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THE SAGEBRUSH SOLDIERS



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**THE
SAGEBRUSH
SOLDIERS**

**Nevada's Volunteers
in the Civil War**

PHILIP DODD SMITH, JR.

NEVADA HISTORICAL SOCIETY QUARTERLY

Volume 5 Fall and Winter
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THE SAGEBRUSH SOLDIERS

CIVIL WAR CENTENNIAL

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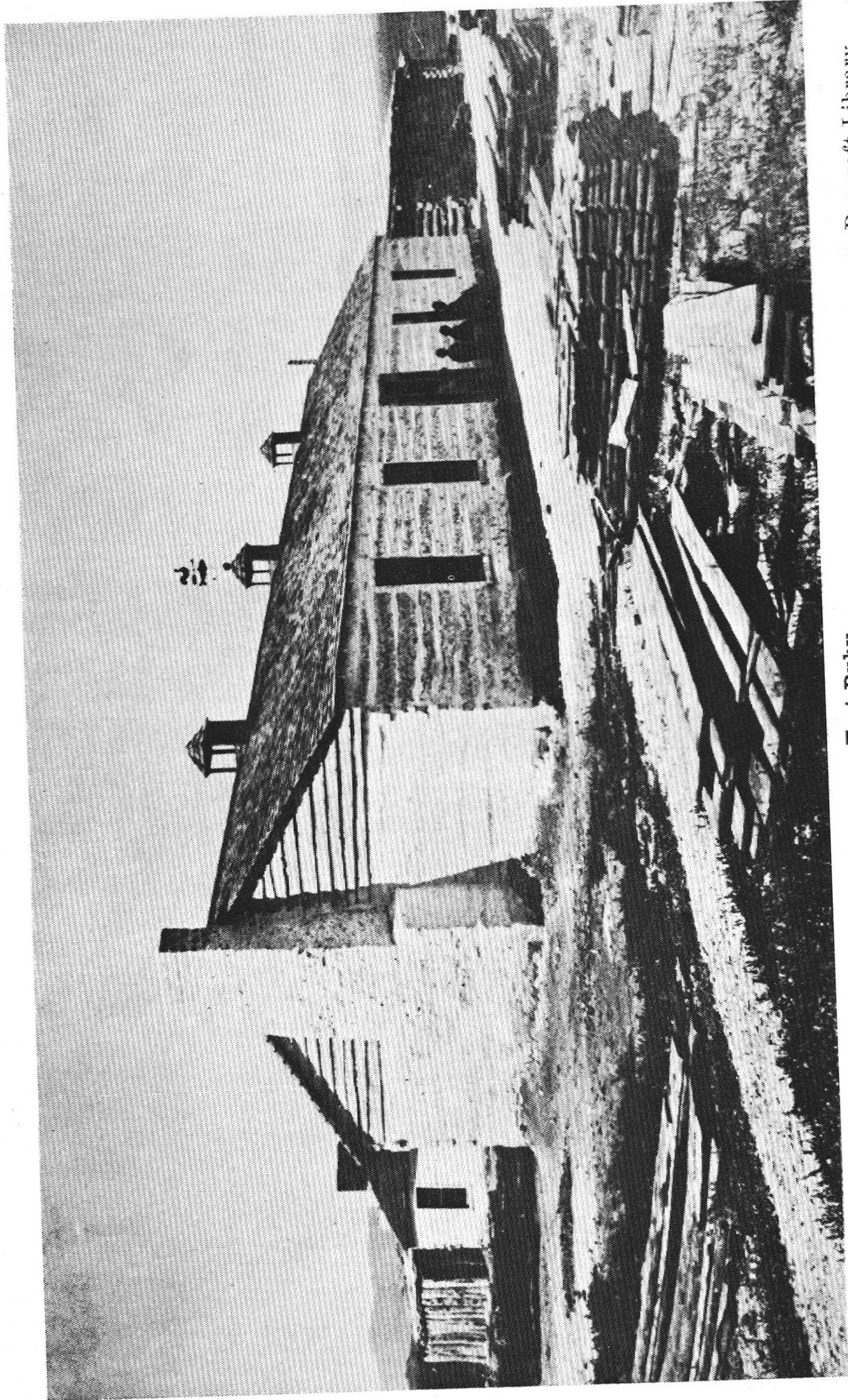
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Fort Ruby

—Bancroft Library.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In many of the published histories of the State of Nevada there are references to the Nevada troops who served in the Union Army during the Civil War. These allusions are, in the main, made merely in passing. No serious and thorough history of these men has, as yet, been undertaken. This study is an attempt to fill this gap in the published histories of Nevada.

In most of the published histories of the State of Nevada the Nevada Volunteers have received scant mention. This is true of the works of both Mr. Davis and Mr. Wren. Dr. Effie Mona Mack in her book, *Nevada*, devotes several chapters to Nevada in the Civil War. However, these are devoted to the politics and the Indian problem as a whole. This necessitates much time to describing the services of the United States Army, the California Volunteers, and partisan civilians. Where specific mention is made of the Nevada Volunteers the account is largely anecdotal and repeats much of the same material covered by the early writer, Myron Angel.

Mr. Angel in his *History of Nevada* has done the best published work on the Nevada Volunteers. However, little mention is made to their organization and training, while any references to their campaigns are scattered and anecdotal. Mr. Angel has strictly limited his work to Nevada and does not, therefore, mention the services of the Nevada Volunteers outside the state.

The most recently published work on the West in the Civil War is Aurora Hunt's *The Army of the Pacific*. This book mentions the Nevada Volunteers only *twice*. Mrs. Hunt has concentrated on the California Volunteers and seems to have completely overlooked the fact that both Oregon and Washington furnished troops for the Union.

While undertaking to study the history of these men the chief objectives were (1) to show that men from Nevada were anxious to serve the United States and enlisted in California regiments to fulfill this desire; (2) to discover what circumstances prevailed upon the United States and the people of Nevada to organize, equip, and maintain the Nevada Volunteers; (3) the methods by which this was accomplished; (4) to what uses the Nevada Volunteers were put and the extent of their campaigns and services; and lastly, (5) to show that they played a part in keeping the West loyal to the Union and in protecting the vital lines of communication between the East and the West.

Most phases of Nevada have been deeply overshadowed by the richness, color, and drama of the Comstock Lode and the other mineral developments which followed. The importance of the Comstock Era in Nevada history cannot be minimized. Historians, due to large amounts of material available to them, have concentrated on the mineral history of the state. Thus, other aspects of Nevada history have not been as thoroughly examined by the scholar.

This is true of the history of the men who served Nevada during the Civil War, although in this period several crucial events in the history of the state took place. The first really large bonanzas of the Comstock were discovered, with subsequent discoveries at Austin, Aurora, and the Humboldt. Nevada ceased to be a collection of miners' shacks in Gold Canyon and passed from a precarious existence as a part of Utah Territory to full statehood, with a widespread and prosperous population.

All this happened while the United States was torn in the agony of its most bitter war. Nevada, the frontier, was without the aid and protection of the United States during its critical formative years. Yet it was vitally helping the nation with the steady stream of precious metals so badly needed to help finance the war effort.

In this study an attempt has been made to detail the history of the men who volunteered to undertake the rigorous and thankless task of policing and protecting Nevada while she grew to statehood.

While writing this paper the author has used several words and terms with somewhat slightly different meanings than the usually accepted connotation. These must be definitely defined in order to make the history as clear as possible.

The term Civil War as used in this work not only includes the actual duration of hostilities between April, 1861, and April, 1865, but also includes the year immediately after the war. This period, from April, 1865, until the summer of 1866, was actually a part of the war in the West as the United States had not been able to return the regular army to service in the West and state troops had to continue their duties as if the war was still in progress.

The Nevada Volunteers include only the men and officers who were regularly enlisted or commissioned members of the First Battalion of Nevada Volunteer Cavalry and the First Battalion of Nevada Volunteer Infantry and, as such, were officially mustered into the service of the United States. It must be understood that many California Volunteer regiments were active in and near Nevada.

While the word infantry is synonymous with foot-soldier, such was not always the case. It was customary to mount infantry when time and distance required it. Therefore, the word infantry may include both mounted and dismounted men, although combat was usually dismounted with the animals kept at the rear.

For clarity and to prevent needless repetition, certain military titles have been abbreviated after being used several times. This is especially true of title of rank and unit designators.

In undertaking the research for this study, every effort was made to use original and contemporary sources dealing with the Nevada troops. The primary source of information on the expeditions and garrison duty were the orders, letters, and reports of the military themselves. These were compiled and published by the United States as the *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies in the War of the Rebellion* in the late 1890's. Since these are unabridged and no editorial comments have been inserted, they can be regarded as accurate.

The reports of the early Adjutants General of Nevada as well as the early Governors, James Nye and Henry Blasdel, can also be regarded as original sources.

The files of newspapers dating in the Civil War period at the University of Nevada, the Nevada Historical Society, the Nevada State Library, and the Lander County courthouse have shed much light on the Nevada Volunteers as seen by contemporaries outside the military. They have helped greatly to fill in the many details not recorded in the official records.

Published books and unpublished theses have provided still more wealth of background and material. Of these, the huge work of Mr. Frederick Dyer, *A Compendium of the War of the Rebellion*, has proven most useful.

Since it has been shown that a complete history of the Nevada men who served in the Civil War has not been written, and that previous works are not complete in this area, it is hoped that this study fulfills this need and adds yet another small piece to the vast jig-saw puzzle that is history.

The slogan of the State of Nevada is "Battle Born." This is the history of the men who helped fight that battle for her.

PHILIP D. SMITH, JR.
Carson City, Nevada
1962

CHAPTER II

NEVADA REMAINS LOYAL

The advent of the Civil War found much of the West, and Nevada in particular, in a state of political and economic chaos. As the momentous tide of history swept toward war and the states of the South began to secede from the Union in the fall of 1860, only two states west of the Rocky Mountains had been admitted to the Union.

California and Oregon were fully established states while the remainder of the Pacific Slope and Great Basin was still a largely unexplored, untamed frontier. Yet this area was already becoming of major importance to the United States and was just beginning to open its wealth to the nation.

Sporadic mining became a frenzied rush with the discovery of gold and silver in Nevada. The astounding wealth of the Comstock Lode, first discovered in 1859, brought thousands of eager miners to Nevada, each filled with the dream of the riches to be found at Washoe. Soon after, in the summer of 1860, Corey, Braley, and Hicks discovered silver at Esmeralda.¹ This was followed by other strikes at Austin and in the Humboldt District.

Following the miners came the inevitable army of tradesmen, teamsters, and professional men. Tent cities began to spring up from sagebrush-dotted hills. From a collection of burrows and tents on the side of Six Mile Canyon the miners emerged after the hard winter of 1859-1860 to tear at Sun Mountain for its riches. Shacks gave way to sturdy buildings in Virginia City and Gold Hill; Washoe became cosmopolitan.

Nevada was still, legally, a part of Utah Territory. However, jurisdiction over Nevada by the Salt Lake authorities had been almost nonexistent since the recall in 1857 of the colony of Latter-day Saints to Utah to help repel the invasion of Deseret by the United States Army. The discovery of vast mineral wealth in Nevada had precipitated the movement of a large population to the area and it was still expanding, yet no government existed in Nevada.

This problem was recognized by the United States and it quickly took steps to remedy the situation. Congress passed the Organic Act creating Nevada Territory and it was signed into law by President Buchanan on March 2, 1861.² Two days later, Abraham Lincoln became the sixteenth President of the United States and the war clouds grew darker.

Already fears that Nevada might become lost to the Union cause were felt in the minds of responsible authorities. By far the largest group to come to Nevada had been Californians. Many of these were ruffians, malcontents, and Confederate sympathizers who had found little welcome in California and had moved into the new mining fields, safely across the state line. Although most of their support for the Confederacy was purely vocal, many later went south and served in the Confederate Army. Some reasoned that if Nevada and California

could not actively aid the Confederate States, the Pacific Coast might be persuaded to remain neutral and form a third separate country. General E. V. Sumner, Commander of the Department of the Pacific, voiced his fears to his superiors in Washington as he wrote, "There is an absolute and immediate need for a government of some sort in Nevada."³

President Lincoln lost no time in appointing able men to govern the new territory. The new Governor was James Nye of New York with Orion Clemens as Secretary of State. Nevertheless, it was four months from the date of Lincoln's inauguration until the new officers arrived in Nevada to officially assume their offices. In these four months, and even in the next year, Nevada came close to being lost to the Union cause.

Just two days before Nye assumed his office, the first land battle of the war was fought at Big Bethel, Virginia. Soon after came the news of the disastrous Federal defeat at Bull Run on July 21, 1861, with a resulting riot in Virginia City. Congress had, by now, authorized 500,000 men and \$500,000,000 for the prosecution of the war.

Nevada was a sprawling ant hill of miners as these momentous events took place. Adding to the chaos in Nevada was the constant fear of an Indian outbreak. Instances of Indian hostility toward the white population were growing and the bloody Piute War of 1860 was still all too fresh in the minds of Nevadans. Although defeated in force, small bands of Indians were constantly attacking the Overland Stage, the Pony Express, wagon trains, and isolated whites whenever the opportunity arose.

Militarily, Nevada was in poor condition. To act as a check on the Indians after the Piute War, Fort Churchill had been built on the Carson River in 1860 by Captain Joseph Stewart, United States Army. This post was manned by Companies H, I, and M of the Third United States Artillery, Companies A and H, Sixth Infantry, and part of Companies A and F, First Dragoons at the outbreak of the war.⁴ This represented a total force of some two hundred men, a sizeable garrison for the frontier.⁵

Since the total strength of the United States Army in 1861 was only 12,951 officers and men,⁶ it can be seen that the total force in Nevada was not so insignificant as might be thought. In addition, many of the more able officers were resigning daily to follow their states into the Confederacy. Even the commander of the Department of the Pacific was a southerner. Sensing the danger in this situation, Major General Albert Sydney Johnson was quickly relieved of his command by the War Department. He was later to die leading a Confederate Army in the holocaust of Shiloh.

It soon became apparent that all regular army units would have to be moved to the East to form the core of the new volunteer army now in training. The Confederates were pushing the advantage they had in the Border States and the fate of these lay in the balance. Vital as the mines of Nevada were to the Union, vital as the lines of communication to California, they were second when trained and equipped troops were at an all-time premium. The regulars at Fort Churchill were moved east. Nor was Nevada alone. All of the regular troops on the Pacific Coast eventually were sent east with the sole exception of one unit of

heavy artillery. The gap was filled by the newly created California Volunteers.

A terrible hiatus existed in Nevada with the removal of the United States Army. True, the state now had a pro-Union government—but how strong was it? Could it stand in the face of a concerted Confederate effort to wrest control of the state? Confederate forces had already occupied New Mexico and Arizona; Nevada could well be next. These were the fears of Nevada Unionists in the early days of the war.

These fears were multiplied beyond their real import by the pressures of the times, but there was a solid basis for some of them. Since California had definitely gone for the Union, many more Confederate supporters had come to Nevada where they continued to proclaim their sympathy for secession. The activities of this group began to cause alarm among the loyal portion of the population.

A Committee of Safety was organized at Virginia City with John A. Collins acting as spokesman for the group. An appeal was made to Captain Hendrikson at Fort Churchill for arms to be issued to loyal civilians.⁷ This request was simultaneously made to General Sumner at the Presidio. The Captain had no surplus arms and asked Sumner if he could be furnished three or four hundred muskets to be issued to Unionists.⁸ Sumner's reply came quickly. United States arms could not be given to civilians. Only by organizing themselves into regular militia units could Nevadans become eligible to receive weapons from the army.⁹

On June 5, 1861, the Unionists expressed their alarms in even more specific terms. "We are eleven-twelfths Union men, but we are without arms or organization, while the rebels have control of all the public or private arms here," wrote Joseph Atwill for the Virginia Committee of Safety.¹⁰ In this communication to General Sumner he again pleaded for more troops to be sent to Nevada.

The commander of the only army post in Nevada was even more pointed, and seemed more disturbed than the civilians. On the same day Mr. Atwill wrote, Major George Blake, First Dragoons, reported that there were in Virginia City alone two hundred men organized for the South under Dr. McMeans. The only available arms in the Territory were left from the Piute War of the year before, and had been placed in the custody of Mr. Blackburn in Carson City. Major Blake's biggest concern was that these eighty stand of Minie muskets were in the care of a suspected Secessionist. The Major requested that his garrison be augmented with two hundred more soldiers and three hundred muskets immediately.¹¹

Lastly, came the news that the Stars and Bars of the Confederacy had been raised over a building in Virginia City the day before. This incident has been described by several writers and they have shown that the incident was conceived as somewhat of a hoax. It certainly was not seen as such by the loyal population of Virginia City, and a huge fistfight broke out between the supporters of both causes. The Unionists emerged bloody, but victorious.

Major Blake concluded his report with the information that he fully expected an attack on Fort Churchill by the Secessionists as he had received rumors of this proposed movement from loyal citizens in Virginia City.¹²

It is to Major Blake's credit that he quickly took what steps he could to keep the Secessionists from gaining control of Nevada. Captain Moore and twenty dragoons proceeded at once to Carson City and relieved Mr. Blackburn of the muskets in his charge. Moving on to Silver City the soldiers took twenty-one more muskets from a Captain Curtis.¹³ Then Moore and his command made their way to Virginia City where the Captain organized a local militia. Four hundred men took an oath of allegiance to the United States, but Moore only had enough arms to equip one hundred. The rest had to wait until more muskets could be received from San Francisco.¹⁴

At his headquarters at the Presidio, General Sumner also took steps to preserve the loyalty of Nevada. Additional troops from the newly recruited California Volunteers were sent to Nevada. Lieutenant Colonel Charles McDermit was placed in command of Fort Churchill and a full report of existing conditions in Nevada was forwarded to the War Department. To his superiors General Sumner reported:

. . . the leaders of this party [Secession] claim to be acting under the authority of the Montgomery Government, which gives them some weight in the country . . . I would respectfully and earnestly represent the importance of organizing the civil government of Nevada Territory immediately . . . There is no law or government there at all and the territory is a place of refuge for disorganizers and other unruly spirits.¹⁵

The Secessionists were both strong and active; it has been alluded that Judge David Terry had in his possession a document from the Confederate Government at Montgomery appointing him Governor of Nevada in the event that Nevada could be won over to the Southern cause. This has never been proven, but the Secessionists did nothing to hinder the rumor's spread, and perhaps even encouraged it. Certainly Terry, already famous as a former California Supreme Court Justice, would have been a logical choice. He later proved his loyalty to the South when he went to the Confederacy and served in its army.

Halting a possible flow of manpower from the West to the Confederate Army was one of the more important tasks of the Union Army in the early years of the war. Singly or in small groups many men tried to travel eastward to join the Confederate forces. All travelers headed east were stopped by the United States Army whenever possible and their motives questioned. One such incident in Nevada was described by Joe F. Triplett, a known Southerner, who joined a cattle drive in Nevada. In his diary Mr. Triplett stated that on May 4, 1862 they:

Left Susan's Bluffs at 8 a.m., passed Fort Churchill, had to halt and let the Blue Coats satisfy themselves that we were a band of cow hunters instead of a band of Ribs [Rebs] going back to the States. If we had not had a well-known cattle owner in our crowd, I reckon Major McDermit would have stopped us,—because of my being in the crowd . . .¹⁶

That Nevada continued to be a place of refuge for "disorganizers and other unruly spirits" can be shown by the statement of Jacob Van Bokkelen, Provost Marshal of Virginia City, when he reported, in May, 1864, that Secessionists were continuing to arrive and that there

were 2,400 in Storey County, not counting other areas of the state.¹⁷ This figure is probably not accurate, as much support for any cause is purely vocal. Only a small percentage of these would have fought for the South, which was, by that date, losing the war.

The Territory of Nevada finally received a civil government with the arrival of James Nye after the arduous trip around Cape Horn and the overland journey from San Francisco. He arrived in Nevada on July 7, 1861, and found a grand and gala welcome awaiting him in Carson City. Five days later, on July 12, Governor Nye issued a proclamation stating he had officially assumed the duties of his office. Nevada, at last, had a Unionist government.

With the establishment of the Territorial officers, the Secession threat waned. True, there were still many sympathizers with the Confederate cause, but after the establishment of law men began to take care what they said in public; the military was quick to arrest any person who spoke out publicly against the administration of Lincoln. Still, over a year after Nye arrived, talk of Secession was still strong. A Mr. Brown reported to Colonel Drum in San Francisco on October 3, 1862, that:

. . . Probably one-half the population of this territory are Confederate sympathizers . . . There is considerable excitement at Carson, Gold Hill, and Virginia Cities about reported Secession movements.¹⁸

The situation was not too bad, as Mr. Brown concluded his observations with the opinion that he considered the Indians more of a threat than the Confederates.

The Union cause in Nevada was strengthened immeasurably when, in November of 1861, Major Charles McDermit of the Second California Volunteer Cavalry was ordered to take command of Fort Churchill. A citizen soldier, McDermit had, in his forty years, lived the varied and active life of the pioneer American. Scarcely a better choice could have been made for the commandant of the Military District of Nevada.

Charles McDermit first saw the light of day in Cambria County, Pennsylvania, on May 7, 1820. Attending school at Ebensburg, he went on to become a cabinet maker, a trade which he followed until he was twenty-six. The drums stirring along the Rio Grande rolled across the young United States, ready and eager to find a war, in 1846. Young Charles heard them, laid down his woodworking tools, and marched off to fight Mexico.

Enlisting in the Second Pennsylvania Volunteers, McDermit was made Second Lieutenant of Company D, leading his men to the Mexican War in 1846. On February 12, 1848, at Camp Enciso, Mexico, he was promoted to First Lieutenant of his company.

Following the custom of the day, McDermit was mustered out of the service of the United States in Vera Cruz. Charles turned then, not toward the life of a Pennsylvania artisan, but toward the lure of the newly discovered gold fields in California. Crossing Mexico, McDermit reached California by sea, one of the original "49'ers." To provide himself with a stake for the gold fields, he took a position as superintendent of the crew building the new United States Barracks at

Benicia, California. A few months later he built and operated a sawmill at Bodega Bay. The spring of 1851 saw him packing supplies to the miners along the Salmon and Trinity Rivers, while during the summer he took up placer mining himself.

Apparently he failed to "strike it rich" as 1851 found him building a ferry across the Klamath River just a few miles from its junction with the Trinity. Leaving this new enterprise for a short time to join a prospecting trip to Southern Oregon, McDermit returned to find that it had been burned by Indians. Soon after he was one of the original founders of the mining town of Happy Camp. Here again hostile Indians gave the miners some trouble and it was only natural that the ex-soldier should lead the whites against the Indians at the Battle at Lowden's Ferry.

When Siskiyou County was created by the California Legislature in March of 1852, McDermit was elected its first sheriff. In this office he led a posse in a summer-long campaign against the Indians around Bloody Point and Tule Lake to protect the wagon trail to Yreka. 1853 and 1854 were busy years as McDermit led an active life as a cattleman, cabinetmaker, and sawmill owner in Siskiyou County. On September 19, 1854, the first white men scaled the snowy summit of 14,000 foot Mount Shasta. Charles McDermit was a member of the party. The following year he was married to Miss Hannah Davidson of Scott Valley, California. Their union, although relatively short, was blessed with three children; Charles and Sadie were born in California while Elizibeth Maude was born at Fort Churchill on November 30, 1864, just eight months before her father's death.

Mr. McDermit entered politics in 1859 and represented Siskiyou County during two sessions of the California Assembly. This position he left at the outbreak of the Civil War and volunteered his services to his country. He was chosen Captain of Company M, Second California Cavalry, and was ordered to Camp Alert, San Francisco, for the basic training of his men.

