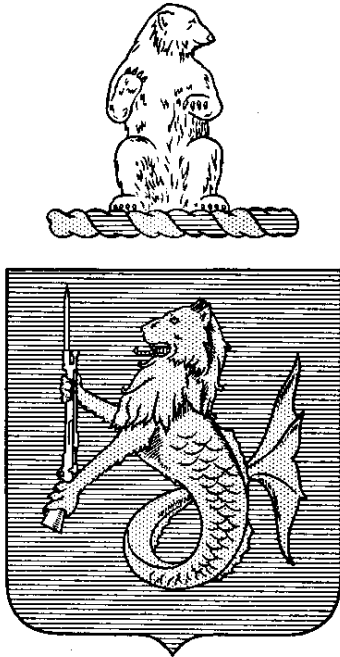


Chapter 1

THE BIRTH OF A REGIMENT

MANILA 1916-1918



The 31st Infantry Regiment's insignia, a polar bear, was approved by the War Department in 1924 to reflect service in Siberia from 1918 to 1920. The 31st never served in the United States as a regiment, earning it the unofficial nickname "American's Foreign Legion." After infantry regiments were discontinued as tactical organizations in 1957, several of the 31st's successor battle groups and battalions served in the United States, but its Headquarters and 1st Battalion have still never "been home." The regiment's only active unit, the 4th Battalion, serves with the 10th Mountain Division at Fort Drum, New York at the time of this writing.

At left is the regimental shield, a sea lion from the Philippine Department's shoulder insignia, commemorating the regiment's birth and long service in the Philippines. The regimental crest is a polar bear, commemorating the regiment's earliest combat experience during the Siberian Expedition of 1918-1920. The regiment's Latin motto, *Pro Patria*, means "For Country."

Two earlier 31st Infantry Regiments were formed in 1813 and 1866 but were later incorporated into other regiments. Their lineages are carried by the regiments into which they were absorbed and are therefore unrelated to the present 31st Infantry.¹ Today's 31st Infantry Regiment was authorized by the National Defense Act of 1916 and was formed in the Philippines that year to strengthen the forces protecting US interests in the Philippines following its capture from Spain in 1898.² Filipinos, although generally inclined toward friendship, did not seek or accept the occupation of their country by another colonial power, prompting a series of guerilla wars against US forces, the last of which ended in 1911. In 1916, there were still six regiments of infantry and a regiment of cavalry in the islands, concentrated mainly on Luzon and Mindanao where Muslim "Insurrectos" were a threat to order.

¹ The original 31st Infantry Regiment was formed in 1813 for service in the War of 1812. It was consolidated with the Regiment of Light Artillery in 1815 and its numeral disappeared from the active rolls until 1866 when a new 31st Infantry Regiment was formed from the 3d Battalion 13th Infantry. In 1869, that regiment was consolidated with today's 22d Infantry.

² The National Defense Act of 1916 appropriated funds for the Army's emergency expansion amid a crisis brewing worldwide. It expanded the Army by seven infantry regiments, one each in the Philippines (31st), Hawaii (32d), and Panama Canal Zone (33d), and four on the Mexican border (34th through 37th).

August 1916 Officer's Roster

Commander	COL Wm. H. Gordon
Deputy	LTC Frederic H. Sargent
Adjutant	CPT Charles Weeks
HQ Co	1LT Emile V. Cutrer
MG Co	1LT Max A. Elser
Supply Co	1LT John P. Adams
1st Bn Cdr	MAJ Robert H. Allen
Co A	CPT Thomas L. Brewer
Co B	2LT J. P. Wilson
Co C	1LT R. G. Caldwell
Co D	CPT Walter Harvey
2d Bn Cdr	CPT Colin H. Ball
Co E	CPT Wm. R. Kendrick
Co F	1LT Clark Lynn
Co G	1LT Everett N. Bowman
Co H	1LT Jacob E. Fishel
3d Bn Cdr	MAJ Ben W. Field
Co I	1LT George W. Maddox
Co K	1LT Everett D Barlow
Co L	1LT Richard H. Jacob
Co M	1LT A. Ellicott Brown

Reaction to the National Defense Act of 1916 was not as orderly as Congress might have intended. Since the required manpower for new regiments would take at least a year to recruit, the Army transferred men and equipment from existing regiments, diluting them all. In compliance with the order, the Philippine Department formed the 31st Infantry Regiment's Headquarters, Machinegun, and Supply Companies and 3d Battalion on August 13, 1916 at Fort William McKinley (Rizal), with personnel and equipment from the 8th and 27th Infantry. 1st Battalion was formed at Regan Barracks (Albay) from the 2d Battalion 15th Infantry. 2d Battalion was formed at Camp McGrath (Batangas) with personnel and equipment from the 13th Infantry. As B Company's First Sergeant Joe Dundas put it; "men went to bed on the night of July 31, 1916 as members of B Company 15th Infantry Regiment and awoke the next morning in B Company 31st Infantry Regiment." On its first consolidated morning report, the regiment totaled 35 officers and 1350 enlisted men.

