



MILITARY HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MINNESOTA  
MINNESOTA MILITARY MUSEUM

# ALLIES

Newsletter for Members and Friends

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## The Thirteenth Minnesota and the mock battle of Manila

By Kyle Ward

On the evening of February 15, 1898, there was an explosion within the *U.S.S. Maine*, which was stationed in Havana Harbor outside the Cuban capital city. Had it happened anywhere else in the world, this event probably would not have had such huge implications, but because it happened when and where it did, it had a major impact on the course of American history. And although it happened 2,000 miles from Minnesota, it had a huge impact on Minnesotans as well.

The sinking of the *USS Maine*, which killed 266 crew members, was like the last piece of a vast, complex puzzle that, once pressed into place, completed the picture and caused the United States and the nation of Spain to declare war against one another. Their diplomatic hostilities had been going on for a number of years, primarily due to Cuban insurgents trying to break away from their long-time colonial Spanish masters. Spain, for its part, was trying to hold on to the last remnants of its once great empire in the Western Hemisphere.

Many Americans saw a free Cuba as a potential region for investment and growth, while others sided with the Cubans because it reminded them of their own nation's story of a small rebel army trying to gain independence from a colonial overseer. Add into this mix the major newspapers of the day, all trying to find the most scandalous and inspiring stories in order to sell more papers, and you found a series of events that led the U.S. to war with Spain. All that was needed to push these events into a full blown war was a major catastrophe—one that would lead many to believe that Spain was openly hostile to the United States. The *USS Maine* served as that tipping point, and on April 25, 1898, the U.S. declared war against Spain.

Reminiscent of the American Civil War, the federal government once again sent out a call to the states for volunteers to help fill the ranks of the U.S. military. On



The battle flags of the Thirteenth Minnesota, flown at camp in San Francisco, California. (All photos for this story are from the collection of the Minnesota Historical Society.)

April 23, 1898, President William McKinley, a Civil War veteran, asked for 125,000 volunteers from the states to come forward and serve their nation. Thousands of young Minnesota men heeded the call, and letters began flooding into the Minnesota governor's office asking how to get involved.

Minnesota Governor David M. Clough was told by the war department that his state's contribution would be three regiments of infantry. Clough quickly wired back that this would be possible, but then asked for federal help to supply these troops with all the necessary uniforms and equipment. This issue caused some tension between state and national officials, but a bigger one developed later when the Minnesotans wanted the regiments to be known as state organizations—as Minnesota Volunteers—even though they would be mustered into

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The Thirteenth Minnesota in the trenches outside of Manila. Arguably the most famous picture coming out of this war.

federal service. Minnesota's plan was to create three new regiments by using volunteers from its three existing National Guard infantry regiments, plus the additional volunteers needed to bring the regiments up to a full wartime strength of 1,200 men each.

This led to another major issue that these recruits, their officers, and state politicians had to deal with. Although it had been 33 years since the end of the Civil War, there were many veterans of that war still alive, and, of greater significance, there were oft-repeated stories about the heroic deeds these men had accomplished while fighting in that war. When word went out that the three new regiments were going to be called the First, Second, and Third Minnesota Volunteers, letters to the Governor's office, to local newspapers, and a variety of newspaper editorials questioned, and criticized, this decision. In the end, the arguments came down to this: What happens if these new recruits do something to ruin the name of these well-known and highly respected units? Would people forget the gallantry of the First Minnesota during the Civil War if the new First Minnesota fell apart fighting in Cuba? In order to ensure the on-going reputation of these Civil War units, the State of Minnesota decided to start a new numbering system that began where the Civil War left off. Minnesota had organized eleven infantry regiments for the Civil War. Thus, for the war with Spain, it would have the Twelfth, Thirteenth and Fourteenth Minnesota Volunteers (and later the Fifteenth).

The new recruits had to be trained immediately. This was carried out at the Minnesota State Fairgrounds—temporarily renamed Camp Ramsey—on a grassy knoll where Machinery Hill is now located. Most of the men came from Minneapolis and St. Paul, but there were also companies mustered in from St. Cloud, Stillwater and Red Wing. The location was problematic because, rather than a stereotypical “boot camp,” it was closer to a summer camp, with family and friends constantly around wanting parades, picnics and parties.

