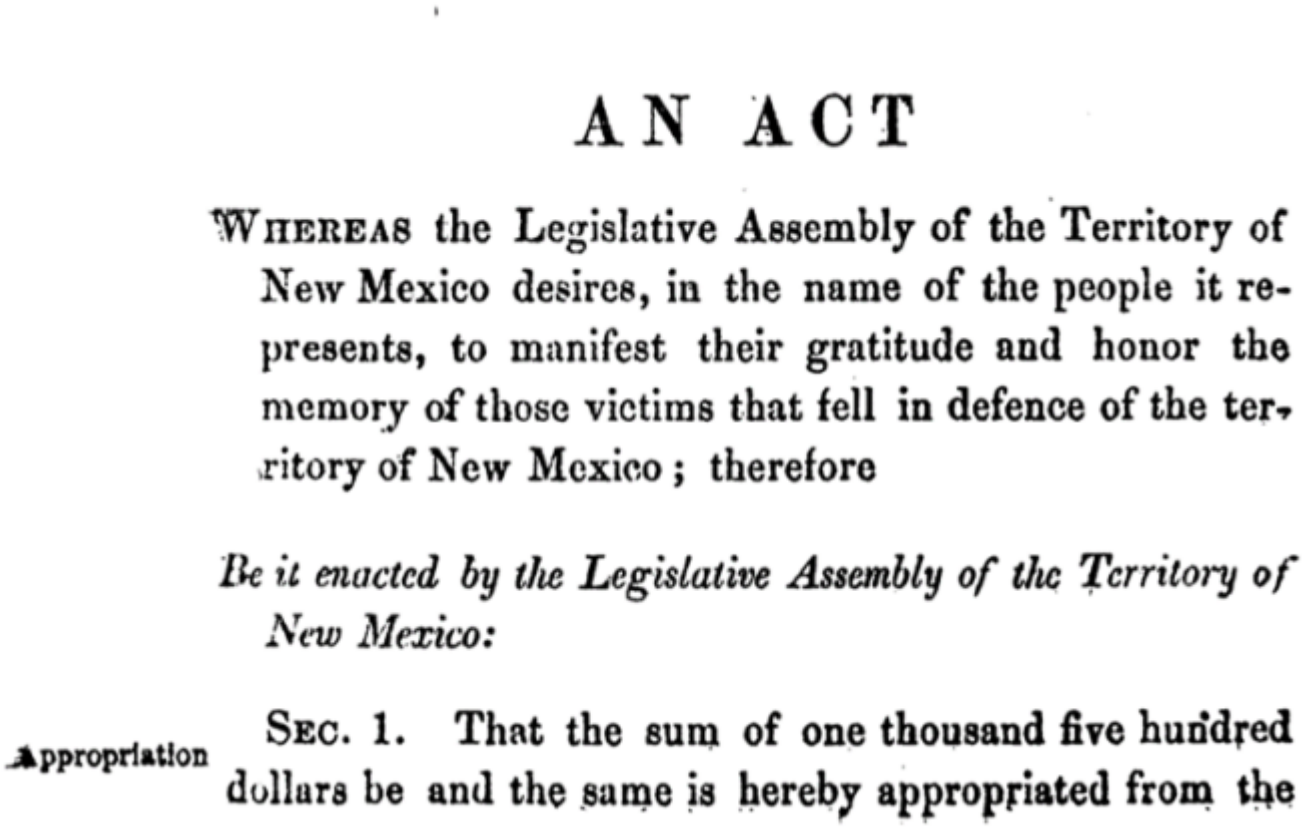
Making Sense of Santa Feâ??s Soldiersâ?? Monument: Part Three

Description



AN ACT

WHEREAS the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of New Mexico desires, in the name of the people it represents, to manifest their gratitude and honor the memory of those victims that fell in defence of the territory of New Mexico; therefore

Be it enacted by the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of New Mexico:

Appropriation

SEC. 1. That the sum of one thousand five hundred dollars be and the same is hereby appropriated from the

Part Three: The Monument

Col. John Slough, who had led the Union forces at the Battle of Glorieta, resigned his commission shortly thereafter due to â??an unfortunate difference between him and Gen. Canby concerning the conduct of the New Mexico campaignâ?¦â?•[1] However, he was subsequently commissioned Brigadier-General and assigned to serve as the military governor of Alexandria through the duration of the war.

