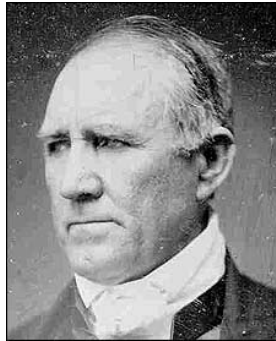


## Chapter One

### Texan Invasions

The problems between New Mexico and Texas did not begin during the American Civil War. They began during the Texas revolution for independence in 1836. When General Sam Houston's troops captured Santa Anna himself, Houston judiciously tried to cinch his success and avoid further bloodshed by making a deal with him. In return for sparing his life, the Mexican leader agreed to pull his troops out of Texas. It was a good move because Santa Anna had 4,000 fresh troops not twenty miles away. The Texan army followed the retreating Mexicans to the banks of the Rio Grande. Once there, Sam Houston and his officers inspected their newly won Territory and tried to decide where the western boundaries of their new country lay.



Sam Houston

General Houston stopped his forces on the banks of the Rio Grande where he believed the border between Texas and Mexico should be. All of his senior officers wanted the border to be a hundred miles west at a certain mountain range. They wanted complete control of the river valley. But Houston prevailed, insisting that the Rio Grande from the mouth of the river, north to 39 degrees latitude, and then eastward along northern New Mexico all the way to the Arkansas River, then at 100 degrees longitude south to the Red River, following the river to the border of Louisiana, and down to the Gulf of Mexico.<sup>1</sup> Thus began the troubles between New Mexico and Texas as they claimed all of New Mexico's land east of the Rio Grande. Even though the New Mexicans were completely unaware of this claim, the Texans thought it was a 'done deal.' As far as they were concerned the Mexican army was gone and they were free, and all that land was theirs.

However, the Mexicans felt that Santa Anna's agreement was a defeat they could not accept. To them, it had not won anyone's independence yet. Therefore, Texas and Mexico were found themselves to be still at war in a continuing series of border fights. Whenever Mexico backed off the Texans would anger them with some belligerent event. For example, in September of 1836 they voted to be annexed to the United States but that wouldn't happen for another nine years. Three months later they voted to include parts of four Mexican states into their Republic. Then they urged their sea captains to commit piracy on Mexican vessels. Meanwhile they heaped ethnic insults of all sorts upon the Mexicans in their newspapers, even calling them "an "imbecile nation" and an "abject race," that was easier to kill than tolerate."<sup>2</sup>

Although the United States delayed the request to annex Texas as a state, they did recognize it as an independent republic early in 1837. The Texans, however, were not content to rule only their own domain. They quickly set about taking steps to exploit the weaknesses of

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<sup>1</sup> Frank S. Edwards, A Campaign in New Mexico with Colonel Doniphan (University of New Mexico Press, 1996), 3.

<sup>2</sup> Time Life Books, The Old West Series, The Spanish West (Time Inc., 1976), 114.

Mexico by interfering in several of the revolutions that were going on in several states. They allied themselves with Mexican Rebels in the Yucatan and sent their small navy to blockade its port cities. By 1841 Mexican General Ariel Arista was urging Mexicans everywhere to reconcile their differences in order to concentrate on the real enemy, Texas. "In Texas," he offered, "you can find a field in which to display your warlike ardor without the pain and mortification of knowing that the blood you shed and the tears you occasion are from your brethren."<sup>3</sup>

If the Texans had simply been satisfied with their freedom and the lands they were unquestionably in control of at the time, the Mexicans might have just let things be. As it was, even Americans were having trouble reconciling some of the actions of Texas, and to Mexicans it was a seditious assault. Unfortunately for Mexico, the Texan revolt was not the isolated event American history usually makes it out to be. In this period, there were revolts in ten Mexican provinces including Texas, New Mexico, and California. If Mexico had been more stable the Texans would have had much bigger problems. But as it was, Santa Anna and the government that took over after him had a lot of fires to put out. Most of the revolts were caused by similar causes – Santa Anna's dissolution of the constitution and the creation of a republican central government in Mexico.

One of the revolts, the Rio Arriba (upriver) Rebellion in New Mexico, came on the heels of the Texan revolt, breaking out late in 1836 and extending into 1837. More than three thousand rebels from northern New Mexico rose up and gained control of the entire upper portion of the province including the capitol, Santa Fe. They killed Governor Perez and set up a new government. In response, the region called Rio Abajo (downriver) gathered its militia forces, who elected a somewhat dubious Manuel Armijo as their leader, and marched to relieve the capitol. Led by a company of dragoons from Veracruz, the Rio Abajo Militia dispersed the rebels without any guidance from Armijo, an unlikely hero. But using the event as a means of good self-promotion to the authorities in Mexico, Armijo was appointed to the rank of General and made governor of the province. He was very pleased with himself. It is told that he once said, "God rules the heavens; Armijo rules the earth." This was how he began his somewhat checkered political career which lasted until the American forces invaded nine years later in 1846.

Thus, Texas and New Mexico became locked in incongruous perceptions of each other. The New Mexicans feared the belligerent Texan revolt – that they would try to extend it to New Mexico; and at the same time, the Texans thought that New Mexico would welcome them as comrades in arms because of the Rio Arriba revolt. So it happened that by 1841, people in New Mexico had heard plenty enough about Texan truculence, and when they discovered that Texan attentions would now be turned on them it caused them much concern. The success of the Texans and Americans who aided them was a cloud of despair that hung over Mexico, and it was felt in New Mexico that they might also be invaded. Their fears were very real.<sup>4</sup>

### **The First Texan Invasion 1841**

After the Rio Arriba rebellion ended, New Mexicans settled back down to Mexican rule (more accurately, Armijo rule), but there were still murmurings of the sentiments of the revolt in several locations of the upper province. This encouraged Texans who were visiting New Mexico and word got back to interested people in Texas. Even as early as 1839, the Mexican authorities in Santa Fe believed that an American party under the leadership of a Julian Werkeman (probably William Workman), was endeavoring to "fan the flames of the previous revolution in favor of receiving a like revolution from Texas." Werkeman and others were stirring up the old feelings

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<sup>3</sup> The Spanish West, 114

