

COMMUNITY MEMORIAL MUSEUM

1333 Butte House Road

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Yuba City, CA 95991

SUTTER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWS BULLETIN

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YUBA CITY, CALIFORNIA

APRIL 18, 1961



WINDSOR HOTEL

YUBA CITY WATER WORKS. FARMER'S BANK AND MASONIC BUILDINGS.

SUTTER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SPRING MEETING

APRIL 18, 1961

TUESDAY EVENING - 8 P.M.

President - Mrs. Florence Arritt
Program Chairman - Randolph Schnabel

P R O G R A M

Speaker: Dr. Clarence McIntosh
Assistant Professor of History
Chico State College
Topic: It's an Old California Custom

LOOKING FORWARD TO THE 1961 CONFERENCE PROGRAM
at COLUMBIA
JUNE 22-24, 1961

The Program Chairman, Dr. Clarence McIntosh, of the Annual Meeting of the Conference, which will be held at Columbia, June 22-24, 1961, announces the following tentative subjects for sessions and speeches:

1. California and the Civil War
2. Creating Historical Records through Oral History
3. Organizations about Which We Ought to Know More
4. California Government and Historical Agencies
5. History and Your Newspaper.

Why these topics? The first one, California and the Civil War, is so important to us now and will remain so for the next few years. We hope we can provide the delegates with an accurate picture of California's role in the Civil War as well as some ideas on how to observe the centennial. Oral history, the second topic, is a development of great significance in recent years. We had an excellent session two years ago on the equipment that might be used in oral history projects; we think we ought to follow it up with a session on the background and techniques of oral history. The third topic is a necessity. There are so many new or relatively new organizations on the California historical scene, and, in addition, some other organizations of significance we should learn more about in order to keep abreast with developments in historical agencies. The fourth subject is intended to keep us in touch with the latest activities of the legislature and government on affairs that concern historical groups. We also hope to have a speaker, who is successful in presenting history as news to his readers, tell us how to do it. And do not forget there will be important items to be considered at the annual business meeting.

Two other features deserve notice. We plan to hold another auction this year, so please support it with gifts for sale and plan to bring along some extra "bidding" money. We are also hoping to let you learn more about and see some of the lovely and historic country in which the Conference meeting takes place. We need to see the progress in restoration at Columbia and the historic landmarks of Sonora.

The committee chairman, with the help of the program committee is now busy rounding up speakers and panelists. He believes the program will be both of interest and value to all. So plan with your societies now to come with a large delegation to Columbia.

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Assembly Bill No. 1920

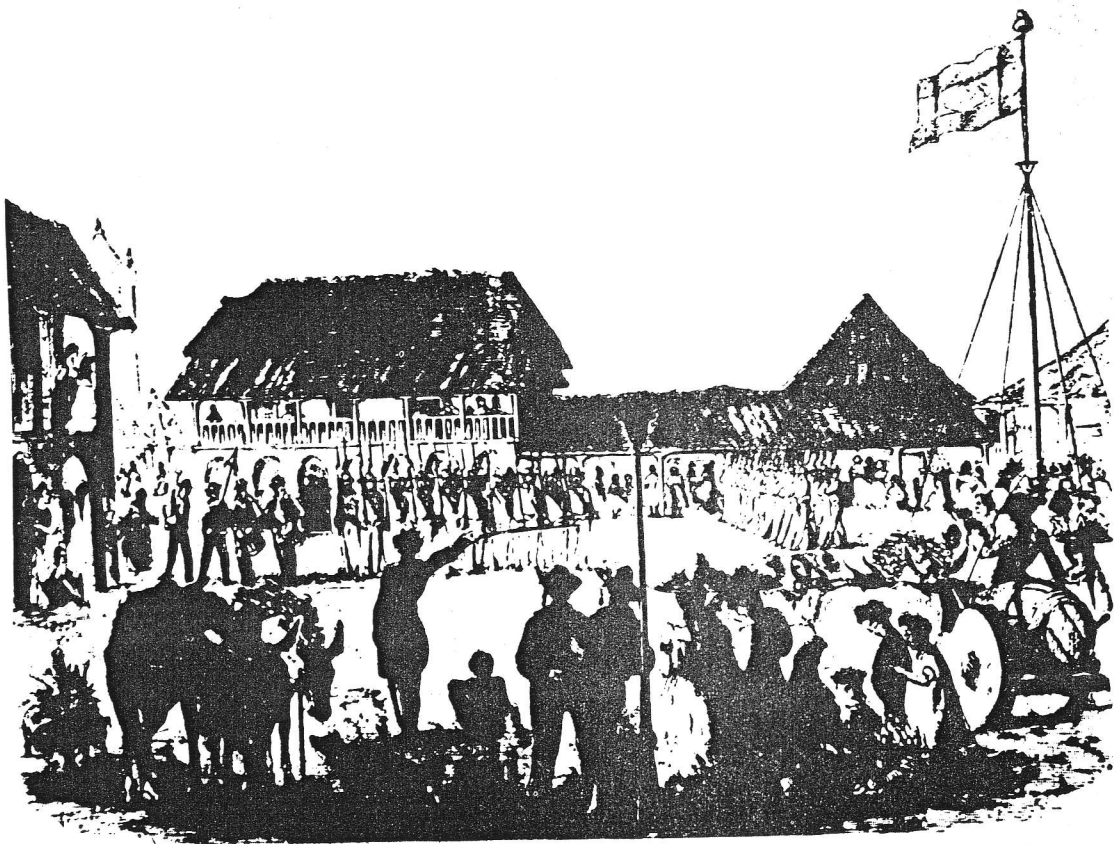
This is to advise that the hearing on Assembly Bill No. 1920 has been set for April 25 at 3:45 P.M. in Room 2170, State Capitol.

