The Bandera PROPHET

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Today in Texas History

By Bandera Spirits of Texas

On this day in 1898, Gen. Nelson A. Miles ordered the First United States Volunteer Cavalry Regiment, better known as the "Rough Riders," to Tampa, Florida, to take part in the forthcoming invasion of Cuba as part of the Spanish-American War.

The regiment, nominally commanded by Col. Leonard Wood but in fact led by Lt. Col. Theodore Roosevelt, was one of three volunteer cavalry regiments raised in the western states and territories to augment the regular defense establishment, and the only one of the three to serve in combat.

After assembling in San Antonio, the men of the First-many of whom were Texas Rangers-encamped in what is now Roosevelt Park and learned drill and discipline. As no transports could be found to move the division's horses to Cuba, however, they fought as infantry.

The Rough Riders were the first United States troops to land in Cuba, and on July 1, with elements of the Ninth and Tenth United States Cavalry regiments, made the famed charge on San Juan (actually Kettle) Hill, seizing the Spanish fortifications and pushing the defenders back into Santiago de Cuba.

The fame of the Rough Riders catapulted Roosevelt into the vice presidency and later the presidency of the United States. In San Antonio, in addition to Roosevelt Park, Roosevelt Street and the Roosevelt Bar of the Menger Hotel, a favorite watering place of the regiment, are named in memory of their sojourn in Texas.