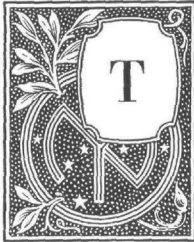


CHAPTER V

ORGANIZATION OF CAMP WADSWORTH



THE National Guard divisions were sent to camps rather than to cantonments because it was expected that they would be moved to France before the winter season set in. Accordingly, they were to live under canvas until the time came for their departure overseas.

Upon arrival of our Division Headquarters at Camp Wadsworth, it was found that a large number of civilian employes were at work erecting hospitals, mess shacks, storehouses, railroad spurs and sidings, and constructing roads, culverts and drains. The camp site was not ready for occupancy by troops. Nevertheless, it was obvious that very much work necessary to be done in the way of clearing land for drill and training purposes could be done and the work thus expedited if soldiers were employed for the purpose.

The units of the division as they arrived at Camp Wadsworth were composed very largely of trained and seasoned men, and they were accordingly put to work improving the roads, cutting down trees and removing stumps and brush from the proposed drill fields. As a matter of fact, many of them had done similar work in preparing camp sites on the Mexican border.

After they had been at work for a week, the camp appeared to develop as if by magic. The amount of work accomplished by the troops lessened to that extent the work to be done by the contractors and, therefore, the amount to be paid the contractors by the government. The contractors who built camps were not paid a fixed sum, but for the work actually done by them, based upon cost plus percentage. The labor of the men of the division, therefore, saved to the government a very considerable sum of money.

Very much could be written here in criticism of the construction of Camp Wadsworth and of decisions of the War Department in relation to recommendations made by the Camp Commander. However, it was recognized at the time, in relation to construction of the large number of camps and cantonments needed, that the War Department had before it a really tremendous problem, and that in connection with this problem, they were handicapped by the necessity of relying upon an overhead greatly augmented by new and untried officers. Many of these, it is true, were exceptionally efficient, but others were timid or incompetent. In view of the magnitude of camp operations, many of these new officers in Washington necessarily made decisions in the name of the chief of the bureau or department concerned. And so it frequently happened that the person who actually disapproved the recommendation of a camp commander of experience and who was on the ground was some relatively inexperienced officer. Camp construction was adversely affected by indecision on the part of the War Department in relation to policy. For a considerable time

the department apparently did not know whether camps such as that at Spartanburg would be maintained for a few months only, or whether it would assume a more permanent rôle in connection with the training of other units after the departure of the 27th Division for France. For a time it was known as a "summer camp," later as a "semi-permanent camp." This attitude directly affected questions of labor and material to be used in the development of the place. If the camp were to be used only by the 27th Division for a few months before going overseas, it would be a waste of public monies to install board floors in the tents for so great a number of units. If, on the other hand, our division or other troops were to occupy the camp during the winter months, board floors would become almost a necessity if good health were to be preserved. In a great camp of this character there must be organization and facilities for handling great masses of supplies that are daily delivered. Particularly we had found from previous experience at training and maneuver camps within the state of New York that a lumber yard is almost a necessity if any considerable amount of lumber is to be used. Otherwise it is almost impossible to protect lumber from theft. This and many other features in connection with the construction and development of Camp Wadsworth had been carefully considered and recommendations made covering each feature, all of which were in the alternative and dependent upon the decision of the War Department as to whether the camp was to be temporary or permanent. Many of these recommendations were determined by the War Department apparently without relation to a definite policy regarding the permanency of the camp. One branch of the War Department apparently assumed that the camp was to be permanent, while another branch would assume that it was to be temporary and make their decisions accordingly. Many recommendations which were at first disapproved as calling for unnecessary construction and expense were later adopted by the War Department, some of them on its own initiative. One of these related to the necessity for a proper road or highway from the city of Spartanburg to the camp, the existing road being no more than a tortuous country lane, which we were informed had no bottom during the winter season. Ultimately, the government, after many delays, undertook the construction of this road, but the work was not commenced until shortly before the armistice and was not completed until some time after the war was over and the camp about to be abandoned. This road, known locally as the "Snake Road," was a necessary artery between the camp and the city of Spartanburg and, as its modification and repair were essential, it was necessary, in view of the War Department's decision to do nothing about it, to reconstruct it with soldier labor. One of the first units to arrive at the camp was the 22d New York Engineers under Colonel Cornelius Vanderbilt, and to the latter was entrusted the work of straightening, ditching, ballasting and widening this important highway. By borrowing road machines from the city of Spartanburg and the county authorities, Colonel Vanderbilt and his men made radical changes in this roadway, including construction of new and safe bridges over the several streams which crossed the road. The