<sup>4</sup> David J. Weber, The Mexican Frontier 1821-1846; The American Southwest Under Mexico (University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, NM, 1982), 266.

that had inspired the revolt in the first place.<sup>5</sup> Texas had deliberately sent agents to New Mexico with a message from President Lamar Mirabeau. They spoke of how Texans welcomed them as “fellow citizens,” and invited them to partake of “all our blessings.” Governor Armijo promptly had them arrested for attempting to start a revolt.<sup>6</sup>

Meanwhile back in Texas, preparations were made to take control of their new land in New Mexico. They formed an expedition to go to Santa Fe. They completely expected the majority of New Mexicans to welcome them with open arms (instead of loaded arms). If the New Mexicans were ready and willing to take up the Texan flag the armed expedition members were ready and willing to help them accomplish it. But if the citizens were not interested they would simply establish trade with them and then they would leave peaceably. This is how the expedition’s historian, an American named Kendall, pretty much described their mission.<sup>7</sup>

But even though it was billed as a trade expedition, just for back-up the Texans brought along a six-pounder cannon, which was described by one beholder as beautiful: “It bears upon it the lone star of Texas, and the name of her ex-governor, ‘M.B. Lamar,’ and upon the sight is engraved ‘Santa Fe.’”<sup>8</sup> No doubt, the Texans had brought along this little beauty merely to bestow it as a gift to the people of Santa Fe – after all, they had engraved the name of the city on it. However, the New Mexicans did not at all appreciate the approach of the Texans. “General Lamar seems to have been very poorly informed as to the sentiments of the people of New Mexico. The reception accorded these so-called Texan pioneers was of an entirely different sort.”<sup>9</sup>



Mirabeau B. Lamar

The expedition departed from Austin in June, 1841. Their army had six companies under the command of Hugh McLeod, a brevet brigadier general of their army. Along with him came three commissioners, deputized as ambassadors who carried proclamations, written in both, English and Spanish. Kendall expressed that Texan expectations ran high as general feelings were that their mission would be a complete success. He wrote that, “not a doubt existed that the liberal terms offered would be at once acceded to by a population living within the limits of Texas, and who had long been groaning under a misrule most tyrannical”<sup>10</sup>

When Governor Armijo learned of their approach, it is said that he lamented, “Poor New Mexico! So far from heaven, so close to Texas!” He took steps to arouse the people and place his military forces in full battle readiness. He had anticipated such a threat for some time and had

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<sup>5</sup> Ralph Emerson Twitchell, Esq., Leading facts of New Mexican History, Volume II (The Torch Press, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, 1912), 74, footnote 52.

<sup>6</sup> Weber, The Mexican Frontier 266.

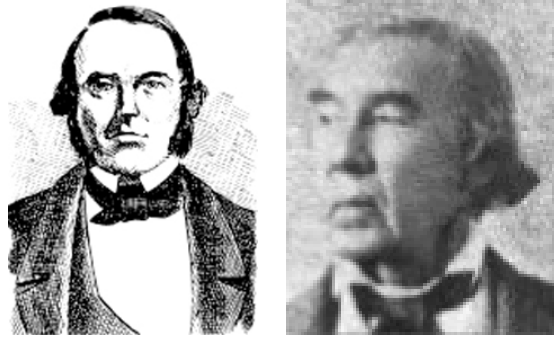
<sup>7</sup> Twitchell, Leading Facts II, 69.

<sup>8</sup> Edwards, Campaign with Doniphan, 25.

<sup>9</sup> Twitchell, Leading Facts II, 70

<sup>10</sup> Twitchell, Leading Facts II, 74.

long since alerted the government of neighboring Chihuahua to be prepared to lend aid. Scouts were posted along the eastern frontier to spy on the Texan advance, and tight restrictions were placed on the travel of Americans living in the province to forestall any possible communications with the enemy.<sup>11</sup> But the Texan invaders lost their way and after three months of arduous travel the men were reduced to desperate straits. They were orphans of the wilderness now, begging for assistance. Their efforts have been described by historians as “almost inconceivable incompetence.” They had traveled about 1300 miles on a 700 mile trip and had set out when the plains were almost waterless. The Native Americans along the way raided them and stole their horses and a fire in the camp wiped out tents and ammunition. Men became sick, starving and thirsty, even sometimes throwing their weapons away because they were too heavy to carry.<sup>12</sup>



Texan Commissioners L-R: Colonel William G. Cooke, Jose Antonio Navarro

Armijo had sent Captain Damasio Salazar, of the Mexican army, to scout the eastern plains for signs of the invaders. On the 4th day of September Salazar captured three men. They escaped and were recaptured. One was killed resisting and the other two were executed for trying to escape. This was not a good beginning. Later, on the 16th of September, Salazar captured five more men near Cuesta on the Pecos River. He immediately planned to execute all five, but was dissuaded by a New Mexican named Don Gregorio Vigil. He was a wealthy Don who was well regarded as a man “of good heart and correct principles and had great influence in that portion of New Mexico”.<sup>13</sup>

Thus hearing of the destitute condition of the invasion force and sensing that success was imminent, and to make sure he was in on it, Governor Armijo made his move. Wearing his best uniform and riding his best mule Armijo led his army out to meet the Texans. About thirty miles out he and his men came across a detachment that was bringing in the five prisoners. Although he wore a uniform Captain William Lewis claimed to the governor he was only a merchant. Upon which, Armijo remarked that the man’s buttons bore stars of Texas as well as the word Texas embossed upon them. Armijo grabbed him by the jacket, pointed to a button, and let him know he was not dressed like a merchant but as a soldier.<sup>14</sup>

The next day, on the 17th of September ninety-four more men under the command of Colonel Cooke were found at Anton Chico by Captain Salazar. Meanwhile, Manuel Chaves, nephew of ‘his Excellency,’ was ordered to go out and meet them with 100 men as Armijo needed time to gather his forces. Manuel discovered them at Cañon Largo in a thick forest, near the village of San José. He surrounded the Americans during the night and at dawn Chaves walked into their camp, unarmed and told them in English to surrender. When Cooke hesitated Chaves called his men into view. Chaves and the unfortunate Captain Lewis negotiated the

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<sup>11</sup> Marc Simmons, The Little Lion of the Southwest (First Swallow Press/Ohio University Press, 1996), 70.

