



JORDAN

OVER THE RIVER

California Volunteers in Utah During the Civil War

by Tom Generous

During the War Between the States, 16,000 Californians answered the nation's call to military service. Although the California Volunteers, as they were known, did indeed fight to defend the Union, it was in the West rather than in the East where they made their military contributions. President Abraham Lincoln's administration decided early in the war that conscripting troops so far away would be expensive and might revive sympathy for the still-alive movement for California independence.

Even without the stimulus of the draft, eager Californians filled eight regiments of infantry, two regiments of cavalry, and several other specialized battalions.¹ Their numbers equalled that of the entire pre-war Army, with the result that during the Civil War there were about five times as many soldiers serving in the Department of the Pacific as before.²

This army has had its own historians, who have shown that the Volunteers joined in large numbers to defend the endangered Union. Unhappy that they were not called to fight Confederates, they nevertheless served with distinction in the tedious, dangerous, and important work of keeping the Far West tied to the Union.³ While this description is correct, it nevertheless misses the mark.

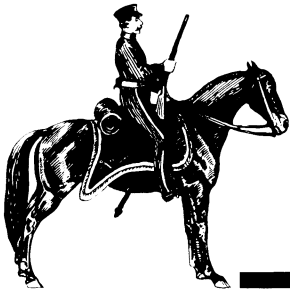
The California Volunteers believed in Manifest Des-

tiny, the philosophical doctrine of natural imperial expansion under whose banner the United States had conquered North America. Itself a product of the doctrine, California produced men whose attitude formed a bridge over which the nativist and imperialist doctrines of the 1840s passed on their way to the nativist and imperialist America of the 1890s. The Volunteers' performance in Utah in subduing not only Indians but the Mormon Church exemplifies these beliefs.

Before the war, transcontinental mail moved by way of St. Louis, Memphis, and Santa Fe to San Francisco. During the secession crisis this route, which passed through the Confederacy, was replaced by a northern trail extending from St. Louis to Placerville, California.⁴ Unfortunately, the new road traversed territory made hostile by Indian "depredations." In April 1861, the Lincoln Administration ordered four companies of the Tenth Infantry to provide protection for the emigrants passing that way.⁵ Regular Infantry, however, was too valuable to be left in such a side-show when the Civil War heated up in the East. On July 24, 1861, Secretary of War Simon Cameron made the first call for three-year California Volunteers, one regiment of infantry, and five companies of cavalry for duty along the new mail route.⁶ The First Infantry and the First Cavalry, California Volunteers, totaled about 1,500 fighting men, or double the number of Regulars then stationed along the route. Mustered into

With support for the Union cause running high in San Francisco in 1861, 16,000 eager Californians volunteer for military service.

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service within a month of their call, these men were immediately diverted to Southern California when the flames of secessionism briefly flickered there.⁷

Meanwhile, the problems along the overland mail route continued.⁸ As a stopgap measure, the Army authorized the mail company to release food to the Indians along the route, hoping temporarily to pacify them.⁹ But this tactic was not likely to gain support in a nation which widely believed that good Indians were dead Indians. Nor was a brief attempt to recruit a company of Mormons for the job of patrolling the overland route likely to be welcomed in an army that had fought the Mormons only three years earlier during what was called the "Mormon War of 1858."¹⁰ The Mormons were relieved of their duty after only three months' service, and the availability of large numbers of California troops soon made a different military solution possible.

While the new California troops busied themselves in Southern California, Union General Winfield Scott formulated his "Anaconda Plan" to attack Confederate troops at many geographic points. Included in the strategy was the invasion of Texas through Mexico by 5,000 Californians. Scott's plan was short-lived, but before it died the government recruited four more regiments of California Volunteer infantry and one more of cavalry.¹¹

One place where some of the newly called-up units were reassigned was the troubled overland mail route. There the Third California Infantry and companies of the Second California Cavalry brought peace, but it was peace exacted in blood from the resident Indians and in ongoing struggle with the area's Mormon population.

The commander of this new fighting force, Colonel Patrick Edward Connor, was an immigrant from Ireland who had risen through the ranks of the Army. He had achieved renown as a combat soldier and commander in various wars and then retired to try his hand with mixed results as a miner in Califor-

nia.¹² As an Irish-American, Connor experienced the perennial blight on America's national character called "nativism." In fact, Connor's immigration in 1836 coincided with the rise of "Know-Nothingism," a bigotry aimed especially at the Irish. Accordingly, Connor did what many others have done: he Anglicized his name in 1844, dropping the "Patrick" and becoming "P. Edward Connor." Partly as a result of this change, he advanced rapidly in the Army.¹³ But despite his experiences, Connor himself never showed tolerance of divergent cultures, and he eventually employed his military power in Utah in a way even Know-Nothings would have applauded.

