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Coast Artillery Noncommissioned and Warrant Officer Personnel

By CAPTAIN B. L. MILBURN

Coast Artillery Corps

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Warrant Officers, Army Mine Planter Service.

Each of the eight Army Mine Planters is authorized one master, one chief engineer, one first mate, one second mate, and one assistant engineer, making a total authorized strength of eight masters, eight chief engineers, eight first mates, eight second mates, and eight assistant engineers. No reserve is authorized to provide for temporary losses due to leaves of absence, sickness, travel upon change of station, and other causes. The replacement of warrant officers on foreign service especially requires mine planters in the United States to withstand extended losses of this nature.

Original appointments in the Army Mine Planter Service are now made only in the grades of second mate and assistant engineer. Appointments in the grades of master, chief engineer, and first mate are made by the promotion of the senior first mate, assistant engineer, and second mate, respectively. Upon the reduction of the number of army mine planters in 1922, it was necessary to discharge summarily a large number of warrant officers who had excellent records and who would otherwise have been retained in the service. For some time a policy was therefore pursued by which vacancies in all grades in the Mine Planter Service were filled by the reappointment of these discharged warrant officers. This policy had the effect, however, of denying promotion to first mates, assistant engineers, and second mates in active service and it was discontinued in 1924. Soon after this announcement Congress made provision for the remaining discharged warrant officers by authorizing their reappointment and immediate discharge or retirement.

The Marine Engineering and Deck courses at the Coast Artillery School were formerly the principal means of qualifying candidates as second mates and assistant engineers. Due to the large number of eligibles made available upon the reduction of the Mine Planter Warrant Officer strength in 1922 these nautical Courses were suspended and have not been in operation since. Owing to the small number of eligibles required each year (probably not more than two or three in both branches of the Mine Planter Service) it is the present intention not to reestablish these courses as long as the present warrant officer strength obtains. To reopen the courses would require a faculty possibly as large as the student body itself and would require the purchase of additional equipment, including boats and other marine materiel and supplies. There is also a question as to whether the method of obtaining eligibles by theoretical courses alone is altogether satisfactory. It appears to be more feasible to select men for assistant engineers and second mates who are practical and experienced seamen, rather than men who have successfully completed short periods of theoretical instruction. The policy has therefore been adopted to secure eligibles for these courses in the future through the medium of competitive examinations to be held from time to time as occasion may require. In selecting candidates to take these examinations preference will be given enlisted men of the Army Mine Planter Service. This policy has been adopted for two reasons. First, to encourage the enlisted men of the lower grades in the Army Mine Planter Service by offering opportunities for their advancement; and, second, to insure the appointment of practical seamen to the warrant officer grades.

Due to the fact that the present number of eligibles for appointment as second mate is sufficient to fill all prospective vacancies for the next four or five years, competitive examinations to secure eligibles for the second mate list will not be held within the next two or three years. The assistant engineer eligible list contained only three names, however, and a special examination was held for the purpose of securing additional eligibles for that list. The results of this examination have been reported. Of the ten applicants, six successfully passed the prescribed examination and the names of these men have been placed on the Assistant Engineer eligible list in the order of merit obtained in the examinations. The Assistant Engineer list now contains nine names and the Second Mate list five names.

Most of the enlisted men now on the warrant officer eligible lists graduated from the Nautical Courses at the Coast Artillery School in 1921. In the mean time they have had no practical experience or instruction on mine planters. A policy has been adopted to require these men to serve on mine planters as acting warrant officers approximately one year prior to their' appointment. At the present time, for example, the enlisted men who stand number one on the second mate and assistant engineer eligible list" are assigned to duty as acting second mate and acting assistant engineer, respectively, on two' of our mine planters. This experience will be invaluable in properly qualifying these men for duties as warrant officers. Commanding officers are required to submit efficiency reports on these men in the same manner as on the regular warrant officers. This serves the additional purpose of eliminating any of the present eligibles who, under actual conditions, do not appear to possess the necessary qualifications for appointment as warrant officers.

A new Army Regulation (A. R. 610-10) pertaining to Warrant Officers of the Army Mine Planter Service has been prepared and will soon be published to the service. A special need for such a regulation has existed for some time. Existing regulations pertaining to warrant officer personnel of the Army Mine Planter Service are covered in many different types of orders and instructions and in some cases administrative action is based upon precedent alone. The new regulations will bring all existing instructions under one cover (some of them with slight modification) and will reduce to definite and accessible form all approved policies and procedure with reference to this class of personnel. The new regulations will cover the following subjects:

Appointment, authorization, how made, when effective, basic requirements, eligible lists, lineal lists, competitive examinations, promotion Examinations.

Miscellaneous, assignment, training and duties, efficiency reports, annual physical examinations, leaves of absence, pay and allowance, retirement, resignation, and discharge.

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