

## **Transportation Corps Officer Candidate School - WW II**

A shortage of competent officers was a persistent problem for the Chief of Transportation throughout the war. This was a condition experienced by other elements of the Army but as a new service the Transportation Corps felt the shortage with special keenness. Unlike the well-established services the Transportation Corps had had no opportunity to build up and train a nucleus of officers during the prewar rearmament period. Although it drew some of its personnel from other services, the other services also needed officers and the Transportation Corps largely had to fend for itself.

The first schools for Transportation Corps officers were established in September 1942 at Fort Slocum, New York and Camp Stoneman, California. Fort Slocum and Camp Stoneman also served as staging areas for the ports of embarkation at New York and San Francisco and the new schools were placed under the supervision of the commanders of those ports.

The school at Stoneman was closed in February 1944 and the one at Slocum in the following October. Between them they had given instruction to more than 3,000 officers. In February 1944, the Chief of Transportation established the Transportation Corps School at New Orleans with divisions for officers and officer candidates to operate under the supervision of the commander the New Orleans Port of Embarkation.

The establishment of an officer candidate school was one of the proposals put forward by the Chief of Transportation in 1942 when he recommended that the Transportation Service be converted into the Transportation Corps to better fulfill its mission. Such a school was the only visible means of meeting the need for junior officers to serve with Transportation Corps troop units.

The schooling of officer candidates began in the fall of that year and the activity can be divided into two periods the first when the emphasis was on administration and the second when military and technical instruction were stressed. In response to the Chief of Transportation's recommendation the General Staff made provision for the schooling of officer candidates for the Transportation Corps at Army Administration School Branch No 4 located at Mississippi State College, Starkville Mississippi.

This school operating under the supervision of The Adjutant General and concerned chiefly with administration was not what the Chief of Transportation had asked for but it was a step in the right direction. The capacity was fixed at 750. The course was twelve weeks in duration and a new class of about 250 was enrolled at intervals of four weeks.

The first class reported on 17 October 1942. The Adjutant General furnished instructors for the administrative subjects, which occupied eight weeks of the course, and the Chief of Transportation furnished instructors for the technical subjects which were dealt with in the last four weeks.

The Chief of Transportation was not satisfied with the school at Starkville and considered it only a temporary expedient. The emphasis on administrative subjects did not fit in with the urgent need that he foresaw for junior officers capable of leading transportation troops in the theaters. Inadequate basic military training on the part of many candidates was a further handicap. The standards of admission which permitted men capable of only limited service and without any practical or technical background to enter also fell short of the Chief of Transportation's desires.

The location of Mississippi State College, which had no shipping facilities and was not adjacent to an airport, was not favorable to the teaching of practical transportation. The lack of military atmosphere and the fact that the school was not a Transportation Corps installation limited the opportunity to inculcate in officer candidates the pride of service on which General Gross placed great emphasis.

Two steps were taken to overcome these handicaps. The school at Starkville was transferred to the control of the Chief of Transportation in January 1943. Changes were then made in the qualifications for admission and in the curriculum to bring them more into line with the Transportation Corps needs.

In June 1943, the school was transferred from Starkville to New Orleans and was redesignated the Transportation Corps Officer Candidate School. The new OCS was operated first at the New Orleans Staging Area where the unit training center was located.

In February 1944 it was moved to the Army Air Base where it became the Officer Candidate Division of the Transportation Corps School which was established at that time. Further changes were made in the curriculum to stress technical subjects and military leadership. The course was lengthened to seventeen weeks. Full use was made of the opportunity to visit and study the various types of commercial transportation facilities available in New Orleans.

The number of officer candidates at the school varied greatly. From a starting capacity of 750 to accommodate three classes of 250 each the capacity was increased to 1,000 in the fall of 1943 only to be drastically cut early in 1944 to conform to a new War Department policy.

The summer of 1944 brought a heavy demand from Europe and the Pacific for junior officers and the capacity was raised to 2,250. The largest classes graduated in November and December 1944 with 764 and 604 graduates,

respectively. Officer candidates who could not keep up with their classes were set back a class and those who did not soon demonstrate proper qualifications were relieved.

The strictness with which this policy was enforced naturally depended somewhat on the demand for junior officers at the time but the Chief of Transportation's instruction was to weed out the duds. The forty-one classes that had completed the OCS course up to 15 August 1945 had a total enrollment of 9,901. This figure includes about 1,800 candidates who were set back so that the actual number of candidates was smaller. Of the 1,280 who were not graduated 333 were relieved for academic reasons, 501 for lack of leadership qualities and 446 for other reasons.

The number graduated and commissioned was 6,865. Upon graduation about 3,100 were assigned to ports of embarkation for duty or further practical training about 3,000 were assigned to officer replacement pools 222 were considered ready for immediate assignment to troop units and the remainder were sent to other Transportation Corps offices and installations.

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