Part One: A NEW EARTH

Pass, hurrying on, the adventurous and the bold!
. . . . . .
To mould and rule, and conquer at your will!
On to your task! — with mind resolved and soul
On fire to seize the prize — to reach the goal!
Wide be your Banner of the Stars unfurled.
And on! — ye Workmen, that shall build — a World!

Lady Emmeline Stuart Wortley.
On the Americans Crossing the Isthmus.

EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY MAP
SHOWING CALIFORNIA AS AN ISLAND

1. The Conquest of California

An old romance, popular in Spain in the early sixteenth century, spoke of California, a fantasy island "on the right hand of the Indies, very near the Terrestrial Paradise." It was peopled with black women, griffins, *and* other creatures of the author's imagination.

Baja California was thought to be an island, and the entire region above it was supposed to be a group of islands. So they began to be called *Las Californias* in 1539, extending indefinitely northward to the mythical strait of Anian, or to Asia, except as interrupted, in the view of some geographers, by Drake's New Albion. Eventually, the peninsula was called old, Lower or *Baja* California, and the province above it, new, Upper or *Alta* California.

Spain explored the Alta California coast on several occasions beginning in 1542, but many years elapsed before the Spanish government took definite action to occupy the province. Fearing a Russian or British takeover and needing a refitting point for the galleons from Manila, Spain finally occupied San Diego in 1769 and Monterey in 1770. San Francisco bay was then discovered, and the subsequent founding of the presidio and mission at that point came after the thirteen English colonies had declared their independence.

The first missionaries in the sixteenth century had found the Baja California aborigines "animal-like," without agriculture, houses or clothing. The Californias had less than one person per square kilometer of land, and were marked by a great complexity of individual languages and separate tribal groups. Agriculture was not practiced except along the Colorado river. Alta California was occupied for the most part without resistance from the peaceful and docile natives, by the military and ecclesiastical forces of Spain.

The military forces were small indeed, reaching a grand total of 380 men in the entire province at the end of the eighteenth century. The ecclesiastical forces, led by Fry Junipero Serra, established 21 missions along the coast, from San Diego to Sonoma. Economically the missions were the blood and life of the province. The hides and tallow yielded by great herds of cattle were exported and did much toward paying the expenses of the government. The priests, of course, played a valuable role in bridging the cultural gap between the Indian and Spanish segments of the population.

As late as the year 1830, the missions of California were in a flourishing and prosperous condition. The San Diego Mission, for instance, included eight large farms, or ranchos, enclosing some forty miles square of territory. Great attention was paid to both agriculture and horticulture in the immediate vicinity of the mission buildings. Brandy, wines, olives, and olive oil were important articles of production. From the herds and flocks, leather, soap, coarse flannels, blankets, hats, and shoes were manufactured in ample quantities. Each mission was well provided with carpenter's, blacksmith's, and saddler's tools.

By December 1831, 62 years after setting foot on Alta California soil, the friars had baptized 88,873 Indians, had performed 24,692 marriages, and had recorded 63,281 deaths among their charges. The independence of Mexico in 1821, and the subsequent secularization of the missions in 1834, put an end to the friars' labors, which promptly sent the Indians back "to their original haunts in the mountains."[1]

In 1834, the Mexican Congress transferred control of the missions property to military officers and their favorites. The ruin they immediately brought on is vividly told in a set of dry statistics that the French consul in Monterey furnished to the San Francisco *Herald* in 1853:

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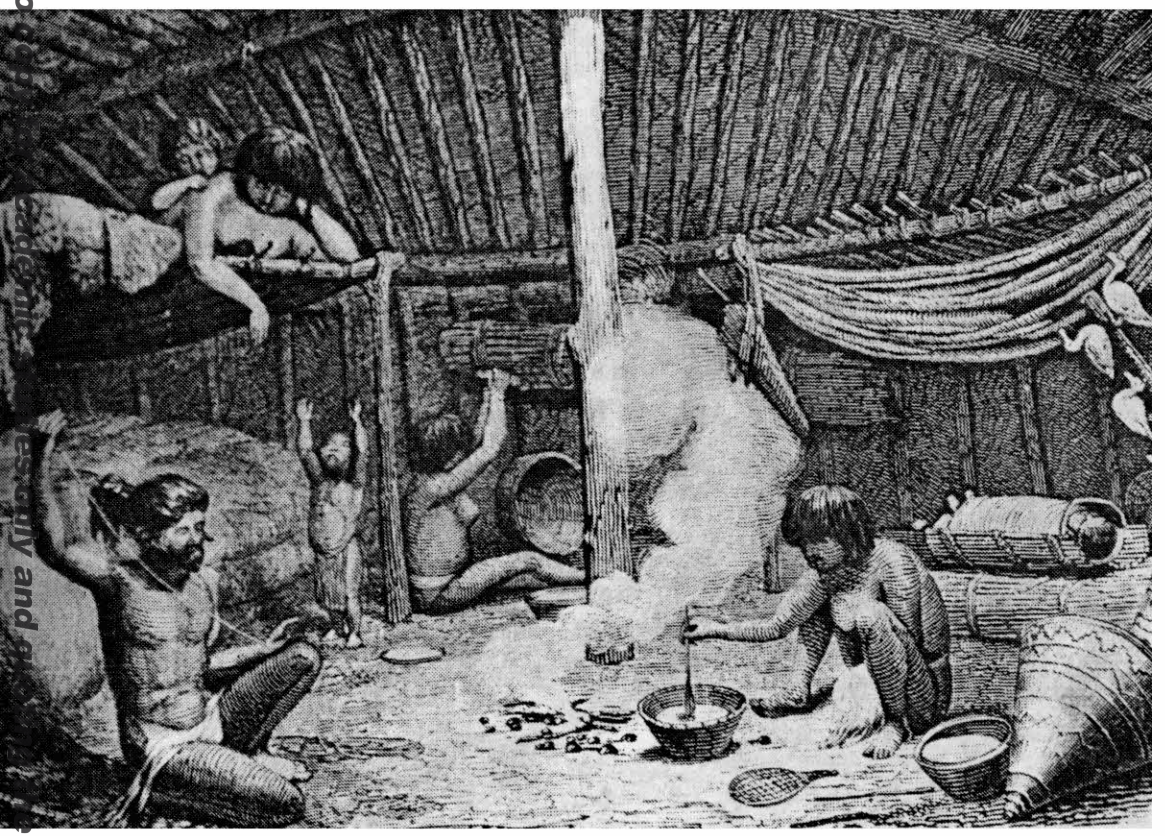
[1]Major J. McKinstry, "Interesting Sketch of the California Indians -- Their History --Country --Customs, and Capacity for War," *San Francisco Herald* 6/4/1853, p.2 c.1; 5, p.2 c.3.



ALTA CALIFORNIA INDIANS

MISSION OF SAN DIEGO

CALIFORNIA MISSIONS' STATISTICS[2]

	In 1834, under the priests	In 1842, under Government control
Cattle	424.000	28.320
Horses	62.000	3,800
Sheep, goats, pigs	321.500	31.600
Grains	118.500 *fanegas*[3]	14.000 *fanegas*

In eight years, the number of Indians in the missions had dropped from 30,000 to 4,450.

Outside of the missions, Alta California's social, economic, and political life centered on large cattle ranches. At the start of the Mexican war, eight million acres were in the possession of 800 grantees, whose holdings in several outstanding instances resembled kingdoms in the wealth and power they brought to their owners. The strong attachment of the Indian to the land of his fathers made him a serf of the soil. The ranchero owned the soil, and the soil owned the Indian.

In 1845, pastoral California had few schools, no newspapers, hospitals or cities worthy of the name. Its longtime capital, Monterey, did not surpass 2,000 inhabitants. Its best port, San Francisco, was then called Yerba Buena and harbored less than 300 people. The entire Spanish American population scattered along 1,000 kilometers of coastline from San Diego upwards, barely reached 7,000.

Suddenly, the outbreak of hostilities in 1846, and the ensuing avalanche of immigrants by land and sea abruptly rushed this new Promised Land into the front ranks of the modern world. An early mover for the change was John Augustus Sutter, a Swiss by birth, who in 1838 obtained a grant of 49,000 acres of land on the Sacramento river on condition that he would fortify it and develop a strong Mexican out-

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2"The Population and Property of California -- Past and Present." Ibid., 2/11/1853, p.2 c.2.

3125 lbs. each.

post. He traded with the Indians for furs and built not only a fort and other buildings but a mill, tannery, distillery, blanket factory, blacksmith and other shops. Sutter's Fort, or "New Helvetia," soon became a rendezvous for adventurers, sailors, trappers, and hunters and an increasing number of Americans. Sutter's growing strength and independence and, above all, his hospitality to the Americans, inevitably steered him into conflict with the Mexican authorities.

Indeed, there had been tension between the Spanish American Californians and the Anglo-Saxon American immigrants long before Col. John C. Frémont arrived at the head of 62 U.S. Army topographical engineers in February, 1846. Frémont was on his way to Oregon for the professed purpose of exploring the Great Basin and Pacific Coast, but he was also carrying secret instructions for action in case of a war with Mexico.

The arrival of U.S. Army troops at Sutter's Fort aroused the suspicions of California Commandant General José Castro, who mustered a force at the San Juan Bautista mission and threatened to expel Frémont. The Americans built a defense on the mountain overlooking the mission and hoisted the Stars and Stripes. Frémont remained "a sufficient length of time to enable Castro to carry his threats into execution; but such not being done, he moved off up the valley of the Sacramento" and resumed his journey to Oregon.[4]

On May 9, at the great Klamath lake, he was overtaken by Lieut. Archi H. Gillespie, a government messenger from Washington. Frémont promptly turned about to carry out his secret mission. On June 11, at dawn, he ambushed and captured a Mexican patrol with a supply of 200 horses for Castro's troops. The war had commenced.

Frémont promptly took by surprise the military post at Sonoma on June 15. He then went to the American settlements at the *Rio de los Americanos* to obtain reinforcements. Returning to Sonoma, he attacked and defeated a squad of seventy dragoons, the vanguard of Castro's army. On the 4th of July, Frémont called the Americans together at Sonoma and

