

Stand Gentlemen, He Served on Samar

The career of MajGen Littleton Waller Tazewell Waller

by Dr. Michael E. Doyle

Remembered by some as the “Butcher of Samar,” an allegation that arguably twice cost him the role of Commandant, Littleton Waller Tazewell Waller, is a legend of the Marine Corps. He was senior among the initial five line officers permanently promoted to brigadier general, and he characterized the Marine Corps in his era. *Webster’s American Military Biographies* claimed L.W.T. Waller was “reputed to have taken part in more actions than any other Marine officer of the period,” and few, if any, of the early legends of the Corps failed to serve with Waller.

Background

Born on 26 September 1856 in York County, VA, both of L.W.T.’s parents were from families of wealth and political influence. For two centuries, the Wallers were high sheriffs of Kent, England, occupying a moated manor house near Tunbridge. Sometime between 1635–1636, John Waller immigrated to Virginia, where he trained as an attorney at the College of William and Mary. His offspring would include several members of the Virginia House of Burgesses, a justice of the Virginia Supreme Court, and a member of the Virginia delegation to the Congress that adopted the Declaration of Independence.¹

Waller’s parents were Matthew Page Waller, a physician who died of typhoid in the epidemic of 1861, and Mary Waller Tazewell. The Tazewells were from Doret County and included members of the House of Burgesses, the U.S. House of Representatives, the Senate of both Virginia and the United States,

>Dr. Doyle was in federal service for 22 years including 9 years in the Marine Corps—resigning as a CWO2 to accept a civilian appointment within the DOD as a Supervising Academic Programs Officer. As a National Guardsman, he spent 32 months of active duty as the Operations Sergeant for a Special Forces Battalion. Following federal service Dr. Doyle was employed as a university executive. His professional military education includes the Amphibious Warfare School (Extension) and the Naval War College.



Col Waller in dress uniform. (Photo: Library of Congress.)

and the Virginia Supreme Court. His grandfather, Littleton Waller Tazewell, a prominent Virginia politician, lawyer, and plantation owner, served in the Virginia House of Delegates, in Congress as a Congressman (1800–1801) and Senator (1824–1832), and as the 26th Governor of Virginia (1834–1836).²

L.W.T. had little formal education apart from reading the *King James Bi-*

ble, Shakespeare, and John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*. In his late teens, L.W.T. joined the Norfolk Light Artillery Blues. A militia unit, the Blues had been part of Heth’s Division in the Army of Northern Virginia during the Civil War and had been reconstituted in 1871.³ While in the Virginia militia, Waller attempted to gain a regular commission in the Army as a cavalry officer. At 5’4”, he was too short for the regular Army.

Early Career (1880 to 1899)

On 16 June 1880, the 24-year-old Waller became one of four new Marine officers appointed from civilian life. They were the first new Marine officers appointed since 1 July 1876. The new second lieutenants joined Marine Barracks, Washington, DC, on 26 June for instruction as new officers. For Waller, this was followed by assignment to Marine Barracks, Norfolk Naval Yard, Portsmouth, VA, from 31 August 1880 to 10 August 1881.⁴

On 20 August 1881, 2ndLt Waller joined the Marine Guard on the screw sloop *Lancaster*, the flagship of the European Station. The fleet Marine officer and nineteen-year veteran, Capt Henry Clay Cochrane, was also stationed on the *Lancaster*. After a period of training

and supervision under Cochrane, on 3 May 1882, Waller took command of the Marine Guard on the gunship *Nispic*.⁵

Cruising extensively in the Mediterranean, on 12 July, the *Nispic*, *Lancaster*, and the corvette *Quinnebaug* arrived off Alexandria, Egypt, during the bombardment of the city by the British. The U.S. squadron immediately began taking aboard both Americans and foreign nationals escaping the city. On 14 July, Capt Cochrane and 2nd Lt Waller went ashore with 73 Marines and 57 sailors. Waller led the advance into the city, seizing control of the U.S. Consulate building. From the consulate building, Capt Cochrane employed his landing force, restoring order, extinguishing fires, and burying the dead. On 15 July, the sailors returned to their ships with the Marines following on 18 July.⁶

Waller rejoined the *Lancaster* on 20 November 1882 and departed the European Station on 16 July 1884 aboard the side-wheel steam frigate *Powhatan*. Arriving at Portsmouth, VA, on 26 August 1884, Waller was assigned to Marine Barracks, Norfolk Naval Yard. He was promoted to first lieutenant on 25 January 1886 with rank from 26 September 1885.⁷

In a time when lieutenants gained experience through the constant command of Marine Guards aboard several types of ships, 1st Lt Waller departed Norfolk on 16 May 1887 to command the Marine Guard on the screw steamship *Iroquois*, Pacific Station. He detached from the *Iroquois* on 6 March 1888, transferring three days later to the screw steam sloop *Pensacola*, North Atlantic Station, steaming back to Norfolk, arriving 31 August 1888. After a brief period ashore, Waller joined and took command of the Marine Guard on the screw steam sloop *Kearsarge*, North Atlantic Station from 1 November 1888 to 31 January 1889. From the *Kearsarge*, he transferred to command of the Marine Guard of the steam dispatch ship *Tallapoosa*, South Atlantic Station. On 26 November 1890, he detached from the *Tallapoosa* for a period of scheduled leave.⁸

Reporting to Marine Barracks, Norfolk Naval Yard on 2 March 1891, Waller remained ashore as a barracks

officer until 12 September 1895, when he rejoined and took command of the Marine Guard on the *Lancaster*, ordered to the South Atlantic Squadron.⁹ On 20 March 1896, Waller transferred to command of the Marine Guard on the protected cruiser *Newark*, the flagship of the South Atlantic Station and the last American cruiser to be fitted with a sailing rig. Returning to Norfolk on 27 April 1896 for provisioning, the *Newark* steamed to join the North Atlantic Station on 4 May. Waller was promoted to captain on 1 July 1896 with rank from 14 June.¹⁰

