

THE ROAD TO GLORIETA



COLONEL JOHN R. BAYLOR



"There is no good Apache except a dead one." - John R. Baylor

When the Sibley Brigade marched off into New Mexico, Colonel John R. Baylor, the man who first bore the Confederate standard into the Far West, remained in the Mesilla Valley as civil and military governor of the Territory of Arizona. Never one to remain idle, the audacious Baylor soon set off in pursuit of Apaches. A marauding band had stolen more than 100 of Sibley's horses and mules, and Baylor set himself the task of tracking them down. Sibley had promoted Baylor to provisional full colonel, but he also stripped him of most of his command. For the chase, the Governor made do with those few troops which remained and augmented them with local citizen volunteers. He relentlessly pursued the Apaches across mountains, desert and plain. When the Apaches crossed the international border into Mexico, he also crossed. After penetrating more than 130 miles into Chihuahua, the Governor's party caught up with the band near the town of Carretas (Corralitos). Foreign country or not, Baylor attacked. Of the ensuing battle he wrote; "I thought myself justifiable in killing the Indians and recovering the animals, the Mexican alcalde acknowledging that the Apaches habitually stole property from the whites in Arizona and run it into Mexico, and that his Government could not and did not afford him protection." Later tales of the fight called it a 'massacre.'" (1)

After the clash at Carretas, those Indians who escaped made their way back across the border to the mining district of Pinos Altos. Although they had attacked the mines only a short time before, they now came with a flag of truce. Worried about the Governor's persistent and deadly pursuit, the Apaches approached Captain Thomas Helms, military commander at the mines, and proposed a treaty. Helms reported the overture to Baylor, who meanwhile had returned to Mesilla. Baylor's response effectively ended his military career. He had just read an article, published in the

Charleston Courier or Mercury, which erroneously stated that the Confederate Congress had declared a war of extermination against wild and hostile Indians. "Presuming from such an important statement in such well-known responsible journals that it indicated the policy of [his] Government, and feeling convinced ... that such a policy was the only one suitable to the hostile and treacherous tribes, [Baylor] acted on it." He ordered Captain Helms 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," wrote Baylor, "kill all the grown Indians and take the children prisoners and sell them to defray the expense of killing the Indians." The Governor went on to suggest that, Helms buy whisky and other such goods as might be necessary to lure the Indians into the trap, and that he would send vouchers to cover the amount expended. The order was issued on March 20, 1862. (2)

Shortly afterwards, Baylor left Arizona for Richmond, Virginia. The purpose of his trip was to secure the authority to raise more troops. In his absence, the brutal plan was never carried out. Captain Helms was an experienced Indian fighter, who knew firsthand the devilish cruelties of the Apache. Less than a year earlier, while serving as a lieutenant, he helped fend off an Indian raid at Pinos Altos in which four people were killed. One of the four was Captain Mastin, his own commanding officer and business partner. Still, according to one source, Helms "shrank with horror from the outrageous proposal." Whether this is true or not, the Apaches left the Pinos Altos area before any treaty making arrangements were made. (3)

Unbeknownst to Baylor, his extermination order followed him east. The Governor counted his share of enemies, among them Sibley's Chief of Commissary and Subsistence, Major Richard T. Brownrigg. Brownrigg quietly sent a copy of the order to Texas senator, Williamson S. Oldham. Oldham hoped the copy was in error, but forwarded it to George W. Randolph, the Confederate Secretary of War. For good measure, Brownrigg personally protested the extermination order, and expounded on what he called Colonel Baylor's "mean & contemptible" treatment of General Sibley. When the documents landed on his desk, Randolph was shocked. Finding it difficult to believe that Baylor would have written such an order, the Secretary referred it to General Sibley to "ascertain if it were genuine." (4)

Sometime in May of 1862, when the Army of New Mexico returned to the Mesilla Valley, Sibley saw the order for the first time. Henry Sibley was no stranger to Indian conflict. Before the war, he fought the Seminole in Florida, and later, out West, the Navajo. Throughout the New Mexico campaign his troops were forced to deal with Indian depredations. Nevertheless, unlike

Baylor, Sibley was not an Indian hater. He reviewed the order and finding it "to be a true and full copy," returned it to Richmond. (5)

