

# Getting to Know My Great-great-grandfather Fred: Soldier in the Spanish-American War

by J. M. Kemp

Fred Knickerbocker has always had a significant presence in our household and in my life. Growing up, all I knew about Fred is what I had been told by my father and other members of my family: Fred was my great-great grandfather; he lived in Pine Plains,; he was farmer; he fought in the Spanish-American War. His legacy lives on in our house to this day through the many pictures of the Knickerbocker family that hang on our walls, including a beautifully shot photograph of Niagara Falls that Fred took. Even the sound of the very entertainment that Fred indulged in fills our house on a daily basis through my father's inherited collection of Edison records that were originally Fred's. For decades, a large portrait of young Fred has rested above the fireplace in our living room, a visual indicator of how significant a presence Fred still holds in our daily lives. Yet even with such a looming presence, and everything that had been relayed to me throughout my life, I had little knowledge of the man who had come to symbolize my family history. Fortune would have it however, that that would soon change through a chance meeting with leaders of the Dutchess County Historical Society.



**Figure 1.** Portrait of Fred Knickerbocker, great, great-grandfather of author Justin Kemp. Photograph, framed. Collection of Kemp family. This portrait of Fred Knickerbocker hung in the Kemp family home giving inspiration to Justin Kemp for further research into the life of his ancestor. Recently Justin graduated from college with a major in history. A visit to the Dutchess County Historical Society ended in encouragement to start a research project on the story of his ancestor and his service in the Spanish-American War.

Like most recently graduated college students, I was aiming to begin the next chapter of my journey to becoming a professional historian. After many fruitless attempts to apply the skills I had obtained at college, my next stop on my post-college life led me to the Dutchess County Historical Society. As my interview was coming to a close, the subject of conversation shifted to my family history and I revealed my familial connection with Fred Knickerbocker. As it turned out, the Society had just completed a project pertaining to Knickerbocker ties to local agriculture. Suddenly it looked as though an opportunity to apply my skills had revealed itself. Once we had taken a look at Fred's collection of letters and photographs, we had begun to form the basis for what could be a truly fascinating story involving a local veteran of what has become known as one of America's "forgotten wars." With this story taking shape, I began to delve into Fred's writing and images, and the man whose life and personality had long been a mystery to me was beginning to come into the light. As it turns out, Fred had quite a colorful vocabulary in his letters, and he was also quite a shutterbug with his camera while traveling with his unit. Who would have thought that a routine interview would turn into an opportunity to finally learn more about my family history? When I started this project, I knew very little about Fred, but now that I've investigated his writings and his photos, I feel like I know him more by going to the source directly than being told stories about him by my family. Knowing what I know now, I feel that it was fated that I would be the one to tell Fred's story, and that my meeting with the DCHS was, to put it boldly, a twist of fate.

### *Fred's Collection*

The collection of Fred Knickerbocker encompasses his life experiences as a farmer in Pine Plains, New York, as a soldier in the Army traveling from coast to coast across America to the Hawaiian Islands in the Pacific, and finally to his twilight years, decades after the Spanish-American War. This vast collection of primary sources details Fred's adventurous life through documents and photographs written and taken by the man himself. The greatest concentration of documents from Fred's collection are the letters written by Fred to his parents Henry B. Knickerbocker and Phebe Stickle during his time in the United States Army. From May to December of 1898, Fred wrote thirty-four letters from the various camps where he was based back home to the family farmstead just on the outskirts of Pine Plains. These letters give us insight into Fred's personal experiences, both good and bad, as a soldier in a secondary army unit. In addition, they chronicle Fred's whereabouts across his eight-month adventure as a soldier during the waning months of the Spanish-American War. Through these

letters, we can trace Fred's movements to places like Camp Black, Fort Hamilton, San Francisco, and Honolulu. Also evident in these documents is how propaganda was used during the war, as several of the envelopes containing Fred's letters bear an image of the battleship USS Maine, bearing the declaration, "Remember The Maine".



