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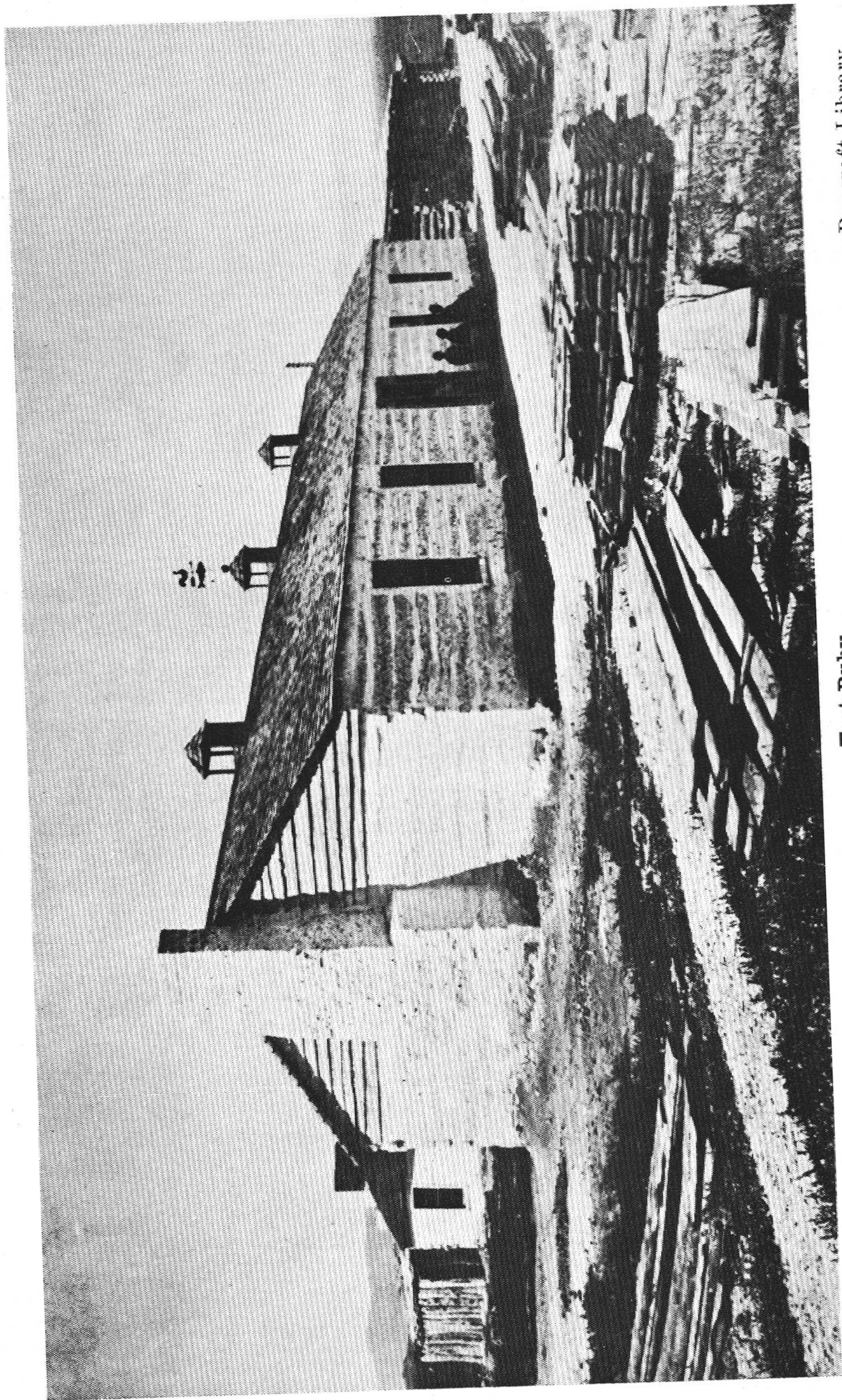
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**THE
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**Nevada's Volunteers
in the Civil War**

PHILIP DODD SMITH, JR.



Fort Ruby

—Bancroft Library.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In many of the published histories of the State of Nevada there are references to the Nevada troops who served in the Union Army during the Civil War. These allusions are, in the main, made merely in passing. No serious and thorough history of these men has, as yet, been undertaken. This study is an attempt to fill this gap in the published histories of Nevada.

In most of the published histories of the State of Nevada the Nevada Volunteers have received scant mention. This is true of the works of both Mr. Davis and Mr. Wren. Dr. Effie Mona Mack in her book, *Nevada*, devotes several chapters to Nevada in the Civil War. However, these are devoted to the politics and the Indian problem as a whole. This necessitates much time to describing the services of the United States Army, the California Volunteers, and partisan civilians. Where specific mention is made of the Nevada Volunteers the account is largely anecdotal and repeats much of the same material covered by the early writer, Myron Angel.

