

The Border History of Three Infantry Regiments

7TH INFANTRY.

On the second day of July, 1916, there detrained at the McAllen station an Infantry regiment which believed that its objective was Brownsville and had visions of visiting the city, which more than once had leaped into the gossip of the daily news columns. After tumbling out of cars which had for three days and nights been without lights, where mess tins had been washed in palatial lavatories and rifles hung in Pullman hammocks, the three battalions started for the bare plains which had recently been cleared of cactus and mesquite brush, plants whose botanical compositions were soon to be known at first hand. Slowly the various companies paced their ways to the designated company streets, wagons were brought up, tents allotted, and up rose the O. D. homes of twelve companies of the 7th Infantry, the Machine Gun Company, and the Headquarters Company.

Then arrived our first visitors, some Texas militiamen with a certain southern-western drawl, "Just breezed in, you know," to look over what one of the local papers had already described as "a number of pale-faced lads, scions of wealthy families, and members of Col. Vanderbilt's regiment," the latter bearing a name, that all country cousins love to conjure with. These "Lone Star" militiamen informed us that a canteen had been opened by them, where our trade would be welcomed, and then proceeded to unravel hair-raising stories of rattlers attacking unsuspecting sleepers, and scorpions and tarantulas playing hide-in-seek in one's shoes and wearing apparel. The number of "Greasers" that had been killed by these fearless youths was beyond computation, they said, due to the fact that our numerical system didn't extend that far.

A very well known circus rider once said that while enroute, "Life consisted of one pill bath after another." Five days of railroad travel had made a bath not only an anticipated pleasure but a dire necessity, so aided by a sponge and squad pail, the last trace of coal dust was removed, and it was ascertained that that we had not tanned so quickly. Cots there were none, although the official explanation stated that the same were on the way, and were in fact somewhere between San Antonio and McAllen. Some slept like the beaver with their inert forms burrowed deeply into the alkali, using the inner part of the rampart around the trench for a head rest.

Of course all know the old Biblical quotation: "Dust to dust doth return," or something like that. Well we didn't believe it was coming so soon, especially since military funerals were difficult to arrange in such an out-of-the-way place. A short cloudburst of rain and the ungraded streets were pools of slushy mud.

The lonely notes of "first call," echoed over the deserted company

streets at 5:15 a. m. the next morning to be followed five minutes later by assembly. The morning was still dark for the moon had just fled, ashamed of being caught at the beginning of a working day, and the moon continued to perform his acrobatic stunts until the hour of reveille was advanced an hour and time to properly dress allowed so that the rimblessness of a blind quick change artist was no longer necessary.

The machinery of camp routine having been well oiled by G. O. & S. O. numbers 1 to 1000, the excitement attendant upon first arrival disappeared, and curious eyes turned McAllenward, the twinkling lights of which nightly beckoned like the jewels of some unknown siren. The evening breezes wafted in the chants of Mexican folk lore, accompanied by the tinkling of stringed instruments.

Armed with rifle, ball ammunition, bearing a duly authorized pass, McAllen was finally visited, its one-half block of wooden, one-story office buildings, its bank, postoffice, movie theatre and general stores, duly explored. Every thing very prosaic, try as one might imagine it being a Border town. The town folk, most of whose stay in McAllen, had been as short as our own, were quick to learn what we needed and proceeded to lay in large stocks of the necessities and luxuries for camp life. Soon, however, the ban was lifted and it no longer became necessary to wear a rifle strapped to the shoulder in order to visit town for the purpose of purchasing a box of Uneeda Biscuits.

