

THE ROAD TO GLORIETA



"Braver men never fought, died, or conquered, than the soldiers of the Sibley Brigade." - Colonel James Reily

The retreat to San Antonio spelled the end of the Confederate Army of New Mexico, but it was just another stop along the road for the Sibley Brigade. Sibley's volunteers enlisted for the duration, and the war was far from over. Everyone received sixty day furloughs and, with the admonition that they were subject to recall at a moment's notice, they were given leave to head home. The men dispersed to see loved ones and get some much needed rest, but they were also under orders to remount and re-outfit themselves. (1)

In the fall of 1862, there was no lack of Confederate field commands that wanted to be reinforced by three regiments of battle hardened cavalry. During the brigade's furlough period, there was considerable confusion about where to send it next. In accordance with orders from the War Department, Sibley spent the most of September and part of October, at his temporary headquarters in Marshall, Texas making preparations to report his troops to Louisiana. By October 18, the Confederate high command had changed its mind. General Sibley was informed by Major General Holmes, commanding the Trans-Mississippi District that the brigade was ordered to Richmond, Virginia with as little delay as possible. These orders were to take precedence over any others that might previously have called for the troops to move to Louisiana. To expedite the move, Major G.M. Bryan, the Assistant Adjutant-General stationed at Little Rock, Arkansas, was ordered to Marshall to superintend the organizing. Bryan's orders stated, that he was to draw on conscripts to bring the regiments back up to full strength, then armed or not, the moment each was organized, it was to be hurried to Richmond. (2)

Shortly, plans changed again. In late October Major General Holmes countermanded the orders for the move to Richmond, telling General Sibley to sit tight at Marshall and await further orders. Within days, however, Sibley was on his way to the Confederate capital to respond to charges levied for his conduct in New Mexico. Colonel Reily, who was left in command, issued a call for the brigade to rendezvous. "This order was obeyed with great promptness on the part of all," and by November 6, all three regiments were in place on Clear Creek, near Hempstead and Millican. To facilitate movement, the brigade's camps were situated, on the Houston and Texas Central Railroad. For about a month, the companies remained bivouacked, reorganizing and occasionally drilling. During much of this time, "with scarcely any intermission, it rained, blew and froze." Without tents everyone was wet and cold. Clothing was also inadequate and many of the soldiers had barely "a dry stitch of clothing on them for that whole time." Once again the Sibley Brigade was ill prepared. Not quite away from their homes, the memories of family and hearth still fresh, some of the men were already suffering. (3)

The counter orders which held the brigade in Texas, were considered "happy tidings" by the state's military authorities. Federal Gunboats had recently invaded Galveston Harbor, and there was a Union beachhead in the city. The Confederate garrison at Virginia Point, on the mainland opposite Galveston Island, was in danger of being outflanked and starved into surrender. The presence of Sibley's seasoned veterans, near Houston, presented all sorts of possibilities. On November 6, Colonel X.B. DeBray, commander of the area's Sub-Military District wrote; "If this is true, and if the general commanding can spare some troops, I could not only hold Virginia Point, but even reoccupy Galveston." DeBray knew that Sibley's troops were designated cavalry, but he also knew that they were really dragoons, who had fought as infantry in New Mexico. (4)

While DeBray waited expectantly to see if his request would bear fruit, the Confederate authorities reached an altogether different decision. On November 26, William R. Scurry, now a Brigadier General, was ordered to take over command of the brigade from Reily, and march it to the vicinity of Vicksburg. By this time everyone was interested in Sibley's men. Between the 26th and the 29th, Headquarters of both the Trans-Mississippi and the District of Texas issued orders requesting "without delay" information on "the numbers and condition of their troops, how armed, and the amount of ammunition on hand." (5)

General John C. Pemberton, commanding the Vicksburg area, had requested that he be reinforced with 10,000 troops from the Trans-Mississippi. Lieutenant General Theophilus Holmes,

commanding that department, was ill-disposed to hand over such a large portion of his command, and replied, that Sibley's cavalry were all that could be immediately spared. Upset with Holmes decision, Pemberton complained to Jefferson Davis, that Sibley's men "will help Vicksburg but little." For his part, Davis wrote; "I am disappointed by a renewed attempt to withdraw Sibley's brigade from the special service for which it was designed." Evidently, the President still viewed the brigade as his army of the Far West. (6)

Into this picture walked Major General John Bankhead Magruder. Recently assigned, on November 29, Magruder assumed command of the District of Texas, New Mexico and Arizona. One of his first actions was to assess the fighting readiness of Sibley's regiments. During their retreat from New Mexico, many of the men had sold their weapons to procure food and clothing, As yet they'd had little luck in rearming. The Major General found that only 1,200 of the men were armed, "and those indifferently." Despite the lack of arms, Magruder agreed with DeBray, that the brigade could do useful service at Galveston. On December 12, unable to find any reliable information about the brigade's orders, General Magruder seized the initiative and told Scurry to march it to Houston. (7)

Within days, Magruder learned of the Vicksburg orders. Instead of immediately complying, he wrote to Lieutenant General Holmes and begged that the orders be countermanded. Meanwhile, the 5th and the 7th regiments were ordered back to Hempstead, and the 4th was sent to Cypress City. What happened next became remembered as one of the glorious moments in the Sibley Brigade's history.

