

BLOOD AND STEEL!

THE HISTORY, CUSTOMS, AND TRADITIONS OF THE 3d ARMORED CAVALRY REGIMENT



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FORWARD

The 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment has a long, proud history. For more than 150 years, the Brave Rifles have served on the frontiers of freedom, defending the national interests of the United States. Now, the Regiment is the last heavy cavalry regiment in the active Army.

People may serve with a unit and then move on, but the history, customs and traditions of that unit remain in place to form a legacy that is passed on from one generation of its Soldiers to the next. These customs and traditions define that unit. Due to its origin as the Regiment of Mounted Riflemen, the *only* regiment of mounted riflemen, this regiment has a unique place in the history of the U.S. Army. Over the years many customs and traditions have evolved, some of which may also be found in other cavalry units. Many of them, however, are unique to this regiment.

This publication has been prepared to familiarize you, the *Trooper*, with the history, customs, and traditions of the 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment. As a member of the Regiment, you will be required to know and use them. If you appear in front of a promotion or other type of board, you will be asked questions about the history of your unit. You may take an active part in them, such as The Order of the Spur or at Regimental functions, or you might contribute to the adoption of new customs or traditions. They will become part of your life in this Regiment.

You can see the objects that embody the history of the Regiment at the Third Cavalry Museum. It is *your* museum. You are encouraged to visit, with your family or friends, and see this legacy. It will help you to understand the Regiment's place in the history of this country.

As you serve in the 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment, you will help to keep the history, customs, and traditions of the Regiment alive. Never forget what they represent—the service and sacrifices of your predecessors.

The Staff of the Third Cavalry Museum



INTRODUCTION

The Regiment of Mounted Riflemen is one of our Army's elite fighting units. It has a long-standing, Army-wide reputation for clear mission orientation, high quality operations, and tough troopers. Initially organized in May 1846, our Regiment remains a combined arms organization that brings a unique capability to the battlefield. The Third Cavalry has performed with distinction during peacetime training and under the toughest conditions of combat. You are now part of the history of this great Regiment.

Troopers of the Third U.S. Cavalry have gone into action during ten major conflicts: the Indian Wars, the Mexican War, the Civil War, the Spanish-American War, the Philippine Insurrection, World War I, World War II, the 1991 Persian Gulf War, Bosnia, and Operation Iraqi Freedom. The Regiment earned 39 campaign streamers during these conflicts as well as a Presidential Unit Citation, and twenty-three of the Regiment's troopers received the Medal of Honor. Your predecessors won lopsided victories against numerically superior forces during the Mexican War, routed Confederate forces at the battles of Val Verde and Glorieta Pass during the Civil War, defeated the enemy in the largest battle of the Indian Wars, quelled an Apache uprising, seized San Juan Hill in Cuba during the Spanish American War, conducted counter-insurgency operations in the Philippines, led General Patton's Third Army across Europe during World War II, fought with distinction as the reconnaissance force for XVIIIth Airborne Corps during Operation Desert Storm, enforced peace in Bosnia, and, most recently, conducted extremely effective counter-insurgency operations over one-third of the land mass of Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Our Regiment will fight again. We are at war against terrorists who are determined to commit mass murder against innocents in our own nation as well as deny the Iraqi people the peaceful and prosperous future they deserve after suffering for over three decades under the brutality of Saddam Hussein's regime. The Regiment, because of its unique capabilities and its distinguished record, will continue to receive challenging missions. The standards that come with those missions are high. Become familiar with our Regiment's proud history. Together we will preserve the legacy we have inherited.

BRAVE RIFLES!



