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REINFORCEMENTS ON THE BORDER:
THE UTAH NATIONAL GUARD'S ROLE IN THE
PUNITIVE EXPEDITION, 1916-1917.

by

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A paper submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

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In June 2006, in a plan to mitigate illicit border crossings, President George W. Bush called the National Guard to the border to build a fence. Almost ninety years to the day earlier, President Woodrow Wilson mobilized the National Guard to the border to protect it from raiders and smugglers who were part of the Mexican Revolution. Most Utahns are aware that the Utah National Guard spent time on the border to construct the fence. However, most do not know that the Utah National Guard served on the border as part of President Wilson's mobilization. In 1916, a civil war that began as a fight for the Mexican presidency, and turned into a revolution in Mexico, pulled the US military into Mexico and the National Guard to the border. The Utah National Guard found itself hundreds of miles from home protecting the border from bandits, raids, and the smuggling of arms into Mexico.¹

Why was the Utah National Guard on the US-Mexican Border in 1916? What role did the Utah National Guard play in the Punitive Expedition? What were the experiences of the Utah National Guard on the border? What does this border excursion reveal in terms of United States military history, the history of Utah, and the border itself? This paper seeks to answer those questions. Although the Utah National Guard played a small role in the Mexican Revolution and the Punitive Expedition, it was an important one in that they allowed the federal army to continue its search for Pancho Villa and his forces. The Utah National Guard also secured the U.S. border from raids and prevented arms smuggling into Mexico. Most importantly, after the arrival of the

¹ Regarding some of the terminology in this work, the author will use the following terms interchangeably, US-Mexican Border, US border, Mexican Border, and the border. The term Mexican will be used only for describing Mexican nationals. Mexican American will be used to describe US Nationals that are of Mexican descent. Some sources that are quoted may not distinguish between the two and the author will do his best to explain. Military terminology will be used to describe some of the events and key players but it is the author's goal to refrain from military jargon as much as possible. The following terms may be shortened: Utah National Guard to UNG, Commanding Officer to C.O., Adjutant General to Adj. Gen., Lieutenant to Lt. Private to Pvt., First to 1st, Second to 2nd, and so forth.

National Guard on the border, tensions between the U.S. and Mexico began to subside, and an all-out war was averted. These achievements were exactly what the US government wanted.

During the Punitive Expedition, the United States was still growing but was not yet a world power. The United States had recently acquired the territories of Cuba, the Philippines, and Puerto Rico as a result of the Spanish-American War; which was fought two decades before the Punitive Expedition. As a result of the Spanish-American War, the US military establishment enacted sweeping reforms to the organization of the army. The Secretary of War and others realized that the military was not ready for any large scale wars or prepared to be an occupying force. The lessons learned from the Spanish-American War appear in the drilling and training of the Utah troops and in the constant sanitation checks by army regulars. The experiences of the Utah National Guard on the border reveal that the US was continuing to make reforms while still holding onto some traditions. The US was developing a more mechanized army with the use of trucks, motorcycles, airplanes, and machine guns, yet horses still played a critical role for the cavalry.

The mobilization of the National Guard in 1916 was based off of a new law passed by the Federal Government earlier that year. The law, known as the National Defense Act, was one of many reforms of the organization of the National Guard in the post-Spanish-American War era.² As part of the National Defense Act, the Federal Government had the power to mobilize the National Guard, prescribe professional,

² Frederick P. Todd, "Our National Guard: An Introduction to Its History." *Military Affairs*, Vol. 5 No. 3 (1941): 163. The first reform bill was passed in 1903. The Dick Bill, as it was called, changed the relationship between the Federal Army and state militias. The Dick Bill standardized the organization of the National Guard, outlined the issuance of equipment and other materials, and prescribed the specific amount of training each state militia needed from the Regular Army.

physical, and moral standards to those in the National Guard, and set enlistment terms for members of the National Guard. States' National Guard units that fulfilled the conditions required by the Federal Government were given Federal recognition and Federal pay.

The Punitive Expedition of 1916 was the first time that the entire National Guard was mobilized in the twentieth century. Certainly only a strong centralized government could perform the task of National Guard mobilization. However, there were issues of efficiency and follow-through that led to confusion for the military serving on the border.

A common theme in the history of Utah and the development of its identity is the role Utahns play as individuals and members of the nation. From the time of its settlement to the granting of statehood, Utahns struggled to be part of the mainstream culture while maintaining their unique identity. Twenty years after Utah was granted statehood, members of the Utah National Guard provide evidence that this struggle continued. Commanding officers from Utah wanted their men to fulfill their duty honorably and without incident. They wanted the Utah units to be superior to all others to prove the Utahns were good soldiers and good Americans. This is likely because the nation still viewed Utahns as a peculiar people. Letters home described the men as great soldiers and examples of what Utah could offer the nation. The Utah Camp, perceived by many military leaders as the example of a well-run camp, displayed similarities to the units of other states. This theme will be explored through the highs and lows of the Utah National Guard's service on the border. Members of the UNG received praises from US officials for their service and won awards for their camp. However, there were instances of desertion and court-martial hearings which resembled the other states' units. The

senior Utah officers did everything in their power to prevent the soldiers from tarnishing Utah's image.

The history of the border and those who shaped it is an interesting story all in itself. The US-Mexican border has had its fair share of criminal and hostile activity since its creation as part of the treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo in 1848. The main criminal activities occurring in the present day are weapons and drug smuggling and human trafficking, to which the Utah National Guard was recently called to build a fence along the border as a means of prevention. When the Utah National Guard was called to the border in 1916, it was a show of US military strength and a means to prevent raids into US territory. These raids by Mexicans were to rustle cattle and smuggle arms across the border. Major Wesley King, judge advocate of the Utah National Guard stated outright in 1916 that the US government should have done more to prevent arms smuggling as that was the main reason the Utah National Guard was on the border. He stated, "Were some active step taken by the department of Justice in apprehending those responsible for the smuggling of arms and munitions to the Mexicans, our boys on duty would have been home long ago."³ Since the creation of the US-Mexican border, it has been mostly porous, however it was likely never more secure than it was in 1916.

There is very little written on the experiences of the Utah National Guard during the Punitive Expedition. In fact, only Richard C. Roberts has anything published on the event. Roberts, who touches on the subject, does leave room for many questions. Roberts was writing a complete history of the Utah National Guard so he does not spend a lot of time discussing the border excursion. He briefly outlines the mobilization, the establishment of a base camp, and the few clashes the troops had on the border. Roberts

³ *Salt Lake Herald*, 27 November 1916.

states that the border expedition was a perfect training tool for the Utah National Guard because months after the expedition, many were sent to Europe to fight in World War I. While this is a sound observation, there is more to be learned from the experiences of the Utah National Guard on the border. This paper seeks to expand on the few writings on the subject and provide a more in-depth description of the Utah National Guard's service along the Mexican border. Based off of the primary sources, Roberts left much of the story out of his works. This paper will fill in the gaps and enrich a variety of historical disciplines. There is truly no definitive work on the Utah National Guard's service during the Punitive Expedition. This paper will attempt to present a fuller picture.

Where there is little written specifically on the Utah National Guard's role in this time period, there is much written on the Mexican Revolution. The historiography of the Mexican Revolution has changed over time. Early writers V. Blasco Ibanez and Martin Luis Guzman wrote contemporary histories that glorified the revolution. Ibanez and Guzman, both Mexican nationals, were caught up in the fervor of the revolution, which explains why they wrote about it in a positive tone. The glorification of the revolution was a common theme for contemporary writers; this is likely because many of them had an active role in the revolution. Over time, as writers became more detached from the events of the 1910s and 1920s historians began writing histories that were more objective of the revolution and its main protagonists.⁴

⁴There is so much written on the Mexican Revolution that even specialists in the area struggle to keep up with published works. A good place to start for more in-depth historiography is with David C. Bailey, "Revisionism and the Recent Historiography of the Mexican Revolution." *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 58 (February, 1978): 62-79. A more recent work on historiography that touches on regional histories of the Mexican Revolution is from Alan Knight, "Patterns and Prescriptions in Mexican Historiography," *Bulletin of Latin American Research* Vol. 25 No. 3 (2006): 340-366. Most work by Mexican historians on Mexican Revolution is printed only in Spanish, so I will not cite those here. See the historiographies of Alan Knight for a listing of Mexican works. German Historian Friedrich Katz, considered an expert in the field, has written much on the Mexican Revolution. For more on the

More recent histories have delved into new topics within the Mexican Revolution. Thomas Benjamin focused on how the history of the revolution has been influenced by myth and memory. John Britton discussed the imagery of the Revolution and how it was perceived in the US media. Regional histories of the Mexican Revolution began appearing decades ago but are continuing to be produced up to the present day. The history of the Utah National Guard on the Mexican Border will fit nicely into these newer histories since it focuses on a smaller topic found at the periphery of the Mexican Revolution. Besides texts dealing in specific areas of the Mexican Revolution, there are also many monographs on the subject, such as that written by Alan Knight.⁵

Since many National Guard units were called to protect the border while the regular army was pursuing Villa in Mexico, it is necessary to discuss works regarding the Punitive Expedition. There is a plethora of secondary sources covering Pershing's expedition to hunt down Villa. Clarence Clendenen's *Blood on the Border* discusses a variety of border battles including the Punitive Expedition. Clendenen argues that the Punitive Expedition was a perfect training ground for the US military just before the US entered World War I. In *Pancho Villa and Black Jack Pershing* James Hurst looks at the Punitive Expedition through the use of military intelligence records. Hurst argues that although the Punitive Expedition has been considered a failure by many because Villa was never captured, Pershing was able to dramatically weaken Villa's forces. There are a variety of biographies on the main characters of the Punitive Expedition. Both General

scholarship of Friedrich Katz please see *The Secret War in Mexico: Europe, the United States and the Mexican Revolution* (Chicago, U of Chicago Press, 1981).

