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ARMY AGRICULTURE IN NEW MEXICO, 1852-53

ROBERT W. FRAZER

WHILE the Mexican War was in progress, military costs could not be a matter of major concern. Once the war ended, the return to a peacetime basis reduced army expenses considerably below those of the war years and no immediate and deliberate policy of economy was adopted. At the close of the war the legal strength of the army was fixed at 10,120 officers and men, a mere 702 above prewar strength.¹ Although the expansion of personnel was small, less than 7 percent, the cost of maintaining the military establishment increased enormously. Part of the increase resulted from the obligations inherent in the acquisition of so much new territory, part reflected the cost of establishing a large number of new military posts, and a significant portion represented the expense of transporting supplies to the far-flung western posts.²

The cost of maintaining troops in the 9th Military Department³ was proportionately higher than in any other department in the United States, surprisingly great, considering the small number of troops stationed in New Mexico. The War Department was quite aware of the cost of operations in the far western territories. Shortly before the war officially ended, Captain Langdon C. Easton, quartermaster at Fort Leavenworth, estimated that the government was paying fourteen and three-quarters cents per pound to move stores from Fort Leavenworth to Santa Fe.⁴ The rate applied, of course, to boxes, barrels, and other containers as well as their contents. The cost of transporting some items, notably certain commissary stores, exceeded the value of the items several times over. Although the rate declined somewhat from year to

year, transportation costs were a prime object when attention turned to the reduction of military expenses.

Because the cost of transportation was so large, the army sought increasingly to purchase supplies locally and to encourage the New Mexican people to produce more to sell. Even though the price of almost everything normally purchased by the army was appreciably higher in New Mexico than at Fort Leavenworth, the saving in transportation more than compensated for the difference. However, New Mexico at this time produced few of the quartermaster and commissary stores required by army regulations. In its current state of development it could expand quantity to some extent but could do little to diversify output. Even though the variety was limited, the military offered a market previously lacking and provided a significant stimulus to New Mexican agriculture, especially corn and wheat production.

By 1851 the savings achieved by purchasing in New Mexico were negligible, and the effect was more important to the local economy than to the military budget. Transportation costs remained a major factor, and there was a growing belief that everything available in New Mexico—whether goods, rentals, or civilian labor—was more expensive than it should be and therefore susceptible to appreciable reduction. In an attempt to reduce some of the excessive costs and to provide the essential feed for public animals, the army turned to itself as a source of some supplies. In the older parts of the United States post gardens had long been planted, and a post farm had been cultivated at Fort Leavenworth with considerable success.⁵ In 1847 Quartermaster General Thomas S. Jesup noted that, “at most of the Western outposts a system of cultivation was adopted when the posts were first established by which the expence of maintaining the posts was greatly reduced.” He recommended that the system be introduced at posts to be established in the newly occupied West.⁶ At the New Mexican posts there is no record of post gardens during the occupation period or the early years after annexation; indeed, the troops stationed in New Mexico were totally unfamiliar with the agricultural methods (including irrigation) practiced in the Southwest.

On January 8 Secretary of War Charles M. Conrad⁷ issued General Order No. 1 for 1851, an order which would be much criticized as an attempt to turn soldiers into farmers. The order contained two main points. First, "to promote the health of the troops, and to reduce the expense of subsisting the army," kitchen gardens would be cultivated at every permanent post and station where public land was available or private land could be leased "on reasonable terms." Enough vegetables were to be grown to supply the troops and the post hospital throughout the year. Secondly, in the recently acquired western territory "a system of more extensive cultivation will also be commenced [by the troops] as soon as possible" at posts designated by department commanders. The post farms would raise "grains for bread and forage, and long forage."

The order authorized "all necessary expenditures for the farm cultivation" and instructed post commanders to "adopt all necessary measures to carry it on successfully." The products of farm and garden which constituted a part of the ration or feed for public animals would be purchased by the commissary and quartermaster's departments of the posts. In New Mexico they would be paid for at the prevailing St. Louis market prices. All expenditures would be deducted from the amount received; then the remaining profit would be distributed equally among the enlisted men at the post. The post commander would be responsible "for any improper management, or loss not strictly unavoidable."⁸ Farming, therefore, was not something to be carried on when military duties permitted but was itself a military duty. Secretary Conrad hoped that the result would be an appreciable saving to the army and that the profit-sharing plan would make the program popular with the troops.

When Colonel John Munroe,⁹ commander of the 9th Military Department, received the order toward the end of February 1851, he apparently assumed that his department would not be expected to participate in the farm program and so addressed himself only to the matter of kitchen gardens. Even in this he saw no great urgency because there were "difficulties attendant on a proper

compliance with the order," not all of which could be removed without some reorganization of the department. Virtually all of the troops occupied rented facilities located in towns and not within convenient distance of land available to them for cultivation. Munroe offered a deceptively simple solution: move the troops to locations where land was available and establish new posts. Once the army was in its own posts there would still remain two problems not encountered in the East. Irrigation systems would have to be constructed and most of the garden seeds would have to be imported from the United States. The picture thus painted seemed to offer no insuperable difficulties and implied a saving in expenses—an appealing thought to an economy-minded War Department.

