

Battle of Manila Bay, April-May 1898, Eye-Witness Account by Commodore George Dewey, TEXT

U. S. NAVAL FORCE ON ASIATIC STATION, Flagship *Olympia*, Cavite, Philippine Islands, May 4, 1898.

SIR: I have the honor to submit the following report of the operations of the squadron under my command:

The squadron left Mirs Bay on April 27, immediately on the arrival of Mr. O. F. Williams, United States consul at Manila, who brought important information and who accompanies the squadron.

Arrived off Bolinao on the morning of April 30 and, finding no vessels there, proceeded down the coast and arrived off the entrance to Manila Bay on the same afternoon. . .

The *Boston* and *Concord* were sent to reconnoiter Port Subic, I having been informed that the enemy intended to take position there. A thorough search of the port was made by the *Boston* and *Concord*, but the Spanish fleet was not found, although, from a letter afterwards found in the arsenal it appears that it had been their intention to go there.

Entered the Boca Grande, or south channel, at 11:30 p.m., steaming in column at distance at 8 knots. After half the squadron had passed, a battery on the south side of the channel opened fire, none of the shots taking effect. The *Boston* and *McCulloch* returned the fire.

The squadron proceeded across the bay at slow speed, and arrived off Manila at daybreak, and was fired upon at 5:15 a.m. by three batteries at Manila and two at Cavite and by the Spanish fleet anchored in an approximately east and west line across the mouth of Bakor Bay, with their left in shoal water in Canacao Bay

The squadron then proceeded to the attack, the flagship *Olympia*, under my personal direction, leading, followed at distance by the *Baltimore*, *Raleigh*, *Petrel*, *Concord*, and *Boston*, in the order named, which formation was maintained throughout the action: The squadron opened fire at 5:41 a.m. While advancing to the attack, two mines were exploded ahead of the flagship, too far to be effective.

The squadron maintained a continuous and precise fire at ranges varying from 5,000 to 2,000 yards, countermarching in a line approximately parallel to that of the Spanish fleet. The enemy's fire was vigorous, but generally ineffective.

Early in the engagement two launches put out toward the *Olympia* with the apparent intention of using torpedoes. One was sunk and the other disabled by our fire and beached before an opportunity occurred to fire torpedoes. At 7 a.m. the Spanish flagship *Reina Chnstina* made a desperate attempt to leave the line and come out to engage at short range, but was received with such galling fire, the entire battery of the *Olympia* being concentrated upon her, that she was barely able to return to the shelter of the point. The fires started in her by our shell at this time were not extinguished until she sank.

At 7:35 a.m., it having been erroneously reported to me that only 15 rounds per gun remained for the 5-inch rapid-fire battery, I ceased firing and withdrew the squadron for consultation and a redistribution of ammunition, if necessary.

The three batteries at Manila had kept up a continuous fire from the beginning of the engagement, which fire was not returned by this squadron. The first of these batteries was situated on the south mole head at the entrance to the Pasig River, the second on the south bastion of the walled city of Manila, and the third at Malate, about one-half mile farther south. At this point I sent a message to the Governor-General to the effect that if the batteries did not cease firing the city would be shelled. This had the effect of silencing them.

At 11:16 a.m., finding that the report of scarcity of ammunition was incorrect, I returned with the squadron to the attack. By this time the flagship and almost the entire Spanish fleet were in flames, and at 12:30 p.m. the squadron ceased firing, the batteries being silenced and the ships sunk, burnt, and deserted.

At 12:40 p.m. the squadron returned and anchored off Manila, the Petrel being left behind to complete the destruction of the smaller gun-boats, which were behind the point of Cavite. This duty was performed by Commander E. P. Wood in the most expeditious and complete manner possible.

The Spanish lost the following vessels:
Sunk - *Reina Christina*, *Castilla*, *Don Antonio de Ulloa*. Burnt-*Don Juan de Austn'a*, *Isla de Luzon*, *Isla de Cuba*, *General Lezo*, *Marques del Duero*, *El Correo*, *Velasco*, and *Isla de Mindanao* (transport).
Captured - *Rapido* and *Hercules* (tugs) and several small launches

I am unable to obtain complete accounts of the enemy's killed and wounded, but believe their loss to be very heavy. The *Reina Chnstina* alone had 150 killed, including the captain, and 90 wounded.

I am happy to report that the damage done to the squadron under my command was inconsiderable. There were none killed and only 7 men in the squadron very slightly wounded. As will be seen by the reports of the commanding officers which are herewith inclosed, several of the vessels were struck and even penetrated, but the damage was of the slightest, and the squadron is in as good condition now as before the battle.