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## FORT UNION AND THE SANTA FE TRAIL

By ROBERT M. UTLEY \*

FOR over half a century a wide band of wagon ruts joined New Mexico, first as a Mexican province, later as American territory, to the Missouri frontier and the States. Between the American conquest in 1846 and the coming of the railroad in the decade of the seventies, the Santa Fe Trail was a momentous avenue of commerce, transportation, and communication.

In Kansas the Trail divided, to enter New Mexico by two routes. The Cimarron Cutoff, shortest but most dangerous fork, turned southwest from the Arkansas River and followed the dry course of the Cimarron River into the Oklahoma panhandle, reaching New Mexico near present Clayton. The Mountain Branch, 100 miles longer and with the treacherous barrier of Raton Pass, kept to the north bank of the Arkansas, turned southwest along the base of the Rockies, and dropped into New Mexico at Raton Pass. The two branches united at the junction of Mora River and Sapello Creek, near modern Watrous. Six miles north of this strategic road junction the United States Army in 1851 built Fort Union, destined to play a direct, active, and vital role in the subsequent drama of the Santa Fe Trail.

Indeed, Fort Union owed its birth to the Santa Fe Trail. It was not, as usually assumed, conceived as the "guardian of the trail," although this turned out to be a major role. Its principal function was to serve as a depot for military supplies shipped over the Santa Fe Trail to the United States Army in New Mexico.<sup>1</sup> The Mexican War had revolutionized the Santa Fe trade. Before 1846 the Trail had been an inter-

\* National Park Service, Region Three, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

1. There were, of course, other reasons. Colonel Sumner had been advised by Secretary of War Conrad to move the troops out of the New Mexican towns and advance them closer to the Indian country. Fort Union was thus an outpost against the Utes and Jicarilla Apaches. At the same time, Maj. Thomas Swords, examining the New Mexican defense system for the Secretary, reported that the towns, besides being expensive and inconvenient sites for military posts, had a corrupting influence on the soldiers. Conrad to Sumner, April 1, 1851, in Annie H. Abel (ed.), *The Official Correspondence of James S. Calhoun* (Washington, 1915), 383-84; A. V. Bender, "Frontier Defense in the Territory of New Mexico, 1846-1853," *NEW MEXICO HISTORICAL REVIEW*, IX, 3 (July, 1934), 264-65.

national highway linking two alien communities. But "Kearny's baggage train," as Paxson wrote, "started a new era in plains freighting. . . . It became a matter of business, running smoothly along familiar channels."<sup>2</sup> Gregg's "commerce of the prairies," conducted largely by private speculators, all but disappeared, and freighters specializing in hauling someone else's goods took over the Santa Fe Trail. A major portion of these goods was destined for the frontier posts in the Territory of New Mexico.

The Southwest proved an expensive acquisition to the United States, for the population had been promised protection from marauding Indians. In 1849 almost 1,000 soldiers, one-seventh of the United States Army, served in New Mexico's Ninth Military Department. By 1859 the number had risen to 2,000, distributed among 16 scattered frontier outposts. The land was not rich enough to subsist this army, and almost all provisions had to be hauled over the Santa Fe Trail from Fort Leavenworth.

The need for a depot on the eastern frontier of New Mexico to receive and distribute these goods to other posts early became apparent. In the spring of 1851 the Department Commander, Maj. and Bvt. Col. John Munroe, sent his Quartermaster, Capt. L. C. Easton, and Lt. John G. Parke of the Topographical Engineers to "examine the country in the vicinity of Las Vegas and on the Moro [sic] Creek with a view of selecting a site for the establishment of a depot for supplies coming from the U. S."<sup>3</sup> By late April the reconnaissance had been completed and a report turned in (it has not been found),<sup>4</sup> but Munroe was almost immediately replaced by Lt. Col. and Bvt. Col. Edwin V. Sumner. Nevertheless, in July 1851 Sumner established a supply depot such as envisioned by his predecessor and located it in the area reconnoitered by Parke and Easton. He also moved Department Headquarters

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2. Frederick L. Paxson, *The Last American Frontier* (New York, 1910), 67.

3. Lt. and Acting Assistant Adjutant General (hereafter AAAG) Lafayette McLaws to Lt. John G. Parke, March 12, 1851; Special Order (hereafter SO) No. 14, Hq. Ninth Mil. Dept., Santa Fe, March 14, 1851; National Archives, typescript in Arrott Collection, Highlands Univ., Las Vegas, N. M. Hereafter all citations of material from the National Archives in the Arrott Collection will be designated NA, AC.

