

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN - LA CROSSE
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

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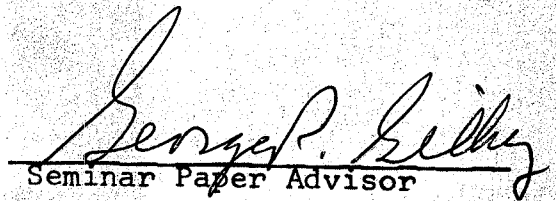
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M.S.T. - History - Social Science

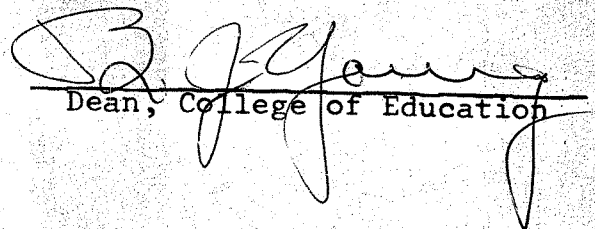
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to determine the extent of the involvement of Brigadier General Charles King in the development of rifles used by the United States Army during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the last of the Indian wars, and the American participation in the Philippine Insurrection.

The study shows a personal involvement in the development of the magazine-fed, bolt-action repeating rifle used both during the Philippine Insurrection, and the later development of the model 1903 Springfield rifle used by the United States Army in World War I.

General King left as his legacy the development of the Springfield model 1903 rifle which gave the riflemen of the United States Armed Forces the finest weapon of its kind in the world.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to explore the extent of the involvement of Brigadier General Charles King in the development of rifles used by the United States Army during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and his role in the Philippine Insurrection.

Brigadier General Charles King, United States Volunteers, was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin on October 12, 1844, the son of General Rufus King, founder and owner of the Milwaukee Sentinel. Charles grew up in a background of military tradition, and after attending Columbia University in New York, where he majored in literature, he received a direct appointment to the United States Military Academy at West Point from President Abraham Lincoln.

Charles entered the Academy during the War Between the States, but did not participate in the war itself since his class did not graduate until shortly after Lincoln's assassination in early 1865.¹

Charles married Adelaide Levander of Carroll Parish, Louisiana, on November 20, 1872, and they had four children: Adelaide, Carolyn, Elinor, and Rufus.

After graduation from the Military Academy on June 18, 1866, Charles was commissioned Second Lieutenant, First Artillery. He served until May 15, 1870, when as First Lieutenant, he transferred to the Fifth Cavalry, which took part in a long series of bloody, frustrating Indian wars in the West. During these years Charles developed the habit of keeping a painstakingly detailed diary, which he kept thereafter every day of his life. Charles developed a writing style which led him into a successful career as an author of romantic novels dealing with army life and contemporary American history. Among his books are: Famous and Decisive Battles; and the novels: Between the Lines; The Colonel's Daughter, 1883; Marion's Faith, 1885; Captain Blake, 1892; The General's Double, 1897; The Iron Brigade, 1902; A Conquering Corps Badge, 1905; Medal of Honor, and others. Some of these novels were later turned into successful plays.²

King's reputation as a man of literary achievement was well established before he ever left for the Philippines, and his play became a regular part of the repertoire of the San Francisco Repertory Theater.

On December 31, 1870, King became adjutant of the regiment of the Fifth Cavalry, a post he was to keep until 1878. King was promoted to Captain on May 1, 1879.

In 1874, Charles was severely wounded in action against the Apaches, when he received a spear in his right shoulder. He was carried from the field, and when the wound did not respond to treatment he was forced to retire from the service with an injury disability, at the permanent rank of Captain.³

When Charles returned to Milwaukee, he gave his full time to writing, and became an even more successful novelist and playwright, with some of his work being produced on the legitimate stage.