Remaining on the North Atlantic Station, Capt Waller detached from *Newark* to take command of the Marine Guard of the recently commissioned battleship *Indiana* (BB-1) on 20 July 1896. He would remain aboard the *Indiana* until 16 September 1898. During the War with Spain, he participated in naval engagements at San Juan, Puerto Rico (12 May 1898) and at Santiago, Cuba (22 June and 2–3 July 1898). At Santiago, the American task force of four battleships and an armored cruiser destroyed the Spanish squadron.¹¹

At Santiago, the *Indiana*, together with *Iowa* (BB-4), were tasked with rescuing survivors from the burning Spanish ships. With ammunition exploding and a heavy surf running just inside the Spanish ships, Waller led a detachment of Marines and sailors in a day-long attempt to rescue the Spanish crewmen, saving 243.¹² For his post-combat heroism, the Navy Department awarded Waller the Specially Meritorious Medal on 3 August 1904. Waller is believed to be the only Marine ever awarded this medal.¹³

On 17 September 1898, Waller rejoined Marine Barracks, Norfolk, where he was promoted to major on 28 August 1899, with rank from 25 July. He was 42 years old and had been in the Marine Corps for 18 years. At this point in his career, he had spent half of it at sea with the balance being spent as a barracks officer, learning the intricacies of the adjutant, paymaster, and quartermaster sections of barracks administration. He had no expeditionary experience and no training in jungle or counterinsurgency warfare (terms and concepts that were

unknown at the time). He also had no experience serving under Army jurisdiction. This would change when, on 25 October 1899, he departed Norfolk for the Philippines.¹⁴

Expeditionary Service: China and the Philippines (1899–1902)

Following the War with Spain, the Filipinos, who had been engaged in a revolution against Spain, now opposed U.S. occupation. Around the naval station at Cavite, guerrilla warfare had broken out, causing ADM Dewey to request Marines. An understrength battalion, raised from the Marines at Guantanamo, Cuba, arrived at Cavite in April 1899, and a second battalion, raised from Marine Barracks along the East Coast, arrived in September.¹⁵ Commanded by Waller, a third battalion was raised from the Marine Barracks at Portsmouth, NH; Brooklyn, NY; Philadelphia, PA; Washington Naval Yard; and Norfolk, VA.

Arriving at Cavite on 15 December, this third battalion was disbanded to provide replacements to the First and Second Marine Battalions, with Waller taking command of the First Battalion. On 1 January 1900, the First Regiment was established under the command of Lt Col George Elliott with the First and Second Battalions joined to the regiment. Command of the regiment was transferred to Col Robert Meade on 7 January.¹⁶

While the situation in the Philippines continued to worsen, another crisis broke out in China. An international expedition was being mounted to relieve the siege of the foreign legations at Peking (now Beijing) by the Society of Righteous and Harmonious Fists (the Boxers). On 8 June 1900, Lieutenants Henry Leonard and Wade Jolly, with 30 Marines from Company H, departed Cavite on the gunboat *Nashville* (G-7), arriving at Taku on 18 June. Maj Waller, with a 107-man detachment consisting mostly of Capt Smedley Butler's Company A, departed Cavite on 14 June, arriving at Taku on 19 June. Waller formed his command and moved inland, linked up with a 400-man Russian column, and marched for Tientsin (now Tianjin). Severely outnumbered

by the opposing Chinese, the column came under heavy fire and was forced to retreat. Regrouping, Waller attached his contingent of Marines to an international force of Italian, German, Japanese, Russian, British, and American Army troops. On 24 June, this combined force marched on Tientsin, engaged in a bitter five-hour running battle, and reached the city.¹⁷

On 25 June, the First Regiment's commander, Col Robert Meade, departed Cavite on the armored cruiser *Brooklyn* (ACR-3) with 318 Marines and joined the international force at Tientsin on 12 July. At Tientsin, Meade organized the Marines into two provisional battalions with Waller in command of the First Provisional Battalion. Waller commanded this battalion during the taking of Tientsin (13–14 July).¹⁸

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Waller replaced Col Meade as commander of the First Regiment on 25 July when Meade became physically incapacitated and was ordered to the United States for treatment. On 3 August, the more senior Maj William Biddle arrived with the Fourth Battalion and took command of the regiment, with Waller returning to command the First Provisional Battalion.¹⁹ He commanded the battalion during the battle of Peking (14–15 August). With the international crisis over, the First Regiment departed China on 9 October, arriving back at Cavite on 21 October.²⁰

On 28 March 1901, Maj Waller was appointed a lieutenant colonel by brevet for “distinguished conduct and public service in the presence of the enemy near Tientsin, China.” He was also advanced two numbers in rank on the lineal list of majors, moving in front of Randolph Dickens and Thomas N. Wood, both four years his senior, for “eminent and

conspicuous conduct” at Tientsin.²¹ Years later, on 16 November 1921, when Congress approved the creation of the Marine Corps Brevet Medal, Waller was awarded the medal in recognition of his brevet commission.²²

While Waller was in China, the fifty-eight-year-old Civil War veteran, Col Henry Cochrane, Waller's former commander aboard the *Lancaster* and during the 1882 Egypt intervention, arrived at Cavite and took command. On 1 January 1901, Cochrane established the First Brigade, dividing his forces into two regiments. Waller commanded the First Battalion, First Regiment while Maj William Biddle continued in command of the regiment. The relationship between the two majors was not good, and Waller's advancement to one number below Biddle on the lineal list, brevet to lieutenant colonel, and

proper performance of duty. Remey also directed LtCol Mancil Goodrell, who had replaced Cochrane as commander of the First Brigade, to relieve Waller of command of the First Battalion upon the expiration of his suspension.²³ The consequence was to make Waller the senior Marine officer without a command and available.

