

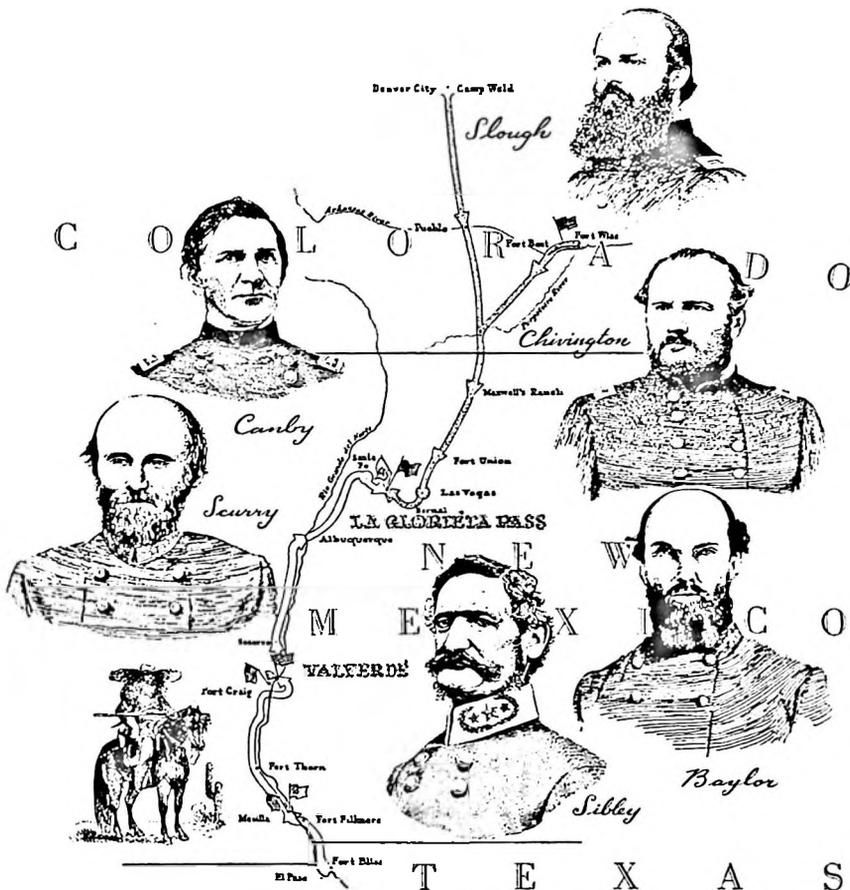


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THE BATTLE OF GLORIETA PASS

by Kenneth Pitman, C.M.



About the Author

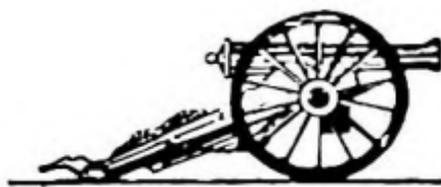
Ken Pitman, a Corresponding Member of the Denver Westerners for nearly two years, is the author of "The Battle of Glorieta Pass," featured article for this issue of *The Roundup*.

Pitman is well versed in military matters, having served as an officer in the U.S. Army, stationed in Panama with the Fourth Battalion, Tenth Infantry Division. He left the service with the rank of captain.

Ken was born in a small farming community in central New Hampshire—"a village that's beside Peyton Place." He was graduated from the University of New Hampshire in 1964, with a major in life sciences.

He received his master's degree from the University of Northern Colorado, where he was also an instructor in biology. For the past 22 years, he has taught science in Littleton School District Six, primarily at Heritage High School. He has also taught evening courses at Arapahoe Community College.

Ken stresses he is an "amateur history enthusiast," but the Westerners are indebted to him for his excellent account of the battle at La Glorieta and Apache Pass.



History of the Cover

The cover illustration for this issue of *The Roundup*, about "The Battle of Glorieta Pass," comes from well back in the history of the Denver Westerners, from an early edition of *The Brand Book*.