Connor's Third California Infantry was recruited in Stockton in the fall of 1861, and it was sent to Utah with three companies of the Second California Cavalry when the mountain passes opened in the spring of 1862.¹⁴ The gruelling trek took nine long weeks, passing through deserts and high country where even in summer temperatures dropped to freezing at night. Forage and water were extremely difficult to find. In his eagerness to begin his work Connor gave little forethought to the logistics of the march, with the result that his troops experienced extreme discomfort.¹⁵

In early September 1862, Connor and his men crossed the Jordan River to reconnoiter the city of Salt Lake, and he then wrote a telling report that set the tone for his entire career in Utah:

It will be impossible for me to describe what I saw and heard in Salt Lake, so as to make you realize the enormity of Mormonism; suffice it, that I found them a community of traitors, murderers, fanatics, and whores.¹⁶

Most Americans shared Connor's biases about Mormons, whose theology, as well as practice of polygamy, was unacceptably heretical.¹⁷ The Mormons had been run out of several more habitable sites earlier in the nineteenth century because of this hostility, until Church leader Brigham Young took them in 1847 to a place where they would be geographically isolated from the nation's hostility.¹⁸

This was the unhappy background of the Mormon colony in 1862 as Connor approached Salt Lake City and wrote unflatteringly of its inhabitants. By deciding that the remote Army camp constructed for the Mormon War in 1858 would not be satisfactory as his base for patrolling the overland route, he made his mission a military occupation of hostile territory. To Connor, a new site in the hills just east of the city was necessary so

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that he could "quietly entrench my position and then say to the Saints in Utah, 'Enough of your treason.'"19

Permitted by the Army to take up the new location, Connor went well out of his way on October 16, 1862, to swing his troops through the center of town, hoping to cow the Mormons by a show of force.²⁰ At first the Mormons welcomed the arrival of the Californians,²¹ but as the months passed the two groups never mixed well because Connor repeatedly and unnecessarily sought confrontations. For example, one of the reasons given to Young for moving the troops nearer to Salt Lake City was Connor's untruthful report that federal officials had requested it.²²

Beginning in September Connor's troops set about building Camp Douglas. They dug foundations for shelters, erected shops, and buildings, cut and hauled timber for fuel, and moved mountains of dirt. A permanent theater, a restaurant, and even a dance hall eventually arose at the camp. The superb Camp Douglas site gave Connor a perfect place from which he could watch the Mormon community. But the morale of his troops was depressed upon arriving in Salt Lake City because of the extremely bitter march from California. A journalist traveling with them reported his own eagerness to see a woman, and no doubt the soldiers felt the same.²³ Connor, however, set limits on liberty parties, and the Mormons, leery of the soldiers, allowed only one person from each neighborhood to converse with troops.²⁴ It is hard to imagine a less friendly situation, but open hostility did not erupt until after Connor had dealt summarily with the Indians living around him.

In 1862 the overland mail route was still threatened by hostile Indians, tribes who shared small numbers and crushing poverty. Herds of buffalo, which were the staple of many other western Indians, ranged far to the north and east, and potable water and arable land were rare. Americans moving across the Salt Lake Valley thus represented tantalizing sources of essential goods.

Mormon policy on the matter of Indian relations was pragmatic and intelligent. Gifted agriculturists and zealous Christians, Mormons shared their produce with their neighbors.²⁵ Civil War Volunteers from California were not so generous, and when a thousand of them arrived in Utah, well-trained and well-armed,



Captain Patrick Edward Connor, later promoted to brigadier general for his conduct in Utah, poses with his son Thomas Jefferson Connor for a photographer c. 1855.

