The Military Department of Ohio Northern University
1884 – 1921

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At the close of the Civil War, the United States Army faced several major challenges. The first of these, demobilizing so huge an organization was handled expeditiously, and by November 15, 1865, the army, which had numbered slightly more than one million six months earlier, had been reduced by roughly eighty percent.\(^1\) Congressional action the following year fixed its size at 54,302.

Finding a role for the peacetime army proved more difficult. There were post-war concerns about foreign involvement in Mexico. In 1864, Napoleon III had sponsored the creation of a Mexican empire under Austrian archduke Ferdinand Maximilian. In response, the United States dispatched troops to the border with Mexico to discourage any territorial ambitions of the new government. That concern, however, evaporated with the dissolution of Maximilian’s empire in 1867.

The Army Reorganization Act of 1866 was the first post war attempt to define the scope and mission of America’s armed forces.
This legislation pertained only to the regular army. The nature of state volunteer forces and their relationship to the army would be resolved elsewhere.

Much of the Act dealt with fairly routine matters. Sections two, three and four set the number of artillery, cavalry and infantry regiments and their organization. The number of military bands, Indian scouts and numerous other posts were also fixed. The venerable position of Sutler was abolished and replaced by a subsistence department.

Sections three and four had additional significance in that they made permanent the right of blacks to serve in the army. Section three of the Act created four additional regiments of cavalry “…two of which shall be composed of colored men” while section four created four colored infantry regiments.
Section twenty-six contained a provision which allowed the President to assign army officers to non-land grant institutions as military instructors. This provision stated:

And be it further enacted, That for the purpose of promoting knowledge of military science among the young men of the United States, the President may, upon the application of an established college or university within the United States, with sufficient capacity to educate at one time not less than one hundred and fifty male students, detail an officer of the army to act as president, superintendent, or professor of such college or university; that the number of officers so detailed shall not exceed twenty at any time, and shall be apportioned through the United States as nearly as practicable according to population, and shall be governed by general rules, to be prescribed from time to time by the President.²

It was under this legislation that Ohio Northern was subsequently to establish its own military department.
The section’s sponsor, Ohio Senator John Sherman, noted that the use of regular army officers would promote uniformity in training. He further stated:

"...indeed, it seems to me that it would be of more service to the people of the United States than the establishment of a militia, because it would educate thousands of young men throughout the United States, and give them at least a preliminary knowledge of military drill and science." ³

This provision was not controversial, especially as it used officers who were already being paid but not needed elsewhere. By 1891, the maximum number of Army officers available had been increased by fifty. Four years later the number had been further increased to 110, though this included both army and navy officers.
Appendix 2 notes, at the outbreak of the First World War, the total number of army officers detailed nation-wide for training was just 100. At that time, Ohio’s share was just three officers, one each for Ohio Northern University, Wilberforce College and Ohio State University. Provisions were made for the distribution of surplus equipment to colleges, and Northern’s share included two civil war-vintage cannon and assorted small arms and ammunition.


Introduction

On a Thursday in late March 1884, the residents of Ada, Ohio, or at least those who braved the drizzling rain and mud, would have noted an additional burst of activity on the local university campus. Ohio Northern University’s founder, Henry Solomon Lehr, had created a military department, and its four “battalions” of would-be cadets were being examined. Major General Baird, Assistant Inspector General of the U.S. Army was touring Ohio schools to decide which would be assigned one of only three army officers available and the associated equipment for their military departments. Despite the inclement weather, the turnout reflected a high degree of institutional support with the professors “in holiday attire.”

An educational entrepreneur, Lehr likely saw the establishment of a military department at Northern as an attraction to new students, one that would differentiate his young school from its sister institutions. He also would have noticed that other Ohio schools had adopted similar programs. The College of Wooster had just started such a program and Ohio Wesleyan University had organized a military course in 1882, although at least initially it was led by one of the faculty. At Northern, this program was to be a distinctive feature of the school for the next four decades.
Many students were also doubtless excited at the opportunities offered by the department, and some pursued careers in the military. Although participation in the department did not entitle students to a warrant or commission, they received a handsome certificate signed by the commandant and university president. This plus their training may well have provided an entrée to those interested in service in volunteer organizations like the Ohio National Guard.