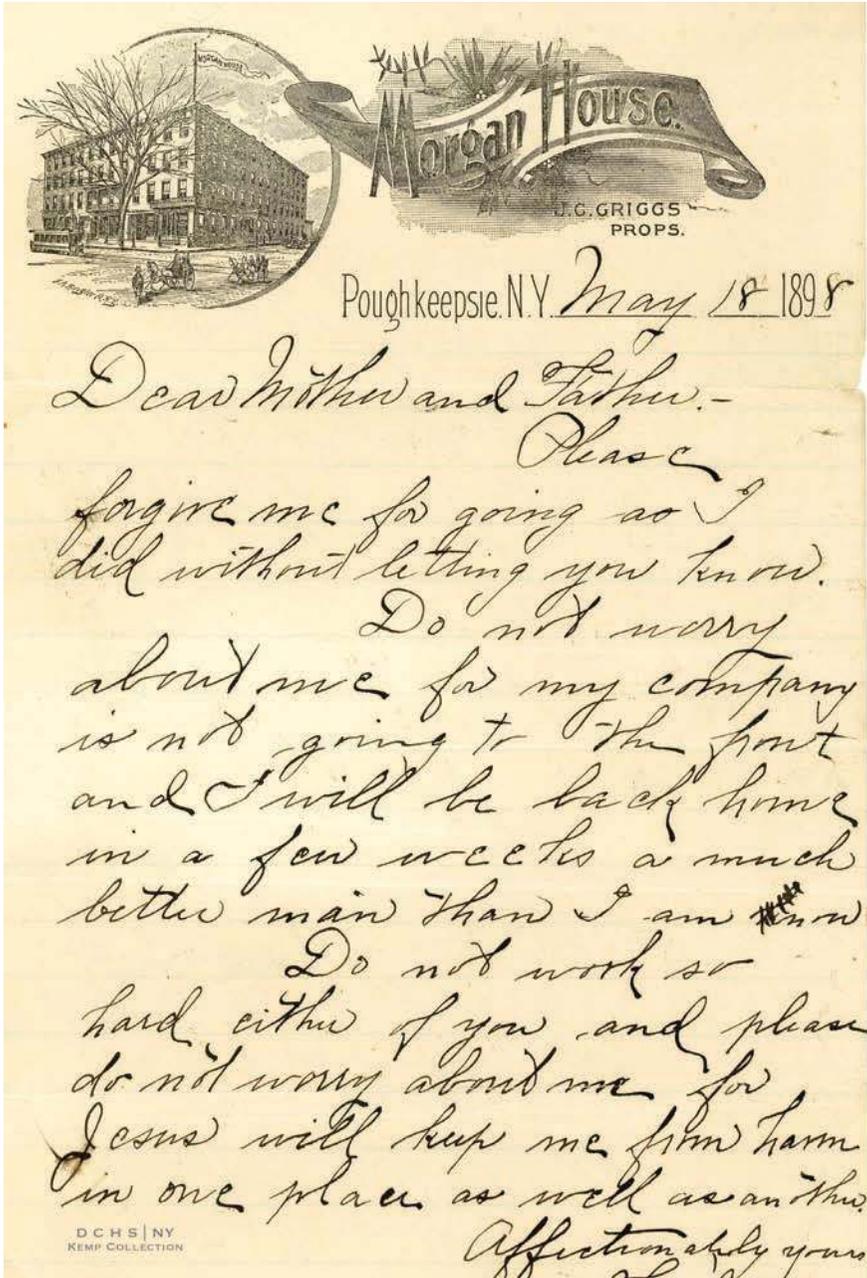
**Figure 2.** Fred Knickerbocker's military cap from the Spanish American War, Company K, Poughkeepsie, New York, 1898. Collection of the Kemp Family. The Kemp Family Collection of Fred Knickerbocker's service materials includes letters, a ledger, many photographs taken by Fred himself, and various other items such as Fred's uniform and this cap.

Another important component of Fred's collection are photographs, the majority taken by Fred himself. Like Fred's letters, the photographs document what army life was like for Fred and his comrades. Even after over a century of deterioration, most of these images are still very much intact and even minute details are still clearly visible to the human eye. Fred's photographs depict the terrain of the various locales where he was based, the spirit and morale of his friends in his unit, and the hardships of everyday life as a soldier. Accompanying Fred's letters and photographs is a ledger from his days following the war that follows Fred's activities for the rest of his life in Pine Plains.

