

Part Four. WORTHY DINNER FOR DICK

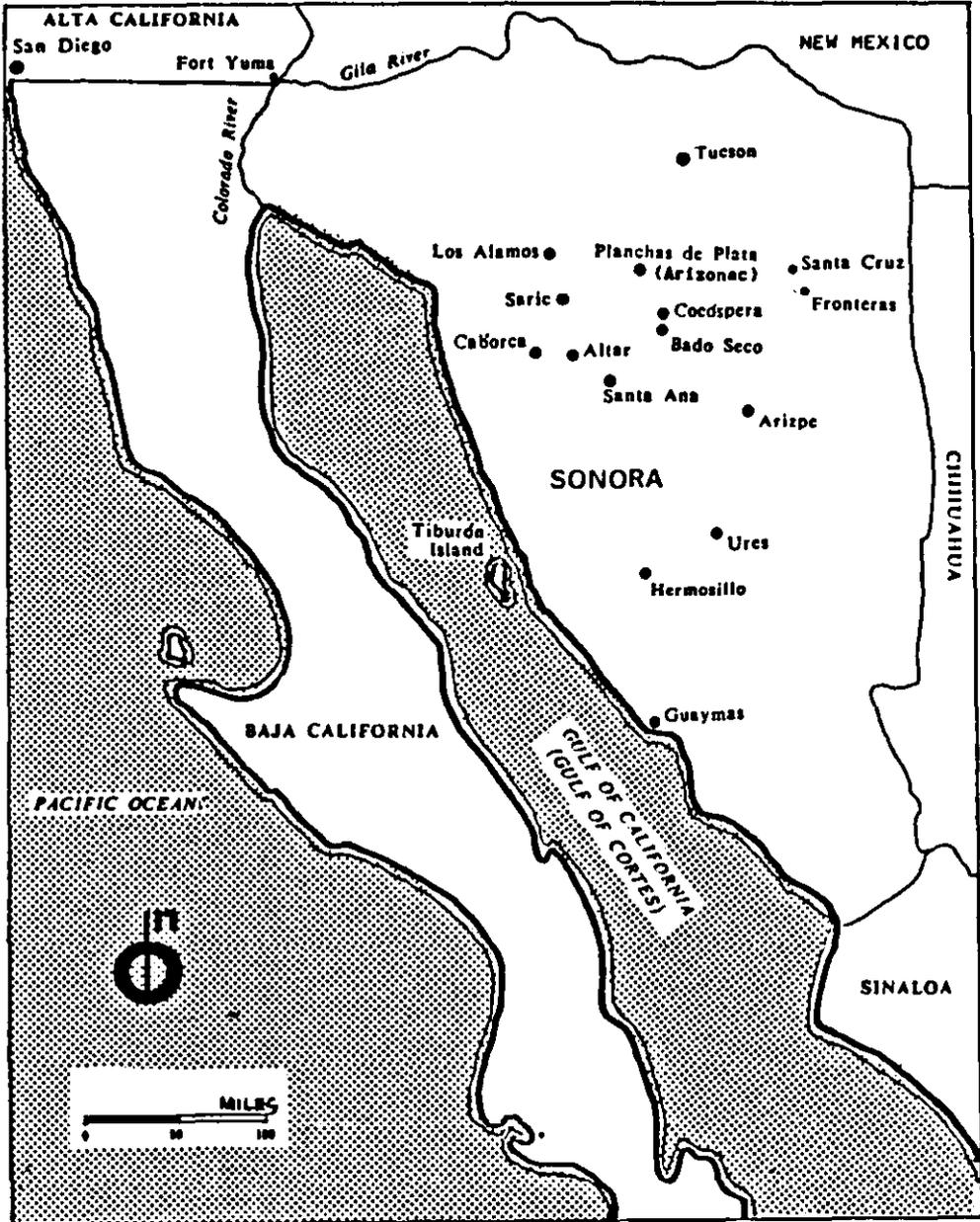
RICHARD DOBS is a most refreshing character! Worthy Dick Dobs, give us your hand! *Dick*, we must always call you, and may you never be "gone Dick."

What a biography your life would make. How irresistible the journal of your wonderful existence! Twenty years ago you were a *boy*, and reveled in bread and molasses: now the choicest viands grace the table of the *man*. Astonishing progress of the age -- singular advancement in gastronomy!

These arguments, when used at the proper times, can be wielded with a giant force in your favor. Esau sold his birthright for a mess of pottage, and we could now give up our present duties to enjoy with you a dinner worthy of the name.

William Walker. *Sketches of Prominent Citizens.*

SONORA



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13. Apaches and Argonauts

At the end of the Mexican war, the state of Sonora reached up to the Gila river international boundary on the north; the Colorado river and the Gulf of Cortés separated it from the Californias on the west; the Sierra Madre mountains effectively isolated it from Chihuahua on the east; and a blunt southeastern angle by the Rio Fuerte divided it from Sinaloa and the rest of the nation. Its one hundred thousand square miles harbored a population barely surpassing one hundred thousand inhabitants gathered in narrow river valleys where they cultivated only what was strictly necessary for their personal use.

With scanty rainfall, often under five inches per year, the greatest potential wealth of Sonora lied in its mineral deposits, and legendary stories of gold and silver riches captivated the imagination, acting as irresistible magnets to attract California argonauts. Attention naturally focused on Sonora from the beginnings of the California gold rush, but even though thousands of adventurers crossed over the Gila route, few ventured to linger on its soil. Moreover, large numbers of Sonorians abandoned their homes and also joined the ranks of argonauts to the new El Dorado. The reason: the Apaches, briefly but clearly outlined by a New Orleans *Picaune* correspondent in 1849:

The greater part of the Mexican population of this State [Sonora] have abandoned their homes, about 15,000 in number, and gone by land to California. Since their arrival at their destination, they have said that they emigrated to be protected from the savages, and not in search of gold, for the placers of Sonora are richer than those of the Sacramento.

In addition to this all the reports and traditions of Mexico are that Sonora is the richest

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THE APACHES

placé in the world. But the diggings cannot be worked in consequence of the annual irruption of the Apaches, who defeat the Mexican troops, and plunder and murder the inhabitants.¹

In numbers the Apaches were not remarkable; probably less than six thousand. It was their unusual fighting qualities which made them feared throughout the Mexican border country. They considered raiding a lawful vocation; indeed, it was their chief means of support. From time immemorial they had been the terror of the Hispanic American settlements, never thoroughly controlled by Spain or Mexico. The ordinary objective of their forays was the stealing of horses and cattle, but they also frequently took human captives, usually women and children, whom they either kept as slaves or sold to traders.

A long series of civil wars between the parties of José Urrea, *comandante general* of the State, and Don Manuel María Gándara, its governor, so weakened Sonora that by 1848 it was utterly incapable of resisting the Apache attacks sweeping southward from the Gila valley and downward from their fortresses in the Sierra Madre. In fact, the almost impassable ranges of the Sierra Madre were at one and the same time a 250-mile highway to refuge from the United States troops, a stronghold and barrier against Mexico's forces, and a base for marauding operations.

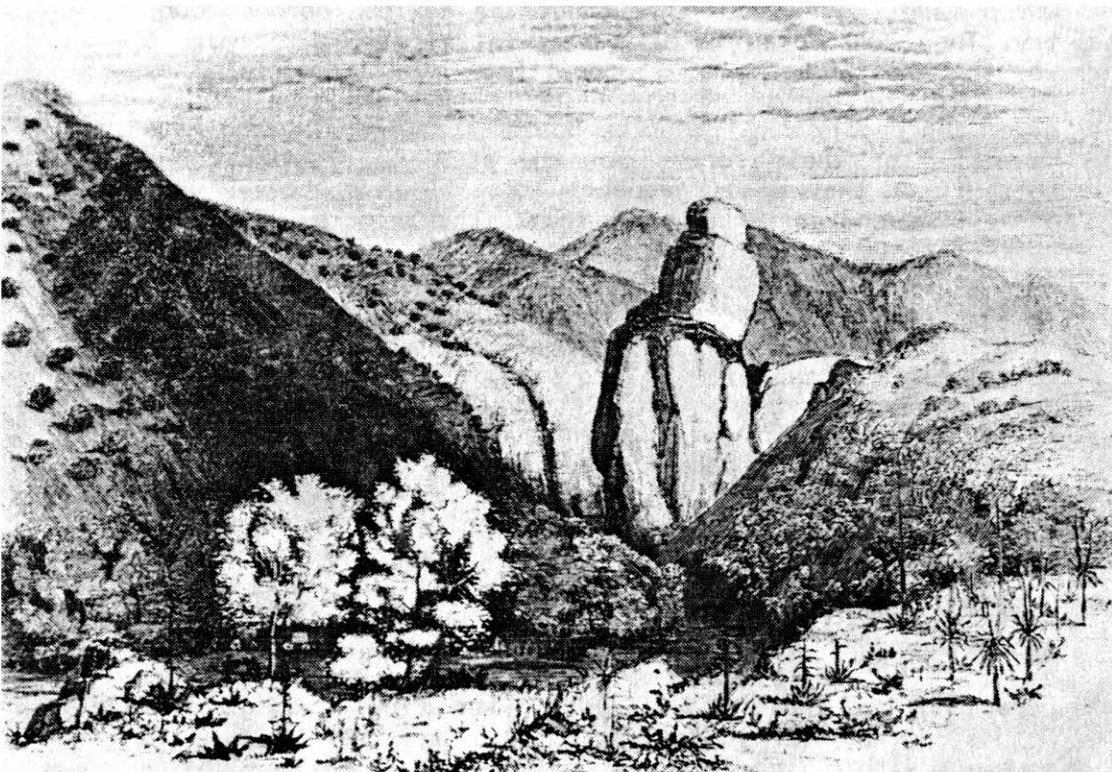
A clause in the 1848 peace treaty obliged the United States to restrain the Indians ranging along the international border, but that was of little help for Mexico because six years elapsed before a well-defined policy regarding the Indians in question was finally adopted by Washington. Suffice it to say that not more than 180 mounted men were within immediate reach of the entire Mexican frontier at any one time during the 1848-1852 period.