The Federal fleet lying in Galveston's waters consisted of the steamship Harriet Lane, carrying four heavy guns and two 24-pounder howitzers, commanded by Captain J.M. Wainwright, U.S. Navy; the Westfield, flagship of Commodore W.B. Renshaw, a large propeller driven ship, mounting eight heavy guns, the Owasco, a similar ship to the Westfield; the Clifton, a steam propeller with four heavy guns; the Sachem, another four gunned, steam propeller; two armed transports, two large barks, and an armed schooner. The Union's "land forces were stationed at the end of a long dock, called Kuhn's wharf, where they were crowded into large buildings immediately under the guns of the steamships. The approaches landward to this position were impeded by two lines of strong barricades, and communication with the shore was destroyed by the removal of portions of the wharf in front of the barricades." To dislodge this toehold and drive the formidable armada from the bay, Major General Magruder devised a desperate plan. (9)

Captain A.R. Wier, a Captain of Artillery at a fort on the Sabine River, volunteered to Magruder, that if a steamship could be armed, his company would work the guns and attempt to expel the enemy fleet. Plying the waters of Buffalo Bayou, between Houston and Galveston, at this time, were two small packets, the "Bayou City" and the "Neptune." Acting on Wier's suggestion, Magruder ordered the steamers outfitted as gunboats and prepared for immediate service. A platform was added on the Bayou City, and she was mounted with a 32-pounder rifled gun. The Neptune was likewise outfitted with two 24-pounder howitzers. There was no time or resources to armor the boats, so bales of cotton were stacked "on the decks of both to give the appearance of protection." With the two "cottonclads" and two smaller tenders as his navy, and land troops supported by six heavy siege guns and fourteen pieces of field artillery, Magruder intended to assault the superior Union force and recapture Galveston. (10)

Work on the Bayou City and the Neptune went on day and night. At half past one o'clock on Christmas afternoon, Sibley's men, drowsing at Cypress and Hempstead, were roused by: the whistling of locomotives, the rumbling of railroad cars and the blaring of bugles. Without their horses, the soldiers were quickly loaded into three long trains. By daybreak they were in Houston. Everyone was excited, and the men of all three regiments were "all shouting, cheering and yelling, as though 'old Nick' had sent them to perform a duty which could not be done without a ---- of a sight of noise." (11)

By year end, the two cottonclads were finished and everything was in readiness for the attack. The only issue yet unresolved was, who would man the Bayou City and the Neptune. Magruder's plan called for each vessel to carry 150 volunteers, armed with shotguns, to serve as marines. To this end, large posters were stuck up all about Houston, exhorting citizens, clerks, and other civilians to come forward in the hour of their country's need. Despite the posters, and a large noisy recruiting parade, the two "warships" were still without crew. Seeing the difficulty, Tom Green immediately stepped forward. The Colonel asked for command of the tiny fleet's land forces, and said, that, if "allowed to take his own men and pick his own officers," he would provide the marines. Not to be outdone, Author Pendleton Bagby, who replaced William Steele as colonel of Sibley's 7th Regiment, also volunteered to lead a contingent of his men onto the steamboats. Major General Magruder gratefully accepted both offers. (12)

On the afternoon of December 31, 1862, Colonel Green and Colonel Bagby called out their respective regiments and lined them up in dress parade formation. Mounted, the two officers rode

slowly down the long lines and told the troops about the offer they had made. Speaking frankly they told the men of the danger of the plan. "If the enemy struck one of the little boats with one shell, let alone a broadside, the little craft would be sunk." No one would be forced to go on the hazardous undertaking, but a 150 men were needed for each boat. At this point, Green shouted to his men; "Boys I want 300 volunteers who are willing to die for their country and die now." "All who would volunteer to march four paces to the front. March!" Private Felix Collard wrote; "The men who had smelled gun-powder before at Valverde and Glorieta would attack the Old Boy in his den if their old officers were in command." At the command, "March," every single man in both regiments stepped forward! As approximately 1,700 men volunteered, this number was divided by 300. Every 5th or 6th man was told to stand fast while the rest were told to step back to their original positions. (13)

Bivouacked some distance away, the 4th Regiment and its officers never heard anything of the game until it was blocked. As soon as he got wind of what was happening, Colonel Reily also offered to lead troops from his command onto the boats. As Reily was then brigade commander, General Magruder politely refused the offer. Some 60 men with Lieutenant Giles B. Crain also volunteered, and tried every conceivable way to get on board, but were also declined. Leaving the marines to meet their boats, Lieutenant Colonel Henry C. McNeil and Major Gustav Hoffman led the remainder of the 5th and 7th regiments down to join the 4th, encamped at Harrisburg. (14)

