

Westward Expansion And Extension Of The National Boundaries 1830-1898



THE TEXAS REVOLUTION

And

MEXICAN WAR

1820-1853



NATIONAL SURVEY OF HISTORIC SITES AND BUILDINGS
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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The National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings

Theme XV
Westward Expansion and Extension of the National Boundaries
1830-1898

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THE TEXAS REVOLUTION AND MEXICAN WAR
(subtheme)

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United States Department of the Interior
Fred A. Seaton, Secretary

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Conrad L. Wirth, Director

PREFACE

"The Texas Revolution and Mexican War" is a subtheme of Theme XV, "Westward Expansion and Extension of the National Boundaries, 1830-1898," of the National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings. The National Survey is a resumption of the Historic Sites Survey, begun in 1937 under the authority of the Historic Sites Act of 1935. During World War II and the emergency following, it was necessary to suspend these studies. The Survey has now been resumed as part of the National Park Service MISSION 66 program.

When completed the Survey will make recommendations to the Director of the National Park Service and the Secretary of the Interior as to the sites of exceptional value that commemorate and illustrate the history of the United States. This will assist the National Park Service in preparing the National Recreation Plan, including sites which may be administered by the National Park Service to fill in gaps in the historical and archeological interpretation within the National Park System. It will also recommend and encourage programs of historical and archeological preservation being carried out by state and local agencies.

The purpose of this study is to assemble data on historic sites believed to be of exceptional value in commemorating or illustrating the history of the Texas Revolution, California Bear Flag Revolt, and Mexican War. It early became apparent that the

historical theme of Westward Expansion was too vast to be adequately treated within a single study. The theme was therefore divided into 11 separate subthemes, of which "The Texas Revolution and Mexican War" is one:

Part I is a narrative treatment of the theme, designed not as a definitive study but as a brief summary from which the general reader may obtain an over-all view of the subject. This part was researched and written under contract by Dr. Frederick G. Bohme, Department of History, University of New Mexico. Part II contains evaluations of sites believed to possess exceptional value in illustrating or commemorating the theme, together with brief descriptions of sites of importance but not of exceptional value. This part was prepared by historians of the National Park Service, who in 1958 and early 1959 visited each of the sites treated. These historians were Robert M. Utley, Region Three Office, Santa Fe, New Mexico, coordinator of the study; and William C. Everhart, Region Four Office, San Francisco, California. Lawrence Sando, draftsman in the Region Three Office, drew the maps and cover.

After completion, the study was presented to the Consulting Committee for the National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings. The Committee consists of Dr. Waldo Leland, American Historical Association; Dr. S. K. Stevens, American Association for State and Local History; Dr. Louis Wright, Folger Library; Mr. Earl H. Reed,

American Institute of Architects; Dr. Richard Howland, National Trust for Historic Preservation; Mr. Eric Gugler, American Scenic and Historical Preservation Society; Dr. J. O. Brew, Committee for the Recovery of Archeological Remains; and Mr. Frederick Johnson, Robert S. Peabody Foundation for American Archeology.

The over-all Survey, as well as the theme study that follows, is under the general direction of John O. Littleton, Chief, National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings, who works under the general supervision of Herbert E. Kahler, Chief Historian, Branch of History, and of Ronald F. Lee, Chief, Division of Interpretation, of the National Park Service.

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The work of the National Survey profits from the experience and knowledge of many persons and organizations. Every effort is made to solicit the considered opinion of as many qualified people as possible in reaching final selection of the most significant sites. Assistance in the preparation of this study from the following is acknowledged:

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Part I

A SUMMARY OF THE THEME

The United States emerged from the War of 1812 with a new awareness of its importance as a nation, and the decades following the war were marked by an urge for territorial and economic expansion unparalleled in American history. The Texas Revolution of 1835-36, the California Bear Flag Revolt in 1846, and the war with Mexico, 1846-48, were part and parcel of the westward movement. Few periods in American history have been as significant in "fixing the mold" for the nation's future, a mold that was to be tested to the breaking point not many years later in the Civil War.

Texas Empresarios

In 1821 Anglo-American frontiersmen, pressed by the combined economic effects of the Panic of 1819 and the end of the credit system in buying public lands, began crossing the frontier from the United States into the Mexican province of Texas. The Mexican government, still busy establishing its independence from Spain, encouraged this settlement by granting special privileges to immigrants. Each family could buy 177 acres of farming and 4,428 acres of grazing land, and those men who would contract to bring

other colonists received extra land for this service. These colonizers, called empresarios, found little difficulty in obtaining colonists, for good land, even at the cost of up to 12½ cents an acre in fees--and that on credit--was far preferable to picked-over public land in the United States at \$1.25 an acre, cash on the barrelhead.¹

At first there was little friction between the Mexican authorities and their new subjects, as their main contact was through the empresarios. The ex-Americans were allowed a good measure of local freedom to build their own roads and schools and to enact their own laws, and in 1823 the Texans were even exempted from paying customs duties for seven years. The Texans participated in the government of the newly created state of Coahuila-Texas, although they protested that they did not receive the representation they deserved.²

Deep, basic differences between the new residents of Texas and their Mexican overlords gradually became apparent. Politically, the Mexicans leaned toward absolutism, and their government gravitated more and more towards centralized control of the entire

1. Rupert N. Richardson, Texas, The Lone Star State (New York, 1943), 22-83.

2. Ibid., 73-89; Nathaniel W. Stephenson, Texas and the Mexican War, Vol. XXIV of The Chronicles of America (New Haven, 1921), 25-38.

country from Mexico City. They dispensed justice by decree and enforced it with troops. The Americans, on the other hand, had been nurtured on states' rights and a complete system of courts, with trial by jury. There was a language barrier, and not many of the new Texans took the trouble to learn Spanish. The Mexicans, with a deep pride in their own institutions, felt that these Texans would have to be kept "in their place;" the Texans, making no great effort at mutual understanding either, considered the Mexicans inferior and incapable of governing.³

By mid-1820's Texas was in a state of uneasy peace, punctuated by the Fredonian Rebellion in which Mexicans and Americans clashed over Spanish land grant titles. This revolt was tied, at least in Mexican thinking, with the efforts of the United States to purchase or otherwise acquire Texas, and they looked upon it as another evidence of "Yankee" pressure. As Americans continued to pour across their northern frontier, the Mexican government promulgated a new law in 1830 which forbade further immigration from the United States into Texas. In this same year the tariff exemptions granted in 1823 came to an end, and the Texans felt the pincers closing around them.⁴

3. Richardson, 98-99.

4. Ibid., 99-100; Stephenson, 38.

The first overt resistance to Mexican rule occurred at the little port of Anáhuac in May 1832. Here the military commander was Col. John Davis Bradburn, a Kentuckian in the Mexican service. The local merchants had been lax in observing the tariff regulations, and several residents took issue with him over his arbitrary actions. Never known for his diplomacy, Bradburn arrested several colonists for obstructing his rule. This resulted in a revolt on the part of the more hot-headed Texans; Bradburn's fort was besieged, and the rebels sent to Brazoria for three cannon (illegally kept there) to underscore their demands. The contest at Anáhuac was quickly resolved by Bradburn's resignation and the removal of the Mexican troops, but meanwhile the colonists were busy boating their cannon around from Brazoria. In order to reach Anáhuac they had to pass the fort at Velasco, at the mouth of the Brazos River. Here the Mexican commandant refused them passage, and in a sharp engagement the colonists took the fort. In another movement Texas forces under the command of Col. John W. Bullock and Col. James W. Bowie forced the retreat of the Mexican troops from Nacogdoches and another post on the upper Brazos. All of these soldiers left Texas and joined the forces of Gen. Antonio López de Santa Anna, then gathering power in Mexico. This action satisfied the Texans, for they had cleared their land of the hated troops, customs duties were again suspended, and they also thought

Santa Anna favored their aspirations for self-rule.⁵

Texas now pressed for the repeal of the 1830 law prohibiting immigration, and called for a separation from Coahuila. In October 1832 and again in April 1833 some of the more militant Texans met at San Felipe to formulate plans for greater self-government, and even drew up a state constitution, which they had Stephen Austin, a leading empresario, take to Mexico City. The authorities there were aghast at such presumptuousness, and threw Austin into prison. Austin urged his fellow Texans to await developments peacefully, and they did so under increasing pressure. Although the government repealed the immigration ban and reformed the Texan court system sufficient to satisfy the more conservative colonists, it had also in 1834 abolished the empresario system, thereby opening Texas to uncontrolled land speculation. A coincident political upheaval in Coahuila led to an "invasion" by Gen. Martin Perfecto de Cos, Santa Anna's brother-in-law, and the governor of Coahuila-Texas began selling public lands in Texas to speculators in order to raise defense funds.⁶

5. Richardson, 101-103; Stephenson, 42-43; George L. Rives, The United States and Mexico, 1821-1848 (2 vols., New York, 1913), I, 214.