<sup>12</sup> The Spanish West, 147.

<sup>13</sup> Twitchell, Leading Facts II, 78.

<sup>14</sup> Simmons, Little Lion, 72.

surrender. Lewis informed the dismayed Texans, correctly, that Armijo was not far away with 1,500 more men. They surrendered. Manuel Chaves supplied them with such food and blankets as he could and marched them to Santa Fe.<sup>15</sup>

Manuel Antonio Chaves was born in 1818 in Atrisco, the family land grant opposite Albuquerque, on the west side of the river. His family moved to Cebolleta when he was a boy. Manuel was not new to militia work. At the age of sixteen, in 1834, he went with his older brother, Don Pedro Chaves in a 50-man party on a punitive and captive gathering raid against the Navajo. The company found the natives unusually scattered and entered Canyon de Chelly where they happened upon a gathering of thousands of natives having a celebration with feasts and dances. The resulting battle lasted all day and only two New Mexicans survived to escape, Manuel Chaves, and a Navajo boy who had been raised by a New Mexican family. Chaves had been wounded seven times and the boy once. The Navajos had presumed that Chaves was dead and the boy had hidden himself in the rocks. After nightfall the two buried Manuel's brother and journeyed without food or water back to New Mexico. Along the way, the boy died. At the end of his limits Manuel happened upon some Mexican shepherds who made a litter and carried him back to civilization. His endurance was remarkable and his bravery was legendary. He was the son of Don Julián Chaves and his grandfather was General Fernando de Chaves, original owner of the Atrisco land grant. His mother was Doña María Luz Garcia de Noriega, Daughter of Francisco Garcia de Noriega. He was described as soft-spoken, with brown hair, grey eyes and fair skin. Later, in 1844, married M. Vicenta Labadie, a descendant of French fur trappers.<sup>16</sup>



Manuel Antonio Chaves

If Manuel had a fault it was horseracing. All New Mexicans and most natives were obsessed with gambling but Manuel's particular love was horseracing. Years earlier, he had owned the finest racing horse in Santa Fe. Governor Armijo was extremely jealous and had it poisoned. Chaves found out what had happened and tried to assassinate 'his Excellency' with a bow and arrow, but he missed, which is a mystery, since he was known to be an expert shot. That's how he ended up in St. Louis as an exile for a couple of years; and that's how he came to learn English. Eventually, Armijo needed him enough to ask him to return, reassuring him that all was forgiven.<sup>17</sup> Now, he was in charge of the column that brought the prisoners to Santa Fe.

Once they arrived at Santa Fe, Armijo ordered them bound and placed in a dirty sheep corral next to the Governor's Palace. Through the walls they could hear a heated debate going on all night as to their fate. It was apparent to them that the Governor was not going to abide by the terms of the surrender. But, luckily for them, Armijo lacked the courage to order the execution of the prisoners by himself so he had asked for a vote by a council of officials. The vote finally taken at dawn was in favor to send the prisoners to Mexico City (by one vote). In contrast to

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<sup>15</sup> Ralph Emerson Twitchell, Military Occupation of New Mexico (Arno Press, New York, 1976), 285-289.

<sup>16</sup> Twitchell, Military Occupation, 296-297.

<sup>17</sup> Simmons, Little Lion, 71.

Armijo's hostility, Manuel Chaves befriended Commissioner-Colonel Cooke and housed him in his own home. And for his part in the negotiations, the unfortunate Captain Lewis became the eternal scapegoat for the Texans because they believed that he had lied to them. The six-pound gun was placed as a monument in the central plaza.



Manuel Armijo

Armijo then sent out Colonel Juan Andres Archuleta who rounded up the remaining Texans on the 5th of October, at Laguna Colorada. "On the day following [their arrival in Santa Fe], the last of the prisoners were sent on their tedious march to the City of Mexico, where they arrived in several divisions at the beginning of 1842."<sup>18</sup> On the way down, the salacious Captain Salazar had the opportunity to execute three more prisoners, and two others died from other causes. Salazar cut off the dead men's ears as a grisly record of their passing. The Texans were badly treated by Salazar but it might have been worse if Presidio Captain Albino Chacón had not been present on the trip. He was described as a man of noble and humane sentiments who took pity on the captives and did all he could to lessen their suffering. When the columns reached El Paso del Norte they were met by General Gonzales, the Curé (parish priest), and Don Ramon Ortiz, who immediately set about improving their conditions.<sup>19</sup>



Albino Chacon

As a side note, Captain Albino Chacón was the father of future U.S. Civil War Captain Rafael Chacón of the First New Mexico Volunteers. While in El Paso, the prisoners were treated surprisingly well and the Texan officers dined as guests of General Gonzales. In fact, they were sipping brandy and smoking cigars with the General when he arrested Salazar for his brutal conduct. Except for Armijo's apparent treachery, most of the viciousness of New Mexico's treatment of the prisoners was a direct result of the actions of Salazar; and to be fair to him, he

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<sup>18</sup> Twitchell, Leading Facts II, 78.

<sup>19</sup> Benjamin M. Read, Illustrated History of New Mexico (The New Mexican Printing Company, 1912), 405.

was only following direct orders from Armijo. “If any pretends to be sick or claims he cannot march, shoot him and bring me his ears.”<sup>20</sup> Compared to other New Mexicans, Salazar had a definite cruel streak. He appeared to be one of the few people in the Province to take Armijo seriously - a willing henchman to a cowardly despot. Five pairs of ears made their way back to Armijo who nailed them to a wall in the Governor’s Palace where the Americans found them in 1846. Armijo knew how his people thought of him; and, in all likelihood, the ears were meant to be badges of courage. Meanwhile most New Mexicans and American merchants went about their business, ignoring him as much as possible. Eventually, the group of Texan prisoners reached Mexico City, where some of them were released early on. The remainder was set free by Santa Anna on June 13th, 1842, except for one man who was condemned to death but was allowed to buy his way out of it.

