

A POLITICAL AND MILITARY HISTORY OF ILLINOIS
IN THE MEXICAN WAR

A Thesis 15

Presented to

The Division of Social Sciences
Kansas State Teachers College of Emporia

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by

Daniel D. Holt

June 1970

T
E

Thomas J. Badger
Approved for the Major Department

Samuel Byler
Approved for the Graduate Council

PREFACE

American historians have too often neglected military history and its many ramifications. Most military histories are primarily concerned with battles and the strange and courageous occurrences that are found only in combat. The study of the effect of United States military policies on economics, politics, and social life is equally important as studying the nation's institutions and systems.

I have personally felt that nothing affects the economic and political systems and people of a country quite so much as does a war. No one doubts that this fact is true of the war in Viet Nam today. This fact was also true of the Mexican War and it is worth noting how many similarities appear between this study and the attitudes of the people and the press relating to the present day. It was asked in 1846 how America could creditably withdraw from a war in which it should not have been involved. It was also stated in 1846 that America had to be involved in the Mexican conflict. By substituting Mexico for Viet Nam the speeches and editorials during the Mexican War could be transposed from the 19th to the 20th century and be unrecognizable as to their actual time in history.

My concern about military history and the lack of writing on repercussions of military conflicts at the state level fostered my desire to do this study. Individual states have, for the most part, provided for the call, training, and the supply of the volunteers or National Guardsmen, for combat. The states have suffered manpower

shortages and felt most directly the personal loss of the men who did not return. Illinois historians have neglected much state history for an intensive study of Abraham Lincoln. Therefore, the need to study military history and the repercussions from war, or lack of them, at the state level, combined with the neglect of the Mexican War period in histories of Illinois, made the political and military history of Illinois from 1845-1848 an ideal study.

As a war does not result overnight, neither do attitudes about national conflicts develop between dusk and dawn. A study of Illinois' politics and economics before the Mexican War is necessary both to understand attitudes on the eve of the war and the changes the war produced in the state. There were many developments in Illinois during the period 1845-1848. Many of those developments were important and progressive, including a new constitution, expanded internal improvement projects, new banking laws, and state financial solvency.

Illinois desperately needed to change her economic system and participation in the Mexican War may have contributed to the adoption of needed reforms. There was no organized political opposition to the Illinois Democratic party before the war. A major development in the war period was the rise of an organized and effective Whig party. It should be said, however, that this was not limited to Illinois. On the national level also the Whig party grew in power. The Illinois Whig party had found it practically impossible to even nominate candidates before the war but this changed drastically at the end of the conflict. It is difficult to delineate the war's distinctive impact on Illinois from the nation generally, but the debating platform built on the Mexican and Oregon controversies no doubt aided the Whig party to build a substantial organization and following in Illinois.

As in many other historical studies it is often a matter of conjecture exactly what cause produced any effect during a period of history. However, it is necessary only to record the total economic, political and military developments within Illinois during the Mexican War without attributing any particular result as being "caused" by the Mexican War. Imponderable causes, such as motivation, may have been an impetus for many of the changes in Illinois. Although many economic and political reforms occurred during the period, it is difficult to say that they would not have been adopted anyway. But it may be just as important to recognize that a negative effect is absent. The Mexican War did not prevent state development.

The history of Illinois in the Mexican War is not necessarily a history of the nation at war. For example, the Whigs rise to power during the war is an important theme nationally but the purpose of this study is to examine their peculiar evolution in Illinois not perforce reflected in other states. It is necessary to realize that what was important nationally may not have been so in Illinois. Illinois both conformed and ran counter to national opinions and attitudes during the war. The national diplomatic, political and military history is well known. The controversies that surround the various interpretations of national policies will be included as needed. The campaigns of Winfield Scott, Zachary Taylor, Philip Kearny, John C. Fremont, Robert Stockton and Alexander Doniphan are also well known. Only the information on these campaigns needed to understand the Illinois volunteers' situation will be presented herein.

An examination of the Illinois volunteer and the militia system is important. The military historian has always questioned the role of the militia in national conflicts in regard to proper training,

organization and capability. In Illinois the volunteer was no different than any other state's volunteer concerning his military capability. But the question is, why did he volunteer? Illinois men were called to duty twice just prior to the Mexican War; first to fight in Hancock County in the Mormon War and then to suppress a regulator movement in southeastern Illinois. Even at depression prices in Illinois the average man could not purchase land and poor transportation facilities within the state prevented him from marketing farm produce outside his locality. This economic situation and the hoped for land bounties and military pay may have influenced the volunteer to enter service.

In the late 1840's Illinois was in turmoil along with many of the frontier states. Should Illinois go to war? In a way, she had a choice. How effectively Illinois participated in the volunteer calls was an index of support. Of what interest to Illinois were the Oregon and Texas annexation crises? Illinois, remarkably, held different views for similar reasons concerning the participation in war to obtain either Oregon or Texas. What was Illinois' economic interest in the war, if, in fact, there was one? If there was a major economic reason for Illinois' participation it would be centered in internal improvements. Was this reason enough? One state's interest in this conflict, both on the home front and the battlefield, is the theme of this study. These viewpoints provide an insight into politics, economics, and martial attitudes in the late 1840's that both reflect and run counter to the national outlook as expressed by the federal administration. A study of Illinois' participation in the Mexican War supports the theory that many national conflicts should be studied on a state level.

One reason that there are so few state military studies is because of the research difficulties. State militias were not diligent

record keepers and knew less about keeping detailed military records.

To write such a military history it is necessary to examine old adjutant general records and archival records (usually uncataloged because of disinterest) and many personal diaries and manuscript collections.

Newspapers and the "Executive Reports and Documents of the United States Senate and House of Representatives" are the primary sources used to fill in the gaps left by this poor record keeping. Even then, the details are difficult to separate because all the United States forces in Mexico, for practical purposes, were considered as the "army." The public and the historian consider the volunteer a member of the United States Army, which is entirely a misconception. Service records of volunteers are not with the regular army records; they must be located elsewhere and pieced together. These are some of the difficulties in writing on Illinois' military involvement in the Mexican War.

I have set forth my reasons for an interest in military history, for the study of military history and policy in general, and my particular interest in the history of Illinois and the Mexican War. I must acknowledge the influence of General Mark Clark, who convinced me that the study of military history and policy is important to the understanding of United States history and of Major Lawrence Addington of the Military History Branch of the National War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, who influenced me to pursue state military and militia studies. Because of his military background and his pursuit of military studies, Thomas J. Badger of Kansas State Teachers College, Emporia, Kansas, has been able to steer me along a creative path instead of allowing me to get lost on a road of glory-stories. Many thanks are due Dr. Patrick O'Brien, also of Kansas State Teachers College, who spent many tedious hours helping me to say what I meant, and in fewer

words. My thanks are also extended to the staffs of the National Archives, Military Records Branch; the Library of Congress; the Illinois Adjutant General's Office; the Illinois State Archives; the Chicago Historical Society; and the Illinois State Historical Library for the many courtesies extended to me in gathering source material. My gratitude is also given to my wife, who for over a year and a half, lost her husband to "war." And most important, a dedicatory thank you to the 6,000 men of Illinois who marched off to a strange land, came back to live in--and some to govern--their state, and to write this story.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE ii

BIOGRAPHICAL GLOSSARY ix

LIST OF MAPS. xii

Chapter

I. THE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL BACKGROUND OF ILLINOIS
PRIOR TO THE MEXICAN WAR 1

II. REACTION TO THE OREGON AND TEXAS QUESTIONS
IN ILLINOIS. 15

III. ILLINOIS PREPARES FOR WAR 36

IV. ORGANIZATION OF THE ILLINOIS VOLUNTEERS 57

V. THE ILLINOIS VOLUNTEERS GO TO WAR 72

VI. BUENA VISTA 96

VII. CERRO GORDO AND HOME. 112

VIII. CONCLUSIONS 127

BIBLIOGRAPHY. 135

BIOGRAPHICAL GLOSSARY

The names included herein are referred to throughout the text. Those identified are generally Illinois personages, although persons not from Illinois are included if important to the narrative. Well-known persons such as Abraham Lincoln, Stephen Douglas, Robert E. Lee, etc., are not indexed. Following each name is the page number(s) indicating additional, the same, or reference material in the text for that person.

Baker, Edward--A Whig attorney, Baker was a veteran of the Black Hawk War. He served in the Illinois General Assembly in 1837, the Illinois Senate, 1840-1844, and in Congress, 1844-1846. Baker was commander of the Fourth Illinois Regiment in the Mexican War. Baker lost his life in the Civil War at the Battle of Ball's Bluff. (p. 9)

Bissell, William H.--A prominent Whig lawyer, Bissell commanded the Second Illinois Regiment in the Mexican War and in 1856 was elected the first Republican governor of Illinois. (p. 8)

Bond, Sharach--Bond was the first governor of Illinois and was a Democratic faction leader prior to the Mexican War. (p. 6)

Bragg, Braxton--A West Point graduate, Bragg served as a regular army officer with the First and Second Illinois Regiments at Buena Vista. He served the Confederacy during the Civil War. (pp. 66, 95)

Breese, Sidney--Breese served as a Democratic United States Senator from 1842 to 1848. A party leader in Illinois, he supported the national administration on the war but disagreed on the annexation of Texas. (p. 23)

Butler, William O.--Regular Army Major General Butler was a member of General Zachary Taylor's staff during the Mexican War. (p. 71)

Carlin, Thomas--Carlin was the governor of Illinois from 1838 to 1842. (p. 6)

Edwards, Ninian--Ninian Edwards was the first territorial governor of Illinois. (p. 6)

Ford, Thomas--Ford was Illinois' governor during the Mexican War years of 1842-1846. He served with the Illinois militia during the Mormon War. He was an administration Democrat. (p. 3)

Foreman, Ferris--Democrat Foreman commanded the Third Illinois Regiment during the Mexican War. He had also served during the Mormon War in Illinois. (p. 46)

Hardin, John--A Whig party leader, Hardin commanded the First Illinois Regiment in the Mexican War and lost his life at Buena Vista. (p. 9)

Harney, William--A regular army veteran of the Black Hawk and Seminole Wars, Harney was General Winfield Scott's ranking cavalry officer in Mexico. (p. 118)

Kearny, Stephen W.--A regular army veteran of the War of 1812, he commanded the Army of the West during the Mexican War. (p. 38)

McDowell, Irvin--An 1838 graduate of West Point, McDowell served at Buena Vista. In the Civil War he commanded the Union forces at the First Battle of Bull Run. (p. 90)

Marcy, William--He was President Polk's Secretary of War. (p. 25)

Meade, George G.--An 1835 graduate of West Point, Meade served in the Mexican War and commanded the Civil War Army of the Potomac from June, 1863, to the end of the war. (p. 63)

Patterson, Robert--A veteran of the War of 1812, Patterson was a civilian appointed to general to command a volunteer division during the Mexican War. The Third and Fourth Illinois Regiments served under him at various times during the war. (p. 70)

Pillow, Gideon--A former law partner of President Polk, he was another civilian general created for the Mexican War. The Fourth Illinois was to have served under him but refused. In the Civil War he was a Confederate brigadier general. (p. 64)

Quitman, John--Brigadier General Quitman was placed in charge of all volunteers on July 1, 1846, but later his command was split. He was breveted a major general after the battle at Monterrey. (p. 71)

Reynolds, John--An Illinois Democrat and governor of the state during the Black Hawk War, he was an expansionist who wanted to annex all of Oregon and Mexico. (p. 16)

Riley, Bennett--Riley was a regular army officer that served with the Third and Fourth Illinois Regiments at Cerro Gordo. He is most noted for his service as a military commander during the opening of the Santa Fe Trail. (p. 117)

Semple, James--A powerful Illinois Democrat, Semple was allied with Stephen Douglas. He served in the United States Senate from 1843 to 1847. (p. 23)

Shields, James--A law partner of Bissell (a Whig), Shields was a prominent Democrat. He received a brigadiership from President Polk and commanded the brigade of Illinois volunteers to Mexico. Later he commanded a brigade of South Carolina and New York volunteers. After the Mexican War he served as territorial governor of Oregon and as a United States Senator from Illinois, Minnesota and Missouri. He also served as a Union general in the Civil War. A statue of Shields was erected in Statuary Hall in the nation's capitol on December 6, 1893. (p. 8)

Thomas, George--The Civil War "Rock of Chickamauga" served along side the Second Illinois at Buena Vista with Braxton Bragg. Bragg would oppose Thomas in the Civil War at Chickamauga. (pp. 104, 105)

Twiggs, David--A veteran of the War of 1812, Twiggs was made a brigadier general in 1846. He served the Confederacy in the Civil War. (p. 84)

Wallace, William H. L.--Wallace (no relation to Indiana's famous Civil War general, Lew Wallace) was a prominent attorney in Illinois prior to the Mexican War. He served at Buena Vista as adjutant with the First Illinois. Wallace served as a volunteer general from Illinois during the Civil War. (p. 4)

Warren, William--A volunteer major in the First Illinois, Warren commanded the Illinois forces near the hacienda Buena Vista and at Saltillo during the Battle of Buena Vista. He also served as military governor of Saltillo after the battle. (p. 74)

Weatherford, William--An Illinois Democrat, Weatherford succeeded Hardin as commander of the First Illinois after Hardin's death at Buena Vista. (p. 19)

Wentworth, "Long" John--A Democrat expansionist elected to Congress from Illinois in 1844, Wentworth favored the acquisition of Texas but was more concerned with the Oregon situation. He revolted against Polk and his "southern sympathies" and voted against the Wilmot Proviso. (p. 16)

Wool, John--A regular army officer, Wool mustered in the volunteers and commanded them to New Orleans. He was then in charge of the division including the First and Second Illinois Regiments through the Battle of Buena Vista. (p. 39)

Worth, William--Regular Army General Worth commanded at Fort Brown at the outbreak of the war and served with the invasion forces at Vera Cruz. At times his command included the Third and Fourth Illinois Regiments. (p. 84)

LIST OF MAPS

MAP OF NORTHERN MEXICO (Showing lines of march).	56
WOOL'S MARCH	77
BATTLE OF BUENA VISTA.	89
BATTLE OF BUENA VISTA, FEBRUARY 23, 1847	99
BATTLE OF CERRO GORDO.	116

CHAPTER I

THE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL BACKGROUND OF ILLINOIS PRIOR TO THE MEXICAN WAR

The settlement of Illinois had an unusual pattern. Only the lower one-third of the state had a significant population until well after statehood, and most settlers in that area immigrated from the South. This situation affected the political alignments in Illinois down to the present day. The immigrants came by the National Road, the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, and later by the Erie Canal. About 3,000 flatboats brought 12,000 land seekers per year down the Ohio mostly from the Carolinas, Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Pennsylvania. It was not until the late 1820's and 1830's that many settlers outside the South were present in the state.¹

In 1818, the year of statehood, Illinois had no cities--only a few settlements separated by great distances. It is estimated that the population was 40,000 and that only 587,000 acres of land had been sold through preemption. After statehood land sales and population both began to increase and did not diminish for many years. By the end of 1848, 1,080,000 of Illinois' total 36,435,000 acres had been sold under the 1813 preemption method.²

¹Daniel D. Holt, "How They Came," Illinois History Magazine, XXI (December, 1967), pp. 51-53.

²Clyde C. Walton, "Where They Settled," Illinois History Magazine, XXI (December, 1967), pp. 54-55.

After statehood the population increased in the northern section of the state. The Erie Canal enabled immigration from New England, New York, and northern Pennsylvania. Those settlers remained in northern Illinois, or the "Yankee" section, with the result that politics began to reflect regional influences brought into the state. The 1850 census reported that New England had accounted for 25,546, the Middle States for 112,000, and the South for 137,711 immigrants.³

The 1818 constitution was written by Democratic politicians and had to be adopted to a constituency divided by political ideology.⁴ By the Mexican War the state also had begun to outgrow the institutions provided for in the 1818 document. Illinois had accumulated a huge debt by the 1840's.⁵

Thomas Carlin, governor of Illinois from 1838 to 1842, wrote to a friend in 1839 that the state banks were attempting to finance their bonds in New York. English speculators, however, financed a \$1,000,000 Illinois state deposit in the Bank of the United States, and now the interest must be paid in London plus an agent's fee of over \$500 per month.⁶

During the winter of 1842-1843 Illinois was in crisis. The state bank had failed, which caused a desperate shortage of paper

³Donald W. Riddle, Lincoln Runs for Congress (New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers Press, 1948), p. 217.

⁴Prominent Democrats of Illinois (Chicago: Democrat Publishing Co., 1899), p. 9.

⁵Charles M. Thompson, "The Illinois Whigs Before 1846," University of Illinois Bulletin, Studies in the Social Sciences, XII (1915), p. 42.

⁶Thomas Carlin papers, Illinois State Historical Library (hereafter cited as IHL), letter, July, 1839.

money for business transactions. The state debt had increased to more than \$15,000,000 because of the Panic of 1837. The Illinois and Michigan Canal, an internal project connecting Chicago with the Illinois River, and thereby the Mississippi River, was two-thirds completed but internal Democratic political party disagreements and the lack of money had stopped work.⁷ The state, according to some popular feeling, had erred in entering the banking business and now must find a way out.⁸ Governor Thomas Ford's administration (1842-1846) was in such dire straits that he personally had to borrow money to collect the state mail.⁹

In 1840 the population stood at 662,150, a 183,221 increase in five years.¹⁰ When Ford became governor, the state debt was \$14,000,000, the treasury was in arrears about \$315,000, state warrants were being discounted over 50 percent, the canal was about to be abandoned, banks were insolvent, and real estate was not worth marketing.¹¹ The Whig press supported state banks and internal improvements, which the Democrats blamed for the financial crisis. By 1842 the Democratic party had a majority in the General Assembly but still had difficulty in defeating the popular Whig internal improvement program.¹²

The primary political question in Illinois in the 1840's concerned

⁷Thomas Ford, A History of Illinois From Its Commencement As A State in 1818 to 1847 (Chicago: S. C. Griggs & Co., 1854), pp. xi, xxxvii; Ameda Ruth King, "The Last Years of the Whig Party in Illinois, 1847-1856," Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society, XXXII (Jan.-Dec., 1925), p. 110.

⁸Justin H. Smith, The War With Mexico (2 vols.; New York: Macmillan, 1919), I, p. 256; Ford, History of Illinois, p. xiv.

⁹Ibid., pp. xxxvii, xi.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 402.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 445-46; Alton Telegraph, December 10, 1846, p. 2.

¹²Thompson, "The Illinois Whigs . . .", pp. 89-90.

internal improvements. This discussion later became linked with Illinois' response to the Mexican crisis. In the 1840's William H. L. Wallace remarked that to market Illinois products and to reduce costs of imported materials, the state must have new canals and river facilities. Illinois had abundant agricultural produce, he continued, but the prohibitive cost of transportation destroyed the profit.¹³

The internal improvements issue (primarily the Illinois and Michigan Canal) kept the Illinois political fight within the state more sectional than doctrinal.¹⁴ It was a significant issue and when the "Memphis Convention on Internal Improvements for the West" convened in 1845, Illinois was well represented. Representatives from the western states met to promote, among other things, the improvements necessary for adequate transportation on the Mississippi River and provide for military protection of the river from Illinois to New Orleans. During the Mexican War crisis, the Illinois landowners would believe that protection of the river was vital to their interests and that the state should assist in protecting the river, and particularly New Orleans, from possible Mexican aggression. Most Whig papers in the state completely supported the Memphis conclave.¹⁵ The editor of the Alton Telegraph, a Whig organ, said the convention was the "first and

¹³Wallace-Dickey Collection, papers, IHL, petition to Congress, November 12, 1844; Ibid., letter, April 12, 1845; Herring papers, IHL, letter June 9, 1840. Wallace, an attorney from Ottawa, Illinois, would gain fame as both a Mexican War and Civil War hero. He served as adjutant in the First Illinois. He was no relation to Civil War General Lew Wallace of Indiana.

¹⁴Clarence Alvord, general editor, The Centennial History of Illinois, Vol. II: The Frontier State, 1818-1848, by Theodore Pease (5 vols; Springfield, Illinois: Centennial Commission, 1918), pp. 332-36.

¹⁵Sangamo Journal, Springfield, July 17, 1845, p. 2; Ibid., October 16, 1845, p. 2; Ibid., October 30, 1845, p. 2.

most important step for the West and South to come together to unloose the terrible calamities bestowed on them by the North and East."¹⁶

The Illinois State Register, published in Springfield, official paper of the Democratic party, did not support the convention and the Springfield Sangamo Journal, the official Whig paper, observed that the Register "appears to be in a rather diseased condition, particularly in the region of the spleen" and disregards the Democratic papers that favor the Memphis meeting.¹⁷

The Democratic Register supported the Illinois and Michigan Canal in 1845 but upheld President Polk's veto of the federal Internal Improvements Bill in August of 1846 as there were "too many additions tacked on to what is legally or constitutionally being done."¹⁸ In 1847 the Register reversed positions and supported internal railroad legislation to aid the trade of the state. The Illinois Whigs consistently favored such programs.¹⁹

During this time money was difficult to obtain and no new commercial or industrial enterprises were being started. At the Memphis Convention Illinois had supported defense of the Mississippi River as a way to foster trade. Farmers were unable to market their crops and had to leave them in the fields.²⁰ Illinois needed jobs, money for

¹⁶Alton Telegraph, Alton, July 18, 1845, p. 2.

¹⁷Sangamo Journal, Springfield, October 30, 1845, p. 2.

¹⁸Illinois State Register, Springfield, February 14, 1845, p. 2; Ibid., August 21, 1846, p. 2.

¹⁹Ibid., August 12, 1847, p. 3; Alton Telegraph, January to March, passim, 1845.

²⁰Pease, The Frontier State, p. 400; Illinois State Register, Springfield, February 19, 1847, p. 3.

land, development of rivers and canals and more immigrants. If the adage that war means prosperity is true Illinois should have benefited from the Mexican War. And Illinois appears to have done just that. When Governor Ford left office in 1847, the domestic debt was reduced from \$14,000,000 to \$31,000 with \$9,000 in the treasury; auditors warrants were at par; insolvent banks had been reestablished; \$5,000,000 had been raised to finish the canal; and the people had willingly submitted to increased taxation.²¹ Illinois had made economic progress during the Mexican War. Although the war may not have been responsible the war at least did not deter Illinois' economic growth.

From 1837 to 1847 the state's political system was also in turmoil. Up to 1837 there were no regular party alignments in Illinois, only political factions headed by Ninian Edwards and Shadrach Bond. The two factions were concerned more with personal than public issues.²² Initially, Illinois' political alignments were Federalist and Anti-Federalist. By 1828 the factions were divided between Jackson and Anti-Jacksonians.²³ Although the Whig-Democrat lines had not yet emerged in 1832, future Illinois Whigs disliked Jackson because of his internal improvements policies and the "old system" alliances began to evolve into Whig and Democratic factions.²⁴ The new groups formed along lines of the Illinois sectional background and former national political loyalties. Even though it was described as a

²¹Ford, History of Illinois, pp. 445-46.

²²Thompson, "The Illinois Whigs, . . .", pp. 9-11; Prominent Democrats of Illinois, p. 16. Ninian Edwards was the first territorial governor of Illinois and Shadrach Bond was the first state governor.

²³Ibid., pp. 9-17, passim.

²⁴Donald W. Riddle, Lincoln Runs for Congress (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1948), p. 4; King, "Last Years of the Whig Party," p. 109.

rather than a compact party," a combination of "milk and cider" Unionians and Anti-Jackson men coalesced to form the Whig party in Illinois. Before 1832 no representative from Illinois was elected as Democrat or Whig.²⁵

The Whigs in Illinois were a minority. The Whigs, throughout their existence in Illinois, would never carry a presidential election in the state, elect a United States Senator, or have more than one representative in Congress. In the 1848 presidential election with the Whigs' popularity at its highest nationally, Democrat Lewis Cass carried Illinois by 3,100 votes.²⁶

In 1840, with Democrat Martin Van Buren unpopular in Illinois, the Whigs campaigned for the National presidential ticket even before a candidate had been named. The Illinois party was overjoyed when William Henry Harrison was nominated but they still failed to carry the state.²⁷ The Illinois Whigs did increase their vote and Adams County, usually a Democratic stronghold, went four to one for the Whigs.²⁸ The Democrats, however, continued to win elections because of the National Democratic platforms and influence in the state. The Whigs also found themselves at a disadvantage because of their lack and distrust of a party convention; a system the Democrats had used since

²⁵King, "Last Years of the Whig Party," p. 108; Riddle, Lincoln Runs for Congress, pp. 36-37; Thompson, "The Illinois Whigs Before 1846," pp. 43, 86, 91-92; Riddle, Lincoln Runs for Congress, pp. 35-36; Thompson, "The Illinois Whigs Before 1846," pp. 30-31.

²⁶Riddle, Lincoln Runs for Congress, pp. 35-37; King, "Last Years of the Whig Party," p. 109.

²⁷Pease, The Frontier State, pp. 251-77, 280.

²⁸Riddle, Lincoln Runs for Congress, p. 52.

1837.²⁹ Lincoln, however, recognized the need for a convention because the ablest men in the Whig party all seemed to be from the same county. Some type of controlled nominating system was necessary to make a more influential representation throughout the state. Although it seems illogical, the Sangamo Journal stated that it would support a Whig convention if the caucus system was unacceptable but no "party character" should be given the convention.³⁰

When the state was redistricted in 1843 into seven Congressional Districts, the Third District, the Whig stronghold, became a part of the new Seventh District. In this new district, three prominent Whigs wanted the congressional nomination. To avoid a party split, similar to that developing in the Democratic party between James Shields³¹ and William Bissell,³² the Whigs attempted to organize a nominating

²⁹Riddle, Lincoln Runs for Congress, p. 52; Prominent Democrats, pp. 4, 16.

³⁰Sangamo Journal, Springfield, June 3, 1847, p. 2.

³¹Shields was Bissell's law partner early in his career. Shields commanded the Illinois Brigade of the First and Second Illinois Regiments in 1846 and later commanded a Brigade of South Carolina and New York regiments. After the Mexican War he served as the territorial governor of Oregon and as United States Senator from Illinois, Minnesota and Missouri. He had a distinguished career as a Civil War general. On December 6, 1893, a statue of Shields was erected in Statuary Hall in the nation's Capitol. IHL Biographical file, "James Shields." The only complete biography of Shields is William Condon, The Life of Major General James Shields (Chicago: Blakely Printing Co., 1900); "The Illinois Scrapbook." Journal of the Illinois Historical Society, XXXI (June, 1938), pp. 216-17; Condon, Life of Shields, p. 348.

³²William H. Bissell, who commanded the Second Illinois Regiment in the Mexican War, was a prominent Illinois lawyer and Whig. He was elected in 1856 as Illinois' first Republican governor but died in office in the same year. Nick J. Perrin, "Mrs. Rhoda Bissell Thomas," Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, XXXVI (March, 1943), p. 41.

convention.³³

But a three cornered Whig fight did develop between Lincoln, John J. Hardin,³⁴ and Edward Baker³⁵ (Hardin and Baker would lead regiments in the Mexican War) for the nomination. The three agreed to take turns in office for the next three elections to prevent party disunity.³⁶ Rotation in office would almost guarantee the Whigs three terms, but if they fought each other for the nomination, it was sure to divide the party and elect a Democrat. Baker received the nomination in 1844, Hardin in 1846, and Lincoln was to be next. Baker was selected by the convention in 1844, but Hardin withdrew as a candidate in 1846, therefore Lincoln's turn came early.³⁷

The large Mormon population further complicated Illinois politics in the mid-1840's.³⁸ In 1840 the Whigs received almost unanimous

³³Pease, The Frontier State, pp. 294-95; Thompson, "The Illinois Whigs Before 1846," pp. 120-21; Milton H. Shutes, "Colonel E. D. Baker," reprint from the California Historical Quarterly (December, 1938), p. 4.

³⁴Hardin was an astute Whig leader in Illinois. It was said that if he survived the Mexican War he could be elected governor. He died at Buena Vista while leading the First Illinois Regiment. Riddle, Lincoln Runs for Congress, pp. 12-14.

³⁵Edward Baker was 19 when admitted to the Illinois Bar, served in the Black Hawk War, and was elected to the Illinois General Assembly in 1837. A close friend and advisor of Lincoln he served in the Illinois Senate from 1840-1844, and then in Congress. He resigned his congressional seat to lead the Fourth Illinois Regiment. Later, during the Civil War, he lost his life playing out his controversial role at the Battle of Ball's Bluff. Shutes, "Colonel E. D. Baker," pp. 2-3; Harry C. Blair and Rebecca Tarshis, The Life of Colonel Edward Baker (Portland, Ore.: Oregon Historical Society, 1960), pp. 19-22; James Matheny, "A Modern Knight Errant, Edward Dickenson Baker," Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, IX (April, 1916), pp. 23-42, passim.

³⁶Riddle, Lincoln Runs for Congress, Chapter IV, passim.

³⁷Ibid., p. 133.

³⁸Pease, The Frontier State, p. 340; Concise Dictionary of American History, Vol. 4, p. 644.

Mormon support.³⁹ The Democrats made their move during Ford's administration when the Democratic legislature granted the Nauvoo city charter to the Mormons. The Democrats used this to win Mormon votes. The charter was intentionally written to allow for misinterpretations, however, and the Mormons consequently would pass laws "obnoxious to the population." The Whigs, meanwhile, used this Democratic deception as an issue in the elections of 1842 to again garner most of the Mormon support. Needless to say, the Mormons were also aware of this and played the Whig support to the utmost.⁴⁰ In 1846 the Mormons would once again swing to the Illinois Democrats because the President of the United States permitted Mormons to settle on Indian land along the Missouri River and had accepted 500 of them for the famous Mormon Battalion during the Mexican War.⁴¹

Whig aspirations in Illinois were set back by the election of James K. Polk to the presidency in 1844. Polk, described by some as his own man with no political promises to live up to, was disliked by the Tyler and Martin Van Buren segments of the party.⁴² Illinois Whigs, who disliked Tyler's stand on the United States Bank, were pleased with the Tyler-Polk split. Democrats in Illinois were overjoyed at Polk's election, primarily because he began to remove Whigs from office.⁴³

³⁹Thompson, "The Illinois Whigs Before 1846," p. 78.

⁴⁰Evarts Green and Charles Thompson, editors, The Governors Letter Books, 1840-1853 (Springfield, Ill.: The State Historical Library, 1911), introduction by Charles Thompson, "A Study of the Administration of Governor Thomas Ford," pp. xxxix-cxviii, passim.

⁴¹Ford, History of Illinois, p. 414.

⁴²Glyndon G. Van Deusen, The Jacksonian Era, 1828-1848 (New York: Harper and Row, 1959), p. 193.

⁴³Thompson, "The Illinois Whigs Before 1846," p. 118.

