

Peking: Report of Captain John T. Myers

UNITED STATES NAVAL HOSPITAL,
Tientsin, China, September 26, 1900.

SIR: I have the honor to submit a detailed report of the operations of the marine guard recently on duty at the United States legation, Peking, China, during the period in which I had active command, from May 29 to July 3, 1900.

2. The guard consisted of 25 marines from the U.S.S. *Oregon*; 23 marines, 3 bluejackets, 1 chief machinist, and 1 hospital apprentice from the U.S.S. *Newark*. Capt. N.H. Hall, U.S. Marine Corps, and Asst. Surg. T.M. Lippitt, U.S.N., were also attached to my command. Chief Machinist Peterson reported for duty on June 3, arriving in Peking unarmed.

3. The guard, equipped in heavy marching order and without baggage, left the *Newark* on the morning of May 29 and arrived at Tientsin that night, having been compelled to come up by boat, as the railroad officials refused to sell tickets to an armed force without permission from the viceroy. We were the first troops to arrive in Tientsin, and our reception was enthusiastic; nearly all the foreign residents, with a band, were on the bund to meet us, and escorted us to the quarters which had been provided by Captain McCalla and Paymaster Jewett, who had come up by train that afternoon. We remained there, waiting for the other guards to arrive and for the necessary permission to go to Peking, until Thursday, May 31, when we left at 4.30 p.m., reaching the railroad terminus outside the city at about 11 o'clock. Captain McCalla, Paymaster Jewett, Naval Cadet Courtney, and Warrant Machinist Molineaux accompanied us.

We headed the column on the march into the city, meeting with no opposition, although we had been warned to be on the lookout for trouble.

The dense mass of Chinese which thronged either side of the roadway for the 4 miles from the station to the Chien Men gate was absolutely silent--a silence which seemed more ominous than a demonstration of hostility would have been.

On our arrival we were assigned to quarters adjoining the legation compound and in the rear of the Russian bank.

4. The ammunition carried was as follows: 9,720 rounds in men's belt, 8,000 for Colt gun, and 10,000 in boxes, making a total of 27,720 rounds, of which I had been told 7,000 rounds remained when the relief arrived. Five days' rations and two large ship's breakers of water were also taken.

5. Between the 1st and 5th of June nothing of any importance happened. Guards were established on the legation grounds and a daily routine of drills and exercises was instituted.

Captain McCalla, Paymaster Jewett, and Naval Cadet Courtney returned to Tientsin on the 2d.

On June 6 the railroad communication was interrupted and many stations burned. The situation appeared critical, and I wired Captain McCalla that 25 or more men were needed to properly protect the legation

On June 7, there having been no plan for common defense adopted by the officers commanding the various guards,

the English marine officer, at my request, called a meeting of all the officers, and it was decided that at the first sign of an outbreak all the noncombatants together with all provisions, should be sent to the English legation; and that all streets leading into the legation quarter should at once be barricaded, no Chinese being allowed to enter without a pass. It was also agreed that we should endeavor to hold all the legations as long as possible, and as a last resort, to fall back upon the English legation.

On June 8, at the request of Mr. Conger, sent 10 men, under Corporal Hunt, to guard the Methodist mission, where a number of American missionaries had assembled. The next day, this number being greatly increased by the arrival of refugees from Tungchow and outlying districts of the city, 10 more men were sent, and Captain Hall was detailed to command the detachment. The mission buildings lay about three-quarters of a mile to the eastward and outside of our lines, on a small street leading off the Hatamun.

On June 10, 11, and 12 nothing of any moment occurred. The feeling of unrest deepened in the city, and foreigners were openly insulted in the streets.

