

Out of the Archives

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Gov. Lister sent uncle of Gov. Inslee's wife to Mexican border in pursuit of Pancho Villa

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Mexican Revolutionary General Pancho Villa is known as a major military influence responsible for altering the landscape of Mexican politics in the 1910s.

His penchant for winning military battles drew the ire of Mexico's most powerful, but his strong will to fight for what he believed in, enabled him to be picky when it came to choosing friends. This stubbornness would also lead to his forced exit from the military arena, and ultimately, his assassination in 1923.

After mutual opposition to the Diaz regime and fighting together to oust President Huerta, Villa broke from fellow revolutionaries, Álvaro Obregón and Venustiano Carranza, over differences, which in hindsight, probably should have been compromised so this group could continue working toward a common goal.

Villa took his cavalry, División del Norte, and went after Carranza's army, led by Obregón. División del Norte had never lost a battle, but Carranza's forces handed them, not one, but two crushing defeats in 1915, which drove Villa into military irrelevance.

In March 1916, Villa would make a last-ditch effort to rebuild and arm División del Norte by invading the border town of Columbus, New Mexico, stealing weapons and animals. In the Battle of Columbus, 18 Americans (and about 100 of Villa's men) were killed, so Villa retreated into hiding, knowing the U.S. Army would not take this battle lightly.

U.S. Army General John J. Pershing was sent on what is unofficially known as the "Pancho Villa Expedition" in retaliation for Villa's attack, with an objective set forth by President Woodrow Wilson: Capture Pancho Villa. American troops only spent about a month inside Mexico before

Carranza's army took issue with the manhunt inside their territory, despite Pershing's focus on one of Carranza's enemies.

Although several of Villa's men were found, Pancho Villa himself could not be found by U.S. forces in the short time they spent in Mexican territory. To avoid backing down altogether, President Wilson kept Pershing's men on the border with the new objective of preventing future border attacks. The men were to anticipate invasion and be prepared for war at any minute, in what they called "The Border War."

This is where Washington gets involved.

[Troop B 1st Washington Cavalry, Mexican Frontier, Calexico, California.](#)

Washington Governor Ernest Lister (1913-1919) sought to help with efforts at the U.S.-Mexican border. In 1916, Governor Lister deployed Troop B, 1st Cavalry (pictured) to the border, where they would be stationed in the border town, Calexico, California.

Included in this cavalry is First Lady Trudi Inslee's great uncle, Philip Tindall.

General Pershing oversaw the troops at the border, but this operation ended after only nine months when the United States was persuaded to declare war on Germany in April 1916, officially entering World War I. Needing his services overseas, President Wilson recalled General Pershing from the border.

Following suit, Governor Lister also recalled his Washington troops, then turned around and deployed the infantrymen, including Tindall, to France to fight in World War I.