One example of this particular career path was Cliffe Deming who was a cadet captain in 1896-97. He subsequently served in the Spanish-American war, and afterward rose to the rank of major in the Ohio National Guard’s second infantry division. Major Deming served with the local guard unit during the Mexican border troubles of 1916-17 before being assigned to the 148th Infantry Division during World War I. He returned to Ohio Northern as a faculty member where he taught public speaking until 1948.¹

Another cadet, Harrison J. Price, took a somewhat different approach. During 1890-91 he served as the battalion’s cadet major. Rather than enter the National Guard, he received a commission in the regular army by examination. One of his sponsors was Dr. Lehr himself.²
Price was then assigned to the 24th Infantry. He was to have returned to Northern in 1899 as the Military Department’s new commandant, but the outbreak of the Spanish-American War on April 21, 1898 intervened. He served in World War I, retiring in 1932 as a brigadier general.

Today the military department may seem merely a quaint part of the university's past, but it is a significant element of the institution’s history. It is noteworthy as a bridge between the university’s normal school beginnings through its transformation to a modern university. The department was part of Northern’s earliest attempts to define itself and, under its first president, was seen as part of the institution’s curricular core. During the next two administrations, however, Northern was faced with the need to modernize its course offerings and build a campus appropriate to its evolving needs. Given these pressures, the utility of the department came to be questioned. Its subsequent decline was emblematic of numerous other features of the institution that were no longer relevant.

It is also worth noting that state and national needs had an impact on this part of Northern’s academic program. The willingness of the War Department, prior to WWI, to assign officers and equipment to college military departments at private institutions was an obvious consideration.
The Department needed a means to augment its small regular army. Such college programs provided at least the rudiments of training to students at a time when the nation was disinclined to support a larger army. The institutions, for their part, gained staff and equipment that they likely could not have otherwise afforded. This effort was continued under the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC), though in a more formal manner. In the early 1920’s, it was necessary for the university to carefully consider if the required resources could be committed to a full-blown ROTC department. In 1921, the board of trustees discontinued military training at Ohio Northern.

1 Ada (Ohio) Herald, October 21, 1949, p. 1
2 Henry Solomon Lehr, History of the O.N.U. (Ada, Ohio: University Herald, March 22, 1907) p. 131
Lehr Administration

In its first decade of existence, the Northwestern Ohio Normal School, as Ohio Northern was then known, struggled for existence. By the 1880’s, however, enrollment had stabilized, and the school possessed two handsome brick buildings and a growing student body. During this latter period, Northern’s curriculum rapidly as the school’s founder, Dr. Henry Solomon Lehr, sought to distinguish his institution from others in the state. It was during this decade that the colleges of law, pharmacy and engineering were established. Dr. Lehr avidly seized opportunities to add programs, the military department being one such example.

In establishing the military department, Lehr was probably influenced by his own experiences in the Union Army. The Civil War was recent enough so that appeals to patriotism resonated strongly. This sentiment was reflected in the college catalogs of the 1880’s which noted:

Patriotism is a principle so noble and exalting, that poets, orators and sages of all ages have united in exalting its virtues and teaching mankind to celebrate its growth. Nothing is more conducive to this than military tactics and discipline.¹
A second, and more pragmatic, rationale lay in his belief that male students needed some form of physical exercise. Lehr’s own rural background caused him to favor useful work as opposed to mere “games” and this sentiment was again echoed in the university’s publications. One line of argument extolled the purely callisthenic benefits of participation.

The drill ... will be found especially entertaining, invigorating and healthful – a most pleasant relaxation after the close and sedentary hours of the student’s desk and recitation room. The erect carriage, the developed chest, the easy movement of the body, all consequent upon military drill, should alone suffice to induce every student to seek admission to the Cadet Battalion.²

A third argument dealt with the perceived link between physical fitness and moral health. The institution’s catalog noted:

It is well known that students must and will have exercise. Many of the games and sports indulged by students are of a questionable character morally and socially.³
For his part, it is not clear what specific “games and sports” Dr. Lehr had in mind, but clearly editor of the *Ada Record* had a particular activity in his sights.

