



## Camp Hancock: The Infantry Post (1872-1877) and Quartermaster Depot/Signal Office (1877-1894)

When the Northern Pacific Railroad crossed the Red River into Dakota Territory on June 6th of 1872, preparations were already being made to push the rails quickly across the northern plains. To assist these efforts, in April of 1872, General Winfield Scott Hancock, Commander of the Department of Dakota (following directives of the Secretary of War) had authorized the establishment of temporary military encampments to protect railroad supplies, equipment and engineering crews at the railroad's proposed crossing sites of the James and Missouri rivers in northern Dakota. The James River site became Fort Cross and, later, Fort Seward. The Missouri River site began at Camp Greene, located near the mouth of the Little Heart River where the railroad then planned to establish its crossing.<sup>20</sup>

In July, the railroad selected a new site further upstream for its Missouri River crossing, and as a result a U.S. Army Board of Officers (who had been assigned the task of selecting a fort site) chose a location atop the bluffs a few miles north of Camp Greene.<sup>21</sup> The camp was moved to the new fort site, which was named Fort McKeen, and construction commenced.<sup>22</sup> At the same

time, the Board also examined and selected a site on the east side of the river to serve as a temporary camp for troops assigned to protect railroad property until crossing facilities could be built. A detachment of Company D, 17th Infantry, was sent from Fort Rice to occupy the location briefly.<sup>23</sup>

As the summer waned, the railroad continued to approach the Missouri, but it became obvious that a crossing could not be achieved before winter. In addition, the railroad had now selected yet a different site for the crossing and not only were railroad supplies already stored near this new site, but a civilian community, Edwinton, had been recently established nearby. Consequently, in August, the Department Commander, totally on his own authority, issued orders officially authorizing that the camp located near "Otter Crossing" be made suitable for occupancy through the coming winter and beyond until the railroad arrived.<sup>24</sup>

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*Camp Hancock Infantry Post, ca. 1877. Photograph taken facing northwest. The building in the left rear is the current museum building.*

On August 8th, 1872, Company D, under the command of Captain Charles E. Clarke, boarded the supply laden steamboat *Ida Stockdale*, at Fort Rice, and the following day proceeded upriver towards the town of Edwinton (later renamed Bismarck), located near the new (third) site selected by railroad for its crossing of the Missouri.<sup>25</sup>

The *Ida Stockdale* tied up at "The Point," located directly across the river from Fort McKeen, just beginning construction.<sup>26</sup> Immediately upon the *Stockdale's* docking, the men of Company D disembarked, began clearing the river bottomland's heavy underbrush for an area to hold the company's supplies, and commenced unloading. Meanwhile, a contingent of prominent citizens from the already active town of Edwinton arrived to welcome the newcomers and, after introductions and greetings were exchanged, escorted the soldiers' ladies into town while the unloading continued and supplies were moved to the wintering site.<sup>27</sup>

Within hours the new post was occupied and its officers and men were "under canvas" on the southern edge of Edwinton, separated from the town only by the main street. Officers' quarters consisted of a row of eastward facing tents aligned roughly with Second Street. The Post Surgeon's tent home was located next to Main Street, with hospital and dispensary tents located directly to the west. Extending in a line southward from the Surgeon's quarters were the tent quarters of Lieutenant Josiah Chance followed by those of Captain Clarke, the company and camp commander, whose tent also served as camp headquarters.<sup>28</sup> From Headquarters, the tents of the enlisted men extended eastward in two columns facing each other. West of the Headquarters tent stood the tent of Captain Clarke's orderly. Cooking and commissary tents stood south of those occupied by the enlisted men, near the edge of the terrace, which overlooked the Missouri's floodplain.<sup>29</sup>

Before the day was ended (with an impromptu picnic

of sardines, canned peaches, and sherry in the Commanding Officer's quarters), the new camp was christened Camp Greeley in honor of Horace Greeley, editor of the *New York Tribune* and a liberal candidate for the Presidency. The name, however, was short lived. On August 13th, Lieutenant General Philip H. Sheridan, commanding the Military Division of the Missouri, arrived at Camp Greeley on an inspection tour. General Sheridan, a wartime comrade and close personal friend of President Ulysses S. Grant (Greeley's opponent in the 1872 presidential election campaign), let it be known that he was not pleased by the post's chosen name and by October 7th the camp had been renamed Camp Hancock for the Department Commander.<sup>30</sup>

The purpose of the post was to guard the workmen and property of the Northern Pacific Railroad and to protect the citizens of Edwinton. As events transpired, protection was soon appreciated. On August 16th, barely a week after settling in, the post received its first Indian alarm; a detachment was quickly sent to Apple Creek where a group of herders had been attacked and one of their party killed. Just three days later, a detachment was sent thirty miles east to a railroad construction camp to deliver a supply of military arms (requested by Dr. Walter A. Burleigh, the Northern Pacific's grading contractor), after the camp was harassed by Indians.<sup>31</sup> During the same period, a hay cutting party was attacked north of Edwinton on the Fort Stevenson trail (roughly present-day ND Highway 1806), and a mail train consisting of two wagons and an escort of several soldiers and Indian scouts was attacked between Fort McKeen and Fort Rice. Skirmishes between Arikara and Sioux warriors occurred occasionally on the west side of the Missouri, reportedly "in full view of the new city."<sup>32</sup>

On August 23rd, Colonel James W. Sculley, representing the army's Quartermaster Department from Fort Rice, and Montgomery Meigs, Jr., of the Northern Pacific Railroad's engineering department marked the camp's

<sup>20</sup> Report of the Quartermaster General (Report of the Secretary of War, 1872-73, House Exec. Doc. 3rd Sess. 42nd Cong., Vol. 1, pp. 146, 199); Linda Warfel Slaughter [edited by Hazel A. Eastman], *Fortress to Farm: or Twenty-three Years on the Frontier* (New York: Exposition Press, 1969), pp. 58, 64 [hereafter cited as "Fortress"]; Post Returns, Fort Rice, Dakota Territory, May, 1872 [National Archives Micro Pub. 617, Roll 1007 [State Archives and Research Library, Microfilm Roll 4318, State Historical Society of North Dakota, Bismarck]].

