

The Final Roster of the Army of the West, 1846-1847

by Dwight L. Clark and George Ruhlen

Originally published in the December 1967 issue of *The California Historical Society Quarterly*.
This article was digitized by the History Office, Installation Support Unit, Camp San Luis Obispo.

3 May 2016

The Final Roster of the Army of the West, 1846-1847

By DWIGHT L. CLARKE and GEORGE RUHLEN¹

ON DECEMBER 6, 1846, after the dispersal of their second charge at the Battle of San Pasqual, Andrés Pico's men rode off down the San Pasqual Valley. The American forces hastily made a camp on the sloping hillside where the battle monument now stands to the north of Highway 78. After succoring their wounded, the dragoons undertook the burial of their dead.

Lieutenant William H. Emory, the topographical engineer, reports the melancholy task:

When night closed in, the bodies of the dead were buried under a willow to the east of our camp, with no other accompaniment than the howling of myriads of wolves, attracted by the smell. Thus were put to rest together and forever, a band of brave and heroic men.²

But despite Emory's prediction, the dead were not to rest forever under the rocks and cactus where they had fallen. In May, 1848, a detachment of the First Dragoons under Lieutenant Davidson transferred the bodies buried at San Pasqual to a cemetery in Old Town, San Diego County. In 1851 Captain Johnston's relatives at Piqua, Ohio, arranged to have his remains shipped to his old home. A year later a weird tale appeared in the California papers. By a strange blunder the coffin containing the body of the dead captain was supposed to have been stored in San Francisco with some boxes of stove parts. Ultimately what was believed to be the Johnston casket was received in Ohio where it was interred and a marble monument was erected over the grave in

DWIGHT L. CLARKE, author of *Stephen Watts Kearny: Soldier of the West*, is president of the Zamorano Club and a fellow of the California Historical Society. GEORGE RUHLEN, formerly post quartermaster at Fort Rosecrans where the dead of the Battle of San Pasqual are buried, is a retired United States Army colonel.

memory of Kearny's gallant aide. Following one of San Francisco's many fires of the fifties, the boxes of stove parts found their way to a rubbish pile. When one was opened by chance, it was found to contain a human skeleton. At first foul play was suspected, but eventually it was widely believed that the bones were those of Captain Johnston. If true, the monument in Piqua stands over a box of stove parts! The story is told at length by Arthur Woodward in *Lances at San Pascual*.³

The remaining bodies interred at Old Town were transferred some time in the eighties to Point Loma and again in 1888 were reinterred in the adjoining Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery—their fourth resting place! There they reposed neglected for many years under a headstone simply marked "16 Unknown U. S. Soldiers." (The graves of Captain Moore and his brother-in-law, Lieutenant Hammond, were nearby.)

Colonel George Ruhlen was post-quartermaster at Fort Rosecrans in 1911. Feeling that these heroic dead merited greater respect, he set in motion the necessary steps to mark their last resting place. His efforts, with the names of the dead, are best told in his letter to the superintendent of the cemetery (by strange coincidence a captain named Kearney). It follows:

Superintendent, Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery,
San Diego, California

San Diego
January 25, 1948.

My dear Captain Kearney:

I have obtained from Mrs. Winifred Davidson, Historian, San Diego Historical Society, the names of the victims of the San Pasqual Battle, December 6, 1846, who are buried in the Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery, . . .

[There follows a list of names differing only slightly from those listed below.]

The . . . listed names are those marked on the bronze plate attached to the boulder marking the grave of these soldiers.

Nearby in the same section of the cemetery are the graves of Captain Benjamin D. Moore and 2d Lt Thomas C. Hammond, of Companies C and K, 1st U. S. Dragoons.

The reason the above names do not appear in your cemetery burial records may be explained somewhat by the following information.

