Desert Empire

The 1862 New Mexico Campaign

by Patrick Kelly-Fischer and Phillip S. Greenwalt

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Chris Mackowski, series editor
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Foreword

BY NEIL P. CHATELAIN

When the United States Civil War began, the American Southwest was a vastly different place as compared to lands east of the Mississippi River. The New Mexico Territory was sparsely settled when weighed against the industrializing cities of New England, and the farmlands of the South and Midwest. Only a few small towns sat between the Rio Grande and Colorado River, all connected through old colonial trails repurposed as federal mail routes. Arable land and water were scarce, though there were rich mineral deposits lacing both mountains and riverbeds, that made land ownership desirable. Most of the territory, however, was a vast stretch of desert cut up by mountains.

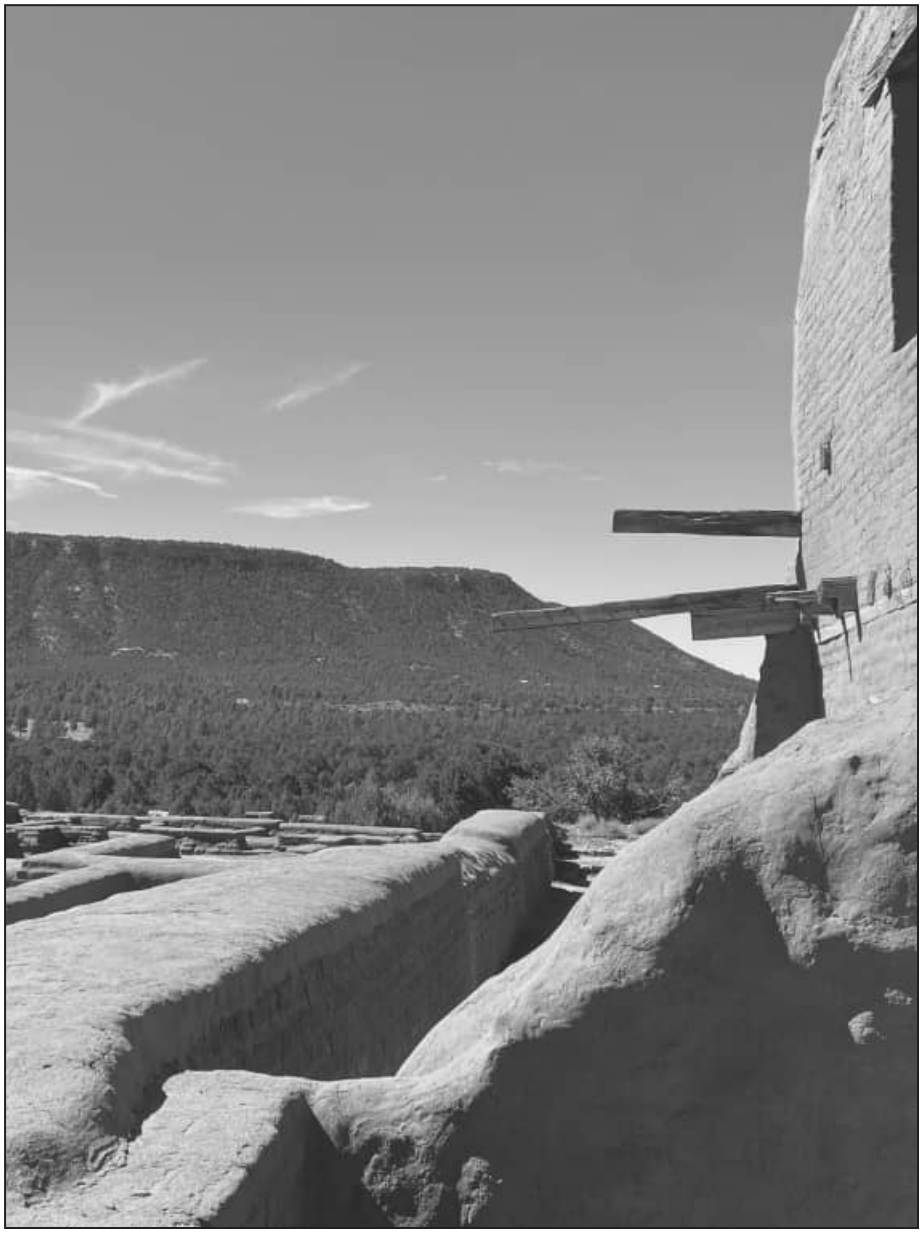
Many of the laws and government structures of New Mexico were based on eastern influences, but the people in this vast territory barely resembled those east of the Mississippi. The 1860 population of the New Mexico Territory was smaller than that of Chicago, all spread out over a land area the size

Cast in 1861, this 12-pounder artillery piece stands where the second version of Fort Union was constructed in 1862, in anticipation of the Confederate invasion. (pkf)

of Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, and Michigan combined. The territory was one of the most diverse across the continent. It included Anglo people, who moved west after New Mexico joined the United States, but unlike states further east, only included a handful of African Americans, both free and enslaved. Hispano people, most long-settled there while the area was under both Spanish and Mexican rule, also spanned the territory, as did hosts of Indigenous tribes whose ancestors had lived there for millennia.

