HISTORY OF FORT DAVIS, TEXAS

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Table of Contents

List of Maps

CHAPTER ONE:

THE SETTING

Julius Frobel, a German traveler, made an extensive tour of the Americas from 1850 to 1857. In the course of his wanderings, Frobel crossed the Davis Mountains of West Texas. He found them to be "among the most interesting things in nature I have ever seen. . . . Nature appears here, more than anywhere else I have seen, like a landscape-painter, composing a picture with the most simple yet refined taste."[1] Indeed, even the modern-day tourist safely ensconced in the comfort of an automobile and secure in the knowledge that food and housing are available cannot ignore the enchantment of the Fort Davis area. The air is crisp and clean, the climate salubrious, the surrounding elevations just high enough to be fairly called mountains yet low enough to be scaled by even the faintest of heart. With more water than the arid plains which encircle the canyons and peaks, the immediate area is comfortable rather than stark—an oasis amidst the beautiful yet barren Trans-Pecos region of Texas.

Frobel's comments, then, are not unusual. "The position of Fort Davis is extremely picturesque and peculiar," recalled another awe-struck traveler. "The most wonderful scenery in Texas is displayed, and the mountains contain minerals and gems."[2] The final remark proved prophetic. For despite the physical beauty of Fort Davis, scenery alone has not satisfied many who have entered the region. Not surprisingly, some have wanted more than Davis is able to give. The history of Fort Davis thus begins with the environment, for it is the land, and perceptions of that land, which hold the key to understanding the human experience.

Fort Davis stands amidst the region known as the Trans-Pecos. Since the Texas boundary was recognized in the Compromise of 1850, the Trans-Pecos has been defined as that area west of the Pecos River, north of the Rio Grande, and southeast of the state of New Mexico. Peculiar geologic and physical features dominate this 28,000-square-mile area. Striking in its contrasts, the

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1 Julius Frobel, *Seven Years' Travel in Central America, Northern Mexico, and the Far West of the United States* (London: Richard Bentley, 1859): 460.

2 N. A. Taylor and H. F. McDonald, *The Coming Empire, or Two Thousand Miles in Texas on Horseback* (New York: A. S. Barnes and Co., 1877): 381.

Trans-Pecos encompasses mountains, plateaus, and intervening basins. To the north, a massive fault formed the Guadalupe Mountains, the highest in Texas. Since the Guadalupes overlook an arid region known as the Salt Basin, their springs and watering holes attracted Indians and soldiers alike throughout the nineteenth century. As such, they are critical to the history of the federal occupation of Fort Davis.[3]

South of Fort Davis lies the rugged Big Bend of the Rio Grande, described by Lt. William Echols as a "picture of barrenness and desolation" in 1860. Erosion has stripped away much of the soil in the Big Bend, exposing the bare surface of the underlying rocks. Hot summer temperatures accentuate the region's aridity and dry soils. Yet the spectacular geologic features have long offered the promise of mineral wealth; countless miners and traders have sought to capitalize on its perceived riches. Ranchers have also exploited the precious pasturelands in the valleys and basins near the Rio Grande.[4]

Fort Davis itself, established by United States troops in 1854, lies nestled in the picturesque Apache Mountains, later known as the Davis Mountains. "I will never tire of looking at them," noted one immigrant. Formed by masses of volcanic materials, the Davis range boasts Mount Livermore, the state's second highest peak at an elevation of 8,382 feet. Benefiting from the natural erosion which deposits the rich black soil from the mountain slopes, drainage basins along the foothills constitute some of the best grazing lands in the Trans-Pecos.[5]

Sheer rock cliffs overlook the fort on three sides. Atop the adjoining range is ignimbrite, quarried for building purposes by early residents of the federal post. Lower outcroppings of rhyolite porphyry display hues from grayish red to brown as weathering continues. At the bottom of the canyon andesite deposits are exposed. These layers of rock resulted from the prehistoric volcanic activity which formed the mountains.[6]

Many of the extremes in temperature which characterize the Trans-Pecos

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3 H. Johnson, *The Natural Regions of Texas*, Bureau of Business Research Monograph No. 8 (Austin: University of Texas, 1931): 58.

4 Ibid., 146; Ronnie C. Tyler, *The Big Bend: A History of the Last Texas Frontier* (Washington: National Park Service, 1975): 5; Diary of Echols, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1860, p. 41 (quotation).

5 William A. Duffen, ed., "Overland Via 'Jackass Mail' in 1858: The Diary of Phocion R. Way," *Arizona and the West* 2 (Spring, 1960): 50 (quotation); Johnson, *Natural Regions*, 144.

6 Jerome A. Greene, *Historic Resource Study: Fort Davis National Historic Site* (U.S. Department of the Interior: National Park Service, 1986): 1.

have less impact on the area immediately surrounding Fort Davis. "The climate of this part of Texas is probably the finest in the world," one inhabitant exclaimed after a mild winter. "The most delightful summer climate of any place I have ever seen in the South," added another resident. Slightly less than twenty inches of precipitation falls annually, most of which comes between July and September. Not always sufficient for farming, the rain does support grasses and forage needed for ranching. Average temperatures range from the low thirties in winter to the eighties in summer.[7]

Prior to twentieth century settlement, the Fort Davis environment supported a rich variety of flora and fauna. Buffalo did not roam the immediate area, but observers commonly noted black and white-tailed deer, antelope, black bear, wolves, and prairie dogs near the post. Black and blue quail, turkeys, ducks, partridges, prairie owls, and squirrel hawks also inhabited the region. Trees and brush dominated the cliffs and hills, grass covered the flatlands, and cottonwood trees lined stream banks, much like the vegetation does today. Overgrazing, however, has stimulated a greater growth of brush in the higher elevations, with catclaw, sumacs, and algarita becoming increasingly common.[8]

Of course, neither the Americans nor the Spanish were the first humans to occupy the Trans-Pecos. This distinction belongs to peoples whose precise roots remain shrouded in prehistory. Conclusions about the Paleo-Indian (ca. 9200 B.C. to 6000 B.C.), Archaic (6000 B.C. to A.D. 1000), and Prehistoric (A.D. 1000 to 1500) ages of the Trans-Pecos remain tentative. Nonetheless, more than one hundred prehistoric sites have been identified in Jeff Davis County alone. Scientists have also unearthed evidence of Paleo-Indian activity near Van Horn, in the Guadalupe Mountains, and near Langtry (approximately 50, 75, and 125 miles from Fort Davis, respectively). Artifacts found at these sites indicate that the

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7 Myer to My Dear James, Feb. 14, 1855, in M. L. Crimmins, ed., "General Albert J. Myer: The Father of the Signal Corps." *West Texas Historical Association Year Book* 29 (Oct., 1953): 57 (first quotation); Zenas R. Bliss Reminiscences, 1: 156, Barker Texas History Center (second quotation); Weather File, Fort Davis Archives; Johnson, *Natural Regions*, 42-43; *The Texas Almanac and State Industrial Guide, 1984-1985* (Dallas: A. H. Belo Corp., 1983): 231.

8 Bliss Reminiscences, 1: 323-24, 328-30, Barker Texas History Center; Edward to Jenny, Mar. 25, 1856, Edward L. Hartz Papers, Library of Congress; Report of Emory, House Executive Document 135, 34th Congress, 1st session, serial 832, II, pt. 2: 4-5; James T. Nelson, "The Historical Vegetative Aspect of Fort Davis National Historic Site, Texas" (Typescript, Fort Davis Archives, 1981): 69-74.

occupants hunted big game and used rudimentary grinding tools several thousand years ago.[9]

Scientists have also identified Archaic-era tools, projectile points, mill stones, petroglyphs, and pictographs along the lower Pecos River and in the Big Bend. Relatively few of these sites have been discovered in the Davis Mountains, suggesting that early native peoples made only limited use of the region. Apparently, however, drought in the surrounding areas led Archaic peoples to explore the Davis Mountains. Several spectacular displays of pictograph shelters are found fifteen miles west of Fort Davis, near Mount Livermore. Another site, dated shortly after A.D. 600 and a mere thirty-seven miles northwest of Davis, depicts men using bows and arrows to kill game. These early pictographs signal the first definite use of such weapons in the Davis Mountains.[10]

These earliest recorded inhabitants of the Trans-Pecos lived arduous lives. Dependent on nature's gifts, they utilized the native wild plants and animals to the fullest and migrated according to season and resources. Prickly pear, yucca, river walnuts, and animals provided most of their food. A few prehistoric inhabitants crafted rough baskets and sandals. By A.D. 800–900, Trans-Pecos peoples began to carve small arrowpoints and scrapers characteristic of the Plains tribes that orginally lived north and east of the Davis area.[11]

Anthropologists and historians believe that the Puebloan culture began expanding southward from New Mexico down the Rio Grande in the eleventh century. The causes of this expansion remain unclear; climatic changes, incursions from Apache raiders, epidemics, and internal strife undoubtedly contributed to this migration. Whatever the case, Puebloan lifestyles and mores overwhelmed the less developed cultures of the indigenous populace. Whether significant numbers of Pueblo Indians actually migrated to the Trans-Pecos is unclear; native bands might simply have adopted the cultural ways of a stronger Pueblo minority from the north.[12]

Sometime during the fifteenth century the Puebloan expansion stopped,

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9 Barry Wade Hutcheson, *The Trans-Pecos: A Historical Survey and Guide to Historic Sites*, College of Agricultural Sciences, Research Report No. 3 (Lubbock: Texas Tech University, 1970): 5-6; Lynne A. Bresaart, et. al., comps. *Prehistoric Archeological Sites in Texas: A Statistical Overview*, Special Report No. 28 (Austin: Office of the State Archeologist, 1985): 151.

10 Hutcheson, *Trans-Pecos*, 5-10; Forrest Kirkland and W. W. Newcomb, Jr., *The Rock Art of Texas Indians* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1967): 127-34; Ellvyn R. Stoddard, et. al., eds., *Borderlands Sourcebook: A Guide to the Literature on Northern Mexico and the American Southwest* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983): 70-73.

11 "Native Indian Culture in the Texas Big Bend: A Public Discussion" (Alpine: Museum of the Big Bend, 1978): 7-8.

12 W. W. Newcomb, Jr., *The Indians of Texas: From Prehistoric to Modern Times* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1961): 230-31.

probably a result of either a decrease in rainfall or additional raids by tribes into the Trans-Pecos. A number of villages seem to have been abandoned. A major concentration of the remaining Trans-Pecos natives clustered around the junction of the Rios Conchos and Grande, which ultimately became the major southern entry point into the region. The peoples at La Junta (the junction) were most influenced by the Puebloan lifestyle, although they also adopted some of the characteristics of the hunting-and-gathering tribes that had preceded them. Along the Rio Grande farming predominated. Possibly because of declining rainfall, other groups roamed the northern lands beyond the Davis and Chisos Mountains, returning to the river valleys when hunting season ended.[13]

Did the nomadic bands of the interior share a common heritage with the settled gardeners of the valley? Anthropologists J. Charles Kelley and Jack D. Forbes argue that the two groups were different. They suggest that the nomadic tribes (Jumanos) were of Plains derivation, and that they pushed south and west into the Trans-Pecos as early as the thirteenth century. Roaming the area from the Neches River to the Rio Grande, they were distinguished from the sedentary valley tribes, or Patarabueyes. In so arguing, Kelley and Forbes follow the distinction made by Diego Pérez de Luxan, a member of one of the earliest Spanish expeditions into the area. Luxan recounts that while the Patarabueyes had killed several of the expedition's horses, the nomadic Jumanos welcomed them with food and drink.[14]

Kelley, a preeminent authority on the Trans-Pecos tribes, concludes that the Jumanos played a crucial role in the diffusion of European culture from Mexico to the southern Plains Indians. He also argues that some of the Jumano lived year round near the Rio Grande, while others merely migrated there during the winter season. These constant shifts, however, have convinced other scholars that the nomadic and sedentary peoples were all from the same stock. Indeed, the dean of Texas Indian scholars, W. W. Newcomb, Jr., maintains that both groups should be called Jumanos.[15]

According to this latter theory, fifteenth-century climatic changes forced some of the Jumanos from their valley homes to the West Texas plains. The

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13 Newcomb, *Indians of Texas*, 225-37.

14 J. Charles Kelley, "The Historic Indian Pueblos of La Junta de los Rios," *New Mexico Historical Review* 27 (October, 1952): 257-95; Kelley, "Juan Sabeata and Diffusion in Aboriginal Texas," *American Anthropologist* 57 (Oct., 1955): 981-93; Jack D. Forbes, "Unknown Athapaskans: The Identification of the Jano, Jocome, Jumano, Manso, Suma, and Other Indian Tribes of the Southwest," *Ethnohistory* 6 (Spring, 1959): 97-159; George P. Hammond and Agapito Rey, trans., *Expedition into New Mexico Made by Antonio de Espejo, 1582-1583, as Revealed in the Journal of Diego de Luxan, a Member of the Party*, Quivera Society Publications (1929; rpt. New York: Arno Press, 1967), 1: 54-56, 124.

15 Newcomb, *Indians of Texas*, 226-27.

reminiscences of the earliest Spanish visitor, Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, support such a position. Upon his query as to why they were not planting maize, the Indians replied "that the rains had failed for two years in succession, and the seasons were so dry the seed had everywhere been taken by the moles, and they could not venture to plant again until after water had fallen copiously. They begged us to tell the sky to rain, and to pray for it."[16]

Other scientists have challenged some of Kelley's archeological evidence. Kelley claims that Jumanos roamed the central Texas plains; materials which he originally traced to the Jumanos subsequently have been attributed to entirely different tribes. Newcomb also points out that Antonio de Espejo, the leader of the expedition chronicled by Luxan, called both interior nomads and river-dwelling farmers Jumanos. Newcomb admits, though, that the arguments remain tentative; the Spanish referred to virtually all regional Indians who tattooed or painted their bodies as Jumanos, rendering attempts to resolve the impasse virtually impossible.

The inability of historians and anthropologists to unravel this tangled evidence thus hampers efforts to identify and describe the Indians of West Texas. Assuming, as does Newcomb, that both nomads and farmers were Jumanos, the disparate tribe numbered more than ten thousand persons. The majority lived in several villages along the Rio Conchos near its junction with the Rio Grande. They were probably related to the even more mysterious Sumas, who lived westward up the Rio Grande. The river villages each had at least one chief; some had separate leaders for war and peace. The nomadic groups developed less centralized political structure, although the most famous Jumano chief, Juan Sabeata, came from such stock.[17]

Whatever the case, several distinct Indian groups lived in the Big Bend area of Texas at the time of the Spanish arrival. Although evidence remains incom-

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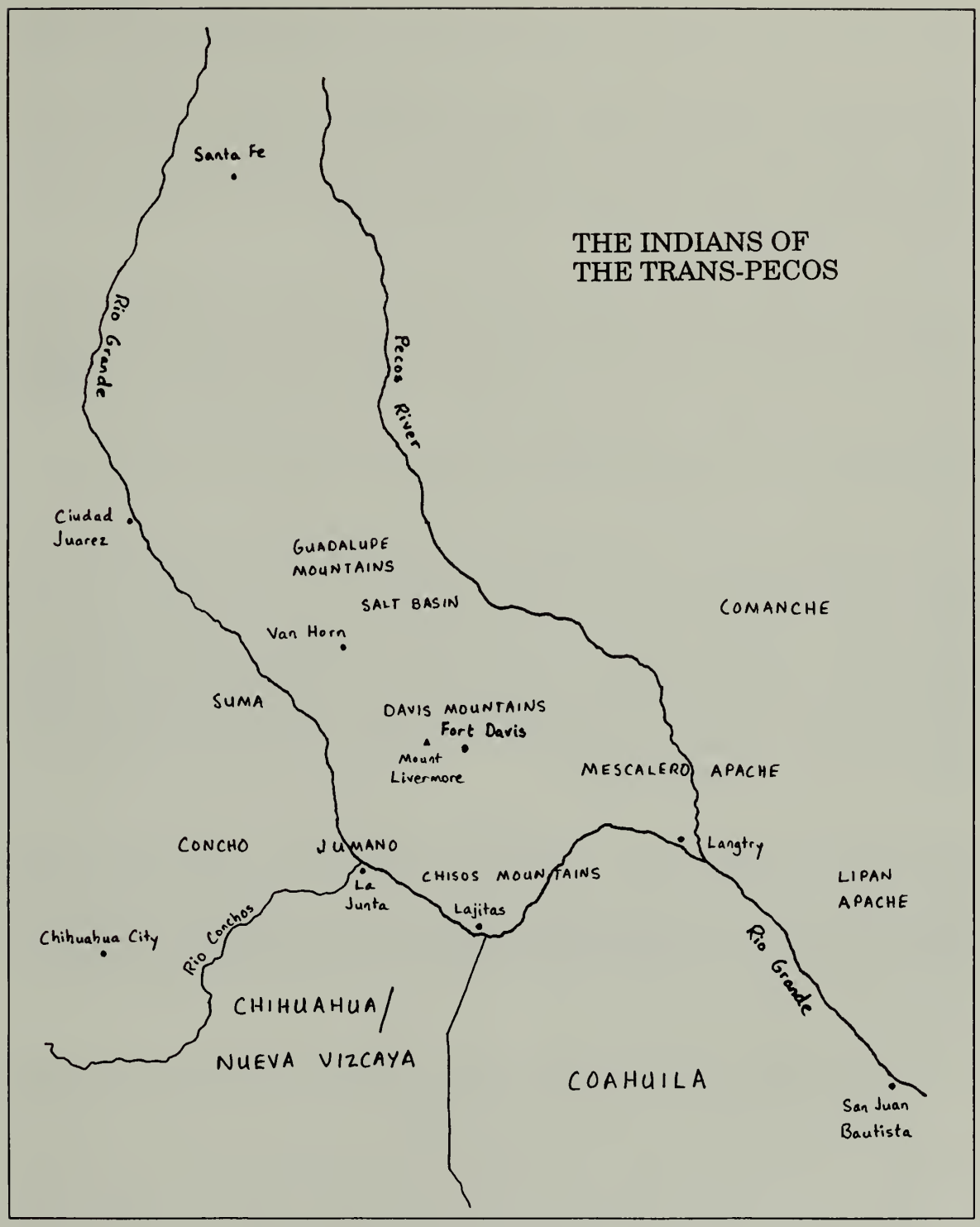
16 Ibid., 226-29; Herbert E. Bolton, ed., *Spanish Exploration in the Southwest, 1542-1706*, Original Narratives of Early American History (1907; rpt. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1963), 1: 104 (quotation).

17 The above discussion is based on Newcomb's seminal volume. For criticism of Kelley's theory, see Dee Ann Suhm, "Excavations at the Smith Rockshelter, Travis County," *Texas Journal of Science* 9 (Mar., 1957): 54-56. See also Michael L. Tate, *The Indians of Texas: An Annotated Research Bibliography*, Native American Bibliographic Series, No. 9 (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1986): 64-68, and Danny Martin Young, "Identification of the Jumano Indians" (MA thesis, Sul Ross State University, 1970).



Map 1:1. The Indians of the Trans-Pecos
Map drawn by the author.

plete, scholars have suggested that these Indians, along with the Sumas, spoke one of the widely used Uto-Aztecan languages. Those living along the Rio Grande (whom Kelley calls the Patarabuey) occupied single-storied, flat-roofed houses made of wood and adobe, clustered together in villages. The structures at La Junta differed radically from the portable framed structures covered with skins, grass, and reed found elsewhere in the Trans-Pecos—northern Chihuahua area. These villages, at least three of which lay on the Rio Grande's east bank, were also larger than the regional norm.[18]

The La Junta Indians carried powerful bows, adorned themselves with elaborately coiffured hair, animal skins, and a variety of coral and copper trinkets, and grew corn, beans, melons, and squash. During years of drought they depended more heavily on wild mesquite beans, prickly pear tuna, pitahaya fruits, and tornillo beans. They also hunted and fished, and kept large domestic animals by the 1690s. Archaeologists have uncovered shards of pottery made by Indians of East Texas and Arizona in one of the villages, confirming that La Junta served as an important trading center.[19]

Less is known about the migratory Jumanos of the interior. Unlike their more sedentary cousins, by the sixteenth century these hunters lived in tents akin to those of the Plains tribes. Moving widely, they traded with the Indians of East Texas during the spring and summer months. They hunted buffalo and traded the products of the great beasts to their stationary kinsmen along the Rio Grande. The nomadic groups wintered at La Junta, setting up their tepees across from the earthen lodges of the valley people. Both groups dressed in a similar fashion, understood one another's language, and reacted peacefully to the initial Spanish conquistadors.[20]

Yet neither could fend off the cultural onslaughts of the coming years. Harrassed by Apache Indian attacks and demoralized by Spanish slavers, growing numbers of Jumanos migrated south and west toward the shelter offered by the San Bartolomé River valleys, where, working on ranches and haciendas, they were assimilated into Mexican society. Disease claimed many others. By the eighteenth century the remaining hunters had become allied with

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18 William B. Griffen, "Southern Periphery: East," in *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 10, ed. Alfonso Ortiz (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1983): 330, 334; Griffen, *Indian Assimilation in the Fransiscan Area of Nueva Viscaya*, Anthropological Papers of the University of Arizona, 33 (Tucson, 1979): 94-98.

19 Hammond and Rey, *Expedition into New Mexico*, 57-58; Newcomb, *Indians of Texas*, 225, 232-44. See also George P. Hammond and Agapito Rey, eds. and trans., *The Rediscovery of New Mexico, 1580-1594: The Explorations of Chamuscado, Espejo, Castaño de Sosa, Morlete, and Leyva de Bonilla and Humana* (1929; Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1966).

20 Newcomb, *Indians of Texas*, 227-44; "Native Indian Culture in the Texas Big Bend," 5-6; Hammond and Rey, *Expedition into New Mexico*, 124-25.

the Apache and known as "Los Apaches Jumanos." The distinct Jumano culture was extinct by the 1900s.[21]

The Jumano experience highlights a problem fundamental to Spanish Indian policy. Spanish missionaries hoped to Christianize the native peoples. Spanish explorers wanted to find mineral wealth. Spanish settlers needed labor for their farms and ranches. The Spanish government sought to profit from its New World colonies. Each group ran afoul of the other: missionaries needed the protection the soldiers offered, but sharply criticized their actions; explorers seeking mineral wealth often resorted to means which reflected poorly on Spanish standards of morality; the government refused to pour desperately needed resources into what it perceived to be a barren region. Ultimately the Jumanos collapsed, unable to defend their interests against the more powerful outsiders.

In contrast to the militarily impoverished Jumanos, the Apaches dominated the Texas plains by the time of Spain's arrival in the New World. The Spanish called the range of these powerful tribes the "Gran Apachería," which extended from ninety-eight to one hundred eleven degrees west longitude (present day Austin, Texas, to Tucson, Arizona), and from thirty to thirty-eight degrees north latitude (roughly Austin to Wichita, Kansas). During the 1850s one young American officer even found evidence of Apache habitation near Fort Davis. Accustomed to free movement, these peoples fiercely maintained their independence. Extended families usually remained together; several such groups often formed loose confederacies for military and ceremonial purposes. The most respected of the local family leaders headed the assemblage, but held advisory rather than dictatorial authority.[22]

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21 Newcomb, *Indians of Texas*, 229-45; Griffen, "Southern Periphery," 341; Griffen, *Indian Assimilation*, 47-48.

22 Bolton, ed., *Spanish Exploration*, 2: 253; Bliss Reminiscences, 1: 172, Barker Texas History Center; C. L. Sonnichsen, *The Mescalero Apaches* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1958): 22-23.

Apaches spoke a dialect of the widely used Athapaskan family language. The bulk of Athapaskan speakers lived in Canada and Alaska, but small bands of Apaches filtered south through the Plains and the Rocky Mountains. By conservative estimate, the Apaches had arrived in the Southwest by A.D. 1400. During his epic search for the mythical Gran Quivira, Francisco Vásquez de Coronado encountered peoples whom some scholars consider Apaches. These nomads followed the buffalo and used dogs as beasts of burden. Coronado's scribe remarked: "They are a kind people and not cruel. They are faithful friends." Juan de Oñate, Spanish colonizer of New Mexico, first used the term Apache to describe these tribes in 1598. Again, initial impressions seemed favorable. "We were not disturbed by them, although we were in their land, nor did any Indian become impertinent."[23]

In all probability the Mescalero Apaches had already occupied western Texas and southern New Mexico by the time of Spain's explorations. In the mountains of southern New Mexico between the Rio Grande and the Pecos River lived the Faraones, often lumped together with their more powerful southern neighbors, the Mescaleros. East of the Pecos River ranged the Llaneros and the Lipans. Although no precise boundaries existed, the various tribes seem to have worked out a tenuous alliance.[24] Spanish slave traders took their toll on the tribal bands, thus contributing to the hostilities between Apaches and Europeans. The Mescaleros learned to elude the powerful Spanish columns and became increasingly difficult to bring to battle. Striking weaker opponents, they eluded all but the most determined pursuers and refused to fight except when confidant of victory.[25]

The Mescaleros followed a seasonal round, moving in search of buffalo herds and the mescal plant for which they were named. A large desert agave, the mescal grows amongst the foothills of the mountains of the American South-

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23 Sonnichsen, *Mescalero Apaches*, 31; Bolton, *Spanish Explorations*, 1: 363 (first quotation); 2: 253 (second quotation); Morris E. Opler, "The Apachean Culture Pattern and Its Origins," in *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 10, ed. Alfonso Ortiz (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1983): 368-92. Opler argues that Coronado's Querechos were not necessarily Apaches.

24 Max L. Moorhead, *The Apache Frontier: Jacobo Ugarte and Spanish-Indian Relations in Northern New Spain, 1769-1791* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1968): 6, 200-203; Newcomb, *Indians of Texas*, 104; Sonnichsen, *Mescalero Apaches*, 33; Opler, "Mescalero Apache," in *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 10, ed. Alfonso Ortiz (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1983): 419. Modern scholars usually divide the Apache into two major groups: the western Apaches, who lived west of the Rio Grande, and the eastern Apaches, who traveled the plains as far east as Kansas. Beyond this general classification, minimal consensus exists. With little political structure, these peoples were frequently given other names by explorers, soldiers, and missionaries, making any definite subtribal classification extremely hazardous.

25 Opler, "Mescalero Apache," 419-20.

west. In early summer Apache women, using long sticks to avoid the plant's protective spikes, gouged out the large white bulb. The women then dug out a huge cooking pit, which they lined with stones. Next they started a fire in the pit; once it became sufficiently hot the women inserted the raw mescal bulbs and covered the pit with grass. Dirt and rocks sealed the cooker. The steaming process produced a syrupy substance. What was not consumed immediately was spread into thin sheets, dried, and saved for the future.[26]

The tribes also used the mescal's fiber for making thread and fabric. Only occasionally, however, did they ferment the mescal juices to make an intoxicant. For alcoholic drink, Mescaleros instead preferred fermented corn sprouts to make tulpai or tiswin. They gathered wild desert plants—sunflower seeds, yucca, cactus fruits, mesquite beans, wild potatoes, acorns, juniper berries, and screw beans among others—to diversify their diet.[27]

When available, families constructed tepees from buffalo hides. But during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, increasing pressure from the north drove the Mescaleros into the rugged Guadalupe, Davis, and Sierra Blanca ranges. As buffalo hides became more scarce, they turned to rude brush shelters (wickiups). Buckskin shirts and breechclouts served as the regular garb. Mescaleros took particular pride in their long, straight black hair, which was either braided or tied with a headband. The intense demands of environment and culture kept them in superb physical condition; until old age took its inevitable toll, they remained lean and well-suited for their mobile lifestyle. As one Spanish diarist concluded: "They have better figures, are better warriors, and are more feared" than those peoples at La Junta.[28]

Although the Mescaleros did not develop strong political or intratribal organizations, they did enjoy a deep sense of community. Bands formed around a male, who by virtue of his leadership abilities and familial relations attracted additional followers. Twenty to thirty familes might gather at places deemed safe from attack that afforded water, fuel, and forage for horses. Rarely did all members of such a band occupy the stronghold simultaneously; hunting, raiding, and gathering parties scoured the surrounding territory as economic and environmental conditions allowed.[29]

Crucial to understanding Mescalero organization is the role of the local group leader. The term for leader, "nant'a," has several connotations: "he who commands," "he who leads," "he who directs," "he who advises." Always filled by a male, the position was neither hereditary nor permanent. Band leaders typically

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26 Sonnichsen, *Mescalero Apaches*, 18; Opler, "Mescalero Apache," 418-21.

27 Sonnichsen, *Mescalero Apaches,* 18; Opler, "Mescalero Apache," 418-21.

28 Sonnichsen, *Mescalero Apaches,* 13-15; Bolton, *Spanish Explorations*, 1: 362 (quotation).

29 Opler, "Mescalero Apache," 428.

headed a strong family group whose members allowed him greater authority than did other members of the local alliance. An effective chief depended upon his eloquence, bravery, performance, and generosity to organize a workable coalition. Deeply concerned with family solidarity and honor, the Mescaleros also expected their leader to arbitrate fairly the disputes of group members.[30]

The local band usually included several extended families. A man and wife, their unmarried children, and any married daughters, their husbands, and offspring comprised a single extended family. The matrilineal structure meant that when a man married, he left his own family to live with his wife and parents-in-law. Each simple family occupied its own dwelling close to that of the oldest married couple. Girls learned to cooperate with their mothers and sisters, with whom they would almost always live. Boys honed their individual skills so as to provide for their in-laws.[31]

Labor was divided according to sex. Women gathered and stored wild plants and foodstuffs, made clothing, collected fuel, prepared meals, cared for children, and maintained the tepee. Men hunted and defended the band and, after the introduction of the horse, the group's herd. Apache males also made and maintained weapons, riding gear, and ceremonial garb. Because of their mobility, Mescalero artifacts tended to be small and portable. Water jars, baskets, grinding instruments, and grooming devices dominated the list of family possessions. Bows and arrows, spears, axes, knives, and war clubs formed the basic weapons of war. Growing numbers of Apaches turned to muskets and rifles after the arrival of the Europeans.[32]

Mescaleros revered two supernatural beings—the Child of the Water and his mother, White-Painted Woman. Oral tradition held that the Child of the Water had freed humans from a series of evil monsters and giants. In so doing, he and his mother established the tribe's cultural patterns. Elaborate ritual ceremonies safeguarded every individual from birth to maturity. Other spirits also influenced religious beliefs and daily life; certain persons, called shamans, were believed capable of summoning assistance from the otherworlds. The tribe buried their dead as quickly as possible. The deceased's possessions were destroyed, the encampment moved, and the name never used again. In sum, they hoped to speed the ghost's entry into afterlife, which was free from disease, sorcery, and unhappiness.[33]

Mescalero Apaches found a convenient void in the region surrounding latter-day Fort Davis. Weakened by Spanish intrusions, remnants of the older Jumanos left a power vaccuum that the Mescaleros filled. In so doing, the Mescalero often allied with the Lipan and Llanero tribes of the east. Using the

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30 Ibid., 428-29.

31 Ibid., 429-30.

32 Ibid., 432-33.

33 Ibid., 433-37.

rugged mountains of the Trans-Pecos to their fullest advantage, they launched devastating raids against Jumano villages and Spanish settlements throughout northern Mexico. In turn, the Spanish reacted clumsily and inconsistently to Apache war parties.

Still, newly imported diseases and wars against the Spanish and other Indians took a grave toll amongst the Apaches. Estimates of Mescalero population vary; the lack of internal political structure and deliberately inflated figures offered by edgy settlers make it impossible to calculate specific numbers. Not until the mid-nineteenth century are fairly reliable figures available. At that time, historians believe that between twenty-five hundred and three thousand Mescaleros remained.[34]

Lipan Apaches also ranged across much of the American Southwest. By the early nineteenth century, the Lipans were a fairly small group, numbering fewer than a thousand. Their numbers, however, fail to reflect their reputation among contemporaries. Although they had once grown maize, beans, squash, and pumpkins, after acquiring the horse Lipans became ever more dependent upon the buffalo as a source of food and ceremony. Like their Mescalero kin, Lipans avidly collected sotol and mescal bulbs. Social organization and the extended family structure also resembled Mescalero practices.[35]

As was common for Plains tribes, warfare played a vital role in Lipan culture. Small parties of a dozen or so men raided isolated enemies and picked off weakly defended goods and animal herds, avoiding battle if the odds seemed unfavorable. Even before acquiring the gun, bows, arrows, and lances made the Lipan warrior a formidable enemy. Captives were often killed or tortured, but some, having survived the initial ordeal, gained acceptance within the gorup. Strongly influenced by the supernatural, the Lipan Apaches believed that a mythical being, Killer-of-all-Enemies, had freed the tribe from various monsters and founded the roots of Lipan culture.[36]

Pressure on the Mescalero and Lipan Apaches came in the form of an even more powerful group of warrior tribes: the Comanches. Evidence suggests that the Comanches defeated the Apaches in a climactic nine-day struggle on the upper Red River valley system in the early 1720s. To make matters worse, the Comanches began to acquire firearms from the French by 1740. The Spanish, on the other hand, tried to keep the Apaches from obtaining such weapons. Forced south and west, the Apaches, like a row of falling dominoes, in turn pressed against the Spanish intruders coming from the opposite direction.[37]

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34 Ibid., 427.

35 Newcomb, *Indians of Texas*, 112-24.

36 Ibid., 125-31.

37 Elizabeth A. H. John, *Storms Brewed in Other Men's Worlds: The Confrontation of Indians, Spanish, and French in the Southwest, 1540– 1795* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1975): 265-66; Newcomb, *Indians of Texas*, 108.

Comanches spoke a dialect of the commonly used Shoshonean branch of Uto-Aztecan language. Cultural similarities also suggest that Comanches were originally related to the Northern Shoshones. They traveled the Rocky Mountains on foot, searching for wild plants, small animals, and the occasional buffalo. The acquisition of the horse revolutionized Comanche society during the 1600s. The poor gatherers and scroungers were transformed, with breathtaking speed, into skilled mounted warriors who dominated the southern Plains. The very word adopted by Europeans to describe these people reflects the feelings of outsiders about Comanches: the original Ute term was Komantcia, or "enemy." Comanches, on the other hand, saw it quite differently; their own term for themselves meant "human being," implying a perceived superiority over outsiders.[38]

Diet, elaborate belief systems, kinship, and warfare dominated their lives. Although they also sought other animals, the buffalo provided the major source of food, clothing, and ceremony. Wild plants—fruits, nuts, berries, and roots—supplemented their meaty diet. They moved their sturdy buffalo-hide tepees according to season, game, and tradition. They believed in an afterlife that promised escape from this world's miseries. All could look forward to this heavenly existence save those who had been strangled, or who had died in the dark, or had been mutilated or scalped—thus explaining their reluctance to fight at night and their practice of scalping and disfiguring the bodies of their enemies. Like Apaches, Comanches had a relatively simple political structure. Kinship systems formed familial bands that provided social and political networks; men regarded women as little more than chattel.[39]

Military decisions came from a council, members of which gained their status through wartime achievements. The group then recognized a special war chief, but every individual could refuse to join the effort or even organize his own war party. The individual warrior and his intricate kinship group thus dominated Comanche society. In battle, Comanches specialized in the ambush; when faced with a more determined enemy whose firepower seemed superior, Comanches deemed a well-timed withdrawal more prudent than incurring needless casualties.[40]

The first Europeans to enter the Trans-Pecos region belonged to the party headed by that most intrepid of wanderers, Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca. Cabeza, Estevan, and two followers had survived a once grand expedition which

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38 Newcomb, *Indians of Texas*, 155-57.

39 Ibid., 163-74, 188-89.

40 Ibid., 174-85; Jean Louis Berlandier, *The Indians of Texas in 1830*, ed. John C. Ewers (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1969): 118.

had washed ashore upon the Texas coast in 1528. Years of slavery among the Indians preceded the party's epic break for Spanish Mexico. They wandered west and south through the area of Fort Davis, encountering several villages around the Rio Grande and Conchos River. The Indians welcomed their exotic visitors with open arms. An impressed Cabeza later described the Jumanos at La Junta as "the finest persons of any people we saw, of the greatest activity and strength, who best understood us and intelligently answered our questions."[41]

Cabeza and his comrades finally blundered into a Spanish slaving party, which escorted the bedraggled group to safety in Mexico. Cabeza repeated the legends of spectacular wealth he had heard while amongst the Indians; the imaginative Estevan asserted these stories even more forcefully. Attracted by the tales of gold and silver, Francisco Vásquez de Coronado led a large column through Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, and Kansas during the years 1540–42. Coronado found none of the fabulous wealth he sought; despite his failure, the lure of mineral riches would eventually lead countless fortune hunters back into the Trans-Pecos.

Drawn by dreams of mineral wealth, pastoral opportunities, and a zeal to Christianize native peoples, Spanish settlers pushed into northern Chihuahua. Growing settlements at Zacatecas, Durango, and San Bartolomé signaled increased interest in and awareness of the northern fringes of New Spain. With Spanish civilization the newcomers also brought slave-hunters. Eager to exploit the mines to the south, the slavers found the area around La Junta ripe for their trade in human cargo. Although the government officially abolished the slave trade in 1585, repeated violations of the law left a bitter legacy among the tribes.[42]

Sketchy reports of the northern lands spawned further investigation. Officials granted Fray Agustín Rodríguez, a lay brother stationed in San Bartolomé, permission to mount an entrada in 1581. Rodriguez and two fellow Franciscans hoped to Christianize the Indians. But the leader of the expedition, Francisco Sanchez (called Chamuscado, or the singed one), seemed more interested in finding temporal rewards. Chamuscado ventured up the Rio Conchos,

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41 Bolton, ed., *Spanish Exploration*, 1: 103-04 (quotations); Donald E. Chipman, "In Search of Cabeza de Vaca's Route Across Texas: An Historiographical Survey," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 91 (Oct., 1987): 127-48.

42 Carlos E. Casteñeda, *Our Catholic Heritage in Texas, 1519–1936* (Austin: Von Boeckman Jones) 1: 157; Howard G. Applegate and C. Wayne Hanselka, *La Junta de los Rios del Norte y Conchos* (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1974): 51-53.

reaching the Rio Grande on July 6, 1581. Here the expedition encountered a number of Indians, who, having already been introduced to the less Christian-like slave traders, feared the Spanish presence.[43]

Chamuscado died before his return home; the three friars who had accompanied the expedition were slain in New Mexico. But the members of the ill-fated Chamuscado expedition were not forgotten. Antonio de Espejo, a wealthy rancher in need of clemency for his involvement in a murder, seized the opportunity to discover the fate of the three friars, and, while he was at it, enough gold or silver to guarantee himself a pardon. Espejo reached La Junta in December 1582, before continuing up the Rio Grande almost to present Santa Fe, New Mexico. Leading fifteen Spanish soldiers and several Indian guides, Espejo veered east along the Pecos River to Toyah Creek. He then turned south, passing through Limpia Canyon near present Fort Davis before crossing the plains to present Candelaria and the Rio Grande.[44]

Espejo submitted grandiose plans for colonization north of the Rio Grande. More importantly, his positive descriptions of the environment incited new interest in the northern regions of New Spain—Gaspar Cas-

Fig. 1:1. Apache warrior. Photograph by Ben Wittick, courtesy of School of American Research Collections in the Museum of New Mexico, neg. # 15881.

43 Tyler, *Big Bend*, 23-24; Hammond and Rey, trans., "The Gallegos Relation of the Rodriguez Expedition," *New Mexico Historical Review* 2 (July, 1927): 252; J. Lloyd Mecham, "The Second Spanish Expedition to New Mexico: An Account of the Chamuscado-Rodriguez Entrada of 1581–1582," *New Mexico Historical Review* 1 (July, 1926): 265-91; George P. Hammond and Agapito Rey, eds., *Obregon's History of 16th Century Explorations in Western America* (Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Co., 1928): 273, 276.

44 Bolton, ed., *Spanish Exploration*, 2: 172-90; Applegate and Hanselka, *La Junta de los Rios*, 13-14; Castañeda, *Catholic Heritage*, 1: 170-73; Hammond and Rey, *Expedition into New Mexico*, 124-25.

taño de Sosa's colonization effort of 1590 was followed by Juan de Oñate's more lasting settlement of New Mexico eight years later. Avoiding several tribes then at war with Spain, Oñate did not take the traditional route up the Rio Conchos; he instead cut straight across New Spain, crossing the Rio Grande at Juarez.[45]

Oñate's thrust shifted Spanish attention away from La Junta to New Mexico. Cuidad Juarez became even more important in 1680, when a Pueblo revolt temporarily forced the Spanish to abandon New Mexico. A few hardy explorers had pushed east to the Pecos and Nueces Rivers, but with the new focus on the Chihuahua City–Santa Fe road, La Junta was largely forgotten in influential Spanish circles. One report suggests that Indians drove off two Franciscan fathers at La Junta between 1670 and 1672. But in 1683 seven Jumano chiefs, including Juan Sabeata, appeared in Juarez with a dramatic request that holy men be dispatched to La Junta.[46]

The church moved quickly to capitalize on the opportunity. By 1864 three Franciscan friars and nine churches graced the area. But others had more temporal goals. The cagey Sabeata hoped to pit Spain against Apaches, who for years had plagued his Jumanos. Others, including Capt. Juan Domínguez de Mendoza, who organized the expedition which followed Sabeata's request, had commercial as well as religious goals—Mendoza should find wealth in addition to helping the Indians. Shrouded in mystery, Mendoza marched past present-day Fort Stockton and negotiated a treaty against the Apaches with a Jumano tribe along the Pecos River but found no gold.[47]

A major revolt threatened to break the Spanish hold on northern Mexico in late 1684. Several changes caused the insurrection. A recent influx of newcomers, ousted from New Mexico by the massive Pueblo rebellion of 1680, strained the region's limited resources. A Concho Indian, usually referred to as Taagua, also contributed to the uprising. Thought to possess supernatural powers, Taagua urged his fellow tribesmen to renounce Christianity and return to more traditional religious rites. He claimed that his magic could transform the wrist bones of the Spanish into grass, thus rendering them helpless. It was also rumored that Taagua could cause Spanish weapons to disintegrate, and that he could immobilize enemy horses or simply kill the outsiders outright. Taagua's alleged powers notwithstanding, a ninety-man Spanish column restored temporary peace to La Junta by February 1685.[48]

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45 Castaneda, *Catholic Heritage*, 1: 181-87.

46 John F. Bannon, *The Spanish Borderlands Frontier, 1513–1821* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1970): passim.; Griffen, *Indian Assimilation*, 94; Kelley, "Juan Sabeata," 981-95.

47 Kelley,"Sabeata and Diffusion," 987; Bolton, ed., *Spanish Exploration*, 2: 314-43; Tyler, *Big Bend*: 25-26; Bannon, *Spanish Borderlands Frontier*, 98-100; John, *Storms Brewed*, 177.

48 Griffen, *Indian Assimilation*,3, 12-13.

To counter potential revolts like this, viceregal inspector Joseph Francisco Marín urged the crown to undertake punitive campaigns against any rebellious tribes. Indians deemed hostile by Spain should be whipped before they could launch their destructive attacks. Once crushed by Spain's mailed fist, the Indians should be forcibly relocated near the new presidios. Although his recommendations were not immediately implemented, future generations unwittingly adopted his aggressive approach to defense against Indians.[49]

But new threats soon distracted Spanish attention from the Trans-Pecos. In 1689 the Spanish seized a demented Frenchman, Jean Gery, who had established an imaginary monarchy on the Pecos River. Delayed news of an even more substantive French challenge proved more worrisome. Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle, had established a French fort along the Texas coast in 1685.[50]

As the eighteenth century opened, the area around what later became Fort Davis remained of minimal interest to Spanish policy-makers. Fear of French intrusion, however, combined with continued Indian strikes against valuable Spanish mining and agricultural communities to generate a demand for action. Frontier revolts such as those of the Pueblos and around La Junta also led the Spanish to further emphasize the military as an agent of empire. They set up an elaborate system of presidios, including major posts at San Juan Bautista and San Francisco de Conchos, and launched periodic expeditions into western Texas.[51]

In 1715 Fray Joseph de Arranegui received permission to reestablish the missions at La Junta. The acting lieutenant governor of Nueva Vizcaya, Juan Antonio de Trasviña y Retís, headed the expedition of fifty soldiers, twenty Indian auxiliaries, and four friars. They found eight villages numbering some fourteen hundred inhabitants scattered along both sides of the Rio Grande near La Junta. By 1716 six missions, each with its padre, stood at La Junta. Yet Apache attacks and general Indian restlessness forced repeated closures of each mission. The demographic problems of the largest position, Nuestra Señora de

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49 Oakah L. Jones, Jr., *Nueva Vizcaya: Heartland of the Spanish Frontier* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988): 112-13.

50 Applegate and Hanselka, *La Junta de los Rios*, 26-27, 53; Charles W. Hackett, ed., *Historical Documents Relating to New Mexico, Nueva Vizcaya, and the Approaches Thereto* (Washington: Carnegie Institution, 1923–27) 2: 257-77.

51 Applegate and Hanselka, *La Junta de los Rios*, 26-27, 53; Charles W. Hackett, ed., *Historical Documents Relating to New Mexico, Nueva Vizcaya, and the Approaches Thereto* (Washington: Carnegie Institution, 1923–27) 2: 257-77.

Guadalupe (also known as Los Polacmes), located at the present-day site of Ojinaga, seem typical. It boasted 550 persons in 1715; by 1747 the population had fallen to 172. As late as 1765 133 persons still lived at Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe. Despite nearly a half century of activity, the mission ultimately fell into disrepair, the fate of its residents uncertain amidst wars, raids, and migrations.[52]

The continued difficulties at La Junta symbolized Spain's problems in her northern New World provinces. She had used both sword and cross in attempting to control the area's Indian population. The cross had not been without influence. But the uncertain life offered at the missions, punitive Spanish assaults, and illegal slaving expeditions for the mines in Mexico offered the Indians little incentive for friendship. Furthermore, Spain's inability to check Apache raids weakened its image in the eyes of prospective converts.[53]

Spain groped for an answer to the question that would plague non-Indian governments until the 1880s. Forays against Indians had been expensive and ineffectual. Permanent military occupation of the Big Bend seemed the only alternative. During a comprehensive inspection tour of the northern frontier from 1724 to 1728, Brig. Gen. Pedro de Rivera y Villalon recommended that Spain establish presidios in the Big Bend region, thus shielding valuable mining areas to the south. This was easier said than done. Capt. José de Berroteran led seventy soldiers in a tentative move across the Rio Grande near present-day Langtry. With few supplies and even less confidence, Berroteran, by his own admission "in a state of confusion," failed to establish a new presidio. Subsequent excursions to the deserted missions at La Junta proved equally uninspired.[54]

Despite his failure, Berroterán later supported the call for a new presidio at La Junta de los Ríos and demanded that additional monies be appropriated for defense against the Apaches. In 1750 Gov. Juan Francisco de la Puerta y Barrera compiled an influential report on conditions in Nueva Vizcaya. The influx of Europeans into central Chihuahua meant that older presidios could be moved closer to the Indian frontier. La Junta, the site of friendly Indian villages and gateway to the settled areas of the south, seemed particularly strategic.

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52 R. C. Reindorp, "The Founding of Missions at La Junta de los Rios," *Supplementary Studies, Texas Catholic Historical Society* 1 (1938): 5-12; Castañeda, *Catholic Heritage*, 3: 199-203; Applegate and Hanselka, *La Junta de los Rios*, 20-21, 54; Griffen, *Indian Assimilation*, 10-18, 97.

53 Hammond and Rey, *Obregon's History*, 273-276; Bannon, *Spanish Borderlands Frontier*, 229-38; Griffen, *Indian Assimilation*, 18.

54 Robert Weddle, *San Juan Bautista: Gateway to Spanish Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968): 196-204; Bannon, *Spanish Borderlands Frontier*, 123; Jones, *Nueva Vizcaya*, 136-38.

Accordingly, de la Puerta advised that the crown erect a presidio there.[55]

It was not until 1759 that Capt. Alonso Ruben de Célis established the first fort at the junction, situated at the largest mission, Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe. Completed in July 1760, El Presidio del Norte de la Junta had an inauspicious beginning. Some eight hundred Indians, many of whom were Apaches, attacked the post at sunrise as opening day ceremonies began. The troops drove off the assault and even countered with a successful punitive expedition later that year; still, the presidio at La Junta had scarcely overawed the Indians of the Trans-Pecos. The added tensions further exacerbated the southwestern exodus. Without dramatic reforms, the mission effort along the Rio Grande was doomed to failure.[56]

The Spanish recognized the ineffectual nature of their previous policies. As part of a major colonial reform program inspired by King Carlos III, Field Marshal Cayetano Maria Pignatelli Rubi Cerbera y Saint Clement (the Marqués de Rubi), conducted an exhausting seventy-five-hundred-mile inspection of northern New Spain. Following his remarkable tour of 1766–68, the Marqués recommended extensive reorganization of frontier defenses. Seeking to reduce expenses as well as to increase effectiveness, de Rubi proposed that a line of presidios, each garrisoned by fifty well-trained soldiers, hold the northern borderlands at forty-league intervals. Expensive, poorly placed presidios would be abandoned; new positions would plug gaps in the line. One such fort should be at La Junta, abandoned before de Rubí could even get to the junction.[57]

During the 1770s Comandante Insp. Hugo Oconor, a red-headed Irishman, began to implement de Rubí's plans along the Big Bend of the Rio Grande. As per instructions, he reoccupied La Junta and established four new presidios across northern Chihuahua.[58]

Inspired by de Rubí, Oconor also called for a general war against the Apache. In 1774–75 he organized a complex pincer movement to deal with the tribes. Troops from San Sabá, San Juan Bautista, the Presidio del Norte, and New Mexico would trap the Indians. But as future planners later discovered, coor-

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55 Jones, *Nueva Vizcaya*, 146.

56 Applegate and Hanselka, *La Junta de los Rios*, 21-22, 54-55; Tyler, *Big Bend*, 34-36; Griffen, *Indian Assimilation*, 97.

57 Bannon, *Spanish Borderlands Frontier*, 172-80; Casteneda, *Our Catholic Heritage*, 3: 231, 4: 236.

58 Odie B. Faulk and Sidney B. Brinkerhoff, eds., *Lancers for the King: A Study of the Frontier Military System of Northern New Spain, with a Translation of the Royal Regulations of 1772* (Phoenix: Arizona Historical Foundation, 1965): 53-55; Rex E. Gerald, *Spanish Presidios of the Late Eighteenth Century in Northern New Spain* (Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press, 1968): 37-39.

dinating these converging forces proved well-nigh impossible in the rugged terrain around Fort Davis. This time the New Mexico column lost its horses and the jaws of the trap failed to spring completely shut. Even so the Lipan Apaches suffered grievous losses—according to Spanish count 138 killed and 104 captured. Nearly two thousand animals were also seized. Another major effort in 1776 drove several Mescalero bands deep into central Texas, where the Comanches inflicted a devastating blow against them.[59]

Ill-health forced Oconor to move to Guatamala before he could conclude his campaigns. Delegating greater autonomy to officials along the troublesome frontier, the crown reorganized the northern provinces into the new Provincias Internas. Commanding the new department, Teodoro de Croix found military conditions in an abominable state. Frontier troops seemed dispirited: their firearms were broken or rusted, they had no swords, their horses were poor, and they had little training or discipline. Croix deemed the Rio Grande line indefensible and abandoned all the presidios except that at La Junta.[60]

In conjunction with the reorganization, Croix and his successors placed greater emphasis on pitting Indian against Indian—Comanches and Mescalero Apaches were set against Lipans; after forcing the Lipan Apaches to terms, the Spanish promptly turned Lipans and Comanches against Mescaleros. Complete success, though, remained illusory, for other imperial obligations limited available manpower and resources. During the height of the campaigns, for example, Presidio del Norte held only 106 men. Poor communications and jealousy between Spanish military and civilian officials ruined efforts to conclude a peace. Finally, the Comanche alliance remained uncertain, with tribesmen launching devastating thrusts deep into old Mexico.[61]

Despite these problems, relative quiet prevailed in the Fort Davis region at the close of the eighteenth century. In 1795 two missions remained open at La Junta. Military campaigns alternated with efforts to make the Indians dependent upon Spanish guns and powder. Yet depopulation, internal confusion and threats to Texas from the east again drew Spain's attention from the Trans-Pecos. The population decline at La Junta deprived Spain of potential farmers, military allies, and Christian converts. As Comanche and Apache raiders pressed their attacks, Spanish officials planned a punitive campaign for 1819. Anticipating that Indians would use the Trans-Pecos as an escape route,

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59 Bannon, *Spanish Borderlands Frontier*, 180-82; Moorhead, *Apache Frontier*, 37-41; Sonnichsen, *Mescalero Apaches*, 48; Bernard E. Bobb, *The Viceregency of Antonio Maria Bucareilli in New Spain, 1771–1779* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1962): 143-45.

60 Bannon, *Spanish Borderlands Frontier*, 182; Alfred B. Thomas, *Teodoro de Croix and the Northern Frontier of New Spain, 1776–1783* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1941): 26, 38-43.

61 Moorhead, *Apache Frontier*, 88-90, 120, 203-06, 245-48, 252-69; Thomas, *Teodoro de Croix*, 92-94.

Spanish commanders hoped to launch a 255-man column from Presidio del Norte. Again, the area's strategic value was apparent; Spain, however, had neither the soldiers nor the colonists to occupy the region.[62]

Internal revolution had wracked Mexico since 1810, when Father Hidalgo issued his famous "grito" at Dolores. Although Hidalgo's dream of social revolt had dimmed, a conservative-moderate coalition of rebels finally forced Spain to concede Mexican independence in 1821. Frequent changes of government made it difficult for the struggling young nation to focus on its wild northern frontiers. A penal colony at present-day Ruidosa, some twenty-five miles upstream, replaced the crumbling presidio and missions at La Junta. The Condemned Regiment, consisting of criminals assigned to protect the frontier but under a heavy guard themselves, inspired little confidence.[63]

Mexico's attempts to maintain the presidial system proved unsuccessful. Despite generous budgetary promises, few of the authorized dollars found their way to the frontier soldiers. Corrupt officers siphoned off huge sums and stationed their reliable troops near Mexico City or Veracruz, ever alert to the political opportunities which characterized the troubled era. On the frontiers, manpower levels never approached authorized strengths. Insufficient mounts precluded effective offensive campaigning; shortages of food, clothing, and salaries endangered the soldiers' very lives. One Mexican officer estimated that Indian raids along the northern frontiers between 1820–35 killed five thousand persons, destroyed one hundred settlements, and drove off four thousand settlers.[64]

A few adventurers nonetheless saw in the Trans-Pecos great opportunity. Juan Bustillos obtained title to lands on the east bank of the Rio Grande in 1830. Two years later, Lt. Col. José Ronquillo, commander of regional frontier forces, successfully petitioned for a massive grant—2,345 square miles—on the north side opposite Presidio del Norte. The huge grant started on the east bank of Cibolo Creek and ran up the Rio Grande for some thirty-five miles to present-day Ruidosa. It then extended northeast, past the future site of Fort Davis, to Alamo de San Juan. To the southeast the grant included the land into modern Brewster

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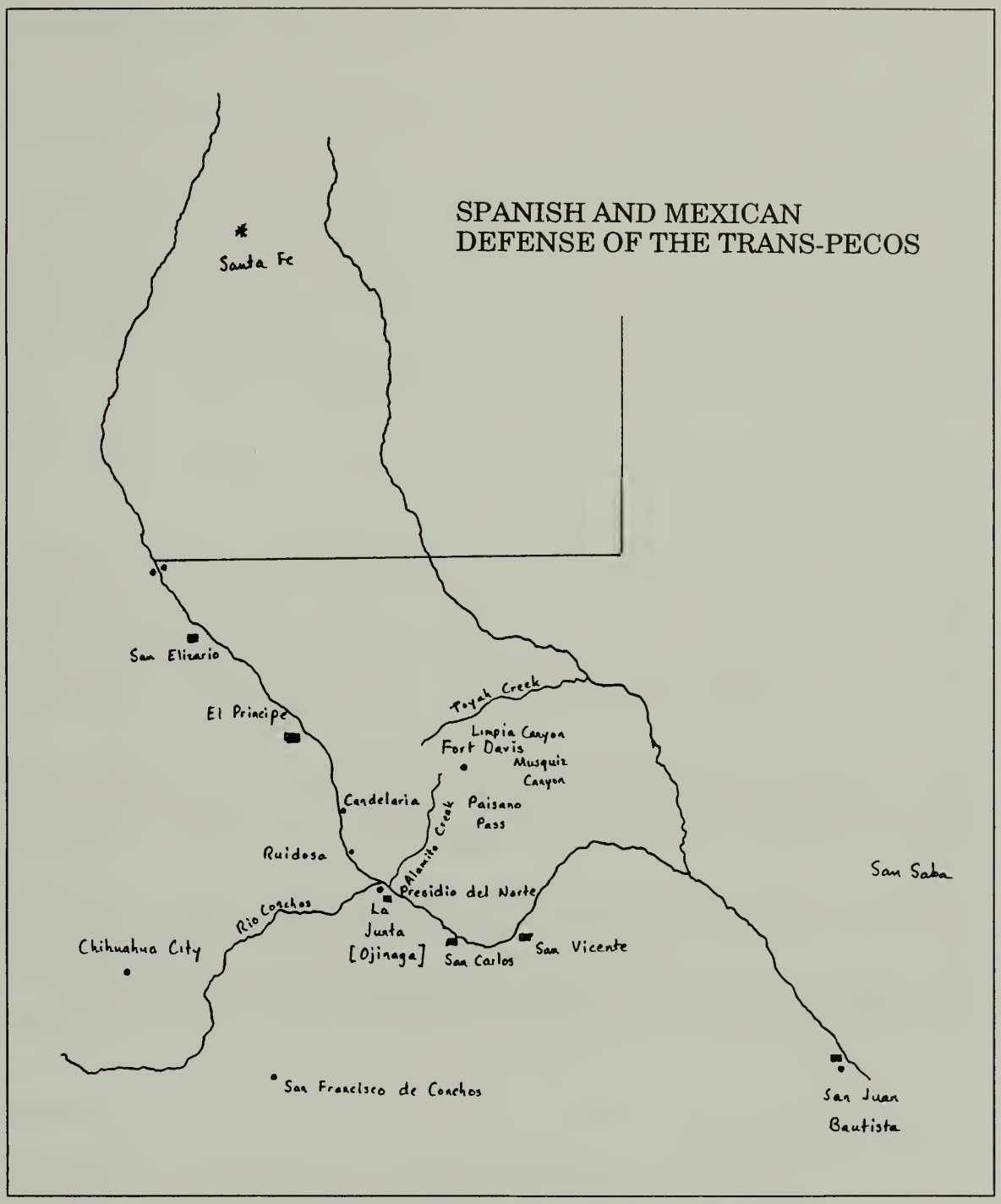
62 Griffen, *Indian Assimilation*, 107-09; Marc Simmons, ed., *Border Comanches: Seven Spanish Colonial Documents, 1785–1819* (Santa Fe: Stagecoach Press, 1967): 35-36.

63 Moorhead, *Apache Frontier*, 286-90; Castañeda, *Catholic Heritage*, 5: 114-15; Cecilia Thompson, *History of Marfa and Presidio County, Texas, 1535–1947* (Austin: Nortex Press, 1987), 1: 36-37, 65. Paul Horgan, *Great River: The Rio Grande in North American History* (New York: Rinehart, 1952), 2: 471, 585, 600, places the penal colony at Ojinaga.

64 David J. Weber, *The Mexican Frontier, 1821–1846: The American Southwest Under Mexico*, Histories of the American Frontier (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982): 108-17; Sonnichsen, *Mescalero Apaches*, 54-55.



Map 1:2. Spanish and American defense of the Trans-Pecos. Map drawn by the author.

County, then back to the Rio Grande through the Puerto del Portillo Mountains.[65]

To receive official title to this land, Colonel Ronquillo had to improve the grant within three years, to live on it for an additional year, and to defend it from Indian attack. He was prohibited from selling his tract for four years. Ronquillo quickly moved to comply with these conditions. With surveys underway, he built a stone house on Cibolo Creek, cultivated a patch of land, ran a few cattle, and opened a small silver mine. Ronquillo's hopes faded momentarily when orders for his transfer arrived, but the practical colonel asked for and received a waiver of the restrictive conditions. That same day, Ronquillo sold the grant to his head steward, Hypolito Acosta. Unable to defend the grant, Acosta sold it for five thousand pesos to Juana Pedrasa in 1833.[66]

The Trans-Pecos also attracted notice from enterprising capitalists in North America. Trappers representing several St. Louis fur companies tested out the area during the 1820s.[67]

The profitable trade between Missouri and Chihuahua City sparked further interest. In 1839 promises of reduced tariff duties through the newly opened port of entry at Presidio led Henry Connelly, a U.S. citizen, to reopen the long-ignored route up the Rio Conchos from Chihuahua City through La Junta. More than one hundred men escorted seven wagons, seven hundred mules, and some two hundred thousand dollars in specie out of Chihuahua. On his return trip from the United States, however, Connelly found that the governor who had reduced the taxes had died. The new governor demanded full duties. Forty-five days passed while tariff negotiations ensued; the wagon train rolled back into Chihuahua City seventeen months after its departure. Connelly deemed the journey too long and by-passed Presidio via the older route home.[68]

Amidst the new activity, Apache and Comanche raids continued. The U.S. policy of removing eastern Indians to present-day Oklahoma increased existing tensions among older residents of the area. Forced to seek out fresh sources of food and plunder, Comanches pushed south, pressuring Apaches as they went. A particularly large group of several hundred Comanches crossed the Trans-

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65 Applegate and Hanselka, *La Junta de los Rios*, 23-24; Thompson, *Marfa and Presidio County*, 1: 33-34, 39, 49.

66 Applegate and Hanselka, *La Junta de los Rios*, 24, 56; Thompson, *Marfa and Presidio County*, 1: 39-40.

67 Carlysle Graham Raht, *The Romance of Davis Mountains and Big Bend Country* (Odessa: Rahtbooks Co., 1963): 47.

68 Horgan, *Great River*, 2: 501-504; Tyler, *Big Bend*, 51-52; Applegate and Hanselka, *La Junta de los Rios*, 30-32; Josiah Gregg, *Commerce on the Prairies: or, the Journal of a Santa Fe Trader* (New York: Henry G. Langley, 1844): 334n-335n.

Pecos into Mexico in 1835. Gov. José Joaquín Calvo tried to scrape together a force of volunteers and regulars at Presidio to check the incursion, but most of his troops instead found themselves transferred east in a vain effort to quell the Texas Revolution.[69]

The forgotten Mexican soldiers along the Rio Grande could do little to stem the tide of Indian war parties. Ever-increasing numbers of American merchants entered the lucrative trade with Indians, exchanging munitions and supplies for stolen booty and diminishing Mexico's influence with the plains tribes still further. Continued threats from the newly independent Republic of Texas, along with the subsequent Pastry War against France in 1838, only exacerbated Mexico's defensive weaknesses along her northern frontiers. The aggressive western policies pursued by Texas added to the pressures on the Plains peoples and thus in turn created more problems for Mexico.[70]

Its frontiers aflame, the state of Chihuahua revived the colonial system of scalp bounties, through which Indian scalps would be redeemable for cash. Spanish officials had periodically offered such bounties since 1619, a practice not uncommon among European colonial powers. The law of 1837 promised one hundred pesos for the scalp of any male fourteen or older; a woman's hair earned the bearer fifty pesos. A child's scalp was worth twenty-five pesos. Bounty hunters brought in substantial numbers of scalps, but critics charged that these men simply fomented additional unrest. The hunters seemed all too eager to submit the scalps of friendly Indians or Mexican citizens.[71]

In a desperate effort to purchase a peace, Chihuahua Gov. García Conde initiated an innovative (if unsuccessful) program in 1842. In return for peace in Chihuahua, he offered the Indians an annual tribute of five thousand dollars, monthly rations, and the right to sell their stolen loot. Unfortunately for Conde, the latter provision only encouraged raids into neighboring states. Although many Chihuahuans supported the governor's actions, his controversial scheme led to his removal from office in 1845.[72]

Comanches launched a particularly devastating raid that year. Crossing into Mexico through the Trans-Pecos near Lajitas, they killed scores of citizens and took dozens of others captive. With some reluctance, the government again hired

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69 Ralph A. Smith,"Mexican and Anglo-Saxon Traffic in Scalps, Slaves, and Livestock, 1835–1841," *West Texas Historical Association Yearbook* 36 (1960): 99-100.

70 Hubert H. Bancroft, *History of the North American States and Texas*, (San Francisco: The History Company, 1890): 598-99; Smith,"Mexican and Anglo-Saxon Traffic, 98-100, 104; Weber, *Mexican Frontier*, 105.

71 Smith,"Mexican and Anglo-Saxon Traffic," 102-14.

72 Bancroft, *North Mexican States*, 2: 600-601.

a bounty hunter—James "Don Santiago" Kirker. Kirker and a small company of Delawares, Shawnees, and Americans had turned in 487 scalps by the end of 1846. Still, the Chihuahuan legislature described the Indian influence in 1846: "We travel the roads . . . at their whim; we cultivate the land where they wish and in the amount they wish; we use sparingly things they have left to us until the moment that it strikes their appetite to take them for themselves." In the absence of effective Indian policy formulated by either Texas or Mexico, a violent future for the Fort Davis region seemed assured.[73]

The Mexican War brought dramatic changes. An 850-man American force led by Col. Alexander W. Doniphan occupied El Paso on December 26, 1846. Acting upon information that Mexican troops still held a presidio at San Elizario, Doniphan dispatched a scouting party down the Rio Grande. The troopers found evidence that Mexican soldiers had abandoned the fort in great haste, leaving wagons of food, ammunition, and a cannon in their wake. Doniphan's column later captured Chihuahua City; other American troops also occupied Monterrey, Mexico City, Santa Fe, and California. In the resulting Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, Mexico recognized Texas independence, accepted the Rio Grande as the southern border of Texas, and ceded the Southwest to the United States. In return, Washington paid $15 million and assumed Mexican debts to U.S. citizens estimated at an additional $3.25 million. It also promised to prevent Indian raids from its newly won lands into Mexico.[74]

With the Stars and Stripes now flying over the Fort Davis area, a few opportunists sought to capitalize on the new political situation. In 1847 a party of Mexican War veterans followed Henry Connelly's old trail as they returned home from Chihuahua. Their uneventful journey seemed to bode well for Trans-Pecos settlement. Other Mexican War veterans also saw potential in the area; John W. Spencer, for example, established a ranch on the northern side of the river above present-day Presidio.[75]

Ben Leaton, formerly a trader along the Santa Fe–Chihuahua City trail, had bigger dreams. He married Juana Pedraza, the widowed claimant of the huge Ronquillas grant, and with John Burgess and others in tow, built a sturdy pueblo stockade (Fort Leaton) on the old Connelly trail. Leaton operated as an unofficial

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73 Smith, "Mexican and Anglo-Saxon Traffic in Scalps," 102-14; Smith, "The Comanche Bridge Between Oklahoma and Mexico, 1843–1844," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 39 (Spring, 1961): 102; Weber, *Mexican Frontier*, 87 (quotation).

74 John T. Hughes, *Doniphan's Expedition* (1848; rpt. Chicago: Rio Grande Press, 1962): 273-315; Clive Perry, *The Consolidated Treaty Series* (Dobbs Ferry, N.Y.: Oceana Publications, 1969), 102: 30-59.

75 Tyler, *Big Bend*, 53.

customs agent, Indian trader, and rancher. He established a reputation as a ruthless merchant more than willing to trade arms and alcohol to Indians in exchange for stolen merchandise. Even the Indians who dealt with Leaton were not safe; he was not averse to selling their scalps to Mexican officials in Chihuahua. A Mexican official charged that Leaton had committed "a thousand abuses."[76]

Leaton sought to acquire the entire region. His claim to the old Ronquillo grant was shaky; Juana Pedraza's grant was invalid without confirmation by an official of at least gubernatorial rank. Hoping a well-placed bribe might smooth the legal waters, Leaton slipped the local alcalde five hundred dollars to issue a fraudulent certificate for the adjoining Juan Bustillos grant. A Mexican court tried but failed to convict the alcalde for his action; Leaton in the meantime filed a claim on the land in his own name. Leaton's dreams of empire were shattered in the early 1850s, however, when he died in an apparent struggle for control over the Presidio trade. The U.S. occupation of the Big Bend area had begun.[77]

As private citizens crept closer to what would later become Fort Davis, government-sponsored explorers also examined the region. Just after the war topographical engineer George W. Hughes reported the Connelly trail to be of "doubtful" use. Hughes had hoped to reconnoiter this and other routes, but "the want of sufficient escorts, and the exigencies of the service, I suppose, prevented it" during the conflict. In 1848, as Hughes put the final touches to his delayed report, Capt. Jack Hays mounted an expedition through the lands west of San Antonio. Hays and his escort nearly starved to death in the Big Bend before reaching San Carlos and finally Fort Leaton, where they took time out for a massive barbecue. They followed a more northerly track back to San Antonio, returning north of the future site of Fort Davis, then across the Horsehead Crossing of the Pecos River. Although the southern route between the Pecos and the Rio Grande proved extremely difficult, the return trip had been through relatively level plains with an "abundance of grass."[78]

The U.S. Army took a keen interest in West Texas. Not only did it seek to interdict Indian raids into northern Mexico, but the discovery of gold in Califor-

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76 Elton Miles,"Old Fort Leaton: A Saga of the Big Bend," in *Hunters and Healers: Folklore Tales and Topics*, ed. Wilson M. Hudson (Austin: Encino Press, 1971): 84-90; Leavitt Corning, Jr., *Baronial Forts of the Big Bend: Ben Leaton, Milton Faver, and Their Private Forts in Presidio County* (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1967): 25-28; Tyler, *Big Bend*, 53, 67 (quotation).

77 Applegate and Hanselka, *La Junta de los Rios*, 24, 56-57; Thompson, *Marfa and Presidio County*, 1: 67, 73.

78 Hughes Report, Senate Executive Document 32, 31st Congress, 1st session, p. 6 (first two quotations); Tyler, *Big Bend*, 53-57; James K. Greer, *Colonel Jack Hays, Texas Frontier Leader and California Land Builder* (New York: Dutton, 1952): 216-26; Hays to William Marcy, Dec. 13, 1848, Senate Executive Document 32, 31st Congress, 1st session, serial 558, p. 65 (third quotation).

nia made it imperative to find a safe route across Texas. Commercial opportunities also beckoned. Optimists in the Corps of Topographical Engineers, whose officers were noted for their favorable projections about the West, dreamed of a transcontinental railroad. Under the auspices of the Corps, Capt. Randolph B. Marcy and three companies escorted a large emigrant train from Fort Smith, Arkansas, to Santa Fe in 1849. Crossing West Texas one hundred miles north of what later became the site of Fort Davis, Marcy waxed eloquent on the possibilities for a railroad. Lt. James H. Simpson, his chief engineer, proved more restrained, and concluded that without population centers to furnish labor, a transcontinental railroad would not be built for another twenty years. The accuracy of Simpson's projection would have surprised most of his fellow engineers in the Corps; indeed, it would be nearly twenty years before the completion of the first trans-continental railroad and thirty-five years before such a road spanned the Trans-Pecos.[79]

But realists like Simpson remained in a decided minority. In 1849 Lt. William H. C. Whiting and Lt. William F. "Baldy" Smith followed up the old Hays trail. West of the Pecos and on their way to Presidio, they encountered a group of Apaches on March 17. Among the Indians was Gómez, noted for his raids in northern Mexico and the Big Bend. With only thirteen armed men, the Whiting-Smith party nervously approached the Apaches. "It was an exciting and picturesque scene," deadpanned Whiting. "Two hundred Apache, superbly mounted, set off by their many colored dresses, their painted shields, and hideous faces." Gómez wanted to fight, but another chief, Cigarito, sought peace with the United States and allowed the group safe passage.[80]

Secure for the moment, on March 20 the party followed a small stream, dubbed the Limpia by Whiting, which wound its way through a deep canyon. "It is a beautiful little brook," he later wrote, "and its waters flow clean and cool over its pebbly bed." They named the defile Wild Rose Pass in honor of the spectacular flowers then in bloom. Just beyond the pass the Whiting-Smith team located a grove of cottonwood trees on the edge of an open plain. They called the place "Painted Comanche Camp" for the pictographs that decorated the trees. Unbeknownst to the engineers, the attractive site would later boast one of the most important army posts in the American West.[81]

As the Whiting-Smith team explored a southern route to El Paso, Robert S.

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79 William H. Goetzmann, *Army Exploration in the American West 1803–1863*, Yale Publications in American Studies, No. 4 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959): 9-10, 209, 214-17.

80 Ibid., 225-30;"Journal of Henry Chase Whiting, 1849," in *Exploring Southwestern Trails, 1846–1854*, ed. Ralph P. Bieber and Averam B. Bender, Southwestern Historical Series, No. 7 (Glendale: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1938): 77.

81 "Journal of Whiting," 331; Report of Smith, May 25, 1849, Senate Executive Document 64, 31st Congress, 1st session, serial 562, pp. 4-7.

Neighbors, federal Indian agent for Texas, and John S. "Rip" Ford, Texas Ranger, were blazing another trail west. The Neighbors-Ford party took the more northerly track through the Guadalupe Mountains to El Paso. Near present-day Balmorhea, they found what they believed to be an old Spanish military station, probably a forgotten outpost or aborted mission effort.[82]

The new information which both teams gathered about the Trans-Pecos proved especially timely, as growing numbers of poorly guided immigrants struggled across the plains of Texas. Lured by the gold fever to California, some three thousand persons crossed the trails of western Texas and northern Chihuahua in 1849 alone. One group of gold-seekers tried to follow the old Hays trail to Presidio del Norte. "We travelled two hundred and forty miles without seeing any timber and at two different times we drove two days and night without water over mountains and ravines on the route that Jack Hays said he found water so plenty," wrote one member of the party, "and if he [Hays] had been in sight he would not have lived one minute."[83]

Aware of such problems, the army followed up both the Neighbors-Ford expedition and the Whiting-Smith route. Lt. Francis T. Bryan took charge of the northern passage; Bvt. Lt. Col. Joseph E. Johnston headed efforts along the Whiting-Smith road. Already a hero of the Mexican War and destined to become one of the Confederacy's most important military leaders, Johnston reconnoitered for Maj. Jefferson Van Horn's battalion of the Third Infantry as that outfit marched to El Paso, sister city to the older settlement of Juarez. On his return trip to the east, Johnston conducted additional scouts, from which he produced the first accurate map of the Big Bend.[84]

The Whiting-Smith route, known as the lower road to El Paso, proved slightly shorter than the northern trail. It also offered more dependable sources of water and wood. As such, it became the primary road between San Antonio and El Paso by the mid-1850s. The experiences of immigrant trains varied widely; some groups took twenty days to make the arduous trek from San Antonio to El Paso while others took three or four times that long. Some travelers reported having encountered no Indians; others found the journey filled with signs of their depredations.[85]

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82 Goetzmann, *Army Exploration*, 230-31; Kenneth F. Neighbours, *Robert S. Neighbors and the Texas Frontier, 1836–1859* (Waco: Texian Press, 1975): 67, 300n.

83 Robert M. Utley, *Fort Davis National Historic Site, Texas*, National Park Service Historical Handbook Series no. 38 (Washington: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1965): 4; Hunter to wife, June 2, 1849, in Robert W. Stephens, ed., *A Texan in the Gold Rush: The Letters of Robert Hunter, 1849–1851* (Bryan: Barnum and White, 1972): 13-15; Greene, *Historic Resource Study*, 9.

84 Goetzman, *Army Exploration*, 227-32; Tyler, *Big Bend*, 75-85.

85 Utley, *Fort Davis*, 4; Wayne R. Austerman, *Sharps Rifles and Spanish Mules: The San Antonio–El Paso Mail, 1851–1881* College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1985): 9-10; Tyler, *Big Bend*, 62-63.

Aware of the potential dangers, Whiting had urged that military posts be constructed in West Texas. The forts would encourage settlement, "which, in time, peopled by our hardy pioneers, become the best defense of a frontier." In so arguing, Whiting took a line of reasoning traditional to U.S. military and political leaders. The small regular army could not protect all westerners. Instead, it was to stimulate population growth, which, historically, had by sheer numbers overwhelmed Indian resistance. And although its policies often seemed neither fair nor rational, the federal government promoted such migration by making it easy to purchase federal lands and by pushing the army ever westward.[86]

Applied to the Trans-Pecos, this policy represented a dramatic change from Spanish or Mexican practice. Spain's social and economic policies afforded little reason to occupy the seemingly barren Trans-Pecos region. La Junta served as a useful barrier to Indian raids on more valuable Chihuahua, but settlers were rarely encouraged to move farther north. Such expansion would only strain Spain's limited resources along its northern colonial frontiers. After having gained its independence, Mexico, plagued by internal convulsions and external threats, could afford to expend but little energy on its northern frontiers. Like Spain, Mexico's social system did not support large scale migration to the north; government policies concluded in Mexico City often conflicted with the needs of isolated northern frontiersmen.[87]

Sustained by dreams of wealth, freedom, and manifest destiny, United States citizens, backed by their federal government, then, entered the Trans-Pecos. The government took over the old informal mail system between San Antonio and El Paso in 1850. Commercial interests were rekindled, and the Chihuahua trade expanded. Heavy wagons, drawn by teams of up to twenty mules, could carry as much as seven thousand pounds each. Even more stupendous were the caravans of two-wheeled Mexican carts, which carried ten thousand pounds of merchandise. These massive caravans worked their way through the Trans-Pecos to Presidio, stimulating greater interest in the lonely Big Bend region as they creaked inexorably onward.[88]

As the Chihuahuan wagon trains transferred Mexican gold for American merchandise, neither Mexico nor the United States could ignore Indian attacks on the valuable cargos. After a major attack, Comanches herded their livestock and captives back to Texas, where they traded their booty for rifle-muskets, bullets, whiskey, and tobacco. Arriba el Sol, for example, attracted a large following by leading his Comanche clan in a series of devastating raids in northern Mexico. Shrewdly, Sol discouraged unified Mexican retaliation by

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86 Report of Whiting, June 10, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1849, p. 288.

87 Weber, *The Mexican Frontier*, 280.

88 Austerman, *Sharps Rifles*, 20-23; Tyler, *Big Bend*, 112; Robert Schick,"Wagons to Chihuahua," *The American West* 3 (Summer, 1966): 76-77, 87.

dealing with local governments. In exchange for commitments against conducting wars of extermination against his band, he promised not to attack the area they represented and to fight their mutual enemies, the Apaches.[89]

Continued Indian raids into northern Mexico led to the reinstitution of the scalp-hunting system. Particularly ruthless were the thirty-odd Texans led by John J. Glanton. A former Texas Ranger and veteran of the Mexican War, Glanton allegedly never brought in a prisoner alive. Many charged that he indiscriminately butchered Mexicans as well as Indians in order to boost his scalp count. His reign of terror extended over northern Chihuahua and into the United States; one U.S. officer called him "one of the most notoriously cold-blooded ruffians that ever lived." Having enraged the local populace, Glanton moved farther west to Sonora, where he again contracted his "services" to the state government. A group of angry Yuma Indians later ambushed and killed Glanton and many of his followers, but not before he had further inflamed the rivalry between Indians and non-Indians in the Southwest.[90]

Conditions thus demanded that the United States Army protect the lower San Antonio–El Paso road. Seeking further knowledge about West Texas, Capt. Samuel G. French led another exploration team out from San Antonio. A veteran of the earlier 1849 expeditions, French had on his earlier trip found the hills near Wild Rose Pass covered with grass. Much taken with the site, French had recorded its "pleasing appearance" as being "most beautiful to the eye." He also reported locating plenty of fuel and grass at the Painted Camp. A few Indian lodges and gardens lay just up the Limpia. Water proved sufficient for his men and animals, and prairie dog villages flourished along the natural road west of the old camp.[91]

Two years later, however, French found conditions much less desirable. Plagued by supply and transportation shortages, his expedition seemed jinxed. Fire had swept the prairies during the past year, leaving only ashes where green grass had once thrived. Early attempts to ferry across the Pecos ended when a cable broke. Limpia Creek was merely a thin trickle near its source; only by marching ninety-six miles to the Rio Grande in just over two days through temperatures exceeding one hundred degrees did French save his thirsty command. He described the condition of the Indians west of the Pecos as being "truly lamentable." Denied their former homelands, he argued that they lived "an existence more filthy than swine." It was no wonder, he concluded, that they attacked travelers.[92]

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89 Tyler, *Big Bend*, 64-67.

90 Miles,"Old Fort Leaton," 114-23.

91 Report of French, Dec. 26, 1849, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1850, p. 309.

92 Report of French, Nov. 2, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1851, pp. 231-32.

After an extensive tour of inspection in 1852, Col. Joseph K. F. Mansfield recommended that the army establish a series of new posts in West Texas. It was nearly 550 lonely miles between the tiny settlement at San Elizario and Fort Clark, established some 120 miles west of San Antonio in 1852. To remedy the situation, Mansfield called for the reoccupation of El Paso (abandoned only the previous year), and for new posts where the stage road left the Rio Grande below El Paso, on the headwaters of the Limpia Creek, and just east of the Pecos crossing on Live Oak Creek. Each site had water, grass, and wood.[93]

Overextended, understaffed, and with little strategic direction, the army could not respond immediately to Mansfield's recommendations. Too, the superiority of the southern route to El Paso, upon which Fort Davis would ultimately be situated, was not yet universally accepted. Though western Texas seemed well-suited to road-building, water shortages presented a significant problem. Commanding the Department of Texas, Persifor F. Smith finally set out to establish a post between the Pecos River and El Paso in 1854. Smith selected the site located by Smith and Whiting, so admired by French, and recommended by Mansfield—Painted Comanche Camp, near the Limpia Creek and Wild Rose Pass. The result of Smith's work, Fort Davis, would permanently alter the landscape of the Trans-Pecos.[94]

The human population of the Trans-Pecos had been changed long before the establishment of the United States military post. Through its missions, presidios, and haciendas, Spain left a profound imprint on the saga of Fort Davis. The Spanish brought with them their basic institutions—Catholicism and the notion of a centralized political system. They also introduced plants, animals, and new diseases. As such, the lives of those peoples living in the Trans-Pecos were irrevocably altered. Population decline and cultural genocide among the indigenous peoples left a void, filled by a mix of Spanish and other Indians, including Mescalero and Lipan Apaches and scattered bands of Comanches.[95]

Seen by Spain as a desolate wasteland, the Trans-Pecos seemed to offer little intrinsic value. A few missionaries tried to convert Jumano and Apache Indians without much success. But the distances from Mexico's population centers and the failure to discover mineral resources meant that relatively little attention would be given to the vicinity of Fort Davis. From the perspective of imperial Spain, it made no sense to settle the Trans-Pecos. Stations along the Rio Grande such as La Junta could protect the more valuable areas of Chihuahua and

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93 J. K. F. Mansfield, *Mansfield on the Condition of Western Forts*, ed. Robert Frazer (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963): 28-29. Mansfield's thorough inspection impressed his superiors—the army eventually established a post at each of these locations.

94 John R. Bartlett, *Personal Narrative of Explorations and Incidents in Texas, New Mexico, Sonora and Chihuahua* (1852; rpt. Chicago: Rio Grande Press, 1965), 1: 140-41.

95 Griffen, *Indian Assimilation*, 108-10.

Fig. 1:2. Limpia Creek and Wild Rose Pass, ca. 1852.
Photograph, from Emory, U.S.-Mexican Boundary Survey, Fort Davis Archives, F-84.

Coahuila against Indian attacks from the north. But more extensive efforts would only divert resources needed elsewhere.

Mexico faced a similar dilemma. Threatened from within and without, the central government's interests often differed from those of its citizens living along the northern frontiers. Promised improvements in the judicial system were rarely realized. Secularization weakened the influence of the Catholic church. The northern frontiers remained relatively underdeveloped and attracted few colonists. The presidial forces could not provide effective defense; local volunteer efforts proved similarly unsuccessful.[96] The use of scalp bounties to limit Indian attacks only alienated local residents and Indians alike.

Different interests and problems drove United States policy in the Fort Davis area. Constitutional and political limitations made centralized planning extremely difficult. Yet the rampant individualism which characterized much of

96 Weber, *Mexican Frontier*, 275-84.

nineteenth-century American society offered white males spectacular opportunities for personal initiative. The small army actively supported the westward push. Spain and Mexico had seen the Trans-Pecos as a final frontier; to the United States, it was part of a massive continental empire that should be tamed and conquered. Although the area around Fort Davis seemed in itself to have little value, in larger strategic terms it served an important purpose. With water, grass, and wood, the beautiful setting became an important station on the well-traveled road to El Paso and beyond.

Spain, Mexico, and the United States experienced varying success in occupying the Trans-Pecos. Differing perceptions of the environment around what ultimately became Fort Davis help to explain the interest, or lack of interest, each government took in the area. But these very different governments had much in common. Each proclaimed the essential righteousness of its cause. The Indians, unlettered and without Christianity, metal goods or western morals, seemed culturally deficient. Although Spain, Mexico, and the United States each produced men who expressed sympathy for Indians, virtually no one espoused Indian equality. The environment was meant to be conquered and tamed by what the Europeans and their American descendants believed to be civilized man.[97]

Prescient observers recognized that such an outlook would lead to violence with the region's Indians. A few even expressed remorse over the fate of the older Indian inhabitants, who had little option other than warfare if they hoped to retain their lands. But as Capt. Samuel G. French had explained, freethinking American migrants could not be prevented from entering areas once dominated by Indians. The undermanned army could scarcely be expected to check the desperate efforts by the tribes to save their way of life.[98]

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97 Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978): 3-31.

98 Report of French, Nov. 2, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1851, pp. 231-32.

CHAPTER TWO:

OUTPOST ON THE LIMPIA

> Peace, plenty, and contentment reign throughout our borders, and our beloved country presents a sublime moral spectacle to the world. . . . In reviewing the great events of the past year and contrasting the agitated and disturbed state of other countries with our own tranquil and happy condition, we may congratulate ourselves that we are the most favored people on the face of the earth.[1]

So trumpeted Pres. James K. Polk in the wake of the ratification of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo. Indeed, the treaty secured for the United States a huge expanse of the American Southwest, including the Trans-Pecos. But like Spain, Mexico, and the Republic of Texas before it, the United States found its occupation of western Texas a tenuous one. The region's immense size, rugged terrain, and indigenous tribes confounded the intruders. And like their predecessors in Madrid, Mexico City, and several Texas capitals before them, Washington planners initially saw little intrinsic value in the lands around what would become Fort Davis. Yet commercial interests—the discovery of gold in California, the trade with Chihuahua City, the projected transcontinental railroad—combined with the confident, self-assured mobility of many Americans to lead the nation to establish its presence in far western Texas.

The army hoped that Fort Davis would dissuade Indians from attacking travelers in the Trans-Pecos, while at the same time encouraging western settlement. Like a hundred other western posts, Davis was part of a process of conquest in which soldiers and settlers saw themselves pushing inexorably forward to the Pacific Ocean. These men and women firmly believed that a Christian God supported their quest to civilize the barren lands. Settling this wilderness, they must brush aside what they perceived to be the inferior

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1 Polk, Annual Address, Dec. 5, 1848, in James D. Richardson, comp., *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789–1897* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1896–99), 4: 629.

occupants of times past. But in reality they were not occupying an empty landscape. Indians, conquistadores, missionaries, rogues, and settlers—all had passed through the vicinity of what Americans called the Painted Comanche Camp.[2]

Why, then, did the United States win the contest for empire in the Trans-Pecos where so many others had failed? Indians would continue to contest the Fort Davis region, but had neither the numbers nor the organization to overcome a sustained and determined invader. Spain, beset by the imperial problems resulting from two centuries of world domination, had too few resources to occupy the Trans-Pecos save for a tentative effort along the Rio Grande. Plagued by internal strife, Mexico could never convince sufficient numbers of loyal colonists to move into Texas.

Those Mexicans who did go north viewed the central government with ambivalence. Local officials seemed paralyzed; the mission system collapsed as secularization and a shortage of priests tested even the most faithful. Indian affairs remained a dilemma, as too few troops and too little money prevented Mexico from establishing a fair or consistent policy. Military defeats cost Mexico the war with the United States—but her northern frontiersmen also seemed to be less willing to fight for their central government than did their Yankee counterparts.[3]

By contrast, the United States system seemed ideally suited for expansion into western Texas. Nineteenth-century U.S. society encouraged individual initiative and enterprise among white males. The territorial system, although often affected by the inconsistent winds of politics, offered newly organized areas the prospect of full equality with older regions. Abundant resources and irrepressible confidence gave the youthful nation a fearsome vitality. French Louisiana and Spanish Florida were sold rather than risked to American expansionism. In the north, Russia also retreated before the Yankee colossus; even mighty Great Britain declined to fight the United States on the North American continent after the War of 1812.

Those Americans who would eventually occupy Fort Davis had no time for such speculation, however proud they might have been of their nation's growth. They had too much to do. Like their comrades at countless other frontier posts throughout the American West, the community at Fort Davis would struggle against myriad problems beyond their immediate control. Politicians limited the size and composition of the army while at the same time demanding

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2 Report of Weisel, in John S. Billings, *Circular 4, War Department Surgeon General's Office: A Report on Barracks and Hospitals, with Descriptions of Military Posts* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1870): 228.

3 David J. Weber, *The Mexican Frontier, 1821–1846: The American Southwest Under Mexico*, Histories of the American Frontier (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982): 273-82.

aggressive action against Indians. Distances, terrain, and environmental conditions inhibited the military's movements and effectiveness. The soldiers and settlers battled heat, cold, thirst, hunger, and loneliness. Yet they built, built, and built even more, rarely questioning their assumed right to conquer what they thought to be a wilderness.

During the 1840s the United States achieved what many felt to be its manifest destiny. By annexing Texas, resolving the Oregon dispute, and seizing the greater Southwest, the United States staked its claim as a continental power. Completed with dramatic suddenness, the new acquisitions also changed the relationship between the federal government and western Indians. Traditionally, the United States had attempted to establish a permanent frontier. It removed Indians to areas west of this imaginary line; military forts, constructed just ahead of white settlement, theoretically preserved the peace.[4]

Yet the idea of a permanent Indian frontier had never worked smoothly. The line was moved continually westward, always into the lands Indians would occupy "in perpetuity." By shattering the myth of a permanent Indian frontier, expansion to the Pacific simply rendered the ineffective old policy obsolete. An imaginary line could scarcely be depended upon to answer the disputes between indigenous populations and American settlers. Furthermore, a diverse array of cultures and peoples lived in the lands now claimed by the United States. Many of these occupants, including Apache and Comanche Indians, threatened to sever the communication routes linking east and west.[5]

In part to cope with these problems, Congress created the Department of the Interior in 1849. Along with pensions and the federal domain, the new department's responsibilities included Indian affairs, formerly housed in the War Department. Few government officials explicitly advocated extermination of the Indians. At the opposite extreme, few saw much value in tribal cultures or lifestyles. The vast majority instead argued that Indians should adopt the ways of western civilization while living on specially designated reservations. With missionaries and teachers in their midst, they would give up their old ways and become respectable Christian farmers. Indians must be separated, according to the theory, from such evil influences as alcohol, disease, and greed, which were endemic in the very culture they were supposed to accept. Few who held this view recognized its essential paradox.

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4 Robert Wooster, "Military Strategy in the Southwest, 1848–1860," *Military History of Texas and the Southwest* 15 (no. 2): 6.

5 Ibid.; Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians* (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1984), 1: 315-18.

Charles M. Conrad, secretary of war for Pres. Millard Fillmore from 1850 to 1853, firmly supported the reservation scheme. Arguing that contact between Indians and whites inevitably led to trouble, Conrad asserted that "rigid adherence to the policy . . . of setting apart a portion of territory for the exclusive occupancy of the Indians" provided the best solution to the dilemma. At the same time, he recognized that Texas posed special challenges. Unlike other states and territories, Texas retained ownership of its public lands. In order to establish reservations for the thirty thousand Indians of Texas, then, the United States would have to either purchase the land or convince Texans to set up reserves of their own.[6]

Given financial constraints and the state's historic antipathy toward Indians, neither option appeared viable. Largely at the instigation of state agent Robert S. Neighbors, however, the Texas legislature sponsored two reservations (known as the Brazos and Comanche reserves) along the upper Brazos River in 1854. The state gave up jurisdiction over an area not to exceed twelve leagues to the United States government, which was in turn authorized to settle Indians on the reserves, establish agencies and military posts, and exercise control over its wards. State officials also pondered the formation of a Mescalero Apache reservation west of the Pecos River. Claimed by sponsors to enjoy the support of West Texans, the proposed agreement would cede five leagues of state land to the federal government.[7]

The Brazos reservation, occupied by semiagricultural tribes such as the Caddo, Waco, Tawakoni, Tonkawa, and Delaware, initially met its designers' objectives. Agricultural efforts were thriving; education in the arts of western civilization proceeded apace. But the more mobile groups on the Comanche reservation made less progress. Troops at Fort Belknap and Camp Cooper could not always separate friend from foe. As nonreservation tribes continued their raids, Texans, who remained dubious about the projects, found it difficult to distinguish their actions from those of the reservation peoples. In 1859, following a series of ugly incidents, Neighbors escorted the inhabitants of both reservations across the Red River into the Indian territory.[8]

As if to symbolize the entire tragic episode, one Texan, angry at Neighbors for befriending the tribes, murdered the former agent shortly after the removal.

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6 Report of Conrad, Dec. 4, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1852, p. 5 (quotation). For the origins of the reservation system, see Robert A. Trennert, Jr., *Alternative to Extinction: Federal Indian Policy and the Beginnings of the Reservation System, 1846–51* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1975).

7 On Neighbors and his reservations, see Kenneth F. Neighbours, *Robert S. Neighbors and the Texas Frontier, 1836–1859* (Waco: Texian Press, 1975). For the Trans-Pecos reserve, see House Executive Document 76, 35th Congress, 1st session, serial 963; A.C. Hyde to Bryan, Nov. 19, 1857, Guy M. Bryan Papers, Barker Texas History Center; H. P. N. Gammel, comp., *The Laws of Texas 1822–1897 (Austin: Gammel Book Co., 1898), 4: 258-59.*

8 Prucha, *Great Father*, 1: 362-66.

The failure of the brief effort to create Indian reservations in Texas had important consequences for Fort Davis. Forgotten was the planned reserve west of the Pecos River. As such, the state government refused to allow the Trans-Pecos tribes to retain even a small portion of their nomadic haunts. An Indian reservation would not have guaranteed peace in West Texas; still, it might have doused some of the sparks ignited by the clash of cultures. Given the cultural propensities of all involved and without even the imperfect prospect offered by a reservation in Texas, violence between Indian and non-Indian was almost inevitable.

Even had the Texas reservations brought about the desired results, they would not have prevented tribes living outside the state from endangering traffic between El Paso and San Antonio. Particularly important during the 1850s were the Mescalero Apaches, who claimed western Texas and eastern New Mexico as their traditional hunting grounds. The trespassers pouring into these lands seemed fair prey to the Mescaleros. In return, military authorities in New Mexico determined to show no quarter. Only after forcing the tribes onto reservations could the much vaunted process of civilization begin. In accord with this thinking, the army established forts Conrad and Fillmore along the Rio Grande as agents negotiated a treaty with the Mescaleros in 1852. The Indians acknowledged the supremacy of the United States and its laws and promised to stop their raids into Mexico. In return the government agreed to grant annuities and any "liberal and humane measurements" it deemed suitable. Subsequently, the Gadsden Purchase ended U.S. responsibility for Indian raids into Mexico, but relations between Washington and southwestern tribes soon deteriorated. The collapse of the uneasy 1852 treaty surprised no one.[9]

Under these conditions, few could envy the situation inherited by the commander of the Department of Texas, Bvt. Maj. Gen. Persifor Smith. Upon appointing Smith to this position (in what was then known as the Eighth Military District), Secretary of War William M. Conrad had instructed him to "revise the whole system of defense." Smith was to establish new posts where needed, protect settlers, carry out treaty obligations with Mexico, and pursue Indians deemed hostile by the government into their homelands. Meanwhile, he should reduce expenses![10]

Formerly a prominent New Orleans attorney, Smith already possessed a formidable military record. He had raised a regiment of volunteers and fought

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9 Ibid., 1: 366-72; Robert Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue: The United States Army and the Indian, 1848–1865* (1967; rpt. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981): 87-88; Garland to Thomas, June 5, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1854, p. 35; Report of Garland, Jan. 31, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1855, p. 56.

10 Conrad to Smith, Apr. 30, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1851, p. 117-18.

in the Second Seminole War in Florida. In the early stages of the Mexican War he distinguished himself in combat at Monterrey. Receiving a brevet promotion to brigadier general, he again performed well during Maj. Gen. Winfield Scott's campaign from Veracruz to Mexico City. After the war Smith received yet another brevet, and commanded the Department of the Pacific before coming to Texas.[11]

Fig. 2:3. Bvt. Maj. Gen. Persifor Smith, ca. 1850. Photograph from Fort Davis Archives, AC-28.

Eager to do well, Smith constructed a line of posts just ahead of settlement in Texas—from Fort Belknap (established 1851) to the north, it included forts Phantom Hill (1851), Chadbourne (1852), McKavett (1852), Terrett (1852), and Clark (1852). An older line of forts, including Worth (1849), Graham (1849), Gates (1849), Croghan (1849), Mason (1851), and Martin Scott (1848) provided interior defense. To guard the lower Rio Grande, forts Bliss (1849), Inge (1849), Duncan (1849), Ewell (1852), Merrill (1850), McIntosh (1849), and Brown (1846) formed what on paper appeared to be another formidable double line of garrisons.[12]

Smith hoped the posts could counter the mounted Indian warriors of Texas. In the event of Indian incursions, infantry stationed at the outer posts would alert cavalry manning the interior line. The troopers were to pursue the intruders as the foot soldiers cut off their retreat. By holding the mounted

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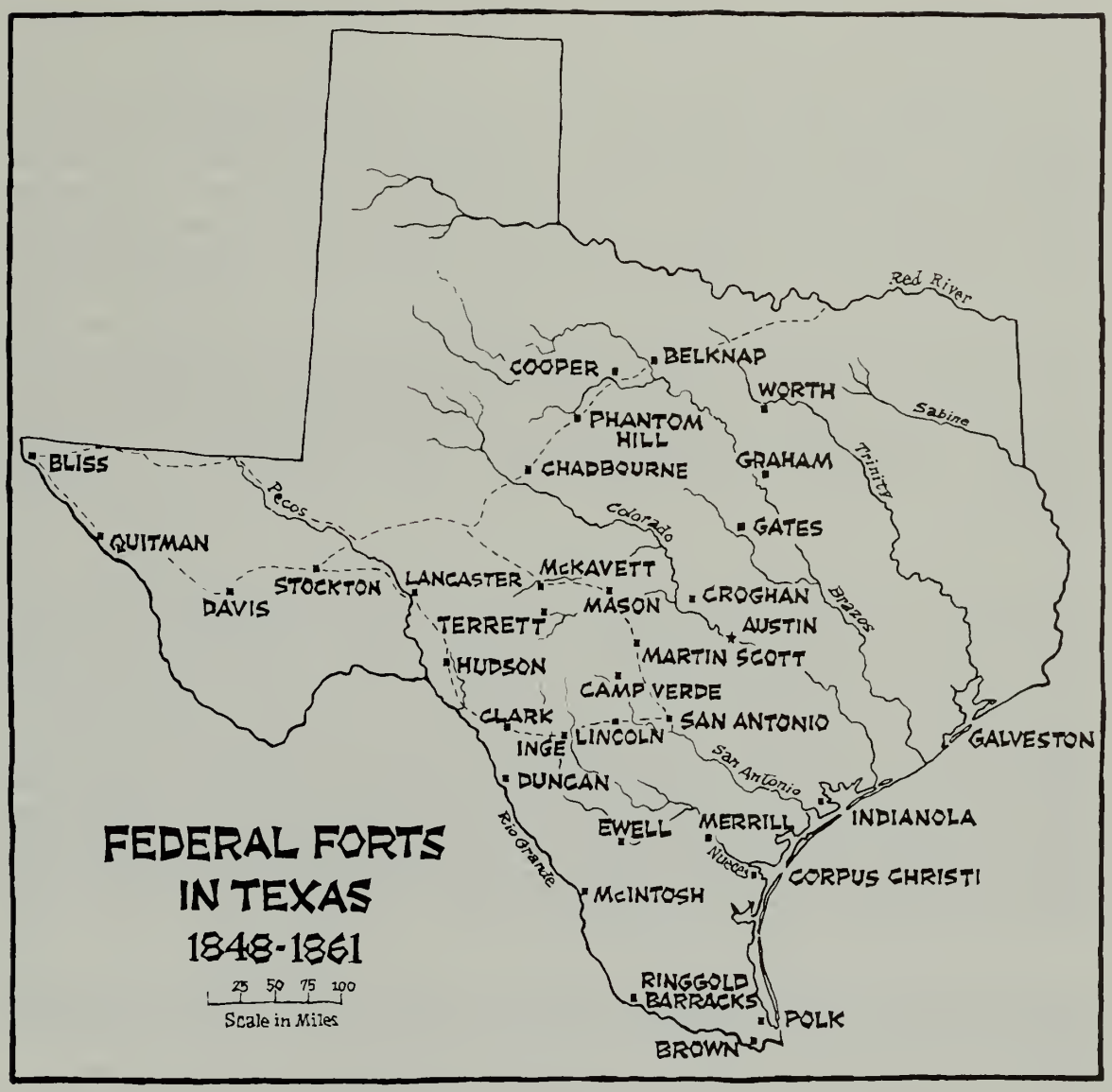
11 Robert McHenry, ed., *Webster's American Military Biographies* (New York: Dover Publications, 1978): 400.

12 Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue*, 61, 71-74; Robert W. Frazer, *Forts West of the Mississippi: Military Forts and Presidios and Posts Commonly Called Forts West of the Mississippi River to 1898* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965): 139-63.



Map 2:3. Federal forts in Texas, 1848-1861.
Map © by Jack Jackson. Originally published in Robert Wooster, *Soldiers, Sutlers, and Settlers* (Texas A & M University Press, 1987), p. 11. Reprinted with permission.

soldiers nearer the settlements along the inner positions, this disposition also reduced expenses. Or so went the theory. In practice, the infantry had little means of warning the cavalry in time for effective action. Furthermore, the 150 miles which typically separated the posts made it impossible to discover every incursion. And finally, the system left the way to El Paso unguarded west of

Fort Clark.[13]

All military observers agreed that permanent garrisons were needed to guard the Trans-Pecos. Debate centered largely on the proper sites for such positions. In 1850 then department commander Bvt. Maj. Gen. George M. Brooke had recommended posts along the Rio Grande opposite San Carlos and Presidio del Norte. Later that year, Bvt. Maj. William W. Chapman had called for one at the "Grand Indian Crossing" of the Rio Grande, 120 miles above the Pecos River junction. Lt. Duff C. Green suggested a similar location in 1852.[14] Quartermaster Gen. Thomas Jesup also emphasized the Rio Grande line. With thirty-five years' experience as quartermaster, Jesup believed supply posed the major problem for any prospective military positions in the Trans-Pecos. He pointed out that Spain had built a post near the mouth of the Rio Conchos at Presidio. Labeling this "the true strategic point," Jesup believed that five hundred men should garrison the site, which could presumably be supplied from Mexico.[15]

Secretary of War Jefferson Davis lent his support to such proposals when, in 1853, he reported that arrangements to build a line of forts along the great river were well underway. In addition to a large post at El Paso [Fort Bliss], a sizeable position at the Great Comanche Trail crossing was "in contemplation." Department commander Smith, however, begged to differ. In May 1854 he concluded: "I . . . am convinced that there is no fit location on the river itself. Abrupt barren hills without grass or timber come in on to the river on our side, leaving occasionally a small bottom of level ground too narrow for our purpose." Smith instead recommended a site near the head of the Limpia River a few miles from Wild Rose Pass. To ensure that he made an informed decision, he promised to lead a column into West Texas that June.[16]

On December 30, 1853, Companies B, E, I, and K, Eighth Infantry Regiment, had camped near the head of the Limpia en route from Fort Clark to El Paso.

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13 Smith to Freeman, July 19, 1853, in Martin L. Crimmins, ed. "W. G. Freeman's Report on the Eighth Military Department," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* (Oct., 1950) 54: 211-16.

14 Brooke to Scott, May 28, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1850, pp. 35-36; Report of Chapman, Sept. 5, ibid., p. 328; Ronnie C. Tyler, ed., "Exploring the Rio Grande: Lt. Duff C. Green's Report of 1852," *Arizona and the West* 10 (Spring, 1968): 56.

15 Report of Jesup, Nov. 20, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1852, pp. 69-70.

16 Report of Davis, Dec. 1, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1853, p. 3 (first quotation); Smith to Cooper, May 6, 1854, #S 358, Letters Received, Adjutant General's Office, 1822–60, National Archives (microfilm M 567, roll 505) (second quotation).

Smith and an escort finally reached the old "Painted Comanche Camp" by early October 1854. Six companies of the Eighth Infantry joined Smith shortly thereafter. Impressed by the site's strategic location near the roads to Presidio del Norte and El Paso and in the center of Mescalero haunts, Smith wrote on October 9: "I have established [Lt.] Col. [Washington] Seawell with his six companies there . . . and have taken the liberty of naming it without reference to the Department—I have called it Fort Davis" [after Secretary of War Jefferson Davis]. In a conflicting statement, Smith at the same time promised: "I will decide nothing finally until I have seen the Presidio."[17]

The trip to Presidio confirmed Smith's decision to build the post along the Limpia. Grazing, water, and fuel were available in sufficient quantities. The site, located about one-quarter mile south of the Painted Camp, also protected the lower route to El Paso and the trail to Presidio. The initial garrison included the six companies and the headquarters, field staff, and band of the Eighth Infantry Regiment. The company commanders were a veteran, battle-tested lot including four West Pointers and four men who had won brevet appointments during the Mexican War. Hoping to protect the garrison from cold winter northers, he tucked the fort into a canyon flanked on three sides by steep rock walls. Indian attacks in the area were frequent; a mail bag carrying several of Smith's own communications was lost in one such incident.[18]

Beautiful though the position was, subordinate Lt. Col. Washington Seawell thought it a poor choice. A career military man, Seawell had graduated a respectable twentieth in his West Point class of 1821. He had compiled an unspectacular record as a junior officer, winning a single brevet for meritorious service against the Florida Seminoles in 1841. Along with many other officers, Seawell feared that Indians could approach unobserved and fire down into the

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17 Thomas Wilhelm, ed., *Synopsis of the History of the Eighth U.S. Infantry* (New York, 1871): 47-48; Jerome A. Greene, *Historic Resource Study: Fort Davis National Historic Site* (U.S. Department of the Interior: National Park Service, 1986): 11; Smith to Cooper, Oct. 9, 1854, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 567-506) (quotations).

18 Smith to Cooper, Oct. 30, 1854, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 567-506).

post from the overlooking cliffs. He instead favored a position safely outside the mouth of the canyon. Seawell's protestations were in vain, however, and the troops began work in October 1854.[19]

As was usually the case at frontier posts, the early structures at Fort Davis were little more than rude shelters against the elements. Congress had appropriated $100,000 for West Texas forts, but the want of materials and laborers plus bureaucratic red tape slowed construction. Regimental adjutant Lt. Richard I. Dodge, a West Point graduate who later wrote several books on his western experiences, sought out more permanent construction materials as the troops settled in for their first winter. Dodge remembered that they had a special reason for immediately plunging into their task: "The winter weather was expected to be severe, and we immediately busied ourselves with preparations for such shelter as short time and scant materials would allow us to build."[20]

As of March 1855 Lt. Albert J. Myer still lived under canvas, but he was determined to make the best of the situation. Myer had assembled a housing complex which included a main tent divided into three "rooms." A servant lived in a smaller tent nearby; a brush fence surrounded the complex. Although his tent had no windows, "I think canvas the best building material in this climate. Dust cannot penetrate it. It is impervious to rain and it looks always white and clean." He continued facetiously, "it is very tight and warm and I have often thought how cozily I am fixed." Myer took the discomfort in stride; as he had already realized, "a man gets used to taking things cooly [sic] after a little service

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19 Report of Weisel, in Billings, *Report on Barracks and Hospitals,* 227-28; Robert M. Utley, *Fort Davis National Historic Site, Texas,* National Park Service Historical Handbook Series no. 38 (Washington: Department of the Interior, 1965): 6-7; Martin L. Crimmins, ed., "Colonel J. F. K. Mansfield's Report of the Inspection of the Department of Texas in 1856," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 41 (Apr. 1939): 356. Service records obtained from Francis B. Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army, from Its Organization, September 29, 1789, to March 2, 1903* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1903).

20 Willard B. Robinson, *American Forts: Architectural Form and Function* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, published for Amon Carter Museum of Western Art, 1977): 147-54; Report of the Chief Engineer, Nov. 29, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1854, p. 109; Richard I. Dodge, *Our Wild Indians: Thirty-three Years' Personal Experience Among the Red Men of the Great West* (rpt. New York: Archer House, 1959): 518-21 (quotation).

with the army."[21]

Like most frontier posts, Fort Davis had no wooden palisades. Its structures instead formed a rough square around an open parade ground. "There is nothing to prevent Indians or anyone else, from riding through the posts in any direction. They are built simply for quarters, and their localities for defence is seldom thought of," remembered one officer. "They are placed so as to have a level place for a parade, convenient to water & c., without any expectation that they will ever have to stand a siege."[22]

The troops used local materials whenever possible. The early structures, or "jacales," consisted of oak and cottonwood slabs set up lengthwise about a rude frame. Mud and prairie grass chinked the gaps of the picket structures. Lt. Zenas R. Bliss's house, for example, was fifteen feet square and six feet high. The canvas roof and warped walls provided an unanticipated source of ventilation, convenient until the first snows began pouring through the cracks. The first enlisted men's barracks, fifty-six feet long by twenty feet wide, were of similar picket construction. Lt. Edward Hartz described the quarters as "humble though comfortable"; a fellow officer, passing through Davis en route to New Mexico, proved less generous: "Fort Davis is a poorly built fort."[23]

In the spring of 1856 Insp. Gen. J. K. F. Mansfield made another swing through West Texas. A career army man who had already recognized the need to hold the Trans-Pecos, Mansfield had established a solid reputation as engineer on the nation's coastal fortifications. He had also performed valuable reconnaissance work during the war against Mexico, winning brevet appointments for his gallant and meritorious service in fighting near Fort Brown, at Monterrey, and at Buena Vista. Mansfield was subsequently appointed inspector general, a job which took him to virtually all of the army's scattered military establishments before his death at the Battle of Antietam.[24]

When Mansfield conducted his inspection of Fort Davis in the spring of 1856,

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21 Myer to James, Mar. 17 to Apr. 4, 1855, in David A. Clary, " 'I Am Already Quite a Texan:' Albert J. Myer's Letters From Texas, 1854–1856," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 82 (July, 1978): 53, 57-58.

22 Zenas R. Bliss Reminiscences, 1: 119-20, Barker Texas History Center. See also Frederick Law Olmsted's description of Fort Inge, in his *Journey Through Texas* (New York: Dix, Edwards and Co., 1857): 174.

23 Utley, *Fort Davis*, pp. 7-8; Crimmins, "Mansfield's Report," 352; Edward to Father, Jan. 4, 1856, Edward L. Hartz Papers, Library of Congress (microfilm edition, Fort Davis Archives) (first quotation); Bliss Reminiscences, 1: 119-20, 173-74; James A. Bennett, *Forts and Forays: A Dragoon in New Mexico 1850–1856*, ed. Clinton E. Brooks and Frank D. Reeve (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1948): 79 (second quotation).

