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"STAND, GENTLEMEN, HE SERVED ON SAMAR!"

The story of the 1901 Marine patrols across the Island of Samar in the Philippines.



One of those moments in Marine Corps history that has, over the years, dropped into obscurity, is America's involvement in the Philippine Insurrection at the turn of the 20th century and the role the U.S. Marines played in helping to subdue the Filipino insurrectos. One significant incident was the Marine expedition across the island of Samar.

Shrouded in controversy and accusations, the operations on Samar have been considered by some to be one of the less than shining moments in American military history. However, upon a closer examination, the courage and discipline demonstrated by those Marines in the face of the tremendous hardships they endured, were nothing short of extraordinary. In many respects the Samar campaign can be compared with the hardships experienced by the Marines in Florida during the Seminole Wars, at Chosin, Korea, and in the jungles of Vietnam. In all cases the Marines persevered against two opponents: a tenacious and often vicious enemy, and an unrelenting climate. For many years, after the conclusion of operations on Samar, officers and men of the United States Marine Corps would pay tribute to the indomitable courage of those Marines by rising in their presence with the following words of homage: *"Stand, gentlemen, he served on Samar!"* What follows is a brief thumbnail sketch of those actions.

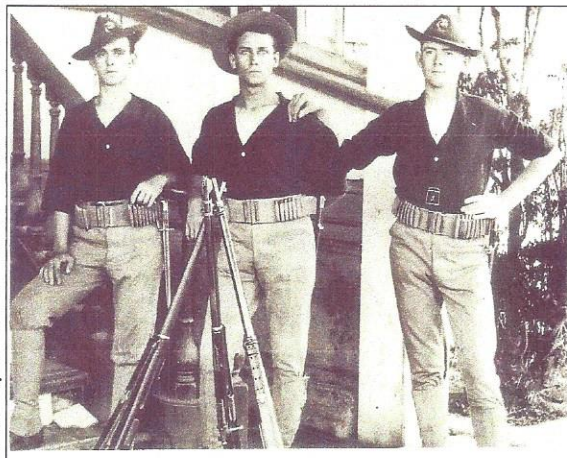
Background:

Although the Spanish-American War would only last for three months, it would thrust the United States onto the world stage as a colonial power. A distinction America was ill prepared for. Following the cessation of hostilities, the United States would come into possession of several territories originally belonging to Spain, including the Philippine Islands.

Prior to the American occupation the Filipinos had been fighting for their independence from Spain. They would look at the United States not as liberators, but as another "imperialist" occupation. Although the Treaty of Paris, signed on 10 December 1898, would end the war with Spain, it would not end America's military involvement in the Philippines. For the next six years, U. S. armed forces would be embroiled in a viscous guerrilla war fought against Filipino insurrectionists.

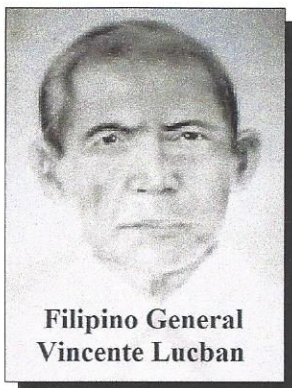
Marine Corps ground involvement in the Philippines began on 3 May 1898, two days after Commodore George Dewey's victory over the Spanish at Manila Bay, when First Lieutenant Dion Williams and a detachment of Marines from the *USS Baltimore* planted an American flag at the Spanish naval station in Cavite. From 1898 until the fall of 1901, Marines took part in a number of operations against the insurrectionists, primarily on the island of Luzon, making several amphibious landings.

By the fall of 1901, U. S. military actions against insurrectionists on Luzon had come to an end. General Emilio Aguinaldo, leader of that island's insurrectionists, had surrendered to the American forces on 1 April 1901 and swore allegiance to the United States. Later that same month, he issued a manifesto to his Filipino followers to *"lay down their arms for the complete termination of hostilities."* The government of Luzon was now in the hands of American civilian authorities. However, in two provinces, Batangas and the island of Samar, there were still hostilities.



Marines of the 1st Marine Brigade (provisional), Philippines 1901.

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Filipino General
Vicente Lucban

On Samar the insurrectionists were led by Filipino General Vicente Lucban. Located in the equatorial tropics, Samar was completely engulfed with dense jungles. Not only did American forces have to endure heat, humidity, incessant rain, and dense vegetation, but in addition, they had to contend with snakes, leeches, and malaria-infested mosquitoes. Smallpox was also running rampant on the island. The hellish conditions on Samar in some instances drove men insane. Gen. Lucban used the climate and the terrain of Samar to his advantage in his guerilla war against the Americans. He had been on Samar for more than a year before the first American troops arrived. This had allowed him to recruit among the natives intensively, and by the time the American troops did arrive, most of the natives were either in Lucban's command or in sympathy with the insurrectionists. Lucban's control over the natives was pure tyranny. He would shoot anyone who failed to support him, including Spanish priests. He once wrapped the head of a pro-American Filipino in a kerosene-drenched American flag and set a torch to it while the man was still alive.