For years, this collection resided in a box as it was passed down from generation to generation of Fred Knickerbocker's descendants until it ended up in the possession of my family.

### *Fred's Story*

Born on December 29, 1876 in Pine Plains, New York, Fred was the younger of the two sons of Henry B. Knickerbocker and Phebe Stickle Knickerbocker. The Knickerbockers were of Dutch ancestry and were farmers. According to photographic evidence, Fred was educated at the Seymour Smith Academy in Pine Plains, a predecessor of the school of the same name that is still operational to this day. After his schooling, Fred returned to the family farm to work with his parents and his brother George. According to ledgers, the family's agricultural pursuits dealt mainly in apple farming and distribution.



**Figure 3.** Letter from Fred Knickerbocker to his parents explaining his decision to leave home and join the army in the Spanish-American War. May 18, 1898. Written at the Morgan House in Poughkeepsie, New York and sent to Pine Plains, New York. Collection of the Kemp Family. Fred wrote: "Please forgive me going as I did without letting you know..."

On May 18, 1898, when Fred was 21 years old, he enlisted in Company K of the New York State National Guard. He served for nearly two years, was mustered out at Poughkeepsie on February 26, 1899, and returned to a life of farming in Pine Plains. The following year he married Mary E. Case and between 1901 and 1913 the couple had four children: Ralph, Rena, Henry, and Grace. Fred registered for the draft on September 12, 1918 at the age of 41 but was not called for active duty. Fred was proud of his military service. Fred died On November 14, 1956 and is buried in the Evergreen Cemetery in Pine Plains

### *Fred Joins the Army, Albeit Secretly*

In May of 1898, Fred suddenly saw an opportunity to leave his uneventful life as a farmer behind him in favor of what he believed would be an adventure that would transform him into a better man. Not wishing to live day to day with the daily routine of farming, Fred made a choice that would leave a lasting impact on his life. That fateful spring, Fred decided to trade in his farming attire for an army uniform, one he would wear with pride, even decades after his service during his twilight years. While at first Fred's story may be considered a classic example of the all-American tale of a farm boy joining the army for a life of adventure, a look through Fred's letters to his family over the next six months reveals the more complex nature of a young farmer adjusting to and coping with the daily struggles of his transition from farmer to foot soldier. One of the more interesting of these letters is his very first letter to parents Henry and Phebe, written immediately after enlisting and just before shipping out for training. Dated May 18, 1898, the letter was sent to his family from the Morgan House in Poughkeepsie and reveals Fred's motives for enlisting as well as well as his affection for his family. Fred writes:

Please forgive me going as I did without letting you know. Do not worry about me for my company is not going to the front and I will be back home in a few weeks a much better man than I am now. Do not work so hard, either of you, and please do not worry about me for Jesus will keep me from harm in one place as well as another.<sup>1</sup>

From this one letter written by Fred, two things are clearly evident. First, we see Fred's reason for joining the army, which was his belief that he was going to come out of the army a transformed man, a much better man than he was at the time he enlisted. Second, we see that Fred enlisted without the knowledge of Henry and Phebe, which is of greater interest here.

Making the decision to leave one's home life and parents behind for military service is a major life decision, and this was the choice that Fred made, only he chose this path on his own, without letting his parents have a say. This is reflected in his letter, where he apologizes to his mother and father for not letting them know of his intentions, however, he is clearly apologetic for such a drastic life change. However, he makes it a point to assure his parents that he would not be in harm's way, as he was well aware that his unit was not going to the frontlines. Perhaps the most valuable thing we can interpret from this letter is just how affectionate Fred was to his family, as he also assured them that Jesus would watch over him while he was away, while also telling them not to work so hard on the farm in his absence. We can see that this is clearly a family man, a man who loves his parents so much, that he apologizes for running off to war while attempting to ease their minds. On another note, the letter also illustrates Fred's naivety in his belief that he would only be away for a mere few weeks, where, as fortune would have it, it would be up to six months before Fred would be permitted to return home.