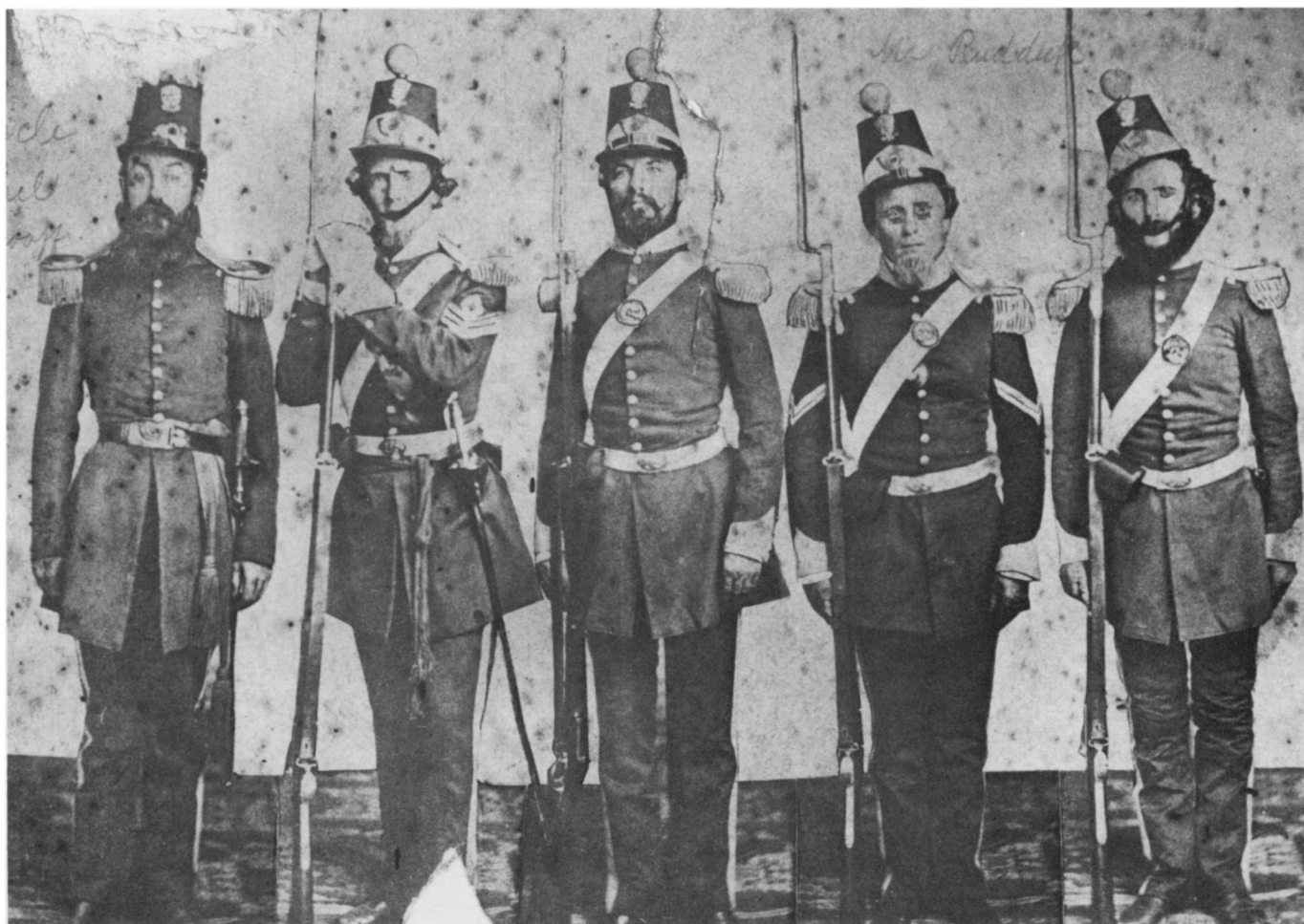
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(Facing page) Detail from the Union Vedette newspaper masthead showing a dragoon on "vedette" or mounted sentinel duty.

the Indians there were to be in for a particularly bad time.

As Connor had made his way across Nevada in August 1862, reports of Indian "depredations" had reached him, and he sent two companies of the Second Cavalry under Major Edward McGarry to deal with one incident. A "star" of the California Volunteers who probably saw more combat than any other officer, McGarry gave a performance that was a preview of what Connor would do in Utah.

McGarry scoured the countryside until October 9, when his men enticed three Indians into camp under peaceful guise. He then imprisoned them, although he



had no evidence that they were even hostile. When they tried to escape, he had them shot. Two days later, a much larger group of Indians was surrounded and disarmed and nearly all of them killed when they too “attempted to escape.” McGarry’s sentries may have been intentionally lax so that they could kill the Indians as they attempted to escape.

McGarry’s troops next captured six men, three women, and a child, certainly not a war party. Nevertheless, McGarry, acting on Connor’s behalf, applied the tactics of threat and butchery to these helpless captives. McGarry described the incident later:

The next day, the thirteenth, I told two of the Indians, through the interpreter, that if they would go and bring in Indians who were engaged in the massacre of emigrants I would release them, but that if they did not return that night I would kill all the Indians I held as prisoners in camp. The next morning, the fourteenth, hearing nothing from the Indians I had sent out the day previous, I put to death four of those remaining, and released the squaws and child, telling them that we were sent to punish Indians who were engaged in the massacre of emigrants.

Connor received this report warmly, and McGarry received a promotion for his work.²⁷

These loyal “Stockton Blues” Volunteers in Connor’s Third California Infantry were called upon to monitor Mormons and fight Indians, not Confederates.
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A month later, an apparently minor event led to the largest battle fought by the Californians during the entire Civil War. The ten-year-old son of a Shoshone woman and a dead white emigrant was living with his mother in a band of Shoshone and Bannock Indians led by a man called Bear Hunter. On the instigation of the boy’s white uncle, Connor sent McGarry to get the boy. Trouble-shooter McGarry and sixty cavalrymen brutally took prisoners and, by threatening to kill the hostages, retrieved the boy from his Indian mother.²⁸

Connor then resolved to finish with Bear Hunter, at whose intentions the modern observer can only surmise. Even the normally tolerant Mormons genuinely feared his tribe and considered Bear Hunter a “villainous . . . old fox.”²⁹

For their part, the Indians seemed willing to test their own martial talents against the Californians. They publicly threatened all white settlers in the area, and Bear Hunter himself danced arrogantly in front of a Mormon bishop’s house in nearby Franklin, Idaho.³⁰

In early 1863, when white miners were killed near Lewiston, Utah, Connor reported without evidence that the murderers belong to Bear Hunter's tribe.



