

Colorado Volunteers- Civil War

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HISTORICAL INFORMATION

On February 28, 1861 Colorado was awarded its long-awaited status as a Territory within the Republic of the United States. While Coloradans were eager to join the United States, the citizens of Texas voted on February 23, 1861 to secede from the Union, bringing the reality of the Civil War dangerously close to Denver. This development, along with the increasing threat of raiding Indians, led Coloradans to call for the organization of local troops to protect the Territory from attack and to insure the loyalty of Colorado to the Union. The response was overwhelming. Fourteen hundred miners, prospectors, pioneers, and explorers from all over the Territory answered the call and proudly formed Colorado's first combat regiments. The enthusiasm and strength of these troops is admirable, especially when noted that they were engaged in their first battle merely one year after gaining territorial status. Despite their relative inexperience, the First and Second Colorado Volunteers fought gallantly and defended the New Mexico and Colorado Territories from a Confederate invasion. Their success and accomplishments were marred only by the horrid and ghastly deed of the Third Colorado Volunteers during the Indian Wars, particularly the Sand Creek Massacre on November 29, 1864.

Colorado's involvement in the Civil War began at the end of 1861, as Brigadier General Henry S. Sibley's Confederate invasion of New Mexico began. Through the conquest and eventual annexation of the Western Territories, the Confederates would possess not only the riches of the area, but a pathway to the Pacific. The small New Mexico forces stationed at Fort Craig, just south of the town of Socorro, New Mexico were in desperate need of assistance and this bleak situation led Colonel Edward R.S. Canby, Commander of the Union forces in the territory of New Mexico, to send a hopeful plea for help to Governor William Gilpin of Colorado. In response to Colonel Canby's plea, Governor Gilpin immediately dispatched two companies of what would later become the Second Colorado Volunteers: Company A, under Captain Theodore H. Dodd, and Company B, under Captain James H. Ford.

Company A received orders to proceed immediately to Fort Craig and arrived in time to assist Colonel Canby and his troops in the first major battle between Union and Confederate forces in the West on February 21, 1862. The battle took place near the small town of Valverde, five miles north of Fort Craig, and

resulted in a Union defeat. Nonetheless, Company A fought gallantly and received much praise from officers who were involved.

After their victory at Valverde, General Sibley and his Confederate troops continued their march northward and by early March 1862 they occupied the town of Albuquerque as well as the territorial capitol, Santa Fe. Their last major obstacle was Fort Union, a strong military post approximately fifty miles northeast of Santa Fe. A conquest of Fort Union would put the entire New Mexican Territory into the hands of the Confederates and bring them one step closer to the riches of the Colorado gold mines. Unbeknownst to Sibley, however, was the departure from Colorado of a regiment of stalwart, brave men whose determination would put an end to his plans: the First Colorado Volunteers were on their way to New Mexico.

The First Colorado Volunteers were a hardy, self-reliant frontier group, loyal to the Union, and eager to fight. Restless and impatient with the discipline of military life, several members often found themselves arrested for insubordination and various other activities. Consequently, they were ecstatic upon receipt of orders from Major General David Hunter, in command of the Department of Kansas, for the First Colorado Volunteers to prepare to march to New Mexico. The Volunteers believed that finally they were to see the action they had so eagerly signed up for.

The troops marched through freezing and miserable weather. On March 8 they received the devastating news that General Sibley's Confederate army was already in possession of Albuquerque and Santa Fe and were making arrangements to attack Fort Union. The Fort contained the Union's military and arsenal supplies and was deemed necessary to defend at all costs. Sacrificing much needed rest, the Volunteers of the First Colorado resolutely pushed on into the cold night carrying only their weapons and blankets. They finally collapsed from exhaustion thirty miles later, on the Cimarron River. Surprisingly, they rested only briefly, and again set out early the next day despite freezing temperatures, furious windstorms, and a mountain snow storm. When they finally staggered into Fort Union on March 10, they had travelled an extraordinary four hundred miles in thirteen days of harsh winter conditions.