Analyzing the existing distribution of troops from a military-agricultural point of view, Munroe believed that ten of the eleven existing posts¹⁰ were properly positioned and that if the government decided to replace them, the new posts should be in the same general areas.¹¹ Having expressed his opinion on the feasibility of the agricultural program, Munroe did nothing to implement the order at any of the existing posts. This had the effect of delaying its application in the department for one year. Munroe's belief that farming was not practical at the existing posts had much to justify it; but at most of them, gardens were entirely possible, particularly as the leasing of land had been authorized.

On March 29, 1851, Colonel Edwin Vose Sumner¹² was instructed to proceed to New Mexico and assume command of the department. His attention was called particularly to the order regarding agriculture, which he was "specially directed to carry into immediate and it is hoped successful operation."¹³ He was further enjoined to "use every effort to reduce the enormous expenditures of the army in New Mexico, particularly in the quartermaster's and subsistence departments . . . [and to] rigidly enforce all regulations having reference to the economy of the service."¹⁴ Sumner left Fort Leavenworth on May 26 with a detachment of dragoon and infantry recruits. He also took with him four young civilians—three farmers and a machinist—each employed at sixty-

five dollars per month, plus a ration. He justified the somewhat unusual outlay on the ground that he had a number of large farms to establish and operate "by a system of cultivation altogether new" to New Mexico; that is, by the farming methods of the well-watered East. The three farmers, with their practical knowledge, would provide the troops with an example of proper agricultural practices.¹⁵

The agricultural program, although its objectives were laudable, was ill-conceived in Washington and carried out in ignorance in New Mexico. No attempt was made to determine in advance what would grow, given the conditions of climate and soil in New Mexico. Sumner's three farmers were not experienced in the practice of agriculture in the arid Southwest. Other than irrigation, which he admitted was necessary, Sumner considered the farming methods of the New Mexicans execrable. He issued instructions not to permit the Spanish-Americans hired to work on government farms to use "their miserable method of cultivation except in irrigation, about which they know more than we do."¹⁶

Munroe had done nothing to prepare for the agricultural experiment, and Sumner arrived too late in the season to get it underway until the following year. He arrived in Santa Fe on July 19 and immediately embarked on the reorganization of the department, which meant abandoning almost all of the existing posts and establishing new posts away from centers of population. In selecting sites for the new posts, the availability of sufficient land and water for agriculture was a prerequisite. Furthermore, Sumner made his attitude quite clear and completely official in a department order: "No officer will be entrusted in command of a post in this Department who does not manifest zeal and ability in carrying out the orders of the government, relating to agriculture and the reduction of army expenses."¹⁷

The results of the program varied from post to post and were most nearly successful, in quantity produced though not in saving, at Fort Union.¹⁸ There the farm was located on Ocaté Creek, an affluent of the Canadian River, where it emerged from the

mountains some twenty-three miles by road north of the fort. The land was good; the setting in the foothills of the Sangre de Cristos, picturesque. The property was rented from Manuel Alvarez; and even after farming was discontinued, the army paid him a small sum annually for the privilege of cutting grass on his land. Soldiers who served at Fort Union remembered the Ocaté; a number of them sought to purchase or rent land there, but Alvarez rejected all offers.¹⁹

The Fort Union farm was under the supervision of W. Reuben Sumner, one of the colonel's imported agriculturalists. Six soldiers were regularly kept at work on the farm, plus detachments of extra duty men cutting hay.²⁰ In 1852 the farm yielded one thousand bushels of corn, six hundred of which had already been consumed or allocated by the first of December, and forty tons of cornstalk fodder. The soldiers also put up forty tons of hay, "more or less," cut from the natural grass. In addition to the quartermaster's mules and horses which were grazed at the farm, there were forty-seven work oxen, five milk cows, a breeding stallion, and forty hogs. Not enough was raised to feed this assortment of animals through the winter, to say nothing of the dragoon mounts at the fort. Major James H. Carleton,²¹ in command of Fort Union, recommended that the hogs be sold or even given away "to improve the breed of hogs in this country" because they were too poor to kill and too expensive to keep. He also suggested that the number of work oxen at the farm be reduced.²²

At Fort Conrad,²³ located on the west bank of the Río Grande about twenty-five miles below Socorro, despite Sumner's insistence, neither a farm nor garden was planted in the spring of 1852 because an acequia had not been dug. This was particularly annoying to Sumner because he had given Major Marshal S. Howe,²⁴ who commanded the post, permission to hire a foreman and ten laborers to open up the farm. He also suggested that it be located close to the river where the banks were low, whether near the post or not, thereby avoiding the expense of constructing a long acequia. If Howe could not do that, he was "to endeavor to have some large fields," on rented land if necessary, provided the terms

were reasonable. Sumner made it clear that he intended Howe to produce large crops of corn, wheat, and barley despite any difficulties he might encounter. When all urging failed to move Howe, Sumner demanded to know whether it would be possible to plant a garden on the river bank near the post "so as to water it by hand" and raise some late vegetables. Under pressure, Howe finally had the garden planted and announced, presumably as a palliative, that his men had put up some two hundred tons of hay.²⁵ This did not satisfy Sumner, who had no intention of letting a second year pass without a farm at Fort Conrad. He now ordered "a detail of one officer, two noncommissioned officers, and twenty privates . . . placed on extra duty for the purpose of opening an acequia and breaking up land for a farm."²⁶

