirable to have air corps available for training with cavalry. In time of war these two agencies are of major importance when properly handled, in cooperation with each other, on reconnaissance missions covering deep zones with wide fronts."

On January 5, 1925, Biggs Field was named after James Barteau Biggs, an El Paso Army Air Service officer who had been killed in World War I. The following year, the field was moved to an expanded site west of the present one.

Castner Range, about 3,520 acres in size, was added to Fort Bliss in 1926. The range was named after Brigadier General Joseph C. Castner, post commander 1925-1926. Castner retired from a distinguished career in 1933.

Beaumont Hospital has its origins in the lobbying efforts of the surgeon general to Brigadier General R.C. Marshall, Jr., the chief of the Construction Division of the Quartermaster Corps. On January 22, 1920, Marshall wrote to the director of operations in the Office of the Chief of Staff about the surgeon general's efforts. The surgeon general considered a 400-bed hospital at Fort Bliss "necessary to fulfill the general needs of the Mexican border." Marshall added, "The present facilities at Fort Bliss are entirely inadequate, and are unsuited for hospital purposes. The necessity for this project has long been apparent and several efforts have been made, without success, to get authority to construct this hospital." Major General Henry Jervey, the director of operations, replied six days later that he recommended approval. "The need for a hospital at Fort Bliss is imperative," Jervey agreed. However, he warned, "The hospital should be built from existing funds . . . as the prospect of securing a further appropriation from Congress is very poor."

At least two sites were considered for the Beaumont Hospital complex. The first site was rejected because it was bisected by Dyer Street and was too close to the Remount Station. A site further west was chosen. Colonel W.E. Cooper, of the Medical Corps, praised the site choice, "This new site is on higher ground, lends itself better to hospital purposes, eliminates the . . . two objectionable features [of the first site], and is also on the Government Reservation."

General Orders No. 40 of the War Department, June 26, 1920, stipulated the new hospital be named after Major William Beaumont, one of the most famous surgeons of the Old Army. Beaumont Hospital opened on July 1, 1921, and was completed in 1922. It originally consisted of 41 buildings and 403 beds, with an emergency reserve of 100 additional beds.

In the 1920s, Fort Bliss expanded, overcoming the fiscal restraints of the decade. It did so because of its strategic location, its access to railroad and air communications, and its available area for training cavalry and field artillery.

### Conclusion

This chapter does little more than outline Fort Bliss's expansion during the 1920s. Fort Bliss's remarkable growth during the interwar years deserves much further study.

The expansion of the post in the interwar period is significant because it reflects Fort Bliss's perceived importance and anticipates the role the post would play in World War II. The reasons for the post's 1920s

#### 44\ A SURVEY HISTORY OF FORT BLISS

expansion should be established in greater detail. The amount of field artillery training carried out in the 1920s also should be determined.

The history of Biggs Field has been related closely to that of Fort Bliss for two generations, yet virtually nothing has been published on the field's early history. Its several locations should be identified definitively. Beyond the general compatibility of air and cavalry, why was it deemed important to expand and develop this airfield in the 1920s?

The large Beaumont Hospital complex also deserves attention. Why was the hospital built at Fort Bliss and not elsewhere? What significant contributions did it make to medical history?

#### Essay on Sources for Chapter VII

The government documents used to prepare this chapter include 66 Congress, 2 session, Senate Report 506, Purchase of Land Adjoining Fort Bliss, Texas; 68 Congress, 2 session, Senate Report 1055, Purchase of Land Adjoining Fort Bliss, Texas, and the companion House Report 1204; *Congressional Record*, 66 Congress, 2 session, vol. 59, part 9, and vol. 66, part 6; and Engineer Directorate, *The Master Plan of Fort Bliss: Analysis of Existing Facilities Report 1968 Book 2 Building Information Schedule DA Form 2368-R* (Fort Bliss, 1968).

Two secondary sources were consulted: Rosalie Ivey, "A History of Fort Bliss," (unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Texas, 1942) and Richard K. McMaster, *Musket, Saber and Missile A History of Fort Bliss* (El Paso, 1962).

Several National Archives record groups were researched for this chapter. There are items on Beaumont Hospital and other 1920s expansion in Record Group 94, Office of the Adjutant General, Central Files 1926-1939, Entry 331, Fort Bliss. Other archival sources include Record Group 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, General Correspondence File 1922-1935, Box 193; Record Group 98, Records of the U.S. Army Commands (Army Posts), T912, Brief Histories of the U.S. Army Commands (Army Posts) and Descriptions of Their Records, Fort Bliss, Texas; Record Group 393, U.S. Continental Commands, Correspondence of the El Paso District 1918-1920, Box 43, Memoranda; and Record Group 407, Office of the Adjutant General, Central Decimal Files, Project Files 1917-1925, Box 1159.

Two Military History Institute manuscript collections contain interesting items on Fort Bliss in the 1920s: the Mrs. Gladys Dorcy Papers and Leon B. Kromer Papers, Box 2. Two unit histories also were consulted: Anon., *History Outline 5th U.S. Cavalry* (Fuchinole, Japan, 1946) and Lt. Col. S.A. Merritt, 8th Cavalry typescript collection (cataloged with unit histories).

Two other useful unit histories are B.C. Wright, *The 1st Cavalry Division in World War II* (Tokyo, 1947); and Melbourne C. Chandler, *Of Garry Owen in Glory: The History of the Seventh United States Cavalry Regiment* (Annandale, Virginia, 1960).

## **Chapter VIII**

### **FORT BLISS IN THE 1930s**

#### **Introduction**

As World War I faded into memory, the strength of the U.S. military continued to decline. The national priorities that had shaped military spending in the 1920s persisted into the 1930s. With the Great Stock Market Crash of 1929, these trends were joined by the Great Depression, the central theme in American life in the 1930s. This combination resulted in an austere decade for the military.

With Franklin D. Roosevelt's election in 1932 and the establishment of the New Deal in the Hundred Days of 1933, federal spending was increased in order to combat the depression. Conservative spending policies, championed by the Republican administrations of the 1920s, were reversed.

New Deal spending gave first priority to putting Americans back to work and restoring the national economy. Even as tensions increased in Europe and the Far East, American leaders hoped to continue 1920s isolationism and concentrate the nation's resources on ending the depression. In 1934, one year after Hitler's election as chancellor of Germany, New Deal priorities left only 6 percent of total federal outlays for the War Department.

