

**THE STAR DAY FOUNDATION
FIRST PIONEERS AND LEADERS
OF THE STATE OF TEXAS
HALL OF HONOR**



**WILLIAM RUFUS SHAFTER
(1835-1906)**

William R. (Pecos Bill) Shafter, United States Army officer, son of Hugh Morris and Eliza (Sumner) Shafter, was born on October 16, 1835, near Galesburg, Michigan. He had two brothers and one sister. After completing an elementary school education, Shafter worked on his father's farm and taught school at Galesburg, Mendon, and Athens, Michigan.

In 1861 he enrolled in Prairie Seminary, but when the Civil War broke out he left school to join a local volunteer regiment. During the war he took part in several campaigns, including the battle of Ball's Bluff and the Peninsular campaign. He was captured at Thompson's Station, Tennessee, in March 1863 and spent several months in a Confederate prison. After his release he was transferred to the regular army and served as an officer in the Seventeenth United States Colored Infantry, a regiment of black troops, in the battle of Nashville in December 1864.

Shafter was commissioned a lieutenant colonel after the war and went to Louisiana briefly before a transfer in 1867 took him to Texas. He served as lieutenant colonel of the all-black Twenty-fourth United States Infantry along the Rio Grande until 1868, when he moved to Fort Clark in West Texas. After 1870 Shafter served primarily as a field commander. He executed his assignments with vigor despite his physical bulk, which would have slowed most men. Working under Col. Ranald S. Mackenzie, Shafter commanded scouting expeditions and campaigns against hostile Indians. He led several excursions into the Llano Estacado and Big Bend areas, thus proving these regions accessible to the military despite their barrenness. His expeditions also deprived hostile forces of the psychological and military advantage of safe refuge. Shafter's most renowned feat in West Texas was the Llano Estacado campaign of 1875.

Combining two companies of his Twenty-fourth Infantry with parts of the Twenty-fifth United States Infantry and Tenth United States Cavalry and a company of Seminole Indian scouts, Shafter drove his men more than 2,500 miles from June to December. Often exhausted and short of water, the troops made three crossings of the Llano Estacado and swept the plains clear of Indians. Shafter's campaign also proved the plains habitable and paved the way for white settlement of the region.

Between 1876 and the end of 1878 Shafter led three separate campaigns into Mexico against Indians. He became colonel of the First Infantry in 1879 and the following year participated in the war against Victorio, the great Apache leader.

In 1883, John William Spencer (1818-1898) discovered areas rich with silver ore in the Chinati Mountains of Presidio County, Texas, samples of which he took to Lt. Col. William R. Shafter, who was then garrisoned at Shafter, Texas. In 1885, the Presidio Mining Company was organized by John William Spencer and Lt. Col. Shafter; the company continued to operate until the early 1900s, contributing significantly to the economy of Texas and regions of Mexico.

After leaving Texas, Shafter served in Arizona before a transfer in 1886 took him to California. In 1890-91 he was in South Dakota helping to return Indians to Pine Ridge after the Wounded Knee massacre. He was promoted in 1897 to brigadier general and in 1898 led American troops to Cuba during the Spanish-American War, in which he commanded the largest force of United States troops that had left American soil up to that time. Shafter was a Republican and a Protestant. He married Harriet Grimes in 1862, and they had one child, Mary. In 1895 Shafter received the Medal of Honor for meritorious service in the Civil War. Shortly after his promotion to major general in 1901, he retired to his sixty-acre farm adjoining his daughter's ranch near Bakersfield, California. On November 12, 1906, Shafter, terribly overweight, died at his daughter's home from an intestinal obstruction complicated by pneumonia. He was buried next to his wife at the Presidio in San Francisco, California.

NOTE: The text was primarily drawn from The Handbook of Texas Online (tsholine.org). Major General Shafter was nominated to be inducted into The First PALS of Texas Hall of Honor by Presidio County Lucy Rede Franco Middle School Texas History Teacher Michael Vogel. On January 28, 2010, the Presidio City Council approved a resolution proposed by students designating the 16th of October each year as "THE WILLIAM RUFUS SHAFTER DAY" in Presidio.

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