On the other hand, the Mexican government made elaborate plans for eighteen military colonies along the northern frontier, but by 1850 the ones in Sonora and Baja California

¹"Mexico," *Daily Picayune*, 6/26/1849, p.2 c.3.

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GUADALUPE PASS, SIERRA MADRE, SONORA

existed only in the decree of their creation, and there seemed to be small hope of establishing them for some time to come. In July of that year, Governor Jose de Aguilar appealed to the central government, warning that "The frontier is deserted, its wealth lost, and the once well-cultivated fields only retain the vestiges of what was done and the remains of many victims sacrificed to the savage fury."² Moreover, the destruction was spreading to the interior of the State, as the Apaches learned the weakness of its defenses and raided as far south as the vicinity of Ures.

To complicate Sonora's woes, not all of the border atrocities were the work of Indians. Almost as soon as overland emigrants to the California gold fields began to use the southern routes, complaints arose concerning their violation of Mexican territory by bands of outlaws preying on the settlers. In 1848-49, California emigrants plundered the pueblo of Nuri in the Alamos district and the mining settlement of Cleneguita in the district of Altar, among others. A party of Papago Indians sent by the authorities on a campaign against the Apaches discovered a force of Americans defending the Apache rancharia selected for attack. According to the Papagos, the Americans had sent the Apaches out to steal cattle which the emigrants were then to purchase from them for use on their journey.

In April, 1850, Don Luis de la Rocha, Mexican Minister at Washington, notified Secretary of State John M. Clayton that armed parties of Americans on their way to California had repeatedly entered Sonora and encouraged and supported the Apaches in raids on the helpless frontier population. Some of these parties had claimed to be emissaries of the United States government. Besides providing the Apaches with arms and ammunition, the Americans bought from them the plunder taken in the raids.

Forty-niners travelling over the Gila route crossed Apache territory in northern Sonora and entered California at the Gila-Colorado Junction, in Yuma territory. The Yumas

²Rufus Key Wyllys, *The French in Sonora*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1932), p. 29.

numbered about 500. They were a "wild, fierce and warlike people" whose nation had been almost annihilated in 1828 by the combined effort of adjacent tribes. Those who escaped destruction fled for safety to the Mohave villages, high up the rivers, and remained there until 1845, during which time they had so far recuperated in numbers as to be able to return to their original hunting grounds. Their initial contacts with the argonauts were chronicled by the *Alta* in May, 1850:

When the emigration of a year ago first took place, and the early parties commenced crossing, but very little difficulty was experienced from them [the Yumas], save from their thieving propensities, which unhorsed many emigrants . . .

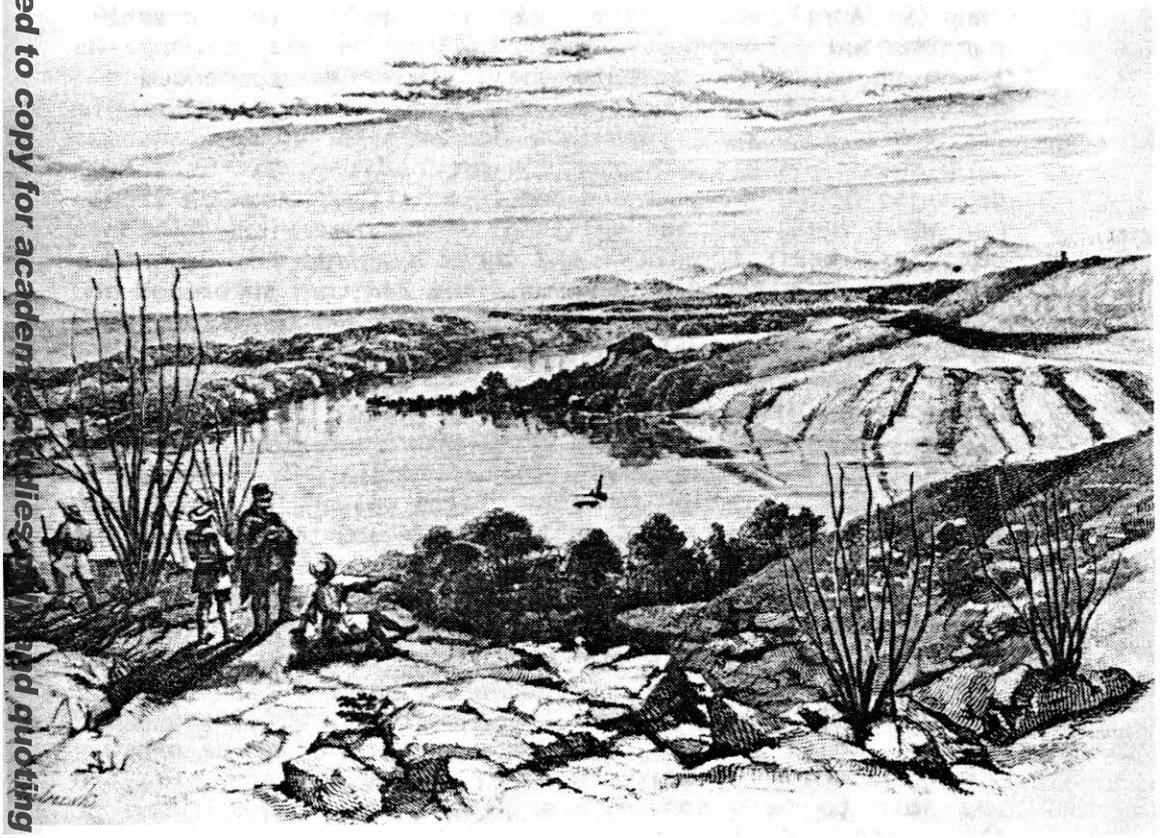
Unlike the friendly Pimos and Maricopas, they understand the value of money, and of late have been nearly as open to "trade" as the sharpest Connecticut pedlar. Their savage shrewdness, too, has taught them the superiority of fire arms, and they have, with their natural cunning, obtained a considerable number of pistols and guns from the various parties who have crossed, for swimming their animals across the wild and whirling waters of the formidable Colorado, acting as guides, and other kindred services.³

Late in 1849, a band of American outlaws established a ferry at the crossing. Their leader, John Glanton, formerly of Texas, was a notorious criminal, and his associates were not a great deal better.⁴ The profits of the ferry were

³"The Gila Emigration." *Daily Alta California*, 5/23/1850, p.2 c.1.

⁴Glanton had killed several men before he left San Antonio, his former place of residence. Fleeing to Chihuahua, he engaged in the service of the governor in the delectable employment of killing Apaches, at so much per head. Finding it not to pay as well as he expected, and coming in contact with some Mexicans whose tonsorial appearance resembled Indians, he coolly despatched them, brought their scalp to the Governor, and received from him the standard pro rata for killing Apaches. Soon the atmosphere of Chihuahua became uncomfortable when the government offered a reward for his head, and we next find him as captain of the gang at the mouth of the Gila. "Los Angeles Correspondence." *Ibid.*, 1/8/1851, p.2 c.2.

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JUNCTION OF THE GILA AND COLORADO RIVERS

enormous: the throng of Mexicans that passed in that season on their way to California exceeded thirty thousand, and the fees charged by the ferry company were exorbitant. When Gen. Anderson, of Tennessee, came through with a party of Americans in April, 1850, he refused to pay Glanton's charges, constructed a boat for himself and ferried his company. He then presented his boat to the Indians, who commenced the business of ferrying on their own at the "Algodones," a short distance downstream from Glanton's ferry.

