

Redington, George O. "The Ciales Expedition". The History of Troop "A", New York Cavalry U.S.V. from May 2 to November 28, 1898 in the Spanish-American War. Eds. William C. Cammann, et al. New York: R.H. Russell, 1899. 171-184. Transcribed by Ewin Martínez Torre, Ciales: Ayer y Hoy.

## The Ciales Expedition

George O. Redington

"Says the Don, 'Go back; you're off the track'.

Says Preston, 'Do not jolly!

'Neath this white flag don't chew the rag,

You must have slipped your trolley".

Freely Translated

Utuaado was not attacked by the Spaniards the night of August 11<sup>th</sup>, 1898, notwithstanding the supposed direct and accurate information received by the American officers, and despite the false alarm during the "wee sma' hours" occasioned by a slight earthquake; and it did not become necessary for seventy men, half a company of the Nineteenth Infantry, fifteen men from Troop "B", Second Cavalry, and fifteen men from Troop "A", to force back overwhelming numbers of the enemy.

The following day our quarters were moved from the Guardia Civile barracks, where we had slept on our arms during the night, to the telegraph office. Three companies from the Nineteenth Infantry ar-

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rived and camped near the Arecibo River on the outskirts of the town. There were increased rumors of an attack, but nothing occurred. Lieutenant Patterson, our own "Pat", of General Henry's staff, came through with orders to await the General's arrival, and later, to the intense satisfaction of every man, due to the prospect of immediate active service, we were transferred from General Miles's bodyguard to General Henry's headquarters.

General Henry reached Utuaado the next day, leaving the balance of his brigade strung out a number of miles back over the mountain road, and established his headquarters. It was said he issued orders for the Troop "A" detachment to leave the following morning to reconnoitre the Spaniards' position at the town of Lares, and it seemed that a few hours only would intervene before the Krag-Jorgensen carbines would have a chance at their outposts. That very afternoon, however, news of the protocol was received, and consequently the Lares scouting trip was abandoned. About the same time the natives brought in stories to the effect that the Spaniards at Ciales had shot down in the streets of that town a number of men, women and children upon almost no

provocation whatever. General Henry immediately ordered that men from our detail proceed to Ciales under a flag of truce to notify the

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Spaniards of the protocol, present to them a copy of the proclamation which had been promulgated by General Henry and investigate as far as possible what foundation, if any, there was for these rumors.

As at this time there were fourteen men in the detachment it became necessary to draw lots to see which four would remain. This was done, and "Pete" Stillman, George Ade, "Jamie" Clark and Horace Henry drew the short straws. The trip was to last three days, and the two "mule skimmers", Jim Ross and Ed Anderson, were to go along with six pack mules to carry the tent-rolls, provisions for the men and feed for the horses.

On the morning of August 14<sup>th</sup> the expedition got under way, consisting of First Lieutenant Preston, Ninth Cavalry, representing General Henry, Second Lieutenant Frelinghuysen, Sergeant Frank Bowne, Corporal "Foxy" Leigh, Corporal Arthur Brown and Privates Rowe Bradley, Gus Wallace, Amos Pinchot, Jack Grannis, "Jimmie" Beales, Lyman Dyer and George Redington. In addition to these were Ross and Anderson with the pack mules.

We had proceeded about half way through Utuado when there came dashing up, mounted on fiery little native horses, eight or ten Puerto Ricans, one of whom was to act as our guide and interpreter. They immediately demanded a supply of arms that

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they might assist in annihilating the large force of Spaniards holding Ciales. The interpreter looked at the handful of men behind Lieutenant Preston and asked if they were all he intended bringing, saying they were insufficient for the purpose, but the interpreter was assured that no more men were needed, and was also informed that he and his comrades would not be furnished with arms. After a short confab the expedition finally got under way.

Just outside the town a halt was made, while a suitable pole was cut, to which was attached a large white towel belonging to "Foxy" Leigh; this served as a flag of truce. The march throughout the day was very severe on the horses, as we proceeded along a mere mountain trail, which was very rough and steep most of the time. It often became absolutely necessary to dismount and assist the horses in scrambling up the more difficult places.

During the afternoon the detachment passed through the town of Jayuya. Our reception was tremendous in its enthusiasm, and every step of the way was like that of a triumphant march. The people crowded up to the sides of our horses yelling at every other breath "Viva los Americanos!" "Puerto Rico Americano!" It was as though we had come to deliver them from slavery and the most oppressive bondage. The Alcalde and other authorities of the

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town urged that we remain and accept of their hospitality, but Lieutenant Preston said that we must press on and we did so. This town had but a few hundred population, but its people created a demonstration never to be forgotten. All along the trail it was the same story to a greater or less degree. We were the first Americans to pass through that region, and the natives' admiration and welcome appeared unlimited. They seemed to think that our few men were going to drive the Spaniards to the north coast and into the sea with but a single effort, and that thereafter they were to be free from the hated Spanish. All through the mountains are scattered squalid huts, in which live one or more families. The huts themselves are small thatched affairs, generally having one room, and only two or three at the most. They are furnished with barely more than a wooden table and a few rough chairs. Several generations seem to be represented in each hut, and what they do for a living and how they exist is almost beyond comprehension; it would be hard to conceive of human beings in these modern times existing in a more primitive condition. Occasionally a profitable appearing coffee plantation or fruit farm will be seen, but these are few and far between, especially in this section of the island.