In early 1863, when some white miners were killed near Lewiston, Utah, Connor reported without evidence that the murderers belonged to Bear Hunter's tribe. In response Federal Marshal Isaac L. Gibbs procured an arrest warrant for the tribe's leaders, and asked Connor for a military escort. Connor then went into action.³¹ The major campaign which followed involved fifteen wagons, two pieces of field artillery, four companies of cavalry, one of infantry, and a reporter from the San Francisco newspaper *Daily Alta California*, who gave a play-by-play account to his readers.³²

Initial contact occurred as the sky brightened on a very cold January 29, 1863, about two miles north of the present town of Preston, Idaho. Connor masked the true size of his battalion from the Indians, who may not therefore have taken the California troops as a serious threat.³³ From an entrenched position on the north bank of the Bear River, the Indians reportedly taunted the Volunteers, mocking their officers' orders: "Four's right, four's left, come on you California sons of bitches!"³⁴

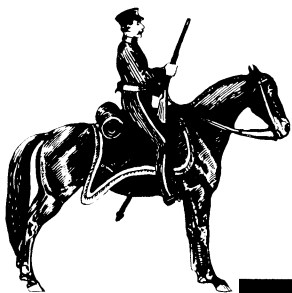
Connor approached stealthily from the south. When he came to the Indian camp, he ordered the cavalry to make a frontal attack down the steep bank. This nearly proved disastrous. Horses and men slipped on the frozen riverbank, buffeted here and there by the swirling, icy current. The Indians fought ferociously, and the Californians found themselves saved only by Captain Samuel Hoyt who took his company of infantry across the river west of the fighting, where the ravine was less steep, and strung them out to the rear of the Indians where the men could fire into the camp. Thus covered, the cavalry got its footing and finally crossed the icy river. What followed was a four-hour slaughter, as the soldiers fired at will into a group of people who probably no longer resisted, as suggested by the difference in casualty figures. Bear Hunter was killed, but a few other leaders managed to escape. In total, some 224 Indians were killed at Bear River, their bodies left on the field in posthumous insult. The Californians lost twenty men, and about fifty were wounded, most in the first few minutes of the battle.³⁵ Only a few women and children were allowed to flee the encirclement during the battle, Connor having given the order: "Kill everything—nits make lice," referring to the children. Describing the scene, the *Daily Alta* reporter wrote, *Some attempted to escape into the river, but the keen eye of the Volunteer, avenging the helpless emigrants, the women*

*and children whose blood had been unatoned, and the fresh flowing blood of his comrade lying at his feet, was, in a moment, upon the fleeing form of the savage, and the deadly rifle did its work, and few escaped.*³⁶

For their efforts at Bear River, Connor, who was promoted to brigadier general on the basis of his "heroic conduct," and his troops were praised by the press, the white community, the military hierarchy, and in the published memoirs of most Volunteers.³⁷ In the cool light of history, however, their performance appears less praiseworthy and gallant. The size of his force suggests that Connor never intended to serve the warrant, the ostensible reason for the expedition, but instead that he sought to wipe out the tribe. Before leaving Camp Douglas, in fact, he told Marshal Gibbs that he was not going to take prisoners, and although Gibbs accompanied the force, he was given no opportunity to do his duty. Nor did Connor handle his troops well. He began the march over mountain roads in a snow storm, with the result that his artillery arrived too late to help. Captain Hoyt's route across the river was always available to Connor, but he ignored it. He should have foreseen that the conditions would cause unnecessary casualties, and indeed frostbite from the freezing river water doubled his losses. Allowing a few Indian women and children to escape was cynical rather than charitable; Connor wanted them to tell of the soldiers' savagery to frighten other tribes.³⁸

As a result of Connor's actions, greater hatred and greater fear developed as the Indians continued to raid the overland mail route. In April and May 1863, the Californians carried out two other massacres of sizable groups of trapped and helpless people, judging by the twin reports that all the Indian casualties were killed—none were wounded or taken prisoner—and that only a few soldiers were injured.³⁹ There appears to have been an element of sport in this butchery. On one occasion, troops used artillery against three Indians who had stolen a dozen mules. The Indians died, along with half of the mules, in a mission that must have been viewed as a lark.⁴⁰

Ultimately the Indians sought peace. In June 1863, Connor reported to his superiors that Shoshones from Idaho had talked terms with him, and shortly thereafter he went to Fort Bridger to conclude hostilities with other tribes. A handful of recalcitrants quit fighting later that summer, and in general the tribes remained peaceful through the end of the Civil War.⁴¹ The Califor-



Experienced at resisting the United States, the Mormons removed weapons and ammunition from the territorial arsenal and ringed Young's house with well-armed men.

nia Volunteers had made the Utah district safe for white Americans by being more savage than the supposed savages.