Despite the onset of the depression, an effort was made to expand Fort Bliss in 1930. The debate over Fort Bliss expansion reveals much about Fort Bliss's status during the early years of the depression and shows Fort Bliss, for remarkably persistent reasons, still was perceived to be an important post.

#### **Fort Bliss 1930-1939**

Several important developments occurred at Fort Bliss during the 1930s. In 1930, Congress passed a bill allocating funds to increase Fort Bliss lands. Indicative of Fort Bliss's growth during the decade, substantial housing construction also was undertaken at the post. Finally, Fort Bliss's 1st Cavalry Division was used to test the feasibility of the three-regiment, or, triangular division, later used by the army in World War II.

In 1925, Congress had appropriated \$366,000 for Fort Bliss expansion. Only \$91,000 of this sum had been spent. In 1930, HR 2030 mandated the unspent balance, \$275,000, plus an additional \$6,305.70 (a total of \$281,305.70) be spent on additional land for Fort Bliss.

The history of House Resolution 2030 sheds light on Fort Bliss's standing in the depression's first year. Close examination of the sources shows that had the \$275,000 balance not been available, Fort Bliss would not have been expanded in 1930. J. Clawson Roop, the director of the Bureau of the Budget, at first opposed the appropriation, but later agreed to it. Roop's final decision won the War Department's support for the bill. Without War Department support, the bill probably would not have been considered. An amended version of the bill was introduced in the House and passed after further changes. The bill survived the Senate, and was signed by President Herbert Hoover.

## 46 A SURVEY HISTORY OF FORT BLISS

The House debate over HR 2030 raised arguments about Fort Bliss's importance in national and regional military planning. Brigadier General George V.H. Moseley had addressed the House Military Affairs Committee on the value of Fort Bliss before the bill reached the floor. Moseley's testimony succinctly summarized themes heard throughout New Fort Bliss's history. "[Fort Bliss] is important because of the Mexican situation and the border situation," Moseley said in 1930. "It is a most important railroad center."

The congressional debate revived old animosities toward Mexico. Congressman Harry M. Wurzbach (Republican, Texas) reminded the House of the Columbus Raid 14 years earlier. Only the year before, 1929, troops from the 1st Cavalry Division had been deployed from El Paso to Douglas, Arizona, to protect the border during the Jose Escobar Revolution. Congressman Thomas L. Blanton (Democrat, Texas) claimed, "A large cavalry force at Fort Bliss . . . [is] . . . the only thing that puts respect into the hearts of revolutionary Mexicans and Mexican outlaws."

Fort Bliss now was the nation's largest cavalry post. Much of the debate over investment in Fort Bliss had to do with the importance of cavalry to the army. The bill's opponents argued the day of the horse cavalry had long passed, cavalry units quickly were being mechanized, motorized transportation and airplanes improved upon the cavalry's capacity for rapid movement and reconnaissance, and, by implication, the expansion of the cavalry post at Fort Bliss was unnecessary.

Proponents of HR 2030 disagreed. J. Matthew Wainwright (Republican, New York), a member of the House Military Affairs Committee, reporting on his committee's conclusions, said, "So far as the defense of the border was concerned, the time has by no means arrived when we could dispense with cavalry. The number of cavalry now available on the border is little enough in view of the tremendous lines of that border that they have to cover." Moseley testified, "In that section of the country it would be utterly impossible and foolish to abandon the cavalry because there are times and places where the motors cannot go and where you would have to have cavalry." Moseley recalled one such instance, "We had some maneuvers down there and the motors did well, but, unfortunately, one of these Texas rains came up and where it had been perfectly dry before there stood a lake for a number of days and we were stuck in the mud." Moseley also pointed out that cavalry took a direct, 150-mile route from El Paso to Columbus; drifting sands forced motorized transport to travel twice that distance. Similarly, Wurzbach derided two of his colleagues from New York for arguing cavalry could be replaced by motorized transport in the borderlands. "I would like to have these two gentlemen visit us in El Paso," Wurzbach contested, "and see the border terrain for themselves."

The resolution passed, ensuring Fort Bliss would continue as the last military installation with a strategic mission as a horse cavalry post. While Fort Riley, home of the 2nd Cavalry Division had, as of July, 1939, an active strength of only about 200 less than Fort Bliss, it did not share Fort Bliss's strategic mission. The presence of cavalry at Fort Riley was a matter of tradition. Fort Riley had figured prominently in the Indian wars. In 1892, an instructional school for artillery and cavalry drill and practice had been established there and since had been succeeded by the Mounted School. Fort Bliss's cavalry, in contrast, served the strategic mission of safeguarding the border.

Fort Bliss grew dramatically during the 1930s. Howard R. Gilley, a bugler with the 7th Cavalry Regiment during the Mexican Revolution, was surprised at how much the post had grown in the interwar period. In 1938, he revisited the post and wrote to another veteran, "I was in El Paso last February and went out to Fort Bliss, but you would not know the old Fort, [there is a] big airport now, new barracks and all to [go] with it."

One striking example of Fort Bliss's 1930s growth was the extensive construction of quarters for noncommissioned officers and their families. This building program exemplified the remarkable growth of the post during the depression and its relationship to the national history of the New Deal years.

By 1924, Fort Bliss's growth had created a housing shortage for married noncommissioned officers (NCOs). Post Commander Howze and Quartermaster W.C. Gardenhire argued the case for new NCO family quarters. They pointed out there were only seven permanent NCO buildings on post, and 60 NCOs "entitled to quarters [are] now living in temporary frame shacks." As a stopgap solution, 15 frame buildings had been salvaged from Columbus and used as temporary quarters. Forty-five old barracks, hospital wards, and storehouses also had been converted into temporary housing. One proposed remedy was to build permanent NCO family quarters, following standardized Quartermaster Plan 339.

By 1926, the need for expansion at Fort Bliss had become urgent enough that a board of officers was convened to study the problem and make a long-range plan for the post's future growth. Lieutenant Colonel J.E. Gaujot was made president of the board. The Gaujot board met from May 11 to May 20, 1926.