Having now enlisted, Fred was about to embark on an incredible cross-country and personal odyssey that would take him from Camp Black across the Pacific to Honolulu. As mentioned earlier, his thirty-four letters of correspondence provide us with a paper trail that tracks nearly his every move from location to location along his nine-month trek with Company K of the 1st New York Regiment, the unit Fred was assigned to. With this vastly detailed paper trail in hand, along with the photographs taken by Fred's camera, a month-by-month timeline of his regiment's movements can be traced from the day Company K left Poughkeepsie to the voyage to Hawaii.

What this personal archive does not entail however, is the events past Fred's very last letter, dated December 6, 1898, as the paper trail unfortunately stops here. With the trail gone cold, one would expect that this is an abrupt end to Fred's incredible journey. However, this is not entirely the case, as a search on Ancestry resulted in the discovery of a digitized copy of Fred's army record. Along with containing all the basic information, i.e. age, size, weight and so on, this record also reveals an interesting piece of information regarding Fred's whereabouts following Company K's posting in Honolulu. According to the record, Fred received a furlough from the army from late December 1898 to February of 1899, before he was discharged that same month. After seven months of moving across America and the Pacific with his comrades in Company K, Fred was finally able to return home to his family, whom he had missed so much, as evidenced by the sheer number of letters that he wrote in those seven months, in which

he informs parents Henry and Phebe of almost everything he and his unit were doing at the time, furthering the image of Fred as a true family man. As mentioned earlier, it was Fred's decision alone to enlist, and based on his letters, it was a decision that would test his patience with Uncle Sam in the next several months to come. If only Fred had known what he was getting himself into when he made his choice to join the army.



**Figure 4.** Company K, First New York Regiment, Poughkeepsie, New York, May, 1898. Spanish American War. Photograph. Collection of the Kemp Family. Fred Knickerbocker signed up for service as a young 21-year-old Pine Plains farm boy. He was hoping “to become a better man.”

### *Journey to Hawaii from Camp Black*

As an enlisted man assigned to Company K of the 1st New York Regiment, Fred's first destination with the unit was Camp Black. This was the first of many stepping stones along his journey with Company K across America and the Pacific. For about a month, Company K resided at Camp Black until mid-July of 1898, when the unit was moved to its new camp at Fort Hamilton. Fred describes his living situation at Fort Hamilton in a letter to his mother, Phebe, dated June 14, 1898, in which he says, “We are away from Camp Black at last and are situated at Fort Hamilton. It is a beautiful place just south of Brooklyn. We are camped in tents instead of barracks. As I write you we would be but have a good floor in each tent and when everything is settled we will be very comfortable.”<sup>22</sup> Once again, we see here that Fred makes certain in his writing to reassure Phebe that he is in excellent spirits and that he is adjusting well to army life, something that Phebe and Henry must have taken great comfort in hearing from their son miles away from home.



**Figure 5.** Fred Knickerbocker as a soldier in the Spanish American War, 1898. Photograph. Collection of the Kemp Family. Knickerbocker's service lasted for ten months during this, one of America's shortest wars. His service did not take him to the Philippines and combat, but to California and Hawaii.

Later that month, Company K was moved from one side of the country to the other, a long and tedious trip by train to its next base in San Francisco, California. From late July until August, Fred's outfit was camped there as they awaited orders to be shipped across the Pacific to the Hawaiian Islands, where they expected to be based for the next several months. Fred wrote home to Henry the day his company finally got their marching orders on July 27, 1898, "At last we have received destination orders and will be on our way to the Hawaiian Islands in a very few days by fast, or fun."<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, Fred also elaborates on how the men in his unit are looking forward to getting out of San Francisco, for they are fed up with the weather there. He says:

All are glad to get away from this place of fogs, cold winds and sand. We will have a fine place where we are going and although we may have to stay there six months we will have no fighting to do, and the climate all who have been there say is fine.<sup>4</sup>

Clearly, Fred and his comrades were excited to go to what seemed to be the ideal vacation destination in a warm tropical climate, a welcome change from the cold and miserable conditions they had encountered in California.