The map of the battle region, together with sketches of the principals of the period, was drawn by then-Posseman William J. Barker, whose article, "The Forgotten War in the West," appeared in the 1948 volume of *The Brand Book*. The map shows the lines of march by Colorado Union forces and opposing Confederate forces of Texas in the 1862 campaign.

Barker's 1948 biography identified him as a Denver advertising man. A combat infantry veteran of World War II, he was also the founder-editor of *Rocky Mountain Life* magazine, and had a Hollywood background as a set designer and author of movie shorts.

The Battle of Glorieta Pass

By

Kenneth Pitman, C.M.

(Presented Jan. 23, 1991)

WAS THE CIVIL WAR battle fought at Glorieta Pass in northern New Mexico on March 26-28, 1862 the "Gettysburg of the West"? What impact did the battles and skirmishes fought in the West have on the outcome of the Civil War?

According to many early Western publications, the First Colorado Regiment kept the West in the Union. In fact, according to *The Golden Jubilee* of April 23, 1909, "Although outnumbered three-to-one, in hard-fought battles, they drove back the invaders under [Maj. Henry H.] Sibley into Texas."

According to this report, had the Confederates succeeded in sweeping through Colorado to the north, they would have been able to hold the Rocky Mountain Region after the "Great Rebellion" was over. They would have split the West from the East, and the conflict would have been between the North and the South and West.

Would this have happened? Or do these observations merely reflect regional feelings of self-aggrandizement? A discussion of the reasons for the conflict at La Glorieta Pass and of the results of that conflict may further sharpen the focus on those questions.

At the time of the outbreak of hostilities during the Civil War, the West was in political and emotional upheaval over what course to follow. Many persons from the South had come to the Colorado goldfields to seek their fortunes. Would those who supported the Union cause prevail?

Jefferson Davis, president of the Confederacy, on February 14, 1862, issued a proclamation declaring the New Mexico region to be organized as the Territory of Arizona. He appointed Col. John Baylor to be the military governor and commander of the Confederate force for that region.

Maj. Henry H. Sibley, an officer in the United States Army, was stationed in New Mexico Territory at the start of the Civil War. He resigned his U.S. Army commission on May 13, 1861, and immediately entered the service of the Confederacy. Sibley, a citizen of Louisiana and a West Point graduate, had fought against the Seminole Indians; engaged in the military occupation of Texas; fought in the Mexican War; and had quelled Mormon disturbances in Utah. He also had overseen the construction in New Mexico of Ft. Union, north of Las Vegas, a major depot with arsenal and storage buildings.

On December 14, 1861, Sibley assumed command of those Confederate troops whom he had enlisted. He named his forces the Army of New Mexico—more affectionately dubbed Baylor's Babes and Sibley's Brigade. The brigade consisted of approximately 3,510 men, described as most hardy, courageous, and efficient. Union troops referred to these men as Texans. A *Harper's Weekly* cartoon of one of Sibley's soldiers portrayed a "Texan" on horseback, armed with a sword, a tomahawk, rifle, pistols, and a bottle of whiskey.

Sibley's Brigade was assigned to drive the federal forces from New Mexico. One of Sibley's officers, Lt. Col. William R. Scurry, was made commander of the Fourth Texas Volunteers. He was a widely respected veteran of the Mexican War, a lawyer, and a politician from Clinton, Texas. A. B. Peticolas, who served under Scurry, wrote in his diary that Scurry was "the best officer, most polished gentleman and most popular Colonel in the whole outfit."

During this same period, Col. Edward Canby assumed command of U.S. troops in New Mexico, with orders to get ready to resist any invasion by Confederate forces from Texas. Canby, born in Kentucky, was a West Point graduate. He had fought in the Seminole and Mexican wars, and was considered both cautious and conservative in military operations.

William Gilpin, first governor of the Colorado Territory, was reputed to be an intelligent, courageous, and patriotic leader. He realized the need to defend the Western territories and pro-



Leaders in the Battle of Glorieta Pass were, left, Union Col. Edward R.S. Canby; and, right, Col. Henry H. Sibley, Confederate commander of the Army of New Mexico.

ceeded to organize the First Colorado Volunteer Infantry. Gilpin's authority to finance such an undertaking was questioned in later years. But, aided by such leaders as Charles Cook, Jep Sears, Dave Moffat, and Joe Chaffee, the governor acquired the necessary funds for the action.