On June 13, 2 Chinese in full Boxer regalia, carrying naked swords, appeared on Legation street, followed by a large crowd. They were shot at and pursued by the German sentries, the German minister himself leading the chase. One of them was captured and the other escaped. As the crowd was thronging in front of our legation, the alarm was sounded and the Colt gun run into the street, upon which they all disappeared. The incident tended to greatly add to the excitement already manifested among the Chinese. At 5 p.m. the outside chapel of the Methodist mission was set fire to by the Boxers, who now openly appeared in all sections of the city. The usual crowd collected, whereupon Captain Hall promptly dispersed them, using only the bayonet. The chapel was totally destroyed. At 6 p.m. the streets in the legation quarter were cleared and rough barricades built. That night all the outlying missions and

churches were burned except the Peitang Cathedral, where the French and Italians had sent guards to protect the Roman Catholic priests, nuns, and native converts there assembled.

On June 14, in the early morning, large numbers of Chinese Christians, most of them horribly burned or badly wounded, appeared at our barricades. They had come from the districts surrounding the Nantung Cathedral, which was then burning, bringing the most frightful tales of outrages committed by the Boxers. These people were allowed to enter, and after the most serious cases among the wounded had been treated by the American and Russian surgeons they were sent to the French legation. The officer commanding the Russian guards decided, in the name of humanity, to send out a party for the rescue of those Christians still in hiding among the burning buildings. At his request, I detailed 10 men to go out with them. This party was led by an American--Mr. Pethick, a veteran of our civil war, whose knowledge of China and the Chinese language and whose personal bravery while under fire rendered his services of the greatest value to the besieged. The mission of the rescuers was entirely successful, they returned escorting about 150 Christians, having shot a number of Boxers and looters. That night the excitement in the Chinese city was intense, and the shouting and cries of "Kill!" "Kill!" continued until early morning.

On June 15 sent 10 men to accompany the English on an expedition to the northeastern part of the city for the purpose of rescuing some native Christians supposed to be in hiding there. Dr. Lippitt volunteered and was given permission to go with them. They failed to find the Christians, but on the way discovered a temple where a Boxer meeting was evidently in progress. Our forces, which had been augmented by the arrival of some Japanese and Austrians, surrounded the place and after a short fight, killed 45 of the Boxers.

On June 16 the Boxers set fire to Watson's drug store, in the Southern City, not far from the Chien Men entrance. The explosion of the chemicals caused the fire to spread rapidly,

destroying the richest business portion of the city, and finally igniting the outer of the two gates, which was totally destroyed. The imperial troops upon the wall waved their banners energetically, but failed to fire upon the incendiaries.

On June 17, about 5 o'clock in the evening, a fire was started on Legation street, half a mile to the westward of our barricade. The Russians promptly started down the street and succeeded in shooting the man who had applied the torch; then after two hours' hard work, aided by the municipal fire department, got the fire under control. I followed with as many men as could be spared from the legation and patrolled the streets between the burning buildings and our lines, causing the Chinese to tear down all the matting and inflammable materials. In this work the English assisted.

On June 18 the Tsungli Yamen, the members of which had been full of assurances of friendship and protection, suddenly changed their tone, and in a message to the ministers announced that the Taku forts had been taken by the powers; that a state of war existed, and that the ministers would be given twenty-four hours to leave the city, accompanied by their suites, protection being guaranteed as far as Tientsin.

On June 20 the ministers held a meeting in the morning, shortly after which the German minister, unattended save by his interpreter, set out to visit the officers of the Tsungli Yamen which were situated on the Hatamun street, some distance outside of our lines. Shortly after the interpreter sought refuge at the American mission in a badly wounded condition. He stated that Baron von Ketteler had been shot in the back and killed by an Imperial soldier, scores of whom lined the road in the vicinity of the yamen. The firing had then become general, but he had managed to make his escape. On the receipt of this news the Germans at once sent out a detachment to obtain, if possible, the body of their minister, but they were fired upon and compelled to return unsuccessful. Realizing that the crisis had come, all the women and children were sent to the English legation, each foreign guard sending ten men for the greater protection of that

legation. All food supplies were sent to the same place, and as we had within our lines the only foreign stores in Peking and several Chinese stores of rice and wheat, the contents of each was appropriated for our use. In the afternoon, the English and Russians having each lent me ten men, I started with them and fifteen of my own to escort Captain Hall and his charges within our lines, which was safely accomplished. At 6 p.m. the Chinese soldiers began to fire upon us. The attack, however, did not seem to be an organized one. Any hope that the Imperial Government would put down the trouble had long been dispelled, as our spies brought us word that the Boxers were entering the city through all the gates, guarded as they were by soldiery, and in all parts of the city mingling freely with the troops, with whom they appeared to be on the best of terms.

