

SQUADRON A SERVICE ON THE MEXICAN BORDER

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Introduction

In 1916 the National Guard was called into federal service for the first time, as a consequence of the Mexican Revolution that had begun in 1910. The United States had strengthened positioned federal forces on the border and built forts to prevent incursions into U.S. territory by Mexican government and rebel forces alike. In 1911 there were some isolated incidences of shots being exchanged across the border between U.S. forces and the warring Mexicans. In April 1914, the U.S. intervened directly in the Mexican civil war, at Vera Cruz. U.S. naval and marine forces occupied the port to prevent the landing of arms for the forces of Victoriano Huerta, who had illegally seized power in a coup d'état in February of 1913, ousting and then murdering the elected president. Reinforced by Army personnel, the U.S. occupied the city until November of 1913. The fighting for Vera Cruz and subsequent occupation increased tensions and sparked anti-American sentiment in Mexico, even among the anti-Huerta forces, as well as in other Spanish-speaking nations south of the border. In March of 1916, Pancho Villa and his rebel forces attacked a train in Santa Isabel, in Mexico's northern Chihuahua State, killing 18 Americans. Later, Villa and his forces attacked three U.S. border towns in search of supplies to help fight the Mexican federal troops, killing civilians and U.S. soldiers. In response, President Wilson ordered Brig. Gen. John J. Pershing and 5,000 men to enter Mexico to capture or kill Villa. To reinforce federal troops and secure the border against further threats, President Wilson decided to call out the National Guard. (1)(2)

The Call to Arms

On June 18, 1916, President Woodrow Wilson, called up the National Guard for mobilization. He did so in accordance with the Constitution and law which gave him authority to muster the state militia into federal service. The following day, New York Governor Charles S. Whitman issued written orders to the New York National Guard to mobilize. At the time the call went out, Squadron A Cavalry was near its highest peacetime strength, which at its annual inspection in March 1916 totaled 357 men, assigned to four troops and a machine gun troop. (3)(4)

Squadron A's roster of officers at that time was:

- Command and Staff: Major William R. Wright, Squadron Commander; Surgeons, Captain Samuel McCullaugh and First Lieutenant Henry A.

Riley; Adjutant, First Lieutenant Reune Martin; Inspector of Small Arms Practice, First Lieutenant Frederick W. Wurster Jr.; Quartermaster, Second Lieutenant Dudley M. Cooper.

- Troop A: Captain Howard M. Cowperthwait, First Lieutenant Samuel H. Gillespie; Second Lieutenant Reginald E. Wigham
- Troop B: Captain Albert W. Putnam, First Lieutenant Robert B. Bartholemew, Second Lieutenant James R. Knapp
- Troop C: Captain Robert W. Bush, First Lieutenant Latham R. Reed, Second Lieutenant Ridgley Nicholas
- Troop D: Captain Graham Youngs, First Lieutenant Nathaniel H. Egleston, Second Lieutenant Melton D. Cole
- Machine Gun Troop: Captain Henry Sheldon, First Lieutenant Stanton Whitney, Second Lieutenant Colgate Hoyt Jr. and Alfred W. Booraem.
(5)

In addition to these elements, Depot Troop, Squadron A, had mustered into state service on March 14, 1916. Its purpose was to remain behind to train recruits and serve as a cadre for new troops. Depot Troop was re-organized in June 1916 into two troops, commanded by Major Latham G. Reed, assisted by two officers: 1st Lieutenant Howard C. Smith and 2nd Lieutenant Lewis Rowland Brown. On July 1, 1916, a third troop was authorized and First Lieutenant William R. Maloney and Second Lieutenant Rodman Gilder were transferred from Squadron A and assigned as its officers and sole members.(6)

The response to the call-up was immediate and all members in the New York metropolitan area soon arrived at the armory on Madison Avenue and Ninety-fourth Street. However, not all members were able to be present for roll-call. Some of these citizen-soldiers were scattered around the globe. Among them were John I. Blair Vail, M.D, who was in Colon, Panama and Reginald E. Wigham, who was at Yellowstone National Park, both newlyweds and on their honeymoons.(7)(8)

My Kingdom For A Horse

On June 19, 1916, Squadron A consisted of 351 officers and enlisted men, but had only 150 horses on hand. Fortunately, arrangements had been made to acquire more horses for a proposed summer tour of duty at Camp Whitman, and the contract was easily transferred to meet the needs of the mobilization. A call went out for experienced ex-Army blacksmiths and saddlers to report to Sgt. Lucius H. Biglow Jr. on June 20th-22nd for service with Squadron A at its armory. Troops A and B relocated to Van Cortlandt Park on June 20th, to establish the squadron camp, and free up space at the armory, while a detachment went up to the docks at W. 130th Street and North River to receive the first

shipment of horses. (9)(10)(11)

These horses were green, unbroken, unshorn animals. Squadron A commander Maj. William R. Wright, wrote that at the armory:

“... A vast open space with concrete floor was carefully moistened to the required degrees of slipperiness and filled with a large number of horses from lighters. The horses were then properly excited by black snake whips operated by well trained hostlers, and the game was on. A man who did secure a good horse and got him out of the dock usually had him taken away by the Division Q.M. Department at once and saw his prize given to some other organization; unless the intelligent animal seconded his efforts to dodge around the corner. On the outskirts of the melee hovered the faithful sergeants, setting legs and arms, binding up wounds, administering restoratives and calling 'once more into the breach, dear friends.' These scenes were repeated daily during the first ten days of our service, the horses being transferred first to the armory and afterwards to camp at Van Cortlandt. Our journeys thereto at times partook of all the dash and glamour of a cavalry charge, and at other times resembled the retreat from Moscow. Even when our chargers were safely delivered, assigned to troops, and tied on the picket line, troubles did not cease. Devilish ingenuity was shown by the stable sergeants who had acquired particularly trying lots, and he was in direct line for promotion who could, day after day, report the same number of horses on the line and yet point with pride to a steady improvement in their appearance and manner...With gradual inspection, branding and identification, these troubles disappeared.” (12)

Mules were needed to transport supplies and equipment, being able to venture across terrain inaccessible to motorized transport. Intelligent animals, they also could be ornery and unpredictable. An account of horses and mules being unloaded from the 131st Street Pier and transported to Van Cortlandt Park noted that troopers were bitten, and some animals required two or more men to handle them. When about 200 yards from the park, the animals stampeded, throwing troopers off their feet and dragging them along at the ends of their halters. Until these stubborn, ill-tempered beasts were weeded out, they would prove dangerous to the cavalrymen and public alike. A case in point was that of Robert Maxwell of Squadron A, who was breaking in a green horse on the polo grounds of Van Cortlandt Park when it bolted into a crowd of spectators, injuring three civilians. Because of the shortage of employable horses and mules it was not until June 24th that Troops C and D and the MG Troop joined their comrades at Van Cortlandt Park. The arrival of 76 more horses on July 5th brought Squadron A to war strength. (13) (14) (15)(16)