John Slough, a prominent lawyer of Denver City, was made a colonel in the regiment. He had originally come from Cincinnati, where he had been a member of the Ohio Legislature. While not an ideal military leader, he was considered capable. The men did not particularly care for him as he did not communicate well with them. They said he had "an Eastern swagger about him."

John Chivington, presiding elder of the Rocky Mountain District of the Methodist Episcopal



Notable in turning back Confederate invasion were, at left, William Gilpin, Colorado Territorial governor; and Maj. John Chivington, First Colorado Volunteer Infantry.

July 6, 1861 *Harper's Weekly* had this caricature of Texas soldiers in Sibley's Brigade.



Church, was offered the chaplaincy of the regiment, but he insisted upon a fighting post, and was made a major.

Chivington was born in Lebanon, Ohio, of Scottish and Irish descent. His father remarked that he was a born fighter. In addition, he was a staunch foe of human slavery. His men came to have the highest regard for his ability, bravery, and stature. It should be noted that John's brother, Lewis Chivington, became a Confederate colonel and was killed at the battle of Wilson's Creek in 1861.

General Sibley proposed to Confederate President Jefferson Davis a military campaign to conquer the New Mexico Territory. A force, raised in Texas, would invade New Mexico, defeat the small and weak Union forces there and capture their supplies. Sibley thought he could enlist large numbers of New Mexicans to augment his Texas army. After defeating the Union forces in New Mexico and capturing Ft. Union, the major U.S. supply center, Sibley would continue north to seize the mining districts around Denver City. Upon obtaining that wealth for the Confederacy, he planned to take the Texans west to Utah where he expected a welcome by the Mormons, who felt alienated from the United States. With Mormon support, Sibley envisioned invading California. There he would seize the mines and warm-water ports of the Pacific.

In January 1862, the Texans moved northward from Ft. Bliss. They encamped for some time at Ft. Thorn, about 40 miles farther up the Rio Grande. On February 7, Sibley set out with about 3,000 men and a large supply train on his expedition to the north. The next major fort encountered was Ft. Craig, south of Albuquerque, under the command of Union Colonel Canby.

Sibley stopped within a mile of the fort and "invited" Canby to leave the protection of the fort, and to fight outside. Canby refused. Sibley decided to bypass the fort and move on to Ft. Union,

prized as a major supply depot.

(It is a myth that Canby and Sibley were brothers-in-law, although both had attended West Point and fought together in conflicts preceding the Civil War. Some of the troops may have believed the tale, but it was false.)

Canby, realizing what Sibley intended, challenged the Confederates at a ford a few miles upstream near the little town of Valverde. The fighting was furious, and at first it appeared Union forces would win, but the Texans eventually took better strategic positions. Finally, Union forces backed away and returned to Ft. Craig. The Texans continued their march, taking Albuquerque and Santa Fe without resistance.

Colorado Territorial Governor Gilpin had begun organizing a militia. The men were rough and unilly, and many came from the mines outside of Denver City. For example, a Sam Cook organized a mounted company of men from the South Clear Creek Mining District. These troops were initially stationed at Camp Weld, two miles north of what was then Denver City.

Most of the men were eager to fight, and were bored with camp life. On occasion they stole chickens, vegetables, bacon, and whiskey from the citizenry. There was almost universal disgust with their behavior. In late February 1862, the "Pikes Peakers," as they were called, marched on New Mexico.

On March 7, 1862, near what is now Trinidad, Colorado, Colonel Slough formed the Colorado Regiment into two columns for the final march to Ft. Union. To the west were the Sangre de Cristo peaks. The columns stayed on the Santa Fe Trail and climbed the Raton Range. On March 8, as they prepared to make camp at the southern end of the Sangre de Cristo spur, a courier appeared from Col. Gabriel Paul, then in command at Ft. Union. Paul sent word of Sibley's successful advance to Santa Fe, and of the impending Confederate attack on Ft. Union.