Most of the Whig press in Illinois had supported Henry Clay for the party nomination and at the same time made known their opposition to the possible annexation of Texas.⁴⁴ Clay naturally appreciated the Illinois support, and wrote to Wyatt Berry Stapp, later an Illinois Mexican War hero, that he would be "very happy to see Illinois added to the Whig states. . . . I do not see why that desirable object might not be accomplished."⁴⁵ The lack of effective Whig party organization prevented it. During the campaign the Illinois newspapers devoted most of their space to the impending Oregon crisis but did not entirely neglect the question of Texas annexation.⁴⁶

After Polk's victory, the Illinois Whigs believed they could not elect a governor in 1846 and some said the election should go by default. Others tried to find candidates.⁴⁷ The Alton Telegraph interpreted the election as a calamity next to the dissolution of the Union, but would "give the new administration a fair, and honest trial."⁴⁸ The State Register, the Democratic organ in Springfield, praised the Polk administration, and termed it popular, dignified, and able to prevent any foreign country from intervening in American affairs.⁴⁹ Whig newspapers

⁴⁴Smith, The War With Mexico, II, p. 270; Thompson, "The Illinois Whigs Before 1846," p. 121; Alton Telegraph and Sangamo Journal, Springfield, May-June, 1844, passim.

⁴⁵Henry Clay collection, papers, IHL, letter, November 16, 1843.

⁴⁶Van Deusen, The Jacksonian Era, pp. 208-09; Alton Telegraph, Quincy Whig, Sangamo Journal, Springfield, May-July, 1844, passim.

⁴⁷Thompson, "The Illinois Whigs before 1846," pp. 128-30; Riddle, Lincoln Runs for Congress, pp. 79-80.

⁴⁸Alton Telegraph, November 23, 1844, p. 2.

⁴⁹Illinois State Register, Springfield, January 15, 1846, p. 2; Ibid., March 14, 1845, p. 2; Ibid., March 21, 1845, p. 2.

forecast a split in the Democrat party over the local appointments and the Oregon and Texas questions.⁵⁰

In 1846 the Whigs, meeting in their second convention since 1844, nominated Lincoln for Congress after Baker declined his "turn."⁵¹ The Democratic State Register asked Lincoln if he was for "54-40" or if he was for "compromising away our Oregon territory to England, as his brother Whigs in Congress. . . . No Shuffling, Mr. Lincoln! Come out square!"⁵² The Alton Telegraph said the Whigs were through and should "bide their time until the people of the state have smarted sufficiently under the uninterrupted misrule of locofocoism. . . . The Whigs will again unfurl their banner."⁵³ John Hardin, however, refused to give up his congressional seat to run for governor. The Telegraph explained the situation in this way:

We hope the refusal of Gen. Hardin to run for Governor will put an end to the question of the Whigs nominating any candidate for that office. We believe it to be bad policy for us to do so. But if a contrary course is decided upon we suppose that A. Lincoln, Esq., of Springfield, would be a prominent candidate. . . . We are decidedly opposed to running any candidate at all for the offices of Governor or Lt. Governor. Our friends can rally in each of the Congressional districts, if they see fit to do so, by supporting candidates for Congress; and in this way keep up their organization much better than by running candidates for Governor and Lt. Governor.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Alton Telegraph, April 26, 1845, p. 2.

⁵¹ Riddle, Lincoln Runs for Congress, pp. 158-59.

⁵² Ibid., p. 159.

⁵³ Alton Telegraph, November 29, 1845, p. 2.

⁵⁴ Sangamo Journal, Springfield, November 27, 1845, p. 2; Alton Telegraph, December 27, 1845, p. 2.

Conduct of the war (not necessarily with the war itself), caused the Telegraph to later reverse its position and call for the Whigs to run candidates for both governor and lieutenant governor.⁵⁵

In May, 1846, when the nomination of Lincoln for Congress was announced, the Sangamo Journal held out hope for the future of the Whig party in Illinois. Its advice to the public was "to be up and doing."⁵⁶ On August 3, 1846, as the Illinois troops were heading for Mexico, Lincoln won his congressional seat with 53 per cent of the vote. Although the Whigs had reason to be jubilant it was no great victory: Hardin had won in 1843 by the same margin and Baker had received 52 per cent of the vote in 1844.⁵⁷ Ottawa attorney W. H. L. Wallace wrote a friend that the Whigs would have been fortunate to elect even a county sheriff, therefore, to elect one Whig to the House of Representatives should be considered excellent under the circumstances.⁵⁸

The Whigs continued to gain in stature. In the 1847 constitutional convention the Whigs won 71 of the 162 seats. The Register reported that the "Democratic regularity" had broken down.⁵⁹ Between 1840-1850 new immigrants from the North and East added to Whig party strength. When the Whigs later developed into the Republican party they had adequate strength to elect a Republican governor in Illinois

⁵⁵Alton Telegraph, April 18, 1846, p. 2; Ibid., December 27, 1845, p. 2.

⁵⁶Sangamo Journal, May 7, 1846, p. 2.

⁵⁷Riddle, Lincoln Runs for Congress, p. 177.

⁵⁸Wallace-Dickey papers, letter, IHL, August 7, 1846.

⁵⁹King, "The Last Years of the Whigs," p. 112; Illinois State Register, May 7, 1847, p. 2.

in 1856 and to take definite stands on major issues.⁶⁰

The importance of the Whig party should not be underestimated during the Oregon and Mexican War debates in Illinois. Certainly the two-party strength developing in Illinois brought forth controversial attitudes toward the war which would have been underrated through one-party domination. Similarly, the economic situation, while less controversial than the war issue, can also be more correctly evaluated through party politics. As the war came at a time of political change in the state it is difficult to determine which had the most affect; the political situation on the war or the war on the politics, but possibly the former. Although the Whig party was gaining power prior to the annexation crisis it should be emphasized that the war greatly enhanced the Whig party's political advantage and especially those individual Whigs who shortly would go to war. This was the basic political and economic situation in Illinois on the eve of the Mexican War, and it must be kept in mind to understand Illinois' participation in the conflict.

⁶⁰Thompson, "The Illinois Whigs Before 1846," p. 61; King, "The Last Years of the Whigs," pp. 147-48.

CHAPTER II

REACTION TO THE OREGON AND TEXAS

QUESTIONS IN ILLINOIS

In 1845 annexation of Texas and the possibility of war with Mexico were not the only concerns of the people in Illinois. The Oregon boundary settlement was also important to them. The political parties were as sharply divided over Oregon as they were later on Texas. Polk favored an Oregon boundary at "54-40"¹ whereas Secretary of State James Buchanan had urged him to compromise on 49° with Great Britain.² In Illinois the papers were giving Oregon a great deal of their news space neglecting somewhat the coming Texas annexation. That situation did not last long.³ Before Polk's inauguration, sentiment had developed in the West for the position that the United States should govern all of North America, including Mexico, California, and Oregon.⁴ The Illinois State Register commented in 1844 that "If war shall ensue, let it not close until the empire of Mexico, as well as Texas, is added to the territory of the Union; and the broad continent only

¹Donald W. Riddle, Congressman Abraham Lincoln (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1957), p. 22.

²Allen Nevins, editor, Polk, the Diary of a President, 1845-1849 (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1952), pp. 2-3, 63.

³Sangamo Journal, Springfield, January, 1845-January, 1846, passim; Illinois State Register, Springfield, January, 1845-January, 1846, passim.

⁴William E. Dodd, "The West and the War With Mexico," Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, V (July, 1912), p. 163.

limits the domain of the United States."⁵ The United States, according to the Register in 1845, should fight for its "undoubted right of the soil."⁶ The Whigs in Illinois also wanted Oregon but felt that Polk would back down from his "54-40" agreement. Both parties felt that war was imminent.⁷

"Long John" Wentworth, Chicago Democrat, had cautioned the Illinois people about the problems inherent in annexation in 1844, and two years later he stated that if it was wicked to go to war over Oregon it would be equally so in the case of Texas. If the United States was unwilling to fight for Oregon, it should not later fight for Texas. He therefore sought a compromise with Great Britain on the Oregon settlement.⁸

John Reynolds, former Democratic governor of Illinois and an expansionist, had been interested in Oregon as early as 1833 and later would favor the Mexican War. In 1846 he proposed that the United States "have possession of Oregon to latitude 49° north of California and of Mexico on both sides of the Rio Grande. . . . We must have Cuba and we are forced to have Mexico."⁹ The Sangamo Journal said that if

⁵Illinois State Register, Springfield, December 27, 1844, p. 2.

⁶Ibid., February 21, 1845, p. 2.

⁷Clarence Alvord, general editor, The Centennial History of Illinois, Vol. II: The Frontier State, 1818-1848, by Theodore Pease (5 vols; Springfield, Illinois: Centennial Commission, 1918), pp. 328-29.

⁸John Wentworth of Chicago was elected to Congress in 1844. He was an expansionist who favored the acquisition of Texas but was more concerned over the Oregon questions. He was one of the first Democrats in Illinois to revolt against Polk and his supposed "southern" influences and to vote against the Wilmot Proviso. Don E. Fehrenbacher, Chicago Giant, A Biography of "Long John" Wentworth (Madison: American Historical Research Center, 1957), pp. 39, 48, 53, 70.

⁹Jessie McHarry, "John Reynolds," Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, VI (1913-1914), pp. 7-57, passim.

Polk should give up Oregon, Reynolds would "immediately raise an army, march over to Oregon, and re-annex the abandoned Territory to the Union."¹⁰

Gradually the Oregon and Texas questions were joined in Illinois. The solution for one, it was argued, should also be used for the other. A few, however, including Edward Baker believed in Manifest Destiny for Oregon, but opposed the application of that principle to Texas.¹¹ While in Congress Baker insisted that the Oregon boundary be placed at "54-40" and favored a resolution stating that the United States could not "consistently . . . offer to surrender to any foreign power any territory to which . . . we have a clear and unquestionable title."¹²

The Whig Alton Telegraph warned that it was easier to get into a conflict than to "creditably" get out of one. Each side had a position from which it was difficult to "honorably recede."¹³ The State Register, speaking for the Democrats, thought the solution should be "54-40 or fight" and nothing else. The editor thought America should build up the navy and other defenses, and extend its laws over Oregon. He would tell Britain to "put up or shut up."¹⁴ Oregon meetings were held throughout Illinois. In Decatur it was resolved that the United States title was "clear and indisputable;" others determined that in

¹⁰Sangamo Journal, Springfield, July 17, 1845, p. 2.

¹¹Harry C. Blair and Rebecca Tarshis, The Life of Colonel Edward Baker (Portland, Ore.: Oregon Historical Society, 1960), pp. 27-29.

¹²Milton H. Shutes, "Colonel E. D. Baker," reprint from the California Historical Quarterly (December, 1938), p. 4.

¹³Alton Telegraph, January 10, 1846, p. 2. At this writing, 1970, the same dilemma is confronting the United States policy in Viet Nam.

¹⁴Illinois State Register, Springfield, June 12, 1845, p. 2.

relation to western interests and defense, Illinois was vitally interested economically and that for once, instead of being asked to defend the East, Illinois could fight for her western interests. This was an important factor to Illinois' position on both Oregon and the Texas annexation. Past federal expenditures had gone for an "Eastern war."

Now it was important for the West to act together to preserve its livelihood.¹⁵ The Whig Sangamo Journal screamed that if our "title to Oregon is clear and indisputable, why then should we negotiate about it."¹⁶ The Whigs would go to war for Oregon but in 1846 the Illinois Whigs opposed a war to obtain Texas.¹⁷ They did state, however, that if fighting should occur with Mexico, they would support the party in power with whatever means possible. The Whig motto would be "Our country first--our country last--our country forever."¹⁸ During the Mexican War they would be called traitors by the Democrats for insufficiently supporting the war effort.

When the Register learned that Britain might compromise at the 49th parallel it insisted that Polk stand firm at 54-40. It was the duty of Congress, according to the editor, to provide the military means to ensure a settlement favorable to the United States.¹⁹ On the other hand, the Alton Telegraph believed that a compromise would at least put the United States in the right; then if America lost

¹⁵Sangamo Journal, Springfield, June 12, 1845, p. 2; Ibid., September 25, 1845, p. 2.

¹⁶Ibid., January 5, 1845, p. 2.

¹⁷For a complete discussion of this matter, see Chapter III.

¹⁸Alton Telegraph, May 10, 1845, p. 2; Ibid., May 17, p. 2.

¹⁹Illinois State Register, Springfield, April 10, 1846, p. 2; Ibid., May 25, 1846, p. 2; Nevins, Polk, p. 73.

Oregon in a war the United States would be without blame.²⁰

On June 26, 1846, Polk referred the question of whether to accept the Oregon boundary at 49° to the Senate. The Democrats implored Polk to reject the compromise at once; however, when the 49° proposition was accepted in June, the Illinois State Register made the United States Senate appear responsible for the loss of territory.²¹

Although the Mexican War started before the Oregon question was settled, the view of the two Illinois political parties on Oregon did not change, except that Oregon decidedly took a back seat to the Mexican issue. Meanwhile, the Mormon difficulties continued to disrupt Illinois politics on the eve of the Mexican War.²² Armed outbreaks against Mormon polygamy, complicated with other issues, forced the governor to send state militia to maintain order in Hancock County. After the anti-Mormon newspaper, the Expositor, was destroyed and the affair blamed on the Mormons, citizens in the area jailed the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum. While locked in the Carthage, Illinois jail the two men were murdered by a mob on June 27, 1844. In the fall Governor Ford sent militia officers General John Hardin and Colonels Edward Baker and William Weatherford, commanding

²⁰ Alton Telegraph, May 8, 1846, p. 2.

²¹ Justin H. Smith, The War with Mexico (2 vols.; New York: Macmillan, 1919), I, p. 201; Illinois State Register, August 7, 1846, p. 2.

²² Sangamo Journal, Springfield, September-October, 1845, passim; Alton Telegraph, September-October, 1845, passim; Illinois State Register, September-October, 1845, passim; Chicago Democrat, September-October, 1845, passim.

the militia, to stop the disturbances with military force.²³

Ford persuaded Hardin and Baker, both Whigs, "But men of military ambition," by his account, along with William Weatherford, a Democrat, to raise 500 volunteers to go to Hancock County for a "Wolf hunt."²⁴ In September, Ford called on seven counties for volunteers. He then declared a state of insurrection and the troops moved into the area.²⁵ On October 16, 1845, the Sangamo Journal declared the Mormon War over but troops remained in the area for several more months.²⁶ The Mormon War was not much of a military operation but Illinois had militia forces under arms in the field on the eve of the Mexican War. While these disturbances occupied Illinois, President Tyler and President-elect Polk started a series of actions that would more vitally affect Illinois.²⁷

The annexation of Texas has been described as the end result of a "long series of reactions fostered by American expansionism," and an "incredible . . . utter failure of diplomacy" on the Mexican side. The Mexican government, in a state of turmoil could not, or

²³William Weatherford, a Democrat, succeeded Hardin as commander of the First Illinois Regiment after Hardin's death at Buena Vista. Charles M. Thompson, "The Illinois Whigs Before 1846," University of Illinois Bulletin, Studies in the Social Sciences, XII (1915), pp. 103-04; Erwin J. Urch, "The Public Career of William Barton Warren," Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, XXXI (1928-1929), pp. 93-109.

²⁴Thomas Ford, A History of Illinois From Its Commencement As A State in 1818 to 1847 (Chicago: S. C. Griggs & Co., 1854), pp. 364-65.

²⁵Evarts Green and Charles Thompson, editors, The Governors Letter Books, 1840-1853 (Springfield, Ill.: The State Historical Library, 1911), Introduction by Charles Thompson, "A Study of the Administration of Governor Thomas Ford," pp. c, ci; Alton Telegraph, September 27, 1845, p. 2; Sangamo Journal, Springfield, January 9, 1845, p. 3.

²⁶Ibid., October 16, 1845.

²⁷Nevins, Polk, p. xiii.

would not, meet with United States representatives. The American expansion theme is also related to the long train of abuses claimed by the citizens of the United States against Mexico. Most of these stemmed from treatment of American traders venturing into Mexico and the long standing boundary dispute. Any assertion that Polk or the annexation of Texas totally caused the Mexican War is an oversimplification. The issue of territorial expansion and manifest destiny and the defense of the Mississippi River and the trade routes were prominent arguments in Illinois.²⁸

²⁸The controversy over United States involvement in the Mexican War is old and complicated. The question involves whether it was a war of conquest or for conquest; was it for expansion or the rightful protection of our boundaries, namely the Rio Grande; or for the protection of one of the United States--the newly annexed state of Texas. Justin Smith, writing in 1919, stated in his Introduction that Polk had been mistreated and wrongly accused of influencing the war for expansionist reasons and for general bungling of the situation. This began a trend to reappraise Polk's role in the war carried on by Robert Henry, Otis Singletary and several others. Lately, however, historians such as general editor Ramon Ruiz in The Mexican War, Was It Manifest Destiny; Norman A. Graebner, Empire on the Pacific, A Study in American Continental Expansion; and Glenn Price, Origins of the War with Mexico, The Polk-Stockton Intrigue, among others, have begun revising the revisionist. Graebner, admitting that Polk did not plot for a war, feels that Polk's all out interest in West Coast expansion and the intrigues to acquire new territory did not deter the war. He does conclude that the war was one for empire; an empire on the Pacific Coast. Price, whose book seems to be more anti-Polk than anything, attempts to show that the entire Oregon-Texas matter was one continuing scheme and intrigue by which Polk could obtain California. The points of the above authors are well taken, as are those of Smith and Henry who see the war as one of unavoidable relations on the border, Polk's failure at diplomacy, and our "right" to defend our soil--no intrigues involved. As can be seen, the controversy is continuing and will not be resolved or discussed further here in any detail. One note of conjecture, however, may be with the usage of Justin Smith's work in this paper in light of the above controversy. Smith, and Henry, are used basically to obtain facts pertaining to the war and not to derive conclusions as to the national importance or involvement in the war. Price himself states on p. 100 that "Smith's work . . . was the first thorough and exhaustive investigation of the primary sources and it stands even now as the only detailed history of the Mexican War." Otis Singletary, The Mexican War (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1960), p. 14.

The United States' interest in California, based on Manifest Destiny, had been prominent since the reports of John C. Fremont. Illinois Democrats and some Whigs regarded both Oregon and California as logical aims of territorial expansion, as probably did President Polk. Polk used the Manifest Destiny argument to absorb California. He had been willing to negotiate with Mexico to obtain that territory but if "expansionism was the dominant theme of an otherwise divergent cabinet," he did not have to wait for Mexico to begin hostilities. But the first issues were on the boundary between Texas and Mexico. Illinois followed the government's reasoning that since 1818 the Louisiana boundary had been the Rio Grande which included Texas and New Mexico. If Texas was annexed under that supposition, it would be the duty of the United States to protect Texas to that river. America would only be protecting one of her states from intrusion by a foreign power.²⁹

When the resolution of Texas annexation was finally introduced in Congress, Hardin said war would be inevitable if the resolution carried. Baker, disagreeing with the preamble, voted for the resolution.

²⁹Again, this is a controversial subject and interpretations vary from source to source. See footnote 28, this chapter. Historians such as Price and Graebner point out that Mexico had always considered Texas included in her territory; therefore, it is just as wrong to assume that she would not accept annexation as it is to assume that the territory always had been considered by the United States to be hers. There is one fact common to the above and the historians such as Smith and Henry; that being, the boundary issue was of prime importance in the actual cause of fighting. For purposes of this paper this controversy will not be resolved but the issue of who, just prior to the Mexican War, should have controlled the Rio Grande, is important. This will be mentioned again in regard to the first encounter of the war and in regard to Abraham Lincoln's famous "spot resolutions." Glyndon G. Van Deusen, The Jacksonian Era, 1828-1848 (New York: Harper and Row, 1959), pp. 216-17; Sangamo Journal, Springfield, July 24, 1845, p. 2; Singletary, The Mexican War, pp. 14-15; Smith War With Mexico, I, pp. 127-28; Van Deusen, Jacksonian Era, pp. 196-99; Smith, War With Mexico, I, pp. 58-63, 138-39.

The Illinois State Register stated it would welcome annexation even if it meant war.³⁰ Hardin had called annexation "unwise, reckless, selfish, sectional, and slavery-extending" in its policy. Sidney Breese and James Semple,³¹ Illinois Democrats, both voted against the original annexation resolution but agreed with the later resolution offered by outgoing President Tyler.³² The Mexican ambassador promptly left Washington, and the Alton Telegraph described his departure as a step "tantamount to a declaration of war."³³

On June 15, 1845, Secretary of the Navy George Bancroft directed General Zachary Taylor to "forthwith make a forward movement with the troops under your command, and advance to the mouth of the Sabine," in anticipation of Texas' approval of the annexation agreement.³⁴ Polk was going to be prepared for any eventuality.

The Democrats approved of Polk's actions and expressed concern

³⁰Illinois State Register, Springfield, January 10, 1845, p. 2; Riddle, Congressman Abraham Lincoln, p. 167.

³¹Sidney Breese served in the United States Senate from 1842 to 1848 when he was defeated by James Shields. President Polk observed that Breese was "the most troublesome and inveterate seeker for office for his friends in either house of Congress." Condon, Life of Shields, p. 348; Prominent Democrats, p. 118; Allen Nevins, editor, Polk, The Diary of a President, 1845-1849 (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1952), p. 203. James Semple served in the Illinois House of Representatives from 1832 to 1843. A prominent Democrat, he was closely allied with Stephen A. Douglas. In 1843 Semple went to the United States Senate and served there until 1847. IHL, biographical file, "Senator James Semple."

³²On the eve of Polk's inauguration Tyler signed the Joint Resolution annexing Texas. Mexico thought she should have been included in the negotiations but the United States replied that Texas had long been independent and the situation was of no concern to the Mexican Government. Singletary, The Mexican War, pp. 8-9.

³³Alton Telegraph, March 15, 1845, p. 3.

³⁴United States Congress, House executive Document 60, 30th Congress, 1st Session, p. 81. Hereafter cited as H.E.D.

for Taylor's army on the Rio Grande. The Journal, and other Illinois Whig papers, warned that geography determines boundaries and that annexation should not become an issue of strength between the United States and Mexico; American actions should be "magnanimous and just."³⁵ Many Americans doubted that Mexico would dare go to war. As the Texas annexation drew close, however, Mexico's final action seemed less certain. The Mexican government had declared many times that annexation would mean war. The Whig press felt that "Our foreign relations are in a most critical position."³⁶

On July 4, 1845, the Texas Congress adopted the resolution of annexation offered by the United States.³⁷ The Mexican government recommended that Mexico declare war as soon as the annexation process was completed or as soon as United States troops "invaded" Texas.³⁸

On July 24 the news of Texas' approval of the annexation resolution reached Illinois and was termed "glorious."³⁹ The news was glorious only briefly for General Taylor had been directed to act "in defense of Texas." He had also been given authority to request additional forces to aid him if he deemed them necessary. Taylor moved toward the Rio Grande on June 15 with about 1,500 men; by mid-October, 1845,

³⁵Riddle, Congressman Abraham Lincoln, pp. 11-12; Sangamo Journal, Springfield, September 11, 1845, p. 4.

³⁶Ibid., Springfield, July 17, 1845, p. 2; Alton Telegraph, December 20, 1845, p. 2; Sangamo Journal, Springfield, June 19, 1846, p. 2.

³⁷Robert S. Henry, The Story of the Mexican War (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1950), chronology.

³⁸Van Deusen, The Age of Jackson, p. 214.

³⁹Sangamo Journal, Springfield, July 24, 1845, p. 1.

half of the United States Army was in Corpus Christi, Texas.⁴⁰

While Taylor was advancing, the Illinois papers speculated that Mexico had declared war against the United States and had ordered out a military force of 20,000 men. Although the United States had not declared war in response, it was highly probable that it would.⁴¹

Taylor received word from Secretary of War William Marcy that Mexico was assembling a large body of troops.⁴²

The Alton Telegraph said Mexico had no choice but to resort to arms and that the Democrats have a "great anxiety to go to war" because they wanted to make money through "wanton" expenditure of funds, such as chartering boats at \$350 per day to take troops to Mexico when cheaper transportation could have been provided. "Great pickings abound for the faithful during these war times."⁴³ Taylor, meanwhile, had been informed that as a "precautionary" measure he was authorized to accept volunteers from Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Kentucky if Mexico should declare war.⁴⁴

The Sangamo Journal "regretted" throwing water upon "such ardent spirits," who would "seek fame" on the battlefield, but the paper had learned that the present military force could not be increased without

⁴⁰United States Congress, H.E.D. 60, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., May 28, 1845, Marcy to Taylor (no page number); Smith, War With Mexico, I, pp. 141-43; Henry, Story of the Mexican War, p. 21.

⁴¹Sangamo Journal, Springfield, August 7, 1845, p. 2; Ibid., August 21, 1845, p. 3.

⁴²United States Congress, H.E.D. 60, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 85.

⁴³Alton Telegraph, August 23, 1845, p. 2; Ibid., August 30, 1845, p. 2.

⁴⁴United States Congress, H.E.D. 60, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 85.

additional legislation by Congress.⁴⁵ But on October 16, 1845, Marcy informed Taylor that he "need not . . . wait for directions from Washington to carry out what you may deem proper to be done."⁴⁶ The needed legislation would be forthcoming.

Polk, meanwhile, was certain that there were ample reasons to justify the war. Since 1835, massacres of United States citizens, property confiscations, bloody reprisals in California, robberies of American citizens on the Santa Fe Trail, and the boundary dispute had, according to Polk, given the United States cause for war. Nevertheless, Polk still attempted to establish negotiations, and sent John Slidell to Mexico in an attempt to settle the matter by purchasing the disputed territory of Texas and to make an offer for California. Slidell was refused an audience and "imprisoned."⁴⁷ The Sangamo Journal felt the United States must at "once take measures to sustain the dignity and character of the country," and the Register, after learning of the "disrespectful" treatment given Slidell, stated that "Uncle Sam will blow these half barbarians out of the water. . . . Let Mexico either fight, or make it up at once."⁴⁸

Regardless of the reasons, war was at hand. In April the War Department estimated that it would take 50,000 additional men to fight a full-fledged war against Mexico. But the war had already begun. Mexican General Mariano Arista gave orders to attack any

⁴⁵Sangamo Journal, Springfield, September 4, 1845, p. 2.

⁴⁶United States Congress, H.E.D. 60, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 90.

⁴⁷Nevins, Polk, pp. 79-80; Smith, War With Mexico, I, pp. 70-74.

⁴⁸Sangamo Journal, Springfield, February 12, 1846, p. 2; Illinois State Register, Springfield, March 27, 1846, p. 2.

Americans crossing the Rio Grande above Matamoros (near present Brownsville, Texas). And on April 25, a United States patrol was attacked by Mexican cavalry on the so-called United States side of the Rio Grande. American casualties were 63 soldiers killed, wounded or captured. Taylor's message that "hostilities may now be considered commenced" did not reach Polk until May 9. Polk meanwhile had prepared a war message to be presented to his cabinet on the 12th but the urgency of Taylor's request that it was "of the greatest importance" to raise volunteers caused Polk to send the declaration of war to Congress early.⁴⁹

Americans had by then fought the Mexicans at Palo Alto and at Reseca de la Palma. The United States Army, numbering barely 2,300, held the field against some 6,000 Mexicans in both battles gaining a "decisive victory" in each. The United States lost between 43 and 48 men killed and almost 200 wounded in the two encounters. American forces had tasted early victories in the hostilities.⁵⁰

On May 10, Edward Baker of Illinois called on Polk to inform him that the military affairs committee of the House had unanimously agreed to support a \$10,000,000 war appropriation and a twelve-month call for volunteers. On May 11, the House approved the war bill with

⁴⁹Sangamo Journal, Springfield, April 9, 1846, p. 2; David Lavender, Climax at Buena Vista (New York: Lippincott Co., 1966), p. 59; Henry, Story of the Mexican War, p. 400; Smith, War With Mexico, I, pp. 149-50; Henry, Story of the Mexican War, p. 400; Van Deusen, The Age of Jackson, pp. 222-23; United States Congress, H.E.D. 60, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 140-41. Again, this matter of boundaries is a controversial matter. See Chapter II, footnote 28.

⁵⁰Van Deusen, The Age of Jackson, pp. 222-23; Henry, Story of the Mexican War, p. 400; United States Congress, Senate Executive Document 42, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 140-41 (hereafter cited as S.E.D.); Ibid., 378, 29th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 57; Ibid., 388, 29th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 2-8. Two official reports were issued for the battles. The number of casualties disagree.

the above provisions and it passed the Senate on May 12. Officially the United States was at war with Mexico.⁵¹ On May 28, 1846, the declaration of war was printed in the Sangamo Journal.⁵² President Polk stated in his public war message that, as Texas was now annexed to the United States, it was America's duty to protect her new state.⁵³

The Democrats wanted a vigorous prosecution of the war. The Democratic press in Illinois stated that the United States should also annex California and let her "Blossom like a rose. We should redeem the continent." Further, the Democrats praised the war effort and specified that the war was not one of conquest because America would have the right to govern Mexico as a conquered territory.⁵⁴

The Sangamo Journal, and other Whig papers in Illinois, objected to the Register's line that our government was "not in a war of conquest." The Whigs remarked that the Democrats denied the truth about the war. The Journal asserted that by the Register's own admission "Our government is surely engaged in a war of conquest, . . . and we do not see the point of its argument when it admits the whole charge."⁵⁵ Most Whigs, however, supported the war after the official declaration; and on May 30 a war rally in Springfield drew many listeners to hear Lincoln and Governor Ford appeal for volunteers.⁵⁶

⁵¹Nevins, Polk, p. 85; Lavender, Climax, pp. 80-81.

⁵²Sangamo Journal, Springfield, May 28, 1846, p. 1.

⁵³United States Congress, H.E.D. 60, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 4-9.

⁵⁴Illinois State Register, Springfield, July 10, 1846, p. 2; Pease, The Frontier State, p. 402; Illinois State Register, February, 1847, passim.

⁵⁵Sangamo Journal, Springfield, August 6, 1846, p. 2.

⁵⁶Riddle, Congressman Abraham Lincoln, p. 11.

But the Whigs soon began to change their minds about the war. They said Polk was a southern man who wanted to appease the slave interests. The Illinois Whigs also accused the President of not living up to his "re-occupy Oregon and re-annex Texas" pledge and asked why he had compromised on one but was willing to fight for the other.⁵⁷

The Democratic press in Illinois accused the Whigs of being unpatriotic for their opposition to the Texas annexation and the war. Democrats wanted a speedy end to the war and they believed the Whigs were impeding the prosecution of the war by calling it one of aggression. The accusation of disloyalty was countered by Whig leaders, who said that the Whigs did not provoke Mexico, did not aid her (the return of Santa Anna to Mexico was accomplished by the administration with government funds), and had not started the war. The Whigs found their debating point in appealing for a quick end regardless of who got America into the war. They supported money bills, as Baker had, and stated that the United States could not withdraw from Mexico without losing honor. The Whigs quickly pointed out that "This course is dictated by enlightened and disinterested patriotism, and does not, however, by any means identify the Whigs with the measures and policy of the party now in power." This was a clear statement of their position for the remainder of the war.⁵⁸

But the Whigs could not make up their minds about the military effort. They certainly realized that a full share of the war burden would be on their shoulders but that the credit for victory would go

⁵⁷Sangamo Journal, Springfield, June 18, July 2, 1846, p. 2.

