



MILITARY HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MINNESOTA
MINNESOTA MILITARY MUSEUM

ALLIES

Newsletter for Members and Friends

Summer, 2016

Vol. XXIV, No. 3



1916: Trial Run on the Mexican Border, Part 1

By Jack K. Johnson

July 2016 marks the 100th anniversary of an important, but often overlooked, episode in American military history—the first mass federal mobilization of the nation's National Guard. The Guard and its predecessor militia organizations had mobilized before, most recently for the Spanish American War, but always as volunteers. This time it was different: for the unit, activation was *mandated*; for the individual soldier, declining to serve was *not* an option.

Prequel

The Spanish American War of 1898, in spite of outward successes, exposed serious shortcomings in the American military establishment. This was especially true for the National Guard, prompting legislation between 1903 and 1916 that fundamentally changed the Guard's structure and preparedness, transforming it from group of "state armies" into an integrated instrument of national defense. The 1903 Dick Act, named for its champion, Ohio Congressman and National Guard general Charles Dick, repealed the old 1792 Militia Act and gave the federal government much more control over the National Guard. Among other things, it empowered the president to call up the Guard, so long as the service was in the U.S. and didn't exceed nine months. It specified minimal training requirements and stipulated that the Guard's organization and equipment be patterned after that of the Regular Army. In return, states would receive federal subsidies for the National Guard.

The National Defense Act of 1916—the most comprehensive defense legislation passed by Congress up to that time—ushered in sweeping changes for the Army and firmed up the National Guard's position as the nation's principal reserve force. It was a response to international tensions and the rising prospect of American entry into Europe's stalemated "Great War," going on since 1914. For the Guard, the 1916 Act increased training requirements, improved pay, sped the flow of weapons and



"I've had about enough of this!" Political cartoon by Clifford K. Berryman for the Washington Evening Star, March 18, 1916. (National Archives)

equipment, and brought in Regular Army officers to serve as inspector/instructors. Of particular note, the Act clarified once and for all the power of the president to call up the National Guard for any national emergency including war, for the duration of conflict, and outside the USA, if necessary.

Trouble with Mexico

The ink on the National Defense Act, signed June 3, 1916, had scarcely dried when President Woodrow Wilson issued orders to mobilize the National Guard. The spark was Mexico, which had been in revolutionary turmoil since 1910. Growing friction between the two nations—often punctuated by violent flare-ups on the border—came to a head in the early dawn of March 9, 1916. The dominant Mexican warlord, Francisco "Pancho" Villa, leading a force of several hundred irregulars, crossed the border south of Deming and attacked, looted, and burned the town of Columbus, New Mexico. Twenty-four Americans were killed, including 14 soldiers at an ad-

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General Pershing, foreground, crossed into northern Mexico on March 15, 1916, in pursuit of Pancho Villa after Villa's raid on Columbus, New Mexico. (Military History Institute, U.S. Army)



Pancho Villa, third from right, and his fellow revolutionaries. (National Archives)

adjacent U.S. Cavalry outpost.¹ An expeditionary force of 6,600 Regulars was quickly assembled under the command of Brig. Gen. John J. "Black Jack" Pershing and sent deep into northern Mexico in pursuit of Villa. On May 6, another cross-border raid occurred at Glenn Springs and Boquillas, Texas, causing more casualties and more U.S. troops to enter into Mexico in pursuit of the raiders. Tensions flared. Pershing's "punitive expedition" soon numbered 12,000, but it had largely denuded the border of its stateside military defenses, leaving wide, unguarded segments. On May 9, Wilson ordered the governors of Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico, to mobilize their states' 5,200 National Guardsmen for border service.

Pershing, in the meantime, was chasing Villa through an unfriendly Mexican countryside. He managed to disperse most of Villa's followers, but failed to find Villa himself. Mexico's shaky government, headed by its cantankerous president, Venustiano Carranza, was also in pursuit of Villa but Carranza's army actively resisted the American incursion. Mexican federal troops skirmished repeatedly with Pershing's troops, risking outright war. On June 15, Mexican irregulars conducted another hit-and-run raid across the border—this time on San Ygnacio, Texas—killing more Americans. To top it off, on the following day, Brig. Gen. Jacinto Trevino, Mexico's military commander in the area, ordered his forces to stop all movements of Pershing's troops except those headed northward, back toward the U.S. Pershing rejoined that he would move his troops wherever he wished.