An old resident of this neighborhood one day remarked that it hadn't rained for nineteen months, which statement was believable, when we commenced to be visited with a daily downpour. Streets became whirlpools and many a night anxious eyes peered over the edge of tent trenches to see how many more inches the water would have to rise before the flood would enter. A vigorous policy to meet this situation followed. Everything must be ditched and a drainage system established. Company streets, regimental streets, picket lines, outside roads—all were ditched and ditch digging was done, no matter how hard the sun tried to prevent it. The labor, although arduous was considerably lightened by the arrival of a personage highly esteemed in military circles, and one who brought good tidings, and such good tidings that all entered with new spirit into the building of spacious mess shacks of the bungalow type and incinerators which resembled huge crouching ducks. This highly esteemed person was none other than General Rumor, who entered without a fanfare of trumpets or other ceremonies, and out ran his hard-working spouse Dame Rumor is forty ways. The General carried many mysterious orders about his person and mentioned very enigmatically about entraining after the return from a certain con-

templated "hike." The "hike" came and went with all its pleasures, humors, trials and tribulations. There were cool days, warm days, water, no water, hard roads, soft roads, baths and no baths. There were sunrises and sunsets such as neither pen nor brush could ever depict. Some lost weight, others gained, yet all eyes glistened with joy, when the old regimental camp came into view with its welcoming cheers and its piping hot and wholesome breakfast.

All have had rifle practice at La Gloria, and have hiked there and back in record-breaking time, and some have already done actual Border duty at Madero. Is all yet said and done? Is that order to entrain lost in some pigeon-hole to be resurrected in spring cleaning?

We have finally said our litany: McAllen, Mission, Sterling, LaGloria,

ceive us although the summer maneuvers were to take place there, and the engineers had partially completed the water lines, roads and rebuilt a few bridges. Furthermore, we being an infantry unit were naturally a trifle shy on four footed animals, so with our regimental train stranded a few miles distant, and no motor power to bring the necessities of camp life to us we again showed our fighting spirit, doing the only thing we could do—pull our wagons to camp ourselves.

Our stay at Whitman was a great source of worry to us. We heard of other regiments leaving for the front, and still we stayed on at Whitman, digging and fixing the same with an air of permanency, while the dailies announced the departure of one after the other of the New York Regiments.

To make a long story short, our orders did come, and we finally arrived

at Sterling. During our absence from camp, several paratyphoid cases were brought to the notice of the medical authorities, and as a precautionary measure we camped at Sterling until the ground formerly occupied by the 71st Regiment at McAllen could be made ready for us. That time finally arrived and we made another one of our fine dashes from Sterling to McAllen, which was certainly a record breaker, and pulled into the latter town in fine and fit condition.

At McAllen we were welcomed by the 7th Regiment, our near neighbors, fine boys and good soldiers. They brought back pleasant memories of the Fishkill days in the summer of 1915. They will always find the word "Welcome" in large letters upon our door mat.

Meanwhile election day draws near, and it will seem queer to be away from the old district. Then we wonder what's doing at the club. The leader misses the boys we know, and the thoughts of the flaring torches and broom parade with the slogan "Clean Sweep," on election night cause the strings around the heart to tighten. How we shall miss the flashing of the returns on the sheet, and the exclamations that follow the startling results. A political campaign is on, and we are not in it. How can it be a regular old-fashioned campaign without us? A fight and we not there? How can it be? We know what they'll say at the club, if we lose. "If only the boys were here, and not on the Border." Well, don't worry "me boys," there are other election days to come.—T. McM.

3RD TENNESSEE.

The 3rd Tennessee Infantry has now been a part of the New York Division long enough to feel at home with the boys from the East, and long enough to be well adjusted to Border conditions. The boys from the Volunteer State are entirely satisfied with their associations with those from the Empire State, but to say that they like it on the border would probably be stretching it a good deal. They are thinking too often of home and mother and sweetheart to like it down here; but they have fared pretty well as army life goes, and all things considered have no kick coming. As long as they have their bit on the border to do, the general verdict is that they had as well be doing it here as anywhere.

