

# *The* **PALIMPSEST**

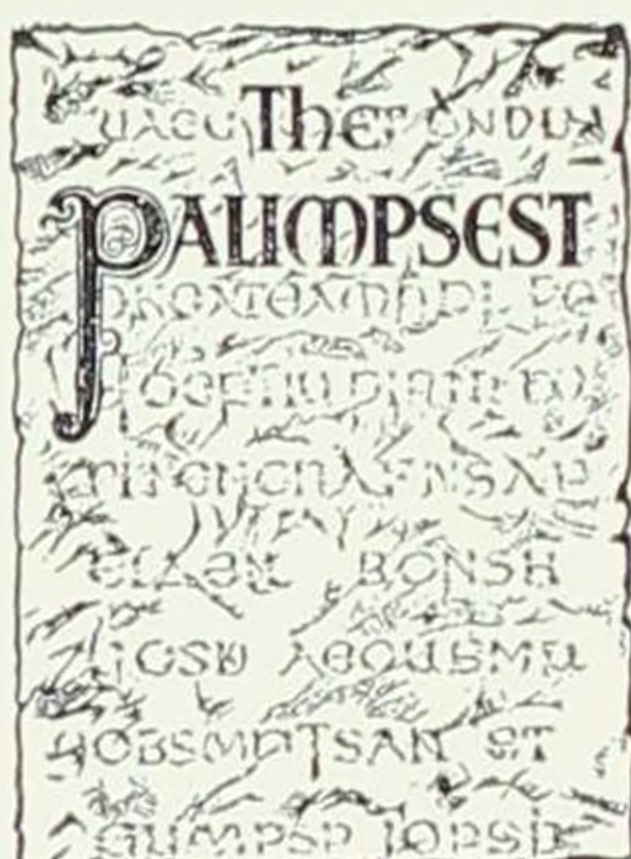


Composing the CAPITAL staff at Camp Dodge were, left to right: Charles Darlington, Dorothy Ashby (Pownall), Herbert Selby, and Jack Newman.

## **A Girl Reporter At Camp Dodge**

Published Monthly by  
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## The Meaning of Palimpsest

In early times a palimpsest was a parchment or other material from which one or more writings had been erased to give room for later records. But the erasures were not always complete; and so it became the fascinating task of scholars not only to translate the later records but also to reconstruct the original writings by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts.

The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the record of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

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DOROTHY ASHBY POWNALL

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## Illustrations

Illustrations were provided by the *Des Moines Register*, Mayor George Whitmer, Laurence Fairall, Mrs. Ethel Towne Holmes, Mrs. A. R. Mellor, Mrs. A. C. Trowbridge, and the author. Many are reproduced from "Our Sons At Camp Dodge," from the Society's book collection.

## Author

Dorothy Ashby Pownall, following her service in St. Paul and Des Moines, spent ten years as woman's page editor of the *Iowa City Press-Citizen*. She has contributed articles and poetry to newspapers and magazines, including the *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Saturday Evening Post*, *Good Housekeeping* and *The Palimpsest*. She is a member of Iowa Press Women.

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# THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

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## Wartime Adventure

Throughout the Middle West there surely are many old scrapbooks, filled with brittle, yellowed clippings and unidentifiable souvenirs. These are mementos of a period when thousands of raw recruits became trained soldiers at Camp Dodge, the World War I Cantonment near Des Moines.

Fond recollections of Camp Dodge personnel and the busy, exciting daily life at the great Cantonment flood my memory. The concern and friendship shown by Des Moines people and other Midwestern communities for those trainees are recorded in my scrapbook, now falling gently apart, here on my kitchen table.

In it are reminders of some of my happiest experiences in a half century of newspaper reporting. From the opening of the Cantonment in 1917 until the 88th Division of the National Army was demobilized in 1919, Camp Dodge was my beat, as a girl reporter for the *Des Moines Daily Capital*.

The 88th was one of a number of infantry di-



visions making up the National Army, all composed of men brought into service by the draft. The National Army was one of three component parts set up by Act of Congress approved May 18, 1917, and composed of the Regular Army, National Guard, and National Army. Although the term was abolished on August 7, 1918, those American divisions numbered from 76 to 102 inclusive were popularly spoken of for years as our "National Army."

My job was to report the human interest side of the sprawling, teeming training center. Everyone there, from Major General E. H. Plummer, the camp commander, to the newest recruit cooperated enthusiastically in my assignment of telling the world how the new soldiers were responding to army life. Each day I tried to tell our readers what the trainees did for fun, what they ate, and how they were being cared for — mentally and physically.

Many celebrities visited the camp, and interviewing them was a delightful and educational task. Jack Newman, a top-notch reporter, covered the straight news of the Division. Charles Darlington was photographer and humorist, recording many funny incidents. As a threesome, we tried to give our readers a well-rounded picture of army camp life.

The *Capital's* publisher was ex-Senator Lafayette Young, Sr., a dynamic writer and patriot.



Managing editor of the *Capital* was William C. Jarnagin, now publisher of the *Storm Lake Pilot-Tribune*. We addressed him informally as "Boss."

The paper thoughtfully provided our little staff with a Model-T Ford car, in which we journeyed cheerfully to Camp Dodge each morning. When sub-zero blasts penetrated the isinglass windows in "Lizzie's" flimsy side curtains, an army blanket was supplied as a lap robe. Once in camp, the blanket became "Lizzie's Throw," and was draped over her hood to discourage radiator trouble.

All of this was nearly fifty years ago, and a far cry from Central High School in Superior, Wisconsin, and a brief academic sortie at Lawrence College. When my father died, during my sophomore year, I had to find a job. Some happy fate led me through the looking glass into the magic world of reporting for the *St. Paul Daily News*.

Far from being ended, my education was just beginning. Editor H. B. R. Briggs and City Editor Vance (I never dreamed of calling him anything but Mr. Vance) were stern and splendid teachers. Reporting for the *News* in St. Paul was exciting, and it was excellent preparation for my later adventures.

I was pretty well established as a sob sister when the telegram came from Bill Jarnagin of the *Des Moines Daily Capital* proffering me the



Camp Dodge assignment. The challenge was too alluring to decline.

And if I had not gone to the *Capital* I would not have met Fred Pownall, a talented writer and editor, to whom I have been gleefully married since 1918. Nor would I have enjoyed the delightful company of our daughters — Eleanor and Dorothy.

Both the *Des Moines Daily Capital* and the *St. Paul Daily News* have succumbed to modern consolidation. After Senator Young's death, the *Capital* was purchased by the *Des Moines Register and Tribune*. The *News* merged with the *St. Paul Pioneer Press and Dispatch*.

The pieces in this modest account do not by any means profess to be a history of Camp Dodge. They are simply a girl reporter's view of some of the everyday happenings in the lives of young men preparing for war.



## Meet Four Generals

Before the new headquarters building was finished at Camp Dodge, the "top brass" occupied offices in an old brick house at the south end of the Cantonment. Here I was welcomed, that first day, by Major General E. H. Plummer, the camp commander, a kindly, white-haired officer, who gave me many helpful tips for exclusive news stories during his stay.

He was a genial, cooperative friend to the reporters, who always found the door to his office open to them. We did not have quite the presumption of a brash recruit who sauntered into the General's anteroom one day and said to the orderly, "What-d'you say I bust in for a little chat with the General?"

The General was kindly, but formal, as an army executive must be. One morning as we were discussing camp affairs, he asked if I had encountered any unpleasant experiences as I went about my newspaper business in this masculine city.

"If any of these men ever annoy you, let me know. I want all women to feel safe at Camp Dodge."

I was happy to tell him every fellow had behaved with utmost respect. I probably was young



and naive and would not have recognized a leer if I saw one. Anyway, my daily stint was accomplished pleasantly.

An army man for 30 years, and a graduate of West Point in 1887, General Plummer came to Camp Dodge from the Panama Canal Zone. Associated with him in command of the camp were Brigadier General R. N. Getty, commander of the 163rd Depot Brigade; Brigadier General W. D. Beach, commander of the 176th Infantry Brigade; and Brigadier General S. M. Foote, who headed the 163rd Field Artillery. Each of these men succeeded General Plummer as ranking officer at the Cantonment, and General Beach, in addition, was in charge of the 88th Division when it went overseas in August of 1918.

An attractive house was provided for General Plummer at Camp Dodge and it was there I met and chatted with his daughter, Miss Harriet, who had been with her father in Panama. Later, Mrs. Plummer and another daughter, Miss Bessie, arrived in Des Moines and found a pleasant suburban home for the family. Over a cup of tea, in the new house, Mrs. Plummer paid tribute to the National Army: "There has never been a more democratizing influence than these camps," she declared. "This experience will make men of some of our recruits who have never known responsibility or the meaning of democracy."

When General Plummer chose to ride at camp,



his orderly, Sergeant W. R. Hill, might bring Patsy or Billie around for a morning canter. These were General Plummer's horses, which Sergeant Hill had chaperoned in a freight car from New York to Iowa. Sergeant Hill had served for many years with the General, and although he could have had a commission at the outset of the war, he preferred to follow his long-time friend to Camp Dodge.

Brigadier General Getty was an expert horseman and frequently was seen riding Pickles or Casey, his favorite mounts. Pickles would smile if offered an apple. Casey was a prize-winning jumper. General Getty was indeed an impressive figure as he rode one of his mounts in military reviews and patriotic processions.

General Plummer, with commanding officers from other cantonments, was sent to France in November of 1917 to visit battlefields and study the war picture. But after his return to the United States in February he was bitterly disappointed to learn that he was not to take the 88th Division to the front. In line with War Department policy to send to France "only those general officers who are prepared to withstand the hardships which a command on the battle line entails," he was relieved of his Camp Dodge command and transferred to Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

City and military friends were saddened by the departure of this valorous officer who had made a



deep imprint upon the Midwest community, and who was revered by the men in his command.

Camp Dodge religious workers paid tribute to him in a farewell message, signed by Chaplain H. B. Boyd; the Reverend Patrick McDermott, Knights of Columbus Post chaplain; Fred Hansen, general secretary of the Y.M.C.A.; and Miles Kleven, representing the Lutheran Brotherhood. There were tears in the General's eyes as the tribute was read to him.

General Plummer's farewell to his troops included these affectionate lines: "The members of the command have won my personal love by their loyalty and by their efforts to carry out to the fullest my personal orders, with evident feeling of personal regard for me."

Brigadier General Getty replaced General Plummer at Camp Dodge for a time. When he was transferred to Camp Gordon, Georgia, Brigadier General Beach took command and had the glory of taking the 88th Division to France.

When he reported for duty at American General Headquarters in Chaumont, France, General Beach found that the reputation of his Division had preceded him. I talked to General Beach when he returned from overseas and he told me:

When I got to GHQ in France they asked me where I was from. I told them I was with the 88th Division, and every officer there had heard of the outfit.

You see, Camp Dodge sent 80,000 men to France be-



fore the 88th got overseas. Three months after the first draft contingent arrived at Camp Dodge we were sending men to every port of embarkation. There were Camp Dodge soldiers in every engagement in which Americans participated.

Brigadier General Beach was in command of the Division until Major General William Weigel took over and brought the troops back to Camp Dodge for demobilization.

With the homecoming soldiers also was Brigadier General S. M. Foote, in command of the 163rd Field Artillery Brigade. For a time he was the ranking officer at Camp Dodge until he was transferred to Camp Sherman, Chillicothe, Ohio, for duty. General Foote concluded his farewell to his men with these words:

It was my good fortune to greet you upon the formation of the brigade. It is now my melancholy pleasure to bid you an affectionate farewell upon its demobilization. I can offer you no better wish than that you may display in civil life the same patriotic zeal you have demonstrated in your military careers.



## You're In The Army Now

The sun was shining, the dust was whirling, and officers were waiting, September 5, 1917, when the first recruits, conscripted men from Iowa, Minnesota, Illinois, and North Dakota, breezed into Camp Dodge, the Thirteenth District Cantonment, a few miles north of Des Moines.

Jack Newman, Charles Darlington, and I were there, too. Our Model-T was parked in the shadow of the registration building—the day was hot. Then, here came our first recruit! He was George Whitmer, a big, blonde boy from Des Moines. With the Reverend F. W. Mutchler, chairman of the Fourth District Draft Board, he left Des Moines at 8 a.m., reached Camp Dodge at 9 a.m., and at 10 a.m. was registered and assigned to the supply company, 350th Infantry Regiment.

When I talked to him, he was balancing a metal cot, and hoping he soon would have his uniform and rifle. "I think carrying a gun will be as easy as juggling these beds," he grinned, mopping his perspiring face. "I don't know a thing about drill, but I'm anxious to learn. All the men are anxious to get started."

Many years passed before I heard of George



Whitmer again, but recently we have had some pleasant correspondence. The young recruit has had an interesting career, and right now (1966) is MAYOR WHITMER of Des Moines.

A strange and wonderful miscellany of humanity reported to the camp that hot, dusty day. Some of the young men were farmers. Some were college men. Some could not speak English. There were barbers, cooks, truck drivers, tailors, cobblers, grocery clerks, office workers, and some who would miss the country club crowd.

On that opening day a comparatively small contingent arrived by train and automobile. By the time the 88th Division was demobilized in 1919, more than 150,000 men had passed through the Cantonment. Some were transferred to other camps; thousands went to France; and many who had drilled, studied, sung, and worshipped at Camp Dodge were killed in battle overseas. War-time security regulations precluded announcement of the total number of men in training in camp, but at full strength the number was said to be between 40,000 and 50,000 men before the 88th Division went overseas.

Charlie Darlington took many pictures. Jack Newman assembled fact and figures. I snooped up and down the company streets, talking with officers and men, and watching the cross section of Middle West humanity lining up at the registration building.



"Three cheers for Uncle Sam," yelled a boy from Grimes as his flag-draped car, filled with draftees and proud townspeople, passed. Before the registration building, bands played vigorously. Some contingents were accompanied by Civil War fife and drum corps.

Week after week the newcomers poured into camp. They were outfitted with army gear and learned to wrap those woolen puttees neatly about their legs. They discovered that the fellows wearing the tailored uniforms and leather boots were officers.

I overheard this exchange on Depot Street, the camp's main thoroughfare:

Recent arrival: "What's it a sign of when a guy is wearing leather puttees?"

Alert comrade: "It's a sign his pay is more than thirty dollars a month."

Learning "squads left" and "squads right" was a problem for some neophytes. One harassed sergeant, desperate with his squad's ineptitude, gave each man a rock to hold in his left hand, to distinguish it from his right. All went well until one beginner made a wrong turn.

"What's the idea," yelled the non-com.

"I dropped my rock," was the unhappy confession.

Winter had Camp Dodge in its icy clutches, and our "Lizzie's" isinglass was covered with frost, when a group of Negro soldiers arrived



from Alabama. I loved talking to these voyageurs, most of whom had never been in the frozen north.

"Man, look at that snow!" one chuckled, as they straggled toward their barracks. Some had tucked a few necessities into cigar boxes or knotted bandanna handkerchiefs. All were happy when they were issued warm uniforms and stout shoes. This was the nucleus of the 366th Infantry Regiment, the first unit of the 88th Division to go overseas, and which received acclaim for bravery under fire in France.

One member of the regiment told me:

I wasn't even drafted. I was on the back platform of the train, saying good-bye to my buddy, when this officer busted up and said, "I'm one man short — come on!" And here I am.

Another, definitely lost, waited anxiously in a Y.M.C.A. hut. Told by the kindly "Y" secretary that he must report promptly to his quarters, he moaned, "O, Lawdy! I don't know where my house is. I'll just wait here till my general comes and gets me."

