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Research Paper
West Point Military Academy

The United States Military Academy at West Point is located less than 50 miles North of New York City along the banks of the Hudson River. During the Revolutionary War, both the British and the Americans realized the importance of commanding the plateau on the West side of the Hudson River. General Washington considered it to be the most important strategic position in America. Thaddeus Kosciuszko was selected by Washington to design the fortification in 1778. In 1779, Washington moved his headquarters to West Point. Desiring to end reliance on foreign engineers and artillerymen, several soldiers and legislators urged the development of an institution devoted to the arts and sciences of warfare. President Thomas Jefferson signed the legislation that established the United States Military Academy in 1802.

Civil engineering became the foundation of the curriculum by the first Superintendent, Colonel Sylvanus Thayer. Thayer, considered “the father of the Military Academy”, raised academic standards, emphasized honorable conduct, and instilled military discipline. Many graduates in the 1800s contributed to the nation’s initial railway lines, bridges, harbors, and roads.

By the Civil War in the 1860s, West Point graduates held most of the highest ranks in the Union and the Confederacy. Generals Grant, Lee, Sherman, and Jackson were all graduates of West Point. After the Civil War other technical schools allowed West Point to broaden its curriculum to topics besides civil engineering.

Graduates continued to play an important part in on the battlefield in foreign conflicts, specifically World War I. Following the World War, Superintendent Douglas

MacArthur sought to diversify the curriculum once again, pushing for physicality in physical fitness and intramural athletic programs. His goal was “every cadet an athlete”. The Cadet Honor Committee was formed and members managed the Honor System. Cadets are required to adhere to the Cadet Honor Code, which states that “a cadet will not lie, cheat, steal, or tolerate those who do.”

When World War II came around, another group of distinguished West Point graduates rose to the challenge of leadership, including Eisenhower, MacArthur, Bradley, Arnold, Clark, Patton, Stilwell, and Wainwright.. Developments in science and technology brought more changes to the curriculum after the Second World War.

In the mid-60s, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed legislation to increase the number of Cadets from 2,529 to 4,417. In 1976 women were first allowed to enroll at West Point. Sixty-two women graduated in 1980.

The entire military reservation covers 15,974 acres, but “the cadet area” is accessible to cadets and visitors by foot. Most of the buildings are a neogothic architectural style set by the architectural firm Cram, Goodhue, and Ferguson when they received a construction contract in 1902. These buildings are constructed from granite with a gray and black hue.

In order to apply to West Point you must be at least 17 years old and no older than 23. You must be a U.S. citizen who is not married, pregnant, or legally obligated to support of children. You must seek and be nominated by the Vice President, a U.S. Senator or Representative, a delegate to the House of Representatives, or the Secretary of the Army. Finally, you must be a recipient of strong scores on either college entrance exam (ACT or SAT).

Works Cited

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