6. Richardson, 106-113; William C. Binkley, The Texas Revolution (Baton Rouge, [c. 1952]), 8-44.

Texas was now caught between a factional political fight in Coahuila, the land speculators, and the Mexican troops. Perhaps Texas would have escaped revolution had the difficulties been confined to Coahuila alone, but events of the summer of 1835 made this impossible. As in 1832, Texas had a small "war" party which wished to seize upon events in order to bring about independence. It also had a small "peace" party, just as interested in maintaining things as they were. In between were the vast majority of Texans, concerned with their own welfare and indifferent to the vagaries of politics. As in 1832, Texas had Anáhuac, where a new force of soldiers had moved in, and another group of merchants became disgruntled over the collection of tariffs. Two Texans were imprisoned and another wounded in an attempt to repeat the 1832 process. General Cos, hearing of the incident, proposed to reinforce the garrison, and sent dispatches to Capt. Antonio Tenorio at Anáhuac to this effect. His courier was intercepted enroute, and his letters were opened and read at San Felipe, where a Texan convention had again gathered. Knowing that the state government of Coahuila-Texas had fallen into Cos' hands and that the governor had been arrested, Cos' new move into Texas seemed to the "war" party an excellent time to strike. By no means supported by the rest of the convention, a small group of 25 or 30 Texans under the direction of W. B. Travis set out with their rifles and a small

cannon mounted on a pair of sawmill truck wheels to take the post at Anáhuac before it could be reinforced. On June 30, 1835, Captain Tenorio surrendered his garrison without a fight.⁷

This action met with widespread condemnation throughout Texas, but General Cos was unwilling to let the Texans settle this matter themselves. He demanded the arrest of the "war" party conspirators and moved his forces into Texas. In the face of this new advance, opinion in Texas began to crystallize. Austin, newly returned from his imprisonment in Mexico, as well as the more conservative members of the convention at San Felipe, decided that resistance was the only solution and called for armed volunteers. The revolution was about to begin officially.⁸

The Texas Revolution

Late in September the Mexican commandant at San Antonio, Col. Domingo de Ugartechea, dispatched a corporal and four men with a cart to Gonzales to commandeer a 6-pounder brass cannon which the settlers there had for protection against the Indians. The local alcalde, or mayor, sent the soldiers back empty-handed, hid the gun under a peach orchard, and called for help. By October 1 some 160 Texans, under Col. J. H. Moore, assembled to face Lt.

7. Binkley, 43-55; Richardson, 115-116.

8. Binkley, 65-67.

Francisco Castañeda and a hundred Mexican dragoons just arrived at the far side of the Guadalupe River.⁹ The next morning the Texans, with their cannon disinterred and loaded with scrap iron and pieces of chain, advanced on the Mexican forces, aimed, and let fly. After a brief parley which produced no results the Texans again fired, and the Mexicans--outnumbered and with no instructions to start a war--departed hurriedly for San Antonio, leaving one casualty behind.¹⁰

While recruits continued to gather at Gonzales, General Cos, with the main body of troops from Mexico, reached San Antonio without interference. Almost immediately, however, his supply line to the coast was cut by a small body of Texans taking the town of Goliad on October 9-10. Stephen Austin, the newly elected commander of the "Army of the People" at Gonzales, decided that the best plan would be to lay siege to San Antonio before Cos could sally forth and reestablish communications. By October 24 Austin and his followers were drawn up in front of San Antonio and began a protracted and ineffective siege. Impatient after six weeks of

9. Eugene C. Barker, ed., Texas History (Dallas, [c. 1929]), 222. The number of Mexican troops varies from 80 (Stephenson, p. 62) to 180 (Richardson, p. 122; Frank W. Johnson, A History of Texas and Texans [5 vols., Chicago, 1916], I, 269). The higher figure appears in a memoir written about 40 years after the event by one of the Texan participants.

10. Barker, 224.

this sitdown war, some 300 men followed an old frontiersman, Ben Milam, in an assault on the town.¹¹ One of the participants reported:

We went through the old adobe and picket houses . . . using battering rams made out of logs ten or twelve feet long. The stout men would take hold of the logs and swing them a while and let drive endwise, punching holes in the walls through which we passed. How the women and children would yell when we knocked the holes in the walls and went in.¹²

Cos' army, twice the size of the Texan force, left the city for the fortified chapel of Mission San Antonio de Valero (better known as the Alamo), a poor defensive position commanded by Texan rifle fire. By December 10 Cos had capitulated to the Texans, and was permitted to leave for Mexico with his troops. William B. Travis, with 150 of the original Texan force, took up the position which the Mexicans had found so untenable. The rest of the army, now under over-all command of Gen. Sam Houston, was split up, and the various military commanders, both official and unofficial, were left to their own schemes for defense or offense without over-all direction or planning. Most of the Texans, having accomplished their purpose at San Antonio, had returned to their homes.¹³

11. Binkley, 73-74, 88; Richardson, 122; Barker, 228-229.

12. Stephenson, 67.

13. Binkley, 88-93.

Through the promise of land bounties Austin recruited two companies of volunteers in Louisiana, two more in Georgia, and one each in Mississippi and Kentucky. Mexico was unable to patrol the Texan coast and guard the frontier at every point, and "emigrants," with their weapons officially described as "hollow-ware," poured in.¹⁴ The Texan Government ordered an expedition against the Mexican town of Matamoros, lest inactivity dampen the enthusiasm of their new supporters in and from the United States. After several changes, the command of this venture passed from Houston to James W. Fannin, Jr. The garrison at San Antonio was stripped of supplies for the project, rendering the weak force at the Alamo even weaker. Houston, discovering that the men would not accept him as commander-in-chief, persuaded many of them that an attack on Matamoros could not succeed, and about 350 of the 500 men then departed for home. This left a force of about 150, which was promptly destroyed almost to a man near San Patricio by a Mexican cavalry detachment under Gen. José Urrea.¹⁵

Fannin, with about 450 new volunteers, mostly from the "States," was left in a quandary. At first he tried to go to the relief of the now-besieged Alamo, but changed his mind.¹⁶ General Houston

14. Rives, I, 363-371.

15. Richardson, 127; Binkley, 94.

16. Barker, 263-264.

(once more in command of all Texan forces) then ordered him to fall back to Guadalupe Victoria. Fannin, however, divided his force, sending one-third of it to Refugio to help evacuate settlers, and wanted to delay compliance until this detachment returned. The Refugio group was taken by General Urrea also, and Fannin could only withdraw. Encumbered with artillery he had been ordered to destroy, he was surrounded on March 19 by the Mexican forces on an open prairie just north of Goliad, less than half a mile from a wooded area that would have given the Texans some measure of cover. Outnumbered four to one, Fannin fought all afternoon and most of the night, but he was five miles from water, all of his horses and oxen had been killed, and he had women and children as well as many wounded men on his hands. He therefore surrendered, expecting that as prisoners of war the men would be returned to their homes in the United States. Instead, on March 27, 1836, 352 prisoners, almost the entire group, were lined up and shot as pirates.¹⁷

This was a mistake on the part of the Commanding General, Santa Anna (now also President of Mexico), who had ordered the executions. The President of the Texas State Historical Association has remarked:

Had Santa Anna seized the opportunity of Fannin's surrender to dump his men . . . on the wharves at

17. Rives, I, 331-334; Richardson, 127-128.

New Orleans, humiliated, starving, half naked, penniless, homesick, and forlorn, and each with his painful story of Texan mismanagement and Texan neglect, Texas' standing with the American people would have fallen to a new low; and American men and American money for the Texan venture would have become scarce indeed.¹⁸

Fannin's defeat was most calamitous for the Texan cause, but it is usually overshadowed in Texas history by the defense of the Alamo. While General Urrea took 3,000 men in the direction of Goliad, Santa Anna marched 3,000 more to San Antonio in February 1836 and demanded its surrender. Colonel Travis refused, and called for help. Reinforced at the last minute by 32 men from Gonzales on March 1, the 188 attempted to defend the mission against odds of twelve to one. The entire garrison was wiped out, but not before some 70 Mexicans had been killed and another 300 wounded. The Texan stand was hardly warranted on military grounds, but it did give the cause of independence a rallying point, delayed Santa Anna for two weeks, and lessened his reputation considerably.¹⁹

The disintegration of Fannin's forces and the disaster at the Alamo shocked Texas into action. On March 1, 1836, the impotent provisional government was replaced by a convention,

18. Harbert Davenport, "The Men of Goliad," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XLIII (July, 1939), 5.

19. Richardson, 128-130; Rives, I, 324-330; Barker, 262-272; Stephenson, 75 ff.

which issued a formal declaration of independence, compiled a constitution, formed a new government with David G. Burnet as President, and put the defense of the country in the hands of Sam Houston. Houston found himself in command of a force at Gonzales composed of less than 400 men, poorly armed, and with less than two days' provisions. General Santa Anna, feeling that he had already conquered Texas, divided his army into three columns, which were to sweep through the countryside conducting "mopping-up" operations. Hearing of the approach of one of Santa Anna's divisions, Houston ordered a retreat. On the night of March 13 this began, as men, women, and children struggled through torrential rain and flooded streams. Houston's line of march described a zig-zag eastward, searching out possible places along the river system where a stand might be made. The frontier and the government moved back with him, as settlers fled the approaching Mexicans and joined Houston's forces. The Texans spent about a week along the east bank of the Colorado River, organizing, drilling, and removing all craft by which the Mexicans might cross the swollen stream. Temporarily halted and facing a Texan force now numbering 1,200, the Mexican commander sent word to Santa Anna at San Antonio on March 24 that he needed reinforcements. Santa Anna's reply was to order the three Mexican columns into a converging movement on Houston's army. Houston, who had been waiting for reinforcement by Fannin before making a stand, received instead

word of Fannin's defeat. This forced abandonment of the Colorado "line," and a further retreat toward the Brazos began.²⁰

By mid-April Santa Anna and his army were at the Brazos. Finding that Houston and his men had gone upriver for some unexplained reason, Santa Anna concluded that this left him an unobstructed path across eastern Texas. He thereupon divided his force and took about 750 men and one cannon himself to pursue and put an end to the fleeing Texan Government. He reached Harrisburg on April 15 and burned it, and reached New Washington on Galveston Bay just as President Burnet and his family were being rowed away from the shore.²¹

Meanwhile, news of the division of Santa Anna's force reached Houston on the upper Brazos, and he resolved at once to follow the Mexican general. Reinforced by the gift of two cannon, the Texan army hurried southeastward, for Santa Anna had trapped himself on the peninsula between Harrisburg and Galveston Bay. The Texans crossed Buffalo Bayou on April 19, and after a night march reached the San Jacinto River on the 20th. Santa Anna's path back to his main army led past the fields beside this river, and Houston deployed his men behind the timbered borders of these fields. At first Santa Anna attempted to move eastward towards