General Magruder planned his assault for midnight on New Year's Eve. While the Neptune and the Bayou City were making their way down the meandering course of Buffalo Bayou, the General positioned his land forces. Magruder considered Fort Point, at the mouth of the harbor, as key to the whole assault. The fort which lay two miles above the town, was designed facing seaward and was entirely open in the rear. Even though it afforded no protection from the enemy ships in the harbor, Magruder garrisoned it heavily, assigning a section of artillery and six companies of dismounted men from Colonel Pyron's regiment. Another six gun battery was to attack the enemy from the landward end of Kuhn's wharf. A railroad ram mounted with an 8-inch siege gun was sent to Galveston's upper wharf. The remainder of Magruder's artillery was placed as opportunity dictated. Colonel Joseph J. Cook, commanding Cook's Texas Regiment, was entrusted with a 500 man storming party. This group consisted of his own men and others detailed from Pyron's command. Furnished with ladders, these troops would attempt scale the torn up sections of the center wharf, and carry the barricades. General Scurry was placed in command of the remainder of Pyron's

Regiment, the Sibley' Brigade, and other available units, and was to act as support for the whole.
(15)

The logistics of coordinating the attack were formidable, and Magruder warned Commodore Leon Smith, in command of the naval expedition, that he would strike at the Union fleet whether or not the Neptune and Bayou City made their appearance. Things got off to a slow start, but shortly after three o'clock in the morning the moon went down and Scurry's men drove in the Union pickets. By 3:30 Confederate artillery arrived in Galveston's main market square. Telegraphic communication was set up between the land troops and their little navy, waiting at Union Point. With his guns in position, General Magruder sent the following dispatch;

"Col. Tom Green, Commanding the Boats: All is ready. The storming rangers of the land send greeting to the storming rangers of the sea."

Three times, Colonel Green read the message to his "horse marines", and each time it was met with the loudest of cheers. It was agreed that the fire of the center gun at Kuhn's Wharf would be the signal for the start of the assault. (16)

The night was pitch black, and the Owasco and the Harriet Lane were lying just off the end of the Union controlled wharf. It was about half past four o'clock, when targeting the Owasco by the light of the stars twinkling overhead, General Magruder himself fired the first round. Quick as thought, the rest of the Confederate artillery open fire. Magruder's second round was aimed at the Harriet Lane. For about three minutes the Rebel guns blazed away without reply. Then, the sky exploded. "A flash, and the whole surface of the water was lighted; and like lightening it kept flying from right to left with such rapid succession that one could scarcely discern the pauses of intervals between each broadside." Next, came the thundering sound. "No," recalled Theophilus Noel watching from shore, "thunder bears no analogy to the sounds that there met our ears." The ground under Sibley's men fairly quaked as broadside after broadside roared into the city. "Sheets of flame, screaming and bursting shells, showers of grape, and the report of heavy guns, all served to render it one of the most terrific, as well as beautiful, scenes that ever met the gaze of man." (17)

Federal warships opened with explosive shell, but lying no more than 300 yards from the Rebel batteries, they soon changed to grape and canister. The Confederate artillery was badly unprotected. Still, under the cover of darkness, Magruder's gunners persisted, boldly working their

pieces. After an hour of almost continuous firing, Colonel Cook advanced leading his storming party. Charging to reach the torn up end of the enemy held wharf, Cook and his men waded into the dark waters of the bay lugging their scaling ladders. Alerted and ready, the 42nd Massachusetts Militia was manning the Union barricades. From the moment Cook's men stepped into the open, they were exposed to the storm of grape and canister coming from the bay, and to an equally deadly hail of musketry from the 42nd. Obstinate the storming party pressed on. The water soon proved deep, and the wharf higher than anticipated. With scaling ladders too short to achieve their goal, the raiders had no choice, but to seek cover or be slaughtered. Colonel Cook ordered a retreat. (18)

After Cook's repulse, Magruder's attack began to flounder. The Federal barrage was unceasing, and some of the Confederate artillerymen were driven from their pieces. With daylight fast approaching, and his little navy nowhere in sight, General Magruder decided to withdraw his batteries. "The delicate duty of withdrawing the pieces in the city from the close vicinity of the enemy was entrusted to Brigadier General Scurry, who performed it with skill and gallantry." As the Sibley Brigade moved through the streets they were constantly under fire. One soldier later "remembered very distinctly feeling the 'wind'" as a shell screamed along the line of his column, passing not five feet over the head of the lowest man. (19)

At about seven o'clock, as the guns were being withdrawn, the Union fire suddenly became lighter. Then, it ceased altogether. After a moment of dread silence, it renewed with broadside after broadside, but no longer directed at the shore. Without warning, the Neptune and the Bayou City had come dashing into the harbor and engaged the Harriet Lane. On the deck of each of the cottonclads were coiled, tarred rope ladders, and beside each was a "cow boy" with a grappling hook. The plan was, ram the Harriet Lane and then board her. Despite the surprise, Captain Wainwright, of the Federal Navy, fought his ship gallantly.