On June 21 the Methodist mission and stores carrying goods were burned. A desultory firing by the enemy was kept up all day. About this time Sir Claude McDonald was chosen by the ministers, and this choice agreed to by the foreign officers, to act as commander in chief. Captain Strouts, R.M.L.I., was appointed chief of staff. Upon his death, on July 16, Mr. H.G. Squiers, first secretary of the United States legation, took his place. This gentleman having served ten years in our army, filled the post with great credit. In addition to these duties he, throughout the siege, acted as commissary for the American guard, his services being of the greatest value.

Friday, June 22, an attempt was made to burn the English legation. Later in the day, owing to some misunderstanding of orders, nearly all the foreign guards retired upon the English legation. The mistake being quickly discovered, our positions were at once reoccupied, before the Chinese knew of our absence.

On June 23 the customs building and Austrian legation were burned, the Austrians having been forced to fall back on the French. The Russian bank was also fired, and as this was

very near us we spent the day alternately fighting fire and Chinese.

On June 24 the Chinese from the Chien Men gate came down the wall and, protected by the parapet, opened a harassing fire upon the legation grounds and buildings. They were driven back by the Germans, who had gone on the wall in the rear of their legation, some 500 yards below. Later in the day I made several attempts to occupy a position on the wall opposite our legation, but the dense smoke which drifted across, together with the fact that the coolies would not build barricades in face of the fire which the Chinese directed down the wall, rendered these attempts unsuccessful. During the day Private King was shot and instantly killed while on duty as a sentry. In the evening the fire in the Russian bank spread to the quarters occupied by the guard, which were totally destroyed.

On June 25 succeeded in occupying a position on the wall. The Germans at the same time gained a foothold and threw up a barricade some 500 or 600 yards in my rear, facing the Chinese troops who occupied the Hatamun gate. During the day the building of bombproofs was begun in the English legation, as the shell fire was now incessant.

On June 26 Sergeant Fanning was killed while on duty. The Chinese busied themselves building barricades in our front.

On June 27, in broad daylight, a number of Chinese sallied from their barricades on the wall and advanced on the run toward our own. A few volleys drove them back in confusion. This was the only instance in my experience of the Chinese leaving shelter to make an attack. Firing continued at intervals all during the night, being kept up incessantly during the 28th, 29th and 30th. The nights being very dark, the Chinese managed to advance their barricades on the wall until they gained a position at the corner of the bastion opposite that occupied by my forces, at a distance of about 30 or 40 yards. The Russians were now daily furnishing ten men to assist in defending our barricade and the English six or seven men to help hold the trench crossing the wall to the United States legation, which was our only means of

communication with the latter place. The Germans has also been sending men until the attack on their own barricade became so determined that every man was needed.

On June 29 Dr. Lippitt was severely wounded while crossing the courtyard of the legation. His place was taken by Dr. George Lowry, an American missionary, who took up his residence in the legation and rendered every assistance in his power to giving first aid to the wounded, who were later sent to the international hospital in the English compound. His services were of great value, and he at all times exposed himself to fire when the necessity arose.

On July 1 the Germans were forced to leave the wall by a heavy shell fire. As this left my rear unguarded and exposed men going up and down the ramp and across the street to a heavy fire, I also withdrew into our legation. After some consultation with the American minister and Mr. Squiers it was decided that the place must be retaken and held at any cost. I was assured that all the coolies available would be sent that night to build cross barricades on the ramp, and also to build barricades across the wall in my rear. We therefore, after an absence of about fifteen minutes, returned, finding that the Chinese once more had failed to discover our retreat. In the evening, by order of Sir Claude McDonald, I was relieved by Captain Hall and went below to get some rest, having had little or no sleep since the wall was occupied.

