



## "Camp Cuba Libre"

(Jacksonville, Florida)

By Patrick McSherry

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Camp Cuba Libre, near Jacksonville, Florida, was the assembly point for **Maj. Gen'l. Fitzhugh Lee's** Seventh Corps. This camp was established on May 31, 1898, because the area around Tampa simply had gotten too crowded. Camp Cuba Libre eventually became home to 30,000 men!

When it was first established, supplies were scarce, and the men assembling at the camp had to fend for themselves. Supplies were being rushed elsewhere - mainly to the 8th and 5th Corps, which were being readied for deployment to the **Philippines** and **Cuba** respectively. The men at Camp Cuba Libre were forced to eat with their fingers off of shingles which served as plates, because the necessary utensils did not arrive. Slowly, supplies began to trickle in, but by the time all of the men received their first issue of uniforms, those that received their uniforms first already had worn them out! Items such as floor boards for tents and similar items were deliberately withheld by the government, on the theory that the men had to be toughened up - a condition with **Fitzhugh Lee** changed! Medical necessities were so slow in arriving that the camp commanders turned to the Red Cross for supplies.



Col. William Jennings Bryan (left) and Maj. Gen, Fitzhugh Lee at Camp Cuba Libre

In spite of it all, Camp Cuba Libre was probably the "model" camp of them all. **Lee**, an experienced troop commander and Civil War veteran chose the site for the camp himself. The men were encamped on sandy, absorbent soil that alleviated the sewage problems prevalent at other camps. Lee had water piped to each regiment. Rail lines, and commercial facilities were close by. **Lee** saw to it that supplies for the hospitals, the bath houses and tent floors were purchased at nearby Jacksonville as needed. When disease began to break out in the other camps, **Lee** had the foresight to take news as a warning of things to come and outfitted his hospitals to prepare for the onslaught of illness.

Most of the troops at Camp Cuba Libre never got to the front, spending their time in the camp in drill, target practice. They were preparing for a planned assault to capture Havana, Cuba, but the operation became unnecessary with the **fall of Santiago**. When the armistice was declared, morale and discipline at Camp Cuba Libre and the other camps began to break down. The Camp Cuba Libre men had a drunken riot in the streets of Jacksonville.

When the war ended, elements of the 7th Corps were sent to Cuba as part of the occupation forces. Included in the occupation forces were the elements of the **6th Missouri Volunteer Infantry** and others. The U.S. continued to occupy Cuba until 1902.

The forces who were encamped at Camp Cuba Libre include:

**First Ohio Volunteer Infantry**  
**Third Ohio Volunteer Infantry**  
**Fifth Ohio Volunteer Infantry**  
**Second Georgia Volunteer Infantry**  
**32nd Michigan Volunteer Infantry**  
**First Florida Volunteer Infantry**  
**Second Illinois Volunteer Infantry**  
**First North Carolina Volunteer Infantry**  
**Second New Jersey Volunteer Infantry**  
**50th Iowa Volunteer Infantry**  
**First Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry**  
**Fourth Illinois Volunteer Infantry**  
**9th Illinois Volunteer Infantry**  
**Second Virginia Volunteer Infantry**  
**Fourth Virginia Volunteer Infantry**  
**49th Iowa Volunteer Infantry**  
**First Texas Volunteer Infantry**  
**First Louisiana Volunteer Infantry**  
**First Alabama Volunteer Infantry**  
**Second Texas Volunteer Infantry**  
**Second Louisiana Volunteer Infantry**  
**Second Mississippi Volunteer Infantry**  
**Second United States Volunteer Cavalry**  
**Third Nebraska Volunteer Infantry**  
**First South Carolina Volunteer Infantry**  
**161st Indiana Volunteer Infantry**  
**Fourth United States Volunteer Infantry**  
**Sixth Missouri Volunteer Infantry**  
**49th Iowa Volunteer Infantry**

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**Bibliography:**

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**Mullin, Burt, Letters**

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