

CHARLES RADZIMINSKI: PATRIOT, EXILE, PIONEER

*By Stanley F. Radziminiski**

An historical marker located on U. S. Highway 163 in Southwestern Oklahoma, two miles north of Mountain Park, bears this inscription:**

CAMP RADZIMINSKI
Site 2 Miles West

Established September 1858 by four troops of crack 2nd Cav., under Major Earl Van Dorn. Named in memory of Lt. Charles Radziminiski, a former member of the Regt. E. Kirby Smith, Cornelius Van Camp, Fitzhugh Lee, W. B. Royall all served here. Permanent type buildings never erected; Post abandoned by Army, Dec. 6, 1859.

A strange turn of events brought the subject of this story, Charles Radziminiski, a Polish Revolutionary exile, to a life of adventure and useful service in his adopted country. He took part in the Polish revolution against Russia in 1830-31, was interned in Austrian prisons for three years, and finally came to United States as exile in 1834. He was engaged as a civil engineer in Virginia and he fought as an officer in the United States Dragoons during the war with Mexico. As surveyor and later secretary for the United States-Mexican Boundary Commissions, he crossed, on foot and horseback, hundreds of miles of harsh terrain in the Southwest.¹ He later served as an officer in the old Second Cavalry in Texas under Colonel Robert E. Lee and finally met an untimely death in 1858.

Charles (Karol) Radziminiski was born in Warsaw, Poland, in 1805 while Europe was in the midst of the Napoleonic Wars.² Nothing is known about his early life in Poland, his immediate family or details of experiences in United States. No diaries or photographs have been found in the National Archives or other sources. The Radziminiski fam-

* Stanley Francis Radziminiski, M.D., Chief Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, Veterans Administration, Marion, Indiana, was born in Poland, and came to the United States in 1912. He received his A.B. degree from Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio, 1927; and his M.D. degree from Loyola University School of Medicine, Chicago, Illinois, 1931. His war service, U.S. Army 1940-45, included overseas duty in the South Pacific and on Okinawa. He commanded an Army Field Hospital as Lieutenant Colonel Medical Corps.—Ed.

** Roadside Marker erected by Oklahoma Historical Society, 1950.

¹ Rev. Francis Bolek, *Who is Who in Polish America*, (New York, 1943).

² *Ibid.*



Radziwiński

Radziwiński Coat of Arms. *Armorial General*. By Jean Baptiste Huet. - Sirey: Histoire, Lyons, France, 1751.

ilies lived in and north of Warsaw, in the old Polish province of Masovia. They were, for the most part, small land owners, with some professional people and government officials among them. The town of Radzymin (Radzimin, on old maps), located about fifteen miles northeast of Warsaw, was the original seat of one of the Radzimirski families.

Following the Congress of Vienna, national freedom ceased to exist in the war-torn country when Poland was again partitioned between its powerful neighbors—Russia, Austria and Prussia. The Poles rebelled in 1830 against the political and other oppressions imposed upon them by the Russian government, under Tsar Nicholas I, and the Grand Duke Constantine, Governor General for Poland. The Poles mustered a volunteer army, drawn from all walks of life, under the leadership of Generals Chłopicki, Dwernicki, Skrzyński, and other officers who formerly served in Napoleon's Grand Army. The revolutionary army was equipped with only such material which was readily available in the country. Lack of adequate material, leadership and support from other countries was to handicap the Poles in their struggle for liberty.³ Charles Radzimirski had his first military experience to the Polish Revolutionary Army in 1830-1, at a youthful age.

The Revolution continued for about a year and was successful at first, but was eventually crushed by the numerically superior Russian Armies under the command of Generals Dybich and Paskevich—Erivansky. The Poles sought help from the other European powers, but none came. Austria and Prussia decidedly opposed the revolution. France and the United States were sympathetic with the Polish cause but were not able to help the Poles materially. Both countries, after the revolution was suppressed, offered asylum to many Polish Revolutionary exiles.⁴

As the success of the revolution ebbed in the fall of 1831, several Polish military units, hard pressed by Russian armies, crossed Prussian and Austrian frontiers and laid down their arms. They were interned and eventually imprisoned by these powers. Charles Radzimirski was in one of the units which crossed the Austrian border. He was interned in an Austrian camp from 1831 to 1834 at Berno, Moravia, and, later at Trieste, until his departure from Austria. The enlisted men were forced to return to Russian

³ Arthur Sliwinski, *Polonaise Listopadowe*, (London 1946).