In November, 1861, McDermit was promoted to Major of Volunteers and directed to proceed to the command of Fort Churchill, Nevada Territory. The journey as far as Sacramento was made by ship, thence by stage over the Sierra Nevada until stopped by the winter snow. The Major and his wife crossed the summit of the Sierra on horseback with the children on the saddles before them. A portion of the journey from Carson City to Fort Churchill was made by sleigh.

Major McDermit was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and his command enlarged on May 1, 1863, just as the Nevada Volunteers were beginning to form. He was to prove a wise and just commander, respected and admired by all who knew him.

By the close of 1861 Nevada was firmly on the side of the Union. The vital lines of communication were safe from the Confederates. California was actively supporting the North with both men and money. In Nevada the riches of the Comstock would help the Union finance the enormous costs of the war.

The West was linked to the East by telegraph in the fall of 1861. The first message to be sent across the continent originated from Carson City, Nevada, on October 23, 1861, and was penned by the First



Lt. Col. Charles and Mrs. McDermitt with children Charles and Sadie

Territorial Legislature which had been called by Governor Nye earlier the same month. The text of their Resolution reads:

Whereas; The privilege of forwarding the first Telegraphic communication across the Continent, has been given to the Legislative Assembly of Nevada Territory therefore be it.

Resolved; That the said communication shall consist of the following language, viz;

“Nevada Territory through her first Legislative Assembly. To the President and People of the United States, Greeting;

“Nevada for the Union ever true and loyal. The last born of the Nation, will be the last to desert the Flag. Our aid to the extent of our ability, can be relied upon to crush rebellion.”

(signed by)	Thomas Hannah	Wm. P. Hunnington, Jr.
	Wm. M. Stewart	Saml. Youngs
	_____	_____
	Council Committee	House Committee

President Lincoln could, with all sincerity, inform Congress in his first annual message:

. . . The Territories of Colorado, Dakota, and Nevada, created by the last Congress, have been organized . . . under auspices especially gratifying when it is considered that the leaven of treason was found in some of these new countries when the Federal Officers arrived there . . .¹⁹

FOOTNOTES

¹Effie Mona Mack, *History of Nevada* (Glendale: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1936), p. 214.

²*Ibid.*, p. 218.

³United States War Department, *Official Records of the War of the Rebellion*, Vol. L. Part II (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1897), p. 518.

⁴Mack, *op. cit.*, pp. 312-313.

⁵Thomas Wilson (Ad. Agency), *Pioneer Nevada*, Vol. L (Reno: Harold's Club, 1951), p. 47.

⁶General Theophilus F. Rodenbaugh, "United States Army," *The New International Encyclopedia* (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1917), p. 729.

⁷*Official Records*, p. 490.

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 495.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 494.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 499.

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 500.

¹³Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

¹⁴*Official Records*, p. 507, and Mack, *op. cit.*, p. 276.

¹⁵General Richard H. Orton, *Records of California Men in the War of the Rebellion* (Sacramento: State Printing Office, 1890), p. 18.

¹⁶Edna B. Patterson, "The Diary of Joe F. Triplett," *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*, Volume 2, Number 1, January-March 1959 (Reno: Nevada Historical Society, 1959), p. 4.

¹⁷*Official Records*, p. 847.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 148.

¹⁹James D. Richardson, *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1902*, Vol. VI (Washington: National Bureau of Literature and Art, 1904), p. 51.

CHAPTER III

NEVADANS IN CALIFORNIA REGIMENTS

When Edmund Ruffin of Virginia pulled the lanyard that sent a cannon shot hurtling toward Fort Sumter, he ignited the spark of the greatest show of patriotism this nation had seen to that time. Thousands sprang to defend both the Stars and Stripes and the Stars and Bars. Overnight huge volunteer armies mushroomed, each dedicated to its own burning cause. Bands played, drums rolled, and crowds cheered as the nation's manhood marched off to the holy war.

The fire of patriotism swept across the plains and mountains to the Pacific Coast. Torchlight parades and rallies, gay bunting, shrilling bugles, and the news of battles in the East stirred the hearts of Westerners. They, too, wanted to fight.

Since the regular army forces stationed in the West were needed to hold the lines until the volunteers could be trained, the War Department authorized the raising of volunteer regiments in California. Enlistments began immediately, and in many a small town of the Mother-Lode the crowds gathered to watch the local men go off to war. They would put "Johnny Reb" on the run.

Alas, this was not true. Western troops were needed to defend the West, and most of the Californians never saw a gray-clad Confederate. One exception was the California Hundred who paid their own way to the East and were accepted as companies of a Massachusetts regiment. These men served throughout the major campaigns of the Army of the Potomac and earned a fine battle record. Others were the men of the California Column, which left its base at Los Angeles and drove the Confederates from Arizona and New Mexico. These men pushed on to invade Texas, capturing El Paso, and crossed that state to the Gulf of Mexico.

The majority of the California Volunteers did wearisome garrison duty in a score of small posts, fighting a never-ending battle against the Indians. One of these was Fort Churchill, Nevada Territory, and in November of 1861 the Second California Cavalry arrived at the adobe fort. More Californians established Fort Ruby in Eastern Nevada, pushing on to set up Camp Douglas, near Salt Lake.

The wave of patriotism swept over Nevada, too, and many men in the Territory desired to serve their country. For a monthly pay of only thirteen dollars a private had to be either patriotic or unable to find more gainful employment. Army life was tough and the discipline even tougher, yet men still looked for a chance to join.

The California units in Nevada accepted Nevadans for enlistment as their complements permitted. Examination of the muster rolls of all California regiments shows that during the Civil War that state furnished a total of 15,725¹ men for Federal service. Of these, one hundred and fifty-nine, or approximately one percent, were from Nevada.

Nevadans enlisted in many California organizations and, individually, saw much service. Most enlisted in the closest unit and served

with it throughout the war, traveling far from the place where they joined. One Nevadan, Private John W. Copeland of Company L, Second California Cavalry, was discharged as far east as Omaha, Nebraska, on February 1, 1866.²

Of the one hundred and fifty-nine Nevadans who served under the banners of California regiments, nine gave their lives for their country. The actual number of Nevadans in these units and the statistics of their service can be seen in Table 1.

One unit of the California Volunteers can be called "Nevada's" with pride by residents of the Silver State. This was Company F, Second California Volunteer Infantry, formed in Nevada by Nevadans.

Charles D. Douglas of Carson City organized this group of volunteers for Federal service in September of 1861. He was appointed Captain of the company, and his unit was accepted by the State of California as part of the Second Infantry. This unit enlisted fifty-four men from Nevada for service. As a full Civil War company contained from eighty to one hundred men, this meant that the remainder had to come from recruits later enlisted in California.³

Captain Douglas' company arrived in San Francisco on October 1, 1861, and remained there in training until December.⁴ It was then ordered to the scene of the Indian war taking place in Humboldt County, California, where it served the remainder of the war, operating from Forts Humboldt and Anderson.⁵

Company F received its first taste of Indian fighting in a small skirmish at Albee's Ranch, Humboldt County, on January 29, 1862,⁶ but this was simply the beginning of a series of small clashes with the hostiles. Throughout the Civil War the Indians of Northern California were engaged in constant warfare with the white settlers. Soon Company F was to receive its share of the hard campaigning.

TABLE I. Nevadans in California Regiments

Organization	Enlisted	Killed	Died	Deserted
2nd Calif. Cav., Co. A.....	18	2	....	2
2nd Calif. Cav., Co. G.....	1	....	....	....
2nd Calif. Cav., Co. H.....	31	1	1	7
2nd Calif. Cav., Co. K.....	12	....	....	2
2nd Calif. Cav., Co. L.....	22	....	*1	3
2nd Calif. Cav., Co. M.....	7	1	1	1
2nd Calif. Inf., Co. F.....	54	1	1	13
2nd Calif. Inf., Co. K.....	1	....	....	....
3rd Calif. Inf., Co. A.....	3	....	....	1
3rd Calif. Inf., Co. B.....	5	....	....	1
3rd Calif. Inf., Co. C.....	3	....	....	1
3rd Calif. Inf., Co. D.....	1	....	....	1
3rd Calif. Inf., Co. E.....	1	....	....	....
Totals.....	159	5	4	32

*Suicide.

On March 25 news was received at the headquarters of the Military District of the Humboldt that Angel's Ranch had been beseiged by Indians for the past three days. Lt. Col. Lippitt, commanding, immediately ordered Captain Douglas to march from his camp at Arcata to the relief of the ranch.⁷ Simultaneously, Arkey's and Hefferman's

Companies of the Second took the field, Lippitt personally accompanying them. These two groups arrived at Angel's Ranch on the 27th. An hour later the Nevadans arrived; Captain Douglas had followed an Indian trail which he had lost in the dense underbrush, necessitating the retracing of part of his route. All the soldiers began an immediate scout of the area for the hostiles, who had disappeared, but a recent snow had obliterated all tracks.⁸

The soldiers then began the weary march back to camp, Company F being under orders to proceed to Arcata by a roundabout way, looking for Indians. This proved to be fruitless, also; the enemy had melted into the forest.⁹

The fact that the Indians made good their escape in this area is easily understood. Even now, much of the region is thickly covered with forest and dense undergrowth. Colonel Lippitt stressed this in one of his reports when he wrote:

. . . it need only be observed that the region of country over which the present hostilities extend consists of some 2,000 square miles, three-fourths of which are covered with dense forests of timber and chaparral, almost impenetrable to white men, but excellent hiding places for the Indians. . . . Of the seven companies now in this district only four are available for operations in this country.¹⁰

To keep a check on the hostiles, the Colonel ordered the Nevadans to occupy a post on the right bank of Redwood Creek, close to the trail that ran along the stream. At five in the early dawn of April 6, 1862, the sentries were startled to hear shots and quickly alerted Douglas. A packtrain had been attacked by the Indians only a mile from the soldier's camp, the drivers fleeing at the first shots.¹¹

Captain Douglas broke camp quickly and headed for the gunfire, despite the fact that he had only twelve men with him, the rest of the company having gone on scouting expeditions.¹²

This handful Douglas split, seven men accompanying him, the other five under Lt. Johnson being sent to scout the timber along the trail. Soon they were joined by the packers who had abandoned their train and were now glad to guide the soldiers back to it. The darkness of dawn and an early morning fog allowed the men to approach the Indians without being detected. The hostiles had finished pillaging the horses and were busily engaged in burning what stores they did not want. Silently the men of Company F raised their muskets and, without warning, fired a volley into the assembled Indians.¹³

One Indian fell dead, while two others were wounded. The astonished survivors scuttled for the underbrush before the soldiers could reload their muskets. One brave, turning in his flight, fired at Captain Douglas at close range, sending a ball through the glove that Douglas held in his left hand. The officer replied with a shot from his revolver, wounding the man, but he made good his escape into the trees.¹⁴

In the timber Lt. Johnson and his party observed about twenty Indians fleeing and were fired upon fifteen or twenty times, but without a casualty among the soldiers. The one dead man was found to be carrying a U. S. Minie musket with a plentiful supply of ammunition.

He was recognized as a Hooper Indian by Private Brown, a hospital orderly.¹⁶

Douglas and his twelve men set up a guard at Minor's Ranch and a dispatch was sent to Lippitt via Sergeant Hoalton requesting that additional troops be sent to the area to pursue the Indians. Unfortunately, there were no soldiers available and the Indians made good their escape.¹⁷ The men continued their frustrating campaign of guard and scout while the winter turned into spring.

Lt. Flynn of Company F was on one of these innumerable patrols when it was reported to him that there were two hundred hostiles encamped near the mouth of Redwood Creek. Although accompanied by only a guide, Flynn turned to see if this intelligence was true. Near Turner's Gap he and the guide encountered three Indians headed in the direction of the supposed campsite. Flynn halted them to prevent the camp from being warned of his approach, cautioning them of the consequences of any attempt to escape. No sooner had he done this when the trio bolted. The officer fired at them with his revolver, killing one instantly and wounding another in the head. The two survivors, nonetheless, made good their escape and succeeded in alerting the main party.¹⁸

Spring wore on and the scouting parties went endlessly on. On one of these, March 7, 1862, Lt. Flynn and twenty men were picking their way across the rugged country near the Mad River, a few miles below Fort Lyon. A brisk rain had settled the dust and the soldiers plodded on, unaware that death ringed them. A sudden volley of musket fire shattered the stillness and the guide fell, shot through both thighs. Instantly taking cover, the soldiers rushed into the shadows of the timber along the trail from whence the fusillade had come. Only shadows greeted them, for not an Indian could be seen. Yet they were there; many a Nevadan flinched as he heard the snap of a musket hammer close by and knew that only a wet cap, soaked by the recent shower, had saved his life. From all sides the sound of the muskets came, but the Indians, finding they were unable to fire a single shot, melted away. The soldiers never saw a single member of the party that had attacked them.¹⁹

In the early morning of May 14, Flynn and fifteen men of Company F stumbled onto a camp of one hundred and fifty Indians near Angel's Ranch. The Indian sentries had given the alarm at the approach of the soldiers and the band had time to flee across the creek, cutting their fish dam behind them. This effectively prevented the soldiers from crossing as they would now be forced to ford the stream under fire. Thus, they opened battle across the creek, pouring a steady fire at the Indians for over an hour, killing six. Finally the hostiles withdrew over a hill, allowing the soldiers to cross the stream and destroy their camp. Flynn reported that he found a large quantity of powder and caps among the possessions abandoned by the band. The Lieutenant and his men then returned to Camp Anderson with the news of their victory. Captain Douglas and the whole of Company F took the field in an effort to overtake the war party, but to no avail.²⁰

There simply were not enough men to patrol and protect the whole of Humboldt County from the Indians and Colonel Lippitt again

entered a plea for more men and supplies to Colonel Drum, his superior in San Francisco, saying:

. . . The whole number of effective men for garrison and field duty in this district is at present about 400, while the field of operations extends over about 2,700 square miles of the most difficult country on the face of the globe . . .²¹

The men, individually, suffered much from the terrain. Two weeks after his plea for reenforcements, Lippitt was forced to report that the brambles ruined the soldiers' clothing so badly that new uniforms were needed at once, especially pants. Twenty-five or thirty men of Company F were so destitute that they could not leave camp for *any* duty, no matter how badly their services were required.²²

In such poor shape physically were the men of Company F that while on a scouting expedition Douglas was forced to leave Corporal Kennedy with Privates Campbell and Lee at Whitney's Ranch, four miles from Albee's, after they had collapsed while marching. Mr. Whitney, his two hired men, and an Indian boy were glad to let the soldiers rest while they carried on the daily ranch routine.²³

In the forenoon one of the hired men rode in to say that he had been shot at by an Indian. Leaving their work, the men retired to the ranch house with the soldiers while the hired man hurried on to Albee's to alert Douglas. Soon after his departure a large band of Indians attacked the house. Private Raymond Campbell, of Carson City, and Mr. Michels, the remaining hired hand, were killed in the first volley. Mr. Whitney, owner of the ranch, was mortally wounded and died the next morning. Corporal Kennedy, Private Lee, and the Indian boy settled down to hold the house until relief arrived.

Twenty other men, under Douglas, had barely reached Albee's in a state of utter fatigue when the messenger arrived with the news of the attack. Exhaustion vanished as the men doubled back to retrace their steps. Spurred on by the sound of firing, they finished the four miles on the run. The three survivors were found still holding out, although the neighboring barn was on fire and the ranch house itself had over fifty bullet holes in it.

The attackers had once again vanished, supposedly toward Albee's. Douglas sent Lt. Noyes with ten men over the route for the third time that morning to protect the ranch until the whole party could return.²⁴ Private Campbell was buried, the first Nevadan ever to be killed in the service of his country.

Thus, it was with blood in their eyes that Lt. Johnson and five men left the camp at Arcata on August 19, 1862. Two whites had discovered a camp of twenty-five Indians and reported the fact to the military. Eighteen civilians, Lt. Anderson and twelve men of Company D, and the detachment of Company F all left in separate bands to surround the encampment. A surprise attack at dawn of the 20th resulted in the death of six Indians. Johnson reported that his men had killed two and wounded three more, capturing five guns and a quantity of bows and arrows. One civilian volunteer was killed in the brief skirmish.²⁴

On September 8, 1862, Company F had another brush with the Indians on Redwood Creek and soon after the unit was transferred to

Camp Wright.²⁶ Lt. Flynn engaged the enemy in a small skirmish at Hydesville, California, near Simmon's Ranch, on October 2.²⁷ Campaigning came to a halt with the onset of winter and Company F settled down to camp life in winter quarters.

Spring came and with it more Indian fighting, but now fresh troops carried the brunt of the labor. The company was part of a larger expedition from Camp Wright to the Williams Valley, engaging the Indians in a skirmish on April 9, 1863.²⁸ The company continued its unglamorous role in Humboldt County throughout the remainder of 1863 and most of 1864, however, without actively engaging the Indians. The only loss to the unit was the death of Private Leo Daniel of Carson City, who succumbed to disease at Camp Wright on July 9, 1864.²⁹

Much of the pressure of the Indian warfare on the California Volunteers in this area was relieved when the State of California authorized the raising of a battalion of Mountaineers, recruited from the population of Humboldt County, specifically designed for this campaign. In addition to increasing the number of soldiers in Humboldt County, the men were well acquainted with the terrain and well suited to service there.

In June of 1865, with the war in the East now over, Company F, Second California Volunteer Infantry, was ordered to return to San Francisco where it was stationed until its release from Federal service.

The men of Company F, Nevadans, played a hard, dirty, unromantic role in the annals of the Civil War. Their reports gather dust, their few small accomplishments are forgotten. Yet the service they rendered to the people of California was great and important in the sight of the residents of Humboldt County. History rings with the names of large battles and campaigns that were fought while these men volunteered, completed their small part of the vast panorama, and vanished. As in any war, these are the forgotten men, without headlines and glory.

FOOTNOTES

¹General Richard H. Orton, *Records of California Men in the War of the Rebellion* (Sacramento: State Printing Office, 1890), p. 11.

²*Ibid.*, pp. 284-293.

³*Ibid.*

⁴Frederick H. Dyer, *A Compendium of the War of the Rebellion* (Des Moines: Dyer Publishing Company, 1908), p. 1035.

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷War Department, *The Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies in the War of the Rebellion*, Series I, Vol. L, Part II (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1896), pp. 50-51.

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 52.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 53.

¹²*Ibid.*

¹³*Ibid.*

¹⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 54.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 53.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 55.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 56.

²⁰*Ibid.*

²¹*Ibid.*, p. 58.

²²*Ibid.*, p. 59.

²³*Ibid.*, p. 61.

²⁴*Ibid.*

²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 65.

²⁶Dyer, *loc. cit.*

²⁷*Ibid.*

²⁸*Ibid.*

²⁹*Ibid.*

CHAPTER IV

ORGANIZATION OF THE NEVADA VOLUNTEERS

With Nevada Territory now organized and functioning, Nevada was considered securely on the side of the Union. But still unanswered was the desire of many Nevadans to take an active part in the war. True, they could, and did, enlist in regiments of California, but this was not the same as having their own units. Many had no desire to serve under the banner of another state and to be sent west rather than east.

The call for the creation of regiments in Nevada came as a result of several pressures exerted on the manpower resources of the Department of the Pacific. The first was the need for more troops at the fronts in the East; men were transferred eastward from stations on the Plains and Californians were pushed into Utah and Wyoming to replace them.

Another was the outbreak of Indian uprisings in California which meant that troops scheduled for duty in the Great Basin were kept near home. Also, Colonel Carleton of the California Volunteers was organizing his expedition to reconquer Arizona and New Mexico. This was to be a large-scale undertaking and California regiments started moving by sea to the Los Angeles area.

Lastly, residents of the Great Basin were also demanding more protection. For example, the citizens of the Honey Lake Valley were promised by Governor Nye in November of 1862 that troops would be sent to Susanville and that a permanent garrison would be established the following spring.¹

On April 2, 1863, Brigadier General Wright, Commanding the Department of the Pacific, asked Orion Clemens, then Acting Governor of Nevada, to raise volunteer companies from Nevada for the service of the United States. General Wright requested that Nevada supply the United States with two companies of cavalry and two of infantry. The cavalry would have to furnish their own horses, but all other equipment would be furnished by the army. Wright observed that as little as one company would be accepted if it could be formed.²

Governor Clemens quickly replied that it would be necessary for the government to also furnish mounts for the cavalry, reminding General Wright that horses in Nevada were twice as expensive as those in California and very scarce.³ This placed them beyond the financial reach of the average man. Clemens informed Wright that he anticipated no trouble in recruiting the infantry companies. Later he was to find that the reverse was to be true.

The recruiters for the Nevada Volunteers almost had some competition. A certain John Elkins arrived in Susanville in July, 1863, and announced that he was accepting recruits for the Confederate Army. However, Mr. Elkins imbibed a little too much strong drink and was killed accidentally before he had induced anyone to enlist.⁴

By the end of April the military man was still determined that the Nevada Volunteers would have to furnish their own horses. Lt. Col.

Head Qrs Fort Churchill.

May 16th 1862

Dear Sir:

Will you please come to this Post as soon as you can conveniently, as I fear Capt. Price has instructions from Dept. Hdqrs, Quarters to proceed to Honey Lake and Act as he may deem proper, and his being unacquainted with the Character and habits of the Indians of this Territory, - through a slight indiscretion, - in the present excited state of the Indians in the Pyramid and Honey Lake Country, ~~he~~ might provoke a war, which we are all anxious to use all honorable means to avoid,

Please inform Gen. Wright that transportation was in waiting at Carson City when Capt. Price ^{arrived} Command, and that I ordered it to Fort Churchill, when all the required Supplies will be furnished, that in consequence of the bridges being washed away on the upper Truckee, and the present high stage of the water, this is the most practicable route to travel,

Yours Respectfully

Chas. M. Dennis
Mj. Comd'g Post

By Telegraph
Gen. Nye }
Carson City }

—Hon. Keith L. Lee,
Controller, State of Nevada.

McDermitt of the Third California Infantry, Commanding Fort Churchill, was informed by his superiors that the newly created Nevada Volunteers would rendezvous at his post and would bring mounts.⁵ The army finally relented to the inevitable and agreed to purchase horses where necessary. A man enlisting with his own horse received an extra forty cents per diem for forage.

Enthusiasm for the new Nevada Volunteers ran high in the Territory, the Legislature voting \$100,000 to finance the companies.⁶ Officers' commissions were granted after applicants had completed both oral and written examinations at Fort Churchill. These were taken before a board of three officers who had been instructed by Clemens to be sure of the applicant's loyalty and, "Make the interrogatory pointed on the Emancipation Proclamation."⁷ The first men to be accepted were Captain Elias B. Zabriskie, District Attorney of the Third Territorial District Court, and First Lieutenant Almond B. Wells. Their original commissions as officers of the Nevada Volunteers are dated May 2, 1863, just one month after the units had been authorized.⁸

Second Lieutenant John H. Mathewson, one of the first to pass the examinations,⁹ immediately proceeded to Virginia City and commenced recruiting. To stir up enthusiasm he paraded the United States flag through the streets and hired two boys to act as drummers. As the three marched along gathering a crowd, a Confederate sympathizer stepped up and quickly smashed the drums. Lt. Mathewson promptly flattened the man with a blow from his fist. Continuing on after this brief pause, the Lieutenant led the procession on to the City Hall where he enlisted seventy-five volunteers in the cavalry companies.¹⁰

The formation of the companies followed the usual Civil War pattern. Officers were chosen first and the burden of enlisting the men became the responsibility of each company commander. Soon the Department of the Pacific authorized the raising of a full regiment, one thousand men, of both cavalry and infantry. This, however, was never done as there were just not enough men in Nevada to enlist such a large number and much of the need disappeared before two thousand men volunteered.

