Sean McEnroe

Painting the Philippines with an American Brush

Visions of Race and National Mission among the Oregon Volunteers in the Philippine Wars of 1898 and 1899

On January 26, 1902, the U.S. Senate opened a series of hearings to investigate the origins and conduct of the ongoing war in the Philippines. For three and a half years, American troops had fought there, first against the Spanish in 1898 and then against an army of Philippine nationalists who opposed U.S. annexation of the islands in 1899. The hearings were closed to the public, and their findings were not widely publicized; but the testimony given at the hearings reveals both the brutality of the war and the racial vision that accompanied it. Over five months, soldiers described the torture and execution of Filipino captives, the wholesale destruction of Philippine villages, and the displacement of civilians. The leaders of the U.S. occupation — Elwell Otis, Arthur MacArthur, and William Howard Taft — presented elaborate theories on America's racial mandate to rule. Experts on military science, experienced in the Indian wars of the American West, justified the destruction of villages and regarded the resulting civilian deaths as regrettable but unavoidable. By the time the hearings closed in June 1902, U.S. military efforts had achieved near-complete success and domestic criticism of U.S. policy in the Philippines had subsided. On July 4, President William McKinley declared the insurrection over. Nothing came of the hearings.[1]

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CIGARS & TOBACCO

The Oregon Volunteers were the first U.S. soldiers to return from the Philippines, arriving at San Francisco on July 12, 1899. Although many of them had described their departure for war a year earlier with pride and optimism, some returned in a more somber mood. Years later, H.C. Thompson recalled: "Things had changed us. . . . We had high respect for authority and its place, but none at all for politicians and war contractors. The only real welcome home would be from family and old friends. Those who got up these big public welcomes, had themselves in mind." (Quoted in H.C. Thompson, "War without Medals," Oregon Historical Quarterly *59:4 [December 1958]: 323.)*

There is considerable evidence that the men of the Second Oregon Volunteer Infantry took part in the same sort of atrocities described in the hearings. They were among the first troops to land in the Philippines, arriving in June 1898, and they served in the Philippines for only about a year. Yet, they witnessed the war on Spain, the period of negotiation, and the beginning of the counter-insurgency campaign. Their correspondence and diaries suggest that they understood the people of the Philippines through the lens of U.S. race relations and patterned their descriptions of

Filipinos on their beliefs about nonwhite Americans. In so doing, they were able to engage in behavior that they would have considered barbaric if carried out against whites. Their writings allow us to see how Americans constructed an understanding of Filipinos, first as unfamiliar allies, then as wards, then as rivals, and finally as enemies.

The conduct of the Oregon Volunteers was no different than that of other state volunteer or U.S. regular regiments. These soldiers are interesting precisely because they appear so representative. They were ordinary citizens who served only briefly as soldiers, and their attitudes on the war, on race, and on America's mission in the world are consistent with those expressed by their fellow Oregonians at home, their leaders in the federal government, and many of the most influential writers of the day.

The atrocities that Oregon soldiers committed are by no means rare in the history of warfare. Scholars of military history and war psychology, noting the frequency of these behaviors, have sought to characterize their institutional and cultural origins. Historian Richard Holmes concludes that the fear and fatigue of battle are so intense that warfare can be conducted only through a powerful group psychology. Loyalty to the group, fear of humiliation, and the dehumanization of the enemy are necessary conditions for soldiers to carry out their duties in the field. "Without the creation of abstract images of the enemy, and without the depersonalization of the enemy during training," he writes, "battle would become impossible to sustain." That depersonalization is often accomplished by seizing on a racial, religious, or ideological characteristic of the enemy. The inherent cruelty and suffering of war make this war psychology a necessity for many soldiers, Holmes concludes, and "it is more difficult to train soldiers in the exercise of deliberate restraint than it is to imbue them with combative zeal."[2]

The same forces are identified by Lawrence LeShan, who describes war as a response to universal human needs: "displacement of aggression," "projection of self-doubts and self-hatred," "lack of meaning and purpose in life," and "a need for greater belonging to a group." In LeShan's view, soldiers are able to make extreme sacrifices because they believe their efforts are part of a vital historic project and they see their enemies as fundamentally different from themselves. The enemy ceases to be understood as a group of individuals and instead embodies the nationality, class, or race of the opposing side.[3]

The experiences of Oregon soldiers in the Philippine wars conform to these models in several respects. The soldiers viewed their efforts as part of a historic struggle, and they conceived of the Filipinos as an alien race.

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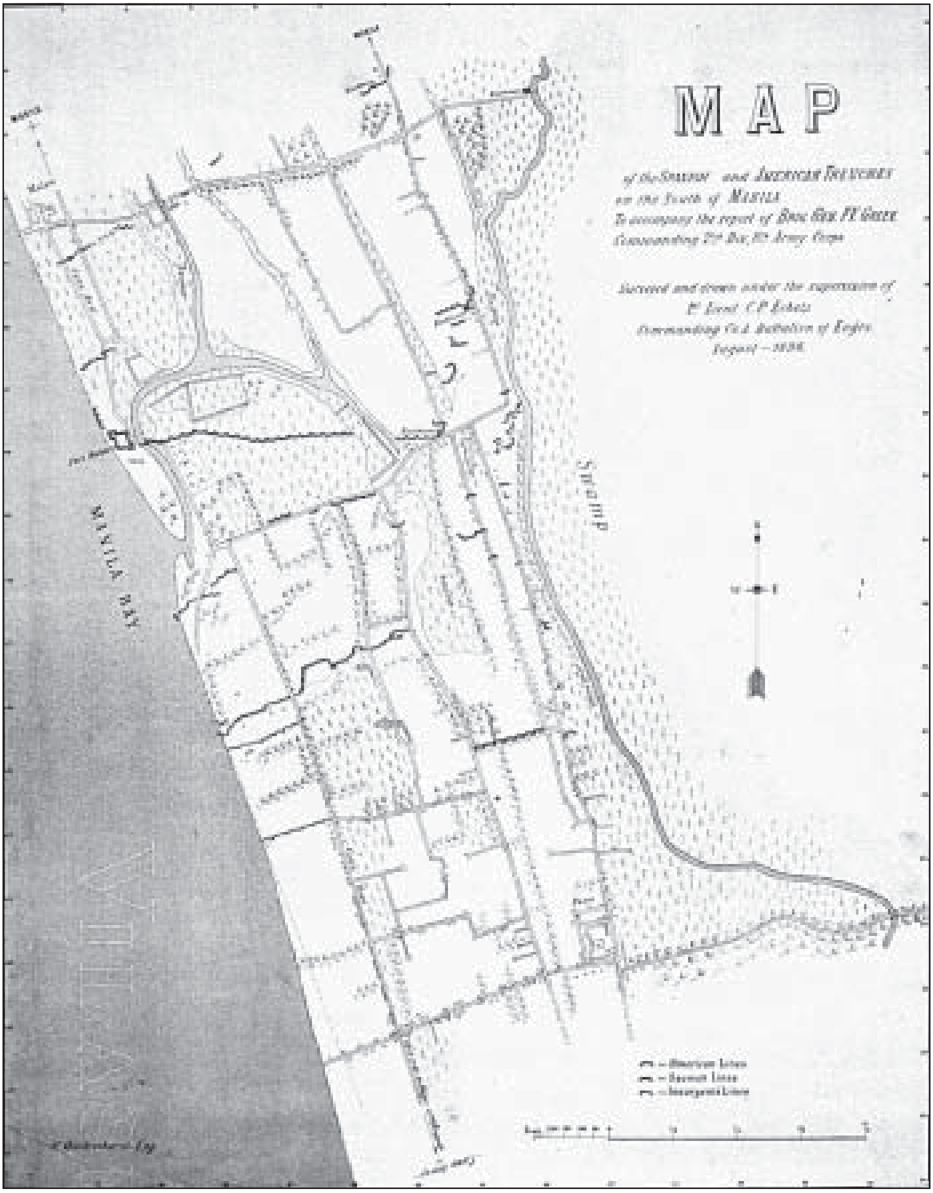

This map of Manila shows the positions of the besieging American and Filipino forces before the city was taken on August 13, 1898. The Americans, who had initially aided the Philippine insurgency, accepted the city's surrender and denied entry to the rebels. Thus began the tense standoff that culminated in the Second Battle of Manila the following February.

They treated their enemies with extreme cruelty and were generally untroubled by it. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the soldiers' experience is the shift in their racial characterization of Filipinos. When the mission of the Oregon Volunteers changed from fighting the Spanish to fighting Philippine nationalists, their notion of the Filipinos' racial identity changed to meet the psychological demands of the new war. Several recent works on the social history of race in America have pointed out that descriptions of race — and even of color — have been assigned and reassigned to different ethnic groups in response to changing economic and political conditions. Neil Foley's *White Scourge* and Noel Ignatiev's *How the Irish Became White*, for example, describe the processes by which economically marginal groups have gained or lost the distinction of "whiteness." Both authors describe gradual changes in historical conceptions of race. In contrast, the experiences of the Oregon Volunteers demonstrate how quickly such schemes of racial classification can be formulated and altered under the pressures of war.[4]

The Oregon Volunteers, their fellow Oregonians, and even the nation's leaders saw the Philippine War as a racial conflict. Though the debate over the annexation of the Philippines in the fall of 1898 created opposing political camps, which termed themselves "expansionists" and "anti-imperialists," most American politicians shared several common assumptions about America's future. They believed that the commercial and cultural influence of the United States would continue to spread across the Pacific and that Americans were racially superior to the peoples of the tropics and Asia. Popular and influential writers such as Alfred Thayer Mahan, Rudyard Kipling, and Benjamin Kidd believed that Anglo-American culture had both a biological and a cultural mandate to extend its influence across the Pacific and rule over peoples incapable of governing themselves.[5]

America's understanding of its mission in the Pacific was also guided by the nation's history. Both African slavery and conflict with American Indians had shaped Americans' definitions of race since early in the seventeenth century. To Frederick Jackson Turner's generation, much of America's identity was expressed in the history of western settlement, the confrontation with "less civilized" people on the frontier, and the extension of white American culture and economics over new lands. To Americans of the 1890s — whether soldiers, civilians, or statesmen — race was a fundamental characteristic of human beings and one of the forces that shaped world history. For them, the most important racial distinctions were among whites, blacks, and Indians.[6]

In April 1898, the United States declared war on Spain to put an end to what the government described as Spain's harsh suppression of the Cuban rebellion. The U.S. Navy destroyed the Spanish fleet at Manila Bay in the Philippines, landed troops in the nearby port of Cavite, and prepared for

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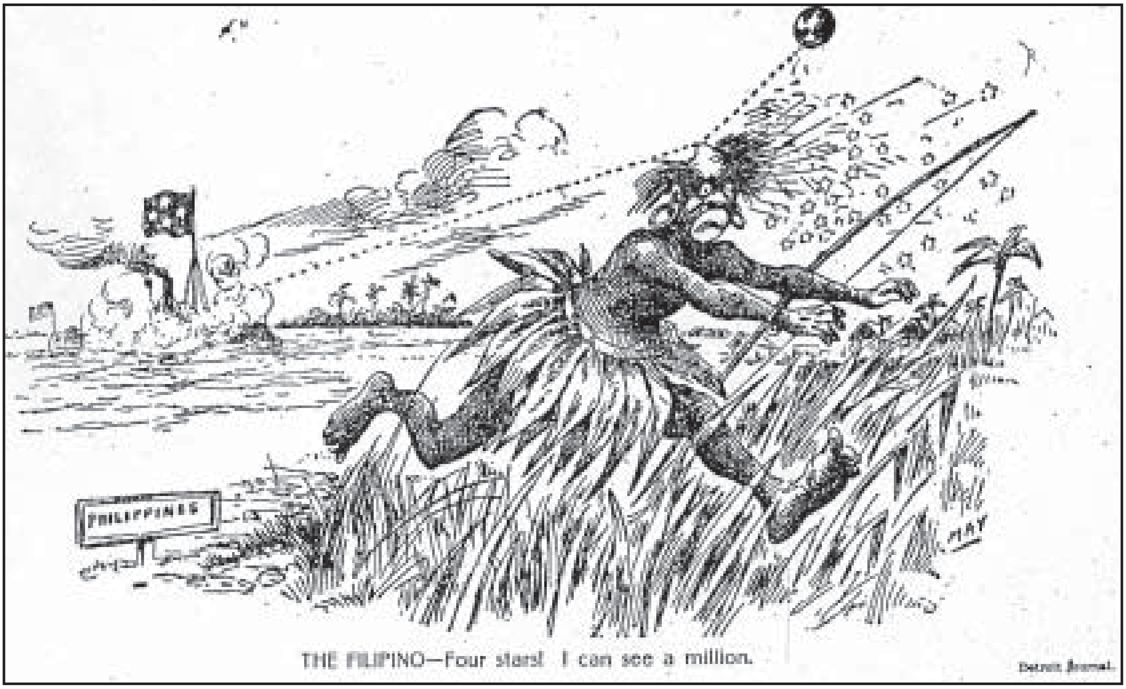
PHILIPPINES
THE FILIPINO—Four stars! I can see a million.
Detroit Journal.