The already exhausted Coloradans discarded everything but guns, ammunition, and blankets, and resumed the march through extreme cold and snow. They hiked 92 miles in 36 hours and arrived at Ft. Union on March 9. In spite of their heroic feat, the volunteers were not warmly welcomed by the well-trained and disciplined Regular Army troops at Ft. Union, and the Coloradans had to camp on the outskirts of the post. Nor did Colonel Slough help the morale of the Colorado troops with his haughty and distant demeanor.

CANBY'S ORDERS AMBIGUOUS

Colonel Canby was in Las Vegas, New Mexico Territory, at this time. He had left ambiguous orders on protecting the fort. Slough, in his cold way, called attention to his seniority, and boldly assumed command. Slough and Paul disagreed on Canby's orders. Paul wanted to wait as long as possible at the fort, then destroy it before it was captured. Slough wanted to meet the Texans and harass them without waiting for an attack.

Slough drilled the Pikes Peakers for 12 days at Ft. Union, and on March 22 the regiment marched south toward Santa Fe. Of the 1,342 men, there were three detachments of cavalry, and the rest of the troops were afoot. Their artillery consisted of eight small cannons.

Even though Colonel Paul vigorously objected to Colonel Slough's plan, Slough asserted that the best way to defend the West was to leave Ft. Union and to meet the Texans head-on. He further directed that all of his troops be involved. In fact, he took many of the Regular Army troops with him. A few regulars and volunteers were left behind to guard Ft. Union.

On March 25, Slough sent Chivington and an advance force of 418 men toward Santa Fe. Late that night this detachment encamped near Kozlowski's Ranch.

The ranch had served as a rest area for travelers on the Santa Fe Trail before the war. Nearby were the ruins of the Pecos Mission where the early Franciscan friars had introduced Christianity to Pueblo Indians.

Martin Kozlowski, the owner, was born in Warsaw, Poland, in 1827. He married in England and came to America, then in 1853 enlisted in the First Dragoons of the U.S. Army. He served five years in New Mexico Territory fighting Indians, then left the Army in 1858 and settled on the 600-acre ranch.



(Courtesy Colorado Historical Society)

Adobe structure was main building of Kozlowski's Ranch.

Chivington decided to use Kozlowski's Ranch as a staging area. A large spring near the ranch provided ample water, and the troops camped on a nearby bluff. They named the spot Camp Lewis after one of the officers in the regiment.

Kozlowski was very supportive of the Union, and complimented the men for not stealing anything from the ranch.

Chivington learned that Confederate scouts had been at the ranch earlier in the evening, inquiring whether any Yankees had been about. A contingent of 20 men from Captain Cook's company was sent to intercept the Texas scouts, and captured them at Pigeon's Ranch, farther up the trail toward Santa Fe. The Confederates were caught before daybreak, with no shots fired.

One captured officer, Lieutenant McIntyre, was a deserter from Colonel Canby's staff, and had fought on the side of the Union at the battle of Valverde. Captain Hall, another Confederate, was a widely known citizen of Denver City. Chivington learned from these men that advance troops from Sibley's force were at the western end of La Glorieta Pass and would be moving toward Ft. Union.

THE FIGHT AT APACHE CANYON

On the morning of March 26, 1862, Major Chivington left Camp Lewis with a detachment of troops to scout in the direction of Santa Fe. Soon they passed Pigeon's Ranch, a hostelry on the Santa Fe Trail. The ranch was named after its owner, Alexander Vallé, a Frenchman. Vallé had a peculiar, birdlike one-two-three-glide style of dancing that observers said was pigeon-like. Vallé proved to be a friendly, amenable, and entertaining host. The ranch had many rooms where the occupants could eat and sleep in private. It had secure areas for animals and wagons, and an adobe-walled yard.

Chivington's detachment continued toward the pass and was near the summit of the divide about one and one-half miles beyond Pigeon's Ranch around two o'clock. As they started to descend the trail through a narrow gulch, they encountered a scouting party from Sibley's lead column, commanded by Confederate Maj. Charles Pyron. Chivington pressed forward, anxious to strike the main body of troops. Battle cries rang out. "We've got 'em this time! Give 'em hell boys! Hurrah for the Pike's Peakers!"