In 1911 while I was post quartermaster at Fort Rosecrans, California, the post cemetery was under my jurisdiction. My interest was aroused by a headstone marked "16 Unknown U S Soldiers." The burial record indicates the remains in this grave had been transferred from the Cemetery at Oldtown to which place

they had been brought from the San Pasqual Battlefield. These data are recorded in the old post cemetery book which is in your possession. Nearby were the graves of Capt. Benjamin D. Moore, 1st Dragoons, and Lt. Thomas C. Hammond, 1st Dragoons, both of whom were killed at San Pasqual, December 6, 1846.

A perusal of available histories indicated that General Kearny lost three officers and 16 men killed at San Pasqual, and all leads tended to the fact that the remains in the "unknown" grave were those of dragoons killed in that battle.

It was inconceivable that brave men killed in battle should lie in an unmarked grave. Accordingly a letter was prepared for the signature of Major Geo. H. McManus, CAC, Commanding Officer of Fort Rosecrans, setting forth the facts and information obtained, which he sent to the Adjutant General of the Army requesting authority to mark the headstone with the names of those killed at San Pasqual and that the names be furnished.

The letter was returned by the War Department disapproving the request on the grounds that the proof was not sufficient that these were the same bodies, but the reply went on to quote General Kearny's report that he had buried his dead, three officers and 16 men on the battlefield, and the names of the dead were listed in the War Department reply. This communication was filed with the cemetery burial book.

Subsequently in 1921 or 1922 while on duty in the War Department at Washington, D. C., the opportunity occurred to present the whole matter to Major General Willard A. Holbrook, Chief of Cavalry, and an old 1st Cavalryman, who immediately took a deep interest in the affair. A letter to the commanding officer of Fort Rosecrans was returned with the notation that no record could be found of Major McManus' letter. Then I went to the Adjutant General's office in the War Department, found the file copy of Major McManus' letter and showed it to General Holbrook. From that time on things began to pop. The Army became interested and the San Diego Historical Society became active in the matter. A boulder was brought from the San Pasqual Battlefield, set up on the grave and bronze plates were attached recording the names of those buried there.

You may note in the old burial book a notation by Colonel Edwin Landon, CAC, Commanding Officer of Fort Rosecrans in 1922, directing attention to a letter pasted in the book on the opposite page. This letter is now missing. Also a notation I made and initialed in 1933, stating that the names of the unknown soldiers are marked on a plate on the stone now over their grave.

I trust that the information herewith will give you sufficient data to record the names of those gallant soldiers who died in battle for their country in your permanent file, where they should have been placed years ago.

Sincerely yours,
George Ruhlen,
Colonel U S Army, Retired.

The names on the bronze plate referred to above are:

1st United States Dragoons

Company C

Sergeant John Cox⁴
 Corporal William C. West
 Private George Ashmead
 Private Joseph T. Campbell
 Private William Dalton
 Private John Dunlap
 Private Joseph B. Kennedy⁵
 Private William B. Leckey
 Private Samuel T. Repose

Company K

1st Sergeant Otis L. Moore
 Sergeant William Whitress
 Corporal George Ramsdale
 Farrier David W. Johnson
 Private William H. Fiel
 Private William C. Gholston
 Private Robert S. Gregory

California Volunteer

Henry Baker

Topographical Engineer Detachment

François Menard

Colonel Ruhlen believes this is the only correct list of San Pasqual's dead, buried at Fort Rosecrans, that has ever been published. It will be noted that it differs slightly from the list in "Appendix D" of *Lances at San Pascual*. The Ruhlen list includes a Private Henry Baker omitted from the *Lances* Appendix but mentioned in footnote 140 on page 84, while Woodward has a line reading "One volunteer killed—Hugh McKaffray K Co. 1st Dragoons, missing."