The Samar Expedition (1901–1902)

On 28 September 1901, Philippine Revolutionary Army forces, commanded by Eugenio Daza, and Balangiga villagers, led by Valeriano Abanador, attacked the U.S. Army's Company C, 9th Infantry Regiment, who were occupying Balangiga, killing 48, wounding 22, with 4 missing. The Army reported the loss of about 100 rifles and 25,000 rounds of ammunition. Rumors circulated that the soldiers' bodies had been mutilated.²⁴ Army BG Jacob Smith, commanding the Army's Sixth Separate Brigade on Leyte and the soldiers on Samar, asked for Marines to help subdue the native population on Samar. Available, Waller was tasked with command of the “Samar Battalion,” a provisional force of 15 officers and 300 enlisted Marines consisting of Companies C, D, and H from the First Regiment and Company F of the Second Regiment. The companies were commanded by Captains Robert Dunlap (C), Hiram Bearss (D), David Porter (F), and Arthur Matthews (H).²⁵

The area assigned to the Marines embraced the entire southern part of Samar (the farthest part of Eastern Samar province). The rules of engagement provided Waller by BG Smith were: “I want no prisoners. I wish you to kill and burn, the more you kill and burn, the better it will please me. I want all persons killed who are capable of bearing arms in actual hostilities against the United States.”²⁶

The Samar Battalion departed Cavite on the armored cruiser *New York* (ACR-2) on 22 October; arrived at Catbalogan, Samar, on 24 October 1901; and there transferred to the collier *Zafiro*. At Catbalogan, the *Zafiro* was joined by the patrol yacht *Frolic*, transporting RADM Rodgers (who by

seniority had replaced Remey as commander of the Asiatic Station) and BG Smith together with their staffs. Proceeded by the *Frolic*, the *Zafiro* steamed through the straits between Samar and Leyte to Basey, Samar, making a port call at Tacloban, Leyte, en route. At Basey, Maj Waller disembarked his headquarters and companies C and D. Companies F and H remained on the *Zafiro*, taking aboard a 3-inch landing gun along with an M1895 Colt-Browning machinegun and proceeded to Balangiga, on the south coast of Samar, where Capt David D. Porter was left in command with 159 men and instructions to begin operations as soon as possible. Maj Waller then returned to Basey.²⁷

At Basey and Balangiga, small expeditions were sent out daily to clear the country of guerrillas. From Basey,

fortified position and drove the insurgents from their positions in a surprise attack. Porter and Bearss continued to exploit their surprise, crossing the river and assaulting the defenses of the intended target. To reach the enemy's position, the Marines had to climb the cliffs, which rose sheer from the river to a height of about 200 feet and were honeycombed with caves connected by bamboo ladders and narrow ledges with bamboo handrails. Tons of rocks, suspended in cages held in position by vine cables (known as bejuco), were ready to be triggered upon people and boats below. The guerrillas were unable to spring their trap, however, because of heavy covering fire provided by GySgt John H. Quick on the M1895 Colt-Browning machinegun.²⁹ The Marines scaled the cliffs and, with their Krag-Jørgensen rifles and .45 single-action

interior of Samar, and the positions they destroyed had taken years to prepare. The Sohoton Cliffs battle would be the high point of the Marines' expedition on Samar, and Cpts Porter and Bearss would both later receive the Medal of Honor for this action.³²

Following this action, Waller's Marines resumed patrolling operations and began registering native inhabitants; however, BG Smith had another use for the Marines. Given little time for rest and resupply after the Sohoton Cliffs action, BG Smith ordered the Marines to march across Samar, from Basey to Hernani (or to Lanang, alternatively) to select a route for a telegraph wire to connect the east and west coasts. Smith also ordered Waller to run wires south from Basey to Balangiga. Waller's Samar Battalion was ill-equipped for such assignments.³³

Waller undertook the Basey to Balangiga mission first. On 8 December, two columns left Basey for Balangiga. The first column followed along the shoreline under the command of Maj Waller while the second, under Capt Bearss, marched about two miles inland. Resupply for both columns was done by cutter, which was kept abreast of the beach column. At a distance of approximately 40 miles, both columns arrived in Balangiga on 12 December, having encountered no resistance.³⁴

Waller decided to begin the march across the interior of southern Samar from its east coast, selecting Lanang as his starting point, moving west to Basey. He planned to move up the Lanang River as far as possible and then strike out for the vicinity of the Sohoton Cliffs. From the known position, he planned to follow the river he had used earlier in his attack on the cliffs from Basey. Upon the arrival of the Marines at Lanang, Maj Waller was urged not to make the attempt, however, as he states in his report: "Remembering the general'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."³⁵

At Balangiga, a patrol led by Capt Porter killed one insurgent, captured seven, and found many artifacts of the dead men of the Ninth Infantry.

several small patrols were sent up the Sohoton and Cadacan rivers, with two Marines being killed along the Sohoton. In an engagement on 8 November at Iba, several insurgents were killed and captured. At Balangiga, a patrol led by Capt Porter killed one insurgent, captured seven, and found many artifacts of the dead men of the Ninth Infantry. In an initial report to Smith, Waller stated that over an 11-day period, his men burned 255 dwellings, shot 13 carabaos, and killed 39 people.²⁸

In mid-November, the Marines attacked a fortified guerrilla position on the Sohoton. Organized into three columns, two of the columns, under the command of Cpts Porter and Bearss, marched on foot, while the third column, commanded by Maj Waller, went up the river in boats. The plan of attack was for the three columns to unite on 16 November below the enemy's stronghold and make a combined assault. Instead, Porter's and Bearss' columns came upon insurgent camps below the

army revolvers, drove the insurgents from their positions and destroyed the guerrillas' stronghold.³⁰

Maj Waller's column, coming up the river in boats, did not arrive in time for the attack, which saved it from disaster. Attempting to ascend the river in boats before the shore columns had dislodged the insurgents from the cliffs would have been catastrophic for Waller's column.³¹

No Marines were killed in the attack, which resulted in the deaths of 30 insurgents and the capture of Philippine Republican Army General Vicente Lukbán and his lieutenants. However, with rations exhausted and the Marines in rough shape, further pursuit of the insurgent force was abandoned. The volcanic stone of the cliffs and its surroundings had cut the Marines' shoes to pieces, many were barefoot, and all had foot problems. The Marines had overcome incredible difficulties and dangers in their march. No foreign army had ever penetrated that far into the

On 28 December 1901, the detachment (composed of Maj Waller, Cpts Porter and Bearss, two Marine lieutenants, and an Army lieutenant from BG Smith's staff, 50 enlisted Marines, 2 native scouts, and 33 native carriers) departed Lanang in boats. Reaching Lagitao, an aerial distance of about ten miles from their starting point, the detachment found it impossible to continue in the boats and persisted on foot. This resulted in the exhausting necessity for crossing and recrossing the swollen river which also resulted in the Marines and their equipment being continually wet. On 30 December, it was necessary to issue reduced rations.³⁶