On July 2, at about dusk, relieved Captain Hall and found that during the preceding night and day the Chinese had succeeded in building a wall into and across the bastion and were then busily engaged in erecting a tower directly on my left flank, the fire from which, when completed, would reach all parts of our position. Their work had been done with such infinite caution and so little exposure that although the fire upon them was incessant, their labor was in no way hindered. I at once reported the condition of affairs, and was asked by Mr. Squiers if it were feasible for me to make a charge, provided reinforcements were sent. I replied that we would try. Later a

communication was received from Mr. Conger telling me that after a consultation with the English and Russian ministers and military officers it had been decided to instruct me to take the enemy's barricade in my front. The Russians were to send five more men with an officer and the English about twenty. The details were of course left to me. These men arrived between 2 and 3 a.m., and as the Chinese had almost finished their tower and were amusing themselves throwing stones into our barricade, I at once made the dispositions for the advance. The Russians were directly to take the inside of the wall, keeping close to the parapet, and dislodge the enemy from their position at the head of the ramp. The English and Americans, on the left and center, were to go over barricades and, once across, to break to the left and follow, the Chinese wall in the bastion around to the rear of their position. These plans were completely successful, the Chinese being routed with considerable loss, and retiring some hundred yards down the wall to the next barricade.

A number of rifles and some ammunition were captured and turned over to the commander in chief. I regret to state that two of the best men in the guard, Privates Turner and Thomas, were killed, and one Englishman and one Russian wounded. Private Turner's body was picked up well inside the Chinese barricade, showing that he had evidently, in the darkness, gotten ahead of our line. Being slightly wounded myself, I sent for Captain Hall to relieve me, and went below into the legation. The next day, as the wound had gotten worse, I accepted the kind offer of the first secretary of the Russian legation and was moved into his quarters, retaining the command, however, until the 21st of the month. Captain Hall's report up to this date is appended.

6. I respectfully commend to the consideration of the commander in chief the conduct of Asst. Surg. T.M. Lippitt, who not only performed all his professional duties thoroughly, but on two occasions took a purely military part. The first of these occurred when the captain of the Colt gun crew, having misunderstood orders, was taking his piece to the wrong

position. Dr. Lippitt followed under a heavy fire and assisted in bringing the piece back and guiding it to the place originally assigned; the second, when he helped to take the Austrian 1-pounder on the wall and place it in position.

I have also to recommend the following enlisted men: Gunner's Mate (First Class) Joseph Mitchell, U.S.S. *Newark*, who operated the Colt gun with the utmost courage and skill under the heaviest fire; he also, with the assistance of Mr. Squiers, put in working order and later used successfully an old brass cannon which had been dug up inside our lines; he also captured a flag under peculiarly hazardous circumstances, on which I will later make a special report. Hospital Apprentice R.H. Stanley, of the *Newark*, who volunteered and took a message to the English legation when it was necessary to use the street down which the Chinese were firing. Sergeant Walker, Corporals Hunt and Dahlgren, who at all times cheerfully performed their duties with courage and fidelity. The conduct of the guard, with one or two exceptions, was excellent.

7. The following papers are appended:

- (1) Report of Captain Hall, July 3 to July 21.
- (2) List of killed and wounded, compiled by Dr. Lung.
- (3) Copy of letter from United States minister.
- (4) Copy of resolutions passed by American missionaries.
- (5) Copy of report of Dr. Velde, the civilian in charge of the hospital, of total casualties during siege.

8. I can not close this report without expressing for myself and the men under my command our appreciation of the uniform kindness shown us and the active assistance rendered by the United States minister and his staff.

Very respectfully,

JOHN T. MYERS,
Captain, U.S. Marine Corps.
THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF,
U.S. Naval Force on Asiatic Station

Report of Captain Newt T. Hall

PEKIN, CHINA, *August 30, 1900.*

SIR: I have the honor to submit herewith the following daily report for your information, during the time that you were confined to your room with your wound, but retained command of the United States detachment on guard at the United States legation in this city from July 3 to July 21, 1900. I was called about 2.30 a.m., July 3, 1900, and informed that you were wounded, and went on the wall and took command until relieved by Captain Von Strauss about 3.30 or 4 a.m. At his request I took charge of the old barricade, making a passage through it for the men, and strengthening the rear side (Ha-ta-men side) of the barricade. I remained on the wall until ordered down by you at 11.30 a.m. It was raining continuously, and heavy fire from the enemy during the entire time. The American, Russian, and British marines were at work on the barricade that you took and the old barricade, the Chinese laborers being afraid to work under the enemy's fire.