20. Richardson, 130-133; Rives, I, 330-341; Barker, 298-299.

21. Barker, 300.

Anáhuac by crossing the San Jacinto at Lynch's Ferry, but he was turned aside by a Texan detachment. On the 21st about 400 Mexican troops under General Cos arrived by way of Vince's Bayou to reinforce Santa Anna, thus bringing the total strength of the Mexican army to about 1,150, as compared to Houston's 783. Houston at once had Erastus "Deaf" Smith burn the bridge over Vince's Bayou to prevent further reinforcement or escape.²²

Maneuvering their army behind the groves, Houston and Mirabeau Bonaparte Lamar, his cavalry commander, watched the Mexicans camp on the open prairie before them. Caught between the San Jacinto River on one side and the Texans on the other, the Mexicans were unaccountably careless. Protected on their exposed left only by a sort of breastwork made up of packs and baggage and their one cannon, they had posted few sentinels, the horses were unsaddled, and Santa Anna was enjoying his siesta that afternoon of April 21. About four o'clock, accompanied by a drum and a fife tooting the melody of "Will You Come to the Bower I Have Shaded for You?" (some accounts say it was "Yankee Doodle," and others magnify the music into that of a full band), the Texans charged the unsuspecting camp and fired their two cannon at point-blank range. The Mexicans were driven headlong toward the river, and of Santa

22. Ibid., 300-301. Historians differ over whether Smith burned the bridge on his own, or was ordered to do so.

Anna's entire force only 40 escaped. In half an hour the battle was over, and the Mexican army surrendered. Houston took 730 prisoners, the rest of the enemy being killed or wounded, at a loss of nine Texans killed and 34 wounded. Houston suffered a shattered ankle (some say from a Texan shot), but his pain was considerably lessened by the news that General Santa Anna himself was one of the prisoners.²³

A truce was declared and the remaining Mexican forces retired pending negotiations. On May 14 Presidents Burnet and Santa Anna met at the port of Velasco and signed two treaties, one public and one secret. The public one ended the war and arranged for the withdrawal of troops and the exchange of prisoners; the secret one engaged Santa Anna to press his government for the permanent recognition of Texan independence and a boundary at the Rio Grande.²⁴ In September 1836 Sam Houston was elected President of Texas, replacing Burnet. Santa Anna, still a prisoner, suggested

23. Houston reported 630 Mexicans killed, 208 wounded, and 730 taken prisoner. Houston to Burnet, April 25, 1836, in Barker, 307. This was based on the supposition that Santa Anna had at least 1,500 men, but there is no evidence that there were more than 1,150. Houston listed the Texan losses at two killed and 23 wounded, but Barker raises these to six and 25, respectively. *Ibid.*, 303. Richardson admits to nine killed or mortally wounded, and 34 wounded. Richardson, 135. See also, Andrew Forest Muir, "The Mystery of San Jacinto," *Southwest Review*, XXXVI (Spring, 1951), 77-84.

24. Richardson, 136-137.

that Houston send him to Washington to negotiate the transfer of Texas from Mexico to the United States. This was done, Houston being anxious to get rid of his unwelcome charge. President Jackson received Santa Anna, but knowing that he had been repudiated by his government and that the Mexicans were in no position to sell a country they no longer possessed, sent the general back to Mexico aboard a United States warship.²⁵ Houston was faced with an empty treasury, and was unwilling to have a large army of volunteers from the United States loose in Texas. The Mexicans were too occupied with internal political troubles to risk resuming the war. The Texas Revolution, by common consent, was at an end.

Americans in California

American interest in California was based on both economic and strategic factors. For several decades after the beginning of the 19th century American vessels hunted sea otter and fur seal off California's coast, and they were followed by whalers. New England merchants sent ships to trade manufactured goods for hide and tallow produced by the vast cattle ranches. A significant number of these New Englanders came to the province, settled

25. Wilfrid Hardy Calcott, Santa Anna (Norman, 1936), 143, 148-149 ff.; Richardson, 138, 150.

and married Spanish wives, and became californios.²⁶

While the sea trade attracted Americans from the Atlantic Coast, the lowly beaver brought men from the Mississippi Valley. The mushrooming demand for beaver pelts for hats set off a rapid expansion in trapping, and the "mountain men" ranged farther and farther west for their quarry. In 1826 Jedediah Smith, of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, led a party of 17 across the mountains and desert to San Gabriel Mission, to become the first of many Americans to visit California from inland. It was only natural that traders would follow the trappers; and settlers, attracted by the accounts of fair climate and fertile soil, would be next.

Americans were not the only people interested in California, however. Russian traders had established a toehold at Fort Ross in 1812, although this was eventually sold--under international pressure and because of a decline in the fur trade-- to John Sutter in 1841. Both English and French explorers had visited the area, and British merchants provided strong competition for the Americans. The Hudsons' Bay Company, for decades, the leading English firm in Canada and Oregon, did not establish a post

26. The introductory material on California, below, is based on John Walton Caughey, California (2d ed., New York, c. 1953), 101-224; and Robert Glass Cleland, From Wilderness to Empire (New York, 1944), 3-205. The hide and tallow trade is well described in Richard Henry Dana's classic, Two Years Before the Mast.

in California until 1841, when it opened a store at Yerba Buena (San Francisco).

All major nations, though, knew the strategic value of San Francisco Bay as a Pacific base, and should the Mexican government lose control of California--as well it might in those precarious early years of independence--the province would be a choice acquisition. Aware of this, President Andrew Jackson had tried to buy San Francisco Bay and Northern California from Mexico in 1835 for \$500,000, but had been rebuffed. Again, in 1837, when Santa Anna visited Washington following his defeat at San Jacinto, the 1835 offer was included when a settlement of the Texas question was discussed. The United States wished to purchase the entire area north of the Rio Grande, and a strip westward along the 38th Parallel from that river to the Pacific, which the government thought would include San Francisco Bay. This plan also came to naught, but California figured in all talk of westward expansion in ensuing years.

The 1840's opened upon a period of increasingly strained relations between the United States and Mexico, relations already made precarious by animosity over Texas and the question of unpaid American claims against Mexico dating back to that country's war of independence against Spain.²⁷ Not only had Mexico lost Texas,

27. For details, see Justin H. Smith, The War With Mexico (2 vols. New York, 1919), I, 74-81.

partly because of the intervention of American groups, but United States citizens, notably one Isaac Graham, had also taken part in some of California's political upheavals. Graham and about 38 of his followers were arrested in 1840 and sent to Mexico, and were only released through the intervention of the British minister in Mexico City.

It was against this background that Secretary of State Daniel Webster attempted, in 1842, to negotiate a three-party agreement among Britain, Mexico, and the United States, in which Texas and Alta California would be ceded to this country. In exchange the United States would pay off Mexico's British and American creditors. Whether or not Webster would have been able to succeed in this scheme is debatable, but whatever chance he had was swept away by an incident which occurred in October 1842.

In September of that year Commodore Thomas ap Catesby Jones commanded a small squadron of United States ships patrolling the Pacific off the west coast of South America. While in Callao, Peru, Jones received a letter from John Parrott, the American Consul at Mazatlán, Mexico, warning that diplomatic relations between the United States and Mexico were nearing a break. The same mail brought a clipping from a Boston newspaper which announced that Mexico was about to cede California to England in payment of its debts. (Mexico had, in reality, merely proposed granting land to British bondholders in exchange for their bonds.)

Within 24 hours after these items arrived in the mail, the British naval squadron at Callao suddenly left port. Jones, putting two and two together, sailed at once for Monterey. He considered it his patriotic duty to prevent the British from taking possession of California (in the light of subsequent evidence his fears seem unjustified, but neither Jones nor the American public knew it at the time).²⁸ He also wished to capture that province for the United States if a war with Mexico had indeed begun. With the frigate United States and the sloop-of-war Cyane (both relics of the War of 1812), Jones left Callao on September 7 and arrived at Monterey on October 19. He demanded surrender of the fort there "in the name of the United States of America, and with the earnest desire to avoid the sacrifices of human life and the horrors of war."²⁹ The puzzled garrison had no knowledge of any war, and no idea of defense. Indeed, it had only 29 soldiers and no ammunition for its guns. Jones thereupon took possession of the fort, raised the American flag over it, and issued a proclamation to the populace. All of this accomplished, it began to dawn upon Jones that possibly there was no war, and papers and letters discovered in the office of the comisario justified his suspicion.³⁰

28. Caughey, 224-225; Rives, II, 49-52.

29. Rives, I, 518.

30. Bancroft, IV, 310.

The Commodore apologized to the local citizenry and, detained for several months by other matters, sailed southward around the first of the year. He put in at San Pedro, and at Los Angeles on January 19, 1843, was wined and dined in the house of Don Abel Stearns by Gov. Manuel Micheltorena, who presented him with a well-padded bill for damages. The physical damage of Jones' "raid" on Monterey was negligible, but was far overshadowed by the injury to international relations. The Mexicans were justifiably irate; the United States was forced to disclaim Jones' action and abandon negotiations with Mexico and Britain for the time being.³¹

With the election of James K. Polk to the presidency in 1844, American interest in California grew even sharper. In his first message to Congress the next year, Polk reasserted the Monroe Doctrine, and announced that "no future European colony or dominion, shall with our consent, be planted or established on any part of the North American continent."³² The acquisition of California became one of the four major objectives of his administration (the others being Texas, Oregon, and the settlement of the Mexican debt question). Although Polk's first interest was to collect the millions of dollars in American claims and to establish the

31. Caughey, 224-225; Rives, II, 49-52.

32. James D. Richardson, comp., A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897 (10 vols. Washington, 1896-1899), IV (1897), 399.

international boundary, an integral part of this settlement was an offer to buy California, New Mexico (including Arizona), and Texas for sums up to forty million dollars, depending on the amount of territory Mexico would be willing to sell.³³

At the same time Polk did not depend solely on an offer of outright purchase to obtain California. He did not propose to try the "Texas game" of introducing settlers to take over the province, (although a few years of American immigration might make this possible), but rather he sought to encourage an independence movement within California itself.³⁴ To this end he appointed Thomas O. Larkin, the United States Consul at Monterey since 1844, his personal agent in assuring the californios of American support. Larkin in turn "passed the word" to other influential men. Polk's offer to purchase California was refused, and his plans for a

33. The Texas question had also revived the problem of the true boundary between the United States and Mexico. From 1803 to 1819 the United States had claimed the Rio Grande as the boundary, by virtue of the Louisiana Purchase from France in 1803. Then, in the Adams-Onis (Transcontinental Boundary) Treaty of 1819 with Spain, the Sabine River (now the Texas-Louisiana state line) was accepted instead, and remained so until 1836 when Texas claimed the Rio Grande as its boundary with Mexico. Mexico also asserted that the Nueces River, roughly 130 miles north of the Rio Grande, was the boundary between its state of Tamaulipas and Texas. Robert Selph Henry, The Story of the Mexican War (Indianapolis, [c. 1950]), 1820; Rives, II, 135-137.

