

# SHINMIYANGO

## THE OTHER KOREAN WAR



MEDAL OF HONOR & MILITARY HISTORY  
HOMEOFHEROES.COM

*No person was ever honored for  
what he received. Honor has been the  
reward for what he gave.*

~ CALVIN COOLIDGE

By C. Douglas Sterner

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### Preface

Inchon Harbor, Korea (Sept 15, 1950) .....	1
Operation Chromite .....	2
The Mud Flats .....	3
Baldomero Lopez .....	4

### The Hermit Kingdom

The Struggle for Privacy .....	6
Byung in (1866) .....	7
The <i>General Sherman</i> Incident .....	8
Byunginyangyo (The French Invasion).....	11

### Amphibious Assault

The Shinmi Year (1871) .....	14
Yangyo (The Disturbance) .....	19
The Marine Redoubt .....	21

### The Citadel – Valor on Both Sides

Assault on Kanghwa Island .....	22
Tiger Hunters .....	23
Hugh McKee and the Citadel .....	26
Victorious Failure .....	28

<u>Conclusion</u> .....	31
-------------------------	----

<u>Special Acknowledgement</u> .....	35
--------------------------------------	----

<u>Bibliography</u> .....	36
---------------------------	----

### Appendixes

Official Report of R/Admiral John Rodgers .....	38
Official Report of Cpt. McLane Tilton, USMC .....	46
Excerpts from the Diary of Samuel Rogers.....	50
Medal of Honor Recipients .....	52

This electronic book is available for free download and printing from [www.homeofheroes.com](http://www.homeofheroes.com). You may print and distribute in quantity for all non-profit, educational purposes.

## PREFACE

Inchon Harbor, Korea  
September 15, 1950

It had been a long day filled with the sounds of battle. Thousands of frightened young Marines crowded their landing craft. Only five years earlier most of them had been students finishing high school and learning world geography from both textbooks and the accounts of veterans of the world war in Europe and the Pacific. Despite the broad expanse of the World War II Theater most of these young men had never heard of the Asian peninsula of Korea. Probably none could find it on a map.

Still ringing in the ears of the young Marines of the 1st Marine Division were the words of the legendary Leatherneck commander of the first regiment, Colonel Lewis *Chesty* Puller: *"We're the most fortunate of men. Most times, professional soldiers have to wait 25 years or more for a war, but here we are, with only five years wait for this one... We live by the sword, and if necessary, we'll be ready to die by the sword. Good luck. I'll see you ashore."*

The day was almost gone as the landing craft struggled against the treacherous tides to make their way to the shores at Inchon. Wooden scaling ladders protruded from the front of low-profile barges that transported the Marines towards their destination. It was an amphibious assault against three enemies: the soldiers of North Korea, the quickly fading daylight hours, and the infamously dangerous geography of Korea's west coast. Indeed, the 1st Marine Division commander Major General Oliver P. Smith had noted, *"Half the problem was getting to Inchon at all."*



### Operation Chromite

General Douglas MacArthur's most ardent detractors will admit that the surprise amphibious assault at Inchon, dubbed *Operation Chromite*, was a stroke of military genius. In a matter of days, the highly successful operation broke the back of the North Korean invasion of the South and liberated the capitol city of Seoul.

Prior to World War II the Asian peninsula of Korea (Corea) was undivided, first as an independent kingdom, then as a Protectorate of Japan (1910-45). Shortly before World War II came to a close the United States and Russia reached an agreement to divide the peninsula at the 38th parallel, for the purpose of accepting the surrender of Japanese troops. When war ended both nations worked hard to promote friendly governments, Russia suppressing the moderate nationalists and supporting Kim Il Sung in the North, the United States promoting United Nations supervised elections in the south. These elections led to the formation of the Republic of South Korea in August 1948. The following month the inhabitants north of the 38th parallel responded by establishing the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). For the first time in history the peninsula was divided into north and south Korea.



On Sunday, June 25, 1950, the North Koreans attempted to reunite the two nations of the Asian peninsula. At exactly 4:00 A.M. nearly 100,000 DPRK soldiers, supported by tanks and 130 aircraft, attacked across the border. Three days later the capitol of Seoul, just fifty miles south of the border between the two countries, had fallen to the North. Within weeks Republic of Korea, U.S., and U.N. forces had been pushed all the way back to Pusan on the southeast coast. The NKPA (North Korea People's Army) held most of the peninsula and appeared close to uniting their land under the banner of Communism.

Throughout the months of July and August the United States moved quickly to shore up defenses at Pusan with supplies and an infusion of new troops. Throughout the period, from his headquarters in Japan, General Douglas MacArthur continued to hammer out the details for landing a counterattack, beginning with an invasion at Inchon.

Actually, Operation Chromite was planned and proposed in early July when the war in Korea was barely a week old. It was typically *MacArthuresque*—transporting a large force completely around the enemy to land behind them, thus blocking supply routes and cutting off any retreat. The harbor at Inchon afforded all strategic requirements:

- It was located almost directly opposite Pusan, far to the enemy's rear flank. A successful invasion would cut off the NKPA from their command in the north, as well as their supply routes.
- According to military intelligence reports the harbor was only lightly defended. The NKPA had committed the bulk of their invading force...some seven full divisions, to the effort at Pusan.
- Inchon was located only ten miles from the Seoul, the South Korean capitol, which was now under NKPA control.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff approved MacArthur's planned invasion early in the war. The course of events in and around Pusan delayed implementation and changed the schematics of what was originally planned to commence on July 22nd with an assault by the 1st U.S. Cavalry. The 1st Cavalry was thrown instead into Korea east of Taejon, and General MacArthur turned his attention to the 1st and 5th Regiments of the 1st Marine Division to lead the Inchon invasion, along with the men of MacArthur's sole reserve unit in Japan, the Army's 7th Infantry Division.

D-Day was September 15<sup>th</sup>. Nearly 70,000 American soldiers and Marines approached Inchon in a task force of 320 warships supported by four aircraft carriers. At 5 A.M. Marine Corsairs struck the small island of Wolmi-do, followed within an hour by the initial Marine landing. Half an hour later the small island at the approach to Inchon was under American control and 108 enemy had been killed, 136 captured. Marine casualties were light...only seventeen Americans wounded.

While the island was the focus of the initial assault, the bulk of the X Corps assault force pulled back into the deeper waters of the Kanghai Bay. The primary assault on Inchon itself would be much more difficult. General O. P. Smith had been more than astute in his observation that *"Half the problem was getting to Inchon at all."* Despite all of the tactical advantages Inchon posed for an amphibious assault to turn the tide of war in Korea, all of the geographical characteristics were negative.

#### The Mud Flats

The city of Seoul sits on the Han River, which runs northwest to spill into Kanghai Bay, and the Yellow Sea. The infamous coastal tides are among the most dangerous in the world and have caused sand carried by the Han and numerous smaller rivers to create large beds of soft mud. When the high tides are running the swift currents of two to three knots (and sometimes up to ten knots), make navigation extremely dangerous. When the tides recede, hundreds of yards of mud flats extend outward from the shoreline. An invading force approaching from the sea could quickly sink up to its knees while it struggled to gain the firmer ground of the peninsula.



The men of the Third Battalion, 5th Marines that landed at Wolmi-do came in with the high tide, a tide range of 36 feet. When the tide withdrew the island was surrounded by a sea of mud separating the American force from the mainland as well as the rest of the assault force. The main assault planned to return with the high tide nearly twelve hours later to land on the mainland itself. The timing meant that their small landing craft would have to struggle against the currents, negotiate the treacherous rocks and mud flats, reach the shoreline, and disgorge the Marines. Upon landing, the Marines would face a 16-foot sea wall, which they planned to scale with the ladders carried in each LST. There would be only about two hours of daylight to reach the shore, scale the walls, and set up their defensive positions. It was a formidable, frightening task, for young men unaccustomed to war. It was made worse by the fact that the soldiers of the NKPA now knew the Americans were coming.

September 15, 1950

3:00 PM

Riding the crest of the incoming tide, the ships of the American task force carefully began their second approach to the harbor at Inchon. Battleships filled the air with a hail of rockets; and explosions erupted all along the Korean shoreline. At 3:35 p.m. the men of the 1st Marine Division began loading in their landing craft. The LCVPs each carried 22 men and the needed scaling ladders. These shallow draft flat-bottom boats were well-suited for shallow waters. Most would come in with the tide, unload at the shoreline, and then remain beached throughout the night as the tide withdrew.

The Marines planned to strike at two locations, the remaining two battalions of the 5th Marine Regiment unloading at Red Beach while the entire 1st Regiment would forge its way across two miles of mud flats covered by shallow water, to land at Blue Beach.

Baldomero Lopez

At 5:33 P.M. the first landing craft reached Red Beach and dropped its gate. Frightened but determined Marines quickly lobbed grenades over the sea wall to discourage any enemy soldiers awaiting their arrival. When the scaling ladders were in place the assault began. From the rear of one of the landing craft a photographer snapped a picture. Leading the way with only his back visible to the camera was 25-year-old Marine Corps First Lieutenant Baldomero "Punchy" Lopez. The young officer from Tampa, Florida would not only command his Marines into the foray.... he would lead them.

All along Red Beach the Marines scaled the walls from which they were met with a tremendous volley of fire by the enemy. Lieutenant Lopez led his Third Platoon of Company A towards a nearby trench, killing a dozen North Korean soldiers in the process. During the opening ten minutes of the invasion however, eight Marines were also killed.



Lieutenant Lopez noted the heaviest enemy fire coming from two nearby bunkers. Quickly he destroyed the first, and then ordered his men to provide covering fire while he crawled towards the second. Nearing the enemy position, the brave lieutenant rose to throw a grenade. A sudden burst of automatic fire raked Baldomero's body, shattering his right arm and puncturing his chest. Thrown backward by the force of the enemy bullets, the armed grenade fell from his shattered hand.

Fighting intense pain and weak from loss of blood, Lieutenant Lopez dragged his body forward in an effort to retrieve and throw the grenade with his one remaining good arm. He was unable to grasp it firmly and realized it would detonate within seconds, killing or wounding some of his nearby American Marines. Unwilling to risk their lives, Lieutenant Baldomero Lopez pulled the grenade into the crook of his good arm and rolled over on it. Absorbing the full impact of the explosion, he was instantly killed, but his Marines were saved.



General MacArthur later referred to the landing at Inchon as one of the Marine Corps' "finest hours." By nightfall, most of the major objectives had been achieved. By the following morning Inchon was secure. More than 300 enemy soldiers had been killed, nearly 1,500 wounded. The Marines lost 20 men killed in action, 187 wounded.

Twelve days later Gunnery Sgt. Harold Beaver ripped down the North Korean flag and raised the Stars and Stripes over the Government House in Seoul.

The shattered body of Lieutenant Baldomero "Punchy" Lopez was returned to his hometown of Tampa for burial. Less than a year after his death, on August 30, 1951, his parents were invited to the Pentagon where Secretary of the Navy Dan A. Kimball presented them a Medal of Honor in recognition of their son's heroism and sacrifice.

First Lieutenant Lopez was the first of 42 Marines to receive the Medal of Honor during the Korean War of 1950-53. He was not, however, the first Marine to earn the Medal of Honor for heroism in Korea.

Little known and rarely remembered by most Americans, was the amphibious assault United States Marines and Navy Bluejackets had made in these same waters nearly 75 years earlier. Barely ten miles from where Lieutenant Lopez had led his men into battle and sacrificed his life, a young Naval lieutenant had similarly led his men into armed combat. In the battle that followed, six marines and nine sailors earned the first Medals of Honor to be awarded for foreign service.\* It was the Korean campaign of 1871, known to the Koreans as.... Shinmiyangyo.

\*During the American Civil War several Medals of Honor were awarded for the Naval battle at Cherbourg, France, when the *U.S.S. Kearsarge* sank the *C.S.S. Alabama*. While these Medals were awarded for service outside the United States, the Medals of Honor awarded for action in Korea in 1871 were the first awarded for foreign service against an enemy of the United States.

## The Hermit Kingdom

For centuries the Orient has been both mysterious and fascinating to European and Western cultures. Perhaps much of that mystery was due the fact that, for the most part, little was known of the Orient and its people. Western literature often portrayed these Asian inhabitants as barbarians...ruthless, backward, and aggressive. For the most part nothing could have been further from the truth.

The people that lived on the Korean peninsula that jutted out from the Manchurian border and separated the Sea of Japan from the Yellow Sea were indeed a very private culture. When their privacy was invaded, they could also be brutal in their treatment of invaders. Even so, they were a very civilized people that had developed a great sense of nationalism during the Choson (Yi) Dynasty, one of the longest running dominations by any dynasty in world history.

Founded by Yi Songgye in 1392, the Choson Dynasty prospered under a people that felt threatened to the north by Manchuria and to the west by Japan. Strong leadership and a highly developed value system of Confucianism welded the people together, despite occasional uprisings from within. The strong monarchical system protected the Kingdom of Choson from both philosophical and armed invasions from outside the realm.

Throughout the centuries Choson merchants and leaders engaged in a limited contact with Japan and a slightly more expanded contact with China. So intense was the isolationism within Choson, however, that when the first recorded Europeans landed on the peninsula in 1628 (three Dutch sailors who were shipwrecked off Cheju Island), they were not allowed to leave. They were treated well by their rescuers and two of them were later killed defending Choson against the Manchurians. The third took the Korean name Pak Yon and lived his full life in the capitol at Seoul.

Similar treatment was given to survivors of another Dutch shipwreck in 1653. Though 15 years later some of them were able to escape the maritime world understood that if you went aground in Korean waters you would disappear for eternity. This, like the pre-Columbus tales of falling off the edge of the flat planet, added an even more ominous mystery to a little-known kingdom. (One of the survivors from the 1653 shipwreck was Hendrick Hamel who later wrote about his adventures in Korea, providing European readers with their first glimpse of what was becoming the *Hermit Kingdom*.)



During the 19th century both European and western traders began looking to the Orient as fertile grounds for commerce. In 1844 the U.S. Congress considered, then tabled a motion to open trade with Korea. Over the following 20 years, however, the Orient was subjected to increased but unwanted interest from foreign shipping and trading concerns. On March 31, 1854, the United States and Japan signed the Treaty of Kanagawa opening Japanese ports to American ships. Six years later the French and British invaded China, seizing the capitol at Peking. While the Chinese fought to hold their capitol, Russia moved in from the east to easily grab 350,000 square miles of Chinese lands in the Ussuri territory. On the Korean peninsula the Choson people watched the western incursion into the Orient with fear and concern.

The year 1864 brought a change of leadership to Korea when Ch'olechong, the 25th king of the Choson Dynasty, died without leaving a male heir. In accordance with her rights under custom and law the queen mother took possession of the king's seal, the symbol of enthronement. After consulting with her advisors and statesmen she adopted Kojong, the second son of Yi Ha-ung. Kojong was only thirteen years old when he ascended to the throne, and in his place his father ruled the Choson Kingdom. Adopting the title *Taewongun*, literally interpreted "Prince of the Great Court", Yi Ha-ung became one of the strongest leaders of the Choson Dynasty during a critical period of trial, crisis, and increased interest from abroad.

In the name of his son King Kojong, the Taewongun initiated his best efforts to bring harmony to the kingdom, while resisting any influences from the outside world. He quickly recognized that treaties with western nations would most probably be one sided, as had been the treaties signed with Japan and China. These would benefit no one but the westerners. (The term *westerner* not only applied to nations of the western hemisphere, but also those of Europe, which was west of Korea.)