The caption beneath this cartoon published in the March 11, 1899, Oregonian *— "The Filipino—Four stars! I can see a million" — refers to the victories of U.S. Navy Commander George Dewey. Dewey's promotion in the same month earned him the four-star admiral's flag. After the outbreak of the U.S. Philippine War in the previous month, American cartoonists' personifications of the Philippine insurgency reflected current stereotypes of the African "savage."*

an attack on the city of Manila. Emilio Aguinaldo's Philippine nationalist army, aided and supplied by U.S. Commodore George Dewey, besieged Spanish Manila and captured outlying areas while the Americans prepared to take the city. In August, the Spanish surrendered Manila to the Americans with only token resistance. When American commanders excluded the Philippine insurgents from the city, however, tensions between the two victorious armies mounted. Following Spain's cession of the Philippines to the United States, a series of shooting incidents between Filipino and American soldiers erupted into a new war. Beginning in February 1899, the United States, claiming sovereignty over the islands, fought to deny the indigenous, provisional government's claims to independence.[7]

When American political leaders set out to annex the Philippines, they did so without any intention of incorporating its inhabitants as citizens. President McKinley felt a paternalistic and humanitarian responsibility for the Filipinos, but he did not believe them capable of participating in

American civic life.[8] This perspective was shared by those American leaders who would exercise the most influence over the Philippines in the decade following the Spanish-American War. President Theodore Roosevelt and Secretary of War Elihu Root, for example, believed that a long-term plan for cultivating the evolution of Filipinos from barbarism to civilization to participation in political life was consistent with historic policies in the United States toward blacks and American Indians.[9] Most of America's territory was acquired without the consent of the inhabitants, they observed, and the annexation of the Philippines should be no different. In October 1900, Root summarized this position:

> The doctrine that government derives its just powers from the consent of the governed was applicable to the conditions for which Jefferson wrote it, and to the people to whom he applied it. . . . But Jefferson did not apply it to Louisiana. . . . Government does not depend upon consent. The immutable laws of justice and humanity require that people shall have government, that the weak shall be protected, that cruelty and lust shall be restrained, whether there be consent or not.[10]

In this way, Root justified America's war to suppress Philippine nationalism by maintaining that order must precede civil rights and that civil rights must precede political rights. From his perspective, the United States was fighting to establish civil order and the Philippine nationalist army was struggling against it.

The Oregon press also viewed American efforts in the Pacific through a worldview ordered by race. The *Portland Oregonian*, for example, presented the Philippine War as a critical step in a long process of historical development, in which a people — variously identified as "Aryan," "Anglo-Saxon," or "White" — were agents for the transformation of the world through the conquest of the uncivilized. The Philippine War was a continuation of the process that the United States had begun in the American West.[11] In July 1899, the *Oregonian* reprinted an article from the *Nashville American* that described the Philippine War as the next step in a process of westward expansion that had begun a century before with the Louisiana Purchase. The writer considered the expansion of the United States a natural process that "cannot be checked."[12] A March editorial described the inevitable absorption of all the Americas by the United States and its continued westward march across the Pacific. The writer advocated the annexation of the "Anglo-Saxon country of Canada" and considered the conquest of less-desirable "Spanish-American" countries a logical measure. He rejoiced that "the manifest destiny idea of the '40s has been surpassed by the actuality of 50 years later, for it did not include the Philippines."[13]

For many American observers, the Philippines was a continuation of the nation's western frontier. In March 1899, the *Oregonian* printed a letter from U.S. Army Paymaster Major Theodore Sternberg to a War Department officer. Under the headline, "To Build an Empire / Many Soldiers Willing to Settle in the Philippines / Favorable Start for Colonies," Sternberg claimed that at least 10 percent of the American soldiers would settle in the Philippines. He pointed to the islands' rich resources and joined the chorus of other annexationists in rejecting the claim that "white men cannot work in the tropics." To Sternberg, there was no significant difference between the old frontier and the new one. He advised: "The only way to Americanize these islands is [by following] the example of American pioneers engaged in making a home for themselves." The next day, an enthusiastic *Oregonian* article reported that a farsighted group of Oregon Volunteers "want to stay and mine" and had formed "a committee to develop the mineral resources of the Philippines."[14]

Historian Paul Sabin has suggested that the frontier is best understood not as a specific location but as a psychological environment — a period of early encounters between the United States and nonindustrialized peoples. The attitudes of Oregon soldiers toward the land and people of the Philippines are less surprising when viewed in this light. Many American soldiers saw their mission in the Philippines as "frontier duty," according to Brian McAllister Linn. Although Linn avoids close analogies between the racial attitudes of the Philippine wars in 1899 and those of the Indian wars a generation earlier, he opens the door to an interesting line of inquiry: How did Americans' cultural memory of past encounters with other races affect soldiers' perceptions of the Philippine War?[15]

The *Oregonian* often presented the idea that the annexation of the Philippines would reenact the settlement of Oregon. The industrious Americans would simply take another step to the West. They would fend off claims from other European powers, subdue the indigenous inhabitants, and begin prospecting for minerals and harnessing the region's agricultural wealth. Eventually, they would remake this new land in the image of their own. It should come as no surprise, then, that Oregonians so often did not view Filipinos as foreign nationals or potential American citizens. Much like the Klamaths, Modocs, and Nez Perces in Oregon, the Filipinos were seen as people who inhabited the land but had no ultimate claim to it.

It is significant that Americans described the Philippine War as an "insurrection," because that is exactly how they had described conflicts with

American Indians. The March 14, 1899, *Oregonian* observed that the "Indian problem" and the Philippine wars were associated with each other in the minds of Oregonians. One article attacked the voices of "theorists and doctrinaires" who believed that Filipinos could be negotiated with or permitted to govern themselves. The author suggested an approach that would mirror the history of Indian policy in the United States: "The first thing is to drub them soundly. We are in for the job and cannot back out. . . . when their submission is received, these children of the tropics will be dealt with kindly and justly." The article next to it announced the beginning of a new campaign in Luzon. The experience of the commanding officers was well suited to the task, the writer concluded. General Elwell Otis had fought in the Indian campaigns of 1876, and his command was filled with "trained and experienced office[r]s, all graduates of the civil war and the subsequent Indian campaigns." The next day, the *Oregonian* published accounts that demonstrated how contemporary the idea of Indian war was in 1899. A report from the Southwest warned that "the Indians are becoming restless, and it is said [that they] threaten all manner of things. . . . an outbreak may occur at any time." On the same page, a report from Minnesota claimed that the "Leech lake Indians are in a dirty temper and ready for any sort of deviltry."[16] Less than a decade had passed since the brutal suppression of the Sioux uprising at Wounded Knee, and it is clear that in Oregon, as in the rest of the western states, fears of Indian rebellions had not yet been laid to rest.

For *Oregonian* readers, Indians — and people in other countries who were similar in appearance to Indians — did not belong to a civilized community and, thus, were not protected by the political ideology or the military conventions that applied to American citizens or the citizens of foreign nations.[17] A front-page headline in March pronounced the Filipinos "Worse Than Indians"; a description followed of American troops being fired upon while attempting to parley with enemy soldiers who had raised a white flag. Such stories confirmed the belief that the war against the Filipinos should be carried out with a brutality previously reserved for Indian uprisings. A July article carried an interview with a returning American soldier who praised the U.S. Army's Philippine Scouts, who fought the "Filipinos Filipino fashion." In describing their tactics, the soldier explained that the scouts "sneak up Indian fashion" to kill the enemy. *Oregonian* editorials embraced the wholesale application of America's past military and political approach to Indians to its treatment of Filipinos. Several editorials defined the political status of the Philippines by referring to the history of the U.S. western territories. One writer insisted: "When the rati-

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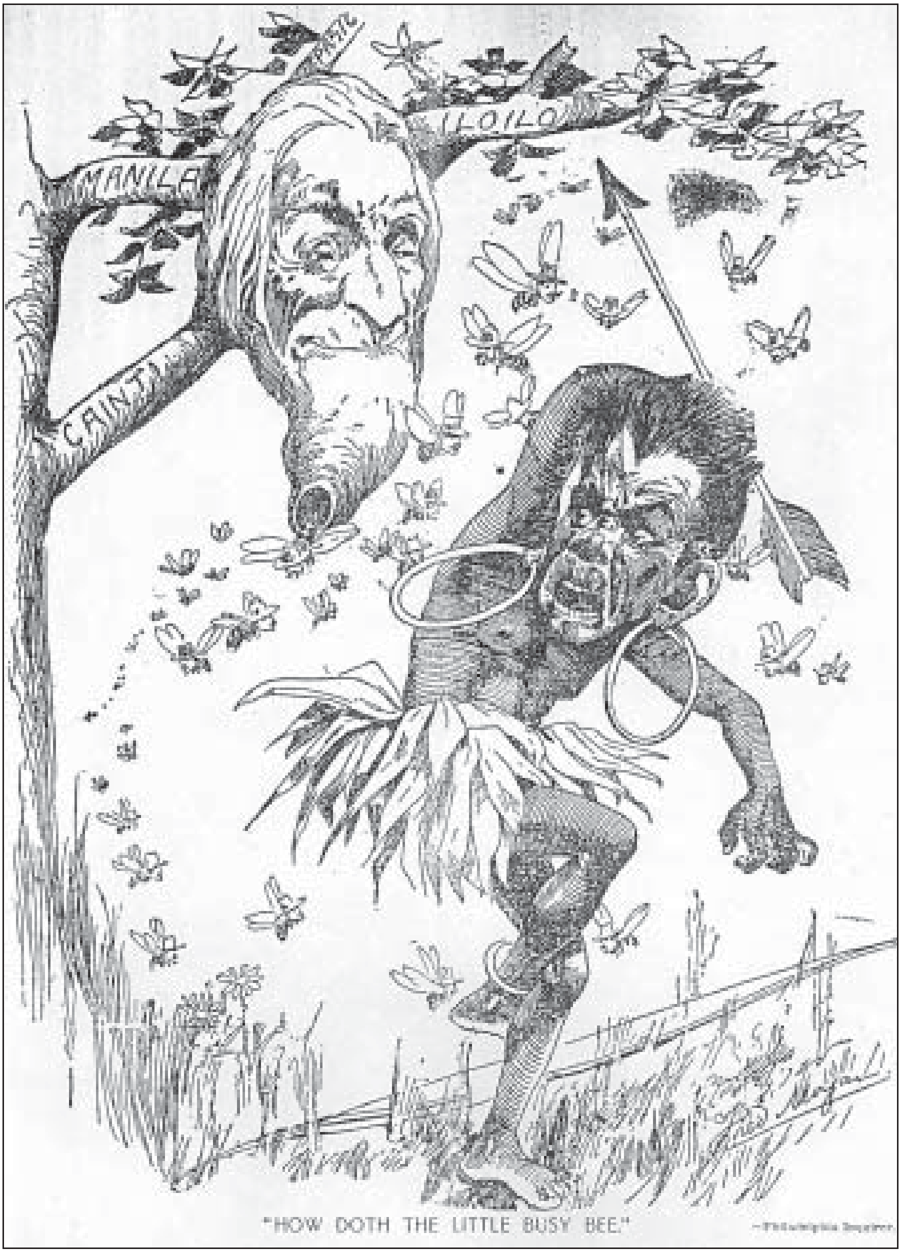