The Gaujot board made new NCO family quarters a high priority in its long-range plan. If no quarters were available, NCOs were entitled to receive housing allowances. The Gaujot board contended housing allowances were costing \$50,000 annually and permanent NCO quarters would "terminate this continuous expense." The board recommended two sites for the new NCO family quarters: One now is occupied by buildings 1400-1413, 1442-1454, 1457-1479, and 1481-1488, north of the main parade ground; the other is the site of buildings 317-357, near the old 7th Cavalry cantonment area. (There is a third site of NCO family quarters, buildings 2100-2104 on Hayes Street, just east of Dyer Street.)

The 1928 Fort Bliss Inspection Report gave further impetus to the construction of new NCO family housing. The report found neither the post's officer nor NCO quarters were "adequate, either as to class or condition of structures."

The same report noted that earlier in 1928 Congress had authorized funds for 75 NCO quarters at Fort Bliss. In the spring of 1929, bids were taken for 50 sets of NCO quarters. The low bid received was \$258,475.

The NCO buildings were to follow standardized Quartermaster Plan 339. This plan had been prepared in April, 1914, and revised in February, 1928. It called for buildings measuring 31'10" x 33'10" x 10'. Some variation from the plan was permitted. For example, Plan 339 allowed a "service and sleeping area [added] to rear of building"; all the Fort Bliss NCO quarters have one of two porch variations. The buildings were of brick construction and had four column fronts. The original plans called for asbestos shingle roofs; all the buildings now have tile roofs.

The first group of NCO family quarters was completed in the spring of 1930. The Annual Inspection Report on Buildings and Utilities at Fort Bliss of April 30, 1930, states the buildings were "new" on that date. The 50 buildings referred to in this report are the present buildings 317-343, 1442-1454, 1481-1485, and 2100-2104. Twenty additional quarters were completed later in 1930 (present buildings 1457-1476). Quarters were built at each of the three sites described above: north of the parade ground, near the 7th Cavalry cantonment, and on Hayes Street.

The NCO quarters completed in 1930 represent only the first phase of 1930s housing construction at the base. Congressman W. Frank James (Republican, Michigan) visited the post in October, 1931, and



#### 48\ A SURVEY HISTORY OF FORT BLISS

concluded NCO housing still was needed urgently. James wanted the War Department to shift \$25,000 that had been appropriated for the construction of a veterinary hospital to construction of three NCO quarters. Post Commander Major General E.E. Booth agreed with James, and the War Department accepted their proposal. The accelerated mechanization of the 1st Cavalry Division between 1927 and 1931 had made a new veterinary hospital less pressing. Brigadier General L.H. Bash, acting quartermaster general, told the adjutant general in November, 1931:

*This office recognizes the necessity for the construction of additional noncommissioned officers' quarters. Nineteen sets have been considered in future programs. Owing to the urgency of construction at other stations, it is very probable that it may be necessary to postpone the authorization of these quarters [for Fort Bliss] until the fiscal year 1934 bill or future fiscal years.*

In May, 1931, it was estimated NCO quarters would cost \$5,300 per building. The Office of the Quartermaster General, in September, 1932, informed the 8th Corps Area commander that \$45,000 or less would be available for NCO housing at Fort Bliss. The Relief Bill appropriated \$50,000 for seven NCO quarters; the Economy Bill reduced this by 10 percent to \$45,000. Utility, overhead, and inspection costs would reduce the amount of money available for construction even further. With these funds a second group of seven NCO quarters, buildings 1400-1406, were built north of the parade ground. These buildings were completed in 1933.

In June, 1933, Assistant Quartermaster Bash envisioned using funds from the New Deal's National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA) for a third phase of NCO housing construction at Fort Bliss. In a June 10, 1933, letter to the constructing quartermaster at Fort Bliss, Bash advised that under NIRA legislation then before Congress, a "large appropriation for army construction projects was possible." Bash wrote again on June 29, suggesting \$25,000 in NIRA funds be spent for three NCO quarters and \$58,750 for eight others (\$83,750 in all). Bash later proposed the set of eight quarters be used by warrant officers.

Construction completed in 1933 might have dampened Post Commander Major General Frank R. McCoy's enthusiasm for further NCO quarters construction. On June 12, 1933, McCoy sent a memorandum to the 8th Corps Area commander listing NCO quarters among his "first priorities," but thought three or perhaps five more sets might be adequate. No more would be required, McCoy reported, "unless it is desired to use these quarters for the housing of warrant officers." On this point, McCoy agreed with Bash. "There are about ten warrant officers stationed at Fort Bliss," McCoy claimed, "now living off the post on a rental allowance status."

Bash remained enthusiastic about NCO quarters construction at Fort Bliss, particularly when he learned NIRA funds would be available. In September, 1933, Bash wrote to advise the constructing quartermaster at Fort Bliss of plans to spend almost \$85,000 for additional NCO quarters. This amount had been authorized under the Public Works Program within the NIRA. Bash suggested that if plans were prepared and ready, bids could be sought for 15 days or less. "Revised General Considerations and Bid Sheets will be furnished," Bash promised, "as rapidly as mimeographing can be completed."

A third phase of NCO family quarters construction at Fort Bliss thus was undertaken. The Construction Division of the Office of the Quartermaster General used Public Works Program funds. Eventually, \$84,947

was appropriated, \$1,197 more than Bash originally had expected. Bids were opened on October 20, 1933, and construction completed in 1934. Nine sets of quarters, not the eight Bash originally had envisioned, were added to the area near the 7th Cavalry cantonment. These quarters now are buildings 349-357. Three sets, buildings 1407-1409, were added to the area north of the parade ground.

The fourth installment of NCO quarters construction was completed in 1939. Assistant Quartermaster Colonel R.H. Jordan inspected Fort Bliss in the spring of 1935. He included 20 sets of NCO family quarters among the construction projects he considered "essential" for the post. Jordan's recommendation probably was the genesis of the 15 NCO buildings that were finished in 1939. Five were added to the quarters near the 7th Cavalry cantonment—buildings 344-348—and 10 were added to the area north of the parade ground—buildings 1410-1413, 1477-1479, and 1486-1488.