Taewongun also firmly believed that foreign missionaries with their Christian teachings were diluting the kingdom with unwanted ideas. Under King Ch'olechong persecution of Christians in Korea had eased for the first time in the kingdom's history. The Taewongun's efforts to return his country to the traditions of Confucianism ultimately led to the death of nine of the twelve French Catholic priests in Korea, and nearly 10,000 of their native converts.

### Byung-in (1866)

The year that *Westerners* called "1866" was known as "Byung-in" in Korea, a country that had now become known as "The Hermit Kingdom" because of its strong policies of isolationism. In Byung-in a series of events set in motion the unwanted intrusion of foreign nations on Korean soil. These would eventually topple one of the world's longest lasting ruling dynasties. In Byung-in the

French invaded Korea in what became known as the Byunginyangyo...."Western disturbance" *yangyo* in the year *byung in*.\*

During the Taewongun's February 1866 crackdown on the spread of Catholicism in his kingdom, three priests managed to escape to China including Father Felix-Clair Ridel. Upon learning of the fate of the Catholics in Korea, French consul Gabriel Deveria boarded the gunboat of Rear Admiral Gustav Roze, commander of the French empire's Far Eastern Squadron. Roze immediately cancelled plans to sail for Nagasaki, while Ridel forwarded the sad news to the French diplomat in China, Henri de Bellonet. On July 13 Bellonet sent a dispatch to Admiral Roze informing him,

*"In receiving the news of the general massacre of Christians and missionaries in Korea, you have no doubt thought like myself that the slightest delay in the punishment of this bloody outrage could result in serious endangerment to the 500 (other) missionaries preaching in China."*

Meanwhile, the French foreign minister also sent a dispatch to the American consul in Peking suggesting a joint French American expedition. The American people were weary of war, this request coming only a year after the end of the great Civil War. More importantly though, the recent deaths of the French priests and native Catholics had no direct bearing on the United States or its own citizens. Without any personal reason to join the French in the foray to Korea, the American consul declined the invitation.

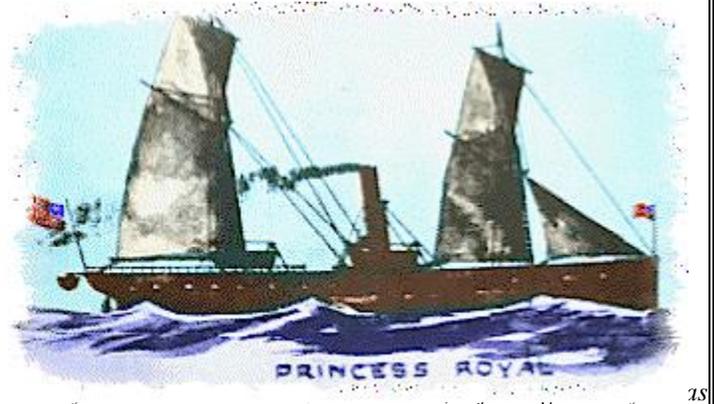
The American denial was something of a setback for the French but Rear Admiral Roze consolidated his fleet in Qufu, China, for a planned early fall incursion in Korea. Then some unexpected uprisings in Indochina, which included part of the far-flung French empire, delayed him. During that delay a *mysterious* incident occurred that finally made the actions of the Hermit Kingdom personal for the United States.

"In August, 1866, the American schooner General Sherman, a merchant vessel, was at anchor in the Ping-Yang River, Korea, when, for some reason never sufficiently ascertained, the treacherous natives unexpectedly sent fire-rafts against the vessel on a dark night, boarder her in the ensuing confusion and murdered the crew to the last man."

From: Acts of Bravery  
by W.F. Beyer and O.F. Keydel  
1907

### The General Sherman Incident

Early western reports surrounding the disappearance and loss of the *General Sherman* were rooted in the mystery and erroneous perceptions most foreigners had of the Hermit



\* Many historical references translate the Korean characters *pyong* and the French invasion as *Pyonginyangyo*.

Kingdom. There really wasn't much mystery to the incident. As early as 1868 Korean officials acknowledged in a letter to Captain John Febiger of the *USS Shenandoah* that the *General Sherman* had made an unauthorized entry into Korea, and that all crewmen had been killed. The events leading to the incident were also recorded in detail in the *Kojong Sil-rok* by a Korean eyewitness.

During the American Civil War, the *Princess Royal* had served first as a Confederate blockade-runner. She was captured by the *USS Unadilla* near Charleston, SC, in 1863 and was refitted as a US Navy gunship. As such, she was well armored and heavily armed with two 12-inch cannon. Following the war, she was purchased by W. B. Preston, an American businessman, who put her into service as a merchant vessel. Mr. Preston retained the heavy cannons that had served the *Princess Royal* well during the war, realizing that there were also dangers to be faced when she went to sea as a merchant ship.

In August of 1866 the *Princess Royal* was under contract to the British firm of Meadows & Co. out of Tientsin, China. The vessel was commanded by Captain Page and Chief Mate Wilson and was loaded with cotton, tin sheets, glass and other marketable goods. When the *General Sherman* steamed out of Chefoo, China, on August 9 the only other westerners aboard the ship were the vessel's owner Mr. Preston, a British trader named George Hogarth, and a Protestant missionary named Robert Jermain Thomas. Reverend Thomas accompanied the expedition as an interpreter.

The crew included thirteen Chinese and three Malays who had been recruited primarily from the bars in Tientsin. These boasted that should the Koreans refuse to trade with the ship, they would loot the cities and return with Korean gold and other valuables. From the moment the *General Sherman* began her journey she was an incident looking for a circumstance.



On August 16 the *General Sherman* entered the inlet that forms the mouth of the Tae-dong River that flows inland towards the Korean city of Pyongyang. There the crew dropped anchor near Kupsumun, hoping to make contact with local merchants and trade the goods aboard the merchant ship for Korean leopard skins, rice, paper, gold and ginseng.

Governor Park Kyoo Soo of Pyung-an sent an emissary to meet with the American ship's captain and inform him that the kingdom did not engage in trade with foreigners. Though the *General Sherman* was unwelcomed in their waters, the Koreans did offer to provide provisions to hurry it on its way to other regions.

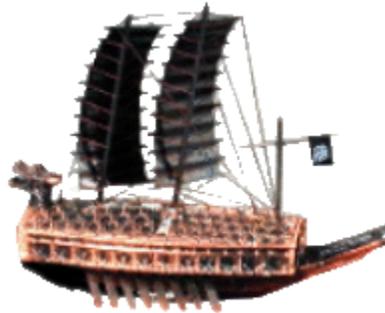
As soon as the Korean emissary departed to report back to Park Kyoo Soo, Captain Page hoisted anchor and steamed up the Tae-dong River towards Pyongyang. The Crow Rapids halted his unauthorized progress and the *General Sherman* anchored for the night. The following morning an unusually high tide arose after a night of heavy rain and lifted the Tae-dong River to record levels. The *General Sherman* was able to cross the rapids and proceed further inland towards Pyongyang. There Governor Park sent requested provisions to the ship with a message: "You have reached the walls of our city when asked to stay put at Keupsa Gate. You insist on trading with us, which is forbidden. Your actions have created a grave situation so much so that I must inform my King and then decide what to do with you people." The message was delivered by Governor Park's aid, Yi Hong-ik.

Tension mounted on both sides in the days that followed while Governor Park awaited a decision from the king as to how to deal with the invaders. Curious civilians crowded the riverbanks during daylight hours to watch the strange ship from the West. On August 27 Yi Hong-ik was invited back aboard the *General Sherman* and then kidnapped. (Some accounts state that a small party of the American ship's crew attempted to leave the vessel in a small boat, which was then pursued by Yi Hong-ik, resulting in his captivity aboard the *General Sherman*.)

Late in August the king's edict finally reached Governor Park: "*Tell them to leave at once. If they do not obey, kill them.*" But by now it was no simple matter. The waters of the Tae-dong River had returned to normal and the encroaching *General Sherman* was trapped inland.

Differing accounts relate conflicting sequences of events in the last days of the *General Sherman*. What is generally agreed to by most reports is that on August 31 the cannons of the merchant vessel fired into a crowd along the shore, killing a dozen Korean soldiers and many civilians. The soldiers withdrew to plan their own attack on the *General Sherman* and hostilities continued for four days with civilians bombarding the ship with rocks and flaming arrows. The *General Sherman* responded with canon fire.

On September 5th Governor Park ordered the *General Sherman* destroyed and the Koreans prepared "turtle boats" for their attack.



Kobuksons, the fire-breathing turtle boats of Korea, were the legendary invention of Yi Sun-sin during the Japanese invasion of Korea (1592-1598). Purportedly the small boats were overlaid with iron plating and covered with spikes to prevent the enemy from boarding them. Ports along the side allowed oars to protrude, with guns also pointing in all directions. The boats' flat bottoms enabled them to navigate easily in shallow water. They were also extremely maneuverable.

The unique boat got its name from a large turtlehead at the bow, which served both as an efficient ramming device and also a mechanism for spewing clouds of noxious sulfur smoke. Some were even reported to have contained fire-throwing cannon. Korean folklore and legend recalled how, with a fleet of only 80 such ships, Admiral Yi victoriously turned back a Japanese fleet of 800 warships.

The 19th century turtle boat that attacked the *General Sherman* was probably a makeshift vessel—a hastily converted fishing boat that was quickly covered with tin and cowhides. It began firing its outdated cannon when it neared the stranded vessel. In this first assault the legendary Korean warship was unsuccessful, its shells bouncing harmlessly off the thick armored plating of the *General Sherman*.

The Koreans then tied together two smaller boats loaded with firewood, sulfur and salt peter. After setting them ablaze the two boats were dispatched on a collision course with the American vessel. The fire went out before the boats reached their destination. A second set of fireboats was

readied but was pushed away by the crew when it reached the merchant ship. A third set of fireboats reached their destination, turning the *General Sherman* into an inferno that took many men to their death. Those members of the crew that jumped into the river and swam to shore were quickly captured by the Koreans and beaten to death. The only survivor was Yi Hong-ik, who was rescued in the confusion.

The account recorded in *Kojong Sil-rok* states, "*The enemy ship was totally burned down and there remained only her iron ribs that looked like posts driven into the ground.*" Other later reports stated that the ship was not totally destroyed, and US Naval archives indicate that the ship may have been returned in 1868 and placed in service as a civilian steamship until she sank on January 10, 1874, near Wilmington, North Carolina.

Whether completely destroyed on the Tae-dong River in 1866, partially destroyed and then hidden by the Koreans, or returned to the United States covertly at a later date, the fact remained that the *General Sherman* disappeared on September 5, 1866'—along with every last member of her crew. All that was ever publicly known or seen of the ship's demise were the two large cannon that were removed for display at the armory of Pyongyang, and her anchor chains which were hung from the East Gate Tower as a symbol of the Korean victory. These served as a warning to other invaders.

#### Byunginvangyo

The inland capitol city of Seoul is built on the Han River, which flows northwest into the Yellow Sea. The convergence of the Han River with the Imjin and Yeasung rivers near Kanghwa Island has filled the seaward inlet with silt which, when the tide is out, becomes miles of mud beds. These, coupled with some of the world's most extreme tides, make the water route to Seoul both difficult and dangerous. At the mouth of the Han River sits Kanghwa Island, Korea's fifth largest island. Like a vigilant sentry, Kanghwa guards the only water route to the capitol. Throughout the centuries the island had been built up with a series of well-established fortifications. Because of the resistance of the Hermit Kingdom to outside countries, very little charting of the dangerous surrounding channel had been accomplished.

While awaiting the arrival of his fleet to make his own incursion into Korea, Rear Admiral Roze determined to conduct a reconnaissance of the area before making his punishing assault on the barbarians who had killed the Catholic priests and their converts. With three ships carrying 65 men, including escaped priest Father Ridel, he departed Qufu on September 18. Five days later Admiral Roze passed Kanghwa Island to steam up the Han River towards Seoul.

*"It is deplorable that the dirty foreigners invaded deep into the Han River,"* Taewongun announced. He then ordered his military commanders to propose a plan to resist the invading French ships. Before the Korean military could mount opposition however, Admiral Roze sailed his ships back to Chefoo. *"We let those dirty mobsters keep their lives only because we put emphasis on generosity,"* Taewongun subsequently proclaimed.



Admiral Roze had not left Korean waters as a gesture of benevolence to the Hermit Kingdom's preference for privacy, however. Instead he returned to assemble a fleet of sufficient size to mount an armed attack. His two-week exploratory mission had convinced the Admiral that he did not have enough men to attack the Korean capital, so he planned instead for an invasion of Kanghwa Island at the entrance of the Han River. With a fleet of seven ships and a force of 600 men he departed China on October 11 for a return to Korea.

October 13th the French flotilla reached Korean waters and anchored off Mulchi Island. With the dawn on the following day a landing force of 450 men went ashore on the north end of Kanghwa Island. The French soldiers marched quickly towards the town of Kapkotji and the Kapgot Fortress. It was deserted and the French moved boldly through the gates.



Taewongun was aware of the French invasion and held an emergency meeting of the State Council in Seoul on October 15, in order to form a Special Defense Command under Yi Kyong-ha. On October 16, as Yi Kyong-ha was taking steps to secure the Han River and the mainland, Admiral Roze sent a force from the French-held Kapgot Fortress to Kanghwa City. When the troops reached the northeast gate, the Koreans opened fire. It was the first combat action of the 1866 western disturbance, the Byunginyangyo.

The skirmish was brief and French gunfire drove the defenders from the walls of Kanghwa City. Then the invaders marched back to their captured bivouac at the Kapgot Fortress. The following day they returned and, upon finding the city deserted, seized the administrative building. They plundered the city for spoils of war. In addition, they entered the royal library of the administration building, which had been previously inhabited by Governor Yi In-ki. The French took vast quantities of books and ancient manuscripts including irreplaceable records of the culture of the Hermit Kingdom. These remain in French possession to this day.

Over the ten days that followed Admiral Roze headquartered his force out of Kanghwa City, while buttressing the defenses of the separately walled administration building for an expected counterattack. Rumors of a Korean response to the invasion had circulated widely, but by October 25th no sign of the Korean forces had been seen. The following day the French Admiral ordered two platoons under the direction of Lieutenant Commander Olivier Thouars to cross the Kanghwa Straits on the north end of the island to gather intelligence on the Korean activities. As the soldiers began unloading from their small boats on the Korean mainland they were met with a withering fire from the village. The invading soldiers fixed bayonets and charged the village amid the hail of fire. The

Koreans pulled back to the protective walls of the Munsu Mountain Fortress. The French withdrew across the strait and back to Kanghwa, two of their number dead and many more wounded.

To prevent the Koreans from using the boats that dotted Kanghwa Island against him, Admiral Roze ordered their complete destruction. On November 2 his ships bombarded the naval headquarters of Jyonggi province, destroying even more of the Korean ships. Meanwhile the Taewongun amassed a force of nearly 10,000 Korean troops on the mainland, well within sight of Kanghwa from across the strait. For the French the situation was now turning perilous.

On November 7th Admiral Roze received word that a large force of Koreans had landed on the southern coast of Kanghwa and occupied the Buddhist monastery at Chondung. Two days later he ordered Commander Marius Olivier to attack the Chondung temple with 150 men.