The Bayou City made the first assault, drawing close enough for some of the Texans to throw their grappling hooks. These were quickly cut away by the Federal sailors and the Bayou City drifted past its target. Next the Neptune attacked. Trying to close on the Harriet Lane's larboard side, Neptune was struck somewhere near mid ship by a shell which penetrated her cotton armor and killed a number of those on board. Without slowing, she ran square into the Union ship. "When she struck the Lane, she stove in her bows and began rapidly to sink." Fortunately for those on board the cottonclad, the water was shallow, and they were able to avoid a swim by scrambling

onto her hurricane deck. From this precarious position the Texans continued to direct their shotguns against the enemy. (20)

With Neptune out of commission, Captain Wainwright turned his attention back to the Bayou City. As she once more rushed forward, he attempted to run her down. Henry S. Lubbock, the cottonclad's captain was an experienced steamboat skipper, and adroitly evaded the deadly stroke. In the near miss, the Bayou City's larboard wheelhouse was torn away. "Again the Bayou City, while receiving several broadsides almost at the cannon's mouth, poured into the Harriet Lane a destructive fire of small-arms." Almost at the start of the action, the Bayou City's 32 pounder burst killing the heroic Captain Wier. With his best gun out of commission, Captain Lubbock brought his boat around and drove her prow into the iron wheel of the Harriet Lane, locking the two vessels together. Instantly, Colonel Green's "horse marines" cleared the decks of the Federal ship with a volley from their shotguns, and their grappling hooks sailed through the air. "The ropes caught, and men were now climbing the rope ladders, six-shooters in hand, some with spurs on." A Federal officer was shouting for his men to bring axes and cut away the ropes. Before he could get anyone to respond, Tom Jones of Company G, 7th Regiment, killed him with a blast from his shotgun. Commodore Leon Smith, the Rebel naval commander, leaped to the deck of the Harriet Lane, followed closely by Tom Green and the rest of the volunteers. After a moment of feeble resistance the ship was theirs. Defiant to the last, Captain Wainwright was killed by Commodore Smith in personal combat. (21)

Realizing that the Harriet Lane was lost, the Owasco passed alongside, and, before being driven away by musketry, poured a broadside into the vessel at close quarters. Early on, the Union flagship Westfield tried to come to the Harriet Lane's assistance, but ran aground. Despite efforts of the Clifton to get her off, she was stuck fast. Feeling that he momentarily had the upper hand, Commodore Smith raised a white flag and quickly sent a message to Commodore Renshaw. Smith's communique demanded nothing less than the surrender of the entire Union fleet. He gave Renshaw three hours to consider. Without surrendering, Renshaw accepted the truce. All the Union vessels were immediately brought to anchor, and raised white flags. (22)

On shore, Colonel Isaac Burrell, commanding the 42nd Massachusetts, saw the white flags, assumed the worst, and after a short period of indecision, surrendered his command. General Scurry accepted Burrell's sword and the Union troops were promptly marched away as prisoners.

After occupying Kuhn's wharf, General Magruder and his men spent the next two hours getting the disabled Harriet Lane and the Bayou City to shore, and their wounded to safety. (23)

With the truce set to expire, Magruder sent Colonel Green and Captain Lubbock to Commodore Renshaw with another message. Probably needing an extension of the cease-fire for his own operations, the General offered Renshaw more time to consider the demand that he surrender his fleet. Before the Confederate launch could reach the enemy flagship, the Westfield exploded. Believing that his vessel could not be freed, Commodore Renshaw had decided to destroy it, rather than risk its capture. All the crew were taken off by the armed transports, the Saxon and the Mary Boardman, but Captain Renshaw and several others were accidentally killed in the blast. Renshaw, Lieutenant Charles W. Zimmerman, and two other officers set a slow match to the ship's magazine. Somehow they misjudged the timing. Last to leave, Commodore Renshaw was climbing down a ladder to the waiting captain's gig, when the magazine exploded prematurely. The Union commander and everyone in the gig died instantly. (24)

Back on shore, Colonel Scurry sent a message to General Magruder asking if his artillery should open fire when the truce expired. Magruder told him, "No," and advised him to sit tight pending the outcome of Green's and Lubbock's overture. Those officers, meanwhile, boarded the ship of the Union's next in command, and delivered their message. While they were awaiting a reply, the ship weighed anchor and began to drop down the bay towards the bar and the open ocean. Green and Lubbock were carried some distance towards the bar, before they were put off. By then, the period of the first truce had lapsed. Following suit, the remainder of the Federal fleet, "regardless of the white flags still flying at their mast-heads, gradually crept off." With two of their ships lost, their commander dead, and their land troops captured, the Union force was making for the sea. As soon as General Magruder realized what was happening, he sent a swift express rider to General Scurry, directing him to open fire. This was done with so much effect that one of the smaller ships was sunk near the bar, and the Owasco was seriously damaged. After firing at the retreating enemy with one of the Harriet Lane's heavy deck guns, Commodore Smith jumped on board a Confederate steam tender, the John F. Carr, and gave chase. Operating in the immediate presence of the heavier Union vessels, Smith managed to cut off and capture the two small barks and the schooner. Out of a fleet of Union eight ships, only three successfully escaped across the bar. (25)

In spite of being at the forefront of the action, losses to the Sibley Brigade were fairly light. Eighteen men were killed and twenty-four wounded. Most of the casualties were sustained by the 7th regiment, a large number occurring aboard Neptune. Serving as marines, Company I had seven men killed and Company A, seven wounded. Isaac Adair's Company H lost, nineteen-year-old, J.D. White.