And how they sang! Their chorus became famous in Des Moines where they appeared in concert many times. And, as they went about their chores in camp, I often heard them harmonizing: "We're the boys from Alabam', and we work for Uncle Sam."

That winter of 1917-1918 was cold! I wore my four-buckle galoshes and my chamois-lined



belted trench coat with its raccoon collar and cuffs. My cloche hat was pretty cozy over my wind-blown bob, and a well-insulated muff kept my hands warm. I was always made welcome in Division headquarters or at other well-heated buildings at the camp.

Typical of the shivering Camp Dodge soldiers was Frederick Cox of Iowa City, who wrote to his father:

Am enlisted in the front line artillery and we are supposed to work light field pieces, trench mortars, etc. We have good food and barracks but it is darn cold drilling outside at -10 with a rifle. Several men froze their noses and fingers, and one man froze his ears right through his helmet. Yesterday our practice march was given up because it was too cold. We started out, but it was -15 and windy so we had a lecture instead. I froze one side of my nose a little, yesterday.

But, cold or not, the men sang as they marched through dust, mud, or frozen ruts at the camp. Soldier Patrick Reynolds wrote these words and they were sung to the tune of *Tipperary*:

It's a hard job to lick the Kaiser;  
It's a hard thing to do.  
It's a hard job to lick the Kaiser  
And our Allies know it, too.  
Good-bye Little Italy,  
Farewell, England, too —  
There's but one flag that can lick the Kaiser—  
That's the Red, White and Blue.

Those of us who attended performances of the



Metropolitan Opera Company, that first winter, were ushered to our seats in the Coliseum by Camp Dodge soldiers who were given passes for this plush event. Many other officers and men from the Cantonment were in the audience to applaud Nellie Melba and Galli-Curci who sang the leading roles in *Faust* and *Lucia di Lammermoor*.

Perhaps some of the fellows, in town for an evening, preferred to see Theda Bara in *When a Woman Sins* — a story of love and sin and its burning cost. Or they chose Florence Reed in *Today*, which was advertised as "Not a Picture for Children." William S. Hart, Harry Carey, Douglas Fairbanks, and other virile stars also were featured in the local cinemas. There might be burlesque, too, at the Elite Theater or occasionally at the Berchel, where "Billy Watson's Beef Trust" with a ton or so of mature feminine pulchritude sometimes rocked the theater.

At the base hospital, distinguished doctors and well-trained nurses capably cared for ailing patients. The soldiers came through their first winter with few illnesses. Listed among their infirmities were German Measles, quickly re-christened "Liberty Measles."

But in October 1918, when Spanish Influenza swept the country, Camp Dodge soldiers were laid low with the scourge. More than 10,000 men were hospitalized and 702 soldiers died. The camp was quarantined and passes were suspend-



ed. Des Moines Red Cross workers made thousands of gauze masks for the camp personnel. In the city, all of us wore masks as we went about our chores. Churches, schools, theaters, and other public places were closed during the height of the epidemic. It was reported, that in proportion to the number of men in service, the toll from flu at Camp Dodge was less than at several other cantonments.

The first spring days brought sunshine and showers to the big camp, now a city with nearly 2,000 buildings. Soldiers, who had choked on camp dust and slogged through mud, cooperated happily in planting shrubs, flowers, vegetables, and laying sod in strategic areas.

We all wondered how soon the 88th Division would be embarking for overseas service. The young draftees were really soldiers now and sang with vigor these words, written by Lieutenant G. C. Whitcomb to the tune of *There's A Long, Long Trail*:

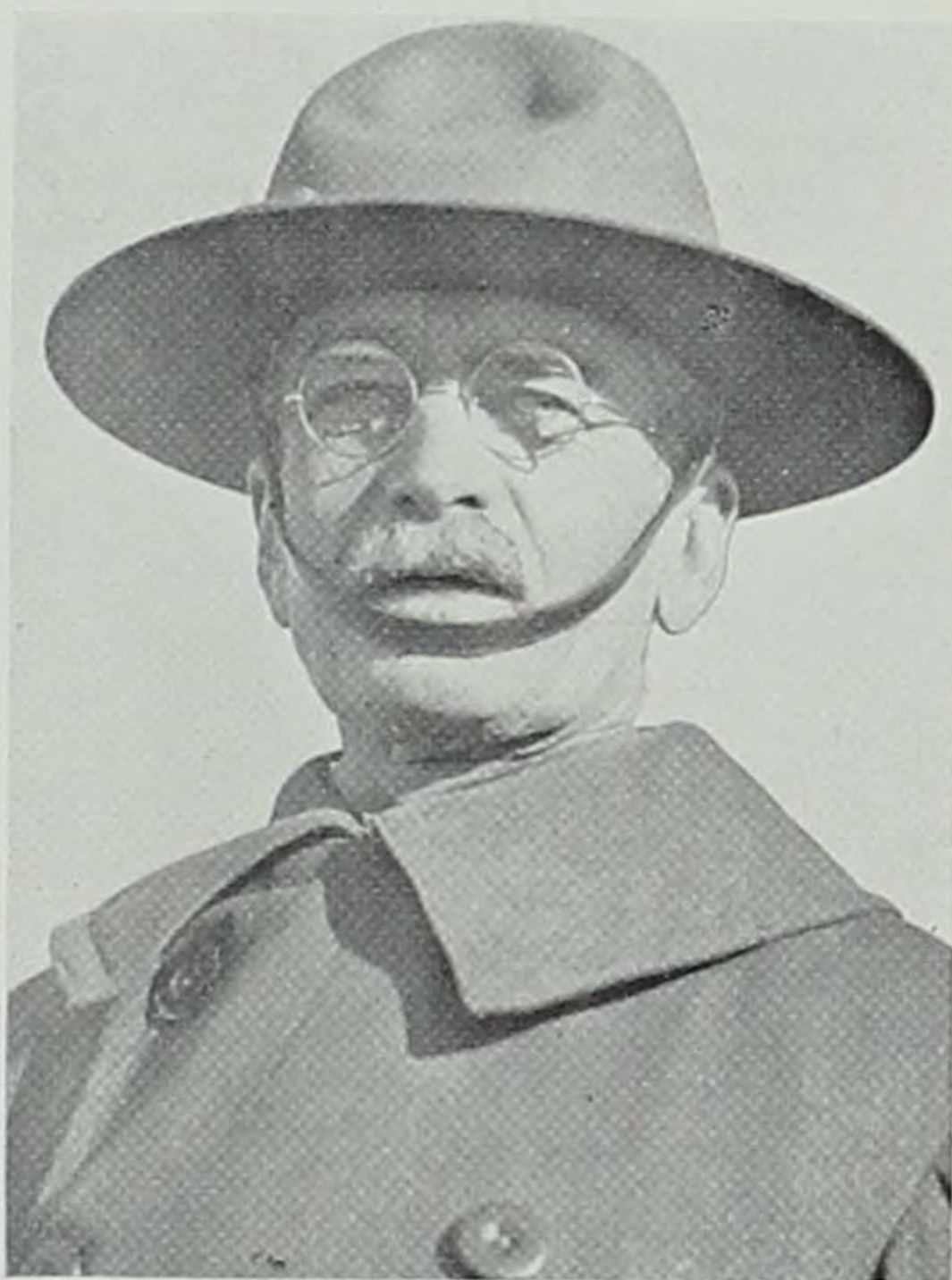
With the Stars and Stripes before us  
We'll go over the top.  
With your spirit there to guide us  
We will never stop.  
With a cheer we'll all rush onward;  
With a cheer we'll break through;  
Then, America, they'll know that we  
Are fight, fight fighting for you.