Korean forces prepared for the enemy's arrival in a fashion that served them well. They remained well hidden while the French soldiers approached. With the exception of the earlier landing on the mainland, the French had thus far encountered little resistance. As Commander Olivier proceeded towards the temple without incident it appeared, he had little to fear. He moved within 300 meters of the monastery wall without any sign of the Koreans and then sent a scouting party towards the front gate. Suddenly the Koreans sprang from their places of concealment, quickly wounding nearly thirty men and five French officers. Commander Olivier pulled his forces back a safe distance to treat the wounded, and then retreated to Kanghwa City before darkness fell.

By this time Admiral Roze had reached the conclusion that there would be no negotiations with the Taewongun, no reparations for past grievances, and no hope for agreement or treaties to open the Hermit Kingdom to the outside world. On November 11 he burned Kanghwa City to the ground and the French fleet left Korean waters, their mission an utter failure. The Byunginyangyo was over.

The French invasion of 1866 only served to galvanize the resistance of the Hermit Kingdom against the outside world. It seemed when foreign ships arrived it meant only pillage, plunder, and death for Korean citizens. Rear Admiral Roze and French diplomat Henri de Bellonet were reprimanded by the French Government for their role in the fiasco. Meanwhile Taewongun rejoiced in his double victory: at Pyongyang over the American ship, and Kanghwa Island over the French fleet. He issued a proclamation establishing an official policy of isolation and had stone tablets erected throughout the Hermit Kingdom reading:

**"Not to fight back when invaded by the Western barbarians is to invite further attacks."**

Unfortunately for members of the United States Navy and Marine Corps, their own politicians and policy makers never took the time to translate the wording on those stone tablets and heed the message.

## Amphibious Assault



Captain McLane Tilton  
USMC\*

*May 16, 1871*

*My dear Nannie,*

*We are really on our way to Korea. I hope what you have read in the papers about the Expedition has not alarmed (sic) you as I do not think we are to have any trouble to speak of, our mission being a peaceful one, and for the purpose only of exacting a reasonable promise from the Korean Govt. that Christian seamen wrecked on their coast may be treated humanely. We have no knowledge of the country, and only very unreliable information in regard to the coast. We are all quite jolly, and every day the crews of our fleet are exercised in the Infantry drill & firing with small arms. Some months ago, a Schooner came up here to trade, and the natives are said to have cut them up, and pickled them, took them in the interior and set them up as curiosities! The French came 3 years ago to avenge their priests, who had been murdered, when they skinned a French (sic) doctor, and crucified him on the beach under the eyes of the Frenchmen who had been driven off, and who were unable to help their friends. Whether this is positively true or not I can't say; but you may imagine it is with not great pleasure I anticipate landing with the small force we have, against a populous country containing 10,000,000 of savages.*

### The Shinmi Year (1871)

The traditional Korean calendar was based on two sets of zodiac cycles (which make a complete cycle every 60 years) and was counted starting from the beginning of the king's reign. Five years had passed since the year Byungin. The year 1871 was the year called "shinmi".

In the intervening period the United States government took a personal interest in the unknown fate of the *General Sherman*. Six months after the incident on the Tae-dong River the *USS Wachusett* was dispatched to Korea under Captain Robert Schufeldt to inquire into the merchant ship's fate. The mission was aborted due to bad weather. Then in 1868 Captain John C. Febiger steamed the *USS Shenandoah* to the mouth of the Tae-dong River, again seeking information on the fate of the *General Sherman* and issuing demands for reparations.

\*

#### **Note:**

The letters of McLane Tilton as used here have been edited for brevity. The text, however, is presented exactly as the Marine commander wrote it in his letters home.

*(From the personal papers of Captain McLane Tilton, USMC - Archives and Library, Historical Branch, HQ, USMC)*

Korean officials were hesitant to release very much information about the destruction of the ship, fearing any acknowledgement might require them to pay those reparations. They did send an official letter to Captain Febiger confirming the death of the ship's crew. The Koreans also asked Captain Febinger why the Americans wanted to come so far to make a treaty. *"We have been living 4,000 years without any treaty with you, and we can't see why we shouldn't continue to live as we do,"* they stated.

Finally, in April 1870, the U.S. State Department instructed its foreign minister in China, Frederick F. Low, to depart for Korea to negotiate the safe treatment of shipwrecked sailors. He was also empowered to establish a trade treaty with the Hermit Kingdom, and to pursue the investigation into the loss of the *General Sherman*. Rear Admiral John Rodgers, commander of the Asiatic fleet based in Japan, was tasked with supporting the diplomatic mission. Minister Low was perhaps the ideal diplomat to negotiate with the elusive Hermit Kingdom, having gained uncommon understanding of the Orient after serving an apprenticeship with the Boston firm of Russell, Sturgis and Company that traded extensively there. Perhaps because of this insight into the Oriental culture, Low was not optimistic about his mission, but dutifully set about to increase the chances of success by enlisting the support of the Chinese government.

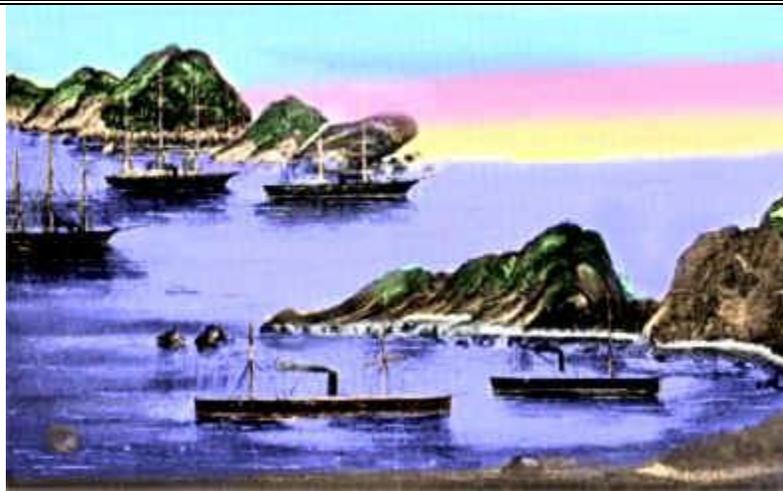


By May of 1871 Admiral Rodgers had assembled the five ships of his fleet and a force of 1,230 men. The *USS Colorado*, a pre-Civil War steam screw frigate that had seen action in the Union blockade off Mobile, Alabama, served as the Admiral's flagship. Also quartered on the *Colorado* were Minister Low and Captain McLane Tilton, who commanded the Asiatic Fleet's Marine Guard.



The *Alaska* and *Benicia* were near sister ships, each 250 feet in length, heavily armed and boasting a powerful 60-pounder, rifled gun. Only two years old, they were the most modern ships of the fleet. *Palos*, an iron-hulled, screw-driven tug had been converted to a gunboat and joined the Asiatic Squadron in 1870. En route it became the first U.S. warship to pass through the newly constructed Suez Canal. The *Monocacy* was a side-wheel gunboat that mounted six big guns and was capable of heavy bombardment.

In 1854, less than 20 years earlier, Commander Matthew Calbraith Perry had steamed into Japan with a far less impressive fleet of warships. He had intimidated the Japanese into negotiating the Treaty of Kanagawa which opened Japanese ports to American shipping and guaranteed the safe treatment of shipwrecked sailors. Minister Low's misgivings about the success of negotiating a similar treaty with Korea aside, Admiral Rodgers had certainly developed an armed force capable of intimidating the Hermit Kingdom into acceding to the American demands.



Shortly after Captain Tilton penned his May 16th letter home the five ships steamed out of Japan. They sailed around the Korean peninsula, past Inchon, and towards the mouth of the Han River leading to Seoul.

*May 26, 1871*

*My dear Nannie,*

*We moved a little nearer our destination since I last wrote, and are now at anchor in a sort of Bay filled with islands where we will remain until we find out by surveying, which is the most practicable way to get over the next 20 miles, which will bring us to our journey's end. The middle of next week will no doubt find us in communication with the (Korean) authorities. The islands in our vicinity are inhabited by a few people only, living in thatched huts in the valleys, and all dress in white. They are seen everyday clustering on the hilltops, where they squat and I suppose wonder what we are about to do. When our boats are sailing about & meet native boats, the latter always change their course, not appearing to desire any communication; and upon our boats landing on the beach, they get in theirs.*

Captain Tilton wrote this letter from the squadron's temporary anchorage near Eugenie Island (Ipp'a-do), where the ships arrived on May 23. For several days after arrival, soundings were taken and the unstable waters off the western Korean coast were charted for safer navigation. On May 29 Admiral Rodgers steamed his ships north, past Inchon and towards the entrance to the Han River. The squadron reached Boise Island the following day. As Captain Tilton had surmised in his letter home, the Americans received their first official visit from the Koreans.

That first visit was cordial but tense. Three Korean diplomats of the 3rd and 5th ranks were welcomed aboard the *Colorado*. Minister Low opted not to meet with them himself, deputizing his acting secretary Edward B. Drew to conduct the interview. Mr. Drew assured the Koreans that the American squadron's mission was of the "non-aggressive disposition". He also informed them that

*"Only (Korean) officials of the first rank, who were empowered to conduct negotiations, could be received (by Minister Low) and to such alone would a full statement of the objects of the expedition be made."*

Before the Korean delegation departed Mr. Low further informed them that the Americans intended to take soundings of the nearby waters and survey the shores. He advised that the effort would not commence for 24 hours, enabling the inhabitants to be notified of the purpose for which the Americans were entering their waterways. When the Koreans failed to protest this intrusion, it was erroneously perceived as an acquiescence to the American plan.

The Kanghwa Strait (also known as the Salee River) flows between Kanghwa Island and the Korean mainland. It was this area of the Korean coast that Admiral Rodgers wished to sound and chart. On the morning of June 1, assuming he had the consent of the Korean officials, Rodgers dispatched a survey party aboard steam launches from the *USS Alaska*, *Benicia*, and *Colorado*. Joining the steam launches was a steam cutter from the *Colorado* and tailing the survey crew at a safe distance were the *Palos* and *Monocacy*. The remainder of the squadron remained at anchorage some six miles away, the draft of their hulls too deep to safely navigate the straits or the shallow waters around Kanghwa.

All seemed well when the steam launches entered the strait and began taking soundings and measurements. Along the coast of Kanghwa Island to the survey party's left ran a series of Korean fortifications, but all were quiet...at first. Slowly the survey party continued northward past a sharp bend in the river. Then, without warning, cannon fire erupted from an elbow shaped fort on the island. An intense fifteen-minute volley of Korean bombardment followed. Looking to their left the survey party could see the walls of the Kwangsunbo Fortress. Known to the Americans as the *Citadel*, the heavily armed fort sat at the top of a conical hill providing an unobstructed view of the straits below. Fortunately for the American survey party, the big guns that protruded from the edges of the fortress were anchored with huge logs, making it difficult for the Korean gunners to lower their barrels. The enemy fusillade, for the most part, sailed harmlessly over the heads of the Americans.

Two seamen from the *USS Alaska's* launch were slightly wounded in the attack, but during the opening volley the *Palos* and *Monocacy* steamed rapidly up the strait and around the bend to rake the Kwangsunbo Fortress with their heavy guns. The fire from the American gunboats drove the Koreans from the walls and the shelling stopped. Then the steam launches, along with the *Palos*, returned to the rest of the squadron's anchorage. The fearless *Monocacy* had pushed its attack too far and was carried by the swift currents around the bend beneath Kwangsunbo. There it ran aground on the rocks. A small hole in the hull of the *Monocacy* was quickly repaired so when the water rose with the incoming tide, the valiant side-wheel warship pulled back to anchorage near Boise'e Island.

Upon learning about the attack on his survey party, Admiral Rodgers initially considered preparing his forces for a ground assault the following. "Preparations for this were made," he later wrote in his official report, "but upon consideration it was concluded to wait for the next neap tides, when the currents will be less violent than during the prevalence of the spring tides, which are now



running." After conferring with Minister Low, Rodgers elected to set aside a brief period of time for the Korean government to offer an official apology. The time limit agreed upon was ten days, after which if no apology was forthcoming, the fortifications on Kanghwa Island would be assaulted and destroyed.

On the island itself Colonel Ching sent a courier to Seoul with a message for the king. It stated:

*"Two sailing vessels with two masts (Palos and Monocacy) have suddenly forced their way into Sun-shih Passage. As this is a most important pass leading up into the river, ever since the attack on our troops in Byuing in, we have increased the guard, and done everything to make it secure: even our own public and private vessels, if they have no river pass, are not allowed to go rushing about...The forces stationed in the Pass accordingly opened their guns to prevent them going by."*

*June 4, 1871*

*My dear Nan,*

*We are all as hearty as bucks, and full of having a bang at the Koreans before very long. On June 1st we started our Gunboats "Palos" and "Monocacy", with four little steam launches, to make soundings higher up the River Salee, and when they reached a mud fort on a point of the River, the Koreans opened on them without a moments warning.*

*Their guns are very rude, seemed to be lashed to logs, and cannot be trained except on a point beforehand, which, when the vessel nears, they touch them off! The vessels were not struck at all.*

*I was not with the party, but you may be sure we all will be, when we make our next advance up the river, which we probably will very soon, and give them a good drubbing too, for firing on our little vessels, without giving any warning.*

*Most affectionately Your husband,  
McLane Tilton*



### Yangyo (The Disturbance)

At ten o'clock on Saturday morning, June 10, 1871, the *USS Palos* and *Monocacy* departed the squadron's anchorage near Boise'e Island for the Kanghwa Strait once again. This time the *Palos* towed a long line of smaller boats... twenty-two of them in all, each loaded with US Marines and Navy bluejackets. An apology from the Korean government had not been forthcoming so Admiral Rodgers had assembled a force to *teach them a lesson*.

Overall command of the expedition was under Commander Homer C. Blake of the *U.S.S. Alaska*, who was to direct the expedition from the *Palos*. His adjutant general was Lieutenant Commander W. Scott Schley, who decades later would become a leading figure in the Spanish-American War. At his own request, ground forces were placed under Commander Lewis A. Kimberly of the *Benicia*. The landing force was led by Captain McLane Tilton who, with four junior officers, led the 100-man Marine detachment ashore. From the ranks of every ship in the squadron Lieutenant Commander Silas Casey had assembled a bluejacket battalion of 542 sailors. An artillery detachment with seven twelve-pound guns completed the force and was sent ashore under the command of Silas Casey.

The order of battle called for the *Monocacy* to enter the southern opening of the Kanghwa Strait preceded by two steam launches and commence bombardment of the Choji Fortress that guarded the mouth. While the Korean forces were occupied by this naval gunfire, the *Palos* would swing in beneath the fort to unload Marines and Navy bluejackets, then join the *Monocacy* in the middle of the channel to continue the bombardment.