Company C of the 9th U.S. Infantry, arrived at Balangiga, Samar, on 11 August 1901, commanded by Captain Thomas W. Connell, U.S. Army. Connell, a strong advocate of President William McKinley's "benevolent assimilation," attempted to establish this policy at Balangiga. Connell's naive assumption that since "benevolent assimilation" seemed to be working on Luzon, it could also work on Samar, proved catastrophic. Because of cultural differences and the inhabitants' hostility toward the American presence on the island, assimilation would prove impossible. One officer of the 9th Infantry testified later that he considered the natives ". . . savages; they were low in intelligence, treacherous, cruel; seemed to have no feeling for their families or anyone else."

On 28 September 1901, 36 soldiers of Company C, Ninth U.S. Army Infantry Regiment, stationed at the town of Balangiga, were killed in a surprise attack by the insurrectos while many were in the mess hall eating breakfast, with the insurgents "*mutilating many of their victims with a ferocity unusual even for guerrilla warfare.*" Most were tortured to death. Another eight soldiers later died of their injuries, and twenty-two were wounded; only four escaped unharmed. Connell's assessment of the situation on Samar had proved fatal. This attack would become known as the Balangiga massacre.

The insurrectionists on Samar habitually committed atrocities, such as body mutilation of dead soldiers, during their guerilla warfare against the Americans. Lucban refused to honor any rules of warfare: "*The dead were mutilated. . . . No prisoners were taken, Noncombatants were put to death. Poison was used. Flags of truce were not respected. The personnel of the insurrectionary forces were composed, in numerous instances of males under military age, who were old enough to assist in military operations, but not sufficiently mature from the point of intelligence and experience to correctly apply or even to understand the rules of civilized warfare.*"

The Balangiga incident provoked shock in the US public, with newspapers equating the massacre to George Armstrong Custer's last stand at the Battle of the Little Bighorn in 1876, and spawned an enraged American response. Major General Adna R. Chaffee, military governor, and commanding officer of the Army in the Philippines received orders from US President Theodore Roosevelt (Roosevelt had become President after the assassination of President McKinley in September) to pacify Samar. To this end, Chaffee appointed Brigadier General Jacob M. Smith, U.S. Army, who was in command of the military district which included the island of Samar, to take tactical command of the 6th Separate Brigade and handle the situation on Samar. Lacking enough soldiers to form a full brigade, General Chaffee requested that Admiral Frederick Rodgers, Commander-in-Chief Asiatic Squadron, lend him some Marines. Rodgers complied by sending Major Littleton W. T. Waller, USMC, with orders that read, "*By direction of the senior squadron commander [Rodgers], you will assume command of a battalion of United States Marines for duty on the island of Samar.*" The Navy left the conduct of operations to Waller's estimation of the situation.

On 20 October 1901, a battalion of Marines, consisting of Major Waller (commanding), 14 Officers, including a Navy Surgeon and assistant Surgeon, and 300 enlisted Marines, was detailed for duty on the island of Samar, the easternmost



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of the Visayan island group, by Rear Admiral Rodgers. Although the Marines were placed under the command of Brigadier General Smith, to reinforce and cooperate with the U.S. Army troops on Samar, it was also intended that Major Waller's movements should be supported, as far as possible, by a vessel of the fleet, to which he should make reports from time to time, and through which supplies for his battalion were to be furnished.

Some of Waller's Marines had served with the victims of Balangiga during the Boxer Rebellion a year earlier. Their attitude may have been best summarized by Private Harold Kinman: *"we will go heavily armed and longing to avenge our comrades who fought side by side with us in China."* Although only a small part of the total U.S. manpower on the island, the

Marine battalion would soon become the most famous military force in the campaign, and ultimately associated with one of the most notorious episodes of the Philippine War.

The battalion, composed of Companies C, D and H, First Marine Regiment, and Company F, Second Marine Regiment, embarked on the Armored Cruiser U.S.S. *NEW YORK* (ACR-2) at Cavite, on 22 October 1901. The battalion arrived at Catbalogan, Samar, on 24 October, and the men and supplies were transferred to the U.S.S. *ZAFIRO*, and proceeded through the straits between Samar and Leyte to Tacloban, Leyte, and then to Basey, Samar, where Major Waller disembarked his headquarters and two companies, relieving some units of the Ninth Infantry. The remainder of the battalion took aboard a 3-inch gun and a Colt automatic 6-millimeter gun and proceeded to Balangiga, on the south coast of Samar. There Waller would leave Captain David D. Porter, USMC, in command with 159 men, relieving the 17th U.S. Infantry, with instructions to begin operations against the insurgents as soon as possible. Major Waller then returned to Basey.