The Tennessee National Guard answered the President's call with the guard of the other states in June, and went into their mobilization camp at Nashville the 27th, just a little more than four months ago. Life was pretty gay for them, and they enjoyed it, although the drill hours were long. But they had a good time, being camped a matter of two miles from the heart of the Tennessee capital, and army life still held its glamour there within the warm, bright circle of friendly hands. That's why border

service seems so much harder. Nevertheless, they grew very impatient to get to the border . . . just as anxious as many of them are now eager to get back. However, on September 16, orders came, and were greeted with wild cheers. Riotous scenes followed the weary weeks of waiting. They were to go to the front at last. On the following day the 1st Tennessee Regiment got away for Eagle Pass, and on September 17, the 3rd entrained; ticketed at the time for the same destination as the First. Enroute, however, the orders were changed, and the regiment was routed to McAllen, then to Pharr, where it wound up on the 20th. It moved into the camp occupied by the Second New York as that regiment moved out. They found their border quarters pretty well fixed up for them, and making camp was easy, very easy to what it must have been to the regiments that came first and had to clear the Texas plains of cactus and mesquite.

That has been a matter of six weeks in which the Tennesseans have made intimate acquaintance with the cactus, and have learned that grows in Texas either stings, sticks or bites wasn't exaggerating to any marked degree. They know what sandstorms are; they know what the wind storms are; and knowing, can't say that they like them. However, all in all, their stay has been pleasant, if it has not been all that they pictured when they heard the blast of the bugle and marched forth to have part in the glory of war.

Arriving at Pharr they became a part of the Pharr brigade and General O'Bryan's New York Division. They were given a cordial welcome, and have ever since gotten along in the best of fashion with their fellow soldiers (or sufferers) from New York, and are glad to be a part of this division.

For the first ten days on the border they were engaged with the usual routine of camp life. Then on the 1st of October, they took up the schedule of the Division Commander. Since that program was taken up they have been on a number of short hikes, and have worked out several battle problems, none of them on a very heavy scale, and at no time being called upon for work as telling on their physiques as during their days at the mobilization camp.

And like the guardsmen from every state represented here, they are wondering how long it is going to last. Thanksgiving and Christmas are not so far in the future, and those seasons always make the thoughts of the absent turn back home. But just like the others, the Tennessee boys feel that if there is really need for them, they are willing to stay and do their bit of service. If there isn't, then "there's no place like home." —J. L. B.



Company Street in an Infantry Camp.

Laguna Seca, Youngs, Edinburgh, Madero, and now we wonder when we shall tell the last band on our rosary with the word "home."—J. T. M.

THE 69TH INFANTRY.

The "Fighting 69th" is a term that has always been applied to our regiment and we think we are entitled to it, for when the call comes, we are the first to volunteer, and the first on line all the time. One needs only look at our past record to see that fighting has been, and always will be our middle name. When the clarion call sounded in June, 1916, and the scare headlines loudly proclaimed that the guard had been ordered to mobilize and that a national crisis was pending and soon we would be engaged in mortal combat with our sister republic across the Rio Grande—who was the first to respond, mobilize and entrain for Camp Whitman—the gallant 69th.

Camp Whitman was not what you might really called prepared to re-

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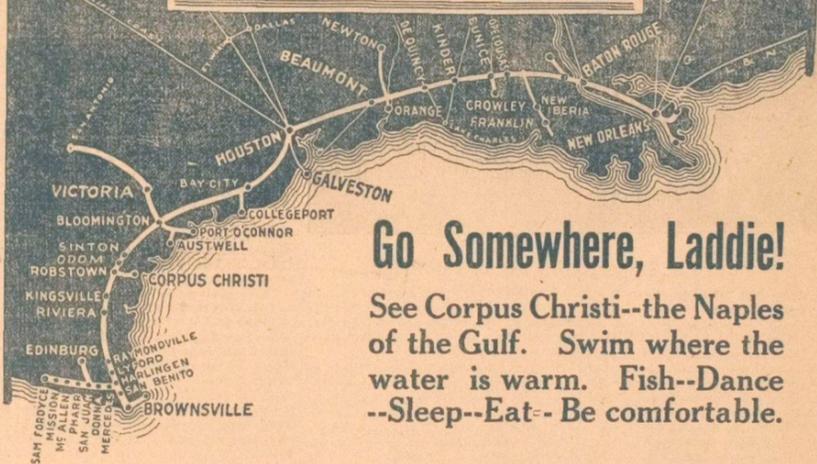
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