With a rapidly decreasing food supply, men becoming ill, their clothing in rags, their feet swollen and bleeding, and the trail lost, the situation became dire. Consulting his officers, Maj Waller decided to take Marine Lt Halford and the thirteen men who were in the best condition and push forward as rapidly as possible to organize and send back a relief party. Capt Porter was placed in command of the main column with instructions to go slowly and follow Waller's trail.³⁷

Not long after Maj Waller's party set out, Capt Bearss and a Marine caught up to Waller carrying a message from Porter. Waller sent a message back to Porter, using a native porter, directing him to follow the advanced column to a clearing Waller's party had found where there was a quantity of sweet potatoes, bananas, and young coconut palms, and to rest the main column there. The message never reached Porter. Instead, the native porter returned to Waller's party two days later, claiming he was fearful there were too many insurgents in the area.³⁸

On 4 January 1902, Maj Waller's party captured five natives, including a man and a boy who stated that they knew the way to Basey. After crossing the Sohoton River, a trail leading from the Sohoton Cliffs to the Suribao River was discovered and followed. Having found a known point, Waller's party was able to cross the Loog River and proceed to Banglay, following the Cadacan River. Near Banglay, Waller's party came upon the camp that Capt

Dunlap had established to await their arrival. The cutter supporting the Samar Battalion was offshore from Dunlap's camp, and Waller's party was taken aboard and disembarked at Basey on 6 January. Maj Waller later reported: "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."³⁹

That same day a relief party was organized and sent out to assist Porter and his Marines. On 7 January, Waller joined this relief party. After nine days of searching for Porter's column without success, the relief party began to break down and returned to Basey. Waller was sick with fever and incapacitated.⁴⁰

Meanwhile, Capt Porter's situation had become desperate. He had not received a reply to the message sent to Waller and there had been no relief party. Taking the seven Marines and six native porters in the best physical condition, Porter set off to retrace the trail to Lanang to get help. Porter's party set out on 3 January, leaving Lt William in charge of the rest of the dying column with orders to follow the trail back to Lanang as the physical condition of the men allowed.⁴¹

Williams slowly followed Porter's trail, leaving men behind one by one to die beside the trail when it was no longer possible for them to continue. One man went insane; the native carriers became mutinous, and some of them attacked and wounded Lt Williams. Williams later testified that their mutinous behavior left the Marines in fear for their lives, and he accused the porters of intentionally hiding food and supplies from the Marines.⁴²

Porter's return to Lanang had also been an ordeal. Rain had flooded the streams and rivers making it impossible to retrace the Marines' path. Lacking food, it took Porter's party eight days to reach Lanang. Reaching Lanang on 11 January, Porter reported the Marines' situation to Army Captain Pickering, commander of the Army detachment

at Lanang, and asked for a relief party. A relief expedition was organized, but it was unable to start for several days because of the rains and the swollen Lanang River. Lt Williams, with what remained of his party, was finally met by the relief party on the morning of 18 January and taken to Lanang.⁴³

That same afternoon, Capt Porter ordered the arrest of eleven Filipino porters. After an investigation, Waller ordered the summary execution, without trial, of the eleven Filipino porters for treason, theft, disobedience, and general mutiny. Ten were shot, with the eleventh having been shot previously while attempting to escape. The bodies were left in the town square as an example. Waller later reported the executions to BG 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."⁴⁴

What was left of the Samar Battalion was relieved by Army units on 26 February 1902. The battalion departed Samar on 29 February returning to Cavite aboard *USAT Lawton* on 2 March.

In November 1901, following the Sohoton Cliffs action, BG Smith recommended Waller for suitable recognition. The Secretary of War endorsed the same and forwarded Smith's recommendation to the Secretary of the Navy. On 21 January 1902, BGen Commandant Heywood recommended the Secretary appoint Maj Waller a colonel by brevet. There would be no brevet. In February 1902, BG Smith had also passed along Waller's report concerning the executions of the Filipino porters to MG Adna Chaffee, commander of U.S. Army forces in the Philippines.⁴⁵

General Court-Martial (March–April 1902)

MG Chaffee was already in trouble with the Governor-General of the Philippines, William Howard Taft, for what Taft saw as the Army's unduly harsh treatment of the Filipinos.⁴⁶ On 4 March 1902, Maj Littleton Waller and 1st Lt John Day were officially charged with eleven counts of murder in violation of the 58th Article of War. Day was

charged because he was Waller's adjutant and should have counseled Waller against the executions. However, Day also faced a separate charge of torturing a Filipino prisoner before executing him.⁴⁷

An Army General Court-Martial was convened on 17 March. The court-martial board consisted of seven Army officers and six Marine Corps officers, led by U.S. Army BG William H. Bisbee. The prosecutor was Army MAJ Henry P. Kingsbury. Waller and Day were defended by CDR Adolf Marix, (USN), MAJ Edwin F. Glenn (5th U.S. Infantry), and Oscar Sutro, a Canadian/American attorney who practiced law in Manila.⁴⁸

Following the opening of the proceeding, Marix immediately argued that all charges should be dropped because the Army did not have jurisdiction to try Marines. BG Bisbee decided that the court was without jurisdiction in the case but left open the possibility of reversing himself if instructions otherwise were received from the office of the Adjutant General of the Army. The Army Adjutant General reversed Bisbee.⁴⁹

With jurisdiction settled, Waller and Day were asked to file a plea with the court. Both men plead "Guilty, except to the words 'willfully and feloniously and with malice aforethought, murder

me," to be used in his and Day's defense. However, the prosecution felt the need to call BG Smith as a witness.⁵¹

On 7 April 1902, in sworn testimony, Smith denied giving Waller any special verbal orders. The defense then produced three officers who testified to hearing Smith give these orders. The witnesses also provided copies of the written order received from Smith. Taking the stand, Waller stated he had been directed to take no prisoners and to kill every male Filipino over age ten.⁵²

There was extensive coverage of the trial by the American press, much of which was not sympathetic to Waller and Day. During the trial, the press, including Waller's hometown newspaper in Philadelphia, referred to him as the "Butcher of Samar."⁵³

