

New Mexico Campaign of the Civil War

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The New Mexico Campaign of the Civil War was an American military operation with a mission of taking over the state of California, which was known as a prominent gold-producing territory at the time. In addition, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo produced the agreement to create New Mexico, which became a United States territory in 1850. The United States Census Report of 1860 indicated that 80,000 men occupied the area within this territory, with most residents occupying regions that were near many major rivers including the Rio Grande River, the Canadian River, and the Pecos River¹. The state of Texas was the 7th state to secede and separated from the Union in March of 1861. Around this same time, Baylor declared that a portion of the territory that was parallel at 34th was Arizona Confederate territory. In that same year, Confederate forces rose up and fired on Fort Sumter on April 12, which led to a declaration of war by President Abraham Lincoln.

Approximately two weeks after this event, Henry Hopkins submitted his resignation to the United States Army. Subsequently, on June 11, 1861, Colonel Edward Richard Sprigg Canby took command of New Mexico's United States Military Department after Henry Hopkins resigned. Furthermore, Union forces abandoned Fort Bliss, which was located near El Paso, in early July of 1861. Following this, Sibley met Jefferson Davis and was instrumental in persuading him to take command of a Confederate invasion on New Mexico Territory². After this, Fort Fillmore was abandoned by Union Major Isaac Lynde on July 25, 1861. Major Lynde subsequently surrendered to the Confederates at San Augustine Pass to John Robert Baylor. Consequently, there was a new star fort at Fort Union on July 27, 1861, which took form and

¹ Earl, Pittman, *New Mexico and the Civil War*. History Press, 2011.

² Jerry D. Thompson. *New Mexico Territory During the Civil War: Wallen and Evans Inspection Reports, 1862–1863*. University of New Mexico Press, 2008.

determinately blocked the Santa Fe Trail from advances from the Confederates. To follow, the United States Territorial Governor, Henry Connelly, issued a proclamation strongly advising New Mexicans to take up arms on September 9, 1861³.

In the latter part of October 1861, Sibley formed a 4-regiment, 3,200-man brigade and trained them, which later marched from San Antonio on October 21, 1861. First, the Texas Mounted Volunteers of the 7th regiment marched north, and then the remaining brigade members followed. The following year in January 1862, Union forces totaled 4,500 militia and men and they showed that they were not tested by the harshness of battle. The following month on February 7, the Texas Mounted Volunteers of the 5th regiment, as well as the Union Army, headed for Fort Craig⁴. Two days later, Canby sent Fort Craig's women north as well. Confederate forces made a strategic move, forming a line of battle to advance toward Fort Craig on February 16, 1862, The Union's Colonel Canby posted a battery of fire power of guns and howitzers on the south-facing walls outside of the fort. Consequently, the Confederates called off their attack and withdrew from the area⁵.

In an attempt to take control of the fort at Valverde and drawing Canby from it, Sibley advanced north on February 19, 1862. The result was Canby's forces being forced back to Fort Craig on February 20, 1862. There, they faced Confederate forces. Consequently, the Battle of Valverde began the following day, in which the Confederacy celebrated a tactical victory. However, the Union retained control of Fort Craig. Two days later, after the Battle of Valverde, Confederate forces left, captured Socorro and entered Albuquerque on March 2, 1862. In

³ Jerry D. Thompson. *New Mexico Territory During the Civil War: Wallen and Evans Inspection Reports, 1862–1863*. University of New Mexico Press, 2008.

⁴ *Colorado Volunteers in the Civil War: The New Mexico campaign in 1862*. The State Historical and Natural History Society, 1906.

⁵ Earl, Pittman, *New Mexico and the Civil War*. History Press, 2011.

response, the Union Army fired on a supply depot and then deserted the area, but was captured by the Confederates.

The war continued, reaching Denver and volunteers in Colorado with reports on the Battle of Valverde. The Union's Garrison from Santa Fe evacuated forces to Fort Union on March 4, 1862. Afterwards, United States Governor Connelly moved territorial capital to the city of Las Vegas, New Mexico, where they rested a few days. On March 11, 1862, Commander John Slough of the Colorado Regiment made it to Fort Union after forcing a march from Denver⁶. Then, the Confederates advanced on Santa Fe on March 13, 1862. Subsequently, on March 20, 1862, Confederate forces retreated from Albuquerque toward the north⁷. Slough's Union forces abandoned Fort Union to march toward Santa Fe on March 22, 1862. Three days later on March 25, 1862, a second group of Confederate forces left Santa Fe and began marching toward Fort Union, arriving at Kozlowski's Ranch the next day, which was located on the east end of Glorieta Pass. A day later, the Battle of Apache Canyon was fought on March 26, 1862, with the Union celebrating a victory. The Union's Major, John Chivington, and 400 men fought the war against the Confederate's, Major Pyron, and his four companies. Union forces then returned to Pigeon's Ranch and the Confederates were forced to set up their camp at Johnson's Ranch. It was not until March 27, 1862 that Confederate forces received reinforcements at Johnson's Ranch, and the Union's reinforcements had reached Kozlowski's Ranch. The Battle of Pigeon's Ranch followed the very next day in which the Confederates celebrated a logistical and tactical victory for the Union. Confederate forces then advanced against Union forces near Pigeon's Ranch. Chivington, with his 400 men, strategically destroyed Confederate supplies⁸.

⁶ *Alberts, Don, Rebels on the Rio Grande: The Civil War Journal of A.B. Peticolas (1993) (Merit Press), ISBN 0-963915-0-3*

⁷ *Alberts, Don, Rebels on the Rio Grande: The Civil War Journal of A.B. Peticolas (1993) (Merit Press), ISBN 0-963915-0-3*

⁸ *Alberts, Don, Rebels on the Rio Grande: The Civil War Journal of A.B. Peticolas (1993) (Merit Press), ISBN 0-963915-0-3*

Furthermore, Santa Fe was abandoned by the Confederacy on April 7 1862 and Union forces, under Canby, followed over the next two days to engage in a trick attack against the Confederacy in Albuquerque. After which, they withdrew to the east to meet Fort Union troupes. On April 12, 1862, the forces then returned to reoccupy Santa Fe. That same day, Albuquerque was abandoned by Confederate forces and on April 14, 1862, forces from Fort Union joined forces from Fort Craig in the San Antonio village and then turned south toward Albuquerque⁹. The Battle of Peralta took place on the next day. Consequently, the 5th Texas Mounted Volunteers, which comprised 500 men, set up camp near Governor Connelly's ranch. In addition, skirmish standoffs took place with some localized firefights, and this resulted in the escape of Confederate forces. Confederate forces then went around the San Meteo Mountains, in late April, to avoid any encounters at Fort Craig. Finally, on May 1 that same year, Confederate forces entered Mesilla. This reduced the Brigade of Sibley from about 3,200 men to only 1,500 men toward the end of the brigade. Subsequently, on April 9, 1865, the Confederacy surrendered at the Appomattox Court House.

⁹ *Colorado Volunteers in the Civil War: The New Mexico campaign in 1862. The State Historical and Natural History Society, 1906.*

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