⁵⁸Pease, The Frontier State, p. 337; Illinois State Register, Springfield, July 31, 1846, p. 2; Alton Telegraph, June 6, August 1, 1846, p. 2.

to the Democrats.⁵⁹ Anything Polk did, therefore, was criticized by the Whigs, including the "blunder" of sending Taylor to the Rio Grande. The Whig premise was that Polk and the Democrats had known that annexation would bring war, and Whig leaders restated it at every opportunity.⁶⁰ They stated further that the Democrats were attempting to conclude the war for "prestige" purposes and that they must get a "cardinal honor" out of conquering a weak nation; it was the same as driving the Indians out of California and New Mexico. The Whigs called for a quick peace, new trade routes, and honest friendship with Mexico.⁶¹

There was other opposition to the Mexican War. Following the lead of New England abolitionists, the Whigs in Illinois lambasted the slavery expansionist overtones of the war.⁶² The Sangamo Journal concluded that:

The war with Mexico, with its long train of evils, is the smallest portion of the vast price which the nation is made to pay for Texas. By a skillfully adjusted policy to increase Southern means of warring against the North, it has secured a power in Congress which enables it to overturn the settled policy of the nation, and to distress more millions than it has thousands of voters. . . . Should new states be carved out of Mexico, the supremacy of the Slave system will be fixed absolute. The vast majority of the American people will be subjugated by the intrigues and boldness of a feeble minority of slave-holders.⁶³

⁵⁹Sangamo Journal, Springfield, September 17, 1846, p. 2; Illinois State Register, Springfield, February 12, 1847, p. 2.

⁶⁰Smith, War With Mexico, I, pp. 275-76.

⁶¹Pease, The Frontier State, pp. 403-04; Illinois State Register, Springfield, July 31, 1846, p. 21. The arguments used by both parties over the war are so closely related to those used at this writing in regard to Viet Nam that by only changing Mexico to Viet Nam in the editorials, one could not determine if it was written in 1970 or 1846; for instance, "to creditably get out of a war," etc.

⁶²Singletary, Climax, p. 23.

⁶³Sangamo Journal, Springfield, August 20, 1846, p. 3.

Meanwhile, the Illinois Democrats nominated Augustus French, who belonged to "no faction and was no hypocrite," for governor at their state convention. The Whig convention nominated Thomas Kilpatrick for governor and approved a platform favoring internal improvements, and opposed to a state bank and the war. The Democratic Register stated that since no one had ever heard of the Whig nominee there could be no comment on his qualifications.⁶⁴

The Whig campaign in Illinois had many national overtones. By and large, the party reasoned that if the war could be made to appear "odious," the administration would be in trouble with Congress and the voters. The Whigs in Illinois were able to elect two state senators and twenty representatives to the General Assembly in 1846; their principle campaign argument was that Congress and the administration were spending money to fight a sister Republic and were providing nothing for internal improvements.⁶⁵ When Polk vetoed the internal improvements bill after the election the Whig press gave him no mercy for the rest of the war.⁶⁶

Although Polk's political difficulties probably seemed bad to him, the situation he faced in building a military force to prosecute the war was even more of a problem. After the Seminole War the United States Army had been reduced to 7,800 men (one-fourth the size of the Mexican Army) spread thin in many small outposts. The entire army force consisted of eight regiments of infantry and four of artillery.

⁶⁴Illinois State Register, Springfield, March 13, 1846, p. 2; Ibid., June 19, 1846, p. 2; Ibid., July 3, 1846, p. 2; Sangamo Journal, Springfield, June 18, 1846, p. 2; Ibid., July 2, 1846, p. 2.

⁶⁵Alton Telegraph, August 14, 1846, p. 2.

⁶⁶Ibid., August 21, 1846, p. 2.

On May 13, 1846, Congress authorized the call of 50,000 volunteers with 20,000 to be raised at once from the Mississippi Valley.⁶⁷

Texas, Arkansas, Illinois, Missouri, Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, and Georgia, because they were close to the war, were the initial states chosen to provide troops. Polk did not think the army would need many volunteers but he agreed to call as many as his military men wanted to prevent an accusation from Whig General Winfield Scott that the army had inadequate forces.⁶⁸

The number of volunteers to be called from each state was to be based on population. The exact population of the Northeast in 1846 is difficult to assess. In 1850 the area from Maryland to Maine had a population of over 9,000,000 and it would supply some 27,000 volunteers. The Southwest and the Mississippi Valley would furnish 45,000, almost 40,000 of those from the strictly western states, and over 17,000 from the sparsely settled states of Illinois, Indiana and Kentucky. There is no doubt that the large numbers of volunteers reflect western support of the war. The East, with its larger population, should have been able to raise some 90,000, or the equivalent ten per cent that was raised elsewhere. But westerners apparently felt that they were fighting a war for their interests--principally, for protection of waterways and for internal improvements.⁶⁹

Polk asserted his constitutional power as commander-in-chief and injected himself into military policy-making. This precedent

⁶⁷Singletary, The Mexican War, p. 105; Lavender, Climax, pp. 49-51; Smith, War With Mexico, I, pp. 139-40; Henry, Story of the Mexican War, p. 65.

⁶⁸Nevins, Polk, pp. 3-99, passim.

⁶⁹Walter Millis, Arms and Men (New York: Putnam's, 1958, reprint), pp. 92-94, 322.

was later followed by Lincoln in the Civil War.⁷⁰ Polk and his Secretary of War, William Marcy, with the aid of Winfield Scott, used travel books and such maps as they had to develop a strategy for the war. It called for two overland routes of march, one toward Monterrey, Saltillo, San Luis de Potosi, and central Mexico, and the other west into New Mexico, Chihuahua, and California (see map, p. 56). The United States relied completely on offensive strategy in the war.⁷¹

Polk was faced with another major political problem as both ranking generals, Winfield Scott and Zachary Taylor, were Whigs. He foresaw the possibility that a successful Whig general would be a likely presidential candidate. Scott had already made his political presence known when in 1839 he received 62 votes for president in the Whig national convention. Taylor also was popular because of his victories at Reseca de la Palma and Palo Alto. On May 13, 1846, Polk issued a verbal order to Scott to assume command in Mexico and, at the same time, introduced a bill to appoint additional generals--a way to dilute Scott and Taylor's prominence.⁷² Illinois Whigs praised Taylor and wanted him as top field commander.⁷³

The Mexican Army also had problems. It was organized upon a class system in the European mold in which social standing and political influence determined rank. The army also lacked morale and professionalism, or an officer training institute equivalent to West Point. At one time the Mexican Army had about 20,000 enlisted men and over

⁷⁰Dodd, "The West and the War With Mexico," p. 162.

⁷¹Singletary, The Mexican War, pp. 4-5.

⁷²Nevins, Polk, p. 100; Lavender, Climax, pp. 81-82; Singletary, The Mexican War, pp. 105-08.

⁷³Alton Telegraph, May 30, 1846, p. 2.

24,000 officers. The country's financial crisis and the influence of the military was indicated in 1845 when the government's total net revenue was about \$12,000,000 and its total military budget was over \$21,000,000.⁷⁴

As had been noted, the war probably influenced the development of a two-party system in that it provided the Whigs in Illinois with an issue upon which to oppose the dominant Democratic party. Illinois' position on the Oregon and Texas issues was complicated. Most, but not all, Whigs opposed the war but for different reasons. Most, but not all, Democrats supported the government. John Wentworth was the most prominent Democrat in Illinois to bolt his party and speak against the war. Wentworth's position, however, was based on the older problem of internal improvements and the economic condition of Illinois. As with the Whigs, Wentworth and his following tied the economic questions of their state with the political issues involving the Texas annexation. The Illinois Whigs blamed the Democrats for getting the country into a war of American aggression and conquest. The Whigs also believed that the slave interests of the South had more to gain than any other group.

Both political parties had agreed that Manifest Destiny might necessitate war with Britain over Oregon. But the Whigs opposed a war for Texas. The Illinois Whigs were accused of traitorous conduct in hindering the prosecution of the war. But many Whigs did support money bills and volunteer conscription. Although somewhat overlapping and inconsistent in their views, both Illinois parties basically reflected the division of their national leadership on both Oregon

⁷⁴Smith, The War With Mexico, I, pp. 54-55; Singletary, The Mexican War, p. 2.

and Texas even though their reasoning may have been different from the national leadership. When war was declared the people of Illinois were at least presented with two different views of the war. A reliable gauge of Illinois support of the conflict was the number of volunteers willing to fight the war.

CHAPTER III

ILLINOIS PREPARES FOR WAR

Although the United States was no doubt justified in annexing Texas, which had been independent for nine years, Illinois had mixed emotions concerning the Mexican War.¹ Most people agreed that the United States had reason to be outraged at Mexico for its restrictions on trade in the Mississippi Valley. Illinois certainly wished unobstruction of the Mississippi River as a trade route. Furthermore, Mexico had repudiated treaties and was forcing the United States to maintain a large army for the defense of the Rio Grande and the Gulf of Mexico. Above all, Mexico was preparing for what appeared to be an invasion of the United States.²

Before the war Whig Congressman Edward Baker of Illinois had suggested to the Congress that the United States absorb Mexico.³ He spoke against Polk's annexation but later gave support "for the honor of our country in our foreign relation." After the declaration of war he told Polk that he would support both the military appropriation bill and the call for volunteers. Baker also wanted an appointment

¹Robert S. Henry, The Story of the Mexican War (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1950), pp. 32-33.

²Justin H. Smith, The War With Mexico, (2 vols; New York: Macmillan, 1919), I, pp. 124-27, 136.

³Congressional Globe, Washington, D. C., 29th Congress, 1st Session, p. 279.

in the volunteers.⁴ United States Senator Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois also favored authorizing supplies for the prosecution of the war and argued in the Senate that the war was justified because of the many outrages committed against the United States by Mexico.⁵ John Hardin of Illinois supported any move to strengthen the government's position against aggression.⁶

Polk still attempted to get what he wanted without fighting. He offered Santa Anna safe passage back into Mexico hoping that the move would influence Santa Anna to sell the southwest and California to the United States for \$30,000,000. Polk felt that if he did not keep the purchase agreement the United States would be out nothing as the return of Santa Anna would cause political turmoil in Mexico.⁷ Polk, however, underestimated Santa Anna's military capability.⁸ It would not be long before his mistake would be obvious.

Meanwhile, General Zachary Taylor, who had mistrusted volunteers since the Black Hawk War in 1832, now found himself in a position that might demand trust of volunteers. In August, 1845, when war became apparent, he complained to General Winfield Scott that reinforcements were needed; but, he hurried to add, he did not need volunteers.

⁴Harry C. Blair and Rebecca Tarshis, The Life of Colonel Edward Baker (Portland, Ore.: Oregon Historical Society, 1960), p. 30.

⁵Frank E. Stevens, "Life of Stephen A. Douglas," Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, XVI (1923-1924), p. 392.

⁶Donald W. Riddle, Congressman Abraham Lincoln (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1957), p. 56.

⁷David Lavender, Climax at Buena Vista (New York: Lippincott, 1966), p. 84.

⁸Otis Singletary, The Mexican War (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1960), pp. 26-27.

Secretary of War William Marcy, nevertheless, authorized Taylor to call for volunteers from several states if he thought it necessary.⁹ But Taylor answered Marcy a month later that he could not "believe that it will become necessary, under any circumstances, to employ volunteers from the United States."¹⁰ Taylor, however, had not yet received intelligence reports on the size of the Mexican forces, or even of news of a Mexican invasion. On October 9, 1845, Taylor received regular army reinforcements, consisting of five companies of the Fifth Infantry, two of the Eighth, and one from the Seventh.¹¹ Six months later, on April 26, 1846, after the Mexican ambush of an American patrol on the north side of the Rio Grande, Taylor called on Texas and Louisiana for 5,000 volunteers.¹²

Until the arrival of the volunteers Taylor would have to get along with those troops he had. The Militia Law of 1792 (re-enacted 1795), the only statute prior to the May 13, 1846 law, enabled the President to call on the states for militia to serve for three months. The new law allowed militia to be called for twelve months service.¹³ The manpower situation was critical. Colonel Stephen Kearny was authorized to obtain 1,000 volunteers from Missouri for his campaign

⁹Lavender, Climax at Buena Vista, p. 212; United States Congress, H.E.D. 60, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 85, 102.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 106.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 109-11.

¹²Henry, Story of the Mexican War, p. 48.

¹³United States Congress, H.E.D. 60, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 318.

to California. Marcy urged that additional volunteers be called.¹⁴ Polk, meanwhile, disgusted with General Scott and his verbal attacks on the administration,¹⁵ appointed Taylor as over-all commander in the field.¹⁶

Taylor, an able soldier whose career dated back to 1808 when he was commissioned a first lieutenant in the Seventh Infantry, was known to be competent in organizing volunteer units. He was assisted by the able General John E. Wool, who was also praised as possessing the ability of taking "rag tag" outfits from different states and training them to be effective fighting units.¹⁷ Wool had been commissioned a captain during the War of 1812 and rose to a full brigadier in 1841. He had been stationed along the Mississippi River at several different posts prior to the Mexican conflict.¹⁸

On May 15, 1846, Scott sent a memorandum to his subordinates stating that an army of 20,000 volunteers and regulars was to be raised. He requested boats for their transportation beyond the Rio Grande. Arms, ammunition, and camp equipage for the army would be sent to the rendezvous points. He did not order rifles or artillery

¹⁴Stephen Watts Kearny, a veteran of the War of 1812, commanded the Army of the West in the Mexican War. He captured Santa Fe in 1846 and continued on to California to meet disagreements with Commodore Stockton and John C. Fremont over command and control of the coast. United States Congress, H.E.D. 60, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 242-43, 281-83, 311-14.

¹⁵Scott was quoted as saying Polk was "an enemy more to be feared than Santa Anna." Lavender, Climax, pp. 85-87; United States Congress, H.E.D. 60, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 1274-75.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷General Taylor and his Staff, pp. 12, 16, 134.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 125-36; Erwin Urch, "The Public Career of William B. Warren," Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, XXL (1928-1929), p. 99.

to be given to any body of volunteers other than those commanded by Stephen Kearny at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Hard bread and bacon was the army diet. Quincy or Alton, Illinois, would be the main rendezvous areas for the "considerable bodies of volunteers." Wool, who had been called to Washington at the beginning of the war, was appointed the volunteer commander and ordered west in May to organize the volunteers from Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Mississippi. He would accomplish this task in six weeks. The first four Illinois regiments would be among these volunteers.¹⁹

On May 29, 1846, General Orders No. 15, Headquarters of the Army, Adjutant General's Office, were issued.

1. Instructions have already been given to Brigadier General Wool . . . for the early inspection and muster into the services of the United States of the quotas of twelve-month volunteers who have been called . . . from Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky, Illinois, Tennessee, and Mississippi.
2. As soon as inspected and mustered . . . the battalions of volunteer horse and foot will, without delay, be put en route, as follows:

5. Excepting one regiment of the Kentucky and one of the Illinois quotas of foot, to which Brigadier General Wool is charged with giving different routes, . . . all the other regiments and battalions of volunteer infantry or rifle, called for from the said states, will be embarked at the nearest navigable points to their respective State rendezvous, and thence by water . . . to Point Isabel or Brazos Santiago, Texas, where, like the troops ordered to San Antonio de Bexar, the whole will come under the orders of the general officer in the chief command.
6. The chiefs of the general staff . . . will . . . each . . . charge himself . . . with supplying the said volunteers (horse and foot) the necessary arms, accouterments, ammunition, knapsacks, canteens, (for water) camp equipage, subsistence, medicines and

¹⁹Urch, "The Public Career of William B. Warren," p. 99; General Taylor and His Staff, pp. 12, 16, 134; United States Congress, H.E.D. 60, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 546.

means of transportation.²⁰

In Illinois it was the county sheriff's responsibility to see that each county's militia answered the call. The militia was raised proportionately to the total population, and when there were not enough men on the militia rolls to meet the quota, "volunteers" were asked to enlist until the quota was reached. The force that would report was a combination of regular militia and volunteer militia, the latter being the men who volunteered to supplement the permanently organized militia. When mustered out of service the regular men would return to their old militia companies and civilian status. The last two regiments (which were enrolled in 1847) had no connection with the regular Illinois militia. The latter were comprised of volunteers.²¹

The commanders soon found that raising militia units was not nearly as difficult as training and supplying them. Illinois had on hand for "arming and equipping the whole body of the militia" (of an estimated 120,219 men) a total of 922 muskets and no accouterments. And these arms had been furnished in February of 1842.²² (That number of militia is misleading since, according to the state constitution, every male in Illinois between the ages of 18 and 45 was technically a member of the militia). Most of their necessary equipment would have to be provided to volunteer units either at the rendezvous or

²⁰United States Congress, H.E.D. 60, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 452-53.

²¹United States Congress, H.E.D. 8, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 625; Walter Wood, "The 130th Infantry, Illinois National Guard," Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, XXX (April, 1937-1939), pp. 193-237, passim. Wood traces the history of the Illinois militia to the present National Guard. For convenience, the term "volunteer" will be used throughout to designate Illinois militia or volunteer forces.

²²United States Congress, H.E.D. 8, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 689.

on the way to Mexico.

On June 8, Taylor received his official notice that 20,000 volunteers would arrive in San Antonio by June 12. The first move inland would be by the Tennessee and Arkansas cavalry and one regiment of infantry from both Kentucky and Illinois under the command of General Wool.²³ The date of June 12 was optimistic, for the Illinois troops would not even get their call until May 25. The official requisition on Illinois was for 3,000 men; three regiments of ten companies each with 100 men per company.²⁴

On May 25, 1846, Governor Thomas Ford, as Commander-in-Chief, issued the general order calling out the militia. He expressed his disillusionment about the organizational unpreparedness of the militia. Ford called for three regiments of volunteer infantry for the duration of the war, although the government call had been for only twelve months. He asked the state militia generals for assistance in gathering the forces for "the militia . . . has long been in a state of disorganization," and some officers might not call their companies. Ford also asked the "sheriff, of each county--immediately on being notified of this call," to help to convene the regiments. Each company, according to Ford's order, would consist of one captain, one first lieutenant, one second lieutenant, four sergeants, four corporals, two musicians, and 80 men, which was a total of only 93 men instead of the 100 required

²³United States Congress, H.E.D. 60, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 324-26.

²⁴United States Congress, H.E.D. 62, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., Adjutant General's Report for the Mexican War, pp. 28-72; Report of the Illinois Adjutant General's Office, 1846-1847, Illinois State Archives (hereafter cited as I.S.A.); I.S.A., Mexican War Muster Rolls.

by the federal order. Each regiment would have a staff of one colonel, one lieutenant colonel, one major, one adjutant (who would be a lieutenant of a company but "not in addition to" the regular complement) one sergeant major, one quartermaster sergeant, two principal musicians, and ten companies. As soon as the companies were organized, they were to elect their officers and forward a list of their names and numbers to the governor's office by the hand of a commissioned officer, whose age was within the constitutional limits of 18 to 45.²⁵

In spite of the disorganized state of the regular militia, the governor's call was met with enthusiasm and hopes of glory. Rousing speeches and appeals were made by local supporters. Approximately 4,000 men responded within ten days. There was much jealousy and rivalry among the companies,²⁶ for Governor Ford had said in his call that he would be compelled to accept the companies in order of first come, first accepted. The eloquent appeal issued by the Alton Telegraph to the men of Illinois and Madison County is typical of the fervor of the time.

A requisition has been made by the General Government, upon the Governor of your State, for three thousand volunteers, to aid in vindicating the honor and rights of your country, and to repel from your soil a foreign foe. We believe it necessary only to announce the fact, to insure the immediate enrollment of the number required at our hands. Every Western State have [sic] thus far promptly obeyed the calls. . . . Let it not be said that Illinois has displayed less Patriotism than any of her sister states. Rally, then Freeman of Illinois, in your respective counties, and proceed to this City, designated by the Governor. . . . Let no time be lost; for your

²⁵Sangamo Journal, Springfield, May 28, 1846, p. 2.

²⁶Clarence Alvord, general editor, The Centennial History of Illinois, Vol II: The Frontier State, 1818-1848, by Theodore Pease (5 vols.; Springfield, Illinois: Centennial Commission, 1918), p. 400; Alton Telegraph, May 30, 1846, p. 3.

service may be required.

Citizens of "Old Madison!" to you also we appeal, to evince your patriotism and love of country by at once organizing several companies, ready to march at a moment's notice.²⁷

For a Whig paper, the Telegraph was heartily in favor of wide participation in, and swift prosecution of, the war in Mexico.

In Jacksonville, John Hardin issued his call for the Militia Third Brigade; but he feared the public belief in stories about Mexico's violent extremes of weather and of yellow fever, for his stirring appeal for enlistments was accompanied by a statement that the "government will not require the services of many volunteers on the low lands of the Gulf coast during the hot weather." The table lands of Mexico, he continued, are as healthful as any land.²⁸

Official knowledge in Washington, D.C., and Congress about the disorganization of the militia led to public statements by the press, widely reprinted, that Illinois would never raise her quota. But this charge worked to Illinois' advantage.²⁹ Governor Ford and Abraham Lincoln made addresses in Springfield on the necessity of "prompt and united action of her citizen soldiery" to volunteer.³⁰ Ford issued General Order Number 2 on June 5 calling for all militia non-commissioned officers to uniform themselves in "blue jeans or cassinet jacket or roundabout, standing collar and brass buttons."

²⁷Alton Telegraph, May 30, 1846, p. 2.

²⁸Sangamo Journal, Springfield, May 28, 1846, p. 2.

²⁹Ibid., June 4, 1846, p. 2; Everts Green and Charles Thompson, editors, The Governors Letter Books, 1840-1853 (Springfield, Illinois, The State Historical Library, 1911), introduction by Charles Thompson, "A Study of the Administration of Governor Thomas Ford," p. cv.

³⁰Sangamo Journal, Springfield, June 4, 1846, p. 2.

He added that the state could not pay their cost of transportation to the rendezvous point.³¹

On June 5, the State Register published extracts of Scott's Infantry Tactics for the volunteers. This was probably the first exposure the volunteers had had to a military publication. The Register also editorialized that everyone eligible should enlist. The total pay for 8,000 men would be about \$320,000. This was not only a time to "show patriotism and fight but also to draw a large share of that public money which has heretofore, as we all admit, been so stintily dealt out to us."³² The war was thus seen as a partial solution to the depressed economic system in Illinois.

News reaching Illinois in June was a dark cloud over the military ambitions of the volunteers. Many of them had enlisted early to gain fame that would eventually enable them to reap a political harvest. They, of course, had wanted to be elected to regimental positions. When the United States House of Representatives passed a bill requiring that future regimental and brigade appointments be approved by the President,³³ many of the once eager soldiers wanted no further part of the war. Others wanted to go home even before they arrived at the rendezvous. A company from McLean County enlisted for six months. When they were informed--incorrectly--that the enlistments were for nine months, one-third of them returned home. Although they were on foot and horseback, the added length of enlistment convinced some of them that the walk back was better than the

³¹Illinois State Register, Springfield, June 4, 1846, p. 2.

³²Sangamo Journal, Springfield, May 29, 1846, p. 2; Ibid., June 5, 1846, p. 2.

³³Ibid., June 18, 1846, p. 2.

march ahead. The rest continued on to Alton.³⁴

The initial three regiments from Illinois were raised in different sections of the state. The First Regiment under the command of John Hardin came from the counties surrounding Springfield. The Second Regiment, which William Bissell would command, enlisted from the southwestern counties; and the Third, under Ferris Foreman, came substantially from southeastern Illinois.³⁵ More men than the three regiments would accommodate arrived in Alton, and Congressman Baker decided to ask for a fourth Illinois regiment, with himself in command. Baker, in Washington for the session of Congress, received assurances from the President that an additional regiment would be allowed; and he arrived in Springfield in six days, armed with a commission as a colonel of volunteers. On June 5 the Secretary of War instructed Governor Ford to raise another regiment. Baker was to enroll the unit and provide for its equipment, transportation, and food. The newspapers stated that the new regiment would be ready to march from Springfield to Mexico in two weeks.³⁶

Spirits were high. Eloquent and effective speeches in Springfield were greeted by the "shouts of the multitude." Prior to Baker's arrival some companies had even obtained uniforms and made a "fine appearance." Newspapers were full of news about the volunteers; and the three initial regiments, and the new fourth one, were expected to be at capacity

³⁴Blair and Tarshis, Life of Edward Baker, p. 31.

³⁵Pease, The Frontier State, p. 401; Wood, "The 130th Infantry," p. 231.

³⁶Milton H. Shutes, "Colonel E. D. Baker," reprint from the California Historical Quarterly (December, 1938), pp. 4-5; Sangamo Journal, Springfield, June 11, 1846, p. 2.

within a week. Barely two weeks after the first call, Illinois was about to fill her required quota. Even Lieutenant Governor John Moore enlisted as a first lieutenant in the McLean County company.³⁷

Meanwhile, Polk was having difficulty holding his Congress together. Stephen A. Douglas wanted to leave Washington and volunteer; but after due consideration, and a talk with Polk, he decided his duty was to remain in Congress.³⁸ Several other congressmen wanted to fill staff positions in the Illinois volunteers. Senator James Semple wanted a command for himself, and when Polk refused to give him one-- saying that it would be "most corrupting in its tendency"--Semple opposed the military appropriations bills for the war. Polk termed Semple's move typical of the "course of spoiled children."³⁹

Some Illinois volunteers gathered in Springfield whereas others proceeded directly to Alton. Most of the Fourth Regiment gathered first in Springfield, and other volunteer companies stopped in the capital on the way to the rendezvous.⁴⁰ When the commanding general at St. Louis announced that he had no authority, as yet, to muster in volunteers in Alton, all volunteers were directed to remain in their home counties until they received additional orders.⁴¹

The State Register, meanwhile, voiced opposition to the possible

³⁷Sangamo Journal, Springfield, June 11, 1846, p. 2.

³⁸Ibid., August 6, 1846, p. 1.

³⁹Allen Nevins, editor, Polk, The Diary of a President, 1845-1849 (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1952), pp. 116-17.

⁴⁰There is no record of the routes taken by the militia on their way to Alton or intermediate stops. The Sangamo Journal, on June 25, gave the impression that all the regiments were in Springfield but other papers and reports indicate that most proceeded directly to Alton.

⁴¹Alton Telegraph, June 6, 1846, p. 3.

separation of Illinois troops. This would be a recurring sore point with the press. Another difficulty encountered at this stage was the assignment of volunteer surgeons. A bill was introduced to authorize the President to appoint surgeons for the regiments. The volunteers were again losing some of their hoped-for control over appointments. The Sangamo Journal stated that Illinois had qualified surgeons and the volunteers, leaving the comforts of home, "should have the privilege of selecting their own physicians and surgeons."⁴²

On June 13 the Alton Telegraph released the story that volunteers could proceed to Alton for mustering into the service. In Springfield Baker's regiment was almost at full complement. Tents for the regiment were being made and equipment would arrive at the end of the week. Five companies, one each from the counties of McLean, Macon, and DeWitt, and two from Sangamon, had already enrolled under Baker.⁴³ Many of the volunteers had deserted on the way to Springfield, however, and the McLean County troops, unhappy about the enlistment period, departed from the camp the next morning leaving chicken feathers strewn about. One man told Baker he could not stand the regimentation and returned home.⁴⁴

The Fourth Regiment was full on June 25 with ten companies including two from Sangamon, one each from Macon, McLean, Menard, DeWitt, Logan, Tazewell, Edgar, and Cook Counties. The regiment was in camp south of Springfield and the men were "learning their duties."

⁴²Sangamo Journal, Springfield, June 25, 1846, p. 1.

⁴³Alton Telegraph, June 13, 1846, p. 2; Sangamo Journal, Springfield, June 11, 1846, p. 2.

⁴⁴Ezra Prince, "The Fourth Illinois in the War with Mexico," Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society, No. 11 (1906), pp. 174-75.

"Tents, blankets, etc., to render the soldiers comfortable, are being obtained--as are arms, and their accompaniments [sic], to render them efficient soldiers."⁴⁵ Many of the companies left amid celebrations; the Coles County company, for instance, was treated to refreshments and a dinner before leaving on their seven-day hike to Alton.⁴⁶

On June 25, the Sangamo Journal reported that all the Illinois regiments were at capacity, with 30 companies from 27 counties. Most of them were at Alton awaiting the Fourth Regiment from Springfield.⁴⁷ On June 27, Baker and Hardin led the remaining troops out of Springfield. Hardin, riding a white horse, and Baker on a black one, led the men past the band of fifes and kettle and bass drums on their way to join the other Illinois volunteers at Alton.⁴⁸

Colonel James Shields, of the Illinois militia, received a commission as a brigadier general from President Polk on July 1, 1846,⁴⁹ and was told to lead the Illinois Brigade and muster into service all the volunteers at Alton.⁵⁰ General John Wool who had been ordered west to command the volunteer brigades was expected in Alton the week of

⁴⁵Sangamo Journal, Springfield, June 25, 1846, p. 2.

⁴⁶William Bishop, A Journal of the 12 Months Campaign of General James Shields Brigade in Mexico (St. Louis: Cathcart, Prescott and Co., 1847), Compiled by Captain Bishop, Company D, Third Regiment, Illinois Volunteers, from the notes by Lieutenants J. J. Adams and H. C. Dunbar, pp. 3-4.

⁴⁷Sangamo Journal, Springfield, June 25, 1846, p. 2.

⁴⁸Shutes, "Colonel E. D. Baker," pp. 4-5; Gaius Paddock, "Brief Record of the Mexican War," Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, XXIII (1920-1921), pp. 45-47.

⁴⁹William H. Condon, Life of Major General James Shields (Chicago: Blakely Printing Co., 1900), p. 55.

⁵⁰Illinois State Register, Springfield, June 19, 1846, p. 2.

June 27 to take the volunteers to San Antonio.⁵¹

Meanwhile, bitter controversies were developing in the encampment at Alton. Many of the companies arriving there were being sent home.⁵² Companies from Clark, Morgan, and Vermilion Counties, among others, were not accepted into service. The Sangamo Journal stated that although only the first thirty companies could be accepted, the governor had called directly for companies from Vermilion and Morgan Counties. The volunteers had come to Alton at much expense and effort only to be told to go home. The editor quizzed the governor, asking if he accepted only those companies signed by his "agents." All the counties whose companies were turned back had been under the impression that their units had been called and accepted. Bond County men had even purchased their own uniforms. The matter of spoils and patronage entered the argument, and the disgusted counties passed resolutions condemning the governor.⁵³

The fault was primarily that of militia disorganization and lack of systematic procedures. Governor Ford had found it necessary to travel about the state procuring money and supplies for the volunteers; and he had given his secretary authority to accept full companies into the Illinois regiments. Ford, having no communications with his secretary in Springfield, also was accepting volunteer companies at various county seats--hence the confusion over the units that had

⁵¹Alton Telegraph, June 27, 1846, p. 2.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Ibid., July 4, 1846, p. 2; Sangamo Journal, Springfield, June 25, 1846, p. 2; Ibid., July 2, July 9, 1846, p. 2.

actually been accepted and their order of appearance.⁵⁴ Most of the men who had arrived in Alton were well fed and adequately housed and busied themselves electioneering for officers.⁵⁵

The governor had completed all arrangements for the rendezvous about the time the Springfield contingent left for Alton. Meanwhile, the "Alton Guards" was the first unit mustered into federal service. Ford and Shields both addressed the unit, with great fanfare, and the Alton paper commended Illinois' quickness in raising the necessary troops without any expense whatsoever to the state.⁵⁶ For the next several days the volunteers drilled from morning to night to keep busy. Some were displeased, however, and one disaffected man was allowed to leave unmolested.⁵⁷

The weather was hot in Alton during July, with the mercury climbing to 97° on the 4th and remaining between 94° and 100° for a week.⁵⁸ Volunteers were still arriving, and the tempers flared. On July 4, the Wayne County company arrived, followed by men from Morgan, Union, Schulyer, Perry, Hamilton, Montgomery, Shelby, Coles, Jo Daviess, Gallatin, and Pulaski Counties. Organization of the regiments would commence shortly, and tempers would be as hot as the

⁵⁴Thompson, "Ford's Administration," p. cvii; Sangamo Journal, Springfield, July 9, 1846, p. 2.