The next two battles were so pivotal in determining the outcome of the Civil War in the Western Territories, that they came to be called "The Gettysburg of the West". In the struggle for control of the Intermountain West during the Civil War, these battles were of major importance. Had the Union been defeated, the Confederate invasion may well have advanced northward into Colorado thereby giving the South control of the riches of the area.

The first of these battles took place at Apache Canyon, approximately seventeen miles southeast of Santa Fe. On March 26, 1862, the advancing Union army, comprised mostly of the First Colorado Volunteers, suddenly found themselves facing the Confederate army only one-third mile ahead in the narrow canyon. The ensuing battle resulted in a Union victory. The First Colorado Volunteers fought bravely and forced the Rebels to retreat.

The second battle, on March 28, 1862, was the most decisive of the Civil War in the West: the Battle of Glorieta Pass. Although the First Colorado Volunteers fought courageously, the Union troops were greatly outnumbered and retreated after six hours of furious fighting. However, shortly after their retreat, news arrived that Major John Chivington and various companies of the First Colorado Volunteers who had taken a circuitous route earlier that morning in which they hoped to reconnoiter and attack from the rear, had discovered and destroyed the Confederate supply train. This was a crushing blow to the Rebels; without their supplies they could not hope to move onward and attack Fort Union. Seeing a continued advance as hopeless, the demoralized Rebel men fell back to Santa Fe and then Albuquerque.

Meanwhile, in southern New Mexico, Colonel Canby and his Union troops, including Captain Dodd's Company A of the Second Colorado Volunteers, left Fort Craig on April 5, 1862 where they had been stationed after their discouraging defeat at the Battle of Valverde. Their destination was the small town of Peralta, just south of Albuquerque, where the Confederates were reportedly stalling their retreat to Texas by indulging in excesses of liquor, music, and dance. Canby and his troops arrived at Peralta on April 15 and engaged in battle: the Battle of Peralta. The

weak Confederates were defeated and renewed their retreat with vigor.

While the First and Second Colorado Volunteers battled in New Mexico, the Indians in Colorado became more and more threatening. In September 1863, Colorado Governor John Evans sensed the danger of an imminent Indian uprising and invited leaders of the Sioux, Cheyenne, and Arapaho tribes to join him in a peace council to be held at the head of the Republican River, in eastern Colorado. All three tribes refused the invitation claiming they regarded all treaties with the white man as swindles. The white man wanted them to move to reservations where they could no longer roam free and hunt as they pleased. On the reservations they starved and lived as prisoners.

In April of 1864, Colonel John Chivington answered a report that small groups of Cheyenne were stealing livestock along the South Platte east of Denver and ordered his troops to "kill Cheyennes wherever and whenever possible". Chivington and his troops pillaged peaceful camps, attacked guiltless bands, and killed innocent tribesmen.

Several bands of vengeful Indians became enraged at news of the horrors of Chivington's latest campaign. On June 11, 1864 a group of Indians savagely attacked the Hungate family who lived on a ranch thirty miles southeast of Denver. The mutilated and scalped bodies of Mr. and Mrs. Hungate and their two children were later displayed in Denver and incited a frenzy of fear and anger among citizens. Hence, Governor Evans quickly raised a regiment of "hundred-day cavalrymen", called the Third Colorado Volunteers, for the sole purpose of fighting Indians raiders.

Early in September 1864, Cheyenne chief, Black Kettle, and seven other chiefs, arrived in Denver to try to make peace with Governor Evans. Evans avoided making any peace agreements and turned responsibility over to Colonel Chivington who informed the chiefs that peace would only come when the tribes gave themselves up at Fort Lyon (formerly Fort Wise) in southeastern Colorado. Desperately wanting peace, the chiefs agreed to Chivington's terms and by November they surrendered and were moved by Fort Lyon officials to Sand Creek. Here they set up camp, believing they were safe from attack because they had complied with the white man's wishes.

However, Chivington and his Third Colorado Volunteers had other plans for the natives. They attacked the camp at Sand Creek on the early morning of November 29, 1864, ignoring the American and white surrender flags that Black Kettle quickly raised to indicate they were a friendly tribe. The soldiers charged on the helpless camp from three directions and indiscriminately shot at the fleeing men, women, and children. Some of the Indian warriors made a brief attempt to defend the camp, but they were vastly outnumbered and reluctantly retreated. More than 150 Indians were killed, two-thirds of whom were women and children. After the battle, the soldiers returned and completely destroyed the village. They then mutilated and scalped the bodies.