On 12 April, the court-martial board voted 11–2 for the acquittal of Waller and Day. Waller's rival, William Biddle, was one of the two officers who voted to convict Waller. Thirty days later, the U.S. Army Judge Advocate General vacated the verdict and dismissed the entire case, agreeing that Marine Corps officers were not subject to an Army court.⁵⁴

As a result of the Waller-Day court-martial, BG Smith faced his own court-martial for conduct prejudicial to good order and discipline. Based

on testimony by Capt Porter and Lt Day on 25 April and Maj Waller on 26 April, Smith's defense counsel stipulated Smith had issued instructions to Waller to "kill and burn and make Samar a howling wilderness." Smith was convicted and admonished.⁵⁵ President Theodore Roosevelt ordered Smith's retirement from the Army with no additional punishment.⁵⁶

Waller's ordeal in the Philippines was over. He detached on 2 May, in com-

Panama Independence and Cuban Pacification (1903–1906)

Waller was assigned as the officer-in-charge of Marine Recruiting Office Philadelphia from 13 October 1902 until 31 March 1904. He was promoted to lieutenant colonel on 23 March 1903 with rank from 3 March and one number behind William Biddle.⁵⁸

LtCol Waller was absent on temporary expeditionary duty with the North Atlantic Fleet from 26 December 1903 to 25 March 1904 in conjunction with U.S. support of Panama's declaration of independence from Colombia and to exert the rights granted to the United States in the Hay-Bunau-Varilla Treaty. At League Island Navy Yard, Philadelphia, Waller took command of the Provisional Regiment of the Provisional Brigade, with Maj James Mahoney and Eli Cole as the battalion commanders. BGen Commandant George Elliott commanded the brigade. Elliott, with the brigade field and staff, and the Provisional Regiment departed League Island on 27 December, arriving at Colon, Panama on 3 January 1904.⁵⁹

Two battalions, commanded by Maj John Lejeune and Lewis Lucas were already in Panama along with the gunboat *USS Nashville (PG-7)*, lying offshore at Colon menacing Colombian troop movements. With Commandant Elliott's arrival, he organized the four battalions into two provisional regiments commanded by LtCols Biddle and Waller, the two leading contenders to succeed him as Commandant. Waller's regiment took control and encamped in the buildings of the defunct French Canal Company at Bas Obispo while Biddle's regiment, with Elliott's field and staff, moved to occupy Empire.⁶⁰

Hostilities averted, Elliot departed Panama on 16 February 1904, placing Biddle in command of the provisional

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and'—to those words, not guilty. To the general charge—"Not Guilty," relying on the provisions of the 1863 Lieber Code (General Order #100) that authorized "exceeding force." This was the same justification Army BG J. Franklin Bell had used when he ordered the execution of over 100 Filipinos."⁵⁰

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Waller's ordeal in the Philippines was over. He detached on 2 May, in com-

brigade while remaining in command of the First Provisional Regiment. On 8 March, Waller departed Panama, aboard the auxiliary cruiser *USS Dixie* (1893), arriving at Philadelphia on 26 March. He rejoined the Marine Recruiting Office Philadelphia that same day.⁶¹

Departing the recruiting office on 31 March, LtCol Waller commanded Marine Barracks Norfolk from 12 April 1904 to 10 August 1911. He was promoted to colonel on 21 March 1905 with rank from 11 March. His rival, William Biddle was promoted

jurisdiction and remained in Cuba until 23 January 1909. Waller returned to Norfolk on 8 November 1906.⁶³

Denied Appointment as Commandant and Founding of the Marine Corps Association

On 30 November 1910, MajGen Commandant George Elliott reached the statutory retirement age of 64 years and retired. His tenure as Commandant had been marked by constant attempts to abolish the Marine Corps. Elliott's final year as Commandant had also been marred by the Perkins retirement con-

officers. Angered by what they viewed as Headquarters' mishandling of the 1908–1909 threats of abolishment, the Elliott-Lauchheimer Court of Inquiry, and Taft's appointment of Biddle as Commandant, the officers decided to form the Marine Corps Association with the general mission of preserving the existence and status of the Marine Corps.⁶⁶

Cuba (1911)

Waller was again absent from Marine Barracks Norfolk from 8 March to 22 June 1911 in command of the First Provisional Brigade assembling in Cuba for possible expeditionary duty in Mexico where a revolution had begun the previous November. The brigade and its First Provisional Regiment formed and sailed from Philadelphia, the Second Provisional Regiment assembled and sailed from Norfolk, and a Third Provisional Regiment was gathered from the Marine Guards aboard eleven battleships of the Atlantic Fleet. Colonels George Barnett and Franklin Moses commanded the First and Second Provisional Regiments and the Third by LtCol Ben Fuller who relieved Maj George Thorpe, the Fleet Marine Officer, Atlantic Fleet.⁶⁷

The crisis ended on 31 May 1911, when Mexican President Porfirio Diaz fled the country. Over the next two weeks the regiments disbanded with the Marines returning to their barracks and ships. Waller and his headquarters departed Cuba on 18 June, arriving back in Norfolk on 21 June.⁶⁸

Denied Appointment as Commandant a Second Time

From 25 August 1911 to 22 April 1914, Col Waller was assigned to Marine Barracks Mare Island Naval Yard, CA. In February 1914, MajGen Commandant Biddle's term as Commandant ended. Biddle had recommended his Naval Academy classmate, Col Lincoln Karmany as his replacement. Many Marine officers outside of Headquarters Marine Corps again favored Waller.⁶⁹

The moralizing Secretary of the Navy, Josephus Daniels rejected Karmany for having divorced his first wife to marry a much younger woman. Waller

... with the approval of Waller, Col Franklin Moses called a meeting of Marine officers to discuss defenses against the attacks by those who would abolish the Marine Corps.

three days later but with rank from 25 February. On 16 June 1906, Waller's promotion would be as an additional number in grade, basically making him and Biddle equal in both rank and seniority.⁶²