Kendall, the expedition’s historian, defended the idea of an invasion by stating that, “the attempt to conquer a province, numbering some one hundred and fifty thousand inhabitants within its borders, was a shade too Quixotical to find favour in the eyes of the three hundred and twenty pioneers”.<sup>21</sup> In hindsight it surely was. New Mexico did not have that many people at that time, probably about 40,000-45,000, but considering that the populace mainly lived in small, far-flung, pastoral villages consisting mostly of peons; and the standing army in the whole area was a company of less than one hundred troops who were spread out in garrisons or employed guarding the Santa Fe Trail, was the idea really so quixotic? Perhaps not. It was well known that the Mexican Presidio troops were only armed with lances, swords, and second-rate firearms. Three hundred well-armed Texans with good rifles could easily defeat this contingent, and the Texans knew it. But what about the many militia groups? Of these, The Texans had heard rumors of great dissatisfaction in the ranks, and it was possible that a large militant faction, such as the previous 3,000-plus rebels of the Rio Arriba Rebellion might step in and put things altogether in the Texan balance. With that in mind, it was just possible and the Texans knew it.

Many historians believe that the Texan Santa Fe Expedition was sent to blaze a trail to Santa Fe for trade purposes, but the leaders bore documents that authorized them to appropriate “all public property,” and form a new government for the province. New Mexicans could provide for congressmen to go to the Texan legislature to represent New Mexico. The invaders were instructed to try “all gentle means before resorting to force,” but if things did not go their way, “then force could be used against government troops”.<sup>22</sup>

Much has been written of the suffering of the Texan prisoners, but most of it is only impressive if one believes that the suffering of Texan criminals is much more important than that of Mexican criminals. The Mexican officials were represented in these reports as being most inhumane in conduct. These were bold complaints from a failed invasion/coercion force. The Texan response to the capture of its army was as incredibly out of context as their boundary claims were in the first place. After the incident, Sam Houston wrote a long letter outlining the Texan stand on this issue (the only stand the Texans ever made during this invasion). However, the facts seem to belie his point of view because no one could deny that they were an armed invasion force. Whether the attempt was just or not makes no difference and though they were mistreated it could have been a whole lot worse. The Texans, having once sworn allegiance to Mexico, could have been treated as Mexican traitors, or at the very least as prisoners of war.<sup>23</sup>

Considering that memories of the Texan retaliatory massacres of hundreds of Mexican soldiers at San Jacinto, as well as Santa Anna’s humiliating defeat were not yet very far in the distant past, as well as the fact that they really were armed invaders, the Texans were actually treated surprisingly well, especially by Santa Anna himself. Yet, the Texans protested most

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<sup>20</sup> The Spanish West, 147.

<sup>21</sup> Twitchell, Leading Facts II, 70, footnote 50.

<sup>22</sup> Weber, The Mexican Frontier, 266.

<sup>23</sup> Twitchell, Leading Facts II, 72-73.

vociferously. Most nations in this era, including the United States executed their traitors, yet Santa Anna held up to his previous bargain and let them go. Ironically, to the utter chagrin of Texan patriots, a large number of Americans did not buy the Texan story at all, causing them to complain even louder. Because of this debacle, implicated Texan sympathizers hastily left New Mexico. Rowland and Workman and twenty others left for California since it was no longer safe to remain there. They were believed by the authorities to have sent information to the Texans – information leading to the arrival of the Expedition.<sup>24</sup>



William Workman

One would think that would have been the end of it, however, the pusillanimous Texans just couldn't 'let it go.' A resolution was passed by their Congress describing that the new borders of Texas now included eight of Mexico's northern states including California (Alto and Abajo). But all that was accomplished by the attempted invasion was a new resolution by Mexican authorities to reconquer Texas. The approach of a new army to their borders sent Texans into a panic. There were inconclusive engagements at San Antonio, Goliad, and Refugio but the political situation in Mexico was too unstable to maintain the offensive and the army withdrew. A Texan force was sent to make sure they left. Once this was accomplished many of the men disobeyed Houston's order not to cross the Rio Grande whereupon they swept into Mexico and assaulted the town of Mier. They were captured en masse, some of them were shot, and the rest were sent to Mexico City in chains, just as had happened to the Santa Fe Expedition.<sup>25</sup>

### **The Second Texan Invasion 1842**

But a second humiliation brought even more patriotic fervor deep in the heart of Texas and another army was quickly mobilized to accomplish what the former had not and to punish the Mexican miscreants who had done their jobs in service of their country. Someone was going to pay this time. And this time their fury was directed at Armijo and New Mexico. The newspapers called for invasion and retaliation and the raising of their flag over New Mexico and Chihuahua as well as instigating revolutions in the rest of Northern Mexico. Just as before, enthusiasm was high.<sup>26</sup> To carry out this plan they began raising "...a force of eight hundred men, under the command of Colonel Jacob Snively, and such enthusiasm prevailed that it was with difficulty that the number was kept down, so many applications were made for joining the enterprise."<sup>27</sup> But for some reason, due to an apparent lack of purpose and direction, the invasion idea and the army as well, pretty much died of neglect and mismanagement. Enthusiasms drained in the inactivity and the ranks dwindled drastically. The 'invasion' plan was shelved and instead, someone got the

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<sup>24</sup> Twitchell, Leading Facts II, footnotes 83.

<sup>25</sup> Alvin M. Josephy Jr., The Civil War in the American West (Vintage Books, 1991), 15.

<sup>26</sup> Twitchell, Leading Facts II, 82.

<sup>27</sup> Twitchell, Leading Facts II, 82.



bright idea of attacking the trade caravans on the Santa Fe Trail, an idea which shows in a true light the actual intentions of the Texans, which was the control of the Santa Fe Trail commerce. “The grand army of invasion and vengeance, the revolutionizing and capture of all of northern Mexico, finally resolved itself into nothing but the attempted plundering of caravans supplying the Santa Fe-Chihuahua trade...”<sup>28</sup>

### **The Third Texan Invasion 1843**

The Texan authorities organized two companies to go on ahead of the main group, presumably as advanced scouts. These companies were headed by John McDaniel and Charles A. Warfield. McDaniel and his small group were the first to leave. Warfield would soon follow, with Colonel Snively remaining behind to assemble the main force. What was left of the Spanish borderlands was almost completely undefended in terms of military strength. “The Mexican government took immediate steps to meet the pending invasion and sent a large force into New Mexico, under General José M. Monterde, to support General Armijo...”<sup>29</sup> Since part of the trade route was through Texas-claimed territory all the goods were to be considered contraband. The idea was to plunder Mexican goods and leave the Americans unmolested. But how would Americans feel about having their business counterparts from south of the border plundered at will? Not very good at all. They had had a very good commerce going on for twenty years now and they didn’t want anything to spoil it.