In this March 25, 1899, cartoon from the Oregonian, *Uncle Sam, in the form of a beehive, sends forth multitudes of winged soldiers to attack the now-familiar personification of the Philippine resistance. The branches behind the beehive are labeled with the names of U.S. military campaigns. The caption is drawn from Isaac Watts's didactic seventeenth-century poem "How Doth the Little Busy Bee." The cartoonist compares the U.S. military to the busy bee, who is able to "Improve each shining hour . . . in works of labor and in skill." The Filipinos are offered as proof of the poem's aphorism that "Satan finds some Mischief still / For Idle hands to do."*

fication of the treaty is formally completed, the president will have the same obligation to stamp out the insurrection of Aguinaldo with the armed heel of war that we would have in any other American territory for which no definitive form of government has been provided by Congress.” He suggested that the United States should follow the precedent of taking the sons of “Native Chiefs” to Washington “in order to educate them by object lessons to [have] respect for and dread of the ‘Great White Father.’ ”[18]

Oregon soldiers often thought of their Filipino enemies as Indian, but they just as frequently thought of them as black. In the 1890s, the African American population of Oregon was very small, but the racial divide between black and white was a dominant feature of the national and regional culture. On the eve of the Civil War, Oregon had been founded as a white state; and at the time of the Philippine War, the Oregon Constitution still barred blacks from residence.[19] The 1880s had been a period of “white redemption” in the South and of general acquiescence to the marginalization of African Americans in the political and economic life of the nation.[20] James Clarke’s study of race and violence shows the widespread acceptance of the torture and lynching of supposed black criminals in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In addition to African Americans, “only Indians were treated as brutally in the West, and for the same reason: they were not white.” Though the lynching of blacks may have been a rare occurrence in Oregon, Clarke’s work demonstrates the general acceptance of lynching in the national press and the prevalence of phrases such as “negro barbeque” to describe it.[21] Phrases such as “nigger hunting,” which occur frequently in the personal papers of Oregon soldiers in the Philippines, are not so different from the phrases used by Americans at home to describe racially motivated mob violence.

The personal papers of members of the Oregon Volunteers indicate that they burned villages, killed prisoners and civilians, impressed labor gangs, and looted the countryside. Read a century later, the soldiers’ candid accounts may shock us, but they also raise many questions. For example, how did the soldiers from the American Northwest describe their enemies and justify their conduct toward them? How is it that in the months between the summer of 1898 and the spring of 1899 they came to view Filipinos with such visceral hatred? To understand these soldiers, one must consider the fear and uncertainty they experienced fighting in an unknown land. In an overwhelmingly complex war and cultural environment, a few simple notions about the world provided them some sense of certainty and security. They, like

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LA MARINA
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The Pasig River was a vital water route between Manila and the interior. In the spring of 1899, a number of Oregon Volunteers served under General Lloyd Wheaten in a campaign up the Pasig River that sought to sever communications and supply lines between northern and southern insurgent groups. Wheaten's scorched-earth tactics included destroying most human settlements and vast tracts of agricultural land between Manila and Laguna de Bay.

other late nineteenth-century white Americans, found their mandate to conquer in an ideology of racial and cultural superiority. They saw themselves as soldiers fighting to spread civilization against those who opposed it. So strong was their need to justify this struggle in racial terms that they were able to assign and reassign racial identities to their enemies in order to justify the needs of the moment. When the Filipinos were allies or bystanders, the Oregon soldiers ascribed to them a variety of different racial identities; but once they became enemies, the Oregon soldiers could view the Filipinos only as Indians or blacks. Under the pressure of combat, Oregon soldiers quickly adopted a cruel, if not genocidal, attitude toward the entire Filipino population.

Oregonians volunteered for the war in the spring of 1898, sometimes out patriotism and sometimes out of personal ambition but rarely out of political conviction. For the American soldiers, the Philippines was a blank slate, an unknown frontier. They received no books, maps, or instruction

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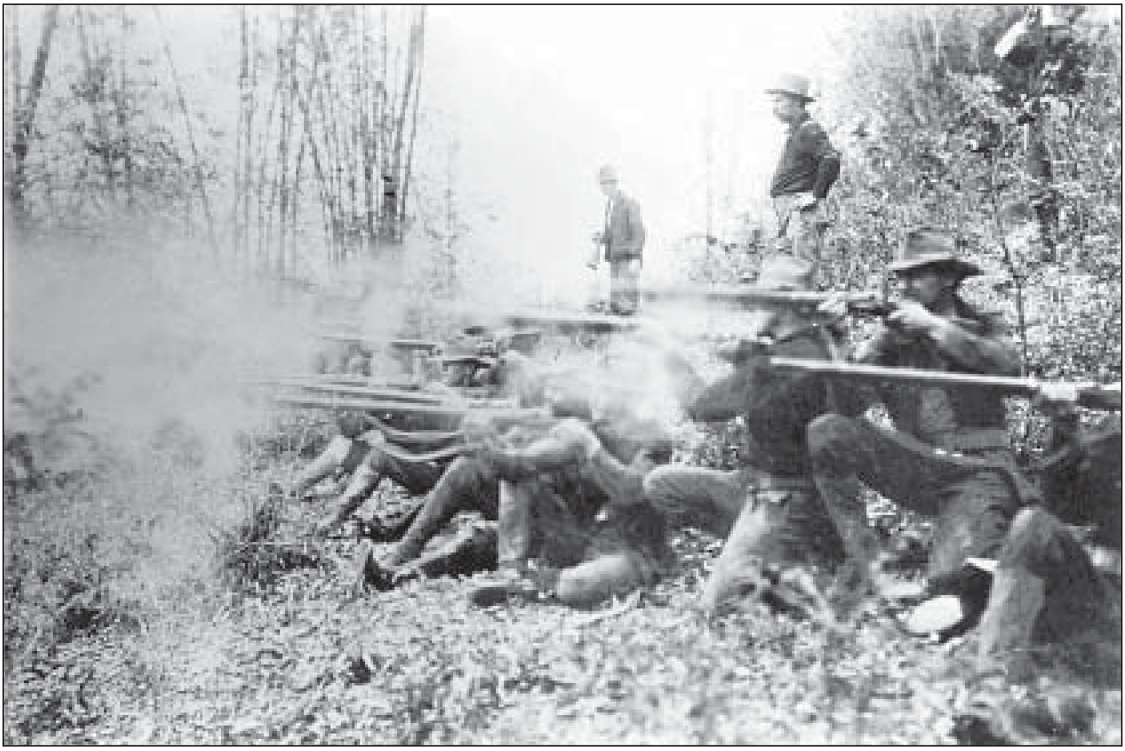


This photograph shows members of Company L of the Second Oregon Volunteers at the Battle of Pasig, a market town about five miles from Manila. The clouds of smoke visible in this photo were a liability often mentioned by the Oregon troops. Both the insurgents and the U.S. regular army carried repeating rifles that fired smokeless powder cartridges. The Oregon Volunteers carried single-shot Springfield rifles, which fired black powder and betrayed the soldiers' position with a burst of white smoke.

on the Philippines, and their early correspondence and diary entries from Cavite and Manila reveal considerable confusion about the country. Nineteen-year-old George Newell, for example, was surprised that the Filipinos "speak a langurage [*sic*] of their own" even though "the Country an[d] climate is almost the same as Centrial [*sic*] America, [and] the natives dress and look the same." The *Soldier's Letter*, a newspaper for servicemen in Manila, proclaimed: "Now that it has become universally known that there are such things as the Philippine Islands, we may look to see Manila . . . making rapid strides toward the front in the commercial world." The story that even President McKinley had needed assistance to locate the Philippines on a map was widely believed by soldiers.[22]

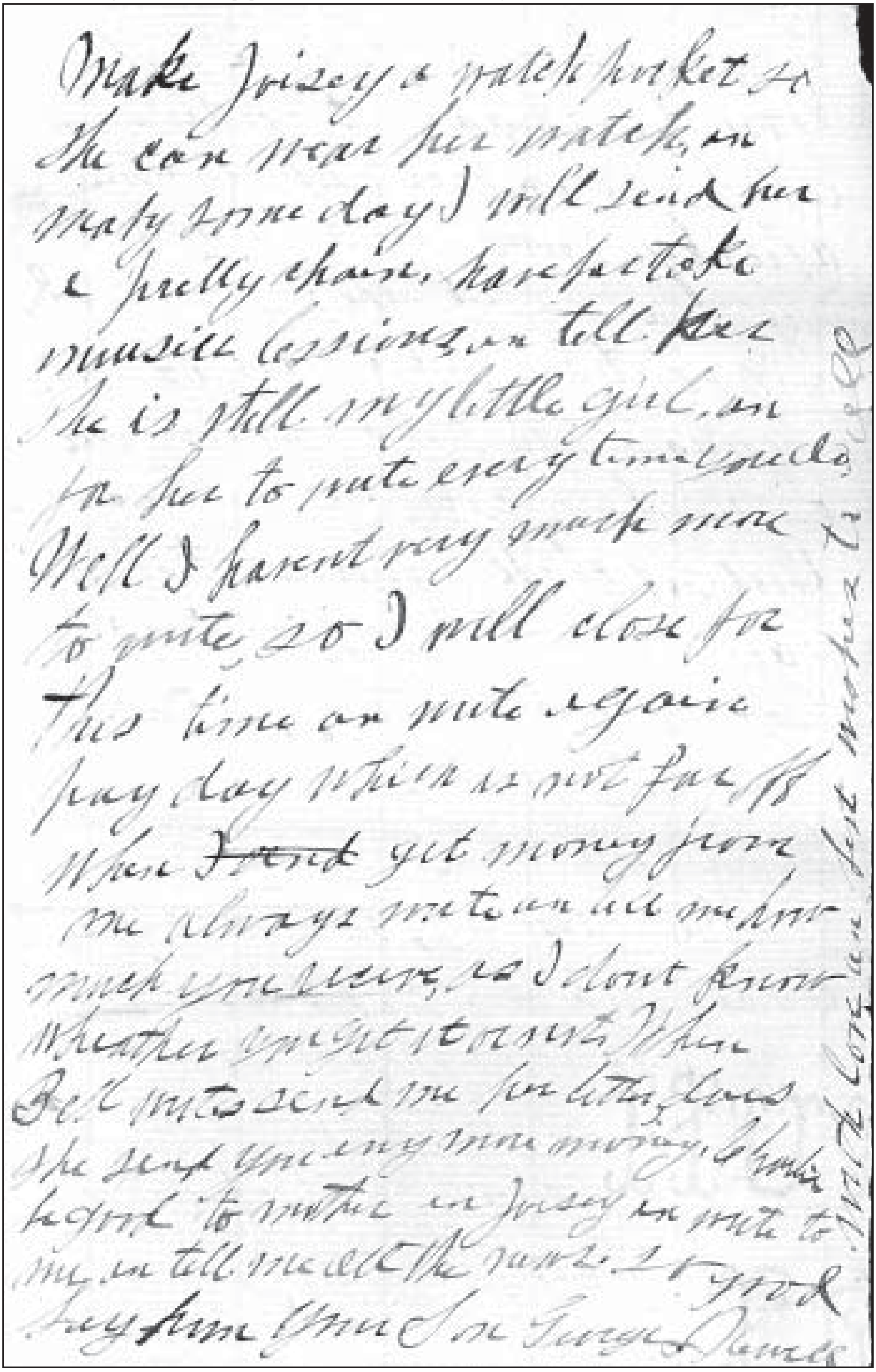
The soldiers' first encounter with Pacific Islanders was a friendly visit to Hawai'i en route to the Philippines. When the expedition reached Honolulu on June 1, 1898, Oregon soldiers were given a warm reception by American expatriates and local Hawaiians. Private Albert M. Southwick noted that the "natives . . . are much better looking people than we expected to see and seem to be quite intelligent."[23] On his second day ashore, Corporal Chriss A. Bell wrote: "the Kanakas are lazy good natured folk not unlike our Indians or a cross between an Indian or Negroe." They were attractive and pleasant, he judged, but they "have no moral[s]."[24] Bell had a similar response to his first encounters with Filipinos.

