

Company B (La Crosse) in the Spanish  
American War

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## Abstract

The participation of La Crosse Company B, Third Wisconsin Infantry in the Spanish-American War was rather limited. Information on this company's activities is confined to a few sources, all of which were used in this paper.

Company B, consisting of 104 enlisted men and twenty-five officers, was in combat for only ten days. Preceding the combat experience was a training period of three months at various camps in the Middle West and South.

The intent of this paper is to tell the story of Company B's role in the war set against the background of the conflict generally and more specially in Puerto Rico, where it took place. The paper concludes with what information was available concerning the members of this company after they returned to their home community.

Local records on community deaths and the obituary columns of the current newspapers yield materials on sixty-six members of the company only. In most cases this, too, is quite brief. The post-war careers of these sixty-six are summarized at the end of the paper in an appendix.

## Introduction

The Spanish-American War, called "The Splendid Little War," began when President McKinley asked Congress to give him war powers on April 11, 1898. The war began on April 19, 1898, when Congress authorized President McKinley to use the army and navy to guarantee Cuban independence. Both economics and politics were contributing factors to the United States' involvement in the war.<sup>1</sup>

Some of the economic factors that helped to ignite this war were problems both in the McKinley administration and from previous administrations. Prior to and during McKinley's term one dilemma was over the currency standard. Those who supported William Jennings Bryan in the early 1890's felt that silver was the best basis of sound currency. McKinley and his supporters, however, felt the gold standard was best. As a result, the silver supporters pushed for the war with Spain hoping that it would break the foundations of the gold standard.<sup>2</sup>

A second factor was the depression of 1893. Sometimes a war helps a country out of a depression. Before the Spanish-American War started, different influential groups of people had exerted pressure on McKinley. American land owners in Cuba wanted the United States to intervene. The trade groups and business men were concerned about their tobacco and sugar interests in Cuba. There were also those men who profit from army contracts in this country.

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1. Foster Rhea Dulles, The United States Since 1865 (Ann Arbor Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1959), pp. 162-168.
  2. Donald Kemmer, American Economic History (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1959), p. 367, and Richard Leopold, The Growth of American Foreign Policy (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962), p. 150.

Lastly, there were the imperialists who supported the expansion theory set down by Mahan.<sup>3</sup>

McKinley was bothered not only with economic factors but also with those of a political nature. One of these was the explosion aboard the battleship Maine in the Havana Harbor. The explosion killed 260 Americans. The battleship had been sent because riots were occurring in the Havana area. To this day the sinking remains a mystery; however, the press did not fail to exploit this issue into a cause for war.<sup>4</sup>

Another example of exploitation on American sympathy was the setting up of a republican government in eastern Cuba. A large section of it fell under insurgent control; consequently, a Cuban junta in New York dispensed propaganda and tried desperately to secure financial assistance for its cause.<sup>5</sup>

Other contributing factors added to the pressure placed upon McKinley, causing him finally to ask Congress for war powers. As mentioned previously, the newspapers picked up the cry for intervention, and some Protestant groups followed suit. In March 1898 Senator Redfield Proctor delivered an address to Congress pertaining to his visit to Havana. His description of the conditions there swayed political as well as business

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3. Richard Leopold, The Growth of American Foreign Policy (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962), p.159, and Julius Pratt, A History of United States Foreign Policy (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1955), pp. 374-78.

4. Ibid.

5. Julius Pratt, A History of United States Foreign Policy (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1955), p. 378.

interests that were opposed to intervention.<sup>6</sup>

The Wall Street Journal reported on March 19 that the speech had, "converted a great many people in Wall Street."<sup>7</sup>

Still another cause in the late 1890's was the Spanish government's abuse of the Cubans in concentrations camps under Captain Weyler. His mistreatment of the Cubans enhanced sympathy for the war effort in the United States.<sup>8</sup>

Another political factor was a letter from the Spanish Ambassador Enrique Dupuy de Lome to a correspondent in Havana. In the letter he called the President,

"a bidder for the admiration of the crowd" and  
"a would-be politician who tries to leave a door open behind him while keeping on good terms with the jingoes of his party."<sup>9</sup>

Further complications existed in political circles because John Hay, Henry Cabot Lodge, and Theodore Roosevelt felt that the war would be an excellent opportunity for economic imperialism. They, however, were not interested in political control of Cuba, but rather possible acquisition of land for naval bases. They also supported the idea of a transisthmian canal which meant that naval bases for protection would have to be at both approaches to the canal.<sup>10</sup>

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6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. Louis Sears, History of American Foreign Relations (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1927), p. 438.

9. Ibid.

10. Harold Faulker, American Economic History (New York: Harpers and Brothers Publishers, 1959), p. 558, and Vera Holmes, A History of the Americas (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1964), p. 358.

This program could be advanced with the struggle between Cuba and Spain. It was further enhanced with the 1895 revolt.<sup>11</sup>

But the most surprising theory was the concept of some politicians and businessmen that Cuba could be a testing field to test the United States newly-realized national strength.

It is hard to escape the suspicion today that the United States was looking for a fight in 1898, and was not particularly concerned with whom the argument was picked.<sup>12</sup>

With all these causes one might say a war could hardly be avoided.

Although Wisconsin did not take an active part in the war immediately, it did get its chance toward the end of the campaign. Wisconsin supplied two brigadier generals, four regiments of infantry, and one artillery battery. However, the entire contingent of Wisconsin troops did not reach the battlefield; only the second and third regiments actually saw combat duty. This duty was quite limited because the Wisconsin troops arrived in Puerto Rico in late July, and the war came to a close on August 13, 1898.<sup>13</sup>

This account is not about the entire third regiment but about a small group of men that made up Company B, La Crosse, Third Wisconsin Regiment. The company consisted of 104 men

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11. Holmes, Ibid.

12. Charles Lerche, Jr., Foreign Policy of the American People (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1959), pp. 133-4.