Glanton and his men promptly marched down to the Indian camp, seized their boat and destroyed it, and took an Irishman whom the Yumas had enlisted in their service, tied his hands and heels together, and threw him into the Colorado. The Yumas retaliated at dawn on April 24: they surprised and killed Glanton sleeping in his tent and ten of his associates before they could fire a single shot. Only three men who were out chopping wood managed to escape and brought the news to San Diego.

The news of the murder of Glanton and his companions occasioned great excitement in California. The season for the spring immigration from the states was near at hand, and it was thought highly important that something should be done by the government to protect people crossing the Colorado. Governor Burnett at once directed the sheriffs of Los Angeles and San Diego counties to enlist a militia of one hundred men who would proceed without delay to the region of the Yumas.

"General" Joseph C. Morehead, recently named Quartermaster General of California, was assigned to lead the expedition. He was a native of Kentucky, about 26 years old, and was said to be a son or a nephew of Governor Morehead of that state. He had arrived in California in 1847, as a Lieutenant in Col. Stevenson's regiment of New York volunteers. In 1849 he had been elected to the first Legislature and in 1850 he was the law partner of Attorney General E. J. C. Kewen.⁵

The orders of the Governor were entirely silent upon the

⁵Kewen would later become one of William Walker's prominent filibusters.

difficult subject of finances to defray expenses. Gen. Morehead met the emergency by giving drafts on his own name, on the treasury of the state. This new species of currency was not received well by the citizens of Los Angeles and San Diego counties. When the old rancheros were asked to part with their animals and other property for "Morehead's scrip," as it was signally termed, they resolutely refused. Thus, together with the impossibility of procuring men, the undertaking was delayed until September, when a body of emigrants arrived from Texas and Arkansas, and enough volunteers were attracted to enlist into the service by the inducements of five dollars a day in "Morehead's scrip," with rations to boot.

Finally, at the end of September, 1850, Morehead's 104-man militia left San Diego for the river, although trains of emigrants then arriving from the Colorado reported the utmost quietness and placidity in that region. During the summer, a company of Americans had built three ferry-boats, a house and a fort, which they called "Colorado City," one mile below the mouth of the Gila river. They had "made a peace" with the Yuma Indians, who themselves were ferrying travellers eight miles downstream in the boats formerly belonging to Glanton's party. A new group of Americans were about to establish another ferry, and "they all lived in harmony," with the Indians behaving more sociable and friendly than ever.⁶

Upon reaching the river, Morehead took possession of the former Glanton camp, known as "Gila City"; however, "The afternoon after his arrival some of his men, who were engaged in herding stock, were, as they allege, fired upon by some Indians. They returned the fire and killed an Indian . . ."⁷ Some one hundred and fifty Indians, armed with bows and arrows, then boldly swam the river in front of Morehead's camp to attack it. About twenty Yumas were slain. Next day, Morehead crossed over the Colorado towards the Indians' principal settlement:

⁶"From the Colorado." *Daily Alta California*, 11/30/1850, p.2 c.2.

⁷"Expedition of Gen. Morehead Continued." *Ibid.*, 1/18/1851, p.2 c.5.

The Indians, perceiving his approach, were busy packing their little wares upon their animals, preparatory to a hasty retreat. Morehead at once commenced an attack upon them, and followed them so closely that most of them were compelled to throw away every encumbrance to ensure their own safety. They were followed for many miles — several were shot, and some of their animals taken. From this time forward, few or no Indians were seen; they retreated up river, leaving their crops and possessions at the mercy of M, who appropriated all to the purposes of his command; turned his animals upon them and those of different companies of emigrants as they came up; had their huts sacked and despoiled of large quantities of musquite beans, prime article of food with these Indians — they make a bread with 'm pounded and mixed with stewed pumpkins — and had stored large quantities for winter consumption: all were destroyed by M.⁸

Morehead disbanded his volunteers in November, leaving but eight men at the Colorado crossing to await the arrival of regular army troops from San Diego. When Major Samuel P. Heintzelman, U.S. Army, established Fort Yuma at the Gila junction in December, he formed a treaty with the Yumas, "dealing out to them rations to supply the place of their crops, so causelessly destroyed by Morehead."⁹ And, according to figures furnished to the Aita by the Governor of California in 1852, the Morehead expedition cost the State treasure the neat sum of \$120,000.

In his annual message of December, 1850, Governor Burnett accused Morehead of unduly protracting his mission besides disobeying his orders. In January, 1851, Morehead sat at a Court of Inquiry convened at San Diego, but by February 21 he was back at his post in San Francisco, engaged in renting a building for the purpose of a State arsenal.

⁸"Gen. Morehead's Expedition," *Ibid.*, 1/20/1851, p.2 c.4.

⁹"Los Angeles Intelligence," *Ibid.*, 2/2/1851, p.2 c.3.

14. Harbinger for Sonora

Early in April, 1851, reports from Los Angeles spoke of a party of men armed with rifles and six-shooters who had passed through the town. They were described as "a portion of a body of 300 men, and say they are going to prospect the Gila. The real object of the expedition is a descent upon Sonora."¹ Reports of the "secret expedition" then began to circulate in San Francisco. The leader turned out to be Quarter Master General Morehead, who on April 20 vanished with the 400 muskets and 90,000 cartridges under his care in the State arsenal. He had purchased a sloop to go down the coast, but on April 23 the Federal authorities detained the vessel in the harbor, fitted out and ready to sail for Mazatlán. On board was "a band of daring and reckless men, with all the munitions of war, and under the auspices and command of some person or persons of some note and influence, proceeding with the view of Americanizing, or, in other words, revolutionizing, Southern California and Northern Mexico."²

On April 25, Governor McDougal asked the Legislature to make provision by law for the apprehension of Morehead. In the House, the governor's message was referred to a Select Committee, while Morehead hurriedly rented a barque, the *Josephine*, and fled with forty men down the coast to San Diego. They passed inspection by the authorities in San Francisco because the entire armament they carried on board consisted of two old muskets.

The *Josephine* arrived in San Diego on May 5. The barque was so poorly provisioned that there was not a sufficient quantity of food on board to last a week. Morehead left the

¹"Arrival of the Constitution." *Daily Alta California*, 4/5/1851, p.2 c.2.

²"Expedition to Mazatlan." *Ibid.*, 4/24/1851, p.2 c.3.

vessel and went over the line into Lower California, where he remained two days. Upon his return, his men disbanded and the *Josephine* proceeded without them to Mazatlan. Rumors reaching that Mexican port, spoke of hundreds of armed Americans coming down to invade their southern neighbor, which prompted the *Noticiosa de Mazatlan* to comment: "Either the Yankees or Comanches and Apaches conquer us! Both things are synonymous. The Mexican people can choose!"³

The overland filibuster column against Sonora fared no better than the naval contingent. Their vanguard of about thirty men encamped near Los Angeles for some weeks. They were commanded by Captain John Irving, alias "Red Irving," a Texan, who proclaimed that they had been invited by the Governor of the State of Sonora, to furnish aid to exterminate the Apaches. Their expectations for 300 men never materialized, and when news of the disbanding of the naval contingent arrived at Los Angeles, Irving's company began to move down the valley, stealing horses, killing cattle, and committing all sorts of depredations along the way. The Indians attached to the rancherías in the vicinity, numbering four or five hundred, went in pursuit of the marauders. Some of the Indians were well mounted, and all were well armed with bows and arrows and lances. Irving and his men were armed to the teeth: they carried rifles, Colt's revolvers and bowie knives; but he and eleven of his men were doomed when they took a bye-road that led into a gulch in the mountains from which there was no egress:

The Indians, scaling the mountains before and on either side of the doomed men, and blocking up the path behind them, then commenced the attack by launching their arrows and lances, and hurling down rocks upon their heads. The battle must have been short and desperate. Irving and his party are said to have fought like tigers at bay: himself and every one of his men fought to the last, and every one of

³"Mexico." *Ibid.*, 5/24/1851, p.2 c.2.

them was killed.⁴

Thus ended the first filibustering expedition launched from California against Mexico. In a strict sense, the Morehead episode can be termed bloodless, for it spilled no blood on Mexican soil and it was finished even before it started. Yet, in the annals of history it is neatly encased between two massacres of American outlaws which point out its true dimension. It evolved from the carnage of eleven of John Glanton's ferrymen at the Colorado crossing on April 24, 1850, and it ended with the slaughter of John Irving and his eleven marauders near Cajon Pass on May 27, 1851. The expedition itself was a harbinger of doom for Sonora, where winds of separatist designs were already blowing.