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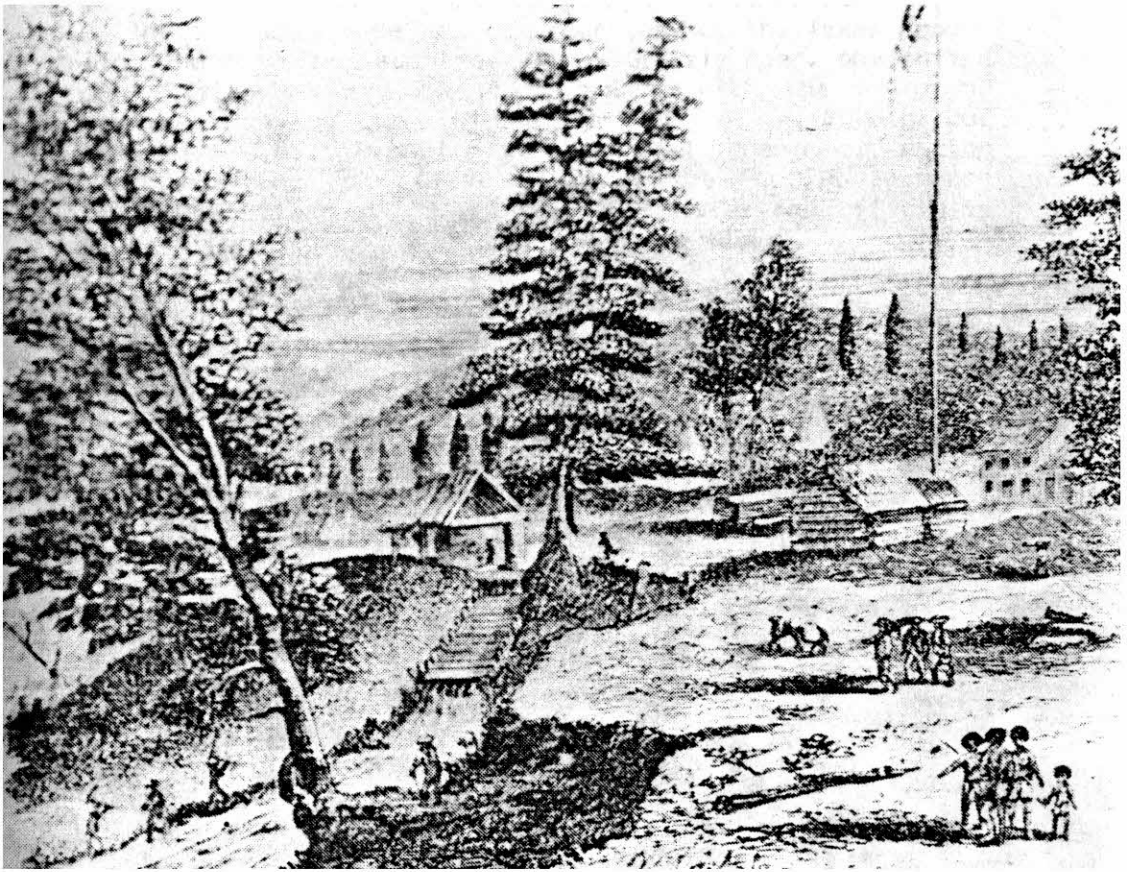
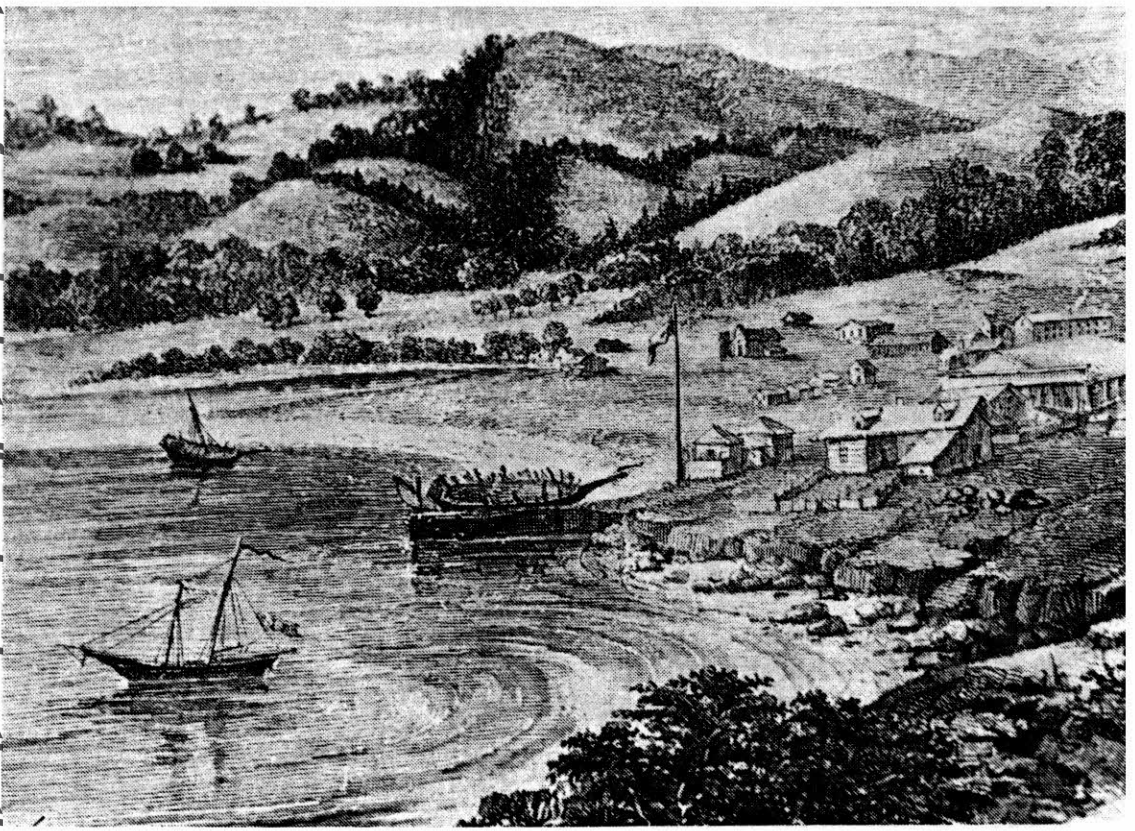
4"Lieut. Col. Fremont," *Daily Picayune* (New Orleans), 11/19/1846, p.2 c.4.



SUTTER'S FORT



MONTEREY
CAPITAL OF ALTA CALIFORNIA

recommended a declaration of independence. This was immediately declared, and the war against Castro was proclaimed.

The Sonoma episode was a carbon copy of the Texas Republic. The flag they adopted, with a Grizzly Bear, one stripe and a star stained on white cotton with the juice of berries, survives today in the state flag of California. But the Grizzly Bear Republic was never an independent nation once Commodore John Drake Sloat of the Pacific Squadron raised the Stars and Stripes over Monterey and officially took California for the United States on July 7.

Frêmont succeeded in mounting 150 men, and advanced to Monterey. There he embarked aboard the sloop-of-war *Cyane* towards San Diego. Castro, too, on learning the news of the declaration of war between the United States and Mexico, went down to Santa Barbara and from there to San Diego. When Frêmont landed, Castro fled to the Colorado and then to Sonora, seeking in vain to raise troops for his return.

In August, 1846, Alta California seemed secure in American hands. Leaving small garrisons in San Diego, Los Angeles, Mission San Luis Rey, and Santa Barbara, Frêmont went back to Monterey to meet Commodore Stockton and make arrangements for the future government of the province. In October, Frêmont was back at Sutter's Fort in the Sacramento valley, recruiting additional forces among the immigrants then arriving from the East.

Meanwhile, the Army of the West had begun to move forward from Fort Leavenworth on June 22, 1846 under the command of Col. Stephen Watts Kearny. It consisted of 3,300 well-armed men, mostly cavalry, except for two companies of infantry, employed as flankers to the artillery in difficult passes. With them traveled 500 Mormons destined for California.

Kearny entered Santa Fe, New Mexico, "triumphantly and without opposition," on August 18. On September 25 he continued with 300 dragoons and two mountain howitzers towards California. On October 6, they met "Mr. Kit Carson, with a party of 16 men, on his way to Washington City, with a mail and papers -- an express from Com. Stockton and Lieut. Col. Frêmont, reporting that the Californians [Spanish-American *Californios*] were already in possession of the Americans under their command; that the American flag was flying from every important position in the Territory, and that the

country was forever free from Mexican control: the war ended, and peace and harmony established among the people."[5]

In consequence of that information, Kearny directed 200 dragoons back to Santa Fe, and continued his march to the Gila with 100 men only. News of peace and harmony were premature, however. In September, the *Californios* had risen against the Americans and retaken San Diego, Santa Barbara, and Los Angeles.

Captain Mervine of the frigate *Savannah* landed at San Pedro, near Los Angeles, with 300 men, but on October 8 was driven back to his ship with a loss of a dozen casualties, by 150 mounted *Californios* who sustained no losses. The *Californios* held possession of the southern part of the country from Santa Barbara to San Diego, and Mervine could not obtain horses for his men, as they had been driven to the mountains and concealed.

Kearny's Army of the West met the *Californios* at San Pascual, on the road to San Diego, on December 6. The day before, his advanced guard had seen the Mexican camp without being detected. He attacked at daybreak and defeated 160 *Californios* "well mounted and among the best horsemen in the world."[6] But the *Californios'* lances were no match for American rifles. Nineteen Americans were killed, and nineteen others were injured, many of them receiving from two to ten lance wounds each.

The final battles were fought near Los Angeles, on January 8 and 9, 1847. On the heights commanding the crossing of the river San Gabriel and on the plains of the Mesa; 500 Americans, marines and sailors included, with a battery of artillery, defeated 600 mounted *Californios*. Besides their muskets and lances, the *Californios* also lost four pieces of artillery.

By that time, Frêmont converged from the north at the head of a regiment of 400 men recruited among the emigrants in the Sacramento valley. The *Californios* capitulated to him

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5"California -- Gen. Kearny's Letters." Ibid., 5/13/1847, p.1 c.6 (Kearny to Jones, San Diego, December 12, 1846).

6Kearny to Jones, San Diego, December 13, 1846, Ibid.

at the ranch of Cowanga, near Los Angeles, on January 13, 1847. This put an end to organized resistance. The Mormon battalion attached to Kearny's Army of the West, lagging behind with its covered wagons, finally arrived, and was assigned to garrison San Diego and Los Angeles when Frémont disbanded his volunteers.

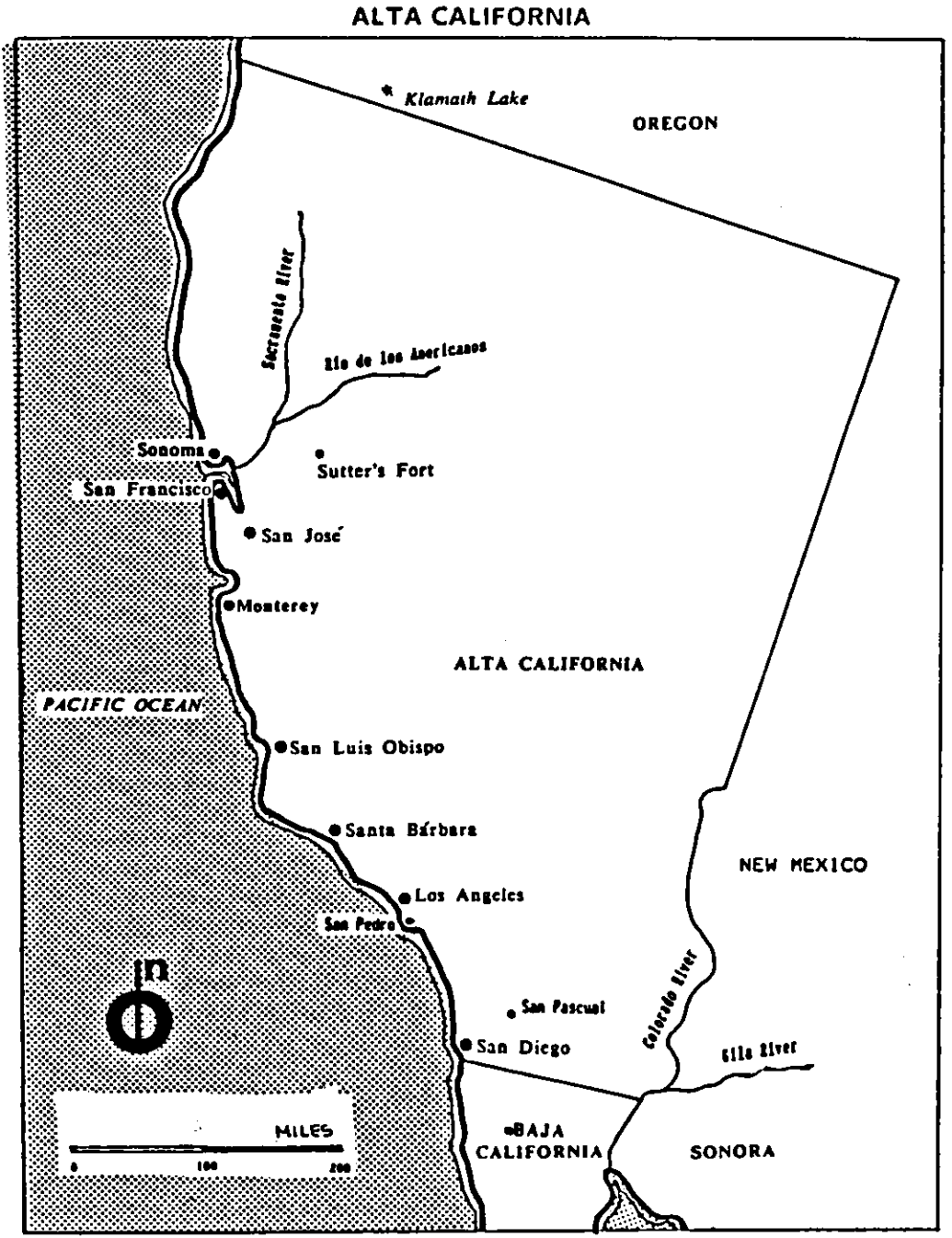
An additional regiment was yet on its way to California, assembled in the previous summer in New York, under the command of Lieut. Col. Jonathan D. Stevenson. Over 800 volunteers had enlisted, explicitly understanding that they would be discharged without a claim for returning home, wherever they may be serving at the termination of the war. In its ranks, as privates, were lawyers, physicians, merchants, actors, printers, representatives of all mechanical trades, "and a few loafers." Most of them were seeking adventure, and many joined to begin life anew in the far-off Pacific, unknowing and unknown.