This bill, as you know, appropriates \$20,000 to the Secretary of State for the purpose of purchasing record preservation equipment to preserve the valuable records in our Archives.

To assure its passage, it will be necessary to show by personal appearance or by resolution of your Society the importance of enacting this appropriation.



WILLIAM WALKER



GENERAL WALKER REVIEWING HIS TROOPS

YUBA-SUTTER FILIBUSTERS

by
Earl Ramey

There exists today (1961) a condition of relations between the United States and Central America which makes an interesting contrast to that condition which existed over a hundred years ago in 1855. Today our gunboats are cruising near the coast of Central America, to the annoyance of some citizens of certain Latin American republics, with the avowed objective of preventing some potential but indefinite force overrunning the weak governments and imposing upon the peoples an intolerable system of political economy.

But in 1855 there developed a much more real and definite threat to the political sovereignty and the existence of the social and economic institutions of Central America than exists today. The threat was not hypothetical and merely potential. An organized and armed force of aliens had invaded Nicaragua with the admitted purpose of deposing the government, of gaining individual ownership of land, and of introducing an economy based upon slave labor.

The contrast involved here is the result of the fact that in 1855 not only did the government of the United States do nothing to help Nicaragua resist this invasion, but rather, the invading forces were allowed to organize and arm on United States territory and to depart from American ports in American ships in violation of our neutrality laws as well as in violation of established rules of proper conduct between sovereign nations enjoying peaceful relations.

Some readers may not have guessed at this point why the topic referred to above is to be given attention in the Bulletin of the Sutter County Historical Society. But the topic is pertinent to our local history because three of our early Yuba-Sutter residents occupied very prominent positions in the force which invaded Central America, and some fifty of the members were recruited from Yuba, Sutter and neighboring counties.

The most prominent of our former residents is WILLIAM WALKER, a native of Tennessee, who came to California during the gold rush from New Orleans. Walker was an attorney and a journalist. He came to Marysville in 1851 and practiced law in Yuba and Sutter counties until 1853. It was after he had left Marysville and while he was doing newspaper work in San Francisco that he organized his famous expedition which he led to Nicaragua.¹

The next in prominence is HENRY P. WATKINS, a native of Kentucky, who also came to California during the gold rush from Missouri and settled in Marysville in 1851. He and Walker were law partners, and both were active in Democratic party politics. Watkins served as recorder of Marysville in 1852 and 1853. He owned agricultural property in Sutter county south of Bear River.²

Our third prominent former resident is WILHELM ALFONS SUTTER, the youngest son of John A. Sutter, Sr. Young Sutter had come to California in 1850 with his mother from Switzerland where he was born in 1833. He had attended a military academy in Switzerland; so with this qualification and his father's influence he was made a military aid to Governor Bigler in 1853 and given the rank of Colonel of Cavalry while yet only twenty years of age.

Colonel Sutter was living with his parents at Hock Farm in 1855 when Walker was organizing his filibusters in San Francisco, and he became interested in the project. He did not join the first contingent to leave but served as recruiting officer during 1855 and is credited with raising between fifty and one hundred men from Yuba, Sutter and nearby counties. He went to Nicaragua in January, 1856 as captain of a company of thirty recruits whom he had enlisted from this area.³

At this time General Sutter was having difficulty operating Hock Farm. He and his two sons, Alfons and Emil, were obliged to do all of the labor in the fields, vineyards and orchards. He was very much opposed to the departure of Alfons because he needed him on the farm. They became estranged, and the father did not bid the son farewell when the latter left for Nicaragua. But we are told that later the General became reconciled and took a keen and vicarious interest in the military career of his youngest son.⁴

We have a record of the names of the company of thirty recruits whom Captain Sutter took to Nicaragua, but at present we can identify only nine of them. The others were probably floaters or non residents of Marysville who were not included in the directory of the city. The identity of these nine will give a partial indication of the general character of the individuals to whom the filibustering adventure appealed.⁵

D. B. WOOLF of Kentucky and JOHN B. CARROLL of Missouri were store clerks in Marysville and probably found this work dull. SAMUEL TUTTLE of Massachusetts and CYRUS DAVIS of Maine were listed as bottlers for the Kimbal Brewery and evidently wanted a change of occupation and diversion. A printer named Cutler had worked at his trade in Marysville but found much better opportunity in Nicaragua. As a result of Walker's patronage he became government printer with a salary depending upon fees. It was reported that he made as much as seven hundred dollars per week at times, but it is doubtful that he was ever able to bring his earnings back to the United States. A young attorney named WORTHINGTON at one of his first criminal trials in Yuba county was indiscreet enough to question the legality of the appointment of the grand jury which had indicated his client. But the trial judge had appointed the grand jury. So Mr. Worthington moved to Nicaragua.

