

10-1987

## A Johnny Reb in Sibley's New Mexico Campaign: Reminiscences of Pvt. Henry C. Wright, 1861-1862, Part I

Michael L. Tate

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/ethj>



Part of the [United States History Commons](#)

Tell us how this article helped you.

---

### Recommended Citation

Tate, Michael L. (1987) "A Johnny Reb in Sibley's New Mexico Campaign: Reminiscences of Pvt. Henry C. Wright, 1861-1862, Part I," *East Texas Historical Journal*: Vol. 25: Iss. 2, Article 7.

Available at: <http://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/ethj/vol25/iss2/7>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by SFA ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in East Texas Historical Journal by an authorized administrator of SFA ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact [cdsscholarworks@sfasu.edu](mailto:cdsscholarworks@sfasu.edu).

## A JOHNNY REB IN SIBLEY'S NEW MEXICO CAMPAIGN: REMINISCENCES OF PVT. HENRY C. WRIGHT, 1861-1862

### I

edited by Michael L. Tate

Private Henry Clay Wright was only twenty-one years old when he enlisted in Company F, Fourth Regiment, Texas Mounted Volunteers. Like thousands of young Johnny Rebs who joined other units of the Confederate Army, Wright probably lacked a precise political understanding of the impending war, but he evidenced a strong admiration for the South's "noble crusade" and a youthful enthusiasm to make his military life an adventurous one. Lifted by the emotionalism of Polk County, whose citizens voted 604 to twenty-three for secession, he answered Captain James Crosson's call for volunteers. As with other East Texas citizens, the people of Polk County rallied and allegedly furnished more soldiers than were contained on the county's list of eligible voters. The various units represented a democratic cross section of the South as farm boys, local merchants, and even a company of Alabama-Coushatta Indians joined together to repulse the Northern armies in widely dispersed theaters of conflict.<sup>1</sup> Most of these Texas forces were sent east to fight in such battles as Shiloh, Sharpsburg (Antietam), Gettysburg, and Vicksburg — but for Wright and his compatriots the destination was at the other end of the map, in the arid lands of New Mexico Territory.

Confederate ambitions in the Southwest rested upon the dreams of General Henry Hopkins Sibley, who had served as commander of dragoons in New Mexico prior to the war. Sibley reasoned that the undermanned Union garrisons would offer little resistance and the entire campaign could be conducted with minimal expense to the Richmond government. Yet the rewards of such an operation would be of epic proportions and would provide major advantages in either a brief or protracted war. The gold and silver of California, the Comstock Lode, and the Denver-Pike's Peak area alone could fund the Confederate war effort, while simultaneously removing the riches from President Abraham Lincoln's war chest. California would offer safe ports for war materials transhipped from Europe and Latin America, thus allowing the South to reduce the impact of a Northern naval blockade along its coastline.

Sibley also concluded that large numbers of Southern sympathizers who lived throughout this region would rally to the "Stars and Bars" once a Confederate army arrived to liberate them. In addition to vast new lands being opened to slavery expansion, support from Mormons and even Indians could be solicited for attacks against Union strongholds in the Pacific Northwest and as far east as Kansas and Missouri. Furthermore,

---

*Michael L. Tate teaches at the University of Nebraska, Omaha. Installments II and III will appear in subsequent issues.*

Mexican regional leaders such as Santiago Vidaurri, governor of Nuevo Leon and Coahuila, already had made overtures for an alliance with the Confederacy. By diplomacy — or conquest if necessary — the entire tier of northern Mexican states from Nuevo Leon to Baja California virtually could be annexed, thus insuring a further source of supplies and troops.<sup>2</sup>

Although Sibley naively overstated the inevitability of Mexican, Mormon, and Indian support, he was correct in identifying the psychological boost which this victory would give to the South and the diplomatic benefits that might emanate from the European policymakers in London and Paris. Even if the latter goal failed to be accomplished, the far-flung military depots offered valuable supplies. Estimates placed 6,000 to 8,000 rifles, twenty-five to thirty cannons, and huge stockpiles of ammunition awaiting the Texans' advance — materials badly needed by Confederate commanders fighting in the eastern theatres of the Civil War.<sup>3</sup> In short, the stakes seemed great and the risks few.

Unfortunately a long delay for training the troops and receiving final authorization for the venture left Sibley facing a winter campaign. This factor, coupled with his inability to capture or purchase adequate food stocks, created a precarious situation that Union forces could exploit. Ironically Confederate victories made the army even more vulnerable as it moved further northward along the Rio Grande and further away from its base of supply.

Henry C. Wright's reminiscences of these events, recorded almost fifty years after their occurrence, offer no startling information to reopen an historiographical debate. Yet Wright's perceptive comments on some of the "human dimensions" of the campaign exceed the value of other diaries and memoirs which matter-of-factly reported the daily movements of Sibley's brigade. Most important are his candid remarks about the Texans' mistreatment of New Mexico's Hispanic population. He seemed genuinely sympathetic toward the latter's plight and clearly summarized the tragedy of Sibley's army which was trying to live off the land while simultaneously alienating the population. Yet two previous invasions of New Mexico in the early 1840s by the Republic of Texas had followed the same abusive pattern and there was little reason to expect anything different in 1862.

