

# **The California Volunteers and the Civil War: The California Column**

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THE CALIFORNIA COLUMN

Reference: "Record of California Troops in War of the Rebellion." (1890)  
Adjutant General's Office.

Regimental Headquarters:

Fort Yuma, California

April 28, 1862

Companies included in the California Column with commanding officers.\*

First California Cavalry

Commanded by Colonel Edward E. Eyre

Company A.

Mustered in October 31, 1861

Mustered out May 22, 1866

Company D.

Mustered in September 9, 1861

Mustered out October 1864

Company E.

Mustered in August 15, 1861

Mustered out March 6, 1866

Company I.

Mustered in November 12, 1863

Mustered out May 22, 1866

Company L.

Mustered in August 15, 1863

Mustered out June 28, 1866

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\*Commanding officers will be found in history of the regiment.

Companies included in the California Column with commanding officers. (Cont.)

FIRST CALIFORNIA INFANTRY

Commanded by Colonel James H. Carleton

Company A.

Mustered in August 31, 1861  
Mustered out September 9, 1866

Company B.

Mustered in December 4, 1861  
Mustered out September 15, 1866

Company C.

Mustered in August 26, 1861  
Mustered out September 17, 1866

Company D.

Mustered in August 28, 1861  
Mustered out September 15, 1866

Company E.

Mustered in August 26, 1861  
Mustered out September 15, 1866

Company F.

Mustered in August 31, 1861  
Mustered out \_\_\_\_\_\*

Company G.

Mustered in August 31, 1861  
Mustered out September 15, 1866

Company H.

Mustered in August 17, 1861  
Mustered out August 31, 1864

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\*No muster out date available as the company broke up, March 16, 1865, and men transferred to other companies.

~~Companies included in the California Column with commanding officers~~

Companies included in the California Column with commanding officers. (Cont.)

Company I.

Mustered in August 26, 1861  
Mustered out August 31, 1864

Company K.

Mustered in January 10, 1862  
Mustered out November 29, 1864

Fifth California Infantry\*

Commanded by Colonel George W. Bowie

Company A.

Mustered in \_\_\_\_\_  
Mustered out November 30, 1864

Company B.

Mustered in \_\_\_\_\_  
Mustered out December 12, 1864

Company C.

Mustered in \_\_\_\_\_  
Mustered out November 30, 1864

Company D.

Mustered in \_\_\_\_\_  
Mustered out November 27, 1864

Company E.

Mustered in \_\_\_\_\_  
Mustered out November 30, 1864

Company F.

Mustered in \_\_\_\_\_  
Mustered out November 30, 1864

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\*Muster in date of these companies are not on record.

Companies included in the California Column with commanding officers. (Cont.)

Company G.

Mustered in \_\_\_\_\_  
Mustered out November 27, 1864

Company H.

Mustered in \_\_\_\_\_  
Mustered out December 12, 1864

Company I.

Mustered in \_\_\_\_\_  
Mustered out November 30, 1864

Company K.

Mustered in \_\_\_\_\_  
Mustered out November 27, 1864

Activities of the California Column:

The California Column was formed during the month of December 1861, due to the appearance of Confederate troops in New Mexico and Arizona. The success which these troops met with at first, made the Government authorities fear they would establish themselves securely in those territories, and use them as a basis for supplies, and for the purpose of organizing a force for the invasion of California. Because of this existing situation it was decided to reinforce the Union troops in New Mexico with an organization of Militia from the State of California. The Column was organized in accordance with suggestions presented by Brigadier General G. Wright, then in command of United States Army in that vicinity.

This military expedition consisted the First California Cavalry, (five companies) under Colonel Edward E. Eyre; the First California Infantry, (ten companies) under Colonel James H. Carleton; light battery of four brass field pieces, under First Lieutenant John B. Shinn, Third Artillery, United States Army. Afterwards, the Fifth California Infantry under Colonel George W. Bowie, was sent to reinforce this expedition, known as the California Column.

Before the actual forming of the Column, a great movement was undertaken in transporting troops from the regular army of the West coast by the way of steamer to New York. Except for one company (Third Artillery) to be left at Fort Vancouver, and three companies left at the harbor of San Francisco, Major General G. B. McClellan directed all troops embark as far as they could be collected. The different posts throughout Oregon, Washington, California, and Nevada, were to be relieved by volunteers.

