

Engineer School

Q: After you left the 219th, you went to the Engineer School that had been established at Fort Humphreys until June 1919 and again September 1919 to June 1920. What kind of course were they offering? Was that primarily military or was that the reestablishment of the Engineer School?

A: That was the reestablishment of the Engineer School. They taught some military courses. They had courses in tactics and field and permanent fortifications, but mainly they taught engineering. They had river and harbor engineering, flood control, regulation of rivers, lock and dam construction. They had courses in mechanics and advanced mechanics. They had courses in mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, with fine laboratories with mechanical equipment, motors, generators, and so on. They had some mapping and some military, but a comparatively small part. That was to be taught mainly in the Company Officers course, which I pursued later, in 1926-27, where they had the military as well as other subjects.

Q: Do you think it was of value to you at that time?

A: Yes. I thought that the Engineer School training was excellent. Up at West Point you had courses in chemistry, electricity, physics, but they were basic, fundamental courses, which I think is ideal. I mean, you got a good solid foundation in the basic educational principles of mechanics, chemistry, physics, math, and so on. But this was sort of a second step beyond that in just getting into a book on electricity and chemistry or mechanical engineering or civil engineering. Here they'd get into the actual operation of major equipment, design of a bridge or other engineer structure, and so on.

Q: How would you compare the course that you took in 1919-1920 to the subsequent time you spent in Engineer School?

A: Well, they were quite different. I think the first course, the first one we took, was comparable to the postgraduate training that you now get in civilian institutions. But I think in some ways they tailored the Engineer School courses toward what you were going to do in the Corps of Engineers

and specifically in civil works. They were better in being more adapted to the Corps of Engineers work than the specialized graduate instruction that you get now in civilian institutions. I mean, now when they go to, say, Carnegie Tech, they don't get a Corps of Engineers' training but they specialize in hydraulics or they may take something in mechanical engineering, but it's more an advanced engineering course in sort of a tight specific field rather than a general one. They won't be getting mapping, river and harbor development, flood control; they won't be getting certain other things that you would have if you were tailoring your course for Corps of Engineers preparational activities.

The company officers course which they had then was also very, very good and specifically directed toward Corps of Engineers activities. They did have a bit more military, including tactics and preparation of defensive positions. They went into river and harbor development, even though that was something that you think was more appropriately in the Engineer School that I attended the first time. But they brought that in, as well as military law and so on.

American Expeditionary Forces in Europe

Q: After you finished the Engineer School at Belvoir in 1919, you went to France for what was called the "tour of observation" with the American Expeditionary Forces until September of 1919, when you came back to Camp Humphreys. What was the purpose of this tour?

A: It was the War Department's idea to give an opportunity to those who had not served in Europe during World War I to see in the field what the actual situation had been. They'd take us over and they'd show us the depots that they had for the important Services of Supply, and up around the different field fortifications at the front, with some of those who had been involved going over the situation and talking about how the operation was conducted. This was poor preparation for the next war because in World War I they just dug in and that was it. When you think of the terrific loss of life, just fighting there, banging against each other, banging against each other with costly frontal attacks and with some tanks and few planes. With war of movement, somebody should have gone here or there and attempted a major