Finally, just as it was growing dark, we camped

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on the top of a high mountain, and, after a welcome mess of hardtack, bacon, coffee and fried green bananas, we crawled in our "dog" tents, leaving one sentinel posted, with special instructions to see that the flag of truce did not blow down. In the morning as soon as it was light, all were up preparing to get an early start.

The forenoon of the second day was practically a repetition of the first day's march. We were joined by a couple of hundred native men, women and children who had fled from Ciales, and, as we proceeded, this number constantly increased. These people were anxious to return to their homes under our protection, and they all told incredible stories of killing and looting by the Spaniards. The trail was even worse than the day before, and on one occasion Lieutenant Preston, who has been all through the West, and who was on the recent government relief expedition to the Klondike, remarked, "I have been on a great many trails in my day, but this beats anything I have ever seen".

We approached Ciales about one o'clock. By this time there were three or four hundred natives accompanying us on every side, some on the little horses, but the great majority on foot. They were constantly chattering with one another, cheering us from time to time, and making a great hubbub in

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general. As we neared the town, Lieutenant Preston ordered the natives to maintain absolute silence, and he took the further precaution, which subsequent events proved to have been the most fortunate, to send on a messenger to notify the Spaniards that we

were coming under a flag of truce, and at the same time to deliver a copy of General Henry's proclamation. This also gave the Spaniards an abundance of time in which to prepare to meet us in any manner they may choose, an opportunity of which they took immediate advantage.

At last, while descending a long, gradual hill, the sides of which rose up almost perpendicularly on either hand to a height of eight or ten feet, and just as we were within about a hundred yards of a curve in the road, we came upon two Spanish sentinels, who ordered us to halt and started running in our direction. We halted. Lieutenant Preston, who was in advance, called back, "Get ready, boys; I think we are in for it!" at the same time reaching for his pistol. However, he told the interpreter to inform them that we were under a flag of truce and were there to consult the Spanish officer. The men stopped, removed the bayonets from their rifles and put them in their belts, but their pieces were allowed to remain cocked. The soldiers then came up to within a convenient speaking distance. They were

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very much excited. Lieutenant Preston, talking at all times through the interpreter, asked them who their officer was. One pointed to the sergeant's chevrons on his arm and said that their officer was not at hand. Lieutenant Preston said that he could not talk to the sergeant, that he must go back and tell his commander to come and meet the American officer half way between the lines. This the man did, and shortly afterward Lieutenant Pedro Ladesma came riding around the curve in the road, accompanied by two civilians.

Lieutenant Preston, with the interpreter at his side, and with Corporal Leigh directly behind him holding the flag of truce, rode forward and met the Spaniard about one hundred feet in front of our detachment, and there held a consultation. The two civilians, who we afterward learned were soldiers in disguise, stood on either side of the road but a few feet away in cocked Remington rifles in their hands. Ladesma himself had drawn his pistol and had it cocked and thrust in the pommel roll near where his right hand rested. In addition to these men there were four soldiers, who advanced and stood near by. All had their pieces cocked. Back at the head of the road a half dozen others, fully armed, took position facing us.

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After shaking hands with Ladesma, Lieutenant Preston delivered to him a copy of the proclamation and said that he was sent to inform them of the protocol and that hostilities had ceased. Ladesma stated that he had heard nothing of the protocol from his government, and could take no notice of it until he did. Lieutenant Preston asked if we could enter the town, and he said "No". Lieutenant Preston also asked suddenly what had happened two days before. At this question both the civilians, Ladesma and one of the men began talking very volubly and excitedly, during which the interpreter gathered that there had been some trouble between the Spaniards and the natives upon the re-entry of the former, they having left Ciales several days before and returned, and that a few

inhabitants and soldiers had been hurt. Lieutenant Preston was finally informed that there had been some trouble, but nothing serious.

When asked if anyone had been killed, they all shook their heads vehemently and said "No". Lieutenant Preston then wanted to know if the residents who had followed us back could be allowed to enter the town and return to their homes unmolested. The Spanish officer said "Certainly", and the interpreter informed the crowd that they could go in without us. None of the crowd, however,

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showed any desire to take advantage of this permission and none of them went.