Before Fort Fillmore²⁷ was established on the east bank of the Río Grande about seven miles south of the recently settled Las Cruces, Major Gouverneur Morris²⁸ objected strongly to the proposed site. He had learned "from personal inspection, and information derived from the old inhabitants of the country," that the entire valley south of Doña Ana was subject to overflow. This, he predicted, would interfere with communications, render the land useless for agriculture, and probably make the site unhealthful. Moreover, the land upstream from the site was lower than the site itself so that it would be necessary to construct an acequia six miles long to irrigate farm and garden. Morris discovered also that "every portion and parcel of the soil is so perfectly saturated with saline matter called by the Mexicans 'Tequesquite' and salitre" that he doubted its suitability for cultivation.²⁹

Lieutenant Colonel Dixon S. Miles,³⁰ who replaced Morris in command of Fort Fillmore in November, warned that it would be a waste of labor and seed to attempt to farm by methods familiar in the States and requested permission to hire an overseer and ten Spanish-American laborers who would be familiar with "the making and management of acequias" and "the time and manner of planting." He estimated that the cost of the farm for 1852, exclusive of farm implements and seeds, would be \$4,750. For this outlay he predicted that he would raise crops valued at

\$12,762, St. Louis prices. To be planted were corn, barley, oats, beans, fodder, hay, and "pumpkins sufficient to feed horses and cows all winter." With surprising enthusiasm, he stated that "the reserve of this Fort is peculiarly adapted for the cultivation of every thing." That being the case, he proposed, in addition to the farm, to plant ten-acre gardens for each company and the post hospital, thus raising all the vegetables necessary for the garrison. Sumner, always suspicious of requests for civilian labor, authorized the hiring of a foreman and two laborers, for a total of not more than \$175 per month. He later relented and permitted Miles to employ "a few Mexicans for farm labor" if he thought it would increase production.³¹

In view of Miles' predictions and Sumner's concessions, the results must be adjudged a minor tragedy. By midsummer Miles became disenchanted with the entire project. "I never before laboured on anything in my life with more zeal, or determination to succeed, than this farming," he wrote; "I regret to say, I have failed in making soldiers farmers!" The farm, it seems, had been under water much of the time, requiring constant ditching, "leg deep in mud." Sumner's reaction was predictable: "whenever it is known that the govt. will not entrust any officer with the command of a frontier post, who does not cultivate a farm, there will be no difficulty in making soldiers, farmers."³² On July 20 "the river suddenly fell," leaving the acequias choked with mud. Spanish-Americans were hired to clean them out and the water was flowing again within two days.³³ Despite all of the labor expended, the crops did not succeed. The beans were destroyed by an infestation of red "chintz" bugs, and only seventeen bushels were harvested. Smut appeared on the corn in September, reducing the expected crop by more than one-half, and only twenty-eight and one-half tons of cornstalk fodder were recovered. If anything else was planted, it seemingly yielded nothing.

The cost of the farm had been less than anticipated, only about \$2,800, not counting implements and seeds, but the operation still represented a loss of \$840. Of course, Miles pointed out, if New Mexican rather than St. Louis prices were applied and the

cost of work oxen, acequias, implements, and transportation deducted, the farm would show a profit, plus the fact that it would be in better shape for cultivation the following year. Still holding to his original opinion, Miles insisted that "our farm, cultivated by Mexicans . . . can be made profitable. I am convinced it never can by the use of an American force—and will be a total failure, in the employment of soldiers."³⁴ The farm superintendent, a Mr. Thompson, offered to cultivate the farm in 1853 with Spanish-American labor, using tools, seeds, and oxen furnished by the government. In return he would sell corn and oats to the post at twenty-five cents per bushel, beans at one dollar per bushel, and hay and fodder at fifteen dollars per ton.³⁵ Although the prices were lower than those current in St. Louis, Sumner rejected the proposal.

At Fort Defiance,³⁶ located in the heart of the Navajo country, the achievements were not much greater, although a genuine effort was made. Major Electus Backus³⁷ planted a farm and garden under the supervision of one of Sumner's civilian farmers, Jonathan F. Wyatt. The procedure astonished the observant Navajos, who asked for ox-drawn plows so that they might plant larger fields for themselves. They were probably less impressed by the eventual results. Corn, beans, peas, cabbage, lettuce, pumpkins, radishes, turnips, and beets were planted in the garden and on July 1 promised to yield a fair crop. Onions and some other vegetables had failed, probably, Backus surmised, because the seed had not been good. He regretted that he had no Irish potatoes to plant, but he had planted a few hills of the native wild potatoes to learn if they would improve by cultivation. In the farm timothy, clover, corn, barley, and buckwheat were planted, but no wheat, which the Navajos grew successfully, was available for seed. The clover did not come up; the barley and timothy were doing poorly; field mice ate part of the corn before it sprouted and were busily gnawing the plants that did come up. Only the oats looked good.³⁸