⁵ Thomas Benjamin, *Revolucion: Mexico's Great Revolution as Memory, Myth, and History*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000). John Britton, *Revolution and Ideology* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1995). Alan Knight's magnum opus is two volumes and is considered one of the best works on the Mexican Revolution. It is aptly titled *The Mexican Revolution* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

Pershing and Pancho Villa have plenty of coverage in monographs, biographies, and journal articles.⁶

Most of the works written on the Punitive Expedition are written in typical military history fashion. The reader is provided with battle and planning information. The works on the Punitive Expedition explain little if anything on the role of the National Guard. If the National Guard is discussed, it is not in detail and does not cover individual units. By providing a history of the Utah National Guard on the Mexican Border certain gaps in the historiography of the Punitive Expedition can be filled.

The history of the Utah National Guard on the Mexican Border can also be considered a piece of borderlands history. Originally founded by Eugene Bolton as the Spanish Borderlands, this topic of history has developed into a broad spectrum covering borders in the United States and throughout the world. Borderlands history is itself a borderland for scholars. This is a place where Western US historians, Latin Americanists, Chicano historians, Indigenous scholars, and Mexican historians all can meet to discuss their views on historical events. Borderlands historians have written

⁶ Clarence C. Clendenen, *Blood on the Border: The United States Army and the Mexican Irregulars* (New York: Macmillan, 1969). It is nearly impossible to separate Pancho Villa's raid on Columbus, New Mexico and the Punitive expedition since Villa's raid was the catalyst for Pershing's pursuit of Villa. There are a few articles that specifically focus on Villa's Columbus raid. See Friedrich Katz, "Pancho Villa and the Attack on Columbus, New Mexico." *American Historical Review* 83 (February 1978): 101-130. Also Bruce E. White's "The Muddied Waters of Columbus, New Mexico." *Americas* 32 (July 1975):72-98. James A. Sandos found evidence of German involvement with Villa, see his "German Involvement in Northern Mexico, 1915-1916: A New Look at the Columbus Raid." *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 50 (February 1970): 70-88. For biographies on General Pershing, see Donald Smythe, *Pershing: General of the Armies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986). or Frank Vandiver, *Black Jack: the Life and Times of John J. Pershing* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1977). Regarding biographies of Pancho Villa, considered one of the best, see Friedrich Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998). Besides Clendenen's *Blood on the Border*, other works specifically on the Punitive Expedition include John S. D. Eisenhower's *Intervention! The US and the Mexican Revolution 1913-1917* (New York: Norton, 1993). Eisenhower describes President Wilson's actions with Mexico as well as provides an in-depth history of the Punitive Expedition. Also intriguing is Joseph Stout Jr. *Border Conflict: Villistas, Carrancistas, and the Punitive Expedition, 1915-1920* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1999). Stout discusses the actions of Carranza's army in northern Mexico and argues that Carranza was more concerned about Villa than he was with the Punitive Expedition.

about the Mexican Revolution and the Punitive Expedition. Borderlands historians have focused on the northern frontier of the Mexican Revolution as that is where the revolution spilled across the US-Mexican Border. The Utah National Guard found itself in the heart of borderlands history during its time spent on the border. Borderland historians have essentially written nothing on the National Guard's role on the border in 1916.⁷

Prior to the National Guard protecting the border, the states of Arizona and Texas created a special group of law enforcers known as the Rangers. The Texas and Arizona Rangers used whatever means necessary to track down criminals and prevent illicit border crossings. The more famous of the two constabulary forces, the Texas Rangers, differed from the Arizona Rangers in that they also played a key role in enforcing the slavery laws of Texas. Both law enforcement agencies were affected by the Mexican Revolution. Not long after the Punitive Expedition ended, the United States government decided to create a permanent force to patrol the borders. The Arizona and Texas

⁷ For more on the Spanish Borderlands see works by Herbert Eugene Bolton, specifically, *The Spanish Borderlands: A Chronicle of Old Florida and the Southwest* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1921). More recent Spanish Borderlands scholarship has been produced by David J. Weber, see his *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (New Haven: Yale University Press 1992). Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron's "From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in Between in North American History," *American Historical Review* 104 (June 1999): 815-41, is the latest work that has revolutionized Borderlands History. Articles describing the Mexican Revolution in terms of a borderland history can be found in *Continental Crossroads: Remapping U.S.-Mexico Borderlands History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004). The articles by Michael Smith, "Andres G. Garcia: Venustiano Carranza's Eyes, Ears, and Voice on the Border," *Mexican Studies* 23 (Summer 2007): 355-386, and Charles H. Harris III and Louis R Sadler, "The Plan of San Diego and the Mexican-United States War Crisis of 1916: A Reexamination," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 58 (August 1978): 381-408, provide another example of how borderlands historians have found peripheral histories and brought them to light. An insightful history of the U.S.-Mexican border that was published recently is that of Rachel St. John. In her work, *Line in the Sand: A History of the Western U.S.-Mexico Border* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2011). St. John discusses the transformation of the border from a mere "line in the sand" to a high tech controlled boundary. She argues the international boundary line was key to the development of the market, conquest, state building, and identity along the border. An interesting aspect of the US-Mexico Border is the distance from federal authority. The US West and Southwest are thousands of miles away from the seat of government. The West was seen as the rugged and highly independent region. The same is true for the Mexican North. Long viewed as the periphery by those in the Federal District, the Mexican North developed a culture as individualistic and rough as the US West. These two rough and tumble cultures met and interacted in a region that was once all part of New Spain. The Utah National Guard had an advantage over other units in that they were Westerners in locality and culturally and they were more acclimated to the region.

Rangers influenced the creation and design of the Border Patrol. The border continues to be a hot topic for politicians and the American public. Not much has changed in the past 100 years.⁸

Causes for the Mobilization of the Utah National Guard

A series of political and military events brought the Utah National Guard to the international border in 1916. In 1910, Porfirio Diaz was elected to his eighth straight term as president. At this point, the Diaz government was more an oligarchy than a republic. Few Mexicans participated in their government and many grew frustrated with Diaz's policies. Francisco Madero, who challenged Diaz in the 1910 election, claimed the election was a fraud and called for the ousting of Diaz. Through force, Diaz relinquished office and Madero took over as president in 1911. After a short period in power, Madero's top General, Victoriano Huerta, led a coup d'état which toppled Madero's regime in 1913. Huerta, now president of Mexico, had Madero and his vice president Pino Suarez assassinated to assure they could not return to power. The US and President Woodrow Wilson refused to recognize the Huerta government due to the

⁸ The works of Bill O'Neal provide a history of the Arizona Rangers. His two titles are *The Arizona Rangers* (Austin, Tex.:Eakin Press, 1987). and *Captain Harry Wheeler: Arizona Lawman* (Austin, Tex.:Eakin Press, 2003). There is more written on the widely known Texas Rangers, specifically relating to the Texas Rangers and the Mexican Revolution is Charles H. Harris III. and Louis R Sadler, *The Texas Rangers and the Mexican Revolution: The Bloodiest Decade, 1910-1920* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004). An interesting history of the Texas Rangers is that of Andrew R. Graybill. Graybill's work is a piece of borderlands and comparative history that compares the formation and actions of the Texas Rangers to that of the Canadian Northwest Mounted Police. See *Policing the Great Plains: Rangers, Mounties, and the North American Frontier, 1875-1910* (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 2007). Regarding the development of the Border Patrol see Alexandra M. Stern, "Nationalism on the Line: Masculinity, Race, and the Creation of the U.S. Border Patrol, 1910-1940." in *Continental Crossroads: Remapping U.S.-Mexico Borderlands History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004). A more recent work on the history of the Border Patrol that covers the period of the formation of the Border Patrol through the 1960s is by Kelly Lytle Hernandez, *Migra! A History of the U.S. Border Patrol* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010). Chinese exclusion cannot be forgotten when discussing the enforcement of immigration laws and the border patrol. For more on the influence of Chinese exclusion on the development of the Border Patrol see the works of Erika Lee, specifically *At America's Gates: Chinese Immigration During the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

assassination of Madero and Suarez. This lack of recognition of the Huerta government encouraged Huerta's political rivals. After the Tampico incident of 1914, the US invaded the city of Veracruz, Mexico and occupied it for nearly four months. During this time, Huerta's political rivals Pancho Villa and Venustiano Carranza grew in strength and tenacity to the point where they called for the resignation of Huerta. In late July, Huerta resigned and fled Mexico.⁹

After the ouster of Huerta, Carranza became president of the Mexican government mainly due to the support of General Alvaro Obregon and his army. Villa still had political aspirations so he decided to fight against the government of Carranza. Villa was soundly defeated on numerous occasions by the army led by Obregon which tarnished Villa's prestige. It was clear to the US government that Carranza firmly possessed the Mexican government so the US granted Carranza and his government de facto recognition.¹⁰

Pancho Villa felt betrayed by the US government for the recognition of the Carranza government and sought revenge. Villa's first attack against US nationals occurred in January 1916 at Santa Ysabel, Mexico. Villa forces stopped a Mexican train that was carrying American mining engineers; the Americans were forced off the train, lined up, and summarily executed. When news reached the US, Americans were outraged, but the incident did not precipitate any immediate US military response. It was

⁹ Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, 28-34.