⁴ *Ibid.*

Poland. The officers had a choice between returning and facing exile to Siberia or emigrating to those countries which would offer them asylum. An agreement between the Austrian government and United States, negotiated by the Polish National Committee in Paris under Marquis de Lafayette permitted many of the Poles interned in Austria to emigrate to the United States.⁵

On March 31, 1834, two Austrian frigates, the *Omerie* and the *Hebe*, commanded by Commodore Bandiera arrived in New York with 235 Polish exiles. A third ship, *Lipsia*, arrived a short time later with 50-60 more. Many of the emigres settled in cities and towns along the Atlantic Coast, as far as Louisiana and Texas. While a great majority remained in the East, some received free land and settled in Illinois, as well as other Midwestern states. Many exiles experienced extreme hardship due to financial difficulties and their unfamiliarity with the English language. Moreover, they had no official backing or diplomatic support of their native land which was occupied by the hostile power—Russia. Charles Radzinski was among these exiles.⁶ He settled in Washington, D.C., and was eventually engaged as a civil engineer with the James River Kanawha Canal Company of Richmond.⁷ This company was organized in 1835 to develop and maintain a canal running parallel to the James River, from Richmond to Buchanan, Virginia. The canal was an important waterway during the years 1840-1861. It fell into disuse during the Civil War and was eventually abandoned and replaced by a railroad.

On March 8, 1847, after the outbreak of war with Mexico, Radzinski received a commission as Second Lieutenant of Infantry, appointed from Louisiana. He was transferred to the Third Regiment, United States Dragoons, April 9, 1847, a newly organized regiment of Light Cavalry, authorized by Congress for the duration of the war. This regiment was commanded by Colonel Edward G. W. Butler, a West Pointer of St. Louis, Missouri. Other prominent officers in this regiment were Major Lewis Cass, Jr., diplomat, son of Lewis Cass, statesman, and governor of Michigan, and Major William H. Polk, brother of President Polk, ex-minister to Naples.⁸ While in the Third Dragoons,

⁵ M. Haiman, *Z Przeslosci Polskiej w Ameryce. Szkice Historyczne*, (Buffalo, 1927).

⁶ Jerzy J. Lerski, *A Polish Chapter in Jacksonia America*, (Madison, 1958).

⁷ Bolck, *op. cit.*

⁸ Cadmus M. Wilcox, *History of the Mexican War*, (Washington, D. C. 1892).

Charles Radzimirski served in a company commanded by Captain Alphonse Dupere of Virginia which took an active combat part in Mexico.⁹ Captain Dupere's company participated in battles near Vera Cruz, Contreras and Churubusco. Other units of the Third Dragoons fought at Molino del Rey, Altizco, and Mexico City.¹⁰ The regimental headquarters was located at Camp Mier and later at Matamoros, Mexico.

Charles Radzimirski served as Regimental Quartermaster from June 15 until October 17, 1847. He was appointed regimental adjutant, March 16, 1848, to replace the former adjutant, Lieutenant Edward McPherson, who was killed in a duel at Camp Mier, Mexico. He served as adjutant until he was honorably mustered out with the entire regiment on July 31, 1848, at Jefferson Barracks, Missouri.¹¹

Following the Mexican War, Radzimirski returned to his civilian profession as a surveyor and civil engineer. He was engaged until 1851 as assistant to Lieutenant Colonel James D. Graham of the Topographical Engineers in the office of the Northeast Boundary Commission in Washington, D.C.¹² This commission completed the survey, according to terms of the Webster-Ashburton Treaty, to end the long disputed boundary dispute between Maine and New Brunswick, Canada.

