

BIRTH OF THE U.S. CAVALRY: THE REGIMENT OF DRAGOONS, MILITARY  
PROFESSIONALISM, AND PEACEKEEPING ALONG THE  
PERMANENT INDIAN FRONTIER, 1833 - 1836

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Doctor of Philosophy

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By  
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## ABSTRACT

Birth of the U.S. Cavalry: The Regiment of Dragoons, Military Professionalism, and  
Peacekeeping along the Permanent Indian Frontier, 1833 – 1836

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Doctor of Philosophy

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“Birth of the U.S. Cavalry” examines the founding and initial operations of the U.S. Regiment of Dragoons, forebear of the First Cavalry Regiment and thus the army’s first permanent mounted unit. The dragoons escorted traders along the Santa Fe Trail and projected American authority by visiting the villages of many Plains Indian nations. Dragoon officers and men made the first contacts between the U.S. government and the Kiowa, Comanche, and Wichita nations. They also helped negotiate a treaty that ultimately cleared the way for the completion of Jacksonian Indian Removal.

The appointment of dragoon officers and recruitment of their enlisted subordinates reflect diverging military cultures in Jacksonian America. Approximately half of the officers served as volunteer officers during the Black Hawk War. These men clashed with the regiment’s regular officers, who viewed themselves as members of a nascent profession. Analysis of government records and army registers shows that the regulars emphasized the need for military education, sought to exclude partisan politics from the appointment process, and served longer on average than the ex-volunteers. The army, expressing concerns over the quality of infantry and artillery rank and file, wanted

healthy, native-born citizens for the dragoons. It departed from established recruiting practices and recruited the dragoons from all over the country, including rural areas. These novel efforts attained the desired results. Enlistment records reveal that dragoons tended to be younger than other recruits, to hail from all regions of the country, and to have been farmers or skilled tradesmen in civil life. Obtaining these men came at a price. Dragoons saw themselves as virtuous citizens and did not like regular discipline or performing the mundane tasks of frontier regulars. Many expressed dissatisfaction by deserting, making dragoon desertion rates higher than those of the army as a whole.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Colonel Henry Dodge believed that taking one part of the Regiment of Dragons' officer complement from those in the regular army, "who understand the first principles of their profession," and taking the other from experienced frontiersmen, "who understand the woods' service, would promote the good of the service." In that spirit I must acknowledge that I could not have completed this without the co-operation of many people throughout the historical profession, and a few entirely outside of it.

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Drs. Andrew Isenberg and David Waldstreicher of Temple University and Durwood Ball of the University of New Mexico all agreed to sit on my doctoral committee largely on the promise of this work. I hope I have met their expectations.

Dr. Gregory J. W. Urwin has been my major professor since I arrived at Temple in September 2001. I find it impossible to sum his contributions in one paragraph, but I'll try. When I started this project, I most valued his expertise and example. In the middle, I appreciated his advice and encouragement. Near the end, I drew upon his patience and faith. For want of any of it, this would have been lost.

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For Ricardo N. Grippaldi, James F. Byrnes (1934 – 2007) and John P. Karras, who all rode the Siberian Express and lived to tell about it; and for Russell F. Weigley (1930 – 2004), who helped me understand what those stories meant.

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## INTRODUCTION

On 14 June 1825, the United States Army celebrated its fiftieth birthday. Its sixth decade would be a trying time. Most of its officers graduated from the U.S. Military Academy, with the proportion rising throughout the decade. Yet it would take orders from a president, Andrew Jackson, whose military career many Americans believed demonstrated that military education was not a prerequisite to officership. Ideological fears of standing armies and practical concerns over government spending limited the army's size. The public viewed its enlisted men as "the sweepings of the cities" – foreigners, drunks, layabouts, those on the run from scandal or the law. Soldiers possessed an embarrassing predilection to desert in hard times, which only confirmed popular ideas of their disreputable character.

The army's primary mission was the defense of the United States' frontiers from foreign attack. Nearly a half century ago, John Juricek argued that Jacksonian-era Americans used "frontier" as roughly synonymous with border, or "the outer edge of a country."<sup>1</sup> Frontiers were *places*, largely determined by political or military considerations. As the United States had an Atlantic frontier, and a Canadian frontier, it had an Indian frontier. The Indian frontier abutted "Indian Country." Congress first used this term in the Indian Intercourse Act of 1790 and first fixed its bounds in the act of 1796.<sup>2</sup> The national legislature, however, exempted from federal regulation intercourse

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<sup>1</sup> John T. Juricek, "American Usage of the Word 'Frontier' from Colonial Times to Frederick Jackson Turner," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 110 (February 1966): 13.

Here and throughout this work, "Indian" refers to the indigenous inhabitants of the North American continent. Both U.S. citizens and policy of the time defined "Indian" as such and so that word is used for consistency. "American" refers to the citizens and policies of the United States.

<sup>2</sup> Act of 22 July 1790, ch. 33, 1 *Statutes at Large* 137; act of 19 May 1796, ch. 30, 1 *Stat.* 469.

with Indians “surrounded in their settlements by the citizens of the United States,” as the 1790 legislation put it, so that these Indians were not technically in Indian Country.<sup>3</sup> Unlike the United States’ other frontiers in this period, the precise boundary between the United States and the Indians continually changed as federal officials purchased more land from Indians. Juricek noted that Indian Country acquired the informal meaning of “all Indian lands beyond the boundary but still within the territorial limits claimed by the United States.”<sup>4</sup>

On this basis Juricek asserted that Frederick Jackson Turner’s definition of frontier, “the meeting point between savagery and civilization . . . at the hither edge of free land,” would have been anachronistic before the Civil War.<sup>5</sup> There was no free land. The Indian frontier lay on the western edge of lands controlled by Americans. By analogy the Indian Country had an American frontier on the eastern edge of lands controlled by Indians. By mid-century, however, American territorial expansion destroyed this concept of Indian Country. Once the United States laid claim to a Pacific boundary, the country had two Indian frontiers. New territories open to white settlement, capped by the creation of Kansas and Nebraska Territories in 1854, destroyed the old concept of Indian Country.

Turner’s concept of the frontier, nineteenth-century use of the word notwithstanding, has held historians’ attention for over a century. His frontier was not one place, but multiple places over time. Turner’s declaration that American history was

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<sup>3</sup> Act of 22 July 1790, ch. 33, 1 *Stat.* 137. Subsequent Indian intercourse legislation changed this wording slightly but retained the exemption for intercourse with Indians living entirely within states.

<sup>4</sup> Juricek, “Usage of the Word ‘Frontier,’” 20.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 32. The quote is from Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” in *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1920), 3.

“the history of the colonization of the Great West” aptly sums up his belief that the frontier was a *process*.<sup>6</sup> His frontier settlers, in transforming “free land” through various economic activities and creating new communities, ended up promoting self-reliance and representative democracy. Because these communities eventually attained equal political status within the Union, the repetition of the process gradually spread their social and political characteristics across the country. In later essays Turner gave credit to the “federal colonial system” which allowed for this equality among the states.<sup>7</sup>

While many historians embraced Turner’s frontier process in the early part of the twentieth century, others offered refinements or challenges. Two of the most significant before the 1960s came from Herbert Bolton and Walter Prescott Webb. Bolton, a student of Turner’s, found Turner’s model of colonization too Anglo-centric and east-to-west to explain the frontier, or “borderlands,” of Spanish North America.<sup>8</sup> Webb rooted the frontier firmly west of the Mississippi in two books, *The Great Plains* and *The Great Frontier*. He claimed, “the Great Plains have bent and molded Anglo-American life,” rejecting process for a very specific place.<sup>9</sup>

The fiercest arguments over Turner, however, erupted as part of the “New Western History” historiographic debates in the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>10</sup> Taking advantage of

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<sup>6</sup> Turner, “Significance of the Frontier,” 1.

<sup>7</sup> The quote is from Turner, “The Middle West,” in *The Frontier in American History*, 132. See also “The Ohio Valley in American History,” in *ibid*.

<sup>8</sup> Herbert E. Bolton, *The Spanish Borderlands: A Chronicle of Old Florida and the Southwest* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1921).

<sup>9</sup> Walter Prescott Webb, *The Great Plains* (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1931) and *The Great Frontier* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1952). The quote is from *Great Plains*, 8.

<sup>10</sup> The debate over the New Western History lasted long enough, and made enough of an impact, that it has been readily summarized in many places. Three brief overviews can be found in Richard White,

broader developments in the discipline during the 1960s and 1970s, young scholars re-interpreted the frontier thesis by stressing the role of minorities and the environment. When most of these scholars used the word “frontier” at all, it became a place. Patricia Nelson Limerick, in *The Legacy of Conquest*, argued for a west that struggled under the weight of environmental and human conquest, without the beginning or end necessary for a process.<sup>11</sup> Donald Worster’s *Rivers of Empire* offered an “aridlands” concept that, in defining the West, was as environmentally deterministic as Webb’s work.<sup>12</sup> Richard White’s *It’s Your Misfortune and None of My Own*, a new textbook, told the story of the West as a story of its people and the environment.<sup>13</sup>

Yet a major figure in the New Western History, William Cronon, helped create a neo-Turnerian school that valued the idea of a frontier process. His *Nature’s Metropolis* also placed the environment at the locus of Western history, but emphasized the stages

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“Western History,” in Eric Foner, ed., *The New American History*, revised and expanded ed. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997), 203 – 30; Nathan J. Citino, “The Global Frontier: Comparative History and the Frontier-Borderlands Approach,” in Michael J. Hogan and Thomas G. Paterson, eds., *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations*, 2d. ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 194 – 211; and Gregory H. Nobles, *American Frontiers: Cultural Encounters and Continental Conquest* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1997), 3 – 16 and 251 – 55.

Major collections of essays on the New Western History written in the midst of the debate include Patricia Nelson Limerick, Clyde A. Milner II, and Charles E. Rankin, eds., *Trails: Towards a New Western History* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1991) and Milner, Carol A. O’Connor, and Martha A. Sandweiss, eds., *The Oxford History of the American West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

In 2004, *The Historian* published an issue devoted entirely to the state of Western history nearly twenty years after the debate began. See the introductory essay, David M. Wrobel, “What on Earth Has Happened to the New Western History?” *Historian* 66 (Fall 2004): 437 – 41.

<sup>11</sup> Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1987).

<sup>12</sup> Donald Worster, *Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity, and the Growth of the American West* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985).

<sup>13</sup> Richard White, *“It’s Your Misfortune and None of My Own”: A New History of the American West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).



that Chicago passed through in harnessing natural resources to American capitalism.<sup>14</sup> *Under an Open Sky*, a collection of essays Cronon edited with George Miles and Jay Gitlin, declared that “One of Turner’s most fruitful suggestions was that invasion, settlement, and community formation followed certain broad, repeating patterns in most, if not all, parts of North America,” and that “His most compelling argument about the frontier was that *it repeated itself*.” That Cronon and his fellow editors disagreed with the catholic, ethnocentric nature of Turner’s process did not prevent them from trying to throw out only the bathwater, and not the baby.<sup>15</sup>

The neo-Turnerian idea of the frontier as process offers much to historians of federal Indian policy and its execution. Federal officials actively worked to reshape the Indian frontier and re-border the Indian Country. Moving the border by acquiring sovereignty over Indian lands was but a step in a sequence ultimately leading to white settlements, and political self-determination for American citizens. The declaration of a Permanent Indian Frontier, and widespread Indian removal after 1815, is less change in policy than a broadening of scale and scope. Because the army was both a tool of diplomacy with Indian nations, and a police force within the Indian Country, soldiers were at the leading edge of this process.

In this light, the formal defense of the Indian frontier from Indians living in Indian Country was only one of the missions the army undertook between 1825 and 1836.

Congress charged the army with removing white citizens living or otherwise illegally

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<sup>14</sup> William Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1991).

<sup>15</sup> Cronon, George Miles, and Jay Gitlin, “Becoming West: Towards a New Meaning for Western History,” in Cronon, Miles, and Gitlin, eds., *Under an Open Sky: Rethinking America’s Western Past* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992), 6; emphasis in original.

present in Indian Country. The presence of nomadic Indians in Indian Country also posed complications. At times American participants in the Santa Fe Trade sought a military escort through the Indian Country. The completion of Indian removal also required persuading the nomads to not attack Indians from the eastern United States who were being resettled in the west.

The army's small size, the dubious quality of its enlisted men, and its lack of cavalry seriously hampered the execution of its Indian Country missions. It failed to prevent Indian uprisings in Wisconsin and Illinois, and to prevent Indian raids in Oklahoma and along the Santa Fe Trail. The mobilization of thousands of citizen-soldiers, many on horseback, helped the government temporarily overwhelm the Indians. This fact allowed the citizen-soldiers to crow at their achievement, and at the failure of the regulars. The cost of that achievement, in both blood and treasure, might have been reduced considerably had Congress invested in an adequately sized and composed regular army.

It was in this context, after a wave of closely spaced Indian disturbances, that in 1833 Congress created the U.S. Regiment of Dragoons, the army's first permanent mounted unit. Because Congress and President Jackson remained ideologically wedded to the citizen-soldier concept, they chose half of the regiment's officers from volunteer officers mobilized during the Black Hawk War. These volunteers and their culture of officership brought the nascent, developing profession of army officership into relief.

Congress also desired that the army enlist a different kind of recruit for the regiment. Ideally, dragoon recruits would be native-born Americans, typical of the virtuous citizens who supposedly joined volunteer units in times of crisis. The army

largely succeeded, by changing its recruiting methods and locations. Reflecting their social, cultural, and ideological roots, these recruits grew frustrated and impatient with the army's bureaucratic missteps and disciplinary procedures, which differed markedly from conditions normally experienced in volunteer units.

The Dragoon Regiment, officers appointed and ranks full, lit out for the Indian frontier. As regular infantry and mounted volunteers had done, the dragoons would escort traders from Missouri to New Mexico and protect Indians under the country's aegis. In a departure from standing policy, the dragoons would visit Indian villages deep in the Indian Country and assist in negotiating peace treaties. The dragoons' success at these tasks allowed the government to eventually complete its program of Indian removal from the southeastern United States.

Most chronicles of the dragoons, however, have not scrutinized the regiment's activities or assessed its full significance in the history of the American military. A quick review of the historiography reveals the gaps that still exist in the literature. Popular histories of the United States Cavalry have given the dragoons short shrift, preferring the thrilling exploits of the Civil War or Indian skirmishes to the mundane diplomacy and police work of the regiment.<sup>16</sup> Nor has any academic historian written a full treatment of the dragoons. Francis Paul Prucha's *The Sword of the Republic: The United States Army on the Frontier, 1783 – 1846*, devotes space to the conditions which contributed to the

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<sup>16</sup> The first of these is Albert G. Brackett, *History of the United States Cavalry, from the Formation of the Federal Government to the 1<sup>st</sup> of June, 1863* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1865). Twentieth-century volumes include James M. Merrill, *Spurs to Glory: The Story of the United States Cavalry* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1966) and Richard Wormser, *The Yellowlegs: The Story of the United States Cavalry* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1966). A later synthesis, Gregory J. W. Urwin, *The United States Cavalry: An Illustrated History, 1776 – 1944* (Poole, Dorset, England: Blandford Press, 1983; reprint, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003) does a more complete but still imperfect job discussing the regiment's formation and operations in 1834.

rise of the dragoons, but his is largely a narrative of operations.<sup>17</sup> A recent account of the Jacksonian army, Robert P. Wettemann Jr.'s *Privilege Vs. Equality: Civil–Military Relations in the Jacksonian Era, 1815 – 1845*, addresses important issues such as professionalism and Indian policy broadly, but does not put the dragoons into that context.<sup>18</sup>

Most of the attempts to discuss the regiment in detail have been incidental. Some of the regiment's officers had or went on to have varying levels of fame, and have had their biographies written.<sup>19</sup> While they offer differing levels of treatment and insight on the dragoons, in the main these works are telling the story of a life. Most of the journal articles on the Regiment of Dragoons have been edited primary source materials, and narrow in scope.<sup>20</sup>

There is one full-length account of the Regiment of Dragoons at any point in its history, Louis Pelzer's *Marches of the Dragoons in the Mississippi Valley: An Account of Marches and Activities of the First Regiment United States Dragoons in the Mississippi*

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<sup>17</sup> Francis Paul Prucha, *Sword of the Republic: The United States Army on the Frontier, 1783 – 1846* (New York: Macmillan, 1969; reprinted Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977).

<sup>18</sup> Robert P. Wettemann Jr., *Privilege Vs. Equality: Civil–Military Relations in the Jacksonian Era, 1815 – 1845* (Santa Barbara, California: Praeger Security International, 2009).

<sup>19</sup> These biographies include Louis Pelzer, *Henry Dodge* (Iowa City: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1911); Otis Young, *The West of Philip St. George Cooke, 1809 – 1895* (Glendale, California: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1955); Dwight L. Clarke, *Stephen Watts Kearny: Soldier of the West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961); William C. Davis, *Jefferson Davis: The Man and his Hour* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991); and R. Douglas Hurt, *Nathan Boone and the American Frontier* (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1998).

<sup>20</sup> For example, Pelzer, ed., "Captain Ford's Journal of an Expedition to the Rocky Mountains," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 12 (March 1926): 550-79; Fred Perrine and Grant Foreman, eds., "The Journal of Hugh Evans, Covering the First and Second Campaigns of the United States Dragoon Regiment in 1834 and 1835: Campaign of 1834," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 3 (September 1925): 175 – 215; and Hamilton Gardner, "The March of the First Dragoons from Jefferson Barracks to Fort Gibson in 1833-1834," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 31 (March 1953): 22 – 36.

*Valley between the Years 1833 and 1850.*<sup>21</sup> *Marches of the Dragoons* is invaluable to the serious student of the regiment. In telling a narrative of operations, Pelzer drew upon documents in the *American State Papers*; the order book of the regiment's first colonel, Henry Dodge; and a memoir written by a former enlisted dragoon, James Hildreth's *Dragoon Campaigns to the Rocky Mountains; Being a History of the Enlistment, Organization, and First Campaigns of the Regiment of United States Dragoons; Together with Incidents of a Soldier's Life, and Sketches of Scenery and Indian Characters; by a Dragoon.*<sup>22</sup> Yet *Marches of the Dragoons* was written nearly a century ago. Reflecting different standards of historical importance, it makes no effort to discuss army officership as a profession, the backgrounds or motivations of the enlisted men, or the place of the regiment in federal Indian policy.

The present work attempts to remedy these weaknesses in the historiography by using the Regiment of Dragoons as a test case. The opening chapters examine the conditions that led to the Jackson administration's unlikely experiment of raising an elite regular regiment of dragoons. Chapter One traces the persistence of the volunteer military in early national America alongside the effects of the War of 1812 on the regular officer corps. Chapter Two recounts how the process of creating new white communities in the trans-Appalachian west increasingly pressured the federal government towards removing Indians west of the Mississippi. In turn, friction between many groups in the former

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<sup>21</sup> Pelzer, *Marches of the Dragoons in the Mississippi Valley: An Account of Marches and Activities of the First Regiment United States Dragoons in the Mississippi Valley between the Years 1833 and 1850* (Iowa City: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1917).

<sup>22</sup> [James Hildreth,] *Dragoon Campaigns to the Rocky Mountains; Being a History of the Enlistment, Organization, and first Campaigns of the Regiment of United States Dragoons; Together with Incidents of a Soldier's Life, and Sketches of Scenery and Indian Characters; by a Dragoon* (New York: Wiley & Long, 1836; reprint edition New York: Arno Press, 1973).

Louisiana Purchase – forcibly re-settled eastern Indians, nomadic Indians native to the Great Plains, and white merchants trading with both Indians and the Mexican community at Santa Fe – required the federal government to improvise a series of military-based potential solutions.

The middle chapters use archival research to offer new insights on the officers and men of the Regiment of Dragoons. Chapter Three addresses the differing cultures of officership. In particular, letters from regular officers and volunteer officers or civilians help illustrate what each set of candidates believed made a good officer. By the 1830s, regular officers tended to be West Point graduates, and emphasized the growing corporateness of the officer corps and the need for martial expertise. Volunteers denied the need for military education and gained their appointments through political connections. Examination of service records reveals that many regulars desired to spend a lifetime in uniform. Most volunteer officers, however, left the service within five years. This fits with the traditional conception of military service for most males in the American republic, that it was a temporary job undertaken in a moment of crisis.

Chapter Four profiles the enlisted dragoons. Analysis of over 7,300 recruits enlisted between March 1833 and February 1836 confirms what had been heretofore largely apocryphal stories about both the dragoons and, more broadly, American soldiers of the period. Dragoons tended to be younger than infantry or artillery recruits, to come from all regions of the country, and mostly claimed to be farmers or tradesmen, not the dregs of American society. These dragoons were also less likely to put up with the mundane tasks of soldiering, as they deserted at high rates during their first year of service.

The final chapters recall the regiment's adventures on the plains. Chapter Five describes the challenges the regiment's officers faced in clothing, equipping, housing, training, and deploying a new unit. Military orders and requisitions, along with eyewitness accounts, portray how political expediency combined with the army's unfamiliarity with cavalry service led to the dragoons' taking station before they were fully trained or fully equipped specialized cavalry gear.

The last two chapters flesh out the official narratives, long known if not widely known, with observations from officers, soldiers and civilians to follow the dragoons on their patrols on the plains. Chapter Six relates how in the summer of 1834 the dragoons successfully escorted a caravan along the Santa Fe Trail and opened the first peace negotiations between the Wichita, Comanche, and Kiowa, and the United States. The resulting treaty cleared the way to completing the Jacksonian program of Indian removal. Chapter Seven concludes the story of the regiment's early years. In 1835, the regiment visited Indians on the northern, central, and southern plains. While they negotiated short-term successes with these nations, they were unable to achieve a long-term peace between the Indians and the United States. Nonetheless, these successes, along with new challenges in Texas and Florida, ended the dragoons' patrols for almost a decade.

CHAPTER 1  
“A UNITED STATES’ EPAULETTE ON HIS SHOULDER”: THE MILITIA SYSTEM,  
THE WAR OF 1812, AND NASCENT MILITARY PROFESSIONALISM IN  
JACKSONIAN AMERICA

On 9 June 1832 the U.S. House of Representatives debated a bill to establish a unit of soldiers to patrol the Indian frontier on horseback. Anyone fortunate enough to sit in the House gallery that Saturday received a free education on the proper form and role of the militia in Jacksonian America. The U.S. Senate had passed a bill the previous December that authorized the president “to mount and equip any portion of the army of the United States, not exceeding, in the whole, ten companies.”<sup>1</sup> Now more than six months later, Rep. Joseph Duncan, Jacksonian from Illinois, rose to amend the bill by striking out everything after the enacting clause and substituting “800 mounted gunmen as volunteers” to serve from 1 April to 1 November of the following year.<sup>2</sup> Duncan, a major general of militia who had commanded Illinois troops during an Indian disturbance in 1831, favored the amended bill because his proposed mounted volunteer force would defend the frontier without resort to calling out local militia. Generally, he believed in relying on the militia, “but it was ruinous to any people engaged in civil pursuits to be compelled to defend their own firesides, or to be required to march in defence of their

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<sup>1</sup> S.6, Twenty-second Congress (1831). The Senate approved S.6 on 29 December 1831 and requested the concurrence of the House; Twenty-second Congress, First Session, *Senate Journal*, 29 December 1831.

<sup>2</sup> Duncan’s proposed amendment is in 8 *Congressional Debates* 3388 (1832), as is the debate that follows here. All biographical data on the representatives, including party affiliation, is drawn from their respective entries in “Biographical Dictionary of the U. S. Congress, 1774-Present,” <http://bioguide.congress.gov>, accessed 30 March 2011.



neighbors, on every incursion of an enemy.”<sup>3</sup> Duncan viewed volunteers as an acceptable substitute.

John Watmough, Anti-Jacksonian from Pennsylvania, rallied to defend the Senate bill. Watmough firmly believed that a well regulated force was necessary for frontier service. He said the object of the bill would be better achieved with ten mounted regular companies, whose men were “completely disciplined” and “perfectly under the control of their officers.” He also feared that the volunteers would be “exposed to the pernicious and demoralizing effects of military service.”<sup>4</sup>

Rep. William H. Ashley, Jacksonian from Missouri, cited his own experience in commanding a large mounted militia force. He called those horsemen the “most disorderly and unmanageable troops under his command.” He believed that much of their conduct could be attributed to their electing their own officers. Admitting mounted volunteers could be a “very efficient force when they could be managed,” Ashley “went for officers regularly appointed, and for regular enlistments.”<sup>5</sup>

Dutee Pearce, an Anti-Masonic representative from Rhode Island, suggested drawing the force from the regular army, whose men and officers were “idle.” If there were to be fighting, he favored “let[ting] those promising boys from West Point have an opportunity of seeing a little of it.” He also noted that “our skeleton army, which was intended to be expanded whenever circumstances required it,” could benefit from

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<sup>3</sup> 8 *Cong. Deb.* 3388 (1832).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 3390.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 3391-92.

learning to perform all kinds of service.<sup>6</sup> Charles Wickliffe, Jacksonian from Kentucky, responded snidely, “These West Point gentlemen were, no doubt, very learned, and would fight very scientifically; but they were not the men to fight Indians.” No, Wickliffe went on, the men needed for frontier service “would not risk their lives under a man they did not know, because he had a United States’ epaulette on his shoulder.”<sup>7</sup>

Two more speakers instructed their colleagues on what made the proper kind of soldier. Del. Ambrose Sevier, Jacksonian from the Arkansas Territory, asserted that regular soldiers were “the refuse of society, collected in the cities and seaport towns; many of them broken down with years and infirmities; none of them used to rise, nor in anywise fit for the service to be assigned to them.”<sup>8</sup> Sevier favored using woodsmen from frontier areas, as did Rep. George Grennell, Jr., Anti-Jacksonian of Massachusetts.

Grennell felt those

residing, and having long resided, in the vicinity of Indians, were acquainted with the Indian character, habits, and mode of warfare; they had seen these people in peace and war, and were the only description of persons fit to meet and to defeat them. . . . Such troops might be relied upon; they had a stake in the community they were defending, and once in the field they would do their duty with promptitude and efficiency, putting their heart into their act.<sup>9</sup>

In the end, when the House approved the amended bill and sent it back to the Senate, the latter made another wholesale amendment. This second amendment, when passed by Congress, established the U.S. Battalion of Mounted Rangers, a new unit. But

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 3393.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 3394.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 3395.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 3396.

the House debate illuminates how Americans thought of their military. The regular army, ostensibly the aegis of national defense, contained neither the appropriate kind of enlisted men, nor the right kind of officers to fight Indians. The majority of congressmen disagreed with those who foresaw the need for tight military discipline and officers who would “fight scientifically,” that is, with a formal military education. Ideally, the militia would defend their own communities, but they had lives to lead and families to raise, so unemployed or underemployed citizens would have to do the job.

This chapter examines the roots of two contrasting nineteenth-century American military cultures: the volunteer military system, and nascent professional military officership. The American militia system, the experience of the War of 1812, and Jacksonian-era attitudes towards the professions all helped shape and perpetuate the volunteer military ethos in Jacksonian America. This ethos included the rejection of formal military education and military discipline, the selection of military leaders without reference to military skill, and the temporary service of both officers and men. Regular army officers, stimulated by their wartime experiences and cognizant of the weaknesses of the volunteer ethos, started making their occupation a real profession.

#### The Militia System, from Colonial Times through the War of 1812

Even during the 1830s, the citizen-soldier ideology, expressed through the militia as a component of national defense, remained a touchstone of American politics. To appreciate this, one need not look any further than Representative Duncan’s comments on 9 June. Down to and beyond the War of 1812, developments in the militia system, not in the regular army, drove the debate over American military policy and practice.

The “militia system,” as defined here, consisted of two major parts: the ordinary militia and the volunteers. The volunteers consisted of a looser aggregation of three categories: independent volunteer companies, the volunteer militia, and federal volunteers. The War of 1812 required the mobilization of both parts of the militia system.

Lawrence Cress has argued that the debates over the proper place of the militia in the eighteenth-century American military system took the place of bigger questions in American politics. Militias were local institutions, representing small communities and under the control of provincial and later state governments. Any standing force in the revolutionary colonies or the new republic necessarily relied on, and at the same time gave credence to, central or national power. Defense was the main cause of government expenditures in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the American government proved no exception. Debating the proper relationship between the militia and the standing army fostered a legitimate discussion of local/national power issues, even if the debate was not explicitly framed in those terms.<sup>10</sup>

During the Revolution, the Continental Army, supplemented by militia units, defeated the British on the battlefield just often enough to allow the rebels to negotiate their independence. Yet the citizens of the new republic downplayed the role of the Continental line in popular memory in favor of the militia. Charles Royster suggests this veneration of the militia stems from the revolutionary generation’s cognitive dissonance over the means and ends of the War for Independence. The inexperienced army of citizen-soldiers the rebels raised in 1775 and early 1776 forced the British to evacuate

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<sup>10</sup> Lawrence D. Cress, *Citizens in Arms: The Army and Militia in American Society to the War of 1812* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), xi-xiv, 51-52, 111-13.

Boston. As many rebels believed themselves freemen fighting a tyrant, this victory seemed to confirm the popular idea that revolutionary virtue made for military prowess without a need for a standing army.<sup>11</sup> As the Revolution went on, however, the rebels came to rely on the increasingly disciplined and effective Continental Army on the battlefield, supplemented by the militia. In Royster's view, any admission by the revolutionaries that they owed their independence to the army conceded that public virtue had collapsed and tacitly questioned whether public virtue existed in the first place.<sup>12</sup> With independence achieved, the revolutionaries reaffirmed public virtue by rejecting a standing army and special recognition for Continental veterans.

No doubt the idea that a standing army had restored freedom and secured national liberties made many citizens uncomfortable. The most important American political documents of the 1770s and 1780s confirm that, despite the late war, the militia held the most prominent role in the public conception of national defense. In Article VI of the Articles of Confederation, the states were forbidden to keep standing armies in times of peace that exceeded what Congress felt to be the necessary size. On the other hand, "every State shall always keep up a well-regulated and disciplined militia, sufficiently armed and accoutered," and the states were also to keep arms and equipment.<sup>13</sup> During the debate over the ratification of the Constitution, Alexander Hamilton wrote *Federalist* 29, arguing that only a militia that responds promptly and efficiently to national

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<sup>11</sup> Charles Royster, *A Revolutionary People at War: The Continental Army and American Character, 1775-1783* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture by the University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 42-43.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 115 and 359.

<sup>13</sup> "Our Documents: Transcript of Articles of Confederation (1777)," <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=3&page=transcript>, accessed 30 March 2011.

emergencies would allow those fearful of standing armies to dispense with regulars.<sup>14</sup>

The Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution begins, “A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State. . . .”

In the main body of the Constitution, Article One, Section Eight, grants Congress the power “to provide for the organizing, arming, and disciplining of the Militia.”

Historian Richard Kohn, among others, has noted the failure of the Federalists during the 1790s to “nationalize” the militia.<sup>15</sup> President Washington and his secretary of war, Henry Knox, formulated a militia reform plan, which they presented to Congress in January 1790. The plan would have divided the current state militias into three classes. Men aged eighteen and nineteen would train for thirty days each year, and those aged twenty, ten days each year. These men formed an “advanced corps.” A “main corps” of men aged twenty-one to forty-six would comprise the bulk of the available manpower in times of war or emergency. Men forty-six or older would form the “reserve corps.” Knox intended to compel young militiamen to participate in the “advanced corps” exercises by linking the rights of citizenship to completing training in the “advanced corps.”<sup>16</sup>

Opposition to the Knox plan arose quickly, and on many points. The federal government would pay for the reforms and the training, but many members of Congress thought the cost would be excessive. Removing eighteen- and nineteen-year old men

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<sup>14</sup> Publius [Alexander Hamilton], “Federalist No. 29,” [http://thomas.loc.gov/home/histdox/fed\\_29.html](http://thomas.loc.gov/home/histdox/fed_29.html), accessed 30 March 2011.

<sup>15</sup> Richard Kohn, *Eagle and Sword: The Federalists and the Creation of the Military Establishment in America, 1783-1802* (New York: Free Press, 1975). This paragraph and the one following are drawn from Chapter Seven, “The Murder of the Militia System [1792].”

<sup>16</sup> “Organization of the Militia,” 21 January 1790, *American State Papers: Military Affairs (ASP:MA)* 1:6-13.

from society for a month every year was not popular, nor was tying citizenship to militia service. Ultimately, both the original plan and a substitute failed to pass. In addition to the above-stated reasons, redesigning thirteen state militias to meet a single federal standard required a diminution of local authority that most Americans found intolerable – despite the fact the Constitution stated Congress already held that power. Thus organizing the militia spoke to the shape and powers of the national government.

The Militia Act of 1792 disappointed the governing Federalists completely.<sup>17</sup> One class of militia existed: free white males between the ages of eighteen and forty-five. The men themselves would acquire weapons and other necessary supplies. The act directed the states to organize their militia units and suggested that, but did not compel, the states use the tactical system Baron von Steuben had devised for the Continental Army. Indeed, the act did not compel the states to do anything, for it granted the federal government no power to penalize non-compliance. Kohn’s argument echoes Hamilton’s *Federalist* 29. Without a militia responsive to federal demands, “the creation of some kind of national military establishment became inevitable.”<sup>18</sup>

Traditional accounts held that Thomas Jefferson, once elected president, set about dismantling the military establishment in accordance with Republican Party views on standing armies and militiamen. Theodore Crackel, however, argues that Jefferson accepted the necessity of a standing army.<sup>19</sup> Jefferson sought to reduce and reform the regular force because he viewed its officer corps as rife with politically unreliable

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<sup>17</sup> Act of 8 May 1792, ch. 33, 1 *Stat.* 271-74.

<sup>18</sup> Kohn, *Eagle and Sword*, 129.

<sup>19</sup> Theodore J. Crackel, *Mr. Jefferson’s Army: Political and Social Reform of the Military Establishment, 1801-1809* (New York: New York University Press, 1987), 13-15.

Federalist partisans. The establishment of the United States Military Academy provided a way for young Republicans to enter the army at its lowest commissioned ranks.<sup>20</sup> The force reduction of 1802 allowed Jefferson to purge the army of many Federalists. Few Republicans ascended to senior military positions during the first seven years of the Jefferson administration, largely because seniority-based promotion made for slow progress. By urging Congress to expand the army after the *Chesapeake* affair in 1808, however, Jefferson gained the opportunity to create new regiments officered entirely by Republicans. The president “recognized that an effective militia would vastly multiply the nations [sic] strength; still, he had no desire to struggle with a militia force unless that institution was reformed.”<sup>21</sup>

This is not to say that American political leaders made no attempt at militia reform after 1792. Jefferson stated in his fourth annual message to Congress, “Should any improvement occur in the militia system, that will be always seasonable,” a sentiment that appears explicitly in no fewer than fifteen of the twenty-three annual presidential messages drafted before the War of 1812.<sup>22</sup> Congress did debate militia reform on several

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<sup>20</sup> For more on this, see Samuel J. Watson, “Developing ‘Republican Machines’: West Point and the Struggle to Render the Officer Corps Safe for America, 1802 – 33,” in Robert M. S. McDonald, ed., *Thomas Jefferson’s Military Academy: Founding West Point* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2004), 154 – 81.

<sup>21</sup> Crackel, *Mr. Jefferson’s Army*, 162.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas Jefferson, “Fourth Annual Address,” in James D. Richardson, ed., *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1908*, vol. 1 (New York: Bureau of National Literature and Art, 1897), 372.



occasions during the first decade of the nineteenth century. Each time it proved unwilling to impose new reforms upon the militia.<sup>23</sup>

But the states themselves arguably provided the largest impediment to the federal government using militia in time of war. National authorities could not be sure how many men the state militias would provide. When the War Department transmitted to Congress the “current” militia returns in 1807, it reported Delaware and Maryland had never made a return, South Carolina last reported in 1802, and four other states had not filed their returns since 1803 or 1804.<sup>24</sup> Congress authorized the president to call up 100,000 militiamen in April 1812 and declared war on Great Britain in June. Despite this, the War Department transmitted a tabulation in February 1813 indicating Vermont had not made a return since 1809, and Delaware and Georgia had not done so since 1810.<sup>25</sup>

Other historians have ably covered the role of the militia in the war of 1812.<sup>26</sup> It should suffice to say that the states failed to organize, arm, and discipline their ordinary militias according to the wishes of Congress. (In New England, some governors failed to muster their militias entirely.) Disorganized, ill-disciplined, and often lacking arms and equipment, the ordinary militia rarely could be relied upon to supplement the regular

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<sup>23</sup> See C. Edward Skeen, *Citizen-Soldiers in the War of 1812* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1999), chapter one, “The Militia Before the War of 1812,” and chapter two, “Congress and Military Mobilization.”

<sup>24</sup> “Return of the Militia of the United States,” 7 February 1807, *ASP:MA* 1: 211-14. Only ten of the seventeen states submitted current returns.

<sup>25</sup> The militia call-up is in act of 10 April 1812, ch.55, 2 *Stat.* 705-7. “Return of the Militia of the United States,” 13 February 1813, *ASP: MA* 1:330-34.

<sup>26</sup> Skeen, *Citizen-Soldiers*, concentrates on militiamen (and volunteer troops) in the War of 1812. But the militia is conspicuous in the standard histories of the war. See John K. Mahon, *The War of 1812* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1972); J. C. A. Stagg, *Mr. Madison’s War: Politics, Diplomacy, and Warfare in the Early American Republic, 1783-1830* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983); and Donald R. Hickey, *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989).

army. Under the right leaders, such as Andrew Jackson at New Orleans, William Henry Harrison at Fort Meigs, and Peter B. Porter in upstate New York, militiamen gave a good account of themselves. But that took training and above all time, both rare commodities when by law the militiamen went home after only three or six months of service.

The War of 1812 revealed the flaws of the militia system, but the war's end removed the impetus for meaningful reform in the decades that followed. Mary Ellen Rowe suggests that, by the 1830s, the militias in Kentucky and Missouri were more political and civic institutions than military bodies, a view that neatly supports Cress' point on local sovereignty.<sup>27</sup> Other historians, particularly Marcus Cunliffe, have discussed the collapse of the post-War of 1812 militia as a defense force.<sup>28</sup> Rowe explicitly notes the militias remained

a crucial symbol of republican ideals, the reputed bulwark of republican institutions, a police and civil defense force, a social club and avenue of political advancement for ambitious men, an expression of communal identity, and a mechanism for the expression and resolution of conflict within the community.<sup>29</sup>

In Rowe's interpretation, the militias were also the repository of another American civic virtue: the dislike of red tape. She challenges Cunliffe's claim that the lack of militia returns sent to Washington after the War of 1812 indicates a broad disorganization of the ordinary militia, especially on the frontier.<sup>30</sup> Rowe argues the

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<sup>27</sup> Mary Ellen Rowe, *Bulwark of the Republic: The Antebellum Militia in the American West* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2003), 87-90.

<sup>28</sup> Marcus Cunliffe, *Soldiers and Civilians: The Martial Spirit in America, 1775-1865* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1968), 177 – 212.

<sup>29</sup> Rowe, *Bulwark of the Republic*, 72.

<sup>30</sup> Cunliffe, *Soldiers and Civilians*, 209; Rowe, *Bulwark of the Republic*, 79.

returns seemed pointless to local communities and officials, who knew exactly the state of their local companies. But from the federal point of view, Rowe inadvertently confirms Cunliffe's argument. How could the federal government rely on local militias in a national emergency when the states refused to disclose how many men they could mobilize? And after the ordinary militia's general performance in the War of 1812, why would the federal government want to make use of such a feeble instrument?

Many of the objections to Secretary Knox's militia plan came from its provision for classifying militiamen. The great irony, then, is that militiamen effectively classified themselves, not by age, but by interest in military service. This self-selection differentiated volunteers from the ordinary militia. But because volunteers emanated from the ordinary militia, it is not surprising that that the former carried with them many of the same strengths and weaknesses.

In 1798, Congress debated the creation of a provisional army during the Quasi-War with France. Albert Gallatin, a Republican representative from Pennsylvania, utilized this occasion to make reference to independent volunteer companies. Gallatin did not look on such organizations benignly. He conflated independent volunteers with a Federalist plot to destroy republicanism in the United States. Gallatin described independent volunteer companies as "military associations" of those "able to arm, clothe, and equip themselves at their own expense" – merchants, lawyers, and the moneyed sort.<sup>31</sup> Political rhetoric aside, the representative had a point. Due to the costs involved, independent volunteer companies tended to attract more affluent citizens. These companies need not be, however, any better at the martial art than ordinary militia.

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<sup>31</sup> *Annals of Congress (AC)* 1798, 1727-28.

Nearly from the beginning of the American militia system, citizens banded together in separate volunteer companies of their own choosing. Bostonians established the oldest, the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company, in 1638.<sup>32</sup> Big cities usually had at least one prominent independent volunteer company. As volunteers, members chose their own uniforms and drill systems. All this cost money. Marcus Cunliffe remarked, “The capacity and readiness to pay seemed to guarantee that only the respectable would join their ranks.”<sup>33</sup> The states absorbed the independent volunteer companies into the existing militia structure. As befitting organizations whose members saw themselves as elites, volunteer infantry units often became the flank companies of ordinary militia battalions and regiments, places of honor on the nineteenth-century battlefield. Volunteer cavalry and artillery assumed such elevated status among an entire state’s militia force.

Despite these pretensions, the independent volunteer company was not the keystone for national defense in the early republic and antebellum periods. For one thing, the explosion in the number of independent volunteer companies came in the 1840s and 1850s, long after the ordinary militia collapsed into a force formidable only on paper. For another, the independent volunteer company served more of a social function than a military one, which suited the tastes of amateur soldiers able to afford fancy uniforms and expensive dinners. But the volunteer militia concept appealed to those who viewed themselves as good citizens, ready to serve at a moment’s notice. The concept also provided the basis for the other two components of the volunteer military system.

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<sup>32</sup> Cunliffe, *Soldiers and Civilians*, 217.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 219.

When a call for militia went out, often the state governments drafted militiamen. But independent volunteer companies, or any militia company for that matter, could volunteer to serve and meet the call. In these circumstances, the units choosing to freely respond became volunteer militiamen. During the 1790s and the first decade of the nineteenth century, the country faced threats from France or Britain overseas, and from Indians on the frontier. In response Congress repeatedly authorized the president to hold in readiness a detachment of militia. These detachments ranged from 80,000 to 100,000 militiamen, roughly a tenth of the supposed number of militia on the combined state rolls. In the acts authorizing these detachments, Congress also gave the president the authority to accept independent infantry, cavalry, and artillery companies to meet the quota.<sup>34</sup>

Presumably, the use of volunteer militiamen corrected some of the biggest defects in the militia system. Volunteers, by the very act of volunteering, would be more enthusiastic about serving. They could be expected to assemble more of their kit than drafted militiamen, who often arrived at camp lacking even weapons and accoutrements. But basic problems inherent in the militia premise remained. Militiamen chose their own officers, sometimes on merits that had little to do with martial skill. The volunteers might not have trained at all at home. If they had, there was no guarantee they had used the same system of tactics as regular troops or other militia with whom they were fielded. Following muster into service, a typical tour of duty with the volunteer militia ran three or six months, hardly enough time to gain a respectable level of proficiency and still engage the enemy. When militia served under state authority, some governors or

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<sup>34</sup> See act of 9 May 1794, ch. 27, 1 *Stat.* 367; act of 29 November 1794, ch. 1, 1 *Stat.* 403; act of 24 June 1797, ch. 4, 1 *Stat.* 522; act of 3 March 1803, ch. 32, 2 *Stat.* 241; act of 18 April 1806, ch. 32, 2 *Stat.* 383; and act of 30 March 1808, ch. 39, 2 *Stat.* 478.

commanders refused to allow their men to cross state lines. In the case of federal calls, some interpretations of the militia clause in the Constitution questioned whether militia could legally serve outside of the United States.

Federal volunteers made up the third component of the volunteers. Arguably, the idea dated to the short-term provincial armies raised by the colonies during the wars of the eighteenth century.<sup>35</sup> In 1791, Congress first authorized a “corps of levies” to be put at the President’s disposal. The President could raise up to 2,000 men in this manner, organize them as he saw fit, and officer them as he chose. They would serve for six months and be on the same footing as the regular army and militia called into the service of the United States.<sup>36</sup>

Subsequently, the use of federal volunteers became more contentious. Critics asked two constitutional questions. What status did federal volunteers hold? Nowhere in the Constitution does the word “volunteers” appear. Albert Gallatin, speaking in the aforementioned 1798 debate over the provisional army bill, struggled to classify the volunteers. These troops, like the militia, operated under the same rules and regulations as the regular army when called into actual service. They were also due the same pay and emoluments. When alerted to hold themselves for readiness, but not yet mustered into federal service, these obligations and privileges did not apply. In this way, the volunteers were like the ordinary militia.

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<sup>35</sup> For an example of this volunteer system dating to the French and Indian War, see Fred Anderson, *The Crucible of War: The Seven Years’ War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000).

<sup>36</sup> Act of 3 March 1791, ch. 28, 1 *Stat.* 223.

But in other respects, Gallatin noted, the federal volunteers of 1798 would be like the regular army. The volunteers would enlist for a continuous two-year term, whereas ordinary militia would undergo several rotations on and off duty in the same period. The president would choose volunteer officers.<sup>37</sup> Critics of the volunteer section in the provisional army bill argued that, if the volunteers constituted an army, their organization and employment rightly fell under the purview of Congress. If volunteers were volunteer militia, regulations already existed for calling out such troops, and allowing the president to select officers, or set their term of service was unconstitutional.

A second constitutional objection rested on the language in Article One, Section Eight. Congress had the power “to provide for calling forth the Militia to execute the Laws of the Union, suppress Insurrections, and repel Invasions.” Could ordinary militia cross the country’s borders? If the President accepted volunteer companies into federal volunteer service, could they cross the country’s borders? Confusing matters even more, the act authorizing 50,000 volunteers on the eve of the War of 1812 allowed officers in federal volunteer units to be “appointed in the manner prescribed by law in the several states and territories to which such companies shall belong,” rather than by the president.<sup>38</sup> That clearly suggested these units were volunteer militiamen in federal service, not federal volunteers. But the volunteers raised under this act would serve for one year, not three or six months.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> *AC* 1798, 1725-26.

<sup>38</sup> Act of 6 February 1812, ch. 21, 2 *Stat.* 676.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

There was another, less contentious category of federal volunteer: rangers raised for frontier service. In March 1792, on the heels of Maj. Gen. Arthur St. Clair's defeat at the hands of Indians in current-day Ohio, Congress granted President Washington the authority "to call into service . . . such number of cavalry as, in his judgment, may be necessary for the protection of the frontiers."<sup>40</sup> During the relative peace that followed the 1795 Treaty of Greenville, Congress did not renew the act. In the face of mounting unrest in the Northwest shortly before the War of 1812, however, Congress authorized President Madison to raise six companies of rangers. In July 1812, Congress sanctioned an additional ranger company. And in February 1813, Congress allowed the President to raise another ten ranger companies.<sup>41</sup> The 1832 act to authorize the U. S. Battalion of Mounted Rangers thus rested on ample precedent.

As a practical matter, the United States had to rely on the militia system for national defense at the outset of the nineteenth century. Congress agreed to pay for the construction of seacoast fortifications outside major American cities. Planners did not believe the forts would prevent enemy invasions, but would rather channel invasions to areas where militia had quickly gathered to oppose them. Even then, Congress did not authorize enough guns and artillerymen to fully man the system. Given Congress' reluctance to fully fund coastal forts to guard the republic's most populous cities, it seemed unlikely it would fund a peacetime mounted frontier constabulary large enough to prevent red-white friction along a sparsely settled frontier.

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<sup>40</sup> Act of 5 March 1792, ch. 10, 1 *Stat.* 241.

<sup>41</sup> Act of 2 January 1812, ch. 11, 2 *Stat.* 670; act of 1 July 1812, ch. 111, 2 *Stat.* 774; act of 25 February 1813, ch. 31, 2 *Stat.* 804.



As for the regular army, both rhetoric and sincere belief in the militia system persuaded Congress to constantly adjust its size, based on expediency, perceived danger, and budgetary considerations. The army began modestly in 1784, with seven hundred soldiers authorized. By 1792, on the heels of Indian troubles in Ohio, the number of authorized soldiers rose to five thousand. In 1796, the immediate danger from Indians having passed, Congress reduced the troop ceiling to two thousand. The regular establishment expanded in 1798 on the threat of war with France, shrank on the return of peace, and eventually soared on the threat of a second war with Britain. The constant adjustment of army size also meant dramatic fluctuations in the number and experience levels of regular officers. All of America's soldiers, militia and regular, would learn many hard lessons at British hands after June 1812.

#### Republicanism, the Militia System and the War of 1812 Experience

Congress tried, and failed, to reform the state militias before the War of 1812. The states made no attempt to ensure that their militiamen drilled as soldiers, conformed to the disciplinary standards used in the regular army, or selected officers who had military training or combat experience. On the battlefield, the militia's weaknesses repeatedly hamstrung American field armies. With political values predominating over military values, militia reform was certainly difficult. Because militias were local institutions filled with virtuous citizens, reorganizing them to promote greater military efficiency was politically unthinkable, if not literally "un-American." The rare successes militiamen enjoyed in battle often can be attributed to "regularizing" them: giving them proper training, equipment, and combat leadership. The American public, however, attributed

any militia success to the innate courage and warrior skills supposedly found in all good Americans.

The new nation's early decades reinforced a political distrust of a large military establishment. The Lexington myth told Americans that virtuous citizen-soldiers were still their first line of defense. To be sure, Continentals valiantly fought the British through the end of the Revolution. But the mutinies of the Pennsylvania and New Jersey Lines, and the aborted officers' coup at Newburgh toward the war's end, blotted out positive memories of the regulars' contributions. The national government subsequently used an army of federalized militia to put down the Whiskey Rebellion a decade after the Revolution. In 1798, it authorized a provisional army whose size caused Jefferson's Republicans to view it as a threat to civil liberties.

Opponents of a large standing army argued that militias not only could protect the country, but also that militiamen posed no danger to anyone but the enemy. The state militias, given tables of organization but not forces in being, provided a ready pool of men in case of emergency. The short terms of militia service, three or six months, prevented the militias from transforming into an ominous standing force. (This also applied to state or federal volunteer units, as well as wartime enlistments in the regular army.)

Of course, terms of service would be meaningless if the men under arms ignored legal niceties and refused to go home when their enlistment expired. Fortunately, many free white males living in the early period of the country embraced the concept of

republicanism.<sup>42</sup> Republicanism demanded society work together to preserve the “commonwealth.” That required citizens possess virtue, or the willingness to subordinate private ends to the public good. Virtue necessitated that citizens retain their political independence to avoid following potential tyrants. Independence sprang from citizenship, or citizens actively participating in politics and society.

Citizen soldiers were men who embraced republicanism in a military context. The entire community, not just a standing army or few select men, was responsible for community defense. Short terms of service both allowed and demanded every man do his part. Moreover, good republicans took their communities with them when they went to war. These men, drawn from the community and officered by trusted community leaders, could not suppress community members’ civil liberties as a matter of principle.<sup>43</sup>

So the militia system may have been a repository of civic virtue. Unfortunately, these virtues contributed to military vices. When militia companies chose their officers, for example, they often chose men without military training or experience. An extreme example would be Micah Taul, who during the War of 1812 gained a Kentucky militia captaincy by winning a brawl against an opponent.<sup>44</sup> By viewing the militia as a local

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<sup>42</sup> “Republicanism” is famously malleable, as Daniel T. Rodgers demonstrated in “Republicanism: The Career of a Concept,” *Journal of American History* 79 (June 1992): 11-38. That malleability may account for its ubiquity in America; see Thomas E. Rodgers, “Billy Yank and GI Joe: An Exploratory Essay on the Sociopolitical Dimensions of Soldier Motivation,” *Journal of Military History* 69 (January 2005): 99. This definition comes from Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850*, 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 14.

<sup>43</sup> For an extended discussion of the ties between republicanism and military service in the early republic, see T. Rodgers, “Billy Yank,” 93 – 121 and Ricardo A. Herrera, “Self-Governance and the American Citizen as Soldier, 1775-1861,” *JMH* 65 (January 2001): 21 – 52.

<sup>44</sup> Skeen, *Citizen-Soldiers*, 56.

institution that happened to have a military function, however, choosing prominent or charismatic men becomes more understandable.

During the War of 1812, Brig. Gen. William Hull, blamed the failure of his expedition to Canada on the militia officers assigned to his command. His immediate subordinates were three Ohio militia colonels, all of whom bickered constantly about their relative ranks.<sup>45</sup> The three soon openly complained about Hull's abilities and leadership.<sup>46</sup> After Hull was court-martialed for surrendering Detroit, he attempted to place blame for the campaign on all of his militia officers. He stated that many of them believed they could vote on his decisions, and that other officers would not give their men unpopular orders.<sup>47</sup>

In other cases, officers could not control their men regardless of orders. Victory eluded the Americans at Queenston Heights in October 1812 in part because the New York militiamen under the command of Maj. Gen. Stephen van Rensselaer refused to cross the Niagara River into Canada.<sup>48</sup> During the May 1813 siege of Fort Meigs, Kentucky militiamen attacked and overran a British artillery position. Instead of spiking the guns and withdrawing, as ordered, the militia chased the British into the nearby woods. There the British counterattacked, killing or capturing three-quarters of the

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<sup>45</sup> Stagg, *Mr. Madison's War*, 197. One of these was Lewis Cass, who would play a prominent role in Indian affairs and national defense through Andrew Jackson's presidency.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 198.

<sup>47</sup> Skeen, *Citizen-Soldiers*, 81.

<sup>48</sup> One excellent recent treatment of Queenston Heights is Robert Malcomson, *A Very Brilliant Affair: The Battle of Queenston Heights, 1812* (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 2003).

American force.<sup>49</sup> Even Maj. Gen. Andrew Jackson, postwar hero of the common man, grew infuriated at his militia and volunteers during the Creek War. In November and December 1813, Jackson twice had to stop entire brigades of citizen-soldiers from going home prematurely by threatening to shoot them en masse as deserters. Jackson wrote his wife that his men had descended from the “highest elevation of patriots – to mere, wining [sic], complaining, Sedioners and mutineers.”<sup>50</sup>

Jackson’s signal triumph, the battle of New Orleans on 8 January 1815, demonstrated the limited usefulness of militia in battle. The Mississippi River divided the American positions south of the city into two sectors. East of the river, the Americans hunkered behind extensive fortifications. Jackson positioned eight artillery batteries to fire on the British assault. Jackson’s main force contained many Tennessee volunteers who were veterans of the Creek War, regulars officered by skilled and experienced leaders, and many Louisiana militiamen who had served in French or Caribbean armies before moving to New Orleans.<sup>51</sup> One thousand Kentucky militiamen stood in reserve, backing the American line at the exact place the British chose to assault.<sup>52</sup> The Kentucky and Tennessee riflemen played an important role in the battle on the east bank. They did not, however, win the battle without extensive, experienced help, as popular memory would later insist.

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<sup>49</sup> Skeen, *Citizen-Soldiers*, 89.

<sup>50</sup> Andrew Jackson to wife Rachel, 29 December 1813; cited in Robert V. Remini, *Andrew Jackson and the Course of American Empire, 1767 – 1821* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 201.