Due to the stronghold of the Confederates in this vicinity, it was feared they would gain control of New Mexico. This gave cause for the Union forces to reorganize and strengthen their Forts. Also during this time, small parties were organizing in the southern part of California for the purpose of proceeding to Texas and aiding the Rebels. The success of these small bands of soldiers was limited as all the boats and ferries on the Colorado River were seized and guarded. Fort Yuma was reinforced with two companies, one of Cavalry and the other Infantry, also two large cannons were available. No person was permitted to pass beyond Yuma or cross the Colorado River without special permit. Very rigid measures were used in crushing any attempted Rebellion.

Following is an account of the occupation and activities of the Confederate troops in Mexico and Arizona, which aroused fears of the United States Army and brought about the formation of the California Column:\*

During the month of July 1861, Lieutenant Colonel John R. Baylor, representing the Confederacy and commanding the Second Texas Mounted Rifles, arrived at Fort Bliss, near El Paso, or Franklin, as it was then called, with about three hundred men. On the twenty-third of July he occupied the town of La Messilla, New Mexico, located on the west bank of the Rio Grande, about twenty-five miles north of the Texas line. About six miles below and on the east bank was situated Fort Fillmore, occupied by seven companies of the Seventh U. S. Infantry, one company of the Mounted Rifles, or Third Cavalry, and aggregate of four hundred and ten officers and men; the whole under the command of Major Isaac Lynde, of the Seventh Infantry. The Confederate forces were permitted to pass Fort Fillmore and occupy Messilla without resistance. On the afternoon of July twenty-fifth Major Lynde marched the town with nearly his whole force. He approached as near as he could with safety, and after firing a few shots with his artillery, and a short skirmish with his other troops, retreated to the fort, with a loss of three killed and seven wounded. Two days later he

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\*Record of California men in War of Rebellion (1890) Pages 42-43.

ordered the stores destroyed, and a retreat to Fort Stanton. Lynde and his men left the post at two o'clock in the morning, and after one day's march, and on arrival at a pass through the Organ Mountains, about twenty miles from the fort, surrendered his entire command to an inferior force under Baylor, who had followed in the rear, without a shot having been fired on either side.

The following order was issued in Major Lynde's case.\*

General Orders,  
No. 102.

Headquarters of the Army,  
Washington, D. C.  
November 25, 1861

Major Isaac Lynde, Seventh Infantry, for abandoning his post--Fort Fillmore, New Mexico--on the twenty-seventh of July 1861, and subsequently surrendering his command to an inferior force of insurgents, is, by direction of the President of the United States, dropped from the rolls of the Army from this date.

By command of Major General McCellan.

L. Thomas,  
Adjutant General

The above order was revoke in November 1866, and Major Lynde was placed on the retired list of the Army.

During this period of civil strife the Confereate Government authorized General H. H. Sibley to organize an expedition in Texas for the conquest of New Mexico. One of the regiments under his command was Colonel Baylor's regiment of Texas Mounted Rifles. Arriving in New Mexico about the middle of December, the General assumed command of all Confederate troops in two Territories. After issuing and absurd proclamation to the people he prepared to move up the Rio Grande and capture the rest of the Territory.

In the meantime, General Canby, who commanded the Union forces, strengthened Fort Craig, New Mexico, with earthworks, caused Fort Union to be moved from under a mesa to a better location about a mile away, an earthwork constructed, and the quarters of the officers and men made bomb-proof; he also enlisted several regiments of volunteers and re-organized the militia.

On the sixteenth day of February 1862, General Canby's troops were engaged in battle at Val Verde, about seven miles from Fort

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\*General Order No. 102, War Department; Record of California Men in War of the Rebellion (1890) Page 43.

Craig. After fighting from ten A. M. until dark his forces withdrew as the loss of men was very heavy. This gave the Confederates the opportunity of capturing Albuquerque and Sante Fe, New Mexico. The Union forces were realizing more and more the need of combined forces in order to check these Confederate invasions. It was during the last week of March that Colonel John P. Slough, First Regiment of Colorado Volunteers, with one thousand three hundred forty-two officers and men left Fort Union to effect a junction with General Canby. On February twenty-sixth, an advance of General Canby's encountered the enemy in Apache Canyon about fifteen miles east of Sante Fe. An engagement followed in which both sides claimed victory, although the Confederate loss was greater than the Union. Major Chivington, with his Union forces then fell back to Pigeon's Ranch and was reinforced on about the twelfth of April, by Colonel Slough and the rest of the command. This brought the number of troops in both forces to about the same number each having about twelve or thirteen hundred men. The battle commenced at about eleven o'clock after the enemy's pickets had been encountered. During the thickest of the battle. Major Chivington's command was sent over the mountain to Johnson's Ranch, where the entire baggage and ammunition train of the Confederates was located. The Major's forces came upon the camp which was guarded by some two hundred men, and were unobserved by the enemy. The train consisted of eighty wagons and a six pound gun, all of the which was destroyed without loss of a single Union man. In addition two Confederate officers and fifteen men were captured. The encounter in the canyon lasted until late in the afternoon, when the Confederates retreated toward Sante Fe in a completely demoralized condition. Colonel Slough having accomplished all that he desired, returned to Fort Union. This engagement is known in Union reports as the "Battle of Apache Canyon," and in the south as the "Battle of Glorietta."