In retirement, King still retained an active interest in the affairs of the army. During his years of combat service in the West, he observed the importance of first-class weapons, especially rifles. Many times the Indians had been equipped with superior weapons, especially Henry repeaters, and even the latest model Winchesters.⁴ It was only superior manpower which finally subdued the Indians. King became convinced that to improve the quality of the U.S. Army, a better rifle was necessary.⁵ In retirement, with more time on his hands, Charles used the Milwaukee Sentinel (through his father), and frequent letters to the War Department in Washington to inquire into the distressing quality of army rifles.⁶

Captain King had observed the limitations of the single-shot, breechloading model 1863 Springfield rifle, which was the standard

in the Army at the time. It was limited in range because of the heavy .58 caliber slug which was insufficiently propelled, in rate of fire because of the time consuming nature of single-shot weapons, and a lack of accuracy beyond relatively short range because of the short 22-inch barrel. This weapon was also prone to jamming if fired over a prolonged period.

In 1882, King was named Lieutenant Colonel in the Wisconsin National Guard, with which he was associated until his death in 1933. This association gave him additional opportunities to press the issue of army weaponry. At various times, King was Adjutant General, Inspector General, and Commanding officer of the National Guard Unit at the University of Wisconsin in Madison.

When the Spanish-American War began in 1898, King was just completing his term as Adjutant General at the University of Wisconsin. He had kept current on the latest trends within the regular army because of his continuing interest in army affairs, and through his National Guard capacity. He quickly volunteered his services to the nation. He had retired with the permanent rank of Captain, and there was little chance of returning to regular service, even though his old army wound had completely healed leaving him full use of his faculties. In 1898, he was nominated as Brigadier General of U.S. Volunteers because of his long and valued service with the Wisconsin National Guard. Wisconsin Senator William Lanier pushed his nomination and King was confirmed by the Senate as Brigadier General of U.S. Volunteers on May 28, 1898. Before he had a chance to get into active service in the island of

Cuba, most of the engagements had already occurred. When Admiral Dewey became involved in affairs in the Philippines when led to the call for American troops, King was available.

When King arrived in Camp Merritt, California, he assumed the command of the Second Brigade, Eighth U.S. Volunteers. Since only one of his five regiments was even partially trained, King's major task became one of training raw recruits to become soldiers.⁷

During the intervening years, (1879-1898) some advances took place in army weaponry, including improvements in slug weight (.58 to .50 caliber). However, its previously noted limitations led during the 1880's to the testing of more modern designs including bolt-action weapons. In 1892, after a series of tests of magazine arms adapted to small-bore smokeless powder cartridges, the U.S. Army adopted the U.S. Krag-Jorgenson model 1892/99 caliber .30-40 rifle. This rifle was a five-shot repeater with a Mauser bolt action.⁸

When General King joined his outfit, some regular army units were equipped with Krag-Jorgenson's, but all of the volunteer units which had been mobilized were still equipped with Springfields. During the training period in California from June 19, 1898, until August 12, 1898, King stressed individual marksmanship utilizing the "cross hairs" sighting technique rather than area fire in which all fire is directed into a general area. King obtained enough Krags to train his brigade in rapid-fire, bolt-action operation.

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However, when King and his outfit left for the Philippines they were still equipped with Springfields.⁹

When the island of Oahu was sighted on August twenty-seventh, it seemed to General King that his journey to Manila was just about complete. After anchoring off Koko Head and establishing a shore routine, King and his officers went ashore and looked over the camp site to be established for his men. It was located on a swampy area, and he foresaw complaints. On the twenty-eighth, a message was received from the War Department stating that no more troops were to be sent from San Francisco or Hawaii to Manila. General Merriam, the overall commander of the Expedition, told General King, "I don't know what to do with you." I might put you in command of this district." At this time, Hawaii had just been annexed by the United States (which in King's opinion most of the natives did not want) for protection of American property interests.¹⁰ General Merriam told King he would have about 3,000 men under his command. The following day General Merriam showed King a draft of the order establishing the Military District of Hawaii with King in command. King was disappointed, but felt the assignment only temporary, and that he would be ordered on to Manila quite soon. King's major concern was the poor physical condition of the camp site and he entered into his new duties with some anxiety.¹¹ At this time, Hawaii's major importance lay in its location on the Pacific shipping lanes as a coaling station, and ships and men from many nations made it a port of call. This added to King's problems, since many of the sailors did not get along well with the soldiers stationed on Oahu. Disturbances were frequent and

