

## Part Six: DISOWNED

A prudent ruler cannot, and should not, honour his word when it places him at a disadvantage and when the reasons for which he made his promise no longer exist. . . . a prince will never lack good excuses to colour his bad faith. . . . men are so simple, and so much creatures of circumstance, that the deceiver will always find someone ready to be deceived.

Niccolò Machiavelli. *Il Principe*.

## 21. The Gadsden Connection

1853 was the year of the Gadsden Purchase, a milestone marking the end of an era in U.S.-Mexican relations. The "Gadsden territory" was the final piece of real estate carved by Manifest Destiny from Mexico. And the historical record of the Purchase adds important elements to the "Southern Connection" of Walker's raid into Lower California, aimed at Sonora.

A boundary dispute preceded the Purchase. It arose from an error in the Trist Treaty map which marked the southern border of New Mexico along parallel  $32^{\circ} 22'$ , eight miles above El Paso, when the parallel is in fact thirty miles farther north. Boundary commissioners John R. Bartlett and Pedro García Conde placed the international border along the parallel in its right place, thirty-eight miles north of El Paso. The Fillmore administration approved the commissioners' decision, but the U.S. Congress didn't, insisting in 1852 that the border should be eight miles above El Paso, with no regard to parallel of latitude.

At stake was the Mesilla Valley, five thousand square miles of mostly arid and unproductive territory. It was believed at the time that the land was absolutely necessary for the construction of a railway from the Rio Grande to California. Upon President Pierce's inauguration on March 4, 1853, one of his first acts was to dismiss Commissioner Bartlett and repudiate his boundary line. And on March 13, William Carr Lane, Governor of New Mexico, issued a proclamation declaring that he would take immediate possession of the disputed territory in behalf of the United States.

General Angel Trías, Governor of Chihuahua, answered with a proclamation of his own on April 6, and advanced to El Paso with 700 troops, many of them Indians armed with bows and arrows. War was averted when Colonel E. V. Sumner, of the New Mexico Military Department, refused to comply with Governor Lane's request for his federal troops to invade the

Mesilla Valley. The Pierce administration then recalled Lane and Sumner, and appointed David Meriwether governor of New Mexico and General John Garland its military commander. Both proceeded together to their new posts in July.

Secretary of War Jefferson Davis was then setting in motion a plan to acquire a larger portion of Mexican territory for the South. Ever since the debates in the Senate towards the end of the Mexican war, the future president of the Confederacy had been in favor of making the range of the Sierra Madre the line of the international boundary in the center -- and extending it east and west so that the United States would encompass, in whole or in part, the Mexican departments of Tamaulipas, Nuevo Leon, Coahuila, Chihuahua, Sonora, and Baja California. In 1853, from his post at the War Office Davis endeavored to make this a reality.

In May, Davis was responsible for the selection of General James Gadsden as minister to Mexico. He informed Gadsden of his appointment, gave him the instructions for the negotiation of the treaty, and corresponded with him while in Mexico. As professor J. Fred Rippey pointed out in *The Negotiation of the Gadsden Treaty*, "the ideas expressed by the minister [Gadsden] with reference to a natural boundary lead one to suspect that Davis is speaking through him."<sup>1</sup>

Gen. James Gadsden, of South Carolina, "a 'fire-eater,' a Southern ultra,"<sup>2</sup> was well-qualified for the job. In 1850 he had been one of the leaders of the secession movement in South Carolina:

Slavery, he thought, was a social blessing, and the abolitionism of the North he considered the greatest curse of the nation. Consequently, he favored the extension of slavery. In 1851, he was a leader of a group of southern planters who memorialized the Assembly of California, for permission to

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<sup>1</sup>J. Fred Rippey, "The Negotiation of the Gadsden Treaty," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, XXVII (July, 1923) p. 6.

<sup>2</sup>"Our Second Boundary Dispute with Mexico -- Warlike Tone of the Washington Organ," *New York Herald*, 6/7/1853, p.4 c.2.

form a colony in the southern part of that state. To a friend he declared that these planters would lead from five hundred to eight hundred slaves to California.<sup>3</sup>

Besides his sterling pro-slavery credentials, Gadsden had been President of the South Carolina Railroad from 1840 to 1850, and had used his position to further a plan of a southern railroad to the Pacific Ocean. By means of the press, by correspondence, and through conventions, he kept his plan before the public. He decided the route along the Gila River was the shortest and most practicable for the southern railroad. He was still the champion of the southern route in 1853, when on May 24 he was appointed minister to Mexico.

When Gadsden arrived at Veracruz on August 4, 1853, the U.S.-Mexican political chess board was very similar to when Slidell had arrived at Veracruz, in November 1845. In particular, the California slavery propagandists led by Gwin, Crabb, and Walker were seeking to play a role patterned after the Bear Flag Republic of the previous decade. Jacques A. Morenhout, French consul at Monterey, California during both periods, called attention to this similarity in his November 15, 1853 dispatch to the Foreign Ministry at Paris:

. . . General [José] Castro, Californian, the same person who commanded the Mexican troops in this country in 1846, and who is at this time in Monterey, has since told me in confidence that two Americans, one of whom was said to have been a general and the other a colonel, came to see him at the beginning of last September for the purpose of proposing to him to put himself at the head of an expedition of two thousand men who were to invade Sonora: one thousand of whom were to leave from California, and one thousand from Texas and New Mexico.

. . . They wanted to use the name of General

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<sup>3</sup>Paul Neff Garber. *The Gadsden Treaty*. (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1959), p. 80.

Castro in order to make an appeal to the inhabitants of Sonora. . . . General Castro refused.

. . . That this is in part the plan of those who wish to invade this Mexican province, cannot be doubted. But they found great obstacles in the execution. Their expedition from this country is far from being as formidable as they had announced. Instead of one thousand men who were to leave from California, I do not believe that they were able to assemble more than two hundred.

. . . I say, Monsieur le Ministre, that the government of the United States . . . protects today the enterprises of the adventurers mentioned above in the same manner and for the same reason, that at the end of 1845 and at the beginning of 1846, it protected the horde that penetrated by force of arms into Upper California and proclaimed an independent *Pavillon*, and which, commanded by officers of the United States Army, MM. Frémont and Gillespie [Gillespie], were moreover openly assisted and protected by a *corvette de guerre* at anchor in the Bay of San Francisco.<sup>4</sup>

After Gadsden presented his credentials to President Santa Anna on August 17, the official correspondence from the Mexican Minister of Foreign Affairs fittingly opened, on the 20th, recounting Walker's visit to Guaymas and the reports of his forthcoming invasion of Sonora. Gadsden replied on the 22nd, that:

The undersigned has forwarded the Substance of His Excellency's communication to the Federal Authorities in California and has every confidence : that on receipt of the same : they will resort to all Legal and Effectual means to arrest any combinations, or movements of a hostile character by lawless

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<sup>4</sup>A. P. Nassatir, "The Second Incumbency of Jacques A. Morenhout," *California Historical Society Quarterly* XXVII (1948), p. 146.

Individuals from that State of the Union.<sup>5</sup>

What Gadsden actually wrote to the Federal Authorities in California -- to his fellow slavery propagandists who backed Walker's invasion of Sonora, was that "they had been informed against and were watched."<sup>6</sup> And on August 26, Gadsden wrote a letter to "Any Captain or Commander of the U.S. Navy --cruizing in the Pacific,"<sup>7</sup> asking for a warship to proceed without delay to Acapulco to protect American citizens supposedly outraged and aggrieved by the authorities. Significantly, in the letter he didn't mention Walker, the filibusters, or Sonora.

At that moment, the U.S. Frigate *St. Lawrence*, flagship of the Pacific Squadron, and the sloop-of-war *Portsmouth*, were at anchor in San Francisco Bay. But when Walker prepared his expedition on the *Arrow*, in connivance with Senator Gwin and his custom-house party in town, the *Portsmouth* sailed for Honolulu on September 15, and the *St. Lawrence* left for Acapulco on the 20th, on its way to Panama, Peru, and Chile, expeditiously leaving the California sea-lanes wide open for Walker's descent upon Mexico.

On September 5th Gadsden wrote to Secretary of State Marcy asking for ten million dollars which he said he urgently needed for a down payment to purchase the five northern states from Mexico. Upon receipt of Gadsden's request in Washington, a Special Messenger was promptly sent on October 22nd to Mexico City with detailed instructions for the purchase of Mexican territory. President Pierce therein authorized Gadsden to pay up to fifty million dollars for 125,000 square miles of land which would include Baja California and parts of Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon, Tamaulipas, and Durango. Should Santa Anna refuse this offer, Gadsden was directed to pay lesser amounts for

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<sup>5</sup>William R. Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States IX*. (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1937), p. 603.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 666.

<sup>7</sup>Letters Received by the Secretary of the Navy from Commanding Officers of Squadrons. Washington: National Archives Microfilm Publication M-89, Roll 36, Item 25.

specified smaller portions of territory, down to a minimum area of 18,000 square miles (which included the Mesilla Valley) for the railroad route to California.

Having thus secured President Pierce's approval, the whole picture looked bright for Secretary of War Jefferson Davis's scheme to add three or four slave states to the Union. Santa Anna was in dire need of money and fifty million dollars were believed sufficient to convince him to part with half of his country. Walker's descent upon Sonora at that very moment would additionally show Santa Anna that Mexico would lose the territory anyway, as it had previously lost Texas, New Mexico, and California. Moreover, during the summer Davis had reinforced U.S. Army troops along the border, and in October General Garland was preparing to move down into Chihuahua "at short notice . . . ready to attack, or repel, whichever may become necessary."<sup>8</sup> Memories of San Jacinto, Buena Vista, and Cerro Gordo would vividly remind Santa Anna what happened when he confronted Manifest Destiny.

But precisely because of those memories, Santa Anna had sternly ordered General Trias to withdraw from the border region, warning him that "under no circumstances was he to make any hostile demonstrations against the troops of the United States . . . that in the situation of the republic any indiscretion which would commit it to a war for which it was not prepared would be a crime."<sup>9</sup> General Garland was thus deprived of an opportunity to emulate General Taylor's deeds on Mexican soil, and receive, "as did his illustrious predecessor, the nation's highest acknowledgement of his worth."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>J. Fred Rippy, "The Negotiation of the Gadsden Treaty," p. 25.

<sup>9</sup>J. Fred Rippy, "A Ray of Light on the Gadsden Treaty," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* XXIV (July 1920 - April 1921), p. 237.

<sup>10</sup>The *San Francisco Herald's* Washington correspondent recorded the prevailing feeling on June 3, 1853, when Gen. Garland was sent to New Mexico: "It will be remembered that President Tyler, towards the close of his term, sent for Zachary Taylor, and directed the movement of the troops upon Corpus Christi, which led to the first Mexican war. Taylor dined with the President next day, and was congratulated at the table upon his command, for it was jocularly remarked that it might lead to

Meanwhile, the Walker expedition against Sonora had been stopped cold by General Hitchcock's unexpected seizure of the *Arrow* on September 30. When the Special Messenger from Washington arrived at Mexico City in mid November, Gadsden already knew of the seizure and was aware that Walker had been forced to sail from San Francisco on the *Caroline*, "precipitately with but a portion of her pretended Passengers, and with insufficient preparation [Sic.] for the success of the expedition."<sup>11</sup> Still, Gadsden tried to convince Santa Anna that the filibusters would eventually prevail, and that he should sell the extensive northern regions that Mexico was bound to lose anyway. As late as November 29, he was advancing that argument to the Mexican Foreign Minister:

. . . Recent transactions against which His Excellency, in anticipation, so justly and so frequently remonstrated, and which the Government of the United States with all its solicitude and with all the vigilance of its Public authorities, has not been able effectually to arrest; and the issue of which as instigated alike by Citizens of the United States in cooperation with individuals of all Nations, embarking from California, and thus erroneously registered as the Citizens of a neighboring Government no one can foreshadow — They may at this time be in possession of one or more of the disaffected States of this Republic or may have been but temporarily discomfited, though not subdued . . .

. . . those hazardous adventures, on Individual responsibility, are in accordance with the spirit of the age . . . That spirit however erratic; and impa-

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a collision with the Mexicans, and thus ultimately to his elevation to the Presidency of the United States. Gen. Garland is now placed in the same line of safe precedent. He will fight in Mesilla valley, our armies will be called out to repel 'Invasion of American territory,' and Gen. Garland may lead home a victorious army, to receive, as did his illustrious predecessor, the nation's highest acknowledgment of his worth." "Our Washington Correspondence," *San Francisco Herald*, 7/9/1853, p.1 c.1.

<sup>11</sup> Gadsden to Bonilla (November 18, 1853), Manning, *Op. Cit.*, p. 665.



tient, only precipitates coming events: (the bow in the East) which are not to be overawed or subdued by an impolitic and ineffectual resistance, from which it only derives additional encouragement: but from a more advised policy which conciliates, and legitimates — The Government of the United States, in a wise forecast will ever prefer, at any cost, the legal and pacific appliances, anticipating inevitable results: to the having of these forced on her by the irregular and unlawful proceedings of ardent and impatient individuals.<sup>12</sup>

Gadsden's wretched but revealing prose fell on deaf ears in Mexico. His argument sounded especially ludicrous to the Mexicans after General Hitchcock had reduced the grandiose filibustering scheme. ("the bow in the East"), to a handful of marauders cooped inside an adobe house at Ensenada.

