

By HENRY E. ARMSTRONG.

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WEST POINT COMMANDER ASKS FOR MORE SPACE

Major Gen. Smith Wants Additional Land for Artillery Rifle Ranges and for an Aviation Field—Adjoining Towns Oppose the Taking of Their Taxable Territory

By HENRY E. ARMSTRONG.

A CRISIS has come about in the administration of the United States Military Academy at West Point, and, unless the Superintendent, Major Gen. William R. Smith, has the sympathetic understanding and aid of Congress, its usefulness as a school for the training of officers and leaders of troops will be greatly impaired.

The reservation, which is always on exhibition to the general public—as many as 10,000 people sometimes visit it on a Summer day—is now too contracted for the drill exercises, manoeuvres and encampments of the cadet corps. The strength of this body when General Pershing was graduated in 1886 was about 300; now, with additional buildings for housing and educational purposes, the total is 1,200, which falls short by 150 of the complement authorized. In quarters the cadets are cramped, and a new barracks is to be built. Officers and their families should have better accommodations. But the pressing need is more land to protect the water supply; to afford space for artillery, machine gun and rifle ranges, and for the laying out of an aviation field.

In his campaign for a larger reservation General Smith has the support of the Chamber of Commerce of the State of New York and of other bodies. In the adjoining towns of Cornwall and Highland Falls his proposal has met with active and even bitter opposition. Particularly is this the case in Highland Falls. Cornwall was placated when it gained its point that a forest and lake area due west of the existing reservation would be cut out of the blue print of the army engineers. This tract contains Sphagnum, Arthurs, Tamarack, Sutherland and Jim's Ponds, and includes high and heavily wooded property. Cornwall continues to give moral support to Highland Falls. The latter opposes the taking of land along the Hudson south of the town, which is wanted for an airdrome. It declares that it could not afford to lose the taxable values.

Further Limitations Suggested.

Highland Falls and investors in its lands on and back of the river protest that they approve of General Smith's greater reservation, but they speak only of "adequate" accretions and would set the bounds themselves. They would be best suited by restricting him to rocky, third-growth and barren land far from the Hudson, where no air field could be constructed because of high hills whose air currents would make taking off and landing dangerous.

The Chamber of Commerce of the State of New York, in a statement signed by a special committee on national defense, including E. H. Outerbridge, J. Vipond Davies, Samuel Robert, John B. Trevor and Henry R. Winthrop, says:

The building of the Storm King Highway has entirely cut off former artillery ranges, and the academy is now unable to continue artillery practice. The former rifle range is quite inadequate, and there is no space to expand it. The water supply is insufficient, and, coming entirely from ponds and streams rapidly being encroached upon by Summer camps, its purity is constantly threatened.

The water for the Lusk reservoir comes through the Patrick pipe-line from Popolopen Brook, which flows out of Popolopen Pond and empties into and leaves Mine Lake. The intake of the pipe-line is on land already owned by the reservation, but west of it for three miles the water is not protected at all.

Other Cramped Facilities.

Artillery practice is completely out of the question and must be abandoned until there is no risk of killing motorists and hikers on Storm King Highway. The rifle range, north of the Lusk reservoir and down by the West Shore railroad track, cannot be used for a similar reason. To see it is to condemn it at once with derision. In regard to machine gun practice, it should be said that shift is made to get along with a piece of ground 1,000 inches in length. What is the use of teaching cadets to

fire machine guns under such a handicap?

Compare the pitiful lack of facilities for handling field guns, rifles and machine guns with the opportunities given cadets to learn how to manage a horse in the spacious riding hall, one of the finest in the world. There are 800 horses at the military academy, and one wonders what old cavalry and artillery men would think of the riding hall, as big as a field, if they could revisit the Point.

Another quotation from the Chamber of Commerce's pamphlet is timely:

Unless these conditions are corrected and proper provision made now for the present and future needs of the academy, the rapid suburban developments will so increase the value of any available property that the government will ere long be faced with the dilemma of an enormously increased expense to acquire the needed land, or, otherwise, to move the academy from this site, rich in its historic interest, and which was selected partly because of the strategic value of its position.

A Bill Before Congress.