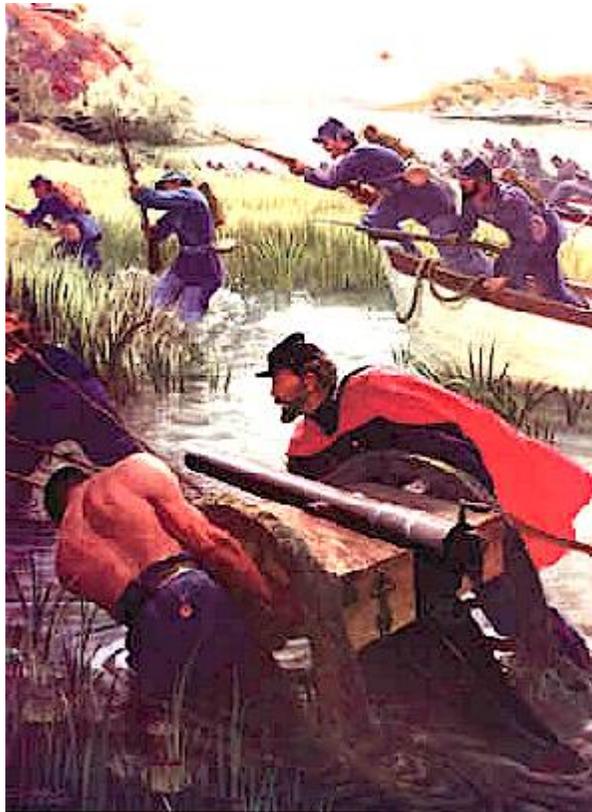
The first phase went well, the *Monocacy's* armament enhanced by two nine-inch guns that had been transferred from the *Colorado*. Leading the way into the channel, Ordinary Seaman John Andrews of the launch from the *Benicia* coolly dropped his lead-weighted line into the water and called out soundings to guide the force around shallow shoals, deadly rocks, and into deeper water. Though cannon fire from the *Monocacy* was met with return fire from the Choji Fortress, Andrews ignored the danger to stay at his post. The first of fifteen Americans to earn the Medal of Honor during the "weekend war in Korea", his citation states:



*"Stationed at the lead in passing the forts, Andrews stood on the gunwale of the Benicia's launch, lashed to the ridge rope. He remained unflinching in this dangerous position and gave his soundings with coolness and accuracy under a heavy fire."* After a short time, the furious pounding of the *Monocacy's* guns drove the Koreans back and the Choji Fortress fell silent.

The amphibious assault did not go as well. The site for the landing south of the Choji Fortress had been chosen because it flanked the enemy's position and left nothing to be feared from the rear. Additionally, the beachhead sloped gently towards the body of the island, as opposed to the sharp rocks and high hills elsewhere along the strait.

The *Palos* swung in towards the shoreline and released its twenty-two small boats. Then she moved back into the strait to join the *Monocacy*. The tide was out so when the landing force reached shallow water, they were faced with a 200-yard beachhead. When they stepped out of the boats to charge the island the Marines and bluejackets sank up to their knees in the soggy mud flats. Along the east of their line where the artillery landed, the howitzers sank up to their axels.



Had the Koreans anticipated the landing and lain in wait, the first Marines to step ashore would have been quickly cut down as they struggled through the mud. Fortunately, the only opposition the landing force met came from the terrain.

So thick and sticky was the mud flat that it sucked boots, socks, and even pants from the Americans struggling to reach firmer ground. Leading the way, McKee's muddy Marines formed a skirmish line and advanced on the Choji Fortress. As they struggled through the brush towards the 100-meter oval wall on the hill overlooking the river, an occasional round peppered their ranks. From time to time movement could be seen in their periphery. Upon reaching the 12-foot stone walls, much of it was found to be in ruin, testament to the *Monocacy's* accuracy. They found the fort abandoned.

### The Marine Redoubt

Due the inhospitable terrain of the mud beds, it was beyond four in the afternoon when the last of the bluejackets reached the solid ground of the island and the last of the howitzers had been pushed and dragged through the mud. While awaiting the arrival of the rest of the force the Marines set about destroying the abandoned weapons that nearly filled the small Korean fort. Some 30 or more smaller guns were destroyed, along with half a dozen 18-pounders and two 32-pounders. The Marines spiked the larger guns and tossed the smaller ones over the walls and into the mud beds below. Stores of enemy powder, provisions, and clothing were burned, and the walls were torn down. The ancient Choji Fortress thereafter became known as the *Marine Redoubt*.



When the bluejackets arrived at the captured fort the Marines, moved off in advance of the main body of the force to make camp for the night. They were accompanied by one howitzer. Captain Tilton set out pickets to guard against any surprises when darkness fell.

The first day of the weekend war concluded well, no casualties, no contact with the enemy beyond the exchange between the *Monocacy* and the defenders on the shore, and the first of the enemy fortifications had fallen without incident. It was a fortunate conclusion considering the physical strain the landing had taken on the Americans. With the Marines to their front, the remainder of the exhausted American force settled in for an all too brief night on Korean shores. For these men, Sunday would not be a day of rest.

In 1973 the Choji (Chojijin) Fortress was reconstructed on Kanghwa, still perched high above the entrance to Kanghwa Strait. A single cannon is displayed inside the fort, now a popular attraction on the island which sees considerable tourism. The pine trees around the fort still carry scars of the many battles fought by the Koreans to protect their shores.



### The Citadel



Valor on Both Sides

### Assault on Kanghwa Island

Reveille sounded with a drum roll at four o'clock in the morning. The respite had been all too brief for the weary marines and bluejackets who had struggled ashore through a sea of mud the previous day. With pickets to the front, they had divided into three reliefs so that at all times one third of the force would be prepared for any attack. Captain Tilton noted in his official after-action report that: "*we bivouacked with our arms by our sides.*"

At midnight when Saturday turned to Sunday morning the Koreans fired a few shots into the American camp from a distance. The exchange was brief and was halted promptly by answering rounds from American howitzers, but it served to remind the landing force that danger was close by.

Each member of the American expedition came ashore with a blanket roll and two days provisions. As they ate their first breakfast ration inside the captured Choji Fortress they could see their 22 landing boats, the two steam launches, and the *USS Monocacy* anchored in the river below. A short distance behind these was the *USS Palos*. During the night the swift currents had carried it into shallow water where it ran aground on the rocks.

The weary Marines could also see the earthen works of the Dukjin Fortress up the Salee River about a mile from the encampment. That would be their next objective. When the main body of the landing force moved up to join them, the Marines were ordered forward. Captain Tilton led his men toward the Dukjin Fortress while the newly arrived bluejackets entered to the Choji Fortress to finish dismantling the enemy's works.



Nearby, a small, heavysset man took photographs. Felice Beato had joined the expedition as its official photographer before it sailed from Japan. Already world renown for his photography, Beato may have in fact been the world's first war correspondent. In 1855 he photographed the Crimean War, then captured the Indian Mutiny of 1858, before taking his lens to China to cover the Anglo-French expedition. In 1863 he moved to Japan and achieved new acclaim for his photographs of the Oriental landscape. It was from there that he was invited to join the expedition to Kanghwa Island, going ashore with the landing force and preserving for posterity some vivid images of the Shinmiyangyo. (Ironically, Admiral Rodgers refused to allow a special correspondent from the *New York Herald*, who was working out of Nagasaki, to join the expedition. In one of his letters to Nannie, Captain Tilton remarked that the correspondent, in his ire, was sure to file disparaging reports about the expedition.)

When the bluejackets completed their work at the Choji Fortress they prepared to move on up the river behind the Marines. Standing atop the works they looked into the lens of Beato's camera long enough for him to capture them on film. At the front of his men stood a young Naval Lieutenant who had been tasked with leading the ground element from the *USS Colorado*. He was Lieutenant Hugh McKee of Kentucky.

Two nights previously Lieutenant McKee had visited with Rev. John Rutherford Matthews, the fleet chaplain, long enough to present him with a letter home to his mother and his fiancé. He parted after indicating to the chaplain that he felt he would not return alive from the expedition. Such premonitions are not uncommon among men facing certain battle, and Lieutenant McKee left his ship the following day to lead his element of the landing party with the confidence of a man destined to live to a ripe old age.

#### Tiger Hunters

With the *Palos* aground, only the *USS Monocacy* remained to provide heavy fire on the enemy positions. While the Marines continued their trek north the latter carefully wended its way through the shallow waters. The small side-wheel gunboat opened fire on the Dukjin Fortress, her big guns turning the fortress walls into rubble.

Nearing the fortress from the rear, Captain Tilton formed his Marines in a skirmish line while awaiting arrival of the main force. When the bluejackets arrived, one third of the Marine force went forward to reconnoiter the walled position. The remainder of the Marines was held in reserve. The fort was silent, and the advancing Americans took no fire. Upon completion of the recon, the full force of Marines and bluejackets entered the fort. It too, was deserted.



From the Official Report of  
Captain McLane Tilton, commanding United States Marines

*We entered this second place, after reconnoitering it, without opposition, and dismantled the battlements by throwing over the fifty or sixty insignificant breech-*

*loading brass cannon, all being loaded, and tore down the ramparts on the front and right face of the work to the level of the treat of the banquette.*

*The ramparts consisted of a pierced wall of chipped granite, with a filling of earth in the interstices and coated over with mortar, giving it the appearance of being more solid than it really was. The cannon was rolled over the cliff into the water...without much trouble. I can not give the weight, but the bore was not over two inches diameter.*

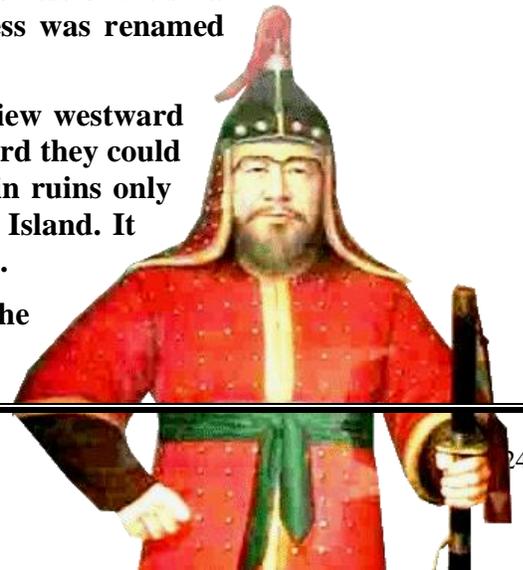
*A photographer...succeeded in taking a negative picture of the place.*



Commander Kimberly's 651-man landing party of Marines and bluejackets had survived the awful landing at the mud beds without opposition. They had then taken the first enemy fort just above their landing point without a shot, and now had taken yet another. It was a great testament to the effectiveness of the offshore naval gunfire. In tribute to prowess of the small warship that had delivered the bulk of it, the Dukjin Fortress was renamed *Fort Monocacy* by the Marines.

From *Fort Monocacy* the Americans had a beautiful view westward across the Salee River and into the Korean mainland. Southward they could see the Marine redoubt (Choji Fortress) which they had left in ruins only hours before. Eastward rose the high mountains of Kanghai Island. It was the view to the north that might have been most disturbing.

*Fort Monocacy* sat at the south end of a sharp bend in the Salee River, beyond which the island jutted sharply into the



river. Along the shoreline was the Elbow Fort that had been first to fire on the American survey party eleven days earlier. Rising 150 feet above it was a cone-shaped hill. At the top of that hill stood Kwangsongbo, a prominent horseshoe shaped fortress. The sight of a large yellow flag quickly erased any doubts that it too would fall without a fight. Nearly twelve feet square it was easily visible from a distance.

In the center of that flag were the characters: **乙巳**. Interpreted, they read "Generalissimo". The commander of the Korean forces himself had pulled his soldiers together for a climactic stand at the Kwangsongbo Fortress, the place the Americans called the *Citadel*.

That commander was General Uh Je-yeon. He had marshaled a force of 3,000\* Korean soldiers, including legendary *Tiger Hunters* from the Yalu River region on the mainland. All of them had sworn to fight to the death against any power that dared to invade the privacy of the "Hermit Kingdom". Later, following the battle, Captain Tilton wrote home that these soldiers: *"fought like tigers, having been told by the King if they lost the place the heads of every body on Kang Hoa (sp) Island on which the forts stood, should be cut off."*

It was still early in the morning; the Dukjin Fortress was only about a mile from the point at which the American force had bivouacked the previous night. While the newly arrived main assault force continued the work of destroying the fortress, Captain Tilton's Marines were ordered to form a skirmish line and begin the arduous task of leading the way to the Citadel. They were also ordered to cover the flank of the rest of the assault force.

Slowly they worked their way through dense foliage, encountering only a few unarmed natives from the local villages. These were ignored as the Marines turned their attention to a more formidable foe, the inhospitable terrain and a rapidly warming sun. Admiral Rodgers later wrote: *"The country is a succession of steep hills, with deep ravines between, over which foot soldiers passed with great fatigue, while the guns (howitzers) were got on only by widening the paths, where there were paths, and by cutting out the bushes and filling up gullies in other places. They were dragged up steep acclivities, by whole companies detailed to help the artillerists, or lowered down from the heights with ropes."*

Captain Tilton later remembered the terrain simply as being: *"Indescribable, resembling a sort of 'chopped sea,' of immense hills and deep ravines lying in every conceivable position."* Despite this the Marines and bluejackets forged ahead, carefully ensuring that their bigger artillery pieces were ever close behind.

Winding their way inland as they fought the terrain, the Korean forces began to probe the advance from the flank. Passing beneath the high hill called Daemoson (Big Mother Mountain) only a short distance from their final destination, the Marines began taking heavy fire from the Koreans above them. Tilton's Marines rushed upward to engage the enemy, reaching the crest of the hill to see the Korean forces on a ridge to their left. With great effort one of the howitzers was moved up the incline to return fire, chasing the Korean soldiers back from their ridge and enabling the advance.

\*It is difficult to accurately determine the actual numbers of soldiers involved on the Korean side. The American force numbered 651 men, though Korean accounts of the battle recount how 350 Korean defenders of the Citadel fought more than 1,000 invading Americans. The American count of the Korean force on the island is probably also rather inflated. Certainly, no more than 500 Koreans and probably far fewer defended Kwangsongbo.

The Citadel was now easily visible, only a few hundred yards distant atop the high hill that rose above the island's peninsula. From the ridge on which the Marines gathered they could see the rugged valley below that gave way to the steep incline to the enemy walls. Along a path leading to the fortress could be seen some 50 yellow flags in a single file, spaced only a few feet apart.

The appearance of the Koreans along the left flank became further cause for concern. If the battle did not go well and these forces moved in behind the Americans, there could be no retreat. Commander Kimberly set up his artillery in two positions to cover the rear, dispatching two big guns to cover the advancing assault. Three of the nine infantry companies were also held in the rear to defend the artillery and cover the flanks, while six companies prepared for the assault on Kwangsungbo.

From the river the Marines and bluejackets could hear the boom of the *Monocacy's* guns as shells rained in a torrent on the enemy fort. It was nearly 11 o'clock in the morning when the main force reached the Marine position opposite the fort. The *real* disturbance in the Shinmi year was about to begin.



#### Hugh McKee and the Citadel

Navy Lieutenant Hugh McKee wiped the sweat from his eyes as he looked intently across the ravine at the fortress the Americans were preparing to attack. It would be Lieutenant McKee's honor to lead the advance as the commander of D Company. This was fitting for the young graduate of the US Naval Academy and son of an American soldier. His father, Colonel McKee, had commanded soldiers at Buena Vista during the war with Mexico. Leading his soldiers into battle, he was first to enter the enemy's works. There Colonel McKee had given his life for his country decades before this moment. Hugh later wrote, "*There never was a McKee that went into battle that was not killed.*"

Noting the small yellow flags that flanked his position, Lieutenant McKee turned to Lieutenant Bloomfield McIlvaine who was charged with leading Company E. "*Mac,*" he said bluntly, "*we must capture one of those flags.*"



And they did! While the force rested on the ridge from their trek to reach the Citadel, four men were dispatched from the companies. They returned with two flags for each of their commanders. Along the line some 15 more of these smaller flags were taken before the battle began. But the flag that really mattered was still flying. It was the large yellow flag bearing the mark of General Uh Je-yeon, still flying over the earthen works of the Citadel.

The Americans began to fire on the fortress from the ridge as the large shells from the *Monocacy* slammed explosively against the earthen walls. Two of the howitzers were brought forward to support the bombardment. The shapes of Korean defenders could be seen darting along the ramparts as the enemy fired back at the ridgeline.