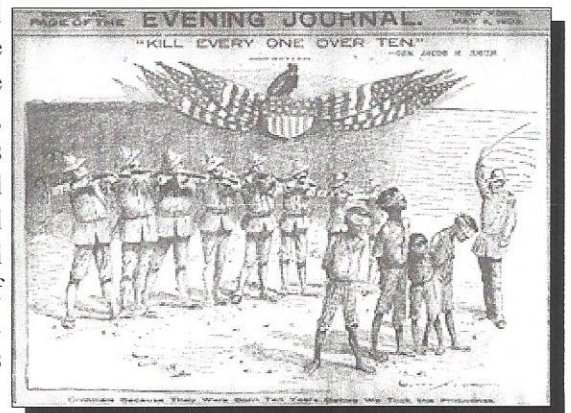


Armored Cruiser
U.S.S. New York
1901



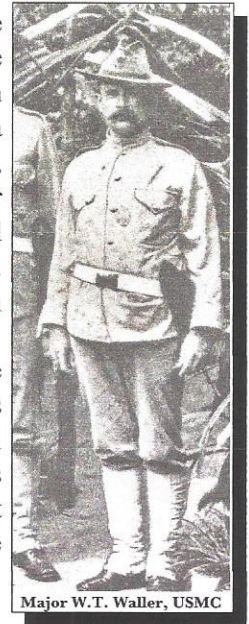
Upon reporting General Smith's instructions to Major Waller regarding the conduct of pacification on Samar stated in part: *"I want no prisoners. I wish you to kill and burn; the more you kill and burn, the better it will please me ... The interior of Samar must be made a howling wilderness ..."* As a consequence of this order, Smith became known as "Howling Wilderness Smith." He further ordered Waller to have all persons killed who were capable of bearing arms and in actual hostilities against the United States. When queried by Waller regarding the age limit of these persons, Smith replied that the limit was ten years of age. However, it was known that Smith earned his original nickname, "Hell-Roaring Jake" not due to his violence in war, but because of his propensity for making outrageous oaths and the extravagance of his language. A product of the old Army's seniority system, Smith owed his general's stars to his longevity, and his physical bravery. Having spent most of his life commanding little more than a company, he

was bewildered by the complexity of handling the 4,000 soldiers, Marines, and native scouts that were placed under his command. To compound his problems, Smith was known to display symptoms of mental instability and was subject to outbursts in which he urged the most violent and irresponsible actions. The Judge Advocate General of the Army would later observe that only the good sense and restraint of the majority of Smith's subordinates prevented a complete reign of terror in Samar. However, the abuses were still sufficient to outrage anti-imperialist groups in the United States when these became known in March 1902.



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Smith, in issuing these orders had misjudged Major Waller. Tony Waller was a Marine firebrand, not a martinet, who let his own high character and conscience guide him. At first glance he had the appearance of an ideal commander. Waller was a 22-year veteran whose combat exploits in Egypt, Cuba, and China had shown that he possessed several characteristics vital to a counterinsurgency fighter: he had tremendous powers of endurance and was personally brave, aggressive, and charismatic. In March 1901 he had been breveted Lieutenant Colonel for "*distinguished conduct and public service in the presence of the enemy near Tientsin, China,*" and advanced two numbers in grade for "*eminent and conspicuous conduct*" in the Battle of Tientsin. These qualities would later make him a legendary combat leader in the Marines' small wars in Latin America.



Major W.T. Waller, USMC

However, Waller's detractors would rumor that he relied on physical courage and endurance to make up for deficiencies in planning and judgment, and that he had a reputation for boastfulness and irritability, and an inability to accept the consequences of his actions. Even today historians still debate the conduct and role of Waller in the pacification of Samar. Regardless, Major Waller's character had an influence on the conduct of the Marines serving under him, and his critics cannot detract from the bravery, professionalism, and discipline demonstrated by those Marines in the face of the tremendous hardships they would endure.

Marine Operations on Samar:

Most American commanders at the time, including Waller, based their operations on the fact that the majority of the natives were hostile to U.S. actions and could not be trusted. Despite pretenses by the native villagers to be pro-American, many of these supposedly pro-Americans were, in fact, members of Filipino General Vicente Lucban's command. Because of this support by the populace for the insurrectionists, along with the hellish conditions of the natural environment, the U. S. Army was able to secure only a few coastal towns on Samar, enabling Lucban to control the central part of the island.



