

ESSENTIAL CIVIL WAR CURRICULUM

Sibley's New Mexico Campaign

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Most historians of the Civil War focus their attention on the great battles, campaigns, and events which took place east of the Mississippi River. While some events west of the Mississippi are often mentioned in general histories of the conflict, they are usually treated as sideshows in comparison to events in the principle theatres of war farther East. Such is the case with Sibley's New Mexico Campaign. Yet, the Civil War occurred, in part, because of sectional conflict about which part of the nation would control and influence the American West. Whether slavery would be allowed to spread into the western territories was a question which plagued the nation for decades prior to the outbreak of hostilities. The West held out the prospect of growth and prosperity to the section of the nation which was able to determine its fate, and the newly-independent Republic of Texas had imperialist designs for its neighboring territory to the west—New Mexico. Claiming the Rio Grande as its southwestern boundary, Texans believed their territory encompassed that portion of New Mexico lying east of the Rio Grande, and they sent three separate expeditions to conquer that territory in the 1840s, all of which failed; however, the ambition to control that land and its resources remained.

The annexation of Texas by the United States in 1845 set the U.S. on a collision course with Mexico. The Mexican War of 1846-48 resulted in a resounding American victory, and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo of 1848, which ended the conflict, transferred control of more than 500,000 square miles of territory from Mexico to the United States. Along with land gained from the Gadsden Purchase of 1853, the U.S. claimed territory which included all of the present states of California, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico, and parts of the present states of Colorado and Wyoming. The California Gold Rush of 1849 and a later gold rush to Colorado in 1859 drew large numbers of Americans into the new territories and highlighted the importance of their mineral wealth. The secession of the southern states and the formation of the Confederate States of America in 1861 directed most attention to the East; however, Henry Hopkins Sibley, a former major in the 2nd U.S. Dragoons and a newly-minted brigadier general in the Confederate Army, secured permission from Confederate President Jefferson Davis to raise a brigade of three regiments of Texas Mounted Volunteers and seize New Mexico Territory from the Union. Sibley argued that New Mexico was lightly defended and disorganized, and he believed that a Confederate force

could subsist on supplies captured from Union-held forts and supply depots in the territory.¹ In essence, he proposed to wage a campaign on the cheap.

In the meantime, a battalion of the 2nd Texas Mounted Rifles under Lieutenant Colonel John Robert Baylor seized the initiative and took control of southeast New Mexico. After defeating a Union force of 380 troops under Major Isaac Lynde in a battle near Fort Fillmore on July 24, 1861, Baylor announced the creation of the Confederate Territory of Arizona, with its capital located at Mesilla. Confederate Arizona theoretically encompassed all of Union New Mexico Territory below 34 degrees' latitude, though actual Confederate control was limited to the territory immediately around Mesilla and Tucson.² Faced with attacks from Native-Americans as well as the danger of a Union advance on his small battalion, Baylor was unable to advance any farther, and he asked for reinforcements to consolidate Confederate control over the territory and to continue the conquest.³

The small United States Army was needed in the East, where Union forces already faced daunting military problems. Little consideration was taken of threats to western territories, and the concentration of Regulars meant stripping most U.S. forts in the West of their garrisons, and maintaining only the most important posts. Native-Americans, emboldened by the U.S. withdrawal, quickly began to press their advantage with the result that both Union and Confederate forces faced dual enemies. Despite the multiple threats to New Mexico at-large and the weakening of U.S. Army organization due to the resignation of most officers from the South,⁴ Union forces maintained a firm hold on the heart of the territory—the Valley of the Rio Grande. Ably led by Colonel Edward Richard Sprigg Canby, Union regulars, volunteers, and militia concentrated at Fort Craig along the Rio Grande River, in position to block any Confederate advance northward.⁵

As Canby gathered his forces in New Mexico, Sibley raised the 4th, 5th, and 7th Texas Mounted Volunteers, along with two batteries of artillery for service in New Mexico, recruited predominantly from southeastern Texas.⁶ Horses and equipment were a problem from the start. Stocks of captured Union supplies were quickly exhausted, and many soldiers brought their own horses and weapons with them. Rifles were in short supply, and many Confederate soldiers were equipped with shotguns⁷—of limited use

¹ Don Alberts, "The Battle of Glorieta: Union Victory in the Far West." *Civil War Trust*. Retrieved on 6/17/15 from <http://www.civilwar.org/battlefields/glorietapass/glorieta-pass-history-articles/glorietaalberts.html>

² Donald S. Frazier, *Blood & Treasure: Confederate Empire in the Southwest* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1997), 57-60.