ROBERT W. PICKERSGILL, a native of England, was serving as deputy sheriff of Yuba county. While enjoying an evening off duty he became intoxicated and was arrested by city police for disorderly conduct. But he felt that he ought to have been immune from arrest; so he drew his service pistol and fired it barely missing a police officer. He was indicted for assault with a deadly weapon, but the court dismissed

the charge to encourage him to go to Nicaragua. D. J. WILKINS, another attorney of Marysville, and GEORGE E. BROCKWAY, who was serving as constable of Marysville township, both from Louisiana, joined the group going to Nicaragua but for no reason of which we have a record.⁶

It is neither possible nor necessary to present in this Bulletin a complete narrative of the filibustering attempt of Walker and his followers. It is not possible because the story is a long one. And it is not necessary because many lengthy accounts have already been written. But there is a certain phase of this episode which is not given detailed attention in accounts written in English by North American writers. The phase referred to here is the reaction of the people of Costa Rica to the presence of the filibusters in neighboring Nicaragua, and the preparation and action by this small country to resist the invaders.

No rational North American writer could possibly defend or excuse Walker and his filibusters. But there has been the temptation to emphasize the romantic nature of the venture thereby neglecting the more serious import - the fright of an innocent and simple people.

While spending a month in San Jose, Costa Rica I took advantage of the opportunity to read newspapers of 1855 and 1856 and certain official documents. The purpose was to try to get a first hand description of what I refer to above as the serious import of the invasion. What I shall write here is that which I was able to glean by reading these documents. Consequently, the account will be from the Costarican view. I shall make no attempt to evaluate the accuracy of the impressions which I shall quote, because it will be of sufficient interest here to know what the people and leaders of Costa Rica believed about the objectives of the filibusters regardless of the accuracy of these beliefs.⁷

In 1855 two political factions were contending for control of the government of Nicaragua; and these factions were so nearly equal in strength that neither side was able to achieve a decisive victory either by arms or by ballot. Walker took advantage of this situation and secured a contract with one faction (ironically, the Democrats) to supply an armed force. This force was given the technical status of colonists to allow departure from the United States in spite of neutrality laws. The individual "colonist" was to be rewarded with a quantity of land in addition to a salary for military service.⁸

The first contingent sailed from San Francisco in May, 1855 and arrived in Nicaragua in June. With the help of the armed colonists the Democrats were able to seize control of the government, and by October Walker had been made commander of the army from which position he was able to direct the entire government. The future appeared favorable for Walker and his followers, and he was tempted to project publicly his plans for all of Central America. These plans when carried to implied conclusions would have subordinated all of Central America and possibly Mexico and Panama to a super government at the expense of the half dozen independent republics then existing. Even drastic changes in social and economic institutions were implied.

JUAN RAFAEL MORA, the president of Costa Rica, took the initiative and sounded the alarm in a proclamation issued directly to his fellow citizens on November 20, 1855 quoted partially as follows:

"Costarians: Peace, that prosperous peace...which has given us wealth and happiness...is menaced. A gang of adventurers, scum of the cities, condemned by the courts of the American Union, not able to satisfy their appetites where they are, propose to invade Costa Rica to find in our wives and daughters in our homes and farms pleasures for their ferocious passions and food for their unbridled covetousness.

Do I need to picture for you the terrible harm to be expected from such a barbarious invasion?

No, you know them; you know well what to expect from such a horde which might be stationed in your country; you know your duty.

Be on the alert then Costaricans! Do not interrupt your daily labor but make ready your arms.

I am keeping vigil for you convinced that at the first signal of danger and alarm all of you will rally with me under our national flag of freedom.

"Here we shall never find partisans of the invaders nor spies nor traitors. Heaven help the Costarican or foreigner who might attempt to subvert our people, to sew discord or to sell us out! Here we shall find only brothers resolved to defend the mother country and to exterminate its enemies."

Two days later, November 22, MONSEÑOR ANSELMO LLORENTE y LA FUENTE, first bishop of Costa Rica, issued an "edicto" to be read in all of the parish churches. After calling attention to the imminent danger which confronted the religion, institutions, liberty, and even lives, he suggested the probable fate by the following questions:

"Given these bloodthirsty enemies of the holy religion which we profess what will happen to our churches, to our altars and to our laws? What will be the fate of the clergy? Given their uncontrolled passions what can you expect for your chaste wives and innocent daughters? Given their greed for wealth how can you keep your property? Given their tendency to crime and murder how can your life be safe?"

The bishop assured them that they would have divine help in the campaign against the invaders and urged them to pray for such help. But he reminded them that their prayers would be more effective if their personal lives were more nearly in accord with the teachings of the church; and he further urged them to abandon "the road of evil" and to cleanse their souls so that "in case it should be our lot to die in defense of our religion, our country, our independence, our laws, lives and property we might find the Supreme Judge more favorable."

The fear of invasion was further aggravated in Costa Rica when on November 23, 1855 the government of Nicaragua, whose policies by this time were completely dictated by Walker, issued a decree offering 250 acres of unsettled land to each immigrant who would settle in the country. The objective of this offer was clearly recognized as a means of securing armed recruits for the filibusters.

