

HUNTER'S WESTERN ARIZONA CAMPAIGN

General Henry Hopkins Sibley in a sober moment recognized the importance of Tucson and Western Arizona to the Confederacy. Thus he wrote on January 27, 1862 a letter to the Adjutant General of the Confederate Army, General Samuel Cooper that he was ordering one company of Col Baylor's command to take post at Tucson.

On February 10, 1862, the following order was issued by Lieut. Col (and Governor of the Confederate Arizona Territory) John Robert Baylor:

Headquarters, Mesilla
February 10, 1862

Captain Sherod Hunter

SIR: You will, without delay move your company to Tucson and select some point in the vicinity of that place for a camp until further orders. You will also escort Col. Jas Riley to the Mexican border, or to some point where he can get an escort from the Mexican authorities. The detachment of Capt. Helms company will return with Col Riley.

Respectfully,
John R. Baylor
Col. Cmdg.

A separate document to Hunter gave specific orders for his operations. These were:

1. Maintain law and order among the citizens and soldiers.
2. Cultivate amicable relations with the citizens of the Mexican state of Sonora.
3. Make a treaty with the chiefs of the Pima and Papago Indians to secure their aid against the Apaches
4. Open communications with Confederate sympathizers in California and secure recruits for the Confederate armies from that source.
5. Scout toward Fort Yuma and report the activities of Union forces stationed there.

Renamed the Arizona Rangers, after Baylor's favorite unit, the Texas Rangers, Hunter and approximately 100 men saddled up and began the trip from Mesilla to Tucson in stormy weather throughout the journey. During the trip, Pvt. Benjamin Mays succumbed to pleurisy at San Simon while enroute.

The battered and ragged company of Confederate Arizona Rangers rode into Tucson and raised the Confederate flag on March 1, 1862. There they found Tucson under siege by the Apaches who were under the impression that they had driven out the bluecoats, rather than it being the result of the Civil War.

Hunter, in his report of April 5, 1862, described in glowing terms the reaction of Tucson's people to the arrival of the Confederate troops saying "My timely arrival with my command was hailed by the majority, may I say the

entire population of the town of Tucson". The majority of the Anglo population of Tucson was for the Confederacy and the local militia had carried the Confederate flag into battle against the Apaches even before Hunter's arrival. There had even been secession conventions in Tucson in March and August of 1861.

Shortly after his arrival, Hunter called in all Union men and gave them the option of either signing the following oath or leaving Tucson:

"I do solemnly swear or affirm that I will be a true and loyal citizen of the government of the Confederate States of America. And that I will bear true allegiance to the same. That I will as a faithful and good citizen observe and obey all laws of said government. That I will at all times whenever required by the proper authority take up arms in defense of the rights and liberties of said government, and that I hereby renounce allegiance to all and every other government but that of the Confederate States of America, so help me God".

Those refusing to sign were given one hour to evacuate and Hunter confiscated their property to provide for the needs of his men. Union - owned mines were also confiscated by Hunter, but none of them were put into operation for the Confederacy.

Col. James Riley and his escort had accompanied Hunter's command to Tucson. Riley participated in the flag raising and gave a rousing speech to all assembled. On March 3, he departed on a diplomatic mission to the Governor of the Mexican State of Sonora with an escort of 20 men.

Hunter was able to gain 8 recruits from the Tucson residents to partially replace the loss of the men to the escort.

On March 3, Hunter set out with 20-30 men (the rest of his men had been sent out in detachments against the Apaches) for the villages of the Pima Indians located on the Gila River (near present day Casa Grande) for the following reasons: First to enlist Pima aid in fighting their enemy- the Apache, Second to investigate rumors of an imminent invasion of Arizona by a Union army from California, and thirdly to delay the progress of any invasion, if it was true.

Upon arriving, Hunter secured a mutual defense treaty against the Apaches with Antonio Azul, Chief of the Pimas and discovered the truth of the rumors about the formation of a Union army in California and its intention to invade Arizona. The California Column, a 1500 man brigade under the command of Colonel James Henry Carleton, was indeed preparing to invade Arizona. In preparation, a Union agent Ammi M. White who owned a grist mill located at the villages had stockpiled 1500 sacks of wheat for the column. White was arrested and, his property (especially the wheat) confiscated. With no transportation, Hunter distributed the wheat to the Pimas, who subsequently again sold it to the Union.