This [the Military Department] is an experiment which, it is hoped, will, eventually wipe out baseball, and its attendant evils, giving the students dignity and practical knowledge in the place of broken bones and a scientific education in gambling.4

Lehr was not alone in his suspicions. There was a degree of misgiving regarding organized athletics among college and university presidents, especially as sports became more commercialized and costly to support. Military drill, on the other hand, consumed a fair amount of youthful energy and hopefully produced a student whose “...bodily vigor makes him less subject to vicious habits...”5 Other educators saw military education as a means of providing students with the moral education, supposedly lost in the late nineteenth century, as colleges and universities rushed to adopt more pragmatic curricula. It was hoped that students would be imbued with the “...lessons of truthfulness, honor, self-restraint, manliness, moral tone, duty, and patriotism.” 6
Given the lack of administrative support for sports, military drill served as the principle form of officially sanctioned exercise for many years. It was not until the 1890’s that the first unofficial football games were played. By May 1886, Dr. Lehr had altered his views to the extent that he allowed students to lay out a “base ball” diamond on his farm near campus. It appears, however, that the first officially approved baseball and football games did not occur until 1901, after Lehr had retired as president. Meanwhile, participation in the Military Department served an important purpose.

In the absence of numerous distractions, the military department also served an important social role for the university. Dr. Ronald Ladwig noted the importance of such local activities in his *A History of Public Entertainments in Ada, 1850 – 1920*. This local focus was scarcely surprising since, in the university’s early years, poor transportation limited student horizons. Actually, this applied to *any* hardy souls trying to use the region’s unpaved roads. In his memoirs Dr. Lehr recounted one rainy five-hour carriage trip from the county seat at Kenton which culminated in him having to lead the horses into Ada due to the deep holes in the road.\(^7\)
1895: Not Yet An Officially Sanctioned Activity
Although the community’s early isolation dissipated rapidly, at least during the Lehr administration, the department continued to loom large on the social scene. Not only were university-sanctioned athletics absent but fraternities as well. Throughout much of the department’s history, contests, drills, receptions, and summer camps were a significant part of student life. Several of the department’s companies appear to have spawned ladies auxiliaries, and the cadets themselves served as honor guards at numerous university events.

In his serialized memoirs, Dr. Lehr, stated that the military department's origins lay in the election of 1883. A statewide issue to prohibit the manufacture and consumption of alcoholic beverages had considerable local backing, and a group of local children was assembled to march through Ada on Election Day in support of the measure. An ONU professor had organized the group, and they had practiced on campus. Dr. Lehr, himself a Civil War veteran, volunteered to drill them in a quasi-military manner, and "A number of students then suggested that it might be a good plan to organize a company and drill for exercise." Lehr agreed, and over a hundred students volunteered. They were organized into two companies, and to assist the group,
Dr. Lehr traveled to Columbus where, on April 30, 1884, he purchased army surplus weapons for his military program. The 110 Enfield rifles, 110 bayonet scabbards with waist belts and plates cost him $302.50.10

Around this time, Pres. Lehr learned from the district's congressman, Gen. James Robinson of Kenton, that provisions had been made under the Army Reorganization Act of 1866 for the appointment army officers to serve as commandants for military instruction at colleges and universities. A vacancy existed for Ohio, and, with the help of the Hon. George Converse of Columbus and Judge William Lawrence of Bellfontaine, Lehr applied. According to Lehr, word of his application found its way into the press, and six other schools also applied.

The War Department appointed Major General Baird, Assistant Inspector General, to consider the relative merits of the competing institutions, and he visited Ada in March 1884. In Lehr's account, which was replete with details of his own lobbying efforts, Baird was highly complementary towards Northern. Lehr ascribed the subsequent decision to award the position to the College of Wooster to political machinations, but whatever the reason, legislation was passed a short time later to increase the number of officers assigned, and Ohio Northern received Lt. H.H. Roberts.
Gen. James S. Robinson and Later Congressman from Kenton
After his considerable efforts to establish a military department at Northern, Lt. Roberts must have proved a sore disappointment to Lehr. He later characterized the unfortunate Roberts as "...a weakling and unfit for the place."\textsuperscript{11} Prior to Roberts' arrival, Lehr had taken preliminary steps to organize his volunteers, steps with which Roberts apparently disagreed. Since the only surviving account was provided by Lehr, it is perhaps unfair to judge Roberts too harshly. Indeed, the two issues that Lehr cited, consolidating Lehr's two companies into one and forbidding cadets from wearing their shoulder straps, may have been rationalizations for a clash of personalities rather than substantive differences over military matters.