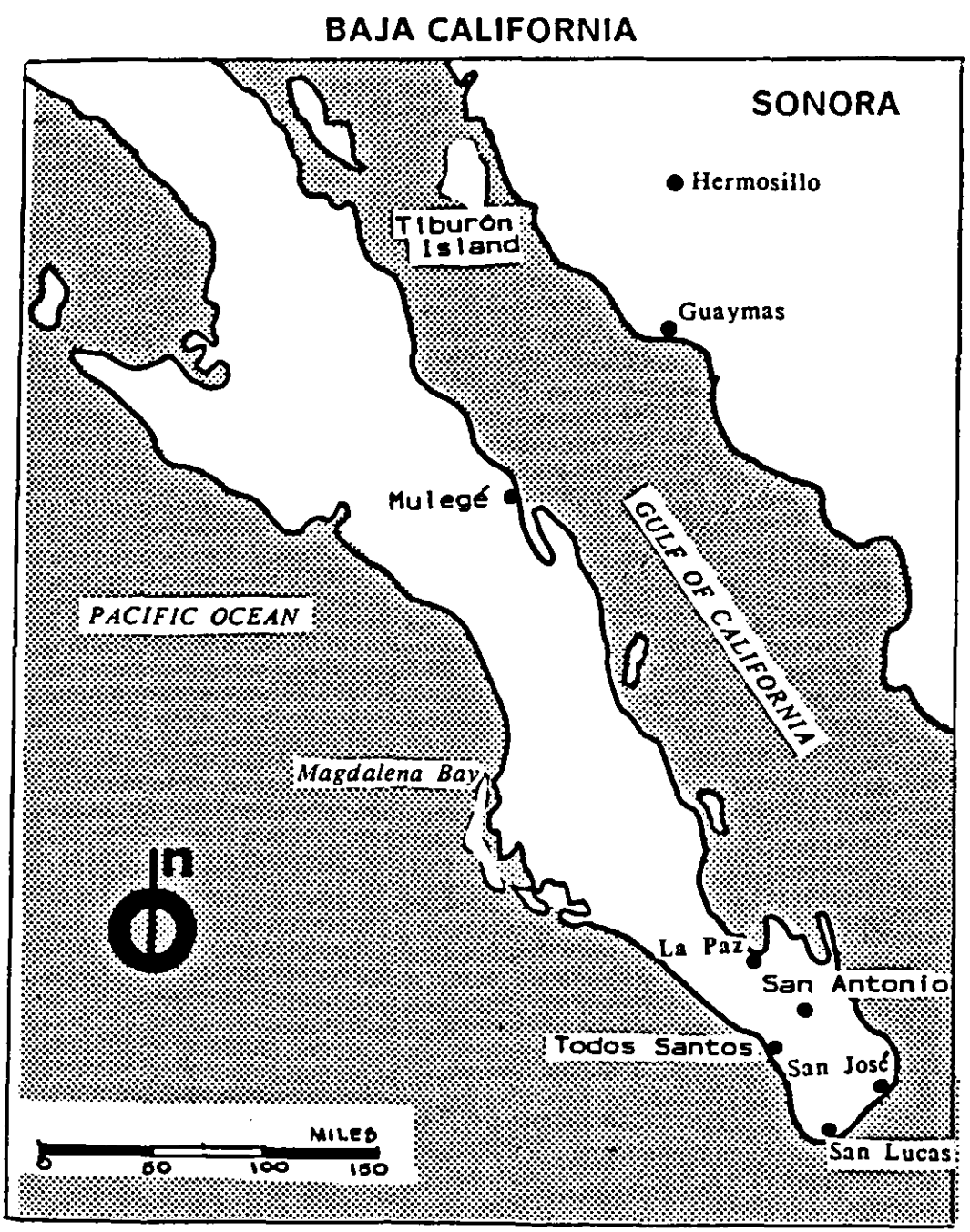
They were drilled in military tactics for a few weeks on Governor's Island, and then shipped on three merchant vessels accompanied by a sloop-of-war, around Cape Horn. Over a hundred were left behind when they departed in a hurry, some hours sooner than expected, on September 26, 1846. The colonel was forced to do it to avoid problems with the civil authorities who were preparing to enforce a legal process and prevent his departure.

They arrived in San Francisco in March, 1847, after the *Californios* had surrendered, and were assigned to garrison a number of posts for the duration of the war. Two companies, under Lieut. Col. H. S. Burton, were ordered to take possession of the Lower California peninsula.

Baja California, 760 miles long and from 30 to 150 miles wide, had a population of 10,000: less than one person per ten square kilometers of land. San José, with 1,100 inhabitants and its capital, La Paz, with 600, were its largest cities. Only 200 Indians remained in the entire peninsula, decimated by disease even before the secularization of the missions had scattered them.

At the end of July, 1847, Lieut. Col. H. S. Burton landed at La Paz with 100 New York volunteers and two pieces of artillery. He took possession of the capital without firing a shot. Twenty marines occupied San José, at the tip of the





peninsula.

Mexican troops from Sonora, across the gulf, then landed at Mulege, a hamlet midway up the Lower California coast. They fought the first skirmish late in September when they were attacked by 80 American soldiers sent ashore from the ship *Dale*. The Mexican Mulegé contingent, under Captain Manuel Pineda, advanced to San Antonio, gathering strength on the way. At San Antonio, they formed a territorial junta and issued patriotic proclamations.

On November 16, 300 Mexican horsemen armed with muskets and a four-pounder field piece, and 60 Sonora Indians, with bows and arrows, marched on La Paz. They were repulsed by two companies of New York volunteers, barricaded behind bales of cotton yarn on the roofs of buildings, supported by two cannons. They were repulsed again on November 27-28. A few days earlier, the twenty American marines at San Jose, using a nine pounder to good account, repelled 150 Mexicans led by Antonio Mejares, killing their leader and several more.

The Americans at San José and La Paz were reinforced by the *Cyane* and *Southampton* in December, and subsequent reinforcements allowed the invaders to counterattack. They took San Antonio on February 17, 1848, and on March 25 they occupied Todos Santos, where "ten of the enemy were killed and 50 horses were taken from them . . . about 100 of the enemy were taken prisoner, and a large number of arms."[7]

At the end of March, the Americans had taken prisoner or dispersed all Mexican forces in the peninsula. Pineda had been wounded and had surrendered. The *jefe político* of Lower California, Don Mauricio Castro, and his entire staff had been captured. The conquest of Baja California was thus completed after the Guadalupe Hidalgo treaty had ended the war on February 2, 1848.

American forces held undisputed possession of both Californias for several months, but in the summer, in compliance with the terms of the treaty, the peninsula was given back to Mexico. The official transfer took place on August 31.

7"Affairs in California," *New York Herald* 6/5/1848, p.2, c.4.

1848, at 2 p.m. Shortly before the transfer, 23 of the "most honorable and honest men of the country" had met at La Paz and signed a petition for annexation to the United States.[8]

The commodore and the colonel could not accede to the request for annexation, but on abandoning the peninsula the Pacific squadron evacuated from La Paz and San José del Cabo some 250 Mexican citizens who had befriended the occupation forces during the war, "by which their lives and estates are clearly forfeited, and which no doubt would have been exacted of many" by their countrymen. The refugees, men, women and children, were relocated to Monterey, Alta California.

As told by Commodore Thomas Ap. Catasby Jones, who carried out the operation:

> Among those unfortunate Californians, thus constrained to abandon their homes and the graves of their fathers, are the late Governor of Lower California [Don Francisco Palacios de Miranda], the Priest of the Diocese [Padre Ignacio Ramírez de Arellano], and the principal civil officers of that Department, including their late Representative in the Mexican Congress.[9]

On their arrival at Monterey in October, 1848, Alta California was already undergoing the unprecedented transformation due to the Gold Rush and the occupation of the territory by the U.S. forces.

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[8]Commodore Thomas Ap. Catasby Jones, Commander in Chief U. S. Naval Forces Pacific Ocean, to the Hon. John G. Mason, Secretary of the Navy. (Flagship Ohio, Monterey de California, October 19, 1848). National Archives microfilm M-89, roll 34.

[9]Ibid.

2. Nation Makers! Onward Go!

Captain Joseph Libby Folsom, Assistant Quartermaster at San Francisco, chronicled events in his reports to the Quartermaster General, U.S. Army. On September 18, 1848, at the time the Baja California refugees were arriving at Monterey, he recapped the momentous occurrences going on before his eyes.

For him, California had slumbered on from its first settlement, without enterprise or activity on the part of its inhabitants. There were many Americans and foreigners in the country prior to the change of flags, but the unsettled condition of politics, and constant revolutions, prevented anything like the systematic enterprise which might otherwise have been expected from citizens of Anglo-Saxon origin.

But several sudden events had changed all this. In the latter part of February, 1848, a mechanic, named James W. Marshall, was building a sawmill for John A. Sutter on the south branch of the *Río de los Americanos*, some fifty miles from Sutter's Fort. While cutting a mill-race or canal for this improvement, Mr. Marshall discovered pieces of gold as they glistened in the sunlight at the bottom of the sluice. Rocks of considerable size were taken from the water. The laborers on the works, mostly Mormons, soon became satisfied of their precious nature, and the news spread rapidly about the country.

Other points along the stream were examined, and almost everywhere with success. Reports of a most marvellous nature reached the coast. Their apparent extravagance created incredulity at first, and the public attention was not fully called to the subject until gold dust was brought into the market in considerable quantities for sale.

Doubt soon became belief, and a change almost magical in its nature pervaded the whole population. Lawyers, doctors, clergymen, farmers, mechanics, merchants, sailors, and soldiers, left their legitimate occupations, to embark in a

business where fortunes were to be made in a few weeks. Villages and districts, where all had been bustle, industry, and improvement, were soon deserted by the male population. Mechanics, merchants, and magistrates, were alike off to the mines, and all kinds of useful occupation, except gold digging, were apparently ended.

Captain Folsom had been to the mining country in the summer, endeavoring to obtain what information he could on the value of the mines and the number of people employed in them. From what he saw, he believed that these were the richest *placer* mines in the world. There were at least three thousand miners, including both whites and Indians. But this number was augmented by men coming from all parts of California, Oregon, and Sonora, as well as from the Sandwich Islands (the name for Hawaii). "There has been such a drain from the Islands, that there is scarcely a mechanic left at Honolulu -- The same is likely to be the case in Oregon, as every vessel comes in from there crowded, and we hear of a large overland emigration."[1]

So began the Gold Rush, called "mania" and "fever" from the start. It spread across the nation later in the year, after the news arrived in New York. James Gordon Bennett placed it in context in his January 11, 1849 *New York Herald* editorial. He observed that all classes of citizens were victims of the mania, but the expenses of the journey restricted the adventurers in some measure to that class of persons who could afford it. And he commented:

> If the government were under the necessity of making a levy of volunteers to the amount of two or three hundred thousand men, for any purpose in California, the ranks would be filled in less than three months. It may be recollected that the enthusiasm which sprung up for the Mexican invasion, after the first battle of General Taylor on the Rio Grande, swelled the ranks of the volunteers from the various States, to the number of nearly one hundred thousand

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1"Another Official Account of the Gold Region," New York Herald 12/24/48, p4 c2.

men.

The mania for Mexican invasion, as it was exhibited in those days, is outstripped by the mania for emigrating to California. This mania, more humane, more safe to the adventurers, and more poetic, is at the same time far more practical and of much greater utility than the enthusiasm for Mexican invasion.

What will this general and overwhelming spirit of emigration lead to? Will it be the beginning of a new empire in the West —a revolution in the commercial highways of the world — a depopulation of the old States for the new republic on the shores of the Pacific? The future alone can answer such questions.

. . . One thing, however, is certain, that we are on the highway of making New York on the Atlantic, and San Francisco on the Pacific, the great central commercial ports of the civilized world; . . . Cuba and Mexico and the Canadas cannot resist the contagious spirit of the age; and they will gradually fall into the great movement which has been set on foot by the enterprise of the people of this republic, and which has begun to show itself in a great revolution, that will mark the future history of the civilized world.[2]

The Gold Rush was set in motion when the boat *John W. Coffin*, with four passengers and twelve crew members, sailed from Boston on December 7, 1848, conveying the first argonauts from the Atlantic seaboard to California via Cape Horn. Two additional ships cleared from Boston before the end of the year, two each from New York and Salem, and one each from New Bedford and Philadelphia, carrying altogether 260 persons direct to San Francisco. Also in December, one ship took 81 passengers to Veracruz, intent on crossing Mexico to the Pacific, and 500 emigrants went aboard five vessels to Chagres, opening the Panama route.

The Panama isthmus was then a province of New Granada

2"Emigration to California." Ibid. 1/11/1849, p,2 c.3.

(Colombia), which had just granted to the government and citizens of the United States "open and free transit across the Isthmus of Panama upon any modes of communication that now exist, or that may be hereafter constructed."[3] The U.S. Government, in turn, had given the Pacific Mail contract to William Henry Aspinwall and his associates. Their steamship *California* left New York on October 6, 1848, on her maiden voyage via Cape Horn, to inaugurate the traffic between Panama and San Francisco.

The "modes of communication" that awaited the first voyagers across the Isthmus were described in detail by the *New York Herald* on December 18, and were primitive indeed. From New York or New Orleans, passengers would land at a small village, a mere collection of huts in the midst of a swamp at the mouth of the river Chagres. There they would find "absolutely no accommodations," and would have to hurry up the river in canoes, propelled by boatmen, stripped to the buff, with long pole in hand.

The river itself was a dark, muddy and rapid stream. No pleasant villages adorned its banks; no signs of civilization were seen on them. Nothing but the sombre primeval forest which grew to the very margin of the swampy mangroves that fringed the water edge, affording a most convenient place of resort for the alligators, with which the marshy country swarmed.

The sensible traveller, however, who remained quietly in his boat and made no adventurous visits on shore, was perfectly safe from any harm from these animals, or the small panthers, monkeys and deadly snakes with which the country on each bank of the river abounded. The passenger had to take his provisions with him, as none were to be had along the route, and the river water was so muddy that it was bound to cause diarrhea, unless filtered in some way before drinking it.

Some 45 to 50 miles from Chagres, from ten to thirty-six hours depending on the heaviness of the boat and the number of hands poling it up, the passenger landed at Gorgona or

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[3] "Treaty of Amity and Commerce . . . ," *Ibid.* 6/19/1848, p.1 c.1.

Cruces. These small villages were situated on high ground, twenty-one miles from the Pacific Ocean, and a road connected them to Panama City. The road was a mere bridle path, full of mud-holes and swampy places.