When all was in place the Americans slipped down the slope from their ridge to take up positions in the valley below. From there they would make their charge. Enemy bullets whined overhead but most were most poorly aimed. None-the-less, one enemy round reached out to take the life of Marine Private Dennis Hanrahan. He was the first casualty. There would be more.

As the American commanders aligned their companies in the valley for the final assault, from inside the fortress came the sounds of trumpets and drums, followed by an eerie chanting. The Koreans knew that the Americans were positioning below them for the attack, and their death chant seemed to signal that they were prepared to die in defense of the island. Rising in crescendo over the valley, the chilling sound had a morose effect upon the Americans, causing man to later write: *"It was like nothing human and rang in our ears longer than the terrible clashing of bayonet, cutlass and spear.* Then, along the line in the valley below came another sound—the command to attack!

Rising up, the bluejackets and Marines forged their way up the steep hillside. The firing was fierce on both sides. *"The air seemed literally alive with whistling projectiles,"* wrote one veteran. Despite their fatigue the Americans climbed the steep hill with grim determination. The advance was so intense that, inside the Citadel, the Koreans did not have time to reload their ancient rifles. With a determination equal to that of their attackers they began to throw stones down the mountainside.

*"McKee got the start of all of us in the commencement of the charge and kept it,"* wrote Lieutenant McIlvane eleven days later. *"I think his heart was set on being the first man in the fort. I was with my company, close behind and a little to his left. My men did their best, but we could not overtake him."*

Lieutenant McKee was indeed the first to scale the walls, along with Marine Private Hugh Purvis. Closely following was Boatswains Mate Alexander McKenzie, Quartermaster Samuel Rogers, and Ordinary Seaman William Troy. Standing on the wall, sword in one hand and pistol in the other, Lieutenant McKee fired two shots and then dropped into the midst of the Koreans. Almost immediately the enemy was on him, one of them shooting McKee in the groin as McKenzie, Rogers and Troy leaped from the wall to assist their commander. A short distance away Landsman William Lukes saw his Lieutenant being swarmed by the enemy and engaged in fierce hand-to-hand fighting. The enemy had thrown down their empty guns and taken up swords and spears. One of the spears pierced the side of the already wounded Lieutenant McKee. At his side Alexander McKenzie fought fiercely to protect his commander. He fell with a blow to the head from a Korean sword. Simultaneously, Samuel Rogers and William Troy also fell severely wounded by the swarm of Korean defenders. Before Lukes could rush to their aid he found himself heavily engaged in a battle for his own life.

Meanwhile the stream of Marines and bluejackets coming over the wall continued. Lieutenant Commander Schley reached the ramparts just as Lieutenant McKee fell. Quickly he shot and killed the man who had thrust his spear through the side of the brave young lieutenant.

Private Hugh Purvis had been first to scale the wall with McKee. Now he advanced toward the Korean standard flying from a short pole nearby. As he worked at the halyards to loosen it, Corporal Charles Brown raced to his side and reached up to assist in tearing the yellow flag down. Moments later Ships Carpenter (and the bluejacket's color bearer) Cyrus Hayden was planting the Stars and Stripes on the Citadel wall. Even so, the battle was far from over and Hayden stood at his post next to the American flag to defend it against the enemy rush to remove it.

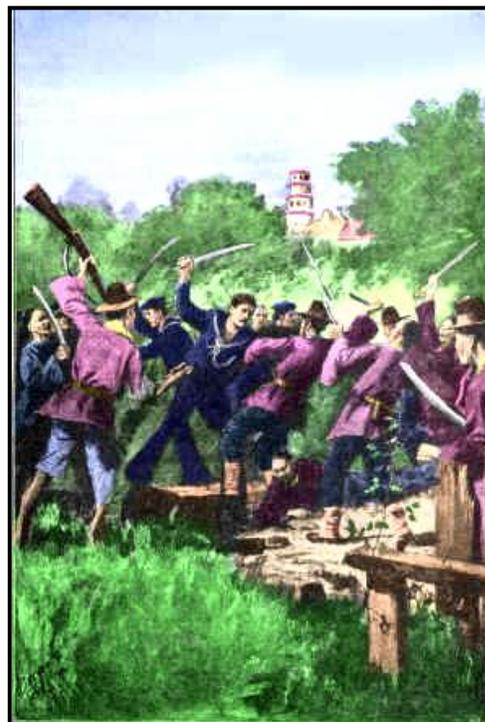
On the ground inside the fort Quartermaster Frederick Franklin assumed command of Company D, leading *"with courage and skill"*. More and more of the Marines and bluejackets streamed over the wall. Landsman James Merton was wounded in the arm forcing his way into the enemy stronghold. Marine Private Michael McNamara reached the parapet only to be confronted by

the muzzle of an enemy matchlock. With great determination the young Marine grasped the barrel and wrested the gun from the enemy, then swung it like a club to kill him before continuing his advance. Private John Coleman fought his way towards the wounded Lieutenant McKee as the Koreans were dragging his body further into their ranks. Struggling against them, he was unable to reach his commander, but succeeded in rescuing Alexander McKenzie who had fallen beside Lieutenant McKee.\*

Such was the nature of the half-hour battle inside the Korean fort. Smoke filled the enclosure as the Korean ammunition dump burned. Bodies littered the ground as the battle became a hand-to-hand melee. Marine Private James Dougherty was wounded repeatedly yet ignored his injuries to continue to fight. Nearby Private Michael Owens likewise fought on despite serious wounds. Korean Fire cut down Seaman Seth Allen of the *USS Colorado* as he stormed the fort.

Slowly the tide began turned in the favor of the Americans. Realizing defeat was imminent; some of the Koreans leaped to their deaths or pierced themselves upon their own swords to honor their vow to fight to the death. Marine Private James Dougherty sought out and killed General Uh Je-yeon, an act that would earn him the Medal of Honor. With the Korean commander dead and his flag in the hands of the Americans, the battle for the Citadel was quickly over.

Years later an artist's rendering of that battle depicted the ferocity of the struggle as three bluejackets went hand-to-hand with a large enemy force. In the center of the drawing was a sketch of Landsman William Lukes, who had earlier witnessed the fall of his Lieutenant. When the battle finally ended Lukes was found unconscious on the ground, and bleeding from eighteen spear and sword wounds.



### Victorious Failure

*"Just before the fight was over, and as I was advancing in the fort, I looked down at my feet among the dead and saw McKee lying there. I stopped and stooped down to him. He looked up at me and said in his cool, clam way: 'Mac, I am mortally wounded.'*

*"With assistance of two or three of his men, I carried him a little aside and looked at his wounds. It was in the stomach from a bullet. I could not and would not believe it was serious and told him so. He smiled, and said he thought I was mistaken.*

*"The doctor soon came up from the rear and said he ought to be taken aboard the Monocacy. I obtained permission to go with him, the fighting being all over, but was told to come back immediately. All the way he talked very little but laid perfectly quiet with his*

\*In his rescue of Boatswains Mate Alexander McKenzie, Private Coleman became the first of at least three men in history, to be awarded the Medal of Honor for saving the life of another Medal of Honor recipient.

*eyes closed. I am afraid the dear fellow was suffering the most agonizing pain, but no pain that human being ever endured would have made him even wince. When we arrived aboard the Monocacy I gave him over to the care of the surgeons and then I said, 'Now Mac, you know I must go back to my company.'*

*"He held out his hand, smiled and said: 'Well, good-bye Mac, if I don't see you again.' Dear noble friend, those were the last words he ever spoke to me, but I little thought so at the time. I simply pressed his hand and rushed away. I could not realize that he was going to die.*

*"At about 6 o'clock in the afternoon the boat came in from the Monocacy and an officer came up to inform me that McKee was dead. His last words were: 'Tell the dear beloved ones at home that my last prayer is for them.'"*

**Bloomfield McIlvaine**

**In a letter home dated June 22, 1871**

When the Sunday sun set across Kanghai Island, little remained of the Kwangsunbo Fortress but piles of broken rubble and bloody Korean bodies. The Americans counted 243 corpses in and around the fortress and took captive 20 Koreans who had been severely wounded. The American dead were Lieutenant McKee, Landsman Seth Allen, and Marine Private Denis Hanrahan. Ten bluejackets and Marines had been wounded. Following the battle, the Marines renamed the fortress. They Americans called it:

#### *Fort McKee*

On Monday morning after spending a second night on the Island, the small landing craft that had brought the Americans ashore returned to affect their departure. The *Palos* had been freed from the rocks and joined the *Monocacy* in towing the victorious invaders back to their ships, which were still at anchor near Boisee Island.

The assault at Kanghai Island convinced Admiral Rodgers not to attempt an expedition up the Han River to Seoul. On July 3 the American squadron sailed out of Korean waters, leaving buried on Boisee Island the bodies of Seth Allen, Denis Hanrahan, and Thomas Driver (USN) who died as the result of illness during the expedition.

What had been a stunning military victory for the American sailors and marines on Kanghai Island could not bring victory to the political process that had sent them there to do their duty. Korea remained isolated closed to American interests. One newspaper summarized it saying that the United States government:



*"Sent a force altogether too large for the delivery of the message of peace and too small for the prosecution of war."*



*June 21st, 1871*

*My dearest Nannie,*

*I am glad to say I am alive still and kicking, although at one time I never expected to see my Wife and baby anymore, and if it hadn't been that the Koreans can't (sic) shoot true, I never should. It is all over now, and as I expected, we have failed to make any treaty with the Koreans.*

*Poor Lieutenant McKee who was such a beau at the Naval School was killed. He was the first to get over the wall of the redoubt when he was mortally wounded & died six hours afterwards.*

*As for me I am quite satisfied, 'I have not lost no Koreans', and 'I ain't alooking for none neither'--I want to go home! The way the 'gingall' or match-lock bullets whizzed was a caution to all those innocents engaged in war. My precious girl I am one of those innocents, and I dont (sic) want to engage in any sicker business.*

*Affectionately,  
Mc*

## Conclusion



Mr. James Wardrop (great-great nephew of Lt. Hugh McKee shakes hands with Mr. Uh Yoon-won (grandson of General Uh Je-yeon, Korean commander in 1871). The occasion was at a May 27, 2000, memorial ceremony for General Uh at Kanghwa (Photo Courtesy of Thomas Durveney)

**Ill-conceived foreign policy by United States leaders and politicians can never diminish the valor of the soldiers who must enforce that policy. Politically the Korean expedition of 1871 was a total defeat for the United States, despite the striking victory by US Navy bluejackets and Marines at the Citadel. For the Koreans, the valiant stand and fight to the death of General Uh Je-yeon became a historical event viewed much like Americans remember the defeat at the Alamo. The Korean defenders were lost, almost to a man, including the General himself. In one of his letters to Nannie, Captain Tilton spoke of sending her *"the plum & tassel of peacock feathers & red & yellow hors hair, which was taken from the cap of the General (Uh Je-yon)"* as a souvenir, along with a yellow piece of cloth from the captured Korean flag.**

**Perhaps the most fortunate of the Koreans were the twenty or so severely wounded that were taken aboard the American ships for medical treatment. In the weeks after the invasion of Kanghwa and prior to departing the Korean waters, Admiral Rogers made repeated efforts to establish a line of communication with Seoul to obtain the desired treaty. At one point he tried to use these prisoners as a bargaining tool, offering to release his recovering prisoners in exchange for a treaty. The Koreans informed the Admiral that his prisoners had dishonored themselves by allowing their capture, and should they be released they would be unwelcome home and would be subject to severe punishment.**



**Captain Tilton noted: "Our mission to Korea has been a perfect failure; they won't have anything to do with us, not even the fisherman. The local authorities refuse to send our letters to the King, and all are returned to us on the end of a pole stuck up on the beach, where we send a boat for them."**

**In all, more than 350 Koreans were killed in the failed expedition. Losses for the Americans were three killed in action, a fourth dead of disease, and ten or more wounded. Lieutenant Hugh McKee's body was placed in a flag-draped coffin for transport to his hometown of Lexington, Kentucky for burial. The other three dead Americans: Landsman Seth Allen (USN), Private Denis Hanrahan (USMC), and Thomas Driver (USN) were buried on Boisee Island (now called Jakyak Island by the Koreans) just off the coast near Inchon.**

**The large yellow flag of General Uh Je-yeon was sent to the United States as a "trophy of war" and placed in a museum at the United States Naval Academy, where both Lieutenant McKee and Captain Tilton had trained to become Naval officers.**



**On February 8, 1872, Marine Private Hugh Purvis and Corporal Charles Brown (pictured standing in that order in front of the flag above with Captain Tilton on the right) were awarded Medals of Honor for capturing that flag. For his role as color bearer and for his valor in planting the Stars and Strips on the wall of the Citadel and then defending it, Navy Ship's Carpenter Cyrus Hayden was also awarded the Medal of Honor.**



In all, fifteen Medals of Honor were awarded for the *weekend war in Korea*, (9 Navy and 6 Marines). Eleven of them were presented on that same day of February 8, 1872, including:

- Alexander McKenzie, Samuel Rogers and William Troy: *Cited for their valor at the side of Lieutenant McKee. All three Navy bluejackets were wounded in that action.*
- Quartermaster Frederick Franklin (USN): *Cited for assuming command of Company D after Lieutenant McKee was wounded and leading them through the remainder of the battle at the Citadel.*
- Marine Private John Coleman: *Cited for saving the life of Alexander McKenzie.*
- Marine Private Michael McNamara: *Cited for his one-on-one battle with a Korean soldier that had attempted to stop his advance with a rifle.*
- Marine Private James Dougherty: *Cited for seeking out and killing the Korean commander.*
- Marine Private Michael Owens: *Cited for their valor in battle despite being wounded.*



Samuel Rogers

Six months later on July 9, 1872, Ordinary Seaman John Andrews (USN), who had so valiantly stayed his post lashed to the ridge rope of the steam launch from the *Benicia* to safely navigate the Salee River when the amphibious landing began, received his own Medal of Honor.

Navy Landsman William Lukes was hospitalized with 18 sword and spear wounds and lay unconscious for thirty-nine days in the sick-ay of the *USS Colorado*. He then spent many more months recovering from wounds so severe that they left him an invalid for life. On October 10, 1872, he had recovered enough to be presented the Medal of Honor. Joining him was Landsman James Merton (USN) who had also been severely wounded in the attack on the Citadel.



William Lukes

More than 40 years later on December 4, 1915, a belated Medal of Honor was presented to Navy Chief Quartermaster Patrick Henry Grace for his own *gallant and meritorious conduct* throughout the attack. As a Naval Officer Lieutenant Hugh McKee was ineligible for award of the Medal of Honor. (Until the revisions of 1917 the Navy medal was presented only to enlisted sailors or marines. Officers were generally rewarded for valorous actions with brevet promotions.)

Korea's efforts to isolate itself from the rest of the world, temporarily preserved by the failed Shinmiyangyo, were all too brief. Five years later Japan forced Korea to open diplomatic ties in the Treaty of Kangwha. Subsequently the Japanese took over the foreign and military affairs of Korea through the Protectorate Treaty of 1905.

Five years after that, Japan formally annexed Korea, burning in front of the Korean court the treaty with the United States that had finally been achieved through diplomatic negotiations in 1882.

Private Hugh Purvis, who had earned the Medal of Honor for his capture of General Uh's flag, served in the Marine Corps until retiring in 1884. Thereafter he served 35 years as Armorer for the U.S. Naval Academy. He was buried there upon his death in 1922.