RANKING OFFICERS AT CAMP DODGE



MAJOR GENERAL E. H. PLUMMER



BRIGADIER GENERAL R. N. GETTY



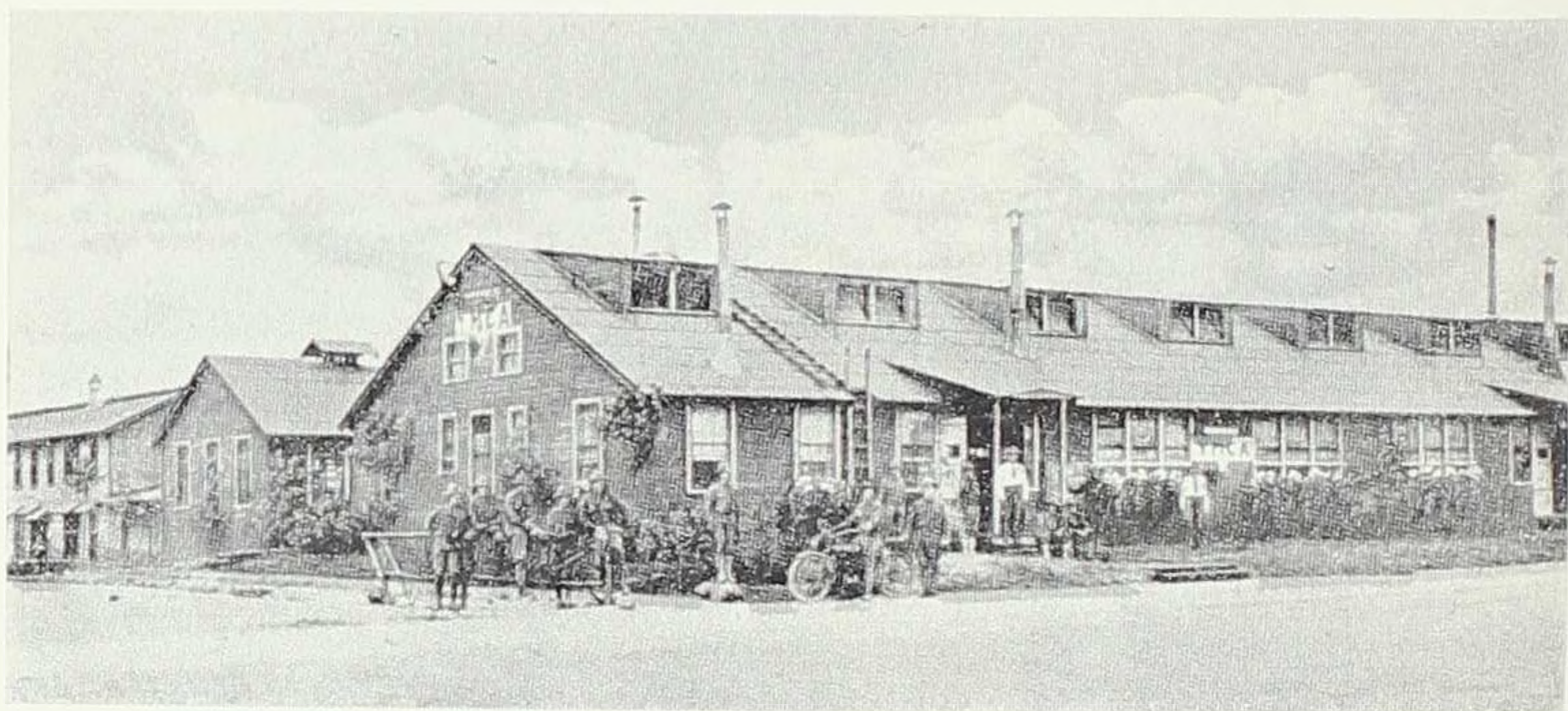
BRIGADIER GENERAL S. M. FOOTE



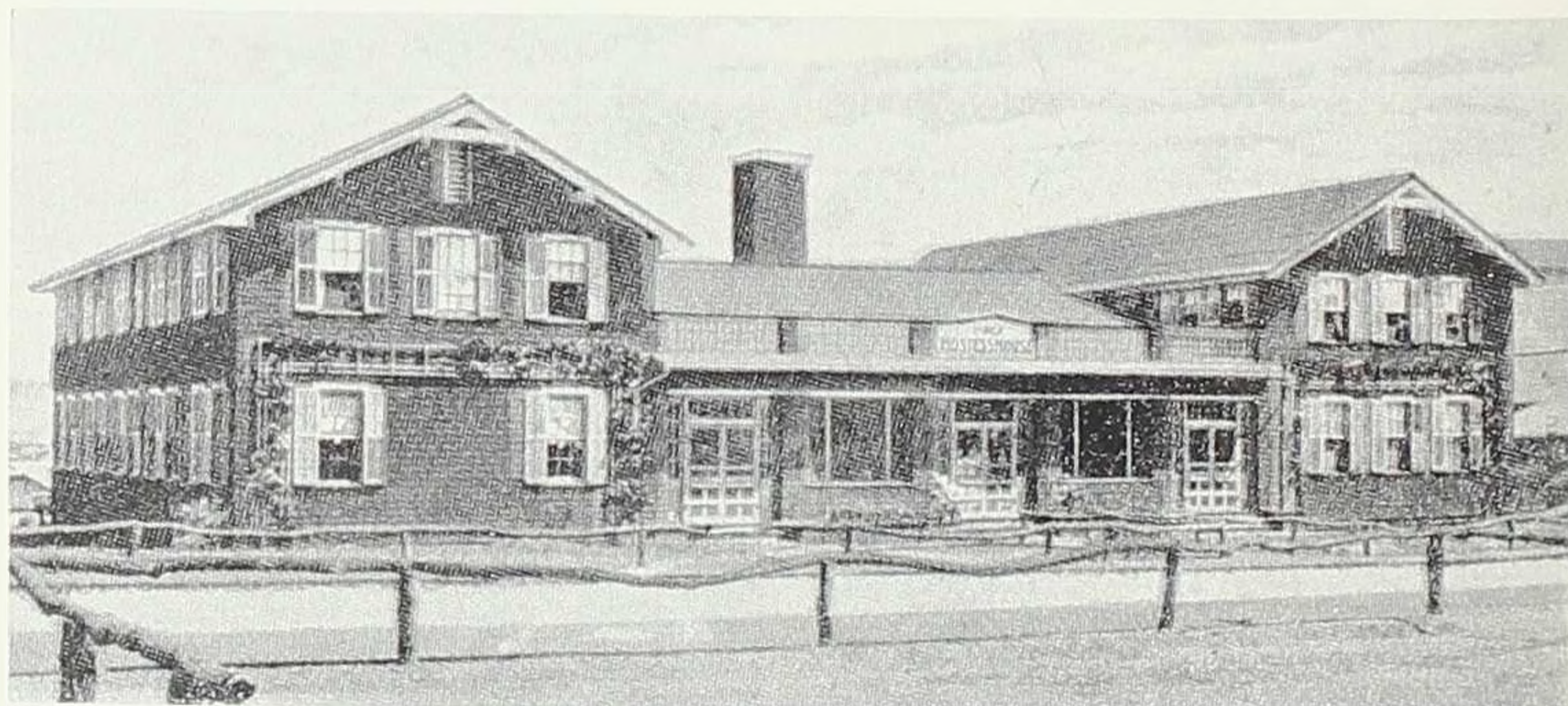
MAJOR GENERAL WILLIAM WEIGEL



## RECREATION CENTERS AWAIT DRAFTEE



One of eight Y.M.C.A. buildings



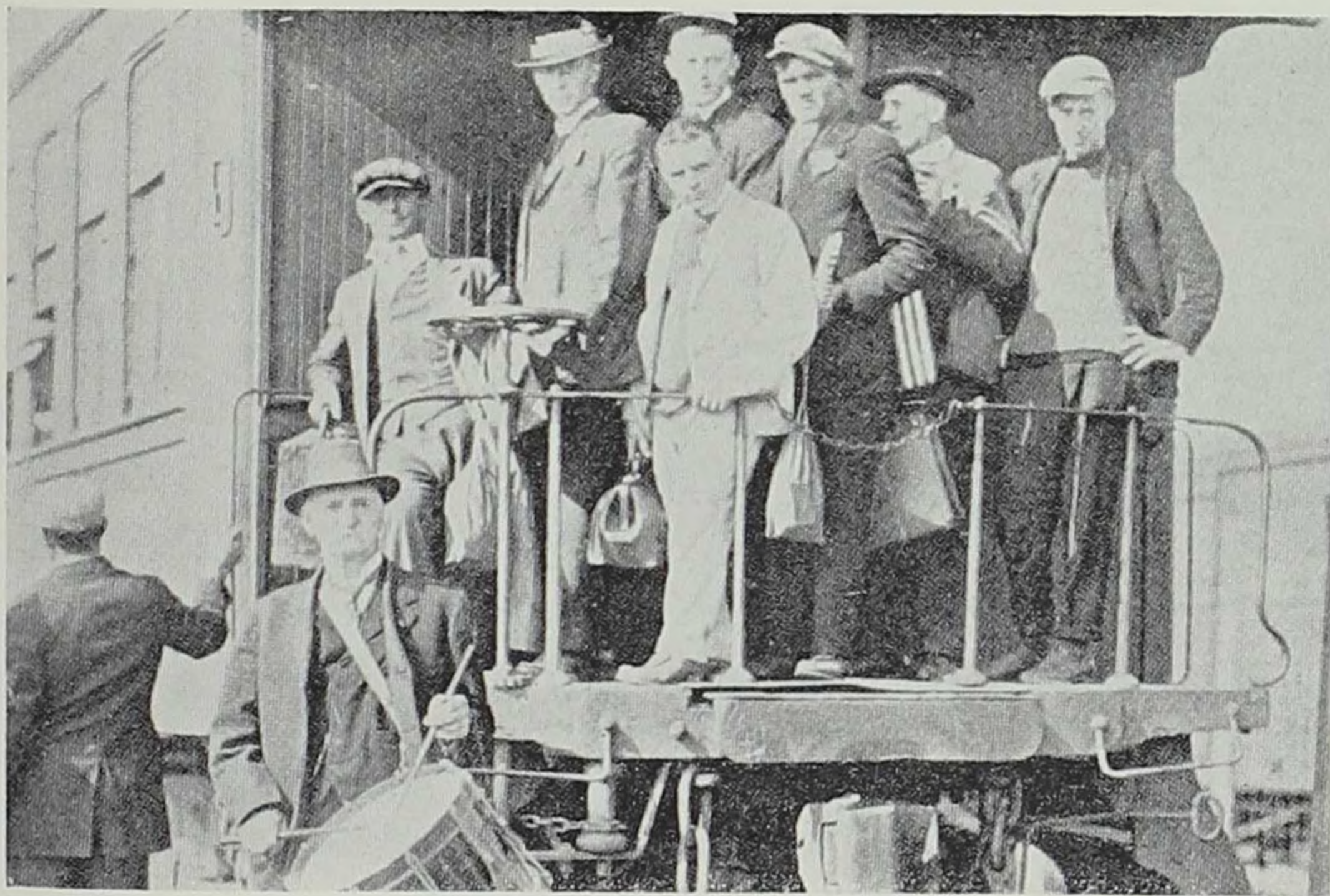
Y.W.C.A. Camp Dodge Hostess House



Knights of Columbus Hall



WHO ARRIVE AMID ROLL OF DRUMS



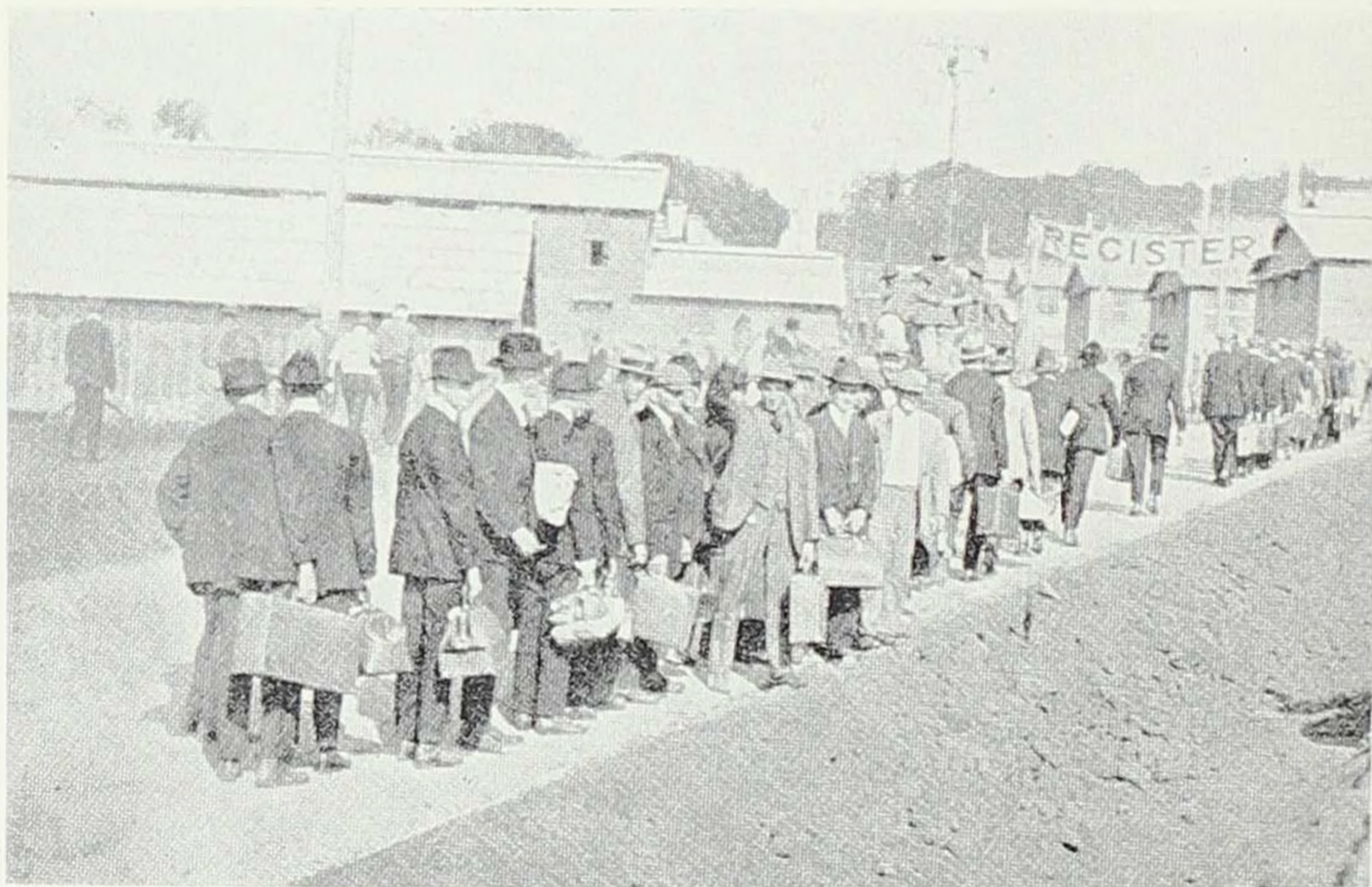
G.A.R. drum corps greets incoming recruits



New recruits at Registration Building



DRAFTEES REGISTERED IN MORNING T



Recruits line up on first registration day



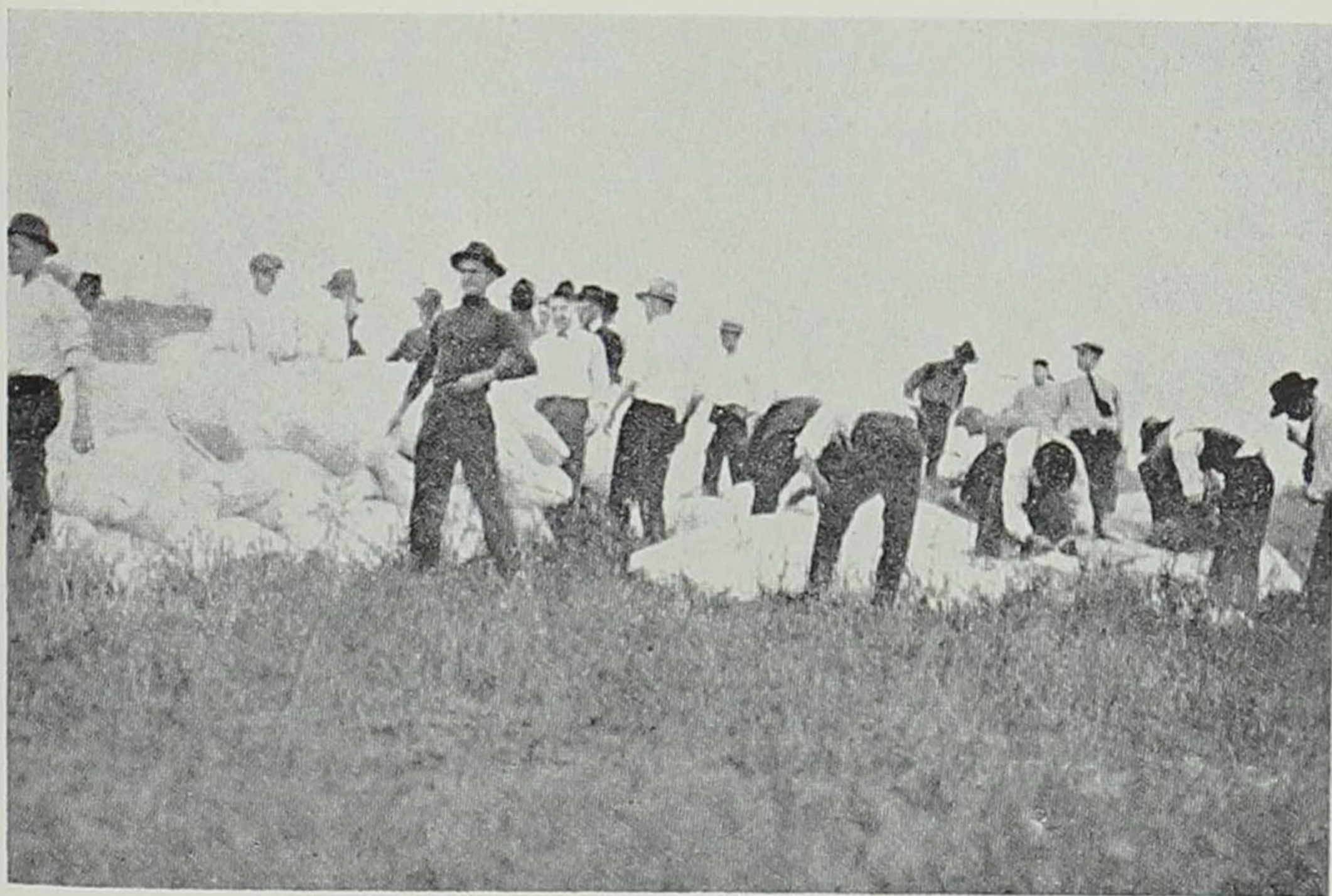
Each recruit had to set up his own cot



NG THEN GOT READY FOR SLEEP



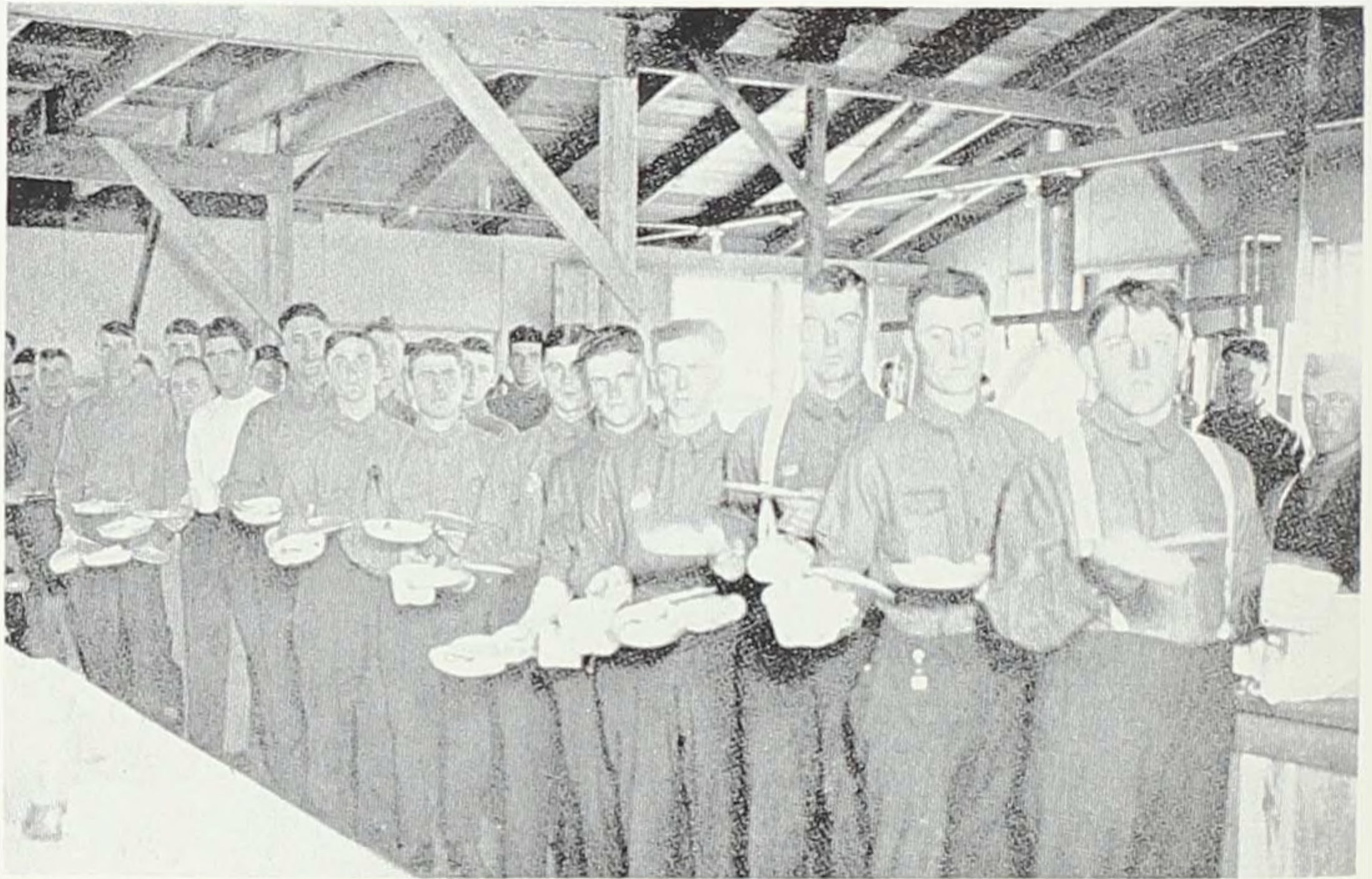
Bales of straw used in filling mattresses



Mattresses begin to take shape



COME AND GET IT!