24 McHenry, ed., *American Military Biographies*, 271.

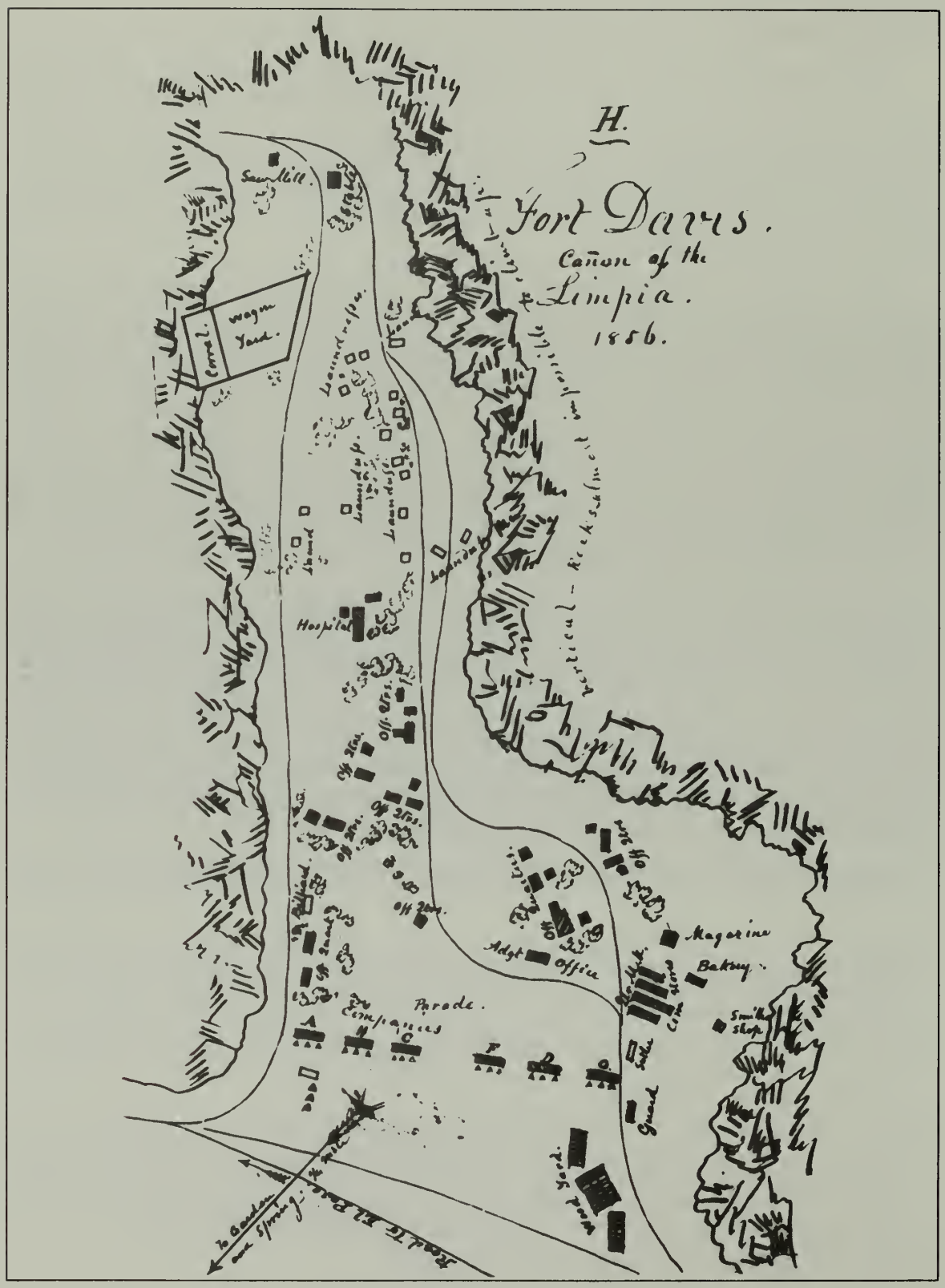

Fig. 2:4. Insp. Gen. J. F. K. Mansfield's outline of Fort Davis, 1856. Photograph from Fort Davis Archives.

Fig. 2:5. Parade grounds and Hospital Canyon.
Original watercolor by Capt. Arthur T. Lee, 1854-58. Photograph courtesy of Rush Rhees Library, University of Rochester.

the guardhouse held sixteen prisoners. In addition to the barracks and officers' quarters, the troops had also erected a variety of miscellaneous buildings. Two or three female laundresses per company lived in tiny jacales near their clients. A large, specially designed tent and a small wood building constituted the post hospital. The bakery was also of wood. The blacksmith's shop, powder magazine, and quartermaster's storehouse were of stone, although the latter two buildings had only canvas roofs.[25]

The troops and officers of the garrison sought to make themselves as comfortable as possible, even though no official lease had been signed. Thirty miles north of the fort, the troops had already erected a lime kiln for use in construction. A circular sawmill, driven by twelve mules, provided lumber. Commanding the Department of Texas, Col. Albert Sidney Johnston urged the government to secure a lease immediately. Only then, according to the government, should permanent construction begin, with troops providing the labor. Using native timber and stone, the project would cost the government only the small extra pay it allotted soldier-builders, plus minimal purchases of glass,

25 Crimmins, "Mansfield's Report," 352-58; Greene, *Historic Resource Study*, 55.

door locks, and nails.[26]

Johnston was an adopted Texan and one of the army's most respected officers. He had recently been appointed to lead the Second Cavalry, widely recognized as the army's elite regiment. It is not surprising, therefore, that Johnston's report on conditions at Fort Davis went to the core of one of the army's strategic dilemmas. Fort Davis should be built because planners deemed it important, not because the army had spent a few dollars to shelter the troops. As he well knew, convenience rather than strategic plan usually drove the army.[27]

But as negotiations for the lease continued, the garrison became increasingly anxious to improve its housing. In late August 1856 Capt. Arthur T. Lee, commanding the post during Colonel Seawell's temporary absence, requested "permission to erect such structures as will protect the comd. during the approaching winter." In accordance with the army custom of using local materials, the cream-colored limestone quarried nearby would be used on the new buildings. On September 13, Captain Lee informed departmental superiors that work had begun.[28]

This was exactly the situation Johnston had sought to avoid. Captain Lee, a junior officer, was setting general policy. The department's assistant adjutant general, Don Carlos Buell, replied in no uncertain terms to Lee's communications. "You must have been aware of the contemplated removal of the post to another location as soon as authority was received from the War Department for the erection of buildings, and a lease of the land was secured," wrote Buell, who had in July 1856 ordered Lee to send out a team to reconnoiter the area between Leon Spring and Eagle Spring, presumably with a view to selecting a new site for a post. Only the "absolute want of shelter for the troops" could justify the new construction program. Reluctantly the department approved Lee's request for doors and windows, but insisted that his construction be of a temporary nature.[29]

In suggesting a change of sites, Buell was apparently referring to earlier

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26 Johnston to Cooper, May 6, 1856, Letters Sent, Department of Texas, 1856–1858, National Archives (microfilm M1165, roll 1).

27 McHenry, ed., *American Military Biographies*, 204.

28 Lee to Department of Texas, Aug. 30, 1856, p. 278, Register of Letters Received, Department of Texas, National Archives (quotation); Greene, *Historic Resource Study*, 53-56 (quotation); Buell to Lee, Sept. 30, 1856, Letters Sent, Department of Texas, 1856–58 (microfilm M1165, roll 1).

29 Buell to Lee, July 12, Sept. 30, 1856 (quotations), Letters Sent, Department of Texas, 1856–58 (microfilm M1165, roll 1).

instructions he had sent Seawell. In July 1856 Buell It is uncertain whether Lee's commanding officer, Washington Seawell, approved of his subordinate's initiative. Lee's decision to begin the program during Seawell's absence must have galled his superior. The two men had already compiled an impressive list of complaints against one another, with the feuding evident almost as soon as they reached Fort Davis. Seawell had requested that Lee be court-martialed in December 1854, only to withdraw his charges the following October.[30]

Lee played his part with great gusto. A multitalented individual, Lee compiled a number of field sketches during his service in the Davis Mountains, later using the notes to produce an impressive series of watercolor landscapes. The captain also dabbled in history, music, engineering, and architecture. He repeatedly requested leaves of absence, probably in order to get away from Seawell. During the summer of 1855 he filed two formal complaints against his post commander. More specific charges against Seawell came in September 1856—just as Lee sought permission to expand the buildings at Fort Davis. This time Lee claimed that Seawell had illegally appropriated an army horse for his private use while living in San Antonio. Lee followed up these attacks with additional criticisms about Seawell's actions as post commander at Davis.[31]

The Department of Texas refused to entertain Lee's charges against Seawell as post commander, but did keep the investigation of the latter's alleged misuse of a public animal open for several months before dropping the case. Not to be outdone, Seawell again preferred charges against Captain Lee. Various department officials tried to convince Seawell to withdraw the charges. Finally they threw them out despite his protestations. On at least three occasions, Seawell requested that the department forward his charges along to Washington for review. New department commander David E. Twiggs finally sent the papers on up the bureaucratic channels; his final comments "that the interests of the service do not require a court martial to investigate the enclosed charges" undoubtedly marked a sensible opinion on the Seawell-Lee dispute.[32]

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30 Buell to Lee, July 12, 1856, ibid.; Seawell to Department of Texas, Dec. 20, 22, 1854, p. 486; Oct. 6, 1855, p. 195, Register of Letters Received, Department of Texas.

31 W. Stephen Thomas, *Fort Davis and the Texas Frontier: Paintings by Arthur T. Lee, Eighth U.S. Infantry* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1976): 4, 34; Lee to Department of Texas, Apr. 21, 1855, p. 265; June 11, 14, 1855, p. 268; July 5, 1855, p. 269; Dec. 27, 1856, p. 279, Register of Letters Received, Department of Texas; Buell to Lee, Sept. 30, 1856, Letters Sent, Department of Texas, 1856–58 (microfilm M1165, roll 1); Buell to Seawell, Dec. 8, 1856, ibid.; McDowell to Seawell, Feb. 28, 1857, ibid.

32 McDowell to Seawell, Feb. 28, May 12, 1857, Letters Sent, Department of Texas, 1856–58 (microfilm M1165, roll 1); Withers to Seawell, June 30, Aug. 22, 1857, ibid.; Twiggs to Thomas, Oct. 4, 1857, ibid. (quotation).

Whatever the cause of the feud, the building program continued. In response to Buell's assertion that Fort Davis might be moved, Lee claimed to know nothing of such news. In January 1857, in what must be interpreted as at least a tacit approval of Lee's expansion program, departmental headquarters promised to give "favorable consideration" to detailed plans for a new hospital. That same month Lee reported good progress on the new quarters. Six stone enlisted men's barracks at the mouth of the canyon now replaced the old jacales. Sixty feet by twenty feet, each barracks had a thatched roof and flagged stone floors. The commanding officer occupied a thirty-eight by twenty-foot frame house, with two rooms, two glazed windows, and thatched roof. A powder magazine, blacksmith's shop, and bakery were intended to be temporary but had stone walls. As one entered the canyon and went past the enlisted barracks, these structures stood near the right side of the rocky cliffs.[33]

Other buildings, however, lagged behind. The troops still used the dilapidated old temporary quarters, located within fifteen yards of the new barracks, as kitchens and mess halls. Married men lived with their families in thirteen rundown hovels, each sixteen by fourteen feet. The proposed new hospital remained on the drawing board. The quartermaster's storehouses seemed in real danger of collapsing, their thin walls unable to support anything more than canvas roofing materials. Even the officers' quarters, scattered along the left side of the canyon past the enlisted barracks, drew criticism from observers. Seven homes were thirty-two by sixteen feet each, four others, each twenty by sixteen feet, had board floors, glazed windows, and thatched roofs. But the green wood used in what was supposedly temporary construction had warped over the years. "The condition of all of them is bad. . . . They are altogether uncomfortable and insufficient quarters," concluded regimental quartermaster Lt. Thomas M. Jones in June 1857.[34]

General Twiggs sympathized with the problems facing his troops. He requested that the War Department spend the remnants of a $150,000 appropriation for "forts on the Western frontier of Texas." Troops "in Texas are sent in almost perpetual banishment from civilization." In his view, "common humanity would dictate that they be better quartered than they are now." Twiggs called upon the army to earmark $10,000 for construction and repairs at Fort Davis. Officers needed new kitchens; the hospital, built with wooden pegs rather than

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33 Greene, *Historic Resource Study*, 56-57; Lee to Department of Texas, Oct. 24, 1856, p. 278, Register of Letters Received, Department of Texas; McDowell to Lee, Jan. 2 (quotation), 31, 1857, Letters Sent, Department of Texas, 1856–58 (microfilm M1165, roll 1); Statement of Jones, June 4, 1857, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 906/8820).

34 Statement of Jones, June 4, 1857, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 906/8820).

metal nails, required extensive remodeling. Stone quarters for the commanding officer and company officers were essential, as were limestone quartermaster and commissary storehouses, a guard house, quarters for the band and noncommissioned officers, and an adjutant's office.[35]

Acting Asst. Q.M. William McE. Dye noticed several changes at Fort Davis by 1859, although major construction had not yet begun. The six stone enlisted barracks remained in satisfactory condition, their two-foot-thick walls providing suitable protection from the elements. The smaller garrison allowed Companies D and G to spread out into two buildings each. The regimental band claimed a fifth set; the final structure had been converted to a guard house. A new quartermaster and commissary storehouse was the only major addition since 1857. One hundred feet long by twenty feet wide, its thick stone walls and shingled roof housed issue rooms, storage facilities, and offices. As was almost inevitably the case at the frontier forts, the married men and laundresses remained in thirteen ramshackle houses scattered deep inside the canyon past the officers' quarters. The latter buildings likewise showed little evidence of repairs or new construction. Despite the poor structures, at least one officer, Lt. DeWitt C. Peters, seemed satisfied with his living arrangements. He and his wife occupied a "large and comfortable" house, "well furnished" with a nice yard, a covered chicken house, and a carriage shed.[36]

Fort Davis briefly played host to Lt. Col. Joseph E. Johnston in 1859. Johnston, of course, had helped reconnoiter the road to El Paso during the early 1850s and later became a full general in the Confederate army. On this occasion, Johnston came through while inspecting posts in Texas and New Mexico. He labeled the new commissary/quartermaster building "capacious & secure." The barracks again seemed in fine order, but the officers' houses "are huts of the slightest kind." The magazine and bakery also earned Johnston's approval. The stable, though small, was "a very good one."[37]

In commenting on the needed repairs, Johnston hinted at one of the reasons

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35 Twiggs to Thomas, July 25, 1857, Letters Sent, Department of Texas, 1856–58 (microfilm M1165, roll 1) (quotations); Greene, *Historic Resource Study*, 59-60; Withers to Commanding Officer, Aug. 17, 1857, Letters Sent, Department of Texas, 1856–58, (microfilm M1165, roll 1); Statement of Jones, June 4, 1857, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 906/8820).

36 Dye to Jesup, July 4, 1859, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 906/8820); Peters to Stoutenborough, June 12, 1860, DeWitt C. Peters Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. Greene's conclusion that the reported differences in the sizes of the officers' quarters resulted from mismeasurement (the 32-by-20-foot houses were now 32 by 16 feet; the 20-by-16-foot buildings were now 18 by 16 feet) seems logical.

37 Joseph F. Johnston, "Reports from Military Inspections of the Posts in New Mexico and Texas . . . in 1859," Arizona Historical Society, Tucson, Arizona (typescript copy of original in National Archives).

for the War Department's refusal to fully fund construction at Fort Davis. Although most traffic now traveled the southern route through Fort Davis, the question of the most suitable road to El Paso still lingered. As had adjutant Buell, Johnston advocated using the upper road (the old Ford-Neighbors route), which swung north of Davis along the Guadalupe Mountains. Fort Davis had been established to protect travelers, the mails, and to encourage western expansion, not to foster local growth. Johnston believed the region's aridity limited its immediate use by large numbers of settlers. Should the road be changed, then, Davis would become obsolete and any new monies spent wasted.[38]

The ubiquitous Insp. Gen. J. K. F. Mansfield returned to Fort Davis for a final time in 1860. As one of the primary champions of the fort's location, Mansfield expressed none of Johnston's doubts about its strategic value. Nonetheless, Mansfield's latest report suggested further deterioration of post facilities. The burgeoning six-company post of the mid-1850s now held parts of only two. The sawmill was out of order. The magazine's shingled roof made it a potential powderkeg in case of a fire. "No body would go near it," commented Mansfield laconically. Most of the officers' quarters lay abandoned, "useless except for temporary purposes."[39]

Mansfield made sweeping recommendations about the enlisted barracks, along with the quartermaster/commissary storehouse, once the pride of the fort. Shingles should replace the thatched roofs of the six stone barracks. Glass windows would add further comfort. The flimsy temporary quarters behind the stone buildings still served as kitchens and mess rooms despite every inspector's insistence that they be demolished. Mansfield advised that they be "burned for firewood." With only two companies in the garrison, the troops could convert every other stone barracks into a kitchen/mess hall complex.[40]

The poor condition of Fort Davis' antebellum hospital drew continual fire. Its location gave that feature its oft-used name, Hospital Canyon. Lieutenant Jones described its "rickety condition" in 1857; two years later, Lieutenant McE. Dye described it as having been "rather flimsily constructed." In 1860 Mansfield was less generous. "The hospital is a worthless building of posts set on end, and shrunken in, & rotten, & thatched roof, & rough floors & braced outside, but will soon fall down, or be blown down. Another should be provided immediately." As a cost-saving measure, he suggested that the stone from one of the enlisted barracks be used in constructing a new hospital.[41]

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38 Ibid.

39 Greene, *Historic Resource Study*, 62-63.

40 Ibid.

41 Statement of Jones, June 4, 1857, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 906/8820); Dye to Jesup, July 4, 1859, ibid.; Mansfield to Thomas, Oct. 31, 1860, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 567/625).

With such an insufficient hospital, army surgeons faced a formidable task indeed. Conditions in the army as a whole merely added to the problems. The one-hundred-odd surgeons and assistant surgeons could scarcely begin to serve the army's diverse needs at each of its eighty-five posts. Many recruits entered the service unfit for duty and unacclimated to frontier conditions. Their sanitary habits were often abominable. A ten-year study concluded in 1859 showed that on the whole, the typical soldier was sick 2.85 times a year. Of those who reported sick, one in every 102 died. Rates for troops stationed in Texas generally ranged higher than the national norms. Constant construction and field duty, inadequate quarters, the shortage of qualified medical personnel, and alcoholism compounded the problem. Digestive disorders accounted for nearly forty-four percent of the deaths on the western frontiers of Texas; not surprisingly, cholera, at least partially explained by poor sanitation, proved the most common of the fatal disorders.[42]

Although a common ailment in Texas, scurvy did not become a serious problem at Fort Davis. Indeed, considering the poor hospital and the isolated location, the surgeons at antebellum Fort Davis did a remarkably good job in keeping sickness rates relatively low. The efforts of Lafayette Guild, Albert J. Myer, Andrew J. Foard, Charles Sutherland, and DeWitt C. Peters stand in marked contrast to those of an early doctor in the region, Thomas A. McParlin. McParlin served on Maj. Gen. Persifor Smith's staff, and accompanied the expedition which established the fort in 1854. From the Painted Camp on the Limpia, McParlin, who should have been busy enough tending to the minor injuries and ailments which inevitably occurred during such a campaign, instead composed a seven-page diatribe as to his seniority in relation to that of a fellow doctor.[43]

The first official post surgeon, LaFayette Gould, applied for a leave of absence almost as soon as he arrived at the fort, possibly because of a dispute with post commander Washington Seawell. Albert J. Myer replaced Gould. Born in 1828, Myer graduated from Geneva (now Hobart) College, New York, in 1847, and

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42 P. M. Ashburn, *History of the Medical Department of the United States Army* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1929): 60-62; Report of Lawson, Nov. 10, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1855, pp. 174-81; Edward M. Coffman, *The Old Army: A Portrait of the American Army in Peacetime, 1784–1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986): 182, 186; James O. Breeden, "Health of Early Texas: The Military Frontier," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 80 (Apr., 1977): 362-64.

43 Coffman, *Old Army*, 182; "Medical Officers," typescript in Medicine File, Fort Davis Archives; McParlin to Cooper, Oct. 13, 1854, Letters Received, Adjutant General's Office, 1822–60 (microfilm M567, roll 502).

earned his medical degree from Buffalo four years later. After passing his army boards in 1854, Myer was sent to Texas, a journey which the inexperienced easterner found "rather exciting." Myer possessed the sense of humor necessary to excel on the frontier. Upon hearing that a friend had fallen ill, the surgeon advised sagely: "avoid Doctors and Medicine!" Following his transfer from Davis, Myer compiled a remarkable career record. He devised a signal system, which the army approved in 1859–60, and developed the Signal Corps as well as the army's weather service.[44]

Asst. Surgeon Andrew J. Foard replaced Myer. In spite of the flimsy hospital, Foard impressed inspector Mansfield during the latter's 1856 tour. "This is a healthy post," commented Mansfield, who also noted tersely, hospital in "good order & records profusely kept." A steward, two matrons, four attendants, and a cook complemented Foard, whose hospital boasted twenty-five iron bedsteads and ample supplies despite its unimposing condition. Charles Sutherland and DeWitt C. Peters succeeded Foard; the lack of complaints during their tenure attested to their capable service at Fort Davis. By the late 1850s the smaller garrison allowed the surgeon a relatively easy schedule. Peters, for example, rose at seven o'clock to check on affairs at the infirmary before taking a leisurely breakfast with his wife about 8:15. He then inspected the garrison, tending his military patients as well as assorted travelers and local residents who had fallen sick.[45]

Though the Fort Davis surgeons compiled an enviable record before 1860, even the most well-versed army doctors could do little to combat malaria, diarrhea, dysentery, and cholera, diseases whose causes and cures would not be understood for many years. Popular treatments included the almost inevitable purgatives, bleedings, and laxatives. Exotic treatments often did more damage than the ailments they were designed to cure. On the other hand, venereal diseases were common (striking between six and seven percent of the troops nationwide) but not considered serious, as army medical men understood the common strains of these sexually transmitted diseases fairly well.[46]

Soldiers maintained few expectations about the miracles of nineteenth-century medicine. When Lt. Zenas R. Bliss contracted smallpox, the surgeon simply

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44 Seawell to Department of Texas, Nov. 27, 1854, Register of Letters Received, Department of Texas, p. 485; Gould to Department of Texas, Dec. 3, 1854, ibid., p. 233; Myer to James, Sept. 26, 1855, in Clary, " 'I Am Already Quite a Texan,' " 72 (quotation); Paul J. Scheips, "Albert James Myer, An Army Doctor in Texas, 1854–1857," *Southwestern Hisorical Quarterly* 82 (July, 1978): 2-7, 19-24.

45 "Medical Officers," typescript in Medicine File, Fort Davis Archives; Crimmins, ed., "Mansfield's Report," 354 (quotations); Peters to Stoutenborough, June 12, 1860, Peters Papers.

46 Coffman, *Old Army*, 183-92.

quarantined him outside the post. Bliss found his own accomodations—a ranch about a mile away from Fort Davis. An older Hispanic woman took care of the ailing officer; the post doctor also paid daily visits. As Bliss began his recovery, fellow officers hurled good-natured insults at him, making sure that they did so from a safe distance across a nearby creek.[47]

Considering the contemporary levels of medical knowledge, some tragedies were unavoidable. Few understood the symptoms or causes of mental illness. When a board of officers at Davis rejected one new recruit because of insanity, it argued that he had the condition before signing up for the army in Philadelphia. The former private died in the government hospital for the insane within two years of his enlistment. The board could have assessed the blame on either his recruiting officer or the attending surgeon, as the letter of the law allowed. Instead, it noted "the difficulty of its (his insanity) detection without opportunity for prolonged observation," and assigned no guilt.[48]

More avoidable were petty disputes concerning hospital stewards. Company officers assigned hospital workers from the ranks. Logically, most officers wanted to retain their best soldiers for company duty and thus dispatched their least capable men to the hospital. Surgeons, on the other hand, believed it essential that they have good assistants and frequently challenged the system. Having been company officers rather than surgeons, post commanders almost inevitably sided with the former. In a typical example at Fort Davis, one Otto Bauman had a reputation as a good hospital steward. Only the stringent efforts of surgeons Myer and Foard secured Bauman a much deserved promotion to sergeant; apparently his company officer objected to a noncommissioned man being away from regular duty.[49]

The army paid little attention to the care of its dead before the Civil War. Under the aegis of the Quartermaster Department, cemeteries were poorly tended. Record-keeping proved equally spotty. According to custom, the army provided funds for the coffins and headboards of enlisted men at the post where they died. No money was available for burying officers; the department generally agreed only that if the surviving family furnished a leaden coffin, the service

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47 Bliss Reminiscences, 1: 304.

48 Nichols to Floyd, Apr. 22, 1857, # N40, Letters Received, Adjutant General's Office, 1822–1860 (microfilm 567, roll 564); Proceedings of a Board of Inspection, Sept. 28, 1855, ibid. (quotation). See also Coffman, *Old Army*, 191-92.

49 Report of Lawson, Nov. 10, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1855, p. 179; Myer, undated letter (1855?), Albert J. Myer Papers, Library of Congress (microfilm copy, Fort Davis Archives); Foard to Dye, Nov. 15, 1855, # B581, Letters Received, Adjutant General's Office, 1822–60 (microfilm M567, roll 534).

would transport the coffin to its interment location free of charge. The pre–Civil War cemetery at Fort Davis lay just north of the enlisted men's barracks; little else is known about the first cemetery.[50]

The garrison also carried out more traditional military functions. All antebellum observers agreed that Davis's garrison was not large enough to build, scout, explore, and provide escorts to immigrant trains. In this, Davis typified virtually every western fort. Eager to cut government spending and fearful that a large regular military establishment threatened American liberty, Congress had reduced the army to about ten thousand following the war with Mexico. Although the annexation of Texas, the acquisition of the Southwest, and the resolution of the Oregon dispute had added a million square miles to the nation's domain, the army of 1851 was only twenty percent larger than that of 1845. Rep. Joshua R. Giddings of Ohio summed up the fears of many:

> I am opposed to any measure which contemplates an increase in the Army. . . . It is a time of peace. . . . We see our officers now in almost every city strutting about the streets in indolence, sustained by the laboring people, fed from the public crib, but doing nothing whatever to support themselves or to increase the wealth of the nation. Sir, I would discharge every officer, and let him support himself.[51]

Army supporters mounted a vigorous counteroffensive. In an 1850 address Pres. Millard Fillmore pointed out the "entirely inadequate" manpower levels in Texas and New Mexico and called for another mounted regiment. That year Congress allowed frontier units to raise the number of privates per company from fifty to seventy-four. With ten companies each plus assorted staff (colonel, lieutenant colonel, two majors, an adjutant and quartermaster assigned from the regular line officers, sergeant major, and quartermaster sergeant) and musicians (buglers for cavalry, fifers, drummers, and bandsmen for infantry) on paper the frontier regiment could number almost nine hundred men. Another increase came in 1855, when Congress added two infantry and two cavalry regiments to the regular army's existing four artillery, eight infantry, and three mounted units.[52]

Although the increases raised the legal limits to 14,000 personnel in 1850

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50 Erna Risch, *Quartermaster Support of the Army: A History of the Corps, 1775–1939* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1960): 462-63; Mary L. Williams, "Care of the Dead: Neglected Duty, The Military Cemeteries at Fort Davis, Texas" (typescript, Fort Davis Archives, 1983).

51 Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue*, 2-12; *Congressional Globe*, 31 Congress, 2nd session, pp. 378-79 (quotation); ibid., 35 Congress, 1st session, p. 674.

52 Fillmore, Annual Message, Dec. 2, 1850, in Richardson, *Messages and Papers*, 5: 87; Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue*, 20-22.

and 18,000 in 1855, the 10,000 miles of coastal and international boundaries and the 8,000 miles of interior frontiers and travel routes meant that every garrison was strapped for troops. Secretary of War Jefferson Davis deemed the army "manifestly inadequate" to perform its multiple tasks. In order to repress Indian attacks in threatened regions, men had to be transported at great expense from other forts. As troops left one area to go to another, the former point, once protected, now invited Indian attack. And what would happen during an emergency, wondered Davis.[53]

To make matters worse, the army never met even its authorized force levels. In 1853 Secretary of War Jefferson Davis estimated that since the Mexican War, actual strength reached only four-fifths of legal limits. And of the actual strength, sixteen percent deserted every year; another twelve percent died or were discharged annually. Detached service duties took an additional toll, particularly among officers, who were liable for service on courts-martial, boards of survey, recruiting details, and action in the field. Frontier garrisons, then, remained pitifully small. Figures for June 1853 are typical. At that time the authorized strength of the army was 13,821, but its actual size was 10,417. Of that number 8,342 were assigned to the fifty-four western posts, but only 6,918 were present. The average strength of a western post was 128.[54]

In light of such problems, Fort Davis seemed relatively well off. Of course, such analysis says little for army readiness. Before the Civil War Davis housed between one and six companies of the Eighth Infantry Regiment; it also hosted the regimental headquarters until 1860. Companies of frontier regiments like the Eighth were entitled to one captain, two lieutenants, one orderly sergeant, four sergeants, four corporals, and seventy-four privates. At its height during the mid-1850s Fort Davis served as home to 400 soldiers. As such, it stood among the army's biggest western posts—the largest that year, Fort Riley, Kansas, boasted 529 men.[55]

But the units at Davis rarely approached their paper strengths. Col. J. K. F. Mansfield's inspection of June 1856 revealed the limited strength of even an important post like Davis. Inspecting Companies A, C, D, F, G, and H, Mansfield counted eight officers and 397 enlisted personnel as present. Ill-health claimed two officers and twenty-two enlisted men; another sixteen privates were in confinement. Forty-nine men held down extra duty and were thus unavailable for field service. Twenty more were either scouting, on escort duty, assigned to

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53 Report of Davis, Dec. 1, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1853, pp. 11-13; ibid., 1854, pp. 5-6; Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue*, 16.

54 Report of Davis, Dec. 1, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1853, pp. 7-8; Report of Scott, Nov. 16, ibid., pp. 116-23.

55 See Fort Davis Archives microfilm M 665, roll 91; Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1854, p. 59; 1855, p. 137; 1856, p. 243; 1857, p. 75; 1858, p. 777; 1859, 605; 1860, p. 219.

the post garden, or on detached service. Six officers and 282 enlisted men thus comprised the garrison's disposable force. The shortage of officers loomed particularly large; F Company had no commissioned personnel available.[56]

When Mansfield returned in October 1860 he found conditions in a virtual state of chaos. Fort Davis now held only one company. Yet even that figure is misleading. Commanding officer Washington Seawell had been on court-martial duty at Fort Bliss since July and had taken a small escort. A lieutenant, three noncommissioned officers, and nineteen privates were on detached duty at Fort Quitman; another officer was at San Antonio. This left the garrison at Fort Davis with a strength of one commissioned officer, one sergeant, two corporals, one musician, and twenty-six privates. Of these men, one corporal and nine privates were on extra duty and another seven privates in confinement, thus leaving one officer and twelve men available for military purposes. Obviously, thirteen soldiers could do little to protect the peace in western Texas. One immigrant summed it up well. Although military posts were as welcome to travelers "as the oasis in the desert . . . a parade of the entire force would sometimes diminish our feeling of security."[57]

Supplying even these small garrisons at a reasonable expense confounded expert and casual observer alike. Due largely to the massive territorial gains of recent years, annual transportation costs alone exceeded two million dollars by 1851, with further increases during the years to come; in 1845 they had been a mere $130,000. Congress screamed for reform. In 1851 Secretary of War Conrad directed that all frontier garrisons plant gardens in hopes of reducing the army's food bill and relieving the strain on transportation. The War Department also ordered western commanders to replace unnecessary civilian employees with military personnel. Dutiful officers tried to abide with these programs; in Texas, however, the troops were too busy chasing Indians or building new posts to plant gardens in 1852.[58]

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56 Crimmins, "Mansfield's Report," 351-52.

57 Mansfield to Thomas, Oct. 31, 1860, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 567/625); Utley, *Fort Davis*, 56; Dagmar Mariager, "Camp and Travel in Texas, I," *The Overland Monthly* 17 (2nd ser., Feb., 1891): 188 (quotation).

58 Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue*, 16; *Congressional Globe*, 32nd Congress, 1st sess., p. 515 (quotation); Report of Conrad, Dec. 4, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1852, p. 4; Conrad to Hitchcock, Twiggs, Smith, and Sumner, May 5, 1852, Letters Sent, Secretary of War, vol. 33; Scott to Conrad, Nov. 22, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1852, p. 35.

The major budgetary culprits remained purchases and transportation rather than a bloated bureaucracy or a few onions or potatoes. Only river improvements or a transcontinental railroad could significantly reduce the quartermaster department's expenditures. Efforts to improve the Rio Grande proved futile. But a number of important politicians became interested in a railroad to the Pacific—and many of these men believed the line should go through Texas.[59]

Texas senators Sam Houston and Thomas J. Rusk eagerly supported the railroad. James K. Polk's former secretary of the treasury, Robert J. Walker, and James Gadsden, who negotiated a major land purchase from Mexico in 1853, also expressed sympathy for a Texas route. The Corps of Topographical Engineers' surveys in western Texas gave further momentum to the transcontinental project. And in a major effort to generate interest and practical knowledge, Congress appropriated $150,000 for army engineers to explore possible railroad routes in 1853.[60]

None of the four routes surveyed in accord with this legislation dealt with the immediate area around Fort Davis, although the proposed route along the thirty-second parallel included an expedition through the Guadalupe Mountains. Conducted by Capt. John Pope, the latter team enthusiastically espoused the virtues of the southern route. But the leaders of the three competing parties were equally effusive about their assigned routes. Contemporary economists believed the nation could support only one transcontinental railroad during the 1850s. Predictably, the project became entangled in the decade's sectional controversies and the Pacific railroad movement temporarily ground to a halt amidst local and national jealousies.[61]

Denied a railroad, transportation costs continued to drain the quartermaster's department; money which might have been spent on construction instead paid for the transfer of food and equipment to the far-flung western posts. Locally available outlets failed to meet the garrison's massive requirements, so most of Davis's supplies came by sea to Corpus Christi or Indianola and overland via San Antonio. As an example, from October 7, 1854, through

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59 Report of Jesup, Nov. 20, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1852, pp. 72-73; Conrad to Johnson et. al., June 29, 1852, Letters Sent, Secretary of War, vol. 33; Goetzmann, *Army Exploration*, 225-26; Report of Jesup, Nov. 26, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1856, pp. 255-57.

60 Goetzmann, *Army Exploration*, 225-26, 274-75. For the Corps of Topographical Engineers, see Chapter One.

61 Ibid., 262-304.

March 31, 1856, a total of nearly $92,500 was spent for forage, supplies to maintain the Mounted Rifle regiment that was temporarily attached to Fort Davis, and for supplies to maintain transient teams that were based there.[62]

In a desperate effort to stem the tide of red ink, the government turned to private contractors in 1855. George Howard dominated the Texas market at the San Antonio depot; for every one hundred miles to outposts like Davis, Bliss (El Paso) and Fillmore (New Mexico), he charged $1.70 per hundred pounds, a reasonable sum for the period. Wastage, some of which was inevitable considering the circumstances, added to the army's miseries. The ever-vigilant inspector Mansfield calculated that during the year ending May 31, 1856, post inspectors condemned ten percent of the 2,000 barrels of pork, eight percent of the 300,000 pounds of bacon, thirteen percent of the 5,500 barrels of flour, and twenty-one percent of the 280,000 pounds of bread brought into the Department of Texas.[63]

Efforts to resolve the transportation crisis took an unusual turn in 1855, when Congress appropriated thirty thousand dollars to test the adaptability of camels to the American West. Largely the pet project of Secretary of War Jefferson Davis, the camel experiment hinged on Davis's belief in the so-called Great American Desert. Like many prominent Americans, Davis concluded that much of the west could never support non-Indian settlers. Since camels had proved their usefulness in the Middle East, it seemed logical that they would perform well in the American West. In theory replacing oxen and mules with the hardy camels would reduce transportation costs. Davis was not alone in his support for the ungainly beasts; Maj. Henry Wayne, surveyor and ethnologist John Russell Bartlett, archeologist George R. Gliddon, and diplomat and geographer George Perkins Marsh also called for their introduction.[64]

Accordingly, Major Wayne sailed to the Middle East. By the spring of 1856 the War Department had begun to import to Texas the first of what eventually numbered more than seventy camels. After allowing the beasts time to recover from their exhausting ocean journey, the army began an intensive series of experiments from its base at Camp Verde. One of Wayne's public exhibitions at the town plaza of nearby San Antonio dazzled the skeptical Texans. Ordering a camel to kneel, handlers loaded two bales of hay, each weighing more than three hundred pounds, onto the animal. Fearing the ungainly camel would not

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62 Crimmins, "Mansfield's Report," 354-55.

63 Mansfield to Thomas, Sept. 27, 1860, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 567/625); Mc.Dye to Jesup, July 4, 1859, ibid. (microfilm 906/8820; Crimmins, "Mansfield's Report," 354-55; also p. 137; House Executive Document 22, 36th Congress, 1st session, serial 1047, p. 7; Risch, *Quartermaster Support*, 311-12.

64 Thomas L. Connelly, "The American Camel Experiment: A Reappraisal," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 69 (Apr., 1966): 442-45.

be able to stand, the crowd gasped as Wayne tied on two additional bales of similar weights. Almost effortlessly, the beast rose and calmly plodded away. This group needed no further convincing.[65]

In July 1857 Lt. Edward F. Beale led twenty-five of the camels through West Texas en route to Arizona. Although stories of Indian depredations abounded, the party encountered no difficulties from this source. Beale and the camels reached Fort Davis about sunrise on the seventeenth. In a dramatic understatement, he noted that "we were kindly treated by the officers." Indeed they must have been, for the sight of the camels, their exhausted escort, and the Arabian handlers surely broke the boredom of the West Texas summer. Another diarist came closer to capturing the spirit of the moment when he reported that "a number of young gentlemen" returned to camp in the wee hours of the night "with a gait that denoted a slight indulgence in alcoholic stimulants. Subsequently I was informed that the whole party who were in the Fort after dark got very funny." Resting only briefly as two of their wagons were repaired and the late-night revelers recovered, the Beale party pressed on the following afternoon.[66]

The army conducted similar experiments for the remainder of the decade, with Fort Davis serving as an important base of operations and source of manpower. In 1859 Secretary of War John B. Floyd ordered the camels to assist efforts to find a more direct route between San Antonio and Fort Davis. Lt. Edward L. Hartz and a squad from the Fort Davis garrison escorted the expedition. They left Camp Hudson on May 23 and reached Fort Davis by June 26. Once again, the camels displayed their remarkable staying power. "The horses and mules nearly exhausted," noted Hartz, "the camels appeared strong and vigorous." The Hartz caravan remained at the Limpia post for three days, allowing the horses and mules to recuperate and the handlers to care for some of the camels whose backs needed attention. The expedition then turned back to Fort Stockton before proceeding down the Pecos River to the Rio Grande.[67]

The following year Bvt. Lt. William H. Echols and thirty-one soldiers accompanied a twenty-four camel caravan that blazed a trail from Fort Davis

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65 Ronnie C. Tyler, *The Big Bend: A History of the Last Texas Frontier* (Washington: National Park Service, 1975): 104.

66 Connelly, "Camel Experiment," 454-55; Davis to Mason, Feb. 24, 1857, Senate Executive Document 62, 34th Congress, 3rd session, serial 881, p. 1; Journal of Beale, July 16-18, 1857, House Executive Document 124, 35th Congress, 1st session, serial 959, pp. 25-26 (first quotation); Lewis Burt Lesley, ed., *Uncle Sam's Camels: The Journal of May Humphreys Stacey supplemented by the Report of Edward Fitzgerald Beale (1857–1858)* (1929; rpt. Glorieta, N.M.: Rio Grande Press, 1970): 64 (second quotation).

67 Report of Hartz, Secretary of War, 1859, p. 425.

to Presidio del Norte, then along the Rio Grande and across country to San Carlos. The hardy camels easily outstripped the accompanying mules, which nearly died for want of water before struggling back to Fort Davis. Echols described the terrain between Presidio and San Carlos as being too rough for normal travel. "I never conceived that there could be such a country," he wrote. "I cheerfully concur with all who regard this region as impassable."[68]

Like every other test, the Beale, Hartz, and Echols trials proved the camels needed less water, less food, and could at the same time carry a larger burden than horses, oxen, or mules. Yet the camels found it difficult to negotiate muddy or slippery ground, and their personal habits offended the army's packers and handlers. Few could bear the camels' fierceness during rutting season, acute halitosis and general bad odor, voluminous sneezing, and shedding of frighteningly large clumps of hair. The army also failed to establish a breeding program; furthermore, the camels lost their most powerful champion when Jefferson Davis left the War Department in 1857. Amidst the growing sectional crisis, the army lost interest in the camels; they had been sold, lost, or largely forgotten by the time of the Civil War.[69]

The imaginative though unsuccessful camel program notwithstanding, the army's transportation and supply problems remained unsolved. The composition of the army posed further challenges. In 1848 only three of the fifteen regiments were mounted; the 1855 measures added but two new infantry and two new cavalry units. Experts generally agreed that only mounted men could hope to fight Comanches and Apaches. Yet equipping and supplying a cavalryman cost from two to four times as much as a foot soldier, a disparity that became even more pronounced when the troopers were on duty in the field.[70]

The lack of mobility particularly hampered the army's efforts in West Texas, where distance, terrain, and the Mexican boundary gave every advantage to Indian raiders. "Parties of hostile Indians are prowling in all directions west of the Nueces, and the Government troops seem to be wholly unable to check their depredations," charged one newspaper. The Texans, who had made their opposition to Indians well-known, exhibited little patience. After winning its independence from Mexico in 1836, the Republic of Texas, with the notable exception of Pres. Sam Houston, had attempted to expel all Indians. As witnessed in the short-lived reservation experiment, the state showed little change of heart following annexation.[71]

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68 Diary of Echols, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1860, pp. 35-44 (quotations); Greene, *Historic Resource Study*, 23-24.

69 Connelly, "Camel Experiment," 457-62.

70 Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue*, 20; Emory Upton, *The Military Policy of the United States* (1904; rpt. New York: Greenwood Press, 1968): 192-93.

71 *Telegraph and Texas Register*, May 23, 1850 (quotation); Walter P. Webb, *The Texas Rangers: A Century of Frontier Defense* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1955): 127.

Blasting the federal government's failure to check Indian depredations, Texans reserved their severest attacks for the infantry. Senator Houston, a long-time regular army critic who advocated more pacific relations with Indians, echoed the charge, claiming that "the infantry dare not go out in any hostile manner for fear of being shot and scalped!" Texans also believed the army had ignored their needs in favor of other sections of the country. The sectional crisis in Kansas and the military occupation of Mormon-dominated Utah sparked fresh charges of negligence. Rep. Guy M. Bryan of Texas and Texas Secretary of State T. S. Anderson reported rumors that the entire army was to be withdrawn in 1858. Gov. Hardin Runnels claimed that "Texas has not received her quota of protection."[72]

The Lone Star state had a ready answer to the Indian question—the Texas Rangers. Texans attributed almost mythical qualities to these volunteers, who were to supply their own horses and arms and knew the frontier terrain. "I would rather have two hundred and fifty Texas rangers than five hundred of the best cavalry you could raise," Houston concluded. Not only were the mounted volunteers better fighters, according to the Texans, but they offered the public protection against the standing army's threat to civil liberties. Rarely admitted was yet another advantage: controlled by the state, ranger units meant jobs, political patronage, and money for the frontier. As such, the state's governors and legislatures repeatedly requested that the federal government fund the volunteers.[73]

The army responded vigorously to these attacks. War Department officials maintained that Texans exaggerated the number and magnitude of Indian depredations. They also noted that between fifteen and forty percent of the entire army was stationed in the Lone Star state. As for the volunteers, they cost more money than regulars, and by their ill-disciplined actions created rather than prevented frontier hostilities. William J. Hardee, a dragoon officer

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72 *Telegraph and Texas Register*, Aug. 7, Sept. 7, 1850; *Texas State Gazette*, Oct. 27, 1847, Apr. 14, 1855; *Congressional Globe*, Jan. 29, 1855, p. 440 (first quotation); undated exerpt from the Austin *Intelligencer*, House Executive Document 27, 36th Congress, 2nd session, serial 1004, p. 13; Anderson to Buchanan, Mar. 20, 1858, ibid., p. 16; Floyd to Anderson, Apr. 19, 1858, ibid., p. 17; Runnels to Reagan, Oct. 30, 1858, John R. Reagan Papers, Barker Texas History Center (second quotation).

73 *Texas State Gazette*, Sept. 7, 1850; Crawford to Wood, Jan. 19, 1850, Letters Sent, Secretary of War, vol. 30; *Congressional Globe*, Jan. 29, 1855, p. 440 (quotation); ibid., Feb. 1, 1858, pp. 492-95; Crosby to Magoffin, Dec. 21, 1852, James Magoffin Papers, Barker Texas History Center; W.C. Holden, "Frontier Defense, 1846–1860," *West Texas Historical Association Year Book* 6 (June, 1930): 39-71.

who led a mixed regular/volunteer force in 1850, reminded his superiors that "where the horses are owned by the volunteers, it must be expected that they will consider the preservation of their animals as paramount to other considerations." Another regular concluded:

> Rangers are rowdies; rowdies in dress, manner and feeling. Take one of the lowest canal drivers, dress him in ragged clothes . . . utterly eradicate any little trace of civilization or refinement that may have by chance been acquired—then turn him loose, a lazy, ruffianly scoundrel in a country where little is known of, less cared for, the laws of God or man, and you have the material for a Texan Mounted Ranger.[74]

The rivalry notwithstanding, the state of Texas periodically organized Ranger companies during the 1850s. Cooperative efforts with federal troops at best gave mixed results. In one incident, Maj. John S. Simonson, based at Fort Davis, arranged to lead a mixed detachment of mounted riflemen and state troops against suspected Mescalero haunts in the Guadalupe Mountains. The troubles began even before the volunteers reached Fort Davis. In a wild alcoholic frenzy west of San Antonio, one of the Ranger companies pillaged the unfortunate little hamlet of D'Hanis. Simonson found out about the episode after meeting up with the Rangers outside Fort Davis. He promptly arrested the company's captain and eleven others for their misconduct. Neither the Davis-based expedition nor another column from Fort Bliss encountered any Indians; although the remaining two Ranger companies gave Simonson no trouble, the exercise had been a failure.[75]

Bewildered by the seemingly insoluble problems which plagued frontier garrisons like Fort Davis, Secretary of War Charles M. Conrad suggested major policy changes in the early 1850s. Distributing arms among frontier citizens offered at least a temporary solution, he reasoned. To help solve southwestern conflicts with Apaches and Comanches, even the Pueblo Indians might receive government weapons. Also of consequence to Fort Davis, had it been adopted, was Conrad's revolutionary proposal to evacuate the military from New Mexico. In his view the resulting savings could be used to benefit other locales. Otherwise, Conrad suggested, the government should make peace at any price. "It

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74 Conrad to Howard, Sept. 7, 1852, Letters Sent, Secretary of War, vol. 33; Conrad to Bell, Sept. 30, 1852, ibid.; Davis to Pease, Aug. 29, 1854, vol. 36; Davis to Latham et. al., Sept. 24, 1856, ibid., vol. 38; Floyd to Anderson, Apr. 19, 1858, ibid., vol. 40; Report of Hardee, Sept. 14, Secretary of War, 1850, p. 59 (first quotation); Myer to "My Dear James," Feb. 14, 1855, in Martin L. Crimmins, ed., "General Albert J. Myer: The Father of the Signal Corps," *West Texas Historical Association Year Book* 29 (Oct., 1953): 52 (second quotation).

75 Report of Smith, Mar. 14, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1855, p. 52; Report of Simonson, Jan. 16, 23, 1855, Register of Letters Received, Department of Texas, p. 487.

would be far less expensive to feed than to fight them," he argued.[76]

Upon assuming the War Department reins in 1853, Jefferson Davis shelved most of Conrad's controversial proposals. Davis instead emphasized the need to avoid scattering small posts along the frontier. Recalling visions of the Great American Desert and the permanent Indian frontier, he argued that "a line . . . has been reached, beyond which civilization has ceased to follow in the train of advancing posts." By concentrating its manpower in large positions along this line, the army could improve discipline, reduce expenditures, and display strength rather than weakness to the Indians. Yet as Secretary Davis soon realized, troops from even the biggest posts could not be everywhere at once; every community and every traveler could not receive an army escort. As such, later refinements called for troops to campaign in Indian country on a regular basis.[77]

Had such a strategy been adopted, Fort Davis, a key link in the San Antonio–El Paso chain, would have received an even larger garrison and added responsibilities. Countless military officials continued to favor the consolidation policy for the next half century, but abandoning a frontier fort proved extremely difficult. A fort meant jobs, contracts, and better security for local residents, facts not lost upon politicians. It also offered a place for rest and refitting, as well as the promise of escort and protection for western travelers. And even the best equipped troops could not always remain in the field. Finally, active campaigns, no matter how vigorously led or actively pursued, often failed to discover, much less defeat, any Indians believed to be hostile. Political and military realities thus doomed the idea of concentration from almost the beginning.

Fort Davis typifies the experiences of many western military establishments before the Civil War. A number of officials within the Department of Texas continued to question its strategic importance, as the best route to El Paso remained a subject of contention into the latter 1850s. Further constrained by budget limitations, Fort Davis never offered adequate housing and facilities for all those who lived there. Its defenses consisted of a cluster of buildings rather than an elaborate palisade; with some exceptions, foot soldiers rather than cavalry garrisoned the lonely outpost. Supply problems remained unresolved, as did disputes between state and federal governments over Indian and military policy.

Traditional fears of a large military establishment, tight budget restraints, and the lack of practicable strategic planning combined to limit the army's

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76 See Conrad's reports of Nov. 30, Secretary of War, 1850, p. 5; Nov. 29, 1851, p. 112-13 (quotation); Dec. 4, 1852, p. 5.

77 Report of Davis, Dec. 1, Secretary of War, 1853, pp. 5-6; Dec. 4, 1854, p. 5; Dec. 1, 1856, pp. 5-6 (quotation); Report of Scott, Nov. 18, Secretary of War, 1854, p. 51.

options throughout the 1850s. As a result, frontier posts like Fort Davis could not fulfill all of their assigned duties. At the same time, logically conceived, adequately funded, and consistently applied measures which might have reduced frontier disputes between Indians and non-Indians were neither formulated nor implemented. With neither resources nor mandate to change, the army simply continued in its old ways by adding a series of additional forts in the Trans-Pecos. Fort Lancaster was constructed in 1855; Camp Hudson came the following year. Forts Quitman (1858) and Stockton (1859) were later added to help Fort Davis protect the Trans-Pecos.

Officers like those stationed at Davis tried mightily to carry out their assignments. But many agreed with the discouraged Lt. Col. Washington Seawell, who penned the following complaints while establishing Fort Davis:

> This post being in the midst of a numerous tribe of Indians actually engaged in war with it, and having in its garrison of six companies only 190 men, and to be relied on for service scarcely 170, I respectfully request that recruits be sent to it as early as practicable. Were the companies now here full, the Indians would be in a short time driven from the country or exterminated, and this post and the road relieved from constant annoyance and danger.[78]

78 Seawell to Cooper, Dec. 3, 1854, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 567/506).

CHAPTER THREE:

HAZARDS OF LIFE IN THE FIELD

Before the Civil War, troops from Fort Davis participated in a number of scouting reconnaissances, explorations, and military campaigns against the Indians of the Trans-Pecos. More often than not these expeditions failed to inflict any serious defeats upon those Indians whom the federal government deemed hostile. Admittedly, the post's commander during most of the 1850s, Lt. Col. Washington Seawell, lacked the hard driving vigor that might have inspired subordinates to develop original means of forcing the Indians to fight. Still, his command compiled a respectable record. Rarely could the troops be fairly accused of having neglected their duties. Their failure to complete the conquest of the region or to protect every settler and traveler instead stemmed from factors largely beyond their control.

The military faced many problems in grappling with western Indians throughout the nineteenth century. Distances between its thinly garrisoned western outposts made it impossible to separate Indians from non-Indians. Compounding the army's difficulties was the masterful use of mobile, nontraditional warfare by its foes. Too, the army never possessed the manpower, horses, or supplies it believed essential to defeating the tribes. Finally, the government failed to establish a clear, effective Indian policy, a mistake exacerbated by the army's own lack of strategic planning. An essential paradox existed along the frontiers of Texas and the West. The United States wanted to settle the region with farmers of solid European stock, yet refused to fund adequately the single most important agency assisting that development—the regular army.

The inability to crush Indian resistance was not, however, entirely attributable to events outside the army's jurisdiction. In the words of one historian, the army viewed the Indian wars as a "fleeting bother," not important enough to merit serious intellectual attention. Strategically the military made little effort to formulate a consistent, workable policy that took into account the era's political restrictions. On a tactical level, the army also failed to develop

sound doctrine. Henry Halleck's *Elements of Military Art and Science* (1846), contained little of value to the frontier soldier fighting Indians. The two most up-to-date tactical manuals, Capt. William J. Hardee's *Infantry Tactics* (1855) and Col. Philip St. George Cooke's *Cavalry Tactics* (officially adopted in 1861), dealt with conventional warfare rather than situations encountered against Indians.[1]

A West Point education offered little guidance on fighting Indians. Interested in producing engineers who could also be soldiers rather than soldiers who knew engineering, West Point administrators emphasized mathematics and the sciences rather than military tactics and strategy. In the academy's most celebrated course, that on military and civil engineering and the science of war, Prof. Dennis Hart Mahan spoke only briefly to the complexities of combat against Indians. He did comment upon the value of the army's superior firepower and the use of Indian to fight Indian. Yet Mahan clearly stressed engineering and tactics of use against conventional European enemies; the tactical instruction presented in other courses largely ignored frontier realities.[2]

On a more informal level, several antebellum books written by army officers provided suggestions for handling tribes labeled hostile. Young officers seeking to learn something of Indian fighting might, for example, have read a few pages of Philip St. George Cooke's *Scenes and Adventures in the Army: or, Romance of Military Life*, or scanned George Catlin's *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Conditions of the North American Indians* for information on Indian culture. And following a tour of the Crimean war, Capt. George B. McClellan suggested that the U.S. Army develop a light cavalry with enough mobility to force the Indians to battle. Yet McClellan's report, buried in an obscure government document, was never adopted by his superiors in the War Department.[3]

Similar thinking, which emphasized warfare against perceived threats from Europe rather than frontier conditions, also permeated decisions regarding equipment and uniforms. Budgetary restrictions limited the development and deployment of the newest weapons systems among western-based regulars.

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1 Robert M. Utley, "Introduction: The Frontier and the American Military Tradition," in *Soldiers West: Biographies from the Military Frontier*, ed. Paul Andrew Hutton (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987): 5 (quotation); Robert M. Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue: The United States Army and the Indian, 1848–1865* (1967; rpt. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981): 57; Edward M. Coffman, *The Old Army: A Portrait of the American Army in Peacetime, 1784–1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986): 77-78.

2 James L. Morrison, Jr., *"The Best School in the World:" West Point, the Pre–Civil War Years, 1833–1861* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1986): 97-101.

3 Utley, *Frontier Regulars*, 57; Philip St. George Cooke, *Scenes and Adventures in the Army: or, Romance of Military Life*, The Far Western Frontier Series (1857; rpt. New York: Arno Press, 1973); George Catlin, *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Conditions of the North American Indians*, 2 vols. (1844; rpt. New York: Dover Publications, 1973).

Beset by financial woes, the army also failed to design uniforms practical to the western environments. Change was not impossible; in fact, the period saw dramatic modifications in the army's appearance and equipment. On the other hand, few planners admitted that Indian warfare deserved as much attention as possible conflict with any of the great powers of Europe. Western garrisons suffered accordingly.

The army's shoulder and hand arms underwent tremendous technological change during the 1840s and 1850s. Before this time, the army remained wedded to the old flintlock system, a time-consuming, elaborate process which tested the mettle of anyone under fire. The Model 1842 Percussion Musket represented a marked improvement over the flintlock. The developing percussion system boasted a copper cap containing fulminate of mercury. Placed upon a hollow cone, the cap sparked an explosion in the main chamber when struck by the falling hammer. Although still a smoothbore, the new .69 caliber weapon weighed just over nine pounds, was slightly less than fifty-eight inches long, and fired a one-ounce spherical ball. The army also tried to convert existing flintlocks to the percussion system.[4]

Even more dramatic changes were forthcoming. The smoothbore muskets were fairly reliable, but inaccurate and relatively short in range. Weapons makers had long known that a spinning projectile had greater range, velocity, and accuracy than one that did not. In 1850 Capt. Claude Minié of the French army designed an ingenious system which made rifled weapons more practicable. Minié invented a cylindrical, pointed projectile with an iron plug at its hollow base. When driven into the ball by the primer's explosion, the plug forced the bullet to expand, filling the grooves of the barrel as it was discharged, and thus producing the desired spinning effect. Strongly backed by Secretary of War Jefferson Davis, rifled weaponry, boasting greater range and accuracy, was adopted on a wide scale with the .58 caliber Model 1855 Rifle and Rifle-Musket.[5]

Slightly under six feet in length and weighing nine pounds two ounces, the 1855 Rifle-Musket also boasted the recently developed Maynard tape primer system. Developed by Washington dentist Edward Maynard, the new paper primer did away with the maddeningly small percussion cap. Consisting instead of a paper coated with fulminate, the tape was pushed to the surface when the hammer was cocked, and ignited the main charge when hit by the hammer. The army equipped a number of its older firearms with the Maynard system, although it often proved unreliable during inclement weather.[6]

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4 Arcadi Gluckman, *United States Muskets, Rifles and Carbines* (Buffalo: Otto Ulbrich, 1948): 36, 167-69, 188-89; James E. Hicks, *Notes on United States Ordnance*, vol. 1, *Small Arms, 1776 to 1940* (2d ed., Mount Vernon, N.Y.: James E. Hicks, 1940): 79-80.

5 Glickman, *U.S. Muskets*, 179-80, 181, 223-24, 227-28; Hicks, *Notes on Ordnance*, 82-83.

6 Glickman, *U.S. Muskets*, 223-25.

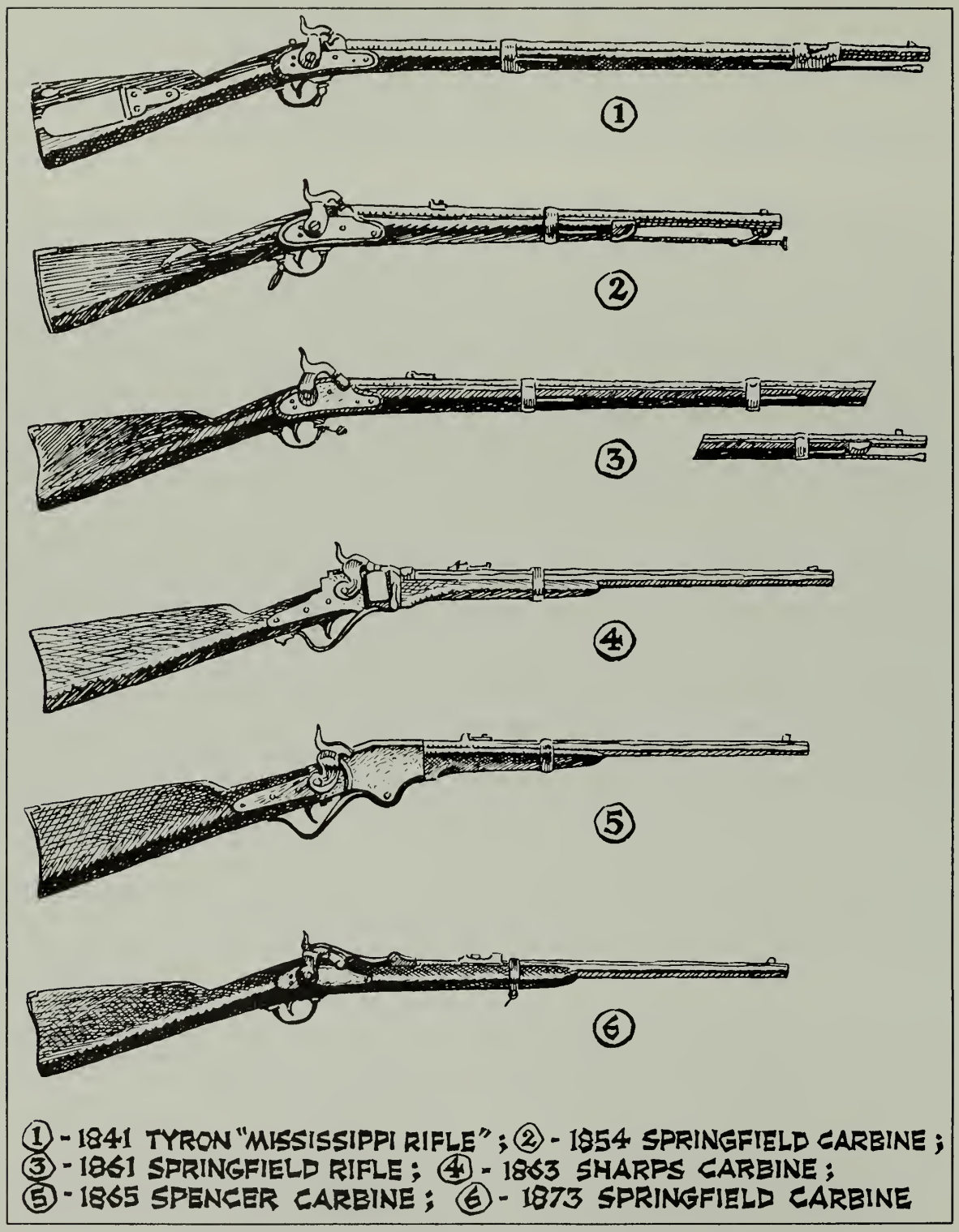

Fig. 3:6. Drawing © by Jack Jackson. Originally published in Robert Wooster, *Soldiers, Sutlers, and Settlers* (Texas A & M University Press, 1987), p. 133. Reprinted with permission.

Mounted troops also benefited from the weapons development. The army developed a variety of rifled carbines to replace the ridiculous musketoon and the aging 1841 model rifle. Even more valuable, however, was the revolutionary work of Samuel Colt. In 1836 Colt received a patent for his repeating pistol, which used an ingeniously designed cylindrical revolving mechanism to hold several charges. The United States Army, however, refused to adopt the repeating pistols, its conservative ordnance boards claiming that the weapon was too heavy and would encourage the troops to waste ammunition. However, experiences gained during the Mexican War showed the need for such a repeating weapon. With the active support of Capt. Samuel H. Walker, the U.S. Army placed a major order for the pistols in 1847. Assured of a buyer, Colt began producing his pistol by the thousands.[7]

Several versions of the Colt repeater were developed in the coming years; whatever the particular style, the pistol became the most prominent small arms weapon of U.S. mounted troops. One version, the big Model 1848 dragoon pistol, was a .44 caliber, six-shot, single-action weapon. Fourteen inches long, the weapon weighed four pounds, one ounce. Another popular gun was the .36 caliber Model 1851 Navy version, which weighed only two pounds ten ounces and was a full inch shorter than the dragoon model. Experts disagreed on which of the two was more suitable to fighting Indians. Lighter and easier to handle, the Navy pistol could not match the velocity and range offered by the dragoon model.[8]

The new weapons, however, took time to reach a frontier post like Fort Davis. During his 1856 inspection, Col. J. K. F. Mansfield found a total of 442 muskets at Fort Davis. Only 33 had the new Maynard primer system. Mansfield also found the 6 companies in possession of a grand total of 3 rifles, 1 Sharps carbine, and 4 swords. The garrison magazine also reflected the slow introduction of new technology to the western frontiers. While it still had 49,000 powder-and-ball cartridges the fort possessed only 4,510 rifle balls. It did have 690 Colt pistol cartridges for use by officers, whose weapons were not accounted for by Mansfield.[9]

Mounted men also carried sabers. One dragoon, an affirmed advocate of the Colt revolver, scorned the saber, exclaiming that "in marching it makes a noise

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7 Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue*, 26; Arcadi Gluckman, *United States Martial Pistols and Revolvers* (Buffalo: Otto Ulbrich, 1944): 153-58.

8 Ibid., 173-84; Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue*, 26.

9 M. L. Crimmins, ed., "Colonel J. K. F. Mansfield's Report of the Inspection of the Department of Texas in 1856," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 42 (Apr., 1939): 352-53, 355-56.

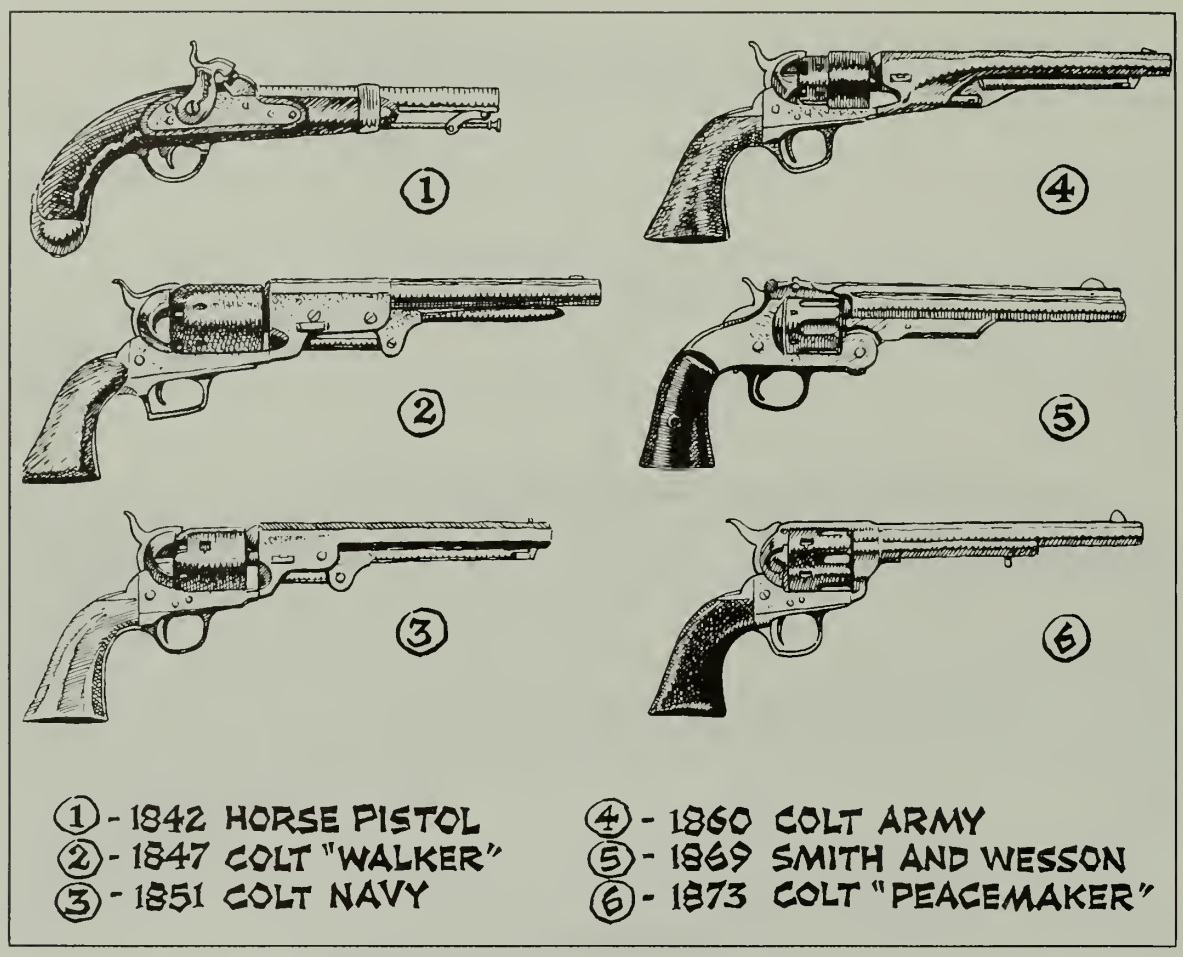

Fig. 3:7. Drawing © by Jack Jackson. Originally published in Robert Wooster, *Soldiers, Sutlers, and Settlers* (Texas A & M University Press, 1987), p. 135. Reprinted with permission.

which may be heard at some distance, perhaps preventing a surprise, and in a charge, when not drawn, is positively an encumbrance." A cavalryman added that "the sabre in Indian fighting is simply a nuisance; they jingle abominably, and are of no earthly use. If a soldier gets enough on an Indian to use a sabre, it is about an even thing as to which goes under first." Some officers allowed their men to leave their sabers behind in the barracks; still, the edged weapons occasionally proved handy when fighting Indians during the 1850s.[10]

Artillery also played an effective role in a number of Indian fights before the Civil War, although no instances of its use by the Fort Davis garrison have been identified. Still, it presented another example of the army's technological

10 Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue*, 27 (first quotation); Albert G. Brackett, *History of the United States Cavalry* . . . (1865; rpt. Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1970): 160 (second quotation).

superiority over its Indian foes throughout the 1850s. The guns situated at Fort Davis during the period are typical for an important frontier post. In 1856 Mansfield found one 6-pound gun, two 12-pound howitzers, and an unspecified "brass mountain howitzer." On his return visit in 1860 Mansfield noted only the first three pieces. Probably of the popular 1840–41 series, the 12-pounders were originally designed for pack use. The guns could propel an 8.9-pound shell for more than a mile. Although the carriages of these guns at Fort Davis remained in a chronic state of disorder, the howitzers were particularly important in the saga of the Indian fighting army.[11]

In 1851 new regulations provided for sweeping changes in military dress, although the army continued to issue accumulated stocks of older uniforms for several years. Dark blue frock coats, with skirt extending to mid-thigh, replaced the old swallow-tailed jackets popular before the Mexican war. Senior officers sported double-breasted coats; captains and lieutenants, along with enlisted men, wore single-breated frocks. Stand-up collars with one-inch yellow metal regimental numbers, along with nine gilt breast buttons each adorned with the soldier's service branch letter (I for infantry, R for mounted riflemen, A for artillery, D for dragoons, and later C for cavalry) gave the enlisted men a particularly martial air. Chevrons denoting rank decorated the soldier's upper sleeves; diagonal half-chevrons below the elbow were awarded for every five years of service. Trim, facings, and piping were colored according to the man's service branch. Infantry was light or Saxony blue, mounted rifles emerald green, artillery red, dragoons orange, and cavalry yellow.[12]

Uniform trousers were loose enough "to spread well over the boot." Regimental officers and enlisted personnel wore sky blue pants; general officers and staff carried a darker blue shade. Welts one-eighth inch in diameter were sewn into the outer seam of the pants legs. These thin stripes also corresponded with the trim of the soldier's uniform jacket. Since the infantry's light blue too closely matched the trousers, it received dark blue welts.[13]

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11 Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue*, 26; Crimmins, "Mansfield's Report," 355-56; Mansfield to Thomas, Oct. 31, 1860, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 567/625); Buell to Lee, Oct. 31, 1856, Letters Sent, Department of Texas, 1856–1858, National Archives (microfilm M 1165, roll 1).

12 Erna Risch, *Quartermaster Support of the Army: A History of the Corps, 1775–1939* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1960): 302-03; Randy Steffen, *The Horse Soldier, 1776–1943: The United States Cavalryman: His Uniforms, Accoutrements, and Equipments*, vol. 2, *The Frontier, the Mexican War, the Civil War, the Indian Wars, 1851–1881* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1978): 6-15, reprints the 1851 uniform regulations. See also U.S. Quartermaster's Department, *Uniforms of the United States Army, Paintings by H. A. Ogden, Text by Henry Loomis Nelson* (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1959): 29-34. The final volume also includes seven full color paintings of 1850s uniforms.

13 Steffen, *Horse Soldier*, 7.

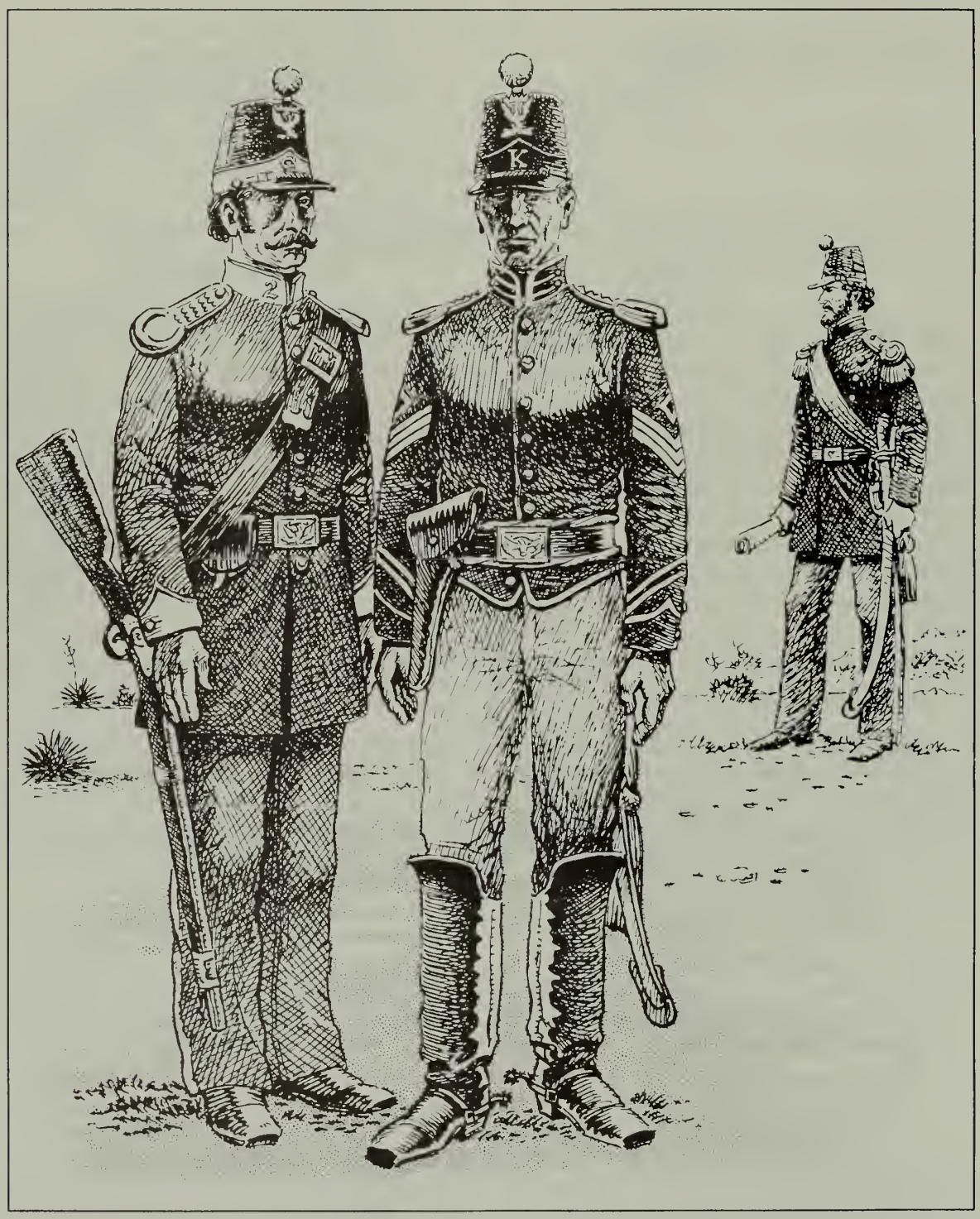

Fig. 3:8. 1851 regulation uniforms (from left):
enlisted, noncommissioned, colonel. Drawing © by Jack Jackson.
Originally published in Robert Wooster, *Soldiers, Sutlers, and Settlers,* (Texas A & M University Press, 1987), p. 124. Reprinted with permission.

A variety of miscellaneous equipment also adorned the official uniform. Officers wore crimsoned silk sashes which went twice around the waist and were tied at the left hip; regimental and first sergeants boasted red worsted sashes. Medical officers sported green sashes. A sash worn across the body from right shoulder to left hip distinguished the officer of the day. Black leather cartridge boxes, knapsacks, and canteens were also issued to the troops, as were flannel shirts, drawers, and stockings. White gloves, black cravats, swords, epaulettes, and sword belt plates rounded out the uniform accessories. Commissioned officers also received dark blue cloaks; enlisted men wore blue gray overcoats.[14]

Minor changes came throughout the 1850s. The army briefly adopted a more fanciful French chasseur pattern coat. With fuller pleated skirts, the new coat appeared only infrequently before the Civil War. In 1857 the clothing department began to issue a sky blue fatigue jacket to troops of all arms. For a brief period the army changed uniform trousers to dark blue, although again the new patterns were rarely worn. Brass scales replaced the shoulder epaulettes. The cords on the trousers of enlisted men were dispensed with as well.[15]

Official regulations also covered hair styles and headgear. General Orders No. 31, article 218 called for short hair and limited moustaches to those in cavalry regiments. The dark blue official shako, approximately six inches high, was faced with a yellow metal letter denoting the individual company on the hat face. A small pompon of corresponding service color topped the hat. Bands of scarlet, light blue, green, orange, or yellow initially signified an enlisted man, although these colorings were done away with during the decade. A gold embroidered design (infantry: bugle; dragoons: two crossed sabers, edges turned up; mounted riflemen: trumpet; cavalry: two crossed sabers, edges turned down; topographical engineers: gold wreath of oak leaves encircling a shield) emblazoned the officers' shakos.[16]

Though inspiring in its Napoleonic appearance, such headgear scarcely served the western soldier's needs. Its narrow leather vizor (two and one-fourth inches wide at the middle) neither shaded the eyes nor protected the neck from the burning Texas sun. As W. G. Freeman reported during his 1854 inspection of the Department of Texas, soldiers on scouting expeditions or off duty dispensed with the official shako in favor of a broad brimmed "Texas hat," which was "almost universally worn."[17]

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14 Ibid., 7-14; *Uniforms of the U.S. Army*, 29.

15 *Uniforms of the U.S. Army*, 28-34.

16 Steffen, *Horse Soldier*, 7-8, 14, 16.

17 Robert Wooster, *Soldiers, Sutlers, and Settlers: Daily Life on the Texas Military Frontier*, Clayton Wheat Williams Texas Life Series, No. 2 (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1987): 125; Martin L. Crimmins, ed., "W. G. Freeman's Report on the Eighth Military Department," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 54 (Oct., 1954): 210 (quotation).

Official relief for the beleaguered infantry at Fort Davis did not come until 1858, when the Quartermaster Department began issuing dark blue forage caps. Although the new hats never matched the elegent French kepi on which they were based, they proved more serviceable than did the older shakos or the fanciful Jeff Davis models, adopted for the cavalry in 1855. These caps also served as the forerunner for the famous "bummer's caps" worn during the Civil War. Further improvements for mounted troops came in 1859, when the army finally began providing leather chin straps.[18]

In a cost-saving measure, uniforms were to be worn on dress parade as well as on fatigue and field duty. Inevitably, however, shortages in official garments affected the Fort Davis garrison. During an inspection of Fort Davis in 1856, for example, none of the forty soldiers comprising the Eighth Infantry's Company A had the new uniforms. Company C, though not in uniform, presented a "neat" appearance. As for Company D, Mansfield reported "a want of pantaloons for the men." Five men of Company F and thirteen in Company G had no canteens. The latter company was also "deficient in pantaloons." Of the 251 men on parade at Fort Davis, at least 149 did not have their official shakos.[19]

Although the heavy woolen cloth of the official uniform was suitable for hard winter service, the Texas summers led many troops to design more comfortable outfits, especially when campaigning. "White pants and summer clothes generally have usurped the woolens," wrote Lt. Edward Hartz to his father in April 1857. Flannel hunting shirts and slouched hats were common. A Second Cavalry officer serving in Texas left the following classic description of the antebellum uniform:

> corduroy pants, a hickory or blue flannel shirt, cut down in front, studded with pockets and worn outside; a slouched hat and long beard, cavalry boots worn over the pants, knife and revolver belted to the side and a double barrel gun across the pommel, complete the costume as truly serviceable as it is unmilitary.[20]

The modifications made by frontier regulars had a practical purpose—serviceability in field operations, for which troops based at Fort Davis were noteworthy throughout the mid to late 1850s. On September 28, 1854 Maj. Gen. Persifor

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18 Wooster, *Soldiers, Sutlers, and Settlers*, 127; Steffen, *Horse Soldier*, 42-44.

19 Steffen, *Horse Soldier*, 17; Crimmins, "Mansfield's Report, 1856," 352-53 (quotations).

20 Edward to Father, Apr. 3, 1857, Edward Hartz Collection, Library of Congress (microfilm edition, Fort Davis Archives) (first quotation); Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue*, 24-25 (second quotation).

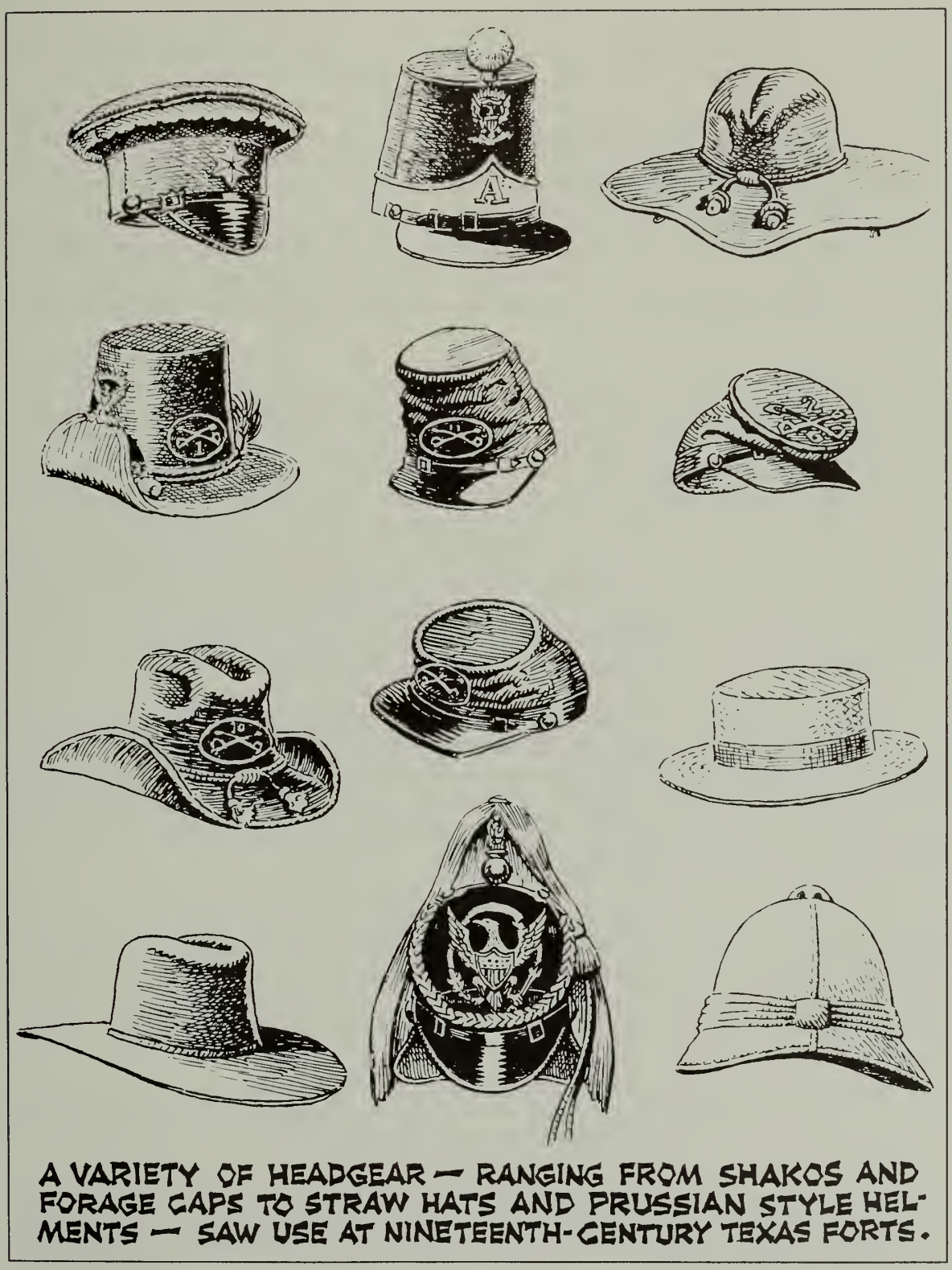

Fig. 3:9. Drawing © by Jack Jackson. Originally published in Robert Wooster, *Soldiers, Sutlers, and Settlers,* (Texas A & M University Press, 1987), p. 126. Reprinted with permission.

Smith left El Paso en route to selecting the site that eventually became Fort Davis. Accompanying Smith was Capt. John G. Walker, who later commanded a division at Antietam and led the Texas Division from 1863-65 in the Civil War. Also with Smith were a hundred Mounted Riflemen commanded by Captain Walker, twelve men and a mountain howitzer under the lead of Lt. Dabney H. Maury, Lt. Eugene A. Carr, aide-de-camp Lt. Alfred Gibbs, several civilians and guides, and Asst. Surgeon Thomas A. McParlan. Upon reaching Eagle Springs, some 120 miles east of El Paso, Smith's party encountered a group of immigrants herding cattle to California. The cattlemen reported that Indian marauders had a day and a half earlier taken a number of cattle. Upon locating the Indian trail, which headed southwest toward the Rio Grande, Smith dispatched Captain Walker after the Indians.[21]

Walker's command included forty-one noncommissioned personnel, Smith's stepson Francis Armstrong, two cattlemen, and a civilian guide, Policarpio ("Polly") Rodriguez. His second-in-command was Lt. Eugene A. Carr, who later won the Medal of Honor at the Battle of Pea Ridge in 1862. Walker's command lost the trail in the tangled terrain that night, only to discover it again when the Indians doubled back in a vain effort to elude pursuit. Having traveled more than sixty miles in twenty hours, Walker renewed the chase early the following morning. About noon the bluecoats glimpsed smoke, presumably from an Indian camp, ten to twelve miles away. Hoping to escape detection, the soldiers remained hidden until nightfall. They moved out once again at dusk, but the overcast night prevented them from following the trail.[22]

Walker resumed the pursuit at dawn the following morning. After a march of several miles, his troops struck another Indian trail headed in a different direction. Walker conjectured that this meant the original culprits had belonged to two different villages and that the smoke seen previously marked the site where they divided the spoils. Pushing on ahead, another ten miles revealed two Indians driving a large herd of horses.

Prudently leaving a reserve, Captain Walker took half of the remaining forces and left the rest under Lieutenant Carr. Carr's section reached the Indians at a gallop and drove them up one of the mountainsides. Suddenly, a much larger band of Indians swept out of the mouth of a protected gorge and fell upon Carr and his men. Carr was severely wounded but pressed the fight

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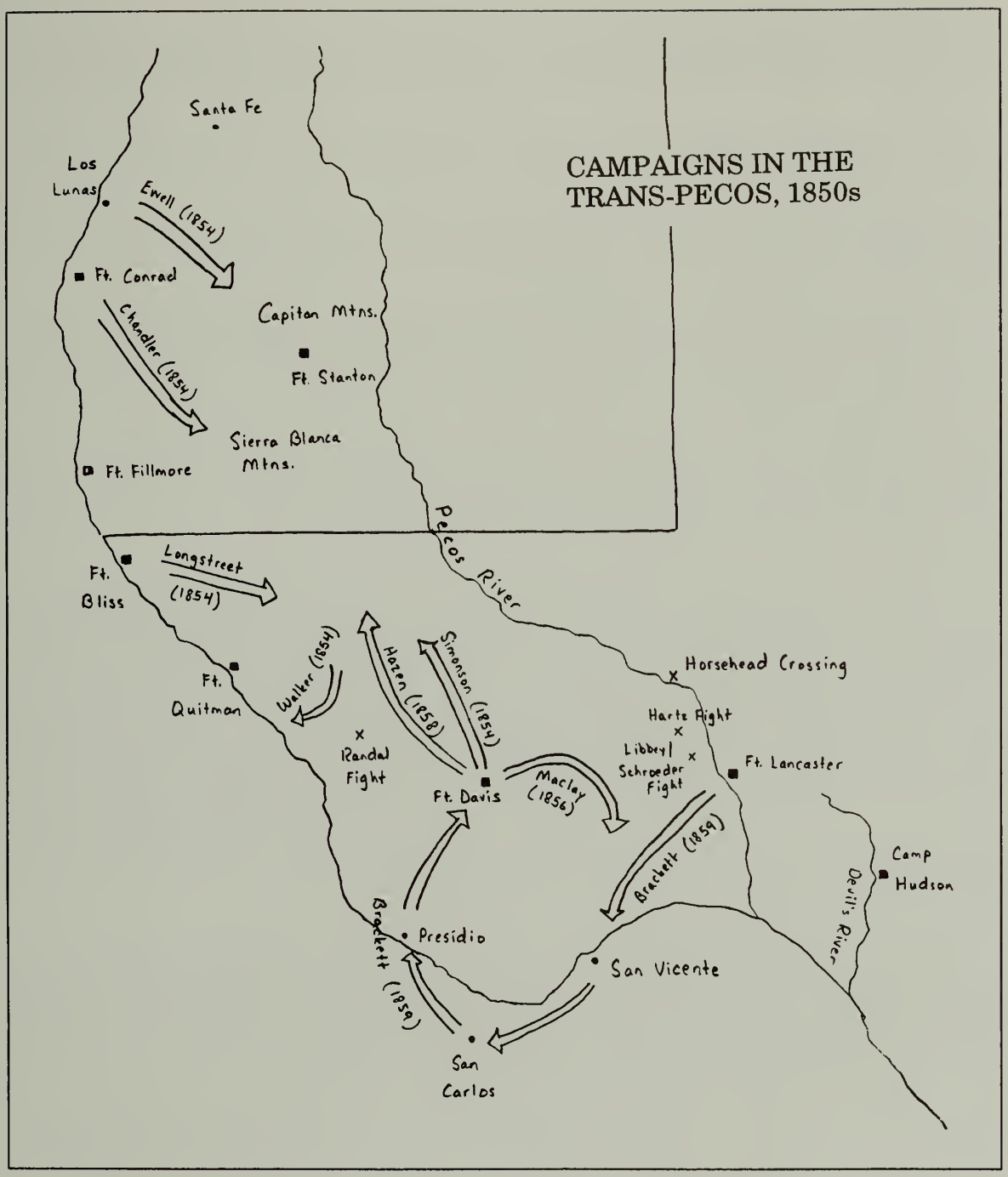
21 The following account is based on Smith to Cooper, Oct. 9, 1854, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 567-506); Walker to Gibbs, Oct. 6, 1854, ibid.; Dabney H. Maury, *Recollections of a Virginian in the Mexican, Indian and Civil Wars* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1894): 84-91.

22 For a brief description of Carr, see Robert Wooster, *The Military and United States Indian Policy, 1865–1903*, Yale Western Americana Series, 34 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988): 68. Carr's papers are located at the U.S. Army Military History Research Center, Carlisle Barracks, Pa.



Map 3:4. Campaigns in the Trans-Pecos, 1850s.
Map drawn by the author.

bravely, his revolvers proving especially valuable in the tangled contest. Walker's arrival with the remainder of the command drove away the Indians. In this encounter the soldiers had run smack into the middle of an Apache encampment of sixty to seventy lodges. "The sides of the mountains were

literally covered with mounted and dismounted warriors," Walker recalled, "and with the women and children escaping from the village near which we were."[23]

Walker and a detachment dismounted and destroyed the Indian lodges. Large quantities of beef were being cooked and cured—the bluecoats had interrupted a major feast. Meanwhile, Carr and eight to ten men again became separated. Quick action on the part of Walker, whose flanking movement forced the nearby warriors to retire, again saved the brash lieutenant despite the expert horsemanship of the Indians.[24]

Amidst the swirling combat, several Indian ponies captured in the initial rush panicked, the soldier guards unable to prevent their frenzied stampede. The serious nature of Carr's wound led Walker to withdraw to a small lake about a mile distant. Several bold warriors made a final dash, losing three of their own number but killing one private with a hail of arrows. Upon reaching the lake, the soldiers paused long enough to dress Carr's wound, now presumed fatal. The guide, Rodriguez, was also badly wounded. Walker estimated Indian losses at six or seven killed, and double that number injured.

Seeking professional attention for Carr's wound, Walker broke off the pursuit and rejoined General Smith's command seven miles west of Dead Man's Hole on the afternoon of October 5. Walker praised his entire command: Carr's gallant conduct had been "throughout worthy of his profession"; the soldiers ate hardtack for three days "without a murmor of discontent." Even the Mexican guide, Rodriguez, earned recognition for his "good service as a trailer and as a good rifle shot in the fight." General Smith agreed with Walker's conclusions, adding that Walker's "spirited action there is highly to his credit and that of his command. His own conduct is spoken of in the highest terms by all present and his clothes which are cut in more than ½ by the Indian arrows bear testimony of his having been in the thickest of the fight."[25]

Walker's scout confirmed the need for a post like Fort Davis. Smith knew, however, that the mere presence of troops would not deter Indian attacks. As such, he ordered Maj. John S. Simonson, Regiment of Mounted Rifles, to conduct another expedition west of Fort Davis. From the Department of New Mexico, Brig. Gen. John Garland dispatched his son-in-law, Bvt. Maj. James Longstreet, to cooperate with Simonson. From December to January, Simonson and Longstreet scoured the rugged Trans-Pecos. Searching the region north of the El Paso road as well as the area between Fort Davis and the Rio Grande, they

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23 Walker to Gibbs, Oct. 6, 1854, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 567-506) (quotation).

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid. (first three quotations); Smith to Cooper, Oct. 9, 1854, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 567-506) (fourth quotation).

failed to locate any Indians. Perhaps the leadership proved lacking. Although Longstreet later became one of Robert E. Lee's most solid corps commanders during the Civil War, Simonson was an aged veteran of the War of 1812. Later described as "a simple, but kind old fellow . . . deficient in reason, cramped in his understanding, and warped in his judgment," Simonson was certainly past his prime.[26]

Generously, Smith later concluded that the Indians, having been warned of the move, left the Trans-Pecos for safer refuges in the north. The Simonson-Longstreet expeditions did find good running water in the Guadalupe Mountains, which Smith argued might provide the basis for a better route for the road between El Paso and San Antonio. A site at Pine Spring, one hundred twenty-five miles northwest of Fort Davis, seemed particularly suited for army use.[27]

The Simonson and Longstreet columns were part of a larger campaign against the Mescalero Apaches. From the Department of New Mexico, Garland twice sent Bvt. Lt. Col. Daniel T. Chandler from Fort Conrad to the Sierra Blancas in 1854. From Las Lunas, Capt. Richard S. Ewell took a reinforced column into the Capitan Mountains. In a series of running battles, Mescalero warriors contested Ewell's skirmishers as the Indian women and children fled to safety. The soldiers finally reached an abandoned Apache village late in the afternoon of January 18, 1855, fending off an ambush in the process. Ewell claimed that his command killed fifteen Indians. Yet he had not inflicted a crushing blow. Exhausted by the terrain and the winter season, his troops limped back to the cover of the federal forts in New Mexico. The lack of forage hit the dragoon horses particularly hard. "The infantry were of valuable service," Ewell concluded, "and towards the end of the campaign were able to outmarch the dragoons."[28]

As Ewell fought in the Capitan Mountains, another New Mexico column commanded by Lt. Samuel D. Sturgis set off after a party of Mescaleros. Sturgis discovered the Indian band at the end of a grueling three-day chase. After a ragged volley, the bitter cold prevented the troops from reloading, so Sturgis ordered his men to charge with sabers drawn, a tactic only rarely used against Indians. In brisk hand-to-hand combat, four of Sturgis' command were wounded, one mortally; three Indians were killed and four others wounded.[29]

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26 Report of Smith, Mar. 14, Secretary of War, 1855, p. 52; Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue*, 30 (quotation).

27 Report of Smith, Mar. 14, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1855, p. 52; Report of Simonson, Mar. 12, 1855, Register of Letters Received, Department of Texas, National Archives. True to Smith's prediction, Davis troops established a subpost there after the Civil War.

28 Garland to Thomas, June 30, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1854, p. 36; Report of Ewell, Feb. 10, ibid., 1855, pp. 59-61 (quotation); Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue*, 148-51.

29 Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue*, 150-51.

The frenzy of activity stunned the Mescalero. Fort Davis now guarded the Trans-Pecos. Although none of the fighting had been conclusive, the campaigns of Longstreet, Simonson, Chandler, Ewell, and Sturgis from Texas and New Mexico indicated the army's determination to force a peace. Also important was the death of a noted war chief, Santa Anna, at the hands of Ewell's men. This allowed the champion of more peaceful relations, Palanquito, to convince his fellow tribesmen to seek out terms. Warily, Garland called off his offensives, and Gov. David Meriweather of New Mexico concluded a treaty in May 1855. Congress refused to ratify the document, so official relations remained tenuous. In the meantime, Garland established Fort Stanton in the heart of Mescalero country, a continual reminder of the army's watchfulness and an important corollary in the history of Fort Davis.[30]

The recent campaigns in Texas and eastern New Mexico pointed out the hazards of life in the field. The harsh environment tested even the most experienced campaigners. Horses, mules, and even the sturdy camels found traversing the rocky outcroppings of the Trans-Pecos an arduous task indeed. The lack of water and the summer heat compounded everything—in desperation, soldiers placed buckshot in their mouths to work up precious droplets of saliva. Of course, northers could transform a pleasant day into a blizzard with devastating suddenness at any time between October and April.[31]

Supply problems compounded the difficulties of those called to active campaigning. Low food stocks meant that a stationary garrison could spare little for troops taking the field. Shortages of wagons (commonly referred to as ambulances) made carrying large rations difficult. Even if food and transport were both available, an officer faced a cruel dilemma. Should he take enough stores to provide for a long campaign, in the process virtually assuring that his weighted-down band would not catch any Indians? Or should he strip his men of all but the barest essentials in hopes of gaining more mobility, thus risking starvation or dehydration?

The need for mobility perplexed antebellum planners. Economic constraints made it impossible to provide all the frontier regulars with horses, yet officers continually asked for more mounted men. Those at Fort Davis proved no exception. Although sympathetic to the problems, the army refused the request. Not only had Congress repealed the law once permitting such action, it also

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30 Ibid., 151-52; Report of Garland, Mar. 31, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1855, p. 62.

31 Zenas R. Bliss Reminiscences, 1: 200-14, Barker Texas History Center; Hartz to Father, Feb. 10, Apr. 3, 1857, Hartz Collection (microfilm edition, Fort Davis Archives); Johnston to W. P. Johnston, Jan. 17, 1856, in William Preston Johnston, *The Life of Albert Sidney Johnston, Embracing His Services in the Armies of the United States, the Republic of Texas, and the Confederate States* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1878).

reduced the number of horses allowed each cavalry regiment. Under such limitations, officials were necessarily restricted in what they could provide their garrisons. As a stopgap measure, they suggested that officers muster up all available mules to form a flying detachment.[32]

Officers at Fort Davis found it difficult to accept such arguments. The prospect of chasing mounted Indians through the Trans-Pecos with mule-borne infantrymen could scarcely inspire confidence among likely participants. Experience showed that most such efforts proved futile. Perhaps Lt. Edward F. Beale, during his camel expedition of 1857, summed it up best. He described the newly erected Camp Hudson, on the Devil's River, as "an infantry post, which, of course, is very useful in protecting this portion of the Indian territory; foot soldiers being especially well adapted to the pursuit of tribes always mounted on the best horse flesh to be stolen in Texas and Mexico."[33]

Events did not always justify the claim that only cavalrymen could catch mounted Indians. As Captain Ewell discovered during his 1855 winter campaign in the mountains of New Mexico, the army's big horses tired quickly. Their dependence upon huge stores of grain limited their ability to maintain mountainous winter chases. Several post–Civil War campaigns later confirmed the effectiveness of well-led infantrymen under the proper conditions. The lack of horses inhibited the command at Fort Davis; it should not, however, have determined that their efforts be futile.

Carefully prepared foot soldiers with energetic officers could, especially in the winter months, penetrate the securest Indian haunts. Without forage, Indian ponies lost their endurance and speed. Too, Indians kept notoriously poor watch over their campsites. Just as the Indians often ambushed unwitting travelers, so could the bluecoats surprise unwary Indians. The army substantially increased its chances for success by striking the homes and villages of the tribes. "The first news of the departure of any party [of Indians] should be followed, not only by their pursuit, but by the *punishment of the remainder of the tribe*," advised Lt. W. H. C. Whiting in 1850. Such a tactic forced the warriors to fight against unfavorable odds and prevented their uninhibited flight into the vastness of the Trans-Pecos. Attacks upon Indian villages occurred only infrequently in the area near Fort Davis, however, as most of the warriors kept their families at a safe distance in the Guadalupe Mountains, New Mexico, or Chihuahua after the occupation of forts Davis and Bliss.[34]

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32 McDowell to Commanding Officer, Feb. 23, 1857, p. 293, Letters Sent, Department of Texas, 1856–58, National Archives (microfilm M 1165, roll 1).

33 Journal of Beale, July 4, 1857, House Executive Document 124, 35th Congress, 1st session, serial 959, p. 19.

34 Whiting to Deas, Mar. 14, 1850, Senate Executive Document 64, 31st Congress, 1st session, serial 562, p. 250.

Distances, aridity, and the availability of convenient escape routes to Mexico or the Fort Stanton Indian reservation further limited the effectiveness of infantry. For these reasons antebellum officers at Fort Davis rarely overcame their ingrained belief that foot soldiers had little chance to catch mounted Indians. Albert J. Myer's description of one failed effort to hunt down Indians who had stolen some army horses east of Fort Davis typifies this skepticism: "Infantry on foot after Indians on horseback. They were near enough, at one time, to fire and they did so, injuring, they say, two warriors, very badly, but after a long race in a broiling sun they came back utterly exhausted and the sixty horses were thenceforth missing."[35]

Qualified scouts, culled from local residents, proved essential to any operation. Rates for scouts varied before the Civil War; in January 1860 the War Department spent thirty dollars per month on those for Fort Davis. Theoretically these men knew the surrounding country and could track suspected Indian trails. Such a policy, however, made the army dependent upon special appropriations from a Congress more concerned with the impending sectional crisis than frontier defense. It also forced officers to sort out effective scouts from those who simply looked or talked the part.[36]

As was to be expected, contracting civilians turned up a fascinating array of individuals. The respected guide for Captain Walker's expedition of 1854, Policarpio Rodriguez, later became a Baptist preacher. Lt. Zenas R. Bliss, stationed at Fort Davis during the mid-1850s, liked to hire one Jesus Aiguelar. Jesus had been an Indian captive for several years and proved a trusted guide to Bliss before the Civil War. After the war, Bliss returned to Fort Clark, Texas, where he again hired Aiguelar until the latter's death. Other scouts included Sam Cherry and José Maria. Most of the antebellum scouts, however, remain shrouded in mystery.[37]

Inexperienced soldiers found it difficult to discriminate between real signs of Indians and other sounds. All too often, jittery young watchmen unnecessarily rousted troops from their slumber. At one point during the mid 1850s army stores of hay and firewood located about five miles from Fort Davis were set

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35 Myer to James, Mar. 17 to Apr. 4, 1855, David A. Clary, ed., " 'I Am Already Quite a Texan:' Albert J. Myer's Letters From Texas, 1854–1856," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 82 (July, 1978): 55.

36 Seawell to Department of Texas, Mar. 19, 1855, p. 490, Register of Letters Received, Department of Texas; "Abstract of Statements of Expenditures made on account of Indian Hostilities . . . in the month of January 1860," Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 906/8820).

37 Maury, *Recollections of a Virginian*, 87; Bliss Reminiscences, 1: 315.

afire. Immediately parties set out in pursuit of Indians. Only later was it discovered that soldiers had mistakenly started the blaze. Edward Beale summed up what must have been a popular sentiment among veterans of one too many unwarranted alarms. "This evening many of our party have seen Indians, but for me, 'Ah! sinner that I am, I was not permitted to witness so glorious a sight,' " he wrote in 1857. "I encourage the young men, however, in the belief that deer, bushes, &c., which they have mistaken for Indians, are all veritable Comanches, as it makes them watchful on guard at night."[38]

Since Indian attack threatened any small party traversing the Trans-Pecos, expeditions from Fort Davis took a full complement of weapons. The road just west of Limpia Canyon seemed especially hazardous. "Many a careless traveller had cause to repent his lack of vigilance while going through it," wrote Mrs. Lydia Lane, an army wife and one of the most famous military diarists of the pre–Civil War years. "You do not expect to have a fight but you have been so used to thinking of and preparing for it that you look upon it as a matter of indifference. It is not courage it is merely custom," remembered one officer. Although large, properly equipped, and carefully led wagon trains and army columns had little to fear from Indian sorties, overconfident or inexperienced groups could find out too late that their lack of wariness had or would cost them their lives.[39]

The terrain seemed ideally suited to Indian tactics, honed by experiences collected over several generations. "All Indians are treated as hostile and hence none are seen," reported J. K. F. Mansfield. "Yet in traveling there are so many covers for them, no party can be safe." Well-known watering holes and campgrounds provided ideal opportunities to ambush the unwary. And following Indian trails proved difficult and dangerous, with some charging that Indians deliberately fouled water holes to discourage pursuit.[40]

The brutality of warfare conducted by both sides magnified the dangers. In attempting to force their more mobile foes to battle, the soldiers often struck Indian camps and villages. During the confused melees which followed, separating women and children from male warriors usually proved impossible. It was inconvenient or impossible to discriminate warrior from noncombatant in the

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38 Myer to My Dear James, Feb. 14, 1855, in Martin L. Crimmins, ed., "General Albert J. Myer: The Father of the Signal Corps," *West Texas Historical Association Year Book* 29 (Oct., 1953): 55-57; Bliss Reminiscences, 1: 303; Journal of Beale, July 8, 1857, House Executive Document 124, 35th Congress, 1st session, serial 959, p. 21 (quotation).

39 Lydia Spencer Lane, *I Married a Soldier: or, Old Days in the Old Army* (1893; rpt. Albuquerque: Horn and Wallace, 1964): 166 (first quotation); Myer to James, Aug. 13, 1855, in Clary, "Myer Letters," 63-65 (second quotation); Bliss Reminiscences, 1: 168-69, 218-19.

40 Crimmins, "Mansfield Report," 356-57 (quotation); Lane, *I Married a Soldier*, p. 74; Myer to James, Aug. 22, 1855, in Clary, "Myer Letters," 69.

heat of combat. Traditional rules of warfare also paled in light of customary Indian treatment of prisoners. Mutilated bodies and recollections of former hostages provided gruesome reminders of the fate awaiting those who fell captive. Of course, storytellers and gossips multiplied the number and ferocity of real events as tales of savagery swept the frontiers. One Fort Davis officer described his feelings toward Indians in the following manner:

> The war on this frontier is one of extermination. In the worst sense of the word these tribes are savages. They are *devils* and the coldest blood must boil at the narration of the manner in which they have treated prisoners who have fallen into their hands, not men, alone, taken with arms in their hands, for *they* can but die, but innocent women and children. Orders are now issued to the troops to take no prisoners; to spare no one; to listen to no terms for peace until the race is cowed by their punishment.[41]

The real and alleged treatment of white women and children enraged the general populace and the army alike. Indeed, the suggestive detail of these lurid accounts gripped society as a whole. Such tales, combined with pseudoscientific claims of Indian inferiority, gave frontier settlers a subhuman villain to whom they could attribute all of their problems. Murders, raids, thefts, and unexplained incidents were simply blamed on Indians. Occasionally thoughtful army personnel like Lt. Zenas R. Bliss escaped the emotionalism of the times and realized that Texans exaggerated the extent of Indian depredations. "The Indians were so many, and killed so many people on the road," remembered Bliss, "that whenever a murder was committed, the perpetrators always endeavored to leave the impression that it was done by the Indians."[42]

Although Indians did not strike Fort Davis itself, they threatened all parties venturing from the immediate vicinity. In one such incident, guide Sam Cherry set out in search of lumber suitable for building with a four-man escort. A twelve-year-old drummer boy also slipped away to join the fun. Indians ambushed the party after it had proceded about six miles north of the post, near Wild Rose Pass. The four soldiers died fighting; Cherry, apparently suspecting a trap, spurred his mount and raced past the warriors. His horse stumbled and fell, however, pinning the guide beneath it. After a brief struggle, Cherry shot himself to avoid capture. The next day a detachment from the fort found the missing wood party. Although Cherry's body had not been touched, those of the four soldiers were horribly mutilated. Officials assumed that the little drummer boy had fallen captive.[43]

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41 Myer to James, Feb. 14, 1855, in Clary, "Myer Letters," 42.

42 Bliss Reminiscences, 2: 158.

43 Homer W. Wheeler, *The Frontier Trail; or From Cowboy to Colonel. An Authentic Narrative of Forty-three Years in the Old West as Cattleman, Indian Fighter and Army Officer* (Los Angeles: Times-Mirror Press, 1923): 314-15; Richard Irving Dodge, *Our Wild Indians: Thirty-three Years' Personal Experience among the Red Men of the Great West* (New York: Archer House, 1959): 521-25.

In August 1855 Lt. Horace Randal of the Eighth Infantry received a transfer to the First Dragoon Regiment, stationed in New Mexico. With a twenty-man escort, Randall set out from Fort Davis to join his new command. En route the lieutenant noticed signs of Indians leading into a canyon near Eagle Springs. Leaving six men to guard the horses, Randal posted seven men in the canyon's mouth and led the remaining seven soldiers around to the rear entrance. Randal's party drove about fifteen surprised Indians into the bluecoats waiting at the opposite end of the canyon. One Indian fired a shot that whizzed harmlessly past the well-covered soldiers, who poured a devastating fire upon their enemies. Eight Indians fell dead; two others were mortally wounded. Two of the remainder jumped off a sixty-foot precipice, presumably to their deaths, and the soldiers captured a young boy. Only two of the band escaped. According to a newspaper account, Randal personally scalped the dead chief; half of the fallen were women.[44]

Still another attack came against a small mail escort in early March 1856. And in the middle of an April day that same year, Indians drove off the post trader's [sutler's] animals less than a mile from the post. Typically, the pursuit party dispatched from Davis failed to catch any of the raiders. One such patrol, commanded by young Lieutenant Bliss, took off after some Indians who had stolen several stock. Anxious to press ahead, Bliss's command went three days without water. Bliss "of course could keep on their trail, but after following them 200 miles he had to strike El Paso almost starved."[45]

In June 1856 Inspector Mansfield reported a more embarrassing incident. Less than five hundred yards from Fort Davis, a band of Indians swooped down upon the post's cattle herd. Driving the cattle through a supposedly impenetrable pass, the Indians successfully escaped the soldiers' belated pursuit. On another occasion, the Indians almost got off with the horses of four companies of the Mounted Rifle Regiment, temporarily stationed at Fort Davis. Even more humiliating was the subsequent realization that less than half a dozen Mescaleros nearly accomplished the daring feat despite the presence of a strong guard.[46]

Obviously, the garrison needed to do something more dramatic if it hoped to check the growing depredations. Capt. Arthur T. Lee and Lieutenant Hartz had led scouting parties from Fort Davis that spring. Although department officials at San Antonio dubbed the information they brought back "useful and interest-

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44 *San Antonio Ledger*, August, 1855.

45 Seawell to Department of Texas, Mar. 6, 1856, p. 393, Register of Letters Received, Department of Texas; Edward to Father, June 24, 1856, Hartz Collection; Crimmins, "Mansfield's Report," 356 (quotation); *San Antonio Herald*, June 28, 1856.

46 Crimmins, "Mansfield's Report," 356; Dodge, *Our Wild Indians*, 548.

ing," it had not overawed the Indians of the Trans-Pecos. As such, adjutant Don Carlos Buell ordered Colonel Seawell, commanding Fort Davis, to send out another reconnaissance under an energetic officer.[47]

While these orders were en route from San Antonio, Lt. Edward Hartz was again in the field, leading an exhausting but fruitless scout. The reconnaissance ordered by Buell apparently decided but little, so on October 1 the Department called for yet another detachment to scour the area southeast of Fort Davis. Seventy-five men would proceed to the Horsehead Crossing of the Pecos River. From here, they should follow the Great Comanche Trail to the southwest as it approached the Rio Grande. After reaching the great river, the expedition was to march to the El Paso road at Comanche Spring before returning to Fort Davis.[48]

The Davis expedition was to take only twenty days' rations; additional provisions were to meet the troops at Leon Springs, on the El Paso road. The command was to be "as lightly equipped as possible" and should "attack any Indians it may meet." Until it struck the Comanche War Trail, the detachment should mount small scouting parties so as to gather more information about the surrounding countryside. As reconnaissance was to be the group's primary object, the department singled out Edward Hartz to accompany the expedition, mapping and describing the region traversed. The department hoped Hartz and the column's commander would select a site for a new post where the Comanche trail crossed the Rio Grande. By October 18 the Davis garrison was preparing for the expedition. Lieutenant Hartz took the news philosophically: "I shall probably be absent a month or so and have some rough times," he wrote his father. "But as I am paid for seeing rough times as well as easy ones I am bound to 'put up' with the roughness and atone for it by making the most of my ease when it presents itself."[49]

Capt. Robert Maclay led the patrol, which explored the area between the Great Comanche Trail and the Rio Grande. But the Maclay scout found little to encourage the dream of a new Rio Grande position. As had earlier teams, the group found the terrain extremely difficult and the available resources limited.

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47 Buell to Seawell, July 12, 1856, p. 12, Letters Sent, Department of Texas, 1856–58 (microfilm M 1165, roll 1).

