

CHAPTER V

MINNESOTA AND THE FIRST WORLD WAR

In the years following the Spanish-American War, Europe was an armed camp, and the world stood constantly on the brink of war. In America, again unprepared for armed conflict, the "boys in blue and gray" had become men in olive drab.

The United States at first stood clear of the tension in Europe, but the war with Spain had shown the need for a larger, better trained and equipped armed force. In 1900, the regular army's size was increased to 100,000 troops and the federal appropriation for the militia was raised to \$1,000,000. Minnesota's allotment was \$15,527.02.

In 1903 the Dick Bill was passed distinguishing between organized and unorganized militia and recognizing the National Guards of the various states as a federal force. They were to be organized, armed and disciplined within five years in the same manner as the regular army. The states were to train and appoint officers. Regular army officers were to be detailed to the state units as inspector-instructors. Under a second bill passed in 1908, federal aid was increased to \$2,000,000. Both measures were the result of work by Charles Dick, United States senator from Ohio, a major general of the Ohio National Guard and a veteran of the Spanish-American War.

The plan did not provide for a balanced organization of Guard units containing the correct proportion of infantry, artillery, cavalry, engineers and others.

Between 1908 and 1916, the First Battalion of Artillery was increased by several batteries and renamed the First Artillery Regiment. Thus the Minnesota National Guard consisted of three regiments of infantry and one of artillery.

In 1913, the legislature passed an act providing for armories. City and state were to share equally in construction. Cost was not to exceed \$15,000 for each armory. Companies had been drilling in basements, city halls, dance halls, store buildings. Now 16 armories were built throughout the state.

A Naval Militia had existed in a number of states, and the Dick Bill of 1903 which gave federal aid and status for National

Guard units within the states also made it possible for the federal government to loan ships, equipment, supplies and arms to the states which had Naval Militia.

The Minnesota Naval Militia was organized at Duluth the same year. First training ship assigned to Minnesota was the U. S. S. Gopher, formerly the U. S. S. Fern, the second ship of that name. She was a two-masted schooner launched at New York in 1871 and commissioned in 1891. With her name changed to Gopher, she was taken to Detroit in 1906 and turned over to the Minnesota Naval Militia who sailed her to Duluth. She served as the militia's training ship until 1917. During those years the Gopher carried the men on memorable training cruises.

In 1910 a total of 155 officers and men (91 per cent of the membership of the Minnesota organization) took part in the annual 15-day training cruise. The Gopher joined other training ships of the Great Lakes Squadron at Thunder Bay, then proceeded via Port Huron, Lake St. Clair and Lake Erie to Buffalo, Cleveland, Detroit and back to Port Huron for the annual inspection by the United States Navy's board of inspectors.

One report states the cruise "offered unusual opportunities for navigation, both coasting and deep sea, for signal drills, target practice, man-overboard drills and competition, ship handling and emergency drills."

That year the Gopher cruised 3,705 miles on seven training missions. A year or so later the militia men were called to duty during a forest fire at Grand Marais. The town was surrounded by fire, and the training ship manned by the Duluth divisions carried supplies and fire fighters, helped battle the flames and stood by to evacuate the population.

In 1914 a revised Naval Militia Act was passed by congress providing for the organizing, equipping, arming and training of the Naval Militia by the federal government so it could be called into service in time of war.

In 1915, new divisions (roughly equivalent to companies) were mustered in at Bemidji, Crosby and Lindstrom. By 1916 the militia had four divisions.

It became apparent in 1916 that the United States would be drawn into the war in Europe and, with preparedness now the watchword, the National Defense Act was passed in June. The Navy Department gave the Naval Militia the status of Naval Volunteers. Four more divisions were organized and by January of 1917, the Minnesota Volunteers had 28 officers and 511 enlisted men.

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in France was not at first apparent to the government; the earliest, as well as the only really urgent, call came to the naval militia as a force auxiliary to the navy in the exigent work of protecting American coasts and commerce against the new marauders of the sea.