What is being done about it? On Jan. 11, 1930, Representative Hamilton Fish Jr. of Garrison, opposite West Point, introduced at the suggestion of Chairman James of the Military Affairs Committee of the House a bill "to authorize the acquisition of certain parcels of land, required in connection with the extension of the West Point Military reservation grounds." It empowered the Secretary of War to acquire "by purchase or otherwise" parcels of land belonging to about forty title-holders (named) in Orange County, "and any other small interlocking plots of land which may be required to complete the proposed extension." The bill concluded: "And the sum of \$1,500,000 is hereby authorized to be appropriated from any funds in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, which sum shall remain available until expended." The bill was referred to the Military Affairs Committee, but it will not come up for discussion until April, when Mr. James, the best informed man on army affairs in the House, who has been ill, is able to return to his duties.

Representative Fish is the grandson of the former Secretary of State who, as a member of Congress, came successfully to the relief of the Military Academy when there was a sinister movement to abolish it. Of that achievement Hamilton Fish Jr. is proud. Mr. Fish, while advocating extension of the reservation, has been impressed by the arguments of constituents who, for various reasons, want a limit set to it. Talking in this city to a delegation from Orange County on Feb. 14, he said, according to a report in the Newburgh News:

"It is obvious I would not do anything to injure the towns of Cornwall and Highlands. This (the bill as introduced) was done merely to get the matter under way. The bill is merely a sketch." He also said: "It does not even provide for condemnation proceedings," and added: "I'm in sympathy with the plan to buy lands west of Highland Falls to preserve water and for rifle and perhaps for artillery ranges. But airports and such matters, if considered at all, should be planned on the gigantic waste areas in the western section of the town, not where the town derives its main financial sustenance. In this instance, I do believe that the public is overwhelmingly in favor of enlarging West Point for military efficiency. This is the greatest military school in the world and its size must be increased if its efficiency is to be maintained."

No Waste Level Land.

General Smith asserts that there is no waste land in the western part of the township at all practicable for an air field. In motor trips to the Popolopen region he points out that the mountain conformation precludes such a use for any level tract to be found there. It is a question for airport engineers where land for a field can be had in the vicinity. The New-

burgh News on Feb. 15 quoted Representative Fish thus:

"Unless it (the bill introduced) is worded to my satisfaction and keeps within bounds which will be satisfactory to my constituents, there will be no bill and no enlargement now."

It is for the Military Affairs Committee to say whether the bill is to be reported out favorably. The case for the academy is strong because its need is urgent. The right to have the water supply protected cannot be challenged. The cottages on the shore of Popolopen Lake increase from year to year. Long Pond is also attractive to campers, plots of land being passed by the year and rustic houses erected. The invasion is attaining serious proportions. To some of the owners it is lucrative.

Since Bear Mountain Park was opened to the public, hikers and campers have been breaking new ground to the North, and there has been a large increase of visitors to West Point. "Of all the institutions in this country," President Roosevelt said at the centenary celebration in 1902, "none is more absolutely American, none in the proper sense of the word is more absolutely democratic than this."

Democratic in every way. Between 1842 and 1925 the candidates for the academy have included sons of fifty-three blacksmiths, of sixteen bricklayers, of twenty-two butchers, of 113 carpenters, of twenty commercial painters, of twelve cobblers, of fifty-nine laborers, of twenty-six letter carriers, of sixty-two enlisted men in the army, of 400 mechanics, of twenty-three mill workers, of sixty-two printers, of thirty-nine tailors and of thirteen telegraph operators. These cadets have had the same welcome as sons of bank officers (312), of clergymen (304), of editors (133), of civil engineers (115), of lawyers and judges (1,267), and of farmers and planters (2,199).

A Crowd of Visitors.

Any one of any condition or degree, and however humbly dressed, may walk through the gate on the academy grounds to see its splendid buildings, its fine parade ground, its Winged Victory, its monuments and statues, and the unforgettable views of the Hudson. There was a time when the Cadet Corps, officers at the post and the professors had some privacy. There is precious little of it now. The grounds have become all too small. Everybody, as well as everything, is on exhibition most of the time. Crowds surround the Summer encampment out in the open. The cadets are always on view.

General Smith asks for more woodland for camps as well as for an artillery range, a rifle range, and room for manoeuvres and war games. In this age of the airplane, he wants a field where flying can be taught. Last year 25 per cent of the graduating class wanted to go into the aviation corps. General Smith is now obliged to send cadets away to Langley Field, Va., to fly; to Fort Eustis for field artillery exercise, and to Fortress Monroe for work with the big guns; five days for training in each case, a plainly inadequate period.

