Confederate Recruiting in the Colorado Territory
Submitted By Scott D. Myers
21 May 2013

Although there have been numerous references to Confederate recruiting in the Colorado Territory during the War for Southern Independence in history books, old newspapers and archival materials, the Colorado Division of the SCV has only recently discovered actual records of recruiting taking place in Denver. Compatriot Gary Parrott of SCV Camp 2104 in Grand Junction found these documents while researching this interesting topic.

These “Muster Documents” show that Private Marion J (M.J.) Diggs of Company D, 2nd Texas Cavalry Regiment (also known as the 2nd Texas Mounted Rifles) was recruited in Denver City, Colorado Territory by Cpt. Joel McKee on 1 September 1861 and was a carpenter by trade. The following document is a form that entitles Private Diggs’ to a discharge due to a “Surgeon’s Certificate of Disability”:

![Image of a discharge certificate]
The form shows that he was indeed recruited in Denver and was signed by Colonel Charles L. Pyron, the 2nd TX Cavalry Regimental Commander. Colonel Pyron had participated in the Battles of Valverde and Glorieta Pass (General Henry H. Sibley’s New Mexico Campaign) in 1862 as a Major.

The next document is a receipt of payment for Private Diggs’ travel from San Antonio, his place of discharge, to Denver City, his place of enrollment.
This last document is Private Diggs’ Honorable Discharge due to a gunshot wound to the right leg which splintered the bone.

Private Diggs has an interesting link to another Confederate historical event in the Colorado Territory. In 1861, General Henry Sibley organized the Army of New Mexico to occupy the New Mexico territory and move northward into the Colorado Territory. Captain George T. Madison (a lieutenant at the time) was recruited by General Sibley and given a two-fold mission within the boundaries of the Colorado Territory. Captain Madison was to disrupt federal mail and communication lines and he was to help organize and recruit Colorado men for Confederate service. In late 1861 there was a vigorous effort within Colorado to recruit and train soldiers for Confederate
service among the miners and settlers who came from the Southern States. Recruits were sent to a number of “camps” in the Pikes Peak region (one was reportedly in Russellville), and eventually concentrated at the primary Confederate training encampment at Mace’s Hole (near present day Beulah, Colorado). General Sibley had commissioned Colonel John Heffner (also referred to as Heffiner and Heffinger in historical documents) to create a Confederate Regiment in Colorado, and his operational base was at Mace’s Hole. Colonel Heffner’s regimental strength at Mace’s Hole was about 600 soldiers.

Unfortunately, Federal soldiers learned of the encampment at Mace's Hole and broke up the regiment while many of the Confederates were away on furlough. The Federals took those who remained in camp prisoner. Forty-four confederates were captured, including Cpt. McKee, and taken to Denver. Cpt. McKee subsequently escaped and rejoined the Confederate war effort in New Mexico. Following this, Col. Heffner and his officers, including Cpt. Madison, were all ordered to join General Sibley in New Mexico.

Below is an excerpt from the Colorado City Journal 28 November 1861:

Confederates Captured at Mace’s Hole
(Colorado City Journal 28 November 1861)
You will notice Marion J. Diggs as the sixth name down in the column on the right and also see Captain McKee listed at the bottom of the article. This lends even more credence to the documentation in this article. Private Diggs had been recruited in September 1861 by Cpt. McKee in Denver and both were captured in November 1861 by Federal troops while training at Mace’s Hole.

NOTE: You will also see the names of John and James Reynolds (right column) of the famed “Reynolds Gang” who conducted operations in and around South Park, Colorado Territory. There is a legend that they buried some of their “treasure” in the South Park area along the base of Mount Logan, but it has never been found.

**Captain Joel McKee**

An excerpt from the book "Frontier Legend, Texas Finale of Capt. William F Drannan” (Pseudo Frontier Comrade of Kit Carson,” by W N Bate, Owen G, Dunn Company, Publishers, New Bern, NC, 1954, p 31 &32) states the following:

"Metcalf (George, a nephew of Joel McKee) stated that Joel McKee was born in Indiana about 1824, and later lived in Rushville, Illinois. He went to Oregon in 1847, then back to Illinois, and upon hearing of gold in California, he went to that territory and made money, after which he went to Palo Pinto, Texas, arriving there about 1855 or 1856. “

“During the Civil War he was a Captain in the Confederate Army and was taken prisoner and held in jail in Denver, from where he later escaped, together with two Wilson boys. Then he went with General Sibley and helped him and his men through the mountains. ”He was in the battle of Glorieta Pass (New Mexico Campaign in 1862), and at a point where they desired to cross a stream, Chivington’s troops opposed them. McKee was known to have made the remark, 'If that Dog Chivington comes near I will shoot him.' McKee moved to Oklahoma about 1900.”

Another author, Earl Pittman writes that Joel McKee was a leader of the underground Secesh (a secessionist or supporter of the Confederacy during the War) in the Colorado Territory in 1861 and specifically, a leader of the pro-South forces around Denver (according to the newspapers). They had a secret camp at the ghost town of Russellville in 1861.

**Captain George T. Madison (ca. 1830–1868)**

Research on George T. Madison, a Confederate officer, suggests he was born in Missouri, the son of William and Sarah (Taylor) Madison, and that his middle name was probably Taylor. After service in the Mexican War, he mined for gold in California, and then settled near Tucson, Arizona. By 1860 he lived in San Pedro Settlement and worked as a merchant, supplying rations to local miners.

At the onset of the Civil War, George T. Madison enrolled in the San Elizario Spy Company, also known as the "Santa Fe Gamblers" or the "Forty Thieves," and was elected lieutenant. Madison and his company became an advance scout unit for Gen. Henry H. Sibley during his New Mexico
Campaign and were the first to enter Santa Fe. Madison was captured at the battle of Glorieta Pass but was paroled at Fort Union on April 5, 1862.

After his parole Madison was promoted to captain, and his group was reorganized as Madison's Spies and Guides. In late 1862 Captain Madison and his soldiers disrupted federal mail and communication lines throughout southern Colorado, especially around Fort Garland, a federal outpost in the San Luis Valley. In August, after Madison and his men seized a mail train at Fort Garland, federal officers offered a $500 reward for their capture. By the following month, however, they were already headed to San Antonio with the rest of Sibley's army.
SOURCES:

Military Order of the Stars and Bars (MOSB) website:  www.coloradomosb297.org/colorado.htm

Colorado Division of the SCV website:  www.coloradoscv.org


http://www.fold3.com/browse.php#20|h6o8f1tVqCj9HsimEgnfgkQ11AkZoPekn

Colorado City Journal 28 November 1861