Colonel G. D. Murphey in a letter to Colonel Ruhlen dated February 5, 1948, enclosed a list of those killed at San Pasqual. Since two of the names were spelled differently than on the copies of the muster rolls in Colonel Ruhlen's possession, he requested verification from the enlistment records. General Witsell in response supplied the names listed above. In Colonel Murphey's letter, earlier referred to, he said, "the name of the civilian topographer who was killed is not known." Colonel Ruhlen feels there can be no doubt that he was François Menard, one of Emory's mountain men.

The names on the burial plate total eighteen. To these must be added Captains Abraham Johnston and Benjamin Moore and Lieutenant Thomas Hammond, or a total of twenty-one Americans killed or mortally wounded at San Pasqual—three officers, sixteen enlisted men, the volunteer Henry Baker, and the civilian Menard in the topographical service. McKaffray (or McCaffrey according to Company K's roster) is not included as a casualty as his fate was unknown. He may have been killed or he may have deserted.

Of equal claim to fame are those other members of Companies C and K of the First Dragoons, who with General Kearny and his staff made the entire march from Fort Leavenworth to San Diego—a march only equalled in our history by that of the Mormon Battalion in 1846-47. General Kearny's staff that rode with him into San Diego included Major Thomas Swords, quartermaster, Captain Henry Smith Turner, Lieutenants William Hemsley Emory and W. H. Warner of the Topographical Corps and their assistant, Norman Bestor, Dr. John Strother Griffin, assistant surgeon, the artist John Mix Stanley, and the guide, Antoine Robidoux.

The rosters of Companies C and K, including the casualties listed above, follow:

Members of Companies C and K, 1st Dragoons

Who Marched with General Kearny from the Rio Grande to California
September to December, 1846

Company C, 1st Regiment of Dragoons

Captain Benjamin Daviess Moore, Commanding Company

1st Sergeant	Privates	Privates
Richard J. Falls	George Coffelt	James Murphy
Sergeants	Edward Curran	George F. Myers
Richard Williams	Michael Curran	John Murty
John O'Brien	Mark D. Childs	Ferdinand Nicholas
John Cox	Joseph T. Campbell	James A. Osbourne
Corporals	Jeremiah Crabb	George Pearce
Paul D. Wood ⁶	Carolus B. Callahan ⁸	Henry Purcell
John W. Cassin	Thomas A. Douglass	Amasa Palmer
Edward Heinricks	John Dunlap	James Pinkerton
Oliver C. Wilson	A. C. Donaldson	Isaac N. Randolph
William C. West ⁷	William Dalton	Samuel T. Repose
Buglers	Peter Forney	James Repeto
Michael Halpin	Erasmus D. French ⁹	David Streeter
James R. McKee	Thomas Grady	John Stokely
Farrier	John Hemerle	Michael A. Tubb
John S. Roody	Joseph B. Kennedy	William Tubb
Privates	Matthew Lauber	Christian Teinchman ¹⁰
George Ashmead	William C. Leckey	Paul Vanaken
Stephen A. Bishop	Jacob Mauser	John Vyer
George S. Bryan	John McNeilly	George N. Williams
Zarah Bobo		Jacob Westfall
John Brown		John White

(1 officer, 59 enlisted men)

California Historical Society Quarterly

Company K, 1st Regiment of Dragoons
2d Lieutenant Thomas C. Hammond, Commanding Company

1st Sergeant	Privates	Privates
Otis L. Moore	John Chambers	David H. Nickerson
Sergeants	Andrew J. Courtner	Godfrey Newmayer
Theodore Heathcote	John Cutler	Francis O'Rourke
William Whitress	William B. Dunn	Gilbert Powell
Corporals	Valentine Ernest	William Pierce
Joseph Clapin	John Fetzer	John Palmer
George W. Whitehorn	William H. Fiel	William Raynor
George Ramsdale	William C. Gholston	Thomas Robeson
Farrier	Michael Green	Charles Shaw
David W. Johnson	Robert S. Gregory	John Smith
Privates	Conrad Humbkey	Louis Steingrandt
Hiram Andrew	Jeremiah Kelliher	Mathew Totten
Asa M. Bowen	Minard J. Lefever	Hilary Twist
Thomas W. Beale	Hugh McElroy	Israel C. Tindall
John Brestler	Hugh McCaffrey	F. L. Venmenmon
Samuel E. Cooper	Robert Moore	Jacob Wilber

