

Preface

This collection of documents, including many previously unpublished, details the role of the Army engineers in the American Revolution. Lacking trained military engineers, the Americans relied heavily on foreign officers, mostly from France, for sorely needed technical assistance. Native Americans joined the foreign engineer officers to plan and carry out offensive and defensive operations, direct the erection of fortifications, map vital terrain, and lay out encampments. During the war Congress created the Corps of Engineers with three companies of engineer troops as well as a separate geographer's department to assist the engineers with mapping.

Both General George Washington and Maj. Gen. Louis Lebègue Duportail, his third and longest-serving Chief Engineer, recognized the disadvantages of relying on foreign powers to fill the Army's crucial need for engineers. America, they contended, must train its own engineers for the future. Accordingly, at the war's end, they suggested maintaining a peacetime engineering establishment and creating a military academy. However, Congress rejected the proposals, and the Corps of Engineers and its companies of sappers and miners mustered out of service. Eleven years passed before Congress authorized a new establishment, the Corps of Artillerists and Engineers.

In editing these documents I have retained the original spelling, grammar, and punctuation, with the following exceptions: I occasionally inserted or removed punctuation for easier reading, always capitalized the first letter after a period, and changed & to *and* and &c. to *etc.* Where feasible, when documents were available in both published and unpublished form, the original manuscripts were used. The glossary explains the many engineering terms used. Permission has been received to reproduce all material under copyright. Credit lines indicate the sources of documents and illustrations. Full citations are contained in the bibliography.

The contributions of many persons have enhanced this volume. The staff of the Historical Division, Office of the Chief of Engineers, gave invaluable assistance throughout. Lenore Fine first suggested the project and along with Jesse A. Remington provided continued encouragement. John T. Greenwood and Frank N. Schubert read and commented upon the entire manuscript. Agnes Riedel assisted with research, typing, and proofreading. Dorothe M. Grande advised on editorial matters. Dale Floyd offered helpful criticism. Alfred M. Beck, assisted by Margaret B. Combs, guided the manuscript through the final stages of production.