Contrary to the opinion of Mr. Clemens, cavalry companies were completed quickly and raised to battalion strength before even one company of infantry was filled. Most of the infantry units were never fully completed and were always under their full quota of one hundred men. As a contemporary observer wrote, ". . . The Nevada boys don't like to walk and won't enlist in the infantry volunteers."¹¹

There were several incentives offered prospective enlistees. Foremost was the promise that the Nevada Volunteers would see active duty against the Confederate forces. In an advertisement in the *Virginia Evening Bulletin* of August 15, 1863, Captain Milo George, forming Company D, N. T. V., informed the public that he was enlisting for a cavalry company of one hundred men. The men were to serve for three years or the duration of the war and would be armed, equipped and mounted when recruiting had been completed. Service was to be against the Confederate forces occupying Arizona and New Mexico.¹²

The Territorial Legislature further offered enlistment and pay bonuses. Each man who enlisted was offered one hundred dollars cash immediately, and title to one hundred and sixty acres of land upon discharge. In addition, each man received a five dollar a month pay increase, payable by the Territory, to his regular stipend. This increased the monthly pay of a private from thirteen to eighteen dollars.¹³

FOR MEXICO DIRECT!

...AND...

THE UNION  FOREVER.

I WANT TWENTY-TWO NON-COMMISSIONED Officers and sixty privates to make up my company of Mounted Infantry, Company D First Regiment Nevada Territory Volunteers, to be mustered into the service of the United States immediately. Subsistence and clothing furnished as soon as enrolled.

\$100 BOUNTY GUARANTEED

by the laws of the United States, and five dollars per month by Nevada Territory, in addition to the regular pay.

Recruiting Office at F. J. HAMMELL'S ORIGINAL SALOON, No. 51 South C street.

E. B. BLAKE,

Captain Co. D, Mounted Infantry, First Reg' N. T. Volunteers.

Jan 26 18

Lastly, and most practical, officers were promised a bounty of ten dollars for each man they induced to enlist. By the close of the war the Adjutant General of Nevada, John Cradlebaugh, informed the Legislature that the officers of the Nevada Volunteers were responsible for enlisting 1,158 men, Milo George alone having signed up one hundred and fifty-two volunteers.¹⁴

Pay was the largest hindrance to obtaining good soldiers. Army wages were exceedingly low compared to other work. A miner in Virginia City could earn about four dollars a day. This made the average miner's wage close to one hundred dollars a month, while the same man in the army would receive less than one-fifth that amount. Generally, the most able men, both physically and mentally, tended to stay away from the army. There were many able men who joined the service, but from motives of patriotism rather than gain.

Many of the volunteers were of the lowest social order. One example can be seen in the enlistment of the notorious petty criminal "Rattlesnake Dick";¹⁵ another in the high desertion rate current among all Civil War units.

The money paid the officers for obtaining men was not all profit. Only when a company had been fully recruited and transported to Fort Churchill would it be accepted and mustered in. Thus to the company commander fell the responsibility of feeding, housing, and transporting the men of his command. This had to come from his own pocket, placing a heavy financial strain upon the officers. Despite this handicap, recruiting proceeded briskly and soon the Nevada Volunteers began to take definite shape.

TABLE II. Civil War Pay Scales

Rank	PAY PER MONTH		Bonus paid by the State of Nevada (monthly)
	Cavalry	Infantry	
Colonel	\$110.00	\$95.00	\$50.00
Lt. Colonel.....	95.00	80.00	45.00
Major	80.00	70.00	40.00
Captain	70.00	60.00	35.00
Lieutenant	53.33	50.00	25.00
Sergeant-Major	21.00	21.00	5.00
First Sergeant.....	20.00	20.00	5.00
Sergeant	17.00	17.00	5.00
Corporal	14.00	13.00	5.00
Private	13.00	13.00	5.00

Compiled from: Paul F. Mottelay and T. Campbell-Copeland, *The Soldier In Our Civil War* (New York: J. H. Brown Publishing Company, 1885.), p. 459.

And: John Cradlebaugh, "Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Nevada for 1865," *Senate Journal, 1866, Second Session* (Carson City: Joseph Church, State Printer, 1866.), p. 8.

Captain E. B. Zabriskie formed Company A of the Cavalry in Silver City. Companies B, C, and D under Captains Baldwin, Dalton, and George were formed in Virginia City and Gold Hill. Captain Lycon enlisted Company E in Genoa, Carson City, and Silver City, while Captain Calder recruited Company F from the mining camp of Aurora.¹⁶ The internal organization of each company followed the pattern of the United States Army.

Popular sentiment for the Nevada Volunteers ran high in the Territory and it was with pleasure that the *Virginia Evening Bulletin* noted that, "Captain Zabriskie's Company is now full, completely armed and equipped . . ." on July 8, 1863.¹⁷ On August 8 it was reported that recruits for Captain George's Company (D) had left for Fort Churchill in an ambulance, ". . . jolly as lords and immensely patriotic."¹⁸

Men continued to volunteer and in September of 1863 the Nevada Volunteers received their first official inspection. General Wright left his headquarters at the Presidio and made a three week's inspection of military posts in Nevada.

Arriving at Fort Churchill at 10 a.m. on September 16, Wright was honored with a thirty-gun salute. He informed Colonel McDermit that on September 7, twenty-six teams had left Folsom bound for Fort Churchill laden with 65,000 pounds of stores and ordnance for the Nevada Volunteers. Included in the train was complete horse equipment for four companies of cavalry, a battery of mountain howitzers, and a supply of sabers and revolvers.¹⁹

**TABLE III. Organization of Cavalry Companies
Nevada Territorial Volunteers**

Rank	Number allowed
Captain.....	1
First Lieutenant.....	1
Second Lieutenant.....	1
Sergeants.....	7
Corporals.....	8
Buglers.....	3
Blacksmith.....	1
Wagoner.....	1
Farrier.....	1
Saddler.....	1
Privates.....	78

General Wright apparently was impressed with the progress made in organizing the Nevada Volunteers for he spoke quite highly of them in his report to Washington, saying:

. . . at Fort Churchill I found three companies of Cavalry, N. T. V., also a detachment of a fourth company in process of organization. A finer body of men I never saw; orderly, well-behaved, and undergoing a thorough course of instruction and discipline.²⁰

FOOTNOTES

¹Asa M. Fairfield. *The Pioneer History of Lassen County, California* (San Francisco: H. S. Crocker Co., 1916).

²*Official Records*, Vol. I, Part II, p. 379.

³Orion Clemens, "Clemen's Letters" (letter to General Wright, dated April 4, 1863).

⁴Fairfield, *Op. cit.*, p. 334.

⁵*Official Records*, p. 414.

⁶Effie M. Mack, *Nevada* (Glendale: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1936), p. 275.

⁷Orion Clemens, "Clemens' Letters" (letter to General Wright, dated April 27, 1863).

⁸John Cradlebaugh, Adjutant General of Nevada, "Report of the Adjutant General of Nevada for 1865," *Senate Journal, 1866, Second Session* (Carson City: Joseph Church, State Printer, 1866), p. 8.

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰Mack, *op. cit.*, p. 274.

¹¹*Virginia Evening Bulletin*, July 7, 1863.

¹²*Ibid.*, August 15, 1863.

¹³*Ibid.*, July 25, 1863.

¹⁴Cradlebaugh, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

¹⁵Thomas Wilson (Ad. Agency), *Pioneer Nevada*, Vol. II (Reno: Harold's Club, 1957) p. 54.

¹⁶Myron Angel (ed.), *History of Nevada* (Oakland: Thompson and West, 1881), p. 267.

¹⁷*Virginia Evening Bulletin*, July 8, 1863.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, August 20, 1863.

¹⁹*Humboldt Register*, Unionville, Nevada Territory, Oct. 3, 1863.

²⁰*Official Records*, p. 630.

CHAPTER V

EARLY ACTIVITIES OF THE NEVADA VOLUNTEERS

The towns of the Comstock celebrated on October 1, 1863. Men laid down their tools, housewives left their chores, and the children hurried to the dusty streets. Up from the trail along the Carson and through the streets of Dayton came the soldiers, "the Nevada boys."

Two full companies of the Nevada Volunteer Cavalry, under the command of Captain Noyes Baldwin, their new uniforms and equipment shining in the sun, had come to call on the Comstock. Crowds lined the streets to see the martial sight as the troopers made their way through Dayton and up the winding road to Gold Hill. This was the first real sight the citizens of the Territory had of their own volunteers, and the welcome extended was loud and long.

Returning to camp at Dayton, the soldiers were engaged in their first field exercise to practice camp life and to bid farewell to the Comstock before beginning more serious duty.¹ Apparently the line of march had not gone uninterrupted, for many of the men had time to pause and drink a proffered toast to the Union. This drinking, combined with the length of the march, resulted in several of the troopers becoming drunk after the return to camp. Soon a row arose between several of the worst affected, and Lt. John Mathewson stepped in to stop the trouble. This seemingly annoyed one of the men who became belicose. Mathewson promptly enforced discipline in a typically frontier manner by simply "bending his pistol barrel" over the offender's head. This silenced the man. The officer was placed under arrest until the incident could be investigated,² but was exonerated at an inquiry held a few days later.³

John Mathewson was, unluckily for some, a brave man and a strong believer in the right. His record is full of examples of his rough courage, such as knocking down the Secessionist in Virginia who tried to halt recruiting for the Union.⁴ Mathewson's leadership was officially recognized by his subsequent promotion to Captain while serving at Camp Douglas, Utah Territory, where he spent the majority of his service.

This was, then, the man who, less than a week after calming one of his men with a blow over the head, followed Private Duffy of Company B into Gold Hill. Here he waited until the luckless Private was in the middle of an intricate business transaction before the Lieutenant made his appearance. He caught Duffy in the act of attempting to sell United States horses to a stage agent. The hapless soldier was sent, under arrest, to Fort Churchill.⁵ Mathewson had also arrested a notorious Secessionist, Hal Clayton, on July 27. He also was sent to the Fort to undergo discipline.⁶

Fort Churchill was, by now, well established. Most of the buildings were finished and occupied. The water problem soon became acute and both men and animals suffered from a lack of drinking water. The ore

refining mills at Empire and Dayton emptied their chemical wastes into the nearby Carson River, contaminating it. Two wells were dug at the Fort by the men but little relief was obtained. An artesian well finally solved the problem.⁷

The spirit of the Volunteers was high and they respected their officers more than many of the Civil War organizations. Perhaps the fact that the officers were required to pass examinations for their commissions and were not elected by the vote of the men had something to do with it. Nevertheless, the men demonstrated their affection for their officers on October 6, 1863 when the troopers of Company A presented Captain A. B. Wells with a finely finished sword, and Company B gave Captain Baldwin a complete set of charger's equipment.⁸

Soon the Nevada Volunteers saw active duty. Companies A and B left for duty in Utah, while on October 22, Lt. Firman and fifty men of Company D were ordered out to the Smoke Creek Desert to relieve the California Volunteers stationed at Camp Smoke Creek, near Pyramid Lake. They camped that night near Silver City and were again feted by the citizenry, the residents of the town treating the whole command to a supper at the Mansion House.⁹ Two days later, Saturday, the men passed through Virginia City. The Californians they were to relieve were sent on to Camp Douglas, Utah.¹⁰

Soon, also, the Nevada Volunteers had their first dealings with the Indians. The Piutes found the body of one of their chiefs in the Carson River, apparently murdered by the whites. The tribes gathered at the Carson Sink, thirteen hundred strong, and sent a message to Fort Churchill demanding redress. Lt. Jewett, N. T. V., and the Indians talked; the Piutes were paid a wagonload of provisions and clothing and \$1,000 cash to assuage their grief.¹¹

There was still a strong desire in the Territory to send troops east to the scene of the fighting against the Confederacy. As it became apparent that the Nevada Volunteers would see service only in the West, a new idea came to light. In the early days of the war a group of Californians had paid their own way to the Atlantic Coast and had been accepted as companies in the service of Massachusetts. These men had already seen much fighting and were destined to be in most of the major battles of the Civil War. Why could not Nevadans do the same? A petition was drawn up and circulated through the Comstock for this purpose. It requested permission from Governor Nye to organize, arm, and equip one company of infantry for service in the East. Nye was requested to telegraph the Secretary of War to find out if these men would be accepted by the United States.

The original of this petition still exists and reads:

Virginia City Oct. 27, 1863

To his Excellency James W. Nye
Governor of the Territory of Nevada
and Commander in chief of the N. T. Militia

We the undersigned would most respectfully solicit your attention to and ask you approval to raise and offer to the General Government one full and complete Volunteer Infantry Company for immediate and active service in the Atlantic States,

The citizens of Nevada Territory to raise a sufficient fund to

defray the expense of passage from Nevada Territory to San Francisco and from there per Steamer to New York City.

The Company to be raised precisely in the same manner as those companies of Cavalry raised for the Nevada Battalion but to be placed in active service at the seat of war.

Recruiting offices to be opened in the most important towns of the Territory. The men to be forwarded to Fort Churchill to be uniformed as fast as recruited and there to remain until the organization is completed and ready for their departure for the seat of war.

We sincerely hope your Excellency will approve of this movement and use your executive authority to obtain the consent of the General Government to recruit this company of volunteers on the basis and for the purposes hereinbefore mentioned who will not only aid their Government in filling the ranks of some decimated Regiment but also be the pride of Nevada as her first offering in the defense of her beloved Country.

And we pledge ourselves to aid by all means in our power the raising of this fund and feel perfectly safe in assuring your Excellency from the proverbial liberality and patriotism of our citizens, that the fund can and will rapidly be raised and also the material of which the Company will be composed a credit and honor to any country or State.

If your Excellency should approve of this movement we would most respectfully ask you to telegraph immediately to the Secretary of War if it is necessary for the acceptance of this Company on the conditions herein stated.

We would most respectfully recommend the Gentlemen who have taken this matter in hand as fit and responsible persons to recruit and organize this company and consider them worthy of becoming its officers, who are as follows: viz Charles De Molder Captain, G. H. Melenberg 1st. Lieutenant, G. A. Thurston 2nd. Lieut., O. N. Feldman 3rd. Lieut.

Trusting that our earnest solicitation will meet with your Excellency's influential approbation we remain, Sir, with sentiments of the highest consideration your obedient servants.

Attached to the petition are the signatures of thirty-nine citizens of Nevada Territory. These are reproduced in the accompanying illustration. The reader will note several names closely associated with the early history of Nevada and with the Nevada Volunteers.

On October 29, 1863, the group of citizens sponsoring the movement called on the Governor who had gladly requested permission from the War Department, and himself volunteered to lead the company.¹² Nye's telegram was brief and to the point. Dated October 28, 1863, and received in Washington the next morning, it read, "Will the government accept a full company of volunteers from this territory, they bearing their own expenses to the city of New York."¹³

For a few hours hopes ran high. Then came the equally brief, but far more deflating reply from Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton, "Will accept volunteers to go to Salt Lake, but there does not seem to

Warren Heaton
 J. A. Murphy
 W. H. ...
 Louis ...
 J. Hagel
 L. ...
 M. ...
 Monclaire Cooper
 S. J. Guffitt
 Leonard Morris
 J. W. ...
 Orion ...
 H. ...
 F. J. ...
 Capt. M. P. Hassett
 J. ...
 G. A. ...
 Warren Wafson
 John ...
 K. ...
 Geo Turner
 Thos. E. ...

Wm. P. ...
 H. C. ...
 W. H. ...
 David ...
 ...
 Albert ...
 W. ...
 J. W. ...
 Geo. A. ...
 Sam. ...
 H. S. ...
 ...
 F. W. H. Johnson & Co

—Hon. Keith L. Lee,
 Controller, State of Nevada.

be any propriety in raising them in Nevada to send them to New York."¹⁴

These few words ended forever the hopes of Nevadans to actively fight the Confederates. They were hurt, of course, but one can scarcely blame Secretary Stanton. At that stage of the war, with the great battles of Gettysburg and Vicksburg already history and the tide now turning definitely in favor of the Union and a million men already under arms, what role would a mere one hundred men from Nevada play? The war might even be over by the time they could come East and be trained and outfitted for combat. Nevada would have to be satisfied with her much more minor role of protecting the West. There was still hope they might be able to see action in New Mexico.

Thus, the organization of the Nevada Volunteers continued at a rapid rate, two additional companies of cavalry forming in late November of 1863, one of these under the command of Captain Robert Payne of Silver City.¹⁵ Lt. Wilkinson of Company C opened up a recruiting office in the Apollo Saloon on C Street in Virginia City and announced he would be there two or three weeks.¹⁶ The *Evening Bulletin* reported the next day, November 25, 1863, that eleven men had volunteered in the past few days. The same journal raised once again the hope of Nevadans that Nevada troops would see action when it reported as news the rumor that the Nevada Volunteers were destined for Mexico, not Salt Lake.¹⁷ This report, dated December 2, proved false, as the proposed invasion of the South through Mexico never occurred.

More officers were needed and many men journeyed to Fort Churchill to take the written and oral examinations for their commissions. On December 3, nine men passed these tests: Mr. Cahill, M. R. Hassett, James Branan, George Thurston, Samuel Mildenberg, Charles Blanchard, Thomas Daley, J. P. McKenna, and Charles DeMoulder. Of these, only Thurston and Hassett ever were mustered into service. Mr. Hassett, formerly of the Washoe Guards, a Virginia City militia company, became Captain of Company A, Nevada Infantry, while Thurston was commissioned Captain of Company B.¹⁸ Both men served with distinction throughout the history of their units. It is interesting to note that Nevada required its officers to pay for having their own commissions drawn up.¹⁹ Many commissions were written but never used. H. P. Russell, Adjutant General of Nevada in 1863, reported that twenty-eight officers had their commissions canceled, revoked, or had resigned. Only one had been dismissed from the service.²⁰

To stir up enthusiasm for the lagging infantry companies, Governor James Nye issued, on December 5, a Public Proclamation calling for the raising of volunteers for a full regiment of infantry.²¹ By December 10, recruiting offices were established in various locations throughout Virginia City and Gold Hill. Captain Hassett and Lt. Brannan had offices set up in the Metropolitan Hotel, Hughes' Saloon, the Apollo Saloon, and Seward's Saloon.²² The *Evening Bulletin* carried the announcement, on December 14, that eight new recruits had left in a wagon for Fort Churchill under the command of Lt. Thurston, giving three cheers for the Nevada Volunteers and three more for Mexico.²³ The same paper let its readers know that more had departed for the Fort on December 22.²⁴

Meanwhile, Company D of the Cavalry, stationed at Camp Smoke Creek, had been active in patrolling Northern Nevada. These men had to protect the wagon trail along the Applegate Cut-off, from the Humboldt to the Honey Lake Valley, across the Smoke Creek and Black Rock Deserts. Early in December Lt. Firman and his men had arrested a Confederate sympathizer named Winn near Honey Lake. He had, reportedly, publicly cheered for Jefferson Davis and the Confederacy. Under the powers granted the President by Congress this was a treasonable offense. Although Winn switched sides and offered to take the Oath of Allegiance to the United States when the troops arrived, he was not permitted to do so and was sent to Fort Churchill. His wife must have been quite devoted as she followed him to the Fort the following day, mounted on a mule.²⁵

To this point in the history of the Nevada Volunteers they had simply acted as separate companies under the command of Colonel McDermit, commanding Fort Churchill and the Military Sub-District of Nevada. If the Volunteers were to be a regular line regiment they would need a commander and staff. The position of Colonel, 1st Nevada Territory Volunteer Infantry, was offered to Mr. A. A. C. Williams. Lt. Col. Williams had served two and a half years with the Army of the Potomac, coming to Nevada to recover from wounds received at Chancellorville.²⁶ Colonel Williams never did fully recover and much of his short service was honorary, his superior Col. McDermit actually having command. For his staff he was given Lt. Colonel Milo George, and Captain Noyes Baldwin was promoted to Major, Field-Officer-in-Command, at a later date.²⁷

On December 17, 1863, Company C of the Infantry, consisting of some eighty-five or ninety men, left Virginia for Fort Churchill under the direction of Captain H. C. James and Lt. James Wilson.²⁸ It was officially mustered into the service of the United States on December 23.²⁹

As all military organizations of the Civil War, the Nevada Volunteers were plagued by much desertion. Of the almost twelve hundred volunteers from Nevada, three hundred and thirty-eight deserted. This figure includes only men actually on the muster rolls, and many deserted before being sworn into service. The reasons were numerous, but chiefly the awakening from a dream of patriotic grandeur to find themselves garrisoning some small, dry, bleak camp on the ragged fringes of civilization, or beyond. Other reasons were the rugged discipline and the fact that many men only enlisted for the promised rewards. The Nevada Volunteers were no exceptions to the rule of the times. After all, they *were* all volunteers; the Draft Law was not applied to the West, largely due to the fear of riots and the fact that many of the western territories were "on the fence" politically.

One typical incident occurred to the command under Firman in the Smoke Creek Desert. Before dawn on Sunday, December 20, 1863, four soldiers of this outpost deserted. To cross the inhospitable desert, they outfitted themselves comfortably with fifteen hundred dollars worth of United States Army baggage, and to carry this vast amount of loot they also took several United States mules.

When their absence was discovered the next morning, four troopers immediately set out in pursuit, overtaking the four culprits on Monday

after a forty-mile ride. A ten-minute running fight resulted and the deserters rode off again. Ten miles later they were again overtaken and a fire-fight occurred, about twenty-five shots being fired by both sides, but without casualties. The deserters then abandoned the mules and stolen supplies and made good their escape. They were never apprehended although a reward of fifty dollars was placed on their heads.³⁰

Enlistments continued far ahead of desertions, however. On December 28, twenty-five more men left for Fort Churchill and Company B, Nevada Cavalry.³¹ Lieutenants Mildenburg and Thurston carried recruiting to the new mining camps at Reese River, while Orderly-Sergeant Warfield was sent to the Humboldt District.³²

In the last days of 1863, more Nevada men took the field as Lt. Jewett relieved Lt. Firman at Camp Smoke Creek,³³ and the United States finally began to purchase mounts for the cavalry. On December 30, 1863, one hundred horses left the Comstock for Fort Churchill,³⁴ but there was still a critical lack of mounts for the men.

Throughout the remainder of the winter months life was slow for the soldiers. Nothing exciting happened until January 1, when Private Phineas Fisher of Company C, Cavalry, decided that army life was not his lot. Accordingly he took to his heels, literally, and began to walk from Fort Churchill to freedom. Unfortunately, he wore a new pair of army shoes, not yet broken in, which blistered his feet. Fisher was not in a mood to let this stop his flight and proceeded a considerable distance barefooted. Finally a friendly teamster offered him a lift and the private continued on his trip in comparative ease. By now, Lt. Wilkinson was in pursuit, tracking the deserter over twenty miles, the trail of bare footprints unmistakable. He overtook Fisher riding on the wagon. When the deserter saw his superior he again took off toward the hills on foot, but was easily overtaken and surrendered. Wilkinson took his captive back to Fort Churchill for trial.³⁵ Fisher remained in the Nevada Volunteers for the remainder of his enlistment.