Because of their many contacts in Texas and Louisiana, the Mexicans knew all about it before it even happened. “It was currently reported in New Mexico, as early as November, 1842, that a party of Texans was out upon the plains, prepared to attack any Mexican traders who should attempt to cross the Missouri river the succeeding spring”.<sup>30</sup> They were very worried about it, and not least of the worries, was that the United States would come in on the side of Texas against them. The Mexican ambassador in Washington D.C. asked the United States to provide protection for the caravans, which they did.<sup>31</sup> The commander of the US troops in the area, Captain Philip St. George Cooke, a native of Virginia and a West Point graduate, was alerted to watch for Texan bandits.

But in New Mexico, except for a paranoid Armijo who saw Texans behind every bush and tree as well as behind every American merchant in Santa Fe, most New Mexicans seemed to be unconcerned. “So little apprehension, says [Josiah] Gregg, seemed to exist, however, that in February, 1843, Don Antonio José Chaves, of New Mexico, left Santa Fe for Independence, with but five servants, two wagons, and fifty-five mules”.<sup>32</sup> March was unseasonably cold and the ill-fated party suffered from frostbite, losing most of their animals. At the Little Arkansas River, Chaves was captured by John McDaniel and his small command of fifteen ruffians. After plundering his goods, seven of the men left. The other eight drew straws and shot Chaves.

Josiah Gregg, noted merchant on the Santa Fe Trail wrote in his memoirs that although shooting of Chaves may have been done as revenge for the cruelties faced by the Santa Fe Expedition, Chaves belonged to a powerful New Mexico family, “one that was anything but friendly to the ruling governor, Armijo.” Antonio’s Brother Don Mariano Chaves possessed a rare friendliness of character. Furthermore Mariano and his wife had supplied the original Texan prisoners with food and blankets, his wife even crossed the river and “administered comforts” to

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<sup>28</sup> Twitchell, Leading Facts II, 82.

<sup>29</sup> Twitchell, Leading Facts II, 82.

<sup>30</sup> Twitchell, Leading Facts II, 83.

<sup>31</sup> Frank D. Reeve, History of New Mexico Volume II (Lewis Historical Publishing Co., Inc., NY, 1961), 49.

<sup>32</sup> Twitchell, Leading Facts II, 83.

them. Gregg even thought the Chaves family might have been well disposed towards Texas but now would be greatly resentful towards them.<sup>33</sup>

Antonio José's brother, Don Mariano, was possibly the only man in New Mexico that Governor Armijo feared and therefore he could do pretty much what he wanted – even in giving aid to the Texan prisoners. While McDaniel was busy with Chaves, Captain Cooke's U.S. Dragoons had been following his trail. He and his men were arrested and sent to St. Louis where they were tried for murder and robbery. "In due course, the sentence of the court which found them guilty was carried out and John McDaniel and his brother David were both hanged".<sup>34</sup> And they had complained about how the Mexicans had treated them! Neither Houston nor Mirabeau wrote any letters of protest this time. But it wasn't over yet. Colonel Warfield's company was already on the move. Warfield had lived in New Mexico and was familiar with much of the territory. He enlisted twenty-four men and set out for the Point of Rocks where the company would rendezvous. In April 1843 they advanced toward Mora and arrived there undetected.<sup>35</sup>

Actually, the Texans had stumbled upon an advance camp of about sixty men, probably a grazing camp outside of town. They rushed the guards at night and stormed into the camp, killing five, wounding four, and capturing eighteen men along with seventy-two horses and mules. Several of the New Mexicans escaped to warn the village. Knowing that the townspeople would be ready for them the Texans prudently decided not to attack the town but rather to retreat with their prize, the horses and mules. They told the prisoners, "You are now free. Bury your dead, and remember in the future how vain it is to resist the arms of Texas."<sup>36</sup> Then they fled in the direction of Wagon Mound.

On the way, they saw a body of mounted New Mexicans on the horizon behind them but were so overconfident they did not even keep vigilance that night. The exact moment they realized that the guards were not at their posts the horses were stampeded by a small group of mounted New Mexicans. Then gun fire erupted from all sides. They were surrounded. The Texans charged outward and the Mexicans scattered, but with the loss of the herd they had to admit it was the, "equivalent of a defeat." With only two "half jaded" animals left, they made knapsacks for themselves, packed the animals.<sup>37</sup> After burning their saddles, Warfield discharged his men from the Texan Army, separated them into three groups, and started walking to Bent's Fort. Warfield and some of the men intended to try to hook up with Snidely's force.<sup>38</sup> On the way one of the Texan groups was ambushed and five men were captured. They were taken to Santa and imprisoned.<sup>39</sup> Apparently the New Mexicans did not heed Texan threats.

Mora was not a good town to pick on. The villanos were hardy frontiersmen and they maintained a very aggressive militia. Even a company of US Dragoons couldn't take the town four years later in 1847 until they returned with cannon. It had been carved out of the mountain wilderness in the early 1800s in spite of the many Ute, Comanche, and Apache raiding parties that ranged through the area. Mora was built with defense in mind with the houses joined together in a rectangle in the ancient Spanish manner and even had a small two-story fort on the NW corner for a refuge. The village was described in 1847 by American Private John Hudgins as being built in a rectangle of about 250 to 300 yards on a side. The adobe houses on the edge were joined together in the ancient Spanish style except for two places which were fenced. There was

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<sup>33</sup> Josiah Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies*, Ed. Max L. Moorhead (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1954), 170-172.

<sup>34</sup> Twitchell, *Leading Facts II*, 84.

<sup>35</sup> Reeve, *History II*, 49; and Twitchell, *Leading Facts, Volume 2*, 85.

<sup>36</sup> Rufus Sage, *Western Scenes and Adventures* (G. D. Miller, Philadelphia, 1855), 265.

<sup>37</sup> Sage, *Western Scenes*, 267.