Regardless of the cause, the department languished during Lt. Roberts's tenure. The number of students participating declined, and the discipline of those remaining left much to be desired. In February 1887 Lt. Roberts was transferred "... to the frontier...," and the War Department appeared on the verge of disbanding the department. With his pet project in danger, Dr. Lehr made a trip to Washington to lobby on behalf of Northern's military program.
Lehr had had the good fortune to have assisted the district’s congressman, General LeFever, in the previous year’s election. In return, LeFever extended an open invitation to Lehr should he ever come to Washington. Always a vigorous champion of all things Northern, Lehr promptly accepted. Lehr’s version of his successful stint as a lobbyist are detailed in installments 98 and 99 of his memoirs. He was able to convince the War Department to have the military department restored and a new commandant appointed. The officer, Lt. John Baxter, Jr. proved to be an excellent choice, and during his tour at Northern between 1888 and 1890, he restored stability to the department.

Initially, the department’s demands on both student time and finances were modest. As the 1884-85 university catalog noted:

No student is compelled to drill, yet each one is expected to take one term’s drill in infantry or artillery tactics. All able-bodied male students who intend to complete any regular course will be expected to take Tactics one term as the same is made a part of each course.¹²
This provision actually exempted a fair number of students since many individuals were attending Northern not to receive a degree but rather to qualify for local teaching certificates. Since they did not “...intend to complete any regular course...” they were presumably excused from drill. Bearing in mind the modest means of many Northern students, the department spared them the expense of purchasing a uniform. The uniform of the day was a generic dark blue suit which “... can be worn at all times, taking the place of civilian clothing.”\(^{13}\) It was to consist of:

SACK COAT: dark blue cloth, single breasted, close fitting, falling collar buttoning up close in the neck, coat cut straight in front so as to button up throughout, five brass buttons in front, two (small size) on sleeve, design of buttons, Ohio State crest.

TROUSERS: dark blue cloth, plain, i.e. without stripes

VEST: (if desired) dark blue cloth without collar and single breasted, small size brass buttons

FORAGE CAP: dark blue cloth, white metal ornament, crossed rifles, letters “U.C.”\(^{14}\)
Students could have their uniforms made by a home-town tailor, if they chose. The forage caps could be purchased in Ada.

Once properly clad, students had access to a variety of equipment. Initially, the department used the Enfield rifles that Dr. Lehr purchased. These were replaced with the 45 cal. cadet Springfield rifle, probably in 1890. Appropriate belts and cartridge boxes were also provided. Each student was provided with 50 cartridges or their equivalent in reloading material. In 1885 the department acquired two three-inch rifled cannon with carriages and limbers for which three-hundred friction primers and one-hundred blank cartridges were provided.

The cannon were among the most visible, and often entertaining, parts of the department, and their blasts periodically enlivened the campus. They were employed on national holidays, and occasionally they featured in student pranks.

Shortly after their receipt, the cannons were to be used to fire a 21-gun salute to mark the inauguration of President Grover Cleveland. The night before, someone, possibly disgruntled Republican students, tried to spike the guns by jamming files into the touch holes. The local paper noted that the job was inexpertly done, and the President had his salute on schedule.15
Cap Badges
Artillery Practice – Before 1909
Note Old Pharmacy Building in Background
Parade on North Main Street
Several years later, a more imaginative group dismantled one of the cannons and reassembled it in Brown Hall Chapel where it was found as classes began the following day.

Although the university did not heavily support the department, adequate equipment and facilities were generally available. A departmental publication from 1897 noted that the “...faculty are liberal in their support of the Department and each year pay incidental expenses of large amount. Last year $384.16 was thus paid...”\textsuperscript{16} A rifle range was initially hard to come by. Apparently the local farmers were reluctant to have their fields used for target practice. This shortcoming was partially remedied by a former officer and local resident, Michael Melhorn, who allowed the cadets the use of his property until his death in 1891. Dr. Lehr subsequently allowed the department a 600 yard target range on his farm east of Ada, and this seems to have been in use from 1898.
During the Lehr administration, the contests and dress parade took place on campus, much to the detriment of the institution’s landscaping. In 1903, however, Northern had acquired the 28-acre Tri-county Fairgrounds a block east campus. This offered improved facilities for both military and athletic events. In the absence of a regular armory, equipment was stored in the Normal School Building. After this structure was razed in 1913, the department moved its stores to Dukes Building and finally to Brown Hall in 1915.