(1 officer, 44 enlisted men)

Two privates of Company K who accompanied Captain Cooke arrived in California in January, 1847, and were assigned to Company C. They were:

Privates: Jacob Jagge Thomas Lester

Lt A. J. Smith arrived in California with Captain Cooke and assumed command of Company C in January, 1847.¹¹

Doctor Griffin's report (see Woodward's *Lances at San Pascual*, p. 59) lists four on the medical staff. We can only identify three—Griffin himself and the two hospital stewards Callahan and French. Probably another dragoon not named was a third steward, but that would not change the total.

If lists of names are lacking in human interest, the remarks that the mustering officer of Company C (Lt. Col. Philip St. George Cooke) noted on the muster roll of February, 1847, bring them to life:

Discipline—Good

Instruction—Improving

Military appearance—Good, except for clothing

Accoutrements—Good

Clothing—A mixture of soldier, sailor, & citizen;

Many ragged, some positively naked.

To these comments should be added the harsh fact that these soldiers

had not been paid even their meager wages since ten months previously, on April 30, 1846, prior to their departure from Fort Leavenworth. The pay scale per month at that time for the several grades was:

Colonel	\$122.00 (including rations and servant allowance)					
Major	107.00	“	“	“	“	“
Captain	82.00	“	“	“	“	“
Lieutenant	65.00	“	“	“	“	“
1st Sergeant	16.00					
Sergeant	13.00					
Corporal	10.00					
Bugler	9.00					
Private	8.00					

Truly United States expansion a century ago, like later crises in the history of mankind, was also “purchased by blood, sweat and tears.”

NOTES

1. In the preparation of *Stephan Watts Kearny: Soldier of the West*, the author originally planned to include two appendices. The first was the roster of Companies C and K of the First Dragoons who marched with General Kearny from the Rio Grande to California, September to December, 1846. The other was a list of all American casualties at San Pasqual on December 6 and 7. In securing these data, I was greatly aided by Colonel George Ruhlen, U. S. Army retired. For lack of space these appendices were omitted from the biography, but the data gathered for them are worthy of preservation. Since the compilation is largely the work of Colonel George Ruhlen, his name is included as a coauthor now that the material appears as a separate article.

2. Lt. W. H. Emory, *Notes of a Military Reconnaissance from Fort Leavenworth in Missouri to San Diego in California*, 30 Congress, 1st sess., Sen. Doc. 7 (Reprint: Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 1951), p. 170.

3. Arthur Woodward, *Lances at San Pascual* (San Francisco, California Historical Society, 1948), pp. 47-53.

4. Died of wounds on December 10, 1846.

5. Died of wounds on December 21, 1846.

6. Resigned as corporal on November 27, 1846.

7. Appointed corporal on November 27, 1846.

8. Hospital steward.

9. Hospital steward.

10. This dragoon's name is spelled in three different ways on the several muster rolls of Company C—Teinchard, Trenchard, and Teinchman. Bancroft spells it Tenchman; Woodward, Teinchman. It appears as Teinchman on the

muster rolls from December, 1846, to February, 1847; probably by that time the company clerk had ascertained the correct spelling.

11. The data on Companies C and K were compiled from photostatic copies of the original muster rolls filed with the National Archives, Washington, D. C., by Colonel George Ruhlen, U. S. Army, retired. The muster rolls examined were: Company C, 1st Regiment of Dragoons, Army of the United States, August 31 to October 31, 1846; October 31 to December 31, 1846; December 1, 1846, to February 28, 1847. Company K, 1st Regiment of Dragoons, Army of the United States, August 31 to October 31, 1846; October 31 to December 6, 1846.