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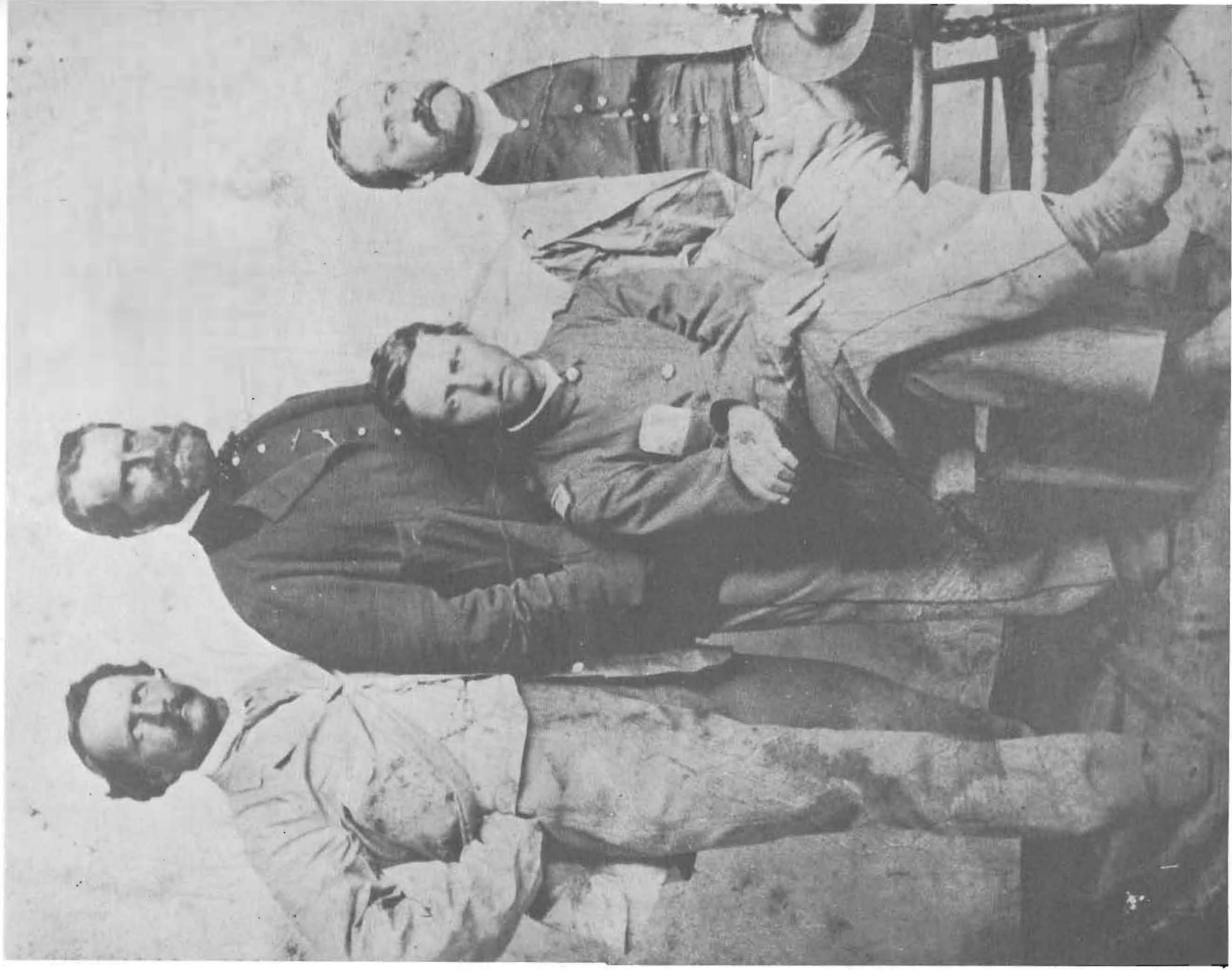
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Civil War Times

ILLUSTRATED



The Road to Appomattox
By Frederic Ray



Captain William McCleave (bearded) and unidentified officers of Column from California. (Bancroft Library, Univ. of Calif.)

THE COLUMN FROM CALIFORNIA

By Col. CLARENCE C. CLENDENEN

A little-known Federal command in the Southwest was instrumental in preventing a Confederate foothold on the Pacific, saving Arizona for the Union, and protecting that vast area from marauding Apaches. It never met Confederates in open fight, but its service contributed materially to the ultimate victory.

THE belated arrival in California of the news of Fort Sumter caused as much excitement as it did in other states, especially since a large proportion of the population, possibly as much as one-third, hailed from the South. There were violent speeches, displays of the Grizzly Bear Flag (symbolizing a separate "Pacific Republic?"), and a quarrel in the legislature over a resolution of loyalty to the Union led to a duel in which Southern sympathizer Assemblyman Dan Showalter, a native of Pennsylvania, killed Assemblyman Charles W. Piercy. It became speedily apparent, however, that the majority of Californians were staunch Unionists.