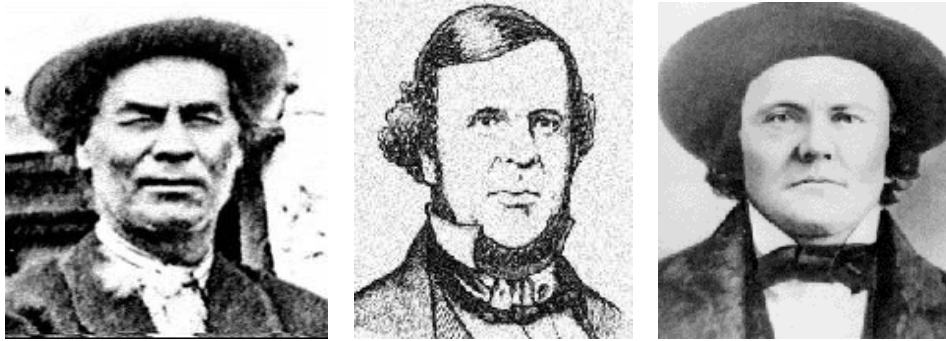
<sup>38</sup> Twitchell, *Leading Facts II*, 85.

<sup>39</sup> Read, *Illustrated History*, 406.

an L-shaped two story building on the northwest corner and a wooden blockhouse on the southeast corner. These buildings had loopholes for firing from within.<sup>40</sup>

Perhaps Warfield had forgotten that New Mexicans had been fighting this hit-and-run, horse thieving style of warfare for a long time with the hostile natives and they easily overtook Warfield's company. It is interesting to note that they captured the same number of Texans as men that had been killed by them. Perhaps it was a coincidence, perhaps not. And it was amazing they didn't kill them all – but then again, leaving the Texans dismounted on the open prairie would have been the highest form of insult. Apparently, they had what they wanted – the horses and the prisoners.

Colonel Snively's force was now ready to follow Warfield. On April 25<sup>th</sup> they left Georgetown near Austin for the international boundary, the Arkansas River. "Colonel Jacob Snively and his 'gallant' band of Texan 'avengers,' to the number, not of eight hundred, but about one hundred and eighty, now appear upon the scene,"<sup>41</sup> luckily bypassing the patrolling US dragoons. When they reached the Arkansas they were joined by Warfield and the few men he had left. While at Bent's Fort Warfield had heard about the progress of the trade caravans. He was able to inform Snively that sixty wagons were on their way to Bent's Fort from Missouri and another caravan would soon be coming up from Santa Fe. As it happened, Kit Carson, Charles Bent, and Ceran St. Vrain arrived in the area with their own wagon train. Kit describes his meeting with Captain Cooke (Carson's notations are corroborated by Cooke's own journal of the expedition).



L-R: Charles Bent, Ceran St. Vrain, Christopher Kit Carson

The dragoons under Captain Phillip St. George Cooke had camped at Walnut Creek. Cooke informed Carson that the westbound train consisting of a mixture of American and Mexican traders was nearby to the east. Armijo's east bound train would be coming up from Santa Fe. The westbound train included about 100 men and a "large number of wagons." Captain Cooke's informants had told him that the Texans had advanced to the Arkansas River where they would attempt to capture the train. He also believed they would kill any Mexicans they captured. The Mexicans in the westbound train decided to stay with Cooke although he would only escort them to the Arkansas. They paid Carson \$300 to take a message to Armijo, warning him of the situation. Carson accepted and set out with Dick Owens. When he reached Bent's Fort he was told that some Utes were on the trail he must take. He set out from there alone but with an extra horse with which to outrun the hostile natives. He made it past the native village and continued on to Taos where he sent the message to Santa Fe.<sup>42</sup>

Upon receiving the news, Governor Armijo gathered several militia units and Presidio soldiers totaling 700 men to guard the eastbound caravan and they left Santa Fe, headed for the

<sup>40</sup> Mora History and History of the Atencio Family, <http://members.aol.com/spegler919/nmhistor.htm>.

<sup>41</sup> Twitchell, Leading Facts II, 84.

<sup>42</sup> Milo Milton Quaipe, Kit Carson's Autobiography (University of Nebraska Press, 1966), 69-70.

international crossing. Meanwhile, Snively's force, still eluding Cooke's scouts, advanced down the Santa Fe Trail and on June 19<sup>th</sup> ambushed Armijo's advance guard - a group of one hundred Taos militia under the command of Captain Ventura Lobato. When they approached the Texans Lovato thought they were Cooke's men. Perceiving the mistake Snively allowed them to get very close before opening fire. Lovato and fifteen others were killed and the rest were taken prisoner.<sup>43</sup> Rufus Sage, who had been with Warfield and now with Snively, states that the Texans hid as the New Mexicans approached, and, jumping up at the last moment, identified themselves and offered Lovato a chance to surrender. But, as noted above, the New Mexicans reported that Snively passed himself off as Cooke and opened fire at close range, without warning. The fact that not one Texan was hit, seems to place the evidence in favor of Lovato. But regardless of what actually occurred, one New Mexican was able to escape by grabbing a Texan horse and riding back to the main caravan. Armijo quickly turned around and headed back to Santa Fe.<sup>44</sup>

But even in his haste he had not neglected to send messengers to Cooke who quickly mobilized his force to intercept the raiders.<sup>45</sup> By this time, Snively's force had been drastically reduced by desertions and loss of mounts to native raids. He had only about 100 men left and was camped about fifteen miles below Caches. He crossed to the Americans to meet Cooke when the Dragoons approached. Snively thought the Americans would hail him and his men as comrades-in-arms. But he was very disappointed to find that Cooke treated the Texans as illegal armed foreigners on the border of the United States. To his utter surprise Cooke immediately began to take firearms from his men. Some of the Texans hid their rifles and turned over the "worthless guns which had been captured from the Mexicans."<sup>46</sup>



Phillip St. George Cooke

The Texans told Captain Cooke they had killed eighteen Mexicans, wounded eighteen more, and captured the rest. Cooke sent forty of the Texans to Fort Leavenworth, presumably including Snively, and set the rest free. After release by the Americans, most of the remaining Texans, now about 60-70 men commanded by Warfield, went into Mexican territory after the southbound caravan on its way to Santa Fe. They soon gave up, however, and headed for Texas. Ironically, the Taos militia they had defeated were of the very same people that Workman and Rowland had hoped to incite to assist the Texans in their first invasion. Gregg wrote that if the Texans had proceeded differently, Lovato's men surely would have guided him to Armijo's train where they could have captured him.<sup>47</sup>

These were not friends of Armijo. Not only were most of them Pueblo Indians and Hispanics from Taos, no doubt veterans of the 1837 rebellion, they had apparently been forced to

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<sup>43</sup> Read, *Illustrated History*, 407.