The trail was narrow for another three-fourths mile, until it angled to the right and opened into the long, wide reaches of Apache Canyon. As the Coloradans moved into the canyon, they could see the Texans coming in at the opposite end.

Major Pyron had some 600 men on foot. The Confederates had left their horses resting at the west end of the canyon, and were investigating a report that there were about 200 Mexicans and 200 U.S. Army troops in the vicinity. They had expected an easy victory.

The Coloradans quickly took cover and began firing. The Texans, surprised but unruffled,



(Courtesy Colorado Historical Society)

Apache Canyon as it appears today, at highway entrance.

replied with their two howitzers. Chivington, strong-voiced and impressive in the saddle, took complete control and vigorously exhorted his men to spread out and continue the fight. He ordered Capt. George W. Howland to take his small cavalry unit to the rear, and to charge the Texans at the slightest indication of their retreat.

TEXANS COMPLETELY OUTMANEUVERED

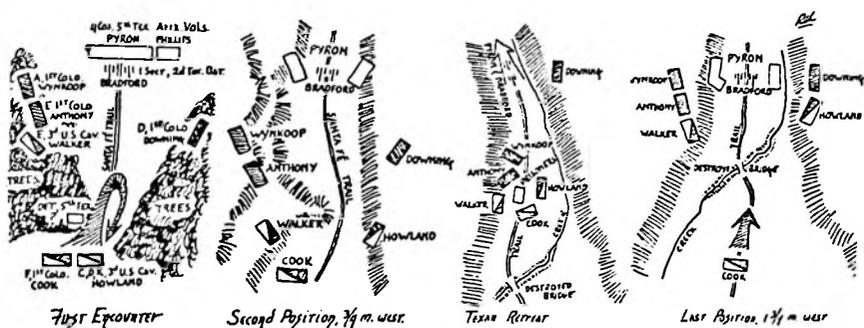
Captains Wynkoop, Anthony, and Walker were sent with their companies to the left along the slope of the canyon, to lay down a flanking fire from above the Texans. Captain Downing's men were sent to the mountainous area on the right. The Texans had been completely outmaneuvered, and the intense gunfire from both sides on their positions forced them to retreat.

An arroyo, in most places 20 to 25 feet deep, cuts through the upper part of the Apache Canyon. At one point, a 16-foot bridge spanned the arroyo. The Texans crossed the bridge, then destroyed it. They set up the two howitzers on their side of the arroyo, and took stations on each side, on the mountain slopes. It seemed to be a strong strategic position.

Chivington's troops, in hot pursuit, were under heavy fire from the Texans' rifles and artillery. Chivington started issuing orders. According to soldiers who served under him, he had a pistol in each hand, and one or two more belted in reserve. He gave his orders with great energy. One of the captured Confederate officers said he emptied his revolver three times at the Colorado major and ordered his company to fire a volley at him. Vallé said of Chivington, "E poot iz 'ead down and foight like a mad bull."

Chivington was angered by Howland's failure to follow orders and to attack the Texans as they retreated. He dismounted the captain's troops and sent them up the canyon's right slope, along with Downing's men. By now, the Texans were becoming impressed with the ability of the Colorado troops.

The rest of the Coloradans were spread out in front, with Captain Cook's cavalry sent to the rear. Soon Chivington ordered Cook to charge. The captain raised his saber in the late afternoon sun, and started the charge with 103 men, mainly those from the south Clear Creek area. They



(Battle maps courtesy Westemore Press)

Battle of Apache Canyon: left: first clash of Union, Confederate forces; second position, $\frac{3}{4}$ mi. west; last position, $1\frac{3}{4}$ mi. west; far right, Texans' retreat.

rode faster as they galloped along the well-worn trail. Increasing enemy fire came from both sides of the canyon. The horses jumped the arroyo at its narrowest point. Only one horse failed to make the leap, and horse and rider died at the bottom of the ravine.

