



## Making Sense of Santa Fe's Soldiers' Monument: Part Four

### Description



Navajos under guard at Fort Sumner, ca. 1864.

### Part Four: The Three-Cornered War

The original intent of the Soldiers' Monument was to honor the soldiers and volunteers who died fighting the Confederacy in New Mexico. When the territorial legislature of 1867-68 added the infamous text that memorializes those "who have fallen in the various battles with the savage Indians of the Territory of New Mexico," they revealed an uncomfortable truth: the military conflict in New Mexico of that era was not simply

between North and South, but was, in the felicitous phrasing of historian Megan Kate Nelson, a "three-cornered war" between "Union soldiers, Confederates and Native peoples fighting for power over the region's natural resources."<sup>[1]</sup>

To understand this "three-cornered war," and to grasp the significance of the monument's reference to "savage" Indians, it is necessary to review the role of the United States Army and local militias during the territorial period with respect to the indigenous inhabitants of the region.

From the very beginning of the territorial period a distinction was made between the Pueblo Indians and the non-Pueblo Indians "Apaches, Navajos, Comanches, and Utes" who were depicted as predators. When Brigadier-General Stephen Watts Kearny marched into Las Vegas, New Mexico in 1846 at the head of his Army of the West and seized control of New Mexico on behalf of the United States, he claimed they came not to conquer, but to protect against raids by Apaches and Navajos. "From the Mexican government," he told the local population, "you have never received protection. The Apaches and the Navaj<sup>o</sup>s come down from the mountains and carry off your sheep, and even your women, whenever they please. My government will correct all this. It will keep off the Indians, protect you in your persons and property!"<sup>[2]</sup>

When the war with Mexico ended two years later, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo repeated this promise, now made to those on the Mexican side of the new border who were at risk of raids from what were referred to as the "savage" tribes.<sup>[3]</sup> James Calhoun was appointed as the first Indian agent for the territory of New Mexico the following year. His instructions from the commission of Indian affairs in Washington emphasized the threat posed by the non-Pueblo Indians in the territory. The instructions estimated their number at 37,000 and explained that principal among them were the Apaches, described as "indolent and cowardly," the Navajos, described as "industrious, intelligent and warlike," and the Comanches, described as "numerous and war-like."<sup>[4]</sup> The Comanches were said to be waging war against Chihuahua and Durango and the Navajos to be holding many New Mexicans as slaves; in addition were the Utes, who were said to be engaged in a long-standing war with New Mexicans.<sup>[5]</sup>

Within six months of his arrival, Calhoun had himself determined that the New Mexico territory consisted of a war between Pueblos, New Mexicans and Americans, on the one hand, and Apaches, Navajos, Utes and Comanches, on the other hand, which he referred to as the four "wild" tribes.<sup>[6]</sup> He believed that the Navajos could be self-sufficient but that the other three tribes survived through raids and depredations, and therefore a strong military presence would be necessary to secure the peace.<sup>[7]</sup> Towards this end, military forts were erected across the territory: Fort Union, Fort Fillmore and Fort Defiance in 1851; Fort Burgwin in 1852; Fort Craig in 1854; and Fort Stanton in 1855.<sup>[8]</sup>

In the years leading up to the Civil War, numerous campaigns were conducted against these tribes by the U.S. Army and local militia regiments that included "large numbers of Santa Fe's citizens who were accepted and who participated in the many campaigns against the marauding Navajos, Apaches, Utes and Comanches."<sup>[9]</sup> Many of these militia men would later serve as volunteers in the Civil War. Take for example, Manuel Antonio Chaves, who fought with the Second New Mexico Volunteers in the Battle of Valverde and the Battle of Apache Canyon, and who helped guide the Chivington flanking column across Rowe Mesa to the location of the Confederate supply troops. As a teen, Chaves participated in "raids against the Navajo, Ute, Apache and Comanche, stealing children to trade or sell as slaves."<sup>[10]</sup> Chaves became a leader of attacks against these tribes "to retrieve stolen sheep or horses" as well as to steal "horses, jewelry, blankets, weapons and slaves."<sup>[11]</sup> In 1834, 16-year-old Chaves participated in an expedition from Ceboletta to capture Navajos to sell as slaves; the expedition ended in a bloody battle at Canyon de Chelly and Chaves was the only New Mexican to survive.<sup>[12]</sup>

Then in the 1850s, Chaves became involved in a number of military campaigns against the Utes and Jicarilla Apaches in the north, Navajos in the west, and various bands of the Gila Apaches in the south.<sup>[13]</sup> In 1851 Chaves responded to a request from the Territorial Governor for the formation of volunteers corps for service against the hostile Indians by raising six companies of volunteers.<sup>[14]</sup> Chaves then led an expedition against the Navajos, promising to pursue the Navajo Nation to their extermination or complete surrender.<sup>[15]</sup>