¹⁰ Mark T. Gilderhus, "The United States and Carranza, 1917: The Question of De Jure Recognition," *Americas* 29 (October 1972): 230.

the invasion of Columbus, New Mexico in March of 1916 that resulted in military action.¹¹

In the predawn hours of 9 March 1916, Villa and his army assailed the small town of Columbus, New Mexico. Villa's forces, numbering nearly 400, attacked the town and its garrison of US Cavalry, killing 16 Americans. Just hours after the attack, President Wilson received a telegram from General Fred Funston, who was the commanding officer for the US forces on the border. Funston argued that the security of the US was tenuous while Villa and his band were free to traverse in Northern Mexico. The commander in chief agreed and on 10 March, the President gave the order to have General John J. Pershing invade Mexico and capture Villa; the Punitive Expedition was underway.¹²

The Punitive Expedition had two goals, kill or capture Pancho Villa and secure the US border from Mexican raids. Initially, the goals were not met. Villa succeeded in eluding American forces, and while Pershing and the US Army were in Mexico, minor raids continued along the border. In May, Mexicans attacked the towns of Glen Springs and Boquillas, Texas. As a result, President Wilson asked the Governors of Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico to mobilize their militia units to help protect the border. Besides minor raids continuing in the borderlands region, a military engagement between US and Carranza forces strained US-Mexican relations almost to the outbreak of a full-

¹¹ Friedrich Katz, "Pancho Villa and the Attack on Columbus, New Mexico," *American Historical Review* 83 (February 1978): 115. Historians have debated the intentions of Pancho Villa's attack on the mining engineers and Columbus, New Mexico. Some argue that Villa sought revenge on the US for what he felt was a betrayal due to the recognition of the Carranza government. Others argue that Villa actually wanted to precipitate a war between the US and Mexico as a way to damage the Carranza government. The most intriguing possibility, but also considered the least credible, is that Villa was serving German interests in trying to precipitate a war between the US and Mexico. For more on the varying opinions of why Villa raided New Mexico see Bruce White's "The Muddied Waters of Columbus, New Mexico."

¹² Clendenen, 230-284.

scale war. In mid-June, General Pershing received word that Villa could be found at the town of Carrizal. Pershing dispatched the 10th US Cavalry to the town with orders to capture Villa. When the US unit arrived at Carrizal, Villa and his men were not in the vicinity, only Carranza soldiers occupied the town. The commanding officer of the US Cavalry decided not to yield to the commands of the Carranza unit and a fight ensued. Both armies suffered casualties but the US forces were repelled and numerous men were captured. The news of the Carrizal incident spread the hysteria of war throughout the US. Senior commanders of the military had already reached out to the President to mobilize the entire National Guard; the Carrizal incident sped up the process. The mobilization of the National Guard served two purposes: to secure the border, and prepare the state militias for a war with Mexico that appeared imminent. The recently passed National Defense Act of 3 June 1916 established the framework for the president's mobilization of the entire National Guard. This was the first mass mobilization of state troops since the Spanish-American War. It was the first test of the reforms that were enacted as a result of the Spanish-American War. The Utah National Guard received the President's call for mobilization on June 18, 1916.¹³

Mobilization of the Utah National Guard

Within a day of the President's call of the National Guard, all units were notified to report for duty. In Salt Lake, Ogden, Brigham City, and cities throughout Utah, members of the Utah National Guard assembled in preparation to be mustered into federal service. As part of the mobilization of the National Guard, Utah was specifically

¹³ Clendenen, 275-284. Roberts, 87-89. The National Defense Act of June 3rd in addition to the Dick Act of 1903 actually created the National Guard. Prior to these acts, each state's units were known as individual militias. Never had an act created a cohesive unit of state militias into one military body. The act also made the process of mobilizing state troops easier because it defined the relationship and duties between the regular federal army and the state forces. The act did have flaws which will be discussed later.

assigned to provide two squadrons of cavalry, one field hospital unit, and one battery of field artillery. The call resulted in nearly 800 Utah soldiers assigned to duty along the border.¹⁴

The initial reaction to the mobilization was enthusiastic. Soldiers were answering the call from great distances, and new recruits were filing in. On June 21, a retired member of the Utah National Guard wrote Adjutant General E. A. Wedgwood notifying that he would be returning to Utah from California to join his unit. Wedgwood honored the request and in a memo written to Captain Webb, commanding officer of the field artillery Wedgwood stated “at his own request, 1st Lt. Alex R Thomas, Retired, is hereby restored to the active list as a 2nd Lt. and assigned to 1st battery National Guard of Utah.”¹⁵

One minor was so motivated to serve on the border that he enlisted without the permission of his parents. In a letter to W.G. Williams, commanding officer of the First Utah Cavalry, a father wrote “My son, Lionel McCracken, minor has entered his enlistment with Troop H First Cavalry, N.G.U. He is under age and I do not consider his physical condition such that he can withstand the rigors of the service. He enlisted during my absence I have not signed for him as consenting to his enlistment, and it is not my intention to do so, and request that he be discharged.” Adjutant General Wedgewood granted the discharge but stated it had nothing to do with the father’s letter but that since Pvt. McCracken was underage, he never truly was enlisted.¹⁶

So many recruits were joining that some men had to be turned away. In a letter from A.M. Sheets to Major Williams on 20 June, Sheets stated that he had previously wrote Major Williams to inform that he was willing to serve if the UNG was mobilized to

¹⁴ Utah National Guard Mexican Border Campaign Records, box 1, folder 64.

¹⁵ Utah National Guard Mexican Border Campaign Records, box 1, folder 4.

¹⁶ Utah National Guard Mexican Border Campaign Records, box 1, folder 16.

go to Mexico. Now that the UNG had been called to service, Sheets was ready to join and would even pay for his travel expenses. Sheets was in New Orleans in mid-June when the call was issued. Major Williams responded on 23 June and stated that the commissioned strength of the guard was full.¹⁷

As part of the mobilization, all soldiers traveled to Fort Douglas. Here the men had physicals performed, those that passed and swore an oath of allegiance to the United States were mustered into federal service. The physical and allegiance oath were issued by officers in the U.S. Army as opposed to officers in the Utah National Guard. This was a change in military policy and was part of the reforms that occurred after the Spanish-American War. Specifically, these actions were a result of the passage of the Dick Bill in 1903 and the National Defense Act of 1916. No longer would individual state organizations be considered militias, they were now key to the expansion of the U.S. Military for a state of war. State militias were now part of the National Guard.¹⁸

After the Utah troops were mustered into federal service they received their equipment. Each unit received specific equipment to fulfill their duties. Equipment issued to members of the UNG included: uniforms, pistols, rifles, and for the cavalrymen, sabres, spurs, saddles, bridles, and saddlebags. Men continued to march and drill while stationed at Fort Douglas until they were finally given the order to leave for the Mexican border.¹⁹

¹⁷ Utah National Guard Mexican Border Campaign Records, box 1, folder 63.

¹⁸ Utah National Guard Mexican Border Campaign Records, box 1, folder 55. Todd, 163-64. The "old army" school of thought felt that the easiest way to expand the army in times of war was to call volunteers. This thought changed with the formation of the National Guard by federalizing state militias. It was easier to control the strength of the army and expand the forces through the creation of the National Guard.

¹⁹ Roberts, 88-89.

Just prior to the departure of the men to the border, Wedgwood asked that all men be read a telegram that he sent to Adjutant General McCain, who was Adjutant for the entire Western Department of the U.S. Army. The telegram outlined the travel and mustering procedures that the men were to follow for the journey to the border. Regarding his men's capabilities, Wedgwood unequivocally stated, "Feel authorized to assure you that the troops from Utah will not need the assistance of ladies, maids, or wet nurses."²⁰ Adjutant General Wedgwood was certain that the men from Utah would fulfill their duties without expressions of unrest or discontent and he wanted to make sure they knew so before they left for the border.²¹

The Utah National Guard Arrives on the Border

The Utah Battery was the first unit from Utah to travel to the border. On June 28, the battery boarded trains bound for the border. Dignitaries and commoners cheered the men as they prepared to entrain. The Mayor of Salt Lake City and Governor of Utah both gave encouraging speeches to the men and the crowd that were gathered at Harriman Station. Prior to boarding the trains, Captain Webb of the Battery stated, "Utah will never be ashamed of its second battery sent into service."²² It is clear that the commanding officer of the battery wanted the Utah soldiers to establish a good reputation on the border and return with honor.

