



## A War Measured in Months, Not Years

For twelve weeks in 1898, the United States came to the aid of Cuban nationals fighting for independence from Spain in a conflict that would become known as the Spanish American War. America initially steered clear of involvement, in spite of the heavy toll that disruption in trade with Cuba was taking on U.S. shipping interests. Public opinion shifted when a massive explosion on February 15, 1898, destroyed the U.S. Navy cruiser *Maine*, anchored in Havana harbor. Over 250 sailors were killed. Succumbing to a public outcry to “Remember the *Maine*,” President William McKinley asked Congress to declare war on Spain in April.

The state of Georgia quickly answered the call to arms by providing both troops and training camp locations. In addition,

infantry units from other states were stationed along the coast to protect against a possible Spanish invasion. On St. Simons Island, a temporary encampment known as Camp Gordon was set up near the lighthouse. As many as six companies of the 2nd North Carolina Volunteer Infantry were stationed there from the beginning of August until mid-September, though a cease-fire was signed on August 12.

On Sunday, September 11, the last dress parade was held at Camp Gordon, and a large crowd of Brunswick residents gathered to bid the North Carolina troops farewell. As described in the September 13 edition of the *Brunswick Times*, the commanding officer, Colonel William Burgwyn, a Civil War veteran who had served in Robert



E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia, thanked the residents for their gracious hospitality and commended his men for “conducting yourselves like soldiers and gentlemen.” The following day, the troops left by train for Raleigh and “Camp Gordon became but a memory.”

An image from the Coastal Georgia Historical Society archives shows the troops enjoying a barbeque provided by the residents of Brunswick. Also shown is construction of a battery for defense of St. Simons Sound, located on the property of Captain F.D.M. Strachan, west of the Village Pier.

Our monthly images on this page are from the vast archives of the Coastal Georgia Historical Society. The Society's mission includes the “administration, restoration and maintenance of historic facilities and resources ... preserved as a living part of the historical and cultural foundations of our coastal community.” Society facilities include the St. Simons Lighthouse and Museum, the A.W. Jones Heritage Center, and the World War II Home Front Museum at the Historic Coast Guard Station. To learn more about the Society, its diverse programs, and the benefits of Society membership, please call 912.638.4666, or visit [coastalgeorgiahistory.org](http://coastalgeorgiahistory.org).