³ Ibid., 72.

⁴ Martin Hardwick Hall, *Sibley's New Mexico Campaign* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000), 13.

⁵ Hall, *Sibley*, 44-48.

⁶ Frazier, *Blood & Treasure*, 84.

⁷ Jerry Thompson, *Henry Hopkins Sibley: Confederate General of the West* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1996), 224.

except at short range, and some troops even embarked on the campaign armed with lances!⁸ In October of 1861, Sibley divided his brigade into smaller detachments for the movement west, in large part due to the scarcity of water along the line of march.⁹

The immediate objective of the campaign was to conquer Union-held New Mexico Territory—with the stockpiles of supplies at Fort Union as the ultimate prize, but Sibley also expressed grander designs. Sibley believed that southern California contained many secessionists who would gladly overthrow the government there and join with the Confederacy if given the opportunity.¹⁰ Mineral wealth from Colorado, California, and other parts of the West might also help to finance the Confederate war for independence, if those areas could be seized. The seizure of California also held out the prospect of gaining control of un-blockaded ports on the Pacific.¹¹ Sibley was also prepared to take advantage of any political instability in northern Mexico, by annexing territory there for the Confederacy.¹² At minimum, he hoped to secure permission to secure supplies in Mexico and possibly the use of a port on the Pacific.¹³ These goals were entrusted to Colonel James Reilly of the 4th Texas Mounted Volunteers, who would lead a diplomatic mission into Mexico while Sibley and his army marched northward.¹⁴ Because of the large tracts of territory involved and the small Confederate force, Southern prospects for success depended on the support of local populations, and, most importantly, on the acquisition of supplies.

The Confederate troops began their march westward toward Mesilla, New Mexico via Fort Bliss, Texas in early November of 1861, and the last detachments arrived there in late December.¹⁵ On December 20, 1861, Sibley issued a proclamation to the people of New Mexico Territory, the southern portion of which was styled the Confederate Territory of Arizona. The proclamation, designed to placate the local population, included promises of security and payment for needed supplies. These promises were almost immediately violated, as some of the Texas troops simply took what they needed from the local inhabitants. Sibley warned the local men against aiding the Union; however, the significant numbers of New Mexico troops in Canby's gathering Union forces indicate that his warning went unheeded.¹⁶

In February, and after incorporating Lieutenant Colonel Baylor's battalion of the 2nd Texas Mounted Rifles and some locally-recruited Confederate companies into his command, Sibley's newly-styled Army of New Mexico moved northward—up the Rio Grande River toward Union-held Fort Craig. Sibley's strategy depended on the capture

⁸ Frazier, *Blood & Treasure*, 95-97.

⁹ Hall, *Sibley*, 29-30.

¹⁰ Frazier, *Blood & Treasure*, 31.

¹¹ Frazier, *Blood & Treasure*, 35-36.

¹² Thompson, *Henry Hopkins Sibley*, 217.

¹³ Hall, *Sibley* 35-36.

¹⁴ Frazier, *Blood & Treasure*, 145-6.

¹⁵ Frazier, *Blood & Treasure*, 118-27.

¹⁶ Frazier, *Blood & Treasure*, 127-31.

of Union clothing, munitions, and food.¹⁷ The Confederate Army carried few supplies with it, and foraging offered limited gains because of the harsh environment of the New Mexico country. Indeed, the Valley of the Rio Grande was the principle productive area of the territory, but supplies would quickly be exhausted by the thousands of Confederate troops if they foraged liberally on the crops and goods needed for the support of the New Mexican population who already lived there. Sibley needed to seize Fort Craig in order to resupply his army at the expense of the Federals, as well as to keep his lines of communication and supply open as he marched northward.

Colonel Edward R. S. Canby remained aware of Confederate movements and strength through the efforts of active Union patrols. However, Canby doubted the reliability of the New Mexico Volunteers and territorial militia called up to augment his Regular Army troops. Canby had already withheld several companies of regular troops from their recall to the east, and the questionable quality of the volunteers and militia preoccupied him during the early months of 1862.¹⁸

The opposing armies drew into formation for battle on February 16, south of Fort Craig, but the Confederate force retired before the fight could begin. Sibley did not possess artillery capable of reducing Fort Craig,¹⁹ he hesitated to make a direct assault on the installation, and instead opted to move his army northward to seize the Rio Grande ford at Valverde. The movement would, he hoped, force Canby to leave the fort to defend his supply lines, and allow the Confederates troops to defeat the Federal force in the open.²⁰