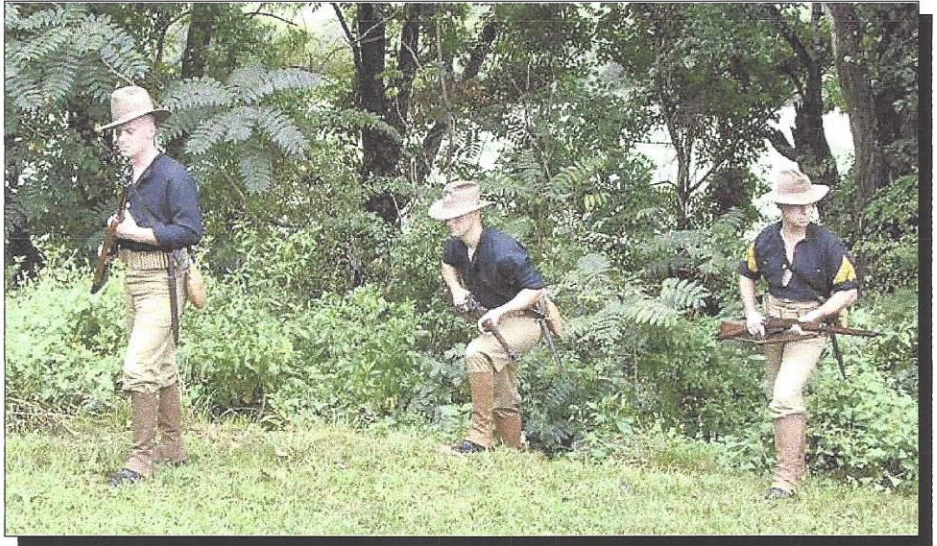
Major Waller, unlike Army Captain Connell, took a more realistic view of the situation on Samar. The day before debarkation, Waller issued explicit orders to his officers concerning relations with the natives and rules of engagement: "*Place no confidence in the natives, and punish treachery immediately with death. . . . Allow no man [marine] to go . . . anywhere without his arms or ammunition. . . . All males who have not come in and presented themselves by October 25th will be regarded and treated as enemies. It must be impressed on the men that the natives are treacherous, brave and savage. No trust, no confidence, can be placed in them. . . . The men must be informed of the courage, skill, size and strength of the enemy. WE MUST DO OUR PART OF THE WORK, AND WITH THE SURE KNOWLEDGE THAT WE ARE NOT TO EXPECT QUARTER. . . .*" Waller viewed the situation as open combat governed by the rules of war. The populace would have to register with the Marines or be considered combatants. Waller's orders to his officers were posted and the Naval high command took no exception to them, nor did General Smith, Waller's immediate senior. Waller's orders were within the limitations of General Order No. 100 of 1863 dealing with irregular warfare, which stated that if enemy units gave no quarter and became treacherous upon capture, it was lawful to shoot anyone belonging to that captured unit.

The Marines' tactical area of responsibility embraced the entire southern part of Samar. Active operations were immediately begun, both at Basey and Balangiga. Waller was relentless in his pursuit of

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the insurrectionists. The situation in the vicinity was very tense because of the Balangiga massacre and other recent happenings; hence the measures prescribed by Gen. Smith for crushing the insurrection may have been, to some extent, retaliatory. Some historians feel that Waller was only following the direct orders of his immediate senior officer. But, as testimony in General Smith's court-martial pointed out, Waller did not execute Smith's orders. Instead, Waller applied the rules of civilized warfare and the rules provided under General Order No. 100.

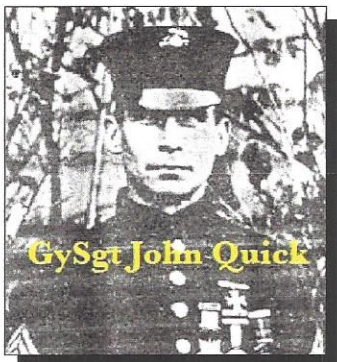
Waller and his subordinates ran patrol after patrol and conducted amphibious operations. On 5 November, Major Waller took a detachment to the Sohoton River and drove the guerrillas from their trenches there; two Marines were killed. A number of small expeditions were sent up the Cadacan River; several of these parties were fired on, but the skirmishes were slight. In an engagement on 8 November, at Iba, several insurgents were killed and captured. An expedition under Marine Captain Porter, sent out to scout in the vicinity of Balangiga, killed one insurgent and captured seven, and found many relics of the massacred men of the Ninth Infantry.



As a result of the continual harassing by the Marines along the southern coast of Samar, the insurgents fell back from that region and occupied their fortified defenses on the Sohoton cliffs, along the Sohoton River in central part of the island. The keys to Waller's successes were the flexibility of his tactics, his endurance, and the stamina of his men. Within a few months, the operations were beginning to take effect, but Marine casualties were also frequent. The insurrectionists, armed with the Krag-Jorgensen rifles taken from Company C, bamboo cannon, and bolo knives, were a formidable foe for his Marines. While running combat operations, Waller, always alert for any treachery, at the same time attempted to register the natives and pacify the towns.

About the middle of November three columns of Marines were sent into the Sohoton region to attack this stronghold, which had been reported to be practically impregnable. Two of the columns, under the command of Captains Porter and Bearss, marched on shore, while the third column, commanded by Major Waller, went up the river in boats. The plan of attack was for the three columns to unite on 16 November at the enemy's stronghold and make a combined assault.

