

1967 Former Fort Riley Correspondent of Daily Union in 1911-15 Visits Post

The Daily Union's "war correspondent" at Fort Riley from 1911-15 returned to the Junction City-Fort Riley area for the first time in more than a half-century this week and found a "lot of improvements" have been made at the Post and in the city since he left in 1916.

Major (ret.) and Mrs. Frank Pickering of Upland, Calif., visited this week with Mr. and Mrs. Dean Keller, 835 West Sixth Street. Mr. Keller is Mrs. Pickering's nephew.

Major Pickering was a civil service clerk assigned to the Mounted Service school at Fort Riley in 1910 when The Union's Fort Riley correspondent was transferred.

"Harry Montgomery, publisher, approached me and asked me if I would like the job," Major Pickering said. "I worked in the headquarters of the Mounted Service school and reported to the newspaper on the orders issued to the officers and enlisted men, football games, and any other newsworthy event.

"For this, I was paid 7½ cents per inch. The other correspondents or "stringers" were paid 5 cents per inch. Mr. Montgomery knew I needed the money so he paid me more."

Major Pickering continued: "I would submit my string every month and my pay averaged about \$7 to \$10, which, in those days, was quite a sum. My civil service pay was only



Maj. Frank Pickering

\$60 a month and I tried to save some of it.

"Like a lot of other people, I got auto fever and in 1912 bought my first car. It was a 1909 two-cylinder Maxwell for which I paid \$100. After two cracked crankcases and one wreck on Washington street, I sold the car two years later for \$75. Its top speed was 25 mph."

Major Pickering said in 1915 the civil service clerks became Army field clerks. They wore the cap insignia of an officer and later drew the same pay and allowances of a second lieutenant.

The clerks had to observe all Army rules and regulations set out in the Articles of War. In May, 1926, all field clerks were made warrant officers and given a reserve commission. In 1940, Major Pickering went on active duty as a captain and retired as a major in 1947. He attained the reserve rank of Lt. Colonel two months before his retirement.

Major Pickering said his biggest story in The Union was an account of a football game he didn't witness. "I knew the lineups would take up a couple of inches and I knew two or three of the players who I talked to after the game, which in those days was played like soccer to keep the medical corps from being kept too busy patching up injured players," he said.

As headquarters clerk in 1912, Major Pickering took part in maneuvers which saw Red and Blue forces battling each other for several weeks until the Blues won following a battle near Leavenworth.

Major Pickering was chief clerk for the Red column.

"The quartermaster advertised in the newspaper for horse feed and stores to be delivered to certain places along our route. The Blue column read the notices and knew exactly where we would be," Major Pickering said. During the maneuvers two types of motor vehicles were tested for the first time. One was a four wheel drive truck and the other was a Maas ambulance, which was named for the chief surgeon of the Army.

"The Maas had a two-wheel drive and its springs were spring. It was fine for carrying cargo, but the men preferred to ride in the regular field ambulances because they didn't offer as rough a ride," Major Pickering said. "We loaded the tentage in the Maas ambulance and the weight made the springs more flexible. One officer rode atop the tentage and got bottom sore, even though he was experienced in riding a mule.

"The Maas would have been a good ambulance if it had lighter springs."

Major Pickering recalled the 90-mile test ride decreed by President Theodore Roosevelt. "Every field grade officer (major and above) had to take it. They rode, walked, trotted and galloped for 90-miles," Major Pickering said. "This really weeded out a lot of men. President Roosevelt was a vigorous rider and felt field grade officers should be also. I didn't have to take the ride because I wasn't that high up."

During Major Pickering's days

at Fort Riley, Gen. George Patton, then a young lieutenant, was a student at the Mounted Service school and Gen. "Hap" Arnold, former commander of the Army Air Force and Benjamin D. Foulois were young lieutenants assigned to the signal corps. Their project was to determine whether pusher-type aircraft could be used to direct artillery fire.

"I can remember Foulois taking off uphill from the artillery parade grounds in that plane with the propellor in the rear of the wings, flying towards the quarters of Brig. Gen. Eli Hoyle, and barely missing the roof of the general's house," Major Pickering said. "This was the Army's first experiment with the aircraft and it proved planes could direct artillery fire."

Major Pickering said a lot of improvements have been made at Fort Riley since he left in 1916. "I was particularly interested in visiting the old Post headquarters building — now the Post museum — where the commanding general's office was. I was also headquartered there," he said. "At the time Fort Riley encompassed only what is now the main post."

Major Pickering said the Post contained the 6th field artillery regiment, 13th Cavalry regiment, the Mounted Service School, the Army's only cooks and Bakers school, and horseshoeing school, among its units. A 2½-inch gun was the biggest piece of field artillery used by the 6th regiment. "We kenw Germany had six inch guns. Our big guns were on ships, coast defenses and railroad cars," he said.

During his visit Major Pickering called on Dr. W. A. Carr, who was 35 years old when he delivered the Pickering's son, Gordon. Mrs. Keller, mother of Dean Keller and sister of Mrs. Pickering, was 18 years old on the same day. She resided in the Pickering home at 1815 North Jefferson.

Gordon Pickering, 55, a colonel in the Army reserve, is chief chemist and manager of the by-products plants of California Packing Co., in Honolulu. He is responsible for the quality of canned pineapple. He received his 30 year service pin from the company recently.

Major Pickering will be 80 in June.

**WHEEL ALIGNMENT
AND BALANCING**

**Slim's
Wheel & Brake**

228 E. 8th Dial 8-643

The Junction City Daily Union

Official City Newspaper

Junction City

Grandview Plaza

"Without or with offense to friends or foes we sketch your world exactly as it goes." — Byron..

Established, as the Smoky Hill and Republican Weekly Union on Sept. 19, 1861 and renamed The Union on July 28, 1888 by John Montgomery. Daily Union established June 24, 1892.

Harry E. Montgomery, Publisher, 1901 to 1952.
Editor and Publisher — John D. Montgomery.

General Manager — Lee Rich.
News Editor — Harold Taylor.
Advertising Manager — William Kelley.

Published each evening except on Sundays, Fourth of July, Thanksgiving and Christmas day. Second class postage paid at Junction City, Kansas, by the Junction City Daily Union, Inc.

Address all communications to

THE DAILY UNION

Junction City, Kansas 66441
Area Code 913

814 North Washington St.
Local CE 8-5124

By carrier in Junction City, Fort Riley and Grandview Plaza \$1.75 a month when paid on a monthly basis. All subscription payments are due in advance. Mail subscriptions, \$10.00 per year in Geary and adjacent counties, elsewhere \$12.00 per year. Single copy five cents.

MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Credit Bureau of Circulation