While training was taking place in Minnesota, international affairs were taking shape in Washington DC. In addition to Cuba, American leaders decided to attack the Spanish in the Philippines, a colony Spain had held since 1521. Immediately, Assistant Secretary of the Navy Theodore Roosevelt ordered Admiral George Dewey and the American fleet in the Pacific to Manila, where, on May 1, 1898, they quickly destroyed an old, dilapidated Spanish fleet and blockaded the harbor. The one-sided Battle of Manila Bay put the U.S. in an interesting position. Now that they held the harbor, what should they do next? Sitting just outside the harbor were navies from England and Germany, nations which both openly desired the Philippines for their own colonial empires. Japan was also strongly interested. And still within Manila itself was the Spanish army, a force of 13,000 expected to defend a crumbling colonial empire.

After much deliberation, the U.S. decided to help



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The church at Cingalon, just outside Manila, where the Thirteenth Minnesota engaged the Spanish after taking Blockhouse #14.



Packed fore to aft with the Thirteenth Minnesota and other troops, the *City of Para* is about to steam out of San Francisco for the Philippines in July 1898.

Filipino insurgents, led by Emilio Aguinaldo, in their ongoing rebellion against Spain. Once that decision was made, American military leaders then divided its forces in half: those volunteers who were training west of the Mississippi River would be sent to the Philippines, and those on the east would do the fighting in Cuba. (An astute geographer probably could have pointed out that the Minnesotans were actually being trained on the east side of the Mississippi River, but this technicality was overlooked).

The Thirteenth Regiment (the old First Min-

nesota) was selected to go the Philippines because it was deemed to be the best equipped and trained of the three regiments. The Twelfth and Fourteenth were sent to Camp Thomas in Georgia, from where, they hoped, they would eventually go to Cuba (the war ended before they were needed for battle). The Thirteenth left St. Paul by train on May 16 for San Francisco, where they were given five more weeks of training at the Presidio adjoining Golden Gate Park. They sailed aboard the steamship *City of Para* on June 26 for Hawaii, where they re-coaled, and then continued on to Manila, the Philippine capital, where they disembarked on August 7, 1898. They were stationed about seven miles south of the city at a hastily created American military enclave called “Camp Dewey.” There they were given a couple of days to get used to the tropical climate. While the Minnesotans—and approximately 10,000 other U.S. soldiers and volunteers—were getting acclimatized, the generals and diplomats were making plans of their own.

For the Spanish army inside Manila and in the fortified blockhouses surrounding the city, the idea of surrender was not an option. The Spaniards were especially adamant that they would not surrender to the Filipinos, who they feared would retaliate harshly against them. But the Spaniards were also aware of three hard facts: they no longer had a navy, they were poorly supplied, and they were not going to get any reinforcements. With that knowledge, Spanish General Fermin Jaudenes and delegates from the U.S. secretly met to discuss how best to conclude this standoff. Eventually it was agreed that on the morning of August 13, in order to save Spanish honor and avoid unnecessary bloodshed, the American fleet would shell the city (preferably doing little or no damage) while American ground forces would keep the Filipinos out of the battle, since the Spaniards utterly refused to surrender to them. If the Americans could do this, then the Spanish military would “lightly” defend the blockhouses circling the city before surrendering to the Americans.

While this seemed to be a sensible plan, given the circumstances, there was one small flaw in it: the leaders forgot to mention it to the Minnesotans in the field. So, after what most felt was an extremely brief shelling of the Spanish fortifications, the Thirteenth spearheaded a drive—under the leadership of its regimental commander, Colonel Charles McC. Reeve, and their brigade commander, Brigadier General Arthur MacArthur (father of future General Douglas MacArthur)—up the right flank and towards the most heavily defended Spanish fortifications.

To complicate this situation even more, as the Thirteenth Minnesota progressed towards the fortifications, they found Filipino rebels occupying trenches outside the city. It was there, in the midst of a battle to ostensibly help free the Filipinos from their colonial masters, that they were ordered to forcibly stop any Filipino

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who tried to join in the fight.