Wright's discussion of the kindness and aid bestowed upon him by the Union soldiers also parallels accounts found in other theatres of the Civil War. This was especially true in the early stages of the conflict when the ideals of personal honor, humaneness, and the common brotherhood of soldiers still prevailed. His "captivity" in Santa Fe contrasts sharply with the horror of Andersonville Prison and similar detention camps that shocked the post-war public. Despite these noble gestures from his enemies and the thrill of preparation for battle, Wright echoes the almost universal sentiment among battle-hardened veterans that war is still a dreadful enterprise and that human lives are its ultimate cost. In looking back at

the failed New Mexico campaign and toward the march of his regiment into Louisiana for further combat, he captured the changed mood of every man when he remarked that "this time we had no foolish notions that the war was only a frolic and would soon be ended. We now comprehended its seriousness and knew that many of us would never return again to our homes."

The reminiscences which follow are related just as Wright recorded them in the early twentieth century. The relatively small number of spelling errors have been retained, and explanatory footnotes have been utilized to correct the few historical mistakes and provide additional information to the reader. Persons who wish to consult the original manuscript, especially for its brief coverage of the Louisiana campaign which has been omitted here, will find a typescript in the Barker Texas History Center at the University of Texas at Austin.

\* \* \* \* \*

I was born in New York City on the 9th day of June, 1840. Raised on Long Island in the village of Astoria, about five miles from the city. My parents were both English and knew or cared but little for the politics or sectional prejudices of the country, and when, in 1855, we immigrated to Texas, it took but a very little while for my mind to grasp and appreciate the southern ideas of the States' rights and the white man's supremacy.

So when, in '61, the State voted for secession, I was among the first to volunteer for service. In May I enlisted in Capt. J.M. Crosson's company of cavalry for the war. Little did I, or in fact any of the company imagine that it would be of more than a few months duration. Little did we anticipate that four long years of war and bloodshed were before us, and but a very few of that gallant company would survive to the end. We were expected to furnish our own mounts and equipment, but those of us who could not do so were fully supplied by public and private subscriptions.

My family was then living in the little town of Moscow,<sup>5</sup> Polk County, in East Texas. This county, though thinly populated, furnished over a thousand soldiers for the Confederacy — I think 7 companies in all. Some went to Virginia and some to other places, but all fought bravely and over half never returned.

As near as I remember, our company did not leave home until late in the summer. We then met in Livingston<sup>6</sup> and, bidding farewell to home and friends, commenced our march to San Antonio. It was supposed at first that we would be sent to Virginia to reinforce Hood's brigade<sup>7</sup> but the powers that be changed their minds and started us in another direction. We crossed the Trinity River at Swartout<sup>8</sup> and went on to Cold Springs<sup>9</sup> in San Jacinto County. There the ladies entertained us with a bountiful dinner that we long remembered. Leaving there we came to Huntsville,<sup>10</sup> Walker County, where I had lived in a while some two years

before the war. There I met an old friend - John T. Poe.<sup>11</sup> His father's family lived in Polk County and he had two uncles and several cousins in our company, besides many friends of whom I perhaps was the closest. He had enlisted in a company there but he at once withdrew and joined in with us, to my great delight. Leaving Huntsville, we made our way by slow marches to the town of Washington on the Brazos River.<sup>12</sup> There again we were met and welcomed by the patriotic ladies of the place remained over Sunday, and the dinner they spread for us that day makes my mouth water even yet. That little town has vanished from existence — no trace of it remains, and its inhabitants have long passed away. But never can I forget the smiles that gave us welcome, the music and feasting that entertained us, or the tearful faces that bade us farewell. Many things have I forgotten, but those never. We reached San Antonio and camped on a creek a few miles east of the city.<sup>13</sup> Here we remained several months and after being sworn into the service, we drilled every day, and by the way, here I will state that I never was sworn in. A young friend, John Clark<sup>14</sup> by name, had some cousins named (I think) McGee, who lived some ten miles from camp. Getting permission to visit them, he asked me to accompany him, I of course being glad to do so. We had a very pleasant time and stayed several days. On leaving Mrs. McGee said to me that of course John would come to see them on his return, and that I must be sure to do the same, should I survive the campaign, and that I would be always welcome. We returned to camp and found the men had all been sworn in, and in the absence, our names were included. Many interesting incidents might be related of things that occurred during our sojourn in this camp, but time fails me to tell it all.

After a number of false reports that had been circulated, as to our destination, we finally found that we had orders to march across the plains to New Mexico, and attempt to take that part of the country from Uncle Sam. We left San Antonio and started on our way in high spirits. Very few of us knew anything of the hardships we would encounter. Only one battalion, consisting of two companies, could go at a time on account of the scarcity of water and food. Two wagons were allotted to each company to carry the men's luggage, tents, etc. One other was allowed to the officers. Several others were loaded with provisions, but what became of them I never learned, for before we had gone three-fourths of the way, our provisions were exhausted and we had only beef to eat, and a very poor quality of that. Our daily travel was limited to the miles the beeves could be driven, and the distance the water holes were apart. Sometimes we would not travel over 10 miles and then again we would have to go thirty. For some distance the grass and water was good and plentiful, but when we reached the plains beyond Fort Clark<sup>15</sup> it was very different. Only a few miles from where now is the thriving city of Del Rio<sup>16</sup> we camped by the beautiful spring that now is utilized to irrigate all that fine country that lies between the spring and the Rio Grande River. It was a great surprise to us to see a body of water at least thirty feet in diameter rise out

