



# WALTON RELATIONS

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Walton County Genealogy Society

May 2014

## **Gulf Cemetery's Anniversary**

Gulf Cemetery in Santa Rosa Beach was recently named a State of Florida Historic Site. Its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary will be celebrated with the dedication of a new Florida Historical Marker this Memorial Day.

The Historical Marker will be unveiled by an official from Tallahassee, and key remarks will be made by Rev. Don Ullrich. World War II vintage planes known as "War Birds" will perform an honorary fly-over. Many local dignitaries and cemetery volunteers from the past are expected to be in attendance. At the conclusion of the dedication, the audience will be asked to place new flags on the graves of the many veterans buried there, and all attendees will receive a memento of the occasion.

The Historical Marker dedication will take place on Memorial Day, Monday, May 26, 2014, at 10:00 a.m. at the cemetery, which is located on County Road 393 South in Santa Rosa Beach. Old maps and stories from the area sometimes refer to the cemetery as the Santa Rosa Cemetery. For more information, call 850-267-8418. In case of rain, the event will take place at the Crosspoint Church, which is across the street from the cemetery.

## **WCGS Meeting**

The Walton County Genealogy Society will meet on Saturday, May 10, at 10:00 a.m. at the Walton County Heritage Museum. The public is invited to bring their questions and share their experiences with genealogical research.

## **Spence Family Reunion**

The 48th Spence Family Reunion will be Saturday, May 17, 2014, at the DeFuniak Springs Community Center. Doors will open at 10:00, followed by a meeting at 11:00, and lunch at noon. Please bring a covered dish to share. For more information, call Mildred Spence Boland at 850-892-3248 or Irmalee Bass at 850-892-6103.

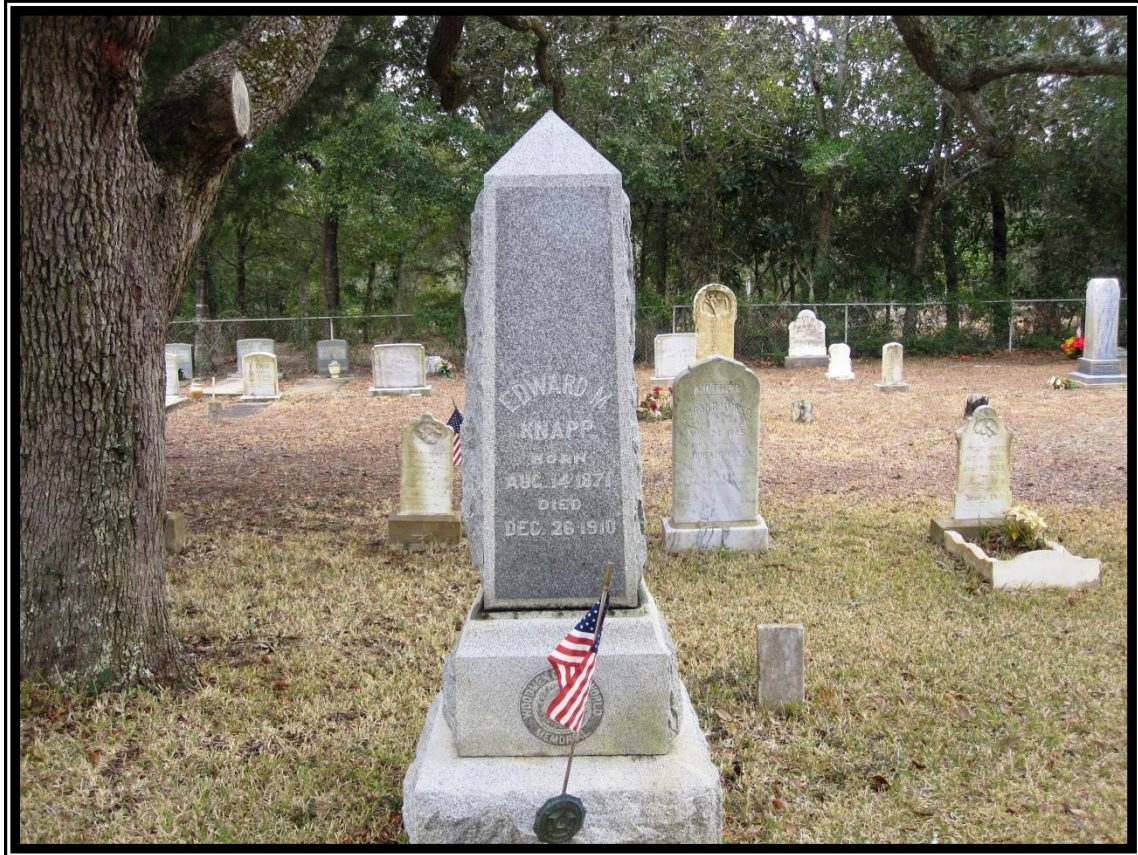
### **Walton County Heritage Museum**

Open Tuesday - Saturday: 1:00 - 4:00 PM  
1140 Circle Drive, DeFuniak Springs, FL 32435  
850-951-2127  
[www.WaltonCountyHeritage.org](http://www.WaltonCountyHeritage.org)  
[HeritageMuseum@centurylink.net](mailto:HeritageMuseum@centurylink.net)