<sup>21</sup> *Fortress*, pp. 59, 64-65, 71; Post Returns, Fort Rice, May, June, July, 1872; Post Returns, Fort McKeen, Dakota Territory, June, July, August, 1872 [National Archives Micro Pub. 617, Roll 11522 [State Archives and Research Library, Microfilm Roll 4327, State Historical Society of North Dakota, Bismarck]].

<sup>22</sup> Arnold O. Goplen, "The Historical Significance of Fort Abraham Lincoln," *North Dakota History*, 13:4 (October, 1946), p. 183; Post Returns, Fort McKeen, D.T., June, July, August, 1872.

<sup>23</sup> George F. Bird and Taylor, Edwin J., Jr., *History of the City of Bismarck: The First 100 Years, 1872-1972* (Bismarck, North Dakota: Bismarck Centennial Association, 1972), p. 15; "Recalls Pioneer Who

Put Up City's First Residence," *The Bismarck Tribune*, July 19, 1940, p. 12; Post Returns, Fort Rice, June, July, 1872.

<sup>24</sup> This authorization process was unusual for a military post of the period. Post establishment usually followed a protocol involving congressional approval and appropriation. Apparently the approaching winter and the perceived need precluded use of the more conventional channels; it also accentuates the intended short term purpose of the post. The camp's \$2,675 cost was submitted to, and approved by, the regular authorization process in 1873. Report of the Quartermaster General, (Report of the Secretary of War, 1873-74, House Exec. Doc. 1st Sess. 43rd Cong., Vol I, pp. 114, 179); *Fortress*, pp. 59, 69-70; Post Returns, Fort Rice, August, 1872; Bird and Taylor, pp. 11-15, 17-21.

<sup>25</sup> Although various reasons have been suggested for these location changes, it seems likely that they were caused by "squatters" staking claims to choice lots at proposed crossing sites, in anticipation of rising land values upon the railroad's arrival. Several authors have suggested that the railroad may have deliberately leaked misinformation about intended crossing sites in order to mislead "squatter" speculators. See, for example, Bird and Taylor, p. 15; *Fortress*, pp. 72-73,



*Linda Warfel Slaughter (top), born in Ohio in 1843, graduated from Oberlin College ca. 1867. She married Dr. Benjamin F. Slaughter (below), in 1868, and together they came to Dakota Territory in 1871. Very active in community affairs, she served as the city's first postmistress and wrote for various magazines and newspapers. Dr. Slaughter was born in Kentucky in 1842, where he later studied medicine. He came to Fort Rice, Dakota Territory in 1871, and in 1872 was assigned Post Surgeon at Camp Hancock.*

boundaries, and work details of Company D men were sent into the cottonwood forests of the river bottoms to cut logs for the camp's buildings.<sup>33</sup> As originally laid out, the "working" area of the post extended from the east side of Second Street to the west side of Mandan Street, a distance of approximately 840 feet; and from the south side of Main to the north side of Front Street, a distance of approximately 360 feet. A strip of railroad right-of-way, 50 feet wide, ran approximately through the center from the eastern border to roughly the middle of the grounds before curving gently northwards to the western border.<sup>34</sup> The rectangular plot contained slightly less than six acres, and consisted of essentially level land on the upper bench, a steeply sloped side hill and relatively flat land below in the Missouri's permanent flood plain.

Although word didn't arrive until November 13th, on October 28th, the Department of Dakota's new Commanding Officer, General Alfred A. Terry, decided to make Camp Hancock an independent post rather than an outpost of Fort Rice as originally planned, and orders officially establishing the post were duly issued.<sup>35</sup> Also in October, the enlisted men of Company D moved into their new quarters. Although the officers' quarters had been started before the barracks, priority had apparently been shifted to completion of the barracks before winter set in, for while officers without housing could live off the post, enlisted men had no such choice. Consequently, the officers continued to live in their tents well into the autumn.<sup>36</sup> Linda Warfel Slaughter, the wife of Post Surgeon Benjamin F. Slaughter, described her early home thusly:

We had two large wall tents, with fly in front, fitted up as bedroom and sitting room. Boards for the floor could not be had, so soft heavy carpets and rugs were spread on the grass floor. During the heat of summer [,] the glare of the sun piercing through the white canvas was intensely painful to the eyes, and we all suffered greatly from this cause, until Mr. Anthony lined the tents with green gingham. Mrs. Anthony and I bought the gingham at a dry goods store. The store was kept in a trunk, and the trunk stood on the grass floor of a log house that had no door, roof or windows, and on the chinking of which a man [store keeper James A. Emmons] was vigorously daubing mud...In October we had a stove put up in our tent, but in windy weather it was impossible to use it, as the flapping of the canvas walls and roofs either pulled out the stove pipe and filled the tents with smoke, or lifted the stove bodily from the floor and scattered fire over the carpet...<sup>37</sup>

After the season's first snowstorm, Captain Clarke rented two buildings located across Main (north of the post) from Dr. Burleigh. One of these, originally a mess

house for Burleigh's railroad construction crews, consisted of two separate log buildings connected by a floored and covered breezeway. One of these became Clarke's temporary quarters, the other became the Post Surgeon's quarters. The second building was a warehouse, also built of logs; this became the post hospital for that first winter.<sup>38</sup>