Col Waller was absent from Marine Barracks Norfolk from 26 September to 8 November 1906 on temporary expeditionary duty during the Cuban Pacification. Arriving in Havana on the civilian steamship *Miami* on 1 October, Waller took command of the provisional First Expeditionary Brigade headquartered at Camp Columbia. Consisting of approximately 97 officers and 2,785 enlisted men, the brigade accounted for about one-third of the Marine Corps. Lieutenant Colonels George Barnett and Franklin Moses commanded the First and Second Expeditionary Regiments, with Majs Theodore Kane, Dion Williams, Edward Lowndes, Albertus Catlin, Wendell Neville, and Capts William McKelvy and Philip Bannon commanding the battalions. On 1 November 1906, the brigade was relieved by Army forces and disbanded; the Marines returned to their ships and barracks except for a provisional regiment which was transferred to Army

trovsey and the Elliott-Lauchheimer Court of Inquiry. William Howard Taft, the Governor of the Philippines during the Samar Expedition and Waller's court-martial, was now president, and Taft faced his own controversies, rumors, and negative press.⁶⁴

In mid-November, Secretary of the Navy George von L. Meyer selected Waller to replace Elliott. It was a selection that was favored by most Marine officers, active duty and retired. However, the powerful Pennsylvania Republican party boss and descendant of the Biddle family, Senator Boies Penrose, told President Taft bluntly that if Taft did not appoint Col William Biddle as Commandant Penrose would sabotage Taft's legislative agenda with the help of Pennsylvania and New York newspapers. Confronted by Penrose and surrounded by controversies both inside and outside of the Marine Corps, Taft capitulated and nominated Biddle.⁶⁵

On 25 April 1911, with the approval of Waller, Col Franklin Moses called a meeting of Marine officers to discuss defenses against the attacks by those who would abolish the Marine Corps. The officers attending represented one-quarter of the Corps' commissioned

was again slurred as the “Butcher of Samar.” Daniels wanted to recommend LtCol John Lejeune but was persuaded that the 47-year-old Lejeune was “too young.” Instead, Daniels settled on nominating the 55-year-old George Barnett, then commanding the Advance Base Brigade and Marine Barracks at Philadelphia. Following Barnett becoming Commandant, Waller replaced him in command of Marine Barracks Philadelphia from 26 April 1914 to 8 January 1917.⁷⁰

Vera Cruz (1914)

Waller was absent from Marine Barracks Philadelphia from 26 April to 4 December 1914. On 26 April he departed for Vera Cruz, Mexico aboard the battleship *USS New York* (B-34). Arriving at Vera Cruz on 4 May, he took command of the First Brigade from Col James Mahoney, who took command of the First Regiment. Colonels John Lejeune and Franklin Moses commanded the Second Regiment and Third Provisional Regiments. Waller’s son, Lt L.W.T. Waller Jr, served as his aide.⁷¹

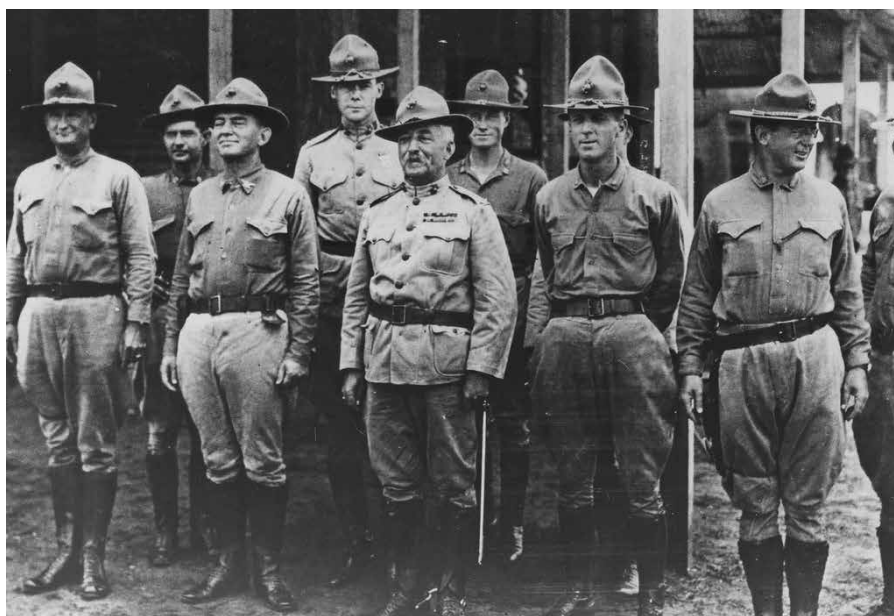
Waller arrived after the brigade had taken the city and after the brigade had been transferred to Army jurisdiction under BGen Fredrick Funston. The brigade engaged in occupation duties until 23 November when it was returned to Navy jurisdiction and began to depart. The brigade returned to Philadelphia on 3 and 4 December via three chartered transports.⁷²

Haiti (1915–1917)

Waller’s final expeditionary duty was in Haiti. He was absent from Marine Barracks Philadelphia from 10 August 1915 until 6 January 1917 in command of the First Brigade in Haiti. Arriving at Port-au-Prince, Waller took command of U.S. Expeditionary Forces Operating in Haiti. The Second Regiment, commanded by Col Eli Cole, had been in Haiti since 4 August when Waller, his headquarters and staff, and the First Regiment, commanded by Col Theodore Kane, arrived eleven days later aboard the armored cruiser *USS Tennessee* (ACR-10). Before the First Regiment could disembark at Port-au-



Marines in Haiti 1915. (Photo: Library of Congress.)



Col L.W.T. Waller (center), commander of the 1st Marine Brigade and his staff at Vera Cruz, Mexico, 1914. Other officers identified in front row are LtCol W.C. Neville; Col John A. Lejeune; Maj S.D. Butler; and Maj R.C. Berkeley (Smedley D. Butler Collection, Marine Corps Archives and Special Collections).