Internal territorial politics created divisions across New Mexico. The lands had been under control of the United States for less than a generation, and in the case of the southern part of the territory, only acquired in the Gadsden Purchase, for less than a decade. Mexican cultural, language, and spiritual dominance pervaded over most settled areas, while most travel routes cut through lands claimed by Indigenous peoples. Most territorial leadership in the 1850s was appointed by pro-southern Democrats. African enslavement was legalized in the territory, but extremely rare, though the Mexican system of debt peonage where debtors could be tied to people for work, remained widespread. Military presence remained high in the years before the Civil War, as soldiers attempted to keep the peace between civilians, garrisoned crossroads, manned isolated fortifications, and combatted Indigenous tribes. Across New Mexico, conflicting cultures was the norm.

During the secession crisis, the southern half of New Mexico, seeking status within the United States as a separate territory for the last several years, formed their own independent territory of Arizona, and seceded with the intention of joining the Confederacy. It was no surprise then that when Henry Hopkins Sibley met with Jefferson Davis to propose a plan to invade and seize New Mexico, it was immediately approved. The vastness of the far west's mineral wealth was on both Sibley's and Davis's minds, as the mines across New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, and California seemed ripe for the taking. Seizing them could lend credence to the Confederacy's economy, and combined with the growth of cotton, through enslaved labor, make the Confederacy a global power. Furthermore, a strike into New Mexico could pave



Glorieta Mesa, viewed from the remains of a Spanish colonial church at the Pecos Pueblo. (pkf)

the way for a conquest of lower California, which would make the Confederacy a two-ocean nation, complicating Abraham Lincoln's blockade. Risks were few for Confederate leadership undertaking this enterprise, but rewards seemed limitless.

Though New Mexico seemed far removed from the Confederacy's core, a small Rebel army proceeded into the territory to seize land and riches. A motley

Today we're used to a north-south border dividing Arizona and New Mexico, but during the Civil War, the Confederacy claimed the bottom third of those two modern-day states as Arizona. (loc)

collection of U.S. regulars and New Mexico volunteers held the line, while reinforcements were rushed from across the West. Battles were fought near the Rio Grande, with the territorial capital of Santa Fe at stake, all while skirmishing and maneuvering continued west to the California border, as loyal troops from Colorado and California braved mountains, snow, and supply shortfalls to reach the scene. Amidst this, the two sides vied for support from the local Hispano population, and for favor from Mexican leaders across the border, who themselves were descending into their own internal conflict, all while Indigenous groups raided military camps, and fought both sides in attempts to maintain control over their ancestral homelands.

The military forces involved in the 1862 New Mexico Campaign were small, just a few thousand soldiers on each side. If moved to battles further east, the armies in New Mexico would have encompassed mere brigades. The small numbers of troops were because of geography, and scarcity of resources, but nowhere else in the Civil War did so few combatants vie for control over such a vast landscape.

Stakes could not have been higher. For Sibley's Confederates, their advance was to solidify control over Arizona, conquer New Mexico, and push the war to the gold mines of Colorado and California. A successful drive could see the Confederate flag flying on the Pacific coastline. For the United States,

continental hegemony and territorial expansion could be stymied by battlefield defeats. While massive armies and fleets fought on Virginia's Peninsula, along the Tennessee River at Shiloh, and at New Orleans to see if the Confederacy would gain its independence, the forces in New Mexico battled to determine which side would control the lands, peoples, and mineral wealth of the American West. The fate of the continent was at stake with each captured fort, mountain pass, and small town in New Mexico proving far more valuable than the last.

The 1862 New Mexico Campaign may seem like an overlooked part of the overall conflict, but it has captivated the minds of people then and now. Many Southerners believed Sibley's strike was the fulfillment of long-held ambitions to expand influence west to the Pacific. In the last thirty years, numerous works have been published, better unpacking the campaign's course, the influence of participants from all backgrounds, and the overall ramifications on the course of the war and the continent. It has also penetrated popular culture, with the 1966 film *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*, and the video games *Call of Juarez*, *Gun*, and *Red Dead Redemption*, all basing their premises on this struggle. It is only proper that Emerging Civil War continues this trend by including the campaign in its series.

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Prologue

A "Self-Sustaining" Campaign

In late July 1861, Lieutenant Colonel John Baylor and 258 Texas cavalry thundered into the small village of Mesilla, tucked along the Rio Grande River in the New Mexico Territory. They aimed to capture strategic Fort Fillmore, which blocked the way north along the river.