The recapture of Galveston was an important emotional victory for the people of Texas, and was widely honored. Jefferson Davis wrote personal congratulations to General Magruder, praising the "brilliant exploit" for "boldness of the conception and the daring and skill of its execution." Lieutenant General Holmes felt that the action reflected "much credit on the Department of the Trans-Mississippi," and commended Magruder and his command for their "zeal and energy," and "for the great gallantry displayed on the occasion." The Legislature of the State of Texas even issued a formal resolution of thanks for the "brilliant victory." General Magruder was careful to credit all those involved. He heaped laurels on Sibley's men saying, that "every man won for himself imperishable renown." In his after action report, the General wrote; "The alacrity with which officers and men, all of them totally unacquainted with this novel kind of service, some of whom had never seen a ship before, volunteered for an enterprise so extraordinarily and apparently desperate in its character and the bold and dashing manner in which the plan was executed, are certainly deserving of the highest praise." (27)

For Sibley's men, Galveston was a redemption. It was one thing to win Pyrrhic victories in a desolate country, nearly 1,000 miles away from friends and family. It was something entirely different to drive the foe from one's own back yard. The forced retreat out of New Mexico left a dark cloud hanging over the brigade, but the victory at Galveston dispelled it. Colonel Reily, afterwards, told General Magruder; "There is not an officer or man in the brigade that does not feel proud of having fought under your immediate command, and we separate with sorrow from a hero who has learned us how to conquer both on land and water." (28)

Before word spread, that the Federals were routed, and the city recaptured, General Magruder was chastised for diverting Sibley's regiments. The same people who soon applauded him, were initially critical of his decision. The day after the battle, Lieutenant General Holmes replied to Magruder's request for use of the brigade. In a short note, written by his adjutant, Holmes said, that the brigade's orders for movement to Louisiana came directly from the War Department. He had no authority to change them. About two weeks later, President Davis, learned of the diversion.

Straightaway, he directed Adjutant-General Cooper to call Magruder's attention to the order requiring Sibley's brigade to proceed to Opelousas, and demand immediate compliance. General Magruder responded with a preliminary report of his success and stated; "I shall spare no efforts to facilitate the departure of Sibley's brigade. They will proceed to New Iberia, La." (29)

With the pressure on for the brigade to get to Louisiana, they didn't tarry long near Galveston. For a few days after the battle, the regiments camped near the city's gas works, but by the 16th they were headed back to Hempstead. The 4th Regiment went on to Navasota, and the 5th and the 7th went into their old camps. Over the next couple of weeks, Colonel Reily "used every formal and official influence" in his power to get the brigade equipped and moving. The men, however, were "almost unclad, and half armed." Without transportation or funds, Reily achieved little success. Then, around the 27th of January, his quartermaster received an infusion of cash. The brigade was paid for the first time since its return to Texas. Each man received four months' pay, amounting to about \$170. The Colonel was also able to issue some clothing and a few blankets. Quickly, Reily put five companies on the road for Louisiana. As soon as more wagons and horses were collected, other companies departed. Just as on the march to New Mexico, the 7th Regiment was split into two battalions. The first consisted of companies: A, B, C, F, and G, under the command of Colonel Bagby. The second which included Companies D, E, I, and Isaac Adair's men from Company H, was led by Major Hoffman. By February 18, fifteen companies were in route with orders to rendezvous near Cheneyville. Movement was slow because of swollen streams in the district and the impassable condition of roads. The remainder of the troops intended to press forward as soon as transportation could be arranged. (30)

General Richard Taylor wrote in his memoirs that in the 2nd week of March, 1,300 of Sibley's men rode into Opelousas. He was delighted to receive the reinforcements, but remarked, that the force was so badly armed, that "to equip it exhausted the resources of the little arsenal at New Iberia." General Taylor was regular army. His initial appraisal of the brigade was that "men were hardy and many of the officers brave and zealous." He felt "the value of these qualities," however, "was lessened by lack of discipline." Still he noted, "They surpassed most of the mounted men who subsequently joined me, discipline among these 'shining by its utter absence.'" Taylor recalled that riding out to inspect one such troop of Texans; upon entering their camp, he was met with a profound silence which, he took to be a sign of good order. The men were assembled under the shade of some trees, and much absorbed. As Taylor drew closer, he found the unit's colonel seated

on the ground, with a blanket spread before him. The colonel was dealing monte. When Taylor refused to join the game and requested the officer's attention, it was only with some displeasure that the worthy abandoned his amusement. "Officers and men," wrote Taylor, "addressed each other as Tom, Dick, or Harry, and had no more conception of military graduations than of the celestial hierarchy of the poets." (31)

With the total number of troops at his command numbering less than 4,000, Sibley's men constituted an important part of General Taylor's army. The brigade's lack of discipline may have concerned the Major General, but just the same, he gave the three regiments key assignments. Many of his men were raw recruits, who hadn't ever been under fire. Taylor knew that the proven veterans of the New Mexico campaign could be trusted to do their duty. At the battle at Bisland he deployed his force so that Sibley's men could anchor his line. Tom Green and 5th Regiment were dismounted and placed on the extreme right. Colonel Bagby and the 7th Texas Mounted Volunteers, also dismounted, were "thrown forward as skirmishers and sharpshooters to the front and in the woods on the extreme left." Colonel Reily and the 4th Regiment were held as reserves at Hutchin's Point, where they could contest an anticipated Federal landing from Grand Lake. (32)

