

CHAPTER III ENGINEERS

On their return from the Spanish-American War, the Upper Peninsula units were part of an inevitable reorganization of Michigan units. In July of 1899, Company D (Calumet) was redesignated as Company E, 3rd Michigan Infantry Regiment. It appears that most of the old 5th Infantry units were included in the reorganization. Colonel Robert J. Bates, and ex-Lieutenant in the old Company H (Ironwood), commanded the 3rd.

On June 10, 1906, Calumet's Company D was pulled from the 3rd Infantry and redesignated as Company A, Michigan Engineer Corps. ¹ The change to engineers was a direct result of the effort of Colonel Cox, the Adjutant General of Michigan and another former member of the Calumet Company. It was generally thought that the underlying reason for the change to engineers was the units excellent performance as 'ad hoc' engineers in Santiago. However, for the boys from Calumet, the old joke 'yesterday I couldn't spell engineer and today I am one,' was true.

The requirement for annual summer camp was generally adhered to, even at the turn of the century. The usual site was Camp Eaton, Island Lake, Michigan, but in 1901 the site abandoned due to a reported contamination of the water supply by long occupancy. From 1901, the sites for summer training varied from such diverse places as Camp Bliss, near Manistee, to Camp Boynton, near Ludington, to Port Huron, with an occasional foray to Fort Benjamin Harrison in Indiana and a camp at West Point, Kentucky. The first stay in the Camp Grayling area, then known as the Hansen Military Reservation, was in 1914. The following summer saw the Company at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, for intensive engineer training. ²

During this long interval of peace, the most interesting duty performed by the Calumet Company was on August 8, 1911 when they escorted then President Taft during a visit to Houghton. ³

On July 24, 1913, the Copper Country unit was mobilized to help keep the peace during the famous Keweenaw copper strike. By order of the Governor, the Battalion and Regimental officers were instructed to proceed to Calumet and the units to report 'equipped for field duty with riot ammunition.' ⁴

At the time of the strike, there were approximately 70 shafts in operation and 15,000 miners on strike. Violence and terrorism by both sides was common.

Eventually the entire Michigan Guard was on duty for the strike. The troops remained on duty at full strength until August 13, when a gradual phase down began, eventually ending on January 12, 1914. ⁵

Because of the great local sympathy for the strike and the desire not to place the local units in a potentially compromising situation, the unit was assigned to non-conflicting duty, generally protecting outlying property.



Company A arriving at Camp Grayling in 1914. Credit Battalion Archives



This 1901 scene shows Company A troops at Camp Ludington, Michigan. Note the Spanish-American War uniforms, although the men were now equipped with the Krag-Jorgenson rifles. Credit: Battalion archives.