13. Henry Bleyer, "Wisconsin Troops in the Spanish-American War," The Sentinel Almanac and Book of Facts (Milwaukee: Sentinel Press, 1899), pp. i-iv.

and twenty-five officers. Its officers were Captain Fred Schultz and Lieutenants Otto Kanard and Charles Jaekel. This company was in actual combat for only a few days. The military action took place in the city of Coamo, Puerto Rico. Although Company B's military action was not extensive, the months of grueling training were put to some use.

On April 23, 1898, a bell rang in La Crosse, giving the signal that the President had called for 100,000 men for service in the Spanish-American War. Throughout the state men left their jobs to go to their local armories and volunteer. In La Crosse, shortly after the bell rang, flags were hoisted on nearly all the local business establishments as volunteers made their way to the local armory. Company B was to consist initially of sixty-five men and three officers. But as the first day of military readiness came to a close, no official orders from Washington had yet been received to tell Company B what camp to report to.<sup>1</sup>

Shortly, after the local citizens had a farewell party, orders arrived for Company B to move to the state fairgrounds in Milwaukee. According to a local newspaper, the departure was even more impressive than the departure of the Light Guard to the "bloody fields" of the Civil War in 1861.<sup>2</sup>

Most of the men of Company B were between the ages

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1. La Crosse Morning Chronicle, April 23, 1898, and April 29, 1898.

2. La Crosse Morning Chronicle, April 29, 1898.

of twenty and twenty-five. Many of them were married, and all the men were of the laboring class. Although most had been in La Crosse, there were several who had been born in foreign countries. Fourteen hailed from Germany, five from Norway, and one each from Poland and the areas later called Czechoslovakia.

After arrival in Milwaukee the company reported to Camp Harvey for physical examinations. The quartering facilities in the horse stables were far from desirable, and Dr. Joseph Thompson, a member of Company M La Crosse, said,

the stables were not the best, but they were as clean as one could expect. Horse stables are not the nicest spot in the world, but our men were made comfortable.<sup>3</sup>

Although some of the men caught colds from sleeping on the damp stable floors, all but one passed the physical examination. He was turned down because of rheumatism.<sup>4</sup>

On May 10 orders arrived directing the company to move south to Chickamauga Park near Chattanooga, Tennessee. The company arrived there on May 16 to join other volunteers from elsewhere in the United States. Some military outfits from other states were poorly equipped with supplies and officers. In one instance a company from Ohio tried to acquire a Wisconsin man as an officer. This man had been a captain at West

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3. Statement by Dr. Joseph Thompson, personal interview, June 23, 1967. He presently is a retired city dentist. He was a volunteer for Company M La Crosse which also went to Puerto Rico with Company B.

4. La Crosse Morning Chronicle, May 8, 1898.

Point, but because he had resigned, he had lost his status as an officer. The Wisconsin commander refused the request. He intended to use the former captain to train the Wisconsin troops.<sup>5</sup>

The shortage of supplies at Chickamauga caused difficult living conditions.

In the kitchens there were few cooks able to handle the rations as issued, and because National Guardsmen had brought no bakers with them, they were compelled to live on hardtack.<sup>6</sup>

Sickness had set in and some of the men died from pneumonia, resulting from exposure and sleeping on the damp ground.

From the beginning of July typhoid and dysentery began to appear at all the camps. At Chickamauga there were heavy rains. The camp had been located in an open forest with the intention of protecting it against the southern sun; the result was that the place would not dry out between one rain and the next. The soil was non-absorbent; the whole camp was soon pretty well flooded and sanitation became impossible. The hospital began to fill; while the troops, finding themselves getting no nearer to the front, sank into a mood of inertia, disgust with military life, and black depression.<sup>7</sup>

Many men also were not physically equipped to withstand two hours of guard duty with only four hours of rest.<sup>8</sup>

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5. Walter Millis, The Martial Spirit (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1931), p. 216.

6. Ibid., p. 213.

7. Ibid., p. 345.

8. La Crosse Morning Chronicle, June 7, 1898. ("La Crosse Boys Slightly Under the Weather")

On June 10 an article appeared in the La Crosse Morning Chronicle stating that if anyone wished to send personal items to a friend at Chickamauga, he was to leave the items with the recruiting Sergeant, Fred Kroner, at the northside armory. The town's people were under the impression that the living conditions were getting worse. However, on June 12 after the soldiers had gone through a series of vaccinations, a letter from one of the men appeared in the paper assuring the folks back home that conditions were not as bad as they were made out to be. Sickness within the camp continued, and various people in the state government were receiving letters from local citizens complaining about conditions of the camp. As the month of June came to a close, no more complaints were reported about living conditions. On June 28 rumors passed among the men that the outfit would leave for Cuba shortly. Instead it went to Charleston, South Carolina.<sup>9</sup>

Even after the Wisconsin troops left Chickamauga Park and moved to Charleston, conditions at Chickamauga did not get any better.

On August 19, an army inspector at Chickamauga was officially reporting that every precaution is being taken. But it is too late; the mischief has been done. This park as a camping place is incurably infected. The cases of typhoid fever have reached five hundred and

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9. La Crosse Morning Chronicle, July 12, 1898.

the whole situation presages a general epidemic.<sup>10</sup>

The month of July was not a quiet one for the La Crosse group. Treatment of the soldiers at Chickamauga irritated the residents of Wisconsin. Orders were issued for the Wisconsin troops to move on to Puerto Rico; shortly after they were issued, they were countermanded. The reason seemed to be for military strategy.<sup>11</sup>

This expedition had been deferred in order that all danger from Spanish warships, now destroyed, might be avoided. Puerto Rico was to be a partial indemnity for our enormous expenditures of money in prosecuting the war.<sup>12</sup>

General Miles did not want to share the conquest of San Juan with the navy. Miles explained to the Secretary of War Alger,

marching across the country rather than under the guns of the fleet will have in every way a desirable effect on the inhabitants of this country.<sup>13</sup>

The troops were dissatisfied because conditions in Charleston were anything but desirable. They were quartered in cotton warehouses during the rainy season. Conditions were far from comfortable; the men slept on the hard floors. Dr. Thompson said, "The floors were damp and the air

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10. Millis, op. cit., p. 366.