When the commanding officer's quarters were completed later that fall, Captain Clarke moved to the post and the Slaughters occupied the entire house until mid-November when, in the midst of a raging blizzard, the rented house burned to the ground.<sup>39</sup> After a brief stay in a local hotel, the Slaughters, upon completion of the Post Surgeon's quarters, also moved back to the post, much to the delight of Mrs. Slaughter who noted:

When our quarters were ready we moved out to Camp Hancock. There were four rooms all elegantly papered with newspapers... Truly sumptuous apartments they seemed to be in comparison with the canvas tents and cabins of unhewn logs, daubed with common mud and boasting merely earthen floors, that formed the homes of the citizens of the town, and we who had braved the glaring heat, the blinding dust, the drifting sand, the stinging mosquito and the chilling storms, under the insecure shelter of a frail and flapping tent, took possession of them with glad and grateful hearts, and of course we gave a party to our friends to signalize the happy event.<sup>40</sup>

Mrs. Slaughter's pleasure, while undoubtedly genuine, was also short lived, because before the year ended, Lieutenant James Humbert, Executive Officer of Company D, was released from detached duty at Fort Rice and returned to his company at Camp Hancock.<sup>41</sup> There being only two officers' quarters at the camp, and because Humbert's status required him to live on the post, Dr. and Mrs. Slaughter relinquished their new quarters and moved back into town.<sup>42</sup>

In addition to protecting the Northern Pacific's workmen and the citizens of Edwinton, the establishment of Camp Hancock allowed substantial changes in the area's communications patterns. Supply trains and mail bound for forts along the Missouri River could be directed

overland along the surveyed line of the railroad [;] and the settlements on the Red River, and the settlements on the Missouri were connected by a direct line of communication. The overland mail route from Fort Stevenson, via Fort Totten to Fort Abercrombie, was abandoned. The Ree scout line from Fort Rice to Grand River fell into disuse. Mail and officers on leave went east from Camp Hancock... [and]...supply teams...now crossing the territory [came] to Edwinton direct from the Minnesota line.<sup>43</sup>

The first train arrived in Edwinton on June 5th, 1873.<sup>44</sup> On June 6th, the post received a new — and presumed temporary — duty as a storage and reshipment point for supplies enroute to the military troops escorting the

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claims that at least one of the moves was made to avoid property damage from occasional flooding of Missouri River bottom lands, but agrees that "squatters" were a primary reason for the relocations.

<sup>26</sup> Various known as Pleasant Point, Whiskey Point or simply "The Point," this settlement was constructed directly opposite Fort McKeen in 1872 by "squatters" hoping to establish land claims that would be purchased by the Northern Pacific Railroad. The site was largely abandoned by permanent settlers, after the railroad opted to lay its tracks through Bismarck. "The Point" eventually became notorious as a "hog ranch," preying on the soldiers of Fort Abraham Lincoln. *Fortress*, pp. 71, 97, 113-114; see also, Bird and Taylor, p. 15; Elizabeth Bacon Custer, *Boots and Saddles: or My Life with General Custer in Dakota* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961), pp. 190-192.

<sup>27</sup> *Fortress*, p. 71, 75.

<sup>28</sup> Josiah Chance, a native of Ohio, enlisted in the Army in 1861.

<sup>29</sup> *Fortress*, p. 77.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 77, 82, 86.

<sup>31</sup> Dennis A. Schneider, "Walter Burleigh: A Political Boss," *The Bismarck Tribune*, July 11, 1973, p. 22.

<sup>32</sup> *Fortress*, pp. 83, 86; Post Returns, Fort McKeen, August, 1873.

<sup>33</sup> *Fortress*, p. 84. James Wall Scully, a native of Ireland, enlisted in the 1st Tennessee Artillery in 1856 and had become a colonel of infantry by the end of the Civil War, after which he was appointed a captain in the Army Quartermaster Corps. (Heitman, p. 871). Scully was transferred to Fort Rice as the Post Quartermaster in April 1872. Post Returns, Fort Rice, April, 1872. The boundary line survey is noted in *Fortress*, p. 84.

<sup>34</sup> The boundary description is based on a map prepared by U.S. Weather Bureau personnel in 1904, contained in a document entitled "Copies of all papers pertaining to the alleged encroachment of the Weather Bureau on the right of way of the Northern Pacific Railway Company at Bismarck, North Dakota," manuscript on file at the Historic Sites Division, State Historical Society of North Dakota, Camp Hancock file, n.p. (hereafter cited as "Encroachment").

<sup>35</sup> Lt. James [E.] Humbert, "Annual Report, 1873" contained in a document entitled, "Report on Application of State Historical Society North Dakota for Camp Hancock Property Bismarck, North Dakota," by Ralph N. Johnson, National Park Service, Region Two, Department of the Interior, 1950; ms. on file at the Historic Sites Division, State Historical Society of North Dakota, Camp Hancock file, (hereafter cited as "NPS"); See also, Post Returns, Camp Hancock, November, 1872 (National Archives Micro Pub. 617, Roll 451 [State Archives and Research Library, Microfilm Roll 4310, State Historical Society of North Dakota, Bismarck]). Humbert notes the date of the order as October 13, while the Post Returns note the date as October 28.

<sup>36</sup> *Fortress*, pp. 87, 109-110.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 87, 88.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, p. 88.

<sup>39</sup> Mrs. Slaughter claims the fire occurred on November 15; the Post Returns give the date as the 20th. *Fortress*, pp. 88-90. Post Returns, Camp Hancock, November, 1872.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 89, 90-91.