As a strange coincidence, while the consultation was taking place an orderly galloped up to the Spanish officer and handed him certain papers. Ladesma read them and shrugged his shoulders. In response to a question, he said they were nothing. Nevertheless a copy was given to Lieutenant Preston and the interpreter attempted to read them, but he did not seem able to make them out readily, and it was not until night by the camp-fire that they were read. They proved to be notice of the protocol and instructions to the Spaniards to turn in their arms within a certain time. Lieutenant Preston again requested that we be allowed to enter the town. Ladesma said that if we wanted to wait for five or six hours he would send to his superior officer and find out whether or not it could be allowed, but he could not take responsibility personally. This ended the interview, Ladesma shaking hands with Lieutenants Preston and Frelinghuysen, the latter having ridden up meanwhile. The Spanish officer was a very disagreeable and treacherous looking man. The interpreter and others said that he had a very bad reputation throughout the island.

During the conference our detachment was standing in columns of twos, and we had been instructed

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what to do in case of an emergency. Lieutenant Frelinghuysen had ordered Ed Anderson to hold all the horses in the event of an order to dismount and fight on foot or deploy as skirmishers. This did not appeal to Anderson's fighting blood, and Jim Ross, his companion, came forward and said in a respectful manner, "Ed wants to know if the natives can't hold the horses, as if there is going to be any amusement he would like to be in it". These two "mule skinnners" were true Western cowboys; they had served in the United States Cavalry against the Indians, had been "cow punchers" a greater part of their lives and had been to the Klondike. Ross, in addition, was a good deal of a pugilist, having encountered nearly every one of note in the West, and at one time holding the championship of the Navy for several years.

After Lieutenants Preston and Frelinghuysen had shaken hands with the Spanish officer the order was given, "Twos, left about, march!" and the return trip was begun. Sergeant Bowne and Private Beales acted as rear guard. At this point it was developed that during all this time the little detachment had been thoroughly ambushed, for as we

started back, and after the main body had gotten beyond a curve three or four hundred feet from the halting-place, the rear guard, in looking around, as

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they did continually for fear of treachery, saw a large number of Spaniards coming down from positions where they had been concealed on either side of the road. There had been ample time to arrange this ambushade, as the messenger sent on ahead had preceded us by a full half hour.

The holding up of the detail in a place that could not have been better adapted for an ambush, and the secret concealment of men were, at one volley, they could have completely wiped it out, were planned with sagacious cunning. There is no doubt that the least hostile move, or any other possible excuse, would have caused serious trouble for those few men a day and a half's march from the nearest American soldier. The whole treatment of the flag of truce was outrageous, and had there been a less cool and experienced officer than Lieutenant Preston to deal with the situation the outcome might have been very different.

Nothing occurred throughout the balance of the day, and so far as we know the Spaniards did not follow us. The number of natives began to increase still more, as a great many along the road packed up what few possessions they could and proceeded to get farther away from the Spaniards. They were in great fear, despite our assurances that the war was over.

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We arrived that night at half-past six on top of the same mountain where we had broken camp in the morning. The men had been in the saddle continuously for eleven hours and a half without dismounting, except occasionally to rest the horses and to help them over the especially difficult parts of the trail.

August 16<sup>th</sup> we returned to Utuado, arriving there early in the afternoon. Several miles out from the town we met Lieutenant Patterson and a detail of four regulars from Troop "B" on their way to Jayuya, General Henry having received reports that brigands were terrorizing the whole neighborhood. "Pat" was sent to investigate. He found that two such bands had been through a short time before, but that the Alcalde and residents had treated them with so much tact and hospitality that the outlaws had gone on to other fields. While this detail was at Jayuya news came in that the Spaniards were on the way there from Ciales. "Pat" thereupon, after sagely advising the Alcalde to protest against the Spaniards' advance as a violation of the protocol, gathered his men around him and retired in good order to report to his General. The rumor, by the way, proved unfounded.

At Utuado we found that the men whom we had left there three days before with the exception of

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Adee, together with Seymour Cromwell's gun detail of five men and a few from Troop "B", all in command of First Lieutenant Lockridge, Troop "B", had gone to Lares.

We remained in Utuado the next day, and then General Henry ordered that we start out on a seven days' expedition, going first to Lares and then to the western coast of the island. This would bring us in contact with General Schwan's brigade, for whom we had despatches. His command was working eastward from Mayaguez.

August 18<sup>th</sup> an early start was made. We left George Adee ill with fever at the hotel in Utuado in care of Amos Pinchot; Amos' father, as soon as the protocol was signed, had obtained his discharge through the War Department, and on our return from Ciales notice was received of it.

The first day out, when about half way between Utuado and Lares, we met Lieutenant Lockridge's detail returning. The Troop "A" men joined our detachment, with the exception of "Jamie" Clark, who was quite ill, and returned to Ponce by way of Utuado; and the subsequent trip was taken together.