While the Thirteenth Minnesota led the attack on the right flank, the American forces on the left flank had already taken the Spanish fortifications without any major resistance. However, due to the distance

and complete lack of communication, the Thirteenth, under orders from MacArthur, rapidly advanced forward. As they did so, the Minnesotans noticed Spanish forces leaving the field of battle. What they soon found out was that this was not a Spanish retreat, but part of a plan to ambush the Americans as they moved forward. In the middle of their defense lay Blockhouse #14, which quickly became a focal point.

Supported by their brigade's Astor Battery, Company M (St. Cloud) was ordered toward the Blockhouse. Fortunately, it was soon over. After a fusillade from the artillery unit, Company M quickly stormed the fortification, and by 11:20 a.m. the U.S. flag flew atop Blockhouse #14. The Thirteenth did not have time to revel in glory, however, and was ordered to press on towards Manila.

Next, the Minnesotans moved into the village of Cingalon, just outside of Manila. Here, once again, the Spanish set up an ambush for the advancing Americans, leading to some of the fiercest fighting that day. After skirmishing with the Spanish, the Minnesotans secured this village. Soon after, the news finally was received that the advance on the left was already in Manila and that the Minnesotans and other units on the right were to stop fighting.

By 2:30 p.m. the Americans reported that the Spanish had surrendered, and by 5:43 p.m. the American flag was raised over the city of Manila. Thus ended the Battle of Manila. The casualty list for this sham battle was obviously too high, especially since there was no real need for the fighting to start with. For the Thirteenth Minnesota, 21 soldiers were wounded and two killed that day—Archibald Patterson, a bugler from Company I, and Sergeant Charles Burnsen, Company G, who sadly was killed on his 28th birthday. The number of casualties in the Minnesota regiment was greater than that of all the other regiments combined.

With this one quick “mock” battle, the Spanish-



President William McKinley stands with Governor John Lind while reviewing the Thirteenth Minnesota during a parade in Minneapolis, October 1899.

American War in the Philippines came to an end. Ironically, this battle that was supposed to be “just a show” was even more tragic in that the U.S. and Spain had come to an agreement to end hostilities on Aug. 12, 1898, the day before the Battle of Manila was even fought. Word of the peace agreement did not reach Manila until the August 16.

At the time, and in the years that followed, few of the Minnesotans ever mentioned how this was a sham battle, or that the war with Spain had technically ended before shots were fired by land forces. For them, they had followed orders, and fought honorably and well—which they felt put them among the other brave Minnesota units that had proudly served in the Civil War. In the year that followed, their fighting mettle continued to be tested.

After Spain's surrender, the Thirteenth did military police duties for seven months in and around the city. Then came the Filipino insurgency and start of the Philippine-American War, a difficult, guerrilla-style conflict that took its toll on the troops. This time it was for real, and the Minnesotans played a key role in the fighting until August 1899 when they sailed for home. There, they were warmly received by parades, parties, and speeches by politicians such as President William McKinley. A few of the Minnesotans signed up to stay behind with Army units still serving in the Philippines, but the vast majority of volunteer soldiers quickly, and quietly, went back to their own lives and did not stay active in the military.

### FURTHER READING:

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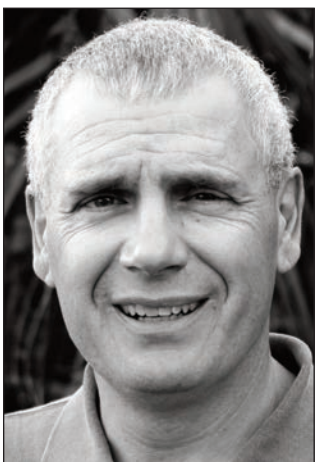
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## DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

By Jeff Thielen



The Minnesota Military Museum is much more than a building at Camp Ripley to view old military artifacts and read interesting stories about Minnesota veterans.

It is a resource for anyone interested in researching and learning about military history in Minnesota.

The museum's curatorial staff has always been the first resource people can turn to when they have questions on artifacts or military history, and they have re-

sponded to countless requests for information from members and the public over the years.

The addition of an archivist to the museum staff

two years ago has provided the public with a second resource to turn to for questions on Minnesota military history. I encourage everyone to check out the Archival website — <http://www.mnmilitarymuseum.org/collections/archives/> — to view what is in the collection and to look at the monthly blog done by the archivist. The blog post shares some of the interesting history being found in our archival collection on Minnesota veterans and Camp Ripley.