Before sailing off to Hawaii, there was one personal errand that Fred made, one that would prove rewarding not only for himself, but for our view of the chain of events that surrounded him those last few months in paradise. While he had spare time in San Francisco, Fred bought a camera, which he would carry with him and capture these incredible images of Company K's presence in Hawaii, images that survive to this day. On August 3, 1898,

Fred spoke of this camera and the supplies he had bought in great detail in a letter to Phebe, in which he says,

I have bought a Camera. I wish you could see it is a fine one a Cartridge Kodak made by the Eastman Kodak Co of Rochester N.Y. takes pictures 4x10 in film. Glass plate camera like my old one is no good as I could not use the plates. could not change them and bend them they would break.<sup>5</sup>

As we can see, Fred clearly knew his way around cameras, as he had prior experience with them, but the transition from glass plates to film must have been an interesting learning experience for him. Of even more particular interest is how much Fred paid for this new camera, and the means with which he paid for it. “I paid \$30 in gold for the camera, case and 4 rolls of films.” In the long term, this would be a fortuitous expenditure for Fred and for future generations, for without this purchase we would not have had such a vast personal visual archive of Fred and Company K’s activities in Hawaii. Among Fred’s most interesting images are ones



**Figure 6.** Soldiers on a troop ship traveling from California to Hawaii. Photograph by Fred Knickerbocker, 1898. Collection of the Kemp Family. Fred wrote home to his parents that the trip to Hawaii was slow and difficult. The photographs he took on the voyage show soldiers crowded together on deck in wet, stormy conditions.



**Figure 7.** Soldiers on deck traveling from California to Hawaii. Photograph by Fred Knickerbocker. The Spanish-American War, 1898. Collection of the Kemp Family.

of the voyage across the ocean to the Hawaiian Islands (Figures 6 and 7), ones that capture the discomfort of the men as they battled the cold ocean breeze and as they came onto the deck for air from the cramped and stuffy conditions below decks.

### *Stuck in Hawaii*

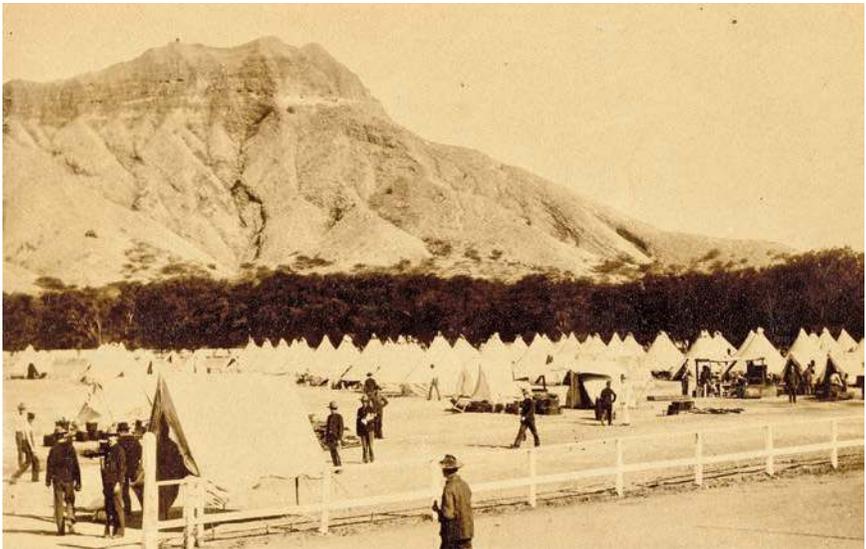
After a long and exhausting boat ride, Company K reached its destination in Oahu, where Fred and his unit settled into their tropical surroundings.

We arrived here all safely yesterday afternoon. The voyage was long and tedious and the accommodations poor but we are here safe and that is the main thing...It seems to be a beautiful place we are going to have a fine camping place.<sup>7</sup>

Those were Fred's thoughts as he expressed them to Phebe on August 13, the day following their arrival in the Hawaiian Islands. For the better portion of their stay in Oahu, Company K was encamped along the shoreline of Diamond Head, the site of an extinct volcano overlooking a beach where the unit spent most of their time. Just about a week into their stay at Honolulu, Fred wrote a letter to Henry, in which he describes not only his surroundings, but the locals encountered by Company K, as well as the sights of the local terrain. It is also in this letter where Fred announces

that he has heard that the war has ended, and was looking forward to being back home soon.