Disaffection and overt Southern sympathy seemed to reside mostly in Southern California. To obtain firsthand and reliable information, Brigadier General Edwin V. Sumner, commanding the Department of the Pacific, late in April ordered Brevet Major James H. Carleton, 1st Dragoons, to make a confidential investigation. Carleton shortly reported that in his opinion there was real danger of an uprising in Southern California, especially in certain communities, such as San Bernardino and Los Angeles. Sumner immediately ordered the few troops at his disposal, two companies of infantry from Fort Mojave and Carleton's own company of dragoons from Fort Tejon, to Los Angeles.

James Henry Carleton was commissioned in the Regular Army in the 1830's, when as an officer of the Maine militia he had attracted the favorable attention of General Winfield Scott during a border dispute with Great Britain. During his twenty-five years as a dragoon officer

he served with several exploring expeditions, was brevetted to the rank of major for gallantry at the Battle of Buena Vista, and took part in numerous Indian campaigns. He had also acquired a reputation as the most unbending martinet in the Army.

Before the war only two long, tenuous roads connected California with the rest of the nation. The Overland Mail Route lay across the Great Plains and through the Sierras. The Butterfield Stage Road crossed western Texas and the vast desert region vaguely called Arizona. With the secession of Texas the Butterfield Stage Line shut down and abandoned its stations, leaving only the Overland Route open. Late in July the War Department sent a requisition to California Governor John G. Downey for a regiment of infantry and five companies of cavalry to guard the Overland Route in Nevada and Utah, specifying (which was unusual) that the command of the force *must* be given to Carleton. Carleton was at once summoned to San Francisco to confer with General Sumner. He found on his arrival that his command was already recruited almost to full strength: "Stalwart, big-bearded men, hardened and bronzed to every vicissitude of a miner's and farmer's life. . . ." He found, too, that the state had given him an unusual group of volunteer officers, nearly every one of whom had previous military service. To mention only two, his lieutenant colonel was Joseph Rodman West, a Southerner but thoroughly loyal, who had been a captain in the Mexican War; his senior cavalry captain was William McCleave, his own old first sergeant in the 1st Dragoons.



Brigadier General James H. Carleton was called "the most unbending martinet in the army." (Photo in National Archives)

IN the middle of August 1861 very disturbing news filtered into California. A Confederate force of unreported strength had invaded New Mexico early in July and captured all the posts and troops in the southern part of the Territory. The only force that stood between the Confederates and the Confederate sympathizers of Southern California was the weak garrison of Fort Yuma, too small to resist anything more than a few Indians. The only troops Sumner had with which to reinforce Southern California were Carleton's. Even though the force was raised for use on the Overland Route, Sumner decided that the situation in the south was threatening enough to justify changing Carleton's mission and orders. Early in September he ordered the force to Southern California immediately; the first contingent, under Lieutenant Colonel West, disembarked at San Pedro on September 18.

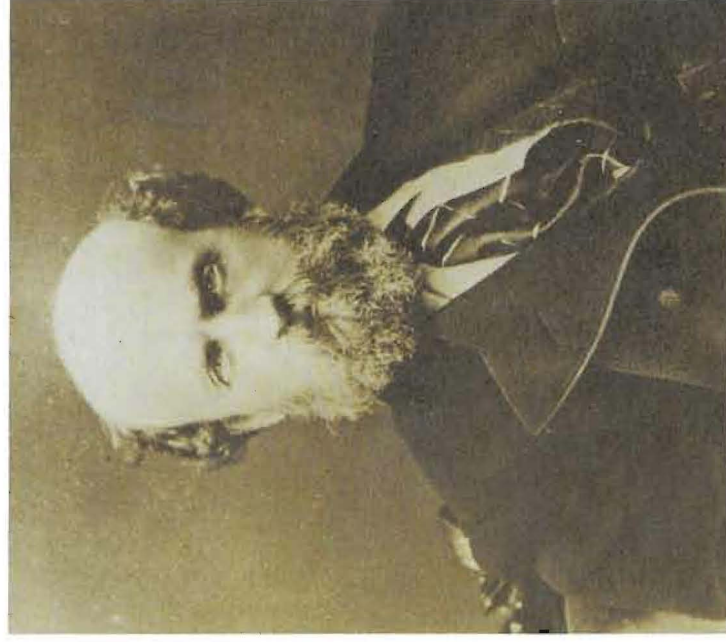
Sumner left the disposal of the troops entirely to Carleton, specifying only that a post be established near Warner's Ranch to guard the defile through which the road to Fort Yuma passed. The equipment of the troops was still far from complete. The cavalry, much to the men's disgust, had to march on foot, as horses had not yet been issued. A hot, dusty, tired company of cavalrymen trudged into San Bernardino, greeted with catcalls and jeers by the people, but the crowd quieted down when a soldier knocked an especially obnoxious heckler flat on his back. Carleton's reaction to the incident surprised people who knew him as a martinet: "If the man . . . is otherwise qualified, make him a noncommissioned officer at once."