<sup>51</sup> Remini, *The Battle of New Orleans* (New York: Viking, 1999), 153-54.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

The American defense on the west bank broke under the British assault. The American forces there consisted of roughly six hundred men, mostly Louisiana and Kentucky militia. Their main fortification was an earthen work that barely reached waist level. All of the men had helped build the fortifications on the east bank, and then had to dig their own on the west bank. As a result they were exhausted.<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, many of the Kentuckians arrived at the front without weapons and were issued a motley assortment of firearms scrounged in the city.<sup>54</sup> When an assault by fourteen hundred British regulars pierced the defense at the center and the right, those Americans panicked and ran. The British now held a position from which they could have enfiladed Jackson's main line on the east bank. Fortunately for Jackson, his main force had already stopped the larger assault, and the British on the west bank withdrew. Afterward, Jackson vilified the Kentuckians on the west bank for cowardice, while praising the heroism of their brothers on the east bank.<sup>55</sup>

The military historian cannot note without irony Jackson's complaints about his militia. As an officer archetype, Jackson was nothing new in the American way of war. His military career during the War of 1812 appeared to validate the whole concept of the volunteer military ethos. Though a major general of Tennessee militia, Jackson was a lawyer by trade, and had participated in Tennessee politics since the 1790s. In contrast, most of the generals who commanded troops in the northern United States in the opening

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 160.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>55</sup> Remini, *Andrew Jackson*, 287-88. Recalling that there are no bad regiments, just bad colonels, Remini writes that Jackson refused to own up to any mistakes, including the placement of the panicky Kentuckians and the lack of prepared defenses for them and the battery behind.

year of the war served as officers in the Continental Army, or in the fledgling peacetime force. Jackson proved to be a warlike and successful commander, while other generals possessing more military experience demonstrated poor command skills. This disparity seemingly vindicated a widely-held popular concept, that of the “military genius.” This held that generalship was an innate talent, not an acquired skill, and thus military education and active military experience had nothing to do with the quality of an officer. Jackson’s widespread fame as the hero of New Orleans, in turn, not only reinforced the volunteer ethic, but helped spread it across civil society in the era which now bears his name.

#### Jacksonian-Era Attitudes towards the Professions

Despite Jackson’s popular image, he was no “everyman.” Jackson found himself in a position to achieve lasting fame by command at New Orleans because of the political connections he cultivated before the War of 1812, and because he earned a regular commission by winning the Creek War. He had lived more than half his life by the time of his most famous battle, and had received no formal military schooling. Yet free white males in postwar America attributed Jackson’s success to something inside him, something unimproved by either expertise or experience. This innate quality might not lead every man to military triumph or the White House, but this belief in the efficacy of genius fit the mood of the country and inhibited the growth of professionalism during the early nineteenth century.

According to John William Ward, “to describe the early nineteenth century as the age of Jackson misstates the matter. The age was not his. He was the age’s.”<sup>56</sup> Americans saw Jackson as embodying three key characteristics. Jackson personified nature, the idea that native sense trumped many of the benefits of traditional learning and formal training. He also embodied will, as his lifetime success stemmed from his character and ceaseless drive. After all, he had been born dirt-poor on the Appalachian frontier before the Revolution, and his education consisted of a limited law apprenticeship. Most especially, however, Jackson represented the divine hand of Providence. Many Americans believed God granted Jackson all the tools he would need for success and the iron will to seize it. Jackson was the synecdoche for young America. It was a wide-open country geographically, expanding all the time. Its people could bootstrap themselves to personal success, and in doing so, collectively propel their nation to greater and greater heights.

Joyce Appleby has suggested that, for free white males, American society seemed wide open even before Jackson’s arrival on the national scene.<sup>57</sup> The political triumph of the Republicans in 1800 led to a more open, contentious public-political space. The Jeffersonian idea that the voters should play a constant and active role in government – representative democracy – replaced the Federalist concept of governors responsible to

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<sup>56</sup> John William Ward, *Andrew Jackson: Symbol for an Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), 213. The concepts of nature, providence, and will are nicely summarized in chapter eleven, “Coda.”

<sup>57</sup> This paragraph is drawn from Joyce Appleby, *Inheriting the Revolution: The First Generation of Americans* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000): *en passim*. In many ways Appleby was responding to a much darker assessment of nineteenth century America, Charles Sellers’ *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991). Sellers posits a Jeffersonian America betrayed by the older James Madison and utterly destroyed by the Market Revolution. Unquestionably Appleby has a more positive view of political, social, cultural, and economic developments in the young nation. But even Appleby admits that opportunities were limited for white women, curtailed for blacks and Indians, and that uneven development of North and South pointed the way to a violent schism over slavery.



the voters only at the ballot box – true republicanism. Those without wealth drove economic development in the country, and enough of them became wealthy in business to encourage others. But there was no stigma for failure or changing jobs. Simple literacy was the key to some level of prosperity. The constant westward expansion of white settlement meant the literate could find employment opportunities as government officials, teachers, lawyers, newspaper editors, and (for a few) professional writing. Religious upheavals and the growth of lay clergy in frontier areas portended a change in American religion. White men enjoyed higher status than white women, blacks, or Indians, but white men competed for status amongst themselves. This meant the destruction of many marks of distinction, and at the same time the appropriation of others from the well-born.

Samuel Haber examined the importance of honor in the professions, as conceived in nineteenth-century America. He found “the American professions transmit, with some modifications, a distinctive sense of authority and honor that has its origins in the class position and occupational prescriptions of eighteenth-century English gentlemen.”<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Samuel Haber, *The Quest for Authority and Honor in the American Professions, 1750 – 1900* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), ix. The literature on professions is so voluminous as to defy quick summary. Good places to start, for the uninitiated, are Jack Shulimson, “Military Professionalism: The Case of the U. S. Marine Officer Corps, 1880 – 1898,” *Journal of Military History* 60 (April 1996): 231-42, note 7, and two review essays: Sheldon Rothblatt, “How ‘Professional’ Are the Professions? A Review Article,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 37 (January 1995): 194-204 and Michael Schudson, “The Rise of Professionalism: A Sociological Analysis,” *Theory and Society* 9 (January 1980): 215-29. In emphasizing the intangible qualities of authority and honor, Haber is writing in response to books such as the Marxist Margali S. Larson, *The Rise of Professionalism: A Sociological Analysis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977) and the Weberian Jeffrey L. Berlant, *Profession and Monopoly: A Study of Medicine in the United States and Great Britain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975).

Because the state holds a monopoly on violence, and thus officers are severely restricted from plying their trade in the marketplace – legally speaking, freebooters and insurrectionists are criminals, only on an immense scale – it is difficult to see the military as a possible profession within the Marxist and Weberian frameworks. As Larson notes on p. 254, note 25, “I think, however, that the authority of the military does not depend on their special expertise, but on their control of the means of coercion,” which

Because colonial society had no landed gentry, the traditional professions of law, medicine, and the clergy developed differently in the colonies, but they made their own claims to honor and authority, “the right to command, direct, initiate, and advise.”<sup>59</sup> In the period 1750 to 1830, the ministry largely retained its aura of honor. Clergymen were gentlemen. They did not participate in the market at a time when more and more Americans engaged in capitalism. Doctors sought to cultivate authority because they saw themselves as giving advice to the sick, not selling cures or health. The law kept its honor and authority because it helped define what it meant to be American.

In this early period, the traditional professions began to establish education as both a way to elevate themselves above mere occupations and restrict access to their ranks. In England, a classical education had been crucial to the gentlemanly sense of profession, and in America many professionals also partook of the classics. But Haber writes, “It was the profession’s science, as well as its classical education, that lifted it above the menial occupations like surgery and attorneyship” – occupations in which, because theoretical understanding was unnecessary, apprenticeship could teach a man everything he needed to know.<sup>60</sup> In religion, the general fissures over the Great Awakening and revolution spurred the establishments of seminaries, which gave the classically educated special training for the ministry. Early medical schools in America either demanded their attendees hold a classical education or sought to cultivate

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must disqualify the military as a profession in her eyes. Haber’s paradigm is more open to the possibility of military professionalism in the Jacksonian era, even though he believes military professionalization is of the post-1880 era; Haber, *Quest for Authority*, 200-1.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 6.

gentlemanly qualities, along with the theoretical science of medicine. Legal apprenticeship remained widespread, but (depending on local circumstances) college education was definitely desired, if not required. Lawyers wanted judges to be gentlemen.

After 1830, entry standards for the traditional professions declined in importance. The forces of evangelical Protestantism, political democracy, and voracious capitalism inspired individual equality: before God, in the voting booth, and at work.<sup>61</sup> In this environment, the emphasis on qualifications to join a profession seemed aristocratic and monopolistic. Lawyers were self-taught or apprenticed, without the benefit of a classical education. Paradoxically, the number of medical schools skyrocketed. (People were willing to see non-classically educated doctors. They did not want self-taught doctors.) The ministry took a middle course, with some denominations accepting clergy without much formal instruction, others setting up seminaries. When state lawmakers removed licensing regulations for medicine and law, they made it possible for future doctors and lawyers to dispense with college.

At the same time, Haber writes, “the professions resisted the peculiar egalitarian onslaught” between 1830 and 1880.<sup>62</sup> He attributes this to the professions’ ability to retain authority and honor in the egalitarian environment. That occurred largely because Americans, professionals and non-professionals alike, saw such occupations as intellectual pursuits, not manual labor. Technical education, the theoretical underpinnings of a profession, still predominated in those fields. This helps explain both the expansion of medical schools and the apprenticeship of law. White men with the natural talents to

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<sup>61</sup> As suggested above, arguably these forces were already reshaping American society by 1815.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

enter these professions could do so regardless of class. Technical education could be a mark of distinction without being a mark of aristocracy. This last point is important. In Haber's words, Jacksonian-era egalitarianism possessed "a vague animus for leveling with a distinct eagerness for rising in the world."<sup>63</sup>

The complexity of Jacksonian attitudes towards technical education can be seen in the congressional debates over the United States Military Academy that flared up in the quarter-century following the War of 1812. During that period, the halls of Congress rang with denunciations of West Point. This phenomenon has been covered in some detail by other historians, so one example of this rhetorical assault should suffice.<sup>64</sup> In February 1830, Rep. David Crockett, Anti-Jacksonian from Tennessee, called for the abolition of West Point.<sup>65</sup> He believed "the institution was kept up for the education of the sons of the noble and wealthy, and of members of Congress, people of influence, and not for the children of the poor."<sup>66</sup> Its graduates were "too nice to work; they are first educated there for nothing, and then they must have salaries to support them after they leave there."<sup>67</sup> Crockett argued that "a bad effect" of this system was that graduates monopolized

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>64</sup> Histories of West Point in this period include Stephen Ambrose, *Duty, Honor, Country: A History of West Point* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1966); James L. Morrison, "The Best School in the World": *West Point, the Pre-Civil War Years, 1833-1861* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1986); and George Pappas, *To the Point: The United States Military Academy, 1802-1902* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1993). This topic is also discussed in Cunliffe, *Soldiers and Civilians*, 105-11.

<sup>65</sup> David Crockett and Andrew Jackson had once been political allies, but Crockett broke with the president over policy on Western land sales and Indian removal. He first ran as an Anti-Jacksonian in 1828.

<sup>66</sup> 6 *Cong. Deb.* 582 (1830).

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 583.

commissions in the regular army. That did not guarantee the army proper leadership, as many of the heroes of the War of 1812 did not graduate from West Point.<sup>68</sup>

At other times, government officials seriously considered expanding West Point or establishing new military academies because they believed in the importance of a military education. In January 1816, with the memory of the War of 1812 still fresh, the House debated a bill that would establish three military academies in addition to West Point. Eight hundred cadets in total would study at the four academies.<sup>69</sup> Richard M. Johnson, hero of the recent war and a Republican from Kentucky, declared that the people had the vigor to defend themselves, if only properly officered, and that “no method of forming officers could be compared, for efficacy and economy, to that by Military Academies.”<sup>70</sup> John C. Calhoun, then a Republican congressman from South Carolina, believed that additional military academies would increase the chances of middle- and lower-class men of talent becoming officers. Any graduates in excess of the army’s needs would return to civil life and “diffuse, as far as possible, military science” to the militias.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Crockett was being disingenuous. According to the Secretary of War in 1822, one hundred six “officers educated at West Point” served in the War of 1812. Two held a rank above colonel during the war. Ninety-one held the line rank of captain or below; “List of Officers Educated at the Military Academy who were in service during the late war,” included in “Military Academy,” 4 April 1822, *ASP: MA* 2:383-85. Of company grade officers, thirty graduated from West Point in July 1812 or afterwards; “Register of Cadets who have been graduated at the United States’ Military Academy, and received commissions in the army of the United States, from June 1802 to July 1823, inclusive; showing ‘in what capacities they have been employed,’” 1 July 1824, *ASP:MA* 2:634-43.

<sup>69</sup> H.R. 9, Fourteenth Congress (1815).

<sup>70</sup> *AC* 1816, 423.

<sup>71</sup> *AC* 1816, 430-31.

Despite the merit of these arguments, the Fourteenth Congress did not vote to establish additional military academies. But the idea of seeding the state militias, volunteers, or wartime enlistees with academy graduates came up from time to time. In 1819, Calhoun, now Secretary of War, recommended one additional academy. In the event of raising a large wartime force, civilians who had received a military education would gain an officer's skills more quickly, as opposed to men without any military training.<sup>72</sup> President James Monroe, in his annual message for 1822, mentioned that Military Academy graduates returned to civilian life would make the best militia officers, and aid Congress in its constitutional duty to organize, arm, and discipline the militia.<sup>73</sup> In 1827, the House Committee on the Militia echoed Monroe's sentiments. It called for the federal government to either provide militia instructors, or pay for them. Militia officers with a formal military education would be doubly valuable, as instructors as well as troop leaders.<sup>74</sup>

The post-War of 1812 debates over the Military Academy and military education fit with Haber's conception of a technical education as a mark of distinction. Jacksonian egalitarianism was not rank communism, bent on destroying the rich and uplifting the poor. It embodied the equality of opportunity. Crockett's call for abolishing the Military Academy and Johnson's argument that the country needed more academies were actually two sides of the same coin. Whether officership required a military education – a

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<sup>72</sup> "Additional Military Academy," 15 January 1819, *ASP:MA* 1:834.

<sup>73</sup> Monroe's message is reprinted in Seventeenth Congress, 2d Session, *House Journal*, 3 December 1822.

<sup>74</sup> "On the Subject of the Organization and Discipline of the Militia of the United States," 27 February 1827, *ASP:MA* 3:601.

theoretical underpinning – was still debatable. How could it have been otherwise, when the process for obtaining regular and volunteer commissions after 1815 differed so? But both Crockett and Johnson sought to lower barriers to military officership, one by making a technical education open to more cadets, the other by rejecting the need for education entirely.

### The Regular Army and the Birth Pangs of the Military Profession

For decades, a less-nuanced concept of the Jacksonian attitude towards the professions – that they were to be thrown open to all white males, regardless of pre-existing expertise or competency – influenced the prevailing outlook on American military professionalism. This outlook held that the lack of military education and expertise, in particular, marked regular army officership before the Civil War. More recent scholarship, however, posits that army officership, as a profession, made significant strides in the period between 1815 and 1861. Those developments owe much to the War of 1812 as a stimulus.

Samuel Huntington was the first author to seriously address the question of American military professionalism. He believed the American officer corps before the Civil War was unprofessional, a judgment that no longer commands much support.<sup>75</sup> Part of the problem was Huntington's relative unfamiliarity with the antebellum army. In

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<sup>75</sup> Samuel Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957). Arguably Huntington's most important work, present-day historians should remember *The Soldier and the State* addresses a specific, and then-current, situation: the status of the officer corps during the opening years of the Cold War. Ironically, then, as fears of both American societal weakness and the development of a garrison state passed, *The Soldier and the State* is currently most valuable as a historical account, and not a political-science treatise.

addition, when he examined regular army officership, he did not find important characteristics that matched his conception of a generic profession.

Huntington defined a profession as having three important characteristics: corporateness, expertise, and responsibility.<sup>76</sup> Corporateness is the idea that a member of the chosen profession belonged to a distinct group within society. To separate the professional from the body public, a profession must regulate entry so that only those with the special skills needed to practice the profession could enter. To a degree, Huntington's definition of corporateness in the American military profession begs the question.<sup>77</sup> But in stating "the Jacksonians assumed that all citizens could be soldiers without training," Huntington clearly indicated his belief that the American officer corps could not regulate who received an officer's commission.<sup>78</sup>

Expertise is the idea that professionals share and develop a skills set, again distinct from the general public. To Huntington, the officer's skill is "the direction, operation, and control of a human organization whose primary function is the application of violence."<sup>79</sup> And yet the military profession in the antebellum period fails to meet Huntington's conception of expertise because the skills taught to officers fell into two categories. In the Jeffersonian era, graduates of the newly-established United States Military Academy participated in a process Huntington calls "technicism." West Point was "designed to serve the entire nation as a practical scientific school, not a professional

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid, 8.

<sup>77</sup> See "expertise," in the next paragraph.

<sup>78</sup> Huntington, *Soldier and the State*, 203-4.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 11.



academy for the entire nation.”<sup>80</sup> Jeffersonian technical specialties, according to Huntington, meant that officers enjoyed closer ties to allied civilian professions than to brother officers. For example, if one officer acquired a specialty in topographic engineering, he had more in common with civilian topographic engineers than a fellow officer who was skilled at building fortifications or bridges. In the Jacksonian era, by Huntington’s account, officers learned no distinct skills at all. To Huntington, the “excessive egalitarianism” of the period considered a specific military skill the mark of aristocracy, which follows Ward’s conception of Jacksonian man.

The third leg of Huntington’s professional triangle is responsibility to society. This concept means that the professional man ceases to be professional if he acts against society’s interests. Even in the Jacksonian period, the regular army officer corps met this requirement. Not that it had always done so. If the Continental officers at Newburgh had mutinied and marched on Congress, that would have been a serious breach of responsibility. The mere fact they considered doing so colored public thinking on the officer corps for a long time. James Wilkinson was, simultaneously, the senior officer in the U.S. Army from 1796 to 1798 and 1800 to 1812, and also a paid agent of the Spanish government. But with the end of the War of 1812, and with very few officer commissions granted in the following twenty years to men who had not graduated from West Point, the American officer corps stabilized. For much of this period, fewer than six hundred officers commanded slightly over five thousand men, mostly stationed on the country’s borders or near Indian villages. Between tradition and circumstance, the army held little political power and even less threat of a coup d’etat.

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 198.

Because the military officer must always act in society's best interest to be professional, society must provide the professional with compensation beyond money. The citizen-soldier ideology, it would seem, already provides the would-be professional with this compensation, namely honor and authority. If all citizens are to defend their country in times of danger and emergency, then the ideology partially validates the concept of army officers who pledge to defend the country at all times, whether they are especially perilous or not. The supposed Jacksonian willingness to subvert corporateness and expertise to join the military also bolsters this view. Why would outsiders seek officership as an occupation if it was dishonorable?

In the half century following the appearance of the Huntington thesis, scholarship challenged parts of this conception of military professionalism. But the 1992 publication of William Skelton's *An American Profession of Arms* directly challenged Huntington on the whole.<sup>81</sup> As Skelton proclaimed in his opening sentence, "Between the Revolution and the Civil War, a military profession emerged for the first time in America."<sup>82</sup> The decisive break from the "unprofessional" army, in this formulation, was not the Civil War. Instead, the Civil War constituted an interlude where civil and military societies

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<sup>81</sup> William B. Skelton, *An American Profession of Arms: The Army Officer Corps, 1784-1861* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1992). Other works on aspects of American military professionalism include Cunliffe, *Soldiers and Civilians*; Edward M. Coffman, *The Old Army: A Portrait of the American Army in Peacetime, 1784-1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Allan R. Millett, *Military Professionalism and Officership in America* (Columbus, Ohio: Mershon Center of the Ohio State University, 1977); Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait*, 2d ed. (New York: Free Press, 1971); and Timothy K. Nenninger, *The Leavenworth Schools and the Old Army: Education, Professionalism, and the Officer Corps of the United States Army, 1881-1918* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood, 1978). Skelton believes the professionalizing process began earlier than the other authors.

<sup>82</sup> Skelton, *American Profession of Arms*, xiii.

crossed paths, as they had before 1815 and they did again on a smaller scale during the Mexican War.

For Skelton, the War of 1812 is the decisive break. More than one author has noted that the army basically fell apart due to the strains of that war and the additional strains placed upon it by the Madison Administration.<sup>83</sup> Skelton's specific contribution to the professionalization literature states that the failures in the War of 1812 placed the officers who led the army in the postwar years in a position to fix a flawed system. The officers established new rules and procedures, standardizing army administration. In the process, these reformers began providing the corporateness and expertise that Huntington denied was present in the officer corps before 1865.

Many prominent officers in the post-1815 army sought to improve themselves and the service generally. In 1817, Capt. Sylvanus Thayer became the superintendent at West Point, a position he held for sixteen years. During his time at the academy he reformed the military curriculum there.<sup>84</sup> In the decade after the war, the army posted Zachary Taylor to the recruiting service twice, first as a major on recruiting duty for the Third Infantry, and later as a lieutenant colonel superintending the Western Recruiting Service. In both instances he suggested reforms that he felt would attract more recruits and lessen the number of deserters.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> See Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973), 47-55; Stagg, *Mr. Madison's War*, en passim; Richard Barbuto, *Niagara 1814: America Invades Canada* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2000): en passim; and Cress, *Citizens in Arms*, 171-77.

<sup>84</sup> See chapter three for an extended discussion of Thayer's reforms and military education at the U.S. Military Academy.

<sup>85</sup> K. Jack Bauer, *Zachary Taylor: Soldier, Planter, Statesman of the Old Southwest* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), 35 and 44.

In 1826, Taylor served on a board considering improvements to militia organization. This brought him into contact with a one-man engine of reform, Brig. Gen. Winfield Scott. One of Scott's biographers noted that he took inspiration from the great generals of European history. Matching their achievements "required a war in the European mold."<sup>86</sup> Another believed that Scott's wartime experience "taught him that the army needed skilled officers and highly trained soldiers who could follow orders with precision" if the army was to attain European standards.<sup>87</sup>

Scott's fingerprints are everywhere on the post-1815 army. Near the end of the war, he served on a board that issued a new tactical manual, versions of which served the army until the eve of the Civil War.<sup>88</sup> As a senior general, he sat on the 1815 board charged with selecting the officers to remain in the smaller peacetime service. As roughly four of every five would be dismissed, the board had the opportunity to keep only those of the highest "moral character" and "military merit."<sup>89</sup> After this, the army sent Scott and other officers, including Sylvanus Thayer, to be military observers with the French and Prussian armies.<sup>90</sup> On Scott's return, he rewrote the army's regulations at the behest of Secretary of War John C. Calhoun.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Allan Peskin, *Winfield Scott and the Profession of Arms* (Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 2003), 33.

<sup>87</sup> Timothy D. Johnson, *Winfield Scott: The Quest for Military Glory* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1998), 78.

<sup>88</sup> Peskin, *Winfield Scott*, 62.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>90</sup> Johnson, *Winfield Scott*, 69-71.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 75-76.

The most famous proposal for army reform during this period is called “Calhoun’s expansible army plan.” Under this plan the army would quickly double in size during wartime by doubling the number of enlisted men allotted to each company. By not creating new units, the army could avoid having to add hundreds of new, temporary officers.<sup>92</sup> Since Calhoun submitted the plan to Congress, it bears his name. But Andrew Jackson, Winfield Scott, Brig. Gen. Edmund Gaines, and Zachary Taylor had all written the War Department to propose a cadre system.<sup>93</sup> In describing Scott’s contribution to Calhoun’s plan, a biographer asserted: “Officership had become a skilled craft made up of a small, tight-knit group with national defense as its expertise. Professional officers generally resented the government’s dependence on unreliable and untrained volunteers.”<sup>94</sup> While Congress did not adopt Calhoun’s plan, the episode demonstrated that officers took their jobs and responsibilities seriously.

Regular army officers who fought in the War of 1812, thinking critically about their experiences, saw the war as a glaring example of what not to do. In future wars, regular officers would have to quickly train, equip, supply, and lead an army comprised mostly of wartime volunteers. The regulars sought to reform their occupation into a profession, to better accomplish their larger goals. By the 1830s, the army’s officer corps could not be considered fully professional. But in one generation, the regulars had made noteworthy and tremendous strides towards establishing corporateness, expertise, and responsibility – in short, a regular and professional military culture.

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<sup>92</sup> “Reduction of the Army,” 12 December 1820, *ASP:MA* 2:188-98.

<sup>93</sup> Johnson, *Winfield Scott*, 80-81; Bauer, *Zachary Taylor*, 38.

<sup>94</sup> Johnson, *Winfield Scott*, 81.

## Conclusion

What did it mean to wear epaulettes on one's shoulders in this period? For many in Jacksonian society, the meaning came from military traditions and the prevailing egalitarian impulse. Inherent in the militia-volunteer system was the aprofessional concept that citizenship, along with rudimentary weapons training, produced good soldiers and good officers. A man was either born with the skills to lead hundreds or thousands in combat, or he was not. To the degree that this quality could be discerned before the outbreak of war, the community at large could best determine which men had it. After all, the men in a militia officer's company directly represented his community; the men of his regiment or brigade, his county or state; and those of the army, his country. They did not leave the civilian community to enter service, but instead took it with them. When they had done their part, they rejoined their geographic community. The idea that officership should be restricted to those with a certain technical education denied natural genius a role in warfare. It also ominously suggested the national government distrusted its constituents, because full-time officers stood apart from the community.

To those who became regular army officers during and after the War of 1812, their epaulettes represented something completely different. The military system, as comprised before the war, left the country vulnerable to attack. It seemed clear from the war's example that military skill and leadership could no longer stem from good citizenship. The safety of the country in any future war would rely on men who made war their business, who received a proper military education and used it over the course of a

career. Officer specialization was not threatening or ominous. Regular officers should wear epaulettes with pride.

That both systems as they existed by the 1830s fell considerably short of their ideals is less relevant to the analysis here. What is important is that the two existed uneasily, side-by-side. The officers appointed to the U. S. Battalion of Mounted Rangers did not come from the regular service. When fifteen of them accepted regular commissions and joined the Regiment of Dragoons, they found themselves serving alongside officers whose conception of the military occupation differed greatly from the ex-volunteers.

CHAPTER 2  
“MEASURES MORE EXPENSIVE AND INCONVENIENT”: THE ARMY, THE  
INDIANS, AND THE PERMANENT INDIAN FRONTIER, 1815 – 1833

Between December 1826 and April 1827, Brig. Gen. Edmund P. Gaines, commanding the Western Department of the army, made an inspection tour of his command. On the tour’s conclusion, he submitted his findings to the War Department. Most of his report concerned itself with military routine: the construction and improvement of fortifications, the condition of his troops and their state of military discipline, and so forth. At the end, Gaines appended his views on Indian affairs, asserting that “the most important duties that ever occur in our Indian relations necessarily devolve, either directly or indirectly, upon the army.”<sup>1</sup> He sought to reorganize the Indian bureau. At the lowest levels, teachers assigned to each Indian nation would offer instruction in American political and economic ways. These teachers would report to one of six superintendents, who in turn would answer to a general superintendent in Washington.

Gaines’ plan assigned the superintendents important responsibilities:

To keep the peace between the Indians and our frontier inhabitants, and between the Indians of different tribes; to take seasonable measures to inquire into and settle all controversies or disturbances calculated to lead to hostilities; to protect and to urge the Indians to protect and encourage the [teachers assigned by the War Department]; to make annual visits of inspection to every tribe, principal town, and school within their districts, to report to the head of the department the results of such inspections; and to assist at all Indian treaties in their respective districts.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “Report of a General Inspection of the Military Posts of the Western Department, and Remarks Concerning the Militia of the United States, by Brevet Major General Edmund P. Gaines,” 27 February 1829, *American State Papers: Military Affairs (ASP:MA)* 4:129.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.



The general wanted one hundred mounted riflemen placed at the disposal of each superintendent. The riflemen, Gaines wrote, should “march promptly” to any hostilities in the superintendent’s territory and “settle the disturbance, and, if necessary, try and punish the offenders.” He recalled from his own experience that Indians were disposed

To yield with more apparent cheerfulness to the wishes of the United States, when those wishes were communicated in the presence of an efficient force, and by persons authorized to wield that force, than by any other men without such force or ability.<sup>3</sup>

Gaines’ proposal recognized the serious challenges the army faced after the War of 1812 as it strove to administer Indian policy in the western United States. In Illinois and the southwestern Michigan Territory, the army had to quell disturbances caused by white settlers’ encroachment on Indian lands. On the southwestern frontier, the army faced the task of protecting removed Indians from those already living west of Arkansas Territory. Another challenge arose when American traders began passing through Indian country to Santa Fe. The threat of native interdiction of this commerce compelled the army to provide escorts for caravans.

By the 1830s, government officials at all levels recognized the army needed mounted troops to successfully execute these missions. Congress initially responded to this need by authorizing the U.S. Battalion of Mounted Rangers, a short-term volunteer unit fully funded by the War Department. After observing the battalion’s lack of discipline and its financial cost, Congress replaced the Mounted Rangers with the Regiment of Dragoons – the army’s first permanent mounted unit.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

## Prologue: Colonial Concepts of Empire

The army's presence and role in the west, loosely defined as the land included in the 1783 British Cession and the 1803 Louisiana Purchase, resulted directly from the federal government's conception of its role in those territories. In this the new republic inherited the legacies of colonial experience with Indians and expanding white settlement. The government's attempt to order the west through congressional legislation for settlers, treaties with Indian nations, and intercourse acts stemmed from the tension between the British concept of empire, and the concept backcountry settlers created for themselves between 1763 and 1783.

Eric Hinderaker has described northeastern North America as hosting three models of empire. French involvement in the Ohio and Mississippi Valleys represents the first, an "empire of commerce." The French "sought to trade for economic resources with native populations."<sup>4</sup> The accident of French settlement in the St. Lawrence Valley led to an alliance with Algonquian-speaking peoples, loosely united by intelligible languages and a hatred of the Five (later Six) Nations of the Iroquois. The Iroquois, themselves in contact with Dutch settlements in the Hudson Valley, went to war with the Algonquians to obtain more beaver pelts for trading with Europeans. In the resulting Beaver Wars, the Five Nations cleared the Ohio Valley of Indian settlement, destroyed several Algonquian nations, and pushed others into the Illinois country and the upper Mississippi Valley.

The Algonquians, finding safety in numbers, created fictive kinships between each other. The French were also incorporated, as a fictive father figure who would settle

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<sup>4</sup> Eric Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires: Constructing Colonialism in the Ohio Valley, 1673 – 1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), x.

disputes and distribute diplomatic gifts to the “children” as a sign of generosity and influence. This, Richard White’s famed “middle ground,” was the price the French chose to pay for continued access to trade.<sup>5</sup> The Franco-Algonquian alliance repulsed renewed Iroquois assaults in the 1680s and 1690s and survived in some form to the French and Indian War.

The British created Hinderaker’s second concept of empire, an “empire of land.” Empires of land “sought to export European populations across the Atlantic and thus exploit American resources more invasively.”<sup>6</sup> English settlers practiced plantation-style agriculture. Their farms, cash crop plantations, and livestock all needed large amounts of land. The demand for land grew geometrically as colonial immigration continued while the colonial-born population increased. In particular the spectacular success of the Pennsylvania colony in the first third of the eighteenth century drew settlers, Indians, and both empires together into open conflict over control of the Ohio Valley.<sup>7</sup>

Generally speaking, the French and British approaches were not compatible. French traders and to some extent missionaries, not French colonial officials, worked with “alliance chiefs” to maintain the relationship. Keeping trade links open curtailed French freedom of action. White noted that the Franco-Algonquian alliance was strongest

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<sup>5</sup> Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650 – 1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). White’s model of a “middle ground” where Europeans and Indians invented a relationship based on what he called misperceptions has proved so influential that the *William and Mary Quarterly* recently offered a fresh look at the paradigm; see *WMQ* 63 (January 2006): 3 – 96.

<sup>6</sup> Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires*, x.

<sup>7</sup> See Fred Anderson and Andrew R. L. Cayton, *The Dominion of War: Empire and Liberty in North America, 1500 – 2000* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 54 – 103. For the French and Indian War itself, see Anderson, *The Crucible of War: The Seven Years’ War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754 – 1766* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000).

at those times French officials believed it was weakest, when the French lavished gifts on the Indians. It was weakest when the French attempted to use force or intervene in quarrels to reshape the middle ground into a conventional European-style alliance.<sup>8</sup>

Conversely, British colonial settlers' constant hunger for land drew colonial governments into contact with Indians, lest the settlers act on their own and initiate conflicts. British colonial traders also created "middle grounds" of a kind with local Indians, but government used these relationships to entreat for more land.<sup>9</sup> The utter collapse of New France left Britain ill-prepared to manage relations with Indians in the Ohio Valley. On the one hand, those nations who previously traded with the French fiercely resisted British attempts to unilaterally restructure the terms and conditions of Anglo-Indian intercourse.<sup>10</sup> On the other, the colonials firmly believed that the French defeat would open the Ohio Valley to settlement.

The famed Proclamation of 1763 can be read in this light. While it banned private citizens from purchasing or settling on lands beyond the Appalachians, it granted colonial governors the power to negotiate new cessions and left open the possibility of royal

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<sup>8</sup> White, *Middle Ground*, 182 – 83.

<sup>9</sup> See James H. Merrell, *Into the American Woods: Negotiation on the Pennsylvanian Frontier* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999), and William B. Hart, "Black 'Go-Betweens' and the Mutability of 'Race,' Status, and Identity on New York's Pre-Revolutionary Frontier," in Cayton and Fredericka J. Teute, eds., *Contact Points: American Frontiers from the Mohawk Valley to the Mississippi, 1750 – 1830* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998): 88 – 113.

<sup>10</sup> The disastrous outcome of this attempt, Pontiac's Uprising, subsided only when the Indians chose to stop fighting; see White, *Middle Ground*, 256 – 97, for a brief treatment. David Dixon, *Never Come to Peace Again: Pontiac's Uprising and the Fate of the British Empire in North America* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005) offers a newer, more in-depth look.

dispensation for settlement beyond the line.<sup>11</sup> British attempts to obtain large tracts of land from Indians at Fort Stanwix and Hard Labor, both in 1768, and Lochaber in 1770 suggest the Proclamation Line was a permeable, not permanent, barrier.<sup>12</sup>

Unfortunately for the Indians, and in the long run for the British, by 1775 a third empire had emerged in the colonial backcountry, what Hinderaker called “an empire of liberty, which departed fundamentally from earlier European conceptions of empire-building.”<sup>13</sup> Settlers in this empire liberated themselves from the controls and restraints of the crown. During the early 1770s, waves of white settlers poured across the proclamation line: on the Ohio above and below present-day Pittsburgh, in the Watauga Valley in modern eastern Tennessee, and through the Cumberland Gap into present-day Kentucky. The movement provoked armed conflicts with Indians. The Watauga settlements were not actually ceded in the Treaty of Lochaber, and a portion of the Cherokee nation took up arms. The treaty of Fort Stanwix purchased land from the Iroquois, who claimed title to Kentucky via the Beaver Wars, and not the Shawnee and Delaware, who actually lived in the Ohio Valley. These Indians rejected the treaty and attacked the settlements. The fighting escalated as each side retaliated, and it eventually merged into the American Revolution.

However the backcountry might have felt about taxation without representation, the settlers sought to use the American Revolution for their own purposes, to defend the

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<sup>11</sup> A copy of the proclamation can be found at “The Royal Proclamation – October 7, 1763,” *The Avalon Project – Documents in Law, History, and Diplomacy*, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/procl1763.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/procl1763.asp), accessed 1 November 2010.

<sup>12</sup> These treaties involved, respectively, Iroquois rights in the Ohio Valley and Cherokee rights in western North Carolina.

<sup>13</sup> Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires*, x.

settlements against Indian raids and to open more land for settlement.<sup>14</sup> Continental authorities never could spare enough regulars to defend frontier settlement, let alone attain military victory. Britain armed and supported its Indian allies. By the 1780s, the Ohio Indians had essentially checked settlement. Thus it must have surprised the Indians not only that the rebels successfully negotiated their independence, but also that the British ceded to the new United States land in the Ohio Valley that the Indians actually controlled.

The republic inherited along with the British Cession both the British model of government-Indian relations, and trans-Appalachian settlements created independently by citizens in the “empire of liberty.” By 1800 the federal government established a colonization scheme which offered the hope of westward expansion while defusing tensions between Indians and ordinary settlers.

#### Ordering the West: Treaties, Ordnances, and Intercourse Acts

The United States created guidelines for a frontier process that converted the “wilderness” of the Indians to territorial units whose white inhabitants could eventually attain full political equality with those of the original thirteen states. Treaties with Indian nations recognized that the United States was not powerful enough to seize western lands by conquest. Instead, the treaties allowed the government to acquire land more or less with the consent of the Indians. Acts of the Confederation Congress allowed the government to survey and classify the Indian cessions in preparation for immigrating Americans to set up their own communities. Because the treaties and ordinances appeared to sharply delineate Indian and white lands, intercourse acts granted the federal

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 210.

government the power to regulate interactions between the two. Taken together, treaties, ordinances, and intercourse acts attempted to define not only space, but also human relationships in the west.

Benedict Anderson, in the revised edition of his innovative *Imagined Communities*, described how colonizing Europeans of the nineteenth century “profoundly shaped the way in which the colonial state imagined its dominion” by use of censuses and mapping.<sup>15</sup> “The fiction of the census,” according to Anderson, “is that everyone is in it, and that everyone has one – and only one – extremely clear place.”<sup>16</sup> To the colonizer, at first blush the newly occupied land consisted solely of numbers, coordinates of latitude and longitude, lines superimposed and grids created on a blank map. Anderson noted “The task of, as it were, ‘filling in’ the boxes was to be accomplished by explorers, surveyors, and military forces.”<sup>17</sup>

Census and map worked with each other synergistically that produced serious consequences for the colonized. A census category described the inhabitants of any given grid. The map delimited exactly where any given census category lived.<sup>18</sup> Put together, they helped form “a totalizing classificatory grid, which could be applied with endless flexibility to anything under the state’s real or contemplated control: peoples, regions,

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<sup>15</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised ed. (London: Verso, 1991), 164. In assessing the influence of the colonial state on post-colonial nationalism, Anderson also addresses the role of archaeology and museums, something less useful to the current analysis.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 173.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 174.

religions, languages, products, monuments, and so forth.” This also demonstrated a belief in serialization, “the assumption that the world was made up of replicable plurals.”<sup>19</sup>

The first step for the American government in establishing a frontier of replicable plurals was to legally purchase title to Indian lands by treaty. This step was not undertaken immediately. Under the Articles of Confederation, the government believed the 1783 Treaty of Paris bound the Indians as much as the British and acted accordingly.<sup>20</sup> Between 1784 and 1789, the United States concluded treaties that on paper transferred not only lands in the Ohio Valley but those held by the Cherokee, Creek, and Chickasaw in the south. Nonetheless in its first decade the United States continually engaged in warfare with trans-Appalachian Indians. In the Ohio Valley, the American government brought the Indians to the negotiating table only through the efforts of Maj. Gen. Anthony Wayne and his Legion of the United States.<sup>21</sup>

While the 1795 Treaty of Greenville would not have been possible without Wayne’s victory the previous year at Fallen Timbers, American officials abandoned the idea that they controlled the land in the British Cession by right of conquest. The treaty offered the nations now at peace with the United States “in consideration of . . . the

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 184.

<sup>20</sup> The word “conqueror” or “conquered” appears frequently in the literature in reference to the United States’ conception of itself and the Indians, respectively. See R. Douglas Hurt, *The Indian Frontier, 1763 – 1846* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002), 25; Francis Paul Prucha, *American Indian Treaties: the History of a Political Anomaly* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 41; Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires*, 232.

<sup>21</sup> See Alan D. Gaff, *Bayonets in the Wilderness: Anthony Wayne’s Legion in the Old Northwest* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004) for an in-depth treatment of the Legion of the United States. Wayne’s 1794 victory at Fallen Timbers did not destroy the Ohio Indians militarily, but it was a defeat and in its aftermath the British severely curtailed their support for the Indians.



cessions and relinquishments of lands” an annuity. The United States further offered to deliver a share of the annuity in domestic animals, tools, or “useful artificers.”<sup>22</sup>

The treaty also asked the Indians to acknowledge that they were under the sole protection of the United States and that they would not trade with whites not licensed by the government. In return, either the Indians or the government had the power to eject white squatters from settling beyond the treaty line. When one group committed crimes against the other, representatives from the Indians and the United States would pursue an equitable solution.<sup>23</sup>

In time, the United States would negotiate slightly different terms in some of its Indian treaties. By 1804, for example, the federal government reserved the ejection of squatters and the adjudication of crime solely for itself.<sup>24</sup> But the same clauses appear again and again in treaties down through the Jacksonian period: the purchase of land from Indian nations, the guarantee of Indian rights to that land and to authorized traders, and a system for removing squatters and for settling criminal disputes.

Congressional legislation modeled on the Land Ordinance of 1785 and the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 established the conditions under which whites could settle western lands ceded to the United States. The Land Ordinance decreed that the United States would appoint surveyors to divide the land into townships “six miles square,” and

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<sup>22</sup> “A Treaty of Peace between the United States of America and the Tribes of Indians, called the Wyandots, Delawares, Shawanoes, Ottawas, Chippewas, Putawatimes, Miamis, Eel-river, Weea’s, Kickapoos, Piankashaws, and Kaskaskias,” (hereafter Treaty of Greenville), 3 August 1795, *7 Statutes at Large* 51. Also see Andrew Cayton, “‘Noble Actors’ upon ‘the Theatre of Honour’: Power and Civility in the Treaty of Greenville,” in Cayton and Teute, *Contact Points*, 235 – 69.

<sup>23</sup> Treaty of Greenville, 3 August 1795, *7 Stat.* 52 – 3.

<sup>24</sup> “A treaty between the United States of America and the United tribes of Sac & Fox Indians,” 3 November 1804, *7 Stat.* 85.

the townships subdivided into thirty-six square mile (640 acre) lots. Lot sixteen in every township would be reserved for education, but the other lots would be sold to private citizens from time to time.<sup>25</sup>

The Land Ordinance, and succeeding acts passed by the United States Congress, took a blank map and created regular, orderly territorial bounds. The Northwest Ordinance and its successors provided the path for the lots and townships to eventually coalesce into states full of citizens equal to those east of the Appalachians. Congress provided for a territorial governor, a secretary, and judges; these men created and administered law solely at the check of Congress. When the territorial population reached 5,000 free adult males, the territory received the right to a legislature and a delegate in Congress. When the territorial population reached 60,000 free citizens, it could petition for admission to the Union as a state.<sup>26</sup>

Eric Hinderaker notes “The [Northwest] Ordinance thus accomplished what the British ministry failed to do . . . it created a flexible, dynamic mechanism for settling Euroamericans on Ohio Valley lands.”<sup>27</sup> Congress eventually applied the ordinance’s formula to what became the other states west of the thirteen colonies, save for Kentucky and Tennessee.<sup>28</sup> Together the processes set in motion by the Land and Northwest

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<sup>25</sup> Continental Congress 1785, 28: 375 – 81.

<sup>26</sup> Continental Congress 1787, 32: 334 – 43. The method in which Ohio would gain statehood, and the new state’s precise boundaries, are laid out in act of 30 April 1802, ch. 40, 2 *Stat.* 173 – 75.

<sup>27</sup> Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires*, 231.

<sup>28</sup> These states drew their lineage, and much of their leadership, from Virginia and North Carolina, respectively. This complicated their relationship with the federal government; see Andrew Cayton, “‘Separate Interests’ and the Nation-State: the Washington Administration and the Origins of Regionalism in the Trans-Appalachian West,” *Journal of American History* 79 (June 1992): 39 – 67.

Ordinances filled the purportedly empty spaces of Indian land cessions with white settlements and institutions.

Inside Indian cessions, the laws of the United States governed citizens. Indian intercourse laws, in the words of historian Francis Paul Prucha, were “directed against lawless whites and sought to restrain them from violating the sacred treaties.”<sup>29</sup> The first was passed in 1790. Congress regularly revised it in the next decade, culminating in the act of 30 March 1802.<sup>30</sup> This law remained in force through the early 1830s. Whites were not to cross the frontier into Indian Country and could be punished by the United States for crimes committed there. Only licensed traders could operate in Indian lands, and the act prohibited certain goods from being bought and sold. Such contraband included “spirituous liquors” at the discretion of the president. The act emphatically declared that the president might “employ such military force, as he may judge necessary” to remove white lawbreakers from Indian lands.

Treaties, ordinances, and intercourse laws set up a frontier process for settling the west with Americans. Treaties purchased land from Indians. Territorial legislation surveyed the land for opening and gave those immigrating the blessings of government. The federal government reserved for itself interactions with Indians and attempted to draw a metaphorical bright line between Indians and citizens. The frontier process efficiently replicated white society.

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<sup>29</sup> Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 92.

<sup>30</sup> See act of 22 July 1790, ch. 33, 1 *Stat.* 137 – 38 ; act of 1 March 1793, ch. 19, 1 *Stat.* 329 – 32; act of 19 May 1796, ch. 30, 1 *Stat.* 469 – 74; act of 17 January 1800, ch. 5, 2 *Stat.* 6 – 7; act of 22 April 1800, ch. 30, 2 *Stat.* 39 – 40; and act of 30 March 1802, ch. 13, 2 *Stat.* 139 – 46.

This efficiency, however, came at a terrible cost for the Indians. By its very nature the process excluded Indians from the Indian frontier (that is, land controlled by Americans abutting the Indian Country), and by extension white society. Backcountry settlers harbored racist views about Indians, coveted Indian land, feared Indians as a threat to their personal safety, and sometimes saw Indians a danger to national security as well. As the nineteenth century progressed, whites consistently demanded Indians be removed from the backcountry. By the 1830s this coalesced into the impetus for Jacksonian Indian Removal.

#### The Army and Trans-Appalachian Indian Policy

The government's frontier process accepted that Indians held rights to their land, but it also legitimized whites' desires to migrate westward and settle on what had been Indian lands. The growth of backcountry settlement increased contacts between whites and Indians along the frontier. This also increased the army's involvement in the trans-Appalachian region.<sup>31</sup> The army attempted to clear white squatters from Indian lands and to shield settlers from Indians. Ultimately, however, the regular army failed in its peacetime missions because it was a small, infantry-heavy force. As a result, the United States fought larger-scale wars against trans-Appalachian Indians. In turn, these large-scale wars helped convince the populace, and eventually the government, to institute wide-spread Indian removal east of the Mississippi.

The white hunger for western lands continued unabated after the end of the Revolution. Kentucky, first settled as part of Virginia, entered the Union in 1792.

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<sup>31</sup> By "trans-Appalachian" I mean the territory claimed by the United States between the Appalachian Mountains and the Mississippi River.

Tennessee, similarly once the westernmost portion of North Carolina, did so in 1796. With the treaty of Greenville most of present-day Ohio formally opened to settlement, and Ohio became a state in 1803. In 1810, Mississippi Territory held over 40,000 people, and the remaining parts of the old Northwest Territory nearly as many.

The federal government's need to formally acquire title to land coincided with a belief by some officials that the government should encourage the Indians to acculturate and take up European-type agriculture, what Americans referred to as "civilization." Henry Knox, the first Secretary of War, urged such a policy as early as 1789.<sup>32</sup> Indian treaties consistently offered the indigenes the services of blacksmiths and other artisans for purposes of instruction. Between 1795 and 1822, the government operated trading factories designed less to make money than to bind the Indians to the federal government and ensure peaceful relations.<sup>33</sup>

Advocates of assimilation believed that as Indians adopted intensive agriculture, they would need less land for their own needs. This land would then be available for purchase by the government and for redistribution to white settlers. Historians have long debated whether or not the point of this policy actually was what whites considered enlightenment of the Indians, or merely a rationalization for appropriating Indian lands. But Francis Paul Prucha has noted, "It was not an opposition of policies, one working for the education and civilization of the Indians, the other seeking to relieve him of his land

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<sup>32</sup> Henry Knox, the Secretary of War, to George Washington, the President of the United States, 7 July 1789; in "Wabash, Creeks, Cherokees, Chickasaws and Choctaws," 7 August 1789; *American State Papers: Indian Affairs (ASP:IA)* 1: 53 – 4.

<sup>33</sup> Robert P. Wettemann, Jr., *Privilege vs. Equality: Civil-Military Relations in the Jacksonian Era, 1815 – 1845* (Santa Barbara, California: Praeger Security International, 2009), 99.

for the benefit of whites. These were two sides of the one coin.”<sup>34</sup> This policy held the promise, however difficult to attain, of allowing for westward expansion while maintaining relative peace on the frontier.

Henry Knox in 1789 had also recognized that while settlers’ emigration “to the Indian country, cannot be effectually prevented . . . it may be restrained, by postponing new purchases of Indian territory, and by prohibiting citizens from intruding on the Indian lands.”<sup>35</sup> Yet the United States and its citizens violated these precepts so often in the next twenty years that they precipitated large-scale warfare with Indians in the trans-Appalachia. In the lands west of Georgia, the federal government tried to acquire Creek lands and detach both the Upper and Lower Creeks from Spanish traders. At the same time, the state of Georgia and white squatters sought lands regardless of the federal government’s treaties with the Creek. North of the Ohio, the boundary set in the Treaty of Greenville held until 1803. In that year William Henry Harrison, governor of Indiana Territory, began acquiring large tracts of the Old Northwest through treaties characterized by R. Douglas Hurt as “dictated rather than negotiated.”<sup>36</sup> Here too, white settlers trespassed on Indian lands and helped destroy the game upon which local Indians relied.

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<sup>34</sup> Prucha, “The Image of the Indian in Pre-Civil War America,” in *Indian Policy in the United States: Historical Essays* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981), 53. Two works which portray this duality in a negative light are Bernard W. Sheehan, *Seeds of Extinction: Jeffersonian Philanthropy and the American Indian* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1974) and Anthony F. C. Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians: The Tragic Fate of the First Americans* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

<sup>35</sup> Knox to Washington, 7 July 1789; in “Wabash, Creeks, Cherokees, Chickasaws and Choctaws,” 7 August 1789; *ASP:IA* 1: 53.

<sup>36</sup> Hurt, *Indian Frontier*, 116.

While some Indian leaders accommodated the United States and accepted acculturation, others dealt with rising anger at the Americans by following two Shawnee brothers, Tenskwatawa (the Prophet) and Tecumseh. The Prophet preached a rejection of white ways and a rebirth of the Indian nations by again adopting traditional practices. While the Prophet sought spiritual strength, Tecumseh attempted to create a politically and militarily strong pan-Indian union. By 1811 the two settled their followers at the so-called Prophetstown, at the juncture of the Wabash and Tippecanoe Rivers in Indiana Territory.

The Prophet and Tecumseh helped touch off two conflicts that changed American Indian policy. North of the Ohio, Governor Harrison viewed Prophetstown with suspicion. In November 1811 he approached Prophetstown with 250 regulars and over 700 volunteers and militia. With Tecumseh absent amongst the Creeks, the Prophet decided to attack Harrison with a force half the size, lest Harrison attack first. The Battle of Tippecanoe resulted in the destruction of Prophetstown and the scattering of its inhabitants.<sup>37</sup> It did not, however, reconcile the Prophet's followers to the United States. When the War of 1812 broke out the next spring, the British promised assistance from Canada to anti-American Indians. Tecumseh personally joined the British and led an Indian force in attacking Americans operating in the west until he fell in the 1813 Battle of the Thames. His death, combined with other American victories that reduced the British ability to trade with Indians, led to the dissolution of the northwestern confederacy.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 118 – 19.

<sup>38</sup> A brief synopsis of the war on the northwestern frontier can be found in *ibid.*, 133 – 36.

At the time of the Battle of Tippecanoe Tecumseh was trying to convince the Creek to join his confederacy. One faction, the primarily Upper Creek “Red Sticks,” embraced tradition and opposed white encroachment. In 1813 this split between the Creek broke into full-fledged civil war, a war that included Americans after Red Sticks attacked a militia fortification at Fort Mims in August. A mixed force of U.S. regulars, local militia and volunteers, and Creek, Cherokee, and Choctaw warriors opposed and ultimately defeated the Red Sticks in 1814.<sup>39</sup>

The Treaty of Fort Jackson, which formally ended the Creek War, marked a sea change in Indian policy. Andrew Jackson, negotiating on behalf of the United States, demanded cessions not only from the Red Sticks, but also from those Creek that fought alongside the Americans. The treaty obtained twenty-three million acres of land from the Creek. That friendly Creek would be punished by the treaty did not sway Jackson to negotiate a less draconian peace. He believed British and Spanish agents had aided the Red Sticks, and the only way to cut off the Indians’ access to European trade goods was to create a physical barrier. “Whether the Indians were friendly or unfriendly,” Robert V. Remini wrote of Jackson’s concept, “they had to be moved out of any area . . . where they could endanger the safety of the United States.” Filling the vacated lands with American settlers would both decrease Indian dangers and increase American strength in the area.<sup>40</sup>

Jackson had considered the idea of removing Indians from the frontier for years, but in the treaty of Fort Jackson he first imposed removal. While historians continue to

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<sup>39</sup> Robert V. Remini discusses the Creek War at some length in *Andrew Jackson and His Indian Wars* (New York: Penguin Books, 2001), 55 – 93.

<sup>40</sup> Remini, *Indian Wars*, 85.



debate Jackson's foremost motivations for removing Indians,<sup>41</sup> after the War of 1812 Jackson negotiated a series of treaties with Indians demanding extensive cessions. Between 1814 and 1820 Jackson helped obtain millions of acres belonging to the Creek, Cherokee, Chickasaw, and Choctaw.<sup>42</sup> In 1817 the federal government agreed to exchange lands on the Arkansas River to the Cherokee for lands east of the Mississippi, and to encourage Cherokee to voluntarily emigrate. In 1820 the government did the same for the Choctaw.<sup>43</sup> These treaties raised the hope that the Cherokee and Choctaw might abandon all their trans-Appalachian lands.

The treaties also reflected the changing wisdom on American-Indian relations after the War of 1812. The federal government had always lacked the means and the will to keep white settlers from the backcountry. The territorial process allowed it to shape settlement, but it also acknowledged the inevitability of western migration. Similarly, during much of the eighteenth century the federal government lacked the means to

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<sup>41</sup> Remini, in *Indian Wars*, consistently argues throughout that Jackson's concern for the safety of the United States from foreign powers drove his support for removal. A secondary issue for Jackson was the near-impossibility of preventing white squatters from taking Indian land, as U.S. regulars were too few and militiamen could not be expected to eject their neighbors; see *ibid.*, 55 and 187 – 88. But cf. Anthony F. C. Wallace, *The Long Bitter Trail: Andrew Jackson and the Indians* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), who sees national security as a fig leaf for white settlers' coveting Indian lands and removal as an issue that would politically benefit a western politician like Jackson; Wallace, *Long Bitter Trail*, 38, 56, and 74.

<sup>42</sup> Remini, *Indian Wars*, 205.

<sup>43</sup> "Articles of a Treaty Concluded at the Cherokee Agency, within the Cherokee nation, between major general Andrew Jackson, Joseph McMinn, governor of the state of Tennessee, and general David Meriwether, commissioners plenipotentiary of the United States of America, on the one part, and the chiefs, headmen, and warriors of the Cherokee nation, east of the Mississippi river, and the chiefs, head men, and warriors of the Cherokees on the Arkansas river, and their deputies, John D. Chisolm and James Rogers, duly authorized by the chiefs of the Cherokees on the Arkansas river, in open council, by written power of attorney, duly signed and executed, in presence of Joseph Sevier and William Ware," 8 July 1817, 7 *Stat.* 156; "A Treaty of Friendship, Limits, and Accommodation, Between the United States of America and the Choctaw Indians, begun and concluded at the Treaty Ground, in said nation, near Doak's Stand, on the Natchez Road," 18 October 1820, 7 *Stat.* 210.

compel the Indians to do anything. Instead, it negotiated treaties, recognizing the relative strength of the western nations and their potential to attract foreign help.