The superintendent's critics have said that while in command in Hawaii and in home corps areas, elbow room became an obsession with him, so that on returning to the Military Academy, where he had spent years of usefulness, the reservation looked too small to him. But the truth is that William Ruthven Smith knows the needs of the Military Academy from intimate contact as perhaps few of his predecessors have done. He wants, he says, no special privileges for West Point, but he wants more space for the academy to grow in—which, to put it in another way, means that he wants more and better facilities for training the cadets to become officers capable of leading troops under the conditions of modern warfare. Aside from that, he is emphatic in his demand for a pure water supply.

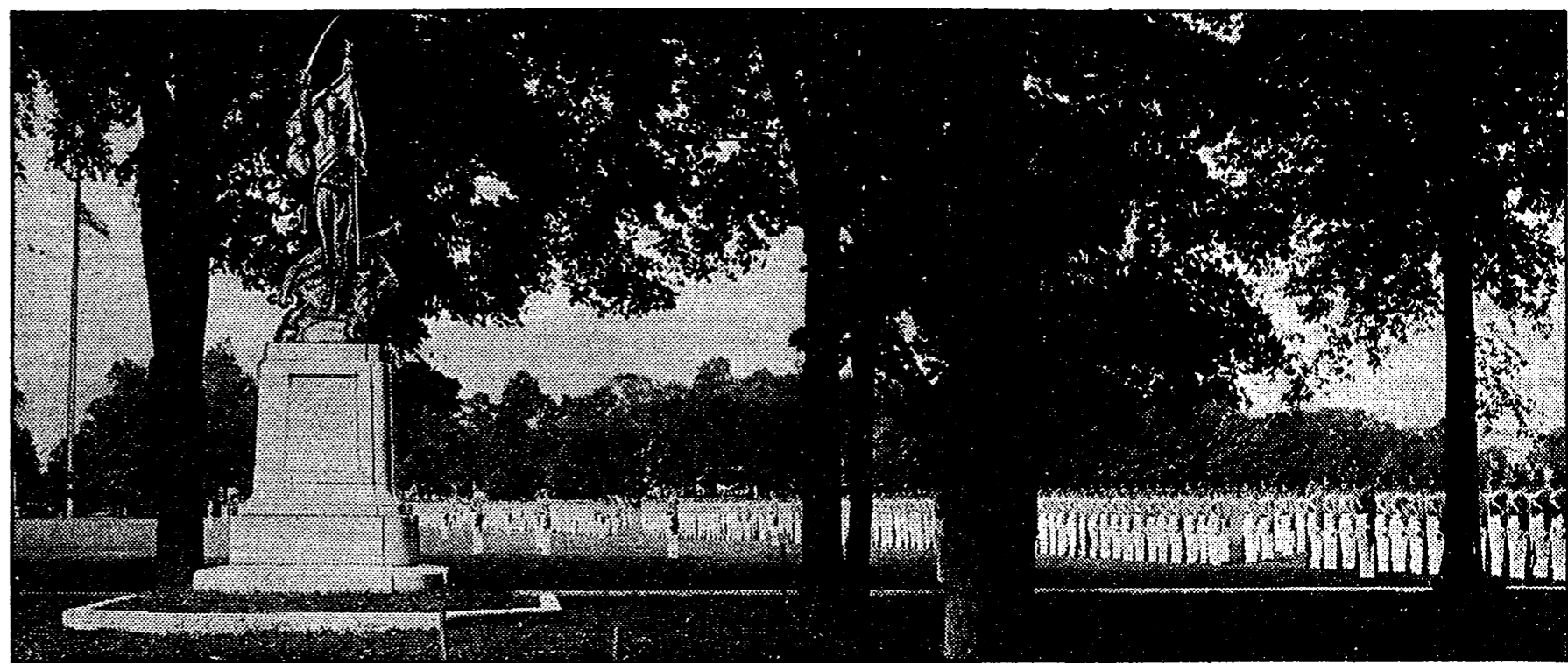
General Smith's Position.

One of General Smith's opponents has taxed him with selecting the wrong time to ask for a larger reservation, as if the General were a swashbuckler and lover of war. No Superintendent has been more a man of peace. Conditions at West Point have forced him, he feels, to speak out from a sense of duty. He does not like controversy—and he does not seek trouble. At the same time, he stands for preparedness as a policy of national defense, agreeing with General Horace Porter, who said in his West Point memorial oration:

"Upon our national arms the American Eagle is represented as holding in one talon the olive branch of peace, in the other the shafts of war. He leaves to his adversaries which to choose."