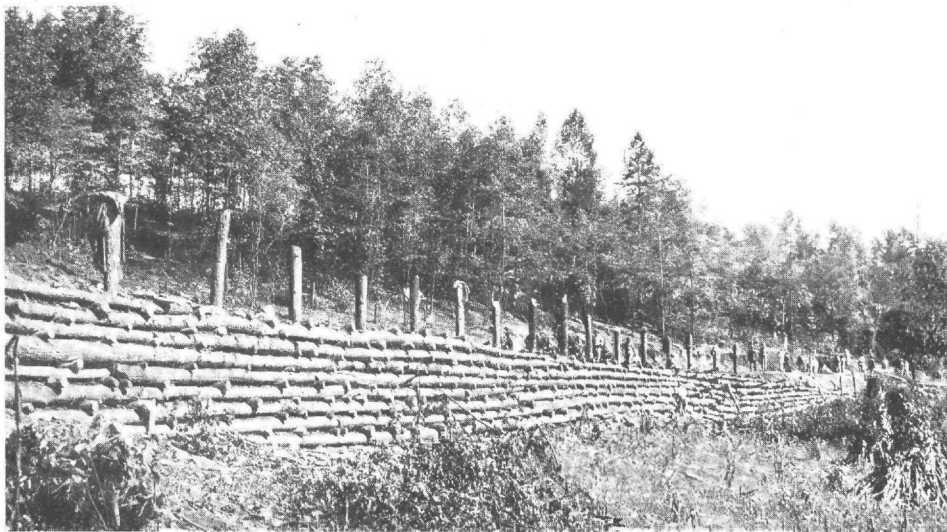


Widening the "Snake Road" to fifteen feet

work was under the immediate charge of 1st Lieutenant Charles E. Bregenzer, who was ably assisted by 1st Lieutenant Herbert E. Odell.

Upon the arrival of the division in South Carolina, Governor Manning sent the Division Commander a cordial telegram of greeting, which was the beginning of many other friendly manifestations of hospitality from the people of South Carolina and particularly of Spartanburg.

Shortly after the arrival of the division at Camp Wadsworth, the War Department detailed as Constructing Quartermaster Major John D. Kilpatrick, Q. M. C., to supervise the construction work going on there. This officer was well known to our division, he having begun his military



The "Snake Road" undergoing repair. The lower crib

career in Squadron "A," New York Cavalry, and at the time of the outbreak of the war was a lieutenant colonel in the National Guard of New Jersey. Largely through his zeal and experience, the contractors in charge of the work at the camp were made to speed up the construction of the necessary buildings.

It might be interesting to the reader to insert here some statistics relating to the construction of Camp Wadsworth in order to convey some idea of the magnitude of the work. The constructing contractor was the Fisk & Carter Construction Company. His general contract was concluded about September 10, 1917, although much additional work was in progress after that date under the supervision of the Constructing Quartermaster, Major Kilpatrick, and later under the Camp Quartermaster, Major Robert E. Grinstead. The work of Major Kilpatrick has already been referred to. Reference should be made to the efficiency of Major Grinstead. He had a very considerable task in relation to additional construction authorized from time to time, besides which he was, as Camp Quartermaster, in charge of the receipt and distribution of the great mass of property that daily poured into the camp. By great patience and industry, he was enabled to function efficiently, although handicapped by several incompetent assistants.