After 1815 conditions changed. The government still lacked the means and will to restrict white settlers. Population growth and concurrent demand for land helped the America of 1820 reach a population of ten million people in twenty-three states stretching from the Mississippi to the Atlantic. The Indians, cut off from foreign trade, defeated in war, and relieved of their territory, were proportionally that much weaker. For many Americans, the time had come for the trans-Appalachian Indians to vacate that part of the country entirely.

In January 1825, President James Monroe wrote the Senate that “the removal of the Indian tribes from the lands which they now occupy . . . to the [unorganized part of the Louisiana Purchase] is of very high importance to our Union.” He suggested both that Indians could not be assimilated and that their remaining east of the Mississippi would lead to their “degradation and extermination.”<sup>44</sup> Yet Monroe’s pleas came to naught. Nor did John Quincy Adams, his successor, carry out the plan. Instead, Andrew Jackson would oversee Indian removal, beginning with the 1830 Indian Removal Act.

The act itself did not remove anyone. It committed the government to settling and providing for eastern Indians in western lands. The United States would provide these Indians with its assurance to “forever secure and guaranty to them, and their heirs or successors” the new lands that the government gave them. The government would provide travel assistance and help the removed nations in their first year in the west.

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<sup>44</sup> “Plan for Removing the Several Indian Tribes west of the Mississippi River,” 27 January 1825, *ASP: IA 2*: 541 – 42.

Tellingly, the president would “cause such tribe or nation to be protected, at their new residence, against all interruption or disturbance from any other tribe or nation of Indians, or from any other person or persons whatsoever.”<sup>45</sup>

The Indian Removal Act did not specify what would happen to Indian nations that remained east of the Mississippi. But it did apply to them, and contemporary white settlers in western Michigan Territory and Illinois demonstrated that the act pressured the Winnebago and Sac and Fox as much as the southern nations.

After 1815 white settlers moved into the western portion of Michigan Territory (present-day Wisconsin) and Illinois in great numbers, so much so that Illinois entered the Union in 1818. During the 1820s, lead miners squatted on lands clearly belonging to the Winnebago in a search for profits. This eventually provoked a violent response from the Winnebago in 1827. The federal government, hamstrung by a lack of regular troops in the region, failed to eject the squatters or prevent widespread retaliations from both sides. Ultimately the army collected nearly 800 infantry from several distant posts, augmented by mounted volunteers from nearby Illinois. Awed by this show of force, the Winnebago uprising ended peacefully.

What became known as the Black Hawk War had similar root and similar response, only to end in bloodshed. During the 1820s white settlers freely squatted on lands on lands that, under the terms of an 1804 treaty, still belonged to the Sac and Fox. One faction of that nation, led by Keokuk, voluntarily and permanently removed themselves west of the Mississippi River. Another, led by Black Hawk, rejected the validity of the treaty. In 1828 the federal government, exercising its right under the terms

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<sup>45</sup> Act of 28 May 1830, ch. 148, 4 *Stat.* 412.

of the treaty, surveyed and sold the lands upon which Black Hawk's faction had been living.

Tensions continued to mount in northwestern Illinois. In both 1831 and 1832 Black Hawk led over 1,000 Indians back to lands that had belonged to the Sac and Fox. In both years the federal government, as it had during the Winnebago crisis, found itself strapped for regulars in the area. Thus it turned to local volunteers. In 1831, the presence of 1,400 mounted volunteers helped persuade Black Hawk to withdraw. In 1832, thousands of mobilized militiamen, including a force of 3,000 mounted riflemen, emboldened Illinois Governor John Reynolds into seeking a clash with Black Hawk's warriors. A skirmish that May between the Illinois militia and Black Hawk's band touched off the Black Hawk War.<sup>46</sup>

The Winnebago Uprising and the Black Hawk War demonstrated that the ravenous desire of whites for Indian lands was not confined to the Old Southwest. But they also demonstrated that the regular army was woefully unprepared to keep peace in frontier regions. Three times in five years the federal government had been forced to accept help from mounted militia units. Ejecting squatters had always been a tedious and seemingly pointless business, given the settlers' proclivity to return after the army had left. But if the army had a mounted unit of soldiers under regular discipline in frontier areas, it may have helped defuse local tensions between whites and Indians long before calling out the militia became necessary.

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<sup>46</sup> Recent works on the Black Hawk War include Kerry Trask, *Black Hawk: The Battle for the Heart of America* (New York: Henry Holt, 2006); Patrick Jung, *The Black Hawk War of 1832* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007); and John W. Hall, *Uncommon Defense: Indian Allies in the Black Hawk War* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2009).

At the same time, the conflicts with the Winnebago and the Sac and Fox seem characteristic of the endemic settler-Indian conflicts in the trans-Appalachia between 1789 and 1832. White emigrants to the backcountry, deliberately or not, repeatedly agitated Indians past limited conflict into full-blown war, war in which the federal government sought the total defeat of its Indian enemies. Never were the Indians as militarily strong compared to the United States as they were in the late eighteenth century. After 1815, growing American military superiority and the crush of white population pressure allowed the American government to pursue a proper program of Indian removal.

#### The Army in the Southwest, 1817 – 1832

In the southwestern United States – modern Arkansas and Oklahoma – the federal government had fewer problems stemming from white settlement. But the problems were no less grave. The Osage attacked Indians exiled from the east. So-called “removed” nations bickered with each other over the boundaries of their assigned lands. All of these Indians suffered attacks from western nomadic nations. The western nomads also preyed on the Santa Fe trade as it made its way along the Arkansas River. In trying to protect these different interests, American officials eventually decided mounted troops would be an asset.

Many contemporary Americans considered the Great Plains empty, deserted if not actually desert. Of course, the plains were not empty. Dozens of Indian nations, nomadic and sedentary, agrarians and hunter-gatherers, recent immigrants and long-time residents, occupied the broad sweep of land between the Mississippi River and the Rocky

Mountains. Collectively they transformed the politics and economies of the plains through their adoption of the horse.

Admittedly Europeans introduced other things to Plains Indian cultures besides the horse. English, French, and Spanish traders helped integrate the Indians into an international trade network, exchanging furs and pelts for manufactured goods.

Europeans also introduced firearms, as well as diseases against which Indians had little immunity. The Iroquois defeat of the Huron and Algonquin also shaped the plains. But the horse revolutionized Plains Indian life.<sup>47</sup>

Before European contact, most of the Indian nations in or around the plains survived as hybrid hunter-gatherers. Nations like the Hidatsa, Mandan, Arikara and Sioux on the northern plains; the Pawnee on the central plains; and the Wichita on the southern plains combined seasonal crop-growing with buffalo hunting.<sup>48</sup> Other nations, such as the Arapaho, Cheyenne, Kiowa, and Comanche, lived on the fringes of the Plains and were semi-nomadic.<sup>49</sup> Hunting buffalo was a labor-intensive practice. On foot, Indians could

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<sup>47</sup> This story has been told in innumerable places. A recent, concise account is in Andrew C. Isenberg, *The Destruction of the Bison* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 31 – 62.

<sup>48</sup> For the northern plains nations, see Roy W. Meyer, *The Village Indians of the Upper Missouri: The Mandans, Hidatsas, and Arikaras* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1977). The Sioux have been written about in many places, but a fresh take is Jeffrey Ostler, *The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism from Lewis and Clark to Wounded Knee* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). For the Pawnee, see White, *The Roots of Dependency: Subsistence, Environment, and Social Change Among the Choctaws, Pawnees, and Navajos* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983). A recent history of the Wichita is F. Todd Smith, *The Wichita Indians: Traders of Texas and the Southern Plains, 1540 – 1845* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2000).

<sup>49</sup> For the Cheyenne, see John H. Moore, *The Cheyenne* (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1996). For the nomads of the southern plains, see Gerald Betty, *Comanche Society: Before the Reservation* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2002); William C. Meadows, *Kiowa, Apache, and Comanche Military Societies: Enduring Veterans, 1800 to the Present* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999); Thomas Kavanagh, *Comanche Political History: an Ethnohistorical Perspective, 1706 – 1875* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996); and Gary Clayton Anderson, *The Conquest of Texas: Ethnic Cleansing in the Promised Land, 1820 – 1875* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005).

not hunt far from their homes. Whole villages would surround a herd, set fire to the grass around the animals, and kill the trapped buffalo. Alternatively, the Indians could spook stampedes, running the buffalo off cliff sides or otherwise trapping them.<sup>50</sup> But no Indian nation could kill buffalo efficiently enough to subsist as hunters alone.

The Spanish introduced the horse to the New World. The Pueblo and Navajo Indians first obtained large numbers of horses during conflicts with the Spanish in the 1680s and 1690s. Indians used the horse in three key ways. Indians hunted buffalo astride more efficiently than on foot. The horse's mobility allowed Indians to hunt buffalo farther from home. Finally, horses could carry or pull larger amounts of the spoils than humans could. During the first half of the eighteenth century, the horse spread from the southwest plains north, to nations like the Kiowa and Comanche, and eventually northeast, to the western Sioux. While agricultural nations used horses on the hunt, they did not abandon their homes in the great river valleys. As Richard White noted, "The most powerful of the buffalo nomads were people who originated outside the plains and moved onto it. . . . hunters and gatherers for whom the horse offered access to the buffalo herds and, with that access, a more abundant future."<sup>51</sup>

As the nomads would learn before the nineteenth century ended, economies and lifestyles based solely on buffalo hunting suffered severe privations when the hunt failed. When hunting was good, however, trade between nomads and villagers could benefit

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<sup>50</sup> Isenberg, *Destruction of the Bison*, 38.

<sup>51</sup> White, "It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own": *A New History of the American West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 21.

both. The village nations could obtain horses and meat from nomads. The nomads in turn could lessen their reliance on the buffalo by trading for corn, rice, and other foodstuffs.

Native trade networks, while spanning the Plains, were anchored at the northeastern and southwestern ends, respectively. The Arikara, Mandan, and Hidatsa villages on the upper Missouri served as entrepôts that attracted nomads and agricultural trading parties from all directions. Similarly, the Pueblo Indians participated in trade not only with Spanish colonists, but other Indians in what would become the American Southwest. Nomads that moved onto the Plains served as intermediaries. Recent scholarship indicates that the Comanche operated a major trade center in their own right on the upper Arkansas River.<sup>52</sup> The Cheyenne, a smaller nation of nomadic Indians, bolstered their importance by occupying a key part of the western Plains. This allowed them to interdict trade traveling northward along the spine of the Rockies, and trade traveling northeast from the southwestern and Comanche centers.<sup>53</sup>

Elliott West described the Indian settlement of the Plains as a result of “the ‘push’ of displacement and the ‘pull’ of new opportunities.”<sup>54</sup> The push came from wars, including conflicts east of the Mississippi, and disease. The pull came from the horse, trade goods, guns, and above all the buffalo herds. In a compressed amount of time the fortunes of Indian nations could change or even reverse themselves. The newly mounted western Sioux pushed the Kiowa and Comanche out of the Black Hills. In turn, the

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<sup>52</sup> Pekka Hamalainen, “The Western Comanche Trade Center: Rethinking the Plains Indian Trade System,” *Western Historical Quarterly* 29 (Winter 1998): 485 – 513. Also see his *The Comanche Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

<sup>53</sup> Moore, *The Cheyenne*, 71 – 93.

<sup>54</sup> Elliott West, *The Way to the West: Essays on the Central Plains* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 10.



Kiowa pushed the Comanche further south. Along with the sedentary Wichita, these nations dominated the western Arkansas and Red River Valleys. More northerly groups like the Pawnee and Cheyenne also raided in the area at times.

The eastern edge of the nomads' territory overlapped with the western edge of the great Indian nation in the east, the Osage.<sup>55</sup> Themselves refugees in the wake of the Beaver Wars, the Osage crossed the Mississippi and settled on the Missouri, Arkansas, and Red Rivers. They both grew food and hunted seasonally. As the nineteenth century progressed, the most immediate threat to the Osage came from the east. They had ceded much of their land to the American government, and the Americans resettled small nations like the Delaware on those lands. A much larger number of Cherokee voluntarily moved themselves west of the Mississippi, reacting to white pressure on their eastern homes. By 1816, some 6,000 Cherokee had reached the Arkansas Valley, with more to come. The Osage and Cherokee continually fought each other.

Government officials realized it would be difficult to voluntarily convince more Cherokee, or members of any eastern nation, to come west when news of Osage attacks filtered eastward. To deter raiding, the army moved into key positions on important rivers in the region. The government erected Fort Smith on the Arkansas River at the current Arkansas state line in 1817. In a few years, the continued push of Indian migration placed Fort Smith well behind the conflict zone. In 1824, the army built Fort Gibson, further up

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<sup>55</sup> A recent study of the Osage is Louis F. Burns, *A History of the Osage People* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004). Also see Willard H. Rollings, *The Osage: an Ethnohistorical Study of Hegemony on the Prairie-Plains* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1992).

the Arkansas at the mouths of the Neosho (Grand) and Verdigris Rivers.<sup>56</sup> In that year, the army also erected Fort Towson, further south, on the Kiamichi near the Red. By 1830, Fort Gibson held the second-largest infantry force in the country, five companies and the headquarters of the Seventh Infantry.<sup>57</sup> The passage of the Indian Removal Act that year meant more Indians would soon inhabit the lands surrounding Fort Gibson.

The Osage were not the American government's only worry. Washington had inadvertently settled a group of Creek Indians on land assigned to the Cherokee. The Cherokee were indignant at the presence of these Creek "squatters." The Creek refused to move, trusting in their proximity to Fort Gibson to protect them. The nomads of the west posed a much greater problem. Both the Osage and the removed nations hunted on the plains west of their assigned lands. The Kiowa, Comanche, and Wichita occasionally raided their transplanted neighbors from the east. Those members of the Southeastern nations who had not yet migrated west of the Mississippi pointed to nomadic raids on their relatives and complained that the government was already failing to protect them. Persuading the western nomads to cease their attacks would not be easy. To this point, the Kiowa, Comanche, and Wichita had never signed even a treaty of friendship with the United States.

Lewis Cass, the Secretary of War in 1831, identified what was necessary to secure the emigrants in their new homes. One of seven key points was "the employment of an

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<sup>56</sup> Brad Agnew, *Fort Gibson: Terminal on the Trail of Tears* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980) discusses not only the fort but also the Indians of the area and their relationships. See also David LaVere, *Contrary Neighbors: Southern Plains and Removed Indians in Indian Territory* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000).

<sup>57</sup> "Annual Report of the Secretary of War Showing the Operations of that Department in 1830," 1 December 1830, *ASP: MA* 4: 592. Jefferson Barracks held eight companies of the Third Infantry and six companies of the Sixth Infantry.

adequate force in their immediate vicinity, and a fixed determination to suppress, at all hazards, the slightest attempt at all hostilities amongst themselves.” Mindful of Black Hawk’s intrusion into Illinois that same year, he further declared “the necessity of employing upon the frontiers a corps of mounted men . . . to be always prepared to follow every party that may attempt to interrupt the peace of the border” by attacking whites or other Indians. “If we are not provided with mounted troops who can prevent or punish these aggressions,” Cass warned, “we shall frequently be compelled to adopt measures more expensive and inconvenient to us, and more injurious to the Indians.”<sup>58</sup>

While white settlement grew in Arkansas Territory during the 1820s and 1830s, a smaller number of whites passing through Indians lands made a larger impact on American policy. Western politicians supported the efforts of Missouri merchants to trade with Santa Fe. When Indians along the Santa Fe Trail attacked the merchants, the government gave the army the assignment of escorting the trade caravans.

Santa Fe, the capital of the Spanish province of New Mexico, had long drawn an admiring glance from westerners. Army Lt. Zebulon Pike wrote glowingly of the town after his arrest there by Spanish authorities in 1807.<sup>59</sup> Mexico won its independence in 1821, and some American traders reached Santa Fe that fall and winter. In a few years’

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<sup>58</sup> “Annual Report of the Secretary of War, Showing the Condition of that Department in 1831,” 21 November 1831, *ASP: MA* 4: 716.

<sup>59</sup> Zebulon M. Pike, *The Expeditions of Zebulon Montgomery Pike, to Headwaters of Mississippi River, through Louisiana Territory, and in New Spain, During the Years 1805-6-7*, 2 vols., ed. Elliott Coues (New York: F. P. Harper, 1895); accessed online through Early Encounters in North America database, 27 November 2007. Study of the Santa Fe Trail has been invigorated by new approaches to the American West. The latest takes on the trail include Stephen G. Hyslop, *Bound for Santa Fe: The Road to New Mexico and the American Conquest, 1806 – 1848* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002); Isenberg, “The Market Revolution in the Borderlands: George Champlin Sibley in Missouri and New Mexico, 1808 – 1826,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 21 (Autumn 2001): 445 – 65; and Susan Calafate Boyle, *Los Capitalistas: Hispano Merchants and the Santa Fe Trade* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997).

time, the participating merchants standardized the trade. Traders carried their goods to Santa Fe, taking specie home with them to pay debts and support their other endeavors. While the earliest endeavors relied on pack animals, later groups used wagons, which could haul larger quantities of goods. After a little experimentation, the traders also established a dominant routing. From an eastern terminus on the Missouri river – first St. Louis, later Franklin and finally Independence – the merchants set off for the Great Bend of the Arkansas River, following the river to the modern town of Cimarron, Kansas, then crossing southwest until they picked up an ancient route between Santa Fe and more northerly settlements.

Santa Fe merchants also standardized a travel tactic, the practice of caravanning. The trade offered great rewards, but it exposed the merchants to great risk. As Stephen Hyslop writes, once the traders left the Arkansas, they “became aliens in a foreign land, subject to the customs and duties of those whose territory they passed through.”<sup>60</sup> Nominally this land belonged to Mexico. The Adams-Onís Treaty of 1819 marked the southwestern border of the United States as the Red River to 100 degrees west longitude, then due north to the Arkansas, then following the Arkansas to 42 degrees north latitude.<sup>61</sup> (Coincidentally, Santa Fe traders on the Cimarron Route left the Arkansas River almost exactly at 100 degrees west longitude.)

The lands along the route between the Arkansas and the Canadian remained in the hands of the local Indians. Not all Indians were hostile to whites, and not all Indian

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<sup>60</sup> Hyslop, *Bound for Santa Fe*, 23.

<sup>61</sup> Treaty of Amity, Settlement, and Limits, Between the United States and his Catholic Majesty of 22 February 1819, 8 *Stat.* 254 – 56.

attacks resulted in loss of life. But small or belligerent parties of traders made bloodshed on the trail more likely.

All the same, the caravans felt running the risk worth the reward until 1828, when the number of Indian attacks increased sharply. In 1829, the merchants observed the maxim “nothing ventured, nothing lost.” According to merchant Josiah Gregg, the value of goods transported declined by 60 percent, the number of wagons in the caravan by a similar percentage, and the number of merchants and men by 75 percent.<sup>62</sup> In these circumstances, westerners and their representatives in Washington pressured the War Department to act, providing an escort as far as the Mexican border.

The 1829 escort, the first the army would undertake, fell to Capt. Bennet Riley, major by brevet, and approximately two hundred infantrymen. The soldiers rendezvoused with the caravan in early June and escorted it to the border without incident. At this point, Riley offered the caravan’s members some advice. “I told them they must stick together,” the major later wrote higher headquarters, “and not leave their wagons more than one hundred yards, without they sent out a party to hunt, but it had no effect.”<sup>63</sup> Less than six miles from Riley’s camp, Indians attacked the strung-out caravan. The traders dispatched a rider to inform Riley and ask for help. Major Riley felt he “could not hesitate” to respond, even if doing so meant violating international law. The escort crossed into Mexico, but saw no sign of hostile Indians. After a few days the traders continued on

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<sup>62</sup> Josiah Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies*, ed. Max L. Moorhead (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1954), 332.

<sup>63</sup> “Protection of the Trade Between Missouri and Santa Fe, in New Mexico,” 5 February 1830, *ASP: MA* 4: 277.

their way and Riley's command returned to American soil. There the major and his men encamped, to await the caravan's return in October.

Twice in August, Indian raiders attacked Riley's camp. When the army first planned the escort, it had intended to mount the infantrymen. "[T]here being no appropriation applicable to the object," the commanding general later stated in his annual report, "the intention of mounting the troops was necessarily abandoned."<sup>64</sup> Riley and his men came to regret this. On 3 August, the soldiers fended off the attack but lost fifty cattle (meant to feed the men until their return to Fort Leavenworth) and several horses. In his official report on the incident, Riley lamented "Think what our feelings must have been to see them going off with our cattle and horses, when, if we had been mounted, we could have beaten them to pieces."<sup>65</sup>

The Indians attacked again on 11 August. Lt. Philip St. George Cooke, who would later rise to fame as both a general and writer, was a young subordinate of Riley's at this time. Years afterward, he described this attack in detail. In a famous postscript to the battle, he noted:

It was a humiliating condition to be surrounded by these rascally Indians, who, by means of their horses, could tantalize us with the hopes of battle, and elude our efforts; who could annoy us by preventing all individual excursions for hunting, &c., and who could insult us with impugny [sic]. Much did we regret that we were not mounted too.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> "Annual Report of the Secretary of War, Showing the Operations of that Department in 1829," 30 November 1829, *ASP: MA* 4: 156. Some horses were purchased for Riley and the company officers.

<sup>65</sup> "Protection of the Trade Between Missouri and Santa Fe, in New Mexico," 5 February 1830, *ASP: MA* 4: 280.

<sup>66</sup> Philip St. George Cooke, *Scenes and Adventures in the Army; or, Romance of Military Life* (Philadelphia: Lindsay and Blakiston, 1857; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1973), 59.

Riley's escort was a narrow success. The caravan enjoyed reasonable security so long as the infantrymen were present. In three respects, however, the expedition left some room for improvement. First, the traders may have been emboldened by Riley's presence. The major believed that so long as the soldiers were nearby, the traders took a lackadaisical approach to their own security. After he responded to the caravan's plea for rescue from the June attack, he reflected "Armed *frontier men*, that could be induced to obey the orders of a Capt. of their own selection, *ought*, to repluse [*sic*] any number of these proverbially cowardly Indians without the assistance of a few regulars."<sup>67</sup>

Second, the caravan had been menaced by Indians only after it cleared the American boundary, and in fact returned to Riley's camp in October with a Mexican military escort. So long as the American and Mexican governments did not coordinate escorts, Indians could simply wait to attack until the caravans left their escorts behind. Third, as both Riley and Cooke testified, troop escorts would operate at a disadvantage until they were mounted. Thus the 1829 Santa Fe caravan proved one impetus towards a rebirth of cavalry in the regular army.

Events in the southwest demonstrated a need for mounted soldiers. Policing the frontier depended on impressing wrongdoers with the military might of the United States. Mounted Indians could always raid a trade caravan or an Indian settlement and quickly get away so long as the army could only dispatch infantry in response.

As the army suffered through its peacekeeping missions during the 1820s and 1830s, officers and other prominent men repeatedly called for a permanent mounted unit.

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<sup>67</sup> Fred S. Perrine, "Military Escorts on the Santa Fe Trail," *New Mexico Historical Review* 3 (July 1928): 281 (emphasis in original). See also Perrine, "Military Escorts on the Santa Fe Trail," *NMHR* 2 (April 1927): 175 – 93, which reprinted Riley's report from the *American State Papers*.

In 1827, Maj. Gen. Jacob Brown, then the commanding general, had recommended that the Santa Fe trade required “military aid of a different character from that of a fixed garrison of infantry in the occupation of any particular position.”<sup>68</sup> His successor, Maj. Gen. Alexander Macomb, noted in 1830 that giving the president the money and authority to mount eight companies of infantry would create a force “which will be sufficient to protect, not only the frontiers of Arkansas, but those of Louisiana and Missouri, as well as the lucrative trade which is being carried on with Santa Fe.”<sup>69</sup>

When members of Congress asked other officers for their opinions on mounted troops, they responded with the same solutions. General Gaines answered an 1828 query from Rep. Joseph Duncan, Jacksonian of Illinois, by saying, “It will be found that mounted riflemen are not only a more *effective*, but a more *economical* means of frontier defense than infantry.”<sup>70</sup> Brig. Gen. Thomas S. Jesup, the Quartermaster General of the Army, replied to an 1830 letter from Arkansas Del. Ambrose Sevier that “the Indian, confident in the capacity of his horse to bear him beyond the reach of pursuit, despises our power, chooses his point of attack, and often commits the outrages to which he is prompted.” Detering such attacks demanded “convinc[ing] him that he can have no security in flight.”<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> “Relative to the Establishment of a Military Post For the Protection of the Trade to Santa Fe, in New Mexico,” 2 March 1827, *ASP: MA* 3: 615.

<sup>69</sup> “Appropriation to Mount Troops for the Protection of the Frontiers of Arkansas Recommended,” 5 January 1830, *ASP: MA* 4: 219.

<sup>70</sup> “Relative to the Efficiency of Mounted Volunteers For the Protection of the Frontiers,” 25 March 1828, *ASP: MA* 3: 828. Emphasis in original.

<sup>71</sup> “Recommendation of General Jesup that a Mounted Force be Employed for the Protection of the Country South of the Missouri River,” 5 April 1830, *ASP: MA* 4: 371.



Indian agents also advocated the creation of a mounted unit. Superintendent William Clark pointed out that the Wichita, Kiowa, and Comanche nations “have no idea of the power of the United States, and unless some effectual mode should be speedily adopted to inform them on this subject, the injury to hundreds of our citizens will be severely felt,” not to mention the Indians already living in the southwest.<sup>72</sup> Andrew Hughes, the agent at the Iowa Subagency, reported that “brave and experienced as our troops are, it does not seem to me that they afford any check whatever to Indian outrage in this section of the country. The Indians have no sort of dread or fear of footmen.”<sup>73</sup>

Unsurprisingly, western traders also lobbied for mounted escorts. Joshua Pilcher believed they were “indispensably necessary for the protection of our inland trade to Mexico, to maintain tranquillity [sic] along our frontier, and for the fulfilment [sic] of our obligations towards the emigrating Indians.”<sup>74</sup> William Gordon wanted “five or six hundred United States’ troops” stationed near the base of the Rockies to help stimulate the fur trade. As he put it, “Those troops, to be efficient, should be mounted: footmen can do no good against the Indians of that country, who are always mounted, and can evade infantry without subjecting themselves to the least inconvenience.”<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Clark to Cass, St. Louis, 20 November 1831; in “Message from the President of the United States, in compliance with a resolution of the Senate concerning the fur trade and inland trade to Mexico,” Senate Document No. 90, 22<sup>nd</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., serial no. 213, 8 – 10.

<sup>73</sup> “No. 3, Andrew S. Hughes’ Report,” in *ibid.*, 22.

<sup>74</sup> “No. 2, Joshua Pilcher’s Report,” in *ibid.*, 18.

<sup>75</sup> “No. 9, Wm. M. Gordon to Gen. Clark, answering inquiries relative to the Fur Trade,” in *ibid.*, 55.

## Peacekeeping Volunteers: The Rise and Fall of the Battalion of Mounted Rangers

After receiving recommendations for mounted troops for several years, Congress finally came to the conclusion the army needed a mounted unit on the frontier. The legislature established the U.S. Battalion of Mounted Rangers, a federal volunteer unit. During its brief existence, the battalion would attempt to perform all the major peacekeeping missions in the west: escorting traders, safeguarding white settlement, and trying to prevent inter-Indian warfare. The unexpectedly high cost of such a unit led to its replacement by the Regiment of Dragoons.

Congress finally debated a bill to raise mounted volunteers for the frontier in June 1832. In addition to official recommendations, the Black Hawk War, then in its opening months, influenced the legislators.<sup>76</sup> Accordingly, they approved an act creating the Battalion of Mounted Rangers on 15 June.<sup>77</sup> Six companies formed the battalion, commanded by a major. A ranger company was supposed to have four officers, five sergeants, five corporals, and one hundred privates. Enlistees had to supply their own horses and arms. Non-commissioned officers and privates received a dollar a day, plus compensation for their personal equipments if necessary. The term of service was for one year. Henry Dodge, then commanding a Michigan volunteer unit battling Black Hawk in Illinois, became the new battalion's major-commandant. Strictly speaking, the president

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<sup>76</sup> The Senate debates are in 8 *Cong. Deb.* 1068 – 70, 1075 – 79, 1083 – 88 (1832); the House, 8 *Cong. Deb.* 3388 – 97 (1832). Some of the rhetorical flourishes appeared in chapter one of the present work.

<sup>77</sup> Act of 15 June 1832, ch. 131, 4 *Stat.* 533. The definitive chronicle of the Battalion of Mounted Rangers' short life remains Otis E. Young, "The United States Mounted Ranger Battalion, 1832 – 1833," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 41 (December 1954): 453 – 70. A briefer account appears in Prucha, *Sword of the Republic*, 240 – 45.

was also supposed to appoint the company officers, but the War Department allowed the captains to choose their own lieutenants and raise their companies as they saw fit.<sup>78</sup>

Because parts of Wisconsin fell in the Eastern Department, the army assigned mounted ranger companies there as well as to the Western Department. As a result, rangers performed all three of the peacekeeping duties assigned to the army. No mounted ranger companies reached Illinois before August 1832, so none of them participated in the campaign against Black Hawk. Nonetheless, companies commanded by Capts. Jesse B. Browne and Benjamin V. Beekes remained with Major Dodge in the Wisconsin – Illinois area through the following spring. In September 1832, the Winnebago nation ceded its remaining lands in Wisconsin to the federal government in exchange for territory beyond the Mississippi. Yet in the spring, numbers of Winnebago remained on their ancestral lands. Browne and Beekes' companies escorted most of these Indians across the river and remained to patrol the lands around Fort Winnebago for any Indians who had stayed behind. Most of the rangers saw their enlistments expire in July 1833, but a few in Captain Browne's company lingered on duty in the fall. This rump company patrolled northern Illinois until it, too, ran out of men.<sup>79</sup>

Rangers under the command of Capts. Nathan Boone, Lemuel Ford, and Jesse Bean served in the southwest, with headquarters at Fort Gibson. In 1832, Congress authorized a peace commission to settle the disputes among the Indians in the area. The Secretary of War named as commissioners Montfort Stokes, a former governor of North

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<sup>78</sup> See chapter three.

<sup>79</sup> Captain Browne remained on duty with the mounted rangers until October. He then accepted a captaincy in the dragoons. Because each captain in the Regiment of Dragoons raised his own company, this had consequences for the regiment's recruiting and training. See chapters four and five.

Carolina; John F. Schermerhorn, a Dutch Reformed minister from New York; and Henry L. Ellsworth, a lawyer from Connecticut. Cass charged the Stokes Commission, as it became known, with establishing “a permanent peace among all the tribes, indigenous or emigrant, west of the Mississippi.”<sup>80</sup> The secretary further believed that placing a mounted force at the commission’s disposal would be a great help. In his annual report for 1833, he stated that doing so would convince the Indians “Their own safety is closely connected with the permanent establishment of pacific relations both with the United States and with the other Indians.”<sup>81</sup>

In accordance with this philosophy, in the fall of 1832 the army placed Bean’s company of rangers at the disposal of Commissioner Ellsworth. Bean and his men undertook a tour of the prairies. Ellsworth brought along two civilians, British traveler Charles J. Latrobe and American author Washington Irving. Bean’s company encountered little of importance. It is the best known of the mounted ranger companies solely because each of the civilians left written accounts of the patrol.<sup>82</sup>

Boone and Ford had initially been sent to Illinois with Browne and Beekes. Not only did these companies arrive too late to see action in the Black Hawk War, they then

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<sup>80</sup> Lewis Cass to William Carroll, Montfort Stokes, and Robert Vaux, 14 July 1832; *ASP:MA* 5:26. Carroll and Vaux turned down their appointments. The instructions were then re-issued to Schermerhorn and Ellsworth.

<sup>81</sup> “Annual Report of the Secretary of War, Showing the Condition of that Department in 1833,” 29 November 1833; *ASP: MA* 5:170.

<sup>82</sup> See Washington Irving, “A Tour of the Prairies,” in *The Crayon Miscellany*, ed. Dalia Terrell, vol. 22 of the *Complete Works of Washington Irving*, gen. eds. Henry A. Pochmann, Herbert L. Kleinfeld, and Richard Dilworth Rust, 29 vols. (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1969 - ); Henry L. Ellsworth, *Washington Irving on the Prairie; or, A Narrative Tour of the Southwest in 1832*, eds. Stanley T. Williams and Barbara D. Simison (New York: American Book Company, 1937); and Charles J. Latrobe, *The Rambler in North America: MDCCCXXXII – MDCCCXXXIII*, 2 vols. (London: R.B. Seeley and W. Burnside, 1835).

endured a cholera outbreak at Fort Armstrong. After both the disease and winter had passed, the War Department ordered them to join Bean at Fort Gibson. In the spring of 1833, the War Department also ordered Lt. Col. James B. Many of the Seventh Infantry to lead an expedition along the Red River. Many's goal was to make contact with the Comanche and Wichita, and persuade those nations to stop attacking Indians under the government's protection.<sup>83</sup> Many took the three mounted ranger companies with him, as well as two companies from the Seventh.

Officially, Bean's 1832 patrol was supposed to have made contact with the Comanche and Wichita, but those mounted rangers saw no one. Many's expedition encountered the Indians, and then failed to persuade them to do anything. At least Bean and the commissioners returned safe and sound, if a bit ragged. On 2 June, Indians believed to be from the Wichita nation raided Many's force, carrying off ranger private George Abbay. The entire expedition went into pursuit mode to recover him, but failed. As historian Otis Young has remarked, "Instead of impressing the tribes with the power of the whites, Many had permitted at least the Wichitas to be treated to the spectacle of their impotence."<sup>84</sup>

One mounted ranger company did enjoy success on the plains. In February 1833, Capt. Matthew Duncan's company reported to Fort Leavenworth. Indians had again attacked again an unescorted Santa Fe caravan the previous year. That spring and summer, Duncan's rangers joined an escort of twenty-five infantrymen commanded by

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<sup>83</sup> An account of the Red River Expedition also appears in Agnew, *Fort Gibson*, 105 – 6.

<sup>84</sup> Young, "Mounted Ranger Battalion," 469.

Capt. William N. Wickliffe of the Sixth Infantry.<sup>85</sup> The escort protected the traders without incident and returned to Fort Leavenworth in August. There Duncan's rangers remained until their enlistments expired.

In the fall of 1833, the Mounted Ranger Battalion's company commanders should have proceeded to recruit another set of rangers. Instead, the Secretary of War and an influential member of Congress sought to replace the horseback volunteers with a regular regiment. Lewis Cass, in his annual report for 1832, claimed that a regiment of dragoons would be roughly \$150,000 cheaper than funding the mounted rangers for another year.<sup>86</sup> He also believed

that a regiment of dragoons would be more efficient as well as more economical. From the constitution of the corps of rangers, and from the short periods of their service, their organization is but little superior to the ordinary militia. Every year there must be a great loss of time in the reconstruction of the corps and in the acquisition of the necessary experience and knowledge.<sup>87</sup>

Richard M. Johnson, chairman of the House Committee of Military Affairs, agreed with Cass. Johnson had become a national hero leading a regiment of Kentucky mounted riflemen in the War of 1812. While he re-iterated many of Cass' points (some word-for-word), he drew on his own experiences to add a few of his own. Johnson believed the mounted ranger companies too large and the number of officers too few. "There is but one field officer (and he a major, without any staff) to command 660 men," the congressman reported, "while in a regiment of infantry . . . composed of only 514

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<sup>85</sup> Wickliffe took command because he was senior in grade by almost six years.

<sup>86</sup> Cass overstated the potential savings, but not by much. See Appendix A.

<sup>87</sup> "Annual Report of the Secretary of War Showing the Condition of That Department in 1832," 25 November 1832," *ASP: MA* 5: 18 – 19.

men, it has been deemed necessary to provide three field officers and an adjutant and certain non-commissioned staff.” Johnson also emphasized that dragoons could fight on foot, as “they may be trained to the use of the rifle and sword as occasion may require.” Adding a regiment of dragoons “would introduce a force which would harmonize with and participate in the *esprit du corps* so essential to military efficiency and so easily and certainly created by military principles.”<sup>88</sup> Johnson’s bill authorizing the Regiment of Dragoons easily became law.<sup>89</sup>

On 2 March 1833 the U.S. Cavalry was reborn. Its conception resulted from the federal government finally realizing its ambitions to settle Indian affairs far outstripped its capabilities. The theory of an orderly process filling the west with whites and Indians was almost elegant in its simplicity. Putting the theory into practice was messy. In Wisconsin and Illinois, along the Santa Fe Trail, and in the southwest, Indians clashed both with whites and with each other. Ultimately, the federal government had to resolve each of the conflicts by force. Army officers and eventually Congress realized that in the Indian west, the army needed cavalry to be effective.

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<sup>88</sup> “On Converting the Corps of Mounted Rangers into a Regiment of Dragoons,” 28 December 1832, *ASP: MA* 5: 126. Emphasis in original.

<sup>89</sup> Act of 2 March 1833, ch. 76, 4 *Stat.* 652.

### CHAPTER 3

#### “THE BEST POSSIBLE APPOINTMENTS SHOULD BE MADE”: THE OFFICERS OF THE REGIMENT OF DRAGOONS AND MILITARY PROFESSIONALISM

In March 1833, regular army officer Stephen Watts Kearny became the first lieutenant colonel of the Regiment of Dragoons. Almost immediately, he began campaigning to keep the volunteer officers of the U. S. Battalion of Mounted Rangers out of the new regiment. Ranger officers “have not an equal claim, to be transferred to the Dragoons,” he wrote the Adjutant General of the Army, “with officers of the Army, long distinguished in their Profession.”<sup>1</sup> He demanded that “The Rangers in *these grades* ... be excluded *en Masse*.”<sup>2</sup> Kearny claimed that a regular officer “had been regularly educated to his Profession” and proven himself “by his 4 years moral deportment & and application to his Studies, at our Countrys [sic] Institute [i.e., West Point].”<sup>3</sup> In December 1833, his pleas rejected, Kearny grumbled that the ex-ranger officers in the regiment “will for years be a serious drawback to [the regiment’s] standing and efficiency.”<sup>4</sup>

Kearny belonged to the post-War of 1812 generation of regular officers that developed the initial concepts of American military professionalism. He joined the army near the beginning of that conflict and served under civilians-turned-generals, men who

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<sup>1</sup> Lt. Col. Stephen Watts Kearny to Col. Roger Jones, the Adjutant General of the Army, New York, 30 April 1833; File K 32 1833, Letters Received, 1805 – 1889, Main Series (LR 1805 – 1889); (National Archives Microfilm Publication [NAMP] M567, roll 84); Correspondence, 1800 – 1917 (Correspondence); Record Group 94, Records of the Adjutant General’s Office, 1780s – 1917 (RG 94); National Archives Building, Washington, DC (NAB).

<sup>2</sup> Kearny to Jones (private letter), 31 July 1833; enclosed in File K 78 1833, LR 1805 – 1889 (NAMP M567, roll 85); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB (emphasis in original).

<sup>3</sup> Kearny to Jones, St. Louis, 19 September 1833; File K 72 1833, LR 1805 – 1889 (NAMP M567, roll 85); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

<sup>4</sup> Kearny to Jones, Jefferson Barracks, 7 December 1833; File K 91 1833, LR 1805 – 1889 (NAMP M567, roll 85); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.



led the American invasion of Canada. During the battle of Queenstown Heights in October 1812, Kearny fought bravely and well before becoming a prisoner. In 1815, when Congress eliminated four-fifths of the wartime officer corps, Kearny not only remained in the army but also kept his wartime rank of captain – a rarity and a tribute to his service reputation.<sup>5</sup>

War impressed officers of Kearny's generation with the importance of a proper military education. For those young officers who entered the army after the War of 1812, this education came not from British musketry, but rather the instructors at the United States Military Academy. War also suggested the folly of directly appointing politically-connected civilians to the regular army. While gaining an appointment to West Point required political influence, further advancement for postwar regular officers depended largely on military merit and connections. Finally, the War of 1812 caused many officers to see war as something too complicated, dangerous, and important to leave to amateurs. Given an environment that allowed for regular officers to serve as long as they wanted, many indicated their desire to make soldiering a life's work by staying in the regular service.

By the 1830s, then, Kearny's concept of military professionalism had won out. It included a formal military education, the seeming exclusion of politics from the process of entering the regular officer corps, and spending a lifetime in uniform. It is no wonder Kearny so vigorously criticized the ex-volunteer officers. They came from a tradition that believed a military education generally unnecessary, and specifically unnecessary to fight

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<sup>5</sup> Kearny began the war as a first lieutenant in the Thirteenth Infantry. His biographer, Dwight L. Clarke, attributes Kearny's promotion to "his gallantry at Queenston Heights"; Dwight L. Clarke, *Stephen Watts Kearny, Soldier of the West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961), 17.

Indians; a tradition that relied on the political process to gain appointment to the officer corps; a tradition that viewed officership not as a vocation, but as a temporary occupation. Compared even to this nascent concept of military professionalism, the ex-mounted ranger officers were different enough to be described as unprofessional.

### Military Education

Under the Constitution, the President appoints army officers, with the advice and consent of the Senate. The Secretary of War, acting for the President, theoretically could appoint officers to the Regiment of Dragoons from three pools: the regular army, the officers of the Battalion of Mounted Rangers, and civil society. The Secretary of War did not appoint civilians. He nominated regular officers and ranger officers. A disparity of formal military education existed between the two groups.<sup>6</sup>

The United States Military Academy produced all officers entering the regular army officer corps between 1821 and 1832. In March 1821, Congress fixed the size of the regular army officer corps at 541 officers.<sup>7</sup> This was the lowest number since 1815, and it would grow by less than 1 percent by 1831.<sup>8</sup> Each graduating class provided more than enough officers to fill vacant second lieutenantcies. In February 1832, the House

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<sup>6</sup> Below, a “regular officer” is defined as any officer of the Regiment of Dragoons who was in regular service before 1 June 1821, or graduated from West Point between 1822 and 1836. A “ranger officer” is defined as any officer of the Regiment of Dragoons who was first appointed to the U. S. Battalion of Mounted Rangers, and who did not graduate from West Point. Several brevet second lieutenants, all graduates of the USMA, received appointments as brevet third lieutenants in the Mounted Rangers.

Thompson B. Wheelock, USMA 1822, resigned after seven years’ service. He then spent three years as a college president in Cincinnati before rejoining the army. As he was a West Point graduate with extensive service during the 1820s, I consider him a regular officer, rather than a civilian appointee to the Regiment of Dragoons, or a transferred Mounted Ranger officer.

<sup>7</sup> Act of 2 March 1821, ch. 13, 3 *Statutes at Large* 615-6.

<sup>8</sup> “Annual Report of the Secretary of War, Showing the Condition of that Department in 1831,” 21 November 1831, *American State Papers: Military Affairs* (ASP: MA) 4:719.

Committee on Military Affairs found that between 1821 and 1831, an average of thirty-six graduates competed each year for twenty-eight vacancies.<sup>9</sup> The excess graduates became brevet second lieutenants, supernumeraries attached to the various arms and waiting for a vacancy. The 1831 *Army Register* reported eighty-three brevet second lieutenants, or over 15 percent of the authorized officer total. Seven of these officers graduated from West Point in 1828.<sup>10</sup>

West Point, in the words of James L. Morrison, graduated “engineers who could also function as soldiers,” but cadets took ample instruction in the art of war, if somewhat less than the instruction taken in the art of engineering.<sup>11</sup> Cadets drilled daily after class, and both mornings and evenings during summer camp. First classmen, soon to be graduates, also received classroom instruction in tactics. Before 1839, the curriculum confined drills to artillery and infantry tactics. Cadets progressed from learning the skills of individual crewmembers or soldiers, to leading a single gun or infantry squad, all the way to commanding an artillery battery, or infantry regiments and brigades. Cadets also found themselves under military discipline when off the parade ground. Courts martial tried the most serious offenses against military discipline. Cadets committing lesser offenses received demerits. The academy discharged any cadet who received two

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<sup>9</sup> “On the Expediency of Prohibiting the Appointment of Captains on the Staff, of Reducing the Number of Cadets, and of Promoting Meritorious Non-Commissioned Officers of the Army,” 8 February 1832, *ASP: MA* 4:870.

<sup>10</sup> “Army Register for the year 1831,” 26 January 1831, *ASP: MA* 4:662-675.

<sup>11</sup> James L. Morrison, “*The Best School in the World*”: *West Point, the Pre-Civil War Years, 1833-1866* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1986), 101. The descriptions of cadet drill here are drawn from chapter six, “The Academic Environment, 1833-1854.”

hundred demerits in an academic year.<sup>12</sup> This formal military education, assisted by manuals and Army Regulations, allowed new second lieutenants to drill and command their companies, from the moment they arrived at their first assignment.

In the nineteenth century, drill and discipline attempted to compensate for the utter chaos of the battlefield: a literal fog of war, loud and unexpected noises from all directions, the butchery caused by cannon and smoothbore muskets, the terror of receiving – or making – a bayonet charge. Effectiveness in combat demanded that each individual soldier know how to carry out changes in formation, that he respond without hesitation to orders from non-commissioned or commissioned officers, and that he believe that following orders increased his chances of emerging from combat safely.

Kearny learned these lessons the hard way during the War of 1812. He knew the new dragoon enlistees had to be turned into serviceable soldiers before the regiment would be good for anything. With a full appreciation of the challenges inherent in his future mission, it is little wonder that Kearny concerned himself with training and discipline.

Henry Dodge, the first colonel of the new regiment, took a much different view of its leadership arrangements than Kearny. Dodge felt that mating regular officers, “who understand the first principles of the profession of arms,” with the mounted ranger officers, “well acquainted with the woods,” would produce a superior unit.<sup>13</sup> Most of the ex-mounted rangers appointed to the dragoons did not possess the regular officers’ formal

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>13</sup> Col. Henry Dodge to Jones, Jefferson Barracks, 28 August 1833; File D 81 1833, LR 1805 – 1889 (NAMP M567, roll 82); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

military education. Certainly they put less of a premium on military discipline, for they believed skills useful against European enemies unnecessary in dealing with Indians.

Lewis Cass, the Secretary of War, appointed Dodge the major commandant of the Battalion of Mounted Rangers. He also selected the six company commanders, from three western states and the Arkansas Territory.<sup>14</sup> Practice varied with time and place, but state politicians or the enlisted men of a volunteer company usually chose company officers.<sup>15</sup> In the case of the mounted rangers, no one state held jurisdiction, and the ongoing Black Hawk War spurred the War Department to get the battalion recruited and deployed as soon as possible. Therefore Cass entrusted the selection of company lieutenants to the captains. He explained in a letter to the captains that “the best possible appointments should be made, and that they should afford you the most efficient aid in raising the men.”<sup>16</sup>

Nathan Boone, son of Daniel Boone, the famed frontiersman, received a captaincy and orders to raise his ranger company in Missouri. George Shannon, the U. S. attorney for Missouri, thought Boone “is the best appointment that could be made: and this, I believe, is the general opinion of the people of Missouri, to whom is he well known.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> For a detailed description of the Battalion of Mounted Rangers’ organization, see chapter two.

<sup>15</sup> For Mexican War practice in choosing volunteer officers, see Richard B. Winders, *Mr. Polk’s Army: The American Military Experience in the Mexican War* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1997), and James M. McCaffrey, *Army of Manifest Destiny: The American Soldier in the Mexican War, 1846 – 1848* (New York: New York University Press, 1992).

<sup>16</sup> Cass to Capts. Lemuel Ford and Benjamin V. Beekes, 16 June 1832; Letters Sent, 1800-1889 (LS 1800-1889) (NAMP M6, roll 13); Correspondence; Record Group 107, Records of the Office of the Secretary of War (RG 107); NAB. The other captains received similar letters.

<sup>17</sup> George Shannon, U. S. Attorney for Missouri, to Maj. Gen. Alexander Macomb, Commanding General of the Army, St. Charles, Missouri, 15 July 1832; File B 187 1832, LR 1805 - 1889 (NAMP M567, roll 84); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB. Another writer believed the power of the Boone name would allow the Missouri company to be raised from Boone’s county alone in a few days; Thomas Dunbar to Jones, St.

Boone selected William G. Pettus, a justice of the peace in St. Charles County, Missouri, as one of his lieutenants. Pettus declined his commission, however, when the time came to go on campaign, as he meant only “to facilitate the recruiting and organizing” of the company.<sup>18</sup> Not all mounted ranger captains took Cass as literally as Boone did, but they all chose lieutenants of note in their home regions, the better to attract recruits.

Choosing officers in this manner fit perfectly with the volunteer tradition, which held different expectations for service. No doubt Jesse Bean, captain of the rangers raised from the Arkansas Territory, inspired young men to sign up. An article in the *Arkansas Gazette* told readers Bean fought at the Battle of New Orleans and later served under Andrew Jackson in the First Seminole War, commanding a company of “spies,” or scouts.<sup>19</sup> But when Henry L. Ellsworth, Charles J. Latrobe, and Washington Irving accompanied Bean’s mounted rangers into the field in the fall of 1832, the trio found popularity and a record of fighting Indians did not translate into competent leadership.<sup>20</sup>

Ellsworth found Bean to be “personally brave, and possessing the qualities of a good woods man,” but also “greatly deficient in energy and more so in discipline.”<sup>21</sup> He described the enlisted rangers as upstanding young men, mostly farmers, who sought a

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Charles, Missouri, 14 July 1832, enclosed with Shannon to Macomb, St. Charles, Missouri, 15 July 1832; File B 187 1832, LR 1805 - 1889 (NAMP M567, roll 84); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

<sup>18</sup> William G. Pettus to Capt. Nathan Boone, St. Charles, Missouri, 3 August 1832; File P 103 1832, LR 1805 - 1889 (NAMP M567, roll 84); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

<sup>19</sup> *Arkansas Gazette*, 18 July 1832; cited in John Francis McDermott, ed., *The Western Journals of Washington Irving* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1944), 28.

<sup>20</sup> See chapter two.

<sup>21</sup> Henry L. Ellsworth, *Washington Irving on the Prairie: or, A Narrative of a Tour of the Southwest in the Year 1832*, eds. Stanley T. Williams and Barbara D. Simison (New York: American Book Company, 1937), 24.

year's adventure. They did not seek regular army discipline, as "they seemed determined, to keep up republican equality, by acknowledging no superior."<sup>22</sup> Latrobe also found among the rangers

An amusing variety of character . . . intermingled with some very sober and worthy members of society, allured to enlist by a desire to see the world and to lead a holiday kind of life away from their farms for a twelvemonth, there was a very large sprinkling of prodigal sons and neer-do-wells.<sup>23</sup>

In "A Tour on the Prairies," the famous author Washington Irving agreed with his fellow tourists. On meeting the rangers, he found "a heterogeneous crew . . . [for] the most part in marvelously ill cut garments, much the worse for wear, and evidently put on for rugged service."<sup>24</sup> Irving described the enlisted men as "a raw, undisciplined band, levied among the wild youngsters of the frontier" that had no idea about camp decorum, nor the desire to learn.<sup>25</sup> They believed they could hunt for all the food they would need, so the expedition lurched from leaving large quantities of meat to spoil when it broke camp, to going hungry from lack of game.<sup>26</sup> The rangers' youth and inexperience made it

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Charles J. Latrobe, *The Rambler in North America, MDCCCXXXII – MDCCCXXXIII*, 2 vols. (London: R. B. Seeley and W. Burnside, 1836), 1: 180 – 81; "American Notes: Travels in North America, 1750 – 1920," [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/lhbtn:@field\(DOCID+@lit\(lhbtn6855adiv17\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/lhbtn:@field(DOCID+@lit(lhbtn6855adiv17))), accessed 30 March 2011.

<sup>24</sup> Washington Irving, "A Tour on the Prairies," in *The Crayon Miscellany*, ed. Dahlia Kirby Terrell, vol. 22 of *The Complete Works of Washington Irving* series, gen. ed. Richard Dilworth Rust (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1979), 14.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 116.

impossible for Bean to maintain march discipline among his troops, who constantly strayed from the column to hunt or joyride.<sup>27</sup>

Bean's failure to impose military discipline on his men made for more than amusing stories. By law, the men provided their own horses, ones accustomed to eating grains and the leisurely life of the stable.<sup>28</sup> Between the rangers riding their horses into the ground, and the poor pasturage found in present-day Oklahoma in late fall, Bean cut the tour short, lest they "lose the greater part of our horses, and ... be obliged to return [to Fort Gibson] on foot."<sup>29</sup>

At least one mounted ranger commander besides Captain Bean faced trouble with his enlistees. Nearly all of Benjamin V. Beekes' rangers walked out on him in July 1833. His men had been sworn in on 7 July 1832, and a year later they agitated for their release. As they had been officially mustered into federal service on 8 September 1832, the War Department did not want to release them until the following September. First Lt. Charles F. M. Noland told the Adjutant General afterwards that he believed most of the men would have re-enlisted through September, if given their discharge in July. But "Captain Beekes threatened to shoot them if they would dare go off on the 7<sup>th</sup> day of July 1833."<sup>30</sup> All of the men enlisted through July 1833 promptly left.

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>28</sup> Act of 15 June 1832, ch. 131, 4 *Stat.* 533. Each ranger received \$1 a day as compensation for themselves, their own arms, and their mounts.

<sup>29</sup> Irving, "A Tour on the Prairies," 111.

<sup>30</sup> 1st Lt. Charles F. M. Noland to Jones, Camp Wilkins near Dodgeville, Michigan Territory, 20 July 1833; File N 22 1833, LR 1805 - 1889 (NAMP M567, roll 86); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.



Despite Captain Bean's weakness as a disciplinarian, and the ineffective bluster of Captain Beekes, Colonel Dodge wanted all of the mounted ranger officers to join the Regiment of Dragoons. Apparently, the experiences of Bean and Beekes made little impression on the colonel. He saw no need for strong discipline and constant drill. He believed fighting Indians did not require such a strict training regimen.<sup>31</sup>

As the Regiment of Dragoons finally came together in the spring and summer of 1833, Colonel Kearny tried to counter Dodge's lackadaisical approach to training and campaigning along the Permanent Indian Frontier. Kearny believed the selection of the regiment's officers to be most important because the enlisted men would be raised directly from civil life, with no regular experience. He sent the Adjutant General a list of sixteen officers he wanted transferred to the regiment.<sup>32</sup> When two regulars declined their appointments, the lieutenant colonel helpfully suggested possible replacements.<sup>33</sup>

Repeatedly and unsuccessfully, Kearny sought the transfer of Capt. Ethan Allen Hitchcock, the commandant of cadets at West Point in early 1833.<sup>34</sup> Hitchcock possessed an inquisitive nature and a fine collection of books. In later years he wrote on philosophy,

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<sup>31</sup> Dodge to Jones, Regimental HQ, Jefferson Barracks, 15 September 1833; File D 93 1833, LR 1805 - 1889 (NAMP M567, roll 82); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB. Jones remarked in an endorsement that a regular unit always required strict discipline.