Alerted to Baylor's plans by a Confederate deserter, the fort's commander, Major Isaac Lynde of the 7th U.S. Infantry, sallied out of the fort with 380 infantry and a battery of howitzers. In the late afternoon of July 25, Lynde demanded Baylor's surrender, who angrily replied that "we would fight first, and surrender afterward." The Federal troops advanced toward the town, struggling to pull their supporting artillery through desert sand. They came under heavy fire, and after taking several casualties, retreated to the fort.

Despite his significant health issues, Sibley survived the war. He lived until 1886 and is buried in Fredericksburg, Virginia. (pkf)

Two days later, Lynde abandoned Fort Fillmore, and its significant stores of supplies. After attempting to flee the pursuing Confederates across the desert for

This 1861 sketch of Confederate troops using a supply wagon clearly marked "US" highlights the extent to which early in the war—particularly in the Southwest, where the U.S. Army had a major antebellum presence—Confederates eagerly took advantage of captured Union supplies and weapons. This was a critical element of Sibley's strategy for a "self-sustaining" campaign. (hw)

a day with barely any water, and wildly overestimating the size of Baylor's force, he surrendered his entire command, between 500 and 600 troops. His commanding officer called Lynde's "abandonment of his position" a "disaster." The Superintendent of Indian Affairs for New Mexico called Lynde's surrender "treacherous and cowardly." Across the territory, as disbelief at the news turned into shock, Union leaders in the region rightly feared that the defeat had opened the way for Confederate forces to penetrate further north into New Mexico.

These were the opening shots of the American Civil War in the Southwest, and the first in a string of Confederate successes. Baylor established a foothold in what became the Arizona Territory—the southern half of the present-day states of Arizona and New Mexico. Over the rest of 1861 and early 1862, Confederate forces marched almost 2,000 miles, conducted what may be the war's only charge by a company of actual lancers, and fought two pitched battles and several skirmishes.

These engagements were fought half a continent away from where the Army of Northern Virginia and the Army of the Potomac famously grappled for the fate of the nation on famous fields such as Antietam, Chancellorsville, and Gettysburg. In contrast, western battles such as Valverde, Glorieta Pass, and Peralta are far from being household names, and remain obscure to many historians. At most, they involved only a few thousand troops, who received much less attention than their better-known cousins and comrades-in-arms to

the east. Typical maps of the Civil War don't stretch west of Arkansas, Missouri, and Louisiana. At most, they might include a sliver of the Texas coast, and what was the Indian Territory in the mid-nineteenth century.

Despite being somewhat overlooked by history, the 1862 New Mexico Campaign was a remarkably ambitious effort to redraw the western half of the United States and change the course of the war. With just a few regiments of Texans, and a handful of light artillery, the Confederacy audaciously sought to conquer present-day Arizona and New Mexico, capture the newly discovered gold mines of Colorado, and open an outlet to the Pacific Ocean in southern California.

Most of the 1862 New Mexico Campaign would take place along the Rio Grande River. For centuries, the Rio Grande Valley and the lands around it have been a center of trade, migration, and sometimes warfare. Spanish colonists and missionaries arriving in the 1500s found a thriving collection of indigenous Puebloans, along with more nomadic Utes, Apache, and Comanches. Spain maintained a tenuous, brutal, and sometimes bloody rule over the region, which then passed to Mexico when it gained independence.

The area was heavily contested through the mid-1800s, with Texas laying claim to parts of New Mexico, as far west as Santa Fe and the Rio Grande River. Shortly after the United States took possession of the region, with the 1848 signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, which ended the Mexican-American War, gold was discovered in California to the west.

Sketched 15 years before the Civil War, this illustration shows that the Southwest's mineral resources were already an important consideration. (loc)

Both as secretary of war and a U.S. senator representing Mississippi, Jefferson Davis promoted expansion into the Southwest—particularly along routes that would favor commerce with the South and pave the way for cotton and slavery in new territories. (loc)

In 1858, gold was also discovered in Colorado. Soon, millions of dollars of gold were being dug out of the ground annually, a jaw-dropping amount of wealth at a time when government finances were still largely dependent on supplies of precious metals. Rumors spread that it could also be found in New Mexico and Arizona, catching Baylor's attention early on.

In New Mexico, water is just as precious as gold and silver, and armies on both sides would battle with thirst as much as with each other. Settlements were almost entirely centered along the Rio Grande River, running southward from the Colorado border, through Santa Fe and Albuquerque, and down past Mesilla to the Texas border at El Paso. Lynde surrendered after Mesilla, largely for want of water, to keep his troops marching through the brutal heat.

To the United States Army, the West generally, and the Southwest especially, was a place that required stationing troops to keep their idea of peace. Much of the prewar army was stationed here, including a significant number of future Civil War generals. They paved the way for waves of settlers coming from the East and watched the new border with Mexico. The antebellum army's presence here was part of what drew the interest of then-Secretary of War Jefferson Davis, the future president of the Confederate States of America.