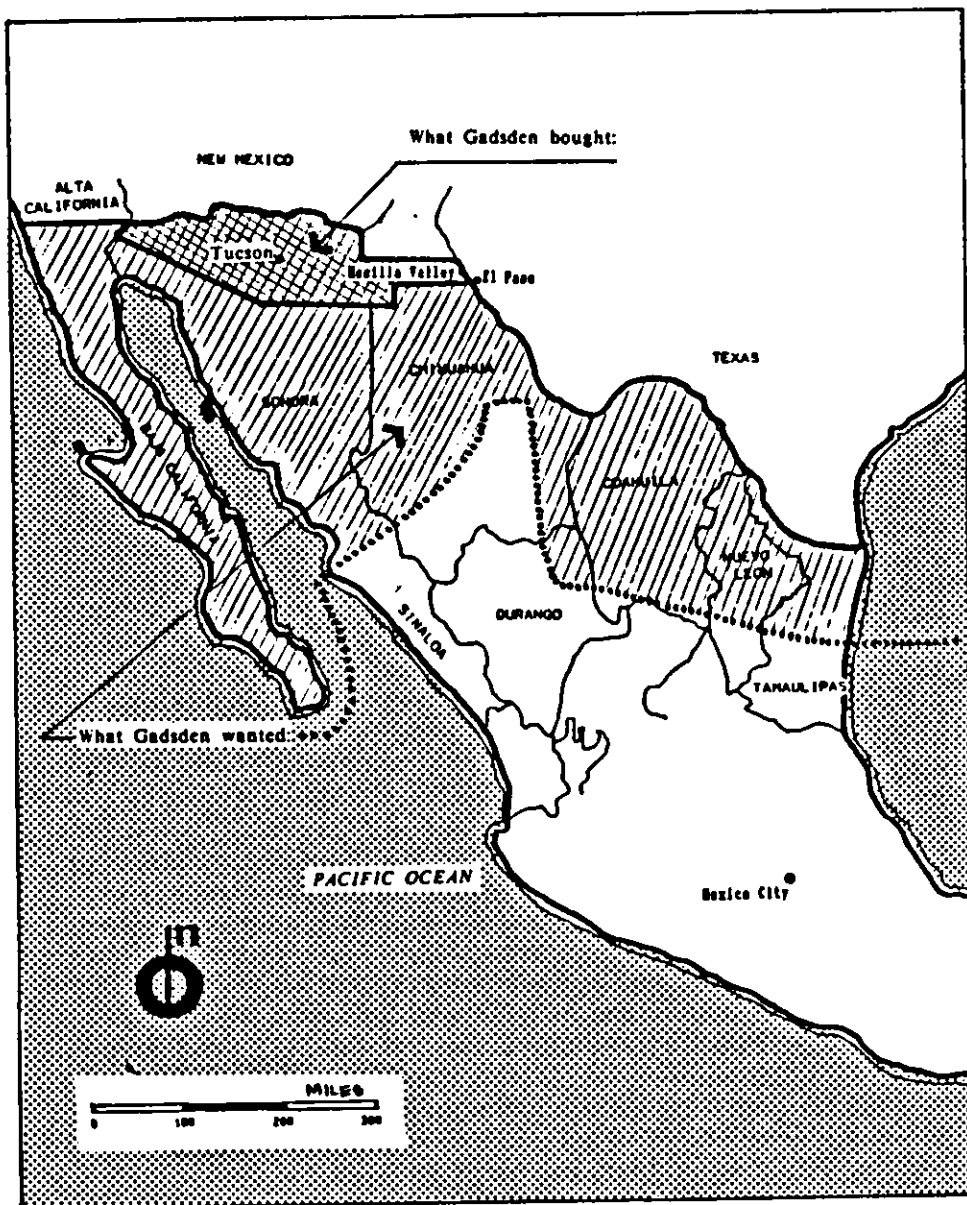
According to Santa Anna, in his first conference Gadsden had shown him a map upon which appeared a new boundary line retaining for the United States, Baja California, Sonora, Sinaloa, and part of Durango and Chihuahua. Santa Anna refused to look at it, saying, "this is not the matter which ought to occupy our attention."<sup>13</sup> Gadsden withdrew the map and courteously offered not to present it again. Thereafter, he had to limit his proposals to the territory needed for the Southern railroad route to the Pacific. As told by Santa Anna:

The Minister, Mr. Gadsden, in several conferences, said in substance: that the land comprehended within the boundary marked by their engineers was absolutely necessary to the United States for the construction of a railway to Alta California which would assure them an easy and rapid communication with this state, and, therefore, he would be pleased if Mexico would cede peaceably and for a good indem-

<sup>12</sup>Gadsden to Bonilla (November 29, 1853). *Ibid.*, p. 670.

<sup>13</sup>J. Fred Rippy, "A Ray of Light on the Gadsden Treaty," p. 241.

# THE GADSDEN PURCHASE



nity that which possibly did belong to her: for in the end that imperious necessity would compel them to occupy it in one way or another.

. . . In order to proceed with better knowledge and more accuracy in the business which occupied us, a report was requested from the engineer of the republic who knew the region from experience, which being presented was substantially as follows: "with the exception of the not very extensive valley of Mesilla, the rest [of the territory in question] was rocky mountains inhabited by Apaches, who, according to their custom, made war continually upon the adjacent departments.

After examining and considering everything in the junta of ministers, the principle was adopted that, of the evils, it was prudent and rational to prefer the least. Accordingly, the propositions of Mr. Gadsden relative to the territory in question were accepted with the remuneration of twenty million dollars which the government of the United States was to give to that of Mexico.<sup>14</sup>

Santa Anna accepted the propositions of Mr. Gadsden on November 30. final arrangements were worked out during several conferences with commissioners in the succeeding weeks. and the treaty was signed on December 30, 1853. Gadsden left Mexico City early next morning, landed in New Orleans on January 12, and two days later the government at Washington received his despatches, confirming the telegraphic reports that the treaty had been signed. On January 18th, President Pierce issued an "Important Proclamation" to the world:

#### BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES — A PROCLAMATION

Whereas information has been received by me, that an unlawful expedition has been fitted out in the State of California with a view to invade Mexico

<sup>14</sup>ibid.

. . . I, Franklin Pierce, President of the United States, have issued this my proclamation, warning all persons who shall connect themselves with any such enterprise or expedition, that the penalties of the law against such criminal conduct will be rigidly enforced; and I exhort all good citizens . . . to discountenance, and by all lawful means prevent, such criminal enterprises; and I call upon the officers of this government, civil and military, to use any efforts which may be in their power, to arrest for trial and punishment every such offender . . .<sup>15</sup>

The timing of the proclamation irrevocably sealed the administration's complicity with Walker's "criminal enterprise." As early as May 17, 1853, the Mexican Minister of Foreign Affairs informed the American government that a filibustering expedition against Sonora was being organized in San Francisco. Washington did nothing to stop it. Many subsequent communications kept Pierce's cabinet informed of developments, to no avail.

Walker's trip to Guaymas was denounced by the Mexican Foreign Minister on August 20, 1853. The departure of the filibusters from San Francisco on the *Caroline* was known in Washington on November 29, and the landing of Walker at La Paz was known in Washington on December 4 -- but none of those events evoked a proper response from President Pierce or his cabinet.

Juan N. Almonte, Mexican Minister to the United States, in a note to Secretary of State William L. Marcy dated at Washington on December 21, 1853, denounced the "scandalous proceedings which are at present taking place in the peninsula of Lower California."<sup>16</sup> He didn't receive an answer from the State Department. Almonte wrote to Marcy again, on January 3, 1854, opening with these words:

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<sup>15</sup>"Important Proclamation," *Alta*, 2/16/1854, p.2 c.4.

<sup>16</sup>Manning, *Op. Cit.*, p. 685.

The Undersigned, Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Mexico has the honor to remind the Honorable Secretary of State of the United States of America, that up to this date he has received no reply to his note of the 21st of last month, in which he asked the Secretary of State to be pleased to inform him whether the Government of the United States had adopted any measures for the pursuit and apprehension of the filibusters who sailed from the port of San Francisco for the purpose of invading Lower California . . .<sup>17</sup>

Yet, the President of the United States kept silent; the civil and military officers in California allowed the *Anita* to sail unhindered, making no effort to arrest or punish any filibusters; and the U.S. Navy took no steps to interfere with their departure, much less to pursue and capture the delinquents.

All that changed suddenly when the news was received in Washington that General Gadsden had arrived in New Orleans with his treaty. President Pierce's proclamation immediately afterwards adds another concrete link to the Gadsden connection of the Walker expedition. The facts of the matter indicate that Walker was allowed to proceed freely as a useful tool to coerce Mexico into signing the sale of territory. As soon as the treaty was signed, Walker was promptly discarded.

Attentive observers at the time called attention to the American government's connivance in the Walker venture. For instance, in its February 22, 1854 editorial, the *New York Herald* noted:

We should not be surprised if similar causes to those which effected the independence and the annexation of Texas were at the bottom of this liberating enterprise of Colonel Walker. The New York Custom House furnished the sinews of war to General Sam

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<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 695.

Houston; and the San Francisco Custom House and government officials have most probably furnished the needful supplies to Colonel Walker . . .<sup>18</sup>

Senator Gwin, who was in a position to know, on January 19, 1854, in the Senate, placed the blame for the Walker expedition on the Pierce administration:

Mr. Gwin desired to call the attention of the country to a matter connected with the proclamation. It was that at the time the expedition was got up in California the United States had no force there to prevent its sailing . . . If the President intended to prevent such expeditions he should have a force to prevent their departure. At the time the vessels left San Francisco there were but two ships of war in active service on the whole Pacific coast — one at the Sandwich Islands [Hawaii] . . . and the other one was supposed to be at the Gulf of California; but, it turned out, had been ordered to the coast of Peru . . .<sup>19</sup>

When no longer useful, Walker and his men were disowned by their Southern backers. President Pierce threw the book at them, calling for the rigid enforcement of all the penalties of the law against "such criminal conduct." General Gadsden, in an interview to the *Charleston Courier* on January 21st, called the Walker expedition "insane" and blamed Walker for his own failure to purchase Baja California.<sup>20</sup> Senator Gwin, however, naturally recalled his pleas to General Hitchcock in September, and thinking Walker had been killed by the Mexicans, he appeared to defend the filibusters during the debates in the Senate:

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<sup>18</sup>"The Gadsden Treaty -- The Gadsden Country -- The Walker Filibustering Expedition," *New York Herald*, 2/22/1854, p.4 c.3.

<sup>19</sup>"Interesting Congressional Proceedings," *Ibid.*, 1/20/1854, p.1 c.2.

<sup>20</sup>"The Mexican Treaty," *Ibid.*, 1/25/1854, p.1 c.5.

Mr. Shields, (Dem.) of Ill. said the Senator from California, had justified the poor, pitiful, lawless, vagabond expedition against the peaceable and quiet people of Sonora.

Mr. Gwin — I did not begin to justify it.

Mr. Shields said he was glad to hear the Senator say he did not justify it.

Mr. Shields continued his remarks, condemning the expedition and its object, as something almost beneath contempt.

Mr. Gwin was understood to say that the Senator might spare his contempt for those engaged in the expedition, for they had all met death and were punished for their crime.<sup>21</sup>

Reports of Walker's death were, however, premature; for at that moment he was a castaway at Ensenada. His role in the Gadsden Purchase was over. Gwin and other hidden mentors promptly turned their backs on him, joining in the outcry of universal condemnation of his cause.

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<sup>21</sup>"Debate in the U.S. Senate on the Expedition to Lower California." *San Francisco Herald*, 2/17/1854, p.2 c.3.

## 22. Castaway at Ensenada

General Hitchcock and Major Richard P. Hammond, Collector of the Port at San Francisco, sent confidential messages on September 30, 1853 to Commodore Bladen Dulany on the *St. Lawrence*, advising him of Walker's expedition and requesting his presence, with his vessel, in the waters of the Gulf. Dulany received the requests at Acapulco, together with a third note from another officer, dated October 1st, telling him of the seizure of the *Arrow* and informing him that his presence was no longer necessary in the Gulf. The *St. Lawrence* then left Acapulco on October 31st and arrived at Panama on November 12, on its way to Peru and Chile. -

When the *Caroline* sailed from San Francisco on October 17, nobody wrote to Dulany. Hitchcock was then entangled in lawsuits for his seizure of the *Arrow* in which he had to contend with a hostile U.S. district attorney and unfriendly judges. He had been sued by Walker for \$30,000 damages, was required to answer for contempt of court, and was abused and ridiculed by the press. Finally, U.S. District Attorney Samuel W. Inge dismissed the suits against the *Arrow* and released the vessel without consulting him. Having learned his lesson, Hitchcock wisely abstained from interfering with the *Anita* when it sailed on December 12.

Beginning on that date, the *Alta* published a series of articles exposing the slavery connection of the Walker expedition. The articles recounted the slavery propagandists' efforts to divide the State of California and revealed how the Sonora venture had been planned in Benicia the previous winter. Among other related facts, the writer denounced the open cooperation of the local federal authorities (Senator Gwin's Custom-House party) with the filibusters:

. . . if he [Gen. Hitchcock] knew of their intended departure, he also knew the probability, that in any action he might take against it, he



would be thwarted by the U.S. District Attorney [and] . . . the U.S. Marshal, who, so far as we have seen, has totally neglected his duties. . .

He is one of the many officials appointed by President Pierce who do not represent the majority of the party in this State. It was a great stroke of policy in those who designed a change of our institutions, in getting nearly all of the federal appointments of a character to suit them. In this way they have got the patronage of the General Government to sustain them, and the government officials are of that kind who will not put themselves out to prevent the fulfilment of their plans, however lawless they may be. So far from opposing them, however, has been the course of Mr. Inge, that it seems to us very clear he has wholly neglected his duty; and if the President has any idea of living up to the faith of treaties, he must immediately make a change. How men can be retained in office after allowing such lawless acts to be carried on before their eyes, is more than we can see.<sup>1</sup>

Inge continued safe in his post of district attorney, but a change was immediately made which added another link connecting the Walker expedition to the Gadsden Purchase. General Hitchcock recorded it in his diary:

December 16, 1853. — . . . I have applied for a leave of absence to go to the East, by way of China, India, etc.

February 2, 1854. — . . . General Wool is coming to relieve me here. The order was issued by the Secretary of War (Jefferson Davis) without consultation with General Scott and unknown to him. What will they do with me?

