



# ALLIES

Newsletter for Members and Friends



Minnesota troops march through Brownsville, Texas, following massive maneuvers, November 1916. (Minnesota Military Museum)

## 1916: Trial Run on the Mexican Border, Part II

By Jack K. Johnson

*"Military ends are frequently attained more by the demonstration than by the actual exercise of military force."*

— W. A. Mann, Chief of the Militia Bureau, 1916

*In the last issue, Part I explained how and why Minnesota National Guardsmen were sent in July 1916 to protect the Mexican border. Along with Guardsmen from Nebraska, Indiana, and North Dakota, the Minnesotans were encamped at Llano Grande, near Mercedes, Texas, about five miles from the Rio Grande.*

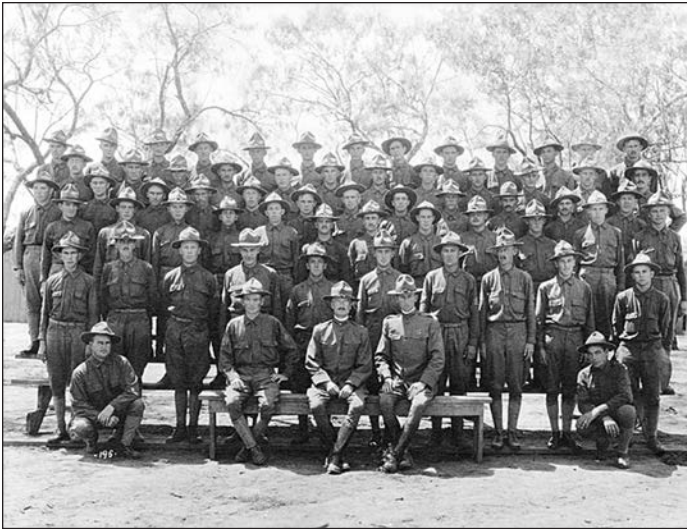
### Training

Because Minnesota regiments had successfully filled out their ranks with raw recruits before leaving for Texas, these men needed basic soldier skills. There

was squad and company drilling (lots of it), bayonet practice, inspections, and "practice" marches into the countryside to build endurance. Target practice was conducted on a miniature scale due to the confined size of the firing ranges, and live ammunition was in short supply, but infantrymen became basically familiar with their newly issued .30 caliber M1903 Springfield rifles. Minnesota's three machine gun companies (one such company had recently been added to each infantry regiment) were issued .30 caliber Hotchkiss M1909 Benet-Mercier machine guns and given two weeks of instruction at a special school set up in Harlingen, 15 miles away.

As time went by, training became more intense and realistic. An October 25 letter to the *Stillwater Gazette* by an unnamed "correspondent" of Co. K of the Third Minnesota Infantry noted that, "Close order drill has ceased to be the principal form of instruction, field combat exercises being substituted. Every morning and often in the afternoon, the battalion or

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Stillwater's Company K, Third Minnesota Infantry, at Camp Llano Grande in 1916. (Minnesota Historical Society)

regiment forms in the manner prescribed for the problem in hand and takes the field. Sometimes it is patrolling or outpost duty; at others it may be advance guard or a sham battle. This is a welcome change . . . and a relief from the one, two, three, four monotony of close order drill."

It was tougher for the artillery. Each battery had its full complement of four M1905 3-inch field guns, which had been brought from Minnesota, but as late as September, the Second Field Artillery Battalion had less than a third of the required number of horses and mules. Both battalions had sent some horses to Llano Grande by rail—many were privately owned by the officers who rode them—but it was the Army's job to supply horses, and the Regulars kept the best stock for themselves. Floyd Gibbons, reporting for the *Minneapolis Journal*, wrote: "Dead horses' was the name which the men applied to the majority of animals received from the government. Most were undersized, soft, and sickly. . . . Then there was the matter of horseshoes, or rather there wasn't the matter of horseshoes. The matter really was that there were no horseshoes. Our cavalry and artillery horses must go barefooted." Adding insult to injury, Army-issued steel collars—needed for horses harnessed to artillery—could not be adjusted to properly fit the horses. Finding suitable ranges large enough for artillery was also a challenge. Service practice had to be conducted on the sandy wastes between Brownsville and Port Isabel on the Gulf coast, 40-50 miles from Llano Grande.