Beginning with 1888, the Color Contests, along with commencement, formed an integral part of each Spring’s social activities. They occupied an entire day. The program for May 13, 1897, for example, began with a Federal Salute at sunrise accompanied by the cadet band. An appropriate chapel program followed at 8:00AM. Between 9:30AM and noon, the actual contest drills occurred. Noon brought the National Salute, again accompanied by the cadet band. Contest drills continued till 3:30PM when artillery drills commenced, again with musical accompaniment. The military part of the day was concluded by a dress parade and review at 5:00PM followed by a theatrical performance in Ada’s Whiteside Theater. That year members of the department appeared in the *Heroic Dutchman of 1776, a Comedy in Five Acts.*
In Foreground – New Athletic Fields to East of Campus
The reward for winning the Color Contest was, in keeping with the social nature of the event, largely symbolic. The company achieving the highest score was designated the Color Company of the battalion, and a pennant bearing the name of the company’s captain was attached to the department’s contest flag. To stimulate effort in all companies the faculty contributed $5 to the cadet in each company who presented the most military appearance and showed the greatest proficiency in drill and discipline. The results of the contests are included in Appendix 5. In addition to the festivities surrounding the Color Contest, the individual companies hosted receptions during the school year.

A more serious activity was the annual inspection by army officers detailed for that purpose by Adjutant General’s Office. It appears that the date of the inspection was generally known in advance. The day’s activities would begin with a parade followed by close and extended order drill. Normally there would also be exercises employing the cannons. Uniforms, weapons and other equipment were inspected and reported upon.
The regular army officers who served as commandants were generally assigned to Ada for fairly brief periods. In 1890, Lt. John Baxter was replaced by 1st. Lt. John H.H. Pershine. He remained at Northern until 1894 when he was succeeded by Capt. James N. Morgan. In 1898, Capt. Price, the last of the Lehr-era commandants arrived, however on April 24, 1898, the United States declared war on Spain. Shortly thereafter, Captain Price was ordered to rejoin his regiment. For several years thereafter, Northern was without a regular army officer as commandant, students filling that position.\(^{18}\)

From the department’s standpoint, war could not have come at a worse time, since Dr. Lehr had chosen that time to set the school on a firmer financial basis. The previous year, he had explored the possibility of Northern being made a state-supported university. When this plan fell through, he initiated discussions with the Methodist church in 1898 for the sale of the school. He remained affiliated with Northern until autumn 1902 but without powers to lobby on behalf of the military department.
1 ONU Catalog, 1883-84, p. 26
2 ONU Catalog, 1894-95, p. 26
3 Ibid
4 Ada (Ohio) Record, Ada, Ohio, March 26, 1884, p. 3
5 Ibid
7 Lehr, p. 61
8 Lehr, p. 355
9 Lehr, p. 356
10 Lehr, p. 353
11 Lehr, p. 358
12 ONU Catalog, 1884-85, p. 24
13 Ibid
14 Ibid
15 Ada (Ohio) Record, March 11, 1885, p. 3
17 University Herald, October 1, 1915, p. 1

The article explained that there had been no regular army officer detailed as commandant since Price’s departure in 1898 and Capt. Davis’ arrival in early 1903, Ada (Ohio) Record, May 20, 1903, p. 1
Smith Administration
1905 - 1929