The remaining units of the Utah National Guard received much less fanfare as they departed to the border. This was due to the fear of sabotage and the desire to prevent any hostile Mexicans from knowing the movements of the soldiers. On July 7,

²⁰ Utah National Guard Mexican Border Campaign Records, box1, folder 2.

²¹ Utah National Guard Mexican Border Campaign Records, box1, folder 2.

²² Roberts, 90. *Salt Lake Herald*, 28 June, 1916. The first battery of Utah National Guard that was sent into service was in the Philippines during the Spanish American War.

the First Squadron of Utah Cavalry marched to Harriman station, entrained, and started their journey to the border. They were followed by units of the Second Squadron Utah Cavalry and the Field Hospital who left for the border on 14 July.²³

The Battery arrived on the border on June 29, 1916. All units from Utah were assigned to establish camp at Nogales, Arizona as part of the Nogales District which included units from California, Idaho, and Connecticut. The federal army commanded the Nogales District so the Utah National Guard received most orders directly from federal officers. Since the Utah Battery arrived first, they were able to choose the most prime real estate for their weapons and tents. The Battery analyzed the area and eventually chose a location that allowed the best defensive positions. After a few hours of clearing the area of rocks and brush the Battery officially setup camp as “Camp Stephen J. Little.” The camp was named to honor a fallen American soldier who was killed by Mexican revolutionaries.²⁴

The two squadrons of cavalry arrived at different times but eventually joined to setup camp a few miles north of Nogales. The cavalry chose a defensive hilltop position per standard military procedures. The camp was on the banks of the Santa Cruz River, which allowed for easier care of the horse herd. It was also in a strategic location to allow the cavalry to protect the river and a reservoir that Nogales used as their water supply.²⁵

Actions on the Border

²³ Roberts, 90-91. Roberts provides more detail regarding the units’ preparation and departures for the border. As this is already covered thoroughly in his work *Legacy*, a more cursory discussion is included here. This paper will expound on events that received little or no attention by Roberts in his book.

²⁴ Roberts 92-93.

²⁵ Roberts 93-94.

After the Utah National Guard established a base camp, they immediately attended to their soldierly duties and routines. Each unit had different duties while on the border. The battery received orders to setup their guns in a concealed position that allowed them to look and fire into Mexico unimpeded. In case of a war with Mexico, the border needed large artillery to repel any attempted invasion. The cavalry patrolled the border in search for bandits, thieves, and smugglers; all the while receiving a good wartime education on cavalry warfare. The field hospital cared for sick and wounded soldiers as well as issued orders for camp cleanliness and hygiene.

So what was a typical day in the life of a soldier on the border? Technically that depends on which unit the soldier belonged. Since the war department wanted the men to not only show a martial presence on the border but also prepare for a war with Mexico, most days were spent drilling and practicing. The battery performed practice maneuvers with their large artillery weapons. After drills concluded, the men spent time cleaning and caring for their camp and their armaments. Corporal Don G. Williams described the daily routine of the cavalry in a letter to the *Salt Lake Herald*. Williams wrote:

“Our routine is very strenuous, part of the daily grind being as follows: Reveille at 5:30 a.m., breakfast 6, at 6:45 we fall in for drill, go over our picket line, clean and brush our horses saddle up and then we have a strenuous drill of riding bareback at full gallop around in circles and many hard sham battles around the rocky hillsides. We then water the horses and arrive back at camp by 11, we then wash and oil the saddles...our horses are thoroughly groomed for inspection. At 12 o'clock we have dinner, after this we have until 1:30 when fatigue call sounds. At this time we police the camp...at 3 water call is blown... it takes some time to water the stock as we have 800 head of horses. We arrive back at camp about 4:30 and prepare for retreat parade at 5:10. For retreat our rifles and pistols must be thoroughly clean and our uniforms spick and span. After retreat mess and our evening meal the time is our own until 11 o'clock when we must be in bed. The above is a brief description of the average day for a 'lazy' soldier. To be a good cavalryman and soldier one must be a blacksmith, bronco buster, carpenter, kitchen mechanic, and lastly, a profound optimist.”²⁶

²⁶ *Salt Lake Herald* 2 October 1916.

A schedule of the week's activities for Troop E of the Second Squadron cavalry also provides some insight into their day to day functions: "Monday Sept. 18th 1916: Instruction in packing saddle, practice march on trails in A.M. in P.M. revolver practice. Tuesday and Wednesday Sept. 19th-20th, Patrol and outpost duty at Buena Vista Ranch. Thursday Sept. 21st One hour school of the troop, close order, balance of drill extended order, On Guard, Grazing, revolver practice. Friday, prepare for Saturday inspection."²⁷

A typical day at the field hospital was spent caring for the sick and wounded soldiers in camp. They also were assigned sanitation duty; in essence, they were to make sure that the camps were sanitary and free from disease.

The main duty of the Utah National Guard on the border was to protect the US from raids and smugglers. When members of the UNG did encounter raiders and smugglers, they usually were hostile. The UNG exchanged gunfire with Mexican smugglers in three documented instances. As likely expected, all three instances occurred while the Cavalry was on border patrol. The first instance occurred in September, a letter from the CO of the troop describes the encounter:

"Reporting that, while Tp A was on patrol duty and occupying the outpost located at the Buena vista ranch, about 3:30 P.M September 26th, sentry post no 3 situated on hill east of camp, in charge of corporal switzer, was fired upon repeatedly from the Mexican side of the border evidently by border thieves.

The corporal reports that there were about 12 men in the band and that they fired from a distance of about 1100 yards from our sentry post. He further states that they wore uniform clothing, but that he could not distinguish accoutrements or insignia due to distance and lack of field glasses.

The fire was returned by our men, about twenty shots being fired, whereupon the band mounted and fled. From all indications it seems that one of the band was wounded when they withdrew. There were no casualties, wounded, or wounded animals on our side."²⁸

²⁷ Utah National Guard Mexican Border Campaign Records, box 1, folder 35.

²⁸ Utah National Guard Mexican Border Campaign Records, box 1, folder 33.

In December, while patrolling the border near Lochiel, Arizona, troops G and H of the second squadron encountered a group of smugglers. The troopers chased the smugglers for many miles before they came across a detachment of Mexican soldiers belonging to President Carranza's army. Major Wallace, who was the senior officer of the second squadron stated that the Utah soldiers nearly went to battle with the Carranza soldiers. He also credited the troops saying that it was "good to see that the boys really can ride when needed."²⁹

The last documented encounter was the most inimical of them all. It is the only one of the three to be given an official name, the Battle of Casa Piedra. On January 26 1917, a detachment of Utah cavalrymen discovered a group of Mexicans rustling cattle across the border. Once the cattle rustlers caught sight of the troopers, they took cover and opened fire. The battle lasted the remainder of the day and through that night. Eventually reinforcements arrived and drove off the remaining Mexicans. Thousands of rounds had been exchanged over that 48-hour period. Regarding the battle, Major Wallace stated, "it was a real test and I am proud to say that every man came through it in excellent shape." As for the Mexican combatants, Wallace reported, "three killed and seven wounded."³⁰ Although cattle rustling was less worrisome than arms smuggling, since the Cavalry was fired upon by the cattle rustlers, the Utah men were cleared to return fire, thus resulting in many rounds expended and some men killed. This scenario was atypical for most National Guard units, a majority of skirmishes between the US and Mexico were fought by the Federal Army as opposed to the National Guard.³¹

Athletics

²⁹ Utah National Guard Mexican Border Campaign Records, box 1, folder 33.

³⁰ Roberts, 96-97. Utah National Guard Mexican Border Campaign Records, box 1, folder 33.

³¹ Clendenen, 275-292.

The officers of the Utah National Guard made every effort to keep morale high. One of the best ways morale was boosted was through athletics. In early August, Major Williams sent out a memo stating, "Realizing that boxing, wrestling, and other athletic exhibitions has a good effect on the morale of the command, it is requested that all troop commanders urge the men of their respective commands to take part in the contests that are held every Saturday night." The contests not only kept the men in shape and entertained; it also kept the men from straying into town. Saturday night in Nogales was no place for a soldier.³²

Apparently the athletic events were such a success and important to Major Williams that on September 3rd Major Williams appointed Capt. Basset and Lt. Wilson and Lt. Mortensen to act as athletic committee of the 1st Cavalry UNG. "the above named will confer and arrange such athletic events as they deem practicable for the entertainment of the organization." Besides boxing and wrestling exhibitions, the men of the Utah National Guard enjoyed playing America's national pastime. In October, a journalist for the *Salt Lake Herald* described a visit to the border with the Field Hospital, Cavalry, and Battery. In the "afternoon mess officers and men participated in a spirited game of baseball. The diamond was laid out on the bed of the Santa Cruz River and the game played in scorching hot sun, but the players enjoyed it, nevertheless."³³

Loss of Momentum

³² Utah National Guard Mexican Border Campaign Records, box 1, folder 8. The commanding officers of the Utah National Guard were very concerned about their men going into Nogales. The officers did not want their men getting into trouble with liquor or the locals. Many of the troops on the border were serving not only out of duty, but because they wanted a piece of the action. Clearly, this situation could result in negative consequences. According to interviews conducted by Richard Roberts with veterans of the campaign, the Utah soldiers did get into some altercations with the locals. Apparently, there were no casualties suffered from these hostile encounters, just some bumps and bruises.