In August, 1850, the governor's deputy Mariano Paredes openly expressed a fear in the Mexican Congress of the probable secession of Sonora. He urged the planting of military colonies to protect the frontier both from the Indians and Anglo-Americans, "to the latter of whom Sonora would turn for aid if not soon helped by the central government."⁵ Governor José de Aguilar, meanwhile, persisted in demanding an active campaign against the Apaches: Sonora needed help at once, not theories. In response, President Mariano Arista in December appointed Colonel José María Carrasco *comandante general* of Sonora, ordering him to proceed at once to the West with men and supplies and money, to organize the military colonies and to commence a vigorous offensive against the Apaches.

Carrasco arrived in Sonora in January, 1851, just in time to discover a movement led by Don Eustaquio Barron and Don A. Garay, to make Sonora independent, "as Texas had been."⁶ The conspiracy had contacts in California, and it may well be that out of it came the "invitation" which led to the Morehead expedition. That being the case, Carrasco's disclo-

⁴"Later from Los Angeles." *Ibid.*, 6/17/1851, p.2 c.2.

⁵Rufus Key Wyllys, *The French in Sonora*, p. 30.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 52.

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sure of the scheme deprived the filibusters of any local assistance they had in mind. To complicate matters, Carrasco himself has been suspected of complicity in the separatist movement.

Carrasco is said to have expressed his secessionist views to Lieutenant Cave J. Couts, who commanded a United States military detachment guarding a survey party at the border. Couts was married to Doña Ysadora, daughter of Don Juan Bandidi, wealthy San Diego rancher "who again and again appears as the exponent of the annexation of northwestern Mexico by the United States and who seems to have profited considerably by his activities along that line during the fifties."⁷ In 1851 the Los Angeles Star reported that Carrasco was in correspondence "with persons friendly to annexation to the United States" and that there were "dim foreshadowings of some revolutionary movements in Sonora."⁸ The Alta commented that the Star's "dim-foreshadowings" must be all smoke.

Carrasco was thwarted in his efforts to protect the frontier. When he took charge as *comandante general* of Sonora in January, 1851, only one military colony had been recruited and provisionally located at the presidio of Fronteras. Another, at Santa Cruz, was being formed, but scarcely had he begun to reorganize the forces of the state when he suddenly died in July.

Apache raids continued to desolate Sonora, and the California press in 1851 repeatedly reported the ravages:

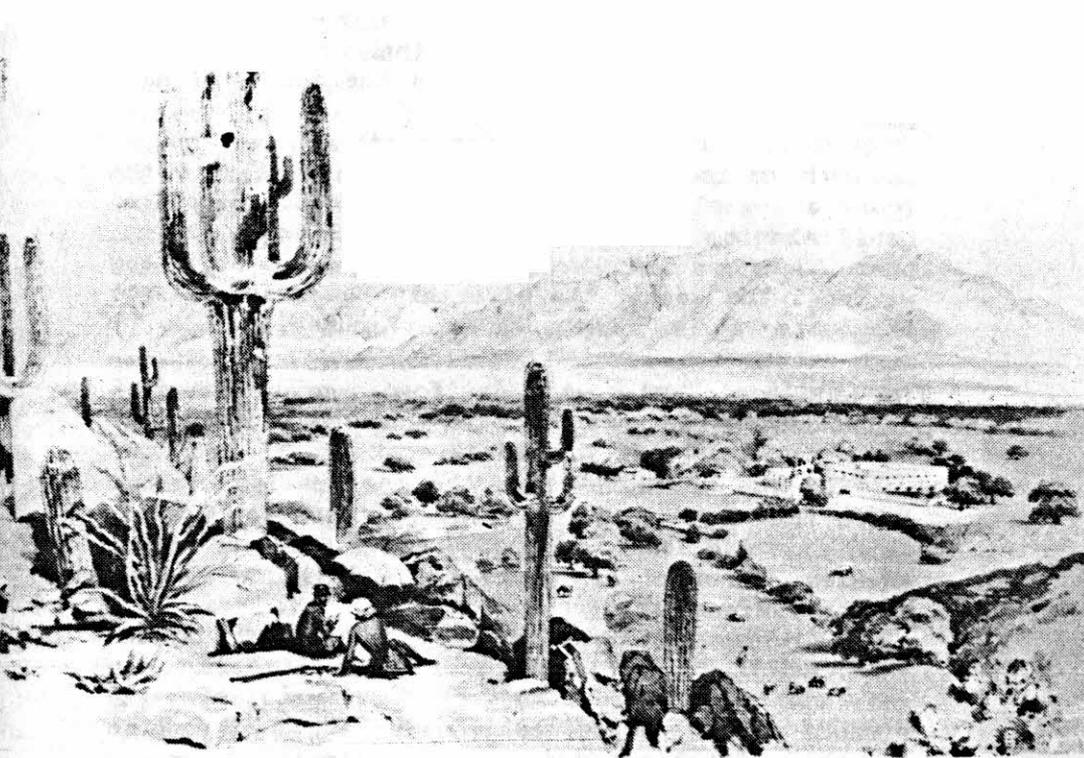
THE INDIANS IN THE STATE OF SONORA. — We perceive by a Mexican paper that the Indians — Apaches probably — to the number of nearly four hundred, had attacked and taken possession of Tucson, the last town in Sonora, coming towards the Gila river. The inhabitants not being able to hold the place, abandoned it.

Thus in that whole valley, extending for several hundreds of miles, there is not one Mexican town on

⁷Ibid., p. 56.

⁸"More Prospective Annexations." *Daily Alta California*, 9/26/1851, p.2 c.4.

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TUCSON, SONORA

the route to the Gila, from Chihuahua, except perhaps the little mission of San Gabriel, but what the Indians have taken possession of. Two and a half years ago, several towns had been abandoned by the inhabitants, one of which was Buena Vista, the houses desolate, the priest's crucifixes and fonts, the cooking utensils of the inhabitants, all left, and silent desolation reigning where recently bustled busy life and were heard the sounds of happiness.

Beyond, gold mines were deserted; the Indians had been there too. The valley was beautiful, but the towns and dwellings in their sad condition appeared as if Alaric, "the curse of God," had swept through them. This was the effect of Indian depredation and warfare. The sooner the miserable races are extinct the better for all the purposes of humanity.⁹

Time and again, also, the California press spoke of the Sonorians desire for Annexation to the United States:

FROM THE SOUTH. — From the Los Angeles Star we learn that Major Hamilton, who had been to Durango, Chihuahua and Sonora, for sheep, had returned to Los Angeles. Three of his party had been killed by the Apache Indians . . .

Major Hamilton was told by an officer of the [Mexican] army in Sonora, that in case the Mexican government failed to afford protection to the inhabitants of that State, application would be made to the United States for annexation. Something must be done, or the whole of Northern Mexico will be deserted.¹⁰

And coupled with the Apache ravages came stories of fabulous mines and the potential riches of Sonora:

⁹"The Indians in the State of Sonora." *Ibid.* 3/28/1851. p.2 c.2.

¹⁰"From the South." *Ibid.* 6/28/1851. p.2 c.2.

THE GOLD MINES OF THE STATE OF SONORA. — Stockton, October 15, 1851 . . . Dr. William Keith, of the firm of T. Robinson Bours & Co., of this city, who has resided many years in the State of Sonora . . . assures me that although certain parts of Sonora, at certain seasons, present a stern and arid appearance, still, that there is no finer country in the face of the earth for farming and stock raising; that in the best part of Sonora there is water for irrigation, that the climate is unsurpassed, that there is scarcely a mountain in the State that does not contain either gold or silver, and that there are in many parts extensive virgin placers. Those remarks will apply particularly to the northern portion of the State, now in possession of the Apache Indians . . .

An army is needed to drive off the Apache savages, and then a line of forts and depots for provisions along the frontier will protect the country. Enterprise and capital would make Sonora one of the most flourishing states in the Mexican Republic.¹¹

In that climate, a year after the first expedition. Morehead was at it again:

GEN. MOREHEAD'S EXPEDITION. — It is very well known that this famous general, who has figured so extensively in the lower part of the state, has been in Sacramento for several months back, collecting a company of ambitious and restless youth, for the purpose of making an excursion to the South: either to distinguish themselves, or to better their fortunes. But little definite has as yet transpired relative to his object and it is frequently hinted that he has a very indefinite idea of the premises himself. Suffice it to say, the company, whatever

¹¹"Correspondence of the Alta California." *Ibid.*, 10/20/1851. p.2 c.5.

their purpose may be, have purchased, provisioned and fitted up a bark, and are now on their way down the Sacramento river.¹²

This time Morehead faded from view before passing through San Francisco, and his exploits, if any, did not merit the attention of the press. His subsequent actions during the Civil War, however, merit our attention here. At the outbreak of the war he was in Jackson, Mississippi, seeking a commission in the Confederate Army. In a letter to Jefferson Davis he advised the president that earlier experience fighting Indians in California had well equipped him for leading men in battle.