The two forces finally came to blows on February 21, 1862 at Valverde, north of Fort Craig. General Sibley did not lead his troops into battle, but remained in the rear area pleading illness—most likely, he was intoxicated.²¹ Sibley ordered Major Charles Lynn Pyron's battalion of the 2nd Texas Mounted Rifles, Baylor's old command, to advance to the ford before relinquishing overall command to Colonel Thomas Green, of the 5th Texas Mounted Volunteers. Green was a veteran fighter, having participated in the Battle of San Jacinto which won Texas' independence in 1836, and an able battlefield commander who led from the front.²² By this point, Colonel Canby surmised Sibley's intentions and ordered Lieutenant Colonel Benjamin Stone Roberts to Valverde with a battalion of regular and volunteer cavalry to protect the ford.²³ The area around the Valverde was dominated by the Mesa del Contadero, a volcanic formation to the Confederate left,²⁴ a series of small sand banks, and several groves of cottonwood trees.²⁵

¹⁷ Don E. Alberts, *The Battle of Glorieta: Union Victory in the West* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1998), 11-12.

¹⁸ Hall, *Sibley*, 44.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 55-56.

²⁰ Thompson, *Henry Hopkins Sibley*, 252-3.

²¹ Thompson, *Henry Hopkins Sibley*, 261.

²² Frazier, *Blood & Treasure*, 79-80.

²³ Thompson, *Henry Hopkins Sibley*, 258.

²⁴ Hall, *Sibley*, 59.

Both forces met and opened fire at about 8:00 a.m.,²⁶ and reinforcements steadily arrived for both units throughout the morning.

The Union possessed an advantage in artillery after the arrival of a mixed battery of six guns, under Captain Alexander McRae, a North Carolinian who remained loyal to the Union, and an additional battery of two 24 pounders under Lieutenant Robert Hall.²⁷ The artillery remained on the west bank of the Rio Grande, protected from assault by the river. Both armies began placing reinforcements on the northern ends of their lines until nearly the entire Confederate force was arrayed, roughly 2,000 troops, against 2,800 Union soldiers.²⁸ Union troops advancing against the Confederate left flank placed the Southern troops in danger, and Green turned to a desperate tactic to turn back the Federal advance. He ordered the two companies of lancers from his own 5th Texas Mounted Volunteers to charge the advancing federals, whom he believed were inexperienced New Mexico volunteers. Lances were a common feature of Napoleonic battlefields and were heavily used by Mexican cavalry during the conflicts of the 1830s and 1840s against the Texans. However, rifled firearms rendered the ten-foot long weapons obsolete. In the only known lancer charge of the Civil War, the two companies were decimated by Captain Theodore Dodd's Independent Company of Colorado Volunteers.²⁹ Canby and his subordinates moved cautiously, but they were able to apply enough pressure against the Confederate lines that the Texas troops were in danger of breaking by 4:00 p.m. Having moved McRae's and Hall's batteries of artillery across the river, Canby prepared for the final push to take the field.³⁰ Many of the Confederates were armed with short-range shotguns and pistols, and they needed to get into close quarters to effectively use their weapons. During the course of the afternoon's battle, Canby thinned the center of his line to reinforce his right flank, leaving McRae's battery exposed and without sufficient infantry support. At this point, Colonel Green ordered a charge to seize McRae's battery.³¹ The death of McRae and the seizure of his battery turned the tide of the battle, and Canby ordered a retreat to Fort Craig.

Sibley's army won a tactical victory at Valverde; however, the battle was a strategic failure. Not only did Sibley's army sustain 10% casualties, but it failed to interdict Union supplies and failed to take Fort Craig, with its stockpile of provisions. In a campaign based on the acquisition of supplies, anything less than complete victory amounted to a loss. Union casualty rates were 17%, in addition to the loss of McRae's six artillery pieces. Canby knew that control of Fort Craig was paramount, and, while the tactical loss at Valverde was demoralizing, he knew that time and circumstances favored his own army. In short, he could afford to wait for more favorable circumstances. After Canby rejected a demand for the surrender of Fort Craig, Sibley undertook a strategic

²⁵ John Taylor, *Bloody Valverde: A Civil War Battle on the Rio Grande, February 21, 1862* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 9.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 49.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 50.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 73-74.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 67-70.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 79-84.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 85-91.