³³ Utah National Guard Mexican Border Campaign Records, box 1, folder 8. *Salt Lake Herald*, 19 October 1916.

As time passed on the Mexican Border, the nationalistic fervor began to subside for the public in Utah and even for some of those troops in service on the border. The swelling numbers of recruits the UNG was accustomed to in the first month after the call were a thing of the past. By August, Adjutant General Wedgwood stated in a letter to leaders of a variety of Utah communities “so far but six out of the twenty eight counties have supplied men for the Utah National Guard. UNG should have a strength of 1146 men, the current strength is approximately 775.” An article revealed that Box Elder County had only supplied 20 troops, though the quota for the county was 42 men.³⁴

Along the border, things were not much better. There were few new recruits and many men chose to be discharged rather than reenlist. This is evidenced by the dismal numbers of recruits joining the UNG and the amount of men who reenlisted. Approximately every two weeks, the C.O. of the Cavalry would send number strength reports to the Commanding General of the Western Department. In letters dated September 1st, September 15th, and October 1st, the Cavalry was in line to lose almost eighty men through discharges. The amount of troops that were expected to be reenlisted totaled three men. A letter from a concerned Major Williams to Adj. General Wedgwood explicated the need for recruits: “Would suggest to you that the officers put on recruiting service be impressed with the necessity of not only filling these two squadrons to war strength, but that it will also take quite a number of men to take care of natural losses... We have a number of men whose enlistments expire the latter part of August to the middle of September. Hope that the military spirit has not already died since the

³⁴ *Box Elder News*, 8 August 1916. The number of troops Adj. General Wedgwood requested was not arbitrary; the troop numbers were dictated by the Federal Government based off of regulations in the National Defense Act of 1916. The formula for troop strength was a percentage of able-bodied men for each county.

leaving of troops.”³⁵ A more scathing critique of the recruiting effort stated, “Lt. Jensen arrived today. He brings us a gloomy report concerning recruiting prospects. What is the matter with the youth of Utah? Must we feel ashamed of the younger generation of our state? Why this lethargy? We can only explain it by the assumption that the young single men are fascinated by stylishly dressed girls, by cabarets, by joyriding in papa’s car, by the vaudeville and movie shows and by the bright lights.”³⁶

Soldiers were not only failing to reenlist, they were even asking to be discharged. The most common reason for requesting a discharge was that the soldier had a dependent family to support. The Married Men’s Act of 1916 had an immediate impact on the numbers of troops in the Utah National Guard. Passed in early summer, this act allowed for soldiers who were married to request a discharge to support their spouse and children. Since soldier’s wages were paltry compared to many men’s normal salaries, married members of the Utah National Guard were clamoring to be discharged. The GI who requested a discharge had to provide supporting documentation. A majority of the time the guardsmen were granted discharge but if they did not prove their case, the discharge was denied. Such was the case for Pvt. J.M. Cook. Pvt. Cook asked for a discharge in the following letter: “I respectfully request a discharge from Troop C, 1st Utah Cavalry, NGUS, by reason of having a mother that is dependent on me for support. My father being dead, and I the only son, am the sole support for my mother, Mrs. Jennie Cook.” After reviewing the case, the C.O of the 1st Utah Cavalry disapproved the request. “This man’s mother owns her home and has no debts. A daughter lives at home with her who

³⁵ Utah National Guard Mexican Border Campaign Records, box 1, folder 63.

³⁶ Utah National Guard Mexican Border Campaign Records, box 1, folder 64.

draws a regular salary of \$65 per month.”³⁷ Many of the men from Utah had to choose between serving the nation and caring for their families, it was apparent that family was more important, though this seemed less true of the U.S. Military.

As a way to keep many of the soldiers on the border, the commanding officers of the UNG directed many of their subordinates to apply for financial assistance from the Soldier’s Relief Committee. The Soldier’s Relief Committee, run by the Rotary Club of Utah, provided monthly payments to families of soldiers who were serving on the border. The payments ranged from \$10-\$50 per month based on need. Each soldier’s application was first reviewed by his commanding officer, who then would forward the request for assistance to the director of the SRC, L.M. Bailey. Mr. Bailey would then process the request and have the funds dispersed to the appropriate entities.

Discipline

As with any army unit, the Utah National Guard had its share of men who went AWOL or ended up as deserters. Correspondence between the UNG officers detailed the names of those who had gone AWOL or were considered deserters. The officers provided a date missing and physical description of the deserter. Officers even detailed the property that was taken by the deserter. Two letters provide interesting insight into how the UNG handled deserters or those considered AWOL. One letter was written from a captain in the 1st Cavalry to the commanding officer of the 1st Cavalry:

“July 1, 1916, I beg to inform you of the absence without leave of Private Goldie Malan. This man has announced members of this troop his intention of deserting from the service. I enclosed Malan’s description card with the request that he be apprehended. He will probably be found in Ogden. One of the members of his troop informed me this morning that Malan had made the remark that he could hide at Smith’s feed yard and not be found.”

³⁷ Utah National Guard Mexican Border Campaign Records, box 1, folder 18.

The letter was escalated to the Adjutant General E. A. Wedgewood who sent correspondence to the Weber county Sheriff on July 1:

“In the interest of the Service and to preserve the morale and discipline of the troops now at Fort Douglas it is of the highest importance that the man referred be located and arrested and held until he can be sent for. Pick him up if possible and advise Major W.G Williams or Lt. Richart at the Camp. Do this by phone, calling Wasatch 5899. If you pick him up he will be promptly taken off your hands.”

Malan was captured and sent back to Fort Douglas. Malan would be sent to the border along with the other members of his unit.³⁸

Some instances of AWOL were men who overstayed leave. Men were periodically given leave of duty for a few days. If they did not return to duty after their leave time was up, they were considered AWOL. Lieutenant. Bruce Wedgewood of the 1st Utah Cavalry dealt with this firsthand. A letter from John Jenkins, Colonel of the Cavalry to his superiors stated,

“First Lt. Bruce Wedgewood, Provisional Regiment of Cavalry, was granted leave of absence for 5 days, reporting departure on Sept. 13th and return on Sept. 21st, overstaying his leave status three days. His explanation, which is enclosed, being unsatisfactory, I placed him under arrest Sept. 21st pending a conference with the District Commander. I interviewed Lt. Wedgewood and thoroughly explained to him his dereliction, censured him and have restricted him from the privilege of going to town and leaving camp when not on duty for one month. I then released him from arrest.”

Bruce Wedgewood’s “explanation” for overstaying leave which he explained to his commanding officer was simple: “I have no explanation to offer for overstaying leave. It was simply through force of circumstances.”³⁹

After a period of time, a soldier considered AWOL had his status changed to deserter. Once the status was changed, the deserter’s commanding officer notified Adj. General Wedgewood of the deserter’s status change from AWOL to deserter. Wedgewood

³⁸ Utah National Guard Mexican Border Campaign Records, box 1, folder 1.

³⁹ Utah National Guard Mexican Border Campaign Records, box 1, folder 1.

dropped deserters from payroll and would send a descriptive card to law enforcement authorities to help track down the deserter.

One such instance occurred in October 1916. Colonel John Jenkins sent correspondence and a descriptive card to Adjutant General Wedgwood for Private Joseph M. Nelson, who had deserted service on October 3, 1916. Interesting insight is gained from Adjutant General Wedgwood's reaction. Wedgwood wired Major Williams and stated, "I think the above matter should be taken up and handled vigorously, I believe, however, that it should be handled by you and at once while you are in the Federal Service. I can stand for men, non-residents of Utah deserting, but I don't like it as to residents of the State."⁴⁰ Major Williams immediately sent a wire to the City Marshall of Pleasant Grove which provided a description of Private Nelson and asked that if apprehended, hold for military authorities. This incident reveals two things about the Utah National Guard. First, the Utah National Guard was similar to other states in that some of its soldiers deserted. Second, Adjutant General Wedgwood did not want the men from Utah to act like those of other states. Although the soldiers were all Americans, Wedgwood wanted men from Utah to be different from the others. Hence, he wanted deserters dealt with quickly in order to squelch any more desertions.

As a way to maintain a good reputation for the men from Utah, the officers of the Utah National Guard demanded the utmost discipline from their soldiers. Regarding the desire for maintaining a good reputation and discipline, Major Williams issued a memo to the troops that stated:

"This command, since its arrival at this station has won for itself nothing but the highest praise from the officers of this military district because of its most excellent discipline, behavior and morale of its members. Such a reputation we must maintain at

⁴⁰ Utah National Guard Mexican Border Campaign Records, box 1, folder 11.

any cost. Such continued deportment will enable you to be proud to say you are from Utah. Your attention is called to the fact that any member of this command reported as disorderly by the military police or appearing at camp under the influence of liquor will be immediately court-martialed.⁴¹

Unfortunately for Major Williams and his officers, soldiers' discipline faltered at times and court martials occurred.