Major Henry L. Kendrick,³⁹ who replaced Backus in command in August 1852, confirmed what his predecessor had suspected: the farm was a failure. On October 1, when he made the required

report on the farm program, he stated that all of the field crops had failed, "due in part to the Qualities of the soil and the want of water, and in part to the field mice." In Wyatt's opinion, with which Kendrick agreed, the soil and climate of the region were not suitable for extensive farming. Kendrick proposed that for the following year "all that can be done to ensure success will be tried, but certainly the prospect is not as promising as we could wish." He suggested that it would be desirable to experiment with the Jerusalem artichoke, a variety of sunflower, since it would grow well in the area and provide a satisfactory feed for public animals. The garden, too, had done less well than expected. Several hundred cabbages and pumpkins had been gathered, but even more had been ruined by frost. The root crops were still in the ground, but it was not anticipated that their yield would be large. The experiment with wild potatoes had led to no improvement. As elsewhere in New Mexico, large quantities of natural hay were put up, perhaps as much as two hundred tons.⁴⁰

On New Year's Day 1852 Sumner announced that it was "indispensably necessary" to move his headquarters from Fort Union to Albuquerque "in order to be nearer the new posts in the indian country."⁴¹ He had already leased the property known as the Thomas Ranch⁴² in the name of the United States for \$400 per year. Undoubtedly, the fact that the land had been broken the previous fall appealed to Sumner's agricultural zeal.⁴³ With the coming of spring he had thirty acres planted as a farm and garden. To care for this he hired a civilian gardener, who also served as his interpreter, to whom he paid thirty dollars per month and a ration. He also employed an undisclosed number of laborers as temporary help. Sumner appeared to take great pride in his small agricultural enterprise, viewing it, perhaps, as a model for his subordinates to emulate. When he went to Santa Fe in May he left strict instructions regarding the vegetables: "do not allow anything to be gathered by any one but the gardner."⁴⁴

Los Lunas,⁴⁵ which was not intended to be a permanent post, was not involved in the farming program, but Captain Richard S. Ewell⁴⁶ had his men plant a large garden on private land. When

his company was temporarily transferred to Albuquerque in April, he asked permission to leave at least one man at Los Lunas because he had "a large quantity of onions, beets, & cabbages sown there" which within a few weeks would be ready to harvest and would be sufficient to feed his company through the winter. Other vegetables were planted; and he hoped, if nothing more, to recover seed to be planted the next year. Many of his men, he added, were suffering from scurvy because of a lack of vegetables.⁴⁷ Ewell apparently enjoyed agriculture, unlike most of his fellow officers. He wrote to his brother: "I am delightfully fixed just now, cows, chickens, etc., and I make my own butter and all that sort of thing, as comfortably as any farmer. My garden, though late, is coming on finely, with a good prospect of onions and cabbage."⁴⁸ Perhaps the fact that his planting was voluntary and not by order was a factor.

Fort Webster,⁴⁹ which was located at the old private defensive fort at the Santa Rita copper mines, was in a poor position to engage in agriculture and too far removed from an adequate supply of water. Nevertheless, wrote Major Gouverneur Morris, "I will plant, and trust to the genial influence of the earth for a crop." A month later he made a contract with civilian John Fitzgerald to open a farm on the Río Mimbres—where the land appeared "to possess singular advantages for planting"—to raise vegetables and forage for the post.⁵⁰ Sumner rejected the contract but he remembered Morris' description of the Mimbres Valley when Fort Webster was relocated there a few months later. Major Enoch Steen,⁵¹ who commanded the post in its new position, promptly proposed that the post farm be operated by contract since it would require "thirty-five good laborers . . . acquainted with the mode of farming in this country." Moreover, he suggested: "If I should be permitted to form this contract and fill up the Companies to Fifty Horses each I will insure you a pretty Post and guarantee that the Indians will both love and fear us and will not steal our stock or that of any body else." Sounding very much like Major Howe, Steen added, "as you are aware, soldiers are but bad farmers at best, even in countries better adapted to cultivation than New Mexico."⁵² At that time, of course, neither farm nor garden had

been planted at Fort Webster, nor were they attempted at Fort Marcy or Cantonment Burgwin⁵³ in 1852.

The farm program in 1852 was not a success. Only Sumner's thirty-acre project, carefully nurtured and cherished, achieved what was intended of it. Sumner estimated that its products represented a saving of \$353.60 to the War Department. As an economy measure the overall program was dubious, costing more than the value of the crops grown. In view of New Mexico's military needs, it is difficult to justify the time spent on the project. Troops were stationed in the department for a purpose—that purpose was not to save money. Moreover, to engage in agriculture, which many officers considered incompatible with the function of the army, caused dissatisfaction among Sumner's subordinates. Major Miles, who was more outspoken than most, wrote: "the economical use of soldiers in farming, I deem impracticable, not an officer but objects to perform such work, and uses every means to avoid it."⁵⁴ Sumner's personal attitude toward the program can only be surmised. Certainly it was influenced by the fact that he was acting under instructions, and he was always a stickler for strict compliance with orders. Having the task thrust upon him, he made a conscientious effort to carry it out and took a perverse kind of pride in the small success of the farm at his headquarters. Admitting that the farm program had been less efficacious than he had anticipated, he insisted that the difficulties could be surmounted.⁵⁵

The failure of military farming was not limited to New Mexico. Secretary of War Conrad regretfully reported that at only a few posts had it "been attended by beneficial results"; but he believed, with "a fair trial" the outcome would be more favorable. Conversely, General Winfield Scott considered that success in military farming was actually undesirable. It would discourage settlement near military posts, for the settlers looked upon the posts as a market for their products. Furthermore, troops could not carry on their military duties and maintain discipline "if required to engage in cultivation beyond kitchen gardens."⁵⁶

