

*Sutter Creek
Community Benefit
Foundation*

(nonprofit 501(c)3 – Tax ID #87-1825043)

September Newsletter, 2023

The Amador Mountaineers

When the American Civil War broke out in April of 1861, many volunteer militia companies were formed throughout California.

COL. E. D. BAKER'S CALIFORNIA REGIMENT.

A RENDEZVOUS

For the enrollment of a

COMPANY OF PICKED MEN

WILL BE OPENED ON

Monday, August 12, 1861,

at the house of Henry Werring,

PASSYUNK ROAD

OPPOSITE QUEEN STREET.

This Company will leave for the West of May 15 two weeks, or sooner, if fall.

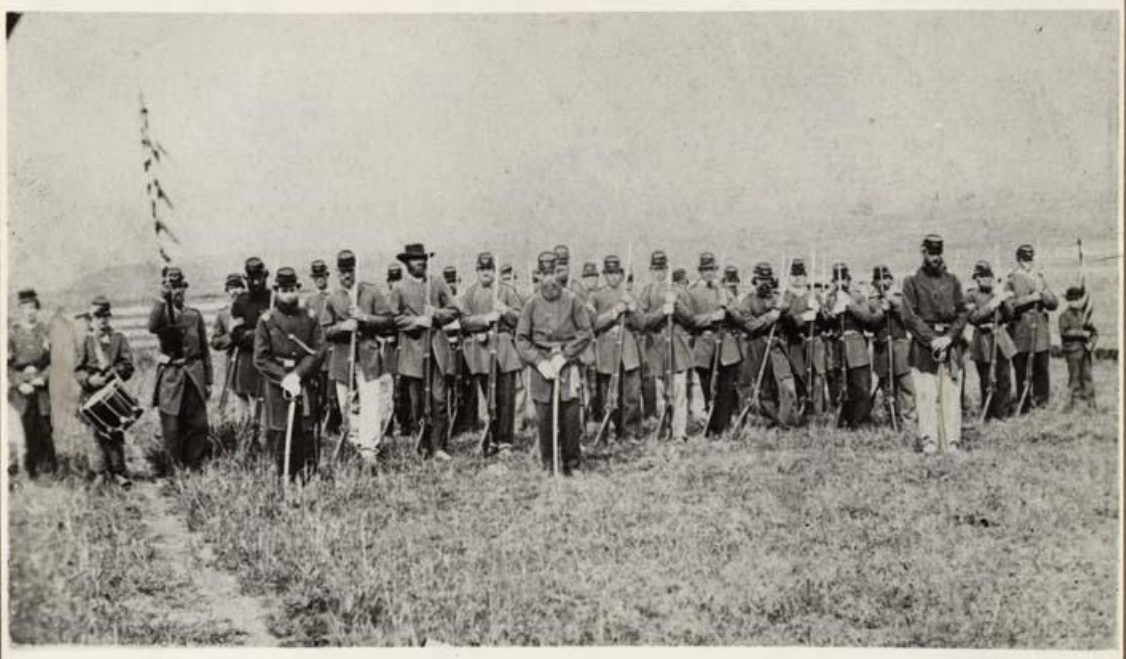
JOSEPH C. TITTERMARY, Captain.

Philadelphia, August 12, 1861.

THE CALIFORNIA REGIMENT, COL. E. D. BAKER'S

These outfits all hoped to participate in active service as well as provide protection and security to their local communities and also the important California mines. Out of approximately 215 local militias formed throughout California from 1860 – 1866, Amador County contributed a total of nine companies. Local judges had the authority to activate wartime militias.

As illustrated by the following list, essentially every major settlement in Amador County formed a militia.



Typical militia unit raised in California - 1861

- Amador Hussars, Jackson, 1861-1862
- Amador Mountaineers, Jackson, 1861
- Amador Rangers, Jackson, 1858
- lone City Guard, lone, 1863-1866
- Jackson Guard, Jackson, 1863-1868
- Sutter Creek Guard, Sutter Creek, 1864-1866
- Sutter Creek Volunteers, Sutter Creek, 1861-1862
- Volcano Blues, Volcano, 1861-1868 and 1871-1872
- Volcano Guard, Volcano, 1858-1861



"Old Abe" is a model 1835 bronze US cannon cast in 1837. This 6-pounder

was acquired by the Volcano Blues in 1863. It was once fired down Volcano's Main Street as a show of force intending to intimidate Southern sympathizers.

