

Preface

One hundred and fifty years ago, Congress created a small organization that filled a big need. The Corps of Topographical Engineers existed only briefly in our history, from 1838 to 1863. However, this handful of dedicated officers proved a major force in the development of the nation.

Army topographers were at the center of an energetic and expansive period of development. In the years between the War of 1812 and the Civil War, Americans fanned out from the original seaboard states, west to the Mississippi River and beyond to the Pacific Ocean. The topographers did much to encourage this process and the economic growth that went with it. They explored and mapped regions beyond the frontier, laid out roads and railroad routes, and supervised the rivers and harbors work that evolved into the modern civil works program of the Corps of Engineers. Truly, they were nation builders.

They set numerous precedents for the Engineers of the 20th century. In addition to their rivers and harbors work, they carried out construction projects and surveys for other government agencies. They also became involved in the construction of public facilities in the nation's capital, another long-standing Engineer job that lasted far into the current century.

For all of their contributions to the development of civil society, they were soldiers too. Their wartime service ranged from reconnaissance of enemy lines to publication of maps. Like their counterparts in the Corps of Engineers, they combined civil and military responsibilities within the same engineering organization in a distinctly American way.

This small volume pulls together for the first time the story of their accomplishments, both military and civil. It should have

a special appeal to people associated with the Corps of Engineers as well as others interested in the development of the nation and the modern Corps of Engineers.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "E. R. Heiberg III". The signature is stylized with a large, looped initial "E" and a long, horizontal flourish at the end.

E. R. HEIBERG III
Lieutenant General, USA
Chief of Engineers