Connor's struggle with the Mormon Church lasted longer than with the Indians. That there was no Mormon or Volunteer blood shed was due to the political agility of Brigham Young, not Connor. In both 1863 and 1864, in fact, Connor tried to provoke incidents in which the Volunteers might crush the Mormons.

Connor's hatred of the Mormons intensified in his first days in Utah during the Bear River campaign of January 1863, when some Mormon settlers refused help to his troops on their winter march.⁴² Indeed, the Mormons' long-standing policy of tolerance towards the Indians lent evidence to support Connor's claim. But Connor frequently exaggerated. In December 1862, he reported that Brigham Young was organizing military resistance against the United States, a heady charge in the middle of the Civil War.⁴³ For their part, the Mormons had always claimed that they were loyal. When the telegraph line from the east reached Salt Lake City in October 1861, for example, the first words transmitted were Young's assurance that "Utah has not seceded, but is firm for the Constitution and the laws of our once happy Country."⁴⁴

What Connor meant by loyalty to the Union and what Young meant by being "firm for the Constitution" were quite different, however. Church leaders thought of the people of Utah in the same way that political theorist John C. Calhoun viewed slave-owning southerners who found themselves within a Union increasingly northern in its overall attitudes. Calhoun argued that a group of people forming a "regional majority" must be able to veto the action of the national government whenever its actions were objectionable, and the Mormons agreed with this principle.⁴⁵ The simultaneous existence of two governmental regimes—one called "Utah" and appointed by federal authority, the other called "Deseret" and elected by settlers—was exactly what Calhoun meant.

Seeking to encourage Mormon loyalty, the Lincoln Administration at first severely hurt its own cause. Its first territorial governor, John W. Dawson of Indiana, was a patronage appointee whom the Mormons saw as vulgar to women, intemperate in speech, and irrational in behavior.⁴⁶ His competence was irrelevant, for

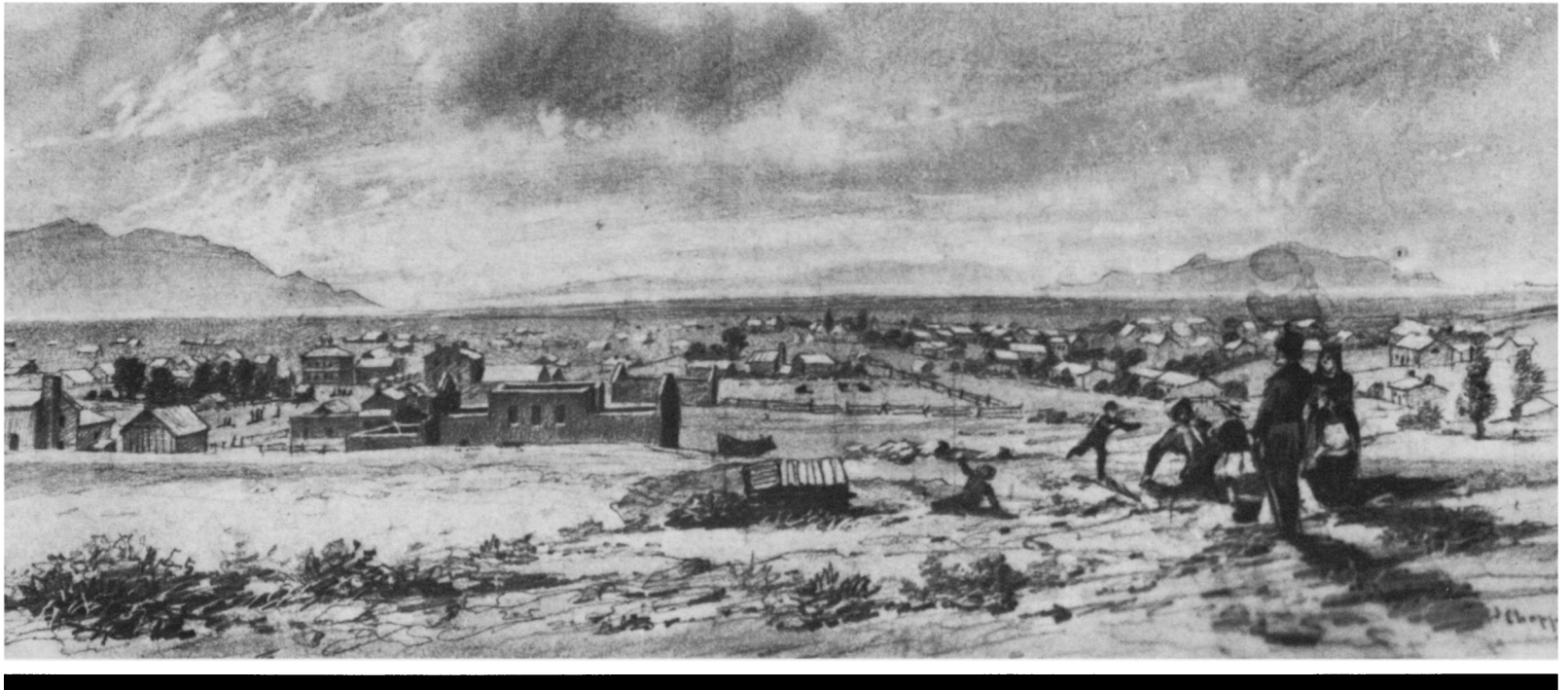
Brigham Young, as *de jure* governor of the State of Deseret, was *de facto* governor of Utah, too.