⁵⁵Otto Engelmann, translator, "The Second Illinois in the Mexican War, The Mexican War Letters of Adolph Engelmann," Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, XXVI (April, 1933-Jan. 1934), pp. 359-62. The original letters, written in German, are in IHL. Engelmann was a German speaking recruit in the Second Illinois Regiment.

⁵⁶Alton Telegraph, June 29, 1846, p. 2; Ibid., June 20, 1846, p. 2.

⁵⁷Prince, "Fourth Illinois," p. 175; Alton Telegraph, June 27, 1846, p. 2.

⁵⁸Ibid., July 18, 1846, p. 2.

weather.⁵⁹

On June 30, the First Regiment was organized and mustered into federal service with Hardin as colonel and William Weatherford lieutenant colonel. William H. L. Wallace and Benjamin Prentiss were adjutants; and William Warren was appointed major to complete the staff.⁶⁰ W. H. L. Wallace (no relation to Lew Wallace although both attained Civil War fame) surprised his friends with his interest in the war. One friend wrote, marveling at his participation:

I see you at Alton just doffing, with ineffable contempt,
your . . . skins, donning your Lieutenant's glittering
tinsel . . . quarrelsome as a weasel, valorous as a
wasp . . . Will! that same veritable Will! who used to
carry such a gentle hand . . . now by pale moon beam,
neath some friendly shade, practicing the art of war.

The writer continued that one should not glory in war, since the "Mexicans are men, and can be profited by the kindly hand of fellowship more than by the cold steel of vengeance."⁶¹

On June 30 the Second Regiment also elected officers: William H. Bissell, colonel; James Morrison, lieutenant colonel; Xerxes F. Trail, major; and August Whiteside, adjutant. The regiment was mustered into service on July 7.⁶² The Third Regiment, mustered on July 8, elected Ferris Foreman, colonel; W. W. Wiley, lieutenant colonel; S. D. Marshall, major; and W. B. Stapp as adjutant.⁶³

⁵⁹Alton Telegraph, July 4, 1846, p. 2.

⁶⁰Muster Rolls, Mexican War, I.S.A.; Alton Telegraph, July 4, 1846, p. 2.

⁶¹Wallace-Dickey papers, IHL, letter, July 4, 1846.

⁶²Muster Rolls, Mexican War, I.S.A.; Alton Telegraph, July 11, 1846, p. 2.

⁶³Muster Rolls, Mexican War, I.S.A.; Alton Telegraph, July 11, 1846, p. 2; Bishop, 12 Months Campaign, p. 4.

The Fourth Regiment arrived in Alton on July 3⁶⁴ already organized. Baker, with his commission from Polk, was regimental commander; John Moore (Illinois' lieutenant governor) had been elected lieutenant colonel; Thomas Harris was the major; and William Fondey was appointed adjutant.⁶⁵

Illinois' dissatisfaction over the President's appointments of volunteer officers began to grow. Part of the grumbling was aimed at Baker, who had received his colonelcy directly from Polk, but most of it was aimed at the brigade commander, James Shields, who had received a brigadiership from the President. The volunteers asked how many more would desert their posts in Washington to come home when there were men already mustered who were competent to fill the positions? They stated that if "the power of patronage of the Government, both civil and military, is to be amalgamated in the person of the President . . . in time of peace as well as of war, we are in fact a despotism though professing to be a Republican government."⁶⁶

The volunteers signed and sent a formal protest to the President against appointing officers on the recommendations of congressmen. Shields' appointment was mentioned as appearing to be a blanket condemnation of the volunteers then in service. The protestors said that Illinois troops would rather be under an officer of the United States Army.⁶⁷ The Illinois commanders, at least, were bipartisan as Bissell and Foreman were Democrats, and Hardin and Baker were Whigs. The Alton Telegraph noted, however, that Bissell was extremely moderate

⁶⁴Alton Telegraph, July 4, 1846, p. 2.

⁶⁵Muster Rolls, Mexican War, I.S.A.

⁶⁶Alton Telegraph, July 11, 1846, p. 2.

⁶⁷Sangamo Journal, Springfield, July 16, 1846, p. 2.

and even labeled him a Whig at one time.⁶⁸

Illinois' large foreign population was well represented. The Ottawa Irish Volunteers from La Salle County and a company of German immigrants under Julius Raith were among the first to volunteer. The Irish company quarreled on the way to Alton and had to be disbanded. Many of them continued on to Alton and attached themselves to other regiments.⁶⁹

More controversy surfaced as the days passed, while the temperature continued to rise. Rivalry between the First and Fourth Illinois over which unit would be outfitted first almost resulted in a duel between Baker and Hardin.⁷⁰ It was unusual to have two Whigs arguing with each other. A question of seniority then arose between the two. Baker claimed to be the senior officer from Illinois. Hardin protested to the governor that Baker, who claimed to have been elected on June 6, had not been elected by a full company. Baker responded that he had received his commission on June 6, with the authority to raise the Fourth Regiment, therefore he had seniority over Hardin. A three-man court of inquiry, which included Governor Ford, was assembled to hear the case. On July 2, the court ruled that since the Fourth Regiment had not been authorized until after the original call for Illinois troops, Hardin had seniority.⁷¹

While the governor was working to cool tempers and quiet the

⁶⁸Alton Telegraph, June 11, 1846, p. 2.

⁶⁹Pease, The Frontier State, p. 400; Sangamo Journal, Springfield, July 2, 1846, p. 2.

⁷⁰Blair and Tarshis, Life of Edward Baker, p. 33.

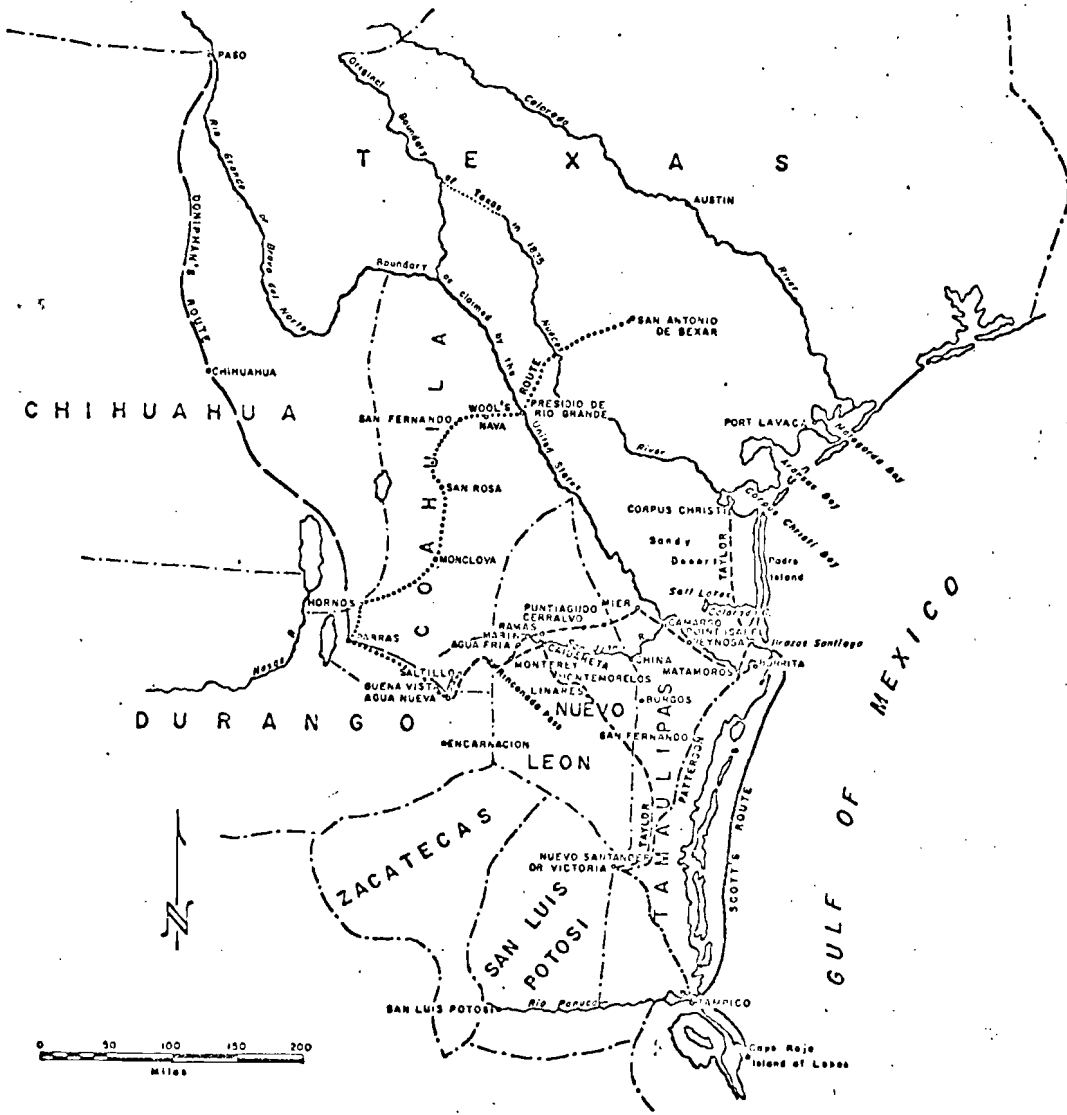
⁷¹Alton Telegraph, July 4, 1846, p. 2; Ibid., July 11, 1846, p. 2; Sangamo Journal, Springfield, July 16, 1846, p. 2.

disappointed militia units, the Sangamo Journal reopened an old controversy with the charge that Governor Ford was so concerned with getting the troops off to "revel in the halls," that he had completely neglected the Mormon situation and the war in Hancock County. The implication was that the governor should not worry so much about international affairs but should pay more attention to the home front.⁷²

In about six weeks Illinois had organized her militia and moved it to the rendezvous at Alton. This was no little task. Political squabbles had been put aside, and Illinois was, in some semblance of order, prepared to go to war.

⁷²Sangamo Journal, Springfield, July 16, 1846, p. 2.

MAP OF NORTHERN MEXICO



George Winston Smith and Charles Judah, Chronicles of the Gringos (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1968), p. 59.

CHAPTER IV

ORGANIZATION OF THE ILLINOIS VOLUNTEERS

O, War! Thou dreadful monster!
Not content with plunging sword
And bayonet to the heart of men,
thou dragest him into foreign lands,
Where his unacclimated constitution
sinks,
And he falls an easy prey to death!¹

wrote a soldier in the Fourth Illinois. Concern about his fellow men dying from disease aroused his doubts about the necessity of war. Evidently not quite as concerned, the two war-time governors of Illinois failed to make any mention of the war in their official letter books.² For that matter, the Illinois State Register, the Democratic organ and spokesman for the administration and the party in Illinois, carried little war news in 1846.³

Records were inaccurate and incomplete and not one of the virtues of a volunteer army. Many names appear twice on the same muster roll. Some men were transferred, and their names were not taken from the roster; others rose from the ranks to command positions without having their names deleted from company rolls and transferred to the correct report. Morning reports for the Illinois volunteers are practically

¹Harvey Neville, typed copy in the IHL, "Mexican War Diary." Neville was a soldier in the Fourth Illinois Regiment.

²Governors Letter Books, I.S.A., vols. I and II, 1844-1846.

³Illinois State Register, January-December, 1846, passim.

nonexistent, except for a few from the battlefields of Buena Vista and Cerro Gordo. The only type of muster roll that is available for all units is the muster out roll turned in at the time of discharge.⁴ The total number of men from Illinois who served in the Mexican War includes two additional regiments (the Fifth and Sixth) and five independent companies raised under a second call for volunteers issued in April of 1847. At the time the two new regiments were inducted, the first four had been discharged. These later units are officially termed the First and Second Illinois Regiments for the war.⁵

The United States Adjutant General's report for April, 1848, listed Illinois' six regiments and one independent company and was based on "the last returns" (which included no return after June, 1847, for the Fifth and no return after December, 1847, for the Sixth). The total number of men and officers was given as 5,973. This report, however, evidently did not include four independent companies which were raised after the discharge of the first four regiments. Dunlap's company was the only independent reported on the list. The total enrollment of the four other independent companies is 358, making a total of 6,331 Illinois men who served in the Mexican War--if one assumes that the independent company totals were not hidden somewhere in the Adjutant's report. Again, this number is based on muster out

⁴Isaac Elliott, editor, Records of the Black Hawk and Mexican War (Springfield: Adjutant General, 1882).

⁵Muster Rolls, Mexican War, I.S.A.; United States Congress, H.E.D. 62, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 38-72, passim; Clarence Alvord, general editor, The Centennial History of Illinois Vol II: The Frontier State, 1818-1848, by Theodore Pease (5 vols; Springfield, Illinois: Centennial Commission, 1918), p. 401, states four independent companies reported but there were actually five according to the muster out rolls.

rolls and on partial returns of the Fifth and Sixth Regiments. The same report lists the total men mustered out in Illinois at 4,592, but that figure does not include all the independent companies.⁶

The muster out rolls that are available, not using the Adjutant General's report, indicate a further discrepancy. According to the actual rolls, 5,366 men volunteered for the six regiments and 494 men were in the independent companies making a final total of 5,860 or a difference of 450 fewer than the Adjutant reported. The 5,860 is close enough to the Adjutant General's figure that it would appear the most accurate count is somewhere between the two. When the 345 enlistments from Illinois into the Fourth and Sixteenth United States Infantry of the Regular Army are added, the grand total comes to 6,205--near the 6,331 initial figure including all the independent companies. Thus, the total of the Illinois volunteers, plus Regular Army enlistees from Illinois, and all the independent companies' members who saw any period of service in the Mexican War is approximately 6,000 men and officers.⁷

It is practically impossible to determine the total male population of Illinois in 1846 because of inaccurate census records. In 1842 the militia was estimated at about 120,000, which should have included all of the able-bodied males in the state between ages 18 and 45.

⁶United States Congress, H.E.D. 62, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 38-43; Muster Rolls, I.S.A., National Archives, Washington, D. C., and Arlington, Virginia. The copies of the muster out rolls in the I.S.A. have been compared to the originals in Washington. The only errors are misspellings and other minor discrepancies.

⁷United States Congress, H.E.D. 62, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 38-43, 65-67, passim, charts of enlistments; Elliott, Records of the Mexican War, lists for the six Illinois Regiments and independent companies; Muster Rolls, I.S.A., Mexican War.

The muster rolls indicate that most volunteers, including officers, were between ages 18 and 28. If one-half of the militia fell into that grouping, or some 60,000 in 1842, then ten per cent of the total available men served in the Mexican War. But considering the total number of militia in 1846 as the 1842 total of 120,000, then only some five per cent of the total population between ages 18 and 45 served. In either case, the total is impressive.

Louisiana furnished 5,849 men for 12 months with an aggregate total of 7,041, but that figure includes only two regiments for the duration and two for 12 months; the remainder had been called for three months. Missouri enlisted 6,733, many of them for the Army of the West, with Texas reporting 7,313, including the early three-months call. Tennessee supplied 3,700 men; Kentucky about 3,700; Ohio 5,500; Indiana 4,400--all of them for different terms of enlistments. Illinois' 6,000 men were all enrolled for at least 12 months, and two regiments were enrolled for the duration of the war. Texas, Louisiana, and Missouri supplied more men, according to the United States Adjutant General, but these three states furnished a large proportion of their enlistments for three to six months. Illinois, therefore, sent as many men to Mexico for twelve months (June 1846-June 1847) or the duration as any other state--if not more.⁸

The total national number of volunteers enrolled for three, six, or 12 months or the duration, including infantry, horse, and artillery, was 54,388. Illinois supplied about one-ninth of that

⁸United States Congress, H.E.D. 62, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 65-67, cumulative listings of volunteer enlistments; Elliott, Records of the Mexican War, compilation of all the volunteers listed in the charts for each regiment of Illinois volunteers, compared with the rolls in the National Archives, Military Records Branch, Arlington, Virginia.

total. Illinois was only one of 26 states that was called upon for volunteers. In the initial call for 12-month volunteers under the act of May 16, 1846, the total called from all states was 18,724. Of that number 12,943 were infantry. Illinois supplied only infantry, but it provided one-fourth of the 12,943 and that was counting only from the first four Illinois regiments. The aggregate total of infantry for the war, including all enlistments and calls, was 20,360, of which Illinois again furnished one-fourth of the total.

Under the initial call to Illinois 3,200 men volunteered according to the muster out rolls or 3,558 men as recorded by the Adjutant General. In either case over 3,000 men from Illinois were prepared to move down the Mississippi in July, 1846.⁹

According to the muster rolls, the First Regiment, commanded by Hardin, reported a 20 member staff and a total of 759 men and officers. The Second Regiment, including Bissell and his staff of 11, totaled 725. The Third totaled 922, with Ferris Foreman and a staff of 19. The Fourth, under Baker and a 13 man staff, reported 856. These were the numbers and commanders of the four Illinois regiments that would go to Mexico.¹⁰

The Illinois men about to leave for war were besmirched in the Chicago Journal. The paper stated they were all low class individuals and the entire mass would not be missed. The State Register countered vehemently with the defense that the volunteers were from all walks

⁹Muster Rolls, I.S.A., compilation of the totals of each company; United States Congress, H.E.D. 62, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 38-72, passim.

¹⁰Elliott, Records of the Mexican War, compilation; Muster Rolls, Mexican War, I.S.A.; Illinois Mexican War Muster Rolls, National Archives, microfilm.

of life and they were going to war from Illinois and deserved respect.¹¹

The outfitting of the volunteers was expensive. On July 30, 1846, the Paymaster General of the Army asked Secretary of War Marcy to inform the volunteers that advances made to them by their states would be deducted on the muster rolls. Also, Marcy was asked to inform the governors to report the expenses incurred in getting the volunteers to rendezvous areas and to deduct them from the rolls. He feared, however, "that this will be too late for the first muster" and so deductions should be made at the first pay call to the volunteers.¹²

Every state called upon for troops--Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee, Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, Arkansas, and Texas--met or exceeded their quotas of volunteers. The Regular Army was also increased and then Polk and his advisors began to develop their strategy for the war. The President wanted to seize northern Mexico and use that territory as a lever for negotiations. To do this, General Wool would proceed to San Antonio, General Scott would move to the central section of Mexico, and Kearny, with 2,000 men, would move overland to take Santa Fe.¹³

In August, while the Illinois volunteers were moving down the Mississippi and into Mexico, the Whigs in Congress were contriving to prevent certain appropriations for the war effort. Polk had asked for money to be used in persuading the Paredes government in Mexico to come to terms over the southwest. The Whigs said such negotiations

¹¹Illinois State Register, Springfield, October 16, 1846, p. 2.

¹²United States Congress, H.E.D. 60, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 466.

¹³David Lavender, Climax at Buena Vista (New York: Lippincott Co., 1966), pp. 82-83.

must be the responsibility of the President and not Congress. The measure passed the Senate 39 to 19 with some Whig support. The bill reached the House where the Wilmot Proviso was attached. The Proviso stated that no slavery could exist in any territory acquired from Mexico. When the bill with the Proviso included returned to the Senate it was defeated by Democratic filibuster.¹⁴

Meanwhile, the volunteer army heading for Mexico had difficulties, one of which was the lack of trained officers from the Military Academy. The Illinois Whigs charged that "locofocoism, in its blind rage against every institution calculated to elevate the character of man, and qualify him for usefulness, had been for years laboring to destroy" the Academy.¹⁵ Wool tried to impress the men with the necessity for discipline but Foreman, commander of the Third Illinois, threatened to march his men home if strict discipline was continued. When Hardin arrived at New Orleans, Wool threatened to take away his commission if he did not obey orders and discipline the Illinois troops. Hardin replied, "By God sir, you can't do it." Wool possessed "too much contempt for volunteers" and, according to an Illinois newspaper, should be relieved.¹⁶ When going to war there has to be an element of cooperation between the military and naval forces and unity between the volunteer and the regular soldier and sailor. With the exception of the landing at Vera Cruz, none of this "togetherness" would be obtained. George Gordon Meade wrote that "we should be grateful that we are at

¹⁴Allen Nevins, editor, Polk, The Diary of a President, 1845-1849 (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1952), pp. 36-38.

¹⁵Alton Telegraph, October 23, 1846, p. 2.

¹⁶Belleville Advocate, September 23, 1847, p. 2.

war with Mexico as were it any other power, our gross follies would have been punished severely."¹⁷ Meade continued that the volunteers were one "costly mass of ignorance, confusion and insubordination."¹⁸ One West Pointer wrote that Gideon Pillow, a civilian appointed as a brigade commander, was "an ass." This type of conflict created animosity that would prove impossible to completely overcome. British military men stated that our army was completely unfit to do anything but fight Indians. Spain propogandized that the Mexican Army was superior in discipline and training.¹⁹

The volunteers were not model soldiers. Many of the volunteers lived in filth, raped women, and brawled among themselves in towns where they were quartered. Taylor had to muster out a Texas regiment to preserve peace at Corpus Christi, Texas; and two volunteer officers nearly fought a duel after their arrival at Camargo.²⁰

The volunteers also suffered. Disease-ridden and resentful of discipline which they did not understand and that was never explained to them, they became dejected. Remarkably, the men who suffered the most were the hearty and hard working farm boys. "Inactivity and want of excitement were the principal cause [of general suffering]--the greater portion of our volunteers came from their farms, and were

¹⁷George Meade, of Civil War fame, was an 1835 graduate of West Point. He commanded the Army of the Potomac during the Civil War from June, 1863, to the end of the war. Otis Singletary, The Mexican War (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1960), p. 130.

¹⁸Justin H. Smith, The War With Mexico (2 Vols.; New York: Macmillan, 1919), I, p. 208.

¹⁹Singletary, The Mexican War, pp. 105-06.

²⁰Ibid., pp. 144-45.

accustomed to daily labor." The farm boys grew restless; they needed activity.²¹

In the United States the supply problems were critical. Between June 30, 1846, and June 30, 1847, the following were issued to supply the regulars as well as the some 50,000 volunteers expected and arriving in Mexico.

21	18 and 24 pound siege cannon
12	8 inch siege howitzers
50	8 and 10 inch siege mortars
28	6 and 12 pound bronze cannon
14	12 and 24 pound bronze cannon
14	12 pound mountain howitzers
42	caissons
18	forges
19	battery wagons
919	harness sets
21,400	rounds of siege artillery ammunition
30,373	" " " " field artillery ammunition
67,045	8 and 10 inch mortar ammunition
1,000	cannon balls
414,500	pounds powder
20,000	cannon primers
1,328	war rockets
24,530	muskets
3,720	rifles with appendages
2,290	carbines
1,110	pistols
22,090	sets of infantry accouterments
12,951,000	cartridges for small arms
417,000	flints
1,022,400	percussion caps for small arms. ²²

The vital figures in the above list are the numbers of small arms issued. Just over 30,000 small arms were sent to Mexico to arm both the regular army and the nearly 50,000 volunteers.

Weaponry was not in much better military condition than the men. Most of the rifles available were the 1833 and 1841 models, the first

²¹Singletary, The Mexican War, pp. 144-45; William Bishop, A Journal of the 12 Months Campaign of General James Shields Brigade in Mexico (St. Louis: Cathcart, Prescott and Co., 1847), p. 10.

²²United States Congress, H.E.D. 8, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 685.

being a breech-loading carbine, and the latter a rifle. The rifle could be fired about three times per minute. Army artillery consisted mostly of six-pound and twelve-pound solid shot muzzle-loading field pieces from the War of 1812. The Mexican Army, fortunately, was no better off with the old "Brown Bess" of the War of 1812 and artillery similar to that of the United States. The improvisations by United States artillerymen in methods of using old weapons, such as Braxton Bragg and his "flying artillery" (or highly mobile), would make our arms seem superior.²³

Taylor knew that the campaign would present extreme logistical difficulties and he complained about the lack of transportation. He had not foreseen the need for light-draught boats for river use as had John Sagers, the captain of engineers who was assigned the responsibility of arranging transportation. Sagers had tried to convince Taylor to order more boats.²⁴ Horses and wagons were also scarce. But in July, the assistant quartermaster in St. Louis reported that he had located horses in Illinois and Missouri which were 20 per cent cheaper than elsewhere. This fresh supply of horses along with the purchase of 260 wagons would help make up the crucial shortage.²⁵ Taylor was expected to attack Camargo (see map, p. 56) in July but he stated that "6,000 men cannot be maintained by bread alone"; the resources of the country could not support that many men especially if they went 1,000 miles into Mexico City.²⁶

²³Lavender, Climax, p. 219.

²⁴United States Congress, H.E.D. 60, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 551-52.

²⁵Ibid., pp. 705-06, 721.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 329-32.

Orders from the War Department indicated that three Illinois regiments would be sent to either Brazos Santiago or Port Isabel, Texas (see map, p. 56) and the fourth to the "frontiers." The Sangamo Journal again took issue with separating Illinois forces and saw the move as an attempt to foist a general upon the Illinois troops without their consent.²⁷ Colonel Hardin wrote to a friend on July 8 that his regiment was destined for Matagordo Bay, San Antonio, and Chihuahua (see map, p. 56) under General Wool. Hardin's assumption was correct as part of the plan was to capture Chihuahua at an early date. He also thought that the Fourth Illinois would have the same destination but in this he was mistaken.²⁸

On July 16, Wool issued orders calling for the Second Illinois Regiment to disembark for New Orleans via Port Isabel, Texas, followed by the Third Illinois the next day. The First Regiment was to proceed to Port La Vaca, Texas, and then to San Antonio. When Wool arrived in Alton, however, he changed the plans so that the Second left on the 18th and the First on the 19th, both for La Vaca, from which place they were to proceed by way of San Antonio to Chihuahua (see map, p. 56). Those two regiments were a part of General Shields' brigade under Wool. The Fourth Regiment was already at Jefferson Barracks, Missouri, having been shipped there on the steamships "LaClede" and "Luella" on the 4th of July. They would join Taylor in a "few days." By July 16, regardless of the company orders, part of the First Regiment was also in Jefferson Barracks.²⁹

²⁷Sangamo Journal, Springfield, June 18, 1846, p. 2.

²⁸Ibid., July 16, 1846, p. 2.

²⁹Ibid., Alton Telegraph, July 11, 1846, p. 2; Ibid., July 18, 1846, p. 3.

Bissell and the Second Illinois left Alton on the afternoon of July 17, with seven companies on the steamboat "Convoy." On July 18 part of the First Regiment left on board the "Missouri." The rest followed on the next day. Foreman and the Third Regiment departed on the 22nd in the "Glencoe" and "John Aull." Baker and the Fourth remained at Jefferson Barracks for a few days.³⁰ The troops that left Alton were as fine a body of men as ever mustered into the service, according to the Alton Telegraph.

Their conduct during their stay here had been honorable to them as citizen soldiers. Most of them were inexperienced when they arrived but they had improved greatly. They went off in high spirits, singing patriotic songs and with colors flying . . . saluted by discharges from a piece of ordnance and the cheers of the assembled crowd.³¹

Baker and the Fourth left Jefferson Barracks shortly after the other troops passed; they were sighted on the steamer "Sultan" traveling past Cairo, Illinois, on July 25. The "Convoy" and the "Missouri" (with the companies of the First and Second on board) reached New Orleans on July 23 after a trip of five days. Wool had reached Cairo and boarded the "Convoy" with the First and Second and immediately began his training and discipline procedures. The trip was not uneventful. A man from the Fourth fell overboard and was drowned. The Third Regiment suffered greatly from dysentery, diarrhea, and overcrowding, and lost one man by desertion in addition to several deaths from disease.³²

³⁰Bishop, A Twelve Months Volunteer, p. 4; Alton Telegraph, July 25, 1846, p. 2.

³¹Ibid., July 25, 1846, p. 2.

³²Bishop, A Twelve Months Volunteer, p. 4; Alton Telegraph, August 7, 1846, p. 2; Sangamo Journal, Springfield, August 13, 1846, p. 2.

Withstanding lack of food, disease and the crowded conditions aboard the steamers, the Illinois forces arrived at New Orleans in fairly good spirits. Wool, they said, looked more like a "preacher than a soldier." One of the men of the Fourth was asked if the boys were all well and he replied that "none of them were very sick, but they were all down at the mouth." They had not lost their sense of humor, and they enjoyed the fish and champagne served upon their arrival by a welcoming committee of New Orleans' citizens.³³

Taylor complained about the great scarcity of medical officers. To remedy the situation he had to hire physicians he deemed incompetent. The Illinois volunteers had complained of this problem earlier: they could not understand why doctors chosen by the Illinois troops were not allowed to accompany the men.³⁴

Although the medical problem was desperate, the volunteers' outlook should have improved when Scott informed Taylor and Wool that when and if vacancies occurred in the ranks of the volunteers through the rank of colonel, such vacancies could be filled by the usual method of election from the ranks. Taylor could not commission volunteer officers personally (which may have suited many of the volunteers), but he could discharge them from the service of the United States.³⁵

The United States government, meanwhile, felt that a federal system of government should be restored to northern Mexico to gain the confidence of the Mexican people. There would be a military advantage

³³Engelmann collection, manuscripts, diary. Sangamo Journal, Springfield, August 20, 1846, p. 2.

³⁴United States Congress, H.E.D. 60, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 414. See Chapter III for a discussion concerning the volunteer surgeons.

³⁵Ibid., p. 448.

in quieting the restless citizens in the area and possibly eliminating their participation in spy networks of the Mexican Army. The strategy involved Taylor's moving into Mexico on the lower Rio Grande via Matamoros and conquering Monterrey on the way (see map, p. 56). Kearny, meanwhile, would march into New Mexico, Arizona, and California, while Wool moved against the Mexican city of Chihuahua.

This would have been a well-devised plan if the military objective was only to occupy the northern part of Mexico, but since the strategy included seizing Mexico City, the plan was ill-advised. The three United States forces were too widely separated to coordinate their movements. The map (p. 56) confirms a march from San Antonio to Chihuahua was unnecessary if a move to Mexico City was to be undertaken (this mistake was later realized, and Chihuahua was abandoned as an objective). The division under Wool was simply too far out of contact with, and too far from, the supply lines.³⁶

The overall strategy called for all the forces to converge on Chihuahua while Taylor marched towards Saltillo (which protected the steep pass which provided a route through the Sierra Madre mountains). General Robert Patterson's division would be ordered south to Tampico to support Taylor's move. Once Monterrey was captured, this would present a front from Chihuahua in the north to Monterrey to Saltillo and was intended to defend the northern section of Mexico. General Scott would then invade at Vera Cruz and penetrate to Mexico City,

³⁶United States Congress, S.E.D., 31st Cong., 1st Sess., Adjutant General's report, p. 95; Smith, The War With Mexico, I, pp. 215, 226, 275.

turn north, and connect with the northern line (see map, p. 56).³⁷

To organize the assembled forces for the Mexican invasion was the next order of business for the military leadership. Wool had already been ordered to accept all the volunteers who arrived at San Antonio for the thrust against Chihuahua. His division would be known as the Division of the Center; Kearny, moving into the southwest United States territory, would be on his right; and the Second Division under General Patterson would move to Brazos Santiago, Texas. The First Division, under the command of General William Butler, would move south.