It was a critical moment, and it was Wilson's move. A pacifist at heart, his ideals had, up to now, kept the U.S. out of Europe's war. Although it paled in comparison, the trouble with Mexico was serious. If the president did not

take action and the deteriorating situation was not defused soon, it could derail his ambitions for election to a second term. Wilson likewise knew that military involvement in Mexico would be a detrimental distraction if U.S. entry into the European war could not be avoided. Because the Regular Army had already drawn upon its own available reinforcements, Wilson decided to immediately mobilize the rest of the National Guard. Within a few weeks, nearly all of America's National Guard was federalized for duty on the border with Mexico, numbering 159,000 men. From Brownsville on the southern tip of Texas, westward along the Rio Grande to El Paso and beyond to San Diego, tent camps sprang up amid cactus and sagebrush on a 1,600-mile "front."

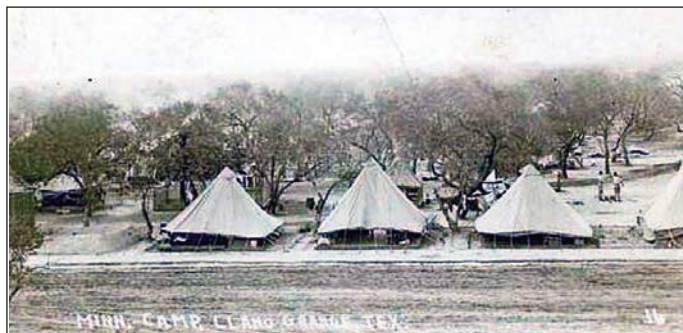
Mobilization

Minnesota's entire National Guard was called up on June 18. The First, Second, and Third Infantry Regiments each had three battalions and were organized as a brigade. The First Field Artillery Regiment consisted of the First Battalion (based in St. Paul) and the Second (in Minneapolis). The mobilization order also directed unit commanders to recruit to full wartime strength. Unfortunately, most Minnesota Guard units were well under their authorized *peacetime* strength. The First Minnesota Infantry, for example, counted 687 members, 231 short of the 918 allowed during peacetime and well short of the 1,836 authorized for an infantry regiment at war strength. St. Paul's First Artillery Battalion was woefully under-

¹ Published accounts of the number killed vary widely, but the U.S. Army Center of Military History currently puts it at 14 military and 10 civilian.

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Headquarters, First Minnesota Field Artillery, at Camp Llano Grande, Texas, 1916. (Charles Green, Minnesota Military Museum)



Most of Minnesota's contingent was located in a mesquite grove at Camp Llano Grande. Enlisted men slept in large squad tents. (Minnesota Military Museum)

manned. Battery C numbered but twenty members and Battery A existed only on paper with one lonesome soldier occupying its roster. Compounding the manpower issue were supply shortages of every description, notably uniforms and up-to-date field equipment. But their spirit was willing. By the time they arrived on the border, they were in better shape than most other states.

When the call went out, Minnesota Guardsmen assembled immediately at their home armories where they prepared for extended active duty. They were given medical exams and those deemed physically unfit were discharged—13 percent statewide in Minnesota. In the meantime, a temporary mobilization camp was hastily set up at Fort Snelling and named Camp Bobleter in honor of Col. Joseph Bobleter of New Ulm. It was customary to name temporary camps after prominent soldiers or citizens, and Bobleter had commanded the Twelfth Minnesota during the Spanish-American War. By June 26, all were assembled at Camp Bobleter and on June 30, Minnesota's three infantry regiments and the Second Field Artillery Battalion were officially mustered into federal service.

For most soldiers, training at Camp Bobleter lasted about three weeks. They organized, paraded, drilled, practiced a few basic soldier skills, and acclimated to the daily customs of a military encampment. Inspections were frequent and sanitary regulations strictly enforced. In mid-July, battalions began departing for a five-day trip to the Mexican border. Each battalion had its own troop train. A stove was set up in a baggage car on which meals were prepared. At stops along the way, the men would get off for exercise, sometimes marching into town for a parade led by a regimental band. The trip went smoothly for all except the Second Field Artillery Battalion. One night, while the men slept and the train was stopped to take on water, it was rammed from behind at 30 mph by another train. Eight soldiers were injured, but the journey got underway again the next morning. Their destination, as with the other Minnesota troop trains, was south Texas, about 25 miles northwest of Brownsville. There, an unfinished tent city named Camp Llano Grande awaited.