<sup>41</sup> James E. Humbert, a native Pennsylvanian, entered the army in 1866 and was assigned as 1st Lieutenant with Company D, 17th Infantry, in 1870. Humbert served with that unit until 1878 when he



Close-up of Camp Hancock in 1883. The letter A indicates the Quartermaster's and Signal Corps offices, B is the original commanding officer's quarters vastly altered, and C is a warehouse. Tents below the terrace were probably for military personnel in transit.

Northern Pacific's engineering party, then surveying the Yellowstone River Valley.<sup>45</sup> By autumn of 1873, Camp Hancock, although planned for only limited duration, was an established and well settled post, albeit one of decidedly spartan facilities.

Roughly in the center of the post, nearly in line with First Street and standing parallel to Main, stood two one-story officers' quarters, each approximately 24 by 45 feet and constructed of hewn logs as were all the post's buildings. Both contained four rooms and had gable roofs, covered porches in front, and a small shed addition at the rear. One of these buildings (originally the Post Surgeon's quarters and later the company First Lieutenant's) was located nearly adjacent to Main Street; the other (the Commanding Officer's quarters) was located about 100 feet further south. Originally, four officers' quarters were to be built, one for each of the three company officers and one for the Post Surgeon,

but the two planned for the middle spaces were never constructed. All were to have faced east, overlooking a small parade ground. Bordering the parade ground on the east was the barracks, a north-south oriented, earthen roofed structure, 100 feet long by approximately 20 feet wide. It is assumed that a kitchen (referred to as "conveniently placed") was attached to the center of the barrack's rear wall, forming a "T" shaped structure, as was common to barracks of the period. The building had six windows for light, two stoves for heat and was furnished with double-sized wooden bunks.<sup>46</sup>

Other buildings comprising the post included two sets of laundresses quarters each 17 by 24 feet; a guardhouse, 17 feet square; a stable, "capable of accommodating twenty-four animals and forage for same..."; and a hospital, 17 by 20 feet. There was no commissary storehouse since rations were drawn from the commissary at Fort Abraham Lincoln. In the absence of a

transferred to the 1st Infantry. Humbert, who was married to a niece of Brevet Major General John C. Gibbon, died on September 20, 1883, presumably of infirmities contracted during his army service. Heitman, p. 554; *Fortress*, p. 109.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109-110.

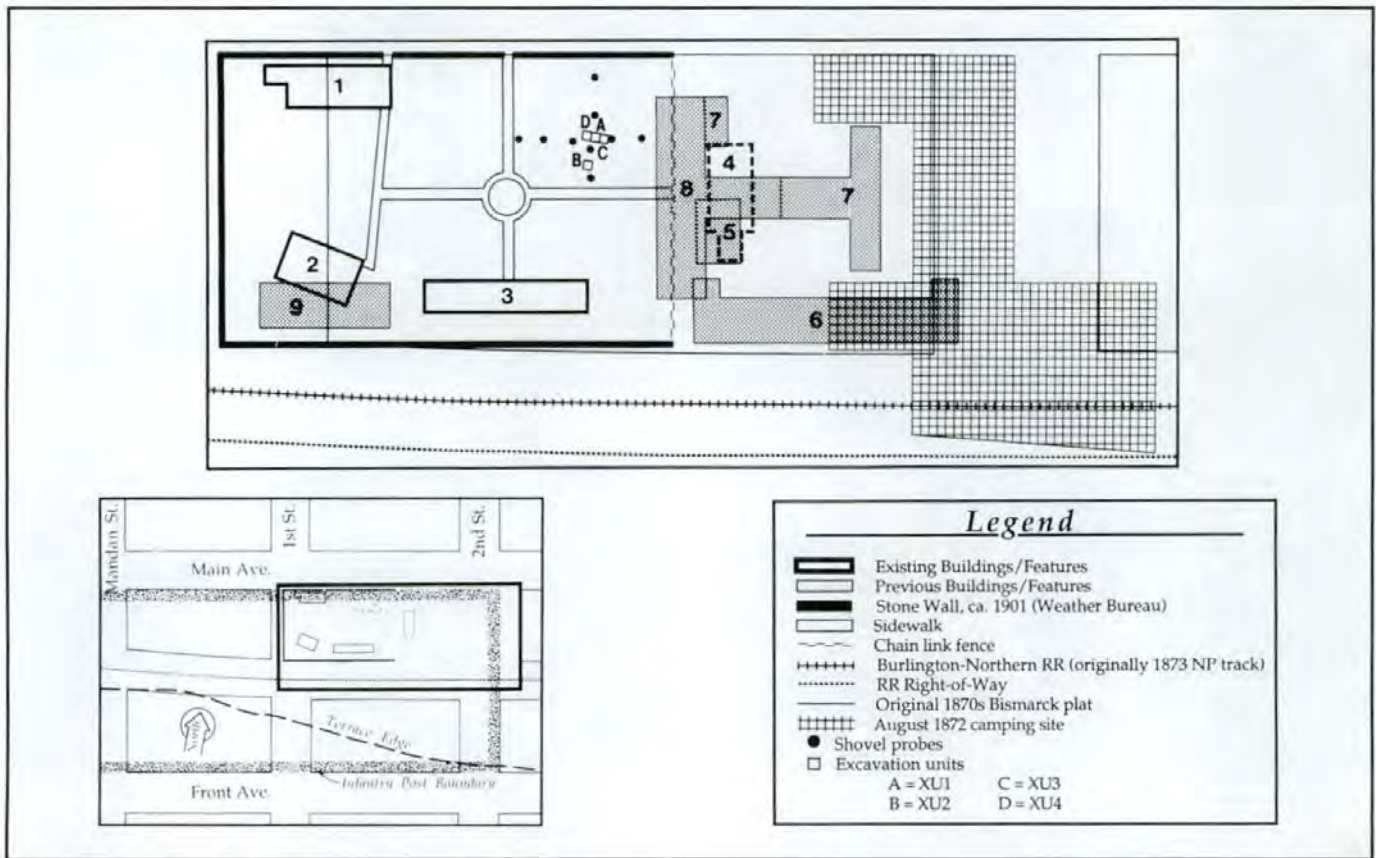
<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 143.