### Off duty

To fill time during off-duty hours, the camp com-

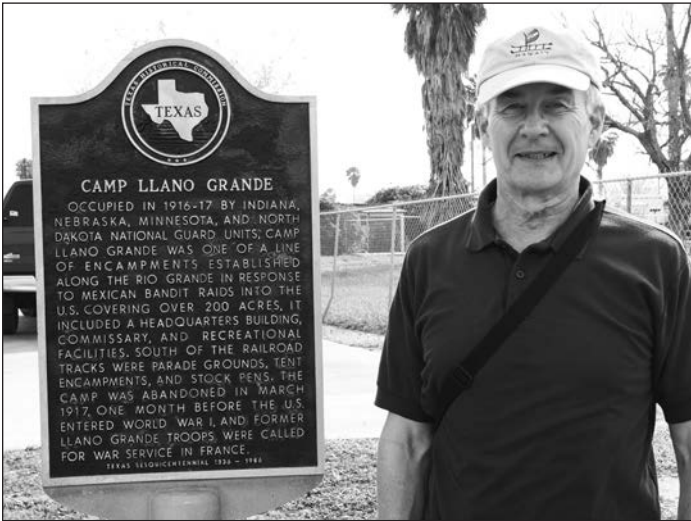
mander encouraged company, battalion, and regimental athletic competition, which was hotly contested in boxing, football, baseball, and track. The YMCA's recreation center offered a quiet place to get away, relax, and write letters home. Motion pictures, still very much of a novelty, were shown throughout the camp, and the camp's many regimental bands—each of Minnesota's four regiments had its own band of 20-25 members—took turns giving concerts. In fact, band music showed up everywhere. Major Orris Lee, a First Brigade staff officer, noted in a letter to his wife: "We arise at 5:30 and if you wanted to hear all kinds of music you ought to be here. All of the bands are out at reveille and march up and down the officers row playing some lively tune, and as we have twelve regiments within hearing distance, you can imagine the medley that greets the sun." Visits to nearby towns were allowed, but not without a prized weekend pass—and with this proviso: don't go into town alone and always carry a side arm.

### War games

Llano Grande wasn't the only encampment in the area. Although Llano Grande was the largest, there were several others in the Brownsville Military District, numbering some 50,000 Regulars and Guardsmen. It was the largest concentration of troops anywhere on the border. On November 16, ten days of field maneuvers commenced that involved 23,000 of them—mostly Guardsmen—from the Brownsville district. The war game scenario, under the overall command of Brig. Gen. James "Gallop'in' Jim" Parker, supposed that a "Brown" army had invaded the U.S. at Port Isabel and attacked a defending



Minnesota National Guard veterans who served together on the Mexican border gather for a 50-year anniversary reunion on the site of Camp Llano Grande, February 19, 1966. (Minnesota Military Museum)



A tiny park in present-day Weslaco, Texas, is all that remains of Camp Llano Grande. The author poses here with its roadside marker in 2012.

“White” army (which included all the Minnesota troops) north of Brownsville. Infantry, cavalry, and artillery forces maneuvered day and night in an elaborate exercise that ranged across much of the lower Rio Grande Valley. Interestingly, some of the opening battles of the 1846 Mexican War took place in the same locations, including Resaca de la Palma, where the war games ended in a giant encounter of both armies on November 24. Captain Charles Green, headquarters adjutant for the First Minnesota Field Artillery, wrote in his diary that there were 56 guns in action at Resaca de la Palma—“more than has been fired together in the U.S. since the Civil War.” Then came a massive parade and review for all participants and finally, for their strenuous work, the men were rewarded with a day’s leave in Brownsville—much to the delight of local merchants—before returning to Llano Grande.

As a training exercise, the maneuvers turned out to be one of the most worthwhile things the men did during their time on the border. It was particularly beneficial for the officers because it necessitated complex coordination and logistics on a large scale not possible back home.