gamble by leaving a large enemy force in a well-supplied fortification in his rear, astride his lines of communication and supply with the Mesilla Valley and San Antonio. In reality, Sibley had no real choice, since he could not reduce the fort and needed to continue the campaign and seize food, clothing, and munitions in Federal caches farther north.³²

Following the Battle of Valverde, Canby sent a staff officer north with orders to destroy all supplies and munitions in the path of the advancing Confederate Army. However, Sibley's army managed to gain possession of hundreds of rifled muskets and foodstuffs when they defeated a regiment of New Mexico Militia north of Fort Craig. The Texas troops found an empty supply depot at Polvadera, but continued their advance to Albuquerque, which they occupied on March 2, 1862. Retreating Union forces waited until the Confederates were too close the town before setting fire to the supply buildings, and many of the supplies were not destroyed. Local citizens looted the supplies before the Confederate arrival, and the Texans confiscated the looted supplies back from the local citizens.³³ When added to additional provisions captured in the area, Sibley estimated that the stocks confiscated from Albuquerque would feed his troops for three months. Continuing the northward march, Major Charles Pyron's battalion of the 2nd Texas Mounted Rifles occupied Santa Fe on March 13. The Texas troops suffered much from the cold winter weather, especially since they lacked adequate tents and overcoats to protect them from the elements. By this point, the fighting in the campaign was reduced to small skirmishes, and Sibley took the opportunity to rest his men before resuming the march northward.³⁴

Sibley's prized target and goal of the campaign had always been Fort Union, in northern New Mexico. He had commanded Fort Union for a few weeks during May 1861, but the post had significantly changed since Sibley last saw it. Recognizing the weakness of the location of the post, in late 1861 Canby ordered it abandoned and rebuilt a mile away. The new fortification was much stronger, and its star-shaped construction enabled it to withstand artillery bombardment. It is unknown how Sibley intended to reduce Fort Union, especially since he refrained from attacking Fort Craig because of a lack of heavy artillery. To be sure, the Army of New Mexico encountered few concentrated numbers of Federal troops after the Battle of Valverde, and it is possible that Sibley might have counted on minimal resistance and an easy victory at the Union-held bastion.³⁵

While Sibley concerned himself with resupplying his army at the expense of Federal stockpiles and resting his men, Union troops in Colorado Territory marched south to face the invaders. Colorado had already sent two companies of troops to fight for the Union in New Mexico, one of which destroyed the lancer charge of the 5th Texas

³² Ibid., 100-4.

³³ Thomas S. Edrington and John Taylor, *The Battle of Glorieta Pass: A Gettysburg in the West, March 26-28, 1862* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998), 23-25.

³⁴ Hall, *Sibley*, 82-85.

³⁵ Hall, *Sibley*, 85.

during the Battle of Valverde. Erroneous reports that this company had been annihilated at the battle spurred the territory to action, as well as the fact that the other independent Colorado company was stationed at Fort Union—the Confederate goal of the campaign. The 1st Colorado Infantry was raised during the summer and early fall of 1861. Its colonel was John Potts Slough, a Denver lawyer, who was ably assisted by Lieutenant Colonel Samuel Forster Tappan and Major John Milton Chivington.³⁶ On February 22—coincidentally the day after the Battle of Valverde, the seven companies of the 1st Colorado at Denver began their 300-mile march to Fort Union.³⁷ After collecting the remaining 3 companies of the regiment from Fort Wise, Colorado, they continued their march to the south. On March 9, the Colorado troops were met by a messenger from Colonel Gabriel René Paul, commander of Fort Union, who informed them that Confederate troops had taken Albuquerque and Santa Fe and that he expected an attack on his post at any time. The message spurred the troops to undertake a forced night march, covering sixty-seven miles in twenty-four hours, and the regiment arrived at Fort Union on March 11—only 48 hours later. Upon their arrival, the soldiers discovered that the fort was not in immediate danger, the Colorado troops had time to rest and recuperate from their march, and they were issued arms and ammunition.³⁸

Canby ordered Colonel Paul to initiate raids against the Confederates, but also to remain at Fort Union, pending further instructions. The 1st Colorado troops had already gained a reputation for rowdiness, having raided sutlers' stores at the post. Colonel Paul interpreted the orders conservatively, preferring to remain at Fort Union in a defensive posture, but Colonel Slough emphasized the portion of the orders requiring raids against the enemy. The disagreement ended when Slough, by virtue of seniority via his earlier commission as colonel, settled the matter. He justified his actions by referring to his advance as a reconnaissance-in-force, and Slough set out for Bernal Springs, from where his troops could harass Confederate troops advancing from Santa Fe.³⁹ The troops in Slough's advance consisted of his own 1st Colorado, as well as a composite battalion of troops formed from an independent Colorado Infantry company and the 5th U.S. Infantry, a battalion of regular U.S. cavalry, and two batteries of artillery. The total force consisted of just over 1,300 troops.⁴⁰