Relations between General Sibley and Governor Baylor were already strained. Some months earlier for reasons unknown, but probably related to Sibley's usurpation of Baylor's command, the two men appear to have had a falling out. On March 17, 1862 Baylor had resigned the commission of provisional colonel that, Sibley bestowed on him. This came only three days before he issued his controversial order. During the late summer and early fall, their animosity flared into a feud in the public press. (6)

Near the end of May, President Davis had confirmed Baylor as governor of the Arizona Territory. He had also authorized the Colonel to raise five battalions of partisan rangers. To be known as the Arizona Brigade, the battalions were to consist of six companies each, of either foot or mounted troops. If the full complement of more than 2,000 men could be raised, Baylor would return to Arizona with a formidable force. (7)

With his authority in hand, the Colonel hurried back to Texas, where he established a temporary recruiting headquarters in Weatherford. Sibley was staying in Marshall. Striking a match to their discord, Sibley sent a copy of the Indian extermination order to the Marshall Texas Republican. On September 27, the newspaper's editor published it along with a rousing denunciation of its barbarity. A week and a half later, the Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph picked up the story. The Telegraph also decried the order, but was more sympathetic to Baylor's position. Baylor responded to the Telegraph's article in a letter to the editor. Unrepentant, he wrote, "There is no question, sir, about the genuineness of the order. I issued it, and meant precisely what I said; and if I am so fortunate as to return to Arizona, I intend to get rid of the Indians in any way I can."(8)

Baylor knew that it was Sibley who leaked the order to the press. Provoked, his letter also attacked the General as a drunk. The only reason Sibley was "shocked and horrified" by the order, wrote the Governor, was because it involved a waste of whisky. Before closing, he stated that, "if the Indians could by any process be dissolved and converted into whisky, I have no doubt that he [Sibley] would drink the whole Apache nation in one week." The letters, editorials and responses provided interesting reading for the people of West Texas, but they accomplished little beyond further tarnishing the reputations of both men. (9)

In Virginia, the allegations stirred up a larger hornets' nest. Sibley's endorsement of the extermination order as "a true bill," arrived in Richmond in mid-October, it was followed soon after

by clippings of Baylor's unapologetic letter to the editor. Far removed from the rugged frontier, both President Davis and Secretary Randolph viewed Baylor's actions as perfidious and brutal crimes. Randolph, promptly wrote to General John B. Magruder, the newly appointed commander of the District of Texas, stating; "In consequence of [Colonel Baylor's] order with regard to the Indians, that authority to raise troops granted him by the Department is revoked." Magruder was also told to inform Baylor that Davis wanted a complete written explanation of his action. (10)

The message was slow in reaching Governor Baylor, and in the meantime he continued to recruit. By mid-December 1862, the size of the Arizona Brigade stood at 1,500. No more than three companies of these were armed, but the existence of the force generated a myriad of rumors which circulated toward Arizona. The Federals took the threat seriously. Colonel Joseph R. West, Commanding the District of Arizona, at Mesilla, wrote to General Carleton in Santa Fe that, stories were circulating in Chihuahua and El Paso to the effect; "General Baylor, C.S. Army, has for some time been preparing to invade New Mexico from Texas with 6,000 men." (11)

In late December, Baylor got the word that he was relieved. Angrily, he turned over command of his growing brigade to Lieutenant Colonel Peter Hardeman. As President Davis demanded, the Governor then penned a lengthy justification of his extermination order. He began by stating that he had lived since childhood on the frontier of Missouri, Arkansas, and Texas, and was "familiar with the Indians and their habits, both in war and peace." According to Baylor, he had witnessed repeated outrages and barbarities almost beyond description. He told Davis that, someone whose only "conception of the Indian character" came "from the very imperfect delineations of it by novelists," couldn't understand the feelings of "hardy frontiersmen," who actually beheld "such scenes of horror and revolting cruelty." Trying to enlighten the President, he went on to describe what it meant to live on the frontier and suffer year after year of "savage visitations." "On numerous occasions," he wrote, "the women of our State have been taken prisoners, and, after being subjected to every outrage that the brutal passions of the savage could prompt, they were murdered in cold blood, and their scalps used to ornament the shields of the Indian warriors." He reported, he had "seen an Indian shield on which were the scalps of twenty-two different unfortunate women." Further, Baylor offered to send along the shield of an Indian chief, he personally slew, which was decorated with the "fair tresses" of a young American lady named, Miss Jackson. Vividly he described the fate of hapless stage passengers, who were pulled from their conveyances and tortured to death. The savage tribes of Texas and Arizona, he told Davis,