34. Caughey, 227; but see, Richard R. Stenberg, "The Failure of Polk's War Intrigue of 1845," Pacific Historical Review, IV (March, 1935), 39-68.

revolution lost their force through the intervention of another American, Capt. John Charles Frémont, of the United States Army Corps of Topographical Engineers.³⁵

The Activities of Captain Frémont

Frémont, son-in-law of the politically potent Senator Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri, gained a national reputation as the "Pathfinder" through his five expeditions into the Far West, although the term "Path Follower" would be more apt. In reality the trails were already known to his experienced guides, among them "Kit" Carson and Joseph Walker, but Frémont succeeded in publicizing the West to such an extent that its exploration seemed his own accomplishment.³⁶

In the spring of 1845 Frémont assembled his third expedition, gathered his rifles, supplies and horses, and headed for California via Salt Lake, the Humboldt Valley, and Walker Lake. Some seven months later, with winter close at hand, he took 15 men

35. Caughey, 227.

36. Ibid., 228-229. The following account of Frémont's movements, except as noted, is based on Caughey, 229-234; Robert Glass Cleland, From Wilderness to Empire (New York, 1944), 203-221; and Hubert Howe Bancroft, History of California (7 vols., San Francisco, 1886-1890) V (1886), 1-190. Bancroft is not friendly toward Frémont but is well detailed. For a more favorable approach, see, Allan Nevins, Frémont, Pathmarker of the West (New York, 1939).

directly across the Sierras, while Walker led the rest of the party by a more southerly route. Frémont visited John Sutter at his settlement of New Helvetia, or Sutter's Fort. Going from there to San Francisco, he paid his respects to the new American vice-consul, William Leidesdorff, and then went to Monterey for an interview with Larkin. They undoubtedly discussed their mutual interests.

Larkin introduced Frémont to several local officials, among them the Commanding General in the area, José Castro. Frémont assured the suspicious Castro that his expedition was strictly scientific in its intent, but that he needed to spend the winter in California refitting and obtaining fresh supplies before starting back to the States in the spring of 1846. Castro gave his permission for the expedition to remain in the province, provided they would stay away from the coastal area. Frémont agreed to this, and soon after the arrival of Walker's party the entire group established a winter camp at Rancho La Laguna, about 13 miles south of San Jose. After two weeks there, however, Frémont marched all his men southward across the mountains and established a camp in the Salinas Valley, just a few miles from Monterey.

This move was an outright breach of faith, and the presence of this armed band so close to California's northern capital aroused the fear and anger of both General Castro and his cousin

Manuel, who was Prefect of the district. They both ordered Frémont to leave California at once, but Frémont instead took up a new position atop Gavilán, or Hawk's Peak (now part of Frémont Peak State Park). Here, on March 6, 1846, Frémont erected a crude log fortification and dared the Castros to dislodge him. General Castro, not to be intimidated, called together a force of local cavalry at Mission San Juan Bautista, below the peak. Castro, however, had no particular desire to risk the lives of any of his 150 or 200 men in charges up the steep sides of the peak, where 60 trained riflemen would be waiting to pick them off. After three days of flaunting the American flag from Hawk's Peak, Frémont and his men abandoned their fort some time between sunset and sunrise of March 9-10, and withdrew eastward toward the San Joaquin Valley.

By the 13th the party was crossing the San Joaquin River. They then turned northward, and on the 21st were camped on the American River across from Sutter's Fort. Moving slowly up the Sacramento Valley, Frémont gathered supplies and sent some of his men out to buy horses from the Indians, "a transaction," according to Hubert Howe Bancroft, "that appear ed not to have given entire satisfaction to the former owners of the stolen animals."³⁷

37. Bancroft, V, 22.

While in the valley, Frémont's men held a big two-day barbeque for a group of recently arrived immigrants. Reports of this affair reached Monterey by way of an Indian servant, who announced that the party--now numbering some 200--was going to attack Monterey as soon as Indian reinforcements arrived from Oregon!

The effect on Californian sensibilities of the Hawk's Peak incident, as well as the news from the Sacramento Valley, can be imagined. Mutual suspicion increased as californios and American residents of long standing alike began to fear for their property. Newcomers from the States found a further incentive to defy local authorities.³⁸ Larkin's hope of peaceful annexation grew dimmer.

About mid-April Frémont moved northward toward Oregon. As he did so, another important American arrived in California. Lt. Archibald H. Gillespie, United States Marine Corps, had been dispatched from Washington the previous November with orders for Commodore John D. Sloat, commander of the United States Pacific Squadron at Mazatlán, Mexico, instructions for Consul Larkin in Monterey, and letters for Captain Frémont. Should a revolution occur in California, President Polk wanted the American forces alerted to prevent either a Mexican recapture or intervention by France or Britain.³⁹

38. Cleland, 217.

39. Rives, II, 168-169.

Communications being what they were in 1845, the authorities in Washington could not wait to have orders reach Sloat via the usual route around Cape Horn, and therefore sent Gillespie, posing as a merchant, by way of Mexico. In order to escape attention and also to report on local conditions, Gillespie made no haste, and did not arrive in Mazatlán until February 9, 1846. After delivering his dispatches to Commodore Sloat, and memorizing and destroying those for Larkin, Gillespie embarked on the Cyane for Monterey via Honolulu on February 22. Direct traffic between Mazatlán was usually limited to about one small trading ship every six months, and Gillespie could not wait for that. On the other hand, the departure of an American warship directly for Monterey might excite the suspicion of the British squadron also at Mazatlán at the time, whereas traffic with Honolulu was quite usual. Accordingly, Gillespie did not land at Monterey until April 17, over five months from the time he had left New York.⁴⁰

After spending two days with Larkin, he followed Frémont's path to Oregon and delivered his mail there on May 9. Following a brief skirmish with the Klamath Indians, Frémont, his men,

40. "Gillespie and the Conquest of California, From Letters Dated February 11, 1846, to July 8, 1848, to the Secretary of the Navy," with an introduction by George Walcott Ames, Jr., California Historical Society Quarterly, XVII (June, 1938), 135 /hereafter cited as Ames/.

and Lieutenant Gillespie moved southward once more to the American settlements on the Sacramento River, which they reached by May 24.⁴¹ There is no evidence that Frémont had orders to do anything more than coordinate his activities with those of Sloat and Larkin,⁴² but it is obvious that his presence in the area with a group of 50 or 60 armed men had a further unsettling effect on local conditions.

The Bear Flag Revolt

Between May 24 and June 10 affairs in the Sacramento Valley approached the point of action. If confidence was needed for revolt, Frémont would be the one to supply it. A dozen immigrants and hunters from Frémont's camp, under the command of Ezekiel Merritt, managed to incur General Castro's wrath by stealing some of his horses on June 10, certainly with Frémont's knowledge if not actual consent. Merritt and his men had more extensive plans than mere rustling, however. Joined by 20 others, including William B. Ide, John Grigsby, William Knight, and Robert Semple, they appeared at Sonoma four days later.⁴³

41. Ibid., 137; Bancroft, V, 24, 29; Rives, II, 176; Cleland, 218.

42. George Tays, "Frémont Had No Secret Instructions," Pacific Historical Review, IX (June, 1940), 157-171.

43. Bancroft, V, 100-112. Rumor was that Castro was collecting these horses to mount an expedition against Frémont, hence Frémont's purpose in capturing them. Actually Castro and Pico were struggling for political power and Castro was organizing to meet an expected advance by Pico.

That early Sunday morning, June 14, 1846, Sonoma was just another sleeping California village, unguarded, ungarrisoned, unaware of its destiny. True, it had a few small cannon--most of them unmounted--about 200 muskets, and some ammunition; but these were under control of the local Commander, Col. Mariano G. Vallejo. Merritt and his men, variously attired in greasy hunting shirts, surrounded Vallejo's house and took him prisoner. Giving every indication that they were acting under Frémont's orders, the invaders took charge of all public property in Sonoma, and sent Vallejo and several of Sonoma's principal citizens to Sutter's Fort as prisoners. If Larkin had planned a peaceful annexation of California by working through the local population, this would end all such thought. Vallejo was certainly the wealthiest, most influential citizen of all central California, and up to this point had been one of the strongest supporters of American interests in the province.⁴⁴

Ide and the others (Merritt having accompanied the prisoners) proclaimed the Republic of California, and raised over Sonoma a flag bearing a single star, what was intended to be a picture of a grizzly bear, and the words, "California Republic." The Bear Flag Revolt had begun, and in a broadside dated "Headquarters Sonoma, June 15, 1846," Ide called upon "all peaceable & good

44. Ibid., 112-113; Cleland, 219.

citizens of California" to help establish a republican form of government, "prosperous and happifying in its tendency"45

During the next three weeks--the entire life of the Bear Flag Revolt--Sonoma became an armed camp, swelled by farmers, ranchers, trappers, adventurers, and families from the surrounding countryside seeking protection. Two Bear Flaggers, foraging for gunpowder on nearby ranchos, were killed by a small party of Californians near Santa Rosa on June 18 or 19. A few days later, a detachment of about 18 Bear Flag volunteers under Lt. H. L. Ford successfully engaged 50 or 60 of General Castro's soldiers, under the command of Joaquin de la Torre, at Camillo's Rancho, or Olompali, about half way between San Rafael and Petaluma.⁴⁶

