

## **Mclver, George Willcox** <sup>[1]</sup>

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by Dennis R. Lawson, 1991

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George Willcox Mclver, military officer, was born in Carthage, the son of Alexander and Mary Ann Wilcox Mclver. Both his father and his cousin, Charles Duncan Mclver <sup>[2]</sup>, were distinguished North Carolina educators. He received his early education at the Mebane school established by Major Robert Bingham <sup>[3]</sup>. In 1877, as a result of a tie in examination scores with his competitor, he won a draw of straws and entered the U.S. Military Academy at West Point<sup>[4]</sup>.

After completing his military education in 1882, Mclver began a twenty-two-year career with the Seventh U.S. Infantry, which he joined at Fort Pembina, Dakota Territory. He subsequently served at various western garrisons, including Fort Bridger, Fort Fred Steele, and Fort Logan. While on duty in the West, he suppressed civil riots between white and Chinese miners in Rock Springs, Wyo., and fought in the Sioux campaign of 1890–91. This conflict, according to Mclver, was "one of the most tragic and unfortunate clashes that ever took place between Indians and soldiers."

Following a tour of duty as West Point tactical officer, he served as an instructor for the California National Guard and participated in the control of violent railroad-labor strikes. During the Spanish-American War <sup>[5]</sup>, he commanded a company of the Seventh Infantry and in the Santiago campaign led these troops in the Battle of El Caney. After serving briefly at the Leech Lake, Minn., Indian agency (1900), Mclver was transferred to Nome, Alaska, where he enforced federal law during the famous gold rush era. He served a short tour in the Philippines, then commanded troops at the Alcatraz military prison in San Francisco. When the destructive San Francisco earthquake and fire left 250,000 residents homeless, Mclver was involved in the military effort to facilitate relief work and restore order. In 1907 he became commandant of the army's musketry school in Monterey, Calif., the forerunner of the modern-day Fort Benning infantry school. As commandant of the school, he instituted the study of weaponry and revised the *Army Small Arms Firing Manual*

After a second tour of duty in the Philippines (1911–15) and office duty in the Militia Bureau of the War Department (1917), Mclver accepted a temporary wartime commission as brigadier general. He was assigned to command the 161st Brigade, 81st Division, later known as the "Wildcat Division" <sup>[6]</sup>. In 1918, having completed a period of training in South Carolina and New York, the 161st embarked for duty with the American Expeditionary Force in France. Initially assigned to the Saint-Dié sector of the Vosges Mountains, Mclver's troops moved to Verdun and subsequently joined the November 1918 Meuse-Argonne offensive.

Returned to the rank of colonel after the war, Mclver served at Fort Slocum until his retirement in 1922. Subsequently he wrote "North Carolinians at West Point before the Civil War," which was published in the North Carolina Historical Review <sup>[7]</sup>. In addition, he was the author of "The Musketry School at Monterey."

Mclver married Helen Smedberg on 28 June 1893. They had five children: Francis (1896), Renwick Smedberg (1901), Alexander (1907), Cora Louise (1912), and George Willcox (1897).

#### **References:**

George Willcox Mclver Papers (Manuscript Collection, East Carolina University, Greenville).  
<http://digital.lib.ecu.edu/special/ead/findingaids/0251/> <sup>[8]</sup> (accessed October 3, 2014).

*Who Was Who in America*, vol. 3 (1960).

#### **Subjects:**

Biographies <sup>[9]</sup>

Military personnel <sup>[10]</sup>

#### **Authors:**

Lawson, Dennis R. <sup>[11]</sup>

#### **Origin - location:**

Moore County <sup>[12]</sup>

Carthage <sup>[13]</sup>

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