

Camp Crane History

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HISTORY OF THE SANITARY DEPARTMENT.

by

MAJOR FURMAN R. SHUTE M.C.U.S.A.

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From the inception of the camp in June 1917, when it was first occupied by the United States Army Ambulance Service, until May, the following year, Richard Slee, Major, M.C.U.S.A., was Sanitary Officer of the camp. In March, 1918, Captain Furman R. Shute, M.C. U.S.A., (since then commissioned a Major) became the Assistant Sanitary Officer and in May of the same year became Sanitary Officer of Camp Crane replacing Major Slee, now a Lieutenant Colonel in the Medical Corps, who then became the Commanding Officer of this Post.

The Fair Grounds, as it was known before being used as a camp, had not been occupied since the Fair the previous season and was in very poor condition. The ground was very much grown up in weeds, gutters were not cleaned out, paths were not laid out and surface drainage was not in the best of conditions. The Camp was filled up rapidly and, of course, it was a big problem to provide adequate sanitary conditions for the incoming men. As sufficient toilet facilities were not available in the original buildings - there were two large toilets in the east end under the Grand-stand and one small one in the west end - it was necessary to construct many latrines which were arranged for and constructed until ample toilet facilities were provided. It was some consideration to construct these latrines in a camp which is situated so close to the city - in fact, it is practically a part of it - without having some objections raised. But I might say in comment that to the best of our knowledge there never was the slightest complaint made; in fact, many times inquiry was made by the visitors as to what so many little "tents" were and upon being informed they were toilets expressed their surprise and astonishment. They could not believe nor understand how it was possible to conduct such toilets without their emitting any odors. The reason for this was that the latrines were followed up and policed regularly and carefully treated in a systematic manner and according to a definite plan, and always kept in the best sanitary condition thereby giving no just cause for any complaint what-so-ever.

The development of the camp was so rapid that it was an impossibility to house all of the men in the old or permanent buildings of the Fair Association and new buildings were erected. With the construction of new buildings the problem of light and heat came into consideration. A large Heating Plant was constructed, consisting of three very large boilers with pipes running the length and breadth of the entire camp, connecting the boilers with the various buildings and thereby furnishing sufficient heat and at the same time maintaining a uniform temperature all over the camp. These large boilers were considered the Central Heating Plant of the camp.

In the laying of the pipes and the construction of the buildings much disorder was caused. A great deal of the camp ground had to be broken up, naturally, and for a time it looked as though the entire ground was nothing but one line of trenches - more like No Man's Land than Every Man's Land. This condition existed thru-out the cold winter months when, owing to the frost in the ground, it was impossible to properly grade and drain the surface. In the spring of 1918 when the frost began to ooze from the ground permitting thereby the proper grading and draining of the camp the entire camp was gone over: Gutters were constructed to carry off the drainage, paths were layed out, grass was sown and cinders placed on the paths adding thereby very materially to the comfort in getting about the grounds as well as improving the sanitary conditions by carrying off the water and eliminating the mud.

The next thing that came into consideration and brought to the attention of the Sanitary Officer was the comfort of the men. Everything possible was done to make things as pleasant for the men as was possible under the conditions. Shower baths were established in some of the buildings and with the inauguration of our heating plant were connected by steam heat and hot water pipes ~~xx that~~ with the plant so that, whereas the men could use only cold water before they could now use both cold and hot water. The showers were constructed of a sufficient size and capacity to permit possibly two hundred (200) men at a time. They were placed in a building which had been

36

used as a Cow Barn during the Fairs held on these grounds in previous years. We constructed a concrete floor in this building with gutters on either side for the drainage so that the baths, as well as the building, might be in as sanitary condition as possible thereby making it an ideal shower-room for the soldiers. In addition to the showers two large toilets, each with accommodations for forty (40) seats, wash-troughs, and urinals, were constructed. Hot water and steam heat connections were at once made with these making the toilets as comfortable as possible and also improving toilet facilities. Then came the light to add cheer to the men. A system of electric lights was installed and wires were connected with each building, both the old or permanent buildings and with the newly erected ones. Each building has somewhere a switch and can turn the lights on or off independently of the other buildings.