The editor of the Boletín, the newspaper of Costa Rica, was printing frequent denunciations of Walker and his filibusters calling attention to the threat and preparing the people for the probable campaign of resistance. Walker evidently wished to avoid a clash with Costa Rica at the time and hoped to arrange a sort of truce because he sent a letter to President Mora assuring him that he had no hostile design against Central America and expressing a desire for cordial relations between Costa Rica and Nicaragua. But Mora would not reply to the letter letting it be known that the government of Costa Rica had no intentions of recognizing as legitimate any government dominated by Walker.¹² This stand was made somewhat easier when on December 8 President Pierce condemned Walker's actions in Central America and refused to receive as minister the person sent to Washington by the government of Nicaragua. But in spite of this disapproval by the administration of the United States additional recruits for the filibusters continued to sail from San Francisco, New Orleans and New York.¹³

Today (1961) when we read about these events of one hundred years ago we are naturally hard put to understand how such illegal activities could possibly have been carried on openly in the United States in violation of our laws as well as in violation of Christian morals. The citizens of Costa Rica were just as much puzzled by the matter in 1856 as we are today. So in a lengthy article in the issue of January 19 the editor attempted to explain to his readers how such activities could take place. A partial quotation of his explanation follows:

"The peculiar character of these movements, the spontaneous manner in which they are organized and developed with little regard for regularity and legality really reduce them to large scale piracy.

The exceptional organization of society in the United States and the peculiar tendencies of institutions allow such expeditions against weak peoples, and in spite of laws of neutrality and in defiance of enforcing officers, district attorneys, and courts, these armed forces leave the United States with general licentiousness to torment nations with which the United States is at peace. Thus have been possible the expeditions against Cuba, Sonora and Nicaragua. The masses with a strange instinct sympathize with these attempts and give them moral and material aid. The machinery of law and the disapproval of the responsible press¹⁴ are helpless in the face of the torrent of public opinion to which these audacious enterprises appeal. Without approval and support of their government, these adventurers, if they get into trouble, are hanged or shot without any agency having the authority to defend them.

As is well known, there exist in the United States organized associations which have as their sole objective to encourage vandal expeditions against certain countries. Those at the head of such associations are speculators who invest little and hope to gain much. They hope to colonize, exploit mines, build railroads, etc. To facilitate these projects they depend upon the desperate audacity of the members of these expeditions, persons who have little or nothing to lose not even valuing greatly their lives. And they also depend upon the weakness of certain countries where political opinions divide the people..."

The editor goes on to recall that Walker had been defeated in lower California by the Mexican Army and declared that "a show of defense will suffice in Central America. The invaders are not invulnerable, and the people of Central America are not so weak that they need to succumb to the adventurers."¹⁵

In the issue of February 9 he assured the readers that the government was watching carefully the advance of the enemy and was working without cessation to put the country in a state of defense against any piratical aggression and was depending upon the patriotism of the population and the sympathy of foreigners.

In the issue of February 13 the editor continued his conditioning campaign by quoting from a letter he had received from a South American friend who was residing at the time in the United States. This observer had these opinions to report:

"In the United States public conscience is corrupt...Crimes are tolerated..Walker is determined to extend his power over all of Central America...Walker is a hero in the United States--A CORTES, a new Peter the Great who goes forth to regenerate countries inhabited by an inferior race of the most loathsome apes....His agents are working with astonishing activity in all of the States to enlist adventurers to serve as filibusters...to extend the boundaries of the United States...But the government is indifferent to these activities which the perverted public opinion encourage... Not only in the large cities are men being recruited to strengthen Walker's forces but in many interior communities--forces to go to create, as they say, a new republic for themselves which will extend from Mexico to the Isthmus of Panama.

"The southern states of the United States desire at any cost to extend their power and territory expecting that afterwards they will be able to establish their accursed institution of slavery there subjecting the colored race of Nicaragua and other Central American republics to the vilest servitude which, in their opinion, is the only condition under which that dejected and lazy and demoralized mass can be of any use.

This opinion is nearly confirmed by the government...You will have seen the message of the president...A document of inhuman, shameful and inconceivable utterances which will be read by future generations in years to come. What will they say when they read his observations on slavery? What will be their reaction upon learning that in this country which with such pride calls itself the classic land of liberty, the models of the republics, the country of equality, the supreme court and congress defended the consistence and constitutionality of maintaining four million men in the barbarous institution of slavery?...

I repeat it is said that today Walker has more than a thousand soldiers; soon he will have many more since the shipping company assists him offering nearly free passage to those who will go to Nicaragua with the promise of 250 acres of land and with the fond hope of indulging to the fullest their desire of rapine. These promises attract thousands of idlers who swarm in the streets, the cafes, the gambling dens, and brothels of this country.

It is urgent that you unite and attack them; it is desirable that the first victories which they might obtain do not discourage the cooperation, energy and activity with which you must proceed; and it is also desirable that as soon as a favorable occasion presents you be ready to take advantage of it.

You must exterminate those bandits and curb the transit company and all of those greedy traders who carry on their barbarous commerce with the property and blood of Central America.

Your cause is just and holy and glorious. To die for the Mother country is to die for glory--to die in order to prevent your brothers and sons being reduced to the most contemptible of oppressions--to prevent their being enslaved and mocked by a crowd of highwaymen from all over the world. If the Central American peoples unite and fight with the enthusiasm which patriotism and honor and liberty inspire, who will be able to deprive them of victory? No one."