This was an inconvenience to the California Column who was depending on the wheat being at the Pima villages and delayed their advance by more than 2 weeks because the Union leaders could not arrange for the supplies needed by their men. The Pimas refused Union currency and would trade their wheat only for manta, a type of broadcloth, which the Union forces did not have. Union Captain William Calloway wrote the following

to his superiors "Send us manta or we will starve. We have only one days rations at present." It took 2 weeks to procure sufficient supplies of manta in order to purchase enough wheat to supply the Union troops. In the interim, the troops lived on their scanty supplies and the generosity of the Pimas.

Hunter later wrote of a further incident "While delaying at the Pima villages, awaiting the arrival of a train of 50 wagons which was reported to be en route for this place for said wheat (which report, however, turned out to be untrue) my pickets discovered the approach of a detachment of cavalry, and which detachment, I am happy to say, we succeeded in capturing without firing a gun. The detachment consisted of Captain William McCleave and nine men of the First California Cavalry." McCleave and his men along with Ammi White were soon on their way, under guard, to Tucson.

McCleave's capture did not end Hunter's activities at the Pima villages. While there, he learned that the Union forces were storing hay at all of the former Butterfield Overland Stagecoach Stations between the villages and Fort Yuma. Hunter sent out detachments to burn the hay, which they succeeded in doing at six of the stations. These probes marked the westernmost penetration of the Confederate Army during the war and would precipitate the furthest west skirmish at Stanwix Station.

On March 30, 1862, Confederates under the command of Lieutenant John W. Swilling were torching hay stored at Stanwix Station located on the Gila River, about 80 miles east of Fort Yuma. While engaged, they encountered the vanguard of a 272 man force sent from Fort Yuma to the rescue of Captain McCleave. The Union force was commanded by Captain William Calloway. The Confederates fired at the approaching Yankees, wounding one in the shoulder, then fled pursued by a detachment of Union horsemen. They eluded capture and brought word to Hunter in Tucson.

Captain Hunter, upon learning of the Union force disposed of his prisoners- paroling McCleave's nine men escort and sending McCleave and miller White under guard to Mesilla. He further stationed a picket detachment of nine men under the command of Sergeant Harry Holmes on the Fort Yuma- Tucson road at a place with a sweeping view of the country called Picacho Pass.

The Union force encountered at Stanwix Station soon moved on to the Pima villages, thus setting the stage for the westernmost battle of the War Between the States, the Battle of Picacho Pass. Realizing that the pickets would warn the Confederate commander of his approach, Calloway was determined to capture them before they could issue any warning. Calloway divided his force, detaching two squads under the commands of Lieutenants Baldwin and Barrett to circle around the Eastern and Western faces of Picacho Peak thus entering the pass from the South and cutting off any retreating Confederate pickets while he lead the main force directly down the Tucson road. On April 15, 1862, brash Lieutenant James Barrett with 12 men arrived early, disobeyed orders and attacked the Confederate campsite capturing Sgt Holmes and two others. Alerted by the gunfire, the other Confederates gathered in a defensive position in a nearby thicket. Barrett ordered his men to mount and flush them out. This strategy proving unsuccessful, Barrett ordered his men to dismount and advance on foot. For 90 minutes, the two sides fought desperately. When the shooting ended, 3 Federals including Barrett lay dead and 3 others were wounded. The Confederates escaped to warn Hunter.

The Union dead were buried where they fell on the battlefield. In 1892, the army removed the remains of the two enlisted men to the National Cemetery at the Presidio, in San Francisco, California. Barrett's remains were undiscovered until 1928, when Southern Pacific Railroad workers found them only yards away from the railroad embankment they were constructing. A monument to the Union dead was erected on Barrett's grave, but later was removed to Picacho Peak State Park. Barrett lies where he fell in 1862.

The Union report of April 18, 1862, by Captain Calloway states that in addition to the three captured Confederates, three others were wounded. Hunter's report does not indicate that there were any wounded.