With the influx of more men and the increasing of the number of buildings there was a proportionate increase in each facility. At first additional shower baths were constructed in one or two of the new buildings. Soon after that toilets were installed and hot water, steam heat and electric connections made with the main source thereby making each building as complete as possible and at the same time keeping our sanitary conditions above criticism.

Our efforts to make things as sanitary as possible would have amounted to naught had we not turned our attention to the General Mess Hall with its two (2) kitchens. The Mess Hall is in that part of the building situated under the Grandstand and has, as we mentioned previously, two kitchens - a east and west end kitchen. These kitchens are placed one on either end of the large hall. The floor of this Mess hall as well as those of the kitchens were actually a "mess". All of the floors were of concrete but they had not been properly laid and the drainage was incomplete. This was altered when during the Christmas holidays of 1917 both kitchens were cleaned out and the old floors broken up and torn out and a new floor of concrete laid instead.

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The new floors were laid with sufficient pitch or drop to permit the proper drainage of both kitchens. At the point of drainage of these kitchens a type known as a Garage Drain was placed. This drain could be cleaned out without letting any of the waste go thru and thereby block up the drainage of both halls. In the rear of the Mess Hall on the Grandstand side where the garbage was collected a concrete basin was constructed with two (2) drains of the same type as those used in the kitchens (Garage Drain) with running water available to keep these properly cleaned out all of the time.

Much annoyance and trouble was caused by the drain of the General Mess Hall. This was during the early part of the camp days when thru the insufficient pitch or drop in the drain which ran longitudinally thru the center of the Hall drainage was incomplete. This drain receives an occasional drain from the surface and runs longitudinally across the Mess Hall. The outlet of this drain was originally connected with the sewerage lines which ran south of the Mess Hall, as was also the drain connecting the east kitchens. There is a sewerage line running north and south right under the Hall a few feet west of the east kitchen. At the point where this line was connected with the east kitchen a manhole was left and the drain from the center of the Mess Hall was connected with this line leaving another manhole at the junction and making the same very accessible for proper cleaning. In addition to this method of access to the drain thru the center of the Mess Hall at the upper end or west end of the drain connection was made from the water line supply so that, if necessary, the full water pressure could be turned into this line - a stopcock being placed very accessible - and on cleaning the Mess Hall a sufficient flow of water could be sent thru to prevent any of the sediment from remaining in the line owing to insufficient drop. After these corrections had been carefully completed the interior of the hall was still further renovated by keeping the kitchens and Hall proper well scrubbed and cleaned and white-washed. A Compo Board was placed over the ceiling helping still further to improve the sanitary conditions. After all this was done and in use a still greater step towards proper sanitation was made when an individual

automatic hot water heating system was installed in the west end of the Mess Hall. This new appliance was so constructed that it was connected up with two (2) troughs each of forty (40) feet in length and three (3) feet in width and arranged so that after the soldiers' Mess Kit was properly washed it was scalded in hot running water. This was not only the quickest way of cleaning the Mess Kits but it also did away with the old system of drying by towels for the hot scalding water would almost, if not entirely, dry the Mess Kits.

Most of the construction work done in the camp was started in the spring of 1918 when the warm weather permitted. The ground was dry and could be easily broken up for additional pipes or drainage lines. It was also in the spring of 1918 that another advance in the comfort for the men was made. At that time the shower rooms placed in Building No. 18 (what was previously called a Cow Barn) were heated and received their hot water supply from the Central Heating Plant consisting of the three large boilers. In order to give that room more heat than any of the other buildings and at the same time prepare for warm weather when the Central Heating Plant would, perhaps, be shut off, a separate hot water plant was installed. This consisted of one large boiler that furnished all of the heat and hot water supply necessary in that particular building. In this way the steam that ordinarily went thru so many more feet of pipes was diverted and sent to other buildings increasing the temperature and keeping the buildings in a very good sanitary condition.