Major Pyron, in command of Confederate troops at Santa Fe, learned of Slough's movement, and set out to contest the Federal advance with 300 troops from his own 2nd Texas Mounted Rifles and additional companies of the 5th Texas Mounted Volunteers.⁴¹ The Confederates camped at Johnson's Ranch, near the mouth of Apache Canyon. At the same time, Colonel Slough assigned Major John Chivington to lead a column of 400 men on a raid toward Santa Fe. The Union troops camped at Kozlowski's Ranch, close enough to the Confederate soldiers that enemy pickets were reported in the area. The

³⁶ Alberts, *The Battle of Glorieta*, 22-27.

³⁷ Edrington, , *The Battle of Glorieta Pass*, 30-31.

³⁸ Alberts, *The Battle of Glorieta*, 30-34.

³⁹ Ibid., 35-37.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 37-38.

⁴¹ Edrington, *The Battle of Glorieta Pass*, 126.

area was confined, with steep slopes on either side of the Santa Fe Trail, which ran along its bottom.⁴²

On March 26, 1862, Chivington's troops marched west, down into Apache Canyon, toward the Confederate encampment at Johnson's Ranch. As they advanced, they captured the Confederate pickets which enabled them to surprise Major Pyron's Texas battalion, which had been reinforced with two artillery pieces.⁴³ Chivington deployed troops on the slopes to either side of his position in an effort to envelop the enemy line, and the Confederates gave way, retreating back down the canyon and toward their own advancing reinforcements. Continuing the pursuit down the Apache Canyon, Chivington deployed his troops in similar fashion to the earlier fight, and, after a brief engagement which included a futile Union cavalry charge, the Texas troops retreated back to Johnson's Ranch, from whence they started that morning.⁴⁴ The battle resulted in minimal casualties, but the most significant result of the action was the Confederate loss of a quarter of their troops as prisoners. To secure the prisoners, refill canteens, and water the stock, Chivington ordered a withdrawal to his morning's position at Kozlowski's Ranch.⁴⁵ The Battle of Apache Canyon was a Union success, largely due to the capture of the Confederate pickets, which allowed them the element of surprise in the attack. The Texans fared poorly, losing a large number of prisoners, but the day's action was not decisive. Both sides were aware of the close proximity of their opponents, and they gathered reinforcements to renew the battle.⁴⁶

After he learned of Chivington's success, the 1st Colorado's Colonel Slough prepared for his advance down the Santa Fe Trail by organizing his troops into two units. The mounted troops, five companies of the 1st Colorado, and the two batteries of artillery, about 800 troops, formed the main column under Slough's direct control. The remainder of the command, comprising nearly 500 troops, were placed under Major John Chivington's command for use as a flanking force.⁴⁷ Meanwhile, Pyron's command was reinforced by a battalion of the 7th Texas, and most of the 4th Texas under Colonel William Read Scurry, who assumed overall command of the Confederate force which now numbered roughly 1,200 troops.⁴⁸

Slough sent Chivington's column on a march to the southwest while he took the main column through Glorieta Pass, along the Santa Fe Trail.⁴⁹ Federal cavalry met the advancing Texas troops late in the morning of March 28, 1862, and the battle began. Unlike the Battle of Apache Canyon, two days before, the Confederates now seized the initiative and the Union troops under Slough assumed a defensive posture for the duration of the battle, as they awaited the expected flank attack from Chivington's battalion.

⁴² Edrington, *The Battle of Glorieta Pass*, 39-42.

⁴³ Alberts, *The Battle of Glorieta*, 47-50.

⁴⁴ Edrington, *The Battle of Glorieta Pass*, 44-51.

⁴⁵ Hall, *Sibley*, 96-97.

⁴⁶ Edrington, *The Battle of Glorieta Pass*, 55.

⁴⁷ Alberts, *The Battle of Glorieta*, 71-72.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 177-8.

⁴⁹ Edrington, *The Battle of Glorieta Pass*, 64.