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<sup>1</sup>"It is not among the things possible." *Alta*, 12/16/1853, p.2 c.1. Other articles in the series: "The Fillibustering Expedition to Sonora" (12/12, p.2 c.3); "As long ago as last winter" (12/15, p.2 c.1); and "The Main Purpose of the Fillibustering Expedition" (12/26, p.2 c.2).

February 16, 1854. — . . . My application for permission to return east via China, India, Persia, etc., made last November and approved by the General commanding, was not assented to by the Secretary of War, Col. Jefferson Davis. Why this request was refused I do not know . . . I must put up with the decision, though I see no reason for it.<sup>2</sup>

Although General Hitchcock didn't see the reason, it seems safe to assume that the Secretary of War removed him from his post and refused his request for a leave or absence to visit the Far East because of his seizure of the *Arrow*, which had ruined the Secretary's scheme to add three or four slave states to the Union. The chronology of events supports that assumption: news of the seizure arrived in Washington on November 10; Gadsden's message announcing the failure of the Sonora expedition was received on December 16; and the removal of General Hitchcock from his post was made public on December 17.

From mid December to late January, Walker's agents scoured the mining districts of California in search of reinforcements and material aid, but with little success. Long before then, his pro-slavery financial backers had given up on Walker and deserted him. Major Oliver T. Baird, Quartermaster General of the New Republic, was in charge of recruiting, but lack of pecuniary resources, the *Alta's* revelations of the slavery connection, and the unfavorable news coming out of Ensenada combined to make his labors unproductive. Despite stirring accounts of private meetings and public displays put up by die-hard supporters, Baird could only gather fifty men that he sent on the steamer *Goliath* from San Francisco to San Diego, and then overland to Fort McKibben. The "fighting qualities" of the recruits may be judged from this San Diego correspondence:

Jan. 31st, '54. — The *Goliath*, from San Francisco, arrived last night. By her we have had an

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<sup>2</sup>W. A. Croffut, ed., *Fifty Years in Camp and Field: Diary of Major-General Ethan Allen Hitchcock*, U.S.A., New York and London: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1909, pp 405-408.

accession to our floating population of about fifty — Filibusters. The Purser complains bitterly of their conduct on the passage. The cargo was broached, and many articles in the shape of clothing, liquors and provisions abstracted. A reward of \$500 is offered for any information that will lead to the conviction of the thieves.<sup>3</sup>

Walker's fallen fortunes were clearly told in a letter from Marysville dated February 5, 1854: .

. . . The invasion of Lower California was for a few days upon the tapis; but that is no longer deemed a subject worthy of dissection [sic], and is quietly inurned in the tomb of the Capulets, from whence even the potential decrees of President Walker, though they may set up Republics, create States, and divide and subdivide them as easy as he can call spirits from the vasty deep, cannot reach it. It is, in fact, a foregone conclusion. A thing that was, and is not, and never shall be again: at least until another "second Columbus" or Lafayette shall make his advent, which may God forefend if this same President Walker is to be taken as a fair specimen of all seconds. Save us now and forever from any and all of the brood: if their mission be to devastate and lay waste: to murder, rob, and pillage: to sack, burn and tear down, may their visits be like those of angels to earth.<sup>4</sup>

Reflecting the prevailing sentiment, a joint resolution was introduced in the California Legislature at the end of January. "declaring Col. Walker and his party pirates and desperadoes."<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, news received earlier from Mex-

<sup>3</sup>"Our San Diego Correspondence." *San Francisco Herald*, 2/7/1854. p.1 c.2.

<sup>4</sup>"Letter from Marysville." *Alta*, 2/9/1854. p.1 c.6.

<sup>5</sup>"Assembly." *San Francisco Herald*, 2/1/1854. p.2 c.3.

ico City showed that the Mexican government considered Walker's expedition "rather insignificant and ridiculous," calling his initial decrees relative to the independence of Lower California an act of "sublime madness."<sup>6</sup> Santa Anna's forces which had already left Mazatlán for the Peninsula, were believed quite sufficient to crush the filibusters.

At that point in time, when Walker's filibuster movement was already dead in California, two farcical presidential proclamations were issued in a single day, on January 18: at Ensenada, William Walker decreed himself President of an imaginary Republic of Sonora, and at Washington, Franklin Pierce killed an undertaking that was already a corpse.

The U.S. Navy was appointed executioner of the cadaver. As soon as Gadsden's message announcing the failure of the Sonora expedition arrived in Washington on December 16, Purser Levi D. Slamm, of the U.S. Navy, "a gentleman who from his distinguished talent is high in the confidence of the Government,"<sup>7</sup> was hurriedly sent to California from New York, via Panama. He arrived in San Francisco on January 23, when the *Portsmouth* had just returned from Hawaii to be placed upon the sectional dock for repairs. Slamm brought instructions from the Secretary of the Navy, "directing the procurement of a steamer in the event of a necessity for the employment of a vessel of that description in preventing the interference of citizens of the United States, from California, in the invasion of the territory of the Republic of Mexico."<sup>8</sup> The *Portsmouth* was likewise ordered "to defer the repairs directed to be made," and to proceed in company with the steamer to Lower California.

The same "custom-house party" officers who in October had midwived Walker's expedition to Sonora, now served as undertakers for its burial. They chartered the Pacific Mail Steamship Company's steamer *Columbus* for \$1,500 per diem, allegedly under specific instructions from Senator Gwin. It

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<sup>6</sup>"From Mexico," *Ibid.*, 1/13/1854, p.2 c.3.

<sup>7</sup>"Topics of the Day," *Ibid.*, 1/25/1854, p.2 c.1.

<sup>8</sup>*Letters Received by the Secretary of the Navy from Commanding Officers of Squadrons*, Washington: National Archives Microfilm Publication M-89, Roll 36, Item 35.

cost the U.S. government \$60,000 in 40 days, when it could have been purchased for much less. The steamer, accompanied by the sloop-of-war *Portsmouth*, sailed from San Francisco on February 3, and arrived at Ensenada on the 9th. Captain Thomas A. Dornin, Commander of the *Portsmouth*, chronicled his arrival in a letter to General Hitchcock on the 12th:

. . . I anchored in front of Walker's encampment distant about one mile. For the three last days his men were constantly making signals of a desire to communicate, showing several white flags at a time. These I continued to disregard until to-day, when, thinking it probable they might be desirous to quit the country and give up their lawless undertaking, I was consequently induced to send a boat with a Lieutenant to the beach, to see what it was that they desired.

The officer saw Walker himself, who said the said signals were unauthorized by him, but were the acts of his men. I had instructed Lieut. Spotts to say, if an occasion presented itself, that I would take off the whole party and return them to their own soil. But no opportunity was fairly afforded, and the offer was consequently not made. The interview was very brief . . .

The interview is best described by one of the *Portsmouth* officers who visited Walker's camp on February 12, in a letter the same day to a friend in San Francisco:

. . . I visited to-day the encampment of Col. Walker, at a rancho called Ensenada, on the edge of the bay. I was accompanied by Lieut. [James H. Spotts], or rather I accompanied him — having obtained permission from the commanding officer.

We landed in a heavy surf, the wind blowing hard from the northwest, and the sea high, and proceeded

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<sup>9</sup>"From Captain Dornin to General Hitchcock." *San Francisco Herald*. 4/28/1854. p.1 c.2.

toward the camp. We were met at the outpost by the Adjutant of the forces of Col. Walker, who politely conducted us to the Colonel's quarters. This was the first communication of any of the officers of our ship with the shore.

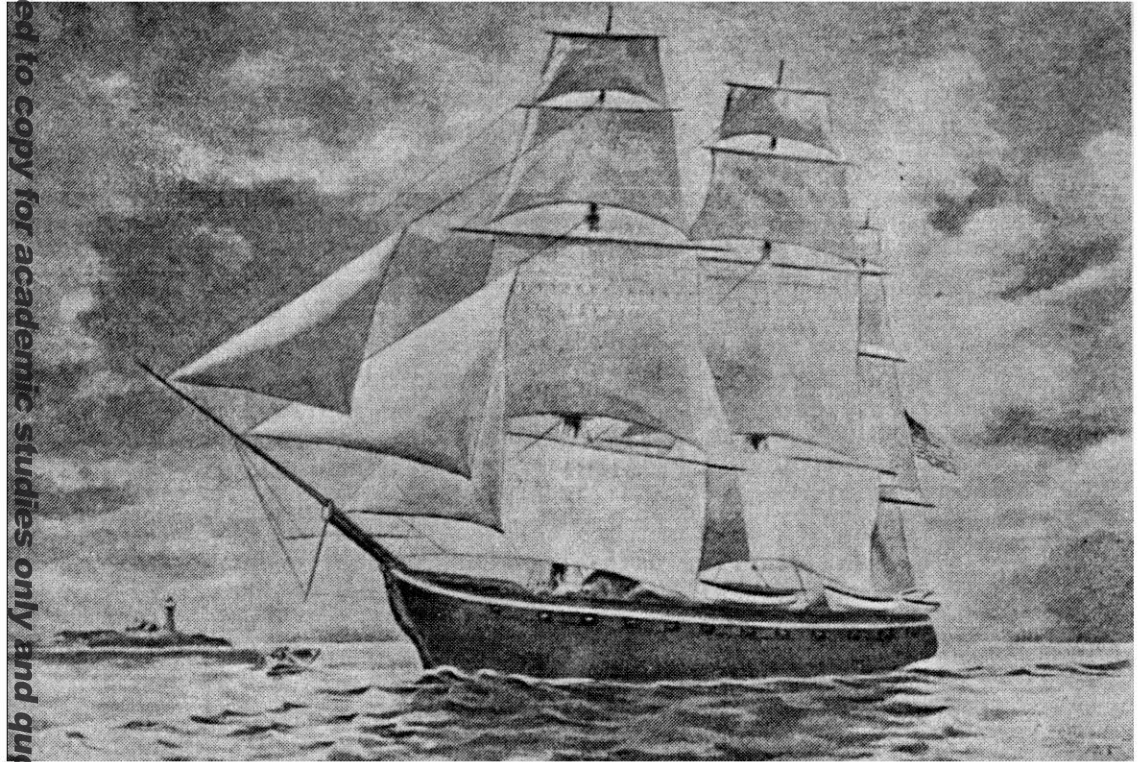
The encampment consists of two or three adobe houses and a few tents. The quarters of the Colonel seemed to be the most modest portion of the premises. It consisted of a shed, jammed against the larger establishment, with the rear and off side of adobe, the roof of tiles, and the front protected from the weather and the gaze of the outsiders by a canvas screen. The floor was that which was created when Lower California obeyed the Divine mandate: "Let the waters under the heavens . . ."

The Adjutant accidentally forgot to introduce us to Col. Walker, and there being two or three persons in his quarters, we were at a loss to distinguish the one from the other. After some general conversation, I suggested to the gentleman I was talking with that he might be Col. Walker, to which he replied in the affirmative, and introducing my friend and he me, we proceeded comfortably upon our interesting talk.

I was rather struck with the appearance and manner of Colonel Walker. He is a small man, not above five feet five inches, nor weighing above one hundred and thirty pounds; but you know that neither height, nor weight, nor age, make the man. He has light hair, sandy complexion, a clear blue eye. He is neither inquisitive, nor communicative, nor discourteous in reply. His uniform consisted of something like the cap worn by navy officers; a drab pea coat, such as those which were formerly worn by the New York firemen; and blue pants, stuck in the legs of his boots after the manner of the Californians.

The interview I had with him, assured me that he was a man of marked character — of will — of education — of cool and deliberate courage — and one





### SLOOP-OF-WAR PORTSMOUTH

ON JULY 9, 1846, HER CREW UNDER COMMAND OF LIEUT. J. S. MISROOM, LANDED AT YERBA BUENA, AS SAN FRANCISCO WAS THEN KNOWN, AND TOOK POSSESSION OF THE TOWN. ON FEBRUARY 9, 1854, UNDER CAPTAIN THOMAS A. DORNIN, SHE BLOCKADED ENSENADA.

who would, with a good cause and probabilities with him, be a formidable leader in a revolutionary movement. . . .

The force that Colonel Walker has had down here has been very much exaggerated. I am satisfied that at no time more than two hundred and six men, and those have been reduced by desertions to about one hundred and sixty. About one hundred of these are now at this camp, and a fine looking set of men they are, and the balance are scattered in small parties in scouting duty. They have plenty of beef and mutton, but as for vegetables and bread it is not reasonable to believe that they can readily be obtained.

There are two small iron field pieces that I saw upon the ground, but I discovered no breastworks or fortification to repel an attack or resist a siege. Should they be attacked by a force from the interior, it must be a fight to the death — for, having no boats, they could not escape by water. . . .

The sea edge of this coast is to the eye the most barren, sterile, uninviting mountainous country you can well conceive. Col. Walker informs me, however, that the valleys in the interior contain much rich land . . .

I have above rapidly given you an idea of the position of Col. Walker. I will not question the well-meaning of that man. Those who know him speak highly of the integrity of his character and the purity of his motives. But the man is beside himself. . . .

My own opinion is, that it is the most unmeaning and Quixotic expedition that has ever been gotten up. . . . It is absurd to entertain the idea that Col. Walker can make a new republic out of Lower California and Sonora. Let our Government alone, and do not embarrass its negotiations by such lawless demonstrations, and there can be no doubt that these Mexican States will be quickly and peaceably obtained. The Government of Col. Walker is a "filius nullius" — it can never be recognized — and can,



therefore, have no inheritance.<sup>10</sup>

It was then obvious to everyone that Walker's venture had no future. Even his friend John Nugent wrote in the *Herald* on February 16 that his Sonora expedition had nearly reached its end. But unfortunately for all concerned, Walker didn't believe it. The fifty recruits sent by Quartermaster Baird had arrived at Ensenada on February 7, and more were expected, besides a steamer that Vice-President Henry P. Watkins was getting in San Francisco, to be employed in the service of his republic. With the U.S. Navy blockading Ensenada, Walker was forced to move on to a new location, to wait for the steamer.