The First Division was made up of volunteers from Kentucky, Ohio, and Indiana. The Second Division was organized on July 20; its First Brigade, under the command of General James Shields of Illinois, was made up of the Third and Fourth Illinois and one regiment from Missouri. The Second and Third Brigades of the Second Division were commanded by Generals Gideon Pillow and John Quitman, respectively, and were made up of forces from Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, Arkansas, Indiana, and Ohio. Wool's Third, or Center Division, consisted primarily of the First and Second Illinois, one battalion from Texas, and a mounted regiment from Arkansas. This was the organization determined by President Polk in June of 1846.³⁸

³⁷A veteran of the War of 1812, Irish born Robert Patterson was a Democratic leader in his home state of Pennsylvania. Patterson was appointed from civilian life. Smith, The War With Mexico, I, pp. 226-28, 264; Lavender, Climax, pp. 123-36.

³⁸Brig. Gen. John A. Quitman was in charge of volunteers on July 1, 1846; he became a Bvt. Maj. Gen. after Monterrey and a Maj. Gen. on April 14, 1847. Pillow, Polk's former law partner, was appointed a Brig. Gen. of Volunteers by Polk in 1846. Pillow considered himself Polk's representative in Mexico. He served as a Brig. Gen. for the Confederacy during the Civil War. United States Congress, H.E.D. 60, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 99, 328, 458, 462.

CHAPTER V

THE ILLINOIS VOLUNTEERS

GO TO WAR

General Wool departed from Alton on July 17, 1846, and proceeded to La Vaca, Texas, to await his forces.¹ He arrived on August 2 and began planning his move to San Antonio 150 miles north by northwest from La Vaca.² Meanwhile, the Illinois volunteers of the First and Second Regiments were on their way to Mexico. The staff and most of the Second Regiment left New Orleans on the steamer "Telegraph" on July 26, but the ship sprang a leak six miles out at sea and had to return to New Orleans.³

George T. M. Davis, a volunteer formerly on the Alton Telegraph staff, wrote home on July 26 that the Third and Fourth Regiments had been ordered to join General Taylor on the Rio Grande via Brazos Santiago and Matamoros (see map, p. 56). Again, there was general dissatisfaction concerning the separation of Illinois forces. Davis

¹Frances Baylies, A Narrative of Major General Wool's Campaign in Mexico (Albany, N. Y.: Little and Co., 1851), pp. 9-10.

²General Taylor and His Staff: Containing Memoirs of Generals Taylor, Worth, Wool, Butler: Colonels May, Cross, Clay, Hardin, Yell, Hays and Others (Philadelphia: Grigg, Elliott & Co., 1848), Compiled from public documents. p. 135.

³Alton Telegraph, July 26, 1846, p. 3.

called the move a "gross injustice" and one contrary to all expectations.⁴

Colonel John Hardin reported in a letter to the St. Louis Republican that he had arrived in La Vaca (see map, p. 56) on July 28 with three companies of the First Illinois; the remainder was expected on the 29th. The Second Illinois was already in camp. He noted that the trip had been pleasant, the place was healthy, and that there was "excellent sunbathing." On August 6, General Wool appointed Hardin to command the brigaded First and Second (fruit of his insistence on seniority) en route to San Antonio. As soon as he could consolidate the regiments they would proceed to San Antonio where they expected to remain until about September. Hardin reported that the troops were anxious to move but that the weather was against them. Roads were flooded from excessive rains, water was boot-top deep, and most of the streams were impassable. There was no transportation for provisions and all supplies (except fresh beef) had to be taken with the men. The quartermaster had not received orders to make up a supply train from San Antonio to Chihuahua.⁵

In addition to the transportation confusion and apoplexy about the weather the men were troubled with the commander, William Bissell. One man in the Second wrote that:

The politicians who picked our Colonel for us have not thanks coming from us. He is lazy, careless, does not understand his duties or is afraid to undertake them, and on horse back he is a sight. All he is is a 'black eye' for Illinois. For political reasons they loaded Bissell off on us and we will have to put up with him.⁶

⁴Alton Telegraph, July 26, 1846, p. 3.

⁵Sangamo Journal, Springfield, August 20, 1846, p. 2; Alton Telegraph, August 28, 1846, p. 3.

⁶Otto Engelmann, translator, "The Second Illinois in the Mexican War, the Mexican War Letters of Adolph Engelmann," Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, XXVI (1933-1934), p. 366.

On August 11 the First and Second moved out for San Antonio.

Major William Warren of the First Illinois described the trip. The intense heat and deep mud caused 150 men to drop out by the time the regiments reached San Antonio. Another 400 men had the measles. It seemed that eight miles a day march was all the volunteers could endure. In Illinois the same men had been capable of marching 35 miles in the same time. Warren, however, was impressed with the beautiful architecture of San Antonio, and compared the Alamo with the Mormon Temple at Nauvoo.⁷

A whiskey ration was authorized and many men got drunk. They were locked up, later released, and then got drunk again. The heavy rains continued; and the heat and humidity were unbearable when the sun appeared.⁸ The men still had no transportation or tents and had to sleep on the ground in the open. There were 140 sick men in the First and Second Illinois Regiments alone. On August 24 they arrived at San Antonio and moved into nearby Camp Crockett on the 25th.⁹ The Illinois regiments, 622 regulars, and volunteer regiments from Arkansas and Kentucky made a total of 3,061 men in camp.¹⁰ Bissell, according to a diarist, gave wrong orders, would not admit his mistakes, and then placed the blame on his officers. Another soldier considered

⁷Sangamo Journal, Springfield, October 8, 1846, p. 3. Warren had served in the Mormon War in Illinois. He was a major in the First Illinois.

⁸Engelmann, "The Second Illinois," p. 368; Alton Telegraph, September 11, 1846, p. 2.

⁹Sangamo Journal, Springfield, September 17, 1846, p. 2; Alton Telegraph, October 9, 1846, p. 2; Harvey Neville, typed copy, IHL, "Mexican War Diary," p. 5.

¹⁰Baylies, Narrative . . . Wool, pp. 11-12; Sangamo Journal, Springfield, October 8, 1846, p. 2.

Major Warren as a better officer even than Hardin.¹¹

The heat was intense at San Antonio. Each regular received 1 1/4 pounds fresh meat, 3/4 pound salt meat, 18 ounces of flour, and one pound each of coffee, bread, beans, and rice. Soap and candles were issued every day. The bread they ate was half cooked and doughy because there was no oven to bake in. The officers could not draw rations but were paid twenty cents a day to buy what they needed at the commissary. Some prices were bacon 15 cents, beef 7 cents, coffee 13 cents, and sugar and rice ten cents per pound. The men started to build a bake oven, but Wool moved his parade ground to the exact spot chosen for the oven and ruined the venture. "The men really gave those staff officers the devil."¹²

The Fourth Illinois had also been preparing to move and did so on July 30. Their destination was Matamoros (see map, p. 56). One writer remarked that the camp to which they were headed had "pestiferous odors" which attracted myriads of flies. Reports from New Orleans stated that the Illinois group was the "best behaved and most orderly" troops to ship out of that city.¹³ On August 13 the Third and Fourth Illinois Regiments marched from New Orleans to the Rio Grande to board boats for Matamoros. When they arrived at Matamoros on August 15 they were ordered to proceed 500 miles up river to Camargo (see map, p. 56). A city with a normal population of about 5,000, Camargo would soon have nearly 15,000

¹¹Alfred Henderson, "A Morgan County Volunteer in the Mexican War," Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, XLI (1948), p. 383.

¹²Engelmann, "The Second Illinois," pp. 377-78.

¹³Illinois State Register, Springfield, August 28, 1846, p. 2; William Bishop, Journal of a Twelve Months Campaign of General James Shields Brigade in Mexico (St. Louis: Cathcart, Prescott and Co., 1847), p. 46; Alton Telegraph, September 4, 1846, p. 2.

men camped nearby.¹⁴

Taylor had arrived at Camargo on July 25 to plan his attack on Monterrey and await the volunteers who were detained because of a riot between two Georgia regiments. Guns, knives, and fists were used in the contest, which Colonel Baker and a company from his regiment tried to quell. Baker was seriously wounded in the neck and eight of his men were killed or wounded before the riot was stopped. Baker was returned to Matamoros for medical treatment and was unable to join his regiment for several weeks.¹⁵

Taylor was trying to maintain good relations with the Mexican civilians, although his undisciplined troops took advantage of the unsuspecting populace. He needed civilian cooperation to ensure security for his movements. Taylor wrote that he could probably end the war if 10,000 men could be supplied and transported to Saltillo and San Luis de Potosi (see map, p. 56).¹⁶

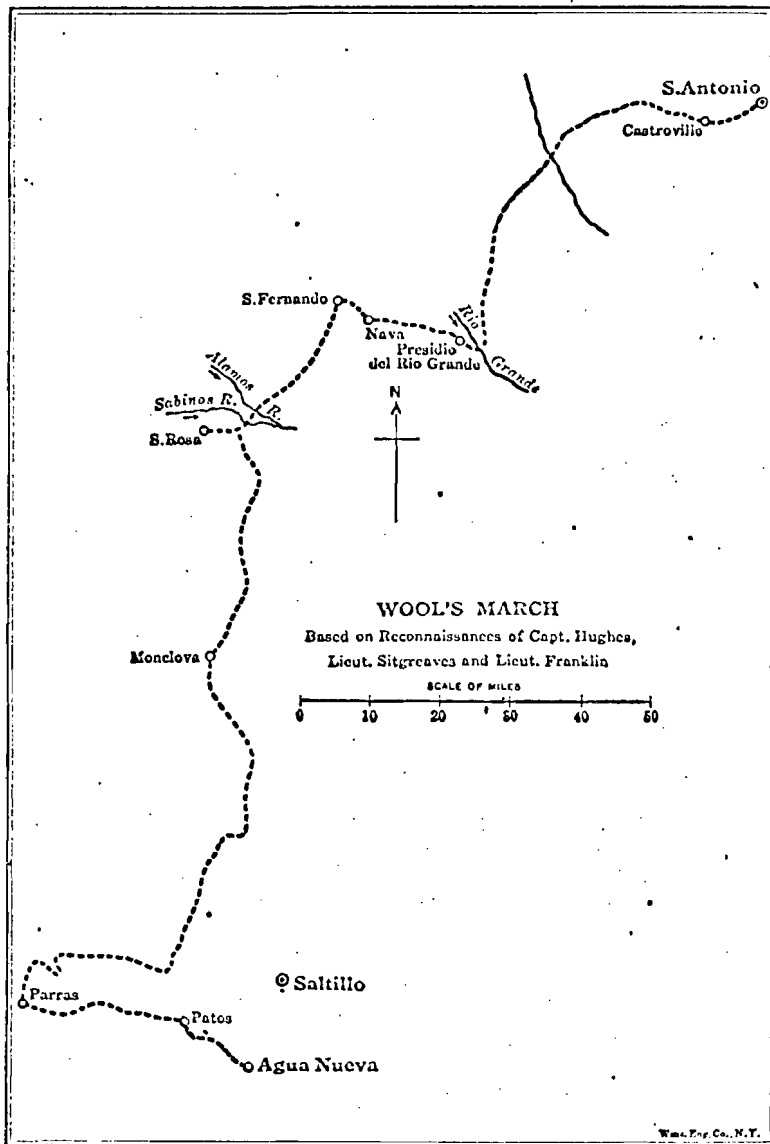
On September 13 George Davis reported that the Third and Fourth Illinois were camped fifteen miles out from Matamoros. Shields was ordered to report to Wool's column to take command of the brigade of Illinois volunteers. Three companies of the Fourth were dispatched to aid Taylor in his attack on Monterrey.¹⁷ The Illinois men reached

¹⁴Bishop, A Twelve Months Volunteer, pp. 5-6; Alton Telegraph, August 28, 1846, p. 3; United States Congress, H.E.D. 60, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 496-97; Justin H. Smith, The War With Mexico (2 vols.; New York: Lippincott Co., 1919), I, p. 211.

¹⁵Sangamo Journal, September 17, 1846, p. 3; Ibid., October 1, 1846, p. 2.

¹⁶United States Congress, H.E.D. 60, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 336-37.

¹⁷Alton Telegraph, October 23, 1846, p. 3; Bishop, A Twelve Months Volunteer, p. 8; United States Congress, H.E.D. 60, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 537.



Smith, War With Mexico, I, p. 271.

Monterrey on October 16, too late to participate in the fight.¹⁸

The use of volunteers in this encounter was similar to that for all future maneuvers. The volunteers were placed in the center of the line with regulars on each flank.¹⁹ This eliminated the possibility of the enemy's turning the undisciplined volunteers on the flanks.

As the Third and Fourth proceeded towards Camargo in 100° heat,²⁰ they received word that 5,000 of the enemy were near Monclova (see map, p. 77) across Wool's line of march. This, according to Davis, gave the First and Second a better chance of fighting. He stated that favoritism had given Shields' brigade the "assignment which would afford . . . an opportunity to distinguish themselves."²¹

On September 27 all but six companies of the Third and Fourth arrived at Camargo. The men could not drill because the dust was unbearable. "At times no provisions could be cooked, and we have seen the poor sick volunteer, lying in his tent buried in the dust to which he would . . . be forever consigned."²² General Patterson arrived at Camargo but the volunteers felt his "manners were not formed in the Western school" and that his "discipline was rather severe for volunteers."²³

¹⁸Ezra Prince, "The Fourth Illinois in the War With Mexico," Transactions of the Illinois Historical Society (Springfield: Illinois State Historical Library, 1906), p. 176.

¹⁹United States Congress, H.E.D. 60, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 506.

²⁰Bishop, A Twelve Months Volunteer, p. 9.

²¹Alton Telegraph, October 23, 1846, p. 3.

²²Bishop, A Twelve Months Volunteer, pp. 9-11; Alton Telegraph, November 6, 1846, p. 1.

²³Bishop, A Twelve Months Volunteer, p. 9.

Back at Camp Crockett where the First and Second Illinois were encamped, the men were distracted with saloons, faro games, and fights. Two surgeons fought a duel, with Bissell acting as a second for one surgeon. Court-martials were commonplace.²⁴ On September 17 two companies of the Second were designated as advance troops for the march to Chihuahua (see map, p. 56). The distance was so great and the knowledge of the country so limited, Taylor doubted that Wool could maintain the army in the area and issued no direct orders concerning the march.²⁵

There was much sickness in the Illinois camp and the surgeons were absent trying to locate medicine but on September 24 seven units prepared to leave as the advance corps. It was composed of the regular artillery, two troops of regular cavalry, Company A and I of the First Illinois and Company B and H of the Second. The units had 297 men.²⁶ On October 2 Hardin left camp for the Rio Grande with a total of 538 men and 36 officers. Approximately 900 men and officers had left Illinois with the regiment. The men on this march were in excellent condition and would be expected to march fifteen miles per day.²⁷ The line of march proceeded to the Median River, then to the Nueces, and finally to the Rio Grande near Presidio, Texas--a total distance

²⁴Engelmann, "The Second Illinois," pp. 383-85.

²⁵United States Congress, H.E.D. 60, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 426-28.

²⁶Alton Telegraph, October 30, 1846, pp. 2-3; Engelmann, "The Second Illinois," pp. 386-91; General Taylor and His Staff, pp. 139-41.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 142-43; Henderson, "A Morgan County Volunteer," p. 385.

of 164 miles (see map, p. 77).²⁸ On October 11, Wool received word that a large force of Mexicans were gathering near Monclova and ordered the Second Illinois, under the command of Bissell, to that city.²⁹

The First Illinois arrived at Presidio on October 13 and Wool held a champagne party for the officers. Despite Wool's overtures, the volunteers still regarded the regular officers as aristocratic and overbearing. Shields arrived in time for the gathering. His men were in a deplorable condition and would not be ready to march until they rested.³⁰

It was now evident to Taylor that the battles on the periphery had not influenced the Mexicans. Secretary of War Marcy stated that he had little knowledge of the conditions in Mexico and left the decision to Taylor as to whether he should advance. Taylor replied that he would need more troops for any advance since most of the volunteers were sick. Polk, meanwhile, decided that an attack on Mexico City via Vera Cruz should be included in the strategy (see map, p. 56).³¹ Taylor was unaware of this Mexico City plan, and on October 6 mustered out all the Texas volunteers to reduce the percentage of volunteers to regulars. He wanted to "be as strong as possible in regular troops."³²

When Wool learned that Mexican troops were near Monclova, he

²⁸United States Congress, S.E.D. 32, 31st Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 16-17.

²⁹General Taylor and His Staff, pp. 144-45.

³⁰Alton Telegraph, January 1, 1847, p. 2; Engelmann, "The Second Illinois," pp. 393-94.

³¹United States Congress, H.E.D. 60, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 351-57; Otis Singletary, The Mexican War (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1960), p. 71.

³²United States Congress, H.E.D. 60, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 430.

expected to receive orders to proceed to Monterrey. Although he received no definite instructions, Wool left Presidio on October 16 and marched for Monclova (see map, p. 77). The First Illinois arrived at Monclova on October 30, and the Second on November 6. The men were issued corn and hand mills to grind their own flour. The patriotic volunteers said "if their country could not supply them with flour they didn't care about wearing their feet out marching any more." It was reported that the quartermaster had sold the flour and issued corn instead. When Wool rode through the camp, the men "brayed like mules for they were fed mule feed."³⁴

Wool was uncertain about moving toward Chihuahua which was still some 500 miles away over treacherous mountains. The men hoped they would be transferred to Monterrey so they could serve under Taylor.³⁵ Wool had been out of contact with Taylor on the march but he decided on his own to keep to the road and proceed on to Parras to intersect the Saltillo-Chihuahua road (see maps, p. 56, p.77). Before he could move, he received instructions from Taylor to remain at Monclova for the time being.³⁶

On November 13, Taylor departed Monterrey and moved toward

³³Smith, The War With Mexico, I, p. 272; Alton Telegraph, November 27, 1846, p. 3.

³⁴Engelmann, "The Second Illinois," pp. 396-408; United States Congress, S.E.D. 32, 31st Cong., 1st Sess., p. 26.

³⁵Sangamo Journal, Springfield, December 17, 1846, p. 3.

³⁶David Lavender, Climax at Buena Vista (New York: Lippincott Co., 1966), pp. 103-21.

Saltillo.³⁷ A post at Saltillo would protect the direct route to San Luis de Potosi, where the main army of Santa Anna was supposed to be located (see map, p. 56). Wool, at Monclova, was not to advance toward Chihuahua because Taylor's advance toward Saltillo made Chihuahua less important. Wool convinced Taylor that occupation of Parras or Saltillo would strategically be more worthwhile. Taylor, therefore, consented to let Wool proceed to Parras (see map, p. 77)--something Wool had wanted to do earlier. Taylor left garrisons at Monterrey, Camargo, and arrived at Saltillo on November 16 with the forces that had been at Monterrey.³⁸

On November 24, Wool and his command, including the First and Second Illinois, moved out for Parras. The regiments had suffered greatly from disease. As the troops left Monclova the temperatures were unbearable. The mercury sank to 24° at night and climbed to 95° during the afternoon.³⁹ W. H. L. Wallace commented that Wool, whom he called "old and vain," had led his men some 400 miles out of the way to reach Parras and remained there 11 days.⁴¹ Wool drilled his men hard and issued strict orders to behave in town.⁴²

³⁷Robert S. Henry, Story of the Mexican War (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1950), chronology.

³⁸United States Congress, H.E.D. 8, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 46-54; Baylies, Wool . . . Narrative, pp. 18-19; Henry, Story of the Mexican War, p. 402.

³⁹United States Congress, S.E.D. 32, 31st Cong., 1st Sess., p. 28; Alton Telegraph, November 28, 1846, p. 2.

⁴⁰Wallace-Dickey manuscripts, IHL, November 6, 1846.

⁴¹United States Congress, S.E.D. 32, 31st Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 33-34; Henry, Story of the Mexican War, pp. 137-38, 402.

⁴²Lavender, Climax, p. 130.

When Wool requested more mules, the quartermaster turned him down with the excuse that Wool had "embarrassed himself with an unwieldy train of several hundred wagons among the mountains of Mexico."⁴³ The Illinois forces at Parras were disaffected. They complained that the personal liberty of the privates had been curtailed and that the administration of the Commissary Department had become even worse. The men in camp were eating only poor hardtack while the officers were receiving salt pork and fresh beef. "Wool, the 'big corporal' is so busy making mountains out of mole hills," one soldier wrote, "that he cannot see the things of real importance."⁴⁴

Despite the volunteers criticisms, Wool's march, a contemporary wrote, was "almost unexampled in the history of modern warfare."⁴⁵ There just was no purpose to much of it. He marched his men, many untrained, 700 miles from La Vaca to Parras, with a complete train of supplies. When he arrived at Parras, his men were in good enough condition to begin drilling immediately.

Meanwhile, the Third and Fourth Regiments were ordered to return to Matamoros, evidently because of Scott's plan to attack Tampico, and move on to Victoria (see map, p. 56). On November 25 these two regiments moved back down the Rio Grande.⁴⁶ The American line now occupied, or was projected for, positions from Parras to Saltillo to Monterrey; the area from Matamoros to Tampico was being occupied with garrison troops.

⁴³United States Congress, H.E.D. 60, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 567.

⁴⁴Engelmann, "The Second Illinois," pp. 408-17.

⁴⁵United States Congress, S.E.D. 32, 31st Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 33-34.

⁴⁶Sangamo Journal, Springfield, December 31, 1846, p. 3; Bishop, A Twelve Months Volunteer, pp. 16-17.

Only the Sierra Madre Mountains between Parras and Tampico broke the line. Taylor disagreed with Patterson, who had moved to Tampico, and ordered him to Victoria instead. Taylor would join him there.⁴⁷

The Fourth Illinois began its march back from Camargo to Matamoros on December 11 and the Third departed three days later. Both arrived at Victoria about January 4.⁴⁸ On December 12 David Twiggs' regulars and General Quitman's volunteers had moved south to Victoria along with the Third and Fourth. Taylor proceeded ahead of his men, and he received an alarm from General William Worth on December 15 that Mexicans were gathering near Agua Nueva and asked him to investigate. The column left at 4:30 P.M. on December 17 and after a march of 120 miles, camped at their destination on December 21. On December 20 one of Wool's scouts, Captain Robert E. Lee, informed him that there was no basis to the alarm. The march over very rough roads had been made in four days with 500 wagons and artillery.⁴⁹ Another inaccurate report about the location of the Mexican Army had caused a tortuous, fruitless march.

The Third and Fourth were now ordered to their original destination of Tampico, where they arrived on January 15, 1847 (see map, p. 56).⁵⁰ The First and Second Illinois, two Arkansas and Kentucky cavalry units,

⁴⁷Smith, The War With Mexico, I, p. 282; United States Congress, H.E.D. 60, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 379-83.

⁴⁸Prince, "The Fourth Illinois," p. 177; Bishop, A Twelve Months Volunteer, p. 11.

⁴⁹General William Worth had been the commander of Fort Brown, Texas at the beginning of the war. In service since 1813 he received his brigadiership in 1842 for service in Florida and after Monterrey was commissioned a brevet Major General in the United States Army. Twiggs was a veteran of the War of 1812. He served the Confederacy in the Civil War. Lavender, Climax, pp. 145-46; Baylies, Wool . . . Narrative, pp. 21-22; Wallace-Dickey manuscripts, IHL, December 23, 1846.

⁵⁰Prince, "The Fourth Illinois," p. 177.

two Indiana and one Kentucky and Mississippi infantry regiments were at Agua Nueva. Only the Mississippi men had been in battle. The only regulars in the encampment were two dragoon companies and three artillery batteries.⁵¹

Santa Anna was over 200 miles south at San Luis de Potosi (see map, p. 56) with nearly 30,000 men by October 8. General Worth had the nearest American force. W. H. L. Wallace reported that the First and Second Illinois were going to act against the Mexican command in conjunction with Taylor.⁵² Wool reached Saltillo on December 21 to reinforce Worth, and all Illinois regiments were in camp by January 9, 1847.⁵³ In a few weeks the Illinois troops would be encamped at Buena Vista.⁵⁴

The Illinois men in Mexico were hungry, ill-fed, and dying from disease while Congress seemed to remain undisturbed.

Where rolls the rushing Rio Grande
How peacefully they sleep!
They did not fall in bloody strife
Upon a well fought field.

.
But calm and fearless to the last
they sleep securely now.

Edward Baker was becoming the poet laureate of the Illinois troops. He wrote the above poem and read it into the Congressional Globe as part of his plea for supplies for the Mexican War.⁵⁵ Controversy surrounded Baker's return to the capital from Monterrey. Baker was

⁵¹Lavender, Climax, p. 167.

⁵²Wallace-Dickey manuscripts, IHL, December 8, 1846.

⁵³Henry, Story of the Mexican War, p. 402.

⁵⁴Wallace-Dickey manuscripts, IHL, June 9, 1847.

⁵⁵Congressional Globe, Washington, D. C., 29th Congress, 2nd Session, December 28, 1846, p. 92.

still a member of Congress although he was in uniform in Mexico. In Monterrey he received Special Orders No. 179, which "directed" him to Washington to arrange for clothing for his regiment. When General Patterson heard of Baker's orders, he said that he had no knowledge nor did he approve of them.⁵⁶

Baker was a Whig who believed that all Whigs should support the war whether they thought it was being properly prosecuted or not.⁵⁷

At the same time, the State Register was accusing the Whigs in Congress of blocking proper war measures.⁵⁸ Baker's visit to his fellow Whigs supported the Register's accusation.

Baker's plea for the Whigs to cease partisan "mutual criminations and recriminations" and to approve appropriations for the war brought results. He introduced a resolution directing the Secretary of War to provide needed supplies to volunteers even if the money was to be deducted from their pay. The resolution was adopted, although Democrat David Wentworth of Ohio said Baker should take action by fighting and not talking.⁵⁹ When the resolution was adopted, Baker resigned his seat to end criticism of his dual service. He planned to return to Springfield; but when he learned that Santa Anna might move against

⁵⁶United States Congress, H.E.D. 60, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 384, 543; Henry Blair and Rebecca Tarshis, The Life of Colonel Edward Baker (Portland, Ore.: Oregon Historical Society, 1960), pp. 36, 41.

⁵⁷Congressional Globe, 29th Congress, 2nd Session, December 28, 1846, p. 92.

⁵⁸Illinois State Register, Springfield, January 29, 1847, p. 3.

⁵⁹Milton H. Shutes, "Colonel E. D. Baker," reprint from the California Historical Quarterly, (December, 1938), p. 5; Blair and Tarshis, Life of Colonel Baker, p. 35.

Saltillo he decided to rejoin his regiment at Tampico.⁶⁰

In Illinois the Whig papers attributed the inept prosecution of the war to the lack of "vigor by the administration." The Whigs felt it was necessary to win a decisive victory over the Mexicans to obtain peace. If the President was not going to press the war the Whigs believed the question to consider was whether the United States should, or could, honorably withdraw from Mexico. The Democratic press felt that a withdrawal would make us the "laughing stock of the world" and continued to blame the "treasonous" Whigs for the whole mess.⁶¹

The Whig arguments, however, were winning national acceptance. In November, 1846, the Whigs gained control of the House of Representatives. In Illinois the Whigs stated they were "Whig and would die Whig" and named candidates for every office. But the Democrats still won the majority of state posts and the governorship. The governor, Augustus French, was an administration Democrat. The retiring governor, Thomas Ford, remarked on leaving office that he had called out the volunteers "to vindicate the rights and homes of the nation, and to chastise an insolent power which had insulted us."⁶² The party line was still very strong in Illinois.

Meanwhile, Wool's men were complaining about his unwillingness to fight. He had "shown more friendship to the Mexicans than he does to the

⁶⁰Sangamo Journal, Springfield, January 21, 1847, p. 2; Blair and Tarshis, Life of Edward Baker, p. 41.

⁶¹Sangamo Journal, Springfield, November 5, 1846, p. 2; Blair and Tarshis, Life of Edward Baker, p. 41; Alton Telegraph, November 6, 1846, p. 2; Ibid., January 6, 1847, p. 2; Illinois State Register, Springfield, October 30, 1846, p. 2.

⁶²Lavender, Climax, pp. 140-44; Alton Telegraph, April 9, 1847, p. 2; Ibid., December 10, 1846, p. 2.

Volunteers." The Illinois and Arkansas volunteers felt that if a fight occurred it would be in spite of Wool.⁶³ An Illinois volunteer said "Old Granny Wool" would not

allow us to impose on them [the Mexicans] in the least but on the contrary if any of our boys should take a piece of bread or lump of sugar from them without paying for it he will have them courtmartialled. . . . To tell you the truth, Colonels Hardin and Weatherford are but little more thought of than the General for they are perfect tyrants and Hardin especially.

Life could not have been too bad as the same man wrote that the volunteers all were very happy "playing ball, running foot races and horse races, jumping, wrestling and with all a goodly lot of drilling to do which altogether gives us pretty general employment."⁶⁴

Wool, at Agua Nueva because of the warning Worth had issued, was apprehensive about remaining there.⁶⁵ Although Taylor learned that Worth's alarm was false, he ordered Wool to stay at Agua Nueva to protect the San Luis de Potosi road.⁶⁶ Wool was unhappy because Agua Nueva was impossible to defend. On December 28 he rode to Saltillo to confer with Major General William O. Butler about a move.⁶⁷ Butler gave him no satisfaction. On his return to his camp Wool passed a quaint little hacienda called Buena Vista (see map, p. 77). He stated:

Saltillo . . . is not defensible being situated in a valley which is commanded on three sides. The true battlefield for its defense in front is just beyond

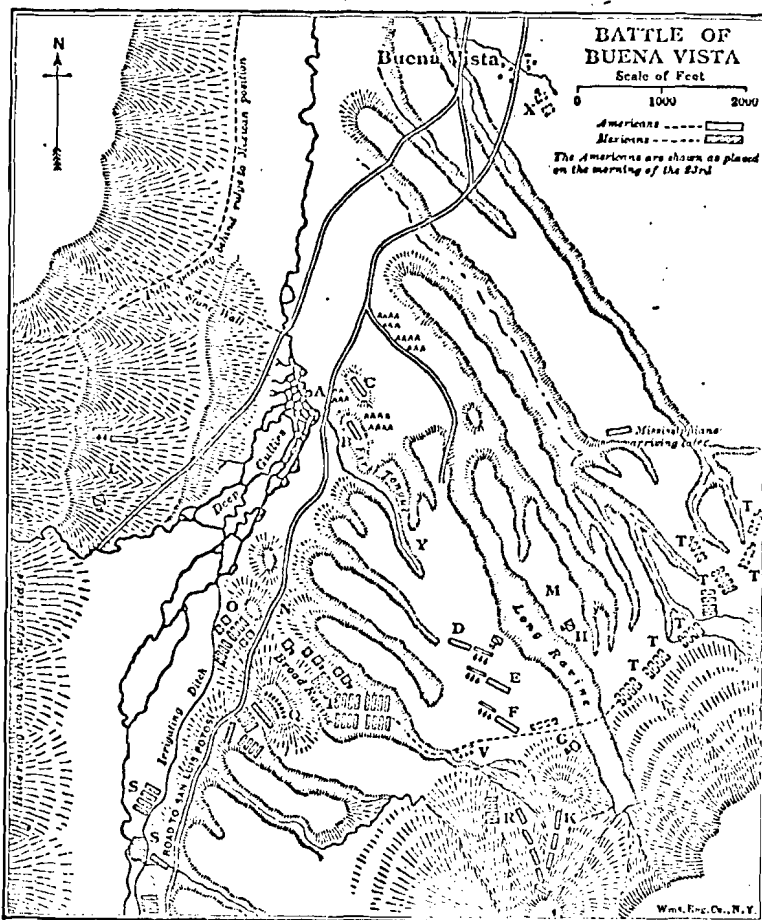
⁶³Henderson, "A Morgan County Volunteer," p. 392.

