

The San Francisco Quartermaster Depot, 1847-1928

By Bertha Bash

The Quartermaster Review, May-June 1929

"PEACE hath her victories no less renowned than war"-the line might have been written of the early military occupation of California. To put down the half hearted resistance of the Mexican-Californian forces, few in numbers, and pitifully ill-equipped, was no very brilliant feat; but to establish and maintain a military organization in that remote outpost was a brilliant feat, in which the Quartermaster Corps played a leading part. The Corps can look back with pride to the work of its early representatives on the Pacific Coast, accomplishing their prosaic but indispensable tasks in the teeth of fantastic difficulties.

One of the first acts of General Stephen Watts Kearny, after the conquest, was to order the establishment of a quartermaster depot on San Francisco Bay. Upon the arrival in that port March 6, 1847, of the first troops from the States, Stevenson's New York Volunteers, he detailed the regimental quartermaster, Captain J. L. Folsom (a West Point graduate and lieutenant in the regular army), to choose a location, open and operate this depot. Not until 1849 were the scattered troops in the territory organized as the Pacific Division. Since the depot has been functioning continuously from 1847, it claims the distinction of being the oldest military establishment on the Coast.

FOUNDATION AMID DIFFICULTIES

Captain Folsom opened his office in the Mexican custom house in Yerba Buena, the name at that time of the miserable little settlement that afterward became the city of San Francisco. For his stores, he hired the only two warehouses in the place, down by the beach, near what is now the intersection of Sansome and California Streets. Two miles and a half away, there were empty barracks at the Presidio, but the road thither was a mere trail across the sand dunes, impassable to loaded wagons. General Sherman in his memoirs describes Yerba Buena as it looked in 1847. "At that day Montgomery Street was as now, the business street, extending from Jackson to

Sacramento, the water of the bay barely leaving room for a few houses on its east side. Around the Plaza were a few houses, among them the Custom House and the City Hotel, single story adobes with tiled roofs, and they were by far the most substantial and best houses in the place. The population was estimated at about 400, of whom Kanakas, from the Sandwich Islands, formed the bulk. At the foot of Clay Street was a small wharf, which small boats could reach at high tide, but the principal landing place was where some stones had fallen into the water, about where Broadway now intersects Battery Street."

The depot quartermaster's duties and difficulties were many. In the first years, procurement of necessary supplies depended upon his individual efforts. For clothing for the troops and for many other stores, he sent to the Sandwich Islands, three or four weeks away by sailing vessel. Honolulu was a point of call for the great whaling fleet, a metropolis compared to any place in California. In 1848, we find Captain Folsom ordering from Valparaiso, Chili, barley for the dragoons' horses; horse shoes and horse shoe nails; and stationery and sperm candles for his own office, "there being none to be had anywhere in California". Another of the difficulties of the office was to procure the cash for these purchases. The government drafts must be sent to the Sandwich Islands, or South America, and specie obtained at 20 or 21 per cent discount. Again and again Colonel Richard Barnes Mason, who succeeded Kearny both as commander of the troops and as military governor, beseeches Washington for more staff officers, especially Quartermasters. "Captain Folsom," he writes, "is the only assistant quartermaster in the department. I am very much in want of disbursing officers. I will be obliged to send Captain Marcy, the only assistant commissary, to Mazatlan as distributing officer there. . . . I hope both an experienced quartermaster and paymaster are now on their way here. A paymaster in New York could pay troops in all the principal cities of Europe and part of India, with more ease than one can pay in Upper and Lower California, such is the difficulty of communication. Major Rich left this port on the 22d of October last, to make a payment at La Paz (Lower California), and did not return till the 29h of March. He was fortunate in getting back so soon, as the general probability was, he would have to return via the Sandwich Islands." If such was the difficulty of paying the troops, the greater difficulty of supplying them may be imagined.

The treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, on February 2d, 1848, fixed the status of California as a permanent United States possession. In a few months thereafter army stores had begun to arrive on every vessel from the Atlantic. But the quartermaster's troubles were only increased thereby, for the gold rush was on. The two warehouses overflowed; there was none other to be hired, and the stores piled up on the open beach. Every able bodied man in the territory wanted to be at the mines. Sailors deserted their vessels before the cargoes could be unloaded; the soldiers at the Presidio deserted in such numbers that there were not enough faithful men left to arrest the deserters. Folsom was paying \$10 a day to civilian guards for his stores, he could not at any price hire stevedores to lighten his supplies from the ships in the harbor to the beach. He writes in the summer of '48 to his classmate Sherman, at the capital at Monterey:

"The most mortifying state of affairs prevails here. Government, both civil and military, is abandoned. Offenses are committed with impunity, and property, and lives even are no longer safe. Last night the crew of the Chilean bark *Correo* rose upon their officers with arms in their hands, and after driving them into the cabin, the vessel was robbed and the men escaped up the Sacramento in the long boat. Acts of disgraceful violence occur almost daily aboard the shipping. My office is left with a large amount of money and gold dust in it. If it is possible to send a vessel of war here, it should be done at once."

An important responsibility of the depot was to maintain communication with Monterey; the express riders who carried the mail twice a week between San Francisco and the capital were Quartermaster employees. Water transportation was also a Quartermaster activity. A sort of scow with a sail was bought and operated to unload cargoes, and to cruise the bay after hay and lumber; the water at San Francisco was so shallow that it took almost a day to pole the loaded scow up to the only wharf. In addition, there were hired or bought four or five small seagoing vessels to ply up and down the coast to the various army outposts. One at least of this fleet, the barque *Anita*, was armed. "She answers all the purposes of a sloop of war", writes Colonel Mason, with pride. Thus we see that transport service is no new undertaking for the corps, and that the operation of a warship is nothing more in a Quartermaster's life than the operation of a scow.

MILITARY AND CIVIL ESTABLISHMENT

In January, 1849, began a new chapter in the military history of California. Two years earlier, Colonel Mason improvised a military and a civil establishment to carry on in the new territory 'till its permanent fate should be decided. For nearly two years, Congress did nothing whatever to help him; it seemed to be all but unaware that California existed. No policy was laid down to guide him; no assistance was sent him. He formed an official family chosen from among the officers of his small command. Young Lieut. Henry W. Halleck, of the Engineer Corps, went on his civil staff as Secretary of State; young Lieut. William Tecumseh Sherman, of the 3d Artillery, on his military staff, as Adjutant General; young Captain Folsom of the volunteers, very lately a second lieutenant in the 5th Infantry, organized and administered the Quartermaster Depot, which supplied a territory from the bay of San Francisco on the north to the southern tip of Lower California, and supplied it successfully, earning a handsome official tribute from the grim old war dog in command.

But now, in the beginning of 1849, a permanent military establishment was initiated. Maj. Gen. Persifor F. Smith, a veteran of the Mexican War, arrived with a staff of experienced officers, to organize the Division of the Pacific. One of Colonel Mason's last official acts had been to authorize Captain Folsom to build a storehouse in San Francisco (as Yerba Buena had now been rechristened). The lease of his rented warehouses would run out in July, and a depot must be had, at whatever preposterous price for materials and labor. But General Smith put a stop to this project. On first setting foot in San Francisco he became of opinion that the site was the poorest possible for a military establishment, and that a better one could and must be found immediately, somewhere else on the shores of the great bay. "The town of San Francisco", he wrote, "is in no way fitted for military or commercial purposes; there is no harbor, a bad landing place, bad water, no supplies of provisions, an inclement climate, and it is cut off from the rest of the country, except by a long circuit around the southern extremity of the bay. * * * There are points on the bay, more inland, having good harbor and landings, good water, and open to the whole country in rear, and accessible without difficulty to ships of the largest class."

General Smith lost no time in setting out to seek this ideal location. A joint board of the two services decided on the Straits of Carquinez as the suitable spot for the

naval and military establishments. Mare Island, chosen at that time, is the naval base to this day, but Benicia survives only as an arsenal.