Of these nine companies, there was no documented company organized in support of the Confederacy. Feelings and loyalties ran strong in both directions, but organized support leaned heavily to the Union.



These cannonballs are of the size and weight fired by the Volcano Blues in 1863. Approximately 4 inches and 4-6 pounds. They were found along Sutter Creek.

Since California is located a good distance from the more active scenes of the War of the Rebellion (as the Civil War was referred to at the time) the State was not called upon to furnish troops for immediate service against the Confederate forces. However, later in the War, “a call” was made upon California for several regiments and battalions, totaling more than sixteen thousand men. These volunteers were assembled from throughout the State.



Volunteers in camp.

The Amador Mountaineers was formed in response to a call for 16,000 California volunteers. It was primarily staffed from the various militia units within the county. The Amador Mountaineers offered their services to Governor Downey, and were accepted. On August 16 1861, they entered the service of the United States Army as Company C, First Infantry Regiment of the California Volunteers. The First Infantry Regiment adopted as their banner a flag designed from the National Emblem. It contained thirteen broad red and white stripes and in the upper corner near the staff was a field of blue with thirty-four gold stars. In the center of the Flag, sewn to a red stripe, were the words in gold letters, "Amador Mountaineers".



The call for California volunteers was in response to the Confederacy's effort to invade New Mexico Territory and proceed into Arizona Territory from Texas. In moving west, the Confederacy hoped to capture military supplies, seek out mineral wealth in Colorado Territory and California, and eventually open seaports on the west coast. In response to this threat, the California Volunteers (also referred to as the California Column) were called upon to protect Union interests in the west.

The California Column was a force of over 5,000 Union volunteers and included the Amador Mountaineers.



Partisan guerrillas were active throughout the South as well as California.

By 1862, the Texas Confederate army had captured the towns of Albuquerque, Santa Fe, and Tucson. In response, Colonel Carleton led the California Column across the Colorado River to Fort Yuma and then along the Gila River on the old Gila Trail. The mission was to remove Confederate Texans from New Mexico Territory and prevent

them from entering Arizona Territory.

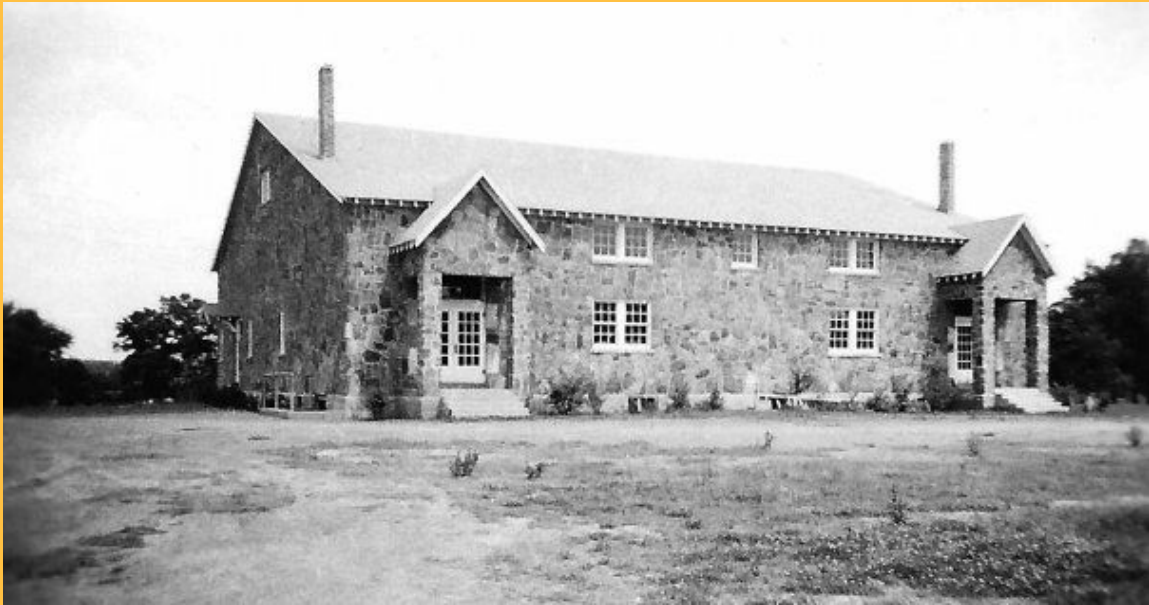
Eighty miles up the Gila Trail, the California Column ran into some Texas Confederates. Although the Confederates managed to capture several of the California Column scouts, the skirmish was indecisive, but it did constitute the westernmost action of the Civil War.