⁶⁴Ibid., pp. 394-95.

⁶⁵Lavender, Climax, p. 147.

⁶⁶Ibid., pp. 147-48; United States Congress, H.E.D. 60, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 515.

⁶⁷Regular Army Major General William Butler was a member of Taylor's staff.



- | | |
|---|---|
| A <i>Ta Anagustura, Washington's Battery and two companies 1st Illinois Vols.</i> | M <i>End Indiana partly rallied here after retreating</i> |
| B <i>Six companies 1st Illinois Regt.</i> | N <i>Heaviest Mexican cannon</i> |
| C <i>3rd Indiana Regt.</i> | O <i>Bianco's Column</i> |
| D <i>End Kentucky Regt. and Sherman's Battery (later position)</i> | P <i>Column to force American left</i> |
| E <i>End Illinois Regt. and 1st Section Bragg's Battery</i> | Q <i>Battery</i> |
| F <i>End Indiana Regt. and three pieces Washington's Battery</i> | R <i>Light Troops</i> |
| G <i>Kentucky Horse Regt. and one squadron End Dragoons</i> | S <i>Reserve</i> |
| H <i>Arkansas Horse Regt. and one squadron 1st Dragoons</i> | T <i>Columns turning American left</i> |
| K <i>Dismounted Cavalry, etc.</i> | V <i>Mexican Battery</i> |
| L <i>End Kentucky Regt., Bragg's Artillery and detachment of Horse (early position)</i> | X <i>Cavalry from head of Column T, attacking Buena Vista</i> |
| | Y <i>Taylor and Staff</i> |

The First Illinois was located at A and B. During the battle they moved in the area between A and Y and back to A. A section of the First was located at X.

The Second Illinois was located at E. They maneuvered in the area between D, V and H. The regiment returned to E at the end of the battle.

Map based on topographical engineers reports in Senate Executive Document 1, 30th Congress, 1st Session. From Smith, War With Mexico, p. 387.

the hacienda of San Juan de Buena Vista, about four miles beyond the town. On this approach is a narrow defile occupied by the road, on the right hand of which rises a high bluff hill, and on the left is a wide, deep and almost impassable arroyo. This pass may be completely swept by a converging fire of artillery, and can be turned only by light infantry on the one hand while on the other side of the ravine . . . no troops can pass without exposing their flank to the artillery within point blank range.⁶⁸

Wool was correct in part. The artillery exposure on any enemy would be tremendous but he overlooked the fact in reporting to his aides, Captain Robert E. Lee and Lieutenant Irvin McDowell,⁶⁹ that the narrow and deep arroyos would protect approaching Mexican cavalry from the view of the trench he proposed to dig.⁷⁰ Neither did Wool foresee that his force could be nearly surrounded if the enemy occupied the heights. This would leave only the Saltillo (or, San Luis de Potosi) road as a retreat and it could be cut off at the Narrows (see map, p. 89). (Fortunately, the Mexican Army would not correctly survey the situation either). Satisfied with his view of the hacienda, Wool rode on to Agua Nueva.

On December 21, the Third and Fourth Illinois were on their way to Victoria to meet Taylor. Taylor reached Victoria with General Patterson on January 4, 1847, only to find that General Quitman's volunteers had already taken the city. After the occupation of Victoria the divisions under Worth, Patterson, Quitman and Twiggs were to go to Vera Cruz via Tampico to implement Polk's plan to attack Mexico City

⁶⁸United States Congress, S.E.D. 52, 31st Cong., 1st Sess., p. 39.

⁶⁹Robert E. Lee, later commander of the Confederate Armies, and Irvin McDowell, the Union commander at First Bull Run, were 1829 and 1839 graduates, respectively, of West Point.

⁷⁰Lavender, Climax, pp. 148-49; Baylies, Wool . . . Narrative, pp. 23-24.

(see map, p. 56).⁷¹ This plan placed Taylor on the defensive because 9,000 of his men were to be transferred to the Mexico City corps.⁷²

By December 21 the Mexican Army was so close to the First and Second Illinois' camps at Agua Nueva that complete silence was ordered after nightfall. One of the volunteers felt that if the Mexicans did not attack quickly they would miss a good opportunity, for most of the volunteers were lying about waiting for their enlistments to expire. The majority were tired of the war and sorry they had left home.⁷³ The temperature was 112°. Baker, even in his absence, was well thought of now. One soldier said that if he did not return quickly the regiment would "go to the devil."⁷⁴ When the soldiers left Illinois they had "believed that in 14 days they would be at Matamoros, facing the Mexicans on the battlefield in which case they would gladly have died. Instead we are . . . 600 miles in the enemy country under a thousand difficulties."⁷⁵

The presence of Mexicans near Agua Nueva caused General Butler to reconsider his position, and he ordered Wool to move north to La Encantada nearer Buena Vista. On December 27 Wool did so, but with contingent orders to support Worth at Saltillo if necessary.⁷⁶ There had been skirmishing in the Saltillo area; and when Taylor was asked about it, he replied "that if a contest occurred, the Illinois troops would be

⁷¹Smith, The War With Mexico, I, pp. 360, 365; Lavender, Climax, p. 151; General Taylor and His Staff, p. 58.

⁷²United States Congress, H.E.D. 60, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 389-400; Lavender, Climax, pp. 153-54.

⁷³Engelmann, "The Second Illinois," pp. 417-19, 426.

⁷⁴Sangamo Journal, Springfield, February 11, 1847, p. 2.

⁷⁵Engelmann, "The Second Illinois," pp. 417-19, 426.

⁷⁶Baylies, Narrative . . . Wool, pp. 23-24; Lavender, Climax, p. 150.

reserved for the charge, for . . . I am satisfied that they will fight like devils."⁷⁷

Wool was disgusted with the prospects of being assigned to La Encantada, which lacked water, so he marched on through to La Angostura (the Narrows, see map, p. 89) near his preferred location of Buena Vista.⁷⁸ Wool was ordered to return to La Encantada by December 30, and remain there if water could be located.⁷⁹

On January 24, 1847, Major Warren moved into Saltillo with the companies of Morgan, Prentiss, and Mowers of the First Illinois and Hacker's of the Second. The supply line to Monclova was becoming difficult to maintain with Mexicans stealing the American's horses. Men who strayed too far from camp were lassoed around the neck by Mexican horsemen and dragged to death. The situation was tense. Sergeant Major Maxwell, alias Ward, of the Second Illinois was court-martialed for assault when he stabbed a private several times with his sword.⁸⁰ A detail of Kentucky volunteers got drunk near Buena Vista and were captured by the Mexican Army.⁸¹

Butler, becoming more concerned about the incidents, left Saltillo (which made Wool senior commander in the area).⁸² Taylor sent word that Santa Anna would probably be moving north from Buena Vista. He deemed this a good opportunity to engage Santa Anna and he left for Saltillo

⁷⁷Alton Telegraph, February 12, 1847, p. 1.

⁷⁸Lavender, Climax, p. 151; General Taylor and His Staff, p. 58.

⁷⁹Engelmann, "The Second Illinois," p. 420.

⁸⁰Alton Telegraph, March 12, 1847, p. 3.

⁸¹United States Congress, H.E.D. 60, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 1108.

⁸²Baylies, Wool . . . Narrative, p. 25.

(ten miles north of Buena Vista) where he arrived on February 4.

When Taylor left, he ordered the main portion of Wool's forces, which included the two Illinois regiments, to camp near the Narrows or the pass south of hacienda Buena Vista (see map, p. 89).⁸³

On January 26 Santa Anna ordered 19,000 men to a rendezvous with him near La Encarcion, 35 miles south of Agua Nueva and 50 miles south of Buena Vista (see map, p. 56). By late February, Santa Anna would know that only 600 volunteers guarded the road from Camargo to Monterrey and that only four companies of Illinois volunteers were at Saltillo.⁸⁴ Taylor was skeptical that Santa Anna could march his army across the desert but the Mexican Army was encamped at La Encarcion on February 20.⁸⁵

Taylor's arrival at Saltillo and Agua Nueva was greeted enthusiastically by three cheers.⁸⁶ Not all were happy, however, because even though the Illinois forces had been praised as those "God Dun . . . Illinoisians" that would march all day and sing and dance all night, "a base and insidious effort" was being made by "certain individuals in the First and Second Illinois" to convince Taylor to send them all home before the twelve-month enlistment period expired.⁸⁷ Bissell scolded the men but they still wanted to begin their march home in order to arrive back in Illinois within the year for which they had volunteered.⁸⁸ Two men of the First Illinois were drummed out of the service for stealing

⁸³Lavender, Climax, pp. 159, 170-73.

⁸⁴Ibid., pp. 164-66.

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 168.

⁸⁶Alton Telegraph, April 2, 1847, p. 2; Ibid., February 7, 1847, p. 2.

⁸⁷Ibid., April 16, 1847, p. 2.

⁸⁸Ibid.

blankets and it appeared that more trouble might be in the offing.⁸⁹

The bad feeling between Wool and the volunteers had increased.

We do not profess to be at all versed in military matters, but it seems to us, that the Government committed a grievous blunder in subjecting the volunteers to long and harassing marches through an uninhabited country, or suffering them to remain idly encamped. . . . They left their homes in hope of gathering laurels in a glorious campaign, and then returning to their homes in order to resume their ordinary avocations. . . . They have been dragged hundreds of miles, through an inhospitable wilderness, without any definite object, or left to perish from inaction in a deadly climate.⁹⁰

Back in Washington the administration was now blaming Taylor for the mismanagement of the war.⁹¹ But Taylor had more serious difficulties.

Faced with some 20,000 Mexicans near Agua Nueva, he instructed Wool to camp at Buena Vista and disperse his forces with the First Illinois positioned at the end of a broad ravine that formed the north edge of a plateau near the Narrows.⁹² Taylor stated the reasons for his move on February 20 and 21 in his official report.

As the camp of Agua Nueva could be turned on either flank, and as the enemy's force was greatly superior to our own . . . I determined, after much consideration, to take up a position about eleven miles in the rear, and there await the attack. The army broke up its camp and marched at noon on the 21st encamping at the new position a little in front of the hacienda of Buena Vista. With a small force I proceeded to Saltillo . . . leaving Brigadier General Wool in the immediate command of the troops.⁹³

It had been cold in the high elevations near Buena Vista, and a

⁸⁹Alton Telegraph, January 26, 1847, p. 2.

⁹⁰Ibid., February 5, 1847, p. 2.

⁹¹Sangamo Journal, Springfield, February 18, 1847, p. 2.

⁹²Lavender, Climax, pp. 172-73.

⁹³General Taylor and His Staff, pp. 60-61.

light snow had fallen. Initially, the First Illinois was placed between Encantada and Buena Vista along with the Second Dragoons, Captains Sherman and Bragg's batteries, the Third Artillery, and the Mississippi regiment under the command of Jefferson Davis. Later at Buena Vista, Captain John M. Washington's regular artillery battery was posted to command the road, and the First and Second Illinois were moved in along the ridges on either side of the defile.⁹⁴ Wool then ordered some artillery to protect the Narrows and sent six companies of the First Illinois to act as infantry support and to build a breastwork for the artillery along the "southern end of the long promontory that reached almost to the edge of the road where the guns would be." Two more companies of the First dug a trench from a gully near the road to the bluffs while the remaining two were stationed as a part of the garrison at Saltillo.⁹⁵ The Second Illinois remained with Bragg and a portion of Washington's battery on the bluffs southwest of the First Illinois.⁹⁶ On the evening of February 21, 1847, the entire complement of Wool's division was either at Buena Vista hacienda or stationed across the Narrows (see map, p. 89).⁹⁷

⁹⁴William T. Sherman and Braxton Bragg, both West Point graduates, are well known in the Civil War--Sherman for the march to the sea and Bragg as military advisor to Davis and Confederate commander at Chickamauga. General Taylor and His Staff, pp. 146-49; Walter Wood, "The 130th Infantry, Illinois National Guard," Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, XXX (1937-1938), p. 232.

⁹⁵Lavender, Climax, p. 173; General Taylor and His Staff, p. 61.

⁹⁶Map of the Battlefield of Buena Vista, United States Army Engineers, in the map section of United States Congress, H.E.D. 60, 30th Cong., 1st Sess.

⁹⁷Lavender, Climax, p. 173.

CHAPTER VI

BUENA VISTA

Bury me not, when I an Dead,
Amidst the city's glare-
Where thoughtless, careless mortals tread,
and wealth and misery are wed;
Oh! bury me not there.
Bury me not . . . High on the Mountain bare
Bury me not . . . By oceans rocky lair
Bury me not . . . In boundless prairies

But bury me, when I shall die,
'Midst woods and flower rare:
When over my grave the winds may sigh,
The birds may sing, and friends are nigh.
Oh! bury me then there. --John Hardin

The night of February 21, 1847, was cold and miserable on the slopes near Buena Vista. The First Illinois was settled in the Narrows with Washington's battery. The Second Illinois, with the Second Kentucky and the Second Indiana Volunteer Regiments, was on a plateau at the extreme left of the First Illinois (see map, p. 89).¹

The remainder of the forces were deployed from the Narrows to the east along deep ravines and on plateaus and promontories. No force

¹This poem, written by Hardin, was sent to his wife from Mexico. Hardin was killed at Buena Vista. The story of the Battle of Buena Vista has been told and retold. No attempt is made here to completely reconstruct the events of February 22 and 23. Only enough detail is given to explain the role of the First and Second Illinois in the conflict. The American right is visualized by standing behind the American lines, facing south toward Agua Nueva. General Taylor and His Staff: Containing Memoirs of Generals Taylor, Worth, Wool, Butler: Colonels May, Cross, Hardin, Clay, Yell, Hays and Others (Philadelphia: Grigg, Elliott, & Co., 1848), Compiled from Public Documents. p. 61; David Lavender, Climax at Buena Vista (New York: Lippincott Co., 1966), pp. 173-75.

was deemed to be necessary along the deep gullies to the right of the Narrows since the terrain limited advances from that direction. Neither Taylor nor Wool apparently noted as they surveyed the situation, that if the Mexicans should envelop the American left the deep gullies and impassable terrain on the American right would prevent an orderly retreat (see map, p. 89).

Dawn broke on February 22 to the playing of music in celebration of George Washington's birthday. Whether or not it was "Hardin's Band" that was playing is not definitely known, but Hardin did have a band that played during the battle. Taylor was still trying to accept the fact that the Mexican Army had marched across 200 miles of desert with practically no rations. But Santa Anna was at Buena Vista with some 20,000 men demanding the surrender of Taylor's army. Taylor made a short, prompt refusal.²

By noon of the 22nd the Mexicans had moved into the valley around the Narrows and had established their lines, including heavy artillery, on the high elevations across from the American left. The two armies sat looking at each other across terrain described as the "roughest, wildest scenes imaginable."³ The Mexicans made a feint on the American right and Taylor immediately sent reinforcements in that direction. No sooner had Taylor reacted than the Mexicans sent a hard charge at the American left (see map, p. 89). Correctly, Santa Anna continually tried to break around the American left to take advantage of a large gap in the

²Lavender, Climax, p. 178; The Picket Guard, soldier newspaper, Saltillo, January 3, 1847, p. 3; General Taylor and His Staff, pp. 58-59.

³Wallace-Dickey manuscripts, IHL, letter, March 1, 1847.

American lines between the positions of the First and Second Illinois.⁴

About 3:00 P.M. on the 22nd, there was light skirmishing again on the left between Mexican troops attempting to gain some high ground, and the Second Illinois, Indiana and Kentucky regiments. Bissell's regiment was ordered back to Saltillo but was met by skirmishers on the way and forced to return to the position it occupied that morning. The fighting was evidently heavier than indicated in the official reports. Davis, reporter of the Alton Telegraph, wrote that at night "we slept among the dead and dying." Wool reported that Colonel Humphry Marshall and his Kentucky force repulsed the Mexicans that had been trying to turn the American left flank.⁵

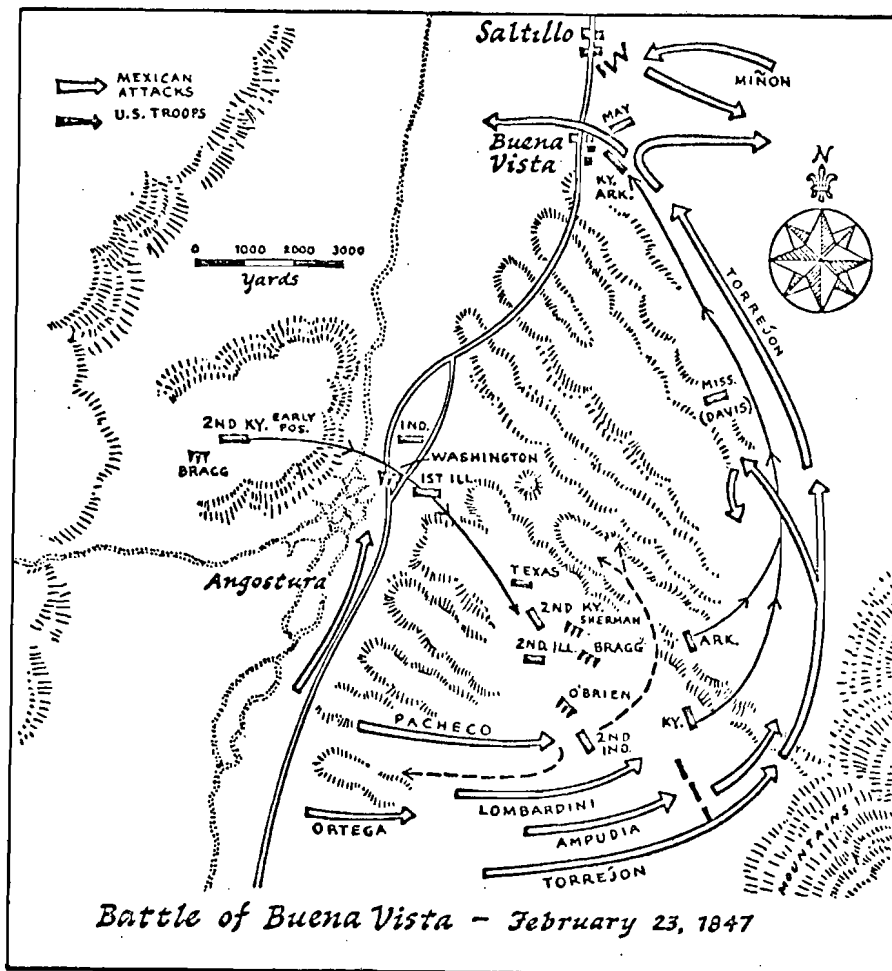
William Warren's force in charge of the fortifications at Saltillo, and later at the hacienda of Buena Vista, was attacked by Mexicans on the 22nd and fighting would continue sporadically into the 23rd. On the 22nd he turned away a large body of Mexican lancers by barricading the streets and leveling a withering fire.⁶ The forces at Buena Vista and in the Narrows slept by their guns on the cold and rainy night of the 22nd. It was a night of "darkness, silence and gloom." The Mexicans received reinforcements during the night and the American pickets were driven into their lines at 2:00 A.M.⁷

⁴Lavender, Climax, pp. 182-86; General Taylor and His Staff, p. 61; Wallace-Dickey manuscripts, IHL, Letter, March 1, 1847; Harvey Neville, "Mexican War Diary," typed copy in IHL, p. 33.

⁵United States Congress, H.E.D. 8, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 175-78; General Taylor and His Staff, pp. 146-49; Alton Telegraph, April 9, 1847, p. 3.

⁶United States Congress, H.E.D. 8, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 205-06.

⁷Francis Baylies, A Narrative of Major General Wool's Campaign in Mexico (Albany, N. Y.: Little and Co., 1851), p. 31; Wallace-Dickey manuscripts, IHL, March 1, 1847.



Map showing movements during the late morning and early afternoon on February 23. The First Illinois moved along the line of the Second Indiana and then returned to their original position. The Second Illinois advanced to near O'Brien's guns, retreated toward Bragg along the dash-line and then returned to their original position. Map by Barbara Long. Charles L. Dufour, The Mexican War, A Compact History, 1846-1848 (New York: Hawthorne Books, Inc., 1968), p. 121.

Early on the morning of the 23rd, (see map, p. 99) Marshall's Kentucky regiment was faced by the reinforced Mexicans. Major Xerxes Trail, with two companies of the Second Illinois, was ordered to support him. The dawn of the 23rd was bright, and sunshine illuminated the Mexican Army.⁸ The Mexicans opened the battle on the 23rd but just what happened after that is not exactly known for the battle was unprecedented confusion. The chaos basically was caused by the terrain features--steep ravines, ten to fifteen feet deep with steep sides covered by loose rock and brush, by mountains and plateaus, and deep gullies--all rain slick in the early morning, then dry in the early afternoon, and wet again by late afternoon showers. In this terrain the lines were fighting many simultaneous actions in total confusion. Communications were impossible and the lack of coordination (Taylor arrived on the field late from Saltillo, where he had gone during the night, and changed the orders issued by Wool) between volunteer and regular units was tremendous.

On the morning of the 23rd, Wool had about 3,300 men facing some 19,000-20,000 Mexicans stretched from the Narrows (La Angostura) to the high plateau at the foot of the mountains on the American left. He ordered Bissell to shift his Second Illinois further to the left in support of the Second Indiana and ordered McKee and the Second Kentucky to help Bissell (see map, p. 99).⁹ According to Wool, the position occupied by the First and Second Illinois Regiments "was the hottest

⁸Lavender, Climax, pp. 187-88; National Archives, Military Records Branch, Mexican War Records, Adjutant General's Reports, Report of General Taylor to the Adjutant General, March 6, 1847.

⁹Lavender, Climax, pp. 188-90.

as well as the most critical part of the actions."¹⁰ William Bissell stated in his report of the action that

Early on the morning of the 23rd, my regiment was formed in order of battle towards the left of our lines, occupying the high plain, which the enemy showed an intention to force, by the vast number of infantry he had thrown into the mountains and ravines on our left and front. By changing directions in the face of the enemy, so as to front him more directly, our right was brought to rest upon the heads of ravines, while our left, extending towards the base of the mountains, was covered by a battery of artillery, supported by the regiment of Indiana volunteers. . . . While the battle was raging in the mountains on our left, the enemy, having deployed around and through the ravines on our front, formed in line of battle, extending across the entire plain from the heads of the ravines in our front to the mountains which flanked his left.¹¹

As the Second Illinois began to shift positions, a strong attack was made against the American line. The Americans tried to stop the attack with artillery.¹² W. H. L. Wallace described the action.

A heavy Mexican column was formed and made a movement to march up the road. As they came opposite the ruined rancho and were uncovered by the hill by the deep gully, Washington opened his battery upon them. The first shell fell short but the next fell in the ranks of the heavy column and the effect was terrible. It opened a gap wide and long, and fragments of men and horses were seen flying in the air.¹³

Washington's battery ripped the advance apart.¹⁴ But on the plateaus, General James Lane, commander of the Second Indiana, attempted to reach the top of the ravine before the Mexicans and moved out before

¹⁰United States Congress, H.E.D. 8, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 144-50.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 175-78.

¹²General Taylor and His Staff, pp. 62-65..

¹³Wallace-Dickey manuscripts, IHL, letter, March 4, 1847.

¹⁴General Taylor and His Staff, pp. 62-65, 149ff.

Bissell and his support could be effective. The Mexican fire was devastating, and the Second Indiana ran for the cover of the ravines.¹⁵ The battle was now open all along the line, and Lane's premature advance, or Bissell's tardy support, had scattered the American forces. Bissell ordered his Second Illinois Regiment to stay steady and advance (see map, p. 99), an order that "was promptly and with perfect regularity obeyed."¹⁶ He halted his men who began to fire at the advancing Mexicans. Meanwhile, a Mexican company had gained the ravine in front of the Illinois position. Major Trail, of the Second Illinois, was on his way to support Bissell but was stopped by Mexican fire, and when the rest of the American line began to fall back, he ordered a retreat and faced his battalion to a more advantageous firing position. He was charged by an "overwhelming" force of cavalry and had to retreat again into a deep ravine.¹⁷ With the rest of the Second Illinois forced to retreat in the face of a lancer charge, Wool became worried and tried to re-form his positions. Effective artillery action once again held the Mexican advance. The mobility and accuracy of the American artillery aided in routing advances time after time.¹⁸

The battlefield was chaotic. Wool was in trouble. Taylor arrived at 9:00 A.M. from Saltillo, and tried to restore some semblance of order among the troops. Bissell and the Second Illinois had by then already

¹⁵Lavender, Climax, pp. 191-92.

¹⁶United States Congress, H.E.D. 8, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 175-78.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 175.

been holding back a greatly superior force between 20 and 30 minutes.¹⁹ Taylor ordered Colonel Jefferson Davis and his Mississippi Rifles to move toward the Mexicans advancing on the hacienda. The Arkansas regiment and some of the Kentucky cavalry were re-formed and Taylor brought in additional forces from areas not under attack. This troop movement, coupled again with effective artillery support, forced Santa Anna to change directions farther to the American left.²⁰ Taylor then ordered Hardin to bring up four companies of the First Illinois and Captains Montgomery, Zabriskie, Richardson, and Smith quickly executed the command. The Second Illinois now began a reconnaissance-in-force to regain some of the ground lost in the center of the line. It was a successful attack against the enemy's left that caught the Mexicans changing positions. Wallace, with Hardin and the First, reported that they had encountered heavy fire from the main ravine on their flank. Hardin tried to dislodge the Mexicans from their cover but was unable to do so. Wallace continued:

The colonel wheeled his command to the right--ordered a 'charge bayonet' and we moved up in line and soon started the game. They could not stand the cold steel. This was the only time the bayonet was resorted to during the engagement. The Mexicans broke and fled in disorder across that ravine and the next one and our boys following at a run and pouring in a hot fire. . . . It was the most brilliant thing of the day.²¹

Bissell re-formed his Second Regiment after Hardin's charge broke the Mexican advance, and the Second and part of the First remained at the head of the ravine on the right of Braxton Bragg's battery next to

¹⁹Lavender, Climax, p. 193; United States Congress, H.E.D. 8, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 171-78, passim.

²⁰Lavender, Climax, p. 198.

²¹Wallace-Dickey manuscripts, IHL, letter, March 4, 1847; United States Congress, H.E.D. 8, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 174-75.

the Second Kentucky until about 3:00 P.M.²² After the action by the First and Second Illinois, the battle temporarily shifted to the far left, and actually the rear, of the American line where Davis was trying to stop the Mexican envelopment (see map, p. 99). The Third Indiana, the last of the reserves, was now committed to the left. Some of the retreating men were reorganized with Davis' advance, but the battle was still in doubt until the famous battle of the "V" of Buena Vista. Davis and 300 men turned back the Mexican advance in a bloody encounter. The action by Davis and his Mississippi Rifles only held one section of the line, however, and the Mexicans launched another attack all along the one and one-half mile American rear, or extreme left. The fighting was bitter but with American mobile artillery and rifle support many of the Mexicans were trapped in retreat. A violent thunderstorm in the middle of the afternoon quelled the fighting somewhat and allowed the trapped Mexican detachments to escape. The Americans, however, had regained most of the ground that had been lost before 9:00 A.M. that morning; and a possible Mexican attack from the rear, or extreme left, had been prevented by Davis.²³

About 4:00 P.M. Taylor decided to assume the initiative and ordered attacks all along the line. The advance was uncoordinated, and troops moved ahead without mutual support or any semblance of timing. The Mexicans answered with a counterattack. The positions that took the first charge were, from right to left, held by O'Brien's guns, the Second Illinois, George Thomas' single gun, McKee's infantry and the

²²United States Congress, H.E.D. 8, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 175-76.

²³Lavender, Climax, pp. 202-04; Otis Singletary, The Mexican War (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1960), pp. 51-53.

First Illinois (see map, p. 99).²⁴ Bissell and Hardin were ordered to advance but ran headlong into the Mexicans who were retreating from Davis' fight at the "V." The Second Illinois was forming into line toward (or at) the front from their original position when they were "met by a most destructive fire from the enemy's infantry. We pressed on towards the enemy to the head of an intervening ravine, into which our men threw themselves, and from which they poured upon the enemy a ceaseless and most effective fire."²⁵

Hardin was ordered to charge the left quickly or all would be lost. At the moment he arrived in the line a heavy column of Mexican infantry appeared and forced the First Illinois to fall back into a ravine for cover.²⁶ At this point Weatherford reported the Mexicans had surrounded the First and Second Illinois and were charging down into the ravine that protected Hardin and his men. O'Brien's gun had been overrun and the line had been breached. The Mexicans, supposedly in retreat, had recoiled viciously from the Davis maneuver and were now attacking with a fury unknown earlier during the day.²⁷ Hardin, aware of the desperate situation, rallied some of his men at the head of the ravine and charged in an attempt to slow the Mexican advance and give his men time to retreat. Mexican lancers were charging down upon them, and Hardin, along with McKee and regular officer Lieutenant Colonel

²⁴George H. Thomas, during the Civil War, would gain fame as the "Rock of Chickamauga," while his Mexican War junior officer, Braxton Bragg, would oppose him in that battle. Singletary, The Mexican War, p. 52; Lavender, Climax, p. 203.

²⁵United States Congress, H.E.D. 8, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 175-78.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 174-75.

²⁷Lavender, Climax, pp. 208-09; United States Congress, H.E.D. 8, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 178.

Henry Clay, Jr., had failed to rally their men.²⁸ W. H. L. Wallace

related that

The First was then some distance in advance of any other troops in the field, but all were moving forward. Just as we came into line on the right I saw the bayonets of a heavy column over a rise near the head of a ravine . . . they were a reserve of about six thousand fresh troops who had not been engaged. . . . We . . . left at a run and gained the cover of the ravine. . . . The five companies of the First and the shattered fragments of the Second then opened their fire. . . . To give you some idea of the perfect torrent of shot, the whistling of the Mexican bullets alone was almost sufficient to drown out the report of their guns, tho they were only fifty yards from us. I kept looking over the edge of the hill to see the charge of our Dragoons . . . but instead I saw them turn and leave the field.

The Mexican column . . . advanced upon us, outflanking us on both sides and the shot poured upon us from all sides. . . . Colonel Hardin, seeing that we were entirely unsupported--that we, little more than five hundred men against seven thousand, and that they outflanked us everywhere--at length reluctantly gave the order to retreat. I stood by him at the time--Colonel Bissell of the Second, was with us--. . . . When the men had got half way down the hill, which is steep and long, he ordered a halt, himself standing near the top of the hill. Most of our Illinois regiments halted and formed [in] line.

