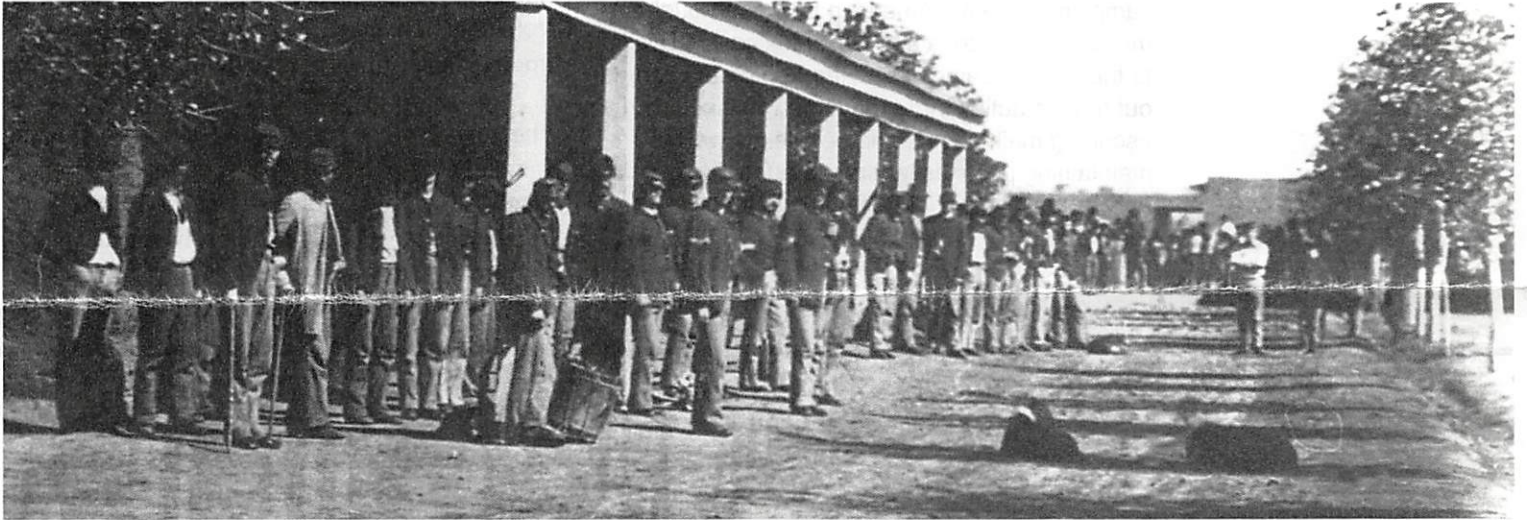




New Mexico Volunteers



Introduction

At the onset of the Civil War, troops were called back from the western frontier in order to address the direct Confederate threat in the east. When an invasion by Confederate Texans into the New Mexico Territory seemed likely, and with so few troops in the West, the Union would need to call on the support of the people of the New Mexico Territory.

Volunteer Army

New Mexico's population in 1861, exclusive of Native Americans, was 80,000. Many of which were of Spanish and Mexican, decent from small rural villages. The majority of New Mexicans spoke little to no English and were unfamiliar with the American military establishment. Despite this, between July and December of 1861, 3,500 New Mexicans were recruited as volunteers in the United States Army. Most of these volunteers were from the northern New Mexico communities of Las Vegas, Mora, Santa Fé, Taos, and other surrounding areas.

Five regiments composed of five to ten companies (80 – 100 men per company) were raised in the territory. The five regiments included infantry, cavalry, and spies and guides. The recruits were assembled and organized at Fort Union and Albuquerque under the direction of such prominent officers such as, Col. Christopher "Kit" Carson, Col. Ceran St. Vrain, Col. Miguel Pino, Lt. Col. Manuel Chavez, Lt. Col. J. Francisco Chavez, and Capt. Raphael Chacon

Recruits

As recruits, the Volunteers were organized, outfitted, and trained through the late summer and fall of 1861. During this time the New Mexico Volunteers faced many difficulties. English was the language of the Army and Spanish the language of the territory, making initial training and relaying of orders difficult. Many of the New Mexico Volunteers were also subjected to ethnic prejudices, and were falsely labeled as "peons," and called "unprincipled," "cowardly," and

"ignorant." Additional frustrations resulted from the obsolete equipment issued to the Volunteers.

First Duties

The first duties as soldiers were as manual laborers for the Army. Employed with pick and shovel, the Volunteers worked in four shifts of 200 men each, 24 hours a day to construct the second Fort Union, as well as being dispatched to work parties to improve trails and roads in the territory.

Civil War

In February of 1862, all five regiments of New Mexico Volunteers were sent to Fort Craig, 30 miles south of Socorro, in anticipation of the Confederate advance up the Rio Grande. On February 21, 1862, near Ft. Craig the Battle of Valverde ensued. The clash between these two armies resulted in a Union defeat and the continued Confederate advancement. After the territorial capital of Santa Fé was captured by Confederate forces, a military decision was made to engage the Confederate threat head-on, with Union regulars and Volunteer troops out of Fort

Union. The Battle of Glorieta took place in March of 1862, about 20 miles northeast of Santa Fé. The decisive moment in the battle occurred when Lt. Colonel Manuel Chavez, of the 2nd Regiment New Mexico Volunteers, guided approximately 400 soldiers including, Colorado Volunteers and Union Regulars, over Rowe Mesa to Apache Canyon, where the Confederate supply train was located, and quickly destroyed. With the Union victory at Glorieta secured, the Confederate invasion of New Mexico was effectively over.

Post Civil War

With the Civil War still raging in the east, and the Confederate threat absent from the territory, the New Mexico Volunteers would immediately fill the role of absent Army regulars in the west, and be thrust into the "Indian Wars." As early as 1863, the New Mexico Volunteers were participating in campaigns against American Indians throughout modern day Arizona and New Mexico. In addition to the "Indian Campaigns," the Volunteers carried out routine duties throughout the west including escorting mail, goods, and people, as well as maintaining posts as laborers, performing guard duty, and any other duty or job that the Army required.

The New Mexico Volunteers served the Army with distinction. They answered the call to arms in 1861 by their new government, even though the majority had only been apart of the United States for 12 years. Despite the mistreatment and prejudices that some of the New Mexico Volunteers endured, they proved to be loyal troops in the Army throughout the southwest.

The service of the New Mexico Volunteers began with the Civil War in 1861 and ended with the discharge of "Kit" Carson's battalion in 1867. They were succeeded by the New Mexico Territorial Militia, and in 1897 the militia became the National Guard of New Mexico.

Major Campaigns and Actions of the New Mexico Volunteers

Summer-Fall 1861

Formation, organization, outfitting, and training.

February 1862

The Battle of Valverde in southern New Mexico near Fort Craig.

March 1862

The Battle of Glorieta Pass at Apache Canyon.

Winter 1863-1864

Arizona Navajo campaign which includes the notorious "Long Walk" and actions against the Mescalero Apache.

Spring 1864

Adobe Walls Campaign

1864-1866

Carleton's Apache Expedition