We recently started the process to make a third resource available to members and the public in December, when we hired a library consultant to assist our volunteers to turn our library into a resource that will be more fully available to members and the public. The goal of the project is to share our collection in an online data base and to provide limited lending of some of the materials in the collection. Sharing the collection online will also assist researchers searching for information and provide them an easier opportunity to visit and review the materials in person.

All of our efforts to be more of a resource to the public helps us expose and promote the museum to the

## CURATOR'S NOTES

By Doug Bekke



Work has started on the museum's new World War I exhibit. Today, few Americans know much about World War I, "the Great War," "the War to End all Wars." So what was it? The June 1914 assassination of the heir to the Austrian throne by a Serbian nationalist triggered the obligations of military alliances between Europe's nations.

When we think of World War I, we think of the Western Front trenches and mud in

France and Belgium, but it was truly a global war. From Australia and the German holdings in the South Pacific and in China, across the trans-Siberian Railroad to a Russian Front nearly as vast as in World War II. To Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Palestine, the Caucasus, Greece and the Balkans, Turkey, Northern Italy, Africa from Cape Town to Egypt, in the North Sea and the Atlantic.

America, singing the song, "I Didn't Raise My Boy to Be a Soldier," sought to stay out of Europe's troubles, but America's farms and industries gladly supplied the belligerents with food and munitions. America watched the bloodbath from afar, seeing the horror of the Battles of

the Marne, Verdun, and the Somme where the British lost 10,000 men in the first hour of their attack and over 60,000 by the end of the day.

In April of 1917 America finally entered the war on the side of the Allies. Now the song was "Over There." Eventually, 4,550,000 Americans would serve—2,084,000 in France with 1,390,000 seeing active combat. Many of the doughboys were new arrivals speaking accented English, or sons of immigrant parents. 118,497 Minnesotans served. Americans started entering combat in the early spring of 1918, but heavy, sustained fighting didn't start until late May. By the Armistice on November 11, over 50,000 Americans had died in combat or of wounds. This included 1,432 Minnesotans. It was a great tragedy for each family involved, but a small number compared to the over 9 million military, and perhaps 10 million civilian deaths—worldwide—due directly to the war.

As many prepared to return home singing "How Ya Gonna Keep Em Down on the Farm after They've Seen Parea," a new danger developed: influenza, aka the Spanish Flu. In less than a year it killed nearly 60,000 doughboys and worldwide 20-50 million people.

Today in America, World War I is forgotten by many, buried under the weight of the memory of World War II and subsequent conflicts, but the effects of World War I dramatically shaped the Twentieth Century and remain with us now in the Twenty-first. World War I was a real part of my life. I was related to, and knew, many World War I veterans. Their stories helped shape my life and my interests. I hope that the museum's exhibit will help us remember that war and the service of its doughboys.

**ALLIES****OUT OF THE ARCHIVES**

By Chad Conrady



Lately I have been putting the finishing touches on the bulk of the Adjutant General's Office Records and Minnesota National Guard paper records housed at the museum. This section will contain about 40 cubic feet of material, and does not include the Minnesota National Guard payroll or muster roll records, which have been arranged and processed for some time now and consists of another 50 cubic feet or so of records.

Once this set of records is processed and an online finding aid is completed, I will begin working on the Adjutant General's records dealing with the Minnesota Air National Guard and the records of the Minnesota Public Affairs Office. The records of the Minnesota Air National Guard contain morning reports, payroll, correspondence and related records regarding the organization of the Air Guard after World War Two.

This past summer the museum received a large number of 3.5 diskettes and CDs of Minnesota National Guard records. Previously, the museum had acquired a handful of "born-digital" materials from the National Guard. Born-digital is not the same as digitized: the difference is that born-digital records were created/born in a digital environment, while digitized means that the material was born in an analog/paper format first and then converted to a digital format.