The burden imposed on the recruiting officer while he enlisted his company was explained to the people of the Territory by a man, who signed his name "Volunteer," in an open letter to the *Evening Bulletin*. That paper printed the letter in full on January 5, 1864. Briefly it told how officers were required to pass physical and military examinations before receiving their commissions. They were then empowered to recruit their companies, but received no pay until the men were mustered into Federal service. All travel, recruiting expenses, and subsistence came from the officer's pockets. The "Volunteer" pointed out that the cost to the officers was two and a half dollars a day, well over the government's set standard. He reported that one captain had spent between two and three thousand dollars to raise his company, and this when a captain received a stipend of only \$125 a month, paid in depreciated greenbacks. First and second lieutenants received \$115 and \$105 respectively, also in the highly devalued paper currency.³⁶

The author of this letter, known only as "Volunteer," dated his letter from Silver City. This would tend to point to the authorship of Captain Robert Payne, the only officer from Silver City then raising his company. It did have the desired effect and private citizens began

to help the officers pay the enormous costs incurred in their recruiting.³⁷

The Territory held an election in January of 1864 and Colonel McDermit was ordered by his superiors at the Presidio to assist Provost Marshal Van Bokkelen of Virginia in keeping the peace, receiving the order, "You will use such force as may be available for the purpose." Fortunately, no force was required.³⁸

Another Virginia saloon was converted to a recruiting office on January 22, when Captain Blake of the Infantry set up shop at Hammell's.³⁹ Captain Blake never was officially part of the Nevada Volunteers as, apparently, he could not induce enough men to enlist.

Money still was a heavy concern of the recruiters and to assist them the Storey County Militia decided to put on one of the gala balls of the season. A grand military ball was held in Millington's Hall in Virginia City on Washington's birthday, 1864. The proceeds from this were destined for the raising of the Nevada Volunteer Infantry Regiment.⁴⁰ However, the funds from this dance were unexpectedly small,⁴¹ and a similar ball was held in Carson City on April 14 for the same worthy cause.⁴²

In attendance at these was the new commander of the N.T.V.I., Major (Brevet Lt. Col.) A. A. C. Williams who had reported for duty at Fort Churchill in accordance with Special Order No. 66 of the Department of the Pacific, dated March 29, 1864.⁴³

Secessionists were still at work in Nevada and this, combined with the natural boisterousness of the Comstockers, led Col. McDermit to request permission from San Francisco to establish a post at Virginia City. This Provost Guard consisted of one officer, two noncommissioned officers, and twenty-five privates,⁴⁴ later known as Company F, Nevada Cavalry.

In early March, Captain Milo George was promoted to Major of the 1st Cavalry Battalion, N. T. V. By this time it was apparent that the Nevada Volunteers would be raised only to a little more than battalion strength, and would not reach the full thousand men of a regular regiment.⁴⁵

The officers of the Volunteers set up a headquarters on B Street in Virginia to live in while completing the organization of their companies. A large clubroom was opened, with a comparatively large flag outside. The grand opening took place on April 19, 1864, and was greeted with enthusiasm by the residents of Virginia City who, apparently, loved a chance to have a good time. A dinner, with champagne, started the evening, after which the National Guard and its band paraded through the streets. Back at the clubroom the toasts began (the *Evening Bulletin* reporter stopped enumerating them after the first nine), and the evening climaxed with a rousing rendition by all present of the stirring battle song "Rally 'Round the Flag."⁴⁶

By the end of April, Brigadier General Wright was able to report to the War Department in Washington that Nevada had six full companies of cavalry and two hundred infantrymen in service. He pointed out that of the four cavalry companies stationed at Fort Churchill, only one was mounted due to the enormous cost of forage in Nevada. Horses were not to be purchased until the final destination of the men was established.⁴⁷

FIRST ANNUAL BALL

...OF THE...



FIRST BATTALION



Nevada Territory Militia,

...WILL BE GIVEN...

AT MILLINGTON'S HALL,

...ON...

MONDAY,.....FEBRUARY 22, 1864.

The proceeds to be for the

Benefit of the First Infantry Regiment.

N. T. VOLUNTEERS.

Committee of Arrangements.

Lieut. John Cahill,	Lieut. P. N. Ryan,
Lieut. M. R. Hassett,	Lieut. Garrett,
	Lieut. Elliot.

Invitation Committee.

VIRGINIA :

Maj. Gen. Vandoktelen,	Col. D. E. Hungerford
Lieut. Col. Williams,	Lieut. Col. Baldwin,
Major Sam ^l Russell,	Raj. S. Wasserman,
Capt. W. E. Melville,	Capt. T. G. Murphy,
Capt. J. E. Plunkett,	Capt. Thos. Cahill,
Lieut. James Brennan,	Lieut. Belan,
Chas. L. Strong, Esq.,	R. F. Morrow, Esq.,
Almon Hovey, Esq.,	N. W. Winton, Esq.,
	Hon. Rufus Ariok.

GOLD HILL :

Capt. John Y. Paul,	Capt. E. E. Phillips,
Capt. Myers,	A. B. Paul, Esq.,
	Hon. John H. Mills.

SILVER CITY :

Maj. D. Vanderhoff,	Capt. S. Terry,
Capt. A. J. Close,	Lieut. Campbell,
	Dr. Zabriskie.

DAYTON :

Major Jaqua,	— Hazelton,
Hon. J. B. Winters,	Hon. Mr. McDonald,

CARSON CITY :

Gov. Jas. W. Nye,	Hon. Orion Clemens,
Adjutant-Gen. Russell,	Hon. J. H. Kinkead,
Surgeon-Gen. Tjader,	Hon. J. N. Johnson,
	Col. J. J. Musser.

WASHOE CITY :

Capt. John G. Kelly,	Lieut. Bonzey,
Hon. J. K. Lovejoy,	Judge North,
	John H. Atchison.

FORT CHURCHILL :

Maj. Chas McDermitt,	Capt. George,
Capt. Chas. A. Sumner,	Capt. Payne,
Lieut. Dalton,	Lieut. Thurston,
	Surgeon J. Wilson.

Reception Committee.

Gov. J. W. Nye,	Maj. Gen. V. Bakkelea
Major McDermitt,	Major Vanderhooff,
Capt. Kelly,	Hon. J. B. Winters,
	Hon. John H. Mills.

Floor Managers.

Capt. W. E. Melville,	Capt. S. Terry,
Capt. T. G. Murphy,	Lieut. John Cahill,
	Lieuten ^{ant} Ryan.

Jan 28 th.

The *Virginia Evening Bulletin* carried periodic reports on the progress of the Volunteers. Their breakdown of the Nevada units at the time of their reports to the public are shown in Table IV.

TABLE IV. Nevada Volunteers at Fort Churchill

Cavalry (as of April 19, 1864)		
Unit	Commander	Strength
Company C.....	Capt. Dalton.....	85
Company D.....	Lt. Jewett.....	75
Company E.....	Capt. Payne.....	85
Company F.....	Capt. Calder.....	91
Infantry (as of May 3, 1864)		
Company A.....	Capt. Close.....	8
Company B.....	Capt. Thurston.....	46
Company C.....	Capt. Hassett.....	48
Company F.....	Lt. Paul.....	22
Company H*.....	Capt. Kelly.....	17
Company G*.....	Capt. Wallace.....	17

*These companies never completed organization and the men were transferred to other companies.

Compiled from the *Virginia Evening Bulletin* of April 19 and May 3, 1864.

Colonel McDermit's request for permission to place a Provost Guard at Virginia City was granted by the Department of the Pacific on May 4, 1864. The two officers and thirty enlisted men were ordered to the city and instructed to cooperate fully with Captain Jacob Van Bokkelen, the Territorial Provost Marshal.⁴⁸

With troops now permanently stationed in Virginia City the Volunteers had a good opportunity to impress the townspeople with the advantages of military life. Accordingly, the band of the Nevada Volunteers began to make a parade through the streets of Virginia City each evening. This stirred the hearts of many young men who then enlisted.⁴⁹

With the ranks of the Volunteers now swelling, Fort Churchill was fast becoming too crowded to properly take care of the new men. Accordingly, it became necessary to locate new camps where the men already trained could be stationed until needed at more remote garrisons. The first of these to be established was located on the south shore of Washoe Lake, five miles north of Carson City. Set up on June 6, 1864, by Company D of the Nevada Infantry, it was named Camp Nye in honor of the Governor. It was occupied on and off until August of 1865.

Another of these camps was Camp Sadler, established much earlier, but not used as much. It was located in the mouth of King's Canyon, near Carson City. As soon as its training was completed, the pressure on the facilities of Fort Churchill was further relieved by sending Company B of the Infantry to Fort Ruby on July 28, 1864.⁵⁰ This camp had been established by the California Volunteers under Colonel Patrick Conner who were now moving on to do garrison duty at Salt Lake. The same day a detachment of Company A, Hassett's, departed for a tour of duty to patrol the Smoke Creek Desert along the Noble or Applegate Trail.⁵¹ One writer states that these twenty-five or thirty men spent the winter of 1863-1864 in Susanville.⁵²

June saw the departure of more men to Northern Nevada. This

expedition of Company D, Nevada Cavalry, deserves to be told in detail. Accordingly, a separate chapter (VI) is devoted to it.

A quiet, respectable lynching in Dayton saw the Nevada men called out for the first time to keep the peace. The incident occurred after a man named Linn (spelled Lynn in the *Sacramento Union's* report of the incident) fatally stabbed a saloon owner. During the night Linn was removed from his cell, silently hanged, and replaced in his rightful spot behind bars. The members of the mob had to overpower and tie up the sheriff to accomplish this feat and then began to talk of "stringing up" a few more of Dayton's undesirables. Friends of Linn gathered together and a fight seemed inevitable, the town nervously awaiting further violence throughout midmorning and early afternoon of August 9, 1864.

Governor Nye heard of the trouble in Dayton and immediately started for that town, pausing long enough to order troops to Dayton from Fort Churchill. His telegram, sent at three in the afternoon had the desired results. Majors George and Purdy, Captain Calder, and fifty men of Company F, N. T. V. Cavalry proceeded to Dayton on the double, covering the twenty-five mile ride in two hours and eleven minutes. They found, upon their arrival, that all the excitement had died down, but the men went ahead and occupied the Court-house and jail.⁵³ Nye arrived at about the same time from Carson City and read the Riot Act to a quiet street, the first time in Nevada's history it had been used.⁵⁴ The men stayed overnight in the now peaceful town and returned the following morning to the Fort.⁵⁵

Trouble with deserters again plagued the Volunteers. The widely read *Sacramento Union*, quoting the *Virginia City Territorial Enterprise* of August 11, 1864, informed Californians of the following incident on the Comstock. Captain Thurston and the Provost Guard spotted a deserter in Virginia. Chasing him, the party was led up the Ophir Grade. The deserter disappeared and Captain Thurston ordered the soldiers to surround and search several small cabins where the man might have hidden. The occupant of one of these, peering from his window, saw the Captain searching for the man. As the officer had on a long loose civilian coat and was armed, the cabin owner was convinced that a band of Confederate guerrillas was raiding Nevada. He hastily reached for his gun and was about to fire when Thurston, sensing his danger, threw back his coat to reveal the blue Union uniform underneath.⁵⁶ The deserter was later captured and returned to duty.

Although now well into a state of preparedness, the men at Fort Churchill never did receive much heavy armament. Governor Nye, while on a trip to Washington, had requested three mountain howitzers and one thousand muskets for the Nevada regiments. These, supplemented with seventy-five carbines, arrived at the United States Arsenal at Benicia, California, but due to an error on the invoice the shipment was destined for Fort Churchill. As General Wright did not feel they were needed at Fort Churchill he did not send them on. Governor Nye, checking up on his arms, found them in storage at Benicia. As Nye was not mentioned on the shipping invoice, General Wright refused to turn them over to the Governor. Wright did not

change his mind until April of 1865 when Nye finally got the War Department to ask Wright what had happened to Nevada's guns.⁵⁷

Austin, the new settlement on the Reese River, was now a booming silver camp. As the leading town of the area it quickly gained both population and prominence, but remained one of the state's leading supporters of the Secession movement. Austin was, in fact, about fifty percent for each side. Several of the Unionists of Austin managed to have a talk with Captain Thurston, N. T. V., as he passed through their city on the way to Fort Ruby and persuaded him to endorse a request to General Conner at Salt Lake asking that a small body of soldiers be stationed permanently in Austin. This request had the added weight of the signatures of ten of Austin's most prominent citizens. Conner heartily approved the idea, but was forced to send it on to General Wright, Commander of the Department of the Pacific, as Conner had no available troops to place at Austin.⁵⁸ Wright turned down the request and Austin never had any regular military beyond the local militia unit, the "Lander Blues."

Fears of a Secessionist movement were still strong in Nevada and when a rumor reached Governor Nye in early September of 1864 that there was to be a Confederate uprising in Nevada between September 7 and 15, he quickly acted to forestall it. A request for men and arms was sent to Col. McDermitt at Fort Churchill. McDermitt did not believe the rumor was based on fact but did not desire to take any unnecessary chances. He therefore sent fifty men and two officers of Company C, Nevada Cavalry, to Carson City to act under the orders of the Governor.⁵⁹ The uprising did not transpire, but the rumors continued, the location of the supposed attempt now moving to Virginia City. Again Nye asked for troops and on September 26, Major George and Companies D and E, Cavalry, left Fort Churchill with three days' rations. Leaving the fort at 8:30 a.m. they proceeded to Virginia City and placed themselves at Nye's disposal. Again the rumor proved false.⁶⁰

As the winter of 1864-1865 came on the Nevadans once again were faced with the problem of housing themselves, especially when Major General Irvin McDowell, loser at First Bull Run and new Commander of the Department of the Pacific, wrote to Governor Nye to increase the strength of the Nevada Volunteer Infantry to a full regiment as soon as possible.⁶¹ To provide more space at Fort Churchill and to disperse the soldiers more widely, Major George and a portion of the Nevada Cavalry were ordered to winter at Camp Nye by the Department of the Pacific.⁶²

Nevada men were given their first opportunity to serve outside the boundaries of the Territory of Nevada when to protect miners and settlers in the Owens Valley, Company C of the Nevada Volunteer Cavalry was ordered, on December 7, 1864, to garrison Camp Independence, California. This unit remained at this post for the remainder of its Civil War service.⁶³

The coming of 1865 saw the Nevada Volunteers now fully organized, armed, and equipped. They had successfully aided in suppressing the Secessionist movement in Nevada and in keeping the peace. Now they were ready for more active campaigning and hoped eagerly that the new year would bring them more noteworthy service.

FOOTNOTES

¹*Virginia Evening Bulletin*, October 1, 1863.

²*Ibid.*, October 2, 1863.

³*Ibid.*, October 5, 1863.

⁴Another example of his courage occurred in 1877 when, as Deputy Warden of the Nevada State Prison, he was held as a hostage by escaping convicts. Mathewson ordered his own guards to fire upon himself and the convicts to prevent their escape and was wounded twice in the ensuing volley. Thomas Wilson (Ad. Agency), *Pioneer Nevada*, Vol. I (Reno: Harold's Club, 1951), p. 140.

⁵*Virginia Evening Bulletin*, October 7, 1863.

⁶*Ibid.*, July 27, 1863.

⁷*Ibid.*, August 1, 1863.

⁸*Ibid.*, October 6, 1863.

⁹*Ibid.*, October 22, 1863.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, October 24, 1863.

¹¹Effie M. Mack, *Nevada* (Glendale: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1936), pp. 316-317.

¹²*Virginia Evening Bulletin*, October 26, 1863.

¹³*Official Records*, Vol. L, Part II, p. 660.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 662.

¹⁵*Virginia Evening Bulletin*, November 27, 1863.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, November 24, 1863.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, November 25 and December 2, 1863.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, December 3, 1863.

¹⁹John Cradlebaugh, "Report of the Adjutant General of Nevada for 1865," *Senate Journal, 1865, Second Session* (Carson City: Joseph Church, State Printer, 1866), p. 16.

²⁰Russell, H. P., "Report of the Adjutant General of Nevada for 1864," *Senate Journal, 1864*.

²¹*Virginia Evening Bulletin*, December 5, 1863.

²²*Ibid.*, December 11, 1863.

²³*Ibid.*, December 14, 1863.

²⁴*Ibid.*, December 22, 1863.

²⁵*Ibid.*, December 5, 1863.

²⁶*Ibid.*, December 17, 1863.

²⁷Cradlebaugh, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

²⁸*Virginia Evening Bulletin*, December 17, 1863.

²⁹*Ibid.*, December 23, 1863.

³⁰*Ibid.*, December 26, 1863.

³¹*Ibid.*, December 28, 1863.

³²*Ibid.*

³³*Ibid.*

³⁴*Ibid.*, December 30, 1863.

³⁵*Ibid.*, January 4, 1864.

³⁶*Ibid.*, January 5, 1864.

³⁷*Ibid.*, January 18, 1864.

³⁸*Official Records*, p. 730.

³⁹*Virginia Evening Bulletin*, January 22, 1864.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, February 22, 1864.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, February 26, 1864.

⁴²*Ibid.*, April 14, 1864.

⁴³*Official Records*, p. 802.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, p. 813.

⁴⁵Cradlebaugh, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

⁴⁶*Virginia Evening Bulletin*, April 19, 1864.

⁴⁷*Official Records*, p. 833.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, p. 840.

⁴⁹*Virginia Evening Bulletin*, May 6, 1864.

⁵⁰Dyer, *op. cit.*, p. 1350.

⁵¹Dyer, *loc. cit.*

⁵²Fairfield, *op. cit.*, p. 331.

⁵³*Sacramento Union*, August 12, 1864.

⁵⁴Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

⁵⁵*Official Records*, pp. 941–942.

⁵⁶*Sacramento Union*, August 13, 1864.

⁵⁷*Official Records*, pp. 980–981 and 1192–1193.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 979–980.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, p. 968.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, p. 992.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, pp. 1010–1011.

⁶²*Ibid.*, p. 1016.

⁶³*Dyer*, loc. cit.

CHAPTER VI

EXPEDITION TO NORTHERN NEVADA

The early summer of 1864 saw the Nevada Cavalry take the field in its first large scale expedition. In the records of the journey it is called the "Expedition to the Humboldt" but a more proper title would be an "Expedition to Northern Nevada," as the soldiers actually spent little time in the Humboldt region.

The purposes of the trip were to scout for hostile Indians in Northwestern Nevada, and to show the people of the area that soldiers were now able to operate in force for their protection.

The following account of the expedition is taken from the report of Captain Almond B. Wells, Company D, Nevada Volunteer Cavalry, which he submitted to his superior, Col. Charles McDermit, upon the return of his command to Fort Churchill.¹

In full field equipment, Company D departed from Fort Churchill at 8 a.m., June 8, 1864 and traveled in an easterly direction down the Carson River. Here they camped at 2 p.m., having covered a distance of ten miles from the Fort. This campsite is now covered by the waters of Lake Lahontan. The next day the company traveled eighteen more miles and again camped early, near the site of Ragtown, saving their animals for the grueling crossing of the Forty-Mile Desert to the meadows of present-day Lovelock.

The crossing of this forbidding stretch of terrain took the Nevada men some twenty-three hours. Leaving the Carson at 5 a.m. on June 10, they arrived at the Sink of the Humboldt at 4 a.m. the next morning. The remainder of that day was spent in resting both men and animals.

The next two days the cavalrymen moved some fifty-five miles up the Humboldt and again stopped to rest on June 14 and 15. Here the horses all stampeded but were recovered without the loss of any mounts. Heading north and east twenty-two miles over barren mountains they arrived at the flourishing mining camp of Star City, then boasting a population of some 1,200.² Here again they paused to rest and visit for three days.

On June 19 they again took to the trail, but this time the company was divided into two parties. Twenty men with the supply train headed west along the Applegate Trail to establish a depot at Camp Pollack. This shifting campsite was to become a main base for the party in the barren Black Rock Desert.

The remaining fifty troopers, under Captain Wells, headed north across the Humboldt to visit the scene of a recent massacre of settlers by marauding Indians. Heading north from Star City the men traveled twenty-six miles and crossed the Humboldt at Basse's Ferry, near present-day Raglan, a Western Pacific settlement. The next day saw the troopers on the trail a full fourteen hours, covering another fifty miles, and camping in the Queen (Quinn) River Valley. The last leg of the trip was accomplished on June 21 when the soldiers crossed

twenty-nine miles of mountains (the Santa Rosas) and arrived at the scene of the recent massacre. The weary Nevadans camped at the site of the battle and the next morning began the long trip to overtake their comrades with the supply train.

To accomplish this feat the company did not retrace its route but headed south and west on a diagonal to meet the others in the deserts of Northern Nevada. An easy day, eighteen miles, brought them back across the mountains. Thence a long fifty-five mile ride to Rabbit-Hole Station, a location named for the peculiar springs there, on the Applegate Trail from the Humboldt to Susanville. On the well traveled trail they made an additional twenty miles to Hot Springs, now another Western Pacific Railroad village. Two more days of moving westerly, and sixty long desert miles later, they arrived at sunset at Camp Pollack where the remainder of the force was awaiting with the supply train. The Nevada Volunteers probably stayed at Wall Springs before arriving at Camp Pollack, which was located almost on the now-surveyed California-Nevada state line. In Civil War days this area was Lake County, Nevada, but since the boundary survey it has been split between Washoe County, Nevada, and Lassen County, California. The modern settlement of Warm Springs, California, now stands near the site of Camp Pollack.

At this camp the Nevada Cavalry rested and scouted for several weeks before pressing on. They had certainly earned the right to take it easy. Company D had ventured into the heart of some of the most barren and desolate desert areas of the United States in midsummer, the main party of the expedition having covered three hundred and ninety-seven miles in fifteen days. This, on horseback, was a large enough feat, but considering that four days were spent in resting, Company D had averaged thirty-six miles a day over desert and mountains. This again is magnified when it is considered that the men had to dismount and lead their horses for a mile or more each hour to rest them.

Still not having seen a sign of Indians, Captain Wells ordered Lt. Littlefield to take part of the Company and scout the area in the extreme Northwest corner of Nevada, where Nevada, California, and Oregon meet.

Taking ten men, Littlefield left Camp Pollack on July 8, 1864, and headed north to Surprise Valley. Exactly a week later Littlefield and his men returned, another one hundred and eighty miles of fruitless scouting behind them. They had not seen a single hostile Indian.

A few days later, Company D left Camp Pollack behind. Leaving on July 19 the men headed west again, this time for the settlements in the Honey Lake country. The only noteworthy events to transpire during the stay at Camp Pollack was the death of one man from disease and the desertion of eight more. This reduced the strength of Wells' command to forty-one troopers.

A thirty-mile ride brought the Company to another nameless camp. Leaving the next morning at 5:30 a.m., their horses carried them on to Susanville, where they arrived at Camp Johns at two in the afternoon. Captain Wells reported the location of this camp as "near Susanville."³

Asa Fairfield, in his book *The Pioneer History of Lassen County, California*,⁴ several times mentions Civil War soldiers in and near Susanville. He states that for a time soldiers were camped at "the foot of the bluff" above Susanville.⁵

After five days' rest at Camp Johns, Littlefield was once again ordered to patrol the desert due to the threat of Indian attacks along the Applegate Trail and because of disquieting rumors of Indian and Confederate troubles in the Humboldt Mining District. Thus, on July 25, 1864, accompanied by thirty men, he departed for Unionville. The remaining eleven men and Captain Wells stayed to enjoy the hospitality of the Honey Lakers.

Traversing largely the same route they had followed to reach Susanville, the troop headed east to Mud Springs, then to Smoke Creek Station. Leaving here at five the morning of July 27, they watered at Buffalo Springs and proceeded on to camp at Deephole. Here, during the night three men deserted, taking with them three horses with saddles, three revolvers, and two carbines.