When Chivington and his Third Colorado Volunteers returned to Denver, they proudly paraded the streets, and boasted their victory over the Indians. When the facts of the massacre gradually became known, the public loudly condemned the actions of the troops. Finally, in 1865 a Congressional Committee in Washington, D.C. vigorously denounced the slaughter of the Cheyennes and Arapahos at Sand Creek by Colonel Chivington and the Third Colorado Volunteers. These soldiers will forever be remembered with shame.

The swiftness with which Colorado was able to raise the competent and hardy troops of the First and Second Colorado Volunteers within only a short time after receiving its territorial status, demonstrates the devotion and courage of these Colorado soldiers. The valantry of the First and Second Colorado Volunteers brought pride to the territory; a pride that was replaced with shame after the horrible actions of the Third Colorado Volunteers in the Massacre of Sand Creek.

CHRONOLOGY

- 1861 February 28: Colorado becomes a territory of the United States.
- December: General Henry S. Sibley's Confederate invasion of New Mexico begins and Colonel Edward R.S. Canby, Commander of the Union forces in the territory of New Mexico, asks for help from Colorado Governor, William Gilpin. Gilpin dispatches Company A and B of what would later become the Second Colorado Volunteers to New Mexico.
- 1862 February 21: Company A arrive at Fort Craig and aid the New Mexico forces against the Confederates in the Battle of Valverde. The Union forces are defeated in the battle.
- February--Early March: General Sibley and his Confederate troops continue their march northward and by early March they occupy Albuquerque and Santa Fe.
- The First Colorado Volunteers begin their march southward to New Mexico.
- March 8: The First Colorado Volunteers arrive at Fort Union, New Mexico.
- March 26: The Confederate and Union forces meet unexpectedly in the narrow Apache canyon approximately seventeen miles southeast of Santa Fe. The battle ends in a Confederate defeat.
- March 28: The two enemies meet again for the Battle of Glorieta Pass. In this battle the Confederates are defeated when their supply train is destroyed by Major John Chivington and his First Colorado Volunteers. The Confederates are forced to begin their retreat back to Texas.
- April 15: Colonel R.S. Canby attacks the Confederate troops at Peralta, New Mexico in an attempt to quicken their retreat.
- 1863 January: First Colorado Volunteers return to Colorado where they are honored as heroes.
- September: Governor John Evans invites leaders of the Sioux, Cheyenne, and Arapaho tribes to join him in a peace council to be held at the head of the Republican River. The tribes refuse.
- 1864 April: Colonel Chivington answers a report that small bands of Cheyenne are stealing livestock along the South Platte. He embarks on a campaign of pillaging of peaceful camps and killing innocent tribesmen.

June 11: A band of Indians kill the Hungate family on a ranch thirty miles southeast of Denver. The bodies are displayed at Denver and incite a frenzy of fear and anger among the citizens. Governor Evans raises a regiment of "hundred-day cavalrymen", called the Third Colorado Volunteers.

Early September: Cheyenne chief, Black Kettle, and seven other chiefs arrive in Denver to make peace with Governor Evans.

November 29, 1864: The Sand Creek Massacre.

SCOPE AND CONTENTS

The Colorado Volunteers played a significant role in the struggle for control of the West during the 1860's. Had the Union forces been absent of the First and Second Colorado Volunteers in the New Mexico campaigns, a Confederate invasion would have been likely. These brave soldiers dominated the Union ranks in the last three battles of New Mexico, and with their valiant determination to protect the wholeness of their country from Confederate dismemberment, they triumphed in victory.

The pride that accompanied this victory, was abruptly stifled one winter day in 1864 on the banks of Sand Creek when Colonel John Civington and a regiment of "hundred-day cavalrymen", the Third Colorado Volunteers, led an attack upon an innocent, unsuspecting Indian camp. The Sand Creek Massacre proved to be one of the most disgraceful and disasterous events in history of the United States and will forever be remembered with shame.

