

could accommodate only a few trainees; and most suitable resort hotels either had been taken over by the Air Forces or would have had to be condemned at a prohibitive price. Engineers as a last resort surveyed even state fair grounds, but found them either leased for government storage or not convertible. For a time the National Chautauqua Circuit at Jamestown seemed the best possibility, although isolated and in a cold climate.⁴⁷

At last, in late April, the mechanization of the U.S. Cavalry made possible the use for Waacs of an old mounted Cavalry post, Fort Des Moines in Iowa. Fort Des Moines was near the geographical center of the United States, had no major defense projects in the area, would present no race and color difficulties, had suitable utilities to handle expansion to 5,000 population, and already had room for 1,000 and suitable administration, supply, and recreation buildings. Its solid red-brick barracks, needing only converted toilet facilities, surrounded an impressively large green parade ground. In addition, said the delighted planners, there were "nine large stables suitable for conversion to barracks."⁴⁸ Time was short and there was no inclination to quibble about the distance from WAAC Headquarters, the climate, or the previous equine occupants.

Immediate authority to start alterations at the post was sought, but could not be obtained until passage of the bill.⁴⁹ It was at least possible to bring into the planning group nine Army officers to be indoctrinated before they went to Fort Des Moines as a nucleus of the staff. To replace the officer previously selected as commandant, G-1 Division chose Col. Don C. Faith, a Regular Army officer of twenty-five years' service. He had been a National Guard instructor and a staff officer, and

later a member of the War Department's G-4 and G-1 Divisions.⁵⁰

The Uniform

The most troublesome problem remaining to the planners was that of the WAAC uniform, which soon assumed a difficulty out of all proportion to its importance. Procurement could not be undertaken until passage of the bill, but it was essential to have agreement on design and number of articles so that contracts could be signed with manufacturers at the moment the bill became law. At first, the problem of clothing only 12,000 Waacs appeared fairly simple, and The Quartermaster General, in one of the greater understatements of recorded military history, anticipated "no unusual difficulties."⁵¹

Three agencies sent representatives to planning sessions: The Quartermaster General's Office, the Philadelphia Quartermaster Depot, and WAAC Headquarters, although The Quartermaster General later decided that this last was a mistake, since "neither she [Mrs. Hobby] nor anyone on her immediate staff was qualified to make decisions."⁵² As a matter of fact,

⁴⁷ (1) Personal ltr, Tasker to Lt C. M. Carr, Cooks and Bakers School, Ft Meade, Md., 21 Mar 42. Col Tasker's personal file, 1942 WAAC files. (2) M/R, 9 Apr 42, sub: Inspection of Available Sites. WA 600.9 (4-9-42). (3) M/R, 11 Apr 42, sub: Facilities. WA 600.9.

⁴⁸ Memo, G-1 for CofS, 22 Apr 42. G-1/15839. Colonel Mudgett successfully persuaded Des Moines newspapermen to ignore the conversion of stables to barracks for fear of the possible effect upon recruiting.

⁴⁹ Memo, G-1 for CofS, 13 May 42, sub: Estab of WAAC Tng Cen at Ft Des Moines, Iowa. WDGAP 352.01 WAAC. Approved by DCofS, 15 May 42.

⁵⁰ Personnel Abstracts, WAC file, OCMH.

⁵¹ All references to WAAC clothing and equipment, unless otherwise noted, are from Erna Risch, *A Wardrobe for the Women of the Army* (QMC Historical Studies 12, October 1945).

⁵² *Ibid.*, Chs. II and III.