Davis did not extend the commission, so Morehead went to Kentucky and organized his own voluntary regiment. Before he could lead his men in battle, he was captured in September, 1862, charged as a spy and interned in United States prisoner of war camps. Upon his release a year later, he was back in Mississippi asking the Confederacy for a commission and trying to raise his "Kentucky Partisan Rangers" when he died in 1864.

Looking at it in retrospect and based on circumstantial evidence, it could be argued that the extension of slavery may have been a major motive for Morehead's designs on Sonora. The *New York Courier and Enquirer*, "generally well informed in relation to California affairs," expressed such an opinion at the time, although John Nugent of the *San Francisco Herald* disagreed, believing it "probable that the only purpose of General Morehead's party was to secure a comfortable settlement in the heart of a fertile country, and to open to themselves a new field for their enterprise."¹³ The prominent role that slavery interests played in the Walker (1853) and Crabb (1857) filibustering schemes against Lower California and Sonora will come to light in subsequent chapters. But whether Southern agents backed

¹²"Gen. Morehead's Expedition." *Ibid.*, 5/7/1852, p.2 c.2.

¹³"Rumored Designs on Lower California." *San Francisco Herald*, 9/16/1851, p.2 c.1.

Morehead or not, they obviously did not furnish him with the minimal means for success.

Walker himself had no connection with the Morehead scheme. At the crucial moment when the *Josephine* sailed from San Francisco to San Diego in April, 1851, Gumbo was in charge in the Inner Crescent City and Walker was busily campaigning for alderman. Upon his defeat at the polls, an editorial on "The Secret Expedition," ostensibly written by Nugent, appeared in the *Herald* on April 29 alongside Tucker's article with the election returns:

. . . The rumors we have mentioned, of a descent on Lower California, have been rife in this city for many days — long indeed previous to General Morehead's departure: — but our citizens look upon plots of this nature as very stupid affairs, not worthy of notice, and they have treated the secret expedition as a very unmeaning absurdity.¹⁴

Dick Dobs' turn would come later, after a new element -- the French -- had entered into the picture. Following the death of Comandante General Carrasco, Mexican authorities undertook the use of foreigners as military colonists. In order to stem the advance of Anglo-American expansionists, this foreign colonization was to be confined to Europeans; and the Europeans most available to Sonora for this purpose were the French in the California gold fields.

The fifteen thousand Frenchmen in California formed a hardy, adventurous group. Numbers of them had military experience. Many were Catholic, and usually not too fond of the Protestant Anglo-Saxons who threatened the integrity of the Mexican territory. They would seem made to order for the job of protecting the northern frontier of Mexico, both from Apache raiders and from "Manifest-Destiny" marauders. In the Fall of 1851, California Frenchmen were called to the rescue of Sonora.

¹⁴"The Secret Expedition." *Ibid.*, 4/29/1851, p.2 c.l.

15. Frenchmen to the Rescue

Upon learning that Guillermo Schleiden, the Mexican vice-consul at San Francisco, was looking for men for a frontier colony in Sonora, a wandering young count or marquis named Charles dePindray bestirred himself to take advantage of the opportunity for easy wealth. Pindray had fled from France on being implicated in the activities of a group of counterfeuters, and arrived in California in 1850 to seek his fortune. His skill as a hunter soon made him well known in the vicinity of San Francisco, whose market he kept supplied with game.

It was not a hard task for Pindray to find a considerable number of his compatriots ready to join in the Sonora venture. He assessed his followers fifty dollars each for the expenses of the expedition, but even so, in amazingly few days six dozen adventurers were enrolled to sail for Guaymas. Many Americans were eager to join, but the Mexican vice-consul was careful to screen out all Anglo-Saxons. DePindray's Frenchmen, 72 in number, dressed in blue blouses made famous by the last French Revolution and armed with double-barreled shot guns, with bayonets attached, left San Francisco on the bark *Cumberland* on November 22, 1851.

They landed at Guaymas on the day after Christmas, and marched inland to Hermosillo and Ures. Reports reaching San Francisco in February and March, 1852, told that the Mexicans received them with open arms and with great enthusiasm. At Ures, the capital of the State,

. . . they were supplied by the inhabitants with twenty mules, provisions of all kinds, and had assigned them, in case they desired to engage in agriculture, the presidio of Santa Anna, and the lands attached . . . the members of the government exhibited every disposition to act in a most liberal

manner towards their newly arrived defenders.¹

Now for the mines. The accounts we continue to receive about them is really astonishing. Nothing can be found in California, even in its brightest days, at all to compare with the favorable representations we have had made to us of these mines. The only question is hinged on the Apaches.²

Such glowing accounts moved many of the French in California to concert measures for joining their countrymen in Sonora, and several companies were soon organized with that intention. A company of 60 French miners from Placer county, under the command of T. P. Sainte-Marie, left San Francisco early in March on the vessels *Sonora* and *Hermosillo*. The schooners *Alerta* and *Thomas* and the brig *Hallowell* carried additional loads in succeeding weeks, but a number of Americans were unable to obtain passage. The agent of the vessel told them not to embark because the authorities would not allow them to go to the interior and they would receive rough treatment from the Sonorians.

The largest contingent of Frenchmen, some two hundred men commanded by Count Gaston Raoul Raousset-Boulbon, left San Francisco on the barque *Archibald Grace* on May 19, 1852. The count, 34, had been educated by the Jesuits in Switzerland and had tried his hand at almost everything: alternately painter, poet, dramatist, agriculturist, manufacturer, and soldier. He had served as staff officer of the Duc d'Aumale in the French Algerine expedition in 1845, and had arrived in California in 1850. For some time he lived partly by hunting and fishing in the neighborhood of San Francisco, or by traffic as a boatman on the bay and up the Sacramento river. Later he had taken up the business of buying and selling cattle for the markets of northern California.

On February 18, 1852, the count sailed from San Francisco aboard the steamer *Panama* for Acapulco. French Consul Mon-

¹"The French Expedition to Sonora." *San Francisco Herald*, 3/5/1852, p.2 c.2.

²"The Mines in Sonora." *Ibid.*, 2/24/1852, p.2 c.3.

sieur Patrice Dillon had furnished him with passports and letters of recommendation to Monsieur Andre Le Vasseur, the French minister at Mexico City. There, on April 7, Raousset signed a contract with the powerful Franco-Mexican banking house of Jecker, Torre & Co., which counted among its honorary or profit-sharing members, the president of Mexico, the governor of Sonora, the French minister, the French consul at Guaymas, and other influential persons.

By the contract, the count was to organize in San Francisco a company of 180 Frenchmen and proceed with them as quickly as possible to Guaymas. There he was to await an agent, fully empowered by the *Compañia Restauradora de la Mina de Arizona*, a Jecker-Torre's subsidiary, and proceed with him to the region known as Arizona in northern Sonora to take possession therein of desirable lands, mines, and placers in accordance with a concession made by the government to the company in January. In case of necessity, he was to "defend as far as possible the lands, mines, and placers of the said *Compañia Restauradora*, against whatever person or authority should attack them."³ The count received thirty thousand pesos on account and more would be advanced later to cover the expenses of the expedition.

The mines of Arizona, subjects of these negotiations, were the famous *Planchas de Plata* (or *Bolas de Plata*) silver deposits in a mountain range known as Arizonac, on the present northern border of Sonora. The deposits were discovered about 1736, and so pure was the silver ore, it is said, that it was gathered in large *bolas* or nuggets. Claimed by local officials for the king of Spain, the works were presently closed to individual miners by a royal decree of 1741. They were soon afterward abandoned and seem never to have been fully reopened, even for the profit of the crown.

Upon returning to San Francisco, the count rapidly enlisted 180 foreigners, most of them ex-soldiers or sailors of France: arms and munitions were purchased, and the Archibald Grace was hired for the voyage. Americans were scrupulously excluded from the company. At the point of departure,

³Rufus Key Wyllys. *Op. Cit.*, p. 73.

U.S. authorities made some opposition to their sailing as an organized military contingent for foreign soil, in apparent violation of the Neutrality Law. When the Mexican and French consuls explained matters, however, on May 19 the *Compagnie de Sonore* sailed for Guaymas. The *Alta's* "Guaymas Correspondence" told of their arrival:

On May 29th, the American barque *Archibald Grace*, Peters, master, brought the Count de Raousset, and his company of 180 Frenchmen to this port. They are perfectly well armed, with two pieces of artillery, and are a very well disciplined troop. They were received in triumph and when, a few days after, their chief submitted to the request of the municipality, to join in the great procession of Corpus Christi, the general enthusiasm was such as never has been witnessed before.⁴

Though greeted at Guaymas with the same enthusiasm as met de Pindray, Raousset encountered an entirely different atmosphere inside Sonora, where things had radically worsened for the French since December. Early in 1852, a new *comandante general*, Gen. Miguel Blanco, had arrived in Sonora with enough resources to arm and equip 1,500 men: seven hundred Mexican soldiers had also arrived from the capital, and more were expected, to man a line of frontier posts and protect Sonora from any marauders, be they Indian, Anglo-Saxon, or French.