Captain Calloway, upon learning of the results of the Battle of Picacho Pass, thought he faced an enemy force of 200- 230 men. California newspapers estimated that the Confederate force in Tucson could muster up to 1500 men. Calloway retreated through the Pima villages to Stanwix Station where he awaited reinforcements. These under Lieutenant- Colonel Joseph West soon arrived, advanced on the Pima villages, built an earthwork fortification named Fort Barrett, and settled down to gather supplies and prepare for the final advance on Tucson.

Captain Hunter's reaction to the Picacho Pass Battle was to send a detachment of 10 men under the command of Lieutenant James H. Tevis to search for the missing pickets. Tevis arrived in time to see the retreating Federal force which he accurately estimated at 200 cavalry and five wagons. Upon receiving Tevis's report, Hunter realized he would quickly need reinforcements if he was to hold Western Arizona. Governor Baylor at Mesilla was apprised of this fact but could do nothing as the Confederate Army of New Mexico had met defeat at Glorietta and was in full retreat back to Texas.

On May 5, 1862, Captain Hunter's Arizona Rangers had the first of two engagements with the Apaches. A foraging party, gathering cattle in the vicinity of Dragoon Springs (near the current town of Dragoon) was ambushed by a large band of Apache warriors led by Cochise and Francisco. Four of Hunter's men were killed and the Apaches stole 25 horses and 30 mules in addition to the cattle. The dead Confederates were buried at the Butterfield Overland Stagecoach Station at Dragoon Springs where they remain to the present day.

The Confederates would exact revenge when a force of 30 men under the command of First Lieutenant Robert L. Swope was sent out to recover the cattle and mounts. Swope surprised the Apaches, killing 5 and recovering the livestock without Confederate loss.

On May 14, Hunter was apprised of the Confederate reversals in New Mexico, and gave the order to evacuate Tucson. Lieutenant Tevis and a small detachment remained in Tucson with orders to watch for the Union forces and report their arrival to Captain Hunter.

That same day, West and four companies of California infantry and cavalry left the Pima villages for Tucson. Instead of moving directly, they moved first to occupy Fort Breckenridge Northeast of Tucson. The fort had lain abandoned since the departure of the U.S. Army in May, 1861 who burned it before leaving. West arrived

at the fort on May 18, raising the Stars and Stripes over its blackened ruins. The fort's name was changed to Fort Stanford after Governor Leland Stanford of California. Former Vice-President Breckenridge's name was inappropriate after he went South.

West and his troops marched into Tucson on May 20, 1862, the cavalry with bugles sounding and guidons fluttering. The infantry marched in with fifes and drums playing "Yankee Doodle". Both amused the remaining citizenry. The last remaining Confederates in the town- Lieutenant Tevis were almost captured when the Union forces entered the town by a different route.

After repeated skirmishes with the Apaches, Captain Hunter and Company A, Arizona Rangers, reached Mesilla on May 27, 1862 where it was soon combined with two other units for the defense of the Mesilla valley. Thus ended Hunter's Western Arizona Campaign.

In their new capacity, The Arizona Rangers became part of Lieutenant Philemon Herbert's battalion of Arizona Cavalry. While most of the Confederate Army of New Mexico departed for San Antonio, Herbert's battalion was among the units left behind under the command of Colonel William Steele, in a forlorn attempt to hold the Mesilla Valley and the El Paso region for the Confederacy.

A primary concern of Steele's command at this time was obtaining adequate supplies. Foraging parties were sent out to requisition food, horses, mules and other supplies from the native Mexicans of the surrounding region. Hunter's Rangers were involved in these foraging expeditions and encountered resistance from armed parties of New Mexican guerillas. On July 1, 1862 Hunter and his men had a sharp clash with the guerillas near Mesilla.

Three days later, on July 4, 1862, advance elements of the California Column reached the banks of the Rio Grande River near Fort Thorn. Within three days after that, Colonel Steele and his entire command (including Hunter and the Arizona Rangers) were in retreat to San Antonio and safety. The Arizona Rangers were thus amongst the very last Confederate units to withdraw from the Confederate territory of Arizona, and with their going, Confederate Arizona ceased to exist.