H. R. McMaster
71st Colonel

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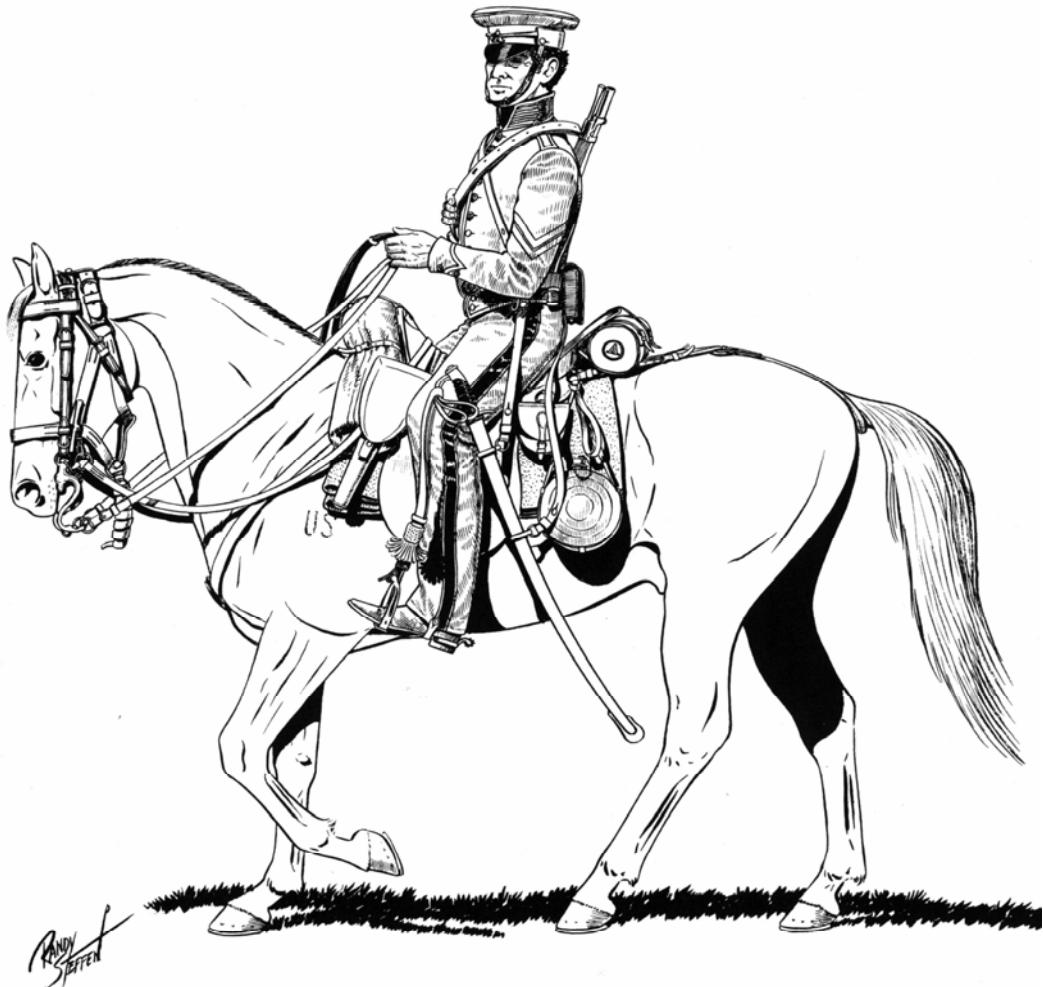
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PART I: THE STORY OF THE REGIMENT OF MOUNTED RIFLEMEN

The Regiment of Mounted Riflemen was authorized by an Act of Congress on 19 May 1846. This brought into existence a new organization in the United States Army: a regiment of riflemen, mounted to create greater mobility than the infantry, and equipped with Model 1841 percussion rifles to provide greater range and accuracy than the muskets of the infantry or the dragoon's smooth bore carbines.

From the beginning, the Mounted Rifles were considered a separate branch of the service. This is reflected by the distinctive uniforms, weapons, and equipment that were issued when the Regiment was organized.

Companies C and F were recruited in the mountain regions of Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina while the rest came from Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Kentucky, and Tennessee. Company I was not formed until October, at New Orleans, because its commanding officer, Captain Charles F. Ruff was on detached service.



Corporal, Regiment of Mounted Riflemen, ca. 1846.

The Mexican War

The Regiment was organized "for establishing military stations on route to Oregon", and it was under orders to proceed on its mission at the earliest practical date. However, the Mexican War intervened and the troopers found themselves diverted to participate in the invasion of Mexico. As soon as horses and equipment were obtained, the Regiment began moving to New Orleans in detachments of one or two companies.