"are with few exceptions wilder, fiercer, and more untamable than any known to exist in North America." "They are more nomadic even than the Arabs of the desert; they live exclusively on meat, and some tribes it is well known are cannibals." According to the Governor, their depredations were keeping Arizona in poverty, and costing the State "a loss of five millions of dollars annually." (12)

With the stage thus set, Baylor told of chasing the Apaches into Chihuahua, and his subsequent issuance of his controversial order. He acknowledged, that he was wrong in his belief the Confederate Congress had declared a war against the Indians. Still, he stood by his action. "I do not deem it consistent with my opinions and feelings on the subject of Indians and Indian policy to retract or disavow a word of the order referred to. "Baylor had not intended his order to be published in the press or paraded around the country. He told Davis that, "while it may not read well in Richmond," "such an order excites no surprise in Arizona or Texas." (13)

Intended for Davis, Baylor's justification was first addressed to General Magruder, who received it in January. Near the beginning of February, the district commander sent it on to the Confederate President. In the meantime, Rebel forces under Magruder dislodged the Union toehold at Galveston. With his commission revoked, John R. Baylor took part in the fighting as a private of artillery. The night before the battle, he shed his coat and helped other common soldiers wheel their cannon into place. The next the day he served the guns, remaining at his post during the hottest of the fire. General Magruder was so impressed by Baylor's "devoted gallantry" that, when he forwarded the Governor's defense, he enclosed a note of his own. Without commenting on the propriety of Baylor's letter, Magruder described how he remained in "the most exposed and dangerous position and rendered most important services." He also earnestly recommended Baylor as the most suitable officer for the command of the Arizona Brigade. Magruder reiterated that, the Governor was misled about the Congress' extermination policy. Besides, he concluded, I happen to know that these Indians are "not better than wild beasts and totally unworthy of sympathy." (14)

General Magruder was not the only person to come to Baylor's defense. Marcus H. Macwillie, Arizona's newly elected delegate to the Confederate Congress, also wrote an explanatory letter to the Secretary of War. Covering some of the same ground as Baylor's own justification, Macwillie wrote; "for several months prior to the issuance of said order it was currently believed in that Territory that extermination of the hostile savages was the publicly declared policy of this

Government." By lending his weight, Macwillie hoped to "mitigate the severity of opprobrium against a tried, trusty, and efficient public servant." (15)

The various arguments failed to change the President's decision. After reading Baylor's letter, Davis added the brief notation; "This letter requires attention. It is an avowal of an infamous crime and the assertion of what should not be true in relation to troops in Texas, &c." The letter was returned to the Secretary of War for action. With the tide of the Confederacy turning nothing further came of the incident. (16)

Colonel Baylor never again commanded Confederate troops, but neither did he fade into obscurity. In 1863 he recruited a company of rangers and served as its captain, affording protection to the frontier. In August of 1863, with the war still raging, Baylor was urged by the citizens of Parker County Texas to re-entered politics. Running against Malcom D. Graham, a popular incumbent, he campaigned on the platform, "there is no good Apache except a dead one." He handily won a seat in the Confederate House of Representatives. Since Texas was then isolated by the fall of Vicksburg, Baylor passed through enemy lines at considerable risk to reach Virginia. In May of 1864, after arriving in Richmond, Baylor wrote the following to his wife; "Here I am in my seat at the Capitol. And to my astonishment, I find a disposition to treat me as a gentleman by all parties from the president down. And I find a good many gentlemen here who think I have been badly used by his Excellency the president. But I am not going to quarrel with anybody." Strangely enough, among Baylor's congressional duties was an appointment to the standing committee on Indian Affairs! (17)

John R. Baylor was the man who first established a Rebel foothold in the Far West. More so than even General Sibley, Baylor was responsible for the establishment of Confederate Arizona. He was also last to give up the dream. In the twilight days of the Confederacy he once again put forward a plan to recapture the West. Sounding like Sibley years before, Baylor asserted to the Secretary of War, James A. Seddon, that between 5,000 and 10,000 Southern Sympathizers and potential recruits were waiting in Arizona, New Mexico, and California. All that was necessary, he argued, was for him to lead an expedition of 2,500 men to recapture the Territory. Once Arizona was secure, men would flock to his banner, and the original expeditionary force could be returned to Texas. Baylor also proposed that Plains Indians be induced to harass Union traffic along the Santa Fe Trail. Seddon was opposed to the plan, but in a surprising turn of events Jefferson Davis overruled him. Somehow, despite all that had gone before, Davis and Baylor had apparently