Colonel Graham was assigned in the spring of 1851 to the U. S. Mexican Boundary Commission and was on his way to Texas and New Mexico. Charles Radzimirski joined Colonel Graham and a staff of other officials at San Antonio, Texas, May 10, 1851. The party proceeded by wagon train to El Paso del Norte to join the U. S. Commissioner John Russell Bartlett and his large staff of engineers, surveyors and technicians, who were engaged to survey the new U. S.—Mexican boundary.¹³ A Mexican Commission, under General Garcia Conde, and Jose Salazar y Larregui, was working together with U. S. Commission to settle the

⁹ Land Bounty Grant issued to Charles Radzimirski, 1850, National Archives, Washington, D. C.

¹⁰ John Frost, *A Pictorial History of Mexico and the Mexican War*, (Philadelphia, 1862).

¹¹ F. S. Heitman, *Historical Dictionary of the U.S. Army*, (Washington, 1903).

¹² Lieut. Col. John D. Graham, "Report on the Boundary Line Between U.S. and Mexico", *Senate Executive Document*, 32nd. Congress, (Washington, 1853).

¹³ Graham, *op. cit.*

boundary extending from the mouth of the Rio Grande to the Pacific Ocean.¹⁴

Radziminiski was on the staff of Commissioners John R. Bartlett, Robert W. Campbell, and later Major William H. Emory, Topographic Engineer, from May 1851 to July 1856. He assisted in the survey of boundary along the Rio Grande River, initially as assistant principal surveyor. The commission labored under difficulties because of many disputes between its members, thus delaying the progress of the survey. As a result of mounting disputes, Radziminiski was sent to Washington by Commissioner Bartlett on August 16, 1851, with dispatches to Secretary of Interior, Honorable Alex. H. H. Stuart, for instructions to settle the disputes. He returned to El Paso in January, 1852, with important directives which eventually speeded the progress of the survey and changed the organization of the commission.¹⁵

There was much correspondence between the disputing members of the Commission and between the commissioners and the Secretary of the Interior. On return from Washington, Radziminiski wrote a letter to Major Emory, who was on a field trip along the boundary, informing him of important dispatches from Secretary Alex. H. H. Stuart. The letter is given here in its original form as an example of his personal correspondence.¹⁶

Dona Ana, New Mexico
January 23, 1852—SAM

Major: I understand from Skillman, whom I met nine miles from this place, that you intended to start on yesterday morning from El Paso in search of Mr. Bartlett; and I send this letter per express after you, to say that I have very important dispatches from the Department of the Interior for the heads of the commission—no small portion of them being for you. Being responsible for their safe delivery, I fear to instruct them to the express-man, and shall keep them, subject to your orders.

I would respectfully advise your return to the headquarters of the commission, from the fact that, previous to my departure with dispatches from Washington, Mr. Bartlett had ordered me to return to San Diego, where, after the reconnoissance of the Gila River, it was his intention to proceed. After waiting my arrival there some reasonable time, the commissioner expected to return by the Isthmus, to Washington or to El Paso, and there is strong probability of your arriving there too late to meet him.

Previous to my departure from Washington I advised Department of the commissioner's orders to me relative to my journey back, and the Department of the Interior thought it proper to modify them

¹⁴ Major William H. Emory, "Mexican Boundary Survey", *Senate Executive Document*, 34th. Congress, (Washington, 1857).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Graham, *op cit.*



I, *Charles Radzimirski*
appointed a *Second Lieutenant* in the
Army of the United States, do solemnly swear, ~~and affirm~~,
that I will bear true allegiance to the United States of
America, and that I will serve them honestly and faithfully
against all their enemies or opposers whatsoever; and I shall
obey the orders of the President of the United States, and
the orders of the Officers appointed over me, according to the
Rules and Articles for the government of the Army of the
United States.

Given to and subscribed before
me, at *Washington City*
this *15* day of *March* 18*47*.

Charles Radzimirski
[Signature]

[Signature] Justice of the Peace.

Appointment of Charles Radzimirski as Second Lieutenant,
U. S. Army, 1847.

by instructing me to return to the headquarters of the commission; and I take this to be an additional reason for taking the liberty to suggest your return to the Pass.