<sup>45</sup> Humbert, Annual Report, in NPS, Section E, n.p.

<sup>46</sup> The descriptions provided are composited from data found in the

following sources: *Fortress*, *passim*; Humbert, "Annual Report" in NPS, Section E, n.p.; B.F. Slaughter and Porter, H.R. "Camp Hancock, Dakota Territory" in U.S. War Department, Surgeon General's Office, *Circular No. 8, Report on Hygiene of the United States Army: With Descriptions of Military Posts*. [John S. Billings, Assistant Surgeon, United States Army] (New York: Sol Lewis, 1974), pp. 409-410; Photo Archives, State Archives and Historical Research Library Division, State Historical Society of North Dakota: photos, 147 D, and A 2280; lithograph entitled, "View of the City of Bismarck, Dak., Capitol of



The locator map (above, left) indicates the area of Camp Hancock in relation to Bismarck. The detailed map (top) is a composite drawing showing approximate locations of site related facilities from 1872 to 1991. 1) Current museum (originally officer's quarters — 1872-1877, quartermaster's offices and signal station — 1877-1894, Weather Bureau offices — 1894-1940); 2) Church of the Bread of Life; 3) 1909 Northern Pacific locomotive; 4) Weather Bureau's station chief residence — 1920s-1950s; 5) warehouse — 1880s; 6) warehouse — 1880s; 7) ca. 1875 addition to the original barracks, including space for a kitchen, bakery, dispensary, hospital, laundry, and carpentry shop; 8) original barracks and mess rooms — 1872-ca. 1875; 9) commanding officer's quarters — 1872-1877, residence of quartermaster's agent — 1877-1890s, residence of Weather Bureau station chief — 1890s-1920s.

suitable building on post, the quartermaster's stores were housed in a rented building in Edwinton. Water was obtained from a well dug on the site, supplemented by quantities hauled from the Missouri River.<sup>47</sup>

In his 1873 annual report, the acting post [and company] commander, First Lieutenant James Humbert requested construction of quarters for the company Second Lieutenant.<sup>48</sup> The response of the Department of Dakota Chief Quartermaster, Major Benjamin C. Card, to this request suggests the Army's still limited intentions towards the post. Card responded:

In view of the probabilities that Camp Hancock as a military post will not be kept up after the coming winter, I recommend that instead of building additional Officers quarters there, that authority to hire...two (2) rooms for that purpose at a rate not to exceed fifteen dollars (\$15) per month per room...<sup>49</sup>

Nonetheless, several changes apparently did occur to the post's layout and facilities during the next couple of

years. In a report published in 1875, but probably prepared in 1873, Dr. B. F. Slaughter and his replacement, Dr. H. R. Porter, provided descriptions somewhat at variance with those cited above.<sup>50</sup> The doctors noted, for example, that "the kitchen and bakery are in a separate building on the south side of the post" and that "the guard-house is 20 by 20 feet, lighted by two windows [and] is comfortably warmed," but with "no separate cell, the prisoners, save for simple offenses, being sent to Fort Abraham Lincoln." They also indicated that a quartermaster's storehouse had been built adjoining the hospital, which they described as consisting of "three wall-tents, framed and floored [and] warmed by two stoves." According to the doctors, the stable was now sufficient for housing only seven animals but was "warm, roomy, and well ventilated," unlike the barracks which they reported as having no means of ventilation at all.<sup>51</sup>

In September of 1873, construction of the Northern Pacific unexpectedly came to a halt when the railroad company went bankrupt along with its bond agent, the Philadelphia banking firm of Jay Cooke and Company,

and the nation entered a period of severe financial recession. With the railroad stalled on the east side of the Missouri, the duties and functions of Camp Hancock began to change. For example, the post's role as a "temporary" storage station for quartermaster's supplies bound for other posts up and down the river and points further west apparently became commonplace. In addition, the post began to be only intermittently occupied. During the massive troop depletions of Fort Rice and Fort Abraham Lincoln occasioned by the 1874 Black Hills expedition and the 1876 Yellowstone campaign, the line troops were recalled from Hancock to bolster the forces on hand at Lincoln. During these periods, only small guard and work details were left to maintain the post's duties.<sup>52</sup>

Despite these apparent changes in function, utilization of the grounds seems to have continued in much the same way as when regularly occupied by the line troops. The eastern and middle thirds of the upper site contained the post's buildings and maintained grounds. The western third was probably used for storage of packaged goods, transport wagons and other bulky materials. That part of the site lying below the terrace appears to have been used as temporary camping grounds for troops in transit, there being ample area in which to set up temporary encampments with at least a modicum of privacy and security and with sufficient grazing for a detachment's animals.<sup>53</sup>

Another — and more propitious — change occurred in 1874 when a Signal Corps "reporting station" was established at Camp Hancock. The U.S. Army Signal Corps, in addition to its name-implied duty of receiving and forwarding military messages, also had the responsibility of collecting data on and maintaining records of the nation's weather patterns; in essence, serving as a national weather bureau, providing weather information to local newspapers, posting local weather bulletins and furnishing printed prognostications to area farmers. The 1874 Signal Corps station was initially established simply to collect weather data and deliver messages, and the