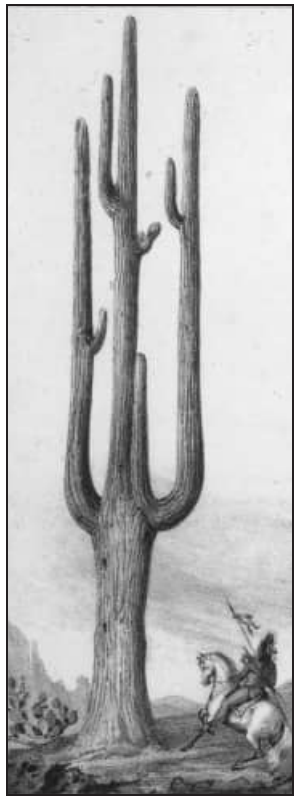
Davis, like many Southern leaders, harbored significant pre-war ambitions for the Southwest, not least because it provided a possible outlet for expanding slaveholding territories, and establishing a transcontinental railroad line through a southern route to a Pacific port, like San Diego or Los Angeles in California, or Guaymas in Mexico. It didn't hurt that the Rio Grande Valley through New Mexico had long been part of what more expansionist Texas leaders considered their rightful territory.

As abolitionism gained political strength in the North, Southern leaders eagerly sought new avenues to expand slavery outside of the traditional southern confines. They feared being boxed into a handful of states in the Southeast, losing out on what they viewed as their fair share of the nation's booming growth to the west.

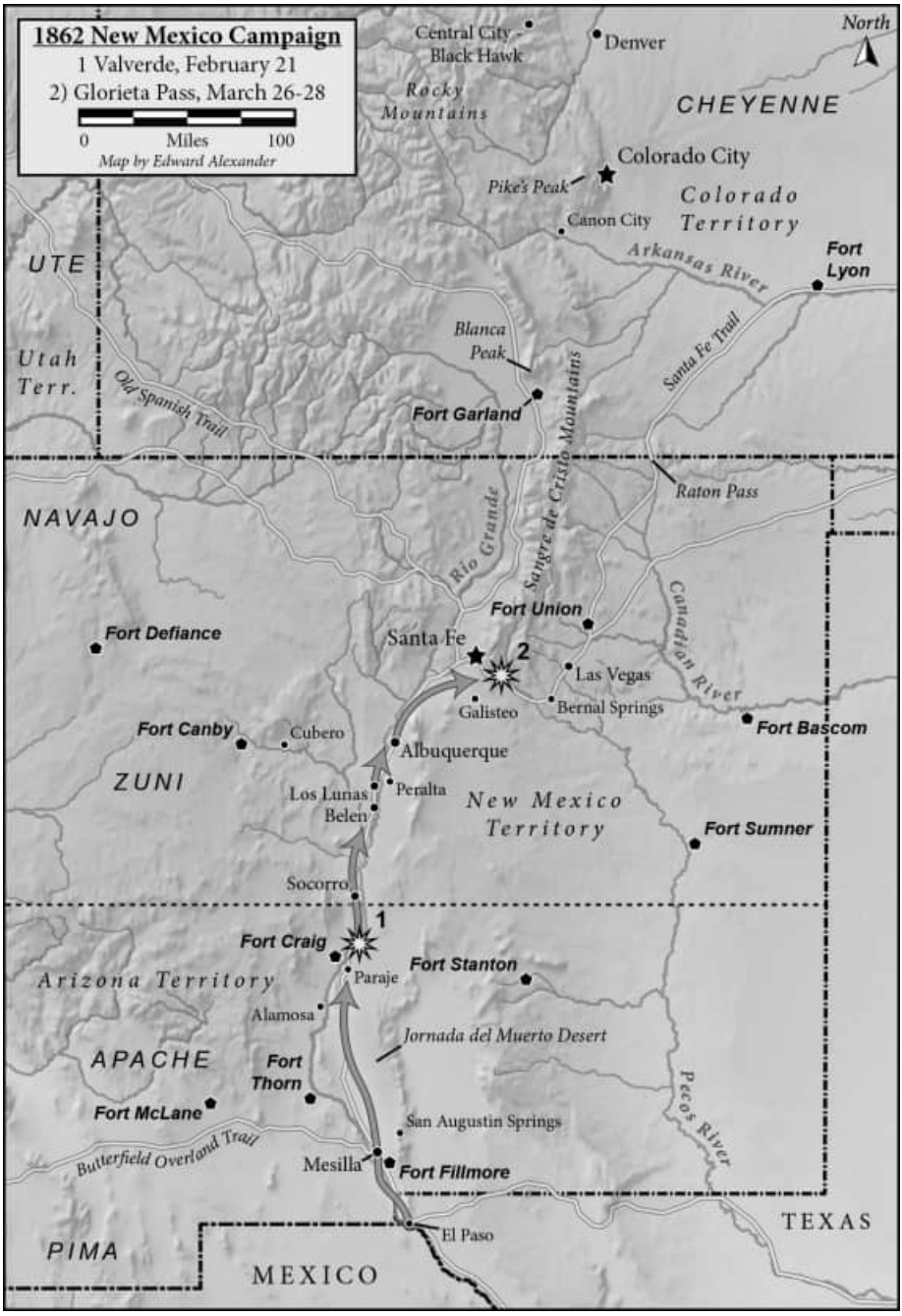
In response, some filibustered across the Caribbean and Central America, seeking to carve out their own slaveholding fiefdoms. Other expansion-minded Southerners strove to spread slavery into newly acquired territories, stoking sectional tensions through episodes like "Bleeding Kansas." As part and parcel of that effort, they turned their eye toward the Pacific Coast. California was booming with the discovery of gold and had recently joined the Union as a free state. There was already widespread talk of a transcontinental railroad, and visionaries across the country knew that the eventual route would become a vital artery for the region it passed through. Southern leaders naturally sought to take advantage of the opportunity, lobbying for the Gadsden Purchase that acquired the southern portions of present-day New Mexico and Arizona from Mexico. Some even quietly pushed for southern California to secede from the rest of the state, envisioning a rich farming region that could double as an eventual Pacific terminus for the railroad, and provide a port to export cotton, and other slave-grown crops.