Although the Military Department was terminated during President Smith’s administration, there was little to indicate its demise when he took office. Regular army officers were once again serving as commandants, and in 1910, drill, which had been optional in earlier years, was made mandatory for all male students.
Starting in 1908, an attempt was made to inject greater realism into the department’s training by organizing annual camps at the end of spring term. It appears that the tents and camp equipment for these outings were borrowed from the local national guard unit. The first such expedition had as its goal a farm approximately three miles south of Ada.
Camp Smith, May 21 – 29, 1909
Artillery Drill at Camp Smith
Starting a tradition, the camp was named after a notable individual, that year for Dr. Lehr. Companies B, D, the Signal Corps, band, Bugle Corps, and Hospital Corps left Ada on Saturday. Sunday appears to have been devoted to rest and receiving visitors. The following two days were occupied with drill and guard duty, and the day’s activities ran from reveille at 5:30 AM to Taps at 11 PM. Camp Lehr was struck on Wednesday.
The following two years camps were established near Crystal Lake on the Applegate farm approximately four miles northwest of Ada. Camp Smith in 1909 ran from May 21\textsuperscript{st} to the 29\textsuperscript{th}, and was visited by Governor Judson Harmon and Ohio Adjutant General C.C. Weybrecht. Next Spring’s camp was named after former ONU faculty member and congressman, Frank Willis. It lasted from May 20\textsuperscript{th} through the 28\textsuperscript{th}.

In 1911 the cadets ventured further afield to Lake Idlewild near Kenton, Ohio. During the week in camp, the cadets practiced wall scaling, and they were issued twenty blank rounds for training purposes. The proximity of a cool lake was correctly seen by the commandant as a potential hazard, and students were cautioned about unsupervised swimming. Unfortunately that year’s camp was marred by the accidental drowning of a cadet.
Summer Camp - 1910
Summer Camp - 1912
The next four years saw a return to using farms near Ada as campsites. The period also appears to have initiated an unbroken string of cold and rainy events. While the weather may have made these later camps more realistic than their sunny predecessors, it is unlikely that those involved appreciated the verisimilitude. As it turned out, Camp Hill, in 1916, was the last of these events. The outbreak of the First World War in April 1917 meant that for many students drill and marching would now be in earnest. By the time that camps returned, they were part of a far more formal ROTC program. The last camp was in June 1919 at Camp Custer, Michigan and ran for six weeks.
Camp Hill, O.N.U. Cadets.
Camp Hill - 1916
The annual camps were not the only thing to change. In 1902, it was necessary to send the department’s two civil war-vintage cannons to the Rock Island arsenal for repairs. They were returned the following June, and continued in service for another decade. During that time, they continued their largely ceremonial role and as props for student pranks. In May 1911, for example, students once more dismantled one of the cannons and reassembled it in Brown Hall where it greeted next day’s chapel goers.