As there was no accommodation for troops at Benicia, which place consisted of little more than a name, General Smith made his headquarters some miles inland at Sonoma (scene of the Bear Flag rebellion), where an old Spanish cuartel served as barracks for his troops. The climate of Sonoma is delightful, but it had no other advantage as a military center, and in 1851, after barracks and quarters had been erected in Benicia, the commanding general moved his headquarters thither.

NEW LOCATION AT BENICIA

When Captain Folsom was ordered, early in 1849, to build a depot and a military post at Benicia, he found himself without materials, without labor, without anything but a site. His first storehouse was the French brig "Julie", which was bought and anchored close to shore, and served as warehouse, office and living quarters. Some years later, when the Quartermaster Department had vacated it, this ship was still housing officers and men. On the first of July, 1849, Maj. Robert Allen (later to distinguish himself greatly in the Civil War as Chief Quartermaster of Missouri and of the Valley of the Mississippi) arrived as Depot Quartermaster and to take charge of the building operations. His report to Quartermaster General Jesup gives a picture of the time. "The Quartermaster stores", he writes, "had been transferred to this location from San Francisco and were piled on the ground near where it was proposed to erect storehouses, having no cover but old sails and no protection but the watchfulness of a single agent. * * * One-half the men of the two companies stationed here had deserted. The remainder refused to work unless paid the mining value of labor, and could not be trusted to guard public property. Their commanding officer was afraid to issue arms to them, and did not attempt to exact from them any extra duty whatever. I had accordingly to depend on hired labor, which proved to be of a transient and inferior character."

Sherman speaks also of the building of Benicia: "Major Allen was building a large warehouse, with a row of quarters, Out of lumber at one hundred dollars per thousand feet, and the work done by men at sixteen dollars a day. I have seen a detailed soldier, who only got his monthly pay of eight dollars a month, and twenty cents a day for extra

duty, nailing on weatherboards and shingles alongside a citizen who was paid sixteen dollars a day. This was a real injustice, made the soldiers discontented, and it was hardly to be wondered at that so many deserted."

Sherman's memory minimized rather than exaggerated the cost of these buildings, for Major Allen says in his report: "On July 1, 1849, lumber was selling at San Francisco for five hundred dollars a thousand. A better quality could be purchased in New York for twelve dollars, in Maine for ten."

To bring down the cost of lumber, the Quartermaster's Department rented a tract of timberland at Corte Madera, in Marin County, and there erected a small sawmill, operated at first by horse power. It was a matter for congratulation when Major Allen was able to procure a steam engine for it.

Sometimes there came a dramatic incident to vary the Quartermaster's worried existence, such as the sending in the winter of 1849 of a relief expedition to the immigrants snowbound in the mountains. Those who arrived earlier in the fall reported thousands behind them, with worn-out animals and little food. General Smith decided to attempt relief. He ordered Maj. D. H. Rucker, Assistant Quartermaster, to be supplied with a hundred thousand dollars out of the Civil Fund, to purchase supplies and hire men and mules to send out and meet the immigrants. "Major Rucker," relates Sherman, "performed his duty perfectly, sending out pack trains by the many routes by which the immigrants were known to be approaching, went himself with one of these trains and remained in the mountains till the last immigrant had got in. This expedition saved many a life." The selection of Rucker was only one illustration of the dependence always placed upon the depot in cases of emergency.

The situation of Benicia as the site for the main depot proved more and more unsatisfactory. As early as 1850, Maj. D. H. Vinton of the Quartermaster Corps, who had been sent out from Washington to report on activities in the Pacific Division, wrote his chief as follows:

"The difficulties attending, at present, the sending of supplies from the United States, are mostly found in the transshipment of commodities into vessels bound for Benicia. This would seem to superinduce the necessity of a resident agent in San

Francisco. It is the wish and intention of General Smith that no officer of the army shall be stationed permanently in San Francisco.