As secretary of war, Jefferson Davis pursued various ventures that subtly helped smooth the way for a southern transcontinental railroad. He sent army expeditions to explore the barely mapped terrain of the Southwest, and backed the Butterfield Overland Mail, which largely followed one possible route. Davis even pursued experiments with camels imported from the Middle East, believing they were better suited to the climate, and would be beneficial to the army and agricultural interests.

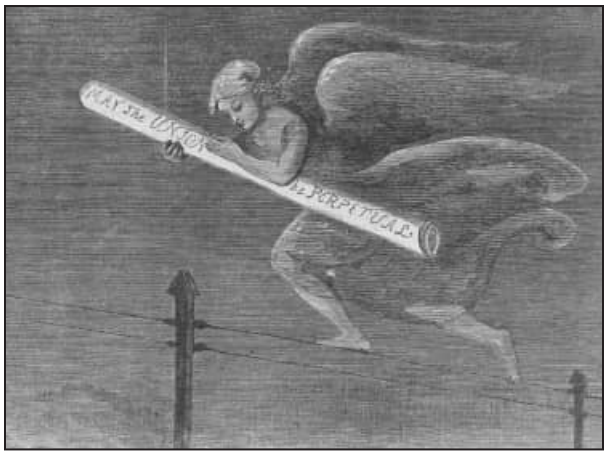
When the Civil War broke out, that fear of being boxed in suddenly evolved from being a long-term economic problem for the South, to a short-term and existential strategic dilemma for the newly founded Confederate States. The antebellum South was extremely dependent on commerce outside the region, with an economy that was largely structured around exporting slave-grown cash crops, such as cotton, in exchange for manufactured goods. In response, one of President Abraham Lincoln's first acts was to declare a blockade of the seceded states, cutting them off from the money they would need to fund a war, and the guns, medicine, and uniforms needed to fight it.



The American Southwest felt exotic to American observers who hailed from the East Coast. Flora and fauna that they had never seen before, including the towering saguaro cactus, reinforced that impression. (loc)



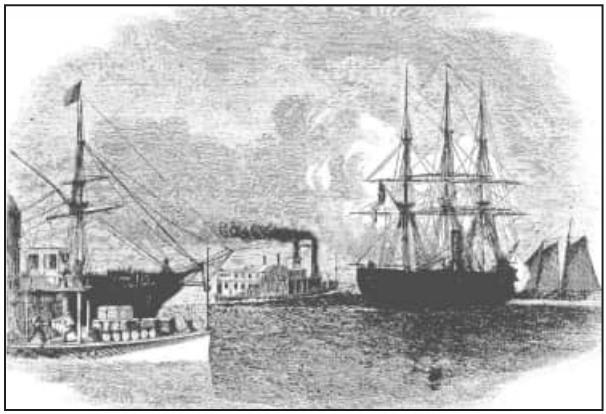
1862 NEW MEXICO CAMPAIGN—The 1862 New Mexico Campaign was fought across hundreds of miles of modern-day New Mexico and Arizona, making it one of the widest-ranging campaigns of the Civil War.



