

Collection #
SC2948

**ALBERT NELSON
LETTER, AUGUST 17, 1898**

[Collection Information](#)

[Historical Sketch](#)

[Scope and Content Note](#)

[Contents](#)

[Cataloging Information](#)

Processed by

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF
COLLECTION: 1 folder

COLLECTION
DATES: August 17, 1898

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NOTES:

HISTORICAL SKETCH

The United States entered the Spanish-Cuban War on April 25, 1898, after declaring war on Spain. Hostilities ended less than four months later with the announcement of an armistice on August 12. U.S. and Spanish commissioners signed the Treaty of Paris on December 10, 1898, which ended what formally became known as the Spanish-American War. The treaty effectively transferred Spain's Pacific holdings--which included the Philippines, Puerto Rico and Guam, as well as Cuba--to the U.S., and thus discounted the campaign for colonial independence and sovereignty that had been raging in Cuba three years prior to America's entrance into the war.

On April 23, 1898, two days before the U.S. declared war on Spain, President William McKinley issued a proclamation that called for "the aggregate number of 125,000" voluntary soldiers to serve at the most two years in the U.S. Army in order to temporarily increase Army reserves. Indiana Governor James A. Mount received a telegram from Secretary of War R. A. Alger "at 6:15 pm on April 25," specifying that four infantry regiments (each about 1,000 men) and two light artillery batteries were to be mustered according to the President's proclamation. Alger also advised Mount to inform him of "what equipments, ammunition, arms, blankets, tents, etc." the Indiana regiments would require without delay. Immediately Mount issued a proclamation calling for the Indiana National Guard to report to the Fair Grounds of the State Board of Agriculture, which was referred to as Camp Mount. Companies departed from different cities in Indiana, such as Vincennes, Anderson, and Logansport, via train. Lieutenant W. T. May, under the authority of Brigadier-General McKee, mustered the volunteers into the 157th, 158th, 159th, and 160th regiments. The estimated number of officers and enlisted men in these groups were as follows: 1023 in the 157th; 1027 in the 158th and 159th each; and 1023 in the 160th. The mustering ceremony involved reciting an allegiance oath. Regiments were further organized into infantry groups, equipped and transferred to waylay camps in other states between May 10 and May 22.

On May 25, 1898, President McKinley issued another proclamation, this time calling for the mobilization of an additional 75,000 volunteer soldiers. Governor Mount received a telegraph from the Secretary of War on June 18, instructing him that the State was required to "furnish two new separate companies of infantry [and] one new regiment of infantry," according to the President's proclamation in May. Alger specified what each regiment should encompass (e.g. one colonel, one lieutenant-colonel, two majors, a chaplain, chief musician, twelve companies, and other officers), as well as advised him to form a board of three physicians to conduct physicals of recruits before they were transported to Camp Mount. Two companies composed of black men were also mustered into service "in accordance with the allotment made by the War Department."

According to General James K. Gore's 1900 monograph *Record of Indiana Volunteers in the Spanish-American War*, Albert J. Nelson of Crothersville in Vernon Township, Jackson

County, Indiana, was mustered into the Army as a private and served from April 26, 1898 to November 23, 1898. Ultimately, only the 27th Battery embarked for Cuba to fight the Spanish during the war. The 160th regiment joined the 161st and the “army of occupation” at the U.S. camp in Matanzas, Cuba, after Spain “made overtures of peace to the U.S.” government in July. Soldiers in the 160th regiment were mustered out of service on April 25, 1899, in Savannah, Georgia.

Sources:

Bowers, Geo. B. (Colonel) *History of The 160th Indiana Volunteer Infantry in The Spanish-American War, With Biographies of Officers and Enlisted Men and Rosters of the Companies*. Fort Wayne: Archer Printing Company, 1900.

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Pérez, Louis A. *The War of 1898: The United States and Cuba in History and Historiography*. Chapel Hill, North Carolina and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1998.

The Sixty-first General Assembly of Indiana. *Record of Indiana Volunteers in the Spanish-American War, 1898-1899*. Indianapolis, Ind.: Wm. B. Burford, 1900. E726.I3 I3 1900

“The World of 1898: The Spanish-American War.”
<http://www.loc.gov/rr/hispanic/1898/intro.html>, accessed Nov. 29, 2012.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection consists of a handwritten soldier's letter and a postmarked envelope addressed to Mrs. Love Deusford of Crothersville, Indiana, from Albert Nelson of Thoroughfare Gap, Virginia. The letter is dated August 17, 1898. The words "ROUGH RIDERS IN ACTION" are printed on the front of the envelope and to the right of a color picture of soldiers firing guns amidst a brandished American flag.

In the letter Nelson, a volunteer in the Spanish-American War, asks Deusford to secure a specific teaching job at a school so that he could "teach again" upon his return. He also discusses the unfavorable conditions of where he and his company were camped "at the foot of the Blue Ridge mountains," which included constant rainfall and extreme heat. Nelson writes, "Tell Mabel [and] Katie that I'm getting almost as black as those darkies from being out in this hot sun so long." The soldier goes on to explain that he and his company "were under orders" to be mustered out to Pennsylvania. He lastly apologizes for writing in pencil and sending a "soldier's letter," as he was not able to "get a stamp."

CONTENTS

CONTENTS

Letter from Albert Nelson to (Mrs.) Love Deusford,
August 17, 1898

CONTAINER

Folder 1

CATALOGING INFORMATION

For additional information on this collection, including a list of subject headings that may lead you to related materials:

1. Go to the Indiana Historical Society's online catalog:
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2. Click on the "Basic Search" icon.
3. Select "Call Number" from the "Search In:" box.
4. Search for the collection by its basic call number (in this case, SC 2948).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.