of the ground and run off in a stream 3 feet deep. In fact it is an underground river bursting out of the ground with great force — clear and cold and foaming, one of the most beautiful sights I have ever seen. There were many large fish in the springs, but I do not remember seeing any of them caught. From there we dragged our slow way onward, handicapped by the weakness of the cattle that we depended on for food, and the want of grass for our horses and mules. It was well that we did not try to cross with great numbers, for at most of the watering places we would, in one night, exhaust the supply. As I said, we were poorly supplied with provisions and soon we were reduced to eating beef alone, as we had no bread. But men are tough and we pulled through, most of us laughing at our conditions and telling what we would do when we again reached the land of plenty.<sup>17</sup> Just before Christmas we reached the town of Franklin, standing where El Paso<sup>18</sup> now is. El Paso at that time was a town across the river in Mexican territory. I am told the bed of the river has since changed, placing the town on the east of it, and this was at one time the cause of a dispute between Mexico and the U.S., but it was settled amicably. Today El Paso is one of, if not the largest, city in Texas. At this time, however, it was a small and significant place, populated by Mexicans. We camped a mile or so below it and awaited the coming of the rest of the command, which came through in small bodies as we did.

When the first dispatch reached us, the men who were very tired turned their horses loose close by our herd, which our boys were carefully guarding for fear of Indians. We had done this all the way over, and though we heard the Indians often, yet we lost no stock. But our boys did not care to guard other stock than their own and so would not admit these other horses into the herd, and so they wandered off by themselves. About midnight a great stampede was heard, mingled with loud cries and firing of guns, and in the morning it was found that about 150 horses had been run off by the Indians. There was mounting in hot haste and a swift pursuit was made, but although they followed after them for three days and nights, until men and horses were exhausted, not a one did they recover. Therefore, 150 men were turned at once from cavalry to infantry.<sup>19</sup>

On Christmas day we received letters, and parcels from home, and oh! how welcome they were. We, of course, wrote back long letters to the dear ones behind, for this was probably the last change we would have to do so for many days. After the brigades had all assembled, we started on up the river. This valley of the Rio Grande is a beautiful and fertile part of the country. Much of it was irrigated and planted in wheat, there were also many acres of grass. Of course there was no fruit at that time, but the many thousands of vines told us what to expect at the proper time. The Mexicans were very polite and accomodating to us at this time, while we were in force, but they changed wonderfully before we left the country. It is true that our men were not as considerate of the rights of these people as they should have been. We camped at, or near, Mesilla,<sup>20</sup> some

thirty miles above El Paso, for some time. The wheat fields in the river valley were green and lovely, and were a great temptation to men with hungry horses, so in [defiance] of orders, hundreds of horses were grazed on these fields. The excuse generally was "My horse got loose and I could not find him". A reprimand followed, and perhaps a day or two on extra duty as a punishment, but that did not cover the damage to the poor mexican.<sup>21</sup>

It is true that the river overflowed and destroyed the crops entirely in the spring before we left the country, but the sense of wrong remained, and many a poor fellow fell a victim to revengeful feelings. In many other ways also, the men antagonized the citizens. When the weather turned cold, it was much more comfortable to sleep in a warm adobe house than in a tent (by the way, very few of us had tents). The owners rather objected to being crowded into one room, or being driven out altogether. This with the appropriation of their donkeys and very often their wives and daughters (always however with the womens' consent) worked up a feeling of hostility that made it a sade state of affairs for many of us when, as fugitives, we were leaving the country a few months later. It is said to think that the actions of a few bad or thoughtless men can react to the detriment of the many. At last all arrangements were made and we started on up the river.

After leaving Mesilla, there were no settlements worthy of notice. The country was practically given over to the Indians for many miles, and careful watching was at all times necessary to protect our stock. By this time our beef cattle were so poor they could barely stagger along, and we could hardly eat the meat. But it was that or nothing, and that beat nothing a long ways.

After crossing the river (now quite low) at San Fillipo crossing, we marched on to Fort Thorn.<sup>22</sup> It had been for some time deserted. We found the gates closed but the fort empty. In the plaza were lying the carcasses of several fine fat beeves. They had been skinned and cut up into quarters, but so fine was the climate and pure the air, that they were perfectly cured and would have made as fine chip beef as I have ever seen. But we were afraid to eat them, for it was rumored that the federals had poisoned and left them there as a trap for us. However, I do not believe that was true, but we took no chances and left the meat untouched. Really the air in that country was wonderful. We could draw a quarter of beef for our mess, cut off what we needed, and hang the rest up in a tree, letting it down from day to day to cut off a portion and it would be sweet and good until it was all gone. We found, also, that wounds and bruises healed there very rapidly, which was a great blessing to us.

The weather was very cold and some of the men were unsufficiently provided with clothes and blankets and suffered very much. As for myself, J.T. Poe and I chummed together and each of us had two heavy blankets so, though we had no tent, we were warm at night. I remember one time

I waked up in the morning feeling too warm, but pushing the cover off my face, found 3 or 4 inches of snow had fallen in the night, and this accounted for the heavy warm covering.