## Demobilization

A big Thanksgiving dinner awaited the men when they got back to camp, amid rumors that the Guard would soon be leaving Llano Grande for home stations. Demobilization had already begun in other such camps. The Third Infantry Regiment was first to leave, departing early December for Camp Bobleter at Fort Snelling, where it mustered out in time for Christmas. The Second Infantry Regiment and brigade headquarters entrained for home in early

January 1917, and the First Field Artillery Regiment pulled out in late February, minus F Battery of the Second Battalion, which had already left.<sup>1</sup> The First Infantry Regiment broke camp at Llano Grande in December, but first went to Camp Wilson near San Antonio, where, for more than a month, it was made to fill in during training exercises for a departing Wisconsin regiment before finally being allowed to depart itself for Minnesota. It mustered out at Camp Bobleter on March 14, 1917, the last Minnesota regiment to do so.

In all, 4,379 Minnesota Guardsmen saw duty on the border. Not everyone was happy with the experience. “We came here to fight, not to sit around in camp,” was a common refrain. But the Guard’s mission was accomplished. It had prevented war, not made it. Border raids had largely ceased. Diplomatic negotiations between the Mexican and U.S. governments were progressing on a positive note. The last column of Pershing’s expedition crossed back into the U.S. on February 5, 1917. Although Villa had never been caught, the Punitive Expedition was proclaimed to be a success because Villa’s followers had scattered.<sup>2</sup> Minor clashes continued along the border until 1919, but the crisis of 1916 had passed.

## It was a trial run

In point of fact, the 1916 call-up of the Guard did much more than defend the border and assert U.S. resolve with its troublesome neighbor: it was a trial run for higher stakes. Some called it a blessing in disguise. Thanks to Mexico, the U.S. was far better prepared for World War I. When the time came, mobilization and deployment to Europe went much more smoothly because of hard lessons learned during the impromptu mobilization and deployment on the U.S. border. For the National Guard, border service infused the ranks with new manpower and equipment, brought improved organization, invaluable training, and unparalleled experience. Officers and men who lacked the capacity for active military duty on the border were weeded out; those who remained were better soldiers for it. Thanks to recruiting in 1916, most Guard units were already at authorized strength when war was declared against Germany on April 6, 1917. The Army benefited, too. Its expedition into Mexico and its oversight of the Guard’s massive mobilization and training, provided

<sup>1</sup> F Battery consisted solely of University of Minnesota students. They were allowed to muster out early, in time for the fall semester.

<sup>2</sup> Villa staged a short-lived resurgence after Pershing pulled out of Mexico, but retired to a spacious hacienda in 1920. He was assassinated in 1923.

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a real-world rehearsal in the use of such modern technologies as trucks and machine guns, and with managing large bodies of troops. It pushed General Pershing to the top of the list when the time came to select a commander for the American Expeditionary Force (AEF) in France. Many of the 1916 border camps became ready-made divisional training camps in 1917—including Camp Deming in New Mexico, which was renamed Camp Cody and became home to the 34<sup>th</sup> Division in 1917-1918. Jointly, the Regulars and the Guardsmen learned from one another: the mobilized Guard taught the Regulars about the motivations and capabilities of an expanded citizen army; the Regulars prepared the Guard—whose return to civilian life would be brief—for the real war that was already raging in Europe.