The Squadron A Guardsmen

On June 19, 1916, the guardsmen of Squadron A were told the mobilization was not a call for volunteers. It was fact; they were going to Texas to guard the Mexican border. Due to federal bureaucracy however, it wasn't until June 30th that Squadron A mustered into federal service and

individuals took the required oath to serve in the National Guard of the United States for three years. By then all five troops in Squadron A were camped at Van Cortlandt Park.(17)(18)

Squadron A had the reputation of being a well-educated (Columbia, Princeton, Harvard, Yale, *etc.*), affluent, socially prominent unit of the New York National Guard. Much was made of them performing the duties of the ordinary soldier. *The Evening World* wrote:

“Go up and see those bankers and brokers and lawyers and doctors and engineers and contractors and merchants and capitalists digging ditches, and splitting rails, and driving tent pegs, and cleaning the troop streets, and doing their own washing in a downpour of rain or under the broiling sun; go up and see wealthy men and the sons of wealthy men, many of them scions of the city's oldest and best known families, working as hard as the boys of the Fighting Sixty-ninth, or the boys of the Husky Twelfth or the boys of any of the other regiments whose members have been raised on a steady diet of manual labor; and lastly stick around until mess time and see men who know most of the head waiters in the fancy hotels and restaurants by their first name—and who don't have to keep their appetites on a leash when they enter such places—stick around and see those milkfed chaps standing in line to get measured for a half portion of beans, a couple of slabs of cold beef and a stack of bread, and see the genuine relish with which they stow it in the individual commissary departments...And don't go away until you see those smart young cavalymen bathing their tinware. When it come to laundering their eating utensils those Squadron A'ers could open a camp of instruction for general houseworkers. And they are doing all these things with a cheerfulness that is nothing short of refreshing. Like the thousands of youngsters and oldsters who have harkened to the call of the Nation, they are prepared to take anything that comes along; ready to go to the end of the route in the present determination to force respect for the old Red, White and Blue.”(19)

Listed in the *New York Times* were some of the socially prominent men who deployed: Lucius H. Biglow, Alanson G. Fox, Sherman P. Haight, William B. Vanderhoof, Harry C. Cushing 3rd, Havens Grant, Robert W. Neeser, Reginald B. Rives, William Jay Schieffelin Jr., Cornelius W. Wickersham, E.R. Philbin, Francis B. Rives, James C. Fargo, Van Santvoord Merle-Smith, John G. Agar Jr., Raymond Chauncey, Philip H. Chew, Alvin Devereux, George S. Hornblower, Brenton C. Pomeroy, Edwin S. Gorham, William J. Knapp, Herbert J. Slocum Jr., Almert F. Jenks Jr., Gailliard Ravenel, and Cleveland C. Huyler. The guardsmen were the sons of businessman, or businessmen themselves; doctors, lawyers, accountants, architects, engineers, and kin of politicians, such as Sgt. Howard Taft of the MG Troop, who was the nephew of former President William Howard Taft, who paid him a visit at Van Cortlandt Park. Sports notables served too, such as Karl H. Behr, a Squadron A member who was to challenge for the New Jersey State Tennis Championship, and John Reed Kilpatrick, who would go on to be inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame and the College Football Hall of Fame. Playwrights Frank Dazey, Luke Thomas, and Harry B Smith also served as Squadron A troopers on the Mexican border. (20)(21)(22)(23)(24)(25)

As with any military mobilization, not only was civilian livelihood disrupted, social life was as

well. Engagements were announced, and marriages hastily concluded before leaving for Texas. Among those to marry were Corporal Van Santwood Merle-Smith, who had planned to wed in California on Aug. 1st instead did so on June 20th, the same day that lawyer and private in Troop B Walter S. Logan, married; Trooper Rufus James Trimble married on June 26th, and all his ushers were Squadron A members, while Trooper Crittenden Hull Adams married on the 28th, with his cousin John Fairchild Adams, also a Squadron A member, as his best man. Trooper Truman P. Handy, a Princeton man, announced his engagement on June 20, 1916. (26) (27)(28) (29)(30)

The mobilization camp at Van Cortlandt Park was a busy place, used to train new recruits and “educate” the horses. Recruitment would continue beyond the initial deployment, the responsibility of Depot Troop. The recruits at the Park were “drilled on foot and on horse, taught to put on a blanket, which part of the horse afforded the safest and easiest approach, how to hold a rifle, and how to keep contact on the skirmish line while advancing through the woods.” Lt. Latham R. Reed of Troop C was considered one of the best instructors. This activity went on until the night of July 5, 1916 when Squadron A was given the order to entrain for Texas. On July 6th, following reveille at 4:00 a.m., the squadron prepared to break camp by 10:15 a.m. for the long ride to Yonkers. (31)(32)

Heading for the Border

A reporter for the *New York Times* described the departure of Squadron A from Van Cortlandt Park:

“A few minutes before the command to march was given, Major Wright had the squadron line up for review, and then as the buglers began to play the squadron's war song, 'To the Colors,' the guidon bearers took their places beside the troop commanders, and a moment later the four troops and the machine-gun troop swung into formation of fours and the ride to Yonkers began. Troop A, commanded by Captain Howard Cowperthwaite, followed Major Wright and the squadron staff, and then in order named came Troop B under the command of Captain Arthur W. Putnam, Troop C, Captain R.W. Bush; Troop D, Captain Graham Youngs, and the machine-gun troop under command of Captain Henry Sheldon. Behind the trotting cavalymen followed a column of automobiles, more than 200 in line. Each occupant of every car carried a small silk flag, and the sight was one of the prettiest that has marked the departure of any New York Unit.” (33)

After arriving in Yonkers, it required nearly six hours to load “horses, mules, motor trucks, forage, tentage and all that goes with a cavalry outfit” on three freight trains. It was hot, dusty work in the railroad yards. Loaded last were Squadron A's mascots: goats, one said to be have been aboard the scout cruiser *Chester* during the fighting at Vera Cruz in 1914, as well as a fox terrier named Punch, and a Pomeranian owned by a Troop D private. Loading completed at 6:00 p.m., it was time to say

farewell to the hundreds of family members and friends who had come along to bid them farewell. They had twenty minutes to do so before the first train departed.(34)(35)