During the fighting the brigade performed with courage and determination. Distributed on both sides of Bayou Teche, the opposing Union commander, General Nathaniel Banks, had about 14,000 men facing the Confederate line. At around eleven o'clock on Monday, the 13th of April, they advanced with confidence against the Rebels' simple earthworks. Banks' force included about sixty pieces of field artillery and these pounded the Confederates unmercifully. Many of the cannon were heavy rifled pieces or Parrot guns and the Union gunners used them with killing effect. Colonel Green's corner of the line, in particular, became uncomfortably hot, and the Valverde battery was badly cut up. With no place in the line especially cool, the 5th Regiment hunkered down and endured the cannonade. After the Federals deemed their enemy sufficiently softened up, they tried to carry the works. Attempting to turn the Confederate right flank, Brigadier General Godfrey Weitzel, twice threw the 75th and the 114th New York infantry regiments against Green's line. Immediately to Green's front was a 600 acre sugar cane field, 300 acres of which was cut by the Texans to provide an open field of fire. To his right was a marsh "covered with green scummy ponds filled with alligators and terrapins." The charging Federals were hampered by the impassable swamp, and both times the New Yorkers were repulsed with considerable loss. Seeing the enemy driven back in confusion, the 5th Texas Mounted Volunteers jumped up from their breastworks and

made a brief sortie into the thicket. Brigadier Weitzel, quickly rallied his men, and Texans themselves were repulsed. (33)

On the Confederate left, the action was equally hot. Sent forward to reconnoiter, an artillery shell exploded among the men of Isaac Adair's old company. "A piece of shell, as large as a man's hand, struck one of the men of Company 'H' just above the belt." Looking down and seeing "all of his abdominal viscera were hanging over his knees." The unfortunate trooper exclaimed, "My God! Look at that," and then collapsed. Colonel Bagby, leading the defense on the left was wounded in the shoulder. Throughout the day, the "Seventh Texas Mounted Volunteers, dismounted, and a detachment of the Eighteenth Louisiana Regiment held the left against all attacks which were made, and at the close of the engagement the enemy had gained no ground since its commencement." (34)

Eventually the pressure of Bank's superior force proved too much and the Confederates were forced to give ground. Passing through the nearby town of Franklin, the retreat continued past Opelousas and didn't stop until it reached Natchitoches, nearly 200 miles up the Red River. After the withdrawal from southern Louisiana the soldiers of the Sibley Brigade remained in the Trans-Mississippi Department, fighting and skirmishing almost constantly. In the winter of 1863-1864, they were briefly returned to Texas, which was threatened with invasion along its extensive coast. In the spring the threat evaporated, and the brigade was hurried back to Louisiana. Almost one year to the day after their defense at Bisland, Sibley's men were with General Taylor, when he broke the back of the Federals' Red River campaign in the actions at Mansfield and Pleasant Hill forcing General Banks army into retreat. Some of the Union dead, who littered the fields after these two battles, were found with the motto "To Texas or to Hell" on their hat bands. According to Private Felix Collard of the 7th Regiment; "It was very evident that they did not get to Texas." (35)

To the end, Sibley's Texans remained an independent and somewhat peculiar command. The men were "hardy frontiersmen, excellent riders, and skilled riflemen, were fearless and self-reliant, but discharged their duty as they liked and when they liked. On a march they wandered about at will, as they did about camp, and could be kept together only when a fight was impending. When their arms were injured by service or neglect, they threw them away, expecting to be supplied with others." "Yet, with these faults," wrote General Taylor, "they were admirable fighters, and in the end I became so much attached to them as to be incapable of punishing them." (36)

During the summer and the fall of 1864 the men were "marched first here and then there in northern Louisiana and southern Arkansas." The brigade's last actions were a raid on Vidalia on July 23, 1864 and a skirmish at Session's Plantation on August 5th. The winter of 1864 was spent bivouacked at Whiteoak Shoals, Arkansas, on the Red River. In the spring of 1865, the brigade was marched back into north east Texas. Laying in camp near Lake Skidmore in Houston County, it was found awaiting orders, when the Trans-Mississippi surrendered on June 2nd. (37)

Between February of 1862 and August of 1864, the men, once known as The Confederate Army of New Mexico, fought fifteen actions, classed as battles. Interspersed with these were at least forty-nine skirmishes in which three or more men were killed. There are no exact casualty records for the brigade's entire term of service, but it is safe to say that total losses, for the three regiments of volunteers, exceeded 1,200. At a minimum: 261 of the Texans lost their lives in battle, 481 or more were wounded, and at least 449 died of disease. Forty-one soldiers from Company H, 7th Texas Mounted Volunteers, lost their lives in service of the Confederacy. (38)