there were numerous altercations which had to be investigated by General King's office.¹² It seems that the Chinese sailors who called at Oahu were the particular targets of the soldiers, and the situation which developed was further inflamed by a newspaper run by a William Cooper. It seems Cooper did everything in his power to put U.S. troops in as bad a light as possible. He refused to allow a partial apology to King's troops to be printed in his paper.¹³ Territorial Governor William Jewell asked that the government buildings be occupied by King's troops, but he refused on the grounds that this would only stir things more, and he only placed a small guard on the guns, ammunition and armory.

While all this was transpiring, conditions at the camp had deteriorated. An epidemic of diarrhea broke out which became very difficult to control. It was King's contention that bad water was causing the diarrhea, but at first the doctors did not concur. They suspected the food, but as time passed and further tests were made, they began to come around to King's view. They finally ordered that all drinking water be boiled before being used for consumption, and this brought the diarrhea to an end.

Trouble in town erupted on October second, when one of King's men, a Lieutenant Merriam, declared martial law and cleared the streets with cavalry. The police were indignant, and the morning papers roasted the army. Upon investigation it was learned that Lieutenant's Merriam and Wheelock had been drinking and had run into a group of merchant sailors, soldiers, and various civilians and were jeered, so

they tried to clear the streets without authority. They even prevented the police from doing their duty.¹⁴ Both officers were relieved of their duties and sent back to quarters. Control returned to the civil authorities, and King set about restoring badly needed morale by putting the men to work cleaning up the camps. On October thirteenth, orders came directing the entire Third Expedition to go on to Manila as soon as the SS Arizona reached Hawaii from the Philippines which she had left October third. While awaiting the arrival of the Arizona, an outbreak of typhoid took place in the camps, followed shortly by an outbreak of yellow fever which soon put many men on the sick list, including General King, who contracted a mild case of yellow fever which put him to bed for ten days.

Finally on October twenty-seventh the Arizona arrived to take the troops to Manila, and on that day the Military District of Hawaii ceased to exist. It took several days of coaling and loading operations, but finally on November seventh, King's command of 1100 regulars and volunteers boarded the Arizona. On November tenth she sailed for Manila.¹⁵ King finally arrived in Manila on November twenty-fifth and was given command of the First Brigade of the First Division of the Eighth Army, comprising the First California, Idaho, and Washington regiments.¹⁶

When King arrived, there were rumors of a general massacre planned by the insurgents to begin between the fifteenth and the seventeenth of December. Officers houses were marked with crosses and Filipino workers were deserting en masse from their jobs in the English-speaking area of Manila. When the eighteenth came and went with no uprising, military affairs calmed down and King assumed command of his

brigade, which occupied the central part of the defense line west of Manila along the Pasig River near the Paco Bridge which was jointly occupied by the insurgents and U.S. troops. General King and his occupying troops traveled all along the defense line selecting strong points where blockhouses were to be established until both he and his men were satisfied with their locations. The blockhouses were built the next day of cinder blocks and reinforced concrete. They were occupied both night and day. The insurgents had similar blockhouses on their side of the line which were similarly occupied.

The next day a row developed over the joint occupation of the Paco Bridge. The sentries became mixed up. King and his aide Lieutenant Saxton drove out to Paco to assess the situation. King's superiors, General's Anderson and Ovenshine were already there when he arrived. King then went forward to meet with the insurgent officers who told him that his officers had shoved their sentries off the bridge. General Anderson and his interpreters drove to see the insurgent commander and when they returned both the insurgent and U.S. sentries were withdrawn from the bridge and posted each on his own side about twelve yards from the bridge.¹⁷ In the next ten days there were many alarms. Nothing came of any of them, but tensions were quite high.

