



Chapter 2

ENTER THE ARMY ENGINEERS

*"Your old men shall have dreams,
Your young men shall see visions."*

The Corps of Engineers traces its roots back to 1775 in the bloody Battle of Bunker Hill, when George Washington hired his first military engineer. Pioneering peacetime work, Corps' topographers followed explorers Lewis and Clark, charting the vast mysteries of the Louisiana Purchase.



The Corps was

COMING OF AGE

in the United States as events unfolded in the Red-Ark basins and Indian Territory.

Army engineering in this country is, after all, older than the United States. The first Army Engineer, Richard Gridley, was hired (for \$60 a month) by General George Washington to direct fortifications in the Battle of Bunker Hill, June 16, 1775.

The Tulsa District, born more than 160 years later, is a product of the Corps' evolution over the years, as the nation broadened the Engineers' mission far beyond the military work for which Congress created them.

After the Louisiana Purchase, the newly acquired wilderness had to be charted. The government turned to its Army engineers, augmented by civil workers such as explorers, surveyors, and map-makers. The government established a corps of official explorers who were nicknamed "topogs" — topographic engineers — within a peacetime Army after the War of 1812.

Following such explorers as Lewis and Clark, the Corps' topogs surveyed a national network of internal improvements that became the framework for the expanding new nation: waterway canals, roads, and eventually railroads.

One lesson learned from the War of 1812 was that the country needed an improved defense and transportation system, including rivers, harbors, and roads. In 1824, Congress accepted the recommendation of John C. Calhoun, then Secretary of War. It directed the Corps to improve waterways and navigation "of national importance, in a commercial or military point of view."

By 1900, following years of waterway development, the Corps' leadership in navigation was well established. By 1890, the Engineers had begun regulating United States waters, primarily to protect navigation activities. At the turn of the century, the Corps was authorized to design an integrated system of interconnected waterways along the Mississippi and its major tributaries, as well as other inland areas and coastal harbors.