I have forgotten distances, and have no accurate map to locate the places, but somewhere about a hundred miles farther up, we came to Fort Craig,<sup>23</sup> and here we first encountered the federals. Fort Craig was almost on the river banks, while the mountains approached it so closely that it commands all the roads in the valley. As we drove near, the enemy came out in strong force to attack us. This was exactly what we desired, but after making quite a display and firing a few rounds of cannon balls, they retired back behind their walls and waited for our next movement. Holding a council of war, our officers quickly decided that the fort was guarded by a force at least three times our number, and was too strong for us to attack. So they concluded that if we could pass it and cut off their supplies from beyond, they must either evacuate or surrender. Where they expected our supplies to come from, I never learned, as the road was blocked on this side the river, it was necessary to find another, so there we camped just out of reach of the guns at the fort for two or three days, sending out scouts to find a way to get past. Here an incident occurred worthy of note. A young man who had been riding all day in one of these scouting parties, approached Mr. Poe who he knew was a watchmaker and jeweler by trade and said "Poe I found something today, can you tell me what it is?" Here he produced a lump of ore about the size of a large marble, which Mr. Poe examined and found to be a nugget of pure gold. He said he found it in a gully on the days march, but utterly refused to disclose anything else about it, only saying that there was plenty more where he found this. He declared that as soon as the war was over, he would come back and investigate. We never heard from him again, and I expect he was either killed or died, for no developments to my knowledge have ever been made in that part of the country. John and I in after years often thought of trying to find the place, but it would have been like looking for a needle in a haystack, and neither of us had the time or means for such a search.

Finally it was concluded to cross the river and pull through the sand hills that lay between the river and the mountains on that side. It was a terrible task and the teams soon became exhausted, and by the time we were opposite the fort, though miles away, we were obliged to stop and camp for the night. About midnight the mules, frantic for want of water, broke for the river and in spite of all the guards could do, about 150 of them got away and were captured by the Yanks.<sup>24</sup> The next morning we were in a sorry plight, about half our wagons had to be left, so we burned them with all the stores that could not be put in the others. We aimed to stroke the river at a point about seven miles above the fort. At last we came in sight of it, only to find it was in possession of an overwhelming force of the enemy. We found out afterwards that they numbered nearly



seven thousand. There were two companies of Pikes Peak men, as brave soldiers as we ever met, 1200 U.S. regulars, and about 5000 Mexicans who had enlisted in the army.<sup>25</sup> To meet these, we did not have over 1200 effective men, but they were desperate. Furious with rage at the losses we had met with, and with horses and men both almost dying of thirst, we asked nothing but a chance to meet the foe. Our General Sibley<sup>26</sup> had before this proved himself incompetent, and now he shirked his duty and gave the command to the Colonels — Riley<sup>27</sup> and Green.<sup>28</sup> It was here that Col. Tom Green, who afterwards became so famous, distinguished himself and began his career.

We left our horses back with the camp, a mile away. Poor brutes, everything had to be securely fastened to keep them from stampeding to the river. I do not remember what artillery we had, but I know it was very little and not at all effective. The federals, on the contrary, had a fine battery of four twelve-pounders, but they made one grave mistake that cost them dearly. Instead of keeping their guns on the other side of the river, they were so confident of victory that they crossed everything over to our side.<sup>29</sup> We marched down and, in spite of their shot and shell, took position in a dry ditch about one-half mile from the river bank. Repeatedly they charged on us, but only to be driven back with great loss. At last Col. Green gave the signal command. "Charge, the whole line, Charge!" This was what we had been longing for. With shouts and yells we dashed forward. An account which I afterwards saw in a Yankee paper said that we were ten thousand strong, and that though their cannon loaded with grape swept us down by the hundred, yet new men took the places of the fallen, and still came on. The truth was that there were not many over a thousand men in that charge, and they, though new to battle, were old in strategy. Watching the flash from the guns, each man threw himself on the ground and as the discharge passed over, rose and pushed forward again. No wonder they thought we fell in hundreds. At the same time we were firing with deadly accuracy, and the enemy fell in great numbers. Some of our best shots aimed only at the men supporting the cannon and it was here that the brave Pikes Peak men met their fate. Hardly a man of those two brave companies but fell before the battle was over. The regular troops also fought bravely, but volleys of musketry do not count much when opposed to men accustomed to taking dead aim at individual marks. The Mexican troops were soon panic stricken and fled. They almost choked up the ford of the river and we were not able to follow them.<sup>30</sup> Had we been in condition to do so, we could easily have captured the whole army and have taken the fort. We were told afterwards that the road was strewn with arms and baggage by the fleeing troops, and that for two days after the battle, the fort would have surrendered had we demanded it, but we had our hands full, over three hundred dead and wounded, and a large part of our outfit destroyed. True, we had won a great victory and now had no obstruction to our onward march.<sup>31</sup> Also, we now had in our possession the famous Val Verde Battery that was destined to prove

a formidable weapon against its former owners for the rest of the war.