Moving rapidly across the desert the men camped at Hot Springs, then Willow Creek, finally reaching St. Mary's (near Imlay, Nevada) just after noon on July 30. While the Company camped here to rest the mounts, Lt. Littlefield rode alone into Unionville, returning two days later after finding the reported rumors groundless.

On August 3, 1864, the soldiers began the long journey back to Susanville, retracing the same route they had traveled just a few days before, and arrived at Smoke Creek Station on August 7. Resting a day, the command left Smoke Creek at dark on August 8, reaching Soldier's Bridge over the Susan River at dawn the next morning. This wooden bridge crossed the Susan River shortly before the stream entered Honey Lake and was built by California Volunteers in the early days of the Civil War. A wooden building at one end of the bridge was used for a while as a small camp, but like the bridge itself, did not long survive. The little town of Standish, California, now stands not far from where the bridge was located and the children of Standish still attend schools in the Soldier's Bridge School District.⁶ The weary men finally reached Camp Johns at nine that morning, having crossed the Black Rock and Smoke Creek Deserts twice in sixteen days, almost four hundred miles.

A week of rest raised the spirits of the men and Wells led them on a three-day trip from Susanville to the summit of the Sierra, August 17 to 20, 1864. This side trip was undoubtedly up the winding course of the Susan River to Fredonyer Pass and quite possibly on as far as the site of the logging towns of Westwood and Chester, California.

Finally, on August 24, 1864, the troopers of Company D rolled up their bedrolls, saddled their mounts, and began the long trip home to Fort Churchill. Heading east they crossed to the east side of Honey Lake before turning south. Early traffic between Susanville and the settlements in the Washoe Valley always followed the east side of the lake due to the larger size of the lake itself then, which reached right up to the foothills of the Sierra on the west shore. For a long while traffic to Reno went by boat down the length of Honey Lake from Standish to a point near the modern Herlong.

CAVALRY VOLUNTEERS

FOR ACTIVE SERVICE

IN UTAH AND NEW MEXICO.

WANTED, ONE HUNDRED ABLE-bodied men, to fill up Company D, First Battalion, N. T. V., to be mustered into the service of the United States for three years or during the war.  Clothing and subsistence will be furnished immediately on being enrolled. Recruits to be armed, equipped, and mounted when the company organization is complete. Recruits desiring to furnish their own horses and horse equipments will be allowed forty cents per day extra. The organization of a company of mounted troops consists of eight sergeants, eight corporals, two blacksmiths, two buglers, one saddler, one wagoner; and eighty privates. One hundred dollars bounty is guaranteed by the laws of the United States in addition to the regular pay.

Recruiting offices are opened at the following places:

Blue Wing Saloon, one door north of the Post-office, Gold Hill.

Overland Saloon, Dayton.

Grass Valley Saloon, No. 3 south B street, Virginia.

MILO GEORGE,

au4 tf Capt. Co. D, First Battalion N. T. V.

CHAPTER VII

OPERATIONS OF THE NEVADA VOLUNTEERS OUTSIDE THE STATE OF NEVADA, 1863-1866

Although the fact is not widely known to even the most serious students of Nevada history, more than one-half of the volunteers furnished by the state for the Union Army during the War of the Rebellion served beyond the limits of the state. The neighboring western states of California, Utah, Wyoming, and Colorado saw the services of the Nevada troops during the last years of the war. Indeed it was for this purpose they were originally recruited; service in Nevada was second in their original concept, as they were to serve as reinforcements for the Department of Utah.

The original authorization for the raising of volunteer companies in Nevada had been explicit when General Halleck informed General Wright, Commanding the Department of the Pacific, to reenforce General Conner at Salt Lake by raising troops in California or Nevada.¹ Special Order No. 223 of the Department of the Pacific informed Colonel McDermit that Companies A and B, Nevada Cavalry, were to proceed to Fort Douglas, Utah Territory, as soon as they were fully equipped on September 29, 1863.²

It is to the credit of these men that they lost no time in complying with these orders, but left immediately for their new post, passing through the booming mining camp at Austin on October 19,³ and camping at Simpson's Park. From here they proceeded on through Ruby Valley, up to the headwaters of the Humboldt, and on to Salt Lake where they arrived on November 21.⁴

Spending the winter at Fort Douglas, they took no part in the Indian campaign waged by General Conner in Southern Idaho, but one patrol of Nevada Cavalry was fortunate enough to capture the hostile Chief Pocatello near Box Elder, Utah. Captain Calder returned the luckless chief to Fort Douglas where he was kept in custody.⁵

With the coming of spring, Fort Douglas became too crowded to contain all the California and Nevada Cavalry stationed there, particularly when forage became scarce. Accordingly, four companies of Californians and the two from Nevada were sent to camp in the new military reserve in Rush Valley. Here, under the patronage of General Conner, "The Father of Utah Mining," the troops engaged in some prospecting.⁶

On March 30, 1864, Company B, Nevada Cavalry, was ordered to proceed to the Uintah Valley, Utah, to protect the miners in the area. Carrying thirty days' rations, the command was to report for duty to the Commanding Officer, Fort Bridger, Dakota Territory (now Wyoming) on or about July 31.⁷

Company A, under Captain Noyes Baldwin, received more explicit orders for the same movement on May 11, 1864. Baldwin was instructed

to set up a supply depot in the Uintah Valley, protect the miners, and maintain friendly relations with the local Indians. Further, he was to be sure his men prospected the area, especially for the easily workable placer mines. This done the company was to proceed to Fort Bridger via Brown's Hole on the Green River.⁸

In midsummer, the first Nevada Infantry unit to take the field, Company B, was ordered to relieve the California troops at Fort Ruby, Utah⁹ (now Nevada), while Company C, Nevada Infantry, was directed to do the same at Camp Independence, California.¹⁰ The latter, under the command of Captain John G. Kelly, was destined to spend the remainder of its service at this small post in the Owen's Valley without having a chance to fight; the Indian troubles which had called for the establishment of the garrison had subsided. Only two small incidents relieved the monotony of this duty at Camp Independence. At Aurora, the booming mining camp astride the not yet settled California-Nevada border, Kelly apprehended a deserter named Sears from one of the Nevada companies in Utah.

Sears had come to Aurora in hope of escaping detection and, probably, would have succeeded had he not become drunk and whipped a woman. This made news and Kelly heard of it. Hastening to Aurora he investigated the situation and arrested Sears, sending him to Fort Churchill for punishment, on April 15, 1865.¹¹

The next day Kelly led the local militia, the Esmeralda Rangers, in the arrest of A. C. Judy, a Secessionist who had been heard to utter treasonous statements in the public streets. Judy recanted his statements and was only too happy to take the Oath of Allegiance to the United States at Kelly's request.¹²

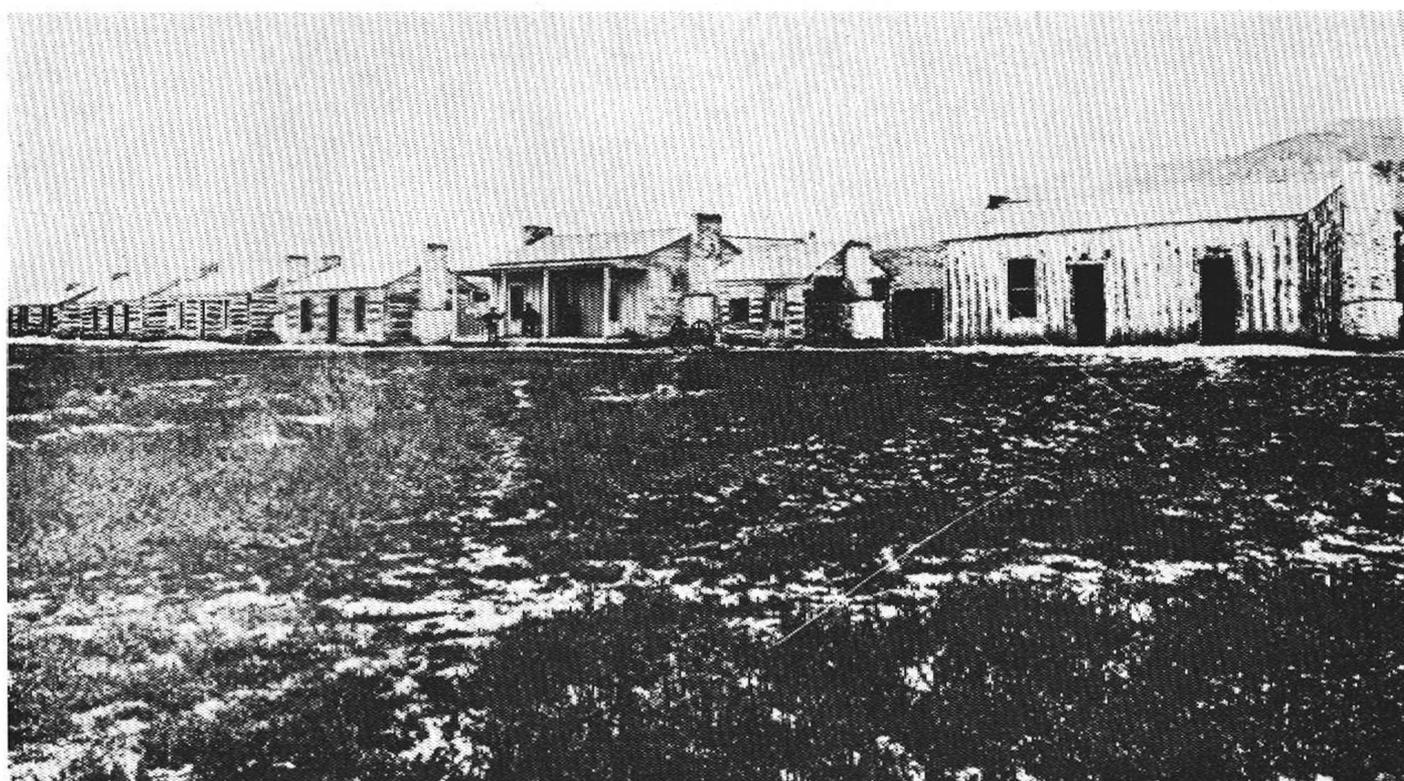
In late August, 1864, two more companies of Nevada Cavalry, C and F, departed from Fort Churchill for Fort Douglas under Major Milo George.¹³ This now made a total of four companies of Cavalry and one of Infantry from Nevada in the Department of Utah. As Companies C and F departed from Fort Churchill, Companies A and B were settling down to garrison life at their new post, Fort Bridger, Wyoming. Here Lt. Col. A. A. C. Williams, Commanding the First Regiment, Nevada Cavalry, took command of the vital post at the foot of the great South Pass over the Rockies. He remained as Commander at Fort Bridger until October, 1864, when he was relieved by a California officer¹⁴ and finally resigned his commission as Colonel in December, due to ill health. Milo George was promoted to replace him as Regimental Commander.¹⁵

Since Nevada had been officially admitted to statehood on October 31, 1864, and provisions had been made in the Nevada Constitution for the soldiers to vote, they early exercised their privilege. This was the crucial election between Abraham Lincoln and General George B. McClellan, hero of the Army of the Potomac. The *Salt Lake Vidette* proudly reported that the Nevada troops at Fort Bridger had cast one hundred and two votes for Lincoln, seven for McClellan.¹⁶

Company B, Nevada Infantry, stationed at Fort Ruby found itself busy, too. The post, established in 1863 by Colonel Conner of the 3rd California Infantry, lay on the western side of Ruby Valley along the Overland Mail route. First garrisoned by California troops, it was

the only post between Fort Churchill and Fort Douglas and the men there had the vast responsibility of patrolling the trail from Austin to the headwaters of the Humboldt. This, they found, was quite a task, especially when the two California companies were relieved by a single Nevada unit.

As the company settled down into the well defined status of garrison life, men started to seek a way to keep themselves occupied. Thus, they began to explore the still almost unknown country around the Ruby Valley. Lieutenant John Tolles heard from a local resident that a large quantity of water emerged from the base of the Ruby Mountains a few miles north of the post and determined to see if he could find its source.¹⁷ Accompanied by several other officers, he



Fort Ruby

—Bancroft Library.

made his way up the stream to a point ten miles from the fort, where they found that the stream emerged from a sizeable underground cavern. It was impossible to explore the cave on foot so a boat was brought up from the fort and minor exploration undertaken.¹⁸ Unfortunately, the Lieutenant was called to duty to lead a patrol to Austin to investigate Indian outbreaks there before an extensive survey could be taken of the cavern.

The cave still fired the imagination of one of the Volunteers, a twenty-nine year old private from Carson City, John W. Purdy. In late November he and a civilian named Chamberlin were in the vicinity of the cave and Purdy expressed his intention of entering the cave and exploring it. This he did, taking the boat, while Chamberlin remained on the outside. After some time Purdy did not emerge and Chamberlin notified Captain Thurston. A party was organized and entered the cave after obtaining another boat. They found Purdy's neatly folded coat at the entrance. Inside the cavern they finally located the body of the soldier in about six feet of water. Apparently he had tried to climb on some of the rocks and fallen, badly bruising

his head, into the water. Unconscious, Purdy had drowned in the dark water, the one accidental death ever suffered by the Nevada Volunteers.¹⁹

Meanwhile the party under Tolles had arrived in Austin, where they received a cordial welcome, on November 26, 1864. The officer was accompanied by Corporal Jared Grover, Drummer I. Graham, and Privates Sanborn and Howe. Arriving in Austin from the "new" Northern Route from Ruby Valley, they camped near the Oregon Mill.²⁰

A week later the Austin newspaper, *The Reese River Reveille*, informed the population of the area that Tolles had received a letter from Thurston requesting that the Lieutenant make a detailed survey and report the local Indian depredations. Tolles stated that part of the command from Fort Ruby might be sent to Austin if conditions warranted and that all interested persons should report to him as soon as possible.²¹

Tolles also drew the unpleasant task of informing the civilian population at Reese River that he had received orders to dispossess all United States clothing worn by civilians. He stressed that it was not only illegal to wear parts of the uniform, but since soldiers could not wear or possess any civilian clothing, the reverse ought to be true, no matter how honestly the citizen had obtained uniform clothing.²²

Tolles, a quiet and unassuming gentleman, soon had a good opportunity to enforce this latest order from his superiors. A few days after the order had become public the young officer encountered a man in Austin wearing part of the blue army uniform. The reporter for the *Reveille* gave a candid and apt account of the meeting in his paper of December 12, 1864.

A few days since we saw Lt. Tolles, . . . throttle a fellow who swore that he was a border ruffian, and dared the officer to take from him a soldier's overcoat, which he was sporting. Said coat came off.²³

The presence of these few troops in Austin apparently brought to the minds of the inhabitants the fact that there was a war on. At any rate, on December 12, 1864, the *Reveille* published a long editorial entitled "The Poor Soldier" which sought to show that charges of living in luxury on the part of the officers was not at all founded and that, indeed, as far as pay was concerned, the private saved far more money than his officer.²⁴

The paper was inconsistent, however, and just a few days later began to complain of inaction on the part of the military in suppressing the local Indian attacks. Perhaps this was justified as the paper was carrying incidents of Indian attacks in Smoky and Monitor Valleys in almost every issue. Stock was stolen, homes burned, and men killed. This criticism turned to wrath as it became public knowledge that General Irwin McDowell, the new Commander of the Department of the Pacific, was adopting a "soft" policy toward the Indian. General McDowell, fresh from the Army of the Potomac, had only taken a civilized attitude when he issued an order to all field commanders that no Indian who surrendered was to be killed, but turned over to civil authorities for trial.²⁵

Humanity was not a common virtue among the rough-and-ready frontiersmen of Nevada who, in general, believed that the Indian should be shown no mercy. Hence, from this time on, the actions of the military came under much criticism from civilians who wanted indiscriminate slaughter of Indians suspected to be hostile. Speaking against McDowell personally, the editor of the *Reveille* wrote, "A late order of the Commanding General of the Pacific Department in references to Indians evinces, on the part of the General, a disregard of his own race, or a deplorable ignorance of the persons with whom he deals."²⁶ However officers strove to maintain the enforcement of this order, it is certain that it was violated many times in the next year during the campaigns against the Indian in Northern Nevada.

At Fort Ruby Captain Thurston had become sufficiently alarmed at the reports coming to him from Austin, especially on Tolles' return, so that he wrote to his superiors at Fort Douglas concerning the matter. He reported that the Indian agent from Salt Lake had been to Ruby Valley and had distributed twenty-five blankets to the local Indians, leaving more at the Fort to be given out later. Thurston informed the military that the Indians were stealing to keep from starving, but that he could gather most of them in Ruby Valley to talk with the whites, if need be. He could spare thirty men of Company B to be sent to the Austin area if orders to that effect were forthcoming.²⁷ Salt Lake did not see fit to send soldiers to Austin and for the remainder of the winter the population of that area continued to ask for troops.

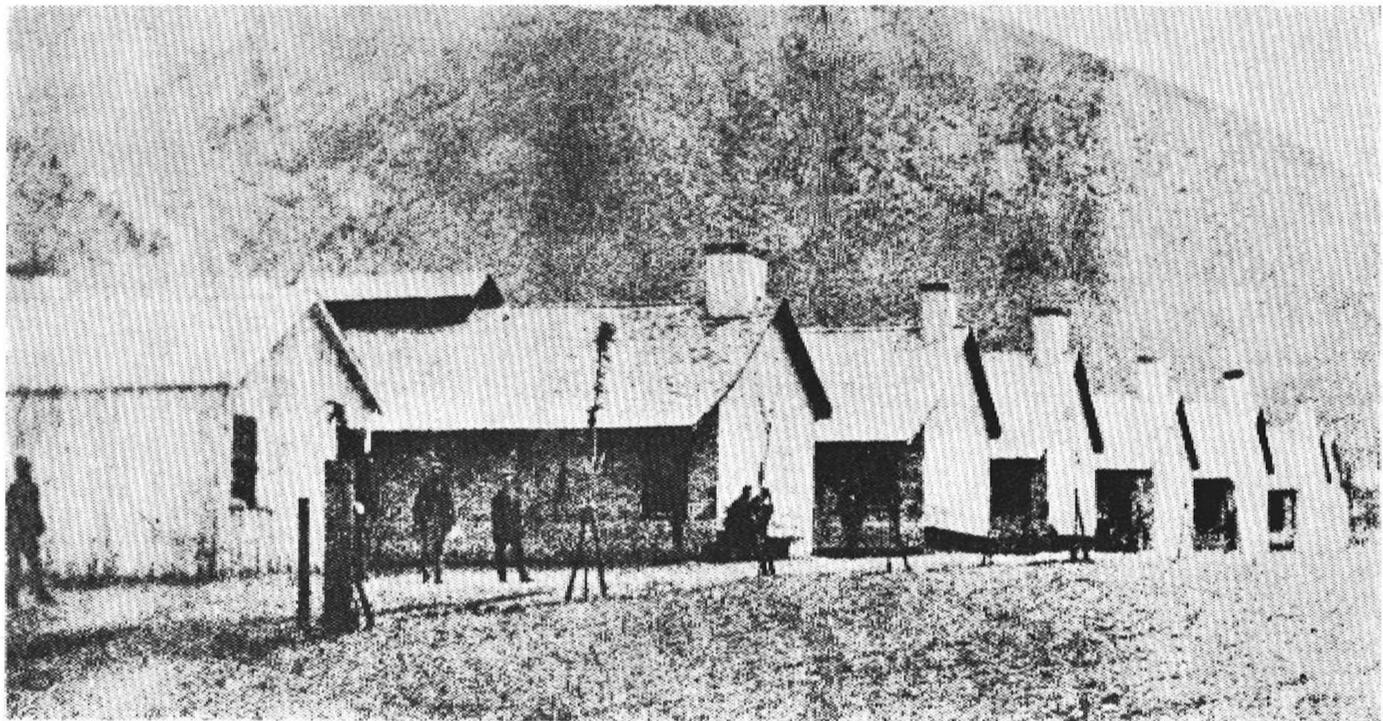
Meanwhile the garrisons stationed at Forts Douglas and Bridger had an easy life, too. Relations had improved between the soldiers in the Salt Lake Valley and the Mormon population. At first they had been definitely strained, and the California Volunteers under Conner had fully expected to find the settlers of the Latter-day Saints belligerent when the soldiers first arrived. Now they were getting along together well.

Colonel Conner had been promoted to Brigadier General of Volunteers and given the command of the new Department of the Plains, setting up his headquarters at Denver. It is a sign of the high caliber of the Nevada officers that he took with him, as members of his personal staff, Captain E. B. Zabriskie and Lt. Oscar Jewett, Nevada Cavalry. These gentlemen were made Judge Advocate of the Department of the Plains and Aide-de-Camp to General Conner, respectively.²⁸ When Conner reorganized his command he placed Lt. Col. Milo George, Nevada Cavalry, in command of the West Sub-District, embracing Utah and parts of Wyoming.²⁹

It was in this capacity that Colonel George and his staff were the guests of the City Council of Salt Lake at a huge banquet and celebration on the event of the second inauguration of Abraham Lincoln as President of the United States.³⁰

The loyalty of the troops to "Uncle Abe" was again demonstrated soon after the assassination of the President, when a man known as "Scotty" expressed joy over the death of Lincoln. He was lodged in the Fort Douglas Guard House and the whole garrison marched in a body to lynch him. He was saved only by the personal intervention of General Conner, who had not yet left for his new post in Denver.³¹

At Fort Bridger Major Baldwin and the Nevada troops expanded their activities in the spring and summer of 1865 as the winter snows melted and the Michigan Volunteers stationed with them left for duty farther out on the Great Plains. Baldwin and forty picked men of the Nevada Cavalry began a systematic search for mineral wealth in Southern Wyoming. They prospected the South Pass area and then headed north around Strawberry Creek, explored Big and Little Popo Agie in the Wind River near Lander, Wyoming. They must have been mildly successful as Privates W. H. Shoemaker and John James formed the Lincoln Mining District, the first in Wyoming, and Private Tom Ryan found rich gold-bearing quartz on Carrisa Creek. Ryan returned to the area after his discharge and made another discovery which led to a mild "rush" to South Pass, the Carter Lode.³²



Fort Douglas, Utah Territory, 1864

—Grabhorn Press.

In the fall of 1865, the Nevadans made the first real road from South Pass to Brown's Hole on the Green River.³³

Indian fighting was still their primary purpose, however, and in mid-May of 1865 Lt. Stewart and twenty-five men of the Nevada Cavalry pursued a band of seventy-five Indians near Rocky Ridge, Wyoming, attempting to recover stolen horses and mules.³⁴ On May 27, the Cheyennes and Arapahoes attacked a telegraph station at St. Mary's on South Pass. The three soldiers on duty held out through the night in the cellar and escaped the next morning to South Pass Station. Major Baldwin and one hundred Nevadans repaired the lines and pursued the Indians, although without success.³⁵

One more mention should be made of Lt. Oscar Jewett, Nevada Cavalry, and his services as Aide-de-Camp to General P. Edward Conner. Jewett was chosen to accompany the General on a three-pronged expedition to Northern Wyoming, the Powder River Expedition of August, 1865. The purpose of the trip was to punish hostile Arapahoes who had attacked a small post at Platts Bridge (Casper, Wyoming).

