

## At Camp McKinley

By evening of April 26, 1898, most of the companies comprising the four regiments of the Iowa National Guard had arrived at the State Fair Grounds in Des Moines, and had been assigned to quarters in the horse and cattle barns. Mess was served for the first time in camp at eight-thirty that night, and afterward the boys gathered in groups to talk over the chances for active service. When tattoo sounded the guardsmen retired to the stalls which had been filled with clean straw for bunks. But there was little sleeping that first night in camp — the excitement of the day, the hard, strange beds, and irrepressible jokers kept the men awake until far into the night.

On the next day the camp was organized under the command of General James Rush Lincoln, and named Camp McKinley. The posted routine of camp duty left no doubt but that hard work and plenty of it was in store. The daily program called for reveille at 6 A. M.; sick call, 6:15; mess, 6:30; guard mount, 8:00; drill, 9:00; mess, 12.00; drill, 2:30 to 4:30; mess, 5:30; dress parade, 6:15; tattoo, 9:00; call to quarters, 9:45; taps, 10:00 o'clock. Battalion drills were to be held in the forenoon, and regimental drills later in the day. The program also "included numerous marches into the surround-

ing country, with advance guard, outpost and skirmish drill in great abundance." Many weary tramps and maneuvers over rough, wooded heights and advances toward an imaginary enemy hardened the muscles of the guardsmen, and whetted appetites for the rations of coffee and hardtack, pork and beans.

From the outset there was considerable apprehension among the members of the four regiments of the Iowa National Guard over the fact that the first requisition for troops from the State called for only three regiments of infantry and two light batteries. Talk of merging the four mobilized regiments into three caused much dissatisfaction as no regiment wished to lose its identity. At this point Governor Leslie M. Shaw visited Camp McKinley and spoke to each regiment on this subject "cautioning forbearance and patience". When news came from Washington that Iowa would be required to furnish four regiments of infantry instead of three it caused genuine rejoicing among the guardsmen. The four regiments of Iowa volunteers were promptly renumbered the Forty-ninth, the Fiftieth, the Fifty-first, and the Fifty-second—the numbering beginning where it had left off at the close of the Civil War.

A continuous round of drill and discipline throughout the month of May transformed the men into well-trained troops. Each day the guardsmen expected to receive orders to move to the front. Some of the boys, away from home for their first extended

stay, became more or less homesick, and the visits of friends and relatives who came to Des Moines on Sunday excursions were most welcome. The hospitality of the people of Des Moines, too, helped to counteract the severity of camp life. Des Moines had furnished two companies of the Third or Fifty-first Regiment and the heart of the city went out in friendly sympathy for the entire camp. Banquets to different companies were frequently provided by various organizations in the city, while individuals threw open their homes for the entertainment of smaller groups.

On May 21st, the Fiftieth Regiment entrained for Camp Cuba Libre at Jacksonville, Florida. The Fifty-second left Des Moines on May 28th, for the concentration camp at Chickamauga Park, Tennessee. But the Forty-ninth and the Fifty-first still lingered and fear was beginning to be felt that their war record would end with the mimic advances upon a theoretical enemy on the outskirts of Des Moines.

Then came word that the Fifty-first would be mustered into service on May 30th, Decoration Day. By an impressive ceremony on that occasion Captain J. A. Olmsted of the regular army administered the oath to each company in turn. On the same day the regiment participated in memorial exercises under the auspices of the Crocker and Kinsman posts of the G. A. R.

No sooner was the Fifty-first mustered into service than it was rumored that it was not to go south-

ward. Already troops were being mobilized at San Francisco preparatory to departure for the Philippines. It became the hope of every man of the Fifty-first to be sent to this far-distant region, and when, late in the evening of June 2nd, Colonel John C. Loper received word to report without delay to the commanding officer at San Francisco the men were overjoyed. Officers and privates sat far into the night talking over the prospects which this news portended.

Sunday, June 5th, was the day set for departure. Meantime, the bustle of packing and preparation for quitting camp occupied every member of the regiment. It was arranged for the Fifty-first to move westward over three roads — the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific; the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy; and the Chicago and North Western.

Sunday morning dawned in a downpour of rain. Breakfast over, the men awaited the signal to depart. With blanket rolls over their shoulders and in full marching equipment, the Second Battalion — Company E of Shenandoah, C of Glenwood, L of Council Bluffs, and M of Red Oak — under the command of Major John T. Hume, left the horse barns first and marched to the Fair Grounds depot where they climbed aboard the Pullman "special" of the C. B. & Q. A large crowd of relatives and friends, unmindful of the rain, stood silently with tear-dimmed eyes that Sunday morning and watched the train depart. "The ringing of the bell on the engine,

and one cheer from the boys on the train told Colonel Loper and his men in the other two battalions still in camp that the Second Battalion had started."

Shortly thereafter the men of the Third Battalion — Company G of Creston, K of Corning, B of Villisca, and I of Bedford — under the command of Major Sterling P. Moore marched out of the Fair Grounds and down Grand Avenue to the North Western train awaiting them on Eighteenth Street. Here another large crowd bade a solemn farewell to the boys.

Before the Third Battalion had reached the camp gate the two Des Moines companies, A and H, followed by D of Knoxville, and F of Oskaloosa, left the barns for the Rock Island "special" standing at the Fair Grounds station. A detail from the G. A. R. acted as an escort while a host of Des Moines people as well as a goodly representation from Knoxville and Oskaloosa followed the marching column. For a few minutes before boarding the Pullmans, Major William J. Duggan halted the men under the shed at the station and permitted friends and relatives to say farewell. In addition to the First Battalion, the Regimental Band and Headquarters Staff of the Fifty-first boarded this train, and at 10:50 o'clock the long trip began which was destined to take the Fifty-first Iowa Volunteer Infantry more than a third of the way around the world.

BRUCE E. MAHAN