We all started and when I got to the bottom of the ravine I turned and looked back--the balls were falling like hail around us--the whole brink of the hill where we had just stood and on either side was lined with Mexican Infantry in their long, tall hats, bedecked with tinsel, and their blue overcoats streaming in the wind. . . . Their long glittering muskets pointing directly at us as if they were really trying to shoot us. They are most miserable shots or they would have killed every one of us huddled as we were in utter confusion, officers and men in the bottom of that narrow ravine forming a focus for their shot poured in from the top of the hill in [the] rear and on either flank.

I had just rounded the point . . . when Washington's battery opened fire. . . . The first shell whistled close to me and burst within fifty yards of me. I've heard many sweet sounds--the voices of lovely women and the melodious breathings of sweet instruments, but the whistling of that shell was the most grateful sound that ever greeted my ear. It was terrible; the main body of Lancers scampered back over the hill, leaving their colonel and several of

²⁸Lavender, Climax, pp. 208-09.

their comrades dead. A small detachment of forty or fifty took shelter in the mouth of the ravine, and it was they that killed nearly all that fell of our regiment. Colonel Hardin fell by their hands, so did Colonel McKee and Lieutenant Colonel Clay (a son of old Henry's).

Colonel Hardin was found half an hour afterwards . . . lanced through the body in four places, his pockets rifled, his sword gone and a Mexican lance, cut nearly in two by a blow of his sabre, lying by his side.²⁹

Taylor and Bragg praised Hardin for his courageous stand against great odds. The men, for volunteers, had stood well and no doubt the 72 year old Lieutenant Price, killed in the charge by the lancers, was an outstanding example of fortitude.³⁰ The Mexicans charged ahead, disregarding the artillery batteries of Bragg and Washington at the Narrows or La Angostura, (see map, p. 99), and the reorganized American forces successfully beat the Mexicans back.³¹ Bissell and the Second Illinois were again placed near the battery on the hill where the men "lay upon their arms until morning." Bissell reported his losses were one captain, 11 lieutenants and 50 soldiers killed and 80 wounded.³² Weatherford, who took command of the First Illinois after Hardin was killed, led companies C, F, and G, along with the Indiana regiment, to the head of the ravine where they remained the rest of the day and night. During the night of the 23rd, the two companies of the First that had been stationed with Warren at Saltillo and the hacienda came in to join the rest of the Illinois

²⁹Wallace-Dickey manuscripts, IHL, letter, March 4, 1847.

³⁰United States Congress, H.E.D. 8, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 201; General Taylor and His Staff, p. 56.

³¹Wallace-Dickey manuscripts, IHL, letter, March 4, 1847; Lavender, Climax, p. 210.

³²United States Congress, H.E.D. 8, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 175-78.

men.³³ The remainder of the Illinois forces reoccupied the breastworks above the Narrows.³⁴

The Mexicans silently retreated as the sun went down.³⁵ The field and victory went to the Americans; when the cold night passed and the sun came up, the Mexican army was gone. Victory had been doubtful. Taylor had had "his back to the wall" with all his reserves committed. Only gallant efforts by men such as Bissell, Davis, and Bragg, and particularly Hardin, saved the day by holding fast and allowing time to reorganize. The enemy did not have time to consolidate and retaliate. One Illinois volunteer remarked that the Mexicans had had the American Army whipped if only they had known it. Because of good training, good discipline, and excellent junior commanders, the volunteers had held their ground.³⁶ The campaign in northern Mexico was over.

Wallace said of the position of the First and Second Regiments that "nothing but the bulldog courage and perseverance of the Volunteers saved the day."³⁷ The soldier newspaper, The Picket Guard, stated it was proud of the volunteers' achievements and that Mexico could hold out no longer.³⁸

³³United States Congress, H.E.D. 8, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 174-75.

³⁴Lavender, Climax, p. 37.

³⁵Ibid., p. 211.

³⁶Lavender, Climax, pp. 212-13; Alfred Henderson, "A Morgan County Volunteer in the Mexican War," Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, XLI (1948), p. 298.

³⁷Wallace-Dickey manuscripts, IHL, letter, March 4, 1847.

³⁸The Picket Guard was published at Saltillo by William and Moses Osman, owners of the Ottawa, Illinois, Free Trader. Moses was a sergeant in Company I, First Illinois, and William was a quartermaster on the First Illinois Regimental staff. The Picket Guard, Saltillo, April 19, p. 1; Dayton Canaday, "Voice of the Volunteer," Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, XLIV (1951), p. 200.

Warren's brave stands at Saltillo and the hacienda should not be overlooked (see map, p. 99). During the night of the 22nd he held back a flanking attempt by the Mexicans, and on the 23rd he held off repeated attacks. Taylor praised Warren for his action, and also spoke highly of Hardin.

The moment was most critical, and no loss falls more heavily upon the army in the field than that of Colonel Hardin. . . . The First and Second Illinois served immediately under my eye. . . . The spirit and gallantry with which the First Illinois and the Second Kentucky engaged the enemy in the morning, restored confidence to that part of the field. . . . Colonel Bissell . . . merits notice for his coolness and bravery on this occasion.³⁹

Taylor also commended Wool for maintaining a high state of discipline among the volunteers during the engagement.⁴⁰ Wool noted in his official report the

particular good conduct of the 1st Illinois Volunteers under Colonel Hardin, and, after his death, Colonel Weatherford; of the 2nd Illinois Volunteers under Colonel Bissell. . . . These regiments suffered greatly in the contest, and were ably and gallantly led on by their officers.⁴¹

Taylor reported that 334 American officers and 4,425 men faced approximately 20,000 Mexicans in the battle.⁴² The reports on losses vary. Taylor reported 267 Americans killed, 456 wounded, and 23 missing. The estimated Mexican loss was 1,500.⁴³ Illinois lost a total of 76 killed (or 86 depending on the source) and 98 wounded with three missing.

³⁹General Taylor and His Staff, p. 70.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 153.

⁴²"Report of General Taylor to the Adjutant General," March 6, 1847, National Archives, Military Records Branch, Mexican War Records, Adjutant General's Reports. Only 453 of the total enlisted men were regulars.

⁴³Ibid.

or almost one-fourth of the total American forces killed. Illinois wounded made up one-fifth of the total. The First lost three officers; Colonel Hardin, Captain Zabriskie, and First Lieutenant Houghton; with 26 men killed and 25 wounded. The Second lost Captain Woodward and Lieutenants Rountree, Fletcher, Ferguson, Robbins, Kelly, Steel, Bartleson, Atherton, and Price, a total of ten officers, in addition to 37 men killed and 73 wounded. At Buena Vista, Illinois suffered more killed and wounded than any other state.⁴⁴

Among the tributes from Illinois paid to the gallant volunteer dead was:

The sound of battle onward comes
 From Buena Vista's bloody field,
 Where freedoms brave and dauntless sons
 Might chance to die but never yield.
 Would tears avail, Hardin, for thee,
 they'd fall as like the gentle rain . . .
 Zabriskie, Woodward, Atherton, Price, Kelly,
 Houghton met like fate; Bryan and Rountree, Bartleson-
 Brave spirits of their own loved state.⁴⁵

Bissell, writing from the field at Buena Vista, expressed his feelings for his men.

My own brave regiment has won for itself eternal honor, and since it did more fighting than any other regiment, has suffered most severely. . . . They were chiefly the well-taught youths of our farming communities and our quiet moral country towns. . . . Honor, all to you, ye mothers! and you, ye fathers, for so forming the characters of your sons as to enable them by force of that character alone to draw down honors upon their state.⁴⁶

⁴⁴United States Congress, H.E.D. 8, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 107-15, 143, reports the 76 killed, while Moses' Historical Statistics of Illinois, p. 499, reports the 86; Baylies, Wool . . . Narrative, p. 41; United States Congress, H.E.D. 60, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 1117-18.

⁴⁵Alton Telegraph, April 9, 1847, p. 2.

⁴⁶William Halbert, "William Henry Bissell," Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, XXXVI (1943), p. 42.

Illinois lost a popular hero in Hardin (the Whigs especially lamented his loss). The distinguished record of the Illinois troops made the supporters of the war even more bitter and antagonistic to those who opposed it.⁴⁷

In early March, Taylor went to Monterrey and left Wool in command of the forces around Saltillo. The extremes of the weather there made Wool decide to move the Illinois regiments back to Buena Vista. Warren, with a small force, was left in Saltillo as military governor for the city.⁴⁸

Taylor's popularity skyrocketed after news of the victory at Buena Vista was received in the United States. But Polk refused to honor the victory, since he thought the battle had been wasted. Illinois Whigs proclaimed that only death could prevent Taylor from becoming president whereas the Illinois Democrats commented that Buena Vista had proved the worth of the volunteers.⁴⁹ Polk and his staff knew that the northern campaign had not been decisive. It would be necessary to strike at the heartland of Mexico and the prize of Mexico City.⁵⁰

⁴⁷Clarence Alvord, general editor, The Centennial History of Illinois, Vol II: The Frontier State, 1818-1848, by Theodore Pease (5 vols.; Springfield, Illinois: Centennial Commission, 1918), pp. 405-06.

⁴⁸Baylies, Wool . . . Narrative, p. 47.

⁴⁹Singletary, The Mexican War, p. 54; Glyndon G. Van Deusen, The Jacksonian Era, 1828-1848 (New York: Harper and Row, 1959), p. 233; Allen Nevins, editor, Polk, the Diary of a President, 1845-1849 (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1952), p. 208; Sangamo Journal, Springfield, April 8, 1847, p. 2; Illinois State Register, Springfield, April 16, 1847, p. 2.

⁵⁰Singletary, The Mexican War, pp. 71-73.

CHAPTER VII

CERRO GORDO AND HOME

The Illinois Third and Fourth Regiments had been in camp at Tampico with Quitman's forces since January 27 (see map, p. 56).¹ But Santa Anna had not lingered. After Buena Vista his forces marched south toward Vera Cruz slowed only by politics. He had to take time out to put down a revolt from within the government.² As early as November, 1846, the groundwork for an attack on Vera Cruz had been laid by the American command. Patterson, who was not a native American and could not run for the presidency, was initially chosen to command but Scott replaced him. On November 23 the move south was ordered, and the transfer of forces from Taylor followed.³ In December the Third and Fourth Illinois moved toward Tampico as part of this strategy, with the Tennessee mounted in front, eight companies of the Third Illinois, 200 wagons, two companies of the Third Illinois and one Tennessee mounted following them and the Fourth Illinois in the rear.⁴ Scott was anxious

¹For earlier discussions of the movements of the Third and Fourth Illinois, see chapter V.

²Otis Singletary, The Mexican War (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1960), p. 77.

³Justin H. Smith, The War With Mexico (2 vols.; New York: Macmillan, 1919), I, p. 351; United States Congress, H.E.D. 60, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 372-74.

⁴William Bishop, Journal of a Twelve Months Campaign of General James Shields Brigade in Mexico (St. Louis: Cathcart, Prescott and Co., 1847), pp. 20-24.

for these reinforcements to join him at Tampico because he feared the "black vomit," or yellow fever, and wanted to move inland.⁵ On January 6 the Third and Fourth camped at Victoria (see map, p. 56). There the Third Illinois was placed under the command of Quitman and the Fourth under Gideon Pillow. But the Fourth refused to serve with Pillow because of an earlier forced march he had conducted without allowing the men to have water (staff and horses had been excepted). Also, Pillow's previous duty as Polk's law partner probably did little to aid his popularity among the volunteers. The Fourth was therefore transferred to Quitman's division.⁶ Quitman was a "brave, talented, dignified, gentlemanly and sound sense" leader, according to an Illinois newspaper.⁷

The Third and Fourth arrived at Tampico on January 26.⁸ The weather was terrible (on February 9 the temperature fell from 101° to 45° in twelve hours) and there was widespread sickness with much yellow fever in the camp.⁹ On February 26, the two regiments, brigaded under Shields, were ordered to prepare to move to Vera Cruz. Held up by poor sailing weather they did not depart until March 6.¹⁰

On March 9 the Illinois regiments took part in the amphibious operation at Vera Cruz following in Worth and his regulars on surf boats

⁵United States Congress, H.E.D. 60, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 851-52.

⁶Bishop, A Twelve Months Volunteer, pp. 24-25.

⁷Sangamo Journal, Springfield, March 4, 1847, p. 2.

⁸United States Congress, H.E.D. 60, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 922.

⁹Bishop, A Twelve Months Volunteer, pp. 29-30.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 30; Henry Blair and Rebecca Tarshis, The Life of Colonel Edward Baker (Portland, Ore.: Oregon Historical Society, 1960), p. 41; Alton Telegraph, April 9, 1847, p. 1.

in one of the most brilliant episodes of the war. Although little had been reported about the Illinois regiments actions, and the official sources list no casualties, the Third and Fourth fought on the right flank. After the landing the two regiments erected a naval gun battery and drew praise for their work.¹¹ While the city of Vera Cruz was still under artillery siege, the Third Illinois moved west of the city to join the Fourth as part of the siege line. While dodging spent bullets they worked on fortifications and dug trenches. Both Illinois units did general work on the artillery batteries until the end of the battle. One unofficial source listed fourteen killed in the Third Illinois.¹²

On March 29 the city surrendered,¹³ and Scott immediately organized a march to Jalapa (see map, p. 56). But he was faced with the fact that volunteer enlistments were about to expire and many of the men did not want to advance but wished to wait out their time in safety.¹⁴ Nevertheless, Twiggs moved inland on April 8. Patterson and the volunteers left on the 9th with the Third and Fourth Illinois and a New York regiment brigaded under Shields. Fifty-five wagons were assigned to the volunteer division for baggage; and every man carried, by order, a "rifle, or musket, 40 rounds, hard bread for four days and bacon or pork (cooked) for two days."¹⁵

¹¹Blair and Tarshis, Life of Edward Baker, pp. 41-42; United States Congress, H.E.D. 8, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 216, 252-57; Walter Wood, "The 130th Infantry, Illinois National Guard," Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, XXX (1937-1938), p. 234; Alton Telegraph, April 23, 1847, p. 1.

¹²Bishop, A Twelve Months Campaign, pp. 32-36; Sangamo Journal, Springfield, April 22, 1847, p. 2; United States Congress, H.E.D. 8, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 222.

¹³Singletary, The Mexican War, p. 76.

¹⁴United States Congress, H.E.D. 60, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 908-14.

¹⁵Bishop, A Twelve Months Campaign, pp. 37-38; United States Congress, H.E.D. 60, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 921.

At Mexico City, Santa Anna received the news about Vera Cruz and left immediately for the coast. On April 5 he established his headquarters at Encaro and decided that he would make a defensive stand at the mountain pass of Cerro Gordo.¹⁶ Marching in 95° heat, Patterson's division arrived near the pass on April 13. The volunteers wanted to attack at once, but action was postponed until the men could be rested and Patterson could regain his health. The troops encamped at Plan del Rio, just below the pass of Cerro Gordo (see map, p. 116).¹⁷

Santa Anna had chosen his terrain to good advantage. The steep pass of Cerro Gordo commanded the National Highway, and two hills, Telegraph and La Atalaya, were at the center of his line. These hills were heavily fortified with breastworks and artillery. Three batteries spanned the road and the terrain prevented any American attempt at the Mexican right. Santa Anna also had a large reserve force behind the pass. The only hope for Scott, therefore, was to turn the Mexican left, skirting around the well-placed artillery; that is, if such a path could be found in the rough country. The reconnaissance of Captain Robert E. Lee located just such a route, although it was difficult and circuitous.¹⁸

Shields' brigade arrived at Cerro Gordo on April 12. The attack was tentatively planned for the 17th, and the Third and Fourth were to support Twiggs in turning the Mexican left. Pillow and his force would fake at the Mexican center. Twiggs was to reach the base of La Atalaya

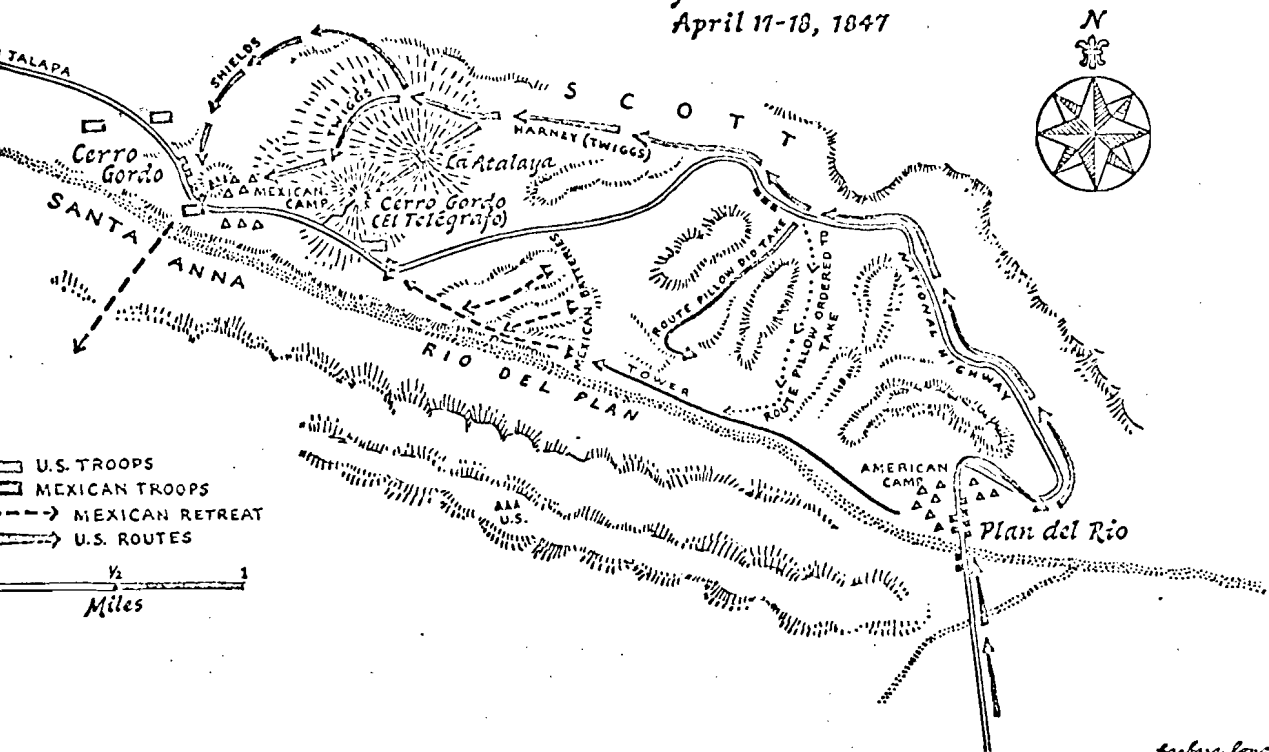
¹⁶Singletary, The Mexican War, p. 77.

¹⁷Bishop, A Twelve Months Campaign, p. 39; Singletary, The Mexican War, pp. 78-79; Robert S. Henry, The Story of the Mexican War (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1950), p. 282; United States Congress, H.E.D. 8, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., Twiggs' Report, pp. 274-77.

¹⁸United States Congress, H.E.D. 8, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 261-64; Singletary, The Mexican War, p. 78; Henry, Story of the Mexican War, p. 283.

Battle of Cerro Gordo

April 17-18, 1847



The Third and Fourth Illinois followed the route indicated as Shields' route around La Atalaya. Map by Barbara Long. Charles L. Dufour, The Mexican War, A Compact History, 1846-1848 (New York: Hawthorne Books, Inc., 1968), p. 221.

while Bennett Riley and his regulars cut in behind the pass and Shields' brigade continued in an enveloping movement toward Santa Anna's reserve camp.¹⁹ Twiggs' division, with the Illinois regiments in support, would be storming the "vital point" of Cerro Gordo.²⁰

On April 17 Twiggs' division initiated the attack, but soon was in difficulty, and the Third and Fourth Illinois were ordered to the division. They arrived too late to take part in any of the fighting that day. Twiggs instructed Shields to place howitzers on the heights to give artillery cover to the attack that was to take place the next morning. Shields remarked, "You will see what Illinois volunteers can do." With 100 men from each regiment they began the chore of moving three cannon up the 500 foot hill. During the night the men used cables to haul the guns up the hill. By 1:00 A.M. they were in place.²¹

The Illinois men lay on their arms all night waiting for the dawn. James Merryman, the sergeant major of the Fourth Illinois, described the setting when dawn came:

I looked around me--the scene was grand and imposing:
the East just tinged with the rays of the rising sun;
lofty mountains just visible in the distance. . . . The
side of the hill glistened with bayonets. There lay
the Illinois boys, eager for the fight . . . my reverie

¹⁹Riley, a veteran of the War of 1812, was instrumental in opening the Santa Fe Trail, served during the Black Hawk War in Illinois, and in the Seminole Wars. After Cerro Gordo he was breveted a brigadier general. Smith, The War With Mexico, II, pp. 53-58; Singletary, The Mexican War, p. 79; Henry, Story of the Mexican War, pp. 281-82.

²⁰United States Congress, H.E.D. 8, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 261-64.

²¹Alton Telegraph, May 12, 1847, p. 1; Henry, Story of the Mexican War, p. 285; Stephen A. Douglas and James Shields, "Thomas Langrell Harris," Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, XXXI (1938), pp. 164-65; Bishop, A Twelve Months Campaign, p. 41.

was soon disturbed by the belching of cannon.²²

On the morning of the 18th Baker was to turn into Cerro Gordo (along the Jalapa road) with the Fourth Illinois (see map, p. 116).²³ As the sun continued to rise, the Illinois regiments huddled on the side of the hill in columns of companies with the Fourth on the right. Dodging incoming cannon balls (a common practice because of the inefficient powder), the men ate what breakfast they could. Shields ordered Baker and the Fourth to lead the attack; Foreman and the Third were to follow on the right flank.²⁴

On that bright Sunday morning the attack began as planned--but did not end as planned. Riley and William S. Harney's regulars charged down La Atalaya and up Cerro Gordo taking the Mexicans completely by surprise. They drove the Mexicans from their batteries which were then turned on them as they fled. Pillow's attack on the center was, if anything, a poor distraction as he got lost in the brush.²⁵ Meanwhile, the Third and Fourth Illinois, accompanied by the New York regiment, began their advance across the side of the hill. They followed a path in single file openly exposed to Mexican fire until they could reach the cover of heavy chaparral. "The Illinois men," wrote Davis, "being better woodsmen than the New Yorkers, left them some way in the rear."

²²Sangamo Journal, Springfield, May 20, 1847, p. 2.

²³United States Congress, H.E.D. 8, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., Colonel Baker's Report, pp. 298-99.

²⁴Bishop, A Twelve Months Campaign, p. 41

²⁵Harney, a regular officer, had seen service in the Seminole and Black Hawk Wars. In Mexico he was Scott's ranking cavalry officer. He is better known for his command of the Department of the West until 1861. Henry, Story of the Mexican War, p. 286; United States Congress, H.E.D. 8, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 274-77.

Shields was in the lead.²⁶

As the Illinois regiments made their way around the hill (see map, p. 116), the Mexicans, being driven down the slope by Harney, ran into the approaching Illinois brigade in the thick brush. Five Mexican artillery pieces, the rifles of the retreating group, and a detachment of lancers fired point blank on the surprised men. The line was torn to shreds. Shields was critically wounded (an Illinois newspaper reported him dead). A fast-thinking soldier stuffed a scarf into Shields' gaping stomach wound saving his life.²⁷

Baker, seeing Shields hit, assumed overall command and directed a company to deploy skirmishers and then to charge. The charge was successful and the enemy retreated. The Fourth Illinois, which Major Thomas Harris then commanded, did an admirable job as part of the charge. Patterson spoke of this action in the highest terms. Twiggs commented that "of the conduct of the volunteer force under the brave General Shields, I cannot speak in too high terms."²⁸ The retreating Mexican forces were cut off by Twiggs' brigade and surrendered. The Battle of Cerro Gordo was over by 10:00 A.M.²⁹

The Mexican riflemen, however, had been effective. Only four men of Wright's company of the Fourth Illinois Regiment escaped wounds or

²⁶Alton Telegraph, May 12, 1847, p. 1; United States Congress, H.E.D. 8, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 298-99.

²⁷United States Congress, H.E.D. 8, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 274-77, 298-99; Henry, Story of the Mexican War, p. 286; Illinois State Register, Springfield, May 14, 1847, p. 2; Blair and Tarshis, Life of Edward H. Baker, p. 44.

²⁸United States Congress, H.E.D. 8, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 274-77, 298-99; Douglas and Shields, "Thomas L. Harris," pp. 160-65.

²⁹Henry, Story of the Mexican War, p. 287.

shot fragments.³⁰ The total casualties were 63 killed and 337 wounded. Four of those killed, and 60 of the wounded, were from Illinois.³¹ Santa Anna said of his defeat at Cerro Gordo that it means "complete ruin for the whole Republic."³² The Illinois regiments remained in the Cerro Gordo area until April 19, when the entire complement marched to Jalapa.³³

One of the more interesting aspects of the battle concerned the purported capture of one of Santa Anna's wooden (actually cork) legs. After Baker's charge, Santa Anna's carriage, full of picnic lunch and spare legs, was overrun. It is disputable who took one of the legs, as is the entire event, but in the Illinois Adjutant General's office today rests a leg reportedly captured by a soldier of the Third Illinois. Whatever, the Illinois men enjoyed the conquest as they ate the lunch left behind by the fleeing general.³⁴

Near Jalapa Mexican guerrilla activities kept the men busy. The Fourth Illinois mounted a retaliatory march against the marauders after three men of the Third had been killed. When the dead men were located and the cause of death deemed to be dragging by a lasso, General Pillow

³⁰Sangamo Journal, May 20, 1847, p. 2.

³¹United States Congress, H.E.D. 8, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., "Report of Killed and Wounded at Cerro Gordo."

³²Quoted in Smith, The War With Mexico, II, p. 80.

³³Henry, The Story of the Mexican War, p. 287; Bishop, A Twelve Months Campaign, p. 43.

³⁴Ezra Prince, "The Fourth Illinois in the War With Mexico," Transactions of the Illinois Historical Society (Springfield: Illinois State Historical Library, 1906), p. 183; Douglas and Shields, "Thomas Harris," pp. 164-65. There are many accounts of the capture of the leg, none of which can be entirely authenticated or none of which can be deemed to be more accurate than the other.

allowed no more expeditions.³⁵ On April 15, with the enlistments about to expire, Polk authorized the acceptance of individual volunteers to fill the ranks. Davis commented that the volunteers would not enlist as they had been "basely and ingenerously treated, and frequently made the scapegoats of the marauding conduct of the men in the regular service." The Picket Guard stated the situation more forcefully.

What an infinitude of wisdom is that collected wisdom of the nation called Congress. We know there are many volunteers that are willing to stay, but did the wiseacres at Washington ever suppose they would get one more man by offering this pitiful bounty of \$12.³⁶

The men at Cerro Gordo were to have marched on to Puebla and then to Mexico City (see map, p. 56), but now the volunteers would not be going. On May 5 orders were received for all twelve-month volunteers to return to Vera Cruz for muster out.³⁷ The Third and Fourth Illinois Regiments left Jalapa on May 6 and 7, and they arrived and departed from Vera Cruz May 11 and 12. The men were mustered out at New Orleans (except for those left in hospitals in Jalapa, Matamoros and Vera Cruz). The Third departed on May 25 and the Fourth on May 29.³⁸

One Illinois man who served meritoriously for the remainder of the war did not leave with the rest of the troops. He was James Shields, the wounded hero of Cerro Gordo, who continued on to Mexico City commanding a brigade of New York and South Carolina volunteers. His action at

³⁵Bishop, A Twelve Months Campaign, p. 44; J. J. Oswandel, Notes of the Mexican War (Philadelphia, 1885), p. 642.

³⁶United States Congress, H.E.D. 8, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 89-91; Alton Telegraph, May 21, 1847, p. 3; The Picket Guard, Saltillo, April 26, 1847, p. 3.

³⁷Bishop, A Twelve Months Campaign, p. 45.

³⁸Smith, The War With Mexico, II, p. 64; Bishop, A Twelve Months Campaign, p. 46; Sangamo Journal, Springfield, June 3, 1846, p. 3; Muster Rolls of the Third and Fourth Illinois, I.S.A.

Churubusco brought him praise and he served gallantly at Chapultepec and Molino del Rey.³⁹

The First and Second Illinois Regiments remained in the Buena Vista area to await discharge.⁴⁰ On May 28, 1847, General Wool issued Order 302 authorizing their departure. He used the occasion to compliment Hardin, Zabriskie (both dead), Bissell, and Weatherford and the men of Illinois "who had served so well their country. Few can boast of longer marches, greater hardships, or more privations, and none of the greater gallantry in the field of Buena Vista . . . who have on all occasions done honor to themselves, and heroically sustained the cause of their country." On May 31, with a warning from Wool not to plunder on the way, the First and Second Illinois Regiments departed for Camargo on the coast.⁴¹ They arrived there on June 14 and were mustered out and paid on the 17th. They arrived at New Orleans about July 3, and left on the 5th on the steamer "Patrick Henry" for St. Louis.⁴² The Mexican War was over for the First, Second, Third and Fourth Illinois Volunteer Regiments.

In mid-June and throughout July the four Illinois regiments returned home to celebrations, picnics, and speeches. They were also greeted by the political problems of ending the war and holding a state constitutional convention. Newspaper editorials would now claim peace

³⁹United States Congress, H.E.D. 8, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 305-78, passim.

⁴⁰Henderson, "A Morgan County Volunteer," pp. 400-01.

⁴¹Harvey Neville, "Mexican War Diary," typed copy in IHL, pp. 37-38.

⁴²Ibid., p. 39; Erwin Urch, "The Public Career of William Barton Warren," Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, XXI (1928-1929), p. 107; United States Congress, H.E.D. 60, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 1180.

after the Whig military commanders had it won. The Sangamo Journal displayed a banner headline for Zachary Taylor for president. The Democrats countered, saying that the support of Taylor was to be expected from the Whigs, who with "consistency, the multi-colored principles . . . they nominate the leader of our armies . . . who has been . . . leading our troops in a war of conquest, rapine, violence and butchery . . . according to their own statements."⁴³

The returning four regiments were not the only forces from Illinois to serve in the war. On April 27, 1847, a second call for troops to "serve during the war" had been issued. The call was for one regiment, but, as in 1846, so many answered that an additional regiment was authorized. The official designation of the two was the "First and Second Illinois Regiments for the War" but they became better known as the Fifth and Sixth Regiments. Four independent companies and one detachment also were organized, and the approximate enrollment in the two additional regiments and independent companies was 2,600.⁴⁴

Speculation was high that Baker, returning from Cerro Gordo, would take one of the regiments. Either he did not care to, or he could not get the appointment, for he did not lead either unit.⁴⁵ Some of the same difficulties in organization were apparent. Boone County, which had been

⁴³Illinois State Register, Springfield, March 19, 1847, p. 3; Ibid., April, 22, 1847, p. 2; Ibid., June-July, 1847, passim; Alton Telegraph, July 16, 1847, p. 2; Sangamo Journal, Springfield, June 10, 1847, p. 3; Ottawa Free Trader, July 9, 1847, p. 2.

⁴⁴Evarts Green and Charles Thompson, editors, The Governors Letter Books, 1840-1853 (Springfield, Ill.: The State Historical Library, 1911), introduction by Charles Thompson, "A Study of the Administration of Governor Thomas Ford," pp. cviii-cix; Sangamo Journal, Springfield, May 6, 1847, p. 3; Muster Rolls, Independent Companies, Mexican War, I.S.A.