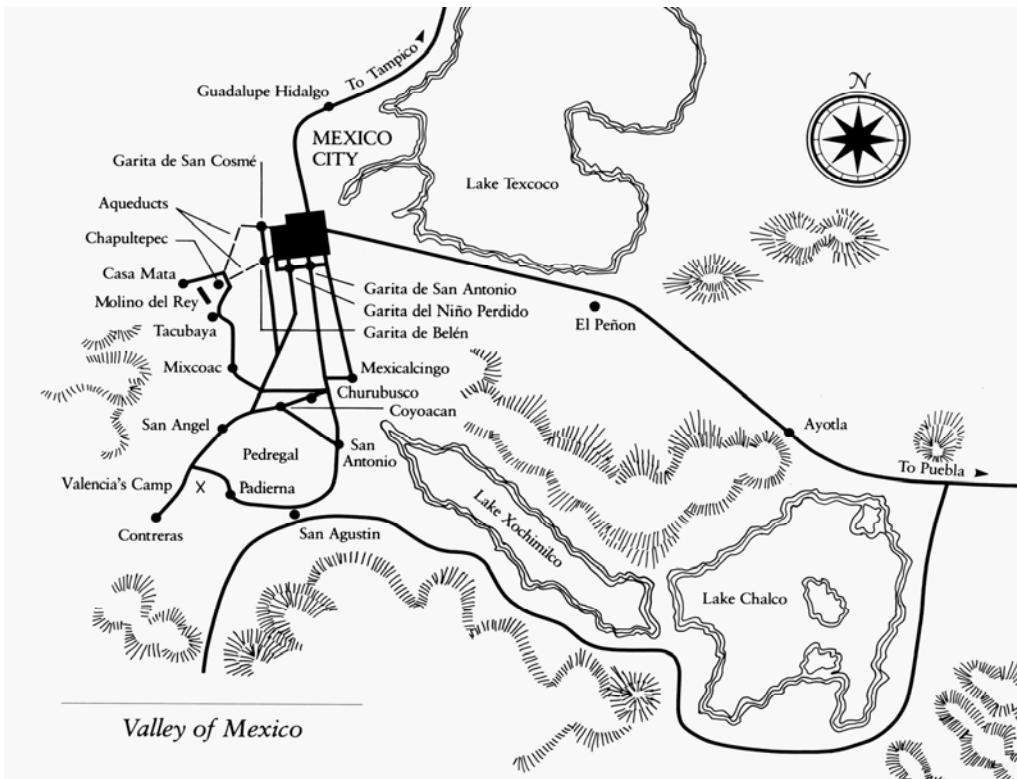
The Mounted Rifles lost most of their horses in a terrible storm during the voyage across the Gulf of Mexico, causing them to fight as infantry during most of the Mexican War. This kept the Regiment from being left behind to escort wagon trains and chase guerrillas, allowing it to distinguish itself in six campaigns.

They landed at Vera Cruz on 9 March 1847 and participated in the fighting there until 28 March. On 17 and 18 April, the Regiment found itself in fierce hand-to-hand combat at Cerro Gordo. After refitting at Puebla, the Riflemen fought at Contreras and Churubusco on 19 and 20 August. It was at Contreras that General Scott made the speech from which the Regiment took its Accolade (see Appendix G for details).



"Brave Rifles-Veterans" by Don Prechtel

Advancing toward Mexico City, the next major engagement fought by the Mounted Rifles was at Molino del Rey on 8 September. Here, 270 Riflemen commanded by Major Edwin V. Sumner were tasked to take and hold a cannon foundry where a large quantity of gunpowder was stored. There was a large ravine, considered impassable by the Mexican cavalry, between the Riflemen and the foundry. Charging under heavy enemy fire, the Troopers crossed the ravine and defeated a vastly superior force of what was considered by many to be the finest cavalry in the world. The Mounted Rifles inflicted 2000 casualties on the enemy and captured some 700 prisoners at Molino del Rey.



