



Lavaca County and The Spanish American War

By Brenda Lincke Fisseler

The next several issues of this newsletter will share the story of Lavaca County during the Spanish-American War and later the Philippine-American War. While both military actions were short term conflicts, Lavaca County men were involved in both and this newsletter will endeavor to share information about these men and their commitments to service. This newsletter series will also highlight some of the individuals whose stories are unique and those who lost their lives in service to their county. We will now travel back to the year 1898 and our setting will be the Spanish-American War....



The Spanish-American War began on April 21, 1898 in the aftermath of the internal explosion aboard the USS Maine in Cuba's Havana Harbor, leading to United States intervention in the Cuban War of Independence.

The first mention of the recruitment of local volunteers for service in the Spanish-American War was in the May 5, 1898 issue of the Hallettsville Herald. The front page of the newspapers relates that "quite a stir" was created in town the week before when placard were posted asking for volunteers to join Dr. W.W. Walker's calvary company at Schulenburg.

Note: Dr. William W. Walker Jr., a native of Louisiana and a Civil War veteran, was ready to raise a company as soon as the government was ready to call for volunteers. His volunteers were assigned to Company G (also known as the Schulenburg Calvary) of the First Texas Calvary. After raising his company, Walker was commissioned a captain at the State Capitol in Austin on May 5, 1898.

Local citizens, F.D. Cain, Alex McGall, Gus Samusch and E. Blakeslee did their part to stir up enthusiasm by obtaining a snare drum, a flute and a big drum and paraded up and down the streets to the tune of "Dixie", "The Girl I Left Behind" and other stirring tunes. J.P. Ellis went to work at once and began to enlist volunteers.

*"Great minds are related to
the brief span of time
during which they live
as great buildings are to a
little square in which they
stand..."*

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On May 4, 1898, the Silver Cornet Band gave the volunteers a parting serenade and H.J. Braunig took a photo of the group amid cheers of the crowd and the booming of anvils.

Note: A group picture was later printed in the December 8, 1959 edition of the Lavaca County Tribune and was furnished to the newspaper by Mr. August Speary of Runge.

The roster of volunteers printed in the newspapers was as follows:

James P. Ellis	Henry Arnim	Macteer Hester
Armond Kainer	Joseph Sykora	Anton Sykora
Henry A. Lindenberg	Earl Wood	Volney Brown
John Smothers	Adolph Lindenberg	Carl Lange
Thomas Hill	Dave Samusch	Ernst Holaitick
Fred Euchner	Ernest Gillar Jr.	Frank Talas
John Speary	Charles Velgo	

Before the volunteers left for Schulenburg to catch a train to Austin, Texas, a list was passed around for contributions for “pin money” for the volunteers to assist in paying for the pictures taken by Braunig. The funds were given to James P. Ellis to be distributed among the volunteers.

It was acknowledged by the local newspaper that some of the volunteers may be rejected by the examining physicians and they will return home.

As the newspaper predicted, some of the volunteers were deemed physically unacceptable for service and returned home. They were Macteer Hester, Hector Tippett (who was not listed in the newspaper volunteer list) Carl Lange, James P. Ellis, Frank Talas and Charles Velgo.

On June 9, 1898, the regiment was transferred to Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas. While other troops were later distributed to other forts throughout Texas, Captain Walker’s Troop G remained at Fort Sam Houston.

While stationed at Fort Sam Houston, Lavaca County Judge Patton called on Troop G. He informed the local newspaper that the Troop band had rented instruments from a private party in the city and will use them until the ones furnished by the government were received. The musicians practice daily and as there are some first class talent among them, they will be a credit to their regiment.

Note: Fred Euchner, Frank Kunetka, Frank Schoppe, and John Speary were all members of the First Texas Cavalry Band during their enlistment.

Next: The Military Future of the First Texas Cavalry Co. G

Sources:

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Hallettsville Herald: 1898 May 5; May 19; June 16

Lavaca County Tribune: 1959 Dec. 8

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