48 Edward to Father, June 24, 1856, Hartz Collection; Buell to Lee, Oct. 1, 1856, pp. 130-32, Letters Sent, Department of Texas, 1856–58 (microfilm M 1165, roll 1).

49 Buell to Lee, Oct. 1, 1856, pp. 130-32, Letters Sent, Department of Texas, 1856–58 (microfilm M 1165, roll 1) (first two quotations); Edward to Father, Oct. 18, 1856, Hartz Collection (third and fourth quotations).

Scouts and guides proved ineffective. Buell, safely ensconced at San Antonio, assured Captain Lee that "but little importance" should be attached to the guides, for the latter seemed notoriously ill-equipped to lead army columns.[50]

Cognizant of such futile gestures, acting commander of the Department of Texas Col. Albert Sidney Johnston hoped to effect major changes in the final months of 1856. Seeking to reduce expenses, he recommended that Ringgold Barracks be relocated fifteen miles higher up the Rio Grande. Camp Cooper, in north central Texas, would probably be moved as well. And in continuing efforts to ease transportation to Fort Davis, Johnston ordered a road survey between that post and the Devil's River. If all proceeded according to plan, the army would establish a new fort sixty miles east of Fort Davis.[51]

Succeeding Johnston, new department commander Brig. Gen. David E. Twiggs was keenly aware of the difficulties of preventing Indian strikes against settlements, immigrants, mail and stage lines, and army stock. He blamed most of his woes on the shortage of mounted men. Scattered along the Indian frontier from Camp Cooper in north central Texas to the Rio Grande, the Second Cavalry Regiment, "though a most gallant, enterprising, and most successful corps," was "inadequate to give that protection which is expected of the Army by both the Government and the citizens of this State."[52]

To better protect the line from San Antonio to El Paso, Twiggs hoped to implement the design of his predecessor. Like Johnston, Twiggs believed a new post between forts Davis and Clark or Lancaster was necessary. If water, wood, and grass proved available, the best site seemed to be "on or near" the great Comanche trail. Such an outpost would "be of great advantage in facilitating the efforts to restrain the predatory expeditions of the Indians to and from Mexico," "over which large herds of stolen cattle and horses, and war parties of hostile Indians are constantly passing."[53]

In accord with Johnston's strategy, Twiggs's accession to command, and the reports of the Maclay-Hartz expeditions, the army would establish Fort Stockton at the junction of the lower El Paso road and the Great Comanche trail in 1859. Before this date, detachments had frequently camped at the site. Troops stationed at the new post could effectively patrol the lands to the mouth of the Pecos River. To garrison Fort Stockton, Fort Davis would be stripped of three

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50 Buell to Lee, Dec. 3, 1856, p. 174, Letters Sent, Department of Texas, 1856–58 (microfilm M 1165, roll 1) (quotation); Edward to Father, Dec. 9, 1856, Hartz Collection.

51 Johnston to Cooper, Dec. 5, 1856, pp. 175-79, Letters Sent, Department of Texas, 1856–58 (microfilm M 1165, roll 1).

52 Twiggs to Thomas, May 27, 1857, p. 331-32, ibid.

53 Ibid.

of its six infantry companies. Such a move seemed well worth the risk; in Johnston's words, the strategically located fort "would greatly obstruct, if not entirely exclude the Indians from the use of the route in conducting their large predatory parties into Mexican territory."[54]

Johnston had not intended to minimize the value of the older Limpia post in projecting a transfer of three companies from Fort Davis to the new site. Indeed, he had labeled the service of the infantrymen at Davis, along with those at Belknap, Chadbourne, McKavett, and Lancaster, "useful and important." Davis and Lancaster were "indispensable for keeping open the communication from New Mexico." Moving troops away from Davis merely recognized the garrison's impossibly difficult task. Despite the best efforts of its soldiers, the small, poorly equipped, inadequately mounted and trained troops could scarcely hope to defeat the Indians of the Trans-Pecos. The proposed new post could, however, force them to be more cautious in their future strikes.[55]

Protecting the United States mail proved one of Fort Davis's most important assignments. Informal mail service, carried by freighters or private contractors like Henry Skillman and Bigfoot Wallace, had existed between El Paso and San Antonio since 1849. Wallace unsuccessfully tried to secure a formal contract in April 1851; later that year, Skillman inked a three-year deal with the federal government. For delivering mail along the lower route from Santa Fe through El Paso to San Antonio, Skillman was to receive $12,500 annually.[56]

Skillman carried mail from El Paso to Santa Fe every month, and from El Paso to San Antonio every other month. Contract renegotiations in 1852 raised Skillman's annual stipend to $28,000; in return, he would provide monthly service both ways. Stage passengers supplemented Skillman's government contract. And in exchange for carrying military dispatches, his mail parties received army escorts. Despite the machinations, Skillman sought to increase his annual subsidy to $50,000 when the contract expired in 1854. Disputes over the subsequent mail contracts led San Antonio merchant George W. Giddings to enter the service. In purchasing a contract from low bidder David Wasson,

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54 Johnston to Cooper, Dec. 5, 1856, pp. 175-79, ibid.

55 Ibid.

56 Wayne R. Austerman, *Sharps Rifles and Spanish Mules: The San Antonio–El Paso Mail, 1851–1881* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1985): 20-23.

Giddings was to deliver the mail west of San Antonio for $16,750; in October 1854, Giddings and Skillman formed a partnership.[57]

From Fort Clark, the mail route followed the emigrant trail for nearly 180 miles to where it hit the Pecos River at Horsehead Crossing. The Pecos always proved a lively topic of discussion for contemporary diarists. Already exhausted by the long dry trail between Clark and the river, writers vied for the best means of describing the brackish Pecos water. "Hot discussion tonight . . . as to whether the Pecos water would or would not cook beans. Bet of five dollars," joked Burr G. Duval. "I am now able to state that Pecos water will not cook beans soft. Boiled them ten hours. They were edible but by no means choice." Another writer described his efforts to choke down a little moisture: "It is cool and unodorous, and its disagreeable taste is quite vanquished by holding the nose as you drink. Coffee boiled in it is a villanous decoction."[58]

The Pecos was especially maddening because the next permanent water lay eighty-three miles to the west, at Comanche Creek. A stage stand marked Leon Springs, nine miles further down the road. Barrilla Springs ["grass and water good, wood plenty"] was the next station, thirty-four miles from Leon. From Barrilla Springs, the trail wound its way through Wild Rose Pass for twenty-eight miles to Fort Davis, where the mail company maintained "La Limpia" station about a mile from the military post.[59]

The journey through Wild Rose Pass was always perilous. "This pass is considered the most dangerous of the rout [sic]. . . . Ten Indians could give a large party great trouble," wrote James G. Bell. According to local lore, Apache chief Espejo particularly favored the site for ambushes. Crossing the pass certainly added a perverse thrill to the final march to safety offered by nearby Fort Davis.[60]

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57 Ibid., 26-27, 31; Jack C. Scannell, "A Survey of the Stagecoach Mail in the Trans-Pecos, 1850–1861," *West Texas Historical Association Year Book* 47 (1971): 119-20.

58 Sam Woolford, ed., "The Burr G. Duval Diary," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 65 (Apr., 1962): 496 (first quotation); N. A. Taylor and H. F. McDonald, *The Coming Empire, or Two Thousand Miles in Texas on Horseback* (New York: A. S. Barnes and Co., 1877): 329 (second quotation); William A. Duffen, ed., "Overland Via 'Jackass Mail' in 1858: The Diary of Phocion R. Way," *Arizona and the West* 2 (Spring, 1960): 48.

59 Randolph B. Marcy, *The Prairie Traveler: A Handbook for Overland Expeditions. With Maps, Illustrations, and Itineraries of the Principal Routes Between the Mississippi and the Pacific* (1859; rpt. Williamstown, Mass.: Corner House Publishing, 1968): 289; Wayne R. Austerman, "Identifying a 'Lost' Stage Station, in Jeff Davis County," *Password* 25 (Spring, 1980): 9.

60 James G. Bell, "A Log of the Texas-California Cattle Trail, 1854," ed. J. Evetts Haley, *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* (Jan., 1932): 227; Robert Schick, "Wagons to Chihuahua," *The American West* 3 (Summer, 1966): 79.

Like the proverbial oasis in the desert, travelers could rest, refit, and replenish their supplies at Fort Davis after their arduous journeys. The post sutler sold merchandise; wagons could be repaired at the post blacksmith's shop. "It was a pleasure to us when we reached an army post where we were safe, and for that day, at least, could relax our vigilance. We met with kind friends everywhere, who supplied us with many small comforts which could not be purchased," recalled Mrs. Lydia Lane. When available, the post's residents presented the visitors with eggs, milk, and butter, virtually unobtainable elsewhere on the trails. The visits boosted the morale of Fort Davis residents and emigrants alike—starved for human companionship on the lonely Texas frontiers, soldiers and civilians quickly became friends.[61]

Mail parties could not tarry long at the Limpia station. Eighteen miles down the road lay Barrel Springs, with good water, fair grass, and sufficient wood. Nineteen more dangerous miles took travelers to the next major stop—El Muerto, or Dead Man's Hole. Here stood a typically bleak mail stand, with adobe corral, small combination sleeping quarters, storeroom and kitchen. A lone trader tended the animals and cooked meals for passengers for fifty cents each. El Muerto was as ominous in fact as it was in name, and remained one of the most dreaded stretches of the El Paso-San Antonio road. Signs of Indians were common; "the thieving red devils had been prowling around us in the night," remembered one frightened camper.[62]

Another thirty-two miles separated Dead Man's Hole from the next stage station at Van Horn's Well. The site itself offered only water, although forage and firewood could be found two miles to the east. Eagle Springs lay twenty miles down the road. Indians often waylaid travelers near the strategic springs. In November 1857 Indians struck a six-man party bound for California. Rashly, the California group had camped about eighty yards outside a waist-high dirt wall constructed by an earlier expedition. Although the emigrants drove off their attackers, one of the whites received an arrow wound in his arm; the party's dog was also killed in the confusion.[63]

Like the great majority of such occurrences, the Mescalero sortie had as its prime object the group's animals. Plunder, not murder, provided the lure for most Indian onslaughts in the Trans-Pecos. From Eagle Springs, the southern San Antonio–El Paso road wound its way another thirty-two miles past Fort

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61 Lane, *I Married a Soldier*, 44, 74 (quotation); Crimmins, "Mansfield's Report," 355.

62 Ibid. p. 51 (quotation); Marcy, *Prairie*, 290; Barry Scobee, *Old Fort Davis* (San Antonio: Naylor Co., 1947): 6.

63 Marcy, *Prairie*, 290; John C. Reid, *Reid's Tramp, or a Journal of Ten Months Travel Through Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Sonora, and California, Including Topography, Climate, Soil, Minerals, Metals, and Inhabitants: with a notice of the Great Inter-Oceanic Rail Road* (1858; rpt. Austin: Steck Co., 1935): 125-29.

Quitman to Canon de los Camenos, along the Rio Grande. Hugging the river for the remaining eighty-five miles, the road continued to Fort Bliss, where travelers and mail/stage lines could again relax their guard. Contemporaries agreed that the section along the Rio Grande seemed relatively free from Indian attack.[64]

The San Antonio–El Paso mail service still floundered as Indian depredations, bureaucratic tangles, and bad weather took their toll on the poorly capitalized venture. The mail trains each consisted of two wagons and an ambulance, accompanied by former state Rangers whom one observer described as nothing more than "drunken ruffians." In March 1855 Congress increased Giddings' compensation to $33,500 annually, but most of the money was impounded to pay plaintiffs from the earlier contract imbroglio. A year after the pay raise, Giddings again ran up enormous debts.[65]

In 1857 the federal government awarded a major contract for transcontinental mail service to a syndicate headed by John Butterfield. James Birch had actively lobbied for the contract; as partial consolation, Birch won the right to haul the mail from San Antonio to San Diego. Birch would receive $149,800 annually for providing semimonthly delivery. Birch's agent in San Antonio, Isaiah Z. Woods, secured a partnership with Giddings's debt burdened company. Giddings would still make the San Antonio–Santa Fe run; in return, he was granted a salary from the new parent company. Shortly after the agreement was signed, Birch's steamer sank in an Atlantic storm on September 13, 1857, and Birch drowned. In the aftermath Giddings assumed responsibility for the San Antonio–Santa Fe operations. Ironically, Skillman and Wallace drove the teams for the first mail runs of the Giddings-Birch syndicate.[66]

Yet troubles continued to mount. The cash starved Giddings enterprise struggled as Butterfield's overland mail line, running from St. Louis to San Francisco, initially struck the old Ford-Neighbors northern route at the Pecos River and followed it through the Guadalupe Mountains to El Paso. The lack of water and escalating Indian threats along the northern passage soon forced the Butterfield line to swing farther south to the Horsehead Crossing of the Pecos.

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64 Marcy, *Prairie*, 90; Lane, *I Married a Soldier*, 169.

65 Austerman, *Sharps Rifles and Spanish Mules*, 75-77; Frederick Law Olmsted, *A Journey Through Texas* (New York: Dix, Edwards and Co., 1857): 287 (quotation).

66 Austerman, *Sharps Rifles and Spanish Mules*, 90-94.

From there, it paralleled the Giddings route through Fort Davis to El Paso. As such, two independent mail firms shared the road from 1859 to 1861.[67]

Problems with the army, which furnished regular escorts, also impeded the mail companies. Disputes between soldiers and drivers and private mail company guards were probably inevitable. In August 1855, for example, troops at Fort Davis complained about "the irregularity of expresses between Forts Davis and Clark" and filed "grievances in connection with the escorting of the mail" between the two posts. More trouble came in 1857, during an inspection of the route to California by mail superintendent and Birch-Giddings agent Isaiah Woods. Upon reaching Fort Davis, Woods asked that the army loan him enough mules to enable him to continue his journey.[68]

Washington Seawell, who commanded Fort Davis, lent Woods the mules. Then the trouble began. In his official report Woods stated only that the arduous journey had worn out his mules. He furthermore claimed that when he did not immediately return the animals to Fort Davis, Seawell advised fellow officers not to cooperate. Upon being provided a copy of Woods's report by California Sen. William M. Gwin, however, Seawell related a far different tale. According to Seawell, Woods lost his own mule train during an Indian attack. Seawell then lent the postal inspector thirty-six mules, with the understanding that the latter would return them upon reaching El Paso. Woods falsely reported a number of the animals having "strayed," and took them all the way to Tucson, Arizona. Seawell also complained about Woods's dual role as postal worker and company agent. "Besides being the superintendent," he wrote, "I have it from pretty good authority that Mr. Woods is also a secret partner in this mail contract."[69]

As federal officials debated Woods's report, the situation in western Texas continued to deteriorate. A dramatic attack on a mail party between forts Lancaster and Davis came about six o'clock on July 24, 1857. Sgt. Ernest Schroeder and six privates of the Eighth Infantry comprised the mail escort; six privates from a wood-gathering party led by a Sergeant Libbey of the First Infantry also accompanied the train. Encountering about sixty Indians twenty-

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67 Ibid., 148; Robert M. Utley, *Fort Davis National Historic Site, Texas*, National Park Service Historical Handbook Series no. 38 (Washington: Department of the Interior, 1965): 10-12.

68 Pitcher to Department of Texas, Aug. 24, 1855, p. 401, Register of Letters Received, Department of Texas (first quotation); Report of Sheridan, Aug. 14, 1855, p. 194, ibid. (second quotation); I. Woods, "Report to Hon. A. V. Brown, Postmaster General," in Barker Texas History Center.

69 Woods, "Report to Brown;" Seawell to Gwin, July 13, 1858, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 567-506).

five miles west of Lancaster, Schroeder and Libbey ordered their men to unhitch the mules and take cover behind the wagons. As the two groups warily surveyed one another, the Indians held up a white flag. Sergeant Libbey exchanged a few shouts with the Indians in Spanish; meanwhile, another band of Indians, hoping to get a better line of fire on the soldiers, crept up a small ravine.[70]

Suddenly, shots rang out. The two sergeants steadied their isolated command, pointing out the Indians' position to the privates. As Schroeder scurried about behind one of the wagons, Libbey exclaimed: "look out Sergt for the sons of bitches they will get the advantage of you if they can & dont put yourself in danger." True to Libbey's warning, the next volley felled Schroeder with a shot through the heart. The soldiers continued their fire, dropping two Indians from their horses as they ventured into the open. Surrounded and badly outnumbered by the two Indian groups, Libbey ordered his command to abandon the wagons.[71]

A fighting retreat began, half the men firing while the others reloaded. As the escort withdrew, they carried the limp frame of Sergeant Schroeder for nearly a mile and a half. There, the Indians made another charge; Libbey ordered his men to leave the body "& look out for ourselves." The fighting retreat continued as dark fell, with the warriors subsequently giving up the chase. The frightened escort limped back into Fort Lancaster about three o'clock the next morning. "Sergeant Libbey did all he possibly could; he was perfectly cool & behaved with courage & discretion," remembered one private. Another recalled that, despite the fearful odds, the command never panicked, killing five Indians in the skirmish. A board of inquiry reached a similar conclusion: "the conduct of the sergeants commanding the mail escort and the wood party is represented as perfectly correct, and it seems to have been gallant and judicious."[72]

In response, Lt. Edward L. Hartz led forty infantrymen out from Fort Lancaster. Many in his detachment, officially stationed at Davis, had been performing mail-escort duty between Lancaster and their home base. A brief site investigation convinced Hartz that Libbey and Schroeder had indeed acted properly. He also realized that his foot soldiers could not catch the mounted Indian ambushers. Furthermore, the lieutenant knew that the Indians would not attack a force as large as his.[73]

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70 Accounts of the Schroeder-Libbey fight may be found in "Proceedings of a Board of Officers . . ." Aug. 5, 1857, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 65-85/10427, roll 1); and General Orders No. 14, Nov. 13, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1857, 56-57.

71 Ibid.

72 Ibid.

73 Report of Hartz, July 30, 1857, Hartz Collection; General Orders No. 14, Nov. 13, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1857, pp. 56-57.

But Hartz was determined to punish the Indians. Hoping to lure them into an unwise attack, he kept most of his men under cover in the accompanying wagons, exposing only a dozen troops as "escorts." The ruse worked. Thinking the Hartz column was a regular supply train, a group of thirty to forty Mescaleros struck about forty-five miles west of Lancaster, near the point where the road left the Pecos River. Quickly realizing their mistake, the Mescaleros withdrew. A running battle resulted, during which the Indians set fire to the prairie, hoping to burn the wagon train or at least cover their own retreat. Without saddle animals, the Hartz command found pursuit impractical as the Indians fell back across the Pecos. Still, the soldiers claimed to have killed or wounded two Indians with no loss to themselves.[74]

Hartz had conducted himself well. His tactic drew his opponent into an ill-advised attack against his own strong though relatively immobile command. Yet the inability to mount an effective pursuit galled the young lieutenant. Mounted men must garrison the lonely West Texas posts if the army expected to protect the road to El Paso:

> The impunity with which attacks have been made in the past week and the powerlessness of infantry to act with advantage against the bands at present infesting the road . . . show conclusively that the Indians are in virtual possession of the road . . ., having the power to retire beyond the reach of chastisement at their pleasure.[75]

The growing Indian activity directly affected Fort Davis. On May 31, 1858 some Mescaleros stole the mules belonging to a government mail party. In response, Seawell ordered Lt. William B. Hazen to "overtake and chasten" the Indians and recover the mules "if possible." Hazen would later rise to the rank of major general of volunteers during his long and illustrious military career. He also became a prolific writer who sparked controversy among his fellow officers, including a dashing young lieutenant colonel named George Armstrong Custer. But in 1858 Hazen remained a relatively green twenty-eight-year-old lieutenant. Upon receiving Seawell's instructions, he left Fort Davis on June 4 with thirty soldiers, twelve horses, and two Mexican guides. For four days he followed to the northwest an Indian trail believed to be left by chiefs Marco and Gomez. With water supplies dwindling, Hazen broke off the exhausting chase to make a forced march to a camp north of Eagle Springs.[76]

Hazen knew that he must resume the pursuit if he hoped to carry out his instructions. He and his men pushed on to the Guadalupe Mountains, where on

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74 Ibid.

75 Ibid.

76 Marvin E. Kroeker, *Great Plains Command: William B. Hazen in the Frontier West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1976): vii-viii, 3, 26-30.

the evening of June 10 they stumbled into a Mescalero encampment. Surprised, the one-hundred-odd Indians fled for cover up a canyon. Hazen's weary soldiers could not catch their foes, killing only one man and capturing but a single woman. But they did round up twenty-nine horses and government mules, and most of the Indians' camp: lodges, pelts, furniture, horse gear, arms, ammunition, and more than one thousand pounds of prepared food. Also recovered were fifty scalps.[77]

Hazen and his command then began the long march back to Fort Davis. Many of his troops, green recruits from the East, wilted in the summer heat. Musket barrels were too hot to touch; water from canteens was too hot to drink. A few desperate men drank urine, with predictably painful results. The big grain-fed American horses had broken down in the canyon chase, so all the men had to walk. At nightfall on the third day after the attack, they found a small salt spring, but more horses and men became ill as they consumed the briny sulphur water too greedily.[78]

That night, sentinel Pvt. Michael Kellett of D Company, Eighth Infantry, fell asleep in a quiet patch of grass. His relief on guard duty assumed Kellett had gone to bed; when he heard nearby rustling, he nervously blasted away without first issuing a challenge, shouting "Indians!" in the process. Kellett fell dead and the camp panicked. Another private on guard duty, Michael Hyers of C Company, rushed blindly into the campsite, firing and screaming. Several wild shots killed Hyers as horses, hit by stray bullets, stampeded through the campsite. With some difficulty, young Lieutenant Hazen restored a semblance of order as he gradually pieced together the evening's tragic events.[79]

Badly shaken, the Hazen detachment arrived back at Fort Davis on June 20, having marched some 450 miles. Furious at his men, Hazen commended three soldiers and the two scouts but damned the other twenty-seven infantrymen. "I never saw so worthless a set of men thrown together before in my life," wrote Hazen. "While in the Indian country they were much frightened, ready to fire at any time, on anything, and it was with peril that I could visit the sentinels at night." All but three of his horses had died in the Trans-Pecos, a country he described as "perfectly worthless for agricultural purposes." He found building stone, lime, and salt in the Guadalupes, but concluded that the remote location meant that the mountains "must remain valueless." Only mules could negotiate such a difficult environment, he noted.[80]

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77 Ibid.

78 Ibid.

79 Ibid.

80 Ibid.

Hazen was transferred to Fort Inge in August 1858, and led a number of subsequent expeditions against Indians. He remained a sharp critic of those who he believed misrepresented the difficulties of settling the American West. Incensed by the wildly optimistic claims of postbellum railroad promoters, in 1875 he published a controversial essay, "The Great Middle Region of the United States, and its Limited Space of Arable Land," in the prestigious *North American Review*. Undoubtedly, his experiences while campaigning in the Trans-Pecos had affected his perceptions of the western environment. Unlike advocates on the other side of the debate, such as George Custer, Hazen emphasized the problems of future western settlement, particularly when newcomers tried to live west of the ninety-eighth meridian.[81]

In addition to providing escorts and launching punitive raids against the tribes, Davis commanders kept a wary eye on affairs in Mexico. The army often purchased supplies in Chihuahua; furthermore, it had some responsibilities toward protecting U.S. citizens south of the border. The unsettled nature of Mexico's internal affairs often strained such relationships. In June 1855 Major Simonson of the Mounted Rifles reported that the governor of Chihuahua "had forbidden the exportation of corn. This decree, made solely to annoy us, will embarrass our supplies of forage towards Fort Davis, where no corn is raised on our side of the river." While not critical to the success of the post on the Limpia, the order encouraged military efforts to make the post more self-sufficient.[82]

In his reports to Washington later that summer, Persifor Smith again brought up the dangerous situation along the Rio Grande. Several army detachments had investigated to no avail rumors that filibustering parties destined for Mexico were forming on the U.S. side of the Rio Grande. American officers had done their best to expose any such plots, according to Smith, but had almost no reliable information with which to work. Smith also complained about raids from Mexico into Texas. After crossing into the United States "to murder and rob," the bandits then "carry back their booty for sale in sight of our frontier."[83]

Another controversy, which further strengthened the acknowledged need for an army presence in the Big Bend, arose in 1860. Lt. Theodore Fink, commanding the Davis garrison, reported that two American citizens had been harassed in Chihuahua City. According to Fink, renegade Mexican troops had combined with a gang of acknowledged outlaws to bring about a reign of terror throughout northern Mexico. In addition to driving the foreigners out of Chihuahua City,

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81 Ibid.; W.B. Hazen, "The Great Middle Region of the United States, and Its Limited Space of Arable Land," *North American Review* 120 (Jan., 1875): 1-34.

82 Report of Smith, June 2, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1855, p. 54.

83 Smith to Cooper, July 14, 1855, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 567/528).

the bandits had murdered a number of residents. The governor of Chihuahua had sought assistance from U.S. authorities at Fort Bliss; Fink "as a matter of course" refused calls from the aggrieved U.S. citizens for help, but thought the matter serious enough to report to superiors.[84]

Colonel Seawell, temporarily in charge of the Department of Texas, forwarded Fink's letter to army headquarters. Seawell assured military officials that the Americans originally filing the complaint "are gentlemen of wealth and great respectability, whose statements, it is believed, can be relied upon as entirely correct." Commanding Gen. Winfield Scott, noting that the matter was "of international interest," submitted Fink's report to the Secretary of War. The matter was largely forgotten as the army faced the more immediate crisis of secession. The incident did, however, foreshadow what ultimately became a major responsibility for troops at Fort Davis—protecting the interests and lives of United States citizens in Mexico and along the Rio Grande. It also lent additional credence to the oft-heard arguments that the army needed a permanent post along the great river.[85]

The shortage of water had hindered efforts to garrison the Trans-Pecos. In attempting to alleviate the problem, Congress appropriated one hundred thousand dollars to drill experimental artesian wells in western Texas and New Mexico. Capt. John Pope of the Topographical Engineers commanded the surveying team, which found water fourteen miles east of the Pecos in 1855 before shifting operations to the Fort Fillmore, New Mexico area in the following year. Retracing his steps to the Pecos in spring 1856, Pope dug to 861 feet before running out of tubing.[86]

Pope returned in 1857. This time Fort Davis played a major role in his drilling efforts. Pope buoyantly predicted that he would find water, but the ever-present Lieutenant Hartz, who headed the Fort Davis escort team, seemed less excited about the prospect of spending several months in the field with the Pope survey. Upon receiving his orders to take seventy-five men from Companies C, D, F, and H (at Fort Davis) and A (at Camp Hudson) to meet Pope at San Antonio, Hartz summed up his feelings cogently: "The prospect before me is bleak." Pope's drilling was underway by September 1857; he dispatched Hartz from his camp along the Pecos to establish a wagon road to Fort Davis. Although

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84 Fink to Assistant Adjutant General, Feb. 4, 1860, #F 11/1860, Letters Received, Adjutant General's Office, 1822–60, National Archives (microfilm M 567, roll 623).

85 Endorsements of Seawell, Feb. 9, and Scott, Feb. 24, ibid.

86 William H. Goetzmann, *Army Exploration in the American West 1803–1863* (1959; rpt. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979): 367.

the effort would facilitate the transfer of supplies to the drillers, the idea of building a road hardly thrilled the regulars.[87]

Bad luck had plagued Pope's artesian well project from the beginning. Pipes, drills, and steam power boiler all broke down. The winter was unusually severe and the soldier escort turned mutinous. From Fort Davis, Colonel Seawell requested that the troops engaged in the Pope project be returned to their companies for proper military training. Striking a common theme, he implied that such extra duty simply made the troops inefficient. Winfield Scott, commanding general of the army, agreed with Seawell's request. Even Pope admitted defeat in June 1858: "I am constrained to say after ten months of very severe and unremitted labor that, I fear that, without greater facilities and more extensive preparations than could have been secured under the appropriation . . . it will be impracticable to overcome the mechanical and physical difficulties of the work."[88]

Although it did not find enough water to justify continued exploration, the Pope survey made an unanticipated discovery of a different kind. Two Mexican boys, aged ten and twelve, stumbled into a group of soldiers en route from Davis to Pope's camp in early April 1858. According to what officers later pieced together, Comanches had captured the boys in Chihuahua the previous December and brought them into western Texas. Left behind when their captors swam the Pecos River, the hungry lads wandered for several days before finding soldiers who brought them into Pope's camp. After the necessary correspondence, Department of Texas officials ordered Seawell to escort the boys to the port of Mexican entry nearest Fort Davis (presumably Presidio), where they were to be turned over to Mexican officials.[89]

Although the army was performing many such functions throughout the nation, its primary task remained that of controlling violence between Indians and non-Indians. Clearly, military posts alone would not bring peace to the frontiers. In 1858 the fiery Brig. Gen. David E. Twiggs ordered his troops to take

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87 Goetzmann, *Army Exploration*, 367-68; Edward to Father, June 13, 1857 (quotation), Sept. 13, 1857, Hartz Collection; Seawell to Cooper, June 5, 1858, #S 315 filed with #T 161/1858, Letters Received, Adjutant General's Office, 1822–60 (microfilm M 567, roll 592); Bliss Reminiscences, 2: 2.

88 Goetzmann, *Army Exploration*, 367 (quotation); Pope to Humphreys, June 1, July 4, 1858, box 3, Miscellaneous Letters Received, Office of Exploration and Surveys, RG 48, National Archives; Seawell to Cooper, June 5, 1858, #S 315 filed with #T 161/1858, Letters Received, Adjutant General's Office, 1822–60 (microfilm M 567, roll 592); Endorsement of McDowell, Aug. 2, 1858, ibid.

89 Seawell to Assistant Adjutant General, Apr. 16, 1858, #S 212/1858, Letters Received, Adjutant General's Office, 1822–60 (microfilm M 567, roll 590); Pope to Seawell, Apr. 5, 1858, ibid.; Garrard to Seawell, May 4, 1858, ibid.

the offensive. "As long as there are wild Indians on the prairie, Texas can not be free from depredations," wrote Twiggs. His principal thrust came along Texas' northern frontiers, where Second Cavalrymen and Indian allies led by Maj. Earl Van Dorn whipped the Comanches at the battles of Rush Spring (October 1858) and Crooked Creek (May 1859). State troops under John S. (Rip) Ford also inflicted a sharp setback at the Battle of Antelope Hills (May 1858).[90]

Twiggs did not ignore the Trans-Pecos. Noting the recent murders of four cattlemen at Leon Springs, some seventy-five miles east of Fort Davis, a frustrated Twiggs exclaimed that "it is important that this road be well guarded, *but I have not the force to do it.*" Still, in accord with the more aggressive stance, Capt. Albert G. Brackett conducted a major scouting expedition from Fort Lancaster in April 1859. Formerly an officer in the Fourth Infantry, Brackett had reentered the army after securing a prized commission in the Second Cavalry in 1855. He would later compile an impressive history of the U.S. Cavalry, and win Civil War brevets for his work in the Arkansas (1862) and Atlanta (1864) campaigns. Knowing the importance of a good guide, Brackett had requested that Colonel Seawell dispatch the scout José Maria from Fort Davis to Lancaster in anticipation of the movement. It is not known whether Maria took part in Brackett's expedition; Brackett's reports mention only "my guide Rogue."[91]

Whether the scout from Davis accompanied the Brackett column or not, the command, including sixty-six men of I Company, Second Cavalry Regiment, left Fort Lancaster on April 19. Supplies were short; the quartermaster could provide only fifteen days' meat ration. Undaunted, Brackett pushed south and west in the direction of the Comanche Trail. Water and grass grew increasingly scarce as the column rode past Comanche Springs and headed toward the Rio Grande. Brackett's expedition reached the river on April 30 opposite the deserted Spanish presidio at San Vicente. The site offered "only some coarse marsh grass," but seemed far superior to the mountains north of the river, which Brackett had found to be "totally devoid of grass or verdure and presenting a most bleak and desolate appearance."[92]

Brackett expected to find signs of Indians near San Vicente. His hunch proved correct when his scout discovered a large band ten miles below his own camp. Brackett immediately launched a surprise attack on the Indian lodges.

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90 Kroeker, *Great Plains Command*, 25 (quotation); Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue*, 128-35; Wooster, *Soldiers, Sutlers, and Settlers*, 155-56.

91 Twiggs to Army HQ, Aug. 24, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1858, pp. 261-62 (first quotation); Brackett to Wood, May 16, ibid., 1859, pp. 366-68 (second quotation); Brackett to Seawell, Mar. 25, 1859, Brackett File, Fort Davis Archives; Heitman, *Historical Register*, 237; Brackett, *History of the U.S. Cavalry*.

92 Brackett to Wood, May 16, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1859, pp. 366-68.

In a short skirmish, his men killed two Indians and wounded another without loss to themselves. Three men earned Brackett's special commendation for their courage.[93]

Despite his victory, Brackett still had a major problem. Now out of meat, he was seventy-five miles as the crow flies from Presidio, the closest town of any size. In an illegal move born of desperation, he plunged across the Rio Grande into Mexico and headed for the village at San Carlos. He and his men arrived hungry but safe on May 5, most of them having had no rations whatsoever for the last two days. Upon reaching San Carlos, Brackett's men procured some beef while waiting for his broken-down pack train to limp in a day later. Without any means of carrying the supplies needed to make the hazardous journey back up the Comanche Trail, Brackett pushed west to Presidio del Norte, where he arrived on May 9. After explaining to Mexican authorities his actions, he and his command finally reached the safety of Fort Davis on the 15th.[94]

Despite occasional scouts like that led by Capt. Charles D. Jordan in spring 1859, Indian strikes continued to plague the West Texas mails. A typical incident occurred in the summer of 1859, when a group of Mescalero Apache ambushed a wagon near Fort Davis and made off with the mail pouches. Such conduct prompted mail parties to greet with rifle shots any Indians who approached their stages, even those bearing white flags. "The policy of the mail-men is, never, under any circumstances, to allow them [Indians] near us, and much less to risk the danger of having them actually in camp," wrote agent Isaiah Woods.[95]

A daring attack occurred on August 28, when eight Mescaleros stole nine mules and a horse from the El Muerto stage stand. One employee claimed to have followed the Indian trail long enough to ascertain that the raiding party had come from the Guadalupe Mountains near Fort Stanton, New Mexico. Reporting the attack from Fort Davis, Washington Seawell added caustically that the tribe was theoretically "at peace" and "taken care of by the government." He also explained that "if it had been possible for a foot command to overtake them," he would have dispatched a patrol. Deeming the situation hopeless, Seawell contented himself with a request that the commander at Fort Stanton search the reservation for the stolen animals.[96]

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93 Ibid.

94 Ibid.

95 Returns from Regular Army Regiments, Eighth Infantry, April-Dec. 1859, National Archives (microcopy M 665, roll 92); Lee to Adjutant General, Feb. 5, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1859, p. 360; Bliss Reminiscences, 1: 153, 244, 249; Woods, "Report to Brown," (quotation).

96 Seawell to Assistant Adjutant General, Aug. 30, 1859, #S 339/1859, Letters Received, Adjutant General's Office, 1822–60 (microfilm M 567, roll 612).

By 1860 Seawell had obviously tired of the outpost on the Limpia, where he had been stationed for most of the past five and one-half years. Called to San Antonio to take temporary command of the Department of Texas, in February he took the opportunity to request transfer of regimental headquarters to the Alamo city. "Though I think this change in the Head Quarters of the 8th Inf. is required by the interest of the service, I also ask it as a favor if it should be considered that my services entitle me to such an indulgence," wrote Seawell in his position as head of the regiment.[97]

Not surprisingly, temporary department chief Seawell favorably endorsed the request from regimental commander Seawell. On May 12 Secretary of War John B. Floyd approved the transfer; accordingly, the headquarters staff and band left Fort Davis on July 11. Presumably, such a move eased Seawell's task as regimental commander and department head by consolidating the separate positions in San Antonio. In reality, however, the transfer of the Eighth Infantry headquarters from Fort Davis was probably done for personal reasons—Seawell wanted to escape the loneliness of the Trans-Pecos. Ironically, the chicanery proved unnecessary; the army promoted Seawell to full colonel of the Sixth Infantry. He did, however, remain with his old regiment at San Antonio until the arrival of Lt. Col. William Hoffman in February 1861.[98]

Only after the transfer of regimental headquarters from Fort Davis to San Antonio was complete did officials realize that the action might not have been in the army's best interests. Robert E. Lee, fresh from a leave of absence in his home state of Virginia, had again assumed command of the department by June 13. Having captured John Brown after the latter's abortive raid on Harper's Ferry arsenal and armory while on leave, Lee admitted that the transfer "might have been desirable" while Seawell was in San Antonio on department business. Now, however, Lee pointed out that four companies of the Eighth Infantry were stationed in New Mexico along the road from El Paso to San Diego. The remainder of the regiment occupied posts in West Texas and along the upper Rio Grande. Lee intended to replace those on the Rio Grande with elements of the Third Infantry; he could then consolidate the Eighth on the El Paso roads. As such, a position at San Antonio seemed too far away from the regiment's area of prime responsibility.[99]

Army headquarters concurred with Lee's judgment. "When Lieut. Col. Seawell was in command of the Department of Texas, it was very proper that

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97 Seawell to Cooper, Feb. 10, 1860, #S 41/1860, ibid. (microfilm M 567, roll 632).

98 Endorsement of Seawell, Feb. 10, ibid.; Endorsement of Floyd, May 12, ibid.; Diary of Echols, July 10, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1860, p. 44; Returns from Regular Army Infantry Regiments, Eighth Infantry, July 1860 (microcopy M 665, roll 92).

99 Lee to Cooper, June 13, 1860, #S 41/1860, Letters Received, Adjutant General's Office, 1822–60 (microcopy M 567, roll 632).

the Head Quarters of his Regiment (which he also commanded) should be at San Antonio," wrote Asst. Adj. Gen. Lorenzo Thomas. The revised placement of the Eighth Infantry, however, changed conditions dramatically. Commanding general Winfield Scott proposed that the Eighth's headquarters be returned to Fort Davis.[100]

Compared with the growing passions of secession, however, the proper location of the headquarters of the Eighth Infantry Regiment seemed trivial. As a result, the projected removal back to Fort Davis never occurred. Also abandoned was any pretence of following General Twiggs's more aggressive strategy of Indian campaigning. Twiggs himself admitted that he had ordered his command "to resort to the defensive system again." Not surprisingly, the list of real and imagined Indian depredations continued to mount as the army's paralysis became obvious. In early February 1861 Daniel Murphy, a prominent local resident, reported that Indians had driven off about one hundred mules from a wagon train hauling copper ore through the Fort Davis area.[101]

Despite the best efforts of the Fort Davis garrison during the 1850s, peace had not accompanied the growing federal presence in the Trans-Pecos. Inconsistent Indian policy and poorly conceived military strategy explained many of the difficulties faced by the Davis regulars, whose efforts were further complicated by outdated equipment and ill-suited uniforms. Still, the troops who used the outpost on the Limpia compiled several impressive campaigns against the Apaches. While not enough to eliminate Indian opposition to the U.S. intrusion, troops led by John G. Walker (1854), Horace Randal (1855), Edward L. Hartz (1857), and Albert G. Brackett (1859) each inflicted stinging defeats on various Indian bands.

Also significant were the contributions of Fort Davis-based troops to Trans-Pecos development. Though not as yet a beacon for large numbers of settlers, the region provided an important highway for western migration. Military posts like Stockton, Davis, Quitman, and Bliss made the arduous trip much more manageable. With army escorts, the mails now moved with a fair degree of regularity. Fort Davis personnel also assisted in scientific and topographical reconnaissance, like the Maclay/Hartz expedition and the abortive Pope artesian well experiment. And the regulars at Davis also maintained a distant watch on events in Mexico, whose domestic woes often threatened the property and lives of United States citizens.

In sum, life in the field was frustrating and dangerous, yet also lent a certain excitement to the daily lives of those who garrisoned Fort Davis in the 1850s. In describing his experiences, Lt. Edward L. Hartz, veteran of numerous Fort

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100 Endorsement of Thomas, Oct. 20, ibid.

101 Kroeker, *Great Plains Command*, 35 (quotation); *San Antonio Ledger and Texan*, Feb. 25, 1861.

Davis campaigns throughout the antebellum period, accurately captured the feelings of most of his contemporaries. Hartz noted that "quarters are decidedly pleasant when returning fagged out from constant travelling, bivouacking and hard feeding. They offer you a comfortable bed, a roof to shelter, and the enticements of a tolerably well spread table." But in spite of the simple pleasures of garrison life, Hartz enjoyed the "excitement, adventure, and constant novelty" of active campaigning. He concluded that "life in the field . . . is in the main more desirable than being immured within the walls of the canon attending to the humdrum routines of garrison duty."[102]

102 Edward to Father, Apr. 3, 1857, Hartz Collection.

CHAPTER FOUR:

DAVIS AS A FRONTIER OUTPOST

During the 1850s Fort Davis was home to a fascinating collection of soldiers, dependents, government employees, and civilians. In carving out their existence in the Trans-Pecos, these pioneers confronted loneliness, boredom, personality conflicts, and shortages in material goods. Vast social, economic, and cultural differences also divided local residents. Officers and their families, for example, cloistered themselves away from enlisted men and laundresses. The small civilian population, largely made up of ranchers and service personnel for the overland mail lines, depended heavily upon the fort's economy, protection, and authority. At the same time, a litany of conflicts marred civil-military relations at Fort Davis during the pre–Civil War years.

Army officers constituted what was considered the cream of Fort Davis society. Because they were more literate and enjoyed more spare time than the soldiers whom they commanded, commissioned personnel left a much better record of their activities and emotions than did their enlisted counterparts. Yet bitterness over real and imagined grievances concerning promotion, leaves of absence, and favorable duty details frequently disrupted relations between officers at isolated posts. Fort Davis proved no exception to the rule, as poorly paid, tired, lonely officers magnified a thousand petty slights into major incidents. In addition to his continuing feud with Capt. Arthur T. Lee, post commander Washington Seawell was embroiled in a long-standing struggle with Lt. Edward D. Blake. In December 1854 Seawell contemplated preferring charges against Blake; the following year, he lodged new counts against the errant lieutenant. Although Blake received no serious punishment, he returned

the favor by requesting a court of inquiry against Seawell no less than four times.[1]

Much of the dispute apparently centered around Seawell's refusal to appoint Blake to the recruiting service. Duty at the camp on the Limpia, hundreds of miles from the nearest major city at San Antonio, held few attractions. A recruiting detail, on the other hand, meant service in an eastern metropolis full of the culture and entertainment absent on the frontier. Inability to wrangle a plum recruiting job also rankled 1st Lt. Theodore Fink. Seawell claimed, by contrast, that Fink had not wanted the post.[2]

The lack of communication between officers revealed the tensions in post society and reinforced Seawell's unpopular standing. For his part, Seawell also wanted to escape the monotony of life at Fort Davis. His efforts to transfer Eighth Infantry headquarters to San Antonio verged on the unethical and ultimately risked official censure. Less questionable (and also less successful) were the dissatisfied post commander's attempts to secure the superintendency of the recruiting service in 1857 and his application for promotion in 1858.[3]

In Seawell's defense, his restless subordinates were a mixed lot of stubbornly independent spirits. One contemporary described his fellow officers as including "gentlemen, rascals, fools & c. I have heard more scandal since I have been in the army than I ever heard before in my life." Among the group was Massachusetts native Capt. Charles D. Jordan, who had been graduated an undistinguished forty-fourth in his West Point class of 1842. Small in physique, the

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1 Letter of Maclay, Feb. 5, 1856, Register of Letters Received, Department of Texas and the 8th Military Department, 1851–1857, Record Group 393, National Archives; McDowell to Commanding Officer, Feb. 27, 1856, Letters Sent, Department of Texas, 1856–58, National Archives (microfilm M 1165 roll 1); Bomford to Cooper, Feb. 26, 1858, #B 74/1858, Letters Received, Adjutant General's Office, 1822–1860, National Archives (microcopy M 567, roll 575); Letter of Blake, Dec. 20, 1854, Apr. 2, June 26, Aug. 24, Nov. 5, 1855, Register of Letters Received, Department of Texas; Letter of Seawell, Dec. 24, 1854, Nov. 10, 1855, ibid.

2 Letter of Blake, Sept. 14, Oct. 10, 1854, Register of Letters Received, Department of Texas; Court Martial of Edward E. Blake, HH 644, box 231, Court Martial Case Files, RG 153, National Archives; Seawell to AG, June 5, 1858, #S 282/1858, Letters Received, Adjutant General's Office, 1822–1860 (microcopy 567, roll 590).

3 Seawell to AG, July 6, 1857, #S 476, Registers of Letters Received, Adjutant General's office, 1822–1860, vol. 33, National Archives (microcopy M 711, roll 29); Ibid., Jan. 29, 1858, #S 59, vol. 35 (roll 30).

dapper Jordan was popular with the ladies but had not fully recovered from wounds received during the Mexican War. His determination to support his mother and two sisters compounded Jordan's physical disabilities. New York born Capt. James V. Bomford also served at antebellum Fort Davis. A boon friend of Lt. Zenas R. Bliss, Bomford was renowned for his skills as a violinist, his purported ability to broad jump twenty-two feet, and his generally eccentric behavior. His great physical strength and propensity to argue made him a force to be reckoned with in post society.[4]

Disagreements over the use of brevet ranks compounded the problems inherent in placing men from different backgrounds together on the western frontier. The army's small size meant that regular promotions were agonizingly slow. To reward its soldiers, Congress authorized brevet, or unofficial, promotions for merit, gallantry, or ten years' continuous service in one rank. Brevet promotions sometimes, but by no means always, allowed the holder the authority and pay of the higher rank. Few understood the circumstances under which one could or could not claim brevet-based privileges. Bomford, for example, was given Mexican War brevets to major and lieutenant colonel for gallantry at the battles of Contreras, Churubusco, and Molino del Rey, yet was ranked according to his regular commission—a captain. His quest for command according to his brevet status joined those of numerous others in a paper sea of bureaucracy.[5]

Friction also stemmed from the army's inconsistent policy in granting leaves of absence. Leaves were authorized according to a whimsical formula of political influence, need, emergency, and luck. For those lucky enough to secure a leave, San Antonio was the first stop, with the venerable old Menger Hotel a common meeting place. Boasting a thriving multicultural population, the Alamo city

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4 Peters to Sister, Dec. 20, 1854, DeWitt C. Peters Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley (quotation); Zenas R. Bliss Reminiscences, 1: 221-25, 318-20, Barker Texas History Center; George W. Cullum, *Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the U.S. Military Academy* . . . (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1868), 2: 65.

5 Edward M. Coffman, *The Old Army: A Portrait of the American Army in Peacetime, 1784–1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986): 66-69; Letter of Bomford, July 2, 1855, p. 118, Register of Letters Received, Department of Texas.

seemed, in the words of one, "a Paris for the officers who were banished to distant frontier posts." Others used their leaves for visits to parents, relatives, and friends. Washington, D.C., attracted political pragmatists seeking promotion.[6]

Several factors offset such contentious issues to draw the commissioned personnel closer together. Of the thirty-one officers known to have been stationed at Fort Davis before the Civil War, twenty-four (seventy-seven percent) were West Point graduates. This figure closely approximated that for the army as a whole—by the mid-1850s, nearly three-fourths of the officers had Academy training. Of the nongraduates, Edwin W. H. Read and John G. Taylor received their commissions in 1855 and 1856, when the army made a number of civil appointments in the wake of the recent increase bill.[7]

Shared West Point experiences provided a common if unspoken bond between officers. Mexican War veterans undoubtedly felt a similar unity—at least ten officers at Fort Davis during the 1850s had served in the conflict. The unceasing struggle for respect from a nation that rarely recognized the army's military endeavors fostered a camaraderie felt by many commissioned men. The tedium of frontier service and shared misery of uncomfortable living conditions intensified notions of group solidarity. Yet patience and tolerance were also essential if officers hoped to create a viable community under these trying conditions. Strikingly appropriate are the conclusions of one military historian: "In the closely knit society of officers, so dependent on each other's fellowship, extremes were to be avoided."[8]

Inadequate pay hampered the army's efforts to attract and keep promising officers. Basic pay scales remained fundamentally the same as those established in 1802—in infantry and artillery regiments, colonels received $75 per month; lieutenant colonels $60; captains $40; first lieutenants $30; and second lieutenants a mere $25. Salaries for officers of mounted regiments and engineers

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6 "Register of Officers Reporting at HQ, Dept. of Texas," Jan. 1859-Apr. 12, 1861, Letters Received, Department of Texas, 1860–61, RG 393, National Archives; D. S. Stanley, Order of Indian Wars Collection, U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pa.; Coffman, *Old Army*, 82-84.

7 Erwin Thompson, "The Officers, Fort Davis, Texas," in Officers File, Fort Davis Archives; Robert M. Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue: The United States Army and the Indian, 1848–1865*, The Wars of the United States (1967; rpt. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981): 33-34; Proceedings of a Board of Examination, Dec. 26, 1855, #S 837, Letters Received, Adjutant General's Office, 1822–1860 (microcopy M 567 roll 528); Francis B. Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1899).

8 Coffman, *Old Army*, 80 (quotation), 103. For brief sketches of commisioned personnel, see Heitman, *Historical Register*.

were slightly higher, ranging from $90 for a colonel to $33 for a second lieutenant.[9]

Supplemental allowances nearly trebled the base pay. Every captain and lieutenant received money in lieu of four daily rations totaling another $24 per month, plus another $19.50 to hire a servant. Colonels, lieutenant colonels, and majors were given additional monies for rations, and were allotted money to engage a second servant. They could also keep up to three horses, with monthly forage payments totaling $24. Company commanders received a $10 monthly bonus; post commanders earned additional rations. For every five years of service, commissioned officers could expect money equal to yet another ration. Appointments as quartermaster, recruiting agent, or commissary officer, along with hazardous duty pay for some activities, brought added supplements. Such benefits meant substantially more money for all officers. In fiscal year 1853, for example, Colonel Seawell garnered a base pay of $1,127.33, but with emoluments netted $3,497.65. For eleven months' service, Lieutenant Blake earned a salary of $359.32 and aggregate pay of $953.12.[10]

Although welcoming such benefits, Fort Davis officers complained bitterly that their incomes did not match high frontier prices. In a remarkable show of group solidarity, nine officers—Seawell, Blake, Bomford, Thomas G. Pitcher, Robert G. Cole, William McE. Dye, Zenas R. Bliss, John G. Taylor, Robert P. Maclay, and Albert J. Myer—petitioned Congress for more money in October 1855. Noting "the total inadequacy of our present pay to our respectable support," they called for a twenty-cent daily increase in the commutation of each ration.[11]

Congress acted in 1857, although no record indicates that the Davis-based petition had any influence among the nation's lawmakers. Each officer received an across-the-board pay hike of twenty dollars per month. In addition, Congress raised the commutation for rations by thirty-three percent, and granted another three dollars per month for expenses involved in hiring servants.[12]

The 1857 raises thrilled the long-suffering officers at Fort Davis. Lt. Edward L. Hartz sent more money home to help his parents make their house payments and to put his sister through school. His economic prospects looked even brighter

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9 Utley, *Frontier Regulars*, 31; U.S. *Statutes at Large*, 2: 133.

10 "Army Register, 1853," House Executive Document 59, 33rd Congress, 1st session, serial 721, pp. 64-65.

11 Enclosure with Lee to Cooper, Oct. 25, 1855, #L 284, Letters Received, Adjutant General's Office, 1822–1860 (microcopy M 567 roll 520).

12 *Official Army Register for 1857* (Washington: Adjutant General's Office, 1857), 46-47; *Official Army Register for 1859*, 46-47.

Fig. 4:10. Hospital Canyon, with officers' quarters in background. Watercolor by Capt. Arthur T. Lee, 1854–58. Photograph courtesy of Rush Rhees Library, University of Rochester.

in early 1858, when he heard that his field services as quartermaster for the Pope artesian well project might net him another three dollars per day. In April delays in the expected supplement led Hartz to hope for a lump sum payment. If such a wish came true, he joked that he would "buy a ranch marry some Mexican senorita and settle on the Rio Grande." By July, however, his plans had been dashed. Angry at the unfortunate turn of events, he privately alleged that Secretary of War John B. Floyd had channeled the funds intended for workers on the Pope expedition to cronies from his native state of Virginia.[13]

Officers at western posts employed a variety of slaves, servants, and assistants. At Fort Davis Asst. Surgeon DeWitt C. Peters and his wife owned the only slave enumerated in the census of 1860, a twenty-four-year-old woman who lived behind their quarters in the detached kitchen. More commonly, officers hired servants from the enlisted ranks. Known derisively as "strikers" or "dog

13 Edward to Father, Apr. 3,, Sept. 30, 1857, Jan. 1, Apr. 1, July 1, 1858, Edward L. Hartz Collection, Library of Congress (microfilm edition, Fort Davis Archives).

robbers" by their fellow privates, these men lived with their officer-masters and received extra duty money directly from their employers. Yet the practice took a man from the ranks and hurt training and morale. The 1802 law allowing officers to draw an additional ration for his servant had specified that the individual not be "a soldier of the line." In practice, though, authorities winked at the use of these soldier-servants until the 1880s. The costs of hiring a full-time civilian and lack of a resident pool of prospective workers led many frontier officers to circumvent the initial intentions of Congress. By the 1850s Congress simply appropriated a lump sum for "payments in lieu of clothing for officers' servants.[14]

Whether the servants be soldiers or civilians, their services proved a mixed blessing to officers at Fort Davis. By cooking, cleaning, cutting firewood, and performing other routine tasks, they greatly eased the labors and responsibilities of those who could secure such assistance. Lieutenant Hartz and Lt. John G. Taylor, for instance, shared the services of Pvt. Walter Scott and Pvt. Samuel Thompson. But in May 1856 the young lieutenants found that their former workers had disappeared, along with the officers' clothes, a shotgun, a Sharps carbine, and two Colt revolvers. One of the criminals was apprehended still lurking about the post; Lieutenant Bliss tracked down the other at Presidio. Fortunately for Hartz and Taylor, most of the stolen goods were recovered.[15]

The rollercoaster-like experiences of Hartz seem typical of a junior officer during the 1850s. A Pennsylvania native appointed to West Point in 1851, his cadet career underwent the same highs and lows encountered by most students. Short of funds and obsessed with the stress of preparing for semiannual examinations during his senior year, he appeared disgusted with the academy regimen. Of the ninety plebes in his freshman class, only thirty-three remained "at this famous school. Famous for what?" he asked his sister rhetorically. "For hard times & hard study, for injustice and marked indifference to the finer feelings of our nature."[16]

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14 Slave Schedules, Manuscript Returns, U.S. Census, 1860, Presidio County; Robert Wooster, *Soldiers, Sutlers, and Settlers: Garrison Life on the Texas Frontier*, Clayton Williams Texas Life Series, 2 (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1987): 73-75; Don Rickey, Jr., *Forty Miles a Day on Beans and Hay: The Enlisted Soldier Fighting the Indian Wars* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963): 111-12; U.S. *Statutes at Large*, 2: 134.

15 Peters to Mrs. Stoutenborough, June 12, 1860, Peters Papers; Edward to Father, June 24, 1856, Hartz Collection; Court Martial of Walter Scott, Samuel Thompson, HH 698, box 235, Court Martial Case Files.

16 Edward to Jenny, Jan. 19, 1855, Hartz Collection; Edward to Father, Jan. 10, 17, 29, 1855, ibid.

The ordeal of examinations over, Hartz applied for a commission in the prestigious artillery. His mediocre scholastic ranking, however, dictated an infantry assignment. Still, he rationalized that western service would allow him to send more money home to his family, which was desperately suffering from his father's alcoholism. Early impressions of his first frontier station, Fort Davis, were positive. The region's spectacular beauty, the pure water of Limpia Creek, and the quaint romance of nearby prairie dog towns all received his effusive praise. Six pleasant months at Davis led Hartz to rejoice in his career decision. "I am heartier, healthier, happier, better contented and stronger than I have ever been in all the twenty-four years of my life," he reported in June 1856.[17]

Yet as time passed, the romance of garrison life lost its luster. By April 1858 Hartz, now a veteran hardened to the rigors of the field, sought promotion. Continually strapped for funds, his inability to support better his parents and sister proved a continual source of frustration. Hope glimmered briefly the following year when he learned that his father had temporarily overcome his struggle with the bottle. But by October 1859 Lieutenant Hartz fell victim to a depression of a kind that all too often afflicted officers of the antebellum army. Four years of hard service in Texas seemed to offer only a future of continued low pay, boredom, loneliness, lack of promotion, and infrequent recognition. Now stationed near Camp Hudson, Hartz begged his father to use his political influence to secure his transfer to a station nearer "civilization." "You will only be doing what is done every day," wrote Hartz.[18]

Officials lamented the poor quality of enlisted applicants to the army. Except during periods of economic distress, such as the depression of 1857–59, the arduous duties of military life offered few attractions to the average citizen. Commanding the Department of Texas, Maj. Gen. Persifor Smith noted the "inferior" quality of new enlistees. Asst. Surgeon Richard H. Coolidge, author of a voluminous study on sickness and mortality in the army, admitted "that the material offered in time of peace is not of the most desirable character, consisting principally of newly arrived immigrants, of those broken down by bad habits and dissipation, the idle, and the improvident." Regulations allowed the inspecting surgeon tremendous latitude in selecting or rejecting prospective recruits: in addition to meeting minimal health requirements, prospective recruits had to be white males between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five.

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17 Edward to Father, Mar. 1, 24, Apr. 14, May 29, 1855, Jan. 4, June 24 (quotation), Dec. 9, 1856, ibid.

18 Edward to Father, Apr. 1, 1858, Mar. 26, Apr. 4, Oct. 9 (quotations), 1859, ibid.

Finally, applicants had to know English and stand at least five feet four and a half inches tall.[19]

Statistics bore out the failure to attract a qualified cadre of applicants. In 1852, for example, medical officers rejected all but 2,726 of the 16,064 potential recruits. Of those who failed to pass the initial screening, nearly twenty-four percent were minors, eighteen percent could not speak English, fifteen percent were intemperate, more than thirteen percent were undersized, and eight percent had varicose veins. Other common reasons for rejection included excessive age, marital status (married men were not supposed to be allowed to enter the ranks), moral, mental, or physical disability, and "unsound constitution."[20]

Few enlisted men at Fort Davis left recollections of their experiences for posterity. The example of Percival G. Lowe, however, seems characteristic. Raised on a farm, Lowe left home at age fifteen to sell newspapers before serving a three-year stint as a sailor. Back ashore, he dabbled in the daguerreotype business as the allure of the romantic West became ever more enticing. "I was a persistent reader of voyages, travels, campaigns, explorations and history . . . and the spirit of adventure was so strong that I determined to enlist in the mounted service, which was sure to place me on the great plains of the West." To the adventurous Lowe, five years in the army would simply "round out my education, so to speak, and if I lived would then be ready to settle down to something permanently."[21]

The case of Eugene Bandel, a Prussian-born immigrant who came to the United States while still a teenager, proved more typical. Well-educated, Bandel nonetheless found himself unemployed and in debt at age nineteen. "I did not know what to do," he later confessed. Desperate for any opportunity, Bandel stumbled upon a recruiting office. "By chance I saw a flag hanging from a house and under it a sign. It was a notice that the United States wanted recruits for the army. This was my only resort if I did not wish to steal or beg. I went in. I was accepted soon enough and sworn in."[22]

The 1850s saw a resurgence of nativist feeling throughout much of the United States, with the popularity of the anti-immigration American Party

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19 Smith to Cooper, Mar. 14, 1855, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 567/528) (first quotation); Report of Coolidge, Senate Executive Document 96, 34th Congress, 1st session, serial 827, p. 625 (second quotation).

20 Ibid.

21 Percival G. Lowe, *Five Years a Dragoon ('49 to '54) And Other Adventures on the Great Plains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965): 3.

22 Bandel to Parents, Oct. 19, 1856, Feb. 2, 1857, in Eugene Bandel, *Frontier Life in the Army, 1854–1861*, ed. Ralph P. Bieber (Glendale: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1932): 72 (quotation), 112.

lending stark evidence of the widespread opposition to foreigners. The nationality of accepted recruits thus helps to explain the dissatisfaction expressed by many of their officers. "The anomalous spectacle of having two-thirds of our rank and file composed of foreigners" troubled Secretary of War Floyd. Indeed, of 5,000 randomly selected recruits enlisted in 1850 and 1851, fewer than thirty percent were native-born. Ireland alone contributed nearly forty-three percent of the sample total, with the Germanic Confederation also providing more recruits than the largest single recruiting state in the Union, New York. Following Ireland and the German states, Britain, Canada, and France offered the most immigrant sons to the United States army. Among the American natives, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Virginia, Maryland, and Ohio were the most common birthplaces after the Empire State.[23]

The constant garrison changes at Fort Davis make accurate comparisons with national samples hazardous. Admittedly imprecise, the manuscript census returns of 1860 offer brief glimpses into the background of Davis's enlisted personnel. Of the ninety-four enlisted men at the post, nearly nine of ten had been born outside the United States. As was the case for the army as a whole, Ireland and the German states provided the overwhelming preponderance of enlisted personnel (forty-three and twenty-six percent, respectively). At Davis, England, Scotland, and Canada collectively offered another twelve percent of the garrison. Four soldiers called Switzerland their birthplace. New York had four native sons; Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, and Maryland two each; Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, Maine, France, and Sweden sent one soldier apiece.[24]

The census also discloses the ages and economic and occupational backgrounds of the Fort Davis soldiers. The average age was now roughly twenty-five; despite official minimum age requirements, Thomas Ryan of New York, the youngest soldier at the post, listed his age at a mere fourteen. John Flourly (England) and Peter John (Switzerland), each aged forty, shared the distinction of being the oldest enlisted men present. Not surprisingly, the overwhelming majority of the garrison listed no property with the census-taker. The fourteen soldiers who did valued their personal estate to be worth between $50 and $300. Sixteen of the property holders were foreign-born; at an average age of thirty, they tended to be slightly older than their nonpropertied mates.[25]

Particularly disturbing to many officials was the paucity of men with agricultural backgrounds. The ideal recruit, in the eyes of the army, was a strapping young lad fresh off his family's farm. Fort Davis figures from 1860, however, bear out the national trend—most recruits came from urban environ-

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23 Report of Coolidge, Senate Executive Document 96, 34th Congress, 1st session, serial 827, p. 629; Report of Floyd, Dec. 5, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1857, p. 12 (quotation).

24 Manuscript returns, U.S. Census, 1860, Presidio County.

25 Ibid.

ments. At Davis, only six of the ninety-four soldiers listed their occupation as farmer (or gardener). Shoemakers, clerks, musicians, laborers, and blacksmiths added to the list. A baker, a chandler, an apothecary, a stonecutter, a student, a seaman, a painter, a plasterer, two carpenters, and a butcher rounded out the occupational register. Yet a few authorities overcame their prejudices. Upon inspecting more than five hundred First Artillery, First Infantry, and Eighth Infantry recruits bound for Texas in 1860, even the skeptical Col. J. K. F. Mansfield described his subjects "as a body of fine looking men. There were but very few exceptions, and none that I objected to."[26]

Most soldiers signed up for military service in a large eastern city. If accepted into the army, the typical recruit went to a "school of instruction"—infantrymen to Governors Island, New York, mounted troopers to Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, and artillerymen to Newport Barracks, Kentucky. Theoretically the new soldiers received the rudiments of military instruction at these depots; in practice, the constant clamor for troops compelled authorities to send enlistees to their units without basic training.[27]

New recruits bound for Fort Davis, an infantry post, sailed from New York to Texas. To save money and ease administrative burdens, the army moved several hundred men at a time, with large recruiting classes dispatched in 1854, 1855, and 1860. A few officers had the thankless task of herding the ill-trained rabble to their appointed destinations. Often without the aid of qualified NCOs, the three-week voyage to Texas sorely tested even the most experienced officer. Zenas R. Bliss recalled that his efforts to distribute rations to the unruly mob met "with very poor success. The men formed in single rank and as soon as the barrel of pork was opened, someone gave a push and they all piled on top of the pork and in a minute it was gone. I finally got it issued, but I am not quite sure that it was a very equitable division." Fires, incidental fistfights, and a near riot between soldiers and ship's crew added to Bliss's "rough experiences" in the 1854 journey.[28]

The 1855 recruits, many of whom were bound for Eighth Infantry posts like Fort Davis, sailed aboard the steamer *Prometheus* in November. An officer succinctly described the voyage from New York to Texas: "The weather was most propitious—our ship new and staunch—the crew in fine spirits and knowing

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26 Ibid.; Mansfield to Thomas, Mar. 23, 1860, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 567/625) (quotation).

27 Report of Coolidge, Senate Executive Document 96, 34th Congress, 1st session, serial 827, pp. 625-26; Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue*, 41; Report of Scott, Nov. 13, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1858, p. 762.

28 Bliss Reminiscences, 1: 3.

their professions—the officers in a high good humour—and our men all drunk." *Prometheus* landed near Corpus Christi in early December and the troops bivouacked on the beach without tents. The enlisted men promptly seized the opportunity to get drunk on bootleg whiskey. Desertion rates soared as officers herded the mob to San Antonio before embarking on the final march to destinations in western Texas and New Mexico.[29]

More specific records document the composition of the recruiting class of 1860. This group traveled aboard the chartered steamer *Grenada*, heralded by one military official as "a good sea vessel." Included among the eight officers and 560 military personnel were 107 recruits for the Eighth Infantry. Eleven prospective musicians and bandsmen were also bound for the regiment. "They all had the final inspection by the Surgeon & were well supplied with clothing & shoes with a blanket and a great coat each," bragged their inspector, "and furnished with a tin pint cup and spoon from the post fund."[30]

Money and food were the typical enlisted man's most important concerns. Secretary of War Jefferson Davis convinced Congress to increase the monthly pay of infantry and artillery privates to eleven dollars in 1854. Mounted troopers received another dollar. A second enlistment merited the noncommissioned personnel a monthly bonus of two dollars, with each additional five-year stint adding another dollar to the total. If he made orderly sergeant, the most lucrative noncommissioned position, the soldier could expect a base pay of twenty dollars per month plus supplements for longevity or mounted service. Enlisted personnel who performed extra duty as clerks, mechanics, or laborers earned additional compensation. Skilled workers garnered forty cents per day for their labors; unskilled men collected twenty-five cents daily in addition to their regular pay.[31]

The private's minimum pay of $132 per year was slightly less than the wage of a farmhand, who by 1860 could expect to earn (on a national average) $163.20 with board. A cotton mill worker might net $201; iron and steel mill hands averaged $346 in 1859. Figures for labor costs in the Department of New Mexico reflect higher wages in the southwest. In 1858 the military department paid skilled mechanics (carpenters, wheelwrights, and blacksmiths) $600-$700 annually. Teamsters, laborers, and herders received from $120 to $360 per year.

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29 Edward to Father, Nov. 1 (quotation), Dec. 5, 1855, Hartz Collection; Thomas to Smith, Sept. 21, 1855, Letters Sent, Headquarters of the Army, vol. 8/6, National Archives (microcopy M 857, roll 5).

30 Mansfield to Thomas, Mar. 23, 1860, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 567/625).

31 Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue*, 31; Report of Kelton, Oct. 1, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1891, p. 61; Bandel to Parents, Nov. 22, 1856, in *Frontier Life*, 105.

Of course, emoluments and extra duty pay narrowed the gap between military and civilian wage scales; the army's job security must also be considered when comparing benefits. Although eventually offset by the inflation of the 1850s, the general price decline in the first half of the nineteenth century further reinforced the buying power of army personnel. Indeed, a prominent student of the old army has concluded that an enlisted man enjoyed "a more secure economic position than . . . that of a common laborer or of virtually any civilian worker" before the Civil War.[32]

Army food was ample in quantity if not quality. The daily meat ration provided twenty ounces of beef or twelve ounces of pork. Official directives also included eighteen ounces of bread or flour, twelve ounces of hard bread, or twenty ounces of corn meal per day. For every one hundred rations, regulations allotted either ten pounds of rice or eight quarts of peas or beans, six pounds of coffee, twelve pounds of sugar, four quarts of vinegar, and two quarts of salt. The army also distributed one and one-half pounds of tallow and four pounds of soap per one hundred rations. On the average, each daily ration cost the War Department between twenty and thirty cents during the 1850s.[33]

Regulations provided little variety and only the barest minimum of vegetables. Garrisons had several ways to diversify their daily fare from the routine meal of beef, bread, beans, and coffee. Efficient cooks used profits from the sale of excess foods to local residents to support company and post funds, which supplied the troops with eating utensils and luxury items. An individual soldier could also supplement his diet through private purchases from the post sutler. Although Fort Davis trader Alexander Young generally carried a respectable range of goods, his canned food supplies sometimes disappointed hungry residents, with sardines the only product consistently available. On occasion, the lucky buyer might secure a can of green peas, tomatoes, or green corn. When more food was within reach, the regulars gorged themselves on a frenzied spree of delicacies: "When payday does come, you should see the life!" wrote one

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32 Coffman, *Old Army*, 153-55 (quotation); Robert W. Frazer, *Forts and Supplies: The Role of the Army in the Economy of the Southwest, 1846–1861* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983): 98.

33 Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue*, 36 n.69; "Table showing cost of rations, Texas forts, 1853," Martin L. Crimmins Papers, Barker Texas History Center; Report of Gibbons, Oct. 30, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1856, p. 258; Report of Taylor, Oct. 25, ibid., 1858, p. 801; Bandel to Parents, Oct. 19, 1856, in *Frontier Life*, 105.

enlisted man. "The rations are not touched. The men live on dainties until their money is gone. Then they are satisfied."[34]

The post garden, a by-product of Secretary of War Charles Conrad's cost cutting measures of the early 1850s, offered other dietary possibilities. Like their fellow soldiers at other posts, the Davis garrison enjoyed only mixed results from their agricultural enterprises. During good years, their efforts yielded a nice variety and quantity of fresh produce. They garnered a bumper harvest in 1856, one observer reporting that the garden's produce "is cheering to a command beyond the reach of a market." Headed by Bvt. Maj. Larkin Smith, who secured a number of experimental seeds from Washington, the men grew hard-to-get items such as cabbages, celery, and sugarcane. By 1860 the post garden, now located in the Limpia Creek bottom about a mile from the reservation, was "tolerable" but still required irrigation. Two previous efforts had already been abandoned for lack of water. The garden did, however, prove a popular spot for late afternoon strolls by romantic post residents.[35]

Purchases from Mexico afforded the Davis garrison another means of diversifying the daily fare. Corn, beans, and fresh fruits were commonly imported from south of the Rio Grande. In July 1860, for example, Lt. William H. Echols reported the availability of Mexican watermelons, muskmelons, and apples at Fort Davis. On occasion Chihuahuan state authorities blocked the import trade. A drought in 1855 led the Mexicans to forbid the export of corn across the Rio Grande, but the embargo was lifted shortly thereafter.[36]

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34 Wooster, *Soldiers, Sutlers, and Settlers*, 116-17; Bliss Reminiscences, 1: 171; Peters to Stoutenborough, June 12, 1860, Peters Papers; Bandel to Parents, Oct. 19, 1856, in *Frontier Life*, 105 (quotation).

35 Martin L. Crimmins, ed., "Colonel J. K. F. Mansfield's Report of the Inspection of the Department of Texas in 1856," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 42 (Apr., 1939): 357 (first quotation); Bliss Reminiscences, 1: 171; Mansfield to Thomas, Oct. 31, 1860, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 567/625) (second quotation); Peters to Stoutenborough, June 12, 1860, Peters Papers.

36 Letter of L. Hart, Apr. 2, 1856, p. 48, Register of Letters Received, Department of Texas; Crimmins, "Mansfield's Report, 1856," 355; Diary of Echols, July 14, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1860, 44; John C. Reid, *Reid's Tramp, or a Journal of Ten Months Travel Through Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Sonora, and California, Including Topography, Climate, Soil, Minerals, Metals, and Inhabitants; with a notice of the Great Inter-Oceanic Rail Road* (1858; rpt. Austin: Steck Co., 1935): 122.

Hunting and fishing allowed the garrison additional variety. Officers often took selected enlisted men out from the military camp to assist them on their hunts. Large game abounded; one officer claimed to have stalked a huge grizzly bear with a footprint two feet long. Geese offered another popular prize. Catfish-laden Toyah Creek proved a fisherman's paradise. The threat of Indian attack, however, limited small hunting and fishing parties to the immediate vicinity of Fort Davis. Only large groups hazarded the dangers of more extensive expeditions.[37]

Aware of the need to offer the troops better food, some army officials urged revisions in the official ration. Charles McCormick, medical director of the Department of Texas, recommended that the six pounds of coffee per one hundred rations be increased to eighteen and that the sugar allowance be doubled from twelve to twenty-four pounds. McCormick's proposed increase in the coffee allottment won the support of Secretary of War Floyd, and Congress belatedly provided for ten pounds of coffee and fifteen pounds of sugar per one hundred rations in June 1860. By contrast, Acting Commissary General of Subsistence J. F. Taylor's suggestion that desiccated potatoes and mixed vegetables be added to the regular apportionment of beans or rice fell upon deaf ears.[38]

Ill-equipped cooks hampered all efforts to improve the diet. Cooks were simply drawn from the ranks and ordered to the kitchen. Although they received assistance and rudimentary instruction from their peers, they remained woefully unprepared to feed an entire company. Baking bread, an essential element of the regulation diet, proved especially difficult for the ersatz cooks at Fort Davis. As one inspector remarked, "the baker . . . has never served a regular trade at the business, & this may account in some measure for the indifferent bread."[39]

Like the regular ration, daily routine at antebellum Fort Davis proved fairly monotonous. Reveille sounded at daybreak, rousting the enlisted men for early morning roll call. A brisk drill began half an hour later. Breakfast, generally consisting of coffee, bacon, bread, and molasses, was served at the enlisted men's mess halls at 7:00 A.M. The daily guard mounting took place at eight o'clock.

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37 Bliss Reminiscences, 1: 180, 323-28; Dabney Herndon Maury, *Recollections of a Virginian in the Mexican, Indian, and Civil Wars* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1894): 88-89.

38 McCormick to Twiggs, Jan. 6, McCormick to Gibson, Jan. 6, Twiggs to Gibons, Jan. 6, 1858, in Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1859, p. 451; Report of Floyd, Dec. 1, ibid., 1859, p. 7; U.S. *Statutes at Large*, 12: 68; Report of Taylor, Oct. 25, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1858, p. 801.

39 Crimmins, "Mansfield's Report, 1856," 354; Mansfield to Thomas, Oct. 31, 1860, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 567/625).

Amidst the strains of the regimental band, officers-of-the-day began their appointed rounds and relieved the old guard of its duties. According to one observer, the event highlighted the average day. "We listen & watch this important measure," he wrote melodramatically, "for here on hangs our safety from the visitations of Indians who surround us in hordes."[40]

Inspection of company barracks began at nine o'clock. Most officers returned to their quarters, where they were at ease to sleep, read, write, play cards, or shoot billiards until that afternoon. The officer-of-the-day bore heavier responsibilities. In charge of sanitary inspections, general police, mounting sentinals, and guard house activities, this officer handled the post's routine duties. When sufficient numbers of commissioned personnel resided at Davis, the rotation allowed each officer several days' rest between turns. But during the latter 1850s the burdens increased as one's number came up with distressing frequency. Officers were also liable for service on courts-martial and boards of survey and examination, which performed a thousand mundane tasks essential to the post's good order. Following time honored tradition, junior officers inevitably found themselves appointed secretaries of such boards.[41]

For the enlisted men, the morning routine varied over time. Selection to the guard meant closely supervised duty yet merited minor privileges like early meals and the chance to skip drills. Fatigue details, especially in the early years, were also burdensome. To save money the army hired enlisted personnel as construction workers. Others found themselves tilling the post garden. Although such extra duty meant more income and better food, the troops complained bitterly about the unmilitary nature of these activities. The lunch call relieved fatigue parties about noon. As officers returned to their quarters, the soldiers sat down to the day's major feed—a hearty portion of beef, whatever vegetable was available, bread, and the ever-present coffee.[42]

Fatigue call reassembled the work parties about one o'clock. Two hours later, company and battalion drill began. Retreat sounded at sunset, followed by a light supper of warmed-over beef, bread, and coffee for the enlisted men. As always, officers supplied their own rations and ate in their own quarters. Many combined their resources to form mess pools, sharing responsibilites and expenses. Tattoo ended the day about 8:30. The weekly dress parade gave the fort an especially military appearance; once again, the regimental band's performance boosted morale at Fort Davis.[43]

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40 Edward to Father, Apr. 6, 1856, Hartz Collection; Peters to Mrs. Stoutenborough, June 12, 1860, Peters Papers (quotation).

41 Edward to Father, Apr. 6, June 24, 1856, Hartz Collection.

42 Wooster, *Soldiers, Sutlers, and Settlers*, 83-91; Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue*, 38, 42-48; Coffman, *Old Army*, 164-65, 171.

43 Hartz to Father, Apr. 6, 1856, Hartz Collection. See also Wooster, Utley, and Coffman, op. cit.

Including a mixture of marching and simple manuevering, drills at Fort Davis usually outshone those conducted at other western posts. In 1856 Inspector Mansfield complimented the military training there. "The command has never exercised at the bayonet," he commented, thus hinting at the infrequent use of this weapon on the frontier posts. Yet the six companies displayed a "handsome" battalion drill and a smoothly executed independent skirmishing exercise. The garrison's marksmanship proved especially impressive in an army more accustomed to swinging an axe and hammering a nail than aligning a gun's sights. Mansfield set up a target one hundred yards from the firing line, at which each man fired twice. Company G scored twenty percent; Companies A, H, C, and F hit a quarter of the targets; Company D scored thirty-three percent. "Company D therefore came up to the Rifle Companies at fort [sic] McIntosh," reported Mansfield, "which shows very good firing with muskets and no back sights & ball & buck cartridges."[44]

Three years later, Lt. Col. Joseph E. Johnston was similarly impressed. Although now only 107 strong, Fort Davis's garrison and commander continued their exemplary work:

> The appearance of the company under arms was very handsome—the men strong, healthy & well "set up"—the arms, accoutrements & clothing in excellent order—their movements accurate & ready both as infantry of the line & skirmishers—their progress in the bayonet exercise handsome—& from the record of their target practice, the improvement in that respect decided. I have great satisfaction in finding a commanding officer who appreciates the importance of military exercises. It is to be considered that these exercises are liable to constant interruption by the frequent detachments, required for escorts. There is more evidence of attention to discipline & instruction at this than at any other post I have inspected.[45]

Mansfield was more critical in his report on conditions in 1860. From a garrison of more than four hundred in the mid-1850s, transfers to new posts in West Texas reduced Davis's strength to only thirty-one in October 1860. The small size of the garrison precluded attempts at drill. In addition, Capt. James V. Bomford had taken several of the company return and account books with him to Fort Bliss, where he was serving on a court-martial. Despite the herculian efforts of Lt. James J. Van Horn ("a highly meritorious officer" who "performs his duty well") post administration was in disarray and military activities had ground to a standstill.[46]

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44 Crimmins, "Mansfield's Report, 1856," 353-54.

45 Joseph F. Johnston, "Reports from Military Inspections of the Posts in New Mexico and Texas . . . in 1859," Arizona Historical Society, Tucson (original in National Archives).

46 Mansfield to Thomas, Oct. 31, 1860, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 567/625).

Women and children often accompanied the uniformed regulars to their frontier stations after the Mexican War. Fort Davis had its share of dependents. The wives of Asst. Surgeon DeWitt C. Peters, Capt. Arthur T. Lee, Lt. Thomas G. Pitcher, and Lt. Theodore Fink accompanied their husbands to the Limpia Creek outpost. The Eighth Infantry garrison also included a number of company washerwomen, or laundresses. Several children resided at Davis during the 1850s, with the offspring of post commander Washington Seawell and Captain Lee the most identifiable from remaining records.[47]

Nineteenth century American culture clearly shaped the views of most women who braved the exigencies of the western frontiers. Although the vigorous efforts of antebellum spokespersons for expanded rights and roles for women must not be forgotten, the overwhelming majority of American women accepted a broadly defined ideology of domesticity in which their primary responsibilities lay with homemaking and the family. Most focused their energies on child raising, family relationships, and domestic production. Popular culture and social controls reinforced traditional norms, which sharply distinguished the spheres of men and women. Men, held to be stronger and more capable of practical decision making, worked outside the home and provided governmental leadership; women, believed to be more virtuous, dominated domestic affairs and set society's moral guidelines.[48]

Contemporary domestic ideology allowed for variance and change. As one historian has concluded recently, it was "less a well-defined 'cult of true womanhood' than a way common women made sense of everyday existence," which combined the formalized structures compiled by eastern writers with the vague, rarely elaborated assumptions of the vast majority of American females. Its adherents did not necessarily accept an uninfluential role for women, who often used the idea of domesticity to command respect and even demand changes

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47 Peters to Stoutenborough, June 12, 1860, Peters Papers; Bliss Reminiscences, 1: 172; Lewis Burt Lesley, ed., *Uncle Sam's Camels: The Journal of May Humphreys Stacey Supplemented by the Report of Edward Fitzgerald Beale (1857–1858)* (1929; rpt. Glorieta, N.M.: Rio Grande Press, 1970): 49, 57.

48 Robert L. Griswold, "Anglo Women and Domestic Ideology in the American West in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries," in *Western Women: Their Land, Their Lives*, ed. Lillian Schlissel, et. al. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988): 15-33.

and concessions from males. Most women were neither passive civilizers, exploited drudges, nor twentieth century feminists; rather, they helped shape their own destinies by contributing to the mutual interests of both family and community.[49]

Little is known of the women of antebellum Fort Davis. It can only be assumed that they, like their counterparts at other posts, arrived on the frontier with a mixture of realism and romanticism. The West was both garden and desert, an ambiguously perceived wilderness of untold happiness and opportunity and at the same time filled with dread and evil. Most army women faced their upcoming struggles with the same quiet resolution as Mrs. Lydia Lane. Wife of the Regiment of Mounted Riflemen's Lt. William B. Lane, Mrs. Lane landed in Texas amidst an outbreak of yellow fever at the army encampment. "It was dreadful news to us, as there was no escape, no running away from it, nothing to do but land, take the risk, and trust in Providence. . . . I had 'gone for a soldier,' and a soldier I determined to be."[50]

In all probability, officers' wives at Davis spent most of their time and energies on domestic activities. Their ramshackle quarters must have caused great concern. Still, one of the elite group made the best of her indifferent surroundings, at least if her husband's letters accurately reflected conditions. With a slave available for household duties, Surgeon Peters assured his mother-in-law that her daughter Emily "was intended for the army." "Either in the tent or the log house she holds her own. . . deprived of many comforts & luxuries, we have managed to substitute others." Buttressing Peters's view was the oft-expressed contention that because of their scarcity, officers' wives received special attention and favors from other commissioned personnel.[51]

Despite such assurances, women like Mrs. Peters, Mrs. Lee, Mrs. Pitcher, and Mrs. Fink occasionally succumbed to the pangs of loneliness and frustration inherent in an isolated frontier post like Davis. The scarcity of ladies limited the possibilites of female bonding, often seen as an element of crucial importance

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49 Ibid., 15 (quotation), 28-29; Elizabeth Jameson, "Women as Workers, Women as Civilizers: True Womanhood in the American West," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 7 (no. 3, 1984): 1-9; Glenda Riley, *The Female Frontier: A Comparative View of Women on the Prairie and the Plains* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1988): 195-201.

50 Sandra L. Myres, "Romance and Reality on the American Frontier: Views of Army Wives," *Western Historical Quarterly* 13 (Oct., 1982): 409-27; Myres, *Westering Women and the Frontier Experience 1800–1915*, Histories of the American Frontier (Albuqerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982): 36; Lydia Spencer Lane, *I Married a Soldier; or, Old Days in the Old Army* (1894; rpt. Albuquerque: Horn and Wallace, 1964): 22.

51 Peters to Mrs. Stoutenborough, June 12, 1860 (first two quotations), Mar. 13, 1861 (third quotation), Peters Papers; Lane, *I Married a Soldier*, 53-54.

in the lives of western women. Differences in age, personality, and social background could also disrupt community harmony. From Fort Massachusetts, New Mexico, an officer who later served at Fort Davis reported that "even the ladies fight like cats and dogs. . . . You see these ladies come from various quarters of the country some from the first families & some from low ones," he continued. "They meet and can't agree."[52]

Even fewer records describe children at Fort Davis during the 1850s. Laundresses and enlisted men had a number of youngsters at the post who frolicked about the nearby area, hunting, singing, dancing, playing, and raising a vast menagerie of animals. Among the officers the problems of parenthood in nineteenth-century America were clearly apparent. Captain Lee and his wife tried to bring a fifteen-month-old child to Fort Davis in July 1857. Tragically the infant, unwell for some time previously, died just as they reached Fort Lancaster.[53]

Colonel Seawell also experienced the trials of fatherhood while stationed at Fort Davis. From 1848 to 1853 he sent three of his sons to school in Shelbyville, Kentucky. Yearly tuition and board cost $159.50 per child, amounting to a staggering forty-two percent of his yearly salary. In 1855 school headmaster Rev. William J. Walker asked Secretary of War Jefferson Davis for assistance in getting Seawell to pay the remaining balance of $800. The War Department forwarded the letter to Seawell. Seawell claimed the amount was too much—he would pay Walker $500 only. "I regard him [Walker] as a great liar & a great rascal although he is a minister of the gospel of Christ," charged Seawell. Unwilling to continue the uneven struggle, Seawell brought out two of his children, a boy aged eleven and a girl aged nine, to Fort Davis by 1860. His kind-hearted efforts to teach his youngsters drew criticism from a fellow officer: "He is rather too indulgent & makes these children his equals."[54]

Though present at virtually every frontier post and a major element in military society, officers' wives were ignored by official regulations. In contrast, laundresses and hospital matrons, despite the scorn of the genteel spouses of officers, enjoyed official military status. In 1802 Congress stipulated that one ration be given "to the women who may be allowed to any particular corps not exceeding the proportion of four to a company," and "to such matrons . . . as may

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52 Peters to Sister, Dec. 20, 1854, Peters Papers.

53 Lesley, ed., *Stacey Journal*, 48, 57.

54 Walker to Davis, Mar. 24, 1855; Seawell to Cooper, June 13, 1855 (first quotation), #S 486/177, Letters Received, Adjutant General's Office, 1822–1860 (microcopy M 567, roll 527); Peters to Mrs. Stoutenborough, June 12, 1860, Peters Papers (second quotation).

be necessarily employed in the hospital." The company commander appointed and dismissed the laundresses. In so doing the United States formally implemented a system of company washerwomen used during the Revolutionary War.[55]

Laundresses remained a silent yet important part of army life for the next seventy-five years. Most were apparently illiterate; many wed enlisted men, generally sergeants. Officially, the army frowned upon noncommissioned personnel taking wives and starting families. Yet military authorities knew that they had to accept such marriages in order to keep a sufficient cadre of qualified sergeants and corporals. As such, NCOs often secured for their wives positions as company laundresses. A laundress drew another government ration and supplemented her husband's regular salary by charging washing fees set by local post councils.[56]

Few records trace the experiences of these women at antebellum Fort Davis. The laundresses came and went with their respective companies. As the recruiting class of 1860 made its way from New York to Texas, for example, twelve laundresses accompanied the five-hundred-odd soldiers. In 1856, during the height of Davis's pre–Civil War glory, no less than fifteen laundresses resided at the fort. By October 1860, however, only four such workers, attached to H Company, Eighth Infantry, lived at Fort Davis. Some may have supplemented their incomes by prostitution. Army policy offically prohibited the practice, yet behind the façade of morality, the military tolerated such entrepreneurship.[57]

Whether they performed sexual favors in return for money or not, the laundresses lived in the flimsy jacal structures official military communiques referred to as married men's quarters (although not all laundresses were married). Unofficial army parlance coined the more colorful "Suds Row" to describe the section of the post occupied by company washerwomen. Social differences and the army's caste system clearly separated the laundresses from the lordly officers' wives, although the former commonly provided essential services by acting as midwives and nurses on the military frontiers. Several laundresses scraped together fairly sizeable estates; in the 1860 census, for

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55 U.S. *Statutes at Large*, 2: 134; Patricia Y. Stallard, *Glittering Misery: Dependents of the Indian Fighting Army* (Fort Collins and San Rafael, Colo.: Old Army Press and Presidio Press, 1978): 59; Miller J. Stewart, "Army Laundresses: Ladies of the 'Soap Suds Row,'" *Nebraska History* 61 (Winter, 1980): 421.

56 Wooster, *Soldiers, Sutlers, and Settlers*, 64-68.

57 Mansfield to Thomas, Mar. 23, Oct. 31, 1860, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 567/625); Crimmins, "Mansfield's Report, 1856," 352-53; Anne M. Butler, *Daughters of Joy, Sisters of Misery: Prostitutes in the American West, 1865–1890* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984): 122-46.

example, Mary Powell and Catherine King, laundresses at the civilian community just outside the fort, each claimed to have more than $1,500 worth of personal property.[58]

For officers, entertainment and social activites at a frontier post usually revolved around the ladies in residence. Bachelors like Bliss quickly became bored with the companionship of fellow males, and depended upon the ladies and married officers to break the monotonous routine by throwing parties and socials. But the dearth of women at antebellum Fort Davis, plus the understandable reluctance by those officers' wives present to entertain the entire garrison, made life at the post, in Bliss's view, much less lively than at a place like Fort Duncan. Lieutenant Hartz concurred. In June 1856, although six companies comprised the post garrison, the wives of Lieutenant Pitcher and Captain Lee were the only "ladies" present.[59]

Mail and an occasional vacation south of the border provided much needed diversions. "Today is Valentine's Day," wrote a lonely Asst. Surgeon Albert J. Myer to a friend back East. "I am so happy for I have my Valentines,—a letter from you and from Aunt." Eastern newspapers and periodicals passed through the hands of eager readers throughout the post. To break the monotony Hartz, Bliss, Bomford, and post sutler Alexander Young enjoyed "a flying trip to Mexico" in early 1858. Presidio del Norte, with its horse races, cock fights, dances, and fiestas especially attracted Lieutenant Bliss. Other Fort Davis personnel, however, undoubtedly agreed with Lt. William H. C. Whiting, who described the city as "a miserable, Indian-blighted place." A few "ragged creatures, apparently half starved and called 'soldiers,' " garrisoned the village, which Whiting dismissed as being "like all Mexican towns on the frontier.[60]

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58 Wooster, *Soldiers and Civilians*, 192-93; Stallard, *Glittering Misery*, 61; Manuscript Returns, U.S. Census, 1860, Presidio County.

59 Bliss Reminiscences, 1: 87, 172, 174; Edward to Father, June 24, 1856, Hartz Collection; (quotation) Eighth Infantry, June, 1856, Returns from Regular Infantry Regiments, June 1821–December 1916, National Archives (microcopy 655, roll 91).

60 Martin L. Crimmins, ed., "General Albert J. Myer: The Father of the Signal Corps," *West Texas Historical Association Year Book* 29 (Oct., 1953): 57-58 (first quotation); Woodland to Cousin Emma, Aug. 16, 1859, Woodland File, Fort Davis Archives; Edward to Father, Feb. 27, 1858, Hartz Collection (second quotation); "Journal of Henry Chase Whiting, 1849," in *Exploring Southwestern Trails, 1846–1854*, ed. Ralph P. Bieber and Averam B. Bender, Southwestern Historical Series, 7 (Glendale: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1938): 285-86 (third, fourth, and fifth quotations).

Social stratification and army tradition also distinguished officers from enlisted men. The regal commissioned personnel had little to do with their troops during off duty hours; as Hartz explained, "we have no society apart from the officers." "We had no amusements outside of the Post but what we could invent with our limited means," wrote Lieutenant Bliss, "and had to resort to almost every device to kill time." Desperate for entertainment, enterprising enlisted men built a horse racing track, a theater which supposedly sat two hundred, a library, a reading room, and a bowling alley. Officers also enjoyed a rudimentary billiards room, probably housed in the back of the sutler's store. Fortunately, the regimental band was stationed at Fort Davis. Colonel Mansfield described the Eighth Infantry band, eighteen strong, as "proficient & played well on dress parades & guard mounting." Exclaimed Dr. Myer, "we can surely amuse ourselves with such opportunities."[61]

Despite a chronic shortage of army chaplains, religious activities occupied some Davis residents. Before the Civil War Congress funded chaplains for only fifteen bases. In Texas only forts McKavett, Belknap, Bliss, and the military reservation at San Antonio enjoyed the benefits of a full-time chaplain. At Fort Davis officers thus assumed religious responsibilities on a rotating basis as their beliefs permitted. The officer-of-the-day was responsible for the chaplain's normal duties at funerals for the enlisted men. Post commander Seawell provided a Sunday sermon on at least one occasion. By 1860 Dr. Peters regularly read church services to members of the informal congregation.[62]

Such activities did much to alleviate the effects of army discipline, which was often harsh and capricious. Totalitarian sergeants dominated the lives of the rank and file. "The training and discipline of the companies are left in their hands entirely and they are held strictly accountable for the conduct of their men," recalled one first sergeant, who added that company officers rarely took part in drill. For minor offences sergeants typically meted out punishment without going through formal court-martial procedures. Veteran noncommissioned soldiers might also challenge a young officer's authority. Twenty-year-old Lt. Zenas R. Bliss met such a confrontation by busting several corporals and giving his first sergeant a stiff fine and a lengthy stay in the guardhouse.[63]

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61 Edward to Father, June 24, 1856, Hartz Collection (first quotation); Bliss Reminiscences, 1: 309 (second quotation), 330; Crimmins, "Mansfield's Report, 1856," 354 (third quotation); Myer to James, Sept. 26, 1855, in David A. Clary, " 'I Am Already Quite a Texan:' Albert J. Myer's Letters from Texas, 1854–1856," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 82 (July, 1978): 72 (fourth quotation).

62 Edward to Jenny, Mar. 25, 1856, Hartz Collection; Peters to Mrs. Stoutenborough, June 12, 1860, Peters Papers.

63 *Larsen Memoirs*, 219-24 (quotation); Bliss Reminiscences, 1: 177-78.

The informal punishment dispensed by company sergeants troubled army authorities. Although it prevented small-time offenders from having their records smeared by petty crimes, the unregulated disciplinary process could, if abused, result in cruel and arbitrary treatment of enlisted personnel. In 1857 commanding general Winfield Scott recommended that the articles of war be revised "to provide for the *legal* punishment of petty offences . . . so as to deprive commanders of small detachments and isolated companies of all pretext . . . for taking the law into their own hands." He suggested that the army set up courts consisting entirely of sergeants to handle minor crimes. Despite Scott's proposal, the system remained unchanged until well after the Civil War.[64]

Crime posed a serious problem throughout the 1850s. A garrison court, consisting of three officers or less, handled minor offenses punishable by no more than a month's confinement or stoppage of pay. General courts, with between five and thirteen officers, considered more serious crimes and all cases involving commissioned officers. At Fort Davis the latter courts meted out punishment to enlisted men according to the type of crime committed, the character of the defendant, and the whim of the court. Absence from drill might result in a five-dollar fine. A twice-drunk soldier was sentenced to hard labor for a month and a ten-dollar fine. A court found another man guilty of having left his post while on guard duty; because of the individual's "previous good character," a lenient court levied a nine-dollar fine and sentenced the offender to hard labor for three months.[65]

More serious offenders received harsh, brutal, and inconsistent punishment. Pvt. William Gould, for example, forfeited nine dollars of his pay for each of two months and was confined at hard labor for the same period for falling asleep while on guard duty. For a similar offence, a different court fined Pvt. William Morris fifty dollars and sentenced the private to walk the post once every three hours from reveille to retreat for a month, carrying a knapsack weighing twenty-four pounds. But Pvt. William Swan, also guilty of sleeping on duty, was assessed a thirty-dollar fine, ordered to be confined at hard labor for four months, and was to be held for two weeks every other month in solitary confinement on bread and water. On the recommendation of post commander Seawell, the army remitted the unexpired term of Swan's punishment after two months.[66]

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64 Report of Scott, Nov. 20, Secretary of War, 1857, p. 48.

65 Coffman, *Old Army*, 197; Court Martial of Robert Carson, II 104, box 260, Court Martial Case Files; Court Martial of Gottard Sanders, HH 914, box 249, ibid.; Court Martial of John Malia, HH 953, box 251, ibid. (quotation).

66 Court Martial of William Gould, HH 888, box 247, Court Martial Case Files; Court Martial of William Morris, HH 698, box 235, ibid.; Court Martial of William Swan, II 9, box 255, ibid.

As was the case for minor crimes, major offences often involved the abuse of alcohol. In describing the deteriorating military appearance of Fort Davis in 1860, J. K. F. Mansfield concluded that "there are two whiskey shops within 500 yards of the post, one east and the other west, & men that will get drunk, can get drunk." In March 1857 a court found Pvt. Peter Fay of F Company, 8th Infantry, guilty of being drunk on guard duty. It sentenced him to forfeit his pay for the next two months, and put him on bread and water for ten days. Two years later Fay, now in Company D, committed the same offence. This time the punishment involved six months of hard labor in the guardhouse; for two weeks of each alternate month, he would be placed in solitary confinement on bread and water. Absent without leave for a day and drunk at inspection, Company G's Pvt. Peter Gilhooly found his pay docked ten dollars for each of the next three months and himself in solitary confinement for the same period. For a week every month, he was put on a diet of bread and water.[67]

Desertion also proved common at Fort Davis. With nationwide desertion rates often exceeding twenty percent a year, the army cracked down hard on such offenders. Runaways apprehended at Fort Davis received forty to fifty lashes, were branded on the left hip with the letter "D", had their heads shaved, and were drummed out of the service to the haunting strains of the "Rogue's March." Some men protested the brutal public whipping, shaving, and stripping of a fellow soldier's military insignia. In one incident at Fort Davis, officer-of-the-day Edward Hartz ordered several men to whip Pvt. William Gould. In rapid succession five soldiers refused to lash Gould to Hartz's satisfaction. "Humanity is a commendable virtue but must give way to the voice of law and the ends of justice," Hartz later wrote after fining the reluctant floggers seventy dollars apiece.[68]

The simple written protest of one of the accused, Pvt. Lewis Dyer Brooks, reveals a good deal about the average enlisted man and the harshness of army life. Brooks, only eighteen years old at the time, noted that for the previous four years and nine months of his enlistment, he "never got in the guard-house or in

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67 Bliss Reminiscences, 1: 298-303; Mansfield to Thomas, Oct. 31, 1860, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 567/625) (quotation); Court Martial of Peter Fay, HH 747, box 238, Court Martial Case Files; Court Martial of Peter Fay, II 9, box 255, ibid.; Court Martial of Peter Gilhooty, II 211, box 260, ibid.

68 Report of Davis, Dec. 1, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1853, p. 7; Report of Davis, Dec. 1, ibid., 1856, p. 3; Court Martial of Thomas Regan, John McKillop, HH 725, box 237, Court Martial Case Files; Court Martial of John J. Bartson, HH 815, box 243, ibid.; Court Martial of William Kearns, II 104, box 260, ibid.; Edward to Father, Apr. 6, 1856, Hartz Collection (quotation); Court Martial of John Laughlin, Jacob Hetler, Lewis D. Brooks, Smith Sanderson, and John Toole, HH 652, box 232, Court Martial Case Files. Coffman, *Old Army*, 196, reports another similar incident at Fort Randall, Dakota Territory.

trouble." Despite this fine record of service, Brooks continued, "i was detailed to flog a man witch i did it seems not quit hard enuf witch god knows i have floged others the same and nothing was said to me. . . . god knows i did not intend to fail to do my duty."[69]

Disobedience of orders also drew severe punishment. Pvt. Daniel Sullivan refused an order to sweep and called his corporal a "son of a bitch," for which the court levied a thirty-dollar fine and six months' hard labor. For striking a noncommissioned officer, a soldier could expect a twenty- to thirty-five-dollar fine and three to six months' wearing a ball and chain in the guardhouse. As Pvt. Thomas Nary found out in 1856, refusing to obey an officer's order meant even harsher punishment. Nary forfeited forty dollars of his pay and was to be confined on bread and water for three months. Admitting that "few men could bear" such punishment, military authorities remitted the bread and water diet to ten days.[70]

Other sentences reflected the tremendous latitude given garrison courts-martial. Musician William Snyder received a twenty-five-dollar fine and a two months' stay in the post guardhouse for stomping on his band instrument. After trying to kill a fellow bandsman, a court fined Pvt. Thomas Griffiths fifty-four dollars and gave him six months of hard labor. Thieves could expect to be branded on the left hip with the letter "T," have their head shaved, and be drummed out of the army. On the other hand, one private found guilty of attempted rape received only a relative slap on the wrist—a twenty-dollar fine.[71]

Pvt. John McCool proved to be the most notorious malcontent among the Davis garrison. The blue-eyed, brown-haired native of Ireland enlisted at Philadelphia in May 1855. Thirteen months later, having drawn guard duty at Fort Davis, McCool left his post to visit his wife. Upon being confronted by a sergeant, McCool threatened to "let the son of a bitch have" it with his shotgun. The private received a stiff sentence—an eighty-dollar fine and five months' confinement at hard labor. In December 1857 a drunken McCool threatened his spouse, for which a garrison court fined him ten dollars and confined him at hard labor for forty days. McCool again ran afoul of authorities in August 1858, when he went to sleep behind a wood pile while on guard duty. For this offence,

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69 Brooks to Friend, attached to HH 652, box 232, Court Martial Case Files.

70 Court Martial of Daniel Sullivan, HH 953, box 251, ibid.; Court Martial of John Dean, John Meldrum, HH 747, box 238, ibid.; Court Martial of Thomas Nary, HH 725, box 237.

71 Court Martial of William Snyder, HH 815, box 243, ibid.; Court Martial of Thomas Griffiths, HH 888, box 247, ibid.; Court Martial of Walter Scott, Samuel Thompson, HH 698, box 235, ibid.; Court Martial of John Guthrie, HH 725, box 237, ibid.; Court Martial of Samuel Cronk, HH 888, box 247, ibid.

he was fined thirty dollars and sent to the guardhouse for six months. For two weeks every other month, McCool would be placed in solitary confinement on bread and water. The private, however, proved indefatigable—while serving the latter sentence, he escaped, was caught, and charged with desertion—another $120 fine, fifty lashes, and hard labor for six months. Undaunted, McCool completed his five-year army stint, and was discharged at Ringgold Barracks in June 1860.[72]

A sensational incident fueled camp gossip in July 1857. Early that month Pvt. Edward Eagan asked laundress Jane McDermott to return his laundry. In the course of their conversation, Eagan noted his desire "to get some woman to sleep with." Several days later Eagan returned to her quarters brandishing a knife and threatening to kill Jane's husband, Pvt. James McDermott, so as to "have the pleasure of sleeping with you yet." Terrified, Mrs. McDermott told her husband of Eagan's harrassment. Private McDermott grabbed a pistol and found Eagan just outside the camp theater. The two exchanged insults; McDermott fired a shot into the air to frighten his adversary, who promptly charged the former with a butcher knife. McDermott then shot and killed his assailant in self-defense.[73]

McDermott's trials had just begun. A good soldier before the incident, he was thrown into the guardhouse for the next ten months until a garrison court-martial convened. McDermott found himself charged with having shot Eagan and with having illegally discharged a firearm on the base. The court found him guilty of the first charge but attached no criminality to the incident because of the extenuating circumstances. But McDermott was found guilty of the firearms charge, fined thirty dollars, and sentenced to hard labor for six months. The long-suffering private protested the sentence, noting his previous incarceration and his "suffering . . . at having his wife alone during that time without a protector." On the advice of all but one of the members of the court, Fort Davis authorities later remitted McDermott's sentence.[74]

The military also drew businessmen, workers, land speculators, and assorted civilians to the Fort Davis region. Attempting to insure that soldiers had some of society's amenities, each regiment maintained officially approved sutlers. Before the Civil War, regimental and post commanders permitted selected

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72 John McCool, Registers of Enlistments in the United States Army, vol. 51, National Archives (microcopy M 233, roll 25); Court Martial of John McCool, HH 652, box 232; HH 888, box 247; HH 953, box 251; II 104, box 260, Court Martial Case Files.

73 Court Martial of James McDermott, Testimony of Jane McDermott, Statement of James McDermott, filed in HH 914, box 249, Court Martial Case Files. For a slightly different view, see Bliss Reminiscences, 1: 330.

74 Ibid.

individuals to erect sutler's stores on army posts. Official boards of survey regulated sales of food, clothing, alcohol, and assorted wares. Since in a frontier environment the post trader often enjoyed a captive market, it was essential that the prices and quality of this merchandise be closely monitored. Frequently, enlisted men and civilians charged that officers accepted under the table payments from the sutler in exchange for allowing him to cheat his powerless clients.[75]

Such does not appear to have been the case at antebellum Fort Davis, where Alexander Young held the post sutlership. First appointed in February 1855, he won renewed permission in December 1857 and August 1860, and was also named sutler for nearby Fort Quitman in December 1860. By January of the following year, the enterprising Young had also secured contracts to supply the Davis garrison with wood and hay. At Fort Davis, Young erected a 135-by-20-foot combined store and warehouse. An example of the picket structure so popular throughout the 1850s, Young's store boasted four rooms and one fireplace. The walls were chinked with adobe; one of the rooms even had a wooden floor.[76]

Young found a financial bonanza at Fort Davis. For official recognition and the right to sell alcohol to the troops, he paid a five-cent tax per man every month. In 1857 one irate civilian asserted that Young hawked his wares "at enormous prices." But by 1860 the sharp-eyed inspector J. K. F. Mansfield reported that Young kept his store "well supplied with all the requisites for the troops & gives satisfaction." Young supplied soldiers, resident civilians, travelers, and traders from Mexico, as well as serving as an erstwhile banker. The long absence of the paymaster, for example, led Lieutenant Hartz to borrow money from Young to send home to his family.[77]

Other civilians also enjoyed semiofficial status at antebellum forts. The scarcity of skilled personnel at frontier posts and the continuing fiscal crises of the War Department led the army to hire a mix of civilian workers and its own soldiers to perform essential miscellaneous tasks. At Fort Davis the military paid more than $13,000 for extra duty men and civilian workers between

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75 Wooster, *Soldiers, Sutlers, and Settlers*, 77; Coffman, *Old Army*, 177-78.

76 Registers of Post Traders, pp. 136, 166, vol. 1, RG 94, National Archives; Vinton to Nichols, Jan. 21, 1861, Letters Received, Department of Texas, 1860–61, RG 393, National Archives; Charles B. Voll, "Archeological Excavations in First Fort Davis, Fort Davis National Historic Site, Texas" (1986): 23-25.

77 Crimmins, "Mansfield's Report, 1856," 357; Reid, *Reid's Tramp*, 123 (first quotation); Mansfield to Thomas, Oct. 31, 1860, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 567/625) (second quotation); Peters to Stoutenborough, June 12, 1860, Peters Papers; Manuscript Returns, U.S. Census, 1860, Presidio County; Hartz to Father, Jan. 1, 1858, Hartz Collection.

Fig. 4:11. View of Fort Davis, 1854-58, showing (from left) enlisted barrack, guard house, and sutler's store. Watercolor by Capt. Arthur T. Lee. Photograph courtesy of Rush Rhees Library, University of Rochester.

October 1854 and June 1856. At the latter date the army engaged a herder, a blacksmith, and a guide from the civilian ranks. More commonly, however, the War Department limited the hire of expensive civilian employees, employing regulars in extra duty tasks whenever possible.[78]

The army's presence at Fort Davis also encouraged nonmilitary development such as the bustling overland trail service community of Wild Rose Pass. No less than seven separate dwellings occupied by stage- and mail-related workers, each with a station keeper, cook, and some form of auxiliary laborer, were evidenced in the 1860 census. In all, Wild Rose Pass boasted a population of forty—seven stationkeepers, six stage drivers, one conductor, eight hostlers, seven cooks, two servants, two herders, one laborer, his wife, and six children. Ironically, the laborer, Lauriano Carrasco, owned more property than anyone

78 Crimmins, "Mansfield's Report, 1856," 354-55; Letter of Seawell, Oct. 13, 1855, p. 195, Register of Letters Received, Department of Texas.

else listed in the Wild Rose Pass settlement, with a total of two hundred dollars in real and five hundred dollars in personal property.[79]

Residents of the little settlement claimed a cosmopolitan background. Fifteen were born in Mexico, two in Ireland, and one in Saxony. Southern-born occupants included nine Arkansans, five Tennesseans, two Texans, one Mississippian, and one Alabaman. The north was also represented, with two natives of Ohio and one each of New Jersey and New York. It was a young population, with an average age of twenty-three and one-half years. John Brown, a thirty-four-year-old station keeper, was the oldest person enumerated.[80]

Other civilians played a prominent role in the region's early history. Ben Leaton, perhaps the most important of the early Anglo residents, had been killed by John Burgess in the early 1850s. Despite the death of its namesake, Fort Leaton continued to supply army expeditions; several official maps even listed it as a U.S. military installation. After her husband's death, Leaton's wife, the former Juana Pedraza, married a discharged soldier named Hall, who also died under mysterious circumstances. Burgess took over the Leaton ranch in lieu of debts; Mrs. Hall moved to Fort Davis, married a hospital steward, and drifted into obscurity.[81]

Another early resident, John Spencer, established a ranch twelve miles up the Rio Grande from Presidio. After unsuccessfully attempting to raise horses, he turned to the cattle business and secured a contract to supply Fort Davis. During the 1850s Manuel Musquiz and his family set up ranching operations six miles southeast of the fort in the canyon that now bears his name. The Musquiz settlement, eventually numbering some twenty persons, was frequently threatened by Indian attacks.[82]

Milt Faver became another major Trans-Pecos cattleman. Of mysterious origins, he claimed to have come to the Big Bend region as a cure for consumption. Faver reportedly spoke Spanish, French, and German along with English, and enjoyed fine wine, tailored suits, and peach brandy. He married Francisca Ramirez, and after briefly operating a dry goods store in Presidio, turned to

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79 Manuscript Returns, U.S. Census, 1860, Presidio County.

80 Ibid.

81 Levitt Corning, Jr., *Baronial Forts of the Big Bend: Ben Leaton, Milton Faver and Their Private Forts in Presidio County* (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1967): 21-32; "Map of Texas and Part of New Mexico compiled in the Bureau of Topographl. Engrs. chiefly for Military Purposes," 1857; Bliss Reminiscences, 5: 201.

82 Cecilia Thompson, *History of Marfa and Presidio County, Texas, 1535–1947* (Austin: Nortex Press, 1986), 1: 55, 66, 78-79, 94; Ronnie C. Tyler, *The Big Bend: A History of the Last Texas Frontier* (Washington: National Park Service, 1975): 121-22.

ranching, establishing a castle-like residence on Cibolo Creek fifty miles south of Davis. Repulsing several Indian raids (assisted at least partially by a small cannon obtained from Fort Davis), Faver turned an original stock of three hundred into a ten- to twenty-thousand-head cattle herd after the Civil War.[83]

Another community, known as Las Limpias, nestled closer to the fort. Its seventy residents included thirty females and seventeen children. Like the trail service settlement at Wild Rose Pass, the population at Las Limpias averaged less than twenty-five years of age. Employment at the latter village centered upon serving the military post's various needs—the census enumerator logged seventeen laundresses, twelve laborers, four cooks, three servants, three seamstresses, a merchant, a storekeeper, a clerk, and a sutler. Fifty persons listed Mexico as their birthplace; Texas and Ireland each contributed five natives. Others were born in Louisiana, California, New Mexico, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, France, Belgium, and New York.[84]

Several residents at Las Limpias prospered from the army's presence. Sutler Alexander Young reported the greatest estate, worth $28,000. Diedrick Dutchover, reportedly born Anton Diedrick, had been shanghaied at Antwerp in 1842. Escaping at Galveston, he joined the army and served in the war against Mexico. Not understanding English, he was dubbed Diedrick Dutchallover. "Dutchover" originally came to the Davis region as an employee of Henry Skillman's mail-stage line in 1854, then served as a butcher for the post. Weighing a mere ninety pounds, little Dutchover was considered a superb jockey and rode Lt. Zenas R. Bliss's horse in the Fort Davis races. Despite Indian attacks, he had accumulated $6,400 worth of property by 1860, and went on to became one of the region's leading citizens. Other wealthy personages included merchant Patrick Murphy, who also figured prominently in subsequent development.[85]

In addition to providing a market for the area's ranchers and farmers, the army offered other tangible assistance to civilian growth. Local residents, for example, could purchase condemned equipment and animals at the army's public auctions. One man who bought used army goods was Irish-born Daniel

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83 Tyler, *Big Bend*, 122-23; *Baronial Forts*, 44-56; Sam Woolford, ed., "The Burr G. Duval Diary," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 65 (Apr., 1962): 499-500.