Even though Walker had been rebuffed when President Mora refused to answer his letter he yet had hope of neutralizing Costa Rica by diplomacy. So the first part of February he sent a commission to treat with the Costarican government. As head of this commission he chose Colonel LOUIS SCHLESSINGER, a Hungarian soldier of fortune, who was an accomplished linguist and fluent in the Spanish language. The second member was a Nicaraguan named ARGUELLO who was cooperating with Walker. It was thought that he would have influence with the Costaricans. The third member was Captain Sutter who had arrived only a few days before with his company of recruits. He was chosen also because of his knowledge of Spanish which he had gained during his six years residence in California.¹⁶

The commission came by sea to Puntarenas but was not allowed to land being ordered to leave Costarican waters. This action served further to emphasize the resolution of President Mora to have no relations with Walker. The only result of the mission was the desertion of Arguello who, upon being convinced that the Costarican government was going to take a firm stand, joined the Costarican army and was able later to persuade many other Nicaraguans to do likewise.

On February 27 the president called the Congress of Costa Rica into extraordinary session to consider the matter of opposing the filibusters. The congress responded by authorizing the president to raise an army of 9000 men, to send this army to Nicaragua to defend the inhabitants of Nicaragua from the filibusters, and to drive the filibusters from Central America. The army was to cooperate with other Central American armies or if necessary to proceed alone. To finance the campaign an appropriation of 100000 pesos was passed.¹⁷

As a nucleus of the proposed army Costa Rica had at the time a small militia which had been trained primarily for maintaining internal order. Consequently, the fact that three weeks after this action of congress 2500 men advanced to meet the enemy and won a battle makes the event one of the classic heroic incidents of history even though it was carried out on a small scale.

President Mora called the army and the population to the common cause with the following proclamation:

"Fellow Citizens; to arms! The moment has arrived. Let us march to Nicaragua to destroy that profane phalanx which has reduced that country to the most hateful state of slavery. Let us go to fight for the liberty of our brothers.

They call us; they expect us to save them from the tyrants. Their cause is our cause. Those who revile, and rob, and assassinate the Nicaraguans defy us with audacity and plan to bind us with the same bloodstained chains. Let us hasten to break the chains of our brothers and to exterminate once and for all their executioners.

We do not go to gain one piece of land, nor to seize ephemeral powers, nor to make petty conquests. No, we go to redeem our brothers from an iniquitous tyranny; we go to help them reestablish themselves. We shall say to them: Brothers of Nicaragua arise! Overthrow your oppressors. Here we come to fight at your side for your liberty, for your country. Unite Nicaraguans! Cast aside your ill will. No more factions. No more fratricidal wrangling. Peace, justice and liberty for all. Make war only against the filibusters.

To battle then Costaricans! I march at the head of the national army. I rejoice to see your noble enthusiasm; I am proud to call you my sons; and I wish always to share with you the danger and the glory...

God will give us victory and with it peace, harmony, liberty and unity of the great Central American family."¹⁸

The army under the command of General JOSE JOAQUIN MORA, the son of the president, assembled at San Jose, the capital, and on March 3 began the long and tedious trek to Liberia near the Nicaraguan border by way of Puntarenas, part of the distance being covered by sea up the Pacific coast. By the twelfth of the month the bulk of the army headed by the president and the military portion of his administration had established a base at Liberia from which point expeditions into Nicaragua were planned. But on March 11 Walker's government declared war against Costa Rica and a force of filibusters was sent across the border to meet the advance of the Costarican army.¹⁹

Walker's advance force of 250 men was put under command of Colonel Schlessinger. These filibusters were composed at the time of four companies of sixty men each segregated by nationality and language. Schlessinger was Walker's choice of commander because he was the only person who could give orders in English, German, French and Spanish; but as matters turned out it was a bad military choice.

The filibusters took possession of a hacienda called Santa Rosa just over the border in Costa Rica. The houses and stone corral of the hacienda made a good barricade, but, apparently, they did not expect to meet their opponents at this place. The hacienda was to serve as a waiting and resting place until a plan of action developed.²⁰

General Mora sent scouts to observe the movements of the enemy, and it was a simple matter to learn where they were stationed. Not only did they receive information from the inhabitants, but they were able to follow the trail to Santa Rosa by boot tracks inasmuch as only the filibusters were equipped with boots and shoes. The native troops

would have been found barefoot or wearing sandals. So it was decided to attack at once, a decision which was unorthodox of the time and region and which completely confounded the filibusters.

The experience which Walker's men had had in Nicaragua up to this time was not only of no value but was really a handicap. They had opposed only demoralized troops weary of fratricidal warfare. In fact they had been able to seize control of government forces with little or no resistance. And it is clear from their conduct in Costa Rica that they expected no more resistance than they had found in Nicaragua.

On March 20 General Mora deployed his troops with orders to attack Santa Rosa from several points. His soldiers advanced and fired and reloaded their muskets by trumpet order in accordance with the little formal training they had received. Walker's men held their fire until the Costarican troops were very near assuming that their first volleys would serve to discourage any further attack. But at this point the native soldiers violated the pattern which the filibusters were depending upon. They continued to advance with unloaded muskets, jumped over the corral and stormed the houses with fixed bayonets. But Walker's mercenaries were not prepared psychologically to do hand to hand combat with rifle butts and bayonets.²¹

Colonel Schlessinger was no better prepared than his troops. It is doubtful that he had ever before seen hand to hand combat, because he was seized by panic, and he fled to the hillsides adjoining the hacienda; and his loyal soldiers fled after him in complete rout. Fourteen minutes after the first attack all was quiet because there were no more filibusters. The only further action was the hunting of stragglers in the mountains. It was reported later that for two weeks small groups made their way back into Nicaragua.²²

In the report of the battle which General Mora made to the President he noted that the enemy left twenty-six dead and that he had taken nineteen prisoners. But he was hopeful that many more would be captured or would die of thirst and hunger in the mountains. Nineteen Costarican soldiers were killed. A quantity of small arms and supplies and a number of horses and mules were captured. And the enemy left all official records behind.