On December 17, 1944, in the latter days of World War II, Hugh Purvis' widow christened the U.S. Naval Destroyer DD 709 the *USS Hugh Purvis*. In 1993 his grandson donated the Medal of Honor inscribed with the name "Hugh Purvis" to the Naval Academy for display in a special area of a museum dedicated to the Korean Expedition of 1871.



*USS Hugh Purvis*

Today Kanghwa Island is a beautiful gem at the edge of the Yellow Sea. Separated by a narrow strip of water from the 38th Parallel and Communist North Korea, Kanghwa (sometimes called Ganghwa) is a popular tourist attraction. Steeped in history, many of the old forts and temples that adorned the island in years past have been carefully restored to preserve the proud history of a people who only wanted to be left alone, but were unable to avoid the technological advances of other nations that made our world so much smaller.



Perhaps it was Admiral Rogers himself who summed up the events of the *weekend war in Korea in 1871* best when he concluded his official report with the following:

*"It gives me the greatest satisfaction to say that in this expedition our officers and men encountered difficulties which were surmounted only by the most arduous labor and defeated a determined enemy in a desperate fight with a patience and courage most admirable. A victory was won of which the Navy may well feel proud. It now remains with the Government to determine what further steps, if any, shall be taken toward requiring from Korea those engagements which it was our purpose in visiting the coast to obtain if we might."*

**SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:**

*The detail and accuracy of this story would not have been possible without the help of Mr. Tom Duvernay, who has spent years researching the Shinmiyangyo. We thank him for his assistance throughout the project.*

Originally from Petoskey, MI, since 1989 Mr. Duvernay has been a Professor in the Department of English, Dong Guk University, Kyongju, South Korea.

Mr. Duvernay became interested in the 1871 US-Korea conflict several years ago while researching military use of archery in Korea. His focus shifted from military archery to Late Chosun Dynasty (19th Century) military research.

In this pursuit, Mr. Duvernay established contact with the Korea Military Academy, and became close friends with several faculty members in its history department (including the director of the KMA museum). With their assistance, he has conducted several research surveys of Kanghwa Island and surrounding areas, including mapping the route U.S. forces took overland on Kanghwa Island in 1871. His Korean contacts, including support from the Kanghwa County Office, have afforded him unprecedented access to sites and people throughout the area.



Mr. Duvernay operates a well done website on the Western disturbance in 1871 at [www.shinmiyangyo.com](http://www.shinmiyangyo.com) and is presently working on a book that will share insights from that event in Korean history. In addition, he is actively pursuing two additional goals:

He is attempting to ascertain the final disposition of the U.S. KIA remains from the Shinmiyangyo. Working with the CILHI (Central Identification Laboratory, Hawaii), as early as this summer efforts will be underway to locate the remains of the three Americans buried in the vicinity after the action.

He is also working to obtain a return to Korea of the Korean commander, General Uh Je-yeon's flag that was captured in 1871 (the same flag pictured on this and the previous page). This Korean flag is currently held in the museum at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, MD.

Mr. Duvernay has gone to great lengths to locate surviving family members of those Americans involved in the 1871 incident. His efforts have enabled him to locate Mr. James Wardrop, the great-great nephew of Lieutenant Hugh McKee. If you have information that can help him locate additional surviving family members, please e-mail him at: [shinmiyangyo@hotmail.com](mailto:shinmiyangyo@hotmail.com).

**Bibliography**  
**& Recommended Readings**

**Above and Beyond.** Boston Publishing Company. Boston, MA, 1985

Beyers, W.F. & Keydel, O.F. **Acts of Bravery.** Platinum Press, Woodbury, NY, 1907

***The Korean War.*** "Harper's Weekly, September 9, 1871

***The Death of Hugh M'Kee.*** "Lexington Morning Herald". November 18, 1900 (Letter from Captain McIlvaine to his mother written June 22, 1871)

***Hugh McKee, He Gained Immortal Fame.*** "Lexington Morning Herald. November 28, 1897

Runyon, Major C.F. ***Captain McLane Tilton and the Korean Incident of 1871,*** "Marine Corps Gazette, Volume 42, No. 2, February 1958

***Tiger Hunt in Korea.*** "VFW Magazine", March 2000

Tyson, Carolyn A. **Marine Amphibious Landing in Korea, 1871.** Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, January 1966

---

Painting of the Marines landing on Kanghwa Island on page 3 by **John Clymer**

**Appendixes**

**Official After-Action Report of Rear Admiral John Rodgers**

**Official After-Action Report of Captain McLane Tilton**

**Excerpts from the Diary of Samuel Rogers, USMC**

**List of Medal of Honor Recipients**

**Report of Rear Admiral John Rodgers  
Detailing the Events Leading Up to the U.S. Assault on the Korean Forts  
Report of the Secretary of the Navy No. 18.**

EXPEDITION TO KOREA Report of Rear-Admiral John Rodgers No. 38.

UNITED STATES STEAMER COLORADO, (1st rate,)

Flagship of Asiatic Fleet Boissee Anchorage, Salee River, Korea,

June 3, 1871

SIR:

I have the honor to report to the Department my arrival on the 30th May at this anchorage, having on board this ship the Hon. Mr. Low, our minister to China, intrusted with the mission to the Korean government. The fleet under my command, consisting of the Colorado, Alaska, Benicia, Monocacy, and Palos, sailed from Nagasaki on the 16th and anchored off the Ferrieres Islands on the Korean Coast, on the 19th of May. Thick fogs delayed further movements, and the anchorage near Eugenie Island was not reached until the 23rd of May. I have called this anchorage, which is indicated on the chart herewith transmitted, Roze Roads, giving the name of the French admiral who directed the first examination made of them.

From this position I dispatched, on the morning of the 24th May, the Palos and four steam-launches, all under the command of Commander H.C. Blake, to make an examination of the channel up to the anchorage above Isle Boissee. Lieutenant Commanders C.M. Chester and L.H. Baker, and Lieutenants W.W. Mead and G.M. Totten, were detailed to command the launches and to make the surveys. Soundings were made of the channel and of the neighboring water, &c., as above, and of the neighboring waters and shores. The expedition reached its destination without difficulty or molestation from the natives and returned to Roze Roads in the evening of the 28th May.

Meantime parties from the ships remaining in Roze Roads were engaged in surveying the vicinity of that anchorage, the sounding taken are given on the chart herewith transmitted, and landing parties had communication with Koreans, who appeared to be of a friendly disposition. A paper with written Chinese characters was handed to one of the officers, and its contents, being translated, conveyed inquiries as to our nation and the purpose of our coming. The paper was without signature or indication of official character.

An informal reply was sent to it by the minister, giving only the information that we were Americans; that our purpose was friendly, and that we had come to seek an interview with the governing authorities. On Monday, May 29th, the fleet got under way and proceeded, but was compelled to anchor some miles below Isle Boissee, owing to a thick fog which came on and hid the land from view. On the following day, May 30th, the fog being dispersed by a breeze, we proceeded and anchored in the afternoon between Isles Boissee and Guirriere. As soon as our anchorage was made a junk approached, having on board people who by signs indicated that they desired to communicate with us.

Upon being invited, they came on board this ship without any apparent hesitation. They were the bearers of a letter, which stated that from our former communication it had been learned that we were Americans and announced that three envoys had been appointed by the Sovereign to confer with us. These messengers were persons of inferior grade and came merely to announce the approach of the superior officials. They were assured of our desire to preserve peaceful relations, and our purpose not to commit any acts of violence unless we are first attacked. This assurance was received with great apparent satisfaction.

The next afternoon, May 31, the envoys previously announced made their appearance. The minister, deeming it proper not to receive them in person until their positions and powers were ascertained to be such that he could do so without derogation to the dignity of his own rank as minister plenipotentiary, deputed Mr. Drew, his acting secretary, to conduct the interview. Mr. Drew conversed with the envoys in the Peking dialect. The conversation elicited the fact that the Koreans were officials of the third and fifth rank, and that they brought with them no credential letters, and, so far as could be ascertained, that they were not entrusted with any authority to initiate negotiations.

Under these circumstances, Mr. Low determined not to see the envoys, and they were informed that only officials of the first rank, who were empowered to conduct negotiations, could be received; and to such alone could a full announcement of the objects of our coming be made.

Their object appeared to be to learn all they could of our purposes and intentions, without committing themselves by the direct expression of assent or dissent to what was said to them; but their manner of non-objection conveyed the impression of actual compliance with our wishes. They were assured of our non-aggressive disposition and were distinctly told that only to resent assault should we resort to arms. They were informed that we wished to take soundings of their waters, and to make surveys of the shores. To this they made no objection.

We expressed the hope that no molestation would be offered to our parties in landing or passing up the river and requested that word be sent to their people that they might preserve the friendly relations which were desired. It was further stated that twenty-four hours would be given to make this announcement to people along the river, before any movement was made. To all this they made no reply which could indicate dissent. So, believing that we might continue our surveys while further diplomatic negotiations were pending, an expedition was sent to examine and survey the Salee River, which empties into this bay, and leads into the River Seoul, which passes near the city of Seoul, the capital and residence of the Sovereign.

The force dispatched consisted of the Monocacy, Commander E. P. McCrea; Palos, Lieutenant C.H. Rockwell; Alaska's steam-launch, Lieutenant Commander C. M. Chester; Colorado's steam-launch, Lieutenant W. W. Mead; Colorado's steam-cutter, Lieutenant G. M. Totten; Benicia's steam-launch, Master S. Schroeder; all under the command of Commander H. C. Blake, who went on board the Palos. What followed is detailed in Commander Blake's report, herewith enclosed.

As is therein related, at the forts which defend a short bend in the river, not far from its mouth, the Koreans unmasked batteries, and, without any previous intimation of their objection to our approach, or warning of their intention, opened a heavy fire upon our boats and ships. The steam-launches were in advance, and but a few hundred feet from the forts. The first fire was directed upon them, from cannon and from gin-galls arranged in rows, one tier above another on the hillside, and fired by a train of powder. This sudden and treacherous assault was not expected by our people, but they promptly resented it.

The Palos and Monocacy coming up, opened fire with their heavier guns, and the tide, sweeping with great velocity up the river, bore our force rapidly past the batteries and around the point on which they are erected. Here the Monocacy and Palos anchored, and from this position the retreating enemy was shelled again. Unfortunately, the Monocacy was carried by the current upon a rock and had a hole broken through her bottom, which caused her to leak badly. This being reported to Commander Blake, he deemed it imprudent to proceed, and therefore returned with his command to this anchorage.

The Monocacy was temporarily repaired, and her leak stopped without difficulty. It was our good fortune to have but two men slightly wounded, James A. Cochran and John Somerdyke, ordinary seamen, in the Alaska's launch. Our exemption from serious loss is only attributable to the bad gunnery of the Koreans, whose fire, although very hot for the fifteen minutes in which they maintained it, was ill-directed, and consequently without effect. The vessels, in their return, received no reply to the fire they directed against the batteries in passing.

In accordance with my instructions not to pursue any advantage which might be obtained in case of an attack upon him, and in view of the small force available for the purpose of landing in the face of the large force of the enemy, Commander Blake did not deem it prudent to send a party on shore to destroy the guns.

At once, upon the return of the expedition, it was determined to equip the available landing force of all the ships, and to return in the morning to attack and destroy the fortifications. Preparations for this purpose were made, but upon consideration it was concluded to wait for the next neap tides, when the currents will be less violent than during the prevalence of the spring tides, which are now running. At the present time the water rises from 30 to 35 feet with each flood tide, and the velocity of the stream at the point at which the attack must be made renders the management of vessels extremely difficult.

In this affair the greatest gallantry was displayed by all engaged. Commander Blake conducted his command with discretion, and his action meets with my highest approbation in all respects.

*[Note: the following was not in the letter to the Secretary of the Navy, as published, but in the original letter written by Adm. Rodgers]*

Mr. Low agreed with me that the Koreans have by their hostile action frankly declared the attitude they intend to take toward us, and that it becomes us to reply to them as frankly in the same way. Very ill effects resulted from the French Expedition to this country in 1866, in which hostile movements were carried to no conclusion. The Tien-tsin massacre has been attributed by some to the contempt with which the French were regarded, in consequence, of their failure, by the natives, who in their ignorance supposed that they, the French, had in that expedition put forth their utmost force.

Our failure to prosecute this war will cause a loss of prestige, not only to ourselves but to all Europeans in the East, deeply to be deplored. And in the opinions of the foreign residents in these countries, will be held as a cause of future difficulties. The national loss will therefore be not only immediate but prospective. A land force which I estimate at five thousand men would be needed to carry the war promptly to a conclusion by taking the Capital and the fortresses in its vicinity. With a few hired tugs, and a few junks for transports, our present naval force may be made to answer all requirements afloat. But small vessels of our own, needed in any case in China, would be useful here.

Meantime, the Palos is sent to Chefoo to convey dispatches and mail for the United States and to obtain those which will be waiting for us at that port to which I have ordered that they be forwarded to [ ] and been sent to Paymaster Eldredge in charge of stores at Hong Kong, to ship five hundred (500) tons of coal; one hundred thousand rations, and a supply of ammunition to Chefoo; and a present supply of about five hundred tons of coal has been sent for to Shanghai. I have sent a dispatch concerning the events here to Shanghai to be transmitted by telegraph to the Department.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

JNO. RODGERS Rear-Admiral, Commander-in-Chief of Asiatic Fleet

Hon. Geo. M. Robeson, Secretary of the Navy, Washington, D.C.

Report of Rear Admiral John Rodgers,  
Detailing the Capture and Destruction of Korean Forts Report of Rear-Admiral John Rodgers.No.43 United Steamer Colorado, (1st rate,) Flagship of Astatic Fleet, Chefoo, China, July 5, 1871.

Sir:

In a telegraphic message, under date of June 3, and again in my dispatch No.38 of the same date, I had the honor of conveying His Excellency Mr. Low, United States Minister to China, to Korea, for the purpose of negotiating a treaty in accordance with the instructions received from the Government. In the dispatches referred to, I informed the Department of the unprovoked and treacherous assaults made on the 1st of June, by the forts in Kang-Hoa Island, upon a portion of the squadron engaged in an examination of the Salee River, and of my intention to resent the insult offered to our flag, should no sufficient apology or satisfactory explanation be offered for the hostile action of the Korean government. Again, under date of June 23, I sent a telegraphic dispatch, announcing the results of the retaliatory action which we were compelled to take in vindication of the honor of the flag.

I have now the honor to write more at length concerning these matters. From the time of the attack of June 1, upon our vessels, ten days were allowed to pass before any movement was made. During this time no apology was offered, nor was an accredited officer sent to confer with Mr. Low. Indeed, in correspondence which passed between the minister and the prefect of the district lying hereabout, the ambushed attempt to cut off and destroy our whole surveying party was assumed by the Korean official to be entirely in accordance with the proprieties of intercourse between civilized people, their own civilization being, as was somewhat proudly stated, four thousand years old. Under these circumstances, nothing remained but to fulfill, with Mr. Low's full approbation and concurrence, the expectations which the Korean authorities might reasonably entertain from the words which the minister had addressed to them, to the effect that, in case due amends were not offered to the Minister and Admiral, they would know how to obtain satisfaction for the wanton attempt to destroy their surveying party.

