

Colleagues -

Dr. Angela J. Smith has asked me to review the documentary she produced, *1898-1899 North Dakota Goes to War*, for her tenure portfolio. I am happy to do so. I must point out at the onset, however, that my area of expertise is not film. Consequently, I can only comment on the content of the work, not its technical aspects.

North Dakota Goes to War is the collaborative product of Dr. Smith and her Digital History class. The documentary is a forty-minute account of the founding of what becomes the North Dakota State University, the Spanish-American War, the Philippine-American War, and the role of Fargo men in the 1st North Dakota. Special attention is paid to the students of the then North Dakota Agricultural College, before, during, and after their service. Importantly, the film targets a general audience, and one that would not have expertise in the Philippine-American War.

North Dakota Goes to War is enjoyable. The film is chronologically arranged. It is historically accurate. The commentary by Carole Butcher and Tracy Barrett are both solid and would prove enlightening to a general audience. The film is rich in photographs and visuals. One point should be made: while some of the photographs and visuals are captioned, most are not. Captions could amplify the narrative and reduce the possibility of misunderstanding. For example, the uncaptioned Philippine “combat” movie clip (commonly found in Philippine-American War documentaries) was actually shot in New Jersey by reenactors.

I would like to highlight a few aspects of the film that I found impressive. One is the presentation of the postwar experience of the veterans, particularly the “Company B rides free” campaign, a small but fascinating event. The discussion of Frank LaFayette Anders and John Kinne is also quite interesting, and I wish I knew more about them. Another impressive aspect is the lack of ideological positioning; it is refreshing to see the Philippine-American War treated without severe postcolonial dogma.

If the documentary should ever be revised, I think a couple of things need consideration. One would be the background discussion of the events leading up to the 1st Dakota’s entry into the war. This background is a full twenty-five minutes in length, over half of the film. Only a small portion of this concerns the 1st North Dakota, and the length causes repetition at several points (the sinking of the *USS Maine*, for example). The background could probably be cut to less than ten minutes. While the discussion of Young’s Scouts is important, so is the involvement of the 1st North Dakota in Luzon during the early days of the war; I would have liked more about this. Finally, the short inclusion of Kinne’s journal was interesting and important; could other entries of the journal be used?

In all, I found *1898-1899 North Dakota Goes to War* to be a valuable tool to help a general audience understand the Philippine-American War.

Dr. Joseph P. McCallus
Professor of English
Columbus State University

Author of *Forgotten Under a Tropical Sun: War Stories by American Veterans in the Philippines, 1898-1913*, The Kent State University Press, 2017; *The MacArthur Highway and Other Relics of American Empire in the Philippines*, Potomac Books, 2010; *Gentleman Soldier: John Clifford Brown and the Philippine-American War*, Texas A&M University Press, 2003; and *American Exiles in the Philippines, 1941-1996: A Collected Oral Narrative*, New Day Publishers, 1999.