I shall wait your orders; and have the honor to remain, Major, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

Charles Radzimirski
Bearer of Despatches

Major W. H. Emory,
Chief Astronomer U.S. and M. Boundary Commission

In the course of its activities along the Rio Grande, in New Mexico, Arizona, and Texas, the commission was constantly exposed to attacks by hostile, thieving Apaches and Comanches. Some of its members were killed by Indians, others died from disease or suffered from malnutrition. The land traversed was harsh and inhospitable; food and other supplies were difficult to obtain.¹⁷

During one journey south of the Rio Grande, Radzimirski accompanied Commissioner Bartlett and a small party of surveyors in the fall of 1852 on an exploratory journey from El Paso, through Chihuahua, Saltillo and Monterey to Ringgold Barracks on lower Rio Grande. While traveling near Rio Florida in the state of Chihuahua, Mexico, the party was attacked by a band of hostile Comanches, and was in great danger of being annihilated. The Indians were driven off, however, through cool conduct and able defense of the party.¹⁸ Shortly after arrival at Ringgold Barracks, in January, 1853, Commissioner Bartlett was relieved from his post because of inefficient management. About the same time, Major Emory and Radzimirski made a special trip to Washington in connection with reorganization of the boundary commission and to report on its progress.¹⁹

In March, 1853, Robert W. Campbell was appointed U. S. Commissioner to replace John R. Bartlett and the commission was reorganized. Major Emory was appointed chief astronomer and Charles Radzimirski was placed in charge of surveying parties. The commission was to complete the survey according to terms of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. He continued in this position, surveying various stretches of the boundary along the lower Rio Grande until the fall of 1854, when the commission was reorganized again. The able and efficient Major Emory

¹⁷ John R. Bartlett, *Personal Narrative of Explorations and Incidents in Texas, New Mexico, California, Sonora and Chihuahua During the Years 1851, 1852, 1853*, (New York, 1854).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Emory, *op cit.*

was appointed U. S. Commissioner. Radzinski was appointed to the important position of secretary for the commission. The commission's staff contained about one hundred men, including surveyors, engineers, draughtsmen, artists, technicians and others. Jose Salazar y Larregui was Mexican Commissioner, after the death of General Conde in December, 1851. This commission completed the final boundary survey under new terms of The Gadsden Purchase in the fall of 1855. The new boundary was established and marked from the mouth of the Rio Grande (Rio Bravo) through El Paso, to the Pacific Ocean, south of San Diego, California.

On January 31, 1855, near El Paso, Texas, a memorable event took place when the foundation for a monument marking the initial boundary point on the Rio Grande. Officers of the joint commission with other American and Mexican officials of both sides were present to witness the ceremony. The event is described in the *Report of the United States and Mexican Boundary Survey*:²⁹

El Paso Del Norte	Latitude 31°, 47'
Initial Point on the Rio Grande	January 31, 1855

The Commission Met According To Agreement At The Meridian

The chief officers of the vicinity, military and civil, from both sides of the line, being present, the foundation of the monument was laid. The following paper, one copy in English, and the other in Spanish, was signed by the two Commissioners and by the persons aforesaid, placed in a glass bottle, and deposited, at the depth five feet, under the center of the monument.

COPY OF PAPER

WE THE UNDERSIGNED, HAVE THUS ASSEMBLED TO WITNESS THE LAYING OF THE FOUNDATION OF THE MONUMENT WHICH IS TO MARK THE INITIAL POINT OF THE BOUNDARY BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND THE REPUBLIC OF MEXICO, ON THE PART OF THE UNITED STATES BY WILLIAM HELMSLEY EMORY, AND ON THE PART OF THE REPUBLIC OF MEXICO, BY JOSE SALAZAR Y LARREGUI, LATITUDE 31° 47', AGREED UPON UNDER THE TREATY WITH MEXICO.