⁴⁵Illinois Journal, Springfield (formerly the Sangamo Journal), September 23, 1847, p. 1; Blair and Tarshis, Life of Edward Baker, p. 47.

rejected in the 1846 call, was also rejected in 1847. Several other companies were similarly rebuffed. A Monroe County volunteer said he felt as if he had been "butted off the bridge by an inferior force."⁴⁶

By June 14, the Fifth Regiment, under Colonel Edward Newby, had been mustered in at Alton and had departed for Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, on their way to New Mexico. The Sixth Regiment, commanded by Colonel James Collins, left Alton in August for Vera Cruz.⁴⁷ When the Fifth arrived at Santa Fe it was divided into two battalions.⁴⁸ One section of the Fifth went to El Paso and the other remained in Santa Fe as part of the garrison. In July of 1848, after the war was over, the Fifth participated in a campaign against the Navajo Indians along the Santa Fe Trail. By September, 1848, half of the Fifth Regiment had returned to St. Louis; in October the other half went to Fort Leavenworth. The entire regiment was mustered out on October 16, 1848.⁴⁹

The Sixth Illinois had been destined to reinforce Scott at Mexico City but arrived too late to be of any use. This regiment also was divided into two battalions. Five companies under the regimental commander, Collins, sailed to Vera Cruz while the others traveled to Tampico where they remained until they were discharged. The Vera Cruz battalion ventured inland as far

⁴⁶Illinois State Register, Springfield, May 21, 1847, p. 2; Alton Telegraph, May 28, 1847, p. 2.

⁴⁷Ibid., June 4, 1847, p. 2; Ibid., August 6, 1847, p. 2; Illinois Journal, Springfield, June 3, 1847, p. 2; Isaac Elliott, Records of the Black Hawk and Mexican Wars (Springfield, Ill.: State Printer), p. xxviii.

⁴⁸The commanders of the Fifth evidently changed in route with Charles Boyakin taking command; the muster rolls do not state exactly when the change occurred.

⁴⁹The independent companies actions are very obscure. Practically no information or records are available. Alton Telegraph, November 12, 1847, p. 2; Ibid., July 21, 1848, p. 3; Ibid., September 29, 1848, p. 2; Elliott, Records of the Mexican War, p. xxviii; Illinois State Register, Springfield, August 20, 1847, p. 1.

as National Bridge near Cerro Gordo and took part in several minor guerrilla skirmishes. The Sixth, as well as the Fifth, saw little action except marauders. The Sixth Illinois Regiment was mustered out at Alton between the 20th and 25th of July, 1848.⁵⁰

There is little information on the independent companies. Josiah Little's command served along with the Fifth Illinois in May and June, 1848. Altogether, Little's company served from September, 1847, to July, 1848. Captain Adam Dunlap's Company entered service in May, 1847, scouted for the Sixth Regiment, and was mustered out in November, 1848. George Lanphere returned from the war in 1848 to raise a detachment of thirty men, but he was mustered in in March and out in June, 1848, without ever assembling his command. Captain Michael Lawler (who would later lead the 18th Illinois Regiment in the Civil War) raised a company and proceeded to Mexico but saw no action.⁵¹

Captain Wyatt B. Stapp's company was mustered in at Alton on August 10, 1847, and proceeded to Jefferson Barracks, Missouri, and then to New Orleans on September 21. By the 30th they had reached Vera Cruz and moved on to National Bridge. They spent January through April patrolling between Jalapa and Perote and serving as escorts for the mail to Mexico City. The company was mustered out on July 26, 1848.⁵²

⁵⁰Alton Telegraph, August 20, 1847, p. 2; Ibid., September 10, 1847, p. 3; Ibid., October 8, 1847, p. 2; Ibid., October 22, 1847, p. 1; Muster Rolls of the Independent Companies, Mexican War, I.S.A.

⁵¹J. T. Dorris, "Michael Kelly Lawler," Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, XLVIII (1955), pp. 366, 401; Alton Telegraph, August 4, 1848, p. 2; Muster Rolls of the Independent Companies, Mexican War, I.S.A.

⁵²"Personal Recollections of Captain Wyatt B. Stapp's Company of Illinois Volunteers," by John Fonda, typed copy and original in the I.S.A., file of Muster Rolls, Independent Companies, Mexican War; Elliott, Records of the Mexican War, p. xvix.

As soldiers returned home, news stories of the war were becoming known throughout the nation. Kearny had taken Santa Fe without firing a shot, and Doniphan, with John C. Fremont's help, had secured California six weeks before the Battle of Buena Vista. The stories of the Mormon Battalion and its famous trek and of the many battles of the Southwest became known. After Cerro Gordo the American Army advanced to Mexico City and the decisive battles around the Mexican capital in September, 1847, were the final blow. Negotiations, more fighting, and renewed negotiations finally led to the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in February, 1848, which the United States Senate approved on March 18, 1848.⁵³

⁵³For detailed accounts of the last months of the war, see Henry, Story of the Mexican War, chapters 18-23; Singletary, The Mexican War, pp. 58-59, 69, 101; Smith, The War With Mexico, II, pp. 140, 168-70.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSIONS

The war was over. The treaty, negotiated by Nicholas Trist who had no authority (he had been fired by Polk), ceded present New Mexico, Arizona, California, Nevada, Utah and parts of Colorado and Wyoming to the United States. Mexico relinquished all claims to Texas above the Rio Grande and all claims held against United States' citizens. This completed the continental boundaries of the present United States with the exception of the Gadsden Purchase made in 1853.¹ Sidney Breese of Illinois, who had wanted America to acquire all of Mexico, stated his view: "No pent up Utica contracts our power, but the whole boundless continent is ours."² The Illinois Whigs were basically satisfied with the territorial acquisitions made by the treaty.³ The Illinois Journal (formerly the Sangamo Journal), however, did not mention the treaty's ratification until August, although it had received the news on July 13. The paper was more concerned about Taylor's road to the presidency.⁴

The national and state elections after the war were interesting.

¹Justin H. Smith, The War With Mexico (2 vols.; New York: Macmillan, 1919), II, pp. 235-341; Otis Singletary, The Mexican War (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1960), pp. 160-61; William E. Dodd, "The West and the War with Mexico," Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, V (July, 1922), p. 172.

²Ibid., p. 169.

³Sangamo Journal, Springfield, August 20, 1846, p. 3.

⁴Illinois Journal, Springfield, June-August, 1848, passim; Ibid., June 13, 1848, p. 2.

The Illinois Whigs supported Taylor for the presidency in 1848.

Democrats could not see how the Whigs, or Lincoln, could support the man who was essentially responsible for fighting the war. How could the Whigs accept a nominee who had been a leader in the war of "conquest, rapine, violence and butchery." Illinois Whigs did, however, and Edward Baker was even considered as his running mate.⁵

Lincoln, the author of the "spot resolutions," explained the Whig position when he said that his party had supported the war through supplies, moral support, and men; Illinois Whigs just did not like the way the war had begun and been conducted. The Whigs still maintained that Polk had devised the Mexican War to draw attention away from Oregon. Also, they argued that the Whig generals won the Mexican War by themselves because once the war had started the Democrats lost interest.⁶ The Illinois Whigs made their presence well-known in 1848.

Whigs formed Taylor clubs throughout the state and held mass meetings for their candidate. The publisher of the State Register was concerned enough about the increased Whig popularity in Illinois that he offered his paper at a discount cost so that all could obtain campaign information. The Democrats carried the state for Lewis Cass by 3,100 votes, but the Whigs increased their total votes by nearly 4,000 over the previous

⁵Donald W. Riddle, Congressman Abraham Lincoln (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1957), pp. 102-03, 127-28; Illinois Journal, Springfield, June 1, 1848, p. 3; Riddle, Congressman Abraham Lincoln, p. 27; Henry Blair and Rebecca Tarshis, The Life of Colonel Edward Baker (Portland, Ore.: Oregon Historical Society, 1960), pp. 47-50; Illinois State Register, Springfield, April 22, 1847, p. 2.

⁶Riddle, Congressman Abraham Lincoln, p. 109; Clarence Alvord, general editor, The Centennial History of Illinois, Vol. II: The Frontier State, 1818-1848, by Theodore Pease, (5 vols.; Springfield, Ill.: Centennial Commission, 1918), p. 338. Lincoln's contention that the initiating ambush of the war had not occurred on American soil and that therefore we had no right to retaliate led his law partner, William Herndon, to comment: Lincoln would be lucky to be elected to any office after writing the spot resolutions.

presidential election. The Democrats lost nine counties to the Free Soil party and fourteen to the Whigs.⁷ The Register's warning to the volunteers to "remember these moral traitors at the polls," had little affect.⁸ If the war had any influence on Illinois politics, this gain of the Whig party should possibly be credited to that conflict. Whether the debate prior to the war aided in the organization of the Whig party is questionable, but the facts are the Illinois Whig party grew in stature during the war.

In these elections of 1848 the soldier-politician was prominent. Although former Major Thomas Harris, a Democrat, won in the traditional Whig Seventh District by 74 votes, which the Democrats described as a crushing victory, the Whigs gained elsewhere. Edward Baker moved to Galena after the war and was elected to Congress from that district.⁹

The new Illinois Senate was comprised of 17 Democrats and seven Whigs, and the House had 43 Democrats and 22 Whigs. This was a sizable gain for the Whig party.¹⁰ This now formidable second party would continue until the rise of the Republican party and the 1856 election of former Whig, and Mexican War hero, William Bissell to the governorship. Bissell's campaign made extensive use of his Mexican War career as did other

⁷Pease, The Frontier State, p. 339; Ameda Ruth King, "The Last Years of the Whig Party in Illinois, 1846-1847," Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society, XXXII (Jan.-Dec., 1925), pp. 109, 120-23.

⁸Alton Telegraph, May 12, 1848, p. 2; Illinois State Register, Springfield, October 27, 1848, p. 2.

⁹Riddle, Congressman Abraham Lincoln, p. 111; Illinois Journal, Springfield, October 3, 1848, p. 2; King, "Last of the Whigs," p. 123; Illinois State Register, Springfield, August 11, 1848, p. 2; Milton Shutes, "Colonel E. D. Baker," reprint from California Historical Quarterly, (Dec., 1938), p. 5; James Matheny, "A Modern Knight Errant--Edward Dickinson Baker," Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, IX (1916-1917), pp. 23-42.

¹⁰Illinois State Register, Springfield, August 14, 1848, p. 2; Ibid., November 3, 1848, p. 2; Ibid., November 11, 1848, p. 2; Ibid., December 15, 1848, p. 2.

candidates. William Morrison, a private in the Second Illinois, served in the Illinois House from 1856-1860, and in Congress from 1876-1886. Another Mexican War hero, James Shields, defeated Sidney Breese for a seat in the Congress in 1848.¹¹

Shields continued on his career as a United States Senator from three different states. The political value he acquired from Mexican War participation cannot be overestimated. Shields had been wounded at the Battle of Cerro Gordo. When he returned home after the war he was nominated for the United States Senate over Sidney Breese, the incumbent, who had served from 1842 to 1848. A supporter of Shields' remarked after his victory, "What an extraordinary, what a wonderful shot that was! The ball [at Cerro Gordo] had gone clean through Shields without hurting him . . . and killed Breese a thousand miles away!"¹²

The Mexican War had made reputations and won elections for its veterans. The road led from the battlefield to the White House for one, and to the court house and state house for others. In Menard County five veterans were elected to county offices of judge, clerk of the county commission, assessor, treasurer, and recorder.¹³ John Moore, the former lieutenant governor and Mexican War veteran, was later elected state treasurer. Bissell, Foreman, Baker, Oglesby (later a governor), Logan, Harris, Richardson, and many others became prominent in Illinois

¹¹Prominent Democrats of Illinois Chicago: Democrat Publishing Co., 1899), pp. 118-32; William Halburt, "William Henry Bissell," Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, XXXVI (March, 1943), pp. 185-86; Charles Thompson, "The Illinois Whigs Before 1846," University of Illinois Bulletin, Studies in the Social Sciences, XII (1915), p. 132.

¹²"The Illinois Scrapbook," Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, XXXI (June, 1938), pp. 216-17.

¹³Singletary, The Mexican War, p. 181; Pease, The Frontier State, p. 406.

politics after the war. Also to be mentioned are Orville Browning and Illinois' Civil War governor, Richard Yates, Sr. In the Civil War, veterans of the Mexican War Michael Lawler, Julius Raith, Adolph Engelman, Logan, Prentiss, Wallace, Shields, and Edward Baker plus 23 others, obtained distinction for their military or political participation.¹⁴

The Illinois General Assembly had tried on several occasions without success to call a constitutional convention to remedy the state's financial and commercial situation. A convention was called in 1847 and delegates were elected in February of that year. Illinois needed new markets, financial institutions and government. The Democrats had a 91 to 71 advantage in the constitutional delegation.¹⁵ Although the new constitution may not seem too progressive now, it was an improvement over the old document and eliminated some of the state's economic and governmental pre-war problems. To assess the influence of the war on the writing of the constitution is difficult. There certainly was more need to compose a new constitution to meet new and increasing demands for the state's economy. The new constitution prohibited the state from contracting any debt of more than \$50,000; eliminated the state bank; increased taxes and provided enabling action for internal improvements.¹⁶ The important point is that Illinois was able to rewrite her constitution during this period to eliminate the problems of the past decade.

Illinois' economic growth after the war was tremendous. About

¹⁴Pease, The Frontier State, p. 406; John Moses, Illinois, Historical and Statistical (Chicago: Fergus Printing Co., 1895), pp. 498-501.

¹⁵See Chapters I and II for discussions of the situation in Illinois prior to the war. Illinois State Register, Springfield, February 26, 1847, p. 2; King, "Last Years of the Whigs," p. 112.

¹⁶Pease, The Frontier State, pp. 407-09; Alton Telegraph, May 12, May 26, 1848, p. 2; Illinois Journal, Springfield, August 2, 1848, p. 3.

\$11,000,000 had been paid to the volunteer forces. The Illinois volunteers probably returned their share of this to the state. This increase in available money must have contributed its affect on the state economy.¹⁷ The state's total receipts grew from \$381,435 in 1844-1846 to over \$634,000 in the period 1846-1848.¹⁸

A land boom was also under way. Military bounty land warrants amounted to more than 60,000,000 acres (much of it in Illinois) and the veterans who did not wish to settle on their 160 acres sold their warrants for \$25 to \$150. Real estate that had hardly been worth marketing before the war was now in great demand. Development of transportation facilities also boomed and the internal improvements so long sought (one of the main hopes to be realized from the war) were being implemented. The Illinois and Michigan Canal, bankrupt before the war, was completed at the end of the conflict. Chicago was beginning its fantastic growth as a market place. The Gulf of Mexico and the Mississippi River were now protected and new harbor facilities would be constructed in Illinois. Railroad building was widely supported after the war to transport state products to markets.¹⁹

Illinois was growing in other ways. The population increased, 476,183 in 1840, to over 851,000 in 1850.²⁰ She was also developing her educational

¹⁷United States Congress, S.E.D. 392, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 2, 11, 13, 15.

¹⁸Moses, Historical Statistics, p. 515.

¹⁹Riddle, Congressman Abraham Lincoln, p. 144; Illinois State Register, Springfield, August 12, 1847, p. 3; Ibid., February 19, 1847, p. 3; Evarts Green and Charles Thompson, editors, The Governors Letter Books, 1840-1853, (Springfield, Ill.: The State Historical Library, 1911), introduction by Charles Thompson, "A study of the Administration of Governor Thomas Ford," pp. lxxvi-vii; Paul W. Gates, "Frontier Landlords and Pioneer Tenants," Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, XXXVIII (1945), p. 48; Pease, The Frontier State, pp. 388-89.

²⁰Margaret Flint, "Chronology of Illinois History," Illinois State Historical Library, Springfield, pp. 10-11.

and social facilities.²¹ The Alton Telegraph commented after the war that things were better all around, land prices were equitable, progress and improvements were now possible, and the state was no longer burdened with debts.²²

Governor Thomas Ford in 1847 commented on the reduction in debts and the increase in internal improvements. He said that the state's future looked bright.²³ Militarily, however, Illinois learned nothing from the Mexican War even though she had been prominent on the battlefield. No attempt was made to improve the militia organization. Neither, for that matter, did the United States Government improve (the regular army was reduced as soon as the war ended). In Illinois, no new militia laws were passed, no new appropriations enabling acts were made available, and the inadequate call up procedure was left unchanged. Illinois could well have retained the in-service organization, and the wartime regiments could have been carried as militia units. The companies were merely disbanded and released, making the same costly and inefficient procedures necessary again in the Civil War.²⁴

One must conclude that the period 1845-1848 in Illinois was as important, or more so, than any three year period in her history. During these three years the Whigs became a formidable party, a new constitution was written, the state militia fought a war within state boundaries and in a foreign land, and the economic system was made reliable. The progress

²¹Pease, The Frontier State, Chapter XIV, "Illinois in Ferment."

²²Alton Telegraph, January 1, 1847, p. 3.

²³Thomas Ford, A History of Illinois From Its Commencement as a State in 1818 to 1847 (Chicago: S. C. Griggs and Co., 1854), pp. 445-46.

²⁴United States Congress, H.E.D. 62, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 5-8; United States Congress, H.E.D. 74, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., Adjutant General's Report, July, 1848.

of internal improvements programs, upon which the state had been working for years, culminated after the war in a general building program. Illinois' progress during the war was praised by government officials and private citizens. It would seem natural, however, to Governor Ford and especially the press, to assume that the war greatly influenced this advance. Care should be taken in considering the press during the period and the danger to credit the so-called advantages and disadvantages of a war to too great a degree to excuse the prosecution of the conflict.

Illinois played a prominent role in the Mexican War--a role that has too long been neglected. The governors of Illinois during the Mexican War made no official mention of the conflict in their journals, and Illinois historians, including Theodore Pease, have made little mention of the war and its influences upon the state. Pease, titling his volume, The Frontier State, 1818-1848, recognized 1848 as the end of the frontier period in Illinois, but he overlooked the importance of the development of the Whig party and almost completely neglected the Mexican War itself. Yet the Mexican War and the impetus from the war certainly had some influence on the state.²⁵ Within the brief period, 1845-1848, most of the above problems were corrected. The Mexican War did not deter and probably assisted the state to prosper and progress more in these three important years than the previous decades in Illinois history.

²⁵Governor's Letter Books, I.S.A.; Pease, The Frontier State, pp. 401-02. Pease, in some three chapters, explains the vast developments that took place in Illinois from 1846-1848 but does not mention them in context to the Mexican War or in any way to the influence the war may have had on Illinois' economic and political scenes. The Whig development and the debates between the two parties and the growth of the party structure, and the war itself, evidently was not deemed so important to the total development process during the late 1840's. This oversight by a fine scholar such as Pease might have been because of lack of source material.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BOOKS

- Alvord, Clarence, general editor. The Centennial History of Illinois.
Vol. II: The Frontier State, 1818-1848, by Theodore Pease.
5 Vols. Springfield, Illinois: Centennial Commission, 1918.
- Anderson, Robert. An Artillery Officer in the Mexican War. New York:
Putnam, 1911.
- Bancroft, Hubert H. History of Texas and the North Mexican States.
2 Vols. San Francisco: The History Company, 1890.
- Basler, Roy, editor. The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln. 8 Vols.
New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1953.
- Baylies, Frances. A Narrative of Major General Wool's Campaign in
Mexico. Albany: Little and Company, 1851.
- Billington, Ray A., with the collaboration of James Hedges. Westward
Expansion: A History of the American Frontier. Second edition.
New York: Macmillan Company, 1960.
- Bishop, William A. A Journal of the 12 Months Campaign of General
Shields's Brigade in Mexico, In the Years 1846-1847.
(Compiled by Captain Bishop, Company D, Third Regiment,
Illinois Volunteers from the notes of Lieutenants J. J.
Adams and H. C. Dunlap). St. Louis: Cathcart, Prescott
and Company, 1847.
- Blair, Harry and Rebecca Tarshis. The Life of Colonel Edward Baker.
Portland, Oregon: Oregon Historical Society, 1960.
- Brooks, N. C. A Complete History of the Mexican War. Philadelphia:
Gregg and Elliott, 1849.
- Callcott, Wilfred H. Santa Anna: The Story of an Enigma Who Once
Was Mexico. Second edition. Hamden, Connecticut: Archon
Books, 1964.
- Carleton, James H. Battle of Buena Vista. New York: Harper Brothers,
1848.
- Chidsey, Donald B. The War With Mexico. New York: Crown Publishers,
1968.

- Condon, William H. Life of Major General James Shields. Chicago: Blakely Printing Company, 1900.
- Democratic Publishing Company. Prominent Democrats of Illinois. Chicago: Democrat Publishing Company, 1889.
- DeVoto, Bernard. The Year of Decision, 1846. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1943.
- Elliott, Isaac. Records of the Services of the Illinois Soldiers in the Black Hawk War and in the Mexican War. Springfield, Illinois: Illinois State Printer, 1882.
- Esposito, Colonel Vincent, chief editor. The West Point Atlas of American Wars. Vol. I: 1689-1900. Second edition. New York: Frederick Praeger, 1960.
- Fehrenbacher, Donald. Chicago Giant, A Biography of "Long John" Wentworth. Madison, Wisconsin: American Historical Research Center, 1957.
- Ford, Thomas. History of Illinois From Its Commencement as a State in 1818 to 1847. Chicago: S. C. Griggs and Company, 1854.
- Freeman, Douglas Southall. Robert E. Lee, A Biography. New York: C. Scribners and Sons, 1943.
- Furber, George C. The Twelve Months Volunteer: Journal of a Private in the Tennessee Regiment of Cavalry. Cincinnati: U. P. James, 1857.
- General Taylor and His Staff: Containing Memoirs of Generals Taylor, Worth, Wool and Butler: Colonels May, Cross, Clay, Hardin, Yell, Hays and other Distinguished Officers Attached to General Taylor's Army Interspersed with Other Distinguished Anecdotes of the Mexican War, and Personal Adventures of the Officers. (Compiled from Public Documents and Private Correspondence). Philadelphia: Gregg, Elliott and Company, 1848.
- Graebner, Norman A. Empire on the Pacific, A Study in American Continental Expansion. New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1955.
- Grant, Ulysses S. Personal Memoirs. Edited and introduction by E. B. Long. Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1952.
- Halleck, Henry W. Elements of Military Art and Science, With Critical Notes on the Mexican and Crimean Wars. New York: Appleton and Company, 1863.
- Hamilton, Holman. Zachary Taylor, Soldier of the Republic. New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1941.
- Henry, Robert S. The Story of the Mexican War. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1950.

- Henry, W. S. Campaign Sketches of the War With Mexico. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1847.
- Huntington, Samuel. The Soldier and the State. New York: Random House, 1964.
- Jenkins, John S. History of the War Between the United States and Mexico. Auburn, New York: Derby, Mitler and Company, 1849.
- Lavender, David. Climax at Buena Vista. New York: Lippincott Company, 1966.
- McClellan, George B. Edited by William Myers. The Mexican War Diary of George B. McClellan. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1917.
- McCormac, Eugene I. James K. Polk: A Political Biography. Second edition. New York: Russell and Russell, 1965.
- Millis, Walter. Arms and Men. New York: Putnam Publishing House, 1958.
- Meade, George G. Life and Letters of George Gordon Meade. New York: C. Scribners Sons, 1913.
- Nevins, Allen, editor. Polk, The Diary of a President, 1845-1849. New York and London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1952.
- Nichols, Edward J. Zach Taylor's Little Army. Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1963.
- Oswandel, J. Jacob. Notes of the Mexican War. Philadelphia: n.i., 1885.
- Price, Glenn. Origins of the War With Mexico. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1967.
- Ramirez, Jose Fernando. Edited by Walter Scholes. Translated by Elliott B. Scherr. Mexico During the War With the United States. Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1950.
- Ramsey, Albert, editor. The Other Side or Notes for the History of the War Between Mexico and the United States. Translated from the Spanish. New York: John Wiley, 1850.
- Reeves, J. S. American Diplomacy Under Tyler and Polk. Baltimore, Maryland: n.i., 1907.
- Riddle, Donald W. Lincoln Runs for Congress. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1948.
- _____. Congressman Abraham Lincoln. Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1953.
- Ruiz, Ramon. The Mexican War--Was It Manifest Destiny. New York: Holt Rinehart, and Winston, 1963.

- Samson, William, editor. The Letters of Zachary Taylor from the Battlefields of the Mexican War. Rochester, New York: The Genesee Press, 1908.
- Scott, Winfield. Memoirs of Lieut.-General Scott. New York: Sheldon and Company, 1864.
- Sellars, Charles. James K. Polk, Continentalist: 1843-1846. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1966.
- Singletary, Otis. The Mexican War. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960.
- Smith, George and Charles Judah, editors. Chronicles of the Gringos, The United States Army in the Mexican War, 1846-1848. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1968.
- Smith, Justin H. The Annexation of Texas. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1919.
- _____. The War With Mexico. 2 Vols. New York: Macmillan Company, 1919.
- Van Deusen, Glyndon G. The Jacksonian Era, 1828-1848. New York: Harper and Row, 1959.

MANUSCRIPTS AND DIARIES

- Baker, Edward D. Illinois State Historical Library, manuscripts collections.
- Bissell, William. Illinois State Historical Library, manuscripts collections.
- _____. Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, Bissell Papers, manuscripts collections.
- Bishop, William. Illinois State Historical Library, diary, manuscripts collections.
- Browning, Orville H. Illinois State Historical Library, Browning Collection, manuscripts collections.
- Carlin, Thomas. Illinois State Historical Library, manuscripts collections.
- Engelmann, Adolph. Illinois State Historical Library, diary, manuscripts collections.
- Ford, Thomas. Illinois State Archives. Official Letter Books of the Governors, December, 1842-November, 1845.
- French, Augustus. Illinois State Archives. Official Letter Books of the Governors, December, 1846-December, 1848.
- Hardin, John J. Chicago Historical Society, Hardin Collection, manuscripts collections.

- Hardin, John J. Illinois State Historical Library, manuscripts collections.
- King, John N. Illinois State Historical Library, manuscripts collections.
- McLernand, John. Illinois State Historical Library, McLernand Papers, manuscripts collections.
- Mahon, William. Illinois State Historical Library, diary, manuscripts collections.
- _____. Illinois State Historical Library, manuscripts collections.
- Merryman, James H. Illinois State Historical Library, manuscripts collections.
- Neville, Harvey. Illinois State Historical Library, diary, manuscripts collections.
- Thompson, Philo. Illinois State Historical Library, manuscripts collections.
- Trumbell, Lyman. Illinois State Historical Library, Trumbell Family Papers, manuscripts collections.
- Wallace, William H. L. Illinois State Historical Library, Wallace-Dickey Collection, manuscripts collections.

PUBLIC DOCUMENTS

- Congressional Globe, Proceedings of the United States Senate and House of Representatives, Washington, D. C. 29th thru the 31st Congress, 1844-1848.
- Illinois Adjutant General, Reports of the Illinois Volunteers in the Mexican War, Public Documents relating to the War, 1846-1847. Illinois Adjutant General's Office, Springfield, Illinois.
- Illinois Constitution. (1818).
- _____. (1848).
- Illinois Reports. Reports of the Illinois Senate and House of Representatives, Springfield, Illinois, 1846-1847.
- Muster Rolls, Mexican War Volunteers. Illinois State Archives, Military Records Files.
- _____. Mexican War, Records of the Volunteers--Illinois. National Archives, Military Records Branch, Washington, D. C., and Arlington, Virginia.
- United States Congress. House Executive Document 4. 29th Congress, 1st Session.

United States Congress. House Executive Document 197. 29th Congress,
1st Session.

- _____ . House Executive Document 207. 29th Congress, 1st Session.
- _____ . House Executive Document 209. 29th Congress, 1st Session.
- _____ . House Executive Document 4. 29th Congress, 2nd Session.
- _____ . House Executive Document 119. 29th Congress, 2nd Session.
- _____ . House Executive Document 8. 30th Congress, 1st Session.
- _____ . House Executive Document 17. 30th Congress, 1st Session.
- _____ . House Executive Document 40. 30th Congress, 1st Session.
- _____ . House Executive Document 60. 30th Congress, 1st Session.
- _____ . House Executive Document 70. 30th Congress, 1st Session.
- _____ . House Executive Document 1. 30th Congress, 2nd Session.
- _____ . Senate Executive Document 1. 29th Congress, 1st Session.
- _____ . Senate Executive Document 378. 29th Congress, 1st Session.
- _____ . Senate Executive Document 388. 29th Congress, 1st Session.
- _____ . Senate Executive Document 337. 29th Congress, 2nd Session.
- _____ . Senate Executive Document 378. 29th Congress, 2nd Session.
- _____ . Senate Executive Document 392. 29th Congress, 2nd Session.
- _____ . Senate Executive Document 1. 30th Congress, 1st Session.
- _____ . Senate Executive Document 32. 31st Congress, 1st Session.

NEWSPAPERS

Note: All newspapers are Illinois unless stated otherwise.

Alton Telegraph, Alton, January, 1844 - December, 1848.

Belleville Advocate, Belleville, January, 1845 - December, 1848.

Chicago Democrat, Chicago, January, 1846 - December, 1848.

Chicago Journal, Chicago, January, 1846 - December, 1847.

Danville Patriot, Danville, January - December, 1847.

Galena Courier, Galena, January, 1845 - December, 1848.

Illinois State Register, Springfield, June, 1844 - December, 1848.

McLean County Register, Bloomington, continuing as the Western Whig,
January, 1846 - December, 1848.

Missouri Republican, St. Louis, Missouri, January, 1845 - December, 1848.

Morgan County Journal, Jacksonville, January, 1845 - December, 1848.

Ottawa Free-Trader, Ottawa, January, 1846 - December, 1847.

Peoria Register, Peoria, January - December, 1846.

Picket Guard, Saltillo, Mexico, (soldier's paper), April 19, 1847 -
May 24, 1847.

St. Louis American, St. Louis, Missouri, January, 1846 - December, 1847.

St. Louis Gazette, St. Louis, Missouri, January, 1846 - December, 1847.

Sangamo Journal, Springfield, continuing after September 9, 1847, as the
Illinois Journal, June, 1844 - December, 1848.

PERIODICALS

Arkansas Historical Quarterly. Fayetteville: Arkansas Historical
Association, Vols. I - XXV (1942-1966).

Bulletin of the Missouri Historical Society. St. Louis: Missouri
Historical Society, Vols. I - XXII (1944-1966).

Gabriel, Ralph H. "American Experience of Military Government,"
American Historical Review, XLIX (July, 1944), pp. 630-44.

Indiana History Bulletin. Indianapolis: Indiana History Bureau, Vols.
I - XLIII (1923-1966).

Indiana Magazine of History. Bloomington: Indiana University, Vols. I -
LXIV (1905-1968).

Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society. Springfield: The
Illinois State Historical Society, Vols. I - XLI (1919-1968).

Journal of the Texas Historical Association. Austin: Texas Historical
Association, Vols. I - XVIII (1897-1916), continued as The
Southwestern Historical Quarterly, Vols. XX - LXXII (1919-
1969).

Kentucky State Historical Society Register. Louisville: Kentucky
Historical Society, Vols. I - LXVI (1903-1968).