



## 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.*



### Volunteers in the Spanish American War

The next issues of this newsletter will focus on the individuals who served from Lavaca County in the Spanish-American War. Many times, the stories will be brief, but there will be instances where the story can be quite unusual.

**John Winters Willeford**  
**1st Texas Cavalry Co. A**  
**Enlisted: June 27, 1898**  
**Discharged: November 14, 1898**

This is the conclusion of the story that began in the August 2025 newsletter concerning the murder of Theresie Willeford and Lillie Dufner by John Winters Willeford on March 16, 1937

On Thursday, March 18, 1937, Willeford was found in the Hammond Hotel on East Commerce St. in San Antonio, Texas with two self-inflicted gunshots to the head.

A note was found that detailed his activities after the shootings.



*Please share this newsletter  
with any one who might be  
interested!*

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## Volunteers in the Spanish American War

Willeford originally drove to Del Rio with the intent to escape to Mexico. Then he changed his mind, according to the note, and returned to San Antonio “to end it all”. After hearing a shot, the hotel proprietor found Willeford wandering around in the hotel corridor with two bullet wounds to his head at 2:00 am. He was taken to the Robert B. Green Memorial Hospital where surgery was performed. Officers found a .32-caliber pistol containing two used cartridges in the room.

Two notes were found in Willeford’s room.

Note #1: “I had read all about it in the San Antonio newspaper. I was down near the border. I left my car there and went to Del Rio on the train and I knew they would get me anyway and I decided to come to San Antonio and finish it up. I came here on the bus from Del Rio. Well goodbye dear children and wife. I guess I done a good job. Well, I was driven to do what I did. They said that I wouldn’t do anything. Tell you mother to put in for ... pension. I am a Spanish War veteran, and they can’t ... them.

Note #2 “The other note was written on the back of a utility bill, said: I want the world to know that I killed the one I love because I loved her, and it was for folks that caused. And I which this would be published in the papers. I can hardly write for the tears. Both notes were signed J.W. Willeford.

On March 25<sup>th</sup>, Willeford died at the Robert B. Green Memorial Hospital at 9:05 a.m. one week after the shooting of his estranged wife and her daughter. His body was taken to Hallettsville for burial at the Willow Creek Cemetery. He was survived by one son and four daughters from a previous marriage.

*“Great minds are related to  
the brief span of time during  
which they live*



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