General Sumner was replaced by Brigadier General George Wright as department commander soon after the

movement to Southern California was completed. The new post near Warner's Ranch was named Camp Wright in his honor. Here California troops had their first taste of war service. Word came that former Assemblyman Dan Showalter was in Southern California with a large party intending to join the Confederacy. Search and patrolling of possible escape routes started at once, and at dawn on a cold November morning Showalter's party found themselves staring at the ugly muzzles of the carbines of Lieutenant Chauncey Wellman's cavalry platoon. Showalter wanted to fight, but his men did not like the looks of those carbines or the men who were fingering the triggers. Wellman marched his prisoners to Camp Wright, where the temporary camp commander was Captain Hugh Gorley. He and Showalter stared at each other unbelieving—they were both from Uniontown, Pennsylvania.

DURING the autumn of 1861 no authentic news came from New Mexico, but there were continual rumors of a Confederate thrust to Southern California from the Rio Grande. Fort Yuma had been reinforced and was now strong enough to resist or delay a Confederate attack. General Wright was not defensive minded; he decided that the quickest way to end any Confederate threat to California would be to attack the rebels in New Mexico. Such an attack would also reopen the southern mail route. Wright quickly obtained authority from the general in chief, George B. McClellan, and summoned Carleton to San Francisco.

To march a force of almost 2,000 men with hundreds of animals across a barren desert was a problem of



Lt. Col. (later Maj. Gen.) Joseph R. West. (Meserve Collection)



Fort Yuma, California, shortly before the Civil War. (1854)

appalling magnitude. California was a mining and agricultural state that produced very few manufactured goods, but still must furnish, somehow, the equipment and supplies for the force. Once on the road the expedition had to be self-supporting.

After conferring with General Wright, Carleton and his small regimental staff worked day and night listing the supplies and equipment that would be necessary. The completed list included such diverse items as 14,000 horse and mule shoes, hundreds of water casks, revolvers for the cavalry, trade goods and presents for the Indians, artillery ammunition (which must come from Washington Territory or the East), and even a supply of small silver coins, to be struck at the San Francisco Mint. Thousands of tons of food, forage, and equipment must be shipped to Fort Yuma and stacks of hay stored along the route of march.

CARLETON ordered intensive training and conditioning of the troops—drill, drill, and more drill, with hours spent on target ranges. An order that all drill must be with full packs brought a minor mutiny at Camp Wright, where one company refused to obey. Once again the unbending martinet surprised people. He ordered that the Articles of War be read to the men and that it be explained to them that they must harden themselves for the time when a man would have nothing but what he carried on his own back. The men probably grumbled, but the mutiny was over.

Meanwhile Carleton needed to know what the enemy was doing, where located, and in what strength. No reliable information had come across the desert for months, but late in February or early in March it became known that the Confederates on the Rio Grande had been augmented by several thousand men and that a Confederate force had occupied Tucson. In the Civil War each commander devised his own system for obtaining information. That Carleton quickly improvised such a system is evident from numerous vague items in the *Official Records*, but they are only tantalizing hints as to what went on. When the Confederates occupied Tucson

many Unionists were expelled, or fled, to Sonora. Major Edwin A. Rigg, the commander at Fort Yuma, was in touch with many of them and, with Carleton's approval, he sent an unnamed young man (presumably a Mexican) to Tucson via an indirect route through Sonora. The young man spent a week in Tucson, quietly counting men and horses, and even had a conversation with Captain Sherod Hunter, the Confederate commander. Then too, late in February, Rigg was ordered to help a "Mr. [John] Jones" across the river and to give him a Government horse. In February, also, Carleton ordered Captain William McCleave with half of his company from San Bernardino in Fort Yuma. McCleave made a fast march over a previously unused route, and on the way "captured" a suspicious man whom he took to Fort Yuma as a prisoner. Late at night Rigg personally took the prisoner from the guard house and set him on his way with a Government horse. Finally, several years before the war a shrewd Maine Yankee, Ammi White, established a flour mill among the agricultural Pima Indians, northwest of Tucson. White was soon buying and storing wheat for the California expedition, and also his Pima Indians could enter and leave Tucson without attracting attention—and they did. Which, if any, of these shadowy figures furnished information to Carleton is unknown.

IN Southern California supplies and equipment were accumulating through January, February, and March and being shipped to Fort Yuma both by wagon train and by sea. Early in March Rigg was ordered to prepare a small force to operate, ostensibly, against the Tonto Apaches. The force was to include McCleave's cavalry company, and McCleave himself received secret orders to march through to the Pima villages to protect White's mill and form an outpost against a possible Confederate move from Tucson. For the first and last time in a long and highly creditable military career McCleave blundered. Leaving his company to follow, he pushed ahead with an escort of five or six men. Before daylight he dismounted at White's mill and knocked on the door—the door was opened by Captain Sherod Hunter. In a moment McCleave and his men were sur-



Lieutenant Jack Swilling. C.S.A., one of the officers of the Confederate occupation force at Tucson. He took McCleave and other prisoners from Tucson to Mesilla. (Courtesy of author)

Blue Water stage station, they found a dead man in the well. He was fished out and buried; the men gagged, but there was no other water, so they had to drink it.