W. H. EMORY, U. S. COMMISSIONERS
 JOSE SALAZAR Y LARREGUI (MEXICAN COMMISSIONER)
 C. RADZINSKI, SECRETY, U. S. BOUNDARY COMMISSION
 JOEL ANKRIM
 E. B. ALEXANDER
 CALER SMITH
 E. K. SMITH (E. KIRBY SMITH, CAPTAIN, INFANTRY)
 JUAN JOSE SANCHEZ
 ANTONIO ZEPEDA
 GUADELUPE MIRANDA
 VINCENTE AGUIRRE

²⁹ Emory, *op. cit.*

While on duty with the Mexican Boundary Commission, Radzimiński was appointed a First Lieutenant in the newly organized Second Cavalry Regiment. Jefferson Davis, Secretary of War was responsible for the organization of two new cavalry regiments authorized by congress in March 1855. These new cavalry units were considered essential for the protection of the settlers and pioneers in the rapidly expanding frontiers in the West against the hostile marauding Indians.²¹

The Second Cavalry was one of the best mounted regiments in the service at that time. The majority of officers were Southerners, who, during the Civil War attained high rank in the Confederate Army. This regiment, called "Jeff Davis' Own," was organized in Louisville, Kentucky, in the spring of 1855. Its horses were purchased from the best stock available in Ohio, Indiana, and Kentucky.

This newly organized Cavalry Regiment was commanded by Colonel Albert Sidney Johnson, a Texan by adoption, who in 1861 became Major General and Commander of the Confederate Forces in the West. Second in command was Lieut. Colonel Robert E. Lee, the future Commander-in-Chief of the Confederate Armies. Officers in the Regiment who became prominent during the Civil War included: Majors William J. Hardee and George H. Thomas, the Rock of Chickamauga; Brevet Major Earl Van Dorn; Captains E. Kirby Smith, George Stoneman and Charles Whiting; Lieutenants Nitzhugh Lee, Walter H. Jennifer, William B. Royall, George B. Cosby, John Bell Hood, and Theodore O'Hara, author of *Bivouac of the Dead*.²²

The Second Cavalry moved to Jefferson Barracks, Missouri, in the summer of 1855 for its final organization before its march to Texas. The Regiment began its long trek October 27, 1855, across Oklahoma into Texas to establish headquarters at San Antonio. Units were deployed to Fort Mason, Camp Sabinal, Fort Clark, Fort McIntosh (Laredo), Fort Belknap, Camp Inge, Fort Wichita, and Camp Cooper on the Clear Fork of the Brazos.²³

At the outbreak of the Civil War the remnants of the Regiment escaped to the North and were reassembled at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. The Regiment was redesignated as the Fifth Cavalry of the Union Forces.

²¹ Captain George B. Price, *Across the Continent with the Fifth Cavalry*, (New York, 1883).

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

Radzinski was appointed to the Regiment June 30, 1855, but continued with his duties with the Boundary Commission until the completion of the survey. He joined the Regiment at Fort Mason, Texas, March 25, 1856, and was assigned to Company K, under Captain Charles Whiting. He served at several stations and camps in Texas as the units were moved about in Western Texas on the lookout for troublesome Indians. The Comanches, Kiowas, Lipans and Apaches were the scourge of Western Texas and Northern Mexico after the withdrawal of Spanish Troops in 1821.²⁴

While waiting for departure from San Antonio to Fort Mason, he met his future commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Robert E. Lee. The two officers traveled together with a convoy to Fort Mason on their way to Camp Cooper in the newly established Comanche reservation. The following incident is told in the book, *Robert E. Lee in Texas*:²⁵

In March 1856 just before leaving San Antonio for Fort Mason, he instructed Lieutenant Charles Radzinski, his young Polish Subaltern, to procure supplies which they would need on their long journey and after they arrived at Camp Cooper. He had explained that his own needs were simple, "a boiled ham, hard bread, a bottle of molasses and one of extract of coffee." However, he also added other things—a canvas tent, tables, camp chairs, crockery and cooking utensils.