Have been in camp here just a week today. Learned by the San Francisco papers that war is all over and now am in hopes that we will be discharged in a few months as I want to get out of the army and back home before winter... There are no snakes or poisonous reptiles on the Island. The natives or Kanacks as they are called are quite intelligent but the Chinese and Japanese are of the lower clans. A great many wealthy Englishmen and Americans live in the immediate vicinity of the camp which by the way is in the race track about four miles out of the city. We are kept confined in the camp and cannot go down to the city but are allowed to go and bathe at the sea shore... Our camp is right by the side of an old extinct volcano (Diamond Head) I and several of my tent mates climbed to the top of it yesterday the view was splendid one could see the whole harbor and city of Honolulu and the country for miles around.<sup>8</sup>



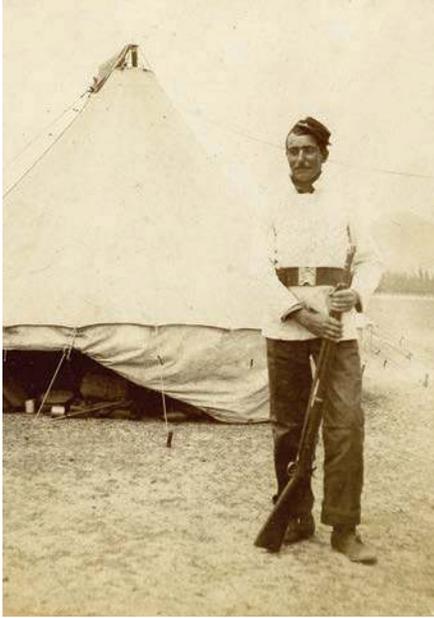
**Figure 8.** The army camp at the base of the Kilauea Volcano, Hawaii. Company K, Spanish-American War, 1898. Photograph by Fred Knickerbocker. Collection of the Kemp Family. Fred's entire period of service was spent here in Hawaii, not in the Philippines fighting. The United States annexed the independent state of Hawaii in 1898, during the conflict of the Spanish-American War.



**Figure 9.** View of the Army Camp looking out to sea over the Pacific Ocean, Hawaii. Company K, Spanish-American War, 1898. Photograph by Fred Knickerbocker. Collection of Kemp Family.

Based on all this information contained within this one letter, it sounds that, at least for their first few weeks in Honolulu, Fred and the rest of his comrades were treated to what seemed like a tropical vacation aside from being in camp.

Besides this and Fred's other letters, which already give us an in-depth account of the conditions in Hawaii, Fred's photography gives us the best view of what daily life was like for the men of Company K in their tropical paradise. Throughout his stay in Hawaii, Fred stayed busy with his camera, taking countless photographs of the terrain as well as the state of his camp on the beach. As we just saw from Fred's letter to Henry, he spoke of climbing the volcano at Diamond Head, and this is one of those images captured by Fred's camera. When discussing Fred's images from his Hawaiian excursions, two particular photographs come to mind, and both show the layout of Company K's camp along the shoreline. If we put these two images together, we see that one side, the camp lies at the base of the mountain, with the volcano looming in the background (Figure 8), while on the other side, the camp is surrounded by sand and the Pacific Ocean (Figure 9). Of these two images, it is the one taken from the volcano side that illustrates the camp in its entirety, as it was taken from a great height overlooking the whole camp. We can see that the soldiers' tents are situated in a wooded



**Figure 10.** Private Fred Knickerbocker with rifle standing in front of a tent, Hawaii. Company K, Spanish-American War, 1898. Photograph probably by Private Fred Knickerbocker and friend. Collection of the Kemp Family.

area, providing shade from the intense sunlight, while other structures are closer to the shore. Another image reveals that a lot of men were placed in large tents that could fit up to ten soldiers. It must have been uncomfortable considering not only the tropical climate, but the added body heat of ten individual soldiers sweating in a confined canvas tent. Things must have gotten quite stuffy very quickly.

Fred's photography was also a way of making money in the army, as on one occasion, he states that he sold 523 pictures to men in his company.<sup>9</sup> It is most fortunate that many of these images have survived today, after being passed down so many generations over a century since they were taken.