In 1855, U.S. Army troops at Fort Union were engaged in hostilities with Jicarilla Apaches and their Ute allies, and another call for volunteers was issued by the new Territorial Governor, David Meriwether. Chaves again responded, forming a volunteer company with Miguel Pino who would later lead the Second New Mexico Volunteers during the Civil War. Just as both these men would also later play a significant role in the battles of Valverde, Apache Canyon, Glorieta and Peralta alongside the Union Army, they played a similar role in the Ute-Jicarilla War of 1855.<sup>[16]</sup>

In 1859, the territorial legislature authorized the formation of volunteer militia companies to carry on the Indian wars in their own way, in the words of Governor Abraham Rencher.<sup>[17]</sup> Once again, Manuel Chaves and Miguel Pino answered the call:

[A] mass meeting was held in Santa Fe at which it was resolved to form an expedition to wage war on the Navajos. Don Miguel E. Pino was elected colonel and Manuel A. Chaves, lieutenant-colonel. A company in Santa Fe of 150 men was raised, each man furnishing his own mount and equipment. Afterward the force was raised to 400 men, who invaded the Navajo country, punished the Indians severely, driving off great numbers of their livestock. Their ammunition finally became exhausted and they returned to the settlements.<sup>[18]</sup>

During this expedition, Chaves told his half-brother Román Baca, who would also later serve with Chaves in the Civil War, he would make Baca a captain if he killed a nearby Navajo man. Baca then shot him in the chest, slid off his horse and scalped him, then raced back to his lines under a rain of bullets and arrows. He was given his captaincy on the spot.<sup>[19]</sup> This same Román Baca in a subsequent action against the Navajos under Canby refused Canby's request to bring a captured Navajo prisoner to him, saying: "Tell Colonel Canby for me that if he wants a Navajo, he had better go and catch one as I did," and then hung the prisoner in front of the camp.<sup>[20]</sup>

These militia campaigns against the Navajos did not abate with the coming of the Civil War. In late 1861, Chaves assumed command at Fort Fauntleroy, an outpost of Fort Defiance located at Bear Springs established principally to serve as a deterrent to Indian war parties.<sup>[21]</sup> Also at Fort Fauntleroy were three companies of the Second New Mexico Volunteers under the command of Manuel D. Pino, Jose D. Sena and Manuel Baca y Delgado.<sup>[22]</sup> Just a month later occurred what would later be known as the Fort Fauntleroy Massacre:

Navajo Indians gathered at Fort Fauntleroy in New Mexico for an issue of rations and friendly horseraces between the Navajo and the New Mexico Volunteers stationed there. A convivial atmosphere was transformed with a disagreement over the final race of the day, the visitors expelled, and a Navajo man shot dead by a sentry. In all, the troops killed twelve Navajo men, women, and children and wounded around forty more.<sup>[23]</sup>

Shortly thereafter Chaves was placed under arrest and removed to Albuquerque. When word of Confederate General Sibley's imminent arrival came through in early 1862, Chaves's arrest was suspended and he was ordered to report to Fort Craig.<sup>[24]</sup> There he joined the other New Mexican volunteers, militias, and irregulars,

including the Second and Third New Mexico Volunteers from Fort Fauntleroy, who had been assembled there by General Canby in anticipation of the Confederate invasion. For the next three months, Chaves and his fellow New Mexico volunteers would be engaged in repulsing the invasion of the Confederate Army of the West as recounted in [Part Two](#).

Soon after the Confederate threat was eliminated, General Canby was dispatched east. He was replaced as military commander of the territory by Brigadier General James H. Carleton — himself a veteran of the Indian wars, having spent five years fighting the Apaches.[\[25\]](#)

Carleton immediately turned his attention to the resumption of the Indian wars that had been briefly interrupted by the Confederate invasion.[\[26\]](#) His avowed program was to —wage merciless war against all hostile tribes, force them to their knees, and then confine them on reservations—[\[27\]](#) The —hostile tribes— in question were the Apaches and the Navajos. Carleton—s intention was to force them —to choose between unconditional surrender or extermination.—[\[28\]](#)

Territorial Governor Connelly, who had returned to Santa Fe with the defeat of the Confederate forces, shared Carleton—s program, declaring that the power of the government —should be so directed as to keep these sons of forest within proper limits and either maintain them as paupers, teach them the arts of civilized life and oblige them to sustain themselves, or, on the other hand, exterminate them.—[\[29\]](#)