This situation ended, literally with a blast, in June 1913 when a student was seriously injured while firing a salute to Ohio Governor Cox, that year’s commencement speaker. While loading a charge for the thirteenth shot, the cannon detonated prematurely and seriously injured, Daniel Best, a former student. This was apparently the first time that the cannon had been fired in several years. In December it was reported that both cannons had been quietly sold to a scrap dealer for $5.30. He, in turn, had burned the black walnut carriages to recover the hardware that held them together.
When news of the incident reached Congressman and former ONU student Frank B. Willis, he purchased the barrels. The class of 1916 donated funds for granite bases and dedicated them to the memory of another ONU graduate, Dr. George W. Crile. For seven decades, they graced the front lawn of the campus with one each pointing toward the corners of College Avenue and University Avenue.
Landscaping changes in the mid-1980’s resulted in their being placed in storage. Through the efforts of Professor emerita Betty Miller, they were placed in the science building quadrangle in 1991.
Under President Smith, student attitudes were gradually changing as military training occupied a less central part of life at Northern. Drill might continue to interest some students, but as has been noted, for others there was a growing list of competing activities. The catalog of 1911-12 first noted existence of an athletic department, and by 1913-14 a student fee had been imposed to support athletics. In 1916 Northern’s athletic program had progressed to where the school could enter the Ohio Athletic Conference. Students could also participate in a extensive list of clubs and Greek letter societies. The latter were as popular with students as they were occasionally unpopular with President Smith.
The outbreak of WWI, radically changed the nature of Northern’s Military Department. Even before America’s declaration of war, Congress passed the National Defense Act of 1916 in June of that year as part of a general program of military preparedness. It permitted the creation of a Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC) at colleges and universities. The new corps signaled the end for programs such as Northern’s which, due to their small size and informality, were not able to meet the needs of modern warfare. The month after American’s entry into the conflict found the local commandant, Capt. Hill, not involved in planning for the annual summer camp or the traditional color contest. He was busy examining applicants for the Officer’s Training Camp at Fort Harrison, Indiana.
The war clearly demonstrated the need for more extensive and rigorous military training than could be provided by local campus departments and in 1918 the War Department created the Student Army Training Corps, SATC. In June 1917, President Smith had expressed interest in such a program when he sought a “permanent officers training school,” and the following year he got his wish.
SATC students began their day with reveille at 6 a.m. followed by 30 minutes of calisthenics. Breakfast was followed by drill from 7:30 to 9:30 a.m. The period from 10 a.m. till noon was allotted for classes. Lunch occupied 50 minutes, and classes then resumed from 1 until 4:30 p.m. Athletics lasted until 5:30 p.m. followed by retreat and a 30-minute dinner. Study hours lasted until 9:30 p.m. with taps at 10 p.m. The usual social activities of college life were obviously precluded by this rigorous schedule.
The SATC preferred to billet its men in groups, and the number of buildings in Ada capable of housing numerous individuals was limited. The downtown Young Hotel was pressed into service, as were the Theta Nu Epsilon and Sigma Phi Epsilon houses. Local boarding house proprietors benefited since even smaller houses were eventually used. On campus, the literary society halls in Lehr Memorial were converted into impromptu barracks. The SATC students were fed in Brown Auditorium which had been converted into a mess hall.
With the end of the war in November 1918, the campus rapidly reverted to civilian life. The SATC program had operated at Northern for less than one quarter when, on December 20, its members were discharged. As it turned out, the greatest danger that this group faced was from the influenza epidemic that year. Northern’s SATC was fortunate not to suffer any deaths and had remarkably few serious cases of flu. Law classes resumed in January, and the fraternities, closed during the conflict, began re-opening.
In March 1919, an ROTC unit was established with Captain A.B. Ball as commandant. In a break with the past, its curriculum consisted of a two year basic program that was required of all participants and a two year advanced course. The latter was optional but secured for those completing it a lieutenant’s commission in the Officers Reserve Corps. Another incentive was the availability of up to $125.00 per year in scholarship funds. Clearly this was a more formal and demanding program than the old military department.
It was perhaps inevitable that the new program would not be popular. For one thing, participation was encouraged but optional, and ROTC demanded a level of commitment which would not appeal to all students. Students also received a clear indication of how the faculty regarded the new program by the latter’s failure in 1919 to set aside an hour specifically for drill. While there is no direct evidence, it is also likely that students at Northern were influenced by the ebbing of wartime patriotism. In addition ROTC was now a part of the curriculum, not with a social significance of its own.
In May 1921, the trustees took the final step of discontinuing ROTC at Ohio Northern thus ending the institution’s thirty-seven year involvement with military training. A newspaper article at that time mentioned the unfavorable response of votes taken among both the faculty and students as contributing to the trustees’ decision. It is also possible that the administration realized that a more extensive program would also be more expensive.

They would have certainly been aware of the financial pressures Northern faced especially in regard to establishing an endowment fund. In 1908, the University Senate of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the denomination's governing body for church-affiliated institutions, decreed that a college or university have "a minimum productive endowment of not less than $200,000." The senate later agreed to give institutions until 1916 to meet this criterion. Even so, it was not until the spring of 1918 that Northern actually achieved this figure, an event that was celebrated on campus with parades and speeches.
Further increases to the endowment were required by the university's entry into the Ohio College Association in 1922. Membership in the association was important, since it provided a measure of accreditation for Northern's academic program. It also required that the endowment be increased, first to $300,000 and later to $500,000. The president and trustees may have wondered if military training, a vestige of the Lehr-era, would dilute efforts to move the institution forward.