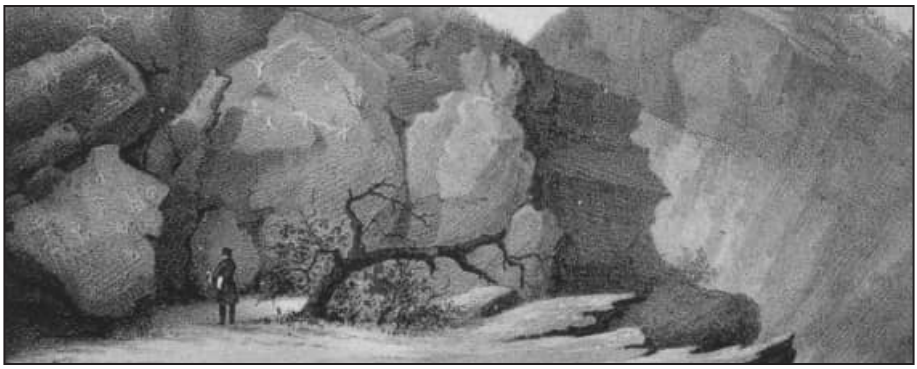
On October 24, 1861, the first transcontinental telegraph was completed, linking California to the East Coast. The first message was sent from Stephen J. Field, Chief Justice of the California Supreme Court, to President Lincoln, pledging loyalty to the Union cause. (hw)

The Federal blockade's stranglehold on the South built gradually throughout the war, but the intent was clear from early 1861, and Union naval supremacy was all but assured. They had the benefit of an existing Navy, and the North possessed most of the nation's shipbuilding capacity. But that blockade was only impactful if it was respected by European powers, especially France and England, who would only consider a blockade to be legitimate if it was also effective. A Confederate port on the Pacific Ocean, with a supply line back to Texas, would have brought in a small number of outside supplies, while undermining the Lincoln administration's arguments against foreign intervention.

The Confederacy would need to change that dynamic to win the war and survive as a nation. Over the course of the war, they gambled unsuccessfully on a range of creative, if unlikely, solutions to the problem: Home-built ironclads, a submarine, clandestine



The Pacific offered an appealing alternative to a Confederacy that had little prospect of breaking the Union blockade of its ports along the Atlantic seaboard and the Gulf of Mexico. (hw)



Termed "hieroglyphics" by contemporary observers, petroglyphs drawn by Native Americans can be found throughout the Southwest, highlighting their presence in the region long before American armies entered the area. (loc)

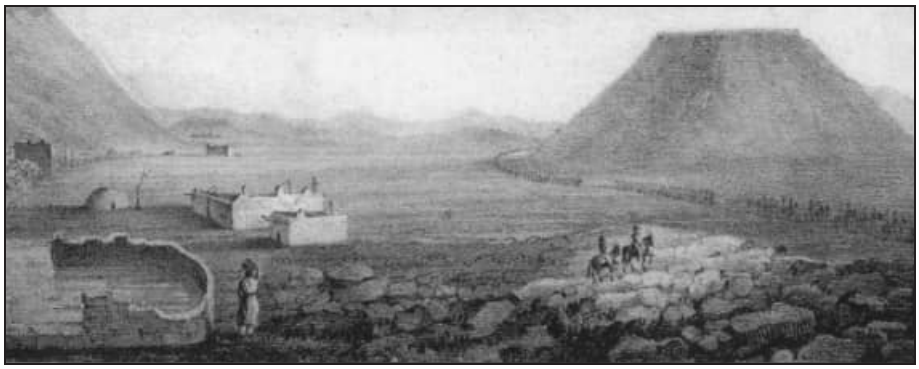
ship purchases overseas, and conducting military campaigns with an eye toward securing foreign intervention. The 1862 New Mexico Campaign can certainly be viewed as belonging to that list.

With President Davis's blessing, and following in Baylor's footsteps, Gen. Henry Hopkins Sibley led about 3,000 Confederate troops across the West Texas desert, into New Mexico, and up the Rio Grande Valley.

Sibley was facing an ad hoc collection of U.S. regulars, New Mexico militia, and Colorado Volunteers, led by Col. R. S. Canby, John Chivington—a Colorado major known as the "Fighting Parson"—and a future general at Gettysburg, Gabriel Paul. Even the famous frontiersman, Kit Carson, was active in this campaign. Some had been stationed in New Mexico for years, or called it home, and volunteered to defend it from what they viewed as a Texas invasion. Others joined in Colorado and were rushing south to shore up Canby's defenses.

But Sibley's other enemy was the harsh reality of campaigning in the vast, empty distances of the nineteenth-century Southwest. He would battle thirst and hunger, and the brutal logistics of large-scale operations in a remote desert, as much as he would fight the Union army.

Much like the Confederate offensives into Maryland and Kentucky in 1862, Sibley's invasion relied on faith in the power of taking the initiative in the face of superior numbers, some wishful thinking about logistics, and a firm belief that any disadvantages would be offset by Southern courage, and latent secessionist support in the territory they were entering. His artillery chief, Maj. T. T. Teel, wrote, "His campaign was to be self-sustaining. . . .



Many Native Americans in New Mexico lived in pueblo-style communities in 1862, similar to this one sketched shortly before the war. (loc)

Sibley was to utilize the results of Baylor's successes, make Mesilla the base of operations, and with the enlistment of men from New Mexico, California, Arizona, and Colorado form an army."