He evacuated Fort McKibben on February 13, leaving behind the sick and wounded and eight men left to attend them. The latter followed after Walker the next day, and the patients were taken aboard the *Columbus* on the 15th, and thence to San Diego and San Francisco. The revolting wretchedness of Walker's "military hospital" at Ensenada was then ascertained. By some strange oversight or neglect, not a single surgical instrument had been provided for Walker's army. The surgeon was in consequence actually compelled to sharpen up the iron handle of a bucket with which to probe wounds, extract bullets, and occasionally pull teeth. Of medicines there were none, except some calomel and rhubarb. When commander Dornin's men landed to pick up the sick and wounded:

They found what Col. Walker called his military hospital, a miserable hovel, with ground floor, damp, cold, without light, save that which came through a single door, and in it Lieut. Col. Charles H. Gilman, laying upon a miserable pallet, in the most abject condition. The wound he had received in one of the fights, not serious at first, had become from want of attention, of medicines, of proper diet, one of the most frightful ever witnessed. It had emaciated him to a perfect skeleton; the wounded

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<sup>10</sup>"News from Lower California," *Ibid.*, 2/19/1854, p.2 c.2.

leg had swollen to a most frightful extent; and the flesh from his ankle and foot was sloughing off from sheer decomposition. He had lain there for eighty-four days, and though his sick couch was not farther than ten feet from the quarters of Col. Walker, Col. Gilman received but three visits from him during the whole period of his sufferings. . . .<sup>11</sup>

Upon arrival at San Francisco, in a very precarious condition, Gilman suffered an amputation at the upper third of the thigh bone and eventually regained his health. In October of the following year he went to Nicaragua, serving once more as one of Walker's most capable and trusted officers, and in December he fell victim of the cholera morbus and died. In *The War in Nicaragua*, Walker called Gilman's death "a severe loss," and explained:

Colonel Charles Gilman, one of the companions of Walker in Lower California . . . was a man of strong mind, with all the sentiments of a soldier, and having a good store of military knowledge. He had lost a leg in Lower California, and the wound from which he suffered long and cruelly before the amputation of the limb, having kept him abed for many months, his intellect seemed to have ripened rapidly during his confinement.<sup>12</sup>

That was an accurate, cold and intellectual reminiscence, totally devoid of compassion, which exhibited the characteristic traits of the narcissistic personalities in command of Walker's Inner Crescent City after the death of Ellen. And Gilman had followed Walker to Nicaragua despite all his sufferings and Walker's lack of compassion in Lower California -- once more showing the remarkable charisma that allowed Walker to secure the allegiance of his men. In the words of

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<sup>11</sup>"Latest from Ensenada." *San Diego Herald*, 2/18/1854, p.2 c.1.

<sup>12</sup>William Walker, *The War in Nicaragua*, (Mobile: S. N. Goetzel & Co., 1860), p. 106.

one of his followers. Walker's charisma was so strong, that "he governed and controlled his men in a way that not only beat down opposition, but drew them to him in unswerving fidelity."<sup>13</sup> Gilman transmits the same message from his silent grave.

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<sup>13</sup>James Carson Jamison. *With Walker in Nicaragua*. (Columbia, Missouri: E. W. Stephens Publishing Company, 1909), p. 20.

## 23. Allegiance to the Usurper

The *Columbus* carried away the sick and wounded and the surgeon -- nine men -- from Ensenada to San Diego. Walker headed south with the rest of his republic -- some mounted, the greater part on foot -- his flag, cattle, sheep, and two small field pieces. Wild Spanish cattle pulled his artillery wagons. He encamped in a valley where he buried several kegs of powder for which there was no means of conveyance. Two days later he marched past La Grulla to Santo Tomás and thence to the old mission of San Vicente, where he arrived on February 20.

Traveling with Walker, "on amicable and confidential terms," was Don Manuel Fernández de Córdova, part owner of the adobe house at Ensenada. Don Manuel served as Walker's private agent, spy, and interpreter. At San Vicente, Walker issued an order for a meeting, which Don Manuel put in Spanish for the natives:

### TO THE INHABITANTS OF SAN VICENTE

With this date I have given orders, transmitted in accordance with my two Ministers, ordering to reunite all the inhabitants of this frontier of Lower California, in the term of five days from this date, and I likewise order and demand you, inhabitants of this place of San Vicente, to congregate in the specified term, with the understanding that should any of you fail to do so, shall be punished very SEVERELY.

WM. WALKER, President of Sonora.  
San Vicente, Feb. 21, 1854.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>"Deposition of A. J. S. Horn," *San Francisco Herald*, 4/28/1854, p.1 c.3: "Vindication of Mr. Cordova," *Ibid.*, 3/18/1854, p.2 c.5.

Don Manuel also took down a letter to Melendrez, who hovered near San Vicente with his men. Walker offered to guarantee Melendrez his life and property, and to appoint him Governor of Lower California, if he should present himself at headquarters with Córdova. Melendrez declined. The "Convention" took place on the 28th, after considerable effort in compelling the attendance of the terrified inhabitants and the issuing of another ominous presidential proclamation:

*The Military and Civil Commandancy of the Republic of Sonora: —*

At three o'clock this afternoon there will be a gun fired, upon which all the citizens of San Vicente will meet in this encampment without any exception or excuse of any kind.

By order of his Excellency, the President.

[Signed] JOSEPH W. SMITH,  
Minister of Interior and Exterior Relations.  
SAN VICENTE, February 28, 1854.<sup>3</sup>

A table was set out on the parade ground enclosed by Walker's soldiers. Two flags of the New Republic were placed in front, crossing each other so as to make a sort of arch. On one side of this stood the President and his Cabinet and Staff, and on the other a member of the "Judiciary" with an interpreter. Don Agustín Horn, a local resident who was a prisoner of Walker at the time, escaped a few days later and chronicled in the California press his eyewitness account of the proceedings:

Let me say something about this so-called convention. This unheard of scheme of rascality was carried into effect at the ex-Mission San Vicente, on

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<sup>2</sup>"To the Inhabitants of San Vicente." Ibid., 3/15/1854, p.2 c.3. A slightly different version (due to re-translation from the Spanish), was published on 4/28/1854 p.1 c.3.

<sup>3</sup>"Walker's Proclamations." Ibid, 4/28/1854, p.1 c.3.

the 28th of February.

Walker, by means of threats, convoked a meeting of the inhabitants on that day. About twenty Indians and sixteen whites, five of whom were landholders, arrived. A square was formed of Walker's men, all armed, and the thirty-six defenceless inhabitants were, as you may say, penned up in a corral, some 120 bayonets serving as walls for the same.

Walker after taking note of the names of the people present, addressed them in a message, or rather order, which concludes, "And I call upon you to swear allegiance to this flag, etc. Thus your President commands you."

Eight Indians were first called up, all of whom took the oath. Allow me, however, to do Walker justice in his conduct towards them: they received a full allowance of beef before and after going through the ceremony of making the sign of the cross and kissing the hand of His Excellency, and passed as loyal subjects: the twenty-eight who were then brought upon the stand refused to comply with Walker's order, and were directed to stand aside, and addressed by His Excellency, as follows:

"Be aware, that I shall treat you as my enemies and as rebels: your lives and property remain at my disposal."

The effect produced of these words was wonderful. The poor people, some fathers of large families, were thus by violence compelled to approach the flag and undergo the necessary formalities, forced to renounce being subjects of a country dear to them, or commit perjury.

On the following day, Walker forced them to sign a representation directed to him and drawn up by himself, by which the proceedings of the so-called convention were ratified . . .<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>"Arrival of the Columbus." Ibid.. 4/10/1854. p.2 c.2.

The Declaration or Representation of the Inhabitants of the State of Lower California, of the Republic of Sonora, to his Excellency the President. San Vicente, March 1st, 1854, extorted from the trembling natives, said in part:

. . . Yesterday, in your camp, we solemnly renounced all allegiance to every other flag or government which was not that of the Republic of Sonora, then represented before us, and voluntarily taking the oath of allegiance to the New Republic, we passed beneath the two banners in token of submission, and here offer to serve you faithfully unto death.

. . . Therefore do we ask of your Excellency the establishment of an authority which shall be recognized by us, and sustained by such armed force as your Excellency may deem proper.

We request of your Excellency that the provisions we have on hand, and may receive in future, be subject to your orders when the requisitions are properly signed by your Commissary, which requisitions will always be cheerfully complied with . . .

The gracious reply of his Excellency the President, came the same day:

COPY OF THE PRESIDENT'S ANSWER

San Vicente, March 1st, 1854.

CITIZENS — I have been gratified at receiving the representation you have just made, and the soldiers of the Republic appreciate the loyalty and devotion you express towards the new Government.

I hope and believe the State of Lower California will prosper and improve under the Republic of Sonora, and prove more fruitful of resource than under the misgovernment of Mexico.

It will give me pleasure to fulfil your desire in regard to the establishment of a local authority and of a constitution under which all your rights will be respected and guaranteed.

With wishes for the individual welfare of each of





### BAJA CALIFORNIA LANDHOLDERS

"WALKER, BY MEANS OF THREATS, CONVOKED A MEETING OF THE INHABITANTS  
... FIVE OF WHOM WERE LANDHOLDERS" (P. 272)



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BAJA CALIFORNIA INDIANS  
(CENTURY-OLD COCOPA COUPLE, FIFTY YEARS AFTER WALKER)

"THE INDIANS FLED TO THE MOUNTAINS, IN TERROR" (P. 280)

you, and for the national prosperity of the Republic,

I am, your President,  
WM. WALKER,  
President of Sonora.<sup>5</sup>

The truth of the matter is that Walker's men had appropriated the horses, cattle, sheep, all the provisions they wanted, at gun point. Consequently, not much was left for the impoverished inhabitants. The greater portion of the male population had fled. Approximately one hundred destitute people had escaped across the border, on foot, and the citizens of San Diego had raised, by subscriptions, funds for their relief. Most of the stock of the country was either already destroyed, or in the hands of the fill-busters. Walker's pretensions and proclamations were not only ridiculous beyond expression, but served no practical purpose. The outside world laughed out loud:

"William Walker, President of Sonora," far eclipses all the great captains who have preceded him, save one, and that one was Governor of the Island of Barataria, and his name was Sancho Panza. It is a pity that these two redoubtable heroes had not lived in the same age, for one to have been pitted against the other. Then there had been sights such as the world has never seen.<sup>6</sup>

Even friend John Nugent of the *San Francisco Herald*, called the whole affair "a sublime farce" and "an incarnation of the ridiculous."<sup>7</sup> But Walker's ridiculous behavior has a psychological explanation. I . . . in accordance with my two Ministers (see p. 270) represented the trio in con-

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<sup>5</sup>"The Declaration of Independence." *Ibid.*, 3/15/1854, p.2 c.3. A slightly different version was published on 4/28/1854, p.1 c.3.

<sup>6</sup>"The news from Sonora." *Daily Alta California*, 3/15/1854, p.2 c.1.

<sup>7</sup>"The Declaration of Independence." *San Francisco Herald*, 3/15/1854, p.2 c.3; "The Walker Expedition." *Ibid.*, 4/10/1854, p.2 c.2.

troi of the Inner Crescent City. The oath of allegiance in order to reunite all the inhabitants of this frontier, like the wish-fulfilment in a dream, attempted to satisfy a deep craving for the union of his shattered personalities into a congruent whole. Any obstacle along the play-acting blocked the fulfilment of a vital psychological need and could unleash a violent reaction from Walker.

That is precisely what happened. Instantly turning the farce into a tragedy. Theodore Ryan, an Irishman who had arrived at Ensenada in the bark *Anita*, was lucky to come out alive from San Vicente to tell the story:

. . . Edward C. Barnes, of Philadelphia, T. F. Nelson and Arthur Morrison, of Ill., Smith an American, and myself, were arraigned on the 28th of Feb., before a self constituted Court Martial upon charges and allegations involving an attempt to desert, to take each a horse from the camp, to blow up the magazine, and to commit murder. This Court consisted of Major Emory, President; Major Crocker, Capt. Cuttrel, Capt. Douglass, Capt. Brewster, Lieut. Griswold, Lieut. Lawrence, and Saml. Roland, Judge-Advocate.

The result of the Court, after a sitting of three days, was that Nelson and Morrison, were sentenced to death, myself and Barnes, one to 50 and the other to 25 lashes, and Smith was acquitted on the ground that he was a good cattle driver. The sentence was executed on the 3d of March, the day I left the camp; Nelson and Morrison were shot, and myself and Barnes whipped.

Upon a previous occasion, a lad about 19 years of age, who is known in camp by the name of "Philadelphia," was tried for desertion and sentenced to death. The sentence was not executed, because the greater part of the command had joined in a petition to Walker for pardon in consequence of his youth.

Walker thereupon called a parade immediately, and while pardoning the boy, swore, "so help him God," he would have shot, or shoot with his own hand,

young or old, should any hereafter attempt to desert him.<sup>8</sup>

Ryan and his confederates couldn't have picked a worse time to desert, for their lack of loyalty and devotion to the Republic patently contradicted the oath of allegiance staged on that day at the old Mission. Consequently, they were bound to receive the severe punishment announced by President Gabriel Gumbo and his two Ministers.

T. F. Nelson and Arthur Morrison were only the forerunners in a lengthening chain of victims executed on direct orders from Walker during his filibustering career. The senseless sacrifice of their lives hardly merited any comment in the press at the time, when illegal killings occurred frequently in California. But the lifeless forms of both men buried deep in Walker's mind etched a complex picture that Timothy Tucker put into words years later, filling a long page of reminiscences in his introduction to *The War in Nicaragua*.

