

THE FIRST REGIMENT OF CAVALRY

United States Army

This Account of the Organization of the First Regiment of Cavalry
And of Its Early Activities Against the Indians Is Quoted
From the Official Record of the Organization

"The 'United States Regiment of Dragoons' was organized by Act of Congress, approved March 2, 1833, becoming the 'First Regiment of Cavalry' by the Act of August 3, 1861. The first order announcing appointments in the Regiment was dated March 5, 1833, gave the names of the Colonel, Lieutenant Colonel, Major, four Captains and four Lieutenants, and stated that the organization of the regiment would be perfected by the selection of officers from the 'Battalion of Rangers.' Headquarters were established at Jefferson Barracks, Mo. Lieutenant Jefferson Davis was the first adjutant but resigned the Staff position February 4, 1834, and was assigned to Company A.

Throughout the summer of 1835 all of the companies of the regiment were kept in the field exploring the territory just west of the Missouri frontier. The object appears to have been exploration chiefly, for no conflicts with the Indians took place. The regiment performed its duty thoroughly, as was shown by the letter of commendation sent by General E. P. Gaines, commanding West Department, to the Regimental Commander upon receipt of his report of operation.

"Many letters written and orders issued about this time are of great interest, and some are very amusing from the force of the language used, showing a great difference in the military correspondence then and now. The court-martial orders are especially interesting on account of the peculiar sentences imposed.

"During the year 1836 the general disposition of the regiment remained unchanged. The companies were employed in scouting among the Indians, especially along the Missouri frontier, a portion of the regiment going to Nacogdoches, Texas, for the purpose of keeping off white trespassers from the Indian country, and preserving the peace between whites and Indians and among the Indians themselves; also in building wagon roads and bridges. During the winter the companies returned to their stations, Fort Leavenworth, Fort Gibson, and Des Moines.

"The First Regiment of Light Dragoons at Fort Leavenworth, when inspected by the Commanding General in 1837, was found to be in a state of police and discipline reflecting the highest credit on Colonel Kearny—

the exemplary commander, his captains and other officers, non-commissioned officers and soldiers, whose high health and vigilance, with the excellent condition of the horses, afforded conclusive evidence of their talents, industry, and steady habits.

"In October, 1837, and again in March, 1838, serious difficulties were reported between the settlers and the Osage Indians, and companies of the regiment were at once sent to the disturbed regions. On the second occasion the rapidity of Colonel Kearny's movements and the sudden appearance of 200 Dragoons in their midst appeared to have had a very quieting effect on the Indians, for after his return to Leavenworth, Colonel Kearny reports no further danger of trouble with the Osages.

"Very soon after the commencement of hostilities between the United States and Mexico in 1845, preparations were begun for the invasion of Mexican territory at various points. One expedition was to advance from the Missouri River to the west, Santa Fe its objective point. It was immediately determined, however, to push on with this column and occupy Upper California. General Kearny was placed in command of this 'Army of the West', which consisted of companies B, D, G, I, and K, of the First Dragoons, two companies of artillery, two companies of infantry, nine companies of Missouri volunteer cavalry under command of Colonel A. W. Doniphan, in all about 1,800 men. This command was concentrated at Bont's Ford, on the Arkansas, from which point it marched for Santa Fe, August 1, 1846.

"Some show of resistance to Kearny's advance was made by the Mexican Governor of New Mexico, but Las Vegas was occupied on the 14th, and Santa Fe on the 18th of August without a conflict, the Mexicans retreating upon Kearny's approach. Leaving Colonel Doniphan in command at Santa Fe, General Kearny took up the march for California, September 26, and encamped about forty miles from San Diego, December 5, where he was met by a small party of volunteers under Captain Gillespie, sent out from San Diego by Commodore Stockton, to give information of the enemy, of whom there were supposed to be six or seven hundred opposed to Kearny's advance.