Camp Hancock site may have been used by the Signal Service only intermittently during the early years. However, the station was eventually upgraded to a "1st class station" fully operational for all Signal Corps duties.<sup>54</sup>

By 1877, the post's buildings appear to have undergone substantial adaptation and consolidation. Building diagrams from that year show that the number of rooms had been increased in both the Commanding Officer's quarters and in the First Lieutenant's quarters and that the enlisted men's barracks had been enlarged, apparently to absorb the functions of several buildings that had probably been removed from the site.<sup>55</sup>

The barracks had been lengthened along the stem of the original "T" by the addition of a dining hall, kitchen and bakery. The building had also become I-shaped through the addition of another lateral section containing a carpenter shop, a laundress' quarters, and the hospital and dispensary. Another laundress' quarters had been added to the cross piece of the original "T". The guard house had been enlarged to contain separate prison, guard, and storage rooms, and an ambulance shed had been attached to one exterior wall. The stable, which now included a grain room and a harness room, contained stalls for twelve animals.<sup>56</sup>

As a result of the intensive campaigning that followed the Little Big Horn battle, concerns about possible Indian dangers east of the Missouri River had largely dissipated. With troops now located at Fort Abraham Lincoln as well as at Fort Rice, Camp Hancock was no longer needed as a troop station. Consequently, on April 12, 1877, the last of the line troops (by now Company H, 17th Infantry), were withdrawn from Camp Hancock.<sup>57</sup> However, with the Northern Pacific still stalled at Bismarck—a lingering result of its 1873 bankruptcy—the post was still able to serve the area's military needs by continuing its "temporary" functions as a quartermaster's depot and as a signal station, duties which required only a small staff of technical specialists.

After removal of the line troops, change came rapidly

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Dakota and County Seat of Burleigh County, 1883" (Madison, Wisconsin: J.J. Stoner, 1883).

<sup>47</sup> Humbert, "Annual Report" in NPS, Section E, n.p. None of these structures have been precisely located during this study.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Third Endorsement to, Humbert, "Annual Report" in NPS, Section E, n.p.

<sup>50</sup> Dr. Slaughter resigned his position late in 1872, but agreed to continue his service as Post Surgeon until a replacement could be assigned. By the time Dr. Henry R. Porter arrived in October 1873, Dr. Slaughter had started a private medical practice in Bismarck to serve the civilian populace as well as continuing to serve the army as Post Surgeon. Because the report bears the names of both doctors, it is presumed that the document was compiled principally by Dr. Slaughter but was submitted (and possibly edited) by Dr. Porter, *Fortress*, 101; Post Returns, Camp Hancock, November, 1873.

<sup>51</sup> Slaughter & Porter, "Circular No. 8," pp. 409-410.

<sup>52</sup> The intermittent occupation of the post is indicated by the Post Returns, particularly the substantial periods of time for which there are no returns, which correspond to periods when Fort Abraham Lincoln and Fort Rice were at minimal staff levels. See for example: Post Returns, Camp Hancock, June, 1874 and May, 1876.

<sup>53</sup> There is visual documentation of this area. See State Historical Society of North Dakota Photo Archives, Photo. Col. No. A2280; also, Lithograph, "View of the City of Bismarck...1883."

<sup>54</sup> Report of the Chief Signal-Officer of the Army (Report of the Secretary of War, 1879, House Exec. Doc. 1, Part 2; 2d Sess. 46th Cong., Vol IV. pp. 8-9, 144).

<sup>55</sup> Benjamin C. Card, drawing entitled, "Plans of Buildings at Camp Hancock, D.T., November 1877" (Assistant Quartermaster General, Department of Dakota, St. Paul, Minnesota, 1877). Copy on file, Map Collections Section, State Archives and Historical Research Library Division, State Historical Society of North Dakota, Bismarck).

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

to the post and by 1880 few of the post's earlier buildings remained. The former commanding officer's quarters had become the residence of the Depot Quartermaster; the Lieutenant's (originally the surgeon's) quarters housed offices for the quartermaster's depot and the signal station. The original log barracks had been removed, but several warehouses had been built (either new or remodeled from earlier structures) across the parade ground from the officers' quarters. During the same period the former commanding officer's quarters also underwent several major modifications. A tower-like second story was added to the front part of the building, an addition was placed at the rear, and the whole structure was sheathed with clapboard siding. In 1881, trees were planted near the office building, transforming "the dilapi[d]ated log shanty of two years ago into one of the handsomest and most tidy spots in town."<sup>58</sup>

### Bismarck Weather Bureau Station (1894-1940)

By 1894 Bismarck had changed markedly, though the Camp Hancock site remained much the same. The former town of Edwinton was now the capitol city of the new state of North Dakota. Water, telephone and electrical services were (usually) available for consumer use; and brick business blocks had replaced the canvas, log and many of the wood frame buildings that formerly lined Main Street.<sup>59</sup> Fort Rice was only a memory and Fort Abraham Lincoln just an abandoned shell, since the threat of Indian warfare was gone and with it most of the army. Of all the military posts and camps that had once served the Bismarck area, only Fort Yates (sixty miles south of Mandan) still housed regular line troops and these, like the small technical staff still occupying

Camp Hancock, were almost without military function.