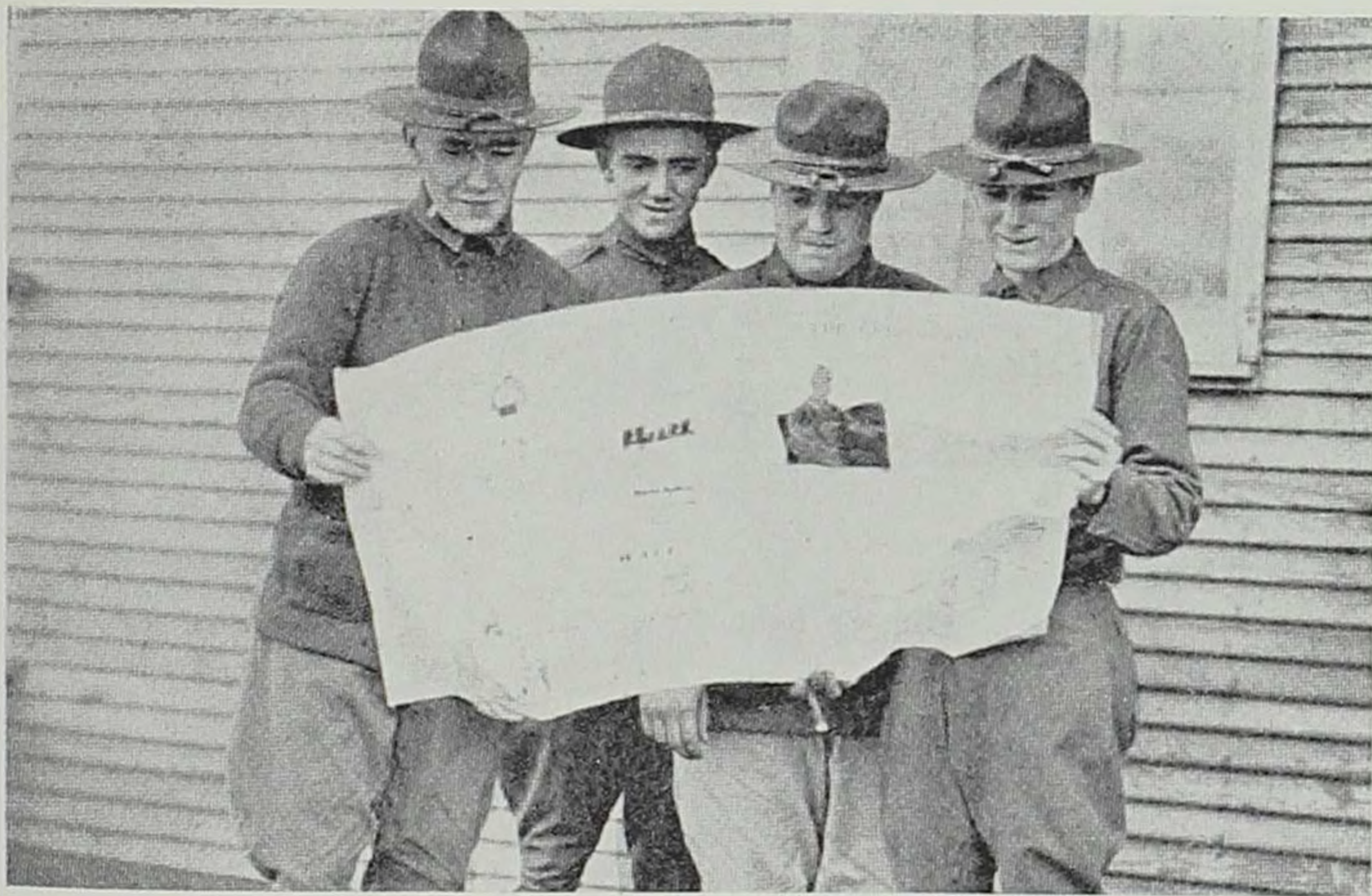
Lining up to be served at meal time



They drew kitchen police duty



## PUTTING IN LEISURE TIME



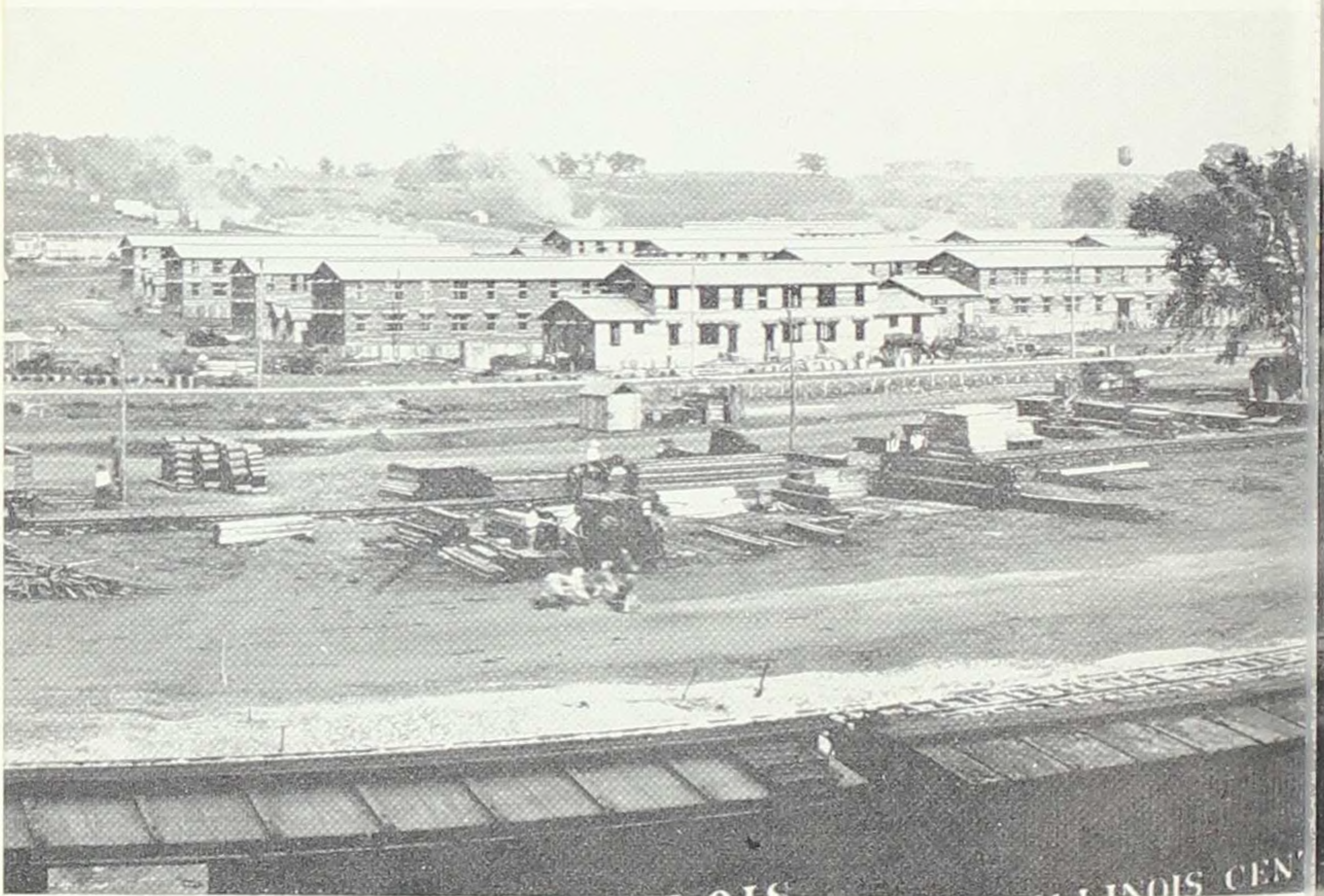
Reading *The Camp Dodger*



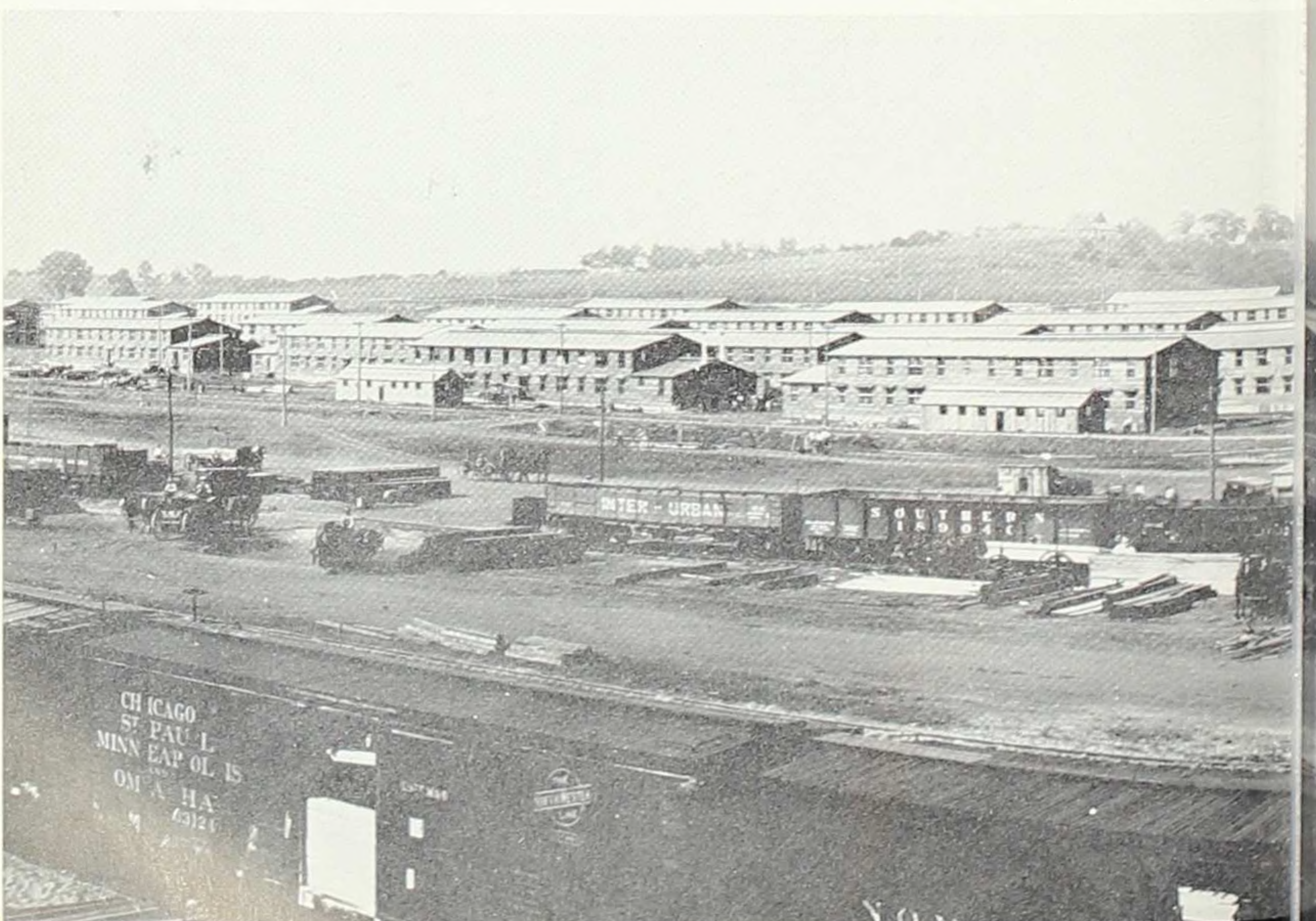
Recruit does his own laundry



PANORAMIC VIEW OF



Top: Looking right





CAMP DODGE IN 1917

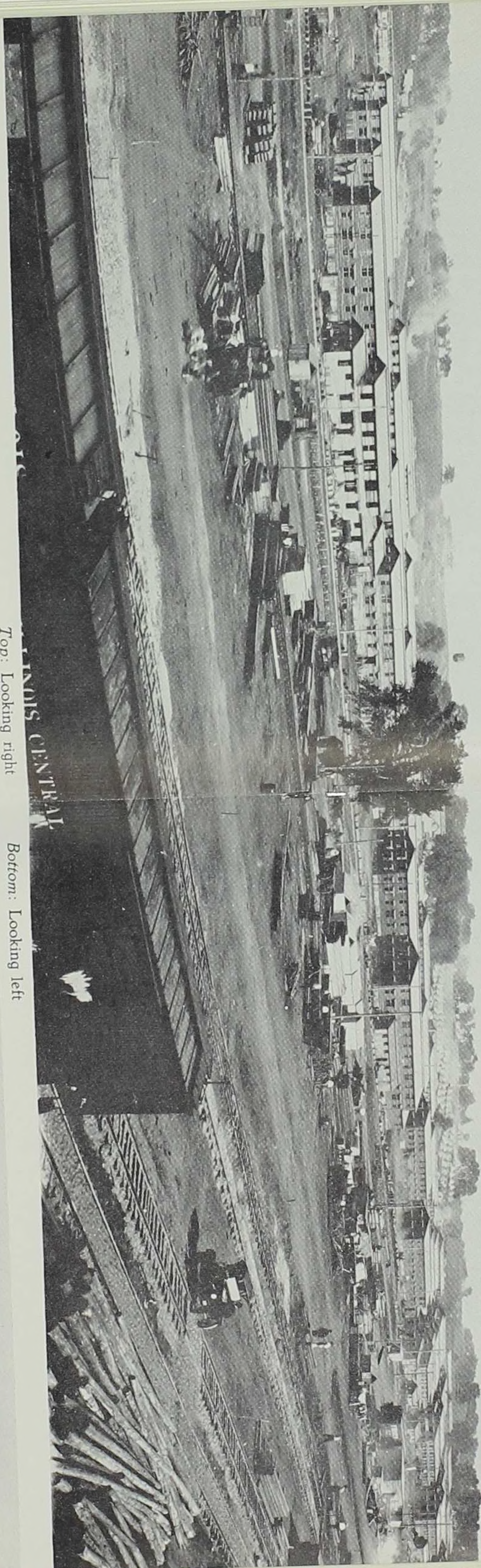


Bottom: Looking left





PANORAMIC VIEW OF CAMP DODGE IN 1917



Top: Looking right

Bottom: Looking left

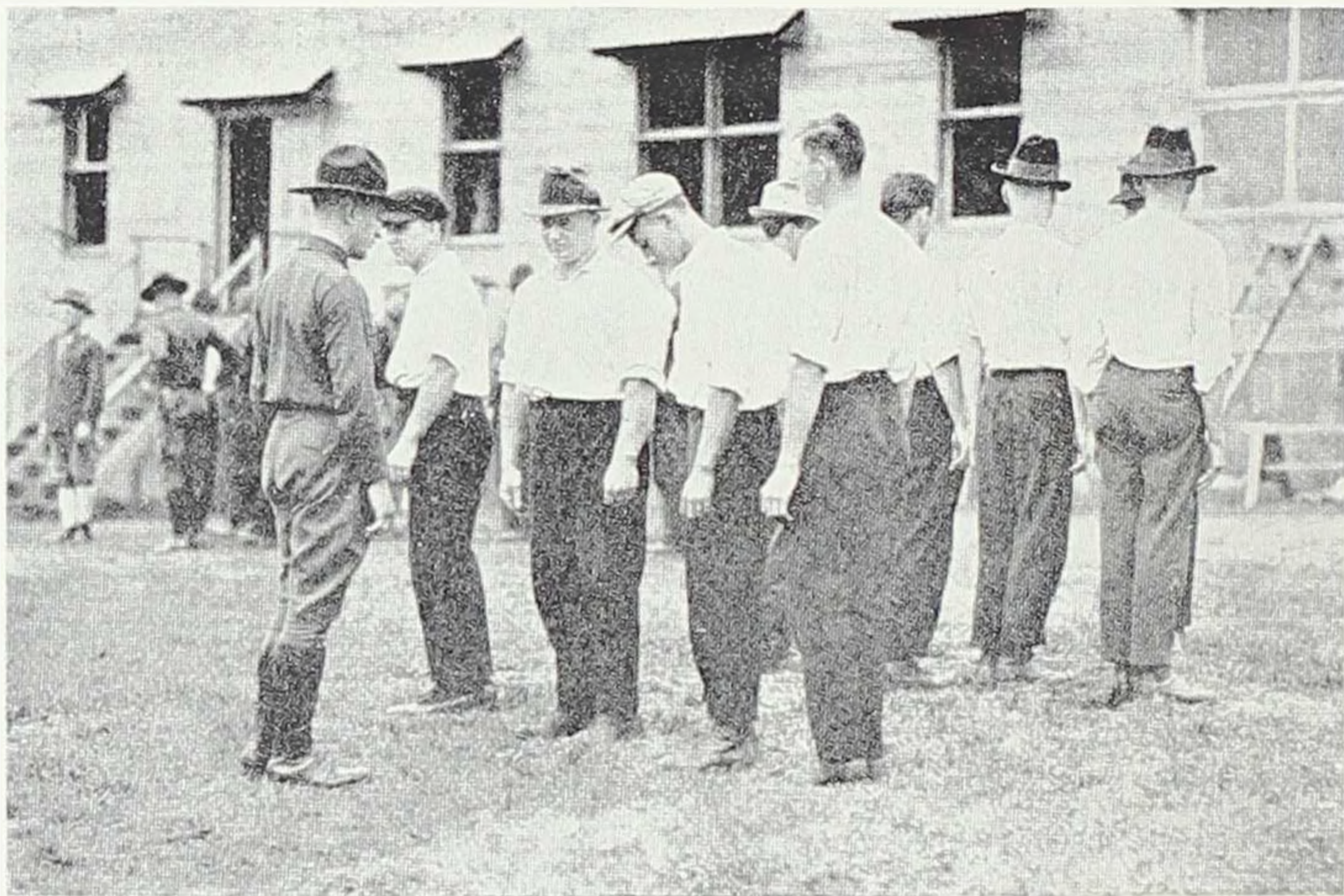


CHICAGO,  
ST. PAUL,  
MINN. EAST OF L.S.  
ON A H.A.  
6-67124

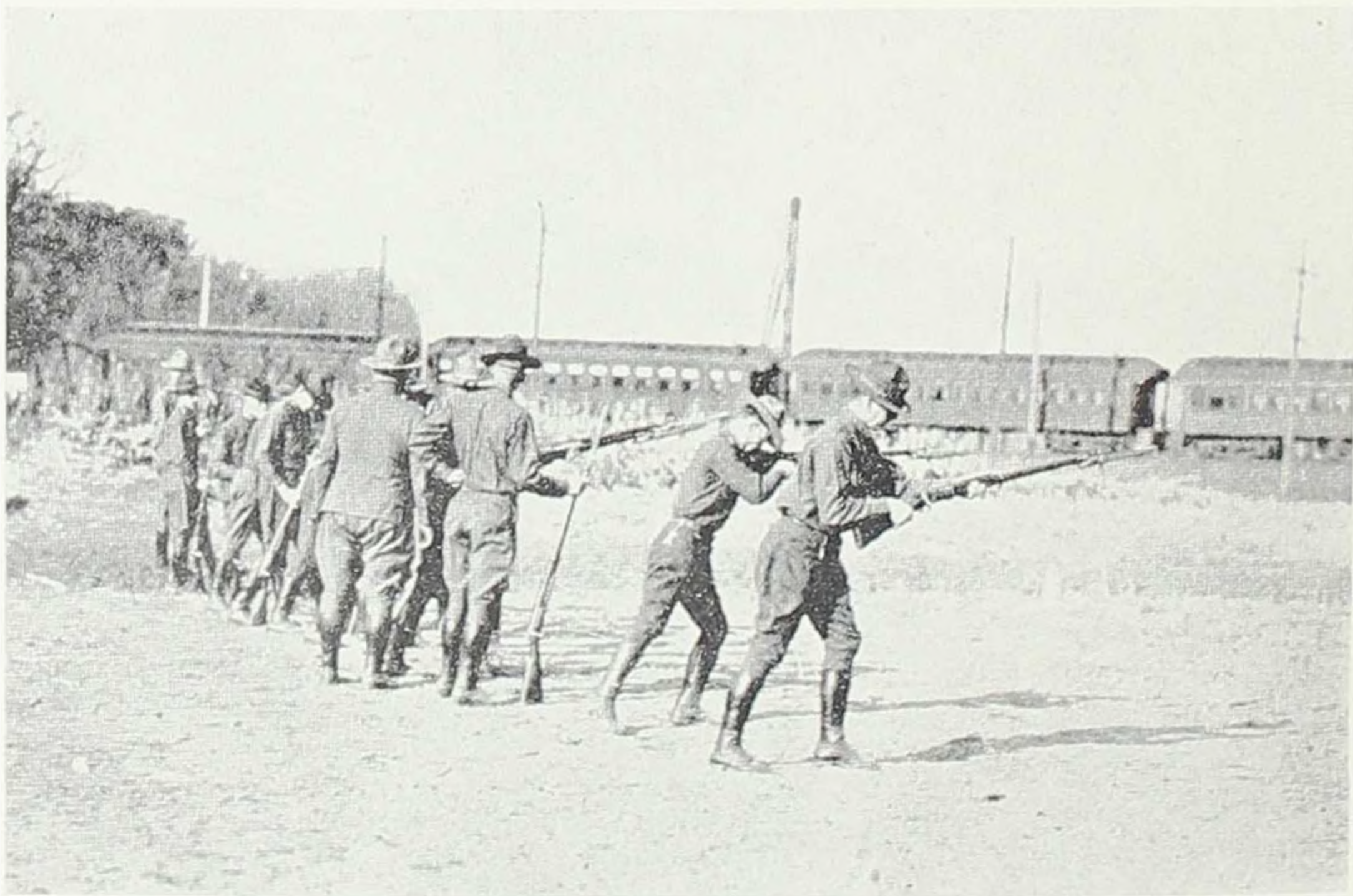
NOV



## BASIC TRAINING



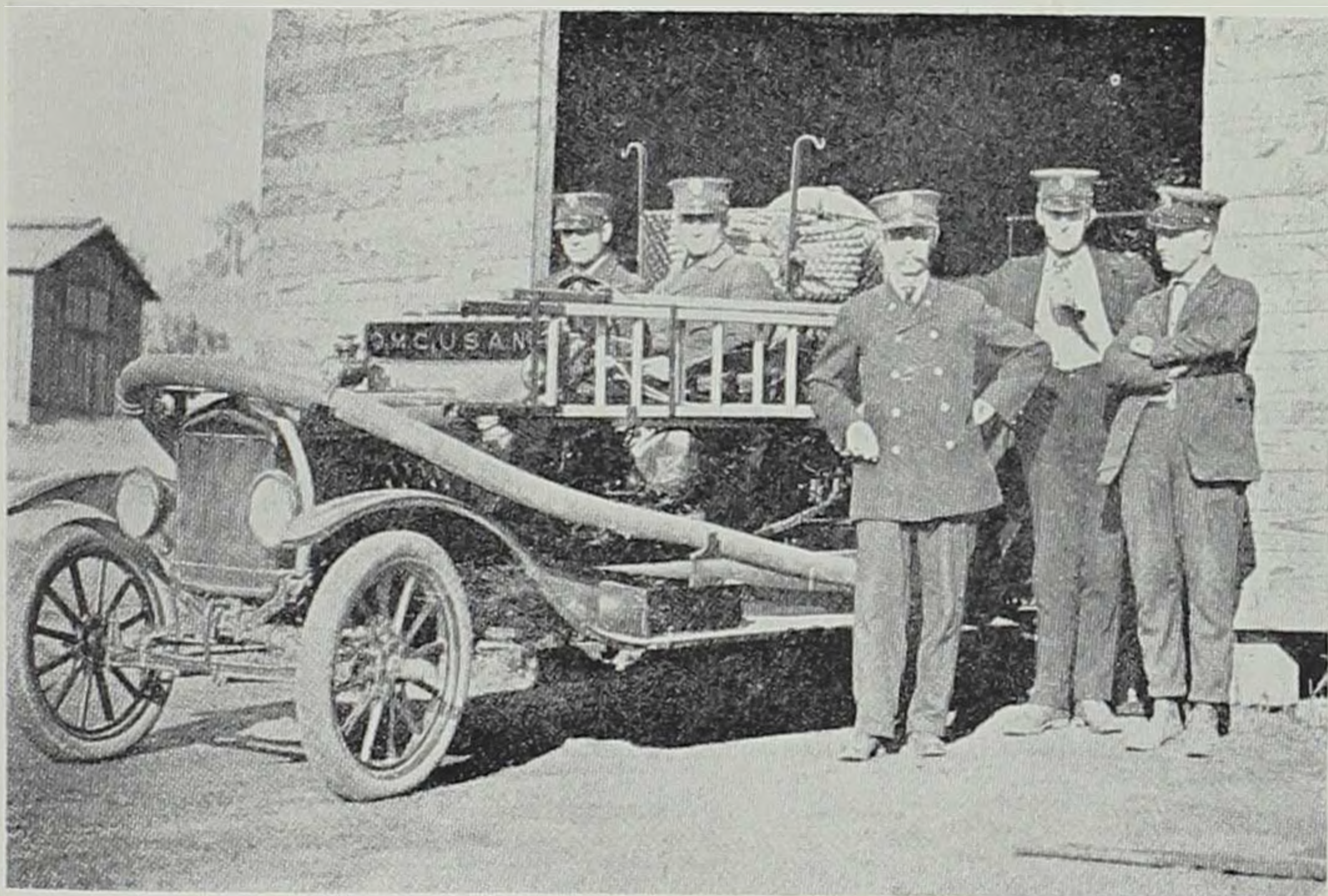
First drill for the new recruits



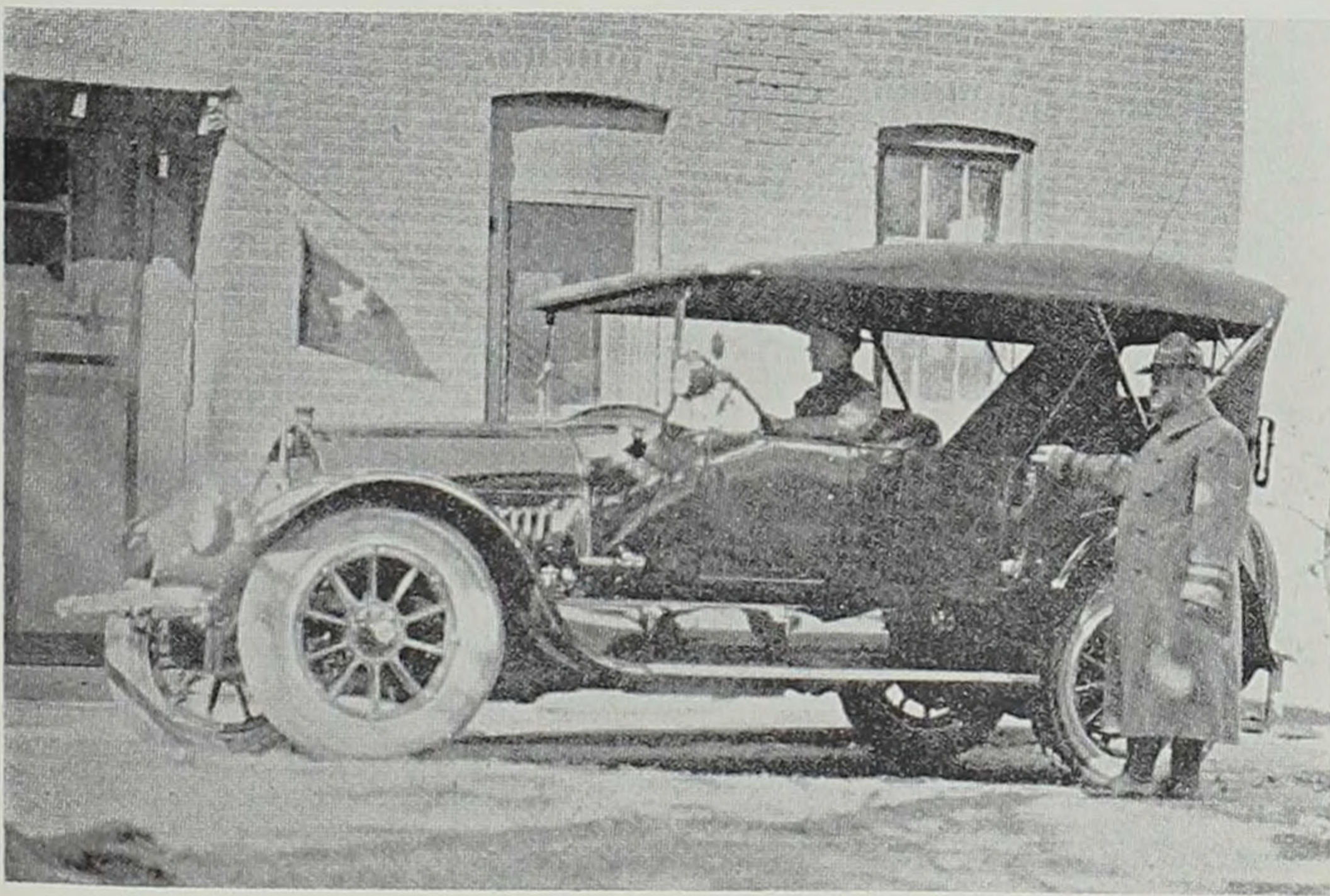
Bayonet practice



READY TO GO

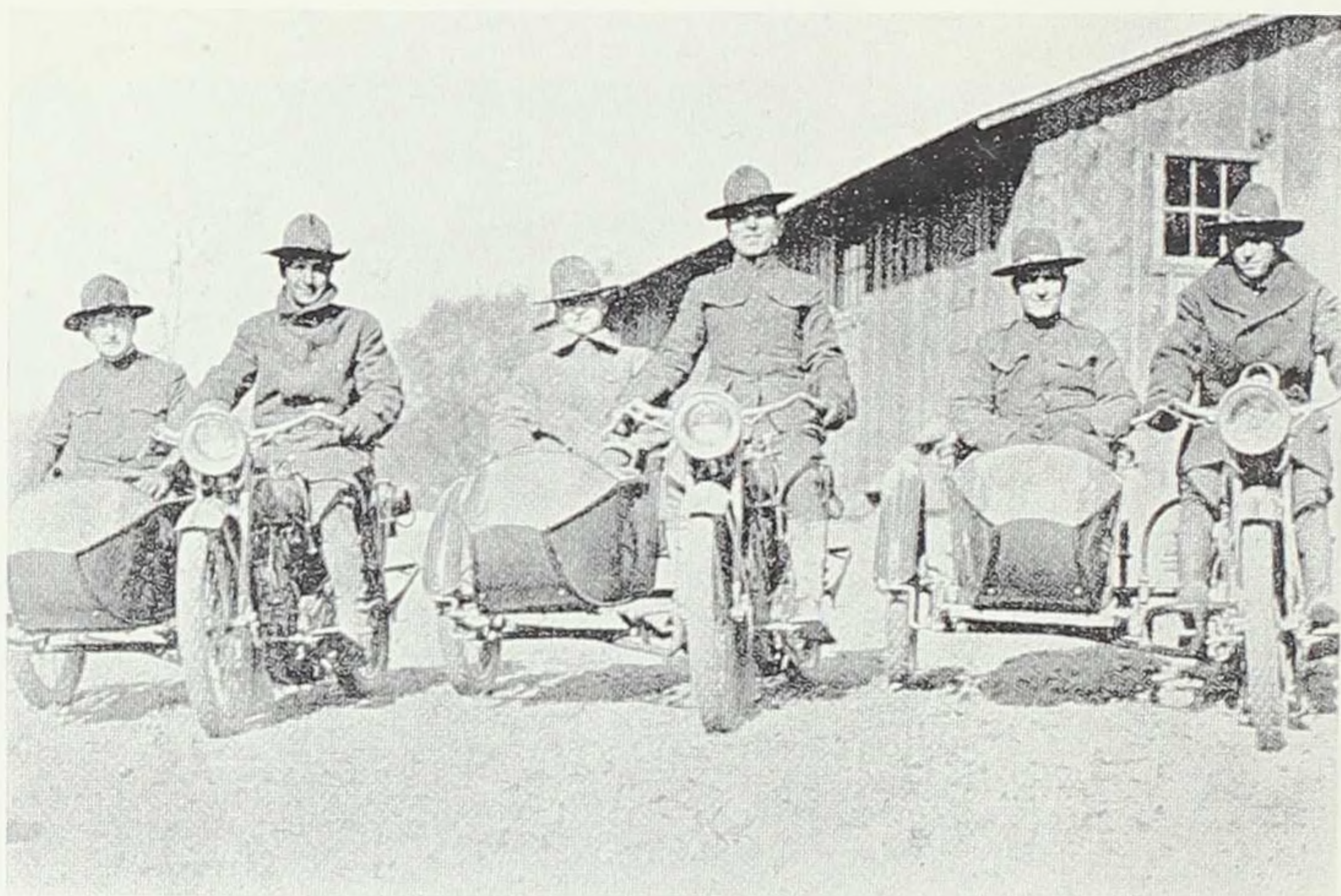


Fire truck and fire fighters

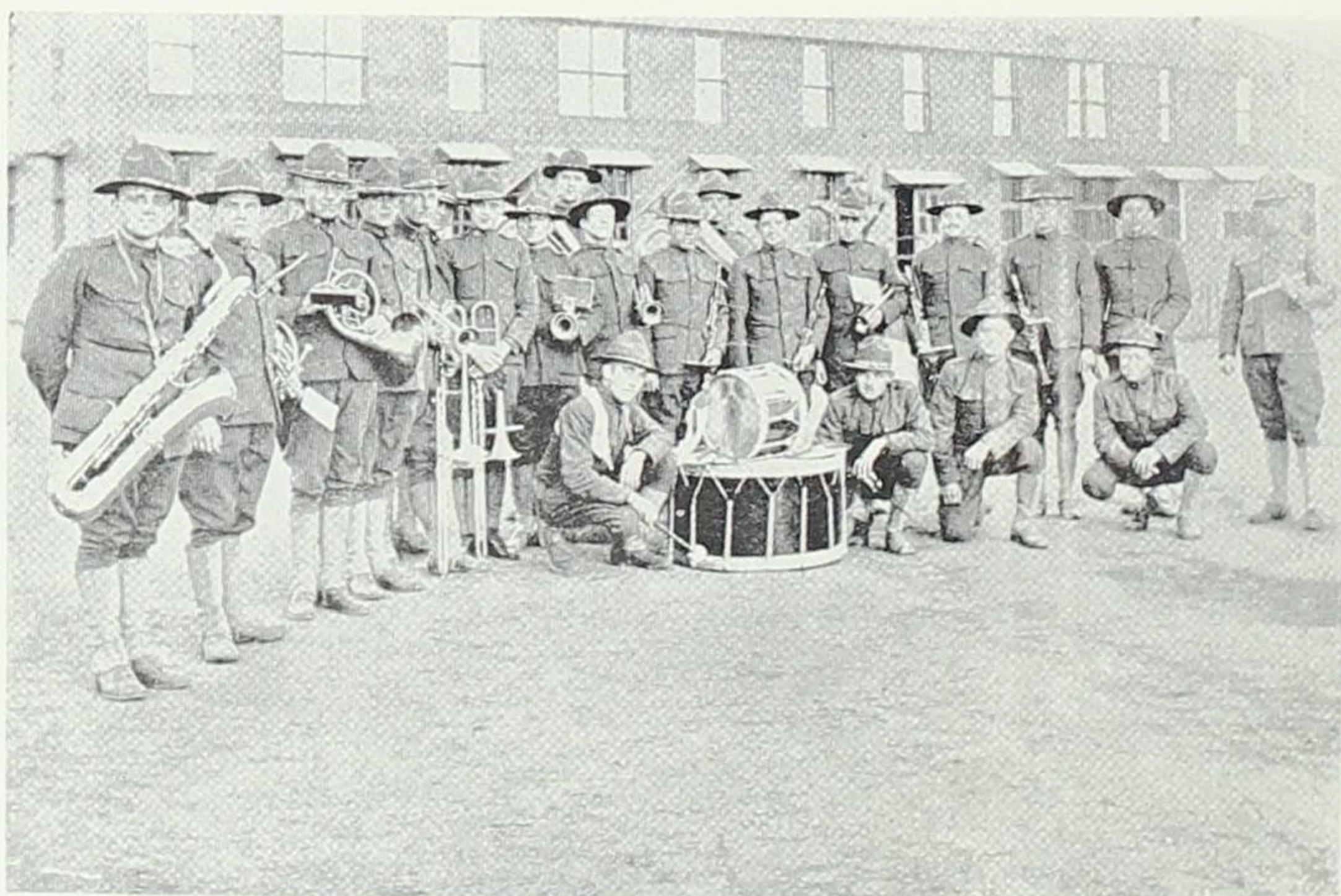


General Plummer and his official car



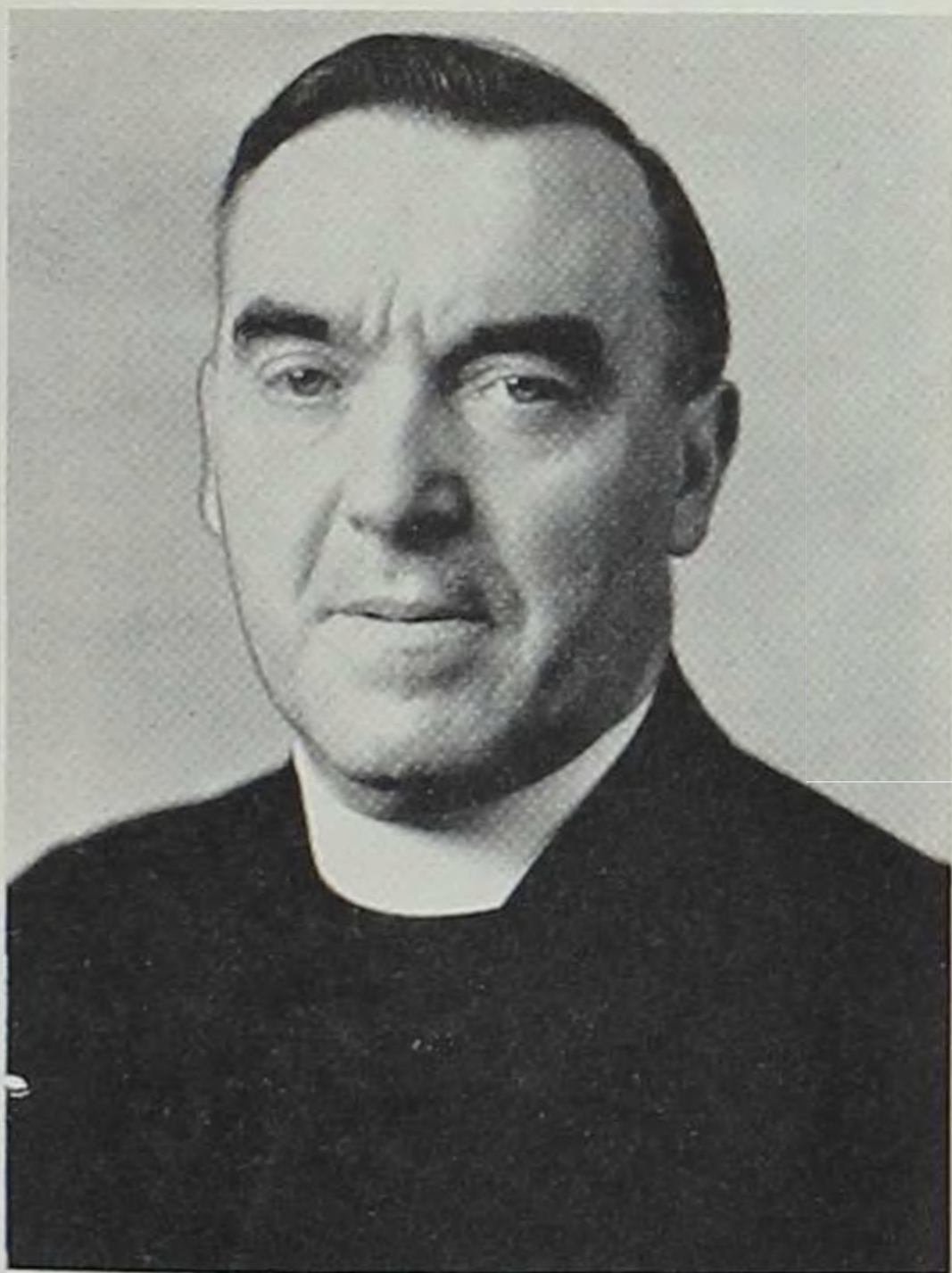


Division headquarters motorcycle squad

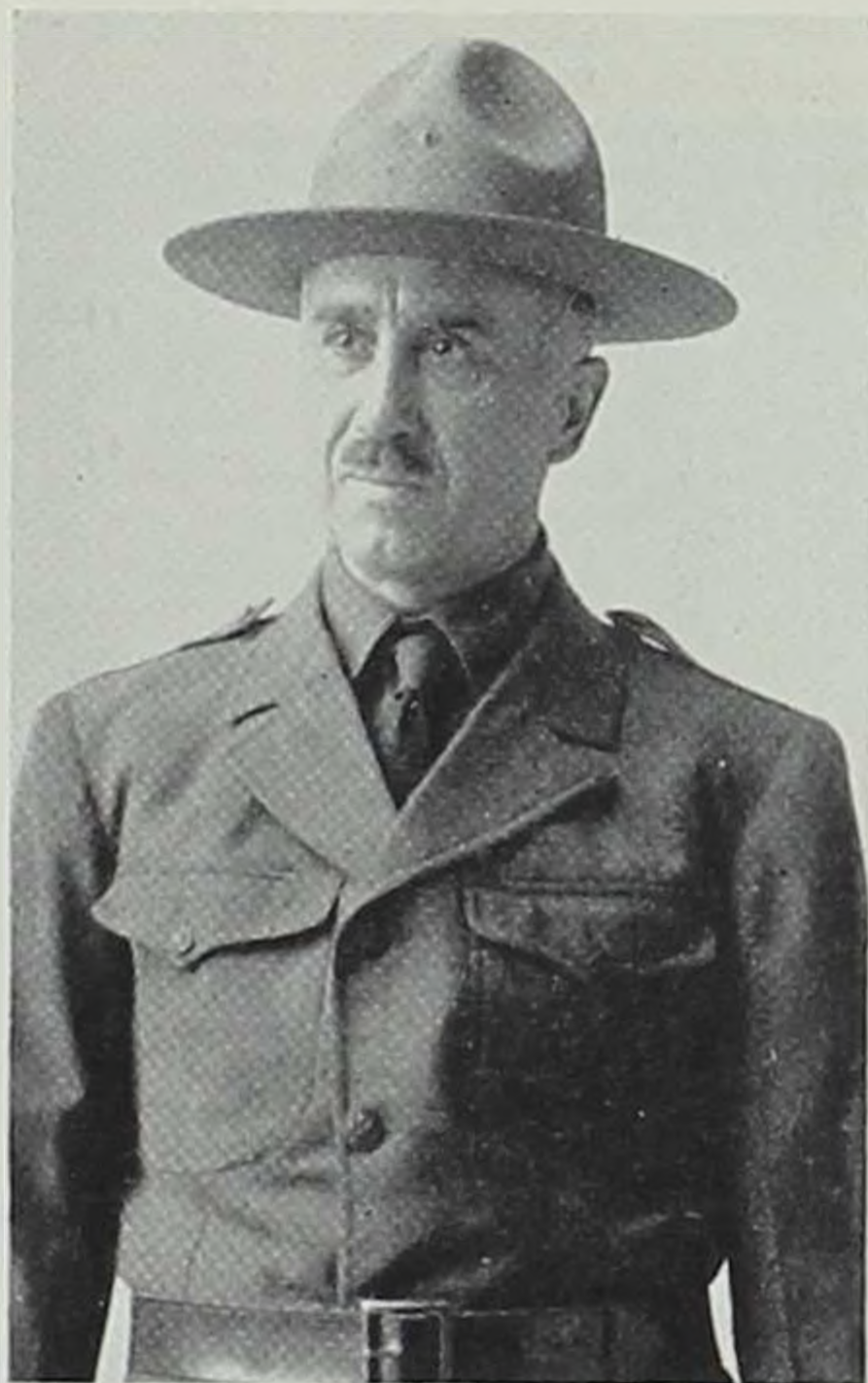


152nd Infantry Band

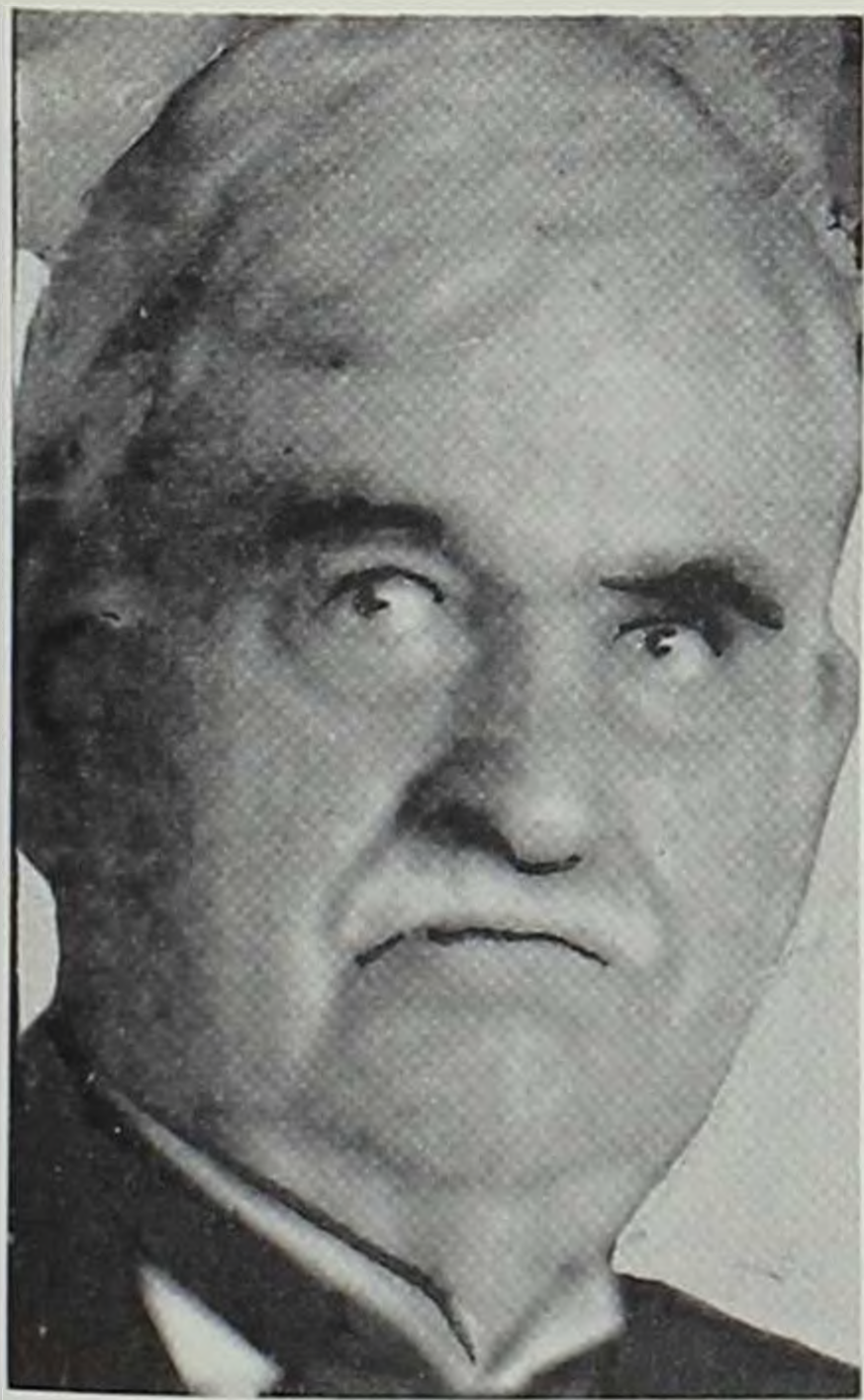




REV. PATRICK McDERMOTT  
Knights of Columbus Post chaplain



DEAN HOLMES COWPER  
Drake University School of Music



LAFAYETTE YOUNG  
Editor and Publisher,  
*Des Moines Capital*



DOROTHY ASHBY  
Girl reporter



## TODAY AND YESTERDAY



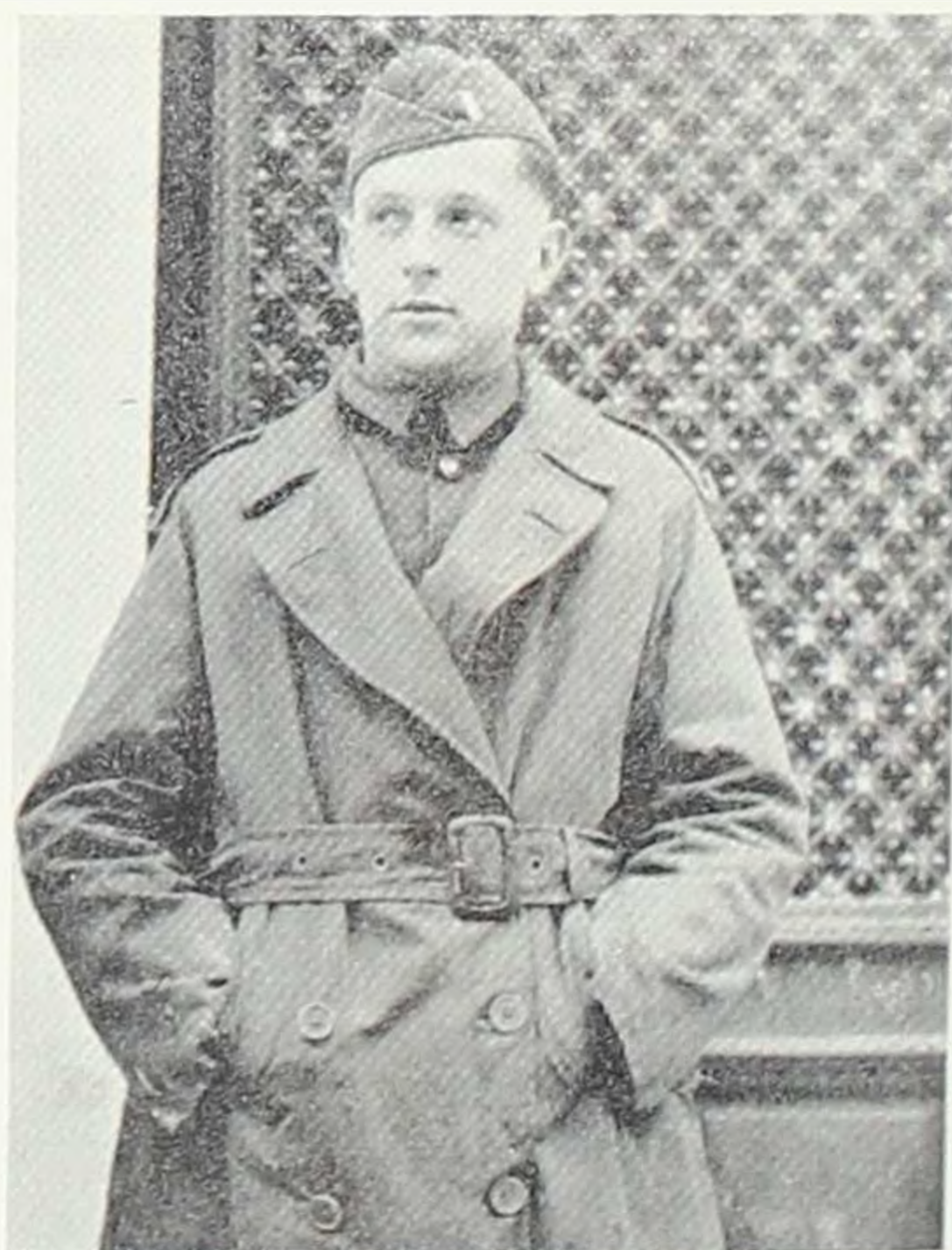
GEORGE WHITMER  
Des Moines mayor



GEORGE WHITMER  
First recruit to register



LAURENCE FAIRALL  
Retired advertising agency head



LAURENCE FAIRALL  
Editor, *The Camp Dodger*



## CHAMPIONS ALL



MIKE GIBBONS (Tommy's brother)  
Boxing instructor



EARL CADDOCK  
Champion heavyweight wrestler



TOMMY GIBBONS  
Famous middleweight boxer



CAPTAIN EDDIE RICKENBACKER  
American Ace



## IMPORTANT VISITORS AT CAMP DODGE



NEWTON D. BAKER  
Secretary of War



GENERAL JOHN J. PERSHING  
General of the Armies



MADAME SCHUMANN-HEINK  
German-American contralto



MISS ANNA MAY PERSHING  
Sister of the General



## Food, Fun And Games

"Come and Get It!" was a welcome invitation to those first recruits at Camp Dodge. Tons of well-prepared food and rivers of fragrant coffee were rewards after days of strenuous drill and hard work. Meals at the camp were ample and wholesome, and on holidays the kitchen staff really threw the cookbook at the happy troops.

I wore my best Georgette crepe afternoon dress to the Allied Thanksgiving dinner given by the Headquarters Troop of the 88th Division November 29, 1917. What a wonderful party that was! Greenery, autumn leaves, flags, and shields decorated the bare walls and the crude ceiling beams of the mess hall. There were yellow shades over the light bulbs, and the dinner tables were banked with hothouse flowers.

And here was our souvenir menu:

Russet Cocktail Plummer		
Eastern Shore Blue Point Cocktail		
Heart of Celery	Dill Pickles	Radishes
Italienne Olives	Salted Almonds	

---

Consomme Alphabet	
Saltines	
Japanese Rice Compote	Banana Sauce
Hawaiian Pineapple Sherbet	



Rhode Island Roast Turkey with Oyster Dressing  
