The Story Begins with a Sword

The Iverson Brothers in Cuba

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January 23, 2024

Images: unless otherwise attributed, are from The Falmouth Historical Society.
The Rededication

• Ceremony to rededicate the Library following a major renovation was held on 2 Nov 2022
• Former home of Iver Iverson became the Library in June 1951.
• During the ceremony, a sword carried by Iver during his military service in Cuba was displayed
  — Sword was donated to the Library by an Iverson family member
The Saber

Model 1860 Light Cavalry Saber
Type issued to cavalry troopers during the Spanish-American War

How did the son of a Danish immigrant in Falmouth come to serve in the US Army in Cuba?
Iver’s Father

Martin Hansen Iversen (1854-1932)
- Born in a rural hamlet in Schleswig

Danish Duchy of Schleswig
- Home to Danes, Germans, Frisians
- Claimed by German-speaking nations
- Seized by Prussia in 1864
- Ceded by Denmark
- Led to an exodus of Danes
- Martin Iversen emigrated to Maine in 1872
Iversen Family

Martin became a farmer in Falmouth

Martin married Elise Boetilda Miller (1861-1941)
  • Emigrated from Denmark in 1874

They had four children
  • Iver Hansen Iversen (1880-1948)
  • Lawrence Martin Iversen (1882-1959)
  • Martin Hansen Iversen (1885-1951)
  • Lillian Elizabeth Iversen (1896-1965)
Spanish-American War

The “Splendid Little War” of 1898

Apr 21  US declared war on Spain
Jun 10  US forces began landing on Cuba
Aug 7   Most US forces withdrew
        ─ 24th US Inf, 9th & 10th US Cav remained
Aug 12  Hostilities ceased
Dec 10  Treaty of Paris was signed
        ─ War officially ended on Apr 11 the following year
        ─ Cuba became a US protectorate

USS Maine
Battleship exploded and sank in Havana Harbor on Feb 15, 1898
Army units deployed to Cuba

- 2nd Cav in the west
- 8th Cav in the center
- 7th Cav in the east

8th Cav arrived in Nov 1898

- Headquarters was at Puerto Principe (now Camaguey)
- Garrison was established at Nuevitas
Iver Enlists in the Army!

Chronology

• Enlisted at Portland in Nov 1900 for three years
  — Assigned to 8th US Cavalry
  — Arrives in Cuba in Dec 1900
• Assigned to L Troop, 8th Cav
  — Spent next 15 months patrolling and providing armed escorts in Puerto Principe Province
  — Advanced from raw recruit to corporal
  — Departed Cuba in Feb 1902
• 8th Cav returned to Fort Riley, Kansas
  — Garrison duty
  — Honorably discharged in Nov 1903
Return to Cuba

Cuban self-governance established
- US forces left Cuba in 1902
- US-Cuba Treaty signed in 1903
- Granted US right to intervene

Rigged Cuban election in 1905
- Led to revolt in 1906
- Government collapsed

US invoked 1903 treaty
- Sent Army back to Cuba in 1906
- Took over governance of Cuba
Lawrence Enlists the Army!

Chronology

• Enlisted at Portland in Apr 1904 for three years
  — Assigned to I Troop, 15th US Cavalry
  — Garrison duty at Fort Ethan Allen, Vermont

• 15th Cav sent to Cuba in Oct 1906
  — Lawrence promoted to corporal and served as leader of a machine gun section
  — Provided security at fixed locations around Cienfuegos

• Enlistment ends
  — Departed Cuba for Fort Monroe, Virginia, in Mar 1907
  — Honorably discharged in Apr 1907
Veterans Back in Maine

Iver Hansen Iverson
- Married Laura Jensen in 1905
- Became a carpenter
- Lived on Depot Road
- Died Mar 1948
- Laura died Mar 1950
  — Buried at Pine Grove

Lawrence Martin Iverson
- Married Wilhemina Wibe (1888-1916) in 1912
  — Lawrence Martin Iverson
  — Minnie Iverson
- Married Alice Lund (1894-1962) in 1920
  — Ruth Iverson
- Became a carpenter
- Lived on Depot Road
- Died 1959
  — Buried at Pine Grove

Images: FHS, Wikipedia
Research Challenges

Reconstructing narrative for military service is often difficult

- Made worse by 1973 fire at records center
- Unit rosters are often the best source
- No records of overseas service in Cuba
- Only record for enlisted soldiers was the “Register of Enlistment”
  — Provides only enlistment and discharge
- Relied on military histories and newspapers
  — Collections at GenealogyBank.com were most helpful
A Recurring Theme

Falmouth is built on waves of immigration

• Many fleeing oppression and persecution
• Seeking refuge and opportunity
• Military service by immigrant families is common

Iverson Family is another chapter in this story

• Three Iverson brothers and a sister
• Emigrated to Maine soon after Schleswig was invaded by Prussia
• Part of the large influx of Danes who settled and thrived in Falmouth after 1864
  — Lots of Falmouth names ending in “sen” or “son”