

#13 - Exemption from the Call



I found a little more about exemptions and that first call for the draft in the August 9, 1917 edition of the Kinsley Mercury. There it was reported that of the 96 men called, only 60 passed the physical examination. (Note that nine of the original 105 called had already volunteered for service and brought the number down to 96. I'll be writing more about those volunteers in my next blog.) Others of the 60 were exempted for the various reason mentioned in the last blog (i.e. ministers, men with dependents, conscientious objectors). The article specifically mentions that four Mexicans and one German alien were exempted. Twenty-one men did waive their claim for exemption and were accepted. You'll be reading more about them in future blogs.

The editor, H. T. Wilcox, wrote this in the mentioned article:

"Only one or two men claimed exemption without good reason for so doing, but one or two is that many too many. Every man knows whether or not he should be exempted and knows whether he is shirking his duty. There are times in everyman's life when he wonders whether he is a victim of circumstances or lacking in physical courage. But any man who has taken his chance and been drawn and then tries to evade doing his duty by the government that educated him and made it possible for him to enjoy the liberties he has enjoyed, knows in the bottom of his heart that his mother bore a coward. A man may forget his mother and deny his God and still hold the respect of many, but when he denies his allegiance to his country he forfeits the respect commonly accorded a 'blind negro's dog'."

This editor voiced a strong call for patriotism and service. The derogatory reference at the end, points to the racial prejudice that existed in this country at the time and will be evident in other soldier's letters and articles that I will write about later. At the end of the first call, the final remaining number after exemptions did not meet the need and another group of 66 men were called to report on August 14 and 15 starting with drawn number 100.