4. Munroe to Adj. Gen. (hereafter AG) Roger Jones, April 30, 1851, NA, AC, transmitted the report to Washington.

from Santa Fe to the new depot, which was named Fort Union.<sup>5</sup>

Military freight hauled from Fort Leavenworth was unloaded at the Fort Union depot, repacked, and assigned as needed to the posts of New Mexico and Arizona. Often, when wagons or entire trains contained shipments for one fort only, they continued directly to the destination without unloading at Fort Union. Other Quartermaster depots were established, at Yuma and San Antonio, but Fort Union continued throughout its lifetime to be the supply center of the frontier army in the Southwest.

Virtually all military freighting on the Santa Fe Trail was performed under contract by civilian companies. Waste and inefficiency had characterized the logistical support, managed by the Quartermaster Department, of Kearny's Army of the West, and in 1848 the Government turned to the contract system. For \$11.75 per hundred, James Browne of Independence in that year agreed to transport 200,000 pounds of supplies to New Mexico. The next year, in partnership with William H. Russell, he contracted to haul all government stores over the Santa Fe Trail for \$9.88 per hundred. Joseph Clymer and David Waldo entered the field in 1850, and that year 278 wagons of military freight passed over the Trail to New Mexico. Some continued to the new post at El Paso. Browne, Russell, and Company were the largest contractors, accounting for 135 of the 278 wagons.<sup>6</sup>

In 1853 another new freighter made his appearance, his name destined to be linked to that of William H. Russell. Alexander Majors made two round trips to New Mexico, one with a consignment of goods from Independence to Santa Fe, the other under government contract from Fort Leavenworth to Fort Union. In 1854, again under contract, he sent 100 wagons in four trains from Leavenworth to Union. The following year he went into partnership with William H. Rus-

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5. Sumner to Jones, Oct. 24, 1851, in Abel (ed.), *Official Correspondence of James S. Calhoun*, 416-18. Throughout the 1850's and 1860's Department Headquarters was located variously at Fort Union, Santa Fe, Albuquerque, and elsewhere depending on the scene of most active operations.

6. Walker D. Wyman, "The Military Phase of Santa Fe Freighting, 1846-1865," *Kansas Historical Quarterly*, I, 5 (November, 1932), 415-28.

sell. In 1856 Majors and Russell had 350 wagons on the Trail, and the next year contracted to deliver five million pounds of freight. In 1858, a third partner having joined the firm, Russell, Majors, and Waddell contracted to deliver all freight turned over to them by the Government, and by 1860 and 1861 were the principal contractors freighting between Fort Leavenworth and Fort Union.<sup>7</sup>

Large-scale military freighting, dominated by Russell, Majors, and Waddell, continued until 1866, when the railroad moved west into Kansas. Each railroad town thereafter served briefly as the port of embarkation for freight wagons. After the rails reached Denver in 1870, wagons continued to move supplies over the Mountain Branch of the Trail between Pueblo and Fort Union. The Santa Fe Railroad crossed the Mora Valley in 1879 and ended the era of military freighting on the Santa Fe Trail.

Fort Union consisted not only of a Quartermaster depot to handle incoming supplies, but also of a military post. The post garrison performed duties similar to those of other garrisons in the West. One important function of the frontier army was to blaze new wagon roads and improve old ones. Officers and men of Fort Union expended such labor principally on the Santa Fe Trail.

Shortly after Colonel Sumner established Fort Union, his Quartermaster, Capt. E. S. Sibley, laid out a road that linked Fort Union with the main route of the Santa Fe Trail between the Mora Crossings and Las Vegas. Although it saved several miles, this route seems to have enjoyed only briefly the favor of freighters and other travellers.<sup>8</sup>

At the same time, Sumner sent Lt. John Pope of the Topographical Engineers to seek "a new road by the shortest practicable route between this point and Fort Leavenworth." Lying between the Cimarron Cutoff and the Mountain Branch, Pope's road intersected the Arkansas River at Big

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7. *Ibid.*; Alexander Majors, *Seventy Years on the Frontier* (Denver, 1893), 140-43; Edward Steere, *Fort Union: Its Economic and Military History* (Ms. Report, National Park Service, Santa Fe, c. 1939), 55-57.