The Minnesota Naval Militia was a comparatively new organization, drawn for the most part from Duluth and other communities around Lake Superior. Before the war the people of other parts of the state were scarcely aware that such an organization existed and it is doubtful whether the fact ever became generally known, so promptly were the militiamen whisked away to the scenes of action and scattered among widely separated posts of duty.

Organized at Duluth in 1903 as the result of a local movement started during the Spanish-American War, the naval militia had become an established institution of considerable merit.³ Its head and guiding spirit from the start was Commander, later Captain, Guy A. Eaton of Duluth. The original organization consisted of two divisions, roughly corresponding to companies in the land forces, with a total of twelve commissioned officers and eighty-three petty officers and enlisted men. Two thirty-foot navy cutters and other equipment were purchased with a fund of about twelve hundred dollars, the first federal allotment, and in 1905 the U.S.S. *Fern*, a steamer of 840 tons displacement, was renamed the *Gopher* and placed at the disposal of the local organization for practice cruises on the Great Lakes. The state furnished a hundred rifles, but no financial aid for several years, and it devolved upon the militiamen to provide their own uniforms, build a boathouse, and supply other equipment. This they did with the aid of citizens of Duluth at an original outlay of about four thousand dollars.

³ The creation of the naval militia was authorized by state law the year following the Spanish-American War. See Minnesota, *General Laws*, 1899, p. 479-481.

Regular drills, many short cruises on Lake Superior, and occasional longer tours of duty on the Great Lakes served to familiarize the men with some of the duties of a man-of-war's man and to arouse local interest in their organization. In the course of the first ten years two new divisions were organized, one at Duluth and the other at Pine City, and in 1916, when preparedness became the watchword of the hour, the number of divisions was increased to eight by the organization of units at Bemidji, Crosby, Lindstrom, and St. Paul. By January 1, 1917, the naval militia had reached a strength of 28 officers and 511 enlisted men.⁴

That this force would in all probability be called out immediately in the event of war with Germany became apparent as early as June 15, 1916, when the navy department issued elaborate instructions for a rapid mobilization of the naval militia of the country in case of need. Commanding officers at the several stations were instructed to have their units as nearly ready for mobilization as possible at all times. Full clothing and equipment allowances, providing everything needful, apparently, except shoes and socks — with which sailors, perhaps, might well dispense — were to be issued to all officers and men. Every enlisted man was expected to "have his bag packed and his hammock ready to leave" and officers were to be prepared to make prompt arrangements, in accordance with accompanying instructions, for the transportation, subsistence, pay, and health of their men while en route from the local stations to national rendezvous yet to be designated.⁵

Another significant development was the inclusion in the naval appropriation act of August 29, 1916, of a section designed to circumvent the constitutional limitation upon federal use of state troops as it applied to the naval militia. This

⁴ Navy Department, *Register of the Naval Militia*, 1917, p. 55.

⁵ Mimeographed "Instructions for the Mobilization of the Naval Militia" in the archives of the adjutant general of Minnesota; transcript in the possession of the Minnesota Historical Society.

provided for the creation of the National Naval Volunteers, a force to be recruited by enlistment or draft from the membership of the naval militia organizations and used as occasion demanded.⁶ Presumably the militiamen would be given an opportunity to enroll in this new force as volunteers in fact as well as in name and this indeed proved to be the case, but for the time being the possibility of a draft remained.

The occasion for these preparations was first really brought home to the militiamen by the break with Germany early in February, 1917. Despite optimistic reports of the readiness of the Minnesota divisions, much, apparently, remained to be done. The process of enrolling the militiamen as national naval volunteers, though perhaps previously begun, had yet to be completed. Recruiting would be necessary to bring the units up to full strength and also to offset the loss of men who might not volunteer or be accepted for federal service. There remained the training of new men, the distribution of belated consignments of equipment, and the final assembling and packing of personal impedimenta. From available accounts it might be inferred that the militiamen all stood ready to volunteer for federal service; the three Duluth divisions were said to have taken the new oath "to a man" and reports of the progress of enrollment at the outlying stations would seem to indicate a like unanimity of response among the other divisions. Yet a shrinkage took place in the transition from naval militia to national naval volunteers, which could hardly have been wholly due to expirations of enlistments and rejections on physical or professional grounds.