<sup>32</sup> Kearny to Jones, 15 April 1833; File K Unregistered 1833, LR 1805 - 1889 (NAMP M567, roll 85); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

<sup>33</sup> Kearny to Cass, Washington, 12 April 1833; File K 7 1833 (enclosed), LR 1805 - 1889 (NAMP M567, roll 84); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

<sup>34</sup> Kearny to Jones, New York, 30 April 1833; File K 32 1833, LR 1805 - 1889 (NAMP M567, roll 84); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB; Kearny to Jones, 1 May 1833; enclosed in Kearny to Cass, Albany, 1 May 1833; File K 32 1833, LR 1805 - 1889 (NAMP M567, roll 84); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB; Kearny to Jones, Louisville, 3 July 1833; File K 49 1833, LR 1805 - 1889 (NAMP M567, roll 84); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB; Kearny to Jones, St. Louis, 6 November 1833; File K 82 1833, LR 1805 - 1889 (NAMP M567, roll 85); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

Christianity, and literature. Maj. Gen. Alexander Macomb, the commanding general, testified as to Hitchcock's talents as a soldier. The general wrote the captain in May 1833, saying "I am well convinced . . . of the great advantage which your military knowledge and experience" would give to the dragoons.<sup>35</sup>

Counting Kearny, twenty-seven regular officers transferred into the Regiment of Dragoons, augmented by thirteen West Point graduates in 1834, 1835, and 1836.<sup>36</sup>

Counting Dodge, fifteen ex-mounted ranger officers (of the twenty-five serving in the battalion in 1833) joined the dragoons. Only three of these could be credibly said to have had some kind of proper military education. James W. Hamilton and Charles F. M. Noland both received appointments to West Point, but left without graduating. James W.

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<sup>35</sup> Macomb to Capt. Ethan Allen Hitchcock, Washington, 28 May 1833; Letters Sent by the Headquarters of the Army (Main Series), 1828-1903 (NAMP M857, roll 1); General Records; Records of Headquarters, 1828-1903; Record Group 108, Records of the Headquarters of the Army; NAB.

For Hitchcock's persistent and ultimately unsuccessful quest to join the dragoons, see Richard N. Grippaldi, "The Politics of Appointment in the Jacksonian Army: The (Non) Transfer of Ethan Allen Hitchcock to the Regiment of Dragoons, 1833," *Army History: The Professional Bulletin of Army History* 70 (Winter 2009): 26 – 35.

<sup>36</sup> Regimental returns, Regiment of Dragoons, August 1833 – July 1836; Records of the 1<sup>st</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiments (NAMP M744, roll 1); Records of the Cavalry, 1833-1941; Record Group 391, Records of United States Regular Army Mobile Units, 1821-1942; NAB, cross-referenced with the appropriate entries in Francis B. Heitman, ed., *Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army, from its Organization, September 29, 1789, to March 2, 1903*, 2 vols. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1903; reprinted Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1965).

Discrepancies exist as to whether or not some officers belonged to the Regiment of Dragoons. Earlier historians sometimes took relevant *Army Registers* and general orders as "proof" an officer belonged to the regiment. For example, in his Ph.D. dissertation "The Army and Stephen Watts Kearny in the West, 1819-1846," (University of Minnesota, 1955), Willis B. Hughes lists 2d Lt. Joseph Ritner as assigned to the regiment (p. 193 n. 43), citing General Order 14 of 6 March 1833, but Ritner never appears on any of the monthly regimental returns. Bvt. 2d Lt. Elbridge G. Eastman accompanied Company F during the 1834 Dodge-Leavenworth Expedition, but Colonel Dodge's report of the expedition clearly shows Eastman as assigned to the Second Infantry ("Account of Colonel Dodge's expedition from Fort Gibson to the Pawnee Pict village," 26 August 1834, *ASP: MA* 5:373-82). Despite this, *Field, Staff, and Officers of the First Regiment of Cavalry from March 4, 1833 to June 1, 1900* (Fort Meade, SD: self-published, 1900) lists Eastman as a member of the regiment.

The current author relies on the monthly regimental returns for the officers assigned to the regiment, and cross-references the returns with Heitman for service information.

Shaumburgh served for three years as a second lieutenant in the Marine Corps.<sup>37</sup> To Kearny and his fellow regular officers, having any ex-ranger officers in the regiment must have been a bitter pill to swallow. The volunteer officers' laissez-faire attitude towards discipline highlighted how little military education they possessed, in stark difference to regulars educated by bloody battlefields and West Point parade grounds.

### Politics and Officer Appointment

Entering the regular army officer corps required political connections. In this era, a cadet could not gain appointment to West Point without the influence of a politician. On the other hand, remaining at the Military Academy demanded study, and class rank determined an officer's initial assignment. A volunteer officer could obtain an appointment without any kind of merit test. When formally applying to join the dragoons, regular officers stressed military experience, while mounted ranger officers tended to treat the process as applying for a volunteer commission all over again.<sup>38</sup>

Regular officers in this period entered the officer corps by graduating from the U.S. Military Academy. Politics pervaded the cadet appointment process. Each congressman could appoint one cadet. Each state held two at large appointments, and the President controlled about a dozen at large appointments. Jacksonian rhetoric condemned

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<sup>37</sup> For Hamilton and Noland, relevant entries in Heitman, *Historical Register*; for Shaumburgh, entry in Thomas H. S. Hamersly, ed., *General Register of the United States Navy and Marine Corps, for One Hundred Years, 1782 to 1882* (Washington: T. H. S. Hamersly, 1882).

<sup>38</sup> The Letters Received, 1805-1889, Main Series file in Record Group 94 does not contain applications for every future officer in the regiment. Many of those that do exist say little beyond declaring an officer a candidate for an appointment, as required by General Order 69 of 1833. Necessarily, the following analysis of applicant letters is limited by availability and tries to illustrate the most general trends.

limiting officer appointment to West Point graduates as elitist and aristocratic, but no Jacksonian politician stopped using cadet appointment as patronage.

Sometimes a cadet used familial political connections. Abraham Van Buren was the son of Martin Van Buren, a U.S. Senator from New York at the time of Abraham's appointment.<sup>39</sup> Philip R. Thompson was the grandson of a representative from Virginia.<sup>40</sup> In other cases, a congressman knew the cadet or his family personally. Representative Charles Fenton Mercer of Virginia claimed William Noland as an "intimate friend." This was probably true, as Mercer recommended William's son, Charles Fenton Mercer Noland.<sup>41</sup> Edward Kavanagh recommended Thomas McCrate, son of the collector of the Port of Wiscasset, Maine.<sup>42</sup>

People soliciting appointments for themselves or their sons did not rely solely on political connections to make their case. In the cadet application files of future dragoon officers, solicitors speak of boys without one or both parents, large families in reduced circumstances, and a father's or grandfather's service to his country in its hour of need.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> "Van Buren, Martin, (1782 – 1862)." *Biographical Directory of the U. S. Congress, 1774-Present*, <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=V000009>, accessed 30 March 2011. Abraham entered West Point in 1823.

<sup>40</sup> Rep. Richard Henry Wilde to John H. Eaton, the Secretary of War, 30 December 1829; File 1827, no.163, Cadet Application Papers, 1814-1866 (CAP 1814-1866) (NAMP M688, roll 50); Records Relating to the U. S. Military Academy (USMA); RG 94; NAB.

<sup>41</sup> Rep. C. F. Mercer to John C. Calhoun, the Secretary of War, 27 November 1822; File 1823, no.257, CAP 1814-1866 (NAMP M688, roll 27); USMA; RG 94; NAB.

<sup>42</sup> Rep. Edward Kavanagh et al. to Eaton, 31 December 1830; File 1831, no. 22, CAP 1814-1866 (NAMP M688, roll 79); USMA; RG 94; NAB.

<sup>43</sup> For examples, see Rep. William Woods to John C. Calhoun, Vice President of the United States, 10 February 1825; File 1826, no.130, CAP 1814-1866 (NAMP M688, roll 43); Joseph Bellinger to Rep. Henry Clay, Charleston, 9 February 1823; File 1823, no. 29, CAP 1814-1866 (NAMP M688, roll 23); and D. R. Porter to Cass, 25 January 1832; File 1832, no. 113, CAP 1814-1866 (NAMP M688, roll 83); all in USMA; RG 94; NAB.

These provided some political cover from charges of elitism. But a boy's chances for appointment plummeted without some kind of political support.

From the moment a boy gained appointment, however, his remaining in the academy relied solely on his merits. Regulations required each newly arrived cadet to pass an entry exam in reading, writing, and mathematics. In class, professors forced cadets to demonstrate their mastery of texts daily, and assigned grades every day. The academy held general examinations in January and June, which fixed class standing. Cadets failing the June examination dropped to a lower class, or were expelled from the academy. Of the cadets admitted in the antebellum period, over one-fourth flunked out.<sup>44</sup>

An officer's West Point class rank determined his initial duty assignment. Regulations allowed the highest graduates to choose any branch of the army (engineers, artillery, infantry and, after 1833, dragoons), assuming a vacancy existed.<sup>45</sup> The lower a cadet's grades, the more limited his career choice. The lowest ranked graduates entered the infantry. While one could question the suitability of the officers the infantry received – mostly men who finished near the bottom of their class, after spending most of their time at the Point studying military engineering – every graduate of the U. S. Military Academy earned his position as a new second lieutenant on merit.

Mounted ranger officers entered the army in a different manner. The Secretary of War appointed the captains, and the captains in turn appointed their lieutenants. The first

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<sup>44</sup> Morrison, *Best School in the World*, 63. Morrison does not provide an exact figure. It should be noted that sometimes, cadets convinced the President that they should gain reappointment. Andrew Jackson proved sympathetic to many cadets at the beginning of his presidency, but by his second term he had grown tired of this practice.

<sup>45</sup> Beyond vacancies in the grade of second lieutenant, a graduate could also be appointed a brevet second lieutenant, although by law no more than one brevet second lieutenant could be attached to a company; act of 29 April 1812, ch. 72, 2 *Stat.* 720.

time the volunteers applied to join the army occurred after Congress authorized the Regiment of Dragoons. Many applicants simply declared their candidacy for a regular commission. What detailed applications exist provide evidence that, for the candidates, political connections stood alongside or ahead of practical military experience.

James W. Shaumburgh's application for transfer from the Battalion of Mounted Rangers to the Regiment of Dragoons includes not only his request for transfer, but supporting recommendations.<sup>46</sup> The recommendations form the bulk of the file and provide most of the insight into his case. According to the file, Shaumburgh had served as a second lieutenant of marines, but he left the Corps due to personal disagreements with his fellow officers. Despite being the target of allegedly unjust harassment, Shaumburgh claimed his manly spirit and his desire to serve his country was still intact. His father reputedly had fought in the Revolution, and the elder Shaumburgh was a wealthy and influential man in New Orleans in the early 1830s. In one recommendation, Rep. Philemon Thomas of Louisiana told the Secretary of War that he would "feel very much hurt if I am not at least gratified with the favor of one single appointment from Louisiana," and reminded Cass that he had helped shepherd the bill creating the Regiment of Dragoons through the House of Representatives.<sup>47</sup>

The record shows that Shaumburgh did indeed serve as a second lieutenant of marines, from 14 March 1829 to 20 October 1832.<sup>48</sup> It also shows Shaumburgh was

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<sup>46</sup> 1st Lt. J. W. Shaumburgh to Cass, Washington, 5 March 1833, and enclosed; File S 69 1833, LR 1805 - 1889 (NAMP M567, roll 87); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

<sup>47</sup> Rep. Philemon Thomas to Cass, Washington, 8 March 1833; enclosed with Shaumburgh to Cass, Washington, 5 March 1833; File S 69 1833, LR 1805 - 1889 (NAMP M567, roll 87); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

<sup>48</sup> "Shaumburgh, J. W.," in Hamersly, *Navy and Marine Corps Register*.

court-martialed four times during his service. Among the charges were unbecoming and unofficerlike conduct; disrespectful conduct to a commissioned officer; neglect of duty and disobedience of orders; and mutinous and disrespectful conduct. President Andrew Jackson reviewed his sentence and upheld his dismissal from the Marine Corps.<sup>49</sup>

The elder Shaumburgh was not only a powerful man, but also a friend of the country. The Adjutant General's Office recorded a "Bart. Shaumburgh" as the sergeant major in the First American Regiment. On 4 March 1791, a "Bartholomew Shomburg" was "promoted from Serjeant Major" to ensign, according to the *Senate Executive Journal*. He reached the rank of captain, serving as a deputy quartermaster. In 1802, the Jefferson administration dismissed him because he remained an ardent Federalist. He subsequently moved to the Orleans Territory and served as a justice of the peace, a colonel of militia, and an army contractor. During the War of 1812, Schaumburgh became a deputy quartermaster general, with the rank of major. He left the service for good in 1815.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> "Shaumburgh, James W., Lieutenant of Marines;" File 520 (inclusive), Transcripts and Proceedings of General Courts-Martial and Courts of Inquiry, 1799-1867 [GCM-CI 1799-1867] (NAMP M273, roll 24); Personnel Records; Record Group 125, Records of the Office of the Judge Advocate General (Navy) (RG 125); NAB; and File 565, GCM-CI 1799-1867 (NAMP M273, roll 28); Personnel Records; RG 125; NAB.

<sup>50</sup> Enlisted service: Card 357, "Shaumburgh, Bart.," Index to Compiled Service Records of Volunteer Soldiers Who Served From 1784 to 1811 (NAMP M694, roll 8); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB. Appointed ensign: U.S. *Senate Exec. Journal*. 1791. 2d Cong., spec. sess., 4 March. Dismissal: Theodore Crackel, *Mr. Jefferson's Army: Political and Social Reform of the Military Establishment, 1801-1809* (New York: New York University Press, 1987), 47. Subsequent career: William Skelton, *An American Profession of Arms: The Army Officer Corps, 1784-1861* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1992), 66. Also see "Schaumburgh, Bartholomew," in Heitman, *Historical Register*. This author has not found evidence that the elder Shaumburgh served in the Revolution, but the surname has been spelled "Schaumburg," "Schaumburgh," "Schomburg," "Shaumburg," "Shaumburgh," and "Shomberg" in various sources, so proof may lie in yet another spelling of the name.

The 1830 Census provides more clues about the elder Shaumburgh, although nothing conclusive. This census lists the name of the head of the family, his or her municipality, county/parish, and/or general location in a state, and the number of free white males, free white females, free blacks, and slaves living in a household. The only Shaumburgh living in Louisiana in 1830 was a “B. Shaumburg,” of the “upper suburbs of New Orleans” in Orleans Parish.<sup>51</sup> Shaumburg, as the census taker spelled it, had three white males living in his household, among them one twenty to thirty, and one seventy to eighty. A seventy-year old man in 1830 would have been a teenager when the American Revolution began, and young enough to be a company-grade officer in the 1790s. Similarly, James Shaumburgh had applied unsuccessfully to obtain appointment to West Point in 1826, the year he turned twenty, so he could be the twenty to thirty year old.<sup>52</sup>

The 1830 Census did not ask for occupations. It does indicate, however, that B. Shaumburg owned fourteen slaves at the time of the census. Most slave owners in the South at this time did not own more than one or two slaves, so it is a reasonable speculation that Shaumburg earned a good deal of money over his lifetime and might be James Shaumburgh’s “wealthy and influential” father.

Finally, James Shaumburgh enlisted several politicians on his behalf. Philemon Thomas served in the House from March 1831 to March 1835, representing Louisiana. Thomas moved to Louisiana in 1806, served in the state legislature, and held the rank of

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<sup>51</sup> Fifth Census (1830), Louisiana, Orleans Parish, 110.

<sup>52</sup> Shaumburgh to Clay, New Orleans, 8 April 1826; File 1826, no. 54, CAP 1814-1866 (NAMP M688, roll 41); USMA; RG 94; NAB.



major general of militia during the War of 1812.<sup>53</sup> Edward Douglass White moved to Louisiana as a boy and began practicing law there in 1815. He served as a representative from Louisiana from March 1829 to November 1834, governor from 1834 to 1838, and again in Congress from March 1839 to March 1843.<sup>54</sup> An “A. Ward” who wrote to Cass on Shaumburgh’s behalf may have been Aaron Ward, a Jacksonian representative from New York for twelve of the eighteen years between 1825 and 1843.<sup>55</sup>

Volunteers often obtained state commissions through political influence, so it is not surprising that Shaumburgh enlisted politicians from Louisiana for help. Nor is it surprising that Representative Thomas felt he deserved special consideration in exchange for supporting the dragoon bill. Thomas’ letter is not proof that Cass appointed Shaumburgh to settle a possible political debt to Thomas, but it does demonstrate Jacksonian-era thinking on politics and volunteer officer commissions.

Shaumburgh’s application is typical of the volunteer ethos in four ways. By speaking of his previous service, it establishes him as a good citizen. In mentioning his dismissal from the service, it reflects distrust of the regular military establishment (never mind that Shaumburgh had been a part of that a few months previous). It references an elder family member who willingly served the country in its hour of need, much as Shaumburgh wished to do. By mustering congressional support for his desires, his application accurately portrays the role of politics in volunteer appointments.

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<sup>53</sup> “Thomas, Philemon (1763-1847),” *Biographical Directory of the U. S. Congress, 1774-Present*, <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=T000181>, accessed 30 March 2011.

<sup>54</sup> “White, Edward Douglass (1795-1847),” *Biographical Directory of the U. S. Congress, 1774-Present*, <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=W000365>, accessed 30 March 2011.

<sup>55</sup> “Ward, Aaron (1790-1867),” *Biographical Dictionary of the U. S. Congress, 1774-Present*, <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=W000125>, accessed 30 March 2011.

Because of Shaumburgh's service in the Marine Corps, he joined the Battalion of Mounted Rangers much later than most of its lieutenants, in March 1833.<sup>56</sup> This explains why he included no testimonials about his service in a mounted ranger company in his application to join the Regiment of Dragoons. Other applicants did so. When Matthew Duncan applied for a regular captaincy, he received the help of Thomas Bryant, an assistant surgeon stationed at Fort Leavenworth. Bryant wrote Cass that Duncan and his officers kept the rangers in the latter's company in an excellent state of discipline.<sup>57</sup> Duncan pointed out his political connections, which included the governor of Illinois; his brother, a sitting member of the U. S. House; and Rep. Richard M. Johnson of Kentucky, Chairman of the House Committee on Military Affairs, a War of 1812 volunteer who reputedly killed the Indian warrior Tecumseh, and Duncan's lifelong friend. Finally, Duncan found his ability to recruit his ranger company "afforded the best evidence of my popularity as a soldier," a comment that would have enraged Kearny, if he had read it.<sup>58</sup>

When James W. Hamilton applied for the dragoons, he obtained recommendations from two prominent men. John O'Fallon, a prominent St. Louis businessman, and William H. Ashley, a founder of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company as well as a U.S. representative from Missouri, endorsed Hamilton's application. Hamilton

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<sup>56</sup> As was customary in both regular and volunteer military units, officers could resign at their pleasure. Some found service with the Mounted Rangers disagreeable, which explains officer vacancies in that unit throughout late 1832 and into 1833.

<sup>57</sup> Thomas Bryant to Cass, Ft. Leavenworth, 2 May 1833; File D 35 1833 (enclosed), LR 1805 - 1889 (NAMP M567, roll 82); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

<sup>58</sup> Capt. Matthew Duncan to Cass, St. Louis, 23 September 1833; File D 100 1833, LR 1805 - 1889 (NAMP M567, roll 82); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

also made reference to his father, a former officer.<sup>59</sup> James Hamilton's application file reveals that he was a troublemaker who saw himself as a victim. He had been a cadet at West Point from 1824 until his dismissal in 1827. He also killed an officer in a duel at Jefferson Barracks. Representative Ashley told Cass that these presumably "produced unfriendly feelings towards him among some of the officers of the Army," but that Hamilton had matured since those days.<sup>60</sup>

The mounted ranger officer applications read like application letters for volunteer appointments. They contained letters of recommendation from politicians or influential people, cited such people as references, suggested that an officer's effectiveness depended on his relationship with his enlisted men, and sometimes tried to take advantage of American society's prevalent anti-regular army bias. Coming from the volunteer tradition, ranger applicants for regular officer appointments naturally would write letters and collect recommendations stressing the qualities that made a "good" volunteer officer. A volunteer officer appointment required political support, regardless of whether "political" meant partisan politics, or support from within the bureaucratic system.

Regular officers, on the other hand, used different people and different evidence to secure appointments in the Regiment of Dragoons. These men served in the regular

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<sup>59</sup> Thomas Hamilton rose from private soldier to the rank of brevet major, leaving the army in 1828; relevant entry in Heitman, *Historical Register*.

<sup>60</sup> Rep. W. H. Ashley to Cass, St. Louis, 17 September 1833; enclosed in J. O'Fallon to Cass, St. Louis, 17 September 1833; File H 175 1833, LR 1805 - 1889 (NAMP M567, roll 84); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB. Ashley made a correct assessment about the bad feelings. Stephen W. Kearny opposed ranger officers generally, but he and Maj. Richard Mason asked Cass not to transfer Hamilton into the dragoons by name; Kearny to Jones, 15 April 1833; File K Unregistered 1833, LR 1805 - 1889 (NAMP M567, roll 85); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

milieu, and received a formal military education. Their letters stressed their soldierly qualities. First Lt. Philip St. George Cooke pointed out that he had served without a furlough since reporting to the Sixth Infantry from West Point. According to Cooke, his regiment had been generally employed on the frontier the entire time.<sup>61</sup> His company of the Sixth Infantry escorted the 1828 Santa Fe caravan. Cooke did not mention this fact in particular, but it is a relevant example of his military experience.

Recommendations for Reuben Holmes, a lieutenant also assigned to the Sixth Infantry, mentioned that he had served on the Western frontier and in Indian country. During the Black Hawk War, Holmes had been on the steamboat *Warrior*, famous for its role in the Battle of Bad Axe.<sup>62</sup> Captain Clifton Wharton, also of the Sixth Infantry, demonstrated “a gallant bearing in battle” during the campaign against the Sac and Fox.<sup>63</sup>

It is a fluke that, of the regular applications for the dragoons still found in the correspondence of the Adjutant General, these three all came from the Sixth Infantry Regiment.<sup>64</sup> It is less of a fluke that they all mention service on the frontier, as the Sixth made its headquarters at Jefferson Barracks. It is decidedly not a fluke that two of these officers, Holmes and Wharton, received recommendations from fellow soldiers. Holmes

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<sup>61</sup> 1st Lt. Philip St. George Cooke to Cass, Jefferson Barracks, 11 February 1833; File C 115 1833, LR 1805 – 1889 (NAMP M567, roll 80); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

<sup>62</sup> Maj. J. H. Hook to Cass, Washington, 28 February 1833; File H 45 1833, LR 1805 – 1889 (NAMP M567, roll 83); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB, and Capt. R. B. Mason to Hook, Washington, 9 February 1833; enclosed in Hook to Cass, Washington, 28 February 1833; File H 45 1833, LR 1805 – 1889 (NAMP M567, roll 83); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

<sup>63</sup> Col. Henry Atkinson to Cass, Jefferson Barracks, 24 January 1833; File W 59 1833, LR 1805 – 1889 (NAMP M567, roll 90); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

<sup>64</sup> Regular officers joined the Regiment of Dragoons from all seven of the army’s infantry regiments. The Second Infantry contributed the most officers, six. Before Thompson B. Wheelock left the army in 1829, he served in the artillery; relevant entries in Heitman, *Historical Register*.

received endorsements from J. H. Hook, a major in the commissary department (Holmes was detached as an assistant commissary officer at Jefferson Barracks), and Richard B. Mason, a captain in the First Infantry and soon to be the dragoons' major. Wharton received an endorsement from Col. Henry Atkinson, who claimed knowledge of Wharton from personal observation. Atkinson commanded the forces employed in the Black Hawk War until superseded by Brig. Gen. Winfield Scott.

Much as volunteer traditions framed volunteer applications for dragoon appointments, the regular officers drew on their experience and tradition in assembling application files. It may seem obvious that they used military officers for references and wanted to demonstrate their qualities as regular officers. But most regular officers still had personal or familial connections to prominent politicians. Many at least retained the contacts they had at the time of their appointment to West Point. It would not have been unusual for Cooke, Holmes, and Wharton to invoke political figures in their desires for transfer. In the forty years between 1821 and the Civil War, officers regularly lobbied the politically influential to help obtain promotions and assignments that circumvented the strict system of promotion by seniority in combat arms.<sup>65</sup> (Lieutenant Eustace Trenor, a regular officer, successfully lobbied Martin Van Buren to aid his transfer.<sup>66</sup>) But clearly

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<sup>65</sup> See Skelton, *American Profession of Arms*, especially 282 – 304. This may seem odd, but this practice is best thought of as bureaucratic politics – trying to advance one's career, having previously gained entry into the profession – instead of partisan politics. Because Congress ultimately confirmed appointments to staff positions like paymaster, or appointments to new combat arms like the dragoons, politicians possessed some influence in regular officer careers.

<sup>66</sup> 1st Lt. Eustace Trenor to Jones, Key West, 14 April 1833; File T 65 1833, LR 1805 – 1889 (NAMP M567, roll 88); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB; and Trenor to Martin Van Buren, the Vice President of the United States, Key West, 18 September 1833; enclosed with Trenor to Jones, Key West, 14 April 1833; File T 65 1833, LR 1805 – 1889 (NAMP M567, roll 88); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

Trenor received the captaincy that Ethan Allen Hitchcock sought. See Grippaldi, "Politics of Appointment," 31 – 32.

these three future dragoons sought brother officers to evaluate their conduct. That suggests they believed their military experience relevant, at least more relevant than politicking. For mounted rangers like Shaumburgh, Duncan, and Hamilton, politics came first and military experience a distant second.

#### The Career Officer and the Development of Military Professionalism

Stephen Watts Kearny spent over thirty years in the United States Army. He accumulated twenty of those years by the time he became the lieutenant colonel of the Regiment of Dragoons. At the time Kearny entered the army, most officers did not serve that long. By 1832, however, Kearny could point to a large pool of regular officers long distinguished in their chosen profession. He carped at passing over such men to award dragoon commissions to volunteer officers who could impede the regiment's efficiency for years.

This represented a fundamental shift in attitude about military careers. From the 1820s onward, regulars expected army officers to pursue the ideal of a career commitment. "Professional officers" who anticipated spending their lives in uniform could not help regarding short-service ex-mounted rangers as unprofessional.

In examining the antebellum officer corps, William B. Skelton used twenty years of service in the regular army as "the minimal definition of a 'lifetime' career commitment." Of the officers on the 1797 army list, he found only 11 percent of company grade officers served that long. Two percent of company grade officers on that list spent thirty or more years in uniform.<sup>67</sup> This is not surprising, given Congress' constant adjustment of the army officer corps in this period. Congress expanded the size

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<sup>67</sup> Skelton, *American Profession of Arms*, 35.

of the corps in 1791-92, 1798, 1808, and during the War of 1812. Congress shrank the officer corps in 1796, 1800, 1802, and after the War of 1812, reducing the corps to its lowest postwar level in 1821. Skelton cited the example of Robert Gray, who received four different appointments and spent approximately eleven of the years between 1799 and 1821 in uniform.<sup>68</sup>

Once Congress stabilized the size of the officer corps in 1821, it made more sense for officers to consider spending a lifetime in uniform. Skelton found that 57 percent of the officers on the *Army Register* of 1830 served at least twenty years. The median career length for that group stood at twenty-two years.<sup>69</sup>

The officers of the Regiment of Dragoons can be split into three distinct groups. Four officers comprised the “Long Service Regulars,” officers who first accepted a regular army commission before June 1821, when Congress fixed the size of the post-War of 1812 officer corps at its lowest level between 1815 and 1832. Thirty-six officers comprised the “West Pointers,” officers who graduated from the U. S. Military Academy between 1822 and 1836. The final fifteen officers made up the “Rangers,” officers who were first appointed to the U. S. Battalion of Mounted Rangers and who did not graduate from West Point.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 182.

<sup>70</sup> In calculating officer career length, I relied on Heitman, *Historical Register*. In the case of James W. Shaumburgh, I also used dates of service listed in Hamersly, *Navy and Marine Corps Register*. Shaumburgh’s service in the Marine Corps (three years, 200 days) is added to his service in the regular army (three years, 323 days).

For mounted ranger officers, I include their service in the U. S. Battalion of Mounted Rangers. Secretary Cass told the ranger captains “the [battalion] is considered permanent, and...the officers will remain in service...till disbanded or discharged” (Cass to Ford and Beekes, 16 June 1832; LS 1800-1889 [NAMP M6, roll 13]; Correspondence; RG 107; NAB). The legislation authorizing the U. S. Regiment of Dragoons clearly states the regiment is “in lieu of the battalion of mounted rangers” (Act of 15 June 1832,

### *Long-Service Regulars*

The long-service regulars comprised a special subset of the officers. All had over ten years' service in the army at the time of their appointment to the Regiment of Dragoons. (See Table 3.1.) As noted, Kearny passed the twenty-year mark in March 1832. Three of the four served more than thirty years, and the fourth served for over twenty-nine years. All died in the regular service. Three died before 1861, when Congress first created a retired list and a pension system for regular officers not hurt or killed in the line of duty.

Table 3.1. Career Details of Long-Service Regulars

Name	Highest Regular Rank Held	Length of Service
Stephen W. Kearny	Brigadier General	36 years, 238 days
Richard B. Mason	Colonel	32 years, 326 days
Edwin V. Sumner	Brigadier General	44 years, 18 days
Clifton Wharton	Lieutenant Colonel	29 years, 258 days
Average Length of Service		35 years, 310 days

*Sources:* Data from relevant entries in Heitman, *Historical Register*, and Ezra J. Warner, *Generals in Blue: Lives of the Union Commanders* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1964).

ch. 131, 4 *Stat.* 533). I do not include service in state volunteer units. Nor do I include service in the so-called "New Establishment" regiments raised during the Mexican War, as the officers and men in those regiments "shall immediately be discharged from the service of the United States at the close of the war with Mexico" (Act of 11 February 1847, ch. 8, 9 *Stat.* 123-6). Officers serving during the Civil War receive credit for time served, so long as they held commissions in the United States regular army.

To calculate averages, I first multiplied each year served by 365.25, the number of days in a solar year, and then added any balance of days (example: 2 years, 349 days = 730.5 + 349 = 1079.5 days). These numbers were summed and then divided by the number of officers. The resulting figure was then converted back into years and days by dividing it by 365.25 for years, and multiplying any fractional amount by 365.25 for days (example: 3209.2 days = 8.7863 years = 8 years + [365.25 X 0.7863 years] = 8 years + 287 days).



Skelton, in researching the officers on the 1830 *Army Register*, found that 38 percent of the officers served at least thirty years, and 16 percent, like General Sumner, served at least forty years in uniform. Skelton also found that these patterns held for officers on the 1860 *Army Register*, although he speculated that, if anything, the number of officers serving over twenty, over thirty, and over forty years would have been higher if the Civil War had not caused a significant portion of the officer corps to resign and fight for the Confederacy.<sup>71</sup> Statistically speaking, then, the long-service regulars were the first career officers of the professionalizing era. Unlike the previous generation of officers, they had the opportunity to serve as long as they wanted, without fear of sudden discharge. With an average length of service of nearly thirty-six years, these men voluntarily committed their lives to soldiering.

#### *Comparing West Pointer Careers to Ranger Officer Careers*

The remaining officers of the Regiment of Dragoons varied more in career length and career outcomes. Some served long enough to retire from the army after the Civil War. Others spent a few years in uniform and then returned to the civilian world. Two were thrown out of the army. Several died in the service, in combat and out.

Roughly one-third of the remaining officers transferred to the dragoons from the Battalion of Mounted Rangers. Two made a career in the army, and others logged more than ten years' service. But comparison with the West Pointers in the regiment reveals the median career length of an ex-ranger was half that of a West Pointer. Nine of the fifteen rangers served less than five years, one-quarter of a lifetime commitment.

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<sup>71</sup> Skelton, *American Profession of Arms*, 181 – 82.

The officers assigned to the Regiment of Dragoons eventually left the regular service in four ways: through death, cashiering, resignation, or retirement.

### *Death*

Thirteen of the regiment's thirty-six USMA graduates, or 36 percent, died in the regular service. (See Table 3.2.) Five died during the period under examination, 1833 – 1836. None of them died in combat while serving with the Regiment of Dragoons, although two (James F. Izard and Thompson B. Wheelock) died while detached in Florida during the Second Seminole War. Four others (James Allen, John H. K. Burgwin, Abraham Johnston, and Eustace Trenor) died during the Mexican War. Only Eustace Trenor, class of 1822, served long enough as a regular to qualify as a career officer.

Three ranger officers died on duty, or 20 percent. (See Table 3.3.) Again, none died in combat with the dragoons in this period. Second Lt. William Bradford was the first officer of the regiment to die, when his pistol discharged in a freak accident.

Of the sixteen officers who died in the regular service, only one, Eustace Trenor, died after serving twenty years. Two others, James Allen and John H. K. Burgwin, served between fifteen and twenty years. Five served between ten and fifteen years, and another five served between five and ten years. In this period, the law allowed graduates of West Point to resign their commissions five years after they entered the academy. Cadets who graduated in four years needed to serve only one year as a lieutenant. One could make a claim that any officer serving at least five years had intentions of making the military his career. Under that premise, nine (of thirteen) West Pointers and two (of three) Rangers in this category might have considered making the army a career.

Table 3.2. “West Pointer” Dragoon Officers Who Died in the Regular Service

Name	Date of Death	Length of Service
Allen, James	23 August 1846	17 years, 44 days
Bowman, James	21 July 1839	7 years, 20 days
Burgwin, J. H. K.	7 February 1847	16 years, 201 days
Hanly, John H.	26 May 1836	0 years, 330 days
Holmes, Reuben	4 November 1833	10 years, 126 days
Izard, James F.	5 March 1836	7 years, 248 days
Johnston, A. R.	6 December 1846	11 years, 158 days
McClure, George W.	21 July 1834	4 years, 20 days
McCrate, Thomas	18 September 1845	9 years, 79 days
Simonton, Isaac P.	21 February 1842	14 years, 235 days
Trenor, Eustace	16 February 1847	24 years, 240 days
Ury, Asbury	13 April 1838	5 years, 286 days
Wheelock, Thompson	15 June 1836	9 years, 268 days

*Source:* Data from relevant entries in Heitman, *Historical Register*.

Table 3.3. “Ranger” Dragoon Officers Who Died in the Regular Service

Name	Date of Death	Length of Service
Bradford, William	17 March 1834	1 year, 31 days
Moore, Benjamin D.	6 December 1846	14 years, 30 days
Terrett, Burdett	17 March 1845	11 years, 250 days

*Source:* Data from relevant entries in Heitman, *Historical Register*.

Of course, that is rank speculation. It is difficult to draw assumptions about career intent solely from time served. One might guess that James Allen or John H. K. Burgwin wanted to make the military their life, but it would only be a guess. Speculation on John Hanly’s military career beyond his first year is useless.

#### *Cashiering*

Two officers, one West Pointer and one Ranger, left the service because courts martial cashiered them. Philip R. Thompson, a member of the USMA class of 1835, served his entire career in the regiment. He rose to be a captain and won the brevet rank of major for his Mexican War service. He was cashiered on 4 September 1855 for appearing as a witness at a court-martial while drunk.<sup>72</sup> Thompson qualifies as a career officer, having served for twenty years and sixty-five days at that point.

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<sup>72</sup> “Thompson, Philip R.,” in George W. Cullum, ed., *Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the U. S. Military Academy at West Point, from its Establishment, March 16, 1802, to the Army Re-organization of 1866-67*, vol. 1: 1802-1840 (New York: Van Nostrand, 1868).

First Lt. James W. Hamilton, the ex-mounted ranger officer, was cashiered on 15 August 1835. The court found Hamilton guilty of drawing between himself, 1st Lt. Thomas Swords, and 1st Lt. Thompson B. Wheelock, to decide who would challenge Capt. Matthew Duncan to a duel. The court also found Hamilton guilty of carrying Swords' challenge to Captain Duncan. These charges violated the Twenty-Sixth Article of War. President Jackson remarked in confirming the sentence that according to the trial record Captain Duncan used language "so derogatory to the character of an officer and gentleman" that Jackson ordered Duncan placed under arrest to be tried. This mitigating circumstance may help explain why Hamilton received an appointment to the new Second Regiment of Dragoons in June 1836. In any case, Hamilton died on duty with the Second Dragoons in Florida in November 1837, having served for four years, 126 days.<sup>73</sup>

### *Resignation*

Congress authorized a retired list on 3 August 1861.<sup>74</sup> Before this act, officers could leave the service voluntarily only by resigning. Twenty-seven of the original dragoon officers did so. Resignations happened for any number of personal reasons. John H. Martindale and Jones M. Withers resigned within their first year to study law. Lloyd Tilghman became a railroad engineer in the southern United States. Nathan Boone resigned in 1853, as he no longer could perform the physical activities of duty. At the time, he was seventy-two years old.<sup>75</sup> Many of these men wore a uniform at a later date.

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<sup>73</sup> The army announced the verdict of Hamilton's trial in General Order 41, 6 July 1835, General Orders and Circulars of the War Department and Headquarters of the Army, 1809-1860 (NAMP M1094, roll 4); Orders, Muster Rolls, and Returns; RG 94; NAB.

<sup>74</sup> Act of 3 August 1861, ch. 42, 12 *Stat.* 289.

<sup>75</sup> For Martindale, see "John H. Martindale" in Warner, *Generals in Blue*, 312; for Withers and Tilghman, see their respective entries in Ezra Warner, ed., *Generals in Gray: Lives of the Confederate*

Martindale became a Union general during the Civil War, while Withers and Tilghman fought for the Confederacy. But their regular military careers ended, for the most part, in their youth.

Seventeen West Pointers resigned from the service. (See Table 3.4.) Of these men, only Lucius Northrop can be considered a career officer (although William Eustis comes close). Northrop saved his army career thanks to a technicality. He hurt his leg while serving as a dragoon lieutenant, and owed his continuing on the active list largely to the post-Mexican War political influence of his friend, Jefferson Davis. Removing Northrop from the list of regulars gives an average of seven years, 147 days.

Ten rangers resigned from the service. (See Table 3.5.) Some of them went on to varying degrees of fame in nineteenth century America. Henry Dodge became the first governor of Wisconsin Territory, and later represented that state in the U.S. Senate.<sup>76</sup> Charles F. M. Noland became an important American literary figure through his contributions to the *Spirit of the Times* magazine.<sup>77</sup> James Clyman, a frontiersman before joining the mounted rangers, went back to being a mountain man.<sup>78</sup> Nathan Boone, on the other hand, finished out a military career he began at an age when most men would have left the service.

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*Commanders* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1959). The most recent biography of Nathan Boone is R. Douglas Hurt, *Nathan Boone and the American Frontier* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1998).

<sup>76</sup> “Dodge, Henry (1782-1867),” *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, 1774-Present*, <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=D000396>, accessed 30 March 2011.

<sup>77</sup> For one analysis of Noland’s writings, see Lorne Fienberg, “Colonel Noland of the *Spirit*: The Voices of a Gentleman in Southwest Humor,” *American Literature* 53 (May 1981): 232-45.

<sup>78</sup> Clyman’s autobiography, *James Clyman, Frontiersman: The Adventures of a Trapper and Covered-Wagon Emigrant, as Told in His Own Reminiscences and Diaries*, ed. Charles L. Camp (Portland, Oregon: Champoeg Press, 1960) makes little mention of his service with the Regiment of Dragoons.

Table 3.4. “West Pointer” Dragoon Officers Who Resigned from the Regular Service

Name	Date of Resignation	Length of Service
Davis, Jefferson	30 June 1835	6 years, 364 days
Edwards, Albert G.	2 May 1835	2 years, 306 days
Eustis, William	4 August 1849	19 years, 34 days
Kingsbury, Gaines P.	15 August 1836	4 years, 45 days
Lea, Albert M.	31 May 1836	4 years, 324 days
Lupton, Lancaster P.	31 March 1836	6 years, 273 days
Macomb, Alexander	31 January 1841	5 years, 241 days
Martindale, John H.	10 March 1836	0 years, 262 days
Moorhead, Henry C.	30 September 1836	0 years, 91 days
Northrop, Lucius	8 January 1861	29 years, 191 days
Perkins, David	2 February 1839	11 years, 216 days
Stockton, Richard G.	30 April 1838	1 year, 303 days
Tilghman, Lloyd	30 September 1836	0 years, 91 days
Turner, Henry S.	21 July 1848	14 years, 20 days
Van Buren, Abraham	1 June 1854 <sup>a</sup>	17 years, 220 days
Van Derveer, John S.	31 December 1840	10 years, 183 days
Withers, Jones M.	5 December 1835	0 years, 157 days
Average Length of Service		8 years, 257 days

a – Abraham Van Buren actually resigned twice. He left the dragoons (and army) on 3 March 1837, one day before his father became President of the United States. He became a paymaster in the regular service on 26 June 1846 and won the brevet rank of lieutenant colonel during the Mexican War.

Source: Data from relevant entries in Heitman, *Historical Register*.

Table 3.5. “Ranger” Dragoon Officers Who Resigned from the Regular Service

Name	Date of Resignation	Length of Service
Bean, Jesse	31 May 1835	2 years, 349 days
Boone, Nathan	15 July 1853	21 years, 30 days
Browne, Jesse	30 June 1837	5 years, 14 days
Clyman, James	31 May 1834	1 year, 312 days
Dodge, Henry	4 July 1836	4 years, 13 days
Duncan, Matthew	15 January 1837	4 years, 102 days
Ford, Lemuel	31 July 1837	4 years, 316 days
Noland, Charles F. M.	1 March 1836	2 years, 260 days
Shaumburgh, James	31 July 1836 <sup>b</sup>	7 years, 158 days
Watson, John L.	30 June 1835	2 years, 117 days
Average Length of Service		5 years, 250 days

b – James Shaumburgh was reinstated on 29 July 1844 and dropped from the army list on 24 May 1845.

*Sources:* Data from Hamersly, *Navy and Marine Corps Register*; Heitman, *Historical Register*.



### *Retirement*

Under the act of 3 August 1861, any officer who had served for forty years could apply for retirement.<sup>79</sup> An act of 1862 allowed the President to retire any officer who had been on the *Army Register* for forty-five years, or who was of sixty-two years of age.<sup>80</sup> Five West Point graduates retired under the various provisions of these acts. (See Table 3.6.)

Table 3.6. “West Pointer” Dragoon Officers Who Retired from the Regular Service

Name	Highest Regular Rank Held	Length of Career
Cooke, Philip St. George	Brigadier General	46 years, 121 days
Grier, William	Colonel	35 years, 168 days
Hunter, David	Colonel	38 years, 263 days
Roberts, Benjamin S.	Lieutenant Colonel	28 years, 52 days
Swords, Thomas	Colonel	39 years, 37 days
Average Length of Service		37 years, 241 days

*Sources:* Data from relevant entries in Heitman, *Historical Register*, and Warner, *Generals in Blue*.

Of the mounted ranger officers, only Enoch Steen retired from the service. He retired in September 1863 after thirty-one years and sixty-nine days in uniform. Unlike the “West Pointer” dragoon officers, Steen did not become a regular general, a general of

<sup>79</sup> Act of 3 August 1861, ch. 42, 12 *Stat.* 289.

<sup>80</sup> Act of 17 July 1862, ch. 200, 12 *Stat.* 596.

volunteers, or a general by brevet. At the time of his retirement, he held the rank of lieutenant colonel in the Second Cavalry Regiment.

All six of these retirees were career officers. All of them entered the army at the lowest grade (brevet second lieutenant or second lieutenant) near the beginning of the period when a lifetime career in the military became possible. Both David Hunter and Benjamin Roberts tried their hands at civilian life, only to rejoin the army. With the desire to be career military officers, and the luck of avoiding death by disease or combat over many years, these six followed in the footsteps of the long-service regulars.

The outcomes of the subsets of the officers of the Regiment of Dragoons compare, as represented in Table 3.7.

Table 3.7. Outcomes of Dragoon Officers in the Regular Service

	Long-Service	West Pointers	Rangers	Total
Death	4	13	3	20
Cashiering	0	1	1	2
Resignation	0	17	10	27
Retirement	0	5	1	6
Totals	4	36	15	55

*Source:* Data from relevant entries in Heitman, *Historical Register*.

Slightly less than half of the West Pointers resigned from the service. Only Lucius Northrop, such as his career was, qualifies as a career officer from that group. Two-thirds

of the mounted ranger officers resigned, with only Nathan Boone qualifying as a career officer.

When Henry Dodge resigned on 4 July 1836, he helped to close the first era of the Regiment of Dragoons. Most of his fellow mounted ranger officers followed him out of the service, in short order. The median career length for mounted rangers voluntarily leaving the regular service was almost exactly half that of West Pointers voluntarily leaving the service. (See Table 3.8.) Two-thirds of the Rangers served less than five years, compared to one-third of the West Pointers. Twenty-seven percent of West Pointers pursued a career, compared to 18 percent of Rangers. But while the service figures for West Pointers gradually decline through the career length ranges, there is a large gap between the mounted rangers who made the regular army a career, and the eighty-two percent who did not. If pursuing a twenty-year career is a standard for professionalism in this period, then as a group the Ranger officers were less professional than their West Pointer and Long-Service Regular counterparts.

Table 3.8. Career Lengths of “West Pointer” and “Ranger” Dragoon Officers who Resigned or Retired

	West Pointer (n=22)	Ranger (n=11)
Career <5 years	8 (36.4%)	7 (63.6%)
Career 5 – 10 years	3 (13.6%)	2 (18.2%)
Career 10 – 15 years	3 (13.6%)	0 (0.00%)
Career 15 – 20 years	2 (9.09%)	0 (0.00%)
Career 20 – 30 years	2 (9.09%)	1 (9.09%)
Career 30 – 40 years	3 (13.6%)	1 (9.09%)
Career > 40 years	1 (4.55%)	0 (0.00%)
Median Career	8 years, 274 days	4 years, 102 days

*Sources:* Data from relevant entries in Hamersly, *Navy and Marine Corps Register*, and Heitman, *Historical Register*.

### Conclusion

In the end, Colonel Kearny proved mistaken when he believed former mounted rangers would impede the Regiment of Dragoons for years. Most left the regular service before their regular counterparts. Kearny’s error is the more surprising, given his accurate observations about the desirability of a formal military education and relevant military experience. By the 1830s, regular officers developed the concept of military professionalism to include a formal military education, the seeming exclusion of politics from the entry process, and spending a lifetime in uniform. These developing standards suggest contemporary officers were more professional than those of only a generation

earlier. The standards also suggest that, compared to the West Point graduates in the Regiment of Dragoons, the ex-mounted ranger officers looked unprofessional.

CHAPTER 4  
“HEALTHY, ACTIVE, RESPONSIBLE MEN OF THE COUNTRY”: THE ENLISTED  
MEN OF THE REGIMENT OF DRAGOONS, 1833 - 1836

In December 1833, Pvt. Thomas A. Russell of Company A, U. S. Dragoons, wrote Rep. John Blair, Jacksonian of Tennessee, with “shame and a sense of degradation.” Russell complained that a recruiting sergeant had deceived him. Russell claimed he was told that in the winter, he would have nothing better to do with his time than read the \$15,000 worth of books in the Jefferson Barracks post library. The sergeant also allegedly pledged “we would not be subject to the strict laws which in general govern the army.” Once Russell enlisted, however, officers ordered him to build stables. Instead of the army issuing clothing and rations, he had to buy his own clothes and food. Instead of living in comfortable quarters, he spent the winter in a tent at a makeshift cantonment in present-day Oklahoma. Russell pled for Blair to secure his discharge.<sup>1</sup>

Private Russell was unusual. Most soldiers did not write their congressmen to complain about their lives. But Russell was unusual in other ways as well. He was twenty-two when he enlisted. The average soldier was nearly twenty-six. Russell claimed to be a farmer, but only 10 percent of infantry or artillerymen did so. Russell was born in Tennessee. At the time, only 3 percent of soldiers claimed to have been born in the states south of the Ohio River and west of the Appalachian Mountains.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Pvt. T. A. Russell to Rep. John Blair, Camp Jackson, 22 December 1833; filed with Col. Henry Dodge to Col. Roger Jones, the Adjutant General of the Army, Camp Jackson, 5 April 1834; File D 47 1834, Letters Received, 1805 – 1889, Main Series (LR 1805 – 1889) (National Archives Microfilm Publication [NAMP] M567, roll 84); Correspondence, 1800 – 1917 (Correspondence); Record Group 94, Records of the Adjutant General’s Office, 1780s – 1917 (RG 94); National Archives Building, Washington, D.C. (NAB).

<sup>2</sup> “Russell, Thomas Augustus,” Entry S-92-1833, Register of Enlistments in the U.S. Army, 1798-1914 (Register of Enlistments) (NAMP M233, roll 19); Records Relating to Regular Army Personnel (Regular Army Personnel); RG 94; NAB.

Most significantly, Russell was not an ordinary sort of soldier, but instead a dragoon. The army hoped to enlist in the new regiment mentally and physically fit men who considered military service a duty of citizenship. To find these men, recruiting officers scoured the country, including rural and western areas. They told potential recruits a compelling story of life in the dragoons: one of campaigning rather than labor, the exploration of distant lands, better pay than ordinary soldiers, and the absence of strict discipline.

Numerous studies exist on American men of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries who enlisted in wartime.<sup>3</sup> Fewer scholars have examined the peacetime regular army.<sup>4</sup> At present, no scholar has focused his or her efforts on those men joining the army in the early 1830s. This is not, however, due to a lack of available evidence. Two

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<sup>3</sup> Studies published in the last twenty-five years include, for the French and Indian War: R. S. Stephenson, "Pennsylvania Provincial Soldiers in the Seven Years' War," *Pennsylvania History* 62 (April 1995): 196-212; Matthew C. Ward, "An Army of Servants: The Pennsylvanian Regiment During the Seven Years' War," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 119 (January/April 1995): 75-93; and John Ferling, "Soldiers for Virginia: Who Served in the French and Indian War?" *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 94 (July 1986): 307-28. For the American Revolution: James Scudieri, "The Continentals: A Comparative Analysis of a Late Eighteenth-Century Standing Army, 1775-1783," (Ph.D. diss., City University of New York, 1993); older studies include Mark Edward Lender, "The Social Structure of the New Jersey Brigade: The Continental Line as an American Brigade," in Peter Karsten, ed., *The Military in America: From the Colonial Era to the Present* (New York: Free Press, 1980), 27-44, and Edward C. Papenfuse and Gregory A. Stiverson, "General Smallwood's Recruits: The Peacetime Career of the Revolutionary War Private," *William and Mary Quarterly* 30 (January 1973): 117-32. For the War of 1812, see J. C. A. Stagg, "Enlisted Men in the United States Army, 1812-1815," *WMQ* 43 (October 1986): 615-45.

<sup>4</sup> Edward M. Coffman discusses regular enlisted men at some length in *The Old Army: A Portrait of the American Army in Peacetime, 1784 - 1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 14 - 24 and 137 - 211. Also see William B. Skelton, "The Confederation's Regulars: A Social Profile of Enlisted Service in America's First Standing Army," *WMQ* 46 (October 1989): 770-85, and Stagg, "Soldiers in Peace and War: Comparative Perspectives on the Recruitment of the United States Army, 1802-1815," *WMQ* 57 (January 2000): 79-120. Two wide-ranging studies of American enlisted men between the War of 1812 and the Civil War are Dale Steinhauer, "'Sogers': Enlisted Men of the U.S. Army, 1815-1860" (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina, 1992) and Robert P. Wettemann, Jr., "The Enlisted Soldiers of the United States Army: A Study of the Seventh Regiment, U.S. Infantry, 1815-1860" (Master's thesis, Texas A&M University, 1995).

volumes of the Register of Enlistments of the U.S. Army, 1798-1914, contain the names of 7,309 men who enlisted for three years between March 1833 and February 1836.<sup>5</sup>

The Register of Enlistments reveals that the army attracted a different type of man for the dragoons. Dragoon recruits, compared to their infantry and artillery counterparts, tended to be younger, to have been born in all regions of the country, and to have had a farm or skilled trade in civilian life. They also differed from typical enlisted men, in that they held dear what they considered to be the rights and privileges of citizenship. When dragoons felt the army reneged on its recruiting promises, some of the men vigorously protested. Others expressed their dissatisfaction by deserting.

#### The Peacetime Army and the Virtuous Citizen

The quality of recruits enlisting during Andrew Jackson's presidency dissatisfied the army. Its leaders sought soldiers from a higher social, economic, and, indeed, moral class. They hoped enlistees motivated by republican ideology would be less prone to drunkenness, severe indiscipline, and desertion.

Between the War of 1812 and the Mexican War, the army found it difficult to enlist good soldiers in peacetime. The typical peacetime enlistee joined the army in a large city. One visitor to Fort Crawford, Michigan Territory, in 1833 described the

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<sup>5</sup> These volumes are reproduced on Register of Enlistments (NAMP M233, rolls 19 and 20); Regular Army Personnel; RG 94; NAB. Each recruit provided his name, age and physical description, the town/county and state/country of birth, occupation, and the date/place of enlistment. Most entries also contain the unit (if any) in which the recruit served and a brief service history. Regrettably, not every recruit has a complete record listed in the enlistment registers. Of important data, the most common omissions are occupation (1.97 percent), service history (1.82 percent), age (1.60 percent), and place of birth (1.60 percent).

The period March 1833-February 1836 was chosen for two reasons. By act of 2 March 1833, ch. 68, 4 *Statutes at Large* 647, Congress changed the term of enlistment from five years to three. Congress also established the Regiment of Dragoons on the same day (Act of 2 March 1833, ch. 76, 4 *Stat. at Large* 652). Thus the period covers the entire term of the earliest men who joined the regiment.



soldiers as a “rag-tag-and-bob-tail herd. . . . either of the scum of the population of the older States, or of the worthless German, English, or Irish emigrants.”<sup>6</sup> Instead of military drill, soldiers often performed construction or maintenance tasks. They earned less for those labors than similarly employed civilians. The soldier suffered under strict military discipline, which many men in the Jacksonian era found degrading. The free daily whiskey ration attracted alcoholics. Approximately one-fifth of the army deserted every year.

The army could only enlist free white males, but it did not want just any free white male. Foreigners were suspect because they were not citizens. Alcoholics and deserters were suspect because they could not practice the virtuous self control to refrain from drinking or running away. The ideal recruit was a man who embraced military service as a demonstration of citizenship. In short, the army wanted men who were citizen soldiers in time of war, to enlist in a time of peace.<sup>7</sup>

Citizen soldiers’ virtue allowed them to temporarily surrender some rights for the sake of military order and discipline.<sup>8</sup> (Tyrants could destroy a republic on the battlefield as well as on the public square.) The citizen soldier held onto and fiercely defended his other rights. “Enlistment,” as Ricardo Herrera notes, “was a contractual agreement freely

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<sup>6</sup> Charles J. Latrobe, *The Rambler in North America 1832-1833*, 2 vols. (London: R. B. Seeley and W. Burnside, 1836), II: 318-19; “American Notes: Travels in America, 1750-1920,” [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/lhbtn:@field\(DOCID+@lit\(lhbtn6855bdiv19\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/lhbtn:@field(DOCID+@lit(lhbtn6855bdiv19))), accessed 30 March 2011.

Latrobe was not unusual in this respect. See Francis Paul Prucha, “The United States Army as Viewed by British Travelers, 1825-1860,” *Military Affairs* 17 (Autumn 1953): 113-24 for other comments on American enlisted men.

<sup>7</sup> See the discussion on citizen-soldiers’ motivation in chapter one.

<sup>8</sup> Ricardo A. Herrera, “Self-Governance and the American Citizen as Soldier, 1775-1861,” *Journal of Military History* 65 (January 2001): 28.

entered into by soldiers and the government.”<sup>9</sup> If the government failed to provide promised food, clothing, equipment, or if the soldiers felt the government lied to them, then soldiers held the government in default of contract. Petitions to senior officials remained a popular way for soldiers to air grievances.<sup>10</sup> If the petitions failed, then the citizen soldiers believed they had the right to withhold their labor.