84 Manuscript Returns, U.S. Census, 1860, Presidio County.

85 Thompson, *History of Marfa and Presidio County*, 1: 79; Barry Scobee, *Old Fort Davis* (San Antonio: Naylor Co., 1947): 72-73; Bliss Reminiscences, 1: 311; Manuscript Returns, U.S. Census, 1870, Presidio County, and 1880, Jeff Davis County; Depositions of Mar. 1, 1899, Claim 2744, Diedrick Dutchove [sic] vs. U.S. and Apache Tribe of Indians, Indian Depredations Files, Record Group 205, National Archives.

Murphy, a naturalized citizen who came to America as a youth, started a ranch north of Fort Davis by 1857, and later established a saloon just off the base. Like Dutchover, Murphy became one of the area's most important figures after the Civil War. Of course, the military did not always attract upstanding figures. Gamblers and ne'er-do-wells lurked about the outskirts of the post; among the most prominent of the undesirables was one Monte Smith, who operated a grog shop-casino frequented by the soldiers.[86]

The military presence directly impacted the region's landowners. An 1820 statute forbade the War Department from purchasing land without special congressional authorization. This restriction was of particular importance to the army in Texas, because the Lone Star state owned the public lands. As such, speculators claimed the sites occupied by the military; once their ownership had been established, they could rent the land to the War Department at a considerable profit. The state did not recognize the shaky claims of Jose Ronquillo's heirs and descendents to the Trans-Pecos north of Presidio. Instead, the original claimant to the site which later became Fort Davis was one A. S. Lewis.[87]

John James, a prominent West Texas surveyor, land agent, and speculator, eventually secured control of the site from Martha Hardin, to whom Lewis had sold the warrant. On October 7, 1854, the government leased the 640-acre tract from James for twenty years at three hundred dollars per annum. The agreement gave the government the right to purchase the land outright for ten dollars per acre within five years, or for twenty dollars per acre for the remainder of the term of the lease.[88]

Both the James lease and the ownership of valuable timberlands in the surrounding area were bitterly disputed. Post commander Seawell sought to

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86 Jones to Jesup, June 3, 1858, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 906/8820); Tyler, *Big Bend*, 122; Bliss Reminiscences, 1: 260; Deposition of Mar. 1, 1899, Claim 3889, Daniel Murphy vs. US and Apache Indians, Indian Depredations Files.

87 Report of Meigs, Oct. 19, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1871, pp. 140-41; J. J. Bowden, *Spanish and Mexican Land Grants in the Chihuahuan Acquisition* (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1971): 196; Illustration No. 19, in Jerome Greene, *Historic Resource Study: Fort Davis National Historic Site* (U.S. Department of the Interior: National Park Service, 1986): 459; Clarence Raht, *The Romance of Davis Mountains and Big Bend Country* (Odessa: The Raht Co., 1963): 159.

88 John James, *Frontier and Pioneer: Recollections of Early Days in San Antonio and West Texas* (San Antonio: Artes Graficas, 1938): 19-23; Raht, *Romance of Davis Mountains*, 159; "Summary of Land Transactions at Fort Davis, 1854–1887," Appendix I, in Greene, *Historic Resource Study*, 380. For Hardin, see Mary Williams to Regional Director, Southwest Region, Aug. 16, 1990.

untangle the situation, but by April 1855 an army clerk recorded that Seawell's "efforts to effect a lease of the land on which Fort Davis is situated, have failed." Surviving records suggest that the original James lease was either forgotten or temporarily voided by mid-1855. Into the breach sprang James W. Magoffin, a prominent West Texas businessman who offered the army a site which, if not that of Fort Davis itself, was close enough to the reservation to confuse all but the most careful student of the dispute. The Magoffin agreement was concluded on July 6, 1855. Still, the problem had not been clarified in May 1856, when Asst. Adj. Gen. Don Carlos Buell advised Seawell to continue negotiations with Magoffin in the event that no other claimants surfaced.[89]

Whether or not Magoffin's claim included the site of the post or simply nearby timber lands, the army reversed its course and once again dealt with James. A previously unforeseen hurdle was removed by mid-August 1856, when a prominent local figure, James Dawson, relinquished his right "to a certain tract of land lying on the Limpia stream near Fort Davis." That same month, the government again leased the post site from James, who by 1860 was receiving the original three hundred dollars annual rent. Magoffin, meanwhile, vainly tried to secure more money for his own claims; his demands for annual payment of five hundred dollars again suggest that he claimed the Fort Davis site itself. The army, however, refused to accede to Magoffin's supplications, determining instead that "his declaration will not be regarded nor his claim admitted.[90]

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89 Letter of Seawell, Feb. 19, Mar. 17, Apr. 26, 1855, p. 488, 491, 492 (quotation), Register of Letters Received, Department of Texas; Letter of Magoffin, May 10, 1855, ibid., p. 523; Letter of Seawell, May 14, June 11, July 6, 1855, ibid., p. 190-92; Johnston to Cooper, May 6, 1856, Letters Sent, Department of Texas, 1856–58 (microcopy M 1165, roll 1); McDowell to Seawell, May 23, 1857, ibid.; Buell to Seawell, May 23, 1856, ibid.

90 Letter of Dawson, Aug. 14, 1856, p. 299, Register of Letters Received, Department of Texas (first quotation); Greene, *Historic Resource Study*, 16; Crimmins, "Mansfield's Report, 1856," 356; Mansfield to Thomas, Oct. 31, 1860, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 567/625); McDowell to Seawell, May 23, 1857, Letters Sent, Department of Texas, 1856–58 (microfilm M 1165 roll 1) (second quotation). The 1860 appropriation of $608.87 "to be paid as back rent for the site of Fort Davis, Texas," also suggests that the lease was not paid while the army sorted out proper ownership. U.S. *Statutes at Large*, 12: 65. See also "Summary of Transactions at Fort Davis, 1854–1887," Appendix I, in Greene, *Historic Resource Study*, 380. For a different interpretation, see ibid., 16.

Timber leases further established the army's role as a significant if not always cooperative client to West Texas landowners before the Civil War. Once again John James, land agent, owner, and speculator, emerged as a crucial player. In April 1857 a board of officers at Fort Davis agreed to pay James Dawson, James R. Sweet, and Henry Skillman $905.53 for timber used in constructing the fort. In December 1857 Texas Congressman Guy M. Bryan notified the War Department that a number of his constituents had filed claims for wood removed from their land by the army. At Fort Davis, John James was again at the center of such claims, arguing that the Sweet-Skillman lands belonged to him. James refused to accept the army board's valuation and instigated legal proceedings in San Antonio district court against Fort Davis officers Seawell, Lee, Jones, and Pilcher for $20,000 in damages.[91]

Desperate to avoid more trouble with the locals, Colonel Seawell called upon the War Department to make a generous offer. "I would recommend, with a view to the amicable settlement of the matter, that Mr. James be allowed the *highest* price which pine trees are worth in any forest in this state," advised Seawell. The officers involved in the lawsuit, fearing personal liability, were authorized to hire legal counsel to defend their interests. Their choice proved wise, for they secured the services of the firm of William Houston and J. J. Allen for a fee of five hundred dollars. On October 13, 1860, the court ruled in favor of James, but allowed him only one thousand dollars in damages. A special clause in the army appropriations bill covered the fine and court costs the following year.[92]

Despite the legal entanglements, the Fort Davis garrison brought rudimentary law and order to the Trans-Pecos. In 1850 Texas created Presidio, El Paso, and Santa Fe counties, and dispatched commissioner (and future Indian agent) Robert S. Neighbors to organize the new governments. The state's claim to what it called Santa Fe County, the most populous of the new units, was invalidated by the Compromise of 1850. Confusion over the legal organization of sparsely populated Presidio County (which included the site of Fort Davis) led the state to attach it to El Paso County for judicial purposes.[93]

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91 Proceedings of a Board of Officers, Orders No. 55, Apr. 23, 24, 1857, #S 330/1858, Letters Received, Adjutant General's Office, 1822–60 (microcopy 567, roll 590); Bryan to Floyd, Dec. 14, 1857, #B 691, ibid. (roll 555); Seawell to Assistant Adjutant General, July 6, 1858, #S 330/1858, ibid. (roll 590).

92 Seawell to Assistant Adjutant General, July 6, 1858, #S 330/1858, ibid. (roll 590); Jones to Cooper, July 6, 1858, ibid.; Lee to Assistant Adjutant General, July 9, 1858, ibid.; Petition of N. O. Green, Feb. 19, 1859, ibid.; Townsend to Twiggs, Aug. 21, 1858, ibid.; Seawell to Cooper, Oct. 13, 1860, ibid.; U.S., *Statutes at Large*, 12: 201. Much of this correspondence may also be found in the Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 906/8820).

93 H. P. N. Gammel, comp., *The Laws of Texas 1822–1897* (Austin: Gammel Book Co., 1898), 3: 464-65, 786, 969; 4: 906-07; 5: 1095.

The lack of local government rendered civil law enforcement practically impossible. With nowhere else to turn, army officers stationed at posts like Davis often settled minor civil disputes. The absence of county officials also made for curious political contests. Judge A. C. Hyde came to Fort Davis seeking support for his state senate campaign. Hyde proved more interested in getting votes than in securing proper identification from prospective supporters. In addition to soliciting the vote of Lieutenant Bliss, Hyde also asked a number of Mexican nationals passing through the area. Bliss, although admitting that Hyde was a good man and a fine state senator, later concluded that the propriety of such vote-gathering techniques left much to be desired.[94]

In March 1860 nonexistant local government and the inevitable jealousies between soldiers and civilians led to a near riot. In a late night scuffle at Daniel Murphy's saloon, located about six hundred yards southeast of the fort, Pvt. John Pratt was stabbed to death. Wild with anger and full of strong drink, several members of Pratt's G Company assembled outside the saloon, brandishing their firearms and demanding that bartender William Graham, supposed to be Pratt's assailant, surrender himself. They opened up a ragged fusilade into Murphy's establishment; in the darkness of the night, one of their own number, Pvt. Michael Powers, received a mortal wound.[95]

Word of the riot finally reached officer-of-the-day Lt. William McE. Dye, who, with the help of a reliable guard, convinced a panic stricken William Graham to go to the post stockade for his own safety. The excitement seemed to subside the following day. But it proved to be only a calm before the storm. The men of G Company, intent upon avenging their dead comrades and apparently with the assistance of six members of the guard, broke into the jail, seized prisoner Graham, and hung him on a nearby tree.[96]

In a remarkable display of group solidarity, the men of G Company refused to divulge much useful information to Fort Davis investigating officers. Department commander Lt. Col. Robert E. Lee, determined to get to the bottom of the incident, ordered Colonel Seawell to lead the external investigation. Capt. James V. Bomford's H Company also returned to Fort Davis to restore order.

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94 Bliss Reminiscences, 2: 15-20.

95 See Miscellaneous letters, testimony, and court decisions in Court Martial Case File II 299 (mistakenly filed in folder II 298), Judge Advocate General's Office, Record Group 153, National Archives. Other correspondence is in File F # 15/1860, Letters Received, Adjutant General's Office, 1822–60 (microcopy M 567 roll 623). See also San Antonio *Ledger and Texan*, August 11, 1860; and Thomas G. Wilhelm, *History of the Eighth U.S. Infantry from its Organization, in 1838* (2d ed., Headquarters, Eighth Infantry, 1873), 2: 62; Scobee, *Old Fort Davis*, 43.

96 Ibid.

The members of the guard who had allowed Graham to be lynched received stiff fines and eight to ten months of hard labor. A strong escort took the supposed ringleaders to El Paso for civil trial, but a jury dismissed the charges due to a lack of evidence. Dissatisfied with the outcome but unable to break the ring of silence, the army broke up G Company, distributing its remaining men to other outfits in the regiment.[97]

Several other factors had contributed to the disintegration of G Company. Its captain, Joseph Selden, had been absent sick or on detached duty for the past twelve years. Lt. Theodore Fink, himself a former enlisted man, was frequently detached as recruiting officer; other officers believed him overly lax in his disciplinary measures. With less than two years' experience, Lt. James J. Van Horn filled out the only other commissioned slot. Detached service, extra duty, sickness, and crime further divided the unit and reduced morale. Company discipline suffered accordingly; the men habitually left their quarters without permission before the incidents of mid-March. With but little guidance from their officers, the soldiers had grown accustomed to looking out for and protecting their own interests. Distrusting orders and uncertain that Graham would be punished, they took matters into their own hands, in the process terrifying superiors who recognized the often tenuous nature of military discipline on the frontiers.[98]

By 1861 Fort Davis had become much more than a simple military outpost. In addition to serving as one of the army's major western bases during the mid 1850s, the fort attracted a number of civilians to the Trans-Pecos region. Among military men, slow promotion, low pay, isolation, and personal feuds frequently divided commissioned personnel. On the other hand, shared bonds of West Point training, Mexican War experiences, and alleged persecution by Congress and the general public engendered a sense of community among the officers. Clearly distinguished from the officers were the enlisted men, whose foreign and urban roots troubled many officials. Fatigue details rather than military duty kept most of the soldiers busy, although the garrison's impressive drills outshone those of typical western posts until the fort was stripped of manpower in 1860. Rations were ample if bland; pay certain if below that offered skilled civilian laborers; discipline harsh and unremitting; entertainment possible if unsophisticated.

Social and economic divisions also marked the lives of those at Fort Davis. Comparatively few officers' wives lived at Fort Davis before the Civil War. Though enjoying the benfits of official army recognition, laundresses found life at the military post rigorous and even dangerous. The sutler, Alexander Young,

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97 Ibid.; Returns from Regular Army Infantry Regiments, Eighth Infantry, June-July 1860 (microcopy M 665, roll 92).

98 Ibid.

performed his duties better than many who held such positions at frontier posts. Most civilians found work with the stage and overland mail lines. A few ranchers also braved the isolation and dangers of far western Texas. But civil-military relations were not always harmonious. While enjoying the proceeds from military leases, landowners found the army to be a tough bargainer. In the absence of formal civil government, the post offered some legal authority, but it could not always prevent clashes between soldiers and civilians.

The army erected Fort Davis to protect the overland trail west of San Antonio, to establish the supremacy of the federal government over Indian tribes ranging the Trans-Pecos, and to facilitate non-Indian, non-Hispanic settlement of the region. The garrison provided some defense against Indian attacks, yet its small size and the government's inconsistent and poorly conceived Indian policies limited the post's effectiveness. Indian raiders still plagued overland traffic, striking even the small ranches in the immediate vicinity. Once in battle, the regulars did fairly well; however, their inability to chase down Indian groups deemed hostile frustrated settlers and soldiers alike. Finally, the fort stimulated only limited Anglo settlement of the Trans-Pecos during the 1850s. The civilian population remained small and heavily dependent upon the military's continued presence. In sum, as the 1860s opened Fort Davis had only partially realized the goals set forth by the architects of what passed for federal policy.

CHAPTER FIVE:

THE CIVIL WAR YEARS

From the moment of their incorporation into the Union, Texans had long criticized the federal government's inability to protect citizens of the Lone Star state from Indian attacks. Indeed, members of the state's secession convention listed this failure as one of their justifications for leaving the Union. Thus the Civil War would not only force the soldiers of the regular army to examine their loyalties, it would test the skill of state officials in raising, equipping, training, and leading the volunteers so acclaimed by Texans throughout the 1850s.

As the dark clouds of secession formed, the immediate question centered upon the fidelities of the frontier regulars. As early as 1856 at least two officers destined to serve at Fort Davis expressed concern over the potential for split allegiances. Both Lt. Edward L. Hartz and Asst. Surgeon DeWitt C. Peters sympathized with former Pres. Millard Fillmore's American Party, but supported the Democratic candidate, James Buchanan, as the man who might heal the nation's sectional wounds. The two officers sternly criticized extremists on both sides. "If he [Buchanan] is elected & our machinery does not work smooth the only thing to be done is to put Massachusetts & South Carolina in ruins," wrote Peters, a native of New York. The Pennsylvania-born Hartz sharply attacked the Republicans and their candidate John C. Frémont. "Men whose only cares are money, money!! money!!! . . . are now striving soul and body to rupture the Union of the states by the accursed fanatical interference in slavery and their support of such an unprincipled scoundrel as John C. Frémont," concluded Hartz, who also lambasted "the fanatic portion" of the South.[1]

Four years later, as rumors of Abraham Lincoln's election and the secession of South Carolina and the lower South swept through Texas, U.S. army officers

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1 Peters to Father, Aug. 16, 1856, DeWitt C. Peters Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley (first quotation); Edward to Father, Dec. 9, 1856 (second quotation), Feb. 10, 1857 (third quotation), Edward L. Hartz Collection, Library of Congress (microfilm copy, Fort Davis Archives).

voiced mixed reactions. Now stationed at Camp Hudson, Hartz blasted both the Republicans and the secessionists. From Fort Mason, Lt. Col. Robert E. Lee wrote: "I can anticipate no greater calamity for the country than a dissolution of the Union." Yet Lee, a native Virginian who had served his country faithfully for thirty years, decided that "if the Union is dissolved, and the Government disrupted, I shall return to my native State and share the miseries of my people." On the other hand, Rhode Island's Lt. Zenas R. Bliss paid little attention to the recent talk of secession, thinking it was simply more of the same bluster which had characterized national politics for years. Bliss did admit, however, that officers with Southern roots expressed more concern than their Northern brethren.[2]

When a state convention met in Austin on January 28, 1861, to consider relations with the United States government, federal troops in Texas could no longer ignore the issue. Although many Texans, including Gov. Sam Houston, opposed disunion, the convention voted 166-8 to secede on February 1, a decision later ratified by a popular vote. Residents of Fort Davis, heavily dependent on federal protection and the local military establishment, voted 48-0 against secession; likewise, Presidio reported a 316-0 count for the Union. However, El Paso precincts returned some 800 votes for secession, so El Paso County as a whole carried the measure by a healthy majority. The decision led Daniel Murphy, Fort Davis Unionist, to conclude that "there is a poor chance for us for getting any protection in this section of the country."[3]

David E. Twiggs, commanding the Department of Texas, acted with dispatch if perhaps not loyalty in response to the situation. Commissioned at age twenty-two during the War of 1812, Twiggs had devoted his life to the service of his country. He had fought in the Seminole Wars, defended Augusta, Georgia, against the South Carolina nullifiers of 1832, and compiled a distinguished record during the Mexican War. Yet the Lincoln election disillusioned the Georgia native, already disgruntled after repeated run-ins with commanding general Winfield Scott. Without informing the War Department, Twiggs initiated correspondence with the governor of Georgia for a position with that state's troops and began negotiations for the army's withdrawal with the secession convention of Texas.[4]

Rightly suspicious of Twiggs's loyalties, the War Department relieved him

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2 Edward to Father, Dec. 15, 1860, Hartz Collection; Lee to Custis, Jan. 23, 1861, in Francis Raymond Adams, Jr., "An Annotated Edition of the Personal Letters of Robert E. Lee, April, 1855–April, 1861" (Ph.D. diss., University of Maryland, 1955): 721-22 (quotations); Zenas R. Bliss Reminiscences, 1: 191, 231, Barker Texas History Center.

3 Ralph A. Wooster, *The Secession Conventions of the South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962): 121-35; Murphy to Pease, Feb. 25 (quotation), Mar. 1, 1861, E. M. Pease Papers, Austin History Center, Austin Public Library, Austin, Texas.

4 Russell K. Brown, "An Old Woman with a Broomstick: General David E. Twiggs and the U.S. Surrender in Texas, 1861," *Military Affairs* 48 (no. 2, 1984): 57-61.

of command in early February 1861. Placing Col. Carlos A. Waite in charge of the Texas department, on February 15 the army ordered his troops to evacuate to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. "Preliminary thereto, you will concentrate the troops in sufficient bodies to protect their march out of the country," commanded the brass in Washington. Garrisons from Bliss, Quitman, Davis, Lancaster, and Hudson were to gather at Fort Stockton; Fort Clark, Camp Cooper, and San Antonio were other projected meeting points. But the flurry of orders arrived in San Antonio too late. In mid-February, Twiggs, still in command, surrendered all the federal posts in Texas to agents of the secession convention. The 2,600 troops in the Lone Star state, comprising nearly fifteen percent of the United States regular army, were to keep their small arms and to be allowed safe passage to the North.[5]

Fig. 5:12. Gen. David E. Twiggs, commander of the Department of Texas, 1857-61. Photograph 111-B-4024 courtesy of National Archives.

In conjunction with the surrender, Twiggs ordered post commanders to turn federal property over to state commissioners and to concentrate their forces for a march to the coast. Confused by the abrupt capitulation, officers and men contemplated their loyalties. Twiggs, for one, returned to a hero's welcome in New Orleans and a major general's commission in the Confederate army. Lee, promoted to colonel in mid-March, placed his fate with that of his beloved Virginia; upon the Dominion's withdrawal from the Union in the spring, Lee resigned his federal commission. Farther west, Edward Hartz condemned Twiggs, the Republican Party, and the state of Texas. Although he cast his lot with the Union, Hartz blasted the "Black Republicans" as "fanatics who regard

5 Ibid.; Assistant Adjutant General to Waite, Feb. 4, 15 (quotation), 1861, Letters Sent, Headquarters of the Army (Main Series), 1828–1903, vol. 8/5, RG 108, National Archives (microcopy M 857, roll 5); Thomas Wilhelm, *History of the Eighth U.S. Infantry from its Organization, in 1838* (2d ed., Headquarters, Eighth Infantry, 1873), 2: 63.

the principles of a political party as paramount to the interests of their country and the welfare of a few miserable negroes of more importance than the perpetuity of the American Union." He also saved a few parting shots for the Lone Star state: "Texas has already cost the U.S. Government millions upon millions and has never brought anything into the Union but her worthless self, her quarrels and her debts."[6]

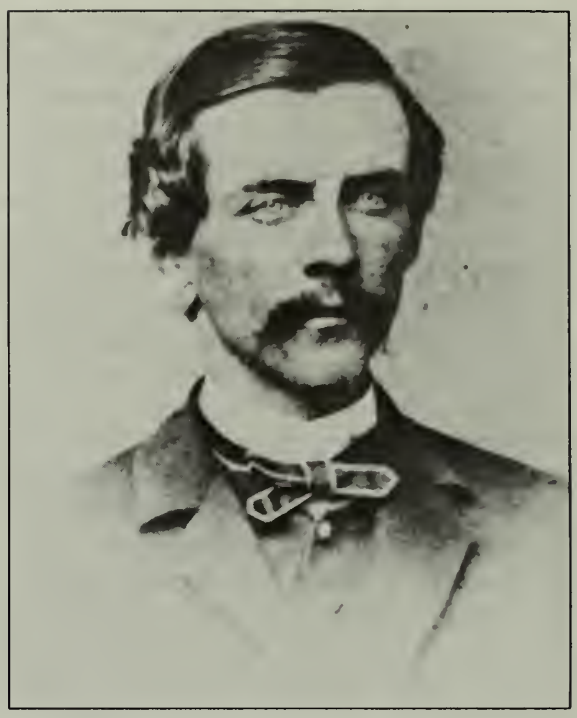

Fig. 5:13. Asst. Surgeon DeWitt C. Peters. Photograph AA-63, Fort Davis Archives.

From Fort Davis, Assistant Surgeon Peters joined a chorus of officers criticizing Twiggs's surrender as "humiliating." "I am one of those . . . who cannot longer regard Genl Twiggs as a veteran, or a Hero," wrote Peters. In contrast to Hartz, however, Peters wished no ill will upon the Lone Star state. "Many of the people in the State are poor beyond means," he noted, and feared that the federal withdrawal would open up the western frontiers to a series of devastating Indian raids, a feeling heartily echoed by local citizens. As for the troops, Peters reported that "every officer & soldier is cheerful & *if anything, more loyal than usual.*"[7]

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6 Report of Weisel, in John S. Billings, Circular No. 4, War Department Surgeon General's Office, *A Report on Barracks and Hospitals, with Descriptions of Military Posts* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1870): 228; Brown, "Old Woman," 60; Lee to Sister, Apr. 20, 1861, in Adams, ed., "Lee Letters," 754-55; Edward to Father, Feb. 25 (first quotation), Mar. 11 (second and third quotations), 1861, Hartz Collection.

7 Peters to Sister, Mar. 13, 1861, Peters Papers (quotations); George Price, *Across the Continent with the Fifth Cavalry* (1883; rpt. New York: Antiquarian Press, 1959): 95; Murphy to Pease, Mar. 1, 1861, Pease Papers.

Peters went on to admit that "a few officers have resigned but that is to be expected." Indeed, secession sharply divided army officers in Texas. Of the thirty-one stationed at Fort Davis before the Civil War, ten ultimately joined the Confederate army. Six of the ten were born in states that seceded; John G. Taylor and Edmunds B. Holloway hailed from Kentucky, a slave state that tried to remain neutral. Robert P. Maclay (Pennsylvania) and Philip Stockton (New Jersey) completed the list of those who joined the gray. Of the former Davis officers in the Confederate army, three—Maclay, Thomas M. Jones (Virginia), and Horace Randal (Tennessee)—became brigadier generals.[8]

But twenty-one officers who had served at Fort Davis remained with the Union. Eighteen had been born in Northern states; another, Theodore Fink, was from Germany. Washington Seawell and Richard I. Dodge hailed from slave states but continued their federal service. Of those remaining in the U.S. army, ten won general's stars; two, William Hazen and Zenas R. Bliss, became brevet major generals. The enlisted personnel stationed at Fort Davis at the time of the crisis, belonging to H Company, Eighth Infantry, and the recently disbanded G Company, remained overwhelmingly loyal to the Union.[9]

While considering their options, the troops in West Texas readied for the upcoming move. Insufficient numbers of wagons and draft animals meant that much property would be left behind. Sutler Alexander Young undoubtedly suffered the greatest tangible loss. He loaded as much of his merchandise as he could on available transportation, but sold the rest at absurdly low prices. The

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8 Peters to Sister, Mar. 13, 1861, Peters Papers (quotation); Erwin Thompson, "The Officers, Fort Davis, Texas," in Officers File, Fort Davis Archives; Francis B., Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1899).

9 Ibid., Wilhelm, *History of the Eighth Infantry*, 2: 125-29. For birthplaces of enlisted men, see U.S. Manuscript Census, 1860, Presidio County. The pro-Union sentiment of the enlisted men is also reflected in a letter written by an officer stationed at Camp Cooper: "I believe a majority of the army rank & file to be Republicans." William L'Engle to E. M. L'Engle, Jan. 2, 1861, William L'Engle Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill.

small civilian population could not possibly afford to buy all the possessions left behind by the departing military personnel. Surgeon Peters took his own losses philosophically. "Poor people can afford to be charitable," wrote Peters, & we will give our furniture &c to those who need them & are our friends."[10]

Confusion grew as the isolated Trans-Pecos commands anxiously awaited official news of the national crisis. The lack of specific orders infuriated army personnel. Troops at Fort Quitman received conflicting instructions; their course was finally decided by the arrival of evacuees from Fort Bliss in early April. The two groups united and headed for San Antonio via Fort Davis. Under the leadership of Capt. Edward D. Blake, the Davis garrison seemed more certain of its orders. In April, as advance elements of secessionist troops approached the post, the federal soldiers began their march toward San Antonio. Although he was a native South Carolinian who subsequently joined the Confederate service, Blake cut down the Davis flagstaff in a final act of defiance to the opposing Rebels. The Federals left little behind—"flour about one months rations for a company, no meat, a few 25 lb cans of desicated vegetables, some salt, one bbl vinigar, [and] some wagon sheets."[11]

As the Texas state troops arrived, they found that E. P. Webster and Dietrick Dutchover had been left in charge of protecting the post against vandalism. A Mr. McGee, the sutler's clerk, and Jack Woodland, civilian guide, also stayed at Fort Davis. Two stagekeepers and a handful of Mexican families remained just outside the fort. Otherwise, "our neighbors at the post are few," reported one

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10 Thomas to Waite, Feb. 15, 1861, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 906/8820); Blake to McFenin, Mar., 1861, ibid.; Bliss Reminiscences, 3: 3; Peters to Sister, Mar. 13, Peters Papers (quotation).

11 William H. Bell, "Ante Bellum: The Old Army in Texas in '61," *Magazine of History* 3 (Feb., 1906): 81-82; Bliss Reminiscences, 2: 238-39; 3: 1-2; Robert M. Utley, *Fort Davis National Historic Site, Texas*, National Park Service Historical Handbook Series no. 38 (Washington: Department of the Interior, 1965): 56; George Ruhlen, "Quitman: The Worst Post at Which I Ever Served," *Password* 11 (Fall, 1966): 110-11; M. L. Crimmins, "The Border Command at Fort Davis," *West Texas Historical and Scientific Society Publications* (1926), 1: 9, 11; "Notes and Sketches of Campaigns in New Mexico, Arizona, Texas, Louisiana, and Arkansas by a Participant Dr. M. W. Merrick From Feb. 16th 1861 to May 26th 1865 Actual Service in the Field," Daughters of the Republic of Texas Library, San Antonio (courtesy of Jerry Don Thompson) [hereafter cited as Merrick Diary] (quotation); General Order 44, Mar. 8, 1861, Returns from Regular Army Infantry Regiments, Eighth Infantry (microcopy M 665, roll 92). Standard secondary sources set April 13 as the date of the Federal withdrawal. However, enlistment records in Martin Hardwick Hall, *The Confederate Army of New Mexico* (Austin: Presidial Press, 1978): 379, show that at least two men had been mustered into Confederate service at Fort Davis by April 1. As such, the departure of April 13 seems unreliable.

Confederate. The postmaster had resigned, leaving Daniel Murphy in charge of the mail. The confused new mailman found that his predecessor had taken the mailbox key. "I do not know what to do," Murphy confessed. Meanwhile, the federal troops pressed on toward San Antonio. Led by Bvt. Lt. Col. Isaac V. D. Reeve, the six companies included officers and 366 rank and file. More than 1,300 regulars had already evacuated Texas, with another 800 well on their way to the port of Indianola.[12]

News of the firing on Fort Sumter in mid-April ended the uneasy truce in Texas. About twenty-two miles west of San Antonio near San Lucas Springs, the Union force encountered fifteen hundred Texas troops led by Col. Earl Van Dorn, himself recently resigned from the U.S. Second Cavalry Regiment. Reeve took possession of a large stone house owned by one "Mr. Adams" and barricaded the road to Castroville with his wagons. Van Dorn deployed his troops and a battery of six cannon across Reeve's front and demanded that his foes surrender. Reeve refused to give up until satisfied that the Southerners enjoyed overwhelming strength. Van Dorn met the demand by allowing Lt. Zenas R. Bliss to inspect the Rebel forces. Upon receiving Bliss's report confirming Van Dorn's superiority, Reeve ordered his men to stack their arms.[13]

On May 9, 1861, Reeve officially surrendered his command. The prisoners were distributed at several locations in Texas. Many officers, for example, found themselves sent to San Antonio. Confederate recruiters offered inducements to the captured troops. A few bluecoats joined the Rebel armies; Assistant Surgeon Peters reported that he and two other lieutenants accepted the parole offered by Confederate authorities. Claiming poor health and accompanied by his long-suffering wife, Peters explained that "I understand they [U.S. authorities] do not approve of the course taken . . . but we were tired of having a halter in perspective & so came away on any terms for there was no chance of a fight for us."[14]

Peters also assailed his former captors. They "need a good thrashing. I can never forgive them of their rascally treatment of us. . . . Liberty of speech is gone in the South & they are all crazy as loonies," he asserted. Those who remained in confinement later complained of inhumane treatment. "They were subjected to degrading labors, supplied with scanty food and clothing, and sometimes

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12 Cecilia Thompson, *History of Marfa and Presidio County, Texas, 1535–1947* (Austin: Nortex Press, 1986), 1: 96; Merrick Diary (first quotation); Murphy to Pease, Mar. 1, 1861, Pease Papers (second quotation); Wilhelm, *History of the Eighth U.S. Infantry*, 2: 60; Brown, "Old Woman," 60.

13 Wilhelm, *History of the Eighth U.S. Infantry*, 2: 87-90.

14 Ibid., 87, 97-105; Peters to Sister, Aug. 13, 1861, Peters Papers (quotation).

chained to the ground, or made to suffer other severe military punishments," according to one Eighth Infantry historian.[15]

One of the Confederate guards remembered a far different story. Assigned to oversee prisoners at Camp Verde, he recalled that his charges occupied "comfortable huts" and were "allowed their liberty within a quarter of a mile from the flagstaff." "I had a friendly feeling for the poor old soldiers and did what I could to make their confinement as light and pleasant as possible," he wrote after the war. He claimed that the prisoners attended roll call twice daily and received the same rations as did the Confederates. According to the guard, the Yankees could borrow guns for hunting and leave the camp to attend miscellaneous needs.[16]

Several Union officers initially rejected any favors offered by their Confederate captors. Bomford, Bliss, and several others refused commutation of living allowances offered by the Confederacy. But they gradually accepted parole—Bliss and Bomford were released in April 1862, as was James J. Van Horn, another Fort Davis resident. Colonel Reeve took parole in August.[17]

The enlisted men waited longer for their freedom. At least two soldiers, Stephen O'Connor and a fellow prisoner named Wilson, escaped from near San Antonio in December 1862. They made their way some eight hundred miles to Matamoros, Mexico; there, O'Connor found a U.S. naval vessel which took him to New Orleans, where he promptly reported for duty. Those who accepted a more orthodox release were rewarded in February 1863. On the twenty-fifth of that month, nine noncommissioned officers and 269 men, including many Fort Davis veterans, were exchanged in Louisiana for Confederate prisoners. The soldiers then returned to active service with the Eighth Infantry, their extended stay in Texas finally over.[18]

Having long complained about the federal government's inability to defeat the Indians, Texans now found themselves responsible for their own protection and free to act according to their own policies. In accord with the instructions

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15 Peters to Sister, Aug. 13, 1861, Peters Papers (first quotation); Wilhelm, *History of the Eighth Infantry*, 2: 97-105 (second quotation).

16 DeWitt C. Thomas Reminiscences, June 12, 1878, Barker Texas History Center.

17 Davis to Bomford, Bliss, et. al., Nov. 26, 1861, Letters Sent, Department of Texas, vol. 135, RG 109, National Archives; Wilhelm, *History of the Eighth Infantry*, 2: 272, 295, 300, 303, 329; 66742 AGO 1897, Dec. 7, 1897, in 965 A.C.P. File 1874, Appointment, Commission, and Personal Branch, Record Group 94, National Archives.

18 *Army and Navy Journal* 28 (Sept. 6, 1890): 22; Brown, "Old Woman," 60; Hebert to Sibley, July 31, 1862, Letters Sent, Department of Texas, vol. 134, RG 109; Wilhelm, *History of the Eighth Infantry* 2: 97-105, 125-29; U.S. Manuscript Census, 1860, Presidio County.

of the secession convention, military authorities ordered Capt. Trevanion T. Teel's company to occupy forts Clark, Duncan, Lancaster, Stockton, and Camp Hudson. In addition, twenty men of Capt. Powhatan Jordan's troop, led by Lt. Samuel Williams McAllister, were mustered into Confederate service on February 27 at San Antonio and were on their way to Fort Davis within the week. Shortly thereafter, McAllister received a promotion and began raising troops for his own command, enlisting three men at Fort Clark and thirty-two at Fort Davis beginning on April 1. McAllister and several others returned to San Antonio in late August, their six months' obligation at an end. At least fourteen of the men who assembled at Davis remained in the Confederate service, including newly elected Capt. James Davis, 1st Lt. John Kinszley, 1st Sgt. John B. Denton, and Cpl. John Wade.[19]

Supply deficiencies troubled the first Confederate garrison at Fort Davis. Although Daniel Murphy provided a few rangy cattle, the men of McAllister's company nearly mutinied over the lack of proper rations. "It is said there is seven great wonders in the world," wrote D. W. Merrick facetiously. "And our receiving some rations of flour & beans . . . from Ft. Stockton is the 8th wonder." Clothing also ran short, with trousers a particularly scarce commodity. "We are now begining to cast about to remedy the situation," noted a Confederate diarist in late May, although "by keeping out of sight of the Murphy residence we could get along fairly with our shirts." [Mrs. Murphy was at the time the lone woman on the post itself.] Fortunately a former sailor teamed with a tailor in the garrison to fashion some wagon sheets left behind by the departing Federals into rudimentary trousers, thus resolving the immediate crisis.[20]

Several Indians came in to investigate the new occupants of the Trans-Pecos. On May 31 H. W. Merrick reported that the venerable old Apache chief Espejo came in for a "confab" with Captain McAllister. Supposedly 106 years old, Espejo was accompanied by two elderly Indian women. Espejo spoke excellent Spanish, and recounted not only the old days during Mexican rule but also his tribe's warfare with the Comanches. "The Comanches claimed all the country on the east [of the Pecos River]," wrote Merrick, "and his people were not strong no more."[21]

Other Apaches followed the venerable Espejo. Nicholas, a notable Mescalero chief, offered at least one Confederate the opportunity to join his tribe by marrying one of his daughters. The Indians traded mescal cakes, bows, shields, arrows, lances, and clothing in return for scrap iron, ore, and liquor. According to Merrick, Espejo "loves" whiskey, but admitted that it rendered younger

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19 Hall, *Confederate Army of New Mexico*, 19, 377-80.

20 Merrick Diary, 17.

21 Ibid., 18-19.

warriors "fools."[22]

The Confederates quickly became bored with life along the Limpia. Occasionally rumors of fighting back east or moves to the west excited the recruits. Four soldiers wasted a day hunting for copper, silver, and big horned sheep. Several troopers idled away July 4 by firing off a few shots with the unit's howitzer. One of the boys "did not elevate the piece quite enough. The shell struck the edge of the bluff and came ricocheting down the mountain in a direct line with the gun. And the boys in a direct line away from it." "Exploded at the foot of the mountain," wrote one diarist nonchalantly. "He had cut his fuse too long."[23]

Meanwhile, department commander Van Dorn set out to clear up the confusion resulting from secession. On May 24 Van Dorn formally ordered the reoccupation of the Federal forts in West Texas. Lt. Col. John R. Baylor, a noted frontiersman and second in command of the Second Texas Mounted Rifles, headed the first occupation forces. If possible, Baylor was also to seize Fort Fillmore, forty miles north of El Paso.[24]

Company D of Baylor's regiment had helped capture Colonel Reeve's column west of San Antonio in May. As part of Baylor's drive into New Mexico, D Company reached Fort Davis on July 7, 1861, thereby reinforcing McAllister's forlorn garrison. Capt. James C. Walker commanded the outfit. Born in London in 1812, Walker emigrated to the United States while still a child. He attended West Point from 1828 to 1831, but "a deficiency in mathematics" led him to quit the Academy to study medicine. He served in the war with Mexico, and moved to Lavaca County, Texas, in 1854. There Walker helped recruit his company, which was mustered into Confederate service on May 23, 1861.[25]

After briefly occupying Fort Davis, Walker and most of D Company continued west with Baylor to El Paso and New Mexico. Baylor occupied Mesilla, New Mexico, captured the Union forces which had concentrated at Fort Fillmore, and organized the Confederate Territory of Arizona. Meanwhile, Lt.

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22 Ibid., 25.

23 Ibid., 25-27.

24 Martin Hardwick Hall, *Sibley's New Mexico Campaign* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1960): 25-26.

25 Mrs. John Walker, "Data Sheet on James Walker," James C. Walker File, Fort Davis Archives; Merrick Diary, 28; Clayton Williams, *Texas' Last Frontier: Fort Stockton and the Trans-Pecos, 1861–1895*, ed. Ernest Wallace (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1982): 15; Hall, *Confederate Army of New Mexico*, 319-20 (quotation).

William E. White and Lt. Reuben R. Mays took charge of Fort Davis until the arrival of Capt. William C. Adams, commander of C Company, Second Regiment of Mounted Rifles. Hoping to protect the western frontiers, Adams had raised his command in February 1861, upon the authority of Ben McCulloch. "You had better get such men as wish to join the service for twelve months," McCulloch had advised. "Get the best horses you can & get them in good order.[26]

State and Confederate authorities sought to establish order amidst the excitement and confusion following the onset of the Civil War. Baylor already held parts of southern New Mexico and Arizona but needed more men to consolidate his gains. Back in Texas, John S. "Rip" Ford, former Ranger and pioneer, commanded the Rio Grande line from Brownsville to El Paso. Van Dorn warned Baylor and Ford of the presence of several hundred U.S. soldiers within range of El Paso. With the aid of the five or six cannon seized at Davis, Quitman, and Bliss, Van Dorn believed prompt action might bag the entire enemy force.[27]

Although Baylor defeated the Federals above El Paso, delays in organizing, equipping, and training recruits prevented the Confederates from exploiting the early advantage. Col. Paul O. Hébert, who replaced Van Dorn as commander of the Department of Texas, noted that "although volunteers are anxious to serve, the people are poor and the state without money or apparent credit. . . . [A]rms, ammunition, provisions and equipments are wanting." Disciplining the independent-minded Rebels seemed a dubious but necessary proposition. Gambling, horseracing, and stealing from civilians must immediately end; "if any gamblers come to the posts or about them to filch the troops of their earnings [you] will order them to stop their gambling or require them to leave at once," wrote one frontier adjutant. Though retaining their individual approach to warfare, Adams's men were decently armed, their commander having drawn sixty-five cavalry musketoons and a similar number of Colt revolvers from Confederate stocks in San Antonio.[28]

Baylor impatiently pressed ahead. On July 12, 1861, he ordered Captain

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26 Hall, *Sibley's New Mexico Campaign*, 26-28; Williams, *Texas' Last Frontier*, 15-18; McCulloch to Adams, Feb. 21, 1861, William C. Adams Papers, Fort Davis Archives; ---- to Mechling, Apr. 16, 1861, fragment, ibid.

27 Van Dorn to Ford, May 27, 1861, Adams Papers; Adams to Ford, Apr. 3, 1861, ibid.

28 Hebert to Secretary of War, Sept. 27, 1861, Letters Sent, Department of Texas, vol. 129, RG 109 (first quotation); Special Order No. 40, June 18, 1861, James B. Berry Papers, Barker Texas History Center (second quotation); Regimental Orders No. 12, July 13, 1861, ibid.; Invoice, July 3, 1861, Adams Papers.

Adams to move most of his command to Fort Bliss, leaving only twenty men and a second lieutenant at Davis. As one delightfully semiliterate Confederate remaining at Davis remarked, "ther are only 20 men at the post now the others are gone with the Captin to Fort Filmore to Col Baylor in persait of them northern troops." Realizing that this might leave the Trans-Pecos open to Indian attack, Baylor sought a truce with Chief Nicholas, a local Apache leader. After briefly meeting an Indian delegation at Fort Davis, Baylor wined and dined the chief at El Paso. The colonel also issued food supplies from Fort Davis to Nicholas's people. In return the Apache chief agreed to make peace. But as his stagecoach approached Davis, Nicholas stole two pistols and made a daring escape.[29]

The shaky truce was shattered by early August. "We have just com from a five days scout yesterday we kild two Indians and tuck one with us a Life he is hear with us now," scribbled a Fort Davis trooper, who believed two hundred Indians roamed the area. On the night of August 4 the Apaches killed or captured fifty animals belonging to sutler Patrick Murphy. Lt. Reuben E. Mays set out in pursuit the following day with six men of D Company, Second Texas Mounted Rifles—Thomas Carroll, John H. Brown, Samuel R. Desper, Frederick Perkins, Samuel Shelby, and John S. Walker. Juan Fernandez, another unnamed Mexican, and five Anglo civilians—John Turner, post guide; P. H. Spence, stage keeper; John Woodland, a former Ranger; Joseph Lambert; and John Deprose, clerk to Patrick Murphy—joined the soldiers.[30]

Lieutenant Mays followed the Indian trail for more than one hundred miles to the southeast. On August 10 Mays captured a hundred Apache horses, but blundered into a neatly laid ambush the following day. Only one of the party, a Mexican guide named Juan Fernandez, escaped the Indian trap. Fernandez stumbled back to Fort Davis, where Lt. William P. White sent out nineteen men, including nine members of the garrison, as a relief party. From Fort Stockton, Captain Adams also took up the pursuit, with Fernandez as guide. Adams and

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29 Baylor to Adams, July 12, 1861, Adams Papers; Draper to Lane, Aug. 8, 1861, John H. Draper File, Fort Davis Archives (quotation); E. E. Townsend, "The Mays Massacre," *West Texas Historical and Scientific Society Publications*, No. 5 (1933): 30-31; Utley, *Fort Davis National Historic Site*, 17-18; Williams, *Texas' Last Frontier*, 24-25; Baylor to Magruder, Dec. 29, 1862, *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, (series 1), 9: 916 (hereafter referred to as *OR*).

30 Petition of Ella P. Murphy, Dec. 6, 1873, Claim 588, Ella P. Ellis vs. U.S. & Mescalero Apache, Indian Drepredations Claims, Record Group 123, National Archives; Draper to Lane, Aug. 8, 1861, Draper File (quotation); *San Antonio Herald*, Sept. 7, 1861; Williams to Hassmer, Apr. 27, 1984, John Woodland Civilian File, Fort Davis Archives.

his men nearly ran out of water in the desolate region south of present-day Alpine as they vainly searched for the Indian raiders. The Fort Davis team located the site of the disaster, but found only the body of John Deprose, scraps of tattered clothing, and a few miscellaneous personal items.[31]

Baylor learned of the disaster by August 25. Formerly the colonel had been satisfied with stationing small detachments of twenty to thirty men at each of the Trans-Pecos forts. But in light of the recent defeat, Baylor ordered Captain Adams to concentrate his entire company at Fort Davis. Such a move, he hoped, might better protect the road to El Paso. Baylor also demanded reinforcements for his operations in New Mexico and western Texas. In accord with Baylor's instructions, Adams returned to Davis on September 7, finding Lieutenant White, Sgt. J. B. Hawkins, and fourteen privates at the post. By the end of the month, the beefed-up garrison included officers Adams, White, and Lt. Emory Gibbons, five privates left behind as sick by other companies, fifteen men from D Company, and forty-eight men from C Company, Second Texas Mounted Rifles.[32]

In early October, Captain Adams rode back to Fort Lancaster to guide additional recruits to Fort Davis. In the meantime Colonel Baylor ordered the capture of one A. F. Wulff, a contractor to Fort Davis who also operated a store in Presidio del Norte, Mexico. According to Baylor, Wulff was "a spy." "I want him enticed over on this side of the river and taken prisoner and sent to these headquarters [Dona Aña, New Mexico] in irons," wrote Baylor. The order reached Fort Davis on the eleventh; in Captain Adams' absence, Lieutenant Gibbons assumed responsibility for carrying out these instructions. Oddly, Gibbons requested that Richard C. Daly, a former soldier now serving as clerk at Pat Murphy's trading house, read the message aloud. Daly did as he was told, with several bystanders at the store overhearing the contents of the letter.[33]

Taking nine men, Lieutenant Gibbons left Davis the following day. On the fourteenth, four of his party, traveling incognito, appeared at Wulff's store in

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31 Townsend, "Mays Massacre," 29-30, 38-43; *San Antonio Herald*, Sept. 7, 1861; Draper to Lane, Oct. 4, 1861, Draper File.

32 Baylor to Adams, Aug. 18, 25, 1861, Adams Papers; Report of Baylor, Aug. 25, 1861, *OR* (series 1), 2: 25; Williams, *Texas' Last Frontier*, 29-30; Post Returns, Sept. 1861, Adams Papers.

33 Baylor to Adams, Oct. 3, 1861, *OR* (series 2), 2: 1527 (quotations); "Richard C. Daly's Account to Harry Warren on Jan. 15, 1907, at Presidio, Texas," Town and Vicinity File, Fort Davis Archives; Adams to McCulloch, Oct. 21, 1861, *OR* (series 2), 2: 1526. The latter message may also be found in the Adams Papers.

Presidio del Norte. They returned again that afternoon, further quizzing Wulff. The storekeeper later claimed that he believed the men to be Confederate deserters and was as such suspicious of their motives. Captain Adams, however, pointed out that since Wulff and Pat Murphy were business partners, the latter had undoubtedly passed a warning on to his associate ahead of the Gibbons scout.[34]

Several Confederates remained on the Mexican side of the border that evening, attending a dance with Joseph Leaton, son of the deceased land baron Ben Leaton. Six men—five soldiers from Fort Davis and Joe Leaton—banged on Wulff's door about three o'clock the next morning. Gibbons claimed that they had been invited to spend the night there. Cautiously, Wulff opened the door. Two Confederates grabbed Wulff and threatened to shoot him if he did not come quietly. Fearful for his wife and family, the accused spy promised to cooperate.[35]

As the Confederates dragged Wulff through the streets, his wife screamed for help. On the alert after hearing about the open reading of the Baylor letter at Fort Davis, Wulff's brother-in-law formed a posse which chased down the Americans. Shots rang out in the early morning streets of Presidio; when the smoke finally cleared, two of the soldiers (Thomas B. Wren from Uvalde and John B. Boles from San Antonio) and an unidentified Mexican were killed. Wulff broke free and escaped unharmed. As he later informed his friend and partner Murphy, "Providence seems to protect me—this time I did not expect to see my family again. . . . Joe Leaton was the one that laid the plot no doubt."[36]

Adams had returned to Fort Davis on the fourteenth, the day before the incident at Presidio del Norte. He dispatched Sgt. T. L. Wilson and five men to recall Gibbons, "but too late to remedy the evil the lieutenant has caused." Adams blamed the fiasco squarely on Lieutenant Gibbons, whose decision to have Daly read the letter accusing Wulff of espionage "entirely ruined the success of the undertaking." Upon Gibbons's return to Fort Davis on October 18, Adams placed the lieutenant under arrest.[37]

Available evidence can prove neither Baylor's allegations that Wulff was a

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34 Adams to McCulloch, Oct. 21, 1861, *OR* (series 2), 2: 1526; Wulff to Adams, Oct. 16, ibid., 1528.

35 Wulff to Adams, Oct. 16, ibid., 1529; Gibbons to President of Presidio del Norte, Oct. 16, 1861, ibid., 1527.

36 Wulff to Adams, Oct. 16, ibid., 1529; Wulff to Murphy, Nov. 16, 1861, ibid., 1530 (quotation); "Return of Soldiers in C Co. 2nd Regt. T.M.R. who have died since 8th June 1861," Mar. 1, 1862, Adams Papers.

37 Adams to McCulloch, Oct. 21, 1861, *OR* (series 2), 2: 1527 (quotation); Adams to Gibbons, Oct. 15, 1861, Adams Papers.

spy nor the latter's claim that Joe Leaton had instigated the attempted abduction. The incident did, however, lead Wulff to abandon his contracts with the Confederates at Fort Davis. He and Murphy had been supplying the post with hay, were just beginning to fulfill a contract for one thousand bushels of corn (at three dollars per bushel), and had also agreed to furnish small quantities of wood to the Confederates. But in the wake of his near escape, Wulff concluded that "we might just as well give up furnishing Fort Davis." From New Mexico, Colonel Baylor agreed. On November 15 he ordered Captain Adams to make no more contracts with Murphy and Wulff.[38]

The misadventure also helped to oust Patrick Murphy from the Davis sutlership. In accord with the original surrender by General Twiggs of federal posts in Texas, Rebel officials tried to locate the proper landowners. Although Patrick Murphy initially claimed the sutler's post at Davis, John James was renting the store at Davis for twenty dollars a month to the firm of Moke and Brother by September 17. Despite the James lease, Murphy apparently contested the case until early December, when authorities ordered Captain Adams to give "Moke and Brother" the sutlership. As late as March 1862 Adams was still defending himself against charges that he had delayed recognizing the Moke and Brother claim.[39]

By the end of October the Confederate garrison at Fort Davis had settled into more routine duties. Acting Asst. Surgeon C. E. R. King had relieved W. J. McClain as post doctor. Captain Adams claimed the commanding officer's quarters formerly occupied by Captain Walker, who later notified his successor that he had left the house "in disorder & everything strewn around expecting to be back in a few days." Walker continued, "I hope you [Adams] have my goods & things stored away, & [have] taken care of as many of them as are of value to us." Another Texan, John Draper, had already grown tired of military life. "I think when ever I git home," he speculated, "I will be able to bye me a farm and settle myself for life for I think the war will be all over by that time and if it is not I know not what I shel do." Corn and hay were plentiful, but the paymaster was long overdue. Draper hoped he would be paid "sum day."[40]

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38 Wulff to Adams, Oct. 16, 1861, *OR*, 1530; Wulff to Murphy, Nov. 16, 1861, ibid. (quotation); Draper to Lane, Oct. 4, 1861, Draper File; Baylor to Adams, Nov. 15, 1861, Adams Papers.

39 Q.M. to A.A.G. Nichols, Apr. 8, 1861, Letters Received, Department of Texas, 1860–61, RG 393, National Archives; James to Adams, Sept. 17, 1861, Adams Papers; Moke and Bro. to Adams, Sept. 28, 1861, ibid.; Special Orders No. 216, Dec. 4, 1861, ibid; Williams, *Texas' Last Frontier*, 33-34.

40 Special Orders No. 87, Sept. 16, 1861, Adams Papers; Walker to Adams, Oct. 26, 1861, ibid.; Draper to Lane, Oct. 4, 1861, Draper File.

The garrison was still woefully small. Of C Company's officers, only Adams was present and ready for duty at Fort Davis. Gibbons remained under arrest; Lt. John C. Ellis was at Fort Lancaster; Lt. John M. Ingram had accompanied Baylor as far as Fort Bliss. Fifty-one of the company's enlisted men lived at Davis, with thirty-one others at Fort Stockton. Although eleven troopers on detached service from D Company lent added strength, the sixty-two men stationed there scarcely inspired confidence in the young nation's ability to defend West Texas. For one, Captain Walker feared that an impending Union offensive would force Baylor to fall back to Fort Davis and gather reinforcements.[41]

Indeed, the combination of losses to Indian attack and the threatened Federal invasion worried many Confederates. Like Walker, John Draper predicted major changes in the near future. The Fort Davis garrison had only twenty-five rounds per man. He calculated that even after Baylor's projected retreat, a mere eight hundred Rebels would be up against twenty-five hundred Yankees. "But I think we can whipe them two to one," Draper exclaimed, "for they ar all Greasers or one half of them." Already bloodied by the loss of several acquaintances in the fighting, Draper urged friends back home to "do soum thing for [their] country."[42]

More troops were indeed on their way. Henry H. Sibley, inventor of the famous Sibley tent and veteran of more than twenty years' distinguished service in the United States Army, had resigned his commission to join the Confederay in May 1861. Formerly stationed at Taos, New Mexico, Sibley rushed to Richmond, Virginia, where he met with Pres. Jefferson Davis. Something of a romantic, Sibley believed that a Rebel invasion of New Mexico could be self-supporting. Furthermore, it might precipitate a Confederate push to California. Impressed by the presumed ease of such a move, Confederate officials authorized him to raise two regiments (Sibley later increased that number to

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41 Post Returns, Oct., 1861, Adams Papers; Special Orders No. 108, Oct. 7, 1861, ibid.; Walker to Adams, Oct. 26, 1861, ibid. W. W. Heartsill, *Fourteen Hundred and 91 Days in the Confederate Army* (Jackson, Tenn.: McCowat-Mercer Press, 1954): 47, also predicted a fight near Fort Davis.

42 Draper to Lane, Oct. 4, 1861, Draper File; Draper to Mrs. A. J. Lane, Nov. 6, 1861, ibid. (quotations).

three) and one battery of howitzers and to seize New Mexico.[43]

Overly optimistic planning and inadequate supplies plagued the Sibley expedition from the outset. Marching in small groups to best exploit the area's limited water, elements of the Fourth Regiment Texas Mounted Volunteers reached Fort Davis in late November and early December. One enlisted man noted that two officers "stayed behind and tanked up considerably." Ignorant of the terrain, the company passed Barrel Springs and made a dry camp on the open prairie. Further misfortune awaited the unfortunate Texans at Van Horn's Wells—an earlier wagon train had taken all the water! Troops with the Fifth and Seventh Regiments entered Limpia Canyon in mid-December. Disheartened by the poorly conducted, treeless march so far, the local terrain proved a welcome change for many of the exhausted soldiers. "Some pretty tall mountains for Texas," jotted W. R. Howell. "Mountain scenery very fine—so likewise the water—trees all round."[44]

A mutiny, apparently stemming from the lack of bread, shook Howell's camp on December 14. In an effort to mollify the restless troops, officers issued passes to Fort Davis the following day. Many of the poorly clad soldiers purchased all available clothing from the post sutler; others seized the chance to "get tight." A few, including the more cerebral Howell, mailed letters via the increasingly irregular but still operable postal system in West Texas. The brief interlude provided a welcome respite for these members of the Sibley Brigade, who resumed the march west on the sixteenth.[45]

Normalcy returned as the main columns departed. Sporting an exotic array of uniforms, personal clothing, materials purchased from the sutler, and garments supplied by friends, relatives, and citizens' groups back home, the Confederate garrisons of West Texas were too small to undertake much formal military training. The variety of their arms paralleled the wide assortment of clothing; musketoons, Springfield rifle-muskets, Sharps carbines, and Colt

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43 Hall, *Sibley's New Mexico Campaign*, 29-34.

44 Theophilus Noel, *A Campaign from Santa Fe to the Mississippi: Being a History of the Old Sibley Brigade . . .*, ed. Martin H. Hall and Edwin Adams Davis (Houston: Stagecoach Press, 1961): 19; Oscar Haas, trans., "The Diary of Julius Giesecke, 1861–1862," *Texas Military History* 3 (Winter, 1963): 231-32 (first quotation); W. Randolph Howell, "Journal of a Soldier of the Confederate States Army," Dec. 13, 1861, Barker Texas History Center (second quotation). Confederate soldiers often referred to the Fourth, Fifth, and Seventh Texas Mounted Volunteers as the First, Second, and Third regiments, respectively. Don E. Alberts, ed., *Rebels on the Rio Grande: The Civil War Journal of A. B. Peticolas* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984): 20.

45 Howell, "Journal;" Hall, *Sibley's New Mexico Campaign*: 48-49.

pistols were the most prevalant weapons used by the Confederates. At sister post Lancaster, Texas, soldiers played an early version of baseball called town ball.[46]

Food became more plentiful, with rations resembling those of the U.S. troops who had preceded the Texans. Lt. J. C. Ellis purchased 36 lbs. of beef, 110 lbs. flour, 10 lbs. coffee, 10 lbs. sugar, 2 quarts salt, 2 lbs. 5 oz. tea, 1 lb. 4 oz. molasses, and 2 lbs. soap from the sutler for the officers' mess during December, his account totaling $13.69. The purchases of Captain Adams between August 1861 and January 1862 suggest that Moke and Brothers maintained a sizeable stock of merchandise. In addition to his normal rations, Adams bought tobacco, a wash bowl and basin, a pitcher, shoes, socks, envelopes, a pocket knife, sugar, tea, a tin pan, and a wool hat. Canned delicacies included pineapples, sardines, preserves, green peas, pickles, oysters, and strawberries. Cognac, two bottles of brandy, and four bottles of champagne rounded out Adams' grocery list, which totaled $72.60.[47]

On December 27 an Indian raid on Patrick Murphy's cattle herd reminded the troops of their exposed position. Lieutenant Ellis's pursuit party left only Captain Adams, Lt. John M. Ingram, Assistant Surgeon King, and twenty-one enlisted men at Davis. The rest of the company were either at Fort Stockton or in the field with Lieutenant Ellis. Another four men from the Sibley columns remained at the Davis hospital; eleven other soldiers were there on assorted escort duties. Smallpox swept the post in early January; from Fort Lancaster, an apprehensive Rebel private noted that "Fort Davis is the next Post above here. The Small Pox is getting rather close to be comfortable."[48]

Next to eluding the mysterious smallpox virus, avoiding boredom remained a chief concern at the Davis garrison during the first months of 1862. Several enlisted men ran up impressive bills with local merchants. By May, Patrick Murphy claimed that Pvt. G. T. Haney owed him $119.67 for clothing and other articles; W. O'Bryan nearly matched the prodigal Haney with a bill of $115.18. Escorts, mail parties, and soldiers in need of medical care arrived periodically as the West Texas garrisons were reshuffled. Captain Adams departed the post

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46 Heartsill, *Fourteen Hundred and 91 Days*, 44-49; Abstract of Ordinance Expended by Co. C, 2nd Regt. T.M. Rifles, quarter ending Dec. 31, 1861, Adams Papers.

47 List of provisions purchased by Ellis, Dec., 1861, Adams Papers; List of provisions purchased by Ingram, ibid.; Adams to Moke and Brothers, May 6, 1862, ibid.

48 Williams, *Texas' Last Frontier*, 34-35; Post Returns, Dec., 1861, Jan., 1862, Adams Papers; "Daly's Account," Fort Davis Archives; Heartsill, *Fourteen Hundred and 91 Days*, 50 (quotation).

for San Antonio on March 13. Lieutenant Ingram led a detachment of C Company to Fort Lancaster two and a half weeks later, leaving Ellis as the only combat officer at Fort Davis. Between March and May an average of only twenty-nine soldiers guarded the post on the Limpia. The small number of troops precluded any significant military activity.[49]

Few records document the activities of the dependents of the Confederate garrison. Captain Adams brought his family out to Fort Davis. A few women and children lived in the outlying settlement, although contemporary writers largely ignored their presence. The ladies of the area did win the gratitude of one private for the friendly reception they gave the Sibley Brigade.[50]

But the destiny of Fort Davis now lay with Sibley's twenty-five-hundred-strong Army of New Mexico. Notorious for his heavy use of alcohol, Sibley expected that his men could rely on local sources of supply. But it was now too late in the season. Stuck in New Mexico in mid-winter, his army found obtaining food, ammunition, and clothing increasingly difficult. Too, Federal opposition organized by Col. Edward R. S. Canby proved stronger than anticipated. Although victorious at the Battle of Valverde (February 21, 1862), the loss of the Confederate supply train at Glorieta (March 28, 1862) forced Sibley to abandon his dreams of conquest. Burying most of their cannon and leaving those soldiers most in need of medical attention behind, the Confederates began the long trek back to Texas.[51]

Sibley's once proud Army of New Mexico disintegrated as a fighting force during the retreat. Shortages of food, medicine, clothing, and water ruined morale. In the words of one Rebel, "Be it known that we did not march in line, but every man for himself and the wagons take the hindmost." Another reported bitterly:

> We ate for breakfast this morning a rib or two of an old broke-down work ox we had along, without salt. Yesterday two men were left on the road, too sick to be moved. We also left two in the mountains near [Fort] Craig. They were thrown out of the wagons by Major [Richard T.] Brownrigg and one out of [the] end of Sibley's wagon. Sibley is heartily despised by every man in the brigade for his want of feeling, poor generalship, and cowardice. Several Mexican whores can find room to ride in his wagons

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49 Statement of Patrick Murphy, May 18, 1862, Adams Papers; Post Returns, Feb.–May, 1862, ibid.

50 "Capt. W. C. Adams," Feb. 28, 1862, ibid., notes that Adams purchased a number of items for his family's use; *San Antonio Herald*, January 11, 1862.

51 Hall, *Confederate Army of New Mexico*, 23-36; Hall, *Sibley's New Mexico Campaign*, 59-160.

> while the poor private soldier is thrown out to die on the way. The feeling and expression of the whole brigade is never to come up here again unless mounted and under a different general.[52]

Of the twenty-five-hundred-man invasion force, only some eighteen hundred effectives returned from New Mexico. Sibley and his headquarters staff departed El Paso in June. Col. William Steele's rearguard followed shortly thereafter, thanks to the excessive caution of the Union commander Canby, who feared that his spearhead detachments might become overextended. Most of the Rebels gladly left New Mexico. One officer labeled the territory "one of the most miserable God forsaken countries on the face of the earth. . . . The miserable God forsaken race of human beings which now inhabit it . . . ought to have it, and so far as I am concerned they are welcome to my share of it." Indian raiders multiplied the plight of the rabble by filling Trans-Pecos water holes with dirt and sheep caracasses.[53]

State and Confederate officials desperately tried to relieve the starving Sibley Brigade. Department commander Paul O. Hébert ordered Col. X. B. DeBray to march to Sibley's relief in early May. Flour was to be delivered at Fort Davis and beef taken on the hoof between San Antonio and El Paso. Fort Davis was designated a receiving station for the sick and wounded. In conjunction with the proposed move, Capt. Angel Navarro organized a company to take over the garrison there. Navarro instructed prospective recruiters to secure volunteers who "have a horse and if possible good armament." Capt. H. A.

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52 Sibley to Bee, May 27, 1862, *OR* (series 1), 9: 714; Noel, *Campaign from Santa Fe to the Mississippi*, 51-52 (first quotation); Alberts, ed., *Rebels on the Rio Grande*, 118 (second quotation).

53 Steele to Cooper, July 12, 1862, *OR* (series 1), 9: 721-22; Carleton to Drum, Sept. 20, 1862, ibid., 567; Eyre to Cutler, Aug. 30, 1862, ibid., 592; D. M. Poor to Mollie, May 7, Documents File, Civil War, Fort Davis (quotation); Hall, *New Mexico Campaign*, 210; Noel, *Campaign from Santa Fe to the Mississippi*, 52.

Hamner's H Company of the W. P. Lane Rangers also briefly occupied Fort Davis.[54]

In accord with these efforts, Fort Davis became a crucial supply depot for Sibley's haggard command. Moving in small detachments, the ragged groups found ample supplies at the outpost on the Limpia. One soldier, Theo Noel, remembered that his party secured enough wood to bake coarse flour into dough. They also "'gourmandised sumptuously' on fat beef, the first for many a long day." Legend also holds that the exhausted Rebels buried two cannon somewhere near Fort Davis. Although the two fieldpieces have not been located, the confused nature of the retreat makes such action plausible.[55]

As Steele's rearguard abandoned the Trans-Pecos, the Confederate occupation of Fort Davis ended. General Hébert had long ago revoked his previous instructions ordering DeBray to move into West Texas. From Mesilla, Colonel Baylor's last-ditch efforts to end the Indian threat by extermination also failed. In March, Baylor had called upon a subordinate "to use all means to persuade the Apaches or any tribe to come in for the purpose of making peace, and when you get them together kill all the grown Indians and take the children prisoners. . . . Leave nothing undone to insure success, and have a sufficient number of men around to allow no Indian to escape." Upon learning of his extermination policy, Confederate authorities stripped the over-eager Baylor of his com-

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54 Shirland to Cutler, Sept. 2, 1862, *OR* (series 1), 9: 578; "Instructions for Col. DeBray," May 9, 1862, Letters Sent, Department of Texas, vol. 134, RG 109; Navarro to Navarro, May 11, 1862, Confederate Interlude File, Fort Davis Archives (quotation); Heartsill, *Fourteen Hundred and 91 Days*, 44.

55 Noel, *Campaign from Santa Fe to the Mississippi*, 53. The historian of the Sibley campaign writes that "all the remaining artillery . . . except for the prized 'Valverde Battery' " were buried between Albuquerque and El Paso. Local specialists Barry Scobee and Clayton Williams, however, cite oral and written testimony of three descendents of Sibley veterans to support the legend. Hall, *Confederate Army of New Mexico*, 36 (quotation); Williams, *Texas' Last Frontier*, 45; *San Angelo Times*, Jan. 26, 1963, in clippings scrapbook, David A. Simmons Papers, Barker Texas History Center; Barry Scobee, *Old Fort Davis* (San Antonio: Naylor Co., 1947): 51.

mand.[56]

Capt. Angel Navarro's detachment probably represented the last permanent Confederate garrison at Fort Davis. As the Rebels abandoned the post, Diedrick Dutchover remained behind along with several civilians, one of whom was quite ill. The Apaches quickly seized the chance to destroy the white man's outpost. For two days and nights, Dutchover and the refugees hid on the roof of a building while the Indians looted the fort. The terrified Dutchover group finally abandoned the sick man and began the ninety-mile trek to Presidio. The escapees arrived safely in the border town; one body, apparently that of the sick man, was found by a subsequent stage party and later by advancing Federals.[57]

Texans braced themselves for the worst in the wake of the Sibley debacle and the growing likelihood of amphibious invasion along the Gulf coast. General Hébert declared martial law. And as Union troops under Brig. Gen. James H. Carleton began moving against Fort Bliss, Hébert ordered that all posts west of Fort Clark be evacuated. "To invade in that direction the enemy have a desert without water to cross," he assured the worried governor of Texas, Francis R. Lubbock.[58]

Carleton began his counterthrust on August 16, when he advanced on Fort Bliss with three companies of cavalry. At the little settlement of Franklin, he found twenty-five sick and disabled Confederates left behind by Steele's rearguard. Carleton's troops also recovered twelve wagonloads of medical and quartermaster's supplies. The Yankees then moved against Fort Quitman; elements of his command hoisted the Stars and Stripes over the old post on

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56 Hall, *Sibley's New Mexico Campaign*, 222-24; Hébert to DeBray, May 19, 1862, Letters Sent, Department of Texas, vol. 134, RG 109; Baylor to Helm, Mar. 20, 1862, *OR* (series 1), 50, pt. 1: 942 (quotation). For a defense of the Baylor order, see McWillie to "Dear Sir," Jan. 10, 1863, ibid., 940-42.

57 Carleton to Canby, Sept. 9, 1862, *OR* (series 1), 9: 696, suggests that Navarro's command was at Davis. Although the *OR* cites the command of "Mararro," this is undoubtedly a printer's garbling of a scribbled Navarro. The discussion of the Indian raid on Fort Davis comes from Williams, *Texas' Last Frontier*, 47-48. Williams cites Scobee, *Old Fort Davis*, and Carlysle Graham Raht, *The Romance of Davis Mountains and Big Bend Country* (Odessa: Raht Co., 1963). Although Scobee and Raht must be used with caution, circumstantial evidence from Shirland to Cutler, Sept. 2, 1862, *OR* (series 1), 9: 578; and "Appearance of Davis, 1862," 14, Fort Davis Archives, supports the idea that Indians did attack the fort after the Confederate withdrawal. As such, the general themes of the story are included; suspect details, however, have been omitted.

58 Hébert to Randolph, July 18, 1862, Letters Sent, Department of Texas, vol. 134, RG 109; Hébert to McCulloch, Aug. 26, 1862, ibid.; Hébert to Lubbock, Aug. 28, 1862, ibid. (quotation).

August 22. In explaining his move down the Rio Grande, Carleton noted:

> The object of my march was to restore confidence to the people. They had been taught by the Texans that we were coming among them as marauders and as robbers. When they found we treated them kindly and paid them a fair price for all the supplies we required they rejoiced to find, as they came under the old flag once more, that they could now have protection and will be treated justly. The abhorrence they expressed for the Confederate troops and of the rebellion convinced me that their loyalty to the United States is now beyond question.[59]

On the twenty-second, Carleton ordered Capt. E. D. Shirland to take his Company C, First California Cavalry, to occupy Fort Davis. The reconnaissance was occasioned by rumors that Steele had left fifty to sixty wounded there under the guard of Captain Navarro's "company of troops of Mexican lineage." Hampered by the fouling of several waterholes by Indians, Shirland nonetheless reached Barrel Springs on the twenty-sixth with twenty men. He dispatched two soldiers and a Mexican guide to reconnoiter Fort Davis the next day.[60]

Upon the scouting party's return, Captain Shirland proceeded to Davis with the balance of his little command. The Federals found one arrow-ridden body at the overland mail station. After burying the corpse, the Union detachment inspected the post. Shirland compiled a detailed report of the remaining buildings, at least three of which he found burned or destroyed. All property save some iron, a wagon full of lumber, a few horseshoes, two wagons, several wagon wheels, empty barrels, some chains, and a number of dilapidated hospital bedsteads had been removed. Finally, the captain informed superiors that he had been told "that the entire fort was sold by the Confederate States officers to some party at Del Norte, Mexico."[61]

Shirland departed Fort Davis on August 30. The next day, six mounted Indians carrying a white flag approached his column ten miles west of Dead Man's Hole. Twenty-five or thirty more mounted men soon appeared, followed by a large party on foot. "Wishing to get rid of the footmen, I made a running

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59 Carleton to Drum, Sept. 20, 1862, *OR* (series 1), 9: 567.

60 General Orders No. 16, Aug. 22, 1862, *OR* (series 1) 9: 577; Carleton to Canby, Sept. 9, 1862, ibid., 696; Shirland to Cutler, Sept. 2, 1862, ibid., 577-79.

61 Shirland to Cutler, Sept. 2, 1862, *OR* (series 1) 9: 577-79; Williams, *Texas' Last Frontier*, 47, speculates that the buyer might have been Edward Hall. However, Williams provides no source for such a conclusion, save that Hall, claiming to be a Confederate agent, was later alleged to have sold public property in Chihuahua.

fight of it, expecting the mounted men to follow," reported Shirland. "Finding it too hot for them, they returned," he noted, leaving behind four dead. The captain claimed twenty Indians wounded. As he continued his retreat to El Paso, Shirland, for unspecified reasons, also arrested two Mexicans who were en route to the east.[62]

General Carleton praised Shirland's gallantry and execution of orders. Supply shortages and the impending withdrawal of much of his command, however, prevented Carleton from continuing his move into the Trans-Pecos, save the continued occupation of El Paso. He paroled more than one hundred captured Confederates and established his departmental headquarters at Santa Fe. Carleton then focused his attention on Navajos and Mescalero Apaches in New Mexico, whose attacks on non-Indian settlements had increased since the outbreak of the Civil War.[63]

Carleton urged Col. Christopher Carson to "make war upon the Mescaleros and upon all other Indians you may find in the Mescalero country, until further orders. All Indian men of that tribe are to be killed whenever and wherever you can find them." In addition to ruthlessly defeating the Indians, Carson should post small parties to watch approaches to New Mexico via the Pecos River, the Hueco Tanks, and Fort Quitman. Rumors of another Confederate offensive in West Texas were evident by mid-November, when Union agents reported that Baylor was organizing six thousand men at San Antonio to link up with secessionists in El Paso. Though increasingly skeptical of such information, Carleton planned a scorched earth policy in case of a renewed Rebel thrust. By gathering all the grain in the region at Mesilla, the Confederates would be unable to cross West Texas without massive preparation.[64]

Union authorities near El Paso were not so sure. They worried that the Confederates might secure supplies from Chihuahua. Henry Skillman, the former overland mail boss, seemed a particularly dangerous foe—this "noted desperado" "dropped from the clouds" into El Paso in late November 1862, fueling additional rumors about Confederate intentions. Skillman certainly dressed the part. "He carries several revolvers and bowie knives, dresses in

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62 Shirland to Cutler, Sept. 2, 1862, *OR* (series 1), 9: 578-79.

63 Carleton to Drum, Sept. 20, 1862, *OR* (series 1) 9: 566-67; Canby to Carleton, Aug. 11, 12, 1862, ibid., 574-76; Carleton to Thomas, Sept. 30, 1862, ibid., 15: 576-77; Rigg to West, Nov. 11, 1862, ibid. 15: 598.

64 Carleton to Carson, Oct. 12, 1862, *OR* (series 1) 15: 579 (quotation); Rigg to West, Nov. 11, 1862, ibid.; Carleton to West, Nov. 18, 1862, ibid., 599-602.

buckskin, and has a sandy hair and beard. He loves hard work and adventure, and hates 'Injuns,' " one observer had written in 1858. From Mesilla, Col. J. R. West stepped up his patrols in West Texas by dispatching "Brad. Daily and Captain Parvin" to watch the Horsehead Crossing of the Pecos. Carleton journeyed to the El Paso area to investigate the talk of Confederate aggression; he returned convinced that the Indians remained the greatest threat to Federal control over New Mexico and Arizona.[65]

Despite Carleton's assurances, the possibility of Confederate assault haunted Federal officials in El Paso through the spring of 1863. Maj. David Fergusson rode to Chihuahua to speak with Mexican officials and to establish contacts with local businessmen who maintained connections in San Antonio. He also convinced Union sympathizers in Mexico to scout the Trans-Pecos, including abandoned Fort Davis, for signs of an impending Confederate advance. Also vigilant was J. R. West, now commanding Union troops outside El Paso. In addition to sending a Mexican spy down to Presidio del Norte to watch for the passage of supplies to Texas, West ordered Captain Shirland back to Fort Quitman and maintained a picket at Hueco Tanks. Convinced that his position was in danger, West asserted "that sooner or later this summer a large force from Texas will be moved against this Territory."[66]

Carleton remained calm. "I cannot believe any large force from Texas is *en route* to invade New Mexico and Arizona at this season of the year," he advised superiors on April 23. Carleton's assessment proved correct. Although a few diehard Confederate sympathizers like Skillman and long-time Presidio resident John D. Burgess assured Southern authorities that such a thrust could be supplied, Texas could scarcely defend herself, much less launch another offensive. Sibley's brigade had returned from New Mexico an unarmed mob. Deeply concerned about the Union occupation of Galveston and the threatened assault on the southern coast of Texas, department commander Hébert pleaded for additional men. A poorly armed, poorly organized Frontier Regiment of Texas State Troops grimly hung on to a line of posts from Fort Clark to Montague County.[67]

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65 Willis to Rynerson, Nov. 26, 1862, ibid., 606-07 (first quotation); Caniffe to Tully, Nov. 26, 1862, ibid., 606 (second quotation); Waterman L. Ormsby, *The Butterfield Overland Mail*, ed. Lyle H. Wright and Josephine M. Bynum (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1954): 68 (third quotation); West to Cutler, Nov. 30, 1862, *OR* (series 1), 9: 605 (fourth quotation); Carleton to Thomas, Feb. 1, 1863, ibid., 669-70.

66 Fergusson to West, Feb. 13, 1863, ibid., 682-86; West to McFerran, May 8, 1863, ibid., 720-22 (quotation).

67 Carleton to Creel, Apr. 23, 1863, ibid., 708-09 (quotation); Hubbell to Baird, Apr. 28, 1863, ibid., 1065; Burgess to Scurry, Mar. 17, 1863, ibid., 1065; Magruder to Cooper, Dec. 9, 1862, ibid., 894-95; Hébert to Lubbock, Nov. 8, 1862, ibid., 858; Turner to Scurry, Apr. 1, 28, 1863, ibid., 1034.

Unconcerned about a new Rebel offensive, Carleton was keen on bringing the attempted kidnappers of A. F. Wulff to justice and wholeheartedly supported efforts to clean up the "ruffians" based at Fort Leaton. He authorized the governor of Chihuahua to cross the river and arrest the gang. Among the gang's ringleaders was Edward Hall. Claiming to be an authorized Confederate agent, Hall sold property looted from Fort Davis in Chihuahua. "Justice has a strong claim on this bad rebel," reported Major Fergusson. Carleton proclaimed that Hall "should be dealt summarily with. A stern example should be made of such a ruffian."[68]

In April 1864 Union troops took care of the problem. Under the guidance of Capt. Henry Skillman, a few Confederates had maintained an irregular communication with Southern supporters in Mexico. On the third, Capt. Alfred H. French and twenty-five men of A Company, First California Volunteer Cavalry, marched to Presidio del Norte via Fort Davis. Twelve days later French surprised Skillman's "Texas spy and scouting party" at Spencer's Ranch. The Federals routed the astonished Rebels, who lost three killed (including their commander), two others mortally wounded, and four men and nine animals taken prisoner. French reported no losses.[69]

Both sides launched occasional forays into the Trans-Pecos throughout the Civil War. Texas state militiamen defeated a collection of deserters, adventurers, and California-bound emigrants west of Fort Lancaster in April 1864. W. A. Peril led a cattle drive from Fort McKavett to Mexico past Horsehead Crossing, Fort Stockton, and El Paso. In the absence of permanent military garrisons, however, non-Indian movement across the Trans-Pecos was a risky undertaking. A Mexican salt train, for example, was attacked near Fort Quitman. Apaches killed all thirteen men, burned their wagons, and captured their oxen.[70]

Without the assistance of federal troops and with her own energies largely devoted to events to the east, the Lone Star state had been unable to defend her

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68 Fergusson to West, Feb. 13, 1863, *OR* (series 1), 15: 675 (first quotation); Carleton to Terrazas, Feb. 20, 1863, ibid., 687 (second quotation).

69 Abstract from Record of Events on return of the District of Arizona for April, 1864, 34, pt. 1: 880 (quotation); William W. Mills, *Forty Years at El Paso* (El Paso: privately printed, 1901): 83-84.

70 Williams, *Texas' Last Frontier*, 49-57.

western frontiers. In January 1865 migrating Kickapoo Indians embarrassed a force of Texas militiamen at the Battle of Dove Creek. Civilians abandoned their frontier settlements or desperately "forted up" in hastily constructed blockhouses against Indian attack. The situation grew worse as it became impossible to devote arms, ammunition, or manpower for western service. Texas's collapse proved complete in early June 1865 when, following the capitulation at Appomattox of Robert E. Lee, Gen. Edmund Kirby Smith surrendered the Trans-Mississippi Department.[71]

Indians and looters had long since vandalized and burned the military buildings comprising the federal fort on Limpia Creek. The regular army's efforts during the 1850s to protect the overland trail, encourage non-Indian settlement of the Trans-Pecos, and defeat the region's indigenous peoples had come to naught. At the onset of the war, troops stationed at Fort Davis generally cast their lots with the Union, although a significant number of former officers associated with Davis joined the Confederate cause. After the federal evacuation, state and Confederate forces occupied the post, using it as a supply, recruiting, and medical center for the ill-fated Sibley invasion of New Mexico. By mid 1862, however, the Confederacy's western empire had collapsed, and the Rebels left the western Texas frontiers in disarray. As major theaters of the sectional conflict emerged elsewhere, both sides left the Trans-Pecos virtually unoccupied. Only the hardiest residents and overland emigrants braved the new wave of Indian attacks which reigned down upon West and Central Texas. Texas, like the United States government before it, had failed to overcome Indian opposition to outside authority.

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71 W. C. Holden, "Frontier Defense in Texas During the Civil War," *West Texas Historical Association Year Book* 4 (1928): 16-31; Robert Wooster, *Soldiers, Sutlers, and Settlers: Garrison Life on the Texas Military Frontier*, Clayton Wheat Williams Texas Life Series, no. 2 (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1987): 42, 49. Another "Fort Davis" was established during the Civil War. One of the many Civil War blockhouses constructed by Texas citizens, the position lay along the Clear Fork of the Brazos River, fifteen miles below Camp Cooper. For a description of life at the fort, see Samuel P. Newcomb Diary, Barker Texas History Center.

CHAPTER SIX:

REESTABLISHING THE FEDERAL PRESENCE

The Civil War left the non-Indian settlement of the Trans-Pecos in disarray. With the withdrawal of both Confederate and Union troops, Indians had stepped up attacks against intruders. The conclusion of the civil conflict, however, saw a resurgence of travel across the plains west of San Antonio. The federal government was again compelled to establish a lasting presence in West Texas if it hoped to protect its citizens. As was the case before the war, the site along Limpia Creek seemed ideal for a military garrison. This time, the intense sectionalism of the previous decade would no longer cloud the interest of the United States in fostering western development. Although the federal government remained small, it could now approach the west free of the political paralysis of the 1850s.

The War Department mustered nearly a million men out of its massive volunteer forces by late spring 1866. But in partial recognition of its western obligations and the need to reassert federal authority in the South, Congress increased the regulars, who had maintained separate status throughout the war, from six cavalry regiments to ten, and the infantry from nineteen to forty-five. It also retained five artillery regiments, giving the new regular force more than 54,000 troops. Subsequent reductions in 1869 and 1870, however, eliminated twenty infantry regiments and limited the number of enlisted men to 30,000, still larger than prewar levels.[1]

Army organization remained substantially unchanged. A colonel commanded every regiment. Cavalry and artillery units each included twelve companies; infantry regiments had ten companies. The War Department set company strength at sixty-four privates. Ten departments and bureaus—Adjutant General, Inspector General, Judge Advocate General, Quartermaster, Subsistence, Medical, Pay, Ordnance, Signal Corps, and the Corps of Engineers—comprised the army's staff and administrative agencies. Commis-

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1 Robert Utley, *Frontier Regulars: The United States Army and the Indian, 1866–1891*, The Wars of the United States (New York: Macmillan, 1973): 12-13, 16.

sioned personnel, selected by often politicized boards of fellow officers, came from both the regulars and the volunteers.[2]

In April 1865 Lt. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant selected Philip Sheridan, a crusty veteran of some of the Civil War's hardest fighting, to command Federal forces in the Lone Star state. Two immediate problems demanded Sheridan's attention. One was the presence of several thousand French troops propping up the Archduke Maximilian's reign as emperor of Mexico. Sheridan set up a powerful army of observation along the Rio Grande, forcefully demonstrating U.S. opposition to the French presence. In the wake of pressure exerted by Secretary of State William Seward, imperial French forces withdrew and Maximilian's tottering regime collapsed.[3]

The second issue—that of convincing Texans to recognize the federal government—proved more difficult. "Texas has not yet suffered from the war and will require some intimidation," asserted Sheridan, who deployed his units amongst the more populous interior communities where they could enforce federal laws. Texans protested Sheridan's dispositions, claiming that the soldiers should instead suppress Indian attacks. Texas politicians briefly entertained a proposal which would have allowed a private company to establish a farming colony along the Pecos River. The settlers, it was reasoned, would deflect Indian raids. Gov. James W. Throckmorton also wanted to raise one thousand state troops to patrol the frontiers. But Sheridan firmly opposed such moves. "I do not doubt that the secret of all this fuss about Indian trouble is the desire to have all the troops removed from the interior and the desire of the loose & lazy adventurers to be employed as volunteers," he wrote. Of the alleged Indian depredations, Sheridan judged that "these reports are now manufactured wholesale to affect the removal of troops from the interior to the frontier."[4]

The disposition of regular troops in the interior antagonized many old-time Texans. Overwhelmingly sympathetic to the Confederacy, the Texans argued that soldiers should patrol the state's frontiers. Sheridan, by contrast, blamed the Indian troubles on the Texans. Summing up operations for 1867, Sheridan explained that "a few Indian depredations occurred . . . arising principally from

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2 Ibid., 12-14.

3 William L. Richter, *The Army in Texas During Reconstruction 1865–1870* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1987): 12-20.

4 Ibid., 13 (first quotation), 66-70; Black to Throckmorton, Jan. 6, 1867, in Dorman Winfrey and James M. Day, eds., *Texas Indian Papers, 1860–1916* (Austin: Texas State Library, 1961): 138-39; Sheridan to Grant, Oct. 3, 1866, Senate Executive Document 19, 45th Congress, 2 session, serial 1780, p. 7; Sheridan to Grant, Oct. 12, 1866, series 5, vol. 54, Ulysses S. Grant Papers, Library of Congress (microfilm edition, roll 24) (second quotation); Sheridan to Grant, Apr. 5, 1867, vol. 55, ibid. (third quotation).

the adventurous character of the frontier settlers, who, pushed out toward the Indian territory, thereby incurred the risk of coming into contact with hostile Indians." He needed troops in the interior to maintain law and order and could not spare the manpower to protect those foolish enough to incite Indian attacks. Noting the mounting assaults on Texas blacks by groups like the Ku Klux Klan, Bvt. Maj. Gen. Joseph J. Reynolds supported Sheridan's position. "The murder of negroes is so common as to render it impossible to keep an accurate account of them," Reynolds argued.[5]

The army played a crucial role in Reconstruction Texas. Early state elections reflected the strength of conservative voters, intent on restoring as much of prewar society and political leadership as they could. Seeking to block the return of former Confederates to power, Unionists used the army to assist the development of Texas's nascent Republican party. Not only did the military attempt to shield blacks from the wrath of white supremacists, it often controlled electoral precincts and dominated vote-gathering and counting procedures. Such political involvement became even more pronounced with Joseph J. Reynolds's accession to command of the Fifth Military District in 1867.[6]

Many Texans bitterly opposed military rule and seized upon every army failure as an opportunity to revile the Reconstruction forces. Envisioning an Indian attack around every corner proved a popular pastime. Despite the tendency to exaggerate the Indian threat to frontier expansion, the Trans-Pecos was indeed experiencing several bloody encounters between Indians and non-Indians. In early February 1866, for instance, an N. Webb and Company wagon train left El Paso bound for San Antonio. The caravan met a few Indians herding livestock near Eagle Springs. The resulting fight saw the whites capture the Indians' animals. Reinforced, the Indians peppered the wagons well into the following night, making an unsuccessful effort to stampede the cattle and horses. Although none of the Webb men was hurt, they later reported that forts Lancaster, Stockton, Davis, and Quitman lay in ruins.[7]

Another wagon train met a similar fate as it crossed the Trans-Pecos from the east. John and James Edgar each outfitted trains of twenty wagons and two

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5 Report of Sheridan, Nov. 21, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1867, p. 379 (first quotation); Report of Reynolds, Nov. 4, ibid., 1868, p. 705.

6 Richter, *Army and Reconstruction in Texas*, 119, 187-93; Davis to Butler, Dec. 7, 1876, vol. 7, The Negro in the Military Service of the United States, 1639–1886, National Archives (microcopy M 858, roll 5).

7 Clayton W. Williams, *Texas' Last Frontier: Fort Stockton and the Trans-Pecos, 1861–1895*, ed. Ernest Wallace (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1982): 61. For collected accounts of depredations in West Texas, see Winfrey and Day, eds., *Texas Indian Papers*, 91-92.

hundred mules. John's train was several days ahead of that of James when it reached Wild Rose Pass in Limpia Canyon. An attack by Espejo's Apache band forced the first group back toward old Fort Stockton. En route, John found that a freak norther had ravaged his brother's caravan west of the Pecos River. The Edgars combined their forces and eventually reached El Paso with about half of their original cargo.[8]

The return trip to San Antonio proved equally eventful. Twenty-eight men, two women, and two children comprised the party. Soon after receiving a corn shipment from Presidio at abandoned Fort Davis, the group found itself under attack by Lipan and Mescalero Apaches. Their initial strike blunted, the starving Indians, later joined by some Navajos from New Mexico, laid siege to the train. A parlay finally broke the impasse; the Indians allowed the interlopers to pass unscathed in return for a supply of corn.[9]

Stage companies assured prospective passengers of their safety, but West Texas travelers clamored for official protection. In one unconfirmed encounter, 350 Apaches reportedly besieged 40 ex-Confederate soldiers east of abandoned Fort Stockton. Newspapers recorded the deaths of 34 men between Fort Quitman and El Paso in a period of only a few weeks and suggested that the army raise volunteer units. Governor Throckmorton, though more concerned about attacks along the northern frontiers of Texas, noted that Mescalero and Lipan Apaches harassed travelers along the road to El Paso. "The military should have orders to route [sic] them out even though they cross over to Mexico to accomplish it," argued Throckmorton.[10]

Sheridan had to do something to protect the frontiers, as the government granted Frederick P. Sawyer the mail contract between San Antonio and El Paso in early July 1866. That fall Sheridan promised to move a few mounted troops to the perimeters of the state the following spring. He remained skeptical; a staff officer's uncovering of a false story of an Indian massacre near Camp Verde had strengthened the general's suspicions. But to avert a call-up of state volunteers and to display the power of the federal government, Sheridan readied several units for Indian service in spring 1867. Like Governor Throckmorton,

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8 Williams, *Texas' Last Frontier*, 61-62.

9 Ibid., 62.

10 Douglas C. McChristian, "Military Protection for the U.S. Mail: A Fort Davis Case Study," May 20, 1983, Fort Davis Archives; Immecke, et. al., to Hamilton, Feb. 1, 1866, Governor's Records, Texas State Archives, Austin, Texas; Throckmorton to O. M. Roberts and B. H. Epperson, Dec. 23, Correspondence, Dec., 1866, James W. Throckmorton Papers, Barker Texas History Center; Williams, *Texas' Last Frontier*, 63.

the general initially considered northern Texas most vulnerable. Sheridan identified twelve likely sites for federal garrisons. Neither forts Davis nor Bliss appeared on Sheridan's preliminary list, though both would eventually serve as important links in frontier defenses after the Civil War.[11]

Inadequate resources, inconsistent federal policies, and a dearth of strategic planning sharply hampered the military's post–Civil War efforts on the frontiers. Manpower remained insufficient to handle every task assigned to the army. The federal government's refusal to adopt a systematic Indian policy further confused military operations against native Americans. The government vacillated between peace and war, thus discouraging long-range military planning among officers. Only the ultimate goal proved consistent—the United States believed it had the right, even the duty, to remove Indians from their native lands. Neither politicians nor army officers, however, agreed upon the best means of achieving this objective.[12]

More interested in replaying the Civil War, securing promotion, or studying European-style conflicts, few officers devoted the time or thought necessary to formulate a clear doctrine against Indians. Two geographic divisions—the Missouri and the Pacific—handled most Indian questions, although this resulted more from the need to provide every brigadier general with the command of a department rather than from a calculated effort to create specialized Indian-fighting units. Texas posed special problems. Should it be part of the sprawling Division of the Missouri, which encompassed most lands between the Mississippi River and the Continental Divide, or should it be one of the special Reconstruction districts? The army answered that question in March 1867, by organizing Texas and Louisiana into the Fifth Military District for purposes of Reconstruction. Thus, despite Sheridan's recent concessions, enforcing Reconstruction, not evicting Indians, still remained the military's primary goal in Texas.[13]

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11 McChristian, "Military Protection," 3; Sheridan to Grant, Oct. 12, 1866, series 5, vol. 54, Grant Papers; Richter, *Army in Texas During Reconstruction*, 67-70; Throckmorton to Sheridan, Dec. 11, 1866, Correspondence, Dec., 1866, Throckmorton Papers; Sheridan to Throckmorton, Jan. 18, 1867, Transcript of Records, 1838–69, Texas Adjutant General's Office Papers, Barker Texas History Center.

12 See Robert Wooster, *The Military and United States Indian Policy 1865–1903*, Yale Western Americana Series, 34 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

13 Ibid.; Arthur P. Wade, "The Military Command Structure: The Great Plains, 1853–1891," *Journal of the West* 15 (July, 1976): 20-21; Raphael P. Thian, *Notes Illustrating the Military Geography of the United States 1813–1880*, ed. John M. Carroll (1881; rpt. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979), 14-15.

Minor administrative changes were forthcoming. Military authorities divided the state into subdistricts, or, after gaining departmental status, districts. By 1869 the Lone Star state included the subdistricts of the Presidio (including forts Bliss, Quitman, Davis, and Stockman), Brazos (Griffin and Richardson), Pecos (Concho, McKavett, Clark, and Duncan), and Rio Grande (McIntosh, Ringgold, and Brown). For many years, Fort Davis served as headquarters for the Presidio command. Higher authorities rarely meddled in the affairs of officers on the scene. In requesting information on efforts to protect mail parties in the subdistrict of the Presidio, for instance, one aide noted that "it is not intended to interfere with Sub-District Commanders . . . without full discussion and for urgent reasons."[14]

The military introduced few strategic innovations after 1865. Army forts were located with more regard to domestic politics than to Indian policy. A post meant jobs, money, and increased safety. A thin line of bluecoats manned these frontier positions, but without formalized, consistent doctrine, flailed away wildly at their Indian foes. Cavalry seemed of particular value, although even the mounted men rarely caught hostile tribesmen. And given the federal government's limited size and budget, the army never had enough cavalrymen to patrol every exposed area. Reservations and international boundary lines further shielded Indian raiders, who, after committing a depredation, often fled to the safety offered by such havens.[15]

Phil Sheridan, the army's key official in Texas during the late 1860s, seemed little troubled by cerebral questions of policy, doctrine, or morality. He believed the Indians must be shunted aside; to do this in West Texas he selected the Ninth Cavalry Regiment. The black cavalrymen would help protect the Trans-Pecos; at the same time, their new stations, isolated from the more populated areas, would remove a point of contention between the army and many whites who resented black soldiers. Lt. Col. Wesley Merritt would oversee the reoccupation of Fort Davis. A thin, boyish-looking brevet major general, Merritt brought an outstanding combat record to the frontier. Graduated from West Point in 1860 and breveted for his actions at Gettysburg, Yellow Tavern, Haw's Shop, Winchester, Fisher's Hill, and Five Forks, he had repeatedly displayed his abilities as a fighting cavalryman. Despite his relative youth, a Democratic

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14 Robert Wooster, *Soldiers, Sutlers, and Settlers: Garrison Life on the Texas Military Frontier*, Clayton Wheat Williams Texas Life Series, 2 (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1987): 48; Wood to Merritt, (1869?), vol. 9: 30, Letters Sent, Department of Texas, 1865–70, National Archives (microcopy M 1165, roll 3) (quotation).

15 Wooster, *Military and Indian Policy*, passim.

Fig. 6:14. Lt. Col. Wesley Merritt, commander of Fort Davis in 1867 and 1868-69. Photograph courtesy of Custer Battlefield National Monument, National Park Service.

family heritage, and his having been in Europe during the politically charged army reorganization process, he received the lieutenant colonelcy of the Ninth.[16]

The Ninth Cavalry was one of six black regiments originally created by the army reorganization bill of 1866. The decision to form such units stemmed in part from a desire to recognize black contributions during the Civil War. Others hoped to offer blacks wider opportunities for government employment, although white officers would command. Congress consolidated four of the black infantry regiments into two as a part of general 1869 army reductions; each of the remaining units—the Ninth and Tenth Cavalry, and the Twenty-fourth and Twenty-fifth Infantry—was ultimately sent to Fort Davis. Companies of the Twenty-fourth Infantry helped garrison the post from 1869 through 1872 and again in 1880. The Twenty-fifth was stationed there from 1870 to 1880. Among the cavalry the Ninth was present between 1867 and 1875; elements of the Tenth remained at Fort Davis from 1875 to 1885.[17]

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16 Sheridan to Throckmorton, Jan. 18, 1867, Transcript of Records, 1838–69, Texas Adjutant General's Office Papers; G. Everett to W. A. Rapperty, Jan. 3, 1867, ibid.; Don E. Alberts, *Brandy Station to Manila Bay: A Biography of General Wesley Merritt* (Austin: Presidial Press, 1981): 179; Mark M. Boatner, III, *The Civil War Dictionary* (1959; rev. ed. New York: David McKay Co., 1987): 544-45.

17 Jack Foner, *Blacks and the Military in American History: A New Perspective* (New York: Praeger Press, 1974): 52-53; Jerome A. Greene, *Historic Resource Survey: Fort Davis National Historic Site* (U.S. Department of the Interior, 1986): 350.

Officers and observers held mixed opinions about the qualities of their black troops. Brig. Gen. Edward O. C. Ord, commander of the Department of Texas from 1875 to 1880, unabashedly opposed the use of black soldiers. Commanding general William T. Sherman explained that he had stationed such troops in Texas because he believed them better able to withstand the state's rigorous climate. Others denied such charges. Lt. Charles J. Crane, assigned to the Twenty-fourth Infantry upon his graduation from West Point, wrote that "though I had not desired the colored infantry . . . I have never regretted my service in that regiment." Elizabeth Custer, that romantic chronicler of army life, defended the qualities of blacks in combat: "They were determined that no soldiering should be carried on in which their valor was not proved," she explained.[18]

No one disputed the high morale in the black regiments. Black cavalrymen, particularly those of the Tenth, carried the nickname "buffalo soldiers" with pride. One Trans-Pecos traveler admitted that while black troops "were ridiculously pompous, they were polite," and focused upon one man, Sgt. John Woodson. Extremely formal with his white officers, Woodson became a different man on detached duty. "It was plain to be seen that Sergeant Woodson was hail fellow with all of his clan." The illiterate Woodson gave his marching orders to a white woman who informed him of their contents. The same writer also pointed out that "we should have felt depressed, escorted by white soldiers; while the four colored men delighted us, as we looked upon them not only as our protectors, but as a company of fellow travelers.[19]

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18 Ord to Sherman, Nov. 1, 1875, vol. 41, William T. Sherman Papers, Library of Congress (microfilm edition, University of Texas, Austin, roll 21); Testimony of Sherman, Nov. 21, 1877, House Miscellaneous Document 64, 45th Congress, 2nd session, serial 1820, p. 20; H. H. McConnell, *Five Years a Cavalryman: Or, Sketches of Regular Army Life on the Texas Frontier Twenty Odd Years Ago* (Jacksboro, Texas: J. N. Rogers and Co., 1889): 212-13; Charles J. Crane, *Experiences of a Colonel of Infantry* (New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1923): 59 (first quotation); Elizabeth B. Custer, *Tenting on the Plains, or General Custer in Kansas and Texas* (1897; rpt. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971), 3: 677-78 (second quotation).

19 Dagmar Mariager, "Camp and Travel in Texas. I," *The Overland Monthly* 17 (2nd ser., Feb., 1891): 189-90. See Erwin N. Thompson, "The Negro Soldiers on the Frontier: A Fort Davis Case Study," *Journal of the West* 7 (Apr., 1968): 228-29, for a discussion of the origins and use of the term "buffalo soldiers."

Fig. 6:15. Frederic Remington, one of the West's most famous artists, often specialized in military topics. Here is his classic sketch of a black cavalryman. Photograph from Fort Davis Archives, F-45.

Composed largely of former slaves, more than one-half of the Ninth Cavalry's enlisted personnel had fought in the Civil War. Racial discrimination made the army an attractive choice for many black males. Steady income, food, clothing, and education seemed especially good to those with only limited employment options; in black communities, military service became a respected career choice. In 1867, while desertion rates for the army as a whole reached an astonishing twenty-five percent, only four percent of blacks deserted. Although the differences were rarely so marked, whites consistently deserted at higher rates than their black counterparts. Indeed, one officer serving in Texas concluded that "if a garrison like the one here could be introduced into every

northern town for six months, the opponents of universal suffrage would be few in the legislature."[20]

Official recruiting for the Ninth began with the arrival of its first officers in November 1866. To expedite the process, Col. Edward Hatch set up recruiting stations in Louisiana and Kentucky. The first volunteers had almost no education—the only enlisted man in the regiment able to read and write found himself promoted to sergeant-major. Several officers deeply resented their appointment to the regiment, complaining both of the social stigma attached to such positions and the extra work necessitated by the paucity of enlisted men capable of handling clerical tasks.[21]

Despite such complaints, the Ninth Cavalry sailed from New Orleans to Indianola, Texas, where it disembarked on March 29, 1867. Five companies reached San Antonio on April 4 and camped just north of the city proper at San Pedro Springs. But only eleven line officers accompanied the regiment, far too few to maintain adequate discipline.[22]

Problems were indeed brewing in Lt. Edward M. Heyl's Company E. Having enlisted as a quartermaster sergeant at the onset of the Civil War, Heyl was commissioned a second lieutenant of volunteers in 1862. He was honorably mustered out of the service two years later, only to receive his first lieutenant's bar in July 1866. Like his fellow cavalry officers, Heyl had to pass an examining board before joining his regiment. The board soundly rejected Heyl's first application for a captaincy in November. The prospective officer displayed a fair talent for math, but his scant knowledge of geography and politics betrayed

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20 Foner, *Blacks and the Military*, 53-55, 60; Thompson, "The Negro Soldiers," 226, 232; Knapp to Mead, Jan. 12, 1867, O. M. Knapp Papers, Barker Texas History Center (quotation); Mullins to Adjutant General, Jan. 1, 1877, 5035 A.C.P. 1874, Appointment, Commission, and Personal Branch, Record Group 94, National Archives.

21 Alberts, *Wesley Merritt*, 180, 182; John H. Nankivell, comp. and ed., *The History of the Twenty-Fifth Regiment of United States Infantry, 1869–1926*, Regular Regiments Series (Fort Collins, Colo.: Old Army Press, 1972): 18. See also assorted correspondence in The Negro in the Military Service of the United States, 1639–1886, vol. 7 (microfilm M 858, roll 5).

22 Alberts, *Wesley Merritt*, 185; E. Carpenter to Grant, May 19, 1866, Louis H. Carpenter Papers, Pennsylvania Historical Society Archives, Philadelphia; Sheridan to Rawlins, Mar. 30, 1867, Edwin Stanton Papers, Library of Congress (microfilm edition, roll 11).

severely limited horizons. In addition to not knowing the location of the Amazon River, Heyl, when asked to "Give the principal rivers of Europe," responded simply, "Nile." "How is the pres. of the U.S. selected by the Constitution?" inquired the board. "He is chosen from the Senate," answered Heyl.[23]

Heyl proved a poor match for the Ninth. A heavy drinker, he often out brutal punishment to his unfortunate command. Just outside of San Antonio his troops rebelled. In a melee between officers and enlisted personnel, one sergeant was killed and two officers wounded. Loyal soldiers rounded up several rioters the following week. In June a court-martial sentenced two ringleaders to death. Another board heard testimony on Heyl's actions, with Merritt concluding that the sadistic lieutenant was "much to blame for cruel not to say brutal treatment of his men." Merritt wanted to conduct a thorough investigation as soon as Heyl had recovered from his wounds. "I am much deceived if many facts do not come to light which will prove him to have been without good sense or sound judgment," added Merritt. With this in mind, the judge advocate general's department remitted the sentences of the enlisted men. They and the other participants ultimately returned to duty. But in an astonishing turn of events, Lt. Edward M. Heyl received a promotion to captain effective July 31, 1867, was transferred to Ranald Mackenzie's Fourth Cavalry Regiment in 1870, participated in nine Indian fights, won three official citations for gallantry, and received an arrow wound during the Red River campaign.[24]

Amidst the controversy, Merritt's column again took up the trail to West Texas. Misfortune still dogged the unlucky Ninth, as two troopers drowned while attempting to cross the Pecos River. It was ironic that such troubles beset Merritt's command; two years earlier, he had led a 5,500-strong division on a model six-hundred-mile march from Shreveport, Louisiana, to San Antonio. He finally led Troops C, F, H, and I, Ninth Cavalry into the crumbling remains of the post on Limpia Creek on June 29.[25]

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23 Heitman, *Historical Register*, 1: 527; Alberts, *Wesley Merritt*, 181; Hunter to AG, Nov. 26, 1866, 4143 ACP 1873, Appointment, Commission, and Personal Branch, Record Group 94, National Archives.

24 Albert, *Wesley Merritt*, 179, 185 (quotations); Griffin to Hartsuff, Apr. 19, 1867, 4: 280, Letters Sent, Department of Texas, 1865–70, National Archives (microfilm M 1165, roll 1); Taylor to Hatch, July 5, 1867, ibid., 373; "List of Indian Engagements participated in, actively by Colonel E. M. Heyl . . .," 4143 ACP 1873; Heitman, *Historical Register*, 2: 527. Ironically, Heyl later came to Fort Davis as a visiting inspector.

25 Merritt to Moore, July 1, 1867, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783); Richter, *The Army in Texas During Reconstruction*, 18; Jerome A. Greene, *Historic Resource Study: Fort Davis National Historic Site* (U.S. Department of the Interior: National Park Service, 1986): 34.

Map 6:5. Map © by Jack Jackson. Originally published in Robert Wooster, *Soldiers, Sutlers, and Settlers* (Texas A & M University Press, 1987), p. 11. Reprinted with permission.

Other regulars also entered West Texas. By August 1868 elements of the all-black Forty-first Infantry (later merged with the Thirty-eighth to form the Twenty-fourth Regiment) joined the garrison at Fort Davis. Troops then reestablished Fort Quitman as a subpost and base for operations into the Guadalupe Mountains. Federal soldiers remained at Fort Bliss, occupied during the war.

In addition, troops began staking out Fort Concho, at the present-day city of San Angelo, by early June 1867. Along the San Antonio road, the army briefly reoccupied Camp Hudson, only to abandon the site in April 1868. And shortly after Merritt rode into Fort Davis, Edward Hatch and four companies established regimental headquarters at Fort Stockton.[26]

The army's reoccupation of West Texas signaled dramatic changes for mail services and local government. Frederick P. Sawyer's struggling mail company hired veteran stageman Benjamin F. Ficklin to manage operations between El Paso and San Antonio. The renewed military presence encouraged the company to establish new stations and improve others along the Trans-Pecos line. Four of these outposts—Barrilla Springs, lying on a barren flat near the entrance to Limpia Canyon, twenty-eight miles east of Fort Davis; the Davis station, a half mile from the post; Barrel Springs, thirteen miles west of Fort Davis and named for the wooden water collection barrels sunk near the station; and El Muerto, the dangerous site nineteen miles from Barrel Springs—were directly influenced by the Fort Davis garrison. Troops from Fort Davis also occasionally guarded two other sites to the west, Van Horn's Well and Eagle Springs.[27]

The typical mail station included two adobe rooms, one used for cooking and eating and the other for sleeping and storage. Hungry travelers could grab some bacon, bread, and black coffee at such an establishment. Quality of accomodations varied; Barrilla Springs had "a very good adobe room, with dirt roof and fair facilities for cooking" but no space for overnight passengers. Eagle Springs was "an old tumble down adobe building"; El Muerto consisted solely of "adobe hovels."[28]

Protecting the mails served as one of the garrison's primary functions. By December 1867 Wesley Merritt was detaching a noncommissioned officer and a handful of enlisted men along with the coaches. The troopers accompanied the

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26 Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1868, pp. 764-65; Commanding Officer to Carleton, Jan. 28, 1871, Fort Davis Archives (photocopies of Letters Sent); Robert W. Frazer, *Forts of the West: Military Forts and Presidios and Posts Commonly Called Forts West of the Mississippi River to 1898* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965): 144, 147, 152, 158, 162; Williams, *Texas' Last Frontier*, 82.

27 McChristian, "Military Protection,:" 4-5. Distances are taken from Randolph Marcy, *The Prairie Traveler: A Handbook for Overland Expeditions. With Maps, Illustrations, and Itineraries of the Principal Routes Between the Mississippi and the Pacific* (1859; rpt. Williamstown, Mass.: Corner House Publishing, 1968).

28 James B. Gillett, *Six years with the Texas Rangers, 1875–1881*, ed. M. M. Quaife (1921; rpt. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963): 146; Andrews to Assistant Adjutant General, Nov. 21, 1877, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 1) (quotations).

stages east to Barrilla Springs or west to Eagle Springs, then escorted return coaches back to Fort Davis. An attack by a hundred Apaches on the eight men guarding an eastbound mail from El Paso quickly tested the system. Lashing his mules into a dead run, the stage driver raced toward Eagle Springs. Both sides opened up a furious fusilade, with Pvt. Nathan Johnson and three of the escort's horses hit during the wild chase. By chance, Capt. Henry Carroll's company of the Ninth Cavalry happened to be camped at the spring; upon hearing the shots Carroll's men deployed to ambush the enemy. As the coach careened wildly toward the station, the troopers unleashed a volley into the unsuspecting Apaches, who promptly broke off the chase.[29]

Although the cavalry had been on hand to save that day, mobile escorts usually offered little protection to the one or two company employees at each station. In response, Merritt dispatched infantry detachments from Fort Davis to guard the positions. By December 1868 eighteen men were at El Muerto and another fourteen guarded Barrel Springs. Content with the beefed-up protection, Merritt wrote smugly: "This arrangement of Guards on this line will I think be a thorough protection against Indians in this direction."[30]

Attempts to organize a county government also accompanied the return of the military. Presidio County, which included Fort Davis, remained unorganized; as such, El Paso County served as the closest judicial center. But growing criminal activity increased the need for local law enforcement. In one instance civilians Samuel H. Butler and Henry Young appeared outside Patrick Murphy's house near Fort Davis. "Come out here you damned old fool and look after your property," shouted Butler. Murphy refused; later testimony suggested that Butler had previously threatened to kill Murphy over a family dispute. The army slapped Butler and Young into irons and sent them to San Antonio on attempted murder charges. But the two prisoners escaped en route to San Antonio, illustrating the problems inherent in depending on such distant civilian authority.[31]

With the military still dominant in Texas, a response came quickly. On September 28, 1868, Fifth Military District commander Reynolds appointed

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29 McChristian, "Military Protection," 5-6.

30 Post Adjutant to Iliff, May 27, 1868, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 1); McChristian, "Military Protection," 6-7 (quotation); Post Medical Returns, Jan., 1869, Fort Davis Archives.

31 H. P. N. Gammel, comp., *The Laws of Texas 1822–1897* (Austin: Gammel Book Co., 1898), 5: 1095; Murphy to Mason, Aug. 19, 1868, File # M52, Letters Received, Department of Texas, 1865–70, National Archives (microcopy M1193, roll 12); Deposition of Higgins, Aug. 19, ibid. (quotation); Merritt to Commanding Officer, San Antonio, Aug. 11, 1868, File # M50/1868, ibid.

