BOOK REVIEWS

_The Department of War, 1781-1795._ By Harry M. Ward. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1962. $4.50.)

Here is a carefully documented book that brings a new dimension to the understanding of the problems of the Revolutionary War period and the early days of the Federal Republic. It is of value alike to historians with a special interest in that period of American history and to political scientists concerned with the development of our political institutions.

Against the backdrop of the familiar events of the concluding period of the Revolutionary War, the losing fight of the Confederation to maintain national authority and achieve fiscal adequacy, the unrest epitomized in Shay's Rebellion, the adoption of the Constitution and the beginning of federal union with Washington as President, and finally the tragic Indian wars in the West and the South as settlers pressed on into new lands, the reader sees the development of the Department of War and the gradual defining of its role.

It was a modest beginning when in February, 1781, the Congress of the Confederation decided that an executive agency was essential for the handling of the administrative details involved in the conduct of the war and created the Department at War. General Benjamin Lincoln was appointed as Secretary at War and served until November 12, 1783. He required no Pentagon to house his staff consisting, at peak size, of the Assistant Secretary, a secretary, two clerks and a messenger, with the occasional service of an additional clerk. There was no chief of staff, for the Department at War had no part in determining military strategy. Actual military operations were in the hands of General Washington in the north and General Greene in the south. Nevertheless, the Secretary at War served as a symbol of national authority at a time of extreme decentralization of military powers. He was "sort of a super adjutant-general" of all the troops in the field, and served as liaison officer between the army and Congress.

Lincoln demonstrated superior administrative ability in handling the enormous mass of detail involved in the performance of his duties. He was saddled with a variety of administrative duties: the supervision of the recruitment of troops and coordination of quartermaster services supplying two armies; the inspection of muster rolls and keeping of official records, and the maintenance of current tables.
of the organization of military personnel; and the custody of prisoners of war. The successful handling of these tasks required tact, and the establishment of friendly relations with Congress, the officers in the field and the governors of states. Effective performance was indispensable, but brought no hero's crown.

With the coming of peace Lincoln had the task of demobilizing the troops, a not altogether agreeable job since the troop payments were in arrears. As his army melted away so likewise did his staff. The Assistant Secretary resigned, and the two clerks followed, leaving only the Secretary at War and the secretary to man the department. With the war crisis over Lincoln laid down his duties on November 12, 1783. The Secretary in the War department shared the military functions with the Commissioner of Military Stores, the sole remaining administrative staff officer of the army.

The Department at War had proved too useful an agency to be permitted to die prematurely. Congress sought to restore vigor by appointing General Henry Knox to the vacant post of Secretary at War in March of 1785. Soon the new Secretary was faced with growing Indian unrest and internal disorder. In spite of popular fear of the military, Knox urged universal military training within the framework of the militia system and the creation of a small standing army, but Congress would authorize only a small garrison for the western frontiers. Congress did take steps for the strengthening of the department by the consolidation of the administrative staff services of the army with the administrative department. Only the settling of old accounts was left outside the department.

Of the administrative agencies created by the Congress of the Confederation only the Department at War (later changed to the Department of War) was carried over unchanged and under the same Secretary when the new government was established by the Constitution. Knox served as an important link between the old government and the new.

During the early period of his service under Washington he served as the chief adviser of the President. Much of his time was consumed in the direction of Indian negotiations. When Indian relations deteriorated in the West and the South he wrung from a reluctant Congress permission to raise a small federal force. When Indian disasters resulted from the inadequacy of federal forces and reliance upon militiamen, Knox bore the brunt of the blame. Shocked by the disasters in the West under St. Clair and Harmar, Congress tardily
authorized the raising of additional federal troops. Though the 5000 men authorized were not fully raised, General Wayne, with a larger federal force combined with militia and with more adequate supplies, led a more daring and successful expedition. Victory came at the Battle of Fallen Timbers. Though Knox was condemned for the former failures, he did not share the honors which Wayne justly deserved.

Knox’s administration reflected the vigor of the man and the departments’ administrative structure matured. Army staff for planning military strategy was still outside the department.

After the successful conclusion of Indian difficulties, General Knox resigned on December 28, 1795; two days later Washington accepted his resignation.

This book is the product of careful research of official records, letters, papers of the principals and journals. The value is increased by footnotes, a 27-page bibliography and appendices.

*University of Pittsburgh*  
Rosalind Branning

*Respects to All.* Edited by Aida Craig Truxall. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press. Pp. not numbered. $3.50.)

The national preoccupation with the centennial of the Civil War has led to the republishing of out-of-print, classic works dealing with that conflict, and the continuing publication of a vast number of new books dealing with the war. In addition, diaries, letters and reminiscences of the participants of all ranks are constantly appearing. The Civil War is certainly one which the historian or casual reader can examine from the vantage point of a private, a sergeant, a captain, a colonel, the General-in-Chief or the President of the United States by a perusal of the letters, diaries and other memorabilia which have survived the ravages of time, and are now appearing in print. It can be examined from the perspective of a professional soldier, a politician, a journalist or just two simple, farm boys who went off to the war to fight to preserve the Union. The book under review is the account of two farm lads from the Pittsburgh area who did just this.

Adam and Michael Bright were two orphans who were raised by an uncle — Emmanuel Stotler, Jr. — and his wife. The Stotlers must have treated the two lads as if they were sons of their own, as the majority of the letters in this little book are addressed to them,