Sibley, and other Confederate leaders, had good reason to believe that they would find support out west. Davis had already cultivated commercial and political relationships before the war. Baylor had already planted the Confederate flag in Arizona, seemingly without serious opposition. Utah had a tenuous relationship, at best, with the Federal government.

Similarly, Union leaders were concerned about their hold on the region. Canby was also uneasy as to the loyalty of troops raised in New Mexico, clearly believing they wouldn't fight for a Union that had conquered their land by force less than a generation earlier.

But as Sibley rode across the desert toward New Mexico, his army must have been haunted by doubts: could this ragtag band of Confederate cavalry really overrun New Mexico, Arizona, and parts of Colorado and California? Could they achieve a "self-sustaining" campaign in the sparsely populated, arid Southwest terrain? Would locals rally to their flag? And most importantly, how were Union troops mobilizing to stop them?

A Confederacy from Sea to Shining Sea

Baylor Enters New Mexico

CHAPTER ONE

MARCH 1861 – JULY 1861

Excitement buzzed in the town of Mesilla, in southern New Mexico in early March 1861. Leading citizens had called for a secession convention, like their Southern brethren in lands to their east. They were tapping into years of disgruntlement at the territorial government in Santa Fe—located 300 miles to the north—for its inability to protect them against what they perceived as Native American incursions. A constitutional convention was the by-product of their insistence.

In language reminiscent of states east of the Mississippi River, the citizens declared their intention to remove their portion, south of the 34th parallel, from the larger New Mexico Territory, and the United States of America. On March 16, 1861, the ordinance was adopted. Twelve days later, in Tucson, in the western reaches of the territory, delegates met and ratified the ordinance of secession.

While small mountain howitzers like this could boost the firepower of light— mobile cavalry columns like Sibley's Army of New Mexico— they were too small to serve as effective siege weapons against fortifications. **(pg)**

That document clearly stated the reasoning for secession, "WHEREAS, Arizona naturally belongs to

the Confederate States of America (who have rightfully and lawfully withdrawn from said league), both geographically and politically, by ties of a common interest and a common cause; and WHEREAS we, the citizens of that part of New Mexico called Arizona, in the present distracted state of political affairs between the North and the South, deem it our duty as citizens of the United States to make known our opinions and intentions; therefore be it. . . ."

After agreeing on the wording, a provisional government was created to oversee the Confederate Territory of Arizona. Dr. Lewis S. Owings, a Tennessee transplant, was appointed provisional governor. Granville Henderson Oury was elected to travel east to the Confederate capital and represent the interests of the territory as its delegate.

This 1861 sketch of a Texas cavalryman shows how they were caricatured as fierce but undisciplined fighters, especially in contrast to the better-equipped, well-drilled armies of the Eastern Theater. (hw)

A few companies of cavalry were created by the Confederate government of Arizona by tapping into a militia company, the San Elizario (Spy) Company, which had been raised earlier in 1861. However, with a sizable Federal troop presence still in the area, primarily at Fort Fillmore, a prudent call for help was sent to nearby Texas. More troops were needed to support the fledgling government, gain control of abandoned military supplies spread throughout the area, and counter the blue-coated United States soldiers. Luckily for Owings and his government, there was a man in Texas who knew the value of the Southwest.

Arizona's worth to the Confederate cause was summed up by John R. Baylor, commissioned a lieutenant colonel leading the Second Texas Mounted Rifles: "The vast mineral resources of Arizona, in addition to its affording an outlet to the Pacific, makes its acquisition a matter of some importance to our Government."

Baylor, born on July 27, 1822, in Paris, Kentucky, had moved to Texas at the age of 18. He served in various capacities, including as a volunteer in the Texas army, United States Indian agent, editor, and politician. He was the epitome of a Texan transplant, fiery and independent. After his commission, Baylor, with the

consent of the district commander, Colonel Earl Van Dorn, pushed his command, the 2nd Texas Mounted Rifles, quickly toward New Mexico, arriving at Fort Bliss outside El Paso, Texas, on July 1, 1861. The post had, by order of United States Gen. David Twiggs, been surrendered on March 31, 1861, to the Confederacy.

The Texans' stay in the western fringes of Texas was short-lived. Word reached Baylor of concern in Mesilla of Federal intentions. Colonel Van Dorn's standing orders gave Baylor the flexibility to enter New Mexico Territory if circumstances dictated a move crucial to protecting Confederate interests. The orders also gave Baylor freedom to attack Federal forts along the Rio Grande, and to be guided by circumstances on the ground.

On the night of July 23, 1861, Baylor, seeking the initiative, steered his mounted Texans toward Mesilla, approximately 40 miles to the northwest, arriving in the latter by the following evening. Giving his troops a short respite, Baylor planned to attack the Federal forces the following morning.