Throughout the campaign after every battle each side attributed to the other side a larger force than was admitted. General Mora reported that there were four hundred filibusters at Santa Rosa but Walker admits only two hundred and fifty. The official report gives the number of Costarican troops as 1500 but Walker gave news releases to his Nicaraguan paper stating that the entire Costarican army was present as well as a company of French soldiers which had been enlisted for the campaign. ²³

Naturally, Walker was disgusted with the performance of his troops at Santa Rosa, but he believed that the defeat was due to the bad leadership of Schlessinger, whom he court marshalled as a traitor; therefore he did not accept the battle of Santa Rosa as significant. But about this time there was indication that Guatemala and El Salvador might come into the war against him. So he postponed the invasion of Costa Rica and drew his army back to Granada.

In the meantime, President Mora and his army, very much encouraged by their victory at Santa Rosa, moved across the border into Nicaragua and occupied the town of Rivas which had been Walker's headquarters a few days before. Further information convinced Walker that he need not expect, at that time, the rumored intervention of Guatemala and El Salvador; so he changed his plan abruptly and decided again to try to gain a decisive victory over the Costarican forces at Rivas. And knowing that President Mora was with the army, he entertained the idea of capturing the person of the president with his administration, an achievement which would have taken Costa Rica out of the campaign.²⁴

This time Walker retained personal command of his army and directed the strategy-strategy which ought to have served to gain the desired objective but for one ingredient which he, even with his astuteness, failed to recognize and comprehend after the demonstration at Santa Rosa. This ingredient was the simple but disciplined patriotism which will cause a soldier to advance in the face of certain death when he had just witnessed the death of those who went before him.

By his strategy Walker out-maneuvered and surprised General Mora and took possession of the central plaza, the church and some strategic buildings, although heroic defense prevented the capture of the buildings where the general staff was quartered and the ammunition stored. But the filibusters were able to direct a damaging rifle fire from the newly introduced Minie guns which prevented all open movement of the Costarican forces.²⁵

Walker obviously expected General Mora to order a retreat from the town even at the cost of abandoning the store of ammunition because the chance of driving the filibusters from their well protected positions seemed hopeless. Instead, Mora sent messengers to nearby towns where reserve forces were being held ordering them to come to Rivas.

Walker's forces had arrived at Rivas early the morning of April 11, and the sniping type of warfare continued throughout the day. But by evening Mora's reserve units arrived and were approaching the town from several points in such manner as to reverse the situation by causing the filibusters to be the ones besieged. In addition to this maneuver the Costaricans resorted to another practice which completely surprised the enemy. A common soldier, named SANTAMARIA, whose memory is yet honored, volunteered to run into the open street in the face of deadly rifle fire carrying a firebrand which he applied to the wooden portion of the eaves of the buildings in which the enemy was entrenched. He returned unharmed from the first trip and made a second one but this time was killed as he returned across the street. The burning roof structure silenced most of the snipers who had been firing from the far slope and as the fire spread the buildings were no longer tenable. So during the night Walker and his soldiers who were not dead or wounded slipped from Rivas in a retreat which some historians believe to be the turning point in his campaign in Central America.²⁶

The victory at Rivas was of great value to the Central American alliance against Walker, but it was costly to Costa Rica. President Mora in a report to the minister of war listed 260 wounded and 110 dead. He estimated the enemy dead at 200 including seventeen prisoners captured and shot.²⁷

When the filibusters left Rivas during the night they left their wounded with a small holding force in the church. But the next morning the Costarican troops stormed the church capturing the few individuals they found. The capture of these wounded is related logically to a phase of this campaign which distinguishes the campaign from the usual international war.

On March 27, a week after the battle of Santa Rosa, the commander in chief of the Costarican army issued a warning to all filibusters stating that any who were captured with arms in their possession would be shot. However, the same notice invited them to surrender voluntarily and be pardoned. The nineteen prisoners taken at Santa Rosa had been shot March 23 and, as has been noted above, the seventeen taken at Rivas were shot. Presumably, the wounded who were captured were not given any different treatment from that of unwounded prisoners. This policy of dealing with prisoners was in keeping with the general status which the Costarican government gave the filibusters from the beginning. They were to be dealt with outside the law entitled to none of the pseudo civilized immunities and privileges of soldiers participating in an international war.

Another phase of the campaign is of interest being somewhat related to that referred to above. The people of Costa Rica had taken pride in and satisfaction from their record of keeping at peace with other peoples. They had adopted a national philosophy of peace if not actual pacifism. But after the battle of Santa Rosa, when it was seen that the war against the invaders had to be continued, the editor of the Boletin saw fit to give this national ideal an interpretation justifying the current national policies. He recalled that it was generally held that to kill a person was wrong. But he argued that inasmuch as there existed no supreme power to which the republics of Central America could appeal to seek justice against an invader, there was no alternative other than making war and killing and injuring members of the invading force. And he further argued that small nations are even more justified in such defense because they are in greater danger of being overrun by stronger forces. ²⁹

The battle of Rivas did not end the campaign against the invaders. In fact the end was not in sight even though there was rejoicing and jubilation in Costa Rica. So the editor printed a letter from two cahplins, Fathers MORA and CALVO, reporting to their bishop in San Jose telling him of the condition of the church at Rivas which the filibusters had used as a hospital and fortress. The passages quoted below served well to convince a Catholic people that the war against the North American vandals must be continued:

"Walker's forces at the time of attacking us took possession of the parochial church of Rivas with no regard for the fact that it was the house of the true God committing the gravest of offenses. Fortunately the parish priest in anticipation of the event consumed the Holy Sacrament. But the enemy removed the sacred vases and stole what they could of the jewels and vestments.