A few weeks later, on June 30, American ships entered Manila Bay, and the Oregon Volunteers had their first glimpse of Filipinos. Southwick classed them among Asian races and set down the following: "The natives are all around the ship this morning in their canoes trying to sell their fruit chickens and eggs. . . . they look a good deal like chinese only darker." From the deck of the ship, he observed: "The insurgents are busy here alright they have been burning the outlying part of Manilla [*sic*] for some time. . . . they have an engagement every day with the Spanish troops."[25]

U.S. soldiers spent June and July besieging the Spanish at Manila; but the one-day conquest of the city, on August 13, was so swift and bloodless that the Oregon Volunteers were mere spectators. In the occupation that followed, U.S. troops administered and guarded the city while the Philippine insurgents occupied the suburbs. The relations between the two armies soon soured, however, and many American soldiers anticipated the outbreak of war, although a tense peace persisted until February 1899. The daily experiences of soldiers during those months were very different from those they later faced in combat. Most of the time, the Second Oregon Volunteer Infantry was assigned guard duty or carried out municipal administrative functions, and the soldiers' diary entries and letters read like they were written by ordinary travelers abroad. The men described local customs and conditions and wrote about food, lodging, and vice. The soldiers provided what might be termed informal ethnographic commentary as they described, categorized, and evaluated the residents of Manila.

The articles in the first issue of the *Soldier's Letter* were similar to the exotic travel writing popular in the United States at the time. The lead article described the citizens of Manila as "heterogeneous, being composed of natives and mestizas ('half-breeds'), Chinese, Europeans and Americans." The writer struggled to describe a city that he considered to be both sophisticated and primitive. He described the old quarter as "medieval" and the new quarter as "just awakening from a slumber of the ages." This perspective was also evident in the diary of Chriss Bell, who described Manila's ancient "grandeur," its state of decay, and its "modern speed."[26]

MSS 2550, George Lemon Newell papers, 1898–1901, OHS Research Library



Make Joisey a watch pocket so
she can wear her watch, an
maby some day I will send her
a pretty chaine, have her to take
music lessions, an tell her
she is still my little girl, an
for her to write every time you do
Well I havent very much more
to write so I will close for
this time an write again
some day which is not far off
When ~~I send~~ get money from
me always return an tell me how
much you recive, so I dont know
whether you get it or not. When
Bell writes send me her letters, does
she sent you eny more money. Thanks
be good to mother an Joisey an write to
me an tell me all the news. so good
bye from your Son George Newell

With love an best wishes to all

This letter from George Newell is part of an extensive OHS Research Library collection of correspondence from Oregon Volunteer soldiers in 1898 and 1899.

The *Soldier's Letter* categorized the locals according to American standards of civilization: cleanliness, commerce, order, and race. Here, class seemed to be just as important as race. Chinese and Filipinos were divided by class: "those who are grovelling in the lowest depths of civilization — (those who merely exist but have not yet learned to live — such as the 'coolies' and illiterate Filipinos)" and "the wealthy Chinese merchants" and "educated Filipinas."[27] Seemingly confused by the complexity of Manila's population, both journalists and common soldiers found confirmation for the prevailing cultural theories of their generation. The Filipino primitives were at the lowest rung of the social ladder, lacking all the gifts of civilization, and Chinese day-laborers received the same estimate. More acceptable were the Chinese merchants, the educated (Hispanicized) Filipinos, and the Spaniards.

Officers George Telfer and Charles Henry Martin also attempted to understand the population of the Philippines according to a racial taxonomy.[28] Telfer listed four distinct races: "The Malay, the Spaniard, the Philipeno [*sic*] (mixture of Chinese & Malay) and a light colored race — a mixture of Spanish and Malay."[29] Oregon soldiers were clearly influenced by popular theories on race, culture, climate, and color. In the early days of occupation, praise for the beauty of the people — particularly women and children — was common. "This population is as perfect a physique as any race I have seen," Telfer wrote in July 1898. "They are quick of thought and action."[30] In a later letter, he explained his emerging notion of Philippine race taxonomy:

> I send by this mail two photos — intended to show two types common to Manila. The Mestiza — is a mixture of Spanish and native — usually some Chinese blood as well. The picture shows the dress to perfection — but the face is not as beautiful as some. The Spanish woman has a large, sharp, pointed nose. The Mongolian in the Mestiza shows by the flatter nose — making a perfect feature. The other picture shows the Fillipina or Tagal type — from which Mestiza is bred. The Mestiza is very light skinned — but black hair and eyes. The men (Mestizo) are very handsome.[31]

Before the outbreak of war in February 1899, Oregon soldiers commented frequently on the Filipinos' pleasing appearance and physical vigor. They also had a tolerant eye for the mixing of races, and several remarked on the beauty and sophistication of the Hawaiian and the Filipino families formed from mixed parentage. From Honolulu, Telfer described a local notable: "Mrs. Humphrey is a sister of Mrs. Whitehead — the Chinese lady who married the naval officer & created such a sensation a year ago. Her father was Chinese Minister here. She has some of the look of a Japanese. She is very much of a lady."[32] Apparently, such marriages among military men, though out of the ordinary, were not unheard of. Oregon soldier Willis Arthur Platts wrote favorably of Captain Wilkinson, his Chinese wife, and their son, George, who "looks like any Mexican boy. Very cute."[33]

Sometimes the Americans associated the superior physical or cultural traits of the mestizos with the people of China or Japan, even while distinguishing the civilized Chinese and Japanese from the "chino" laborers of the United States. The Americans' experiences at home had left them with an opinion of the Chinese as mysterious people, with no regard for what they considered proper standards of cleanliness and order. Yet, they saw the Chinese as clever and resourceful in business and had some notion of Asian civilization as ancient and impressive. Oregon soldiers drew on all of these impressions in categorizing and describing the Chinese and mestizo populations of the Philippines. Albert Southwick's letters to his family, for example, use a palette of American images to illustrate his understanding of Manila: "[There are] business houses that compare favorably with our own at home but the Chinese have the upper hand. . . . they are not like the Chinese at home and must have come from a different part of China. Some of them are very large over 6ft and well built." While noting their prominent position in Manila's commerce, Southwick explained that the businesses "kept by the Chinese . . . are dark and dirty like those at home only more so."[34]

American soldiers distinguished between the Chinese engaged in commerce and those whom they saw as common laborers, much like railroad workers and porters in the United States. The use of forced Chinese labor by the American military in the Philippines was common, and Oregon soldiers expressed no surprise at the practice. Oregon Volunteer H.C. Thompson reported that his comrades in the Second Oregon conscripted "Chinos" at gunpoint to carry their supplies. George Telfer insisted that "in a country where Chinamen abound & where they carry everything — & where wages are low — it seems absurd to punish soldiers by making them beasts of burden."[35]

Charles Henry Martin, who would become governor of Oregon in 1935, was far from charitable in his description of the people of Manila. For him, industriousness and cleanliness were essential to civilization, and he judged that those qualities were sorely lacking in the Philippines. He wrote that the "worthless natives live about like the Chinese" but also that "the Chinese are about the only people who do any labor here. All the Philopinos [*sic*] are a lazy, shiftless set who would rather steal than work." He concluded that when the Filipinos eat they look "like so many animals."

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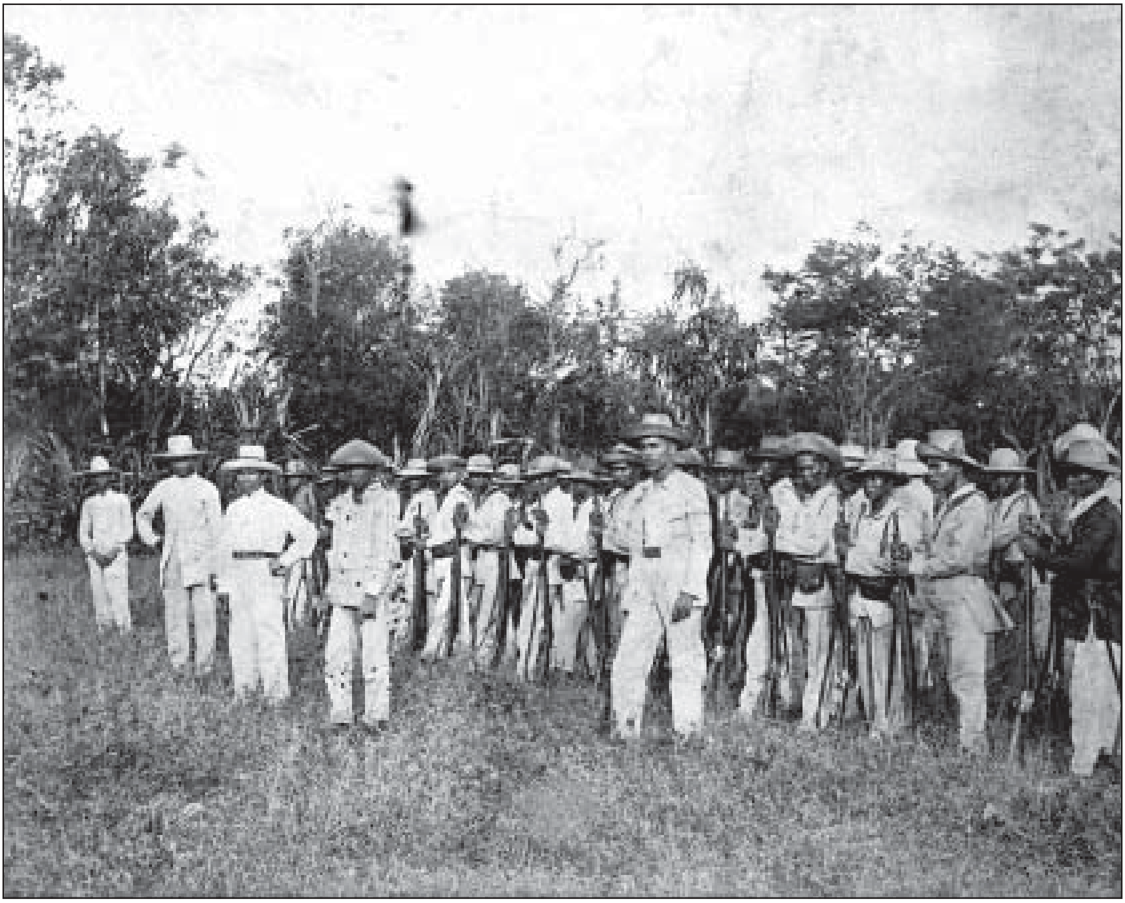
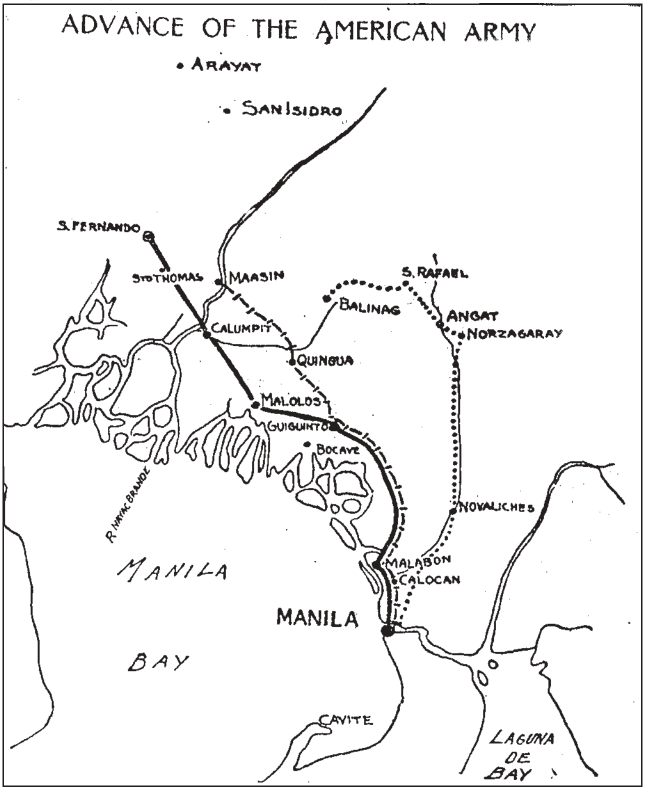


Although cartoonists often represented insurgents as stone-age archers wearing only leaves or loincloths, this photograph taken at the time shows the typical dress and armaments of the Filipinos: Spanish-style clothing and Remington rifles.