# The Mystery Gravestone in the Marler Memorial Cemetery – Part 1

By **Bill Mills** of Fort Walton Beach, Florida

**W**ho is the stranger, Edward M. Knapp, buried among the Marler-Destin relatives in the family cemetery? He has one of the tallest, most distinctive gravestones in the cemetery. It is the only “Woodsman of the World” gravestone. These were provided by the Woodsman of the World Life Insurance Company upon the death of its members before 1920. Because he has no known relationship to anyone buried in the cemetery, I set out to find out who Edward M. Knapp was and why he was buried in the Marler Memorial Cemetery.



(Gravestone of Edward M. Knapp – 1871 to 1910 – in the Marler Memorial Cemetery, Destin, FL)

**The Knapp Family** – Edward’s father, John Sullivan Knapp, was born in 1844 in Illinois, and Edward’s mother Christina was born in 1853 in Missouri. Edward Morris Knapp was born in Asley (Scott County), Illinois, on August 14, 1871, and grew up in Westchester (Scott County), which is located just north of Asley. Scott County had a population of 10,500 when Edward was born in 1871. Today the population is 5,200. The size of the 1870s population was due to the arrival of the railroad in the 1850s.<sup>1,2</sup>

They lived in a farming community where work was hard, even for a young boy. Edward’s father, John S. Knapp, was a Lieutenant in the Illinois infantry during the civil war, was wounded, and became disabled from a gunshot wound. John was an agriculture inspector in 1880 in Scott County, Illinois, according to the Federal Census. Edward Knapp had one sister and four brothers as follows:

- Sister, Josephine B. Knapp was born in 1874. She was a nurse and transported sick patients by ship from the Panama Canal Zone to New York City in both 1912 and 1913. Josephine Knapp's occupation was a nurse in St. Louis according to the 1920 Federal Census. <sup>3,4</sup>
- Brother, Hiram Henry Knapp was born in 1877. According to the Federal Census he lived in St. Louis in 1910, then in 1920 he lived in Iowa, and finally he settled in Kansas City in 1930 where he lived until his death in 1930. <sup>5,6,7,8</sup>
- Brother, Henry Harper Knapp was born in 1883. He lived in Omaha (Douglas County), Nebraska, about 1903. He married, raised a family, became a farmer, and lived in Nebraska until his death in 1953. <sup>9,10,11</sup>
- Brother, George Delbert Knapp was born in 1888. George arrived in Florida about 1911 but could have been there earlier. He departed Florida about 1917 when he too moved to Nebraska where his brother Henry lived. In 1920 he married and settled in Wilber (Saline County), Nebraska, where he raised his family and farmed until his death in 1970. <sup>12,13,14,15</sup>
- Brother, Lester Leroy Knapp was born in 1893. He registered for the draft in Pike County, Illinois, in 1917. Lester joined the U.S. Army and was stationed in Germany in 1920 in the 1<sup>st</sup> Engineering Division. When he returned from World War I, he married in Pennsylvania and lived there until his death in Philadelphia in 1967. <sup>16,17,18,19,20</sup>

Searching historical records for Edward Morris Knapp found him living in Saint Louis, Missouri, in the 1890s, likely attending school. On March 2, 1897, he married Cecily Flynn in Clayton (St. Louis County), Missouri. By the time of the 1900 Federal census, Edward and his wife Cecily were living in Havana, Cuba, at the Headquarters, Department of Matanzas and Santa Clara Hospital Corps, Armed Forces-Foreign Company. On December 14, 1901, in Havana, Cuba, their son Nathan was born. <sup>21,22,23,24</sup>

Edward's military service records stated he enlisted on August 3, 1898, in Missouri, in K Company, 3<sup>rd</sup> Regiment, U.S. Volunteer Engineers. He transferred to the #82 Headquarters Department, Camp Michie, Matanzas, Cuba, on August 29, 1898. Edward was discharged April 12, 1899, and held the rank of private, corporal, and sergeant, which was amazing for his eight month career! His service records provided his age, where he was from, and his physical description. Edward had blue eyes, brown hair, and was 5 foot 6 inches tall. Edward's military service was during the Spanish-American War (1898). This was a conflict between the United States and Spain that ended Spanish colonial rule in the Americas and resulted in U.S. acquisition of territories in the western Pacific and Latin America. <sup>25</sup>

**The Spanish-American War** - The war originated in the Cuban struggle for independence from Spain, which began in February 1895. Spain used force to stop the rebellion, but the American people supported the rebels. There was a growing popular demand for U.S. intervention after the unexplained sinking of the *USS Maine* on February 15, 1898, while it was in Cuba. A massive explosion of unknown origin sank the ship in Cuba's Havana harbor, killing 260 of the nearly 400 American crew members aboard. It was rumored to have been sunk by Spanish mine at the time.