They profaned the images and ornaments throwing them on the floor carrying their impiety to the extreme of using the images to bar the doors and to make barricades mutilating and breaking some in the process.

After the flight of the enemy our soldiers found on the bodies of the enemy dead various fragments of the beautiful gold shrine of the church. Our soldiers gave us the pieces of gold and we

have in turn returned them to the priest. The bandits carried away the cross which was ornamented with diamonds and other precious stones. And they carried their profanity to the extreme of bringing women into the holy temple.

The maniples and the priests garments were used as bandages for their wounded. We found one filibuster who had put on a Mozetta which he had torn off the image of Saint Viatico, and another fled across the fields dressed in a tunic.

We believe that it is desirable to publish in the press this information in order that the people of Costa Rica become more and more convinced each day that the cause which they are at present, supporting is not only appropriate and necessary politically but also holy and sacred with respect to religion."³⁰

The cost of the victory at Rivas was not limited to the dead and wounded. A few days after the battle an epidemic of cholera broke out which was to take a greater toll than the Minie guns had taken. Walker declared that the Costaricans caused the cholera by burying their dead in wells to save the labor of digging graves. But this charge was denied by Costarican authorities who declared that it was the filibusters who had so disposed of their dead.³¹ The forces of General Mora were so much weakened by the disease that a counter offensive by Walker could easily have won what might have been a decisive victory. But the cholera spread in all directions from Rivas in both Nicaragua and Costa Rica taking its toll of civilians as well as soldiers. So the filibusters were as much weakened as were the Costarican troops, and there resulted a self-imposed truce.³²

During this truce the editor gave a summary of his idea of the prospects which lay ahead for Costa Rica. Walker's original plan as seen by the editor based upon his (the editor's) correspondence was detailed as follows: Walker would defeat the Costarican army. In one month he would be in control of the five Central American governments. The United States, France and England would recognize his new government of Central America. He would send representatives to these three powers and the representatives would be accepted. Then the editor asked these questions:

"Hos could Walker doubt his victory? Has he not been recognized by counsuls of Hamburg and Prussia resident in Granada? Is he not a friedd of Mr. Wheeler, the American minister? What is to prevent his government from becoming as respectable as that of the United States? Little."

But he went on to assure the readers that this plan had been exploded by the victories at Santa Rosa and Rivas. "Walker has lost all of the prestige which the cowardly Central American renegades gave him by calling on him for help. Now he has been reduced to his former status of a fugitive from the justice of Sonora. Now this famous captain with pretensions of HERNAN CORTES has no other future but to become again a fugitive from his abortive republic, to suffer the punishment which God imposes on man to cause him to atone on the gallows the wanton and ambition which has spllt so much blood on the American continent" And he added later "The Central American peoples will exterminate this savage horde and out of the war perhaps will come a confederation and defensive alliance of all Spanish America."³³

We must take a final note of our Yuba-Sutter representatives. Henry Watkins served as captain of a company but is not mentioned in the accounts of the battles of Santa Rosa and Rivas. But later in the summer of 1856 he engaged in a minor skirmish where he received a bullet in the thigh. He recovered from the wound and returned to the United States in 1857. He returned at once to Marysville where he resumed his law practice and political activity. His case serves as evidence of the fact that the participants in the invasion of Central America did not suffer any appreciable stigma at home. In 1860 he was elected by the voters of Yuba and Sutter counties to serve as their joint representative in the senate of California. After the twelvth session of 1861 he moved from Marysville to Oakland where he died in 1872 at the age of 53 years.³⁴

Captain Sutter had the good fortune to be the only member of Walker's general staff to survive the engagement at Rivas without being killed or wounded. He returned to California in 1857 but brought with him what was described as a "fatal tropical disease". We were not told the name or the nature of the disease. He married and spent some of his time at Hock Farm and some at Anaheim, California working in vineyards. Later he moved to Nevada City where he died of the disease August 18, 1863 at the age of 30 years.³⁵

To write more here about the adventures of Walker after Rivas would be like telling the ending of a novel to a person to whom we might be recommending the novel. Those who would like to know more about "Mr. Walker of Yuba", as he was known at political conventions in Sacramento in the early days of Marysville, ought to have our local library order a biography of him from the State Library.

William Walker occupies a prominent position in the history of Costa Rica. There is no parallel character in United States history. King George, the Kaiser, Tojo, Hitler and others were remote. Walker was close and real. He has given Costa Rica its fourth of July, or rather two of them, because they consider equally important the battles of Santa Rosa and Rivas. So they celebrate the two dates. March 20th and April 11th. Children learn about William Walker in school, and all citizens of Costa Rica know him well. He is their patron devil.