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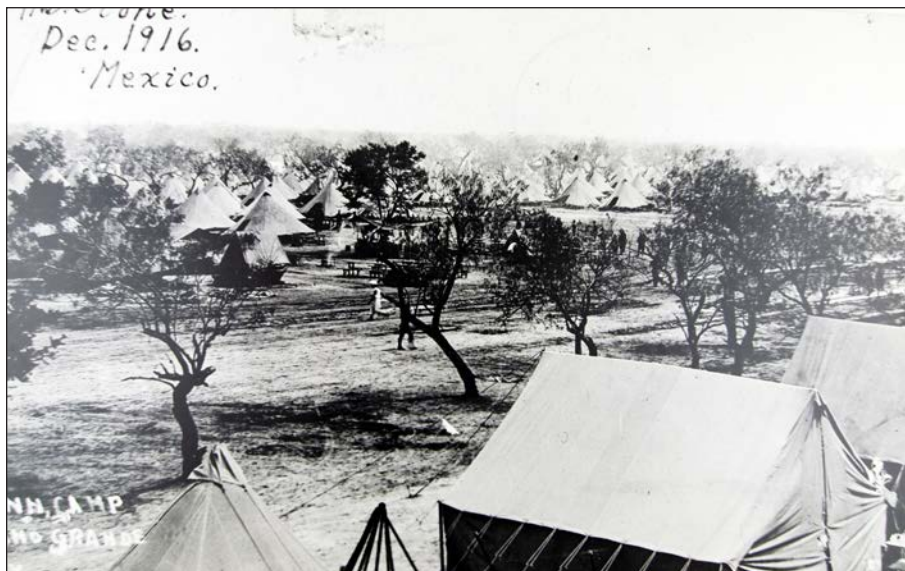
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"Minnesota Camp" at Llano Grande. Everyone slept in tents. (Herb Stone/Minnesota Military Museum)

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## CURATOR'S NOTES

By Doug Bekke



Over my 16 years at the Minnesota Military Museum I have opened the door on many projects. Many of these doors remain open. As my 31 December retirement approaches, I am trying to avoid new projects and close the doors on as many of the existing projects as possible. I will soon begin work on reorganizing and cataloging the museum's large collection of flags, guidons and related items. Ten years ago, I stabi-

lized this collection but since then more such items came to us from around Camp Ripley and the state. There are still a few boxes with flags in storage waiting to be opened. This is an important project and I will be very glad to see it completed.

Within the next few weeks I hope to complete the Viet-

nam veterans oral history project, still unfinished after the July 2015 opening of the new Vietnam exhibit.

Work continues slowly on the WWI and WWII cannon restorations. Mechanical problems, volunteer illness, and some really hard-to-remove paint have all contributed to delays. As we keep an eye on the approaching Minnesota winter we still hope to have the four guns completed this year and set up in an exhibit building. A fifth gun will be moved out of storage to the workshop this fall to be restored next year.

Over the past few months I have asked for the financial assistance of museum supporters to raise the remaining \$2,000 to complete payments on the cannon project. Over the past 18 months only nine people have donated for a total of \$580. I incorrectly thought this would be a unique project that many would eagerly support, especially the many ex-artillerymen in Minnesota, but it has proven to be one of the most unrewarding fundraising projects of my 16 years. Many, many, sincere thanks to the nine who contributed so far.

I think I can safely say that there are several lifetimes of projects waiting to be started or completed here at the museum, and of course there is always more history.

## Volunteer Voices: Meet Gloria Stumpf

[Gloria Stumpf, who lives in Pierz, has been volunteering at the museum for three years.

**On getting involved:** "I read in the local paper they were looking for volunteers and as a member of the local Chamber we went there on a tour."

**Museum projects:** "I work in the gift shop, take admissions and provide office assistance at Sandy Erickson's request."

**What she likes most:** "Hearing the stories that veterans and their families tell."

**Why she does it:** "The museum makes me feel like I'm giving back to our soldiers and veterans in a small way."

**She stays busy:** "I am also an Auctioneer and have been licensed for almost 15 years. I volunteer with Habitat for Humanity, Catholic United Financial and St. Francis Health and Rec. Now that I'm retired from Morrison County Public Health after 26 years, these volunteering opportunities and my grandchildren keep me busy."



GLORIA STUMPF

## Give to the Max Day Nov. 17

GiveMN links donors with organizations that are working to make Minnesota a better place. Its website, GiveMN.org, enables online charitable giving year-round, but once each year on "Give to the Max Day" thousands of nonprofit organizations and individuals rally to raise as much money as possible in a 24-hour period. This year, mark Nov. 17 on your calendar. Once again, donations to the Minnesota Military Museum will be matched by a foundation grant. In addition, one GiveMN donor every

**give** TO THE **MAX**   
**NOV. 17, 2016**

hour will be randomly chosen to have \$1,000 added to their gift. No matter the amount, your donation is important! Go to our website on Thursday, Nov. 17, and click on the GiveMN logo.