Frémont now took an active hand in the revolt, appearing in Sonoma on June 25 with about 90 men. Augmenting his force from the Bear Flaggers, he marched to San Rafael, where he expected to find Torre, and possibly General Castro himself. Although he captured--and executed--several California messengers, Frémont could find no sign of the enemy. Captured dispatches, however, revealed Castro's plan to attack Sonoma, and Frémont hurried back to reinforce the garrison there. These dispatches, however, were

45. Bancroft, V, 152-153. Whether the flag was raised on June 14 or 15 is disputed among historians.

46. Ibid., 160-163.

intended to fall into the insurgents' hands, and while Frémont followed a false trail Torre escaped across the bay to San Pablo, where he joined Castro's forces.⁴⁷

On July 1 Frémont and Lieutenant Gillespie visited San Francisco with about 20 men. Convincing Capt. William D. Phelps of the American barque Moscow that war had already been declared (something Frémont did not know), they succeeded in borrowing the ship's launch and a crew to take them across the bay. Making an amphibious attack on San Francisco's fort, Frémont spiked ten guns and waded back to the boat. Bancroft remarked, "In the absence of a garrison, with no powder, it is not surprising that, so far as can be known, not one of the ten cannon offered the slightest resistance."⁴⁸ The next day the captain of the port was captured and sent to Sutter's Fort. These things accomplished, Frémont retired to Sonoma, where on July 5 he organized the California Battalion, a group of about 250 men combining members of the Bear Flag Revolt and his own party, with himself as major, and Gillespie as adjutant with the rank of captain. Leaving Capt. John Grigsby with about 50 men at Sonoma, Frémont departed with the rest of the battalion on July 6 for Sutter's Fort. They

47. Ibid., 170-176.

48. Ibid., 177.

camped in their old position across the American River on the 9th and 10th with such supplies and animals as they found on the ranchos along the way. Here, as they prepared once more to pursue the elusive General Castro, news came of the official declaration of war. The American flag had been raised over Sonoma on July 9, and now, on July 11, 1846, the Bear Flag Revolt ended with the raising of the stars and stripes at Sutter's Fort.⁴⁹ From this point forward, events in California became part of the Mexican War.

Taylor on the Rio Grande

Following the end of the Texas Revolution in 1836 there had been nine years of uneasy peace, during which Mexico constantly threatened to resume hostilities. During these years negotiations continued between Texas and the United States, with a view toward annexation of the debt-ridden nation to the Union. The Mexican minister in Washington, Juan N. Almonte, made it clear that annexation would mean war, and said that if Congress concluded a treaty with Texas for such a purpose he would demand his passports.⁵⁰

Early in 1845 the proponents of annexation succeeded in guiding through Congress a joint resolution by both houses inviting Texas to join the Union, and President John Tyler signed it just

49. Ibid., 178-186.

50. Henry, 17-18.

before relinquishing his office to the incoming James K. Polk in March 1845. Upon Texan acceptance of the invitation, Polk sent Gen. Zachary Taylor and a force of United States troops to the south bank of the Nueces River to guard the new American frontier.⁵¹

Although Colonel Almonte promptly left Washington, the annexation of Texas did not immediately lead to war, for the Mexican Government itself was in turmoil and more than half inclined to attempt a peaceful settlement of its differences with the United States. In October Mexican President José Joaquín Herrera was unwilling to resume the diplomatic relations Almonte had broken, but indicated that he would receive a commissioner (not a minister, for that would imply diplomatic recognition) to deal with the problem of Texas, and then only if President Polk removed the United States fleet hovering off the port of Vera Cruz on the Gulf of Mexico. Polk immediately appointed John Slidell, not as commissioner, but as minister plenipotentiary with power to deal with all Mexican-American differences.⁵² His arrival within a month and a half, together with the revelation of his diplomatic status, caused an uproar in the sensitive Mexican government. Gen. Mariano Paredes y Arrillaga denounced Herrera for weakness in treating with

51. Ibid., 20; Rives, II, 118-119.

52. For the interesting and complex correspondence, see House Executive Doc. No. 60, 30th Cong., 1st sess. (Washington, 1848), 12-148.

the United States, ousted him from the presidency, and assumed the office himself in January 1846. Gambling that the United States would not fight Mexico as long as war threatened with Great Britain over the Oregon question, Paredes declared his intention of defending all of Mexico, clear to the Sabine River.⁵³

This was an obvious challenge, to be met by the army idling at Corpus Christi since mid-1845. By October Taylor had some 4,000 men under his command, nearly half of the United States Army. With little or no expectation of war, the men alternately quarreled because of the inactivity or relaxed and entertained themselves. Lt. Ulysses S. Grant played Desdemona in a camp production of Othello, and a circus performed for the troops. With Paredes' announcement, however, Polk ordered Taylor's army to the Rio Grande, and on March 8, 1846, the cavalry and artillery began the march from Corpus Christi southward along the coast.⁵⁴

The presence of American troops here was important to Polk's plans, for it might exert sufficient pressure on the Mexican Government to accept Slidell (he had once more presented his credentials and had been refused recognition). Then, too, actual possession of the territory on the left bank of the Rio Grande

53. Henry, 24-31; Rives, II, 53 ff.

54. Henry, 22-23, 31; Rives, II, 128-129.

might be useful if a treaty were ever framed. It would also strengthen United States rights to the land between the Nueces and the Rio Grande, which Texas had claimed but not really occupied.⁵⁵

Gen. Francisco Mejía, the commandant at the Mexican town of Matamoros, sent cavalry across the Rio Grande to observe Taylor's march. He ordered them to fire if the Americans crossed the Arroyo Colorado, a salt marsh on the way to Point Isabel. On March 20 Taylor's dragoons splashed through it, but the Mexican cavalry retreated without creating an incident. Reaching Point Isabel (now Port Isabel) near the mouth of the Rio Grande on March 24, Taylor began establishing a base of operations there; and on March 28 the main body of troops reached a position opposite Matamoros, some 30 miles up the river. While Mejía undertook to strengthen the town's defenses, the Americans raised a flagpole and began erecting the bastions of a fort.⁵⁶

On April 11 Gen. Pedro Ampudia arrived in Matamoros, and immediately wrote Taylor, accusing him of invading Mexico and ordering him to retreat at once to the Nueces. Taylor replied politely, but did not move. In addition, he requested the United States Navy to blockade the mouth of the Rio Grande, so that Ampudia could receive no supplies by the usual water route. On

55. Rives, II, 133-137; Cf. Smith, I, 150-155.

56. Rives, II, 138-140; Smith, I, 145-148.

April 23 President Paredes published a manifesto declaring that a state of war existed because of Taylor's "invasion," the capture of the town of Laredo by a force of Texas Rangers, and the American threat to California caused by Frémont's presence.⁵⁷

Gen. Manuel Arista now assumed command of the 5,700 Mexican troops at Matamoros, with Ampudia as his junior. Arista had received a letter from Paredes which stated, "It is indispensable that hostilities begin, yourself taking the initiative,"⁵⁸ and on April 24 he sent Gen. Anastasio Torrejón with 1,600 cavalrymen across the Rio Grande.⁵⁹

Outbreak of Hostilities

Torrejón and his men moved upriver from Matamoros and forded at a ranch called La Polangana. The next day, April 25, 1846, Capt. Seth B. Thornton and a detachment of 63 United States dragoons was also upriver from the American camp, reconnoitering. He and his men were on a ranch named Los Carrecitos (later known as Galveston's Ranch), about 19 miles away. They had just ridden into a corral, and Thornton was questioning a Mexican when

57. Rives, II, 140-142.

58. Paredes to Arista, April 18, 1846 (captured in Arista's baggage May 9), quoted in Smith, I, 155.

59. Ibid., 149, 158; Rives, II, 142.

Torrejón's forces came upon them. The alarm was given, and with Thornton in the lead the Americans tried to dash through the only entrance to the corral. It was already blocked. They attempted to shoot their way out, but Thornton's horse was wounded and fell on him. Capt. William J. Hardee (later a Confederate lieutenant general) then took over, attempted a rally, but was forced to surrender. Sixteen Americans were killed or wounded, and with few exceptions the rest were captured. Thornton was among the prisoners, but was later exchanged and subsequently died in battle in the Valley of Mexico.⁶⁰

This was the first action of the Mexican War, and caused General Taylor to write Washington, "Hostilities may now be considered as commenced."⁶¹ His dispatch reached the Cabinet on May 9, just as it was meeting to consider a war message. With this word from the Rio Grande, President Polk went before Congress on May 11, and war was declared.⁶² Thornton's skirmish with the

60. R/oswell/ S/abine/Ripley, The War with Mexico 2 vols. (New York, 1849), I, 108-109; Henry, 47-48; Cadmus M. Wilcox, History of the Mexican War (Washington), 44, and map, 45; Rives, II, 143; Smith, I, 149-150. See also, Thornton's and Hardee's reports in House Exec. Doc. No. 119, 29th Cong., 2nd Sess., 19-21.

61. Taylor to the Adjutant General, Camp near Matamoras, Texas /sic/, April 26, 1846, House Exec. Doc. No. 119, 29th Cong., 2nd sess. (Washington, 1848), 17.

62. Rives, II, 157.

Mexican cavalry also marked the "spot" which figured so prominently in the resolutions put forth by a new young congressman from Illinois, Abraham Lincoln.⁶³

Following Thornton's capture, Torrejón circled eastward around the American fort opposite Matamoros, and camped at a new position about 12 miles downriver. Directly across the Rio Grande, at the Rancho de Longoreño, General Arista and the main body of Mexicans waited, and on Torrejón's arrival began fording the river to join him. For several days Taylor did nothing, but when he heard of Arista's crossing he left Maj. Jacob Brown at the fort with about 500 men, and on May 1 marched the rest of his troops toward Point Isabel, which he assumed was the Mexican objective. When they arrived there the next day, the Americans found no sign of the enemy.⁶⁴

The Mexicans, however, had not been idle. As soon as Taylor left for Point Isabel, the guns of Fort Paredes, across the river in Matamoros, began shelling the American bastion. In a desultory 160-hour bombardment Major Brown was wounded and subsequently died. The fort was now named in his honor. Both it and (later) the city

63. See, Congressional Globe, 30th Cong., 1st sess., XVIII, 64 (December 22, 1847). Lincoln demanded that the administration prove that the "spot" where the war began was actually on United States soil.