To Martin, the natives were indolent, the Chinese filthy but hard working, and the Spanish only a bit better: "none of the Spanish contingent here know how to live. Perhaps a few of the English may live tolerably well."[36]

George Telfer, a devoted family man, wrote frequently to his wife and children, and their welfare was ever-present in his mind. During the months of waiting in Manila, he appeared to have a soft spot for the Spanish and Filipino families in the city. In July 1898, for example, after dining with one family, he praised the food and music and remarked that their "manners are enough of the latin race to be pleasing — but backed by greater depth of feeling which makes you like them." He wrote about his neighbors and the families that he saw in public places in the same affectionate tone. While he had plenty of criticism for Spanish administration, commerce, *Oregonian*, May 6, 1899, OHS Research Library


ADVANCE OF THE AMERICAN ARMY
ARAYAT
SAN ISIDRO
S. FERNANDO
STO THOMAS
MAASIN
S. RAFAEL
BALINAG
ANGAT
NORZAGARAY
CALUMPIT
QUINGUA
MALOLOS
GUIGUINTO
BOCAVE
R NAYAC GRANDE
NOVALICHES
MALABON
CALOCAN
MANILA BAY
MANILA
CAVITE
LAGUNA DE BAY

From August 1898 to February 1899, the Second Oregon Vounteer Infantry's duties were limited to Manila and its immediate environs. Between March and May, separate companies of the Oregon Volunteers served in campaigns to the north that sought to seize control of the Manila-Dagupan railway, destroy the insurgents' capital at Malolos, and pin down and destroy the Filipino army. To the south, several companies of Oregonians served in the campaign to control the Pasig River from Manila Bay to Laguna de Bay and to cut off communications and supply lines between insurgents on both sides.

and education, he maintained that "Spanish children and Spanish mothers are the same as American children and American mothers."[37]

Telfer was fond of quoting Rudyard Kipling and shared that writer's paternalistic attitude toward colonized people.[38] He was fascinated by the idea of racial characteristics and subscribed to contemporary notions of them. He believed that Anglo-Saxon peoples had a historical mandate for benevolent leadership. Like Kipling, he was fond of "native children," even seeking their company as a diversion from his monotonous duties. "One of my sources of amusement are the native children," he wrote. "They are like the darkey babies — only smarter. . . . They have the negro features & white teeth. They are musical & catch all the popular airs."[39] During his months of civil duty, this romanticized, yet condescending pickaninny motif appears several times. "The native children have lots of fun," he wrote. "They are like the darkeys 'down south' — & can make fun out of anything. They stay out doors all day — & play all the time."[40]

Corporal Bell, who planned to return home and enter the legal profession after the war, wrote in his diary from the time the *Australia* arrived in Guam in June 1898 until his departure a year later. While stationed in Manila after its capture, Bell made social visits to affluent Spanish families. He wrote in September 1898: “There was a number of young folks from babies up. Had a pleasant time especially with the little girls and boys.” Although his attitude toward Spaniards was warm, he viewed them as a people in decline and described them in language that communicated a sense of decadence and degeneration. He praised the architectural works of the Spanish, but noted that “there is a general air of ancient grandeur gone to decay.” Likewise, he observed: “Once in a while are seen a Spanish woman that is very handsome but they seem to decay early.” Though he had no high regard for the Spanish army as a fighting force, Bell found that they were “decent fellows and treat us fine.”[41]

When the war began, Bell was a fairly evenhanded observer. He judged the relative strengths and weakness of the two armies and found the American force to be far superior, yet his comments show no racial hostility. In the first days of the war, for example, he wrote: “The natives are but poor fighters & do not understand our style of charging under fire.” He described the first American advance this way: “Natives were killed by the hundreds. They did so much shooting from bamboo huts that an order came to fire the huts as the men advanced. This was done & men, women and children suffered.” Bell was also concerned by the callous treatment of Filipinos in Manila as the war began: “In [the] evening two natives were shot within 30 feet of me apparently [there was] no cause as neither of them had any sort of weapon.”[42] Soon, however, Bell and his fellow soldiers would cease to be troubled by such incidents.

When Spanish forces surrendered Manila to the U.S. troops in August 1898, they did so, in part, to avert conquest and occupation by the Philippine army that had laid siege to the city. American troops soon understood that their mission had shifted to the protection of Spanish lives and property, and the soldiers believed that a lapse in American vigilance would result in the uncontrolled looting of the city by Aguinaldo’s troops. As early as the end of August, Charles Henry Martin thought that the U.S. was “almost at hostilities with the insurgents who hate us almost as much as they did the Spanish troops. They were dreaming for months of the gold and riches they would get on the fall of the city & the fun they would have in cutting the throats of their old enemies.” The notion that U.S. troops were now defending the Spaniards against the barbarians at the gates was widely held. Albert Southwick later recalled that “the insurgents expected we would allow them to come into the city and loot the stores and houses.” Though he was far from the fighting and not entirely correct in his understanding of events, George Lemon Newell was certain that on the day Manila was taken "the rebles [*sic*] an[d] natives begun to pillange [*sic*] and we had to stop them." Willis Arthur Platts, during the first week inside the walls, reported with some anxiety that "an attack by natives is feared, so we all sleep under arms."[43] The American soldiers in Manila, perhaps especially Oregon soldiers charged with guard duty, shared the feeling that civilization was under siege. The Spanish — and even the Hispanicized Chinese and Filipinos in the city — were now understood as allies against the threat from without.

Albert Southwick did not develop a hostile attitude toward the Filipinos until after the U.S. capture of Manila, when there were disputes over the zones of occupation. As his attitude changed, so did his racial classification of the Filipinos. "Next time they get into a fight," he wrote, "there will be quite a funeral of black men."[44] Southwick showed contempt for the Filipinos and believed that the "insurgents expected we would allow them to come into the city and loot the stores and houses," but there were few major conflicts between the two armies during that period and his letters contain few references to the insurgents through the fall of 1898.[45] When he did write about the Philippine soldiers, he described them as "natives" or "insurgents."

In January, during the same weeks that Telfer described the growing anxiety and bellicosity of the guards, Southwick turned his attention to the Filipino character: "The natives still keep up their reputation for treachery, and have knifed two sentrys [*sic*] this last week . . . but there were two 'Filipino' funerals as a consequence."[46] With the outbreak of war in February, Southwick's correspondence focused almost exclusively on military matters. He saw combat sooner than Telfer did, but his letter demonstrates the same sudden shift in the characterization of the Filipinos. In his first account of battle, Southwick referred to Filipinos as "niggers" — a term he had never used before.

In the midst of combat, Filipinos — whether they were enemies under arms, the wounded, the dead, or civilians — no longer looked "like chinese," to Southwick, as they had eight months before; they were now "niggers." Upon first seeing the enemy dead up close, Southwick wrote without further comment: "found 2 wounded 'niggers' and 7 dead ones." In the entries that follow, it becomes clear that Southwick came to believe that all Filipinos were enemies, and he noted with disgust that he and his companions kept finding "niggers" who claimed to be "amigo philipino [*sic*]." The American soldiers treated the civilians as enemies, heedless of protestations to the contrary, and either executed them or used them for forced labor.

Southwick's men made a general attack on all people and property within the area of their military operations. The following passages are typical: "the 'nigs' were so well hidden and using smokeless powder, it was almost impossible to find any of them, but we filled the trees and bushes full of lead. . . . and sent a shot into every clump of bushes and houses thick leaved trees, or anything that looked like a place for a 'nigger' to hide." It is clear that Southwick often feared for his life in the heat of battle, but it is also clear that he enjoyed certain aspects of war. Among his favorite activities were what he called "nigger hunting," "foraging," and hunting for "curios" and "relics" — that is, tracking down and killing Filipino enemies and looting the area for food, drink, and valuables.[47] In war, Southwick considered his enemies black, savage, and undeserving of the protections of civilization.

Southwick's desire to understand U.S. allies as civilized and the nation's enemies as savage is so pronounced that in the spring of 1899 he made some subtle ethnographic distinctions between two indigenous groups. In explaining the situation to his family, he first wrote: "there are several distinct tribes on this island. Only one of which [the Tagalogs] are connected to this insurrection." These are the people that Southwick called "niggers." The Macabebes, who were hostile to the Tagalogs and whom the U.S. was using as scouts, were "probably the most civilized."[48] This is a fascinating reassessment. Before the outbreak of hostilities with the Philippine independence movement, Southwick had followed the usual convention of associating civilization with urbanization and westernization. By this standard, the Tagalogs, who were the largest Philippine ethnic group in the city of Manila, would have been the most civilized. Yet, as enemies, Southwick came to regard them as barbarians, even while seeing the Macabebe tribesmen as a promising, "civilized" group.

Following the outbreak of the war, George Telfer considered the Filipino troops to be crafty and dishonest, noting that the enemies who fought in one night's engagement appeared in the guise of friends the following morning. Yet, he neither glossed over the faults of the American army nor demonized the enemy and reported that in the first battle of the war the "natives . . . fought stubbornly & surprisingly well." In mid-March, however, when he was reassigned from civil administration and guard duty to field command, Telfer's attitude toward the war and the Filipinos changed dramatically. Telfer continued his civil duties in Manila as a judge advocate, becoming all the while more frustrated with the situation. He observed symptoms of ongoing tension

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'Nipa Houses, Philippines'
168

Outside of Manila, most Filipinos lived in simple houses thatched with nipa, a type of palm, as shown in this image from a postcard. American forces frequently burned entire villages to the ground in order to deny aid and shelter to insurgents.

and declining standards of humanity in the other men: "We still 'don't fight.' We kill a man or so every night, but that is poor satisfaction. The men [on guard duty] are getting so ugly that they use great deliberation in aiming at any person they desire to stop."[49]

Telfer had begun his military career as a member of the Minnesota National Guard and had served in the suppression of two Indian uprisings — experiences that helped shaped his attitude toward the Philippine War. In the letters he wrote during the summer and fall of 1898, he never likened the Filipinos to Indians or referred to the Indian wars; but in mid-January, as tensions between the Philippine and the American armies approached the boiling point, he began to analyze the situation through the lens of his own experiences. He was annoyed that because no official state of war existed between the Filipinos and Americans, the troops were not permitted to engage Aguinaldo's army: "You know this is one of the annoying things about our system of government. It was always so with the Indians. The officers of the army would know that the Indians were preparing for an outbreak — but the authorities at Washington would order 'hands off.' "[50]

Once involved in the war against Filipinos, it did not take long for Telfer to return to the methods he had once used against American Indians. In a letter recounting his first day in the field, Telfer reported the strategy and movements of forces with dispassionate precision. On the second day, his troops looted the area of their deployment with clean consciences: "So we all enjoy life. Yesterday the men went on a foraging expedition and have been living on chicken, eggs ducks & young pigs." In March, during a break in the fighting at Laguna Bay, Telfer worried about his "chances of standing off any stray party of Indians." When he saw enemies face-to-face, he called them "niggers," but he called unseen attackers from the jungle "Indians." In the middle of a grueling advance, he wrote: "I wet my handkerchief & washed my face & cooled my head. Then I considered my chances of standing off any stray party of Indians who might seek to gather me in. . . . I had not used my revolver, so had a belt full of ammunition & decided that they would have a hard time getting me." After rising from his rest, Telfer wrote: "We burned every house we passed."[51]

Telfer and about two dozen men helped carry out a loosely coordinated campaign to root out the Philippine army and its supporters. They sometimes fought against regular formations across open fields, trenches, or simple fortifications, but most battles were brief skirmishes in a long war of terror against the local population. Like the Indian wars in the American West, the campaign was not a tidy war of position. It required the intimidation of a large number of people to prevent civilians from giving aid and comfort to the Philippine army. When not in battle, Telfer's men displaced villagers and looted their homes or seized homes and forced the owners to act as servants.[52]