On arriving at the Pima villages, Calloway found that White's mill had been burned and some fifteen hundred sacks of wheat that White had purchased had been given back to the Indians, who cannily resold it a few weeks later to Carleton's quartermaster. After resting at the villages for a few days, Calloway resumed the march toward Tucson. As they approached Picacho Pass, through which the road wound, Paulino Weaver, a noted frontiersman who was scouting ahead, reported that Confederates were concealed in the pass. Lieutenant James Barrett, with the advance guard of ten or twelve cavalymen, boldly charged in. For a few minutes there was a savage fight. Barrett was killed almost instantly and two soldiers mortally wounded. At least one Confederate was killed and several were wounded and captured. The Confederate survivors, only two or three men, fled toward Tucson. Calloway, however, decided for a number of reasons to return to the Pima villages, a decision for which he was criticized but which Carleton approved.

IN California preparations for the expedition were completed early in April. Because of the reported increase in Confederate strength in New Mexico, Colonel George Bowie's 5th California Infantry and Captain C. Cremony's company of the 2d California Cavalry were added to the expedition. Cremony, an adventurer and a most colorful character, was one of the few white men fluent in the various Indian tongues, including the Apache. From all over Southern California troops began marching toward Fort Yuma according to a carefully worked out timetable, a company at a time at each well and watering place. The march of the troops from Camp Wright was probably typical of the experience of all. They left Camp Wright on a beautiful spring morning; at noon they were in the midst of a howling mountain blizzard, and that night camped, far down the eastern slope, in a valley in which the grass and wild flowers were knee-high. Two days later the men huddled under their blankets in a sandstorm which neither men nor animals could face. But early in May the entire force was assembled at Fort Yuma without having lost a single man or horse in the desert. And at Fort Yuma Carleton gave identity to the expedition by formally naming it "The Column from California."

Before the assembly of the main body was complete Carleton sent Lieutenant Colonel West ahead with several companies of infantry and cavalry. West's march was as uncomfortable and tiring as the other marches, but was uneventful until reaching the Pima villages. A raiding party of Apaches suddenly appeared, and as suddenly vanished when the raiders saw the blue uniforms. Cremony, meanwhile, had Indian problems too. His company was dropped from the column to guard a

rounded and soon were bundled off to Mesilla as prisoners of war.

When weeks passed with no word from McCleave, Rigg became worried. He decided to send a force eastward strong enough to resist any Confederate attack, and to go on to Tucson if circumstances warranted. The force consisted of Captain William P. Calloway's infantry company, Captain Nathaniel J. Pishon's cavalry company, and McCleave's company. They crossed into Arizona late at night, "unencumbered with reminiscences of happy days at Fort Yuma," as one of the men later wrote. To avoid the desert heat, marches were made at night, but still the men suffered, making camp at daybreak, exhausted from plodding through the sand and with eyes reddened and skin blistered by clouds of alkaline dust. Nor was excitement lacking. Just before dawn on the Sunday after leaving Fort Yuma the pickets suddenly opened fire. A Confederate patrol had emerged from the dusk like ghosts. There was a brisk exchange of shots in which a soldier was wounded, and the Rebels vanished as suddenly as they had appeared, pursued by Pishon's cavalymen. Days later, at the abandoned

critical defile in the Maricopa country. Cremony knew many of the Maricopas personally, and knew that they were skillful thieves. An eclipse of the moon gave him the opportunity to prove the power of his "medicine," when with suitable ceremonies and incantations he made the moon die, and then brought it back to life. The Maricopas gave his camp a wide berth thereafter and he did not lose any weapons or other Government property.