11. Andrew Draper, The Rescue of Cuba (New York: Silver Burdett and Company, 1910), p. 131.

12. Frank Freidel, The Splendid Little War (Canada: Little, Brown and Company, 1958), p. 261.

13. Draper, op. cit., p. 132.

was very heavy, making it difficult to sleep." Food was anything but the best. The diet consisted ofhardtack and horse meat. This led to much complaining among the men, and it caused many to go to local restaurants to eat if they could afford it. The food in these places was not much better. Dr. Thompson mentioned, "Some men were invited into southern homes for dinner. These homes were very nice."<sup>14</sup>

Hungary soldiers brought whatever food was available. Negroes appeared at the gates of the training area to sell watermelons and fresh peaches. The soldiers purchased these fruits unaware of the effect they would have on their stomachs. Beer, sent from the city's three local breweries caused further problems with the men's digestive systems. The beer and fruit caused a variety of sicknesses, including acute diarrhea. The hospitals were crowded with Wisconsin troops in a short time. Poor food, bad sleeping, and long forced marches caused the state of Wisconsin to demand an investigation of camp conditions at Charleston.<sup>15</sup>

Shortly after the promise of an investigation orders to embark for Puerto Rico came. At the beginning of the war General Miles thought the correct objective from a military point

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14. Statement by Dr. Joseph Thompson, personal interview, June 23, 1967, and La Crosse Morning Chronicle, July 17, 1898.

15. La Crosse Morning Chronicle, July 17, 1898.

of view was the conquest of Puerto Rico, which was the Spanish base for all operations in the West Indies. He felt that the climate was more conducive for the northern troops. Now three months later this maneuver was a reality. After some delay in negotiation with the navy, the orders were officially received to move the troops to the loading dock for embarkment to Guanica Bay, Puerto Rico.<sup>16</sup>

General Miles departed from Guantanamo with 3,000 men for Cape Fajardo, while the transport convoy from Charleston and Tampa left for the same destination. He sailed in seven transports convoyed by the Massachusetts, the Yale, the Columbia, the Dixie, and the Gloucester. Because of much publicity about General Miles' plans, he decided in mid-passage to land in Guanica Bay. He figured the Spanish would concentrate their troops at Fajardo, leaving Guanica Bay open for a landing. He had decided to attack San Juan by going through the island from south to north.<sup>17</sup>

According to a contemporary account, after the five-day voyage, the Wisconsin soldiers were ready to put their feet on solid ground. Many of them were smelling salt water for the first time, and they became seasick. The sickness was basically brought on by the frame of one's mind, the poor food, and

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16. Edgar Macaly, History of the United States Navy, Volume III, (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1901), p. 410.

17. Ibid., p. 412.

the gale that hit the fifth day. Dr. Thompson said,

The trip was a little too long; I was fortunate because I had a hammock to sleep in for the entire voyage.<sup>18</sup>

The trip seemed all the more difficult because their ship missed the expected convoy. The missed convoy caused some delay, but their ship came in contact with the cruiser Columbia which confirmed their orders to report to Guanica Bay.<sup>19</sup>

As General Miles' convoy reached Guanica Bay, he was worried about it being mined. He sent the Gloucester into the harbor to check. The harbor was not mined, and the landings that followed met with no Spanish opposition. The landing party moved toward the city of Guanica. About three hundred yards up the main street, the landing force was fired upon by the Spanish. The fight did not last long, and the Spanish pulled out. After the skirmish, the American force found the only person in the town. He told the soldiers that the Spanish troops were expected from Yauco; they never arrived. He also said the town's people would be back now that the United States troops had landed. When General Miles came ashore much later, Guanica was already captured, but a formal surrender was made to Miles. General Miles then made a three-fold proclamation. The troops had come for the sake of

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18. Statement by Dr. Joseph Thompson, personal interview, June 23, 1967.

19. La Crosse Morning Chronicle, August 9, 1898. (author John Bacon war correspondent of Company B)

liberty, justice, and humanity; they had come to overthrow the armed authority of Spain. Finally, they were not there to make war on the people of this country.<sup>20</sup>

Although the war was to end in a few weeks, the men of the Wisconsin Third Regiment were to have some brief encounters with the enemy, and the La Crosse Company B was there right in the middle of them. On July 28 the Cincinnati with two transports arrived at La Playa Harbor near Ponce. Although the sources do not indicate it, it might have been the Wisconsin troops because the next day the regiments of the Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Illinois, and Wisconsin were given patrol duty in the city to look for lurking Spaniards. The patrol duty meant a little because the city had already surrendered.<sup>21</sup>

From all accounts that the Americans have received the Spaniards on the island are not a formidable lot. They have constantly run away from a possible fight and indications are that little resistance will be received anywhere.<sup>22</sup>

The true test of training did come on August 9 about a week after their so-called first encounter with the enemy. The chance came when the second and third infantry of the Wisconsin National Guard and one artillery battery unit were assigned the task of capturing the city of Coamo, Puerto Rico. The Wisconsin group was assisted by the sixteenth Penn-

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20. Macaly, op. cit., p. 414, and Draper, op. cit., pp. 132-133.