In a letter dated 1 September 1916, Major Williams revealed to the C.O. of the Southern Department that there were six cases of trial by summary court for the 1st Utah Cavalry during the month of August. This is contrary to what other scholars have written. The only other historian to write about the Utah National Guard's service on the border never mentioned the court martial hearings. In fact, Richard Roberts only discussed how well the men behaved on the border, the soldiers' negative actions were omitted.⁴² Based off correspondence and muster rolls, Utah National Guard soldiers were disciplined for deserting, carrying guns into the town of Nogales, public intoxication, and crossing the international boundary line. The trials of William Allen, Joseph Costello, and Henry Owensby shed light on the court proceedings.

Private Allen deserted the border camp on 22 September and was apprehended in El Paso, Texas three days later. Allen was moved to Fort Bliss, Texas and tried by general court martial for desertion, losing clothes and ordinance property, and for stealing a government horse and suitcase. In short order, Private Allen was found guilty of losing the ordinance property and going AWOL. Allen was sentenced to four months confinement and loss of 2/3 salary for the same period.⁴³

⁴¹ Utah National Guard Mexican Border Campaign Records, box 1, folder 21.

⁴² Roberts, 92-100. Roberts also never discusses the lack of new recruits that occurred after the initial call-up period of June-July of 1916.

⁴³ Utah National Guard Mexican Border Campaign Records, box 1, folder 11.

Private Joseph Costello, who also deserted the Utah camp was a little more fortunate than Private Allen. A letter from Captain Nielsen of Troop E to major Williams described the desertion of Costello: "Private Costello of this organization has been AWOL since Aug. 29th and I have every reason to believe that he has deserted. We find the following items missing: one cup, one pair spurs, one lariat rope." Major Williams advised that the Adjutant General needed to be informed of the desertion so Costello could be dropped off of pay rolls and muster rolls. Costello was on the lamb and escaped capture for nearly three months. Finally, on 2 November Costello was apprehended and transferred from Fort Winfield Scott to Fort Douglas, Utah. It was at Fort Douglas that Private Costello caught a break. In a letter from Major Williams to the Department Adjutant of the Western Department Major Williams stated, "It is impossible for this office to prefer charges against Pvt. Costello. The records of his desertion and of the property he was short are with the Headquarters 2nd Squadron Utah Cavalry." Since the Second Squadron of Utah Cavalry was still on the Mexican border, Costello escaped trial by court martial.⁴⁴

The story of Private Henry G. Owensby is just as fascinating as that of Joseph Costello and provides interesting details about the Federal Government and Utah. Prior to deserting Private Owensby had already been tried by court martial three different times. According to court-martial documents, in September 1916 while already a prisoner in the guardhouse, Owensby "did become drunk and disorderly in camp. While in an intoxicated condition, Private Owensby did use abusive and obscene language." Owensby not only was liquored up and cursed at officers, he even attempted to start a fight with the regimental adjutant D.G. Richart. Liquor in the Utah camp was anathema;

⁴⁴ Utah National Guard Mexican Border Campaign Records, box 1, folder 11.

there is no way the officers of the camp would stand for a soldier to get publicly intoxicated. Apparently, Private Owensby grew tired of being disciplined so he deserted. At some point in October, while Owensby was still at-large, Major Williams corresponded with the Commanding General of the Southern Department of the U.S. Army. Owensby was set to be tried for yet another offense, but was let off the hook. Williams stated "In view of the fact that the 1st squadron, Utah Cavalry, is now under orders to proceed to Mobilization Camp for the purpose of muster out and as nearly all principal witnesses belong to that squadron as does the accused, on account of the difficulties and expense involved, I recommend that he not be brought to trial." Owensby was finally apprehended in early November and transported back to Fort Douglas, where his story took an interesting turn. While in transit, the Commanding General of the Western Department wired Major Williams asking if Owensby was the same man that was dishonorably discharged by general court martial in January 1915. Williams checked with Owensby and discovered he was the man to whom the General referred. Private Owensby's entire escapade with the Utah National Guard should not have even happened, since he had previously been dishonorably discharged in 1915.⁴⁵ The fact that Owensby had been dishonorably discharged previously shows that either the U.S. government or U.S. military lacked an efficient means to document discharged soldiers or that there was little communication between federal and state units. Had the Utah National Guard known that Owensby had a dishonorable history; it is likely they would not have allowed him to enlist, especially since the men from Utah cared so dearly for a good reputation.

Accolades

⁴⁵ Utah National Guard Mexican Border Campaign Records, box 1, folder 9.

As evidenced, the Utah National Guard resembled any other military unit. The commanding officers of the Utah National Guard wanted their units to stand out from those of other states. Although the UNG did have its share of deserters and disciplinary actions, there were many accolades heaped upon the members of the Utah National Guard. The Utah National Guard was lauded for its rapid response to the call being one of the first units to arrive at the border. Local newspapers and even some Utah historians have credited the artillery unit as being the first on the border after the June 18 call. The *Salt Lake Herald* stated, “It is significant, and characteristic too, that the Utah battery should have been the first national guard organization to report to General Funston at the border following the President’s call.”⁴⁶ Although Utahns touted that fact, official records credit a unit from Illinois as being the first to arrive.⁴⁷ Nonetheless, the Utah National Guard was heralded as being not only quick in response, but also prepared for service on the border.

Praiseworthy letters and telegrams streamed into the Utah Headquarters on the border and were sent to Fort Douglas. Newton Baker, the US secretary of war, wrote Adj. General Wedgwood and personally thanked Wedgwood for the service of the Utah National Guard on the border. Many military leaders applauded the men of the Utah National Guard for their behavior. In September, the Utah Cavalry and Field Hospital received high honors in the Nogales district. The Cavalry and Field Hospital had placed first in the camp inspections that took place that month. In October of 1916, the Utah Battery was included with a select number of units to drill and perform at the Arizona

⁴⁶ *Salt Lake Herald*, 24 October 1916.

⁴⁷ Roberts, 92.

state fair. The Utah Battery was chosen as the best-drilled and equipped militia organization on the border and thus was asked to give exhibitions at the fair.⁴⁸

Although the battery was selected as one of the best militia units on the border, it was necessary for them to constantly drill. In the same month in which they provided exhibitions at the Arizona state fair, the battery had to continually drill to remedy their “concealment problems.” These drills were supervised by army regulars as part of the training regimen that was outlined in the passage of the military reform acts. Since the Federal Government wanted the National Guard to be more prepared for engagements, the Regular Army spent more time drilling and instructing the state troops, this was a lesson learned from the Spanish-American War. Any well-trained battery should be able to conceal itself from the sight of the enemy. During drills in October, the Utah Battery had to maneuver their guns into a variety of defensive positions for many weeks until army officers were satisfied that the Utah Battery could conceal itself from enemies in every direction.⁴⁹

Military Reform and The Utah National Guard

The US was in a state of transition on many fronts during the first two decades of the twentieth century. Perhaps the transition was no greater on any facet than it was for the military. As previously described, the military establishment issued sweeping reforms after the Spanish-American War. The concept of the National Guard as an expansion force for the regular army was spawned by those reforms. The Federal Government allocated more money to the army for the buildup of arms and supplies. The

⁴⁸ *Salt Lake Herald*, 24 October 1916.

⁴⁹ *Salt Lake Herald*, 19 October, 1916.

peacetime strength of the army increased by tens of thousands of troops.⁵⁰ The army began using new weapons like the machine gun and trucks and motorcycles for transportation. The military even began using the airplane as a reconnaissance device during the Punitive Expedition.⁵¹

In this era of reform and mechanization The Utah National Guard served on the border using horses as their main transportation. However, they also used trucks and motorcycles for the transport of troops and weapons. This was certainly a new concept for many military leaders, yet the Punitive Expedition was one of the last conflicts in which the US used a horse-mounted cavalry. The muster rolls of the Utah National Guard reveal there was a need for veterinarians and horseshoers as well as truck and motorcycle mechanics. In August, 1916 the C.O. of the Nogales District dispatched a telegram inquiring if the UNG had any men that could serve as chauffeurs for a set of new trucks the army had just received. Major Williams replied that only two of the nearly 800 men on the border were qualified to drive the trucks, but they could not be spared as they were currently driving trucks for his command.⁵² There were more men qualified as veterinarians and horseshoers than there were to drive trucks. Also in August, Major Williams wired Adj. General Wedgwood asking for a supply of barbed wire so the men could build a fence. The men were concerned not of losing supplies, ammunition or weapons; they were wary of horse thieves.⁵³ Although the army was becoming more mechanized, the men could not do without their horses. The men of the

⁵⁰ Graham Cosmas, "Military Reform After the Spanish-American War: The Army Reorganization Fight of 1898-1899." *Military Affairs* 35 (Feb., 1971) 17.

⁵¹ Clendenen, 318 .

⁵² Utah National Guard Mexican Border Campaign Records, box 1, folders 6, 14, and 24.

⁵³ Utah National Guard Mexican Border Campaign Records, box 2, folder 3.

UNG did not receive specific training on a new weapon, the machine gun; though they served with units from other states whose specialty was the machine gun.