On May 31, 1862, just six weeks after the Confederates were driven from the territory, the various regiments of New Mexico volunteers were consolidated and organized into the First New Mexico Cavalry under Col. Kit Carson. Other commanding officers included J. Francisco Chaves, Arthur Morrison, Francisco P. Abreu, Jose D. Sena, Rafael Chacon, Edward H. Bergmann and Albert H. Pfeiffer, all of whom were also veterans of the New Mexico Civil War battles.[\[30\]](#) Stationed throughout the military posts of the territory, their service would now be entirely dedicated to carrying out the U.S. Army—s campaigns against the Navajos, Apaches, Comanches, Kiowas and Utes that were resumed even as the Civil War continued to rage between the North and South.[\[31\]](#)

Carleton first turned his sights on the Mescalero Apaches of southern New Mexico, and issued the following order:

All Indian men of the Mescalero tribe are to be killed whenever and wherever you can find them—. If the Indians send in a flag and desire to treat for peace, say to the bearer — you have no power to make peace; that you are there to kill them wherever you find them—. The Indians are to be soundly whipped, without parleys or councils, except as I have told you.[\[32\]](#)

Carleton sent Kit Carson to —harry the tribe into submission— and by March 1863 the campaign was complete.[\[33\]](#) Some 400 Mescaleros surrendered and were conducted to Bosque Redondo, a reservation marked out by Carleton near Fort Sumner.[\[34\]](#)

Carleton then turned his attention to the Navajos. —As General Carleton saw it in the spring of 1863, nothing but total war could cause the Navajo to capitulate.—[\[35\]](#) New Mexico volunteers under the command of Lt. Col. J. Francisco Chavez, who had fought in the Civil War battles alongside Kit Carson, were sent to Fort Wingate to establish the base for General Carleton—s campaign.[\[36\]](#) Carleton sent the following orders to Chavez on June 23, 1863: —every Navajo able to bear arms will be attacked and destroyed or captured unless he comes in before July 20<sup>th</sup>. The rule is a plain one and needs no further correspondence to define its meaning.—[\[37\]](#)

Kit Carson then led the New Mexico volunteers in a brutal campaign against the Navajos. In the last half of 1863 Carson's forces destroyed the Navajo's economic base. In January of 1864 Carson led an expedition into Canyon de Chelly and thereby secured the tribe's final surrender. This led to the infamous "Long Walk" to the Bosque Redondo.<sup>[38]</sup>

Just as the New Mexico volunteers resumed the war against these Native American tribes as soon as the Confederate army was routed from New Mexico, so too did many of the Colorado volunteers. The most infamous example is John Chivington. Following his success at the Battle of Glorieta, Chivington was promoted to the rank of Colonel and continued to serve with the First Regiment in Colorado. In November 1864 he led his soldiers from Fort Lyon in southeast Colorado to a village of Cheyennes and Arapahoes near Sand Creek. There, in Chivington's words, the soldiers took "no prisoners" and left between "500 and 600 Indians dead upon the ground" and all their lodges destroyed.<sup>[39]</sup>

One commanding officer who refused to take part in the massacre was Captain Silas Soule who had served under Chivington at the Battle of Glorieta. Soule, having learned of Chivington's intentions to massacre the peaceful men, women and children camped at Sand Creek, had initially protested but had been persuaded by Major Scott Anthony (another veteran of both the Battle of Apache Canyon and the Battle of Glorieta as Captain of Company E of the First Colorado under Major Chivington<sup>[40]</sup>) that only "fighting Indians" would be targeted.<sup>[41]</sup> However, once the troops arrived at the camp, they immediately opened fire. Then, Soule related, "hundreds of women and children" were coming towards us, getting on their knees for mercy. [Major Scott] Anthony shouted, "kill the sons of bitches."<sup>[42]</sup> Soule refused and removed his company across the creek as the slaughter continued. The massacre, he reported, "lasted six or eight hours."<sup>[43]</sup> His account of the many atrocities committed against defenseless children, women and men is a litany of horror.<sup>[44]</sup> A subsequent military commission recommended that Chivington be dismissed dishonorably and tried before a military court (an outcome Chivington avoided by resigning his commission). In the words of the commission, "It is difficult to believe that beings in the form of men and disgracing the uniform of the United States, soldiers and officers, could commit or countenance such acts of cruelty and barbarism."<sup>[45]</sup>

In sum, the history of the soldiers who fought the Confederates in New Mexico is utterly entangled with the history of the soldiers who fought the so-called Indian wars—in many cases they are the same people. The Soldiers' Monument, with its multiple texts, accurately captures the reality that the Union Army was fighting a "three-cornered war" in which "[p]reventing Confederate occupation of New Mexico Territory and clearing it of Navajos and Apaches were twin goals."<sup>[46]</sup> The Soldiers' Monument thus embodies the "hard and complicated truth about the Union government's war aims: that they simultaneously embraced emancipation and Native extermination in order to secure an American empire of liberty."<sup>[47]</sup>

Next: [Making Sense of Santa Fe's Soldiers' Monument Part Five](#)

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<sup>[1]</sup> Megan Kate Nelson, *The Three-Cornered War: The Union, the Confederacy, and Native Peoples in the Fight for the West*, first Scribner trade paperback edition (New York: Scribner, 2021), xx.