As told by Tucker, the culprits "had formed a conspiracy to desert and to pillage the cattle-farms on their way to Upper California."<sup>9</sup> That is why they were sentenced to

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<sup>8</sup>Statement of Theodore Ryan." Ibid., 3/15/1854, p.2 c.2.

<sup>9</sup>. . . An instance occurred at the old mission of San Vicente, illustrative of the character of the expedition, and of the persons who directed it. Several of the soldiers had formed a conspiracy to desert and to pillage the cattle-farms on their way to Upper California. The plan and purposes of the conspirators were revealed by one of the confederates, and the parties to the plot were tried by court-martial, found guilty of the charge, and sentenced to be shot. A military execution is a good test of military discipline: for no duty is so repulsive to the soldier as that of taking life from the comrade who has shared the perils and privations of his arduous service. On this occasion, too, the duty was more difficult, because the number of Americans was small, and was daily diminishing. But painful as was the duty, the men charged with the execution did not shrink from the performance of it: and the very field where the unfortunate victims of the law expiated their offence with their lives, was suggestive of comparison between the manner in which the expeditionists and the Mexican Government severally performed the duties of protection to society. The expeditionary force, drawn up to vindicate law, by the most serious punishment it metes out to the offender, stood almost in the shadow of the ruins of the church of the mission fathers. The roofless buildings of the old monastery, the crumbling arches of the spacious chapel, the waste fields which showed signs of former culture, and the skulking form of the half-clothed Indian, relapsing into savagism [sic] from which the holy fathers had rescued him. all

death. That explanation, however, -- Walker's conscious rationalization --, fails to satisfy the facts of the case. To pillage cattle-farms was a routine occupation of his men, and desertions were rampant in his army; yet, on other occasions he didn't punish the offense. Why, then, in that particular instance?

Tucker left the clue in the *forfeited allegiance of the Peninsula*, at the end of his narrative in which he told the Inner Crescent City story in the usual symbolic language. *The skulking form of the half-clothed Indian, relapsing into savagism amid the waste fields which showed signs of former culture*, portrayed the Oedipal inmates professing submission to President Gabriel Gumbo and his two ministers, the persons who directed the expedition. The symbolism had already become apparent during the performance at San Vicente, when Walker issued another amazing decree, a fitting finale for the farce.

*His Excellency, the President of Sonora: --*

I have decreed this day the following: Those Indians who may have masters and live in the condition of servants, shall observe good conduct, yielding the most perfect obedience. Any infraction of this shall be punished on the complaint of their masters.

By virtue of my office, I thus sign and direct in San Vicente this day, 1st March, 1854.

[Signed]

WM. WALKER,  
President of Sonora.<sup>10</sup>

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declared the sort of protection Mexico had given to the persons as well as the property of the Peninsula. In the vital functions of government, the expeditionists may safely challenge a comparison of their acts with those of Mexico in Lower California; and the ruin and desolation which followed the unwise no less than unjust measure of secularizing the missions, were sufficient to forfeit the claim of the Mexican Republic to the allegiance of the peninsula" (*italics mine*, A.B.G.). William Walker *The War in Nicaragua*, (Mobile: S. H. Goetzl & Co.), 1860, p. 22.

<sup>10</sup> "Walker's Proclamations," *San Francisco Herald*, 4/28/1854, p.1 c.3.

By their acts, Nelson, Morrison, Ryan, and Barnes had forfeited the claim of President Gumbo to the inmates' allegiance. The offenders were summarily punished. Two were shot and buried, the other two were whipped and drummed out of camp. Many natives fled to San Diego and other places. The Indians fled to the mountains, in terror. Don Manuel F. de Córdova and Secretary of State Frederick Emory left for Upper California, on official business for the New Republic.

Walker's agents had enjoyed complete freedom of action in California. Yet, Vice-President Henry P. Watkins had been unable to get a steamer and reinforcements for Walker. In a final act of desperation, on February 8, he shipped away from San Francisco some sixty German, American, and English "restless and hardened characters" aboard the *Anita*, which he owned. The bark cleared for Guaymas and sailed in full sight of the port authorities, after Watkins had changed her name to *Petríta* and had placed her under the Chilean flag. Captain William Gillam (former master of the *Arrow* and the *Anita*) went along as a "passenger," while command of the ship was nominally given to the mate, J. Springer, in a further attempt to conceal its identity to Mexican authorities.

Unable to communicate with Walker at Ensenada, blockaded by the *Portsmouth* and the *Columbus*, the *Petríta* continued down the coast to the tip of the peninsula. The filibusters held a "secret conference" with a man named Riche, owner of "the white house" at Cape St. Lucas, and then continued on to Guaymas where they arrived on March 4th.<sup>11</sup> They pretended to be peaceful colonists, but alert authorities instantly suspected their true intentions and confined them in jail. Depositions and documents soon convinced the Mexicans that they held a contingent of Walker's filibusters.

Gillam, Springer, and three others were taken under guard aboard the British merchant vessel *Ethelbert*, destined for trial at Mazatlán. Commander N. H. Morshead of the British sloop-of-war *Dido*, at anchor in Guaymas, then sent a detachment of marines to the *Ethelbert* and abducted the filibusters, alleging that they were political prisoners protected

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<sup>11</sup>"Extracto de cargos que resultan contra Guillermo Gillam," *El Nacional* (Alcanje) 5/20/1854, p.4 c.3.



by Her Majesty's merchant vessel flag. Vehement Mexican protests fell on deaf ears. The remainder of the party were removed in irons to Mazatlán on the *Petrita*; they were later released through the good offices of the American consul at that port.- backed by Captain Thomas A. Dornin with the *Portsmouth*.

That ended Vice-President Watkins' efforts to help Walker. Moreover, the situation had changed abruptly in San Francisco since the arrival on February 14 of General John E. Wool with new orders from Washington, and the publication in the *Alta* on the 16th. of President Pierce's proclamation against the filibusters. U.S. District Attorney Samuel W. Inge promptly obeyed the new instructions and instituted legal proceedings against Vice-President Henry P. Watkins, Major Oliver T. Baird, and Captain George R. Davidson, of Walker's Republic.

Watkins was arrested on February 23 and preliminary examinations began on the 27th, with Edmund Randolph appearing as defense attorney. On March 1st, the Grand Jury presented a bill of indictment against the three defendants "for taking part in getting up a hostile expedition in this State to wage war upon Mexico."<sup>12</sup> Dr. David Hoge, the surgeon evacuated from Ensenada, was detained that day. Emory and Córdova were arrested in San Diego on March 8, and sent aboard the *Columbus* to San Francisco for trial. The authorities thus broke the filibuster "ring" in California six months too late, when recruiting for Walker had already died a natural death.

The trial of Watkins began on March 20, before Judge Hoffman of the U.S. District Court. The jury rendered a verdict of guilty on the 24th, and two weeks later the Judge sentenced him to pay a \$1,500 fine. Emory then pleaded guilty and received an identical sentence. The *Alta* applauded and commented: "So far as we know there has been but one expression in our city in regard to the verdict of the jury in the case of Watkins, and that expression is of unqualified approbation. The people feel relieved, they have

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<sup>12</sup>"Law Report," *Daily Alta California*, 3/2/1854, p.2 c.4.

freed themselves from suspicion, they have washed their hands of Filibusterism."<sup>13</sup>

Having washed California's hands of filibusterism, the district attorney entered a *nolle prosequi* in the case of Davidson, alleging that "he had not been able to obtain any testimony that would satisfy a jury, and that he was not aware of any such testimony that could be procured."<sup>14</sup> The Court assented and ordered the discharge of the defendant. Watkins and Emory were kept in the custody of the U.S. Marshal, pending payment of their fines, while all the other prisoners got off scot free. Emory, also, was eventually discharged by the Court in June, upon filing an affidavit "in which he sets forth his inability to pay the fine, or any portion thereof."<sup>15</sup>

By the middle of March, 1854, the demise of the Republic of Sonora at San Vicente was at hand. Most citizens had fled; its coffers were empty; its army, thinned by desertions to 120 men. The Vice President, the Secretary of State, the Quartermaster General, the Army Surgeon, the principal spy, and the chief recruiting agent had all been locked behind bars in San Francisco. Enemy vessels blockaded its port; Mexican expeditionary forces were said to be moving in for the kill, and Antonio Melendrez with his band of "rebels" hovered about the "Republic," patiently waiting for an opportunity to strike.

William Walker, however, was not thinking of surrender or retreat. On the contrary, he was preparing to go on the offensive. In his Inner Crescent City, President Gabriel Gumbo, with the concurrence of his two Ministers --Colonel Dick Dobs and Timothy Tucker, Esq. -- made the necessary plans and issued the pertinent orders for the forthcoming drive to victory, to plant his twin-star banner upon the walls of Guaymas.

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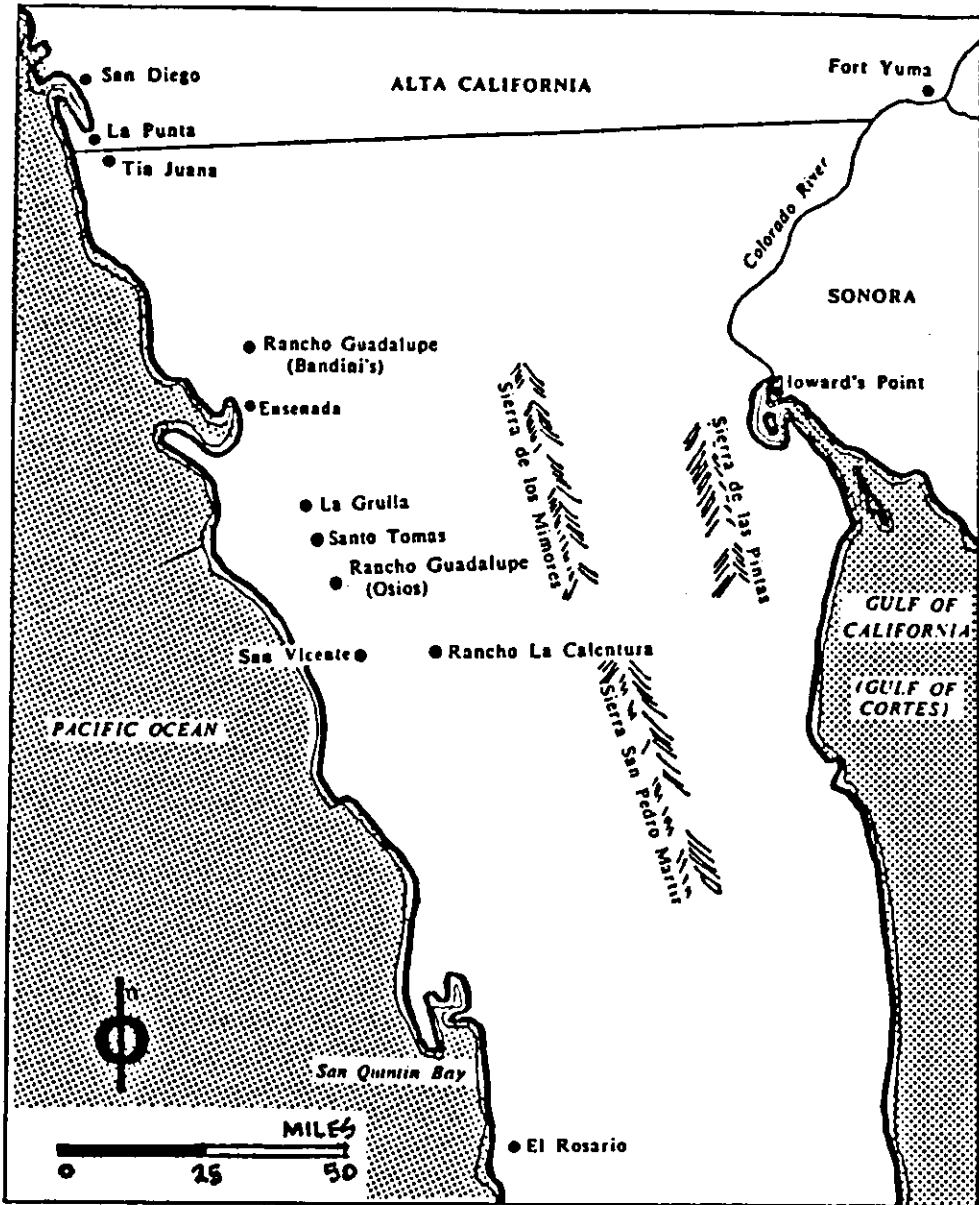
<sup>13</sup>"So far as we know," Ibid., 3/26/1854, p.2 c.1.

<sup>14</sup>"Discharge of Davidson," *San Francisco Herald*, 4/4/1854, p.2 c.2.

<sup>15</sup>"U.S. District Court," Ibid., 6/2/1854, p.2 c.5.



THE REPUBLIC OF LOWER CALIFORNIA (1854)



## 24. *Exeunt* the New Republic

Sources differ as to the exact date -- March 16, 17, 20, or 22 -- when Walker's ninety-man army departed from San Vicente for the conquest of Sonora. Secretary of War and State John M. Jernagin, Secretary of the Navy Howard A. Snow, Surgeon General S. S. Richardson, Army Major Timothy Crocker, Captain of the Navy William T. Mann, and many other officers assisted His Excellency the President, commander-in-chief of the troops. Adjutant Samuel Ruland recorded events for posterity, Wagon Master G. Glasscock took charge of hauling the one-gun Artillery Corps, and Quartermaster General Norval Douglas watched over the one hundred head of cattle that constituted the entire food supply of the nation. Nobody took care of the Treasury Department, simply because there was no "treasury" to watch.