July 4.--Intermittent and slack fire by the enemy during the day. Occupied in building barricades. Private Woods was wounded at the head of the east ramp by a stray bullet.

July 5.--Very little firing; nearly all done by the enemy. Some sniping from the American barricade at the head of the west ramp.

July 6, 7, 8, and 9.--Same as 5th.

July 10.--Sniping by the enemy; very little firing by us.

July 11.--Desultory firing by the enemy.

July 12.--Sniping on the part of the enemy. I was ordered to build a barricade at the far end of the first bastion on the Ha-ta-men side about 100 yards from our barricade; build about half of it during the night; almost no shots fired by the enemy; a few volleys fired by us, on request of the German commanding officer, at the enemy's barricade on the wall in the rear of the

German legation. About 12.30 p.m., at the request of Baron Rahden, the Russian commanding officer, I sent one corporal and four privates to protect his men while they were occupied in tearing down some burned buildings and went with them. There was very little firing by us, as the enemy did not open fire upon the Russians until they had finished working and were coming back to their legation.

July 13.--Continuing work at the barricade; enemy sniping all day at the barricade.

July 14.--Continuing work on the barricade; enemy firing at the barricade continuously.

July 15.--I was informed that the barricade was not far enough along the wall and was requested to build another. At my request, Mr. H.G. Squiers, first secretary to the United States legation, went on the wall with me to show me the exact place at which it was desired to build the barricade--the far end of the bastion about 100 yards from our last barricade and yards from the enemy's barricade. I took Private Daly with me about 9 p.m., and went out to reconnoiter the bastion with the understanding if we were not attacked the coolies were to come out with sand bags, under charge of Privates Carr and Upham ten minutes later. As the coolies did not come at the appointed time, Private Daly asked permission to remain in the bastion while I returned for the coolies. I did not wish to leave one man in the bastion as there were stray shots flying along the wall from the front and rear and the Joss temple west of the legation. Finally, feeling sure that there was a misunderstanding in regard to the coolies, I left Private Daly and returned to the barricade for the coolies and found out that the interpreter first sent up with them could not understand English and that Mr. Dossberg, secretary of the Belgian legation had just arrived and was starting for the bastion in which I had left Private Daly. I sent out Privates Carr and Upham with the coolies and went back to our first barricade to send the rest of the men to the barricade built on the night of the 12th.

July 16.--An armistice was made with the enemy. Sick.

Private Fisher killed about 9.30 a.m.

July 17 and 18.--Sick.

July 19.--Quiet. A few stray shots during the day.

July 20.--Same as 19th.

July 21.--Same as 19th and 20th. I relieved you in command about 5 p.m., on account of illness.

I respectfully invite the attention of the commanding officer to the courage and fidelity of Daniel Daly, private, U.S. Marine Corps, at all times, and to his conduct on the night of the 15th of July, 1900, when he volunteered to remain alone in the bastion under the fire of the enemy while I returned to the barricades for the laborers.

The command is very much indebted to Mr. E.H. Conger, envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary of the United States of America for his many kindnesses, placing his house at our disposal for shelter, and for doing everything in his power for their health and comfort.

Messrs. Pathig, Cheshire, and Dossberg rendered valuable assistance in directing the Chinese laborers at work on the barricades.

Very respectfully,

N.H. HALL,
Captain, U.S. Marine Corps.

J.T. MYERS,
*Captain, U.S. Marine Corps, Commanding United States Detachment,
Guarding United States Legation, Peking, China.*

HEADQUARTERS FIRST REGIMENT U.S. MARINES,
Peking, China September 7, 1900.

Forwarded.

By command of Major Biddle.
DAVID D. PORTER,
First Lieutenant and Adjutant.