The first leg of their journey took them to Buffalo, a twenty-four hour trip, traveling at 28-mph with short stops at Syracuse and Rochester. The men rode in uncomfortable day coaches but had the luxury of a large box car attached to the train to provide hot meals. It took three and one half hours to boil all the coffee needed for the men. In charge of the mess was Mess Sgt. Reginald Saunders, assisted by Presidential nephew Sgt. William Howard Taft, and John A. Greene Jr., son of the president of the National Biscuit Company.(36)

At Buffalo, a train collision occurred just before the troop train departed. A 32-car freight train was backing up at a siding when it was switched onto the same track as the Squadron A train, which had just unloaded the horses. A caboose attached to the rear of the troop train was derailed on impact. Another collision occurred at the rail yard in Gallon, Ohio, when a train of a dozen cars was shunted on to the same track as the troop trains, rear-ending the caboose of one of them.(37)

The *New York Times* reported that:

“Throughout the trip there has been a series of severe jolts when stopping and starting which have sent the men flying in all directions. The results have been disastrous to any one drinking coffee or trying to shave. The worn and rheumatic brakes of the venerable Erie coaches, long since entitled to honorable retirement, seem unable to perform their accustomed duties. One of these jolts placed Livingstone Whitney temporarily on the sick list yesterday afternoon. Whitney was nailing some cleats on the floor, when a sudden jerk threw him against the side of the car with considerable force. He suffered a badly wretched knee and bruises which required the attention of Dr. McCullough.”(38)

Crossing Indiana was a dusty affair as “great clouds of fine silt penetrated the cars, choking the men and covering them with grime. To add to this discomfort, the supply of water on board quickly gave out, so that the men were unable to wash up or to quench their thirst until Indianapolis was reached. All hands view the situation, however with good humor.” But the response of the citizenry to their mobilization must have been heartening to the men of Squadron A. “Since leaving Buffalo the men have been greeted in every town and hamlet by the residents. Flags were displayed on the farmhouses, and whenever a stop was made the people hastened to welcome the men. This was especially true of the small places.” On July 9th the trains arrived in St. Louis, Missouri, for an eight hour layover, to give the men and livestock a rest. Tired, some suffering side effects of a second typhoid vaccination, over 300 of them took advantage of the free bath and shave offered by A.B. Gaines, president of the Hotel Jefferson Company, while the Racquet and Athletic Clubs entertained them and sent them off with a generous supply of cigars and cigarettes. (39)(40)

Departure from St. Louis was delayed four hours, when, having loaded the last horse, a yard

engineer, thinking the shipment part of another consignment, took the stock cars several miles away. On the positive side, Squadron A received word before departure that tourist sleeper cars were awaiting them at North St. Louis. When the squadron left St Louis, four men were left behind. Dudley Cooper, squadron quartermaster, remained there on official business, while Trooper Brenton C. Pomeroy was suffering tonsillitis and had to spend an extra day under treatment, accompanied by Trooper Thomas McClure Peters, and Trooper Charles McAlpin Pyle of Troop C missed the train; all would rejoin the squadron later. (41)(42)(43)(44)

Squadron A reached Texas on July 10th after speeding through Missouri, Kansas, and Oklahoma. At Mokane, Missouri, during a half-hour stop, they gave a concert to the 100 or more citizens who were there to greet them. A large group welcomed them during a breakfast stop in Parsons, Kansas. The horses were rested during an eight hour stop at Muskogee, Oklahoma, while the troopers were well entertained by the citizenry. At Dennison, Texas, the Y.M.C.A. pool was opened to the guardsmen, vaudeville and movie houses provided entertainment, and arrangements were made for a large number of the troopers to dine in private homes. Unfortunately for the first and second trains of Squadron A, their stopover in Dennison lasted but a half-hour, to take on water, and they continued on to Houston to await the third section. In Houston, the men faced inflated prices for a bath and a shave. Lt. Dudley Cooper, having missed the troop train in Dallas, caught up with the squadron in Houston, making it to Union Station five minutes before the train departed, and at that he was fortunate, as the train had been delayed for five hours. After a trip of five and one half days, Squadron A arrived on the Mexican border on July 13, 1916. (45)(46) (47) (48)