8. Report of Col. J. K. F. Mansfield . . . Regarding his Inspection of the Department of New Mexico During . . . 1853 (Ms., National Archives, typescript in Library, Museum of New Mexico, Santa Fe).

Timbers, near the site of Bent's Fort, in modern Colorado.<sup>9</sup> An extension of this road, probably also pioneered by Pope, connected Fort Union with the Cimarron Branch at the crossing of the Canadian River by a route lying north of the Turkey Mountains, thus gaining several miles to travellers arriving on the Cimarron Branch.<sup>10</sup>

Pope's road was a compromise between the Mountain and Cimarron Branches. It was shorter than the Mountain Branch and, by skirting the eastern slope of the Raton Mountains, avoided the winter snows of Raton Pass. During the Civil War it had another advantage: it was far enough from Texas to be free of the Confederate threat to the Cimarron Branch, a threat that existed less in reality than in the minds of Union officers.

The advantages of this road, with a slight variation at its northern end to connect with Fort Wise (later Fort Lyon), were not lost upon officers at Fort Union and Santa Fe. Supply trains for Union forces in New Mexico might use this road the year around without fear of Texan guerrillas. From Fort Union to the head of the Cimarron the road had already been surveyed, and required only minor banking and grading at stream crossings. From Fort Wise south but little work was needed, principally on the eastern slopes of the Raton Mountains. During the winter of 1861 and summer of 1862, therefore, details from Forts Union and Wise worked towards each other on this road, meeting on the upper Cimarron.<sup>11</sup> What share of Civil War freight the road carried thereafter is not apparent. It is clear, however, that the Mountain and Cimarron Branches also continued to be used by freighters.

In addition to processing military freight and seeking new and better routes, troops from Fort Union performed another

9. SO No. 58, Fort Union, Aug. 6, 1851, NA, AC; Sumner to AG Roger Jones, Oct. 24, 1851, in Abel (ed.), *Official Correspondence of James S. Calhoun*, 416-18.

10. Mansfield Report (1853). Colonel Mansfield gives credit for this to Capt. James H. Carleton, whom he probably confused with Lieutenant Pope. Carleton and his company were patrolling the Cimarron Route at the same time Pope was reconnoitering the new road. The mistake, therefore, is understandable.

11. Capt. & AQM J. C. McFerran to Maj. & QM J. L. Donaldson, Nov. 11, 1861; Lt. & AAAG W. J. L. Nicodemus to Capt. Elmer Otis, 4th Cav., Nov. 15, 1861; Nicodemus to Commanding Officer (hereafter CO) Fort Union, Nov. 15, 1861; SO No. 125, Hq., Dept. of N. M., July 16, 1862; SO No. 144, Hq., Dept. of N. M., Aug. 15, 1862, NA, AC.

important duty connected with the Santa Fe Trail. Military protection of the Trail is a chapter in its history that remains to be adequately explored. Historians have dealt with early attempts to provide escorts from Missouri to the Arkansas, but the part played by the garrison of Fort Union has never been fully told. Although less dramatic, it spanned 15 years and proved far more effective.

No sooner had Fort Union been established than Colonel Sumner, in August 1851, issued orders for Capt. James H. Carleton to patrol the Cimarron Branch of the Trail between Fort Union and the Arkansas. With his Company K, First Dragoons, Carleton remained in the field until November 4. So successful was he in preventing depredations on freight trains by the Kiowas, Comanches, and Jicarilla Apaches that he drew the same assignment the next year. During the summer of 1852 Company K twice marched to Fort Atkinson, at the crossing of the Arkansas, and returned to Fort Union.<sup>12</sup>

After 1852 there is no record of further patrolling such as Carleton had performed for the remainder of the decade. Rather, protection took the form of military escorts of the Independence-Santa Fe Mail.<sup>13</sup> During the 1850's the Kiowas and Comanches were in general friendly, or at least not actively hostile, and the war against the Jicarillas kept the tribe busy in the mountains around Taos and Abiquiú. Nevertheless, escorts were furnished whenever officials of the stage company or Post Office Department feared that danger existed. Late in 1857, as the result of a directive from the Secretary of War, the Commanding Officer at Fort Union began providing regular escorts for the mail.