The reservation at West Point has undergone changes from time to time. To add more land to it would be nothing new. But to talk of moving the academy with all the glories and memories that cluster around it, the shrines and shafts and monuments; the cadet chapel, with its stained glass windows and draped flags; the Cullum Memorial Hall, with its trophies, decorations and portraits; and the cemetery where lie Sylvanus Thayer, Winfield Scott, Robert Anderson, Custer, Kilpatrick and other famous soldiers, is to dim the significance of this military school to the American people. It is a beautiful country of mountain and river that surrounds West Point, but more beautiful are the patriotic asso-

ON THE PARADE GROUND OF THE UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY



The West Point Cadet Corps, in Dress Uniform, Drawn Up in Review.

ciations that pervade the academy buildings.

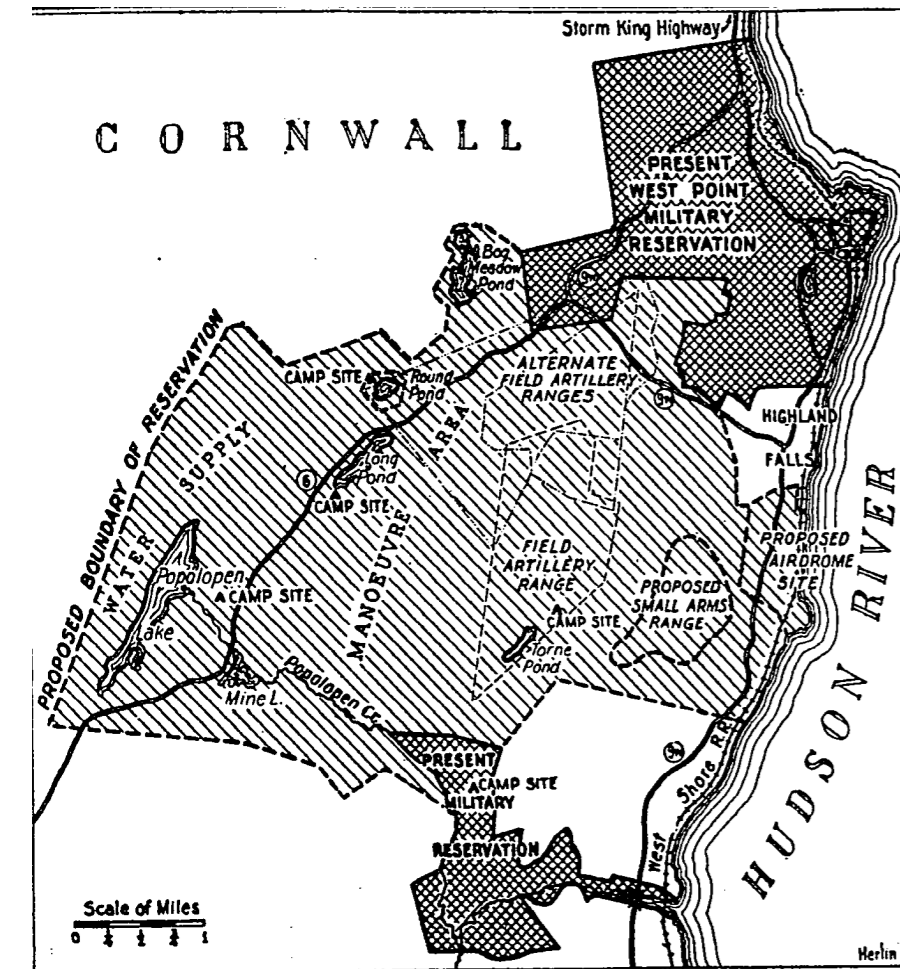
"I had no idea," said Secretary Good a few days before his death, "what the United States Army meant to the American people until I became Secretary of War. It is one of the great peace-time departments of the government." Secretary Good had in mind its widespread peace duties, from constructing public

works to guarding and feeding the victims of flood, conflagration and earthquake. Moreover, he had learned that American soldiers desire war no more than civilians do. But if war comes, it is the men trained by the side of French, Belgians, British, Canadians, Australians, Italians and Portuguese on Continental battle fields? Faith in the need of the Military Academy was vindicated as

never before. It is the greatest school of the officer in the world. It is estimated that the buildings on the reservation could not be reproduced for less than \$35,000,000, and the ground on which they stand has a high value. How short-sighted it would be, argues General Smith, not to spend a million or two for more land to increase the usefulness of the Military Academy!

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The Proposed Extension of West Point. The Heavy Shaded Area Indicates the Present Reservation. The Area Covered by Light Shading Is That Which General Smith Wishes to Include in the Reservation.