Patrick Murphy as Justice of the Peace and Diedrick Dutchover as constable for Fort Davis. The new civil officers got off to a rocky start. In October Daniel Murphy (no relation to Patrick), who had occupied a 160-acre tract adjoining Fort Davis since 1857, sought a writ of possession order against post sutler Jarvis Hubbell. Murphy had abandoned the property with the federal evacuation in 1861; the defendant, who had moved onto the site in 1867, exhibited a patent secured during the Civil War. The jury decided in favor of the plaintiff. When Hubbell refused to leave, Justice of the Peace Patrick Murphy requested that the military enforce the decision. Post commander Merritt refused, arguing that he needed approval from his superiors before he could interfere in the matter. By coincidence, Indians later killed Hubbell and Murphy took over the quarters by default.[32]

A subsequent incident also pointed up the ineffectiveness of local government. On January 5, 1869, Merritt wanted to organize a military commission to try a civilian laborer named Schmitt, accused of killing a fellow mechanic. Hoping to make an example of Schmitt, Merritt simply ignored Murphy's continued presence as justice of the peace, claiming that civil authority was incapable of meting out justice in the frontier environment. Reasoned the colonel, "there is great necessity of one or more examples of vigorous administration of the law to prevent crime in future."[33]

Unknown to Merritt, military officials were already stirring. Maj. Gen. E. R. S. Canby, former defender of New Mexico against Sibley's invasion and recently named commander of the Fifth Military District, was determined to restore civil order. R. G. Hurlbut succeeded Murphy as justice of the peace on January 6, 1869. Patrick Murphy protested his removal, only to be informed "that this action was taken upon complaint made . . . that you lived at such distance from Fort Davis, as to render you almost inaccessible." Furthermore, Murphy had demanded "extortionate" fees for taking affidavits.[34]

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32 Special Order No. 5, Sept. 28, 1868, Election Registers, Texas State Archives, Austin; Miscellaneous papers in File # M182/1868, Letters Received, Department of Texas, 1865–70 (microfilm M 1193, roll 12).

33 Merritt to Morse, Jan. 5, 1869, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66/783, roll 1).

34 Richter, *The Army in Texas During Reconstruction*, 162; Special Order No. 37, Jan. 6, 1869, Election Registers; Carierc to Murphy, Feb. 5, 1869, vol. 7: 189, Letters Sent, Department of Texas, 1865–70 (microcopy M1165, roll 2) (quotations). Patrick Murphy's wife later recalled that he "was very much interested in politics." Depostion of Ella P. Ellis, 1899–1900, claim 588, Ella P. Ellis vs. U.S. and Mescalero Apache, Indian Depredations Claims Files, Record Group 123, National Archives.

Hurlbut, the county's lone civil officer, found enforcement just as difficult as his predecessor. As Merritt sympathized: "Crimes are not frequent . . . but the distance from the seat of Justice and the neglect of the civil officers who have prisoners in charge has prevented, so far as I am informed, any criminal act from being punished for the past two years." Fifth Military District officials asked Merritt to supply a list of prospective officeholders. The colonel found it impossible to fulfill the order. "There is not a sufficient number of citizens in this county to comply," he explained.[35]

The army took an even more active role in enforcing Reconstruction with the presidential election of Ulysses S. Grant. The day after his 1869 inauguration, the new president returned Joseph J. Reynolds to command of the Fifth Military District. Reynolds began replacing moderate Republican officeholders with those of more radical inclinations, reportedly filling nearly two thousand local government jobs with his minions. He did not act on Fort Davis until February 1870, when he named John Moczygemba justice of the peace, Peter Johnson district clerk, and Peter Donnelly sheriff. Yet the army continued to play a role in local law enforcement. The Davis guardhouse held a variety of offenders (many of whom were discharged soldiers or government employees) on charges that included vagrancy, fraud, theft, assault with intent to kill, and murder. Those accused of serious crimes were transferred to San Antonio when transportation and escort became available.[36]

At the state level, controversial statewide elections established a civil government in Texas acceptable to the national Republican party in late 1869. The military handed over the reigns of government to the staunchly Republican Gov. E. J. Davis the following April. Another attempt to organize a separate Presidio County was soon forthcoming, with Republican party bosses seeking to capitalize upon the pro-Union tendencies of local voters. Separate status for Presidio County would probably mean another Republican in the state senate. In July the legislature authorized Patrick Murphy to head a three-man board to oversee a county election at Fort Stockton. The 1870 measure was ignored, as still another act for the organization of Presidio County followed on May 12,

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35 Merritt to Carierc, Mar. 1, 1869, File # D74, Letters Received, Department of Texas, 1865–70 (microcopy M1193, roll 17) (first quotation); Carierc to Merritt, Mar. 22, 1869, vol. 7: 440, Letters Sent, Department of Texas, 1865–70 (microcopy M1165, roll 2); Merritt to Morse, May 8, 1869, File # D142, Letters Received, Department of Texas, 1865–70 (microcopy M1193, roll 17) (second quotation).

36 Richter, *Army in Texas During Reconstruction*, 166-74; Special Order No. 37, Feb. 17, 1870, Election Registers; Semi-Monthly Reports of Citizens Held and Released, Fort Davis Records, RG 393, National Archives; "Charge and Specification preferred against William Donelson, Citizen," Dec. 27, 1869, Box 17, ibid.; Wood to Wade, Nov. 16, 1869, vol. 9: 180, Letters Sent, Department of Texas, 1865–70 (microcopy M 1165, roll 3).

1871. Daniel Murphy and Moses E. Kelley joined Patrick Murphy as election commissioners. On this occasion, voting was to be conducted at Fort Davis.[37]

Such efforts again failed to secure separate county status for Presidio. From San Elizario, district judge Simon B. Newcomb claimed that there were fewer than a hundred "legal" voters in the Presidio and Pecos districts combined. The "whole business" was a "dam [sic] fraud," he believed, because the state constitution stipulated that a prospective county have at least 150 voters. Newcomb could not even muster a grand jury. Most voters, in his view, did not want separate county status. Unenthusiastic about making the treacherous journey from El Paso via Fort Davis to Presidio three times yearly, Newcomb personally opposed the measure as well.[38]

Statewide contests brought more conflict and confusion in 1872. Newcomb passed through Fort Davis on the second day of the election, finding that the registrar had quit after quarreling with election judges. Determined to complete the election, unsupervised judges kept the polls open, thus opening up the results to charges of fraud. As for El Paso, Democrats had organized to oust the Reconstruction regime. Catholics who voted Republican risked excommunication by their parish priests. Himself a Republican appointee, Newcomb declared that he would not hold court again until soldiers could be detailed for his protection.[39]

Despite the best efforts of Republican loyalists, the Democratic party steadily regained control of the Lone Star state, first securing the state legislature and then ousting the Republican Edmund J. Davis from the governorship. In addition to overturning much of the Reconstruction legislation, the Democratic resurgence meant that the army would turn away from intrastate politics in favor of the frontier.

As the political tide shifted, building suitable quarters dominated the life of the new garrison at Fort Davis. In a crucial decision, Lieutenant Colonel Merritt opted to rebuild the post well outside the canyon walls, as several offficers had suggested throughout the 1850s. The August 1867 arrival of two steam powered sawmills facilitated the work at the pineries, located twenty-five miles up Limpia Canyon. Sandstone quarries were opened one-half mile from the post and limestone was found thirty-five miles distant. Enterprising soldiers set up a kiln at the site to burn and prepare lime for the mortar used in construction.[40]

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37 Gammel, *Laws of Texas*, 6: 206-07, 988-89.

38 Newcomb to Newcomb, June 7, 1871, James P. Newcomb Papers, Barker Texas History Center.

39 Newcomb to Newcomb, Nov. 12, 1872, ibid.

40 Extract of Strong, n.d., Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1868, p. 865.

Skilled mechanics began arriving in early September. A boiler of one of the steam sawmills exploded a month later, temporarily slowing progress. Still, by December 1 the commanding officer's quarters stood complete save for the roof. One captain's quarters was finished and foundations for the other officers' houses were laid. Seventy thousand shingles, 90,000 board feet of lumber, and 422 bushels of lime had been used so far. Employees included a clerk, two foremen, an engineer, a sawyer, twenty-eight masons, thirty-six carpenters, a wheelwright, a blacksmith, nine quarrymen, a lime-burner, a wagonmaster, two teamsters, and ten laborers. In contrast to the prewar building program, which had depended almost entirely upon the soldiers' extra duty labor, only $1,069.95 had been paid to such workers by December 31; during the same period, civilians had received more than $40,000. Construction costs nearly equaled those at Fort Stockton, which had totaled $43,301 at this time.[41]

Bureaucratic trouble arose in April 1868, for the Quartermaster's Department had not given its blessing to Merritt's building program. Workers had erected several officers' quarters, a guardhouse, a company storeroom, and stables. An enlisted barrack was finished, with three more sets in progress. But the Quartermaster's Department halted construction until July, when it authorized work to begin anew.[42]

Other problems delayed completion of the new post along the Limpia. An officer shortage slowed work efforts. The exhaustion of the old pinery also contributed to the holdup; although the garrison found a fresh timber stand, the road from the new site proved so tortuous that logs were often simply hurtled down the side of a mountain into a nearby wood yard. Incompetent civilian mechanics contributed to the confusion. One worker complained that most of his fellow employees were "loafing a round the lumber pile at the back of the shop." One man, he claimed, was hired because "he fetched fore [four] game cocks and too [two] bull dogs to Captain Moffit [probably Isaac F. Moffat]."[43]

Influenced by racial prejudice, officers at Fort Davis believed their black troops incapable of handling construction work and attempted to rely upon civilian workers despite the problems. Between May 1867 and June 1868 more money had been spent on wages at Davis (more than $72,000) than at any other post in Texas, with Fort Stockton ($68,000) a close second. By contrast, construc-

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41 Ibid., 866; Special Order No. 4, Jan. 15, 1868, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 65-855/10427); Greene, *Historic Resource Study*, 93-94.

42 Greene, *Historic Resource Study*, 94-95.

43 Merritt to Potter, Sept. 2, 1868, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 1); Patterson to General, Dec. 19, 1868, ibid. (quotations); Letter to Potter, vol. 4: 329, Registers of Letters Received, Department of Texas, 1865–70 (microcopy M 1193, roll 2).

tion materials for Davis, costing just over $11,000, ranked behind similar projects at Concho, Richardson, and Stockton.[44]

However the laconic pace frustrated members of the garrison, construction crept ahead. In January 1869 two hundred civilians were still at work. Four stone officers' quarters stood complete and five adobe houses were ready for roofing. Of the enlisted barracks, four were "well advanced," with one scheduled to be ready for occupation within the month. Miscellaneous structures, including two forage rooms, three mess halls, the guardhouse, the magazine, and assorted quartermaster and commissary buildings, were also progressing nicely.[45]

Army bureaucracy struck again on March 20, 1869, when the department quartermaster suspended all construction save that on two officers' quarters, one barrack, and the commissary. About half of the civilian workers, including most of the masons, left the post. Sharp budget restrictions led the garrison to send home all but twenty of the civilians. A frustrated onlooker described the confusion:

> The vast multitude of mechanics gathered here in the past two years, to assist in rebuilding their post, have been dismissed and dispersed; and the role of economy and reform has been fully inaugurated here, by the presiding genius at Washington. To my mind it is a question capable of much doubt, whether, or not, it was genuine economy to abandon the buildings nearly completed to the drenching rains and driving storms, and witness the unprotected adobe walls slowly but surely returning to a shapeless heap of mother earth. Had the work on the unfinished buildings progressed during the past Spring and Summer, the early Autumn would have found the Post completed, and most truly it would have been the pride of the frontier; but, looking upon it to-day, with its bare and roofless walls, the passer-by is forced to exclaim, "what a masterly failure." It is truly a melancholly [sic] abortion of what was intended to tower aloft, as a monument to martial pride and architectural vanity.[46]

With appropriations limited, the enlisted men grimly erected rudimentary shelters which would enable them to abandon their tents. In face of the chronic

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44 Merritt to Potter, Sept. 2, 1868, Fort Davis Archives (photocopies of Letters Sent); Report of J. G. Lee, June 30, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1868, p. 871.

45 Greene, *Historic Resource Study*, 95.

46 Ibid., 96 (quotation); Post Medical Return, 105, 113, 117, Fort Davis Archives. On the possible identity of the writer, see Wulff to Hatch, Nov. 6, 1869, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 6).

Fig. 6:16. Officers' row, ca. 1871. Note the ruins of a barrack from the first fort at the far left. Photograph from Fort Davis Archives.

lumber shortages, the second barrack, like the first, had only dirt floors. Six sets of officers' quarters were also occupied by December 1869. Eighteen civilian mechanics remained at Davis in May 1870, but their small number and the garrison's heavy military duties slowed work to a snail's pace. Commanding general William T. Sherman concluded that "the huts in which our troops are forced to live are in some places inferior to what horses usually have.[47]

At Fort Davis, nine completed officers' quarters formed a neat line running north and south across the mouth of Hospital Canyon by January 1871. All post residents envied the commanding officer's house. The structure measured 48 by 21 feet, with a 41-by-18 foot wing. As originally built, the commander's residence boasted stone walls, shingle roof, and two chimneys. Three captains' quarters also graced officers' row. Like the commanding officer's quarters, the captains each had two front rooms, each 15 by 18 feet, separated by a wide entranceway. Another 15-by-15-foot room served as a rear wing. Five smaller lieutenants' quarters were finished. Each set of officers' quarters had front and rear porches,

47 Ibid., 96-97; Humfreville to Loud, May 1, 1870, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 65-855/10427, roll 1); Report of Reynolds, Sept. 30, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1870, p. 41; Report of Sherman, Nov. 20, ibid., 1869, p. 31 (quotation).

six pillars, and a separate kitchen in the rear. The one-story buildings were 14 feet high; four were constructed of native limestone, the remainder of adobe; each had a central doorway with two front windows. Eleven other quarters were either under construction or projected for future development.[48]

Six companies of unmarried enlisted men crowded into two barracks, each 186 by 27 feet. A 12-foot passageway separated each barrack into two equal sections, and led to a rear wing measuring 86 by 27 feet. The latter edifice included a mess room, kitchen, and storeroom. The two squad rooms were each 24 by 82 ½ feet. An orderly office occupied one end of the squad rooms. Two hundred feet behind each barrack lay a communal sink that was 8 by 24 feet and 12 feet deep. Like the officers' quarters, open fireplaces heated the barracks, which had three front windows each. A large ceiling ventilator improved circulation. The unimposing structures had dirt floors, and were altogether "very untidy, dirty, and disorderly," according to the post surgeon. Even so, the barracks must have seemed quite cozy to the cavalry company still living in tents. The married men and laundresses were still without permanent quarters.[49]

The situation had not improved by 1873. Attempts to heat the barracks during a severe January cold spell nearly suffocated the enlisted men. Considering the minus ten degree temperature and the overworked ceiling ventilator, "and that the only means of warming the room, is by one open fireplace, the condition of the men can be readily understood," explained one officer. Needless to say, a wave of sickness accompanied the norther. An inspector's report that March concluded that the enlisted quarters were overcrowded and poorly ventilated. He instructed company commanders to keep the windows open as much as possible.[50]

Auxiliary buildings also dotted the canyon floor. The post bakery had been rebuilt by April 1870. The 40-by-20-foot adobe building stood two hundred yards from the southeast corner of the parade ground. Under the twice-daily inspection of post surgeon Daniel Weisel, the six-hundred-loaf capacity oven "has all

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48 Greene, *Historic Resource Study*, 115-16, 132-34; Post Medical Returns, p. 9, Fort Davis Archives.

49 Post Medical Return, pp. 9, 12, 197 (quotation), Fort Davis Archives; Report of Weisel, in John S. Billings, *War Department Surgeon General's Office Circular No. 4: Report on Barracks and Hospitals with Descriptions of Military Posts* (rpt. New York: Sol Lewis, 1974): 229.

50 Andrews, Inspection Report of Jan. 31, 1873, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783 reel 6) (quotation); Bliss, Inspection Report of Mar. 31, 1873, ibid.

Fig. 6:17. Enlisted barracks at Fort Davis. Note the construction of a new barrack at the far left. Photograph from Fort Davis Archives.

the appliances of a first class bakery—and all materials necessary for baking are obtainable—consequently the bread is the best." Weisel boasted: "No complaints are ever made." A subsequent inspector agreed with the effusive Weisel—the bakery was "in very good order."[51]

During the late 1860s and early 1870s the post hospital remained inadequate. Although planners foresaw a fine stone building as early as November 1867, a few tents clustered deep in Hospital Canyon served as the first infirmary for postwar Fort Davis. In exchange for treatment from Acting Asst. Surgeon Joseph K. McMahon, civilian workers threw up a temporary hospital behind officers' row in the summer of 1868. The 50-by-19-foot adobe structure held fourteen beds. An adobe kitchen and mess room soon fleshed out the ramshackle complex.[52]

By July 1870 the crumbling adobe hospital, "hastily and temporarily constructed," was "almost untenable." Heavy rains made further occupancy doubtful. But although the limestone walls were nearing completion, work on the

51 Post Medical Return, pp. 9-13, Fort Davis Archives (first quotation); Greene, *Historic Resource Study*, 176 (second quotation).

52 Greene, *Historic Resource Study*, 222-24; Post Medical Return, p. 13, Fort Davis Archives; Report of Weisel, *Circular No. 4*, 229.

permanent hospital had stopped in March 1869, along with most of the other projects. "Both the Post Surgeon and the Post Quartermaster have made urgent and frequent presentations regarding the necessity of at once providing a permanent Hospital, but all it seems have been greatly disregarded," objected surgeon Weisel, who found it odd that work on officers' and enlisted mens' quarters continued while the hospital decayed. In January 1871 Inspector James H. Carleton agreed that the makeshift structure remained "too small and stuffy" and recommended further improvements.[53]

Behind the temporary infirmary and near the north side of the canyon bluffs lay the post's stone magazine, completed by September 1869. The stone magazine held the garrison's ammunition for small arms, as well as shells for two model 1861 three-inch field guns and cartridges for two .50 caliber Gatling guns ultimately housed at the fort. The garrison erected a second magazine storehouse, this one of adobe, by 1873; both were judged to be of inferior construction. The danger of explosion always worried inspectors, who believed that the first magazine lay too close to the temporary hospital.[54]

Other structures also appeared. The executive office building stood on the north side of the parade grounds. Each of the structure's three rooms had a window and door facing the post grounds. Company and quartermaster stables and corrals lay seven hundred feet behind the enlisted barracks. Adobe walls enclosed each structure. The dimensions of the stables changed frequently; in June 1873 an inspector reported one of the stables as being "in very bad condition." About one hundred feet north and south of the corrals stood the quartermaster's and commissary storehouses, respectively. The quartermaster's warehouse held bedding, tools, fuel, clothing, and construction materials; the commissary housed the garrison's food supplies.[55]

Commanding the south side of the parade ground, the limestone guardhouse drew vituperative criticism. It included a 13-by-15-foot guard room, three smaller cells, and a 15-by-16-foot prisoners' room. In October 1870 post surgeon Daniel Weisel complained of inadequate ventilation for the larger holding tank in October 1870. That month an average of thirty prisoners had been confined, leaving each man only seventy-nine cubic feet of air space. Minimum levels, he argued, should be no less than two or three hundred cubic feet per man. The situation had further deteriorated three months later. As prisoners from forts

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53 Report of Weisel, in *Circular No. 4*, 229 (first quotation); Post Medical Return, p. 177, Fort Davis Archives (second and third quotations); Greene, *Historic Resource Study*, 225 (fourth quotation).

54 Greene, *Historic Resource Study*, 240-41.

55 Report of Weisel, in *Circular No. 4*, 229; Greene, *Historic Resource Study*, 165-67, 200-212 (quotation); 181-92.

Bliss, Quitman, and Stockton had been sent to Davis for court-martial, forty-six men packed the little guardhouse. Temporary post commander John W. French ordered the expansion of the prisoners' room and installation of better ventilation for the older structure. Although designers went to great lengths to ensure security during construction, two prisoners escaped in April 1871.[56]

Supplying the garrison also proved a frustrating proposition. The army continued its contract freighting system after the Civil War and advertised for contracts for subsistence and quartermaster supplies (except clothing and equipage) within each military department. Long distances from department headquarters (for most of the postwar era at San Antonio) and ports of entry (Corpus Christi and Indianola) to Trans-Pecos forts like Davis frequently broke down the system. Poor roads, inadequate storage and warehouse facilities, the relative scarcity of locally available supplies, insufficient draft animals, limited federal funding, unscrupulous contractors, and lazy army inspectors compounded the geographic problems. Natural hazards also plagued attempts to supply Trans-Pecos forts; the unsteady pontoon bridge at the Horsehead Crossing of the Pecos River terrified virtually everyone involved in West Texas travel.[57]

As had been the case before the Civil War, seasonal freighting rates varied, with summer costs generally lower than those in winter. A typical freigher, Charles Elmendorf, charged $1.75 per pound per hundred miles from San Antonio to Fort Davis in spring 1871. A leading government contractor was H. B. Adams, a former Confederate soldier and old partner in the Adams and Wickes freighting firm. Whistle-blowing officials frequently challenged the system. Costs could be reduced, they argued, by taking better care of the animals, preventing the overloading of trains, and more diligent inspection of goods on the part of army officials.[58]

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56 Report of Weisel, *Circular No. 4*, 229; Weisel to Geddes, Oct. 28, 1870, Post Medical Return, p. 190, Fort Davis Archives; Greene, *Historic Resource Study*, 168-71.

57 Erna Risch, *Quartermaster Support of the Army: A History of the Corps, 1775–1939* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1960): 476, 493; Thian, *Military Geography*, 99; Elvis Joe Ballew, "Supply Problems of Fort Davis, Texas, 1867–1880" (MA thesis, Sul Ross State University, 1971): 10-12, 143-46; Emily K. Andrews Diary, 31, Barker Texas History Center.

58 Ballew, "Supply Problems," 19-22, 35; J. Evetts Haley, *Fort Concho and the Texas Frontier* (San Angelo: San Angelo Standard-Times, 1952): 288, 296; Walter C. Conway, ed., "Colonel Edmund Schriver's Inspector-General Report on Military Posts in Texas, November 1872–January 1873," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 67 (Apr., 1964): 564, 570.

From Fort Davis, Colonel Merritt fired off a stream of complaints about the inadequacy of supplies. Even before reoccupying the outpost along the Limpia, Merritt had called upon military authorities to force contractors to make their deliveries "in a reasonable length of time." The problem continued throughout the summer of 1867. In July no vegetables were available at Davis. The poor quality of beans made "it impossible to cook them soft, even after twenty-four hours uninterrupted boiling." The flour was "lumpy and bad"; sugar was "dirty, and of poor quality." He would throw away an entire September shipment of flour, Merritt noted, if anything else were available. As it was, he condemned eighteen barrels of flour and demanded that San Antonio authorities inspect goods more closely before shipping them west.[59]

Merritt continued to scold San Antonio officials. If the costs of transportation were factored in, he argued, stores could be procured at tremendous savings from local suppliers. According to Merritt, such was not the case because the commissary department, eager to show a small savings on its own books, bore only the purchase costs. Cheaper prices elsewhere led commissary officials to purchase goods in the east. The commissary then turned them over to the quartermaster's department, which paid freighting costs out of its own budget. The availability of trade with Mexico bore out Merritt's claim. In 1871, for example, as authorities loosened the centralized contract system, John D. Burgess of Fort Davis secured a contract to supply Fort Concho with 255,000 pounds of barley.[60]

Waste and spoilage claimed many of the supplies bound for Davis, concluded a board of survey following its investigation in May 1872. Lt. H. Baxter Quimby, regimental quartermaster for the Twenty-fifth Infantry, intercepted one convoy east of Fort Stockton and inspected a cask of bacon which had broken open. He found only 768 of the 1,000 pounds of bacon intact. The board concluded that the bacon, along with 263 pounds of rice, 187 pounds of sugar, 129 pounds of soap, and a number of other goods had been lost to "natural waste" along the hard journey. A similar board convened the following November, concluding that broken casks ruined 395 pounds of sugar. This time, however, the officers recommended that the freighter bear a portion of the costs.[61]

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59 Merritt to Lee, June 12, 1867, Fort Davis Archives (photocopies of Letters Sent) (first quotation); Merritt to Nash, July 19, 1867, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 1) (second, third, and fourth quotations); Merritt to Assistant Adjutant General, Sept. 19, 1867, p. 284, vol. 3, Registers of Letters Received, Department of Texas (microcopy M 1193, roll 1).

60 Merritt to Morse, July 25, 1868, Fort Davis Archives, LS (photocopies); Report of Weisel, in *Circular No. 4*, 230; Haley, *Fort Concho*, 290.

61 Procedings of a Board of Survey Convened at Fort Davis on May 20, November 22, 1872, H. B. Quimby Papers, Barker Texas History Center.

Despite the efforts of conscientious officers like Lieutenant Quimby, spoilage continued to claim considerable amounts of provisions. In May 1873 a board of survey found almost 1,000 pounds of potatoes, 25 pounds of bacon, 100 pounds of pork, 20 pounds of mackeral, and a can of salmon had rotted. Worms had infested vermicelli, macaroni, a box of herring, some dried peaches, and ten heads of Holland cheese. Mice had spoiled 3 pounds of tapioca, 3 pounds of laundry starch, and 2 pounds of corn starch. Thirty pounds of butter and more than 10 pounds of lard were "rancid," as was 2 pounds of chocolate. Ten pounds of crackers had gotten wet and spoiled, while dirt and sawdust had contaminated 20 pounds of white sugar, 16 pounds of brown sugar, and a can of yeast. A can of oysters and 8 cans of assorted fruits and vegetables were described as "fermented." Seventy-two pounds of flour were "mushy and sour."[62]

This board recommended that the quartermaster not be held responsible for the losses. Hoping to salvage whatever it could, the officers believed that the soldiers could eat some of the cheese, though "worm eaten" and "crumbled." Furthermore, 140 pounds of beef tongues, "dried so that they resemble hard wood," could be offered for sale to the troops. Recognizing the limited appeal of such foodstuffs, the board advised that the quartermaster tempt unwary bargain hunters by reducing the tongues to half-price.[63]

Fraud and theft also frustrated the efforts of Fort Davis quartermasters. In one instance, the post officer, upon opening a box labeled ginger, instead found ground bark. Inadequate storage facilities forced Lieutenant Quimby to store such less perishable provisions as corn outside the guardhouse. Covering the bags of corn with canvas, Quimby warned the guards to keep a close watch over his stores. Despite his precautions, the corn supply soon dwindled. The only guard who spotted anyone raiding the corn pile was on his way to the latrine, and the thief escaped before the sentinel could summon help. The unfortunate lieutenant also found himself under a board of survey's investigation when the post herders failed to control fifteen head of stampeding army cattle for which he was responsible.[64]

Bad luck, theft, inadequate storage facilities, and nature thwarted efforts to improve efficiency. Fed up with the continued excuses, one group of officers took matters into their own hands. In early 1871 a board comprised of Capt. John W. French, Lt. Washington I. Sanborn, and Lt. William Hugo, found that only 16,852 pounds of the 19,172 pounds of bacon allegedly shipped from San Antonio had arrived at Fort Davis. Exposure and spoilage had ruined that which had

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62 Ibid., May 23, 1873.

63 Ibid.

64 Ibid., June 21, 1872; Ibid., July 30, 1873; Affidavit of O. W. Dickermen and James D. Cooper, June 28, 1873.

been received. Striking wildly, the board held quartermaster officials in San Antonio responsible for the loss.[65]

Repercussions swept through Fort Davis almost immediately. Rumor held that a court-martial of the board's officers was imminent. Defending his subordinates against retribution by the quartermaster's staff, post commander William Shafter assured department officials that "I am well satisfied that they intended to do their duty. I believe their judgment in the case to be erroneous but I do not think they ought to be humiliated by being brought to trial for it." He added that "they are all good officers and I think will be very careful in the future that their recommendations are more carefully made."[66]

The post garden provided sporadic relief to the supply problem. Scurvy and dysentery had swept through the garrison in 1867. Hoping to check the disease, surgeon Daniel Weisel compiled an antiscorbutic cookbook and sent it to the post adjutant. Weisel also called upon the troops to establish a new post garden. In 1868 agricultural efforts went awry, owing to the lack of proper seeds and the lateness of planting. The following year's crop seemed more promising. Post officials hired a civilian, James Feuerty, to oversee the work. The four-acre plot, located about half a mile northwest of the fort along Limpia Creek, produced a mixture of fresh vegetables and melons. Unfortunately, military officials soon fired Feuerty for selling stolen seeds and produce to fellow civilians.[67]

The garrison undertook more extensive agricultural efforts in 1870. Deeming the existing plot too small, the troops established a garden at the old Musquiz ranch. The soil seemed adequate, but dry weather and the scarcity of soldier labor ruined the experiment. The following spring an inspector relocated the post garden closer to the military reservation. "Twelve miles out and back over a rough road is a long ways to go for a head of lettuce or a bunch of radishes," he reasoned. Accordingly, the troops planted a new five-acre garden near the southeast corner of the post in 1871. Worked by various fatigue details, the little farm supplied the post with "all kinds of vegetables including Irish and sweet potatoes and melons."[68]

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65 Quartermaster to Ekin, May 27, 1871, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 906/8820).

66 Shafter to Wood, July 24, 1871, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 1).

67 Report of Weisel, in *Circular No. 4*, 228-30; David A. Clary, "The Role of the Army Surgeon in the West: Daniel Weisel at Fort Davis, Texas, 1868–1872," *Western Historical Quarterly* 3 (Jan., 1972): 56-57; Mary Williams, "The Post and Hospital Gardens at Fort Davis, Texas 1854–1891," 1-3, Fort Davis Archives; Greene, *Historic Resource Study*, 301-02.

68 Ibid.

Similarly, the War Department's attempts to reform the system of post traders clearly affected the quality of life at Fort Davis. Past abuses with the regimental sutler system led Washington officials to allow more persons to enter the military trade. In July 1867 General Orders No. 68 permitted individuals "without limit as to numbers" to sell merchandise at posts between longitude 100° west and California. E. D. S. Wickes, the recently authorized sutler at Fort Davis, suddenly found himself in competition against Patrick Murphy, who had brought along "a considerable stock of merchandise."[69]

Officers at Fort Davis distrusted Patrick Murphy, whose trading wih the Confederacy during the Civil War engendered no sympathy among those who had risked their lives for the United States. A council of administration again nominated Wickes as post sutler in August 1867. Lt. Isaac F. Moffett, Ninth Cavalry, asked Murphy to stop selling alcohol to soldiers and civilian employees that same month. If complied with, the petition would have severely restricted Murphy's business. Another trader entered the competition three months later, when A. J. Buchoz requested permission to establish a trading post near Fort Davis. Merritt promised to give Buchoz full government protection, but ordered him not to locate within five hundred yards of any post building.[70]

For the privilege of his official status, Wickes paid a monthly tax of ten cents per soldier. The money supported the post fund, which bought assorted items not covered by official requisition. Officers attempted to protect Wickes in return for his regulated contribution. In May 1868 acting commander Bvt. Capt. James G. Birney warned that the government would not guarantee credit extended to soldiers by nonauthorized traders. In a further attempt to assist Wickes, Colonel Merritt forbade "any and all traders except the Authorized Post Sutler" from selling liquor to the enlisted men or government workers two months later. His

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69 Belknap to Committee on Military Affairs, Apr. 20, 1870, House Executive Document 249, 41st Congress, 2nd session, serial 1425; Murphy to Reynolds, July 9, 1868, File # M60/1868, Letters Received, Department of Texas (microcopy 1193, roll 10) (quotations).

70 Moffett to Wickes, Aug. 24, 1867, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 1); Moffett to Murphy, Aug. 19, 1867, ibid.; Merritt to Buchoz, Nov. 13, 1867, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 906-8820) (quotation).

order forbidding collection of their debts at the company pay tables further restricted the nonofficial traders.[71]

In the meantime Patrick Murphy had completely antagonized the officers at Fort Davis. The military never approved of his actions as justice of the peace and his loud criticism of Birney's order limiting credit obligations only made matters worse. In a sharp rebuke Captain Birney reminded Murphy that he was responsible only to his military superiors, not to Murphy. The latter promptly lodged a protest with district commander Joseph J. Reynolds. The storm of controversy led Reynolds to call for additional applications at Fort Davis. Three traders—Jarvis Hubbell, R. G. Hurlbut, and C. H. Lesnisky & Co.—won official approval for the work on October 19, 1868. The only recorded applicant not receiving such recognition was Pat Murphy, whose second unsuccessful request was classified as being "totally unfit for the position."[72]

In early January 1869 Daniel Murphy sought recognition for his trading operations at Fort Davis. The army refused Murphy's petition on the grounds that the three authorized sutlers could serve the garrison's needs. After Indians killed Jarvis Hubbell near Fort Quitman, Daniel Murphy was again refused permission to sell his wares at Davis. Instead, Robert W. Hagelsieb joined Hurlbut and Lesnisky & Company as authorized merchants.[73]

Congress revamped the post trader system in 1870. At his discretion, Secretary of War William Belknap was authorized to appoint one or more sutlers

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71 Moffett to Wickes, Jan. 1, 1868, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 1); Circular, May 25, 1868, File # M60/1868, Letters Received, Department of Texas, 1865–70 (microcopy M 1193, roll 10); General Orders No. 10, ibid. (second quotation).

72 Post Adjutant to Murphy, May 26, 1868, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 1); Murphy to Reynolds, July 9, 1868, File # M60/1868, Letters Received, Department of Texas, 1865–70 (microfilm M 1193, roll 10); Lesnisky & Co. to Assistant Adjutant General, Sept. 28, File # L75/1868, ibid.; Hubbell to Morse, Oct. 1, 1868, File # G97/1868, ibid.; Hulbert to Adjutant General, Oct. 1, 1868, File # G98/1868, ibid.; Murphy to Morse, Oct. 2, 1868, File # M130/1868, ibid.; Murphy to Morse, Dec. 28, 1868, File # M307/1868, ibid. (quotation); Registers of Post Traders, vol. 2: 140, RG 94, National Archives; Carierc to Murphy, Jan. 11, 1869, vol. 7: 46, Letters Sent, Department of Texas, Department of Texas, 1865–70 (microcopy M1165, roll 2).

73 Carierc to CO, Fort Davis Archives, Jan. 21, 1869, vol. 7: 102, Letters Sent, Department of Texas, 1865–70 (microcopy M1165, roll 2); Carierc to Murphy, Feb. 25, 1869, p. 311, ibid.; Murphy to Loud, Apr. 2, 1869, File # M92, Letters Received, Department of Texas, 1865–70 (microcopy M1193, roll 12); Hatch to Wood, Dec. 21, 1869, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 1); Merritt to Morse, June 10, 1869, ibid.

per post. Secretary Belknap selected Simon Chaney trader for Fort Davis on October 6, 1870. Chaney arrived by the following January and demanded that post officers evict merchant A. J. Buchoz, located a quarter of a mile northeast of the flagstaff, from the military reservation. Chaney also asked that his private competitors not be allowed to collect their debts at company pay tables. "I am regularly appointed Post Trader and am the only Merchant in this vicinity entitled to full military protection," he argued.[74]

Washington acted accordingly, rejecting the last ditch efforts of Buchoz and Moses F. Kelley to secure the post sutlership. Buchoz claimed to have spent $4,300 in improving his store, which he was now forced to vacate. Although local officers recommended that he receive government compensation, such a onetime payment could scarcely replace all of his future profits. And in accord with post trader Chaney's wishes, department officials severely chastised Bvt. Capt. Andrew Sheridan, then commanding officer at Fort Davis, for allowing civilian traders to collect their debts directly as the men were paid.[75]

Preliminary attempts to expand the size of the military reservation also affected Daniel and Patrick Murphy, when in early 1871 a board of officers recommended that the post encompass a four-mile-square reservation. Patrick had opened a new store five hundred yards behind the stables and two hundred yards from the post hay stacks. Daniel Murphy's post–Civil War establishment lay south of the fort. Except for the Murphys, only "transient Mexican families, deriving their support from the soldiers at the post; many of them by lewd habits—the keeping of dance houses, gambling places, etc." would be affected by the proposed expansion. Pat Murphy, who owned his property, should receive $500 per annum and "be allowed a reasonable time to remove from the reservation." Daniel Murphy was also a landholder but merited more generous treatment. The army should allow Daniel to maintain his current residence and pay him $1,000 annually. "This recommendation is made from the fact that Mr. Dan Murphy and family enjoy deservedly a high reputation for social and moral qualities," advised the board.[76]

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74 Report of Belknap, Nov. 22, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1875, p. 24; Registers of Post Traders, vol. 3: 7; Chaney to French, Jan. 31, 1871, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 8); Gerhard to Buchoz, Feb. 1, 1871, ibid. (microfilm 906-8820); Chaney to Rucker, Mar. 19, 1871, ibid. (microfilm 66-783, roll 8) (quotation).

75 Registers of Applications, File # 87 and 127, vol. 1: 14-15, 22; Greene, *Historic Resource Study*, 214; Buchoz to Secretary of War, June 3, 1871, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 906-8820); Wood to Davis, Apr. 17, 1871, ibid. (microfilm 66-783, roll 8). On post traders, see Mary Williams, Feb., 1985, Post Trader File, Fort Davis Archives.

76 Greene, *Historic Resource Study*, 213; Proceedings of a Board of Officers convened at Fort Davis, January 27, 1871 (entry of Feb. 6), Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 65-855, roll 2) (quotations).

At district headquarters, Reynolds disagreed, asserting that both Patrick and Daniel Murphy opposed the proposal. Owing to the still uncertain post boundaries, the Murphys' undisputed title, and the projected cost, Reynolds blocked attempts to enlarge the military reservation. In denying the motion, Reynolds apparently believed the Murphys to be related and thus associated the military's disputes with Patrick to Daniel as well. Reynolds never understood the essence of the problem, claiming that efforts to enlarge Fort Davis "were based upon unpleasant relations existing between the commanding officers and Messrs. Daniel & Patrick Murphy." He added that "considerable correspondence has taken place on the subject (most of it not very good tempered) between the post commanders and Messrs. Murphy." In fact, relations between Daniel Murphy and most officers were good, as witnessed in the board's favorable recommendation.[77]

Troubles with Patrick Murphy finally boiled over in May 1871. Lt. Andrew Geddes testified that about eleven o'clock on the evening of the twelfth, "Mr. Pat Murphy shot at me deliberately, and with intent to kill, the ball from his revolver wounding me in the head." Geddes asked for a transfer from Fort Davis, claiming that Murphy had since threatened to "kill me on sight." Geddes's written complaint stirred Brevet Captain Sheridan, who took Patrick Murphy prisoner the following day. Murphy died later that year, leaving his wife of eleven years to carry on operations at the post.[78]

Problems relating to construction and supply consumed much of the garrison's time and energy. Crucial were the army's efforts to keep pace with developments in armaments and equipment after the Civil War. The Springfield rifle-musket, left over from the war but altered to fire a metallic cartridge, served as principal infantry arm immediately following the Civil War. Testing for a new breech-loading rifle was underway by 1871, when Fort Davis's G Company, Twenty-fifth Infantry, participated in a series of field experiments. During the process, its soldiers carried seven Springfield model 1868 .58 caliber, twenty Springfield model 1870 .50 caliber, twenty Sharps .50 caliber, and

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77 Reynolds to Adjutant General, June 5, 1871, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 65-855, roll 2) (quotations); Carleton to French, Feb. 3, 1871, ibid. (roll 1).

78 Geddes to Post Adjutant, May 13, 1871, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 8) (quotations); Sheridan to French, May 14, 1871, ibid. (roll 1); Deposition of Apr. 11, 1891, claim 588, Ella P. Ellis vs. U.S. and Mescalero Apache, Indian Depredations Files, Record Group 205, National Archives; Ibid., Indian Depredations Claims, Record Group 123.

twenty Remington .50 caliber weapons. All were single shot, metallic cartridge rifles; repeaters were deemed too expensive, too prone to misfire, and too limited in range.[79]

An 1872 board of survey formally investigated the new weapons and tests, once again selecting the Springfield, modified with the breech-loading metallic cartridge Allin conversion. The following year, production began on the model 1873 .45 caliber Springfield rifles and carbines. Though many complained about the weapon's single-shot capacity, most observers believe it served the army well until 1892, when the War Department adopted the Krag-Jorgensen magazine rifle. Indians, on the other hand, often preferred the Winchester six-shot repeater, despite its shorter range and more limited penetrating power.[80]

The army also adopted the Colt 1872 revolver, a powerful .45 caliber single-action six-shooter. Rival pistols, including the Remington .44 caliber and the Smith and Wesson .45 caliber, offered limited competition. The Hotchkiss "mountain gun" howitzer added long range punch. Light and easily managed, the 1.65-inch cannon was accurate to 4,000 yards. Less successful was the Gatling gun, which could fire 350 rounds per minute by virtue of its hopper-fed ten revolving barrels. The weapon's short range, maddening proclivity to jam, and cumbersome carriage severely limited its use in the American West.[81]

An equipment adoption which most affected soldiers at Fort Davis was the army's standard issue cartridge belt. Army belts initially used black leather cartridge boxes designed for paper ammunition. With the widespread introduction of metallic ammunition, sheepskin lining or cloth loops were added. Despite the remodeling, the cartridges still tended to clatter about and the weight remained unevenly distributed. Several officers, including Capt. Anson Mills, devised belts with loops to hold metal cartridges which proved immensely popular with frontier soldiers. Mills, who ultimately served at Fort Davis, secured official adoption of his prairie belt and made a good deal of money. Of course, budgetary restrictions often delayed the purchase and distribution of new regulation equipment.[82]

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79 Report of Meigs, Oct. 11, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1870, pp. 148-49; Utley, *Frontier Regulars*, 69-72; Endorsement of July 14, 1871, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 8); Summary of Ordnance . . . ending March 1872, ibid. (microfilm 816-8091); Sherman to Belknap, July 12, 1870, vol. 52, Letters Sent by the Office of the Adjutant General, National Archives (roll 39).

80 Utley, *Frontier Regulars*, 70-73.

81 Ibid.

82 Ibid., 75; Chappell, "Search for the Well-Dressed Soldier," 18-30; Wedemeyer Memoirs, Feb. 20, 1881; Douglas C. McChristian, "The Model 1876 Cartridge Belt," *Military Collector and Historian* 34 (Fall, 1982): 109-15; McChristian, "Company C, 3rd Cavalry," *Military Images Magazine* 4 (Mar.-Apr. 1983): 4-6.

But Indian opposition to new migration to western Texas remained a major concern. In addition to the escorts and guards detached to the mail stations, the troops at Fort Davis also launched several expeditions into the Trans-Pecos, with Lt. Patrick Cusack leading the most significant of these patrols in September 1868. With sixty soldiers from K and F Troops, Ninth Cavalry, and a few Mexican volunteers, Cusack caught two hundred Apaches eighty miles south of the post. Cusack claimed that his men killed between twenty and thirty Indians, wounded an equal number, captured a pony herd, recovered two hundred head of stolen cattle, and freed two Mexican prisoners. Two soldiers were severely wounded and two horses killed. On the triumphant return to Davis, pranksters dressed up in their captured booty and pretended to be Apaches. The "Indians" surprised a group working on the rock quarry about a mile from the post. "You can imagine how fast those men ran trying to get back to the post," remembered one soldier.[83]

Despite the success of the Cusack scout, assorted hostilities continued. Indians killed two men near old Fort Quitman in January 1869. That summer they stole a number of stock from the stage station at Dead Man's Hole. The army's failure to check such attacks by Indians or outlaws outraged local citizens. From Presidio John D. Burgess claimed that "the Mexican thieves driven from Fort Davis . . . have taken refuge on my plantation, and are nightly committing depredations on my goat and sheep herds." In his annual report for 1869 Reynolds admitted that Indian raids had been "unusually bold." And in 1870 a strike against Milton Faver's ranch claimed one life and four hundred sheep. A late spring foray against the Fort Davis pinery snatched fifteen government mules. Against such widely ranging attacks, the efforts of the overburdened garrison at Davis proved futile. No less than nine scouts had been launched by January 1871, but no end to the problem seemed apparent.[84]

The mounting frustrations proved too much for Lt. Col. Wesley Merritt, whose calls for more troops fell upon deaf ears. In Merritt's view, it was unreasonable to expect his four or five companies to build a military post, cultivate a garden, protect mail and emigrant travelers, guard the stage stations, and campaign against the skilled Apaches. Furthermore, the wilds of

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83 Abert to Commanding Officers, July 27, 1867, vol. 4: 398, Letters Sent, Department of Texas, 1865–70 (microcopy M 1165, roll 1); Merritt to Morse, Sept. 15, 1868, Fort Davis Archives (photocopies of Letters Sent); Thompson, "Negro Soldiers," 219 (quotation).

84 Douglas McChristian, "Incidents Involving Hostile Indians Within the Influence of Fort Davis, Texas 1866–1891," September 9, 1975, Fort Davis Archives; Burgess to Merritt, Aug. 5, 1869, ibid. (microfilm 66-783, roll 6) (first two quotations); Report of Reynolds, Oct. 21, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1869, p. 144 (third quotation); French to Carleton, Jan. 28, 1871, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 1); Post Medical Return, June, 1869, Fort Davis Archives.

West Texas never appealed to Merritt. He had attempted to escape the arduous duty entirely, unsuccessfully requesting a one-year's leave upon being ordered to the frontier. Arriving at Davis in the summer of 1867, he contracted acute dysentery and was unable to inspect his command in October.[85]

Merritt finally secured sick leave in November 1867. With extensions granted in January and February, the lieutenant colonel stayed away from his station until June 1868. A succession of temporary commanders headed the post during his absence. Upon Merritt's return, he was humiliated in an embarrassing incident the following January. Attempting to leap into a moving wagon just outside his quarters, Merritt "missed his foothold and fell." The wheel of the heavy vehicle crushed his exposed left forearm. As his arm healed, Merritt remained in command at Fort Davis for eight more months. Col. Edward Hatch assumed command in November, a position he would hold for thirteen months. An old friend of General Sheridan, Hatch had compiled an excellent record during the Vicksburg campaign of 1863. A solid officer, Hatch nonetheless lacked the intense ambition and luck needed to excel along the frontiers. He would die in 1889, still a colonel of regulars.[86]

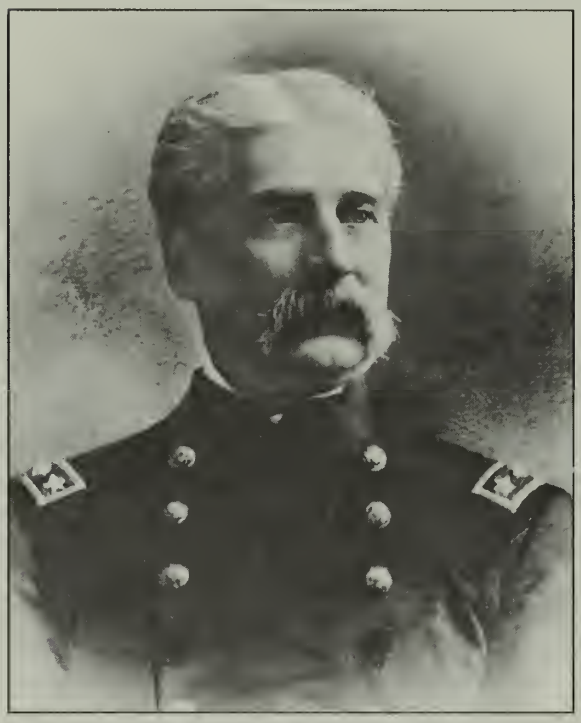

Fig. 6:18. Col. Edward Hatch, commander of Fort Davis in 1870. His uniform reflects the trappings of his brevet rank—major general. Photograph from Fort Davis Archives, AA-15.

Fort Davis had changed dramatically. Instead of the all-white regular force stationed there before the Civil War, black troops now comprised the garrison. Racial discrimination, along with the bitterness engendered by the army's role in the Civil War and Reconstruction, created numerous disputes between the military and civilian communities at Fort Davis. Still, the two groups obviously

85 Merritt to Moore, July 20, 1867, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 1); Letter of Merritt, Apr. 29, 1867, vol. 2: 603, Registers of Letters Received of the Department of Texas, 1865–70 (microcopy M 1193, roll 1); Alberts, *Wesley Merritt*, 196.

86 Alberts, *Wesley Merritt*, 179, 196; Robert M. Utley, *Fort Davis National Historic Site, Texas*, National Park Service Handbook Series no. 38 (Washington: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1965): 56-57; Post Medical Returns, Jan. 30, Fort Davis Archives (quotation).

depended upon one another—the civilians for protection, law enforcement, and business from the army; the troops for skilled employees, entertainment, and essential services from the nonmilitary population. Cogent observers recognized the interdependency. One officer believed the nonmilitary community, which save for the stage line depended almost totally on the military, "can hardly be regarded as a settlement. . . . Nothing is being done toward a permanent settlement of the country," he wrote.[87]

Political disputes also affected the Fort Davis community. During the height of Reconstruction, Republicans attempted to form a separate Presidio County government in this traditionally Unionist area. However, the sparse population hampered such organizational efforts. With local government so limited, the army was forced to assume nonmilitary responsibilities. Disputes between the army and local officials often resulted from the confusion. Despite the problems, the civilian population at Fort Davis would grow rapidly in the postwar years.

The military had also assumed a more active defence. Soldiers escorted the mails and guarded the stage stations throughout the region. Patrols and expeditions periodically combed the Trans-Pecos, though with the exception of the column led by Lt. Patrick Cusack, rarely caught any Indians. At the fort itself, supply shortages, disputes over land title and the post tradership, and attempts to cultivate a post garden characterized life during the late 1860s and early 1870s. And as had been the case before the Civil War, construction proved a never-ending task, although civilians played a much greater role in this process than they had earlier.

87 Shafter to Augur, Feb. 12, 1872, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 1).

CHAPTER SEVEN:

FORT DAVIS AND THE INDIAN WARS

During the 1870s the army turned away from Reconstruction and reinforced its frontier posts as the Democratic party returned to power throughout the South. The military Department of Texas was transferred to the sprawling Division of the Missouri, commanded by the energetic Philip Sheridan. The garrison at Fort Davis also changed its priorities. As at least rudimentary shelters became available, more and more soldiers could operate against Indians. In a series of grueling marches, Davis-based troops crisscrossed the Trans-Pecos, and established subposts throughout the region. Others guarded strategic waterholes, further limiting Indian mobility. Better coordination with Mexican military forces and increased settlement also facilitated the army's efforts. In sum, aggressive military operations, the new outposts, the advancing non-Indian frontiers, and better relations between the U.S. and Mexico combined to eliminate the Indian presence in West Texas.

One survey has documented nineteen definite and six possible encounters between Indians and non-Indians in the Fort Davis vicinity between January 1869 and December 1877. A federal commission studying Indian depredations in Texas concentrated its efforts on the lower Rio Grande region, but added, almost as an afterthought, that along the frontiers "the sufferings of the settlers are grievous." A congressional committee alleged that Indians had killed more than one hundred white males between 1872 and 1874, with a similar number of women and children captured. It attributed the loss of more than one hundred thousand cattle and horses to Indian theft during the same period.[1]

Joseph J. Reynolds, military chief in Texas for most of the period from 1868 to 1871, had found the politics of Reconstruction more interesting than formulating an effective strategy against Indians. His efforts to defeat the Apache, Comanche, Kiowa, Southern Cheyenne, and Kickapoo proved uninspired. The lack of horses seemed an insurmountable burden. In August 1870 Edward Hatch speculated that a winter campaign such as that recently conducted across

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1 Douglas McChristian, "Incidents Involving Hostile Indians Within the Influence of Fort Davis, Texas 1866–1891," Sept. 9, 1975, Fort Davis Archives; Report of Commissioners, Dec. 10, 1872, House Executive Document 39, 42nd Congress, 3rd session, serial 1565, pp. 2-3 (quotation); Report of the Committee on Indian Affairs, Apr. 11, 1874, House Report 395, 43rd Congress, 1st session, serial 1624, pp. 1-3.

the southern Plains might "cripple" the Indians of the Trans-Pecos. But alas, "active operations against the Indians from this post conducted without cessation will reduce the horses to so few, the winter operations which are the most important cannot be made effective." Rather than taking the initiative, post commanders launched erratically timed patrols. Orders to Lt. Irwin M. Starr in March 1871 betrayed the timidity. "If possible," Starr should punish the Indians, but only if he could do so while exercising "care and judgment" in taking "good care" of troops and government animals. He should take no risks that might "endanger the safety" of his command.[2]

Fig. 7:19. Maj. Gen. William R. Shafter, commander of Fort Davis in 1871 and 1881–82. During his colorful tenure in West Texas he earned the nickname "Pecos Bill." Photograph from Fort Davis Archives, AA-58.

Like so many of his colleagues on the military frontiers, William R. Shafter, who first took command at Fort Davis in 1871, had compiled an impressive Civil War record. Able, imaginative, and dedicated to the army, Shafter enlisted as a lieutenant in 1861 and rose to brevet brigadier general of volunteers by 1865. Congress later awarded him the Medal of Honor for his work at the Battle of Seven Pines,

2 Raphael P. Thian, *Notes Illustrating the Military Geography of the United States 1813–1880*, ed. John M. Carroll (1881; rpt. Austin: University of Texas, 1979): 99-100, 111-12; Report of Reynolds, Sept. 30, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1870, p. 41; Report of Reynolds, Sept. 30, ibid., 1871, p. 65; Hatch to Wood, Aug. 24, 1870, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 1) (first and second quotations); Rucker to Starr, Mar. 7, 1871, ibid. (subsequent quotations).

Virginia. Having commanded a black regiment in the Civil War, it was natural that Shafter, who would ultimately balloon to well over three hundred pounds, should receive the lieutenant colonelcy of the Twenty-fourth Infantry.[3]

The imperious Shafter's constant bullying and dogged determination offended many subordinates. Yet whatever his faults, Shafter quickly made his presence known. He saw little need for more men or buildings at Fort Davis. Rather than the four companies suggested by department commander Reynolds, Shafter believed three companies were capable of handling any contingency. "In fact except to guard the El Paso Mail I am unable to discover the necessity for a single soldier at this post as there is not now nor ever will be an honest permanent settler from the head of the main Concho [River] to this post," he observed. As for new construction projects, Shafter again outlined a clear-cut position: outside of a few necessities, no additional construction was necessary. "I believe that beyond what I have stated every dollar expended here in building more will be thrown away if this is to be a three or four company post."[4]

Shafter's impact on scouting expeditions was equally visible, his aggressiveness reflecting the army's more general shift from Reconstruction to Indian affairs. His predecessors had worked hard but lacked inspiration. The head of a typical 1870 scout reported that his men "had marched a distance of about 187 miles, without seeing any signs of Indians and without injury to men or stock." The vast majority turned up nothing of value, a rare exception being that led by Capt. Francis S. Dodge. In January 1871 the Dodge expedition, including at least two companies from Fort Davis, surprised a group of Mescalero Apaches. The bluecoats claimed to have killed twenty-five Indians while admitting only one wounded among their own forces.[5]

Rather than assigning the task to junior officers, Shafter took the field himself. On June 16, 1871, Comanches hit the Barrilla Springs mail station,

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3 On Shafter, see Paul H. Carlson, " 'Pecos Bill' Shafter: On the Texas Frontier 1870–1875," *Military History of Texas and the Southwest* 15 (no. 4, 1979): 5-16; "William R. Shafter as a Frontier Commander," ibid., 12 (no. 1, 1975): 15-29; and "William R. Shafter Commanding Black Troops in West Texas," *West Texas Historical Association Year Book* 50 (1974): 104-16.

4 Carlson, "Frontier Commander," 23-25; L. F. Sheffly, ed., "Letters and Reminiscences of Gen. Theodore A. Baldwin: Scouting After Indians on the Plains of West Texas," *Panhandle-Plains Historical Review* 2 (1938): 17-19; Nolan to Benjamin Grierson, Feb. 8, 1881, Benjamin Grierson Papers, Illinois State Historical Library, Springfield, Illinois (hereafter referred to as GPSpr) (microfilm edition, Fort Davis Archives, roll 2); Shafter to Wood, June 5, 1871, Fort Davis Archives (photocopies of Letters Sent). For a similar view, see French to Carleton, Jan. 28, 1871, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 1).

5 Geddes to Rucker, Mar. 16, 1870, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 65-855/10427, roll 1) (quotations); Commanding Officer to Carleton, Jan. 28, 1871, Fort Davis Archives (photocopies of Letters Sent).

running off forty-four mules and horses belonging to A Company, Twenty-fourth Infantry. News of the attack reached Fort Davis two days later. Shafter assembled all of his available cavalry—thirty-four men of C Troop, Tenth Cavalry—Asst. Surgeon Daniel Weisel, Lt. Isaiah McDonald, and Lt. William Gerhard. They left Davis on June 19, picking up reinforcements at Barrilla Springs in the form of Capt. Michael Cooney's Ninth Cavalry detachment from Fort Stockton.[6]

Now boasting eighty-six officers and men, the command followed the trail left by stolen animals north and east toward the Pecos River. Circling back to the west, they sighted an Indian village in the distance. Shafter had few options in the treeless plain. Dispatching fifteen soldiers to seize the animals, Shafter led the rest of his troopers in a headlong charge. Although shots rang out from both sides, no one was hurt, the Indians enjoying too much of a head start. Shafter burned the village and resumed the pursuit. With rations running low, he gave up the trail on July 2 at the Pecos River. The lone captive, a seventy-year-old Indian woman, provided some useful information about the tribes on the Staked Plains. Still, the lieutenant colonel's initial effort had done little to deter Indian raiders.[7]

Shafter conducted another reconnaissance in October. With four officers, one acting assistant surgeon, two guides, and seventy-five enlisted men from I and K Troops, Ninth Cavalry, and G Company, Twenty-fifth Infantry, Shafter entered the region south of Peña Blanca. Although he found numerous signs of Indians, the mountainous terrain and convenient escape routes across the Rio Grande made it impossible to force the mobile bands to battle.[8]

The failure to achieve immediate results did not weaken Shafter's resolve. "I am desirous of making a long scout as soon as the grass is good through the country north of here," he promised. More horses would allow him "to thoroughly scour the country with cavalry." Like most at Fort Davis, Shafter attributed the depredations to tribes from the Fort Stanton reservation in New Mexico. New department chief Brig. Gen. Christopher C. Augur supported Shafter's determined stance. Post commanders should "be not content with a mere formal pursuit of a few days . . . but see that a vigorous, determined and continued

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6 Shafter to Wood, July 18, 1871, Fort Davis Archives (photocopies of Letters Sent).

7 Ibid.

8 "Tabular Statement of Expeditions and Scouts against Indians in Fort Davis, Texas," third quarter, 1871, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 1); Shafter to Wood, Feb. 1, 1872, Fort Davis Archives (photocopies of Letters Sent).

effort, even to the extent of privation to men and horses, if necessary, be made to overtake and punish the marauders." They must avoid sending expeditions "under officers who have made up their minds before starting that nothing could be done," Augur ordered. "With such leaders *nothing will be done*, and it is mere folly to send them out."[9]

Fig. 7:20. Col. George L. Andrews, commander of Fort Davis, 1872-73, 1874-76, and 1876-78. Photograph from Fort Davis Archives, AA-17.

But Augur could not spare troops for every corner of the state. For most of 1871 and early 1872, he sought to shield the state's northern frontiers and to penetrate the Staked Plains, a task made exceedingly difficult by President Grant's avowed Peace Policy, which called for nonviolent solutions to U.S.-Indian conflicts. In February 1872 the garrison at Fort Davis fell to a low of 110 enlisted men. As a result, Shafter cut back the number of men assigned to the mail stations. New recruits that spring brought the two companies of infantry (from the Twenty-fourth and Twenty-fifth Infantry) and one Ninth Cavalry troop to 149. With little more than a corporal's guard, the garrison launched no scouts or expeditions against Indians during the first quarter of 1872.[10]

Col. George L. Andrews, Twenty-fifth Infantry, replaced Shafter, called away to participate in a campaign along the upper Brazos River, as post commander effective May 26, 1872. With several interruptions, he com-

9 Shafter to Wood, Feb. 1, 1872, Fort Davis Archives (photocopies of Letters Sent) (first quotation); Shafter to Wood, Feb. 5, 1872, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 1); Shafter to Augur, Feb. 12, 1872, ibid. (second quotation); General Orders No. 5, Apr. 3, 1872, "The Regular Army in Texas," Martin L. Crimmins Collection, Barker Texas History Center (subsequent quotations).

10 Douglas C. McChristian, "Military Protection for the U.S. Mail: A Fort Davis Case Study," May 20, 1983, Fort Davis Archives; Shafter to Acting Assistant Adjutant General, Mar. 1, 1872, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 1).

manded the post for four years during the 1870s. Andrews proved much less aggressive than Shafter. Five parties took the field during the second quarter of 1872, but the largest group boasted only nineteen men; four of the expeditions were directed against "Mexican thieves" rather than Indians. Active campaigning became even less common in subsequent years; from the third quarter of 1872 until the end of 1876, Fort Davis mounted only twenty-eight scouts or expeditions. Sixty-nine men comprised the largest column; the second largest was forty-six; most numbered fewer than thirty.[11]

The record seems unimpressive until one considers Fort Davis's active support for wider defense efforts, exploration, and road building projects throughout the 1870s. Capt. Louis H. Carpenter's late summer expedition of 1875 typifies such fragmentation. Consisting of his own troop of Tenth cavalrymen and I Company, Twenty-fifth Infantry, its original assignment had been to help patrol the Eagle Spring area. Carrying five days rations and two hundred rounds of ammunition per man, the eight wagons, eight mules, three guides, three packers, and tents for every two officers and men slowed the group's progress. Shortening the road around Eagle Spring took precedence over finding any Indians. For a determined officer like Carpenter, whose combat record won high marks from as tough a taskmaster as Phil Sheridan, the need to balance fighting Indians with auxiliary tasks must have been maddening. Although his unit had marched an aggregate of 1,153 miles "and mapped the country," it had caught no Indians.[12]

Civilian demands for military protection exacerbated the dilemma facing Andrews. Small detachments guarded ranches throughout the area. Since 1871 at least twelve men from the post had usually guarded the mail stations; since 1873 the garrison furnished four men per week as stage escorts. Andrews

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11 Robert M. Utley, *Fort Davis National Historic Site, Texas*, National Park Service Historical Handbook Series no. 38 (Washington: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1965): 56-60; Paul Carlson, " 'Pecos Bill' Shafter: On the Texas Frontier 1870–1875," *Military History of Texas and the Southwest* 15 (no. 4): 12; "Tabular Statement of Expeditions and Scouts Against Indians," Fort Davis Records, Record Group 393, National Archives.

12 Special Orders No. 130, Sept. 2, 1875, Louis H. Carpenter Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania Collection (Philadelphia); Andrews to Carpenter, Oct. 8, 1875, ibid.; Woodward to Carpenter, Mar. 4, 1869, ibid.; Andrews to Adjutant General, Nov. 17, 1875, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 1) (quotation).

SCOUTS AND EXPEDITIONS (1871–1880)

Quarter	Year	Total Number of Scouts and Expeditions	Number led by Enlisted Men	Size of Largest Expedition
4	1871	3	1	78
1	1872	none	—	—
2		5	0	19
3		1	0	16
4		2	1	15
1	1873	1	0	20
2		1	0	11
3		4	0	20
4		1	0	21
1	1874	none	—	—
2		2	0	25
3		1	0	28
4		2	0	11
1	1875	none	—	—
2		1	0	24
3		1	0	69
4		1	0	46
1	1876	3	0	32
2		3	1	21
3		4	0	21
4		none	—	—
1	1877	3	0	20
2		4	0	52
3		1	1	11
4		not reported		
1	1878	4	0	40
2		8	1	40
3		4	0	59
4		1	0	14
1	1879	none	—	—
2		5	0	39
3		4	0	44
4		1	0	38
1	1880	3	0	52
2		2	0	20

Source: "Tabular Statement of Expeditions and Scouts Against Indians," Fort Davis Records.

summed up recent efforts in November 1875. For the past four months, his six-company garrison boasted a mean strength of just over two hundred. Detached service claimed an average of sixty-three of these men. This left too few soldiers either to conduct proper military drills or to campaign effectively against Indians.[13]

13 Murphy to Assistant Adjutant General, Oct. 23, 1871, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 65-855, roll 1); first endorsement, Oct. 25, ibid.; second endorsement, Nov. 3, ibid.; Andrews to Adjutant General, Nov. 17, 1875, ibid. (microfilm 66-783, roll 1). See also Lizzie Crosson vs. U.S. and the Apache Indians, Indian Depredation No. 6322, Crosson Ranch Collection,

Furnishing guards for ranches, mail stations, and stagecoaches helped appease local demands and ensure the relative safety of scheduled overland travel. But such efforts drained manpower and exhausted the garrison. In addition to their scouting duties, the troops had worked on several major construction projects. Manpower levels, particularly in the infantry companies, failed to meet such demands. "My men are now getting but one night in bed," complained Colonel Andrews. The Fort Davis experience proved typical. "McIntosh, Quitman, and Bliss have only about a corporals guard for duty . . . cases of sleeping on post, on account of but one night in bed are crowding upon me," wrote department commander E. O. C. Ord.[14]

Recognizing the problem, Shafter had reduced the number of men assigned to the mail stations. Andrews eventually withdrew the guards from several points entirely. Department headquarters soon noticed this "oversight," however, and ordered Andrews to reestablish the detachments between Fort Davis and Quitman. He obediently dispatched a noncommissioned officer and three men to each station, but wondered if the stage companies should not be forced to hire their own guards. Unenthusiastic about the project, in late 1872 Andrews found himself responsible for even more positions when the War Department reduced the already undermanned Fort Quitman to a single company. Consequently, Fort Davis now bore the responsibility for guarding two additional stations—Van Horn's Wells and the ever-dangerous Eagle Spring, on the path of an Apache trail into Mexico.[15]

Uneasiness characterized relations between the military and the mailmen. The station keepers and stage drivers, many of whom were Confederate veterans, resented the presence of black troops, and the regulars soon found themselves relegated to menial tasks. Although most keepers reluctantly provided the guards with quarters, the Leon Springs boss kept the soldiers in tents. He also neglected to issue rations. Several stage drivers refused to carry the black men, thus forcing several soldiers to walk to either Davis or Stockton for food. At Barrilla Springs, a stage driver took a shot at a private; the abused soldier finally dropped the driver with a well-aimed rifle shot. Lieutenant Colonel Shafter vigorously protested the ill-treatment. "I shall be glad to furnish mail escorts as long as they are wanted but they must be properly treated," thundered Shafter. "They should either be fed by the Company or allowed

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14 Andrews to Commanding Officer, Ft. Quitman, Sept. 5, 1875, Fort Davis Archives (photocopies of Letters Sent); Andrews to Adjutant General, Nov. 17, 1875, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 1) (first quotation); Ord to Sherman, Aug. 26, 1875, William T. Sherman Papers, Library of Congress (microfilm edition, University of Texas, Austin, roll 21) (second quotation).

15 McChristian, "Military Protection," 9-10.

facilities for cooking their own rations [and] a decent place to stay in while at the station and invariably brought back by first return stage."[16]

One of many scandals in the corruption-riddled Grant administration involved the postal department, further dividing the military and the private mail company. In attempting to reform his scandal-ridden ministry, new postmaster general Marshall Jewell halved the company's federal subsidy. Service between San Antonio and El Paso quickly deteriorated; the army began carrying its own mail between Forts Bliss, Quitman, Davis, Stockton, and Concho in October 1875. Although more dependable civilian service was restored early the following year, several carriers complained about carrying black military guards on their stages. But in September 1877 an Indian attack on a civilian hay camp near the Van Horn station spawned renewed calls for army protection.[17]

Colonel Andrews contemplated sweeping revisions in the military escort system that November. Except during the biannual sessions of the district court, almost no passengers took the stage, which ran a biweekly buckboard and weekly coach between El Paso and Fort Concho. He doubted the need for mail service between Davis and El Paso and complained that the drivers merely eased their own burdens by assigning the soldiers menial tasks. With ten percent of his infantrymen involved in such duties, he maintained that "discipline suffers accordingly." Having outlined these criticisms, he warned that "a loud out-cry" would nonetheless accompany the removal of army guards.[18]

Andrews's report had little impact, and another incident disrupted relations in November 1878. Mailmen charged that Sgt. Joseph Jenkins's detachment had stolen an express package at El Muerto. Jenkins vigorously defended his men, antagonizing the civilian stage and postal workers in the process. Subsequent investigators concluded that the cook at El Muerto, previously fired from the Davis stage station, had in fact taken the package. Superiors approved of the sergeant's actions; Captain Carpenter informed Jenkins that he "was pleased with the way in which you look after things at your present station." In

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16 Ibid., 10-12; Shafter to Taylor, undated [probably Jan. 4, 1872], Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 1); Andrews to Assistant Adjutant General, Aug. 25, 1872, ibid.

17 McChristian, "Military Protection," 13-14; Andrews to Cardes, Aug. 28, 1877, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 1); Valdez to Schurtz, Sept. 30, 1877, ibid. (microfilm 65-855, roll 1).

18 Andrews to Assistant Adjutant General, July 21, Nov. 21 (first quotation), 1877, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 1); McChristian, "Military Protection," 14 (second quotation).

reporting the incident to district officials, Carpenter theorized that the driver had been drunk. Furthermore, the latter's claim that Jenkins had delayed the mail "was a lie" which merited his discharge.[19]

Lingering distrust between soldiers and civilians along the mail lines again surfaced in 1880. At Barrilla Springs the stage men rejected military escorts without direct orders. The army in turn refused to send mails without proper protection. The feud further degenerated as Pvt. George Taylor challenged one driver to a fight. Hoping to cool tempers, Cpl. J. F. Ukkerd implemented new orders which forbade his men from hitching or unhitching the stagecoach horses. He also reported Taylor's provocation. The hot-headed Taylor "demanded to know where the black son of a bitch was who reported him" and threatened to "beat you as I beat all the other sons of bitches that try to get me in trouble." For his latest outcry, Taylor again found himself put on report. Despite such disciplinary action, ill will among soliders and civilian stage workers continued to fester.[20]

During the early 1870s a communication from Fort Davis took about ten days just to reach San Antonio. The army had long recognized the importance of improving communications, and actively supported telegraph and railroad construction. Budgetary concerns, however, led Congress to kill an 1873 bill authorizing the War Department to construct and operate 1,483 miles of telegraph lines in Texas. The estimated $125-per-mile cost seemed too expensive to a tight-fisted Congress. The following year, the army successfully submitted a smaller package—1,275 miles of telegraph lines at $100 per mile.[21]

Lt. Adolphus W. Greely, who would later gain greater fame for his arctic explorations, directed the project. High costs continually beset Greely's efforts. Too, the laborious task of staking out the line, distributing the poles, digging

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19 Post Adjutant to Jenkins, Nov. 6 (first quotation), 15, 1878, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 1); Carpenter to Adjutant General, Nov. 23, 1878, ibid. (second quotation).

20 Ukkerd to James, Aug. 9, 10, 11 (quotations), 1880, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 8); Post Adjutant to Ukkerd, Aug. 16, 1880, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 65-855, roll 1).

21 John S. Billings, Circular No. 4, War Department Surgeon General's Office, *A Report on Barracks and Hospitals, with Descriptions of Military Posts* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1870): 230; L. Tuffly Ellis, ed., "Lt. A. W. Greely's Report on the Installation of Military Telegraph Lines in Texas, 1875–1876," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 69 (July, 1965): 69.

the holes, planting the poles, and stringing the wires demanded enormous amounts of the soldiers' time and labor. But the work continued, with Fort Davis troops actively participating in the undertaking. In late September 1878 Lt. George Andrews, Jr.[the colonel's son], and Cpl. J. M. Kistler (Signal Corps) took thirty-one infantrymen to extend the telegraph toward El Paso. Overcoming supply deficiencies, young Andrews finally linked up with eastbound construction teams by February 1, 1879, having constructed more than ninety-one miles of wire.[22]

By 1880 the army maintained telegraph stations at Fort Concho, Grierson's Spring, Fort Stockton, Fort Davis, and El Paso. Noncommissioned personnel from the Signal Corps operated the wires; local boys earned forty cents a day delivering messages. Although floods and high winds often downed the lines, the military telegraph dramatically improved communications between the western posts. For the first time officials had a real chance to coordinate the efforts of the scattered garrisons.[23]

Troops at Fort Davis also laid military roads, easing travel through Musquiz and Limpia Canyons. Other efforts reduced the distance by road from San Antonio to Fort Davis to just over 390 miles. From Fort Davis Chaplain George Mullins marveled at the new road to Stockton, but noted the often dangerous nature of such work. "The labor was herculean and the work accomplished positively wonderful. Unfortunately, two of the enlisted men were blown up—and one noble fellow is blind for life." Soldiers of the Twenty-fifth Infantry became especially proficient road builders, with Capt. George Schooley known as a champion construction foreman. In December 1879 a fellow officer teased: "I don't think there will be any hill in the vicinity when he gets done."[24]

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22 Ellis, "Greely's Report," 85-86; Orders No. 160, Nov. 6, 1877, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 4); Andrews to Assistant Adjutant General, Feb. 20, 1879, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 65-855, roll 2).

23 Mary Sutton, "Glimpses of Fort Concho Through the Military Telegraph," *West Texas Historical Association Year Book* 32 (1956): 122-34; Carlysle G. Raht, *The Romance of Davis Mountains and Big Bend Country* (Odessa: The Raht Co., 1963): 218.

24 Charles J. Crane, *Experiences of a Colonel of Infantry* (New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1923): 105, 111-13; Mullins to Adjutant General, May 2, 1876, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 905-8821) (first quotation); Raht, *Romance of Davis Mountains*, 218; Report of Ord, Oct. 1, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1880, p. 111; Woodward to Benjamin Grierson, Dec. 29, 1879, Benjamin Grierson Papers, Newberry Library, Chicago, Illinois (hereafter referred to as GPNew) (microfilm edition, Fort Davis Archives, roll 2) (second quotation).

Its manpower stretched by such diverse assignments, the understrength mounted contingent at Fort Davis proved unable to handle all its duties. In March 1876 new recruits pushed the average strength of the five companies of the Twenty-fifth Infantry to forty-five enlisted men, while the Tenth Cavalry's lone troop at Davis mustered but forty-five men and forty-four serviceable horses. The manpower pressures eventually forced Andrews to withdraw guards formerly afforded local ranchers. Matters further deteriorated the following spring, when hard campaigning left the troop with only eight serviceable horses. One inspector wryly concluded that the command was "inefficient for field operations."[25]

Service in the field frustrated officer and enlisted man alike. Forced marches under the blazing sun seemed useless as Trans-Pecos warriors eluded the army's clumsy efforts. Personnel stationed at Fort Davis undoubtedly echoed the sentiments of one junior officer, who after a particularly fruitless trek across the Panhandle concluded that "it seems that the 10th Cavalry is particularly blessed with incompetent commanders. . . . This poor regiment has been led by damn fools," he wrote.[26]

Responsibilities along the Mexican border further drained the garrison at Fort Davis. With the close of the Civil War and the federal reoccupation of the Texas frontiers, trade along the Chihuahua Trail expanded rapidly. Large caravans gathered at San Antonio and Chihuahua City to make the long but profitable journey. En route to Mexico the freighters carried mining machinery, baled cotton, and small manufactured goods. During the late 1860s and early 1870s large numbers of cattle, bound to restock the Mexican haciendas devastated by years of French invasion and domestic turbulence, also accompanied the traders. On the return trip the wagons hauled hides, minted coins, and gold and silver bullion. In 1875 one of the carts also bore Mexico's contribution to the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition—a large meteorite.[27]

Although John D. Burgess blazed a shortcut which bypassed Fort Davis, the military post along the Limpia continued to play a vital role in the Chihuahua trade. Not only did the garrison provide an excellent market for Mexican produce, but post commanders detached military escorts for the larger trains. August Santleben, one of the most successful of these merchants, carried a shipment of nearly $400,000 in Mexican silver in 1876. On the advice of two

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25 Bi-monthly inspection report, Mar. 6, 1876, Mar. 3, 1877 (quotation), Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 6); Andrews to Crosson, Dec. 19, 1876, Crosson Ranch Collection; Mullins to Adjutant General, Apr. 2, 1877, 5035 A.C.P. 1874, Appointment, Commission, and Personal Branch, Record Group 94, National Archives.

26 Sheffly, "Baldwin Letters," 24.

27 Robert Schick, "Wagons to Chihuahua," *American West* 3 (Summer, 1966): 72-75.

officer friends at Fort Davis, Santleben secured escorts from department commander Brig. Gen. E. O. C. Ord. Several posts dispatched guards of twenty-five men to protect the valuable cargo. Impressed by the military's performance, a grateful Santleben gave the last group two boxes of cigars and a keg of Budweiser beer.[28]

The lively Chihuahua trade proved an economic boon to the twin Rio Grande settlements at Presidio del Norte—Presidio (on the U.S. side) and Ojinaga (on the Mexican side). By the 1870s observers credited the towns with a population of three thousand. Both governments maintained customs houses along the great river, although high duties and lax enforcement prompted many traders to circumvent official channels. Bands of sheep, goats, and burros roamed the streets, and large vineyards and fields in the surrounding areas supplied military garrisons on both sides of the river. Nightly fandangos and the colorful lifestyles of the trail hands, merchants, smugglers, ne'er do wells, and assorted government officials gave the settlements a distinctive flavor. "To the American stranger, it is a place in which he can pass a day or two with interest," calculated one contemporary guidebook.[29]

The situation along the border perplexed officials at Fort Davis. Apache and Kickapoo raids from Mexico into Texas and the inevitable congregation of desperadoes at the border towns had led Lt. Col. Wesley Merritt to send several small detachments south from Fort Davis during the late 1860s. Internal revolution in Mexico also worried army personnel. Frustrated by their inability to catch many Indians, military men believed they must be allowed the right to pursue Indians into Mexico. Secretary of War William Belknap and Secretary of State Hamilton J. Fish pressed Mexico to sanction such U.S. military entries. Mexican officials, knowing that any concessions to their northern neighbors meant political suicide, rejected State department queries.[30]

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28 Ibid., 78; August Santleben, *A Texas Pioneer* (New York: Neal Co., 1910): 202-03.

29 Santleben, *Texas Pioneer*, 167-68; N. A. Taylor and H. F. McDonald, *The Coming Empire, or Two Thousand Miles in Texas on Horseback* (New York: A. S. Barnes and Co., 1877): 357-64 (quotation).

30 Robert Wooster, *The Military and U.S. Indian Policy, 1865–1903*, Yale Western Americana Series, 34 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988): 91; Merritt to Norse, Sept. 24, 1868, Fort Davis Archives (photocopies of Letters Sent); Acting Assistant Aadjutant General to Merritt, Apr. 20, 1869, vol. 8: 36, Letters Sent, Department of Texas, 1865–70, National Archives (microcopy M 1165, roll 3); Belknap to Fish, Dec. 7, 1870, House Executive Documents 1, 42nd Congress, 2nd session, serial 1502, p. 608; Fish to Nelson, Dec. 12, 1870, ibid; Testimony of Sherman, Ord, House Miscellaneous Documents 64, 45th Congress, 2nd session, serial 1820, pp. 19-20, 93-94; For additional investigation, see Robert Wooster, "The Army and the Politics of Expansion: Texas and the Southwestern Borderlands, 1870–1886," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 93 (Oct. 1989): 151-68.

Seeking a solution, the army attempted to lure Indian groups out of Mexico and onto reservations in the United States. As usual, Fort Davis played a key role in such proceedings. In December 1870 Shafter ordered Lt. Isaiah H. McDonald to convince a band of Mescaleros near Presidio to come to Fort Davis under the federal government's protection. Negotiations for a reservation could then procede. McDonald dutifully met with the chief, who refused to come to Fort Davis. The lieutenant believed the chief might have cooperated had Mexican officials not warned that such action would jeopardize the release of the tribe's women and children, held captive at Chihuahua City. Shafter agreed with his subordinate's assessment, blaming officials in Presidio and Ojinaga for the continued Indian difficulties.[31]

Unwilling to allow United States troops to enter their nation, Mexican officials did authorize the governor of Chihuahua to help the Fort Davis garrison crush "the hostile Indians in Texas." But effective cooperation proved impractical as violence ravaged both sides of the Rio Grande. William Russell and several merchants in Mexico threatened to lead a hundred volunteers into the United States in early 1872. Fearing a struggle between the Mexican volunteers and U.S. citizens, Shafter organized a mobile strike force from Fort Davis—thirty-five mule-mounted infantrymen—and alerted Wesley Merritt at Fort Stockton.[32]

From departmental headquarters General Augur ordered Shafter to track down any armed incursions into the United States. But both sides managed to avoid a direct clash even as the situation intensified. Bloody Chihuahuan insurrections led that state's Anglo merchants to demand military protection

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31 Shafter to McDonald, Dec. 8, 1870, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 1); Shafter to Wood, Jan. 4, 1871, ibid.

32 Belknap to Secretary of State, Feb. 3, 1871, vol. 65: 94 (quotation); Feb. 23, 1872, vol. 68: 341, Letters Sent by the Secretary of War Relating to Military Affairs, National Archives (microcopy M 6, rolls 61, 63); Brown to Shafter, Nov. 20, 1871, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 8); Shafter to Merritt, Feb. 17, 1872, ibid. (roll 1).

from Fort Davis; Shafter dispatched a company to Presidio during the summer of 1872. Farther down the Rio Grande, another officer took more decisive steps in May 1873. Backed by Augur, Lt. Gen. Phil Sheridan, and Secretary of War William Belknap, Col. Ranald Mackenzie and four hundred troopers crossed the river and burned several Indian villages near Remolino, Mexico.[33]

"The Mexican frontier will be most vexatious," warned Gen. William T. Sherman. Despite the Mackenzie raid, affairs along the Rio Grande continued to trouble Maj. Zenas R. Bliss, now on his second tour of duty at Fort Davis. Bliss had won two brevets for his Civil War service, and was later awarded the Medal of Honor. The situation along the border, however, called for tact rather than heroism. From a Presidio customs official, Bliss learned that one hundred armed men were gathering to kill the noted merchant, John D. Burgess.[34]

In December 1873 Capt. David D. Van Valzah led D Company, Twenty-fifth Infantry, from Fort Davis to Presidio for a four-week tour of duty. Bliss rode down to Presidio later that month for a firsthand look. He found the Mexican population upset over reports that Burgess had imprisoned an elderly citizen, but returned to Davis satisfied that the military had averted a riot. The following spring Bliss returned to more traditional policies, refusing to permit Mexican troops to cross the Rio Grande and again working (unsuccessfully) to convince a band of Apaches to accept a United States reservation.[35]

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33 Augur to Shafter, Feb. 2, 1872, William Shafter Papers, Stanford University Library, Stanford, California (microfilm edition, University of Texas at Austin, roll 1); Brown to Commanding Officer, June 27, 1872, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 65-855, roll 1); Shafter to Assistant Adjutant General, July 23, 1872, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 1); Patterson to Post Adjutant, July 27, 1872, ibid. (microfilm 65-855, roll 1); Wooster, "Army and the Politics of Expansion," 155-57.

34 Sherman to Augur, Dec. 28, 1872, Christopher C. Augur Papers, Illinois State Historical Library, Springfield, Ill. (quotation); Francis B. Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1899), 1: 225; Clarke to Bliss, Nov. 26, 1873, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 9).

35 Post Medical Return, p. 108, Fort Davis Archives; Bliss to Assistant Adjutant General, Dec. 12, 1873, Jan. 2, Mar. 10, 1874, ibid. (microfilm 66-783, roll 1); Bliss to Garcia, Apr. 1, 1874, ibid.; Belknap to Secretary of Interior, Mar. 17, 1874, vol. 75: 344, Letters Sent by the Secretary of War Relating to Military Affairs (microcopy M 6, roll 68).

The links between Fort Davis and Presidio became even more evident in 1875. Seeking to resolve the borderlands problems, the Indian Bureau appropriated $25,000 to facilitate the removal of the tribes along the Rio Grande to interior reservations. Thomas G. Williams, chief negotiator with the Kickapoos who had migrated to the area from Kansas during the 1860s and received land grants from the Mexican government, investigated the Big Bend area in the summer of 1875. Williams attributed depredations to Indians from New Mexico, not those living south of the Rio Grande. Yet keenly alert to the interests of U.S. customs officials, Williams believed a strong military presence at Presidio would reduce smuggling. The projected new Indian reservation one hundred miles south of Presidio also suggested the wisdom of such a garrison. To Williams it seemed logical that Fort Davis be transferred to Presidio. Secretary of the Treasury Benjamin H. Bristow backed Williams's proposals and Interior Secretary Columbus Delano saw to it that a copy reached the War Department.[36]

From Fort Davis Colonel Andrews protested the projected transfer. In his view, Presidio's economic importance was steadily declining. A recent military inspector had rejected the possibility of establishing a post there after a thorough investigation. A furious Andrews also noted that J. W. Clarke, deputy collector at Presidio del Norte, refused to cooperate with troops from Fort Davis. "So far as is known to this office," continued Andrews, "the efforts to have troops permanently stationed there were inaugurated by one M. L. Helfenstern . . . [who] purchased, or was negotiating for some mines in Mexico located 80 to 100 miles south of del Norte."[37]

Andrews also struck back at a letter by Clarke's wife published in the *National Republican*. With most of the Davis garrison scouting in the Guadalupe Mountains, Andrews had no men to spare on wild chases stemming from the unreliable reports of a character like Clarke. The colonel asserted that civil authorities, not the army, must protect the customs officers. General Sheridan supported his subordinate. Fort Davis protected the road from San

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36 Belknap to Secretary of State, Feb. 3, 1871, vol. 65: 94, Letters Sent by the Secretary of War Relating to Military Affairs (microcopy M 6, roll 61); Williams to E. P. Smith, July 14, 1875, File # W1142, Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824–80: Kickapoo Agency, 1872–76, National Archives (microcopy M 234, roll 374); Crosby to Secretary of Interior, Sept. 11, 1875, File # W 1435, ibid.; Cowen to Secretary of Treasury, Sept. 9, 1875, p. 205, Indian Division Letters Sent, 1849–1903, National Archives (microcopy 606, roll 17); Cowen to Secretary of War, Sept. 9, 1875, ibid., p. 206; Bristow to Delano, Sept. 23, 1875, vol. BA-1, pp. 395-96, Letters Sent to the Interior Department, Record Group 56, National Archives.

37 Endorsement of Andrews, Oct. 27, 1875, Fort Davis Archives (photocopies of Letters Sent).

Antonio to El Paso; furthermore, "the recommendation of Thomas G. Williams is probably in the interests of the town of Presidio del Norte, which wants to get a market for the sale of grain and other articles of commerce." On the advice of Andrews and Sheridan, Secretary of War William Belknap dubbed the move from Davis to Presidio "detrimental to the interests of the service."[38]

Although the transfer was not effected, tumultuous events along the Rio Grande continued to distract the Fort Davis garrison. In November 1876 Bliss reported a "pretty good gang of Indians" trading at San Carlos, Mexico. The renewed call from American merchants for protection foretold more ominous developments. Moses Kelley, who operated businesses on both sides of the Rio Grande, requested assistance after receiving threats from Mexican revolutionaries. Mustering the band to stand guard at Davis, Colonel Andrews, a three-inch cannon, and K Company, Twenty-fifth Infantry, left for Presidio on December 8. Two days later Andrews demanded that Mexican authorities surrender, by noon the following day, a U.S. citizen taken hostage. "I am prepared to open up on the town of Presidio del Norte, Mexico, with my Artillery, and to follow it up with Cavalry and Infantry," threatened Andrews. Upon the rejection of his demands, Andrews unlimbered his cannon and lobbed several shells onto the Mexican side of the river.[39]

Andrews' demonstration had the desired effect, for apparently the hostage was freed. The colonel next hoped to exploit the incident to secure reinforcements for his overworked regulars at Fort Davis. But even the aggressive Phil

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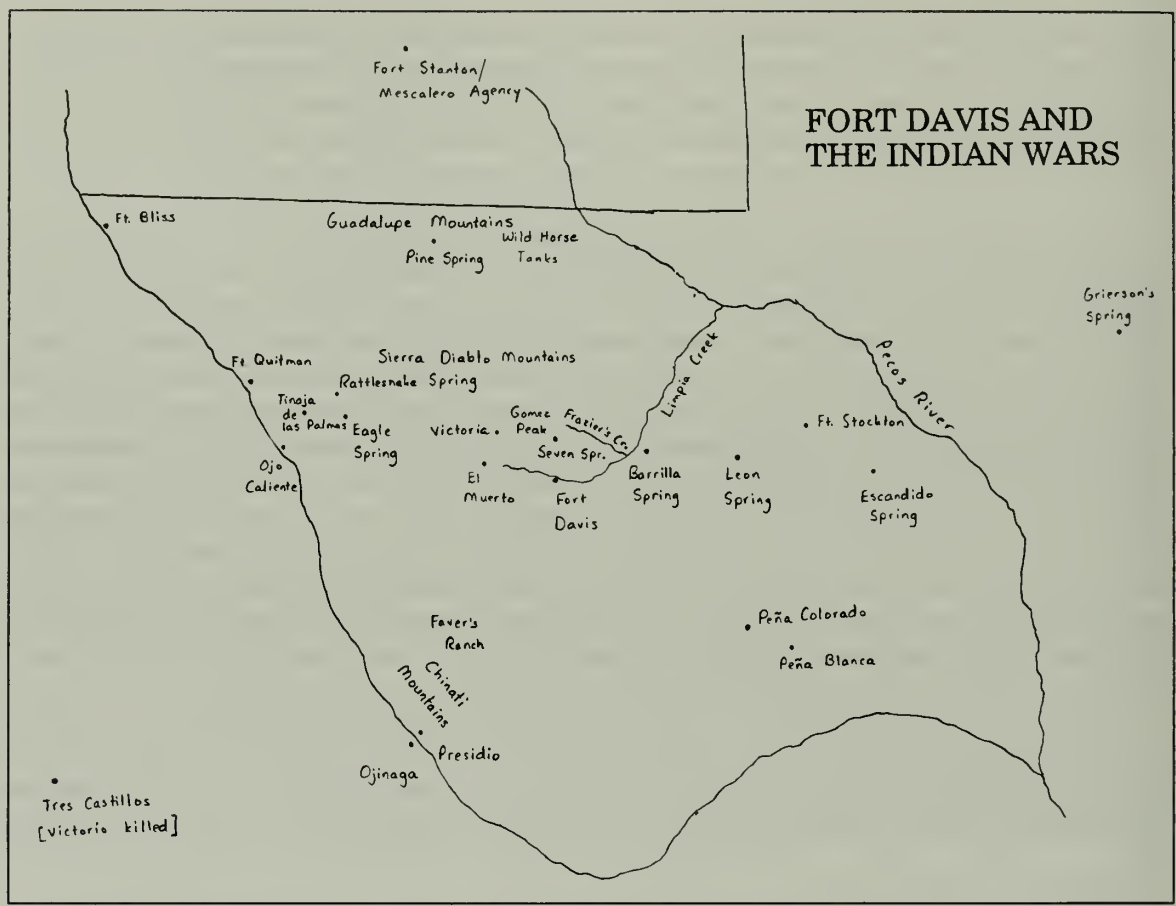
38 Andrews to Caldwell, Sept. 19, 1875, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 1); Andrews to Adjutant General, Nov. 17, 1875, ibid.; Belknap to Secretary of Interior, Jan. 22, 1876, vol. 79: 96, Letters Sent by the Secretary of War Relating to Military Affairs (microcopy M 6, roll 72) (quotation).

39 Bliss to Shafter, Nov. 24, 1876, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 1) (first quotation); Erwin N. Thompson, "The Negro Soldiers on the Frontier: A Fort Davis Case Study," *Journal of the West* 7 (Apr., 1968): 217-35; John H. Nankivell, comp. and ed., *The History of the Twenty-Fifth Regiment of United States Infantry, 1869–1926*, Regular Regiments Series (Fort Collins, Colo.: Old Army Press, 1972): 27; Andrews to Commanding Officer, Dec. 10, 11, 1876, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 1) (second quotation). In a possibly related incident, Private Joseph Claggett, of H Company, Tenth Cavalry, claimed to have acted as "lanyard-puller" in a fight against "Mexican desperadoes" with "such excellent results" that many of the enemy were killed and fifteen others surrendered. *Roster of Non-Commissioned Officers of the Tenth U.S. Cavalry* (1897; rpt. Bryan, Texas: J. M. Carroll and Co., 1983): 32. Ironically, Kelley was eventually killed by Milton Faver's son, who suspected the merchant of having an affair with his wife. Cecilia Thompson, *History of Marfa and Presidio County, Texas, 1535–1947* (Austin: Nortex Press, 1985), 1: 102, 108, 145. For a description of Kelley and his residences, see "Diary of Mrs. Alex. R. Shepherd Containing Remembrances of First Trip into Mexico in 1880," Fort Davis Archives.



Map 7:6. Fort Davis and the Indian Wars.
Map drawn by the author.

Sheridan decried the use of force in the dispute. Sharply departing from his belligerent stance on the Mackenzie raid of 1873, Sheridan proclaimed: "I think it would be well to caution the officers in command along the Rio Grande frontier to avoid involving themselves in cases that belong exclusively to the State Department." Despite the stern warning, Andrews still monitored Kelley's reports on affairs in Mexico. He also saw to it that elements of the Twenty-fifth Infantry occupied Presidio through January 1877. Indian attacks against one of William Russell's ranches led Andrews to dispatch Capt. Michael L. Courtney in a futile reprisal early the following year.[40]

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40 Nankivell, *Twenty-Fifth Regiment*, 27, 28; Andrews to Assistant Adjutant General, Dec. 29, 1876, Feb. 14, 1878 Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 1); Sheridan to Ord, Jan. 25, 1877, ibid. (roll 8) (quotation); Kelley to Andrews, Feb. 11, 1877, ibid.

Meanwhile, the depredations continued unabated. Mescalero Apaches killed six men about sixty miles northwest of Presidio on January 5, 1878; another strike six weeks later claimed two lives at Point of Rocks, fifteen miles northeast of Davis. A rash of violent encounters between April 15 and 20 shocked the area. Thirteen mules were stolen within three miles of Fort Davis; an unknown traveler was murdered west of Eagle Spring; a mail rider lost his horse and bag three miles east of Escondida. Apaches killed W. M. McCall nine miles outside of Fort Quitman. Three men fell in two new attacks at Point of Rocks.[41]

West Texans protested the seeming ineffectiveness of Colonel Andrews and the Fort Davis garrison. From district headquarters, Col. Benjamin Grierson urged Andrews to campaign more vigorously. "Troops sent out in pursuit of Indians must be amply provided for a long & vigorous pursuit," instructed Grierson. "The Indian marauders must be attacked wherever found and severely punished if possible." Stung by the thinly veiled criticism, Andrews claimed that the garrison had investigated every reported attack: "My officers are all anxious to do something and no effort will be spared to rid this section of these Indians—if I can hire two packers."[42]

Increased violence along the frontiers led the Lone Star state to reestablish its own paramilitary organization, the Texas Rangers. Richard Coke, the state's first Democratic governor after the Civil War, had convinced the legislature to appropriate $75,000 to create six companies of Rangers. In July 1880 ten Rangers established themselves at Fort Stockton; another squad set up a similar

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41 Report of Ord, Appendix A, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1877; Douglas McChristian, "Incidents Involving Hostile Indians within the Influence of Fort Davis, Texas 1866–1891," September 9, 1975, Fort Davis Archives; "Report of Indian Depredations," Jan. 1, 1878, in Dorman Winfrey and James H. Day, eds., *Texas Indian Papers, 1860–1916* (Austin: Texas State Library, 1961), 4: 394; Baldwin to Andrews, "Report of Persons Killed or Captured by Indians," box 14, Fort Davis File, Record Group 393, National Archives; "Report of persons killed or capt. by Indians . . . during the 1st quarter, 1878," Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 6); McCrary to Commanding Officer, Apr. 22, 1878, vol. 83: 397, Letters Sent by the Secretary of War Relating to Military Affairs (microcopy M 6, roll 76).

42 Hernandez to Commanding Officer, Dist. of Pecos, Apr. 21, 1878, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 1); Benjamin Grierson to Commanding Officer, May 1, 1878, ibid. (roll 8) (first two quotations); Andrews to Adjutant General, May 2, 1878, ibid. (roll 1) (third quotation); endorsement of June 14, 1878, ibid.

position at Davis. Lt. Charles L. Nevill and thirteen Rangers soon relieved the earlier detachment. Although the Rangers had come to investigate the holdup of a Fort Davis store, they also took part in campaigns against the Indians of the Trans-Pecos.[43]

Old disputes between state troops and federal regulars were again raised. Cooperation between the rivals proved the exception to the general rule. One soldier allowed that while the Rangers were "tolerable Indian fighters, . . . most of their time was occupied in terrorizing the citizens and 'taking in the town.' " General Sherman labeled a $1,700,000 Texas claim for reimbursement of expenses incurred in repelling Indians and Mexicans "simply monstrous. The Texas Rangers . . . have been a source of danger to the United States, rather than assistance, in the matter of frontier defense."[44]

The Rangers saw their regular rivals in similarly negative terms. The army, they believed, had too much red tape and inefficiency. Rather than fighting Indians, the army drilled and did paperwork. After one reported depredation, a Ranger reported cynically that "the soldiers left here [Fort Davis] in pursuit of the Indians on the evening of the 5th day after the fight. How is that for an Indian pursuit?" he quipped. Too, the army represented the federal government, against which many Rangers had fought during the Civil War. And finally, the regulars in the Davis area were black. One Ranger summed up the racial feelings which permeated nineteenth century Texas: "This idea of having nigger

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43 Walter P. Webb, *The Texas Rangers: A Century of Frontier Defense* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1935): 407-08; Clayton Williams, Jr., *Texas' Last Frontier: Fort Stockton and the Trans-Pecos, 1861–1895*, ed. Ernest Wallace (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1982): 254.

44 H. H. McConnell, *Five Years a Cavalryman; or, Sketches of Regular Army Life on the Texas Frontier, Twenty-odd Years Ago* (Jacksboro, Texas: J. N. Rogers and Co., 1889): 296 (first quotation); Sherman, Dec. 5, 1877, Senate Executive Document 19, 45th Congress, 2nd session, serial 1780, p. 12 (second quotation). For examples of diverse cooperation, see Card to Ekin, Oct. 14, 1870, Letters Received, Subdistrict of the Pecos, Record Group 393, National Archives; Ord to Roberts, Apr. 12, 1879, in *Texas Indian Papers*, 4: 423; J. T. Gillespie to King, Oct. 31, 1881, Texas Adjutant General Papers, 1881 (typescript), Barker Texas History Center.

soldiers, I think, is ridiculous. If I was going to have nigger soldiers, I'd wait until a war come and put them right in front and get them all killed off."[45]

Whatever the validity of Ranger criticism, the Fort Davis garrison needed to become more effective. Recognizing the need for better scouting and information gathering services, army officials had long deployed friendly Indian auxiliaries. In Texas the Seminole Negro scouts, led by Lt. John Bullis, were the most famous of these allies. Descendants of Florida Seminoles and runaway slaves, they had fled to Mexico upon the removal of the Seminoles to Indian territory. In the early 1870s the Seminole Negroes took up service with the U.S. Army; eking out a frugal existence near forts Clark and Duncan, dependent upon the government for their livelihood. In early 1880, while escorting a privately sponsored expedition that was combing Presidio County for minerals, they secured supplies from Fort Davis and subsequently became associated with the post.[46]

Troops at Fort Davis depended more heavily upon scouts recruited at Ysleta del Sur (near El Paso), the only Pueblo Indian community in the state. Simon Olgin, head man of the local tribe, frequently found employment with the U.S. Army, as did assorted members of his family. In 1880, for example, Simon journeyed from Davis to Ysleta to enlist his people for upcoming campaigns. Lt. Samuel L. Woodward, Lt. Harvey D. Read, and Lt. Frank H. Mills, respectively, oversaw recruiting and training. Equipped with carbines, pistols, mules, and canteens from Fort Davis, the Pueblo scouts proved an important resource.[47]

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45 Mrs. D. W. Roberts, *A Woman's Reminiscences of Six Years in Camp With the Texas Rangers* (1928?; rpt. Austin: State House Press, 1987): 26; Caruthers to Nevill, June 8, 1880, Texas Adjutant General Papers (first quotation); J. Evatts Haley, "Interview with Jeff D. Milton," July 1, 1937, pp. 25-26, Barker Texas History Center (second quotation).

46 Grant to Stanton, Aug. 1, 1866, series 5, vol. 47, Ulysses S. Grant Papers, Library of Congress (microfilm edition, roll 21); Sam Woolford, ed., "The Burr G. Duval Diary," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 65 (Apr., 1962): 489, 496 (quotation), 505. See also "Receipt roll of Clothing Issued to Enlisted Men," Feb. 11, 1885, Enlisted Men File, Fort Davis Archives.

47 Woodward to Benjamin Grierson, Mar. 11, 1880, GPSpr (roll 1); Orders No. 42, Mar. 26, 1880, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 4); Reed to Wilson, Apr. 7, 1880, ibid. (microfilm 85-3); Orders No. 65, May 9, 1880, ibid. (microfilm 66-783, roll 4); Mills to Commanding Officer, May 13, 1880, ibid. (microfilm 85-3); Commanding Officer to Ft. Bliss, Feb. 3, 1882, ibid. (microfilm 65-855, roll 1). For a fine general account of the use of Indian auxiliaries, see Thomas W. Dunlay, *Wolves for the Blue Soldiers: Indian Scouts and Auxiliaries with the United States Army, 1860–1890* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982); for the Pueblos, see p. 230 n. 8.

With assistance from the Pueblo scouts and in conjunction with the Texas Rangers, the army strove to crush Indian resistance. Capt. Thomas C. Lebo probed the area southeast of the post in March 1878. After marching more than four hundred miles, Lebo's command returned to Fort Davis empty-handed the following month. "This country seems to have been at one time a favorite haunt of the Indians," reported Lebo, "but I saw only very old trails and camps and none at all that I consider to be recent."[48]

Capt. Louis H. Carpenter took thirty-three men from H Troop, Tenth Cavalry, west to Eagle Spring on May 20. From there, Carpenter cooperated with Presidio merchant William Russell and Mexican troops against Indians suspected of attacking Ruidoso. Although Fort Davis officials strove mightily to assist the joint effort, Carpenter's command returned on August 29, having logged more than eighteen hundred miles without encountering tribes resisting the government. The captain deduced that the troublesome tribes had come from the Fort Stanton Reservation to trade for arms in Presidio del Norte.[49]

In late June the army also occupied the crucial waterhole at Seven Springs, twenty miles north of Fort Davis. The strategic locale commanded a long-used Indian byway to the popular ambush site at Point of Rocks and rendered indirect assistance to users of the stage road between Barrilla Springs and Limpia Canyon. Capt. Michael L. Courtney took a detachment of his H Company, Twenty-fifth Infantry, from Fort Davis and encamped there. From this base Courtney scouted to Frazier's Creek and the Barrilla Mountains. Despite marching nearly a thousand miles, he returned empty-handed near the end of September, having uncovered no signs of recent Indian activity.[50]

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48 Lebo to Post Adjutant, Apr. 27, 1878, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 65-855, roll 1).

49 Russell to Andrews, Mar. 13, 1878, ibid.; Russell to Andrews, July 21, 1878, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 8); Carpenter to Post Adjutant, July 24, 1878, ibid.; Wilson to Carpenter, July 28, 1878, ibid.; Andrews to Russell, July 25, 1878, ibid. (roll 1); Andrews to Norvell, July 28, 1878, ibid.; "Tabular Statement of expeditions and scouts against Indians," Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1879, pp. 102-06; French to Adjutant General, Aug. 20, 1878, Fort Davis Archives (photocopies of Letters Sent); Carpenter to Post Adjutant, Oct. 8, 1878, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 65-855, roll 1).

50 Post Adjutant to Commanding Officer Co. H, June 20, 1878, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 1); "Tabular Statement," Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1879, pp. 102-06.

Lt. Robert Read, Jr., led a less extensive patrol from Fort Davis beginning July 7, 1878. Pursuing Indians believed to have killed a Hispanic citizen near Musquiz Canyon, Read took ten enlisted men and a Mexican guide into the field. The Tenth Cavalry detachment located a faded trail left by three persons north of Fort Davis, but soon found it impossible to follow. A frustrated Read returned to Davis eight days later, having covered nearly two hundred miles. Concluded the weary lieutenant: "I could not detect the slightest trace of anything like a fresh trail."[51]

Capt. Charles D. Viele undertook several major expeditions in the fall. Charles had formerly been married to Teresa Viele, one of the military community's most prominent diarists; the former Mrs. Viele, who had tired of the monotony of frontier life, now enjoyed the higher society of Parisian literary salons. The captain, who later remarried, experienced a different fate. Based at the Eagle Spring subpost, he led a series of patrols throughout the Trans-Pecos. Between September and December Viele commanded elements of his C Troop, Tenth Cavalry. Although his forces were never larger than forty enlisted men, they conducted five separate patrols which logged 1,160 miles.[52]

Viele's experiences that fall symbolized the frustrations endemic in the lonely struggle for the Trans-Pecos. His first four expeditions uncovered no evidence of recent Indian activity. On the fifth scout, Viele located a trail in the Eagle Mountains estimated to be thirty-six hours old. Dispatching a squad back to fetch additional rations, Viele and the rest of his men took up the trail. The path grew warmer as two additional Indian parties, each herding several cattle, joined the original group. Over a waterless desert the soldiers tracked their foes into New Mexico, one detachment just missing an Indian camp on the third day. The terrific pace, however, had hobbled the cavalry's mounts. Without supplies or water, Viele broke off the pursuit.[53]

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51 "Tabular Statement," Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1879, pp. 102-06; Read to Post Adjutant, July 17, 1878, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 65-855, roll 1) (quotation). Andrews endorsement, July 19, 1879 (typescript), Charles Mahle, Civilians File, Fort Davis Archives, undoubtedly describes the same incidents; the date (1879) seems to be a clerical error.

52 "Tabular Statement," Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1879, pp. 102-06. On Teresa Viele, see Sandra L. Myres, "Romance and Reality on the American Frontier: Views of Army Wives," *Western Historical Quarterly* 13 (Oct., 1982): 426.

53 "Tabular Statement," Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1879, pp. 102-06; Carpenter to Adjutant General, Nov. 27, 1878, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 1).

Other troopers from the Tenth joined Captain Lebo in another grand scout from September 4 to November 30. From Davis, Lebo took fifty-eight enlisted men to Seven Springs, then past the tiny settlement at Victoria to Gomez Peak, before heading north to the Guadalupe Mountains. Lebo relieved the detachment from M Troop based at Pine Spring and conducted several scouts from the subpost. Again the patrols proved futile, and the captain broke camp on November 22. He returned to Fort Davis eight days later, having marched 550 miles during his fall campaigns.[54]

The winter brought a lull to operations from Fort Davis. By now troops from the post maintained three subposts—Pine Spring in the Guadalupe Mountains; Eagle Spring on the road to old Fort Quitman; and Seven Springs twenty miles north of Davis. As the garrison recovered from its exertions, Mexican forces based at Ojinaga and Santa Rosa captured forty to fifty Indians in mid-December. An enthusiastic William Russell reported that the tribesmen who escaped "are rendered desperate, as they have no place they can consider themselves safe, unless it is at the [Fort] Stanton Reservation." Long troubled by Indian raids, Russell asserted that the Mexican government was now cooperating.[55]

In April 1879, as forage became more readily available, U.S. columns took the field from Eagle Spring, Seven Springs, and Pine Spring. Led by Lt. Charles G. Ayers, Lt. William S. Scott, and Captain Viele, the three expeditions logged thirty-three hundred miles but turned up little concrete evidence of recent Indian incursions into West Texas. In the most successful military action that spring, a detachment from Viele's command, led by Lt. Robert E. Safford, did capture several animals from an Indian herd.[56]

In addition to garrisoning the subposts, troops at Fort Davis responded to sporadic raids. Indians struck an animal herd near the fort in May. Lieutenant Read headed an eleven-man pursuit party, detached from H and K Troops. Hard on the heels of a handful of suspected raiders, Read's little column found several dead and broken down-horses left by the Indians. The latter scattered at the head of Maravillas Creek; by taking individual routes into the nearby hills they successfully eluded their pursuers, who returned to Fort Davis on May 9. In

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54 "Tabular Statement," Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1879, pp. 102-106; Orders No. 131, Sept. 2, 1878, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 4); Carpenter to Adjutant General, Dec. 1, 1878, ibid. (roll 1); materials attached in Crisman to Levy, May 9, 1969, Stagecoaching File, Travel and Transportation Section, Fort Davis Archives.

55 Report of Ord, Oct. 1, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1879, p. 113; Russell to Carpenter, Dec. 22, 1878, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 65-855, roll 1).

56 "Tabular Statement," Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1879, pp. 102-06; ibid., 1880, pp. 137-39.

July, Read led another fruitless trek after Indians accused of stealing stock and killing a woman near Diedrick Dutchover's ranch. The lieutenant believed his foes were Mescalero Apaches from the San Carlos Reservation in Arizona. Another report, however, had the Indians crossing the Rio Grande below San Vicente.[57]

The subposts at Eagle Spring, Seven Springs, and in the Guadalupe Mountains remained beehives of activity. On July 20 Capt. Michael L. Courtney took detachments from H Troop, Tenth Cavalry, and H Company, Twenty-fifth Infantry, to Eagle Spring. Upon hearing that Indians were within eight miles, Courtney set off in immediate pursuit. The soldiers indeed discovered the tribesmen and dismounted in order to close upon their foes. But before they could position themselves, their guide, who had proceeded ahead, fired a premature shot. The Indians scrambled for their horses, only to be driven away by a well-directed volley from the soldiers. Although the Indians remained dismounted, most slipped through the loose cordon of bluecoats, whose own horses were exhausted by the previous day's chase. Two Tenth cavalrymen fell wounded; Indian casualties included two dead, one wounded, and nine horses, a mule, and assorted equipment captured. Scouts from Eagle Spring under the direction of Captain Carpenter continued through the early winter; the latter efforts, however, proved ineffectual, as did Captain Lebo's patrols from a base camp at Manzanito Springs and Sgt. H. Fields from Seven Springs.[58]

The uncoordinated efforts of the past two years seemed to offer little hope of destroying Indian opposition to non-Indian settlement in the Trans-Pecos. Ranchers and merchants like George Crosson, Daniel Murphy, and Diedrick Dutchover suffered huge losses in the meantime. Murphy filed claims for three separate attacks. The illiterate Dutchover, who came to the Trans-Pecos in 1854, allegedly lost thirty yoke of oxen in 1868 and twenty horses and two hundred sheep in 1879. Crosson suffered even more heavily. In 1875 he established a sheep ranch near Manuel Musquiz's antebellum operation—unknown to Crosson, it lay near a widely used Indian trail from New Mexico to Mexico. In July 1876 he lost $5,000 in livestock; the following year, $5,925; and in January 1879, another $1,850. Sporadic army patrols and guards repeatedly proved ineffective. On October 8 a cryptic missive warned Crosson that some Mescaleros had again headed south from the Fort Stanton reservation. It had come far too late, for on

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57 Ibid.; McCrary to Secretary of State, May 21, 1879, vol. 85: 480, Letters Sent by the Secretary of War Relating to Military Affairs (microcopy M 6, roll 78); Crosby to Adjutant General, July 31, 1879, vol. 85: 644, ibid. (roll 78); "Tabular Statement," Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1880, pp. 137-39.

58 Ibid.

September 21 raiders had taken sixteen horses and three hundred sheep. An attack in 1880 finally forced Crosson to give up the exposed Musquiz Canyon position; he moved to Limpia Canyon before settling at a site south of present-day Alpine in 1883.[59]

Although settlers cursed the army for not doing more, the problem had been festering for several years. Evidence suggested that much of the resistance came from Indians based in New Mexico. In 1877 the Mimbres Apaches had been moved from their homeland near the Ojo Caliente Reservation in southwestern New Mexico to San Carlos, Arizona Territory. As the situation deteriorated their leader, Victorio, led more than three hundred followers away from San Carlos back to New Mexico. Victorio's suspicions of whites were understandable; his predecessor, Mangas Coloradas, had been taken prisoner and killed under a white flag. But Victorio and the Mimbres were caught and ordered back to San Carlos. Victorio and eighty men again slipped away to the mountains. In June 1879 the group appeared at the Mescalero Agency, inquiring about the possibility of moving their families to the latter reservation.[60]

Things seemed to proceed fairly well until September when rumors of his impending arrest led Victorio to make yet another break. Warriors from his own tribe, along with scattered Chiricahua and Mescalero Apaches, followed the chief, whom a respectful kinsmen described as being "the most nearly perfect human being I have ever seen." Assisting Victorio was his sister Lozen, a fine warrior in her own right who allegedly possessed supernatural powers. On September 6 their annihilation of an eight-man herding party at Ojo Caliente signaled the renewal of open hostilities. Army officials complained bitterly about the government's fragmented Indian policy; neither the War Department, which controlled the army, nor the Interior Department, which oversaw the reservations, could carry out their work without interference from the other.[61]

Commanding troops in New Mexico, Col. Edward Hatch deployed his Ninth Cavalry in a futile effort to block Victorio. Following several skirmishes, Victorio

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59 Depositions of Mar. 1, 1899, claim 2744, Deiderick Dutchove [sic] vs. U.S. and Apache Tribe of Indians, Indian Depredations Files, Record Group 205, National Archives; Deposition of Aug. 11, 1891, claim 3889, Daniel Murphy vs. U.S. and Apache Indians, ibid.; Thompson, *History of Marfa*, 1: 156-57; Ayres to Crosson, Aug. 28, 1888, Crosson Collection. Lizzie Crosson finally won a $2,590 judgment in 1902. See Weed to Crosson, Mar. 8, 1902, ibid.