The following table gives some of the items of material used in the construction of the camp up to December 10, 1917:

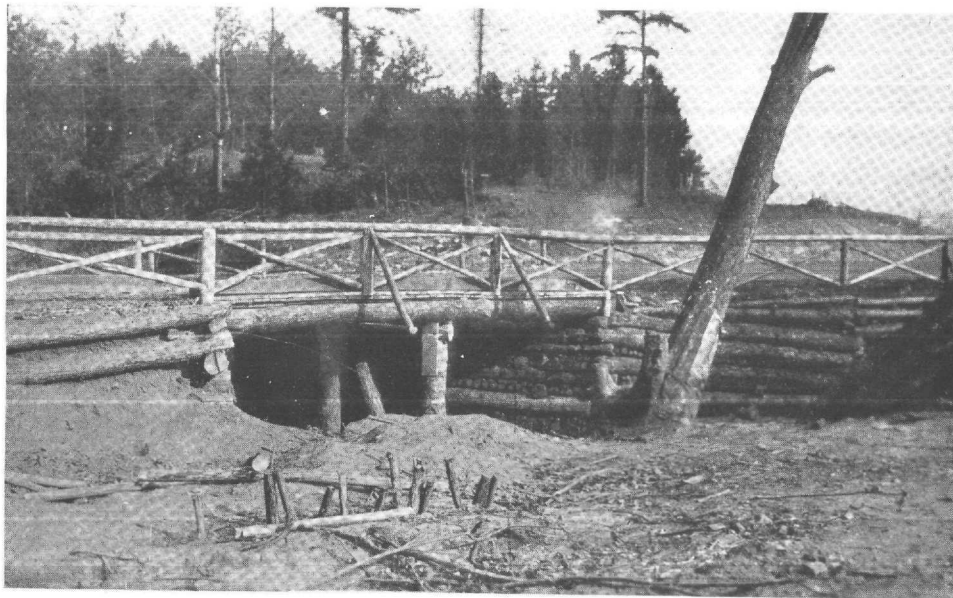
| | |
|--|-----------------|
| Number of cars of lumber | 1,036 |
| Amount of lumber, in B. F. | 20,000,000 |
| Number of cars of roofing | 28 |
| Amount of roofing, in square feet (two-ply 3,276,000, one-ply 424,000) | 3,700,000 |
| Number of cars of wire screening | 5 |
| Amount of wire screening, in square feet | 375,900 |
| Number of cars of nails (6,000 kegs) | 12 |
| Amount of electric wiring, in feet | 1,559,577 |
| Number of lamp sockets | 21,111 |
| Number of doors | 6,119 |
| Number of sash | 11,357 |
| Amount of vitrified pipe, in feet | 2,840 |
| Amount of iron pipe, in feet (includes all sizes $\frac{1}{2}$ inch to 12 inches) | 217,819 |
| Number of cars of all kinds of pipe | 44 |
| Total number of cars of material of all kinds | 2,051 |
| Greatest number of cars of material handled in any one day | 47 |
| Average number of cars of material handled per day when operation was in full swing | 28 |
| Number of miles of roads | 18 |
| Number of miles of railroad siding: | |
| On reservation, miles | 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ |
| Off reservation, miles | 1 |
| Number of miles sewer line | None |
| Number of miles water line (mains) | 13 |
| Number of miles trenching (including target and pipe trenches) | 15 |
| Amount of money expended in plumbing fixtures (on showers and faucets for water lines) | \$27,000.00 |
| Method of heating (steam or stove)—Stoves. | |
| (a) If by steam, number of miles of steam lines. | |
| (b) If by stoves, number of stoves | 629 |
| Greatest number of men employed in any one day | 3,806 |



"Snake Road" undergoing repair. View of bridge No. 1 under construction

| | |
|---|----------------|
| Average number of men employed per day when operation was in full swing | 2,800 |
| Highest payroll in any one week | \$72,016.20 |
| Average payroll per week when operation was in full swing | \$60,000.00 |
| The number of men in executive organization of the Government (average) | 55 |
| The number of men in executive organization of the contractor (average) | 25 |
| Total cost of camp (includes everything as paid by Constructing Quartermaster, as of December 10, 1917) | \$2,223,223.59 |

One feature of camp construction that caused much inconvenience was that, although infantry companies were to have a strength of 250 men,



View of bridge No. 2

the kitchens were built to accommodate but 150 men. It was understood that the decision to organize the infantry companies at 250 instead of 150 was not reached until after plans for the construction of the camps on the basis of the smaller companies had been approved and the work commenced.