After a toilsome journey of some eight to ten hours on horse, muleback, or by foot, and provided that the traveller arrived in good health and had little baggage, the white towers of the Cathedral of Panama came into view. An hour later he entered the city of some 5,000 to 7,000 inhabitants: up to then, a quiet, still city, where only the soft sounds of the convent and church bells disturbed the people's horses in their grazing in the public squares, all overgrown with grass.

Agriculture was at a low point on the Isthmus, as not enough sugar was raised to supply the city of Panama, and they hence depended for their supplies of wheat, flour, salt, sugar and groceries, from Peru or Jamaica. Panama's market and its accommodations were poor. On account of the extreme heat, fish that were caught in the morning were rotten by the afternoon. Fowls, vegetables and fruits were scarce and expensive. It was only within a few years that a public hotel had been established; previous to that, travellers had to depend on the hospitality of those to whom they carried letters of introduction.

The steamer *Falcon* discharged the first shipload of passengers at Chagres on December 27, after a pleasant nine-day cruise from New Orleans. The agent of the steamer immediately proceeded to Gorgona and Cruces ahead of the crowd, and engaged all the mule transportation that he could, securing some 300 animals for the passengers and their baggage. When the 193 travellers boarded the small boats on the Chagres river, all were in fine spirits, expecting to sail for San Francisco on the Pacific steamer *California* shortly after arriving in Panama. Certainly, nobody was thinking of the cholera which had begun to rage in New Orleans on the evening of December 18, the day of their departure.

But days and nights passed on the Isthmus without any sign of the *California*. When the steamer finally arrived in Panama, on January 17, 1849, six additional shiploads of passengers had landed at Chagres, on their way to the gold regions. The ordeal they suffered is vividly recorded in the

chronicles the passengers themselves sent to the *New York Herald* and other papers:

> Chagres is a collection of 100 negro huts . . . A few turkey buzzards ornament each roof . . . Low and swampy, it looks the abode of pestilence, as it is.
>
> . . . All had to sleep one night between Chagres and Cruces; the greater number were two nights on the way — some were three or four. The naked boatmen are generally efficient, tolerably honest, and civil.
>
> The sleeping places are the same as the Chagres huts, with mud floors, and nothing to eat. If a hen be found, the price is a dollar, and seventy-five cents for cooking. No bread, no sugar, no tea, no milk, no meat. Even these huts are few and far between.
>
> . . . Cruces is nearly as low, and quite as disagreeable as Chagres. We were compelled to remain there some days, in consequence of the impossibility of obtaining transportation.
>
> Of the road from Cruces to Panama, it is impossible to give an idea. The liveliest imagination cannot picture it. Mud holes, in which the mules mire up to their bellies; cartloads of boulder stones, which, in the time of the Spanish galleons, may have formed a pavement; ravines worn deep in the solid rock . . . all combine to make up the most impassable road now in actual use in the face of the globe . . . But the saddest part of our story remains to be told. At Cruces, several cases of virulent cholera morbus, some think it cholera, appeared among us . . .
>
> One word to our friends in the United States who are feverish to go to California.
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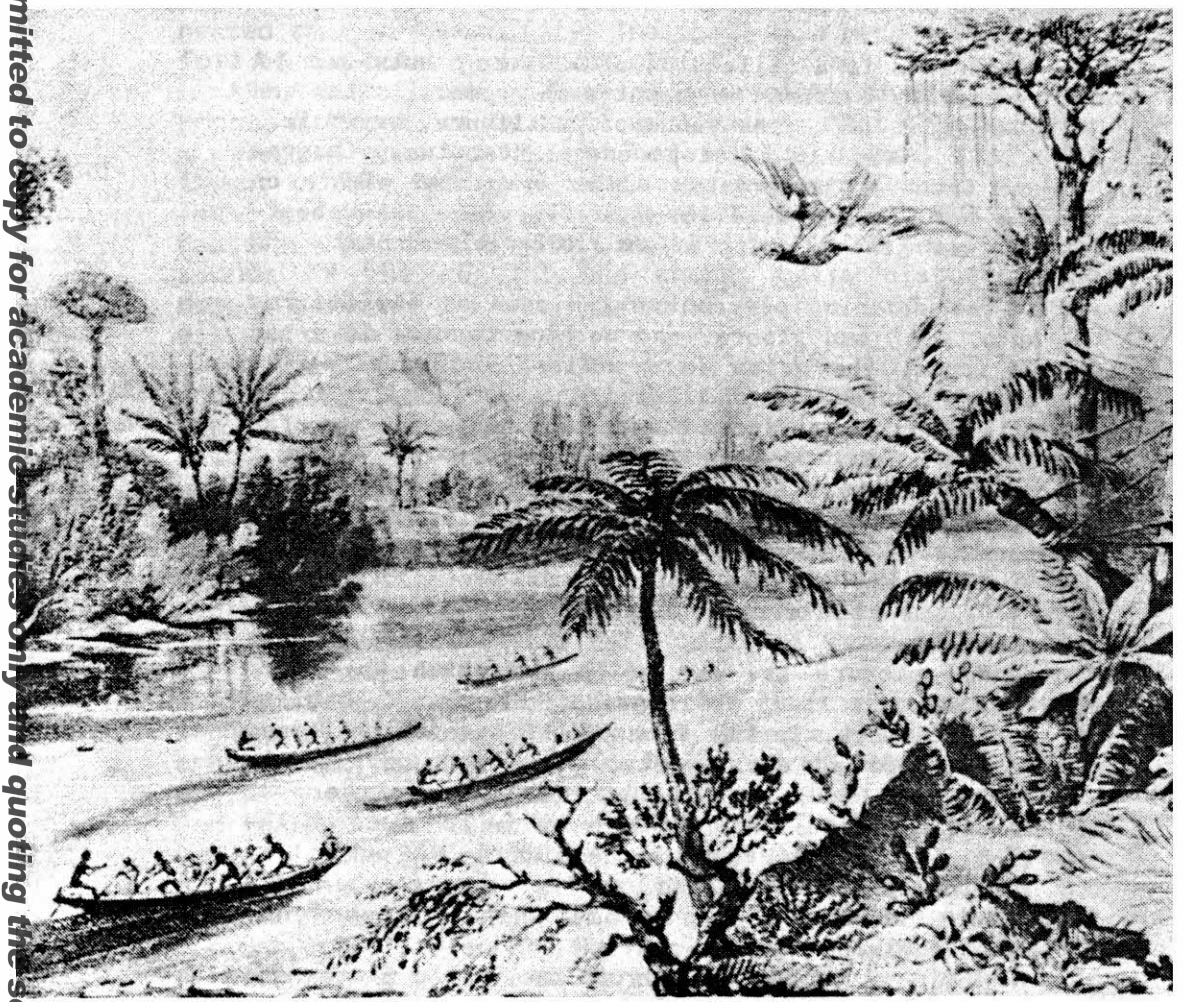
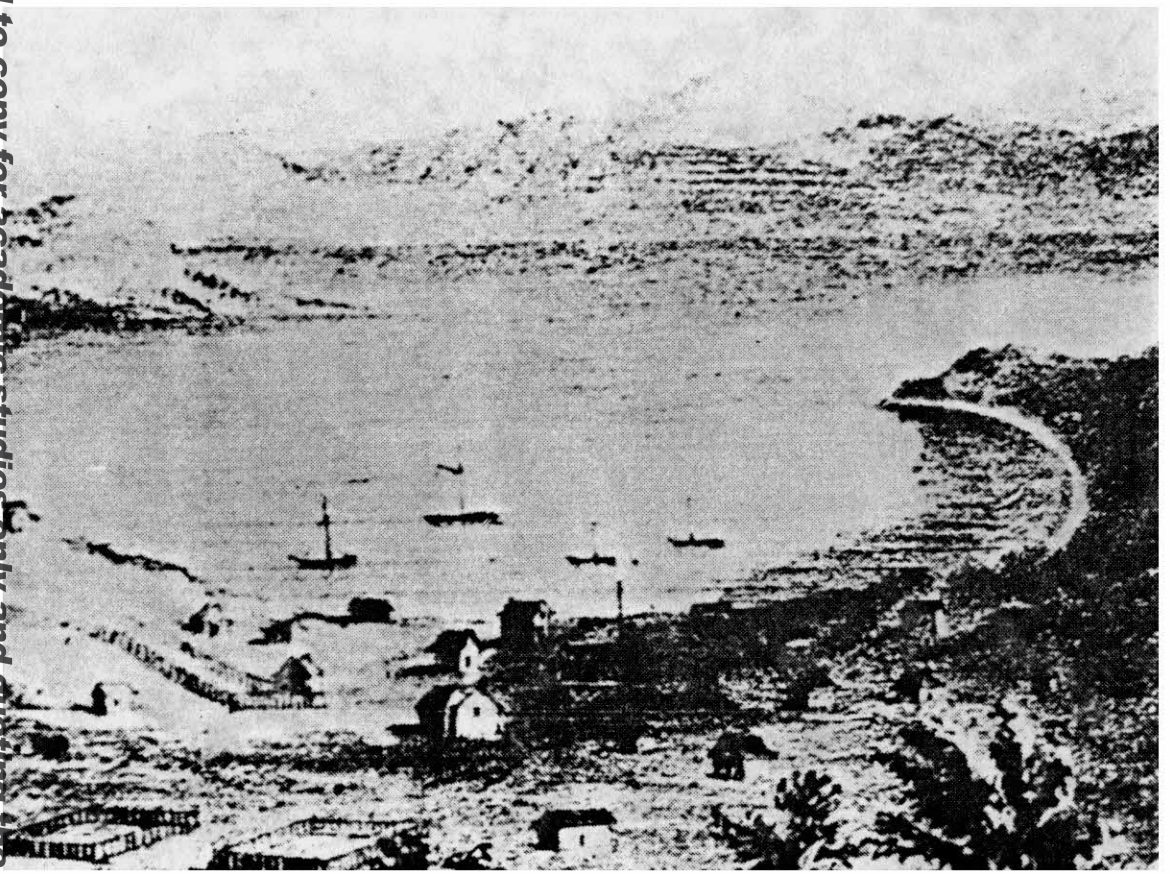
> 1st. Stay at home.
>
> 2nd. If you go there, take any route but this.[4]

4"Our Panama Correspondence," Ibid. 1/28/1849, p.2 c.3.