Unlike the farms, the post gardens were not experimental, although they had not been planted before on an organized basis in

New Mexico. Fresh vegetables, previously available only in limited quantities and variety, were considered necessary to improve the health of the troops and highly desirable to lend zest to the otherwise dreary ration. The post gardens did reasonably well in New Mexico in 1852, producing, among other things, a number of crops which could be stored for use during the winter. One of the results was the virtual disappearance of scurvy among the troops stationed in New Mexico, declining from 113 cases in 1851 to 19 in 1853.⁵⁷

A full list of the vegetables planted by the troops cannot be compiled. In preparation for the planting season of 1853, Sumner simply asked that an assortment of fresh garden seeds suitable for ten companies be sent to the department.⁵⁸ A crop frequently mentioned, because it was unsuccessfully attempted at almost every post at one time or another, was the Irish potato. Many of the vegetables planted in post gardens had not been grown in New Mexico prior to United States occupation.⁵⁹ Soon some of them were planted by the New Mexicans, thus influencing their agriculture and eventually their diet. Even the Indians were given seeds and induced to plant some vegetables, but whether they ate any of the produce no one bothered to record.

In 1853 farms were planted at all of the permanent posts except Fort Marcy. The outcome was even less satisfactory than before. At the three posts where farms had not been attempted in 1852, the one at Fort Webster was most nearly successful. Colonel Sumner left no doubt of what he expected Major Steen to accomplish: "the cultivation of a good farm by your command [is] next in importance after the preservation of discipline at your post, and quiet amongst the Indians." Even construction at the incomplete post (some of the troops and the sick were still in tents) was secondary. He made this clear to Steen when he wrote: "If, in addition to the above important duties, you may have time to devote to the improvement of your quarters, no objections, of course, will be made to your doing so; but the Col. Commdg. cannot authorize such improvements or even permit them, if they are to interfere in any degree with your farming operations."⁶⁰

There was, in fact, considerable agricultural activity in the vicinity of Fort Webster in the spring of 1853. A fifty-acre farm for the Apaches was planted in corn, beans, squash, and pumpkins under contract with François Fletcher, interpreter for the Apache agency, who was to instruct the Indians in husbandry. Fletcher also prepared a much larger acreage which he cultivated as a private venture. The post farm was sown in oats and corn and, as elsewhere, hay was put up from natural grass. There is no record of the results of Fletcher's private operation; but the Indian farm produced comparatively little, largely because of neglect. The post farm showed a deficit of \$73.01, the smallest in the department.⁶¹

At the other extreme was Fort Massachusetts,⁶² located at an altitude of more than eight thousand feet in a region where killing frost might occur even in mid-summer. Major George A. H. Blake⁶³ complained that he had only one experienced farmer in his command, a noncommissioned officer whose services were difficult to spare from other duties. Despite these handicaps, Sumner instructed Blake to obtain all necessary farming implements from Fort Union, sending his own wagons to transport them. Sumner also told him that he would be expected to raise most of the grain required by his post.⁶⁴

The post garden was planted in April, too early for the climate of the area, and was largely destroyed by cold weather. The farm, although it was not planted until May, produced something less than a spectacular crop. Ten bushels of barley were sown and about thirty bushels reaped. Six bushels of wheat planted resulted in a yield of fifteen bushels. From four acres sowed in oats, a crop of ten bushels was recovered. Timothy and clover were sown on ten acres but failed to come up, and ten acres of corn were killed by frost. The closest thing to an achievement was the harvesting of some two tons of straw, hardly a satisfactory return for the time and labor expended. Blake could only report that because of "the shortness of the season, the farming operations cannot be successfully continued at this post."⁶⁵

The results at Fort Conrad were summed up by Colonel Joseph K. F. Mansfield⁶⁶ when he inspected the post in October:

There is a good garden at this post and a farm had been in operation on hired ground, where $37\frac{1}{2}$ bushels of wheat and 50 bushels of corn were raised the past year, at a cost of 100 dollars for the use of the farm and 102 dollars for repairs of "acequia" besides the loss of one quartermaster's mule. In short it had proved a failure.⁶⁷

Sumner relinquished command of the department at the end of June 1853 and consequently was not at hand to observe the results of the second year of military farming. It was probably just as well. Two years of agriculture had simply increased expenses in the department. Colonel Mansfield's comments on farm culture, as he saw it in 1853, were almost uniformly discouraging. The farms at Forts Defiance, Massachusetts, Conrad, Fillmore, and the one at Albuquerque were failures. At Fort Union the farm was in debt, but Mansfield proposed retaining the land to graze public horses and beef cattle and cut hay. The farm at Fort Webster "looked well," but this was faint praise as he recommended that the post be abandoned. Only at Los Lunas, where none was required, did the farm receive unqualified approval. Neither Fort Marcy nor Cantonment Burgwin engaged in farming. Gardens were planted at all ten posts, and all but two were described by Mansfield as good or excellent. The garden at Albuquerque he termed "almost a failure," and the one at Fort Union supplied only part of the vegetables needed at the post.