 Roast Prime Rib of Beef with Gravy Natural  
 Minnesota Cranberry Sauce      Giblet Gravy  
 California Asparagus Tips with Drawn Butter  
 Irish Steamed Potatoes      Dixie Candied Sweets  
 French Peas Joffre      Belgium Midget Beans

---

Red Cross Champagne  
 Combination Salad      Thousand Island Dressing  
 Royal Cross of St. George Plum Pudding  
 Hard Sauce a la Haig  
 Buckeye Pumpkin Pie      Allied Mince Pie

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Troop Ice Cream, en favor  
 Assorted Tropical Fruit      Philippine Mixed Nuts  
 Cafe Noir      Ceylon Tea  
 After Dinner Mints  
 Cigars      Cigaretts

Our host was Captain John H. Quigley, Troop commander, and the mess sergeant was Daniel McDonald. And every other outfit in camp enjoyed a bounteous holiday meal. Camp Dodge cooks were provided with ten tons of turkey, stuffed with two tons of dressing; 10,000 pounds each of white and sweet potatoes; 5,000 pounds of cranberries; 5,000 pounds of celery, and 4,000 apple, mince, and pumpkin pies.

On a bright autumn day it was fun to be invited to eat out-of-doors with a company of engineers. But — O dear! Let us draw a veil over the girl reporter's inept manipulation of her metal mess kit! I did have the good sense to put my



fork and spoon in my pocket. Then, how to maneuver the big coffee cup along with the pan filled with roast beef, baked potato, lima beans, and sweet pickles? And, horrors! What to do with the pan's cover which was to hold the dessert? Advice from mischievous soldiers was of little help, but I did survive this acrobatic adventure with a minimum of spills. And for the budget-minded: Mess Sergeant Lester Langley planned this tasty repast for 230 people for \$24.

Snow and cold ushered in December and the first Christmas at Camp. The plain buildings were gay with holiday decorations. Unpainted rafters were concealed with fir and holly and streamers of bunting. There were decorated Christmas trees in every building, and company cooks again worked magic with Yuletide menus.

Midnight Mass in the Knights of Columbus building was attended by more than 2,000 soldiers. At the big Y.M.C.A. auditorium there were gifts for everyone, and thousands of voices were raised in Christmas carols with dynamic Dean Holmes Cowper leading the singing. On Christmas morning there were special religious services in the Y.M.C.A., Knights of Columbus and Lutheran Brotherhood buildings, and many of the soldiers attended church in Des Moines.

And what fun it was to go with a well-chaperoned group of young people to a Christmas dinner-dance given by Company B of the 313th En-



gineers, with Colonel R. R. Raymond, Engineers' commander, an honored guest. During the dinner an improvised jazz band entertained us with great clashing of dishpans, wash basins, and pie tins, all trying to drown out the violinist and pianist. Climaxing the party, everyone sang:

Where are the Engineers? Ho!  
Send up the Engineers.  
Blast the bridge, entrench the ridge!  
Come on, you pioneers!  
The Infantry's the fighting arm,  
The Signal Corps the ears —

*But*

Gee Whiz! Great Guns! Send us the Engineers!