Chapultepec

The most notable action during the Regiment's participation in the Mexican War came on 13 September 1847 when the Regiment participated in the assault on the fortress of Chapultepec. The site of the Mexican National Military Academy, it is described in Steele's American Campaigns:

This stone castle stands on an isolated mound rising 150 feet above the valley; nearly precipitous on the northern, eastern, and part of the southern side, it declines gradually on the east to a cypress grove separating it from Molino del Rey. The grounds were enclosed by a high wall on the southern side and on the northern side by the San Cosme Aqueduct. The castle commanded two of the causeways leading into the City of Mexico, about two miles east of it. The position was defended with canon.

Chapultepec castle was taken by a pair of hand-picked, 250-man storming parties, which included Mounted Riflemen under the command of Captain Benjamin S. Roberts, who would later command Company C. Seeing a party of Marines falter during the assault after losing most of their officers, Lieutenant Robert M. Morris of the Mounted Rifles took charge and led them on to victory. During the assault, other elements of the Regiment captured an enemy artillery battery at the foot of the castle.

After these actions the Regiment was immediately reformed and advanced down the Tacubaya Causeway to storm the Belen Gate which barred the way into Mexico City. The hard-fighting Riflemen captured another artillery battery halfway to the gate at Casa Colorado, and a third during the assault on the gate.

Leading the American forces, the Regiment stormed into Mexico City at 1:20 that afternoon. At 7:00 A.M. on 14 September 1847, Sergeant James Manly of F Company and Captain Benjamin S. Roberts raised the American Flag over the Mexican National Palace while Captain Porter, Commander of F Company, unfurled the Regimental standard from the balcony.



The storming of Chapultepec Castle.

As recalled by Major General John A. Quitman, “When forming my division on the plaza, I perceived several non-commissioned officers hastening towards the palace with their regimental colors. I cried out, ‘No, my brave fellows, take back your colors. The first flag on that palace must be the flag of our country.’ Captain Roberts, of the Rifles, was then directed to bring forward a stand of National Colors and plant them upon the palace.”

Captain Benjamin S. Roberts' letter to General D. E. Twiggs:

City of Mexico, Sept 17, 1847.

Sir:

I have the honor to return the American Flag you entrusted to my keeping in the storming of Chapultepec, and the taking of the City of Mexico. Your charge to me was, "I expect that Flag to be the *first* placed upon the Capital of Mexico." The Commission has been executed and the first American Flag that ever floated upon the Palace of the Capitol of Mexico is now returned to you.

It was also the *first* planted on the 5 gun battery stormed and carried by my assaulting party at the left of the enemy's line at Chapultepec.

It was also the *first* planted on the battery stormed and carried by the Rifle Regiment between Chapultepec and the Gareta.

It was also the *first* planted on the batteries at the Gareta and the *first* on the Citadel of the city.

It was carried by Sergeant Manley of "F" Co., whom I selected to bear so distinguished a flag, and the anticipations I entertained of his doing honor to the banner of his Country were not disappointed. I desire to commend him to your special consideration. This Flag would have been returned through him but for a severe wound that confined him to his Quarters..... On inspection you will perceive that the Flag has been pierced six times by the balls of the enemy.

I have the honor to be with high regards, etc.

(Signed) B. S. Roberts,
Capt. Rifles.

Gen. D. E. Twiggs,
Commanding, 2d Division.

Most of the remainder of the Regiment's service in Mexico would consist of police duty and chasing guerrillas as a result of street-fighting and assassinations. There were, however, engagements with Mexican forces at Matamoras on 23 and Galaxara on 24 November, 1847 and at Santa Fe on 4 January 1848.

Because it was armed with rifled muskets, the Regiment was usually found in the midst of the heaviest fighting. As a result of its reputation for bravery and toughness, it was in great demand when enemy fortifications barred the American's advance. During the Mexican War, eleven troopers were commissioned from the ranks and nineteen officers received brevet promotions for gallantry in action.

Regimental losses in Mexico were approximately four officers and 40 men killed, 13 officers and 180 wounded (many of whom would eventually die), and one officer and 180 men who died of other causes.