Back in Minnesota, a major recruiting effort had finally brought St. Paul's First Artillery Battalion up to requisite strength. On July 23, the same day the Second Battalion's train was rammed, the First was mustered into federal service. Because so many of its members were raw recruits, the First remained at Camp Bobleter for training until October 1 when it entrained south and united with the others at Llano Grande. As for the other units, they continued to receive recruits from home throughout their active duty tour on the border.

Camp Llano Grande

Camp Llano Grande became the desert home for 13,000 National Guard troops from Minnesota, Nebraska, Indiana, and North Dakota. Located a few miles from the town of Mercedes and about five miles from the Rio Grande, the flat 200-acre site had once been part of a large farm called Llano Grande (Big Plain). It was served by a rail line and had a flag depot, but except for the main house, which had been converted to an Inn and became the camp's hospital, and an old ranch house that became camp headquarters, there was little else in place when the Minnesota troops arrived. A flurry of activity ensued. Minnesota was assigned to a mesquite grove. Company areas had to be laid out, ditched for drainage, and brush cleared; temporary latrines dug; incinerators erected; water pipes laid and buried. Nearly everything was under canvas, although platforms were eventually built for the tents, and framed out structures erected for permanent latrines, kitchens and mess halls. It wasn't easy. Daytime temperatures hovered in the 90s. Dust blew and caked everything. Rains, when they came, were usually torrential and swamped everything. Supply shortages were chronic. When troops first arrived, the correct requisition form had to be used to order supplies, and there were no forms -- nor forms to order the forms.

While troops were establishing their own regimental areas, a camp-wide telephone system, showers, warehouses, commissary, parade grounds, stock pens, recreational facilities, and firing ranges were being constructed. Remarkably, by the end of August almost

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everything was completed. The camp was crude, but fully functional. The business of training and border patrols could finally get underway.

Border duty

The Mercedes area had been subjected to harassment from Mexican rebels, but the U.S. Third Cavalry, assigned to patrol the region, was stretched too thin to stop it. Now, Camp Llano Grande became part of a string of new National Guard encampments and reinforced Army garrisons that were spread out along the entire border. The Rio Grande, which marks the boundary with Mexico for all of Texas, was divided into sectors, and each sector was systematically patrolled by detachments of troops stationed nearby. Working from sentry and observation posts at strategic locations, the soldiers at Llano Grande stood ready to defend their sector from attack and to cross into Mexico for active campaigning, if necessary. Fortunately, their patrol activity proved uneventful. The very presence of a large U.S. military force on the border served as a deterrent to raids and disturbances. There were occasional attempts by Mexicans to breach a picket line, but no serious incidents or American casualties in the Brownsville sectors. The only recorded instance for a Minnesota unit occurred the night of August 30. A detachment from Co. A of the First Minnesota was guarding the Mercedes pumping station on the banks of the Rio Grande when they were fired upon from the Mexican side of the river. This prompted an exchange of about 150 rounds. No Minnesotans were hit; Mexican casualties were unknown.

To be continued next issue: Training at Llano Grande – time off – war games – demobilization – outcomes.

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Jack K. Johnson is a retired university teacher and administrator. He was the museum's first curator, a former Command Historian for the Minnesota Army National Guard, and is a long-time board member of the Military Historical Society of Minnesota.

CURATOR'S NOTES

By Doug Bekke



Work continues on the new WWI exhibit, but it will be completed well before the planned opening on 22 July. As is often the case, I started the exhibit thinking, what will I put in it? How will I fill the space? Do we have enough stuff? As it always turns out, the museum has many more artifacts than we could possibly hope to exhibit, even if we had two or three times the space. I know that some people will be disappointed

because their relative's uniform is not in exhibit. Hopefully, we can put a priority on exhibiting WWI veterans in our Featured Veteran exhibit. Many thanks to the museum volunteers who have worked hard on this exhibit: John Deuhs, Kerry Beckenbach, Fred Tramm, and Tom Doom (who made out of wood, perfect replicas of WWI German stick grenades), museum staff Doug Thompson and Chad Conrady, and museum board member Jon Van der Hagen.

