**Black Mountain Interpretive Notes**

Rich Loosbrock, Ph.D.

rdloosbr@adams.edu

@DrRichLoos

 Feel free to email or message on Twitter any questions you may have over the summer, or any insights into the camps and roles that you play.

The Civil War was significant for New Mexico in many ways. After the Confederates were turned back at Glorieta Pass in early 1862 there was little fighting between Confederates and Union soliders. But the Civil War led to a much greater military presence in the West, and much of this was used against Indians (the Long Walk, for example, of the Navajo after defeat by Kit Carson).

Carlton’s California Column was a significant force, mostly because they brought experience miners to New Mexico. Gold at Elizabethtown (Baldy) discovered by members of the unit, as well as Magdalena, NM).

During the Civil War, the primary industry in New Mexico was supplying the military.

One note: the overwhelming cause of the Civil War was slavery. Among academic historians, there is a wide consensus, and historians don’t often agree on much. They differ on just how slavery caused the war, but there is no doubt it was the cause. Most of the Confederate states, when they seceded, indicated that was the reason they were leaving; no one at the time on either side said otherwise. “States rights” was understood to be about only one right: to hold slaves.” And most southerners didn’t believe in states rights as northern states were passing laws in the 1850s to protect runaway slaves. The South Carolina ordinance of secession actually states they are leaving because of the North’s promotion of personal liberty laws. In other words, South Carolina was leaving because they were *against* States Rights.

 The issue only arose after the war when proponents of the Confederacy (mostly, its generals) sought to elevate the cause of the South, and to do that they had to separate the Confederacy from slavery, which they did by simply lying about it.

 However, in some of the popular mind today the war was not about slavery. This ideology continues to fuel political differences today, and often break along racial lines.

 Soldiers in the Union army may not have cared about slavery, and many were bitterly racist, as much of the population was. But they did see the war as a test of the American experiment in democracy (see the Gettysburg Address) and many came to be abolitionists by the end of the war (in the 1864 election Lincoln did very well among the soldiers in the field, most of whom had come to believe in the necessary destruction of slavery). The average Union soldier would be been highly politicized by the war, and many joined the Grand Army of the Republic after.

 And the army had a complex relationship with Indians. While the relationship was mostly antagonistic, and often violent, sometimes soldiers, especially officers, developed close and respectful relationships with tribes in the West. After all, many treaties between the U.S. government and tribes made the army the protectors of the Indians.

We tend to view history, especially in the American West, as a story that the region made America what it is; that it was a place that was wide open and had lots of opportunity. But the discharged soldiers at Black Mountain were likely doing this because they had no other options; that they were trying to survive and likely not as enthralled by what we see as a free life.