

Appraisal Report

Bancroft Camp 16, United Spanish War Veterans

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Provenance

These records were created and kept by a variety of officers of Bancroft Camp 16 in the normal course of administering the organization. They were donated by the Racine County Historical Society and Museum in 1984. From whom the records came to the county historical society is unknown.

Organization History

The Bancroft Camp 16 of the United Spanish War Veterans Association (USWVA) was officially formed on April 29th, 1889, by a committee called by Mat H. Heck and composed of Ezra L. Evans, Hard C. Clemons, George H. Rickeman, Paul M. Matson, George H. Herzog, Hillian Collier, Thomas Bishop, Earnest H. Smieding, James Craig, and John Stiegler. The purpose of this organization was to observe Decoration Day by decorating the graves of the committee's fallen comrades. From this committee, a draft of a constitution and by-laws were written, and it was decided that the Bancroft Camp 16 of the USWVA would be open to those who served or volunteered in Company F of the First Wisconsin Regiment and those who enlisted in the Spanish-American war from Racine City or County. At its highpoint, the Bancroft Camp 16 participated in the Annual National Encampments and Wisconsin Encampments well into the 40s and 50s, as well as assisting the widows of fallen members in applying for pension. The organization consisted of various officers and departments including, but not limited to a president, secretary, quartermaster, and historian.

General Description of Records

The Bancroft Camp 16, United Spanish War Veterans Association Collection contains a variety of materials regarding the organizations' history, records, proceedings, events, correspondence, and reports and publications, with a strong emphasis on financial records and documentation of the organization's early decades. Included this documentation are ritual books, books of ceremonies, and rules and regulations which provide an interesting view into the culture and general meeting and celebratory proceedings of a closed organization. Most of the materials

are papers or booklets, with various miscellaneous documents included throughout, that document meeting proceedings, financial accounts, department reports, as well as pamphlets and correspondence and proceedings from the national USWVA and the Wisconsin USWVA from the later years of the organization.

I recommend that the Bancroft Camp 16 of the United Spanish War Veterans Association Collection be preserved despite lacking proper documentation in the latter half of the organization's history, because this collection provides an interesting look into the local chapters of a national organization, with specific regards to veteran's affairs. On a broader note, this collection also reveals early 20th century American culture surrounding loss and death, collective memory, and the often-forgotten presence of veterans and casualties of war in popular culture through national attempts at remembering fallen comrades, which is doubly important alongside the preservation of the local history of Racine, Wisconsin, and veterans' culture in Wisconsin during the first half of the 20th century.

Explanation for Acquiring the Records

As previously stated, the Bancroft Camp 16 of the United Spanish War Veterans Association Collection provides an inside view into general and celebratory proceedings and rituals through rules and regulations, minute books, ritual books, and books of ceremonies, while financial records provide a glimpse into fund-raising and the monetary details of running a local chapter with annual events. On top of financial, historical, and general documentation of the organization, this collection also provides a unique look into veterans' affairs during the early 20th century in the United States, and more specifically Wisconsin, with doctors' medical examination of USWVA veterans' letters, national and local reports, proceedings, and events, in addition to memorial booklets and widows' pension forms. On a broader note, materials from the collection that document annual Encampment events, Decoration Day, memorials, and death announcements reveal an interesting look into traditions and celebrations of grief on a local and national scale in early 20th century United States. Overall, the Bancroft Camp 16 of the United Spanish War Veterans Association Collection unique lens of 20th century community organizations and central American culture and is recommended for preservation at the Wisconsin Historical Society.

Series Descriptions

Series I: Records, Minutes, and Documentation

Series I: Records, Minutes, and Documentation contains materials regarding the documentation of the Bancroft Camp 16 of the United Spanish War Veterans beginning with the general records and minutes of the organization and ending with a short scrapbook with press clippings. Newspaper clippings in the scrapbook should be photocopied, but otherwise in good condition. Notable mentions from this series include documentation of the Bancroft Camp 16's first meeting and the history of the organization's formation, and pretty much continuous coverage of the first two decades of the organization's meetings but falls short in documenting the last three to four decades. Series I: Records, Minutes, and Documentation is recommended for preservation because of the detailed and comprehensive early documentation of the Bancroft Camp 16.

Series II: Membership and Meeting Materials

Series II: Membership Materials contains materials pertaining to membership in the United Spanish War Veterans Association including the organization's rules and regulations, ritual books, books of ceremonies, as well as more miscellaneous items like a rollcall book, memorial booklet, anniversary messages, blank stationary, materials found inside the booklets, and finally some books pretraining to the history of the Spanish war, Spain's involvement with Cuba, and the History of the Wisconsin Veterans' Home. Some newspaper clippings need to be photocopied. This series is relatively strong in the breadth of materials and booklets from various decades, however, just like the first series, it lacks later membership materials from the last two decades. Series II: Membership Materials is recommended for preservation (with an caveat* for the books, which should be moved to the library or library shelving) because of the comprehensively documented books of rituals, books of ceremonies, rules and regulations, rollcall book, and membership applications which provide an intimate look into organized rituals and ceremonies and how they change over the progression of three decades.