A number of my company was killed or wounded during the battle, Mr. Poe's uncle Dave McCormick, our First Lieutenant,<sup>32</sup> was killed and one of his cousins wounded, but John and myself escaped unhurt. Before the battle I felt very uneasy, and after it was over, shivered with dread as I thought of the many narrow escapes I had. But during the fighting I was as carefree as though I was in a frolic and, filled with excitement, thought of nothing but to shoot straight and get to the river. When we captured the guns and turned them upon the fleeing men, it was all to me like a game, and not until all was over did I realize what a terrible thing a battle was. We camped near the battle ground for a week or so and then started on our way, but a great change was first made. So many of our horses had died or been lost and the rest, from want of sufficient food, were in such bad condition that it was determined to dismount one regiment and turn the best of their horses over to the others. Our officers glibly assured us that if we would consent to this measure that as soon as we returned to Texas we would be remounted at the expense of the government, and as our horses were likely to die anyhow, it would be a wise thing for us to get rid of them now. All this sounded very nice, but I noticed that Col. Green's men did not give up their horses, neither did they die but recruited from the best of ours they road through the campaign and back to Texas, while we footed it all the way and had to remount ourselves again at home.

**(Continued in Next Issue)**

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>*Historical Polk County, Texas: Companies and Soldiers Organized in and Enrolled from Said County in Confederate States Army and Navy, 1861-1865* (Livingston, Texas, 1901), pp. 6, 43, 46, 50-51. Stephen B. Oates, "Recruiting Confederate Cavalry in Texas," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, LXIV (April, 1961), pp. 463-477. Howard N. Martin, "Texas Redskins in Confederate Gray," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, LXX (April, 1967), pp. 586-592.

<sup>2</sup>Trevanion T. Teele, "Sibley's New Mexico Campaign — Its Objects and the Causes of Its Failure," in Robert U. Johnson and Clarence C. Buel, eds., *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, II (New York, 1887), p. 700. W.H. Watford, "Confederate Western Ambitions," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, XLIV (October, 1940), pp. 161-187. Jason H. Silverman, "Confederate Ambitions for the Southwest: A New Perspective," *Red River Valley Historical Review*, IV (Winter, 1979), pp. 62-71.

<sup>3</sup>Latham Anderson, "Canby's Services in the New Mexico Campaign," *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, II, p. 698.

<sup>4</sup>Captain James Murray Crosson was thirty-seven years old when he assumed command of Company "F" of the Fourth Regiment, Texas Mounted Volunteers. Raised in South Carolina and trained as a lawyer, he served in the South Carolina legislature and in the mid-1850s was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. In 1857 he moved to Texas with his wife and three children, and during the following year bought part interest in *The Rising Sun*, Polk County's first newspaper. Crosson simultaneously maintained a law practice and was appointed as Chief Justice of the county. As a man of property and esteem, he attracted sufficient recruits on September 8, 1861, when he organized the "Lone Star

Rangers" at Winn Bridge, halfway between Moscow and Livingston. He served the regiment throughout the New Mexico campaign and the subsequent Louisiana battles at Mansfield and Pleasant Hill for which he was promoted to major. His postwar opposition to Reconstruction policies cost him the job of district attorney, but Crosson resumed a successful legal practice until his retirement in 1901. Martin H. Hall, *The Confederate Army of New Mexico* (Austin, 1978), pp. 93-94. *Historical Polk County*, pp. 27-28.

<sup>5</sup>Moscow was only nine years old when Wright's parents settled there in 1855. Originally called Greenville, in honor of David Griggs Green who had built a house and blacksmith shop nearby, the small community grew up around farming and lumbering interests, as well as serving as a trade center on a main road between the Sabine River and the Trinity River. It was named either for the city in Russia or a small town in Green's native state of Tennessee. Walter Prescott Webb and H. Bailey Carroll, eds., *The Handbook of Texas*, (2 vols; Austin, 1952), II, p. 241.

<sup>6</sup>Located midway between Houston and Nacogdoches, Livingston became an early commercial center and in 1846 was made county seat of Polk County. Named by early settler Moses L. Choate for a town near his former home in Alabama, Livingston maintained dominance over the other villages of the county and even survived a disastrous fire in 1902 to rebuild its entire business district. *Handbook of Texas*, II, p. 68.

<sup>7</sup>Originally known as the Texas Brigade, this organization mustered during 1861 under Brigadier General Louis T. Wigfall, Colonel John Bell Hood, and Colonel James J. Archer. Wigfall's resignation in February 1862 resulted in Hood's promotion to brigadier general and to overall commander. Playing a prominent role throughout the war as a component of Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia in James Longstreet's Second Corps, the Brigade participated in battles from Second Manassas (Bull Run) to Appomattox. By war's end only 557 men remained alive of the 4,480 who had served in the Texas Brigade. General Hood had been relieved of command in January 1865 following his defeat at Nashville, Tennessee. *Handbook of Texas*, I, pp. 832-833. Mrs. A. V. Winkler, "Hood's Texas Brigade," in *A Comprehensive History of Texas, 1685 to 1897*, edited by Dudley G. Wooten, (Dallas, 1898), pp. 651-681.

<sup>8</sup>Swartwout had been settled by whites in 1835 on the earlier site of an Alabama-Coushatta Indian village. Among the early real estate promoters of the townsite was Sam Houston. By the time of the Civil War it contained a warehouse, hotel, school, church and several stores. A decline in boat traffic along the Trinity River caused Swartwout to decline during the 1870s and 1880s. Only a stone marker now designates the site. *Handbook of Texas*, II, p. 694.