EARLY GROWTH OF SAN FRANCISCO

Despite General Smith's contempt, the young city at the Golden Gate was growing by leaps and bounds, due very largely to the shrewd act of its leading citizens in changing its name from Yerba Buena to San Francisco. Yerba Buena and Benicia were alike unheard of outside California, but the name of the great bay was known in every port in the world. Ships arrived from all over the globe, consigned to San Francisco, and naturally dropped anchor off the settlement of that name. Captains and crews making off for the gold mines, there the ships and their loads remained, and there the city had to be. Its wooden houses were again and again destroyed by fires, and again and again rose from their ashes; the sand hills were leveled and the soil used to fill in the "tide lots", the mud flats between the solid ground and deep water; despite all calamities and discouragements, San Francisco lived and grew. While Benicia, with its sheltered natural anchorage, its excellent climate, free of the fogs cold winds and sandstorms that afflicted its rival, its convenient location at the gate to the Sacramento Valley and the mines, obstinately refused to grow. In 1852, Gen. Ethan Allen Hitchcock moved the headquarters of the Pacific Division and the main office of the Quartermaster Depot back to San Francisco. For several years, offices and storehouses were maintained in both places. General Wool, from 1855-1857, again tried to command the division from Benicia, but though the Chief Quartermaster of the division took station there, he found it necessary to keep his assistant in San Francisco, and to spend a large part of his own time in the city. The depot in San Francisco had been steadily growing, that in Benicia dwindling. After 1857, the struggle to carry out General Smith's scheme was abandoned; headquarters again returned to San Francisco, and we find no further mention of Benicia in the Quartermaster records.

The depot, then, was born in the Spanish custom house. the "Old Adobe" on the Plaza, now Portsmouth Square. This building was destroyed in the fire of 1852. In the meantime, the office of the Depot Quartermaster had been in a tent on the beach in San Francisco; in a tent on the beach in Benicia; on the old hulk "Julie" in Benicia; and later in a wooden storehouse there, built by Major Allen. At the time of

the fire of 1852, it was located in San Francisco in Folsom's Iron Building, at California and Leidesdorf Streets, which withstood the flames. A little later, the office of the depot was moved to Parrott's Granite Building, at California and Montgomery Streets, where it remained for more than a decade. This structure, built by Chinese workmen out of granite brought from China, survived the earthquake and fire of 1906, remaining unchanged with its sidewalks of granite blocks till a year or two ago it was laboriously torn down to make room for a skyscraper.

In the next years, the depot moved several times about the business district, its latest and longest stay during this period being at the corner of Stockton and O'Farrell Streets. The year 1881 found it settled at 36 New Montgomery Street, just behind the Palace Hotel, where it operated for twenty-five years, long enough for "36 New Montgomery" to become a well-known synonym for the San Francisco Quartermaster Depot. In 1906, the old office went up in smoke, its only surviving relic being the brass bell from the front door, now in my possession. After the fire, the depot moved to the Fontana Building at Van Ness Avenue and North Point Street, the site of the Pioneer Woolen Mills of the fifties and sixties, just outside the reservation of Fort Mason. In 1915, it moved again, this time into the reservation, where it remains. At last, its offices, warehouses, shops and piers, are all on government land.

One of the earliest exploits of the depot, after its return from Benicia to San Francisco, was the outfitting and supply, in 1858, of the troops for the "Modoc War", Col. George Wright's expedition against the hostile Indians of Oregon and Washington. "A more successful campaign," says General Jesup, Quartermaster General of the Army, in his report, "has never before been witnessed in the whole course of our history. The measures required to put the troops in the field and to supply them in the extensive theater covered by their operations were promptly adopted and ably carried out by Lieutenant Colonel Swords, Deputy Quartermaster General, aided by Major Allen, Captain Jordan, Captain Ingalls, and Captain Kirkham, Assistant Quartermasters. Great credit is due all these officers." Col. Thomas Swords, an officer of uncommon experience and ability, considerably Senior to the others, was Chief Quartermaster of the Division; Maj. Robert Allen, as we have seen, was Depot Quartermaster, with Capt. R. W.