Depression-era construction at Fort Bliss was an impressive expansion undertaken in difficult economic times. The construction of the NCO buildings is tied closely to the Roosevelt administration's efforts to revive the national economy. Quartermaster General J.L. DeWitt, referring to the second installment of NCO quarters, said in July, 1932, "It is [the] desire of the War Department to start work immediately and relieve unemployment as soon as funds are released." Bash, speaking of the third installment of NCO buildings, told the constructing quartermaster at Fort Bliss in June, 1933, "You will bear in mind that funds will be appropriated to relieve unemployment at once to stimulate recovery from the present depression, and it is a prime requisite that work start within 30 days after receipt of notice to proceed."

Fort Bliss's 1930s history also is tied to the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). The CCC was a New Deal agency that employed young men to work on park development and conservation projects. The 1st Cavalry Division assumed operation of the Arizona-New Mexico CCC District. The division provided manpower and headquarters for CCC companies that, at one time, numbered more than 62,500 men.

The 1st Cavalry Division underwent organizational changes in the 1930s. These changes began in 1928 when the 8th Mounted Engineers were transferred to Fort McIntosh. In 1932, the 82nd Field Artillery Battalion was expanded into a regiment. The 12th Cavalry Regiment, stationed at forts Ringgold and Brown, was brought to Fort Bliss the same year. The 12th Cavalry replaced the 1st Cavalry Regiment, which was transferred and mechanized.

Fort Bliss's 1st Cavalry Division contributed to the development of the triangular division, the divisional organization used in World War II. The new organization was proposed by the general staff, and theoretical tests were carried out in the service schools. In the late 1930s, the new system was tested with both infantry and cavalry divisions. During the autumn of 1937, Fort Bliss troops engaged in the Provisional Infantry Division tests at Fort Sam Houston. After returning to Fort Bliss and reconditioning the horses, the division tested the Provisional Cavalry Division at Balmorhea, Texas. The new system of divisional organization was adopted after these tests. By 1940, all eight regular army infantry divisions had been made triangular divisions.

Training at Fort Bliss was intensified in 1940 and 1941. In the spring of 1940 and the summer of 1941, the 1st Cavalry Division participated in maneuvers in east Texas and Louisiana. For Sergeant Major S.A. Merritt, of the 8th Cavalry Regiment, these exercises were dreary affairs. "The troopers," Merritt wrote, "live, eat, sleep and snore and smell in the soaking wet country of East Texas and Western Louisiana. Mosquitos, Monsoons, Mud, Muck, Misery, and Plenty of Mites . . . Help This Misery Along."

## 50\ A SURVEY HISTORY OF FORT BLISS

On the eve of the American entry into World War II, the authorized strength of the 1st Cavalry Division was 10,110 men. In 1940, the 1st Cavalry Division (without the 1st Cavalry Brigade) had constructed cantonments for 20,000 antiaircraft troops (four National Guard regiments), and further developed Biggs Field. In the autumn of that year, the 56th Cavalry Brigade of the Texas National Guard joined the division at Fort Bliss for intensive training. Early in 1941, the Regular 1st Cavalry Brigade relieved the guardsmen.

The late interwar years were difficult ones for the American military, years during which the army was constrained by an isolationist foreign policy and the hardships of the Great Depression. In spite of this unpromising fiscal climate, Fort Bliss grew in the 1930s. Fort Bliss's growth was exemplified by the construction of 104 NCO family quarters. The post also gained land in the early 1930s. Land was acquired primarily with unspent 1925 funds; new appropriations totalled only about \$6,000. The congressional debate over this appropriation confirmed Fort Bliss's mission as a cavalry post, important for its strategic border location. As America prepared to enter World War II, two horse cavalry posts remained: Fort Riley was a cavalry post by tradition; Fort Bliss was the last to have a strategic mission.

### Conclusion

Two topics touched on briefly in this chapter merit further research: the contributions of the 1st Cavalry Division to both the work of the CCC and the development of the triangular system of divisional organization.

The CCC was an important New Deal agency. Its work is significant in Southwest and national 1930s economic history. Future research might establish the 1st Cavalry Division's role in the organization and work of the Arizona-New Mexico CCC District.

The triangular system of divisional organization was introduced late in the interwar period. World War II was fought and won by American triangular divisions. The transition from the square division to the triangular division should be examined in greater detail. Also, the contributions of Fort Bliss's 1st Cavalry Division to the development of the triangular division should be identified.

### Essay on Sources for Chapter VIII

The government documents drawn from in Chapter VIII include 71 Congress, 2 session, House Report 1599, Purchasing of Land Adjoining Fort Bliss, Texas, and the companion Senate Report 851; Senate Document 180, Acquisition of Land, Fort Bliss; and Engineer Directorate, *The Master Plan of Fort Bliss: Analysis of Existing Facilities Report 1968 Book 2 Building Information Schedule DA Form 2368-R* (Fort Bliss, 1968).

The cavalry unit histories cited in previous chapters also contain information on 1930s Fort Bliss. There are vivid and, in places, entertaining notes on the maneuvers of the 1st Cavalry Division in the late interwar period in the Lieutenant Colonel S.A. Merritt, 8th Cavalry, typescript collection (cataloged with unit histories) at the Military History Institute. For an organizational chart of the triangular division, see H.E. Dager, "Modern Infantry," *Command and General Staff School Military Review* 20 (March, 1940), 14.

The history of Fort Bliss construction in the 1930s has yet to be explored through primary archival sources. This study made use of the Still Photograph Division, Record Group 77, Office of the Chief of

**Engineers, War Department Construction Program, Photographs of Completed Projects From the Fiscal Year 1925 To Date; and Record Group 92, Office of the Quartermaster General, General Correspondence Geographical File 1922-1935, Boxes 190-193 and 196.**

**52\ A SURVEY HISTORY OF FORT BLISS**

## **Appendix**

### **FORT BLISS IN WORLD WAR II AND THE EARLY COLD WAR PERIOD**

World War II and the early Cold War period are beyond the scope of this study. However, a brief overview of these events helps put Fort Bliss's development from 1890 to 1940 into a larger historical context and suggests some areas for further research.

#### **Fort Bliss in World War II**

##### *Introduction*

World War II had momentous consequences for Fort Bliss and its personnel. Fort Bliss units served valiantly in the war and incurred heavy losses. Fort Bliss shed its role as the nation's most important cavalry post and emerged from World War II the nation's antiaircraft artillery center.