Captain George Price in *Across the Continent with the Fifth Cavalry* gives a narrative history of the Regiment and included biographical sketches of officers who served from 1855 to 1883. The following biographical sketch of Lieutenant Charles Radzinski appears in the book:²⁶

Charles Radzinski was born in Poland and emigrated at an early age to the United States. He served in the War with Mexico as a Second Lieutenant in the Third Dragoons (organized by Act of Congress of February 11, 1847, for the War with Mexico), from April 9, 1847, to July 31, 1849, and was engaged in civilian pursuits in New Mexico, when he was appointed from Louisiana as First Lieutenant in the Fifth (Old Second) Cavalry to date from June 30, 1855. He joined the Regiment at Fort Mason, Texas, March 25, 1856, and served at Camp Cooper, Camp Sabinal, and at Forts Inge and Clark until May, 1857, when he was compelled to avail himself of a sick leave of absence. He rejoined the Regiment (his company) at Fort Clark in November, 1857, and served at that station, Fort Mason and on the Clear Fork of the Brazos until July 24, 1858, when rapidly falling health again compelled him to seek a change of climate, and he died at Memphis, Tenn., of consumption (tuberculosis) on August 15, 1858. He was highly esteemed for many qualities and generous disposition.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Carl Coke Rister, *Robert E. Lee in Texas*, (Norman, 1945).

²⁶ Price, *op. cit.*

After he left Camp Cooper on his second sick leave in July 1858, Charles Radzinski journeyed to Memphis, where he registered at the Gayoso House, which was one of the most fashionable hotels at that time. Being very ill and not certain about his future, he asked the management to notify the Secretary of War Floyd, and an acquaintance of his, a Colonel J. Knox Walker of Memphis, in the event of any emergency. He was found dead sitting on his bed, on the morning of August 18, 1858. Inspection of his papers revealed no relatives or friends listed. He was buried on August 22nd in an unknown cemetery in Memphis. As there was no will or next of kin mentioned in his papers, Colonel Walker became the administrator of the estate which consisted of his personal effects, valuables and an extensive wardrobe.²⁴ A recent check of Memphis cemeteries failed to locate his grave. It was learned that some of the older cemeteries were done away with, and the records destroyed.

His death was reported to the Secretary of War Floyd by a visiting government official, Thomas R. Shalleross, in the following letter given in its original text:²⁵

Memphis, Tenn.
23 Aug. 1858

Dear Sir:

Lieut. C. Radzinski of the U. S. Army died at the Gayoso House in this city on Tuesday the 18th inst. shortly after his arrival from Texas. As his approaching end was not anticipated by himself or his attending physician so soon, he left no directions with anyone, as to the disposition he wished made of his remains, or effects. He died alone sitting on the side of the bed. His disease, consumption.

He had in his possession about \$145 in money and Dfts. on the Treasury amounting to \$837, with an extensive wardrobe. On his arrival at the hotel he enquired for and expressed a desire to see Col. J. Knox Walker, who was at the time and still is absent from the city. His remains were placed in a metallic coffin and deposited in a private vault, where they were kept until yesterday, awaiting the return of Col. Walker, who is supposed to know his relatives and friends, and who it was intended should communicate the intelligence of his death, and learn from them what they desired to be done with his remains and effects, but Col. Walker failing to arrive and doubting the propriety of keeping the body in the vault longer, Mr. Knowlton of the Gayoso House had it deposited in the cemetery yesterday morning.

²⁴ Old Army Records, National Archives, Washington, D.C. News item about death of Lieut. Radzinski *The Memphis Appeal*, (August 19, 1858),
²⁵ Old Army Records, National Archives.

Never having known Lieut. Radziminiski, I am entirely disinterested and governed alone by sympathy for the friends of the deceased in communicating the foregoing facts to you.

I am very respectfully
Your obdt. servant
Thos. R. Shallicee
Spt. Agt. P.O. Dept. of
Wheeler, Va.

Hon. John B. Floyd
Sec'y of War
Washington
D.C.

In addition to this brief sketch of Radziminiski's life it is thought appropriate to give a brief history of the military camp named after him. Camp Radziminiski in the Wichita Mountains of Southwest Oklahoma, perpetuated his name for over a hundred years, on maps, in articles and books dealing with military history of our Southwest. Another land mark which commemorates his name is Mount Radziminiski, a massive granite pile which lies about one half mile to the southeast of the camp site.²⁹ This mountain is known to the people living in the vicinity of the camp, although it is not shown on official maps of Oklahoma.