On the expedition Jewett handled himself well, once leading a scouting party of twenty-five troopers of the Sixth Michigan Cavalry

on a fifty mile scout for the Indians. This trip, taken on August 12, 1865, took Jewett as far north as the Bozeman Trail.³⁶ Again on the 19th he led another scout with Lt. O'Brien and twelve men from Michigan.³⁷

In the climax to the campaign, the Battle of Tongue River, where Conner found the Arapahoes in the foothills of the Big Horn Mountains and attacked them, Jewett proved his bravery in combat. Although there were only three hundred thirty soldiers and Indian scouts against over seven hundred Indians, Conner vigorously pushed the attack in a battle that lasted a full day and ended in a complete victory for the troops. Lt. Oscar Jewett, Nevada Cavalry, fought in the forefront of the battle and although shot through both the thigh and hand continued to fight, riding over forty miles after he had received his wounds.³⁸

Nevada almost lost another man to accidental death when Private McCormick, Company C, Nevada Cavalry, shot himself in the thigh in September of 1865. At the time he was guarding a telegraph station, under Lt. Firman, along the Overland Trail. McCormick was taken to Fort Bridger for treatment and eventually recovered.³⁹

In June, 1866, with the Civil War over for nearly fifteen months, the Nevada troops were finally relieved. A company of the Eighteenth U. S. Infantry arrived at Fort Bridger and occupied the post while the Nevada companies retraced their steps to Fort Douglas where they were mustered out of service in July after three years of service.⁴⁰

From the crest of the Sierra Nevada to the wide stretches of the Great Plains the Nevada Volunteers had done their job well, unglamorous and weary as it was. It was a job that had to be done and the Nevada men were proud to contribute their small bit to the service and preservation of their country.

FOOTNOTES

¹Frederick B. Rogers, *Soldiers of the Overland* (San Francisco: The Grabhorn Press, 1938).

²*Official Records*, Vol. L, Part II, P. 631.

³*Reese River Reveille*, October 21, 1863.

⁴Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 163.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 98.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 115.

⁷*Official Records*, Vol. L, Part II, p. 834.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 846.

⁹Frederick H. Dyer, *A Compendium of the Rebellion* (Des Moines: Dyer Publishing Co., 1908), p. 1300.

¹⁰*Ibid.*

¹¹*Sacramento Union*, April 20, 1865.

¹²*Ibid.*

¹³Dyer, *loc. cit.*

¹⁴Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

¹⁵*Reese River Reveille*, December 29, 1864.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, November 22, 1864.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, November 27, 1864.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, December 1, 1864.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

²⁰*Ibid.*, November 26, 1864.

²¹*Ibid.*, December 8, 1864.

²²*Ibid.*, December 12, 1864.

²³*Ibid.*

²⁴*Ibid.*

²⁵*Ibid.*, December 13, 1864.

²⁶*Ibid.*, December 19, 1864.

²⁷*Official Records*, Vol. L, Part II, pp. 1103-1104.

²⁸*Ibid.*, Vol. XLVIII, Part I, p. 148.

²⁹*Ibid.*, Vol. XLVIII, Part II, p. 275.

³⁰Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

³¹*Sacramento Union*, April 25, 1865.

³²Rogers, *op. cit.*, pp. 116-117.

³³*Ibid.*, p. 86.

³⁴*Carson Daily Appeal*, Carson City, Nevada, May 20, 1865.

³⁵*Ibid.*, June 30, 1865.

³⁶*Ibid.*, p. 178.

³⁷*Ibid.*, p. 183.

³⁸*Ibid.*, p. 197.

³⁹*Reese River Reveille*, September 13, 1865.

⁴⁰Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

CHAPTER VIII

EXPEDITION TO WALKER LAKE

In 1865 the Indians of Nevada began their last big effort to resist the inroads made on their territory by the white settlers of Nevada. For the past several years Nevada had been comparatively free from Indian trouble, with only a few minor outbreaks occurring. After the start of the Civil War, California Volunteers had met and defeated hostiles in the Humboldt Valley, and civilians had clashed with the Piutes at Battle Mountain. This had temporarily calmed the Indians, but in 1864-1865 they again took to the warpath.

Nevada was, by this time, fairly well settled and prospected. The frenzied rush of the early Comstock discoveries had passed and mining in the state was the more laborious and slow shaft work. Many newcomers to Nevada had turned to other industries, particularly ranching, and now the nomadic tribesman found his water holes fenced, game scarce, and piñon-nut forests reduced to mine timbers. This put the Nevada Indian in the position of having to steal from the white man in order to survive, for although the United States was supposed to care for and protect the Indian, little was actually done for him, and oftentimes supplies intended for him went to whites instead.

A splendid example of the treatment of the Nevada Indian is the report of Col. McDermit to the Department of the Pacific that he had visited the Indian Reservation on the Truckee River (near Wadsworth) on May 7, 1865. Here McDermit found that the grazing land belonging to the Indians had been leased to white men by the Indian agent, who pocketed the rental money. McDermit also noted that \$25,000 appropriated for the care of the Indians had disappeared without the Indians being helped at all.¹

Thus, reduced to starve or steal, the Indian had little choice, and began to commit crimes against the white invaders, largely by stealing cattle. However, cattle were not all and soon everything was on the "wanted" list. From here it was but a step to murder, for by killing a white man the Indian had all his possessions. Lone prospectors began to disappear and soon white settlers carried arms at all times and commenced to suspect all Indians, although the majority were friendly.

Isaac Stewart, a young man of twenty-four, had come to Nevada from Ohio to make his fortune. As a partner he chose Robert Rabe, a native of Germany, and a few years his senior. Together the two set out to prospect the region south and east of the Comstock. Early in March, 1865, the prospectors made their small camp some two miles from the head of Walker Lake. As it was still early, Stewart mounted his horse and rode toward the lake to scout the next day's journey. Rabe, left at camp, started to cook supper. As he kneeled to strike a match to kindle the fire, a shot from the brush struck him in the back. Falling forward, the dying man was killed by having his head smashed in with a rock.² Stewart, hearing the shot, turned to find himself facing two Indians, trapped between the murderers and Walker Lake. The

young man, unarmed, tried to flee and forced his horse into the lake to swim for safety. He was never seen again.³

Word of the murders quickly reached Fort Churchill by means of friendly Indians and the Nevada Volunteers immediately took to the field. A crime such as this could not go unpunished, and capture had to be quick and sure. Uncertain of the reaction of the rest of the Indians in the area prompted the movement of a fairly large force to the region.

On March 12, 1865, Captain Wallace, Company A, Nevada Infantry, left Fort Churchill with what amounted to a small army. To capture two Indians he had thirty-seven men of his own company, fifty cavalry of Company E, N. V. C., twelve friendly Indians, and a white guide, a total force of one hundred men. The following account of his expedition is taken from his official report.⁴

Leaving Fort Churchill at 5 a.m., the column marched eighteen miles south and reached Mason's Ranch on the Walker River. Here Wallace found many of the fears concerning the attitude of the local Indians to be groundless. At Mason's Ranch twenty Indians volunteered their services in catching the two fugitives, but were told there were enough men already on the job.

Believing that the murderers were at the lower, or south, end of Walker Lake, Wallace planned to head on south and cross the mountains near the foot of the lake. Accordingly, he and his men pushed on the next day fourteen miles to the junction of the East and West Walker Rivers, then four more miles up the West Walker where they forded the stream and camped at Wilson's Ranch. The next day, March 14, they traveled back down the West Walker and up the East Walker to Wheeler's Ranch where they again camped.

Here they found the settlers in a state of near panic, saying that three hundred murderous Indians were gathered at the foot of the lake, unaware of the approach of Wallace. The settlers had deliberately misinformed the Piutes, telling them that the soldiers were on the way to Aurora.

Wallace, then, had to cross the steep eleven thousand foot Wassuk Range that lay between his position and the lake. The only other route possible would have been to proceed to the head of the lake and down the flat barren west shore, where his men would easily be seen. Wallace and his men went to work. In order to transport their supplies across the difficult mountains he sent out men who managed to borrow five pack saddles from the local ranchers. Then the men began to cook two days rations in preparation for the crossing.

In the forenoon an Indian messenger arrived from Josephus, a friendly chief, with news that the Indian camp had moved to the head of Walker Lake the day before. This greatly eased the task of the soldiers and an hour after the news arrived they were on the march back down the East Walker River. A mile from Wheeler's they forded the river, which placed them on the advantageous and well-traveled side of the river.

Here Wallace split his command in order to save time. Lt. G. J. Lansing and the infantry were sent by trail on a shortcut, accompanied by the guide. Wallace and the cavalry continued along the river on the road to the rendezvous point, a tollhouse. Here the cavalry arrived at

8 p.m., March 15, having traveled twenty-five miles. Fifteen minutes later the infantry made their appearance, traveling by a trail which had saved them ten miles. This position now found Wallace eight miles from the head of Walker Lake and the spot where the Indians were camped.

The soldiers were on the move again at 2 a.m. the following morning. Marching together they advanced three miles down the road to the lake where Wallace once again divided his men. Lt. Clark and the cavalry crossed the Walker River to the east side and followed a route parallel to the river and one-half mile from it. Before dawn they had taken a position near the camp, their left flank on Walker Lake, the right on the Walker River. At the bugle signal Clark was to move his men to within fifty yards of the camp and halt. If the Indians fired on the troops, none were to be allowed to escape the circle of soldiers.

Wallace and the infantry continued down the west side of the river and took up a position similar to that of Clark, one flank on the river, the other on the lake shore. This completely encircled the Indian camp which lay on the east edge of the Walker River where it flowed into the lake. The Indians were enclosed in a triangle, infantry on one leg, cavalry on the other, and the lake a natural third. This movement was completed and the troops in place just fifteen minutes before daybreak.

With the coming of daylight the Indians realized their situation, but far from being hostile they proved to be quite the opposite. Josephus rode across the river to inform Wallace that one of the murderers was in the camp, the other at the foot of the lake. The friendly chief then returned to the camp, sending words a few minutes later that he was with the wanted man.

Wallace's bugler sounded the advance and the soldiers tightened their circle as Wallace and four cavalymen spurred their mounts across the shallow river and rode into the camp. Clark's Indian guides, hearing the bugle, ran among the encamped Indians, shouting to them not to fire upon the white soldiers.

Wallace, riding up, found Josephus in the center of the camp and asked him which man was the murderer. As he spoke, a man brandishing a gun, jumped from a nearby *campoode*. Mr. Campbell, the Indian Sub-Agent and guide, immediately covered the Indian. Upon disarming him, Wallace was informed by Josephus that this was not the man he was searching for. The murderer was pointed out to the officer and he was quickly trussed up by the troopers, who removed him from the camp to forestall any general resentment among the tribesmen.

The Captain and twenty-five cavalry started down the lake shore, guided by Josephus, to apprehend the second killer. To insure the surrender of the man, Wallace took the fugitive's brother along as a hostage.

The chief pointed out where the murderer was camped in a small ravine. A mile from the campsite, Wallace split his men, sending ten to the head of the ravine to prevent any possible escape. Then, with these men in their position, the rest of the party approached the camp, only to see the fugitive fleeing up the ravine on foot. Chief Josephus and the man's brother called to him to stop, which he did. He was trussed securely and the bugler sounded the recall.

By 7:30 a.m., Wallace was back at the end of the lake. In just the

short space of time since dawn he had successfully captured the two men without alarming the assembled Indians. The bridge across the Walker River was reached at 10 a.m., the soldiers bringing in their wake the three hundred unarmed Indians. At noon a camp was made three miles above the bridge and named Camp Josephus, after the chief who had aided the expedition. From here an Indian, the murderer's brother, was sent to the foot of Walker Lake with instructions to recover the pistols and saddles of Stewart and Rabe. This he did, returning them to Fort Churchill.

March 17, 1865 found the troopers on the journey home, up the Walker River to the Reservation House where one hundred friendly warriors had assembled to lend the soldiers a hand if they were needed. March 18, another easy day, and the column arrived at Smith's and Mason's ranch. Leaving here at five the next morning the soldiers arrived at Fort Churchill before noon, placing the Indians in the Guard House. They were later turned over to the civil authorities for trial on murder charges.

The Nevada Volunteers had successfully and forcefully managed to capture the men without causing a serious incident. The Expedition to Walker Lake had, at least, several good results. Firstly, it demonstrated to the Indians of the area that the white man's justice was quick and sure, and secondly, it showed the white population that the Indians in the western corner of Nevada were definitely friendly and on the side of the whites. These Indians never troubled the white population again; it was the Indians of Northern Nevada that gave the Nevada Volunteers a fight.

The imprisonment of the two Indians was destined to be short, however. They were turned over to the county officials of Esmeralda County at Aurora, the county seat. In late May, 1865, they broke jail and again were on the loose, killing two friendly Indians and threatening to murder any whites they could.⁵ Captain Wallace and Company A with thirty-six men of Company E, Nevada Cavalry, once again made the trip to the Walker Lake region to apprehend them.⁶

Upon his arrival there he met and disarmed one hundred and fifty Indians, releasing all of them except two. These were the brother and uncle of one of the fugitives and were kept as hostages to identify the murderers.⁷ By June 1, one of the killers had been recaptured and sent to Fort Churchill,⁸ releasing Wallace's command to proceed to active campaigning in the Humboldt District where, by now, a full-scale Indian war was under way.

FOOTNOTES

¹*Official Records*, Vol. L, Part II, p. 409.

²Myron Angel (ed.), *History of Nevada* (Oakland: Thompson and West, 1881), pp. 168-169.

³*Ibid.*

⁴*Official Records*, op. cit., pp. 404-409.

⁵*Reese River Reveille*, Austin, Nevada. May 30, 1865.

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷*Ibid.*, June 1, 1865.

⁸*Ibid.*

CHAPTER IX

EXPEDITION TO PYRAMID LAKE

At the same time the killing of Stewart and Rabe prompted Colonel McDermit to send troops to the Walker Lake region, word was received at Fort Churchill that a band of hostile Indians were camped in the vicinity of Pyramid Lake. Thus, on the same day that Captain Wallace led his men out to the south, Captain Almond B. Wells, Nevada Volunteer Cavalry, led Company D in a north-easterly direction. The following account of his trip is taken from his report to Col. McDermit, dated Camp Nye, Nevada, March 19, 1865.¹

The first day in the field, March 12, 1865, the cavalry made only ten miles, the fifty men of the command pausing early to rest for the next day's journey. Leaving camp at 6 a.m., Wells pushed his men a long forty-eight mile ride to Pyramid Lake, reaching that body of water at six in the evening.

Here they were informed that a band of hostile Smoke Creek Indians was camped at a point only eleven miles away, from which base they were continually stealing cattle from local settlers. To keep the Indians from being warned of the presence of soldiers in the vicinity, Wells placed a guard over the Pyramid Lake Indians camped nearby. This, however, proved entirely unnecessary, as this was the camp of Chief Winnemucca himself, always friendly to the whites.

At three the next morning, March 14, the Captain and twenty-nine men left their campsite and guided by two civilians, W. H. Wilson and T. W. Murch, headed for the Indian camp located on Winnemucca or "Mud" Lake. Sighting the Indians at five-thirty, the soldiers split into three groups to surround the hostiles. Wells and ten men advanced straight toward the camp while two other squads under Sergeants R. D. Wadleigh and H. Besat encircled the Indians. At a distance of one hundred and fifty yards the soldiers were seen by the Indians who commenced to fire on the soldiers.

Corporal (later Sergeant) John Dolan, Company D, Nevada Cavalry, was wounded by the first shot fired, while the second ball aimed at the soldiers passed through Captain Wells' overcoat. As firing began, Wells ordered a saber charge upon the camp, at which the Indians fell back into the surrounding underbrush. With both sides having the same number of men, a running fight ensued, the soldiers chasing the Indians for some ten miles. Engaged in hand-to-hand combat, the troopers killed twenty-nine Indians, while one solitary warrior made good his escape.²

The Captain, in his official report of the skirmish, broke with the usual tradition when he did not hesitate to compliment the Indians on their ability to fight, noting that they fought well.

Sounding the recall, Wells found that he had captured a supply of guns, powder, and beef, which he destroyed. Nine horses were taken, but were in such poor physical shape that Wells did not even bother to bring them in.

The Captain was honored by a visit from Chief Winnemucca upon the return of the soldiers to Pyramid. The old chief expressed his approval at the results of the fight, as the Indians involved were not from his people, but "bad" Indians.

This little skirmish on March 14, 1865, is carried in the annals of the Civil War as a "Skirmish, Mud Lake, Nevada," although in the West it has been reported as an "Expedition to Pyramid Lake." Mud Lake is a large dry lake immediately to the north of Pyramid, and it was near here the fight actually began.

Their mission accomplished, Company D returned to their base at Camp Nye to rest until more Indian outbreaks would send them to Northern Nevada. At the Fort, Wells was asked for an accounting of his actions on the expedition by Col. McDermit.

McDermit had adopted the policy, which came under much criticism from others, of trying to settle the Indian problem peacefully and without bloodshed. In accordance with this Wallace was praised for his actions at Walker Lake in capturing the Indians without a fight. Wells, on the other hand, had charges brought against him by McDermit and a court of inquiry was set up to investigate the skirmish at Mud Lake.⁴ Wells was acquitted and allowed to resume the field with his men as the court found that the Indians had fired first, wounding Corporal Dolan, before Wells ordered his saber charge.

This "go easy" policy of McDermit was severely criticized by some of Nevada's leading citizens. Indian outrages were occurring all over the state and the loss in goods, livestock, and life were mounting rapidly. Of course, one must realize that the average Nevadan was violently anti-Indian, and many openly advocated their complete annihilation. The editor of the *Reese River Reveille* scathingly blasted Col. McDermit and Capt. Wallace for their attitude toward the Indians on May 20, 1865, stating that the local military were "unworthy the name of soldier."⁵ This was largely due to the seeming inaction of McDermit and his apparent reluctance to take the field personally against the red man. The writer went on to state that only by taking the initiative himself could McDermit redeem his name. On May 30 the same man wrote again, largely repeating his charges, but especially lauding Captain Wells for fighting at Mud Lake, and criticizing McDermit for holding a court of inquiry when he could better be chasing Indians.⁶

FOOTNOTES

¹*Official Records*, Vol. L, Part II, pp. 403-404.

²Dr. Effie Mona Mack, in her book *Nevada*, states that all the Indians were killed. This is in error, as Wells definitely states in his report that one Indian managed to escape. Effie Mack, *Nevada* (Glendale: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1936), p. 317.

³*Reese River Reveille*, Austin, Nevada, May 20, 1865.

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵*Ibid.*, May 30, 1865.

CHAPTER X

OPERATIONS OF THE NEVADA VOLUNTEERS IN NORTHERN NEVADA, 1865

As the year 1865 grew into maturity and the snows of winter gave way to the green growth of spring, Indian depredations in Humboldt, Pershing and Churchill Counties continued to rise. Cattle and horses were stolen and the Piutes openly began to attack ranches and travelers.

There were, in this area, some soldiers, but not nearly enough to meet the Indians. California Volunteers were stationed at Dun Glen and the Smoke Creek Desert, operating from the Honey Lake Valley. Also, the opening of the Susanville-Boise road led Californians to patrol along the Nevada-Oregon-Idaho border.

Colonel McDermit, to help the settlers of the region, began to send the troops at Fort Churchill to aid the settlers in early April. First to take the field was Company D, Nevada Cavalry.

Forty-seven men of this unit arrived at Star City, Humboldt County, on April 1, 1865, bringing with them one hundred extra muskets to be issued to the local inhabitants to withstand Indian attacks. Lt. Joel Wolverton, commanding the expedition, listened and approved the plea of the settlers for a military post to be established in Northern Nevada.¹

The local inhabitants were extremely alarmed at the Indian attacks upon them, letting the military authorities and other agencies know of their plight by many urgent letters and telegrams. One such letter, dated Star City, Nevada, April 4, 1865, was published in the California newspaper, *The Sacramento Union*. The letter informed Californians of the state of affairs in Nevada, and said in part:

For several months past the Piutes and Shoshones . . . have shown a disposition of mischief, driving away and killing stock, and in two or three instances falling upon and cutting off a single individual or isolated parties of whites. In this manner as many as five or six persons have already been killed, and fears are entertained that many more will fall victims to savage vengeance.²

By April 4, Colonel McDermit had reported to San Francisco that he had received three urgent letters from the residents of the Humboldt District, sent from Dun Glen, telling of Indian depredations in Northern Nevada and requesting that a military post be established in Paradise Valley.³ This request he endorsed and forwarded to the Presidio where it found little warmth. General Wright, commanding the Military District of California, denied the request for a permanent military base in the area, stating that he believed a mobile cavalry force in the region would prove more effective.⁴

McDermit's answer to this denial was to put the mobile cavalry into the field. Half of Company D was already into the heart of the hostile

Indian territory and on April 6, 1865, Special Order Number 4, Sub-District of Nevada, ordered the remainder of Company D and Company E, Nevada Cavalry, to proceed to Star City. This force, one hundred strong, was commanded by Captain A. B. Wells, by now an able and seasoned campaigner.⁵

The following day the first blood of the campaign was spilled as Lt. Wolverton attacked a small band of Shoshones, killing five of the Indians. Twenty men of his command were sent to protect the ranchers in Paradise Valley, while he and a detachment of Company D headed northeast some forty-five miles to the Humboldt River, near the present-day village of Golconda, Nevada.⁶

Here they paused long enough to celebrate, as did all military posts in the West. All stations in the Department of the Pacific were ordered to parade all men not on duty and to fire a one-hundred gun salute. Richmond, Virginia, capital of the Confederate States of America, had fallen to the Army of the Potomac.⁷ The Civil War was drawing to a close.