<sup>9</sup>Originally called Coonskin and later Fireman's Hill, this community changed its name to Cold Spring in 1850 and combined the words into Coldspring in 1894. *Handbook of Texas*, I, p. 371.

<sup>10</sup>Founded in 1836 by Indian traders Pleasant and Ephraim Gray, who named it after their former Alabama home, Huntsville prospered throughout the pre-Civil War era. In addition to a lively commercial district, it accommodated numerous churches, a succession of newspapers, the state penitentiary, and the forerunner of today's Austin College. Among its most illustrious citizens was Governor Sam Houston, twice president of the Republic of Texas, who sided with the Union during the secession crisis and was thus driven from office. *Handbook of Texas*, I, p. 867.

<sup>11</sup>John T. Poe was twenty-five years old when he was made Fourth Corporal in Company F of the Fourth Regiment, Texas Mounted Volunteers. Hall, *Confederate Army of New Mexico*, p. 95.

<sup>12</sup>Washington-on-the-Brazos seemed destined for lasting importance when in 1836 the General Council of the provisional government met there to draft the Declaration of Independence against Mexico. Six years later it became the capital of the Republic of Texas, only to lose the prize to Austin in 1845. Steamer trade along the Brazos River brought enough prosperity to the town that by the eve of the Civil War its population numbered approx-

imately 4,000. By 1885 the population had declined to only 200 due to a failure to grant a bonus to the Houston and Texas Central Railroad which bypassed the town as a result. *Handbook of Texas*, II, pp. 865-866.

<sup>13</sup>This training camp, six miles east of San Antonio on Salado Creek, was named Camp Sibley in honor of the commanding officer of the upcoming campaign — Brigadier General Henry Hopkins Sibley. Hall, *Confederate Army of New Mexico*, p. 15.

<sup>14</sup>John W. Clark was twenty years old when he enrolled as a private in Company F of the Fourth Regiment, Texas Mounted Volunteers. Hall, *Confederate Army of New Mexico*, p. 95.

<sup>15</sup>Established in June 1852 at the present town of Bracketville, this post remained a temporary installation for five years until its importance as a protector of the San Antonio-El Paso Road was recognized and permanent buildings were authorized. Abandoned to the Confederacy on March 19, 1861, it remained virtually uninhabited during the Civil War except as a temporary border patrolling station for rangers. Regarrisoned by the United States Army in December 1866, it remained active until 1946. Robert W. Frazer, *Forts of the West* (Norman, 1972), p. 146.

<sup>16</sup>Originally settled during the late Spanish colonial period and named San Felipe del Rio, this small trading village offered a commercial connection between Texas and Coahuila, Mexico. The huge San Felipe Springs, which Wright mentions with great enthusiasm, served the surrounding farms through a series of canals. By 1890 the population had risen to approximately 2,000 people due to the town's increased importance on the Southern Pacific Railroad. In 1885 it was placed within the newly organized Val Verde County, named for the New Mexico battle to which Wright and his friends were now marching. *Handbook of Texas*, I, pp. 485-486, and II, p. 550.

<sup>17</sup>Somewhat surprisingly, Wright devotes little attention to the difficult desert crossing between Del Rio and El Paso. Had the regiments attempted to cross this area of West Texas as a unified command, they doubtless would have encountered even greater problems with water, inadequate food, and slowness of wagon movement. For a daily account of this difficult march through Forts Lancaster, Stockton, David, and Quitman written by a lieutenant in Company G, Fourth Regiment, Texas Mounted Volunteers, see Oscar Haas, trans., "The Diary of Julius Giesecke, 1861-1862," *Texas Military History*, III (winter, 1963), pp. 230-232. A more detailed account by a twenty-one year old private in Company I, Fifth Regiment, Texas Mounted Volunteers, appears in Walter A. Faulkner, contrib., "With Sibley in New Mexico; the Journal of William Henry Smith," *West Texas Historical Association Yearbook*, XXVII (October, 1951), pp. 117-124.

<sup>18</sup>Although the Ciudad Juarez-El Paso area had been settled by the Spaniards in the seventeenth century, Anglos did not arrive until the Mexican War. Franklin Coons bought part of a Mexican ranch in what is now downtown El Paso and gave his name to the initial village on the north side of the Rio Grande — Franklin. The establishment of Fort Bliss and increase in overland travelers bound for the California gold fields helped the town grow during the 1850s, but most of the population remained on the Mexican side of the river. Wright's comment that the border dispute had been "settled amicably" at the time he was writing these memoirs proved premature. The Chamizal dispute was not ended until 1963 when the congresses of Mexico and the United States signed a formal agreement returning the small section of land to the former. C.L. Sonnichsen, *Pass of the North: Four Centuries on the Rio Grande* (El Paso, 1968), pp. 100-135. Leon Metz, *Fort Bliss: An Illustrated History* (El Paso, 1981), pp. 16-33.