In his closing report Mansfield concluded that the farming program in New Mexico was generally a failure:

The mode of cultivation in this Territory is necessarily so different from that to which the American and European, who constitute the rank and file of our army, have been accustomed, and the business so entirely different from the pursuits of an officer and soldier, that it is not at all astonishing it did not succeed. There are probably many officers and soldiers too who have never had the least practice at planting not even an ordinary garden, and certainly the subject at the Military Academy has never been introduced as one of the essentials of an officer in defence of his country, however pleasant and agreeable it may be to possess information and have practice in farming.

He considered the program injurious to discipline and responsible for the neglect of other and more important duties, which, if properly pursued, would occupy all of the time and energy of the troops, leaving none for farming.⁶⁸ When Colonel Philip St. George Cooke, who had succeeded to the command of Fort Union, reported that the corn raised on the post farm in 1853 had cost the government more than four times as much as if it had been purchased locally on the open market, the glamour of what had been considered New Mexico's most successful military farm was sadly tarnished.⁶⁹ Brigadier General John Garland, Sumner's successor, simply remarked that the farm program had "failed entirely."⁷⁰

In Washington there had been a change of administration, and no one was left to urge the continuation of military farming. Colonel Samuel Cooper, Adjutant General of the Army, reported that by the end of the third quarter of 1853 the farm program for the West as a whole was more than \$18,000 in debt, most of which represented the loss of \$16,701.12 in the 9th Military Department, exclusive of Fort Massachusetts, of which it was noted, "the Commanding officer reports the farm a complete failure." The only post to show a profit was Fort Defiance, \$682.88, which was achieved by the "sale" of hay, most of which was natural grass rather than a product of the farm.⁷¹ Fort Union, with the largest program, had the largest deficit, more than \$13,500, and Albuquerque, of which Sumner had been so proud, had amassed an indebtedness of \$480.17 by September 30, 1853. Cooper recommended that the program be discontinued and the "implements, cattle &c heretofore purchased" sold to recover as much of the loss as possible. Secretary of War Jefferson Davis agreed. The farming experiment was quietly terminated, and the sale of farm equipment ordered.⁷² There is no indication that any of the officers in New Mexico regretted its passing.

The farm experiment had little noticeable effect on the New Mexican economy. At none of the posts was enough grain produced to fill the needs of the post itself; hence, the army continued to provide a market for civilian production without even an appreciable reduction in prices. Some few jobs were made available to

civilians as farm supervisors and laborers, but under Sumner's parsimonious administration they were held to a minimum. Anglo-American supervisors, none of whom had significant experience with New Mexican farming, were employed at five of the seven posts where farms were required. They were paid from thirty to sixty-five dollars per month, plus one or more rations. Aside from the troops employed, the farm laborers were almost all Spanish-Americans and varied in numbers literally from one day to the next. They were employed only for about one-half of the year and received twenty-five to fifty cents per day. Post gardens undoubtedly made a greater impact. Even the one at Fort Massachusetts produced some vegetables in 1853. While they lessened the army's dependence on local civilian produce, most of the vegetables raised in post gardens, with the exception of onions and beans, were not crops ordinarily planted by the New Mexicans. The result was more diversification of production than competition with native growers.

NOTES

1. *Annual Report of the Secretary of War*, 1853, 33rd Cong., 1st sess., H. R. Exec. Doc. 1, II, 11.

2. Charles M. Conrad to Millard Fillmore, Nov. 30, 1850, and "Statement of Current Expenses," 31st Cong., 2nd sess., Sen. Exec. Doc. 1, II, 8-9, 122.

3. The 9th Military Department was created on Nov. 3, 1846. On Oct. 31, 1853, it became the Department of New Mexico.

4. Henry P. Walker, *The Wagonmasters* (Norman, 1966), p. 230.

5. *Annual Report of the Secretary of War*, 1852, 32nd Cong., 2nd sess., H. R. Exec. Doc. 1, II, 4.

At Fort Leavenworth some civilian farmers were regularly employed. See Francis Paul Prucha, ed., *Army Life on the Western Frontier* (Norman, 1958), pp. 85, 88.

6. Thomas S. Jesup, Dec. 22, 1847, Record Group (RG) 94, Adjutant General's Office (AGO), Letters Received (LR), National Archives (NA).

George Gibson, Commissary General of Subsistence, concurred in Jesup's report.

7. Conrad, a native of Virginia, was Secretary of War in President Millard Fillmore's cabinet. He had no military background.

8. Jan. 8, 1851, 32nd Cong., 1st sess., H. R. Exec. Doc. 2, pp. 164-65.

9. Munroe was major and brevet colonel, 2nd Artillery. He became commander of the 9th Military Department on Oct. 23, 1849.

10. The posts in the department at this time were Las Vegas, Rayado, Taos, Abiquiu, Santa Fe (Fort Marcy), Albuquerque, Cebolleta, Socorro, Doña Ana, El Paso (Coons' Ranch), and San Elizario. Munroe recommended that the post of Socorro be moved to Valverde.

11. Munroe to Roger Jones, Mar. 30, 1851, RG 94, AGO, LR, NA. The report did not reach Washington until May 6, more than a month after Conrad had issued instructions to Munroe's successor.