Prince, Waller transferred command of the newly arrived regiment to Cole and ordered it to Cape Haitien. Disembarking there, the First Regiment began operations against the *Cacos* (political bandits) in Northern Haiti. Kane was placed in command of the Second Regiment, operating in Southern Haiti from Port-au-Prince.⁷³

At Cape Haitien, Cole declared martial law after having occupied the city. Under Cole, the First Regiment remained in and around Cape Haitien,

within the range of the guns of the American warships in the neighboring waters. At Waller’s insistence, on 25 September the First Regiment began active patrolling of the interior. Remaining at Cape Haitien, Cole placed Maj Smedley Butler in charge of all Marines in the field in northern Haiti. Still concerned with the First Regiment’s performance, Waller established a forward headquarters at Grande-Riviere-du-Nord, 15 miles south of Cape Haitien and took command of forces operating against

the *Cacos* in northern Haiti, effectively taking command from both Cole and Butler.⁷⁴

With Waller in direct command, the Marines in northern Haiti stay in constant pursuit of the *Cacos* during November 1915. Marines engaged the *Cacos* around Le Trou (1–4 November), repulsed attacks on Le Trou (1–2 November) and near Fort Capois (5–13 November), captured Fort Capois (16–20 November) and captured Fort Riviere (17 November).⁷⁵

On 20 November, the Secretary of the Navy suspended all offensive military operations in Haiti. The Marines would stay, taking on an evolving mission of peacekeeping and nation building.⁷⁶

Waller was absent from Haiti and the First Brigade on temporary duty in Washington, followed by a period of leave, from 24 February to 1 April 1916. That April, RADM William B. Caperton, commanding the Cruiser Squadron, Atlantic Fleet arrived at Santa Domingo in response to a rebellion that threatened the U.S. backed government. Caperton landed a provisional Marine battalion, under the command of Capt Frederic Wise on 30 April

ashore in Santo Domingo. At the request of RADM Caperton, Waller's command remained restricted to Haiti. In the haste to move Marines to Santo Domingo, units of the First and Second Regiments were intermingled. To regain unity of command, Waller placed all the Marine units in Santo Domingo in the First Regiment, commanded by Col Kane and RADM Caperton. The units in Haiti formed the Second Regiment, commanded by Col Cole and Waller.⁷⁸

Col Waller was absent from Haiti on leave in the United States and temporary duty in Washington from 11 November 1916 to 8 January 1917. While in Washington, he was detached from Marine Barracks Philadelphia and U.S. Naval Forces Ashore in Haiti.⁷⁹

Brigadier General and Advanced Base Force (1917–1920)

Subject to Senate confirmation, Waller was provisionally promoted to brigadier general on 21 November 1916 along with line officers George Barnett (then serving as Major General Commandant), Joseph Pendleton, John Lejeune, Eli Cole, and staff officers Charles Lauchheimer (Adjutant and

States declared war on Germany on 6 April 1917, the nearly sixty-one-year-old Waller was too old and infirm for a field command in France. Waller would remain in Philadelphia, in command of the Advanced Base Force until his retirement. He was temporarily promoted to major general on 28 August 1918 with rank from 1 July.⁸¹

Retired While Continuing on Active Duty (1920)

MajGen Waller was found incapacitated for active service as the result of an incident of service by a Marine Retiring Board on 22 March 1920. He was placed on the retired list on 27 March 1920 for incapacity with the rank of Major General from 1 July 1918. He continued to command the Advanced Base Force until 16 June 1920, when Headquarters, Advanced Base Force was disestablished, and he was ordered home in the status of a retired officer. On 11 November 1920, he was awarded the Navy Cross for distinguished service "during the operations of the Brigade in France."⁸²

In retirement, MajGen Waller continued to live in Philadelphia, under the care of his wife and eldest son, L.W.T. Waller Jr, who left active duty to tend to his father. MajGen Waller died in Atlantic City, New Jersey on 13 July 1926 and was buried in Arlington National Cemetery on 16 July. During his service, MajGen Waller received the Marine Corps Brevet Medal, Navy Cross, Specially Meritorious Medal, West Indies Naval Campaign Medal, Spanish Campaign Medal, Philippine Campaign Medal, China Relief Expeditionary Medal, Marine Corps Expeditionary Ribbon (Egypt 1882, Panama 1903–1904, Haiti 1915–1916), Cuban Pacification Medal, Mexican Service Medal, Haitian Campaign, and World War I Victory Medal.⁸³

L.W.T. Waller Jr returned to activity duty in 1941, serving until 1946 when he also retired as a major general. Two other sons also attained flag rank: RADM John B. W. Waller and Marine BGen Henry T. Waller.

... MajGen Waller continued to live in Philadelphia, under the care of his wife and eldest son, L.W.T. Waller Jr, who left active duty to tend to his father.

from the auxiliary cruiser *USS Prairie* (AD-5). On 12 May, Caperton landed a second provisional battalion of Marines, commanded by Maj Newt Hall. On 22 May, Col Kane, commanding the First Regiment at Port-au-Prince, arrived with the regiment's artillery battalion and was placed in command of all Naval Forces Ashore in Santo Domingo. Kane immediately began operations against rebel forces.⁷⁷

On 5 June, with three-quarters of the First Brigade now serving in Santo Domingo and the Fourth Regiment under the command of Col Joseph Pendleton en route, Waller requested his command expand to include U.S. forces serving

Inspector), George Richards (Paymaster), and Charles McCawley (Quartermaster). These were the first Marine Corps general officers who were not also serving as Commandant. Upon Senate confirmation, he was made a permanent brigadier general on 16 March 1917 with rank from 29 August 1916. Waller was senior among the line officers.⁸⁰

On 8 January 1917, BGen Waller took command of the Advanced Base Force with headquarters at Philadelphia. The mission of this almost 8,000-member force was to function as an expeditionary strategic reserve, capable of establishing and defending advanced naval bases. When the United

Notes

1. Lyon Gardiner Tyler, *Encyclopedia of Virginia*

Biography (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company).

2. R.A. Brock, *Virginia and Virginians* (Chicago: H.H. Hardesty, 1888). https://xtf.lib.virginia.edu/xtf/view?docId=2007_01/uvaBook/tei/b001866541.xml.

3. Staff, "Norfolk (Virginia) Light Artillery Blues," *The Civil War in the East*, n.d., <https://civilwarintheeast.com/confederate-regiments/virginia/norfolk-virginia-light-artillery-blues>.

4. "Waller, Littleton. USMC," National Archives and Records Administration, Department of Defense: Department of the Navy, U.S. Marine Corps, Personnel Management Division, 74860832, #17-1834-9/18/1927.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. Waller's extended presence at Marine Barracks, Norfolk was probably due in part to the state of the Navy's existing ships and in part due to delays in the commissioning of the *Indiana* class pre-dreadnought battleships and in manning of *Newark (C-1)* style of protected cruisers.