##### *Fort Bliss in World War II*

At the inception of American involvement in World War II, Fort Bliss was designated a troop reception center. In this service, however, as in World War I, the post's activities were far from unique. Fort Bliss's reception center capacity was 1,000 troops. Two other posts in the 8th Corps Area—Fort Sill, Oklahoma, and Fort Sam Houston, Texas—had equivalent capacities. Nationwide, 18 other posts had a 1,000-troop capacity and six could accommodate more than this number.

Another important function served by Fort Bliss during World War II was the induction of National Guard units into federal service. In the Autumn of 1940, the first of five National Guard units arrived at Fort Bliss. These five units were the 200th, 202nd, 206th, and 266th coast artillery regiments (AA); and the 120th Air Corps Observation Squadron. Except for Camp Hulen, Texas, Fort Bliss housed more National Guard units than any other post in the 8th Corps Area.

The 200th Coast Artillery Regiment (AA), formed in New Mexico, suffered bitterly in the Philippines Campaign. The unit arrived in the Philippines from Fort Bliss via San Francisco in late September, 1941. The 200th was ordered to Fort Stotsenburg to protect Clark Field. Early in the war, the Japanese attacked the field. The 200th was crippled by poor ordnance, but it made a determined defense. Of the coast artillerymen at Clark Field, the official army history reported, "Acts of personal heroism were commonplace." After their service at Clark Field, the unit was split to create a new regiment, the 515th Coast Artillery (AA). During the retreat towards Bataan, two batteries of the 200th covered the strategically crucial Calumpit bridges crossing the Pampanga River. The 200th and 515th were the last organized units committed to battle by Major General Edward P. King in the final defense of Bataan. The official army history reports the coast artillerymen "stood alone" in the last fighting on Bataan. The survivors then endured the infamous death march to Camp O'Donnell.

Unlike many of the units that passed through Fort Bliss to serve in World War II, the 1st Cavalry Division had a long association with the post, beginning with the creation of the division in 1921. The 1st

## 54\ A SURVEY HISTORY OF FORT BLISS

Cavalry Division was sent to the 6th Army in the Pacific Theater. It received its orders in February, 1943. Horses and horse equipment were turned in, and the last elements of the division left Fort Bliss on June 18, 1943. After staging at Camp Stoneman, California, the 1st Cavalry Division went to Australia.

The departure of the 1st Cavalry Division from Fort Bliss marked a turning point in American military history, the passing of the horse cavalry. Major General Verne D. Mudge reminisced about this historic event in a 1953 speech to the sixth reunion of the 1st Cavalry Division in El Paso. Mudge said, "For it was we, who, hardly more than ten years ago, here at nearby Fort Bliss saddled up for the last time; and as we unsaddled, and unhitched the limbers, an era ended--*the horse was gone.*"

The 1st Cavalry Division left a record of bloody and heroic combat in the Pacific. In the Admiralties Campaign, 326 were killed and the division suffered total casualties of more than 1,500. The division lost more than 900 men at Leyte Gulf; only two divisions of the same command took higher losses. In the Battle for Manila, it is estimated the division endured 1,500 total losses, surpassed only by the 37th Infantry Division.

After the war ended, while the 1st Cavalry Division was serving in the occupation of Japan, General Douglas MacArthur summarized its wartime service. "No greater record," MacArthur claimed, "has emerged from the War than that of the 1st Cavalry Division--swift and sure in attack, tenacious and durable in defense, and loyal and cheerful under hardship." Referring to Admiralties airfields captured by the division, the official army history reports, "The gallant action of the 1st Cavalry Division in execution of [General Douglas] MacArthur's bold decision thus paid rich dividends."

By the time the 1st Cavalry Division left for the Pacific, Fort Bliss's transition from a cavalry to an artillery post long had been underway. Many months before Pearl Harbor, four antiaircraft artillery regiments had arrived at the post. With the departure of the 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Bliss became an antiaircraft artillery post.

Fort Bliss was well suited for antiaircraft artillery training. The third largest facility of its kind in the country, it had enormous amounts of land, suitable terrain and favorable weather. In 1944, the Anti-aircraft Artillery School was moved from North Carolina to Fort Bliss. With the school came the Anti-Aircraft Artillery Board. Fort Bliss became the national center for antiaircraft artillery.

### *Summary*

Fort Bliss made important contributions to America's victory in World War II. Units from Fort Bliss left distinguished service records in the Pacific. At the fort itself, an important transition took place. Fort Bliss was relieved of its role as a horse cavalry post. It quickly became the country's antiaircraft artillery center.

## **Fort Bliss in the Early Cold War Period**

### *Introduction*

In the Cold War period that followed World War II, Fort Bliss played a unique and crucial role in national and international military developments. To understand this role, it is necessary to briefly examine the American military history of the early Cold War years.

World War II and its aftermath brought important changes in American foreign and military policy. The isolationism of the interwar period was abandoned.

The United States emerged from the war as the strongest nation in the world. The military capabilities of Germany and Japan virtually were eliminated by the victory of the Allied powers and the strength of America's European Allies also was reduced greatly. In contrast, the United States' industrial infrastructure had been untouched by the war's destructiveness and had grown stronger from wartime mobilization and industrialization. In 1945, the United States was the world's only atomic power and had an active army of more than 8,000,000 soldiers. War Department expenditures in 1945 were about \$50.5 billion.

During the late 1940s, the army was returned to peacetime strength. Americans were war weary, as they had been in the 1920s. By 1948, the active army had been reduced to about 550,000 soldiers; in 1950, Department of the Army expenditures were less than \$6 billion.

The end of World War II brought a new alignment of the world's military power. One other Allied power had grown stronger during the war: the Soviet Union. Although the Soviets had suffered tremendous losses on the Eastern Front, their military establishment was much stronger in 1945 than it had been in 1939. Soviet forces remained in Eastern Europe and North Korea after the war, and the Soviets tested their own atomic bomb in September, 1949.

American civilian and military leaders became wary of the Soviet Union during the war. After the war, the Truman administration identified Stalin's Soviet Union as the greatest threat to world peace and American security.

American postwar policy was predicated on the assumption the United States would have to play a leading long-term role in preventing further Soviet expansion. War-devastated Western European allies were too weak to check the Soviet Union. Before World War I and World War II, United States intervention in European affairs had been a subject for debate. After World War II, America committed itself to foreign military interventionism.