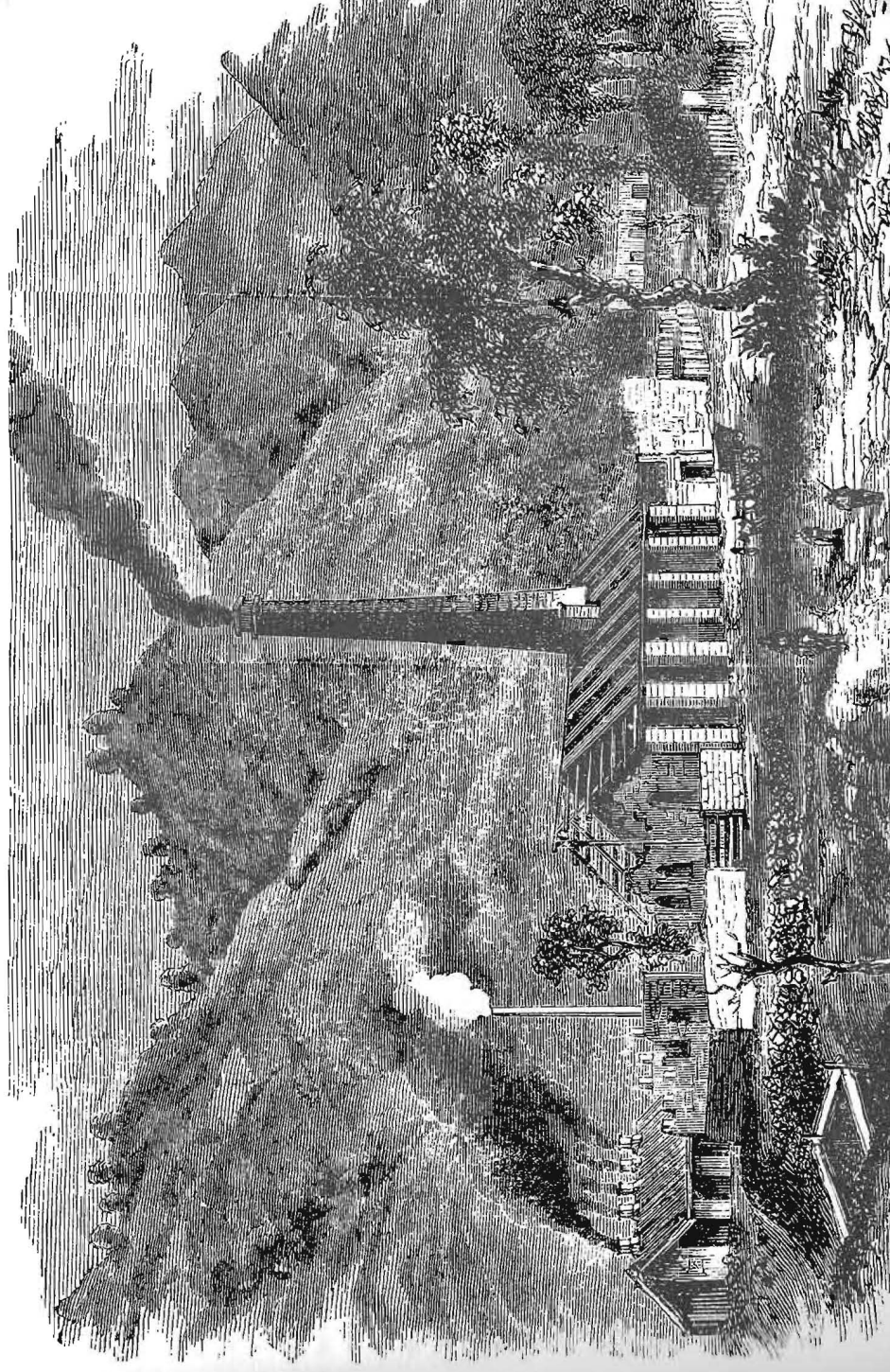
ON the morning of May 20, 1862, while West with his main force approached Tucson from the northwest, Captain Emil Fritz's cavalry company circled to the east of the town to cut off any Confederate retreat, and then galloped in with raised pistols, hoping for a fight, but the Rebels had evacuated forty-eight hours earlier. The only Americans in the town were a dozen tough-looking individuals whom Fritz rounded up and confined, on the not unreasonable theory that any American who remained during Hunter's occupation must be a Rebel sympathizer.

Still marching in small detachments because of water scarcity, the column assembled at Tucson, where Carleton received notice of his promotion to brigadier general, and of West's promotion to colonel and command of the 1st California Infantry. A period of rest was now needed, hundreds of animals required reshoeing, scores of wagons needed repair after weeks on the primitive road, and vast amounts of supplies and equipment had to be stored before the next long stride to the Rio Grande. Immediate mea-

sures needed to be taken to obtain information and security. A hundred miles to the south was the Patagonia Mine, owned by Sylvester Mowry, a native of Rhode Island and graduate of West Point, but whose activities and attitude were questionable. Lieutenant Colonel Edmund E. Eyre, who commanded the cavalry, marched secretly with one company and surrounded the mine before Mowry was aware of his approach. Mowry was taken into custody, along with his guest, "Colonel" Palatine Robinson, a Confederate "Mining Commissioner" (probably self-appointed) who had been confiscating mining properties belonging to Unionists.

Before leaving Fort Yuma Carleton tried to communicate with General E.R.S. Canby, commanding the Department of New Mexico, but the messenger failed to get through. From Tucson he sent Expressman John Jones (the same Jones whom Rigg had sent across the river), with a sergeant and a Mexican guide, with dispatches for Canby. Up to this time there had been no trouble with the Apaches, and Carleton hoped to keep them quiet, but at the very moment, probably, when he was writing to General Wright to that effect, the sergeant and the guide were dead and Jones was riding and fighting for his life. They were attacked near Apache Pass. Jones managed to break clear, pursued by half a dozen warriors. He killed two with his revolver and the others finally gave up. Jones rode all night without stopping, and at daybreak hid himself and his mount in an abandoned stage station. Again he rode all night and at dawn arrived at the Rio Grande. There his good fortune abandoned him. He was caught by a Confederate patrol, and within a few hours a Confederate colonel read his dispatches. But by means

Headquarters and offices of the Mowry Silver Mine. (From J. Ross Browne's "Adventures in the Apache Country," N.Y. 1868)



that have never been revealed to this day, Jones got a message to General Canby from the Mesilla jail.