10. "Waller, Littleton. USMC."

11. Ibid.

12. David J. Sibley, *A War of Frontier and Empire: The Philippine-American War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2008); and Brian McAllister, *The Philippine War, 1899-1902* (Lawrence: Univ. Press of Kansas, 2000).

13. The Specially Meritorious Service Medal was a military decoration of the United States Navy created by Joint Resolution of Congress No. 18 of 3 March 1901. The medal was intended to recognize acts of non-combat meritorious service accomplished during the Spanish-American War. Waller was one of 93 known to have been awarded this medal and the only Marine.

14. "Waller, Littleton. USMC."

15. *A War*; and *The Philippine War*.

16. Vernon Williams, *Empire Marine: General Littleton W.T. Waller and the Growth of American Imperialism* (Ft. Worth: TCU Press, 2024).

17. George Clark, *United States Marines in the Boxer Rebellion* (Lebanon: Brass Hat, 2002); and Irving Werstein, *The Boxer Rebellion; Anti-Foreign Terror Seizes China, 1900* (London: Franklin Watts, 1972).

18. Ibid.

19. The numbering system for Marine battalions, regiments, and brigades of this time had yet to be standardized across the Corps. At times, there were multiple battalions and regiments, and provisional battalions and regiments with the same numeric designations. Battalions and regiments were at times renumbered based on the seniority of their commanders.

20. *Boxer Rebellion*.

21. The four-year gap between Waller and Dickens and Wood reflected the four years between 1876 and 1880 when no new Marine officers were commissioned.

22. *Boxer Rebellion*.

23. *Empire Marine*.

24. Alvita Akiboh, "The 'Massacre' and the Aftermath: Remembering Balangiga and The War in the Philippines," *U.S. History Scene*, July 25, 2017, <https://ushistoryscene.com/article/balangiga>.

25. *Empire Marine*.

26. Victor Nebrida, "The Balangiga Massacre: Getting Even" (Hector Santos, ed., *Philippine Centennial Series*, 15 June 1997, <http://www.bibingka.com/phg/balangiga>).

27. The accounts of Waller's march across Samar vary greatly and disagree. This account is a composite of the accounts in: *Empire Marine; A War; The Philippine War*; "The Balangiga Massacre;" and Creighton Miller, "Benevolent Assimilation:" *The American Conquest of the Philippines, 1899-1903* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984).

28. Ibid.

29. Max Boot, *The Savage Wars of Peace: Small Wars and the Rise of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2014.)

30. Composite of the accounts in: *Empire Marine; A War; The Philippine War*; "The Balangiga Massacre;" and "Benevolent Assimilation."

31. Ibid.

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid.

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid.

39. Ibid.

40. Ibid.

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid.

43. In October 1926, Williams, a colonel who was notorious for his poor navigation skills, died in a single car accident in San Francisco. It was believed that he lost his way in the Embarcadero and drove off a pier he had mistaken for a street.

44. Composite of the accounts in: *Empire Marine; A War; The Philippine War; The Savage Wars of Peace*; "The Balangiga Massacre;" and "Benevolent Assimilation."

45. Ibid.

46. Similar executions had occurred in the provinces of Batangas and Laguna under Army BGen J. Franklin Bell, who had also established internment camps, described by one of Bell's subordinates as "some suburb of hell" and where one in five of the detainees died.

47. Vernon Williams, *Empire Marine: General Littleton W.T. Waller and the Growth of American Imperialism* (Ft. Worth: TCU Press, 2024), Christopher Thomas Dean, *Atrocity on trial: The Court-martial of Littleton Waller* (Tempe: Arizona State University Press, 2009) and "Proceeding of the general court-martial, case of Maj L.W.T. Waller, Manila, 5 March 1902," and "testimony summarized in the Adjutant General's distich to MajGen Chaffee, USA," in *Correspondence Relating to the War with Spain Including the Insurrection in the Philippine Islands, and the China Relief Expedition* (Washington, DC: 1902).

48. Ibid.

49. Ibid.

50. Ibid.

51. Ibid.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid.
54. Ibid.
55. Ibid.
56. BGen Jacob H. Smith was a wholly unacceptable officer who had been subject to numerous investigations. Early in his career he had profited from an illegal enlistment bonus scheme, defrauding enlistees and the government. He was notorious for his financial schemes and difficulties, requiring a leave of absence to deal with creditor lawsuits. In 1891, Smith was charged with using enlisted men as his servants in his home. In the Philippines, he involved himself in native religious disputes ignoring orders to stay strictly neutral in religious matters and invoking violence.
57. "Waller, Littleton. USMC;" and *Empire Marine*.
58. Ibid.
59. Ibid.
60. Ibid.
61. Ibid.
62. Ibid.
63. Ibid.
64. Robert Debs Heinl, *Soldiers of the Sea* (Annapolis: United States Naval Institute, 1991).
65. Ibid.
66. Two years after the Marine Corps Association was established, the officers of the Second Provisional Brigade (Cuba 1913) organized the association. Col Lincoln Karmany appointed LtCol John Lejeune as the senior member of a three-man Executive Committee that effectively molded the Association.
67. "Waller, Littleton. USMC;" and *Empire Marine*.
68. Ibid.
69. Josephus Daniels, *The Wilson Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1946).
70. Josephus Daniels, *The Wilson Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1946); and "Waller, Littleton. USMC."
71. "Waller, Littleton. USMC;" and *Empire Marine*.
72. Ibid.
73. Ibid.
74. Butler had recently led a 45-man patrol into the interior to locate Fort Capois, the *Caco* stronghold. After locating the stronghold, Butler's patrol was ambushed by a reported 400 *Cacos* and engaged in a running battle. For this action, Capt William Upsher, 1stLt Edward Ostermann, and GySgt Dan Daly would be awarded the Medal of Honor (Daly's second).
75. "Waller, Littleton. USMC;" and *Empire Marine*.
76. Ibid.
77. Ibid.
78. Ibid.
79. Ibid.
80. Ibid.
81. Ibid.
82. Ibid.
83. Ibid.