60 Utley, *Frontier Regulars*, 368-69; Robert M. Utley, *The Indian Frontier of the American West 1846–1890*, Histories of the American Frontier (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984): 67; T. C. Godfrey to A. M. Dudley, Apr. 22, 1878, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 905/8821).

61 Report of Van Valzah, Aug. 28, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1879, pp. 115-16; Utley, *Frontier Regulars*, 369; Eve Ball, *Indeh: An Apache Odyssey* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1980): xiii, 11, 14-15, 41 (quotation), 73; Sheridan to Sherman, Dec. 12, 1879, Sherman Papers (roll 26).

Fig. 7:21. Nana, confederate of Victorio. Photograph from Fort Davis Archives, C-4.

brushed off Maj. Albert P. Morrow's column and entered Mexico. Additional Mescalero warriors swelled Victorio's force to nearly one hundred fifty men.

Fig. 7:22. Victorio, Apache warrior. Photograph # 882 (Rose Collection) courtesy of Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Library.

Devastating raids south of the border compelled Mexican Gen. Geronimo Treviño to conduct winter operations which harassed Victorio back into the United States. Slipping past the Ninth Cavalry, Victorio disappeared into the San Andres Mountains in January 1880.[62]

The army suspected that the Mescalero Reservation remained a supply depot, recruiting ground, and safe haven for Victorio's dependents. From Fort Davis post guide John Briggs was sent to investigate the reservation. According to S. A. Russell, the Indian agent, fifty tribesmen had left for the Guadalupe Mountains, where they joined thirty-five Comanches. Several incidents of theft, alleged to have been the responsibility of Indians, were reported near Davis and Quitman in the following months. Yet Briggs remained dubious of any information provided by Russell: "I do not think that the agent knows how many Indians are a way. He has no way of telling. The squaws draw the rations and the buck could be gone a month without his knowing anything about it." Briggs expected a major breakout at any time.[63]

Army officials shared Briggs's concern. Following common army practice, Colonel Hatch decided to disarm and dismount the remaining occupants of the Mescalero Reservation. Realizing the dangerous nature of the task, he convinced his superiors to dispatch reinforcements from Arizona and Texas. Hatch and the troops from Arizona would approach the agency from the west; soldiers from Texas would join him at the Mescalero Agency by April 12, 1880.[64]

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62 Utley, *Frontier Regulars*, 368-69.

63 Briggs to Post Adjutant, Jan. 28, 1880, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 85-3) (quotation); G. W. Baylor to J. B. Jones, Mar. 18, 1880, Texas Adjutant General Papers.

64 Benjamin Grierson to Assistant Adjutant General, Oct. 1, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1880, p. 154; William H. and Shirley A. Leckie, *Unlikely Warriors: General Benjamin H. Grierson and His Family* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984): 258-59.

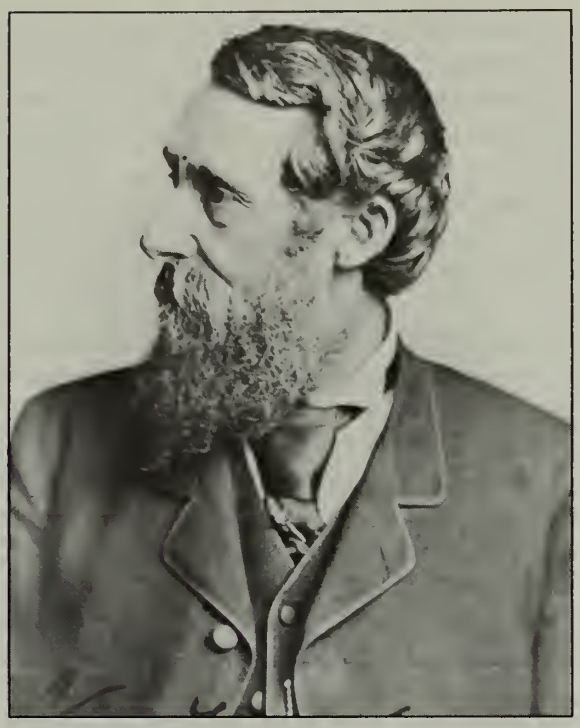

Fig. 7:23. Col. Benjamin Grierson, commander of Fort Davis, 1882-85. Photograph from Fort Davis Archives, AA-24.

Col. Benjamin Grierson set out from West Texas in late March, heading the Texas column with five companies of the Tenth Cavalry and a detachment of the Twenty-fifth Infantry totaling 280 men. A music teacher and petty businessman, Grierson joined the army during the Civil War. Promoted to colonel of volunteers in late 1862, he led one of the war's most daring cavalry raids during the Vicksburg campaign. In charge of 1,700 troopers, Grierson covered 475 miles through enemy territory from La Grange, Tennessee, to Baton Rouge, Louisiana, in sixteen days, diverting attention from Grant's crossing of the Mississippi River. He had assumed command of the Tenth Cavalry Regiment in the army reorganization following the Civil War. En route to New Mexico, trails Grierson located trails which "invariably" led in the direction of the Mescalero reservation. His command killed two warriors, captured four women, and recovered a captive Mexican boy and twenty-eight head of cattle. Upon reaching the agency, the colonel reported that it had served as supply base, refitting camp, and medical center for noncombatants.[65]

Disarming the reservation peoples went poorly. About 320 Indians were assembled on April 16. Just as the process began, firing broke out and the Indians scattered wildly. The Tenth Cavalry thundered into the melee; Grierson estimated that between thirty and fifty Mescaleros escaped to join Victorio or to form their own war parties. Few arms were recovered, but Hatch maintained a strong guard at the agency to discourage future association with nonreservation groups.[66]

The failure to disarm the Indians peaceably disappointed Grierson. Publicly he defended the government's recent actions. Grierson believed agent Russell an honest if ineffectual man saddled with the impossible task of controlling Indians up to forty miles away. Hatch, a former commander at Fort Davis, also

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65 Benjamin Grierson to Assistant Adjutant General, Oct. 1, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1880, pp. 154-55.

66 Ibid.

received Grierson's official approval. Although the colonel had erred in keeping the troops too far from the place of disarmament, Hatch's delicate position invited censure and controversy. Grierson followed customary army practice by defending his brother officer and blaming the problem squarely on the Indian Bureau. According to Grierson, because it offered so many convenient hiding places, "the reservation is, if civilization is the object, the most unsuitable place that could possibly have been selected." In his view, the occupants had to be removed to another site and Indian affairs turned over to the War Department.[67]

Privately, however, Grierson was seething. Hatch's subsequent attempt to keep segments of his command in New Mexico infuriated the Tenth's colonel. Less than four days after the aborted attempt at disarmament, Grierson complained of having been retained in New Mexico "when all is as quiet as a New England Sunday." Grierson alleged that Hatch had engaged in "a systematic plan to gobble myself & command for duty in New Mexico for an indefinite but protracted length of time." In so doing, Grierson hinted at the tensions and jealousies which lay just under the surface throughout the postwar army. Like many officers, Grierson bitterly resented having been subordinated to another's plans. Freeing himself from Hatch's supposed machinations, Grierson returned to Fort Concho after a brief stay at Fort Davis, determined to prevent his command from further serving Hatch's interests.[68]

As Grierson returned to Texas, Hatch's Ninth Cavalry veterans stalked Victorio through New Mexico and Arizona. The regulars wore out their horses in vain attempts to trap the elusive Mimbres leader, but an Indian scout company nearly killed him along the headwaters of the Palomas River. Eluding the bluecoats, Victorio's band melted back into Mexico. Hatch promptly requested assistance from Colonel Grierson. Grierson, however, proposed a new strategy. Another Fort Davis probe into the Guadalupe Mountains in April had turned up only faded signs of Indians. With traditional trailing methods proving ineffective, Grierson suggested that pickets stationed along the Rio Grande

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67 Ibid., 155-57.

68 Ibid. 158; Benjamin Grierson to Alice, Apr. 20, 1880, GPNew (quotation).

would intercept Indians as they entered the Trans-Pecos on their way back to the Mescalero Reservation. Department commander Ord supported Grierson's plan, and Lieutenant General Sheridan overcame his own personal distaste for Grierson to approve the scheme on June 28.[69]

Continued depredations in the Trans-Pecos seemed to justify Grierson's position. Near Eagle Springs, Indians struck a party of citizens on May 12, killing James Grant and Mrs. Harry Graham and wounding Harry Graham and Daniel Murphy, an emigrant to New Mexico. Hit twice, Murphy hid his family in the brush and bluffed the attackers away with a broken rifle. The army sent one hundred emergency rations to the remaining group of fifteen. Murphy had "lost everything he had in the world," according to one report. And on June 11 twenty to twenty-five Indians attacked Lt. Frank H. Mills and his Pueblo scouts at Viejo Pass, near modern-day Valentine. The Mills detachment lost its chief guide, Simon Olgin, and four animals.[70]

Taking advantage of his newfound independence, Grierson shifted three companies of the Tenth from Concho to the west. On July 18 he learned that Col. Adolfo Valle and 420 Mexican troops would join 120 cavalrymen already in the field against Victorio. Grierson ordered Lieutenant Mills and the Pueblo scouts, still full of fight, to patrol the Rio Grande. He also reinforced his pickets at Viejo Pass, Eagle Spring, Fort Quitman, Pine Spring, and Seven Springs. Rather than wasting his efforts chasing Victorio, Grierson positioned his troops

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69 Utley, *Frontier Regulars*, 371; "Tabular Statement," Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1880, pp. 136-39; Grierson to Assistant Adjutant General, Sept. 20, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1880, p. 158; Bruce Dinges, "Victorio Campaign of 1880: Cooperation and Conflict on the United States–Mexico Border," *New Mexico Historical Review* 62 (Jan., 1987): 87.

70 Williams, *Texas' Last Frontier*, 239-40; Delaport to Commanding Officer, May 16, 1880, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 85-3) (quotation); Munson to McLaughlin, May 16, 1880, ibid. (microfilm 65-855, roll 1); McLaughlin to Assistant Adjutant General, May 17, 1880, ibid.; Carpenter to Assistant Adjutant General, June 13, 1880, ibid.; Post Adjutant to Baker, June 24, 1880, ibid.; Vincent to Commanding Officer, June 14, 1880, ibid. (microfilm 66-783, roll 6), Williams to Shideler, Sept. 17, 1990 (copy in author's possession). James B. Gillett, *Six Years with the Texas Rangers, 1875–1881*, ed. M. M. Quaife (1921; rpt. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963): 285-86, argues that five or six regulars were also killed.

Fig. 7:24. Diorama depicting Grierson's defense of Tinaja de las Palmas. Photograph from Fort Davis Archives, KB-18.

at strategic points to intercept the Indians and rode out to Eagle Spring to be closer to the action.[71]

With a storm disrupting telegraphic communications, Grierson's Pueblo scouts contacted Valle, who reported a sharp engagement south of the border. On July 27 the colonel moved back to Fort Quitman. To his astonishment, Valle's troops turned up the following day completely destitute of food. Grierson issued them three thousand pounds of flour and more than eleven hundred pounds of grain; Valle informed his American counterpart that he would take up the trail again only after receiving supplies from the south. To his surprise, Grierson also learned that Valle had received permission to enter the United States in pursuit of Indians deemed hostile by the government.[72]

By this time United States troops were scattered all along the Rio Grande. Capt. Nicholas Nolan and A Troop, Tenth Cavalry, garrisoned Fort Quitman. G Troop, the field headquarters, and H Company, Twenty-fourth Infantry, were at Eagle Spring. Captain Lebo held Fresno Spring; Capt. Thomas A. Baldwin (I Troop) and Capt. Louis H. Carpenter (H Troop) guarded Viejo Pass. Assuming

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71 Benjamin Grierson to Assistant Adjutant General, Sept. 20, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1880, p. 159; Smither to Nolan, July 7, 1880, Nicholas Nolan Papers, U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pa.; Douglas C. McChristian, "Grierson's Fight at Tinaja de las Palmas: An Episode in the Victorio Campaign," *Red River Historical Review* 7 (Winter, 1982): 50; Benjamin Grierson to Alice, July 20, 1880, GPNew (roll 1).

72 Ibid.; Dinges, "Victorio," 89; Robert K. Grierson, "Journal Kept on the Victorio Campaign in 1880," Fort Davis Archives.

Valle would again take up the chase, Grierson left Quitman for Eagle Spring on the twenty-ninth. They spotted an Indian near the east end of Quitman Canyon; soon thereafter they received word that Indians had crossed the Rio Grande and were headed in their direction. An attempt to run seemed suicidal and would allow the Indians to break through the line of posts into unguarded areas north of the river. With Lt. William H. Beck, five privates, and his son Robert, Grierson made camp at strategic Tinaja de las Palmas, the only waterhole for many miles.[73]

As his party dug in atop a ridge, the colonel sent out orders for reinforcements. Lt. Leighton Finley and fifteen troopers galloped up at 4:00 A.M. on the morning of the thirtieth expecting to escort the colonel's party back to safety at Eagle Spring. But Grierson had no intention of leaving Tinaja de las Palmas. "Being well supplied with ammunition, water, and provisions, I was confident of my ability to hold the position . . . as long as necessary," remembered Grierson, who instead dispatched couriers calling for more support. About nine o'clock that morning, the little squad observed the Indians' approach. Young Robert, "out in search of adventure," surely had his wish fulfilled.[74]

Though a proven combat veteran of the Civil War, Colonel Grierson had never fought Indians in battle. Impatient at the Indians' refusal to attack his strong defensive position and hoping to attract the attention of reinforcements believed near, Grierson sent Lieutenant Finley and ten men out to engage Victorio. They met stiff opposition; quite possibly, the Indians had enticed Grierson to sally forth from his rocky fort. Nonetheless, Finley's men fought well; after an hour of long range skirmishing, the lieutenant ordered an audacious attack upon the Indian positions. About ten o'clock, just as Finley seemed to be gaining the advantage, the advance guard of Captain Viele's relief party arrived, only to mistake Finley's embattled troopers for the Indians.[75]

Watching the action atop the ridge with his telescope, Grierson knew his chance to ensnare Victorio was slipping away. As Viele's company sorted out the confused fighting, another column led by Capt. Nicholas Nolan appeared in the distance to the west. Victorio's warriors scattered as the troops hidden atop

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73 McChristian, "Tinaja," 50-54; Benjamin Grierson to Assistant Adjutant General, Sept. 20, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1880, pp. 159-60; Benjamin Grierson to Alice, Aug. 2, 1880, GPNew (roll 1).

74 Benjamin Grierson to Assistant Adjutant General, Sept. 20, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1880, p. 159-60.

75 Ibid.; McChristian, "Tinaja," 59.

the ridge finally loosed a ragged volley. "Golly!! you ought to've seen 'em turn tail & strike for the hills," wrote an excited Robert Grierson. This allowed Viele to link up with Grierson's command but left his cavalrymen too exhausted to catch the Indians. The skirmishing had lasted four hours; Grierson claimed seven Indians had been slain and several others wounded. Among the soldiers, Lt. Samuel Colladay was wounded and one private killed. Fifteen horses and mules were also hit. Benjamin Grierson proudly reported that "Robert with his Winchester and his 250 cartridges executed his post in a heroic manner."[76]

Pueblo scouts trailed Victorio to Ojo del Alamo, thirty miles below Ojo Caliente. Grierson forwarded this information to Colonel Valle, apparently expecting his Mexican counterpart to block Victorio's escape. But Valle, instead of holding the Quitman area, had marched toward supplies at El Paso. Rather than pursuing Victorio with his own command, which now included three companies plus several of the invaluable Pueblos, Grierson stuck with his defensive strategy, reinforcing the detachments at the waterholes.[77]

Though bloodied, Victorio remained a dangerous foe. On July 31 Cpl. Asa Weaver led seven Tenth cavalrymen and a handful of Indian auxiliaries to the Alamo Springs waterhole twenty miles from Fort Davis. They spent the next two nights there, but saw no Indians. Resuming the march toward the Rio Grande, they ran into Victorio's main body about daybreak on August 3. Badly outnumbered and deserted by his scouts, Weaver conducted a skillful fifteen mile retreat to Eagle Spring. By the time they reached the spring, every horse and virtually all of his men had been wounded. Pvt. George Tockes had lost control of his badly wounded mount, which carried him into the thick of his pursuers. When last seen alive, Tockes, a former sailor and three-year army veteran, had dropped his reins and was firing his carbine defiantly into the Indians. For saving the rest of his command, Weaver was promoted to sergeant on the spot.[78]

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76 Benjamin Grierson to Assistant Adjutant General, Sept. 20, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1880, pp. 159-60; McChristian, "Tinaja," 45, 59-60; Robert Grierson, "Journal" (first quotation); Benjamin Grierson to Alice, Aug. 2, 1880, GPNew (roll 1) (second quotation). Colladay died at Fort Stockton on January 14, 1884, of an "abscess of the liver." He was survived by a wife and six children. "Record of Death and Interment," (photocopy), Samuel R. Colladay, Officers File, Fort Davis Archives.

77 Benjamin Grierson to Assistant Adjutant General, Sept. 20, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1880, p. 160-61.

78 E. L. N. Glass, ed., *The History of the Tenth Cavalry, 1866–1921* (Fort Collins, Co.: The Old Army Press, 1972): 22-23; *Roster of Non-Commissioned Officers*, 28; Returns from Regular Army Cavalry Regiments, Tenth Cavalry, Aug. 1880, National Archives (microcopy 744, roll 96); Registers of Enlistments in the United States Army, 1798–1914, vol. 77, National Archives (microcopy M 233, roll 40).

On August 3 and 4 Indians encountered parties led by Capt. William B. Kennedy and Capt. Lebo. Lebo's detachment did particularly well, seizing Victorio's supplies. Grierson also tried to head off Victorio; upon hearing that his foe was near Van Horn, the colonel pushed two companies toward the crucial waterhole at Rattlesnake Springs. Marching sixty-five miles in less than twenty-four hours, Grierson beat Victorio to the springs. Robert Grierson reported that "Papa and [William] Lt. Beck were nearly frozen when we got here—neither had their overcoats. . . . It is astonishing what a great difference there is in the temperature of day and night here. Decidedly hot in the day and shivering cold at night."[79]

Troops C and G, Tenth Cavalry, deployed in Rattlesnake Canyon and awaited the Indians, who wandered in looking for water about two o'clock in the afternoon of August 5. The battle remained in doubt until the arrival of Captain Carpenter with H and B Troops. The Indians scattered, reorganizing in time to hit an army supply train eight miles south of the original skirmish. Escorted by a detachment of cavalry and Company H, Twenty-fourth Infantry, the column drove off the attack. Grierson claimed four Indians had been killed in the day's fighting and admitted no casualties among his troops.[80]

The colonel attempted to coordinate a final pursuit following the skirmish at Rattlesnake Springs. Regulars from the Eighth and Tenth Cavalry and the Twenty-fourth Infantry joined Pueblo and Lipan scouts and fifteen Texas Rangers in an attempt to hem in Victorio. Grierson personally commanded the main force, while Nolan, Kennedy, and Carpenter led independent columns after the wily chief. On August 9, Indians attacked a stage near Fort Quitman, killing James J. Byrne, a retired Civil War officer. "There was only one gun and one cartridge in the hands of these men—right in the center of a wild country, and during the invasion of a merciless foe," reported Texas Ranger George W. Baylor. "How men can be so blind when their lives may hang on their Winchester's muzzle passes my comprehension." Two days later, Indians ran off the mules at Barrel Springs and cut the telegraph line between Quitman and Davis.[81]

Rumors of fresh depredations abounded. A sergeant accompanying one of the trains from Barrel Springs gave sketchy details of a purported Indian attack.

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79 Benjamin Grierson to Assistant Adjutant General, Sept. 20, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1880, p. 161; Robert Grierson, "Journal" (quotation).

80 Benjamin Grierson to Assistant Adjutant General, Sept. 20, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1880, p. 161.

81 Ibid.; Baylor to Jones, Aug. 26, 1880, Texas Adjutant General Papers (quotations); McChristian, "Incidents Involving Hostile Indians."

Fort Davis dispatchers wondered why the corporal in command of the Barrel Springs station had not reported the incident. Cpl. Joseph Merryweather coolly explained: "Sir why I did not report the case of Indians I though[t] the Sergt maid a fals[e] report." Upon closer investigation, Lt. Charles Nordstorm concurred with Merryweather's assessment. "I think I am reasonable in concluding the Sergt has a very lively imagination," explained Nordstrom, who believed the rumor "instigated by the devil and sutlers whiskey."[82]

Stung by the repeated skirmishes with the army, Victorio was indeed working his way back into Mexico. On the eighteenth, interpreter and scout Charles Berger led the allied Indian scouts across the border on Victorio's trail. Although his foes had been crippled, Grierson fumed over the indecisive end of the campaign. He blamed the failure to annihilate Victorio squarely upon Mexico. In his view Mexican troops could have snapped up the Apaches as they recrossed the Rio Grande. "There seems to be an understanding between Victorio and many of the Mexicans," charged Grierson, "that so long as he does not make war upon them in earnest, he can take whatever food and other supplies he may need for his warriors." On the other hand, some sharply criticized the colonel's failure to annihilate the Indians at Tinaja de las Palmas. Indeed, more aggressive action might indeed have ended the Victorio campaign then and there.[83]

Grierson remained wary of another Indian raid in September 1880. Prepared to use every means at his disposal to defeat Victorio, the colonel positioned a three-inch gun at Eagle Spring. By this time the army maintained a web of stations throughout far western Texas. In Grierson's District of the Pecos, troops from Fort Concho occupied subposts at Grierson's Springs and Camp Charlotte, east of the Pecos River, as well as a camp above old Fort Quitman. To relieve the strain on overworked Fort Davis, Concho also helped garrison outlying posts

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82 Merryweather to Post Adjutant, Aug. 22, 1880, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 8) (first quotation); Nordstrom to Post Adjutant, Aug. 22, 1880, ibid. (second and third quotations).

83 Benjamin Grierson to Assistant Adjutant General, Sept. 20, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1880, p. 162. McChristian, "Tinaja," 62; Baylor to Jones, Aug. 26, 1880, Texas Adjutant General Papers, Barker Texas History Center. For an excellent summation of the campaign, see Dinges, "Victorio," 90-91.

at Eagle Spring and Eagle Mountain. Forts Concho and Stockton maintained troops in the Guadalupe Mountains. And Davis and Stockton assumed joint responsibility for a new station along the Rio Grande at Ojo Caliente, Texas.[84]

A new District of the Bravo had also been created. Commanded by William R. Shafter, the Bravo district included subposts at Faver's Ranch in the Chinati Mountains, Mayer's Spring, and the mouth of the Pecos River. Shafter's command also maintained a garrison at Peña Colorado. Established in August 1879, Peña Colorado guarded the new road between Fort Davis and the Pecos. Grierson had been influential in the decision to occupy this position at "Rainbow Cliffs"; in late November he had bragged that "the troops at Peña Colorado will have good comfortable stone quarters by Dec. 1st."[85]

Despite such bravado, the regulars were nearly worn out. The heat, lack of water, and hard campaigning had taken their toll. Between June 30 and August 31, for example, the Tenth Cavalry's G Troop had participated in two battles and marched 471 miles. Its captain had been under arrest at Fort Concho; First Lieutenant Colladay was now recuperating from his wound at Stockton. With another lieutenant on recruiting detail, 2nd Lt. Leighton Finley had been attached to command the unit. By August 31 only thirty-two dusty troopers reported present for duty. But G Troop was not unique in having so few men in the field; A Troop mustered but thirty-four.[86]

In the meantime the troops whiled away time at their lonely outposts. Many officers played whist or read; Robert Grierson brushed up on his foreign languages. He also admitted that the southern Trans-Pecos was "a 'hell of a country' in the truest sense of the word . . . there are some pretty sights—the mountains in the distance, the clouds, some of the Spanish daggers, mescal, etc." Occasional letters from home broke the monotony of camp life. "I tell you it is

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84 Peck to Commanding Officer, Aug. 22, 1880, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 8); Report of Ord, Oct. 1, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1880, pp. 116-21; materials compiled by Robert Utley, accompanying Crisman to Levy, May 9, 1969, Travel and Transportation File, Fort Davis Archives. For good secondary accounts of the subpost system, see McChristian, "Tinaja," 49, and Frank M. Temple, "Colonel B. H. Grierson's Administration of the District of the Pecos," *West Texas Historical Association Year Book* 38 (Oct., 1962): 85-96.

85 Report of Ord, Oct. 1, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1880, pp. 116-21; Eddie J. Guffee, "Camp Peña Colorado, Texas, 1879–1893" (MA thesis, West Texas State University, 1976): 20-21; Benjamin Grierson to Alice, Nov. 15, 1879, GPNew (roll 1) (quotation).

86 Muster Roll, Co. G, Tenth Cavalry, June-Aug. 1880, Tenth Cavalry, Units File, Fort Davis Archives; ibid., Co. A. In 1881, actual enlisted strength of cavalry troops averaged 58. Utley, *Frontier Regulars*, 17.

fine to get letters when you are away off in the wilderness," confided Robert to his mother.[87]

A veteran of a month's hard campaigning and two brisk fights with Victorio, Robert now considered himself to have seen the elephant. Like his comrades among the regulars, he scoffed at those who had not smelled the scent of battle. For Capt. William R. Livermore, a proper West Pointer who had arrived after the fighting and who packed his mules rather more slowly than Robert would have liked, the young Grierson had nothing but contempt. Upon the bald Livermore's claim that he had "rushed through," Robert reported: "This is perfectly absurd. West Point tactics & engineering. I bet he'd be like a peeled banana if he's made a march as we did." Proud of his role in the campaign, Robert added: "If some Indians would get after him once he'd learn something.[88]

The men grew more careless as the waiting continued. One soldier accidentally shot a comrade through the leg on August 20. Dr. Eugene McLoon, acting assistant surgeon accompanying the expedition, escorted the wounded trooper back to Fort Davis; for McLoon, whose painful hemorrhoids had become inflamed after the sixty-five-mile dash to Rattlesnake Springs, the chance to return to the relative comforts of the fort must have seemed particularly welcome. Sloppy discipline continued to plague troops in the field. On the twenty-fifth, soldiers guarding two supply wagons from Eagle Spring fell asleep on duty. Two men sent to repair the telegraph line between Quitman and El Paso instead got drunk and lost their weapons. And the lures of female companionship across the river proved overwhelming. On August 27 Robert reported that "Lieut. [William H.] Beck and Doctor K. [presumably B. F. Kingsley] have been across the river this eve on a 'tear'—two old women and one virgin on to 14 are there. The subject demands an immediate investigation—i.e. the one 'virgin' on to 14."[89]

Colonel Grierson's criticisms notwithstanding, Mexico outperformed the U.S. Army. Col. George P. Buell led several hundred regulars, Berger's Pueblo scouts, and some Texas Rangers deep into Chihuahua. As the noose tightened around Victorio, Col. Joaquin Terrazas, in command of Mexican troops, ordered the Americans back to the United States. Terrazas cornered Victorio in the Candelaria Mountains, killing the feared chief and most of his followers.[90]

The wizened secondary leader Nana gathered the survivors and reentered the Trans-Pecos in October. On the night of the eighteenth they stole two animals from Fort Davis. Later that month Indians snapped up a stagecoach

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87 Robert Grierson, Aug. 14, 17 (first quotation), 20, 1880, "Journal;" Robert to Mama, July 26, 1880, GPNew (roll 1) (second quotation).

88 Robert Grierson, Aug. 7, 1880, "Journal."

89 Ibid., Aug. 20, 25, 30, 27 (quotation), 1880.

90 Dinges, "Victorio," 93; Utley, *Frontier Regulars*, 373.

and surprised a regular detachment eating breakfast at Ojo Caliente. At least five soldiers were killed as the Indians vanished back into the mountains. A stagecoach was ambushed in Quitman Canyon the following January. Two men died in the attack. Early reports pointed to the Apaches as the culprits. Upon inspection, however, Lt. Samuel R. Whitall believed that white murderers ("probably . . . some men who recently escaped from the jail in the town at Fort Davis Texas") had in fact tried to make it look like an Indian depredation. In making the accusation, Whitall blamed the Texas Rangers for allowing the men to escape.[91]

Whoever the real attackers were, the Rangers exacted their revenge on January 29, 1881. Commanded by Capt. George W. Baylor and Lt. Charles L. Nevill, a Ranger detail hit an Apache camp near the Sierra Diablos. One warrior was killed and two others wounded; three women and two children were also slain. The Rangers recovered seven mules, nine horses, three rifles, a cavalry pistol, six cavalry saddles, and assorted goods belonging to the stage company. They escorted their captives, a woman and two small children, back to their base camp at Fort Davis for medical attention. A self-satisfied Nevill reportedly modestly: "The people of Fort Davis are well pleased with what we have accomplished so far."[92]

Sporadic rumors of Indian attack trickled in for the next seven months. In May 1881 William R. Shafter, now colonel of the First Infantry and back at Fort Davis, held troops at Davis, Presidio, and Quitman in readiness should they be needed to assist Mexican troops campaigning along the Rio Grande. "I trust that success will attend your efforts to destroy the savages that infest the border," wrote Shafter to his Mexican counterpart. A squad of Rangers also patrolled the region. Two months later Indians broke from the Mescalero agency near Fort

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91 Erwin N. Thompson, "The Negro Soldiers on the Frontier: A Fort Davis Case Study," *Journal of the West* 7 (Apr., 1968): 224; Nolan to Grierson, Sept. 12, 1880, Nolan Papers; Nolan to Assistant Adjutant General, Sept. 16, 1880, ibid.; McChristian, "Incidents Involving Hostile Indians;" Gillett, *Six Years with the Texas Rangers*, 286-88; Baylor to Jones, Oct. 28, 1880, Texas Adjutant General Papers; Nevill to Jones, Oct. 27, Dec. 20, 1880, Feb. 9, 1881, ibid.; Whitall to Post Adjutant, Jan. 21, 1881, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 85-3) (quotation); Webb, *Texas Rangers*, 409. For another example of a case of mistaken identity, see Carpenter, extract of Sept. 21, 1880, Nolan Papers.

92 Kenneth A. Goldblatt, "Scout to Quitman Canyon: Report of Captain Geo. W. Baylor of the Frontier Battalion," *Texas Military History* 6 (Summer, 1967): 155-58; Nevill to Jones, Feb. 6, 1881, Texas Adjutant General Papers (quotation).

Stanton. Indians allegedly raided cattle ranches near Camp Peña Colorado twice within the month. A shepherd, Pedro Morales, was killed about ten miles east of Fort Davis on August 31. Such incidents notwithstanding, the Ranger fight near the Sierra Diablos proved to be the final major encounter between Indians and non-Indians in the Fort Davis region.[93]

Administrative changes were also in motion. Acknowledging the declining Indian presence, Augur, who once again succeeded Ord as department commander, abolished the District of the Pecos on February 1, 1881. Although Colonel Grierson's troops had not captured Victorio, they had performed with valor and determination in harrassing the famous chief out of Texas. In addition, the colonel calculated that his command had strung up three hundred miles of telegraph lines, built more than one thousand miles of wagon roads, and marched 135,710 miles during the past three years. According to Grierson "a settled feeling of security" now existed in West Texas; "a rapid and permanent increase of the population and wealth" was sure to follow.[94]

The postwar campaigns also gave rise to one the most enduring legends surrounding Fort Davis. According to the story, a young Indian maiden was badly wounded during some fighting along the Chihuahua Trail. Left behind for dead, the pursuing soldiers took her back to Fort Davis, where the mother of Lt. Thomas Easton took charge of her care. The girl, known as Emily, fell in love with the dashing lieutenant. But alas, Tom loved another—beautiful young Mary Nelson. The very day Easton announced his engagement to Ms. Nelson, a heartbroken Emily quietly left the post.

The tragedy of unrequited love is a staple of Western literature. But the story of Indian Emily did not end with the girl's disappearance. During her absence the threat of Indian attack on the isolated outpost grew. Anxious sentries walked the post grounds at night, challenging every suspicious movement. Upon hearing no response from one intruder, a sentinal fired, and a woman screamed. The body of mortally wounded Emily was taken to her friend, the mother of Thomas Easton. According to the story, Emily's dying words warned the gar-

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93 Shafter to Col. Cisneros, May 1, 1881, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 65-855, roll 1) (quotation); Vincent to Commanding Officer, July 29, 1881, ibid.; Nevill to Jones, June 11, 1881, Texas Adjutant General Papers; Nevill to W. H. King, Sept. 11, 1881, ibid.; Read to Post Adjutant, July 23, 1881, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 85-3); McChristian, "Incidents Involving Hostile Indians."

94 Benjamin Grierson to Assistant Adjutant General, Sept. 20, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1880, p. 163; General Orders No. 1, District of the Pecos, Feb. 7, 1881, GPNew (roll 1) (quotations); Dinges, "Grierson," 166-67.

rison of an impending Apache attack. The next morning Apaches allegedly came; thanks to the girl's heroic action, the garrison threw back a major attack with heavy losses.[95]

Soldiers had indeed brought captured Indian women back to Fort Davis on several occasions, and the legend grew with each retelling. In 1936 the Texas Centennial Commission erected a monument over the "grave" of Indian Emily, located by Warren D. Bloys, Arthur Bloys, and devoted local author Barry Scobee. But the story seems to bear little relationship to actual events. A former park historian believed the legend originated with Lt. Patrick Cusack's scout in 1868. On January 9, 1882, post surgeon Paul R. Brown noted another possible source for the story. A captive Indian woman had been quartered in a tent near the hospital; someone split her head open with an ax, "and rape seems to have been the object.[96]

An Indian girl may very well have fallen in love with a handsome young officer at Fort Davis. Or, in an attempt to cover-up the last-mentioned murder, ethnocentric storytellers might very well have altered the truth in order to protect the "honor" of the soldiers. But do such incidents, even when allowing for the inevitable embelishing of events, add up to anything approaching a real-life Indian Emily? Probably not. No record of anything approaching an Indian attack on Fort Davis can be substantiated. Such an incident would have been distinctly unusual—although Indians often ran off a few animals, attacks like that on Fort Apache, Arizona, in 1881 were almost unheard of. Furthermore, the tale's champion, Barry Scobee, was not above stretching the truth. As one contemporary remembered, "he wasn't always right . . . he wanted to make a good story out of things." For example, Scobee portrayed Mrs. Diedrick Dutchover as a blonde Spanish immigrant; in fact, she was a Mexican immigrant with black hair and brown eyes.[97]

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95 For the best told account, see Barry Scobee's *Old Fort Davis* (San Antonio: Naylor Co., 1947), and *Fort Davis, Texas 1583–1960* (El Paso: Hill Printing Co., 1963).

96 Erwin Thompson, "Private Bentley's Buzzard," Apr. 2, 1965, Fort Davis Archives; Post Medical Returns, Jan. 8, 1882, Fort Davis Archives (quotation).

97 Utley, *Frontier Regulars*, 84-85; on Scobee, see Pansy Epsy, Oral Interview, July 27, 1982, Archives of the Big Bend.

CHAPTER EIGHT:

SOLDIERS AND CIVILIANS

Civil-military relations continually provided grist for conversation among residents of Fort Davis throughout the 1870s and early 1880s. Strong-willed officers like William Shafter often antagonized local residents and government authorities. The black garrison also worried race-conscious whites. At the same time, a growing civilian population demanded greater attention from the state government; the widespread use of the Texas Rangers in the Trans-Pecos relieved the regulars of many burdens of law enforcement. In addition, local businesses and contractors were increasingly able to capitalize on the army's presence.

Within the garrison itself, basic material needs continued to dominate daily affairs, as pay, food, and shelter consumed time, thought, and energy. The post sutler remained vital. Post and regimental funds helped finance educational programs, libraries, and bands. Women, including civilians, military dependents, and laundresses, played important roles at virtually every frontier fort, with Davis no exception. Like the soldiers, women struggled to achieve better lives against the challenges of sickness, crime, and despondency. Army policy on the proper location of its western forts also continued to influence routine affairs; appropriations which could ease the hardships of frontier life depended upon changing national perceptions of the western environment and the projected development of railroads.

Health, race, discipline, and punishment remained of special importance to the soldiers throughout the period. Calls for better hygiene at the frontier military establishments led to disputes between medical personnel and line officers. Race became particularly significant at Davis, where a large black garrison and the first black graduate of West Point, Henry Flipper, faced innumerable obstacles which affected not only racial harmony but also the delicate relationship between officers and enlisted men.

Although the army proved a captive market for local merchants, civil-military relations were not always cordial. Few civilians remained ambivalent when dealing with officers like the domineering William Shafter, post commander in 1871–72 and 1881–82. Many respected his gruff efficiency; others found him impossibly rigid. Incidents in late 1871 and early 1872 exposed Shafter's forceful personality. As an example, in 1871 the Presidio County sheriff came to Fort Davis to serve several court orders. During his visit the

sheriff took a break at the sutler's store, where he imbibed a bit too freely. Shafter ordered the inebriated civil servant to leave the post. The latter promptly threatened to kill Shafter. The colonel offered to throw the lawman off by force or slap him in the stockade. The sheriff slunk away, with Shafter demanding that he secure special permission to enter the military reservation in the future. Shafter refused to accept the latter's subsequent apology.[1]

A similar incident occurred the following year. On New Year's Day the duty officer ejected several drunk civilian employees from the post billiard room, a private establishment open only to officers and invited guests. At taps Shafter strolled over to the room and found that the civilians had returned. The post commander ordered them to leave; all obeyed except a government-employed saddler. Shafter described what happened next: "As there was no enlisted man convenient to enforce my order I took him by the collar and led him to the door and upon his turning to come in kicked him so as to keep him out." When the man appeared at work the following day, Shafter had him removed. The aggrieved saddler promptly charged Shafter with ill-treatment before the Justice of the Peace. Characteristically, Shafter simply ignored the claim.[2]

Though a strict disciplinarian within camp, Shafter reacted forcefully to any external criticism of his soldiers. In May 1871 private contractor and customs collector Moses Kelley, a Presidio resident who frequented Fort Davis, sharply criticized Capt. Andrew Sheridan in a private letter. By September Shafter had seen a copy of the note and strongly reprimanded Kelley. The latter claimed that he had only sought to defend a widower against Sheridan's "malicious" attack. Kelley hoped the courts could clear up the matter without jeopardizing his chances of securing contracts of flour and hay for the Davis garrison. Shafter responded to this manuever by banning Kelley from Fort Davis. Kelley eventually regained his privileges, but the dispute exemplified the often strained relationships between officers and local figures.[3]

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1 Finkham to Miller, Nov. 4, 1871, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 65-855, roll 1); Finkham to Shafter, Nov. 4, ibid.; Miller to Shafter, Nov. 6, 1871, ibid. (microfilm 66-783, roll 8); Shafter to Miller, Nov. 6, 1871, ibid. (roll 1). For more favorable responses to Shafter, see Keesey et al. to Lamont, Oct. 9, 1894, 2220 A.C.P. 1879, box 570, Appointments, Commission, and Personal Branch, Record Group 94, National Archives; Crane et al. to Lamont, Oct. 11, 1894, ibid.

2 Shafter to Wood, Jan. 4, 1871 [1872], Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 1).

3 Kelley to Sanborn, Sept. 16 (quotation), 17, 1871, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 8).

Racial antagonisms widened the gulf between the army and many civilians. Texans sympathetic to the Confederacy bitterly resented what they believed to be federal intrusion during Reconstruction; the continued presence of black troops seemed particularly galling. Even though the region tended to be pro-Union, some found it difficult to accept black soldiers in their midst. Wrote Brig. Gen. Christopher C. Augur: "However senseless and unreasonable it may be regarded, there is no doubt of the fact that a strong prejudice exists at the South against Colored troops." Soldiers of all races occasionally encountered trouble when frequenting local businesses; blacks were often special targets for local toughs and racist law enforcement officers.[4]

In addition to the scraps between soldiers and civilians, the burgeoning community at Fort Davis suffered from increased criminal activity. In 1872 former subsistence clerk O. W. Dickerson, his wife Martha, and five children bolted from the post for San Antonio bearing $2,000 in embezzled War Department funds. In another notorious episode William Leaton (son of old Ben Leaton) killed John Burgess at Fort Davis on Christmas Day, 1875. Burgess had murdered Edward Hall, William's stepfather, who had taken over Fort Leaton.[5]

A veritable crime wave hit the Trans-Pecos in 1880 when members of the notorious Jesse Evans gang robbed several prominent businessmen. Evans, a former associate of Billy the Kid and participant in New Mexico's bloody Lincoln County War, had shifted operations to Texas the previous year. On May 19, 1880, he and two fellow gunmen hit the Fort Davis store owned by Charles Siebenborn and Joseph Sender, getting away with $900 and assorted arms and ammunition. One Fort Davis resident explained their easy getaway: "It is so

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4 Jack Foner, *Blacks and the Military in American History: A New Perspective* (New York: Praeger Press, 1974): 57-58; William H. Leckie, *The Buffalo Soldiers: A Narrative of the Negro Cavalry in the West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967): 108-09; Augur to Assistant Adjutant General, Mar. 17, 1879, The Negro in the Military Service of the United States, 1639–1886, Record Group 94, National Archives (microcopy M 858, roll 5) (quotation). For one example, see Post Medical Return, May, 1880, p. 273, Fort Davis Archives.

5 Andrews to Assistant Adjutant General, Oct. 25, 1872, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 1); W. J. McDonald to A. Blacker, Apr. 29, 1877, ibid. (roll 8); Cecilia Thompson, *History of Marfa and Presidio County, Texas, 1535–1947* (Austin: Nortex Press, 1985), 1: 135; Leavitt Corning, Jr., *Baronial Forts of the Big Bend: Ben Leaton, Milton Faver and Their Private Forts in Presidio County* (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1967): 40-41.

common for strangers to come in on horseback and well-armed that no one took any account of seeing them around. There are some pretty desperate characters on the frontier," she added, who "do not value their lives any more than you would a pin."[6]

The robberies convinced local leaders to raise a $1,100 reward and to ask the governor for state support. In response Sgt. L. B. Caruthers brought a squad of Texas Rangers to Fort Davis by June 6. Caruthers believed the thieves were congregating along the Pecos River between the Horsehead Crossing and the New Mexico boundary line. They had rendezvoused at forts Stockton and Davis, and Caruthers soon feared that the Rangers would be overwhelmed. The gang's agent in Fort Davis was under indictment for cattle rustling in Shackleford County, but had been appointed jailer and deputy sheriff of Presidio County. The real sheriff "could not get a posse of six reliable men to guard the jail in this county," complained the Ranger. Meanwhile another Ranger squad moved into Davis, bringing with them to the new adobe jail and courthouse a previously captured member of the Evans gang.[7]

Caruthers and five Rangers rode out of Fort Davis on the night of July 1. They spotted their quarry eighteen miles from Presidio two days later. Cornering the outlaws in a rocky mountain refuge, the Rangers forced Evans and two others to surrender after a bloody gun battle. Ranger George R. Bingham lay dead, as did outlaw Jesse Graham. "With saddened heart, we wound through mountain passes, to Davis . . . people here are so happy with our success, they propose to give us 12 or $1,400 for capture," Ranger Edward A. Sieker reported. But the ordeal was not yet over, as rumor held that Billy the Kid was conspiring to rescue his confederates. Ranger Capt. Charles Nevill arrived in early August to reinforce the exhausted squad at Fort Davis. Nevill soon enlisted two local

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6 Clayton W. Williams, *Texas' Last Frontier: Fort Stockton and the Trans-Pecos, 1861–1895*, ed. Ernest Wallace (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1982): 251-53 (quotation); Dan L. Thrapp, *Encyclopedia of Frontier Biography* (Glendale, Ca.: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1988), I: 473; Virginia Madison, *The Big Bend Country of Texas* (New York: October House, 1968): 42.

7 "To His Excellency O. M. Roberts," Texas Adjutant General Papers; J. M. Dean to O. M. Roberts, May 21, 1880, ibid.; Frazer to Roberts, May 24, June 3, 1880, ibid.; Williams, *Texas' Last Frontier*, 254-57 (quotation); Caruthers to J. B. Jones, June 17, 1880, Texas Adjutant General Papers.

men, bringing his total strength to fifteen. From his first camp at Musquiz Canyon, Nevill swept the region, but found no evidence of new criminal activity. He then moved the Ranger camp to a site called Camp King, eight miles from present-day Alpine (then known as Osmon).[8]

In October the Fort Davis court sentenced Evans to ten years for robbery and another ten years for Bingham's death. The low bail set by Judge Allen Blocker allowed others to go free. The easy terms did not please many local residents; Nevill noted that "Dan Murphy who is opposing Judge B for the legislature is talking very heavy against him. The Judge lost many a vote in this and Pecos counties on account of it." And despite the best efforts of the Rangers, several prisoners escaped. In October three men dug their way out of the Pecos County jail. Others broke out of the Davis "batcave" two months later. Their tarnished record notwithstanding, the Ranger presence allowed the army to relinquish some of its law enforcement responsibilities.[9]

While victimized by such frontier rowdyism, the growing civilian community also grew more able to supply the army's immediate needs. Between 1875 and 1877, for example, at least eleven different bidders secured contracts at the post. The El Paso firms of Charles H. Mahle and S. Schurtz & Brother often provided beef and lumber. Presidio's C. Caldwell secured an unspecified contract in November 1875; that city's Moses E. Kelley and A. F. Wulff won the right to furnish lumber, shingles, bran, and cordwood. Closer to home Joseph Sender filled the hay contract in the fourth quarter of 1876. Peter Gallagher, who had

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8 Williams, *Texas' Last Frontier*, 257-59 (quotation); Nevill to Jones, Aug. 8, 26, Sept. 5, 17, 28, Nov. 17, 1880, Texas Adjutant General Papers; Nevill to King, May 30, 1882, ibid., 1880–1882. Nevill, who had formed a ranching partnership with J. B. Gillett, resigned his state commission upon being elected Presidio County sheriff in November 1882. Nevill also acted as land agent for several army officers. See Nevill to King, Nov. 14, 1882, Texas Adjutant General Papers, Barker Texas History Center and Walter P. Webb, *The Texas Rangers: A Century of Frontier Defense* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1955): 410.

9 Williams, *Texas' Last Frontier*, 259-60; Nevill to Jones, Oct. 23 (quotation), Dec. 20, 1880, Texas Adjutant General Papers. Evans escaped from the Huntsville state penitentiary on May 23, 1882. Thrapp, *Encyclopedia*, 1: 473-74.

invested heavily in lands around Fort Stockton, sold corn and barley; J. G. O'Grady peddled his hay. A former member of the Third Cavalry who had established a large farm at Fort Stockton, Francis Rooney, sold corn. Fort Davis's Otis Keesey also supplied cordwood.[10]

Even as local commerce flourished, the post trader's efficiency of operations and quantity of merchandise continued to influence life around the military post. Simon Chaney had won the sutler's concession in late 1870. At this time the Secretary of War appointed post traders; though the system was designed to remedy past abuses, Secretary William Belknap brazenly used the tradership to dispense patronage and line his pockets. Although the scandal was not publicized until 1876 (forcing Belknap's retirement), officers in the subdistrict of the Pecos had long suspected that the Secretary's appointments had been less than disinterested.[11]

A Belknap appointee, Chaney's operations never satisfied his military customers at Fort Davis. Acerbic post surgeon Daniel Weisel labeled Chaney as "unreliable" and lambasted his store for offering "an inferior stock of goods." In October 1874 a post council of administration reported that Chaney had been absent for over two years. In the official sutler's absence, a brother, A. W. Chaney, had operated the store until the El Paso firm of S. Schurtz & Brother assumed control. Simon Chaney finally asked Secretary of War Belknap to transfer his appointment to his brother. Belknap, noting the stream of criticism against the sutler, assented to Simon's wishes.[12]

But A. W. Chaney proved just as recalcitrant. Following an earlier warning, on January 7, 1875, the post adjutant handed out an ultimatum: "Unless you

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10 "Contractors for Supplies at Fort Davis," H. B. Quimby Papers, Fort Davis Archives (typescript); Williams, *Texas' Last Frontier*, 91-94, 140-41.

11 Report of Belknap, Nov. 22, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1875, p. 24; Robert M. Utley, *Frontier Regulars: The United States Army and the Indian, 1866–1891*, The Wars of the United States (New York: Macmillan Co., 1973): 43 n. 94; Veck to Woodward, Jan. 21, Letters Received, Subdistrict of the Pecos, 1870, Record Group 393, National Archives; Sherman to Augur, Apr. 16, 22, 1870, Mar. 18, 1871, Christopher C. Augur Papers, Illinois State Historical Library, Springfield, Illinois.

12 Post Medical Return, p. 15, Fort Davis Archives (first two quotations); Registers of Post Traders, vol. 2: 140, Record Group 94, National Archives; Ibid., vol. 3: 7; Belknap to Commanding Officer, Nov. 9, 1874, vol. 76: 208, Letters Sent by the Secretary of War Relating to Military Affairs (microcopy M 6, roll 69); Belknap to S. Chaney, Nov. 9, 1874, ibid. (third quotation); Post Adjutant to S. Chaney, Dec. 23, 1874, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 1); Post Adjutant to A. W. Chaney, Dec. 1, ibid.

take measures to procure and keep constantly on hand a good stock of marketable goods and conduct the business in a satisfactory manner," then "after a reasonable time measures will be taken to cause your removal." Post commander George Andrews intervened in March. Despite recent trips to El Paso and San Antonio, Chaney still had not added to his inventory. Andrews, asserting that every man on the post wanted a new sutler, concluded "that the garrison is suffering while Mr. Chaney is pursuing schemes that must prove abortive."[13]

Chaney returned to Fort Davis on May 20 after a visit to his San Antonio bankers, John Twohig & Co., to whom he owed $5,000. Two days after Chaney's return, his store closed. Colonel Andrews recommended that the War Department appoint Joseph Sender, local agent for the firm of S. Schurtz & Brother, as post trader. Sender enjoyed a good reputation among the troops, having extended credit when their pay was overdue. Inspector Nelson H. Davis urgently endorsed such action while at Fort Davis on July 27, 1875. Not only was Schurtz & Brother a reputable firm; Sender had operated a successful store just off the reservation for several years.[14]

Chaney offered his letter of resignation in November 1875, later becoming a county judge and taking up residence at "new Pat Murphy's store" on the outskirts of the fort. Despite the recommendations of both Inspector Davis and Colonel Andrews, on the advice of Rep. John L. Vance of Ohio, Secretary Belknap appointed an outsider, John D. Davis, as the new post trader. Belknap's enforced resignation the following spring led the incoming Secretary, Alfonso Taft, to insist that every post council investigate its trader. Sutler Davis won the support of both the board of officers and commander Andrews, who reported that "no complaints have reached me regarding him . . . either in regard to his

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13 Post Adjutant to A. W. Chaney, Nov. 27, 30, 1874, Jan. 7, 1875 (first and second quotations), Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 1); Andrews to Belknap, Mar. 19, 1875, ibid. (third quotation).

14 Ibid.; Andrews to Belknap, June 8, 1875, ibid.; Davis to Inspector General, July 27, 1875, 4914 A.C.P. 1875, box 340, Appointment, Commission, and Personal Branch.

manner of conducting his business, or the means he employed to obtain his appointment."[15]

In securing the sutlership, Davis beat out at least four competitors, including the hard-luck Daniel Murphy. Murphy's case is intriguing, especially considering his amiable relations with many officers at Fort Davis, his political support from Texas congressmen John M. Hancock and Edward Degener, and his repeated efforts to secure the position. Murphy, who had campaigned for the job since the darkest days of Chaney's unsuccessful regime, claimed to have Secretary Belknap's verbal support. Yet he found his application blocked, probably because of his indirect involvement in G Company's 1860 mutiny and his former service as beef contractor to the Confederacy.[16]

Whatever the circumstances surrounding his appointment, John Davis again won the unanimous support of a post council held September 30, 1876. Secretary of War James D. Cameron concurred. Davis soon took on a partner, George H. Abbott, and by September 1877 they were leasing a tract just south of the guardhouse for seventy-five dollars a month from banker John Twohig. They expanded the sprawling sutler's compound, which after 1880 included a residence, shed, bar, store, telegraph office, and two privies. As was to be expected, a few criticisms against Davis and Abbott surfaced during their tenure at Davis, which continued through the 1880s. An inspector described their merchandise as "only fair" and the whiskey "poor" in 1878. On occasion, the traders were reprimanded for allowing undesirable elements to use their bar

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15 Andrews to Assistant Adjutant General, June 2, 1877, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 1); Orders No. 104, July 1, 1877, ibid. (roll 4) (first quotation); Applicants for Post Trader, vol. 2, Registers of Post Traders; ibid., vol. 3: 7; Utley, *Frontier Regulars*, 31; Andrews to Adjutant General, Mar. 20, 1876, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 1) (second quotation).

16 Registers of Applications, File #541, vol. 1: 498-99, File #375, vol. 2: 45, Appointment, Commission, and Personal Branch; Andrews to Wilson, Apr. 11, 1876, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 1); Cameron to Schleicher, June 6, 1876, vol. 79: 587, Letters Sent by the Secretary of War Relating to Military Affairs (microcopy M 6, roll 72); McKeever to Murphy, Aug. 13, 1873, vol. 4: 234, Letters Sent, Department of Texas, National Archives (microcopy M 1114, roll 2); Registers of Post Traders, vol. 2: 141; Applicants for Post Trader, ibid.; Williams to Shideler, Sept. 17, 1990 (copy in author's possession).

and billiard table. Despite these complaints, Davis and Abbott satisfied the garrison's needs.[17]

The two partners also participated in one of the fort's most bizarre series of marriages. In 1877 Ellen Jane Brady, a step-daughter of Daniel Murphy, married John Davis. While still in her early teens, Ms. Brady had several years earlier married S. C. Hopkins, a nephew of Lt. Col. Wesley Merritt who worked as a carpenter at Fort Davis in 1869 and 1870. She and Hopkins had two daughters in the early 1870s. The Brady-Davis marriage also produced six children. Davis's partner, George Abbott, married one of Ellen's step-sisters, Sarah Murphy, in 1883, thus linking, if only briefly, the partnership through extended family relations. But in what community gossips must have found especially titillating, Ellen later divorced the sutler in favor of her first husband, S. C. Hopkins.[18]

Like the post traders, women played a vital function at the typical frontier post. The census of 1870 reported 134 females present at Davis; that of 1880 listed 345 women at the community and fort along the Limpia. One hundred and six women were not housekeepers; all so listed were black, mulatto, or Hispanic. An overwhelming majority (66) were laundresses. Sixteen seamstresses, 9 cooks, 5 domestic servants, and 2 laborers rounded out the list of common occupations. But not all women at Fort Davis fit these unskilled classes. Three teachers, a teamster, and a tailoress were also present. Jesusia Sanchez received the unceremonious label of "idler." At least two operated their own businesses: Dominga Learma was a widowed shopkeeper, and 36-year-old Manuella Urquedes "keeps a dance house," according to the enumerator.[19]

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17 Circular, May 27, 1876, in 2496 A.C.P. 1876, box 376, Appointment, Commission, and Personal File; Post Adjutant to Davis, Oct. 4, 1876, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 1); Registers of Post Traders, vol. 3: 7; Deed Records, Sept. 14, 1877, vol. 1: 15-16, Jeff Davis County Courthouse, Fort Davis, Texas; Jerome A. Greene, *Historic Resource Study: Fort Davis National Historic Site* (U.S. Department of the Interior: National Park Service, 1986): 216 (quotation); Wilhelmi to Post Trader, July 30, 1881, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 65-855, roll 1). A sketch of the complex, compiled by James Ivey, may be found in the Land Acquisitions File, Fort Davis Archives.

18 Mary Williams to Robert Wooster, Oct. 19, 1988, Fort Davis Archives; Williams to Scannell, Sept. 22, 1987, Sergeant John Scannell, Enlisted Men File, ibid.; Williams to Regional Director, Southwest Region, August 16, 1990.

19 Manuscript Returns, U.S. Census, 1870 and 1880, Presidio County.

The federal censuses of 1870 and 1880 (during which time only black units garrisoned the fort) show twenty-nine laundresses or hospital matrons clearly associated with the United States Army. Of these women the census reported eighteen blacks, seven mulattos, and four Hispanics. Their average age was twenty-eight, with the youngest reportedly aged sixteen and the oldest forty-six. Only one of those listed as black or mulatto listed her birthplace as being outside the South or Indian territory. At least fifteen were married to soldiers.[20]

Army laundresses and hospital matrons received government transportation, rations, quarters, and fuel, along with pay rates established by the post council of administration or the surgeon. In 1885 laundresses earned 37 1/2 cents per man per week. Assuming two laundresses per company of fifty, each washerwoman would have netted $37.50 per month. By regulation laundresses collected their debts directly at the pay tables. But long intervals between the paymaster's visits often left the women, like their customers, strapped for cash. In other instances lax enforcement allowed the men to shirk their financial responsibilities. Two laundresses appealed for assistance from the post commander in October 1886. "We are a lone [sic] standing women and thought best to try for your assistance," they explained. Twenty-seven soldiers from one of their companies owed them for five months' work.[21]

At Fort Davis the laundresses occupied a variety of quarters — all of them in poor condition. Insufficient funding and post commanders who placed higher priorities on other projects left the laundresses without suitable habitation. In 1871 they lived in tents behind the enlisted barracks. The women subsequently inhabited a series of small adobe hovels situtated throughout the military reservation. The laundresses had taken over an eight-room adobe structure located southeast of the parade ground near the old bakery and storehouses by

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20 Manuscript Returns, U.S. Census, 1870 and 1880, Presidio County; James Sheire, *Fort Davis National Historic Site. Furnishing Study, Enlisted Men's Barracks HB-21* (Denver: National Park Service): 14, 15.

21 Bill dated May 1, 1885, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 9); Miller J. Stewart, "Army Laundresses: Ladies of the 'Soap Suds Row,' " *Nebraska History* 61 (Winter, 1980): 423-24. John R. Sibbald, "Camp Followers All," *American West* 3 (Spring, 1966): 65, using similarly inconclusive evidence, comes up with similar estimates; Mrs. Merrill and Sister to Clendenin, Oct. 5, 1886, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 9).

1883. Formerly the quarters of the sergeant majors and the principal musicians, the structure had been deemed "past repair" even before the laundresses moved in. In March 1884, although annual inspections again found the site "bad, past repair," the washerwomen remained. Officials demolished the structure sometime within the next twelve months.[22]

Military officials gave laundresses and hospital matrons mixed reviews. Occasionally, the army tried to help those wives in destitute condition by arranging their appointment as laundresses. Surgeon Daniel Weisel labeled his two matrons, one black and the other Hispanic, "efficient" in January 1869. But Lt. William Beck criticized the work of his laundresses a decade later: "I send you the cuff you loaned me," he wrote the son of a fellow officer. "My laundress tarried long in restoring it to a proper degree of whiteness and even now I am afraid that it is not 'good.' " Many believed the laundresses either engaged in prostitution or harbored ladies of the evening. Hoping to clear out a brothel in 1880, the post quartermaster expelled all nonlaundresses and locked up all vacant quarters in the area.[23]

Congress investigated the situation in 1876, with most officers arguing that the number of laundresses could be decreased. Benjamin Grierson believed that the army could reduce from four to two the number of laundresses per company. Col. George Andrews, then senior officer at Davis, declared that he would not allow any laundresses in his company if he were again a captain. Like commanding general Sherman, Andrews thought enlisted men could handle the job. Following the hearings, the army prohibited laundresses from accompanying the troops. Only in 1883, however, did the army strip the women of their

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22 H. H. McConnell, *Five Years a Cavalryman; Or, Sketches of Regular Army Life on the Texas Frontier, Twenty Odd Years Ago* (Jacksboro: J. N. Rogers and Co., 1889): 211; Stewart, "Army Laundresses," 423; John S. Billings, Circular 8, War Department Surgeon General's Office, *Report on the Hygiene of the United States Army, with Descriptions of Military Posts* (Washington: Government Printing Office): 200; Greene, *Historic Resource Study*, 245-46; Annual Inspection of Public Buildings, Mar. 31, 1883, Mar. 31, 1884, Mar. 31, 1885, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 63-172) (quotations).

23 Taylor to Commanding Officer, Co. E, 35th Inf., June 8, 1867, vol. 4: 339, Letters Sent, Department of Texas, 1865–70 (microcopy M 1165, roll 1); Post Medical Returns, Jan., 1869, Fort Davis Archives (first quotation); Beck to Rob, Sept. 29, 1880, GPSpr (roll 1) (second quotation); Orders No. 84, Oct. 15, 1880, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 4).

government rations. Even so, washerwomen continued to function in at least a semiofficial capacity at frontier posts like Davis for many years.[24]

Army regulations prohibited married men from enlisting, and those who later wished to take wives needed permission from their commanding officers. One survey into this little-understood field has found that of the twenty-one men from H Troop, Tenth Cavalry, who served at Fort Davis in the summer of 1880 and filed for army pensions, five were married at some point during their military service. Four served as noncommissioned officers. Fifteen married enlisted soldiers may be identified from postbellum census returns; they had thirty-one children living in their households in 1870 and 1880. Black troopers often married local Hispanic women despite Texas laws forbidding interracial marriages.[25]

The experiences of married personnel ran the gamut of human experience. Many lived long, happy lives with their wife or husband. But high death rates occasioned numerous remarriages. Guide William Joseph Bishop, for example, married laundress Mattie Howell Adams Collins. Ms. Collins already had eight children by two previous marriages; she and Bishop had four more children. Settling down held few allures for others. Pvt. Daniel C. Robinson, Tenth Cavalry, claimed his bride worked as a servant for one of the officers. To the army, however, the "marriage" was strictly one of convenience designed to allow Robinson to live outside the enlisted barracks. "It appears that they play fast for a while . . . then they play loose for a time."[26]

Others took extreme steps to extricate themselves from their personal unions. Enlisted man John F. Casey married a woman by the name of Pablo after moving to Fort Davis in 1877. He and his wife had two children; he abandoned his family upon receiving his transfer in 1885. Trooper George Goldsby and his wife Ellen had four children, but Goldsby deserted his family at Fort Concho in 1879. A laundress, Ellen remained with her company as it

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24 Grierson to Banning, Feb. 12, 1876, House Report 354, 44th Congress, 1 session, serial 1709, p. 64; Andrews to Banning, Feb. 25, ibid., 115; Sherman to Banning, Feb. 4, ibid., 7; Robert Wooster, *Soldiers, Sutlers, and Settlers: Daily Life on the Texas Military Frontier*, Clayton Wheat Williams Texas Life Series, 2 (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1987): 64-68; Case of Ellen Goldsby-Lynch, June 14, 1923, William Lynch, Enlisted Men Files, Fort Davis Archives.

25 Sheire, *Furnishing Study*, 12-21; Manuscript Returns, U.S. Census, 1870 and 1880, Presidio County. For other married enlisted personnel, see "Marriages," (typescript), Millard F. Eggleston, Officers File, Fort Davis Archives; Post Medical Returns, Aug., 1879, April 11, 1881, and Dec. 9, 1881, Fort Davis Archives.

26 C. E. Bishop to McChristian, June 8, 1981, William J. Bishop, Civilians File, Fort Davis Archives; Memo dated June 5, 1881, ibid.; J. T. Morrison to Post Adjutant, Jan. 31, 1884, ibid. (microfilm 66-783, roll 8) (quotation).

moved from Concho to Davis and ultimately to Fort Grant, Arizona. In 1889 she remarried Pvt. William Lynch—who previously served at Fort Davis—without first receiving a divorce from Goldsby.[27]

A few challenged social traditions. One contract surgeon, though married, was nonetheless "cohabitating" with a Mexican woman. The former wife of Lt. Calvin P. McTaggert, Seventeenth Infantry, married a First Infantry private named Daniel Davis. A United States congressman asked the army to allow Ms. Davis to join her husband in the barracks at Fort Davis. The request shocked the gruff William Shafter. "I have not quarters in the garrison for Mrs. Davis. . . . if she wishes to come here and live in the town adjacent to the post, she can do so, and Davis can see her every day." But Shafter warned that "Mrs. Davis has been the wife of an officer and I think she will find it very unpleasant living near a post." The colonel promised to support the discharge of her husband. But before any arrangements could be concluded, a soldier from another First Infantry company raped Mrs. Davis. Although the Rangers nabbed the villain (who subsequently received the death penalty), only later was Private Davis's discharge secured.[28]

Married enlisted men and their families, other than the laundresses, enjoyed but limited housing facilities. Two buildings, including as many as six rooms each and located northeast of the parade ground, provided a little shelter by 1883. In January of that year noncommissioned officers and their families lived in "two or three dilapidated adobe huts," according to the surgeon. "I would respectfully recommend," he continued, "that decent quarters be built for each soldier permitted to marry, and that these hovels be torn down and their debris hauled entirely away of the reservation."[29]

These quarters proved the scene of lively, if not always reputable, activity. On June 11, 1877, Pvt. Alfred Gradney, Twenty-fifth Infantry, entered the

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27 Case of Ellen Goldsby-Lynch, June 14, 1923, William Lynch, Enlisted Men Files, Fort Davis Archives; Sheire, *Furnishing Study*, 14.

28 Smither to Grierson, June 3, 1883, Benjamin Grierson Papers, Illinois State Historical Library, Springfield (hereafter referred to as GPSpr) (microfilm edition, roll 2); S. J. Peelle to Shafter, Sept. 12, 1881, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 8); Shafter to Peelle, Sept. 21, 1881, ibid. (quotations); *Galveston Weekly News*, Feb. 16, 1882; Registers of Enlistments in the United States Army, 1798–1914, vol. 79: 24 (microcopy M 233, roll 41). Joseph Bruister, the guilty party, "showed a stolid indifference" during his trial. San Antonio *Daily Express*, Feb. 12, 25, Apr. 5, 9 (quotation), 1882. For additional information regarding married personnel, see Douglas McChristian, "Notes from Archives, Washington, DC, Nov. 1979," Company C, Units File, Fort Davis Archives.

29 Greene, *Historic Resource Study*, 247; Post Medical Returns, Jan. 31, 1883, Fort Davis Archives; J. T. Morrison to Post Adjutant, Jan. 31, 1884, ibid. (microfilm 66-783, roll 8).

quarters of a Mrs. Henry Ratcliffe, laundress for the Tenth Cavalry. Finding her absent, an enraged Private Gradney kicked over a table filled with crockery, "thereby . . . disturbing the good order of the garrison." And a chief musician stormed into Sgt. James Cooper's house, complaining to Mrs. Cooper about her husband. Seizing a fistful of hair, the musician dragged Mrs. Cooper outside before a guard rescued her. Despite the offense, post officials quickly returned the musician to duty. The sergeant's wife had no recourse but to file a formal grievance with department officials.[30]

Officers' wives comprised a completely different social class at every frontier station. At Fort Davis ten of the twenty-eight officers listed in the 1870 and 1880 censuses had wives living with them. Eight of these families had children; the officers' youngsters totaled ten in number. These elite dependents formed close friendships among one another, rarely interacting with the lowly laundresses or enlisted men. In keeping with Victorian mores which often relegated women to second class status, they cared for their children, consoled their husbands, sewed, and discussed the latest fashions and military affairs. Despite their prominence, the officers' wives enjoyed no official army recognition—no rations, no protective regulations, no transportation. Embittered ladies found the lack of official status "notorious."[31]

For officers, finding a wife or woman companion at Fort Davis proved a welcome pastime. Daughters of fellow officers seemed likely targets for prospective suitors. Lt. Leighton Finley, a Princeton graduate, kept a list of "girls I have known." The young lieutenant rated his female acquaintances as to the "degree of influence they exercised over me." Of those at Fort Davis, Mary Shafter, daughter of the colonel, rated a four. One of Daniel Murphy's daughters, Kate, who married the Tenth Cavalry's John B. McDonald, merited a five on Finley's scale. May Beck (daughter of William H. Beck), earned a three in 1884, but was upgraded to a seven in 1886.[32]

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30 General Orders 103, June 29, 1877, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 4) (quotation); Christine Cooper to Assistant Adjutant General, July 30, 1873 (ibid., roll 9); Registers of Enlistments, vol. 76: 135 (microcopy M 233, roll 40); ibid., vol. 82: 106 (roll 43).

31 Manuscript Returns, U.S. Census, 1870 and 1880, Presidio; Nita to Papa, undated fragment, box 13, Frank D. Baldwin Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California; Mama to Nita, Jan. 28, 30, 1890, ibid.; Sis to Mother, July 19, 1890, James K. Thompson File, Fort Davis Archives; Mrs. Orsemus Bronson Boyd, *Cavalry Life in Tent and Field* (1894; rpt. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982): 142 (quotation).

32 Leighton Finley Diary, vol. 4, Officers File, Fort Davis Archives. For biographical material on Finley, see McChristian, "Notes from Archives."

Others were more successful than Finley. Lt. Millard F. Eggleston, Tenth Cavalry, married Miss Gertrude Gardner, daughter of Asst. Surgeon William H. Gardner, at the Fort Davis chapel in 1884. Two years later Miss Josephine Fink, daughter of Capt. Theodore Fink, a member of the antebellum fort's garrison, wed a civilian at her mother's hotel at Fort Davis. Officers found the Murphy clan especially enticing—four of the Murphy girls married officers.[33]

But frontier life could be horribly cruel, especially when it came to bearing children. Although generally enjoying the assistance of a surgeon, midwife, or other post females, the perilous prospect of childbirth at a military post troubled most pregnant women. Annie Nolan, wife of Capt. Nicholas Nolan, moved to Fort Davis shortly before giving birth. "Though I ought not to complain, this post being really lovely and home like," Mrs. Nolan freely admitted that she would rather bear her child among her friends at Fort Concho than among strangers at her new house. In so doing, she undoubtedly echoed the fears of every prospective mother on the western frontier.[34]

Caring for newborn babies tested even the best parents, with mothers bearing the brunt of infant care. Lt. James K. and Mary Swan Thompson handled the initial problems extremely well. Having put the infant to sleep, Mary once allowed that "all my nervousness has gone. . . . I've not an ache or pain anywhere." Their little boy received typical upper class gifts, including toys, clothes, socks, and gold buttons. With the baby awakening at regular hours to nurse, things could scarcely have been better. But four weeks later, an exhausted Mary Thompson confided to her mother and grandmother:

> This is the first afternoon I've had a moment to myself in I can't tell when. . . . The baby is so wakeful all day long and keeps me so busy—but today he has just succeeded after trying for nearly two hours in howling himself to sleep. . . . It is two o'clock now—and so far today he has slept just fifteen minutes, after his bath this morning, so you can see he is an incessant scamp—and there is nobody to take him but myself. So please stop scolding me about not writing.[35]

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33 "Marriages," Millard F. Eggleston, Officers File, ibid.; Williams to Wooster, Oct. 19, 1988, Feb. 23, 1989, Fort Davis Archives; Manuscript Returns, U.S. Census, 1870 and 1880, Presidio County; M. Bock, undated memo in 2205 A.C.P. 1872, Appointment, Commission, and Personal Branch, Record Group 94, National Archives.

34 Lauderdale Letterbooks, Sept. 26, 1888; Annie Nolan to Mrs. Grierson, Dec. 14, 1880, GPSpr (roll 1) (quotation); Post Medical Returns, Feb. 14, 1881, Fort Davis Archives.

35 Lauderdale Letterbooks, Feb. 17, 1890, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm); Sis to Mother, July 16, 1890, Thompson Files, Fort Davis Archives (first quotation); Mrs. James K. Thompson to Gram and Mother [October] (second quotation), Nov. 3, 1890, ibid.

Sickness, disease, and death also affected women at Davis. Maj. Zenas R. Bliss's wife suffered from a severe eye ailment in the spring of 1874. The post surgeon could not hope to provide the necessary treatment. Yet Bliss, as acting post commander, had to wait three weeks for his leave because the permanent commander, George Andrews, was also away from his post. Andrews's wife Emily had died in 1873, and the colonel returned east to settle her estate, not returning until the fall of 1874. While there, he married Emily Kemble (Oliver) Brown, a widow with a young daughter from her previous marriage.[36]

Fort Davis was the scene of one of the military's most bizarre set of personal relationships. 1st Lt. Louis H. Orleman, his eighteen-year-old daughter Lillie, and Lt. Andrew Geddes were all stationed at neighboring Fort Stockton in February 1879. On the twenty-first the three rode the stage to Fort Davis, where they remained for five days before returning to Stockton. In a subsequent court-martial, Lieutenant Orleman charged Geddes with endeavoring "to corrupt" Lillie "to his own illicit purposes," attempted abduction, and conduct unbecoming an officer. Orleman claimed Geddes had pressed Lillie's knees between his [Geddes's] during the coach ride under the cover of a blanket. This was while the father held his daughter in his arms. Tearfully, Lillie also accused Geddes of repeatedly propositioning her at Davis and Stockton.[37]

Geddes mounted a vigorous defense, claiming that he had seen Orleman "having criminal intercourse with his said daughter" one afternoon at Stockton. Geddes added that Lillie had told him that this had been occurring for the past five years. He also presented the affidavit of a fellow passenger, stating that he saw Lieutenant Orleman "fondling with the breast of his daughter." Other witnesses reported the commonly held belief that Orleman and his daughter slept in the same bed. After sixty-eight days of sensational testimony at San Antonio, the court found Geddes guilty, cashiering him from the service and sentencing him to three years in the penitentiary. Pres. Rutherford B. Hayes accepted the judge advocate general's recommendation that the court's ruling against Geddes be overturned. Geddes was eventually dismissed from the army

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36 Bliss to Assistant Adjutant General, Mar. 27, 1874, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 1); Myres to Williams, Sept. 9, 1981, George Andrews File, Fort Davis Archives.

37 Court Martial Files, Case of Andrew Geddes, QQ 1387, box 1927, Records of the Judge Advocate General's Office, Record Group 153, National Archives.

on another charge in December 1880; ironically, Lieutenant Orleman, his health broken, had retired thirteen months earlier.[38]

Disputes between surgeon and commanding officer, a recurring problem at frontier military posts, also marked Fort Davis after the Civil War. These conflicts stemmed from personality clashes as well as systemic defects. In December 1868 Asst. Surgeon Daniel Weisel took charge of medical affairs at Fort Davis. A thirty-year-old native of Williamsport, Maryland, Weisel was on his first independent station. His bride of less than a year, Isabel Walters Weisel, accompanied the young doctor. Weisel's two predecessors at Davis, J. H. McMahon and Joseph Taylor, had been acting assistant surgeons under private contract. Since virtually everyone in the army distrusted contract surgeons, who had not passed the army's rigorous medical examinations, the garrison extended Weisel a warm welcome.[39]

Fig. 8:25. Asst. Surgeon Daniel Wiesel, who took over the Fort Davis Hospital in 1868. Photograph from Fort Davis Archives, AA-64.

The new doctor immediately proved his worth. His efforts to collect locally available watercress, to make sauerkraut, onions, pickles, and citric acids part of the regular diet, and his unceasing support for the post garden prevented the recurrence of scurvy, which had broken out the previous spring. To reduce the rates of diarrhea and dysentery, Weisel encouraged the men to bathe regularly in Limpia Creek. He

38 Ibid.; see also Francis B. Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1899), 1: 451, 760; Patricia Y. Stallard, *Glittering Misery: Dependents of the Indian Fighting Army* (Fort Collins and San Rafael, Colo.: Old Army Press and Presidio Press, 1978): 117-21. Note, however, that Stallard changes Orleman's name to "Orleans."

39 David A. Clary, "The Role of the Army Surgeon in the West: Daniel Weisel at Fort Davis, Texas, 1868–1872," *Western Historical Quarterly* 3 (Jan., 1972): 53-55; Walter C. Conway, ed., "Colonel Edmund Shriver's Inspector-General Report on Military Posts in Texas, November 1872–January 1873," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 67 (Apr., 1964): 559-83.

also suggested that rings and parallel bars be set up to encourage more exercise. Weisel reasoned that "innocent and healthful amusement" would reduce the average soldier's "inducements to seek pleasures farther away and more injurious."[40]

Seeking to improve health, the War Department directed post surgeons to inspect sanitation facilities in late 1869. Weisel welcomed the challenge. To his traditional tasks of overseeing the post hospital, making sick calls, and forwarding specimens of flora, fauna, and diseased organs to the Army Medical Museum, Weisel now undertook regular inspections of the post's physical properties, water supply, and cooking equipment. As always, the surgeon remained liable for service on boards of survey and courts-martial. He was also responsible for the post cemetery, and often served as post treasurer. In addition he checked on the welfare of troops stationed at Davis's various subposts. The surgeon was to suggest sanitation and general health improvements to the post commander, who was obliged to hear out the medical man's reports.[41]

A matron, a cook, and two male nurses assisted Weisel, with the latter positions filled by enlisted personnel. He also enjoyed the service of Acting Asst. Surgeon Thomas Landers during much of his three and one-half years at Fort Davis. One inspector recommended the transfer of one of the two doctors, as "these two gentlemen really have but very little to do." Whatever the case, Weisel oversaw a dramatic improvement in the health of the command. During his first year at Fort Davis, while the garrison's average strength fell by ten percent, the number of troops taken sick fell by forty-two percent. Malarial fevers were reduced from 48 to 32; cases of diarrhea and dysentery from 231 to 105; scurvy from 47 to 8; deaths from 17 to 2. Only the incidence of venereal disease, which increased from 2 cases to 9, showed a perceptible growth.[42]

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40 Weisel to Markley, Feb. 18, 1869, Post Medical Return, 109-10, Fort Davis Archives; Ibid., May, 1869, p. 121; Ibid., Aug., 1869, p. 133; Weisel to Post Adjutant, Aug. 5, 1869, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 6) (quotations).

41 General Orders No. 22, Dec. 30, 1869, Post Medical Return, p. 150, Fort Davis Archives; Clary, "Weisel," 54-55.

42 Clary, "Weisel," 55; Post Medical Return, Jan., 1869, p. 108, and Sept., 1869, p. 137, Fort Davis Archives; Greene, *Historic Resource Study*, 225 (quotation); John S. Billings, Circular 4, War Department Surgeon General's Office, *A Report on Barracks and Hospitals, with Descriptions of Military Posts* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1870): 230.

General health continued to improve as Weisel hounded line officers to show greater concern for the physical welfare of their men. When comparing monthly averages of 1869 and 1871, Weisel proudly reported that the number of wounded or sick dwindled from 26 in 1869 to eight in 1871. Length of illness also declined—those remaining sick from the last report fell from nearly 11 to 5. Fort Davis statistics compared favorably to national averages. Between January 1869 and May 1872, the military's overall death rate was 17 per 1,000; at Fort Davis, it was only 6 per 1,000. The number of medical discharges at Davis, 21 per 1,000, was far less than the army's average of 35.5. And the garrison's sick rate of 60.2 percent remained less than one-third of the national average of 200 percent.[43]

But not everyone admired the young surgeon. Many remained skeptical of Weisel's abilities; others expected him to be on call twenty-four hours a day. Capt. Charles Hood filed an official complaint against the doctor on March 1, 1871. Although Hood hinted at several incidents, the specific charge was Weisel's "official delinquency" in refusing to pay him a visit for a sore throat. According to Hood, Weisel never responded to verbal requests sent by orderlies, instead demanding that every complaint be written. Weisel responded angrily to Hood's "whimsical, unfounded, and entirely uncalled for" grievance. "I *did not* tell Captain Hood that I paid no attention to verbal messages," wrote Weisel, who simply refused to accept such requests delivered by enlisted personnel.[44]

Weisel also had a falling out with post commander George Andrews. In the post's official medical record, the doctor complained that while Edward Hatch and Wesley Merritt had kept the reservation clean and sanitary, more recent commanders had been less conscientious. The general police was "not done as regularly as it should." And because of a shortage of disinfectants, particularly lime, the post sinks were "in a very bad condition." Fellow officers must cooperate, complained Weisel, if he was to do his job properly.[45]

Upon Weisel's departure, Colonel Andrews investigated the post. He went over the fort's books in painstaking detail, blasting the subsistence department for erratic and inconsistent record-keeping. Pages had been torn out and entire

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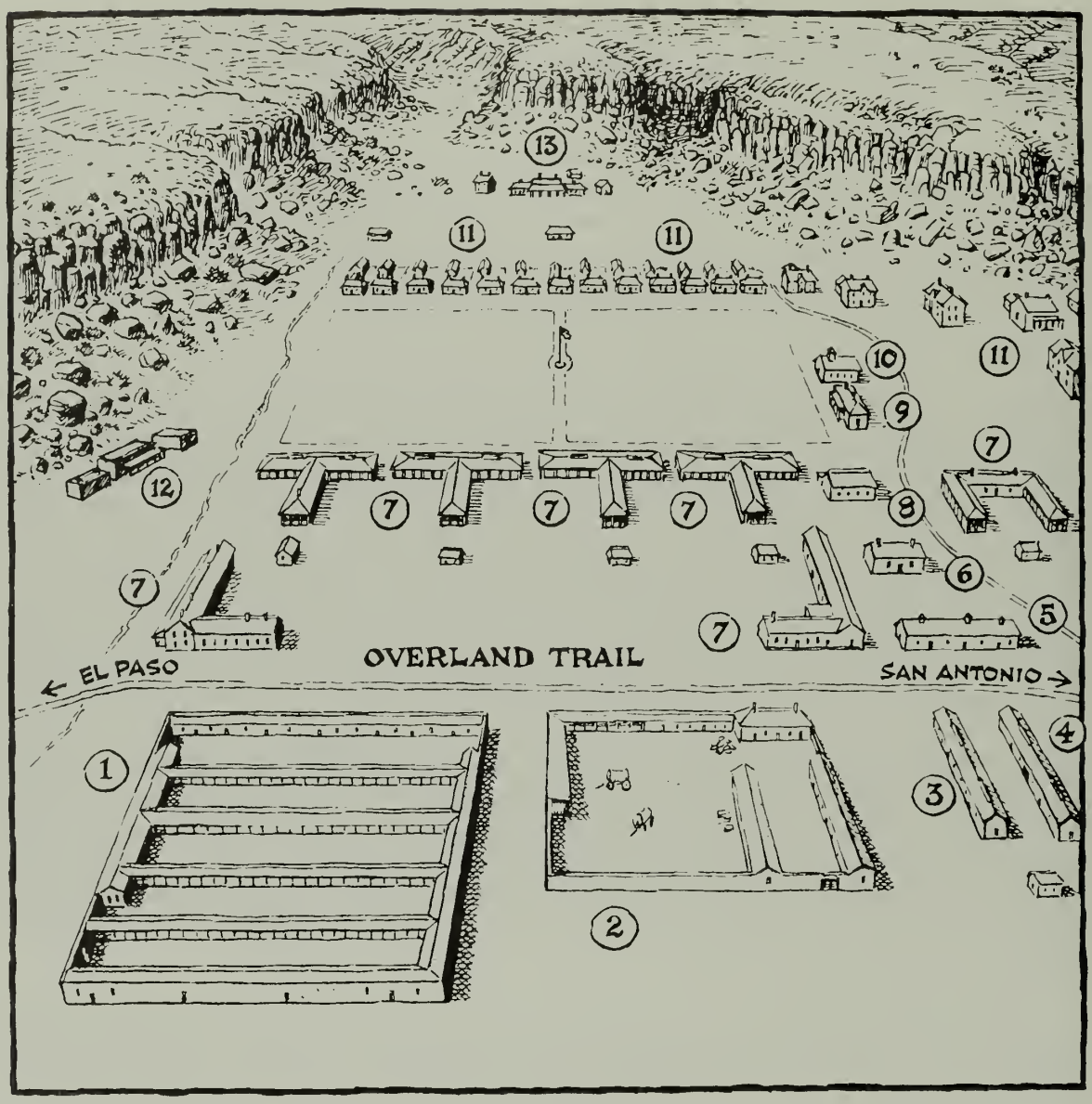
43 Post Medical Returns, Dec., 1869, p. 151, and Dec., 1871, p. 246, Fort Davis Archives; Clary, "Weisel," 62-64; Billings, Circular No. 4, p. 228. For other comparative statistics: see P. M. Ashburn, *History of the Medical Department of the United States Army* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1929): 113, for national averages; Herschel Boggs, "A History of Fort Concho" (MA thesis, University of Texas, 1940): 79, for state figures; and "Register of the Sick and Wounded at Post Hospital, Fort Davis, Texas," Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 85, roll 1) for entries between July 1, 1867, and Dec. 6, 1870, to the post hospital.

44 Hood to Post Adjutant, Mar. 1, 1871, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 65-855, roll 1) (first quotation); Weisel to Post Adjutant, Mar. 5, 1871, ibid. (second and third quotations).

45 Post Medical Return, p. 14, Fort Davis Archives.



AT FORT DAVIS, TYPICAL OF ALL TEXAS FORTS, ENLISTED MEN'S BARRACKS (7) FACED "OFFICERS' ROW" (11) ACROSS THE PARADE GROUND. HEADQUARTERS (9) AND A CHAPEL-SCHOOLHOUSE (10) DOMINATED THE NORTH END OF THE QUADRANGLE, WITH THE POST SUTLER'S (12) TO THE SOUTH. BEHIND THE BARRACKS STOOD THE CAVALRY STABLES (1), QUARTERMASTER'S STABLES (2) AND STOREHOUSE (3), GRANARY (4), COMMISSARY (5), BAKERY (6), AND GUARDHOUSE (8). THE MAGAZINE WAS USUALLY A DISTANCE AWAY — AT DAVIS, BEHIND THE HOSPITAL (13) — AS WERE THE LAUNDRESSES' QUARTERS. FORTS WERE RARELY ENCLOSED BY WALLS.

Fig. 8:26. Drawing © by Jack Jackson. Originally published in Robert Wooster, *Soldiers, Sutlers, and Settlers* (Texas A & M University Press, 1987), p. 43. Reprinted with permission.

volumes were missing. But the colonel saved his sharpest attacks for Assistant Surgeon Weisel's hospital records, which, according to Andrews, "have been irregularly and improperly kept." Weisel had used the medical history "as a means of expressing personal spleen." When Colonel Shafter had tried to look at the book, it had mysteriously disappeared, not to resurface until Weisel handed it over to the incoming surgeon. Andrews maintained that Weisel had in the meantime changed or erased several of the most critical passages.[46]

Andrews gleefully immersed himself in the minute details of Weisel's sloppy accounting. Enlisted men had kept most of the books and Weisel had failed to check their math or oversee their work. In fact, the surgeon discharged two of his stewards for disobedience—both probably embezzled funds from the hospital, although Weisel's poor arithmetic prevented him from discovering their worst infractions. Andrews ferreted out numerous discrepancies, of which the misappropriation of medicinal alcohol proved most serious. The colonel calculated that Weisel's liquor requisitions far exceeded that actually dispensed to patients, with the amount of alcohol on hand not nearly making up the difference.[47]

The status of the hospital remained a sore spot which helped explain the constant bickering. Weisel left the following description of the temporary infirmary in December 1871:

> Despite the constant patching of the roof with mud, an ordinary rain penetrates it as a sieve; and in moderately cold weather, by reason of there being no windows in the building, it is impossible to sufficiently warm it. For windows [there] have been light wooden frames, covered with cotton cloth furnished from the Hospital, and these are now in a very dilapidated condition. There has never been a single pane of glass in the Hospital, and during a recent severe snow storm, it was necessary to cover these cotton windows with blankets to assist in warming the ward—and it was not until recently, that the cotton doors, similar to the windows being entirely destroyed, were replaced by rough wooden ones. The kitchen . . . was built entirely by the Hospital attendants of damaged adobes, that could not be used in any permanent buildings, and old lumber. It, like the remainder of the Hospital being only built for temporary purposes, is rapidly decaying.[48]

Weisel had repeatedly asked Colonel Shafter to requisition new hospital funds. Shafter, however, vetoed Weisel's suggestions. The commander believed

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46 Andrews to Adjutant General, Nov. 3, 1872, box 15, Monthly Inspection Reports, Fort Davis Records, Record Group 393, National Archives.

47 Ibid.; Clary, "Weisel," 62, 65-66.

48 Greene, *Historic Resource Study*, 225.

the building had "answered the purpose very well for several years and is as good now as it ever was." He later rationalized his decision: "Hospital is built of adobe, mud roof and dirt floor. For a building of this description [it] is in fine order."[49]

Shafter's departure removed a major obstacle to hospital remodeling. Maj. Zenas R. Bliss, who commanded Fort Davis for twenty months between 1873 and 1876, supported efforts to improve the infirmary. Flooring was finally added during the spring of 1873. That September Bliss forwarded plans for a twenty-four-bed hospital, based on the Surgeon General's blueprints, to departmental headquarters. Cost estimates exceeded eleven thousand dollars. As officials examined the proposal, torrential rains on November 2 and 3 forced attendants to move patients from the leaky hospital back to their barracks. Requests for tarps to cover the roofs fell upon deaf ears.[50]

Plans for a big new twenty-four-bed structure finally won the approval of departmental medical director L. F. Hammond, Asst. Q.M. Gen. Samuel B. Holabird, and department commander Christopher C. Augur. However, in the sixth endorsement to the proposal, an officer in the divisional quartermaster's office claimed that a twelve-bed hospital was sufficient. Division commander Phil Sheridan also opposed the measure. As the Fort Davis climate was "very healthful," wrote Sheridan, "I consider a twelve bed hospital abundantly large for the garrison."[51]

In September 1874 surveys for the smaller twelve-bed infirmary were concluded following the return from leave of Colonel Andrews. Construction started on October 26. Some two hundred yards behind officers' row, the adobe structure boasted a stone foundation with reinforcements at each corner. The main building stood 63 by 46 feet, with a 41-by-27-foot wing to the north and a 19-by-17-foot southern addition. The nine-room complex had a tin roof. Construction was not, however, without complications. The Treasury Department's withholding of funds temporarily delayed work in January 1875; on March 5, 1876, strong winds ripped away nearly a third of the roof.[52]

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49 Ibid., 225-27.

50 Ibid., 227; Post Medical Return, Nov., 1873, p. 105, Fort Davis Archives.

51 DeGraw to QM, Mar. 14, 1874, Post Medical Return, Fort Davis Archives; "Annual Estimate Hospital Fort Davis, Texas," Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 906-8820); Greene, *Historic Resource Study*, 228.

52 Post Medical Return, Sept., Oct., 1874, Jan., 1875, pp. 127, 129, 135, Fort Davis Archives; Greene, *Historic Resource Study*, 229; Billings, Circular 8, *Report on Hygiene*, 199.

Asst. Surgeon Charles S. DeGraw headed the post's medical operations from November 1872 to September 1876. He and his acting assistant surgeons S. S. Boyer, Ira Culver, and Joseph Harmar administered to a wide range of ills. In May 1873, for instance, DeGraw noted that he spent most of his time treating Hispanic civilians, "as no other medical attendance could be procured at a distance of 200 miles." Gonorrhea, diarrhea, rheumatism, and neuralgia proved among his most common diagnoses. Scattered cases of smallpox were reported in December 1874, with the dread disease threatening to reach epidemic proportions the following spring. Pvt. Alpheus Rankin of D Company, Twenty-fifth Infantry, the daughter of one of DeGraw's servants, and an unnamed citizen all caught the virus. Fearing its further spread, DeGraw isolated the patients "a considerable distance from the post." By August, however, the scare had ended.[53]

Violence occasionally shattered the post's reverie. While fooling around with a carbine, Pvt. Jesse Warren of the Ninth Cavalry accidentally shot and killed fellow trooper David Boyd. During the Independence Day ceremony in 1873, Pvt. John Jourdan of G Company, Twenty-fifth Infantry, lost the sight in his right eye when his weapon prematurely discharged. Another private killed himself while cleaning his rifle three years later. In 1874 DeGraw discharged a private for injuries stemming from a mule's powerful kick. Following a July 4 celebration in 1876, a civilian murdered musician Charles Hill. Later that year, Cpl. Abraham Lincoln, Twenty-fifth Infantry, was found dead near the post, a suspected victim of foul play.[54]

Asst. Surgeon Henry P. Turrill succeeded DeGraw in October 1876; in turn, Turrill was followed by Ezra Woodruff in June 1877, Joseph B. Girard in May 1879, and Harvey E. Brown in April 1881. All save Brown were assistant surgeons, equivalent to line ranks of lieutenant or captain. Turrill won few friends by calling for more thorough policing of the notoriously unsanitary

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53 "Medical Officers Serving at Permanent Posts by Stations. . . ," in Medicine File, Fort Davis Archives (typescript); Registers of Enlistments, vol. 76: 84 (microcopy M 233, roll 40); Post Medical Return, May, 1873, March, April, Aug., 1875, pp. 92, 139, 141, 151, Fort Davis Archives.

54 "Proceedings of a Board of Officers convened at Fort Davis," Mar. 17, 1870, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 7); Post Medical Return, July, 1873, Mar., 1874, July, 1876, Nov., 1876, pp. 97, 113, 173, 180, Fort Davis Archives.

company sinks in only his second month there. Likewise, Girard bitterly complained about the removal of his best hospital cook, Pvt. Alfred Russell, to serve Capt. Thomas Lebo. In a much heralded exhibition, Woodruff secured an ambulance in December 1878. But while ten admiring passengers road tested the new equipment, one of the rear wheels collapsed. Doctor Woodruff diagnosed the trouble as "weak timber" in the spokes.[55]

The case of Surgeon Brown was more tragic. A twenty-year veteran who won his majority in February 1881, Brown showed up drunk to a court-martial of which he was president six months later. Reluctantly, post commander Shafter placed Brown under arrest, but hoped to avoid pressing charges against the doctor. "His ability is not questioned," Shafter reasoned, "but besides his liability to get drunk, he is in very poor health, and is not, in my opinion, fit to be in charge of a large Post." He recommended clemency for Brown, whom doctors diagnosed as having tuberculosis, coughing, indigestion, hemorrhaging, and "general debility and depression of spirits." Departmental medical director Joseph R. Smith made a brief inspection on September 15. Two months later, a new assistant surgeon replaced Brown at Fort Davis.[56]

Land ownership remained an issue of dispute throughout the era. Since the Lone Star state retained control of its public domain, the army was forced either to lease or purchase sites for its posts. The military's presence inevitably increased property values. Wherever the army went, speculators moved also, buying up potential sites and then renting them at high rates to the federal government. One member of the House of Representatives ruefully observed that "the lands at these places are of little value till occupied by the military authorities, when they suddenly become valuable and their owners exact high rents." Exasperated by the lingering problem, Secretary of War Belknap explained that "in consideration of the protection afforded the State of Texas by

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55 Post Medical Return, Nov. 30, 1876, Dec., 1878 (quotation), and July, 1880, Fort Davis Archives. Medical officers, with dates of appointment, are found in "Records of the Adjutant General's Office: Medical Books, Texas, Fort Davis," in Medicine File, Fort Davis Archives.

56 Colonel to Adjutant General, Aug. 9 (first quotation), 11 (second quotation), 1881, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 65-855, roll 1); Harard to Assistant Adjutant General, June 21, 1881, in 4938 A.C.P. File 1872, Appointment, Commission, and Personal Branch; Davis Report, Aug. 13, 1881, ibid. (third quotation); Post Medical Return, Sept. 15, 1881, p. 314, Fort Davis Archives; "Records of the Adjutant General's Office: Medical Books," in Medicine File.

the presence of the U.S. troops, I think it should use its utmost power to provide suitable sites for forts." Belknap warned that "unless such assistance be rendered, the [Federal] Government may be compelled to withdraw troops from Texas altogether."[57]

Threats notwithstanding, all parties knew that the army would not abandon Texas. In 1871 Secretary Belknap and Q.M. Gen. Montgomery C. Meigs asked Congress to empower the War Department to buy land within the state. The House Committee on Military Affairs reported the bill favorably in January 1873. With annual rents ranging from $500 for Fort Davis to $2,500 for Fort Bliss, paying the high leases seemed foolish—it would be more economical to purchase the property outright. Congress formally approved the measure in March.[58]

Pursuant to congressional instructions, a military board of survey met in San Antonio in November 1873. Including Lt. Col. Samuel B. Holabird, Maj. Albert P. Morrow, and Capt. William T. Gentry, the board noted that the present lease for Fort Davis ran for fifty years. Negotiations opened as landowner John James asked $15,000 for all tracts leased to the government. Seeking to reduce costs, the military board excluded all lands except the 640 acres upon which the post stood. Called upon to offer a new amount, James again demanded $15,000. After both Morrow and Gentry visited Fort Davis, the board set $9,000 as a fair price for the military reservation. The board noted the government's previous investments and "very substantial character" of the buildings in justifying its assessment. In addition to the recommended purchase of Davis, the board called for $3,840 for nearby Fort Quitman and $12,000 for Fort Stockton. Suggested acquisitions in Texas totalled $106,360.[59]

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57 Belknap to Governor, Aug. 14, 1871, vol. 67, Letters Sent by the Secretary of War Relating to Military Affairs (microcopy M 6, roll 67) (second quotation); *Congressional Globe*, Jan. 11, 1873, p. 506 (first quotation).

58 Report of Meigs, Oct. 19, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1871, p. 140-41; Report of Belknap, n.d., ibid., p. 9; *Congressional Globe*, Jan. 11, 1873, p. 506; Report of the Committee on Military Affairs, Jan. 11, 1873, House Report 26, 42nd Congress, 3rd session, serial 1576, p. 3; Report of Belknap, n.d., Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1874, p. viii.

59 Report of the Committee on Military Affairs, Jan. 11, 1873, House Report 26, 42nd Congress, 3rd session, serial 1576, p. 1; Holabird and Morrow to Augur, Dec. 15, 1873, House Executive Document, 282, 43rd Congress, 1st session, serial 1615, p. 42; Report of Holabird, Gentry, and Morrow, ibid., pp. 12-13 (quotation); Belknap to House, May 20, 1874, ibid. The asking price seemed more reasonable when considering that the owner of Fort Quitman originally demanded $100,000.

Following the board's recommendations, Secretary Belknap suggested that the army divert the $100,000 already appropriated for purchasing a San Antonio depot to buy the other positions. But in command of the sprawling Division of the Missouri, Phil Sheridan added a note of caution. As he explained, "The rental of the ground is in most cases reasonable. The purchase will cost a good round sum, and it may soon be necessary to change many of the posts, especially if the Pacific Railroad goes on."[60]

Department commander Christopher C. Augur concurred with Sheridan's reasoning in 1874. Augur believed the posts along the Rio Grande should be purchased outright for reasonable prices. But all forts north of Clark and Duncan should be located along the Southern Pacific Railroad, projected to undergo major expansion in the near future. Augur thus believed it premature to buy any sites which the railroad might make obsolete. General Sheridan likewise supported the immediate acquisition of Rio Grande posts, but entertained "grave doubts of the propriety . . . of the purchase of the sites on the northern frontier, namely, Forts Richardson, Griffin, Concho, McKavett, Stockton, and Davis." In particular, Sheridan predicted that "Forts Davis and Stockton will go to the Pecos River."[61]

While endorsing these conclusions, Sherman refused to rule out purchases along the western and northern frontiers at "a reasonable price." Congress refused to divert the $100,000 allocated for the depot at San Antonio to other sites in Texas. But to the delight of military officials, it authorized additional monies for forts Brown, Duncan, and Ringgold. As negotiations for these Rio Grande posts began, Congress also investigated calls by General Sherman, newly appointed Secretary of War George W. McCrary, and new commander of the Department of Texas, Brig. Gen. E. O. C. Ord, for additional forts along the Mexican border.[62]

Ord championed the idea of erecting another permanent position in the Big Bend. The mouth of the Devil's River or the city at Presidio held strategic

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60 Report of Belknap, Nov. 24, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1873, p. 10; Sheridan to Augur, Mar. 1, 1874, House Executive Document 282, 43rd Congress, 1st session, serial 1615, p. 44 (quotation).

61 Augur to Sheridan, Mar. 12, 1874, House Executive Document 282, 43rd Congress, 1st session, serial 1615, p. 44; Sheridan to Sherman, Mar. 19, ibid., p. 45 (quotations).

62 Sherman endorsement of Mar. 23, 1874, ibid., 46 (quotation); Report of Ludington, Aug. 14, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1875, p. 263; Report of Meigs, Oct. 10, ibid., p. 123; Report of McCrary, Nov. 19, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1877, p. xx; Testimony of Sherman, Nov. 21, 1877, House Miscellaneous Document 64, 45th Congress, 2nd session, serial 1820, p. 21; Testimony of McCrary, Nov. 23, ibid., 4.

importance. In addition, Ord estimated that sixteen army companies in Texas had no permanent quarters; he could easily divert forthcoming construction monies to new positions along the Rio Grande. Similarly, department officials began investigating the possibility of establishing a post near San Carlos to block Apache raids from Mexico in early 1878. Far from the "grog shops and disreputable places" of any towns, such an environment would also foster good discipline.[63]

Congress deferred action on the additional Rio Grande posts until 1880. Finally, with the support of Pres. Rutherford B. Hayes, former Secretary of War McCrary, generals Ord and Sherman, and both House and Senate Committees on Military Affairs, a measure passed on April 16 appropriating $200,000 for the purchase of sites "on or near the Rio Grande." As one congressman reasoned, such action would forestall any disturbances which might lead to war between the U.S. and Mexico. He also reminded his fellow representatives of the government's obligation to protect "the life and property of every American citizen."[64]

Strangely, however, the army failed to move. As one clerk informed Secretary of War Alexander Ramsey five months after the appropriation: "The expenditure of $200,000 for sites of posts and buildings in Texas does not appear to move forward. This office is without knowledge of the places chosen or plans and estimates for the erection of buildings." In its response the army in Texas emphasized the disruption caused by the Victorio campaign throughout that summer. Notwithstanding that preoccupation, Capt. William R. Livermore had attempted to examine the Trans-Pecos.[65]

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63 Testimony of Ord, Dec. 6, ibid., 102-03; Senate Report 40, 46th Congress, 2nd session, serial 1893, p. 1; Grierson to Assistant Adjutant General, Mar. 8, 1878, Benjamin Grierson Papers, Newberry Library, Chicago, Illinois (microfilm edition, Fort Davis Archives, roll 1) (hereafter referred to as GPNew) (quotation).

64 Report of Meigs, n.d., Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1880, pp. 329-30; Senate Report 40, 46th Congress, 2nd session, serial 1893, p. 1; Report of Upson, Jan. 14, 1880, House Report 88, 46th Congress, 2nd session, serial 1934, pp. 1-6.

65 H. T. Crosby to Ramsey, Sept. 15, 1880, Alexander Ramsey Correspondence and Miscellaneous Papers, Minnesota State Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota (microfilm edition, roll 25).

In November, General Ord submitted his official rejoinder. Having located no likely spots along the Rio Grande between the mouth of Devil's River to Presidio, he believed Congress should remove the restrictions limiting funding to new positions "on or near the Rio Grande." In a January 1882 response to a House inquiry, Secretary of War Robert T. Lincoln again explained the failure to implement the act of April 16, 1880. "Points for the location of forts other than on or near the Rio Grande are deemed more desirable and better adapted to the purpose contemplated in the act," argued Lincoln. Congress relented, and on June 30 granted the army permission to use the special appropriation on posts anywhere in Texas. Although title to Fort Davis would remain largely in private hands, subsequent commanders at the post on the Limpia sought to capitalize on these newly available funds.[66]

As negotiations with Congress proceeded, garrison life at Fort Davis remained roughly comparable to that before the war. Fatigue duty, drills, patrols, and construction took up the majority of the garrison's time and energies. Everyday tasks kept the troops "well-occupied," assured one Fort Davis surgeon. The chief difference came in the composition of the enlisted men. Once the exclusive purview of whites, the Civil War had opened military service to thousands of blacks.[67]

Reflecting the pervasive effects of racism in the nineteenth-century United States, racial incidents occurred on a regular basis at Fort Davis. Those who tested the color line risked ostracization or intimidation. Pvt. William Layton deserted rather than face action for his involvement "in a most disgraceful affair with a colored soldier." Pvt. Charles M. Douglas, K Company, Sixteenth Infantry, became the target of an unending stream of racist jokes because of his dark complexion. Following a series of fist fights at the post pinery, Douglas finally cracked under the pressure. As a reviewing officer explained:

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66 Ord to Adjutant General, Nov. 11, 1880, House Executive Document 20, 47th Congress, 1st session, serial 2027, p. 11 (first quotation); Sherman to Augur, Dec. 9, 1882, Augur Papers; Lincoln to Speaker of the House, Jan. 20, 1882, ibid., p. 1 (second quotation); Report of Ingalls, Oct. 9, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1882, p. 265; Report of J. M. Moore, Sept. 11, ibid., p. 452.

67 Post Medical Returns, Jan., 1869, Dec., 1871, May, 1873, Fort Davis Archives. See also Mullins to Adjutant General, Apr. 2, 1877, 5035 A.C.P. 1874, Appointment, Commission, and Personal Branch, Record Group 94, National Archives.

> He defiantly proclaimed himself a "nigger" and . . . began to associate exclusively with colored men. This aroused a bitter feeling against him in his company and they have no doubt treated him cruelly telling him that as he had confessed himself colored he must get out of the company. He is now in a state of frenzy bordering on mental aberrration wants to transfer to a colored company says he will never serve in his own but will desert as soon as he can if returned to it. Meanwhile [he] will fight no more with his fists but will kill some of them or they shall kill him.[68]

Fort Davis was also the scene of two spectacular racial confrontations. The first occurred about one o'clock in the morning of November 21, 1872. Lt. Frederic Kendall, Twenty-fifth Infantry, was away from the post; the sound of breaking glass outside her bedroom window awakened his wife. Mrs. Kendall raised the curtain to find Cpl. Daniel Talliferro, Ninth Cavalry, trying to force his way inside the house. After a frantic warning Mrs. Kendall seized a revolver and killed the intruder with a bullet through the head.[69]

News of the incident spread like wildfire. The idea of a black enlisted man attacking a white officer's wife threatened the foundations of military society. Shocked by the alleged challenge to white womanhood, post commander George Andrews claimed that in the seventeen months he had commanded black troops, attempts had been made to enter officers' quarters at forts Duncan, Stockton, Davis, "and I think McKavett and Concho." Five such break-ins had occurred at Fort Clark. Of the Kendall-Talliferro incident, Andrews claimed that this "was the second attempt within three weeks at this post; the first one was made while an officer was absent from his quarters for only ten minutes to attend tattoo roll call." According to Andrews, married officers were reluctant to leave their families alone after dark. Detached service now became "a positive cruelty."[70]

In the view of Andrews, married enlisted men shared these fears. Musician Martin Pedee, Twenty-fifth Infantry, had recently been accused of attempting to rape the white wife of a fellow corporal. The lack of army retribution in the Pedee case worried Andrews. "When the result of the case was published, one and all exclaimed 'what shall we do to protect ourselves,' " he noted. In response

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68 Report on William Layton, June 6, 1883, Reports of Individual Deserters, Record Group 393, National Archives; Mills, 2d endorsement, July 9, 1884, United States vs. Charles M. Douglas, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 8). For excellent insights into race relations at Fort Duncan, see the William Paulding Memoirs, U.S. Army History Research Collection, Carlisle Barracks, Pa.

69 Post Medical Return, Nov., 1872, p. 289, Fort Davis Archives; Andrews to Assistant Adjutant General, Nov. 21, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 1).

70 Andrews to Assistant Adjutant General, Nov. 21, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 1).

to Andrews's account of the incident, Judge Advocate Gen. Joseph Holt concluded that Mrs. Kendall had been justified in shooting Corporal Talliferro. In the Pedee case, however, the accused assailant's identity had not been established.[71]

Racial tensions mounted. Black troops at Fort Stockton nearly mutinied in response to a surgeon's alleged mistreatment of a sick patient in July 1873. Another ugly racial confrontation occurred at San Antonio. "The fact cannot be disguised, that there is anxiety at every post garrisoned exclusively by colored troops," concluded the normally fair minded department commander, Christopher C. Augur. "They are so clannish, and so excitable—turning every question into one of class, that there is no knowing when a question may arise which will annoy in a moment the whole of the garrison against its officers not as officers, but as white men."[72]

Yet another incident involved West Point's first black graduate, Lt. Henry O. Flipper. Born in Thomasville, Georgia, in 1856, Flipper was educated at Atlanta before going to West Point. Despite being shunned by the other cadets, the young man was graduated fiftieth in a class of seventy-six in 1876. He took a commission in Benjamin Grierson's Tenth Cavalry and served at Fort Sill. There Flipper befriended his captain, Nicholas Nolan, and Nolan's sister-in-law, Mollie Dwyer. Flipper and Miss Dwyer often rode horses together, a practice they continued when the company was transferred to Fort Davis in 1880.[73]

Flipper encountered a series of difficulties at the post on the Limpia. Post commander Maj. Napoleon B. McLaughlin seemed to Flipper "a very fine officer and gentleman." But most of the other officers were "hyenas." Only Lt. Wade Hampton, nephew of a former Confederate general, visited Flipper's quarters on New Year's Day, a traditional time of celebration and gaiety at the frontier communities. At Fort Davis, Flipper served as post quartermaster and commissary of subsistence. Even the most meticulous officers found themselves entangled in the morass of paperwork entailed in both jobs. The lieutenant proved no exception. In January 1881 guide Charles Berger deserted. On the quartermaster's payroll, Berger had served only the first week of the month,

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71 Ibid. (quotation); Report of Holt, Dec. 18, 1872, ibid. (roll 9).

72 Williams, *Texas' Last Frontier*, 169-71; Augur to Sheridan, Aug. 5, 1873, 3250 AGO 1873, Letters Received, Adjutant General's Office, 1871–1880, Record Group 94, National Archives (microcopy M 666, roll 121) (quotations).

73 Donald R. McClung, "Second Lieutenant Henry O. Flipper: A Negro Officer on the West Texas Frontier," *West Texas Historical Association Year Book* 47 (1971): 20-31; Charles J. Crane *Experiences of a Colonel of Infantry* (New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1923): 55; Theodore D. Harris, ed., *Negro Frontiersman: The Western Memoirs of Henry O. Flipper* (El Paso: Western College Press, 1963): 2-3, 19.

but Flipper had charged the whole of January (sixty dollars) to the government. Major McLaughlin assumed responsibility for the incident when a board of inquiry failed to reach a verdict.[74]

Fig. 8:27. Lt. Henry Flipper. Photograph from Fort Davis Archives, AA-47.

Colonel Shafter again took over as commander in mid-March 1881. One onlooker had previously observed that "all the other officers are mad" at Flipper's having been placed in a position of authority. Shafter reshuffled the post's staff, replacing Tenth Cavalry officers with officers from his own First Infantry Regiment. He removed Flipper from his quartermaster's responsibilities, retaining the young lieutenant as commissary officer pending the arrival of a suitable replacement. He also kept Flipper at the fort while his company served in the field. The arrival of Lt. Charles E. Nordstrom made matters worse for Flipper. With a fine new buggy, Nordstrom lured Miss Dwyer away from the horseback rides which had so uplifted the lieutenant's morale. The two rivals shared a set of quarters, but rarely spoke to one another. Ostracized by his fellow officers, Flipper found companions among the townspeople, a move Shafter resented. Friends warned Flipper that Shafter and his minions were out to get him. "Never did a man walk the path of uprighteousness straighter than I did," Flipper later remembered, "but the trap was cunningly laid and I was sacrificed."[75]

In August 1881 Flipper was arrested for misappropriating army funds and concealing a discrepancy of about $2,400 in his commissary accounts. Three officers searched the lieutenant's quarters. There they noted three Mexicans—two men and a woman—in his back room, an incident they believed peculiar. Closer investigation revealed that one of Flipper's two servants, Lucy Smith,

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74 Harris, ed., *Memoirs of Flipper*, 15-16, 20-21 (quotations); Barry C. Johnson, *Flipper's Dismissal* (London: privately printed, 1980): 9-10, 82.

