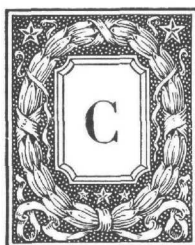


## CHAPTER I

### THE ORIGIN OF THE NEW YORK DIVISION



COMING back on the steamer from France in the winter of 1917, a Frenchman informed me that what was most characteristic of Americans in relation to their conversation was their apparent determination to get at the bottom of any subject of discussion—to begin at the beginning.

Perhaps this is a national characteristic. At any rate assuming it to be so, I must say something of the origin of the New York Division.

Going back to what might be termed the "Stone Age" of the National Guard, it is interesting to observe that the earliest National Guard units were so-called independent companies, which were organized and developed by veteran officers of the Revolution and of the War of 1812. In that period of our national development the militia of the Constitution was the military reliance of the government. By statute the militia were required to provide themselves with specified weapons, to be organized into military units and to hold assemblies at stated intervals. In time these stated intervals came to be known as the "Annual Training Day," and, as the name indicates, were held once a year.

When General Upton, in his work on the military policy of the United States, fairly and properly criticized the militia, it was this militia of the Constitution to which he referred, a force without discipline or real training of any kind. So strong appeared to be the prejudice in Congress against soldiers that efforts to secure proper organization and armament, to say nothing of adequate training for the militia, were unavailing. Accordingly, veteran officers of the wars with Great Britain, who had gone into civil life and who viewed the then existing conditions with alarm, were patriotic enough to organize volunteer independent military units throughout the various states. These units of their own accord drilled frequently. They provided themselves with arms and equipment that were modern, and they soon acquired a very satisfactory state of efficiency in relation to drill and minor tactics of such units.

When there was local trouble which bordered on insurrection, the county sheriffs frequently called upon these units, as the only trained forces available, and employed them as a "posse comitatus." Such service led to appreciation on the part of the public, here and there resulting in a license

to occupy part of the town hall, or some other public building for storing military property. As the efficiency of these units developed, and as the authorities of the counties and states came more and more to rely upon them, so the efficiency of the militia and the interest of the people in it correspondingly waned. Congress had appropriated annually a small amount for the maintenance of the militia of the country, and it became apparent that the independent companies might secure the financial benefits to be derived from sharing in these appropriations, could they establish the claim that they were militia. And so apparently it came to pass that these independent companies, which originated as living protests against the worthlessness of the militia, made claim that they were part of the militia, in order that they might receive government support.

Some of the earliest of these independent companies in the state of New York, through the process of development, became some of our present-day regiments. The Washington Grays was the origin of the present 8th Coast Defense Command. The 27th Artillery, National Guard, organized about the year 1803, became ultimately the present 7th Infantry. Some of these National Guard regiments served in the Mexican War. Most of them served in the Civil War. Nearly all of them served in the Spanish American War, and all of them served in the World War.

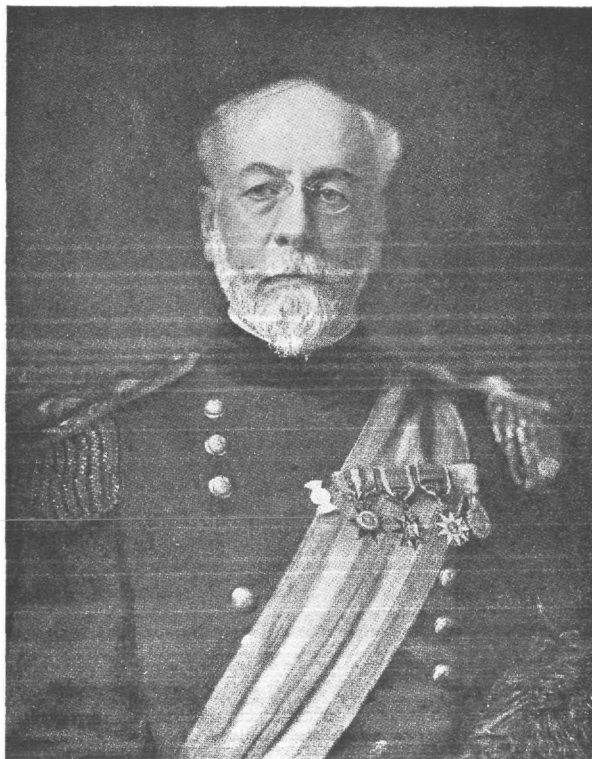
For a considerable period after the Civil War there existed a lack of interest in military matters, and the strength of the National Guard of New York was low. The National Guard was, moreover, an aggregation of regiments, separate battalions and companies, in effect commanded by the Adjutant General of the state, although nominally commanded by the Governor as Commander-in-Chief. With the advent of a new Governor there was a new Adjutant General, and so there was lacking trained military leadership and a continuity of policy, both essentials in the development of efficiency, particularly in a force approximating the strength of a division.