21. Draper, op. cit., p. 133, and La Crosse Morning Chronicle, August 9, 1898.

22. La Crosse Morning Chronicle, August 9, 1898.

sylvania, which later received full credit for this victory. The only satisfaction the Wisconsin group had was that of raising the Stars and Stripes first for the United States in the city of Coamo.<sup>23</sup>

But what really took place at this battle? Coamo was attacked through an effort of the Wisconsin Infantry of the second and third regiment and the sixteenth Pennsylvanian. According to General Miles' military plan, this was just one of the routes he planned to take to make his move on San Juan. He expected that the towns along the way would be heavily garrisoned. Dr. Thompson said, "All roads to this city had large ditches in them to slow down the Americans." The city was set in a valley, surrounded by bluffs on two sides. Coamo was set much like La Crosse, with bluffs on both sides but no river. Thus the battle was staged on four fronts, making the city completely cut off from retreat. The protection of the rear of Coamo was given to the sixteenth Pennsylvania, thus sealing off the city from the north. The Wisconsin groups were given the responsibility of driving the Spaniards out from the south and west. The biggest obstacle to this plan was a blockhouse at the entrance of the city. This blockhouse had helped the Spanish repel the United States forces four times in previous battles. Destruction of this barrier became the responsibility of the Wisconsin artillery battery unit.

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23. \_\_\_\_\_, Wisconsin in Three Centuries (New York: Publishing Society of New York, 1906), p.239.

The Second and Third Wisconsin Infantry had the task of moving into the city on two sides. Thus, twenty-two Wisconsin companies under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Benjamin Parker were involved in the task of taking Coamo. <sup>24</sup>

The blockhouse was set afire by a few well-placed shots from the artillery, and the infantry forces advanced on the city.

But as the troops advanced, the Spanish withdrew after some desultory fighting in which they met with some losses, and a few were killed and wounded on the American side. <sup>25</sup>

The La Crosse companies as well as the companies from Sparta, Eau Claire, West Superior, Hudson, and Menominee were to move up the road which led directly through the middle of the city. But getting to that road was not easy. Marsh land, ravines, bluffs, and rivers comprised the area around the city, making the road difficult to reach. While the battery unit shelled the blockhouse, the infantry was left with the task of

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24. Ibid., pp. 240-248, and "Wisconsin Troops in the Spanish War (reprinted from, The Sentinel Almanac, Milwaukee, 1898) pp. i-iii; Company G Wausau; Company K Tomah; Company A Marschfield; Company B Oshkosh; Company D Ripon; Company M Oconto; Company K Beaver Dam; Company I Marinette; Company L Ashland; Company E Fond de Lac; Company F Oshkosh; Company G Appleton; Company H Manitowox; Company D Mauston; Company F Portage; Company B La Crosse; Company M La Crosse; Company I Sparta; Company E Eau Claire; Company I West Superior; Company C Hudson; Company H Menominee, and Draper, op. cit., p. 134.

25. Draper, op. cit., p. 134.

removing the Spanish infantry from the city.<sup>26</sup>

The battle itself had its moments of heavy firing, but the Pennsylvania sixteenth was involved the most in the skirmish. The Spanish held true to earlier reports that they would not remain and fight. As the firing began, they immediately tried to escape out the back door of the city, but they ran into the Pennsylvania group. The battle was short, and the Spanish had twelve casualties and 150 captured.

According to one source,

a sharp little battle was fought at Coamo, where a detachment of enemy surrendered after a desperate struggle in which most of the Spanish officers were killed.<sup>27</sup>

There were no deaths in the Pennsylvania group, but a few were wounded.<sup>28</sup>

Later that same day news came that a New York troop was having difficulty repairing bridges along a military route a few miles from Coamo because the Spanish were firing on it. Consequently, the La Crosse, Portage, and Sparta groups were left with the assignment of guarding the mountain pass near a hill, called Asoninate mountain by the Spanish or as the American soldiers called it, Aibonita pass, outside the city

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26. Henry Bleyer, "Wisconsin Troops in the Spanish War" (reprinted from, *The Sentinel Almanac*, Milwaukee, 1899) pp. i-iii.

27. Draper, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

28. Bleyer, *op. cit.*, pp. i-iii.

of Coamo. The Spanish were supposedly entrenched in the hill of this pass; therefore, the three groups left to guard the pass were to be prepared for a surprise night attack. The night, however, proved to be uneventful, but on the following day while the members of the cavalry were reconnoitering, the Spanish soldiers opened fire on them. The three companies left in charge came to their assistance; however, because the shooting range was too great, no damage was done to either side.<sup>29</sup>

General Ernst Wilson on August 12 decided to call for artillery help to dislodge the enemy from the sides of the Aibonita pass. But while waiting for the artillery to arrive, the Spanish opened fire right into the middle of the Wisconsin camp. After the artillery arrived, the infantry assisted the artillery in a four-hour duel. The battle did not prove to be a victory for the Americans but rather a victory for the enemy because the United States forces did not accomplish any military gains. The only major tragedy was the death of two men from the Sparta company when a shell from the Spanish artillery exploded in the middle of the Sparta camp.<sup>30</sup>

This skirmish lasted longer than General Wilson expected because the Americans were at a great disadvantage firing into the hills while they remained in the open. Wilson had

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29. Ralph Immell, "Wisconsin Troops in the Spanish War," (reprinted from The Sentinel Almanac, Milwaukee, 1899), p. iii.

30. Ibid.

decided to storm the sides of the pass using all available forces; therefore, he had returned to the central camp near Coamo to round up the rest of the troops of the Wisconsin and Pennsylvania sixteenth. In Wilson's judgment it would take an extra day for these troops to march around the hill and come up from the other side. The march was unnecessary for on Saturday, August 13, 1898, a courier arrived at central headquarters to inform General Wilson that the Spanish had signed a protocol. With this the war came to an end and there began the long wait to return home.<sup>31</sup>

Soldiers were disappointed that they would not have the opportunity to emulate the valor of their comrades in Cuba, but more shared in the gratification of the American people that bloodshed was at an end.<sup>32</sup>

Thus the end of combat was in sight for the 5,469 men of Wisconsin that took part in this war. About ten days after the last battle took place, General Miles asked that the troops be moved out immediately to avoid the spread of sickness. The month of August went by and still the Third Wisconsin had not left for home. As the month of September began, many of the La Crosse group and other company groups got ill. The regimental correspondent thought the troops might be there another six weeks. As a result there was much homesickness, and the men were depressed. Even their bodies showed their physical and mental state which was from being encour-

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31. Ibid., p. iv.