I may here remark that the delay of ten days had, apart from the propriety of giving the Koreans an opportunity to reconsider the hostile attitude which they had assumed, been expedient on account of the more favorable tides which would prevail at the expiration of that time, when the neap tides would render navigation in the little known and difficult passages of the Salee River less perilous than it was during the prevalence of the spring tides. Even with the more moderate neap tides our vessels did not escape injury, as will be hereafter seen. All preparations for our movement being completed, at 10 o'clock a.m., on the 10th of June, the expedition started. In pursuance of the humane policy indicated in the letters of instructions from the State and Navy Departments to Mr. Low and myself, it was decided that the punishment to be inflicted upon the Koreans should be confined to the forts from which the offense had been given. Copies of my orders to Commander H.C. Blake and to Commander L.A. Kimberly, marked respectively A and B, are herewith transmitted.

The force dispatched consisted of the Monocacy, Commander E.P. McCrea; Palos, Lieutenant Commander H. F. Picking, conveying the boats of the squadron, in which were embarked all the men available for a landing force The Monocacy received the additional armament of two 9-inch guns, transferred from the Colorado. The force detailed from the Colorado, Alaska, and Benicia, numbered seven hundred and fifty-nine men. Of these, the crews of the steam-launches and the boat-keepers numbered one hundred and

eighteen men, leaving the actual force put on shore six hundred and fifty-one men. Of these, one hundred and five were marines. Seven howitzers were landed.

Commander H. C. Blake, of the Alaska, commanded in chief. He was to remain afloat and went on board the Palos. Commander L. A. Kimberly, of the Benicia, was detailed, at his own request, to command the landing force. Lieutenant Commander Silas Casey commanded the artillery. Captain McLane Tilton commanded the marines. Accompanying this dispatch, I transmit a chart, upon which the positions and movements of the two days' operations are given.

The expedition moved with the Monocacy, preceded by two steam-launches surveying the channel in advance, while the Palos, having in tow twenty-two boats with the landing force, followed. The Monocacy had the duty of shelling the enemy's first fort, and of clearing away opposition to the landing. This first fort, now designated on the chart "marine redoubt," is distant about ---miles from the anchorage at Isle Boissee. As soon as the Monocacy came within good range, she opened upon the enemy's works with shell. The enemy returned the fire for a time, but was soon driven out, and when our landing was made abandoned the position and fled.

The Palos coming up with the boats pulled in for the shore and effected a landing below the fort. The point chosen for the disembarkation, while seemingly as good as any in other respects, was, for military reasons, deemed the best, since it flanked the enemy's works, and left nothing to be feared in our rear. The character of the shore was unknown, and it proved to be most unfavorable for our purpose. Between the water and the firm land a broad belt of soft mud, traversed by deep gullies, had to be passed. The men stepping from the boats, sank to their knees, and so tenacious was the clay, that in many cases they lost gaiters and shoes, and even trousers' legs. The guns sank above the axles of their carriages, and it required the strenuous exertions of many men to get them through.

The landing was covered by the guns of the Palos and the steam-launches. The boats reached the shore at about noon. As soon as firm ground was attained, the infantry battalion was formed, and the marines deployed as skirmishers. The advance at once began, and the fort was quietly occupied. This fort was constructed of stone, its walls being about 12 feet high. From the upper flank stretched a long water battery ; it mounted thirty odd guns of various caliber, most of them being the small bronze breach-loading pieces of from one to two inch bore; five or six were about 18-pounders, and there were two 32-pounders. The destruction of the fort was at once begun. The guns were cast into the river, with the exception of the 32-pounders, which were spiked. The walls of the fort were thrown down and the stores of powder, provisions, and clothing burned.

By this time the afternoon was so far gone that it was not expedient to make a further advance on that day. The force, therefore, went into camp upon a favorable spot in the vicinity of the fort. The marines, with one howitzer, occupied the position in advance of the main body of the force, and pickets were established to guard against surprise during the night. The Koreans made an attack at about midnight, but it was confined to distant firing upon our lines, and a few shells thrown by the howitzers caused their retreat.

On the morning of the 11th, the destruction of the first fort was made more complete, and the advance began, at an early hour, toward the main objects of attack, the enemy's forts on the point at the turn of the river, about three miles above. The next defense of the enemy was a stone fort, built upon a bluff, about a mile distant from that already occupied. It is now designated on the chart Fort Monocacy. This fort also had been shelled by the Monocacy, and being reconnoitered by the marines, was found to be entirely deserted. It

was a square structure and occupied a strong position; it mounted about the same number of guns, similar in character to those destroyed in the first fort. This place was also dismantled without delay.

The force again moved on. The march was a most difficult one. The country is a succession of steep hills, with deep ravines between, over which foot soldiers passed with great fatigue, while the guns were got on only by widening the paths, where there were paths, and by cutting out the bushes and filling up gullies in other places. They were dragged up steep acclivities, by whole companies detailed to help the artillerymen, or lowered down from the heights with ropes. A squad of sappers and miners, provided with shovels, picks, and axes, was very useful in facilitating the passage of the artillery, as well as in destroying the fortifications.

As the advance continued toward the upper and main fort, large bodies of the Koreans were seen on the left flank of our force, and in such position that when the direction of our march was changed, as it must be to approach the forts, they would be behind us, and have us cut off from retreat should we be repulsed in the assault upon the forts in front. To guard against danger of an attack upon our rear while engaged in front, five howitzers, with three companies of infantry, under the command of Lieutenant Commander Wheeler, were placed in strong position, which they held as a rear guard during the advance of the main body. Their service was most valuable, inasmuch as they checked several attempts of the enemy to advance, and by their accurate fire prevented a very large body from ever getting fairly into action. They also did good service by their fire, directed over our forces, against the forts beyond.

At about 11 o'clock, on the forenoon of the 11th of June, the hill nearest the enemy's stronghold, or citadel, was gained. The Monocacy having moved up the river, keeping nearly abreast our land force, had taken position and shelled the forts for some time before our men came up to their vicinity. This fire was continued until our assaulting force was ready, when signal being made it was discontinued. Behind the crest of the hill which they occupied our men were formed for the assault upon the citadel, now distant about 150 yards, and, covered from the enemy's fire, they rested awhile to recover from the exhaustion of the hurried march under a hot sun.

Up to this time, although there had been some brisk skirmishing, but few of our men had been wounded; several had been prostrated by sunstroke. The citadel about to be assaulted, the key to the defenses upon the point below, was built upon the apex of a conical hill about 150 feet high from the bottom of the ravine, through which our men had to pass to reach it. The hill side was very steep, and walls of the fort joined the acclivity with scarcely a break in the line. Had not the face of the walls been somewhat shattered by the shells from the Monocacy and the howitzers onshore, the escalade would have been most difficult.

Our men kept up a fire from their resting place upon the fort whenever an enemy exposed himself, and this they did constantly and with the most reckless courage, for they maintained an incessant fire, mounting the wall and discharging their pieces as fast as they could load. There was no artillery in the citadel.

When all was ready, the order was given to rush forward down the slope and up the opposite hill. The enemy maintained their fire with the utmost rapidity until our men got quite up the hill, then, having no time to load, they mounted the parapet and cast stones upon our men below, fighting with the greatest fury.

Nothing could check our men; on they rushed. The heroic McKee was first to mount the parapet, and the first to leap into a hand-to-hand conflict. There he fell, as his father fell in Mexico, at the head of his men, first inside the enemy's stormed works. Other officers and men were quickly over the parapet. The fighting inside the fort was desperate. The resolution of the Koreans was unyielding; they apparently expected no

quarter, and probably would have given none. They fought to the death, and only when the last man fell did the conflict cease.

The point to the river was opened to a rear attack by the capture of the citadel, and the garrison fled. Many of them, however, fell under the fire of our musketry and howitzers, which had nearly cut them off from retreat.

To return to the vessels engaged: After the boats left the Palos, and had made their landing, that vessel got under way to pass up to join the Monocacy in the attack upon the forts. Unfortunately, she struck a rock on the falling ride. She keeled over, and had a hole stove in her bottom, from which she leaked badly. It was only with the rising tide that she came off and anchored late in the evening. It required the full employment of her steam-pumps to keep her afloat.

The Monocacy dragged her anchors in the night, and was brought up only with an additional anchor, after she had drifted for a considerable distance. In swinging with the tide, she also struck and grated upon sunken rocks, but received no serious injury so far as is known. Two of the steam-launches require repairs. These circumstances will serve to indicate the extreme difficulties and hazards which our force afloat encountered.

Even with the advantage of the neap tides, comparatively moderate in their force, six steamers engaged, large and small, suffered injury. In the affair of June 1, as mentioned in a former dispatch, the Monocacy received an injury by striking the rocks, from which she leaked so badly that it was thought for a time that it would be necessary to run her ashore to keep her from sinking. Both the Monocacy and the Palos received repairs of a temporary character, by which the leaks were overcome. It will be necessary to dock both vessels, and they have been sent to Shanghai for that purpose.

To summarize the results of the operations of the 10th and 11th of June, we captured and destroyed five forts. Fifty flags were taken including that the generalissimo; four hundred and eighty-one pieces of ordnance fell into our hands, besides very many matchlocks and gingals. The guns comprised eleven 32-pounders, fourteen 24-pounders, two 20-pounders, and the remainder, four hundred and forty-four, were 2 and 4 pounders. Two hundred and forty-three dead Koreans were counted in the works. Few prisoners were taken, not above twenty, and some of these were wounded. Thus, was a treacherous attack upon our people and an insult to our flag redressed.

On the afternoon of the capture of the "du Conde" forts, Commander Blake sent down to me a dispatch announcing the victory and requesting instructions, stating at the same time that the position gained on shore could be held. It was not deemed desirable to do this, inasmuch as our purpose was not to enter upon extended operations, and on account of the exceeding danger and difficulty of holding the vessels in position in the furious and uncertain currents of the river, he was directed to withdraw the entire force on the following morning, the 12th June. This was effected without hindrance or accident, and the vessels, with the landing force embarked, returned to the Boisee anchorage.

It gives me the greatest satisfaction to say that in this expedition our officers and men encountered difficulties which were surmounted only by the most arduous labor and defeated a determined enemy in a desperate fight with a patience and courage most admirable. A victory was won of which the Navy may well feel proud. It now remains with the Government to determine what further steps, if any, shall be taken toward requiring from Korea those engagements which it was our purpose in visiting the coast to obtain if we might.

Herewith are transmitted copies of my orders to Commanders H. C. Blake and L. A. Kimberly, and the reports of those officers; also, the reports of W. S. Schley, Silas Casey, D. P. Cassel, W. K. Wheeler, and of Captain McLane Tilton, United States Marine Corps, together with the surgeon's list of casualties. Also, I transmit a copy of my General Order No. 32.

The fleet sailed from the anchorage off Isle Boisee, of the morning of 3rd July, and arrived in the harbor of Chefooon the morning of the 5th.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully, your obedient servant,  
JOHN RODGERS, Rear-Admiral, Commander-in-Chief of Asiatic  
Fleet. Hon. Geo. M. Robeson, Secretary of the Navy, Washington, D. C.

*A report of Captain McLane Tilton, commanding United States Marines.*

**UNITED STATES FLAG-SHIP COLORLDO,**

*At anchor off Isle Boisee, Korea, June 16, 1871.*

Sir:

*In conformity with your directions, I have the honor to make the following report of the part taken by the marines of the Asiatic fleet in the late expedition against the Koreans:*

On Saturday, the 10th instant, the guards of the Colorado, Alaska, and Benicia, numbering one hundred and five, rank and file, and four officers, equipped in light marching order, with one hundred rounds ammunition and two days' cooked rations, were embarked from their respective ships and towed up the Salee River by the United States ship Palos. Upon nearing the first of a line of fortifications, extending up the river on the Kang-Hoa Island side, the Palos anchored, and by order of the commanding officer all the boats cast off and pulled away for *the* shore, where we landed on a wide sloping beach, two hundred yards from high-water mark, with the mud over the knees of the tallest men, and crossed by deep sluices filled with softer and still deeper mud. After getting out of the boats a line of skirmishers was extended across the muddy beach, and parallel to a tongue of land jutting through it to the river, fortified on the point by a square redoubt in the right, and a crenulated wall extending a hundred yards to the left, along the river, with fields of grain and a small village immediately in its rear. The fortification had been silenced by the cannonade from the United States ship Monocacy and the steam-launches, and the garrison fled through the brush and fields, firing a few shots as they retired at a distance. The marines, by order, then advanced on the place, sweeping through the grain-fields and village, meeting no opposition, and remained in possession until the main body came up, when we were again ordered to push forward, which we did, scouring the fields as far as practicable from the left of the line of march, the river being on our right, and took a position on a wooded knoll, covered with hemispherical mounds, and, commanding a fine view of the beautiful hills and inundated rice-fields immediately around us, and distant about half a mile from the main body. A reconnaissance was then made toward the next fort – a square work of hewn granite foundation, with a split rock, mud, and mortar rampart, crenulated on each face, with a front of about thirty paces – and a messenger dispatched to headquarters with the information that the road was clear and passable for artillery. Pickets were posted on the flanks of our little position, five hundred yards to the right and left – a rice-field inundated being in front – and a Dahlgren 12-pounder planted so as to command the junction of the only two approaches, which the commanding officer had ordered up to us as a support.

An order having been sent to hold our position till morning, we bivouacked with our arms by our aides, dividing our force in three reliefs, one of which was continually on the alert. No incident occurred during the night except rapid firing of small-arms and howling from a hill inland from us, and about a third of a mile distant. Two or three shots from the artillery with the main body were fired across the left of our picket, in the direction of the noise, which presently ceased.

Sunday morning, the 11<sup>th</sup> of June, the main body came up, and we received orders to push forward, which we did, and after reaching the fields in the rear of the next line of fortifications, we threw a line of skirmishers across the peninsula of hills on which the fort stood, and after the main body came up we advanced toward the rear face, with two-thirds of our guards in reserve. We entered this second place, after reconnoitering it, without opposition, and dismantled the battlements by throwing over the fifty or sixty insignificant breech-loading brass cannon, all being loaded, and tore down the ramparts on the front and right face of the work to the level of the tread of the banquette.

The ramparts consisted of a pierced wall of chipped granite, with a filling of earth in the interstices and coated over with mortar, giving it the appearance of being more solid than it really was. The cannon was rolled over the cliff into the water by Bugler English, without much trouble, who climbed down for this purpose. I cannot give the weight, but the bore was not over two inches diameter. A photographer came on shore from the Monocacy and succeeded in taking a negative picture of the place. We were then ordered by the commanding officer to push forward and find the road leading to our objective point, and to cover the flanks of the main body, which we did with two-thirds of the marines deployed, the remainder in reserve.

We scoured the scrubby woods and fields of grain, stirring up two or three unarmed native refugees from the village we had just passed, who were not, however, molested; and, after progressing half a mile, down deep ravines and the steepest sort of hills, were fired upon from a high ridge a little to the left of us, up which our skirmish line cautiously wheeled, and upon reaching the summit saw the enemy on a parallel ridge opposite, who blazed away at us with their gingals or match-locks, their black heads popping up and down the while from the grass, but only one spent bullet struck us, without any injury. A piece of artillery was here brought up from the valley beneath us, by direction of Lieutenant Commander Cassel, by superhuman exertions on the part of his men, and several shells landed among the enemy grouped on a knoll, scattering the party, when our skirmish line pushed on down the narrow range leading to the circular redoubt – our objective point, and known to us as the citadel, being the third work of the line of fortifications – the main body following in column of fours.

