When the Spanish-American War began in the Spring of 1898, Wisconsin's National Guard comprised four regiments of infantry, one troop of cavalry, and one battery of light artillery. The State's quota under President McKinley's first call for State volunteers was three regiments of infantry and these were organized from the First, Second, and Third National Guard Infantry. The State Fair Grounds in Milwaukee became the mobilization point and on April 28, just five days after the national call for volunteers, these three regiments began assembling in Milwaukee. Between May 11 and May 14 the three regiments were mustered into federal service as the First, Second, and Third Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry. May 25 brought another call for State volunteers, this time for 75,000 men. The War Department had already decided that the majority of these men were needed to increase the strength of the original units, over 42,000 being needed for this purpose. Accordingly, most State and Territorial Governors promptly received a telegram with an estimate of the number of volunteers required as replacements, and Wisconsin's quota was 990. Only when the original units were up to strength were new units accepted, and Wisconsin's contribution to the second call was a further regiment of infantry, organized from its Fourth National Guard Infantry and mustered into federal service in Milwaukee on July 11 as the Fourth Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry. In addition, Battery A of the First National Guard Light Artillery (the regiment's only battery until the eve of the First World War) was mustered into federal service on July 9 in Milwaukee.

Only the Second and Third Regiments were destined for foreign service. Battery A, Wisconsin Volunteer Light Artillery, remained in Wisconsin during its period of federal service (July 9 - October 8), and the First and Fourth Regiments remained in the United States. The Fourth after training at Camp Douglas was assigned to Anniston, Alabama, where it was mustered out on February 28 the following year. The First was in service from May 14 to October 19, 1898 and was mustered out in Wisconsin.

The destruction of Spain's Caribbean fleet on July 3 doomed the Spanish garrison in Cuba and as negotiations for unconditional surrender progressed General Nelson Miles was in the process of organizing an expedition against Porto Rico. On July 21 Miles with over 3000 men set sail for Porto Rico from Guantanamo and by early August his expedition had been reinforced by some 10,000 troops from the United States, including the Second and Third Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry. Spanish resistance was slight and the campaign ended on August 13 with news of a peace protocol, signed the day before. The casualties were below fifty, of which two were suffered by the Third Regiment, which had two enlisted men killed in action. Far higher were the deaths from disease, which totalled 73 between the two regiments.

The Wisconsin medal was authorized on April 25, 1917 by Chapter 122, Wisconsin laws of 1917, which appropriated $1500 for the purchase of the medals. The act was published in the following terms:
AN ACT to provide campaign badges for the officers and enlisted men who served in the Army or Navy of the United States during the Spanish American war, and making an appropriation.

The People of the State of Wisconsin, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. The adjutant general shall cause to be prepared and shall distribute to the officers and enlisted men who served honorably in the Army or Navy of the United States during the Spanish American war, and who enlisted from the State of Wisconsin, or who were citizens of Wisconsin and enlisted in the United States Volunteer Regiments at large, and who are not eligible to receive the War Department medal given for foreign services. If any such officer, soldier or sailor be deceased, the badge to which he would be entitled shall be delivered to his proper legal representatives.

SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of any money in the treasury not otherwise appropriated the sum of fifteen hundred dollars or so much thereof as may be necessary for the purposes of this act. Such money shall be paid by the State treasurer, on the warrant of the Secretary of State, issued upon a requisition signed by the adjutant general.

SECTION 3. This act shall take effect upon passage and publication.

Approved April 25, 1917.

The foregoing criteria were defined primarily in negative terms. That is, the medal was not available to veterans who were entitled to the War Department's medal, the Army Spanish Campaign Medal authorized by General Orders 129 of August 13, 1908. It is curious that those entitled to the Navy's Spanish Campaign Medal authorized by Special Order No. 81 of June 27, 1908, were not excluded since the War Department medals were not normally available to sailors and marines. Marines, incidentally, do not seem to be covered at all. It is instructive to begin by determining who was entitled to the Army medal. Basically, it was available for service during the Spanish-American War in one of the overseas theaters of operations between designated dates. The qualifying dates were service on the high seas en route to, or ashore in Cuba between May 11 and July 17, Porto Rico between July 24 and August 16, and the Philippines between June 30 and August 13, 1898. When the medal was first announced eligibility was confined to those serving in the Regular Army, although it did not matter whether the war service had been in the Army, Navy, or Marine Corps. The medal was to be worn as part of the soldier's uniform and awards to members of the National Guard and civilians were therefore not allowed. The one exception was soldiers on the retired list, who were in active service on or at any time after January 11, 1905, when the policy was announced in principal. A circular of the Division of Militia Affairs of March 15, 1909, extended the award to members of the organized militia if on the active list, and on December 5, 1913, The Adjutant General's Office announced that civilians were able to buy the medals from
By the time Wisconsin authorized its medal, the Army Spanish Campaign Medal was freely available to anyone who served overseas during the war. However, three classes of Spanish-American War veterans were excluded from the War Department Medal: (a) soldiers who did not serve overseas; (b) sailors and marines unless they subsequently served in the Army on or after January 5, 1905 and were serving at the time of the award or were on the Army retired list at that time; and (c) soldiers who served overseas but did not survive to make a claim. It may be seen from the relevant orders (see Bauman Belden's U. S. War Medals) that posthumous awards were not made except in the case of soldiers in service on January 11, 1905, who subsequently died either while in service or while on the Army retired list. Only in these cases could personal representatives claim the medal. In consequence, the Wisconsin medal was available to the following veterans:

(1) anyone who served in the Navy during the war who entered the service from Wisconsin. It did not extend to (a) marines; (b) sailors eligible for the Army medal by reason of subsequent relevant Army service; and (c) citizens of Wisconsin who entered the service outside the State - contrast the position of soldiers.

(2) anyone without foreign service who served in the Regular Army or the Volunteers and who either entered service from Wisconsin or who, being citizens of Wisconsin, entered a Volunteer Regiment at large. This expression is not defined and since there were two types of Volunteer Regiment the meaning is unclear. It may have meant or included those who entered a regiment or other unit raised by another State under the Presidential calls of April 23 and May 25. Or it may have meant those who entered one of the federal National Volunteer Regiments authorized by Congress on April 22, 1898 (First through Third U. S. V. Cavalry) or May 11, 1898 (First through Third U. S. V. Engineers or the First through Tenth U. S. V. Infantry, otherwise known as the Immunes). The veterans primarily covered by the act qualified under this category and served in the First or Fourth Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry or Battery A, Wisconsin Volunteer Light Artillery. However, it also covered some members of the Second and Third Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry, particularly those who were transferred to other units before July 20, 1898 (the date they sailed for Porto Rico) and did not subsequently serve abroad in other units or service arms, or were honorably discharged for any reason before that date, or who were forced to remain in the United States through illness. The Biennial Report of the Adjutant General of Wisconsin for the two fiscal years ending June 30, 1918, contains the following report beneath an illustration of the medal:

**Spanish War Service Badges**

Under the authority of the act of the Legislature, Chapter 122, Laws of 1917, providing for badges for officers and men who were in service during the Spanish American War, this office contracted for the badge herewith illustrated.

Under the terms of the Act the badge is to be sent to those officers and men or to the heirs of such, who did not become entitled to the campaign badge provided by the War Department for duty beyond the seas. This