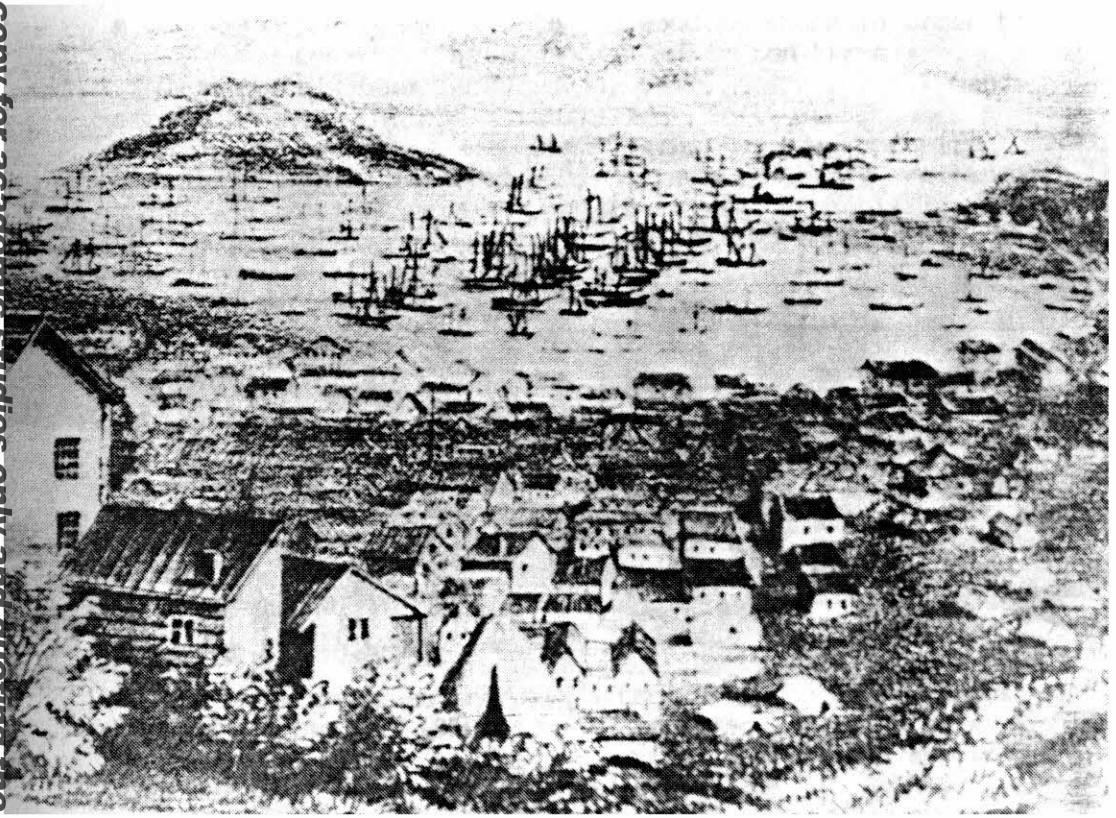


FORTY-NINERS UP THE CHAGRES RIVER

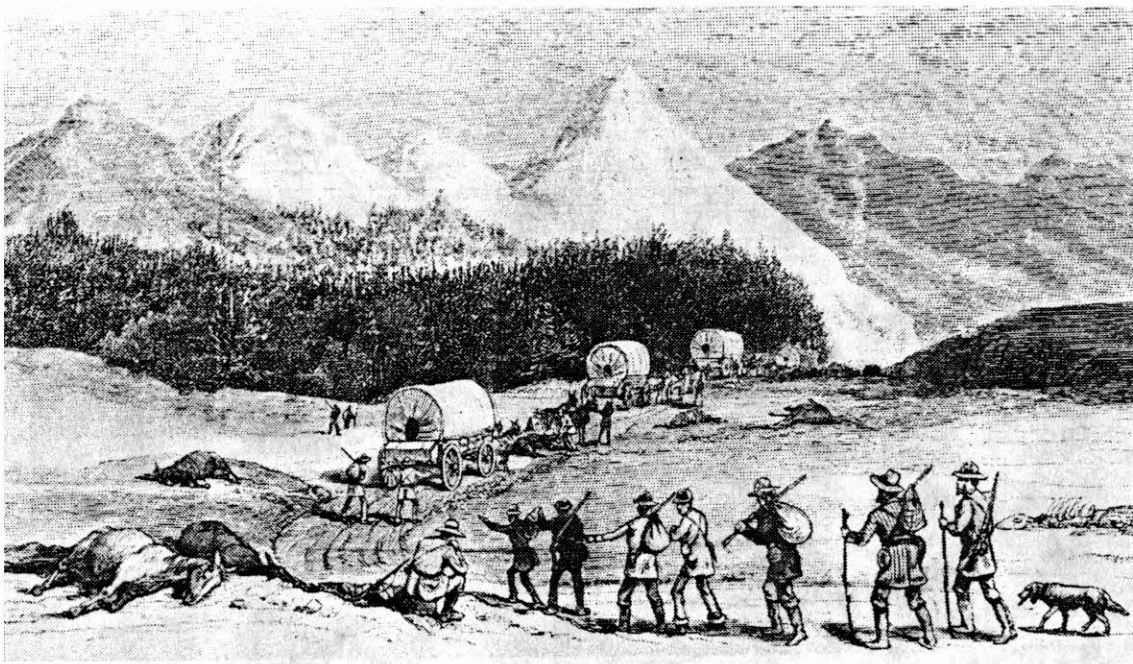
FORTY-NINERS DOWN PANAMA WAY



SAN FRANCISCO BAY, 1848



SAN FRANCISCO BAY, 1849



ARGONAUTS ACROSS THE PLAINS

. . . TENS OF THOUSANDS EAGERLY PRESS ONWARDS, PARCHED BY THE HOT BREATH OF THE LUST OF GAIN . . . AND GOLD IS KING-EMPEROR -- GOD! ACROSS THE BROAD PRAIRIES, THE TRACK MARKED BY WHITE AND BLEACHING SKELETONS, THROUGH THE SILENT VALLEYS, OVER FLOWING RIVERS, UP PRECIPITOUS MOUNTAINS, COME THE WAGONS OF THE MADLY ANXIOUS MINERS -- ALL PRESSING FORWARD TO DRINK OF THE PIERIAN SPRING."

Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, May 24, 1879.

The *California*, built to accommodate 250 passengers, carried away 350 when she sailed from Panama on January 31, 1849, inaugurating the Pacific leg of the route. Overcrowded and short of fuel, the ship barely made it to Monterey 24 days later, after having burned all the coal, spare spars, boards and barrels on board. At Monterey, they had to muster a gang from the passengers to cut wood on shore in order to raise steam for the final ninety miles to San Francisco.

Upon reaching her destination, on February 28, all hands except the captain and first officer left the steamer for the mine fields, and the vessel laid idle in the harbor, empty of fuel and deserted of crew for more than two months.

But the *Forty-Niners* were on their way, from all corners of the world to San Francisco by all available routes. Between January 1 and April 11, 5,000 arrived by sea, half of them Americans, and 1,000 Mexicans by land. In the following ten months, 806 vessels entered San Francisco Bay, adding 39,888 human beings to California -- 30,766 Americans and 9,122 foreigners; 38,467 males and 1,421 females.

To these must be added 6,000 Mexicans that entered in the spring and summer from Sonora; at least 3,000 seamen that abandoned ship in San Francisco Bay; 500 passengers that landed at other ports along the coast; and, most importantly, the thirty to forty thousand Forty-Niners that came across the Plains. Most of them followed the Oregon Trail through the Rockies and the Humboldt River route; about 2,000 took the Santa Fe Trail and Southern route of the Gila.

The flow continued unabated after 1849. The first census, in the spring of 1850, though imperfect due to circumstances, nevertheless reflected the new California emerging with the Gold Rush:

Native American population in California, inclusive of blacks and free people of color: 69,611. Foreign population: 22,358. Total population: 91,969. The American residents consisted of 6,600 native Californians, 38,600 from the free states, 24,000 from the slave states, and 400 from the District of Columbia and U.S. Territories. The foreigners came from all over the world.

Within a few months, many new cities were laid out by the newcomers. Eighteen of them had appeared in northern Cali-

fornia by July 1849. The list of articles shipped from New York to San Francisco in that year, unfolds the story of the sudden rise and future greatness of California: Over four million feet of lumber, over a million shingles, six hotels, ten complete stores, nine ten-pin alleys, 372 frame houses, 49 iron houses, and many, many more.

The *New York Herald* correspondent assessed the situation at the end of the year:

> San Francisco, (California,) Dec. 31, 1849.
>
> *On this last night of the year of our Lord one* thousand eight hundred and forty-nine, I seat myself in a magnificent well furnished house, standing on a spot of ground which, at the commencement of the year, was untenanted, to scribble you my monthly epistle.
>
> The revolutions of the earth make great changes everywhere, but on no spot on its surface has a greater one been wrought within the last three hundred and sixty-five days than here in San Francisco. Within that time, barren, sandy hills have *been covered with dwellings, and corralls for horses* and cattle have been converted into streets, in which the busy hum of trade is now sounding.
>
> An almost empty harbor has been filled with tall masted ships, which have borne to these shores thirty thousand human beings. The Anglo Saxon race have exhibited their celebrated energy, enterprise and perseverance, with greater effect in California than ever before in any portion of the globe.
>
> Since the commencement of the present year, four thousand houses have been erected in San Francisco, *and the levee at New Orleans, or the wharves of the* East River, do not display such an amount of business as the banks of San Francisco bay exhibit. Among the other improvements, several wharves have been built; the most extensive, the Central, built by a joint stock company, already extending two hundred and ninety feet into the bay thus enabling vessels to lie alongside and discharge, which will, when completed be twenty-one hundred feet in length.

> Seven churches have been erected — two Episcopalian, two Presbyterian, one Baptist, one Methodist, and one Catholic; so that we now enjoy "the stated preaching of the gospel" in our churches, beside having a tearing sermon on the plaza every Sunday afternoon, from a brass-lunged Methodist itinerant. A large theatre is now in progress of erection, under the auspices of Col. H. T. Myers, and saw dust and dimity fly nightly in a capacious and well managed circus.
>
> The town is crowded with people. Every day some new vessel pours its hundreds on our shores — many of them with fine prospects awaiting them, and many destined to be bitterly disappointed . . .
>
> Our State Legislature met on the 15th of December, at the Pueblo de San Jose, and Gov. Burnett was inaugurated on the 21st. I send you his inaugural address and first message . . . Our Senators and Representatives start for the United States, tomorrow, in the *Oregon* . . .
>
> Ex-Governor Shannon is gold-digging on the Yuba river . . .
>
> The *California* will leave on the 15th; till which time, *adios*. CALIFORNIA.[5]

Other writers touched on different aspects of the new city. William Walker's lawyer-friend, Edmund Randolph, wrote to him from San Francisco in September 1849, that "this is no place for a man to bring his family to. It will always be one of those great commercial Babels where the demon Mammon shows by his acts that he came originally from hell."[6] A few excerpts from Randolph's long letter furnish a graphic picture of the transformed California:

> My office, which I told you I paid $200 per month for, is about 12 feet square; it is on the second

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5"Our California Correspondence," Ibid. 2/8/1850, p.1 c.1.

6"Life in San Francisco," *Daily Crescent* (New Orleans), 11/19/1849, p.1 c.4.

floor, and one of a long row. All beneath is grog-shop and gambling-house . . . It is night —let us go down into the street and see what all that noise is about. It is a fellow ringing a big bell and making proclamation that there is a new drinking and gambling house opened, and that all who go down will get the best liquor and trimmings in San Francisco. . . . A few steps bring me to the plaza or public square. On every side are lights gleaming and strains of music issuing from shells of wooden houses and canvass booths. Most of these are devoted to eating and drinking and gaming, and the music is maintained by the keepers for the gratification of their customers. . . .

You are shocked at the wickedness of the place, and it is but justice to these ministers of public pleasure to tell you that they also contribute not a little to public interest. The gamblers are the capitalists, and lend the money you need for building up the city, at the moderate rate of 12 or 15 per cent, per month; they also keep up the rents and make the land-holders feel that they are rich. Besides, the most of them close on Sunday, and contribute liberally to building churches and supporting preachers. . . . The roulette table keeps up its perpetual round, the faro-box has no rest, the dice never cease to rattle . . . But I mustn't let you suppose that gaming is the only thing done here.

. . . Before we leave the Square we will look in here at this light where there is no music. This is the Court-house, and the Judge is an ex-Colonel of a volunteer regiment. Who is that old fellow with a black handkerchief round his head and blanket round his shoulders, talking to his Honor? He is a native Californian, who was here, perhaps, before the Judge was born. He is trying to make some grievance known, and the Judge is trying to impress upon him the necessity of getting an interpreter, as he does not understand Spanish. The old man never had to do the like before when he went to the Alcalde, and so persists in his unintelligible demand. The Judge

GROG-SHOP AND GAMBLING-HOUSE

"EATING AND DRINKING AND GAMING . . . " (P.32)

> becomes vexed and calls the Sheriff, and the old man finds himself shoved out of Court by the shoulders because his native tongue has become a foreign language and himself an exile in his own country.
>
> . . . Coming back into the public square you observe two or three astonishingly clumsy, awkward carts, with the biggest kind of oxen standing near and tied by the horns. These are the native market wagons. They bring fruits and vegetables, and there they are piled up in crates and the owners lying beside them asleep in their blankets. In the morning you will see them weighing out grapes at six reals per pound, and retailing pears, green and hard, at three for a bit. The Anglo American will come by, take a bunch and pass on to buy or sell goods by the shipload and real estate by the square — a hundred thousand dollars at a clip. And thus you see California as it was and as it is. . . .[7]

And thus we see the *Nation Makers* transforming California in 1849. At the end of the war in 1848, Brevet Brigadier General R. B. Mason, U.S. commanding military officer of the department, had assumed the administration of civil affairs in the province. He became *ex officio* Governor in accordance with the provisions of existing Mexican laws which continued in force. The political and judicial organizations then established were utterly inadequate to cope with the human avalanche of the Gold Rush.

A chaotic situation rapidly developed that led a London *Times* correspondent in San Francisco to observe: "In California there is a *de facto* no government and no administration of justice."[8] By July, 1849, irregular armed bands called "Stags" or "Hounds," had launched a reign of terror which was but the outward sign of a fierce struggle for political power.

7Ibid.

8"Interesting Advices from California by Way of England," New York Herald 9/24/1849, p.1 c.2.

The Mormons had the initial advantage. They had taken possession of large tracts of land about the city, and were very anxious to secure their titles by local legislation. They therefore constituted themselves into a "Legislative Assembly of the District of San Francisco." They held an "election," with a body of men calling themselves the Hounds officiating at the polls. The election over, the new Assembly called upon the Hounds to arm and aid the civil power. Their first act was to enter the Alcalde's office and carry off the records of the town.

When a Hound was shot by a Chilean, the whole body marched to the Chilean's house, confiscated all his property and ordered him out of town. On the following Sunday they held a parade, headed by drum and fife, and marched to the hills that overlook the town. They made a furious assault on the tents and persons of the Chileans, killing four and wounding thirteen. They sacked the tents, "and having satisfied themselves with blood and plunder, they marched back to their rendezvous, at a groagery rejoicing in the *name* of Tammany Hall."[9]

Before it was over, a great number of Chileans, French and Spaniards had been killed and wounded. The *New York Herald* correspondent told what happened next:

> This act of the Hounds was the signal for the friends of order to come forward. Hundreds who had suffered at their hands were willing to take up arms and expel the Hounds by force. Public meetings were held, speeches were made, the Alcalde offered rewards for their apprehension, and during Monday and Tuesday, the gold fever ceased, to afford an opportunity for the law and order fever to burn. A police has been established, and before Thursday evening, no less than twenty of the Hounds were running in couples, and kenneled on board the brig of war *Warren*.
>
> That most potent lawgiver, Judge Lynch, never

9"Our California Correspondence," Ibid. 9/17/1849, p.1 c.4.