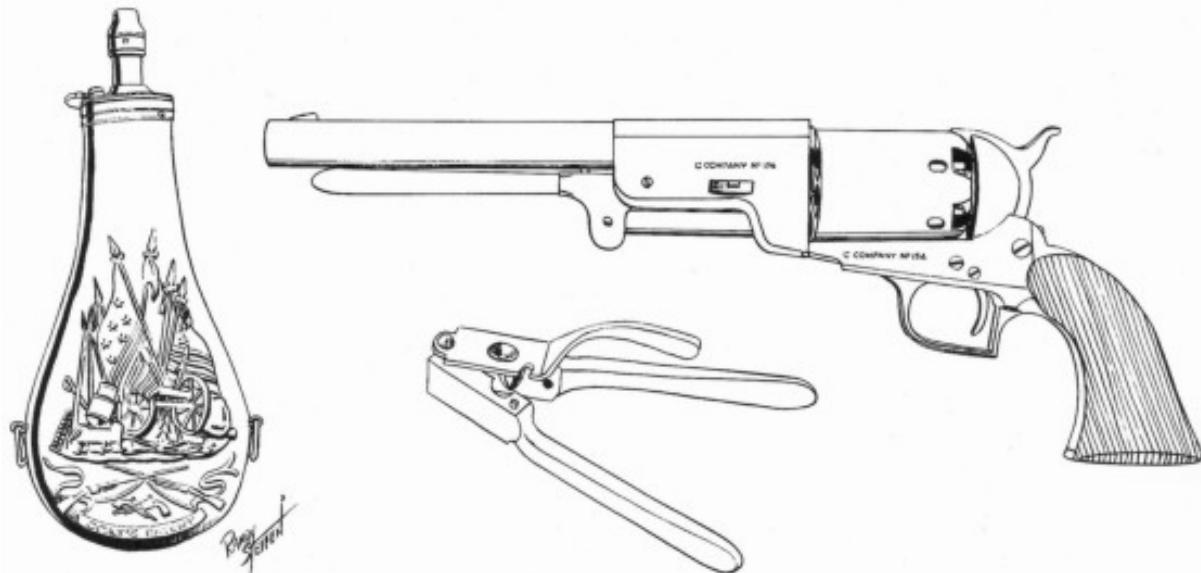
The Mounted Rifles departed from Vera Cruz on the ship *Tyrone* on 7 July 1848. They arrived at New Orleans on the 17th and sailed up the Mississippi River on the same day aboard the *Aleck Scott*.

On to Oregon

The Regiment returned to Jefferson Barracks, Missouri on 24 July 1848, and remained there recruiting until 10 May 1849. On that day, it began the grueling 2,000 mile march to the Oregon Territory to accomplish the mission for which it had been originally organized.

The country through which the Regiment marched was without roads, and often without wood, water and grass. Except for Fort Kearny in Nebraska, and a fur trading post at Laramie in Wyoming, there was not one structure between Fort Leavenworth, the departure point, and the Columbia River.

Travel was laborious and slow. Trails had to be cut, routes surveyed, and an alert maintained against hostile Indians. The problems of supply, transport and disease were tremendous. In spite of these difficulties the Regiment moved steadily west. In November 1849, six months after its departure, the main body reached Oregon City.



The Walker Colt (U.S. Model 1847) .44 caliber revolver with powder flask and bullet mold. This pistol was co-designed by Samuel Colt and Captain Samuel Walker, commander of Company C, who was killed in action in the Mexican War. The Regiment of Mounted Riflemen was the only unit in the U.S. Army issued this weapon.