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NOTES

- 1 William Scroggs, Filibusters and Financiers. This is one of the best biographies of Walker
- 2 Thompson and West, History of Sutter County, p. 41, Marysville Daily Appeal, Jan. 4, 1873
- 3 James P. Zollinger, Sutter the Man and His Empire, p. 289 Mar. sville Daily Herald, Jan. 5, 1856; Alta, California December 22, 1853; Sacramento Union, Jan. 4, 1856; Marysville Daily Appeal, Nov. 23, Dec. 7 and 8, 1855
- 4 Firemans Journal and Military Gazette, Mar. 8, 1856
- 5 San Francisco Herald, Jan. 5, 1856. The thirty names are quoted by the Herald from an item in the Marysville Express. The names not identified are: Francis Kirtley, N. Brown, Robt. Burns, George Flynn, R.M. Goff, J.W. Summers, John Nixon, C.S. Wells, Duncan Livingston, Lysander Johnston, W.J. Hutchins, Wm. Dunn, John A. Shelly, Frank Reynolds, J. Rowe, A.J. Clark, Thomas Taylor,

- R. Johnston, James Miller, Z.O. Cady, F.M. Tucker and J. Lowry.
6 Colville's Marysville Directory 1855. Marysville Herald,
Dec. 12, 1855 and Jan. 1, 1856
- 7 All of the clerks in the Biblioteca Nacional were very hospitable;
but I am especially indebted to one of the librarians, Senora
Grace Pacheco, who took a sympathetic interest in my project.
She not only helped me to find the papers which I wanted to read,
but she gave me several compilations of documents relative to
the campaign against Walker
- 8 William Walker, LaGuerra de Nicaragua
Version Castellana de Ricardo Fernandez Guardia, pp. 15-18.
This is a translation from the original written in English by
Walker in 1860. The translator, Guardia, is the leading historian
of the filibuster's campaign, and his footnotes in this translation
are especially valuable to students seeking the Costarican view
of certain debatable items.
- 9 Comision de Investigacion Historica, Proclamas y Mensajes No. 3,
p. 9. This is a compilation of documents made during the recent
centennial celebration of the war against the filibusters.
- 10 Ibid., pp. 7-8
- 11 Joaquin Bernardo Calvo, LaCampana Nacional Contra los Filibusteros,
p.18
- 12 Ibid., p. 18
- 13 Ibid., p. 19 This proclamation by President Pierce is quoted in
the Marysville Herald Jan. 19, 1856
- 14 The editor of the Marysville Herald denounced Walker's operations
in the issue of Dec. 11, 1855 and continued to express disapproval
in following issues.
- 15 Boletin Oficial, San Jose, Costa Rica, Jan. 19, 1856. This
publication was primarily a newspaper privately operated, but it
also was designated as the official organ of the government.
During the war against Walker it served as official bulletin of the
Department of War
- 16 Walker, La Guerra, pp. 143-144
Calvo, La Campana, p. 19
Sutter did not keep his California title of Colonel when he went
to Nicaragua. He went down as Captain of a company but was relieved
of his company command and became a member of Walker's general
staff with rank of Captain.
- 17 Calvo, p. 19
- 18 Proclamas y Mensajes, P.10
- 19 Comision de Investigacion, Batalla de Santa Rosa, No. 4, pp. 19-22
- 20 James J. Roche, Historia de los Filibusteros. version Castellana
de Manuel Carazo Peralta, p. 217
- 21 The Spanish speaking soldiers have a better description of hand to
hand fighting. They call it "cuerpo a cuerpo."
- 22 Batalla de Santa Rosa, pp. 25-29. Many years later excavations
were made at Santa Rosa uncovering remains of common graves where
the filibusters had been buried. United States coins were found
among the bones. Costarican historians have cited this fact with
pride as evidence of the pure patriotism which motivated the native
soldiers. They refrained from plundering the enemy dead.
Ibid, p. 44
- 23 A few French and German residents of Costa Rica served with the army.
But authorities deny that there ever existed a company of French
soldiers.

- 24 Calvo, pp. 28=30
- 25 This rifle and bullet had been invented by a French soldier named Minie in 1849. It fired a cone shaped bullet which was designed to expand in the barrel after being fired. This made the rifling of the barrel more effective allowing greater accuracy of aim. It was demoralizing to an opponent because the bullet made an animal like whine as it went from rifle to target.
- 26 Comision, Batalla de Rivas, pp. 29=42. These pages contain the personal account of this battle dictated by General Victor Guardia who served as captain at the time.
- 27 Ibid., pp. 16-18
- 28 Boletin, Mar. 27, 1856. This notice was published in Spanish, English, French and German. The english version read: "All filibusters taken with arms in hand will be subject to the rigor of the law which in this case is death. But all the filibusters who have not used their arms against this Republic and give up out of free will their arms and persons to officers of the Costarican Army shall be pardoned."
- 29 Boletin, Mar. 22, 1856
- 30 Boletin, May 3, 1856
- 31 Roche, p. 90
- 32 Batalla de Rivas, La Epidemia del Colera, pp. 45-55
- 33 Boletin, Apr. 26 and 30, 1856
- 34 Walker, LaGuerra, p. 255
California Blue Book 1909, p. 591
Marysville Appeal, Jan. 4, 1873
Sacramento Union, Jan. 3, 1873
- 35 Roche, p. 90; Zöllinger, p. 321
Grass Valley National, Aug. 18, 1863
Sacramento Union, Aug. 15, 1863
Marysville Appeal, Aug. 18, 1863
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