This illustrates a shortcoming which appears to be characteristic of our army and it is noted here not in a spirit of captious criticism, but with the hope that the army may free itself of this weakness. Let the reader reflect for a moment that the war had been in progress over three years. If it had taught anything in the way of military organization it had demonstrated the desirability of infantry companies having a strength of at least 200 men. All the great powers engaged had come to the strong infantry company. What then delayed our War Department arriving at a proper conclusion in relation to organization prior to our declaration of war? It is the chief function of the General Staff to prepare plans to meet the emergency of war, and yet our war experience showed that many of our most annoying delays were to be charged not to Congress or to the people, but to the action or failure to act of those who had the authority and whose duty it was to have made timely decisions and plans for the great emergency. Many of the failures of the War Department in relation to preparedness are to be traced, not to a lack of zeal or of industry on the part of the officers of the army, but rather to an excess of misdirected zeal which leads them to seek perfection in organization and material; and in this attempt at the unattainable, to defer decisions and actions which, if made and consummated, would meet the emergency. For the purposes of war, it is immaterial, broadly speaking, whether the infantry company is organized on a basis of 200 men or 250 men or of any number between these limits, because after a company is so organized it begins almost immediately to lose men by promotion, detail, transfer, sickness, accident, wounds and death. Seldom, if ever, is it possible to maintain its strength exactly at the number prescribed. Probably no command in the army after the first month of its existence on the new basis of 250 men had that number, except by mere accident for a few days. Nevertheless, so long-drawn out were the discussions and conferences in relation to the proper strength of an infantry company that a decision was deferred until after our entry into the war, and in consequence many embarrassments and financial losses resulted from the failure to come to some timely decision.

In similar manner regrettable and unnecessary delays resulted from the failure of the War Department to make prompt and final decisions in relation to armament. Machine guns and automatic rifles complete in their designs and ready to go to the manufacturer to be turned out in great quantities for the use of the troops eagerly awaiting their receipt, were subject to minor changes by experts of the Ordnance Department in the effort to attain perfection. These minor changes necessitated new dies and tools as well as modifications in manufacturing machinery. All

these meant more delay, the result of which was that few of these weapons were used by American troops before the armistice.

The history of warfare has always demonstrated that the soldier, that is to say, the man, is the determining factor in battle—not the weapon. By the soldier and the man is meant, character, leadership, physical fitness, discipline, morale, tactical and technical skill, and experience, all coupled with numbers. The best weapons in the hands of troops not possessing these qualities are worse than no weapons, for they become but trophies to be captured by an efficient enemy.

In this war a million Americans did not spring to arms overnight literally, but actually the draft law furnished with surprising smoothness and speed several millions of young Americans possessing in the rough most of the essential qualities of the successful soldier, and hundreds of thousands of these young men were living in camps for months awaiting impatiently the arms and equipment which were not forthcoming. Much better, therefore, that the War Department in the future should have in reserve, weapons and equipment of some type for immediate issue to the great numbers of men demanded by modern warfare, than to defer the accumulation of the same until too late, in the attempt to increase effectiveness by the adoption of the latest refinements in design.

While the organizations were still arriving at Camp Wadsworth a telegram was received that 200 reserve officers had been directed to report there for duty. On the same day this telegram was received, these young officers began to arrive. It was difficult to know what to do with them. The organizations of the division had practically a complete roster of commissioned officers and at that time all units at the camp were engaged as stated in the work of developing their camp sites. However, in the absence of sufficient tentage, provision was made to house them in buildings not yet in use, and it being learned that their instruction at the training camp had not included such subjects as company administration, property accountability and other matters of military routine, a practical course of instruction was laid out for them and officers of special capacity and experience assigned as instructors. Later when the remaining units of the division had arrived at camp, these officers were distributed among them and assigned to companies as additional officers.

The 200 reserve officers were, on the whole, a very promising looking group of young men. Shortly after their arrival it developed that there was friction between some of them and a percentage of the officers of the units to which they had been assigned. This friction was perhaps a natural outcome of circumstances. Some of the reserve officers had gone to the training camps as enlisted men from the New York Division. Most of these were young men of service and experience, who had been recommended for commissions and whose ambition had led them to the officers training camp as the medium to gain advancement. Most of them knew that there were other soldiers in the division of equal or greater capacity and experience still serving in the ranks, and because of this knowledge they were always on guard to conduct themselves with becoming modesty.