<sup>19</sup>This attack was probably carried out by Apaches who frequently raided the El Paso area during this period. Most likely participants were Mimbreno or Mogollon Apaches from the Mogollon Mountains of southwestern New Mexico, or Mescalero Apaches from their agency at Fort Stanton, New Mexico. C.L. Sonnichsen, *The Mescalero Apaches* (Norman, 1958), pp. 82-125.

<sup>20</sup>Although Mesilla had a larger Hispanic than Anglo population, the latter group clearly dominated the scene. A strong pro-Southern sentiment emanated from these Anglos who

used their newspaper, the *Mesilla Times*, to promote secession and Confederate conquest of New Mexico. So strong was this sentiment that John R. Baylor made the town his capital of the Confederate Territory of Arizona. After the routing of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad to nearby Las Cruces in 1881, Mesilla gradually declined. T.M. Pearce, *New Mexico Place Names: A Geographical Dictionary* (Albuquerque, 1965), p. 100. Martin H. Hall, *Sibley's New Mexico Campaign* (Austin, 1960), pp. 13-14.

<sup>21</sup>Wright neglects to mention that five months prior to his arrival at Mesilla, Confederate troops under Lt. Col. John R. Baylor had defeated Major Isaac Lynde, who offered only minimal resistance with his 380 Union troops. Following the minor conflict, Lynde decided to abandon nearby Fort Fillmore and attempt to lead his men 140 miles to the northeast where Fort Stanton offered temporary safety. Pursued by the Confederates, he elected to surrender the entire command near San Augustine Springs in late July 1861. For this action he was court martialed a year later, but subsequently reinstated to his former rank by President Andrew Johnson on the condition that he then retire. A.F.H. Armstrong, "The Case of Major Isaac Lynde," *New Mexico Historical Review*, XXXVI (January, 1961), pp. 1-35. For a summary of these events written by one of Lynde's officers and severest critics, see Major James Cooper McKee, *Narrative of the Surrender of a Command of U.S. Forces at Fort Fillmore, New Mexico. In July, A.D. 1861* (Houston, 1960).

<sup>22</sup>Established on Christmas Eve of 1853, Fort Thorn guarded the El Paso-Santa Fe road along the west bank of the Rio Grande, and protected California-bound travelers who turned west from the fort toward southern Arizona. The various garrisons suffered from ill health at the post because it was located on the edge of an extensive marsh. In March 1859 it was abandoned and most of the movable property was transported to Fort Fillmore. Confederate troops briefly occupied it until forced to retreat in the summer of 1862. Fort Thorn was never again permanently garrisoned because the newly constructed Fort Selden made it obsolete. Its site is located at the present town of Hatch. Frazer, *Fort of the West*, pp. 104-105.

<sup>23</sup>Fort Craig, established in 1854 as a protection against Apache raiders on the "Rio Grande Road," represented a formidable obstacle to the 2,600 advancing Confederates. Approximately 3,810 men were positioned there, of which 1,200 were U.S. Army regulars and the rest militia. Wright fails to mention that during the inconclusive fight of February 21, 1862, Captain James "Paddy" Graydon lashed a dozen 24-pound howitzer shells to two mules, cut the fuses, and led the mules toward the Confederate camp where the explosives would be detonated. Unfortunately the mules followed Graydon back toward the Union lines and caused considerable anxiety. Though no Union troops were hurt by the explosion, they had lost the element of surprise, along with two mules of questionable loyalty. George H. Pettis, "The Confederate Invasion of New Mexico and Arizona," *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, II, pp. 103-106.

<sup>24</sup>The crossing of the Confederate army on February 19, 1862 to the east bank of the icy Rio Grande went well. The stampede of the mules that night was caused by careless herding and the "running blind" panic of the thirst-maddened mules which had not received adequate water since Mesilla. Not only did the Union forces capture most of these, but also the Confederates were forced to abandon thirty wagons filled with supplies because they had no draft animals to pull them. Hall, *Confederate Army of New Mexico*, p. 27.

<sup>25</sup>The two companies of Pike's Peak men were Colorado Volunteers led by Captain Theodore H. Dodd. Wright's estimate of 5,000 militia is far too high and certainly did not exceed 1,000 for the Battle of Valverde. These Mexican American troops were somewhat made scapegoats for the failure of Union military efforts following the Valverde fight. Jerry Don Thompson, "Mexican Americans in the Civil War: The Battle of Valverde," *Texana*, X (1972), pp. 1-19. For appraisals by two Union officers who blamed the Hispanic-dominated New Mexico militia for failure at Valverde, see Anderson, "Canby's Services in the New Mexican Campaign," and A.W. Evans, "Canby at Valverde," both in *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, II, pp. 697-700.

<sup>26</sup>Born at Natchitoches, Louisiana in 1816, Henry Hopkins Sibley was raised by his

celebrated grandfather, John Sibley, important American trader and diplomat in the early history of the disputed Texas-Louisiana borderlands. Henry Hopkins Sibley was graduated from the United States Military Academy at West Point in 1838 and saw action in the Seminole Wars, Mexican War, and Utah expeditions of 1857-1860. Having served at several New Mexico posts prior to the Civil War, he seemed a natural choice to lead the invasion, but his performance in the campaign would be questioned for years to come. Between 1867 and 1874 Sibley served as a general of artillery in the Egyptian army, but ill health and poverty plagued his final years. He died at Fredericksburg, Virginia, on August 23, 1886. *Handbook of Texas*, II, p. 608; and Hall, *Confederate Army of New Mexico*, pp. 43-44.

