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**THE
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SOLDIERS**

**Nevada's Volunteers
in the Civil War**

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CHAPTER XI

END OF THE NEVADA VOLUNTEERS

The Nevada Volunteers based at Fort Churchill, Nevada, were officially mustered out of the service of the United States on December 23, 1865,¹ after two and one-half years of duty in Nevada and California.

Recruiting for the Nevada Battalions had been halted in May of that year and the recruits for Company D, Nevada Infantry, absorbed by Companies A and C.² The four companies of Nevada Cavalry at Forts Bridger and Douglas were kept in service until they were finally relieved by the Eighteenth United States Infantry and mustered out in July of 1866 at Fort Douglas. A monument honoring the California and Nevada Volunteers stands today as an enduring tribute to their service, while the Utah Historical Society is currently (1961) attempting to identify the graves of those men who died there in their country's service.

Financially, the Volunteers had been a tremendous liability to Nevada both as a state and as a territory. John Cradlebaugh informed the Nevada Legislature of this in his annual report as Adjutant General of Nevada in January, 1866. His accounts to that date showed the following:³

Recruiting Bounties.....	\$4,530.00
Officers' Pay.....	10,979.19
Enlisted Pay.....	55,272.49
Uncertified Recruiting Bounties.....	420.00
Uncertified Officers' Pay.....	5,895.00
Uncertified Enlisted Pay.....	20,235.50
Total.....	\$97,332.18

In addition to this enormous burden to the new state, General Cradlebaugh reminded the Legislature that there were still eleven officers and three hundred and nine enlisted men on active service. These men, kept in the army until July, cost the State of Nevada an additional \$1,875 a month until discharge.⁴ It is an interesting historical note that the State of Nevada was not reimbursed this cost by the United States until well into the Twentieth Century.

It is also of interest that the Nevada Volunteers, so proudly and loudly acclaimed by the people of the state, were so quickly forgotten with the end of the war. The lordly and loud *Territorial Enterprise* did not even carry the story of the final mustering out of the last of the Nevada soldiers.

The State of Nevada is credited with having enlisted one thousand and eighty men for the defense of the Union.⁵ Of these, only two were killed in action, although Nevada Volunteers, as units, fought in well over a dozen battles and skirmishes. One died accidentally while disease took a substantial toll. A complete list of the members of the Nevada

Battalions can be found in the report of the Adjutant General which was published as a part of the Appendices of the *Senate Journal for 1865*.

Nevada owed many of these men both back pay and promised rewards made at the time of enlistment. The discharged soldiers, however, found it difficult, in many cases, to make the journey to Carson City from the place of discharge to claim their just due. Civil War soldiers were mustered out at the most convenient spot, often a thousand miles from the point where they had originally enlisted. For this reason many men sold their claims against the state for a mere pittance.⁶

The men themselves casually drifted back into civilian life and most of them disappeared from record. A few achieved limited little spots in history. Captain Elias B. Zabriskie returned to the Comstock and exchanged "Captain" for "Lawyer." The *Territorial Enterprise* of July 26, 1866, lists him as the witness to the cause of death in a murder trial.⁷ Captain Payne, Nevada Cavalry, put to good use the knowledge of Northern Nevada he had gleaned while chasing Zelaauwick and became a noted cattle rustler in the area.⁸ Private Ryan returned to the South Pass to find the Carter Lode.

In the main they disappeared, swallowed up on the vast frontier that was now coming to life as America tried to forget the bitter throes of civil strife.

The Nevada Volunteers have disappeared from history, too, being almost entirely omitted from histories of their own state. Their services also are forgotten until someone pauses to wonder how less than eleven hundred men patrolled and protected an area extending from the crest of the Sierra to the Great Plains and from Idaho to the Mojave Desert of California for over two years, some of the most fearsome and rugged terrain in the United States.

In numbers, the Nevada Battalions were but a decimal in the total strength of the United States during the War Between the States. In performance, they did a hard, grueling, and forgotten task that had to be done. In history, they deserve more of a place than has been awarded them.

TABLE VI. Nevada in the Civil War

ENGAGEMENTS	
Skirmishes.....	4
Expeditions.....	7
Scouts.....	1
Affairs.....	4
Total.....	*16
PERSONNEL	
Troops furnished by the State of Nevada.....	1,080
Deaths—	
Killed.....	2
Disease.....	29
Drowned.....	1
Other.....	1
Total.....	33

*Dyer, *op. cit.*, p. 582.

FOOTNOTES

¹Frederick H. Dyer, *A Compendium of the War of the Rebellion* (Des Moines: Dyer Publishing Co., 1908), p. 1300.

²John Cradlebaugh, "Report of the Adjutant General of Nevada," *Senate Journal, 1865, Second Session* (Carson City: Joseph Church, State Printer, 1866), p. 8.

³*Ibid.*

⁴*Official Records*, Series III, Volume IV, p. 1270.

⁵Cradlebaugh, *loc. cit.*

⁶*Territorial Enterprise*, July 26, 1866.

⁷Thomas Wilson (Ad. Agency), *Pioneer Nevada*, Volume II (Reno: Harold's Club, 1956), p. 106.