<sup>44</sup> Quaife, *Kit Carson*, 71-72.

<sup>45</sup> Read, *Illustrated History*, 407.

<sup>46</sup> Twitchell, *Leading Facts II*, 88.

<sup>47</sup> Gregg, *Commerce*, 173.

take this forward position by armed coercion (some even had to be tied to their saddles), so Gregg's assessment that they would not only surrender but also lead the Texans to the governor, may well have been an accurate one. And once again, Armijo, the 'ruthless tyrant' showed his true mettle by immediately turning the caravan around and heading in a panicked 'pell-mell' retreat back to Santa Fe. Armijo was always more of a merchant than a governor – and never a general. Understandably, the American freighters were also very disturbed by the Texan proceedings. Gregg mentions that even though the Texans had asserted they would not molest Americans or their goods, they could not, in all conscience, have allowed the plunder and murder of the Mexicans. He wrote, "What American worthy of his name, to save his own interests, or even his life could deliver up his trading companions to be sacrificed?" He believed that every man in the train would have considered such action to be nothing less than treachery, not to mention they each would have ruined their own business prospects in doing so.<sup>48</sup>

By this time it was a fact that the Mexicans sponsored fully fifty percent of the trail's commerce and an attack on them would have severely curtailed relations. So in the end, loyalty and trade relations won out. Now the as-yet uninvolved Texans still residing in New Mexico became the victims of their compatriot's deeds. "When the news of the defeat of Lobato's command reached Taos, the friends and relatives of the slain, the whole population, indeed, were incensed beyond measure; and two or three naturalized foreigners, who were supposed to favor the Texan cause, and who hitherto had been in good standing, were now compelled to flee for their lives..."<sup>49</sup>

As a result of the Texan depredations, General Santa Anna (back in office again) closed all the ports of entry of northern Mexico to all commerce from August 7, 1843 to March 31, 1844, and trade completely ceased on the Santa Fe Trail. It was not until the lifting of the ban that the caravans began to roll again when ninety wagons and 200 Americans once more hit the trail to the southwest. The pugnacious Texans had influenced the commerce on the Santa Fe Trail all right, but not in the way they had intended.

### **The Fourth Texan Invasion 1850**

Texas was admitted into the Union in 1845 and five years later, the U.S. Congress passed the Organic Act of September 9, 1850, by which New Mexico was changed from a military protectorate to an official U.S. Territory with a non-military governor, a Territorial Council, and a representative in Congress. This attempt to 'territorialize' New Mexico brought the old boundary claims of Texas once more to the surface – never mind that New Mexico had only been ceded to the U.S. from Mexico in 1848 and therefore it could never have been Texan. But at least now, the Texans had to deal with the United States about it. By 1850 Texas had been a member of the United States for five years and had firm support in Congress. So much so, that they felt justified in creating three new Texan counties in New Mexico. There was El Paso County which contained parts of southern New Mexico, Worth County which reached upriver from El Paso County to Belen, and Santa Fe County which ambitiously included all the rest of eastern New Mexico and parts of Colorado and Wyoming.<sup>50</sup>

New Mexicans had no idea they were now Texans. What most also didn't know is that they had been brought into the heart of the nation's most serious conflict – the slavery issue – and that made it critical. The opposition to the Organic Act was spearheaded by the representatives of Texas, back by many southerners who actually hoped that the Texas/New Mexico conflict would bring the country into open war in order to solve the slavery question once and for all. Therefore, with southern backing, the Texans felt that they had enough clout to at least legislate the take-over of eastern New Mexico if not precipitate a national war and take it. The debates for the

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<sup>48</sup> Gregg, *Commerce*, 170-172.

<sup>49</sup> Twitchell, *Leading Facts II*, 87.

<sup>50</sup> Glen O. Ream, *Out of New Mexico's Past* (Sundial Books, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 1980), 60.

Organic Act were very one-sided. New Mexico had only one friend in Congress in 1850. “New Mexico stands alone with no one to speak for her,” said New York’s Senator William H. Seward, “put New Mexico on equal footing with Texas. Only the voice of Texas is heard.” Seward then proposed immediate statehood for New Mexico. Seward’s proposal failed without a single favorable vote.<sup>51</sup>

Going beyond mere proclamations, the emboldened Texans took steps to administrate their fantasized new counties. Spruce M. Baird of Nacodoches, Louisiana, was appointed “Judge of Santa Fe County” and he was sent to take over administration there. He arrived in Santa Fe in November, 1848, after a horrific journey of 1500 miles and showed his commission to the military governor, Colonel John M. Washington. Washington was furious. He shouted at him, “Who in hell is Governor Wood; and where in hell is Texas?”<sup>52</sup>



J. M. Washington

That was serious cussing in those days (at least in a public office). Although many southerners believed the Texan claim was actually ridiculous, as long as slavery was involved they were going to back it; and, of course, the North would oppose it. It appears that from early on, the South had set its sights on acquiring new land for the slave o’crats in New Mexico. Southerners, including Jefferson Davis, who was currently the U.S. Secretary of War had plotted that upon his election as governor of Mississippi, to support Texan border claims in such a manner as to begin a war between North and South. However, Jefferson lost the election. This was not a new idea. Even before Texas was admitted into the Union southern politicians were thinking that these claims could be used to precipitate such a war.<sup>53</sup> Unaware of these political machinations and uninfluenced by robust arguments, New Mexicans still considered themselves to be an independent territory and this continued to irritate the Texans. This complacency and rejection infuriated the Texans who again proposed sending an army to New Mexico “to suppress the existing rebellion in Santa Fe.” They even threatened to fight American troops if they had to. The new Governor of Texas, Peter H. Bell belligerently asked the southern states for support.<sup>54</sup>

This was the point when the Civil War could have begun, but the United States ‘bought’ not only New Mexico, but at least ten more years of peace, before the War would break out in earnest. They paid Texas \$10,000,000 dollars in 1850 to forget the border claims and accept things as they were. The New Mexico Territory would be established with its capital at Santa Fe.<sup>55</sup> Thus, the Texans were paid-off handsomely by the Federals for what was never theirs and one would think that would have been the end of it. However, paying for the land only legitimized the claims in the minds of some bellicose Texans, and of those, many complained it

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<sup>51</sup> Ream, *New Mexico’s Past*, 59.