The rest of Cook's Clear Creekers went hell-bent through the Texans' line up to the mouth of the canyon. Cook yelled, "We're going back!" and rode through the Confederate lines, crossing back and forth three times. The Texans were almost routed but managed to save their howitzers.

Dusk was approaching, and the hurt and exhausted Confederates abandoned their positions. Both sides had many casualties, and more than 70 Texans were taken prisoner. Chivington set up a hospital at Pigeon's Ranch.

The Confederates asked for a truce late in the evening, to bury their dead and to care for their wounded. A truce was agreed upon until 8 A.M. the next day. Both sides started to prepare for a major battle. Pyron's Texans had been reinforced by Colonel Scurry at Johnson's Ranch, at the western end of the pass. Scurry had made an all-night march from Galisteo, and brought along a large wagon train of supplies.

Chivington was joined by Slough's forces. Neither side broke the truce the next day, March 27. They nervously scouted each other and planned strategy. Scurry, confident of his Texans' abilities, and knowing how they had succeeded at Valverde, decided to attack the Union forces on his own terms.

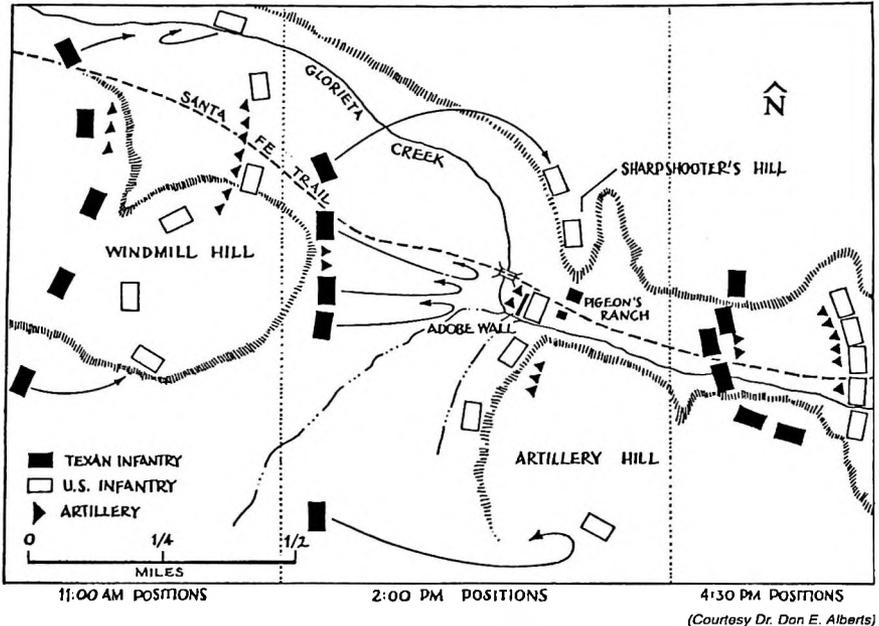
BATTLE AT PIGEON'S RANCH

Early on March 28, Scurry marched eastward with about 1,100 men and three cannons. At about the same time, Chivington set out with some 400 troops on a route to the south to scout the Confederate rear in the area of Johnson's Ranch. It was hoped that the Confederates could be forced to retreat, and Chivington's troops could ambush them.

Colonel Slough was left with about 700 men to face Scurry's Texans. Slough's men were fatigued after a forced march of 35 miles to support Chivington.

It should be noted that the men under Slough had little confidence in his abilities. Some even questioned his loyalty, although this was unjustified. One of his captains in later years stated that he had watched the colonel carefully to detect any action favorable to the enemy. If he had, he said he would have shot Slough on the spot.

Around 10 A.M., Slough's troops reached Pigeon's Ranch. The troops broke ranks to rest and obtain water, and to visit the wounded left there after the fight in Apache Canyon. They were almost completely surprised when pickets rushed back, exclaiming that that Texans were only 800 yards away.



Positions of troops during daylong battle around Pigeon's Ranch at Glorieta Pass.

