

MILITARY ORDER OF THE LOYAL LEGION OF THE UNITED STATES



Loyal Legion Vignettes

OFFICERS OF HISPANIC DESCENT IN THE UNION ARMY

By

**Robert Girard Carroon, Past Commander-in-Chief
Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the U.S.**

**23 Thompson Road
West Hartford, CT 06107**

jjcarroon@aol.com

(May 2000)

The Officer Corps of the Union Army during the Civil War was an important factor in enabling minority groups to enter the main stream of American life in the mid nineteenth century. Leadership roles assumed by members of immigrant groups in the regiments of the Federal forces carried over into civilian life and helped them to achieve integration into society in the United States in the decades which followed the War of the Rebellion. Most students of the Civil War are familiar with the contributions made by Irish, German and Scandinavian units commanded by officers from their own native lands. More recent research has shown that at least 107 African Americans held commissioned rank in the Union Army as line officers and as chaplains and surgeons. A neglected group has been the officers of Hispanic ancestry who served in the Union Army.

So far approximately 173 officers of Hispanic descent have been identified using the Army Register of the Volunteer Force in the United States. Because most Hispanic residents of the United States lived in the southern portion of the nation historians have tended to assume that if they participated in the Civil War it was as soldiers of the Confederate States Army. While this is certainly true, particularly in the case of the Texas regiments, it is not completely accurate. Governor Sam Houston was by no means the only resident of Texas who espoused the cause of the Union. As Companion Paul Adams pointed out in a previous issue (Vol. 49, No. 1) of the Loyal Legion Historical Journal, "Treue Der Union" German immigrants in Texas were particularly loyal to the Union and suffered greatly for the position they took.

The Union Army had several units from Texas and the First and Second Texas Cavalry Regiments as well as the Independent Texas Cavalry (Partisan Rangers) had officers and men of Hispanic descent serving with those units. The 2nd Texas Volunteer Cavalry had five Captains (George Travino, Clemente Zapata, Cesario Falcon, Jose Maria Martinez and Monico de Abrego) as well as a number of first and second lieutenants. The 1st Texas had five officers of Hispanic descent.

New Mexico had the most officers with Hispanic names serving in the nineteen units which were enlisted in the Federal service. New Mexico at this time also included Arizona Territory. So far 157 officers have been identified, including Lt. Colonel Diego Archuleta commanding the First New Mexico Volunteer Infantry, Colonel Miguel E. Pino who commanded the 2nd New Mexico Volunteer Infantry, Colonel Jose G. Gallegos commander of the Third New Mexico Volunteer Infantry, and Lt. Colonel Francisco Perea, who commanded Perea's Militia Battalion. Most of these units fought in the Battle of Valverde on 21 February 1862 against the forces of the Confederate States Army commanded by Brigadier General Henry H. Sibley. These units also participated in such battles as Fort Craig, on 23 August and 26 September 1861 under Brigadier General Edward R. S. Canby and Glorietta Pass, and later served under Brevet Brigadier General Christopher S. "Kit" Carson. The Battle of Aro Pass, fought on 5 July 1865, was among the last engagements of the war.

Florida furnished one officer of Hispanic descent in Captain Emeric Meszaros of the 1st Florida U.S. Volunteer Infantry and Louisiana at least two, Captain Manuel de le Callija of the 2nd Louisiana Volunteer Infantry and 1st Lieutenant Rolando Secondo of the 1st Louisiana Volunteer Infantry. The 2nd Louisiana fought at Plains Store and the 1st Louisiana at Port Hudson.

New Mexico has no Commandery of the Loyal Legion, but it is evident that should one be established there are a number of officers whose descendants would qualify as Companions. The accounts of the actions in which these officers participated and many of their official reports can be found in the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies in the War of the Rebellion, Series I, Volumes 4, 9 and 26.)