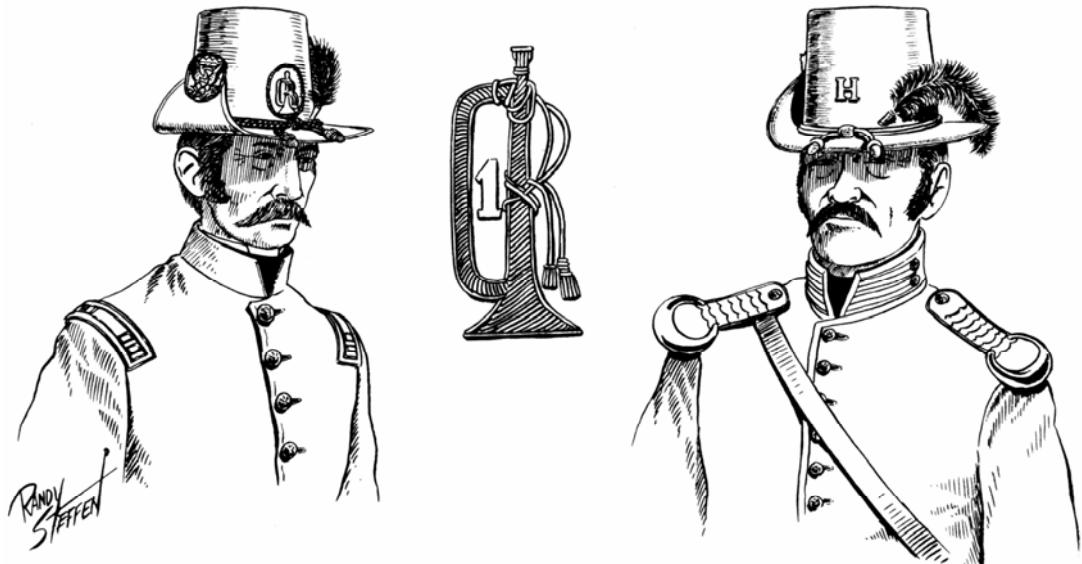
Rebuilding at Jefferson Barracks

In May 1851, The Mounted Rifles were ordered to return to Jefferson Barracks. All the horses and men were transferred to the 1st Dragoons in California, and the officers and NCOs traveled by ship to Panama. After crossing the Isthmus, they boarded another ship and returned to the Regiment's birthplace. For the next six months, the Regiment recruited, re-equipped and re-trained.

First Regiment of Mounted Riflemen

In December 1851, the Regiment was ordered to Texas, where for the next four years it operated against the Indian tribes living in the area. Patrols, skirmishes, guard, and escort duty were all part of the daily routine. In 1853, the Regiment was redesignated as the First Regiment of Mounted Riflemen because the Army considered raising another mounted rifle regiment. This did not happen, but the "First" designation of the original regiment was kept. Jeb Stuart, later to gain fame as a Confederate cavalry commander, served with the Regiment as a lieutenant during this period.

In 1856, Indian troubles in the New Mexico Territory required additional troops and the Regiment moved further West. In 1857, Fort Bliss, Texas became the new home base for the Mounted Rifles. Service in New Mexico was constant and most exacting. The Regiment was widely scattered and the number of troops available was wholly inadequate for the task of patrolling an area that extended from Denver, Colorado to the Mexican border, and from West Texas to Arizona, Nevada, and Utah.



The trumpet pictured above was the branch of service insignia of the Mounted Rifles until it was redesignated as the 3d United States Cavalry Regiment in 1861.

The Civil War

In April 1861, The American Civil War began and nine of our officers left the Regiment to join the cause of the Confederacy. In August 1861, the mounted arm of the U.S. Army was reorganized, and the First Regiment of Mounted Riflemen was redesignated as the 3d United States Cavalry Regiment.

In the New Mexico Campaign of 1862, the Regiment fought the Confederates at the Battles of Val Verde and Glorieta Pass. The 3d Cavalry fought alongside the 1st Colorado Infantry (the Pikes Peakers) and the 1st New Mexico Infantry. Colonel Christopher "Kit" Carson, for whom the Regiment's current home base is named, commanded the latter unit. The Confederate troops started this campaign at Fort Bliss, Texas to seize the territories of New Mexico and Colorado. At Glorieta Pass, near Sante Fe, the Union force defeated the Confederates, causing them to return to Texas.



It was at the Battle of Val Verde on 21 February 1862 that Captain Alexander McRae, formerly commander of Company E, commanded a provisional artillery battery equipped with M1857 12 pounders and M1847 6 pounders, manned primarily by men of Company I. The battle was fought to control an important ford across the Rio Grande river just north Fort Craig, New Mexico.