32. Draper, op. cit., p. 134.

aging. As the month of September passed, things got worse instead of better, and hope for return seemed not to be in the making. Dr. Thompson said,

Many men, while waiting for return to the states, got diarrhea which laid up some men in New York hospitals upon their return. It was primarily due to the type of food the men received in their diets while in Puerto Rico.<sup>33</sup>

On October 11 orders came to ship the Third Wisconsin home; its men, a contemporary account says, were overjoyed.<sup>34</sup>

Because some members of Company B were ill, their return home had to be delayed. Others, although ill, were able to return home with the healthy. Those who were ill but able to travel included Max Affeldt, Fred Koch, Charles Miller, Anton Roubick, Louis Winsole, Ernst Rick, Frank Schaller, Daniel Clarke, Charles Weigel, Fran Faltermeyer, William Kosbal and Frank Mueller. John Miller, John Poley, Michael Cain, Berth Keys, William Schroeder, Herman Bay, William Taylor, Joseph Riese, and Oscar Darling had to spend time in eastern hospitals. The absence of some members of Company B did not prevent La Crosse from celebrating the return of the others. A large crowd turned out at the Milwaukee depot to greet its soldiers. They in turn were sources of comment on the war. They said the Charleston forced marching was the worse hardship they had endured while in the service. Some men had convulsions during these marches

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33. Statement by Dr. Joseph Thompson, personal interview, June 23, 1967.

34. La Crosse Morning Chronicle, September 11, 1898, and October 12, 1898.

because of extreme heat. Several were in poor physical condition for the voyage to Puerto Rico.<sup>35</sup>

Several men, after their tour of duty is over, fade from the scene unless they are asked to participate in some parade. Many times people do not realize that an individual is a hero or a veteran of armed services until he reads it in an obituary column in a newspaper. This group of men was no exception. Many of them passed from the scene, without even being recognized by their city, and more important their local citizens. Even if their effort in the war was only a small one, they still deserved the proper recognition. This is the intention of this paper, but let us now turn to the men themselves who volunteered when they were asked by their country.

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35. La Crosse Morning Chronicle, October 31, 1898.

BIOGRAPHICAL APPENDIX

As previously mentioned all the men involved were of the laboring class, and most of them returned to the city to continue at the jobs that they had left behind. The only two men that did not return alive were Morris Casberg and Joseph Tucheck. They both died of a fever acquired in travel to Puerto Rico. This information was acquired from the death notices at the La Crosse Death Record Office, the death notices at the Veterans Administration Office, and obituary columns in the La Crosse Morning Chronicle and La Crosse Tribune.

Max Affeldt

Born in Germany, Affeldt came to this country when he was seven years old. At the time of the war he was employed at Torrance and Son's Foundry as an iron molder. He continued to work there until he retired in 1951. He was a member of the United Spanish-American War Veterans and former president of the organization. He was also a member of the Governor's Guard. He had married the former Emma Strauss.<sup>1</sup>

William Bauman

Bauman was employed as an iron molder when he entered the war. After the war he married Augusta Freiberg. He died at the age of eighty-six in the Veterans Hospital at Tomah, Wisconsin.<sup>2</sup>

Albert Buchman

Born in Chaseberg, Wisconsin, in 1877, Buchman was single when he went to war, and he was at that time employed

as a weaver. When he returned from the war, he moved to St. Paul, Minnesota.<sup>3</sup>

Dan Clarke

He was born in Dubuque, Iowa, and was married at the time of the war. He was employed as a telegraph operator. It is not known if he returned to the city after the war.<sup>4</sup>

John Goetsche

John Goetsche, another who came from abroad, was born in Holstein, Germany, in 1860. While in the service, he advanced from corporal to fourth sergeant. At the time of the war, he was employed at the Heileman Brewery, but after the war he became a carpenter until his death in 1908. At that time he committed suicide with a shotgun.<sup>5</sup>

Anton Halik

He was twenty years old when he joined Company B, and he was single. At war time, he worked as a woodworker. If he came back to the city to stay after the war, it would be difficult to say because no further information exists.<sup>6</sup>

John Jiracek

Born in Kansas City, Missouri, he returned to the city after the war and worked as a turnkey for La Crosse County. He was married here in the city, and he died here in 1940.<sup>7</sup>

Walter A. Hammond

Born in Baltimore, Maryland, in 1869, Hammond was married at the time of the war and had been employed then as a cigarmaker. After the war he returned to the same profession. He continued

to work at this job until his death, of heat prostration while at his job. 8

Olaf Noye

He was born in Bergseth, Norway, in 1867. He was single when he entered the war, and he was a laborer. No further information is available.9

Michael Jansky

Born in the city in 1874, he was a painter at the time of the war. He continued at this job after the war until his death at the age of forty-nine. No other information is available.10

Charles Jaekel

A second lieutenant of Company B Jaekel was married when he entered the war and had been employed as a motorman for the La Crosse Street Railway Company. He also turned to farming before he entered the service. After the war he returned to his own farm.11

Otto Kanard

He was born locally and was married when he entered the service. He owned a grocery store on the corner of Third and Mississippi Streets, plus a small retail liquor store. He was a member of the Governor's Guard and the Eight Ward Aid Society. He also served his company as its first lieutenant.12

John KiENZle

He was born in the city in 1867 and worked as a stone-cutter before he went into the service. He was married at the time of the war.13

Fred Koch

Born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in 1875, Koch was single when he entered the service. He was then employed as a fireman. No information is available on him after the war.<sup>14</sup>

Valentine Konoetzke

Another foreign born was Valentine Konoetzke of Poland, who was one of the older ones, who entered the service. He was thirty-two. He was then employed as a local brewery worker. He returned to the city after the war but was killed in a car accident instantly at the age of thirty-six.<sup>15</sup>