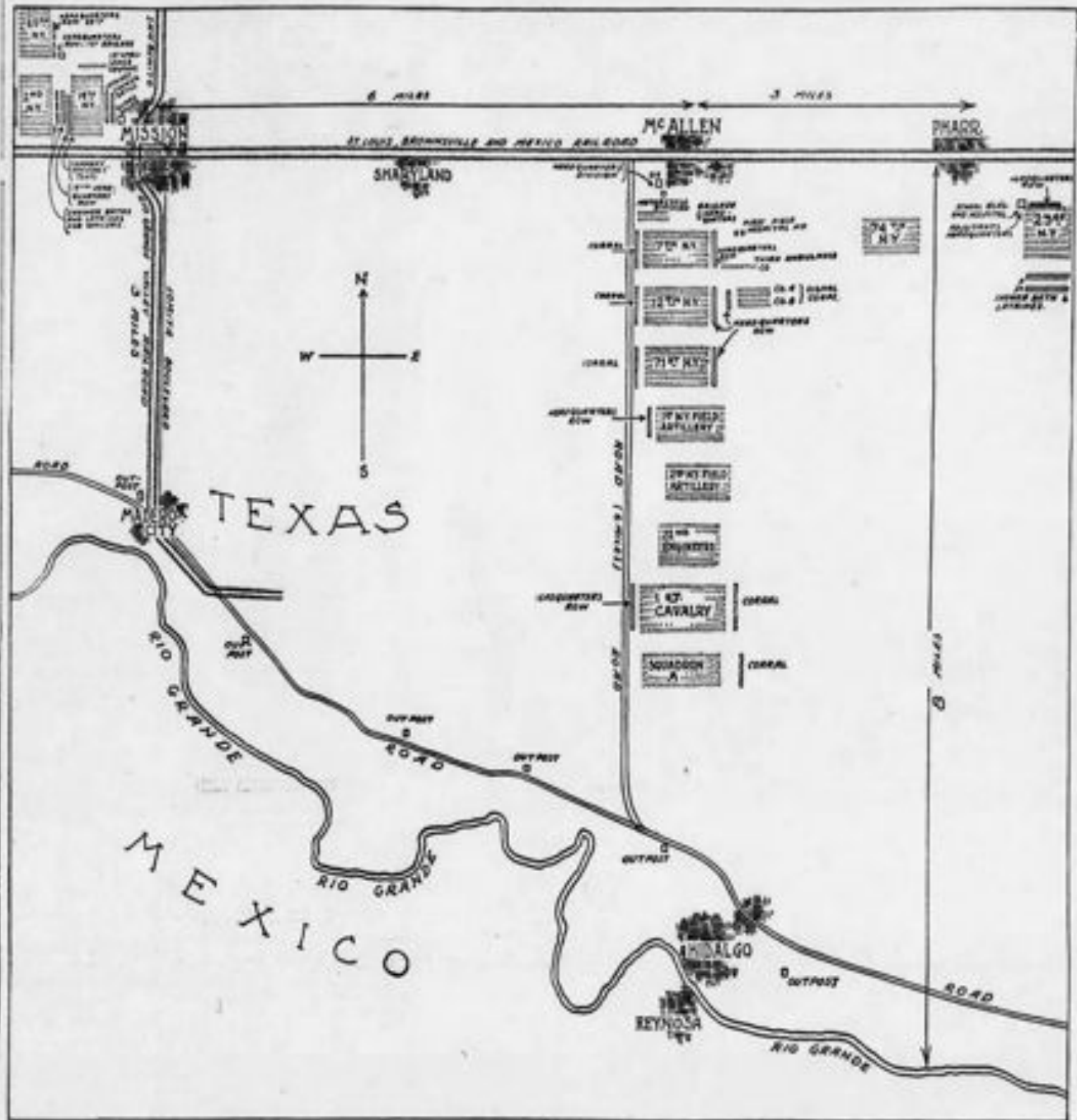
On the Mexican Border

The official history of Squadron A tells us that Texas proved a bit of a surprise for the New York troopers:

“At last, McAllen of the 'Magic Valley!' They told us it hadn't rained there for fourteen months. It began the day we arrived and didn't stop for the next three. Mud up to your knees; thick, heavy, sticky mud that cakes your shoes and your horses' legs, and makes grooming the trooper's despair. Work, ye tarriers! Unload that motor truck, empty those dozen cars of horses, lead them down that slippery runway and out through that slough of despond. Load those wagons. Drag the whole business a mile and a half through that swamp. Clear that cactus away. Now hurry up with the tents. Supper? Wonderful anti-climax to a day of torture. Bed? What can beat the good old loam of Texas?”(49)

Squadron A built its camp about three miles from McAllen and about four miles from the Rio Grande [see map]. (50) The troopers hired local Mexican-Americans to help clear away the cactus and underbrush, and by the end of the day there was not one man in the command who was not covered in

ENCAMPMENT OF N. Y. STATE TROOPS IN TEXAS



At Mission, it will be seen, are the Sixty-ninth, Second and Fourteenth Infantry Regiments. Six miles to the east is McAllen, where the Seventh, Twelfth and Seventy-first Infantry are. Here also are the First Field Artillery, Twenty-second Engineers, First Cavalry and Squadron A. Pharr is three miles to the east of McAllen, and there the Twenty-third Infantry is located, but between Pharr and McAllen is the Seventy-fourth.

mud. The men were served beans from a bucket, and coffee and hardtack. A serious problem was that the camp was located at the end of the only water pipe line out from McAllen, which had to supply the needs of not only Squadron A, but also the other units of the 6th Division, the 7th and 12th New York Infantry and 1st New York Cavalry as well. Being at the end of the line meant that, "except for the

hours after midnight, all we received was an occasional trickle.” According to Major Wright, the official camp water system was replaced by “our own well, pump, tank and pipe lines; the gift of a member of Troop B, anonymous but ever blessed.”(51) (52)(53) Having set up at Camp McAllen, the men of Squadron A believed their camp was properly drained and the tents and equipment protected by a series of dikes and ditches. A few days later, a storm dispelled them of that notion.

“A shower, seemingly no more severe than others, visited us, and our beautiful camp disappeared under the waves. Ditches ceased to exist, dikes submerged and dissolved. With frantic haste, each troop turned out en masse and put forth every effort to dam the water into another troop street before it could be dammed into theirs. The next day we commenced that rival of the Panama Canal, which, for the rest of our period of service, successfully prevented the recurrence of our first tragedy and always brought our camp above water before we sank a third time.” The Squadron A guardsmen presented quite a sight during camp reconstruction. “Hardy spirits on arising took off all encumbering garments, grabbed a pick or shovel, and went to work secure in the knowledge that within five minutes they would be so covered in mud as to be unrecognizable. Officers modestly wore slickers, but a mounted slicker is so constructed that, when reinforced by no other clothing, the sudden shock of a rear view materially detracts from the dignity of its appearance from the front.”(54)(55)

Life at the camp was fairly routine: “A day's work in a cavalry camp begins and ends with care of the horses; reveille at 5:30, then feed the horses and police the camp; mess at 6:15; 'Boots and Saddles' at 7:00; mounted drill at 7:30; recall, 10:30, cleaning equipment, then an hour's grooming, watering and feeding; mess, 12:30; school, 1:30; stables and water call, 4:00; dismounted drill, 4:30; recall, 5:30; guard mount, 5:40; retreat, 6:00; mess, 6:30; quarters, 9:45; taps and lights out at 10:00.” (56)

“Hikes” served a dual purpose, training and breaking up the monotony of camp life. On August 1st, two weeks after arriving, Squadron A escorted Major General John F. O’Ryan, 6th Division Commander, on a ride covering 150 square miles of ground that would be used for divisional maneuvers. It was on this week long hike that Squadron A earned the reputation as being “the hardest riding bunch down there.” Each troop in Squadron A had been donated a 1½ ton motor truck by relatives and friends of the squadron, which proved invaluable throughout service on the border, as well as two motor cars, donated by former squadron members and friends. These motor cars and those sent by the division quartermaster “sank all over the country and had to be pulled out” on the return trip on that hike in August. (57)(58)(59)(60).

Later, another ride was planned to Camp Fordyce. Major Wright set off in his Marmon car with Alwyn Ball, Reune Martin, and Capt. Putnam to scout the route. Occasionally the vehicle would get stuck in the mud, but with a rope and the three passengers pulling it free, they could move on; that is until they were in a lonely section of road, four or five miles from Hidalgo and three miles from

Donna Pump. There they hit a deep-water hole and sank, water rising over their feet. Martin and Putnam walked to Donna Pump to call for a camp truck to come free the vehicle, then returned to the car to await rescue. Unfortunately, the relief truck also became stuck in the mud in camp and the passengers spent the night swatting mosquitos, which were so bad, the major abandoned the vehicle to take shelter in a mesquite tree, hoping to rise above the mosquito line. (61) Such was a problem with mechanized transport.