World War II had been a global, total war; ultimately, it became an atomic war. It changed the nature of warfare, making clear that, in a future war, the United States would have to mobilize more rapidly than ever before, and would need a more extensive peacetime base for military mobilization. The threat of Soviet expansionism and the new conditions of warfare led the United States to adopt unprecedented peacetime military policies.

World War II produced a new arsenal of rockets and guided missiles. Adolf Hitler had supported special weapons projects vigorously, believing until the final days of the Third Reich the success of any one of these projects would give Germany victory. Only the German rocket program had any appreciable success. Germany fired about 9,300 V-1 rockets and 4,300 V-2 rockets toward England, Antwerp, and other targets. While the V-2 was much more devastating than the V-1, neither was the decisive strategic weapon for which Hitler had hoped.

By the end of the war, German researchers had worked on 140 different guided-missile projects. In 1945, Germany possessed the greatest mass of technical information on guided missiles in the world. After the war, American scientists realized German V-2 rocket work, British radar, and American nuclear technology could be combined into a single weapons system, one that would surpass any armament in world history.



## **56 A SURVEY HISTORY OF FORT BLISS**

### *Fort Bliss in the Early Cold War Period*

Fort Bliss played a very important role in the early Cold War period. The post made crucial contributions to the development of the American missile program. These contributions included the work of the V-2 rocket development team at Fort Bliss, the formation of the 1st Guided Missile Brigade at the fort, and the establishment of the Anti-aircraft Artillery Replacement Training Center and the U.S. Army Air Defense Center at Fort Bliss.

The U.S. Army's Project Paperclip brought hundreds of volunteer German scientists and technicians to America. The Germans agreed to a probationary stay of six months; many stayed longer and became citizens. Project Paperclip resulted in the United States using German expertise with the V-2 engine to develop rocket engines for the Thor, Jupiter, Atlas, and Titan missiles.

The best-known Project Paperclip group, one of the first to arrive in the United States, was the V-2 rocket development team headed by Werner von Braun. Major General H.N. Toftoy arranged to bring this team to America. During the summer of 1945, the scientists, their families, their technical papers, rockets, and rocket parts were assembled in a housing area near Munich. The 82 team members were screened to establish their scientific backgrounds and to determine if they previously had ties to the Nazi Party.

The von Braun rocket development team then was brought to Fort Bliss. Their budget was small. As one army historian wrote:

*[The von Braun team] set up shop in the dusty remains of a former temporary hospital area. The wooden buildings contained no laboratories or equipment but they were the best that could be provided at the time. At least it was a place to begin, and it was close to the new missile firing range at White Sands, New Mexico.*

White Sands Proving Ground (later White Sands Missile Range) was established in July, 1945. White Sands was the first of three national missile ranges, each managed by a different service branch but available to all branches.

The 1st Anti-aircraft Guided Missile Battalion was organized at Fort Bliss on October 11, 1945, and was the first missile battalion in army history. Research and development was carried out at Fort Bliss; missiles were tested at White Sands. Advanced designs for the V-2 were developed. Fort Bliss research also was the basis for the long-range missile project, Hermes II. Further research and development of the Hermes II was contracted by Army Ordnance with the General Electric Company.

The first V-2 was fired at White Sands on March 15, 1946, to test the rocket's engine. A month later, the first V-2 flight in North America took place; the V-2 reached an altitude of only 5 miles. In a May test flight, the V-2 gained 70 miles in altitude. From 1946 to 1951, 68 V-2s were launched from White Sands. (Not all the tests were successful: In 1948, a White Sands V-2 landed near Ciudad Juarez, Mexico.)

The Anti-aircraft Artillery and Guided Missile Center was activated at Fort Bliss in July, 1946. Its primary mission was to train anti-aircraft artillery and guided-missile units. In 1947, the Anti-aircraft and Guided Missile School was established at Fort Bliss as was a joint army-navy guided-missile department.

The 1st Guided Missile Regiment was created in 1948. Secretary of the Army Kenneth J. Royall announced it was organized "to provide vacancies for further specialist training and experimentation." Within two years, the 1st Guided Missile Regiment was expanded into the 1st Guided Missile Group. The group consisted of a development, a training, and a tactical battalion. In 1950, Secretary of the Army Frank Pace, Jr., reported the group "actively participates in the missile launchings conducted at White Sands Holloman Range. In addition to the extensive specialized training afforded to the personnel of the Group, training and instruction are provided [to] selected members of all components of the Armed Forces at the Anti-aircraft and Guided Missile Center, Fort Bliss, Texas."

The group later became the 1st Guided Missile Brigade. The brigade continued to be stationed at Fort Bliss and to conduct its testing at White Sands. It was made up of a headquarters unit, a headquarters battery, the 1st Guided Missile Group for surface-to-air missiles (SAMs), and the 2nd Guided Missile Group for surface-to-surface missiles (SSMs). The brigade was the only guided-missile organization of its kind in the army.

The work at Fort Bliss and White Sands was vital to other American missile-development programs. The Corporal missile program was initiated in 1944. The WAC Corporal missile was tested at White Sands in February, 1947. It was the first American rocket launched by an army unit organized solely for rocket and guided missile work. The Corporal E, the first American SSM, was launched from White Sands three months later. In testing, it achieved a range of 60 miles. In February, 1949, as part of the Fort Bliss V-2 program, the Bumper-WAC, a combination of German V-2 and American WAC Corporal systems, was tested at Cape Canaveral, Florida. It reached the unprecedented altitude of 250 miles. This test showed that multistage vehicles that could reach higher velocities and greater ranges were feasible. The first Nike-guided missile battalion was installed at Fort George C. Meade, Maryland, on December 17, 1953. The nucleus of the battalion was formed by personnel trained in the 1st Guided Missile Brigade at Fort Bliss.

The work begun at Fort Bliss was fundamental to later American missile development. The Corporal program became the basis for the Redstone and the Jupiter missile programs. The army established Redstone, Alabama, as its major missile development center in 1949. In April, 1950, the Fort Bliss V-2 team moved there. This group was to form the core of the Army Ballistic Missile Agency (ABMA), created February 1, 1956. The ABMA, headed by von Braun, eventually was transferred to the civilian National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). The missile development accomplished at Fort Bliss in the late 1940s therefore was fundamental to the later successes of NASA.