Dr. Joseph W. Smith, Minister of Interior and Exterior, had been appointed "Commandant of the Northern Frontier" and stayed behind at San Vicente with a garrison of twenty men. A party of twelve had gone south in the direction of Rosario earlier in the month, on a scouting and foraging mission from which they never returned. As soon as Walker was out of sight, Smith went down to Rosario and surrendered his men and arms to the Justice of the Peace of the Frontera District, Don José Luciano Espinosa.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Smith delivered his thirteen men to Melendrez on Espinosa's advice, but not before the Mexicans had slain a half a dozen stragglers from his party. Melendrez sent the doctor with another prisoner to La Paz, put six men to work

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<sup>1</sup>Dr. Smith was an American physician who arrived at La Paz with Governor Rebolledo and joined Walker. In 1856 he tried to collect indemnification for damages from Mexico, alleging that he had been taken prisoner by Walker and had defected at the first opportunity. His petition did not prosper. Joseph W. Smith, *Expedición Filibustera de William Walker en la Baja California*. (México, D.F.: Biblioteca Aportación Histórica, 1944).

in his ranch at La Grulla, and on April 7 gave the last six a safe-conduct to return to California. Upon their arrival at San Diego, the *Alta's* correspondent commented that Meléndrez had acted "with a magnanimity worthy of a General of a more civilized nation. Great credit is due him for his humanity."<sup>2</sup>

Walker's journey from San Vicente to the Colorado covered a distance of over a hundred and twenty miles. Secretary of State Frederick Emory had surveyed the routes across the mountains and the desert in January, and had told Walker which trails to follow. From San Vicente he took the trail that entered along the Calentura Arroyo, swung around the northwest shoulder of the Sierra San Pedro Mártir, and traversed the Valle Trinidad; thence into the Arroyo Grande and across the desert, around the Sierra de las Pintas and by the Lagunes near New River, to the Colorado.

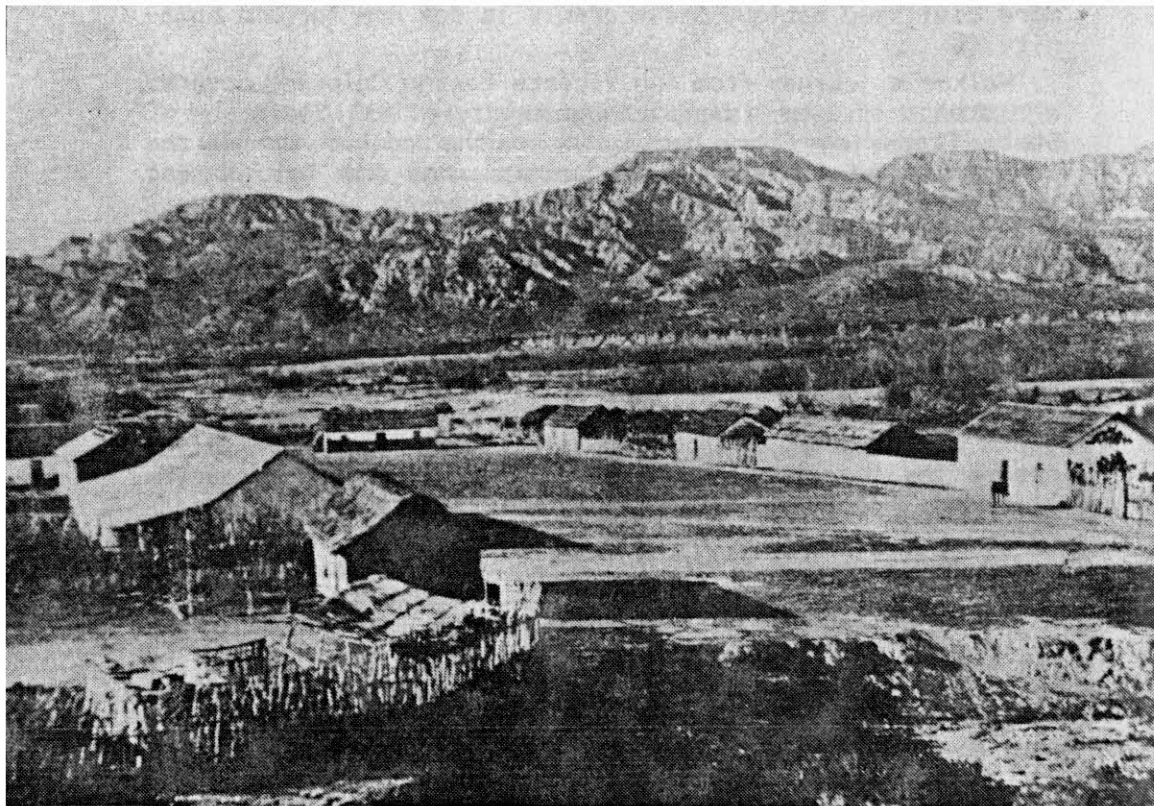
The trail passed generally through the beds of dry creeks, heavy chaparral, and rocky cañon, ascending and descending hills of an enormous size. The twenty-five miles across the desert, with an abundance of water but scarcity of grass, rendered travelling exceedingly tedious with animals.

In crossing the mountains, two men deserted and twenty head of cattle were lost. Thirty Cocopa Indians then joined the filibusters and followed them to the river, where they stole some thirty head of cattle. Five of the Indians were seized as hostages for the return of the property, and in attempting to escape, three of them were shot. Towards the end of March or early April, Walker reached Howard's Point on the Colorado, six miles above its mouth, which was a landing place for ocean vessels coming up the Gulf. Emory had encamped there in January when the brig *Gen. Veil* was discharging cargo which a riverboat would later haul some eighty miles upstream, to Fort Yuma.

Walker apparently expected to find the *Petríta* at Howard's Point, and perhaps also a steamer with reinforcements from California. According to rumors circulating at the end

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<sup>2</sup>"From Our Correspondent," *Alta*, 4/26/1854, p.2 c.2.



ROSARIO, BAJA CALIFORNIA  
FIFTY YEARS AFTER WALKER

DR. JOSEPH W. SMITH, WALKER'S "COMMANDANT OF THE NORTHERN FRONTIER," SURRENDERED HIS MEN AND ARMS TO THE JUSTICE OF THE PEACE OF THE FRONTERA DISTRICT, DON JOSÉ LUCIANO ESPINOSA, AT ROSARIO (p.284).





ENTRANCE TO ARROYO GRANDE  
SAN VICENTE-COLORADO TRAIL



ROCKY ROAD IN BAJA

FIFTY YEARS LATER, SUCH AS TRAVELLED BY WALKER

of January in San Francisco, Walker's friends had "purchased a steamer to be despatched immediately to the Gulf of California, to be employed in the service of the Republic."<sup>3</sup> In his February 7 dispatch from Ensenada, Adjutant Samuel Ruland spoke of "a movement of our forces very shortly in a direction that will literally 'astonish the natives'."<sup>4</sup> The *Alta* soon learned through the grapevine that the filibusters intended to take Tiburón Island, about 100 miles above Guaymas, for a base of operations in the Gulf, and had made arrangements to have a steamer as a transport.

But the U.S. Navy then blockaded Ensenada. Later, early in March, Walker had sent fifteen men to San Quintín Bay, down the coast from San Vicente, expecting to find the *Petrita* and a steamer at that port. Of course, he found no ships at San Quintín nor at the Colorado. Walker waited several days at Howard's Point, hoping against hope, but no vessel arrived. He had reached the end of the line. The deep and wide Colorado river stood between him and Sonora. But the chasm that separated him from the Promised Land was much wider and deeper, for his Republic of Sonora was about to die.

His "soldiers of Sonora" were both miserable and destitute; they wore the same clothing, now tattered and ragged, with which they had arrived in Lower California. Walker himself was no better clad than the rest: he had but one boot and a piece of a boot. The cattle that constituted the food supply of the nation were so emaciated that they couldn't cross the river by swimming. Meager rations consisted of beef alone. There had been corn, but this had been reduced so that it was only to be had in the mess of his Excellency.

One incident illustrates the situation vividly: some of the men built rafts and floated over to the opposite shore. The first raft carried, among others, Capt. Douglas and an Englishman named Smith. Douglas took a pint of boiled corn, which he placed upon the ground but somebody stole it. When

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<sup>3</sup>"Steamer for the New Republic," *Ibid.*, 1/30/1854, p.2 c.5.

<sup>4</sup>"News from the Lower Country," *San Diego Herald*, 2/11/1854, p.2 c.2.



Douglas ascertained Smith to be the thief, he drew his pistol and deliberately shot him dead. "Thus a pint of boiled corn was worth a man's life!"<sup>5</sup>

Dissatisfied, exhausted, naked, and famished --over fifty men then deserted and headed for San Diego and Los Angeles via Fort Yuma. Some, quite bitter, on their way to San Diego vehemently voiced their feelings to an *Alta* correspondent, "condemning Walker for deception, cowardice, infirmity of purpose and other 'negative virtues'."<sup>6</sup> The correspondent elaborated: "He [Walker] is still looked upon, I believe, by all as an able and by most as a resolute man, though apparently infatuated by some notion of his own supremacy. He is described as being fond of Napoleonic flourishes, and with folded arms and downcast eyes actually imitates the traditional strut of that deceased potentate."

Other disaffected filibusters told the same story of Walker's megalomania which had become more ludicrous as his situation worsened. When the stragglers from the Colorado showed up at Los Angeles, towards the end of April, the *Star* reported:

The character which Walker bears among his men is by no means an exalted one. He is represented as excessively vain, weak-minded and ambitious. His vanity makes him tyrannical -- his weakness renders him cruel; his unbounded and senseless ambition has led him to believe himself born to command. His great pride was in "standing upon his dignity"; his men were constantly harassed with vexatious orders upon etiquette. There was not a sensible man in the whole command who did not utterly despise him.<sup>7</sup>

But over one third of the command were not sensible men, and thirty-eight "soldiers of Sonora" remained loyal to

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<sup>5</sup>"Still Later -- Misfortunes of Ambitious Vanity," *Alta*, 4/26/1854, p.2 c.2.

<sup>6</sup>"Letter from San Felipe," *Ibid.*, 5/6/1854, p.2 c.4.

<sup>7</sup>"Still Later -- Misfortunes of Ambitious Vanity," *Ibid.*, 4/26/1854, p.2 c.2.



Walker at the Colorado. The remnants of his New Republic consisted of himself, his two Ministers, the Surgeon General, the Wagon Master, one major, three captains, five lieutenants, four sergeants, two corporals, and 19 privates. With his army reduced to a mere corporal's guard, and no reinforcements in sight, Walker began, on April 6, to retrace his steps from Howard's Point to San Vicente.

At the Rancho La Calentura, on April 13, he lost two men in his first skirmish with Melendrez's forces. Upon arriving at San Vicente, on the 17th, according to Adjutant Ruland, Melendrez "collected his forces, consisting of about thirty-five horsemen and about forty-five footmen, on a hill a long distance from us, and commenced trailing our flag in the dust, and yelling insulting and defiant words at us, until a detail of ten men had time to get near enough to his valientes to make them run."<sup>8</sup>

Failing to find Dr. Smith and his men at San Vicente, Walker moved his headquarters to the Rancho Guadalupe, a better defensive position because the house controlled the only clearing in which cavalry could operate. On the night of the 19th, Walker personally led twelve men on a surprise attack to Santo Tomás, killing two and wounding several of Melendrez's men. A few days later, thirty Mexican volunteers arrived at Santo Tomás, sent by Don Juan Bandini, from San Diego, to help finish the filibusters. Thus reinforced, on April 26, Melendrez sent a flag of truce to Walker, offering him and his men a free pass out of the country if he would lay down his arms and make a formal surrender. Walker read the message and responded by trampling the letter under his foot, "then, by a series of well applied kicks, ejected the courier from his presence."<sup>9</sup>

Melendrez attacked in full force the same afternoon, but withdrew after a three hour battle in which he was fortunate that only three of his men were killed, instead of the entire company, for at close range the filibusters fired twelve pistol for each rifle shot of the Mexicans. One "sol-

<sup>8</sup>"Return of the Invaders," *San Diego Herald*, 5/13/1854, p.2 c.4.

<sup>9</sup>"Arrival of the Southerner," *Alta*, 5/16/1854, p.2 c.3.

dier of Sonora" was killed and one slightly wounded.

Walker then began to retreat towards the border, while Melendrez "adopted the plan of remaining always on the defensive, depriving the invaders of all means of sustenance, maintaining a strict watch on their movements, leaving them always an unobstructed outlet to Alta California, and preventing them from taking any road that would lead them to an easily fortified position."<sup>10</sup>

Melendrez prepared an ambush on the road by La Grulla where the filibusters barely escaped being surprised, running for cover into the woods. Further down the road, on April 30, they were obliged to take cover again in some deep grass and chaparral. The Mexicans set fire to the grass on two sides, which forced Walker's men to fight their way out, "firing in such a manner that the Mexicans were compelled to retire precipitately, with a loss of several killed and wounded."<sup>11</sup>

The filibusters entered Ensenada at day-break on May 1st, rested two days, and continued their march towards the border. On Saturday, May 6, they encountered Melendrez again and kept up a running fight with him for ten miles, until at 10 o'clock at night Walker reached and took possession of the Ranch La Tlajuana, two and a half miles below the boundary line. Melendrez encamped in the vicinity, blocking Walker's way to San Diego.

On Sunday morning, U.S. Army troops under the command of Captain Henry S. Burton were posted at the border. Early Monday morning, Major J. McKinstry, U.S.A., delivered to Walker, at La Tlajuana, a number of letters from his friends in Alta California, and upon assessing the situation, advised Walker and agreed with him on the terms of his surrender to the United States, whom McKinstry represented. Thereupon, the major sent a mounted messenger with a letter to Captain Burton, apprising him that:

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<sup>10</sup>Robert G. Cleland, "Bandini's Account of William Walker's Invasion of Lower California," *Huntington Library Quarterly*, VII, 1944, p. 165.

<sup>11</sup>"Return of the Invaders," *San Diego Herald*, 5/13/1854, p.2 c.4.