About a month after Radziminiski's death, Brevet Major Earl Van Dorn, West Pointer from Fort Gibson, Mississippi, marched from old Fort Belknap, located south of New Castle, Young County, Texas, with Companies A, F, H, and K of the Second Cavalry, one company of infantry and sixty Caddo and Delaware scouts under the Indian Agent Lawrence Sul Ross, to establish a new base of operations north of the Red River. The movement of these troops was ordered by Brevet Major General David Twiggs, Commanding General of the Department of Texas. This move was deemed necessary because the hostile Comanches were moving north from Texas into Indian Territory to harass the settlers where there was insufficient protection.³⁰

The expedition under Major Van Dorn, after crossing the Red River, established a temporary camp, September 23, 1858, on the southwest bank of Otter Creek, near Tipton, Tillman County, Oklahoma. This camp, Van Dorn named Camp Radziminiski in honor of Lieutenant Radziminiski of K Company, in accordance with an Army custom to name camps and forts after deceased military men or prominent

²⁹ Kent Ruth, *Oklahoma, A Guide to the Sooner State*, pp. 454-455, (Norman, 1957).

³⁰ William E. Morrison, *Military Posts and Camps in Oklahoma*, (Oklahoma City, 1936); Col. W. S. Nye, *Carbine and Lance*, pp. 18-26, (Norman, 1943).

Americans. It was from this base that Van Dorn staged an attack on large bands of Comanches under Chief Buffalo Hump, at Wichita Village near Rush Springs on October 1, 1858. The Cavalry and Indian Scouts defeated and dispersed a band of 500 hostile Indians. Major Van Dorn and "Sul" Roas were seriously wounded in this battle. Lieutenant Van Camp, a young West Pointer, was killed.³¹

In November, 1858, the troops moved and made camp several miles upstream on Otter Creek. The grazing land in this new location was exhausted by March 1859 which necessitated another move. Van Dorn crossed to the west bank and marched north to the point where Otter Creek emerges through a gorge between two granite peaks of The Wichita Mountains. He found a cove, sheltered from the "northers," with plenty of timber and grass nearby. All three camps were called Camp Radziminiski. The last camp was the most permanent and best known and is the one that has the historical marker. This third camp was situated in the southern slopes of the Wichita Mountains; to the south and west lay a great plain which supported thousands of buffalo. Big horn sheep and elk were numerous in the rugged granite mountains to the north.³²

While the troops were encamped for the winter, Buffalo Hump gathered new warriors and continued raiding settlements and committing depredations further north near Kansas. Van Dorn organized another expedition, May 30, 1859, with Capt. E. Kirby Smith as second in command, and trailed the hostile Indians into Kansas. The expedition surprised a large body of Kiowas and Comanches on Crooked Creek (Nescatunga), south of Old Fort Atkinson, near Dodge City, Kansas. The Comanches were again defeated and dispersed and henceforth became a lesser threat to the settlers in the Southwest. Major Van Dorn was again wounded in this battle, as were Captain Edmund Kirby Smith and Lieutenant Fitzhugh Lee. Lee carried an arrow-head imbedded in his chest the rest of his life. The troops now returned to Camp Radziminiski to rest and convalesce from their wounds. Shortly after return to camp, Major Van Dorn was ordered to San Antonio, leaving Captain Smith in command of the troops at Radziminiski through the summer of 1859.³³

While preparing for Indian Campaigns the troops were engaged in training and drilling recruits and mounts. The

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Morrison, *op. cit.* (Site is west of Mountain Park, Kiowa County.)

only recreations were hunting, mountain climbing, and horse racing at the camp. The horses were trained to return to camp when alarm sounded to prevent their being stampeded. It was the strategy of the Comanches to run off the horses for their own use and leave the troops afoot.

The interesting book, *Story of the Fifth Cavalry*, has the following note about horse racing at Camp Radziminiski:²⁴

Major Van Dorn was owner of a splendid running horse which had won more money than any other horse in the regiment. He was once defeated by Lieutenant Royall with Minnehaha, owned by Lieutenant Radziminiski; a beautiful mare, thoroughly trained in the Baucher System and a saddle animal of great endurance. She finally became the property of Lieutenant Colonel Robert E. Lee, but was left behind when the regiment marched to the coast en route to the North. (1861)

Camp Radziminiski was abandoned by the troops of the Second Cavalry, December 6, 1859, when the units were ordered back to duty in Texas. The old camp site was occupied later by Texas Rangers, who remained for about a year, patrolling the border and skirmishing with the remaining bands of marauding Indians.