I liked to drop in to visit with the Y.M.C.A. secretaries or chat with the Reverend Patrick McDermott, the Knights of Columbus Post chaplain, Ireland's County Donegal's contribution to the priesthood. There was always a dish of candy on the table in his study. Fellows often stopped by for a game of chess with the Reverend Father, or watched wrestlers or boxers training for downtown bouts in this hospitable building.

The Liberty Theater was a popular entertainment center, too, offering movies, home talent shows, and such gems as *Up in Mabel's Room*, *Mary's Ankle*, or *Getting Gertie's Garter*. And every day, Holmes Cowper, Dean of Music from Drake University, led hundreds of recruits in community singing. It was a treat to watch the Dean



leap and bound about the stage as he encouraged hundreds of singers to whoop it up with *Tipperary*, *Over There*, *K-K-K-Katy*, and other great songs which rocked the building.

One day some army mules, tethered near the theater, joined in the singing. "They came to scoff and remained to bray," laughed the exuberant Dean.

Major P. J. Hennesey of the 349th Infantry Regiment declared that "singing men are fighting men," when he organized the Trench and Barracks Glee Club, which entertained many Camp Dodge and Des Moines audiences. Very popular, too, was the chorus of Negro soldiers from the 366th Infantry Brigade.

Lively band music kept the recruits' spirits high. I'll never forget the concert given by the combined bands, that first winter. Bohumir Kryl, the great Chicago bandmaster, came out to lead the massed group in a stirring program of Sousa marches, anthems of the Allied countries, and other rousing numbers. Three field artillery bands, four infantry bands, and one Regular Army unit participated in this memorable event, which was held in the Y.M.C.A. auditorium.

Women visitors to Camp Dodge were not forgotten. General Plummer called the Y.W.C.A. Hostess House "the front parlor of Camp Dodge." What a lovely place this was for visiting wives, mothers, and sweethearts and for chilled girl re-



porters who found a welcome at its hospitable fireside. My good friend, Sue McNamara of the *Des Moines Register and Tribune*, often showed up at Division headquarters, and occasionally we were joined by Ruth Stewart, another Des Moines reporter.

After we had made our rounds, the Hostess House always was our objective. The gracious hostesses whom I remember best were Mrs. Earl Dunshee, the first director; Mrs. Ethel Towne Holmes, now of Grinnell; and Mrs. A. R. Mellor of Des Moines, who often joined us for tea.

Here was a hospitable building where weddings were held; meals were served; children could be tucked away in the pretty nursery; and elusive soldiers located for bewildered visitors. During the influenza epidemic, the big lounge was filled with cots for sorrowing relatives who had been called to the bedsides of sick and dying men.

Flags, palms, and flowers decorated the Hostess House when it was dedicated in February 1918. Soldiers and townspeople were invited to a gala afternoon tea honoring General Plummer, just back from France. In the receiving line with the General and his wife were Brigadier General and Mrs. R. N. Getty, Mrs. Hollis Rawson, Mrs. Gardner Cowles, Mrs. Henry C. Wallace, Mrs. O. F. Schee, Mrs. Harry Taylor, Mrs. Roy Walker, and Miss Harriet Plummer.