64. Rives, II, 144, and map, 150.

of Brownsville perpetuate his memory.⁶⁵ General Arista bivouacked at Palo Alto (between Matamoros and Point Isabel) on May 4, and sent Ampudia with a thousand men to besiege Fort Brown. Ampudia's efforts were fruitless, however, and he was ordered to return. The Mexican force at Palo Alto, about 3,300 in size, took up positions in the open fields, for Arista knew that Taylor was returning this way. When the Americans, numbering about 2,300, came into range on May 3 Ampudia opened fire with his artillery.⁶⁶ Lt. Ulysses S. Grant, who was present, wrote,

As we got nearer, the cannon balls commenced going through the ranks. They hurt no one, however, during this advance, because they would strike the ground long before they reached our line, and ricocheted through the tall grass so slowly that the men would see them and open ranks and let them pass.⁶⁷

After setting the prairie on fire with the cannonading, the Mexicans attacked twice, were repelled, and the Battle of Palo Alto was over.⁶⁸

Arista then retreated along the road to the Rio Grande. The land between Palo Alto and the river was covered with thick

65. Taylor referred to this post merely as "Camp near Matamoros" until May 4, 1846, when the name "Fort Texas" appears momentarily. House Exec. Doc. No. 119, 29th Cong., 2nd Sess., 22.

66. Rives, II, 145-146.

67. Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant 2 vols. (New York, 1885) I, 95.

68. Rives, II, 151; Smith, I, 163-169.

chaparral, relieved only by a series of dry lakes which marked an old bed of the stream. Here Arista decided to fight again, because he still stood between Taylor and Fort Brown. On May 9, therefore, he took up a position in a ravine known as the Resaca de Guerrero, which the road crossed. Taylor, knowing he was there, moved into a parallel ravine to the north, Resaca de la Palma. Deploying his infantry through the chaparral, and sending the cavalry in a sudden charge down the road, Taylor captured the Mexican artillery and put the enemy's foot soldiers to rout. Arista departed hastily for the Rio Grande, leaving behind his personal baggage and papers, his mules, and even one of his generals, Rómulo Díaz de la Vega. As the Mexicans passed Fort Brown, its guns hastened their flight across the river, thus ending the battle of Resaca de la Palma. American losses were reported as 39 killed and 82 wounded; official Mexican casualties were 802, but it is probable that they were closer to 1,200 over the two-week period.⁶⁹

Instead of pursuing Arista at once, Taylor waited on the left bank of the Rio Grande, to the vast impatience of his army. On May 18, having arranged for naval cooperation, he began crossing the river at the Rancho de la Burrita, about 15 miles below Matamoros, and approached the city from downriver. Arista at

69. Rives, II, 152-156; Smith, I, 170-176.

once requested an armistice, but when denied evacuated Matamoros and marched his thoroughly demoralized troops southward.⁷⁰

The Occupation of New Mexico

With Texas securely under American control, the authorities in Washington next moved to occupy New Mexico, and this task was assigned to Col. Stephen Watts Kearny, who left Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, in late June 1846. Travelling over the Santa Fe Trail, he reached Bent's Fort on the Arkansas River with 1,700 men by the end of July. On August 2 he crossed that stream, but sent Capt. Philip St. George Cooke, together with 12 dragoons and two Chihuahua merchants, with a flag of truce ahead to Santa Fe to sound out conditions there. On August 12 Cooke was received by Governor Manuel Armijo, who sent Dr. Henry Connelly (later a governor of New Mexico in his own right) back with the Captain as a "commissioner" to Kearny, promising that Mexican troops would be close behind. They met Kearny, who that day received his promotion to brigadier general, and his army on the trail between San Miguel and Las Vegas, not 50 miles from the provincial capital. Kearny ignored Connelly, and the "commissioner" returned to Santa Fe, giving Governor Armijo and the other Mexican officials sufficient information about the size of the American force to panic

70. Rives, II, 156-157.

them. Although Armijo made a pretense of fortifying Glorieta Pass, 15 miles southeast of the capital, the American dragoons marched through the defile without opposition.⁷¹

Kearny arrived in Santa Fe on August 18, 1846, hoisted the American flag over the Palace of the Governors, proclaimed New Mexico part of the United States, and began setting up an "Organic Law" for the Territory. Governor Armijo had fled toward Mexico with the entire garrison of about 270 men and their artillery, dissipating his force as he went. The immediate danger of military action in New Mexico was over, but Kearny had Lt. W. H. Emory draw up plans for a fort, and construction of Fort Marcy (named after the Secretary of War) was begun at once on a hill commanding the town.⁷²

Kearny remained in Santa Fe only long enough to consolidate American authority and organize a government. He appointed Col. Sterling Price military governor and Charles Bent of Taos (brother-in-law of Kit Carson) civil governor. Leaving over 2,000 Missouri Volunteers and a battalion of Mormon infantry in Santa Fe, Kearny and 300 dragoons left for California on September 25.⁷³

71. Ibid., 216; Ralph E. Twitchell, The Leading Facts of New Mexican History (1912), II, 200-203.

72. Rives, II, 216-219; Twitchell, II, 204-212.

73. Rives, II, 217, 219; Twitchell, II, 213-217; see also William A. Keleher, Turmoil in New Mexico, 1846-1863 (Santa Fe, [c. 1952]), 13-22.

During the next few months the forces at Price's disposal diminished. Under command of Captain Cooke, promoted to lieutenant colonel of volunteers, the Mormon Battalion set out on Kearny's trail on October 13. Their epic march, with wagons, took them south into Mexico, through southern Arizona, and ultimately to California, where they joined Kearny on January 30, 1847. Within a few years their route, the Cooke Wagon Road, was to be used by hundreds of immigrants crossing the country to the California gold fields.

Col. Alexander W. Doniphan and a regiment of Missouri Volunteers also left Santa Fe in October 1846. After a brief campaign against the Navajo Indians, the regiment re-formed at Valverde in December and marched south to cooperate with other troops in Mexico.⁷⁴ With a total of 856 men armed with rifles, but no artillery, he moved southward across the waterless Jornada del Muerto (Journey of Death) and entered the Mesilla Valley.⁷⁵

74. For details of the Navajo campaign, see Keleher, 22-26; Twitchell, II, 217-218. Valverde was an important New Mexican settlement from 1820-1825, but was abandoned due to the frequency of Indian raids. When Doniphan was there it was already reduced to a few adobe walls. On Feb. 21, 1862, Union troops under Col. E.R.S. Canby fought Confederates under Gen. H. H. Sibley in one of New Mexico's few Civil War battles. Keleher, 121.

75. Ibid., 23-26; John T. Hughes, Doniphan's Expedition . . . (Cincinnati, 1847), reprinted as Senate Doc. No. 608, 63rd Cong., 2nd sess. (Washington, 1914), 75-103, 129-130.

Doniphan's army, stretched out in detachments along the road, followed the left bank of the Rio Grande toward El Paso del Norte. On Christmas Day they began camping next to the Brazito ("Little Arm"), a short divergence in the Rio Grande about nine miles south of the present town of Las Cruces. While many of the men were foraging, and Doniphan was reportedly engaged in a game of "three-trick loo" (similar to whist), a cloud of dust was observed in the direction of El Paso. It shortly materialized into a detachment of Mexican cavalry and infantry under Lt. Col. Antonio Ponce de Leon. As contrasted to the un-uniformed Americans, the Mexican dragoons, according to one of the eye witnesses, were gaily dressed in "blue pantaloons, green coats trimmed with scarlet, and tall caps plated in front with brass, on the top of which fantastically waved a plume of horse hair or buffalo's tail."⁷⁶ Doniphan's men reportedly lay in the grass until the Mexicans had advanced to within 60 paces, then loosed a barrage of rifle fire. After capturing a small brass howitzer from the Mexicans and turning it on them, the 300 American troops in the field, aided by other detachments still coming into camp forced the enemy to retreat toward El Paso. Mexican losses were reported as 40 killed and 150 wounded, the latter including Colonel Ponce de Leon. Seven United States soldiers were wounded. The total number

76. Hughes, 132.

of Mexican troops involved is not known, and reports vary from 500 to 1,300.⁷⁷ The lower figure is probably more correct.

On December 27 Doniphan entered the town of El Paso, which promptly surrendered, and camped there until the artillery ordered from Santa Fe could reach him. On February 8, 1847, with the artillery, over 300 traders and wagons, and a total of 924 soldiers, he continued into Chihuahua. Twenty days later he met and defeated Mexican forces at the Sacramento River, and the next day occupied Chihuahua City. In May, their enlistment expired, Doniphan and his troops were mustered out at Saltillo, and from there they returned to Missouri. In 12 months they had travelled over 5,000 miles without uniforms, quartermaster, paymaster, commissary, tents, or even military discipline, certainly a notable achievement of a nature highly unusual in modern history.⁷⁸

Kearny's report to Washington that "The people of the Territory are now perfectly tranquil and can easily be kept so"⁷⁹

77. Keleher, 121; Hughes, 131-134, and map on 133; see also, Doniphan's report, December 7, 1847, Senate Ex. Doc. No. 1, 30th Cong., 1st sess. (Washington, 1848), 498; Smith, I, 518, n. 5. For Ponce de Leon's report, see, New Mexico Historical Review, III (October, 1928), 381-389.