Kirkham as his assistant. When, after a service of nearly ten years on the coast, Allen was ordered to the front in 1861, Kirkham succeeded to the command of the depot, where he did most valuable work during the Civil War. In 1865 he was brevetted Brigadier General, for faithful and meritorious services in the Quartermaster Corps during the war. Resigning from the army in 1870, he made his home in the place where he had served so long, and became one of the best-known citizens of the bay region. Like Folsom, he was paid the honor of having a street in San Francisco named for him.

Kirkham, as most of our officers prior to the Civil War, was a graduate of the Military Academy, and a veteran of Mexico, where he had twice been brevetted for gallantry; but the two Assistant Quartermasters who served under him at the depot, each of whom succeeded to command of it, came in for the emergency without previous experience. Capt. J. T. Hoyt was a lawyer of San Francisco, Quartermaster of Volunteers; he was brevetted Major in 1864 for faithful and meritorious service, and received a commission in the Regular Army as Captain and Quartermaster. Capt. R. L. Ogden was a wealthy business man, an early member of the Bohemian Club, and a president of the San Francisco Yacht Club. Both these officers were men of ability and highest patriotism, and so well trained under Major Kirkham that their work throughout the war won nothing but praise. Both returned to civil life, their corps parting from them with regret.

For the greater part of his service, Captain Ogden was in charge of the Clothing Depot, which was established in 1861, as a quasi-independent branch of the main depot, to procure garments and equipage for the volunteers. The West Coast was famous for its wool, and the blue uniform cloth, underwear, and blankets, which the Clothing Depot procured from the Pioneer Woolen Mills of San Francisco and from other mills of California and Oregon, were the real thing, and not "shoddy", as was so much of the misnamed "woolen goods" supplied to our soldiers in the Civil War. Like California gold, California fleece played its part in winning the war. The Coast contributed leather goods also, in shoes and various articles of equipment.

In 1871, a bright official mind (not in the Quartermaster Corps) conceived the idea of saving money for the government by moving the entire Clothing Depot and the storehouses of the main depot over to Goat Island, in the harbor. The government

owned the island, and there would be no rent to pay. The fact that there were no facilities there for storing or handling the goods; that everything must be transhipped to and from the island, at great inconvenience and expense, was not considered. Wooden storehouses and a few sets of quarters were run up, and the move was attempted. The main office of the depot remained in San Francisco; twenty years earlier, when the experiment had been tried of locating the depot at Benicia, it had been found indispensable to maintain the business office in San Francisco, and so it was now. This second effort to handle supplies from an out-of-the-way and inconvenient base ended just as the first had done. By the end of 1873, all Quartermaster activities were back in the city. The Clothing Depot continued to function as a separate establishment till 1898, usually in command of one of those now obsolete officers of the Quartermaster Corps, known as Military Store Keepers.

During the uneventful years between '65 and '98, one of the achievements of the depot was the reclamation and beautification of the sand dunes that constituted the Presidio. In 1888 and 1889, under the direction of Lieut. Col. R. N. Batchelder, more than \$60,000 from two congressional appropriations was spent on the roads and walls of the Presidio, and especially on trees. Fifty-five thousand acacias, pines, cypresses and eucalyptus were set out on the windswept sand hills, together with about five thousand native redwood, spruce and madrone. Very nearly all these trees grew, till now the Presidio is densely wooded over much of its extent, thereby greatly improved in climate as well as in looks.

As long as forty years ago, Colonel Batchelder was concerned about the water supply of the reservation, "poor in quality and insufficient in quantity". he remarks. His description is still applicable.

NEED FOR A TRANSPORT SERVICE

The outbreak of the Spanish-American War, in 1898, found the depot in command of Captain-later, Brigadier General-Oscar F. Long, a most resourceful and efficient officer with a fine record of accomplishment in the line. The immediate result of Dewey's victory in May was a demand for troops to take and hold Manila. The War Department had few Regulars to spare, but soon had a large force of volunteers mobilized in San Francisco and awaiting transportation. The supply and fitting out of