The closing of the area's military posts and the completion of the Northern Pacific and the Great Northern railroads to the west coast eliminated any practical need for the Quartermaster's depot and military message service. Furthermore, in 1890, the weather bureau function had been removed from the mission of the Army Signal Corps and made a responsibility of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.<sup>60</sup> On April 16, 1894, the Department of War gave the Department of Agriculture permission to use the Camp Hancock buildings as a weather station.<sup>61</sup>

By 1899 virtually all of the military-era structures had been removed from the site except for the two original officers' quarters, which stood on their original locations. The former commanding officer's quarters had acquired a full second story in addition to its clapboard siding, and was used as the residence of the Weather Bureau's station chief. The former surgeon's quarters was still a single-story log building standing near Main at First Street, though it had gained a stone basement, and now housed the Bureau's offices. At the opposite end of the parade ground, where first the barracks and later a warehouse had stood, a few small storage buildings were now located. Sometime prior to 1901, a steel weather observation tower—fifty feet high and complete with a crow's nest, weather vane and anemometer—was erected a short distance northeast of the center of the former parade ground, and a little gazebo-like shelter was constructed at almost its exact center.<sup>62</sup>

In October of 1900, the Weather Bureau's Station Chief, B.H. Bronson, requested \$4,505 "to put the property in good order," with projects that included construction of a stone wall and substantial repairs to the "main building."<sup>63</sup> In justifying the repairs Mr. Bron-

<sup>57</sup> Post Returns, Camp Hancock, April, 1877.

<sup>58</sup> Based upon map entitled, "Bismarck, Dakota Ter. July 1888," New York: Sanborn Map and Publishing Co., 1888; see also: Lithograph, View of the City of Bismarck...1883; *Fortress*, p. 87. *Bismarck Tribune*, May 13, 1881.

<sup>59</sup> Thomas M. Heski, 'Icastinyanka Cikaha Hanzi' *The Little Shadow Catcher: D.F. Barry, Celebrated Photographer of Famous Indians* (Seattle: Superior Publishing Company, 1978) pp. 30-31, 33; Bird and Taylor, pp. 93-119, *passim*.

<sup>60</sup> Donald R. Whitnah, *A History of the United States Weather Bureau* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1961), p. 60.

<sup>61</sup> Letter, B.H. Bronson, Section Director, Weather Bureau, Bismarck, to Chief U.S. Weather Bureau, Washington, D.C., September 30, 1902 (see "Encroachment..."). Letter, James Wilson, Secretary of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. to the Secretary of the Interior, January 19, 1904 (see "Encroachment..."). Note that the War Department gave the Weather Bureau permission to use the buildings and grounds; they did not "transfer" the property to the Weather Bureau. That point became a critical factor in a later law suit.

<sup>62</sup> Based upon a map entitled, "Bismarck, Burleigh Co. N.Dak., August 1899" (New York: Sanborn-Perris Map Co., Limited, 1899). Also, Katherine H. Davison, "Reference Service Report" (U.S. Department of Agriculture, Records Section, Natural Resources Records

Branch, n.d.); Photo B 108 (Photo Archives Section, State Archives and Historic Research Library Division, State Historical Society of North Dakota, Bismarck).

<sup>63</sup> For the historic interpretation of the site's present day museum building, Mr. Bronson's use of the term "main building" was unfortunate. Earlier studies of Camp Hancock — undertaken without benefit of currently available visual evidence — apparently concluded that the "main building" referred to was the Weather Bureau's office building that had been constructed in 1881, incorporating elements of one or more of the 1872 structures. However, this conclusion was in error. A portion of the old commanding officer's quarters — used in 1881 as the residence of the Quartermaster Department's agent — was demolished in 1881. Another portion was salvaged and attached (the addition) to a new section previously added to the original construction. It was this new section that was referred to by Mr. Bronson as the "main building," which was being threatened by the continued deterioration of the old part. Consequently, for the past forty years the present museum building has been misinterpreted as being an 1881 structure containing parts of 1872 camp buildings when, in fact, it is actually the original Post Surgeon's quarters, later the Post Executive Officer's quarters. See, Photo No. A 2280; Lithograph, View of the City of Bismarck...1883; Map, entitled, "Bismarck, Dakota Ter...1888,"; Map entitled, "Bismarck, Burleigh Co. N. Dak...1899; Map entitled,



By 1906, all the improvements announced over the previous five years for the Weather Bureau Station had been accomplished and the grounds had taken on the neat and tidy appearance of a government experimental farm. A four feet high stone fence now surrounded the entire plot.



son provided the following description:

The addition mentioned is one of the buildings originally built here in 1872; in 1881 this addition was moved back, and the main building constructed at a cost of...\$4,800. The walls of the old part are now giving way, the floor is sinking down, and unless substantially repaired will involve the main building in ruins.<sup>64</sup>

The requested monies were approved, and over the next several years a series of changes occurred at the site. In May of 1901, plans were announced concerning remodeling of Station Director Bronson's residence (the former commanding officer's quarters), including demolishing the old kitchen and building a new two-story addition with bedrooms above. The existing front porch was also to be replaced. The Bureau's offices (the former surgeon's quarters) were also to be extensively renovated: walls were to be lathed and plastered, a new steel ceiling installed, and woodwork replaced with new quarter-sawn, polished oak. A new steam plant was to

be installed to heat both buildings, the old barns were to be demolished and a new barn built, and a "broken" ashlar stone fence, four feet high, twenty inches wide and one thousand feet long was to be built around the perimeter of that part of the property lying north of the Northern Pacific's tracks. Other improvements were soon announced, including the construction of concrete walkways around and within the grounds, plantings of hardy shrubs and trees, and the addition of a second story to the office building.<sup>65</sup>

By 1906, after all the improvements of the previous five years, the grounds had taken on a very tidy, if somewhat sterile, appearance. On the site of the former commanding officer's quarters now stood a two-story, hip roofed residence with a bracketed cornice and a balustered, wooden front porch with a matching balcony. Still on its original location in the northwestern corner of the site stood the Weather Bureau office building, now a two-story structure with a gabled roof and two sets of cross gabled dormers. In the southeastern corner of grounds stood a small storage barn and the

"Bismarck Burleigh County, North Dakota, November 1904" (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1904), p. 7; map entitled, Bismarck, Burleigh Co. N. Dakota, 1908" (New York: Sanborn Map Company), p. 11. See also, *Fortress*, p. 87.