Large numbers of soldiers deserted, permanently withholding their labor from the government. To many soldiers, the military justice system seemed arbitrary and inconsistent. Army regulations sometimes lacked clearly defined punishments. As a result, punishments often varied widely for the same crime. These included technically illegal punishments, such as flogging.<sup>11</sup> The military justice system flagrantly offended a citizen’s sense of equality. As Mark Vargas has written, “No self-respecting citizen of the republic willingly accepted such abuse, and there was little recourse other than running away.”<sup>12</sup>

Senior army officers served in the War of 1812, and must have remembered that citizen soldiers could be prickly and recalcitrant at times. But with training and experience, citizen soldiers made good soldiers. The army also hoped virtuous citizens would lessen drunkenness and indiscipline in the ranks. Recruiting officers, given the opportunity to fill the entire Regiment of Dragoons with these idealized enlistees, worked hard to make the army sound as attractive as possible.

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>11</sup> Mark A. Vargas, “The Military Justice System and the Use of Illegal Punishments as Causes of Desertion in the U.S. Army, 1821-1835,” *JMH* 55 (January 1991): 2-3.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 4.

## Recruiting the Regiment of Dragoons

Famed army officer and writer Philip St. George Cooke was a twenty-four-year-old lieutenant when the army assigned him to recruiting duty for the new dragoons. Posted to Tennessee, he believed the prospect of exploring the Indian Country excited “the enterprising and roving disposition of many fine young men, in that military State.”<sup>13</sup> But Cooke was also an 1827 graduate of West Point and an officer of six years’ service. His martial experience led him to believe that ideal dragoon recruits would not enlist if they believed dragoons would be required to perform the less glamorous duties that ordinary soldiers performed on a regular basis.<sup>14</sup>

To encourage virtuous citizens to enlist, the Regiment of Dragoons recruited most of its initial complement in rural and western areas. Recruiting officers told recruits grand tales of adventure, leisure time, and relative comfort. These methods created a 600-strong unit by the summer of 1834. Seeking replacements in the fall and winter of 1834/1835, the army changed its geographic recruiting focus but continued to seek virtuous citizens.

The regular army traditionally enlisted men in two ways. Recruits could join a unit by enlisting directly at that unit’s post. Recruiting officers also established recruiting stations. Most of these were in “urban places,” defined by the U.S. Census Bureau as any city or town with over 2,500 people. In the years 1830 to 1832, for example, the War Department reported 2,728 men enlisting at recruiting stations.<sup>15</sup> Almost 95 percent,

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<sup>13</sup> Philip St. George Cooke, *Scenes and Adventures in the Army; or, Romance of Military Life* (Philadelphia: Lindsay & Blakiston, 1857; reprint edition New York: Arno Press, 1973), 197-98.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 224.

<sup>15</sup> Data from "Statement showing the whole number of recruits enlisted in the army from January 1 to September 30, 1830," 20 November 1830, *American State Papers: Military Affairs (ASP:MA)* 4:593; "Statement showing the whole number of recruits enlisted in the army from the 1st of January to the 30th of

2,582 recruits, joined up at urban places in the eastern part of the country.<sup>16</sup> Stations across the Mid-Atlantic region furnished 2,029 recruits, or 74 percent. Stations in New England provided another 447, or 16 percent.

The army wanted to fill the Dragoon Regiment with men who could withstand the rigors of long horseback patrols on the frontier. Clearly it also wanted to exclude foreigners and men without better prospects of employment. The army ordered Lt. Col. Stephen Watts Kearny to recruit dragoons who were “healthy, active, responsible men of the Country, being native Citizens of the United States” between the ages of twenty and thirty five.<sup>17</sup>

Kearny received permission to recruit where he saw fit. On the whole, his recruiters focus their attention on the rural and western regions of the country. (See Table 4.1.) Their efforts provided the regiment with a large element of country boys (48

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September, 1831, according to the latest returns," 20 November 1831, *ASP:MA* 4:726; "Statement showing the whole number of recruits enlisted in the army from the 1st of January to the 30th of September, 1832, according to the latest returns," 1 November 1832, *ASP:MA* 5:40. These reports omit the last three months of each year. The three-year total figure is probably around 3,600.

<sup>16</sup> Here and throughout, I use the following definitions:

East: New England, Mid-Atlantic, and South Atlantic regions, plus Florida Territory and the District of Columbia; West: Northwest and Southwest Regions, plus Arkansas, Michigan, and Unorganized Territories. New England: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont; Mid-Atlantic: New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania; South Atlantic: Delaware, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia; Northwest: Illinois, Indiana, Ohio; Southwest: Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, and Tennessee.

For the Census Bureau's definition of "urban place," see "Urban and Urban Place," <http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0027.html#urban>, accessed 30 March 2011. "Rural" is any place not classified as urban. In 1830, there were ninety urban places in the United States; "Population of the 90 Urban Places: 1830," <http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0027/tab06.txt>, accessed 5 June 2011.

<sup>17</sup> General Order 15, 11 March 1833, General Orders and Circulars of the War Department and Headquarters of the Army, 1809-1860 (GO-C) (NAMP M1094, roll 3); Orders, Muster Rolls, and Returns (Orders); RG 94; NAB.

percent). Overall, the rank-and-file had a distinctly western profile (nearly 64 percent). Only 21 percent of the initial set of dragoons enlisted in eastern urban places.

Table 4.1. Dragoons' Places of Enlistment in 1833-1834, by Region and Population

	Western U.S. (%)	Eastern U.S. (%)	Total (%)
Urban Places (%)	254 (30.98)	174 (21.22)	428 (52.20)
Rural Places (%)	269 (32.80)	123 (15.00)	392 (47.80)
Total (%)	523 (63.78)	292 (36.22)	820 (100.00)

Table 1 excludes four men whose exact place of enlistment could not be determined.

The 523 dragoons enlisting in the western U.S. is a conservative figure. Arguably, in this period the Ohio Valley towns of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (32 men); and Wheeling (31), Parkersburg (15), and Clarksburg (5), Virginia, can be considered "western," even if they are located in "eastern" states. Shifting these men would make 606 of 820 dragoons, or 73.90 percent, western enlistees.

*Source:* Register of Enlistments (NAMP M233, roll 19), Regular Army Personnel, RG 94, NAB.

The army tried to recruit each of the ten companies (at full strength, 71 non-commissioned officers and men) in distinct regions of the country. (See Table 4.2.) Companies A and K came from Tennessee. Company B's officers recruited in upstate New York, while the men of Company E enlisted in New York City. The Ohio River valley proved a fertile source of recruits: Companies C (Kentucky), D (Ohio), G (Indiana), and I (southeastern Ohio / northwestern Virginia) all recruited along the river.

In two cases, however, recruiting difficulties forced the regiment to put men from different regions in the same company. Company F had twenty-three men enlist in New England, seventeen men enlist in New York State, and nineteen enlist at Louisville. Company H raised thirty-seven men in Missouri and another thirty-two at Pittsburgh.

Table 4.2. Dragoons' Places of Enlistment in 1833-1834

Place	Recruits	Place	Recruits
Louisville, Kentucky	111	Canandaigua, New York	22
New York, New York	71	Jefferson Barracks	19
Jonesborough, Tennessee	52	Plattsburgh, New York	18
Cincinnati, Ohio	51	Indianapolis, Indiana	17
Nashville, Tennessee	39	Zanesville, Ohio	16
Utica, New York	33	Charlestown, Indiana	15
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania	32	Parkersburg, Virginia	15
Dayton, Ohio	31	Elizabethton, Tennessee	12
Wheeling, Virginia	31	Brownville, New York	10
New Albany, Indiana	30	Sub-total	680
Boston, Massachusetts	28		
Franklin, Missouri	27	All others	140
		<b>Total</b>	<b>820</b>

Table 4.2 excludes four men whose exact place of enlistment could not be determined.

*Source:* Register of Enlistments (NAMP M233, roll 19), Regular Army Personnel, RG 94, NAB.

This newspaper notice typifies the dragoon officers' recruiting appeal:

**Native Citizens**

Of the United States, active, young, and good horsemen, of good moral character, are WANTED for a Company of UNITED STATES DRAGOONS, to serve in the western country.

The men are to be enlisted for three years. They will be furnished by the Government with clothing, rations, quarters, arms, equipments, horses, medicine, and medical attendance in case of sickness.<sup>18</sup>

Privates would earn \$8 a month. At the high end of the pay scale, the sergeant major, the quartermaster sergeant, the chief musician, and two chief buglers earned \$16 a month.<sup>19</sup> These rates did not seriously compete with civilian wages. In the early 1830s, a farm laborer, with board, could make almost \$9 a month; a common laborer, with board, earned over \$16. Skilled workers could make even more money. A blacksmith, for example, could earn over \$28 a month.<sup>20</sup> The dragoons had to offer their enlistees something beyond a steady job.

For many recruits, the possibility of adventure may have been that something extra. One letter appearing in the *New Hampshire Patriot and State Gazette* promised summer expeditions passing through lands “full of game of every sort, interspersed with prairie and wood land, the latter free from underbrush, so it may be passed without

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<sup>18</sup> *New Hampshire (Concord) Patriot & State Gazette*, 9 September 1833, 1.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* See also Maj. Gen. Alexander Macomb, the Commanding General, to Lewis Cass, the Secretary of War, Washington, 15 March 1833; Letters Sent, 1828-46, 1849-69, 1873-1903 (NAMP M857, roll 1); General Records; Records of Headquarters, 1828-1903; Record Group 108, Records of the Headquarters of the Army; NAB.

<sup>20</sup> Stanley Lebergott, *Manpower in Economic Growth: the American Record Since 1800* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964), 539 (farm laborer) and 547 (others).

difficulty in any and every direction . . . they will be delightful recreations to active spirits.”<sup>21</sup>

Enlistees saw these recruiting notices and letters touting the dragoons as terms of a contract between the government and its soldiers. The government offered a blend of decent pay and grand adventure, and promised to supply the dragoons’ wants. Recruiters, then as now, often neglected to stress less-pleasant aspects of service. In the case of the Regiment of Dragoons, that neglect would prove problematic over time.

For the moment, however, devious recruiting tactics paid off. The quality of the newly enlisted dragoons impressed observers. Captain Reuben Holmes claimed “there was never a more respectable, more athletic, more vigorous or a prouder set of men enlisted for any service in any Country” than the men enlisted in his company.<sup>22</sup> Major Richard Mason, his immediate superior, agreed: “Capt. Holmes has the finest Company I ever saw.”<sup>23</sup> An anonymous civilian referred to Lt. David Perkins’ company as “being selected with the greatest care . . . [for] their moral qualification & their general adaptation for a service requiring an unusual degree of skill, courage, coolness, and power of endurance.”<sup>24</sup> British traveler Charles J. Latrobe, who had penned such a despairing account of the foot soldiers he encountered at Fort Crawford, described a party

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<sup>21</sup> *New Hampshire (Concord) Patriot & State Gazette*, 23 September 1833, 1.

<sup>22</sup> Capt. Reuben Holmes to Jones, Louisville, 11 June 1833; File H 100 1833, LR 1805 – 1889 (NAMP M567, roll 84); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

<sup>23</sup> Maj. Richard Mason to Lt. Col. Stephen Watts Kearny, Jefferson Barracks, 24 July 1833; filed with Kearny to Jones, St. Louis, 8 August 1833; File K 60 1833, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 85); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

<sup>24</sup> “United States Troops,” *New Hampshire (Concord) Patriot & State Gazette*, 15 July 1833, 1.



of dragoons he met on a steamboat as “for the most part picked, athletic young men of decent character and breeding.”<sup>25</sup>

These observers’ comments betray class bias, nativism, and perhaps snobbery. Yet if superior sorts of men regularly enlisted in the army, there would have been nothing remarkable about the dragoons’ “moral qualifications” or “decent character.” Particularly telling are the officers’ assessments. As members of an emerging profession, they probably held middle-class viewpoints and were ecstatic to find they finally commanded men worthy of them.

In a little over a year, recruiters enlisted a full complement of dragoons. Once on active service, however, the dragoons quickly suffered grievous losses. The 1834 summer expedition to western Oklahoma was anything but a “delightful recreation” to “active spirits.” The regiment suffered from the effects of a virulent cholera outbreak. Lieutenant Cooke believed that during the expedition three-fourths of the regiment ended up at a sick camp, including himself.<sup>26</sup> As 1834 progressed, monthly regimental returns pled for increasing numbers of replacements: 103 in June, 164 in August, 220 in October, 273 in December. In March 1835, the average company reported only nineteen of seventy-one men present for duty, or nearly 27 percent of authorized strength.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Latrobe, *The Rambler*, II: 319; “American Notes: Travels in America, 1750-1920,” [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/lhbtn:@field\(DOCID+@lit\(lhbtn6855bdiv19\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/lhbtn:@field(DOCID+@lit(lhbtn6855bdiv19))), accessed 30 March 2011.

<sup>26</sup> Cooke, *Scenes and Adventures*, 225.

<sup>27</sup> Regimental returns, U.S. Regiment of Dragoons, June 1834 – March 1835; Returns of the 1<sup>st</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>- Cavalry Regiments (Cavalry Returns) (NAMP M744, roll 1); Records of the Cavalry 1833-1941 (Cavalry Records); Record Group 391, Records of United States Regular Army Mobile Units, 1821-1942 (RG 391); NAB.

Under these circumstances, recruiting company drafts in distinct regions of the country was out of the question. Instead, in 1835 and 1836 the army set up a recruiting headquarters at Carlisle Barracks. Officers enlisted recruits throughout the Cumberland Valley, as far south as Winchester, Virginia. A second set of recruiters operated in Boston and the cities of southeastern Pennsylvania. (See Table 4.3.) Men still enlisted specifically for the dragoons, but were formed into drafts and sent west. Three men enlisting on the same day at the same place could join three different companies on reaching the dragoons' station.

Table 4.3. Dragoons Places' of Enlistment in 1835-1836

Place	Recruits	Place	Recruits
Carlisle, Pennsylvania	113	Winchester, Virginia	10
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	68	New York, New York	9
Boston, Massachusetts	54	Chambersburg, Pennsylvania	4
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania	26	Sub-total	334
Hagerstown, Maryland	21		
Reading, Pennsylvania	17		
York, Pennsylvania	12	All others	11
		<b>Total</b>	<b>345</b>

*Source:* data from Register of Enlistments (NAMP M233, rolls 19 and 20), Regular Army Personnel, RG 94, NAB.

Nonetheless, the dragoons enlisting in 1835 and early 1836 pleased recruiting officers. Captain Edwin V. Sumner, discussing his recruits with the Adjutant General of

the Army, wrote, “They are all excellent young men, of good constitutions, and respectable habits.”<sup>28</sup> Philip St. George Cooke believed dragoons he enlisted were “as good men as I ever saw in the Army” and “a *different class* of men from those that join the Infantry.”<sup>29</sup> Civilians also approved. An item in the *Harrisburg Chronicle* believed “sober habits and good character were, we understand, indispensable prerequisites to enlistment.”<sup>30</sup> A letter in the *Baltimore Patriot* proudly claimed, “Young men of spirit become attached to the Dragoon Service. It is a manly and respectable one.”<sup>31</sup>

As with the earlier set of recruits, the army clearly sought to exclude foreigners and the less-well off. While the War Department apparently lifted the ban on foreigners enlisting in 1835, few enlisted in the regiment.<sup>32</sup> Forty percent of the 1835-1836 dragoons enlisted at Carlisle or nearby towns. Another 20 percent enlisted at Hagerstown, Maryland, or Winchester, Virginia. As a group, the newer dragoons more resemble the earlier dragoons in the key categories of age and civilian occupation than the infantry and artillery recruits of the period. Only virtuous citizens would want to join “a manly and respectable service,” and only they could keep it that way.

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<sup>28</sup> Capt. Edwin V. Sumner to Jones, Carlisle Barracks, 14 February 1835; File S 41 1835, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 113); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

<sup>29</sup> 1st Lt. Philip St. George Cooke to Jones, Carlisle Barracks, 29 April 1835; File C 163 1835, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 105); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB, and Cooke to Jones, Carlisle Barracks, 31 October 1835; File C 420 1835, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 106); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB (emphasis in original).

<sup>30</sup> Reprinted in “U.S. Dragoons,” *Army and Navy Chronicle* 1 (April 1835): 128.

<sup>31</sup> Reprinted in “U.S. Regiment of Dragoons,” *Army and Navy Chronicle* 1 (November 1835): 372.

<sup>32</sup> See Cooke to Jones, Winchester, 16 February 1835; File C 55 1835, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 105); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB, and Capt. Clifton Wharton to Jones, Philadelphia, 5 May 1835; File W 92 1835, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 115); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

Between 1833 and 1836, the dragoons operated two different recruiting systems. In 1833 and 1834 the army recruited each individual company in a different part of the country. In the throes of a manpower crisis in 1835 and 1836, the army largely abandoned regionally based recruiting, using instead a regimental-based system. Nonetheless, both systems apparently attracted the “healthy, active, responsible men” the War Department wanted: the ideal citizen of high moral and physical fiber.

#### The Enlisted Men of the Regiment of Dragoons

The new dragoons, compared to the rest of the army, were younger and far less likely to be of foreign birth. Dragoons were more likely to have been farmers or artisans (i.e. skilled tradesmen), and less likely to serve out their terms of enlistment. In part, this reflects the death and disability suffered during arduous service on the Plains. It also acknowledges that the army succeeded in recruiting virtuous citizens, men unexpectedly likely to desert as a sign of their dissatisfaction.

Both sets of dragoons, those enlisted in 1833 and 1834, as well as those enlisted in 1835 and 1836, tended to be younger than their counterparts in the rest of the regular army. In turn, the 1833-1834 dragoons were younger than their 1835-1836 brethren. (See Table 4.4.) The median age for dragoons recruited in 1833-1834 was twenty-two, and the median age for the 1835-1836 dragoons was twenty-three. The median was twenty-five for infantry, artillery, and ordnance. The mean age for the 1833-1834 dragoons was 23.48 years, slightly younger than the 1835-1836 dragoons at 23.79 years. The average age for other recruits was 25.66 years. On average, a dragoon recruited in 1833 or 1834 was nearly two years younger than an ordinary recruit.

Table 4.4. Regular Army Recruits, March 1833 – February 1836, by Age

Age	1833-34 Dragoons (%)	1835-36 Dragoons (%)	Infantry, Artillery, & Ordnance Recruits (%)
9 to 17	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	53 (0.86)
18 to 20	90 (10.92)	26 (7.54)	430 (7.00) <sup>c</sup>
21 to 23	427 (51.82)	163 (47.25)	2,012 (32.77)
24 to 26	175 (21.24)	84 (24.35)	1,286 (20.94)
27 to 29	75 (9.10) <sup>d</sup>	44 (12.75)	943 (15.36)
30 to 32	39 (4.73)	22 (6.38)	639 (10.41) <sup>e</sup>
33 to 35	17 (2.06)	6 (1.74)	452 (7.36)
Over 35	1 (0.12)	0 (0.00)	208 (3.39)
UNKNOWN	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	117 (1.91)
<b>Total</b>	<b>824 (100.00)</b>	<b>345 (100.00)</b>	<b>6,140 (100.00)</b>

c – includes one 20.25 year old.

d – includes one 29.5 year old.

e – includes one 32.5 year old.

Percentage totals may not equal 100.00 due to rounding

*Source:* data from Register of Enlistments (NAMP M233, rolls 19 and 20), Regular Army Personnel, RG 94, NAB.

Interestingly, it appears that, like recruiters since time immemorial, dragoon officers on recruiting duty turned a blind eye to age requirements to meet their quotas. Fourteen men younger than twenty, and one thirty-seven year old, joined the dragoons in 1833-1834. Fifteen men younger than twenty joined the dragoons in 1835-1836.

In 1833, the War Department banned foreigners from the dragoons without special permission. Therefore, unlike the rest of the army, dragoon recruits were nearly entirely native-born. (See Table 4.5.) This upset Colonel Kearny. He believed the regiment would be more effective by adding to each company a few foreigners who served in European cavalry units.<sup>33</sup> One such foreigner was Edward H. Stanley, who claimed to have been a sword and riding master in a British cavalry regiment.<sup>34</sup> Still, in line with the army's plans, foreigners made up less than 2 percent of the initial dragoons. Their proportion climbed only to 10 percent of the replacement dragoons. This was a far cry from the infantry and artillery, where foreigners made up 39 percent of all recruits.

As befitted a regiment recruited in each region of the United States, the birthplaces of the earliest dragoon enlistees were more evenly distributed than those joining the infantry, artillery, or ordnance. (See Table 4.6.) By birth, the South Atlantic and Southwest regions were over-represented amongst the 1833-1834 dragoons, compared to the later dragoons and the army at large. The percentages for the 1835-1836 dragoons and the ordinary recruits were similar, reflecting that the replacement dragoons

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<sup>33</sup> Kearny to Jones, Louisville, 23 May 1833; File K 40 1833, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 84); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

<sup>34</sup> Kearny to Jones, Louisville, 26 May 1833; File K 41 1833, LR 1805 – 1889 (NAMP M567, roll 84); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB. Stanley, a colorful figure, is discussed in more detail in chapter five.

enlisted in the same regions as infantry and artillery recruits: the Mid-Atlantic, with smaller but significant numbers joining in New England and the South Atlantic.

Table 4.5. Regular Army Recruits, March 1833 – February 1836, by Place of Birth

Region	1833-1834 Dragoons (%)	1835-1836 Dragoons (%)	Infantry, Artillery, & Ordnance Recruits (%)
New England	107 (12.99)	67 (19.42)	777 (12.65)
Mid-Atlantic	271 (32.89)	186 (53.91)	1,899 (30.93)
South Atlantic	225 (27.31)	48 (13.91)	692 (11.27)
Northwest	58 (7.04)	5 (1.45)	106 (1.73)
Southwest	146 (17.72)	1 (0.29)	111 (1.81)
Territories <sup>f</sup>	3 (0.36)	3 (0.87)	59 (0.96)
Foreign	14 (1.69)	34 (9.86)	2,380 (38.76)
UNKNOWN	0 (0.00)	1 (0.29)	116 (1.89)
<b>Total</b>	<b>824 (100.00)</b>	<b>345 (100.00)</b>	<b>6,140 (100.00)</b>

f –Territories: District of Columbia, Arkansas Territory, Florida Territory, Michigan Territory, Unorganized Territory.

*Source:* data from Register of Enlistments (NAMP M233, rolls 19 and 20), Regular Army Personnel, RG 94, NAB.

Negative stereotypes of U.S. soldiers during this period implied that they joined the army to avoid the challenges of civilian life. These accounts featured lifelong soldiers, laborers, or men passing near destitution as typical recruits. This negative stereotype, however, did not apply to dragoon recruits. Eighty percent of the regiment's

1833-1834 enlistees and over two-thirds of the 1835-1836 recruits claimed to have been artisans or farmers, members of a better socioeconomic class than day laborers.

Table 4.6. Home Regions of Native-Born Regular Army Recruits, March 1833 – February 1836, by Percentage

Region	1833-1834 Dragoons	1835-1836 Dragoons	Infantry, Artillery, & Ordnance Recruits
New England	13.21	21.61	21.32
Mid-Atlantic	33.46	60.00	52.11
South Atlantic	27.78	15.48	18.99
Northwest	7.16	1.61	2.91
Southwest	18.02	0.32	3.05
Territories	0.37	0.97	1.62

Percentage totals may not equal 100.00 due to rounding.

*Source:* data from Register of Enlistments (NAMP M233, rolls 19 and 20), Regular Army Personnel, RG 94, NAB.

Dragoon recruits, depending on year of enlistment, were two to three times more likely than ordinary recruits to claim they had been farmers in civilian life. (See Table 4.7.) Since dragoon recruiting officers targeted rural areas for recruits, this is not surprising. What is surprising is the percentage of tradesmen in the regiment, nearly one out of every two dragoons. One possible explanation could be these men enlisted after failing at their jobs.<sup>35</sup> But ordinary laborers – those without a trade, who would have had

<sup>35</sup> Skelton concluded that the men of the First American Regiment, for the most part, joined due to economic distress; “Confederation’s Regulars,” 776-77. Stagg determined that, for peacetime enlistees between 1802 and 1811, men of all occupations enlisted predominantly from economic destitution;



the most trouble finding work - are under-represented in the regiment, compared to the infantry and artillery. The persistence of a pre-Market Revolution economic model in rural America may discourage an economic explanation.<sup>36</sup> If anything, the dragoons' youth suggests some may have enlisted to earn seed money for land or their own shops.

Others had different reasons. One newspaper described dragoon recruits at Carlisle Barracks as "generally respectable young men, who felt desirous of making a tour of the far west free of expense."<sup>37</sup> Philip St. George Cooke believed that "a craving for excitement, and romantic notions of the far West" inspired most enlistments.<sup>38</sup> Private James Hildreth, a dragoon who wrote a memoir of his service, enlisted because "every thing that savors of military life [had] an indescribable charm for me."<sup>39</sup> In any event, it is difficult to conclude the majority of dragoons enlisted because they had failed to become economic successes.

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"Soldiers in Peace and War," 104-12. As for War of 1812 enlistees, he found artisans, seamen, and laborers probably enlisted from destitution, but that self-described "farmers" may have enlisted to earn money to obtain their own lands; "Enlisted Men in the United States Army," 632-43.

<sup>36</sup> Allan Kulikoff, *The Agrarian Origins of American Capitalism* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1992), 25. Note that whether and how all regions and occupational sectors of the United States "transitioned" to capitalism is still contentious; *Ibid.*, 13-33, discusses the models and literature at work.

<sup>37</sup> "U.S. Regiment of Dragoons," *New Hampshire (Concord) Patriot & State Gazette*, 31 August 1835, 2.

<sup>38</sup> Cooke, *Scenes and Adventures*, 224. For the prevalence of "romantic notions of the far West" in Jacksonian society, see Daniel J. Herman, "The Other Daniel Boone: The Nascence of a Middle-Class Hunter Hero," *Journal of the Early Republic* 18 (Autumn 1998): 429-57, especially pp. 455-56.

<sup>39</sup> [James Hildreth], *Dragoon Campaigns to the Rocky Mountains; Being a History of the Enlistment, Organization, and first Campaigns of the Regiment of United States Dragoons; Together with Incidents of a Soldier's Life, and Sketches of Scenery and Indian Characters; by a Dragoon* (New York: Wiley & Long, 1836; reprint edition New York: Arno Press, 1973), 14.

Table 4.7. Regular Army Recruits, March 1833 – February 1836, by Occupation

Occupational Group	1833-1834 Dragoons (%)	1835-1836 Dragoons (%)	Infantry, Artillery, & Ordnance Recruits (%)
Farmers <sup>g</sup>	256 (31.07)	83 (24.06)	711 (11.58)
Soldiers <sup>h</sup>	16 (1.94)	9 (2.61)	824 (13.42)
Musicians	4 (0.49)	3 (0.87)	250 (4.07)
Sailors	3 (0.36)	2 (0.58)	32 (0.52)
Professional	8 (0.97)	3 (0.87)	47 (0.77)
Service	5 (0.61)	1 (0.29)	27 (0.44)
Retail & Clerks <sup>i</sup>	41 (4.98)	18 (5.22)	204 (3.32)
Artisans	412 (50.00)	159 (46.09)	2,078 (33.84)
Laborers <sup>j</sup>	75 (9.10)	66 (19.13)	1,828 (29.77)
UNKNOWN	4 (0.49)	1 (0.29)	139 (2.26)
<b>Total</b>	<b>824 (100.00)</b>	<b>345 (100.00)</b>	<b>6,140 (100.00)</b>

g – includes fishermen, grooms, and hostlers/ostlers.

h – includes armorers, artificers, dragoons, hospital stewards, and ordnance sergeants.

i – includes bookkeepers.

j – includes unskilled occupations.

Percentage totals may not equal 100.00 due to rounding.

*Source:* data from Register of Enlistments (NAMPS M233, rolls 19 and 20), Regular Army Personnel, RG 94, NAB.

As the first members of a new corps, the men who joined the dragoons in 1833 and 1834 faced difficult challenges. For many of them, adapting to regular army discipline proved a major hurdle. During the summer of 1834, dragoons endeavored to survive extreme heat and epidemic disease as they campaigned on the Plains. It should come as no surprise, then, that the 1833-1834 dragoons logged higher rates of desertion, death, and discharge for disability than both their 1835-1836 successors and ordinary army recruits between 1833 and 1836.

Dragoons deserted at a higher rate than infantry or artillerymen, even after adjusting for different company sizes. Nearly 27 percent of the 1833-1834 dragoons left the army by deserting, over five percentage points higher than infantry and artillery recruits. (See Table 4.8.) Reported desertion rates, while drawing from a different data pool, confirm the desertion trend revealed by the Register of Enlistments.<sup>40</sup>

The ten dragoon companies, added to seventy infantry and thirty-six artillery companies, gave the army 116 companies of the line. Companies in the Regiment of Dragoons reported a median desertion rate of 6.54 desertions per year per 50 authorized men. (See Table 4.9.) This exceeds the army-wide and artillery rates, at 4.93, and the infantry rate, at 4.00. Three of the dragoon companies ranked in the ten-highest companies by desertion rate army-wide: Company H, 13.28 (tied for fifth); Company I, 12.88 (seventh); and Company F, 11.90 (ninth).

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<sup>40</sup> I use the term “successful desertions” to refer to soldiers who deserted according to the Register of Enlistments. These are men who deserted and were not apprehended. I use the term “reported desertions” to refer to the desertions reported on monthly regimental returns, regardless of whether the soldier successfully deserted. These returns record all attempts. If the army apprehended a soldier, he additionally was marked as “joined from desertion” on a return. Some men deserted more than once. For example, Private Thomas Carnes, Company A, U.S. Dragoons, deserted on 19 November 1833, joined from desertion on 20 November, and deserted again on 25 November. Thus he appears as deserting twice on that month’s return.

Table 4.8. Outcomes of Regular Army Recruits Enlisting Between March 1833 and February 1836

Outcome	1833-1834 Dragoons (%)	1835-1836 Dragoons (%)	Infantry, Artillery, & Ordnance Recruits (%)
Expiration of Enlistment	358 (43.45)	227 (65.80)	2,977 (48.49)
Re-enlistment	12 (1.46)	0 (0.00)	224 (3.65)
Desertion	221 (26.82)	58 (16.81)	1,319 (21.48)
Death	129 (15.66)	20 (5.80)	625 <sup>k</sup> (10.18)
Discharged for Disability	68 (8.25)	27 (7.83)	335 (5.46)
Dismissal by Court-Martial	11 (1.33)	0 (0.00)	166 (2.70)
Other	19 (2.31)	9 (2.61)	370 (6.03)
UNKNOWN	6 (0.73)	4 (1.16)	124 (2.02)
<b>Total</b>	<b>824 (100.00)</b>	<b>345 (100.00)</b>	<b>6,140 (100.00)</b>

k – includes 75 soldiers killed in action against the Seminole Indians.  
Percentage totals may not equal 100.00 due to rounding.

*Source:* data from Register of Enlistments (NAMP M233, rolls 19 and 20), Regular Army Personnel, RG 94, NAB.

Table 4.9. Company Desertions per Year per 50 Authorized Men, August 1833-February 1836

	A	B	C	D	E
Dragoons	6.82	5.35	6.54	6.54	4.37
1st Infantry	8.74	6.46	6.46	1.52	2.67
2d Infantry	0.77	1.52	6.84	<b>13.67</b>	7.21
3d Infantry	1.90	6.07	2.28	5.32	4.18
4th Infantry	<b>15.29</b>	1.97	8.24	0.79	3.14
5th Infantry	8.35	5.32	6.07	2.28	5.70
6th Infantry	<b>11.77</b>	6.07	11.00	2.67	5.70
7th Infantry	0.79	0.00	2.75	2.75	0.00
1st Artillery	6.40	3.17	2.82	1.42	5.99
2d Artillery	10.19	2.54	<b>12.37</b>	0.37	2.91
3d Artillery	3.73	4.93	4.22	4.57	3.53
4th Artillery	7.39	3.88	4.22	8.10	2.47

Table 4.9. (continued)

	F	G	H	I	K
Dragoons	<b>11.90</b>	3.31	<b>13.28</b>	<b>12.88</b>	1.54
1st Infantry	2.28	<b>14.42</b>	0.00	3.80	<b>13.28</b>
2d Infantry	5.32	0.00	11.00	0.00	6.46
3d Infantry	10.63	3.42	7.60	2.67	6.46
4th Infantry	11.38	2.35	4.32	8.63	<b>14.12</b>
5th Infantry	2.67	0.00	0.38	1.14	1.90
6th Infantry	5.70	6.84	7.97	3.42	5.32
7th Infantry	0.40	1.97	0.79	0.79	2.75
1st Artillery	5.63	3.53	4.93	9.50	X
2d Artillery	5.82	0.37	3.28	5.46	X
3d Artillery	5.63	7.39	5.28	4.57	X
4 <sup>th</sup> Artillery	4.57	9.85	8.80	5.99	X

Rates in **bold** are among the ten highest. Infantry companies were authorized 51 men; artillery, 55; dragoons, 71. During this period artillery regiments had only nine companies, A-I.

*Sources:* data from regimental returns, U.S. Regiment of Dragoons, August 1833 – February 1836; Cavalry Returns (NAMP M744, roll 1); Cavalry Records; RG 391; NAB; Regimental returns, First-Seventh Infantry Regiments, August 1833 – February 1836; Returns From Regular Army Infantry Regiments, June 1821 – December 1916 (Infantry Returns) (NAMP M665A, rolls 2,16,30,42,54,65,78); Records of Infantry Regiments Raised Prior to the Civil War, except Regiments Raised Exclusively for Mexican War Service (Infantry Records); RG 391; NAB; Regimental returns, First-Fourth Artillery Regiments, August 1833 – February 1836; Returns From Regular Army Artillery Regiments, June 1821 – January 1901 (Artillery Returns) (NAMP M727, rolls 2,10,18,26); Records of the First-Seventh Artillery Regiments (Artillery Records); RG 391; NAB.

To calculate desertion rates per 50 authorized enlisted men per year, I took the number of deserters for a company, divided that by the company's authorized strength, and multiplied that number by 50. Having established desertion rate per 50 authorized enlisted men, I divided that by the number of months the unit was listed on a regimental return between August 1833 and February 1836 (Dragoon Cos. A & C-E, 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiments, 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Artillery Regiments, 31 months; Dragoon Co. B, 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry, 7<sup>th</sup> Infantry, and 2<sup>nd</sup> Artillery Regiments, 30 months; Dragoon Cos. F & G, 22 months; and Dragoon Cos. H-K, 21 months) and then multiplied by twelve, the number of months in a year.

Not all dragoon companies, however, reported very high desertion rates. Three dragoon companies reported rates between 6.82 and 6.54, while the remaining four had rates between 5.35 and 1.54. Are there any reasons for desertion that explain the discrepancy between the reported rates in Company H (13 deserters per year) and Company K (1.5)?

Regional discord among the dragoons poses one explanation. As noted earlier, Company F was split between easterners and westerners. Col. Henry Dodge, commanding the regiment, told the Adjutant General that, as “their habits and manners were different,” sectional friction between the men exploded into a raft of desertions.<sup>41</sup> This may also apply to Company H, partially enlisted in Missouri and partially at Pittsburgh. But the other dragoon companies were largely recruited in the same region.

The dragoons’ inexperience encouraged desertion. When the army looked at its desertion problem in 1830, for example, it found over 60 percent of deserters that year were in their first year of enlistment.<sup>42</sup> For the dragoons, the successful desertion rate was far higher. Of 221 deserters, 198, or 90 percent, were in their first year of service. Sixty-two percent – 137 deserters – were in their first six months. Sixty-seven deserters, or 30 percent, had not completed three months.

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<sup>41</sup> Col. Henry Dodge to Jones, Fort Leavenworth, 29 December 1834; File D 190 1834, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 95); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

<sup>42</sup> “Report on the subject of desertions, marked I,” included in “Annual Report of the Secretary of War, showing the condition of that department in 1831,” 21 November 1831, *ASP:MA* 4:727.

Once dragoon enlistees left their recruiting rendezvous, they found themselves serving either under false expectations or broken promises, depending on whether one sympathized with the army or the rank-and-file. Regardless, the troopers' sense of betrayal and the resultant bad feelings led to desertions. According to James Hildreth, many dragoons thought that they would be treated as West Point cadets. Others saw themselves as volunteer soldiers "whose wants and comforts were to be attended to, and that they should not be subjected to the more severe restrictions of army discipline." Some believed "that it would disgrace a dragoon even to speak with an infantry soldier."<sup>43</sup> Dragoon Companies A through E arrived at Jefferson Barracks in August 1833 and began drilling. September saw more 1833-1834 enlistees desert, twenty-five, than any other month. Similarly, the second battalion of companies began arriving at Jefferson Barracks in late May 1834. Twenty-four dragoons deserted that month, the second-highest number of successful desertions. All but three of the May deserters belonged to Companies F, G, H, or I.

Paradoxically, a lack of martial drill also contributed to desertion. Like the soldiers of mighty Rome, these American legionnaires were as much engineers as warriors, if not more. Woodcutting, post construction, and road building were only three of the tasks American soldiers of this period performed regularly.<sup>44</sup> The dragoons, much as Philip St. George Cooke worried while on recruiting duty, did not like construction

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<sup>43</sup> [Hildreth], *Dragoon Campaigns*, 44 – 45.

<sup>44</sup> For an overview of soldiers as laborers, see Prucha, *Sword of the Republic: The United States Army on the Frontier, 1783 – 1846* (New York: Macmillan, 1969; reprinted Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), 169-92. This summarizes his earlier book, *Broadax and Bayonet: The Role of the United States Army in the Development in the Northwest, 1815-1860* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1953).



tasks. Captain Clifton Wharton, Private Russell's company commander, admitted to the War Department that about a dozen of his men constructed stables at Jefferson Barracks.<sup>45</sup> James Hildreth remarked the regiment "was not enlisted to build stables, and some of our men have signified their disrelish of the work by *not remaining to see it finished*."<sup>46</sup>

This dislike for manual labor continued after the regiment left Jefferson Barracks for frontier stations. In September 1834, Companies B, H, and I arrived at Camp Des Moines, near present day Montrose, Iowa. Stephen Watts Kearny, commanding the detachment, informed the Adjutant General: "The quarters for the officers and men are not as far advanced as I had expected, & not a log is yet laid, for stables for our horses."<sup>47</sup> Kearny hoped the dragoons would construct their own barracks and stables by November. Between September and November 1834, Company H reported eleven desertions, or one-third of its total between June 1834 and February 1836. Company I reported twenty-two desertions, two-thirds of its total. Maj. Richard Mason reported similar concerns on taking station with three companies at the dragoon camp near Fort Gibson, also in September 1834.<sup>48</sup>

Private Russell may have been the only dragoon who missed reading \$15,000 worth of books, but others valued a warm barracks at a similar amount. Field service in

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<sup>45</sup> Wharton to Dodge, Camp Jackson, 27 March 1834; filed with Dodge to Jones, Camp Jackson, 5 April 1834; File D 47 1834, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 95); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

<sup>46</sup> [Hildreth,] *Dragoon Campaigns*, 47 (emphasis in original).

<sup>47</sup> Kearny to Jones, Camp Des Moines, 26 September 1834; File K 57 1834, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 98); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

<sup>48</sup> Mason to Jones, Camp Jones, Creek Nation, 8 September 1834; File M 223 1834, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 99); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

brutal weather spurred the dissatisfied to desert. Lieutenant Cooke recalled in his memoirs that that “the officers were authorized to inform candidates for enlistment that they would be . . . kept in comfortable quarters in winter.”<sup>49</sup> Instead, the War Department unexpectedly directed Companies A through E in October 1833 to winter in the field at Camp Jackson, a makeshift cantonment near Fort Gibson, in present-day Oklahoma.<sup>50</sup> The regiment began its movement in November. That month saw the third-highest number of successful desertions, twenty-three.

After arriving at Camp Jackson that December, these companies lived in tents. The tents did not offer the men protection from freezing temperatures. Nor did their uniforms. James Hildreth recalled that, despite recruiters’ promises to prospective dragoons, on arriving the men found “there was no clothing at all” for them at Jefferson Barracks.<sup>51</sup> In late October 1833, Colonel Kearny told the Adjutant General, “All the companies are in want of, & some suffering for, their clothing.”<sup>52</sup> The army’s quartermasters, having failed to ship summer uniforms before the dragoons first arrived at Jefferson Barracks, now failed to ship the regiment’s winter uniforms before the dragoons’ departure. Captain Wharton admitted that many of his men bought blankets or

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<sup>49</sup> Cooke, *Scenes and Adventures*, 219. See also Jones to Kearny, Washington, 22 August 1833; Letters Sent by the Office of the Adjutant General (Main Series), 1800-1890 (NAMP M565, roll 8); Letters Sent, 1800-1889; Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

<sup>50</sup> General Order 88, Washington, 11 October 1833, GO-C (NAMP M1094, roll 3); Orders; RG 94; NAB.

<sup>51</sup> [Hildreth,] *Dragoon Campaigns*, 38.

<sup>52</sup> Kearny to Jones, St. Louis, 28 October 1833; File K 79 1833, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 85); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

old infantry uniforms before the winter march.<sup>53</sup> Only in February 1834, after the men had been exposed to the elements for months, did the dragoons receive winter clothing.<sup>54</sup> Forty-three of the regiment's 122 desertions reported for 1834 occurred at Camp Jackson.

James Hildreth, explaining why men deserted, attributed it to "the non-fulfillment of contract on the part of the officers." He added that "the deception practiced by the officers was no less a crime" than desertion.<sup>55</sup> The evidence supports his statement. Men like Hildreth and Thomas Russell found life in the dragoons different from the recruiters' descriptions of life in the service. The army promised the dragoons uniforms, warm quarters, and idleness during the winter months. Instead, the dragoons labored, received their uniforms late or not at all, and spent a brutal winter living in tents. The dragoons saw the government as having broken the enlistment contract. Many believed "French leave" to be the only remedy, and had no qualms about deserting.

That said, not all dragoons registered their dissatisfaction with the service by taking unauthorized leave. Private Russell, for example, finished out his enlistment. While dissatisfied, he was not a major disciplinary problem. In that respect, he was like most of the dragoons. The Registers of the Records of the Proceedings of the U.S. Army General Courts-Martial, 1809-1890, contain the names of 1,199 soldiers brought before such tribunals between March 1833 and February 1836.<sup>56</sup> Only forty-seven belonged to

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<sup>53</sup> Wharton to Dodge, Camp Jackson, 27 March 1834; filed with Dodge to Jones, Camp Jackson, 5 April 1834; File D 47 1834, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 95); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

<sup>54</sup> Dodge to Jones, Camp Jackson, 9 February 1834; File D 22 1834, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 95); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

<sup>55</sup> [Hildreth,] *Dragoon Campaigns*, 45-46.

<sup>56</sup> Registers of the Records of the Proceedings of the U.S. Army General Courts-Martial, 1809-1890 (NAMP M1105, roll 1); Court-martial Case Files and Related Records; Records of the Immediate

the Regiment of Dragoons. That makes a rate of 6.4 general courts martial per hundred enlisted men authorized. Comparable rates for infantry regiments range from 6.8 to 27.0; for artillery regiments, 17.5 to 26.4. The highest rate for a dragoon company is 14.1, in Company A, and seven companies have a rate below 6.0. Two, Companies D and G, had no men tried for a general court-martial in this period.

A dragoon could control his personal behavior, but many could not avoid serious injury, illness, or death. The dragoons' patrols took them through inhospitable climes and disease-ridden territory. Such service harmed the first set of dragoons especially, as 16 percent died and 8 percent received discharges for disability. Since the U.S. Dragoons did not see combat, the high death and disability rates must stem largely from sickness.

The dragoons lived in close quarters and performed physically demanding work. In addition to these traditional breeding conditions for disease, the dragoons marched through present-day Oklahoma during the 1834 cholera outbreak. In May, before the Dodge-Leavenworth Expedition commenced, 9 percent of the regiment reported on the sick list.<sup>57</sup> In June, that number rose to 18 percent; July, 29 percent; August, 35 percent; and for September and October, 40 percent. The sick call rate gradually declined, but did not dip below 8 percent until June 1835.

Unsurprisingly, the death rate follows the sick call rate. Between August 1833 and May 1834, the regiment reported fifteen deaths. Deaths reported exceeded fifteen in August 1834 alone. Between June and December 1834, the regiment reported eighty-two

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Office of the Judge Advocate General, 1808-1981; Record Group 153, Records of the Office of the Judge Advocate General (Army); NAB.

<sup>57</sup> All sickness rates taken from regimental returns, U.S. Regiment of Dragoons, August 1833 – February 1836; Cavalry Returns (NAMP M744, roll 1); Cavalry Records; RG 391; NAB.

deaths. To put this in army-wide perspective, ten of the other eleven regiments reported fewer than eighty-two deaths each for 1834 and 1835 combined.<sup>58</sup>

The dragoons suffered less during their summer 1835 campaigns. Illnesses spiked in late summer, reaching 13 percent of actual strength in September and October – a far cry from the previous year. The regiment reported fewer deaths as well, only three in all of 1835. The dragoons enlisted in 1835-1836 suffered less than the early set of dragoons, because those men missed the brutal campaigning of the year before.

### Conclusion

The U.S. Army did well when it sought to recruit intelligent and able men like Thomas A. Russell. To encourage virtuous citizens like him to enlist in the Regiment of Dragoons, the army specifically excluded foreigners and recruited in rural and western areas. To persuade reluctant enlistees, recruiting officers described service in the dragoons as fundamentally different from service in infantry or artillery regiments.

The new dragoons were different from ordinary American soldiers. They were younger, had been born in all regions of the country, and tended to have been farmers or skilled tradesmen in civilian life. But Russell's letter demonstrates the spirit of equality and justice to which many of the dragoons tenaciously clung. The men fiercely defended their rights as citizens. When dragoons determined the army defaulted on the enlistment contract, many deserted. Those who remained in the regiment also differed from ordinary soldiers, as they suffered higher rates of death and disability.

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.; Regimental returns, First-Seventh Infantry Regiments, August 1833 – February 1836; Infantry Returns (NAMP M665A, rolls 2,16,30,42,54,65,78); Infantry Records; RG 391; NAB; Regimental returns, First-Fourth Artillery Regiments, August 1833 – February 1836; Artillery Returns (NAMP M727, rolls 2,10,18,26); Artillery Records; RG 391; NAB.

CHAPTER 5  
“SANGUINE EXPECTATIONS”: ORGANIZING, EQUIPPING, AND TRAINING A  
NEW REGIMENT, MARCH 1833 – JUNE 1834

The first year in the Regiment of Dragoons’ existence produced a series of small problems. The U.S. Army had gone without conventional cavalry for nearly twenty years. The resultant lack of institutional memory hampered every aspect involved in fielding the new regiment. Once the regiment recruited its enlisted personnel, they had to be issued horses and equipment. At the same time, men and animals had to be trained. To further complicate matters, the first half of the regiment took the field before it had completed its training. Needed equipment failed to arrive as scheduled. The officers made errors in their paperwork. First Lt. George A. McCall, the acting assistant adjutant general for the Western Department, had to reassure Col. Henry Dodge that such errors “frequently occur in the first organization of a regiment – they are however easily enough corrected when officers entertain and are actuated by a spirit of co-operation in advancing the public interest.”<sup>1</sup>

It was in this chaotic atmosphere that the army prepared the new dragoons for service on the frontier. The first recruits spent a cold winter in modern Oklahoma. Later enlistees passed quickly through Jefferson Barracks to ensure they arrived at their respective posts in time to join various summer expeditions. It is a tribute to the skill and resourcefulness of the first dragoon officers to say that they surmounted government

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<sup>1</sup> 1st Lt. George A. McCall, Acting Assistant Adjutant General, Western Department, to Col. Henry Dodge, Memphis, 21 June 1834; Letters Sent, June 1821 – July 1836 and April 1841 – April 1854; General Records; Western Division and Department, 1820 – 1854; Records of Named Departments, 1821 – 1920; Record Group 393, Records of United States Army Continental Commands, 1821 – 1920 (RG 393); National Archives Building, Washington, D.C. (NAB).

inefficiency sufficiently for the regiment to attain the minimal readiness necessary to undertake its first mounted missions by June 1834.

#### Acquiring Horses and other Accoutrements

Lieutenant Col. Stephen Watts Kearny and Maj. Richard B. Mason, the senior regular dragoon officers, began planning the new regiment's organization and equipment before it had officers to recruit enlisted men, let alone recruits to train. Organizing a new infantry regiment would have been difficult enough, but at least the infantry had what modern historians call a table of organization and equipment, along with established doctrine. Dragoon field officers either had to invent or adapt cavalry equipment and concoct training and operational procedures suited to American service.

Kearny and Mason discovered simple problems could demand complex solutions. Acquiring horses was one such example. The army mustered out its last regular mounted units in 1815. The U.S. Battalion of Mounted Rangers required its enlistees to bring their own horses from home.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the officers had to decide on their own how and what kind of horses to acquire. "How" was solved easily enough. Jefferson Barracks, the regiment's first headquarters, lay a short distance from St. Louis, Missouri. The regiment purchased its mounts on the open market. By November 1833, the five companies then at Jefferson Barracks all had mounts.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Act of 15 June 1832, ch. 131, 4 *Statutes at Large* 533.

<sup>3</sup> Lt. Col. Stephen Watts Kearny to Col. Roger Jones, the Adjutant General of the Army, St. Louis, 28 October 1833; File K 79 1833, Letters Received, 1805 – 1889, Main Series (LR 1805 – 1889) (National Archives Microfilm Publication [NAMP] M567, roll 85); Correspondence, 1800 – 1917 (Correspondence); Record Group 94, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1780s – 1917 (RG 94); NAB.

Colonel Kearny also decided that each company's horses would be of the same color. In turn, each company would have a distinct color of horse.<sup>4</sup> Possibly he hoped such uniformity would impress the various Indian nations the regiment would encounter. The color scheme did impress painter and author George Catlin, who later accompanied the regiment on the Dodge-Leavenworth Expedition. Viewing the assembled regiment at Fort Gibson in June 1834, Catlin wrote, "There is a company of *bays*, a company of *blacks*, one of *whites*, one of *sorrels*, one of *greys*, one of *cream* colour, &c &c which render the companies distinct, and the effect exceedingly pleasing."<sup>5</sup>

Of course, the horses had to do more than just look pretty. They would convey the dragoons over rough country that would disable and possibly even kill many of the beasts. Major Mason, among others, realized the regiment would regularly require fresh horseflesh. In January 1834, he proposed a plan to ensure the dragoons received the new mounts they needed, and eventually make some money for the U.S. government. He wanted to start a government stud farm, where mares purchased on the frontier would breed with "the best blooded Stallions from Virginia, Kentucky, or Tennessee."<sup>6</sup> Mason's plan required the government to spend a lot of money with few initial results – over \$100,000 in the first ten years – just to acquire necessary land and buildings, breeding

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<sup>4</sup> Kearny to Maj. Gen. Alexander Macomb, the Commanding General, St. Louis, 28 October 1833; filed with Kearny to R. Jones, St. Louis, 6 November 1833; File K 82 1833, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 85); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

<sup>5</sup> George Catlin, *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Conditions of the North American Indians; Written During Eight Years' Travel Amongst the Wildest Tribes of Indians in North America*, 2 vols. (London: self-published, 1841; reprinted New York: Dover Publications, 1973), 2: 38; emphasis in original.

<sup>6</sup> Maj. Richard Mason to Lewis Cass, the Secretary of War, Camp Jackson, 28 January 1834; Letters Received by the Headquarters of the Army, 1827 – 1903 (LR Hq Army) (NAMP M1635, roll 3); General Records; Records of Headquarters 1828-1903 (Hq Records); Record Group 108, Records of the Headquarters of the Army, 1828 – 1903 (RG 108); NAB.



stock, and so forth. By year ten, however, the farm would produce enough horses not only to supply the dragoons' wants, but also to sell on the open market. He estimated proceeds from the surplus horses would make the farm self-sustaining. But the government did not adopt his plan. The initial cost must have played a role.<sup>7</sup> In addition, the horse farm would undercut or eliminate farmers and horse breeders selling mounts to the government, making it sure to raise political opposition.

The law authorizing the dragoons made no provision for a veterinary surgeon. Major J. B. Brant, the army quartermaster stationed at St. Louis, contracted James A. Lee to be the regiment's veterinary surgeon.<sup>8</sup> Lee, apparently believing that the regiment would have a veterinary surgeon attached to it, asked to be appointed as such. Colonel Dodge readily recommended Lee's services.<sup>9</sup> But much like Major Mason's stud farm, the government did not see fit to make Dr. Lee an integral part of the regiment.

Similarly, senior leadership sometimes expressed a desire for additional personnel to care for the horses' material wants. Congress authorized each dragoon company to have one farrier-blacksmith. In the fall of 1833, however, Colonel Dodge noted that only two of the five companies then at Jefferson Barracks possessed theirs. He called upon Major Brant to send him smiths to help shoe horses, telling the quartermaster, "We have a march of 400 or 500 miles to make, before we can accomplish which, it is absolutely

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<sup>7</sup> See Appendix A for the initial expense estimates for the regiment. The stud farm would have absorbed anywhere from two-thirds to five-sixths of the savings resulting from replacing the mounted rangers with dragoons.

<sup>8</sup> James A. Lee to Cass, Camp Jackson, 7 January 1834; LR Hq Army (NAMP M1635, roll 3); General Records; Hq Records; RG 108; NAB.

<sup>9</sup> Dodge to Cass, Camp Jackson, 8 January 1834; filed with *ibid.*

necessary to have our horses shod.”<sup>10</sup> In the fall of 1835, after two years of active campaigning, the horse equipments under Major Mason’s care showed serious signs of wear. Colonel Matthew Arbuckle, brigadier general by brevet and commanding the Army of the Southwestern Frontier from his headquarters at Fort Gibson, called on the Adjutant General to add a saddler to each company, “believing them almost as necessary as a Farrier and Blacksmith.” Arbuckle added that the Arkansas Territory had neither enough civilian saddlers nor necessary materials to repair horse equipments.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to horses, the regiment needed special gear for the use and care of its mounts. Kearny and Mason drew up an extensive list. With seventy-one men in each of the ten companies, and five musicians and non-commissioned officers assigned to regimental headquarters, the regiment needed 715 of everything. Some items were fairly obvious, like saddles, bridles, and halters. Others reflected familiarity with horses, including currycombs, cords for carrying grain to horses at night, scythes for cutting hay, a traveling forge with 9,606 lbs. of iron (for one year), and saddle and shoeing tools for each company.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Dodge to Maj. J. B. Brant, Jefferson Barracks, 5 November 1833; Letters Sent, 1833 – 1906 (LS 1833 – 1906); Records of the 1<sup>st</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiments (Cavalry Regiments); Records of the Cavalry, 1833 – 1941 (Cavalry Records); Record Group 391, Records of United States Regular Army Mobile Units, 1821 – 1942 (RG 391); NAB.

<sup>11</sup> Bvt. Brig. Gen. Matthew Arbuckle to R. Jones, Fort Gibson, 7 October 1835; Records of Headquarters, Army of the Southwestern Frontier, and Headquarters, Second and Seventh Military Departments, 1835 – 1853 (Southwestern Frontier Records) (NAMP M1302, roll 1); Records of Armies, 1832 – 1865 (Records of Armies); RG 393; NAB.

<sup>12</sup> “Estimate of the No. of Arms and Accoutrements, Horses and Horse Equipments, Forage, &c. &c. for the U.S. Regiment of Dragoons,” filed with Cass to Macomb, Washington, 30 April 1833; Letters Sent by the Secretary of War Relating to Military Affairs, 1800 – 1889 (LS Secy War) (NAMP M6, roll 13); Correspondence; General Records, 1791 – 1947 (General Records); Record Group 107, Records of the Office of the Secretary of War (RG 107); NAB.