The ride to Sam Fordyce did go as planned, a 21 mile ride along dirt roads following close to a one-track railroad. It was barren, flat country covered by mesquite and cactus. Every four or five miles the squadron saw settlements built of adobe with thatched roofs, inhabited by poor families who did not speak English. Six-hours into the ride they encountered a tributary of the Rio Grande and stopped to allow the horses to water and graze, and availed themselves of lunch, rest, and a swim, their first in two months. Arriving in the evening at Sam Fordyce, they met up with soldiers of the 2nd Texas Infantry and enjoyed an evening of dinner, music, and drink. Some excitement occurred in the middle of the night when a fire was spotted burning brightly about three miles from camp and gunshots were heard. Fearing a raid was in progress, a platoon from the 2nd Texas took a motor car to investigate, while Major Wright ordered out a platoon from Troop B to follow. As the troopers approached the scene of the fire they met the 2nd Texas soldiers returning and learned it had been a false alarm; the shots had been fired as a call for help; a house had caught fire accidentally. Disappointed that there was no action, the troopers returned to camp. The next day, they rode ten miles and made early camp due to excessive heat, as the mercury rose above 120 F. The following day a fierce storm hit with gale-force winds and a temperature drop to below 50; the major ordered the troops back to camp. Knowlton Durham noted that it took every man in Squadron A to keep the camp for blowing away.(62).

River patrol was a pleasant activity, begun first by a composite troop. A few weeks after arrival at Camp McAllen, Capt. Putnam of Troop B led a provisional troop of 25 non-coms and privates from Squadron A and the 1st New York Cavalry on a week-long on assignment to familiarize the men with ground considered bandit territory. Special attention was paid to fords and river crossings on the Rio Grande on both sides of Hidalgo. Later, the entire squadron performed similar duty. (63)(64)

Members of Troop C were on temporary detached service as guards for a supply train near Monte Cristo, Texas. They set up an informal headquarters at the Wander Inn, and enjoyed the wide shady veranda, phonograph, couch, and rickety shower bath in the yard during their leisure hours. Guard duty at Monte Cristo was also performed by Troops A and D; Troop B saw service at Mission. (65)(66)

Training is the routine of an army unit, and much time was spent testing camp defenses,

learning to utilize and overcome terrain obstacles, and working in concert with other units in the brigade. Squadron A participated in several large maneuvers with other troops of the brigade and division. The first maneuver involved a scenario whereby Hidalgo was occupied by enemy forces. It was made notable by the “capture of Hidalgo without firing a shot...” Squadron A troopers captured a platoon of Troop L, 1st New York Cavalry during the battle. Later, Troop K of the 1st turned the tables and captured half a troop of Squadron A. (67)(68)(69)

Squadron A devised its own exercises. Once, on an exercise, “Approaching the supposedly deserted ruins concealed in thick brush, we guarded every avenue of exit, formed a cordon of mounted skirmishers, and charged in with raised pistols to discover that our 'deserted village,' contained about a dozen Texas Rangers bristling with weapons, as usual, and somewhat puzzled over our sudden and warlike appearance. A peace without victory was established, and we withdrew.”(70)

Squadron A performed well in field firing at silhouette targets at the La Gloria range. When all the records were in, Squadron A led the 6th Division in battalion scores and all of the troops had finished in the “first ten” companies. Another accolade was when a federal field inspection board gave Squadron A the highest rating of any National Guard cavalry squadron in federal service. Squadron A showed no hardship attending reviews, bringing up the rear of the column, which enabled them to be well-prepared. (71)

Off-duty, the troopers formed a glee club, quartets, banjo clubs, wrote ballads of their experience, played polo and intramural sports, gambled, published the *Troop C Tarantula* and contributed to the 6th Division’s newspaper, *The Rio Grande Rattler*. The generosity of family and friends helped provide canvas-covered horse sheds, screened tent frames, a mess shack, the squadron infirmary and Squadron A Club, Texas branch. That generosity also improved their diets.(72)(73)(74)

Injury and disease are the bane of military service, and while Squadron A suffered no deaths during their border service, there were casualties. The injured and sick were first treated at camp. Depending on the severity, they were sent to field hospitals or the post hospital at Ft. Sam Houston; the severest cases were transported to the Army and Navy General Hospital in Hot Springs, Arkansas. Most injuries were fractured and broken bones and lacerated fingers. Antibiotics did not exist so injury and disease could make for a long recovery time. Nine men of the squadron were injured by a kick of a horse or mule while on the border; five by a fall from a horse or wagon, including Pvt. Lloyd Allen who broke a leg in fall at Mission and was in hospital over a month. Pvt. Frank Dazey, the playwright, was struck by an automobile but was in hospital only a few days. Illness too struck the Squadron A troopers. Six of the men of Troop C who had served in the commissary at Monte Cristo were laid up with suspected paratyphoid. Three confirmed cases of paratyphoid were reported in the newspapers; the

source being the field bakery at Mission. Pvt. Francis C. Dossert of Troop A came down with appendicitis and a successful operation was performed at the 1st Field Hospital, said to be the first of its kind in a field hospital in the United States. Later, in August, Dossert requested and was granted a one month furlough. George D. Leslie also suffered from appendicitis and was well enough to return to duty after treatment at Ft. Sam Houston and a nearly two month long furlough. Pvt. Harold Gile was granted a furlough in order to have an operation to treat a hernia. Four men, Troopers Aycrigg, Duer, Fleitman, and Halley, received surgeon's certificates of disability in November 1916 and were discharged. It should be also be noted that men in Squadron A were discharged or furloughed from the unit for reasons other than health. In Sept. 1916, four men, Troopers John F. Adams, George S. Hornblower, Antonio Lazo, and Richard Page were discharged due to dependent relatives. Thirteen others did complete their entire service on the border with Squadron A, having accepted commissions as officers in the 69th New York Infantry, 12th New York Infantry, Field Artillery, or the Regular Army. Squadron A also had 19 men furloughed to the National Guard Reserve and three retirements from service. (75)(76)(77)(78)(79)(80)

As Squadron A's service continued into the fall without any action against an enemy, thoughts of returning home escalated. The Squadron A glee club "introduced a new song which was greeted with thunderous applause at all of the Division entertainments held about semi-monthly in front of General O'Ryan's quarters."(81)

When Do We Go Home, John?

Now we've been down here six long
months,

On the banks of the Rio Grande,
We've eaten tons of pork and beans,
And hiked throughout the land;
We've liked our stay immensely,
And worked hard every day--
But now, the summer's over,
The time has come to say:

Chorus:

When do we do home, John---
When do we go home?
The girls up North are anxious
And they miss us.
The Broadway lights are burning,
The office needs us back---
When are those Pullmans coming, General?