**ALLIES****DIRECTOR'S UPDATE**

By Jeff Thielen



Typically I try to restrict my Updates to one theme; however, today my theme is going to be a "potpourri" of happenings from the museum to keep you informed on issues we are working on.

Our summer numbers at the museum were about average with just under 7000 visitors. We also saw an increase in store revenues due to the addition of some new sale items. You may want to check out our annual report on the website,

<http://www.mnmilitarymuseum.org/about-us/annual-report/>. If you have not reviewed our website lately, please take the time to do so. Long time museum supporter and board member Jack Johnson does an excellent job in updating and managing this informative website.

The library project continues to move forward as our librarian and dedicated group of library volunteers strive to

turn our 15,000 volume book collection into a lending library and more useable working resource. We had a presence at the Minnesota Library Association Conference in Duluth in September to inform the state's library professionals of our existence and to ask their assistance in supporting our military themed collection. Our online data base is a work in progress, but if you would like to see a partial catalogue of our library please visit the website.

Our volunteers continue to amaze me with their dedication and support of projects around the museum. They have allowed us to do many things that would not be accomplished without them.

This coming year is a budget year at the state capitol and we are hopeful the legislature will look favorably on our legislative agenda. It is always a promising sign when the local state senator stops in to see how he can help us in the upcoming session. If you have the opportunity and contact with your state legislators, please put in a good word for the museum. Remind them we represent veterans from all branches of the military and are an asset for all Minnesotans.

Lastly, please remember us during the November 17 "Give to the Max Day." This has been a very successful fundraiser for us the past few years. Maybe your gift will be increased by one of the hourly "Golden Tickets," which will reward us with an additional \$1000.00.

**OUT OF THE ARCHIVES**

By Chad Conrady



Lately I have been working on securing grants to help fund facility "re-housing" projects that meet archival best practices. Unfortunately, the grants to fund re-housing some parts of the collection did not come through, but, on the plus side, I was awarded a conservation assessment and planning grant. That grant provides funds to have a professional conservator visit the museum and provide information on what can be done in the short,

medium, and long term to improve the storage, handling, access to the artifacts and archival materials at the museum.

In late September, a conservator from the Midwest Arts Conservation Center, based at the Minneapolis Institute of Art, visited and conducted a site survey and provided an initial plan of things we can do. Doug Thompson, our collections specialist, and I assisted the

conservator during her assessment. We learned quite a lot about some relatively simple ways to improve the storage and access to the collection. One easy thing is to place data loggers to record temperature and relative humidity in the artifact storage areas. I started using a simple USB data logger that needs to be checked and information downloaded every couple of days.

Another thing we need to do is to create a disaster plan to help the museum staff respond quickly in case of a natural disaster such as a tornado. As you probably heard, a small tornado hit Camp Ripley about a half mile north of the museum on September 9, tearing the roof off a couple of buildings. It did no harm to the museum, but it was too close for comfort. To do it correctly, the disaster plan will take time to prepare and will require working with the Minnesota National Guard to help the museum recover.

We also need to formalize policies regarding exhibit rotating practices, and for pests such as mice, which would simply require staff to document locations of traps and what interval to check them. The conservator also suggested that the museum staff have a discussion about access to the collection storage areas. All these things are aimed at improving ways to protect our ever-growing artifacts and records.

## DONOR HONOR ROLL, July-September, 2016

### Memorials

#### Given by:

Doug Bekke  
Jack Johnson  
194th Tank Regiment Assn.  
194th Tank Regiment Assn.  
194th Tank Regiment Assn.