As soon as Pindray's men arrived at Ures, capital of Sonora, Gen. Blanco made them sign the act of allegiance to the Mexican Government, and the governor granted each Frenchman about half a square mile of arable land at Cocospera: the Sainte Marie's contingent received the hacienda de la Cruz, near Tucson, where the mines were said to exist. Each man was given provisions for six months, the necessary tools and seeds, besides one mule for two men and two oxen for eight men. Those who worked their land dur-

⁴"Guaymas Correspondence," *Daily Alta California*, 8/28/1852, p.2 c.3.

ing two years would receive a proper deed for the same.

De Pindray's colony was governed in a deplorable manner, and the acrimony which existed between its chief and its members gave rise to disorders which brought about a separation. Fifteen or twenty of the men withdrew from the company for the purpose of seeking the mines, and they forthwith "discovered" an abandoned silver mine, called St. Theresa, in Apache country. A Mexican judge, however, ruled that the right of ownership belonged to the former local proprietors and the Frenchmen were compelled to withdraw.

By temperament, the French colonists in Sonora preferred to dig gold rather than work as farmers. Many of St. Marie's men took their horses and went straight to the mines. Laboring conscientiously, they found gold everywhere, but in such small quantities that a miner could not gather more than a dollar's worth per day, providing there was always water enough to wash the dirt. But despite the tales of Apache silver bullets and similar fabulous stories, the French colonists failed to find riches in Sonora.

In consequence of the disastrous turn which the affairs of the Cocospera colony were taking, Monsieur Pindray blew his brains out in a fit of despair while laboring under a high fever, although some historians suspect that he was murdered. Most of his men, discontented and destitute, sought to return to California. A French surgeon aboard a merchant vessel at anchor in Guaymas, wrote in August:

Every day I see our unfortunate countrymen returning, either from Santa Cruz or Cosespera [sic], in a state of misery and prostration difficult to describe, without shoes, without clothes, harassed by fatigue, without money, dying of hunger and afflicted with the dysentery . . .

Some days ago a ship arrived with forty Frenchmen, but the news they received upon their arrival was so bad that they immediately decided upon returning to San Francisco . . .

We are awaiting the result of Mr. Raousset's expedition. All wish him well, for he skillfully directs his company, composed now of about 250 men, thoroughly disciplined, armed and equipped. Two

months more, and the Sonora problem will be completely and definitely solved. Fortune, or misery the most terrible, will be the fate of those composing the expedition.⁵

The gloomy picture facing the French in Sonora was already quite apparent by the end of May, 1852, when Raousset arrived at Guaymas, but other events which transpired behind the scenes played the decisive role in dooming his expedition to "misery the most terrible." Unknown to the count at the time, a more powerful rival was on the field to thwart his efforts: the Anglo-Mexican house of Barron, Forbes & Co., financial lords of Mexico's West Coast, with headquarters at Tepic and linked with the Bolton & Barron banking house of San Francisco. Eustaquio Barron was British consul at Mazatlán, and in 1852 William E. Barron had been appointed Mexican vice-consul in San Francisco.

Barron, Forbes & Co. organized a subsidiary corporation with the house of Ocegüera of Guaymas, the Forbes-Ocegüera Company, also known as the *Sociedad Exploradora de Metales de Sonora*. Claiming prior rights to the "mine of Arizona" than those granted to the *Restauradora*, in the spring of 1852 they "denounced" the said mine before the local authorities, according to the Mexican mining laws. All the civil and military functionaries of Sonora, even the French consul at Guaymas, instantly deserted the Jecker-Torre camp and joined the Forbes-Ocegüera company. During April and May, Gen. Miguel Blanco, *comandante general de Sonora*, accompanied and protected Forbes-Ocegüera's agent, Adrian Daste, in his journey to the Apache infested Arizona region, to take legal possession of the property. When Raousset landed at Guaymas, his *Restauradora* no longer had any rights in Arizonac.

Gen. Blanco ordered Raousset to take his troops to the nearby pueblo of Pozo, to the west of Guaymas and to await further orders. From then on, Blanco threw every impediment in the way of the count and of his company. After a month's

⁵The Sonora Expedition -- A Gloomy Picture." Ibid., 10/18/1852, p.2 c.l.

delay. Raousset finally obtained permission to march inland with his army of Frenchmen, and upon reaching Hermosillo, on July 12, 1852 he sent a letter to Monsieur Patrice Dillon, the French consul at San Francisco: "This is a strange country, sir; law, justice, public shame amount to nothing. The company, formed to deprive us of our property, numbers among its members the Governor, the military commandant, the two judges of the tribunal of the mines, two deputies of the opposition, &c., &c. On my side I have a former Governor, but I am assured that he is interested in both enterprises."⁶

Gen. Blanco finally authorized the French to go to Saric, close to the Arizonac mines, but without their leader, who was to report to Blanco at Arizpe. The French were to leave Hermosillo in small groups, forbidden to march out in military formation or with any display of arms. Raousset refused to comply. Early in the morning of July 29 the French troops marched out of Hermosillo in full array, with fixed bayonets, artillery (two small unmounted field pieces on mule-back) in the van, and the count at the head of the column with sword drawn.

Difficulties of various kinds delayed their progress, and on August 19 they reached Bado Seco, near Cocospera, where they found some forty French settlers living as agricultural colonists. By that time, Raousset had decided to revolt. There, he proposed to Col. Manuel María Giménez, the *Restauradora's* agent, to put himself at the head of the French force and declare the independence of Sonora. Giménez not only refused but immediately abandoned the expedition; he reached Arizpe on August 22nd and reported to Blanco.

Blanco forthwith gave the count and his men the choice of three options: (1) They might renounce their French nationality and submit to the laws of the state; or (2) they might apply to the governor for *cartas de seguridad*, pending the arrival of which they were to remain at Saric; or (3) all the French should be dismissed save fifty men to be retained as unarmed laborers.

⁶"More of the Sonora Expedition." *Ibid.*, 10/25/1852, p.2 c.2.

In a lengthy reply on September 8, Raousset categorically rejected and ridiculed Blanco's three choices. On September 23, provisional governor Fernando Cubillas told the State Legislature that Raousset planned to make himself "sultan of Sonora," whereupon Congress appropriated funds for the conduct of a campaign against the French.

The remaining Cocóspera and Tucson French swelled Raousset's ranks to two hundred and fifty men. He advanced to Hermosillo, the largest town in Sonora, on October 14. General Blanco had eight hundred soldiers in the area, counting cavalry and artillery units, but only half of them were inside the city that morning. In less than three hours, Raousset captured Hermosillo, at a cost of 18 killed and 32 wounded. Among the dead, however, were three of his best and most trusted officers. The Mexican loss was officially put at 24 killed and 50 to 60 wounded.

Hermosillo proved to be a barren military victory. No Mexican leader could be found to embrace the Frenchmen's tricolor banner, inscribed with the words "Liberty to Sonora." Raousset wrote to Manuel María Gándara and Mariano Paredes, both of whom had previously taken part in or been suspected of sedition, placing the victory at their disposal. Both answered him insultingly, and Gándara instead faced the French with an army of *nacionales* at Ures while Blanco rallied his forces in the direction of Guaymas.

During the campaign the count was stricken with a severe attack of dysentery, aggravated by a mistake of his attendant, who administered a clyster by way of the throat. With Raousset prostrate, and seriously ill, his men quarreled among themselves, became demoralized, and opened negotiations with Gándara for a safe withdrawal from the heart of the hostile country. The Mexican leader offered them an unmolested journey to Guaymas and protection to their wounded left in Hermosillo. The French accepted and the evening of October 24, 1852 found them straggled along the road to the south, bearing Raousset on a litter and guarding a few prisoners and hostages brought with them as a sort of insurance.

With Raousset hovering between life and death, he was deposed of his command before the articles of capitulation were finally drawn up by Blanco and signed by the French

officers on November 4. By them the *Compagnie de Sonore* was formally dissolved and its possessions surrendered to General Blanco; the French submitted themselves wholly to the laws and authorities of Sonora; Blanco on his part guaranteed them their lives and personal security; he also persuaded the merchants and townspeople of Guaymas to contribute "voluntarily" to a "loan" of ten thousand pesos, which he turned over to the French to defray the expenses of their journey back to California.