> opened court with more solemnity than he did here, under the title of "Law and Order." . . . The whole trial was a complete farce, from beginning to end. . . . the result has been that four of the 'hounds' are now on board the *Warren*, sentenced to be transported to the United States prison, in the District of Columbia, for ten years.10

With all the shortcomings of such summary proceedings, the expulsion of the leaders effectively ended the Hounds chapter of organized crime in San Francisco, ushering in the reign of "Law and Order" into the new California society. The election of delegates on August 1, the Constitutional Convention held at Monterey from September 1 to October 13, and the subsequent ratification of the State Constitution and the general election on November 13, 1849, all apparently transpired in a model, democratic, orderly fashion.

The burning question of the day, agitating North and South on the Atlantic side of the continent, presented no problem at all for the Pacific voters. Their overwhelming repudiation of slavery was eloquently expressed by a Sacramento valley gold-digger, who wrote:

> One of the prominent questions in the election was an expression as to whether slavery shall be allowed in California. The candidate, though a Louisianian, was opposed out and out to the introduction of slavery here, and so we all voted for him.
>
> For myself, I was of the opinion of an old mountaineer, who, leaning against the tent-pole, harangued the crowd to the effect that in a country where every white man made a slave of himself, there was no use in keeping niggers. I deposited my ballot in an old candle-box in accordance with this opinion.11

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10 Ibid.

11 "The Election in California." *Crescent* 10/29/1849, p.1 c.4.

The forty-eight delegates assembled at Monterey in September included sixteen individuals originally from the South, but on framing the California constitution they unanimously passed a clause declaring that "neither slavery, nor involuntary servitude, unless for the punishment of crimes, shall ever be tolerated in this State."[12] In November, the voters ratified that constitution aligning California with the Free States by an overwhelming margin surpassing a ten to one ratio. In the San Francisco district, the ratio was 410 to one.

12"Constitution of the State of California." *New York Herald* 12/8/1849, p.2 c.2.

3. Filibusters! Onward Go!

President Taylor transmitted to the Congress the official transcript of the California Constitution on February 13, 1850. This brought the whole slavery and territorial question to a new crisis. The proposal to admit California in the Union met with vehement opposition from Southern legislators led by ailing elder statesman John C. Calhoun. Grim and emaciated, his voice stifled by the catarrh that shortly led to his death, Calhoun's parting speech delivered in the Senate on March 4 by James Murray Mason of Virginia, uttered the South's ultimatum:

> I have, Senators, believed from the first, that the agitation of the subject of slavery would, if not prevented by some timely and effective measure, end in disunion. . . .
>
> California will become the test question. If you admit her under all the difficulties that oppose her admission, you compel us to infer, that you intend to exclude us from the whole of the acquired territories, with the intention of destroying irretrievably the equilibrium between the two sections. We would be blind not to perceive, in that case, that your real objects are power and aggrandizement, and infatuated, not to act accordingly.[1]

Calhoun immediately and assiduously set to work behind the scenes for a Southern convention to be held at Nashville on June 3, 1850, gathering men from both political parties, "with the view and the hope of arresting the course of aggression, and, if not practicable, then to concentrate the

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1"Speech of the Hon. John C. Calhoun on the Slavery Question," *New York Herald* 3/5/1850, p.1 c.1.

South in will and understanding, and action . . . [A] convention of all the assailed States to provide in the last resort for their separate welfare, by the formation of a compact and a union that will afford protection to their liberties and their rights."[2]

Senator Thomas Hart Benton, of Missouri, a staunch opponent of Calhoun, early saw and denounced that there was a scheme, ripe for execution, for the dissolution of the Union. A vision of imminent secession galvanized the South: "The South is aroused, her banner is on the outer wall, and the cry is . . . to dissolve the Union immediately, form a Southern Confederacy, and the possession by force of most of all the territories suitable for slavery, which would include all south of the northern latitude of Missouri."[3]

But secession also meant expansion, which *The New York Herald's* Washington correspondent explained in economic terms: "with the annexation of Cuba, the absorption of Mexico, and of Central America to the Isthmus of Panama, the southern confederacy would not only monopolize the balance of the trade of the 30 States, but the trade, also, of the Pacific, via the Isthmus Canal, the entire monopoly of cotton, sugar and tobacco, and a consequent rapidly increasing value to slave labor and slave property."[4]

The Southern dream of a Caribbean empire was already in progress, riding on the crest of Manifest Destiny to engulf Mexico, Cuba and beyond. On February 1, 1850, *The New York Herald* reported:

> In certain portions of the South there are expeditions forming for the purpose of sailing to San Domingo, and of conquering that island; and in other parts, expeditions are forming for a descent on the

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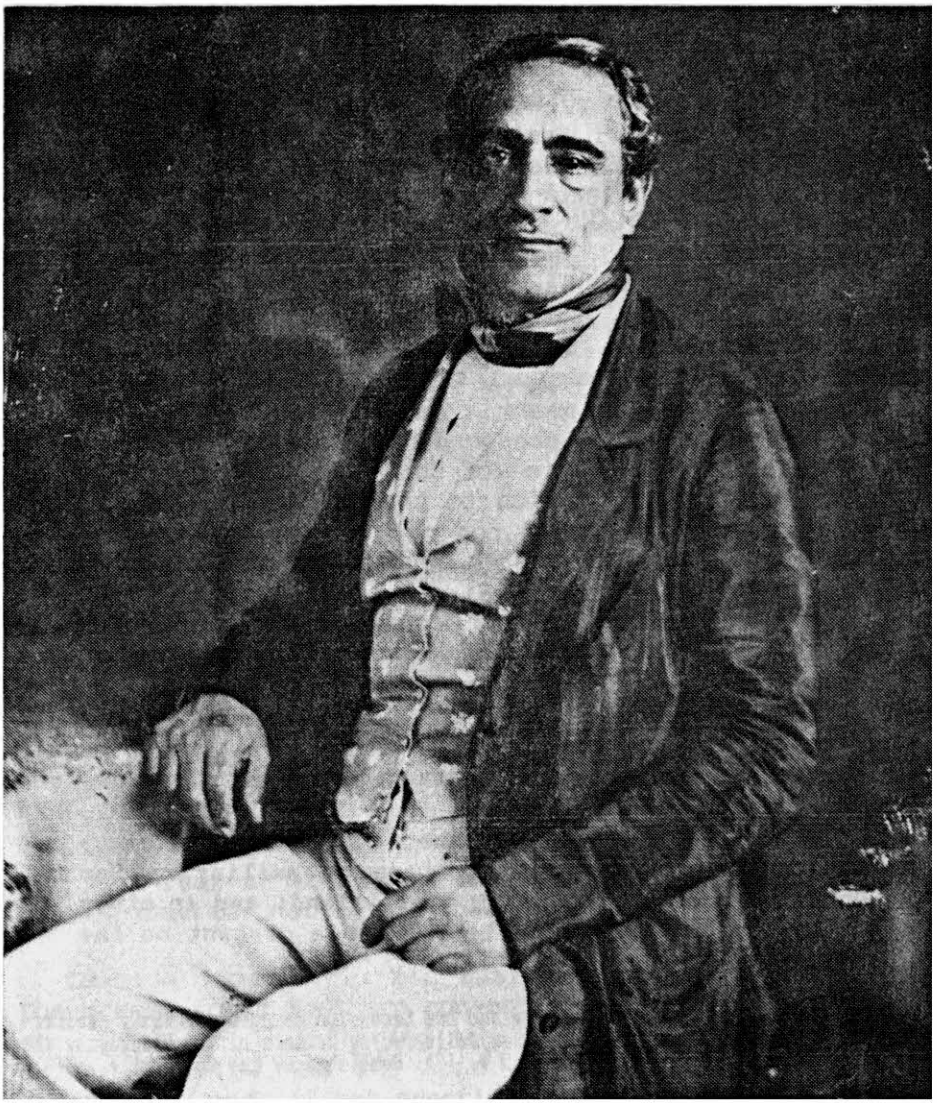
[2]Ames, Herman V., "John C. Calhoun and the Secession Movement of 1850, *University of Pennsylvania — University Lectures Delivered by Members of the Faculty in the Free Public Lecture Course — 1917-1918* V. (PA: Published by the University, 1918), p. 116.

[3]Ibid., p. 119.

[4]"*Interesting from Washington,*" *New York Herald* 2/21/1850, p.1 c.1.



GENERAL NARCISO LOPEZ

> Island of Cuba; and others are looking to the acquisition of Mexico, with the ultimate creation of a new republic, commencing with Virginia at the North, and embracing San Domingo, Cuba, and Mexico up to Central America.
>
> All these wild measures, to our certain knowledge, are embraced more or less by certain parties now in Washington, and scattered over the South.[5]

Of all the "wild measures," the descent on the Island of Cuba is the only one that actually got under way at the time. It was organized over the remnants of the 1849 Round Island failure. Its background, from the Cuban participants' viewpoint, was narrated in detail by Gen. Ambrosio José González, Adjutant General of the expedition and leading member of the "Patriotic Junta for the promotion of the political interests of Cuba."[6]

González told of the Cuban people's plight under Spanish rule. Since 1825 revolutionary clubs had existed in Cuba, under the name of *Soles de Bolivar*, and other designations. Conspiracies had succeeded each other, and arrests, imprisonments, banishments, and executions had invariably followed in their wake.

The current leader of the revolutionary party was General Narciso López, a Venezuelan by birth, major general in the Spanish army, former Governor of Madrid and Senator in the Spanish Cortes for the province of Seville. Sent to Cuba, he held the post of Civil and Military Governor of the Central Province, and was also President of the Supreme Military Tribunal. Upon leaving those posts, he became the leader of the revolutionary party.

In 1848, the American army had conquered Mexico, producing the possibility that 5,000 American soldiers could eventually aid the impending Cuban revolution, when no longer in the service of their country. General W. J. Worth was

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5"Mr. Clay's Compromise, and the Cabinet," Ibid. 2/1/1850, p.2 c.1.

6"Important Manifesto to the People of the United States," Ibid., 9/22/1852, p.2 c.1.

approached, at Jalapa, by Cuban delegates. He accepted their propositions, but the troops were not disbanded in Mexico, as had been anticipated, and nothing could be done while they were in the pay of the United States.

About that time, General López's conspiracy was discovered, and he, together with some distinguished Cubans, had to seek refuge in the United States. The frustration of the revolutionaries' plans made it evident that the revolution could not be successfully commenced in Cuba.

General González was then sent to the United States with a new plan. Gen. Worth accepted the eventual command of an American army, which was to act in support of a small force, headed, in advance, by Gen. López. For the raising of these expeditions, the Cubans were supposed to contribute three million dollars.

The election of General Taylor to the Presidency of the United States was a severe blow to their hopes, as they knew that the Whig party would oppose their scheme. The death in Texas of Gen. Worth cast an additional gloom over their plans.

General López and his American friends went ahead, anyway, in 1849. They had collected $80,000, all of which was Cuban money, for "not one solitary cent was procured or contributed by Americans."[7] They raised a force of about 1,200 men, intended as a nucleus for the Cuban population to rally around. A portion of it assembled at Round Island, in the Gulf of Mexico; the remainder was to sail from New York.

President Taylor's proclamation led to Commander Randolph's blockade of Round Island and the dispersion of the expeditionists, but no Cubans were arrested and the vessels, arms, and ammunitions remained in their possession. By December, 1849, the *Junta Promovedora de los Intereses Políticos de Cuba* was active in New York, with Cuban exiles holding meetings and collecting funds for the liberation of the island.

The simultaneous arrival from Europe of prominent Hungarian refugees who had led the "noble struggle for the estab-

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[7] Ibid.

lishment of popular liberty in their native land" rubbed off popular fervor for the Cuban cause. Even anti-slavery crusader Horace Greely, of the *Tribune*, contributed one hundred dollars to López's coffers in 1849. Gen. Narciso López then moved his headquarters to Washington, where he was in touch with Southern leaders and had close connection with some friends of the cabinet. *The New York Herald* reported on January 19, 1850:

> They have their head-quarters, not only at one of the hotels in Washington, but also at one of the hotels in this city, and in every principal city in the Southern and Southwestern States. They have money in abundance, and they will have arms and munitions at the proper time in equal abundance. In this movement they intend to conduct themselves with so much regularity and order, as to prevent Congress or any one of the cabinet from seizing an opportunity to issue any more proclamations. The Southern States and all the leading men in that section of the country, both in and out of Congress, or in the State legislatures, are in favor of the movement.[8]

Cuban hopes for independence from Spain hence fused with Southern dreams of a Caribbean Empire in 1850. General González acted as interpreter for General López who neither spoke nor understood English. They conferred with members of both houses of Congress, and every officer of high station in the government, as to the extent they might go without violating the law. They also "held counsel and conference with people in Kentucky and other parts of the western country, and made arrangements with them in part, to embark in the expedition."[9]

Early in April, Generals López and González showed up at Jackson, Mississippi, and after conferring with Governor John Quitman, they arranged at Vicksburg the final details

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8"Expedition Against Cuba -- Great News," Ibid. 1/19/1850, p.2 c.2.