The Colorado Volunteers collection contains four series. The first is titled The First Colorado Volunteers and contains original orders, discharge papers, receipts, and various newspaper typescripts concerning the deeds of the soldiers within this regiment. A special feature in this series is an original document signed by Governor William Gilpin relating to the appointment of Larkin C. Tolles to Assistant Surgeon of the First Colorado.

The second series, The Second Colorado Volunteers, consists of original orders, one discharge paper, and the personal papers of Cpt. Lymann Rouell, Thomas Conley, Thomas F. Weaver, Levi McGrew, and John Graham. This series also includes many newspaper typescripts and several original editions of the Rocky Mountain Herald.

The third series, The Third Colorado Volunteers, includes original orders, discharge papers, correspondence, and a book of morning reports. It also contains the personal papers of Leland S. Thatcher, Duncan Keith, and Padro Padeu. Two newspaper typescripts are also included in the series.

The last series contains papers that fall under the category of Miscellaneous. It consists primarily of newspaper typescripts, orders, and general references to all three regiments of the Colorado Volunteers. Also within this series, are newspaper typescripts and correspondence relating to the erection of monuments to the Colorado soldiers that presently exist in both New Mexico and Colorado.

For further information concerning the First, Second, and Third Colorado Volunteers refer to the following books:

- Colton, Ray C. The Civil War in the Western Territories. Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1959.
- Josephy, Alvin M., Jr., and the Editors of Time-Life Books. War on the Frontier: The Trans-Mississippi West. Alexandria, Virginia: Time-Life Books, Inc., 1986.
- Whitford, William C. The Battle of Glorieta Pass: The Colorado Volunteers in the Civil War. Glorieta, New Mexico: The Rio Grande Press, Inc., 1906.

SERIES DESCRIPTION

<u>Series</u>	<u>File Folder Numbers</u>
First Colorado Volunteers.....	1-22
Second Colorado Volunteers.....	23-47
Third Colorado Volunteers.....	48-57
Miscellaneous.....	49-69

COLLECTION CONTENTS

<u>FILE FOLDER #</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>
	<u>First Colorado Volunteers</u>
1	Roster
2	Orders
3	Orders
4	Discharge Papers
5	Receipts
6	Receipts
7	Larkin C. Tolles
8	Newspaper: Typescript "Engagement with the Enemy in Apache Canyon", Newspaper and date unknown.
9	Newspaper: Typescript "The Departure of the First Regiment of Colorado Volunteers", <u>Colorado Republican and Rocky Mountain Herald</u> , 2-27-1862
10	Newspaper: Typescript "March of the Colorado First", <u>Colorado Republican and Rocky Mountain Herald</u> , 2-27-1862
11	Newspaper: Typescript "From the First Regiment", <u>Colorado Republican and Rocky Mountain Herald</u> , 3-6-1862
12	Newspaper: Typescript "Powder, Powder", <u>Colorado Republican and Rocky Mountain Herald</u> , 3-6-1862
13	Newspaper: Typescript "The War in New Mexico", "Very Latest News From the South", <u>Colorado Republican and Rocky Mountain News</u> , 3-20-1862

- 14 Newspaper: Typescript
"Notes of the First Regiment",
Colorado Republican and Rocky
Mountain Herald, 3-20-1862
- 15 Newspaper: Typescript
"First Fight of the Colorado
First!", "Defeat of the
Texans", "Fifty Rebel Wagons
Burned With Provisions, etc.",
"Four Officers and Twenty
Privates of the Colorado First
Killed and Forty or Fifty
Wounded", Colorado Republican
and Rocky Mountain Herald,
4-10-1862
- 16 Newspaper: Typescript
"Latest From New Mexico", "Full
Account of the Late Battle",
Colorado Republican and Rocky
Mountain Herald, 4-17-1862
- 17 Newspaper: Typescript
"Particulars of the Battle at
Pigeon's Ranch", Colorado
Republican and Rocky Mountain
Herald, 5-1-1862
- 18 Newspaper: Typescript
"List of Killed, Wounded, and
Missing in the First Regiment
of Colorado Volunteers in the
Engagements with the Rebels in
New Mexico", Colorado
Republican and Rocky Mountain
Herald, Date unknown
- 19 Newspaper: Typescript
"Latest From New Mexico",
"Sibley Runs Like a Rebel",
"Canby in Hot Pursuit",
Colorado Republican and Rocky
Mountain Herald, 5-22-1862
- 20 Newspaper: Typescript
"The Brass Band", Commonwealth
and Republican, 3-19-1863
- 21 Newspaper: Typescript
"First Colorado Battery",
Colorado Transcript, 4-11-1877