In the first decades following the Civil War, the ex-soldiers of the Sibley Brigade, like so many other Southern veterans, formed enduring fraternal organizations. Organized in 1891 in Houston County, Texas, Crockett Camp No. 141, of the United Confederate Veterans, carried no fewer than fifty-seven men on its rolls, who listed their brigade as Sibley's or Green's. Of these, fifteen served with Isaac Adair in Company H. Every year in June, for as long as the veterans lived, the men of the Sibley Brigade met for a reunion. As the men aged and their numbers dwindled, they eventually combined their gatherings with those of Hood's Texas Brigade. In 1927, eighty-seven-year-old ex-private, Henry C. Wright reported that only ten survivors from the old brigade were left at their annual get-together. It isn't known when the last of Sibley's men passed away, but the last surviving veteran of the Civil War was Walter Washington Williams, a forager for Hood's Brigade, who died on December 19, 1959 at the age of 117. (39)

Footnotes

1. Noel, Campaign from Santa Fe, p.61; Hall, Sibley's New Mexico Campaign, p.214.
2. OR,I,XV,p.819, H.H. Sibley to Hon. George W. Randolph, Secretary of War, Richmond, Va.; OR,I,XV,p.832, S.S. Anderson to Brig. Gen. P.O. Herbert; OR,I,XV,p.833, S.S. Anderson to Maj. G.M. Bryan.
3. Noel, Campaign from Santa Fe, pp.61-62; OR,I,XV,p.843, S.S. Anderson to Brig. Gen. P.O. Herbert; Collard, Reminiscences, p.10.
4. OR,I,XV,p.856, X.B. Debray to Capt. Samuel Boyer Davis.

5. OR,I,XV,p.879, S.S. Anderson, Assistant Adjutant-General to Maj. Gen. J.B. Magruder; OR,I,XV,p.881, A.G. Dickinson, Major and Assistant Adjutant-General.
6. Crist, The Papers of Jefferson Davis, Volume 8, pp.523-524.
7. OR,I,XV,p.894, J. Bankhead Magruder to General S. Cooper; OR,I,XV,p.897, J.Bankhead Magruder to Col. S.S. Anderson.
8. OR,I,XV,pp.902-903, J.Bankhead Magruder to Col. S.S. Anderson; Noel, Campaign from Santa Fe, p.62.
9. OR,I,XV,p.213, Report of J. Bankhead Magruder, Major General, commanding.
10. The heaviest of Magruder's six siege pieces weighed in at 5,400 pounds. One, an 8-inch Dahlgren was mounted on a railroad ram, and was carried by rail to a point only a few hundred yards from the nearest Union ship. The Confederates' 3 heaviest remaining guns were transported 9 miles over difficult roads to get them to the scene of the action. Collard, Reminiscences, p.10; OR,I,XV,p.908, C.G. Forshey, Consulting Engineer, to Colonel DeBray; OR,I,XV,p.213, Report of J. Bankhead Magruder, Major General, commanding.
11. Noel, Campaign from Santa Fe, p.62.
12. Ibid, pp.62-63; OR,I,XV,p.213, Report of J. Bankhead Magruder, Major General, commanding.
13. There is some disagreement over exactly how many volunteers were requested. The majority of sources say 300, but others say that only 150 were called. Collard, Reminiscences, p.11; Davidson, "Reminiscences of the Old Brigade," June 14, 1888, Davidson.
14. Noel, Campaign from Santa Fe, p.63; OR,I,XV,p.213, Report of J. Bankhead Magruder, Major General, commanding.
15. Noel, Campaign from Santa Fe, p.63; OR,I,XV,p.213, Report of J. Bankhead Magruder, Major General, commanding.
16. Noel, Campaign from Santa Fe, p.63; OR,I,XV,p.213, Report of J. Bankhead Magruder, Major General, commanding; OR,I,XV,pp.206-207, Report of Lieutenant Charles A. Davis, Adjutant 42nd Massachusetts Infantry.
17. Noel, Campaign from Santa Fe, pp.64-66; OR,I,XV,p.214, Report of J. Bankhead Magruder, Major General, commanding.
18. Ibid.
19. Noel, Campaign from Santa Fe, p.64; OR,I,XV,p.214, Report of J. Bankhead Magruder, Major General, commanding.
20. Some accounts say the Neptune was sunk by a broadside from the Harriet Lane. William Davidson, who was on board the cottonclad, however, contends that; "No gun ever touched the hull of the Neptune. Nor could the Lane have depressed her guns enough to touch the hull." Davidson, "Reminiscences of the Old Brigade," June 14, 1888, .
21. General Magruder's contention that Commodore Smith killed Captain Wainwright in personal combat is disputed by William Davidson. Davidson, who was serving aboard Neptune, says that Wainwright was killed by small arms fire from his boat, and "was lying dead upon the deck, shot through the head," when the Texans boarded. Regardless of how the Commodore died, Davidson noted; "He was a brave man, and fell at his post." Collard, Reminiscences p.12; Noel, Campaign from Santa Fe, p.66; OR,I,XV,pp.210-211 & 215, Reports of J. Bankhead Magruder, Major General, commanding; Davidson, "Reminiscences of the Old Brigade," June 14, 1888.
22. OR,I,XV,p.215, Report of J. Bankhead Magruder, Major General, commanding.