On 17 November, the shore column struck the enemy's trail and soon came upon a number of bamboo guns (improvised cannons made out of hollow bamboo stalks wrapped with hemp rope). One of these guns, placed to command the trail, had the fuse burning. Acting Corporal Harry Glenn rushed forward and pulled out the fuse. Gunnery Sergeant John H. Quick also played a decisive role laying down covering fire for the advancing Marines with an M1895 Colt-Browning machine gun.



The attack of the Marines was a complete surprise, and the enemy was routed. After driving the insurgents from their positions, the Marines crossed the river and assaulted the cliff defenses. In order to reach the enemy's position, the Marines had to climb the cliffs, which rose sheer from the river to the height of about 200 feet and were honeycombed with caves, to which access had to be made by means of bamboo ladders, and also by narrow ledges with bamboo handrails. Tons of rocks were suspended in cages held in position by vine cables (known as bejuco), in readiness to be dropped upon people and boats below. The Marines scaled the cliffs, drove the insurgents from their positions and destroyed their camps. Major Waller's detachment, coming up the river in boats, did not arrive in time for the attack, which fact probably saved it from disaster; instant destruction would have

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undoubtedly been the fate of the boats had they undertaken the ascent of the river before the shore column had dislodged the insurgents.

Further pursuit of the enemy at this time was abandoned because the rations were exhausted, and the men were in bad shape. The volcanic stone had cut the men's shoes to pieces, many of them were barefooted, and all had bad feet. The men had overcome incredible difficulties and dangers in their heroic march. The positions which they had destroyed must have taken several years to prepare. Reports from old prisoners said they had been there years working on the defenses. No white troops had ever penetrated to these positions, and they were held as a final rallying point. The insurgents of Samar had spent years of labor on the defenses, and considered the cliff fortifications impregnable.

The March:

In a communication dated 5 December 1901, Major Waller refers to General Smith's desire that the Marines make the march from Basey across the island of Samar to Hernani, for the purpose of selecting a route for a telegraph wire to connect Lanang on the east coast to Basey on the west coast. General Smith also asked Major Waller to run wires from Basey to Balangiga, and left to the major's discretion the point of departure from the east coast, either from Hernani or Lanang.

On 8 December two columns left Basey for Balangiga, one, under command of Major Waller, proceeding along the shoreline, and the other, under Captain Bearss, marching about two miles inland. Stores were sent by the Navy cutter which was kept abreast of the beach column. Although the Marines did not encounter any organized resistance, the thick jungle and obstacles of nature which they encountered proved far more deadly than the natives and their many contrivances and traps. On arriving at Lanang, Major Waller was urged not to make the attempt, however, he says in his report: *"Remembering the general's (General Smith's) several talks on the subject and his evident desire to know the terrain and run wires across, coupled with my own desire for some further knowledge of the people and the nature of this heretofore impenetrable country, I decided to make the trial with 50 men and the necessary carriers."*

On 28 December 1901, Waller started from Lanang and headed into the interior of the Samar jungles, an area where few natives and no foreigners had ever gone. The detachment included Major Littleton W. T. Waller, Captain David D. Porter, Captain Hiram I. Bearss, First Lieutenant A. S. Williams, Second Lieutenant A. C. DeW. Lyles, U.S. Army Second Lieutenant Frank Halford (Aid sent by General Smith), 60 Marines, two native scouts, and 33 native bearers.

The expedition worked its way up the Lanang River as far as possible by boat, but when Lagitao was reached, it was found impossible to use them further on account of the numerous rapids. The remainder of the distance would have to be made on foot. One of the most trying features of the march was the necessity for crossing and re-crossing the swollen river many times, which kept the men's clothing wet continually.

Within a few days, almost all the men were suffering from fever and other afflictions, as cited by Waller: *"Water sores [which] began to form where the clothing bore on the skin were developing rapidly . . . we suffered from sores caused by being constantly wet; also from the cuts made by the thorns and from bites of leeches. All these places festered and made very uncomfortable sores. . . ."* The terrain was exceedingly difficult. On 30 December, it was necessary to issue reduced rations, and the next day the rations had to be cut down to one-half and the number of meals per day to two. The Marines were running out of food and began to starve. The march was continued across the rugged mountains on 1-2 January 1902. On 3 January, the rapidly vanishing food supply and the serious condition of the troops made the situation very critical. The men were becoming ill, their clothing was in rags, their feet were swollen and bleeding, and the trail was lost.

After a conference with his officers, Major Waller decided to split his force. He would take Lieutenant Halford and thirteen of the men who were in the best condition and push forward as rapidly as possible to Basey and send back a



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relief party. Captain Porter would stay behind with the bulk of the unit who were unable to march any further, with instructions to go slowly and follow Major Waller's trail.