On December twenty-seventh, General Anderson informed King that the Filipino government's Cabinet had undergone considerable change. Pro-American Conservatives were replaced with anti-American Radicals. The Radicals said any reinforcement of our lines would be regarded as an act of war. General Anderson considered a clash probable, since General Otis had sent the Fourth Cavalry forward and the First Idaho regiment to

reinforce King's brigade.¹⁸

On Thursday, December 29th, King went to look over his lines and found that the insurgents had pushed forward their pickets past the stipulated line, and when he reported it he was ordered to hold his brigade in readiness. On January 3rd, King went to see General Anderson, who told him that General Otis was worried. He believed that the insurgents are "bent on rising in town and attacking from without." "They are wildly excited, he says, on rumors about insurgent leader Emilio Aguinaldo's Proclamation of Independence." The President of the Philippine representative Assembly cabled Aguinaldo to avert hostilities by all means, but to publish his Proclamation and explain it.¹⁹ After meeting with Anderson, where plans for defense and action were planned, King's brigade was reinforced by the First Idaho regiment after reports of shots being exchanged between Filipinos and Americans along the front, and the reported evacuation of Filipino families from the area of the outposts.

On Monday, January 9th, General Anderson told King that the insurgents had sailed a gunboat towing canoes full of troops which landed six companies near the U.S. defense lines, and that Aguinaldo had issued a second Proclamation which meant war. King was ordered to turn back all Filipinos who might try to pass through his lines. He was told that no immediate trouble was anticipated, but to send a battalion to the blockhouse at Paco just in case trouble developed. An alert was called for dawn.

At dawn everything was quiet along the front, and King was informed by General Anderson that the evening conference had resulted in a temporary truce with the insurgent representatives going back

to their headquarters for instructions. King decided to send the men to Paco that night as planned anyhow. The next day King was informed of the probable breakdown of negotiations and that the insurgents would probably attack on January twelvth, thirteenth, or fourteenth, and if so, it would be heaviest along his front because of its intricate network of trees, huts, and bridges across the dividing stream.²⁰

On Friday, January thirteenth, King went to see General Anderson and received stricter orders. One officer of each company was to sleep at the barracks. No Filipinos were to be allowed to come in after dark across U.S. lines, with Filipinos on the U.S. side to go home at nine P.M. There was a marked difference in the manner of the Filipino natives. They were now very sullen both coming and going. The insurgent officers jeered and insulted U.S. officers and sentries who were ordered to salute them. They considered U.S. submission to orders a fear of them. Tensions continued to build almost unbearably.²¹ On January sixteenth, King heard from General Anderson that the rumored assault had been voted down by a large majority among the insurgents.

Incidents began to occur along the front lines which further built tensions. First, a Filipino Captain was killed when he drew a revolver on a soldier, and this made the insurgents ugly. Then, on February fourth, three Filipino insurgents occupied some huts across from the U.S. lines and began to shoot in the American outposts. This caused King to order the huts to be burned, and in the insuing fight, the three Filipino's were killed. During the day on the fourth of February, much burning of brush was reported, and later could be

observed across the lines, and word came that 500 additional insurgent soldiers with rifles had arrived along the front. King received orders to send more men to the same area, which he did. On the way to dinner a mounted soldier dashed up to inform him that an insurgent attack was imminent and to have his brigade ready for action. As his staff was gathering, firing broke out along another part of the front, but his sector was quiet until 2:40 A.M., when firing broke out along his front. By 3:00 A.M., firing was general all along the front. Across the Pasig River the Filipino's lay thick in the rice fields, and in these and other flanking positions they poured a thick fire into American positions. It soon became apparent that the insurgents were armed with the latest model Mauser and Remington rifles which were far superior in range and firepower to the Springfields with which King's brigade was armed. The following morning, King took it upon himself to order about 5000 Krag-Jorgenson rifles (which were available in Manila for some of the regular units) to replace the Springfields.²² In the ensuing action, these rifles proved their worth beyond question.

On Sunday afternoon, February fifth, King was heavily engaged, and was ordered to defend his position, not to attack as he had requested. For several hours the situation was very trying. Openings in the lines of the insurgents were found, and U.S. lines consolidated until they were in position to counter-attack. On one end of the line, it was discovered that the insurgents were falling back and seeking shelter from King's artillery and rifle fire, but in the center and on the other end, they were giving King's men all they could handle. Casualties were very heavy on both sides, with officers and men of every company

taking both fatal and crippling wounds.

