

bequeathing to its members and the city the traditions of an elite Southern military company. It won every major drill competition it entered; served with courage, honor and good sense during a number of racial and civil disturbances and in the Spanish American War; and, both as a company and as individuals, accepted a responsible role in the community. The Houston Light Guards functioned for the city's business elite, giving them business, social, and family connections, political and military power, and a sense of belonging within the community.

The Houston Light Guards are atypical in that they lasted longer, performed more efficiently, and acquired more money and prestige than most post-Reconstruction Southern militia units. However, they differed from other Texas units in quantity, not in kind. Many, though not all, militia units had the same purposes and the same interconnected group of members as the Light Guards. The Houston Light Guards were not average; they epitomized what the Texas Volunteer Guard was meant to be.

Camp Logan and the Photography of Fred L. Vermillion

The work of commercial photographers has made a valuable contribution to preserving Houston's history since the nineteenth century. Their prints and negatives provide visual documentation of Houston's people, events, and places, and are an important part of the archives of the Bayou City. Fred L. Vermillion, longtime photographer in Houston, is one example. He became professionally active around 1918 when he set himself up as "camp photographer" of Camp Logan, the military training base located in Houston during World War I. Vermillion's photographs of virtually every aspect of camp life constitute some of the most significant evidence of that brief but memorable episode in Houston's past.

Camp Logan represents more than an isolated event in this city's development. It demonstrated Houston's perennial spirit of boosterism, was associated with Houston's most unfortunate example of racial conflict, and contributed to the lore and geography of the urban region. With the entry of the United States into the First World War, representatives of the Houston Chamber of Commerce and other promoters lobbied for their city to be designated as the location for one of the thirty-two military training camps authorized by Congress. In June 1917, their efforts bore fruit when the War Department awarded Houston one of sixteen temporary camps for training National Guard units prior to overseas combat duty. It was named Camp Logan after General John A. "Blackjack" Logan, veteran of the war with Mexico and a Union General during the Civil War.

Houstonians were enthusiastic about this development because of the millions of dollars it would bring to their economy and because of their wartime patriotic fervor. Established on July 18, 1917, the camp initially comprised 2,019 acres of piney-wooded land leased by the army between Washington Road (Avenue) and Buffalo Bayou. The camp lay approximately a mile west of the city limits and, according to some estimates, ultimately occupied 12,000 acres including camp and drill grounds as well as target ranges. Its construction, completed by early 1918, employed thousands of Houstonians who built the roads and the hundreds of wooden buildings which served as warehouses, offices, mess halls, stables, showers, and latrines.

During the construction, Houston's most serious racial conflict occurred. It

was also one of the most bloody riots in United States military history. On the evening of August 23, 1917, approximately one hundred soldiers of the black Third Battalion, Twenty-Fourth Infantry, who were stationed in Houston to guard construction of the camp, mutinied and descended on the city. Although the precipitating cause was the beating of one of the soldiers by a white Houston police officer, the underlying cause was the humiliation of segregation, then a feature of Houston society. The rampaging soldiers killed sixteen whites, including five policemen, in their three-hour riot.

Meanwhile, companies of the Illinois National Guard became the first units to bivouac under the pine trees of Camp Logan. The camp was a tent city which eventually trained over 30,000 soldiers including both infantry and artillery. These men became a feature of Houston society as citizens feted them with watermelon lawn parties. Houstonians also established soldiers' clubs in town for their entertainment and visited the camp via automobile and trolley car to bring the young men a touch of home. These associations created warm memories that would be manifested in personal reminiscences, newspaper accounts, and many other types of written documentation from the period.

After the Armistice, Camp Logan was designated as a demobilization center. Local citizens turned out in large numbers to welcome home the men who returned from overseas. Wounded soldiers convalesced at the camp hospital. Although Houstonians had hoped that it would become a permanent military cantonment, the camp closed on March 20, 1919. The city converted the American Red Cross building at the camp into a charity hospital which lasted until the mid-1920s.

Will and Mike Hogg, prominent Houston developers, acquired a part of the site after the camp closed. In 1924, they sold 1,000 acres of it to the city at cost, for purposes of establishing a park. Subsequently, the city obtained an additional 503 acres. Together, these two tracts became Memorial Park, named to memorialize the men who occupied the site in 1917-1918. Memorial Drive took its name from the Park, and the name spread throughout Houston's west side subdivisions. In these many ways, Camp Logan has left its permanent imprint on the character of its host city.

The spirit of Camp Logan also lingers in the work of Fred L. Vermillion. As the camp began to train the National Guardsmen, the young photographer established his tent studio on the grounds. Vermillion took individual portraits of soldiers and officers, as well as photos of training exercises, routine camp duties, posed groups, recreational activities, and the buildings and grounds. He probably sold some of these photographs to individual soldiers. Others were converted into picture postcards which were sent home to family and friends, both by the men of Camp Logan and by visitors. A selection of his photographs is shown on the following pages.

Vermillion's images comprise a body of thousands of dry-plate glass

negatives. This type of glass negative, available in 1881, was in wide usage by commercial photographers during the early twentieth century. Fragile and necessitating a great deal of archival care, the Vermillion dry-plate glass negatives represent a valuable, arresting view of Camp Logan in its prime—World War I encampment that indelibly marked Houston's past.

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