The battle opened in a gulch about one-half mile west of Pigeon's Ranch. Scurry deployed his Texans on a ridge west of Windmill Hill. Slough positioned his Union troops on the west slope of Windmill Hill. The ensuing battle lasted about three hours. Union troops under the command of Captain Kerbler tried to follow an irrigation ditch to outflank the Texans on the right, but Scurry repulsed their attack.

Confederate Major Pyron attacked Captain Downing's company on the opposite flank, and pushed them back toward Pigeon's Ranch. The federal troops were under heavy fire and outnumbered. Expecting an immediate charge on their position, they retreated 800 yards. They formed a line along the ledge of rocks to the north (Sharpshooter's Hill) and below the Vallé house, across the arroyo and to the wooded bluff to the south (Artillery Hill).

Scurry directed the Texans from the east slope of Windmill Hill, ordering a series of attacks on the Union center. These moves were repulsed, as was an attack against Artillery Hill. However, a Confederate flanking attack against Sharpshooter's Hill succeeded, the Texans took the ridge, and the Union center collapsed. Union forces on Artillery Hill were almost captured.

About 4:30 P.M., Slough set up his final battleline one-half mile east of Pigeon's Ranch. The Union troops wanted to continue the fight, but Slough insisted that they had fulfilled their mission of harassing the enemy.

About that time an ambulance bearing a flag of truce came from the Texas lines. Maj. Alexander M. Jackson, an assistant adjutant and one of the leaders for the whole expedition, asked for a suspension of hostilities until noon the following day to care for the dead and wounded. Morale of the Union troops sank. They thought the Texans would resupply and continue the attack after the truce ended.



(Courtesy Colorado Historical Society)

Pigeon's Ranch, Stanta Fe Trail hostelry, was built by Alexander Vallé.

CHIVINGTON'S MARCH TO JOHNSON'S RANCH

While this fighting had gone on, Major Chivington had taken four companies on a southern route to the rear of Scurry's forces. Charles Gardiner, a member of Company A of the First Colorado Infantry, affectionately called the "Pet Lambs of Colorado," recalled what happened during this maneuver. He said that Chivington's plan was to go around the enemy and head the Confederates off and make them surrender, or slaughter them as they came through. The Union troops were unsuccessful as the Texans "wouldn't drive worth a cent."

Lt. Col. Manuel Chavis of the New Mexico Volunteers was selected to guide Chivington and his men in this plan. Chavis was reputed to be a brave, intelligent, and skillful officer. He led the column to a trail that was south of Pigeon's Ranch. While following this trail for eight miles, the troops could hear the fighting at Pigeon's Ranch. A mounted company was sent forward to scout, at first in the direction of the fighting, then toward Johnson's Ranch. The scouts captured a sentry on the crest of the mountain overlooking the Confederate wagon-train encampment about one-o'clock in the afternoon.

According to Gardiner, the Union troops silently approached a bench of the mountain about 1,500 feet high and directly above the supply wagons.

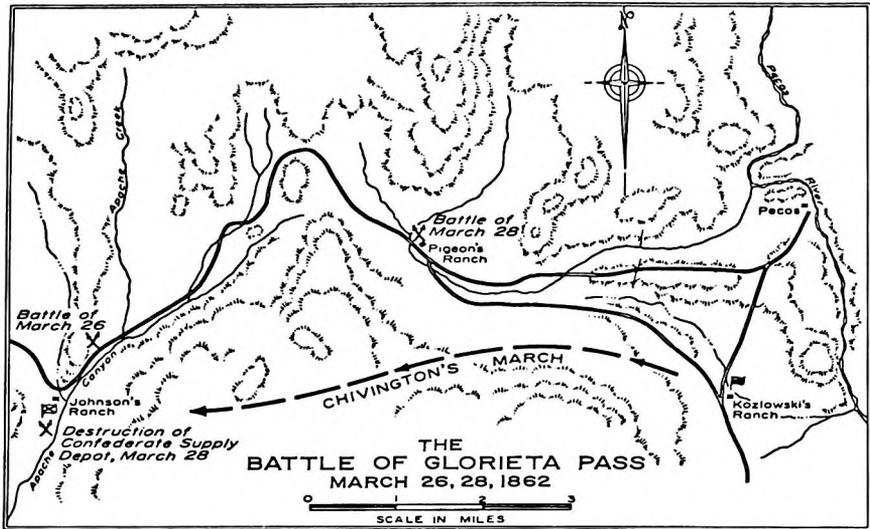
"Then we sat and rested near an hour, watching the unconscious Texans, jumping, running foottraces, etc.," Gardiner recalled.