Another part of the list reflected Kearny and Mason's long experience in the infantry. It called for sixty-four axes and spades; 168 wall tents; 200 pack mules; and two regimental standards. (The officers also requested ten guidons, one per company, which were not issued to infantry units.) The list even asked for six three-pound guns, later revised to three six-pounders. The six-pounders had better range, and could fire shrapnel as well as shot and grape.<sup>13</sup>

The list demonstrated the logistical concerns of the two officers as well. For six months, it estimated the regiment would require 62,448 bushels of oats, 41,632 bushels of corn, and 1,166 tons of hay. It also called for unspecified amounts of stabling, forage store houses, and straw.<sup>14</sup>

Lewis Cass, the Secretary of War, approved the list, but with several exceptions. For one, he allowed only 100 pack mules, until experience proved more would be necessary. He also referred the appropriate parts of the list to the Colonel of Ordnance and the Quartermaster General. Perhaps remembering his claim that a regular regiment would be less costly than the Battalion of Mounted Rangers had been, he remarked, "The Corps, with the best management, will be an expensive one. The most rigid economy ought therefore to be exerted and will be expected."<sup>15</sup>

Kearny and Mason's list also made mention of clothing and armaments for the dragoons. By far these would be two most contentious essentials issued to the new regiment. The field officers did not include a specific uniform design in their list, but the

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Cass to Macomb, Washington, 30 April 1833; LS Secy War (NAMP M6, roll 13); Correspondence; General Records; RG 107; NAB.

War Department issued separate uniform regulations for the Regiment of Dragoons.

Officers would wear a dress coat of the following design:

Dark blue cloth, double breasted, two rows of buttons, ten in each row, at equal distances . . . the buttons are to be gilt, the lace gold, the collar, cuffs, and turnback, yellow, the skirt to be ornamented with a star . . . and the length of the skirt to be what is called THREE QUARTERS.<sup>16</sup>

Company officers would wear the blue-gray trousers of the infantry, but with two yellow stripes running up the outside seam. The field officers and the adjutant would wear dark blue trousers with two stripes of gold lace. “Officers upon ordinary stable duty, marches, or active service” were permitted to wear shell jackets. Their pants, without the stripes, were otherwise identical to dress pants. In the summer, “all officers [are] to wear plain white drilling.”<sup>17</sup>

Non-commissioned officers and enlisted men would wear short dress coats of dark blue cloth, also double breasted, with yellow collar, cuffs, and turnbacks. Sergeants wore three chevrons of rank on each sleeve above the elbow, facing downward; corporals, two chevrons. Similarly, sergeants wore trousers with two yellow stripes on each outer seam, whereas corporals and privates had only one.<sup>18</sup> One historian of army

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<sup>16</sup> General Order 38, 2 May 1833, General Orders and Circulars of the War Department and Headquarters of the Army, 1809-1860 (GO-C) (NAMP M1094, roll 3); Orders, Muster Rolls, and Returns (Orders); RG 94; NAB.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. For illustrations of the uniforms, see Gregory J. W. Urwin, *The United States Cavalry: An Illustrated History, 1776 – 1944*, illustrated by Ernest Lisle Reedstrom (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003), 59, and Randy Steffen, *The Horse Soldier, 1776 – 1943: The United States Cavalryman – His Uniforms, Arms, Accoutrements, and Equipments*, vol. 1: *The Revolution, the War of 1812, the Early Frontier, 1776 – 1850* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1977), 90 – 110.

uniforms in this period notes that “jacket and pantaloons for field and fatigue service were made identical to the woolen undress clothing, but from white cotton.”<sup>19</sup>

In addition to new uniforms, the regiment of dragoons also required weapons then not in U.S. service. Cavalry regiments traditionally used swords to fight on horseback and press cavalry charges home. With the development of firearms in Europe during the fifteenth century, cavalymen soon added pistols to their arsenal. While the U.S. Dragoons had not been created to fight Napoleonic-style battles on horseback, they received cavalry sabers and single-shot flintlock pistols. Colonel Kearny, on receiving in 1834 enough sabers and pistols for the five companies then at Jefferson Barracks, told the Secretary of War that he and Major Mason had recommended “a very different Pistol & Sword” than those sent by the Ordnance Bureau.<sup>20</sup>

In June 1833, Kearny first asked of Col. George Bomford, the Colonel of Ordnance, “if the Pattern Gun for the Dragoons has yet been decided upon?”<sup>21</sup> The Ordnance Bureau chose to issue to the dragoons Hall’s carbine. This was a shorter version of the M1819 Hall rifle. Invented by Capt. John Hall in 1811, the Hall rifle was a breechloader, initially with a flintlock ignition system. Hall’s carbine was also breech-loading, but used a percussion cap to discharge the cartridge. There is more to designing a carbine than simply shortening rifles stockpiled in a government arsenal. One historian notes the government issued the contract for the carbine in June 1833 and received full

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<sup>19</sup> Steffen, *Horse Soldier*, 1: 110.

<sup>20</sup> Kearny to Cass, Jefferson Barracks, 19 February 1834; File K 50 1834, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 98); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

<sup>21</sup> Kearny to Col. George Bomford, the Colonel of Ordnance, Louisville, 2 June 1833; File 51 K (4) 1832 – 33, Letters Received, 1812 – 1894 (LR 1812 – 1894); General Records, 1797 – 1962 (General Records); Record Group 156, Records of the Office of the Chief of Ordnance (RG 156); NAB.

delivery by May 1834, “a tribute to the ingenuity and resourcefulness” of Simeon North, whose plant held the contract.<sup>22</sup> Officers came to praise the weapon. Captain David Hunter described the carbine in November 1835 as “an excellent arm. It is light, quickly loaded, shoots with sufficient accuracy, is easily carried on horseback, and is not in the way even when the horse is at full speed.”<sup>23</sup> That same year Kearny called it “a very efficient weapon & well adapted to our Service.”<sup>24</sup>

So far, everything with the dragoons had more or less gone according to plan. The field officers drew up lists of equipment and the army bureaucracy began to procure it. At the same time, junior dragoon officers began gathering recruits for the regiment’s first five companies. As they reported in at Jefferson Barracks, the well-laid plans of the dragoons began to go awry.

#### The First Battalion of Dragoons in Training, August – November 1833

In August and early September 1833, the first battalion of five companies, designated A through E, arrived at Jefferson Barracks.<sup>25</sup> Right away, officers began putting the dragoon recruits through their paces. Yet the regiment still labored with a serious deficiency. The army, having had no cavalry for a generation, had no manual of mounted tactics to issue to the dragoons.

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<sup>22</sup> Arcadi Gluckman, *United States Muskets, Rifles, and Carbines* (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: The Stackpole Company, 1959), 366.

<sup>23</sup> Capt. David Hunter to R. Jones, Fort Leavenworth, 29 November 1835; File H 403 1835, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 109); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

<sup>24</sup> Kearny to R. Jones, Fort Des Moines, 29 September 1835; Letters Sent by a Detachment of Dragoons, August 1834 – June 1837 and December 1841 – December 1843 (LS Dragoon Detachment); Cavalry Regiments; Cavalry Records; RG 391; NAB.

<sup>25</sup> Regimental returns, Regiment of Dragoons, August-September 1833; Returns from Regular Army Cavalry Regiments, 1833 – 1916 (Cavalry Returns) (NAMP 744, roll 1); Cavalry Records; RG 391; NAB.

Colonel Kearny, as a battle-tested veteran and a hard-bitten regular, knew the regiment needed something in writing for drilling the men. As early as July 1833, he called for infantry and cavalry manuals.<sup>26</sup> After the recruits reached Jefferson Barracks that fall, he requested cavalry manuals be purchased in Europe and expressed a preference for French cavalry drill, of which (unsurprisingly) he already owned a copy.<sup>27</sup>

The dragoons, however, never would receive any printed cavalry tactics during this period. Kearny remarked in November 1834 “there are not one-half of the Capts or Subalterns in the Regiment, who can wheel a Compy of Drags from Line to Column, or from Column into Line,” adding he still had not received any manuals.<sup>28</sup> As for the field officers, in September 1836 – after Kearny had become the colonel of the regiment – he caustically reported to the commanding general that “Col. D[odge] *never did, nor could* drill a Compy or Squadron of Cavalry.”<sup>29</sup>

Without manuals, the dragoon officers learned cavalry tactics from wherever or whomever they could. The regiment possessed one man with valuable knowledge of cavalry affairs. He also happened to be a non-commissioned officer. Private James Hildreth referred to this man as “Long Ned,” and mirthfully described the regiment’s

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<sup>26</sup> Kearny to Macomb, Louisville, 4 July 1833; File K 50 1833, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 84); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

<sup>27</sup> Kearny to Macomb, St. Louis, 28 October 1833; filed with Kearny to R. Jones, St. Louis, 6 November 1833; File K 82 1833, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 85); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB; Kearny to Macomb, St. Louis, 30 November 1833; File K 88 1833, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 85); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

<sup>28</sup> Kearny to R. Jones, Camp Des Moines, 3 November 1834; LS Dragoon Detachment; Cavalry Regiments; Cavalry Records; RG 391; NAB.

<sup>29</sup> Kearny to Macomb, Fort Leavenworth, 19 September 1836; LR Hq Army (NAMP M1635, roll 4); General Records; Hq Records; RG 108; NAB; emphasis in original.

officers being “compelled to receive instruction in swordmanship [sic] from one of the enlisted members of the regiment.”<sup>30</sup>

Hildreth, in his memoir, claimed to be friendly with Long Ned. In keeping with his nickname, Long Ned was a taller man than average for the time, and if Hildreth is to be believed, he was also larger than life:

One of the most conspicuous [of the dragoons] is Sergeant S., or as he is more familiarly called among his companions, Long Ned, measuring six feet six in his stocking feet – a fine fellow, I assure you – and although an Englishman by birth, still Yankee enough in disposition. He was formerly a cornet in an English regiment of lancers. . . . Subsequently arriving in this country, he was solicited to join our regiment, under the express declaration that he should receive the appointment of riding master.<sup>31</sup>

It would be easy to dismiss this character as a literary device in a disenchanted dragoon’s rant against the officer corps, but enlistment records and officers’ letters point to the probable identification of the “real” Long Ned. In May 1833, Colonel Kearny sought and received special permission to enlist an Englishman named Edward H. Stanley. Stanley’s enlistment record describes him as six feet, four inches tall, and of English birth.<sup>32</sup> Stanley, according to the colonel, served in both the British dragoons and as “an officer in the Portuguese Lancers. . . . He [is] desirous of engaging with me, as a Riding Master, or a Sword Master of the Regiment.” Kearny went on to praise Stanley as “so valuable to the Regt, that I would rather Discharge any Thirty Recruits yet enlisted

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<sup>30</sup> [James Hildreth], *Dragoon Campaigns to the Rocky Mountains; Being a History of the Enlistment, Organization, and first Campaigns of the Regiment of United States Dragoons; Together with Incidents of a Soldier’s Life, and Sketches of Scenery and Indian Characters; by a Dragoon* (New York: Wiley & Long, 1836; reprint edition New York: Arno Press, 1973), 120.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>32</sup> “Stanley, Edward H.,” Entry 1833-S-75, Register of Enlistments in the U.S. Army, 1798-1914 (Register of Enlistments) (NAMP M233, roll 19); Records Relating to Regular Army Personnel (Regular Army Personnel); RG 94; NAB.



than him.” Finally, Kearny said Stanley was well acquainted with the duties of a dragoon, “of which I am as yet ignorant - & from whom I [expect] to learn a great deal.”<sup>33</sup>

Congress did not provide for sword or riding masters when they authorized the Regiment of Dragoons.<sup>34</sup> Instead, Stanley became a sergeant in Company E. All the same, he soon instructed many of the regiment’s officers in sword tactics. Private Hildreth may have found this a grand spectacle, but the officers were grateful for the help. Major Mason and fifteen company grade officers attested that Stanley “has given lessons . . . in both the broad and small sword exercises, which we believe him to be master of, and from long experience, well calculated to instruct. He is also well qualified to instruct in the act of riding.”<sup>35</sup> They asked for Stanley’s appointment as a sword or riding master. So did Colonel Kearny. In June 1834, Kearny reminded the Adjutant General that he would labor for Stanley’s discharge unless Congress authorized such a position before it adjourned.<sup>36</sup> Congress did not do so, and the army discharged Stanley in September 1834.<sup>37</sup>

It is not known if Colonel Dodge agreed with Private Hildreth that the regiment’s officers humbled themselves by learning the sword drill from an enlisted man. But the colonel did feel that much of the training Colonel Kearny and Major Mason wanted for

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<sup>33</sup> Kearny to R. Jones, Louisville, 26 May 1833; File K 41 1833, LR 1805 – 1889 (NAMP M567, roll 84); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

<sup>34</sup> Act of 2 March 1833, ch. 76, 4 *Stat.* 652.

<sup>35</sup> Mason et al. to Cass, Camp Jackson, 27 March 1834; LR Hq Army (NAMP M1635, roll 3); General Records; Hq Records; RG 108; NAB.

<sup>36</sup> Kearny to R. Jones, Camp Jackson, 18 June 1834; File K 42 1834, LR 1805 – 1889 (NAMP M567, roll 98); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

<sup>37</sup> “Stanley, Edward H.,” Entry 1833-S-75, Register of Enlistments (NAMP M233, roll 19); Regular Army Personnel; RG 94; NAB.

the regiment was unnecessary. In September 1833, he told the Adjutant General that, as the regiment would be encountering Indians, not European armies, the dragoons required a lesser level of skill and discipline.<sup>38</sup> The Adjutant General must have regarded this statement with suspicion. Certainly Col. George Croghan, one of the army's inspector generals, disagreed. The regiment "gives no promise of immediate (I might almost say future) usefulness," he wrote that November, "or of becoming under its present officers anything better than the Mounted Rangers."<sup>39</sup> This deficiency could be attributed, in part, to an officer shortage. The regiment had only ten of its allotted company officers at Jefferson Barracks in November, according to the monthly regimental return, an average of two per company in the first battalion.

Not surprisingly, the regulars Mason and Kearny agreed with the inspector general. The first five companies consisted of raw recruits and inexperienced non-commissioned officers. Mason asked for ten brevet second lieutenants, freshly graduated West Pointers yet to receive permanent commissions, to help with training, as "two officers [per company] are not enough to instruct in the Squad drill."<sup>40</sup>

Kearny in particular made a hobbyhorse out of the regiment's missing officers. He complained to Washington no less than eighteen different times between January

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<sup>38</sup> Dodge to R. Jones, Jefferson Barracks, 15 September 1833; File D 93 1833, LR 1805 – 1889 (NAMP M567, roll 82); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

<sup>39</sup> Col. George Croghan to Macomb, Louisville, 18 November 1833; LR Hq Army (NAMP M1635, roll 3); General Records; Hq Records; RG 108; NAB.

<sup>40</sup> Mason to Kearny, Jefferson Barracks, 24 July 1833; filed with Kearny to R. Jones, St. Louis, 8 August 1833; File K 60 1833, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 85); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

1834 and February 1836 about this crucial shortage.<sup>41</sup> He hoped to remedy this deficiency so military discipline could be instilled before the regiment left for western Oklahoma.<sup>42</sup> After his detachment of three companies took up station at Camp Des Moines, he worried about day-to-day administration and discipline. In April 1835, only four of the twelve company grade officers and brevet second lieutenants assigned to his detachment were present. One of those officers was temporarily assigned as post quartermaster and commissary of subsistence, which kept him from working with the men. “No matter how good any one officer may be,” Kearny warned the Adjutant General, “one is by no means sufficient to do all the necessary duties in a Compy. of Dragoons.”<sup>43</sup>

Practical knowledge of the cavalry service was not the only thing the dragoons lacked. Their uniforms were not ready by the time the first companies arrived at Jefferson Barracks in August 1833. James Hildreth recalled that the recruiting officers had told the new dragoons not to bring clothing with them, as uniforms were waiting at Jefferson Barracks. As a result, the men had only the clothes on their backs, and those garments were soiled and wearing out.<sup>44</sup> The following month, Major Mason urged the quartermaster to send uniforms piecemeal, as “*a great many of our men are in their shirt*

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<sup>41</sup> See Kearny to R. Jones, Jefferson Barracks, 31 January; 10 and 22 February; 10, 17, and 24 March; and 7, 12, and 28 April 1834; Files K 9, K 11, K 13, K 15, K 17, K 19, K 20, K 21, and K 24, all 1834, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 98); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB. Kearny says he had written another nine times between October 1834 and February 1836 in Kearny to Cass, Fort Des Moines, 7 February 1836; filed with Kearny to R. Jones, Fort Des Moines, 7 February 1836; File K 14 1836, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 126); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

<sup>42</sup> See Kearny to R. Jones, St. Louis, 28 October 1833; File K 79 1833, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 85); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB; and Kearny to R. Jones, Jefferson Barracks, 28 April 1834; File K 24 1834, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 98); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

<sup>43</sup> Kearny to R. Jones, Fort Des Moines, 11 April 1835; File K 19 1835, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 110); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

<sup>44</sup> [Hildreth], *Dragoon Campaigns*, 37 – 38.

*sleeves, having no jacket or coat whatever.*<sup>45</sup> At the end of October Colonel Kearny complained, “All the companies are in want of, & some suffering for, their clothing.”<sup>46</sup>

Likewise, Hall’s carbines were not ready by the time the first recruits arrived. In the meantime, the regiment began drilling with longer barreled rifles drawn from the Jefferson Barracks arsenal.<sup>47</sup> Hildreth recalled the rifles issued to his company were of War of 1812 vintage, “as effectual . . . as a broomstick.”<sup>48</sup> Colonel Dodge himself referred to them as of “the most indifferent kind” and Colonel Kearny found them “entirely unfitted for any service.”<sup>49</sup>

During the winter of 1833 - 1834 the regiment’s first battalion took up station near Fort Gibson, on the Arkansas River. That winter the water level fell so low that it seriously delayed steamboat shipments to the fort.<sup>50</sup> In March 1834, the steamer *Little Rock* sank on its way to Fort Gibson. It carried a shipment of Hall’s carbines as well as dragoon uniforms.<sup>51</sup> Eventually, the army salvaged the carbines and issued them to the dragoons. In the meantime, the military storekeeper at New York shipped another set of

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<sup>45</sup> Mason to Maj. John Garland, Jefferson Barracks, 29 September 1833; LS 1833 – 1906; Cavalry Regiments; Cavalry Records; RG 391; NAB; emphasis in original.

<sup>46</sup> Kearny to R. Jones, St. Louis, 28 October 1833; File K 79 1833, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 85); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

<sup>47</sup> Dodge to R. Jones, Jefferson Barracks, 6 October 1833; LS 1833 – 1906; Cavalry Regiments; Cavalry Records; RG 391; NAB.

<sup>48</sup> [Hildreth,] *Dragoon Campaigns*, 42.

<sup>49</sup> Dodge to R. Jones, Camp Jackson, 9 February 1834; File D 22 1834, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 95); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB; Kearny to R. Jones, St. Louis, 28 October 1833; File K 79 1833, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 98); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

<sup>50</sup> For the trials and tribulations of the river trade, see Grant Foreman, “River Navigation in the Early Southwest,” *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 15 (June 1928): 34 – 55.

<sup>51</sup> Kearny to R. Jones, Jefferson Barracks, 10 March 1834; File K 15 1834, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 98); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

360 carbines to Fort Gibson in March. Colonel Henry Leavenworth, brigadier general by brevet and placed in command of both the dragoon and infantry detachments during the upcoming expedition, initially noted that the water level of the Arkansas was still too low to receive this second shipment. But by mid-May the carbines had reached Fort Smith, ninety miles away, and would travel overland to Fort Gibson.<sup>52</sup>

When some carbines finally become available in June 1834, however, Colonel Dodge allowed the commanders of the nine companies then at Camp Jackson to arm their companies as they wished. Captains Nathan Boone and Jesse Bean, commanding Companies H and K, respectively, chose to keep the rifles with which their men had marched from Jefferson Barracks to Camp Jackson.<sup>53</sup> Kearny also found on his promotion to command the regiment in 1836 that Company G still carried rifles, two years after most of the rest of the regiment drew carbines.<sup>54</sup>

After the summer 1834 campaign, the regiment's field officers sought carbines to replace the rifles, as well as lost or overused carbines. Perhaps, if the regiment had been concentrated in one place or stationed near the line of white settlement, each company could have had a complete supply of carbines. Instead, one-third of the regiment took station near Fort Gibson after the summer 1834 campaign; one-third at Fort Leavenworth,

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<sup>52</sup> Bvt. Brig. Gen. Henry Leavenworth to Macomb, Fort Gibson, 4 May 1834; Southwestern Frontier Records (NAMP M1302, roll 2); Records of Armies; RG 393; NAB; Leavenworth to Cass (unofficial), Fort Gibson, 17 May 1834; Southwestern Frontier Records (NAMP M1302, roll 2); Records of Armies; RG 393; NAB.

<sup>53</sup> Kearny to R. Jones, Camp Des Moines, 22 February 1835; File K 11 1835, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 110); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB; Kearny to Macomb, Fort Leavenworth, 19 September 1836; LR Hq Army (NAMP M1635, roll 4); General Records; Hq Records; RG 108; NAB.

<sup>54</sup> Kearny to Bomford, Fort Leavenworth, 11 July 1836; File 91 K (6) 1834 – 36, LR 1812 – 1894; General Records; RG 156; NAB.

on Missouri's border with Unorganized Territory; and one-third at Camp Des Moines, in the sprawling portion of Michigan Territory west of the Mississippi River. Geography again conspired to make supplying the dragoons difficult.

Kearny, ever the consummate professional, did not let that stop him from bombarding Bomford, and any other superior who would listen, with requests for more carbines. In November 1834, after arriving at Camp Des Moines, he requested 120 of those weapons: sixteen for Company B, seventy-one for Company H, and twenty-nine for Company I, with a reserve of four to replace inoperative carbines. He still did not receive these by May 1835.<sup>55</sup> By September Kearny's detachment had accepted delivery of only six additional carbines.<sup>56</sup> The colonel provided the last word, which neatly summarized his frustrations on the issue, in a letter to the Adjutant General in July 1836: "The Carbines which I requested as necessary to Arm my Command, on Novemb[er] 12<sup>th</sup> 1834, were received March 26, 1836 – comment, I deem unnecessary."<sup>57</sup>

While Dodge may not have cared whether his men carried carbines or rifles, he exhibited concern about their ability to shoot. The colonel found the men of the first battalion to be poor marksmen. In January 1834, Colonel Arbuckle passed along Dodge's request for ammunition as "several companies of [Dodge's] Regiment are totally

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<sup>55</sup> Kearny to Bomford, Fort Des Moines, 14 May 1835; File 31 K (6) 1834 – 36, LR 1812 – 1894; General Records; RG 156; NAB.

<sup>56</sup> Kearny to Capt. John Symington, Fort Des Moines, 23 September 1835; LS Dragoon Detachment; Cavalry Regiments; Cavalry Records; RG 391; NAB.

<sup>57</sup> Kearny to R. Jones, Fort Des Moines, 1 April 1836; File K 22 1836, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 126); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

deficient as marksmen or the proper care [sic] of their rifles.”<sup>58</sup> The dragoon colonel later wrote the Adjutant General directly, claiming “The greater part of the Dragoons that are with me know nothing about the use of arms.”<sup>59</sup> While Kearny dispatched the second battalion from Jefferson Barracks to Fort Gibson with new rifles, there was no extra ammunition at Fort Gibson for the troops to engage in target practice.<sup>60</sup>

In addition to drills and learning how to use their weapons, cavalrymen had an extra duty infantrymen did not. The enlisted men needed to take care of their horses. This included stable construction, which proved necessary everywhere the dragoons were posted. At the time, the army regularly used enlisted men for construction tasks.<sup>61</sup> When the army put the dragoons to work building their own stables, the men protested that they had not enlisted for that kind of work.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Arbuckle to McCall, Fort Gibson, 30 January 1834; File A 31 1834, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 91); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

<sup>59</sup> Dodge to R. Jones, Camp Jackson, 9 February 1834; File D 22 1834, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 95); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

<sup>60</sup> Kearny to R. Jones, Camp Des Moines, 22 February 1835; File K 11 1835, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 110); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB; Leavenworth to First Lieutenant Samuel Cooper, aide-de-camp to Major General Macomb, Fort Gibson, 27 May 1834; LR Hq Army (NAMP M1635, roll 3); General Records; Hq Records; RG 108; NAB.

<sup>61</sup> For an overview of soldiers as laborers, see Francis Paul Prucha, *Sword of the Republic: the United States Army on the Frontier* (New York: Macmillan, 1969; reprinted Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), 169-92. This summarizes his earlier book, *Broadax and Bayonet: The Role of the United States Army in the Development in the Northwest, 1815-1860* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1953).

<sup>62</sup> See Pvt. T. A. Russell to John Blair, Camp Jackson, 22 December 1833; filed with Col. Henry Dodge to R. Jones, Camp Jackson, 5 April 1834; File D 47 1834, LR 1805 – 1889 (NAMP M567, roll 84); Correspondence, RG 94, NAB; Kearny to R. Jones, Camp Des Moines, 26 September 1834; File K 57 1834, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 98); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB; Mason to R. Jones, Camp Jones, Creek Nation, 8 September 1834; File M 223 1834, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 99); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB; and Dodge to R. Jones, Fort Leavenworth, 15 October 1834; File D 136 1834, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 95); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

First Lt. Philip St. George Cooke also protested the use of the dragoons to build stables, but he opposed the practice as detrimental to military efficiency. “Do gentlemen reflect,” Cooke asked, “that the dragoon is almost constantly occupied with the care of his horse? of the horses of the sick? of absentees of all causes? and until stables *are* built, his horse is tenfold an object of attention?”<sup>63</sup> Dragoon horses grazed for half the day. During the other half, the dragoon watered, groomed, and fed his horse, as well as looking after its equipment. The dragoons built stables at the expense of their own training. In time, Major Mason received infantry detachments to build stables at his quarters near Fort Gibson.<sup>64</sup> The other dragoon posts did not possess infantry nearby, and so had to muddle through with dragoon labor.

To a certain extent, these problems were unavoidable. It takes time to purchase and issue new equipment. As a new branch, the cavalry had neither a ready store of cavalry knowledge, nor pre-existing facilities to put their horses. But what happened next to the first battalion of dragoons was easily avoidable. The army sent those five companies into the field in the face of inclement weather and with no ready quarters at their new station.

#### The Dragoons in the Field, November 1833 – June 1834

In late August 1833, Col. Roger Jones, the Adjutant General of the Army, informed Colonel Kearny, “The wintering of the Dragoons at Jefferson Barracks may be

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<sup>63</sup> Philip St. George Cooke, *Scenes and Adventures in the Army; or, Romance of Military Life* (Philadelphia: Lindsay & Blakiston, 1857; reprint edition New York: Arno Press, 1973), 223-24; emphasis in original.

<sup>64</sup> McCall to Arbuckle, Memphis, 28 December 1834; Southwestern Frontier Records (NAMP M1302, roll 2); Records of Armies; RG 393; NAB.



reasonably anticipated,” although he added nothing was certain.<sup>65</sup> Colonel Dodge had a different idea. He understood that waiting until springtime would mean poor forage for the regiment’s horses, as well as sloppy marching conditions. While moving to the frontier immediately would curtail training for the dragoon recruits, Dodge considered the availability of forage and the speed of the march more important concerns.<sup>66</sup>

It appears Dodge impressed the Adjutant General with the urgency of moving the battalion west. Dodge soon received orders dated 11 October to march his men as soon as possible to Fort Gibson.<sup>67</sup> Kearny protested to the War Department, but to no avail.<sup>68</sup> On 20 November, Dodge led the first battalion from Jefferson Barracks, while the lieutenant colonel stayed behind to superintend recruiting.<sup>69</sup>

Dodge had wanted to leave Jefferson Barracks by 1 November. James Hildreth, serving in Company B, confirmed the wisdom of an early departure. He noted that the horses found a scarcity of fodder starting on 25 November, and the men began rationing ears of corn for their mounts.<sup>70</sup> Lieutenant Cooke recorded that it snowed three days out from Jefferson Barracks. He grimly remarked that the men wore “a quantity of clothing

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<sup>65</sup> R. Jones to Kearny, Washington, 22 August 1833; Letters Sent by the Office of the Adjutant General (Main Series), 1800-1890 (AGO Letters Sent) (NAMP M565, roll 8); Letters Sent, 1800-1889 (LS 1800-1889); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

<sup>66</sup> Dodge to R. Jones, Jefferson Barracks, 15 September 1833; File D 93 1833, LR 1805 – 1889 (NAMP M567, roll 82); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

<sup>67</sup> General Order 88, 11 October 1833, GO-C (NAMP M1094, roll 3); Orders; RG 94; NAB.

<sup>68</sup> Kearny to R. Jones, St. Louis, 28 October 1833; File K 79 1833, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 85); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

<sup>69</sup> Dodge to R. Jones, Camp Jackson, 18 December 1833; File D 152 1833, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 82); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

<sup>70</sup> [Hildreth], *Dragoon Campaigns*, 69.

nearly sufficient to cover them, but of all qualities, colors, and patterns.”<sup>71</sup> On 14 December, some five hundred miles from Jefferson Barracks, the regiment arrived at Camp Jackson, its billet approximately one mile outside Fort Gibson.<sup>72</sup>

Having a permanent campground brought little relief from the weather. The dragoons lived in tents while they labored to construct more permanent buildings. Winter cold set in earlier than usual. Cooke estimated the temperature dropped below eight degrees below zero more than once.<sup>73</sup> The structures the shivering troopers eventually raised were “barrack rooms, or rather barns,” according to Private Hildreth, who wrote, “For indeed although they answer a somewhat better purpose than our tents towards keeping us from the inclemencies of the weather, still they are, in point of comfort, scarcely equal to a country barn.” Water often poured in during rainstorms.<sup>74</sup>

Nor did having a permanent camp ease the clothing situation. Only in February 1834 did the army finally issue the dragoons wool jackets and flannel shirts, along with dragoon model wool overalls. (See Appendix B for the clothing schedule.) Calamity struck again when the *Little Rock* sank. Colonel Dodge afterwards asked the War Department for another complete clothing requisition, as he understood “that all the

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<sup>71</sup> Cooke, *Scenes and Adventures*, 220.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.; Dodge to R. Jones, Camp Jackson, 18 December 1833; File D 152 1833, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 82); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

<sup>73</sup> Cooke, *Scenes and Adventures*, 220.

<sup>74</sup> [Hildreth], *Dragoon Campaigns*, 85 – 86.

clothing intended for this Regt. was lost in the Arkansas River by the sinking of the Steam Boat 'Little Rock'.<sup>75</sup>

Unfortunately for some of the dragoons, these privations meant more than mere discomfort. Two members of the corps died each month between November 1833 and March 1834.<sup>76</sup> Though more comfortably situated, officers were no more immune to the winter's ravages than their men. Captain Reuben Holmes had succumbed to illness in November 1833.<sup>77</sup> Second Lt. William Bradford expired the following March after his pistol accidentally fired while he replaced it in its holster.<sup>78</sup>

Throughout the winter and spring of 1834, Colonel Kearny remained at Jefferson Barracks. The army, encouraged by the relative celerity with which the company officers in the first battalion recruited their own men, chose to recruit the second battalion of five companies in the same manner. Most of the officers in these companies had served in the Battalion of Mounted Rangers. The Secretary of War did not formally appoint them to the Regiment of Dragoons until September 1833, delaying the start of their recruiting efforts. Furthermore, many encountered great difficulty in their search for enlistees.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Dodge to Garland, Camp Jackson, 19 March 1834; LS 1833 – 1906; Cavalry Regiments; Cavalry Records; RG 391; NAB.

<sup>76</sup> Regimental returns, Regiment of Dragoons, November 1833 – March 1834; Cavalry Returns (NAMP 744, roll 1); Cavalry Records; RG 391; NAB.

<sup>77</sup> Kearny to R. Jones, St. Louis, 6 November 1833; File K 82 1833, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 85); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

<sup>78</sup> Dodge to R. Jones, Camp Jackson, 31 March 1834; File B 123 1834, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 92); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB. The earliest versions of the Model 1819 flintlock pistols issued to the dragoons had a safety bolt meant to prevent such a discharge, but it was discontinued when it proved less a help than a hindrance; Arcadi Gluckman, *United States Martial Pistols and Revolvers* (Buffalo: Otto Ulbrich Co., 1939), 56. It is unknown whether Bradford's pistol had the safety bolt.

<sup>79</sup> See Kearny to R. Jones, Jefferson Barracks, 7 December 1833; File K 91 1833, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 85); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB; Kearny to R. Jones, Jefferson Barracks, 14 January

In February 1834, the Adjutant General ordered Colonel Kearny to organize and equip these five new companies as fast as possible.<sup>80</sup> Company F, the first company from the second battalion to reach Camp Jackson, left St. Louis on 4 May. Kearny apologized to General Leavenworth, noting that, while the second battalion was “well mounted, armed, and equipped, for a Summer active campaign – they have been detained here longer than I had wished and expected, in waiting for the balance of Recruits, Horses, &c &c.”<sup>81</sup> Kearny did the best he could to quickly send the men to Camp Jackson. No company in the second battalion appears on the regimental return for April 1834, yet all five departed Jefferson Barracks in the two weeks spanning 5 to 17 May.<sup>82</sup>

Philip St. George Cooke, more than a little exasperated at the events of the last six months, felt moved in May 1834 to ask the public for understanding over the regiment’s slow start. “With a little time and patience,” he pled, “doubtless all will be well; and the regiment of dragoons will fulfill in usefulness and efficiency, the sanguine expectations of its friends, and stand unscathed by the vain shafts of envy and malice.”<sup>83</sup> This hardly seemed possible. A year earlier the regiment largely existed in recruiters’ pitches, lists of

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1834; File K 1 1834, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 98); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB; and Kearny to R. Jones, Jefferson Barracks, 5 March 1834; File K 14 [no.1] 1834, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 98); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB

<sup>80</sup> R. Jones to Kearny, Washington, 21 February 1834; AGO Letters Sent (NAMP M565, roll 8); LS 1800-1889; Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

<sup>81</sup> Kearny to Leavenworth, Jefferson Barracks, 8 May 1834; Southwestern Frontier Records (NAMP M1302, roll 2); Records of Armies; RG 393; NAB.

<sup>82</sup> Regimental return, Regiment of Dragoons, April 1834; Cavalry Returns (NAMP 744, roll 1); Cavalry Records; RG 391; NAB; Atkinson to Macomb, Jefferson Barracks, 29 May 1834; File A 92 1834, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 91); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

<sup>83</sup> “C” [Philip St. George Cooke,] “The Regiment of Dragoons,” *Military and Naval Magazine of the United States* 3 (August 1834): 427. The writer is obviously Philip St. George Cooke, as most of this letter is reproduced in his *Scenes and Adventures*, 216 – 25.

equipment, and the minds of its senior officers. Yet perhaps this beginning was strangely appropriate for what would follow. The dragoons' days of suffering were not over. They were about to embark on one of the more unique missions in American military history, and they would pay a high price in executing it.

CHAPTER 6  
“EXPOSED TO ALL THE PELTING INCLEMENCIES OF A WILD AND  
UNCOVERED ABODE”: THE REGIMENT OF DRAGOONS IN THE INDIAN  
COUNTRY, JUNE – AUGUST 1834

In the spring of 1834, noted author and illustrator George Catlin prepared to accompany the Regiment of Dragoons on their expedition to the lands of the Wichita Indians.<sup>1</sup> Catlin, who was in the midst of the tour he later immortalized in *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Condition of the North American Indians*, neatly summed up the expedition’s goals. The Wichita and the Comanche, Catlin wrote, “are two extensive tribes of roaming Indians, who . . . have struck frequent blows on our frontiers and plundered our traders who are traversing their country.” The government sought “a friendly meeting with them, that they may see and respect us, and to establish something like a system of mutual rights with them.”<sup>2</sup>

All the same, Catlin wondered if the expedition could succeed in opening talks. “In the first place,” he argued, “from the great difficulty of organizing and equipping, these troops are starting too late in the season.” The first part of their journey would be “picturesque and pleasing,” but the second part “tiresome and fatiguing in the extreme.”<sup>3</sup> He believed the regiment would have trouble both living off the land and keeping itself

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<sup>1</sup> This expedition has had two names. One is the Dodge-Leavenworth Expedition, after its principal leaders, Col. Henry Dodge and Bvt. Brig. Gen. Henry Leavenworth. The other is the Pawnee Expedition, because contemporary officials sought to find the “Pawnee Pict” Indians. They believed this nation was related to the Pawnee nation living on the northern Plains. In fact, the expedition sought the Wichita Indians, who are not related to the Pawnee. Thus it seems more appropriate to call it the Dodge-Leavenworth Expedition.

<sup>2</sup> George Catlin, *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Condition of the North American Indians; Written During Eight Years’ Travel Amongst the Wildest Tribes of Indians in North America*, 2 vols. (London: Self-published, 1841; reprinted New York: Dover Publications, 1973), 2: 38.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 38 – 39.

militarily effective. Should the dragoons manage that dual feat, the Indians might take alarm at their approach and retreat.

As Catlin predicted, the regiment suffered on its march from heat and disease. The percentage of men on the sick list escalated from 9 percent in May, before the expedition set out, to 40 percent in September. Between June and September, the regiment reported forty-one deaths, roughly one out of every eight officers and men present for duty in June.<sup>4</sup>

Yet despite Catlin's fears, the Regiment of Dragoons accomplished its summer missions. One company escorted traders down the Santa Fe Trail to the Mexican border without incident. The other nine, accompanying Col. Henry Dodge, reached and convinced the indigenous Indians of western Oklahoma to enter treaty talks with the United States government – something those nations had never done before. Those talks, in turn, led to an agreement to resettle the “removed” Indians of the eastern United States peacefully. Despite the near-destruction of the regiment's military effectiveness, its dragoons soldiered on and made the summer 1834 campaign a success.

#### Planning for a Summer Campaign

The Stokes Commission neared the end of its two-year term as the spring of 1834 approached. While the commissioners enjoyed some minor success, they had not attained “a permanent peace among all the tribes,” as stated in their instructions upon

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<sup>4</sup> Sick rates taken from regimental returns, U.S. Regiment of Dragoons, May – September 1834; Returns of the 1<sup>st</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>- Cavalry Regiments (Cavalry Returns) (National Archives Microfilm Publication [NAMF] M744, roll 1); Records of the Cavalry 1833-1941 (Cavalry Records); Record Group 391, Records of United States Regular Army Mobile Units, 1821-1942 (RG 391); National Archives Building, Washington, D.C. (NAB).

appointment.<sup>5</sup> They believed the Comanche and Wichita Indians caused most of the trouble both with the Santa Fe trade and the immigrant Indians. They also believed these Indians lived outside the boundaries of the United States. Still the commissioners hoped to negotiate with them anyway.<sup>6</sup>

The government believed that the dragoons could help secure a peace with those nations. In February 1834 Maj. Gen. Alexander Macomb issued orders to Col. Henry Leavenworth. Leavenworth, acting in his brevet grade of brigadier general, received temporary command of the Regiment of Dragoons, the Third Infantry, headquartered at Fort Towson, and the Seventh Infantry, garrisoning Fort Gibson.<sup>7</sup> Macomb expected that the dragoons would be “assembled, armed, and equipped” by 1 May. The commanding general thought the regiment should range “the country occupied by the Comanche and other tribes, that have been in the habit of plundering our people, and intercepting our trade with Santa Fe.” The overall object of the expedition would be “to impress the natives with an idea of our power and our ability to punish them” if they continued to attack the property and persons entrusted to the care of the United States.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See chapter two for the instructions.

<sup>6</sup> Montfort Stokes, Henry Ellsworth, and John F. Schermerhorn to Cass, 3 February 1834; Headquarters Records of Fort Gibson, Indian Territory, 1830-1857 (Fort Gibson Records) (NAMP M1466, roll 2); Records of Posts, 1820 – 1940 (Post Records); Record Group 393, Records of United States Army Continental Commands, 1821-1920 (RG 393); NAB.

<sup>7</sup> The appointment of Leavenworth caused no small distress on the part of Col. Matthew Arbuckle of the Seventh Infantry, also a brevet brigadier general. Arbuckle’s commission as colonel preceded Leavenworth’s by five years, but Leavenworth’s brevet commission preceded Arbuckle’s by six. The feud predated the 1834 campaign; see Brad Agnew, *Fort Gibson: Terminal on the Trail of Tears* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980), 118-21.

<sup>8</sup> Maj. Gen. Alexander Macomb, the Commanding General of the Army, to Leavenworth, 19 February 1834; Fort Gibson Records (NAMP M1466, roll 2); Post Records; RG 393; NAB.



The expedition also sought to recover ranger Pvt. George Abbay.<sup>9</sup> Beyond a genuine concern for Abbay's safety, his continued captivity affronted the prestige of the United States. As early as December 1833, Secretary Cass demanded Abbay be recovered from his captors. The War Department added this objective to Colonel Dodge's list.<sup>10</sup>

The commissioners and General Leavenworth disagreed on how best to achieve these goals, in part because they acted at cross-purposes. The commission sought peace among the Indian nations, and between them and the United States. They believed the accomplishment of their goal would automatically produce Abbay.<sup>11</sup> At one point, Reverend Schermerhorn proposed a plan to Governor Stokes that would have drastically reduced the need for a military expedition at all. The reverend had learned that Pawnee had been visiting the Osage tribe and offered to conduct the Pawnee to the Kiowa, Arapaho, Comanche, and "Pawnee Pict" (or Wichita) nations "with a view of making peace with each other." He believed this to be the only way the government could access the more remote Indian nations. Schermerhorn wanted to build upon this proposed meeting by inviting chiefs of emigrant tribes to meet with him and the distant Indians. He

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<sup>9</sup> See chapter two.

<sup>10</sup> See Cass to commanding officer, Fort Gibson, Washington, 18 December 1833; Fort Gibson Records (NAMP M1466, roll 2); Post Records; RG 393; NAB; Col. Matthew Arbuckle to Cass, Fort Gibson, 6 February 1834; File A 40 1834, Letters Received, 1805-1889, Main Series (LR 1805-1889) (NAMP M567, roll 91); Correspondence, 1800-1917 (Correspondence); Record Group 94, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1800s-1917 (RG 94); NAB; Arbuckle to Cass, Fort Gibson, 8 February 1834; Fort Gibson Records (NAMP M1466, roll 2); Post Records; RG 393; NAB.

<sup>11</sup> Schermerhorn and Stokes to Leavenworth, Fort Gibson, 12 May 1834; Records of Headquarters, Army of the Southwestern Frontier, and Headquarters, Second and Seventh Military Departments, 1835 – 1853 (Southwestern Frontier Records) (NAMP M1302, roll 2); Records of Armies, 1832 – 1865 (Records of Armies); RG 393; NAB.

requested “a Lieutenants Command” of dragoons to “guard my baggage” and render assistance.<sup>12</sup>

In private, Leavenworth probably was predisposed against a plan that required no more than thirty soldiers, especially after the commanding general had granted him control over the better part of three regiments. In public, he tactfully advised the commissioners that he thought it “better and more safe for the credit of our country” if the dragoons sought to bring the headmen of the remote Indian nations to Fort Gibson.<sup>13</sup>

#### The Escort of the Santa Fe Caravan, May – July 1834

While General Leavenworth and the civilians discussed the proper way to conduct the expedition, one company of dragoons quietly set off on its own adventure. Company A, Capt. Clifton Wharton commanding, received orders to seek out the annual 1834 Santa Fe Trail caravan and, if the traders requested escort, march with them to the United States – Mexican border.<sup>14</sup> The company left Camp Jackson on 13 May. On the nineteenth, it met up with dragoon Lt. John H. K. Burgwin, who had been sent to Franklin, Missouri, to determine if the traders wanted the escort. Burgwin reported the caravan desired protection, but it had already left and that Wharton’s command would have to catch up.

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<sup>12</sup> Schermerhorn to Stokes, Fort Gibson, 21 April 1834; Southwestern Frontier Records (NAMP M1302, roll 2); Records of Armies; RG 393; NAB.

<sup>13</sup> Leavenworth to the Indian Commissioners, Fort Gibson, 12 May 1834; Fort Gibson Records (NAMP M1466, roll 2); Post Records; RG 393; NAB.

<sup>14</sup> This account comes from Captain Wharton’s journal, which can be found in Wharton to Lt. Henry Swarthout, aide-de-camp to General Leavenworth, Fort Gibson, 21 July 1834; File W 208 1834, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 102); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB. A more accessible version is also available; see Fred S. Perrine, ed., “Military Escorts on the Santa Fe Trail,” *New Mexico Historical Review* 2 (July 1927): 269-304.

Wharton wanted to make sure he overtook the caravan. He reached the Santa Fe Trail where it intersected the Cottonwood River on 3 June, ahead of the traders. The caravan, of “nearly a hundred wagons” under the command of the famed Missouri trader Josiah Gregg, reached the Cottonwood on the eighth. On 10 June, the dragoons and caravan set off down the trail. “No incident worth mentioning,” as Wharton put it, happened until the seventeenth.

That night, the traders and dragoons encamped on the right bank of Walnut Creek, near present-day Great Bend, Kansas. A sentinel, believing he detected an approaching intruder, sounded the alarm. While Wharton found nothing that night, the next morning “mockasin [sic] tracks were discovered” near the sentinel’s position. Later that morning, a small party of Kansas Indians visited the camp, suggesting the guard’s senses had not led him astray. The United States considered the Kansas Indians as friendly, as they had a treaty with the government and an agent. Nonetheless, Wharton had to restrain “several irresponsible persons attached to the Caravan” who wished to fire on the Indian party.

The caravan and escort continued their travels on 19 June. On the twenty-sixth, lookouts spied nearly a hundred Indians near the trace’s intersection with the Arkansas River (near modern Cimarron, Kansas). Fearful for the caravan, Wharton advanced his company to the head, ready to charge if necessary and buy time for the traders. Instead, when the Indians and dragoons were a mere sixty feet apart, Wharton observed:

The Comanche, for such they proved to be, became loud and active in their professions of friendship, some calling out in Spanish “*buenos amigos, buenos amigos*, good friends, good friends,” while another was equally clamorous [sic] exclaiming in broken English, “how do you do, how do you do.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Wharton to Swarthout, Fort Gibson, 21 July 1834; File W 208 1834, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 102); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB; emphasis in original.

At the crossing point of the Arkansas, the caravan and escorts encamped. The Comanche kept on the other side, approximately half near the bank and another half visible but further away. Wharton, Josiah Gregg, an unnamed dragoon officer, and an interpreter crossed the bank to the Indian shore and began to talk. Members of the trading caravan, curiosity piqued, followed the two captains. This alarmed the Comanche. Wharton convinced the Indians that they and the whites should have a small conference, five on five, later on. He then recrossed the river.

On returning, Wharton learned some of the traders had muscled a small artillery piece into position to fire on the Indians. Wharton rushed over to Gregg and protested that this was “not only a violation of my pledge of a friendly disposition towards the Indians and one which would effectually prevent the meeting which I had proposed should take place between us, [but also] an act of positive cruelty.”<sup>16</sup> At the same time, a dragoon officer placed himself between the artillery piece and the Indians, to the vocal discontent of the traders.<sup>17</sup> Gregg agreed to stop his traders from firing the cannon.

Wharton’s victory was short lived. He had hoped to persuade the Comanche at their next meeting to accept the peaceful intentions of the United States, and to meet with Colonel Dodge’s expedition. While Wharton sat writing in his tent, Gregg and four other members of the caravan crossed the river. Gregg implied that he, not Wharton, commanded the dragoons. He told the Indians that they must retire or the soldiers would fire upon them. The Comanche promptly decamped.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Wharton does not identify the officer.

In the wake of the Indians' hasty departure, Gregg tried to convince Wharton to continue escorting the caravan. Wharton determined he was at the Mexican boundary and that he could not go further without evidence of an Indian threat to the caravan. Furthermore, he claimed low supplies. The dragoons did not enter Mexican territory. At this, the caravan captain promptly resigned.<sup>18</sup> Wharton refused to be manipulated by Gregg's temperamental gesture, and the dragoons took up the march for Fort Gibson on the twenty-eighth. They arrived on 19 July, their rations nearly exhausted.

Wharton's command successfully escorted the Santa Fe caravan to the Mexican border. The traders informed Wharton that "although your company was small, the protection afforded us, has been as efficient as when greater numbers have accompanied us."<sup>19</sup> But that is a narrow consideration. Two larger issues loom in the background: the proper role of the escort in Indian-American and Mexican-American relations.

Wharton addressed both of these issues in his report. He arrived at largely the same conclusions Bennet Riley had in 1829. "So long as the Indian tribes within our territory are at peace with us and each other," Wharton wrote, "I do not think the Caravan has to fear any regular attack on it."<sup>20</sup> The Comanche outnumbered the dragoons by at least two-to-one, but did not attack. The Kansas were demonstrably friendly. The dragoons' presence helped persuade the Indians that attacking the traders would not be

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<sup>18</sup> See Letter No. 5, Gregg to Wharton, Camp Livingston on the Arkansas, 27 June 1834, enclosed in *ibid.*; and Letter No. 7, I. G. Smith to Wharton, Camp Livingston, 27 June 1834, enclosed in *ibid.* It is unclear why Gregg resigned at this point, but Gregg must have known Wharton would be angry with him after he impersonated an U.S. Army officer and threatened the Comanche band. He may have resigned in an attempt to keep the caravan in Wharton's good graces.

<sup>19</sup> Letter No. 9, T. I. Boggs et al to Wharton, Camp Livingston, Crossing of the Arkansas, 27 June 1834; enclosed in *ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

worth the casualties the raiders might suffer. At the same time, despite the presence of the dragoons, members of the caravan wanted to attack the friendly Comanche and Kansas. Wharton effectively restrained not only the Indians from attacking the traders, but also the traders from attacking the Indians.

Wharton also suggested that the United States reach an agreement with Mexico to allow for American troops to continue on to Santa Fe. Generally speaking, despite the Santa Fe trade crossing the international boundary at the Cimarron crossing of the Arkansas, the Mexican government refused to escort caravans any farther than the Canadian River. As a result, the traders covered the 250 miles between the Arkansas and the Canadian without escort. Regardless of what the maps said, Indians controlled that stretch of the Santa Fe trade. It made little sense to escort the ends of the trip, leaving the caravan exposed in the middle. Alternatively, if the caravan could defend itself, then military escorts were wholly unnecessary.<sup>21</sup>

In any event, Captain Wharton and his company of dragoons accomplished their mission. His was the last escort of the Santa Fe trade until 1843. His success came fairly easily. Colonel Dodge and his expedition would have a more difficult time.

#### Final Preparations for the Dodge-Leavenworth Expedition, May-June 1834

At the same time Wharton left for the Santa Fe Trail, Colonel Dodge and General Leavenworth continued to prepare for their expedition. May came and went, as did the first week of June. The senior commanders on the scene still faced two problems. One

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<sup>21</sup> Col. Henry Atkinson, commanding the Sixth Infantry with headquarters at Jefferson Barracks, also recommended this measure; Atkinson to Macomb, Jefferson Barracks, 29 May 1834; File A 92 1834, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 91); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

was a lack of troops. The second battalion of dragoons had not yet arrived at Camp Jackson.<sup>22</sup> The other was a lack of supplies.

General Leavenworth had the Third and Seventh Infantry Regiments at his disposal, and he put their men to good use. To facilitate the dragoons' march, as well as aid resupply, he ordered four companies of the Seventh under Capt. James Dawson to cut a road from Fort Gibson to the north fork of the Canadian River. Similarly, two companies of the Third Infantry, commanded by Capt. James Dean, constructed a road from Fort Towson to the False Washita River. By late May, some 25,000 rations had been forwarded from Fort Towson along this road.<sup>23</sup> Yet the continued low water levels in the Arkansas River prevented resupply of Fort Gibson and, by extension, the dragoons at Camp Jackson.<sup>24</sup>

In addition to Leavenworth, Dodge, and nine companies of dragoons, the expedition would take along George Catlin and some other civilians. Reverend Schermerhorn, in his proposed plan to visit the Indian nations, wanted to obtain a Kiowa and a Wichita prisoner from the Osage. Returning those Indians to their people would

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<sup>22</sup> See chapter five.

<sup>23</sup> Regimental return, Third Infantry, May 1834; Returns From Regular Army Infantry Regiments, June 1821 – December 1916 (Infantry Returns) (NAMP M665A, roll 30); Records of Infantry Regiments Raised Prior to the Civil War, except Regiments Raised Exclusively for Mexican War Service (Infantry Records); RG 391; NAB; regimental return, Seventh Infantry, May 1834; Infantry Returns (NAMP M665A, roll 78); Infantry Records; RG 391; NAB; Leavenworth to Lt. Samuel Cooper, aide-de-camp to Major General Macomb, Fort Gibson, 27 May 1834; Letters Received by the Headquarters of the Army, 1827 – 1903 (LR Hq Army) (NAMP M1635, roll 3); General Records; Records of Headquarters 1828-1903 (Hq Records); Record Group 108, Records of the Headquarters of the Army, 1828 – 1903 (RG 108); NAB.

<sup>24</sup> Leavenworth to Cooper, Fort Gibson, 27 May 1834; LR Hq Army (NAMP M1635, roll 3); General Records; Hq Records; RG 108; NAB.

earn goodwill. In addition, the rescued captives could also act as interpreters.<sup>25</sup> General Leavenworth thought this a good idea. Captain Edwin V. Sumner's Company B visited the Osage village in late May and secured the freedom of the captives, two teenaged girls.<sup>26</sup>

Others asked to come along. These included Carl Beyrick, noted Prussian botanist, and Catlin, the famous painter and chronicler of North American Indians.<sup>27</sup> Three civilians who did not accompany the expedition, however, were the members of the Stokes Commission. Why they did not is something of a mystery. Gary Clayton Anderson has suggested that the commissioners, believing the Indians resided at times in Mexican territory, wanted to seek permission to cross the international boundary.<sup>28</sup> But the commissioners may have had less lofty motives. The act authorizing the commission was due to expire in July.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Schermerhorn to Stokes, Fort Gibson, 21 April 1834; Southwestern Frontier Records (NAMP M1302, roll 2); Records of Armies; RG 393; NAB.

<sup>26</sup> Capt. Edwin V. Sumner to Dodge, Camp Jackson, 24 May 1834; Fort Gibson Records (NAMP M1466, roll 2); Post Records; RG 393; NAB; 1st Lt. Thompson B. Wheelock, "Journal of Colonel Dodge's Expedition from Fort Gibson to the Pawnee Pict Village" (hereafter referred to as Wheelock's journal), *American State Papers: Military Affairs (ASP: MA)* 5: 373. But cf. Catlin, *North American Indians*, 2: 71 which claims there were three girls.

<sup>27</sup> Wheelock's journal, 5: 374; George Catlin to Thomas L. Smith, Memphis, 4 September 1833, enclosed with Smith to Cass, 15 October 1833; LR Hq Army (NAMP M1635, roll 3); General Records; Hq Records; RG 108; NAB.

<sup>28</sup> Gary Clayton Anderson, *The Conquest of Texas: Ethnic Cleansing in the Promised Land, 1820-1875* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005), 89.

<sup>29</sup> William Omer Foster, "The Career of Montfort Stokes in Oklahoma," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 18 (March 1940): 42 not only implies that Schermerhorn and Ellsworth went home, but states Stokes accompanied the Dodge-Leavenworth Expedition. On Stokes' part, at least, this is dubious. The official journal and George Catlin both make no mention of Stokes coming along. Additionally, Foster's article inaccurately states the expedition left in September.