<sup>64</sup> NPS, Section E, n.p.

<sup>65</sup> *The Bismarck Tribune*, May 31, June 6, June 8, June 10, June 21, August 16, 1901 and September 13, 1901.

<sup>66</sup> Photo # B 108; Map entitled, "Bismarck, Burleigh County, North Dakota, November 1904" (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1904), p. 7.

<sup>67</sup> Letter, James Wilson, Secretary of Agriculture to Secretary of the Interior, January 19, 1904.

<sup>68</sup> See "Encroachment..." *passim*. One of the central issues appears to have been the fact that the War Department had never officially yielded possession of the site. Generally, opinion was that the Army

had "transferred" the land to the Weather Bureau. If they had, federal lawyers thought the railroad's claim might have validity from the time of the Army's relinquishment. However, because the Army only gave permission to use the buildings and land, possession had never been broken.

<sup>69</sup> Based upon photos No. Col 95-53, 95-94 (Photo Archives Section, State Archives and Historic Research Library Division, State Historical Society of North Dakota, Bismarck.); map entitled, "Bismarck, Burleigh County, North Dakota, February 1927" (New York: Sanborn Map Company of New York, 1927), p. 17.

<sup>70</sup> "Camp Hancock Future Undecided" (*Bismarck Tribune*, June 28, 1949, photos A 4319, A 4320 (Photo Archives Section, State Archives and Historic Research Library Division, State Historical Society of North Dakota, Bismarck)).

northeastern corner was given over to gardening.<sup>66</sup>

The Weather Bureau administration had spent over \$10,000 to "put the property in good order" and must have been satisfied with these improvements, for few additional changes appear to have occurred for a considerable while.<sup>67</sup> Suddenly, however, the Bureau was forced to vigorously defend its investments. In 1902, the Northern Pacific began questioning the Bureau's occupancy of the property, contending that the property was part of the railroad's original land grant and that the government had no right to be there. For fifteen years the fight persisted, centering around the railroad's alleged changes of proposed river crossing points versus the government's continual possession and use of the site since 1872, despite the absence of an official military reservation. To finally settle the issue, the case was placed before the U.S. District Court in Fargo and on January 6, 1917, the Court entered Decree No. 78, in which essentially all the contested land north of the railroad tracks was granted to the United States and all the contested land lying south of that now affirmed to the government was relinquished to the railroad.<sup>68</sup>

The last known major change to the grounds wrought

by the Weather Bureau occurred before 1927, by which time the large two-story house formerly located in the site's southwestern corner had been removed to a new location approximately where the barracks had stood. The small storage barn that had stood in the southeastern corner of the property had been replaced with a two-stall automobile garage next to the Director's house. Perhaps during the same period (the date has not yet been determined), a wooden observation tower was added to the roof of the office building, which remained intact until the early 1950s when it was removed by the State Historical Society.<sup>69</sup>

When, in January of 1940, the Weather Bureau moved their operations to new facilities prepared for them at the Bismarck Municipal Airport, the vacated Camp Hancock grounds had taken on a decidedly park-like appearance with the little gazebo standing at the center of an expanse of well manicured lawns, flower gardens, walkways and a profusion of trees and shrubs. The old Surgeon's quarters, its origins and history obscured by failed memories and the passage of the time, remained on its original location, much altered but still a sturdy and worthy monument to the passage of the frontier.<sup>70</sup>

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## Conclusions

The 1988 archeological testing program revealed prehistoric as well as historic occupations of the area encompassed by Camp Hancock State Historic Site. The investigation was originally conducted at Camp Hancock to determine the archeological potential of an area threatened with disturbance. In the process, an Archaic period component was discovered and the historic site researched. Because the Camp Hancock site contains undisturbed Archaic period cultural deposits, it contributes to our knowledge of where people lived, what they ate, how tools were made and used, and the extent of interaction of human groups living in this region several thousand years ago. The examination of the historic documents brought to light a clearer understanding of the role of Camp Hancock during the military era in North Dakota. The approximate locations of military era buildings were determined as were areas that have subsequently been disturbed or altered.

From this initial work at Camp Hancock State Historic Site, it is evident that only the surface has been scratched of a site that is much more important than previously thought. Additional archival and archeological investigations are planned for 1992. At that time the proposed locations of the barracks and the commanding officers' quarters will be investigated. In addition, further research concerning operational details of the infantry post will be conducted, including clarifying Camp Hancock's role in the Quartermaster Corp, and seeking explanation for its apparent independence although sur-

rounded by other posts such as Fort Abraham Lincoln.

Likewise, there are a number of questions concerning the prehistoric component of Camp Hancock. The recent archeological work suggests the presence of datable remains at the site. Radiocarbon dating of carbonized or organic materials could more precisely place this prehistoric site in time. Further excavations could also provide more information about subsistence activities, seasons of site occupation, climate, tool production—the list goes on and on. As additional work explicates Camp Hancock's several roles as a prehistoric campsite, historic infantry post, signal corps station, and weather station, the public will benefit from a far more interesting and accurate interpretation of this important though too long ignored North Dakota historic site.

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