Upon reaching a point a third of a mile from this work, a general halt was ordered to rest the men, who were greatly fatigued after their comparatively short, although extremely steep, march; the topography of the country being indescribable, resembling a sort of "chopped sea," of immense hills arid deep ravines lying in every conceivable position. We then advanced cautiously, with our line of skirmishers parallel to the right face of the redoubt, which was our point of attack, concealed from view from the enemy, and took position along the crest; of a hill one hundred and fifty yards from him, closing intervals to one pace on the right skirmisher; the line extending along the ridge, our right resting in a path leading to the redoubt, upon which were planted about twenty-five banners in single file, a few feet apart, and at right angles to our line, the first banner being only four paces from our right skirmisher. Thirty paces in front of us was another ridge, parallel to the one we now occupy, but in order to reach it the whole line would be exposed to view. The main body came up and formed close behind us. The banners seemed to be a decoy, and several of us went from our right, took about fifteen of them, which drew a tremendous hail of bullets from the redoubt, which relaxed in half a minute, when away we pushed, availing ourselves of the opportunity to get to the next ridge, accomplishing the move with the lose of only one man, a marine from the United States ship Alaska, although for several seconds exposed to a galling fire, which recommenced immediately after the rush began. Our lines were now only one hundred and twenty yards from the redoubt, but the abrupt slope of the hill and the weeds covered us very well. The firing now commenced rapidly from both sides; ours increasing as the men got settled comfortably, and their fire was effective, as the, forty or fifty killed and wounded inside the redoubts show. The firing continued for only a few minutes, say four, amidst the melancholy songs of the enemy, their bearing being courageous in the extreme, and they exposed themselves as far as the waist above the parapet fearlessly; and as little parties of our forces advanced closer and closer down the deep ravine between us, some of them mounted the parapet and threw stones, at us, uttering the while exclamations seemingly of defiance. One of these little parties, the very first to enter the redoubt, was led by our beloved messmate, the noble, the brave, the heroic McKee, who fell pierced with a bullet in a hand-to- hand struggle on the ramparts.

The yellow cotton flag, about 12 feet square, with a large Chinese character in black on the center, thus



which flew over the fort, was captured by the marines. It was torn down by Corporal Brown, of the Colorado's guard, by my direction, while Private Purvis, of the Alaska's guard, was losing the halliards at the foot of the very short flagstaff. Private Purvis, of the Alaska's guard, had his hand on the halliards a second or two before anyone else, and deserves the credit of the capture.

Corporal Brown deserves equally with him to be honorably mentioned for his coolness and courage. The command, to a man, acted in a very creditable manner, and all deserve equal mention. The officers of the marines were Lieutenants Breese, Mullany, and McDonald, who were always to be found in the front.

The wounded were soon attended to by the surgeon's corps, who removed them to the Monocacy, lying in the stream. The place was occupied all Sunday night, the artillery being posted on the heights, and commanding the rear approaches, the men bivouacking with their companies on the hills. Early Monday morning the entire force re-embarked on board the Monocacy, the marines being the last to leave.

The re-embarkation was accomplished in a masterly manner, in the space of an hour, no confusion whatever occurring, although the current was very strong, the rise of the tide being nearly 20 feet. The Monocacy then steamed to the fleet, some ten miles below, where we all rejoined our respective ships.

Of the marines there was one killed, and one severely wounded; the first being Private Dennis Henrahan, of the Benicia's guard, and the wounded man Private Michael Owens, of the Colorado's guard, shot through the groin as he was charging toward the redoubt, falling about forty paces from the parapet. The accouterments and arms of the guard of this ship were returned, and no loss of property occurred. The expenditure of ammunition was sixteen hundred cartridges, about forty rounds each man.

I trust it will not be considered out of place in this connection to mention that I picked up from the field great numbers of copper-shell cartridges, unexploded, although the shell bore evidence of having been well struck by the firing-pins. Upon filing the heads of some of these shells, so as to expose the tinned cup holding the fulminate, I found the appearance of oxidation around the cavity holding the fulminate, and on the inside of several cases I found the tinned surface of the cup entirely gone, and one-sixteenth of an inch of what looked like the rust of iron filling the bottom of the cup. Upon inquiry I found the men complained of the cartridges packed in paper boxes, while no complaint was heard from them who had been furnished with cartridges in wooden boxes.

From the great number of unexploded cartridges I saw on the field, although having a deep indentation in their heads from the pins, I am led to think that it will be dangerous to trust to any of the cartridges in the fleet, packed in paper boxes, and marked "Frankford arsenal, 1869," and I believe that at least 25 per cent of them are utterly worthless.

I would respectfully suggest that this fixed ammunition be thoroughly tested, and the good separated from the worthless. For curiosity I today got an unopened box of each kind, and, with a Remington carbine, fired them with the following result. Not a single cartridge packed in the wooden box failed to explode, and not one required to be struck the second time. Fifty per cent of those packed in the paper boxes failed altogether, and several of those that did explode required to be struck twice, and, in two instances, even three blows were struck before explosion, showing that the sensitiveness of the fulminate had materially deteriorated, probably by some galvanic action; at all events, *it* was bad. One rifle carbine had shown me which seemed to have a weak mainspring, as it worked stiffly and failed to explode a cartridge. I examined the arm and found the apparent weakness of the spring to be owing to the gummed oil on the large pin upon which the hammer revolves; the stiffness thus occasioned over so great a surface prevented the hammer from

operating with sufficient force, the strength of the spring being too much spent in overcoming the friction occasioned by the gum. Upon removing the pin, wiping and putting it back in **its** place, a matter of a few moments, the piece worked perfectly.

One carbine burst about three inches from the muzzle, but it was evidently not caused by improper welding, as the fracture presented an irregular surface. The barrel of this gun on the outside looked as if it had been pushed into stiff mud, and probably a long wad of mud was inside the barrel when the rupture occurred.

Very respectfully, yours,

McLane Tilt,

*Captain U. S. Marine Corps,  
And Fleet Marine Officer, Asiatic Fleet.*



The following pages are a transcription of Samuel's diary of the war in Korea in which he won the Congressional Medal of Honor. (This is only a small part of his complete diary, but one of the most detailed sections.) The contents of Samuel Rogers diary have been preserved by his great-great-niece Cathy Edwards, whom we thank for granting permission to reprint herein.

**May 16** we Sailde from Nakasaki in Companay with the Alaski Beneca Monackasa and Palas bound for Korea

**May 19** the fleet came to anker of three Small Islands of Korea

**May 21** the fleet got under way and Stud in a bout 20 Miles and came to anker

**May 22** the fleet got under way and whent 12 Miles farther up the Sound

**May 24** the Palos and 4 Steime Lanchis Started to Survay the Entrinc to the River

**May 27** the Palas and Lanchis Returned from Survaying and Exploring the River

**May 29** the fleet got under way and Came to anker 7 Miles from the Mouth of the River

**May 30** the fleet got under way and came to anker in Side of the Mouth of Salee River and opned comunacashin with the Koreans

**June 1** the Palos and Monocasa and 4 Steime Lanchis Started up the River to Survay and the ware fierd into from the fortes on Shore 12 Miles a bove whare we Layede to anker

**June 4** the Palos Sailed for Cheefoo for the Mail

**June 8** the Palos Returnd from Cheefoo with the Mail

**June 10** an Expadishin Lefte the Ships to destroy the forts that fierd in to our Survaying Partey on the 1 of June it consisted of the Monacasa and Palos 4 Steime Lanchis and 24 boats in tow of the Palos with 550 Sailors and 75 Marines the Monocasa Steimed Some distince a head of the Palos we had 8 feilde guns with the Landing Partey, 12 Pounders about 11-30 the Monoca opened fier which was Returnd by the forts in 10 Minits the Monoca Silenced the furste forte and the Signal was maide to Lande we Landed Shortley before Noon we Landed 500 yards below a formadible Looking forte which it was Proposed to carry by assulte but the works ware found abandoned Leiving about 200 arms of all kinds in our hands Including 2 Long 32 Pounder as the beitch was verrey Muddy we Experianced Much trouble in Landing our arttillory consequentley the Men was Some what fatigued and it was deamed advisable to go into Camp for the Night at 11-20 P.M. the Koreans troyed to Surprise our Camp but the ware mette with Sutch a waram Recepshin the fell back at daylight broke Camp and Resumed the march inlande keeping a Skirmish Line well in advance of the Main bodey during the fornoon we captuerd three fortes of conciderabill importance without Serious fighting they being Evacuated under the fire of our arttillary Leiving the armament in good Conditton Large bodies of Koreans ware obsrved in our front but they Retreated So Rapidly and Coverd themselves So Effectively behinde the Elavated Ridges that it was impossable to force an Engagemnt Shortley before Noon however we approached thare Strongest

fortification which was Situated on a Peninsula formed by an abrupt bend of the River Stretching across the Pointe we cut off their Retreat by Land and advanced on the works three Companies were ordered to take the fort by Storm supported by the marines Company E.D. and C Leaving a Section of artillery and 4 Companies of infantry to guard our Rear which was threatened by a large force of Koreans advancing under a heavy fire from the fort at about Noon we Stormed the Citadel which we Carried by assault the Koreans fought Courageously and Much of the fighting was done hand to hand during which Sword and spears were used and Even Stones were hurled against us Lieutenant H W McKee fell Mortally wounded in the interior of the Citadel and S.A. Allen of the Colorado was killed on the walls of the fort Our Loss in the affair was three killed and 12 wounded of the Koreans 243 were killed and 20 wounded we also captured fifty flags and 32 Prisoners after coming for the wounded we Camped with Line of battle to the Rear and occupied Position until the Next day when we Embarked on board Monacacy and Palos and Steamed down to the fleet with the boats we were Received with cheers by Colorado Alaska and Benicia and arrived on board our Respective Ships in good order at 2 o'clock on the 12 I Received a Sword cut on the Rist if I had not ward it off with the barrel of My Rifle I Should have Lost a limb the force Composing this Expedition Numbered about 625 Men of whom about 520 were effective men the Remainder including Men in charge of boats Servants and Nurses

on the **17 of June** the Millat arrived from Shanghai bringing guns ammunition Stores and a few of the officers of U.S.S. Ashulat

**June 24** the Millat Sailed for Shanghai

**June 30** a Steam Launch belonging to the Prushin frigate herther come in Expecting to find us cutt to Pieces she had hard hard in Cheepoo that our Ships was aground and that tow of them was burnt

**July 1** the Returnd to thare Ships

**July 2** Sent the boddy of McKee on board U.S.S. Monacacy

**July 3** the fleet got underway at daylight for Cheepoo

**July 4** at Sea Making Passage from Korea to Cheepoo at Noon the fleet fired a Salute of 21 guns and the Monacacy and Palos kept a way for Shanghai and we came to anker at 11 P.M. in Site of the Light Ship of Cheepoo

**July 5** got underway and came to anker of Cheepoo Minister Low and Staff Left the Ship the Same afternoon

*This is the last entry that deals with this engagement specifically, except for this entry May 26th the next year (1872):*

**May 26** I Received a Medal of honor from the department for that Mefs in Korea Last June”

### Medal of Honor Recipients

Name	Date/Place of Birth	Date of Action	Military Unit	Presentation	Date of Death
	Entered Service At:	Place of Action			Place of Burial
Ordinary Seaman <b>John Andrews</b> US Navy	1821 York County, PA	<b>Jun 09 &amp; 10, 1871</b> Aboard Ship, Korea	U.S.S. Benicia	Presented on Jul 09, 1872 - G.O. 176	Unknown
	Maryland				
Corporal <b>Charles Brown</b> US Marine Corps	New York, NY	<b>Jun 11, 1871</b> Citadel, Korea	U.S.S. Colorado	Presented on Feb 08, 1872 - G.O. 169	Unknown
	Hong Kong, China				
Private <b>John Coleman</b> US Marine Corps	<b>Oct 09, 1847</b> County Cork, Ireland	<b>Jun 11, 1871</b> Citadel, Korea	U.S.S. Colorado	Presented on Feb 08, 1872 - G.O. 169	Unknown
	California				
Private <b>James Dougherty</b> US Marine Corps	<b>Nov 16, 1839</b> Langhash, Ireland	<b>Jun 11, 1871</b> Citadel, Korea	U.S.S. Benicia	Presented on Feb 08, 1872 - G.O. 169	<b>Nov 25, 1897</b> Cypress Hills National Cemetery - Brooklyn, NY
	Pennsylvania				
Quartermaster <b>Frederick Franklin</b> US Navy	1840 Portsmouth, NH	<b>Jun 11, 1871</b> Citadel, Korea	U.S.S. Colorado	Presented on Feb 08, 1872 - G.O. 169	<b>May 10, 1873</b> Proprietors Cemetery - Portsmouth, NH
	New Hampshire				
Chief Quartermaster <b>Patrick Henry Grace</b> US Navy	1832 Ireland	<b>Jun 10 &amp; 11, 1871</b> Citadel, Korea	U.S.S. Benicia	Presented on Dec 04, 1915 - G.O. 177	<b>Feb 24, 1896</b> Unknown
	Pennsylvania				
Carpenter <b>Cyrus Hayden</b> US Navy	1843 York, ME	<b>Jun 11, 1871</b> Citadel, Korea	U.S.S. Colorado	Presented on Feb 08, 1872 - G.O. 169	Unknown
	Maine				
Landsman <b>William F. Lukes</b> US Navy	<b>Feb 19, 1847</b> Niderbergdorf, Bohemia	<b>Jun 09 &amp; 10, 1871</b> Citadel, Korea	U.S.S. Colorado	Presented on Oct 10, 1872 - G.O. 180	<b>Dec 17, 1923</b> Los Angeles National Cemetery - Los Angeles, CA
	Tientsin, China				
Boatswain's Mate <b>Alexander McKenzie</b> US Navy	1837 Glasgow, Scotland	<b>Jun 11, 1871</b> Citadel, Korea	U.S.S. Colorado	Presented on Feb 08, 1872 - G.O. 169	Unknown
	New York, NY				
Private <b>Michael McNamara</b> US Marine Corps	1841 Clure, Ireland	<b>Jun 11, 1871</b> Citadel, Korea	U.S.S. Benicia	Presented on Feb 08, 1872 - G.O. 169	Unknown
	New York, NY				
Landsman <b>James F. Merton</b> US Navy	1845 Cheshire, England	<b>Jun 09 &amp; 10, 1871</b> Citadel, Korea	U.S.S. Colorado	Presented on Oct 10, 1872 - G.O. 180	Unknown
	Portsmouth, NH				
Private <b>Michael Owens</b> US Marine Corps	<b>Feb 06, 1837</b> New York, NY	<b>Jun 11, 1871</b> Citadel, Korea	U.S.S. Colorado	Presented on Feb 08, 1872 - G.O. 169	<b>Dec 08, 1890</b> Unknown
	New York, NY				
Private <b>Hugh Purvis</b> US Marine Corps	<b>Mar 05, 1846</b> Philadelphia, PA	<b>Jun 11, 1871</b> Citadel, Korea	U.S.S. Alaska	Presented on Feb 08, 1872 - G.O. 169	<b>Feb 12, 1922</b> Cedar Bluff Cemetery - Annapolis, MD
	Pennsylvania				
Quartermaster <b>Samuel F. Rogers</b> US Navy	1845 Buffalo, NY	<b>Jun 11, 1871</b> Citadel, Korea	U.S.S. Colorado	Presented on Feb 08, 1872 - G.O. 169	<b>Nov 01, 1905</b> Forest Homes Cemetery - Forest Park, IL
	New York, NY				
Ordinary Seaman <b>William Troy</b> US Navy	1848 Boston, MA	<b>Jun 11, 1871</b> Citadel, Korea	U.S.S. Colorado	Presented on Feb 08, 1872 - G.O. 169	<b>Mar 08, 1907</b> Stockton State Hospital Cemetery - Stockton, CA
	Massachusetts				