Mr. Angel in his *History of Nevada* has done the best published work on the Nevada Volunteers. However, little mention is made to their organization and training, while any references to their campaigns are scattered and anecdotal. Mr. Angel has strictly limited his work to Nevada and does not, therefore, mention the services of the Nevada Volunteers outside the state.

The most recently published work on the West in the Civil War is Aurora Hunt's *The Army of the Pacific*. This book mentions the Nevada Volunteers only *twice*. Mrs. Hunt has concentrated on the California Volunteers and seems to have completely overlooked the fact that both Oregon and Washington furnished troops for the Union.

While undertaking to study the history of these men the chief objectives were (1) to show that men from Nevada were anxious to serve the United States and enlisted in California regiments to fulfill this desire; (2) to discover what circumstances prevailed upon the United States and the people of Nevada to organize, equip, and maintain the Nevada Volunteers; (3) the methods by which this was accomplished; (4) to what uses the Nevada Volunteers were put and the extent of their campaigns and services; and lastly, (5) to show that they played a part in keeping the West loyal to the Union and in protecting the vital lines of communication between the East and the West.

Most phases of Nevada have been deeply overshadowed by the richness, color, and drama of the Comstock Lode and the other mineral developments which followed. The importance of the Comstock Era in Nevada history cannot be minimized. Historians, due to large amounts of material available to them, have concentrated on the mineral history of the state. Thus, other aspects of Nevada history have not been as thoroughly examined by the scholar.

This is true of the history of the men who served Nevada during the Civil War, although in this period several crucial events in the history of the state took place. The first really large bonanzas of the Comstock were discovered, with subsequent discoveries at Austin, Aurora, and the Humboldt. Nevada ceased to be a collection of miners' shacks in Gold Canyon and passed from a precarious existence as a part of Utah Territory to full statehood, with a widespread and prosperous population.

All this happened while the United States was torn in the agony of its most bitter war. Nevada, the frontier, was without the aid and protection of the United States during its critical formative years. Yet it was vitally helping the nation with the steady stream of precious metals so badly needed to help finance the war effort.

In this study an attempt has been made to detail the history of the men who volunteered to undertake the rigorous and thankless task of policing and protecting Nevada while she grew to statehood.

While writing this paper the author has used several words and terms with somewhat slightly different meanings than the usually accepted conotation. These must be definitely defined in order to make the history as clear as possible.

The term Civil War as used in this work not only includes the actual duration of hostilities between April, 1861, and April, 1865, but also includes the year immediately after the war. This period, from April, 1865, until the summer of 1866, was actually a part of the war in the West as the United States had not been able to return the regular army to service in the West and state troops had to continue their duties as if the war was still in progress.

The Nevada Volunteers include only the men and officers who were regularly enlisted or commissioned members of the First Battalion of Nevada Volunteer Cavalry and the First Battalion of Nevada Volunteer Infantry and, as such, were officially mustered into the service of the United States. It must be understood that many California Volunteer regiments were active in and near Nevada.

While the word infantry is synonymous with foot-soldier, such was not always the case. It was customary to mount infantry when time and distance required it. Therefore, the word infantry may include both mounted and dismounted men, although combat was usually dismounted with the animals kept at the rear.

For clarity and to prevent needless repetition, certain military titles have been abbreviated after being used several times. This is especially true of title of rank and unit designators.

In undertaking the research for this study, every effort was made to use original and contemporary sources dealing with the Nevada troops. The primary source of information on the expeditions and garrison duty were the orders, letters, and reports of the military themselves. These were compiled and published by the United States as the *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies in the War of the Rebellion* in the late 1890's. Since these are unabridged and no editorial comments have been inserted, they can be regarded as accurate.

The reports of the early Adjutants General of Nevada as well as the early Governors, James Nye and Henry Blasdel, can also be regarded as original sources.

The files of newspapers dating in the Civil War period at the University of Nevada, the Nevada Historical Society, the Nevada State Library, and the Lander County courthouse have shed much light on the Nevada Volunteers as seen by contemporaries outside the military. They have helped greatly to fill in the many details not recorded in the official records.

Published books and unpublished theses have provided still more wealth of background and material. Of these, the huge work of Mr. Frederick Dyer, *A Compendium of the War of the Rebellion*, has proven most useful.

Since it has been shown that a complete history of the Nevada men who served in the Civil War has not been written, and that previous works are not complete in this area, it is hoped that this study fulfills this need and adds yet another small piece to the vast jig-saw puzzle that is history.

The slogan of the State of Nevada is "Battle Born." This is the history of the men who helped fight that battle for her.

PHILIP D. SMITH, JR.
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