Acting upon my advice Mr. Walker has agreed to surrender himself and party as prisoners to myself and I have guaranteed in behalf of the United States to quarter and provision them at New San Diego and to forward them by the 1st steamer as prisoners to General Wool [emphasis mine, A.B.G.].<sup>12</sup>

Precisely when the captain was reading McKinstry's letter, Melendrez came to him, complaining that a representative of the U.S. Government had gone into Mexico and made conditions of surrender with Walker. Burton assured him that "nothing of the kind could be done."<sup>13</sup> He then asked Melendrez upon what conditions he would permit Walker and his party to march across the border. The Mexican replied: "Let him deliver up his arms and ammunition, and a man of his party called 'Carrillo,' and he may pass."

Captain Burton personally took Melendrez's conditions to Walker, which the latter rejected. He then returned to Melendrez and told him of Walker's refusal. Walker then commenced his march from La Tiajuana to the border, while McKinstry and Burton waited by the monument marking the boundary line at the Rancho of La Punta. McKinstry chronicled the ensuing events in his official report:

. . . I then returned to the line where I witnessed Genl. Melendrez's attempt to intercept Col. Walker. Two hundred yards south of the line, the road leading to this place winds around a hill of some two hundred feet in height. The Mexican forces (cavalry) filed into the valley and took up a position upon this hill with colors displayed and with an evident intention of attacking Walker. Upon our side of the line numerous spectators had assembled to witness the threatened combat.

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<sup>12</sup>"Official Report of the Surrender of Col. Walker's Party." *San Francisco Herald*, 5/18/1854, p.2 c.2.

<sup>13</sup>*ibid.*

As Walker approached the Mexican position, his advance guard composed of nine riflemen deployed as skirmishers advanced at a run, and with a shout gained the summit of the hill only in time to catch a glimpse of the Mexican Colors as they disappeared in the valley to the south, borne by horsemen spurring their horses to the top of their speed. Col. Walker then pursued his line of march to the monument, and halting his command upon Mexican Territory, crossed the line and agreed with me upon the terms set forth in document A.<sup>14</sup>

Document A is an "Agreement" signed by Major J. McKinstry and Captain H. S. Burton "representing the Government of the United States," and "Col. William Walker President of the Republic of Sonora." By it, Walker agreed to surrender himself and party to the United States, to abide an investigation of their "alleged violation" of the Neutrality Act. The U. S. Army officers agreed to provision and quarter Walker and his men at San Diego and to furnish them with transportation by steamer to San Francisco. In an annex, titled "Parole of Honor," Walker's men -- thirty-three signatures -- pledged their "word of honor" to report themselves to General Wool at San Francisco.

The Agreement is the official death certificate of the chimeric Republic of Sonora whose birth had been recorded a year earlier in the Land Warrants issued by Colonel Walker on the first day of May, 1853. Its demise came at 4 o'clock P.M. on Monday, May 8, 1854, Walker's thirtieth birthday, when he signed the document. The phantasmal nation came to life when the *forty-five immortals* sailed from San Francisco

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid. Melendrez's last-minute withdrawal prevented additional senseless bloodshed, but this time nobody noticed his humanity. Rather, for manifest destiny Americans, the Mexican was a coward: "As Walker neared the enemy, he deployed his advanced guard of nine riflemen, who, with a cheer charged the Mexicans; the latter, without firing a shot at their enemy, put spurs to their horses and disappeared in a cloud of dust, from out of the midst of which the Mexican flag could be discerned waving over as arrant a set of cowards as ever attempted to 'play soldier.' A shout of derisive laughter went up from the valley, highly expressive of a filibuster's opinion of Mexican courage." ("From Our Special Reporter," *San Francisco Herald*, 5/16/1854, p.2 c.2).

clothed in darkness, and it passed away when the 33 shoeless soldiers of Sonora gave three cheers for the United States, and then for Col. Walker, as they crossed the line at San Diego.

Although the document was signed at the Rancho of La Punta, U.S.A., the U.S. Government, in fact, made the agreement with the so-called President of the imaginary Republic of Sonora at La Tlajuana, inside the domain of a real country called Mexico. The farcical essence of the affair was noted by the editor of the *Alta*, who considered the agreement "outrageous," and added: "It is an insult to all civilized nations, and an injury to our credit as a nation professing to have some regard for international law and for our duties to other nations, whom we pretend to equal in refinement."<sup>15</sup>

Altogether, less than 300 men accompanied Walker in Lower California. At least twenty-three lost their life and a like number were wounded. Mexican casualties were not tabulated, but were probably higher. Moreover, as told by Don Juan Bandini: "Walker's conduct created widespread antagonism towards the United States; brought financial loss to the invaders; caused the devastation of the invaded country; led to prolonged suffering among some of the families that were reduced to abject poverty . . . and lastly, because of the outcome, brought shame and ridicule upon such an ill-conceived expedition."<sup>16</sup>

When Walker and his men returned to San Francisco aboard the steamer from San Diego on May 15, there were no welcoming bands to greet them nor kind words from the press. Friend John Nugent simply reported in his editorial column: "The details of the surrender of Walker and his men to the

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<sup>15</sup>"We scarcely know in what terms to speak," *Alta*, 5/18/1854, p.2 c.1.

<sup>16</sup>Robert G. Cleland, "Bandini's Account of William Walker's Invasion of Lower California," *Huntington Library Quarterly*, VII, 1944, p. 165. Bandini was one of many Baja California residents who had welcomed the American occupation during the war and had been forced into exile at San Diego in 1848. In his detailed chronicle of the Walker invasion (written at San Diego on May 25, 1854), he called attention to the "guilt" of the Alta California authorities by their tolerance and even actual support of the Walker expedition.

United States authorities, will be found in another column."<sup>17</sup> The *Alta's* editorial on the demise of "the great republic of Sonora, with all its sins of slavery-extension, robbery and murder,"<sup>18</sup> was more explicit and quite to the point:

The bubble has burst. The "Republic of Sonora," with its President, Secretaries of State, War and Marine, its proclamations, its hopes and its promises, has, so far at least as Col. William Walker and his party are concerned, become one of the "things that were," that is, if it ever had any existence, save in the imagination of the bombastic Filibusters. After months of hardship, toil, privation and suffering, the remnant of the Republic's army has returned to the place of its enlistment, with its banners trailing in the dust, with no wreath of laurel twined around its brows, received with no welcoming songs . . .

We can scarcely exult at the termination of this worse than foolish enterprise. . . . The deserted homes of the peaceable and harmless rancheros of Lower California, their lands despoiled of their stocks, and their fields of their produce, speak in louder tones of condemnation than we could utter to those who have caused such a state of things . . .

They will now be called upon to answer to the laws which they have outraged . . . But the evil they have done, the misery they have caused . . . can never be fully repaired. . . . We hope that the whole tale of folly, crime and misery will have an enlarged and effectual tendency to stay<sup>19</sup> the reckless spirit of Filibusterism in the future.

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<sup>17</sup>"The details of the surrender." *San Francisco Herald*, 5/16/1854, p.2 c.1.

<sup>18</sup>"The Report that Melendrez." *Alta*, 5/6/1854, p.2 c.1.

<sup>19</sup>"The bubble has burst." *Ibid.*, 5/16/1854, p.2 c.1.

Unfortunately for all concerned, the megalomaniac trio in command of Walker's Inner Crescent City didn't share the views and hopes of the Alta. Within a few months, Colonel Dick Dobs would be again setting in motion an even worse tale of folly, crime and misery in another country south of the border.

## Agreement

The undersigned representing respectively the Government of the United States and the so-called Republic of Sonora have agreed as follows.

1<sup>st</sup> Col. Wm. Walker President of the Republic of Sonora and party agree to surrender themselves to the United States as prisoners to abide an investigation of their alleged violation of the act of 1818 in reference to the neutrality of the United States on the following condition to wit -

Major J. McKimby & Capt. C. S. Burton of the army of the United States agree to provision & quarter Col. Walker & command at San Diego until the arrival of a steamer when they shall be furnished with transportation to San Francisco upon condition of reporting themselves (under the direction of Capt. Burton) to Maj. Gen. S. C. Wool. U. S. Army at San Francisco as prisoners on their parole of honor.

Rancho of La Punta Cal

May 8<sup>th</sup> 1854

J. McKimby  
1<sup>st</sup> Major Adm.

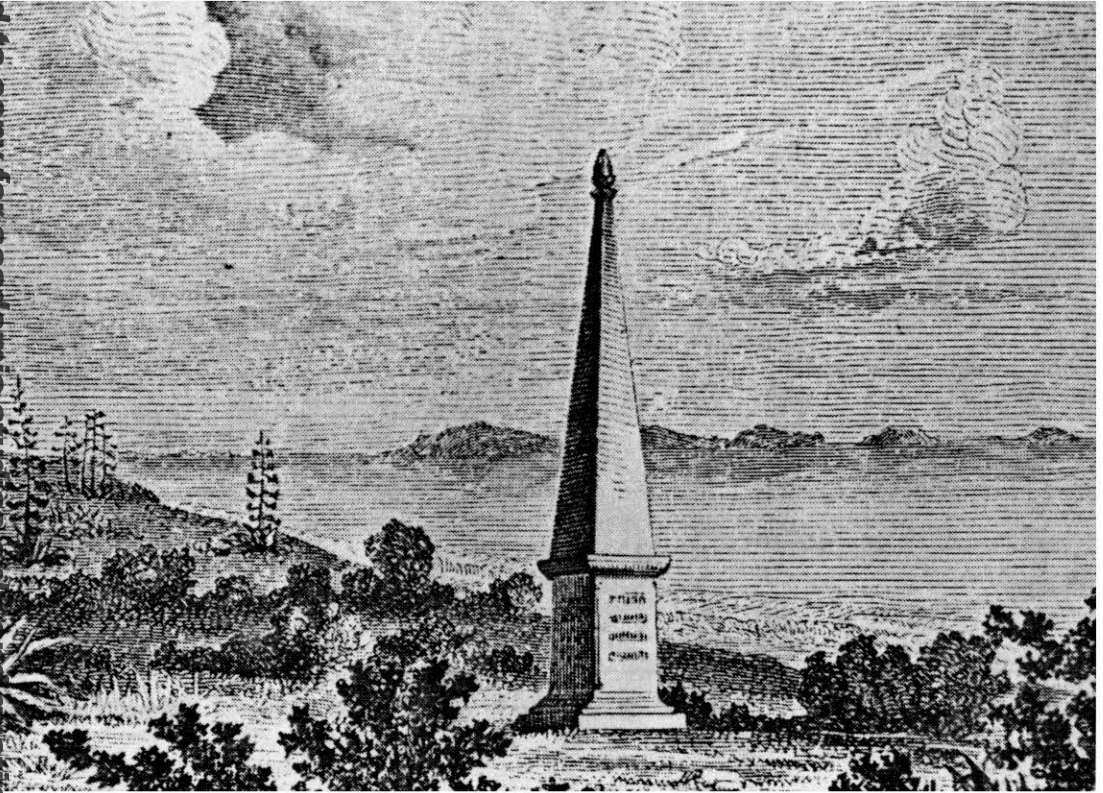
H. S. Burton  
Capt. U. S. A.

Wm. Walker  
Pres. of the  
Republic.

SURRENDER AT LA PUNTA  
(DOCUMENT A)



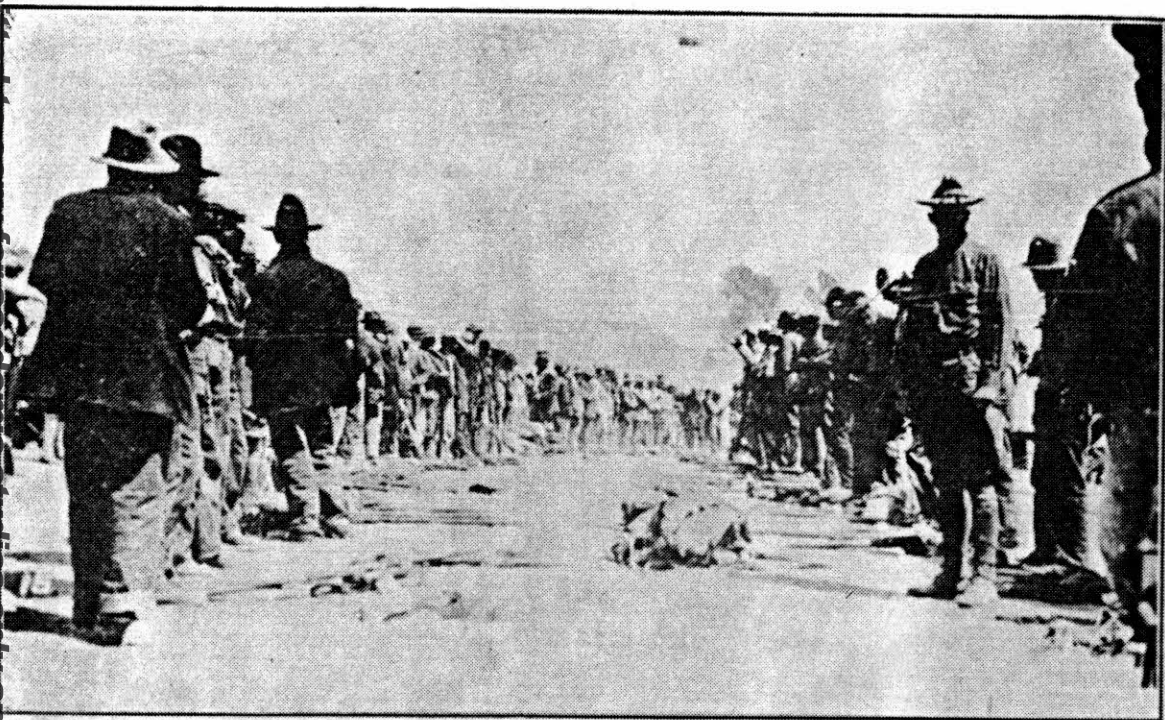
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THE MONUMENT  
INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY STONE

WALKER THEN PURSUED HIS LINE OF MARCH TO THE MONUMENT, AND HALTING HIS COMMAND UPON MEXICAN TERRITORY, CROSSED THE LINE AND AGREED WITH ME UPON THE TERMS SET FORTH IN DOCUMENT A."