In the hope of offsetting these losses and of making a considerable net gain in strength, the recruiting of men from civil life was carried on continuously to the last moment. Efforts to increase the three Duluth divisions from an average of sixty to ninety men each took the form of appeals made through recruiting details, newspaper articles, and slides

⁶ *Statutes at Large*, 39: 595-597.

shown in the theaters. An exceptionally vigorous campaign was carried on in St. Paul with the coöperation of the St. Paul Association, the Patriotic League, and other civic bodies. Headquarters were maintained at the Old Capitol and branch recruiting stations at the Golden Rule and in the old Merchants National Bank Building. On two occasions the local division paraded through the down-town streets and small squads of militiamen, in flag-draped automobiles or trucks, were frequently in evidence among the noon-hour throngs. Similar campaigns, though perhaps more in the nature of man-to-man solicitation, were carried on by the divisions located in the smaller cities and towns. Marked success attended some of these efforts, but the net result of it all was a body of naval volunteers somewhat smaller in number than the state force from which it sprang.

On April 6, after two months of continued last-minute preparations and of suspense, came the declaration of war and the immediate dispatch to the governors of all the states of telegrams conveying the brief order, "Mobilize Naval Militia." All the Minnesota divisions were assembled at once at their respective local stations and within two days seven of them, comprising 22 officers and 326 men, were concentrated at Duluth, where they were to entrain in a body for the navy yard at Philadelphia, the national rendezvous to which they had been assigned. The divisions from Bemidji, Crosby, Lindstrom, and Pine City were variously fêted upon their departure from the home towns and on the eighth, when all seven divisions left for the East, Duluth staged the first of those ceremonious, noisy, and heartbreaking last farewells *from the people of Minnesota that were to become so familiar in the months following.*

The St. Paul division, though mobilized at the same time as the others, was held at the local station for six weeks because of crowded conditions at the rendezvous to which it had been assigned, the United States Naval Training Station

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Third Division.

Name.	Rate.	Local Rendezvous.
Babcock, Jas. A.	Seaman	Pine City
Booth, Merrill J.	Seaman 2d class.	Pine City
Boston, Frank A.	Seaman 2d class.	Pine City
Blanchard, Emory	Seaman 2d class.	Pine City
Brandes, Fred C.	Seaman 2d class.	Pine City
Carlson, Alfred F.	Seaman 2d class.	Pine City
Clark, Robert N.	Seaman	Pine City
Collins, Wm. H.	Seaman	Pine City
Dosey, D. J.	B. M. 1st class.	Pine City
Dudley, Oscar C.	Elec. 3d class.	Pine City
Ellison, Harry	Seaman 2d class.	Pine City
Fitzgerald, Leslie	Seaman	Pine City
Fitzgerald, Jos. Z.	Seaman	Pine City
Fremi, Frank J.	Seaman 2d class.	Pine City
Gottrey, Clarence	Seaman 2d class.	Pine City
Gray, John H.	Seaman 2d class.	Pine City
Gray, Richardson	Seaman 2d class.	Pine City
Greenly, Dewitt	Seaman 2d class.	Pine City
Harris, Wm. H.	Seaman 2d class.	Pine City
Hoffman, Arthur	Seaman	Pine City
Johnson, Fritz A.	M. M. 1st class.	Pine City
Korbel, Wm. J.	M. M. 1st class.	Pine City
Kilgore, J. H.	M. M. 1st class.	Pine City
Kunesh, Jos.	M. M. 1st class.	Pine City
Ling, Wm.	M. M. 1st class.	Pine City
Maissonneuve, Philip	M. M. 1st class.	Pine City
Maves, Wm.	M. M. 1st class.	Pine City
Neubauer, Jos.	Seaman	Pine City
Neville, Benj.	Seaman 2d class.	Pine City
Oliverius, Anton	Seaman 2d class.	Pine City
Oman, Albert	Plumber	Pine City
Pennington, Clark	Seaman 2d class.	Pine City
Robinson, George	Seaman 2d class.	Pine City
Sherwood, Charles H.	Seaman	Pine City
*Wilcox, Dewey	Seaman	Pine City

*Accidentally wounded and left at division station.