On November 11 Raousset was sent, still very ill, to Mazatlán, where he remained several months in convalescence. The majority of the French left for California during November and December: at the end of a long year, Sonora had been cleared of an immigration begun with such high hopes by Marquis Charles de Pindray in the previous Christmas season; in a long letter sent from Mazatlán, published in San Francisco in March, 1853, Raousset explained:

I had devoted more than a year in preparing the execution of this enterprise, which was to open emigration to a new place. I saw in Sonora the foundation for a new California, not for the selfish interest of one nation, but free and open to all who might seek it to earn a livelihood, far from the narrow and over-populated countries of Europe.⁷

Upon his return to San Francisco in March, he is reported to have said, "unless a powerful interest is to colonize it, [Sonora] is condemned to sterility, to barbarism, and to be a desert, until the day when the cannon shall open its ports to liberty — Sonora will be fecund only by conquest!"⁸

Practically everyone agreed with the count in California. At that very moment, the powerful interests of William Walker's Manifest Destiny and his "Southern connection" were already advancing their own plans to "fecundate" Sonora by conquest.

⁷Count Raousset-Boulbon," *Ibid.*, 3/14/1853, p.2 c.1.

⁸Wyllis, *Op. Cit.*, p. 136.

16. The Southern Connection

The threat of secession that hung over the United States at the beginning of 1850 rapidly receded in a few months. The death of Calhoun at the end of March, the fiasco of the López expedition to Cárdenas in May, and the conciliatory tone of the resolutions adopted at the Nashville Convention in June, all contributed to weaken the adamant posture of Southern ultras in Congress and helped to clear the way for the admission of California into the Union. Still, with the struggle now on the eighth month, the *New York Herald's* Washington correspondent wrote on August 11 that "Congress moves with but a snail's pace on the California Bill. It will pass the Senate in a day or two, but can hardly pass the House, unless the boundaries of California are reduced. The Southern men will contend to the last for a division of California, so that a territory first, and then a Slave State, may be formed out of the southern portion of that newly acquired country. On the other hand, the Northern men will contend to the last against giving New Mexico a territorial government, without the Wilmot Attachment."¹

But precisely then, both sides gave in and the famous *Compromise of 1850* was enacted by the legislators. By mid September one of the essential bills had passed both House and Senate: the Admission of California, with its constitution and borders unchanged; the organization of New Mexico and Utah as territories, without the Wilmot attachment; curbing of the slave trade in Washington; adjustment of the Texas boundary; assumption of the Texas debt; and a more stringent fugitive law, gave both North and South something each badly wanted.

The territorial question was put to rest for a time,

¹"Our Washington Correspondence," *New York Herald*, 8/13/1850, p.3 c.3.

though the package failed to satisfy extremists. Moreover, the fugitive slave bill would actually serve to incite regional hostility and eventually split the country asunder. The first arrests under the new law were made in New York on September 26, 1850. Then a "great riot" between the whites and blacks in Philadelphia, a "fugitive slave riot" at Detroit, and a "tremendous fugitive slave excitement" in Boston ominously succeeded each other in October, releasing waves of unceasing agitation that after a decade would inexorably culminate in the Civil War.

The Compromise of 1850 officially opened the door for the introduction of slavery in the territories of Utah and New Mexico, whence it had been excluded by Mexican law. The California constitution, on the other hand, forbade its extension further west. Slavery propagandists, however, did not cease their endeavors to reach the Pacific coast, and they strove to accomplish it by attempting to separate Southern California from the rest of the State. Faced with overwhelming popular aversion to the *peculiar institution*, their actions were necessarily clandestine, but enough traces remained to allow later detection of their movements. For instance, the *San Francisco Picayune* recorded on June 10, 1851:

SLAVERY IN CALIFORNIA.

We have for some time past been aware of the existence of an organization, got up by leaders of the Democratic party in this city and elsewhere, the object of which is to divide the State with a view to the introduction of slavery in the southern portion of the present commonwealth. Until within the last ten or fifteen days, we looked upon the movement as the offspring of a diseased imagination on the part of a few restless, ambitious, ultra Southern disunionists, that would result in nothing but a ridiculous farce, and draw upon its projectors the contempt of the public.

When the scheme was first concocted, the character of the men who headed it warranted the belief that it would never disturb the peace or endanger

the welfare of the State. But since it has been espoused by many of the most enlightened and responsible men in the Democratic party — men who are the acknowledged exponents of the principles and policy of that party — it has assumed a more serious aspect, and invites the scrutiny and earnest attention of every man who has an interest in the honor and prosperity of the State.

. . . The plan was conceived in the first place by a few restless spirits . . . They have since been joined by the emissaries of disunionists in South Carolina, Alabama, and Texas, who have been sent here to create discord, division, and a foothold for slavery.²

From the very beginnings of the gold rush, the argonauts exercised effective control of the legislation enacted for the new State. They naturally framed laws that favored the mining interests. As a result, under American rule, the native cattle ranchers around San Diego and Los Angeles soon bore an unduly heavy share of the tax burden, which created an intolerable situation that impelled them to secede. The real bases for their grievances were documented in the first Report of the Comptroller of the State, whose official figures were examined by Governor John McDougal in his annual message to the California Legislature at the close of the year 1851: the Southern agricultural counties, with a population of 79,778, had paid into the Treasury \$246,247.71 during the last fiscal year, while the Northern mining counties, with a population of 119,917, paid only \$21,253.66.

The Southern California movement for division of the State had gathered strength in the summer, 1851. When the leaders of the movement held a Southern Convention at Santa Barbara in October, some sympathetic journalists considered it a plan likely to succeed, but during three days of sessions, sharp diversity of opinion prevailed as to the demar-

²"Slavery in California," *Ibid.*, 7/22/1851, p.7 c.3

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cation of the boundary between the State and the proposed territory. After an animated debate, the president and several delegates from San Diego left the room and withdrew from the Convention. When the fragmented assembly adjourned *sine die* on October 23, it had quite failed in accomplishing the objects for which it had been called. The *Alta* observed that "the Southern people themselves are at open war as to the object they wish to secure, or the means they ought to take to secure it."³

Indeed, some Southern Californians resorted to open war to secure what they wanted. Hostilities began in November, when the sheriff of San Diego seized the property of a Cahuilla Indians' rancheria for taxes. The Indians promptly killed four Americans at Aguas Calientes, and Indian chief Antonio Garra attacked the ranch of Senator John H. Warner (called *Juan Largo* by the Spaniards), killing one of his servants, destroying his property, and driving off his stock. Later captured, Garra was court-martialled, convicted, and shot. In his confession he named prominent persons of San Diego as the instigators of the revolt, and an *Alta* correspondent reported from Los Angeles on November 30:

It cannot be disguised that there is an Indian war against Americans, solely. Almost the whole California population is disaffected with our institutions — or, you may change the word, and say our tax system . . . The smothered fire is breaking out in a general Indian war, excited, as Indians themselves say, by California emissaries.⁴

The rebellion ended with a battle on December 21, in which U. S. forces routed the Cahuillas, leaving eight of their number dead on the field, with the rest fleeing to the mountains, hotly but vainly pursued by the troops. The *Los Angeles Star* summed up the war as follows:

³"The Southern Convention." *Daily Alta California*, 10/28/1851, p.2 c.1.

⁴"Later from the South -- The Indian War." *Ibid.*, 12/12/1851, p.2 c.2.

The facts which are daily brought to light, clearly establish that we have escaped most imminent peril. The plan was deep laid, to unite the Indians from the Colorado to the Merced, to a simultaneous attack upon the three lower counties of this State, and had the Union been consummated, we doubt if any American resident would have been spared to tell of its consequences. As it is, twelve of our countrymen have been slaughtered.⁵

With the Indian insurrection crushed, Californian authorities directed their attention to legislative means for alleviating the onerous tax burden on the southern counties. Influential politicians argued that the State Constitution should be revised in order to accomplish this, and a bill for a Constitutional Convention was introduced in the House of Assembly on February 3, 1852. The *Alta* and others promptly pointed out that the real purpose for revising the State Constitution was to allow the introduction of slavery in Southern California. Numerous editorials hammered on the theme, laying bare and denouncing the behind the scenes maneuvers of Southern agents in the Pacific. Under "Slavery Propagandists," the *Alta* explained:

There is a body of men in this State who are imbued with the opinion that negro slavery is a blessing to mankind, and that it ought to be transplanted to these shores. . .

They began their system of attack before the State was admitted, by holding meetings in the southern part of the State protesting against including the South in the present State boundaries, and asking Congress to set them off as a territory.

Failing in this, . . . [they tried to] persuade the South to seek a separation. This course has been so successfully practiced that the people of the southern portion of the State have been led to

⁵"Los Angeles Items," *Ibid.*, 1/6/1852, p.2 c.3.

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believe that they would truly promote their own interests by demanding a division, whilst the men who have been most active in disseminating such sentiments have all along cherished the idea that they could surely procure the establishment of slavery among them by an adroit and careful management of this plan for a separation. . . .