However, in 1976, a naval investigation determined that the cause of the explosion was the spontaneous combustion of coal (the fire set off the ammunition stores and blew up the ship).

One of the first American battleships, the *Maine*, weighed more than 6,000 tons and was built at a cost of more than \$2,000,000. The *USS Maine* had been sent to protect U.S. citizens and property after rioting in Havana. Spain announced an armistice on April 9, 1898, and granted Cuba limited powers of self-government. The U.S. Congress soon afterward issued resolutions that declared Cuba's right to independence, demanded the withdrawal of Spain's armed forces from the island, and authorized the President's use of force to secure that withdrawal while renouncing any U.S. design for annexing Cuba. <sup>26</sup>



(Wreckage of the *USS Maine* [ARC-1] in the harbor at Havana, Cuba)

Spain declared war on United States on April 24, 1898, and, in turn, the U.S. declared war on Spain on April 25, 1898. Commodore George Dewey took over the Philippines on May 1, 1898, and destroyed the Spanish fleet. General William Shafter located the Spanish Caribbean Fleet in Santiago, Cuba. The Spanish Fleet ran from the harbor on July 3, 1898, and, by July 17, 1898, the ships came under fire by U.S. forces and they were sunk or were beached and burned. This ended the war.

A total of 274,000 U.S. soldiers were sent to Cuba. Of the 5,462 who died, only 379 were actually killed in battle. The others died from tropical disease and unspecified "other" causes, including malaria, yellow fever, and dysentery. By the Treaty of Paris (signed December 10, 1898), Spain renounced all claim to Cuba, ceded Guam and Puerto Rico to the United States, and transferred sovereignty over the Philippines to the United States for \$20,000,000.

On January 1, 1899, General Brooke took formal control of Havana. Within the year American corporations had set up offices in Cuba, buying up farm land to control the sugar, tobacco, and mines. Edward M. Knapp was sent out with other American soldiers to villages across Cuba to convince the Cuban people to vote in the election for annexation to the United States, explaining the benefits to them. On June 16, 1900, the Cuban people went to vote for independence or for annexation to the United States. They voted for independence. The Cuban flag flew over Havana again and, on May 20, 1902, Tomás Estrada Palma was sworn in as the first president of the new Republic of Cuba.

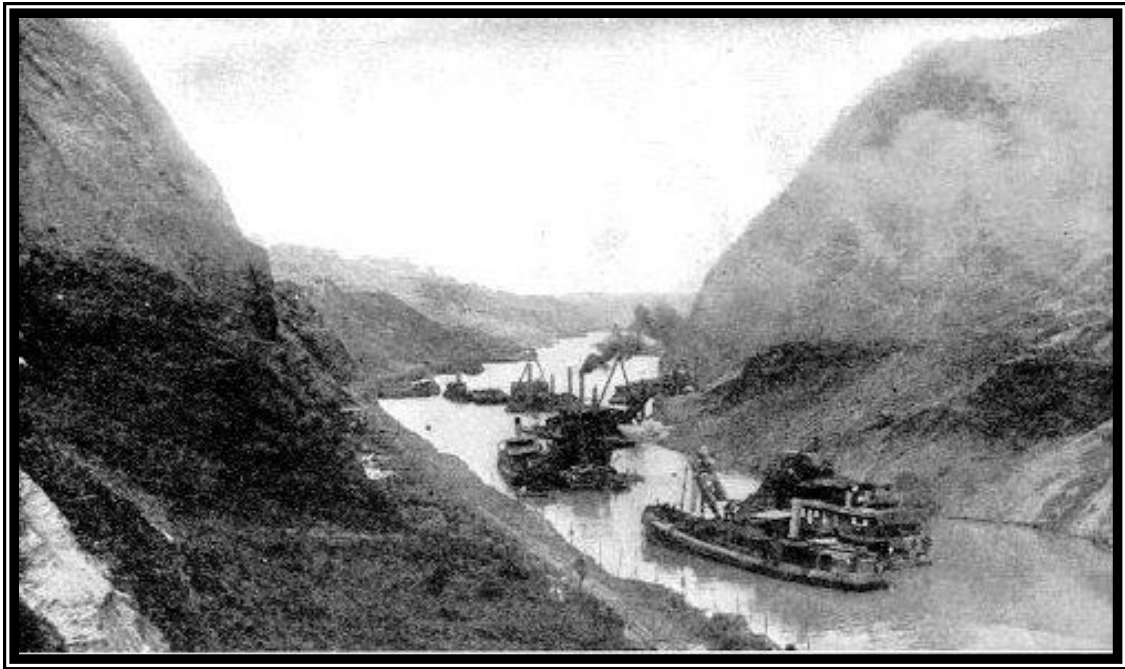
On December 16, 1903, the U.S. signed a treaty with the Cuban government leasing Bahía Honda and Guantánamo Bay as deep water naval bases for \$2,000 a year. There is no 99-year clause, and the treaty could only be terminated when both governments agreed to the termination. Bahía Honda was abandoned in 1912 for expansion of land leased around Guantánamo Bay. <sup>27</sup>