While in route the advance column was joined by Captain Bearss and a corporal, the former carrying a message from Captain Porter. A message was sent back to Captain Porter, directing him to follow the advanced column to a clearing which had been found where there was a quantity of sweet potatoes, bananas, and young coconut palms, and to rest there until his men were in condition to continue the march. This message did not reach Porter, however, as the native by whom it was sent returned two days later, stating that there were so many insurrectos about that he was afraid.

On 4 January, Major Waller's party rushed a shack and captured five natives, among whom were a man and a boy who stated that they knew the way to Basey. After crossing the Sohoton River, the famous Spanish trail leading from the Sohoton caves to the Suribao River was discovered and followed. The party crossed the Loog River and proceeded through the valley to Banglay, on the Cadacan River. Near this point the party came upon the camp which Navy Captain Dunlap had established to await their arrival. Major Waller's party went aboard Captain Dunlap's cutter and started for Basey, where they arrived on 6 January 1902.

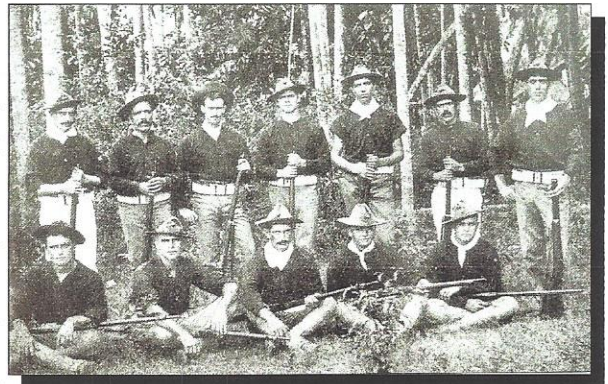
Concerning the condition of the men of his party, Major Waller would state: *"The men, realizing that all was over and that they were safe and once more near home, gave up. Some quietly wept; others laughed hysterically.... Most of them had no shoes. Cut, torn, bruised and dilapidated, they had marched without murmur for twenty-nine days."*

Immediately after the arrival of the detachment at Basey, a relief party was sent back to locate Captain Porter's party. The following day, with total disregard for his own health, Major Waller joined this relief party, and remained out nine days searching for signs of Captain Porter without success. The floods were terrific and several of the former camp sites were many feet under water. The members of the relief party began to break down, due to the many hardships and the lack of food, and the party had to return to Basey. Upon returning to Basey, Major Waller was taken sick with fever.

Meanwhile Captain Porter had had three options: to attempt to follow Waller, whose trail was unsure; to stay where he was and perish; or to attempt to backtrack to Lanang. He opted to retrace the trail to Lanang and ask for a relief party to be sent out for his men, the most of whom were unable to march. He chose seven Marines who were in the best condition along with six natives and set out on 3 January for Lanang. He left Lieutenant Williams in charge of the remainder of the detachment, most of which were sick and dying, with orders to follow as the condition of the men would permit.

Captain Porter's return to Lanang was made under difficulties many times greater than those encountered during the march to the interior. Food was almost totally lacking, and torrential rains filled the streams making it almost impossible to follow down their banks or cross them as was so often necessary. Porter finally arrived at Lanang on 11 January and reported the situation to Captain Pickering, the Army Commander at that place. A relief expedition was organized to go for the remainder of the Marines, but it was unable to start for several days because of the swollen Lanang River.

Williams's fate was disastrous. Without food, yet realizing that death was certain if they remained in camp, Lieutenant Williams and his men slowly followed Captain Porter's trail. His men, *"so nearly dead from starvation and exposure that they began to crawl, slowly perished along the way."* One Marine went insane. In addition, there was open rebellion against Williams' party by the porters. Three of the natives, armed with a bolo knife, attacked and wounded Williams. The other natives watched while Williams managed to fight off the attack. Williams testified that *"the mutinous demeanor of the natives caused me daily fear of massacre,"* and that the natives were hiding food and supplies from the Marines while keeping themselves well-nourished and securing food for themselves on the march. By 18 January, when the relief column reached Williams, ten Marines had died along the trail. The natives were put under arrest when the Marines reached Lanang.



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Major Waller, throughout the campaign, had used the natives as bearers of food and supplies on the march. However, he had no confidence in the allegiance of the natives to the Marines and kept ever mindful of an attempted attack, which he and his officers had taken precautions to prevent. Natives could use a bolo knife only to help the Marines hack through the jungle; every evening the knives were collected and counted. The natives were kept spread along the column with the Marines and away from the rifles. At night and during rest periods, the natives were huddled in one area and watched over by Marines. The natives were apparently playing a waiting game; they would wait until the Marines were in a weakened state, steal their weapons or overpower them one at a time, and kill them. A native called Victor stole Waller's bolo at night while Waller was asleep. Before the native could turn on him, Waller awoke, drew his pistol, and seized the bolo. Upon reaching Basey, Victor was imprisoned and became the first native to be shot by the firing squad on 20 January. Waller testified that Victor was revealed to be *the* "Captain Victor," the notorious and infamous captain of insurrectos, who was of the detail from Basey in the Balangiga massacre."