About 7:15 P.M. General Anderson came along and informed King that they were going to attack, but not to carry the attack too far forward. To King it was welcome news, and he hurried back to Paco. Though fired at as they went, both King and his men reached Paco safely. King then ordered his companies to attack straight ahead across the river. They waded right through the water and mud and forced the insurgents to fall back into the fields and thickets where they were met with heavy fire. This was just what King wanted, as he proposed to wheel the right wing into the insurgent position in the village of Santa Ana, just across the Pasig, as soon as it was well beyond the line of trenches and catch the Filipinos in a trap.²³ The advance began. As soon as the right had advanced 400 yards, the center and left keeping a hot fire on the trenches, King took his men across the bridge without losing a man. He sent word to have three companies form the advance line for the attack on the enemy toward Santa Ana. King's men then began to lay down a sharp cross-fire on the Filipinos between him and their trenches. This was the signal for a general advance straight for the main Filipino positions, and when the Filipino officers began abandoning their men to their fates, King's men wheeled to their left and went crashing into Santa Ana right on the heels of the insurgents, capturing many and killing a few in town. Then the remaining insurgents trapped between the U.S. lines and the Pasig began to be rounded up. "Like rats in a hole they fought for a while though many made a wild break for the river and were shot or drowned in the swirling waters."²⁴

The engagement ended with 161 insurgents being buried on the field. 300 wounded and surrounded insurgents were taken prisoner, while King's losses were ten killed and seventy-nine wounded. General King's behavior during this engagement was very aggressive and fearless. He repeatedly exposed himself to enemy fire. He personally led many of the charges which led to the final rout. King was recommended for the Congressional Medal of Honor for this action.

After the battle ended, King's men found vast quantities of ammunition, provisions, 2000 bolos, plus many papers and records which showed the full extent of the insurgent plan to seize control of the Philippines from the United States. General Anderson wrote a letter to the Adjutant General of the Army recommending that King be made Major General of Volunteers, for "energy, bravery, and efficiency in battle." Once the Americans gained the initiative, they did not lose it again.²⁵ Two days later, riding to the far front, General King received the surrender of Pasig and some of the smaller towns at the foot of Manila Bay.

In March 1899, General King became very ill as a result of a fever which caused his health to deteriorate to the point where he was relieved of his command.²⁶ He left the Philippines in late May 1899, and was discharged from the service on August 2, 1899, after having served in the Philippines for a little more than five months.²⁷ King's bravery made its mark on his part in the Insurrection, and his brigade went on to further distinguish itself until the Insurrection finally ended with the capture of Emilio Aguinaldo in 1901.

King returned home to a hero's welcome, and after regaining his health in Milwaukee, he was appointed Superintendent of the Michigan Military Academy at Lansing, where he served for several years. During these years King continued to be vitally concerned with the continued development of the United States Army. He was still very much concerned with the infantryman's weapons. After he had witnessed the performance of the Mauser's and Remington's in the hands of the Filipino insurgents, he was convinced that the United States Army must have an infantry rifle superior to any other weapon in the world. Through letters written to the War Department, and articles in the Milwaukee Sentinel, King conducted a campaign which led to the appointment of a commission to study improvements in army weaponry.²⁸

In 1902, a contract was given to the Springfield Armory, in Springfield, Massachusetts, to develop a new standard Army rifle. After extensive testing of many types of rifles, a bolt-action rifle resulted, in 30.06 caliber, with a five-shot magazine utilizing the Mauser 1895 action. It was designated by the Armory the Springfield model 1903.²⁹ In the next few years these rifles completely replaced the older models of the Springfield still in use by the Army. It also replaced the Krag-Jorgenson, when it became apparent that the new rifle had greater accuracy, greater range and velocity, and a faster rate of fire than Krags.³⁰ There were three separate models of the 1903 Springfield, and when World War I began to involve the United States Army, the standard issue was the Springfield model 1903A3, which quickly

showed its worth. American soldiers killed Germans at ranges of more than 800 yards with this rifle, and the enemy came to fear facing American units equipped with them.³¹ After the war, the 1903 Springfield became the standard of excellence around the world, and until the development of the model M-1 Garand just before World War II, remained the standard Army rifle of the United States Army. In the years from before World War I until the late 1920's, Charles King continued to write a daily record of his activities, showing a very active interest in the affairs of the army. In 1929, King was appointed Major General in the Wisconsin National Guard (the highest then attainable rank). Charles died peacefully in his sleep on March 18, 1933, having lived a very full eighty-nine years.