1 *University Herald*, May 19, 1911, p. 3

2 *Ada (Ohio) Record*, June 11, 1913, p. 4

3 *Ada (Ohio) Record*, December 3, 1913, p. 3

4 *Northern Review*, September 16, 1919, p. 2


6 *Ada (Ohio) Record*, June 3, 1918, p. 1

7 *Ohio Northern Alumnus*, Vol. 1, no. 2 July 1927, p. 10

8 *Ohio Northern Alumnus*, Vol. 1, no. 2 July 1927, p. 10
CAPTAIN WILLIAM R. SCHMIDT, U. S. A.
Professor of Military Science and Tactics
One aspect of the department continues to this day – the band.
Although the students, faculty and trustees may have been content to see military training at Northern discontinued, The move was likely a surprise to some graduates. When the university began an alumni magazine 1927, its second issue contained a sentimental plea to restore the military department.[1] The author stressed the national need for continued military preparedness and also stressed the personal advantages of holding a reserve officers’ commission. Perhaps responding to the spirit of the times, he also emphasized that reactivating the department would not encourage militarism since the participants would be citizen reservists after graduation. Finally, he returned to Dr. Lehr’s earlier ideas when he noted:

Military drill adds a colorful feature to college life. To me it also meant outdoor exercise and recreation which I might not have taken, for my studies were heavy. It meant relaxation from the grind of study, a chance to get the cob-webs out of my brain.[1]
This appeal appears not to have struck a responsive chord, however the demise of the Ohio Northern University ROTC program deferred the university’s involvement with military training, but it did not end it.
In early 1940, with Europe already at war, 20 ONU students began receiving flight training. The Army Air Corps, realizing that it could not begin to train enough pilots on its own, turned to the Civil Aeronautics Authority (CAA). The CAA first began working with civilian flying schools in the spring of 1939, but, as more pilots were needed, the program was extended to colleges and universities. This program probably benefited from the imposition of the nation's first peace-time draft in October 1940. Faced with the prospect of induction, the ability to enter flight training and retain some measure of control over one's destiny must have been attractive. Indeed, Northern's quota of candidates doubled to 40 for 1940-41.
As the international situation grew more threatening, a ground school was added to teach non-pilots the rudiments of various aviation-related subjects. The school, which was under the guidance of Prof. Frank Berger of the College of Engineering, received several pieces of equipment for training purposes. These included a radial aircraft engine, aircraft wing panels, and a modern aircraft radio. In September 1941, 10 students were enrolled in this program and receiving six hours of college credit for their work. By that time, an entire plane had been assigned to the campus as an aid to inspection and design classes.
Other military training programs were added during the war. By April 1942, Northern had been approved by the Navy for officer training. Under the plan, students could enlist as apprentice seamen and then attend classes. Those volunteering for aviation remained on campus for two years while the balance would remain to complete a full course of study before going on active duty. That fall, 10 students were training as glider pilots at Northern. They took classes on campus and received flying instruction at the Lima municipal airport. A training program for radio technicians was also instituted. These programs were terminated by war’s end.
FIRST ROW: Carl J. Graham, Columbus Grove, Robert E. Sims, Wapakoneta; Kenneth E. Volkmer, and Irvin S. Anderson, Columbus Grove.


First Glider Training Class
TOP ROW, left to right: Arthur Reiser, Tuscarawas; Russell Moore, Cleveland; John Ducic, Bessemer, Pa.; George Singer, Olmsted Falls; Joseph Archer, Lewisville; Harold Fairbust, Wooster.

UPPER CENTER: Russell Schad, Cleveland Heights; Russell Cook, Cleveland; Merle Martz, Wooster; Robert Krebs, Cleveland; Herbert Sheets, Hartville; Theodore Laping, Cleveland; Donald Chew, Shelby.

LOWER CENTER: Harold Rucy, Louisville; George Ott, Lakewood; Alfred Levine, Cleveland; John Thomas, Duncan Falls; Bruce Simon, Wooster; Richard Lipman, Cleveland.

FRONT ROW: Dudley Bell, Elyria; Robert Ireland, III, Cleveland; Joseph Klein, Cleveland; William Kohl, Berea; Raymond Brown, Cleveland. NOT IN THE PICTURE: Clair MacNeal, Grafton.
During the Korean War the university attempted, as in the past, to avoid rapid drops in enrollment by instituting military training on campus. At Northern's request, a preliminary inspection of campus facilities was undertaken in February 1951 by the head of the air ROTC program at Ohio State University. Unfortunately, some 450 other institutions had the same idea, and in the end only 62 were chosen. Northern was not among the finalists, but, given the short duration of the conflict, the adverse decision was not a serious setback.

In recent years, Northern’s students have participated in military training through the ROTC program at Bowling Green State University. This partnership appears to have begun with the 1980-81 academic year.