Colonel Scurry's supply train consisted of 80 wagons, 500 horses and mules, and one field-piece.

Chivington's troops started down the mountain silently. About two-thirds of the way down, one of the officers yelled, "Who are you below there?" One of the Confederate officers replied, "Texans, goddamn you!"

"We want you!" replied the Union officer. The Texan retorted, "Come and get us if you can!"

The Union troops heard the command, "Go for 'em!" and they slid down the steep incline "like wild Indians." The Texans fired two volleys, then broke ranks. Most of them were captured.



(Courtesy National Park Service)

Three battle sites plus Chivington's march on Confederate supply train.

The Union soldiers were allowed to ransack the wagons, but because they had to return over the steep mountain, all of the wagons and most of the supplies had to be destroyed. The sad task of bayonetting the 500 or 600 horses and mules was carried out so that Scurry's troops could not recapture them.

Couriers informed Chivington that he and his troops should return without delay to help Slough. They were cautioned to take a different route back to avoid the Texans. They were guided by a French priest who supposedly knew the trails of the region. His knowledge was questioned by many of the men, but they arrived safely in the Union camp about two o'clock the next morning.

Chivington's troops had inflicted a stunning blow at Johnson's Ranch. The Texans had few options without supplies, and retreated to Santa Fe, leaving their wounded to be cared for by the Union forces.

There are varied reports on casualties, but the best estimates are that Slough lost one-fourth of his men, and the Confederates probably the same.

Canby's troops dogged Sibley's column as the Confederates continued their retreat to Texas. At least on one other occasion the federal forces thought they could defeat Sibley, but Canby refused to continue the fight, stating he didn't want the cost and burden of taking care of Sibley's men.

The overly cautious Canby ordered the Coloradans back to Ft. Union. The men were incensed, and Slough was so disgusted that he resigned his commission. (He was later appointed brigadier general in charge of the military district of Alexandria, Virginia.)

What was the impact of this conflict on the outcome of the Civil War? With only a few thousand troops engaged, it can be argued that the battle was insignificant. But if Sibley had taken Ft. Union and then marched into Denver City, would large numbers of Union troops have been diverted to the West? Would foreign interests have entered the conflict on the side of the South? These questions cannot be answered, but the significance of the battle should not be underestimated.

Why was General Sibley so frequently absent at critical times of decision? His troops felt that alcohol was a major factor in his behavior. Sibley—inventor of the Sibley tent, the Sibley howitzer, and the Sibley stove—years later went to Egypt and became a general of artillery.

Dr. Don Alberts, author of *Rebels on the Rio Grande*, is involved with the Glorieta Battlefield preservation effort. He said there is now a movement to put the area under the protection of the U.S. Park Service. Dr. Alberts, who is also a member of the Westerners in Albuquerque, noted that Pigeon's Ranch is near a paved highway and is subject to vandalism. However, the road may be closed to help save the battle site. Dr. Alberts said Kozlowski's Ranch is now a part of property owned by actress Greer Garson, and it, too, may become a part of the protected area.



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AUTHOR'S NOTE—Illustrations used were through the courtesy of sources herein listed, and as credited on accompanying captions: The Colorado Historical Society; Dr. Don E. Alberts, from his *Rebels on the Rio Grande*; Charles Gardiner, *Historical Times (Civil War Times Illustrated)*; Robert L. Kerby, from his *The Confederate Invasion of New Mexico and Arizona*, Westernlore Press; William J. Barker, "The Forgotten War in the West," *Denver Westerners 1948 Brand Book*; and E.B. Long, "War Beyond the River," *Denver Westerners 1974-1975 Brand Book*.