When the war ended, President Andrew Johnson appointed Slough to the position of Chief Justice of the New Mexico territory.[2] Upon his return to New Mexico, Slough initiated an effort to fund a memorial to the soldiers who had died in the New Mexico territory while fighting on behalf of the Union. On January 31, 1867, in response to Sloughâ??s efforts, the legislative assembly of the New Mexico territory approved the sum of $1,500 â??to enclose the graves, and erect monuments over the federal soldiers killed at the battle of Apache CaÃ±on and Glorieta, that now lie near the house of Kuzlowski [sic]; and to enclose the graves and erect monuments over the federal soldiers killed at Valverde and now interred at Fort Craig.â?•[3]

The territorial legislature did not provide for a monument anywhere other than at the battlefield sites themselves. However, it was only 11 days later when the committee appointed to oversee this project (consisting of Chief Justice Slough, Territorial Secretary W.F.M. Arny, and Territorial Treasurer Simon Delgado) decided to erect the monument on the Santa Fe Plaza: by resolution dated February 11, 1867, the committee authorized the ordering of tablets â??for the joint monument to be erected in the Public Plaza of the City of Santa FÃ©, in honor of the dead soldiers of the battlefields of the Rebellion, in this Territoryâ?¦â?• In addition, the committee apparently endorsed the design of the monument in the form of an obelisk on top of a base,[4] and adopted the following text to be inscribed on the four tablets:

> The People of the Territory of New Mexico, through their Governor and Legislative Assembly, have caused this monument to be erected to the memory of the Gallant Dead of the War of the ~~Great~~ Rebellion, who fell in this Territory, as a token of their Deep Gratitude to their Defenders and Preservers.â?•
>
> Erected A.D. 1867â?• â?? â??By act of Governor and Legislative Assembly approved January 31st 1867â?• â?? â??Commissioned by W.F.M. Arny, Secretary, New Mexico, John P. Slough, Chief Justice, and Simon Delgado, Treasurer.â?•
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> The Battle of Valverde was fought on the 21st day of February A.D. 1862 â?? the Federal Troops were commanded by Col. E.R.S. Canby U.S.A. The Confederate Troops by Gen. H.H. Sibley C.S.A.â?• â?? â??Sacred to the memory of the Dead Heroes.â?• (To be followed â?? if possible â?? with a correct list of the dead of that battle).
>
> The Battle of Apache CaÃ±on was fought on the 26 day of March A.D. 1862, and, the Battle of Pigeons Ranch (La Glorietta [sic]) on the 28 day of the same month â?? the Federal Troops were commanded by Col. John P. Slough U.S.V. The Confederate Troops by Col. __, C.S.A.â?• â?? â??Sacred to the memory of the Dead Heroesâ?• (To be followed â?? if possible â?? with a correct list of the dead of those battles)â?•[5]

The cornerstone for the monument was laid eight months later, on October 24, 1867.[6] Territorial Governor Robert Byington Mitchellâ??s address made clear that the monument was being erected in commemoration of those who died defending the Union, which he called â??one of the most important events in the history of our Territory as well as in that of our common country.â?•[7] The monument was dedicated, he said, â??to the memory of the fallen heroes whose blood was shed upon the soil of New Mexico at Valverde and Apache Canyon in defense of the perpetuity of the union, and for advancement of the great ideas of liberty and progress upon which the American Union was founded and of which it was the representative before the nations of the world.â?•[8]

Given this history, there is no room to doubt that the Soldiersâ?? Monument was originally intended solely to commemorate those who died fighting on behalf of the Union in these Civil War battles and was in fact under construction with that sole intention. Several events intervened, however, to alter the meaning of the monument and to condemn the monument to continuous controversy and, ultimately, destruction.

First, Chief Justice Slough, the great advocate of a memorial to those who died fighting the Confederate army, was killed on December 14, 1867 by a political rival. It seems that Slough, who has been described as having â??an exceptional command of abusive language, which he used masterfully and willingly against any opponent,â?•[9] had responded to a censure resolution brought against him by a member of the legislature, Col. William L. Rynerson, by calling Rynerson a â??thief in the army, a thief out of the army, a coward and a S.O.B.â?• The next day, Rynerson confronted Slough at the Exchange Hotel (the present location of La Fonda on the Plaza). A witness recounted what happened next:

> I saw Slough and Rynerson approaching each other, using angry wordsâ?¦. Rynerson demanded, â??Judge, you spoke very harshly of me last night and you must retract your languageâ?¦.â?•
>
> â??I donâ??t propose to take it back,â?• retorted the Judge, â??What are you going to do about it?â?• Again, Rynerson demanded the foul language be retracted. He threatened to shoot. The Judge, reaching for his pocket, yelled: â??Then shoot, damn you!â?• Rynerson shot. The Judge fell dead.â?• [10]

Second, when the Adjutant Generalâ??s Office of the U.S. Army provided the names of the dead to the monument commission in March 1867, they included for each regiment not only the names of those who died in the battles of Valverde, Apache Canyon, Glorieta and Peralta, but also those who died â??in various skirmishes with the Indians.â?• Included in this listing were soldiers from the following regiments:

- 3rd Regiment U.S. Cavalry: one private â??killed in action by Indiansâ?• at Comanche Canyon on March 3, 1862
- 1st Regiment U.S. Cavalry: one corporal and three privates â??killed by Indians while on marchâ?• in the Socorro Mountains on March 1, 1862
- 1st Regiment Colorado Infantry Volunteers: one private â??killed by Apache Indiansâ?• near Fort Craig on July 16, 1862
- 3rd New Mexico Volunteers: one sergeant and three privates â??killed by Indiansâ?• in 1862, date and place not stated
- 2nd Colorado Cavalry Volunteers: one corporal â??killed by Indiansâ?• above Pulvedera on August 12, 1862

In addition, a separate list provided by the Adjutant Generalâ??s Office to the commission identified another 24 â??officers and enlisted men killed by Indians in the different regiments and companies while on scouts and in skirmishes in the Territory of New Mexico.â?• Included on this list were 12 soldiers from the New Mexico volunteers and twelve soldiers from the Colorado volunteers. 11]

It thus appears that either the commission requested the names of these individuals who died not in the Civil War battles but rather in â??skirmishes with the Indians,â?• or that the Adjutant Generalâ??s office provided these additional names at its own initiative. Either way, the commission had this information in their hands by March 1867 and could well have been contemplating an alteration to the monument to accommodate these additional names.

Third, the committee ran out of money to complete the monument, necessitating a return to the legislature for additional funds. On January 29, 1868, the legislature granted the request; fatefully, however, the legislature additionally dictated that the monument should not only recognize those soldiers who lost their lives in the battles with the Confederates, but also â??the brave victims who have perished in the various wars with the savage Indians surrounding us.â?•[12] The legislature even dictated the exact text for the panels, in lieu of those planned by the original commission:

> On the front slab: Erected by the people of New Mexico, through their Legislatures of 1866-7-8. May the Union be perpetual.
>
> On the second slab: To the heroes of the Federal army who fell at the battle of Valverde, fought with the rebels February 21, 1862.
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> On the third slab: To the heroes of the Federal army who fell at the battles of CaÃ±on del Apache and Pigeonâ??s Ranch, (Glorieta) fought with the rebels March 28, 1862, and to those who fell in the battle fought with the rebels at Peralta, April 15th, 1862.
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> On the fourth slab: To the heroes who have fallen in the various battles with the savage Indians of the Territory of New Mexico.[13]

Here, in the actions of the territorial legislature in January 1868, is the source of the infamous text that memorializes those â??who have fallen in the various battles with the savage Indians of the Territory of New Mexicoâ?• that became affixed to the monument. At first blush, this additional text may seem out of place on a monument originally intended to honor those soldiers and volunteers who died fighting the Confederacy. In fact, however, these words reveal a truth that has often been obscured: as will be explored in the next part, those whose deaths are memorialized on the multiple tablets of the Soldiersâ?? Monument were fighting in a â??three-cornered war.â?•[14]

Next: Making Sense of Santa Feâ??s Soldiersâ?? Monument Part Four

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[1] â??Brigadier-General John P. Slough,â?• *Weekly Commonwealth* (Denver City, Colorado Territory), July 2, 1863.

[2] Slough remained an ardent opponent of slavery and as Chief Justice of the New Mexico Territory he issued an important and controversial judicial decision ruling that involuntary peonage as practiced in New Mexico was unlawful. *TomÃ¡s Heredia vs. JosÃ© MarÃa GarcÃa*, Jan. 26, 1867, New Mexico Territorial Supreme Court, printed in â??The Supreme Court on Peonage,â?• *Santa Fe Weekly Gazette*, Feb. 2, 1867.

[3] Laws of the Territory of New Mexico, passed by the Legislative Assembly, Session 1867-68, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.35112203960184&view=1up&seq=601&skin=2021&q1=monument, 449-452.

[4] A rough, hand-sketched design for an obelisk is among the papers of the committee. *Report of the Soldiers Monument Commission, 1867-1868*, New Mexico State Records Center and Archives.

[5] Ibid.

[6] â??An Account of the Day They Laid the Cornerstone to the Obelisk Monument,â?• *Santa Fe New Mexican*, Nov. 5, 1967; see also, Oliver La Farge, *Santa Fe: The Autobiography of a Southwestern Town* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1959), 45.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Horn, *New Mexicoâ??s Troubled Years*, 127.

[10] Ibid., 128. Rynerson was later acquitted of the murder.

[11] *Report of the Soldiers Monument Commission, 1867-1868*, New Mexico State Records Center and Archives.

[12] Laws of the Territory of New Mexico, passed by the Legislative Assembly, Session 1867-68, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.35112203960184&view=1up&seq=601&skin=2021&q1=monument, 596-601.

[13] Ibid.

[14] 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.