No one – not Catlin, not Leavenworth, and certainly not the Stokes Commissioners – believed the Regiment of Dragoons could bring peace to the southern plains by force. Much as the Indians living between the Arkansas and Canadian Rivers effectively controlled the middle stretch of the Santa Fe Trail, the Wichita and Comanche bands dominated southwestern Oklahoma. In the best possible outcome, these Indian nations would enter into the treaty system and be friendly to the United States.

Finally, the last three companies of the second battalion arrived on 12 June.<sup>30</sup> The regiment left Camp Jackson three days later.<sup>31</sup> The time had come to put plans into execution. Both man and nature were about to put the dragoons to the ultimate test.

#### The Expedition, June – August 1834

The command temporarily moved to Camp Rendezvous, about twenty miles west of Fort Gibson, and departed the area for good on 21 June.<sup>32</sup> Watching the dragoons move must have been an inspiring sight, but it was less inspiring than it could have been. George Catlin initially expected eight hundred dragoons to make the march, but later cut that estimate in half.<sup>33</sup> Both Lt. Thompson Wheelock, the expedition diarist, and Sgt.

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<sup>30</sup> [James Hildreth], *Dragoon Campaigns to the Rocky Mountains; Being a History of the Enlistment, Organization, and first Campaigns of the Regiment of United States Dragoons; Together with Incidents of a Soldier's Life, and Sketches of Scenery and Indian Characters; by a Dragoon* (New York: Wiley & Long, 1836; reprint edition New York: Arno Press, 1973), 140.

<sup>31</sup> Wheelock's journal, 5: 373; Louis Pelzer, ed., "A Journal of Marches by the First United States Dragoons, 1834 – 1835," *Iowa Journal of History and Politics* 7 (July 1909): 341; [Hildreth], *Dragoon Campaigns*, 140.

<sup>32</sup> Wheelock's journal, 5: 373; [Hildreth], *Dragoon Campaigns*, 141.

<sup>33</sup> Catlin, *North American Indians*, 2: 37 and 49. By law, the number of officers and men in the regiment could not have exceeded 749 in any event.

Hugh Evans of Company G put the strength of the regiment at around five hundred.<sup>34</sup> The regimental return for June suggests Catlin was more accurate. It reported twenty seven officers and 377 men, distributed across regimental staff and Companies B through K. Already some sixty-eight men were absent sick.<sup>35</sup>

In addition to Messrs. Beyrick and Catlin, and the former prisoners of the Osage, thirty-two other Indians joined the march on 21 June. These Osage, Delaware, Cherokee, and Seneca would serve as guides, hunters, and interpreters. Each of these nations suffered from attacks by nomadic Indians at times. If Leavenworth and Dodge made contact with the Comanche and Wichita, these friendly Indians would also serve as representatives for their nations in negotiations.<sup>36</sup>

The expedition reached Camp Canadian, on the south fork of the Canadian River, on 25 June. The men had covered eighty-six miles in five days. An anonymous chronicler of the march serving in Company I noted “nothing worth of remark” had happened during this stretch, save for traversing “a fine country . . . which seems of no value while in the hands of these half civilized Indians.”<sup>37</sup> Sergeant Evans, on the other hand, found plenty on which to remark. “We would travel whole days at a time without coming to any water at all,” he noted. When they did find water, it was covered in green slime, “unfit for

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<sup>34</sup> Wheelock’s journal, 5: 373; Fred S. Perrine and Grant Foreman, eds., “The Journal of Hugh Evans, Covering the First and Second Campaigns of the United States Dragoon Regiment in 1834 and 1835: Campaign of 1834,” *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 3 (September 1925): 182.

<sup>35</sup> Regimental return, Regiment of Dragoons, June 1834; Cavalry Returns (NAMP 744, roll 1); Cavalry Records; RG 391; NAB.

<sup>36</sup> Wheelock’s journal, 5: 373; [Hildreth,] *Dragoons Campaigns*, 142. Note Hildreth also includes members of the Mohawk nation.

<sup>37</sup> Pelzer, ed., “A Journal of Marches,” 341.

the use of man or horse.” The “scourching rays” of the sun only exacerbated the men’s problems.<sup>38</sup> Camp Canadian (sometimes called Camp Holmes for its commander, Lt. Theophilus H. Holmes of the Seventh Infantry) proved an unplanned stop for some of the dragoons. Twenty-seven men were left sick, under the charge of a brevet second lieutenant and the watchful eye of the regiment’s assistant surgeon. (Philip St. George Cooke also took ill here, and eventually returned to Fort Gibson.)<sup>39</sup> The rest of the regiment continued on to Camp Washita, where Captain Dean and the Third Infantry had constructed a post at the end of the road from Fort Towson. The advance party arrived on 29 June. The bulk of the regiment followed on 1 July, after marching nearly 100 miles.<sup>40</sup>

The expedition would rest several days at Camp Washita. For one thing, the dragoons badly needed a rest. Another forty-five men and three officers had taken sick by the time they reached the station. Lieutenant Wheelock recorded that the regimental surgeon “attributes the sickness to exposure in the heat of the day.” Seventy-five mules and horses were also disabled, also suffering from daytime heat, plus poor grazing at night.<sup>41</sup> For another, Camp Washita was the last pre-positioned resupply point for the expedition. While the quartermaster forwarded many needed supplies, horseshoe nails – a basic item – were not included in the shipment. Two of the regiment’s farrier-blacksmiths went to Fort Towson to make some.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Perrine and Foreman, eds., “Journal of Hugh Evans,” 182.

<sup>39</sup> Wheelock’s journal, 5: 374.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.; Perrine and Foreman, eds., “Journal of Hugh Evans,” 183.

<sup>41</sup> Wheelock’s journal, 5: 374.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

Here at Camp Washita, General Leavenworth made a critical decision. He had intended to conduct negotiations himself. Since leaving Fort Gibson, however, he had fallen from his horse during a buffalo hunt and contracted the same illness as his men. Catlin observed that the general, along with half the command, “have been thrown upon their backs, with the prevailing epidemic, a slow and distressing bilious fever. The horses of the regiment are also sick, about an equal proportion, and seemingly suffering from the same disease.”<sup>43</sup> Leavenworth ordered Dodge to go forward, make contact with the Indians, and conduct negotiations.<sup>44</sup>

The regiment passed the Fourth of July at Camp Washita. Three members of the expedition used the holiday to take stock. Sergeant Evans wondered whether the rest of the country even knew that “there are such beings in existence [sic] as the young hardy and enterprising Dragoons who have been exposed to all the pelting inclemencies [sic] of a wild and uncovered abode.”<sup>45</sup> Wheelock optimistically thought the “spirits of the officers and men good; sanguine expectations of a successful march upon the [Wichita].”<sup>46</sup> Catlin, describing himself as “one who has already seen something of Indian life and country,” predicted “we shall meet with many severe privations, and . . . [finish] a jaded set of fellows, and as ragged as Jack Falstaff’s famous band.”<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Catlin, *North American Indians*, 2: 49.

<sup>44</sup> Wheelock’s journal, 5: 374.

<sup>45</sup> Perrine and Foreman, eds., “Journal of Hugh Evans,” 184.

<sup>46</sup> Wheelock’s journal, 5: 375.

<sup>47</sup> Catlin, *North American Indians*, 2: 48.

The command moved a slight distance on 6 and 7 July. At Camp Smith, on the western side of the False Washita, Dodge reorganized the regiment.<sup>48</sup> He would take along just over 250 men, organized in six companies of forty-two dragoons each. Another 195 stayed behind, 86 of them sick. Similarly, six dragoon officers remained here, two of them sick.<sup>49</sup> Besides the disabled men, the command shed as much baggage as possible. Each man received ten days' rations and eighty rounds.<sup>50</sup> Dodge also left behind the regiment's wagons, packhorses, and tents.<sup>51</sup> In the early morning hours of the eighth, a sentinel fired his weapon on what he thought to be an intruder. It turned out to be a horse that had slipped his stakes. The sound of the gunshot caused a stampede. Recovering the horses took the better part of the day. The regiment marched on 9 July. Remaining behind were ten additional men without horses, and Colonel Kearny. General Leavenworth wanted him to command the camp.

On the tenth, Dodge's column encountered the Cross Timbers. This was a belt of scrub forest extending from the Red Fork of the Arkansas River, down through Oklahoma, and into Texas as far as the Brazos River. It stretched several miles wide in places. Charles J. Latrobe, who had visited the Cross Timbers the previous year with a company of U.S. Mounted Rangers, called it "an almost impenetrable forest of the closest

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<sup>48</sup> Wheelock's journal, 5: 375, calls it "Camp Leavenworth." Kearny referred to it as "Camp Smith" in letters he wrote to the Adjutant General. To avoid confusion with Fort Leavenworth in modern Kansas, Camp Smith is used here.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Perrine and Foreman, "Journal of Hugh Evans," 185.

and harshest growth.”<sup>52</sup> Hugh Evans, whose journal shows him to be a sensitive and introspective soul, reflected on the imposing nature of the Cross Timbers:

About 8 Oclock [sic] on the 10 we were all under marching orders in the wide wilderness, no man knowing where or what was to be his future destination whether he was to leave his dead body a prey to the voracious [sic] wild animals of the forest . . . Whether utter starvation was to be his lot or to perish at the hands of the merciless savages . . . But they calmly resigned themselves to their fate. Every man looking forward with an eye single to one thought, the service the welfare and the prosperity of the Country and cause in which he had the honor to serve.<sup>53</sup>

The anonymous diarist of Company I recorded a discovery that eventually became of great importance to the expedition. A dragoon “while riding through the thicket found several pieces of a pair of saddle bags which had no doubt belonged to a citizen by the name of Martin who had been murdered by the Pawnees but a few weeks earlier.”<sup>54</sup> The news of this incident had reached Fort Gibson before the expedition’s departure. Gabriel Martin had been a judge in Miller County, Arkansas Territory (now part of Texas). He had taken his son Matthew and two slaves to go camping near the future site of Camp Washita. When a small party of soldiers reached that vicinity, they found the bodies of Judge Martin and one slave.<sup>55</sup> While the fate of nine-year-old Matthew was unknown, the expedition added his possible recovery to its list of goals.

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<sup>52</sup> Charles J. Latrobe, *The Rambler in North America, MDCCCXXXII – MDCCCXXXIII*, 2 vols. (London: R. B. Seeley and W. Burnside, 1836), I: 210-14; “American Notes: Travels in America, 1750 – 1920,” [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/lhbtn:@field\(DOCID+@lit\(lhbtn6855adiv19\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/lhbtn:@field(DOCID+@lit(lhbtn6855adiv19))), accessed 30 March 2011.

<sup>53</sup> Perrine and Foreman, “Journal of Hugh Evans,” 186.

<sup>54</sup> Pelzer, ed., “A Journal of Marches,” 347.

<sup>55</sup> Catlin, *North American Indians*, 2: 47; James D. Morrison, “Travis G. Wright and the Leavenworth Expedition in Oklahoma,” *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 25 (March 1947): 7 – 14.

On 13 July the command cleared the Cross Timbers.<sup>56</sup> Around noon on the fourteenth, the dragoons spied what George Catlin described as “a large party at several miles’ distance, sitting on their horses and looking at us.” The artist thought perhaps those riders were Mexican soldiers from “the glistening blades of their lances, which were blazing as they turned them in the sun,” but instead they turned out to be Comanche.<sup>57</sup> At this point, the dragoons put themselves in order to defend against a possible attack and sent forward a rider with a white flag. Instead, a mixed-blood Comanche referred to as “the Spaniard,” for his knowledge of that language, rode forward and greeted the dragoons.<sup>58</sup> The Comanche, declaring themselves to be friends, agreed to conduct the dragoons to their nearby town. They also agreed to bring the Wichita chiefs to their town.<sup>59</sup> Lieutenant Wheelock concluded “our goal seems in sight; uncertainty of reaching the Pawnees much lessened.”<sup>60</sup> On 16 July, Dodge and his men reached the Comanche village in a valley near the foot of the present-day Wichita Mountains. The dragoons made camp several miles away.

Dodge waited two days for the Wichita chiefs to arrive, but they never did. Thus the colonel made preparations to go find the Wichita village. Growing numbers of sick hobbled the command. The total had ballooned to thirty-nine dragoons and now included

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<sup>56</sup> Wheelock’s journal, 5: 375.

<sup>57</sup> Catlin, *North American Indians*, 2: 55.

<sup>58</sup> Perrine and Foreman, “Journal of Hugh Evans,” 188; Wheelock’s journal, 5: 375.

<sup>59</sup> Catlin, *North American Indians*, 2: 55 – 56; Pelzer, ed., “A Journal of Marches,” 348 – 49; Perrine and Forman, “Journal of Hugh Evans,” 188; Wheelock’s journal, 5: 375.

<sup>60</sup> Wheelock’s journal, 5: 376.

George Catlin.<sup>61</sup> The dragoons set up a sick camp under the watchful eye of the regiment's surgeon, Clement Finlay. Approximately an equal number of able dragoons, commanded by Lt. James Izard, constructed simple breastworks and stood guard.<sup>62</sup> The rest of the regiment, 183 strong, marched on the morning of the nineteenth.

Over the next two days the dragoons threaded their way through treacherous passes in the Wichita Mountains. On the evening of 20 July, as the soldiers made camp, the men noticed an Indian in the distance. First Lt. Lucius B. Northrop overtook him and the pair entered camp. On seeing this warrior, the Wichita girl Captain Sumner had obtained from the Osage embraced the stranger "in a most affecting manner," as the Company I diarist put it. The male Indian not only turned out to be a member of the Wichita nation, but a blood relative of the girl. He agreed to return to his village and tell the band that Dodge sought a peaceful meeting.<sup>63</sup> The next day, the uncle of the Wichita girl came to the camp, and a large band of Wichita met the dragoons, escorting the soldiers to their village.<sup>64</sup> As the chief of the Wichita band was not currently in the village, Dodge agreed to postpone talks until he arrived.

What could Colonel Dodge have been thinking as he waited for the Wichita chief to return? After the expedition, the colonel confided to a friend:

I was determined to effect the Object of the Govt. if possible[.] My orders were entirely of a Pacific Character[.] I was ordered not to fire on the

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<sup>61</sup> Catlin, *North American Indians*, 2: 70; Wheelock's journal, 5: 376. Catlin sent a friend on ahead to chronicle the expedition.

<sup>62</sup> Pelzer, ed., "A Journal of Marches," 351; Perrine and Foreman, "Journal of Hugh Evans," 190.

<sup>63</sup> Pelzer, ed., "A Journal of Marches," 353; Wheelock's journal, 5: 377.

<sup>64</sup> Wheelock's journal, 5: 377, says sixty Indians met the dragoons; Pelzer, ed., "A Journal of Marches," 353, says "almost 200."



Indians unless they fired on me and to pursue that course that was best Calculated to Conciliate [these] Indians and make peace with them if possible.<sup>65</sup>

On the first day of talks, Dodge opened by bluffing. The “Great American captain,” he said, was at peace with all the whites, and wanted only peace with the Indians. The president also desired that the Wichita make peace with the Osages, and agree to remain at peace with the Cherokees, Senecas, Delawares, and Choctaws. The colonel also stated that “we could have taken [the Comanche’] horses from them, but did not . . . we have come to your town, and found you as defenseless as the Comanche . . . we have come now to require [Matthew Wright Martin].”<sup>66</sup> If the Wichita delivered the boy, and word on the condition of the ranger George Abbay, the dragoons would turn over the Wichita girl held prisoner.

The Wichita responded by denying they held young Martin, until some of the dragoons found in camp Judge Martin’s surviving slave. He admitted that the Wichita had the boy.<sup>67</sup> At this, after some deliberation, the Wichita produced their captive. The Wichita denied having anything to do with Abbay’s death, blaming it on a nation of nomadic Indians named Oways who lived in Mexican territory. When Dodge asked about the Indians attacking the Santa Fe caravans, the Wichita told them “a roving tribe of very bad Indians called Wakinas” were responsible.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Dodge to George W. Jones, Fort Leavenworth, 1 October 1834; Henry Dodge Papers (microfilm), State Historical Society of Iowa, Des Moines.

<sup>66</sup> Wheelock’s journal, 5: 377.

<sup>67</sup> Catlin, *North American Indians*, 2: 71. Wheelock does not mention that the Wichita denied having young Martin, but he may have omitted the incident in the interests of either peace or space.

<sup>68</sup> Wheelock’s journal, 5: 378.

Colonel Dodge, albeit aided by the impromptu appearance of Judge Martin's slave, had won the day and recovered young Martin. Doubtless remembering his orders, and aware his bluff had not been called, he accepted Wichita testimony concerning George Abbay's fate and the Santa Fe caravans. He then ordered the Indian prisoners brought forward. "From this moment," Catlin's correspondent noted, "the council, which before had been a very grave and uncertain one, took a pleasing and friendly turn."<sup>69</sup>

On the morning of the second day, Dodge sought to have the western Indians travel east attend a council with the Stokes Commission. The Wichita were reluctant to do so. Hoping to induce their agreement through gifts, Dodge presented the Wichita with several rifles and pistols, promising more gifts when the Indians returned east. The Wichita accepted the firearms "with *much evident satisfaction*," but still remained reluctant to accompany Dodge. Eventually they agreed to discuss among themselves who would go.<sup>70</sup>

That day saw the arrival of men from two other Indian nations. A band of Comanche came from the village the dragoons had visited, led by their chief. The chief refused to go with Dodge, but agreed to send his brother, and to tell other bands of Comanche that the Americans sought peace. (He also blamed a band of Texas Comanche for Ranger Abbay's death.)<sup>71</sup> At this juncture, a band of Kiowa arrived. On seeing the Osage accompanying the expedition, they had demanded their prisoner, only to be told

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<sup>69</sup> Catlin, *North American Indians*, 2: 72.

<sup>70</sup> Wheelock's journal, 5:378; emphasis in original.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 5: 379.

the dragoons now had her. Wheelock recorded that the Kiowa “presented themselves in a warlike shape, that caused many a man in camp to stand by his arms.”<sup>72</sup>

In trying to obtain the Martin boy, Colonel Dodge had talked tough, despite his orders. Now, when such a ploy could have been disastrous, he made not even a token attempt to do so. Instead, he presented the Kiowa girl to her relatives. Disarmed by American generosity, the Kiowa agreed to participate in a council with the Wichita and the Comanche the next day.

On the morning of 24 July 1834, in a small wooded area two hundred yards from the dragoon camp, Colonel Dodge and his officers met with representatives from three Plains Indian nations for the third and last day. Dodge again extended an invitation to the Indians to come east. The Comanche already had agreed. The Wichita designated the chief of a Waco band, close relatives of the Wichita, as their representative. Finally, the Kiowa chief agreed to go back with the dragoons.<sup>73</sup>

Henry Dodge had accomplished his mission. He was not an organizer. The army left the tasks of organizing and recruiting the dragoons to Stephen Watts Kearny. He was not a disciplinarian. Again, Kearny was better suited than Dodge to turning civilians into soldiers and readying them for deployment. Yet Dodge had two strengths. He had spent his adult life living on the frontier near Indians, and he was a natural leader of men. This is not to say that Kearny would not have convinced the Indians to open negotiations with the government. But considering the dragoons’ mission that summer, Henry Dodge’s skills and experience made him an excellent choice to lead the expedition.

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 5: 380.

On 25 July, accompanied by representatives from the Comanche, Wichita, and Kiowa nations, the dragoons began their return trip. Within two days, they reached their sick camp, or “Camp Finley” as Hugh Evans called it. “We found this camp in a desolate situation,” the sergeant wrote, “having to remain on post every alternate hour for three days without ever being relieved; the sick some little on the recovery.”<sup>74</sup> In truth, the rest of the command was in little better shape. It was extremely short of supplies. Dodge had expected General Leavenworth to meet him and follow up with the wagons.<sup>75</sup>

Henry Leavenworth had not rendezvoused with Dodge for a good reason: the general was dead. He had intended, as Dodge expected, to follow the dragoons with infantry and the supply train. The general had gotten as far as the Cross Timbers when he passed away. Captain Dean of the Third Infantry, commanding the infantry force, then reported back to Colonel Kearny at Camp Smith. Kearny, now the senior officer present, initially told Dean to cut a road through the Cross Timbers and wait to hear from Colonel Dodge.<sup>76</sup> Later, on reading Leavenworth’s order book, Kearny learned of the general’s intent to move forward and meet Dodge. On the twenty-fourth, as Dodge wrapped up his negotiations, Kearny ordered Dean to try and make it through the Cross Timbers with whatever healthy infantrymen he had and the supply wagons. This too ultimately failed, largely because Dean’s men were now overwhelmingly sick. Kearny reported to the

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<sup>74</sup> Perrine and Foreman, “Journal of Hugh Evans,” 206.

<sup>75</sup> Wheelock’s journal, 381.

<sup>76</sup> Kearny to R. Jones, Camp Smith, 22 July 1834; Southwestern Frontier Records (NAMP M1302, roll 2); Records of Armies; RG 393; NAB.

Adjutant General that he could not move the detachment to meet his commander because the colonel had left him burdened with so many sick men, sick horses, and baggage.<sup>77</sup>

When the supply wagons did not arrive, Colonel Dodge needed to find an alternative food source without delay. He sent a messenger to find General Leavenworth and marched his command northeast, hoping to come across buffalo near the Canadian River. The dragoons did so, almost immediately. Wheelock observed on 29 July, “The cry of buffalo was heard, and never was the cheering sound of land better welcomed by wearied mariners, than this by our hungry columns.” For several days, through 2 August, the command found itself in the middle of buffalo country, and set to killing beasts and preserving as much meat as possible.<sup>78</sup>

Buffalo were plentiful; water was not. George Catlin noted that often the only water available consisted of stagnant pools, some of them large enough to hold wallowing buffalo. Nonetheless, some of the dragoons “sprang from their horses, and laded [sic] up and drank to almost fatal excess, the disgusting and tepid draught.” Catlin believed this water to be

The cause of the unexampled sickness of the horses and men. Both appeared to be suffering and dying from the same disease, a slow and distressing bilious fever, which seems to terminate in a most frightful and fatal affection of the liver.<sup>79</sup>

In these conditions, with sick men and horses getting sicker by the day, Colonel Dodge decided to return to Fort Gibson by the most direct path. As a result, the dragoons

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<sup>77</sup> Kearny to R. Jones, Camp Smith, 29 July 1834; Southwestern Frontier Records (NAMP M1302, roll 2); Records of Armies; RG 393; NAB.

<sup>78</sup> Wheelock’s journal, 5: 381.

<sup>79</sup> Catlin, *North American Indians*, 2: 77.

crossed the South Fork of the Canadian River some 100 miles north of Camps Washita and Smith.<sup>80</sup> If Captain Dean and the supply wagons had made it through the Cross Timbers, they likely would not have found Dodge's command.

Despite the near-desperate straits in which Dodge's men found themselves, at least one had the mental energy to wittily consider their plight. Sergeant Evans recounted on 4 August:

In many places [today] is spent by the citizens in electioneering careers & oratorical strains But not so by us [. O]ur principal [thought] is to obtain something to eat. Demagogues [sic] may prate for honor & profit, But a poor Dragoon could tell a more pitying and interesting tale to supply his immediate necessities.<sup>81</sup>

The next day, Dodge's messenger returned from Camp Smith with word of the death of General Leavenworth, as well as dragoon Lt. George McClure. Dodge sent orders to Colonel Kearny to begin making his way to Fort Gibson. Dodge's command, with the same orders, entered the Cross Timbers north of the Canadian.

The dragoons had a tough time traversing the Cross Timbers. They often had to cut their way through. Men and horses alike suffered from the lack of water. But the command emerged on the tenth, reaching Camp Canadian the same day. Home was finally in sight. The expedition left many sick at Camp Canadian, and drew rations for the last few days' of travel upon the road to Fort Gibson. Colonel Dodge and his staff passed through the fort's gates on the evening of 15 August. Colonel Kearny and his detachment arrived on the twenty-fourth.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Wheelock's journal, 5: 381.

<sup>81</sup> Perrine and Foreman, "Journal of Hugh Evans," 209.

<sup>82</sup> Wheelock's journal, 5: 382.

## Analysis and Conclusions

The dragoons succeeded in their mission, but at a terrible cost. The regimental return for August reported only 241 men present for duty. Another 165 were either present but sick, or sick at Camp Canadian.<sup>83</sup> Lieutenant Cooke believed that, at some time during the expedition, three-quarters of the regiment had been ill.<sup>84</sup> George Catlin, himself trying to recover at Fort Gibson, noted that the Prussian botanist Beyrick died of the illness, and that six or eight soldiers – including members of the Seventh Infantry garrisoning the fort – died daily.<sup>85</sup> He estimated a third of the dragoons on the expedition had already died, and “I believe many more there are whose fates are sealed, and will yet fall victims to the deadly diseases contracted in that fatal country.”<sup>86</sup> Catlin’s estimate was wrong, as the regiment reported only eighty-two deaths between June and December 1834. But his broader point is well taken. As late as March 1835, illness and death helped reduce the average dragoon company to only nineteen men present for duty.<sup>87</sup>

Philip St. George Cooke, ruminating on his experiences, later wrote that the regiment “marched full six weeks too late . . . the thermometer having previously risen to

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<sup>83</sup> Regimental return, Regiment of Dragoons, August 1834; Cavalry Returns (NAMP 744, roll 1); Cavalry Records; RG 391; NAB.

<sup>84</sup> Philip St. George Cooke, *Scenes and Adventures in the Army; or, Romance of Military Life* (Philadelphia: Lindsay & Blakiston, 1857; reprint edition New York: Arno Press, 1973), 225.

<sup>85</sup> Catlin, *North American Indians*, 2: 80 – 81. He erroneously referred to the Seventh as the “9<sup>th</sup> Regiment,” which was inactive between 1815 and 1847.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 2: 82.

<sup>87</sup> Regimental returns, Regiment of Dragoons, June 1834 – March 1835; Cavalry Returns (NAMP 744, roll 1); Cavalry Records; RG 391; NAB.

[105 degrees] in the shade, there was every prospect of a summer of unexampled heat.”<sup>88</sup> He concluded simply, “Nature would seem to have conspired with an imbecile military administration for the destruction of the regiment.”<sup>89</sup> Surely he was right, but how much did each factor contribute? Could the regiment have avoided the worst of its travails?

George Catlin blamed a great number of deaths on something in the water. That was probably *V. cholerae*, the bacterium that causes cholera. Observers noted its presence at Fort Gibson in April 1834.<sup>90</sup> The disease thrives in conditions like those under which the dragoons served. It is easily transmitted person to person, or by drinking contaminated water. In the close quarters of a military encampment, it would not be long until the disease ran rampant. One of its symptoms is excessive watery diarrhea. In an age when doctors did not frequently wash their hands, or sterilize clothes and bedding, those treating the disease could accidentally help to spread it. Common nineteenth-century cholera treatments were counterproductive. Modern medicine relies on rehydration to treat cholera, but many doctors at the time believed in restricting fluids. Others believed in liberal doses of calomel, a mercury-based compound.<sup>91</sup> In 1835, an army surgeon

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<sup>88</sup> Cooke, *Scenes and Adventures*, 225. According to newspaper reports, the temperature at Fort Gibson that July and August regularly exceeded 100 degrees. See the *Portland (Maine) Advertiser*, 14 October 1834, p. 2.

<sup>89</sup> Cooke, *Scenes and Adventures*, 225.

<sup>90</sup> See *Niles' Weekly Register* (Baltimore), 24 May 1834, 201; *Pittsfield (Massachusetts) Sun*, 29 May 1834, 3; and “From the Far West,” *Baltimore Gazette and Daily Advertiser*, 13 September 1834, 2.

<sup>91</sup> Charles E. Rosenberg, *The Cholera Years: The United States in 1832, 1849, and 1866* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 66.



serving in Oklahoma suggested “the fearful mortality among the Dragoons . . . may be attributed to the tea-spoon doses of calomel commonly given.”<sup>92</sup>

The dragoons, then, could not have avoided the cholera epidemic. They could have minimized their suffering, however, if they had left earlier. But this was not a realistic possibility. The regiment was neither completely assembled nor well supplied by 1 May, the date Major General Macomb anticipated the regiment leaving for the Wichita village.<sup>93</sup> Throughout May, Leavenworth claimed shortages of all kinds of supplies. If the Regiment of Dragoons had left Camp Jackson on 1 May, then they could have avoided the worst of the summer’s heat, presumably returning to Fort Gibson around 1 July. But the regiment would have been drastically undersupplied. It could not have left Fort Gibson much earlier than it did.

During the expedition, Lieutenant Cooke was assigned to Company G, and so he may have known Sgt. Hugh Evans. As a regular officer, Cooke kept a correct distance between himself and his men. But any sergeant who wondered if Independence Day revelers knew of “young hardy and enterprising dragoons,” who spoke of honorably serving his country regardless of hardship, and cracked wise on contemporary politicians certainly was cut from the same cloth as the West Pointer. After all, Cooke believed the only reason the first battalion left Jefferson Barracks in the wintertime was “*that the corps being raised for the defence of the frontier, would be disbanded if it remained*

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<sup>92</sup> Harold W. Jones, ed., “The Diary of Assistant Surgeon Leonard McPhail on His Journey to the Southwest in 1835,” *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 18 (September 1940): 290.

<sup>93</sup> See chapter five.

*inactive so far in the interior as Jefferson Barracks.*”<sup>94</sup> It is difficult to escape the conclusion that the government rushed the Regiment of Dragoons into action before it was fully ready. The credit for the successful escort of the Santa Fe caravan and council with the Wichita, Comanche, and Kiowa Indians lies with Captain Wharton and Colonel Dodge, respectively; subordinate officers like Cooke; and men like Evans.

Colonel Dodge feared that the dragoons had let down the country. It must have come as a great relief to hear that he and his regiment received plaudits from on high. Lewis Cass mentioned in his annual report for 1834 that “Colonel Dodge, who led the expedition, and his whole command appear to have performed their duties in a most satisfactory manner, and they encountered with firmness the privations incident to the harassing service upon which they were ordered.”<sup>95</sup> President Jackson, in his annual message for 1834, agreed that “Colonel Dodge and the troops under his command have acted with equal firmness and humanity.”<sup>96</sup> The dragoons succeed where infantry and mounted rangers could not. In doing so, they secured a permanent place in the regular army for cavalry.

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<sup>94</sup> Cooke, *Scenes and Adventures*, 220; emphasis in original.

<sup>95</sup> “Annual Report of the Secretary of War, Showing the Condition of that Department in 1834,” 27 November 1834; *ASP: MA* 5: 358.

<sup>96</sup> Andrew Jackson, “Sixth Annual Message,” 1 December 1834; The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29476>, accessed 30 March 2011.

CHAPTER 7  
“JUSTICE, MAGNANIMITY, HUMANITY, AND POWER”: PATROLLING THE  
PERMANENT INDIAN FRONTIER, 1834 – 1836

In December 1835, Maj. Gen. Alexander Macomb issued his annual report on the condition of the army. It was a brief document, half of which discussed the Regiment of Dragoons. The commanding general offered the new unit this tribute: “There is no doubt that their presence has had the effect of keeping the Indians quiet, and of preventing those depredations and hostilities which, before the raising of this regiment, had so frequently occurred on the frontiers.” He concluded, “The dragoons may be regarded as a very efficient corps, and a valuable acquisition to the military establishment.”<sup>1</sup>

By that winter, the dragoons had essentially closed the opening period of their existence as a regular mounted unit. In part, they were victims of their own success. In 1835, three separate detachments of dragoons had visited three distinct regions of the country. As a result of their tours, many Indian nations agreed on peace with the United States, and with each other. General Macomb rightly noted that the regiment had a positive effect on the tranquility of the Indians beyond the Permanent Indian Frontier.

Other reasons accounted for the end of the dragoons’ patrols. A new Indian war in Florida and the threat of an Indian war in Texas drew the scant resources of the regular army to those areas. Because the dragoons had helped negotiate peace on the Plains, government officials felt safe in introducing new measures for frontier defense. These events led the War Department to alter the Regiment of Dragoons’ patrolling mission.

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<sup>1</sup> “Report of the Major General of the Army,” December 1835; enclosed with “Annual Report of the Secretary of War, Showing the Condition of that Department in 1835,” 30 November 1835; *American State Papers: Military Affairs (ASP: MA)* 5: 632.

## Deploying the Dragoons along the Frontier, September 1834

In May 1834, as the dragoons prepared for their first expedition, the War Department issued General Order 41. This order contained two parts. The first formally directed the Dodge-Leavenworth Expedition to get underway. The second part specified the stations the regiment would occupy after its return. Lieutenant Col. Stephen Watts Kearny would march a detachment of three companies to the mouth of the Des Moines River.<sup>2</sup> Major Richard B. Mason would command three companies and remain near Fort Gibson. The remaining four companies, along with Col. Henry Dodge and regimental headquarters, would take up station at Fort Leavenworth.<sup>3</sup>

Senior officers debated the wisdom of dispersing the dragoons after their return from the field. Colonel Matthew Arbuckle argued that “as great a portion of the Regt. of Dragoons as can be spared” ought to be posted on the Red River, the boundary with Mexico, until the Indians made peace with each other.<sup>4</sup> Brevet Brig. Gen. Henry Leavenworth objected to posting seven of the dragoon companies on the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers. This plan left only three on the Arkansas and none on the Red to deal with Indians in present-day Oklahoma. But he suggested only minor changes, noting,

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<sup>2</sup> Perhaps because the U. S. Army had not had cavalry for some time, the army did not use traditional terms related to that arm. It referred to dragoon companies, not troops, and battalions or detachments, not squadrons. The field officers commanding the dragoons consistently used the term “detachment” to refer to their separate commands.

<sup>3</sup> General Order 41, 19 May 1834, General Orders and Circulars of the War Department and Headquarters of the Army, 1809-1860 (GO-C) (National Archives Microfilm Publication [NAMP] M1094, roll 3); Orders, Muster Rolls, and Returns (Orders); Record Group 94, Records of the Adjutant General’s Office, 1780s – 1917 (RG 94); National Archives Building, Washington, D.C. (NAB).

<sup>4</sup> Col. Matthew Arbuckle to Col. Henry Leavenworth, Fort Gibson, 3 May 1834; Records of Headquarters, Army of the Southwestern Frontier, and Headquarters, Second and Seventh Military Departments, 1835 – 1853 (Southwestern Frontier Records) (NAMP M1302, roll 2); Records of Armies, 1832 – 1865 (Records of Armies); Record Group 393, Records of United States Army Continental Commands, 1821 – 1920 (RG 393); NAB.

“The people and their Representatives will however be better satisfied to have it so and therefore it is well enough.”<sup>5</sup>

Colonel Kearny disagreed with the plan entirely. He expected the regiment to sustain sharp losses in men and horses during its first campaign. In his opinion, that made Jefferson Barracks the best place for the dragoons. There “Horses can be most easily obtained, & Recruits collected . . . there are stables completed for 6 comps. of Horses and Quarters for 6 comps. of Soldiers.” Rather than being stationed piecemeal on the frontier, Kearny believed the regiment could do more good by occasional visits to the Indians.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, the commander of Jefferson Barracks, Col. Henry Atkinson, agreed with the War Department plan. He would station the dragoons at the most important points on the frontier. Either Kearny or Mason’s detachments could easily combine with Dodge, creating a force of seven companies. The dragoons, already on the frontier, could rapidly respond to Indian attacks.<sup>7</sup>

Despite the objections of Arbuckle, Leavenworth, and Kearny, the dragoons redeployed as ordered. Unfortunately, all three detachments took up their stations understrength. Kearny and his detachment arrived at Camp Des Moines on 25 September

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<sup>5</sup> Leavenworth to Lewis Cass, the Secretary of War, Fort Gibson, 29 May 1834; File L 134 1834, Letters Received, 1805 – 1889, Main Series (LR 1805 – 1889) (NAMP M567, roll 99); Correspondence, 1800 – 1917 (Correspondence); RG 94; NAB.

<sup>6</sup> Lt. Col. Stephen W. Kearny to Cass, Jefferson Barracks, 19 May 1834; enclosed with Col. Henry Atkinson, to Maj. Gen. Alexander Macomb, the Commanding General, Jefferson Barracks, 29 May 1834; File A 92 1834, LR 1805 – 1889 (NAMP M567, roll 91); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

<sup>7</sup> Atkinson to Macomb, Jefferson Barracks, 29 May 1834; File A 92 1834, LR 1805 – 1889 (NAMP M567, roll 91); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

1834.<sup>8</sup> Colonel Dodge and his command reached Leavenworth on the twenty-seventh.<sup>9</sup> As late as November 1834 there were still 75 dragoons at Fort Gibson proper, sick or otherwise detached from their companies.<sup>10</sup> This represented approximately one-sixth of the reported strength for the entire regiment.<sup>11</sup> Arbuckle, commanding the southwestern frontier, wanted to transfer all of these men to Major Mason's command. He rationalized that Camp Des Moines and Fort Leavenworth were easier to supply with dragoon recruits.<sup>12</sup> Both Dodge and Kearny protested that this would leave their commands severely under strength.<sup>13</sup> Ultimately, the War Department supplied recruits to the different posts at different times in 1835.<sup>14</sup>

Another problem common to all three detachments stemmed indirectly from the lack of manpower. The dragoons, ostensibly a mounted unit, again had to build their own stables. All three detachment commanders noted this constituted an imposition on their

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<sup>8</sup> Bvt. 2d Lt. Joseph P. Harrison, Acting Assistant Adjutant General, Right Wing, Western Department, to Col. Roger Jones, the Adjutant General of the Army, Jefferson Barracks, 1 October 1834; File A 185 1834, LR 1805 – 1889 (NAMP M567, roll 91); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

<sup>9</sup> Col. Henry Dodge to George W. Jones, Fort Leavenworth, 1 October 1834; Henry Dodge Papers (microfilm), State Historical Society of Iowa, Des Moines.

<sup>10</sup> Arbuckle to R. Jones, Fort Gibson, 11 November 1834; Southwestern Frontier Records (NAMP M1302, roll 1); Records of Armies; RG 393; NAB.

<sup>11</sup> Regimental return, Regiment of Dragoons, November 1834; Returns of the 1<sup>st</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>- Cavalry Regiments (Cavalry Returns) (NAMP M744, roll 1); Records of the Cavalry 1833-1941 (Cavalry Records); Record Group 391, Records of United States Regular Army Mobile Units, 1821-1942 (RG 391); NAB.

<sup>12</sup> Arbuckle to R. Jones, Fort Gibson, 11 November 1834; Southwestern Frontier Records (NAMP M1302, roll 1); Records of Armies; RG 393; NAB.

<sup>13</sup> Dodge to Arbuckle, Fort Leavenworth, 21 December 1834; Southwestern Frontier Records (NAMP M1302, roll 2); Records of Armies; RG 393; NAB; Kearny to R. Jones, Camp Des Moines, 3 January 1835; File K 4 1835, LR 1805 – 1889 (NAMP M567, roll 110); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

<sup>14</sup> Regimental returns, Regiment of Dragoons, April, August, and September 1835; Cavalry Returns (NAMP M744, roll 1); Cavalry Records; RG 391; NAB. See also General Order 42, 7 July 1835; GO-C (NAMP M1094, roll 4); Orders; RG 94; NAB.

men above and beyond their regular duties.<sup>15</sup> Mason convinced Brig. Gen. Edmund P. Gaines, commanding the Western Department, to relieve the dragoons from construction duty.<sup>16</sup> But Mason's was a special case, as infantrymen from Fort Gibson could be assigned the job. Even then, the construction remained ongoing over a year later.<sup>17</sup> As for Kearny and Dodge, their posts had no infantrymen to relieve the dragoons of such duty.

The use of the army as law enforcement agents on the frontier was a third commonality among the detachments. The army was long charged with enforcing federal law in the territories and other areas outside of state jurisdictions.<sup>18</sup> Two acts passed by Congress in the early 1830s re-emphasized the army's constabulary role. An act of 1832 banned liquor from being introduced into Indian lands.<sup>19</sup> The Indian Intercourse Act of 1834 made more fundamental changes. All lands west of the Mississippi, save those in Missouri and Arkansas Territory, were re-designated "Indian country."<sup>20</sup> Not only did this act confirm the alcohol ban, but it also forbade unlicensed traders and white squatters from entering Indian lands. The act authorized the President of the United States to use

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<sup>15</sup> Dodge to R. Jones, Fort Leavenworth, 15 October 1834; File D 136 1834, LR 1805 – 1889 (NAMP M567, roll 95); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB; Kearny to R. Jones, Camp Des Moines, 26 September 1834; File K 57 1834, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 98); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB; Major Richard Mason to R. Jones, Camp Jones, Creek Nation, 8 September 1834; File M 223 1834, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 99); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

<sup>16</sup> See 1st Lt. George A. McCall, Acting Assistant Adjutant General, Western Department, to Arbuckle, Memphis, 28 December 1834; Southwestern Frontier Records (NAMP M1302, roll 2); Records of Armies; RG 393; NAB.

<sup>17</sup> Mason to McCall, Dragoon Quarters near Fort Gibson, 15 September 1835, enclosed with Mason to 1st Lt. Washington Seawell, Acting Assistant Adjutant General, Army of the Southwestern Frontier, Dragoon Quarters near Fort Gibson, 15 September 1835; Southwestern Frontier Records (NAMP M1302, roll 2); Records of Armies; RG 393; NAB; Arbuckle to McCall, Fort Gibson, 15 September 1835; Southwestern Frontier Records (NAMP M1302, roll 2); Records of Armies; RG 393; NAB.

<sup>18</sup> See chapter two.

<sup>19</sup> Act of 9 July 1832, ch. 174, 4 *Statutes at Large* 564.

<sup>20</sup> Act of 30 June 1834, ch. 161, 4 *Stat.* 729.

the military to enforce these provisions. In addition, the military could arrest Indians committing crimes against American citizens, as well as “in preventing or terminating hostilities between any of the Indian tribes.”<sup>21</sup>

Mason and Kearny’s detachments, in particular, adopted a constabulary role almost from the moment they occupied their respective stations. In the winter of 1834 – 1835, Lt. James Bowman toured the area around Fort Gibson and destroyed spirits introduced into the Indian country.<sup>22</sup> Kearny reported at that time that he had to send patrols to destroy “Grog Shops . . . seducing our men, who have been hitherto most temperate, to become dissipated.”<sup>23</sup> Bowman received orders in November 1835 to seize an alleged white murderer who had entered Cherokee lands, and to search for whiskey while on patrol.<sup>24</sup>

Nonetheless, as the fall of 1834 turned into the winter and spring of 1835, the most challenging duty lying ahead of the regiment was the charge to make and enforce peace between the Indian nations in its patrol territory.<sup>25</sup> Each detachment would have its own separate adventures in 1835, but they all sought to achieve this common goal. The

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 732.

<sup>22</sup> Seawell to Bvt. 2d Lt. James M. Bowman, Fort Gibson, 27 December 1834; Southwestern Frontier Records (NAMP M1302, roll 1); Records of Armies; RG 393; NAB.

<sup>23</sup> Kearny to R. Jones, Camp Des Moines, 1 February 1835; File K 7 1835, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 98); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

<sup>24</sup> 1st Lt. Dixon S. Miles, Acting Assistant Adjutant General, Army of the Southwestern Frontier, to Bowman, Fort Gibson, 5 November 1835; Southwestern Frontier Records (NAMP M1302, roll 1); Records of Armies; RG 393; NAB.

<sup>25</sup> General Order 12, 9 March 1835, GO-C (NAMP M1094, roll 3); Orders; RG 94; NAB, sets out the patrol territories and orders for the spring and summer.



Regiment of Dragoons, despite its reduced size and unrealistically broad goals, made a significant contribution to federal Indian policy that spring and summer.

#### Mason's Detachment and the Camp Holmes Treaty, 1834 – 1835

Major Mason's detachment played an important role in securing a treaty with the nomadic Indians that the dragoons encountered in 1834. That story actually begins with Colonel Dodge's return to Fort Gibson in September 1834. The colonel had brought with him Indians representing the Comanche, Wichita, and Kiowa nations. Representatives from the immigrant Indian nations – Seneca, Choctaw, Cherokee, Creek, and Osage – also came to the fort. As the instructions to the Stokes Commission had expired, no one had the explicit authority to act on behalf of the United States. Just the same, Dodge, Governor Stokes, and Francis W. Armstrong, the Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the Western Territory (the "Indian country") coached the nations in making their professions of peace to each other and the whites.<sup>26</sup> The three white leaders promised the Indians that another council to discuss a treaty would be held "when the grass next grows after the snows, which are soon to fall, have melted away."<sup>27</sup>

On the death of General Leavenworth, Matthew Arbuckle became the senior military officer on the southwestern frontier in his brevet rank of brigadier general. He believed that winning the friendship of the Comanche "very material to the further

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<sup>26</sup> For descriptions of the council, see George Catlin, *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Conditions of the North American Indians; Written During Eight Years' Travel Amongst the Wildest Tribes of Indians in North America*, 2 vols. (London: Self-published, 1841; reprinted New York: Dover Publications, 1973), 2: 82 – 83; Grant Foreman, ed., "The Journal of the Proceedings at Our First Treaty with the Wild Indians," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 14 (December 1936): 394; and Dodge to Brig. Gen. Edmund P. Gaines, Fort Gibson, 8 September 1834; File D 123 1834, filed with Gaines to R. Jones, Memphis, 30 September 1834; File G 224 1834, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 97); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

<sup>27</sup> Foreman, "Proceedings at Our First Treaty," 394.

tranquility of this Frontier.”<sup>28</sup> The general envisioned a grand council of all the Indians, emigrant and native, in the area. In the spring of 1835, Holland Coffee, who had opened a trading post on the Red River, brought word that the Indians also sought a treaty, as promised. Coffee also added the Indians did not want to travel back to Fort Gibson.<sup>29</sup>

Suitably intrigued, Lewis Cass appointed Stokes, Arbuckle, and Armstrong as Indian commissioners and empowered them to negotiate a treaty between the Indian nations and the United States.<sup>30</sup> Despite Coffee’s warnings that the western Indians would not come to Fort Gibson, Arbuckle continued to operate on the principle that they ultimately would. Mason received orders to march to a place on the Little River, a branch of the Canadian, and await the Comanche, Wichita, and Kiowa. He would then invite them to meet with the commissioners.<sup>31</sup> On 18 May, Mason left Fort Gibson with seventy-one dragoons.<sup>32</sup>

Mason reached his campground on 8 June. He chose a different site than Arbuckle had selected. An anonymous officer at Fort Gibson described Mason’s encampment, named Camp Holmes:

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<sup>28</sup> Arbuckle to R. Jones, Fort Gibson, 1 February 1835; Southwestern Frontier Records (NAMP M1302, roll 1); Records of Armies; RG 393; NAB.

<sup>29</sup> Foreman, “Proceedings of Our First Treaty,” 394. For a short biography of Holland Coffee, see Audy J. and Glenna P. Middlebrooks, “Holland Coffee of Red River,” *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 69 (October 1965): 146-62.

<sup>30</sup> Foreman, “Proceedings of Our First Treaty,” 398.

<sup>31</sup> Arbuckle to Mason, Fort Gibson, 18 May 1835; enclosed with Arbuckle to Macomb, Fort Gibson, 18 May 1835; Letters Received by the Headquarters of the Army, 1827 – 1903 (LR Hq Army) (NAMP M1635, roll 3); General Records; Records of Headquarters 1828-1903 (Hq Records); Record Group 108, Records of the Headquarters of the Army, 1828 – 1903 (RG 108); NAB.

<sup>32</sup> Arbuckle to Macomb, Fort Gibson, 18 May 1835; LR Hq Army (NAMP M1635, roll 3); General Records; Hq Records; RG 108; NAB.

[A] beautiful and healthy place, on the immediate border of [the Cross Timbers] to the east, with a level prairie of ten miles in width to the west, encircled round with sparse woods, and having there a fine running stream and a number of springs.”<sup>33</sup>

Mason had hoped this would be a more attractive meeting place for the Indians.

He was right. By early July, large numbers of Comanche, Kiowa, and Wichita had reached the camp.<sup>34</sup> In response, he called for reinforcements. Arbuckle sent him 100 infantrymen and a field piece.<sup>35</sup>

General Arbuckle had earlier given Major Mason permission to hold the council at Camp Holmes, should Indian leaders refuse to either go to Fort Gibson or deputize members of their bands to do so.<sup>36</sup> Mason reported back to Arbuckle that, indeed, the Indians would do neither.<sup>37</sup> The major informed the assembled Indians that the meeting would be held on 20 August, at the camp. Some Indians, notably the Kiowa, promptly left.<sup>38</sup> In late July, Mason tried to impress upon the commissioners how important it was that they arrive at Camp Holmes by 20 August:

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<sup>33</sup> “Frontier Movements,” *Army and Navy Chronicle* 1 (October 1835): 315. Also see Howard F. Van Zandt, “The History of Camp Holmes and Chouteau’s Trading Post,” *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 13 (September 1935): 316-37. Note that this post, sometimes called Camp Mason, is *not* the post built by Lt. T.H. Holmes in 1834 and referred to as “Camp Canadian” in chapter six.

<sup>34</sup> “Intelligence from the Dragoons,” *Army and Navy Chronicle* 1 (August 1835): 253. The article quotes from a letter Mason wrote on 2 July.

<sup>35</sup> Seawell to Capt. Francis Lee, Fort Gibson, 11 July 1835; Southwestern Frontier Records (NAMP M1302, roll 1); Records of Armies; RG 393; NAB.

<sup>36</sup> Arbuckle to Mason, Fort Gibson, 13 June 1835; Southwestern Frontier Records (NAMP M1302, roll 1); Records of Armies; RG 393; NAB.

<sup>37</sup> Mason to Arbuckle, Camp Holmes, 8 July 1835; Southwestern Frontier Records (NAMP M1302, roll 1); Records of Armies; RG 393; NAB.

<sup>38</sup> Mason to Seawell, Camp Holmes, 17 July 1835; Southwestern Frontier Records (NAMP M1302, roll 2); Records of Armies; RG 393; NAB.

[I]f from any accident the Commissioners should not be here at the appointed time I am sure that every tribe will immediately go off. I don't believe they will wait one single day. They all assembled this spring at Coffee's trading house with the expectation of having a council which they say Col. Dodge promised them last summer. They went off disappointed after waiting some time.<sup>39</sup>

In particular, the Comanche alternately fascinated and worried Mason. "The Comanches are such an exceedingly suspicious people," he wrote. "[T]hey are so entirely ignorant of the whites that they cannot comprehend why it is that we are so very desirous of keeping them here to make a peace with all the red people."<sup>40</sup> Mason's frustration, while understandable from his point of view, reveals a lack of appreciation for the Indian nations as autonomous political entities. Earlier he had written that an Osage had convinced many of the Indians present, including many individual Comanche, that "the object of the white people, in inviting them here to meet in council, was only to betray them into the hands of the Creeks, Cherokees, &c. &c."<sup>41</sup> From the Comanche perspective, distrust would seem natural enough. The whites had introduced eastern Indians to the area and now sought the western Indians' assurances not to molest the intruders.

The commissioners were delayed in leaving Fort Gibson for several reasons, notably the ill health of both Governor Stokes and Mr. Armstrong, the Indian agent. Armstrong was too ill to travel and died 6 August, the same day Stokes and Arbuckle

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<sup>39</sup> Mason to Seawell, Camp Holmes, 24 July 1835; Southwestern Frontier Records (NAMP M1302, roll 2); Records of Armies; RG 393; NAB.

<sup>40</sup> Mason to Seawell, Camp Holmes, 17 July 1835; Southwestern Frontier Records (NAMP M1302, roll 2); Records of Armies; RG 393; NAB.

<sup>41</sup> "Intelligence from the Dragoons," *Army and Navy Chronicle* 1 (August 1835): 253.

finally departed for Camp Holmes.<sup>42</sup> Arriving on 19 August, the commissioners were surprised to learn the Kiowa had left. To their relief, the remaining Comanche and Wichita told the whites they were empowered to sign a treaty with the United States on behalf of the Kiowa.<sup>43</sup>

The commissioners began discussions on 20 August as scheduled. The council included the Cherokee, Muscogee, Choctaw, Osage, Seneca, and Quapaw nations, as well as the Comanche and Wichita. On 24 August, the council concluded a treaty. That document's eight operative articles would have appeared to settle the Indian problems in Oklahoma for all time.<sup>44</sup> The Indian nations pledged "perpetual peace and friendship" to each other and the United States. The nations would forgive and forget past transgressions. The Indians would agree not to molest U.S. citizens passing along the Santa Fe Trail and additionally would remain at peace with the Mexicans. Each party would indemnify the other in case of theft. Surprisingly, the western Indians also agreed to article four, which stated, "Each and all of the said nations or tribes have free permission to hunt and trap in the Great Prairie west of the Cross Timber, to the western limits of the United States."

On the surface, it appeared the commissioners achieved something momentous in the Camp Holmes Treaty. Officials in Washington concurred. The Secretary of War noted that the dragoons had helped establish "permanent pacific relations" between the

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<sup>42</sup> Arbuckle to Mason, Fort Gibson, 6 August 1835; Southwestern Frontier Records (NAMP M1302, roll 1); Records of Armies; RG 393; NAB.

<sup>43</sup> Foreman, "Proceedings of Our First Treaty," 406.

<sup>44</sup> Treaty of 24 August 1835, 7 *Stat.* 474 – 77.

western Indians and the removed nations.<sup>45</sup> The Commissioner of Indian Affairs believed the treaty “will have a salutary effect in repressing a long-indulged spirit for depredation.”<sup>46</sup> From a distance, it appeared that the commissioners had fulfilled their instructions. Even the Kiowa, who had left Camp Holmes before the treaty assumed its final form, later came to Fort Gibson and eventually signed a treaty containing the same terms.<sup>47</sup>

Despite this, the peace signed at Camp Holmes faltered quickly. One problem was that, regardless of article four, the western Indians became upset that the immigrants trespassed on their historical hunting grounds. A much larger problem concerned the nearby international boundary. Invariably the nomadic nations blamed bands living in Texas for depredations on American soil. (Texan nomads committed some, but not all.) The Mexican government did not fail to notice that in the past three years, counting the operations of the Battalion of Mounted Rangers, the United States deployed large military forces near the border, and had now come to agreements with Indian nations living in those areas. The Mexican province on the American border – Texas – was about to explode in rebellion, and some Texans had differing ideas about how to treat their Indian neighbors.<sup>48</sup> The problems the federal government faced in dealing with the

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<sup>45</sup> “Annual Report of the Secretary of War, Showing the Condition of that Department in 1835,” 30 November 1835, *ASP: MA* 5: 627.

<sup>46</sup> U.S. House, “Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs,” 24 November 1835, *House Doc. No. 2*, serial no. 286, 265.

<sup>47</sup> C. C. Rister, “A Federal Experiment in Southern Plains Indian Relations,” *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 14 (December 1936): 451; Treaty of 26 May 1837, 7 *Stat.* 533.

<sup>48</sup> For an overview of Mexican, Texan, and United States relations with the western Indians in this period, see Gary Clayton Anderson, *The Conquest of Texas: Ethnic Cleansing in the Promised Land, 1820 – 1875* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005), 81 – 140.

western Indians thus had aspects in places outside of American control. The United States suffered great difficulty in pursuing peace while the Indians roamed in Mexico or Texas. (In truth, the 1845 annexation of Texas merely removed the international boundary. American Indian policy struggled to end the raids even after the Indians were entirely inside the United States.)

Despite all these complications, the Regiment of Dragoons effectively played its small part in executing federal Indian policy. The dragoons were integral to a successful negotiation of a treaty with the Comanche, Wichita, and Kiowa nations. To place the treaty's eventual failure on Major Mason is unrealistic. The reality of inter-Indian relations was complex, as Colonel Dodge would also realize.