Of course, being stuck in Hawaii for months on end was beginning to get tiresome for most of the men in Company K, including Fred, for whom all this downtime was taking a physical toll. On October 16, Fred pointed out the physical change he was going through in a letter to his mother, one that is quite surprising, "I am getting fat weigh 175 don't think you will know me if I don't get home pretty soon."<sup>10</sup> Fred was gaining weight, and based on what we see in some of his photographs, it's easy to see why. In two images, men from Fred's unit can be seen with large columns of bananas tied to their rifle racks and eating coconuts, and one of Fred's letters substantiates this. "Almost all kinds of tropical fruit grow here and we can go out and get coconuts and pineapples and almost everywhere."<sup>11</sup> It's no wonder why Fred was putting on weight, with all the native produce that he and his friends were eating in their spare time.

With the war over, Fred was anxious to get back home, but the powers that be were preventing him from doing so, so he tried several times to get home on his own terms, even to the point of asking Henry and Phebe



**Figure 11.** Caverns in the Lava at the Kilauea Volcano, Hawaii. Photograph by Private Fred Knickerbocker, Pine Plains, N.Y. Collection of the Kemp Family. When Fred came home from ten months of service, he published his stories of his travels along with his photographs in the *Poughkeepsie Eagle*, the local paper. His photograph of the lava flow in Hawaii, a local attraction, he submitted to the amateur photographic contest of the national periodical, *Leslie's Weekly*, winning first prize in November 1899. Although Fred claims in his letters home that he did not like the inconveniences of Army life in Hawaii—the heat, the insects, the rough living—in fact, he and his fellow soldiers were on a great adventure seeing a part of the world far from home.



**Figure 12.** An Outing of Members of Company K, First New York Volunteers, In Hawaii. Photograph by Fred Knickerbocker. Published in *Leslie's Weekly*, November 1899. Collection of the Kemp Family. In this photo, the men are shown on an expedition in the Hawaiian jungle where a small railroad had been installed. After ten months, Fred wrote home to his father asking for funds and assistance to return home. He was going to be released from the Army.

for assistance. This wasn't always the case during his stay in Hawaii, as he went back and forth between wanting and not wanting a discharge. For example, on September 7, Fred writes to Henry, "I wrote George some time ago that I was willing to accept a discharge. I feel different about it now that the war is over than I did while we were at Ft. Hamilton."<sup>12</sup> Weeks later, he says "I hope you have made no attempt to get a discharge before this letter reaches you I was foolish to write you as I did for no doubt you are worried about me."<sup>13</sup> Even at a time when he was experiencing personal distress, Fred still made it a point to put his mother at ease, something he had done from the very start of this adventure. For the next few months, army life in Hawaii went on, and Fred patiently waited for what seemed to him like a lifetime for any word of a return home to Pine Plains. Then on one late November day, Fred finally got the news that he had waited months for. "The unexpected has happened we are coming Home."<sup>14</sup> Naturally, Fred was ecstatic to hear that his wish was finally being met. After four long months, Fred would finally get to be home with his family again. Unfortunately, it would not be until after Christmas that he returned home, but what wonderful family reunion it must have been indeed.

### *Fred Returns Home and a Life of Remembrance*

In January 1899, after eight months of service in Company K, Fred was finally back home with Henry, Phebe, and George, a very much long-awaited reunion that he had dreamt of and written of with such frequency since he had first shipped out to Camp Black. In the decades following his departure from the army, Fred would continue to live a fulfilling life in Pine Plains,



**Figure 13.** Fred Knickerbocker in old age saluting the flag. He is standing next to a monument to fallen soldiers after the Spanish- American War, World War I, and World War II. Pine Plains, New York. 1948. Photograph. Collection of the Kemp Family. In later years, Fred would be proud of his participation in the Spanish-American War and his travels to California and Hawaii. Here he is shown wearing his original uniform.