The Union position was under attack by a force of some 3,000 Texans. Throughout the morning McRae's gunners poured grapeshot and canister into the Texans. McRae's battery inflicted such heavy casualties on them that a force of about 1000 of the Texans mounted a direct attack on the battery's position. The volunteer infantry assigned as part of the support for the battery, fled, leaving it unprotected. McRae's gunners continued firing into the Confederate ranks, mowing them down by the dozen. One by one, the gun crews were cut down but McRae refused to retreat. The surviving gunners and infantrymen were now engaged in a furious hand-to-hand fight with pistols, clubbed muskets, bayonets, and knives.

Eighty percent of the Union casualties at Val Verde occurred either in or near the battery's position. The March 23, 1862 edition of the *St. Louis Republican* stated "With his artillerymen cut down, his support either killed, wounded or flying from the field, Capt. McRae sat down calmly on one of his guns, and with revolver in hand, refusing to flee or desert his post, he fought to the last."

Captain Alexander McRae was a native of North Carolina who was ostracized by his own family for remaining loyal to the Union Cause. He died defending his position in the face of overwhelming odds, adding to the Regiment's tradition of selfless service to the nation.



Captain Alexander McRae

In his official report, Colonel Edward R.S. Canby, commander of the Department of New Mexico, said of McRae, "Pure in character, upright in conduct, devoted to his profession ... Captain McRae died, as he had lived, an example of the best and highest qualities that man can possess." Alexander McRae was one of only two officers of the Regiment killed in action in the Civil War.

After assembling at Ft. Union, New Mexico, the Regiment departed for Jefferson Barracks, Missouri on 30 September 1862. The Regiment arrived there on 23 November, having completed a march of 1,280 miles in fifty-five days.

In December 1862, the Regiment moved to Memphis, Tennessee, where it remained until October 1863. During the period October to December 1863, the Regiment participated in operations on the Memphis and Charleston Railroad, and fought in skirmishes at various locations such as Barton Station, Cane Creek, and Dickinson's Station, Alabama. While fighting in the Chattanooga-Ringgold campaign, the Regiment was not attached to any brigade or division. The 3d Cavalry was tasked by General Sherman to perform various reconnaissance missions as part of his advance guard, including marching to the relief of Knoxville, Tennessee. Elements of the Regiment also were engaged at Murphy, North Carolina and Loudon, Tennessee.

From May 1864 until April 1866, the 3d U.S. Cavalry was stationed at Little Rock, Arkansas, with the mission of "preventing the organization of enemy commands, capturing guerrilla bands and escorting trains." To accomplish these tasks, the Regiment did much hard riding over a large area. During an expedition from Little Rock to Benton, a detachment of the Third Cavalry was ambushed by Confederate troops. The resulting confusion and effort to escape the kill zone became known as "The Benton Races."

The 3d U.S. Cavalry Regiment's losses during the Civil war were two officers and thirty enlisted men who were either killed in action or died of wounds and three officers and 105 enlisted men who died of disease or other non-combat causes.

The Indian Wars

In April 1866, the 3d Cavalry was once again ordered to New Mexico to campaign against the Indians. On 3 October 1866, Company G, 3d U.S. Cavalry engaged a band of Ute Indians along the Purgatoire River , west of Trinidad, Colorado.



Troop C, 3d U.S. Cavalry at Fort Davis, Texas circa 1887.

In April 1870, the Regiment was ordered to Arizona for operations against the Apaches and, in late 1871, was transferred north to the department of the Platte, which included what are now the states of Wyoming, Montana, the Dakotas and Nebraska.

During the summer of 1876, the Regiment participated in the Little Big Horn Campaign against the Sioux and Cheyenne. On 17 June 1876, ten companies of the 3d Cavalry fought in the battle of Rosebud Creek. This was the largest battle between the Army and the Indians in the history of the American West, with 1,400 friendly Indians and soldiers opposing more than 1,500 hostile Indians.

The record of the battle shows that "three battalions of the 3d Cavalry under Captains Mills, Henry and Van Vliet, performed gallant, heroic, and outstanding service". Henry was shot in the face, losing an eye, but survived to become our 12th Colonel. Four 3d Cavalry troopers received the Medal of Honor for bravery in this battle: Trumpeter Elmer A. Snow of Company M and First Sergeants Joseph Robinson of Company D, Michael A. McGann of Company F, and John H. Shingle of Company I.