In June I drove to my daughter's wedding in Rhode Island. On the way home, I stopped at the workshop of Matt Switlik in Monroe, Michigan, where the wooden wheels for our WWI German 105 howitzer were rebuilt



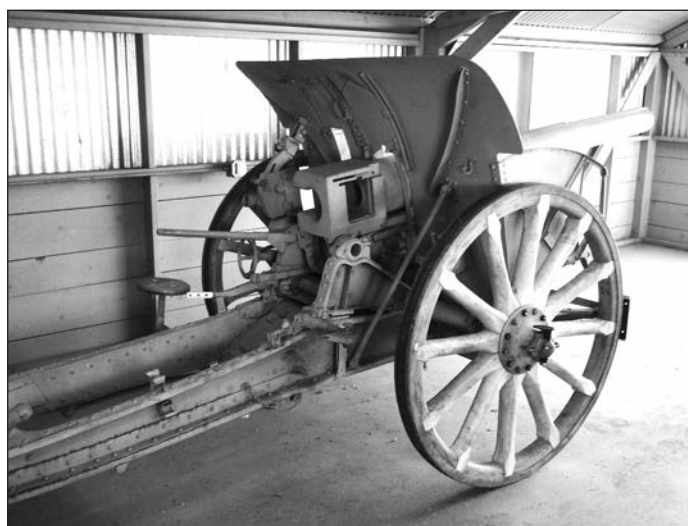
Miracle of miracles, the restored wheels for the World War I German howitzer fit into Bekke's car for their return to Minnesota.

and ready to ship back to Minnesota. Would they fit in my Subaru Outback? Working very carefully, inching the front seats forward, sliding the wheels in the back door diagonally, with only a half inch to spare, I was able to get both wheels into the car without damaging the car or the wheels. Thankfully, when I arrived at Camp Ripley we were also able to get the wheels out. They are now mounted on the howitzer. Thanks to the work of museum volunteer Ed Erickson, the wooden seats and handles have also been restored. Soon Jerry Ryan, a long time museum volunteer and a very skilled craftsman, will correctly paint the gun and three others in their proper colors.

In the last newsletter I made an appeal to fundraise the remaining \$2,000 needed to finish paying for the restoration of the 105 WWI German howitzer. To date, I believe we have only received one donation for about \$100. The museum is grateful for that \$100, but we are still short \$1,900. It was my hope that current and former Minnesota artillerymen would jump at the rare opportunity to support the restoration of a 100-year-old cannon – the 1918 capture of which represents the American victory in WWI. REDLEGS!! It isn't too late to help honor and preserve the heritage of the "King of Battle." The Minnesota Military Museum works very hard to preserve and honor the heritage of Minnesota's veterans, but we need your support for this and many other projects.

I also mentioned last time that the museum needed \$1,800 for a gun safe to store federal weapons not on exhibit. To date we have not received any donations for the safe.

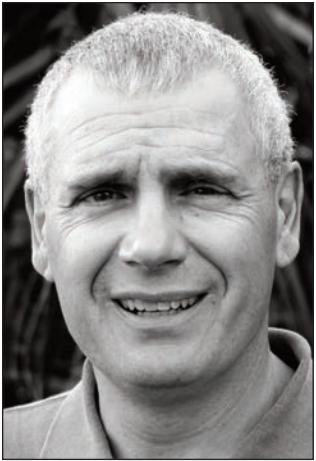
Can you help us out? Specify the project you wish to support.



With the wheels now mounted, the old artillery piece awaits further restoration and a new paint job. (Doug Bekke photos)

ALLIES**DIRECTOR'S UPDATE**

By Jeff Thielen



The Military Historical Society of Minnesota, (MHSM) Board met in December 2015 and developed the basis for a six-year strategic plan that was revised into working documents and approved during the May 2016 Board meeting.

The strategic plan lays the foundation and direction for this organization for the next six years with specific objectives and action items to be achieved each year. It includes an Executive Summary and a "Doable Checklist."

The organization's mission statement was modified to acknowledge MHSM's statewide leadership role in the preservation and interpretation of Minnesota military history, and the role it plays in educating the public and assisting other organizations to educate the public. It

reads, "The Mission of the Military Historical Society of Minnesota is to collaborate with and educate the public about Minnesota's military history through exhibits and outreach efforts."