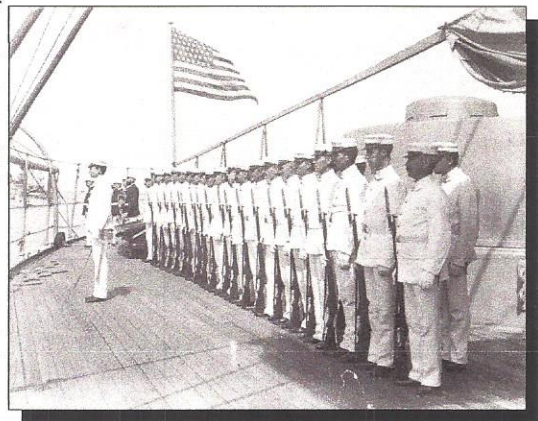
After the Marines returned to Basey by ship from Lanang along with the native prisoners, Major Waller, who was still ill from his ordeals, was briefed by his officers and non-commissioned officers, all of whom recommended execution. Waller charged the natives that mutinied against Lt. Williams with, 1stLt John Day's words, "*treason in attempting to kill Lieutenant Williams, with treason in general, theft, disobedience and general mutiny,*" and ordered them to be shot. Waller stated: "*The reports of the attempted murder of the men and other treachery by the natives, the whole plot being unmasked, caused me to hold an inquiry and consult with my officers. The population of the town was hostile at the time . . . Using my own judgment, and fortified by the opinion of the officers and men, I had the guilty men shot, releasing the innocent. The power exercised was mine by right as commanding the district. It seemed to the best of my judgment, the thing to do at the time. I have not had reason to change my mind.*"

On 20 January 1902, First Lieutenant John H. A. Day, U.S. Marine Corps, marched the Filipino prisoners, under guard of a detachment of U. S. Marines down the main street of Basey, Samar. Upon reaching the town plaza, Day ordered his detachment of Marines to execute the Filipinos by firing squad.

Waller reported the executions to General Smith, as he had reported every other event. "*It became necessary to expend eleven prisoners. Ten who were implicated in the attack on Lt. Williams and one who plotted against me.*"

Lieutenant Williams, who had been left in charge of the weakest men of the expedition, undoubtedly had the most trying task of the whole unfortunate affair. The full circumstances of his attempt to extricate these exhausted men from the midst of that wild tropical jungle is one of the most tragic yet one of the most heroic episodes in Marine Corps history. The entire march across Samar was about 190 miles. Major Waller's march, including his return with the party searching for Captain Porter, was about 250 miles. The Marine's exploits across Samar would enter onto the pages of Marine Corps history

On 19 February the Marine battalion on Samar received orders to return to Cavite after having been relieved by troops of the U.S. Army. Arriving on 29 February the unit returned to a welcoming home salute and party, but there was something else in store for Major Waller -- a murder charge.



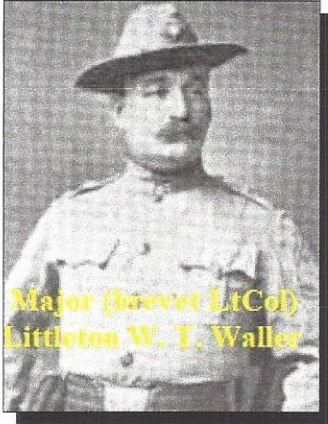
Aftermath:

General Smith passed Waller's report of the executions to his superior, General Adna R. Chaffee. Chaffee decided to investigate these executions, despite General J. Franklin Bell purportedly having carried out similar executions on a much larger scale months before with no subsequent investigations.

Waller was brought up on charges of murder in ordering the execution of the eleven Filipino porters. A court martial began on 17 March 1902. The court-martial board consisted of 7 Army officers and 6 Marine Corps officers, headed by U.S. Army General William H. Bisbee, "*a stalwart old Indian fighter.*" The charges against Waller specified: "*In that Major Littleton W.T. Waller, United States Marine Corps, being then and there detached for service with the United States Army by authority of the President of the United States, did, in time of war, willfully and feloniously and with malice aforethought, murder and kill eleven men, names unknown, natives of the Philippine Islands, by ordering and causing his subordinate officer under his command, John Horace Arthur Day, 1st Lieutenant, U.S. Marine Corps, and a*

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firing detail of enlisted men under his said command, to take out said eleven men and shoot them to death, which said order was then and there carried into execution and said eleven natives, and each of them, were shot with rifles, from the effects of which they then and there died.



Major (brevet LtCol)
Littleton W. T. Waller

Waller's defense attorney argued that, because he had never been detached from his Marine unit, an Army court had no jurisdiction over him. The court denied Waller's lack of jurisdiction claim, then proceeded to the specific number of natives executed and the issue of Waller's guilt or innocence.

