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A Spy Named Whitney

The ongoing international commemoration of the centennial of the Spanish-American War has offered opportunities to reassess preservation efforts on the island of Puerto Rico, host international symposia on the history of the conflict, and revisit research relating to U.S. involvement in the war.

Captain Henry H. Whitney's service as a spy shaped the invasion and occupation of the island of Puerto Rico by U.S. Armed Forces in 1898. Information gathered by Whitney resulted in the alteration of U.S. Army General Nelson A. Miles' original invasion and occupation plan.

Revisiting Whitney's involvement in occupation plans included an exhaustive historical investigation. Beginning with an entry in Rivero's *Chronicles of the Spanish-American War in Puerto Rico,* a very important Puerto Rican source, the search included Whitney's maps and sketches, held by the Military Archives of Fort San Cristobal, as well as documents in the National Archives. The Archives of the U.S. Armed Forces in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, held a third Whitney sketch of the island of Puerto Rico. His student records, including graduation papers, were found at the Military Academy of the U.S. Armed Forces in West Point, New York. Finally, his gravestone in the National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia, not far from the mausoleum of General Nelson A. Miles and from the monument to the Fallen Soldiers of the Spanish-American War, provides interesting information.

The new documents uncovered in the course of my research prove that Henry H. Whitney was a professional in the field of military intelligence. Born in Glen Hope, Pennsylvania on December 25, 1866, he was admitted to West Point Academy in June, 1889. He graduated in 1892, and received a commission as Second Lieutenant of the 4th Artillery.

An 1897 report noted Whitney's knowledge of six languages, including Latin, classical Greek, modern Greek, French, Italian, and Spanish. He was also interested in the use of various technologies, as evidenced by his June 1897 report, "Adaptation of the use of the bicycle for military purposes." I could not find this report, which might shed light on the military campaign in Puerto Rico.

Second Lieutenant Henry H. Whitney received orders on January 22, 1898 for training at West Point in the use of photographic equipment to gather reconnaissance data for the creation of maps.

Departing May 5, 1898 from Cayo Hueso, Florida, on the battleship *Indiana*, he transferred to the war correspondent ship *Anita*, from which he witnessed the bombardment of the city of San Juan on May 12, 1898. He returned on the *Anita* to the port Charlotte Amalie on the Caribbean island of Saint Thomas, and then changed ships again, this time to the English merchant ship *Andarose*. With the help of the American Counsel, Phillip C. Hanna, he obtained passage on the *Andarose* to the city of Ponce, Puerto Rico, arriving May 15, l898. He paid $60 to the Captain of the *Andarose* to disembark at each stop along the coast. In this manner, he managed to travel to all of the suburbs of the city of Ponce, the largest city of the island of Puerto Rico, and other suburbs within the jurisdictions of the towns of Arroyo, Yauco, Salinas and Guánica. He learned of the latter's favorable conditions for landing and wide, deep, and unmined harbor, as well as its close proximity to Ponce, which was identified with a strong opposition to the Spanish regime and with sympathy toward the "Yankees."

From Ponce, Whitney travelled to various island towns, disguising himself as an English crew member of *Andarose*, as a crude oil traveling salesman, or as an amateur fisherman. In these roles, he spent long hours along the coast collecting information about the topography, location of defenses and mines in and around ports and bays, character of the population, means of communication, lighthouses, and roads.

Whitney's maps included a sketch of the north coast of the city of San Juan, stretching eastward to the town of Loíza. This signed sketch, dated May 28, 1898, shows the defenses of the walled and fortified district of the city. A second map, a general sketch of the island of Puerto Rico, includes notations about various towns. Ponce had a population of 35,000, defended by 800 regulars, of which 400 were volunteers and 80 were calvary. Twenty-three Howitzer rifles provided the city's defenses, and the town was strongly anti-Spanish. Guayama was strongly pro-Spanish and possessed a good road leading to the town of Cayey. Maunabo had 5,000 strongly anti-Spanish residents, while the municipality of Vieques could serve as a good base for soldiers and hospitals.

Whitney returned to New York City on June 1, and delivered a detailed report to President McKinley in Washington, DC on June 8, 1898. As a result of his successful mission, he was promoted to the rank of Captain and assigned to the expedition of General Nelson A. Miles to occupy the island of Puerto Rico.

Miles reported to the naval commander in a letter dated July 22, 1898,

> Our goal has been the port of Fajardo or Cabo de San Juan; but ... undoubtedly the enemy is informed of our purpose .... As it is recommendable not to do what the enemy expects done, I believe it convenient to ... continue immediately to Guánica, and land at Ponce, the largest city of Puerto Rico ... we will get great reinforcements that will put us in condition to continue on in any direction or to occupy other populations of the island ... the knowledge of the island and the reports obtained by Captain Whitney during his dangerous travels through the island of Puerto Rico, were in all concepts entirely exact and of great value to me.

Whitney's maps became key to the American plan for the occupation of the island of Puerto Rico. Based on the new information, General Nelson A. Miles altered his landing plans. Instead of landing in the east, in Fajardo, he decided to continue southward, landing in the port of Guánica. Brief maneuvering in Fajardo and the taking of the lighthouse there distracted the Spanish authorities, who had learned of the primary plan of the invasion through Fajardo and distributed their main defensive forces along this area and the principal port of San Juan.

Whitney's grave, placed near the Spanish-American war memorial in Arlington National Cemetery, reflects his important role in the successful occupation of Puerto Rico by the U.S. Army in 1898. The epitaph, while noting lifelong service, stresses this early and important contribution:

> Henry Howard Whitney, No. 3640 Class of 1892, died on April 2, 1949 in Madison, New Jersey, at the age of 82. The 32 years of service Brigadier General Henry Howard Whitney gave to the United States Army and his country were repleat with many valorous exploits, one of which led to the successful conquest of a country and saved thousands of lives without endangering that of anyone except his own.

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This article is a condensed version of one presented at "The International Congress of the Army and Fleet in 1898: Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Phillipines," in the cities of Madrid and Avila, Spain in March 1998.

Alan Sweeney

A Splendid Little War

Participation by members of the Lackawanna (County) Historical Society, located in Scranton, Pennsylvania, in the Save Our Sculpture (SOS) initiative sponsored by the Smithsonian Institution provided the impetus for commemorating the Spanish-American War and specifically the sinking of the battleship *Maine*. We focused on restoring the city's Maine Memorial monument and on a public presentation we titled "A Splendid Little War." While conducting the SOS assessment of all sculptures and monuments in Lackawanna County, we realized that the Battleship Maine Memorial, in a local park, did not fall under the SOS project guidelines. As a commemorative work, it could not be included in the national initiative. We thought that this and other memorials were special to our local area, so we included them in a county level assessment of sculptures and monuments.

From this background, we formed the Spanish-American War Centennial Committee as a working committee of the Lackawanna Historical Society. Made up of local historians, military history buffs, and a few collegiate history majors, the committee planned a two-part event which we felt would create an awareness for this part of American history and would result in the eventual restoration of the Maine Memorial. We planned a re-dedication of the Memorial including speakers and a re-enactment contingent. We also began a fund-raising campaign for the monument's restoration.

The first desire of the committee was to commemorate the loss of life on the night of February 15, 1898, when *Maine* sank in Cuba's Havana har-