Between engagements, Oregon troops tried to root out small bands of adversaries in what most referred to as "nigger hunts." Telfer, who had never before used that word to describe Filipinos, adopted it to describe his enemies during this campaign. It is clear that his humanitarian standards began to change as well. While he had once been critical of the trigger-happy guards, Telfer's accounts of battles in March and April show no remorse over the enemy dead or for battlefield executions: "I remember jumping trenches — seeing mangled bodies, writhing figures, and hearing groans — seeing blood everywhere. But through it all but one line of thought was in my mind — 'Guide right.' 'Preserve touch.' 'Advance' 'Lay Down' 'Forward'—'Kill' 'Kill' — 'Take no prisoners.' — Then dropping — out of breath and panting." The fear and confusion of battle is palpable in his letters. Even in moments of relative safety, Telfer desired a war of extermination, and his cynical amusement can be chilling. In a letter to his wife,

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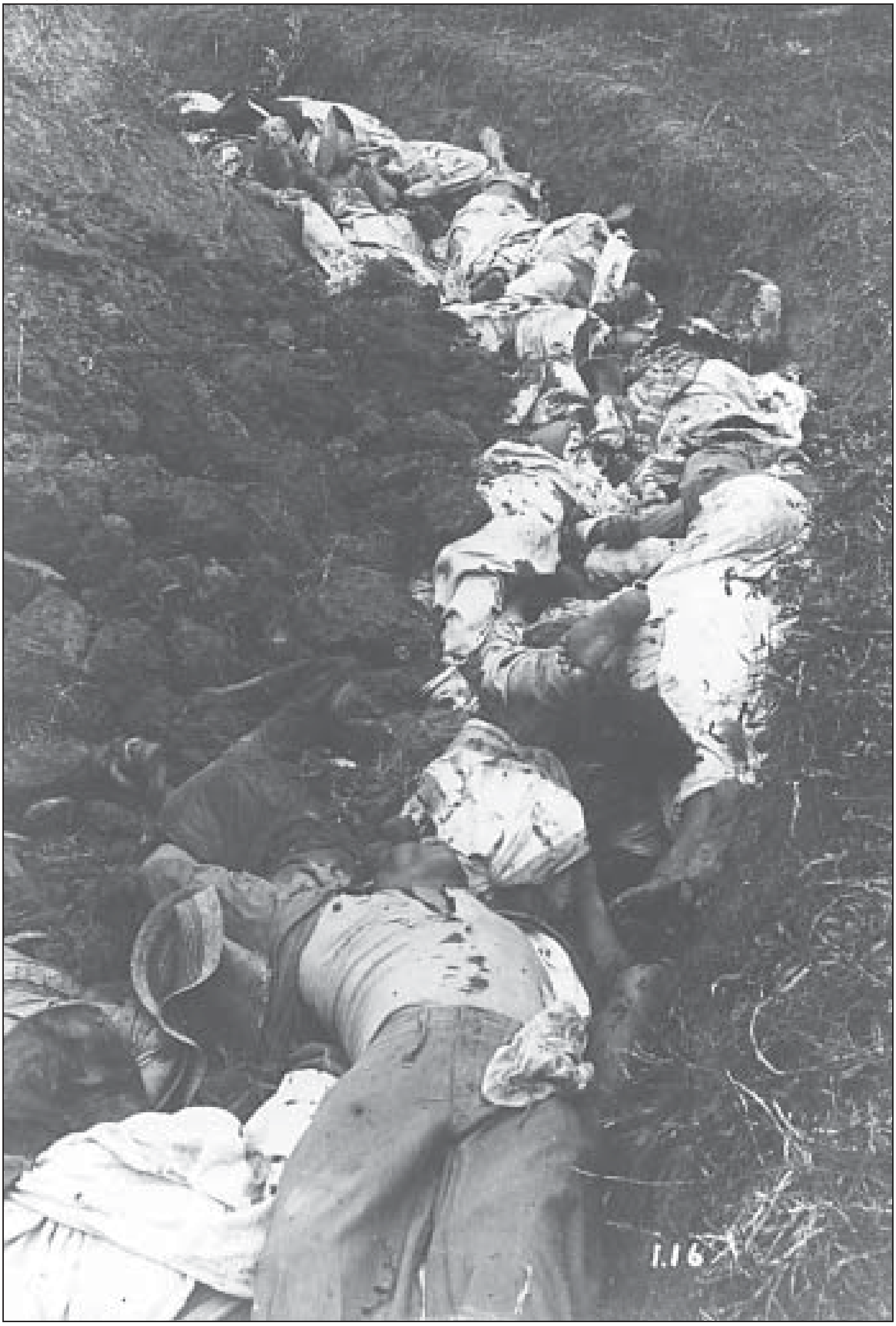

This photograph of some of the casualties of the Philippine War — probably Philippine insurgents — is one of many images in the OHS Research Library that document the conflict..

Telfer described his daily routine without apology: "We perform no duty during the day — but put out pickets at night. Scouting parties are made up from volunteers — every now and then. It is great fun for the men to go on 'nigger hunts.' The air would be delightful were it not for the odor from dead niggers which have been left unburied. . . . We received some Krg-Jorgenson [*sic*] rifles today. So now we can reach Mr. Nig. at his own distance."[53]

By April, Chriss Bell had been subjected to tough combat conditions and his attitude had hardened. Though he had once worried about the fate of the local population, he now wrote that the Filipinos "have caused so much trouble & murdered so many of our boys that they [U.S. soldiers] recognize them no longer but shoot on sight all natives. Natives will not or cannot understand kind & civilized treatment. If you treat them as equals they will think you are afraid of them & murder you." He justified the abandonment of ordinary codes of war on the grounds that the natives fought "contrary to all civilized warfare." By May, Bell had been through terrifying combat experiences that cemented his sense of racial hostility, and his reports of battle casualties reflected this new outlook: "About 700 niggers attacked MacArthur in the fore noon. . . . there were about 100 niggers killed and wounded." Bell's diary entries show the connection between visceral fear and race-hatred: "[They] warned us the gugus were in front . . . the gugus opened fire their aim was poor. . . . We could see but few gugus though they could see us and as we came through the field the range was good and bullets whistled all around. . . . [I] was sick to my stomach & puked but would rather have been shot than quit."[54]

As an observer to the battles surrounding Manila in early February, Willis Arthur Platts believed American brutality was warranted by the Filipinos' violations of civilized conventions of warfare: "They say our boys raised the cry of no quarter (am glad of it) and disregarded their numerous white flags because of many treacherous deeds."[55] Though Platts was unconcerned by battlefield executions of enemy soldiers, he evinced no real hostility toward ordinary Filipinos.[56] By the end of the month, however, he found himself in the middle of the kind of warfare that he had observed from the walls of Manila. In the first description of "street fighting," Platts abandoned all moral distinction between the killing of male combatants and noncombatants, although he still showed remorse for the death of women and children:

> [We] would fire into a house and when the natives would run fire at them and generally they tumbled. Fired each house after we had looted it and driven the women

and children back. . . . Grover Todd and myself fired each about 8 shots into the bottom of a hut about 3 feet from the ground then ran forward and breaking open the doors rushed in to find 2 men and 3 women all unhurt. They had lain flat on the ground and our bullets went over them, am glad now that they did. . . . before the fight was over had to witness the painful sight of many a women shot.[57]

Platts did not describe his first battles as race conflicts, but his accumulated combat experiences wore down his original sense of war ethics. His entries became increasingly callous with hard experience. At the end of the day described above, Platts concluded that "estimates of the days work are natives lost in killed and wounded 150. Amer. 2 killed and 4 wounded, near 1000 native huts burned and a good time for all." His combat statistics in no way distinguished between enemy soldiers and civilian Filipinos. A few days later, he noted without concern that "nearly all of the Regts are foraging now, have chickens, pigs and anything else they want . . . [they take any] carriage that they see and make it their own, houses and buildings are looted and burned as they go. . . . every native carries a pole with a white flag on it." From this point forward, Platts described killing Filipinos in the same terms he used to describe killing animals for sport. Working in

This poem by Katharine Lee Bates, the author of "America the Beautiful," was written in response to the war against the Philippine insurgents in 1899.

In the Philippines
by Katharine Lee Bates

Silvery rice-fields whisper wide
How for home and freedom their owners died.

We've set the torch to their bamboo town,
And out they come in a scampering rush,
Little brown men with spears.
Shoot!
Down they go in a crush,
Sickening smears,
Hideous writhing huddles and heaps
Under the palms and the mango-trees.
More, still more! Shoot 'em down
Like brown jack-rabbits that scoot
With comical leaps
Out of the brush.
No loot?
No prisoners, then. As for these—
Hush!

The flag that dreamed of delivering
Shudders and droops like a broken wing.

Silvery rice-fields whisper wide
How for home and freedom their owners died.

From *America the Beautiful and Other Poems* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1911).

coordination with a boat crew armed with Gatling guns, Platts and his comrades moved north from Manila toward the enemy capital at Malolos, "killing and burning all we meet." He remarked frequently on the good fun had by the Oregon soldiers: "All the boys are contented and happy. . . . killed a couple hundred ducks and chickens today." The soldiers spent their free time looting, swimming, and shooting at dogs and birds for sport.[58]

In mid-March, after surveying a field of wounded and dead enemy soldiers, Platts's commitment to total war crystallized: "After seeing this I can have no pity for the natives." In his diary, Platts never again betrayed any thought of compassion for the Filipinos. The shift in racial categorization observable in other soldiers' writings appears in the next entry of Platts' diary: "niggers attempted to cross the bridge but was met by a terrific fire from Lieut. Kelly's Platoon." Following the rout at the bridge, Platts reported: "The boys of our little camp were so encouraged about it that they scattered out and burned every house anywhere near and whenever 'an amigo' showed up generally put him to sleep . . . I know of quite a number they killed, even shot at many myself."[59] By April, the "natives" had become "niggers" and even those who proclaimed themselves "amigos" were the enemy. For Platts, all villages were reasonable military targets and anyone fleeing from a burning home could and should be shot.

Oregon soldier Elliot Rodgers left behind a journal of his combat experiences in April and May 1899. Because the diary contains no earlier entries, it is not certain what his attitude toward the Filipinos was prior to combat, but his entries during the spring campaigns provide valuable information about his thoughts on race during the fighting. Rodgers's descriptions of battles combined military and racial terminology, sometimes shifting between the two lexicons in mid-sentence: "the insurgents has some big guns but do not know how to use them. The negroes fell back and the brigade took the town." In another instance, he recounted the casualties in this way: "The coons attacked the Kansas regiment. . . . The Mon. & Kan. regiments went after the coons and killed about 100 and captured 30."[60]

The racial distinctions in Rodgers's writing show that his understanding of a man's race was determined by context and relationship more than by appearance, language, or custom. To Rodgers, a "coon" or a "negro" was, by definition, an enemy. This becomes especially clear in his description of the enemy soldiers as "Negroes" in contrast to friendly Filipinos whom he did not view as black. Consider this description of the Philippine army's attack on the town of San Fernando: "The report is the Negros [*sic*] killed a 1,000 Philipinoes [*sic*] & Chinese and threw them into the church before setting fire to it."[61] Somehow he was able to view pro-American, Chinese-Filipinos as "Chinese" and pro-American ethnic Filipinos as "Philipinoes"; those hostile to the U.S. occupation became "negroes."

For some, the association of Filipinos with American Indians derived from past experiences, but there were other roots as well. For Americans from the western United States, Indians were people under the authority of the United States but outside its civilization. They represented all things uncivilized and external to American culture. George Telfer, who so revered Kipling, saw America as a partner in a great Anglo-Saxon project to civilize the world. To him and Charles Henry Martin, America's conflict with the Spanish was a sideshow to the broader European objective of civilizing the world. The Spanish were incompetent allies, while the Philippine nationalists were the real enemy. In August 1898, Telfer wrote: "These Spaniards are really our best friends. . . . the natives have not a single virtue to redeem them. They are *infinitely* lower & viler than our own Indians."[62]

Of all the men to serve with Oregon Volunteers, Edward E. Kelly provided the most complete explanation of why soldiers associated Filipinos with American Indians. Kelly was a law school graduate and former telegraph operator from North Dakota who had volunteered in the Midwest for service in the war against Spain and was assigned to serve with the Oregon Volunteers because of his technical expertise in communications.[63] A special feature in the Chicago *Sunday Chronicle* lauded Kelly's accomplishments in battlefield cable communications and included an interview with Kelly on the course of the war and the future of the Philippines.

