

BATTLELINES



A Bimonthly Newsletter of the San Pasqual Battlefield Volunteer Association

VOL. XXXIII, No 5

WWW.SPBVA.ORG

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2020

15808 San Pasqual Valley Road, Escondido, CA 92027 - 760-737-2201

Head Qrs Army of the West,
Camp on the Rio del Norte below Socorro N.M.
October 6, 1846.

Orders,
No 34. }

II. ... Positive information having been this day received, per express en route to Washington, that the Province of Upper California has been taken possession of by the Americans, the necessity no longer exists for taking a considerable force into that country: Companies "C." & "K", 1st Dragoons, under Capt Moore, are therefore selected to accompany the General to California, the remaining three companies of Dragoons present, "B." "G." & "J.", under Major Sumner, will remain in this Territory, at some point in the Rio Abajo Country, to be selected by himself, suitable for obtaining supplies for the winter, and for giving protection to the inhabitants from hostile Indians.

Asst. Surg. Simpson will remain with Major Sumner's command.

III. ... Mr. Mason who arrived today express from California to Washington, having been engaged to return with the General, will deliver his letters, despatches, &c into the hands of Mr. Thomas Fitzpatrick, who will convey them with all despatch to the City of Washington.

By order of Brig. Gen. S. W. Kearny
(Signed) M. J. Turner.
Capt. A. A. A. Jewell

Recd. Nov. 30. 46

**SWK
Orders**

**Oct 6,
1846**

Official orders from the Headquarters of Brig. Gen. S. W. Kearny, dated October 6, 1846, Camp on the Rio del Norte below Socorro, New Mexico. Kearny, after meeting eastward-bound Kit Carson and learning of the situation in California, decided to split his army. He sent three companies of Dragoons (B, G, and J) back to New Mexico Territory and took Companies C and K with him to California. He prevailed upon Carson to guide him to California and sent the dispatches that Carson was carrying to Washington in the trust of Thomas Fitzpatrick.

The Army Medical Department

by Ellen Sweet

I recently purchased the book *The Army Medical Department, 1818-1865*, by Mary C. Gillett (Center of Military History, United States Army, Washington, D.C., 1987). I was curious to learn more about medicine during the U.S.-Mexican War. I also found that the National Library of Medicine has digitized books and photographs that are easily downloadable and searchable.

Joseph Lovell, son of a member of the Continental Congress, served as the first Army Surgeon General, 1818-1836. Lovell graduated from Harvard College in 1807 and was a member of their first medical school graduating class of 1811. Lovell constructed an effective framework for the new Medical Department of the US Army. He established the value and respectability of the medical officer among line officers and staff. He also put an emphasis on the importance of the soldiers' diet and started the Army Medical Library.

Unfortunately, Joseph Lovell died of pneumonia at a relatively young age. He was eventually replaced by



Joseph Lovell, *Courtesy of the National Library of Medicine*



Thomas Lawson, *Courtesy of the National Library of Medicine*

Thomas Lawson, appointed by President Andrew Jackson. There is no written record of Lawson's formal medical training. As was often the case, he probably received his medical training under local physicians and while serving in the military. Lawson entered the navy in 1809 as a sur-

geon's mate, but resigned after two years. He then joined the army, serving in a medical capacity.

Surgeon General Lawson put his stamp on the department during a long tenure. He served until his death in 1861. Lovell even accompanied Gen. Winfield Scott from Vera Cruz to Mexico City as a medical advisor.

According to this book, when Lawson took over the Medical Department, there were 15 surgeons and 60 assistant surgeons plus a clerk in Washington. By 1842, Congress even reduced the total number of surgeons, despite having 75 military posts.

Examinations were required for both entry and promotion in the Army Medical Department. Only candidates of ages 21 to 28 were eligible to apply. Lawson also worked for adequate pay for his staff and managed to get step increases for experience. However, the surgeons did not have the rank of field officers. Uniforms were another item that he considered. The new surgeon's uniform of 1840 was complete with "Epaulettes—Gold, with solid bright crescent." Epaulettes were embroidered in gold with the letters 'M.S.' in old English characters.

The position of hospital stewards was not clear. A law in 1838 officially authorized the enlistment of young men as stewards and increased their pay. But by 1842, Congress forbade the enlistment or reenlistment of men to serve specifically as stewards. This book did not resolve the situation for hospital stewards in my reading.