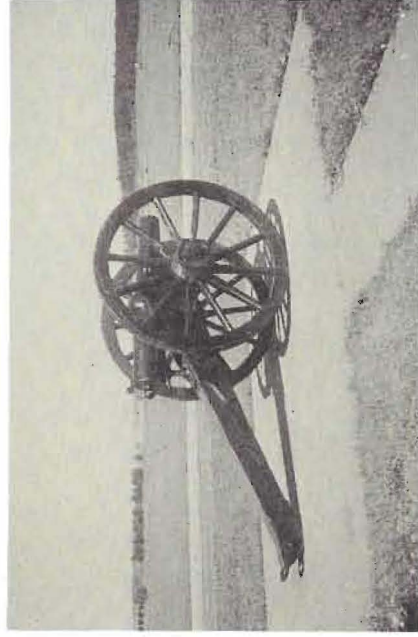
LATE in June, with his horses freshly shod and some meat on their bones again, Eyre and his cavalry marched for a reconnaissance in force toward the Rio Grande. Several days later, as the horses were being watered at the spring at the top of Apache Pass, some Indians appeared. Eyre rode forward with an interpreter and talked to them, but they seemed to have nothing in particular to say. He gave them some tobacco, and they went away. Half an hour later, when the column was ready to resume its march, three soldiers were missing; what was left of them was found after an hour's search, in a nearby ravine. There was no more straggling from the force, and that night the bivouac on the plain near the eastern portal of the pass was fired into from the surrounding brush and the surgeon was wounded. That made the pickets alert and a bit "trigger happy"; a few nights later a foraging coyote brought down a barrage.

Carleton decided to establish an advance depot in Apache Pass which could supply Eyre and reinforce him if necessary. On July 8 Captain Thomas L. Roberts marched from Tucson with his own infantry company, two howitzers, Captain Cremony's cavalry company, and a sizeable wagon train. About noon on the 15th the infantry, the howitzers, and Sergeant Mitchell's squad of cavalymen to serve as messengers, toiled up the pass, near the top. Cremony and the wagon train were miles to the rear. The advance guard was vigilant, but not a sign of an Indian was seen. Then, without warning, the barren hillsides echoed with warwhoops and exploded with gunfire and arrows. A soldier dropped, killed instantly. The surprise was complete, but at that instant the months of rigid training and discipline under a martinet paid rich dividends—not a man panicked. There was no room for deployment where the attack occurred. Quietly Roberts ordered the company to the rear. One of the howitzers turned over, but Sergeant Mitchell and his cavalymen, disregarding the Indian