9"Important Manifesto . . ."

of the expedition with General John Henderson, a cotton planter and former U.S. Senator who gave them substantial backing. They then proceeded to New Orleans, setting their headquarters at the home of Laurence J. Sigur, exiled Cuban, editor of the *Delta*.

They issued and sold bonds at ten cents on the dollar, five hundred thousand dollars of which equalled fifty thousand. Quasi-clandestine recruiting quickly got under way in Kentucky, Mississippi, and Louisiana. They made promises to certain gentlemen who would be given commands proportionate to the number of men they should raise. Each enlisted man was to receive seven dollars per month and from one to four thousand dollars at the termination of the campaign. Officers would get twenty thousand dollars additional salary or an equivalent in lands.

They obtained muskets and sundry military supplies from the state arsenals in Mississippi and Louisiana through employees sympathetic to the cause. As a token of respect for the Neutrality Law, the boxes of arms and uniforms were not to be opened until they were beyond the jurisdiction of the United States.

Col. E. B. Gaither, in charge of raising the Kentucky troops, later explained that the motives of those engaged in the expedition were mixed. He was neither wholly mercenary nor wholly an errant knight: "Honorable fame and wealth, both or either, with 'our cause' would have induced us to undergo the perils of the enterprise; but neither the fame of Napoleon nor the wealth of the Rothschilds could have tempted one of us to aid in forging the shackles we would peril our live to loose."[10]

The 500 would-be-liberators of Cuba assembled at the end of April and sailed aboard three vessels from New Orleans early in May, disguised as adventurers bound for Chagres and California. They made their rendezvous off the coast of Yucatán, and continued towards Cuba on board the steamer *Creole*.

10"More on the Cuban Expedition -- Col. E. B. Gaither, of Kentucky," Ibid., 1/12/1850, p.1 c.2.

On May 11, *The New York Sun* gleefully announced the imminent deliverance of Cuba from the Spanish yoke, and displayed a large red-white-and-blue flag with one star. It was a replica of "a splendid flag, embroidered in silk," by a distinguished young lady in New Orleans, which General López carried as standard on board the *Creole*.

Nobody else gave López any possibility of success. The prevailing view was that nothing could be expected from the Cuban population unless the prospects looked promising, and that at least five thousand troops would be required for any initial success against the Spanish army. *The New York Herald* laughed at the sanguine expectations of the *Sun*:

> Yesterday morning the *Sun* announced the expectation of a great battle in Cuba, before the world had heard that any disturbance was likely to take place in that beautiful island. Not content with this twentieth edition of the moon hoax, it tried to give some color to the ridiculous affair by hanging a large flag, belonging to no people on the face of the earth, from the eaves of its printing office.
>
> This is all very pretty amusement for boys, and suited to their capacity; but it is carrying a joke a little too far. . . . An expedition to the moon to see the man-bats, with shades over their eyes to keep the sun from blinding them, would be as rational as any attempt at an invasion of Cuba. It is all moonshine.[11]

When New Yorkers were reading about the moonshine, the steamer full of filibusters was puffing up smoke in the Gulf of Mexico, on its way to Cuba. On May 19, at 2 a.m. it slipped unnoticed in the bay of Cárdenas, a port city of 7,000 inhabitants some 75 miles east of Havana. The plan was to land, surprise the town, seize the railroad cars, proceed immediately to Matanzas, and then go up the river and fortify positions in the mountains. There the name of Gen.

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11 "The Cuban Expedition -- what is it?" Ibid. 5/12/1850, p.2 c.3.

López would bring the soldiers and the citizens to his standard.

Their landing was delayed and noisy, and when the invaders entered the town they met with a hot reception from all quarters, producing a number of casualties on both sides. On reaching the railroad depot, they found that the rails had been taken up, so as to render it impossible to reach Matanzas by that means. Before nightfall, large Spanish reinforcements were approaching the city, and Gen. López had no alternative but to re-embark his command on board the *Creole*. He intended to attempt another landing at the town of Mantua, westward from Havana.

A vote was taken, and three-fourths of the force determined to head for Key West instead, placing a guard over the boat's compass to insure it. They landed at Key West on May 22. Like the previous attempt, this second filibuster expedition had failed. This time, however, blood had been spilled, leaving dozens of victims on Cuban soil.

Bennett, in *The New York Herald*, printed the news under the heading: "The Don Quixotte of the Nineteenth Century, &c., &c., &c.."[12] In subsequent editorials, his voice joined the almost universal chorus of condemnation outside the South that denounced the "ill-fated, unprincipled, ridiculous, if not piratical, marauding expedition."[13] But the story would be repeated time and again in the ensuing decade. Filibusterism had been born, sired by Manifest Destiny and the Southern Dream.

12"The Threatened Invasion of Cuba." Ibid. 5/18/1850, p.2 c.1.

13"The Relations of the United States with Spain -- Rather Squally," Ibid., 5/6/1850, p.2 c.1.

4. William Walker! Onward Go!

The collapse of the López expedition at Cárdenas came in the midst of political events in the United States which worked to deter the threat of secession, and contributed to dampen the surging Southern dream of a Caribbean empire. John C. Calhoun died on March 31, 1850. His death deprived slavery partisans of "the only man that could organize or lead the South in the protection of their rights."[1] A rising tide of union sentiment then swiftly drowned all talks of secession, for the younger generation of Southern politicians such as Jefferson Davis, William L. Yancey, Robert Barnwell Rhett, Pierre Soulé, and John A. Quitman failed to produce a leader who could emulate Calhoun.

As expressed by Bennett in the New York *Herald*, "now that he [Calhoun] is dead and gone, the moral courage and unity of the South are also gone."[2] The *Herald's* Washington correspondent graphically conveyed the void that inexorably modified the correlation of forces in the Senate in the wake of Calhoun's departure:

> Clay, Calhoun and Webster — the tripod is broken — the historical associations of forty years are broken. There are but two of them on the floor of the Senate to-day, and they stood like the remaining columns of a ruined temple, recalling the reminiscences of an era that is past, and of generations long gathered to the grave. Their voices spoke of the history and experiences of the past — their presence blended the living with the dead. It was a

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1"The South, and the Nashville Convention," *New York Herald* 4/10/1850, p.2 c.1.

2Ibid.

solemn and beautiful scene.[3]

Clay and Webster stood for compromise in the California and related slavery issues. They led ranks of men like President Taylor, Senators Cass, Benton, Houston, Douglas, and others, Whigs and Democrats, who formulated concessions to preserve the Union.

When Clay introduced his "Omnibus Bill" of compromise resolutions in the Senate, on January 29, 1850, he united the entire South, from Virginia to Texas, to oppose it. Among other things, Clay proposed to admit California, to provide governments for the territories, and to say nothing about slavery. "Not a single Northern man rose to the support of Mr. Clay -- not a man from the South. He stood alone. But this was a mere skirmish -- the battle has yet to be fought."[4]

The battle was fought in spirited debates that dragged on for months, well into the summer. Webster's last "great speech," delivered in the Senate on March 7, 1850, was a passionate plea for compromise:

> I wish to speak to-day, not as a Massachusetts man, nor as a Northern man, but as an American and a member of the Senate of the United States. . . . I speak, to-day, for the preservation of the Union. "Hear me for my cause." I speak to-day, from a solicitous and anxious desire for the restoration to the country of that quiet and that harmony which make the blessings of this Union, so rich and so dear to us all. "Believe me for mine honor."[5]

Webster's words took "like wild fire" among moderate men of both parties. Calhoun's absence was deeply felt from the very beginning when the Southern Convention met at Nashville

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3"Our Washington Correspondence," Ibid. 4/3/1850, p.4 c.1.

4"Mr. Clay's Compromise, &c.," Ibid. 1/30/1850, p.2 c.4.

5"The Great Speech of the Hon. Daniel Webster . . . ," Ibid. 3/9/1850, p.1 c.5.

on June 3, and Judge William L. Sharkey, of Mississippi, voiced the prevailing sentiment in his opening address. The Convention, he declared, had not assembled to devise measures to protect the rights and property of the Southern people, but to preserve the Government which had been handed down to them untarnished. It had not been called to prevent, but to perpetuate the Union.

In that atmosphere, the Nashville Convention strongly recommended the extension of the Missouri line to the Pacific. This would allow the expansion of slavery into New Mexico and Southern California, below the 36°30′ parallel.

* *

At that moment, when the capital of Tennessee was filled with Southern delegates, a native son, William Walker bade goodbye to family and friends and started for California. His friend John Berrien Lindsley had been doing missionary work and was then organizing the medical department at the University of Nashville. John's father had just been elected President of the University of Pennsylvania, but had declined the honor. William would never see Dr. Philip Lindsley again, nor Dr. Gerard Troost, for both would die before his return. He also said farewell to his ailing mother for the last time.

Walker traveled to California by way of Panama. He preferred the Isthmus route in view of the fever which was raging in the ports of South America, rendering a voyage through those latitudes, around Cape Horn, very dangerous to health and life.

He paid in advance $365 for cabin accommodations to San Francisco, but his ticket failed to arrive from New York. He was forced to protest in writing to the ship line owners, and as he waited in New Orleans, the filibusters defeated at Cárdenas began to drift back from Key West. General López arrived in the city on June 7, under custody of the U.S. Marshal.

On the afternoon López appeared for examination at the U.S. District Court, charged with having violated the Neutrality Law. Instantly freed on bail of $2,000 given by Gen. Henderson, the Cuban leader was escorted to his hotel "by a

large concourse of citizens who made the welkin roar with their cheers."[6] At the St. Charles Hotel, he came out to the portico and addressed the assemblage in Spanish, which J. L. Sigur translated to the crowd, and was received with the strongest marks of approval.

The hero-welcome to the defeated warrior, at the same hotel but without the need of a translator, would be repeated seven years later when Walker returned from Nicaragua. The López contingent also congregated in the street of New Orleans, on the eve of Walker's departure in 1850, and various members of that contingent would later serve under him: Callender J. Fayssoux, mate of the steamer *Creole*; Captain Achilles Kewen, of the Mississippi Battalion; Col. Chatham Roberdeau Wheat (Billy's schoolmate in Nashville), Commander of the Louisiana Battalion, wounded at Cárdenas; and Captain Parker H. French. Captain French had sailed from New York on May 13, at the head of "a party of 112, ostensibly destined for California, but really the *Herald* intimates for Cuba."[7] Each of these men would later play a role with Walker in Nicaragua.

Walker left New Orleans aboard the 2,500 ton steamer *Ohio*, punctually departing from her wharf at the foot of St. Mary street at 9 o'clock a.m. on Saturday, June 15, 1850. At dusk, the *Ohio* overtook a slow moving schooner, the *Mary Ellen*, which had sailed from New Orleans a day earlier, bound "for Matanzas and a Market."[8]

On Monday afternoon, Walker arrived in Havana, and spent two full days and three nights on Cuban soil before embarking aboard the steamer *Georgia* for Chagres. Havana was perfectly quiet. The excitement caused by the late expedition had subsided. "The cholera had, in great measure, disappeared, and business of every description was improving."[9]

The *Georgia* anchored in the bay of Chagres on June 25

6"Speech of Gen. Lopez," Crescent 6/10/1850, p.3 c.1.

7"Passengers by the Georgia," Picayune 5/22/1850, p.2 c.3.

8"Port of New Orleans," Crescent 6/14/1850, p.3 c.2.

9"Very Late From Havana," New York Herald 6/25/1850, p.4 c.5.

before nightfall, and the passengers went to the "American House, on the American side of the bay." It was a "large shingle palace, barely covered from the weather, and contains five rooms; one general eating-room and three chambers. A long table is laid on one side, with plates for some thirty persons, and the rest of the room is filled with baggage and a bar."[10]

Next morning Walker boarded a native canoe or perhaps the *Ralph Rivas*, a 100 ton steamer on her third trip up the river; and then traveling by horse, he arrived in Panama City. There we find him, on Saturday, June 29, two weeks after he had left New Orleans:

> We had the pleasure, on Saturday, of meeting Mr. William Walker, formerly one of the editors of the New Orleans *Crescent*, who arrived here *en route* for California, where he goes, we learn, to join one of his former associates, Mr. Hayes, in the publication of a paper in San Francisco. Mr. Walker is an able and easy writer, and in connection with Mr. Hayes, who is among the best practical printers in the United States, will no doubt publish one of the best papers on the Pacific. We wish these two gentlemen all the success which their talents and enterprise so richly deserve.[11]

Panama "was very sickly" at that moment, and the U.S. Mail Steamship *Oregon* was the only steamer in port. The vessel was able to accommodate only 300 of the 1,500 passengers on their way to San Francisco. Tickets sold for as much as $600, but Walker faced no problem for he had purchased his in New Orleans.

The *Oregon* was detained two days on account of the mails and then left Panama on the evening of July 2. The passenger list included Monsieur Patrice Dillon, Consul-General from the Republic of France to San Francisco, his wife and two

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10 "Incidents of Travel," *Picayune* 6/9/1850, p.1 c.6.