Slough deployed his troops on either side of the road at Pigeon's Ranch, with the two batteries of artillery in the center. The Union commander attempted to flank the attacking Confederates by advancing a single company on either side of the slopes to the right and left of the road along the bottom, but the effort failed when Texan counterattacks drove the Union companies back toward the positions of the artillery in the center of the line.⁵⁰ The Colorado troops fell back to Pigeon's Ranch, where Slough began to dismount some of his cavalry reserve for placement on the flanks to support his infantry. Union troops on the right, under Colonel Tappan, held back a Texan assault, but the Union right flank fell back under the weight of another attack, which exposed the two Union batteries in the bottom to enfilading fire.⁵¹ The Union force retreated for the second time, abandoning Pigeon's Ranch to Scurry's force, and gathered at Kozlowski's Ranch—the location of their camp two days prior to the battle.⁵² Throughout the battle of Glorieta Pass, Slough awaited word from Chivington's flanking force. The columns mission was to launch a flanking attack, and, though the Union force remained intact and retreated in good order, Scurry's Texans won a tactical victory and held the field.

Both Slough and Scurry kept their supply trains relatively close at hand, during the battle, though the Federal train remained directly behind the battle lines. Indeed, the Union wagons came under fire during the retreat from Pigeon's Ranch, and two of them were burned to prevent them from falling into Confederate hands.⁵³ To protect his own logistical support, Scurry left his supply train at Johnson's ranch, miles to the rear, where they were presumed safe from Union capture.⁵⁴ In the vast western expanse and sparse population of New Mexico, the efforts of both sides of the conflict depended on supplies.

Before Slough's troops advanced westward on the morning of March 28, Chivington's battalion moved to the southwest. Guided by Lieutenant Colonel Manuel Antonio Chaves of the Second New Mexico Volunteers and a native of the area around Glorieta Pass, Chivington's force arrived on high ground above Johnson's Ranch early in the afternoon of March 28. From their position on the cliffs above the ranch, Chivington and Chaves had a spectacular view of the entire Confederate supply train.⁵⁵ Scurry believed the train was safe, so far behind the lines, and he left only a couple hundred troops to guard it. Most of the guards were sick, wounded, or otherwise unable to join the main force fighting Slough's troops, and their assignment as supply train guards was considered suitable, light duty.⁵⁶ Chivington's troops descended the sheer cliffs in a half-hour's time,⁵⁷ and scattered the scratch force of Texas troops protecting the train. With the loss of only a few of his own soldiers, Chivington captured Scurry's supply train, concentrated the wagons, and burned them together with their contents.⁵⁸ Rather than

⁵⁰ Ibid., 72-76.

⁵¹ Ibid., 78-83.

⁵² Hall, *Sibley*, 107.

⁵³ Alberts, *The Battle of Glorieta*, 121.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 79-80.

⁵⁵ Edrington, *The Battle of Glorieta Pass*, 89-93.

⁵⁶ Alberts, *The Battle of Glorieta*, 79-80.

⁵⁷ Edrington, *The Battle of Glorieta Pass*, 93-94.

⁵⁸ Alberts, *The Battle of Glorieta*, 134.

risk an attack on the Confederate rear, Chivington's battalion returned to Kozlowski's Ranch to reunite with Slough's main column.⁵⁹ Exhausted, and with half of their field officers dead or wounded, the Confederates were not able to pursue.⁶⁰

The Confederate Army of New Mexico won a tactical victory at the Battle of Glorieta Pass, but the victory was barren of strategic results. Slough's retreat to Koslowski's Ranch left Scurry in control of the battlefield, which allowed him to claim victory; however, Chivington's destruction of the Texan supply train spelled disaster for the Confederates. Already suffering from hunger and the elements of winter in the southwestern desert, the Texas troops were hundreds of miles into enemy territory, beyond the reach of resupply or reinforcement.⁶¹ After hearing of the loss of the supply train, Scurry made the difficult decision to withdraw his force back to Santa Fe rather than continue the push toward Fort Union. In the aftermath of the battle, the Confederates were so destitute of equipment that, during a truce after the action, they were forced to borrow tools from Slough's Colorado troops to bury their dead.⁶²

By early April of 1862, both the Union and Confederate armies assessed the situation. Sibley's army had won all of the major battles in the campaign to that point, but the strategic situation was dire. With the supplies around the Santa Fe area depleted, and the local population largely cleaned out by the occupying Texans, Sibley faced a dilemma. His army would not be able to remain longer at Santa Fe, but taking Fort Union's supplies might alleviate the hunger of the troops. However, most of his army's ammunition had been destroyed with Scurry's supply train during the Battle of Glorieta, making an attack on Fort Union with what remained very risky if it did not succeed.⁶³ He hoped to await the arrival of reinforcements and supplies from Texas so that he could continue on to seize Fort Union, but waiting threatened the safety of his command in other ways, as the initiative passed to Canby and Slough.⁶⁴ In the meantime, as he waited on the development of events, Sibley sent a small number of troops into southern Colorado to ignite Confederate support and organize guerilla operations. That action laid the groundwork for a Confederate invasion of Colorado, once Fort Union was seized. If Canby and Slough united their troops, the battle-hardened joint Union force would be too large to defeat in an open contest.⁶⁵ In the end, Canby's actions forced Sibley's hand.