We were all on hand at the Hostess House at



Christmas time when mistletoe was especially rampant. Ethel Towne of the Hostess House staff had written to Oklahoma families of men then stationed at Camp Dodge mentioning a shortage of this essential Yuletide symbol. Walter Harrison, editor of the *Daily Oklahoman* and a former Des Moines newspaperman, responded with 20 crates of mistletoe which added much to the red balls, holly, evergreen, and the big Christmas trees throughout the camp.

Mrs. Mellor still recalls sad and happy weddings in the Hostess House; the blinding dust storms; the sleuthing necessary to locate men whose families and sweethearts could furnish only meager clues. There were days, too, when 99 gallons of ice cream were not enough, and when 61 watermelons, each weighing 20 pounds, were consumed by sweltering doughboys. On August 4, 1918, with the thermometer registering 110 degrees, Mrs. Mellor recalls that 2,176 people were served in the Hostess House cafeteria. She loved her job, however, later confessing: "It was all so new and different that I would not even lie down for a rest for fear I would miss something." During the first six months after its opening, the Hostess House furnished lodging for 1,000 women, and in the busy cafeteria, 83,199 persons were served in the month of June.

Camp Dodge had its own lively newspaper, *The Camp Dodger* edited by Lieutenant Laurence



Fairall. It was founded September 21, 1917, and was the oldest newspaper in the National Army. When the Division went to France, *The Camp Dodger* went along and was published in the Gondrecourt area — price, 25 centimes. Laurence Fairall recently retired as head of Fairall and Company, the well-known Des Moines advertising agency.

Colorful highlights of Des Moines social life during the Camp Dodge period were brilliant regimental balls held in hotels and clubs; teas for wives of officers and enlisted men; romantic wartime weddings and many informal gatherings planned to make the visitors feel at home. The Girls' Volunteer Aid, an organization of nearly 2,000 carefully selected young Des Moines women under the leadership of Mrs. W. E. Maulsby, danced happily at well-chaperoned parties in the city and the camp, as well as sewing and knitting articles for the men.

Two companies of Girls' Volunteer Aid were invited to attend the opening of the Army Club in downtown Des Moines. Many dignitaries were on hand to "say a few words." This was followed by dancing to a jazz band with 500 soldiers cutting in on 100 girls.

The clubhouse became a popular meeting place as well as a party center. Billiard and pool tables, books and magazines, and writing desks brought many soldiers to this hospitable center. The



planned dances were chaperoned by Des Moines women, and the Women's Clubs planned Sunday afternoon gatherings with special programs. Several of the churches also provided recreation centers for young men and women.

