

CANBY, EDWARD RICHARD S.

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Born at _____ Kentucky, August ____, 1817.

Son of Israel T. Canby and _____

Married Louisa Hawkins at Crawfordsville, Indiana, August 1, 1839

No children

Came to Fort Defiance, New Mexico, as Major, 10th U.S. Infantry, 1860

Was Brigadier General in Command of the Department of the

Pacific when killed by Modoc Indians near Siskiyou, California,

April 11, 1873, aged 55.

Buried

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EDWARD RICHARD SPRIGG CANBY was born in Kentucky in August 1817 or 1818. He was the son of Israel T. Canby. He moved with his parents to Indiana. His father was Democratic candidate for Governor of Indiana during the Civil War. He married Louisa Hawkins at Crawfordsville, Indiana, August 1, 1839. There were no children.

He came to Fort Defiance, New Mexico, as Major, 10th U. S. Infantry, in 1860. Was Brigadier General in command of the Department of the Pacific when killed by Modoc Indians near Siskiyou, California, April 11, 1873. He was 55 years of age at the time of his death.

1873
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1818

The biography of Edward Richard Sprigg discloses that he was born in Kentucky, August 1817 and that he died April 11, 1873; that on August 1, 1839 he married Louisa Hawkins at Crawfordsville, Indiana. There were no children. His military service is described as follows:

Union soldier, was born in Kentucky. His father Israel T. Canby was later Democratic candidate for governor of Indiana, to which state the family had removed. Canby was appointed from Indiana to a cadetship at Westpoint in 1835, graduated there in 1839, and was commissioned second lieutenant in the 2nd infantry. He served in the Florida War and on routine duties for some years, was promoted first lieutenant in 64, and in 1847 was appointed an assistant adjutant-general with the rank of captain. In that capacity he accompanied Riley's brigade of Gen. Scott's army in Mexico, was present at the siege of Vera Cruz, the battles of Cerro Gordo, Contreras, and Churubusco, and the taking of the City of Mexico, and was twice brevetted for gallantry. He was employed on duties pertaining to his department, at first in San Francisco and later in Washington, until 1855, when he returned to the line by appointment as major of the 10th Infantry. He then served with his regiment at various stations on the frontier, the outbreak of the Civil War finding him garrison at Fort Defiance, New Mexico. He was appointed colonel of the 19th Infantry, May 14, 1861, and assigned to the command of the Department of New Mexico. The district under his charge was an almost uninhabited region, remote from the principal theatre of the war, and the operations conducted there were little noticed at the time and yet they had, or might have had a great influence upon the result of the war. When Gen. Sibley led a Confederate expedition from Texas into New Mexico, his government had larger plans than the mere occupation of that territory. California was a goal which Sibley hoped to reach. Its population was scanty, and included a considerable number of secession sympathizers. Once occupied, its conquest by Union troops would have been a difficult matter, and meanwhile the Confederate government could have drawn from it an ample supply of the gold that it so badly needed. Canby's force was small, and was largely made up of unreliable local volunteers. He fought and lost a battle at Valverde, Jan. 21, 1862, and thereafter avoided combat, using hunger, thirst and heat as his weapons, as he drew Sibley away from his supplies. The invasion ended in complete disaster, and Sibley's demoralized command had lost half its strength before it reached Texas again.

Canby was appointed brigadier general of volunteers, Mar. 31, 1862, and ordered east. For a year and a half he was on duty as assistant adjutant general in Washington, except for a period of four months in 1863, following the draft riots, when he was in command of the City of New York, suppressing disorder and executing the draft. He was appointed major general of volunteers, May 7, 1864, and assigned to the command of the Military Division of West Mississippi, embracing the Gulf States and the Southwest. As all available troops had been withdrawn to strengthen Grant's and Sherman's armies, there were no large operations in his district during 1864. He was severely wounded by guerrillas in November. Soon after his recovery he managed to assemble sufficient force for a serious campaign against Mobile. The forts covering it were successively taken, by siege or assault, and the city was entered on April 12, 1865. On May 4 and May 26, Canby received the surrender of the armies of Taylor and Kirby Smith, the last two Confederate armies remaining in the field.

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For five years following the war he was moved from place to place in the South, being sent anywhere that the administration encountered serious difficulties. "Wherever he went", according to Gen. Cullum, "order, good feeling, and tranquility followed his footsteps."

He had been appointed a brigadier general in the regular army, July 28, 1866, and was mustered out of the volunteer service, Sept. 1, 1866. In 1870 he was assigned to command on the Pacific coast. Always a friend of the Indian, he undertook a mission to the Modocs in northern California, endeavoring to arrange a peaceable settlement of the difficulties with the government, but was treacherously murdered by the Indian envoys during his conference with them.

He was tall and soldierly in appearance, kind and courteous in manner, utterly devoid of selfish ambition. His superiors and subordinates knew him as a great commander; he was too modest and reserved to win the popular recognition that he merited.

(G.W. Cullum, Biog. Reg. (1801), II, 18-24; Battles and Leaders of the Civil War (1884), vols. II and IV; Official Records, IV, IX, XXVII, pt. 1, XXXIV, Pts. 1, 3, 4, XXXIX, pts. 1, 2, 3, XLIX, pts. 1, 2; H.C. Wood, "The Assassination of Gen. Canby," in Jour. of the Military Service Institution, IX (1888), 395-98.) T.M.S.
(Also Pension records of widow)