Kelly's understanding of U.S.-American Indian relations gave him a blueprint for understanding the war in the Philippines, and his description of the enemy might just as easily have been applied to Indian adversaries of previous decades. "The Tagalogs are warlike," he told reporters, "but they are also primitive and have had enough of us." He was confident that America was winning the war but cautious about the prospects for a stable peace. Kelly "is of the opinion," the writer reported, "that the backbone of the uprising has been broken, but does not hope that native tribes will accept civilization with reasonable speed if at all. He looks for years of predatory warfare like those which formerly raged on the borders of the United States with the Red men."[64]

Kelly understood the Philippines as a frontier territory of the United States and the inhabitants as primitive Indians, resistant to the inevitabil-

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One of the primary U.S. objectives in the spring of 1899 was to seize the city of Malolos, the headquarters of the provisional Philippine government. Most of the Second Oregon Volunteer Infantry served in this campaign. This photograph shows the street fighting that took place in the city of Malabon early in the campaign, as U.S. forces moved north from Manila toward Malalos. Churches, like the one visible in the background, were often used as temporary fortifications by both American and Philippine forces.

ity of American sovereignty and too uncivilized to trust or enfranchise. The natives were "lazy, savage, and little inclined to adopt new ideas. They would rather remain as they are than to improve." Departing from the genocidal vision of some of his peers, Kelly hoped that the Filipinos' assimilation of American culture would be the basis of their historical ascent. Kelly recommended an administrative policy modeled on the American reservation system and a military policy based on the Indian wars: "I am satisfied that it will be many years before any striking change will be noted. We are facing the same condition over there that we faced on our own frontiers for so long. The same treatment will be needed to train the Filipinos to the habits of civilization."[65]

Even young soldiers who had never fought in the wars against Indians in the American West drew on the experiences of their elders. George Newell, who was only nineteen when he enlisted, absorbed the ideas of his superiors: "General Oties [Otis] expects to subdue the Insurgents before long, but I think it will take at least 2 or 3 years. . . . I have heard officeres [*sic*] say that this is worse than any Indian fighting they ever seen."[66] It is clear that the soldiers described their role in the Philippines by analogy to the recent conquest of the American West — another territory inhabited by so-called uncivilized people of a different race. Yet, more soldiers used the term "nigger" than "Indian" in describing their enemies, suggesting that the soldiers' vision was rooted not just in the history of the West but also in the national history of race relations in the United States.

The contrast between black and white had dominated the discourse on race in America for well over two centuries. Oregon soldiers considered their own country to be inhabited by white citizens and Indian and black noncitizens. The broader world was composed of people like themselves, who were entitled to a political identity as citizens, and of so-called primitive races that were not so entitled. In January 1899, the *Oregonian* reprinted a story from the *New York Sun* that lampooned the idea of future citizenship for Filipinos. In its territorial expansion, the paper editorialized, the United States had always understood that the principle of "government by consent" applies only to self-governing races: "It would also be a waste of time to repeat that the consent of the governed does not mean historically the consent of all the governed."[67]

In mid-1899, as the Oregon Volunteers prepared to return home, the War Department decided to deploy its segregated black regiments to the Philippines. This decision created controversy within the department and the army, because some feared that the black troops would have a natural, racial affinity for the Filipinos that would be stronger than their loyalty to the U.S.[68] Given that American soldiers, journalists, and statesmen tended to view the war as a racial struggle, the decision to send African American soldiers to the Philippines provokes several interesting questions. For example, how were the black soldiers viewed by their white counterparts? How did the black soldiers view Filipinos? What was their perspective on colonial warfare? Willard B. Gatewood, Jr.'s *"Smoked Yankees" and the Struggle for Empire* is a collection of correspondence from black soldiers that shows the extent to which white soldiers placed African Americans and Filipinos in the same racial category. The correspondence also demonstrates that racial beliefs so dominated American culture that black soldiers, like white soldiers, sought to understand the Filipinos in reference to American racial categories.[69]

Letters from black soldiers often recorded anger over their mistreatment by whites in the army, and they also expressed sympathy for Filipinos who were subjected to similar or worse treatment. A letter in the Cleveland *Gazette* explained:

> I feel sorry for these people and all that have come under the control of the United States. I don't believe they will be justly dealt by. The first thing in the morning is the "Nigger" and the last thing at night is the "Nigger." You have no idea the way these people are treated by the Americans here.[70]

Explicit comparisons between racial prejudice at home and in the war were common in letters from black soldiers. A letter to the *Wisconsin Weekly Advocate* described the common characteristics of both environments:

> . . . the Americans, as soon as they saw . . . native troops . . . began to apply home treatment for colored peoples: cursed them as damned niggers, steal [from] them and ravish them, rob them on the street of their small change, take from the fruit vendors . . . and kick the poor unfortunate if he complained. . . . They [white soldiers] talked with impunity of "niggers" to our soldiers, never once thinking that they were talking to home "niggers."[71]

The Philippine nationalist army was well aware of the racial divisions in American culture, and it targeted African American troops with propaganda.[72] One black soldier described a typical insurgent message:

> We have been warned several times by insurgent leaders in the shape of placards, some being placed on trees, others left mysteriously in houses we have occupied saying to the colored soldier that while he is contending on the field of battle against people who are struggling for recognition and freedom, your people in America are being lynched and disfranchised [*sic*] by the same who are trying to compel us to believe that their government will deal justly and fairly by us.[73]

A few African Americans defected to the Philippine army, but most continued to serve the United States despite the sympathies that many letters demonstrate. Several hundred members of the black regiments remained in the Philippines after completing their military service.[74]

Despite their anger over the racism of white soldiers, black soldiers shared some common assumptions about race with their white counterparts. Both considered race central to a person's identity, and both sought to categorize and characterize the people of the Philippines in reference to the racial taxonomy of the United States. A letter in the *Cleveland Gazette* shows one black soldier's attempt to understand Luzon's different ethnic groups:

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> As far as I can note from casual observance, I should class the Filipinos with the Cubans. They are intelligent and industrious, and although some of their habits are unclean, their clothes are always spotless and neat. . . . There are here some of the best mulatto people I have ever seen in my life. They are handsome. . . . A good deal of the business is done by the Filipinos but the major part is done by the Chinese. The United States has lots of trouble catching the wily Cheno. He is prone to steal and smuggle.[75]

When on duty in the interior, black soldiers — like whites — were more likely to class Filipinos with Indians. A letter home from Arthur E. Peterson described the inhabitants, a mountain people called the Igorrotes:

> They are only semi-civilized and wear no clothes, only a gee-string. The women wear a little apron about three inches square in front and, of course, they are a sight. But of all that, they are the most moral people I ever saw. Our civilized brethren and sisters in the states could learn something in that line. . . . some are nice looking. They are light brown, with coal black straight hair. . . . They are something like our North American Indian. The women do most [of] the work. The men lie around and smoke.[76]

This letter, like many others, shows a kind of ethnographic interest in the Filipinos. Black soldiers' accounts of Filipinos contain much of the condescension and paternalism that the pre-combat correspondence of white soldiers contained. The hostile or genocidal notions that often occur in the field duty correspondence of white soldiers, however, do not seem to occur in the writings of African Americans.

Members of Company A, Second Oregon Volunteer Infantry, in Manila, Philippines, May 24, 1899, as they prepared to return to the United States.

When the United States annexed the Philippines, the land became American land and the non-citizen Filipinos had to be described either as black or Indian to be compatible with America's notion of a white republic.[77] This way of describing American rule was common to Oregon infantrymen, newspapermen back home, and the authors of American policy in Washington, D.C. Secretary of War Elihu Root, who assumed control over the Philippine War effort in August 1899, often explained the war to the public by referring to principles of race-based republicanism. When asked whether the doctrine of self-determination should be applied to the Filipinos, he answered: "That maxim, though general in its terms, was enunciated with reference to a highly civilized, self-governing people. Its unqualified application to barbarous and semi-civilized people is contrary to the whole course of civilization. Without the consent of the hundreds of thousands of Indians whom our fathers found in possession of this land, we have assumed and exercised sovereignty over them."[78]

American political leaders did not consider the Filipinos entitled to the political rights of civilized peoples, and American military leaders did not believe they were entitled to the humanitarian protections of civilized peoples. Many of the explanations provided by military leaders at the 1902 Senate hearings were consonant with the opinions of the troops on the ground. The testimony of General Robert P. Hughes, who commanded American troops around Manila in 1898, included this exchange with

Senator Joseph Rawlins (D-Utah) on the practice of burning Filipino villages:

> *Rawlins*: The punishment in this case would fall, not upon the men, who could go elsewhere, but mainly upon the women and little children.
>
> *Hughes*: The women and children are part of the family, and where you wish to inflict a punishment you can punish the man probably worse in that way than in any other.
>
> *Rawlins*: But is that within the ordinary rules of civilized warfare?. . .
>
> *Hughes*: These people are not civilized.[79]

It would be comforting to think that war atrocities by Oregon Volunteers were desperate acts produced exclusively by the fear and anger of combat conditions. It is true that the trauma of combat produced a profound change in their understanding and treatment of the enemy, but it was a change enabled by a racial ideology they had already embraced. All claims of political or humanitarian rights were, in the American mind, conditioned on race. Thus the soldiers could maintain one set of standards of self-determination and political participation for European peoples and another for non-European peoples — one set of wartime ethics for European adversaries and another for American Indians. The soldiers did not change their ethical system as a result of combat. They simply re-categorized the Filipinos by race. In making their Filipino enemies into blacks and Indians, the soldiers were able to place both the objectives and the methods of the war beyond doubt.

Notes

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1. Henry F. Graff, ed., *American Imperialism and the Philippine Insurrection: Testimony Taken from Hearings on Affairs in the Philippine Islands before the Senate Committee on the Philippines — 1902* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1969) [hereafter Senate Hearings].

2. Richard Holmes, *Acts of War: The Behavior of Men in Battl*e (New York: Free Press, 1986), 361, 367.

3. Lawrence LeShan, *The Psychology of War: Comprehending Its Mystique and Its Madness* (Chicago: Noble Press, 1992), 74–91. LeShan's belief that mythologizing the enemy is vital to combat psychology accords well with the findings in this article. His model also predicts, however, that extended, face-to-face contact with the enemy re-humanizes him in the soldier's eyes, creating greater empathy. I saw no signs of this second effect in the writings of the Oregon Volunteers.

4. Neil Foley, *The White Scourge: Mexi-*

cans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

5. David Healy, *U.S. Expansionism: The Imperialist Urge in the 1890s* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1970), 3–64, 128–34; Robert L. Beisner, *Twelve against Empire: The Anti-Imperialists, 1898–1900* (1968; reprint, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 216–39; Stuart Creighton Miller, *"Benevolent Assimilation": The American Conquest of the Philippines, 1899–1903* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1982), 4–30, 105–26; Walter LaFeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860–1898* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1963), 64–99; and Brian P. Damiani, *Advocates of Empire: William McKinley, the Senate, and American Expansion, 1898–1899, Forging Economic Policy of the United States* (New York: Garland, 1987), 126.

6. Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Problem of the West," *Atlantic Monthly,* September 1896, available online at www.theatlantic.com/issues/95sep/ets/turn.htm (August 8, 2002). See also Audrey Smedley, *Race in North America: Origin and Evolution of a Worldview* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1993), 171–204, 231–52.

7. For a history of events, see W.D.B. Dodson, "Official History of the Operations of the Second Oregon U.S.V. Infantry," in *The Official Records of the Oregon Volunteers in the Spanish War and Philippine Insurrection,* comp. Brig.-Gen. C.U. Gantenbein (Salem, Ore.: W.H. Leeds, State Printer, 1902). For a general history of American soldiers in the war, see Brian McAllister Linn, *The Philippine War, 1899–1902* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000); and Graham A. Cosmas, *An Army for Empire: The United States Army in the Spanish-American War* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1971).