<sup>52</sup> Ream, *New Mexico’s Past*, 46.

<sup>53</sup> Ream, *New Mexico’s Past*, 62.

<sup>54</sup> Josephy, *American West*, 16.

<sup>55</sup> Josephy, *American West*, 16.

had not been a proper price for the acreage. Nevertheless, the deal was done and the Organic Act was passed. Incidentally, during the settlement of the border dispute the survey party 'made a mistake' and put the southern border of New Mexico too far to the north. Because of that, El Paso that had belonged to the Province of New Mexico since its inception in 1680 now became Texan. However, neither the purchase nor the survey was successful in stopping the continuance of Texan incursions into New Mexico. Regardless of what the United States had paid for, Texans who had been given land grants by the State of Texas were moving into New Mexico and forcibly taking land from New Mexicans.

Individual Texans who possessed such land rights relocated to the Rio Grande Valley and forced themselves on to land which had belonged to New Mexicans since colonial times. The courts were indecisive and many New Mexicans who feared hostile aggression left their houses and moved to the Mexican side of the river to the west. Doña Ana was particularly attractive to Texan immigrants since the U.S. Army had decided to build a post there, and they pounced on it in droves. The courts still waver and the deserved protection was not given. Several hundred Hispanic citizens of that town moved to the Mexican side. They selected a location six to eight miles south of Doña Ana known as La Mesilla. Within a year half most of the town had moved there. When the boundary with Mexico was affirmed in 1851 and La Mesilla was south of that line the people there rejoiced. They had already resolved to move again if necessary.<sup>56</sup>

Doña Ana was not an ancient villa. It had been inhabited during the first settlement of New Mexico in the 1600s and Governor Otermin had stopped there during his retreat to El Paso in 1680 due to the Pueblo Rebellion. But after the Reconquest it was never re-settled until a grant was approved in July of 1840, and even then, settlers did not arrive until 1843.<sup>57</sup> Nevertheless, it was a Mexican town and never had belonged to Texas except in imagination. As a note of interest, Colonel Doniphan stopped there in December 1846, bought supplies and rested for two days. It was a welcome respite after traveling through the desert. The Colonel donated a canon to the town for use in defense against Apaches.<sup>58</sup> So it appears that the town was well-disposed towards the United States in 1846 while maintaining its aversion to Texas in 1850. Another village called Chamberino was also founded by New Mexicans who did not want to remain in the United States.<sup>59</sup>

On the other side of the Rio Grande, La Mesilla still belonged to Mexico and the inhabitants celebrated that fact. People from Northern New Mexico also moved there to avoid becoming US citizens. No doubt, however, the celebrations were very muted when it was sold to the United States as part of the Gadsen Purchase of 1853. As for Doña Ana today, most of the 'Anglos' are gone and it continues to be an Hispanic farming village. The old church is still there as a reminder of days gone by and the names of the residents hark back to the founding families.<sup>60</sup> Also occurring during the 1850's, there were more Texan schemes to take over northern Mexico through attempts to influence local revolutions as well as attempts to take advantage of the proposed filibusters in Arizona and California but these are not part of New Mexico's story.

### **The Fifth Texan Invasion 1861**

The advent of the Civil War, eight years later, again brought to mind the old grievances as well as the expansionist fever, and besides, to Texans, the United States was the enemy now. So it seemed that it was as good a time as any, to finally take-over what had always been rightfully theirs, so they thought. Incredibly, the Fifth Texan invasion was as ill-conceived as the

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<sup>56</sup> Twitchell, Leading Facts II, 294-295, footnote 219.

<sup>57</sup> Fugate, Roadside History, 43.

<sup>58</sup> Fugate, Roadside History, 44.

<sup>59</sup> Francis L. and Roberta B. Fugate, Roadside History of New Mexico (Mountain Press Publishing Company, Missoula, 1989), 17.

<sup>60</sup> Fugate, Roadside History, 44.

others had been. Although better executed, it was still very badly planned. General Sibley had convinced the Texans that:

(1) An army could live off the land. In truth, the inhabitants of New Mexico themselves could hardly live off the land. There had been a drought for several years. Crops were small and stores were low (what hadn't been carried off by the Indians yet). In addition, the villages along the Rio Grande were being ravaged by smallpox.

(2) That the citizens of New Mexico would rise and join them. The New Mexicans hated the Texans – the Texans themselves had made sure of that.

(3) That the South could open a gateway to the California and Colorado gold fields and the California seaports. Nevermind that Sibley's understrength command of 2,600 men would have to fight 4,500 Federal and New Mexican troops, and another 2,300 were on the way from California, 1,000 from Colorado, and 5,000 more were on their way down the Santa Fe Trail...

Since he had been stationed in New Mexico he should have known the conditions of the land, a desert, and its people who could barely feed themselves. They hated Texans and weren't likely to swell their ranks. In addition, most of the leadership was opposed to the Confederacy and its principles.<sup>61</sup>



Henry Hopkins Sibley  
General of the Army of New Mexico

Conquering New Mexico in those days was similar to conquering Russia. The fifteen years of American occupation had improved almost nothing. There was no infrastructure, just a sea of peasants and sheep in a harsh landscape. Conquer a village and what do you have? ...some scared peasants, some sheep, and a few beans. Conquer the Capital, Santa Fe, and it still wouldn't amount to anything. The only two strategic points of any value were Forts Craig and Union, and Sibley didn't have enough men to take over either one of them. So...into the valley of pestilence, famine, drought, poverty, Indian depredations, fortified Union strongholds, and hostility to anything Texan, rode the unsuspecting Rebels...

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<sup>61</sup> Josephy, American West, 53.