

## Part XIV: Miles makes a harrowing discovery in his hat after ambush

**By Doug Stout**

**Local History Coordinator**

**Licking County Library**

In February 1898, 1st Lt. Perry Miles had been in his first battle of the Philippine Insurrection. Shortly after the fighting he discovered that a bullet had passed through his hat.

Miles wrote in his memoir, "Fallen Leaves: Memories of an Old Soldier":

"An eighth of an inch forward or the same distance lower would have given me a nasty wound. In after years, when luck seemed sometimes to be against me, I recalled the evidence of this hat and thanked God again for my good luck."



Miles also wrote that after the battle, he was visited by his superior officers who had witnessed his actions and wanted to compliment him:

"It seems that most of my fellow officers and enlisted men believed that I had performed some sort of commendable exploit. At the time I certainly was not aware of doing more than I was expected to do and what I saw had to be done to save some of our lives. I should think that any officer in my place with his senses and with the knowledge of conditions that I had, would have sought cooler climate as I did for myself and my men." Despite Miles' modesty, for his actions he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for "extraordinary heroism in action."

Fourteen months later, on June 13, 1899, Miles was with the 14th Infantry on the battle line at the Zapote River preparing for battle against the Insurrectionists. The river was defended by 4,000 to 5,000 Filipinos. The American forces numbered about 1,200 infantries supported by naval gunboats. Miles noted that the fighting that the 14th Infantry had done since February 1898 had been "merely unimportant skirmishes," but the fight at the Zapote River was a "genuine battle."

He recalled his feelings before the battle:

"I remember the tenseness I felt around my chest while waiting here to go into this engagement. When I was in the real thing at the outbreak of the insurrection, the fierceness of the fire came upon us so suddenly I had no opportunity to stand and wait and anticipate. It was all extremely urgent action and duty supreme. Now I had that experience, knew what the tolls of such close- range fighting were likely to be, and now could only stand and wait and anticipate."

Miles didn't have long to wait before the battle started around 6:15 a.m. The battle lasted for hours until the Filipinos retreated around 5 p.m. There were 15 Americans killed and 60 wounded, while the Filipinos suffered 150 deaths and 375 wounded.

Miles continued his service in the Philippines until October 1898, when he accepted a new position. He assumed the position of captaincy in the Quartermaster Department serving on the USAT Warren in the U.S. Army Transport Service. He wrote as he left the Philippines for his new assignment, "This was the end of a chapter."

Miles was correct as he had many more chapters to write on his rise to brigadier general. Those are stories for another day.

*Doug Stout is the Licking County Library Local History Coordinator. You may contact him at 740.349.5571 or [dstout@lickingcountylibrary.org](mailto:dstout@lickingcountylibrary.org).*