Waller could have made excuse for his actions by saying that he was injured and lying in a hospital when he issued his orders, nor did he use Smith's orders "I want all persons killed" to justify his deed. Instead, he stood committed to his actions: "As the representative officer responsible for the safety and welfare of my men, after investigation and from the information I had, . . . I ordered the eleven men shot. I thought I was right then; I believe now I was right. Whatever may happen to me I have the sure knowledge that my people know, and I believe the whole world knows, that I am not a murderer." Waller testified that he did not kill women or children and that he treated prisoners according to the rules of civilized warfare. "Always when prisoners came in and gave themselves up they were saved,

they were not killed." In essence, Waller disobeyed Smith's direct orders, which refutes any claim that Waller was "just following orders." Instead, Waller's interpretation of Smith's orders demonstrated Waller's high moral courage and his effort to apply the rules of civilized warfare.

Waller felt that he had acted within the framework of General Order No. 100, which did not call for a trial of the accused, and within his authority as a district commander, although this was disputed by the Judge Advocate General. The real issue was that the responsibilities of a district commander in the Philippines were never clearly defined, and that the tactical situation necessitated his actions.

The prosecution then decided to call General Smith as a rebuttal witness. On 7 April 1902, in sworn testimony, Smith denied that he had given any special verbal orders to Waller. Waller then produced three officers who corroborated Waller's version of the Smith-Waller conversation, and copies of every written order he had received from Smith, Waller informed the court he had been directed to take no prisoners and to kill every male Filipino over age 10.

In the face of the evidence presented, the court martial board voted 11-2 for acquittal of the charges against Major Waller. Headed by an old troop leader and field officer, General Bisbee, the board must have weighed the tactical situation and the mitigating factors involved in the case. Many of the court's officers had been through guerilla warfare in both the Philippines and the American West. It seems that they, as Waller's peers, realistically assessed the factors influencing Waller's decisions.

Ultimately the U.S. Army Judge Advocate General dismissed the entire case as illegal, ruling that the Marines on Samar were not detached from the Navy but only engaged in a "cooperative" venture with the Army, and that a Marine Corps officer was not subject to an Army court.

On 21 April 1902, as a result of evidence introduced at Major Waller's trial, Brigadier General Jacob M. Smith, U.S.A., was brought to trial on the charge of "conduct to the prejudice of good order and military discipline" for orders issued to Waller at Samar. He was found guilty and was eventually forced to leave the service.

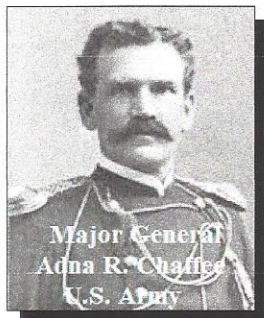
The type of combat fought on Samar was some of the most brutal of the Filipino-American War. When his native bearers turned on him and his officers, Waller guided his actions on doctrinal orders, the rules of civilized warfare, and an estimation of the tactical situation as he saw it. Upon consultation of his officers and non-commissioned officers, Waller had the natives executed.

The decisions and conduct of men during war or in trying environments may seem questionable to outside observers, but seldom questionable to the participants at the time. The purpose of court-martial is to obtain justice by one's military peers. The officers of the court were little affected by public opinion and high-level politics. The overwhelming majority of the court agreed with the opinions of Waller's officers and the accused, and acquitted Waller for his actions.



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Waller's court-martial had effects on its participants and on the country as a whole. It informed the American public as to the type of warfare that was taking place in the Philippines. Even to its most ardent supporters, "benevolent assimilation" had its limits. The trial frustrated American civilian authorities and their attempts to implement their policies in the Philippines.



During the trial, many American newspapers, including his hometown newspaper in Philadelphia, nicknamed Waller the "Butcher of Samar". General Chaffee would state that he believed Waller's acquittal was a "miscarriage of justice," and chastised what he believed to be the major's illegal actions, publicly condemning the killings as "one of the most regrettable incidents in the annals of the military service of the United States." Waller's supporters would claim that he was a scapegoat, a victim of politics, a Marine forced to stand trial for crimes that the U.S. Army committed with impunity in the Philippines. Was Major Littleton Waller Tazewell Waller the Hero of Samar or the Butcher of Samar? The court-martial of Major Waller for murder is almost as controversial today as it was over 120 years ago. Historians will continue to argue the point for many years to come.

Waller continued to serve in the Marine Corps with distinction. In 1910, the "outstanding troop leader of the period" was passed over for Commandant, probably because of his one blemish, the court-martial.

Although the actions of Major Littleton W. T. Waller and his battalion in the actions against the insurgents on Samar continued to provoke controversy, and despite the scandal of the court martial, and the subsequent reports by the press, Major Waller and his Marines would quickly become icons among their fellow Marines. Campaigning on Samar was such a hellish experience that for years afterwards, as a sign of Marine respect, veterans of the campaign would be greeted in mess halls with the toast: "STAND, GENTLEMEN, HE SERVED ON SAMAR!"

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