Series III: Financial Records

Series III: Financial Records contains materials regarding the financial status, bank account records, receipts, quartermaster accounts, cancelled checks and more. These materials miss the first five years of the memberships but document the monetary state of the Bancroft Camp 16 well into the 30s before again missing documentation for the last decades of the

organization. Series III: Financial Records is recommended for preservation because of the comprehensive documentation of decades of financial records, statements, reports of the Bancroft Camp 16.

Series IV: Reports and Publications

Series IV: Reports and Publications contains materials and annual publications from the National Headquarters and Encampment and the Wisconsin Encampment. These reports and materials begin five years into the formation of the Bancroft Camp 16 organization and finish into the mid-50s. Series IV: Reports and Publications is recommended for preservation because of the comprehensive reports and publications from the National Headquarters and Encampment and Wisconsin encampment.

Series V: Correspondence

Series V: Correspondence contains correspondence to the Bancroft Camp 16 from the national headquarters and doctors, as well as miscellaneous alphabetized correspondence and unorganized correspondence. It's recommended to keep the Medical Examination Letters and Correspondence from the National Encampment but recommended to weed through the unorganized and alphabetized correspondence for relevance before preserving. The medical examination letters and correspondence from the National Encampment provide extremely unique and interesting look into veterans' affairs and the inner workings of the Bancroft Camp 16 charter of the United Spanish War Veterans Association.

Series VI: Miscellaneous Records

Series VI: Miscellaneous Records contains materials, mostly from the latter half of the Bancroft Camp 16 organization. It is recommended to sort through these materials and organize them into the right series, whether it is the creation of an additional series, or preserved in the miscellaneous series if material is relevant to the collection. Irrelevant/useless miscellaneous material should be disposed. Relevant miscellaneous material should be preserved because it could contain valuable insight into the organization, period of time, or location if in the hands of the right person, but material should be assessed and weeded through to see if it is relevant prior to preservation.

Processing and Conservation Note: Collection is clean and generally in good condition. Clippings should be replaced with photocopies.

Container List

Box 1 contained items 1-12, Box 2 contained items 13-18, Box 3 contained items 19-23, Box 4 contained items 24-31, Box 5 contained items 32-36, and Box 6 contained item 37. Items are numbered by the order in which they were originally placed in the box.

Series I: Records and Minutes, and Documentation of the Organization

- Record Book-April 29-1899- May 8, 1902 (1-8)
- Minute Book May 31, 1905- December 23, 1912 (1-10)
- Minute Book, January 13, 1913- December 10, 1923 (5-31)
- Scrapbook, n.d. (6-37)

Series II: Organization Membership Materials

- Applications for Membership and Miscellaneous Records, 1906-1917, 1913 (4-24)
- Rules and Regulations, 1910, 1920, 1920 (1-2)
- Ritual Books, 1912, 1918, 1935 (1-5)
- Booklet found in front of one of the 1935 ritual books (1-6)
- Rollcall book, 25th anniversary messages, and blank stationary, 1912-1917 (4-29)
- Books of Ceremonies, 1913-1924, 1913-1926, 1913-1926, and 1913-1929 (1-3)
- Miscellaneous materials inside one of the Books of Ceremonies, 1913-1929 (1-4)
- Memorial Booklet of Bernard J. Cigrand, 1946 (2-15)
- Books (1-7) *

Series III: Financial Records

- Quartermaster Accounts, 1905-1906, 1910 (1-12)
- Semi Annual Reports and Bank statements, 1906, 1908, 1909, 1912, 1938 (2-18)
- Account Book and Records, 1907-1920 (1-11)
- Financial Record Book, 1907-1938 (1-9)
- Receipts, 1913 (4-28)
- Bankbook, 1914-1929 (4-27)
- Cancelled Checks, 1918-1922 (5-35)
- Declaration for Widow's Pension forms, n.d. (5-34)
- Miscellaneous Correspondence and Financial Records and Reports, 1906, 1908 (3-21)
- Miscellaneous Correspondence and Financial Records, 1908-1912 (3-20)

Series IV: Reports and Publications

- National Headquarter Circulars, 1905-1912 (3-22)
- Wisconsin Encampment Proceedings, Reports and Telegrams, 1917, 1929-1948 (2-16)
- National Encampment Proceedings, Reports, 1927-1955 (2-17)
- Souvenir Books from the 41st Wisconsin Encampment, 1940. (2-13)

Series V: Correspondence

- Correspondence from the National Encampment and USWV Official Program 1905-1921 (2-14)
- Correspondence, "S," 1906-1910 (3-19)
- Correspondence "F" (5-32)
- Medical Examination Letters (5-36)
- Unorganized Correspondence, 1937-1945 (5-33)

Series VI: Miscellaneous Records

- Miscellaneous Records, 1908 (3-23)
- Miscellaneous Records, 1913 (4-25)
- Reports, general orders, bulletins, and miscellaneous documents 1946-1948, 1953-1956 (1-1)
- Miscellaneous Records, 1942 (4-26)
- Accordion Folder, n.d. (4-30)