

# Town turns out for soldiers' return in 1898

*"For a brief time, all Americans, regardless of party, were inspired by a high idealism; we were going to free the enslaved people of Cuba. Then, of a sudden, the war was over." Indiana: A History, by William E. Wilson.*

Patriotism was high in Monroe County when Indiana Gov. James A. Mount called for volunteers after the explosion of the battleship "Maine." The local boys may have had visions of charging into battle against the Spanish, but the only thing they fought was mosquitoes and humidity in Virginia.

From "Camp Thoroughfare" Henry Feltus, of the Bloomington newspaper family, reported to *The World* on Aug. 8, 1898, that there had been rumors that the Indiana troops would be sent home. "It was certainly the desire of a majority of the boys of our regiment to be mustered out. They could not think of having to serve the rest of their enlistment doing garrison duty."

Some of the officers felt otherwise. Feltus wrote home that after the president had asked regiments to express their opinions about whether they wanted to continue to do garrison duty, the men of the Indiana



## Looking back

By Rose McIlveen

159th got up a petition in favor of going home. When the officers found out about the petition, the officers tried but failed to prevent it from being delivered to the president.

The officers next ploy was to send a message to Gov. Mount to the effect that "seven eights" of the men wanted to stay in the service. When they heard about it, the men began sending telegrams to the governor to let him know their real sentiment.

Continued Feltus, "We are of the opinion that as Uncle Sam no longer needs our services, and undergoing the hardships that we have had during the last four months, we certainly should be included in the mustering out of the regiments."

Bloomingtonians were elated at the pros-

pect of returning relatives and friends. The Sept. 16, 1898, *World* announced that, "About 50 of the friends of Co. H met at the court house last night to make arrangements to receive the boys tomorrow." W.F. Browning was elected chairman of the planning group.

The preparation of a lunch was assigned to the "ladies," Mrs. J.D. Morgan and Mrs. A.O. Henry from the First Ward; Mrs. Peterson and Mrs. Stewart from the Second Ward; and Mrs. J.E. Harris and Mrs. T.A. Allen from the Third Ward. They were to coordinate their efforts with representative of the Ladies Aid Society, Miss Vonja Miller, Miss Eva Slocumb, Mrs. R.H. Campbell and Miss Ella Rawlins.

General committee members were Capt. W.J. Allen, W.T. Blair, Robert Strong, J.D. Morgan, Samuel Gilmore, Professor J.A. Woodburn, Dr. J.E. Harris, Dr. J.F. Potts, Wilson Adams and James Millen.

It is unlikely that there were very many Bloomingtonians not on hand for the gala welcome, but for the benefit of any who weren't. On Sept. 18 the *World* described it. "Bloomington's welcome to her returning

soldiers was right royal. They were welcomed by a special committee sent to Gosport to meet them. Welcomed upon arrival by about 6,000 friends. . . . Welcome was written in the faces of fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, sweethearts and friends at the train."

Cheered by the crowd and led by the Mechanics Band, the soldiers were led into the courthouse square. The newly-returned soldiers heard a welcome from the mayor and representatives of the Civil War veterans, the Honorable H.C. Duncan and the Honorable John R. East. Miss Eva East sang "The Star Spangled Banner."

At the Armory the ladies' committee was waiting to serve the soldiers "chicken, Maryland style; jelly, cherry geletine, sweet pickles, queen olives, star ham, sliced ox tongue, celery, sliced tomatoes, cheese, pineapple sherbert, finger rolls, potato salad, salted wafers, peach ice cream, bananas (Hoosier style), grapes, white, chocolate, fruit and angel food cakes, mixed nuts, iced tea, coffee and peppermint wafers.

All in all, for the members of Company H, it must have been good to be home.

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