Public dance halls were carefully supervised, and strict rules were posted by the city officials. To test these rules, Mr. H. L. Eddy, head of the welfare department of the Chamber of Commerce, and I made a tour of the downtown dance-halls on the first evening the regulations were in effect. Mr. Eddy was a very good dancer and we meticulously followed the posted rules: "All unnecessary shoulder or body motion shall be forbidden. No undue familiarity or suggestive forms of dancing will be tolerated."

Friendly clubwomen were chaperons in all of the halls, and even Ben Woolgar, the safety commissioner, was there to see that proper etiquette was observed. I'm afraid our proper fox trots and waltzes would seem pretty tame to the frug and watusi set today.

There was no air conditioning, no television or radio broadcasts and the folding chairs were hard, but the sports shows sponsored by Camp Dodge authorities drew thousands of spectators to the old Coliseum in Des Moines nearly a half century ago.

Camp Dodge boasted at least two athletic stars of national note—Sergeant Earl Caddock, world champion heavyweight wrestler, and Mike Gib-



bons, noted middleweight fighter, who was appointed by the War Department to teach boxing to the men of the 88th Division. These two men, along with many lesser lights, appeared in a number of exciting shows to which I usually was sent to record a woman's reaction to the hot matches. So I was on hand when Iowa-born Earl Caddock defended his world title against "Strangler" Lewis and Wladek Zbyszko, the famous Polish wrestler. I joined the crowd in cheering when Mike Gibbons appeared in an exhibition match with "Packey" McFarland, another noted fighter who was boxing instructor at Camp Zachary Taylor.

Heading the sports program at Camp Dodge was Captain John L. Griffith, who left Drake University to become director of the Department of Athletics and Physical Training at the Cantonment. In later years, Major Griffith served as Commissioner of Athletics for the Western Conference — Big Ten Universities. For Camp Dodge he planned a broad program of contests which included track and field meets, baseball, football, basketball, boxing, wrestling—even polo.

Some of the programs were held in Y.M.C.A. and Knights of Columbus buildings, and it was exciting on one occasion to watch sparring matches between Mike Gibbons and his brother, Tommy, in the Knights of Columbus auditorium. Tommy, also a fighter, was training for an important bout, and he and Mike demonstrated rope skipping and



other conditioning techniques for the delighted spectators. Mike's boxing classes prepared recruits for hand-to-hand fighting in battle and were also useful aids for bayonet training. Mike once told me: "After all, bayonet fighting is largely boxing with a gun in your hand."

Earl Caddock, a big, good-looking Iowa fellow and already world champion, reported for service at Camp Dodge in December 1917. He was assigned to the Divisional Headquarters Troop. Caddock's reaction to his new life was typically modest. "I'm just a buck like the rest of these boys," he said, "but I'm going to work hard to deserve this uniform."

His pretty wife, Grace, a former Anita school teacher, kept the home fires burning in their Des Moines apartment and took an active part in the war work of the community. She and I had many chats, and I learned that while she was very proud of Earl's athletic prowess she never attended a wrestling match. She got the returns of each match over the telephone and was always ready to cook up a storm after one of his victories. Steak and eggs were the basis of his pre-match meals, so pies and casseroles looked pretty good to him after he disposed of his challengers.

A gentleman and a scholar was Wladek Zbyszko, Caddock's challenger for the world's wrestling championship in February 1918.

On the day of his match, he told me he was



proud to wrestle Caddock . . . "he is a gentleman" . . . but he was confident of victory. But the Polish wrestler did not win, and Earl Caddock retained his championship. In my story, which appeared on the sports page of the *Capital*, I pulled out all the stops as I described the struggling, "glistening bodies under the arc lights," while thousands cheered Caddock and booed the man from Poland.

On the morning after this victory, the Caddocks chatted happily with me in their Des Moines apartment. I watched hungrily as Grace prepared a prune pie which would be served with plenty of whipped cream.

There were many of those special matches and contests, but day in and day out John L. Griffith and his colleagues planned less glamorous sports and games which built the raw, young recruits into rugged, fighting men.

The admiring opinions of many officials at home and abroad were expressed in remarks of General Beach, as we surveyed a group of 88th Division soldiers, back at Camp Dodge for demobilization in June 1919. "Aren't they a fine looking lot of men?" the officer exclaimed. "When they came from home, many were pale and thin. The war surely did wonders for them!"



## Heroes And Homecoming

As our Model-T chugged back and forth between town and camp, our routine chores were sparked by frequent interviews with Very Important People who came to visit Camp Dodge.

"Teddy" Roosevelt made one of his slam-bang talks to the soldiers. William Howard Taft brought his comfortable bulk and hearty laugh and talked to us about the League of Nations. General John J. Pershing was the handsome "Black Jack" of army legend, and well-remembered by former West Point graduates for his talent at poker.

I had a memorable train ride from Ames to Des Moines with Secretary of War Newton D. Baker and General Peyton C. March, Army Chief of Staff. General Leonard Wood was pleasant but declined to say whether he would be a presidential candidate. History took care of that query. Madame Schumann-Heink, who came to sing for the soldiers, told me "Don't call me 'Madame Schumann-Heink'—call me 'Mamma Heink.'"

Senator Lafayette Young and I boarded a train in Colfax to interview Ambassador James W. Gerard, who gave us a first-hand account of his stay in Germany as we rode to Des Moines. And



there were universal smiles and cheers for glamorous Captain Eddie Rickenbacker, America's Ace of Aces in World War I, when he visited Camp Dodge and his former employer, W. W. Sears, Des Moines automobile dealer.

My interview that day said:

Of course everyone knows that Captain "Rick" has 26 German planes to his credit and that he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, the French Croix de Guerre and the French Legion of Honor Medals for exceptional valor.

"There's not much thrill in flying," he said, soberly. "It's not a sport at all. It's scientific murder. After a man gets one or two planes, he's deadly."

A delightful visitor, too, was Miss Anna May Pershing, the General's sister who came from her home in Lincoln, Nebraska, to visit Mrs. H. R. Howell in Des Moines.

Besides the extra-special visitors there were military missions from France and England. A trio of Iowa soldiers came from France to aid in the Liberty Loan Drive, and there was a gala reception for more than 300 Belgian and Italian veterans of the Russian campaign who stopped off at Camp Dodge on a world-circling tour. And on two occasions, young Camp Dodge heroes who had served overseas, John D. Garner, a Kentuckian, and Private Liberty Pease from Farragut, Iowa, were decorated with the Distinguished Service Cross at the Cantonment.



Rumors of peace were rife in Des Moines in early November 1918, and then came November 11 and the armistice! What a day!

"Life is just one cheer after another," I wrote in the *Capital*. "Before 10 a.m. the town was wild . . . Trolley cars didn't pretend to run. Trucks were filled with happy men and women . . . Noise seemed to be the universal watchword. Horns, bells, and klaxons blazed away the message of victory."

Brigadier General W. D. Beach took the 88th Division to France. Major General William Weigel brought the troops back to Camp Dodge for demobilization. Before they returned, members of the 88th Division, who were stationed at Gondrecourt, passed in review before General Pershing. Secretary of War Baker also was there. At this ceremony, the General decorated Major General Weigel with the Croix de Guerre with palm and the Distinguished Service Medal.

I finally said good-bye to the 88th Division, after a proxy interview with Major General William Weigel. An interview had been scheduled and I was on time but no General. Then a tall aide, with an anxious expression, announced that he had been authorized to speak for the General. It developed that General Weigel had sent his uniform to the cleaners and his boots to be shined, and he was in no state to meet a girl reporter for an interview. Of course, this made a better story



than any profound remarks I might have exchanged with this noted veteran.

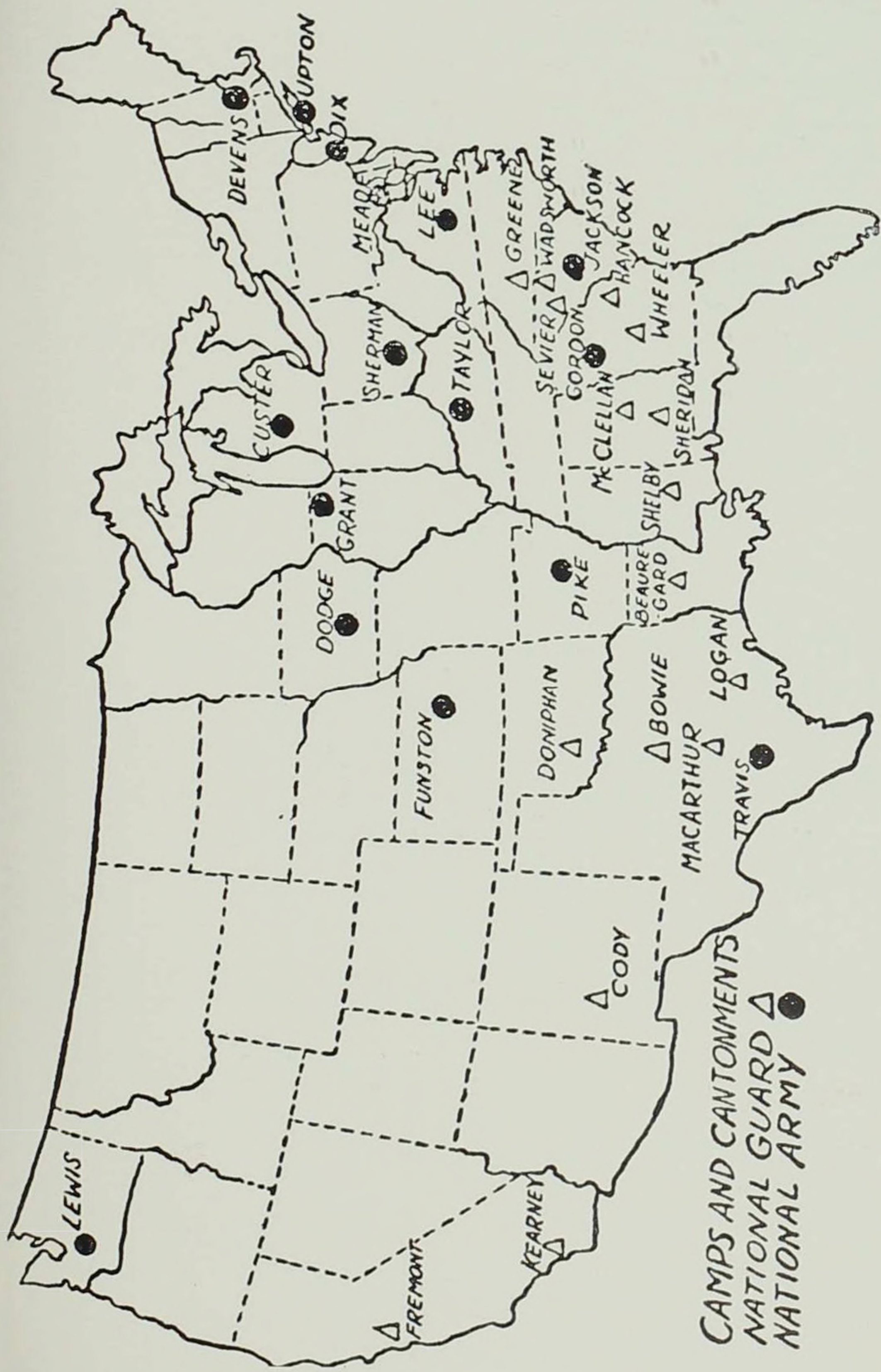
As units of the 88th Division arrived at Camp Dodge they were demobilized with dispatch, under the direction of Colonel Rush Wells, camp casual officer.

Enlivening the daily routine of demobilization was the arrival of Martha "Mart" Porter, a favorite newspaper woman who had served overseas as a correspondent and expert doughnut maker for the Salvation Army. Also, here came the cast of "*Who Can Tell?*" the sensational musical show which members of the 88th Division presented in many European centers.

Perhaps a nice way to end these random recollections would be this tribute from General Pershing to the 88th Division:

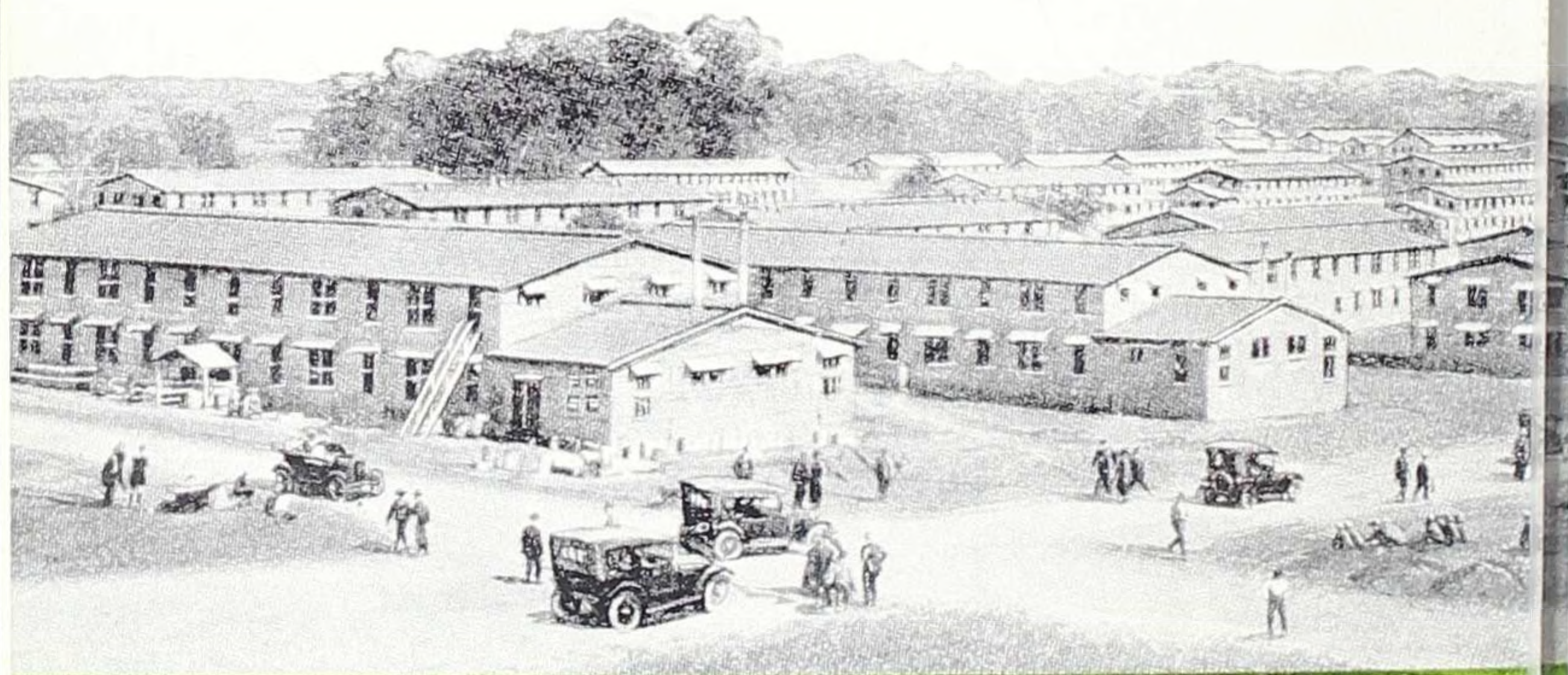
The soldierly bearing, military precision, and excellent physical appearance of the men, as well as the remarkable condition of all equipment, marks your division as one of the best. You have maintained very high standards indeed. I wish to thank the men of the Eighty-eighth Division for the manner in which they bore their share of the burden of war. When you get home, the American people will thank you again.





Location of Camps and Cantonments, 1917





Bird's-eye view of Camp Dodge