

all patients from the island to a quarantine hospital on West Bank about 10 miles from the bay.

Many died as the result of exposure suffered during this transfer. The exact toll of the fatal seizures was never computed, but it is known that Chaplain Alexander Davidson and the sexton of the chapel were among those who succumbed to the disease.

Early in 1871 all the buildings in which the plague had existed were destroyed. Among these was a line of one-story wooden houses, nicknamed "Rotten Row," which extended across the present park near Quarters 18, and had been erected originally to accommodate the builders of Fort Jay after the Revolution. In removing these structures it was found that the supply of earth available to fill in their cellars would not permit the fill to be brought up to a level with the surrounding ground, which accounts for the curious depression that may still be noted in this section of the park.

The spiritual depression which the yellow fever attack bequeathed to the island was happily dissipated a year later when the garrison was honored by a state visit of the Grand Duke Alexis of Russia, brother of the Czar. A reception and dance was held for his entertainment in the old hospital, a marquee being erected on the lawn in front of the building. Full dress blues were brought out of moth balls, gold epaulets were reburnished, the post orchestra furnished special music, and the distress of the past months was so completely forgotten that the royal visitor regarded the occasion as one of the high spots of his American tour.

For the next six years the calm serenity of Governors Island as a recruiting station continued undisturbed by anything more notable than the replacement of Sergeant Gubbins' ferryboat Madden by his new Governors Island, and the elimination of the drum in favor of the bugle for sounding drill calls.

The row of quarters on the west side of the park, now known as Colonels' Row was also commenced during this period. Then with the coming of 1878 the War Department ordered the Headquarters of the Military Division of the Atlantic and the Department of the East from New York to Fort Columbus, marking the final transformation of Governors Island from the status of a purely military fortification to that of an administrative center, a role which it held until 1966.

The change-over took place on July 1, when the Recruiting Service was transferred to Fort Slocum on Long Island Sound, and Batteries A and D of the 1st Artillery relieved the island garrison which at that time consisted of the "Music Boys," the "Permanent Party," Recruit Companies E and F,

and the "Coloured Infantry" Company H, and all of the 10th Infantry. As department commander there was assigned Major General Winfield Scott Hancock. With his arrival began a true renaissance for the island.

One of General Hancock's first moves was to secure a large appropriation from Congress to augment and modernize the living accommodations on the post, supplementing this by the removal of various unsightly and unsafe structures. Most important among these improvements was the elimination of a two-story wooden barracks from the center court of Castle Williams where it had long been a serious fire hazard to the powder magazines in the castle's walls.

The general's program for the betterment of the professional, social, and economic conditions of his new headquarters was as effective as it was continuing. No detail of garrison routine seemed too small to escape his attention. One of the immediate and major improvements which he effected in behalf of his command was the establishment of a ferry service that was completely Army controlled and free to Army personnel and their families. The harbor steamer *Atlantis*, purchased from the Cunard Line, became the new ferryboat and rendered faithful service until 1898 when it was replaced by a specially built vessel appropriately named General Hancock. A striking contrast to the island's water transportation system of today is offered by the following high-ranking correspondence of 1879:

**February 12, 1879**

**To General Hancock.**

**General:**

**A number of officers desire to attend a reception at the Army and Navy Club tonight and on application of the Post Commander in their behalf I have in your name directed the *Atlantis* to make a trip tonight, leaving the Battery at 1 o'clock vice 12.**

**Yours truly,  
James B Fry  
Major General, 1st Ind.**

**To General J.B. Fry:**

**Very well. This is the way the thing can be done.**

**Winfield Scott Hancock  
Major General.**