Several other important programs were developed at Fort Bliss during the early Cold War years. The Anti-aircraft Artillery Replacement Training Center (AAARTC) was activated in 1950. It was the only AAARTC in the country and it became the largest single subordinate command on the post. Organized into battalions and groups, its mission was to train soldiers for specialized assignments. Training was administered in atomic weapons, heavy anti-aircraft artillery guns, computer operation, radar operation, and operations assistance. The AAARTC also conducted eight weeks of basic infantry training for army inductees in the Southwest.

Another important unit was the Continental Army Command Board No. 4. It was charged with research, testing, and development of new weapons and equipment. The unit also studied existing material in order to improve efficiency and extend the scope of the material's use. The Office of the Director of Special Weapons Development was established at Fort Bliss in December, 1952. This office was a Continental Commands organization. The office was responsible for keeping the army informed of developments in atomic energy and for adapting them to military use.

## 58 A SURVEY HISTORY OF FORT BLISS

On July 1, 1957, the development of these and other important programs at Fort Bliss culminated in the base being designated the United States Army Air Defense Center. Four days later, the first students were enrolled in the Air Defense School.

### *Summary*

In the period after World War II, Fort Bliss served two important purposes. It housed and provided research facilities to scientists who made unique and fundamental contributions to the American strategic missile program. Related but separate developments in antiaircraft missiles eventually led to Fort Bliss being designated the nation's Air Defense Center.

### **Conclusion**

World War II and the early Cold War years are beyond the scope of this study. Eventually, these periods will become eligible for the same historical attention given the earlier eras treated by this study.

The principal research topics for Fort Bliss's World War II history will be the contributions of the fort to the American war effort and its transition from a cavalry to an antiaircraft artillery post.

After the Mexican Revolution, the early Cold War period is the most significant in Fort Bliss history. Fort Bliss made unique contributions to the vitally important American missile program during the program's formative years. In the 1950s, the post developed the programs that would make it the Army Air Defense Center. Future research will explore these historical processes in much greater detail.

### **Essay on Sources for the Appendix**

The section on World War II draws primarily from the United States War Department, *Report of the Secretary of War to the President, 1941*, Biennial Report of the Chief of Staff, July 1, 1941 (Washington, D.C., 1941); and from several volumes in the Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, United States Army in World War II Series. These included R. Elbert Smith, *The Army and Economic Mobilization* (Washington, D.C., 1959); Louis Morton, *The Fall of the Philippines* (Washington, D.C., 1953); John Miller, Jr., *Cartwheel: The Reduction of Rabaul* (Washington, D.C., 1959); M. Hamlin Cannon, *Leyte: The Return to the Philippines* (Washington, D.C., 1954); and Robert Ross Smith, *Triumph in the Philippines* (Washington, D.C., 1963).

Richard K. McMaster, *Musket, Saber, and Missile* and the cavalry unit histories cited in earlier essays were used in this chapter as well.

The Cold War section cites three official reports: United States Department of Defense, Annual Report of the Secretary of the Army 1948 (Washington, D.C., 1949); *Semiannual Report of the Secretary of the Army, January 1 to June 30, 1950* (Washington, D.C., 1950); and *Semiannual Report of the Secretary of the Army, January 1 to June 30, 1958* (Washington, D.C., 1959).

There are many secondary works on the United States missile program. Specifically, this section drew from Nels A. Parson, Jr., *Missiles and the Revolution in Warfare* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1962); Eric

Burgess, *Long-Range Ballistic Missiles* (London, 1961); and Ernest J. Yanarella, *The Missile Defense Controversy: Strategy, Technology, and Politics, 1955-1972* (Lexington, Kentucky, 1977). Also, *The United States Army, Fort Bliss: The Second Hundred Years* (El Paso, n.d.) is a pamphlet that provides a brief introduction to the programs at Fort Bliss during the late 1940s and 1950s.

**60\ A SURVEY HISTORY OF FORT BLISS**

REFERENCES

*Army and Navy Journal*

1914 March 7, 1914, p. 851; May 2, 1914, p. 851; May 9, 1914, p. 1155; May 16, 1914, p. 1191.

1917 March 31, 1917  
Microfilm, Fort Bliss Library, Building No. 2, Fort Bliss, Texas.

Bash, L.H., Brigadier General

1933 Memorandum, September 22, 1933. *National Archives*, Record Group 92, File 31, Box 192, File 600.1, Fort Bliss Public Works Construction Program. Copy on file, Cultural Resources Management Branch, Fort Bliss, Texas.

Bundy, Omar, Major

1908 *Fort Bliss Inspection Report*, 1908. Copy on file, Cultural Resources Management Branch, Fort Bliss, Texas.

*Cavalry Journal*

1920 *Regimental Reports*. July 1920, Vol. XXIX, p. 220.

1933 *Regimental Reports*. November-December, 1933.

1941 *Regimental Reports*. June 1941.  
Microfilm, Fort Bliss Library, Building No. 2, Fort Bliss, Texas.

Chandler, Melbourne C.

1960 *Of Garry Owen in Glory: The History of the Seventh United States Cavalry Regiment*. Turnpike Press, Virginia.

Christian, Garna Loy

1977 *Sword and Plowshare: The Symbiotic Development of Fort Bliss and El Paso, Texas, 1849-1918*. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Texas Tech University, Lubbock.

Crego, Arthur Van Vooris

n.d. *City on the Mesa: The New Fort Bliss, 1890-1895*. Public Affairs Office, Fort Bliss, Texas.

Daugherty, Frances, Colonel (Retired)

1986 Telephone Interview, September 9, 1986. El Paso, Texas.

## 62\ A SURVEY HISTORY OF FORT BLISS

### *El Paso Daily Times*

- 1890      March 21, p. 7, c. 2-3.
- 1891      January 4, p. 7, c. 2-4.  
            March 14, p. 7, c. 2-3.
- 1892      January 27, p. 7, c. 2.  
            April 23, p. 6, c. 5.  
            June 28, p. 7, c. 3.  
            July 7, p. 7, c. 3.  
            August 14, p. 7, c. 2.  
            November 27, p. 6, c. 4.
- 1895      October 6, p. 3, c. 3.
- 1896      September 25, p. 3, c. 4.  
            November 25, p. 2, c. 4.  
            November 28, p. 1, c. 5-6.
- 1897      June 3, p. 3, c. 3.
- 1898      April 19, p. 2, c. 3.  
            April 20, p. 3, c. 4.  
            April 21, p. 3, c. 2-4.  
            November 16, p. 7, c. 2-3.  
            November 20, p. 3, c. 1.
- 1899      February 8, p. 7, c. 4.
- 1900      February 17, p. 1.
- 1909      October 16, p. 1.  
            Microfilm, University of Texas at El Paso.