75 Nevill to Jones, Dec. 2, 1880, Texas Adjutant General Office Papers (first quotation); Paul H. Carlson, "William R. Shafter as a Frontier Commander," *Military History of Texas and the Southwest* 12 (no. 1, 1975): 21-23; Johnson, *Flipper's Dismissal*, 8, 11, 16-17; Harris, ed., *Memoirs of Flipper*, 19-20 (second and third quotations).

stored her clothes in the locked trunk in which Flipper kept the commissary funds and thus enjoyed free access to the key. Shafter found $2,800 in uncashed checks from military personnel to the commissary on her person at the time of Flipper's arrest. Flipper, on the other hand, maintained that he had concealed the shortfall only because he feared Shafter was out to ruin him.[76]

Realizing that Flipper might go to prison for his indiscretion, local residents took up a collection to repay his debt to the commissary fund. About a thousand dollars was donated outright; the balance came in the form of loans. Ironically, Shafter, who pitched in one hundred dollars to the loan fund, was the only officer to contribute. A ten-man court-martial board began meeting September 17 at the post chapel, where a stream of witnesses soon attested to Flipper's good character. Flipper claimed that he never suspected any deficiency greater than several hundred dollars until mid-August. Upon discovering the total to be much higher, he set about making good the missing funds. But because of his "peculiar situation" and Shafter's well-known severity, Flipper decided to "endeavor to work out the problem alone."[77]

Flipper's plan went awry when projected royalties from his autobiography were delayed. His bank balance could not cover a check he wrote to make up the difference. Pleading for leniency, his lawyer, Capt. Merritt Barber, acknowledged Flipper's inexperience and carelessness. Still, his decision to cover up the matter seemed perfectly logical: "He has had no one to turn to for counsel or sympathy. Is it strange then that when he found himself confronted with a mystery he could not solve, he should hide it in his own breast and endeavor to work out the problem alone as he had been compelled to do all the other problems of his life?"[78]

Unable to prove Flipper guilty of embezzlement, the court-martial instead dismissed him from the service for "conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman." Despite pleas for clemency from regimental commander Benjamin Grierson and Judge Advocate Gen. David G. Swaim, Flipper was forced out of

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76 Johnson, *Flipper's Dismissal*, 18-19, 32-36, 69-73.

77 Ibid., 40, 44; Bruce J. Dinges, "Court-Martial of Lieutenant Henry O. Flipper," *The American West* 9 (Jan., 1972): 59 (quotations).

78 Dinges, "Court-Martial of Flipper," 59.

the army. The young man went on to become a successful mining engineer, but spent much of the rest of his life in a futile effort to clear his name.[79]

The Flipper case symbolized white attitudes toward black advancement after the Civil War. Many white colleagues resented and feared both Flipper's commission and his friendships with nonwhite civilians. A sloppy accountant, the lieutenant was a poor choice as commissary officer. But such failings were scarcely unique to Henry Flipper. He deserved a sharp reprimand; still, the severity of his punishment suggests that racism dictated the final decision. A white officer would not typically have received such a stiff penalty for a comparable transgression. The harsh judgment also suggests the wide acceptance of the myth of black inferiority. Despite the excellent record compiled by its black troops, this myth would not be shattered at the post along the Limpia.[80]

The racial problems only exacerbated the age-old problems of discipline within any military force. In the postbellum army, overly harsh disciplinary measures tended to ruin morale and encourage desertion. Persnickety officers risked gaining the unflattering sobriquet of "dust inspector" and losing the respect of their men. Virtually every action in the day, from getting out of bed to performing fatigue duty to drilling to inspection to going to bed, risked breaking one of the articles of war, slightly altered during the Civil War but substantially unchanged until 1890. As was the case before 1861, noncommissioned personnel or officers thus dealt individually with a thousand petty transgressions.[81]

Of those formally accused of breaking official regulations, violation of Article 62—"conduct prejudicial to good order and military discipline"—proved most common. Assorted minor offenses included neglect of duty, insubordination,

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79 Johnson, *Flipper's Dismissal*, 40, 44; Harris, ed., *Memoirs of Flipper*, 40-41.

80 Dinges, "Court-Martial of Flipper," 59-60; Carlson, "Frontier Commander," 21-23; "To whom it concerns," Nov. 1, 1880, GPNew (roll 1). Flipper maintained he was the victim of a Shafter-inspired conspiracy, and during his lifetime eight separate peitions were filed before Congress on his behalf. In 1976, a board of review posthumously awarded Flipper an honorable discharge. Ironically, Fort Davis was indirectly involved with yet another major scandal associated with the army. See George L. Andrews, "West Point and the Colored Cadets," *The International Review* 9 (Nov., 1880): 477-98.

81 Edward M. Coffman, *The Old Army: A Portrait of the American Army in Peacetime, 1784–1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986): 375; Raymond Ifera, "Crime and Punishment at Fort Davis, 1867–1891" (MA thesis, Sul Ross State College, 1974): 61-63; Sidney E. Whitman, *The Troopers: An Informal History of the Plains Cavalry 1865–1890* (New York: Hastings House, 1962): 131 (quotation).

profanity, fighting, and petty theft. For such misconduct garrison courts-martial meted out small fines, short terms in the guard house, or took away privileges. The 1878 case of Horace Brown, K Troop, Tenth Cavalry, is typical. A garrison court-martial found Brown guilty of "failing and neglecting to wash the Dispensary floor, . . . and when asked why he had neglected to do, did reply 'God damn you, go to hell.' " For this transgression, Brown paid a five-dollar fine. Found guilty on another Article 62 charge, 1st Sgt. Thomas H. Allsup, a splendid combat veteran, was reduced to the ranks.[82]

Punishment for more serious crimes at Fort Davis tended to be milder than at other posts; still, military justice could be brutally cruel. Congress had abolished flogging in 1861, but allowable punishments called for prisoners to be tied up and spread eagled, to carry heavy logs, or to lug about a heavy ball and chain. Some officers like Lt. Charles J. Crane seemed reluctant to hand down such sentences. But when faced with a near mutiny while escorting his men via railroad from Fort Davis to Fort Sill, Indian Territory, even Crane resorted to draconian measures. He ordered the drunken ringleader bound and gagged. "My method of quieting the man was the best under the circumstances, as was proven at the time and on the spot," explained Crane, "but I would not advise it as something to be practiced lightly and without feeling very sure."[83]

Violent crimes also disrupted military life, with a spectacular example occurring on June 13, 1878. That morning Sgt. Moses Marshall, Twenty-fifth Infantry, stormed into the barracks cursing an unidentified man for insulting his wife. One witness speculated that Marshall had been drinking. About two o'clock that afternoon, Marshall and Cpl. Richard Robinson exchanged "pretty rough words." Half an hour later, Marshall entered the barracks and shot Robinson through the head with his Springfield rifle. As the startled enlisted men came in to investigate, they asked Marshall what had happened. "Oh,

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82 Ifera, "Crime and Punishment at Fort Davis," 56; Post Medical Return, May, 1873, p. 91, Fort Davis Archives; Orders No. 122, Aug. 15, 1878, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 4) (quotation); Orders No. 13, Jan. 24, 1884 (typescript), Thomas H. Allsup File, Fort Davis Archives.

83 Ifera, "Crime and Punishment at Fort Davis," 53-54, 85; Post Medical Return, Jan., 1869, p. 105, Fort Davis Archives; Crane, *Experiences*, 120 (quotation).

nothing, only I have killed Corporal Robinson," replied Marshall coolly, who followed with a series of diatribes against any man who dared impugn his mother's reputation. A criminal jury quickly found Robinson guilty of "a cool, wilful [sic], and deliberate murder."[84]

As had been the case before the Civil War, many of these crimes were related to the abuse of alcohol. One chaplain rued that "drinking of the vilest kind of whiskey, and gambling, I am sorry to say, seem inevitably on the increase in the command." It seemed as if nothing could dam the tide of alcoholic beverages. The paltry fines assessed for inebriation were a feeble deterrent. In 1881 Pres. Rutherford B. Hayes forbade the sale of whiskey at military posts; one student has concluded, however, that a "marked increase" in knife and gunshot wounds occurred after the temperance order.[85]

Loneliness proved a common problem—"tis naught but a deserted Post," wrote one surgeon whose wife had gone back east. Maj. Napoleon B. McLaughlen, Tenth Cavalry, seemed a particularly tragic case. In 1880 a visitor described the major as "very kind, and seemed to enjoy having people about him." At one of the Murphy parties, McLaughlen "did his duty too on the 'light fantastic.' " But the journalist concluded that "his life is a sad and pathetic one; having much sorrow and little pleasure." McLaughlen subsequently found himself committed to an insane asylum.[86]

Although all officers did not consume large quantities of alcohol, liquid spirits proved the undoing of many. Former post commander James G. Birney died of "acute inflammation of the stomach produced by intemperance." Surgeons frequently administered to those who imbibed too freely. Commanding officer Frank D. Baldwin called upon surgeon John V. Lauderdale's services

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84 "Proceedings held at Coroners Inquest on the Body of Richard Robinson," June 16, 1878, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 65-855, roll 1) (quotations); Post Medical Return, June, 1878, p. 222, Fort Davis Archives. Marshall escaped from civil authorities, was recaptured by the army, and discharged. Returns from Regular Army Infantry Regiments, Twenty-fifth Infantry, Oct. 1878–May 1879, National Archives (microcopy M 665, roll 255).

85 Mullins to Adjutant General, May 2, 1876, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 905/8821) (first quotation); Orders No. 130, Sept. 1, 1878, ibid. (microfilm 66-783, roll 4); Report of Drum, Oct. 25, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1881, p. 45; Don Rickey, Jr., *Forty Miles a Day on Beans and Hay: The Enlisted Soldier Fighting the Indian Wars* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963): 200; Ifera, "Crime and Punishment at Fort Davis," 57 (second quotation).

86 Lauderdale Letterbooks, Sept. 28, 1888 (first quotation); "Diary of Mrs. Alex. B. Shepherd Containing Remembrances of First Trip into Mexico in 1880," Fort Davis Archives (first three quotations); McChristian, *Garrison Tangles*, 27; Crane, *Experiences*, 55-56.

after consuming "too much lobster and beer." And in 1889 Lauderdale noted that he hospitalized one alcoholic officer and feared that another would soon require similar treatment.[87]

In 1871 Congress reduced the pay of enlisted men to prewar levels—ranging from thirteen dollars per month for a private to twenty-two dollars for first sergeants. The first reenlistment added two dollars to the regular pay; each subsequent reenlistment was rewarded with another dollar. Desertion rates promptly skyrocketed from just over nine percent to nearly thirty-three percent. The resulting outcry from army officials convinced Congress to add longevity supplements of one dollar per month in each of the soldier's third, fourth, and fifth years of enlistment. The army would retain the bonus until the soldier's honorable discharge as a deterrent to desertion or misconduct.[88]

Many soldiers worked on extra duty, thus garnering extra income. Through most of the period regulations established rates at twenty cents per day for laborers and thirty-five cents per day for skilled mechanics. Even when considering that the army added room, board, and uniform allotments, the pay for skilled craftsmen scarcely equaled that of local civilians. Assuming work was available, a private working as a carpenter could expect $23.50 a month ($13 base pay plus $10.50 extra duty pay). The civilian carpenter, on the other hand, earned $60 per month, often with a government ration included. Civil blacksmiths, wheelwrights, and saddlers received slightly more. This reflects general trends—army pay for unskilled workers seemed competitive, even lucrative, when compared to civil life; a skilled worker, however, clearly lost money by joining the army.[89]

Irregular visits of army paymasters proved a chronic problem. Official guidelines called for the men to be paid at least every two months, but most frontier soldiers received their money less frequently. The practice thus left disgruntled troopers without any cash on hand for long periods of time. The robbery of the government paymaster bound for forts Davis and Stockton in the spring of 1883 only added to their woes. But when he did come, the paymaster immediately rejuvenated life on the post. Creditors flocked to the area to collect their debts; hucksters hawked their wares; gamblers tempted the soldiers with their games of chance; dram shops did a booming business.

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87 Williams, "Care of the Dead," 4 (first quotation); "Record of Death and Interment," Samuel R. Colladay, Officer File, Fort Davis Archives; Lauderdale Letterbooks, June 25, 1888 (second quotation), Dec. 9, 1889.

88 Coffman, *Old Army*, 346-47; Whitman, *The Troopers*, 103.

89 Coffman, *Old Army*, 348-49; "Costs of Hired Help at Fort Davis, 1873–1876," H. B. Quimby Papers, Fort Davis Archives (typescript). By 1885, the army had raised extra duty pay to thirty-five cents for unskilled and fifty cents for skilled labor. U.S., *Statutes at Large*, 23: 359.

During the 1870s the daily ration included 20 ounces of fresh beef, 12 ounces of bacon, or 14 ounces of dried fish. In addition, each soldier was allotted 18 ounces of soft bread, 2.4 ounces of beans, 2.4 ounces of sugar, .6 ounces of salt, and 1.28 ounces of roasted coffee beans. Actual costs varied by region—on a national level, the price for a ration fell from just over 23 cents in 1868 to 16.77 cents in 1874. Cooks and subsistence officers able to manipulate standard provisions introduced rice, hominy, sauerkraut, and cheese. In the field wild game and vegetables supplemented the regular ration. Robert Grierson described "prairie cabbage," which from his description seemed to be the mescal plant, as tasting "like boiled cabbage would cooked up with bacon." But the lack of vegetables led one army surgeon to conclude that the "ration is not only deficient in quantity, but that it does not contain the elements necessary to preserve the health of the soldier."[90]

Troubled by such concerns, Joseph R. Smith, medical director of the Department of Texas, compiled an extensive study of the army ration in 1880. He found that in order to secure a balanced diet for his command, the company commander (or, more often, a junior officer, first sergeant, or cook) sold or bartered surplus rations for vegetables. Up to one third of the bread allowance was commonly sold to private citizens. The resulting proceeds built up post, regimental, and company funds, which were in turn used to support schools or the library, supplement the mess, buy garden seeds and utensils, or provide miscellaneous comforts approved by the company commander. Smith advocated increasing the ration; food purchases ate up too many of the extra funds. By reducing amounts of salted meat, sugar, and coffee, the government could offer more potatoes, fresh meat, and flour to improve health and give the companies additional bread for barter.[91]

The commissary general of subsistence, Robert Macfeely, believed that Smith's proposed increases were too expensive. Instead, Macfeely demanded

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90 Coffman, *Old Army*, 340 (third quotation); George A. Forsyth, *The Story of the Soldier* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1900): 96; Report of Schofield, Nov. 20, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1868, p. iv; Turrill to Post Adjutant, May 31, 1874, Post Medical Returns, Fort Davis Archives; Robert Grierson, July 26, 1880, "Journal," Fort Davis Archives (second and third quotations).

91 Coffman, *Old Army*, 341; McConnell, *Five Years a Cavalryman*, 210; Smith to Assistant Adjutant General, Nov. 3, 1880, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 905/8821); Report of Macfeely, Oct. 10, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1881, pp. 484-85 (quotation). See also Stanley to Assistant Adjutant General, Mar., 1880, Post Medical Return, Fort Davis Archives.

that cooks be trained and given extra pay. The current practice of detailing cooks from the ranks for ten-day stints could prove disastrous. Even if the cooks made palatable food, the troops' dependence upon his ability to manipulate savings from their daily ration to provide for a post or company fund made a system of trial and error impractical. A stingy Congress, however, refused to provide for permanent cooks until 1898.[92]

At Fort Davis Lieutenant Colonel Shafter inherited a particularly difficult situation regarding food in 1871. Nearly one thousand dollars of improper assessments against private merchants doing business on the military reservation had been refunded, leaving the post fund nearly penniless. As the balance was again built up, the army introduced fruits and vegetables preserved by the "Allen process" to Fort Davis. Enlisted men flatly refused to purchase the experimental foods; on the other hand, officers found the onions, corn, potatoes, apples, and peaches superior to canned products. The commissioned personnel acknowledged the inferior quality of the cranberries and tomatoes. Lacking funds to buy better food, the garrison's options were thus severely limited.[93]

Among products stocked by the subsistence office and sold to the troops at cost, tobacco proved particularly popular. Butter, dried fruits, canned vegetables, crackers, lard, and yeast were other common offerings. More refined palates found hams, oysters, syrup, and jelly usually available. Canned lima beans, on the other hand, simply collected dust—inspectors found 825 cans of the slow moving beans on inventory in April 1876. A board of survey had destroyed 848 cans of lima beans just a year earlier.[94]

Inadequate storage facilities and lax inspection hampered efforts to improve Davis's food supply. An 1875 board found "that old and an inferior quality of stores are often sent to this post . . . and others are packed so badly that in their arrival here are totally unfit for issue." Within the past 6 months, boards had destroyed 2,357 pounds of hard bread, 900 pounds of hominy, 384 pounds of hay,

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92 Report of Macfeely, Oct. 10, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1881, pp. 485-86; Report of Macfeely, Oct. 10, ibid., 1877, pp. 344-45; Harris, ed., *Memoirs of Flipper*, 7; McConnell, *Five Years a Cavalryman*, 265; Report of Feb. 27, 1878, Senate Executive Document 47, 45th Congress, 2nd session, serial 1781.

93 Shafter to Wood, Aug. 15, 1871, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 1); Shafter to Cushing, Apr. 25, 1872, ibid.; Bi-monthly Inspection Report, Apr. 30, 1876, ibid. (roll 6).

94 Report of Eaton, Oct. 5, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1872, p. 293; various "Abstracts of Provisions," H. B. Quimby Papers, Barker Texas History Center and Fort Davis Archives; Andrews to Assistant Adjutant General, Jan. 4, 1875, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 1); Small to Commissary General, Aug. 26, 1881, ibid. (microfilm 906/8820).

151 pounds of crackers, 97 gallons of molasses, 208 pounds of vermicelli, 256 pounds of macaroni, 588 cans of condensed milk, 9 heads of cheese, 49 hams, 154 cans of sardines, 20 gallons of onions, 198 cans of sweet potatoes, 120 pounds of creamed tartar, 143 cans of onions, 508 pounds of lard, and the aforementioned 848 cans of the dreaded lima beans. Although repairs were frequent, an inspector still found the commissary storehouse "too small," with inadequate ventilation and a poor cellar in 1881.[95]

War Department officials counted on post gardens to augment the regular ration. The Fort Davis garrison's effort did fairly well except in 1873, when grasshoppers destroyed virtually the entire crop. Potatoes seemed to be about the only vegetable not grown successfully. By 1879 an older garden in Limpia Canyon was also under cultivation. Post commanders detailed troops to the latter site for up to six weeks at a time. Bad weather hampered production in the early 1880s; in 1883 and 1884, animals belonging to Diedrick Dutchover ravaged much of the produce.[96]

When properly collected and spent, post and company funds provided needed supplements to regular army issues. A list of equipment purchased in October and November 1885 serves as an instructive example. During this two-month period, the post fund provided 200 pounds of salt, 4 pounds of hops, 5 cans of lard, 1,225 pounds of potatoes, 1 can of mineral oil, 2 pounds of candles, and 38 books. This was in addition to the materials already on hand: 24 bake pans, a dough trough, a strainer and tin kettle, a sieve, 14 benches, a work bench, a clock, a composing stick, 14 boxes of crayons, 6 slate pencil boxes, 34 library files, 2 maps, 2 sets of checkers, chess pieces, dominoes, a printing press, 6 hoes, a plow, a rake, two watering pots, a dust brush, and an organ.[97]

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95 Andrews to Assistant Adjutant General, Jan. 4, 1875, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 1); Small to Comm. Gen., Aug. 26, 1881, ibid. (microfilm 906/8820).

96 Mary Williams, "The Post and Hospital Gardens at Fort Davis, Texas 1854–1891," 2, ibid.; Inspection Reports of Bliss, May 31, July 31, 1873, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 6).

97 "Account Current Post Fund," Oct.–Nov. 1885, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 6).

Fig. 8:28. Miscellaneous noncommissioned officers and their families. Those pictured (left to right): Cpl. Robert Dickson; child of Sgt. Thomas H. Forsyth; Beulah Rolehouse (niece of Forsyth); Sgt. John Wylie [standing]; Sergeant McHale; Hospital Steward Appel; Clara Wharton Forsyth; Sgt. Thomas H. Forsyth; Forsyth child; Sgt. G. Fahlbush (ca. 1888–89). Photograph from Fort Davis Archives, AB-17.

On the cultural front, soldiers at Fort Davis enjoyed access to fairly substantial libraries. Attendance at the reading room averaged a healthy 67 of the 343 enlisted men on post in January 1881. Most reading material was purchased using post and War Department funds; during the later 1870s Chaplain George Mullins secured supplementary magazines and newspapers from the New York City and Chicago Young Men's Christian Associations. By 1882 periodicals included *Scribner's Magazine*, *United Service*, *Harper's Magazine*, *Appleton's*, *Popular Science*, *The North American Review*, *Frank Leslie's Illustrated*, *London Graphic*, *Nation*, *Army and Navy Register*, and the *Washington Sunday Herald*. Daily newspapers from New York, St. Louis, Chicago, Boston, Houston, San

Antonio, and Philadelphia were also available. Three years later the post boasted 1,660 books.[98]

Individual regiments also sponsored their own collections. As Fort Davis served as headquarters to several regiments over the years, its garrison benefited from such libraries. The best was undoubtedly that of the Twenty-fifth Infantry, which boasted some twelve hundred volumes. Housed in the adjutant's office, the collection nearly burned at the hands of an arsonist in December 1873. Only energetic action by the troops saved the books.[99]

Regimental bands had long been an army institution. After the Civil War, however, Congress halted appropriations for the musical groups, save for a single chief musician per regiment. It did allow sixteen (later twenty) privates and a sergeant to be detached from their units to form a band. The troops would have to provide their own music and instruments. Congress "has done a wrong thing," protested one officer, and most regiments kept their musicians by private subscription. In addition to playing at parties and hops, the band serenaded the garrison at inspection, roll call, and special military occasions.[100]

The long-suffering Twenty-fifth Infantry band struggled to overcome numerous hurdles through most of the 1870s. The band endured abominable living conditions, the post commander reporting in 1873 that the chief musician lived in a ramshackle adobe hut built twenty years earlier. The enlisted bandsmen fared even more poorly. That same year, the regimental council of

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98 Greene, *Historic Resource Study*, 156, 159; Post Adjutant to Post Council, Nov. 3, 1872, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 1); Post Medical Return, p. 14, Fort Davis Archives; Report of McCrary, Nov. 19, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1877, vii-viii; Mullins to Adjutant General, Dec. 31, 1875, Feb. 28, 1878, 5035 A.C.P. 1874, Appointment, Commission, and Personal Branch, Record Group 94; Yard to Quartermaster, July 4, 1880, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 65-855, roll 1); Quartermaster to Commanding Officer, Feb. 26, 1880, ibid. (microfilm 85, roll 3); "Bi-monthly Report of Schools at Fort Davis Dec. 31, 1881," Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 6); "Account Current Post Fund," Oct.–Nov. 1885, ibid.

99 Post Medical Returns, Jan., 1874, p. 108, Fort Davis Archives.

100 Coffman, *Old Army*, 358; Kramer to W. J. Palmer, Apr. 9, 1867, in Brit Allen Storey, "An Army Officer in Texas," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 72 (Oct., 1968): 250; Benjamin Grierson to Alice, Aug. 31, 1879, GPNew (roll 1).

administration found that the band needed about $225 for new instruments and repairs. Unfortunately, the regimental fund contained only $10.31. But the council reasoned that the band, "an honor to the regiment," deserved special uniforms and recognition. As such the board proposed that all officers "voluntarily" contribute one percent of their salaries to a special fund. The $641.90 raised from this assessment would cover all costs.[101]

Soldiers of the line resented their comrades in the band, whose bearing often seemed less than military. Though belonging to regular companies, bandsmen frequently held plum staff posts. Only occasionally did they serve the guard and fatigue details so detested by enlisted personnel. Furthermore the bands attracted an eccentric cast. Particularly memorable was Carl S. Gungl, director of the Twenty-fourth Infantry band at Fort Davis during the late 1870s. "An excellent musician and instructor," the unconventional Gungl threw rocks and shouted maniacally at his recalcitrant musicians.[102]

The post school offered educational opportunities to soldiers and army dependents. Shortly after the Civil War, Congress ordered each permanent military establishment to organize a school. But it failed to pass accompanying appropriations; as western posts were rarely considered permanent, the War Department avoided the spirit of the congressional action. Generally lethargic in its approach to education, Congress did fund chaplains to teach soldiers in each of the black regiments. Line officers occasionally took an interest in the cause, using post funds to pay for additional teachers and school equipment.[103]

Early educational efforts at Fort Davis thus proved sporadic. In March 1869 the teacher resigned following a salary reduction. But at Col. Edward Hatch's instigation, the army converted a newly purchased building on the reservation into a schoolhouse and chapel in 1870. Unfortunately, Manuel J. Gonzales's effort to teach the officers' children and enlisted men produced only mixed results, and his transfer ended the experiment. But by December 1872 education was again "progressing satisfactorily." One-fifth of the 165 soldiers ready for

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101 Circular Letter, Jan. 17, 1873, Quimby Papers, Barker Texas History Center (quotations); Andrews to Assistant Adjutant General, Oct. 4, 1875, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 1); Mullins to Adjutant General, Mar. 5, 1877, 5035 A.C.P. 1874, Appointment, Commission, and Personal Branch, Record Group 94.

102 McConnell, *Five Years a Cavalryman*, 266; Crane, *Experiences*, 68-69 (quotation). For a more intensive study, see John Strauss Buchanan, "Functions of the Fort Davis Military Bands and Musical Proclivities of the Commanding Officer, Col. B. H. Grierson, Late 19th C." (MA thesis, Sul Ross State College, 1968).

103 Foner, *Blacks*, 58; Erna Risch, *Quartermaster Support of the Army: An History of the Corps, 1775–1939* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1960): 489-90.

field duty attended the night school. Lt. Frederic A. Kendall taught more than one hundred budding scholars for several months until "the excessive heat, the small number of enlisted men who can attend, and the small amount of funds on hand by the Post Treasurer" forced closure during the summer of 1873.[104]

Two years later educational and religious efforts received an energetic boost with the arrival of George M. Mullins, recently appointed Twenty-fifth Infantry chaplain. A Disciples of Christ minister, Mullins held a master's degree from the University of Kentucky. The prospect of teaching black soldiers almost caused his resignation. But he doggedly continued, teaching reading, writing, mathematics, history, and science. Attendance of noncommissioned officers was mandatory; the school convened every weekday evening fifteen minutes after retreat. By early January 1876 increased attendance necessitated another session at 3:05 each afternoon. "The marked improvement the men have made in the various studies . . . reflects great credit upon themselves and is highly recommendable," bragged the post commander. With company officers supporting his efforts and attendance having climbed to ninety-two in May, Mullins acknowledged that his students displayed "remarkable ambition and ability to learn."[105]

The chaplain seemed less pleased with his religious work. Though attendance at school and chapel remained good, he worried that alcohol, gambling, and immorality threatened the souls of his charges. "I am humbly convinced that any interest in and influence of the preaching is but fugitive, and for the hour," he sighed in November 1875. Further, "the use of intoxicating liquors seems to be steadily on the increase." But the dogged Mullins attacked these concerns energetically, working with company officers and securing extra bibles and hymnals from outside agencies like the American Bible Society.[106]

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104 Greene, *Historic Resource Study*, 155-56 (second quotation); Post Medical Returns, March, 1869, p. 115; May, 1873, p. 93, Fort Davis Archives; Report of Bliss, Dec. 31, 1872, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 6) (first quotation); Post Adjutant to Kendall, Dec. 2, 1873, ibid. (roll 1).

105 Foner, *Blacks*, 58-59; Earl F. Stover, *Up From Handymen: The United States Army Chaplaincy, 1865–1920* (Washington: Office of the Chief of Chaplains, 1977): 49-50; General Orders No. 36, June 5, 1875, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 4); General Orders No. 5, Jan. 18, 1876, ibid. (first quotation); Mullins to Adjutant General, May 2, 1876, ibid. (microfilm 905/8821) (second quotation).

106 Mullins to Adjutant General, Nov. 1 (quotations), Dec. 1, 1875, Aug. 31, 1876, Sept. 1, 1878, Feb. 1, 1879, 5035 A.C.P. 1874, Appointment, Commission, and Personal File, Record Group 94.

The chapel's leaky roof hampered Mullins's efforts during the summers of 1876 and 1877. Mullins pushed ahead, however, assisted by post commanders George L. Andrews and Louis H. Carpenter. In December 1878 the chaplain asked for benches to seat thirty more men, four writing tables, a blackboard, more lamps, improved steps into the chapel, and two additional enlisted men to serve as teachers. Paid thirty-five cents per day, these "school overseers" would enable Mullins to reach a wider audience. Military inspectors and the prestigious *Army and Navy Journal* alike applauded his tireless efforts.[107]

The new post chapel stood ready for service by the spring of 1879. Capable of seating 250, the building had a stone foundation, tin roof, and three rooms. Its more centralized position on the northeast side of the parade ground further improved the school's image. Despite the new facility, increasing demands of Indian campaigns forced the temporary discontinuance of the school for soldiers that year. In the meantime, Chaplain Mullins organized a school for children which met every weekday between one and three o'clock. An enlisted man was detailed as teacher—"he will have authority to inflict slight punishments, but whipping will not be permitted," explained one circular. For the first three months of 1880 attendance averaged ten of the twenty-two children of enlisted men on post. None of the officers' children participated (parents seeking to educate their children commonly sent them back East or hired special tutors), but three civilian youngsters were added to class rolls.[108]

The post school at Fort Davis served its purpose during Mullins's regime. In addition to offering at least minimal education for the children of enlisted personnel, it provided the army with a healthy pool of literate clerks. Summing up his efforts in 1878, Chaplain Mullins proudly reported that more than 160 men had learned to read and write. Twenty-four of his scholars had served as regimental clerks. Furthermore, he argued that his students developed "a sense

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107 Bi-monthly Inspection Report, Aug. 31, 1876, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 6); Orders No. 102, June 29, 1877, ibid. (roll 4); Orders No. 37, Mar. 25, 1878, ibid.; Orders No. 92, June 30, 1878, ibid.; Circular, Sept. 29, 1878, ibid.; Orders No. 173, Dec. 1, 1878, ibid.; Report of McCrary, Nov. 19, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1878, p. v; Mullins to Post Adjutant, Dec. 7, 1878, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 65-855, roll 1); Vincent to Commanding Officer, Dec. 21, 1878, ibid. (microfilm 66-783, roll 8); Stover, *Up From Handymen*, 49-51.

108 Greene, *Historic Resource Study*, 157-58; Mullins to Adjutant General, Mar. 21, 1877, 5035 A.C.P. 1874, Appointment, Commission, and Personal File, Record Group 94; Mullins to Davis, Apr. 7, 1877, ibid.; Orders No. 76, May 24, 1879, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 4); Orders No. 43, Mar. 21, 1879, ibid.; Report of McCook, Nov. 5, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1880, p. 296; "Report of Schools in Operation at Fort Davis, Texas," Fort Davis Records, Record Group 393, National Archives.

of self-respect and a pride of soldiership." As a consequence, the most frequent attack against black troops—that their lack of formal education prevented them from handling routine office tasks—had been answered.[109]

The Civil War forced major changes in the army's care for its dead. The haphazard efforts by the Quartermaster's Department which characterized the 1850s were no longer acceptable; as hundreds of thousands of brave men died, public opinion demanded proper burial and identification. But while a national cemetery system gradually evolved, frontier posts like Davis continued their erratic treatment of the deceased. During his inspection in March 1871, Lt. Col. James H. Carleton noted that "none of the graves have been marked as required." The remains, continued Carleton, were "so scattered" on and off the post that all graves needed to be "disinterred and deposited" to a properly marked site.[110]

Post commander William Shafter quickly moved to implement Carleton's recommendations. The bodies of twenty-eight enlisted men who died between July 1867 and October 1870, buried at a cemetery one-half mile southwest of the fort, were removed to the military reservation 150 yards due north of the flagstaff. Although the site was not enclosed, a headboard listing the name, rank, and unit marked the grave of each deceased soldier by 1873. But post officials had in the meantime erected still another cemetery, located at "a beautiful site at the base of the mountain" one-quarter mile due north of the flagstaff. Twenty-two burials at the new site were recorded.[111]

Officers received special ceremonies. Capt. James Patterson, chaplain of the Twenty-fifth Infantry, died of illness on August 21, 1873. Special orders authorized the post quartermaster to purchase material for a coffin and to hire a carpenter. Pine lumber costing nine dollars served as the coffin. The funeral itself proved much more elaborate. The regimental band and an escort of D Company, Twenty-fifth Infantry, preceded the pallbearers, followed by the remainder of the infantry, troops of the Ninth Cavalry, civilians, and officers in reverse rank order. All unnecessary duties were canceled and the flag flown at half staff.[112]

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109 Foner, *Blacks*, 58-59 (quotation); Mullins to Adjutant General, Nov. 1, 1875, 5035 A.C.P. 1874, Appointment, Commission, and Personal Branch, Record Group 94.

110 Mary L. Williams, "Care of the Dead: A Neglected Duty; The Military Cemetaries at Fort Davis, Texas," pp. 2-3, September 15, 1983, Fort Davis Archives.

111 Ibid., 4-7; "Record of Deceased Officers and Soldiers Buried . . . up to June 8, 1879," Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 63-172).

112 Williams, "Care of the Dead," 6-7.

Between February 1876 and September 1878 seven soldiers were buried at still another cemetery five hundred yards west of the flagstaff, known as the "west canon" site. All were enlisted men save Lt. Patrick Kelliher, whose grave was marked with a salmon-colored stone marker; his body was laid "in a lonely grave in the beautiful canon."[113]

By the early 1880s, then, the postbellum military community had used three cemeteries. Under orders from San Antonio, the site one-quarter mile north of the flagstaff was designated "post cemetery"; all future interments, including those of enlisted men, officers, dependents, civilian employees, and even some town residents, were made there. Yet the site remained unkempt. Post quartermasters, theoretically in charge of maintenance, rarely took an interest in the cemetery. A report filed in 1882 noted resignedly: "Cemetery not fenced in, poor condition." Those who could afford the expense had the remains of the deceased shipped to the larger national cemetery at San Antonio, or to private burial plots.[114]

In many ways life at Fort Davis during the 1870s and early 1880s had changed but little when compared to that before the Civil War. Officers continued to employ enlisted men as personal servants despite official policy to the contrary. Discipline and punishment remained harsh. Low pay plagued efforts to attract and keep quality enlisted personnel; company funds and post gardens were still crucial to a properly balanced diet for soldiers. As had been the case before the Civil War, transportation and spoilage hampered quartermaster officers. Care for the dead had undergone but little improvement. And finally, land ownership complicated attempts to establish a coherent military presence in the Trans-Pecos.

Certain aspects of material life, however, were changing. Regimental bands, post schools, and libraries had assumed significant roles at the fort. The controversial forays of post surgeons into the daily routine, while angering many line officers, reduced sick rates. Chaplains like George Mullins made education, religion, and reading significant factors in the daily routine. The successful operations of post sutlers John D. Davis and George Abbott also improved life at Fort Davis. Relations with local civilians proved mixed: although some were dissatisfied with the high-handed actions of post commander William Shafter, others enjoyed the economic benefits of the military establishment. And the growing role of the Texas Rangers in Trans-Pecos law enforcement removed a burdensome and controversial task from the army.

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113 General Orders No. 4, Aug. 21, 1873, Quimby Papers, Barker Texas History Center; Special Orders No. 85, Aug. 22, 1873, ibid.

114 Ibid., 8 (quotations); Mama to Nita, Feb. 13, 23, 1890, Frank D. Baldwin Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California; "Record of Deceased Officers and Soldiers Buried . . . up to June 8, 1879," Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 63-172). Greene, *Historic Resource Study*, 373, has reproduced this list.

Women and blacks were critical to life at the postbellum fort. Ever increasing numbers of women fought to establish their social and economic identities through marriage as well as in the civilian workplace. Other changes resulted from the decision to station black troops at Fort Davis. Ugly racial incidents between white officers, civilians, and black troopers proved common; in the most famous case, a court-martial expelled from the army the first black graduate of West Point, Lt. Henry O. Flipper. In sum, all was not well at the post along the Limpia.

CHAPTER NINE:

THE GRIERSON ERA

The Trans-Pecos military frontiers underwent dramatic changes during the 1880s. As railroads made their belated appearance, the army developed new subposts throughout the region. With conflicts against Indians diminishing, new post commander Col. Benjamin Grierson, who took over on November 20, 1882, sought to transform Davis from a temporary frontier cantonment to a permanent military establishment. His herculean efforts to develop the army's presence neatly coincided with equally tireless attempts to provide financial and psychological security for his family. Grierson often blurred the fine line separating private gain and the public interest. In so doing, the colonel's actions were hardly unique—only the scope and intensity of his ventures separated Grierson from most of his peers. Garrison members followed their commander's example: land speculation, ranching, mining, and railroad development proved fertile fields for soldier-entrepreneurs during the 1880s.

Perhaps the illusion of quick financial coups encouraged rivalries within the garrison; perhaps Colonel Grierson's easy-going administrative style exacerbated problems of discipline, morale, and desertion. Whatever the case, Fort Davis officers proved a particularly fractious lot during this period. Infighting and pettiness seemed the rule rather than the exception. Military duties, especially drill and target practice, were adversely affected by such jealousies. Despite (or perhaps because of) these difficulties, most seemed to cope with life at Davis rather well. Dances, celebrations, theatricals, and dinner parties thrilled military and civilian communities alike, and contrast sharply with the false image of drab, colorless life on the American frontiers.

Grierson's administration, despite a series of personal disappointments, would mark the height of Davis's glory as a frontier military establishment. As commander of a black regiment, Grierson faced the enmity of racist officers. The colonel's efforts to insure fair treatment for Indians also antagonized many officers. His lack of a West Point education isolated him still further. Personal calamaties also took their toll. His brother John often needed money. Alice, his

wife, lost two children in infancy; his eldest son Charles suffered a mental breakdown while attending West Point in 1877. As if this were not enough, the colonel's thirteen-year-old daughter Edith died of typhoid fever at Fort Concho the following year.[1]

His military career blocked by prejudice and petty disagreements, his personal life marred by recurring tragedy, Grierson strove to protect his remaining fortunes at any cost. The bearded, sharp-eyed colonel first saw Fort Davis while on an inspection tour of his District of the Pecos in early summer 1878, and was immediately taken by the region. "This appears to be a first rate country to go to sleep in," he advised Alice. The commanding officer's quarters were "a palace compared with our old rat trap at [Fort] Concho," he added. Only the fort's location bothered Grierson. Like many predecessors, he believed that it was situated too close to the overlooking mountains.[2]

Grierson returned to Fort Davis during the Victorio campaigns of 1879 and 1880. New personal reversals added to his family's woes. His brother fell deeper into debt. Thomas Kirk, Alice's brother, committed suicide in January 1881. And while attending the University of Michigan medical school, their son Robert suffered a nervous breakdown. Concluding that academic pressures had caused his sons' illnesses, Ben sought to place them in less stressful environments.[3]

Changes in military administration allowed Grierson to go about realizing his dreams. With the defeat of Victorio and the construction of the Southern Pacific and Texas & Pacific railroads, the existing system of West Texas forts seemed obsolete. From Fort Davis, friend and confidant Samuel L. Woodward wrote Grierson on March 13, 1882: "This is a rather desirable post. We wish you could get it for Regimental HdQrs." Grierson concurred. Rumors of impending change were confirmed in June, when Grierson received word of the army's determination to abandon Forts McKavett and Stockton. The Tenth Cavalry and Sixteenth Infantry would garrison Forts Concho and Davis; he had his choice of regimental headquarters.[4]

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1 Bruce J. Dinges, "Benjamin H. Grierson," in *Soldiers West: Biographies from the Military Frontier*, ed. Paul Andrew Hutton (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987): 168, 172; William H. Leckie and Shirley A. Leckie, *Unlikely Warriors: General Benjamin H. Grierson and His Family* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984): 269, 294.

2 Grierson to Alice, May 31, 1878, GPSpr (roll 1) (first quotation); Frank M. Temple, "Colonel B. H. Grierson's Administration of the District of the Pecos," *West Texas Historical Association Year Book* 38 (Oct., 1962): 88 (second quotation); Grierson to Alice, May 29, 1878, GPNew (roll 1).

3 Williams, "Empire Building," 61.

4 Woodward to Grierson, Mar. 13, 1882, GPNew (roll 2) (quotation); Grierson to Alice, June 25, 1882, GPSpr (roll 2).

The decision proved easy. Grierson told his wife, then visiting her family in Illinois, "A change any where would be desirable, as we have been so long at Concho." The anxious colonel soon "commenced packing in earnest." He received official confirmation of his move to Fort Davis on July 6. Grierson, who owned more than five thousand acres in the Fort Concho region, determined to invest any future profits from the sales of these lands "in a ranch in the vicinity of Davis."[5]

Grierson's struggles on behalf of himself and his family conveniently paralleled his natural proclivities as a builder, which were in turn strengthened by the army's changing regional needs. Indian scares had became increasingly rare since the defeat of Victorio and his supporters. In May 1882 several persons attempted to steal some horses about five miles from the fort. Although observers initially attributed the crime to Indians, the Texas Rangers later concluded that individuals "disguised as Indians" had committed the deed. Rumors of trouble that summer led both Rangers and regulars to dispatch patrols along the Rio Grande; neither group found any signs of Indians. The following year, department commander Christopher C. Augur concluded that no tribesmen deemed hostile had entered Texas.[6]

The garrison took a minor role in Brig. Gen. George Crook's 1885 campaigns against the Apaches. Anticipating Crook's pursuit into Mexico, the War Department wanted to block escape routes into Texas and alerted Fort Davis and its subposts to watch "all crossings . . . especially those points where Victorio crossed in eighteen hundred and eighty." Geronimo and his followers stayed west of Texas, but troubles in the Indian territory that summer again put the garrison on call. By late 1885, the *Army and Navy Journal* reported that although scouts frequented the Rio Grande, "of late no Indians have been seen within the confines of Texas."[7]

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5 Grierson to Alice, June 25 (first quotation), 27, 30 (second quotation), July 8 (third quotation), 1882, GPSpr (roll 2).

6 Nevill to King, May 18, 1882, Texas Adjutant General Papers, Barker Texas History Center (quotation); Commanding Officer to Adjutant General, July 8, 1882, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-855, roll 1); Report of Augur, Sept. 21, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1883, p. 145.

7 Smith to Commanding Officer, June 10, 1885, vol. 24: 341, Letters Sent, Department of Texas, National Archives (microcopy M 1114, roll 8) (first quotation); Ruggles to Commanding Officer, June 17, 1885, vol. 24: 366, ibid.; Smith to Commanding Officer, July 8, 1885, vol. 24: 406-07, ibid.; *Army and Navy Journal*, Dec. 5, 1885, p. 369 (second quotation).

As campaigns against the Indians became less frequent, the coming of the railroads to the Trans-Pecos had fundamentally changed army designs. Dreamers had long envisioned steel rails linking West Texas to the rest of the nation. A. B. Gray surveyed a path through the Guadalupe Mountains as early as 1854. But building came only later. In the summer of 1881 the Southern Pacific's Collis P. Huntington negotiated a deal with the smaller Galveston, Harrisburg & San Antonio Railroad to build a railroad between El Paso and San Antonio, which would become part of the Southern Pacific's transcontinental system. Construction from El Paso ran through Marfa in January 1882 and linked up with westbound construction teams near the Pecos River twelve months later. Chinese immigrants provided the bulk of the labor force.[8]

Another line further improved access to the Trans-Pecos. Shortly after the Civil War, the Texas & Pacific Railroad secured a charter to build a "military and post road" from Marshall, Texas, to San Diego, California, via El Paso. Construction began at once, only to be slowed by the panic of 1873. Builders later agreed to link up the Texas & Pacific with the Southern Pacific at Sierra Blanca, some twenty-five miles east of old Fort Quitman. It reached its terminus in December 1881.[9]

The army had long maintained a cozy relationship with the railroads. Realizing the benefits of the iron horse to military operations and to the expansion of non-Indian settlement, officers like William T. Sherman and Phil Sheridan courted railroad officials. Soldiers commonly conducted surveying expeditions or provided escorts for construction teams. From Fort Davis, for example, men from A Company, Twenty-fifth Infantry, had assisted a railroad surveying team in January 1878. Two years later Capt. William R. Livermore's

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8 A. B. Gray, *Texas Western Railroad: Survey of Route, Its Cost and Probable Revenue in Connection with the Pacific Railway* (Cincinnati: Porter, Thrall, & Chapman, 1855); S. G. Reed, *A History of the Texas Railroads and of Transportation Conditions Under Spain and Mexico and the Republic and the State* (Houston: St. Clair Publishing Co., 1941): 197-98; J. Evetts Haley, "Interview with Jeff D. Milton, June 30, 1937," Barker Texas History Center.

9 Reed, *Texas Railroads*, 360-61, 365.

expedition helped lay out the Southern Pacific route. And in early September 1881 regulars responded promptly to a request from the Texas & Pacific's general manager for protection.[10]

Military officials realized that the lines necessitated major changes in defensive schemes. Augur tied the lingering problems along the Rio Grande, which Congress and the army had debated throughout the latter 1870s, to the progress of the Texas & Pacific and the Southern Pacific. He believed the railroads made Forts Concho, McKavett, and Stockton unnecessary. Fort Clark could also be abandoned if new barracks were built at San Antonio. In place of the older system Augur envisioned two lines of posts. One would buttress the Rio Grande between the mouth of the Pecos and the Presidio del Norte; the other should shield the northern flank of the Texas & Pacific. "Fort Davis," he asserted, "is well located as it is, and its resources are available for either frontier."[11]

In the spring of 1882 commanding general William T. Sherman embarked on a grand western tour. Bored with life in Washington, D.C., and anxious to bring order to the army's crazy-quilt positions, Sherman took the Southern Pacific cars whenever possible. The general acknowledged that the railroad had completely changed the southwestern frontiers. "I would have every Post if possible on the bank of the Rio Grande or *on the Railroad*," wrote Sherman. "The Southern Pacific Railroad will be the best possible picket line we could have along our Southern border." He agreed with Augur's earlier recommendations;

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10 John H. Nankivell, comp. and ed., *The History of the Twenty-Fifth Regiment of United States Infantry, 1869–1926*, Regular Regiments Series (Fort Collins, Colo.: Old Army Press, 1972): 28; H. M. Hoxie to Ord, Apr. 24, 1880, E. O. C. Ord Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley; Special Orders No. 118, June 17, 1880, House Executive Document 20, 47th Congress, 1st session, serial 2027, pp. 4-5; Report of Ord, Oct. 1, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1880, p. 112; Special Orders No. 68, Sept. 29, 1880, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 4); Augur to Commanding Officer, Sept. 7, 1881, ibid. (roll 8).

11 Report of Sheridan, Oct. 22, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1880, p. 56; Endorsement of Sheridan, Sept. 10, 1881, House Executive Document 20, 47th Congress, 1st session, serial 2027; Endorsement of Augur, Aug. 24, 1881, ibid., 6; Maxey to Ord, May 12, 1880, Ord Papers; Report of Augur, Sept. 27, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1881, p. 129 (quotation).

Concho, McKavett, Clark, and Stockton should be decommissioned. Although Davis was neither on the river nor on the railroad, Sherman deemed it, with its subposts at Presidio and Camp Rice, one of the "strategic points of the Texas frontier."[12]

But military strategy never occurs in a vacuum; politics and economics did not allow the neat shifts Sherman had envisioned. Planners hoped to transfer Stockton's garrison to Fort Davis. However, the lack of quarters at Davis forced the army to maintain its former position. In September 1883 Augur also recognized political influences. As he explained, "the proprietors of the site of Fort Stockton, and citizens in the vicinity, being so anxious to keep the post there as to offer the site for another year at a mere nominal rent, it was thought best to allow the troops to remain there another year." beset by such forces, the army would not abandon the post for three more years.[13]

William T. Sherman retired from the army in 1883. Hoping to smooth the transition to his successor, Phil Sheridan, Sherman reiterated his belief that Davis and San Antonio "should be made permanent large posts, with out-posts along the Rio Grande." Sherman later wrote that "with San Antonio and Fort Davis as first class posts, and small stations at Ringgold, Laredo, Duncan, Del Rio, Presidio, Rice, & El Paso, the frontier can be easily guarded. All of Texas *else* has ceased to be Indian territory or raiding ground," he concluded.[14]

But the new commanding general, who undertook an extensive tour of his own, believed that the army needed to maintain Fort Clark as well as San

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12 Sherman to Augur, Feb. 1, 1882, Christopher C. Augur Papers, Illinois State Historical Library, Springfield; Sherman to Lincoln, Mar. 18, 1882, vol. 95, William T. Sherman Papers, Library of Congress (microfilm edition, University of Texas, roll 47); Sherman to Sheridan, Oct. 3, 1882, ibid.; Sherman to Augur, Mar. 26, 1882, ibid. (first quotation); Sherman, "Estimates for Buildings at Military Posts," Oct. 16, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1882, p. 11 (second quotation); Sherman to Huntington, Nov. 16, 1882, vol. 96, Sherman Papers (roll 47).

13 Report of Augur, Oct. 2, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1882, p. 104; Report of Augur, Sept. 21, ibid., 1883 (quotation).

14 Sherman to Sheridan, Mar. 7, 1883, vol. 26: 545, Letters Sent, Headquarters of the Army, National Archives (microcopy M857, roll 9) (first quotation); Sherman to Sheridan, Apr. 2, 1883, vol. 26: 553, ibid. (second quotation).

Antonio. Sheridan championed Clark's importance, citing its healthy location and strategic position near the Rio Grande. In a compromise move, Brig. Gen. David S. Stanley, recently appointed commander of the Department of Texas, listed all three forts—San Antonio, Clark, and Davis—as principal sites. "Though the latter is too far (22 miles) off the railroad, the salubrity of the climate, the low price of wood, hay, and grass make it the best site for a military post in the wide territory of the Rio Grande and the Rio Pecos," wrote Stanley.[15]

Troops from Fort Davis or its subposts could quickly respond to threats along the Rio Grande, as Stanley explained. The army could assemble troops via the railroad in case of more distant emergencies. As such, the military drew up contingency plans for embarking troops at the Marfa rail stop, twenty-two miles south of Davis. Indeed, the Davis garrison used the Southern Pacific's Marfa station much more frequently than the Texas & Pacific's Toyah depot, which was nearly three times as far. Relations with the local railroads generally proved cordial, although thirsty field detachments occasionally watered their animals at railroad supply tanks, a practice for which the owners billed the War Department five cents per head.[16]

The new post commander, Benjamin Grierson, further influenced the region's defensive positions. Although he had supported the building of a cantonment at Peña Colorado in 1879, Grierson now deemed Paisano Pass more suitable for a military camp. He believed the latter site, located south of Fort Davis between the newly established railroad towns of Marfa and Murphysville (later known as Alpine), boasted the best water supply. Furthermore, it was thirty-five miles closer to Fort Davis than Peña Colorado. The colonel also wanted to erect a subpost at Viejo Pass, forty miles west of Davis and ten miles from the railroad station at Valentine.[17]

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15 Sheridan to Lincoln, Nov. 28, 1883, Letterbooks, box 43, Philip Sheridan Papers, Library of Congress; Sheridan to Maxey, Feb. 19, 1884, ibid.; Report of Stanley, Sept. 30, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1884, p. 125 (quotation).

16 Vincent to General Traffic Manager, Apr. 28, 1884, vol. 22: 204, Letters Sent, Department of Texas (microcopy M 1114, roll 7); Woodward to Grierson, Oct. 17, 1882, Benjamin Grierson Papers, Illinois State Historical Library, Springfield (microfilm edition, roll 2); Vincent to Commanding Officer, Sept. 25, 1882, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 8); "Report of Persons and Articles Hired for the Month of December, 1885," ibid. (microfilm 85, roll 1); F. D. Rigsby to Commanding Officer, Apr. 9, 1887, ibid. (microfilm 66-783, roll 9).

17 Eddie J. Guffee, "Camp Peña Colorado, Texas, 1879–1893" (MA thesis, West Texas State University, 1976): 13-16, 20; Mary L. Williams, "Empire Building: Colonel Benjamin H. Grierson at Fort Davis, 1882–1885," *West Texas Historical Association Year Book* 66 (1985): 63; Grierson to Adjutant General, June 25, 1883, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 65-855, roll 1).

Grierson, a veteran of frontier political maneuvering, moved to secure land title for his proposed military posts. As ranchers had already snapped up areas with permanent water, quartermaster officials finally abandoned attempts to rent land at Paisano Pass in February 1884. But military officials leased railroad land at Viejo Pass, and ordered C Troop, Tenth Cavalry, to establish a camp there in December 1883. The army, however, soon aborted the latter scheme. The failure of the Viejo Pass venture disappointed the enterprising Grierson, who had purchased several thousand acres just north of the site and bought a number of town lots in nearby Valentine. His son Charles also owned a ranch on the road between Davis and Viejo.[18]

Land transactions at Peña Colorado partially explained Grierson's projects at Viejo Pass and Paisano as well as the army's refusal to implement his plans. Lt. William Davis, Jr., a Tenth Cavalry officer who was married to one of the colonel's nieces, owned the Peña Colorado tract when the army occupation began. Davis allowed the troops to remain, hoping that the military presence would raise property values. He then sold the tract to Francis Rooney, a prominent Fort Stockton rancher and realtor. Cattleman Monroe B. Pulliam eventually purchased the site and demanded that the troops leave in August 1882.[19]

The War Department reached an accommodation with Pulliam and was renting the post for fifty dollars per month by 1886. The crumbling adobe quarters needed constant repair and the garrison battled high rates of alcoholism; Helen M. Morrison, wife of Capt. John T. Morrison, described it as "a fearfully lonely place." Still, Peña Colorado became one of the army's major bastions in the Trans-Pecos. In contrast to Mrs. Morrison and most of the officers' wives, "all the male population of the garrison like it and are more satisfied with it than the females." Formerly a subpost of Fort Davis, Peña

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18 Woodward to Commanding Officer, Viejo Pass, Dec. 10, 1883, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 65-855, roll 1); Endorsement of Lee, Feb. 19, 1884, ibid. (microfilm 66-783, roll 8); Williams, "Empire Building," 63.

19 Post Adj. to Rooney, Jan. 27, 1882, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 65-855, roll 1); Viele to Post Adjutant, Aug. 2, 1882, ibid.; Vincent to Commanding Officer, Sept. 23, 1882, ibid. (microfilm 66-783, roll 8).

Colorado was given independent status as part of an army economy move in July 1884 and went on to outlive its mother post by nearly eighteen months.[20]

Fort Davis's defense responsibilities also extended to the west. Detachments from Davis had frequently occupied Fort Quitman during the late 1870s, but continuing land litigation and wretched living conditions finally led the army to abandon the site. The army then reconsidered, and Capt. Samuel L. Woodward and K Troop, Tenth Cavalry, staked out a site six miles northwest of Quitman on April 15, 1881. Known as Camp Rice, this subpost of Fort Davis was moved to a point on the Southern Pacific Railroad in July 1882. Against the advice of Colonel Shafter, Christopher Augur deemed it necessary to maintain troops there. But upon personal inspection, Augur again found the site untenable. "It is not a good location for either wood, water or grass," he advised. Two miles further up the railroad, however, he found an excellent tract belonging to the Texas & Pacific company.[21]

Camp Rice was moved according to Augur's wishes. By July 1884 several cottonwood log huts housed the garrison, commanded by Capt. Theodore A. Baldwin, Tenth Cavalry. Only by throwing up a hasty levee had Baldwin's troops saved the post's buildings from recent flooding. Like Peña Colorado, Camp Rice received its independent status that summer, though General Stanley opposed sinking any more money into the fort: "the amount of the allotment for building the post if spent on quarters at Forts Clark and Davis, would go much further towards sheltering troops in this department," he

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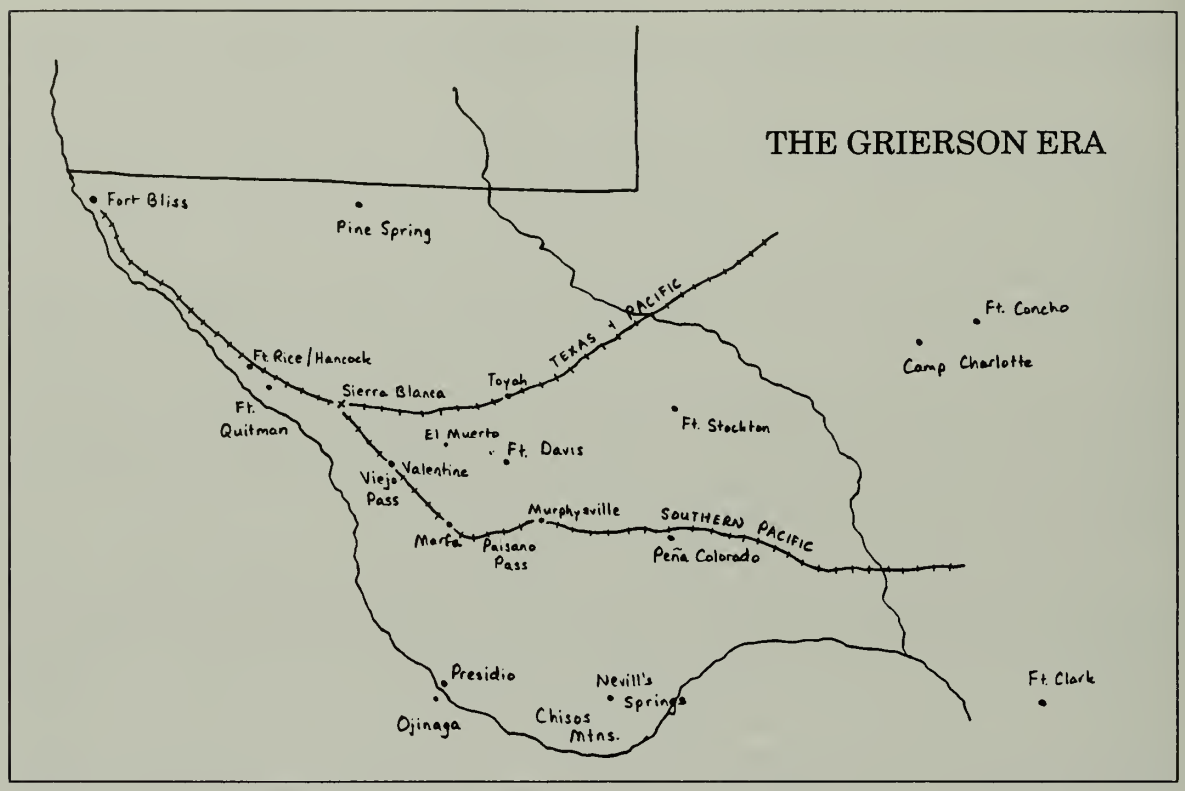
20 Charles Judson Crane, *The Experiences of a Colonel of Infantry* (New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1922): 105; Table XVIII, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1891, p. 667; Report of Stanley, Sept. 30, ibid., 1884, p. 124; Guffee, "Peña Colorado," 21, 33; Helen Morrison to Adjutant General, Feb. 22, 1885, GPLu (first quotation); Charles to Father, Feb. 10, 1885, ibid. (second quotation).

21 George Ruhlen, "Fort Hancock—Last of the Frontier Forts," *Password* 4 (Jan., 1959): 22; Erwin Thompson, memo, Aug., 1964, Camp Rice File, Fort Davis Archives; Commanding Officer to Vincent, Apr. 8, 1882, ibid. (microfilm 65-855, roll 1); Augur to Sherman, Aug. 16, 1882, vol. 18: 536, Letters Sent, Department of Texas (microcopy M 1114, roll 6) (quotations).



Map 9:7. The Grierson era. Map drawn by the author.

reasoned. An officer unfortunate enough to be stationed there described the environs as "a Godforsaken-appearing country . . . in close proximity to the supposed haunts of 'Beelzebub.' " Despite such comments, Washington authorized extensive building projects totaling $47,200. Subsequently renamed Fort Hancock, it was not abandoned until 1895.[22]

In November 1884 an attack against a Chisos Mountains mining camp led Washington officials to demand that Fort Davis help establish still another outpost. To garrison the new site, Stanley recalled several recently discharged Seminole Negro scouts. The new camp was located in the heart of the Big Bend country at Nevill's Springs in February 1885. Detachments from the Third,

22 Ruhlen, "Fort Hancock," 19-21; Thompson, memo, Aug., 1964, Fort Davis Archives; Stanley to Adjutant General, Aug. 18, 1884, vol. 22: 445, Letters Sent, Department of Texas (microcopy M 1114, roll 7) (first quotation); S. B. M. Young to J. L. Childs, Feb. 12, 1886, S. B. M. Young Papers, U.S. Army History Research Collection, Carlisle Barracks, Pa. (second quotation); Report of Chandler, Sept. 21, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1885, p. 456.

Eighth, and Tenth Cavalry regiments manned the isolated subpost, with forts Davis and Clark sharing responsibility. In June 1885, although garrisoned by men from Clark, the post was under command from Fort Davis. The army continued to list it as a subpost of Fort Davis in November 1887, but had transferred it back to Clark by March 1889. The army abandoned the camp two years later.[23]

The long and controversial relationship between Fort Davis and Presidio continued to invite the army's attention. Detachments from Davis suffered a miserable existence along the river. During his 1882 inspection tour General Augur found the company located outside of Presidio at the old Burgess ranch, rented from William Russell for fifty dollars a month. The adobe building was "not a fit place for troops, even for one company, and how two companies and a field officer ever lived there I cannot understand," wrote Augur. Presidio businessmen remained anxious to have a military presence nearby, but conditions had become intolerable by 1883. Commanding the Presidio station, Robert Smither described the deteriorating conditions in a series of scathing letters. "The more I examine the country the more I become disgusted with it," wrote Smither, who asked that the subpost be abandoned. In June he reported: "With the thermometer at 115, a man can scarcely be expected to retain sufficient energy to get up a good growl."[24]

In accord with Smither's wishes, the army pulled out of Presidio on June 30, 1883. The poor living conditions, difficulty in obtaining title to a suitable

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23 Vincent to Commanding Officer, Nov. 19, 1884, vol. 23: 7, Letters Sent, Department of Texas (microcopy M 1114, roll 7); Stanley to Division of Missouri, Nov. 20, 1884, vol. 23: 18, ibid.; Vincent to Commanding Officer, Feb. 11, 1885, vol. 23: 101, ibid.; Douglas C. McChristian, "National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form," Nevill's Springs File, Fort Davis Archives; Ruggles to Commanding Officer, June 18, 1885, vol. 24: 370-71, Letters Sent, Department of Texas (microcopy M 1114, roll 8); Camp at Nevill's Springs, p. 9, Rosters of Troops, Fort Davis Records, Record Group 393, National Archives; Martin to Commanding Officer, Mar. 9, 1889, vol. 28: 47, Letters Sent, Department of Texas (microcopy M 1114, roll 9); Martin to Commanding Officer, Camp at Nevill's Spring, Aug. 12, 1890, vol. 29: 166, ibid.

24 "Report of Persons and Articles hired . . . December 1882," Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 85-1); Augur to Sherman, Aug. 16, 18: 536, ibid. (roll 6) (first quotation); Smither to Grierson, Jan. 24, Mar. 4 (second quotation), June 3 (third quotation), 1883, GPSpr (roll 2).

location, and diversion of trade to the newly completed El Paso-Chihuahua railroad had made the continued occupation of Presidio impractical. Problems, however, did not end so easily. Apache raids convinced the Ojinaga mayor to request permission for Mexican troops to cross the border. The army refused to grant such a permit, instead advising "that if you can make known to the Commanding Officer at Fort Davis, the hiding place in Texas of the two or three depredating Indians . . . that officer, or the one at Camp Peña Colorado, will promptly send out a suitable force to search for them." But the army's policy was rarely consistent. Less than two months after the War Department had rejected the Mexican proposal, Capt. Robert G. Smither led a joint command from Davis and Peña Colorado across the Rio Grande after those suspected of murdering a family in the Big Bend region.[25]

Cattle thefts also poisoned relations along the border. In December 1885 parties from Fort Davis and Camp Rice examined allegations that Mexican soldiers had been stealing cattle in the Van Horn area. Five months later the adjutant general's office sternly warned the commanding officer at Fort Davis to step up patrols in the area between Fort Quitman and Presidio. "These troops will be relieved from time to time," the order read, "but the relief will take place in the field and on or near the line and not at Fort Davis." Despite more vigorous scouting, charges against the Mexican government filtered in to Fort Davis through most of 1886. Skeptical officers, however, belived many of the claims fraudulent.[26]

At forts Sill and Concho, Colonel Grierson had overseen major construction projects. Playing upon the continued strategic value of Davis, he hoped to do the same at his new home in the Davis Mountains. His attempts to expand the size of the military reservation certainly reflected this attitude. Efforts to enlarge

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25 Cooper to Smither, Mar. 9, 1883, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 65-855, roll 1); Smither to Quartermaster, June 30, 1883, ibid.; Report of Augur, Sept. 21, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1883, p. 145; Vincent to Victoriano Garcia, Nov. 11, 1884, vol. 7: 2, Letters Sent, Department of Texas (microcopy M 1114, roll 7) (quotation); Assistant Adjutant General to Commanding Officer, Jan. 13, 1885, vol. 24: 32, ibid. (roll 8); Smither to Adjutant General, Dec. 20, 1884, 6246 A.G.O. 1884, Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General, 1881–1889, National Archives (microcopy M 689, roll 317); Endorsement of Lincoln, Dec. 23, 1884, ibid.; Stanley to Treviño, Jan. 27, 1885, ibid.

26 HQ, Dept. of Texas, Dec. 15, 1885, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 9); Ruggles to Commanding Officer, May 7, 1886, vol. 25: 115, Letters Sent, Department of Texas (microcopy M 1114, roll 8) (quotation); A. C. Ducat to Post Adjutant, May 15, 1886, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 85, roll 3); Report of Stanley, Sept. 4, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1886, p. 126; Young to Assistant Adjutant General, Nov. 25, 1886, Young Papers.

the garrison and to inaugurate new building programs further augmented Grierson's intricate schemes for self-promotion. Increasing the number of troops stationed at Davis seemed crucial to the projects; under his direction the post secured its largest military complement, a paper strength of 39 officers and 643 enlisted men, in February 1884.[27]

Grierson submitted a range of proposals for additional construction. After all, the big new garrison needed shelter. In so doing, he followed the practice set by virtually every post commander. Even William Shafter, who had initially doubted the need for more buildings, had undertaken major new projects during the early 1880s. Shafter extended officers' row to the south by overseeing the erection of three new sets of officers' quarters. Additional housing for commissioned men and their families was built along the base of the rocky cliffs to the north; and in a departure from previous examples, one of the two sets of officers' quarters here eventually boasted two stories. Shafter also guided construction of another enlisted barrack, a new guardhouse, and housing for the band and staff. Each of these structures lay north of the four enlisted barracks already in existence.[28]

The additional buildings still failed to satisfy the needs of the bulging garrison. Laundresses and married men occupied ramshackle structures north and east of the main parade ground. Even the officers lacked sufficient space. "The quarters are very limited," remarked Charles Grierson shortly after his arrival in the summer of 1882, "and I expect there will be lots of growling." Indeed, the dread process of "ranking out"—whereby senior officers forced junior officers to vacate their quarters upon demand—continued through 1883. In describing the process, Alice Grierson noted: "Capt. Lebo came in Sunday—he chose Capt. Morrison's quarters—Morrison [Charles L.] Cooper's, and Cooper the Viele house." Apparently, the "Viele house" was then occupied by the ill-fated

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27 Williams, "Empire Building," 59-60, 69; Maxon to Grierson, Aug. 18, 1882, GPNew (roll 2); Vincent to Commanding Officer, Jan. 16, 1883, vol. 20: 39, Letters Sent, Department of Texas (microcopy M 1114, roll 7).

28 Greene, *Historic Resource Study*, 118-24, 138-39, 146-47, 172-73.

Lt. Leighton Finley, who, being away on a scout, would not find out about his eviction until he returned to the post.[29]

Such a condition was made to order for a man like Benjamin Grierson. Q.M. Gen. Rufus Ingalls had completed in September 1882 a "crude estimate," which anticipated ultimate construction costs at Davis to be $83,250. Seizing the opportunity, Grierson requested $51,000 for his new command. Officers submitted a request for another $30,000 in 1885, most of which covered projected construction. Although actual funding was much lower, Grierson plunged ahead. He initiated a number of projects—new commissary and quartermaster storehouses northeast of the parade ground; substantial remodeling of the cavalry corrals; a spacious new forage house; another set of officers' quarters; two new enlisted barracks; a new wing for the hospital. Adobe walls and tin roofs marked the buildings. Conveniently enough, he had found enough time to approve several Davis projects while serving as acting department commander.[30]

Repairing the post's various structures proved a constant headache. "The quarters are unfinished and in a poor state of repair," wrote a typical observer, "and many of the adobes are already sleeping quietly with the parent earth." Leaky roofs, shabby construction materials and techniques, fire, and natural disasters necessitated regular attention. In 1885, for instance, ten officers' quarters required repairs costing between $63.40 and $153.73. Two structures used by married men and noncommissioned officers took another $1,300; various storehouses demanded an additional $2,600.[31]

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29 Charles to Mother, Aug. 4, 1882, GPLu (first two quotations); Augur to Sherman, Aug. 16, 1882, vol. 18: 535, Letters Sent, Department of Texas (microcopy M 1114, roll 6); Alice to Grierson, Oct. 2, 1883, GPLu (third quotation); Charlie to Grierson, Oct. 7, 1883, ibid. For another example of ranking out, see Brown to Post Adjutant, Nov. 20, 1881, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 9); Parker to Quartermaster, Nov. 21, ibid.; Wilhelmi to Post Adjutant, Nov. 21, ibid.

30 Report of Ingalls, Sept. 26, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1882, p. 18 (quotation); Greene, *Historic Resource Study*, 106-07, 232-33; "Estimate for One Barracks . . .," 1884, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 65-855); Statement A, Report of Construction and Repairs, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1883, p. 419; Report of J. G. Chandler, Appendix A, ibid., 1884, p. 432; Statement A, Report of Construction and Repairs, ibid., 1885, p. 475; Williams, "Empire Building," 64.

31 Greene, *Historic Resource Study*, 109 (quotation), 131; Statement A, Report of Construction and Repairs, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1885, p. 475.

Fig. 9:29. View of Officers' Row, ca. 1885. Photograph from Fort Davis Archives, HG-30.

Fire and nature also took their toll throughout the postwar era. In late 1883 a New Year's Eve fire destroyed the chimney of Lt. William H. Beck's quarters. Chaplain George Robinson's parlor burned down seven years later, damaging much of his furniture. "Unfortunately the chaplain was not a member of the Army Co-operative Fire Association," observed one newspaper wryly. "A number of officers joined the next day." Violent hailstorms on May 25, 1884, struck twenty buildings. Seventy-two-mile-per-hour winds damaged several structures in July 1886.[32]

The demands kept the post pineries, sawmill, and adobe makers extremely busy. Extra duty men provided the bulk of the unskilled labor. For finer tasks the army hired civilian mechanics whenever funding became available. In April 1883, for instance, it paid sixty-one employees $2,417. But August 1884 found

32 Stanley to Adjutant General, June 2, 1884, vol. 22: 276, Letters Sent, Department of Texas (microcopy M 1114, roll 7); Vincent to Commanding Officer, June 10, 1884, vol. 22: 296-97, ibid.; *Army and Navy Journal*, Feb. 28, 1891 (quotations); Typsecript from San Angelo *Standard*, July 3, 1886, in Weather File, Fort Davis Archives.

Fig. 9:30. View of Fort Davis from the north, ca. 1886.
Photograph from Fort Davis Archives, HG-14.

only ten civilians working at Fort Davis. William Ryan seemed by then to have cornered most of the current building contracts. Ryan was still at it as of December 1885, making and laying adobe bricks, completing a roof, and crafting and setting window and door frames.[33]

By expanding the garrison and sinking additional government monies into the buildings, Grierson hoped to increase the army's stake in Fort Davis. Such actions would spur new settlement, which would in turn increase demand for local products and drive up land values. To profit from these machinations, Grierson invested heavily in Trans-Pecos real estate, claiming at one time or

33 R. J. Armstrong to Post Adjutant, Sept. 6, 20, 1881, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 8); "Report of Persons and Articles Hired for the Month of April 1883 . . ." ibid. (microfilm 85, roll 1); ibid., Aug., 1884; ibid., Dec., 1885.

another at least 45,000 acres in what ultimately became Jeff Davis, Brewster, and Presidio counties. He also purchased 126 lots in the little hamlet of Valentine, forty miles west of Fort Davis. The colonel was not alone in his efforts to make a quick dollar. At least seven officers stationed at Fort Davis during Grierson's years of command bought land in the vicinity, with Lt. John L. Bullis acquiring title to 53,520 acres in Pecos County alone.[34]

Grierson and his cronies were everywhere. A fellow officer noted: "Wherever Bullis saw fine land he located it with script [sic] which was in the market at 12 ½ cents to 15 cents per acre." And the colonel saw to it that two of his supporters, Lieutenant Woodward and Capt. Charles Cooper, held positions of authority at Fort Davis—Woodward as post adjutant and Cooper as Acting Commissary of Subsistence and Post Signal and Ordnance officer. George A. Brenner, chief musician, real estate agent, and Grierson's personal friend, kept a sharp eye out for the colonel's pecuniary interests whenever the latter was away from the post.[35]

Grierson sought to profit from real estate sales as well as ranching, exploring the possibility of acquiring land around the water holes at El Muerto and Van Horn. The latter area indeed proved lucrative to the colonel; in one instance, he earned a $2,000 profit from the sale of 2,560 acres near Van Horn. Meanwhile, Grierson set up his son Robert with a cattle and sheep ranch near Fort Davis. Robert initially showed promise as a farmer, producing ample quantities of cabbages, pumpkins, and squash. On a visit to the ranch, Alice commented that she and the family "all like living here." She continued, "I've . . . been here now a week, and I like it better all the time—have planted some seeds." Taking no chances, the colonel secured his son a lucrative job with the quartermaster's department, adding a steady seventy-five dollars a month to Robert's income.[36]

Like many of his colleagues, Grierson mixed personal pecuniary advantage with the best interests of the American army. Upon coming to Fort Davis he found the perfect opportunity to establish a comfortable life for his family as well as to improve conditions on the military post. The process had been set in motion long before Grierson's arrival, with inconclusive negotiations taking place during the mid-1870s. General Sherman finally designated Fort Davis a

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34 Bruce J. Dinges, "Colonel Grierson Invests on the West Texas Frontier," *Fort Concho Report* 16 (Fall, 1984): 6-11.

35 Memoirs of William George Wedemeyer, Dec. 16, 1884, vol. 2: 262 (typescript), Fort Davis Archives (quotation); Williams, "Empire Building," 67; Brenner to Grierson, Sept. 28, 1882, GPSpr (roll 2).

36 J. T. Gano to Grierson, May 18, 1883, GPLu; Grierson to Alice, Oct. 7, 1884, GPSpr (roll 2); Leckie and Leckie, *Unlikely Warriors*, 280; Alice to Grierson, Apr. 5, 1883, GPLu (quotations).

permanent post in the spring of 1882. Anson Mills, then commanding the fort on the Limpia, promptly recommended that the government purchase the site for $20,000. Although the current lease cost only $900 per year, the rent could always be raised. With existing buildings at Fort Davis valued at $100,000, the army would have to pay whatever the owners demanded.[37]

Talks reopened in January 1883, two months after Grierson returned. Using tactics similar to those employed in earlier real estate negotiations, owner John W. James offered to sell the 640 acres comprising the post plus four surveys totaling 1280 acres (known collectively as "the pineries") for $30,000. Colonel Grierson, however, deemed the current 640-acre military reservation too small, too rocky, and too prone to flooding. He recommended that instead of buying the present position for "the exhorbitant price of $20,000," the military continue paying the $900 annual rent and investigate other local sites for purchase.[38]

By February negotiations had become more complicated. James presented a new proposal—he would sell the 640 acres encompassing the actual reservation for $27,500. But Grierson, armed with the authorization of department headquarters, quietly solicited proposals from other area landowners. The colonel eagerly proceeded, implying that such efforts might be best handled by military personnel acting as private citizens. Although General Augur did not officially sanction such measures, he also refused to order Grierson to cease and desist. "It is very desirable citizens should manifest interest in procuring land for post," read the carefully worded message.[39]

Grierson had already consulted with a prominent local landowner, the venerable Daniel Murphy. Murphy agreed to sell for $3,500 his three-hundred-acre tract which lay immediately east of Fort Davis. Another desirable survey lay adjacent to the existing military reservation and north of the Murphy land. According to Grierson, "private parties—Mr. George A. Brenner and Mr. M. Maxon," had snapped up the land the previous fall. Investing $3,500, Brenner and Maxon had laid out a town site and already sold enough sections to recoup their original costs. "These transactions have greatly increased the price of real estate in the vicinity of the post, and therefore, to secure now at moderate rates

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37 Mills to Adjutant General, Nov. 24, 1882, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 905-8821); Sherman to Secretary of War, Dec. 29, 1882, ibid.

38 James to Augur, Jan. 24, 1883, ibid. (microfilm 65-855, roll 2) (first quotation); Grierson to Adjutant General, Jan. 30, Mar. 16 (second quotation), 1883, ibid. See also endorsements of 1445 A.G.O. 1883, in Land Acquisitions File, ibid.

39 Augur to Division of the Missouri, Feb. 15, 1883, vol. 20: 116-17, Letters Sent, Department of Texas (microcopy M 1114, roll 7); Vincent to Grierson, Feb. 21, 1883, ibid. (quotation).

propositions from the owners to sell their lands to the government, has required time much work and quiet financiering," Grierson advised his superiors. "Quiet financiering" was indeed necessary, for the colonel had not disclosed the full identities of the landowners in question. George A. Brenner was his longtime friend and chief musician. Mason M. Maxon was in fact the husband of Grierson's niece, a trusted ally, and lieutenant in the Tenth Cavalry.[40]

Fig. 9:31. Lt. Mason Maxon, one of Grierson's coterie. Photograph from Fort Davis Archives, AA-33.

In mid-March 1883, Grierson concluded the negotiations. Several landowners promised to sell their property at "reasonable rates." The army could also purchase 960 acres directly from the state. Such expansion would allow the garrison to conduct more efficient target practice and better parade marches. Grierson also revealed his own initiatives. "About the 1st of February I furnished One Thousand Dollars to procure the two homestead tracts west of the military reservation . . . to prevent the land from falling into the hands of objectionable parties." To ensure that deal, he had spent $500 on another survey two and a half miles away from the fort. "The land, or any part of it that may be needed for military purposes, will be transferred to the government at cost," he assured his superiors.[41]

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40 Murphy to Grierson, Feb. 26, 1883, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 65-855, roll 2); Grierson to Adjutant General, Mar. 16, 1883, ibid. (quotations); Williams, "Empire Building," 62. The survey by S. A. Thompson, May 22, 1883, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 65-855, roll 2), is extremely helpful in sorting out land claims in the Fort Davis area.

41 Brenner to Grierson, Mar. 15, 1883, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 65-855, roll 2); Keesey to Grierson, Mar. 15, 1883, ibid.; J. B. Shields to Grierson, Mar. 15, 1883, ibid.; undated memo filed after Shields to Grierson, Mar. 15, 1883, ibid.; Grierson to Adjutant General, Mar. 16, 1883, ibid. (quotations). See also Land Acquisitions File, Fort Davis Archives.

Phil Sheridan, commanding general of the United States army, inspected Fort Davis a week later. He agreed with the $3,500 purchase of Daniel Murphy's 300 acres. This move would prevent the burgeoning town from completely encircling the post. Following Sheridan's advice, the Secretary of War authorized the Murphy deal from the much disputed $200,000 appropriation for acquiring military sites in Texas. The final purchase was concluded in May.[42]

However, Sheridan refused to support Grierson's other schemes. His opposition to Grierson came as no surprise—the two men were acknowledged enemies. Without Sheridan's support, Grierson's expansion projects had little chance of reaching fruition. Adj. Gen. Richard C. Drum, always suspicious of the additional purchases, noted that Grierson inevitably followed his requests for new sites with assurances that the last mentioned proposals would provide the Davis military reservations with ample space. After filing such recommendations, Grierson would then propose still more purchases, always claiming that just one more purchase would do the job. Convinced by the logic of Drum and the powerful voice of Sheridan, Secretary of War Robert T. Lincoln denied the colonel's proposals in November 1883.[43]

Meanwhile, negotiations with James for the existing reservation continued. The Secretary of War authorized the purchase of Fort Davis for $23,500 by October 1883. Concurrently, Gov. John Ireland of Texas ceded jurisdiction over lands adjacent to Fort Davis to the United States, thus enabling the federal government to legally purchase additional property. The following June, however, a quartermaster's missive approved an asking price of only $20,000. In July the owners rejected the army's latter proposal; subsequent negotiations raised the annual lease from $900 to $2,400.[44]

But the tireless Grierson refused to give up his efforts to expand his cherished post. Upon hearing of a proposal to spend $47,000 at Camp Rice, once

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42 Sheridan to Adjutant General, Apr. 18, 1883, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-876); Endorsement of Sherman, Apr. 21, 1883, ibid.; Adjutant General to Sheridan, Apr. 27, 1883, ibid. (microfilm 905-8821); Warranty Deed, Presidio Co., May 24, 1883, Land Acquisitions File, ibid.

43 R. C. Drum, "Case of Proposed Purchase of Additional Land at Fort Davis, Texas," Nov. 6, 1883, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 905-8821); Drum to Commanding General, Division of the Missouri, Nov. 19, 1883, ibid.

44 Report of Holabird, Oct. 6, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1883, p. 409; Vincent to Commanding Officer, Nov. 9, 1883, vol. 21: 55, Letters Sent, Department of Texas (microcopy M 1114, roll 9); Holabird to Adjutant General, June 17, 1884, Land Acquisitions File, Fort Davis Archives; Endorsement of M. V. Sheridan, July 9, 1884, ibid.; Statement B, attached to Report of J. G. Chandler, Sept. 10, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1886, p. 443.

a lowly subpost of Davis, Grierson confided: "I propose giving the powers that be a tussell for part of the $47,000 for Fort Davis. It might as well be thrown into the Rio Grande as to be expended at Camp Rice for all the benefit it would ever be to the Government." The failure to block construction at Rice did not deter Grierson, who proposed that Davis become a twelve-company post in September 1884. Six months later, 1st Sgt. Pollard Cole and Pvt. George W. Forster, both of H Troop, Tenth Cavalry, relinquished their claims to a valuable property lying east of the tract recently sold by Murphy. Exchanging their claims "for value received," Grierson's "quiet financiering" undoubtedly had helped convince his enlisted men of the wisdom of such a sale.[45]

A railroad linking Fort Davis to either the Southern Pacific or the Texas & Pacific would also serve Grierson's designs. On October 18, 1883, the Fort Davis and Marfa Narrow Gauge Railway Company was formed. Original subscribers, who invested between $2,000 and $5,000 each, included George H. Abbott, John D. Davis, R. L. Moreno, William L. Lampert, C. L. Nevill, John M. Dean, George Brenner, Robert Grierson, Charles Grierson, and Samuel L. Woodward. Benjamin Grierson, though not an original stockholder, later took Moreno's place among the group. The colonel called in loans and favors to raise money for the project, which proposed to connect Fort Davis with the Southern Pacific at Marfa.[46]

Grierson's Jacksonville banker, Marshall P. Ayers, supplied initial cost estimates. But Grierson's brother John, manager of the Grand View Mining & Smelting Company of Rico, Colorado, counseled caution. Noting that Ben had estimated the cost to be $150,000, John Grierson argued that expenses would run about $50,000 higher. He repeated rumors that the military would soon abandon Fort Davis. "Should they be true," warned John, "or should you not get the patronage of the Government, you could never make the investment pay." He advised his brother to sell the franchise after establishing a right of way "for more money than you could ever make out of it by building the road."[47]

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45 Grierson to Alice, Aug. 17, 1884, GPSpr (roll 2) (first quotation); Extract from Inspection Report, Sept. 3, 1884, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 905-8821); Statement of Cole and Forster, Mar. 24, 1885, GP, Spr (roll 2).

46 Memorandum of October 18, 1883, Benjamin Grierson Papers, Texas Technological University, Lubbock, Texas (photocopies at Fort Davis Archives) [hereafter referred to as GPLu]; Proceedings of Stockholders, Fort Davis & Marfa RR Co., Jan. 12, 1885, GPNew (roll 1).

47 Ayers to Grierson, Oct. 29, 1883, GPLu; Jonathan to Grierson, Nov. 1, 1883, ibid. (quotations).

But the starry-eyed Davis investors proceeded. Grierson hoped to secure the cooperation of the Galveston, Harrisburg & San Antonio Railroad (the Southern Pacific remained the parent company). In a January 1884 proposal to Thomas W. Pierce, president of the GH & SA, Grierson said that the narrow gauge line between Marfa and Davis could be constructed if Pierce's company would provide materials "at fair rates." But negotiations proved maddeningly slow. Grierson finally handed the matter over to his trusted banker, Ayers, in January 1885. "Everything depends on having a *sure* thing in connection with the So. Pac. interest—or we might yet get caught with a permanent indebtedness that would floor both of us," cautioned Ayers.[48]

That month the company deleted the words "narrow gauge" from its charter. The banker advised Colonel Grierson to insure his dominance over local stockholders as negotiations continued. He should engineer elections so that the secretary was "one of your own side [but] not one of your sons." Preferably, one of the Griersons should be president with Ayers as director holding power of attorney. Convinced the project neared fruition, on February 11 the colonel informed his son Charlie: "I do not doubt but that the railroad will soon be constructed."[49]

But the deal remained tenuous. Ayers heard that the Tenth Cavalry was to be transferred. "Will not that removal subtract very largely from the business of the road?" wondered Ayers. "The whole success depends on the station as a govt. post. . . . Pierce would hesitate if he knew that the Post were to be reduced." As a last-ditch option, the banker asked Grierson to pass along any and all information regarding coal mines. In so doing, Ayers was probably referring to the efforts of a miner named McKenzie, who was opening a coal mine northwest of Marfa. The combination of government contracts and mineral promise might convince wary railroad investors.[50]

With Grierson's assurance that the post would not be reduced, Ayers concluded initial arrangements with President Pierce. Informally Pierce agreed to accept company bonds in exchange for "old chain rails not much worn." But the GH & SA would neither provide ties nor subsidize all construction. The president, noting that Grierson had led him to believe that coal was to be found along the route, wanted to determine the mining issue before concluding official negotiations. In sum, Pierce's proposal left open the question of finding funds for the ties, bridge timber, and construction costs. "One thing is certain, I must

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48 Grierson to Pierce, Jan. 29, 1884, GPLu (first two quotations); Ayers to Grierson, Jan. 20, 1885, ibid. (third quotation).

49 Proceedings of Stockholders, Fort Davis & Marfa RR Co., Jan. 12, 1885, GPNew (roll 1) (first quotation); Ayers to Grierson, Feb. 3, 1885, GPLu (second quotation); Grierson to Charles, Feb. 11, 1885, ibid. (third quotation).

50 Ayers to Grierson, Feb. 24, 1885, ibid. (quotations); Tyler, *The Big Bend*, 137.

know where all the money is before we embark," advised Ayers. Pierce must endorse the bonds "so that money can be raised on them."[51]

Both Grierson and Ayers agreed the "old chain rails" were, even at a discount, "a poor operation." Everything depended upon Pierce. "We must not get involved in debt and cannot move until the question is settled," counseled Ayers. Finally, in October 1885, with railroad construction projects mired in a statewide slump, Ayers notified Grierson of Pierce's death. The latter's demise "of course cuts off in that direction," wrote Ayers. Until they could be certain of a profitable business with Fort Davis, other potential investors would also shy away from the project. "If the boys have good ranches, they have a good thing I expect," Ayers consoled. The grand scheme was dropped.[52]

"The idea of the army being 'one happy family' was a considerable exaggeration," remembered one officer's wife. Indeed, internal bickering among commissioned personnel characterized the postbellum army. Sharp differences separated those trained at West Point from those who had not attended the academy. Civil War veterans often scorned younger officers who had not participated in America's bloodiest war. But while setting themselves apart from those who entered the service after 1865, the Civil War soldiers frequently clashed amongst themselves over who had taken what position at what time with the most glory. Interregimental and service rivalries further divided the officer corps; regiments "looked after their own," according to contemporary observers. Slow promotion, infrequent pay, and repeated slights from the rest of society only exacerbated the existing tensions.[53]

Controversies between officers often went public, further increasing tensions within the service. According to one Third Cavalryman, *The Army and Navy Journal* "wields more power, probably for good or bad in army matters than any

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51 Ayers to Grierson, Mar. 16, 27, 1885, GPLu.

52 Ayers to Grierson, Apr. 14 (first five quotations), Oct. 17 (sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth quotations), 1885, ibid.

53 Grace Paulding Memoirs, p. 10, Paulding Papers (quotations); Edmund to Aunt Hattie, June 14, 1866, and Edmund to Father, Dec. 15, 1870, Edmund Papers, U.S. Military Academy Archives, West Point, New York, give fine observations on West Point life. On the general subject, see Robert M. Utley, *Frontier Regulars: The United States Army and the Indian, 1866–1891*, Wars of the United States (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1973): 18-22. A good example of a petty feud at nearby Camp Rice may be found in Young to Brackett, Feb. 4, 7, 1886, Young Papers.

other agency." Commissioned personnel eagerly scanned its pages for army news, lines of promotion, articles, and letters. Any hint of personal criticism often touched off controversy. As the Third Cavalryman noted cogently, "in military life character and reputation is the most of our stock."[54]

Fort Davis proved no exception to this divisiveness. Of the 259 officers known to have served there after the Civil War, 81 (31 percent) had been graduated by the U.S. Military Academy. A sizable number (33 percent) had joined the service as enlisted men, a figure largely explained by the huge numbers of promotions from the ranks during the Civil War. Such a practice became less common in the following years.[55]

Many of the problems among Tenth Cavalry officers were attributable to Colonel Grierson's personal machinations and lax administrative style. "I do not admire General Grierson's ways," wrote one enemy. "He is a great talker and full of himself and his works." Another foe deemed Grierson dishonest, and claimed that Texas Sen. Samuel B. Maxey had assured him that the colonel would never be promoted to brigadier general. Maj. Anson Mills believed Grierson too easy on his troops, too willing to forgive mistakes, and too eager to promote his own personal schemes. "He left the details of the post and regiment entirely to us," complained Mills, "signing only papers which went to his superiors."[56]

Grierson also favored his own regiment to the detriment of others. Soon after their transfer to Fort Davis, Companies I and K, Sixteenth Infantry, soon found themselves dispatched to the pinery. Capt. William H. Clapp angrily reported that he and his men "had been shamefully treated." Grierson repeatedly pressured his subordinates to get the reluctant soldiers to work. His directive that the officer in charge of the pinery must not "allow target practice or drills

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54 Charles Merton to W. C. Church, Sept. 13, 1890, box 2, William C. Church Papers, Library of Congress.

55 Erwin Thompson, "The Officers, Fort Davis, Texas" (typescript), Officers File, Fort Davis Archives. One exception was Lieutenant Patrick Kelleher, a native of Ireland. A trained apothecary, Kelleher enlisted as a private in 1866, soon gained appointment as a hospital steward, and within two years secured a commission as a second lieutenant.

56 Memoirs of William George Wedemeyer, U.S.A., vol. 2: 99 (first and second quotations), 255, Fort Davis Archives; Anson Mills, *My Story*, ed. C. H. Claudy (2d ed., Washington: Press of Byron S. Adams, 1921): 186 (third quotation).

to interfere with" shipping lumber to Davis clearly expressed the colonel's determination to use his infantry as a source of cheap labor.[57]

Whatever Grierson's failures as a commander, the officers of the Tenth Cavalry battled constantly amongst themselves. Their squabbling had begun in earnest even before the colonel took over at Fort Davis. While campaigning against Victorio, Lt. Leighton Finley overheard a fellow officer denounce a superior's report as an "infamous lie." One of Grierson's allies, Samuel Woodward, kept his colonel well-advised on social conflicts at the post on the Limpia. Major Mills "is very jealous of his staff being ordered over his head. . . . So this letter is only for *your private information*." Woodward later described Mills as "a sorry excuse," and "the worse [sic] apology I ever struck." In return, the major described his antagonist as "slow to obey." Refuting Woodward's allegations, Mills assured Grierson that "a more contented and congenial garrison I have never seen at any post."[58]

Despite Mills's optimistic portrait, petty quarreling seemed the rule rather than the exception. "Some of the doings of these men are worse than anything I had imagined and too vulgar to be recorded in my journal," wrote one diarist. Upon temporarily losing his position as post quartermaster, Lt. Mason M. Maxon got his father to write a formal letter of protest to his senator. Captain Smither feuded with Mills, Grierson, and authorities in the commissary department. Lt. James Jouett, Tenth Cavalry was in constant trouble, remaining "continually intemperate for a long time" before being dismissed from the service in 1885. Lt. William Beck drank excessively, was an addictive gambler,

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57 Wedemeyer Memoirs, 2: 247, 272 (first quotation); Williams, "Empire Building," 65-66 (second quotation).

58 Wedemeyer Memoirs, 2: 262; Leighton Finley Diary, vol. 3, Fort Davis Archives (first quotation); Woodward to Grierson, July 27, 1880, GPNew (roll 2) (second quotation); Leckie and Leckie, *Unlikely Warriors*, 280 (third and fourth quotations); Mills to Grierson, Oct. 1, 1882, GPSpr (roll 2) (fifth quotation). For earlier problems, see Woodward to Grierson, Aug. 8, 1874, GPSpr (roll 9).

and reportedly had loose moral values. The entire family was little better than a plague, thought one officer. "Mrs. Beck is a great gossip and the boys are a bad lot."[59]

A major fracas occurred in late December 1884. On the eighth, Lt. William Davis, while "in his usual [drunken] condition at the traders store," blasphemed former President Abraham Lincoln. Captain Clapp, jealous of the cavalry's preferential treatment, preferred charges against Davis, who had married Colonel Grierson's niece, Helen Fuller. Of the marriage, a fellow officer scoffed, "Why she married him [Davis] is a hard question to answer. She is a nice woman and he is a vagabond, lazy as can be and a drunkard besides." In Grierson's temporary absence, post commander Anson Mills seized the opportunity to fan the flames against his rival, Colonel Grierson, by forwarding a report of the incident to department headquarters. But others struck back angrily against Major Mills, who had allegedly trumped up "petty charges" against Davis. "Mills ought to be a picket in a penitentiary," wrote one dependent, "& get his fill of lynx-eyed watching." Upon his return, Grierson prevailed upon Davis to formally retract his offensive remarks. But the Davis-Clapp conflict had just begun.[60]

On December 30 Davis and Clapp exchanged blows in the sutler's store. Lieutenant Davis slapped his adversary in the mouth, taking a black eye in return. The feisty lieutenant promised to slap Major Mills the next time he saw him. Mills responded in kind. In an official communication sent through regimental headquarters, Mills threatened to kill Davis if the latter dared touch

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59 Douglas C. McChristian, *Garrison Tangles in the Friendless Tenth: The Journal of First Lieutenant John Bigelow, Jr., Fort Davis, Texas* (Bryan, TX.: J. M. Carroll and Co., 1985): 26 (first quotation), 23 (second quotation); Sherman to A. Cameron, June 5, 1883, vol. 104: 19, Letters Sent by the Secretary of War Relating to Military Affairs (microcopy M 6, roll 88); Smither to Post Adjutant, July 21, 1884, GPNew (roll 2); Smither to Grierson, Mar. 4, 1883, GPSpr (roll 2); Vincent to Commanding Officer, Aug. 23, 1884, Letters Sent, Department of Texas (microcopy M 1114); Grierson to Alice, Nov. 15, 1878, GPNew (roll 1); Wedemeyer Memoirs, 2: 254 (third quotation); Assistant Adjutant General to J. J. Fisher and Co., Aug. 17, 1882, Letters Sent by the Office of the Adjutant General, National Archives (microcopy M 565, roll 55); Douglas McChristian, "Notes from Archives," in Units, Company C File, Fort Davis Archives.

60 Wedemeyer Memoirs, 2: 128 (first quotation), 253 (second quotation); McChristian, *Garrison Tangles*, 26, 52-53n.; Vincent to Commanding Officer, Dec. 22, 1884, vol. 23: 76 Letters Sent, Department of Texas (microcopy M 1114, roll 7); Fuller to Alice, Dec. 11, 1884, GPLu (third, fourth, and fifth quotations).

him. "The Lieut. still lives, but the Colonel's [Mills'] mouth has not been slapped," quipped one wag.[61]

The lure of easy mineral profits further divided the officers. A long history of rumors of silver and gold deposits preceded Grierson's tenure. The locals showed one 1870s traveler gold-bearing veins, supposedly from the mountains near Dead Man's Hole. An officer of the Galveston, Harrisburg & San Antonio Railroad carried out an ore sample rich in silver, reportedly found in the Chinati Mountains. In 1879 a well-known professor, William H. Steeruwitz, led an exploration team through Fort Davis to Presidio del Norte, where he found lead and silver ore in the Chinatis. From the post at Presidio, Captain Woodward kept his friend Benjamin Grierson apprised of their actions. Woodward believed the minerals were there, but remained unsure if there was enough water to make mining practicable. "I am keeping my eyes open, however," he noted. "There is certainly a big effort being made to get up mining excitement in the interest of railroads and people who own land."[62]

Woodward proved an accurate soothsayer. Mineral wealth would increase property values; the International & Great Northern, Texas & Pacific, and Galveston, Houston, & San Antonio railroads, which owned huge amounts of West Texas land, sponsored a major expedition. Escorted by Lt. John Bullis and a detachment of Seminole scouts, the party arrived at Fort Davis on January 23, 1880. Assayer E. S. Nicolls led the prospectors south from Fort Davis. They interviewed long-time resident John Spencer, who claimed to have found a rich galena mine bearing a high proportion of silver. They sunk an exploratory shaft on Spencer's property, but failed to turn up anything of real value. At least one member of the party, Burr G. Duval, discounted Spencer's story. "He [Spencer]

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61 Wedemeyer Memoirs, 2: 253; Vincent to Commanding Officer, Dec. 22, 1884, vol. 23: 76, Letters Sent, Department of Texas (microcopy M 1114, roll 7); McChristian, *Garrison Tangles*, 27 (quotation).

62 Duane Kendall Hale, "Prospecting and Mining on the Texas Frontier" (Ph.D. diss., Oklahoma State University, 1977): 92-94, 117, 127; N. A. Taylor and H. F. McDonald, *The Coming Empire, or Two Thousand Miles in Texas on Horseback* (New York: A. S. Barnes and Co., 1877): 375; Woodward to Grierson, Dec. 29, 1879, GPNew (roll 2) (quotations); F. W. Strout to U.S. Command, Mar. 12, 1883, ibid.

is an ignorant man and while I have no doubt of his good faith I haven't such confidence in his judgment."[63]

Although these initial efforts had proved fruitless, Bullis must have seen something he liked. Giving credence to Spencer's assertions, a group formed of Spencer, Bullis, Colonel Shafter, and Lt. Louis Wilhelmi gobbled up land about eighteen miles north of Presidio. Lacking the financial resources or the technical knowledge to exploit their claims, within a year they leased their land to what later became the Presidio Mining Company. The vision of Spencer and the officers proved correct—the area south of Davis ultimately yielded small amounts of coal and paying quantities of silver and mercury. Little towns like Shafter and Terlingua, established in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, became centers for mining activities in the Big Bend.[64]

But the discoveries led to lawsuits rather than massive profits for the soldiers. In March 1883 the Presidio Mining Company had applied for an extension of its lease; army business, however, had scattered the officers, and only Shafter, Wilhelmi, and Spencer could be reached. The mining continued, but Bullis and his wife Alice, in whose name some of the land had been purchased, filed an injunction to halt operations. Although a Presidio district court finding favored the Bullises, the Presidio Mining Company appealed to the Texas Supreme Court. In savage attacks, the lawyer for Mrs. Bullis charged that Shafter deliberately mislead Bullis and attempted to cover up the new lease. Shafter's action, according to the attorney, "stamps him as a man unfit to wear the uniform." In "stabbing his brother army officer in a court of justice," he "had betrayed Bullis in the land transaction."[65]

Still, the supreme court reversed the earlier decision, holding in favor of the company. But the lawsuits continued until at least 1890, when Shafter was recalled to testify in a new civil action. "We feel sure of beating him [Bullis] as

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63 Sam Woolford, ed., "The Burr G. Duval Diary," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 65 (Apr., 1962): 488; Burr G. Duval, "Journal of a Prospecting Trip to West Texas in 1879," 1, 48, 56 (quotation), 66-67, 69, 71, Barker Texas History Center. Duval also contributed to the influential *Galveston Weekly News*, Feb. 12, 1880.

64 Unsigned report of Assistant Adjutant General, Dec. 10, 1886, box 17, Fort Davis Records, Record Group 393, National Archives; Hale, "Prospecting and Mining," 149-51, 154, 171; Clifford B. Casey, *Soldiers, Ranchers and Miners in the Big Bend*, National Technical Information Service (Washington: National Park Service, 1969); Ronnie C. Tyler, *The Big Bend: A History of the Last Texas Frontier* (Washington: National Park Service, 1975): 135-45; *Galveston Weekly News*, Apr. 8, 1880.

65 Presidio Mining Company vs. Alice Bullis, Aug., 1887, Supreme Court of Texas, No. 5909, in 2220 A.C.P. 1879, box 570, Appointment, Commission, and Personal Branch, Record Group 94.

he has behaved like a scoundrel from the beginning of our relations," charged Shafter. In sum, dreams of mineral riches had further splintered the fractious officers of the United States Army.[66]

Infighting extended beyond the commissioned ranks. An act of July 15, 1870, had made it unlawful for officers to use enlisted men as servants. Commissioned personnel at Davis, like most army posts, openly ignored the prohibition. Civilian labor proved scarce and expensive; too, army traditions died hard. Efforts by such workers to negotiate better conditions usually failed. Striker George Washington asked for a five-dollar-per-month raise when his lieutenant, John Bigelow, added cooking to his job description. Bigelow preferred to hire another man rather than buckle to the demands of a black soldier. In a similar incident, the Griersons hired a former soldier to work on their ranch. But when it came time to settle accounts after two weeks of work, Alice was incensed that this "flighty, fidgety individual" refused to accept her offer of $1.25 per week.[67]

Clearly, such one-sided relations did little to encourage harmony and trust between military castes. Many officers, particularly those outside the immediate Grierson coterie, saw harsh punishment for even the most minor offenses as a good way to instill discipline and to command respect. But others found such iron-handed rule distasteful. "I am trying to make a good company but it seems to be up grade," complained Capt. Robert G. Smither. "I have some worthless characters that annoy me very much, neither moral suasion nor gar[rison] courts seems to be of much assistance. . . . I do not like to punish men, if I can help it, and if I do, I feel like going for them." Yet Smither's constant diatribes against the pickled pork issued his men won only official reprimands from superiors. Lieutenant Bigelow, so unwilling to negotiate with his striker, worried that his insistence upon strict discipline and extra drill threatened company morale. In an effort to gain the trust of his men, Bigelow ordered a half-dozen new baseballs.[68]

Fellow officers often criticized such approaches. In 1884 Pvt. William Carter, having received permission to take his horse for a ride, promptly went into town for a few drinks. Returning to his barracks, the boisterous soldier uttered a stream of profanities and hurled a rock at a fellow enlisted man. His sergeant

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66 Shafter to Baldwin, Dec. 25, 1889, box 6, Frank Baldwin Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, Ca.

67 McChristian, *Garrison Tangles*, 28; Alice to Grierson, Oct. 4, 1883, GPLu (quotations).

68 Grierson to Adjutant General, Mar. 1, 1885, GPNew (roll 1); Smither to Grierson, Oct. 21, 1882, GPSpr (roll 2) (quotations); Smither to Adjutant General, Dec. 20, 1884, 6246 A.G.O. 1884, Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General, 1881–1889 (microcopy M 689, roll 317); Sheridan endorsement of Feb. 7, 1885, ibid.; *Army and Navy Journal*, Mar. 28, 1891, p. 534; McChristian, *Garrison Tangles*, 26, 33.

ordered Carter into confinement. Carter proved a tough opponent, kicking one guard in the face and biting four others before he could be secured. The garrison court-martial board pointedly noted that none other than Captain Smither had recently dismissed several charges of drunkenness and neglect of duty against the recalcitrant private.[69]

Commissioned personnel generally took a dim view of their enlisted charges. Much of this was attributable to prejudice. Reflecting the views of contemporary American society, War Department officials wanted white, native-born, strapping young sons of agriculture; actual recruits were in fact much different. After the Civil War, thirty to forty percent of recruits were foreign-born; laborers outnumbered farmers by nearly three to one; substantial numbers of blacks enlisted in the armed forces. White recruits were roughly twenty-seven years of age; blacks about twenty-four. Thus despite the stereotypes, soldiers reflected a tremendous diversity of backgrounds, occupations, and ages.[70]

Officers found this difficult to accept. Many soldiers indeed displayed little discipline or military bearing. A drunken Pvt. William Lynch once reported to his superior's quarters without shoes, blouse, or uniform cap. Upon being ordered back to his barracks, the private retorted: "God damn your heart, catch me if you can," and began an unsuccessful flight from authorities. Particularly in the black regiments, officers magnified such episodes and assailed what they perceived as the poor character of their men. "Negroes have no moral sense," alleged Major Mills. Another Tenth Cavalryman believed that "darkies are natural thieves."[71]

Much of the rough and tumble excitement of the early 1880s centered around the little community of Chihuahua. Described as a "squalid little Mexican settlement about half a mile from the garrison," Chihuahua's saloons, gambling houses, and brothels attracted soldiers thirsting for action of a nonmilitary nature. Sgt. Thomas White of M Troop, Tenth Cavalry, secured a pass to go

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69 Report on William Carter, 1884, Charges and Specifications of Garrison Courts Martial, box 17, Fort Davis Records, RG 393.

70 Report of Townsend, Feb. 9, 1876, House Report 354, 44th Congress, 1st session, serial 1709, p. 228; Tables I and II, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1880, pp. 41-45; Table L, ibid., 1881, pp. 62-63. For different views on recruits, see "Report of Company G, 23rd Infantry," [1890], Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 85-1).

71 "Charges and Specifications preferred against Private William Lynch," May 10, 1884, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 9) (first quotation); McChristian, *Garrison Tangles*, 17, 20, 26 (second quotation); Wedemeyer Memoirs, 2: 128-29 (third quotation).

hunting but instead spent several days in the company of "disreputable women" in Chihuahua. White lost his sergeant's stripes as a result. Others died at the hands of local toughs.[72]

Most officers avoided Chihuahua. The notorious community also drew fire from Fort Davis surgeons for its dismal sanitation. Hoping to brush up on his Spanish, Lt. John Bigelow temporarily defied social custom to attend a few religious services in the Hispanic chapel. Upon noting a "very dirty and slovenly subject," however, even Bigelow decided to stop going "in view of the various maladies one is liable to catch from the congregation." Bigelow also complained that the "common Mexicans" were uncommunicative; he rarely heard good Spanish during his years at Fort Davis.[73]

While generally winking at prostitution and alcohol abuse as long as such activities did not keep too many troops from their military duties, commissioned personnel held themselves aloof from most of the activities of their men. Virtually the entire military community upheld the strict separation between officers and men. Officers' children played with those of their own class, rarely mixing with the offspring of enlisted personnel. When later asked about this topic, John Bigelow's daughter remembered: "We weren't allowed to!"[74]

The rigid lines separating officers, their families, and enlisted personnel were only occasionally blurred, even during the relatively loose tenure of Colonel Grierson. Several officers and their wives attended a passion play on December 30, 1884, held at the home of a retired buffalo soldier, Archie Smith, and his Hispanic wife. Lieutenant and Mrs. Bigelow, along with Maj. William H. Gardner and his wife, also watched a Catholic pastoral play at another Hispanic home two days later. The Grierson children also broke the unofficial barriers. Both George and Harry nurtured friendships with enlisted man C. H. Fairalds, organizing hunting parties and corresponding frequently. George even gave Fairalds a series of hand-drawn sketches he made of himself, an antelope, and several comrades, as if to give his friend something "to Rember [Remember] me by."[75]

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72 McChristian, *Garrison Tangles*, 7-8 (first quotation), 28 (second quotation); Post Medical Return, Mar. 26, 1880, Mar. 31, 1883, Fort Davis Archives; Nevill to Jones, Sept. 5, 1880, Texas Adjutant General Office Papers.

73 Post Medical Return, July 1, 1879, July 31, 1882, Fort Davis Archives; McChristian, *Garrison Tangles*, 8, 18 (second, third, and fourth quotations).

74 Anne M. Butler, "Military Myopia: Prostitution on the Frontier," *Prologue* 13 (Winter 1981): 233-50; Smither to Grierson, June 3, 1883, GPSpr (roll 2); Transcript of oral interview, Douglas McChristian with Mrs. Jane Stevenson, June, 1981, in John H. Bigelow, Officers File, Fort Davis Archives (quotation).

75 McChristian, *Garrison Tangles*, 24-25; Fairalds to Harry, Nov. 15, 30, 1884, Grierson Collection, Fort Davis Archives; George to Harry, Nov. 30, ibid. (quotation).

Holidays proved a time for special festivities at Fort Davis. Christmas Eve saw a celebration in the library for the children. On Christmas Day each troop prepared a special feast replete with wild game, turkeys, chickens, pigs, pies of all types, puddings, and special sauces. Following tradition, the officers and their ladies inspected the company tables, then returned to their own quarters for separate celebrations. In 1884, for instance, Lt. John J. Bigelow and his wife Mary exchanged gifts before dining with Lt. and Mrs. Charles G. Ayres. "It was quite like civilization," Bigelow remembered, with raw oysters, soup, turkey, vegetables, plum pudding, fruit, nuts, "a cold blanc mange-like dish," and "Claret and Cook's Imperial." All, however, did not go as planned; Bigelow was "mortified" when Lt. James B. Hughes, a former student of his at West Point, was too drunk to attend the banquet.[76]

A celebration prepared and hosted by B Troop, Tenth Cavalry, also marked that Christmas. That evening Captain Smither's proud troopers threw a huge party to inaugurate their new barracks. A band played on an elevated platform at one end of the new structure and the dining room boasted five tables overloaded with food. Two fruit-laden Christmas trees also marked the holidays. On these occasions the strict military and racial caste system was loosened but not forgotten. At 9:00 P.M., the officers and ladies commenced the dancing with a waltz and a quadrille. An open competition waltz highlighted the entertainment, with a huge chocolate cake the prize. The strains of "Home, Sweet Home" signaled the ball's grand finale about 2:30 the next morning.[77]

Holiday celebrating continued through New Year's Day. Like the men of B Troop, the noncommissioned officers, band, and staff of the Tenth Cavalry hosted a New Year's Day hop in 1884. Officers and their ladies formally opened the gala affair, but spent most of their time at separate entertainment and dinners. That same year Alice Grierson and her cousin received guests at the commanding officer's quarters. Mrs. John Davis, wife of one of the post traders, hosted another large party. The daughters of prominent local entrepreneur Daniel Murphy prepared a third reception. Officers without wives seemed particularly well-served; custom allowed one to make the rounds of each get-together.[78]

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76 *Army and Navy Journal*, Jan. 19, 1884; McChristian, *Garrison Tangles*, 21.

77 *Army and Navy Journal*, Jan. 19, 1884.

78 Ibid.

The arrival of visitors always heralded an exciting series of card playing, balls, hops, and socials. "What an amount of kindness and goodness there is in the world," wrote a thankful traveler. Although every garrison sponsored such activities, those at Fort Davis won particular praise. "We were feted beyond all former experiences," recalled another visitor. A spectacular variety of meats, fowl, and homemade desserts could be found at such galas.[79]

Outside dignitaries also enlivened the post. During his July 1880 stay at Davis, Colonel Grierson was guest of honor at an officers' hop and an elaborate band concert. Two years later William T. Sherman, commanding general of the United States Army, visited Fort Davis with his entourage. Capt. Charles D. Viele met the Sherman party near Marfa and escorted the dignitaries to Fort Davis. Department commander Christopher C. Augur visited the post in August 1882, when a court-martial was also in session. "With balls, picnics, driving and riding parties, Mexican circuses and dinner parties," wrote one correspondent, "we have enough to entertain us and prevent this happy coterie from affliction with that languer [sic] so common to the society of a frontier military post."[80]

Other events interrupted the monotony of post routine. Commissioned personnel and their wives read books, magazines, and newspapers, and kept reasonably well abreast of contemporary developments. Practical jokes were common. Reports of "hops" and "Germans" inevitably included a careful accounting of the ladies present. Many affairs were held in the post reading room or library, gaily decorated with flags and special lamps by partygoers. Openings of local businesses attracted an elite crowd of officers, their dependents, and civilians. Elaborately organized hunting parties, which generally included a battalion of officers, a lesser number of women guests, and a few enlisted sharpshooters, added another popular form of amusement.[81]

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79 "Diary of Mrs. Alex. B. Shepherd Containing Remembrances of First Trip into Mexico in 1880," Fort Davis Archives (first quotation); Dagmar Mariager, "Camp and Travel in Texas: I," *The Overland Monthly* 17 (2nd ser., Feb., 1891): 188 (second quotation); Mrs. Orsemus Bronson Boyd, *Cavalry Life in Tent and Field* (1894; rpt. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982): 253; Capt. R. G. Carter, *On the Border with Mackenzie; Or, Winning West Texas from the Comanches* (Washington: Eynon Printing Co., 1935): 341.