Of note in the mission is that outreach will not be confined to the Minnesota Military Museum at Camp Ripley. Strategic Plan objectives to expand the organization's outreach efforts include establishing a secondary museum location in the Twin Cities metro area and developing some type of "mobile museum" to be taken around the state.

The MHSM primary outreach effort will continue to be the Minnesota Military Museum at Camp Ripley. The strategic plan also has numerous goals and objectives to improve the Minnesota Military Museum and increase the number of users and visitors to the museum.

The development and expansion of the museum's library, adding aircraft from the Air Force, the Veterans Registry, and archival records to be used by MHSM members and the public are all initiatives to increase exposure of the museum as a resource for the public and to attract more visitors.

The Strategic Plan will be reviewed by the Board annually and will provide guidance for the MHSM to be the premier military history organization in the state and a valuable resource for the citizens of Minnesota.

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Volunteer Voices

Volunteers are an indispensable to the museum's work. In their own words, here's how they are making good things happen at the Minnesota Military Museum.

Meet John Deuhs

John Deuhs, who lives in Cold Spring, has been volunteering at the museum for over four years.

On getting involved: "One of my sons told my about an ad he saw in the St. Cloud Times about the museum needing volunteers. I talked to my friend Harold Fiala, who was a longtime supporter of the museum, and we decided to volunteer. We would drive together and this worked out well. He started having some health issues and was unable to continue, but I've kept at it."

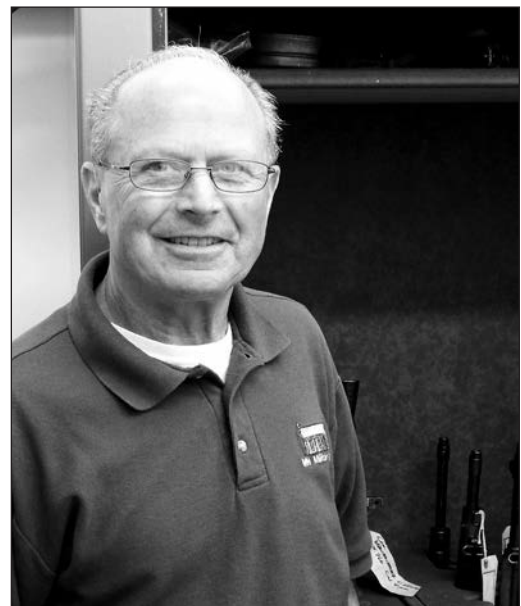
Museum projects: "I've done just about everything. Lately, I have been working with the weapons—maintaining and repairing them, getting them better organized in their storage racks and cabinets, and putting more of them on display.

What he likes most: "I am always learning. This can be about history, weapons, or how to properly restore an item. The best part about being a volunteer is the people that I get to work with—the two Dougs [curator Doug

Bekke and collections specialist Doug Thompson], Jeff [Thielen] and the other volunteers."

His advice: "Do it because you want to."

Other accomplishments: In May, John ran the Lake Wobegon Trail Marathon—his 46th marathon since starting to run when he was 40. "I run for health and fitness," he says.



John Deuhs (Jeff Thielen photo)

DONOR HONOR ROLL, April-June, 2016

Memorials

Given by:

Doug Bekke
 Doug Bekke
 Lyle Doerr
 Jack Johnson
 Anita LeBlanc
 Raymond Lunde
 Raymond Lunde
 Winter Operations
 Instructor Team
 Winter Operations
 Instructor Team
 Winter Operations
 Instructor Team
 Robert Eddy
 Robert Eddy
 Richard and Betty Hayes
 Richard and Betty Hayes
 Wayne Hayes
 Betty Masoner
 James Nygaard
 Richard and Betty Hayes

In Memory of:

Ray Nagell
 Alexander Ostapenko
 BG (Ret.) Gary LeBlanc
 BG (Ret.) Gary LeBlanc
 BG (Ret.) Gary LeBlanc
 BG (Ret.) Gary LeBlanc
 Brian Orton
 SSG Ronald Steineman
 1SG Ron Wenberg
 SFC Ray Hertel
 SFC Gary Johnson
 SFC Gabriel White
 Kristine L. Nelson
 Eugene S. Durham
 Henry C. Mills
 Eugene E. Thompson
 Randy Becker
 Ron Witt

Renewing Members:

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New Members:

James Chaffee ▪ Dan Conlon

American Legion: Post 455, Cold Spring ▪ Post 381 Auxiliary, Eden Valley ▪ Post 43, Faribault ▪ Post 507, Willernie

VFW:

Post 6316 Auxiliary, Cottage Grove ▪ Post 906, Hutchinson ▪ Post 9713 Auxiliary, Mankato ▪ Post 5039, Morris ▪ Post 5727, Zumbrota

Donations:

Amazon Smile Foundation ▪ Katherine B. Andersen Fund of the Saint Paul Foundation ▪ Philip Andrews ▪ Bernick's Pepsi ▪ Robert Boone ▪ Fraternal Order of Eagles #3208, Bloomington ▪ John Handeland ▪ Bradley Hansen ▪ Garold Healy ▪ IBM ▪ Jeanne Johnston ▪ David Larson ▪ Cheryl Morgan ▪ Anthony Nathe ▪ John Nickolay ▪ Robert Riess ▪ St. Gabriel's Hospital ▪ Gail Ugro ▪ Dolores Vosika Jackson

SPOTLIGHTED RECENT DONATIONS



-- Dr. Dan Conlon donated a great collection of Montagnard items that he brought back from Vietnam.

-- Dr. Richard Sylvester donated artifacts from his father, Col. George Sylvester, who was an enlisted man in D Battery, 151st Field Artillery in WWI, and rose to command the unit from the late 1930s through the end of the North African Campaign in 1943.

-- Glen and Merl Burgstahler donated a 1944 M-3A4 utility cart. When restored to its 1944 appearance, it will be exhibited with the museum's 75mm pack howitzer.

-- Glenda Hanson donated a large number of items from the old downtown Owatonna Armory — unit athletic shirts, guidons, banners, photos, uniforms and equipment.

-- Maggie Huberty donated uniform items and a Soviet Tokarev Pistol from her husband's service in Vietnam.

Artifact donations

The museum gratefully acknowledges donations of artifacts from the following:

Gary Bettcher ▪ Tom Chial ▪ Dan Conlon ▪ Gordon Dey ▪ Glenn Griffin ▪ Glenda Hanson ▪ Maggie Huberty ▪ Girls Jaternieks ▪ JoAnn Johnson ▪ David Karvonen ▪ Peter Knutson ▪ Rodger and Patsy Larsen ▪ Jim McDuff ▪ Cheryl Morgan ▪ Mike Mykulak ▪ Stephen Osman ▪ Jay and Joan Peterson ▪ Karen Ring ▪ C. Perry Schenk ▪ Lee Smith ▪ Richard Sylvester

Annual Book Sale Aug. 12-13

Book Sale: Thousands of titles — mostly military, but also other genres including rare and collector editions. Most hard-cover books only \$1.00, paperbacks 25 cents plus special "box sales." Friday and Saturday 10:00 - 5:00

Book Signings: Local author and decorated Vietnam Veteran, Michael P. Maurer, will be on hand to sign copies of his acclaimed new book, *Perfume River Nights* (\$14.95). Maurer will be signing SATURDAY ONLY. All royalties will benefit the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund.

Wisconsin journalist Jennifer Rude Klett, *Alamo Doughboy: Marching into the Heart of Kaiser's Germany During World War I* (\$18.95) book signing will also be SATURDAY ONLY. Special author presentation, "The American Doughboy Experience During the Great War and Writing Alamo Doughboy" at 11:00 Saturday near the World War I exhibit.

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World War I Exhibit to open Friday, July 22, at museum

The museum's newest special exhibit, "In the Fight: Minnesota and the First World War," is set to officially open on Friday, July 22. It replaces "Minnesota's Two Civil Wars, 1861-1866," which closed in September 2015. The new exhibit anticipates the 100th anniversary of America's entry into what, today, we call World War One. The war actually began in August 1914. The U.S. initially sought to remain neutral, but repeated German provocations prompted us to finally declare war on Germany in April

1917. Although most of the fighting took place in Europe, 32 nations from throughout the world were drawn into the conflict. The new, multi-media exhibit explains the origins, conduct, and outcomes, with particular attention to Minnesota's part in an event that was truly cataclysmic in its consequences. The exhibit's staging is complex: as you view it, you will walk through a simulated trench on the Western Front. Opening day will include World War I reenactors.



Sneak preview into a trench of the unfinished World War I exhibit. (Jack Johnson photo)