

**NEW YORK HUSSARS
(FIRST NEW YORK DRAGOONS)
1884-1889**

The New York Hussars roots lie in the US presidential campaign of 1884, when Republican James G. Blaine, United States Senator, ran against Democrat Grover Cleveland, Governor of New York. On October 31, 1884, a mounted group of Blaine supporters, lead by Maj. L. C. Whiton, rode in a New York City parade in honor of Sen. Blaine. Two-hundred strong, known as "City Troops," they wore a uniform consisting of a "white tunic, trimmed with red, with a large Maltese cross on the breast of the wearer, white helmets with red plumes and white leggings. The company officers and staff were: Captains Banning, Wanamaker, Buckingham and Bantry; quartermaster, Paulson and aides Little and Hulin."(1)

Grover Cleveland prevailed in the election, becoming the 22nd President of the United States. When it was learned that New York City Democrats were organizing a mounted group of Cleveland supporters to attend the inauguration using its name, the Republicans filed for incorporation as "City Troop New York Hussars" in December 1884. The trustees named for the first year were William C. Banning, Cyrus W. Field Jr., Leonard Paulson Jr., Lindsay C. Ivory and Louis Claude Whiton. The purpose stated on the incorporation papers was "military drill" and it was filed under the "provisions of 'An act for the incorporation of societies of clubs for certain social and creative purposes,' passed by the Legislature on April 11, 1865." (2-3)

It is not known how many of those that marched in the 1884 Blaine parade joined the New York Hussars over time, but early meeting attendance numbered sixteen to eighteen participants(4). Within months of being incorporated, the New York Hussars expressed a goal of becoming a New York National Guard cavalry unit.(5) Little did they know that it would take nearly four years to reach that goal.

There were challenges to becoming a National Guard cavalry unit: required was a minimum of 51 members and because the Hussars viewed themselves as an exclusive club, this put a constraint on the available pool of qualified candidates. Further, these civilians would be required to adhere to a military standard. Military cavalry service involved more than skill in equitation - it meant a dedication of time to attend drills, learn tactics and to become proficient in arms. These successful businessmen/professionals would need to submit themselves to military discipline. It is known that members who did not meet the standard were asked to resign by fall 1885.(6) Another group resigned in 1888, illustrating an identity crisis that had plagued the organization since its founding. The New York Sun attributed the attrition in membership to demand for a "more exclusive membership, socially considered." It noted that at the annual meeting of Oct. 1, 1888, "Fourteen members, among whom Thomas Manning and Dan Winslow were prominent agitators, declared that the intents, purposes and present condition of the association didn't suit them. They tried to carry a proposition not to enter the National Guards, but to surround themselves with fortifications over which none but Ward McAllister's 400 could by any possibility climb. They wanted a club with a large and wealthy inactive membership behind it. The other side declared for business. They did not want it to make it cost a fortune to be a Hussar, and favored the admission of any man who was a known gentleman, whether blessed with Mr. McAllister's patronage or not. They reiterated a desire to enter the service of the state as part of the National Guard." (7)

The evolution of the New York Hussars into a National Guard unit would not have been possible without the instruction of seasoned veterans of the US Cavalry. Their first instructor in cavalry tactics was Captain Thomas J. Spencer, a West Point instructor. (8) Drills were held at Hussar headquarters, Dickel's Riding Academy on West Fifty-sixth Street. In the fall of 1886 Frank L. Abler, nicknamed "Buck", a former US cavalry sergeant became drillmaster at Dickel's for the mounted work.(9) But the success of the New York Hussars in becoming National Guardsmen is attributed to the leadership of

Charles Francis Roe.