Unbeknownst to Baylor, a Texan deserted that evening, secreting across the New Mexico landscape to Fort Fillmore, located seven miles from the center of town. Fillmore was established in the late summer of 1851, by Col. Edwin Vose Sumner, and named for the sitting president at the time, Millard Fillmore. The fortification helped protect travelers, traders, and settlers headed toward California. The Butterfield Overland Mail route also ran through Fort Fillmore. A young Virginian, by the name of George Pickett, spent time stationed at Fillmore as a captain, and in 1855, Ambrose Burnside used the fort as a supply point during a scientific and engineering expedition.

In July 1861, the post was commanded by Maj. Isaac Lynde. Born in Vermont on July 23, 1804, he was an 1827 graduate of West Point, a Mexican War veteran, and in October 1855, promoted to major of the 7th United States Infantry. After marching along under Col. Albert Johnston in the Utah Expedition from 1858–1860, he had been ordered by Col. Edward Canby to assume command at Fort Fillmore.

Lynde initially acted aggressively, using the information from the deserter. Leaving a small holding force at Fort Fillmore, Lynde took the bulk of

An early Confederate commander in Texas, Earl Van Dorn authorized Baylor's initial invasion of the New Mexico Territory. Van Dorn went on to become famous as a general in battles throughout the Western and Trans-Mississippi Theaters. (loc)

After serving extensively as the military governor of the New Mexico Territory in the 1850s, Edwin Vose Sumner rose to the rank of major general while serving with the Army of the Potomac. (loc)

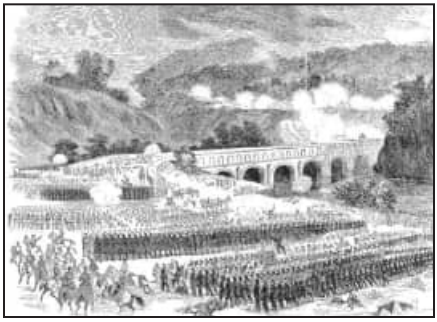
Gen. Twiggs came under fire for largely abandoning the U.S. Army's presence in the Southwest without a fight. He subsequently held a commission in the Confederate Army, before resigning for health reasons. (loc)

his command—380 soldiers—toward Mesilla, to drive out Baylor's Confederates.

On the morning of July 25, 1861, Lynde's men confronted Baylor's Texans and demanded their surrender. Baylor refused, replying with gusto to Lynde's demand, "If you wish the town and my forces, come and take them!" Lynde's reply was to form his Regulars into a skirmish line, and open a barrage of artillery from his accompanying mountain howitzers. As his foot soldiers advanced, three companies of the United States Regiment of Mounted Rifles backed up the infantry, waiting to exploit the Confederate defense.

Baylor's Texans, with a sprinkling of Arizonans, had positioned themselves well, using the adobe walls that comprised the buildings of Mesilla to their advantage. A Federal officer even noticed that some townspeople had joined in the Confederate defense.

As Federal artillery launched shot and shell toward the Confederates, shots belched forth in retaliation. Baylor instructed the soldiers under his command to shoulder rifles and aim for the blue-coated officers. One officer hit was Capt. C. H. McNally, a rifle round striking him through the chest and exiting out his neck quickly after a first round struck his saber. Confederate soldiers armed mostly with shotguns and smoothbore muskets added their firepower, but with little impact given the long range. Some of the buckshot and bullets eventually did strike home, wounding four Federal soldiers, and killing a fifth.



While the Civil War raged north of the border, Mexico was embroiled in its own conflict, which was inflamed by European military intervention. (hw)

After two United States artillerymen were struck, the artillery limbered up from the Federal front and headed rearward, Federal infantry following, covered by the mounted troopers. Confederate soldiers cautiously advanced behind as Baylor had ordered "not to push them too fast," remembered Sgt. Henry Clay Smith.

Although some minor skirmishing consumed the rest of the day, the First Battle of Mesilla had ended. Both sides disputed the number of wounded, and casualty counts in general are vague, but a widely accepted estimate is three killed and nine wounded Federals, and six Confederates wounded. More importantly, over 20 horses belonging to

By surrendering Army posts under his command to Texas without a fight in 1861, Twiggs avoided early bloodshed, but left a gaping hole in Union defenses in the Southwest. (hw)

Confederate riders had been killed, a sizable sum for a mounted command.

Baylor, ever aggressive, decided to turn the attack the following day, July 26, after hearing reports of Lynde constructing further earthworks outside Fort Fillmore. Not wanting to wait for Confederate artillery and reinforcements to arrive from Fort Bliss, the eager Confederate commander moved toward the Federal fortification. When the Southerners arrived near Fort Fillmore, they saw the recently dug earthworks, along with a series of ropes tied to posts as an anti-cavalry measure.

As Baylor prepared for the attack, he detailed some of his commands to impress horses to replace those lost the previous day during the Mesilla engagement. The Arizona Guards, a company that had become attached to Baylor's command when the Texans arrived in New Mexico Territory, were detailed to find replacement mounts. Twenty-five of the Guards were able to surprise Federal soldiers, capturing 85 horses and 26 mules.

End of Unedited Excerpt