as a gardener, as a father, and more importantly, as a veteran. On one front, life went back to the way it had been before his odyssey. He would return to the monotony, regularity, joys, and problems of a farmer's life, the life he had led before the war, planting crops on the farmstead, something he had tried to get away from by enlisting in the army in the first place. However, Fred's reputation as a man with a deep affection for his family would remain strong following his army days well into his later years. Eventually, Fred married a woman named Mary Case, and they had four children together, two daughters, Rena and Grace, and two sons, Ralph and Henry, the latter named after Fred's father. Fred also continued to express his creative side in both his photography and his gardening. Shortly after returning home from Hawaii, Fred submitted some of his photographs to the magazine *Leslie's Weekly*, as part of the publication's photo contest, resulting in Fred taking home first prize for that contest. In terms of his gardening, Fred would go on to plant rose gardens at the family home, even posing with daughter Rena in one of the many family photos. It would seem that even in old age, after all the times in Company K, both good and bad, Fred still held onto that idea of beauty in life, this creative side of his that he expressed in his pictures and gardening.

However, times were not always perfect for the next fifty years of his life. By 1934, the Great Depression held the nation in its grip, and even the Knickerbocker family was feeling the effect of it as well. That year, Fred was forced to sell the farmstead that had been his home, in his family for so many years. He would spend the next twenty-three years residing on Poplar Avenue in Pine Plains for the remainder of his life, a house where his daughter Rena would continue to reside until her passing. Despite such hardships, besides family there was still one other thing Fred held onto



**Figure 14.** Fred Knickerbocker in old age wearing his original Army uniform. Photograph. Collection of the Kemp Family. After his service in the Spanish-American War, Fred returned home. He spent the remainder of his life as a farmer in Pine Plains, New York. He married and had four children, and eventually grandchildren.

dearly in his twilight years: his status as a veteran in his community. On May 27, 1948, a monument bearing the names of Pine Plains veterans who served in the Spanish-American War, World War I, and World War II was unveiled in the town center, next to the town clock, and Fred had the honor of donning his old dress blue uniform as he unveiled the monument, while Sheriff Fred Close read the Honor Roll. It was a moment that was captured in time, as he happened to be photographed standing next to the monument bearing so many local veterans' names, including his own, one of just two names underneath the title of the Spanish-American War. Even fifty years after his service in Company K, Fred continued to wear his uniform with pride until his death in 1956.

### *Conclusion*

As the great-great grandson of Fredrick Knickerbocker, I feel blessed that I'm the one who finally got to share Fred's story on his behalf, a story that very might as well have been hidden were it not for a chance meeting with the members of the Dutchess County Historical Society. It gives me great pride that finally Fred is being recognized for his many traits and attributes, particularly given his connection to Pine Plains, my hometown. I believe that the story of Fred Knickerbocker is an inspiration, not only to military families, and local families, but more importantly to families in general. I think the most important thing we can take away from Fred's story is the value of family. I think we can look at this story and say that Fred provides us with an excellent example of a family man, one that I hope influences others who read this story. Because considering all other factors of life, family is everything.

---

The research for this article comes from the letters that Fred Knickerbocker sent home to his parents at their farm in Pine Plains while he was a soldier in the Spanish-American War. Fred Knickerbocker to Mrs. H.B. Knickerbocker, May 18, 1898

<sup>1</sup> Fred Knickerbocker to Mrs. H.B. Knickerbocker, June 14, 1898.

<sup>2</sup> Fred Knickerbocker to Mrs. H.B. Knickerbocker, July 27, 1898.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Fred Knickerbocker to Mrs. H.B. Knickerbocker, August 3, 1898.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Fred Knickerbocker to Mrs. H.B. Knickerbocker, August 13, 1898.

<sup>7</sup> Fred Knickerbocker to H.B. Knickerbocker, August 22, 1898.

<sup>8</sup> Fred Knickerbocker to Mrs. H.B. Knickerbocker, October 16, 1898.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Fred Knickerbocker to H.B. Knickerbocker, August 22, 1898.

<sup>11</sup> Fred Knickerbocker to H.B. Knickerbocker, September 7, 1898.

<sup>12</sup> Fred Knickerbocker to Mrs. H.B. Knickerbocker, September 20, 1898.

<sup>13</sup> Fred Knickerbocker to Mrs. H.B. Knickerbocker, November 29, 1898.