To help the museum prepare and care for these materials, I have been attending Society of American Archivists workshops to acquire their Digital Archives Specialist certification. While there are specific digital preservation systems like Preservica or Archivematica that will take care of every aspect of born-digital maintenance, they are cost prohibitive, so I adopted an open-source program called BitCurator. This program was developed

and supported by a consortium of universities that include Harvard, MIT, Duke, and the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, to name a few. I use BitCurator to create a disk image of the media and then use the image to scan the material for sensitive information and other metadata. Once these are completed, an access copy of the born-digital records are extracted and saved as a PDF/A-2, called file normalization. The normalization embeds all text, images, links onto the record, and makes it impossible to change anything within the record. The nice thing about converting a born-digital record to a PDF/A-2 is that this file format is an ISO standard, which means that while other file formats will become obsolete and require specific programs or operating systems, the PDF/A-2 is an international standard and will be maintained indefinitely and viewable no matter what programs or operating systems were used to create them or will be used in the future.

Some archivists feel that it is more important to maintain the original born-digital record in its original file format and not normalize the file, but this process to keep the original files "as is" is complicated and expensive, requiring an archive to have computers run emulator programs that make the computer appear like the computer system that created the digital record. I have heard of only a few archives that pursue this method to preserve a born-digital record.

The other bit of news that has been going on in the archives is that I just submitted two Minnesota Historical Society Legacy grant requests to have four 16mm, black and white motion pictures of Camp Ripley in the 1930s conserved and digitized. When I initially came across these films, I thought they were a part of the Robert P. Miller papers, but I recently came across some documentation that leads me to now believe these films were part of the Minnesota National Guard records. The films record WPA construction of camp, a camp open house, and military reviews of the 59th Field Artillery Brigade and the 92nd Infantry Brigade. I also submitted a grant request to purchase an extra-large flat file to store some of our largest maps in the archives. Later this month, I will also be submitting a National Film Preservation Foundation grant request to have two other Camp Ripley films

**Library consultant hired to make collection more accessible**

A recent grant has allowed the museum to hire Chris Magnusson as a library consultant to expand and support the efforts of our wonderful library volunteers. The goal is to make the museum library—which contains nearly 13,000 books, manuscripts, and pamphlets—much more accessible to troops and the public.

Chris is currently the Automation Librarian for the Arrowhead Library System and lives in Hibbing. She has a master's degree in Library and Information Science and a

long history of library experience. She served six years in the Marine Corps and is passionate about the goal to open our library to troops and the public.

She will be at the library as needed and will provide coordination to volunteers and museum staff as the project progresses. Stay tuned.

## DONOR HONOR ROLL, October-December, 2015

### Memorials

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### SPOTLIGHTED RECENT DONATIONS



In November, we received from Jon Bell the uniforms, papers, photographs, and war souvenirs of his father, Gail Bell, who served as an officer in the 135th Infantry Regiment, 34th Division, from Northern Ireland to the end of the war.

Also in November, Chris Sellner donated the uniforms of his father, LTC George Sellner. LTC Sellner made two combat parachute jumps as a Lieutenant with the 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne, Division in World War II. After the war, he joined the Army Reserves at Ft. Snelling where he commanded the Third Battalion of the Third Infantry Regiment (The Old Guard) of the 205th Infantry Brigade.

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## Are you in the museum's Minnesota Veterans Registry?

The museum's new Minnesota Veterans Registry is a statewide database containing information about the military service of individual Minnesota veterans. A qualified veteran is anyone who once served or is serving in the US military and was either born in Minnesota or has lived in Minnesota.

The website Registry is simple to use and anyone can submit a Minnesota veteran's story and photo. The general public can easily search the database. The service is free of charge as part of the museum's mission to preserve records of Minnesota veterans' service as well as the related artifacts.

Everyone is strongly encouraged to gather and share veterans' stories by using the Registry. Our goal is to build the largest, most inclusive online database of Minnesota veterans available to the public. If you are a Minnesotan who served in the military, why not put yourself in the Registry, as well as eligible family members? Go to [mnmilitarymuseum.org](http://mnmilitarymuseum.org) and click on Veterans Registry.

### WINTER HOURS

**October through April:** Thursdays and Fridays 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m., except national holidays



## You really gave to the Max

Grand total giving to the museum for this year's Give-to-the-Max Day on Nov. 12, 2015, and for the two days immediately preceding and following it, was just short of \$9000—\$8995 to be exact—a record amount for us in this statewide fundraising event. THANK YOU to all our donors. Your generosity not only keeps us going, but enables us to keep getting better.