11 "The Panama Star," *Crescent* 7/26/1850, p.2 c.1.

servants: the family of California Lieut. Governor John McDougal; and W. Walker. Only six female passengers were on board, and two gentlemen would die during the trip. Curiously, both were named William.

As the *Oregon* cruised along the Pacific coast of Central America, a portentous omen appeared in the sky. A new comet became visible to the naked eye, and rapidly increased in brightness, coming closest to the earth around the middle of July. It was named Peterson's comet after its discoverer, but its visit coincided with William Walker's voyage to encounter his own fatal star in the West. It presaged for the Inner Crescent City inmates the "new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven," as they approached the "new earth" of California.[12]

Touching at Acapulco for coal, the *Oregon* made the passage up from Panama in nineteen days. Her 317 passengers arrived in San Francisco on Sunday evening, July 21. W. Walker was #10 in the list published by the *Alta* next morning. Although their names were not registered in the paper, Gabriel Gumbo, Timothy Tucker, and Dick Dobs had reached the promised land, where their grandiose dreams glimmered in the future.

Upon landing, Walker registered at the St. Francis Hotel. His reputed partner, A. H. Hayes, was nowhere to be seen. Hayes had left New Orleans by way of Chagres in April, but as soon as he arrived in San Francisco, he was seized with a severe case of the *gold fever*, and when last seen, in May, he was sailing up the Sacramento river for the mining regions. By the time Walker arrived, he was on the Middle Yuba River banks in northern California -- searching for gold.

Although Hayes was one of the best practical printers in the United States, he had no intention of returning to the newspaper business. As he confided to a friend in a letter dated "On the South Yuba River, California, Monday, May 27, 1850 -- I am writing from a trading point . . . A few days since, I crossed over, in company with several others, to

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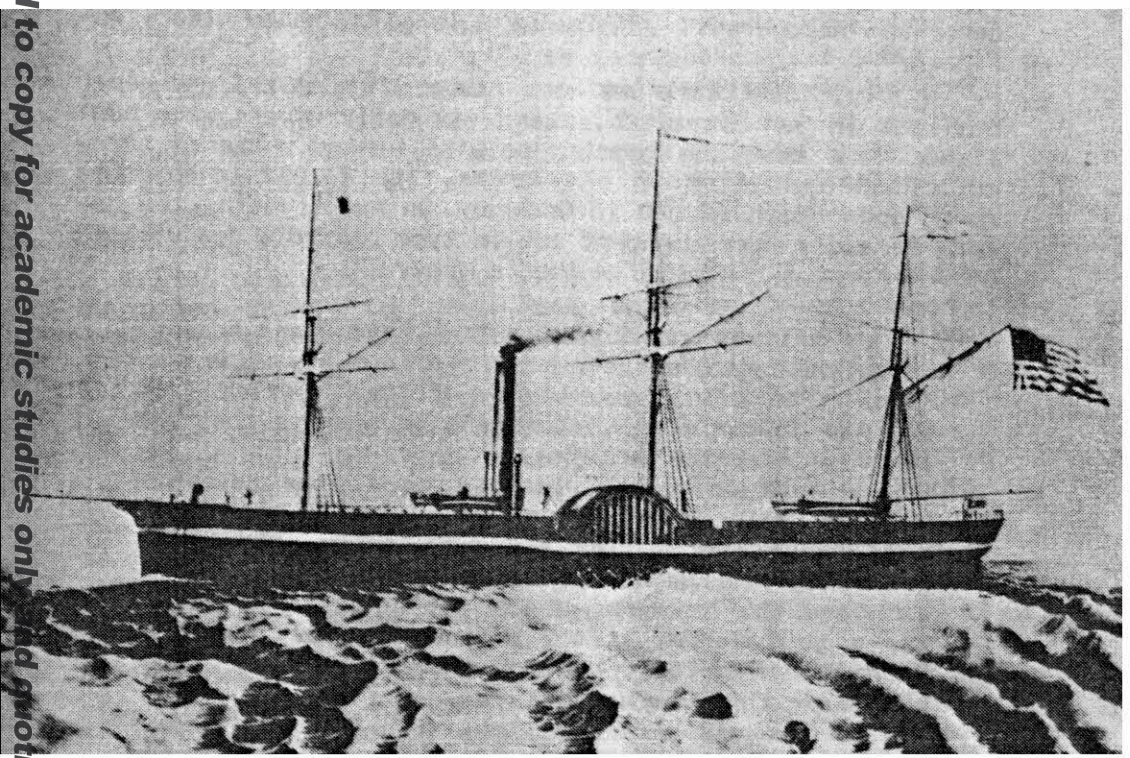
[12]See Chapter 20, Vol. I, p. 238.



SS OREGON

the Middle Yuba, where I secured a claim without much trouble . . . I have never enjoyed better health than I have since I started on my pilgrimage to the gold region . . . I never was happier . . . This place is going ahead like wildfire."[13]

In July, 1850 there was keen competition in the newspaper business in San Francisco, where six daily papers were published. The town was booming despite having suffered three major conflagrations in six months. Its 24,000 inhabitants would soon reach 50,000 in October. On August 15th, the New York *Herald's* correspondent set in type a bird's eye view of city life at the time of Walker's arrival:

> The city is growing very fast, and frame houses, admonished by the frequent fires, are giving way to brick. Rents are enormous —offices varying from $100 to $500 a month, according to whether they are in frame or brick buildings.
>
> Business is not so hurried as it has been. It seems settling down to a quiet uniformity. Merchants are undoubtedly making the most money. Physicians are being overrun with the plethora of their profession and the leanness of their practice. Dr. Rogers has a good berth, at the Marine Hospital; and Drs. Harris of New York, and Nelson, the Canadian refugee, have their hands full.
>
> The same is much the case with lawyers. Thomas Jefferson Smith, an old Yorker, monopolizes the commercial law, and McAlister & Son, the land titles, which are producing a great deal of trouble.
>
> Our heaviest bankers are mostly foreigners — Burgoyne & Co., of England; Argenti, agent of Rothschild; and Davison, lead off the van; and, in the rear, comes every storekeeper in Montgomery and Jackson streets . . .
>
> As for society, I wish you could catch a glance of our streets on a Sunday morning. The silks and

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13"California Correspondence," *Crescent* 8/8/1850, p.2 c.4.

> satins of the ladies, and the neat and orderly appearance of the Sunday School girls, would turn your brain.
>
> The long wharf, usually known as Cunningham's wharf, is at last completed, and from it the *New World* made her first trip to Sacramento, last week. A daily line of stages is established between here and San José, superseding the former lonely horseback ride. Neat Brougham's and gigs from the States, are beginning to make their appearance in our streets.[14]

Hayes' gold fever forced William Walker to change plans. He turned for help to Edmund Randolph, a New Orleans lawyer-friend who had arrived in San Francisco a year earlier. Randolph belonged to one of America's greatest families. The Randolphs of Virginia, which produced such powerful leaders as Thomas Jefferson, John Marshall, and Robert E. Lee.

Edmund "was not only courageous but also looked the lion."[15] Born in 1819, he was given the name of his grandfather, Washington's Attorney General. His mother was the famous belle Maria Ward, who had rejected the courtship of John Randolph of Roanoke. His father, Peyton, spent an unadventurous life as clerk and chronicler of the Supreme Court of Virginia.

Educated at William and Mary and the University of Virginia, this Edmund moved in his early twenties to New Orleans. There, perhaps with Randolph pull in Washington, he was appointed clerk of the U.S. District Court. Also, he married Tarmesia (or Thomassa) Meaux, daughter of a physician with a fine house on Canal Street.

The bonds of friendship between Edmund Randolph and William Walker had been cemented amid political and judicial circles in New Orleans, where Randolph was a conspicuous figure in the Democratic party. Randolph had arrived "flat

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[14]"Additional Intelligence from California," *New York Herald* 9/24/1850, p.6 c.1.

[15]Jonathan Daniels, *The Randolphs of Virginia*, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1972), p. 289.

broke" at San Francisco in August, 1849, as he told Walker in the letter from which excerpts were quoted above.[16] Soon after his arrival, he was elected to the first legislature to convene under the State constitution. Almost as quickly, he became a member of San Francisco's leading law firm.

The first Legislature of California had convened at the Pueblo de San José on December 15, 1849. During the succeeding weeks Randolph helped enact the organization of the State government, and the framing of such general laws as were essential to the proper administration of justice. After the closing of the sessions, in April, 1850, he remained active in Democratic party politics and at the same time assiduously sustained a lucrative legal practice.

On June 1, 1850, Randolph started the *San Francisco Herald* newspaper in partnership with John E. Foy and John Nugent, but retired soon afterwards to organize a new law firm with A. Parker Crittenden. In July, Nugent became the sole proprietor of the *Herald*. He paid $15,000 to Foy for his interest, with money supposedly furnished by Joseph L. Folsom and other wealthy real estate owners.

Nugent was a young journalist, formerly attached, as editorial writer, to the New York *Herald*. He had been correspondent in Washington during the Polk administration. He had published a copy of the Trist Treaty when it was supposedly a secret document, and incurred the ire of the Senate by stubbornly refusing to reveal his source of information. He had been confined for contempt, until finally discharged after a month, "ostensibly on account of his ill health, but really because they did not know what to do with him."[17] Thereupon he travelled to California by the Gila route with the celebrated Texas ranger Jack Hays in the fall of 1849.

Nugent was a bold, caustic writer, and a bitter and relentless enemy, who was embroiled in many of the political quarrels of the time. He made himself a reputation at once

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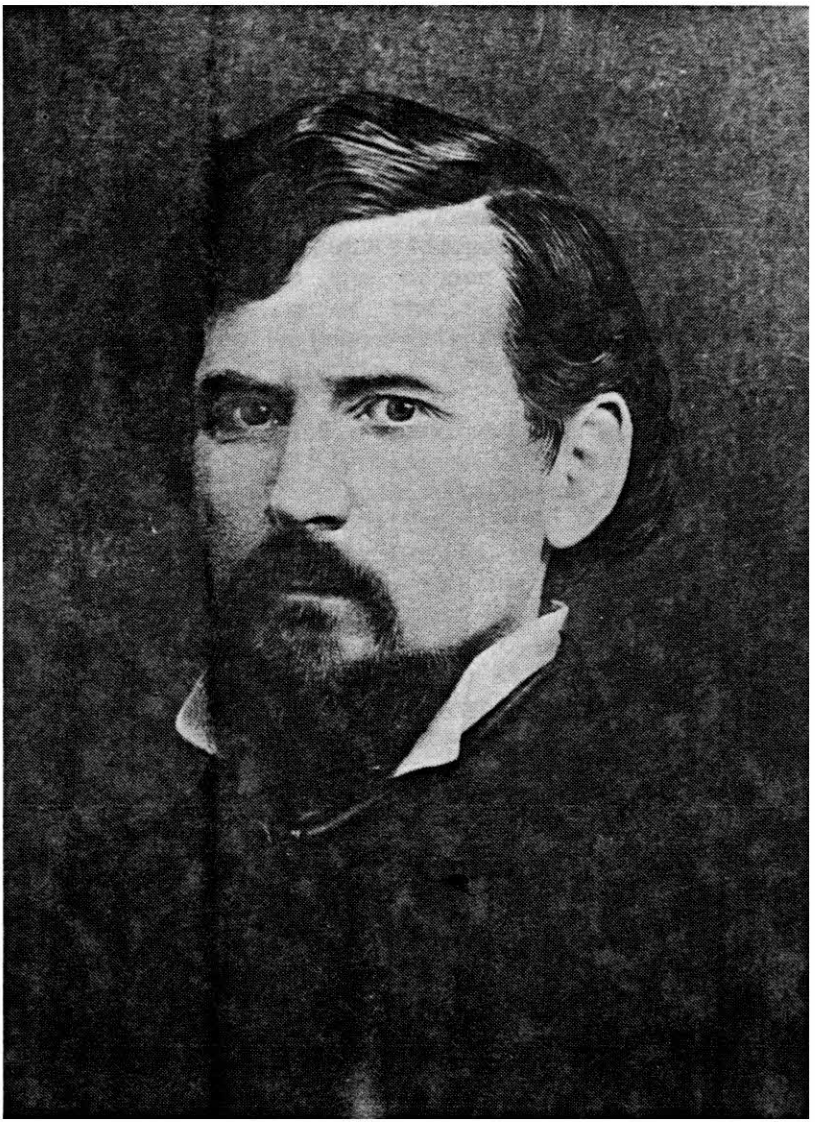
16 See p. 31.

17 "Washington Correspondence," Picayune 5/11/1848, p.2 c.4.

in San Francisco. His paper was a success from the beginning.

Walker went to work for Nugent, assuming the post of associate editor of the *Herald* originally held by Randolph. The condition of affairs brought about by the gold rush had made California a veritable paradise, harboring all sorts of Satans. Walker's magic Ithuriel spear of projection soon found suitable targets, and before long it was lashing out against all shades of wickedness, outdistancing by far the pale efforts emanating from Nugent's caustic pen.



EDMUND RANDOLPH

JOHN NUGENT

WILLIAM WALKER