Then, in the Battle of Picacho Pass, California volunteers got revenge by retaking Tucson. The stage was now set for a decisive battle with the Confederates. However, before the Californians arrived, a unit from Colorado Volunteers defeated the Confederates in the Battle of Glorieta Pass and the Confederates retreated to Texas. Colonel Carleton then pushed the California Column into New Mexico and on into Texas where he captured Forts Bliss, Davis, and Quitman. The Californians engaged in their last battle of the campaign on the return trip.



Fort Davis, Texas



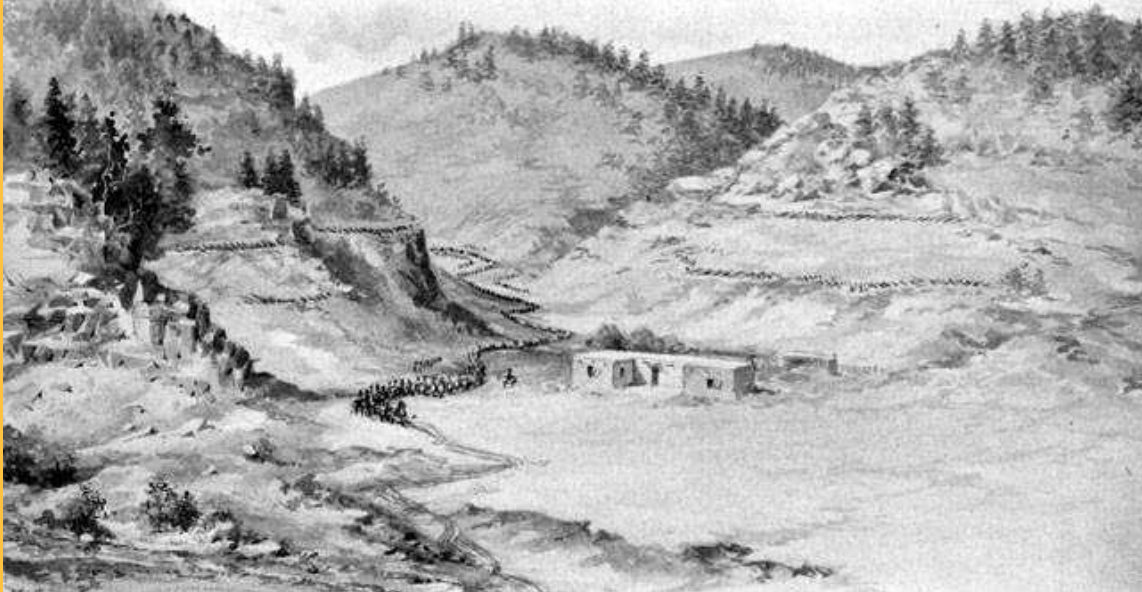
Fort Quitman, Texas

Their last battle however, was not against Confederates but against Geronimo and his band of Apache in southern Arizona.



Geronimo at far right, waged war against the governments of the United States and Mexico for over 35 years. Raiding was his forte, not politics.