Borderland Encounters

During periods of war, Americans have frequently harassed nationalities with which the US was fighting. The American sentiment towards Mexicans during this period was certainly negative. After Villa's Columbus raid in March 1916, Americans became even more hostile towards Mexicans. As the Utah National Guard prepared to travel to the border, the leaders received telegrams asking to keep their men in line while travelling on the railroads. The officers of the UNG were asked not to harass the Mexican or Mexican American railroad workers since they were invaluable to the railroads. During the months after the Columbus raid, many railroad workers quit after receiving jeers and threats from railroad patrons, and a letter details the situation:

“Inform commanding officers that throughout California and border states many railway employees and section gangs are Mexican, though American citizens...Representations are coming from railway managers that some Mexican employees have been frightened and left work because of menacing actions, jeering and insulting remarks made by soldiers enroute to border. No other laborers available for railways, prompt arrival of troops at border so essential department commander confident patriotic citizen soldiers will not embarrass efforts of government by such thoughtless conduct.”⁵⁴

Besides having a hostile sentiment towards Mexicans, Anglo Americans also viewed the country and its people as poor and backward. In a letter from Major King to the *Salt Lake Herald*, Major King compared his time during the Spanish American War to his present situation in Mexico. “I wonder if we may not after all have the same

⁵⁴ Utah National Guard Mexican Border Campaign Records, box 2, folder 11.

opportunity of carrying the message of education, sanitation, honest administration and decent living to the poor Mexicans as we did to the Cubans.”⁵⁵

Due to the negative view of Mexicans and even Mexican Americans, members of the Utah National Guard were frequently warned to steer clear from contact with citizens of Nogales. Officers in charge of the Nogales district enacted regulations to limit soldiers’ travel into the city of Nogales. No weapons were permitted at any time while visiting the city when soldiers were not on duty. Soldiers’ dress was also regulated. The Army wanted to make sure that men were always properly dressed. This was to maintain a professional look for the group but also to distinguish the soldiers from the common folk. A letter sent from the Commanding Officer of the Nogales District to the officers of each unit stated that he has seen men on the streets of Nogales with their sleeves rolled up, shirts unbuttoned and even soldiers wearing articles of clothing not issued by the government. The C.O. wanted this practice stopped at once. He stated, “With proper efforts, the appearance of men on the streets of Nogales will be greatly improved as well as adding to the military reputation of this command.”⁵⁶

The medical officers of the Utah National Guard shed light on the view of Mexicans during this period. The leaders of the sanitation group warned soldiers to be weary of venereal disease. A General Order was issued stating,

“All men who expose themselves to the danger of contracting venereal diseases shall at once upon their return to camp report to the hospital for the application of such cleansing and prophylaxis as may be prescribed by the Camp Surgeon. Any soldier who fails to comply with such instructions shall be brought to trial by court-martial for neglect of duty.”⁵⁷

⁵⁵ *Salt Lake Herald*, 10 September 1916.

⁵⁶ Utah National Guard Mexican Border Campaign Records, box 1, folder 56.

⁵⁷ Utah National Guard Mexican Border Campaign Records, box 1, folder 36.

Although the order does not state outright to avoid the people in and around Nogales, it is implied – how else was one to contract a venereal disease? Major Williams provides insight regarding the troopers' view of the locals with the following statement, “troop commanders are requested to bring this question pointedly before their man again at this time owing to the known venereal condition existing among certain of the classes of this particular locality.”⁵⁸ This is not the first time in military history that soldiers have been admonished to steer clear of the locals. The U.S. Army struggled with outbreaks of venereal disease in Hawaii and the Philippines in the years between the Spanish-American War and the Punitive Expedition. Military leaders realized the health of the troops was critical to the success of the army.⁵⁹

Sanitation

During the time of the Punitive Expedition, American soldiers benefited from a medical staff that was knowledgeable and experienced. Besides their enemies, the worst threat to armies was disease; the Utah National Guard was no exception. Fortunately, the medical field had made much advancement in disease prevention. The germ theory of disease was now widely accepted in the medical field. Although the U.S. had a simple victory in the Spanish-American war, the loss of life due to disease was catastrophic. For every soldier that was killed in action, seven died from disease.⁶⁰ The staggering loss of life due to disease ushered in a new era of military medicine. Sanitation became a curriculum for cadets entering military academies throughout the United States. In 1911

⁵⁸ Utah National Guard Mexican Border Campaign Records, box 1, folder 36.

⁵⁹ Brian M. Linn, “The Long Twilight of the Frontier Army.” *The Western Historical Quarterly* 27 (Summer 1996): 148-49.

⁶⁰ Vincent J. Cirillo, *Bullets and Bacilli: The Spanish-American War and Military Medicine*. (Piscataway, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 30.

the U.S. required Typhoid immunization for all soldiers.⁶¹ Army medical officers now realized that flies and mosquitos were vectors of disease so eradication of these pests was critical to maintain healthy troops. It was clear that the U.S. no longer wanted its soldiers to suffer from debilitating diseases that could be prevented.⁶² It is from this new school of military medicinal though that members of the UNG benefitted.

While the UNG was on the border, their hospital unit performed sanitary inspections and provided healthcare for the soldiers. There were strict guidelines for camp cleanliness and sanitation. The sanitary regulations covered nearly every aspect of camp including the kitchen, water, waste incinerators, latrines, pest control, and personal cleanliness. As previously mentioned, soldiers risked court-martial for exposing themselves to the hazards of venereal disease. Soldiers in the Utah National Guard were even instructed on how to properly handle food. The military understood that handling food with unclean hands spread disease. Brigadier General Plummer issued orders that stated, “bread should not be touched by hands or clothing, instead it must be handled in clean sacks and placed in a clean box that is furnished by the camp.”⁶³

The Utah camp frequently received compliments for the cleanliness of their camp. The federal army praised the Utah camp for being in excellent condition and having the one of the lowest instances of disease. For every thousand soldiers, the percentage of sick was .018.⁶⁴ In September, the Utah camp received the highest score in the Nogales district for sanitation. Major Wesley King described, “Some honors have come to our boys. The cavalry ranked first on sanitary inspection. The field hospital, commanded by

⁶¹ Cirillo, 150-52.

⁶² Cirillo, 150-52.

⁶³ Utah National Guard Mexican Border Campaign Records, box 1, folders 36 and 61.

⁶⁴ Utah National Guard Mexican Border Campaign Records, box 1, folder 37.

Major John F. Sharp has been given the conduct of the hospital school being conducted for all the sanitary officers in the district, of which there are over 350.”⁶⁵ The Utah National Guard constantly held its own inspections in preparation for those that would occur by the district commanders. It appears that the constant sanitary inspections paid off for the camp. Earlier in August, as part of a “self-check” the following was reported, “Sanitary Inspector today pointed out conditions around the kitchens as intolerable. The kitchens were untidy; ice boxes dirty and ill smelling...none of the fly traps were baited, garbage cans were dirty...On the other hand his inspection of the latrines found same in perfectly satisfactory condition.”⁶⁶ It is clear from the letter that every effort was made to prevent the spread of disease and that early technology was used to maintain sanitary conditions.

Critiques of the Reforms

The National Defense Act of 1916 changed how state militias would support the federal troops. The act was supposed to make the process of mobilizing the National Guard easier, though evidence suggests otherwise. Part of the National Defense Act required all members of the National Guard mustered into federal service to swear an allegiance oath. This was a change from previous instances when state militias were asked to aid the regular army but were not considered in federal service. The oath of allegiance was supposed to be sworn and signed when members of the militia were mustered into federal service. This did not always occur. In fact for over two months, the Utah National Guard was on the border with at least half of its men not having taken the appropriate muster oath to gain federal recognition. Only troops F and H took the

⁶⁵ Major King to *Salt Lake Herald*, 10 September 1916.

⁶⁶ Utah National Guard Mexican Border Campaign Records, box 1, folder 37.

oath to comply with the June 3 act. All of the soldiers had sworn an oath of allegiance when they were mustered into federal service; however, most of them swore an oath that was different from the one included in the National Defense Act. Adjutant General Wedgwood did not realize this until he discovered that the UNG did not have federal recognition and thus would not receive any federal funds for his unit. The soldiers who had not taken the allegiance oath did so throughout the month of September.⁶⁷

Confusion abounded among federal and state units with what was actually covered by the act. Although many National Guard units were criticized for lack of preparation and low levels of training, the federal government itself deserved some blame for the issues that occurred. Often, there were procedural issues in which neither officers in the National Guard nor those of the U.S. Army knew how to resolve. These issues were escalated all the way up to the Chief of the Militia Bureau, General Mills. Questions such as rank advancements and the issuance of clothing were wrapped in the red tape of the Federal Government. A perfect example of this occurred in November when a debate raged whether the National Guard troops could wear the uniform of the U.S. Army. General Mills concluded that members of the National Guard could wear the same uniform with one exception; there must be an insignia worn to distinguish the two groups.⁶⁸

In an attempt to promote a captain of the Utah National Guard to the rank of Major, Adjutant General Wedgwood criticized the War Department for one of its

⁶⁷ Utah National Guard Mexican Border Campaign Records, box 1, folder 46. This is also contrary to what Richard Roberts stated in his works about the Utah National Guard. Roberts declared that the Utah National Guard had performed all due diligence prior to travelling to the border. The fact that most units were on the border without formal recognition by the Federal Government proves otherwise, though it appears the U.S. government was more to blame for the mishap than was the Utah National Guard.