The escort usually consisted of an officer and 20 to 40 men, later of a sergeant and 15 to 20 men, who accompanied the

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12. Sumner to Carleton, Aug. 1, 1851; SO No. 23, Hq., Ninth Mil. Dept., near Albuquerque, March 28, 1852; SO No. 31, Hq., Ninth Mil. Dept., near Albuquerque, May 3, 1852; Annual Returns, First Dragoons, 1851 and 1852, NA, AC. Sumner to AG Roger Jones, Oct. 24, 1851, in Abel (ed.), *Official Correspondence of James S. Calhoun*, 416-18.

13. Monthly stage service was inaugurated between Independence and Santa Fe in July 1850, with a contract let to carry the U. S. Mail. Throughout the 1850's service was erratic, and as late as 1860 the commander of the Department of New Mexico complained of the "great irregularity of the Mails." Col. T. T. Fauntleroy to Postmaster General, Dec. 16, 1860, NA, AC; LeRoy R. Hafen, *The Overland Mail, 1849-1869* (Glendale, 1926), 70-73, briefly sketches the details of the Santa Fe Mail.

stages to the Arkansas and returned to Fort Union with the next west-bound mail. The soldiers, infantry or dismounted horsemen, rode in wagons. This method had been adopted by Col. John Garland, Department Commander, because it afforded better defense in the event of attack and because of the scarcity of grass, especially in winter, along the road between the Canadian and the Arkansas. Even so, the mules drawing the escort wagons frequently broke down and always had trouble keeping up with the mail coaches. The stage company had relay stations with fresh animals on the Mora and the Arkansas, but the army mules travelled over 600 miles, from Fort Union to the Arkansas and back, without relief. So troublesome did this problem become that Colonel Garland in March 1858 requested the Adjutant General of the Army to have instructions issued to the mail company to keep pace with the slower moving escort.<sup>14</sup>

The necessity of furnishing escorts kept the Fort Union garrison constantly below strength, and proved a serious handicap to the post commander. Nevertheless, Colonel Garland could report early in 1858 "that no mail has been lost since my administration of this Military Department—four years and a half—and that I have never failed to furnish escorts whenever in my judgment they were deemed necessary."<sup>15</sup>

Probably as a result of these difficulties, and the apparent friendliness of the Indians on the Cimarron Route, Garland in May 1858 discontinued the escorts. In October 1859, however, the mail from Independence failed to arrive in Santa Fe on schedule. Citizens and postal officials became so alarmed that Col. B. L. E. Bonneville, Garland's successor, was induced to order two officers and 75 men, virtually the entire garrison of Fort Union, to escort the next eastbound stage to the Arkansas. At Cottonwood Spring the mail and escort, under Capt. R. M. Morris of the Regiment of Mounted Rifles,

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14. Lt. & AAAG W. A. Nichols to Lt. Col. Philip St. George Cooke, March 12, 1854; Unsgd. (Fort Union) to Nichols, March 8, 1856; Nichols to Col. W. W. Loring, Jan. 29, 1857; Col. B. L. E. Bonneville to AAG Lorenzo Thomas, Feb. 28, 1857; Loring to Nichols, Jan. 25, 1858; Garland to AG Samuel Cooper, Jan. 30 & March 14, 1858; Loring to Capt. & AQM L. C. Easton, March 9, 1858, NA, AC.

15. Garland to AG Samuel Cooper, Jan. 30, 1858, NA, AC.

met the west-bound mail. It was accompanied by Col. Thomas T. Fauntleroy and escort enroute to Santa Fe to replace Colonel Bonneville. Fauntleroy issued orders on the spot assuming command of the Department of New Mexico (name for the Ninth Military Department since 1853) and relieving Captain Morris and half of his command of further escort duty. At the same time he called upon the Adjutant General for "particular instruction at the earliest moment" on the subject of furnishing regular escorts for the mail.<sup>15a</sup>

No sooner had Fauntleroy reached Santa Fe, however, than he authorized continued escorts. It was a fortunate move, for on December 4, at Cold Spring in the Oklahoma panhandle, 20 Kiowa warriors attacked the mail wagon and its escort, slightly wounding one soldier. The Indians were repulsed, but kept the troops pinned down with long-range rifle fire for several hours.<sup>16</sup>

Thereafter raiding Kiowas and Comanches became increasingly active, and throughout the Civil War years travel on the Cimarron Branch was a dangerous undertaking. Fauntleroy reinforced Fort Union, and escorts regularly accompanied the mail. A new system was devised. Troops from Fort Union escorted the east-bound mail about half way to the Arkansas. There they met the west-bound mail under escort by troops from Kansas. Each detachment then accompanied the mail back to its home base.<sup>17</sup>

