Ft William McKinley, just south of Manila near the town of Rizal, became the 31st Infantry’s home on its return from Siberia. When the last contingent arrived on April 17, 1920, the entire 31st Infantry was stationed at the same post for the first time in its history. It shared the post with its sister regiment from Siberia, the 27th Infantry. In commemoration of their service in Siberia, the 27th called itself the “Wolfhounds” and the 31st called itself the “Polar Bears”, nicknames that endure to this day. With their tours of overseas duty completed, many officers departed the regiment soon after returning to Manila. Among them was Colonel Fred Bugbee, the Regimental Commander, who was succeeded by Colonel Ralph H. Van Deman on April 5, 1920.

The return to Manila was not as pleasant as expected for some. Men who had married Russian women in Siberia had to arrange for their commercial passage to Manila, since the Army had no provisions for moving dependents from Siberia. The task was made more difficult since there was no regular passenger service between Vladivostok and Manila. Further complicating things, troops arriving from Vladivostok were quarantined in Manila's port area for two weeks. When the women arrived, men had trouble finding them a decent place to live since other units stationed in the Manila area occupied the best private quarters available. Officers were quartered based on seniority. The regimental commander, executive officer, and battalion commanders were assigned comfortable government-leased quarters on General Luna and Padre Burgos Streets. A few officers were assigned smaller quarters at Cuartel de España or Ft Santiago along the wall of the old walled city. Most lived in rented private quarters in Manila's Malate District and some lived in distant Pasay, commuting to Manila by car or bus. All enlisted personnel, regardless of grade, were required to maintain their residence in the barracks, although those married to Filipinas often maintained a second residence in town.

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1 Filipina is the female derivative of Filipino, a generic term applying to all Philippine islanders.
When the 27th Infantry departed for Hawaii in December 1920, the 45th and 57th Philippine Scout Infantry Regiments (American officers and Filipino enlisted personnel) were formed at Fort McKinley. To make room for the new units, the 31st Infantry moved its Headquarters Company, Band, and 1st Battalion to the Cuartel de España, a sturdy old Spanish barracks complex tucked inside the southwest corner of Intramuros, Manila’s walled city. Service Company moved to nearby Santa Lucia Barracks at the port, and the 2d and 3d Battalions moved to Estado Mayor, the former Spanish Viceroy’s compound along the Pasig River, just outside the walled city’s southeast corner along the Pasig River.

After months of turbulence, the regiment was able to finally settle down to a garrison routine. Reveille was at 6:00, breakfast at 6:30 followed by close and extended order drill, which started each day at 8:00. Indoor classes in company day rooms were held from 11:00 to 11:30, followed by dinner at noon. From 1:00 P.M. to 4:00 P.M., quiet was observed in the barracks, permitting men to sleep since training was considered impractical in the tropical heat. Wool shirts were prescribed for drill because of their absorbent qualities. Battalion parades and inspections were held on Saturday mornings.

Infantrymen caught guard duty every 12 days. The regiment's guard force was formed from details drawn from every company. Men stationed at Estado Mayor had to march a considerable distance in the afternoon heat to the regimental guard mount on Cuartel de España's parade field. Among the most dreaded guard posts was Headquarters, Philippine Department at Ft Santiago.
Infantrymen caught guard duty every 12 days. The regiment's guard force was formed from details drawn from every company. Men stationed at Estado Mayor had to march a considerable distance in the afternoon heat to the regimental guard mount on Cuartel de España's parade field. Among the most dreaded guard posts was Headquarters, Philippine Department at Ft Santiago. This detail had a long, hot (or wet, depending on the season) march down General Luna Street, past the Cathedral and Fire Station #4, through the Philippine Ordnance Depot, to the guard room at the foot of the stairs leading to topside, the office of the Philippine Department Commander. A welcome break from the routine of garrison life was annual firing practice at Fort McKinley's B Range.
As the only remaining all-American infantry regiment in the Philippines, the 31st performed security and ceremonial functions for the Governor General.\(^2\)

\(^2\) There were two infantry regiments at Ft McKinley composed of Philippine Scout enlisted personnel with American officers.
When a gunfight broke out between members of the Philippine Constabulary and Manila's civil police in 1920, the 31st was called to intercede. The 31st served as General Leonard Wood's honor guard when he became Governor General in 1921 and performed the same function for General Douglas MacArthur when he became Military Advisor to the Philippine Commonwealth in 1935. In 1922, the regiment paraded in honor of Japan's Baron General Tanaka and Britain's Prince of Wales, among others.

Although garrison duty was normally fairly boring, there were abundant sources of off-duty recreation. In June 1920, the Philippine Department authorized rest and recreation (R&R) leave to China and Japan for soldiers of outstanding bearing and appearance. On June 28, the first R&R contingents left for leave at Cheefoo, Chingwangtao, and Tsingtao, China and Nagasaki, Japan. Second Lieutenants Ralph M. Oder and Edward M. Miner were the first members of the regiment to participate. Troops could also take R&R at Camp John Hay, a rest and recreation (R&R) center in the cool hills of northern Luzon, near Baguio, or obtain passes to numerous other scenic spots in the Philippines.