Otto Kowalke

He was born in the city of German parents, and he was single when he entered the service. He was the Quartermaster Sergeant for Company B. He returned to the city after the war and married a local girl. He was employed by the county as a turnkey. He died supposedly of a self inflicted gun shot wound in the head.<sup>16</sup>

Ben Lund

Born in Norway, Lund was also married when he entered the service. He returned to the city after the war and became an insurance agent. He died in 1933.<sup>17</sup>

Andrew Krebs

Born in Germany, Andrew Krebs served as a sergeant for Company B. He was a cigarmaker before and after the war in the city. He, however, died of tuberculosis at the age of thirty in 1904 which was believed to be attributed to an illness he had during the war.<sup>18</sup>

Fred Kroner

He was a native of the city, and he served as purchasing agent for Company B. He did not go into actual combat, but he remained in the city to see that the needs of Company B were met. At the time of the war, he was secretary of the Fred Kroner Hardware Company. After the war he remained in the city.19

Fred Schultz

Born in Roebuck, Germany, Fred Schultz was married when he entered the service. At the time of the war, he was an employee of the Heileman Brewery where he returned to work after the war. He died from fatal burns received from an explosion at this brewery. He had spent a good portion of his life in the service, some twenty-two years. He served that time as a captain which was his position with Company B.20

Eric Lucht

Another native of Germany was Eric Lucht. He was a stonecutter at the time of the war. What happened to him after the war is not known.21

Frank Muellenberg

Another born in Germany, Frank Muellenberg served his company as a first sergeant, which he acquired while he was in the service. He moved from private to sergeant which all the men in his company believed he deserved. He worked before and after the war as a molder. He also was married, but he died at the age of thirty-seven of a hepatic coma.22

Frank Mach

Born in Germany, he worked as a repairman for the Mississippi Valley Service Company before and after the war.

No other information is available.<sup>23</sup>

Otto Manke

He was born in Germany in 1873. He was married at war time, and he worked as a carpenter. Whether, he returned to the city or not is not known. He was, though, a sergeant in Company B. <sup>24</sup>

Charles Miller

A native of the city Charles Miller was single man when he entered the service. No other information could be found.<sup>25</sup>

Frank Mueller

Born in Danzig in 1876, Frank Mueller was single at war time. He was then working at one of the local breweries. After the war he returned to the same job and became a foreman. He held this job until his death at the age of thirty-eight.<sup>26</sup>

George Roellig

He was born in the city in 1877. He was single when he entered the service and then was employed as a painter. He returned after the war to the city to marry a local girl. He was a member of Casberg Post of Spanish War Veterans, a member of Veterans of Foreign War, the Eagles, and the Governor's Guard.<sup>27</sup>

Edward Forseth

Born in Norway, Forseth's occupation both before and after the war was a bartender. He was employed at this job until his

death in 1911 at the age of forty-one. He also was married.<sup>28</sup>

Otto Sill

Born in Germany, Sill entered the service as a single man. After the war he returned to the city and married a local girl, the former Emma Ritter. He was employed at Segelke and Kolhaus Company for twenty years, and he also operated a confectionary at 15th and Vine Streets for several years until he retired in 1931. He was a member of the Governor's Guard.<sup>29</sup>

Emil Last

Another born of German parents, Last returned to the city after the war to marry a local girl. He served as a police officer in the city for twenty-six years.<sup>30</sup>

Joe Riese

He was married, and his occupation was cigarmaker. He was a member of the La Crosse County Board of Supervisors for years.<sup>31</sup>

Ernst Zube

He was born in the city. He was single when he went to war. He returned and married but later separated.<sup>32</sup>

Phil Wendling

A native of the city, he was single when he went to war. At that time he was a painter, but when he returned from the war, he and his brother went into the grocery business together. He was commander of the Casberg Post Camp 11, organized in 1904 in memory of Morris Casberg.<sup>33</sup>

Frank Wichman

He married after the war, and he was employed at J.Gund Brewery as caretaker for thirty-four years. Before the war he was employed at the L.C. Collman Mill here in the city.<sup>34</sup>

August Stoll

A native of the city, he worked as a painter before the war. His parents were Austrians. He died six months after his return from the war of tuberculosis. He was only twenty-three. He had been ill during the last two months of the war in Puerto Rico.<sup>35</sup>

William Nichols

Born in Carthage, Illinois, he was a barber at the time of the war. He was married. No other information could be found.<sup>36</sup>

August Peterson

Another native of Norway, August Peterson was unmarried at the time of the war. He was employed as a laborer and served his Company B as the company's musician.<sup>37</sup>

John Mueller

He was a member of the Governor's Guard. No other information is available.<sup>38</sup>

Henry Platz

Another native of Germany, Henry Platz was single when he entered the war. His occupation was a brewery worker before and after the war. He married a local girl after the war. He too was a member of the Governor's Guard, and the wagoner of Company B.<sup>39</sup>

John Poley

He was born in the city and was single also when he entered the war. He was a laborer before the war. He married after the war, but at the age of forty-one he committed suicide with a 32 caliber revolver.<sup>40</sup>

William Raseman

A native of the city, William Raseman was married and worked as a blacksmith at the time of the war. After the war he became a foreman at Allis Chalmers.<sup>41</sup>

William Klix

He was buried by the Veterans of Foreign War. No other information is available.<sup>42</sup>

Ernst Rick

At the time of the war he was single and a laborer. No other information could be found.<sup>43</sup>

William Schroeder

Born in Germany, Schroeder worked as a millwright before the war and as a plow worker after the war. He also married a local girl.<sup>44</sup>

John Schleiter

He was single when he entered the war but married upon his return. He was a foreman at Heileman Brewery and a member of the Masonic Lodge 922 of Chicago. He was also a member of the Casberg Camp.<sup>45</sup>

John Gerrard

John Gerrard married a local girl before he entered the

service. He was a laborer before the war, but after the war he returned to the city and became a chiropodist which was his profession for forty years. 46