Later in 1860 Fauntleroy authorized the Commanding Officer at Fort Union, Lt. Col. George B. Crittenden, to seize any opportunity offered to strike a blow at the Kiowas and Comanches. In December Crittenden learned that a war party was harassing traffic on the Mountain Branch about 70 miles north of Fort Union. With 88 men of Companies D, H, K, and

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15a. Lt. & AAAG J. D. Wilkins to Capt. R. M. Morris, Oct. 15, 17, and 18, 1859; Wilkins to D. V. Whiting, Postmaster at Santa Fe, Oct. 16 and 17, 1859; Wilkins to Lt. A. Jackson, Oct. 17, 1859; Bonneville to AAG Lorenzo Thomas, Oct. 17, 1859; Bonneville to Gov. Abraham Rencher, Oct. 13, 1859; Fauntleroy to AG Samuel Cooper, Oct. 25, 1859; Fauntleroy to Morris, Oct. 25, 1859; Fauntleroy to Thomas, Nov. 6, 1859, NA, AC.

16. Lt. & AAAG J. D. Wilkins to Maj. J. S. Simonson, Nov. 14, 1859; SO No. 70, Fort Union, Nov. 16, 1859; Simonson to Wilkins, Dec. 9, 1859; Fauntleroy to AAG Lorenzo Thomas, Dec. 12, 1859, NA, AC.

17. Wilkins to Lt. D. Bell, Pawnee Fork, K. T., Jan. 3, 1860; Wilkins to Simonson, Jan. 10, 1860; *ibid.*, Jan. (?), 1860; Jan. 28, 1860, NA, AC.

E, Regiment of Mounted Rifles, he marched up the Trail. The Indians, however, had moved east and were preparing to attack traffic on the Cimarron Branch. The Mounted Riflemen followed their trail night and day and, on January 2, 1861, surprised a village of 175 Kiowa and Comanche lodges on the Cimarron River 10 miles north of Cold Spring. The Indians were driven from their camp with a loss of 10 killed and an unknown number wounded. Crittenden had three men wounded. The troops destroyed the village and its contents and returned to Fort Union with 40 captured horses.<sup>18</sup>

It is noteworthy that, throughout the decade of the 1850's, there is no record of military detachments assigned to escort freight caravans. Except for Carleton's operations in 1851 and 1852, which were designed to safeguard all traffic simply by the presence of troops on the Trail, all escorts were of the Independence-Santa Fe Mail. To the extent that these escorts advertised to the Indians the proximity of soldiers, they indirectly protected freight trains. The freighters, however, understood the conditions of the trail and organized for their own protection. They consequently felt no need of military protection and made no demand for such service.<sup>19</sup> The picture changes in the 1860's. The mounting Indian menace, the fear of Confederate attacks on freight caravans, and the vital need of assuring a continuous flow of provisions to Union forces in New Mexico led to escorts of freight trains on the Santa Fe Trail.

In June 1861 Col. Edward R. S. Canby, who had just assumed command in New Mexico, promptly took two steps to protect the Santa Fe Trail. Fearful of a Confederate move against his lines of supply and communication, he instructed Maj. William Chapman at Fort Union to organize parties of Mexican or Indian spies to watch the Cimarron Branch and the road from Fort Smith via the Canadian River to Anton Chico and Santa Fe. Masquerading as hunters or traders, they were to operate well south of the roads and give timely

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18. SO No. 103, Fort Union, Dec. 26, 1860; Crittenden to AAAG at Santa Fe, Jan. 11, 1861; Fauntleroy to AAG Lorenzo Thomas, Jan. 12, 1861, NA, AC.

19. Cf. Steere, *Economic and Military History*, 34-35.

warning of Confederate movements. By June 25 Chapman had employed nine New Mexicans for this duty.<sup>20</sup>

At the same time Canby ordered Capt. Thomas Duncan at Fort Union to lead 100 Mounted Riflemen and two companies of recently organized New Mexico Volunteers to the crossing of the Arkansas to escort freight trains to Fort Union. In August he sent a squadron of Mounted Rifles to Fort Wise, on the Arkansas near the site of Bent's Fort, to strengthen that post and help protect trains using the Mountain Branch. In the same month Lt. Col. Christopher "Kit" Carson marched four companies of New Mexico Volunteers to the Arkansas to bring in trains using the Cimarron Route.<sup>21</sup>