In 1909, Cuba asked the United States to take control over the government, and President Theodore Roosevelt appointed a military governor of Cuba on January 28, 1909. A total of 92 kilometers of new roads were constructed during the occupation, and the U.S. Army manned about thirty different posts. After the second U.S. military occupation of Cuba ended, revolutionary forces continued fighting in Cuba. In 1910, fighting stopped with the arrival of additional U.S. military personnel. The United States has been in Cuba since the Spanish-American war and remains at our naval base in Guantánamo Bay today. From 1880 to 1959 there was a revolutionary movement in Cuba.

In 1959, the new Cuban government (with Fidel Castro as their leader) requested the return of Guantánamo Bay, but the U.S. banned its soldiers from entering Cuban territory and told Castro, “No!” The United States reinforced Guantánamo Bay by installing mines and wire. In retaliation, Castro then took control of all the American companies in Cuba.

**The Knapp Involvement with the Panama Canal** - When Edward Knapp left Cuba is not known, but he continued to work for the government as a civil servant until late 1910. He may have gone to Panama to work on the canal. His sister, Josephine B. Knapp, was located in the Panama Canal Zone on August 4, 1912, when she left Cristobal on the ship *Colon* for New York City. Then again on November 22, 1913, Josephine left Cristobal on the ship *Panama* going to New York City. She listed her home residence as Destin, Florida. She was found in the 1920 Federal Census in St. Louis, Missouri, as a nurse, so she may have been transporting sick patients aboard ships back from Panama to New York during the building of the Panama Canal. <sup>28,29</sup>

France attempted to build a canal across the Isthmus of Panama from the Pacific Ocean to the Atlantic Ocean from 1881 to 1902 but failed. The United States took over the construction of the Panama Canal in 1904. In 1905, President Theodore Roosevelt sent a team of engineers to Panama. Edward Knapp could have been with them. They had to build places for workers to live, baseball fields, billiard rooms, an assembly room, a reading room, bowling alleys, dark rooms for the camera clubs, gymnastic equipment, an ice cream parlor and soda fountain, and a circulating library. Hotels and stores were also built. The project was mammoth; they built two lakes, cut through mountains, and constructed two dams and many large locks. <sup>30</sup>



(Dredges Building the Panama Canal)

On October 10, 1913, the dike at Gamboa, which had kept the Culebra Cut isolated from Gatun Lake, was demolished; the initial detonation was set off telegraphically by President Woodrow Wilson in Washington, DC. On January 7, 1914, the *Alexandre La Valley*, an old French crane boat, became the first ship to make a complete transit of the Panama Canal under its own steam, having worked its way across in the final stages of construction. There were 40,000 workers working on the Canal. According to hospital records, 5,609 workers died from disease and accidents during the American construction of the Canal.

Could Edward Knapp also have been working for the government in the Panama Canal Zone? After his discharge from the military, Knapp stayed in Cuba and served as clerk, Engineer Department at Large, from April 17, 1899, to July 31, 1902, at the Engineer Office, Territorial Department. Then the same day, July 31, 1902, under Presidential Executive Order dated May 6, 1896, whereby President Grover Cleveland established the civil service, Knapp was appointed clerk in classified service (Civil Service) in Cuba.

It was at this point that he may have been reassigned to Panama to assist with the building of the Panama Canal, which was a very large engineering project. The next we know of Edward is when his wife had a baby in St. Louis, Missouri. Their second child, a daughter, Rhoda I. Knapp, was born on April 9, 1906. Edward Knapp continued working as a civil servant for the U.S. Army until November 30, 1910, when he resigned. He and his family planned to join Edward's parents in Shoals (South Walton County), Florida, when they returned to the United States. <sup>31</sup>

To be continued in the June 2014 issue.

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*Walton Relations* is a publication of the Walton County Genealogy Society. Wayne Sconiers, President.

Distribution is encouraged! For more information or to submit an article, please email its editor,

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