John Simkey

Born in Hokah Minnesota, Simkey was at the time of the war single which he remained for his entire life. At the time of the war, he was a broommaker.47

Julius Simkey

He was a brother of John and was single also when he entered the war; however, he married after the war. No other information could be found on these brothers.48

Andrew Engelhard

Engelhard was a local grocer and died in the veteran's center at Wood, Wisconsin. No other information could be found.49

George Fischer

He was single and a laborer at the time of the war. He returned to the city and worked as a molder until his death at the age of twenty-eight of a complicated fracture of the spine.50

Julius Storkerson

Born in Rushford, Minnesota, Storkerson was single also at the time of the war and was then employed at the telephone company as an inspector. He returned to the city, married, and worked at the phone company as a superintendent. He was a member of the local Masonic temple. 51

John Strehl

He was born in Milwaukee, and he was employed at several different concerns: such as Heileman Brewery, malt plant; foremen of J. B. Funke Candy Company, and bookkeeper for Segelke and Kohlhaus Manufacturing Company. He was married at the time of the war.52

Alfred Welch

Alfred Welch was single at the time of the war and was then employed as a lumberman. He returned to the city, married, and worked as a conductor on the railroad for thirty-two years.53

Frank Voras

Born of Czechslovakian parents, Voras was at the time of the war married and a cigarmaker. He returned after the war and continued this profession for thirty years. He too was a member of Casberg Camp.54

Fred Yehle

He was single and a clerk in a florist shop at war time. He was born of German and Norweigian parents. He married after the war and worked in a florist shop for the rest of his life.55

Adolph Weisbecker

Weisbecker was a native of the city, married, and a mechanic at the time of the war. No other information is available.56

Louis Weigel

Born in the city, he was single and a type-writer by trade at the time of the war. He married after the war and worked

as a postal clerk for thirty years. He was a member also of the Governor's Guard, Casberg Camp, and the veterans of Foreign War.<sup>57</sup>

Rudolph Young

He was single at the time of the war. He married after the war and was a member also of the Governor's Guard. No other information could be found.<sup>58</sup>

John Bradley

He came back to the city area after the war and ran his own farm. No other information is available.<sup>59</sup>

Mike Weber

Born in Caledonia, Minnesota, Weber was married and a wagon maker at the time of the war. No other information could be found.<sup>60</sup>

Maurice Casberg

He died on board the Transport Obdam, in the harbor Fortress Monroe, August 5, 1898, of pneumonia. He was the one that the Casberg Camp was named after. He was buried at Holmen, Wisconsin.<sup>61</sup>

Joseph Tucheck

He died of typhoid fever October 18, 1898, at Ponce, Puerto Rico. He was buried at Ponce. He had been a blacksmith.<sup>62</sup>

Leopold Sill

Another born in Germany, he was single when he entered the war. He married after the war to the former Elizabeth Graff.

He was assistant superintendent at Listman Flour Mill here in the city. He was a corporal in Company B.<sup>63</sup>

Louis Losby

Born in Christiana, Norway, he was single and a barber when he entered the service. He contracted malaria and typhoid while in Puerto Rico. When he returned to the city, his job was gone, so he got an offer for a job as postal clerk in Sparta and he took it. He continued to work at the post office there for thirty years.<sup>64</sup>

William Critchfield

He was born in Iowa and was married when he enlisted. He was then a machinist by trade. No other information could be found.<sup>65</sup>

No Information is Available on the Following: <sup>66</sup>

Albion Weigel	Winfred Johnson
Anton Casper	Berth Keys
John Ellingsvold	Asa Lawrence
Frank Faltermeyer	Pearl McKieth
Paul Hupp	Gustave Rosmansky
Herman Bay	Emil Theyson
Anton Roubick	Benton Williams
Ted Leudtke	Louis Zoeller
Lester Aikens	William Kosbal
Mike Cain	Gustave Kolb
Fred Freeman	John Miller
August Gelenski	Harry Olson
Anton Herstad	Oscar Stratte
Frank Schaller	Herman Taplett
Louis Winsole	Andrew Webenstad
Joseph Berghaus	Tom Thompson
Oscar Darling	Richard Kraus
Harry Fuller	John Lean
Same Grant	August Macking
Ed Hartung	Jim O' Donavon
Bill Taylor	Charles Skaten
Julius Zellner	

Footnotes on Biographical Section

1. La Crosse Tribune, November 11, 1962, p. 4. (Family Magazine)
2. La Crosse Death Record Office, August 13, 1959.
3. La Crosse Morning Chronicle, April 28, 1898.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., and La Crosse Death Record Office, January 27, 1908.
6. La Crosse Morning Chronicle, April 28, 1898.
7. La Crosse Death Record Office, February 11, 1941.
8. Ibid., June 18, 1933.
9. La Crosse Morning Chronicle, April 28, 1898.
10. Ibid., and La Crosse Death Record Office, May 8, 1924.
11. Ibid., June 20, 1939.
12. Ibid., April 8, 1917.
13. La Crosse Morning Chronicle, April 28, 1898.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid., and La Crosse Death Record Office, September 23, 1902.
16. Ibid., February 8, 1923.
17. Ibid., October 19, 1933.
18. Ibid., August 16, 1904.
19. La Crosse Morning Chronicle, April 28, 1898.
20. Ibid., and La Crosse Death Record Office, June 16, 1914.
21. La Crosse Morning Chronicle, April 28, 1898.
22. Ibid., and La Crosse Death Record Office, July 23, 1905.
23. Ibid., June 23, 1943.
24. La Crosse Morning Chronicle, April 28, 1898.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid., and La Crosse Death Record Office, January 31, 1915.
27. Ibid., January 24, 1963.
28. La Crosse Death Record Office, October 9, 1911.
29. Ibid., February 18, 1965, and La Crosse Morning Chronicle, April 28, 1898.
30. La Crosse Death Record Office, December 15, 1932.
31. Ibid., December 31, 1955, and La Crosse Morning Chronicle, April 28, 1898.
32. La Crosse Morning Chronicle, April 28, 1898.
33. La Crosse Tribune, November 11, 1962, p. 4. (Family Magazine)
34. La Crosse Morning Chronicle, April 28, 1898.
35. La Crosse Death Record Office, June 16, 1899.
36. La Crosse Morning Chronicle, April 28, 1898.
37. Ibid.
38. La Crosse Death Record Office, September 17, 1944.
39. Ibid., January 22, 1941, and La Crosse Morning Chronicle, April 28, 1898.
40. Ibid., October 20, 1921.
41. Ibid., October 4, 1948.
42. La Crosse Morning Chronicle, April 28, 1898.
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid., and La Crosse Death Record Office, February 28, 1939.