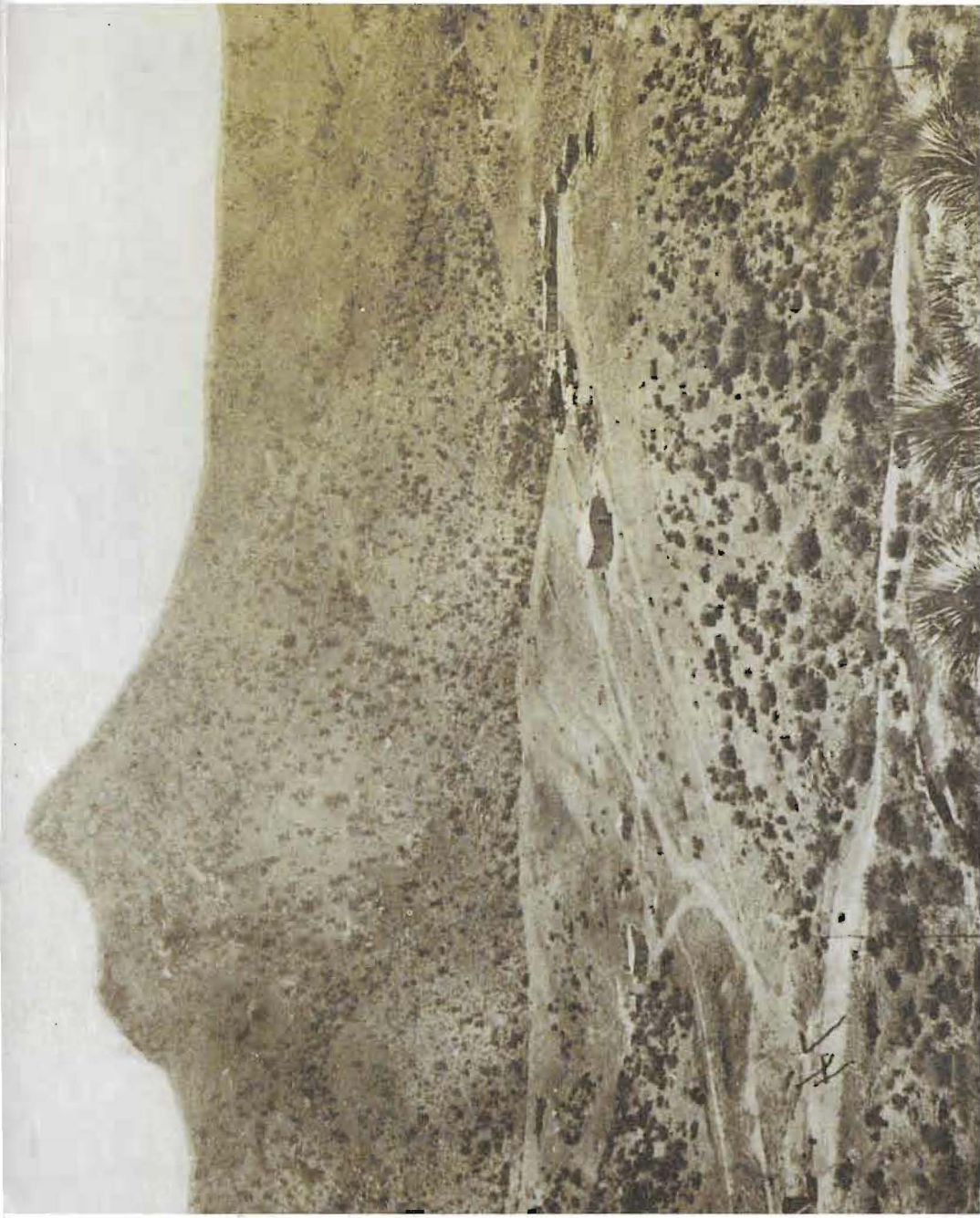
fire, set it upright. Five hundred yards down the canyon, where there was room for deployment, the infantry formed a skirmish line and the howitzers were unlimbered and opened fire. The first salvo exploded in the midst of a huddle of warriors, killing several. With fixed bayonets and loaded muskets the infantry advanced slowly and methodically, while salvo after salvo screamed over their heads, bursting on the hill-sides. The Indians were aghast; there was no cover against this terrible new weapon which they had never encountered before. Reluctantly they withdrew, and late in the afternoon the soldiers and animals slaked their thirst in the spring.

Miles to the rear, Cremony knew nothing of the fight. At dusk, with his animals tiring, he decided to bivouac for the night. About midnight, after a terrific thunderstorm, during which strange lights were seen drawing steadily closer to the bivouac—the signals between circling Apaches—the pickets heard the sounds of galloping horses. A few minutes later Sergeant Mitchell and his squad galloped in. Two men were wounded, two men were riding a single horse, and Private Teal was missing. Roberts had sent Mitchell and his men back to warn Cremony. They were "jumped" near the mouth of the pass. A horse was killed, two men wounded, and Teal disappeared before they could fight clear. Hours later the pickets again heard someone approaching; to the amazement and relief of all, it was Teal, trudging wearily with his saddle and equipment. His horse was killed at the first fire, but he had fallen clear and held onto his carbine. For hours he lay behind his dead horse, taking an occasional shot at the Indians who were cautiously stalking him. Suddenly a tall warrior stood upright in plain view. Teal fired and the man dropped. There was a chorus of yells and several Indians ran openly to the fallen man. An hour later Teal realized that the Indians had left and he was saved. He worked his saddle and equipment loose from the dead horse and started the long walk to Cremony's camp. The man he had shot was Mangas Colorado, the great war chief of the Chiricahua Apaches.

EYRE'S march for the Rio Grande was uneventful until the morning of June 29, when a messenger was intercepted carrying a dispatch addressed to Carleton from Colonel John M. Chivington, of the Colorado volunteers. Eyre read the message (since lost) and for the next five days pushed his men and horses to the limit of their endurance. Late in the afternoon of July 4, the force reached the ruins of Fort Thorn, on the Rio Grande. It was a climactic moment, but Eyre's later report was soberly factual. Next morning, at sunrise, the national colors were raised over the ruins to symbolize repossession by the Union. A little later a message arrived from General Canby, authorizing Eyre to negotiate for the exchange of McCleave, Jones, and other prisoners, but before Eyre



Howitzer of the Civil War period. Howitzers of Roberts' force at Apache Pass were probably similar. (Photograph by author)



Apache Pass at about the time of the Civil War. The buildings are probably those of the Butterfield Stage Station. (Photo courtesy of Arizona Pioneers' Historical Society)

could finish reading the message, McCleave himself arrived, under parole. He brought the first authentic information the Californians received as to the situation. The Rebels were badly disorganized by their defeat by the Coloradoans a few weeks before and by the subsequent retreat down the *Jornada del Muerto*. The information gleaned from Jones's dispatch, that the Column from California was about to cut squarely across their lifeline to Texas, completed their demoralization, and they were making preparations to retreat.