78. Smith, I, 306-314; Henry, 224-237.

79. Kearny to Brig. Gen. R^oger Jones, Santa Fe, Aug. 24, 1846, quoted in James Madison Cutts, The Conquest of California and New Mexico (Philadelphia, 1847), 59-60; Twitchell, II, 212-213. General Jones was Commodore Thomas ap Catesby Jones' brother.

proved premature. Colonel Price had to crush an incipient revolt that was to take place in Santa Fe on Christmas Eve. On January 19, 1847, there was a localized outbreak in northern New Mexico. In this revolt, seven men were killed at Arroyo Hondo and still others at Mora. Governor Bent was assassinated while visiting his home in Taos, and the homes of several other Americans were destroyed. Kit Carson's wife escaped, disguised as an Indian. The uprising spread to most of the northern part of the Territory, and Price was forced to organize an expedition against the rebels. Fighting successive battles at Santa Cruz and Embudo, and marching through heavy snow, Price reached Taos on February 3.⁸⁰

He found the pueblo strongly fortified, with many of the buildings and walls pierced for rifles. The 12-pounder howitzers could not breach the walls, so it was necessary to storm them, cut holes, and then fire shells through. Over February 3-4 some 150 Mexicans were killed, and many more wounded, with American losses given as seven killed and 45 wounded. The Indian residents of the pueblo sued for peace, however, and the insurrection was now broken except for brief irregular skirmishes along the Red River and at Las Vegas. The revolt culminated that summer when 400 or more revolutionaries were reportedly found near Anton Chico.

80. Twitchell, II, 232-240; Cutts, 227-228.

Some were killed, about 50 taken prisoner, and the rest fled into the mountains.⁸¹

The Fall of California

The occupation of California, one of President Polk's prime objectives, officially began as a naval operation. Late in March 1846 Commodore Sloat, who had his orders to seize California's ports in the event of war, was lying off the western coast of Mexico with a squadron of seven ships. Upon receiving word of the Hawk's Peak Affair, he sent the sloop Portsmouth to Monterey to protect American interests there. In mid-May his copies of the Guadalajara newspapers bore the story of Captain Thornton's surrender on the Rio Grande. Sloat--in contrast to Commodore Thomas ap Catesby Jones--made no move except to send the sloop Cyane to Larkin in Monterey, advising him of developments and announcing his own eventual arrival. On May 31, when word was received of the battles at Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma, Sloat sent the sloop Levant to Monterey. On June 5 came news of Taylor's capture of Matamoros. Still Sloat made no move. On June 7, after the arrival of dispatches indicating that the Navy was blockading Vera Cruz, Sloat weighed anchor for Monterey.⁸²

81. Twitchell, II, 241-248 ff.; Cutts, 228-231, 234-240.

82. Rives, II, 190-191.

On July 2 he arrived at his destination in the frigate Savannah, still uncertain what to do. Five days later, he put a force of 250 marines and seamen ashore. They marched to the custom house and, amid ceremony, raised the American flag. A proclamation was read declaring that "henceforth California will be a portion of the United States. General Castro then moved southward for a meeting with Governor Pío Pico at San Luis Obispo, and the two, uniting forces, went to Los Angeles, leaving the rest of California to the Americans. On July 15 Commodore Robert F. Stockton, in the Congress, reached Monterey, and a week later took over command from the ill and aging Sloat. Admiral Sir George Seymour, with H. B. M. Collingwood, entered Monterey Bay on the 16th, but observing the American ships, the presence of Frémont with 160 men, and the flag over the custom house, left.⁸³

While Kearny was preparing to enter New Mexico, Commodore Stockton pursued his occupation of California. Taking the California Battalion into United States service and giving Frémont the rank of major and Gillespie that of captain, he sent them southward by sea to head off Castro. Stockton and Larkin, aboard the Congress, raised the American flag at Santa Barbara and then sailed into San Pedro harbor. Castro offered to negotiate a settlement with Stockton, but was rebuffed. Finding the odds

83. Ibid., 191-194.

apparently against him, the Mexican leader and several of his lieutenants departed for Sonora, and Governor Pico left the province also.⁸⁴

On August 13, 1846, Stockton and Frémont entered Los Angeles behind a brass band, and four days later the Commodore proclaimed, "The Flag of the United States is now flying from every commanding position in the Territory, and California is entirely free from Mexican dominion."⁸⁵ As subsequent events revealed, this announcement also was somewhat premature; but this was the message Kit Carson gave Kearny when they met in New Mexico on October 9.

Stockton left Captain Gillespie in command of 50 men to occupy Los Angeles, sent Frémont northward with the rest of the Battalion, and himself departed for San Francisco to make final arrangements for a territorial government. Gillespie's command was too small to control Los Angeles, and was further weakened when a detachment was sent to take charge of San Diego. Gillespie's attempts to govern Los Angeles were exceedingly unpopular, and on September 23 some of the local citizenry attacked the government barracks, without success. The incident, however, stirred the populace into a more general revolt, and several days later (September 26-27) a group of about 70 captured a small American detachment under Don Benito Wilson at Rancho Chino, about 25 miles

84. Smith, I, 336-337.

85. Caughey, 234.

east of Los Angeles. Gillespie now moved his men to Fort Hill,⁸⁶ back of the Los Angeles plaza, mounted some guns, and sent John Brown to Frémont asking for help. Carrying the message written on cigarette paper concealed in his hair, Brown was pursued, and escaped only by having his wounded horse leap a 13 foot ravine. He then walked 27 miles for another mount.⁸⁷

This horseman's epic journey of 500 miles in five days has been known ever since as "Juan Flaco's Ride," but "Lean John" was too late. Gillespie could hold out no longer, and surrendered. He was allowed to march his men to San Pedro harbor, but had no sooner embarked there than a relief detachment of 350 men arrived from San Francisco. Gillespie turned around at once and proceeded to lead his new force back to Los Angeles, only to be met by some determined Californians at Domínguez Rancho. In the ensuing "Battle of the Old Woman's Gun" on October 3, the Californians forced the Americans back to San Pedro with the help of an old four-pounder swivel gun which a Mexican woman had buried in her garden when Stockton first entered Los Angeles. The 110 mounted Californians had the gun fastened to a pair of wagon

86. Actually, there was no fort here until the next year, when the Mormon Battalion, under Lt. Col. Philip St. George Cooke, built one. For its history, see, Andrew F. Rolle, "New Flag Over Fort Moore," Westways, XLVIII (September, 1956), 4-5.

87. Cleland, 225-226; Bancroft, V, 305-314.

wheels, and pulled it along with saddle ropes as they harassed the Americans. Gillespie realized that his footsore men could not chase a mounted enemy, so he clambered aboard the Savannah in San Pedro harbor to await developments.⁸⁸

The Californians retook San Diego and Santa Barbara, and re-established their control over Southern California for the moment, but this was not to last long. Commodore Stockton, aboard the Congress, arrived at San Pedro on October 23 with more men, but after seeing the clouds of dust raised by the Californians (who were purposely driving herds of horses back and forth) he decided he was outnumbered and sailed for San Diego.⁸⁹ Frémont's co-incident move southward by sea was made useless by a lack of horses at Santa Barbara and San Pedro, and he was forced to return to Monterey. Here he organized a land expedition, and once more headed towards Los Angeles with four or five hundred men and four cannon.⁹⁰

American control of Northern California was fairly secure, so that Frémont could leave readily. The only manifestation of revolt there was some guerrilla warfare led by Manuel Castro and Joaquin de la Torre, directed at preventing Frémont from going to Stockton's aid. This culminated in a skirmish known as the Battle

88. Cleland, 226-228; Bancroft, V, 314-320.

89. Bancroft, V, 320-324.

90. Ibid., 357-360.

of Natividad on November 16, when about 70 American volunteers with 300 horses on their way to join Frémont met Castro's band at a ranch on the Salinas River about 15 miles from Monterey.⁹¹

Castro's forces had taken Consul Larkin prisoner the night before, and were proposing to use him in negotiating a favorable settlement with the Americans. The Californians attempted to intercept the herd of horses destined for Frémont, while the Americans sought to rescue Larkin. Neither side succeeded, the Californians retired southward, taking Larkin with them to Los Angeles (he was released in January); and Frémont got his horses.⁹²

Meanwhile, General Kearny and his 300 dragoons were moving southward along the east bank of the Rio Grande. On October 9, near Valverde, they met Kit Carson, who was enroute to Washington

91. The details of this skirmish are confusing, and the number of participants is in doubt. Hittell states there were about 40 Americans and twice that number of Californians. Theodore H. Hittell, History of California 4 vols. (San Francisco, 1898), II, 601. Bancroft (V, 364-369) lists around 70 Americans and 125-130 Californians; Cleland follows Bancroft, but places the number of Californians closer to 150. A History of California, The American Period (New York, 1922), 216-217.

92. Cleland, History, 217; Bancroft, V, 364-372, 402. Following Frémont's departure, the remaining Americans and the resident Californians had another "brush" known as the "Battle of Santa Clara" near the mission of that name on January 2, 1847. This was concerned primarily with resentment against American methods of "purchasing" supplies from the various ranches, and ended with a truce and an American promise that property rights would be respected. Bancroft, V, 377-383.

with dispatches from Stockton and Frémont announcing that California was under control. Leaving 200 of his men behind in New Mexico, Kearny sent the dispatches on and persuaded Carson to guide the rest of his "Army of the West" to the Pacific. The hundred men, mounted on mules and pulling two howitzers, moved westward through southern Arizona.⁹³ They forded the Colorado River on November 25, and after an agonizing march across the Colorado Desert reached Warner's Rancho, lying in a valley just east of the Coast Range, on December 2. From this point Kearny wrote Stockton in San Diego, requesting information and a guide party. This arrived three days later, when Captain Gillespie and Lt. Edward F. Beale, U.S. Navy, met Kearny's army with a detachment of 37 men and a small brass cannon on the heights above Santa Ysabel, along the road to San Diego.⁹⁴

Gillespie's departure from San Diego had not gone unnoticed, for word soon reached Andrés Pico, brother of ex-Governor Pío Pico and leader of one of the partisan bands then roaming Southern

93. Keleher, 26-28.

94. Owen D. Coy, The Battle of San Pasqual (Sacramento, 1921), 5; Arthur Woodward, Lances at San Pascual (San Francisco, 1948), 8-23; Bancroft, V, 339-341. The cannon, known as the "Sutter Gun," came from Russia and was one of those mounted at Fort Ross when John Sutter bought it in 1841. Lieutenant Beale, in later years, introduced camels into the Southwest as an experiment in transportation, and also became one of California's foremost Indian agents.