With the coming of warm weather came the fly and the mosquito. Immediately the Sanitary Department got to work to find means for preventing their breeding and the possible spreading of contagious diseases. Fly swatters, fly paper, fly tape and other contrivances were used and judiciously employed with success and the fly was exterminated. Pools of water were always drained off and other means taken. The accumulation of waste has always been eliminated to avoid the possible breeding of the fly and mosquito. The catch basins, manholes and sinks have all been carefully inspected at various intervals

and always kept in good sanitary condition. The Inverted Siphon drain, which is part of the drain of the Oval, had not been properly drained. This drain is under the subway leading from Liberty Street into the Oval. It was thoroughly cleaned out and flushed and has been in good condition since that time - the spring of 1918.

A "sink" which provides for the surface drainage was soon afterward constructed in the east end of the Oval and through that all of the east end of the camp is working very satisfactorily. The work of constructing this "sink" was not as easy as it appeared at the first thought. The hardest part, perhaps, of the entire proposition was to find a suitable place to construct this "sink". And when this was found a series of blasting operations was begun. At first things came along rather smoothly when suddenly rocks and stones of all sizes and shapes were struck. Then the real work of blasting began. Deeper and deeper into the heart of the earth we went until we finally came to a suitable landing place to sink the "sink". Then we blasted little channels for the drainage lines which connect the drains with this "sink". Now this same "sink" that caused us so much hard work is working splendidly and no trouble has ever been experienced therefrom. Before passing it might be mentioned that the drainage in this vicinity is all taken care of by "sinks" or subdraining channels as no sewerage system is available excepting for a surface or rain water sewerage system.

The leading factor of the camp is the roadway. Previous to the inception of the camp there were few good roads and even those few were too poor to permit their being permanent. After being used for so long a time most of the roads were nothing but mere beds of mud and had to be resurfaced. In this instance, the Sanitary and the Quartermaster Department got together and with the expenditure of a considerable amount of money reconstructed all of the roads. They were re-surfaced and hardened and channelled on either side for proper drainage. Many new roads were built and constructed in the most sanitary manner and the most expedient way.

Last, but not least, a little discussion on the Flu Epidemic which raged all over the country during the early Fall of 1918. This camp was fortunate in having a very low sick rate during that period when so many of our beloved ones were dying daily. Sanitary measures of all sorts and means were at once brought into operation and enforced. Regular and systematic inspection of men was immediately started and as soon as any soldier was suspected of having the Flu he was at once ordered to report to the Camp Surgeon and on his finding any abnormal conditions the patient was at once isolated and treated. Men so isolated were closely observed and as soon as any definite symptoms developed they were still further isolated and treated. This brought all serious cases of Influenza in one place and the incipient cases in another. Shelter-halves were placed between each cot thereby separating one bed from the other and doing away with any possible danger of contagion. The Barracks were policed each morning, noon and evening when all the men were out. The detail who did the policing all wore masks for protection and had all the windows wide open for proper airing. The floors were kept well oiled and all other sanitary conditions and precautions attended to.

Much credit for all the good work done by the Sanitary Department is due, though, to many of the Commissioned and non-Commissioned officers of this camp who gave their energies towards making this camp as healthy a place to live in as possible. There have been many able assistants to the Sanitary Officer during the existence of this camp. Most of these officers are still in the camp; the others will still be remembered by the men in camp. Among them we find Major ^{J. H.} Jordan, then a Captain, Captain ^{Sydney E.} Chamberlain, Captain ^{William D.} Bateman, Captain Toms, Lt. L.G. Smith, Lt. Smiley and still others who will be remembered as having been on duty in this line of work. At the present time Captain Sydney E. Bateman is Assistant Sanitary Officer of the Camp.

330