8. William McKinley, *The Speeches and Addresses of William McKinley, from March 1, 1897 to May 30, 1900* (New York: Doubleday and McClure, 1900), 295–6.

9. See Thomas G. Dyer, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Idea of Race* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980); and Richard Collin, *Theodore Roosevelt, Culture, Diplomacy, and Expansion: A New View of American Imperialism* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985).

10. Elihu Root, "American Policies in the Philippines in 1900," in *The Military and Colonial Policy of the United States: Addresses and Reports,* ed. Robert Bacon and James Brown Scott (1916; reprint, New York: AMS Press, 1970), 42. Roosevelt asserted the same perspective. See Roosevelt, *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt,* ed. Elting E. Morison (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1951), 239. Even Taft, who was more optimistic about the long-term potential for Philippine self-government, repeated the notion that American rule was the only alternative to the savagery of a people completely unprepared for civic life.

11. See LaFeber, *New Empire,* 27–8; and Stuart Creighton Miller, "The American Soldier and the Conquest of the Philippines," in *Reappraising an Empire: New Perspectives on Philippine-American History,* ed. Peter W. Stanley (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984), 34.

12. *Oregonian* (Portland), July 13, 1899.

13. *Oregonian,* March 14, 1899.

14. *Oregonian,* March 13, March 14, 1899. At the time these articles appeared, fewer than two years had elapsed since news of Alaska's Klondike gold rush had hit Portland and Seattle. In that period, approximately a hundred thousand Americans had set out to make their fortune in the Klondike. It should come as no surprise that the annexation of the Philippines would provoke speculation about its mineral resources.

15. Paul Sabin, "Home and Abroad: The Two 'Wests' of Twentieth-Century United States History," *Pacific Historical Review* 66:4 (1997): 305–35; Brian McAllister Linn, "The Long Twilight of the Frontier Army," *Western Historical Quarterly* 27 (Spring 1996): 141–57. Linn is careful to distinguish between the subject of his work, the U.S. Volunteers, created by the army in March 1899, and the Volunteers of 1898, who are the subject of this article. The two were recruited from different groups: the state volunteer forces of 1898 that served in the Philippines came largely from western states, the U.S. Volunteers of 1899 were drawn from the entire country.

16. *Oregonian,* March 14, March 15, 1899.

17. This perspective was common among both civilian and military leaders. In the 1902 Senate hearings, military science expert Arthur L. Wagner testified in support of the American practice of burning villages and displacing civilians in order to root out enemies. He asserted that, although "it is not always possible to discriminate between those who are active enemies and those who are not . . . it would be justifiable to destroy the town." Gen. Walter P. Hughes, when questioned about tactics that brought suffering or death "upon the women and little children" of the Philippines, defended himself by asserting that "the women and chil-

dren are part of the family, and where you wish to inflict a punishment you can punish the man probably worse in that way than in any other." Senate Hearings, 64–5, 129.

18. *Oregonian*, March 11, July 14, 1899.

19. Gordon Dodds, *The American Northwest: A History of Oregon and Washington* (Arlington Heights, Ill.: Forum Press, 1986), 83–4.

20. Eric Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction: 1863–1877* (New York: Harper and Row, 1990), 238–60.

21. James W. Clarke, *The Lineaments of Wrath: Race, Violent Crime, and American Culture* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 1998), 139–41, 143, 150–3.

22. George Lemon Newell to mother, brother, and sisters, August 22, 1898, in Mss. 2550, George Lemon Newell papers, 1898–1901 [hereafter Newell correspondence], Research Library, Oregon Historical Society, Portland [hereafter OHS Research Library]; *Soldier's Letter* 1:1 (November 1898): 10, in Mss. 2714, Albert Southwick papers, folder "Rosters & Booklets re War 1898," OHS Research Library [hereafter Southwick papers]; H.C. Thompson, "War without Medals," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 59:4 (December 1958): 297.

23. Southwick to mother and sisters, May 1898, Southwick papers. The dating of Southwick's letters is imprecise. It appears that he dated his letters on the day he began them but added to them for many days thereafter. My citations provide his recorded date as well as inferred dates for the specific entry.

24. Correspondence, June 2, 1898, in Chriss A. Bell diary, Mss. 2930, OHS Research Library [hereafter Bell diary]. See also James Stanley Rost, "The Oregon Volunteers in the Spanish-American War and Philippine Insurrection: The Annotated and Edited Diary of Chriss A. Bell, May 2, 1898 to June 24, 1899" (M.A. thesis, Portland State University, 1991).

25. Southwick to mother and sisters, June 30, 1898, c. June 30, 1898 [possibly written at anytime in early July], Southwick papers.

26. Bell diary, August 20 and 21, 1898, June 6, 1898.

27. *Soldier's Letter,* November 1898, 1, 10, in Southwick papers.

28. Telfer's correspondence indicates that he was proud of his middle-class household and that he was struggling financially to keep it afloat. As a civilian, he had worked in a series of low-level managerial jobs. See Sara Bunnet, ed., *Manila Envelopes: Oregon Volunteer Lt. George M. Telfer's Spanish-American War Letters* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1987), xv. See also Dodds, *American Northwest,* 228–32.

29. George M. Telfer to Willis [son], September 8, 1898, in George M. Telfer papers, Mss. 2635, OHS Research Library [hereafter Telfer correspondence]. All of Telfer's letters cited here have been published in Bunnett, *Manila Envelopes.*

30. Telfer to Willis, July 18, 1898, Telfer correspondence.

31. Telfer to Grace [daughter], October 7, 1898, Telfer correspondence

32. Telfer to family, June 3, 1898, Telfer correspondence.

33. Willis Arthur Platts diary, January 20, 1899, in Mss. 376, Research Library, OHS Research Library [hereafter Platts diary].

34. Southwick to mother and sisters, August 25, August 5, 1898, Southwick papers.

35. Miller, *"Benevolent Assimilation,"* 173; H.C. Thompson, "War Without Medals," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 59:4 (December 1958): 317; Telfer to Lottie [wife], February 19, 1899, Telfer correspondence..

36. Charles Henry Martin to Louise [wife], September 3, October 17, October [?], 1898, in Charles Henry Martin papers, Mss. 1153, OHS Research Library [hereafter Martin correspondence].

37. Telfer to Grace, July 18, 1898, Telfer to Lottie, October 16, 1898, Telfer correspondence.

38. See references to Kipling in Telfer correspondence, May 31, 1898, September 23, 1898.

39. Telfer to Grace, September 23, 1898, Telfer correspondence.

40. Telfer to Hazel [daughter], October 9, 1898, Telfer correspondence.

41. Bell diary, September 1, August 13, August 14, August 21, 1898. Bell carried law books with him to the Philippines and intended to use the return voyage to study the rules of evidence. See Bell diary, January 25–30, 1899. In his enlistment papers, Bell recorded "lawyer" as his profession, but he does not seem to have been practicing law at the time. *Official Records of the Oregon Volunteers,* 270.

42. Bell diary, February 6, February 7, 1899.

43. Martin to Louise, August 28, 1898, Martin correspondence; Southwick to mother and sisters, August 25, 1898, Southwick papers; Newell to mother, brother, and sisters, August 22, 1898, Newell correspondence; Platts diary, August 17, 1898.

44. Southwick to mother and sisters, August 5, 1898, Southwick papers. This letter was written from Manila, probably in the first week following its capture on August 13.

45. Southwick to mother and sisters, August 25, 1898, Southwick papers. This entry may have been written at any point during the fall after the date given.

46. Southwick to mother and sisters, January 18, 1898, Southwick papers.

47. Southwick to mother and sisters, February 10, 1899 (entry written between February 10 and 21), February 25, 1899 (entry written between February 25 and March 9), Southwick papers. See also Southwick to mother and sisters, April 22, 1899 (written between April 22 and the end of May), and April 9, 1898 (probably written between April 9 and April 22, 1899), Southwick papers.

48. Southwick to mother and sisters, March 13, 1899 (entry written between March 13 and April 22), Southwick papers. In the spring of 1899, Southwick, along with most of the U.S. military establishment, misunderstood the relationship between tribal allegiances and the Philippine independence movement. Later campaigns in the Visayas and outside Tagalog regions of Luzon would demonstrate that the independence movement had strong support outside of the Tagalog tribe.

49. Telfer to Grace, February 6, Telfer to Lottie, February 13, Telfer to Grace, January 20, 1899, Telfer correspondence.

50. Telfer to Lottie, January 15, 1899, Telfer correspondence.

51. Telfer to Family, March 17, March 22, 1899, Telfer correspondence.

52. An interesting example of this is found in Telfer's account of his occupation of the village of Gagalangin. He describes himself as the town's mayor and explains the benefits levied from the local population. See Telfer to family, March 28, 1899, Telfer correspondence.

53. Ibid.

54. Bell diary, April 12, May 24, June 18, 1899. It is widely reported that American troops referred to their Filipino enemies as "gugus," but Chriss A. Bell's diary contains the only occurrences of the word that I have encountered in the personal papers of Oregon soldiers.

55. Platts diary, February 6, 1899.

56. Platts diary, February 9, 1899. Platts repeats a story that a guard from the Tennessee Volunteers executed sixty of seventy-five captives because they were "to [*sic*] much of a bother" to transport as prisoners.

57. Platts diary, February 23, 1899.

58. Platts diary, February 23, February 9, March 11, March 15, May 5, 1899.

59. Platts diary, March 16–21, April 18, 1899.

60. Elliot Rodgers journal, May 2, May 24, 1899, in Elliot Rodgers journal, Mss. 2628, OHS Research Library [hereafter Rodgers journal].

61. Rodgers journal, May 12, 1899.

62. Martin to Louise, August 28, 1899, Martin correspondence.

63. Many signalmen were recruited nationally but individually assigned to serve with other states' volunteer regiments. See Cosmas, *An Army for Empire*, 133–4.

64. "Big Kelly at Manila," *Chicago Sunday Chronicle*, August 6, 1899, clipping in Edward E. Kelly papers, Mss. 1434, OHS Research Library [hereafter Kelly papers].

65. Ibid.

66. Newell to mother, April 27, 1899, Newell correspondence.

67. "Consent of the Governed: A Waste of Time to Pay Attention to That Theory," *Oregonian*, January 23, 1899, reprinted from the *New York Sun*.

68. Miller, *"Benevolent Assimilation,"* 80–1.

69. Willard B. Gatewood, Jr., comp. *"Smoked Yankees" and the Struggle of Empire: Letters from Negro Soldiers, 1898–1899* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971).

70. Patrick Mason to the *Cleveland Gazette*, November 19, 1899, in Gatewood, *"Smoked Yankees,"* 257.

71. Unsigned letter to the *Wisconsin Weekly Advocate*, May 17, 1900, reprinted in Gatewood, *"Smoked Yankees,"* 280.

72. John Morgan Gates, *Schoolbooks and Krags: The United States Army in the Philippines 1898–1902* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1973), 31–2; Gatewood, *"Smoked Yankees,"* 244.

73. Michael H. Robinson to the *Colored American* (Washington, D.C.), February 1, 1900, in Gatewood, *"Smoked Yankees,"* 268.

74. Gatewood, *"Smoked Yankees,"* 15–16.

75. C.W. Cordin, October 15, 1899, in Gatewood, *"Smoked Yankees,"* 250–1.

76. Arthur E. Peterson to mother, May 3, 1900, in Gatewood, *"Smoked Yankees,"* 278.

77. The notion of full citizenship as a racial privilege was widely accepted in Oregon and in the nation. During the Philippine War, an effort to remove a clause from the Oregon Constitution that excluded blacks from residence in the state was soundly rejected by voters. See Dodds, *American Northwest*, 82–3, 118. During the same period, U.S. Supreme Court rulings confirmed the denial of constitutional rights to residents of American territories abroad. See "Insular Cases," in *Oxford Companion to the Supreme Court of the United States*, ed. Kermit L. Hall (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 433–4. American Indians were not guaranteed the rights of U.S. citizenship until 1924. See Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians*, abridged ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 272–3.

78. Root, "American Policies in the Philippines in 1900," 87–8.

79. Senate Hearings, 64–5.