45. Ibid., September 28, 1935.
46. La Crosse Morning Chronicle, April 28, 1898.
47. Ibid., and La Crosse Death Record Office, January 13, 1945.
48. Ibid., April 1, 1944.
49. La Crosse Morning Chronicle, April 28, 1898.
50. Ibid., and La Crosse Death Record Office, October 12, 1903.
51. Ibid., March 22, 1935.
52. Ibid., August 1, 1942.
53. Ibid., October 31, 1937.
54. Ibid., December 16, 1935.
55. Ibid., March 4, 1942.
56. La Crosse Morning Chronicle, April 28, 1898.
57. Ibid., and La Crosse Death Record Office, October 18, 1957.
58. Ibid., September 9, 1956.
59. La Crosse Death Record Office, June 17, 1943.
60. La Crosse Morning Chronicle, April 28, 1898.
61. Ibid., and Henry Bleyer, "Wisconsin Troops in the Spanish American War," The Sentinel Almanac and Book of Facts (Milwaukee: Sentinel Publishing, 1899), p. iv.
62. Ibid.
63. La Crosse Tribune, November 11, 1962, p. 4. (Family Magazine)
64. Ibid.
65. La Crosse Morning Chronicle, April 28, 1898.
66. Ibid.

This account, this author believes, shows that local citizens as well as local news media fail to keep tabs on some of the aspects of local history. It is unfortunate that a group of men who willingly volunteered their services for their country can not be better remembered. This probably happens in communities all over the United States. It has been this author's intention to try to make the readers of this paper, more aware of their obligations to local historians.

It is this author's hope that through this paper some remembrance of the men of Company B will be achieved, and that people will not allow local history to slip through the community records unrecorded. Once this happens, it is practically impossible to acquire worthwhile information.

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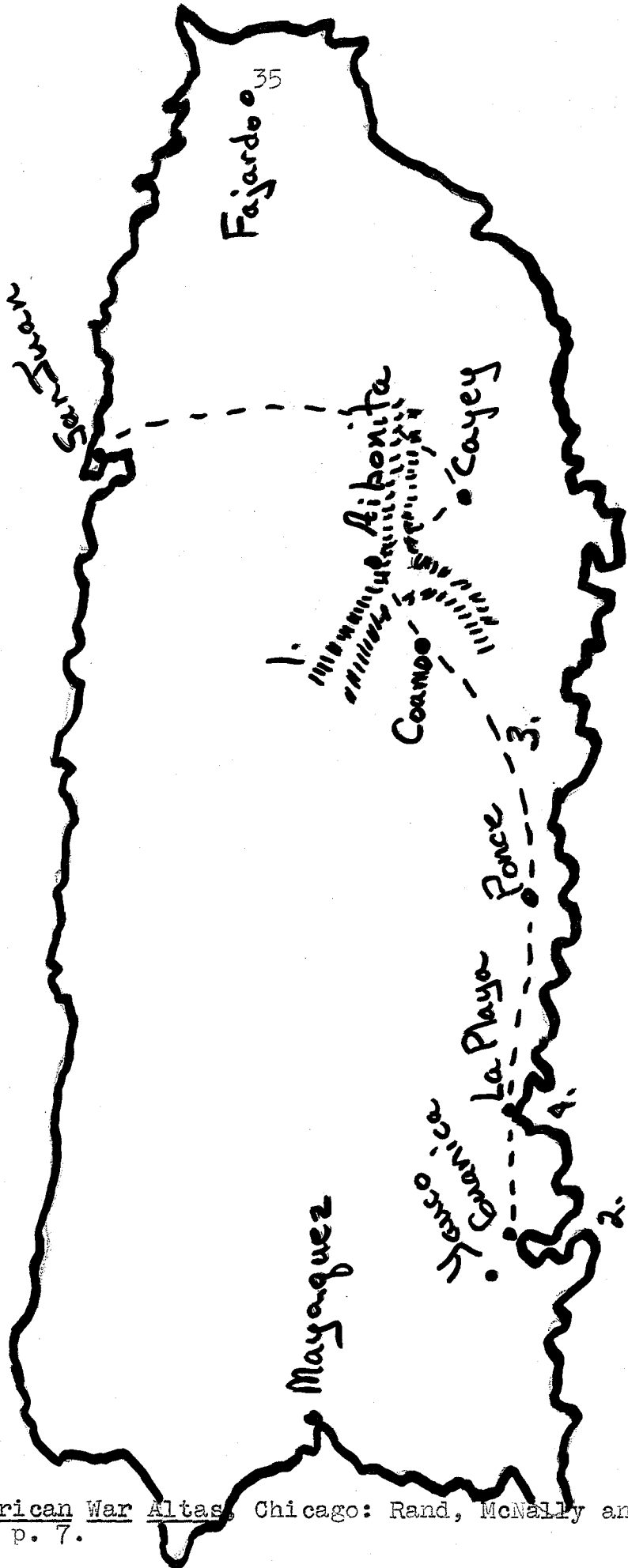
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- Key
- 1. mountains
  - 2. Guanica Bay
  - 3. Military Road
  - 4. La Playa Harbor

Puerto Rico.