Canby, angered by Slough's unauthorized advance from Fort Union against Scurry's force, continued to worry about the safety of the post (he had not received word of Chivington's destruction of the supply train at Glorieta Pass). On April 8, Canby advanced north from Fort Craig with a column of 1,200 troops (most of them regulars, since Canby had no confidence in the New Mexico Volunteers) and captured the Confederate hospital at Socorro. It was there that Canby learned of the strategic Union

⁵⁹ Edrington, *The Battle of Glorieta Pass*, , 98-100.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 101-3.

⁶¹ Alberts, *The Battle of Glorieta*, 149-150.

⁶² Edrington, *The Battle of Glorieta Pass*, 102-5.

⁶³ Hall, *Sibley*, 116-17.

⁶⁴ Frazier, *Blood & Treasure*, 235-6.

⁶⁵ Hall, *Sibley*, 117-8.

victory at Glorieta and the destruction of Sibley's supply train.⁶⁶ Canby immediately recognized the significance of the events, and decided to combine his force with Slough's troops. The Union army proceeded toward Albuquerque in an effort to bluff Sibley's army out of Santa Fe to defend his rear. The plan worked, Sibley evacuated the territorial capital, and retreated south. The march toward Albuquerque also placed Canby in an ideal situation for uniting with the troops from Fort Union.⁶⁷ After his strategic victory at Glorieta, and facing censure for his controversial decision to advance against the Confederates in violation of Canby's orders, Colonel Slough resigned from the army and returned to Colorado.⁶⁸ Slough's replacement in command of the column, Colonel Gabriel Paul, seized the opportunity presented by the Confederate retreat and marched south for his ordered junction with Canby's army, which was affected on April 13.⁶⁹

Sibley knew that a united Union force south of Albuquerque would cut off his only line of retreat to Texas and that it would be able to intercept any communication and supplies sent from San Antonio. Confederate morale plummeted after Glorieta, and confidence in Sibley's leadership among both officers and the rank and file was at an all-time low.⁷⁰ Among other shortcomings, Sibley never led his army in any of the battles and skirmishes,⁷¹ and Texans prized officers who led from the front. Out of supplies—especially ammunition, beyond the reach of aid from Texas, and out of options, Sibley decided to retreat to Texas and abandon the campaign. However, extracting his army from New Mexico Territory and Canby's pursuing army remained a difficult task. Sibley worried about the ability of his army to fight a major battle—even a defensive contest—with Canby's now-united army. Any Confederate defeat on the battlefield might result in the disintegration and capture of the army. If possible, Sibley desired to avoid further conflict with Union troops as his army withdrew towards the Mesilla Valley.⁷²

Union cavalry overran a small Confederate wagon train near Peralta on April 14, 1862, and the two armies formed for battle. The Confederate force was initially divided by the Rio Grande—potentially a disastrous situation, but was able to mass to meet Canby's army before the Union commander could take advantage of the mistake. Among the few soldiers not able to join the main Confederate force was General Sibley and his staff, who were forced to remain on the west bank, once again leaving Colonel Thomas Green to command the Army of New Mexico. Minor skirmishing took place among the troops, but the major action of the day merely consisted of an artillery duel. Colonel Gabriel Paul and the recently-promoted Colonel John Chivington prepared to lead an infantry assault on the Confederate positions, supported by a cavalry charge, but Canby halted the attack before it began. The Union troops were exhausted from multiple forced-marches, and they needed rest. During the afternoon, a blinding sandstorm ended the

⁶⁶ Ibid., 118-20.

⁶⁷ Frazier, *Blood & Treasure*, 237-8.

⁶⁸ Alberts, *The Battle of Glorieta*, 140-1.

⁶⁹ Hall, *Sibley*, 122-4.

⁷⁰ Frazier, *Blood & Treasure*, 232.

⁷¹ Thompson, *Henry Hopkins Sibley*, 306.