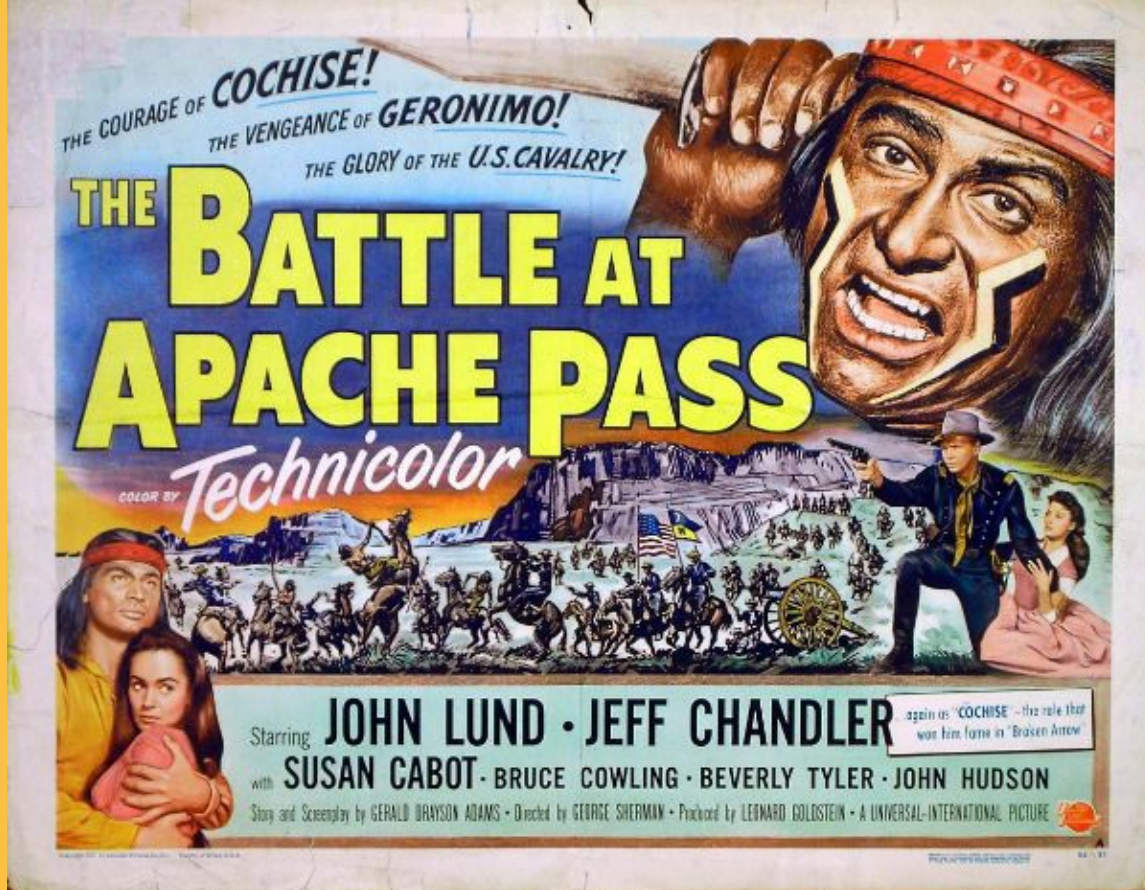
This battle became known as the Battle of Apache Pass, lasted 3 days and is one of the largest single battles ever fought between the United States and the Apache. The battle started when an advance guard of 96 California volunteers marched toward the San Simon River along the old Butterfield Stage Road through Apache Pass.



Old Butterfield Stage Station at Apache Pass - 1858



As they approached the abandoned stage station, Cochise and his ally, Mangas Coloradas with a combined force of about 150 warriors, attacked the California Column. The Californians countermarched from the station, driving the Apache into the hills, only to find that the Apache had taken up new positions occupying the high ground and the only available water source, Apache Spring. The Californians attacked repeatedly and finally dispersed the Apache from rock fortifications commanding the spring. The battle is the subject of several detailed personal accounts, books, and even a fictionalized movie in 1953.



1953 poster for the fictionalized account of the fight.

Several companies of the California column remained behind in New Mexico and Texas for the duration of the war. Meanwhile, the bulk of the California Column returned home where they were treated as honored veterans.



California Column Veterans – 1890's

Brigadier General George Wright, the commander of the Department of the Pacific said, "I have never seen a finer body of Volunteer troops than those raised in this state." The Army's top brass agreed. Chief of Staff, Major General Henry W. Halleck said, "It is one of the most

creditable marches on record. I only wish our Army here (in the East) had the mobility and endurance of the California troops."

California played a surprisingly important role in the Civil War. It is generally known that the gold from California helped keep the Union solvent during the Civil War. However, few of us realize that California also had more volunteers per capita in the Union Army than any other state, and that by war's end California volunteers in the West occupied more territory than did the Union Army in the east.

The Amador Mountaineers and the Amador County goldmines each played a very important role in the Civil War.

References:

Lieutenant Colonel (CA) Roger McGrath

The Civil War in the West by Herbert M. Hart, USMC (retired)

National Park Service, Fort Bowie National Historic site

Office, California Adjutant General's

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SCCBF's current renovation project is the Historic Sutter Creek Grammar School which is rich in Gold Rush history. This beautiful building is California's second oldest two-story brick schoolhouse. There are four rooms within the Historic Grammar School that can be rented.



Contact the City of Sutter Creek for information on rates and availability - (209) 267-5647 ext. 230 or email info@cityofsuttercreek.org / [website - cityofsuttercreek.org](http://website-cityofsuttercreek.org)

The Sutter Creek Community Benefit Foundation (SCCBF) is dedicated to the restoration, preservation, and development of the community's historic assets both now and for future generations. (nonprofit 501(c)3 – Tax ID #87-1825043)

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