The officers of the National Guard struggled in vain against these conditions for many years, and until 1898, when, in the administration of Governor Black, they succeeded in securing a new military law, which provided for the organization of the National Guard of the state as a division, to be commanded by a permanent Major General, who was vested with the command, training, administration, discipline and efficiency of the National Guard.

Major Charles F. Roe, who commanded Squadron "A," was appointed Major General under this law, and thus was organized the New York Division under its first Major General.

Major General Roe continued in command of the division from 1898, until May 1, 1912, when he was retired, having reached the age of 64 years. Under his leadership the development of the National Guard of New York was steadily progressive. The division during this period was never strictly a tactical division in the sense that all units of such an organization were existent and trained in coordination, but they constituted a division at least in a territorial sense, and possessed esprit-de-corps, confidence in themselves and their leader, and a very high sense of military responsibility.

After the Spanish American War there was a revival of interest in military matters throughout the country. In the National Guard there existed a strong sentiment for further and more rapid development of efficiency along practical lines of field training. In response to this sentiment the regimental summer camps at Peekskill gave way to maneuver camps at Pine Camp, New York. The full dress uniforms so prominent in camp activities were replaced by the field service uniform. In practically every unit of the National Guard there developed two distinct schools of thought, one composed of those who harkened back to the old days and who looked with disfavor upon the subordination of the ceremonial side of military service to the strenuous activities of the maneuver camp, and the other composed of the younger officers and men, who preferred the Spartan activities of the maneuver campaign to the ceremonial life of the old-fashioned state camp.



*Major General Chas. F. Roe, National Guard,  
New York, retired*

The latter school believed that the National Guard, if properly developed, would become the real and dependable citizen army of the nation, and to a considerable extent they sought to coordinate their aims and efforts with the officers and men of other states, who thought as they thought. The so-called Dick Law, enacted by Congress in 1903, was a legislative expression of this growing sentiment.

And so when the writer, then a Major of Field Artillery of the New York National Guard, was appointed Major General to succeed Major General Roe on May 1, 1912, he found the sentiment among the officers and men of the National Guard of New York strongly in favor of vigorous action to insure the progressive and rapid development of the division along paths which would make it a dependable fighting unit in the event of war.

It is not a part of the mission provided for this work to describe what was done between 1912 and 1916 to carry out this determination. Suffice it to say that officers' schools were established and attendance made com-

pulsory, that these schools included theoretical work throughout the year and vigorous and practical work in the officers' schools of application early in the summer. It included training camps for non-commissioned officers and for companies, troops, batteries and regiments. These were followed by maneuver camps, where the various arms of the service were instructed in the coordination of their battle efforts. All of this work culminated in such grand maneuvers as those of the Massachusetts Maneuver Campaign in 1909 and the Connecticut Maneuver Campaign in 1912.

Finally, in the early summer of 1916, and while a considerable portion of the officers were attending a course of field training at the Infantry School of Application at Peekskill, there suddenly came the order to mobilize for service on the Mexican border. The manner in which the division was able to respond to that call was most satisfactory to all those officers and men who had the vision to foresee such an occasion and the loyalty, perseverance and capacity to prepare themselves to meet it.