Going Home

On the night of December 4, 1916, word came that they'd been ordered home. "Though it was after taps, a parade of troopers, the more fastidious in pajamas and the proletariat in shirt-tails, started in the vicinity of Troop A and marched through camp, up one street, and down the next, beating laundry tubs, wash basins, and other noise-making utensils. In addition to this hubbub, capable of rousing the dead, the air was hideous with whoops and yells of the sort the papers tell about when a presidential candidate is nominated. The racket stopped as suddenly as it started when the mob, valiantly dispersed by Captain Spencer, officer of the day, resumed its' "bunk-fatigue." However, Squadron A had to wait for replacement by the 1st Alabama Cavalry which had yet to arrive at Camp McAllen.(82) (83)

On Friday, December 15th, the squadron struck camp. The Squadron A troopers distributed furniture and personal belongings to the less fortunate, rounded up the horses, mascots, and other creatures acquired during their stay in Texas, and made way to the train station escorted by the 12th New York Infantry, who had given them a luncheon in their camp. The entire 1st New York Cavalry, from Brooklyn, rode out as the squadron was loading the trains and gave them a formal saber salute. The 6th Division newspaper, the *Rio Grande Rattler* paid them a tribute, "nothing has been too difficult for Squadron A to undertake cheerfully, and execute promptly and efficiently." (84)(85)(86)

Before departing from the railroad yards, a letter from General Ryan, the 6th Division Commander arrived for Major Wright, the commanding officer. It read:

"Squadron A being under orders to entrain for home station in New York City, the time is appropriate to make acknowledgement to you, and through you to your officers and enlisted men, of the excellence of the service rendered by the squadron during the period of its stay on the border.

"That the personnel of your command are of the type in civil life who have important business obligations and responsibilities which have suffered materially by reason of the enforced absence of six months is well known. What therefore is particularly commendable in connection with their service is that their loyalty and zeal was not only above par at all times, but served as an inspiration to the Division. Squadron A, throughout its service, met the unpleasant and the disagreeable details and features of field work with apparently the same zeal and interest that it displayed in performing the most attractive field exercises. The horsemanship and marksmanship of the squadron have set high standards.

"Please convey to the officers and men of your command my appreciation of the excellence of their work and of the really remarkable spirit back of it."(87)

Squadron A left McAllen at midnight on December 15th, and arrived in two sections at Houston the following evening. Troops C and D, accompanying the horses, arrived first. Once the horses had

been unloaded, the men descended on the Rice Hotel for a feast. The headline in the local newspaper read, "Rice Commissary Depleted by 'Millionaire' Squadron, Nearly 200 Chickens, Two Barrels of Oysters, Three Barrels of Shrimp, Many Pounds Of Beef and Other Eats Consumed, Not to Mention Drinks." The men had memorable time, and appreciated the hospitality shown in both Houston and later in Louisville, Kentucky, on their way home. Delays customary to moving a cavalry unit by rail occurred on the journey. At one point, all of their cargo had to be unloaded and transferred to other rail cars because of the narrowness of certain West Virginia tunnels. Finally the first section pulled into the Jersey City rail yards at 1:00 a.m. on December 23rd. Unloading the rail cars began at dawn. The second train arrived at half-past nine in the morning. In total 19 officers, 447 troopers, 194 horses, and 37 assorted motor vehicles made the trip home to New York. (88)(89) (90)(91)

Shortly after 1:00 p.m., on the 23rd, unloading complete, Squadron A took a ferry to West Twenty-third Street. Being Christmas, the atmosphere was festive, the crowds thick with applause as the guardsmen, escorted by Depot Troop, passed the Governor's reviewing stand at the University Club, Fifty-fourth Street and Fifth Avenue shortly after 3:00 p.m. Among the civic and military dignitaries reviewing the troops were Gov. Whitman, Mayor Mitchel, Maj. Gen. Leonard Wood, Maj. Gen. John F. O'Ryan, Col. Cornelius Vanderbilt and George W. Wickersham. Proceeding north along Fifth Avenue to Ninety-fourth Street, the troopers turned east to their armory on Madison Avenue. There, the command was given, "Captains, dismiss your troops." The border service was over. It was time to reunite with the 2,000 loved ones awaiting them. The reception for the troopers and their families and friends was held next door at the more spacious 8th Coast Artillery Regiment Armory to comfortably accommodate them all.(92)(93)(94)(95)

Depot Troop, Squadron A Guard

While Squadron A was serving on the Mexican border, the members of Depot Troop were on call, ready if required by the state, to support civil authorities during any unrest. Depot Troop's main function was to assist in the breaking and training of horses and drilling of new recruits until they could be deployed to the border. Depot Troop kept the home fires burning, and had the honor of escorting Squadron A to the armory during the parade on Fifth Avenue, on December 23, 1916. They fulfilled their mission, and credit must be given, though they did not go to the border.

Significance of Mexican Border Service

Squadron A's service on the Mexican border should be viewed as a training experience, preparing them for World War I service, which began approximately six months after their return from

the border to New York City. While not a bullet was fired at an enemy while they were on the border, the deployment provided invaluable lessons for the troops. The guardsmen were citizen-soldiers, who until mustered into federal service in June 1916, had limited opportunity to train in the field. Certainly, the six months of continuous active service prepared them far better than the camp exercises of a weeks duration held yearly by the New York National Guard. Participating in large-scale maneuvers with other units of cavalry, infantry, engineers, and so forth, exposed the strengths and weaknesses involved in undertaking coordinated missions between such units. It allowed them to test out new technologies. For example, for the first time, Squadron A had mechanized equipment and saw for themselves how vehicles could be used, and how they bogged down in the mud, and the troops learned that spare parts and gas needed to be kept on hand. It was a transition time that showed the need for better equipment to fight a modern war, such as being fought in Europe, with airplanes, heavy artillery, gas, and more.

During World War I, Squadron A furnished from its ranks, over 750 officers to the United States Army, many of whom had served on the Mexican border. Some would also serve in the armed forces of allied nations. In August 1917 Squadron A was redesignated as the 105th Machine Gun Battalion, 27th Division. Enlisted men who served on the border in Squadron A went to officers' training camps, graduated, and were assigned to units throughout the army and a few entered the navy. Some border veterans would be highly decorated; most would survive the war. Some would not.