these new regiments threw a tremendous strain upon the depot, which, of course, had not carried in stock during peace time the various kinds and amounts of stores and equipment now needed. American troops had never before been called upon to operate at such a distance from the home country, under tropical conditions, against an enemy whose very name had never been heard of. Not even a cotton uniform had yet been adopted; and no one could guess many necessities of Philippine service that afterwards become commonplace. Hence, the duty of the Quartermaster was not only to find means of filling requisitions but to instruct the troops what to requisition for. Despite all the difficulties, each contingent sailed provided with the essentials, and there was no suffering. This achievement was made possible by the fine cooperation of the volunteers, whose patriotism and ardent desire to see active service inspired them to help in every way. The task of supply was also greatly simplified by the fact that the depot was directly under the control of the Quartermaster General, who wisely allowed his local Quartermaster great initiative, backing him up in all he did. Such a condition in wartime necessarily results in elimination of red tape, with consequent efficiency.

But the supply problem, knotty at it was, could be solved by the application of routine principles. The prime difficulty was the transportation of men and animals across the Pacific Ocean, in time of war, and the landing of them in an unknown hostile country fit for immediate service.

True, troops have been transported by the sea since the dawn of history. Our corps had shipped many to Mexico and California during the Mexican War, but that had been many years ago under different conditions, and there were no data at hand for guidance. Furthermore, there was but little suitable shipping available on the Pacific Coast.

In brief, a transport service had to be improvised on the spot. An account of how every suitable ship (and some not so suitable) was chartered, a shore organization collected, steamers rebuilt and refitted would make a most interesting story for which there is no space here. The first expedition was started in such old tubs as the "Indiana", "Ohio" and "Senator", all of which reached their destination safely and remained in service for several years—good examples of the sound military principle of utilizing the means at hand, and a credit to the ability of those who provided them.

Meantime, the best brains in the Department were at work upon the building up of a permanent fleet, and the organization of the Army Transport Service. The latter was the hardest task, but was brilliantly performed by adopting the administrative methods of any large commercial steamship line, efficiency of management with consequent efficiency of service being the guiding principle. It was prescribed that the Army Transport Service should be a special service of the Quartermaster's Department, as nearly independent as possible under the law, and with its own officers. At each principal port was a General Superintendent under the direct control of the Quartermaster General, with assistants in each subport, thus providing a simple and military chain of responsibility and command. The principles of the first Army Transport Service Regulations have never been improved upon.

San Francisco was the most important port in the country from the transport standpoint, and the depot soon had a fine fleet of its own operating from rented docks at the foot of Folsom Street—the street named very appropriately for the depot's first Quartermaster, superintendent of the first transport service, in 1847. Included in the modern service were the Sherman, Sheridan, Logan, Grant, Hancock, Meade, Burnside, Crook, Buford, Hooker and Thomas, the last the only one still on the list today. All these vessels were built for other lines and other purposes. The Sheridan, Sherman, Logan and Thomas, to mention the four which so long constituted the regular fleet after the emergency was past and the other vessels were sold or laid up—these four, the largest and best of the service, were old ships of the Atlantic Transport Co., the cattle line between New York and London. They were well built and staunch, and have done wonderful service on the Pacific; but they were not new when we got them, and what with constant repairs and with successive alterations in attempts to adapt them to a purpose they were never planned for, they have cost in the long run more than new ships built for transports. Shall we ever achieve an army transport, planned for an army transport, planned by an army transport service that through years of experience has learned to know what is wanted?

NEW PROBLEMS AND NEW FEATS OF THE DEPOT

The years following the Spanish War brought increased responsibilities and new problems to the depot, which now had to supply not only Hawaii and the Philippines

but also Alaska, whose garrison, though small, was far scattered, with peculiar needs of its own. After the Boxer uprising, in 1901, a regiment in North China was added to the list of the depot's wards.

The great disaster of April 18, 1906, wiped out the depot building with all its stock, but this loss was only another test of the efficiency of the organization. Again the resourcefulness and ability of its officers were worthy of the highest traditions of the Corps. A new and more commodious storehouse was immediately rented in the unburned district. Purchases were made in open market with a lavish hand, new stocks rolled in as fast as railroads were in shape to handle shipments, bakeries and food stations were established to feed the destitute and the efficient trained personnel were foremost in the relief measures, cooperating with General Funston so as to earn the deep gratitude of the people of San Francisco. In talking of those trying times, people still refer affectionately to Maj. C. A. Devol and his ever-ready help in saving a tragic situation. As in every disaster occurring in this country, the army tent was the sign of succor.

