

inch coast defense mortar, three Gatling guns, and two 24-pound brass mortars remaining from the British occupation. Most of these were removed shortly thereafter, so that when the infantry buglers blew Taps for the dying century at midnight of New Year's Eve of 1899, Governors Island was feeling completely settled in its new identity.

Also at this time there was begun on the island an engineering operation of major importance. In the more than 200 years which had elapsed since the purchase of the land by Van Twiller the erosion of the tides had reduced the original area of the island to slightly less than 70 acres; indeed, so closely had the harbor waters encroached on the reservation that during stormy weather the brick houses of Regimental Row, built in 1889 and 1890 along the south shore, were wet with flying spray. Twenty years previously the State of New York had graciously ceded to the federal government all the submerged land adjacent to Governors Island to the south and southwest, and it was this area which the Army now proposed to reclaim at an estimated cost of approximately \$10,000 an acre.

The Corps of Engineers, under the direction of Colonels W. L. Marchall and S. W. Roessler, prepared the plans and the work went forward without delay. A bulkhead was constructed to surround the reclamation area, including the shoal southwest of the island, and this was filled in with dirt and rock from dredged channels and the excavations for New York's 4th Avenue subway, then under construction. More than 4,787,000 cubic yards of fill were used behind the sea wall 7,219 feet in length, with the

result that when the project was completed in 1912, new land to the extent of 103 acres had been restored to the island premises and marked by a lighthouse, a signal bell, and fog horn.

Even before its completion, this extension had given an indication of the important role it would play in our future defense plans when Wilbur Wright, in the autumn of 1909, took off from the new land in his airplane for what the newspapers called a "record-breaking flight" up the Hudson as far as Grant's Tomb and back. The next year America's other aviation expert, Glenn Curtiss, landed on the extension at the finish of a pioneering flight from Albany. Exposed to such aerial influences, it is not to be wondered at that a young infantry lieutenant stationed on the island asked his commanding officer to approve his transfer to the aviation section of the Signal Corps, then being formed. The colonel gave his consent but warned his subordinate, "Young man, I know of no better way for a person to commit suicide!" Fortunately this forbidding prospect failed of realization, for the air-minded youngster lived to become General of the Army H. H. Arnold, five-star commander of our Air Corps in World War II.

Meanwhile Major Generals Arthur MacArthur and Adna Chafe, famous fathers of famous sons, had succeeded in turn to the island command. until the creation of the Atlantic Division in 1904 brought to the post as commanding officer Brigadier General Frederick Dent Grant, famous son of a famous father.

Between the administrations of Chaffee and Grant, the resident commander was Major General Henry C. Corbin, destined to be the Army's most renowned Adjutant General, and to him fell the gratifying privilege of publishing the War Department's General Order No. 18 of Jan. 25, 1904, retracting an undeserved and spiteful slight to a great American statesman and acknowledging a long overdue recognition of his worth:

A welcome modern touch was given to the island on May 10, 1904, when electric current from New York's powerhouses was at last made available to the garrison, and its buildings and streets no longer needed to depend upon candles, oil, or acetylene gas for their illumination.

The original Chapel of St. Cornelius the Centurion, after more than 60 years of constant use, was now found to be in a state of such decay and deterioration that it was no longer safe for occupancy. Window frames had fallen out, the floor had rotted, there were leaks in the roofs and sides, and it was impossible to heat the building during the winter. The Corporation of Trinity Church in New York, which had maintained the chapel, decided that it was

January 25, 1904

The fortification on Governor's Island, New York Harbor, partly built in 1794-1795, enlarged and completed in 1798-1801, and partly rebuilt 1806-1808, now known as Fort Columbus, is hereby restored to its original name of Fort Jay; and the said fortification and the Military post located on the said Island will hereafter be known and designated as Fort Jay.

Elihu Root  
Secretary of War.