There were others, however, who had gone to the officers training camps without special recommendation from the division, and whose promotion in their old commands would have been long deferred on account of the great number of better men who would have preceded them in promotion on the merits. Their presence in the camp as commissioned officers naturally affronted the sense of justice of their old comrades. The mass of the reserve officers, however, were young men without previous military experience. Their mental attitude depended largely upon their common sense. It is believed that most of them understood that in a three months' training period they could not possibly have acquired the knowledge, skill and experience of those who for many years had been attending drills, schools, maneuver camps and strike duty, all crowned by long months of hard and varied service on the Mexican border. This group, like the first group named, went hard at work to learn all they could from those with whom they were associated. The remaining element of the reserve officers were those who had taken literally the exhortations and stimulating comments of some of the younger regular officers at their training camps concerning the National Guard. It is apparently true that some of the regular officers in an excess of zeal and perhaps in order to advance their standing in the minds of the young civilians who went to the training camps, had criticized and undervalued the worth of the non-regular officers and units of the army. Naturally there were some of the training camp graduates who had been greatly influenced by these unhappy class references and in their conduct and attitude of mind seemed for a time at least to be looking for trouble.

The foregoing circumstances taken in connection with the fact that many of the non-commissioned officers of the division believed that the presence of the reserve officers indicated a block in promotion for them will make clear to the reader that the situation was one which gave promise of unpleasantness. As a matter of fact, several of the reserve officers had made complaint that they were not properly received and treated by the officers of the units to which they were assigned. The Camp Commander personally interviewed the reserve officers and otherwise investigated the subject of their relations with the officers of the division. The great majority of the reserve officers testified that their treatment was all that could be desired. A few only were dissatisfied; all were gradually absorbed, many of them by our own division. Soon any distinction between one class of officer and another disappeared in the intense and universal loyalty which all the officers and men manifested for their division.

Soldiers are notoriously hungry and notoriously willing to put almost anything into their stomachs between meals. So much success resulted on the border from the control of places which sold cakes, fruit and soda, that promptly upon the arrival of Division Headquarters at Camp Wadsworth a regulation was prescribed which prohibited the establishment of any places where eatables or drinkables of any kind were sold, within 500 yards of each camp. In some instances this zone extended outside the reservation and included private property. The only method of enforcing



Commanding General's office, quarters and aide's office. Front view, Camp Wadsworth



102d Engineers repairing the "Snake Road"

compliance so far as private property was concerned, was to place guards over any stands to be erected thereon and prevent soldiers patronizing them. As the threat to do this accompanied the order which was issued and this was done before private property had been so occupied, property owners recognized the inevitable and did not lease their property for such purposes. The rule was at all times rigidly enforced and had not only a beneficial effect upon the health of the command, but enabled the camp to present an appearance free from the litter which abounds in the vicinity of hucksters' stands.

Soon after the arrival of the division at Camp Wadsworth, it became apparent that the attitude of the people of Spartanburg was most friendly and accordingly a General Order was issued to the troops as follows:

"The civilian inhabitants of this section of the country have a national reputation for open-handed hospitality. They have shown in every way possible a sincere and patriotic desire to do everything in their power to aid the country and the army. It is, therefore, enjoined upon every member of this command to do his utmost to show his appreciation of this desire and to maintain cordial and harmonious relations with all civilians."

The soldiers of the division conducted themselves at all times in harmony with the provisions of this order.

Shortly after our arrival the newly organized battalion of two companies of Military Police, under Major T. Harry Shanton and Captains Cornelius W. Wickersham and William T. Starr, arrived and established their headquarters in the old Magnolia Street school building in the town of Spartanburg. The members of this remarkably efficient force were picked with great care, not only for their physical excellence, but as much for their moral dependability. It is interesting to note that throughout the entire service of the division this Military Police command, although enforcing all rules and regulations, maintained at the same time the respect and high regard of the division as a whole.