<sup>27</sup>Born in Ohio and raised in Kentucky, James Reily settled in Nacogdoches at the end of the Texas Revolution. Trained as a lawyer and married to a niece of Henry Clay, he moved quickly into the powerful circles of Texas' leadership. During the era of the Texas Republic, he directed the sale of a million dollars worth of government bonds for President Mirabeau B. Lamar and in 1841 and was appointed minister to the United States by President Sam Houston. Reily commanded a Texas regiment during the Mexican War and in 1856 briefly served as U.S. consul to Russia. In August 1861 he was commissioned as colonel of the Fourth Regiment, Texas Mounted Volunteers, but his service in the New Mexico campaign was interrupted when he was sent on a diplomatic mission to the Mexican states of Chihuahua and Sonora. During his absence Lt. Col. William R. "Dirty Shirt" Scurry commanded the regiment. Reily returned to his unit after the failure of the Mexican mission and was killed on April 14, 1863, at the Battle of Franklin in Louisiana. Wright is not only incorrect in his spelling of Reily's name, but also in connecting him with the Battle of Valverde. *Handbook of Texas*, II, p. 459; and Hall, *Confederate Army of New Mexico*, pp. 51-54.

<sup>28</sup>Thomas "Tom" Green emerged as one of Texas' most famous heroes during the mid-nineteenth century. Born in Virginia in 1814, Green came to Texas at the beginning of the Revolution and participated in the Battle of San Jacinto where he helped man the artillery. Trained as a lawyer and previously having been admitted to the Tennessee bar, he followed the legal profession into Texas politics as a representative in the Fourth Congress of the Texas Republic and in 1941 as clerk of the Texas Supreme Court. While holding these positions, Green joined in several major expeditions against Indians and served as a captain of Texas volunteers in the Mexican War. Following the New Mexico campaign where he gained considerable fame, Green was promoted to brigadier general and led Confederate troops in the recapture of Galveston and at the Battles of Mansfield and Pleasant Hill in Louisiana. He was killed on April 12, 1864 at the Battle of Blair's Landing in Louisiana. *Handbook of Texas*, I, Pp. 727-728. Odie Faulk, *General Tom Green, Fightin' Texan* (Waco, 1963), pp. 36-64.

<sup>29</sup>This crucial jockeying for position along the banks of the Rio Grande was won by the daring of Union cavalry commander Colonel Benjamin S. Roberts, who secured the position with a small force prior to the arrival of Colonel Edward R.S. Canby's main complement of troops to which Wright refers. This deprived the Confederates of control of both sides of the Rio Grande and allowed Canby's men to move their artillery battery to the east side of the river where it was subsequently captured by the Confederates, renamed the "Val Verde Battery," and utilized by them in the Louisiana campaign of 1863-1864. Alwyn Barr, ed., *Charles Porter's Account of the Confederate Attempt to Seize Arizona and New Mexico* (Austin, 1964), pp. 13-15.

<sup>30</sup>Wright is describing the Battle of Valverde (February 21, 1862) which marked the Confederates' greatest victory in the New Mexico campaign. Official Union losses were listed at sixty-eight killed, 160 wounded and thirty-five missing; Confederate casualties included thirty-six killed, 150 wounded, and one missing — roughly eight percent of Sibley's force. Wright fails to mention that Colonel Tom Green commanded the troops that day because General Sibley was indisposed due to sickness, or drunkenness according to some detractors. Eyewitness descriptions of the conflict are given in Thomas Benton Collins, "A Texan's Account of the Battle of Valverde," *Panhandle-Plains Historical Review*, XXXVII (1964), pp. 33-35; Noel, *A Campaign from Santa Fe to the Mississippi*, pp. 28-31; *Official Records*

of the War of the Rebellion, Series I, Vol. IX (Washington, D.C.), pp. 486-525; James Bell, "The Battle of Val Verde," edited by M.L. Crimmins, *New Mexico Historical Review*, VII (1932), pp. 348-352; William C. Whitford, *Colorado Volunteers in the Civil War: The New Mexico Campaign in 1862* (Denver, 1906), pp. 58-71; and David B. Gracy, II, ed., "New Mexico Campaign Letters of Frank Starr, 1861-1862," *Texas Military History*, IV (Fall, 1964), pp. 171-176.

<sup>31</sup>Confederate failure to take Fort Craig created a problem which soon played a critical role in the overall campaign. The victorious rebels were running low on supplies which partially could have been alleviated if they had captured the commissary stores at the fort. Sibley decided instead to try to live off of the land and move quickly enough to capture the Union quartermaster depots at Albuquerque and Santa Fe. Both goals were only partially met because the predominantly Hispanic population proved uncooperative to the Texans, and the commissary stores were partly destroyed by the retreating Union army and by the drunken celebrants among the victorious Confederates. Ray C. Colton, *The Civil War in the Western Territories: Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah* (Norman, 1959), pp. 36-40.

<sup>32</sup>First Lieutenant David R. McCormick died four days after the battle from wounds suffered. He was forty-one years old and had been recruited in Polk County, Texas. Hall, *Confederate Army of New Mexico*, p. 94.