As the threat of hostilities with Mexico became more apparent, Surgeon General Lawson began anticipating war. However, the War Department did not increase the size of the Medical Department until after war was actually declared. The department was not in a strong position to care for volunteers as well as regulars. Congress did not increase staff until February 1847—too late to help the Army of the West. A law in August 1846 granted volunteer surgeons the same status as regulars. Surgeons became majors and assistant surgeons became captains.

Fort Leavenworth served as the starting point for
(Continued on page 3)

Army Medical *continued...*

(Continued from page 2)

the Army of the West under Stephen Watts Kearny in the spring of 1846. In the 1830s, Fort Leavenworth recorded exceedingly high percentage of disease. Fortunately, a new hospital had been built there shortly after Lawson took over.

The first part of Kearny's campaign from Fort Leavenworth took his army 900 miles to Santa Fe through wilderness, desert, and mountains. Heat, dust, scurvy, poor water, mosquitoes, stress, disease, privation, exhaustion, and inadequate diet led to many of the wagons being used as ambulances.

The Gillett book stated that at least six physicians



accompanied Kearny on the Fort Leavenworth to Santa Fe portion of the march—the medical director and two assistant army surgeons were regular army physicians. One volunteer doctor left at Bent's Fort with three invalids. Gillett thought the others were also volunteers.

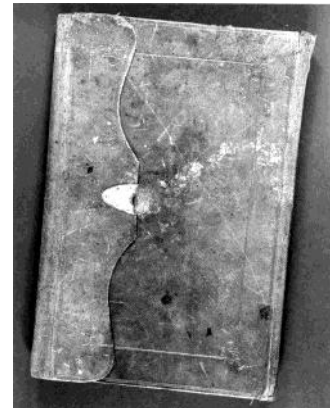
After seizing Santa Fe, Kearny divided his forces, taking 300 dragoons, a topographical team, and a few scouts to continue onward to California in late September 1846. He left Colonel Alexander Doniphan in charge at Santa Fe for further operations.

The two regular army assistant surgeons traveling with Kearny were John Strother Griffin and Richard French Simpson. Both men were born in 1816 in Virginia and both graduated from the University of Pennsylvania Medical School, although in different years. Griffin, orphaned at an early age, was reared by his uncle in Kentucky. He graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 1837 (graduation essay listed as "Lithotomy") and practiced his profession in Louisville before enlisting in the US Army in 1840. Simpson graduated medical school in 1840 (graduation essay listed as "Dysentery Acuta"), enlisting shortly afterwards.

As the Army of the West continued westward, the



Photographs of Fort Leavenworth courtesy of the National Library of Medicine



John Strother Griffin, circa 1840, and the journal he carried to California. He was one of the major diarists of the expedition. *Courtesy of the California Historical Society*

dragoons encountered Kit Carson, who was traveling with dispatches to Washington, D.C. Learning from Carson that the US Navy's Pacific squadron had already secured the main California ports, Kearny decided to trim his force. He sent 200 dragoons and an assistant surgeon back to Santa Fe, while insisting that Carson accompany him to California.

Supposedly, the two doctors drew straws to see who would return and who would travel to California. Dr. John Griffin stayed with Kearny and attended those who were wounded at San Pasqual. Resigning from the military in 1854, Griffin spent the rest of his life in Los Angeles and was first president of the Los Angeles County Medical Association. Dr. Simpson went back to New Mexico, kept his career in the military, and died in Key West, Florida. Strange how one's life and that of others can depend on a thin straw!

[Please study the *Battlelines* cover for Kearny's orders of October 6, 1846, which expressly state that Dr. Simpson is to travel back with Maj Edwin Sumner and three dragoon companies.]

*SPBVA 2020**BOARD**Donald Coates**Randall Hamud**Darlene Hansen**Jody Hansen**Marci Trussell**Tom Vilicich**Bob Wohl**Emeritus:**Shirley Buskirk**Ron Hinrichs**President:**Tom Vilicich**Vice-President:**Don Coates**Treasurer/Sec'y:**Marci Trussell**SPBVA Info:*

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President's Message



by Tom Vilicich

Sad to say, the park is still not open. This means there has been no activities. So, what about Battle Day in December? Planning meetings usually start in August and September. We have not had any word on that from State Parks at this point.

The annual SPBVA membership meeting is usually held in October. I'm going to schedule it for **Saturday, October 17, 2020 at 12 noon** at the park meeting room. With the way things are now up in the air, the date, place and time are, of course, subject to change. This is your chance to vote those who will serve on the SPBVA board of directors. If you are interested on serving on the board, please let me know by email at trooper284@aol.com.

Hope to see you there. Stay tuned for more information.



First Sergeant's Corner

submitted by Tom Vilicich

Of the Charge.