become friends. With his country crashing down around his shoulders, Davis authorized the onetime governor to proceed. On March 25, 1865, Baylor was once again commissioned a Colonel in the Confederate Army and given sanction to recruit troops on the Texas frontier. Two weeks later Robert E. Lee surrendered at Appomattox Court House. Before Colonel Baylor could make it home, the war was over. George Wythe Baylor later wrote; that during the hectic last days, when Richmond was being evacuated, his brother offered to escort Jefferson Davis to the frontier, where they could subsist in buffalo meat while recruiting new soldiers. (18)

After the war, Colonel Baylor took up residence in San Antonio. In 1872, he was an unsuccessful candidate for the Democratic nomination as governor of Texas. When asked why he lost, he replied in typical Baylor fashion; "The damned Indians have killed all my constituents." Later he moved to Uvalde County, where he added to his reputation by winning several encounters with notorious outlaws. John R. Baylor died at home, in bed, of natural causes on February 6, 1891. His tombstone reads; "As sleep the brave who sink to rest, by all their country wishes blest."(19)

Footnotes (See *The Road to Glorieta* for bibliography)

1. Don Luis Terrazas, governor of Chihuahua, later wrote to General Sibley, demanding damages for Baylor's incursion into his state. OR,I,XV,p.916, Jno. R. Baylor, Governor of Arizona to Maj. Gen. J.B. Magruder; Finch, Confederate Pathway to the Pacific, p.110; Crist, The Papers of Jefferson Davis, Volume 8, p.376.
2. OR,I,XV,p.917, Jno. R. Baylor, Governor of Arizona to Maj. Gen. J.B. Magruder; Holmes & Hollingsworth, Essays on the American Civil War, M.H. Hall, "Planter vs. Frontiersman," pp.56-57, Reprinted text of extermination order.
3. Based on his experience, it is unlikely that Captain Helms shrank from anything. Thomas Ochiltree had a long standing animosity with Baylor and was probably just sensationalizing his account. Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph, October 8, 1862, Note from Major Thomas P. Ochiltree.
4. Jefferson Davis also enjoined Sibley to prevent the execution of Baylor's order, noting that CSA practice has been "to cultivate friendly relations even with the nomadic tribes." Crist, The Papers of Jefferson Davis, Volume 8, pp.347-348; Jones, A rebel War Clerk's diary, pp.172-173.
5. Finch, Confederate Pathway to the Pacific, p.171; Holmes & Hollingsworth, Essays on the American Civil War, pp.57-60; Jones, A rebel War Clerk's diary, p.173.
6. Holmes & Hollingsworth, Essays on the American Civil War, p.58; Finch, Confederate Pathway to the Pacific, p.161.
7. Holmes & Hollingsworth, Essays on the American Civil War, p.58; Finch, Confederate Pathway to the Pacific, p.161.
8. Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph, October 8, 1862 and October 17, 1862.
9. Ibid, October 17, 1862.
10. OR,I,XV,p.857, G.W. Randolph to Maj. Gen. J.B. Magruder; Jones, A rebel War Clerk's diary, pp.173 & 187; Crist, The Papers of Jefferson Davis, Volume 8, pp.348 & 467.
11. OR,I,XV,p.599, James H. Carleton to Col. Joseph R. West; OR,I,XV,p.902, J. Bankhead Magruder to Col. S.S. Anderson.

12. OR,I,XV,pp.914-918, Jno. R. Baylor, Governor of Arizona, to Maj. Gen. J.B. Magruder.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. OR,I,XV,pp.941-941, M.H. McWillie, Delegate from Arizona.
16. OR,I,XV,p.919, J.D. to Secretary of War.
17. Nunn, Ten Texans in Gray, p.15; El Paso Herald, November 16, 1901; Holmes & Hollingsworth, Essays on the American Civil War, p.71, as quoted in, Jno. R. Baylor to Darling Emy, May 26, 1864.
18. Ibid, pp.71-72; Finch, Confederate Pathway to the Pacific, pp.221-223.
19. Nunn, Ten Texans in Gray, p.16; Finch, Confederate Pathway to the Pacific, p.238.



The Road to Glorieta; A Confederate Army Marches through New Mexico



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