Patrols and escorts carried out similar missions throughout the winter of 1861 and summer of 1862. In August 1862 a system of patrols was inaugurated on the Mountain Branch, troops from Fort Union covering the Trail to Raton Pass, troops from Fort Lyon (formerly Wise) from the pass to that fort. A force of the First Colorado Volunteers was ordered to establish a temporary camp on the Mountain Route midway between Forts Wise and Union and give protection to freight trains and mail coaches.<sup>22</sup>

That troops were assigned to such duty during 1861 and 1862 reflects the importance Canby attached to keeping open the Santa Fe Trail. These were the critical Civil War years in New Mexico. Texans under Lt. Col. John R. Baylor occupied southern New Mexico in the summer of 1861, and the Confederate brigade of Brig. Gen. Henry H. Sibley carried the invasion north to Albuquerque and Santa Fe during the first four months of 1862. Battles were fought at Valverde in February and Glorieta Pass in March before the Texans withdrew from the Territory. At the same time Navahos and

20. Lt. & AAAG A. L. Anderson to Chapman, June 19, 1861, NA, AC. Notation on back lists names of New Mexican spies employed by Chapman.

21. Anderson to CO Fort Union, June 30, 1861, *War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Ser. I, Vol. IV, 49; Canby to Chapman, Aug. 15, 1861; Chapman to Col. Ceran St. Vrain, First New Mexico Volunteers, Aug. 18, 1861; Chapman to Anderson, Aug. 22, 1861, NA, AC.

22. Lt. & AAAG W. J. L. Nicodemus to CO Fort Union, Dec. 8, 1861; Canby to Col. J. M. Chivington, June 30, 1862; Chapman to CO Fort Union, July 2, 1862; Canby to AAAG Dept. of Kansas, July 3, 1862; Capt. & AAAG Gurden Chapin to Col. J. H. Leavenworth, Aug. 7, 1862; Chapin to CO Fort Union, Aug. 9, 1862, NA, AC.

Mescalero Apaches were raiding settlements throughout New Mexico. Still, these demands did not prevent Canby from detaching troops to guard the Santa Fe Trail.

When Canby went east to other duty in September 1862, Brig. Gen. James H. Carleton, who had led the California Column to New Mexico, took command of the department and retained it until the end of the war. He appreciated the importance of the Santa Fe Trail and, from his experience in patrolling it in 1851 and 1852, was familiar with the problems involved in its protection. He believed that troops should be temporarily stationed on the most dangerous section of the Trail, and recommended to the Adjutant General in May and again in July 1863 that four companies be placed at Cold Spring and four at Cimarron Spring.<sup>23</sup>

This plan called for reinforcements and seems not to have been adopted until 1864, by which time the plains were in the throes of a disastrous Indian uprising, with Kiowas, Comanches, and Cheyennes attacking trains between the Arkansas and Fort Union. In the summer of 1864 Carleton stationed 50 cavalymen and 50 infantrymen at the crossing of the Arkansas, an equal force at Lower Cimarron Springs, and 50 cavalymen and 30 infantrymen at Upper Cimarron Springs. He also sent one company to Fort Lyon and one to Gray's Ranch, on the Purgatory River in Colorado, to police the Mountain Route. These troops, California and New Mexico Volunteers, carried rations for 60 days.<sup>24</sup>

Carleton next decided to strike at the home country of the Indians who were raiding on the Santa Fe Trail. Late in November 1864 he sent Col. Kit Carson and the First New Mexico Cavalry, fresh from victory over the Navahos, into the Texas panhandle, heart of the Kiowa-Comanche country. On November 26 the troops attacked a large camp of Kiowas on the Canadian River near the ruins of William Bent's old trading post. Joined by Comanches, the Kiowas counterat-

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23. Carleton to AG Lorenzo Thomas, May 10, 1863, July 14, 1863, in U. S. Cong., *Condition of the Indian Tribes: Report of the Joint Special Committee Appointed Under Resolution of March 3, 1865* (Washington, 1867), 109-10.