⁷² Hall, *Sibley*, 117-8

encounter and the possibility of combat altogether, and Sibley's army continued its retreat to the South.⁷³ Confederate losses consisted of the captured wagon train, twenty-two of its escort, and a dozen killed and wounded.⁷⁴ Union losses were fewer, with about eight killed and wounded.⁷⁵ At the time, Canby was roundly criticized for refusing to attack Sibley's army at Peralta. However, he knew the Confederates were in retreat and was happy to let them go without further bloodshed. Prisoners consumed rations, and the fact that few supplies remained in New Mexico—even for the Union troops—likely influenced his decision to allow Sibley's escape.⁷⁶

Hoping to avoid another battle with the Union troops at Fort Craig, Sibley proposed a detour around the Union bastion by marching his worn and haggard army through the desert along the base of the San Mateo Mountains and through the Jornada del Muerto Desert. The troops were ordered to wear as much clothing as possible, draw rations for seven days, and burn what they could not carry. Most of the remaining supply wagons were also abandoned, and the mule teams became pack animals.⁷⁷ The route was more than a hundred miles in length, with no access to water along the entire route, and it took the Army of New Mexico nine days to make the march before they met a relief expedition from a battalion of the 7th Texas Mounted Volunteers, which had been left to occupy Mesilla when the campaign began. Men and horses dropped out along the retreat, and debris from the column littered the desert area for years afterward. Sibley's troops were starving, and even their draft animals did not have enough meat on the bones to adequately nourish the men after they were slaughtered.⁷⁸ After his army arrived at Mesilla, Confederate units which had remained in the area were gathered, and the Army of New Mexico continued its retreat to San Antonio, Texas, from where the expedition began in the fall of 1861. Since most of the troops no longer had horses, the retreat was made largely on foot, with little organization. Some of the scattered bands of retreating Texans were harried by Comanche war parties along the retreat through western Texas, and troops continued to straggle into San Antonio into the late summer of 1862.⁷⁹

Sibley's New Mexico Campaign was an unmitigated disaster for his army. Of the 2,500 troops which invaded the territory in early 1862, 1,500 returned to San Antonio, Texas by the end of the summer of that year. Nearly 500 of the Texans became prisoners. Most of those were taken when Canby's forces captured the Confederate hospitals in Santa Fe and Albuquerque, and a number of other prisoners were captured when they straggled or dropped out along the Confederate line of retreat. Roughly another 500 troops died in battle or as a result of starvation or disease. In total, Sibley's Army of New Mexico sustained nearly 40% casualties—a rate which exceeds that of many of the larger battles in the eastern theatres of the Civil War. Additionally, Sibley's

⁷³ Ibid., 127-30.

⁷⁴ Frazier, *Blood & Treasure*, 248.

⁷⁵ Hall, *Sibley*, 130.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 130-1.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 133-7.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 137-9.

⁷⁹ Frazier, *Blood & Treasure*, 259-77.

army lost all of its artillery, with the exception of the guns from McRae's battery, which they took at the Battle of Valverde. Determined to keep the trophies of their hard-fought victory, the troops took extra pains to drag them back to Texas, where they were permanently attached to the brigade and became known as "The Valverde Battery." The captured guns were important to them, since they represented the only real gain of the campaign!⁸⁰

The New Mexico Campaign constituted the farthest Confederate advance into the American West. The campaign provides an example of the gulf between tactical and strategic success—how winning individual battles doesn't always mean victory in a strategic sense. Though officials along the West Coast, and in mining districts in Montana and Colorado, worried about Confederate irregulars and sympathizers, no significant threats to Union control of the West remained after the retreat of Sibley's army. The irregulars sent to Colorado by Sibley in the days after the Battle of Glorieta caused only minor problems throughout the remainder of the war.⁸¹ The New Mexico campaign is also noteworthy because it was among the few Civil War campaigns based almost entirely on the capture of enemy stockpiles of supplies to ensure its operational success. Though likely never intended as an end, in and of itself, the Confederate capture of New Mexico Territory would have been a stepping stone to conquests farther north and west. The campaign is largely overlooked by most students of the Civil War, though it provided an interesting backdrop for several Hollywood films of the 1950s and 1960s which sought to connect the romance of the American West with the drama of the Civil War. The outcome of the campaign is not in dispute, but Sibley's New Mexico Campaign merits attention as a Confederate attempt at Manifest Destiny, and it continues to provide those Civil War scholars who undertake its study with plenty of fuel for debate about what might have been.

⁸⁰ Hall, *Sibley*, 141.

⁸¹ Frazier, *Blood & Treasure*, 292.