Still, the Republican administration had good reasons to seek to subdue the Mormon church. First, the government needed to elevate the cause of the federal union over the contentions of states' rights advocates in the South. Second, the 1856 Republican party platform had opposed slavery and polygamy as equal "twin relics of barbarism." Both were legal in the Mormon country.⁴⁷ The distances involved, and utter lack of federal power in Utah, however, at first left the United States little to do about the situation.

All of that weakness was swept away by the arrival in Salt Lake City of Connor's Californians. In late winter 1863, they drove Young to the brink of rebellion. On Sunday, March 3, 1863, Church members heard his sermon in the Tabernacle on the political disagreements between the Mormon State of Deseret and Utah. Young reminded his followers that the Church had long foreseen the present civil war, and he then wished the Mormon prophecy that the North and the South would destroy each other "Godspeed." Describing himself as the "governor" of the State of Deseret in Calhoun's terms, he turned on the federal officials in Utah. He reserved special scorn for Stephen S. Harding, who had just replaced Dawson, calling him "a black-hearted abolitionist . . . a nigger worshipper," healthy pejoratives in white-supremacist Utah. Young also attacked federal judges Drake and Waite in remarkably seditious words. These three men must resign, Young exclaimed, and if President Lincoln would not remove them, "The people must attend to it."⁴⁸

The Mormon meeting next approved a resolution calling for the removal of the villains from office. Calhoun would have approved. Hearing about the meeting, Connor of course argued that the three men were only federal appointees doing their duty. The officials themselves responded that they had no intention of deserting their posts.⁴⁹ Conflict appeared likely.

On the same day as Young's ringing denunciation of Lincoln's officials, the Mormons, experienced at resisting the United States, removed weapons and ammunition from the territorial arsenal, ringed Young's house with well-armed men, and put others to work preparing equipment for a possible confrontation. But Young again acted with restraint, and on March 8, he returned to the Tabernacle to offer conciliation. He denied that the Mormons were secessionists, insisting



that they were merely citizens protecting their rights. He further implied that they could await a political settlement and did not need a military one. Connor refused this opening, however, and asserted instead that Young's remark about not sending troops to fight against secession was disloyal.⁵⁰

After the March 8 meeting, Connor's ally, Marshal Gibbs, procured a warrant for Young's arrest on a charge of polygamy. Chief Judge J. F. Kinney of the Territorial Court, however, probably remembered the battle at Bear River where the writ was never served but the "military escort" was thrown precipitously into combat. He thus spurned Connor's offer of a military escort for the arresting party. Had the troops been employed, Connor and Young might have had the confrontation the Californian seems to have desired. Fifteen hundred armed Mormons were on alert in the city, a number equal to all the troops Connor had in the entire territory. Catastrophe was averted when Young simply appeared in court, was arraigned, posted a \$2000 bond, and was released.⁵¹

Most of Connor's superiors shared his hostility towards the Church. Pacific Headquarters advised him to be "prudent," but also promised him that "a day of retribution will come." On March 19, Washington ordered that Connor be reinforced and gave him permission to use force.⁵² By the time Connor gained approval to use this force, however, the crisis was over.⁵³

Meanwhile, Brigham Young continued to work politically. In April 1863, he went to Washington to try to convince the Administration that the overland route should be protected by the Mormons, not the meddling

The Mormon settlement of Salt Lake City in the State of Deseret and Territory of Utah.

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Californians. Not surprisingly, Connor reported that if the Californians withdrew, federal officials in Utah would lose their power to govern. He agreed, though, that perhaps the Mormons could protect the mail route as well as the Californians. This he no doubt did in hopes of having his regiment transferred to the eastern front, his long-time dream.⁵⁴ The status quo prevailed, however, because Young's loyalty to the Union was suspect, the only test that mattered at this point.⁵⁵

This political jockeying finally generated a real solution, when President Lincoln made important decisions about Utah. In June 1863, he told an acquaintance of Brigham Young the "old log" story. Lincoln remembered from his youth that when clearing timber, they would sometimes find an old log that was too hard to split, too wet to burn, and too heavy to move, so they would just plow around it. Lincoln's visitor relayed the story to Young: Utah could be plowed around while the timber of the southern rebellion was being cleared away. If the Church would leave the Union alone, Lincoln would leave the Church alone.