<sup>[2]</sup> Ralph Emerson Twitchell, *The Leading Facts of New Mexican History* (Cedar Rapids: The Torch Press, 1912), 2:206; reprinted in Richard N. Ellis, *New Mexico Past and Present: A Historical Reader* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1971), 117-18.

<sup>[3]</sup> Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Article 11, quoted in Andrés Reséndez, *The Other Slavery: The Uncovered Story of Indian Enslavement in America*, First Mariner Books Edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt 2017), 235.

[4] Res ndez, *Other Slavery*, 242.

[5] *Ibid.*, 398n2.

[6] *Ibid.*, 245.

[7] *Ibid.* One solution that Calhoun proposed was â??penning upâ?? the Comanches and Apaches to solve the problem of Indian depredations in New Mexico.â?? *Ibid.*, 398n9.

[8] Marc Simmons *New Mexico: A History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1977), 134.

[9] Ralph Emerson, *Old Santa Fe: The Story of New Mexico's Ancient Capital* (Santa Fe: Santa Fe New Mexico Publishing Corporation, 1925), 367n655.

[10] Jacob Baynham, â??Battling History,â?? *National Parks Magazine*, Fall 2018, <https://www.npca.org/articles/1918-battling-history>.

[11] Marc Simmons, *The Little Lion of the Southwest: A Life of Manuel Antonio Chaves* (Chicago: Swallow Press, 1983)

[12] *Ibid.*, 34-42.

[13] *Ibid.*, 121.

[14] *Ibid.*, 125.

[15] *Ibid.*, 126.

[16] *Ibid.*, 127-135.

[17] *Ibid.*, 158-159.

[18] Twitchell, *Old Santa Fe*, 367n655.

[19] Simmons, *Little Lion*, 161.

[20] Simmons, *Little Lion*, 162. The Territorial Governor protested against this â??unauthorized organization of a volunteer force to make war on the Navajo Indiansâ?? and subsequently refused their request for payment. See Horn, *New Mexico's Troubled Years*, 81-82.

[21] Simmons, *Little Lion*, 163.

[22] â??History of Fort Wingate Depot: Forts Fauntleroy and Lyon,â?? 8, [https://www.ftwingate.org/docs/pub/History\\_FortWingate.pdf](https://www.ftwingate.org/docs/pub/History_FortWingate.pdf).

[23] â??At Fort Fauntleroy, New Mexico troops massacre visiting Navajo families, killing twelve and injuring forty,â?? House Divided: The Civil War Research Engine at Dickinson College, <https://hd.housedivided.dickinson.edu/node/38092>; William A. Keleher, *Turmoil in New Mexico, 1846-1868* (Santa Fe: Rydal Press, 1952), 298-299.

[24] Simmons, *Little Lion*, 171-173.

[25] Res ndez, *Other Slavery*, 278.

[26] Simmons, *New Mexico*, 150.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid., 151; see also Res ndez, *Other Slavery*, 284; Ellis, *New Mexico Past and Present*, 133.

[29] Horn, *New Mexico's Troubled Years*, 105.

[30] "First Cavalry New Mexico Territory 3-Years,"  
<https://www.civilwardata.com/active/hdsquery.dll?RegimentHistory?1272&U>.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Simmons, *New Mexico*, 150.

[34] Robert M. Utley and Wilcomb E. Washburn, *Indian Wars*, First Mariners Books edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2002), 198-99.

[35] Simmons, *New Mexico*, 150.

[36] "History of Fort Wingate Depot: Forts Fauntleroy and Lyon," 11,  
[https://www.ftwingate.org/docs/pub/History\\_FortWingate.pdf](https://www.ftwingate.org/docs/pub/History_FortWingate.pdf); Keleher, *Turmoil in New Mexico*, 303.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Utley and Washburn, *Indian Wars*, 199-202. It was not until 1868 that the Navajos were permitted to return home.

[39] Ibid., 11.

[40] See Edrington and Taylor, *Battle of Glorieta Pass*, 125, 139.

[41] Kelman, *Misplaced Massacre*, 22-23.

[42] Ibid., 23.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid., 194.

[46] Nelson, *Three-Cornered War*, xviii.

[47] Ibid., 252.