Squadron A Border Veterans Who Died in World War I

Lest we forget, these are the border veterans that sacrificed their lives in service to their country in World War I or died shortly thereafter from illness or wounds sustained in service:

1. John Girard Agar Jr.: Member of Troop C, died in service in an airplane crash in France, on Oct. 21, 1918, while a First Lieutenant in the 22nd Aero Squadron.(96)
2. Arthur Douglas Alexander: Member of Troop B, died on April 22, 1919, from an illness contracted while serving in France as a Second Lieutenant.(97)
3. Lloyd Seward Allen: Member of Troop A, died in an plane crash at Wright Field OH, on May 1, 1918, while a cadet in the Aviation Section Signal Corps School.(98)
4. Charles Dabney Baker: Member of Troop C, died in France on September 23, 1918, from wounds sustained from machine gun fire, while a Captain, Company E, 165th Infantry and was awarded the French *Croix de Guerre*.(99)
5. Stratford St. J. Bushman (Buschmann): Member of Troop C, was severely wounded in France, while serving as a Captain, 302nd Engineers, 77th Division, and died of complications on May 26, 1921 in Baltimore Maryland.(100)
6. Stephen Higginson Dorr Jr.: Member of Machine Gun Troop, died in a plane crash on August 17, 1917 at Royal Aviation Corps field, Toronto ON, thirty days shy of

- receiving his commission as an officer in US Army Air Corps.(101)
7. Fritz Leopold Dressler: Member of Troops B, died in France on October 16, 1918, while a Captain, Quartermaster Section, 2nd Division.(102)
 8. John Fine: Member of Troop C, died on July 12, 1922, from an illness contracted in France, while a Captain and commander of Battery B, 306th Field Artillery, 77th Division.(103)
 9. Herbert Groesbeck Jr.: Member of Troop C, was killed in action in France on November 1, 1918, while a First Lieutenant in Company A, 308th Machine Gun Battalion, 78th Division.(104)
 10. Thomas Addis Emmet Harris: Member of Troop C, died in France of wounds on September 6, 1918, while a First Lieutenant, Company D, 306th Machine Gun Battalion, 77th Division.(105)
 11. Sheldon Eliot Hoadley: Member of Troop C, died in France from a direct hit by a gas shell on October 13, 1918, while a First Lieutenant in Battery D, 305th Field Artillery. He was cited for gallantry.(106)
 12. Edward Jules Lamarche: Member of Troop C, was wounded in action in France, earning a *Croix de Guerre* with Silver Star, and died suddenly on July 12, 1919, while a Second Lieutenant, Headquarters Company, 15th Field Artillery, on occupation duty in Germany.(107)
 13. Albert Henry Lanzer: Member of Troop A, died March 5, 1919 of influenza returning home from France aboard the troop ship USS Leviathan, while a member of Co. B 105th Machine Gun Bn.(108)
 14. James Jellis Page: Member of Troop A, was killed in action in France on September 28, 1918, while a Private 1st Class in Company K, 107th Infantry, 27th Division. He was awarded the Silver Star.(109)
 15. Marshall G. Peabody: Member of Troop C, was killed in action by machine gun fire in France on October 8, 1918, while a Second Lieutenant, 306th Machine Gun Battalion, 77th Division. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.(110)
 16. James Jackson Porter: Member of Troop C, was killed in action in France on October 5, 1917, while a Second Lieutenant, 10th Machine Gun Battalion, 4th Division.(111)
 17. Gordon L. Rand: Member of Troop C, died in France on February 6, 1918, while a First Lieutenant in the Air Service. (112)
 18. William Bradford Turner: Member of Machine Gun Troop, was killed in action in France on September 27, 1918, while a First Lieutenant, 105th Infantry, 27th Division. He was award the Medal of Honor posthumously.(113)
 19. Russell Tracy Walker: Member of Troop A, died in England of influenza on October 18, 1918, while a First Lieutenant, 147th Aero Squadron.(114)

NOTES

1. Border War (1910-19). Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Border_War_%281910%E2%80%9319%29
2. United States Occupation of Veracruz. Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_occupation_of_Veracruz
3. Appendix A. New York Units At The Mexican Border, 1916-1917. https://dmna.ny.gov/historic/reghist/mexBorder/mexBorder_history_Exhibits.htm#1
4. Squadron A: A History of Its First Fifty Years. Association of Ex-Members of Squadron A. p.141
5. Ibid. p.144
6. Ibid. pp.171&172&174
7. The Sun, New York NY, 20 June 1916 p.3 c.6
8. New York Herald, New York NY 21 June 1916 p.13 c.7
9. The Sun, New York NY, 20 June 1916 p.3 c.6
10. New York Times, New York NY, 20 June 1916 p.9 c.1 The ad reads to report to Sgt. Bigelow. Sgt. Lucius H. Biglow Jr. is the correct name on the Squadron A muster roll.
11. Squadron A: A History of Its First Fifty Years. Association of Ex-Members of Squadron A. p.145
12. Ibid. p.145
13. New York Herald, New York NY, June 24, 1916 p.6 c.3
14. The Sun, New York NY, 25 June 1916 p.2 c.5
15. The Evening Post, New York NY, 24 June 1916 p.3 c.3
16. New York Herald, New York NY, 6 July 1916 p.5 c.2
17. Squadron A: A History of Its First Fifty Years. Association of Ex-Members of Squadron A. p.144
18. Ibid. p.159
19. The Evening World, New York NY, 29 June 1916 p.9 c.4
20. New York Times, New York NY, 7 July 1916 p.5 c.4
21. The Sun, New York NY, 27 June 1916 p.3 c.6
22. The Brooklyn Daily Eagle, Brooklyn NY, 27 June 1916 p.23 c.2
23. The Cincinnati Enquirer, Cincinnati OH, 2 July 1916 p.4 c.3, Section 3
24. The Scranton Republican, Scranton PA, 3 October 1916 p.11 c.7
25. The New York Times, New York NY, 22 October 1916 p.9 c.3, Section 2
26. The New York Times, New York NY, 21 June 1916 p.4 c.2
27. The New York Herald, New York NY, 21 June 1916 p.13 c.7
28. The New York Times, New York NY, 28 June 1916 p.11 c.2
29. The Brooklyn Daily Eagle, Brooklyn NY, 29 June 1916 p.7 c.1
30. The Brooklyn Daily Eagle, Brooklyn NY, 21 June 1916 p.4 c.7
31. Squadron A: A History of Its First Fifty Years. Association of Ex-Members of Squadron A. p.159
32. The New York Times, New York NY, 7 July 1916 p.5 c.4
33. Ibid. p.5 c.4
34. Squadron A: A History of Its First Fifty Years. Association of Ex-Members of Squadron A. p.159
35. The New York Times, New York NY, 7 July 1916 p.5 c.4
36. The New York Times, New York NY, 8 July 1916 p.3 c.4
37. The New York Times, New York NY, 9 July 1916 pp.15 c.4&5
38. Ibid. p.15 c.5