Stories of the Indian War still reached the military at Carson City and Fort Churchill. Mr. E. F. Dunne, a rancher in Paradise Valley, wrote to General John Cradlebaugh, the Adjutant General, requesting that the state militia aid the ranchers, and telling of an attack by the Indians on a ranch at Cottonwood Creek. Burning the ranch house, the Indians killed two men, Fearborne and Collins, while the third, a Mr. Barber, managed to escape. At nearby ranches he raised help, but by the time they could arrive at Cottonwood Creek the Indians had escaped.⁸

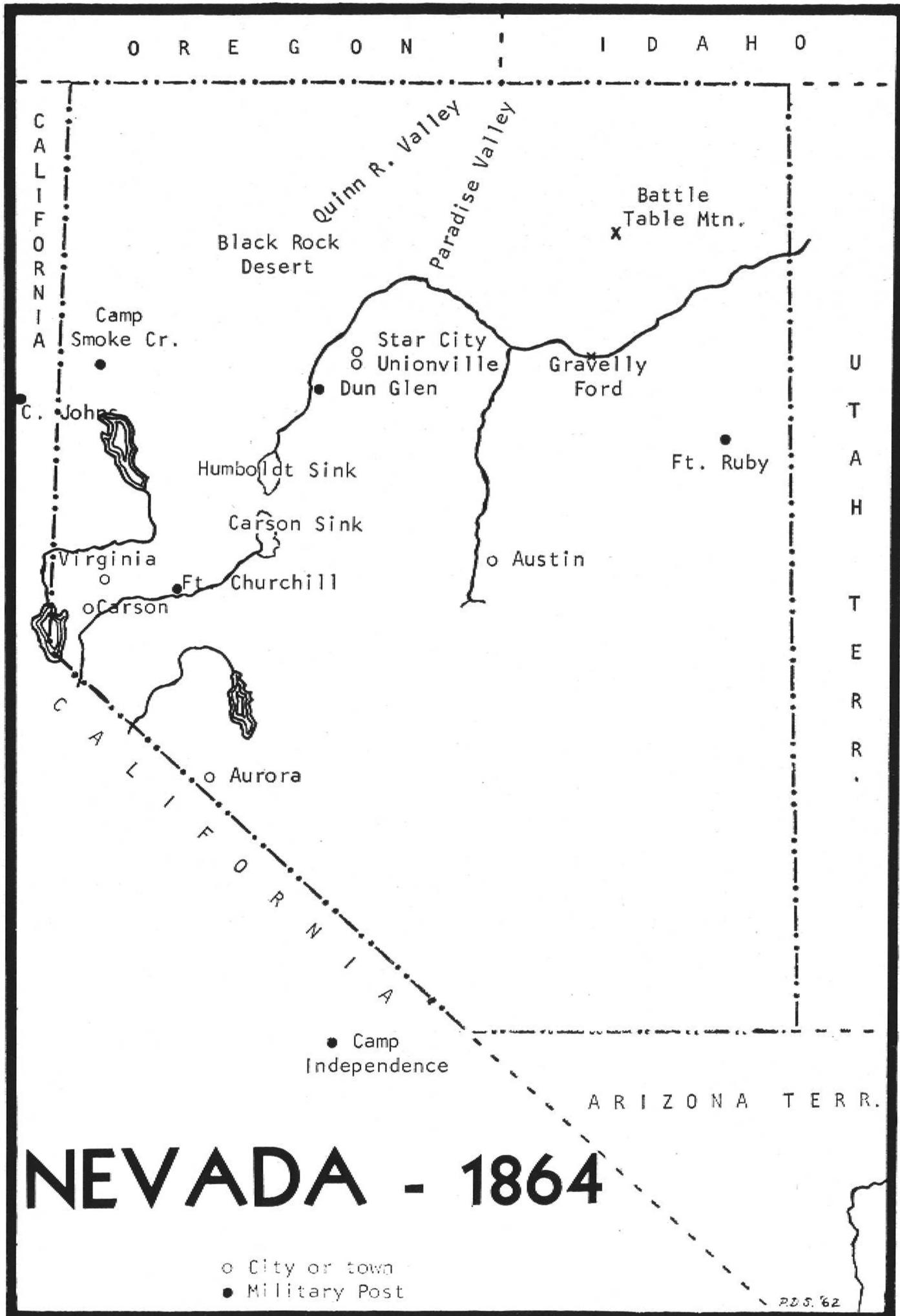
Crossing the Humboldt and arriving near Willow Creek, Wolverton and the only troops as yet in the field, found themselves in the midst of small bands of hostiles. One of these was met at a point twelve miles from Willow Creek and ten Indians killed in the ensuing action. Hearing of a large band camped at Martin Creek Gap near Paradise Valley, Wolverton turned west and pushed on. Reaching the Gap, the soldiers killed two Indians as they scouted the area, and then met the party of ranchers under Mr. Dunne. These civilians brought the welcome news that more soldiers were on the way.⁹

Mr. Dunne, the leader and spokesman of the ranchers, did not hesitate to call for aid. From Star City on April 6, he had telegraphed Colonel McDermit:

Massacre in Paradise Valley. Six women and two men killed. Send cartridges, caliber .58, and revolvers, and 200 men. There are 1,000 Indians on the warpath.¹⁰

Dunne also informed McDermit that Wolverton and the soldiers were pursuing this latest band of Indians along the Humboldt toward Gravelly Ford.¹¹ Before moving east the officer had visited the scene of the attack in Paradise Valley and the soldiers had buried the bodies of Fearborne and Collins, the men killed in the initial attack.¹²

Havoc created by the Indians continued to be widespread and by the second week in April most of the ranches from Fish Creek to Dun Glen had been attacked by a band of Indians under Buffalo Jim. In Austin, the largest town near this present trouble, there was talk of sending the local militia, the Lander Guard, into the field against this



band. The fact that the company had only twenty muskets was the prime reason in deciding this would not be a wise move, but the men were anxious to go.¹³

Another attack in Paradise Valley took the lives of a Mr. and Mrs. Doon and a Mrs. Stockham, who was burned to death, while Thomas Rapper lost an arm. On April 15 the *Reese River Reveille* reported that Granite Creek Station had been attacked and the Indians had raided Cunningham's Ranch in Grass Valley, Humboldt County, driving off seventy horses and one hundred and fifty head of cattle. Soldiers from Star City had chased the marauders but to no avail.¹⁴ These men were local militia and a few days later Cunningham and his men managed to recover much of the stock.¹⁵

On April 23, 1865 an agreement was drawn up between the whites and the Indians that was completely unprecedented in Nevada History. On that day Captains John and Soo of the Piutes made an agreement with Captains Safford, Usher, Bonnifield, and Parkinson to move a portion of the Piute Nation from the Humboldt to the Carson. This would remove most of the friendly and peaceful Indians who wanted to avoid being caught up in the middle of an all-out Indian War. All Indians found in the Humboldt region one week after the agreement were to be considered as hostiles and would be killed by the whites.¹⁶ On what authority this was done is a moot question; it was not done with McDermit's consent or knowledge. We will never know how many harmless Indians perished because, in remote regions, they had not heard of this contract.

Settlers in the Carson Lake area now began to notice unrest among the local Indians, and fearful that the Indian trouble had descended on them also, sent news of their alarm to Fort Churchill. Col. McDermit had, by this time, very few men left under his personal command at the fort, but he decided that the matter needed attention and for the first time personally took the field.

Accompanied by Lieutenants Vanderhof and Pine of the Nevada Cavalry with fifteen men of Company E, McDermit left Fort Churchill on May 5, 1865. By evening the party had reached Cottonwood Station, some twenty-six miles from the fort. Up early the next morning, they made their way to Carson Lake, arriving at nine-thirty, where they met with local settlers and Indians. In a three hour talk, McDermit found that the supposed Indian troubles were largely a misunderstanding, caused by the exodus of Indians from the Humboldt and the resultant stir as they arrived on the Carson. This large influx had alarmed both the whites and the local Indians, but unduly.¹⁷

Moving west to the Truckee River, the soldiers stopped long enough to arrest a citizen named Cook who had been openly exulting over the assassination of President Lincoln. He was sent with Lt. Pine and a trooper to Fort Churchill for punishment.¹⁸

On May 7 Col. McDermit met the Indian Agent at the Reservation House on the Truckee River. In a four hour investigation he found that the man had leased the Indians' land to the local ranchers for grazing and that \$25,000 appropriated for the Indians there had vanished without visible improvements. Orders were issued for the ranchers to remove their stock and the party returned to Fort Churchill the next day, convinced that the Indian scare in the region was over.¹⁹

The hostilities were progressively worsening and in settled areas of the state great alarm was felt among the population. Scarcely a day passed but the local newspapers carried accounts of Indian raids and attacks. In Austin the Lander Guard met to discuss the situation as the editors of the *Reveille* called for troops to come to that city's aid. In the past four days there had been three raids by the Indians, one as close as Italian Canyon, where twelve horses were stolen.²⁰ The result of the meeting was the dispatch of telegrams to Governor Bladell asking permission for the local militia to take the field, and another to Fort Ruby requesting troops be sent to Austin.²¹

On May 6 a reply was received from Lt. Tolles, Nevada Infantry, commanding Fort Ruby in the absence of Captain Thurston. He requested details of the Indian troubles and assured Austinites that troops would be sent to aid them.²²

Austin recruited "Minute Men" and requested arms from the state government to equip them.²³ A few days later Capt. Thurston, himself, wired Austin that troops would shortly be on the way and asked how many citizens could take the field with him in a thirty-day Indian Campaign.²⁴ The city replied that he could count on fifty men.²⁵ Several days of false starts finally resulted in a column leaving Fort Ruby, commanded by Lts. Seamands and Tolles.

While the citizenry of Austin were busy calling for assistance, the few Nevada troops in the field were in need of help themselves. Lt. Littlefield and a detachment of Company D, Nevada Cavalry, were scouting for Indians to the east of Paradise Valley when they encountered a large band. Littlefield had only thirty-five men with him at the time and they met the hostiles in a small box canyon. Here the Indians, who numbered two hundred, had had ample time to fortify their position, digging twenty-five rifle pits, some of which would hold twenty or thirty men. The Nevadans would have to dismount to attack this strongly fortified position and Littlefield judged this would be unwise, as they were many times outnumbered. Thus the soldiers withdrew, taunted by the Indians who graciously invited the soldiers to come up for breakfast and waved a bloody scalp.²⁶

Newspapers, rabidly anti-Indian, carried conflicting accounts of this episode. The *Humboldt Register* reported that Littlefield had sixty men, while the Indians numbered the same or a little less, and stated that the officer had made a hasty fifteen-mile retreat, camping without water. Their story had it that Littlefield was held to be a rank coward by the men of his command.²⁷ The *Reveille* stated it could scarcely believe this as Littlefield was held in high esteem.²⁸ Thus, it was with gladness that the *Reveille* was able to inform its readers on June 27 that the charges of cowardice leveled against Littlefield were "utterly false and without the slightest foundation."²⁹

The same day that soldiers had belatedly left Fort Ruby for Austin, May 20, Captain Almond Wells and a detachment of Company D, Cavalry, met the hostile Piutes and Shoshones in force at Table Mountain in the Tuscarora Range, ten miles southwest of the spot that was in later years to be a boom mining town.

Here the Nevada Volunteers had one of their most serious engagements with the enemy and the largest scale action to date. Wells and sixty-five troopers found a large band of Indians under Zelauwick³⁰

on top of the flat topped mountain. Here again they had displayed ingenuity in strongly fortifying their position by building stone forts on the summit. Taunting the whites, the Indians dared Wells to fight. More hasty than Littlefield in a somewhat similar situation, Wells took the offer. Estimates of Wells' strength differ. Myron Angel wrote that he had only thirty-six men,³¹ while contemporary newspapers reported sixty-five.³² It is definitely known that Wells had eighty-two men with him in June when he reported to Col. McDermit for duty near Paradise Valley.³³ A participant in the engagement accounts for fifty-six men and "a few" with the horses during the fighting. This would place the number near the sixty-five strength mentioned previously.

Also estimates as to the strength of the Indian band vary, but the lowest is five hundred. McDermit reported five hundred as did Angel, the historian. The *Reveille* says, "between five and six hundred."³⁴ Taking the maximum guess as to Wells' strength, sixty-five, and the Indian minimum of five hundred, it would still seem a one sided affair even if the Indians were not behind strong fortifications. Visiting the scene of the battle a month later, Col. McDermit estimated that twenty Indians could have held the mountain against two hundred soldiers, providing the soldiers had no artillery.³⁵

Wells, nevertheless, decided to attack, perhaps thinking the Indians would panic and flee. At three in the afternoon of May 20 the charge was sounded and Company D assaulted the mountain. For four long hours the soldiers attempted to drive the Indians from the summit,³⁶ at times coming within thirty feet of the Indian fort.³⁷ Finally Wells sounded the recall, leaving Privates Isaac Godfrey and James Munroe dead in front of the Indian breastworks and finding four other men wounded too seriously to fight on.³⁸

On May 30, just ten days after the battle, Captain Wells was interviewed by the *Carson Daily Appeal* and related the particulars of the engagement to the newspaper. He was in Carson City to obtain supplies and returned the next day to the Humboldt. Wells stated that he was convinced that some of the Indians had been equipped with repeating rifles.

The official account of the Battle at Godfrey's Mountain has been lost. Fortunately, one of the participants in the fight took the time to write an account of it for a friend and it was subsequently published in the *Carson Daily Appeal* on June 3, 1865. The author of this letter was one of the enlisted men of Company D, Nevada Cavalry, and his letter reflects the viewpoint of the soldier. It is quoted here in full since it not only paints a good description of the engagement itself but also of some of the hardships that the Nevada Volunteers endured campaigning in Northern Nevada.

Camp McDermit, Paradise Valley, May 26, 1865.

I have delayed writing from lack of an opportunity. We have been on the go most of the time since we reached this place. We have just got in from a ten days' scout through the mountains to the eastward of this place. After four days', or rather nights', travel, we came up with a large band of Indians strongly fortified, they having breastworks of rocks with loop-holes to shoot through. To convey to you the exact situation I will compare the point

that the Indians held to a peninsula, the sides being a rocky mass, perpendicular. The neck is intersected with ledges of high rocks; the top, as near as we could see, is nearly flat. We arrived on the ground about 3 o'clock P. M., but as soon as we got within gunshot of the bluff there was not an Indian to be seen. When within about eight hundred yards we dismounted, as it was not practicable to take horses any further. Captain Wells, with about twenty men, took the right, while Lieutenant Littlefield with the balance of the command went to the left. The whole number engaged could not have been more than thirty-five or six. There were about ten sent out as scouts, the day previous, and about ten with the pack train. A few remained with the horses. The scouting party did not join us until the fight was over, but they also had a fight with about a hundred Indians well mounted and armed with guns. Had they (the Indians) not seen the command in the distance, our ten men would have been handled pretty roughly, but as soon as they discovered our main body they retreated. The only casualty to our side was two horses wounded.

Now to return to the main command. As I said before, we could see no Indians, but as soon as we reached within seventy-five or a hundred yards of the bluff, they fired a volley at us. Strange as it may seem, no one was hit at the first fire. I think it was because we were too close, their shots passing over us. We then retreated behind some rocks and watched to see them stick their heads out, but they would seldom give us a chance to shoot. We fought them in this way until sundown, running from one rock to another to get a better chance. The party on the left fared a little worse than we did on the right; they had one man killed instantly and two wounded—both through the thigh, one in the right and the other in the left—only flesh wounds. They are both doing well. The saddest thing of all is about James Monroe, a member of our Lodge, who was last seen when the men were withdrawn from the hill. He was then making his way to where the horses were. Going farther down the hill than was necessary, it is supposed that he was caught while crossing a high point to reach the horses. It was then getting dark and not possible to go back and look for him. He was a young man of good morals and well liked by his comrades. Brother White will notify the Lodge of his probable death. Lewis B. Clark is wounded in the leg; he is doing well. Isaac W. Godfrey is the man's name that was killed. He was shot through the head. I can give no correct guess of how many Indians there were, but they must have had fifty or sixty guns, perhaps a great many more. They used no bows and arrows. Some of their guns are equally as good as ours. After retreating for about two miles we camped for the night. The next day we started back for this place.

I will not make comment about our officers, but will say that the men did all that was asked of them. It is useless to try to fight these Indians without artillery, for to surprise them in these mountains is next to an impossibility. They have to be taken on ground of their own choosing. They are well armed and mounted. It is

also my opinion that there are some degraded white wretches among them. I think I have already written more than you will be able to read, but I must say a few words more, and that is in regard to rations. For instance, on the 3d instant we started on a ten days' scout. The only means of transportation we had was deserters' horses and saddles. That being insufficient to carry ten days' rations, we took what we could, the balance we had to go without. All the meat we had for nine days was about one pound to the man. This last trip we fared a little better, for we had about four days' rations of pork; then the idea of going into the Indian country to hunt a fight without a surgeon or even a bandage, in fact no provision made for sick or wounded, it looks to me as though somebody was to blame. The nearest physician was at Star City, about eighty-five miles. We have an acting hospital steward with some medicine, but no surgical instruments. Someone is to blame.

During the night Wells' command was silently surrounded by the enemy and in order to make good his retreat the Captain sent ten men ahead to scout a path through the Indians. Carrying their wounded the remainder came more slowly, finally overtaking the advance guard who had been surrounded and were in danger of annihilation. At the approach of the main party of soldiers the Indians finally withdrew and Wells retreated in good order.³⁹

Military and civilians alike were stunned by the defeat at Godfrey's Mountain. The name was changed in honor of one of the dead soldiers, although the new one never has become permanent. This was the first real defeat of soldiers in Nevada since the first disastrous battle of the Pyramid Lake War. Not only had Wells lost men but the Indians had captured many of his supplies.⁴⁰ The most shocking blow, however, was the news that now a large coordinated Indian force was opposing the troops. Heretofore the soldiers had only to deal with scattered bands of Indians, hardly ever numbering as many as twenty or thirty. Now, under Zelauwick, there were five hundred Piutes, Bannocks, and Shoshones⁴¹ working together. This made the total Indian strength larger than the total forces of the Nevada Volunteers in the state.

McDermitt lost no time in calling for help. In a special telegram to Col. Drum at the Presidio he asked for two more companies of cavalry to be sent to him at once, stating, "Capt. Wells had a fight with 500 Indians who are strongly fortified. He failed to rout them."⁴² The Department of the Pacific lost no time in ordering troops from Northern California to Nevada to help crush the Indians.

The citizens of Austin were saved from what they considered an immense Indian danger on May 24, when Lt. Seamands, Nevada Infantry, arrived in that city with news that a column under Lt. Tolles would arrive the next day.⁴³ The arrival of these men, forty infantrymen of Company B, Nevada Infantry, was hailed with great jubilation by the town as they went into camp at Upper Austin. A fine appearance they must have made, as the command was fully outfitted for a major and extended campaign. Each soldier carried a Springfield musket with bayonet and one hundred rounds of ammunition. An artilleryman attached to the unit manned a mountain howitzer which was

equipped with a complete supply of cartridge, shell, round shot, grape, and canister. Two six-mule teams pulled the cannon and a variety of supplies including forty days' rations, surgical equipment, entrenching tools, and pack saddles.⁴⁴

Seamands investigated the Indian problem at Austin and announced that his command would proceed to Gravelly Ford where the Indians were supposedly gathered in force. The *Reese River Reveille* rather sarcastically remarked it was a shame that many men had volunteered to accompany him, but now that troops were on the way they were unable to volunteer.⁴⁵ Seamands did request that the Lander Guard be ordered into state service to aid him and telegrams were dispatched for that purpose.⁴⁶



Fort Ruby

—Baneroft Library.

In reply, the Lieutenant was ordered by Captain Thurston to remain at Austin for further instructions, and Governor Blasdel denied permission to use the Austin militia, stating that he and McDermitt would be in Austin the following week.⁴⁷

The Governor of the State of Nevada, Henry G. Blasdel, had become quite concerned over the Indian problem and added his weight to McDermitt's request for more soldiers. He wrote, on May 27, 1865, to General Irvin McDowell, now commanding the Department of the Pacific, informing him that the Indians had stolen more than fifteen hundred head of cattle from Humboldt County alone during the months of April and May.⁴⁸ The General heeded the pleas from Nevada and commenced moving troops to the state to be placed at the disposal of Col. McDermitt. Companies A and H, Second California Cavalry, were ordered to Fort Churchill to replace Nevada troops now taking the field. Captain Doughty, in command of the post at Susanville, was instructed to cross the Applegate Trail to Humboldt County, while Companies D and I, Sixth California Infantry,

under Major O'Brien, were ordered to Nevada. Company B, Second California Cavalry, under Captain David McLean, was ordered from its camp at Fort Bidwell, on the Chico-Boise Road, into Northern Nevada.⁴⁹ California troops, under Lt. Penwell, were already occupying a small post at Dun Glen.⁵⁰

More men were on the way to the Humboldt as Captain Wallace and Company A, Nevada Infantry, and a squad of cavalry were ordered to proceed to Northern Nevada on May 29.⁵¹

Now there were several parties converging on the region. Wallace from Ft. Churchill; California Volunteers from Susanville, Ft. Bidwell, and Chico; and Seamands at Austin. In addition, cavalry under Wells, Wolverton, and Littlefield, numbering about two hundred men, were actively fighting the Indians.

At Austin, Lt. Seamands had gone into permanent camp, awaiting the arrival of Col. McDermit and Governor Blasdel. Company B paraded through the main street of Austin from Upper Austin to Clifton (present-day Rodeo Grounds), pausing long enough to honor the offices of the *Reese River Reveille* with a military salute.⁵² To mount some of his men, Seamands purchased sixteen riding animals while in Austin.⁵³

News that McDermit was to take command of the large scale operations on the Humboldt was reported to the people of Austin by Sergeant J. D. Warfield, who informed the *Reveille* on May 29 that McDermit would soon leave Fort Churchill for Austin, and then would proceed north to the scene of action with one hundred and thirty additional men.⁵⁴

A few days later the Governor's party arrived at Austin to try to placate the local Indians. The entourage consisted of Governor Blasdel, Col. McDermit, Lt. C. C. Warner, and Surgeon A. F. Meachem. They were escorted by thirteen troopers of Company E, Nevada Cavalry.⁵⁵ Arriving in Austin the evening of June 2, the Governor and McDermit met the local tribesmen at Half-Way House, below Clifton, on June 3. The following day McDermit and the soldiers headed north while Blasdel stayed to meet more Indians at Jacobsville.⁵⁶ Seamands with twenty men of his command, now mounted, with the cannon, accompanied McDermit. Lt. John Tolles was left with twenty men camped on Silver Creek a short distance north of Austin on the western slope of the Toiyabe Range. The following account of the travels of this party is taken from Lt. Tolles' report, submitted to his superiors upon completion of the trip.⁵⁷

While camped at Silver Creek on May 29 a civilian ran into the soldiers' camp, informing them that several Indians were driving off cattle belonging to a Mr. Worthington. Tolles and fifteen men started on the double and encountered the Indians only three hundred yards away. Here three redmen, two of whom were mounted, were engaged in herding eight or ten cattle up a ravine toward the summit of the Toiyabes. The roughness of the terrain slowed down the horsemen and permitted the soldiers, on foot, to come within musket range. However the Indians made good their escape with the cattle and drove them over the mountains into Grass Valley. At this point the pass is an easy ride for an experienced horseman.

Tolles and his men broke camp on June 6 and headed north along the small stream known as the Reese River. Making sixteen miles the first day they camped at Tenant's Ranch, now a part of the large Racetrack Ranch holdings.

On June 7 the plodding foot-soldiers threaded their way through the Reese River Canyon and out onto the flat plain that stretches north to the Humboldt. They pitched their camp that evening at Warm Springs, now the site of Barium Incorporated's open-pit operations. The following day the men walked twenty-eight miles to the Hay Ranch, just eight miles from the Humboldt. On June 9 the men made the last few miles to the river and turned to follow the stream east along the emigrant trail.

As they followed the Humboldt the party was overtaken by a Mr. Klemp, owner of a small ranch just ahead. He had been fired upon by the Indians while out searching for lost horses about a month previously. Returning to the ranch he found that his hired man, Fred Anchor, had disappeared during Klemp's three-day absence. All that remained of the man were a few articles of clothing. Eight or ten shots at him hurried Klemp on his way to Austin where he remained until news of the soldier's journey prompted him to return home.⁵⁸

The soldiers investigated the disappearance of the man and found from his clothing that he had apparently been shot in the left hip and the small of the back just above the belt. The body of Anchor was believed to have been thrown into the Humboldt.

Pushing on the next day, Tolles and his men made their way up the Humboldt to Gravelly Ford. From this well-known point the soldiers struck across three mountain ranges, the Cortez, Sulphur Springs, and Diamonds, in a south-easterly direction. This stage of their journey took five days and the men found themselves on the Overland Trail only five miles from Jacob's Well Station. From here it was an easy hour's walk to the welcome confines of Fort Ruby and a well earned rest. Tolles reported that the party had seen no Indians since leaving the Austin area except for the signs of their visit to Klemp's Ranch.