Formed only 18 years after the Spanish-American War, most of the 31st Infantry's senior officers and NCOs had served in that war, gaining insight into expeditionary warfare. Colonel William H. Gordon, the Regimental Commander, and Lieutenant Colonel Frederic H. Sargent, his Deputy, had seen action during the closing years of the Indian Wars in the American West, had fought against Spain in 1898 and against insurgents during the Philippine Insurrection, and had seen their Army transformed from a pitifully small internal security force to a modern Army that would grow to a force of over 4 million men over the next two years.

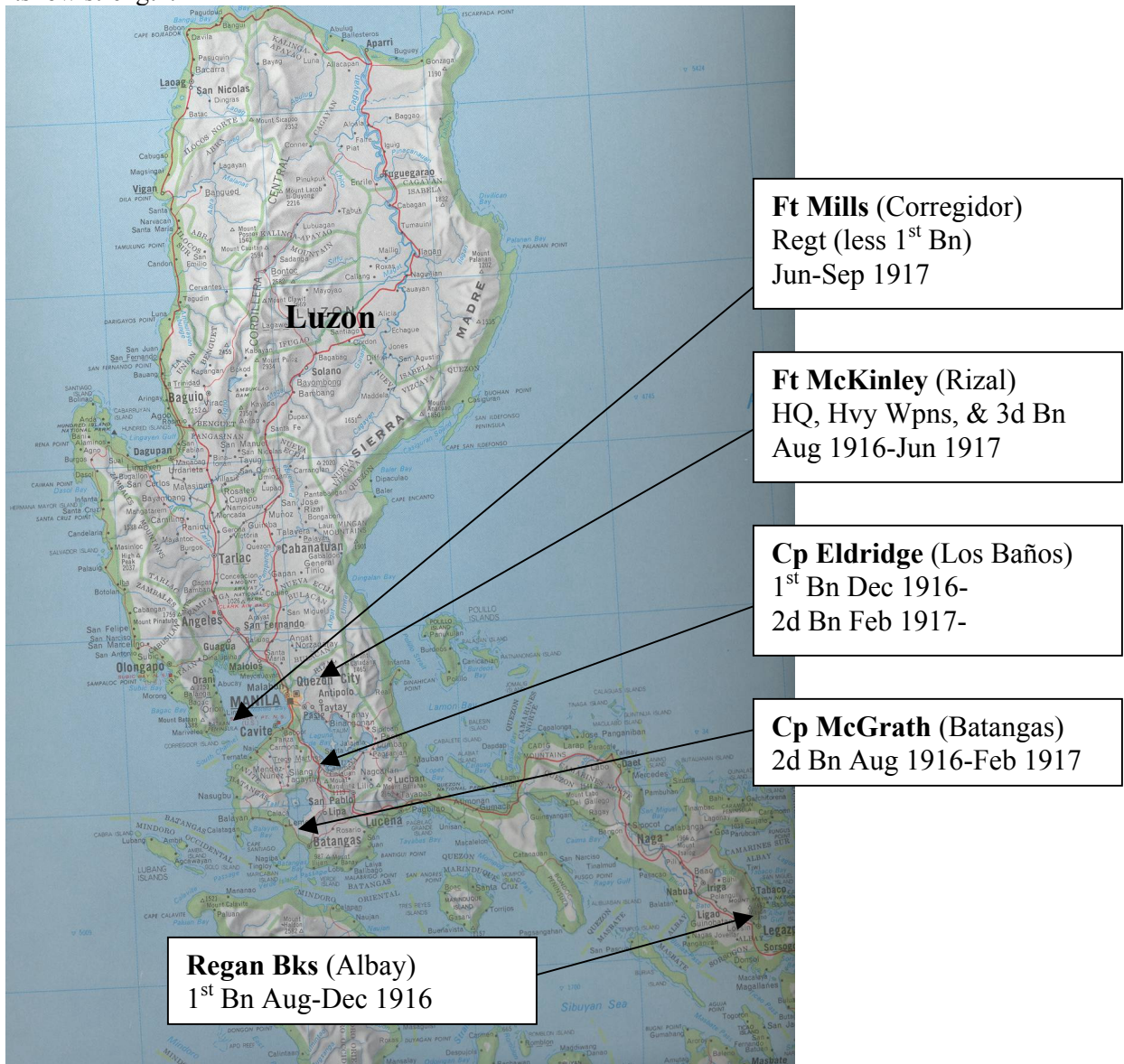


Bottomside Barracks and Officer Housing at Ft Mills, Corregidor, seen from Malinta Hill