General Sibley having lost most of his baggage and supplies, decided, at the news of the approach of the Column, to evacuate this country. He began retreating about the middle of April, leaving the regular traveled routes he took his command through almost inaccessible mountain passes. The men had to cut their way through dense undergrowth, dragging their artillery up and lowering it down the mountain sides, with long ropes. All of this was done without the aid of guides, trail, or roads. (A year later the route was found strewn with military equipment of every description). He finally crossed the line into Texas just as the First California Cavalry under Colonel E. E. Eyre reached the Rio Grande. These men were the advance of the California Column. The remainder of General Sibley's force numbering one thousand five hundred, straggled back into Texas four months later, starving and demoralized.

It was during this critical time when the true work of the Column began. During the early part of April the troops composing the Column were assembled at Yuma, Arizona. The Union forces received information that the Confederates under Captain Hunter were on their way down the Gila River. A reconnoitering party was at once sent out with orders to proceed as far as Tucson. This party reached the Pimos Villages with no other signs of the Confederates than a number of burned haystacks at different stations. The Column upon approaching the Picacho, received word from Indian scouts that a detachment of Confederates was in the immediate front. An advance of Cavalry, under Lieutenant Barrett was sent out at once. The Infantry had traveled several miles when rapid fire was heard in the distance. Arriving at the scene, it was found that Lieutenant Barrett had located the Rebel pickets and charged in among them. It was during this attack that Lieutenant Barrett and two of his men were killed. The Captain then ordered the Cavalry to fall back, and the following day met the advance of the Column near Fort Stanwix station. They proceeded to Pimos Villages where a permanent camp was established, which was named Fort Barrett in honor of the young Lieutenant, who had been killed. A halt was made here to allow the different detachments of the Column to close up as not more than four companies could move together, due to the scarcity of water. On the fifteenth of May the advance detachment of the Column under Colonel West, left Fort Barrett for Tucson. Just five days later this city was occupied by the Union troops, the Confederates abandoning it on the approach of the California Column, returning to the Rio Grande.

After the evacuation of the Rebels from Tucson, the Congress of the United States decided to set aside a portion of New Mexico and organize it into a separate territory to be known as the Arizona Territory. This Territory comprised within its limits all the country eastward from the Colorado River; the limit to extend in that direction to the extreme geographical boundary of the Territory. One of the duties which was the last major activity performed by the Column was the placing of this newly organized Arizona Territory, under martial law. This step was taken when Colonel Carleton issued a proclamation to that effect on June 8, 1862. The Colonel at that time assumed control of the Territory through virtue of his office as Military Commander of the United States forces which were stationed there.

Martial Law was deemed necessary when Arizona was found to be in a chaotic state, having no civil officers to administer the laws and neither was there any security of life or property within its borders. It therefore, became the duty of Colonel Carleton to represent the authority of the United States over the people of Arizona as well as those who composed or were connected with the California Column. The Colonel was declared Military Governor until such time as civil authority was established.

In completing its mission by checking the advance of the Confederate troops, the California Column had forced the Rebels to return to the Rio Grande which prevented them from establishing themselves in the Territories of New Mexico and Texas. This also checked a proposed invasion into California by the Confederates who realized it would be futile to attempt such an exploit when they had the Union forces to deal with. The California Column remained in that Territory until the fall of 1866, leaving the Rio Grande near Las Lunas on October fifteenth. The troops arrived at Drum Barracks, California on December twenty-fourth, embarking at once for San Francisco, where they arrived, December twenty-eighth. The Column was mustered out at the Presidio, San Francisco on the last day of December 1866, except for Company M, First Regiment of Infantry which was mustered out January 4, 1867--the last of the California Volunteers in the War of the Rebellion.