

## A Memorial to the Founding of Arizona

The Wesley Bolin Memorial Plaza at the Arizona capitol in Phoenix has thousands of visitors every month. The memorials around the plaza tell the history of Arizona, from the original Native American settlers to the Spanish, and through our involvement in World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, and operations Desert Storm and Enduring Freedom. It relates the importance of various people and groups who have impacted the area known as Arizona. But there is no memorial that describes how Arizona came into existence.

Arizona was born out of the Civil War and played a very important part in that war. Many school groups visit the Plaza every year, but they don't learn how Arizona itself came about; the history of the Civil War is rarely taught in schools anymore. There is a Confederate Troops Memorial, but it does not provide any history. The Allied Orders of the Grand Army of the Republic (The Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, Auxiliary to the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, Daughters of Union Veterans of the Civil War 1861-1865, Women's Relief Corps, and Ladies of the Grand Army of the Republic) propose constructing a memorial to the Civil War and the creation of Arizona as we know it.

When the Civil War began, the area now known as Arizona was a part of the New Mexico Territory. In July 1861, Confederate forces from Texas entered the New Mexico Territory and defeated Union troops at Mesilla. The following month, the Confederate Territory of Arizona was declared, comprising the southern half of the New Mexico Territory, and the Confederate government formally recognized the Arizona Territory in February 1862.

The Confederate Army of New Mexico was organized in Texas in late 1861 and entered New Mexico in January 1862. It drove north, intending to capture the Colorado gold fields, and west, hoping to secure a route to the Pacific coast and its resources and ports; the Union blockade of Southern ports had effectively cut off trade for the South, stymying its ability to grow and conduct the war. Confederate President Jefferson Davis had overseen the Gadsden Purchase in 1853, which had added all of Arizona south of the Gila River, for the purpose of building a southern railway to the Pacific, and the military effort in 1862 sought to clear the path for that railway.

The northern push to Colorado was stopped at the Battle of Glorieta Pass on March 28. In Arizona, Confederate troops got as far west as Stanwix Station, 80 miles from Yuma, where they were turned back by a Union Army raised in California, and then at the Battle of Picacho Pass on April 15, where 3 Union soldiers were killed. These two skirmishes were the western-most engagements of the Civil War and kept the Confederacy from expanding westward. By the end of July 1862, all Confederate troops had been pushed back into Texas, and New Mexico and Arizona remained under Union control through the rest of the war.

As a result of the Confederate incursion into the New Mexico Territory, the United States created the Territory of Arizona, comprised of the western half of the New Mexico Territory, on February 24, 1863. Except for the southern tip of Nevada, which was transferred from Arizona to Nevada in 1867, the Arizona Territory encompassed the same boundaries as the current State of Arizona.

A memorial to the Civil War in Arizona on Wesley Bolin Memorial Plaza will help provide a more complete picture of the history of Arizona. The Allied Orders have designed an obelisk memorial that will be about 6 feet tall, have the history of the formation of Arizona on one side, a recounting of the Civil War in Arizona on another side, a recognition of the Union soldiers who died in Arizona during the Civil War on a third side, and the history of the Grand Army of the Republic in Arizona on the fourth side.