With the Apache uprising in the spring of 1882, the Regiment was ordered to return to Arizona, and on July 17th, the 3d and 6th Cavalry Regiments defeated renegade Apaches in the Battle of Big Dry Wash. This battle quelled the last Apache uprising in Arizona and also marked the end of the Regiment's participation in the Indian Wars. This action resulted in the award of two more Medals of Honor, to First Sergeant Charles Taylor of Company D and Lieutenant George H. Morgan of company K.



Cavalry squad room circa 1880

In 1885, the 3d U.S. Cavalry was ordered back to Texas, where it remained until 1893. Between 1893 and 1897, the Regiment was engaged in garrison, training and ceremonial activities throughout the East and Mid-West. By July 1897, the Regimental Headquarters and four troops were stationed at Fort Ethan Allen, Vermont, while the remainder of the Regiment returned to Jefferson Barracks, Missouri.

Fiddler's Green

The experiences of a typical Indian Wars period trooper are perhaps best summed up by the poem, *Fiddler's Green*. Although the poem's origin is uncertain, *Fiddler's Green* is described as a broad meadow located halfway down the trail to Hell, dotted with trees and crossed by many streams. Traditionally, this is the place where dead Troopers camp, with their tents, horses, picket lines, campfires and the old army canteen. The souls of the dead Troopers gather there to exchange reminiscences and tell stories.

Fiddler's Green

*Halfway down the trail to hell,
In a shady meadow green,
Are the souls of all dead troopers camped
Near a good old time canteen,
And this eternal resting place is known as Fiddler's Green.*

*Marching past straight through to Hell,
The Infantry are seen,
Accompanied by the Engineers,
Artillery and Marine,
For none but the shades of Cavalrymen
Dismount at Fiddler's Green.*

*Though some go curving down the trail
To seek a warmer scene,
No trooper ever gets to Hell
Ere he's emptied his canteen,
And so rides back to drink again
With friends at Fiddler's Green*

*And so when man and horse go down
Beneath a saber keen,
Or in a roaring charge of fierce melee
You stop a bullet clean,
And the hostiles come to get your scalp,
Just empty your canteen,
And put your pistol to your head
And go to Fiddler's Green.*

The Spanish-American War

In April 1898, the Regiment was assembled at Camp Thomas, Georgia in Chickamauga National Park, and assigned to a brigade in a provisional cavalry division.

On 13 May 1898, the Regiment arrived in Tampa, Florida. On 8 June, the Regiment, minus four troops, embarked for Cuba with the rest of the invasion force.

One of the Army's objectives was to take the Cuban positions on the high ground around the landward side of the city of Santiago, a Cuban seaport. This would force the Spanish warships in the harbor to sail out to face the U.S. Navy. The cavalry division, of which the Regiment was part, was assigned the mission of assaulting these hills, known as the San Juan Heights. The 3d Cavalry was one of five regular U.S. Cavalry Regiments engaged there.

In the dismounted attack on San Juan Hill, the Regiment's U.S. Flag, carried by Sergeant Bartholomew Mulhern of Troop E, was the first to be raised at the point of victory. This flag may be viewed at the Third Cavalry Museum.

*Headquarters 1st Cavalry Brigade,
Camp Hamilton, Cuba, July 29, 1898.*

*The Adjutant General, U. S. A.,
Washington, D. C.,*

Sir:—

I have the honor to recommend that a certificate of merit be granted to Sergeant Bartholomew Mulhern, Troop E, 3rd Cavalry, Color Bearer for the Regiment, for distinguished gallantry in action in the battle before Santiago de Cuba, July 1, 1898.

Sergeant Mulhern kept with the firing-line of the regiment, bearing the colors most conspicuously, and drawing heavy fire of the enemy, and was first to plant the American colors on the first hill, on which is located the San Juan house.

*Very respectfully,
Robert L. Howze,
Asst. Adjutant General, U. S. V.*