

SPRUCE MCCOY BAIRD

(1814-1872)

Spruce McCoy Baird, jurist and Confederate officer, was born at Glasgow, Kentucky, on October 8, 1814. He taught school there before moving to Texas. He lived at Woodville and San Augustine before beginning his law practice at Nacogdoches. On May 27, 1848, Governor George T. Wood appointed Baird judge of the newly established Santa Fe County, east of the Rio Grande in what is now New Mexico, an area included in the bounds of the Republic of Texas but unorganized until after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo concluded the Mexican War. Baird was unsuccessful in his attempts to set up Texas jurisdiction, for the natives of Santa Fe County were Republican in politics and were opposed to Texas control. Furthermore Baird was opposed by Col. John M. Washington, commanding officer at Santa Fe. When Texas sold her claim to the area as a result of the Compromise of 1850, Baird was left without a job. He stayed in New Mexico, became a member of the bar there, and in 1852 was Indian agent to the Navajos. In 1860 he was appointed attorney general of New Mexico, but in 1861 he was forced to leave the state because of his sympathy with the Confederacy. On March 4, 1862, he was indicted for high treason and his property was confiscated. Baird returned to Texas, where he recruited and commanded the Fourth Regiment, Arizona Brigade, which served throughout Texas, mostly on the northwest frontier. He was paroled in July 1865 and in 1867 moved to Trinidad, Colorado, where he opened a law office. Baird married Emmacetta C. Bowdry of Kentucky in 1848. On June 5, 1872, he died at Cimarron, New Mexico.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Vertical Files, Barker Texas History Center, University of Texas at Austin

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