Eyre decided to cross the river and do whatever he could to add to Confederate confusion. The river was swift, turbulent, and swollen from melting snows in the north, so the crossing took several days. No sooner, however, was the last soldier across when an order arrived for the Californians to remain on the west side. Because he was already across, Eyre disregarded the order and marched south. Another order arrived, directing him to stay north of a specified line, but when he received the order he was already miles past the line, so he kept on going until he reached Las Cruces. There, he informed the district commander, he would remain until further orders.

THE main body of the column marched from Tucson late in July. Carleton arrived at Apache Pass on August 1, where he learned for the first time that the Apaches were on the warpath. Next day, as he and his escort left the eastern portal of the pass, they found a grim sight—four burned-out wagons and four corpses. Two of the men had been lashed to the wagon wheels and burned alive. The march to the Rio Grande was uneventful, but the summer heat and shortage of water made it one of the most difficult and trying that the column had to make. On arriving at Fort Thorn on August 7, they at once made preparations for crossing the river. Messages arrived from Eyre; he was angrily champing at the bit at Las Cruces, forbidden to move, while the Rebels were destroying supplies at Fort Bliss, getting ready to evacuate. Carleton obtained a free hand from Canby within a few days, but it was too late. By the time the Californians arrived at Fort Bliss the Rebels had gone. Carleton rounded up numerous stragglers and paroled them, and, strangely, furnished them with arms and ammunition for their own defense, along with an escort to accompany them to the nearest Confederate post and there reclaim the weapons.

A few days after the occupation of Fort Bliss Captain Cremony raised the national colors over Fort Quitman, a hundred miles down the river, and Captain Edmond Shirland marched to Fort Davis for the same purpose.

Col. Clarence C. Clendenen, *USA Ret'd*, is an authority on the military history of the Southwest, and his latest book, *"Blood on the Border,"* the story of United States - Mexican border difficulties, has recently been published by Macmillan. In preparing this article, he made use of the "Official Records," Cremony's reminiscences, and several histories of the Old Southwest.

The Rebels had so recently evacuated Fort Davis that the Indians had not yet looted it. In one of the buildings was the body of a Confederate soldier, bristling with arrows. A few miles from the post an Indian came out of the brush, carrying a white flag. Shirland talked to him for a few minutes, then realized that he and his men were being surrounded. He shouted a command, spurs were driven into the horses, and for the next fifteen minutes there was a running fight in which one horse was wounded, and Shirland believed that at least one Indian was killed.

On August 21 Carleton received a sudden and unexpected order to proceed to Santa Fe and assume command of the Department of New Mexico. With that order the Column from California became merged with the troops assigned to the department and lost its identity as a separate military force. But the service of the soldiers of the column was far from ended. In fact, they remained in service longer than any other Federal volunteers; they were not mustered out until late in 1866, a year and a half after the Civil War ended. They fought Indians in the mountains and on the plains. Many fights were not reported, and are merely hinted at in the *Official Records* and the scanty memoirs of the time. A California patrol killed a Confederate courier in the Big Bend region; among the papers found on him was a letter from Lieutenant

Fort Davis. (From *W.H.H. Davis' "New Mexico and Her People"*)

Colonel Dan Showalter, C.S.A., to the daughter of a California colonel. It is strange reading in the dry *Official Records*, a letter written by a young man who was deeply in love. In the fall of 1864 "Captain H. Kennedy, C.S.A.," after a dangerous secret mission for the Confederacy in California, skillfully marched a detachment of California recruits for the Confederate Army across Mexico from Mazatlan to Texas, but two days after entering Texas ran into a Federal patrol. Three quarters of his recruits were killed, wounded, or captured—and the only Federal troops in that part of Texas were Carleton's Californians. At Mesilla in 1864 there was a mutiny similar to the one that had occurred at Camp Wright. This time there was no velvet glove. Colonel West ordered the ringleader shot; the mutiny was over.

THE Column from California did not fight any major battles against the Confederacy, but its soldiers endured hardships as severe as those of soldiers in any theater of the war and fought enemies who either took no prisoners or tortured those unlucky enough to be captured. It was the imminent arrival of the Californians after the Colorado forces had defeated the Confederate Army of New Mexico that made impossible any Confederate reorganization and recovery. Throughout the war there were continual hopeful plans by Confederates for a thrust to the Pacific to gain access to the supposedly large reservoir of Southern manpower in California, but the firm hold established over Arizona and southern New Mexico by the California forces kept such schemes in the realm of wishful thinking. Incidentally, Lieutenant Colonel Dan Showalter was prominent in trying to promote such plans. The achievements of the Column from California were not spectacular. In fact, many historians have never heard of the Column from California, but it nevertheless played a definite part in strangling the Confederacy and bringing final victory to the Union.