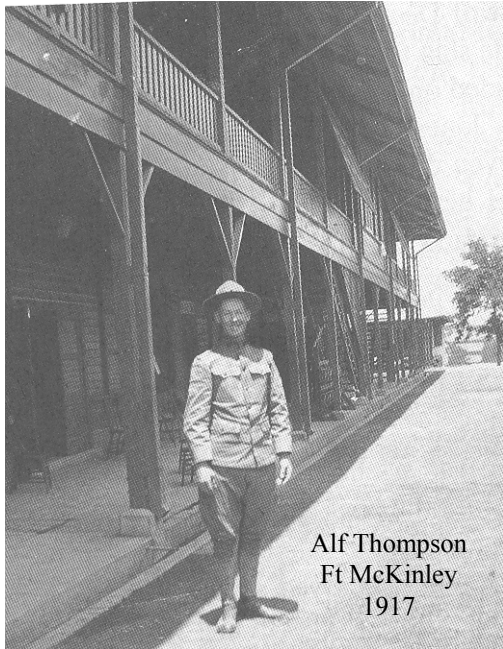
In December 1916, the 1st Battalion moved to Camp Eldridge (Los Baños) where it was joined by the 2d Battalion in February 1917. During February and March 1917, the regiment underwent its first instruction practice, combat firing, and proficiency tests and there were frequent inspections to assure companies attained a common standard. In June, Lieutenant Colonel Sargent, the regiment's deputy

commander, was promoted to succeed Colonel Gordon. To guard against a possible surprise attack by Germany to seize the Philippines, the 2d and 3d Battalions moved to Fort Mills on Corregidor, an island near the mouth of Manila Bay. They were followed a month later by Headquarters, Machinegun, and Supply Companies. In August and September, all but the 3d Battalion returned to Fort McKinley.

After the United States entered World War I in April 1917, few additional troops were sent to the Philippines, causing the regiment's strength to plunge as experienced men were promoted or sent to training camps in the US to help expand the Army for wartime service. Those left behind feared they would sit out the war in the Philippines while others went to France to win the glory, the medals, and the girls back home. By January 1918, the regiment had dwindled to 55 officers and 865 enlisted men, just enough to fully man one battalion. In February and March of that year, the regiment underwent its second round of record practice, combat firing, and proficiency tests, showing impressive results despite its low strength.



With one of the last contingents of new troops to join the regiment in 1917 was a remarkable 21-



Alf Thompson
Ft McKinley
1917

year old who would remain associated with the Army and his regiment to the end of his life at age 100. Private Alf Thompson joined the Army at Fort Collins, Colorado in the fall of 1917 and was promptly sent to the Philippines. Although disappointed that he was not going to war, Thompson was excited to see a part of the world that he had previously known only in school books. Assigned to the 31st's Machinegun Company on his arrival in Manila, Thompson demonstrated uncommon attention to detail and was soon appointed company clerk, a corporal's position. A year later, following his promotion to sergeant and his return to a machinegun section, Thompson applied for Officer Candidate School (OCS) at the urging of his company commander. In those days, OCS was taken mainly by correspondence, supplemented by local instruction and testing at the candidate's home station.³ Although Thompson passed every test with ease, publication of orders making him a second lieutenant had not yet arrived when the regiment departed the Philippines in 1918.

During the spring of 1918, the regiment's strength grew abruptly. Among the replacements arriving at Pier 7 in Manila was Cesar Pares, a Spaniard by birth, who had



been sent to the United States by his wealthy parents to study in New York. Eager to see the American west, he abandoned his studies to work on a ranch in New Mexico. When he turned 18, he and a friend journeyed to Denver by train to see more of the west. After a wild night on the town, they wandered the streets penniless. On a whim, they walked into the Army recruiting station at Fort Logan and enlisted. Pares expected that he would soon be returning to his native Europe to fight the Germans. Instead, he was sent to the Philippines and assigned to the 31st Infantry's Headquarters Company.

When the 8th and 13th Infantry Regiments departed the Philippines to form part of the 8th Division at Camp Fremont, California, members of the 31st assumed it was only a matter of time before their regiment received similar orders. They would wait in vain. By April 1918, the 31st was one of only two US infantry regiments left in the Philippines.

³ When his tour of duty was done in 1920, Alf Thompson left the Army. When World War II came, Alf was too old to enlist so he organized the American Red Cross effort supporting American troops in the Mediterranean Theater. A full generation later, Alf organized a welcome home program for Vietnam veterans in Illinois and helped raise funds for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC. When the 31st Infantry Regiment Association was formed, he was among its earliest members and attended its reunions until he became unable to walk. He celebrated his 100th birthday on November 11, 1995 and died the following spring.