

# Interesting Find



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Monday, January 9, 2012

## Henry Sibley, Confederate Brigadier General and Inventor of the Sibley Stove

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It's often said that need is the father of invention and regarding the Sibley Stove that seems to be the case. Henry Hopkins Sibley was both a Confederate Civil War Brigadier General as well as an inventor. Sibley was a 1838 graduate of the United States Military Academy in West Point New York.

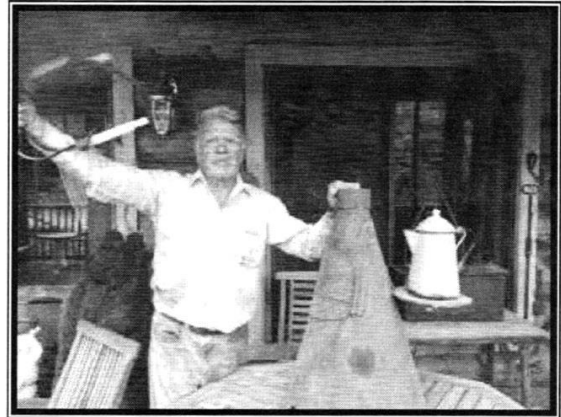
Sibley was involved back in the old Seminole Wars in Florida, the Mexican American War, during the time of much conflict in Kansas regarding the slavery issue and he saw action in both Utah and New Mexico. His service with the Union army ended in 1861 when he resigned his commission and joined the Confederate cause. After some action in Louisiana, his home state, where his contributions in battle were somewhat questionable, Sibley was best noted for his attempt to capture the trails to California in the American southwest.

The southwest campaign came to a head in the Battle of Geronimo Pass which occurred just to the east/southeast of Santa Fe New Mexico. The Confederates wanted to both capture this strategic pass to the southwest and also raid the gold and silver mines further north in Colorado. Henry Sibley was defeated at Geronimo Pass by Union forces along with the Colorado Militia which came 400 miles south to meet them under the partial command of the controversial leader Major John Chivington. Had Sibley's effort succeeded he would have joined forces with Confederate Lt. John R. Baylor who had pretty much secured the southern portion of the New Mexico Territory and was operating out of Tucson. Sibley never had that opportunity and after his defeat at Geronimo Pass New Mexico retreated back down to San Antonio Texas. Most historians believe that the Geronimo Pass battle pretty much doomed the Confederate and Baylor plan to secure a route westward to the Pacific Ocean.



Brig. Gen. Henry H. Sibley

Unfortunately for Henry Sibley, his military career can best be described as taking a nosedive after the Geronimo Pass New Mexico affair. The Confederacy gave him some minor less strategic tasks and his military biography seems to have faded away along with the Confederacy's fortunes. Records also show that Sibley was censured during his last year with the Confederacy. His Civil War legacy from most historian's accounts paint him as an old drinker who had a hard time executing battle plans. Some historians go as far as blaming the entire Confederate New Mexico/Arizona campaign failure on Sibley which is a bit of a stretch. Baylor had his own problems, regardless of Sibley's defeat, with Union forces coming east out of California via Yuma resulting in the Battle of Picacho Pass. Henry H. Sibley passed away in poverty in 1886 in Fredericksburg Virginia and is buried at the City Cemetery in Fredericksburg.



I got this Sibley Stove in Tucson AZ. for \$5.00 My interesting find.  
By Duane Durham



Old Sibley Stove

What Brigadier General Henry Sibley lacked on the Civil War battlefield, he already had proven his value

as a creative inventor during the 1850's. In 1866 Henry Sibley patented what was to be called the "Sibley Tent". This was a tent that could house twenty men. The Sibley Tent was actually used by both sides during the Civil War. In addition to the tent, Sibley also invented and patented the "Sibley Stove". The Sibley Stove was used to heat the tent, he developed and the stove itself had a long and varied use for the both the military for years afterward and by civilians for years after that.

The Sibley stove has a conical shape and was constructed of iron. It was fueled with a small amount of wood. A stove pipe going out through the center top of the tent carried out the smoke. The stove of this kind placed in the middle of a tent certainly presents a fire hazard and tents did indeed occasionally catch fire but all in all the stove appeared to do the job although the heat output was limited. The stove was also used for warmth and cooking both inside and out of many types of shelters. There are people who have written that Sibley's inventions were nothing more than ideas stolen from the plains Indians of which he had a lot of contact with in the 1840's and 1850's. I would disagree with the claim since just about every invention known to man was some type of improvement, sometimes great and sometimes small, of a method already employed in some form. An invention can be something in existence that is made more usable and practical.

The Sibley Stove was used during World War One and up until the second World War. Using a hot stove in a tent obviously presents some dangers and this type of heating isn't recommended in these modern days. Adaptations of the Sibley Stove were also used to keep citrus groves heated during cold weather. Citrus grove heating is still employed today but the Sibley apparatus as it was first constructed caused too many environmental concerns.



The Fort Stockton military post museum in Fort Stockton Texas features an authentic Sibley Stove from the 1860's. The museum which is located on the old fort's grounds has a terrific collection of military artifacts from the era along with a 1874 Sharps Sporting Rifle. If you are in the Fort Stockton area of southwest Texas, it's a great stop. Fort Stockton is on Interstate-10 about halfway between San Antonio and El Paso. Another site displaying an authentic Sibley Stove is Fort Bowie in Arizona. Fort Bowie National Historic Site is about 100 miles east of Tucson and about 25 miles southeast of Wilcox Arizona

south of Interstate-10. Both of these historic sites make great additions to your southwest vacation planner.

### Note from the Editor:

I would greatly appreciate your submission of articles concerning the actual use of your stove or the conversion of a wood/coal stove to gas. I can always use more **Last One Left, Stove Trivia, One of a Kind, and Interesting Find** submissions.

Please email to: [mmytoy8@sbcglobal.net](mailto:mmytoy8@sbcglobal.net)  
Thank you, Barb Wernsing