MAJOR J. MCKINSTRY, U.S. ARMY (P.294).



Filibusteros entregando sus armas al destacamento angloamericano de Tia Juana, después del combate librado el 22 de junio de 1911.

### REPEAT PERFORMANCE AT LA PUNTA

FIFTY-SEVEN YEARS AFTER WALKER, ANOTHER BAND OF AMERICAN FILIBUSTERS SURRENDERED AT LA PUNTA: JACK NOSBY'S MEN HAND IN THEIR ARMS TO THE U S ARMY TROOPS AT THE BORDER, AFTER BEING ROUTED BY THE MEXICANS AT TIJUANA ON JUNE 22, 1911.



## 25. *Exeunt* the Sultan of Sonora

When Walker returned to San Francisco on May 15, 1854, a more urgent international imbroglio occupied the attention of the press, and his *New Republic* quickly faded out of sight. Precisely on the day he arrived in town, Judge Ogden Hoffman of the U.S. District Court issued a bench warrant for the arrest of French Consul Monsieur Patrice Dillon. The consul had been indicted for violation of the Neutrality Law, for supposedly launching a French filibustering expedition against Sonora in connivance with Count Gaston Raoul de Raousset Boulbon.

The count had travelled to Mexico City in June, 1853 and had proposed a plan to Santa Anna for the introduction of six thousand Frenchmen into Sonora. In running away from Scylla, Santa Anna was not willing to fall into Charybdis. Negotiations went on simultaneous to his talks with Gadsden, and his final counterproposal to the count was for five hundred Frenchmen to fight the Apaches under the command of the Mexican authorities in Sonora and Chihuahua. Raousset angrily rejected Santa Anna's offer, for it imposed restrictions that thwarted his grand designs for the "liberation" of Sonora. In November he hurried back to California to carry out his plans.

Raousset arrived in San Francisco on December 6. Secretary of State Frederick Emory arrived next morning with the startling news from the *New Republic* in Lower California. Both filibuster factions soon gravitated towards each other, each one hoping to further its own cause. When Vice-President Watkins returned from Ensenada on January 12, 1854, the San Francisco grapevine announced that Walker and Raousset had reached a solemn agreement to join forces for the conquest of Sonora. Financed by French businessmen interested in the mines of Arizona, the count before the end of January, procured the 1200 ton frigate *República de Guatemala* and two smaller vessels to carry 800 filibusters and

the military hardware which included "a revolving bronze cannon, caliber 40."<sup>1</sup>

Upon the arrival of purser Slamm at San Francisco, the Custom House authorities suddenly became unfriendly to the filibusters, forcing them to take measures in order to camouflage their actions. Watkins's Anita, disguised as Petrita, sailed for Guaymas on February 8. Two days later, the República de Guatemala was sold at auction, renamed Challenge, and placed under the British flag. The new owners, Hector Chauviteau and Edouard Cavallier, happened to be Count Raousset's close friends and associates.

Before the Challenge could sail, President Pierce's proclamation was published in San Francisco: Watkins and fellow filibusters were arrested; and French Consul Monsieur Patrice Dillon publicly warned all Frenchmen that he would not grant passports or protection to any filibuster. Thereupon, Raousset had to abandon his plans, and at the end of February all filibustering activities had ceased in San Francisco. The Mexican government unwittingly revived them in March, by the very measures intended to prevent them.

President Santa Anna ordered Don Luis M. del Valle, Mexican consul at San Francisco, to recruit Frenchmen in California for the Mexican army and to send them in small parties of not more than fifty men each, to the ports of Guaymas, Mazatlán, and San Blas. Don Luis explained Santa Anna's purpose to the French consul as soon as he received his instructions early in March:

In pursuance of despatches which I have just

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<sup>1</sup>"Importante." *El Nacional*, 3/10/1854, p.4 c.2. Thus reported the Mexican consul in San Francisco to his government. Walker's men at the peninsula knew of his alliance with Raousset. Theodore Ryan, cashiered out of San Vicente on March 3, stated under oath upon arrival at San Francisco: "I certify that it was the general impression among the forces of William Walker, while at Ensenada, that the retirement from that port was for the purpose of meeting reinforcements at the Bay of St. Quinten (sic) or the Bay of St. Vincente. These reinforcements were to come from San Francisco -- to be composed mainly of Frenchmen -- and to be commanded by a French officer, with the title of Brigadier General. When I left Walker's camp on the 3d of March, the whole dependence of his force was upon the presumed reinforcement, and that should this fail him, all hope of consummating the object of his invasion of Lower California or Sonora must be abandoned." ("Deposition of Theodore Ryan, *San Francisco Herald*, 4/28/1854, p.1 c.4).

received from my Government, directing me to put myself in communication with you, to whom the Legation of Mexico gives the appropriate and reserved instructions, and that we may labor together to secure the separation of the Frenchmen who compose the expedition of Count Raousset, by proposing to them their enlistment in the military service of my nation . . .<sup>2</sup>

Don Luis M. del Valle was an "old, infirm man"<sup>3</sup> newly arrived in San Francisco, unacquainted with U.S. laws and the English language, which left him dependant on his French colleague. Monsieur Dillon lost no time in arranging a meeting between Don Luis and the owners of the *Challenge*.

A contract was signed without delay, on the 5th of March, for the transport of a thousand recruits to Guaymas at \$42 per passenger. Del Valle paid in advance, drawing drafts for \$42,000 against the Mexican Treasury. As it was "very troublesome" for Don Luis to do the recruiting, Chauviteau kindly consented to do it for him. Within a few days, over 500 men were enlisted, most of them Frenchmen loyal to the Count. The latter, meanwhile, stored arms and ammunition near Telegraph Hill, to be secretly conveyed on board the *Challenge*.

General Wool got wind of the proceedings and conducted an investigation. Del Valle began to suspect that he had been duped, and asked the general to detain the *Challenge*, which was ready to sail on March 20th. Clearance of the vessel was delayed as U.S. Army officers searched the ship from top to bottom, finding no arms or evidence of any military organization. Ostensibly, the passengers were peaceful colonists who carried valid passports duly signed by the French and Mexican consuls. Count Raousset was nowhere to be seen. Clearance was therefore granted and the *Challenge* left her wharf on March 29.

<sup>2</sup>"Instructions of the Mexican Consul," *Alta*, 4/27/1854, p.2 c.3.

<sup>3</sup>Rufus Kay Wyllys, *The French in Sonora*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1932), p. 174.

It was stopped at the Golden Gate, seized by the U.S. Marshal because it carried an unlawfully large number of passengers in proportion to the accommodations, the berths were arranged contrary to law, etc., regulations seldom or never enforced in San Francisco. Two days later, Don Luis del Valle was arrested for violation of the Neutrality Law. The affidavit for his arrest was made up by Messrs. Hector Chauviteau and Edouard Cavallier, owners of the *Challenge*, who claimed that the Mexican consul had contracted the ship to take soldiers to Guaymas.

Don Luis was released the same day after posting three ten thousand dollar bonds. The owners of the *Challenge* modified the berths and reduced the number of passengers to comply with the legal requirements, and the vessel departed at dawn on April 2nd. She carried some 400 adventurers on board: 70 or 80 Germans, Irishmen, and Chileans, and 330 Frenchmen.

As a result, Raousset's filibusters travelled to Guaymas, all expenses paid by courtesy of the Mexican Government, while Don Luis del Valle faced charges in San Francisco "for hiring and retaining a great number of persons to enlist in the service of a foreign power."<sup>4</sup> The jury rendered a verdict of guilty on April 28, but the District Attorney introduced a motion that no further proceedings should be heard on the case, and Don Luis was discharged a free man. The French consul's trial, in May, ended with a hung jury: 10 for conviction and 2 for acquittal.

When the *Challenge* reached Guaymas on April 19, 1854, the arrival of 400 foreigners startled Comandante General José María Yañez, who expected no more than 50 men at a time. His own troops numbered only 200 soldiers. He organized the French into a battalion, quartered them in two large buildings at Guaymas, supplied them with old muskets for drilling purposes, and drilled them daily just outside the town. The Germans, Irish, and Chileans, not being on good terms with the French as a result of quarrels during the voyage, were organized in two separate companies.

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<sup>4</sup>"Law Report," *Alta*, 4/6/1854, p.2 c.5.

Lack of a vessel delayed Raousset's departure from San Francisco. He finally got financial aid from Felix Argenti, an Italian banker in town. He bought the *Belle*, a ten-ton schooner that lay hidden amid the fishing boats in the bay, and on May 25 left the Golden Gate with several companions on his way to Sonora. Overloaded with 180 rifle carbines and a supply of ammunition, the schooner cruised slowly down the Baja California coast, crossed the Gulf, and on June 27 anchored at Punta Colorada, near Guaymas.

Raousset sent two messengers with instructions for his confidant Leon Desmarais, the commander of the French battalion. He was to seize possession of the town that very night and imprison Yañez, his troops, and any of the leading citizens of Sonora who might be found in Guaymas. But the Mexicans seized the messengers before they entered the town and put them in jail. When they were finally permitted to talk to the officers of the French battalion, it was too late to carry out the plan because the Mexicans knew of the Count's presence and were on their guard.

The *Belle* entered the Bay of Guaymas in the evening of July 1st and anchored in a secluded spot to land her cargo. Raousset wrote a note to Yañez, asking for an interview. His request was granted and a series of talks ensued while both sides prepared for battle. Yañez reinforced his troops while the *Belle's* rifles and munitions were secretly distributed to the French. Raousset wanted Yañez to accept the plan rejected by Santa Anna a year earlier. Yañez refused, repeatedly advising Raousset to leave Sonora at once.

The crisis came on July 12, when a quarrel between Frenchmen and Mexicans left several wounded. Both armies spent the night in a watchful vigil under arms in their respective barracks. Raousset attacked next afternoon. The Chileans and Irishmen sided with the 350 Mexican defenders. Most of the Germans remained neutral, but a number of French residents in Guaymas sided with the Count, increasing his forces to around 400 men. Not a single Mexican joined the French.

The battle began at 2:30 P.M. and ended just before sundown when the attackers fled, unable to dislodge Yañez's men from their barracks. The Mexicans fired ninety artillery shots and 15,000 bullets in three hours. Raousset left for-





COUNT GASTON RAUL DE RAOUSSET-BOULBON



ty-eight dead and seventy-eight wounded on the field. Fifteen of the wounded also died. Half of the French graves were labeled "Name Unknown," for their mangled remains were unrecognizable. The defenders suffered somewhat less: fifteen killed and fifty-five wounded, for a total of seventy casualties.

Some thirty Frenchmen made their escape in the *Belle*, only to have her wrecked near the mouth of the Colorado, with the loss of most of the men on board. The remainder 235 were taken prisoner by Yañez. All except the Count were eventually released and shipped away. Many of them travelled via San Blas to Veracruz, and thence to Martinique. Only sixty-eight returned to San Francisco.

Raousset was court-martialled and condemned to death. Most of the officers of the French battalion, when called as witnesses, testified against him, saving themselves at his expense. He spent his last days writing farewell letters to family and friends, and making a will. He left his signet ring to Don Francisco Borunda, the Mexican Army officer who defended him in the trial. Before surrendering, he delivered his sword to the sister of Don José Calvo, the French consul at Guaymas, being unwilling to be disarmed by a Mexican.

His red hunting shirt, blankets and rifle, he requested to be sent to his family, and a medal of the Blessed Virgin which he wore around his neck, he wished to be sent to his niece. And in a final farewell to his half-brother Victor, written a few hours away from the grave, the all-powerful forces of Oedipus in the unfathomed Unconscious of the Sultan of Sonora, rose to impress its countenance upon the paper:

Guaymas, August 10, 1854.

My Good and Dear Brother:

When you receive this letter, I will no longer belong to the world . . . Yesterday, August 9th, I was tried by a court martial and condemned to death: I will be shot tomorrow or the day after.

. . . Twenty-seven days in solitary confinement have been time enough to contemplate death and to ponder what it means to face it at thirty-six years of age, calm, certain, full of life and vigor.

. . . I have a profound faith in the immortality of the soul; I firmly believe that death is the hour of liberty . . . death is a reunion with the loved ones.

Our father was a man who hardly ever unknit his stern brow in our presence. Why is it that for the last several years, I see him in my dreams, always good-natured and kind? Why is it that I have preserved a very great love towards my mother, I, who never met her? It must be, no doubt, that a mysterious chain, of which this life is but a single link, holds us together beyond the grave.

. . . Farewell, yet, farewell for the last time till we meet again in a better world.

(Signed) GASTON DE RAOUSSET BOULBON.<sup>5</sup>

At sunrise on August 12, 1854, the people of Guaymas gathered on the housetops and at the *plaza del muelle*, by the bay shore. A row of soldiers formed the customary square for executions, one side of which was the beach. Others were stationed in the adjoining streets. Another squad of soldiers marched behind a party of soberly clad men, down to the water's edge. In the center of the party strode Raousset, pale of face but firm of step and bearing, accompanied by Captain Borunda and a priest.

The Count removed his hat and faced his executioners. Then, as the rising sun threw long shadows across the bay and beach and kindled the red glow on the Sonora hills, a volley of musketry from the firing squad ended the stormy, romantic career of Count Gaston de Raousset Boulbon.

One ball broke the medal of the Blessed Virgin which he wore around his neck, the same which he wished to be sent to his niece, and only a few pieces of it could be extracted from the body. Most of the medal, shattered in hot lead, buried deep into his breast, fittingly symbolized the passionate ending of Count Gaston Raoul de Raousset Boulbon, who, like Walker, and Byron, died at age 36.

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<sup>5</sup>Rufus Kay Wyllys, *The French in Sonora*, p. 297.