Emboldened by their success in cajoling the South into supporting their scheme, under the ostensible purpose of a relief from taxation, . . . they point with pride to the recent passage by the Assembly of Mr. CRABB'S fugitive slave bill . . . The bill is ostensibly a law for the recovery of fugitive slaves, when in fact, its fourth section tolerates slavery in this State, in open defiance of the Constitution . . .

The great reliance of the [slavery] propagandists is upon the Constitutional Convention. . . . The South are to be hoodwinked into supporting it, under the vain belief that they will procure a territorial government and an amelioration of taxation. . . .⁶

The principal promoters in the House of Assembly for the Constitutional Convention bill, were two close friends of William Walker: A. Parker Crittenden, Democrat from Santa Clara county, and Henry A. Crabb, Whig from San Joaquin. Walker's statements in *The War in Nicaragua*, clearly place him in the Crittenden-Crabb camp of "Slavery Propagandists" denounced above:

Crabb and Walker had known each other from childhood, and their views were similar in regard to the state of Central America, and the means necessary for its regeneration. . . .

Those who have studied the legislation of California — not the evanescent laws born of party passion or impure interest, but those which mould

⁶"Slavery Propagandists," *Ibid.*, 2/20/1852, p.2 c.1.



HENRY ALEXANDER CRABB

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society, and form its habits -- can best appreciate the capacity, and the patient labor of Parker Crittenden.

Crabb had solid pro-slavery credentials. He was the San Joaquin delegate to the Santa Barbara convention in October, 1851. At the House of Assembly, in January, 1852, he was the author of a bill for the restoration of slaves to their masters and other pro-slavery measures. When free negroes presented a petition to the Assembly, asking to be allowed as witnesses to give testimony in court against white citizens, an exciting debate ensued, during which "Mr. Crabb stated that it was never supposed such an infamous petition would be presented to a legislative body."⁸ His resolution, "that this House having heard the petition read, decline to receive or entertain any petition upon such subjects, from such source," was promptly adopted by a 47 to 1 vote.

Crabb headed the Select Committee to which the Constitutional Convention bill was referred, and he drafted the majority report in favor of the convention. The bill was approved by the Assembly in March, but on April 20, 1852 it was defeated in the Senate by a narrow 11 to 9 margin. The *Alta's* constant denunciation of the slavery schemers probably tipped the balance. A few days later, the *Alta* reported several secret meetings held by Assembly members "who are brim-ful of Southern sentiments" -- led by Crittenden, Crabb, and others.

When the Legislature adjourned in the Spring of 1852, the Southern schemers once more jostled for positions in the political arena of California. At the Whig State Convention in June, Crabb made an unsuccessful bid for Congress. At the Democratic Convention in July, Crittenden failed in his quest for Supreme Court justice. All the while, Walker and Randolph maneuvered behind the scenes, both of them invisi-

⁷William Walker, *The War in Nicaragua*, pp. 27, 150.

⁸Legislative Proceedings, *San Francisco Herald*, 3/23/1852, p.2 c.4.

ble slavery enthusiasts camouflaged in the anti-slavery Broderick faction of the Democratic party, and attempting to influence the selection of key political offices for persons sympathetic to their cause. In the November canvass. Crabb was elected Senator from San Joaquin to the fourth California Legislature to convene at Vallejo. The stage was set for renewed efforts in 1853 to extend slavery to the Pacific coast, as denounced by the Stockton Journal shortly afterwards:

THE PLOT THICKENS — DEVELOPMENTS. — We have recently obtained a clue to guide us in unraveling the mysterious organization with which the State was infected at the last election, and through which the present Legislature has been stocked with men who seem bent on disrupting her territory. Our information comes from a reliable source, and we appeal to the frequenters of the Blue Wing (a drinking saloon of this city, much frequented by politicians) to deny it if they can.

The story runs thus. An attentive observer of the times will remember that an effort was made during the last Legislature to dismember California, but it failed to meet the approbation of a majority of the members, and was voted down. Our informant says that after the question was decided, those Southern members who had introduced and supported it, entered into a secret understanding that, in the ensuing fall elections (last November) representatives should be voted for only with reference to their sectional predilections or the States from which they came.

For instance: if two candidates were up for senator, one from the North and the other from the South, ability or honesty was not to be made a question but the Southern aspirant was to be voted for and supported through "thick and thin" by the associates in this sacred league. And this, we are told,

is what defeated our candidate, Mr. Staples — he was not sound on the "Velvet Head Question."⁹

Governor John Bigler initiated the action in his annual message to the Legislature at Vallejo, January 3, 1853. According to the official figures presented by the governor, the State debt already surpassed the two million dollar mark, and "under existing arrangements, will continue to accumulate to a disastrous extent." Bigler's solution to the problem was to cut expenses, and "with a view to lessen the expenditures of Government I would invite your attention first to several reforms in our State constitution . . ."¹⁰

Senator Crabb took it from there, and on his motion, two days later, a Select Committee was appointed to study all matters having reference to amendments of the State Constitution, division of the State, etc. Naturally, the chairman of the committee was Henry A. Crabb, which instantly prompted the *Alta* to warn once more about the slavery schemers.

Crabb's select committee was unable to achieve a consensus, for on January 26 it presented three separate reports to the Senate. The one signed by Crabb was accompanied by a bill providing for the call of a convention; it advocated an entire revision of the constitution and recommended the division of the State. In the document, Crabb "absolutely" asserted that the advocates of a convention "are not now, and will not be at any time hereafter, in favor of engrafting any new Constitution with a slavery clause."¹¹

Crabb's assertion was dismissed by his opponents, who pointed out that no slavery clause need to be engrafted in order to introduce the Southern institution into a divided territory. In the words of the *Stockton Journal*, at Crabb's home base in San Joaquin:

⁹"The Slavery Movement in the Present Legislature," *Daily Alta California*, 2/18/1853, p.2 c.1.

¹⁰"Governor's Message," *Ibid.*, 1/6/1853, p.1 c.6.

¹¹"Convention Bill," *San Francisco Herald*, 1/30/1853, p.1 c.1.

The game, as is well known, provides for the creation of one State and two Territories, one of the Territories including San Joaquin and all the counties below us. Now, this appears to be innocent enough, and so it would be but for the events expected to succeed as a natural consequence. An explanation of these cannot be amiss at present.

It will be borne in mind that slaves can be introduced into any territory of the United States below the Missouri Compromise. After we have been declared a Territory, what is to prevent the immediate importation of thousands of negroes, before any new organization can be perfected?

But, says an advocate of the Convention, we will not introduce slavery. Granted; but it will introduce itself. There is no country in the world where slaves could be so profitably engaged as in California, and there are thousands of men waiting anxiously in Alabama and other Southern States for an opening by which they can introduce their negroes into this State.

The telegraphic despatch that announces the calling of a Convention, will send scores and hundreds here to participate in the election; and when the Territory is declared, we shall see a coterminous line of "velvet heads" reaching from South Carolina to California. It would not only be a profitable speculation to the slave dealer, but it would also be a source of pleasure to certain propagandists in the South, who look upon it as their appointed mission to uphold and spread that "peculiar institution."¹²

Almost simultaneous with his Select Committee Report, Crabb drew up a "Secret Circular" to which many of the Whig members of the Legislature affixed their signatures, pledging to support the Convention Bill. The document acknowl-

¹²"The Slavery Movement in the Present Legislature."

edged that the Whigs were in the minority, and that to gain power they must combine their whole strength with a section or even a majority of the Democrats in the espousal of a measure for a State Convention, to revise the Constitution and divide the State. Crabb's "Secret Circular" was leaked to the press, and his Convention Bill was lost in the Senate in April when many Democrats withdrew their support, alarmed at what they believed to be a Whig scheme for the destruction of the Democratic party.

Again foiled in their designs for the introduction of slavery through the device of a Constitutional Convention and a division of the State, slavery propagandists had to resort to other means. Thenceforth, they carried out a plan for the conquest of Sonora, with a view of securing a foothold for the peculiar institution and then spread it to Southern California. The idea was not new, and very likely Morehead had that purpose in mind in 1851. John Nugent of the *Herald* was then extolling the valley of the Gila in Sonora "as well adapted to the growth of cotton as any portion of the Southern States . . . in this Gila country, within easy distance of San Diego and San Francisco, a cotton growing population will spring up . . ."13

But the French then rushed into Sonora, and all would-be American colonists were effectively barred from settling that piece of Mexican soil. Throughout 1852, slavery schemers were forced to restrict their activities to the political maneuvers for the division of California. Conditions differed in 1853, when the withdrawal of the French and other events combined to encourage American attempts to conquer Sonora by Manifest-Destiny filibusters under the helm of William Walker and fellow slavery master planners.

¹³"Cultivation of Cotton." *San Francisco Herald*, 11/22/1851, p.2 c.1.