The 31st also played a role in humanitarian relief operations. In mid-January 1922, 4 officers and 60 enlisted men of the 2d and 3d Battalions erected three tent cities for people left homeless by a fire that ravaged Manila's Tondo district. They erected more than 250 tents in less than 4 hours, earning the regiment a letter of appreciation from Manila's Mayor, Ramon Fernandez. One episode not verified by official Army records, is a dispatch of troops to Japan in 1923. The following, reprinted from the "United States Army Recruiting News," December 1938, reports:

"When a terrific tidal wave, earthquake, and fire very nearly leveled several Japanese coastal cities and the Japanese government sent out a frantic appeal for relief, the War Department radioed Headquarters of the 31st Infantry to dispatch immediately a picked group of officers and men, with supplies, to Kobe and Yokohama. The radio message was received at the headquarters of the regiment late on a payday night (August 31, 1923) when personnel of the regiment were scattered all over the Manila area. Yet within three hours after the message had been received, every man of the 31st Infantry was back in his barracks. The "round-up" was affected by telephone, by word of mouth, and by motorcycle messengers who raced all over the Manila area. The hundred percent response to the midnight message is typical of the spirit of this regiment of infantry, a spirit which continues to this day."

Received by COL Van Deman on 18 Jan 1922.
Although some 1930s-era veterans recall hearing from others who were in the Philippines in the 1920s that a full battalion of the 31st was dispatched to Japan, no existing Army records show a battalion being dispatched. It is possible, however, that a battalion-size detachment of "volunteers" (men selected by First Sergeants) from various parts of the regiment may have been dispatched to assist in relief efforts.

The 31st Infantry was assigned to the Philippine Division from October 22, 1921 to June 26, 1931. Throughout that period, division field training exercises centered around Fort McKinley (Rizal), Fort Mills (Corregidor), and Fort Stotsenberg (Angeles). The experience of one of the regiment's members illustrates a pattern that became routine during the 1930s. On December 18, 1931, Private Earnest Calvin Cloud of Stone County, Missouri, was assigned to G Company at Estado Mayor. He was 16 years old when he started basic training at Fort McKinley's B Range.

Before Cloud had been in the Philippines two months, the Philippine Department curtailed basic training and sent the regiment on War Plan Orange maneuvers. The 31st traveled from Manila to Fort McKinley, the Philippine Division's assembly area, and on to Lingayen Gulf, an expected landing area if the Japanese were to invade. From Lingayen Gulf, the 31st practiced a series of delaying actions past Clark Field and Ft Stotsenberg to the Calumpit Bridge, down the Bataan Peninsula, and across the 2.9 mile North Channel to Fort Mills on Corregidor. The exercise was to have been a dress rehearsal for how to fight the war, but ten years later the Japanese got to Lingayen Gulf first and somehow our planners had neglected to stockpile enough food, medicine, barrier material, and ammunition along the intended delay lines.

As at all overseas garrisons, officers were permitted to bring their families to join them at government expense. Among those to take advantage of the adventure was CPT Robert L. Wright, who commanded B Company in Manila. Wright finished the Infantry Officers Advanced Course at Ft Benning with orders to join the 31st Infantry. With his wife and two children (Homer and Mary Elizabeth, aged 9 and 11), Wright sailed from New York City on the USAT Grant, a former German passenger ship of World War I vintage. Two weeks later, the Grant reached the Panama Canal where mules slowly pulled the ship through the locks while passengers sweltered in the searing tropical heat. Two weeks later the ship stopped briefly at San Francisco to refuel and take on supplies before moving on to Manila via Honolulu and Guam. The entire journey took and agonizing 52 days! In Manila, the Wrights eventually took up residence in the Sequia Apartments, connected Spanish-style houses with tiled floors, no screens, and mosquito netting over each bed. Mrs. Wright was able to hire a cook, a houseboy, and a housekeeper who came daily. The children went to school from 7 to noon.

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3 War Plan Orange is one of a series of plans drafted by the War Department, each code named with a different color. Together, they were known as the "Rainbow Plans".

4 Homer followed in his father's footsteps, commanding K Company of the 31st Infantry during the Korean War. He was a past Commander of the 31st Infantry Regiment Association and his sister, Mary Wright Neil, is an active participant in the association. Homer died at Hopewell, VA in 2003.
enabling everyone to get home for lunch and a siesta since studying was impossible in the heat. School lasted only from September to March because of the heat.

On Monday, 1 February 1932, the Wright children came home to find their dad hurriedly packing and rushing back to the Cuartel de España, where his company was stationed. Rumors had been circulating that the Japanese might invade China and they did. That night, the entire 31st Infantry Regiment boarded the USAT Chaumont bound for Shanghai.