Soon Lincoln followed up his promise by replacing the unpopular governor Harding with James Duane Doty who, although not a Mormon himself, enjoyed great popularity among them. Other new territorial administrators were likewise acceptable to the Church.⁵⁶ These changes meant that the rights of Mormons were likely to be better protected, whatever the California commander thought or did. As early as August 1863,



Doty wrote that the people were peaceful and loyal, and that his was a "government of the people."⁵⁷ Coming only three months before Lincoln's more famous remark at Gettysburg about a "government of the people," Doty's sentiments probably struck a responsive chord. The State of Deseret was effectively ended in January 1864, when John Kinney, the judge who had refused Connor's "military escort," became Utah's representative in the U.S. House of Representatives.⁵⁸

In July 1864, Connor staged a final bid for military confrontation with the Mormons. He reported that Utah's merchants were harassing his troops by not accepting the government-issue greenbacks or legal tender notes with which they were paid. He thereupon established a company-sized provost guard with headquarters directly across the street from the Tabernacle.⁵⁹ The unit was far too large to act merely as military police, so Connor was clearly trying to threaten the city, yet the unit was too weak to represent a genuine attempt to take over the Mormons. In response the Mormons immediately called up 1,000 militiamen, greatly outnumbering the fewer than 300 men Connor had at Camp Douglas. Governor Doty also supported the Mormons, as did Major General Irwin McDowell, recently named Department of Pacific commander. Aware that most of the California Volunteers were approaching the end of their enlistments, and anxious to avoid any manpower drain, McDowell quickly ordered Connor to desist. His telegram to Connor of July 16 directed, "Remove the guard and the troops rather than their presence should cost a war."⁶⁰ The Mormons had won their fight. As McDowell's adjutant wrote: "The

Connor's troops erected Camp Douglas in the hills east of Salt Lake City so that Connor could monitor the Mormons' activities.

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object of troops . . . in Utah is . . . not to endeavor to correct the evil conduct, manifest as it is, of the inhabitants of that Territory."⁶¹ At least for the duration of the war.

Connor then played his final card: he set about to recruit non-Mormon settlers to the territory to take advantage of its mining opportunities, thereby to dilute the Mormon population with "gentiles" and reduce the power of Brigham Young.⁶² Most Californians themselves had originally gone west to share in the gold or silver bonanzas, so Connor's troops and military superiors vigorously supported his new idea.⁶³

Silver ore had been discovered in the first years of the Mormon settlement in Utah, but the Church condemned mining because Brigham Young believed that the Saints should pursue an agrarian life. This left the ore to Connor, an ironic default since his goal was to destroy the Mormon Church.⁶⁴

Connor took out the first mining claim himself and plunged into the program with impressive zeal. His headquarters distributed a circular about potential sites throughout the United States, and the camp newspaper published directions to the latest claims with assurances to emigrants of protection from all threats, "Indian or white," referring, of course, to the Mormons.⁶⁵ Connor expected his troops to do some prospecting themselves, although some of the officers were unenthusiastic about

“Remove the guard and the troops rather than their presence should cost a war.”



the chore. Connor was undaunted. Time and again, he gave troops on patrol orders to “thoroughly prospect the country for precious metals.”⁶⁶

Despite his enthusiasm and his insistence that his promotion of Utah was successful, Connor was unable to turn the Mormon tide. The flow of about 1400 Gentiles whom he attracted was insignificant in the Mormon population of about 80,000. Utah was inhospitable culturally, politically, and topographically for most Americans. Connor himself obliquely admitted the failure when he urged that the Californians be discharged from service in Utah, in order to increase the area’s non-Mormon numbers. Governor Frederick F. Low of California stymied this effort, however, by giving contrary instructions to General McDowell.

While some of the Californians did leave the Army in Utah, how many of them stayed there cannot be determined.⁶⁷ Little gold or silver was found in the area until the completion of the transcontinental railroad brought more men and materials, and, ironically, until the Mormon Church encouraged its members to pursue the new industry.⁶⁹

Connor’s war against the Mormons whimpered to an end. When Indians in Colorado rose up in November 1864, he took his Californians there to operate in the Department of Missouri under General Grenville Dodge.⁷⁰ In March of 1865, his long struggle with the Mormons finally behind him, Connor took command of Kansans, Nebraskans, and Coloradans, plus the remnants of the Third California Infantry and Second California Cavalry, in a new war against the Sioux, Cheyenne, and Arapahoe.⁷¹