12. Sumner was lieutenant colonel and brevet colonel, 1st Dragoons. He had previously been briefly in New Mexico, serving under Brigadier General Stephen Watts Kearny in the Mexican War.

13. Jones to Sumner, Mar. 29, 1851, RG 98, Records of United States Army Commands (USAC), Department of New Mexico (DNM), LR, NA.

14. Conrad to Sumner, April 1, 1851, 32nd Cong., 1st sess., Sen. Exec. Doc. 1, pp. 125-26.

15. Sumner to Jones, Oct. 28, 1851, RG 98, USAC, DNM, Letters Sent (LS), NA.

16. Sumner to Dixon S. Miles, Mar. 30, 1852, RG 98, USAC, DNM, LS, NA.

17. O. No. 6, Jan. 9, 1852, RG 98, USAC, Orders, 9th Mil. Dept., NA.

18. Fort Union was established on July 26, 1851, in the valley of Wolf Creek, an affluent of the Mora River, about twenty-four miles northeast of Las Vegas.

19. At least three such offers were made in 1856, the year of Alvarez' death. On the back of one of them Alvarez wrote that he was even then making arrangements to rent the land to Captain William Shoemaker, ordnance officer at Fort Union. B. Marchowich to Alvarez, Jan. 11, 1856, and note v., Alvarez Papers, State of New Mexico Records Center, Santa Fe.

20. James H. Carleton to Sumner, Aug. 2, 1852, RG 98, USAC, DMN, LR, NA.

21. Carleton was captain and brevet major, 1st Dragoons.

22. Carleton to Samuel D. Sturgis, Dec. 2, 1852, RG 98, USAC, DNM, LR, NA.

23. Fort Conrad was established on Sept. 8, 1851. It was named for the Secretary of War.

24. Howe was major, 2nd Dragoons.
25. John C. McFerran to Howe, Dec. 6, 1851, RG 98, USAC, Fort Conrad, LR, NA; Sumner to Lawrence P. Graham, Feb. 26, 1852, RG 98, USAC, DNM, LS, NA; Sumner to Howe, Mar. 30, 1852, and June 7, 1852, RG 98, USAC, DNM, LS, NA; Howe to Sumner, RG 98, Sept. 10, 1852, USAC, DNM, LR, NA.
26. S.O. No. 67, Nov. 12, 1852, RG 98, USAC, Special Orders, 9th Mil. Dept., NA.
27. Fort Fillmore was established on Sept. 23, 1851.
28. Morris was major, 3rd Infantry. When he was ordered to establish Fort Webster later in the year, he was replaced at Fort Fillmore by Lieutenant Colonel Dixon S. Miles, 3rd Infantry.
29. Morris to Sumner, Aug. 27, 1851, RG 98, USAC, DNM, LR, NA. There are two pertinent letters of this date.
30. Miles was also charged with transportation to, and supplies for, Fort Webster, emphasizing the need for adequate stores at Fort Fillmore. O. No. 44, Dec. 2, 1851, RG 98, USAC, Orders, 9th Mil. Dept., NA.
31. Miles to McFerran, Nov. 29, 1851, RG 98, USAC, DNM, LR, NA; Sumner to Miles, Dec. 3, 1851, RG 98, USAC, DNM, LS, NA.
32. Miles to AAAG, Santa Fe, July 31, 1852, and Sumner endorsement, Aug. 27, 1852, RG 98, USAC, DNM, LR, NA.
33. Miles to AAAG, Santa Fe, Aug. 1, 1852, RG 98, USAC, DNM, LR, NA.
34. Miles to Cooper, Nov. 10, 1852, and "Statement of Expenditures and receipts of the Farm Cultivated at Fort Fillmore N. M. up to 31st October 1852, by 1st Lieut J. C. McFerran," RG 98, USAC, DNM, LR, NA. The "chintz" bugs may have been red spiders.
35. [Proposal of Mr. Thompson] encl. in Miles to AAAG, Santa Fe, Aug. 1, 1852, RG 98, USAC, DNM, LR, NA.
36. Fort Defiance was established Sept. 18, 1851. It was located on Black Creek at the mouth of Cañoncito Bonito, northwest of Gallup, New Mexico, in the present Arizona.
37. Backus was major, 3rd Infantry.
38. Backus to Jones, July 1, 1852, RG 98, USAC, DNM, Unentered LR, NA.
39. Kendrick was captain and brevet major, 2nd Artillery. He served in New Mexico until 1857 when he was appointed professor of chemistry, geology, and mineralogy at the United States Military Academy.
40. Kendrick to [Jones], Oct. 1, 1852, RG 98, USAC, DNM, Unentered LR, NA; Kendrick to Sumner, Sept. 10, 1852, RG 98, USAC, DNM, LR, NA.
41. Sumner to Jones, Jan. 1, 1852, RG 98, USAC, DNM, LS, NA.

42. The Thomas Ranch was property purchased by 1st Lieutenant Francis J. Thomas, 3rd Artillery, and Richard H. Weightman, additional paymaster, volunteers, from Rafael and Manuel Armijo on April 25, 1849. Bernalillo County, Deed Book A, State of New Mexico Records Center.

43. Henry Winslow to Sumner, Dec. 23, 1851, RG 98, USAC, DNM, LR, NA; Sumner with A. J. Pillings, agent of Alexander W. Reynolds and William McGrorty, Dec. 28, 1851, RG 92, Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, Register of Contracts, NA.