MN. NAVAL MILITIA BLDG.

JUNE 11, 1898 WESTERN LAND ASSOC. OF MN. TO CHRISTIAN BERG
FOR \$300 (LOTS 5, 6, & 7)

SEPT. 12, 1901 CHRISTIAN BERG TO CARRIE E. HODGE FOR
\$400

OCT. 3, 1913 CARRIE E. HODGE & FRED HODGE TO ST. OF MN. FOR
"\$1.00 AND OTHER VALUABLE CONSIDERATIONS"

OCT. 5, 1976 ST. TO PINE CITY FOR \$19,000

JAN. 6, 1979 PINE CITY TO SCHOOL DIST. # 578 FOR
\$20,100

- UNIT CALLED TO DUTY ON APRIL 6, 1917 & REPORTED AT
U.S. NAVAL YARDS ON APRIL 10; ASSIGNED TO QUARTERS
ON U.S.S. MASSACHUSETTS

HOLBROOK : MN. IN THE WAR WITH GERMANY

- 7 DIVISIONS OF MN. NAVAL MILITIA ; MOBILIZED &
SENT EAST UPON THE DECLARATION OF WAR

- 1911 LAW (Chap. 302) LEG. GRANT AID FOR CONSTRUCTION
OF ARMORIES

23 ARMORIES FUNDED - 222 COMPANY

- 1913 - (2 DIV. IN DULUTH) 1915 (2 IN DULUTH + PINE CITY), 1917 - 8 DIV

1, 2, 4 - DULUTH

3 - PINE CITY

5 - BEMIDJI

6 - CROSBY

7 - LINDSTROM

8 - ST. PAUL

1857
1875
313

JAN. 31, 1913 - 70 OF 78 APPLICANTS ACCEPTED ; AT TIME
LARGEST DIV. IN ST. (2 IN DULUTH) ; ORGAN.

JAN. 30

MAY 2, 1913 - ARMORY ASSURED ! HODGE DONATE 3 LOTS
MERCHANTS & CITIZENS DONATE \$1000

JUNE 27, 1913 - 35 MEMBERS TAKE 1ST CRUISE ON "GOPHER"

OCT. 3, 1913 - ST. ARMORY BD MEET IN ST. PAUL & VOTED
\$15,000 TO BUILD ARMORY ; MR. KELLY OF
DULUTH IS ARCHITECT & EMIL LARSON THE
LOCAL CONTRACTOR

Handled by (FINE CITY NEW BANK) 1ST ST. BANK

Earl Foster PICKINSON GDS SERVICE

NAVAL MILITIA BLDG. .C. 1912 FRED HODGE DONATE
LAND TO ST.

- COURTHOUSE HAS PLACK
- VOCATIONAL SCHOOL OWNS IT NOW
- ARCHES - DOORS THAT OPENED 2 BOATS
STORED ON GROUND
- VACANT AFTER WWF UNTIL 1923 WHEN
NAT. GUARD UNTIL 1941 WHEN ACTIVE DUTY
#109R
- ST. MILITIA UNIT UTILIZE BLDG. FROM 1941
UNTIL 1946
- NOV. 1946 REACTIVATED 2 ARMORY UNTIL

JULY 1 1976

NAVAL MILITIA UNITS

PIKE CO. PIONEER

- TAKE TRAIN FOR DULUTH & THEN ON TO PHIL.

- MARCH 22, 1914 - TO PARTICIPATE IN CELEBRATION OPENING
PANAMA CANAL

- OCT. 23, 1914 - NOV. 5 TO BE GRAND OPENING OF ARMORY

- NOV. 13, 1914 - ARMORY DEDICATED ON 6TH ; SEATING
CAPACITY OF ABOUT 1200 ; BASKETBALL

- JAN. 17, 1913 - MEETING LEADING TO ORGAN. OF CO ; COMM.
EATON FROM DULUTH ATTEND ; NUCLEUS OF
ABOUT 125 MEN EXPECTED ; J. ADAM BEDE A
MAJOR MOVER

ST. LAW IF CITY RAISE \$1000 ST. GIVE \$10,000