Not long after the fire the War Department began work on its own docks, making a fill at the west of Fort Mason, and building three concrete piers, with a number of warehouses and shops. The Transport Service was operating from there in 1911, though it was 1915 before all the Quartermaster activities were withdrawn from rented buildings in the city.

In 1912 came the consolidation of the Quartermaster, Pay and Subsistence Departments into the new Corps, the trying task of reorganization being in the competent hands of Maj. John T. Knight. It was no small undertaking to weld three distinct services, each with its own organization and traditions, into one compact harmonious whole, especially when the "Manchu" provisions of the law resulted in the simultaneous relief from duty of practically all officers serving by detail from the line. The pessimists predicted that it could never be done, but the Quartermaster Corps did it.

Our entrance into the World War called to command of the depot the same Devol who had been its head in the earthquake time, eleven years earlier. A major general now, the brilliant reputation he brought from the Canal Zone was an assurance of his

performance in this emergency. In the beginning, it was supposed that all army activities would be on the East Coast, and consequently the depot was badly crippled by the transfer of its regular officers and highly trained civilian personnel to eastern stations. When it was decided to send an expedition to Siberia, a hurried expansion became necessary. A large number of emergency officers was assigned, some of whom were leaders in the business life of California, but none of whom was familiar with Army administration. As is usual in our service, their training had to proceed coincidentally with their work, but they learned in that most valuable school experience. Fortunately, as it was wartime, the bonds of red tape were relaxed, and General Devol was given a free hand. The troops were shipped to Vladivostok, supplied during their long sojourn in that bleak latitude, and finally brought home, without a hitch. Later, a transport was dispatched to that same port to rescue the famous battalion of Czecho-Slovakians who had fought a running fight with the Bolsheviks clear across Siberia.

Another feat of the San Francisco Transport Service deserves mention. General Pershing found himself short of tugs for handling arriving ships in France. None were available, so the Quartermaster General bethought himself of that fine vessel, the Slocum-the pride of San Francisco harbor-and ordered her to Brest via the Panama Canal and various way ports. After invaluable service throughout the war, she steamed back to San Francisco.

During the war period, when storage space was a crying need, many temporary storehouses were built on the Fort Mason reservation as well as at the Presidio. Some of these unsightly, inconvenient fire traps are still standing and in use, for want of replacement. It is a pity that the War Department did not foresee that San Francisco is predestined by its natural situation always to be the supply point on the Pacific Coast and did not take advantage of the abundant funds always available in wartime to build a magnificent and monumental base. It is sad to think of what could have been accomplished for a part of the money expended at certain eastern ports that have since been abandoned.

Col. John T. Knight took command of the depot during the post-war deflation period and carried out the difficult job of retrenchment to a peace basis, as competently as he had managed the expansion of 1912. There have been few

changes in the scope or importance of the depot's functions since then. As now organized, the Quartermaster Supply Officer is also General Superintendent Army Transport Service. In addition thereto he is Depot Quartermaster, is in charge of the National Cemetery, commands the Motor Battalion and Motor Repair Shops and is the real estate representative of the Quartermaster General for the Ninth Corps Area. A number of additional minor duties are attached to what is one of the most responsible positions in the Quartermaster Corps.

In general, the depot is charged with the supply of the Ninth Corps Area, Alaska, the Hawaiian and Philippine Departments and the forces in China.

It has grown with the increased responsibilities imposed upon it as our country has developed until it bears slight resemblance to its original establishment by Captain Folsom on the mud flats so many years ago. Its reputation for efficiency has been maintained at the same high level and it is still the strong dependable organization upon which the War Department and the country can count in any crisis. It is an integral part of the business life of the city of San Francisco, where its activities are known and appreciated. The Quartermaster in charge of the depot is thus enabled to face serenely and to handle smoothly whatever emergency may hereafter arise.