### *El Paso Herald Post*

- 1941      February 5, p. 1, c. 2.  
            June 10, p. 2, c. 1.  
            November 17, p. B12, c. 4.
- 1946      January 24, n.p.  
            Microfilm, University of Texas at El Paso.

### *El Paso Morning Times*

- 1913      January 13, p. 1, c. 1-7.  
            January 16, p. 1, c. 3-5; p. 7, c. 3.

March 6, p. 2, c. 4-7.  
 April 26, p. 1, c. 3.  
 May 7, p. 3, c. 1-3.  
 May 10, p. 16, c. 1-7; p. 17, c. 7.  
 August 27, p. 1, c. 1-3.  
 August 30, p. D4, c. 1-3.  
 September 30, p. 1, c. 1.  
 October 10, p. 1, c. 1-7.  
 October 11, p. 1, c. 6-7; p. 5, c. 3-5.

1915 February 8, p. 1, c. 1-2; p. 4, c. 5-6.

1919 February 16, p. 7, c. 1.  
 March 6, p. 16, c. 1.  
 March 26, p. 9, c. 1.  
 May 17, p. 3, c. 5.  
 June 12, p. 14, c. 1-2.  
 July 20, p. 14, c. 8.  
 August 29, p. 12, c. 3.  
 Microfilm, University of Texas at El Paso.

*El Paso Times*

1933 July 7, p. 10, c. 6-8.  
 September 21, p. 1, c. 5; p. 3, c. 1-2.

1934 December 21, p. 1, c. 5; p. 3, c. 1-2.

1935 February 12, p. 1, c. 5.  
 April 7, p. 23, c. 3-5.

1941 March 1, p. 4, c. 1-5; p. 5, c. 1-5.  
 April 14, p. 1, c. 1; p. 2, c. 6.  
 June 11, p. 1, c. 1.

1942 December 6, p. B10, c. 1.

1943 March 23, p. 12, c. 2-3.

March 27, p. 5, c. 4.  
 April 22, p. 1, c. 3; p. 7, c. 3.  
 Microfilm, University of Texas at El Paso.

**Field, Harvey R., Captain (Constructing Quartermaster)**

1919 Memorandum to the Commanding General, El Paso District, December 13, 1919. *National Archives*, Record Group 393, Records of the United States Army Continental Commands, 1821-1920, El Paso District File #600.91, Box 43. Copy on file, Cultural Resources Management Branch, Fort Bliss, Texas.



## 64\ A SURVEY HISTORY OF FORT BLISS

### Fine, Lenore and Jesse A. Remington

1972 *The Corps of Engineers: Construction in the United States*. Office of Chief of Military History, U.S. Army, Washington, D.C.

### *Fort Bliss Monthly Post Return*

1898 May and September.

1910 October.

Copies on files, Cultural Resources Management Branch, Fort Bliss, Texas.

### General Orders No. 25

1890 Letter from J.C. Kelton, Adjutant General's Office, March 11, 1890, Washington. Copy on file, Cultural Resources Management Branch, Fort Bliss, Texas.

### Harris, Charles H., and Louis R. Sadler

1993 *Bastion on the Border: Fort Bliss, 1854-1943*. Ms. on file, Cultural Resources Management Branch, Fort Bliss, Texas.

### Inspector General's Office

1910 Correspondence #1238. Copy on file, Cultural Resources Management Branch, Fort Bliss, Texas.

### Marshall, R.C., Jr., Brigadier General

1918 Memorandum from the Chief of the Construction Division to the Director of Operations, United States Army, December 26, 1918. *National Archives*, Record Group 165, File 10, C/S General Correspondence, 1918-1921, Box 21, #154, Fort Bliss. Copy on file, Cultural Resources Management Branch, Fort Bliss, Texas.

### McKinney, Millard G.

1964 *Forgotten Flying Field*. Ts. on file, Cultural Resources Management Branch, Fort Bliss, Texas.

### Metz, Leon C.

1981 *Fort Bliss*. Mangan Books, El Paso, Texas.

### Real Property Records

1942 Buildings and Structures Card File (others with various dates). On file, Real Property Office, Fort Bliss, Texas.

## Robinson, Willard B.

- 1981 *Gone from Texas: Our Lost Architectural Heritage*. Texas A&M University Press, College Station.

## Robinson, Willard B., and Todd Webb

- 1974 *Texas Public Buildings of the Nineteenth Century*. University of Texas Press and the Amon Carter Museum of Art, Austin.

## Ruhlen, George, Captain

- 1890 Letter, November 2, 1890. File 833, *Special Collections Department*, University of Texas at El Paso.
- 1894 Journal (Record of Expenditures). File 883, *Special Collections Department*, University of Texas at El Paso.
- ca. 1892 *Specifications of the Labor and Material Required in the Construction of Officers Quarters at the New Post, Fort Bliss, Near El Paso, Texas*. El Paso Printing Company, El Paso.

## Ruhlen, George

- 1974 The Genesis of New Fort Bliss. In *Password*, Vol. XIX, No. 4, El Paso County Historical Society, El Paso.

## Sonnichsen, C.L.

- 1968 *Pass of the North: Four Centuries on the Rio Grande*. Texas Western Press, El Paso.

## Stubbs, Mary Lee and Stanley Russell Connor

- 1969 *Armor-Cavalry, Part I: Regular Army and Army Reserve*. *Army Lineage Series*, Office of Military History, Washington, D.C.

## War Department, Office of Construction Division

- 1919 *Manual of the Construction Division of the Army*. Section C., Engineering Division, 1918, Consolidated Supply Company, Washington, D.C.

## War Department

- 1920 *Annual Reports*. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1921.
- 1921 *Annual Reports*. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1921.