Charles F. Roe was a graduate of West Point and had served 16 years in the U.S. Cavalry. He'd commanded the first column of cavalry to arrive at the Little Bighorn after Custer's defeat in 1876. In late 1888, resigned from federal service, Roe had recently moved to New York City to attend to some personal affairs. Accompanying a friend, military artist Rufus F. Zogbaum, to a Hussar drill at Dickel's, Roe saw the potential of the men to form the core of a first-class military troop. In turn, the Hussars recognized a professional cavalryman that would lead them towards their goal. Appointed Captain of the organization, they became known as the First New York Dragoons under his guidance. Then on April 2, 1889, under his command, the New York Hussars/First New York Dragoons became Troop A, NGSNY. Troop A would expand to two troops in 1895 and subsequently designated as Squadron A, would grow to three troops a year later.(10-11)

Few records exist regarding membership prior to April 2, 1889. All 53 enlisted men who were mustered in Troop A on that date are considered Dragoons, although it is noted that Troopers Robert L. Lee and Alfred F. Baldwin signed up the very day.(12) Captain Roe, as noted above, and 2nd Lt. Oliver B. Bridgman of Troop A are also Dragoons, being members before the muster. The 1889 Troop A Roster is listed elsewhere on this website. More Hussars/Dragoons are listed below and research is ongoing to discover the identify the missing.(13-16)

Known Hussars (excluding Troop A, NGSNY)

Louis Henry Amy

Thomas Herbert Allen

Jules S. Bache

William Calvin Banning

Charles G. Bennett

William Garrett Bibb

Horace Joshua Brookes

William J. Cassard

E. Holloway Coe

Prof. Bernard F. Connor

Cyrus W. Field Jr.

Albert Gallup

J. Morton Giles

Douglass Green

Seymour J. Hyde

Lindsay C. Ivory

Edward R. Johnes

Herman Jonas

Joseph Harvey Ladew

Francis Lathrop

Alfred J. Manning

Thomas Manning

George H. McLean

Dr. Alfred Augustus Mitchell

Edward Lea Montgomery

D. Parker Morgan

Leonard Paulson Jr.

Henry Powell Ramsdell

James B. Roy

Frank Russack

Henry Woodward Sackett
Edward Isaac Sanford
Charles E. Schuyler
Arthur Shrenkeisen
Steddiford Stagg
William M. Tewksbury
Louis Claude Whitton
Dan Winslow

Sources:

1. "Sixty-Thousand In Line. The Grandest Parade Ever Seen in New York" New York Tribune, New York NY, November 1, 1884. p.1 c.4
2. "A Troop To Preserve Its Name", New York Daily Tribune, New York NY, December 9, 1884, p.2 c.6
3. "To Form A Company of Hussars," New York Times, New York NY, December 7, 1884 p.14 c.3
4. Squadron A, A History of It's First Fifty Years 1889-1939, Association of Ex-Members of Squadron A, Reprinted by the Squadron A Association, Heritage Books, 2010 Squadron A Association, p. 4
5. "The New York Hussars," The Evening Telegram, New York NY, February 21, 1885- Double Sheet, p.5 c.6
6. Squadron A, A History of It's First Fifty Years 1889-1939, Association of Ex-Members of Squadron A, Reprinted by the Squadron A Association, Heritage Books, 2010 Squadron A Association, p. 4
7. "Our Fashionable Troopers, The evolution from the Swell First Hussars of the Very Swell City Troop," The Sun, New York NY, November 4, 1888 p.6 c.6
8. "A Troop To Preserve Its Name", New York Daily Tribune, New York NY, December 9, 1884, p.2 c.6
9. Squadron A, A History of It's First Fifty Years 1889-1939, Association of Ex-Members of Squadron A, Reprinted by the Squadron A Association, Heritage Books, 2010 Squadron A Association, p. 5&6
10. "Gen. Charles F. Roe Dies at 84 Years," New York Times, New York NY, Dec. 2, 1922 p. 13 c.3
11. The Evening Post, New York NY, February 23, 1889, p. 1 c.3
12. Squadron A, A History of It's First Fifty Years 1889-1939, Association of Ex-Members of Squadron A, Reprinted by the Squadron A Association, Heritage Books, 2010 Squadron A Association, p. 12
13. "Blackballed by the Hussars," The Sun, New York NY, March 25, 1885 p.3 c.2
14. "The Hussars and the Hebrews," New York Herald, New York NY, April 12, 1885 p.17 c.1
15. "National Guard Review," New York Daily Tribune, New York NY, October 30, 1887, p.15 c.1
16. "Our Fashionable Troopers, The evolution from the Swell First Hussars of the Very Swell City Troop," The Sun, New York NY, November 4, 1888 p.6 c.6

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