44. Sumner to Daniel H. Rucker, May 3, 1852, RG 98, USAC, DNM, LS, NA.

45. Los Lunas, located on rented property in the town of the same name, was established on Jan. 3, 1852. It was intended as a temporary station but it was not finally broken up until Sept. 6, 1860.

46. Ewell was captain, 1st Dragoons.

47. Ewell to McFerran, May 7, 1852, RG 98, USAC, DNM, LR, NA.

48. Ewell to Ben [Ewell], July 21, 1852, *The Making of a Soldier: Letters of General R. S. Ewell*, Percy Gatling Hamlin, ed. (Richmond, Va., 1935), p. 75.

49. Fort Webster was established under that name in Dec., 1851. O. No. 44, Dec. 2, 1851, RG 98, USAC, Orders, 9th Mil. Dept., DNM, NA. The old private defensive post had been occupied previously by the escort to the boundary commission under the name Cantonment Dawson. On Sept. 9, 1852, Fort Webster was moved to the Mimbres Valley, about fourteen miles northeast of the copper mines. It was named for Secretary of State Daniel Webster.

50. Morris to McFerran, Mar. 16, 1852, and Apr. 13, 1852, RG 98, USAC, DNM, LR, NA.

51. Steen was captain and brevet major, 2nd Dragoons.

52. Steen to Sumner, Dec. 13, 1852, RG 98, USAC, DNM, LR, NA.

53. Cantonment Burgwin was established Aug. 14, 1852. It was located on the Río Grande del Rancho about ten miles south of Taos. It was intended to be a temporary post and was abandoned on May 18, 1860. It was named for Captain John H. K. Burgwin, 1st Dragoons, killed during the Taos uprising of 1847.

54. Miles to AAAG, Santa Fe, Aug. 1, 1852, RG 98, USAC, DNM, LR, NA.

55. Sumner to [Cooper], Sept. 24, 1852, RG 98, USAC, DNM, LS, NA.

56. *Annual Report of the Secretary of War, 1852*, 32nd Cong., 2nd sess., H. R. Exec. Doc. 1, II, 4, 35.

57. Richard H. Coolidge, comp., *Statistical Report of the Sickness and Mortality in the Army of the United States* [1839-55] (Washington, 1856), p. 429.

58. Sumner to George G. Waggaman, Dec. 15, 1852, RG 98, USAC, DNM, LS, NA.

59. The *Santa Fe Republican*, Sept. 17, 1847, recommended "that persons with suitable land plant vegetables to sell to the army. Irish potatoes are the first, then cabbage, beets, radishes, lettuce, sweet potatoes, turnips, cucumbers, etc."

60. Sturgis to Steen, Jan. 26, 1853, RG 98, USAC, DNM, LS, NA.

61. William Carr Lane contract with Fletcher, April 7, 1853, and James M. Smith to David Meriwether, Sept. 5, 1853, RG 75, Office of Indian Affairs, New Mexico Superintendency, LR, Microcopy 234, Reel 546, NA.

62. Fort Massachusetts was established on June 22, 1852. It was located in a sheltered valley on Ute Creek, about six miles north of the present town of Fort Garland, Colorado.

63. Blake was major, 1st Dragoons.

64. Blake to Sumner, May 1, 1853, RG 98, USAC, DNM, LR, NA; Sturgis to Blake, Jan. 26, 1853, RG 98, USAC, DNM, LS, NA.

65. Blake to Cooper, Oct. 1, 1853, RG 98, USAC, DNM, LR, NA.

66. Mansfield was colonel, Inspector General's Department. He conducted a general inspection of the 9th Mil. Dept. in Aug.-Oct., 1853.

67. Robert W. Frazer, ed., *Mansfield on the Condition of the Western Forts*, 1853-54 (Norman, 1963), p. 51.

68. *Ibid.*, pp. 62-64. As there were no profits to distribute to the soldiers who had worked on the farms, Mansfield suggested that they be given extra duty pay, then 15 cents per day.

69. Cooke to Nichols, Jan. 20, 1854, RG 98, USAC, DNM, LR, NA. Cooke was lieutenant colonel and brevet colonel, 2nd Dragoons.

70. Garland to Lorenzo Thomas, Oct. 29, 1853, RG 98, USAC, DNM, LS, NA. Garland was colonel, 8th Infantry, and brevet brigadier general.

71. It is interesting to note that after the farm program had been terminated 1st Lieutenant John C. McFerran, commissary of subsistence at Fort Fillmore, reported that after all expenses of the post farm had been paid there was a surplus of "at least \$1500." McFerran to William H. Wood, May 1, 1854, RG 98, USAC, DNM, LR, NA.

72. Cooper to Davis, Jan. 26, 1854, and Davis endorsement, Feb. 9, 1854, RG 94, AGO, LR, NA; G.O. No. 3, Feb. 9, 1854, RG 94, AGO, General Orders, Headquarters Army, NA.

Elsewhere in the West, farms were cultivated at eleven posts, exclusive of

the long-established farm at Fort Leavenworth. At only two posts, both in Minnesota, was there a profit, at one as a result of renting the farm to a civilian, at the other from the sale of hay.