#### Dodge's Expedition to the Rocky Mountains, 1835

The Osage did not only cause trouble for Major Mason. Their activities cost Colonel Dodge the use of one of his companies in late spring 1835. By treaty, the federal government assigned the Osage lands in the northern section of present-day Oklahoma. Hugh Evans, a sergeant in Company G, recorded in his journal that Capt. David Hunter's Company D had been sent to Fort Gibson, to "keep [the Osage] from committing deprivations [sic] they are so frequently engaged in."<sup>49</sup> Hunter arrived at Fort Gibson on 21 June and waited for three weeks. It turned out that the Osage were not at their village on the Neosho River, but instead out buffalo hunting. Hunter returned to Fort Leavenworth on 18 July.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Fred S. Perrine, ed., "Hugh Evans' Journal of Colonel Henry Dodge's Expedition to the Rocky Mountains in 1835," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 14 (September 1927): 194.

<sup>50</sup> Hunter to R. Jones, Fort Leavenworth, 20 July 1835; File H 133 1835, LR 1805 – 1889 (NAMP M567, roll 109); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

On the eve of the expedition's departure, Dodge wrote his friend George Jones about his aims. "I will have with me about One Hundred Dragoons, well armed & well mounted," the colonel related. "My route will be up the South Fork of the Platte to the head and then take a direct course to the Rocky Mountains. On reaching the mountains I will shape my course to the Arkansas River," following that stream to the Santa Fe Trail and then back to Fort Leavenworth. Dodge expected to meet the Otoe, Omaha, Arapaho, Cheyenne, and Blackfoot nations, along with the several bands of the Pawnee.<sup>51</sup>

Dodge also hoped to treat with the Arikara Indians. In 1823, Henry Leavenworth had gone to the Arikara villages on the Missouri, and boasted afterwards "the Ricarees [have been] humbled, and in such a manner as will teach them and other Indian tribes to respect the American name and character."<sup>52</sup> Yet in January 1835, Dodge told the Adjutant General that the Arikara, pushed off their lands by the Sioux, had gone to war with the other upper Plains Indian nations. While he called the Arikara "a faithless treacherous people," the colonel also believed "their wants may place them in a situation that may force them to make a peace that will be lasting with the U.S."<sup>53</sup>

Dodge's expedition left Fort Leavenworth on 29 May. He had with him three companies totaling only 117 dragoons, and two field pieces. John Dougherty, the agent for the Otoe and Pawnee nations, and John Gantt, former army officer and current Indian

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<sup>51</sup> Dodge to George Jones, Fort Leavenworth, 27 May 1835; Henry Dodge Papers (microfilm), State Historical Society of Iowa, Des Moines.

<sup>52</sup> "Condition of the Military Establishment and the Fortifications, and Returns of the Militia," 29 November 1823, *ASP: MA* 2: 594. For the particulars of the expedition to the Arikara villages, see *ibid.*, 578 – 97.

<sup>53</sup> Dodge to R. Jones, Fort Leavenworth, 18 January 1835; File D 30 1835, LR 1805 – 1889 (NAMP M567, roll 106); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.



trader, also accompanied the expedition.<sup>54</sup> The command marched northwest through the Kickapoo lands to the Otoe village on the Platte River, arriving there on 10 June and remaining for a week. Dodge held councils with the Otoe and nearby Omaha Indians.<sup>55</sup> It was here that Dodge first got a sense of with what the government had to deal. Big Elk, principal chief of the Omaha, listened to the colonel and replied:

I believe the presents you have spread before us have been the cause of creating a great deal of evil in our country. When I receive these presents I know that they are given by good men, and I feel grateful for them; but it has a contrary effect upon some of my neighbors, and they do not feel grateful when they receive these things for nothing, but think they are entitled to them.<sup>56</sup>

The expedition journal calls Big Elk “remarkable for his sound practical sense,” and the Otoe and Omaha “friendly with the whites.”<sup>57</sup> Thus the chief’s comments should be construed as friendly, almost fatherly advice. Dodge might find his mission more difficult than he hoped.

After the council on 17 June, the dragoons again took up the march. They moved through the Platte valley, arriving on the twenty-first at the Grand Pawnee village, approximately eighty miles from the Otoe village.<sup>58</sup> The previous day, the Grand Pawnee chief Angry Man met the expedition some ten or fifteen miles from the village. If Big Elk

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<sup>54</sup> Gaines P. Kingsbury, “Report on the Expedition of Dragoons, Under Colonel Henry Dodge, to the Rocky Mountains in 1835,” 27 February 1836, *ASP: MA* 6: 130 (hereafter cited as Kingsbury’s journal). Kingsbury, a dragoon lieutenant, served as adjutant and official diarist for the expedition.

<sup>55</sup> Kingsbury’s journal, 6: 131 – 32; Louis Pelzer, ed., “Captain Ford’s Journal of an Expedition to the Rocky Mountains,” *MVHR* 12 (March 1926): 554 – 55. But cf. Perrine, “Hugh Evans’ Journal,” 198, which makes no reference to the Omaha but puts the Ioway and Nemaha Indians at the councils.

<sup>56</sup> Kingsbury’s journal, 6: 132.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 133. Perrine, “Hugh Evans’ Journal,” 200, makes the distance 70 miles.

had only hinted at what awaited the dragoons, Angry Man made the intricate diplomacy of the Plains nations quite clear. The Pawnee were divided into four different bands, each with its own chief. Angry Man told Colonel Dodge that the Pawnee Loup, over whom he had no control, were stealing horses from the Wichita. As for his own band, the Grand Pawnees had nothing against the white man. Lieutenant Kingsbury cynically remarked the chief “appeared to possess all the ingenuity of a modern politician.”<sup>59</sup> As a whole, the Pawnee were at war with the Sioux, Cheyenne, and Arapaho at the time of Dodge’s visit. The colonel halted at the Grand Pawnee village, in hopes of holding a council with all the Pawnee bands.

Dodge and the chiefs of the Pawnee bands met in council on 23 June, in the Grand Pawnee village. The dragoon colonel opened by noting that, in the previous year, he had made peace with “your friends, the Pawnee Peets [Wichita], the Comanches, and Kiowas.” He continued, in what became a standard speech, that the Pawnee bands must make peace with each other, and the neighboring nations. “You see with me but a small part of the dragoons which your great father can send every year” to prevent the Indians and white settlers from interfering with each other. In the case of white intrusions, this included the introduction of alcohol, “which is the ruin and destruction of your people.”<sup>60</sup>

The Axe, chief of the Pawnee Loup, responded by admitting that his people had indeed stolen horses from the Wichita, only without his permission. He also accused the Grand Pawnee of stealing horses from his band, and told Angry Man “do not listen so

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<sup>59</sup> Kingsbury’s journal, 6: 133. The expedition journal says the Pawnee Loup were stealing from the “Pawnee Peets.” This is almost certainly meant to be “Pawnee Pict” and later uses in the journal confirm this nation to be the Wichita.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 6: 134.

much to bad men, and pay more attention to the advice of the good.” At this Angry Man turned to Dodge and more or less pled self-defense:

It is the words of our great father (the President) that has caused us to throw our weapons behind us and make peace. Here are our brothers around us, they go where they choose without the fear of being killed. It is our friends (the whites) that have produced all this change. I am desirous to have as many red friends as possible wherever I go. . . . Some of our friends accuse us of being squaws; but it is because the whites have given us this advice. You advise us to make friends with those around us. I wish to do so; but that makes some of our neighbors say we ought to wear petticoats.<sup>61</sup>

This should have given Dodge great pause. It is easy to say both the Axe and Angry Man were looking out for their own interests. Even so, the episode underscores how fragile a long-lasting peace on the northern plains would be. All of the Indian nations would have to forsake war with each other, for the desired peace to hold. Only the United States government could restrain all of the Indians, but not without a good deal more treasure, and manpower, and probably blood. And as the current government policy was to remove the Indians from land desired by whites, it was improbable, if not unthinkable, that a just peace on the plains would ever occur.

Nevertheless, good soldiers obey orders and attempt to carry them out to the best of their ability. At the close of the council, Dodge told the Pawnee he wanted them to live peacefully with the Cheyenne and Arapaho. The Pawnee agreed to send a delegate along with Dodge to assist in this.<sup>62</sup>

On 24 June, John Gantt went to the Pawnee Loup village, hoping to make contact with some Arikara rumored to be there. Meanwhile, the dragoons broke camp and again

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.; parentheses in original.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 6: 135.

took up the march. On the twenty-eighth, after the expedition had moved some sixty-five miles down the Platte valley, five Indians arrived in camp. They were two Arikara and three Pawnee. One of the latter was the brother of the Axe.<sup>63</sup> Dodge sent Gantt back out with an Arikara on 1 July, to gather a body of that nation nearby. By the Fourth of July, the command had passed the forks of the Platte, continuing along the south fork, and had progressed approximately 220 miles from the Grand Pawnee village. On the fifth, Gantt returned with 24 of the Arikara, including the chiefs.<sup>64</sup>

Lieutenant Kingsbury prefaced the description of the Arikara council by describing those Indians as “the wildest and most savage tribe of Indians west of the Mississippi.” The Arikara had “an inveterate hostility” to whites and were at war with nearly all of their neighbors. Still, he noted that the Sioux had driven them off of their lands. If the Arikara could somehow obtain land to call their own, the lieutenant believed they would settle down “and become a peaceful and industrious nation.”<sup>65</sup>

In many ways, the council resembled the council with the Pawnee. Dodge told the Arikara he was on a mission of peace, and that they had to stop fighting with other Indians, as well as whites. The president wished only the best for the Indians, and expected nothing in return. If the Arikara spurned him, however, Dodge warned, “The warrior who is the slowest to anger is the most terrible when forced to action; such is the character of your great father, the President of the United States.”<sup>66</sup> In response, the

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid. Perrine, “Hugh Evans’ Journal,” 201, claims four Pawnee Loup arrived.

<sup>64</sup> Perrine, “Hugh Evans’ Journal,” 202.

<sup>65</sup> Kingsbury’s journal, 6: 136.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 6: 137.

Arikara agreed to give up their raiding if the president did indeed grant them land on which to settle. Once the Arikara agreed to terms, Dodge gave them some presents. Kingsbury caustically concluded, “It was treating them so much better than they knew they deserved that they were quite overjoyed.”<sup>67</sup>

The council with the Arikara concluded, the expedition set out for its next objective. Dodge sought meetings with the Arapaho and Cheyenne, who inhabited the central plains. Those nations traded buffalo robes with white merchants at Bent’s Fort, operated by Charles and William Bent and Ceran St. Vrain. The merchants established the trading post on the Arkansas River, near present La Junta, Colorado, on the Santa Fe Trail. Dodge hoped to find Arapaho and Cheyenne at the fort.

Because the Arkansas River’s headwaters lay in the Rocky Mountains, the surest way for the dragoons to find the Arkansas was to travel south along the Rockies until they reached the river. Leaving the Arikara council, the dragoons continued along the south fork of the Platte River. On 15 July, Capt. Lemuel Ford noted in his journal that the mountains were only eighty-five or ninety miles away. “[O]ur command are in high spirits,” he wrote, “highly delighted with the prospect of being in a few days on the Rock[y] Mountains.”<sup>68</sup> Kingsbury agreed that, with the mountains in sight, “we saw the end of the march—the long-wished-for object of all our hopes.”<sup>69</sup> Hugh Evans, speaking

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 6: 138.

<sup>68</sup> Pelzer, “Captain Ford’s Journal,” 561.

<sup>69</sup> Kingsbury’s journal, 6: 138.

for the enlisted men, thought “the curiosity of seeing these grand & Majestic Mountains” caused many to have enlisted in the first place, for some now almost two years prior.<sup>70</sup>

The command worked its way past Pike’s Peak and south along the Rockies. On 30 July the expedition reached the Arkansas River, the boundary between the United States and Mexico. This day the dragoons also encountered several Arapaho.<sup>71</sup> Over the next few days the soldiers continued down the Arkansas until they reached Bent’s Fort. Dodge convened a council there with the Arapaho and Cheyenne on 11 August. The council also included members of the Gros Ventres and Blackfeet nations.

The Cheyenne seemed the biggest obstacle to Dodge’s plan for peace. At the moment they were disorganized, having split into three different villages, and were at war with the Comanche, Kiowa, Pawnee, and Arikara.<sup>72</sup> Dodge again asked all the Indians to be at peace with each other, taking pains to point out to the Cheyenne that they should make peace especially with the Comanche, and that the Pawnee had come with him to make peace with the Cheyenne and Arapaho.<sup>73</sup> The Cheyenne stalled, asking for time until their war parties returned. At this the Pawnee Loup traveling with the expedition said ominously:

Cheyennes and Arepahas [sic], this is the third or fourth time we have made peace; but it will not hold; you have never been to see us; we have always been the ones to come and see you . . . you have only stolen our horses and killed our people.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Perrine, “Hugh Evans’ Journal,” 206.

<sup>71</sup> Kingsbury’s journal, 6: 140.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 6: 141.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 6: 142. The journal does not provide the Pawnee’s name.

This notwithstanding, the Pawnee asked the Cheyenne and Arapaho to visit his village and assured them they would be welcomed peaceably.

With this mixed result, the dragoons broke camp on the evening of 12 August and headed back for Fort Leavenworth. Three days' march from Bent's Fort, the dragoons unexpectedly received another opportunity to help make peace on the plains. A large number of Cheyenne absent from the Bent's Fort council were at the dragoon camp on the Arkansas on the morning of the fifteenth when gunfire erupted over a line of hills a mile or so away. The soldiers investigated and encountered a party of Pawnee Loup and Arikara. The expedition journal recorded that the approaching Indians fired their weapons as part of a demonstration that they sought peace.<sup>75</sup> Less charitably, Captain Ford reasoned, "those Pawneys & Rees [Arikara] came here for the purpose of Stealing the Schian horses but on finding the dragoons in the vicinity thought it best to make it a campaign of peace."<sup>76</sup> In any event, the two sets of Indians exchanged gifts and the next day Dodge held an impromptu council, where he praised the Indians for making peace.<sup>77</sup>

From there the dragoons' return march to Fort Leavenworth witnessed little of consequence. Continuing along the Arkansas River, the command reached the point where the Santa Fe Trail crossed the river on the evening of 23 August. The next morning Dodge's men set off up the Santa Fe Trail, eventually reaching the fort on 16 September. During the whole expedition the command lost only one man, Pvt. Samuel Hunt of

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 6: 143.

<sup>76</sup> Pelzer, "Captain Ford's Journal," 568 – 69.

<sup>77</sup> Kingsbury's journal, 6: 143.

Company A, to “an inflammation of the Bowels” on 11 September.<sup>78</sup> The most likely explanation for only one casualty is that, unlike the summer of 1834, Dodge’s men did not march through broiling summer heat and cholera-infested regions. Lieutenant Kingsbury finished the expedition journal by stating “The expedition had exceeded in interest and success the most sanguine anticipations.”<sup>79</sup>

Officially, the expedition was a success. General Gaines, endorsing Dodge’s report of the expedition, exclaimed that the dragoons had impressed the Indians with “the *justice, magnanimity, humanity, and power* of our government and country” and thought Congress should award Dodge a sword for his efforts. (The other officers should receive pistols, according to the general, and the enlisted men extra pay.)<sup>80</sup> In reality, the tour failed to establish a permanent peace among the Plains Indian nations. But the inter-tribal warfare played to Washington’s advantage. Policymakers were most concerned with direct relations between each Indian nation and the federal government. Not only were many of these nations at war with each other, some – notably the Pawnee Loup band and the Cheyenne – were at war with the southern Plains nations that Dodge had visited the previous year.

The expedition demonstrated that, in this geopolitical environment, even a small number of white soldiers, properly led and mounted, could project American power into areas far beyond the line of white settlement. No Indian nation felt it could make a new enemy, even one that lived hundreds of miles to the east. The American government,

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<sup>78</sup> Pelzer, “Captain Ford’s Journal,” 574; Regimental return, Regiment of Dragoons, September 1835; Cavalry Returns (NAMP M744, roll 1); Cavalry Records; RG 391; NAB.

<sup>79</sup> Kingsbury’s journal, 6: 144.

<sup>80</sup> Kingsbury’s journal, 6: 146 (emphasis in original).



which did not have the power to unilaterally impose its will on the Plains Indians, ironically benefited from the absence of the peace it sought to compel.

Colonel Dodge's expedition should have validated the concept of American cavalry patrolling the Indian lands. Militarily, of course, it did. Politically, this concept was still under debate.

#### Kearny's Expedition to the North, 1835

The instructions for Colonel Kearny's expedition to the far north – present day Iowa and Minnesota – appeared, in fact, to accept the patrolling concept. His orders were twofold. First, the War Department directed him to find a new site for a permanent military post in Indian Country. Second, he was to treat with Santee Sioux Indians and help assure peace between them and the Sac and Fox nation. While Kearny carried out his orders ably, he did not attain either goal for reasons that proved beyond his control.

The War Department never intended Camp Des Moines to be a permanent post. Its location near present-day Montrose, Iowa, on the Des Moines River and practically on the Mississippi, prevented it from playing the constabulary role between the Santee Sioux and Sac and Fox nations that Fort Gibson played in the southwest. General Order 12 of 1835 directed him to march up the Des Moines to the fork of the Raccoon River and determine where in that vicinity the government should build a permanent fort. After Kearny had done that, his command should travel to the Sioux villages on the Mississippi and help make peace between the Sioux and the Sac and Fox.

Kearny left Camp Des Moines on 7 June with 146 men and eight Sac Indians. As Kearny had been ordered to first proceed to the Raccoon, he used the Sac as guides and marched northwest, keeping between the Des Moines and Skunk Rivers. Unfortunately,

his faith in the Sac was misplaced. After two weeks of traveling, Kearny expected to be below the Raccoon fork. Instead, on 21 June the command crossed the Des Moines, only to find itself forty or fifty miles above the Raccoon.<sup>81</sup> Irritated, Kearny decided to proceed to the Sioux village. He would return to the Raccoon instead of immediately backtracking.

A chief named Wabashaw led a band of Mdewakanton Sioux whose village sat near present-day Winona, Minnesota. The dragoons arrived in the vicinity of the village on 8 July, after traveling 230 miles northeast from the Des Moines. All in all, the command had traveled 420 miles since leaving Camp Des Moines.<sup>82</sup> Wabashaw and the other headmen were not in the village when the dragoons arrived. The soldiers spent most of the next two weeks in camp, relatively idle. An anonymous diarist in Company I recorded on 14 July, “We have seen but few of the soux & those we have seen give us a poor idea of this tribe. They are mostly a dirty thieving race living in the most abominable filthy manner.”<sup>83</sup> Wabashaw and the other Mdewakanton returned a couple of days later. Colonel Kearny held his council between the Sioux and the Sac on 20 July.

Kearny addressed the gathering first.<sup>84</sup> He hailed Wabashaw and introduced him to the Sac who had accompanied the dragoons, adding, “Your great father wishes these

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<sup>81</sup> Kearny to R. Jones, Fort Des Moines, 14 September 1835; File K 58 1835, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 110); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> Pelzer, ed., “A Journal of Marches by the First United States Dragoons, 1834-1835,” *Iowa Journal of History and Politics* 7 (July 1909): 371-72.

<sup>84</sup> This paragraph is derived from a description of the council appended to Kearny to R. Jones, Fort Des Moines, 14 September 1835; File K 58 1835, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 110); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

Sacs and Sioux to be at peace.” Next a member of the Sac spoke and agreed that the band wanted peace with the Sioux. Wabashaw responded by saying, “I am glad to see the Sacs here: but I see no Foxes, and it is they that I wished to see.” While he wanted peace with the Fox, he feared that the Fox would not see the Sioux peacefully. The chief then hopefully suggested the whites set up a trading post among the upper forks of the Des Moines River, neutral ground between the Sioux and the Sac and Fox, so that the two nations could meet peacefully.

On this inconclusive note, the council broke up and Kearny left to find the Raccoon River at its junction with the Des Moines. Marching west, the command became horribly lost, missing the Des Moines River entirely and instead finding the Blue Earth River in present-day Fairbault County, Minnesota. As the Company I diarist put it, “We are no nearer home than we were at Wabashaws village.”<sup>85</sup> Ten days of marching had been lost. At this, the command took up the heading of due south. Leaving the Blue Earth on 31 July, they found the west fork of the Des Moines on 3 August, and the mouth of the Raccoon River on 8 August.<sup>86</sup>

Kearny, as per orders, personally reconnoitered the ground at the mouth of the Raccoon River. He came up with three reasons to oppose a new post there. “After riding over a considerable portion of the Country myself,” he later wrote the Adjutant General, & sending officers in different directions with a view to the same object, I could neither see nor hear of any place that possessed the necessary

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<sup>85</sup> Pelzer, “Journal of Marches,” 374.

<sup>86</sup> Kearny to R. Jones, Fort Des Moines, 14 September 1835; File K 58 1835, LR 1805-1889 (NAMP M567, roll 110); Correspondence; RG 94; NAB.

advantages, or in my opinion was suitable for the establishment of a Military Post.<sup>87</sup>

The colonel further stated he felt a new post unnecessary because he believed the Sioux and the Sac and Fox sought peace. The Sac also feared a military post would scare away the game in the area.<sup>88</sup> The expedition then followed the Des Moines River back to Camp Des Moines, arriving on 19 August.

Kearny had carried out his orders, but the expedition was a strategic failure. According to the colonel, there was no good place to put a new military post. The Sioux indicated that they would not make peace with the Fox, which should have made Kearny suspicious of any professions of peace. (Sioux insistence on distinguishing between the Sac and Fox should have indicated to government officials that the two bands were not a unified nation.<sup>89</sup>) Kearny had done little to end the recent hostility among the Indians of the Old Northwest. Still, every Indian village dragoons visited that year welcomed the soldiers as friends, and Kearny's visit to Wabashaw's village was no exception. The Santee Sioux did not seek Americans as enemies. The Sac and Fox had recently learned how dangerous the Americans could be.

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid. In 1843 the War Department went ahead and built a post here anyway; this is the Fort Des Moines on the present site of Des Moines, Iowa.

One of the officers referred to in the quote was Lt. Albert M. Lea, who Kearny sent by boat down the Des Moines River to examine its prospects for navigation. Though only a junior officer, Lea became relatively prominent. The city of Albert Lea, Minnesota, is named for him. He also published a book, *Notes on Wisconsin Territory*, in 1836. This book was purportedly the first to refer to an "Ioway district," and was republished as *The Book that Gave Iowa its Name* (Iowa City: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1935).

<sup>89</sup> For the story of the uneasy co-existence of the Sac and Fox bands as one "nation," see Michael D. Green, "'We Dance in Separate Directions': Mesquakie (Fox) Separatism from the Sac and Fox Tribe," *Ethnohistory* 30 (Summer 1983): 129 – 40.

## The End of the Dragoon Patrols, 1835 – 1836

From the standpoint of government officials in Washington, the dragoon expeditions across the Plains in 1834 and 1835 netted positive results. The nomadic nations living in western Oklahoma agreed not to attack the immigrant Indian nations being removed from the eastern United States. The dragoons had also ostensibly laid the foundations for peace between the many contacted nations, and between them and the United States government. Rather suddenly, however, the government changed its tactics. After the summer of 1835, the dragoons would no longer march across Indian lands and visit the various nations. Why would the government abandon a peacekeeping doctrine with good prospects for continued success?

One reason, paradoxically, was the very success of the dragoons. Prior to 1834, the Comanche and Wichita nations had never enjoyed official contact with the government. In 1835, they entered into a peace treaty with the Americans. That was a direct result of Dodge's 1834 expedition and Mason's presence at the 1835 treaty council. To planners in Washington, the southern Plains seemed pacified and ready for permanent settlement by the removed Eastern tribes. Prospects for peace in the central Plains also appeared good.

Two new military developments also provided compelling reasons for a change in the Regiment of Dragoons' mission. In December 1835, after the dragoons had returned home for the year, Seminole Indians ambushed and massacred 108 American soldiers under the command of Maj. Francis Dade in Florida. This opened the Second Seminole

War, a conflict that would drag on until 1842.<sup>90</sup> By December 1836, in addition to U.S. Marines and thousands of short-term volunteers, the army in Florida included forty of the forty-five regular artillery companies, eight of the ten companies of the Fourth Infantry, and one company of dragoon recruits hastily sent to the war zone. This small force, estimated at 1,500 men, represented more than a third of the army's regulars present for duty.<sup>91</sup>

The army did not send the Regiment of Dragoons to fight in Florida. Instead, Congress raised a second dragoon regiment from scratch and dispatched it to the new war zone. (The army re-designated the Regiment of Dragoons as the First Regiment of Dragoons, and named the new regiment the Second Regiment of Dragoons.) Yet two officers from the elder regiment lost their lives in Florida. First Lt. Thompson Wheelock was one of three officers on recruiting duty who escorted the company of recruits to Florida. He died in June 1836 of illness.<sup>92</sup> First Lt. James F. Izard, who had been in New York on sick leave, volunteered to accompany the company. In March 1836 he was mortally wounded in combat. Colonel Kearny called his passing "a great loss to our regiment, [his] having been one of the most intelligent & gallant officers in it."<sup>93</sup> The

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<sup>90</sup> John K. Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War, 1835 – 1842* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1967) remains the most comprehensive study of the war.

<sup>91</sup> "Annual Report of the Secretary of War, Showing the Condition of that Department in 1836," 3 December 1836; *ASP: MA* 6: 806-07.

<sup>92</sup> General Order 6, 18 January 1836; GO-C (NAMP M1094, roll 4); Orders; RG 94; NAB; *Army and Navy Chronicle* 3 (July 1836): 41.

<sup>93</sup> Kearny to Mason, Fort Leavenworth, 24 April 1836; Headquarters Records of Fort Gibson, Indian Territory, 1830-1857 (NAMP M1466, roll 2); Records of Posts, 1820 – 1940; Records of United States Army Continental Commands, 1821-1920, Record Group 393; NAB.

colonel and other officers later expressed their regrets on his death in a tribute published in the *Army and Navy Chronicle*.<sup>94</sup>

Dramatic events in Texas precipitated a second drain on army manpower. As the Texans rose in rebellion against Mexico, rumors spread that the Mexicans had incited Indians against the Texans.<sup>95</sup> These rumors emanated mostly from the rebels, who hoped to entice American troops stationed at Fort Jesup, Louisiana, into entering Texas and intervening on their behalf. In January 1836, General Gaines arrived on the Texas – Louisiana border with orders to prevent Indian attacks. He had permission to cross the border to quell such depredations if the Indians responsible lived in the United States.

Gaines repeatedly called for regulars to man the border. With much of the army now pinned down in Florida, this was a difficult request to fill. Eventually, the army moved Major Mason's detachment of dragoons and six companies of the Seventh Infantry to Fort Towson and then on to Nacogdoches. The Secretary of War laconically noted those troops were still there in September.<sup>96</sup> While Nacogdoches sat inside Texas, Gaines' soldiers moved no farther. Both President Jackson and Congress disapproved of any attempt at annexation. All the same, the deployment prevented the southernmost detachment of dragoons from undertaking a summer tour of the plains.

A policy change, rather than tumult in Texas, had a longer-lasting effect on the deployment of the First Dragoons. In February 1836, Cass introduced a new plan for frontier defense. Traditionally, the army set up military posts based on what were

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<sup>94</sup> "The Late Lieut. J. F. Izard," *Army and Navy Chronicle* 2 (May 1836): 316.

<sup>95</sup> See Anderson, *Conquest of Texas*, 109 – 125.

<sup>96</sup> "Annual Report of the War Department, Showing the Condition of that Department in 1836," 3 December 1836, *ASP: MA* 6: 819.

essentially local factors – geography and the soldiers’ ability to restrain the Indians’ behavior. But with a regular process of re-settlement into the Indian Country occurring, the time had come for a systematic program of frontier defense.<sup>97</sup> “The great object,” he continued, “is to make such arrangements as will distribute . . . a sufficient force to overawe the Indians, and to intercept any parties who might be disposed to make interruptions upon our settlements.” Cass proposed a military road, running from Fort Snelling, through present Iowa, then west of Missouri and Arkansas, down to Fort Towson on the Red River. On opening the road, the army would establish intermediate stations garrisoned by small detachments of troops. All posts west of the road would be abandoned. The dragoons stationed at Camp Des Moines would be moved to the northern terminus of the road.<sup>98</sup>

This plan abandoned the system of peacekeeping and deterrence patrols that the dragoons executed in 1834 and 1835. It focused instead on the possibility of Indian attacks on white settlements, which was largely a political bogeyman by this time in history. Nonetheless many western citizens continued to embrace this fear.<sup>99</sup> Congress approved the plan in July 1836.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Cass to Thomas H. Benton, 19 February 1836; “On the Establishment of a Line of Posts and Military Roads for the Defense of the Western Frontiers Against the Indians,” 3 March 1836; *ASP: MA* 6: 150.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 6: 151.

<sup>99</sup> See “Application of Citizens from Clay County, Missouri, For the Erection of Military Posts and Opening Military Roads, Etc., Around the Frontier of that State,” 24 December 1835; *ASP: MA* 5: 729 – 31. At the time of this memorial, Clay County’s western border was on the Permanent Indian Frontier.

<sup>100</sup> Act of 2 July 1836, ch. 258, 5 *Stat.* 67.



This road was never built. Cass resigned as Secretary of War in 1836. After an interim secretary in the closing months of the Jackson administration, Joel Poinsett became Secretary of War in March 1837. He introduced a different plan, one that proposed roads running perpendicular to the Permanent Indian Frontier, not parallel to it. He was unable to fully implement his plan as well.<sup>101</sup> But the mood of the country had definitely shifted. Both the Cass and the Poinsett plans called for troop concentrations positioned to ensure a quick response to Indian incursions. The First Dragoons had shifted from preventive diplomacy to a reactive mode. It would be several years before the dragoons again toured the prairies.

### Conclusion

During the summer of 1835, the Regiment of Dragoons visited Indian nations, as it had the previous year. The three dragoon detachments achieved their immediate goals. Richard Mason and his troopers helped convince the nomadic Indians living in Oklahoma to make peace with emigrant Indians from the East, and the U.S. government. Henry Dodge visited with several Indian nations during his expedition, and they all agreed to seek a nominal peace with each other. Even Stephen Watts Kearny carried out his stated orders, holding a council with the Sioux and Sac and Fox, and reconnoitering lands for a new post in Iowa.

In the long term, however, the 1835 expeditions did little more than mark the end of the opening period in American policy towards the trans-Mississippi Indians. For all the difficulties Dodge and the regiment suffered in 1834, their mission was simple: to

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<sup>101</sup> Francis Paul Prucha, *Sword of the Republic: The United States Army on the Frontier, 1783 – 1846* (New York: Macmillan, 1969; reprinted Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), 342 – 57.

open official contact with the Kiowa, Wichita, and Comanche. In 1835, policymakers dispatched the dragoons to begin imposing American will on the Indians. Arguably, annual visits could have convinced the Indians that the American government had come to stay (even if the visits had a limited moral effect after the dragoons had returned home). But Washington officials seem to have overestimated the effect of the expeditions. Combined with events in Florida and Texas, the dragoons' short-term success led to a change in Plains Indian policy, one that kept the dragoons from the interior of Indian Country.

## CHAPTER 8 CONCLUSION

The formative period of the Regiment of Dragoons represents an attempt by Congress and the War Department to reform America's frontier military. These reforms – a permanent mounted unit, an officer corps partially drawn from civilians living in western states, and enlisted men recruited from a seemingly virtuous class of citizens – were not radical departures from American military traditions. They originated in the volunteer military experience. When added to an existing asset, the growing professionalism of the regular officer corps, these reforms helped achieve an important goal in the government's Indian policy, the 1835 treaty with the Kiowa, Comanche, and Wichita.

The reforms left a mixed legacy, however, in the years that followed. The army almost immediately abandoned trying to recruit virtuous citizens in peacetime, its leaders both unable and unwilling to alleviate the conditions that made regular military service unpopular to most American males. West Point officers comprised a growing percentage of the officer corps, but future presidents and Congresses continued naming civilians as regular officers. Whatever their origins, officers generally did not use their constabulary experience to shape their concept of professional expertise. Finally, the army would field regular mounted units from 1833 onward, but military officials vacillated on the best way to use them in executing Indian policy.

On the post-1815 frontier, authorities used volunteer mounted units to address Indian disturbances in the Old Northwest. When regular infantry undertook expeditions there and on the Plains during the 1820s, it failed, largely due to the limited mobility of

foot soldiers. The horse allowed soldiers greater mobility in tactical situations. Because horses could move further and faster than infantry could march, cavalry also extended the army's operational range. The Regiment of Dragoons added these capabilities to the regular army. The dragoons also offered other advantages. Having horse soldiers under arms for more than one campaigning season granted army leaders some flexibility in planning and executing missions. The regiment also cost less on an annual basis than the volunteer units it replaced.

Almost immediately, the dragoons proved their value to the country. The 1834 Dodge-Leavenworth expedition established formal contact between the nomadic Indian nations in western Oklahoma and the U.S. government. The nine participating companies of the regiment made a march of several hundred miles. Their route took them far west of Fort Gibson during a summer of extreme heat and a cholera epidemic. Despite these hardships, less than two hundred dragoons gave the Indians enough pause to listen to what Col. Henry Dodge had to say. The Kiowa, Wichita, and Comanche agreed to send some of their number east to meet the government's treaty negotiators.

The following year, Maj. Richard Mason's detachment of dragoons helped Gov. Montfort Stokes and Gen. Matthew Arbuckle negotiate a treaty at a campsite of Mason's choosing. Again the dragoons, later reinforced by infantry and artillerymen, provided a show of force impressive enough to convince the Indians to engage in talks. The resulting treaty declared that the native nations would not molest the emigrating Southeastern Indians. The negotiations, therefore, ostensibly deprived resisting Indians east of the Mississippi of the argument that moving to Oklahoma would adversely affect their

property and lives. The 1835 treaty, which removed an important obstacle to the Jacksonian program of Indian removal, owed much to the dragoons.

The regiment also helped secure peace on the American portion of the Santa Fe Trail. In 1834, Capt. Clifton Wharton's Company A encountered approximately 100 Comanche – outnumbering his troopers two-to-one. Yet those Indians took no action against the caravan or its escort. Ironically, the escort carried out its mission to prevent hostilities by physically restraining a few hotheaded white merchants. In 1829, the army had given Capt. Bennet Riley 200 infantrymen to fulfill the same mission. The foot soldiers did not awe the Comanche. Riley skirmished twice with mounted Indians. While his command fought off some of the raiders, others seized several head of cattle the troops had brought along for sustenance. To put it succinctly, the Indians found Riley's infantry as soft a target as the caravans. The dragoons' mobility made Wharton's force more imposing.

The 1835 expeditions of Dodge and Lt. Col. Stephen Watts Kearny were not as successful as Wharton's escort. Nor did they deliver results as spectacular as the Dodge-Leavenworth Expedition of the previous year. But they helped establish a *de facto* doctrine for executing Indian policy. Both Dodge and Kearny led long-range patrols that showed the native nations the increased reach of the United States and the potential of its power. Policymakers in Washington incorrectly believed that the dragoons could help them dictate an end to intertribal warfare. All the same, Indians – even those at war with each other – took pains to profess their peaceful intentions towards the United States when the dragoons visited their villages.

Put simply, the dragoons impressed enough of the Indians they encountered to make the United States, in the Indians' eyes, a legitimate military power. On the basis of that accomplishment, the Regiment of Dragoons secured a permanent home for cavalry in the U.S. Army.

During the early decades of the republic, Congress regularly proffered officers' commissions to prominent civilians living on the frontier in the belief their experiences with Indians would contribute to military success. This position had an apparent logic to it. During the Winnebago Uprising and the Black Hawk War, volunteer mounted units gave battlefield commanders the mobility they needed to pursue their foes. Local men led these units, and their knowledge of Indians and the region presumably benefited the government's efforts. The widespread acceptance of the "military genius" concept downplayed these commanders' lack of formal military training. Congress subsequently drew on westerners all along the frontier to officer the U.S. Battalion of Mounted Rangers, and allowed these new captains and lieutenants to transfer to the dragoons.

Historians have not celebrated the volunteer officers as the Jacksonians did. Henry Dodge, the dragoon's first colonel, receives little credit for his regiment's successes. There are no modern biographies of Dodge, and certainly no shorter works that concentrate on his military career. At the same time, developments in the study of American military professionalism represent his second in command, Stephen Watts Kearny, as a key figure in the pre-Mexican War army, if not the *beau ideal* of a soldier for that period. The historiography betrays a lingering sense of Dodge as a backwoods interloper among the regiment's field officers, and his ex-mounted ranger officers as contaminating an officer corps otherwise filled with West Point graduates.

The careers and writings of the dragoons' officers lend weight to the concept that American military officership had made great strides by the 1830s in transforming itself from an occupation into a profession. In general, the regulars valued formal military education, sought to exclude partisan politics from the officer appointment process, and devoted longer parts of their lives to the army. This pattern stands in marked contrast to the regiment's former mounted ranger officers. When those gentlemen thought about military education at all, they believed such a background less necessary for Indian fighting. They sought dragoon commissions on the basis of political patronage, and half of them left the service after only four years. In a way, the impressive point is not that the ex-mounted rangers were considered unprofessional. It is that the regular officers had developed a standard for comparison at all.

That said, Henry Dodge played an important role in the dragoons' successes. In particular, the death of Henry Leavenworth laid the outcome of the 1834 expedition entirely on Dodge's shoulders. His leadership helped hold the regiment together in the midst of a grueling and destructive march. The colonel's negotiating skills helped the dragoons attain an important diplomatic victory. His claim that the dragoons could get by with less training and discipline because they faced Indian opponents puts him in a poor light, and out of step with America's emerging military profession. But Dodge performed well leading his regiment in the field. Perhaps there was something in his belief that combining frontiersmen and West Point graduates promoted the good of the service.

Of course, that formula can be read the other way, namely, that adding the West Pointers to the frontiersmen made the Regiment of Dragoons a successful experiment. The Battalion of Mounted Rangers' undisciplined and lackadaisical service in Oklahoma

at its best provided amusement for Washington Irving and at its worst cost Pvt. George Abbay his life. With the formation of the Regiment of Dragoons, Colonel Kearny demanded discipline in all things. He organized the unit, planned for its outfitting, and sought to instill regular-army discipline in the enlisted men. He received ready assistance in these endeavors from Major Mason, another stolid regular. These two field officers worked together as an effective team.

Speaking of enlisted men, the Regiment of Dragoons showed that the U.S. Army could recruit in peacetime the kind of citizen that volunteered during wartime. The army obtained a better grade of soldier by casting its net in rural and western areas, and by making service sound more glamorous than it turned out to be. The high disciplinary standards of a Kearny or a Mason came as a rude shock to any man who expected to be treated as a volunteer soldier or an officer candidate. Many enlisted dragoons registered their dissatisfaction with regular service by deserting in droves. Not surprisingly, desertion rates were highest after the men made their way from their recruiting rendezvous to Jefferson Barracks and started their training.

Despite the initial success of the dragoons, some of the volunteer-based military reforms had little lasting impact. After the founding of the Second Dragoons in 1836, for example, the army kept its recruiting system for dragoon regiments separate from infantry or artillery. But in time, even dragoons recruiters – what became the Mounted Recruiting Service – relaxed their induction standards in order to meet their manpower quotas. Desertions in all branches remained endemic. During the 1820s, men deserted because they were used as laborers more than soldiers, their units deployed infrequently to the field, they received little pay, and they disliked discipline. The army promised the



dragoons active soldiering, service in the field, better pay, and relaxed discipline.

Dragoons definitely spent more time on active service than infantrymen. While better paid than other soldiers, dragoons still earned a pittance compared to civilians. The army did not relax discipline or absolve dragoons of manual labor.

The service appears to have gotten its desertion problem backwards. Rather than seeking to alleviate the conditions that led soldiers to desert, it sought to enlist men who would not desert under those conditions. It is a measure of the army's disdain for its enlisted men in the 1820s and 1830s that senior officers believed native-born citizens with respected and potentially lucrative trades would be less likely to desert than the foreigners, supposed drunks, and roustabouts who filled much of the ranks. Blind optimism led officers to believe these "virtuous citizens" would enlist, re-enlist, and serve out their terms of service. In any event, save for the separate recruiting service, enlisted men in the cavalry came to differ little from other rankers as the 1830s wore on.

With regards to military professionalism, the Regiment of Dragoons left its mark more on the profession's corporateness than its expertise. The War of 1812 provided the regular army with a major impetus to upgrade the standards of officer selection and training, and it had come a long way in less than a generation. By the 1830s, however, the officer corps had plateaued in its pursuit of professionalism. More accurately, it seemed to be going in two directions at once. Regular officers' corporateness – a profession's ability to set its own standards for entry – reflected this. West Point supplied enough graduates to fill the normal amount of vacancies throughout the army. Joel Poinsett, Martin Van Buren's Secretary of War, commissioned a select few meritorious rankers, and set up examinations for civilian applicants. On the other hand, the officers of the

Battalion of Mounted Rangers and the Second Dragoon Regiment were nearly all appointees from civil life, and the Eighth Infantry (established 1838) also contained a significant number of civilian appointees. And this was in a peacetime army. During wartime, the U.S. Army continued the practice of directly commissioning civilians to fill regimental cadres up through the Spanish-American War.

As for professional concepts of expertise, regulars defined this conventionally, without resorting to any lessons they might have learned from acting as a frontier constabulary. Even during the post-1865 Indian Wars, army officers continued to define expertise in conventional terms. Gen. William T. Sherman, the great postwar proponent of professional reform, commanded an army that faced little threat from European-style enemies. Yet like Kearny, Sherman sought to emulate European metropolitan armies because he viewed the American profession of arms as analogous to its European counterpart.<sup>1</sup> Lt. Gen. Philip H. Sheridan, as the postwar commander of the army west of the Mississippi, evinced little interest in this definition of military expertise. He faced Indians, not a conventional army.<sup>2</sup> In this, he was much like Henry Dodge.

The dragoons did have a larger effect on the army's operational doctrine in the West. Before 1832, American policy towards the trans-Mississippi Indians was largely ad hoc. The government identified a problem – Indians were killing other Indians, and/or

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<sup>1</sup> Sherman, as commanding general of the army between 1869 and 1883, supported reform-minded subordinates such as Col. Emory Upton and Brig. Gen. William B. Hazen. He also established advanced infantry and cavalry schools in the early 1880s. See Edward M. Coffman, *The Old Army: A Portrait of the American Army in Peacetime, 1784 – 1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 269 – 84 for an overview of Sherman's professionalizing reforms and legacy.

<sup>2</sup> See Paul Andrew Hutton, *Phil Sheridan and His Army* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985), 144 – 48, for the general attitudes of Sheridan and his senior subordinates towards post-Civil War conventional warfare. Hutton notes "The conflict [with Indians] on the plains simply was not real war in the minds of men who had won their stars in the great struggle of 1861 – 1865" (145).

white people – but had not identified a solution. The creation of the Battalion of Mounted Rangers represented an acknowledgement that infantry made a poor tool for dealing with hostile Indians on horseback. The eventual establishment of the Regiment of Dragoons signified that the mounted rangers were also a failure. Using dragoons to patrol the Permanent Indian Frontier resulted in an approach that held until the Mexican War. Whites would stay east of the frontier and Indians west of it. In this environment, the Regiment of Dragoons served not as Indian killers, but as policemen and peacekeepers.

Between 1834 and 1835, and then again between 1843 and 1846, the dragoons followed the operational doctrine described earlier, making regular expeditions that demonstrated the reach of American power. Between 1836 and 1842, largely due to the redeployment of troops to fight the Second Seminole War, the army switched to a static operational doctrine on the Plains. The Regiment of Dragoons (lately renamed the First Dragoons) impressed the Indian nations nearest its bases with the constancy of American power.<sup>3</sup>

The events of the mid- and late 1840s effectively destroyed the Permanent Indian Frontier concept. The 1845 annexation of Texas made the U.S. Army responsible for protecting additional settlements from the southern Plains nomads, whose lands now lay entirely in American territory. White immigration to Oregon began in the early 1840s, and the acquisition of the Oregon Country in 1846 dramatically increased traffic on the Oregon Trail. Similarly, the acquisition of the Mexican Cession following the Mexican War led to more travelers on the Santa Fe Trail. After the war, white settlements sprang

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<sup>3</sup> See Francis Paul Prucha, *Sword of the Republic: The United States Army on the Frontier, 1783 – 1846* (New York: Macmillan, 1969; reprinted Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), 339 – 95 for the shifts in planning and subsequent deployment of the army on the frontier.

up along the Pacific coast, on the “wrong” side of the frontier. The government replaced the strategy of a long permanent frontier with a strategy of interposing the U.S. Army between hostile Indians and whites wherever possible.

Robert M. Utley, in his history of the army on the Plains between the Mexican and Civil Wars, noted “a highly mobile enemy skilled in guerrilla tactics demanded either a highly mobile counterguerrilla force or a heavy defensive army large enough to erect an impenetrable shield around every settlement and travel route in the west.”<sup>4</sup> Instead of adopting either expedient, the army tried both, and in so doing it got neither. Gradually, the army multiplied its mounted regiments, adding the Regiment of Mounted Rifles in 1846, the First and Second Cavalry Regiments in 1855, and the Third Cavalry in 1861. (In 1861 all the regiments, including the dragoons, were re-designated cavalry and renumbered by seniority. The First and Second Dragoons became the First and Second Cavalry, respectively, and the Mounted Rifles changed its name to the Third Cavalry. The three junior regiments became the Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Cavalry.) Nevertheless the infantry remained the army’s main combat branch. Infantry regiments still outnumbered mounted regiments two to one after the expansion of 1855.

Not only did the regular establishment lack the right kind of troops for frontier service, it also remained a skeleton force. The Mexican Cession increased the amount of U.S. territory west of the Mississippi by approximately 50 percent, but the army tasked with its defense did not experience commensurate growth. Only in Texas did the army

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<sup>4</sup> Robert M. Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue: The United States Army and the Indian, 1848 – 1865* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 9.

did try the “heavy defensive” strategy, establishing a double line of forts to screen white settlements from the Kiowa and Comanche. This also failed.

Heavy white emigration to the Plains after the Civil War did more to end Indian conflicts than any political or military solution. The reservation system and the government’s willingness to attack any nation that strayed from its prescribed limits allowed lawmakers to impose the federal colonial system across the west. During the 1860s and 1870s, U.S. soldiers were frontier warriors, resorting to force when the threat of force failed.

In the 1830s, by contrast, the dragoons acted as frontier peacekeepers. The government sought to avoid Indian wars with a policy of ethnic segregation. Obviously a detachment of one hundred men on horseback, well-armed and disciplined, represented a distant threat to Indians. At the same time, the army tried to restrain whites from entering Indian Country. In retrospect, the strategic mission was too large for the army, given the lack of troops and the size of the frontier. But the Regiment of Dragoons scored some temporary tactical and diplomatic successes in the mid-1830s and firmly established, in Uteley’s words, that a highly mobile counter guerrilla force was a viable counterweight to hostile Indians on the Plains.

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APPENDIX A  
ESTIMATING EXPENSES FOR A REGIMENT OF DRAGOONS

Lewis Cass, in his annual report for 1832, claimed a regiment of dragoons would cost approximately \$150,000 less per year than the U.S. Battalion of Mounted Rangers. He drew this conclusion by comparing actual costs incurred by the rangers with the hypothetical costs for a regiment. (See Tables A.1 and A.2.)

Table A.1. Expenses for the Battalion of Mounted Rangers, 1832

Expense	Cost
1 Major	\$1,456.00
Pay and emoluments per year	
6 Captains	\$7,530.00
6 First Lieutenants	\$6,096.00
6 Second Lieutenants	\$5,718.00
6 Third Lieutenants	\$5,718.00
30 Sergeants	\$10,950.00
30 Corporals	\$10,950.00
600 Privates	\$219,000.00
660 Non-commissioned officers and privates	\$30,112.50
Subsistence for one year, at 12.5¢ per ration	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$297,530.50</b>

*Source:* "Annual Report of the Secretary of War, Showing the Condition of that Department in 1832," 25 November 1832, *American State Papers: Military Affairs (ASP: MA)* 5: 40.

Table A.2. Lewis Cass' Hypothetical Expenses for a Regiment of Dragoons, 1832

Expense		Cost
1 Colonel	Pay and emoluments per year	\$2,048.00
1 Lieutenant Colonel	Same	\$1,699.00
1 Major	Same	\$1,456.00
1 Adjutant	Extra pay and emoluments per year	\$120.00
10 Captains	Pay and emoluments per year	\$12,550.00
10 First Lieutenants	Same	\$10,150.00
10 Second Lieutenants	Same	\$9,530.00
1 Sergeant Major	Same	\$180.50
1 Chief Musician	Same	\$168.50
40 Sergeants	Same	\$6,500.00
40 Corporals	Same	\$6,020.00
10 Musicians	Same	\$1,385.00
10 Farriers and Blacksmiths	Same	\$1,865.00
400 Privates	Same	\$50,600.00
502 Saddles and horse equipments	\$10 each, for five years	\$1,004.00
502 Horses	\$60 each, for five years	\$6,024.00
502 Horses' forage	\$60 each, per year	\$30,120.00
502 Horseshoes	\$1.50 per horse per year	\$753.00

Table A.2. (continued)

Expense	Cost
502 Bounties and premiums    \$14 per man, for five years	\$1,405.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$143,578.00</b>

Note: Prorating the enlistment bounty over five years should come to \$1,405.60. I have left the error as it appears in the original.

Source: "Annual Report of the Secretary of War, Showing the Condition of that Department in 1832," 25 November 1832, *ASP: MA* 5: 40.

Once the Secretary determined the costs for each unit, he subtracted the estimate for the dragoons from the calculation for the rangers, arriving at the magic figure of \$153,952.50.

Rangers		\$297,530.50
Dragoons	-	\$143,578.00
Savings		\$153,952.50

This estimate turned out not to be accurate, if only because Congress created a regiment of different size and with different pay than Cass anticipated. The initial bill submitted to the House in December 1832, H.R. 646, followed Cass' model exactly. The regiment would have ten companies, each of one captain, one first lieutenant, one second lieutenant, four sergeants, four corporals, one musician, one farrier-blacksmith, and forty privates. The officers and men would be paid the same as infantry (except the farrier-blacksmith, a new position entitled to the same pay as an artificer of artillery).

“An act for the more perfect defence of the frontiers,” as passed by Congress, introduced significant differences. Each company would now have two buglers instead of a single musician, and an additional twenty privates. Regimental staff gained a lieutenant to act as adjutant (in the infantry and artillery, a lieutenant was taken from the line companies), a quartermaster sergeant, and two chief buglers. The regiment would have thirty-four officers, not thirty-three, and 715 enlisted, not 502. When mounted, officers and enlisted alike would be paid as the dragoons had been paid during the War of 1812, not as infantry.

Taking all this into account, the final estimate of the dragoons’ cost should have been \$177,412.83. (See Table A.3.)

Whatever the discrepancy, it is clear Cass was correct about the dragoons being cheaper than the Battalion of Mounted Rangers. The largest savings came in paying the enlisted men less. Each ranger non-commissioned officer or private earned \$1 per day, or \$365 for the year. Dragoon privates earned \$8 per month, or \$96 per year. Even the dragoon sergeant major, the most senior non-commissioned officer, earned barely more than half the salary of a ranger. Using the revised estimates, the regiment of dragoons could have been expected to save the federal government \$120,117.67. For a Congress constantly concerned with limiting expenditures, a regular regiment made fiscal sense.

Table A. 3. Revised Hypothetical Expenses for a Regiment of Dragoons

Expense		Cost
1 Colonel	Pay and emoluments per year	\$2,396.00
1 Lieutenant Colonel	Same	\$2,047.00
1 Major	Same	\$1,794.00
10 Captains	Same	\$14,890.00
11 First Lieutenants	Same	\$11,960.00
10 Second Lieutenants	Same	\$10,830.00
1 Sergeant Major	Same	\$192.00
1 Quartermaster Sergeant	Same	\$192.00
1 Chief Musician	Same	\$192.00
2 Chief Buglers	Same	\$384.00
10 First Sergeants	Same	\$1,800.00
30 Sergeants	Same	\$4,320.00
40 Corporals	Same	\$4,800.00
20 Buglers	Same	\$2,160.00
10 Farriers and Blacksmiths	Same	\$1,200.00
600 Privates	Same	\$57,600.00
715 Saddles and horse equipments	\$10 each, for three years	\$2,383.33
715 Horses	\$60 each, for three years	\$14,300.00
715 Horses' forage	\$60 each, per year	\$42,900.00

Table A.3. (continued)

Expense	Cost
715 Horseshoes	\$1,072.50
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$177,412.83</b>

Note: By act of 2 March 1833, ch. 68, 4 *Statutes at Large* 647, Congress reduced the term of service from five years to three. It also eliminated enlistment bounties.

*Sources:* I compiled this table from the following: The number of officers and enlisted men drawn from act of 2 March 1833, ch. 76, 4 *Stat.* 652. Officers' pay drawn from table in "A Plan for Equalizing the Pay and Emoluments of the Officers of the Army and Navy, and Providing for an Increase of the Pay of the Latter," 17 May 1834, *American State Papers: Naval Affairs* 4: 546. Enlisted pay drawn from Maj. Gen. Alexander Macomb, the Commanding General, to Lewis Cass, the Secretary of War, Washington, 15 March 1833; Letters Sent by the Headquarters of the Army, 1828 – 1903 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M857); General Records; Record Group 108, Records of the Headquarters of the Army, 1828 – 1903; National Archives Building, Washington, D.C.



APPENDIX B  
CLOTHING ISSUED TO SILAS RUDE, JUNE 1833 – APRIL 1834

Silas Rude, a twenty-one year old brick mason from Hardin, Kentucky, enlisted in the U.S. Regiment of Dragoons at Louisville on 31 May 1833. He was discharged slightly less than a year later, on 1 May 1834, “by order.”<sup>1</sup> On discharge, he had to account for all of the clothing the army issued him. That account, currently in the files of the Missouri Historical Society, provides historians with a record of the army’s attempts to keep the men clothed. (See Table B.1.)

Table B.1. Clothing Issued to Silas Rude

Date	Clothing
June 1833	1 pair of boots; 1 blanket
July 1833	1 forage cap, infantry; 2 pair of cotton overalls, infantry; 2 cotton shirts; 2 pair of stockings
October 1833	1 pair of shoes
November 1833	1 pair of wool overalls, infantry; 1 pair of boots; 1 greatcoat, infantry; 1 blanket; 1 haversack
February 1834	1 forage cap, dragoon; 1 jacket, wool; 1 pair of wool overalls, dragoon; 1 flannel shirt; 1 pair of drawers; 1 pair of boots; 1 pair of stockings; 1 leather stock
April 1834	1 pair cotton overalls, dragoon; 2 cotton shirts; 2 pair of stockings.

*Source:* “Statement of the Clothing Account of Private Silas Rude of ‘C’ Company Regiment of Dragoons, who enlisted on the 31<sup>st</sup> May 1833, and is now discharged on 1 May 1834,” 1 May 1834; Richard Graham Papers, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis.

<sup>1</sup> “Rude, Silas,” Entry 1833-R-67, Register of Enlistments in the U.S. Army, 1798-1914 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M233, roll 19); Records Relating to Regular Army Personnel; Record Group 94, Records of the Adjutant General’s Office, 1780s – 1917; National Archives Building, Washington, D.C.

As discussed in chapters four and five, the army's inability to make timely issues of complete sets of uniforms to the dragoons added to the men's misery and almost certainly encouraged desertions.