24. Carleton to Capt. E. H. Bergmann, Aug. 22, 1864; Carleton to Thomas, Aug. 27 and 29, 1864; SO No. 32, Dept. of N. M., Aug. 20, 1864; SO No. 34, Aug. 23, 1864, in *ibid.*, 191-95, 241-42.

tacked and besieged Carson in the ruins. The battle of Adobe Walls raged all day, but mountain howitzers kept the Indians at bay. At dusk the troops burned the Kiowa village and withdrew.<sup>25</sup>

Meanwhile, General Carleton made preparations for guarding the Trail during the approaching travel season. He had hoped to establish temporary camps during the summer of 1865 at Lower Cimarron Springs, Cold Spring, Rabbit Ear Creek and Whetstone Creek,<sup>26</sup> but, probably because of insufficient men, modified this plan. Instead, on February 8, 1865, he published the following notice:<sup>27</sup>

To the people::

Owing to Indian difficulties upon the roads leading from New Mexico to the States, a company of troops will leave Fort Union, New Mexico, for Fort Larned, Kansas, on the first and fifteenth of every month, until further orders, commencing on the first day of March, 1865. The first company will go by the Raton mountain route, the second by the Cimarron route, and so on, alternately. The merchants and others who wish to send trains in after goods can assemble their trains at such points near Fort Union as may be desired by them, so as to have the protection of these periodical escorts, if such be their wish. Arrangements will be made with Major General Curtis, commanding the department of Kansas, so as to send these companies back from Fort Larned at such times as may best promote the interests and safety of all who may have trains upon the road coming in this direction.

By command of General Carleton:

Ben. C. Cutler,  
Assistant Adjutant General.

Carleton provided these escorts for two months, but by May all the troops that could be spared were in the field, and he had to discontinue the service. At the same time, however, he ordered Col. Kit Carson, with two companies of the First New Mexico Cavalry and a company of California Volunteers, to leave Fort Union on May 20 and establish a canton-

25. R. N. Richardson, *The Comanche Barrier to South Plains Settlement* (Glendale, 1933), 285-87; *idem.*, "The Comanche Indians and the Fight at Adobe Walls," *Panhandle-Plains Historical Review*, IV (1931); C. Boone McClure (ed.), "The Battle of Adobe Walls, 1864," *ibid.*, XXI (1948).

26. Carleton to Maj. Gen. S. R. Curtis, Jan. 24, 1865, *Condition of the Indian Tribes*, 215-16.

27. Reproduced in *ibid.*, 243.

ment at Cedar Bluff or Cold Spring, on the Cimarron Route. Carson was to occupy this camp until November 1865 and protect trains passing to and from the States. He was also to have a talk with the Kiowa, Comanche, and Cheyenne chiefs. "Tell them this," advised the General. "They must not think to stop the commerce of the plains, nor must they imagine that we are going to keep up escorts with trains. We do this now until we learn whether they will behave or not. If they will not, we will end the matter by a war which will remove any further necessity for escorts."<sup>28</sup>

Near Cedar Spring Carson's men built Camp Nichols, a fort consisting of stone officers' quarters and walled tents surrounded by stone breastworks banked with earth. The first escort left Camp Nichols on June 19 and accompanied a caravan of 70 wagons to Fort Larned. Carson had no opportunity to convey Carleton's sentiments to the hostile chiefs, for he was almost immediately called to Santa Fe to testify before a joint congressional committee investigating Indian affairs. Maj. Albert H. Pfeiffer, his second-in-command, remained to furnish escorts to caravans for the remainder of the season. Camp Nichols was presumably abandoned in November 1865 as planned, for Col. James F. Meline found it in ruins the following summer.<sup>29</sup>

Carson's expedition of 1865 marked the end of escort service on a significant scale by troops from Fort Union. The railroad moving west into Kansas in 1866-67 caused traffic on the Santa Fe Trail to shift increasingly to the Mountain Branch. The Army mounted campaigns against the Kiowas, Comanches, and Cheyennes in 1868-69 and again in 1874-75, but not in the locale of the Santa Fe Trail and not primarily because of depredations on the Trail. These campaigns crushed the power of the tribes on the southern plains. Soon afterward, the railroad advanced through Raton Pass into New Mexico. In 1880 the first engine steamed into Lamy, station for Santa Fe, and the Santa Fe Trail passed into history.

28. Carleton to Carson, May 4, May 8, 1865; SO No. 15, Hq., Dept. of N. M., May 7, 1865, in *ibid.*, 225-26, 245.

29. E. L. Sabin, *Kit Carson Days, 1809-1868* (2 v., New York, 1935), II, 751-55; Aurora Hunt, *The Army of the Pacific, 1860-1866* (Glendale, 1951), 163-65; James F. Meline, *Two Thousand Miles on Horseback . . . in the Year 1866* (New York, 1867), 269.