⁶⁸ Utah National Guard Mexican Border Campaign Records, box 2, folder 6.

policies. "I am very much disappointed at General Mills refusal to permit me thru the Governor to suggest the appointment one of the Captains at the border as the other Major. General Mills is today, in his quiet way, the most powerful autocrat in the U.S. and has been since military legislation that culminated in the act of June 3rd." ⁶⁹ Clearly, this is an indictment of the federal legislation. Historian Frederick Todd expanded this criticism one step further. He stated that the federal government never had a good thought-out plan for how to interact with state militias. Although the acts of 1903 and 1916 were improvements to the relationship, the result remained poorly planned and executed. ⁷⁰

The Utah National Guard Returns Home

The return of the units of the Utah National Guard was more staggered than their departure. The first unit that was recalled to Utah from the border was the First Squadron of Utah Cavalry. Early in October, the First Squadron received word that they were to leave the border on 25 October. The First Squadron and a detachment of the Utah Field Hospital entrained from Nogales on October 25 and arrived in Salt Lake City on October 30. Thousands of adoring Utahns joyfully greeted the soldiers upon their arrival. The troops paraded through the city mounted on their horses and brought along a souvenir from the border, a burro! Later that evening they enjoyed a hearty turkey dinner: "The reception was one ovation from the time the troopers left their train to prepare for the parade through the city until after the dinner served in their honor at Fort Douglas, late in the afternoon." ⁷¹ Over the next two weeks, the troopers were mustered out of federal service.

⁶⁹ Utah National Guard Mexican Border Campaign Records, box 1, folder 58.

⁷⁰ Todd, 168-70.

⁷¹ *Salt Lake Herald*, 31 October 1916.

The next unit to return from the border arrived mid-December. The Utah Battery paraded through town as the cavalry had before them; they too received a dinner in their honor. A special letter from Brigadier General E.H. Plummer was read to the troops. Plummer had kind words for the Utah Battery. He stated, “inspectors and instructors detailed from time to time with your organizations have in every case reported the battery efficient, well trained, and well disciplined, and I can recall no instances of misconduct of members of your organization.” Mustering out of the troops began on December 22 and lasted through the end of the year. The troops were given a few days break to celebrate the Christmas holiday with their families during the same period.⁷²

The Utah Field Hospital arrived in Salt Lake City just in time for Christmas. On December 24, the members of the Field Hospital unloaded from their train and went directly home to spend time with their families. They returned to Fort Douglas on December 29 for mustering out of federal service.

The Second Squadron Utah Cavalry was the last unit to leave the border. Technically, they were the only Utah unit to serve on the border during the year of 1917. The Second Squadron was still serving on the border after President Wilson cancelled the Punitive Expedition and asked that General Pershing withdraw his troops from Mexico on January 30, 1917. Although Villa was never captured, President Wilson considered the expedition a success since Villa’s band and power had nearly disintegrated.⁷³ The Second Squadron patrolled the border until the 10th US Cavalry relieved them in early March. They arrived in Salt Lake City to much less fanfare than the other units of the Utah National Guard did. By March, the threat of war with Mexico had entirely subsided

⁷² Roberts, 99.

⁷³ James A. Sandos, “Pancho Villa and American Security: Woodrow Wilson’s Mexican Diplomacy Reconsidered,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 13 (November 1981): 310.

and Utahns were more focused on the events in Europe than they were on the US-Mexican border. The Second Squadron mustered out of federal service on March 8, 1917.⁷⁴

Outcomes

The service of the Utah National Guard on the US-Mexican Border in 1916 has been essentially overlooked by historians. Yet, there is a rich history that enhances our understanding of Utah, the US Military, and the border during this time period. In this case study alone, one learns not only the thoughts and actions of the men of the UNG and how the US Military reforms affected the Utah National Guard's border campaign, but also how Utahns and other Americans interacted with the locals on the border.

Nearly one thousand men from the Utah National Guard served on the Mexican Border between June 1916 and March 1917. The time served was eventful; troopers gained critical wartime experience while on the border. Daily, the men spent time drilling, marching, inspecting camp, and learning new military skills. It is surprising the men found time to spend leisure time in the town of Nogales or participate in athletic events.

Perhaps to the dismay of the commanding officers and their desire to differentiate themselves from other units, the Utah National Guard did have its share of deserters and disciplinary hearings. In these instances, the Utah National Guard resembled a typical military unit. However, many units of the UNG separated themselves from other military outfits. The Utah camp received praise for its clean appearance, sanitation, as well as its

⁷⁴ Roberts, 99.

lack of alcohol.⁷⁵ The Battery, Cavalry, and Field Hospital all received praise from US commanders from the Nogales district while serving on the border. They even received a special thank you from the US Secretary of War in which he credited the National Guard as being an integral part of the “peaceful solution” between Mexico and the United States.⁷⁶

The legacy of the Utah National Guard on the border literally expands beyond the US Mexican Border. From the documentary evidence we learn not only the actions the men took while on the border, but their thoughts and feelings as well. The members of the Utah National Guard truly felt they were defending the honor of the US when they answered President Wilson’s call for troops. The patriotic fervor reached a level of near jingoism in the state of Utah as well as throughout the country.

At this time, the Americans’ view of Mexicans was certainly hostile. Even Mexican Americans were not safe from jeers and reprisals. Much like the present day, Mexican workers played a key role in the economy. As previously stated, the railroad industry in 1916 employed a vast amount of Mexican American and Mexican workers who were harassed by Americans and even US troops. Today, this ethnic group continues to receive maltreatment even though there is no war between the US and Mexico.

⁷⁵ The UNG camp generally lacked alcohol based on the Latter-Day Saint demographic makeup of the unit. However, there were members of the UNG that did bring alcohol into camp. As previously discussed, Pvt. Owensby was certainly intoxicated when he challenged his superior officers to a fight. In the end, the Utah camp considered alcohol anathema, and disciplined troopers who became intoxicated. There are many memos and orders issued in the Adj. General’s records that indicate that commanding officers did not want their men to drink intoxicating liquors. Although the camp was considered alcohol-free, it really was not entirely a dry camp. The fact that the officers were concerned about alcohol suggests that the camp was not as dry as they wanted.

⁷⁶ Utah National Guard Mexican Border Campaign Records, box 1, folder 2.

The reforms to the military that took place after the Spanish-American War were initially tested during the Punitive Expedition. These reforms are still in effect today. No longer are state units considered militia, they are part of the National Guard. Although these reforms had their flaws, i.e. lack of preparation on the part of the federal and state governments, the reforms created a stronger Regular Army and National Guard. The acts that created the National Guard mandated training and discipline that were previously lacking. Besides developing better soldiers, the increased training and discipline weeded out the weaker soldiers which actually strengthened state units. All of the drilling and training the Utah National Guard received on the border was supervised by Army Regulars. Reforms did not stop with the expansion of the army and its organization, but reached into the field of military medicine as well. The actions Utah National Guard on the border display the changes military medicine during this time. This is evidenced by the actions taken by the sanitation troops to help prevent the spread of disease through proper handling of food, avoidance of the “vice” districts of Nogales, and the care of camp sanitation.

Lastly, is the role the Utah National Guard played in the Punitive Expedition and the Mexican Revolution. According to the War Department, the Punitive Expedition was not punitive at all. Instead, “its real purpose was an extension of the power of the United States into a country disturbed beyond control of constituted authorities of the Republic of Mexico, as a means of controlling lawless aggregations of bandits and preventing attacks by them across the international frontier.”⁷⁷ The interpretation of the Punitive Expedition by U.S. Department of War as a means for peace is certainly one-sided. The

⁷⁷ U.S. War Department, *War Department Annual Reports, 1917* (Washington, D.C., 1918) Vol. I p. 10.

army was in Mexico fighting battles, which resulted in many casualties. A solution that was truly peaceful would not have required any military intervention. Also, the War Department even stated it was an extension of US power into Mexico, which can be interpreted as an imperialistic maneuver.

In his thank you letter to the Adjutant General of the Utah National Guard, Secretary of War Baker sums up the National Guard's role and accomplishments. Baker stated,

“I wish to thank you and the officers and men of your organization on behalf of the Government, for the valuable service just rendered to the country by its presence on the border. When the National Guard was called into the service of the Federal Government, the lives of men, women and children along the southern frontier were in grave danger owing to formidable bandit raids from the Mexican side of the boundary. It is not too much to say that had these raids continued there was danger of international war. From the time of the arrival of the units of the National Guard on the border the raids ceased and the tension between the two countries began to relax. It is the hope and belief of the Government that the presence of the units of the National Guard, together with units of the Regular Army, on the border and in Mexico, has made possible a peaceful solution of a difficult and threatening problem.”⁷⁸

By the time the last members of the Utah National Guard returned home, the mission had been accomplished; raids had ceased, Villa's power in Northern Mexico had diminished, and war was averted. Although it was not perfect, all units of the Utah National Guard that dutifully served on the border had many successes. Through this service, the troops from Utah had also demonstrated their loyalty and their “American-ness” to other Americans. As the present-day focus shifts towards Mexico and its drug trafficking violence, perhaps interested parties can learn from the events that brought the Utah National Guard into action on the border in 1916.

⁷⁸ Utah National Guard Mexican Border Campaign Records, box 1, folder 2.

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