23. OR,I,XV,pp.206-207, Report of Lieutenant Charles A. Davis, Adjutant Forty-second Massachusetts Infantry; OR,I,XV,pp.215, Report of J. Bankhead Magruder, Major General, commanding.
24. OR,I,XV,p.209, W.S. Long to Major D.C. Houston; Collard, Reminiscences p.12.
25. After the Federal retreat, each side in the action accused the other of violating their truce. General Magruder claimed that the Federal vessels misused the white flag to make good their escape. The Union second in command, Commodore H.H. Bell, claimed that Magruder's artillery fired upon the white flags. Both sides denied the other's charges. OR,I,XV,p.216, Report of J. Bankhead Magruder, Major General, commanding; OR,I,XV,pp.206-207, Report of Lieutenant Charles A. Davis, Adjutant 42nd Massachusetts Infantry.
26. General Magruder's after action report put the total Confederate losses at 26 killed and 117 wounded. Noel reported them as 38 and 131. No known record exists of Company H's wounded. Noel, Campaign from Santa Fe, appendices.
27. OR,I,XV,p.211, Jefferson Davis to Maj. Gen. J.B. Magruder; OR,I,XV,pp.220-221, S.S. Anderson to Maj. Gen. J.B. Magruder; OR,I,XV,p.221, General Orders No. 56, Hdqtrs. Dist. of Tex., N. Mex., and Ariz.; OR,I,XV,pp.210 & 216, Reports of J. Bankhead Magruder, Major General, commanding.
28. OR,I,XV,p.970, James Reily.
29. While noting that he was sending the Sibley Brigade to Louisiana, General Magruder, recommended Brigadier General Scurry for promotion and asked to retain his services. OR,I,XV,p.922, S.S. Anderson to Maj. Gen. J.B. Magruder; OR,I,XV,p.936, J. Bankhead Magruder to Col. S.S. Anderson; OR,I,XV,p.954, S. Cooper to Maj. Gen. J. B. Magruder.
30. Noel, Campaign from Santa Fe, p.67; Collard, Reminiscences, p.12; OR,I,XV,pp.968-970, James Reily to Brig. Gen. H.H. Sibley; OR,I,XV,pp.982-983, James Reily to Lieut. Stephen D. Yancey; Davidson, "Reminiscences of the Old Brigade," June 21, 1888.
31. Taylor, Destruction and Reconstruction, pp.125-126.
32. OR,I,XV,pp.388-389, Report of Maj. Gen. Richard Taylor.
33. Collard, Reminiscences, p.13; OR,I,XV,pp.324-325, Reports of Brig. Gen. Godfrey Weitzel; OR,I,XV,pp.330-331, Reports of Brig. Gen. William H. Emory; OR,I,XV,pp.390-391, Report of Maj. Gen. Richard Taylor.
34. Private Collard does not say which of Captain Adair's men suffered this terrible wound. Unfortunately, the author has been unable to match the incident to known casualty lists. Collard, Reminiscences, sequel 3, p.1; OR,I,XV,pp.390-391, Report of Maj. Gen. Richard Taylor.
35. Among the Confederate casualties at Mansfield were James M. Daniel and G. Woodard, both of Company H. James M. Daniel served with Isaac Adair in New Mexico, where he was one of the Company's second lieutenants. Daniel thought highly enough of his former captain that before his own death, he named a son after him. In later years Isaac Adair Daniel, who was generally known as Ike Daniel, was a prominent citizen of Crockett and Houston County, holding both the offices of sheriff and representative of the Texas Legislature. Collard, Reminiscences, p.24; Haas, "The Diary of Giesecke, Julius," notes of Oscar Haas; Aldrich, History of Houston County, p.145.
36. Taylor, Destruction and Reconstruction, p.179.
37. Collard, Reminiscences, pp.24-25; Haas, "The Diary of Giesecke, Julius," March 1st, 1865; Noel, Campaign from Santa Fe, appendices; McKenzie, "My Dear Wife".

38. Sharp Whitley lists total battle dead from the brigade at 437. He notes, however, that this figure includes wounded who subsequently died. Noel, Campaign from Santa Fe, casualty figures are extracted from appendices; Davidson, "Reminiscences of the Old Brigade," June 7, 1888.
39. Ex-private J.T.M. Hartt, who died in 1927, was possibly the last surviving member of Isaac Adair's Company. Hartt was 18 at the time of the New Mexico campaign. Two other veterans of the Sibley brigade, living in 1927 were, Brinkley H. Tyler age 90 and, 84 year old, Harvey Holcomb, both of Company F, 4th Regiment. The claim of Walter Williams as the last CSA veteran is sometimes questioned. The penultimate CSA survivor was John Salling, who died March 19, 1959. Simpson, Hood's Texas Brigade in Reunion and Memory, p.13; Mainer, Houston County in the Civil War, pp.99-119; Bloom, "Confederate Reminiscences," p.315; Sanders, FAQ, p.19.

(See *The Road to Glorieta* for bibliography)



[The Road to Glorieta; A Confederate Army Marches through New Mexico](#)



Is available in trade paperback and many eBook formats from: Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Apple, and other popular online outlets.