

CONFEDERATE GRAVES

BACKGROUND - The Southern States seceded from the Union in April 1861. In July, Lt. Col. John Baylor of the Confederate Army defeated a Union force in West Texas. After this victory, he declared a swath of land stretching from the Texas Plains west to the Colorado River and from the area near present day Wickenburg south to the Mexican border as the Confederate Territory of Arizona. He named himself Governor of the Territory. Early in 1862, he sent 180 Texas cavalymen under the command of Captain Sherod Hunter to capture Tucson. Union troops had been withdrawn from Tucson months before so Hunter rode into Tucson on 28 February unopposed. The Confederate Flag was raised over Tucson on the first of March 1862. Hunter kept his troops garrisoned in Tucson but sent scouting parties within 80 miles of California. The Confederate soldiers enjoyed the support of the civilians in the area since they filled a void in keeping the Indians under control after the Union soldiers left.

DRAGOON MASSACRE – After the Bascom affair of February 1861, Cochise and the Chiricahua Apaches went on the rampage against the Anglo-Americans. With the Civil War in full swing, the US Army forces in the New Mexico/Arizona Territory were withdrawn by 1862 to augment the Union forces farther east. This gave Cochise the impression that he had defeated the Army and the Apaches proceeded in their efforts to clear their area of the remaining Americans. To the Apaches, soldiers were soldiers regardless of whether they were Union or Confederate and they were considered to be the enemy. On 5 May 1862, a detachment of Confederate soldiers was on a foraging mission near the Dragoon Mountains. The foraging party included three Union soldiers who had been captured in a previous battle along the Gila River and had been pressed into service. They had rounded up stray cattle and were taking them back to Tucson when the Apaches struck in a surprise ambush. Although a Confederate battle report has never been found, historians believe the size of the Apache force was about 200 Braves. It is not known how many Apache were killed but there are four graves adjacent to the Dragoon Springs Stage Station that hold the remains of those members of the foraging party killed by the Apaches. Three of the graves hold Confederate Soldiers. One is marked with the inscription “S. Ford, May 5, 1862”. The fourth holds the remains of a Tucson boy who had apparently been accompanying the party as a herder. His grave is marked with the inscription “Richardo”. Four days later, on May 9th, a Confederate scouting party led by Lt. Robert Swope



Confederate Grave Site



Grave Marker for S. Ford

surprised a group of Apaches gathering cattle near Dragoon Springs and this time the outcome was entirely different. Five Apache were killed with no losses on the part of the Confederates.

CONFEDERATE WITHDRAWAL – A Union force of about 1400 men under the command of Brigadier General James H. Carlton had been sent from Fort Yuma to retake Tucson. Captain Hunter's scouts had engaged elements of this force several times including the Battle of Picacho Pass on 16 April. As the superior Union force approached Tucson, Captain Hunter decided to withdraw. The Confederate cavalry departed on 14 May and the Union forces retook Tucson six days later without a fight. This ended the Confederate occupation of Southern Arizona.

Summary by T. Johnson from a September 2004 Arizona Highways article and various web sites. Updated by T. Johnson 01/2015