Meanwhile, Colonel McDermit was hurrying to the north to personally take charge of the campaign against Zelaauwick. Leaving Austin on June 4 he headed up the Reese River and was joined by Lt. Seamands and twenty mounted infantry at Boone's Ranch. Four days later the party reached the Humboldt some seventy miles north of Unionville (near modern Golconda). Unable to cross the river here as it was in flood they went down the river eighteen miles to where the stream was bridged, a crossing later to become Winnemucca. At the bridge the party encountered Company A, Wallace's, with seventy-three men enroute from Fort Churchill.⁵⁹

Crossing the Humboldt River on June 10, 1865, McDermit's command proceeded eight miles up the Little Humboldt, traversing it in a small boat that Wallace had procured at Dun Glen. Now in Paradise Valley, heart of the Indian uprising, they rendezvoused with Captain Wells, eighty-two men, and Captain Payne, fifty men.⁶⁰ This now placed two hundred and thirty-seven cavalry and infantry with

two howitzers under the personal command of McDermit. This was in addition to the California Volunteers now converging on the area. The *Reveille* on June 7, 1865, gleefully informed its readers that there were between four and five hundred cavalry in the field against the Piutes.⁶¹

Leaving most of the men in Paradise Valley, McDermit took seven officers and fifty men of Company E, Nevada Cavalry, north and west scouting for Indians. On June 14 the party visited the spot where Littlefield had been beset by the Indians in early May. Here Littlefield's prudence was upheld by his brother officers, McDermit personally naming the spot Fort Redskin.⁶²

Another twenty-five miles to the northeast brought them to the scene of Wells' defeat by Zelauwick. The bodies of Privates Munroe and Godfrey were found where they had fallen, scalped and mutilated. Godfrey had been killed instantly but Munroe had not been so lucky. Shot in the foot and torso he evidently had been scalped and had a fire kindled on his stomach while still alive as an examination of his body showed that he had almost bitten off his own tongue in agony.⁶³ Table Mountain was renamed Godfrey Mountain in honor of the fallen soldier.

The soldiers spent the next few days scouting for the Indians but to no avail. McDermit had heard rumors that the band of hostiles he was searching for was now camped at Owyhee Lake, still a considerable distance away. Accordingly, he sent for the remainder of his command and they went into camp while McDermit planned his next moves. Here he was also joined by some of the California Volunteers and learned that more were on the way to join the coming movements.⁶⁴

Colonel McDermit decided to push for the Indians in force, splitting his command. The men were glad to see some impending action as they had now been idle for over a week. One of the Nevada soldiers wrote a letter to the *Virginia Union*, which that paper published, expressing his feeling of the campaign so far. From one hundred miles northeast of Star City the "Volunteer" wrote:

. . . This expedition is only a get up of officers, to keep in the service. It is the greatest boy's play that ever I saw; you can compare it to nothing else. . . . Those letters of Lt. [C. N.] Warner's in the papers, are not to be relied upon. They are nothing but braggadocio, and amount to nothing; they are the laughing stock of the company.⁶⁵

McDermit's strategy called for a double thrust toward the Utah border in hope of catching the elusive band under Zelauwick. He, with one hundred men of Companies D and E, Nevada Cavalry, and fifty men of Company A, Nevada Infantry, headed across Northern Nevada for Thousand Springs Valley, headwaters of the Humboldt. At the same time Seamands with twenty men of Company B, Nevada Infantry (Mounted) and some Californians under Doughty made their way toward Gravelly Ford.⁶⁶

Both of these columns were successful. The party under McDermit succeeded in surprising the Indians at Hot Springs. Attacking the more than two hundred Indians, they captured seventy and scattered

the remainder. The elusive chieftain, Zelauwick, made good his escape but was hotly pursued by Captain Wells and twenty-five men of Company D. Following so closely they wore out the Indian mounts, Wells captured the Indian supplies but the fugitives again escaped.⁶⁷

Seamands, who had made his way south to Fort Ruby, immediately headed north again on July 25 accompanied by fifteen mounted men and an Indian guide. He was lucky enough to catch Zelauwick in Cottonwood Canyon, north of Humboldt Wells, at dawn of July 31, 1865. The Chief and eleven of his men were killed, while the only casualty on the part of the soldiers was Sergeant Skerill, badly wounded in the neck by a barbed arrow.⁶⁸

Withdrawing back toward the center of the hostilities in Paradise Valley, the Nevada Volunteers again defeated the Indians at Willow Point. This action started while several members of the California Volunteers were gathering forage in the valley. They were surprised by a band of about fifty Indians. Keeping his head, the corporal in charge raised a white flag and talked to them while a Mr. Scott went for help. Luckily, he encountered Sergeant Thomas and eight men of Company D, Nevada Cavalry, herding stock only four miles away. These men hastened to the scene, cutting off the Indians' retreat to the mountains before letting themselves be seen. Thomas then charged the band, forcing them to withdraw into the nearby swamps.⁶⁹

Aided by five or six civilians and the Californians, Thomas advanced his men as skirmishers and hand-to-hand fighting ensued. One man clubbed an Indian to death with his empty pistol, ruining the weapon. Five hostiles took refuge in an abandoned cabin. This was promptly ignited by the soldiers and the occupants killed as they emerged.⁷⁰

Starting at 4 p.m., the fight lasted until dark and the remaining Indians made good their escape into the hills. Mr. Warfield, civilian, and Private Hereford, California Volunteers, were killed while another civilian and five Californians were wounded. Over an area of five miles, twenty-one Indians were killed.⁷¹ This was the last Indian fight of the campaign, July 26, 1865, to be fought in Paradise Valley. The threat over, and peace established, McDermit removed his command and crossed the Santa Rosa Mountains, leading them into the Quinn River Valley for the last drive against the Piutes.⁷² Here, on August 2, 1865, Lt. Littlefield and a party of troopers killed five Indians in a small skirmish.⁷³

News of tragedy stunned Nevada with the dispatch of a terse telegram on August 8, 1865. Addressed to Col. R. C. Drum in San Francisco, it read:

Col. McDermit was killed yesterday afternoon within half a mile from Camp by Indians lying in ambush.

(Signed) G. F. LANSING, *2nd Lieut.*

1st. Inf., Nevada Volunteers.

Charles McDermit was dead, dying a short time after he was shot by a hidden Indian. The text of the telegram and of the letters and documents to follow were supplied to Mrs. Alice Addenbrooke by Mr. Charles Shepard of San Francisco, Colonel McDermit's grandson. If it had not been for Mrs. Addenbrooke's efforts this valuable contribution to Nevada History might well have been lost.



**Lieutenant Colonel Charles McDermit, 2nd California Cavalry Volunteers,
Commander of the Military Sub-District of Nevada**

The campaign had been going well and was drawing to a close. Lt. W. Gibson Overend, 2nd. Cavalry Volunteers, wrote this description of the last few days of Col. McDermit. Unfortunately, only a part of his letter has been preserved.

In compliance with the request of the widow of my late and much beloved Colonel Charles McDermit, of the Second Regiment of California Cavalry, who was killed on the 7th day of August, A. D. 1865, by an Indian, I make the following statements of the incidents that transpired while I was with him on a Scout after hostile Indians in the Section of Queen's and King's River District Idaho Territory, five days prior, and up to within four hours of his lamented and untimely death.

On the 2nd day of August, 1865, the Colonel, Captn. Payne and myself started with 12 enlisted men and a Mexican Pack Mule Teamster from Queen's River Station (now Camp McDermit), at about 3 o'clock in the afternoon, and traveled in a westerly direction. We left the men go ahead in a northerly course while we explored the section of the valley on the west, and while we were doing so we discovered many fresh Indian tracks. We saw a species of grass, containing a pulp or seed, had been cut down and tied up in small bundles by squaws. It was then carefully heaped in stacks. In the streams which ran through this valley we found dams or weirs which intercepted the fish from getting into the main river. We came to the conclusion immediately that Indians dwelt in that section and the Colonel remarked he would make it warm for them on his return; as he intended not only to punish them but burn and destroy all of the grass that was stored for winter purposes. On his march this day he instructed me how to find and discern Indian trails and footsteps. He also advised me as to the best means of attacking Indians, as to time, place etc., etc. He ordered no fires to be lit at camp that evening. When we were in bed he told me he had written to Mrs. McDermit and told her she must kill one of her fattest turkeys and have it in readiness for dinner about the latter end of August. His conversation was of the most cheerful and animated kind, and he expressed his certainty of capturing some Indians on this trip, as from the indications we saw that day's march, the Colonel entertained hopes we would meet with some on the next day.

August 3rd, 1865, we started on march this morning at an early hour and went through the valley a distance of about 12 miles, following up a trail that we supposed was the same made by the Indians who attacked a party going to Boise and killed one of the number and wounded two or more. The man's name they killed was Jackson from Virginia City. We continued our course to the westward and the Colonel dispatched 3 enlisted men in an easterly direction to see if the trail ran across a mountain on that side. We arrived at the mouth of a canyon, still following the trail which ran that way, and was led by the same into a splendid fertile spot where Indians had camped about a month previous. We saw where they had killed a beef and left some of it after them, showing that they must have had a plentiful supply on hand. We took lunch and the Colonel and myself laid down under the shade

of a cotten tree and spoke about military matters, and he remarked to me that he was sorry to say that he had officers under his command he could not trust, and among them were two especially who failed to fulfill capturing an old Indian Chief who was within pistol shot of them. One of those he said, boasted of the qualities he attained, by being in the Regular service nine years. We remained there for about one hour for the men's return who were dispatched in another direction. We were making preparations to leave, when the three men made their way back. They showed us the trophy that is taken as a usual thing from Indians, the scalp, and we were all well pleased to be in possession of it. We continued our march and the trail which led us over an immense mountain some six or seven hundred feet high, the Colonel and myself on foot leading the van. We had to stop several times to take breath and give our horses a chance to do likewise. During one of these intervals I sat down and began to sing "Who will care for Mother now." The Colonel remarked that it was a beautiful song, and said he would like to learn it. I then told him I was going so high and near the firmament, I felt the next place we would march into if we followed the trail would be the firmament, and continued singing,

Soon with angels I'll be marching
With bright laurels on my brow.
I have for my country fallen,
Who will care for Mother now.

He remarked that we sooner or later would, with the help of Almighty God wear those bright laurels that never fade in a world of immortality, and that it would be of such infinite pleasure for us to join with a band of angels in heaven, where wealth or rank would not divide us, in Unity of worship to the Giver of Life who had put us here on earth to love one another and to do justice to all men. Among other remarks on that day, he said, "Lieut., how good God has been so far to us on this march. It is true, we are deprived of the society of those we love next to God, our wives and our children; but see, even in this remote section, he supplies us with little luxuries that we can enjoy with contentment and good appetite, as does those who have the privilege of living in California." "Here," he said, "we have the wild currant and stream trout, while they have at this season the grape and peach. With contentment let's wish them to enjoy theirs and you and me thank God for the benefits we receive." "Even yet," he remarked, "These people in civil life have not that fine boast to make that we have. We are in pursuance of our military duties to our Government, We can . . ."

Here Lt. Overend's narrative ends. Four days later Charles McDermit was killed, returning from this scouting expedition. Although one must keep in mind that this account was written for the bereaved widow, and thus might tend to be written from this viewpoint, one can gather a good picture of McDermit, proud of his men as they displayed a bloody scalp and deeply religious and sentimental a short while later.

Hardened to the realities of life and warfare on the frontier, he was a sensitive and loving family man. It is no wonder that he was beloved by his men and all who knew him.

McDermitt's body was returned to Fort Churchill. His successor, Lt. Col. A. E. Hooker, Sixth California Infantry, paid him full military honors in General Orders: No. 2, dated August 19, 1865.

1. The remains of the late Lt. Col. Chas. McDermitt, 2nd Cavalry, California Volunteers, late commanding the district of Nevada, who, while in the noble performance of his duty, gallantly leading a portion of his command through a wilderness infested by a savage foe, was shot and killed by Indians, on the 7th instant, near Queen's River Station, Humboldt Co., Nevada, having been brought to Fort Churchill, will be interred with appropriate military honors, on tomorrow, Sunday, the 20th Inst. at three o'clock P. M. Major O'Brien, 6th Inf. Calif. Vols. will command the funeral escort.

The flags at Fort Churchill and all the Military Posts, Stations, and Camps in the District, will be displayed at half staff, from sunrise until sunset on the day of the funeral, or the day following receipt of this order—and the troops will be paraded at Ten o'clock, A.M., and this order read to them, after which all drills, fatigue duties, and operations will be suspended for the day, as far as practicable.

2. The Camp located near Queen's River Station, will be known as Camp McDermitt, subject to the approval of the proper authority.

The proper authority did approve and Camp McDermitt later became the more permanent Fort McDermitt, with the second *t*.

The command of the Military Sub-District of Nevada had fallen to Lt. Col. Hooker of the Sixth California Infantry, who was at Fort Churchill. Command in the field went to Major O'Brien of the same California regiment.⁷⁴ Fort Churchill was now totally garrisoned by California Volunteers except for the few men of Company F, Nevada Cavalry, who had been, until recently, the Provost Guard at Virginia City. They had been removed from this detail when the Indian outbreaks were at their height and sent as a stabilizing force to the Walker River area.⁷⁵

In honor of Col. McDermitt, Queen's River Station was renamed Fort McDermitt and a permanent military post established there. A permanent fort was also built at Summit Lake by the Californians to protect the Applegate Trail across the Black Rock Desert.⁷⁶ Plans to set up posts in Paradise Valley and several other places to the east were abandoned.

Where there had once been a dearth of men there was now an abundance. Therefore, the men who had been in the field the longest, the Nevada Cavalry units under Wells and Wolverton, were ordered to Fort Churchill, passing through Unionville and finally arriving at the Fort on August 31, 1865.

Company E, Nevada Cavalry, had the dubious distinction of fighting the last skirmish by Nevada Volunteers in the state on the morning of

September 13, 1865. At daybreak that day Captain Payne and Lt. Littlefield, each with nine men, surrounded an Indian camp in the Quinn River Valley. Attacking the surprised Piutes, who retired well, the soldiers had an easy victory. Estimates of the Indian losses run from thirty-one to fifty.⁷⁷ The Indians were routed and left most of their supplies and equipment to the soldiers. Suddenly, there occurred a single incident that forever removed the doubts of "Big John" Littlefield's courage. A single mounted Indian appeared and rode straight for that officer, brandishing a spear. Littlefield calmly waited until his attacker was at close range and shot him from his horse.⁷⁸

With this, the close of the fighting on the part of the Nevadans, they returned to Fort Churchill and eventual release from the service of the United States. As a direct result of the campaign, Privates Botell, Rafferty, and Dickerson were honorably discharged due to wounds received in Indian battles.⁷⁹ Upon arrival at Fort Churchill the Nevada Volunteers again settled down to a couple of months of garrison duty until they were mustered out. In four months of summer campaigning in some of the most barren country in the world, where Col. McDermit could truthfully report he had traveled sixty miles without seeing a stick of wood, they had quelled the hostile Piutes and brought a lasting peace to Nevada. For never again would Nevada have the bloody Indian uprisings on a scale to compare with 1865.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹*Sacramento Union*, April 1, 1865.
- ²*Ibid.*, April 4, 1865.
- ³*Official Records*, Volume L, Part II, pp. 1177-1179.
- ⁴*Ibid.*, p. 1160.
- ⁵*Ibid.*, p. 1183.
- ⁶*Ibid.*, p. 1187.
- ⁷*Ibid.*, p. 1179.
- ⁸*Sacramento Union*, April 18, 1865.
- ⁹*Ibid.*
- ¹⁰*Official Records*, p. 1181.
- ¹¹*Ibid.*
- ¹²Myron Angel (ed.) *History of Nevada* (Oakland: Thompson and West, 1881), p. 171.
- ¹³*Reese River Reveille*, April 12, 1865.
- ¹⁴*Ibid.*, April 15, 1865.
- ¹⁵Thomas Wilson (Ad. Agency), *Pioneer Nevada*, Volume II (Reno: Harold's Club, 1956), p. 76.
- ¹⁶*Reese River Reveille*, April 28, 1865.
- ¹⁷*Official Records*, p. 409.
- ¹⁸*Ibid.*
- ¹⁹*Ibid.*
- ²⁰*Reese River Reveille*, May 4, 1865.
- ²¹*Ibid.*, May 5, 1865.
- ²²*Ibid.*, May 6, 1865.
- ²³*Ibid.*, May 8, 1865.
- ²⁴*Ibid.*, May 12, 1865.
- ²⁵*Ibid.*
- ²⁶*Ibid.*, June 28, 1865.
- ²⁷*Ibid.*, May 22, 1865.
- ²⁸*Ibid.*
- ²⁹*Ibid.*, June 27, 1865.
- ³⁰Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 75.
- ³¹Angel, *op. cit.*, p. 172

- ³²*Reese River Reveille*, May 29, 1865.
- ³³*Official Records*, p. 411.
- ³⁴*Ibid.*
- ³⁵*Reese River Reveille*, June 28, 1865.
- ³⁶Angel, *loc. cit.*
- ³⁷*Reese River Reveille*, *loc. cit.*
- ³⁸Angel, *loc. cit.*
- ³⁹*Reese River Reveille*, *loc. cit.*
- ⁴⁰Wilson, *loc. cit.*
- ⁴¹Angel, *loc. cit.*
- ⁴²*Official Records*, p. 1245.
- ⁴³*Reese River Reveille*, May 24, 1865.
- ⁴⁴*Ibid.*, May 25, 1865.
- ⁴⁵*Ibid.*
- ⁴⁶*Ibid.*
- ⁴⁷*Ibid.*, May 26, 1865.
- ⁴⁸*Official Records*, pp. 1246–1247.
- ⁴⁹*Ibid.*
- ⁵⁰Wilson, *op. cit.* p. 74.
- ⁵¹*Official Records*, p. 1250.
- ⁵²*Reese River Reveille*, *loc. cit.*
- ⁵³*Official Records*, p. 412.
- ⁵⁴*Reese River Reveille*, May 30, 1865.
- ⁵⁵*Ibid.*, p. 410.
- ⁵⁶*Reese River Reveille*, June 3, 1865.
- ⁵⁷*Official Records*, *loc. cit.*
- ⁵⁸*Reese River Reveille*, May 18, 1865.
- ⁵⁹*Official Records*, pp. 410–411.
- ⁶⁰*Reese River Reveille*, June 28, 1865.
- ⁶¹*Ibid.*, June 7, 1865.
- ⁶²*Official Records*, *loc. cit.*
- ⁶³*Reese River Reveille*, June 28, 1865.
- ⁶⁴*Ibid.*, July 8, 1865.
- ⁶⁵*Ibid.*, July 15, 1865.
- ⁶⁶*Official Records*, pp. 1274–1275.
- ⁶⁷Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 75.
- ⁶⁸*Reese River Reveille*, August 14, 1865.
- ⁶⁹Angel, *op. cit.*, p. 173.
- ⁷⁰*Reese River Reveille*, August 11, 1865.
- ⁷¹*Ibid.*, August 1, 1865.
- ⁷²*Ibid.*, August 11, 1865.
- ⁷³*Ibid.*, August 7, 1865.
- ⁷⁴Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 101.
- ⁷⁵*Reese River Reveille*, August 17, 1865.
- ⁷⁶*Ibid.*, August 19, 1865.
- ⁷⁷Angel, *op. cit.*, p. 174; and Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 76.
- ⁷⁸*Ibid.*
- ⁷⁹John Cradlebaugh, "Annual Report of the Adjutant General of Nevada," *Senate Journal*, 1865, *Second Session* (Carson City: Joseph Church, State Printer, 1866), p. 8.

CHAPTER XI

END OF THE NEVADA VOLUNTEERS

The Nevada Volunteers based at Fort Churchill, Nevada, were officially mustered out of the service of the United States on December 23, 1865,¹ after two and one-half years of duty in Nevada and California.

Recruiting for the Nevada Battalions had been halted in May of that year and the recruits for Company D, Nevada Infantry, absorbed by Companies A and C.² The four companies of Nevada Cavalry at Forts Bridger and Douglas were kept in service until they were finally relieved by the Eighteenth United States Infantry and mustered out in July of 1866 at Fort Douglas. A monument honoring the California and Nevada Volunteers stands today as an enduring tribute to their service, while the Utah Historical Society is currently (1961) attempting to identify the graves of those men who died there in their country's service.

Financially, the Volunteers had been a tremendous liability to Nevada both as a state and as a territory. John Cradlebaugh informed the Nevada Legislature of this in his annual report as Adjutant General of Nevada in January, 1866. His accounts to that date showed the following:³

Recruiting Bounties.....	\$4,530.00
Officers' Pay.....	10,979.19
Enlisted Pay.....	55,272.49
Uncertified Recruiting Bounties.....	420.00
Uncertified Officers' Pay.....	5,895.00
Uncertified Enlisted Pay.....	20,235.50
Total.....	\$97,332.18

In addition to this enormous burden to the new state, General Cradlebaugh reminded the Legislature that there were still eleven officers and three hundred and nine enlisted men on active service. These men, kept in the army until July, cost the State of Nevada an additional \$1,875 a month until discharge.⁴ It is an interesting historical note that the State of Nevada was not reimbursed this cost by the United States until well into the Twentieth Century.

It is also of interest that the Nevada Volunteers, so proudly and loudly acclaimed by the people of the state, were so quickly forgotten with the end of the war. The lordly and loud *Territorial Enterprise* did not even carry the story of the final mustering out of the last of the Nevada soldiers.

The State of Nevada is credited with having enlisted one thousand and eighty men for the defense of the Union.⁵ Of these, only two were killed in action, although Nevada Volunteers, as units, fought in well over a dozen battles and skirmishes. One died accidentally while disease took a substantial toll. A complete list of the members of the Nevada

Battalions can be found in the report of the Adjutant General which was published as a part of the Appendices of the *Senate Journal for 1865*.

Nevada owed many of these men both back pay and promised rewards made at the time of enlistment. The discharged soldiers, however, found it difficult, in many cases, to make the journey to Carson City from the place of discharge to claim their just due. Civil War soldiers were mustered out at the most convenient spot, often a thousand miles from the point where they had originally enlisted. For this reason many men sold their claims against the state for a mere pittance.⁶

The men themselves casually drifted back into civilian life and most of them disappeared from record. A few achieved limited little spots in history. Captain Elias B. Zabriskie returned to the Comstock and exchanged "Captain" for "Lawyer." The *Territorial Enterprise* of July 26, 1866, lists him as the witness to the cause of death in a murder trial.⁷ Captain Payne, Nevada Cavalry, put to good use the knowledge of Northern Nevada he had gleaned while chasing Zelaauwick and became a noted cattle rustler in the area.⁸ Private Ryan returned to the South Pass to find the Carter Lode.

In the main they disappeared, swallowed up on the vast frontier that was now coming to life as America tried to forget the bitter throes of civil strife.

The Nevada Volunteers have disappeared from history, too, being almost entirely omitted from histories of their own state. Their services also are forgotten until someone pauses to wonder how less than eleven hundred men patrolled and protected an area extending from the crest of the Sierra to the Great Plains and from Idaho to the Mojave Desert of California for over two years, some of the most fearsome and rugged terrain in the United States.

In numbers, the Nevada Battalions were but a decimal in the total strength of the United States during the War Between the States. In performance, they did a hard, grueling, and forgotten task that had to be done. In history, they deserve more of a place than has been awarded them.

TABLE VI. Nevada in the Civil War

ENGAGEMENTS	
Skirmishes.....	4
Expeditions.....	7
Scouts.....	1
Affairs.....	4
Total.....	*16
PERSONNEL	
Troops furnished by the State of Nevada.....	1,080
Deaths—	
Killed.....	2
Disease.....	29
Drowned.....	1
Other.....	1
Total.....	33

*Dyer, *op. cit.*, p. 582.

FOOTNOTES

¹Frederick H. Dyer, *A Compendium of the War of the Rebellion* (Des Moines: Dyer Publishing Co., 1908), p. 1300.

²John Cradlebaugh, "Report of the Adjutant General of Nevada," *Senate Journal, 1865, Second Session* (Carson City: Joseph Church, State Printer, 1866), p. 8.

³*Ibid.*

⁴*Official Records*, Series III, Volume IV, p. 1270.

⁵Cradlebaugh, *loc. cit.*

⁶*Territorial Enterprise*, July 26, 1866.

⁷Thomas Wilson (Ad. Agency), *Pioneer Nevada*, Volume II (Reno: Harold's Club, 1956), p. 106.

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