Second Colorado Volunteers

- 22 Orders
- 23 Discharge Paper
- 24 Captain Lyman Rouell
- 25 Thomas Conley
- 26 Thomas F. Weaver
- 27 Levi McGrew
- 28 John Graham
- 29 Newspaper: Typescript
"Departure of the Second",
Commonwealth and Republic, 12-
25-1862
- 30 Newspaper: Typescript
"Second Colorado Losses and
Trophies", Weekly
Commonwealth, 9-3-1863
- 31 Newspaper
Soldier's Letter, 8-20-1864
- 32 Newspaper: Typescript
"Reunion of the Army of the
Border", Colorado Transcript,
6-7-1871
- 33 Newspaper: Typescript
"The Proposed Reunion", Weekly
Colorado Transcript, 6-14-1871
- 34 Newspaper: Typescript
"Old Second Transcript",
Colorado Transcript, 1-17-1877
- 35 Newspaper: Typescript
"Veteran's Reunion", Colorado
Transcript, 2-2-1877
- 36 Newspaper: Typescript
"Veteran's Reunion", Colorado
Transcript, 2-2-1877
- 37 Newspaper: Typescript
"The Second Colorado", Colorado
Transcript, 2-7-1877

- 38 Newspaper: Typescript
"Second Colorado Reunion",
"Formation of the Second
Cavalry Club", Colorado
Transcripts, 2-14-1877
- 39 Newspaper: Typescript
"The Second Colorado", Colorado
Transcript, 2-28-1877
- 40 Newspaper: Typescript
"The Second Colorado Veterans",
Colorado Transcript, 3-7-1877
- 41 Newspaper: Typescript
"Second Colorado Veterans",
Colorado Transcript, 3-21-1877
- 42 Newspaper: Typescript
"Second Colorado Veterans",
Colorado Transcript, 3-28-1877
- 43 Newspaper: Typescript
"Second Colorado Veterans",
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- 44 Newspaper: Typescript
"Second Colorado Veterans",
Colorado Transcript, 4-11-1877
- 45 Newspaper: Typescript
"Second Colorado Veterans",
Colorado Transcript, 4-25-1877
- 46 Newspaper: Typescript
"Second Colorado Veterans",
Colorado Transcript, 5-2-1877
- 47 Newspaper
"Second Colorado: A History of
Colorado's Celebrated Cavalry:
Three and a Half Years in
the Army", Rocky Mountain
Herald, 6-20-1896---9-5-1896

Third Colorado Volunteers

- 48 Orders
- 49 Correspondence- Mrs. Sanford
Babcock

50 Morning Reports

51 Discharge Papers

52 Discharge Papers

53 Leland S. Thatcher

54 Duncan Keith

55 Padro Padeu

56 Newspaper: Typescript
"Departure of the Third",
Commonwealth and Republic,
3-12-1863

57 Newspaper: Typescript
"History of the Third Colorado
Volunteer Infantry", Colorado
Transcript, 4-18-1877

Miscellaneous

58 Orders

59 Discharge Paper

60 Robert Cleveland

61 Newspaper: Typescript
"Address of the Recruiting
Commissioner to the People of
Colorado", Commonwealth and
Republic, 8-28-1862

62 Newspaper: Typescript
"The Military of Colorado",
Commonwealth and Republic,
11-20-1862

63 Newspaper: Typescript
"Summary of the Military Events
of Colorado", Commonwealth
Weekly, 6-22-1864---4-12-1865

64 Newspaper: Typescript
"The Pet Lambs", Denver
Republican, April-June 1890

65 Tyler's Rangers

66 Colorado Veterans Associations,

1886

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Santa Fe Plaza Monument

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Colorado Monument

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Photocopies