Even though officially abandoned by the Army, the camp site continued to be used as a bivouac area by U. S. Cavalry units after the Civil War. It was visited on many occasions by Army officials and persons interested in the history of the region.

On June 27, 1868 the ruins of Radziminiski were visited by Colonel B. H. Grierson with units of the 10th Cavalry from Fort Arbuckle. He was making a reconnaissance of the Wichita Mountains area for a location of a new permanent Army fort in that region. Colonel Grierson was fascinated by the site of the old camp in the Wichitas because of the tales of buried treasures there. While camping near the site, he was visited by a band of Comanches. A conference was held with these Indians, as a result of which several captive children, including four whites and two negroes, were ransomed.²⁵

The site of the new fort was eventually chosen on January 8, 1869, by General Phillip Sheridan, on the banks of Medicine Bluff Creek, about thirty five miles east of Camp Radziminiski. It was first called Camp Wichita, but renamed Fort Sill at department headquarters on July 2, 1869, and at Fort Sill on August 1, 1869. This post has

²⁴ Price, *op. cit.*

²⁵ Nye, *op. cit.*

become the famous and historical Army installation of the Southwest. At the present time it is used as an Artillery and Missile Training Center.²⁶

The site of old Camp Radzinski was occupied as a camping area on March 4 and 5, 1869, by the famous Seventh U. S. Cavalry and the Nineteenth Volunteer Kansas Cavalry under the command of General George A. Custer. This was shortly after the establishment of Fort Sill, following Custer's destruction of Chief Black Kettle's Cheyenne Village on November 27, 1868.²⁷

The site of Camp Radzinski is located about four miles northwest from the town of Mountain Park, Kiowa County, on the farm of Mrs. Olivia E. Walker, her son A. O. "Red" Walker and daughter Claudia Walker. It lies on the west bank of Otter Creek below the granite mountains to the north. The land is partly under cultivation for wheat and other crops. About one half mile to the southeast lies Mount Radzinski which is also called Mount Frisco by the local residents, after the Frisco Railway which passes to the east of it. According to Mr. "Red" Walker, there were six graves on the camp site. The remains were moved to the cemetery at Fort Sill in the late 1920's. There were occasional visitors including Army personnel who came to inspect the site and gather information about it from the Walker family. Miss Claudia Walker showed the author during his visit there, some souvenirs, such as buckles, horseshoes, bits and bottles and other items picked up on the site from time to time. A rectangle of stones and an abandoned well remain to identify positively the location of the mess-hall.²⁸

Private interests acquired the rugged slopes of Mount Radzinski in 1915. Extensive granite quarrying operations begun at that time by Anton Soukup and Frank Svoboda, Bohemian born citizens of Omaha, Nebraska. In the past, as many as five hundred granite cutters have been employed at one time, although shipments in recent years were reduced to several carloads a month.²⁹ Pink, red and gray granite is quarried there for monuments by the Githam Granite Company of Mountain Park.

²⁶ *Oklahoma Historical Sites Survey*, Oklahoma Historical Society, (Oklahoma City, 1958); Muriel H. Wright, "A History of Fort Cobb", *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. XXXIV No. 1, Spring 1956, p. 70.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 94-95.

²⁸ Information obtained from Mr. A. O. "Red" Walker, a resident of Camp Radzinski Area.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 94-95; *Lawton Constitution*, August 11, 1957, "Camp Radzinski Lost to the Rubble."

Here ends the brief story of Lieutenant Charles Radzinski and the camp named in his honor. He died untimely, an exile from his native land, buried in an unknown grave, after a colorful and useful career in his adopted country. For his services in the cause of freedom and the faithful performance of his duties, his name will live on in the Archives of Army, the Boundary Commission and in the landmarks of Oklahoma.