The California Volunteers enhanced their reputation as Indian-killers five months after the surrender at Apomattox, when Connor led a very large force including two companies of the Second California Cavalry against the Arapahoe at Tongue River in northeastern Wyoming on August 29, 1865. Because 250 lodges were destroyed and at least sixty-three Indian braves and “many” women and children were killed without a single reported casualty among the troops, the event was surely another shooting gallery-like massacre. Unlike the incident at Bear River, however, Connor’s efforts were not decisive. The Arapahoe fought on.⁷²

The Californians did not. As the campaign shut down for the winter of 1865–66, the units re-gathered at their posts to be mustered out. Few had re-enlisted in October 1864 when the original volunteer period of three

years expired, thus reducing the Third Infantry to a battalion of merely five companies. The original Second Cavalry companies which suffered great casualties at Bear River had also been mustered out in 1864. Companies L and M, which had joined Connor’s command in 1863, stayed with him to the very end.⁷³ All of these remaining units were mustered out in the summer of 1866. Patrick Connor returned to Utah where he mined his claims until his death in 1891.

A large force of California Volunteers went to Utah to carry out an important mission in an area where few troops had been before the beginning of the Civil War. These men helped conquer the West at the same time the United States was defeating the South’s attempts at independence. The attitudes the men brought with them led them to exterminate most of the Indians in Utah in the name of protecting the whites.

When Connor’s California Volunteers confronted the Mormons, they attempted again to destroy what they saw as an unacceptable variation from the dominant American culture. But the Mormon Church was more formidable, and Brigham Young politically outmaneuvered the Californians until higher government authorities decided to end the oppression.

In a sense the Civil War represents an oasis in the desert of nineteenth-century racial and ethnic attitudes. Before the war, Know-Nothingism and slavery reigned. After Reconstruction, the “white man’s burden” and Jim Crow took their places. During the war, however, the national authority worked to liberate humans by emancipating slaves and defending a government of the people. But the actions of the California Volunteers in Utah were different: from start to finish, they were the bridge from one era of hostility to the other. □

Notes

1. Orton, Richard, *Records of California Men in the War of the Rebellion* [hereinafter Orton, *Records*] (Sacramento, 1890), p. 11; War Department, *War of the Rebellion: Official Records . . .* [hereinafter WOR], series 3, vol. IV, p. 73; War Department, *Official Army Register of the Volunteer Force*, pp. 328ff.
2. Wright, Arthur A, *The Civil War in the Southwest* (Denver, 1964), p. 8; War Dept., WOR, series 3, vol. IV, p. 465. A regiment of Washingtonians was recruited entirely in California, too. *Ibid.*, series 1, vol. L, part 1, pp. 848, 900.
3. See, e.g., Orton, *Records*, and Pettis, George H., *The California Column* (Santa Fe, 1908), written by men who



If the Mormon Church would leave the Union alone, Lincoln would leave the Church alone.

- served in the Volunteers. Or, Shutes, Milton, *Lincoln and California* (Stanford, 1943), and Hunt, Aurora, *The Army of the Pacific* (Glendale, 1951), written by twentieth-century historians.
4. War Dept., WOR, vol. L, part 1, p. 454; Wright, *Civil War in the Southwest*, p. 8.
 5. War Dept., WOR, series 3, vol. 1, p. 26; *ibid.*, series 1, vol. L, part 1, p. 460-1.
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 30. Long, "The 'terrible combat'," *Civil War Times Illustrated*, April 15, 1976, pp. 6, 9. Long may not be reliable; he gave no sources for the war-dance tale, and his citation for the story of Bear Hunter's threat is not correct.
 31. War Dept., WOR, vol. L, part 1, p. 185; *Deseret News*, Jan. 28, 1863, p. 244.
 32. The *Alta* account is reprinted in Orton, *Records of California Men*, pp. 174-181.
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 35. War Dept., WOR, vol. L, part 2, p. 318. The more famous events at Sand Creek, Colorado, in November 1864 were very much the same. *Ibid.*, vol. XLI, part 1, pp. 948-72.
 36. *Ibid.*, part 1, p. 185; Danielson, *The Trail Blazers*, p. 12. The remark about nits and lice is sometimes credited to Col. John Chivington, commander at Sand Creek. Which-ever colonel said it, Connor did his slaughtering nearly two years earlier.
 37. Orton, *Records*, p. 180; War Dept., WOR, vol. L, part 1, pp. 185, 318, 369; Long, "The 'terrible combat'," p. 41; Morris, W. G., "Address delivered before the Society of California Volunteers: California Volunteers as Seen by an Eastern Volunteer," an address before the Society of California Volunteers, October 15, 1893.
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48. *Deseret News*, Mar. 4, 1863, pp. 284; War Dept., WOR, vol. L, part 2, pp. 370-4; Eddins, "The Mormons and the Civil War," p. 62. The first names of Drake and Waite do not appear in the records.
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61. *Ibid.*, p. 910.
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CHS, San Francisco

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