80 Robert to Momma, July 19, 1880, GPNew (roll 1); "Complimentary Concert to General Grierson by the Twenty-fourth Infantry Band," July 15, 1880, ibid. (roll 2); see also printed invitation, Sept. 10, 1880, ibid.; Colonel to Vincent, Mar. 15, 1882, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 65-855, roll 1); Post Adjutant to Viele, Mar. 23, 1882, ibid.; Augur to Sherman, Aug. 16, 1882, vol. 18: 535-36, Letters Sent, Department of Texas (microcopy M 1114, roll 6); Vincent to Commanding Officer, Mar. 20, 1883, vol. 20: 195, ibid. (roll 7); Vincent to Commanding Officer, Jan. 24, 1885, vol. 24: 56, ibid. (roll 8); *Army and Navy Journal*, Oct. 14, 1882 (quotation), Mar. 17, 1883.

81 Lauderdale Letterbooks, Dec. 25, 1888; Crane, *Experiences*, 62-63; *Army and Navy Journal*, Oct. 14, 1882, Nov. 17, 1883, Jan. 19, 1884; Circular dated May 25, 1885, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 9); Robert to Mother, Nov. 30, 1884, GPLu; Leighton Finley Diary, vol. 4, Fort Davis Archives; Zenas R. Bliss Reminiscences, 4: 246, Barker Texas History Center.

The post commander's wife set the tone for such activities. Because of Benjamin Grierson's long reign at Davis, Alice Grierson dominated society during the mid-1880s. She seemed to enjoy her stay, although a leg injury incurred while getting out of a carriage left her lame for most of her tenure. Like many garrison members, she combed mail-order catalogs for clothes and assorted goods not available from local merchants. Under Ben's tutelage, the children played musical instruments; the family's grand piano served as the centerpiece of many social affairs. But even Alice's patience sometimes wore thin, tested by the deaths of several family members and her husband's frequent absences. Exhausted by having to entertain while Benjamin was away, she once complained: "If only a little of your energy could be transferred to me, I doubt if you would be any the worse, and I might be all the better."

For a brief period during the mid-1880s, bicycles became "all the rage" at Fort Davis. In March 1884 the local newspaper, the *Apache Rocket*, proclaimed Lt. Samuel D. Freeman "the champion rider." Robert Grierson entered the fray in the spring of 1885. As a reward for his hard work on the family ranch, Colonel and Mrs. Grierson gave their son a trip to New Orleans during Mardi Gras. Robert bought the bike there and picked up the newfangled contraption at the Marfa station; in his excitement, he rode the new cycle back to Fort Davis, a journey of just over three hours. With a huge front wheel spanning fifty-five inches, Robert soon began terrorizing the garrison. "I often take a little start at the QM office & coast clear down to the new town on my bicycle," he told his mother, "with my legs over the handlebars."[82]

Enlisted men enjoyed a range of leisure time activities throughout Grierson's tenure. Company and post funds supplied various board games in the enlisted barracks. Checkers, backgammon, and parcheesi sets seemed particularly popular at Fort Davis. Despite official proclamations, gambling proved endemic; most commissioned personnel concentrated their efforts against "the miserable gang" of civilians who worked about the reservation. The library and post reading room provided another widely used outlet heartily supported by the command's ranking personnel. Sharpshooters found themselves invited to well-organized hunting parties sponsored by their officers. Baseball also grew to be a popular activity, with ball games involving company teams as well as private citizens' groups often marking Independence Day celebrations or the beginning of spring.[83]

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82 *Army and Navy Journal*, Mar. 22, 1884; Leckie and Leckie, *Unlikely Warriors*, 284; Robert to Mother, May 10, 1885, GPLu; Robert to Mother, May 26, June 10 (quotations), 1885, GPSpr.

83 *Army and Navy Journal*, Mar. 22, July 19, 1884; Post Medical Return, Order of Nov. 26, 1873, Fort Davis Archives; Mullins to Adjutant General, Sept. 1, 1878, 5035 A.C.P. 1874, Appointment, Commission, and Personal Branch, Record Group 94; Finley Diary, vol. 4, Feb. 3, 1884; Leckie and Leckie, *Unlikely Warriors*, 283.

Theatrical performances in one of the company barracks highlighted the social calender for November 1884. George Grierson described the action. With reserved seats costing seventy-five cents each, "the house was jamed full of people and we got our seats," wrote George, "and sat there for about two minutes before there was a fuss and they said we had to move on to the other side so I just got any where I could get." The opening performance delighted young Grierson. "They sang and acked very funy, they had about 14 peaces;" the "bad boys and the doctor" scene particularly impressed him and "brought the hole house down." Unfortunately, only about forty people paid to see the next evening's encore performance. Most who watched the second show did so without paying; like George, the lure of holes in the walls and curtains proved too great for the community.[84]

Military drill remained an important segment of daily life at Fort Davis after 1865. The propriety of such training widely divided officers. Older veterans saw little need for such antics. Service in the field and in combat, they maintained, had little relationship with drill or education. But the army hoped its officers might obtain a better grasp of new military developments. Although such instruction rarely went beyond the tactical level, officers were encouraged to attend lectures and discussions. In December 1878, for example, Captain Viele presided over "the officers school for cavalry" on Tuesdays and Fridays at 11:30 A.M.[85]

Yet West Point continued to turn out men with virtually no experience in handling routine duty or drill. Charles J. Crane, class of 1877, recognized his lack of preparation. "Knowing my deficiencies I carefully studied each day for the next day's drill," he wrote, "and I confined the exercises to those I had been studying." The old ways were changing, even though men like Benjamin Grierson remained more interested in personal fortune than endless drill. But under the goading of their superiors, commanders gradually insisted that officers take a more active role in such training.[86]

Fresh from a five-year stint as temporary instructor at West Point, Lt. John Bigelow seemed well-satisfied with his company's progress at Fort Davis in 1885. "I can maneuver with it at a trot," he wrote, "and gallop with some

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84 George to Harry, Nov. 14, 1884, Benjamin Grierson Collection, Fort Davis Archives.

85 Timothy K. Nenninger, *The Leavenworth Schools and the Old Army: Education, Professionalism, and the Officer Corps of the United States Army, 1881–1918*, Contributions in Military History, 15 (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1978): 16; Circulars, Dec. 3, 7, 19, 1879, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 4) (quotation); Carpenter to Assistant Adjutant General, Sept. 1, 1878, ibid. (roll 1).

86 Post Adjutant to H. H. Landon, Mar. 21, 1877, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 1); Crane, *Experiences*, 64 (quotations); Circular No. 1, Feb. 3, 1876, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 4).

Fig. 9:32. The Griersons.

Upper left:
Cadet Charles "Charlie" Grierson.

Upper right:
Edith Clare Grierson.

Lower left:
Harry (Benjamin Henry, Jr.) Grierson.

Upper right:
Benjamin Henry Grierson.

Upper left:
Alice Kirk Grierson.

Lower right:
Robert Grierson.

assurance that it will not go to pieces." Battalion drill proved more difficult, with company officers disagreeing on the propriety of certain exercises. In one notable incident, Major Mills demanded that the men execute a particularly difficult command several times in succession. Indignant officers later accused Mills of trying to "stove up" their horses. At the next scheduled battalion exercise, the companies of captains Smither and Lebo were noticeably absent.[87]

Target practice became more common during the 1880s. Although post commanders occasionally tried to improve the marksmanship of their commands before this period, regular practice seemed prohibitively expensive. In addition, under constant pressure to fight Indians as well as to build quarters, roads, and telegraphs, the garrison often had too little time for such drills. The massed formations of traditional military tactics stressed volume of fire rather than individual accuracy. But the disastrous defeat at the Little Bighorn in 1876 highlighted the already recognized need for a fresh approach.[88]

The Fort Davis experience paralleled that of the army as a whole. In November 1875 Colonel Andrews had noted "the very unsatisfactory results" of recent firing drills. The next month he claimed that in accord with orders from San Antonio, weekly target practice was being conducted. "Improvement is evident," he explained. Efforts remained piecemeal, however, until the adoption of Col. Theodore T. S. Laidley's new firearms training system in 1879. Mounted firing practice for cavalry was finally initiated in the 1880s. Using cost-saving "gallery" loads, the amount of ammunition available for training was increased and a system of rewards for good marksmanship revived. In addition to various silver stadia, buttons, and medals, expert riflemen could gain passes, permission to go on special hunting trips, or relief from onerous military duties. The War Department instituted a series of shooting contests, with post and regimental marksmen winning substantial prizes at department, division, and national competitions. Orders and circulars flew thick and fast; even officers' wives could be found trying their hands at shooting on Sunday afternoons.[89]

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87 McChristian, *Garrison Tangles*, 30-35.

88 Testimony of Sherman, Nov. 23, 1877, House Miscellaneous Document 64, 45th Congress, 2nd session, serial 1820, p. 49. For a comprehensive study of the subject, see Douglas C. McChristian, *An Army of Marksmen: The Development of U.S. Army Marksmanship in the Nineteenth Century* (Ft. Collins, Colo.: Old Army Press, 1981).

89 General Orders No. 67, Nov. 11, 1875, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 4) (first quotation); McChristian, *Army of Marksmen*, 7-8, 41-46, 54, 68-69. For examples of other prizes, see Joske Brothers to Inspector of Rifle Practice, July 2, 1887, and Frank Grice to O. M. Smith, July 18, 1887, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 8).

Fort Davis officials placed less emphasis on target practice. In February 1884 the adjutant general's office demanded "a full and exhaustive report" explaining the low marksmanship scores at Davis, which maintained a shooting range east of the post proper. Only three of the garrison's ten companies had any qualified marksmen. Another critical report came down seven months later. Although B Troop, Tenth Cavalry, had expended 22,945 rounds (which represented four-fifths of its yearly allowance), Companies I and K, Sixteenth Infantry, had each fired less than 9,000 rounds. Citing the obvious, the report concluded that "instruction in target practice is not conducted upon a uniform basis." Low scores drew renewed fire from department officials in December. Indeed, the criticisms supported many of the charges against Colonel Grierson, whose easy-going style, interests in his own regiment, and desire to build a personal fortune often interfered with military duty.[90]

With minimal direction from above, the success or failure of a company depended heavily upon the abilities of line officers and sergeants. "The spirit of the company commander has very much to do with a company," wrote one officer. "If he is indifferent the Co. will be. If he is interested they will be." The workhorse first sergeant also assumed tremendous responsibilities over the equipment, morale, and training of his unit. "A good first sergeant is indispensable to the making of a good company, for without him the best efforts of the captain would be rendered abortive," explained one high-ranking official.[91]

Desertion remained the army's single most pressing problem, with annual rates averaging 14.8 percent between 1867 and 1891. But Fort Davis troops left far less often—5.1 percent. The lower figure suggests a degree of relative satisfaction among soldiers at Davis. It also reflects the fact that, nationwide, black troops deserted far less frequently than did whites. In 1879, for instance, a total of forty-three soldiers deserted from the four black regiments. But the First Cavalry Regiment suffered 107 desertions alone. The transfer of white troops to Fort Davis in 1881 dramatically affected desertion rates. From 1867 to 1880 desertion averaged only 1.8 percent per year. In 1881 it reached 6.6 percent; the following year, with the white regiments firmly ensconced, desertion claimed 19.5 percent of the garrison. At Fort Davis, not only did white troops

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90 Vincent to Commanding Officer, Feb. 13, 1884, vol. 22: 62-63, Letters Sent, Department of Texas (microcopy M 1114, roll 7) (first quotation); Vincent to Commanding Officer, Sept. 6, 1884, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 9) (second quotation); Vincent to Commanding Officer, Dec. 23, 1884, vol. 23: 80, Letters Sent, Department of Texas (microcopy M 1114, roll 7).

91 J. C. Myers to Baldwin, Mar. 1, 1893, box 16, Frank Baldwin Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, Ca. (first two quotations); Report of Kelton, Oct. 7, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1889, p. 89 (third quotation).

desert at higher rates; the racial tensions between white and black soldiers apparently had convinced many blacks to leave their units as well.[92]

Army officials speculated widely on the causes of this phenomenon. Low pay, arduous non-military assignments which claimed so much time and effort, poor recruits, long delays in payment, and the desire of soldiers to get a free trip west were among the most commonly cited reasons. Initial investigations concerning the problem in Texas focused on "old offenders" and "indifferent, troublesome soldiers." According to these theories, desertion increased where "demoralizing influences"—alcohol and the "alliance with an element of loose population"—were greatest. Sure of their conclusions despite the absence of reliable data, military officials believed that tougher discipline, higher and more frequent pay, and stiffer recruiting standards would decrease desertion. The establishment of the central military prison at Fort Leavenworth in 1874 was also designed, at least in part, to deter potential deserters.[93]

Belatedly the army conducted a more thorough investigation in 1883. Of the 325 desertions in the Lone Star state, 200 came within ten days after being paid and 145 occured during the first six months of a soldier's enlistment. Army apologists blamed the recruits themselves and called for tougher punishment. Others recognized more subtle problems. Without positive identification procedures, repeat offenders could join the army, receive free transportation, then melt into the background. But harsh discipline and punishment undoubtedly shocked many new recruits. Cruel, inconsistent penalties had long characterized the decisions of court-martial boards. Seizing upon the recommendations of a Department of Texas official, Judge Advocate Gen. David G. Swaim concluded that "severity of punishment is no deterrent."[94]

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92 Ifera, "Crime and Punishment," tables; Mullins to Adjutant General, Aug. 31, 1876, 5035 A.C.P. 1874, Appointment, Commission, and Personal Branch; Coffman, *Old Army*, 371 n. 95; Report of Proctor, Nov. 23, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1889, p. 9.

93 Report of E. D. Townsend, Oct. 20, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1867, p. 417; Report of Reynolds, Sept. 30, ibid., 1870, p. 41; Report of Marcy, Oct. 17, ibid., 1871, pp. 110-11; Report of Sherman, Nov. 6, ibid., 1882, p. 6; Report of Sheridan, Oct. 17, ibid., 1883, p. 105; Report of Howard, Sept. 15, ibid., 1880, pp. 149-50 (quotations).

94 Report of Sherman, Nov. 6, ibid., 1882, p. 6; Report of Lincoln, Nov. 15, ibid., 1883, p. 6; Report of Drum, Oct., ibid., 1883, pp. 50-52; Report of Augur, Sept. 21, ibid., 1883, p. 147; Report of Sacket, Oct. 17, ibid., 1884, pp. 84-87; Extract of Report of J.W. Claus, ibid., 1883, p. 399; Report of Swaim, Oct. 1, ibid., 1883, p. 388 (quotation).

Reform-minded Adj. Gen. Richard C. Drum suggested an improved code of punishment, a reduction in the first term of cavalry enlistments from five to three years, more careful recruiting, and permission to purchase an early discharge. In Drum's view harsh punishment, rather than reducing desertion and improving discipline, simply fostered discontent. Gen. John Schofield emphasized the importance of the company commanders. "The character of the commanding officer has much to do with the extent of the evil," wrote the former Civil War hero. "It is true that lax discipline, coupled with great care for the comfort of the men, may give a captain a very contented company yet a very inefficient one, while very rigid discipline may cause half the men to desert, but make the other half extremely efficient soldiers."[95]

Fort Davis investigations did not always coincide with conclusions drawn by national figures. Low pay troubled many. Enlisted men frequently complained about the hard work and constant fatigue details—one noted that "he thought he had enlisted to be a soldier and not a slave"—and promptly deserted. Other Sixteenth Infantrymen quit the army rather than serve alongside black troopers of the Tenth.[96]

Officials at the post often linked desertion to the lure of female companionship. Pvt. James Brown was "given to running after women that fill the numerous towns about this post;" deserter David Anderson, "full of syphilis, deviltry and rascality," trekked from Peña Colorado to the little settlement of Chihuahua, "where there lives a woman by the name of Maggie Weber." Pvt. James E. Martin "was very much in love with a Mexican girl at Presidio del

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95 Report of Drum, Oct. 12, ibid., 1885, p. 74; Report of Schofield, Oct. 22, ibid., 1889, p. 64 (quotation).

96 Report on John Smith, Sept. 14, 1883, Separate Special Reports (Reports of Individual Deserters) 1883–1890, box 15, Fort Davis Records, RG 393 (quotation); Report on David Wells, Oct. 21, 1883, ibid.; Report on Joseph McCann, Sept. 18, 1883, ibid.; Report on Henry Bland, Dec. 25, 1883, ibid.; Report on Charles Brisher, July 16, 1883, ibid.

Norte and it is supposed he went there." Officials believed a woman claiming to be his wife at Fort Leavenworth caused Pvt. Daniel Bell's desertion.[97]

Other reports cited different factors. Many deserters were repeat offenders. Fear of prosecution for criminal activities caused others to flee their units. In 1883 Cpl. Thomas Gatewood, Tenth Cavalry, deserted rather than face charges stemming from his having lost a horse from the post herd. A cook departed after a twenty-pound bag of rice for which he was responsible disappeared. George McNeil, described as a "good" soldier, "was but a boy with no worldly knowledge . . . persuaded to desert by Private Layton, . . . who deserted the same night." According to one account, McNeil "was very much disheartened with the desertion of Pvt. Frank Brady . . . to whom McNeil had become greatly attached."[98]

Alcohol remained a key ingredient to postbellum desertions at Fort Davis. Reports indicated that Pvt. Henry Hardy, otherwise an "excellent" soldier, "was drunk and absent 2 or 3 days and was afraid to come back." "Good" soldier Charles Fillmore was last seen with a flask of whiskey; George Crossin was "a drinking man" who "complained of too much work." An "excellent" soldier in "splendid" health, Pvt. Daniel Clum had been drinking and was last seen carrying some money belonging to the men of his troop from one of the pineries back to Davis.[99]

Officials apprehended very few deserters. Of the 9,120 men who deserted the army in the three years preceeding October 1884, 272 surrendered themselves and another 1,495 others were caught. Small teams dispatched from Fort Davis to track down deserters usually came up empty-handed. An 1886 Supreme Court decision making it illegal for police officers or private citizens

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97 "Separate Special Report in the Case of Pvt. James Brown," May 29, 1884, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 6) (first quotation); M. F. Eggleston to Post Adj., June 19, 1884, ibid. (roll 8) (second and third quotations); Report on James E. Martin, July 18, 1883, Reports of Individual Deserters (fourth quotation); Report on Daniel Bell, July 11, 1883, ibid.

98 Report on Charles D. Clemens, May 27, 1883, Reports of Individual Deserters; Report on Charles L. Waters, July 25, 1883, ibid.; Report on Scott Graham, Nov. 14, 1883, ibid.; Report on Thomas A. Gatewood, Sept. 11, 1883, ibid.; Report on Joseph Gwyn, Aug. 24, 1883, ibid.; Report on George McNeil, June 5, 1883, ibid. (quotations).

99 Report of G. N. Lieber, Oct. 21, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1889, p. 325; Report on Henry Hardy, July 18, 1883, Reports of Individual Deserters (first two quotations); Report on Charles W. Fillmore, Mar. 13, 1881, ibid. (third quotation); Report on George Crossin, Aug. 1, 1883, ibid. (fourth and fifth quotations); Report on Daniel Clum, July 25, 1883, ibid. (sixth and seventh quotations).

to detain military deserters further weakened the army's efforts. Those unfortunate enough to be caught, of course, received stiff sentences.[100]

In the midst of such problems, Pvt. John Muchs reminds us of an often overlooked side of army life. Born a slave, Muchs joined the military in 1873. John helped support his destitute mother by sending part of his pay home. The illiterate private dictated his letters home to a fellow soldier who could write. Like the loyal son he undoubtedly was, he apologized for not writing more often, and promised to improve his future habits. Muchs strove to act as a Christian, as his mother had instructed, but acknowledged the difficulty of doing so at a rugged frontier community like Fort Davis. Tragically, the private died in the post hospital in August 1883, a victim of pneumonia.[101]

Grierson's Tenth Cavalry had occupied West Texas since 1873. Many of its officers (including its colonel) had undertaken a number of profit-making schemes which verged on the unethical, even by nineteenth-century standards. One critic claimed that private citizens, bitter about the colonel's unwelcome competition in local real estate bidding, actively encouraged the colonel's transfer in 1885. During the year officials would soon investigate Lieutenant Maxon's alleged mismanagement of public funds as post quartermaster; Lieutenant Jouett was being tried for a second time; two officers would shortly file charges against Lieutenant Davis. Its fractious officers indeed set high standards for pettiness in an army filled with ambitious men. One believed the Tenth had degenerated into a "contest for supremacy . . . between the good element and the bad and that the two elements are pretty evenly matched." Major Mills, a Grierson foe, saw that such matters reached the desks of officials in San Antonio.[102]

The army generally attempted to transfer regiments on a regular basis; the Tenth's turn was long overdue. Department commander E. O. C. Ord, mindful of "the influence of demoralizing localities," suggested that the regiment be shifted from Texas. In December 1884 General Stanley again called for such a move. Although he had recommended Grierson for a promotion less than a

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100 Report of Drum, Oct. 15, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1884, p. 218; Orders No. 90, Apr. 23, 1883, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 4); Report of Endicott, Nov. 30, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1886, p. 22.

101 Sheire, *Furnishing Study*.

102 Dinges, "Grierson," in *Soldiers West*, 168-19; Wedemeyer Memoirs, Mar. 10, 1885; Grierson to Charles, Feb. 21, 1885, GPLu; Grierson to Alice, Apr. 13, 1885, GPSpr (roll 2); McChristian, *Garrison Tangles*, 27 (quotation).

month earlier, he found the Tenth wracked by internal turmoil. As Stanley reasoned: "The regiment has become 'localized' to an extent as to have an effect prejudicial to the public interest. . . . I regret that the localization tends to demoralization."[103]

Rumors of the impending transfer had commonly circulated in and about Fort Davis; indeed, such gossip had slowed the Fort Davis and Marfa railroad project. In November 1884 one officer claimed the move was "no doubt to make room for some regt. with a wirepulling colonel who is coveting our good quarters and pleasant climate at Fort Davis." Colonel Grierson, who had left Fort Davis on October 31 to vote in his home state of Illinois and to visit Washington, D.C., campaigned furiously to be allowed to maintain his position at Davis. But by February 1885 the colonel recognized that the Tenth's transfer was imminent. A slim hope that Pres. Grover Cleveland's incoming Democratic administration, "with a view to retrenchment," might revoke the order was shattered when official transfer orders arrived in early March. The Tenth was to exchange positions with the Third Cavalry, currently stationed in Arizona. Grierson secured Whipple Barracks as new regimental headquarters.[104]

Although many found the marches a refreshing change of pace, the hurried packing and preparations involved in a major transfer caused tremendous logistical problems for every frontier military family. In 1882, for instance, the Sixteenth Infantry had replaced the First Infantry. Several months after the First's departure, baggage belonging to the regiment's members remained in storage at Fort Davis. The army did not have enough wagons to move it to the Marfa railroad station. The War Department paid for only one thousand pounds of personal effects per officer, meaning that excess goods had either to be paid out of pocket or auctioned off to local residents.[105]

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103 Stanley to Schofield, Nov. 26, 1884, Semi-Official Letters Received, box 15, John M. Schofield Papers, Library of Congress; Stanley to Adjutant General, Dec. 19, 1884, vol. 23: 74-75, Letters Sent, Department of Texas (microcopy M 1114, roll 7). See also Schofield memorandum, Sept. 28, 1891, box 55, Letters Sent, Schofield Papers.

104 McChristian, *Garrison Tangles*, 5 (first and second quotations); Grierson to Charles, Feb. 21, 1885, GPLu (third quotation). Leckie and Leckie, *Unlikely Warriors*, 284, conclude that "the Griersons returned to Fort Davis in time for Christmas [1884], sobered by the news received in Washington that the Tenth would be transferred, probably to Arizona." Although this earlier date might very well be true, they cite give no source which supports this conclusion.

105 Wedemeyer Memoirs, 2: 265; Commanding Officer to AG, July 6, 1882, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 65-855, roll 1); Whitman, *The Troopers*, 154; Sandra Myres, "Romance and Reality on the American Frontier: Views of Army Wives," *Western Historical Quarterly* 13 (Oct., 1982): 420.

The Tenth Cavalry left Texas in 1885. Companies formerly stationed at Concho and Stockton rendezvoused at Davis in preparation for the westward march. On the afternoon of April 1, the Tenth Cavalry passed out of Fort Davis in a grand review. The band, mounted on dapple gray horses, preceded the column before doubling back to camp to leave the following day. Two abreast, the eleven companies made an impressive sight never matched in community annals. When I Troop joined the column near Camp Rice, it was the only time prior to the Spanish-American War that the entire regiment had assembled. The twelve troops and their baggage train stretched for nearly two miles across the plains. Many women remained at Fort Davis until their husbands secured quarters in Arizona. One who did accompany the soldiers concluded that "the ladies who remained at Davis showed their sense." Another, however, remembered that she "was very comfortably fixed for the trip."[106]

Colonel Grierson and regimental adjutant Mason Maxon remained at Davis until April 9, cleaning up loose ends of a military as well as a personal nature. "This is decidedly a deserted castle," wrote Ben. Hired hands helped Robert with the family ranch, but Benjamin leased out one large section to Jonathan A. Jackson (probably a former Tenth Cavalryman) for a third of his annual production. After his father's departure, Robert described the temporary administration of Capt. William H. Clapp, Sixteenth Infantry. "Fort Davis is like 'the deserted village' now," according to Robert. But not all was grim—profits from the sale of the ranch's eggs to Fort Davis took a dramatic turn for the better. "Captain Clapp has had all the chickens removed from the officers' line," noted Robert contentedly. "There is a great fight going on between the people and the bugs."[107]

Benjamin Grierson longed to return to Texas in an official military capacity. Angling for the command of the department and hoping his family ranch near Davis would solve his financial needs, Grierson made several trips back to Fort Davis in subsequent years. Continued investments fell upon hard times, however, as drought and the overstocking of the ranges devastated the local cattle industry. Meanwhile, the independent-minded Robert worked for several more months in various civilian jobs on the post.[108]

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106 McChristian, *Garrison Tangles*, 39; Grierson to Alice, Apr. 6, 1885, GPSpr (roll 2); Robert to Mother, Apr. 26, 1885, GPLu (first quotation); "An Account of a 10th. Cavalry March . . .," Helen Grierson Fuller Davis, Civilians File, Fort Davis Archives (second quotation). For costs of the move, see Table D, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1885, pp. 531-35.

107 Grierson to Alice, Apr. 6, 1885, GPSpr (roll 2) (first quotation); Robert to Mother, Apr. 14, 1885, GPLu (second, third, and fourth quotations).

108 Leckie and Leckie, *Unlikely Warriors*, 287, 290-92; Robert to Mother, June 10, 1885, GPSpr (roll 2).

Col. Albert G. Brackett, Third Cavalry, assumed command of Fort Davis on May 12, 1885. A veteran cavalryman and officer of a widely used history of that branch, Brackett's arrival signaled many changes. He quickly ended commissary sales to civilian employees, thus closing Robert Grierson's source of cut-rate food. "Of course I can't afford to run my mess at the prices you have to pay outside," reported Robert indignantly. In his view, the tighter restrictions antagonized all of the workers. Robert smugly reported that his replacement had been dismissed for drunkenness, and added that General Stanley was "not at all pleased with Col. Brackett's administration." Indeed, Stanley, upon his own transfer from Texas, requested that Grierson replace him as department commander. But politics and seniority intervened—Grierson remained on station in Arizona.[109]

109 Robert to Mother, May 26 (first quotation), Oct. 16 (second quotation), 1885, GPSpr (roll 2); M.P. Hepburn to Grierson, Mar. 6, 1886, GPLu; Stanley to Grierson, Mar. 10, 1886, ibid.

CHAPTER TEN:

THE LAST YEARS OF FEDERAL OCCUPATION

With the destruction of Indian military power, the army undertook several far-reaching reforms designed to improve material conditions for the common soldier during the latter 1880s and early 1890s. The introduction of post canteens, better food, and renewed efforts to reduce desertion greatly benefited the troops at Davis, as did the further civilian development of the region. But other changes boded ill for the post on the Limpia. Seeking to concentrate its scattered frontier garrisons at forts on the railroads, military officials redoubled efforts to identify and eliminate useless positions. Brig. Gen. David S. Stanley believed that its questionable water supply, its lack of direct access to the railroad, and poor sanitation made the continued occupation of Fort Davis unnecessary.

But forts were rarely situated for purely military reasons. Because of their direct benefits to the civilian economy, local citizens argued forcefully against their removal. Representing the interests of their constituents if not the nation as a whole, congressmen often fought to keep posts in their districts despite the lack of military rationale. Discontinuing an army fort thus resulted only after a complex series of external and internal factors had made removal either politically palatable or militarily unavoidable.

The army had tried hard to reform its system of post traders. Although sutlers John D. Davis and George Abbott had satisfied most garrison members, their trade drew fire from those who linked the abuse of alcohol with poor morale, high rates of desertion, and general inefficiency. Department commander E. O. C. Ord asserted "that *Posttrader's Establishments* are, with rare

exceptions, simply dramshops, where the cheapest and most deleterious liquors are generally sold." Ord recommended the government itself sell the soldiers beer and wine in an effort to reduce drunkenness in the ranks. During the mid-1880s a system of nonprofit canteens gained momentum. Col. Elwell Otis, commander of Fort Davis from October 1887 to May 1888, asked permission to open such an establishment in an unoccupied barrack soon after he took charge. Chaplain Brandt C. Hammond joined in the chorus of attacks against the post sutlers.[1]

The new canteen opened on December 18, 1887. It sold "beer, tobacco, cigars, pipes, playing cards, oysters, sardines, and sundry other articles" to enlisted personnel. It also maintained billiard tables; chess, checkers, and backgammon sets; and dominos and cards for its patrons. As part of new army doctrine, sales of hard liquor were forbidden—this correlated nicely with the increased popularity of beer and wine in the nation at large. No civilians were allowed on the premises. The canteen also extended limited credit (from three dollars per month to privates to five dollars per month for sergeants) to the soldiers. Its long hours (9:00 A.M. to 10:00 P.M., with an hour off for lunch and dinner), low prices, and congenial atmosphere quickly lured business away from Davis and Abbott.[2]

Abbott protested the new canteen to Texas Sen. Richard Coke. The merchant argued that since the canteen paid no taxes or rent, its employees received government salary, and its supplies were shipped by government transporta-

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1 Don Rickey, Jr., *Forty Miles a Day on Beans and Hay: The Enlisted Soldier Fighting the Indian Wars* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963): 202; Ord endorsement of Jan. 17, 1877, to report of Chaplain Mullins, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 8) (quotation); Otis to Adjutant General, Nov. 11, 1887, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 65-855, roll 1); Registers of Post Traders, vol. 4: 5, Record Group 94, National Archives. For official studies on the abuse of alcohol, see Table XVIII, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1891, p. 667. Official rates of alcoholism at Davis (54.72 per 1,000 troops), ranked forty-third among all army posts.

2 Otis to Adjutant General, Feb. 4, 1888, 279 A.C.P. 1888, box 1135, Appointment, Commission, and Personal Branch, Record Group 94, National Archives; Abbott to Secretary of War, Jan. 12, 1888, ibid. (quotation); Edward M. Coffman, *The Old Army: A Portrait of the American Army in Peacetime, 1784–1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986): 360.

tion, it had an unfair advantage over sutlers who paid a head tax to the post fund. Furthermore, Abbott charged that the canteen allowed gambling and remained open on Sundays in flagrant violation of state law. "Its establishment is contrary to the spirit of American institutions," reasoned the capitalistic Abbott, "and is borrowed from customs prevailing in the armies of Europe." A writer using the pseudonym of "Temperance" added the following description of the canteen to Texas newspapers: "It encourages intemperance, it weakens discipline, it leads to desertion, crime, lost manhood, and the wreck of mind, body and soul . . . . [and] now resounds to the clinking of Bacchanalian glasses, loud and obscene language and maudlin profanity."[3]

But Abbott's protests fell upon deaf ears. The adjutant general ruled that the Fort Davis canteen did not infringe upon the rights of the sutlers. Daniel Murphy's decision to open a "saloon lunch" in late 1888 drew away more business from Davis and Abbott. After another attempt to convince the government to purchase their business failed, the army revoked the sutlers' appointment in May 1890. The Fort Davis experience typified the War Department's growing opposition to the old sutler system. From eighty-five post traders throughout the nation in 1889, there were only eleven by 1891.[4]

With less competition, the canteen expanded its operations. A commissioned officer, assisted by a sergeant and two or three enlisted men, managed the enterprise. By 1891 the operation boasted several lamps, chairs, pictures, an ice chest, knives, forks, bowls, glasses, and two ice cream freezers in addition to its original appointments. Stock worth nearly one thousand dollars now added cheese, candies, pickles, jellies, toilet paper, envelopes, cherries, cookies,

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3 Abbott to Secretary of War, Jan. 12, 1888, 279 A.C.P. 1888, box 1135, Appointment, Commission, and Personal Branch, Record Group 94 (first two quotations); clipping with Abbott to Secretary of War, Mar. 2, 1888, 1303 A.C.P. 1888, ibid., box 1139 (third and fourth quotations). For debate on the canteens, see *Congressional Record*, 51 Congress, 1st session, vol. 21, pt. 3: 2818.

4 Adjutant General to Abbott, Mar. 2, 1888, 279 A.C.P. 1888, 279 A.C.P. 1888, box 1135, Appointment, Commission, and Personal Branch, Record Group 94 (first quotation); John V. Lauderdale Letterbooks, Oct. 17, 1888, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm edition) (second quotation); Drum to Division of the Missouri, Feb. 5, 1889, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 9); Registers of Post Traders, vol. 4: 5; Report of Proctor, Nov. 15, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1890, p. 16; Report of Proctor, Nov. 3, ibid., 1891, p. 17.

Fig. 10:33. East side of Fort Davis, ca. 1886. The post trader's complex is in the foreground, the enlisted barracks and cavalry corrals in the center. Photograph from Fort Davis Archives, HG-8.

cigarettes, gum, and lobsters. But the absence of hard liquor led some soldiers to illegal outlets. A local jury found one man guilty of selling "spiritous liquors without a license." At the same time, the court found him not guilty of "keeping a disorderly house."[5]

The canteen system was but one of many reforms championed by Secretary of War Redfield Proctor. Concerned about the high desertion rate, Proctor hoped to better the lot of the common soldier. In 1889 he abolished the full Sunday

5 L. E. Brooks to J. W. Tynes, Jan. 29, 1890, General Correspondence, box 2, # 1017, Secretary of War, Record Group 107, National Archives; Otis to Adjutant General, Feb. 4, 1888, 279 A.C.P. 1888, box 1135, Appointment, Commission, and Personal Branch, Record Group 94; J. E. Normoyle to Post Adjutant, Aug. 13, 1890, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 9); "List of fixtures and furniture . . . May 10, 1891," Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 905/8821); "List and valuation of stock . . . May 10, 1891," ibid.; Criminal Docket # 30, Criminal Docket Book 1, Jeff Davis County Courthouse, Fort Davis, Texas (quotations).

morning dress parade, long a fixture at every military post, in favor of a parade under arms on Saturday and a dress and general appearance inspection on Sunday. Proctor theorized that giving the troops more free time would help morale. He also placed greater emphasis on recruiting in rural areas, thus accepting the widely held notion that city dwellers, many of whom were immigrants, made poorer soldiers. Of more practical value was the decision to hold recruits on probation until the army performed a perfunctory background check.[6]

Like several predecessors, Proctor sought to make punishment less severe and more equitable, thus reducing the temptation to desert. An act of October 1, 1890, established summary courts for petty offenses. By avoiding the standard court-martial procedure, the newly established courts assured the accused a trial within twenty-four hours. Like the old courts-martial, they found the overwhelming majority of defendants guilty, meting out punishments of up to thirty days at hard labor for offenses ranging from neglect of duty to leaving one's post without permission. Proctor prescribed uniform punishment for certain offenses, thus reducing the capriciously discretionary powers of courts-martial.[7]

A further change allowed enlisted men to purchase an army discharge after only a year of military service. Increases in the vegetable ration, the retention of some pay until the end of a soldier's enlistment, and the authorization allowing civil officers to arrest deserters were also part of Secretary Proctor's comprehensive plan. Strongly influenced by commanding general John M. Schofield, Proctor, by reforming the military code of punishment, encouraging the establishment of post canteens, and improving morale, hoped to make every soldier come to view his company as his family. "Every captain should be to his

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6 Chester Winston Bowie, "Redfield Proctor: A Biography" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1980): 186-90; Report of Proctor, Nov. 3, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1891, pp. 3-4.

7 Report of Endicott, Nov. 30, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1885, p. 14; Report of Endicott, Nov. 30, ibid., 1886, p. 22; Stanley S. Graham, "Duty, Life, and Law in the Old Army, 1865–1900," *Military History of Texas and the Southwest* 12 (no. 4): 275-77; Report of Proctor, Nov. 3, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1891, p. 11; "Report of Cases Determined by Summary Court at Fort Davis," box 17, Fort Davis Records, Record Group 393, National Archives.

company as a father, and should treat it as his family, as his children," explained the secretary. "Unnecessary restraint should be removed and the soldier's life in post be made as comfortable and pleasant as possible," concluded Proctor, whose reforms indeed cut desertion from 11 percent in 1888–89 to 7.5 percent in 1890–91.[8]

Officials in the Department of Texas continued to link high desertion rates to inadequate commissary provisions. The ration had remained largely unchanged from earlier years—pork, bacon, beef, flour, cornmeal, beans, peas, rice, hominy, coffee, tea, sugar, vinegar, candles, soap, salt, pepper, and yeast powder comprised the official articles. Brig. Gen. David S. Stanley and Judge Advocate representative Capt. John G. Ballance both argued that soldiers in Texas found pork unacceptable and that too few vegetables were actually available. In a single year troops within the department contributed more than $12,000 out of their own pay to purchase potatoes and onions. The War Department agreed to pay for kitchen utensils and tableware while abolishing post and regimental funds, so that all ration savings would go toward food purchases. It also increased the bread quota, which allowed frontier companies to peddle excess flour in return for other goods, and added more vegetables to the daily fare.[9]

Company cooks and local purchase offered other alternatives. A revised edition of the *Manual for Army Cooking* was published in 1883. But Congress continued to kill efforts to fund permanent cooks. At Fort Davis the search for culinary talent continued. Eugene Kentner, a private in I Company, Fifth Infantry, served as a baker for a year, but eventually became disgusted with the task. "The duties are trying and laborious," he complained, "and I believe, owing to the necessity for night work and close confinement over hot ovens is affecting my health." The garrison found greater solace from the independent purchase of fresh foods, procuring melons and fruit from Limpia valley growers,

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8 Report of Schofield, Oct. 25, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1888, pp. 66-67; Report of Proctor, Nov. 23, ibid., 1889, p. 8 (quotations); Report of Proctor, Nov. 15, ibid., 1890, p. 9; Report of Kelton, Oct. 1, ibid., 1891, p. 63; Proctor to J. Wheeler, Feb. 20, 1891, box 3, Redfield Proctor Papers, Proctor Free Library, Proctor, Vermont.

9 Report of R. Macfeely, Oct. 8, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1888, p. 585; Extract of Report of Ballanee, ibid., 1887, p. 292; William George Wedemeyer Memoirs, 2: 298, Fort Davis Archives; Report of Stanley, Aug. 27, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1887, p. 137; Report of A. Baird, Nov. 7, ibid., p. 110; Report of Macfeely, Oct. 10, ibid., 1888, p. 602; Coffman, *The Old Army*, 342.

lemons and oranges from Mexico, grapes from El Paso, and pears and peaches from the Pacific Coast.[10]

War Department officials also counted on post gardens to supplement the diet, and, indirectly, to reduce desertion. The lack of a garden in 1885 forced troops to buy vegetables at usurious prices from surrounding farmers. The following year, plagued by a severe drought, each company cultivated its own garden; although 1887 and 1888 were disappointing years, 1889 saw the men raising eight acres of vegetables. The post system returned the next year with spectacular success. Two mules aided six workers; at a cost of $1,340, the garden yielded $2,624 worth of foodstuffs. Cabbage and sweet potatoes comprised three-quarters of the 131,000 pounds of vegetables grown; other popular crops included beets, carrots, cucumbers, melons, onions, squash, and tomatoes.[11]

The army's educational efforts at Fort Davis proved less successful during the 1880s. Following the departure of Chaplain Mullins, a school for soldiers gradually fell into disfavor. Some children now went to a private institution established by Mattie Belle Anderson in 1883. "The enlisted men manifest but little interest [in] a school for their benefit," concluded one report. By April 1886 none of the 195 enlisted men were attending school, although 24 children still used the facilities. Adj. Gen. Richard C. Drum labeled the army's attempts to educate its men "a failure." He urged that teachers be accorded higher rank and recognition and that attendance for enlisted men who could not read and write become compulsory. But only in late January 1889 did the War Department redouble its efforts, decreeing that post schools be held during regular duty hours with mandatory attendance from those in their first enlistment. Despite the official pronouncements, the post school at Davis remained ineffective during the late 1880s and early 1890s. Insp. Gen. Joseph C. Breckinridge reported that only sixteen of the eighty-one-man garrison were attending school on April 30, 1890.[12]

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10 Report of Macfeely, Oct. 8, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1883, p. 590; Coffman, *Old Army*, 342; Kentner to Post Treasurer, Mar. 31, 1889, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 9) (quotations); *Army and Navy Journal*, Sept. 26, 1885.

11 Ruggles to Commanding Officer, Mar. 26, 1886, vol. 26: 76, Letters Sent, Department of Texas, National Archives (microcopy M 1114, roll 8); Mary Williams, "The Post and Hospital Gardens at Fort Davis, Texas 1854–1891," (typescript), Fort Davis Archives; unsigned report, Dec. 10, 1886, box 17, Fort Davis Records, RG 393; Order No. 27, Apr. 27, 1890, box 4, Frank Baldwin Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, Ca.

12 Report of Schools in Operation at Fort Davis, box 17, Fort Davis Records, Record Group 393 (first quotation); Mattie Belle Anderson Reminiscences, Barker Texas History Center; Report of Drum, Oct. 9, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1886, p. 80 (second quotation); W. Bruce White, "ABCs for the American Enlisted Man: The Army's Post School System, 1866–1898," *History of Education Quarterly* 8 (Winter 1968): 479-96; Report of Breckinridge, Oct. 1, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1890, p. 110.

Maj. Eugene Beaumont, a veteran campaigner serving as inspector general in the Department of Texas in 1889, identified other problems usually ignored by Washington staff officers when he noted that "the absence of any provision for the amusement of enlisted men makes army life on the frontier unendurable." To overcome this problem, Beaumont urged that the army construct "bowling alleys, lecture, dancing, and music halls, and theater combined," so as to provide enlisted men with diverse amusements.[13]

With much ground to make up after decades of neglect, the army made great strides along these lines during Proctor's tenure as secretary of war. Support for libraries continued during the late 1880s and early 1890s. Sporadic theatrical performances added color, if not always refinement, to garrison life. "A soldiers show is usually one of protracted waits for something," noted Asst. Surgeon John V. Lauderdale in July 1889. Two hundred persons attended a festival the following year. Enlisted men performed acrobatic feats on gymnastic rings and a high wire. But the comic performance by one Sergeant Beyer, D Company, Twenty-third Infantry, stole the show with "his excellent make-up and acting."[14]

Soldiers also joined fraternal organizations. The Good Templars, a national association, formed a lodge at Fort Davis in 1886. Using one of the deserted enlisted barracks, the Good Templars boasted sixty members by February 1887. The group sponsored meetings, dances, and an occasional variety show for members of the garrison. In a separate enterprise, at least twenty-five members of an unidentified Fort Davis community fraternity listed their occupation as "soldier" during the late 1880s or early 1890s. Others joined the Oddfellows. The Grand Army of the Republic, a powerful organization of Civil War veterans, also flourished at Fort Davis, with Capt. Frank Baldwin alternate delegate to the departmentwide encampment in 1890.[15]

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13 Quoted from Report of J. C. Breckinridge, Oct. 25, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1889, p. 134.

14 "Fort Davis . . . corrected and approved by Lieut. Col. M. A. Cochran, 5th Infantry, commanding post, June 19, 1889," (typescript), Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 905-8821); Lauderdale Letterbooks, vol. 9, May 11, July 10 (first two quotations), 1889; *Army and Navy Journal*, June 5, 1886, Aug. 16, 1890 (third quotation).

15 *Army and Navy Journal*, Dec. 25, 1886, Feb. 5, 1887, Feb. 22, 1889; clipping attached to Abbott to Secretary of War, Mar. 2, 1888, 1303 A.C.P. 1888, box 1139, Appointment, Commission, and Personal Branch, Record Group 94; typescript memo, Sept., 1975, in Enlisted Men File, Fort Davis Archives; Lauderdale Letterbooks, Apr. 28, 1890; Keesey to Grand Army of the Republic, Feb. 18, 1890, box 4, Baldwin Papers.

Sgt. Thomas Hall Forsyth, one of Fort Davis's most interesting characters, was a member of both the Good Templars' and Oddfellows' lodges. A Civil War veteran, Hall's heroic action in protecting the body of his commanding officer in 1876 was later rewarded with the Medal of Honor. The sergeant married in 1871 and had eleven children, one of whom wed a Third Cavalryman at Fort Davis. From a wealthy family, he enjoyed dancing, music, chess, and subscribed to several eastern newspapers. Forsyth became commissary sergeant at the post on the Limpia in 1885. Holding down one of the army's most honored noncommissioned slots, Forsyth was allotted an individual adobe house befitting his position.[16]

Like their comrades in arms throughout history, soldiers at Fort Davis took great pride in their abilities as practical jokesters. The dour assistant surgeon Lauderdale, who usually refrained from involving himself in any frivolity, could not help himself when making his diary entry for November 23, 1888:

> A strange sight met my gaze this morning walking down the road in front of the officers row—some soldiers had dressed *a burro in white drawers on the legs*, and a white jacket round its body and an old hat upon its head, the animals' ears projecting through openings in the crown. Playing cards were pinned to the sides of the coat, and a cigar box hung from the fore shoulder. Thus attired the brute has been walking up and down the post all day to the amusement of those who saw it.[17]

Baseball became one of the most popular leisure time activities at the army's western posts, and Fort Davis proved no exception. Weather permitting, members of the garrison played ball on the parade ground after duty. Rules and equipment at these nineteenth century contests often differed from modern day hardball. Six balls equaled a walk; a batter could call for a high ball, between his belt and the shoulders, or a low ball, between the belt and his knees. Although the old underarm pitch was giving way to sidearm or overhand delivery, the soft baseballs of the period made long-distance slugging rare. Fielders used their bare hands or tiny hand leather gloves to shag the blows of their opponents.[18]

Holidays often provided the occasion for contests between the Davis nine and civilian or rival garrison teams. Fort Davis played a team from Marfa in

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16 Douglas C. McChristian, "The Commissary Sergeant: His Life at Fort Davis," *Military History of Texas and the Southwest* 14 (no. 1): 21-32; Robert M. Utley, *Fort Davis National Historic Site, Texas*, National Park Service Historical Handbook Series no. 38 (Washington: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1965): 46; Lauderdale Letterbooks, Oct. 6, 1888.

17 Lauderdale Letterbooks, Nov. 23, 1888.

18 Robert F. Bluthardt, "Baseball on the Military Frontier," *Fort Concho Report* 19 (Spring 1987): 20-21.

Fig. 10:34. Sgt. Thomas Hall Forsyth and family. Back row (left to right): niece Beulah Rolhouse Wylie, Clara Wharton Forsyth, Mary Elizabeth Forsyth, Henry Hall Forsyth. Center row: Sgt. Thomas Forsyth, Margaret Forsyth, Mary Elizabeth Strickland Forsyth (wife) holding Thomas Hall Forsyth. On floor: George "Harvey" A. Forsyth, Mabel Agnes Forsyth (Thomas Hall's twin sister), and Isabella Forsyth. Not pictured is Patience born in 1890 after this photograph was taken. Photograph from Fort Davis Archives, AB-8.

Fig. 10:35. Surgeon John Vance Lauderdale and family on porch of their quarters at Fort Davis. Photograph from Fort Davis Archives, AA-147.

November 1888. In 1889 a Washington's Day ballgame saw the Fort Davis team lose to a powerhouse club from Peña Colorado. Another game highlighted Independence Day celebrations the next year, though spirits were dashed when rain washed out the affair in the seventh inning. More staid observers, however, did not appreciate such activities. Assistant Surgeon Lauderdale criticized the post's adjutant for playing in one ballgame and was mortified that "the *C.O.* was an earnest looker on." "Is it not time that these miserable people be superseded by a better and more civilized command?" he wondered. "They are a disgrace to the army."[19]

Lauderdale found the budding science of photography more appealing. Itinerant photographers occasionally visited Fort Davis, spurring a flurry of excitement and providing invaluable visual records of post activities.

19 Lauderdale Letterbooks, Nov. 11, 1888, Feb. 22, Oct. 27 (quotations), 1889; *Army and Navy Journal*, July 12, 1890.

Lauderdale's interest, however, seemed more genuine. He and his servant clambered up the surrounding cliffs to get panoramic views for his shots. Taking advantage of his position, Lauderdale set up a darkroom in the post hospital. He occasionally presented his handiwork in "a lantern entertainment" to select friends; slides of Ireland, New Mexico, and the Centennial Celebration at Philadelphia highlighted his collection.[20]

Picnics, dances, hunts, and dinner parties delighted officers and their families. Romantic young couples played tennis or managed to steal away from larger groups for strolls into the canyon. Friday nights saw an officers' dance at the post chapel. In December 1888 two new pianos arrived at Fort Davis, bound for the homes of Lt. and Mrs. Joseph McDowell Partello and Lt. Col. and Mrs. Melville A. Cochran. Birthday parties for officers' children featured games like pin the tail on the donkey. At a "progressive euchre party" attended by many officers' wives and hosted by postmistress and teacher Mattie Belle Anderson, the "booby prize" consisted of "a good-sized healthy-looking frog, who croaked melodiously when handed to the winner." Not all the parties were purely for entertainment—in 1890 the charitable society branch of the King's Daughters organization, headed by Anna Cochran, daughter of the post commander, held a festival at the post chapel to raise money for San Antonio orphans. Serving cake and ice cream, the dance cleared fifty-two dollars. But some of the social engagements disappointed attendees. Mrs. Frank Baldwin concluded that she "never had such a stupid time in *all* my life" at one party.[21]

On a more practical level, the surrender of Confederate forces in 1865 had left the United States army with enormous stocks of uniforms. Quartermaster officials believed the clothing on hand would obviate any problems for several years. This might have seemed the case to an officer sitting behind a comfortable desk in Washington; few frontier regulars would have concurred with such claims. The Civil War uniforms were of notoriously poor quality. Furthermore, Civil War contractors, seeking to save material and to increase profits, frequently cut their uniforms too small. And although uniforms theoretically came in four sizes, the demand for medium and large sizes quickly outstripped available

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20 Baker and Johnston to Post Adjutant, Jan. 18, 1886, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 9); Lauderdale Letterbooks, June 9, Sept. 12 (quotation), 13, Oct. 26, 27, 1888.

21 *Army and Navy Journal*, Sept. 17, 1887, July 6, 1889 (first, second, and third quotations), Aug. 2, 1890, Feb. 7, 1891; Anderson Reminiscences; Lauderdale Letterbooks, June 18, 19, Nov. 29, Dec. 14, 1888, Apr. 15, 16, 1889; Robert to Mother, July 6, 1888, Benjamin Grierson Papers, Illinois State Historical Society, Springfield (roll 2); Memo of J.A. Bennett, Mar. 11, 1891, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 85-2); Mama to Nita, Feb. 20, 1890, Baldwin Papers (fourth quotation).

supplies. As a result, enlisted men paid tailors, usually drawn from their companies, to alter their uniforms at personal expense.[22]

In 1868 the Medical Department issued a pamphlet, based upon the comments of 160 medical officers, which sharply criticized the army's system for clothing its enlisted personnel. With the gradual depletion of Civil War surplus stocks, a board of officers convened to revise uniform regulations in 1871. The board's reports appeared the following year and won the approval of the War Department and the president. The infantry received looser fitting dark-blue pleated coats. In place of the extremely unpopular felt hat adopted during the 1850s, foot soldiers also obtained new shakos as part of their dress uniforms. All troops were to be issued broad-brimmed felt hats for campaign duty. Cavalrymen were given longer coats instead of the traditional shell jackets. For dress uniform, mounted soldiers added a Prussian-style spiked helmet with yellow horsehair plume.[23]

Financial exigencies, field experience, and regional climatic differences led to several modifications in the 1872 regulations. Production of the new uniforms proved slow; the army's determination to use existing stocks of supplies meant that frontier units wore jackets, hats, and trousers from a series of different issues. The pleated infantry jacket was soon replaced. A stiffer model modified the black campaign hat, unsuitably flimsy for frontier service, in 1875. The Texas heat also spawned continued criticism from soldiers wearing the official wool uniforms. On several occasions, war secretaries reiterated an 1871 pronouncement allowing soldiers in Texas to wear straw hats and light white trousers during summer months. Despite recommendations from officers like Zenas R. Bliss, however, such comfortable garments had to be acquired through private means. As Adjutant General Drum finally sighed, "time and fashion must settle the everlasting hat question."[24]

Summer uniforms became more prevalent during the 1880s, reflecting the general trend toward improving conditions for frontier regulars. Following the example of the British army, the War Department designed a cork summer helmet, covered with white drill cloth and later with unbleached brown linen,

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22 For a good overview, see Gordon Chappell, *The Search for the Well-Dressed Soldier 1865–1890*, Museum Monograph No. 5 (Tucson: Arizona Historical Society, 1972): 1-5; and H. H. McConnell, *Five Years a Cavalryman: Or, Sketches of Regular Army Life on the Texas Frontier, Twenty Odd Years Ago* (Jacksboro: J. N. Rogers and Co., 1889): 230-31.

23 Chappell, *Search for the Well-Dressed Soldier*, 7-20.

24 Ibid.; Report of Meigs, Oct. 11, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1870, pp. 148-49; General Orders No. 45, July 1, 1875, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 4); Bliss to Assistant Adjutant General, Aug. 28, 1876, ibid. (roll 1); Drum to Quartermaster General, 5958 A.G.O. 1881, Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General, 1881–1889, National Archives (microcopy M 689, roll 54) (quotation).

for enlisted men. In 1886 the army sent lighter cotton duck uniforms to Texas for experimental use; the Secretary of War approved their adoption two years later. NCOs were authorized bleached coats, trousers, and overalls, and privates were to get similar garments of unbleached materials. The quartermaster general directed the purchase of three thousand muslin shirts for trial by Arizona and Texas troops in 1890.[25]

In still another move toward practicality, the army had begun issuing leather gauntlets to its cavalrymen in 1884. Piping and trim for the respective branches was also changed. The sun had bleached the cavalry's yellow and the infantry's light blue to an almost indistinguishable white. By the late 1880s official regulations, for once bowing to practicality, adopted white for the infantry service trim and directed that cavalry uniforms be faced with a darker orange-yellow shading. Finally, the army increased the range of regulation uniform sizes to twelve for trousers and six for shirts.[26]

The purchase and distribution of uniforms was also modified. Soldiers paid for their own uniforms, but were given clothing allowances in addition to their regular pay. In 1872 privates received just less than $180 over their five-year enlistments. Careful troopers could thus increase their effective incomes by keeping their uniforms in good condition. Veterans often sold garments to their friends upon leaving the service, thus adding to their own coffers as well as offering cut-rate clothing options to the remainder of the ranks. As regulations changed in 1888 the quartermaster's department sought to bring official allowances in line with reality, and to save money for the government in the process. The soldier's five-year quota of three dress jackets and twelve pairs of trousers was cut to two coats and ten pairs of pants. On the other hand, mounted troops received more gloves and the yearly allotment of cotton stockings was raised from two to six. Linen collars, campaign hats, and fatigue coats, trousers, and overalls were added to official allowance tables at minimal prices (a private's coat cost $0.98; trousers $0.88). Soldiers in their first year of enlistment would heretofore receive two fatigue caps, rather than one as had formerly been the case.[27]

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25 Chappell, *Search for the Well-Dressed Soldier*, 32-37; Report of Holabird, Oct. 5, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1888, p. 307; Report of J. F. Rodgers, Aug. 28, ibid., 1890, p. 774.

26 Chappell, *Search for the Well-Dressed Soldier*, 32-37; Report of Holabird, Oct. 9, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1884, p. 323.

27 Papers accompanying General Order 75, Dec. 26, 1871, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1872, p. 279; Report of Holabird, Oct. 5, ibid., 1888, pp. 307-08; Report of Rodgers, Sept. 6, ibid., 1888, p. 536.

Gradual development had transformed Fort Davis from a sleepy hamlet to a bustling community by the mid-1880s. In 1870, 313 nonmilitary personnel could be identified from the U.S. census. By 1880 that figure reached 792, a whopping 253 percent increase. Although the civilian economy remained heavily dependent upon the military presence, a wide range of private entrepreneurs now dotted the surrounding area. In 1884, for example, a drug store, lumber yard, clock shop, dressmaker, bakery, butcher, stable, dairy, and liquor store were present. At least two saloons, two grocery stores, two hotels, and seven dry goods-general merchandise stores also competed for customers. Of course, the village was still in its formative stages, and suffered the problems of a typical frontier settlement. One 1890 observer remembered that the town "did not impress me very favorably." It "sprawled around the post in a very disorderly manner, and there was not a well-defined street in the whole place."[28]

Census records and contemporary accounts provide a fairly reliable picture of the fast growing civilian population. Well over half of the nonmilitary residents had Hispanic surnames in 1870; census returns suggest they made up more than two-thirds of the population by 1880. Whites, who comprised nearly thirty percent of the civilian community in 1870, made up just over twenty percent ten years later. The percentage of blacks had fallen to less than ten by 1880. Although whites were diminishing as a percentage of the total population, many believed that they should dominate civilian society and looked with disfavor at other racial groups.[29]

The racism of the late nineteenth century United States was clearly discernable at civilian Fort Davis, although strict lines of racial segregation were not always evident. One white observer, having bought a soda water for his wife at a local drug store, resented seeing his black servant and a friend enter the same establishment. The white diarist criticized this display of economic prowess: "The colored people are nothing unless they are spending money freely like the white folks." Another white, Dr. I. J. Bush, referred to the population as "a melting pot" of races. "A nondescript, hybrid population" lived at the village. Black and white soldiers, upon retirement, often married Hispanic women.

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28 U.S. Manuscript Census, Presidio County, 1870, 1880; *The Presidio County News*, May 31, 1884 (reprint); I. J. Bush, *Gringo Doctor* (Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers, 1939): 33 (quotations). For the post's continued role in the Fort Davis economy, see Statements C and H, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1889, pp. 396, 424, 470.

29 U.S. Manuscript Census, Presidio County, 1870, 1880; Bush, *Gringo Doctor*, 36-37.

Horrified, Bush added: "The racial mixture that resulted after this condition had existed for a quarter of a century may be imagined."[30]

With some blurring of color lines, then, Fort Davis consisted of several communities, distinguished by race, geography, and economic class. Army personnel lived at the post itself. A recent development, referred to as North Fort Davis or New Town, extended east and north of the military reservation. Many of the businesses clustered around the court house south of the fort proper. Most Hispanics lived east of the central business district, in Chihuahua. The income distribution was skewed, with a few elites dominating the local economy. Echoing the racism of the times, an army report noted that the Hispanic population was "content with little and generally not well to do in a worldly point of view." By contrast, "there are several cattle owners hereabout worth twenty-five to fifty thousand dollars," it boasted.[31]

Further civilian development was seen in the organization of a Masonic Hall and publication of local newspapers. Masons held their first local meeting on December 15, 1883. Three years later, however, the headquarters moved to Marfa, as many members were county officials. Petitions from enraged Fort Davis Masons led the state group to order the lodge back to the original community in January 1887. After two more years, the local group split, with the old lodge returning to Marfa and Fort Davis members establishing an independent branch of their own. Local newspapers also highlighted community maturity. *The Apache Rocket*, the first newspaper in Presidio County, appeared on May 21, 1882. Capt. Millard F. Eggleston took a prominent role in the weekly publication, which was later succeeded by the *Presidio County News*. James Kibbee, former editor of a Tom Green County sheet and future owner and proprietor of the Limpia Hotel, bought out the old *Rocket* and established the *Fort Davis News*, which featured local news, advertisements, and clips from sister journals.[32]

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30 Lauderdale Letterbooks, Aug. 1, 1888 (first quotation); Bush, *Gringo Doctor*, 36-37 (second, third, and fourth quotations). For the apparent lack of racial separation at a local bar (at least in terms of sales), see Ledger 7, W. Keesey Collection, Archives of the Big Bend, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas.

31 Anderson Reminiscences; Lauderdale Letterbooks, May 22, 1888; unsigned report, Dec. 10, 1886, box 17, Fort Davis Records, Record Group 393 (quotations).

32 Cecilia Thompson, *History of Marfa and Presidio County, Texas, 1535–1947* (Austin: Nortex Press, 1985), 1: 183, 202, 205, 252, 270, 278; *Presidio County News*, May 31, 1884 (reprint).

NONMILITARY PERSONNEL AT FORT DAVIS, 1870 AND 1880

	1870	1880
White	93	181
Black/mulatto	37	70
Hispanic surname	183	541

OCCUPATIONS OF NONMILITARY PERSONNEL AT DAVIS, 1870 AND 1880

(EXPRESSED IN NUMBERS)

	1870			1880		
	White	Black/Hispanic	Mulatto	White	Black/Hispanic	Mulatto
Skilled/Prof.	39	7	10	61	15	29
Ranching/Farming	6	1	4	10	5	58
Stage	1	0	4	7	1	33
Unskilled	3	26	57	9	26	116
TOTAL	49	34	75	87	47	236

(EXPRESSED IN PERCENTAGES)

	%	%	%	%	%	%
Skilled/Prof.	80	21	13	70	32	12
Ranching/Farming	12	3	5	11	11	25
Stage	2	0	5	8	2	14
Unskilled	6	76	76	10	55	49
TOTAL	100	100	99	99	100	100

Note: Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding errors.

Among civilians, Daniel Murphy retained his position among the elite of Fort Davis society. A former beef contractor, he had established a ranch and sawmill in the Toyah Valley of the Davis mountains against the face of Indian attacks. His home and store lay three hundred yards outside the southern limits of the post, a convenient gathering place for townspeople and officers. "The Murphys are real warm-hearted frontier people," explained one traveler, thankful for the

generous welcome extended by the family. "The girls were each in school at San Antonio; and sending to New York now and then for dry-goods, really 'get themselves up' very creditably. The ladies got up a very nice supper, and Miss Mary Murphy's chocolate and jelly cake were simply delicious."[33]

Murphy's daughters were especially attractive to the unmarried officers. Tired of the frontier life, the Murphys moved to San Antonio briefly in 1884. But Mr. Murphy had returned to his old haunts by February 1886. Three years later, an officer described his condition as being analogous to that of a typical agricultural baron—land rich but cash shy. Murphy assured the diarist that he was "running behind financially every year."[34]

George and Lizzie Crosson moved to the Fort Davis area in the mid 1870s. Indian attacks forced them repeatedly to shift their sheep-raising operations, but the family remained loyal to the region. They cultivated close ties with members of the Davis garrison, who sporadically patrolled the Crosson place in an effort to fend off the depredations. Even after being transferred to Fort Snelling, Minnesota, members of the Twenty-fifth Infantry corresponded with the Crossons concerning matters of business as well as pleasure. Several officers who owned land back in Texas leased or sold their property to the Crossons. Others noted their fond memories of the Fort Davis climate, or waxed eloquent on the friendly civil-military relations they had enjoyed. "Mrs. Woodruff and I both remember with pleasure our . . . pleasant visits to your ranch, where spareribs were sweeter and better than I have tasted since," wrote former post surgeon Ezra Woodruff.[35]

Otis and Whitaker Keesey also boosted civilian development at Fort Davis. The brothers had come to the area as bakers for the army, but quickly went into private business. Whitaker lived with his two sisters, Isabell and Annie. He held

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33 Mary Williams to Robert Wooster, Feb. 23, 1989, Fort Davis Archives; Thompson, *History of Marfa and Presidio County* 1: 79, 108; "Diary of Mrs. Alex. R. Shepherd Containing Remembrances of First Trip into Mexico in 1880," Fort Davis Archives (quotation); Deposition of Feb. 28, 1899, claim 3889, Daniel Murphy vs. U.S. and Apache Indians, Indian Depredations Files, Record Group 205, National Archives.

34 Finley Diary, vol. 4, Fort Davis Archives; *Army and Navy Journal*, Jan. 2, 1886; Lauderdale Letterbooks, June 20, 1889 (quotation).

35 Thompson, *History of Marfa and Presidio County*, 1: 156-57; D. B. Wilson to Crosson, July 15, 1885, box 1, Crosson Ranch Collections, Archives of the Big Bend, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas.; G. Lawson to Crosson, Aug. 18, 1885, Sept. 22, 1887, Apr. 6, 1888, ibid.; Woodruff to Crosson, July 23, 1890, ibid. (quotation).

various public offices, including those of deputy sheriff and treasurer. By 1881 his general store was doing a thriving business with members of the garrison, for whom his rye whiskey seemed especially alluring. Otis married a woman named Adelina, and by 1880 had three young girls living at home. Like many frontier entrepreneurs, Otis, who presided over the Presidio County court for a time, also branched out into less reputable activities. He owned a series of "cribs," or brothels, southeast of the post. Operated by James Watts, a one-armed roughneck who was later run out of town, the prostitutes were segregated by race and often lived in tents. One of the Keeseys also commanded the local Grand Army of the Republic post, a potent political force comprised of Civil War veterans.[36]

As the War Department finally cracked down on the use of strikers, officers at Fort Davis increasingly relied upon civilian servants throughout the late 1880s. Upon his transfer, surgeon Lauderdale brought a longtime domestic worker, a black man named David, with him to Fort Davis. He also employed various Hispanic assistants, including a nurse and a hospital steward. Colonel Cochran hired a Chinese native who undoubtedly had come to West Texas with the railroad work parties. Contemporary descriptions of these workers reflected the rampant racial prejudices of the time. Complained Lauderdale, "We are quite disgusted with such help as it is about equal to doing the work ourselves." He added that "the market is not *full* of good nurses," and advised colleagues to hire qualified workers before they came to Davis.[37]

Religious diversity accompanied civilian development. Early post chaplains included a Baptist, a Disciple of Christ, and an Evangelical Lutheran; although intended primarily for the troops, their presence undoubtedly affected civilians as well. On the nonmilitary front, Father Joseph Hoban built a Catholic church and school on land donated by Daniel Murphy in 1875. The Catholic church remained influential, but a strong Methodist movement spurred by the efforts

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36 U.S. Manuscript Census, 1870, 1880, Presidio County; "Excerpts from W. Keesey Collection—Archives of the Big Bend," W. Keesey, Civilian File, Fort Davis Archives (typescript); Thompson, *History of Marfa and Presidio County*, 1, 107, 132, 133, 139, 171, 175, 177; Keesey to GAR, Feb. 18, 1890, box 4, Baldwin Papers. For material on the brothels, see "Interview and Driving Tour with Mrs. Pansy Epsy," Feb. 16, 1982, Town and Vicinity File, Fort Davis Archives.

37 Lauderdale Letterbooks, Sept. 9, 1889, Feb. 21, 22, Apr. 26, 1890.

of pastor Samuel G. Kilgore challenged the Catholic hegemony in the mid-1880s. The Presbyterians made a concerted effort later in the decade, when the Rev. William B. Bloys began preaching at Fort Davis. With too few buildings for every denomination, preachers took their turns at the Methodist church and the post chapel. Each had one Sunday a month at the latter building; they rotated the last Sunday between them.[38]

Brandt C. Hammond, a Methodist Episcopal minister, was appointed post chaplain in April 1885. He continued with the chaplain's regular duties on post—conducting regular religious services, holding a variety of administrative positions, ministering to the sick and forlorn, and overseeing educational activities. Hammond, perhaps unwittingly, became involved in something of a newspaper war two years later. In an unofficial capacity, Hammond had become editor of the *Fort Davis News*. As "this position involves the Chaplain in local controversy," department officials suggested that post commander Albert G. Brackett "counsel him to terminate at once all connection with the newspaper."[39]

The army made few provisions for discharged soldiers. In 1885 Congress agreed to provide veterans of thirty years' service annual retirement benfits consisting of three-fourths of their yearly pay. The Soldiers' Home in Washington, D.C., offered beds to a few retired enlisted men. Others managed to build up savings accounts over the years. But little was done for those who fell through the gaping holes in the retirement system. By refusing to make an entry on the lower part of the official discharge form reserved for character, an officer could effectively block reenlistment, thus ruining the futures of those with no other choice but to make the military their career. This was meant to prevent undesirable elements from reentering the service. Some, however,

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38 "The First Baptist Church of Fort Davis, Texas: A Preliminary History," (typescript), Fort Davis Archives; Thompson, *History of Marfa and Presidio County*, 1: 137, 143, 198-99; Lauderdale Letterbooks, July 19, 1889; Anderson Reminiscences; Natalie Barber, *Faith West of the Pecos* (Denton: Terrill Wheeler Printing Co., 1984): 4; unknown to Gram and Mother, Nov. 3, 1890, Thompson File, Fort Davis Archives.

39 Hammond to Commanding Officer, Apr. 11, 1885, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 85-3); Ruggles to Commanding Officer, Jan. 29, 1887, vol. 26: 26, Letters Sent, Department of Texas (microfilm M 1114, roll 8) (quotations); Ruggles to Hammond, June 21, 1887, vol. 26: 164, ibid.

believed such discharges resulted from petty slights rather than sound professional judgments.[40]

A number of garrison members remained at Fort Davis after leaving the army. Archie Smith, a Tenth Cavalry veteran, married a native of Mexico and "made some money in the cattle and stock raising business." John Jackson served as a local freighter and petty landowner. Other discharged buffalo soldiers, including Charlie Owens, Jack Jackson, Hemp P. Jones, and George Bentley, cooperated to build a substantial rock wall to protect their horse herd some four miles north of the post. Bentley, a Kentucky native whose father was the illegitimate son of a white man and a black woman, had joined the army to escape his parents. After retiring from the Ninth Cavalry in 1871, Bentley settled at Fort Davis, married a woman named Concepcion, and had numerous children. [41]

Other former soldiers who made a name for themselves in the local community included Anton Aggerman and Charles Mulhern. Born in Bohemia in early 1859, Aggerman immigrated with his parents to the United States as a youth. He enlisted in 1878 with the Eighth Cavalry; briefly discharged in 1883, he reenlisted with the Sixteenth Infantry the following year. Stationed at forts Davis and Stockton, he joined the hospital corps in 1889 before receiving a special discharge in 1890. Later remembered as "a camp cook and quite a yarn teller," Aggerman, reportedly the last Fort Davis soldier to live in the community, died at the ripe age of 95.[42]

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40 Coffman, *Old Army*, 396-98; Report of W. B. Rochester, Oct. 14, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1885, p. 781; J. Billings to Adjutant General, Feb. 10, 1875, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 85-3).

41 Lauderdale Letterbooks, July 12, 1888 (quotation); S. A. Thompson to B. T. Newman, Jan. 27, 1890, box 4, S. A. Thompson Papers, Archives of the Big Bend, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas; Bess Gray Higgins, "The Old Rock Wall . . ." Local History File, Fort Davis Archives; Thompson, "Private Bentley's Buzzard," Apr. 2, 1965, ibid.; Manuscript Returns, U.S. Census, 1880, Presidio County; L. T. Brown to Friend, May 21, 1965, Enlisted Men File, Fort Davis Archives; Davis County Deed Records, vol. 1: 505-06, Jeff Davis County Courthouse, Fort Davis, Texas. See also Special Schedule, Surviving Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines, and Widows, etc., U.S. Census, 1890, Jeff Davis County.

42 Barry Scobee, Newspaper clipping of Nov. 10, Aggerman File, Fort Davis Archives; Brown to Friend, May 21, 1965, Enlisted Men File (quotation).

Veteran Charles Mulhern, returned to Fort Davis upon his 1885 discharge. The Irish-born Mulhern had first come to the post on the Limpia in 1878 as an ordnance sergeant before later moving on to Louisiana. He and his wife Eva, a native of Switzerland, had at least four children. Mulhern saved his money and operated a cattle ranch as well as serving as agent for the Fort Davis interests of Lt. Mason M. Maxon. His ranch house three miles southeast of the post became a popular social center. Selling stock to local residents both public and private, a diarist described Mulhern as "living in comparative comfort." He later became a county commissioner.[43]

The Grierson boys remained active in Fort Davis life. Managing the ranch, Robert continued to appear at post and civilian functions, flirting with the girls but growing increasingly lonely without his family and Tenth Cavalry connections. George and Harry Grierson arrived in 1887; following his retirement in 1890, Colonel Grierson divided his time between the Spring Valley Ranch near Fort Davis and his family in Jacksonville. Robert, the backbone of the local operation, again collapsed, depressed over both his mother's death and pressure surrounding the embezzlement of nearly $2,000 in public funds by the county treasurer. As a county commissioner, Robert had promised sureties on the treasurer's personal bond and was held personally accountable for the loss. After placing Robert in a mental home back in Illinois, George and Harry gradually became alienated from their father, who remarried one Lillian King.[44]

Over time the increasing civilian development inevitably disrupted the traditional ways of the military community. The onset of the canteen system and the increased number of private enterprises near the post took away the sutler's competitive edge by the decade's close. Post doctors also changed their habits. Long accustomed to treating civilians as well as members of the military

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43 E. O. Parker to J. W. Edwards, Mar. 27, 1973, Charles Mulhern, Enlisted Men File, Fort Davis Archives; Scobee to Mike, July 18, 1969, ibid.; U.S. Census Manuscript Returns, 1880, Presidio County; Newspaper clipping, *Alpine Avalanche*, Apr., 1947, in David A. Simmons Papers, Barker Texas History Center; Scobee, *Old Fort*, 73-74; Lauderdale Letterbooks, June 19, 1888 (quotation); George to Harry, Nov. 30, 1884, GPLu; "Case of Fort Davis," Oct. 4, 1878, 4570 A.C.P. 1878, box 530. See also the Mason M. Maxon Papers, Texas Technological University (photocopies at Fort Davis Archives).

44 Robert to Mother, Oct. 20, 1886, GPSpr (roll 2); William H. Leckie and Shirley A. Leckie, *Unlikely Warriors: General Benjamin H. Grierson and His Family* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984): 175 n. 27, 293, 303-08.

Fig. 10:36. Post hospital complex, ca. 1885-88. Note the post magazine to the left of the main hospital buildings. Photograph from Fort Davis Archives.

community, the surgeons habitually sold prescription drugs to townspeople. Civilian druggists George W. Geegge and A. B. Legard believed the competition hurt their businesses and complained to the Secretary of War and Congressman S. W. T. Lanham. Although post medical officers charged that Geegge was incompetent, officials immediately forbade the sale of army equipment for private purposes. The army also transferred those most involved in the case, Dr. Paul Clendenin and steward Richard Dare.[45]

45 Legard to Secretary of War, Jan. 4, 1887, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 905-8821); Geegge to Secretary of War, Jan. 5, ibid.; "Investigation of the Complaint against Hospital Steward Richard Dare . . ." Jan. 23, ibid.; Ruggles Commanding Officer, Jan. 27, 1887, vol. 26: 23, Letters Sent, Department of Texas (microcopy M 1114, roll 8); Kelton to Lanham, Feb. 15, 1887, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 905-8821); Rumbaugh Clendenin, Oct. 26, 1887, Letters Sent, Department of Texas (microcopy M 1114, roll 8).

The military presence greatly affected local politics. The Republicans generally retained their control over the executive branch and thus over the War Department as well. The large number of local military contracts tied residents to the federal government. Discharged soldiers, both black and white, also tended to vote Republican. As such, the party's influence over Fort Davis remained stronger than in the Lone Star state as a whole, which had by the 1880s become solidly Democratic.[46]

Local governmental races thus remained hotly disputed. The legislature had completed the organization of Presidio County in 1875, with Fort Davis designated the county seat. The burgeoning railroad town of Marfa, however, soon began to rival the older community. In a bitterly fought election on July 14, 1885, voters moved the seat of local government to Marfa by a 392 to 302 count. Although prominent Marfa landowner J. M. Dean was accused of fraud, the election stood. Fort Davis retained the jail as a consolation prize. A protest before the state supreme court failed, but a separate Jeff Davis County, with its own county seat at Fort Davis, was created by an act of March 15, 1887. Tensions still ran high in the presidential contest of 1888, with local campaigners allegedly bribing voters with promises of free soda water.[47]

Fort Davis had long been considered one of the army's healthiest positions. Its moderate climate, sheltering canyon walls, and plentiful water supply made it a favorite among military personnel who enjoyed the serene isolation of the Trans-Pecos. It therefore shocked many officials when studies conducted during the mid-1880s showed Davis to have high sickness rates. Although deaths generally remained rare, it had a higher than average incidence of sick and hospital admissions in 1884 and 1885. Conditions grew worse still in 1886, when the constant noneffective rate at Fort Davis (78 per 1,000) was the second highest in the nation. Its hospital admission rate (2.276 visits per soldier per year) led all Great Plains region posts. Abnormally high rates of typhoid, dysentery, malarial fevers, diarrhea, and venereal diseases accounted for the disastrous results.[48]

The figures astonished David S. Stanley, in command of the Department of Texas. Noting the high rates of sickness, Stanley explained that "this is new and somewhat of a disappointment, as Fort Davis, with its temperate climate,

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46 Lauderdale Letterbooks, Nov. 5, 1888; Keesey to Newcomb, Apr. 3, 1879, James Newcomb Papers, Barker Texas History Center; Bush, *Gringo Doctor*, 49.

47 R. D. Holt, "Texas Had Hot County Elections," *West Texas Historical Association Year Book* 24 (1948): 11; *Army and Navy Journal*, June 5, 1886; Thompson, *History of Marfa and Presidio County*, 1: 259; Lauderdale Letterbooks, Nov. 1, 1888.

48 Vollum to Adjutant General, Aug. 31, 1886, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 906/8820); Report of J. Moore, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1887, p. 622-24, 644-45.

has long been reckoned as a good sanitarium for Texas." But a sanitarium could scarcely be built in an unhealthy site. "If further experience shows the water to be unwholesome," warned Stanley, "measures must be taken to vacate the post."[49]

Stanley attributed the declining health to an impure water supply, which had nagged Fort Davis officials since its reoccupation in 1867. Although a large spring lay within the reservation's limits, surgeon Daniel Weisel had reported that "this water . . . was once, for some reasons unknown, condemned as unfit for potable purposes." Until samples of the spring water could be tested, wagons imported water from the nearby Limpia during the early years of the second fort. The spring was back in use by 1876, when increasing complaints of diarrhea led the post adjutant to suggest that drinking water again be hauled in from the Limpia. Two years later, surgeon Ezra Woodruff protested the unrestricted use of its waters by pigs and horses.[50]

Closely related to the water supply were problems of drainage. Floodwaters rushed down Hospital Canyon during heavy rains; few Americans understood the relationship between sanitation, drainage, and disease control during the immediate postwar years. As such, drainage remained "in a great measure natural" as of 1875. Hoping to control the continuing problem of flooding, Napoleon B. McLaughlen ordered his troops to dig a large ditch in the summer of 1880. "I never worked harder in my life than when officers and enlisted men alike were frantically digging the big ditch," recalled a former soldier.[51]

It remained for the inveterate empire builder Benjamin Grierson to attempt decisive action. If Fort Davis were to be the lynchpin of the army's presence in West Texas, a clean, reliable supply of water was essential. At the colonel's behest, Lt. Millard F. Eggleston and Lt. Charles H. Grierson, both of the Tenth Cavalry, joined with civil engineer W. H. Owen to survey a potential waterworks system in April 1883. Their report called for a pipeline from Limpia Creek to

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49 Report of Stanley, Sept. 4, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1886, p. 126.

50 Report of Weisel, Circular No. 4, p. 229 (quotation); Weisel to W. Webster, Feb. 28, 1870, Post Medical Returns, Fort Davis Archives; DeGraw to D. Wilson, June 30, 1876, ibid.; Entry for June 30, 1878, ibid.

51 Post Medical Returns, Jan., 1875, Fort Davis Archives (first quotation); Robert Grierson Journal, July 19, 1880, Fort Davis Archives; clipping from the El Paso *Times* (probably 1954), in scrapbook, Simmons Papers, (second quotation).

the military reservation. Supported by Lt. Gen. Phil Sheridan, the War Department in June 1883 authorized $5,000 for the pump, boiler, cypress tank, and more than 12,000 feet of pipe needed for the system. The appropriation came out of a scant budget of just over $51,000 earmarked for supplying water to military posts located throughout the nation.[52]

Work began immediately. Pipes from the pumphouse, located just south of the Limpia Creek, carried the water over a steep incline directly south to the post, ending at the hospital. Like all of Grierson's projects, initial estimates proved insufficient for the fort's needs. Officials authorized another 2,000 feet of pipe, along with twenty fire hydrants, in December 1883. The existing pump soon failed, so a larger machine was approved the following April. Workers installed a bigger tank in 1886; a new steam pump and boiler were added that year as well. These improvements added another $3,500 to the project's cost.[53]

Despite the revisions, the water system failed to meet the garrison's demands. Medical officials linked the post's high rate of dysentery to the "unwholesome" water supply. The water smelled and tasted foul, "which quality may no doubt be attributed to tadpoles that develope [sic] in large numbers in the distributing tank," according to one surgeon. New filters, vitrified iron piping, and a steam condenser were added in 1887 and 1888, bringing the total amount spent on the water system for Fort Davis to $10,397.81 by early 1888. Fiscal year 1889 saw another $331.95 added to the project.[54]

Fed up with the nagging problems, surgeon Lauderdale took a special interest in the post's water supply. On June 23, 1888, Lauderdale noted that he and the engineer had made a great improvement "upon the thin pea soup emulsion which has been passed round to the people of this Post as distilled water." Five days' additional tinkering with the filter produced water which was "delicious, soft, and free from any odor or taste of machinery oil." But by August 4 even Lauderdale seemed resigned to nature's dominance—thousands of tad-

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52 Roscoe P. and Margaret B. Conkling, *The Butterfield Overland Mail, 1857–1869* (Glendale: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1947), 2: 27; "Office Brief as to Water Supply," Water System File, Fort Davis Archives; Report of Perry, Sept. 11, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1883, p. 557.

53 "Office Brief as to Water Supply;" "Plan of the Reservation and Post of Fort Davis, Texas, showing the Water Supply System," traced from Colonel W. H. Owens, Water System File, Fort Davis Archives.

54 E. P. Vollum to Surgeon General, Apr. 22, 1886, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 905/8821) (quotations); "Office Brief as to Water Supply;" Report of Sawtelle, Sept. 20, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1889, p. 491.

poles and frogs were thriving in the reservoir, making useless all previous attempts to clean the filtering system.[55]

Continued flooding further magnified the growing health problems. Runoff water from the surrounding hills poured through the military reservation, a condition exacerbated by the overgrazing of lands surrounding the post. Despite efforts by post commanders McLaughlen and Grierson, existing drainage ditches proved too shallow to divert waters from the deluge of August 1888. Surgeon Lauderdale grew increasingly vitriolic in his private complaints about the beefy post commander, Col. Melville A. Cochran. According to Lauderdale, floodwaters "washed away the feeble barriers thrown up by our fat commander who does not seem to know as much about looking after the interests of a Post as Barnum's fat boy. I do not think that fat men are good for the service," continued the surgeon, "as they are too sluggish in their minds to do much real work."[56]

Flooding frequently disrupted the daily routine. Between May 16 and August 31, 1890, runoff waters from the surrounding hills broke through an earthen embankment immediately west of the officers' row on five separate occasions. In several instances it inundated the officers' quarters. Post surgeon J. O. Skinner attributed the high number of remittent fever cases among the families of officers during the same period to the floodwaters. Post commander Samuel Overshine agreed. Repairing the ditch seemed useless; although the major believed that new ditches and a masonry reinforcing wall might prevent flooding, such measures would consume enormous amounts of labor. But he did not favor using the garrison to complete the task, and admitted that private contracts would be extremely expensive. After a series of additional reports, new post commander William A. Kellogg concluded that such action "would not be advisable unless this is quite certain to be a permanent station."[57]

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55 Lauderdale Letterbooks, June 23 (first quotation), 28 (second quotation), Aug. 4, 1888.

56 Ibid., July 21, Aug. 22 (quotation), 1888. On overgrazing, see *Army and Navy Journal*, June 20, 1885.

57 Skinner to Post Adjutant, Aug. 31, 1890, Medicine File, Fort Davis Archives; Normoyle, endorsement of Sept. 2, 1890, ibid.; Normoyle, endorsement of Nov. 4, 1890, ibid. (quotation). For other descriptions of flooding, see Alice Blackwood Baldwin. *Memoirs of the Late Major General Frank D. Baldwin* (Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Co., 1929): 35.

Along with their efforts to secure a better water supply, to improve sanitation, and to reduce the risk of disease-ridden floodwaters, medical officers hoped to uplift personal hygiene. Troubled by the lack of adequate bathing facilities, Capt. John T. Morrison used his company fund to procure enough zinc for two bathtubs in 1884. Only in 1888, however, did official monies become available to construct two bathhouses, complete with hot and cold running water, for the command as a whole. Hot water connections to six sets of officers' quarters were authorized two years later.[58]

Upkeep of the post also declined. An 1887 inspector feared that the accumulation of filth under the floors of the enlisted men's barracks would lead to an outbreak of typhoid fever. "The kitchens all need repair," he added. "Bakehouses not neatly kept." The privies also demanded special attention. Although acknowledging that the post's "general appearance . . . has been much improved," the inspector concluded that "there is a great deal yet to be done, in order to put the post in proper condition."[59]

Five barracks underwent substantial repair following the inspector's criticism, leading surgeon Lauderdale to conclude that both officers' and enlisted men's quarters at Davis surpassed comparable accomodations at rival Fort Clark. By 1888 four cottonwood trees also lined the area in front of officers' row. The trees as yet provided but little shade, but madeira vines sheltered the front porches. Bermuda grass further improved the area's appearance. In yet another effort to keep the livestock from nearby ranches from destroying everything in their wake, Colonel Cochran oversaw construction of "a rustic fence" in front of officers' row the next year.[60]

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58 Post Medical Returns, May 31, 1884, Fort Davis Archives; A. McGonnigle to Assistant Adjutant General, Aug. 13, 1888, Annual Report of Brig. Genl. D.S. Stanley . . . 1888, in Rosters of Troops, Record Group 393, National Archives; Lauderdale Letterbooks, June 30, 1888; Quartermaster to Chief Quartermaster, Division of the Missouri, July 10, 1890 (photocopy), Water System File, Fort Davis Archives.

59 "Extracts of inspection report . . . January, 1887, by Lieut. Col. E. M. Heyl," Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 9). See also Martin to Commanding Officer, Aug. 5, 1889, vol. 28: 170, Letters Sent, Department of Texas (microfilm M 1114, roll 9).

60 Statement A, Report of Construction and Repairs, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1887, p. 425; Lauderdale Letterbooks, May 22, June 11, 1888, Apr. 30, 1889 (quotation); Post Medical Returns, Apr., 1889, Fort Davis Archives.

With such conditions placing everyone on edge, the petty rivalries so common to the frontier army again reached crisis proportions at Fort Davis during the latter 1880s. Lt. Col. Paul Clendenin received stern orders to avoid meddling in the affairs of others. Dr. Daniel M. Appel protested his transfer from the relative comfort of Davis to the wilds of Fort Hancock. The daughter and wife of Capt. Frank D. Baldwin, on the other hand, complained just as bitterly about having to remain at Davis. Mary Swan Thompson, embittered about her husband's failure to win the promotion she believed he richly deserved, concluded that "life in Texas is a dreary round."[61]

Surgeon John Lauderdale continued the long-standing feud between medical and line officers at Fort Davis. Angry at a thousand real and imagined slights, Lauderdale shunned any social encounters with Joseph M. Partello. But he reserved his choicest criticisms for his post commander, Melville Cochran. "That heavyweight next door has been tramping up and down his porch for the last half hour making a fearful racket. I suppose he is trying to reduce his weight by exercise," wrote Lauderdale. Of Cochran's subsequent efforts to walk off a few pounds, the surgeon confided: "If he should consult me I would say start for Marfa and if that does not do it right on towards San Antonio."[62]

In 1885 Surgeon Gen. Robert Murray had recommended that all posts in Texas and Arizona be furnished with ice machines. Demand quickly outpaced monies; the ice maker for Fort Davis did not arrive until mid-August 1888. After lengthy disputes, surgeon Lauderdale, quartermaster Partello, and commander Cochran agreed to place the machine in the now abandoned band quarters. As members of the garrison set up the ice maker, Lauderdale charged his archrival Partello with illegally diverting the building materials purchased from the medical department's funds to the quartermaster's office. "I never was at a Post where I had to encounter such a selfish pig of a q.m.," complained the surgeon, who engaged in "a rather hot discussion" over the matter with Cochran.[63]

The availability of ice seemed a godsend to the sick, and allowed the garrison to store game and seafood. But the ice machine, which broke down frequently and consumed huge quantities of fuel, proved a continual headache for the

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61 Kimbrough to Clendenin, Oct. 26, 1887, vol. 26: 293, Letters Sent, Department of Texas (microcopy M 1114, roll 8); Lauderdale Letterbooks, May 22, 1888; Nita to Papa, undated letter attached to envelope postmarked Nov. 29, 1890, box 13, Baldwin Papers; Nita to Papa, undated letter attached to envelope addressed to Camp Neville Spring, postmarked 1890, box 13, ibid.; Sis to Mother, July 19, 1890, James K. Thompson Files, Fort Davis Archives; Sis to Gram and Mother, Nov. 3, 1890, ibid. (quotation).

62 Lauderdale Letterbooks, Nov. 3 (first quotation), 13 (second quotation), 1889.

63 Report of Murray, Oct. 1, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1885, p. 734; Lauderdale Letterbooks, Aug. 16, 18, 22, Sept. 6 (first quotation), 10 (second quotation).

irascible Lauderdale. On the evening of June 23, 1889, the newly refurbished icehouse burned. "To be without ice for even a few weeks . . . in this country, will cause much discomfort and sickness," reported the Fort Davis columnist for the *Army and Navy Journal*. Considering the constant turmoil and high costs, it was not surprising that the post's chief medical official quarreled with officers of the line. Lauderdale charged "that the q.m. and his employes [sic] have been cheating us in the delivery of fuel." A board of survey's forty-one page report on the ice house capers proved inconclusive, as no one could verify the amount of fuel actually delivered.[64]

Thus in spite of repeated efforts to improve health at Fort Davis, confusion reigned. Medical knowledge, though becoming increasingly sophisticated, was unable to meet the complex demands of the frontier environment. The post's primitive system of wooden privies and dry earth closets was ill-designed to encourage effective cleanup efforts. Despite prodding by medical men, line officers frequently made only half-hearted attempts to police the post. In 1890 Davis remained less than ideal as a prospective permanent station—its noneffective rate of 6.28 per 1,000 men was the thirteenth highest in the nation.[65]

In 1882 the completion of the Texas & Pacific and Southern Pacific Railroads heralded a new era for Fort Davis. To many it signaled a brighter day—the powerful locomotives presaged faster and surer communications, better supplies, and a whole new range of possibilities. Its proximity to the railroad and healthy climate marked Davis as one of the southwest's most important military positions, reasoned the editors of the influential *Army and Navy Journal*. But others seemed less sanguine. "We are no longer the frontier," warned the Fort Davis correspondent for the San Antonio *Daily Express*, "for we will have fallen into the embrace of the iron monster and will possibly perish beneath its wheels."[66]

The latter observation proved correct. For with the easier access to "civilization," the railroad also made it easier for the army to transfer its soldiers to

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64 Lauderdale Letterbooks, Sept. 14 (second quotation), Sept. 21, Oct. 22, 1888; *Army and Navy Journal*, July 6, 1889 (first quotation); Report of a Board of Survey, Sept. 20, 1889, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 85, roll 3).

65 Stanhope Boyne-Jones, *The Evolution of Preventive Medicine in the United States Army, 1607–1939* (Washington: Office of the Surgeon General, 1968): 111-15; Report of Moore, Aug. 8, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1890, p. 933, 979; Lauderdale Letterbooks, May 18, 31, 1889; Martin to Commanding Officer, Aug. 5, 1889, vol. 28: 179-0-71, Letters Sent, Department of Texas, National Archives (microcopy M 1114, roll 9).

66 *Army and Navy Journal*, Oct. 14, 1882; San Antonio *Daily Express*, Aug. 11, 1881 (quotations).

trouble spots throughout the West. Patrols continued only sporadically. Pvt. John Wood and Cpl. Julian Longorio made the last recorded scout against Indians on Fort Davis records in February 1888, riding seventy miles from the subpost at Nevill's Springs down the Rio Grande. With the Indian military presence eliminated, the twenty-odd miles to Marfa, the most important depot serving Fort Davis, were just enough to make Fort Davis seem misplaced. Wouldn't it be easier, officials wondered, to have a major reserve base directly on the railroad?[67]

General Stanley echoed those sentiments in two 1887 reports. In August he noted that "Fort Davis is very much out of place; it is inconvenient to get to it and to draw troops from it, and it is expensive. It is only kept up because we can not do without it." Later that year, Stanley launched an even more ominous threat to the post on the Limpia. He pinpointed three strategic spots along the Mexican border, all of which coincided with a railroad entering that country—El Paso, Laredo, and Eagle Pass. He believed El Paso most important, but decried "the entire unfitness of the present post for a military station." Stanley suggested that the army acquire a better site three miles east of the city. "I recommend that a post for a full regiment be built upon the site referred to," he remarked, "and upon its completion, that Fort Davis be abandoned."[68]

Stanley's recommendations regarding Fort Davis won little support from his superiors, as orders went out in April 1888 readying the Eighth Cavalry, five companies of which were then stationed at Fort Davis, for transfer to Dakota. Replacing the Eighth's troops at Davis would be elements of the Sixteenth Infantry. Stanley again questioned the wisdom of occupying the Limpia post. "Davis must be maintained," responded War Department officials in no uncertain terms. By contrast, a recommendation for the abandonment of Fort Concho would "be considered." But the general refused to sanction such a move, claiming that recent robberies of the U.S. mails near Concho necessitated that post's continued occupation.[69]

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67 Smith to Commanding Officer, Nov. 28, 1887, vol. 26: 323, Letters Sent, Department of Texas (microcopy M 1114, roll 8); Quarterly Tabular Reports of Expeditions and Scouts, 1871–1888, box 17, Fort Davis Records, Record Group 393.

68 Report of Stanley, Sept. 4, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1886, p. 124; Report of Stanley, Aug. 27, ibid., 1887, p. 136 (first quotation); Stanley to Adjutant General, Nov. 18, 1887, vol. 26: 316, Letters Sent, Department of Texas (microcopy M 1114, roll 8) (second, third, and fourth quotations).

69 O. M. Smith to Commanding Officer, Apr. 21, 1888, vol. 27: 103, May 5, 1888, vol. 27: 125, Letters Sent, Department of Texas (microcopy 1114, roll 9); S. E. Blunt to R. Williams, Apr. 23, 1888, vol. 29: 64, Letters Sent, Headquarters of the Army, National Archives (microcopy M 857, roll 11) (quotations); Stanley to Assistant Adjutant General, Apr. 24, 1888, vol. 27: 106, Letters Sent, Department of Texas (microcopy M 1114, roll 9).

Stanley renewed his offensive against Fort Davis the following year. Of the nine regular military posts in Texas, the United States government now owned six; the title to another was in question. Only forts Concho and Davis were still under lease. Showing a slight change of heart, Stanley admitted that Concho could be abandoned. But he remained firm on Davis, which was too far away from the Rio Grande and the railroads to be of much use. A three-company post at Peña Colorado, formerly a subpost of Davis, would be more valuable.[70]

Stanley's reports ran into stiff opposition from new commanding general of the army John Schofield. Although the two men were close friends, Schofield having been instrumental in securing Stanley his first general's star, the commanding general rejected the immediate abandonment of Fort Davis. Instead, on September 27, 1889, he asked that shelter be erected there for six cannon. Stanley got the message; in response to a request for a list of posts to be abandoned, he replied that none within his department fit that category.Stanley to Schofield, Jan. 5, Mar. 25, 1884, Special Correspondence, box 42, John Schofield Papers, Library of Congress; "Dept. of Texas," (1885), File "S", box 14, Letters Received, ibid.; Schofield to Secretary of War, Sept. 27, 1889, vol. 29: 269, Letters Sent, Headquarters of the Army (microcopy M 857, roll 11); Vincent to Adjutant General, Dec. 24, 1889, vol. 29: 322, ibid.; Stanley to Adjutant General, Jan. 15, 1890, vol. 29: 11, Letters Sent, Department of Texas (microcopy M 1114, roll 9).

But Schofield then unwittingly confused matters in the process of making out his own recommendations. In a letter of March 20, 1890, he listed sixteen posts suitable for abandonment if accomodations for the garrisons could be found elsewhere. Fort Davis was not among these; instead, it fell into a different list, marked number two. A clerk reported in a note dated April 2 that in regard to those posts marked number two, "their abandonment has been recommended but not fully determined upon." Schofield attempted to clarify the situation on April 29, when he explained that a "clerical error" of April 2 "makes it appear that I had recommended that the following posts be abandoned, viz.: . . . Fort Davis, Texas. . . . These are the posts in repect to which the question was presented for consideration, but upon which no recommendation was made by

70 Report of Stanley, Sept. 13, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1888, p. 141.

me." Schofield thus remained convinced of Fort Davis' military value. The transfer of four additional companies to the post that spring seemed a further indication of the army's desire to maintain Davis.[71]

Schofield reiterated his support for its occupation in October 1890, when he suggested that empty quarters at Davis or Clark be used to eliminate overcrowding in Arizona. Observers also interpreted events later that year as heralding a permanent occupation. The Fifth Infantry Regiment, of which two companies had been at Davis since 1888, was alerted for a possible move in response to Indian disturbances which culminated in the Wounded Knee disaster of December 1890. But the transfer call never came. "Now that the Indian trouble is settled and the 5th Infantry are not to leave, the officers and companies here are unpacking and settling down to garrison life once more," reported a writer for the *Army and Navy Journal*.[72]

But Secretary of War Redfield Proctor, in addition to championing disciplinary and subsistence reforms, advocated the abandonment of useless frontier forts. As he reasoned, "I am always glad to reduce the number of posts as I think it advisable to make them as large and have as few as possible—we can thus have better ones." During a spring tour in 1891 the Secretary caught the train out to San Antonio. There, on March 24, he met General Stanley and his staff and discussed "many important matters relative to the defence of the Rio Grande." Proctor also visited Eagle Pass, Fort Clark, and Del Rio.[73]

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71 Two letters from Schofield to the Secretary of War, March 20, 1890, have been found. That in box 55, Schofield Papers, lists 13 posts suitable to be abandoned. A typewritten note in box 3 (1890), file 2425, General Correspondence, Secretary of War, Record Group 107, National Archives, lists 16 such forts, marked number one. Davis appears with eight other posts, marked number two, on the same message. No explanation can be offered as to the differences, except that the note in Schofield's personal papers might have been simply a draft document.

72 Schofield to McCook, Dec. 9, 1890, box 55, Schofield Papers; Schofield to Commander, Department of Texas, Dec. 1, 1890, vol. 30: 29, Letters Sent, Headquarters of the Army (M 857, roll 12); Alice to Frank, Jan. 17, 1891, box 9, Baldwin Papers; *Army and Navy Journal*, Feb. 7, 1891 (quotation).

73 Proctor to McCook, Nov. 21, 1890, box 2, Redfield Proctor Papers, Proctor Free Library, Proctor, Vermont (first quotation); *Army and Navy Journal*, Apr. 4, 1891 (second quotation); Proctor to Sayres, Apr. 25, 1891, box 3, Proctor Papers; Stanley to Adjutant General, July 30, 1891, vol. 29: 408-10. Letters Sent, Department of Texas (microfilm M 1114, roll 9); San Antonio *Daily Express*, Mar. 27, 1891.

Upon his return to Washington he reported his findings to Congressman S. W. T. Lanham, whose Trans-Pecos district would be most affected by possible changes. Proctor believed a large post at El Paso advisable. Although Fort Hancock seemed "neither necessary nor desirable," the new buildings there meant a continued army presence. On Fort Davis, however, the Secretary delivered bad news: "Both General Schofield and General Stanley think that Fort Davis is not needed. It is so far away from the railway that it is not thought desirable to maintain it longer. The troops will probably be withdrawn from there before the first of July."[74]

Local residents and merchants had long feared such a move. In September 1885 when conditions in Arizona and the Indian territory demanded the reduction of the Davis garrison, no fewer than 108 persons petitioned the president of the United States for a larger garrison. Another two-pronged campaign was initiated in 1889. While Lieutenant Colonel Cochran and Lieutenant Partello promised their support, Fort Davis citizens called upon prominent former residents like Benjamin Grierson to add their influence. And in 1890 a worried S. A. Thompson queried Congressman Lanham: "It is reported here that a bill has been introduced in the 'House' for the abandonment of this Military Post. Please let me know if such is the case, and if you feel bound to support such a move, who it is that is advocating the above document," inquired Thompson.[75]

Local residents knew of Proctor's decision to abandon Fort Davis by April 1. Venerable old Daniel Murphy offered one final plea to Secretary of State James G. Blaine. To Murphy it seemed foolish for the military to leave what would soon become "the richest mineral belt on the Continent south of us to the Pacific." This would leave the entire Big Bend region open "to the most unlaw abiding

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74 Proctor to Lanham, Apr. 27, 1891, box 3, Proctor Papers.

75 Augur to Sender and Bro., Mar. 6, 1883, vol. 20: 163-64, Letters Sent, Department of Texas (microcopy M 114, roll 7); Ruggles to Commanding Officer, Sept. 19, 1885, vol. 24: 520-21, ibid. (roll 8); Petition to President, Sept. 17, 1885, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 905-8821); Endicott to J. D. Davis, Oct. 7, 1885, vol. 112: 181-82, Letters Sent, Secretary of War (microcopy M 6, roll 95); H. M. Patterson to Grierson, Mar. 26, 1889, box 4, S. A. Thompson Collection; S. A. Thompson to Lanham, Feb. 4, 1890, ibid. (quotation). No record of debate on the issue was located in the *Congressional Record*.

people of bought [both] countryes and we are liable at any time to be plased in a disagreeable pocession [position]."[76]

The lack of protest from Texas's congressional delegation to the move is an unsolved riddle. Military posts meant big money; representatives usually fought like tigers to protect the economic interests of their constituents. Indeed, Texas Sen. John Reagan struggled to keep Fort Elliott open; Lanham protected Fort Bliss, Fort Elliott, and the post at Del Rio. The latter camp, in fact, boasted special lobbying. In August 1890 General Schofield admitted that "the representative in Congress from that portion of Texas has been to see me several times on this subject [of Del Rio]." But no record has been found to indicate that Davis had such a champion. Its small population and the Republican tendencies of its voters meant that it had little political clout. Presumably, closing Fort Davis seemed economically sensible and politically feasible.[77]

Stanley and Proctor had agreed to evacuate all troops from Davis by June 30, 1891, the end of the fiscal year. At the time of their meeting, four companies of the Twenty-third Infantry, one company of the Fifth Infantry, and one troop of the Third Cavalry garrisoned the post. The cavalry troop was sent to Fort Hancock. The Twenty-third Infantry received orders to move to Forts McIntosh and Bliss. Company F, Fifth Infantry, would remain at Fort Davis until government property had been moved or sold, after which it would go to Fort Sam Houston.[78]

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76 J. Gilliss to James, Apr. 1, 1891, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 65-855, roll 2); Murphy to Blaine, May 15, 1891, ibid. (microfilm 66-876/7833) (quotation). See also San Antonio *Daily Express*, Apr. 12, May 1, 17, 1891.

77 Schofield to Reagan, Jan. 13, 1890, vol. 29: 335, Letters Sent, Headquarters of the Army (microcopy M 857, roll 11); Schofield to Lanham, Jan. 10, 25, 1890, ibid., pp. 333-34, 356; Schofield to Lanham, Mar. 18, June 2, 1890, vol. 30: 408-09, 458, ibid. (roll 12); Schofield to SW, Mar. 3, 1890, box 55, Schofield Papers; Proctor to J. Woods, Mar. 9, 1891, box 3, Proctor Papers; *Congressional Record*, 20: 1628; Schofield to Quartermaster General, Aug. 12, 1890, box 55, Schofield Papers (first quotation); Stanley to Schofield, Dec. 5, 1890, box 42, Special Correspondence, ibid.; Proctor to T. B. Reed, Mar. 3, 1891, box 3, Proctor Papers.

78 Stanley to Adjutant General, July 30, 1891, vol. 29: 408-10, Letters Sent, Department of Texas (microcopy M 1114, roll 9); Martin to Commanding Officer, June 1, 1891, Fort Davis Archives (microfilm 66-783, roll 9).

Post quartermaster Charles B. Hardin oversaw the details of the military evacuation. The inventory of public property began on May 15. Quartermaster stores, uniforms, nonperishable foodstuffs, and chapel furniture were shipped to San Antonio. The post library went to Fort Hancock. On June 19 Hardin auctioned off condemned food and medical supplies, fuel, and forage at a public sale. Civilian residents snapped up the goods in an auction which netted the government nearly three thousand dollars.[79]

Military personnel dreaded transfers such as this. In addition to the usual problems of any move—the invariable scramble for boxes, crates, and packing materials—the garrison faced the army's chronic shortage of transport. Two years earlier, the men of F Troop, Eighth Cavalry, when faced with a similar dilemma, each contributed a dollar (officers gave five dollars) toward the purchase of a light spring wagon to move more of their belongings. Excess goods were sold at bargain rates, particularly when faced with the competition of the government auction of 1891. "To sell anything of value in this poor country at its real worth is almost impossible," complained a victim of such a depressed auction, "and many things will have to be sold at a sacrifice."[80]

The troops had left by July 3; Lieutenant Hardin and Pvt. William Boyer, Company F, Fifth Infantry, remained behind making final arrangements. His task completed, Hardin first engaged Thomas Kiess as custodian for the abandoned public buildings. When Kiess accepted other employment, Hardin recommended a local resident, Joseph Grainger.[81]

The decision to abandon Fort Davis thus came as part of the army's general efforts to consolidate its scattered frontier garrisons. Secretary of War Redfield Proctor proudly reported that twenty-eight posts had been abandoned between

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79 Ibid.; Devon to Commanding Officer, June 18, 20, 1891, vol. 29: 375, 377, Letters Sent, Department of Texas (microcopy M 1114, roll 9); Hardin to Quartermaster, July 13, 1891, p. 240, Book of Letters Sent by C. B. Hardin, Fort Davis Archives.

80 Lauderdale Letterbooks, May 9, 10, 11, 12, 29, 30, 1888, Jan. 26, 1890 (quotation); Smith to Commanding Officer, May 8, 1888, Letters Sent, Department of Texas (microcopy M 1114, roll 8); Capt. F. E. Phelps, "From Texas to Dakota: The Eighth Cavalry's Long March," *Journal of the U.S. Cavalry Association* (April, 1905): 1-3; Alice to Baldwin, Dec. 19, 1890, Baldwin Papers.

81 Returns from Regular Army Infantry Regiments, Fifth Infantry, July, 1891, National Archives (microcopy M 665, roll 60); Devon to Commanding Officer, June 30, 1891, vol. 29: 389, Letters Sent, Department of Texas, (microcopy M 1114, roll 9); Hardin to Quartermaster, July 6, 1891, p. 199, Book of Letters Sent by C. B. Hardin.

Fig. 10:37. East side of Fort Davis, ca. 1900. Note the ruins of the old post trader's complex in the foreground. Photograph from Fort Davis Archives.

June 1, 1889, and November 3, 1891. In explaining the evacuation of Fort Davis, Stanley noted: "Fort Davis had outlived its usefulness as a military station, and yet it is to be regretted that it was discontinued, owing to its salubrious climate and its usefulness as a government sanitary hospital, to which enfeebled soldiers could be sent."[82]

Charles Mulhern, a former soldier now acting as estate manager for Lt. Mason M. Maxon, cogently reported the effects of the military's abandonment. "Plenty of houses in Davis now and no one to live in them," he wrote. "As you say yourself the Bottom is out of Ft. Davis." Mulhern later added to his worried client: "There is no chance to sell property of any kind now as for leasing houses

82 Report of Proctor, Nov. 3, Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1891, p. 16; Report of Stanley, ibid., p. 156 (quotation).

there is no chance to get a tenant." An immediate economic depression indeed followed the withdrawal of the military garrison. Although most settlers remained, the captive market offered by the army was gone. The John James family, owners of the former military reservation, rented out buildings for residences for several years. But the buildings inevitably fell into disrepair as looting and weather took their toll on stone and lumber.[83]

Fort Davis is among the most representative of all frontier forts. Established before the Civil War, it was occupied for nearly fifty years as the nation achieved what many believed to be its manifest destiny—the conquest of a continent. This victory was not without cost, particularly to the region's early inhabitants. The Indians of the Trans-Pecos—Apaches, Comanches, Jumanos—were removed as distinct cultural entities. With them went most traces of their diverse cultures and societies. Although descendants of the Spanish and Mexican explorers and settlers remained and made important contributions to West Texas development, nineteenth century racism often restricted their political influence.

The army had played a major role in the western expansion of the United States. In establishing and garrisoning posts like Davis, it encouraged non-Indian settlement and development. It offered at least limited protection to overland emigrants and to those who elected to settle in the vicinity. Limited in numbers and mobility and befuddled by the hit and run raids of the Indians, whose true skills were often unfairly belittled by contemporary military theorists, the army's umbrella was rarely foolproof. Westerners and more particularly Texans frequently criticized the army's efforts.

In the Trans-Pecos, warfare against the Indians was rarely conclusive. Long campaigns exhausted many a man and beast but only infrequently resulted in decisive combat. Skirmishing and pursuit rather than the stereotypical Hollywood-style cavalry charge were the order of the day. Yet in the end, the frontier regulars stubbornly did the job assigned them by the federal government. As non-Indian settlement increased and the railroads arrived, old haunts and hunting grounds were progressively reduced and the Indians removed.

During its tenure as a military establishment, Fort Davis housed some of the army's most colorful characters: Henry Flipper, first black graduate of West Point; William "Pecos Bill" Shafter, rugged veteran who later defeated the Spanish in Cuba; Benjamin Grierson, Civil War hero and unsuccessful empire-builder; Frank Baldwin, awarded two Medals of Honor. Others of less repute but of equal interest include a series of chief medical officers such as DeWitt C. Peters, Daniel Weisel, and John Lauderdale, whose constant harping upon health conditions infuriated post commanders but saved numerous lives. And

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83 Mulhern to Maxon, June 30 (first quotation), Aug. 31 (second quotation), 1891, Mason M. Maxon Papers, Fort Davis Archives; Maxon to Mulhern, Dec. 28, 1891, ibid.; Ed Bartholomew, Oral Interview, June 16, 1983, Archives of the Big Bend, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas; Scobee, *Old Fort*, 89.

just as remarkable were the enlisted men who endured low pay and long hours to build lives for themselves—Charles Mulhern, Thomas Forsyth, Anton Aggerman, and George Bentley representing but a small sample.

After the Civil War the army decided that four of its regiments should be comprised of black enlisted men. Each of these four units (Ninth and Tenth Cavalry, Twenty-fourth and Twenty-fifth Infantry) served at Fort Davis. This experience, combined with the large Hispanic civilian community in the region, makes Fort Davis a prime target for analyzing the stratified racial relations of nineteenth-century America. With few exceptions, white soldiers and civilians considered blacks, Hispanics, and Indians to be inferior, and treated these peoples accordingly. Although frontier necessity often blurred these color lines, available evidence strongly suggests that racial prejudice permeated post society.

Like many frontier military establishments, Fort Davis attracted a colorful variety of settlers and drifters. Some settled down and contributed mightily to regional development. Wives, children, and assorted military dependents helped the soldiers carve out lives for themselves amidst the picturesque Davis Mountains. Laundresses and post traders also played a crucial role in bringing American culture and society to the region. Other opportunists, looking for the main chance, came and went as frequently as did the constantly changing garrison itself.

Fort Davis thus reflected in a microcosm many salient features of the frontier military. Women were not accorded full equality, but because of their relative scarcity were allowed greater freedom and entrepreneurial opportunities than was often the case back East. Walls did not enclose the post's sprawling buildings, as danger from Indian attack was minimal. The bluecoats spent far more of their time building and performing day-to-day chores than they did fighting Indians. Although many a ne'er-do-well joined their ranks, the soldiers were by and large solid citizens who left behind their permanent imprint upon the American psyche.

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