King's accomplishments alone give him a lasting place in the history of the State of Wisconsin. His National Guard service is evidence by itself of that fact. His service in the U.S. Volunteers in the Philippines, his recognition of the superiority of the Krag over the older Springfields, his utilization of them during the Insurrection, and his untiring efforts to improve army rifles through writing campaigns with the resulting model changes stand alone. All show how untiring his devotion to his country. Although he personally made no direct improvements to army rifles, his efforts to improve them stand as a lasting monument to General King.

FOOTNOTES

¹ General Charles King, "Memories Of A Busy Life," Wisconsin Magazine of History, V; No. 3; March, 1922 (Madison: Wisconsin State Historical Society, 1957), p. 235.

² Diary, Brigadier General Charles King, June 11, 1898 - February 5, 1899. (Madison: Wisconsin State Historical Society, June 27, 1898).

³ General Charles King, "Memories Of A Busy Life," "Service With The Regulars," Wisconsin Magazine of History, V; (Madison: Wisconsin State Historical Society, 1957), p. 243.

⁴ Stephen Longstreet, War Cries on Horseback, The Story of the Indian Wars of the Great Plains. (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1970). p. 213.

⁵ Charles King Papers; A volume of telegrams, clippings, and letters. (Madison: Wisconsin State Historical Society).

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ U.S. Army Special Orders, No. 12. June 19, 1898. (From the personal papers of Brigadier General Charles King),

⁸ Guns Magazine, January 1974, (Skokie: Publishers Development Corp.), p. 46.

⁹ U.S. Army General Order No. 9. August 13, 1898. (From the personal papers of Brigadier General Charles King).

¹⁰ Diary, Brigadier General Charles King, September 13, 1898, pp. 86-87.

¹¹ Ibid., September 13, 1898., pp. 88-89.

¹² Ibid., October 2, 1898., pp. 102-103.

¹³ Ibid., September 9, 1898., pp. 82-83.

¹⁴ Ibid., October 3, 1898., pp. 104-105.

¹⁵ Ibid., November 10, 1898., pp. 112-113.

¹⁶ Ibid., November 25, 1898., pp. 114-115.

¹⁷ Ibid., December 21, 1898., p.125.

¹⁸ Ibid., December 29, 1898., p. 129.

¹⁹ Ibid., January 3, 1899., pp. 136-137.

- 20 Ibid., January 11, 1899., pp. 142-143.
- 21 Ibid., January 13, 1899., pp. 145-146.
- 22 James H. Blount, The American Occupation of the Philippines 1898-1912. (New York: Oriole Editions: 1912; re-issued 1973). p. 223.
- 23 Milwaukee Sentinel. March 12, 1899. (From the personal papers of Brigadier General Charles King) (Madison: Wisconsin State Historical Society).
- 24 Diary, Brigadier General Charles King, February 5, 1899.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 U.S. Army General Order No. 70. April 12, 1899.
(From the personal papers of Brigadier General Charles King).
- 27 Milwaukee Sentinel, Sunday, April 30, 1899.
(From the personal papers of Brigadier General Charles King).
- 28 Charles Edward Chapel, The Gun Collectors Handbook of Values. First revised edition. (New York: Coward-McCann Inc., 1947), pp. 257-258, 259.
- 29 Ibid., p. 259.
- 30 Walter Millis, Arms and Men: A Study in American Military History. (New York: Charles Putnam, 1956), p. 178.
- 31 Russell F. Weigley, History of the United States Army. (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1967). p. 464.
- 32 Ibid.

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