959.—To execute a charge against the enemy, when the Colonel judges that he is at the proper distance, he conforms to what has just been prescribed, with this difference, that at the signal to charge the squadrons quicken the gallop and attack the enemy with impetuosity.

The enemy being routed, the Colonel causes the *rally* to be sounded: at the signal, the troopers halt and rally on their squadrons; the officers take their places in line. As it is important that the enemy should not have time to form again, the Colonel des ignites, among those first rallied, the number of platoons necessary to pursue him.

At the signal to charge, the officers remain in their places in line; the colonel and the other field officers place themselves on the alignment of the officers, at the center of their respective commands.

The Adjutant, the sergeant-major, the quartermaster-sergeant, and the general guides remain in their places in line.

The trumpeters remain in the rear of the center of the regiment. A chief bugler remains behind the Colonel.

The Colonel moves wherever his presence may be most necessary to ensure the success of the charge.

Before preparing for the charge, the Colonel recalls the skirmishers; they place themselves in the rear of the flanks, to be ready to turn the enemy's flank and rear while the regiment charges in front.

JOIN NOW! Our non-profit organization supports the activities of the San Pasqual Battlefield State Historic Park. All members receive *BATTLELINES*, a 10% discount on all bookstore items, special programs, field trips, history discussions, and opportunities to participate in our Living History Sundays and in our annual December re-enactment of the Battle.

SAN PASQUAL BATTLEFIELD VOLUNTEER ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

P.O. Box 300816, Escondido, CA 92030-0816

(760) 737-2201

www.spbva.org

This is my/our membership application & dues for the following category:

- ___ Student (\$5) ___ Sustaining (\$50) ___ Dragoon (\$100 or more)
- ___ Individual (\$15) ___ Organization (\$25) ___ Benefactor (\$1,000 or more)
- ___ Family (\$20) ___ Corporate (\$100) Please make checks payable to: SPBVA

NAME(S) _____

ADDRESS _____

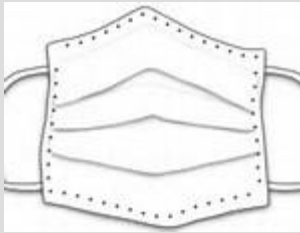
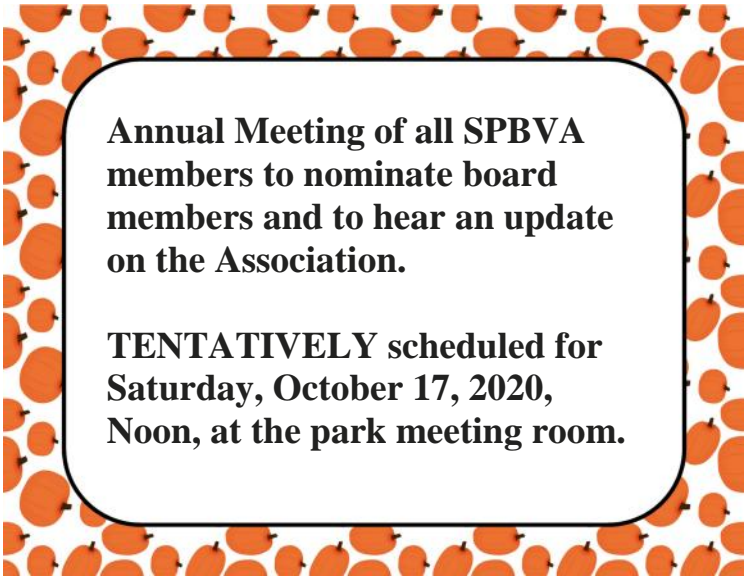
CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE _____ EMAIL _____

OCCUPATION _____ INTEREST/SKILLS _____


2020 CALENDAR

Until further notice, all regular events are cancelled and the park is closed due to the Coronavirus pandemic

Annual Meeting of all SPBVA members to nominate board members and to hear an update on the Association.

TENTATIVELY scheduled for **Saturday, October 17, 2020, Noon, at the park meeting room.**

- **Bob & Judy Bowman**
 - **Justin & Michelle Burkhard**
 - **Carole Chavez**
 - **Donald & Vicky Coates**
 - **Jane Stokes Cowgill**
 - **Jake Enriquez Family**
 - **Allen & Suzanne Foucar**
 - **David Frazee**
 - **David Herbert**
 - **Milo Johnson Automotive**
 - **Janell Percy**
 - **Ellen Sweet**
 - **Thomas M. Vilicich**
 - **Bob & Robyn Wohl**
- 

Dragoon Level Members