39. The New York Times, New York NY, 10 July 1916 p.5 c.2 The article makes reference to a 2nd vaccination against typhoid fever. Innoculations against communicable diseases were likely given at the Van Cortlandt Park encampment, with the 2nd inoculation against typhoid given shortly before departure.
40. The New York Times, New York NY, 11 July 1916 p.5 c.3
41. Ibid. p.5 c.3
42. The New York Times, New York, NY 13 July 1916 p.4 c.6
43. The New York Times, New York NY, 10 July 1916 p.5 c.2
44. St. Louis Post, St. Louis MO, 11 July 1916 p.9 c.3
45. The New York Times, New York NY, 11 July 1916 p.5 c.3
46. The New York Times, New York NY, 12 July 1916 p.5 c.3
47. The New York Times, New York NY, 13 July 1916 p.4 c.6
48. The New York Times, New York NY, 14 July 1916 p.4 c.2
49. Squadron A: A History of Its First Fifty Years. Association of Ex-Members of Squadron A. pp.159 &.160
50. The Brooklyn Eagle. Brooklyn NY. 4 August 1916 p.11 c.3-7
51. The New York Times, New York NY, 14 July 1916 p.4 c.2
52. Squadron A: A History of Its First Fifty Years. Association of Ex-Members of Squadron A. p.160
53. Ibid. p.150
54. Ibid. pp.146 & 147
55. Ibid. p.147
56. Ibid. p.161
57. The New York Times, New York NY, 3 August 1916 p.6 c.2
58. Squadron A: A History of Its First Fifty Years. Association of Ex-Members of Squadron A. p.162
59. Ibid.. p.146
60. Ibid. p.147
61. Ibid. pp.162 & 163
62. Ibid. pp.163-165
63. Ibid. p.161
64. Ibid. p.149
65. Pittston Gazette, Pittston PA, 4 September 1916 p.6 c.2&3
66. Squadron A: A History of Its First Fifty Years. Association of Ex-Members of Squadron A. p.165
67. Ibid. p.148
68. The Brooklyn Daily Eagle, Brooklyn NY, 25 September 1916 p.6 c.4
69. The Brooklyn Daily Eagle, Brooklyn NY, 1 October 1916 p.2 c.2&3, Section 2
70. Squadron A: A History of Its First Fifty Years. Association of Ex-Members of Squadron A. p.148
71. Ibid. p.148-150
72. The New York Times, New York NY, 21 August 1916 p.9 c.1
73. Belvidere Daily Republican, Belvidere IL, 16 September 1916 p.6 c.4
74. Squadron A: A History of Its First Fifty Years. Association of Ex-Members of Squadron A. pp.150 & 151
75. The Brooklyn Daily Eagle, Brooklyn NY, 6 September 1916 p.18 c.2
76. The Sun, New York NY, 9 September 1916 p.3 c.8
77. The New York Times, New York NY, 28 July 1916 p.4 c.2
78. The New York Times, New York NY, 9 August 1916 p.11 c.5

79. The New York Times, New York NY, 14 August 1916 p.11 c.1
80. Squadron A Muster Roll, Abstracts of muster rolls for National Guard units mustered into federal service during the 1916 Mexican Punitive Campaign, 1916-1917, New York State Archives. A total of 511 Squadron A guardsmen took the oath and were federalized. In addition to the discharges noted in text, another nine guardsmen were discharged- one being Trooper Stephen Mason who was an employee of federal contractor.
81. Squadron A: A History of Its First Fifty Years. Association of Ex-Members of Squadron A. p.151
82. The New York Times, New York NY, 5 December 1916 p.5 c.2
83. Democrat and Chronicle, Rochester NY, 11 December 1916 p.19 c.1
84. Squadron A: A History of Its First Fifty Years. Association of Ex-Members of Squadron A. p.152
85. The Brooklyn Daily Eagle, Brooklyn NY, 16 December 1916 p.5 c.2
86. The New York Times, New York NY, 16 December 1916 p.13 c.4
87. Squadron A: A History of Its First Fifty Years. Association of Ex-Members of Squadron A. p.152
88. The Houston Post, Houston TX, 17 December 1916 p.1 c.4&5
89. Squadron A: A History of Its First Fifty Years. Association of Ex-Members of Squadron A. p.152
90. New York Tribune, New York NY, 21 December 1916 p.13 c.2
91. The Evening Telegram. New York NY, 23 December 1916 p.3 c.2
92. The Evening World, New York NY, 23 December 1916 p.1 c.4
93. The Evening Telegram. New York NY, 23 December 1916 p.3 c.2
94. The Brooklyn Daily Eagle, Brooklyn NY, 24 December 1916 pp.12 c.1-3
95. Squadron A: A History of Its First Fifty Years. Association of Ex-Members of Squadron A. p.153
96. Find A Grave. Memorial#55952079. 1stLt. John Giraud Agar Jr.
97. Find A Grave. Memorial#156720715. 2nd Lt. Arthur Douglas Alexander
98. Find A Grave. Memorial#65430900. Cadet Lloyd Seward Allen
99. Find A Grave. Memorial#145353446. Capt. Charles Dabney Baker
100. Find A Grave. Memorial#113802566. Capt. Stratford St. J. Bushman (Buschmann)
101. Find A Grave. Memorial#153452488. Cadet Stephen Higginson Dorr Jr.
102. Find A Grave. Memorial#56636917. Capt. Fritz L. Dressler
103. Find A Grave. Memorial#60232962. Capt. John Fine
104. Find A Grave. Memorial #55956308. 1st Lt. Herbert Grosbeck Jr.
105. Find A Grave. Memorial #56637732. 1st Lt. Thomas Addis Emmet Harris
106. Find A Grave Memorial #55993359. 1st Lt. Sheldon Eliot Hoadley
107. Find A Grave Memorial #57195464. 1st Lt. Edward Jule LaMarche
108. Find A Grave Memorial#137365784. Pvt. Albert Henry Lanzer
109. Find A Grave Memorial#56099554. Pvt. 1cl James Jellis Page
110. Find A Grave. Memorial #55958188. 2nd Lt. Marschall Grahlf's Peabody
111. Find A Grave. Memorial #55996000. 2nd Lt. James Jackson Porter
112. Find A Grave. Memorial #56639844. 1st Lt. Gordon Loring Rand
113. Find A Grave. Memorial #8154565. 1st Lt. William Bradford Turner
114. Find A Grave. Memorial #144864488. Lt. Russell Tracy Walker