#### In Memory of:

General John W. Vessey, Jr.  
General John W. Vessey, Jr.  
General John W. Vessey, Jr.  
Alan Westberg  
Glen Harcey

### Renewing Members:

Glenn Boche ▪ Joseph Dudley ▪ Joe Forberg ▪ Marty Host ▪ Doug Johnson ▪ Richard Kaasa ▪ Al Kreutz ▪ Howard Larsen ▪ Eugene Leifeld ▪ Benton Murdock ▪ Russell Ness ▪ Donald Pettitt ▪ David Smith ▪ Robert Swetz, Sr

### New Members:

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Post 3915, Brooklyn Park ▪ Post 6208, Prior Lake

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Amazon Smile Foundation ▪ Philip Andrews ▪ Richard Ashmun ▪ Janice Glass ▪ Shirley Haberer ▪ Jack Johnson ▪ Robin Kelleher ▪ Richard Klobuchar ▪ Duane Lorsung ▪ Ray Lunde ▪ Donald Pettitt ▪ C. Perry Schenk ▪ Marvin Segal ▪ Susan Shelton ▪ Thrivent Choice ▪ Henry Wieland

### Artifact donations

The museum gratefully acknowledges donations of artifacts from the following:

Michael Bemis ▪ Frank and Lucienne Bray ▪ Larry Brennan ▪ Merrill Burgstahler ▪ Jim Cluka ▪ Sandy Dittberner ▪ Beth

### SPOTLIGHTED RECENT DONATIONS



-- In June, Merrill Burgstahler donated a WWII, 1944 M-3A-4 utility cart. Mr. Burgstahler had used it at his cabin. After sandblasting, repainting, and obtaining a few replacement parts, the cart is a welcome addition to the collection. It is on exhibit with our 75mm Pack Howitzer. During the war it was used to haul ammunition for the pack howitzer and many other things. Merrill's son Glen was instrumental in getting the cart to Camp Ripley.

-- From Frank Bray the museum received a complete WWII 3rd Marine Division USMC grouping of Leslie Grant Williams – a complete well documented uniform.

-- From Wendy Morreim, her father's WWII 13th Airborne Division uniform set and papers, etc.

Erickson ▪ Robert Gerlach ▪ Garrett Grams ▪ Dennis Hale ▪ John Justin ▪ Stephanie Kroeger ▪ Ethel Kunde ▪ Ray Lunde ▪ June McHenry ▪ James Newman ▪ Newport Library & Community Center ▪ John Nys ▪ James C. Patrick ▪ David Popken ▪ James Rasmussen ▪ Mike Rinowski ▪ Wendy Strobel Morreim ▪ Lucy Tanner ▪ U.S. Navy Memorial ▪ James T. Weber

## Museum Archivist Chad Conrady takes position in D.C.

Chad Conrady, our archivist since September 2013, is moving on to a new job with the Library of Congress in Washington, DC, where he will be working on the LOC's backlog of archival materials. His last day with us was October 14; his work with the LOC begins October 31.

Conrady was the museum's first full-time appointment, thanks to a special appropriation from the Legislature. As a trained, certified archivist, he put a series of archival "best practices" in place that included a complete reorganization of materials, significantly improved access, better storage and preservation, digitalization of some of the most important records and films, and website links.

He applied for and received a number of grants to underwrite related costs. Museum director Jeff Thielen praised Conrady's work: "I am excited for him to have this opportunity. He was hired because he was a standout

candidate. I knew we were lucky to have him here and hoped we could keep him around for a while. He put us on the right path . . . and leaves the archives in great shape for the person who replaces him."

A national search for a new archivist is underway. In the meantime, we extend to Chad our thanks and very best wishes .

### WINTER HOURS

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

## ALLIES

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Visitors pose with two American doughboys and a German "soldat" on opening day of the new World War I exhibit.

## New World War I exhibit opens at the Military Museum

The museum's latest special exhibit, "In the Fight: Minnesota and the First World War," opened July 22, replacing "Minnesota's Two Civil Wars, 1861-1866," which closed in September 2015. The new exhibit captures the experiences of Minnesota men and women who served and contributed to the "Great War" effort. The First World War began in August 1914. The U.S. remained officially neutral until April 1917, but some Minnesotans got a head start, and Minnesota National Guardsmen on the Mexican

border in 1916 were, in essence, being trained for the war. Although most of the fighting took place in Europe, 32 nations from throughout the world were eventually drawn into the conflict. The exhibit includes a simulated German bunker, fourteen static displays and six media presentations.