California. Apparently unaware of Kearny's presence, it is probable that he assumed that Gillespie was out on a foraging expedition, and laid plans to ambush him at San Pascual, along the return road to San Diego. Pico, who had about 30 men with him, did not escape Gillespie's notice either; and after a council with his officers Kearny decided to send out a scouting party. A detail went out that night and succeeded not only in determining the enemy's position but also in causing enough noise to make their own presence known. When the Californians also found a U.S. Army blanket and a dragoon's jacket, the entire camp was roused and mounted.⁹⁵

Three hours before dawn on December 6, Kearny's force stretched out in the six or seven mile march toward San Pascual. The advance guard found the Californians waiting with lances ready, and suffered sharp casualties in a charge. When the main American body came up, the Californians followed their well-known tactic of drawing the enemy off by feigning retreat. Kearny's men, mounted on a variety of semi-trained steeds gathered from the countryside, were soon strung out in pursuit. Pico then turned and attacked the disorganized dragoons. Carbines were practically useless because of rain-dampened ammunition, and the Battle of San Pascual soon devolved into a hand-to-hand encounter between

95. Woodward, 24-27.

the two sides, with clubbed firearms and sabers against the far longer iron-tipped lances forged on the local ranchos. As this was going on, more of Kearny's troops arrived with two howitzers, and the Californians at once galloped out of range. Eighteen Americans had been killed and 15 wounded. Among the latter were Gillespie and Kearny. The Army of the West camped that night where it was, sent an urgent message to Stockton, and the next day resumed the march to San Diego. Again Pico's cavalry attacked, harrying the American rear and occupying a hill ahead of them. The dragoons succeeded in taking the hill (now known as Battle Mountain), and Kearny decided to camp there and await reinforcements. Lieutenant Beale, Kit Carson, and an Indian guide crawled past three Californian sentry lines, and walked or ran over the rocky, cactus-studded back country to San Diego. Stockton had rejected the first plea on the ground that Kearny's force was big enough to protect itself, but he now sent a relief detachment of 180 sailors and marines. Faced with this, the Californians fled, and Kearny reached San Diego without further incident.⁹⁶

Assembling Kearny's dragoons, Gillespie's detachment of the California Battalion, some volunteers, and his sailors and

⁹⁶. Coy, 8-12; Cleland, 230-231; Woodward, 39 ff.; Bancroft, V, 346-355. Historians have tended to criticize Kearny for deliberately courting a battle, whereas he could have reached San Diego by another, undefended, road. Certainly his men were poorly equipped, and in no condition to fight. See especially, Bancroft, V, 353-354.

marines, in all about 600 men, Stockton set out overland for Los Angeles. The men, in ragged uniforms and handmade canvas shoes, had to help pull and push heavy ox carts through sand and up steep hills, but they finally reached the San Gabriel River--about 12 miles from Los Angeles--on January 8, 1847. Here they found a large number of mounted Californians under José María Flores, probably equal to their own force in size, in command of the bluffs on the opposite side of the stream. The Californians must have felt, somehow, that this was to be their last organized stand, for their morale was low, their leadership was divided, and they had little ammunition left. Stockton's men, with Kearny second in command, forded the river, beat off a cavalry charge, and forced Flores to retreat from the bluffs. The next day, January 9, the last skirmish in the American occupation of California occurred, when in the so-called Battle of the Mesa, close to the Los Angeles River, the American forces repelled a final charge by some 300 Californians. On January 10 Gillespie's old flag once more flew over the Pueblo of Los Angeles.⁹⁷

As Stockton had been moving northward towards Los Angeles, Frémont had been slowly marching south from Monterey with an assortment of about 400 trappers, settlers, adventurers, and even some Indians. Almost as if the timing had been planned, Frémont

97. Bancroft, V, 385-398; Cleland, 231.

arrived in the San Fernando Valley, just north of Los Angeles, on January 11. By now the Californians had abandoned hope, and were anxious to reach a settlement. Stockton had never been willing to negotiate, but Frémont announced that he would grant generous terms. On January 13 the Californian leaders met with Frémont at Cahuenga Rancho, near the San Fernando entrance to Cahuenga Pass, and signed the "Cahuenga Capitulations." These required only that the Californians turn over their public arms (two cannon and a few muskets), pledge obedience to United States laws, and promise never to rejoin Mexico in the war. Stockton, whatever his thoughts on the subject, was presented next day with an accomplished fact, and the Mexican War in California was over.⁹⁸

In hardly more than six months after the declaration of war, American forces had implemented the annexation of Texas, and had conquered New Mexico and California. The final move would be to strike at the heart of Mexico itself. In the late summer of 1846, General Taylor began the invasion by taking Monterey (September 21-23). Joined by the forces of Gen. John E. Wool, who had marched southward from San Antonio, Texas, and Colonel Doniphan with his Missourians, coming from New Mexico and Chihuahua, Taylor's army met that of General Santa Anna (once again President of Mexico) at Buena Vista. In the battle there (February 22-24, 1847) Santa

98. Cleland, 232-234; Bancroft, V, 399-407.

Anna was forced to retreat, leaving the road to Mexico City open.⁹⁹

The End of the War

For political reasons, President Polk decided to have Mexico City taken by "Old Fuss and Feathers," Gen. Winfield Scott, instead of by Taylor. Scott attacked Mexico City from the east, landing at Vera Cruz and pushing inland, while Taylor waited at Buena Vista. Scott reached Puebla on May 15 after fighting a series of small engagements, and finally approached the capital at the end of August. The Castle of Chapultepec, which overlooked two of the causeways leading into the city, proved to be the major obstacle between Scott's 10,000 men (including a battalion of 300 marines) and the city of 200,000. On September 13 the Americans stormed the heights of Chapultepec, which were defended fiercely. "Los Niños," the boy cadets of the Military College, were among those who fought to the last in the defense of their country and flag, and created a tradition for the Mexican nation to parallel the Alamo. In bitter street fighting Scott's men finally took Mexico City; Santa Anna surrendered on September 17, 1847, ending the Mexican War.

99. The material in this paragraph, and those following, is based on Henry, 138-391; Rives, II, 220-659; Smith, I, 347-400, and II, 1-324. An excellent summary of the war and its relationship to American history may be found in Ray Allen Billington, Westward Expansion (New York, 1949), 572-592.

There remained the problem of the peace. General Santa Anna abdicated, and Mexico was again in the hands of a provisional government. Realizing that a peace treaty would have to be signed quickly to prevent anarchy, Scott and Nicholas Trist, the Chief Clerk of the United States Department of State, ignored their instructions from Washington and pushed through an agreement. In return for \$15,000,000 and the assumption by the United States of \$3,250,000 in American claims against Mexico, Mexico would recognize the Rio Grande as the Texan boundary, and cede the area from the Gila River north to the 42nd Parallel and west to the Pacific. On February 2, 1848, the Mexican representatives agreed to these provisions and signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, named after the village where the negotiators met. This treaty substantially represented President Polk's aims at the beginning of the war, but due to the speed and ease with which the Mexican armies--once thought formidable by both sides--had been defeated, there had been increasing clamor for the acquisition of the whole of Mexico, as part of the United States' "manifest destiny" to rule all of North America. The treaty, rushed to Washington, was grudgingly accepted.

In three short years the United States had grown by 1,200,000 square miles, thus doubling its size, and had extended its boundaries to the Pacific. The Oregon boundary question had been settled in 1846 by treaty with Great Britain, and the United States thus

acquired the future states of Washington and Oregon. In the Mexican War, the United States wrested from Mexico territory that later made up the states of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, California, Utah, and parts of Wyoming and Colorado. The Gadsden Purchase of 1853, transferring a block of land south of the Gila River in Arizona, completed the expansion of the United States to its present continental boundaries. Manifest Destiny, the great motivating force of the times, had attained its most spectacular expression.

The Mexican War solved two problems--what to do about Mexico's failure to pay its war debts to the United States, and how to satisfy the desire for expansion--only to create another and more serious problem: how could the balance of power between North and South be maintained in this new territory? Despite efforts at compromise during the next decade, the basic differences could not be resolved. Men who fought side by side in the Mexican War to gain the Southwest were destined to face each other in the Civil War in a contest for supremacy. Texas, California, and the Mexican War completed the American nation, but divided it as well.

SOURCE MATERIAL AND FURTHER READING

Unlike the Civil War, the period covered by this brief survey has not received the detailed attention of scholars in recent years. The standard works on the Mexican War, for instance, date back to the decade of World War I, when the United States was again deeply involved in Mexican affairs. For day-to-day accounts it is frequently necessary to go back to books published around 1848 (due to space limitations, manuscript and newspaper sources were not used). The following bibliography omits the rarer government publications and other works cited in footnotes above, but includes several biographies and monographs worthy of attention. Most of these books and articles are either still in print, or available at public libraries.

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A detailed analysis of the spirit of the times.

McCormac, Eugene I., James K. Polk, A Political Biography (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1922).

Fairly old, but the only biography of Polk for the period of the Mexican War.

Polk, James Knox, Polk; the Diary of a President, 1845-1849 . . ., ed. by Allan Nevins (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1929).

Useful insight into presidential thinking.

Smith, Arthur D. Howden, Old Fuss and Feathers (New York: The Greystone Press, 1937).

Highly readable biography of General Winfield Scott.

Stenberg, Richard R., "The Failure of Polk's War Intrigue of 1845," Pacific Historical Review, IV (March, 1935), 39-68.

Discussion of Polk's actions in the realm of foreign policy.

Young, Otis E., The West of Philip St. George Cooke (Glendale, Calif.: A. H. Clark Co., 1955).

Cooke led the famous Mormon Battalion, which arrived in California just after the end of fighting there in 1847. Valuable impressions of the Southwest.



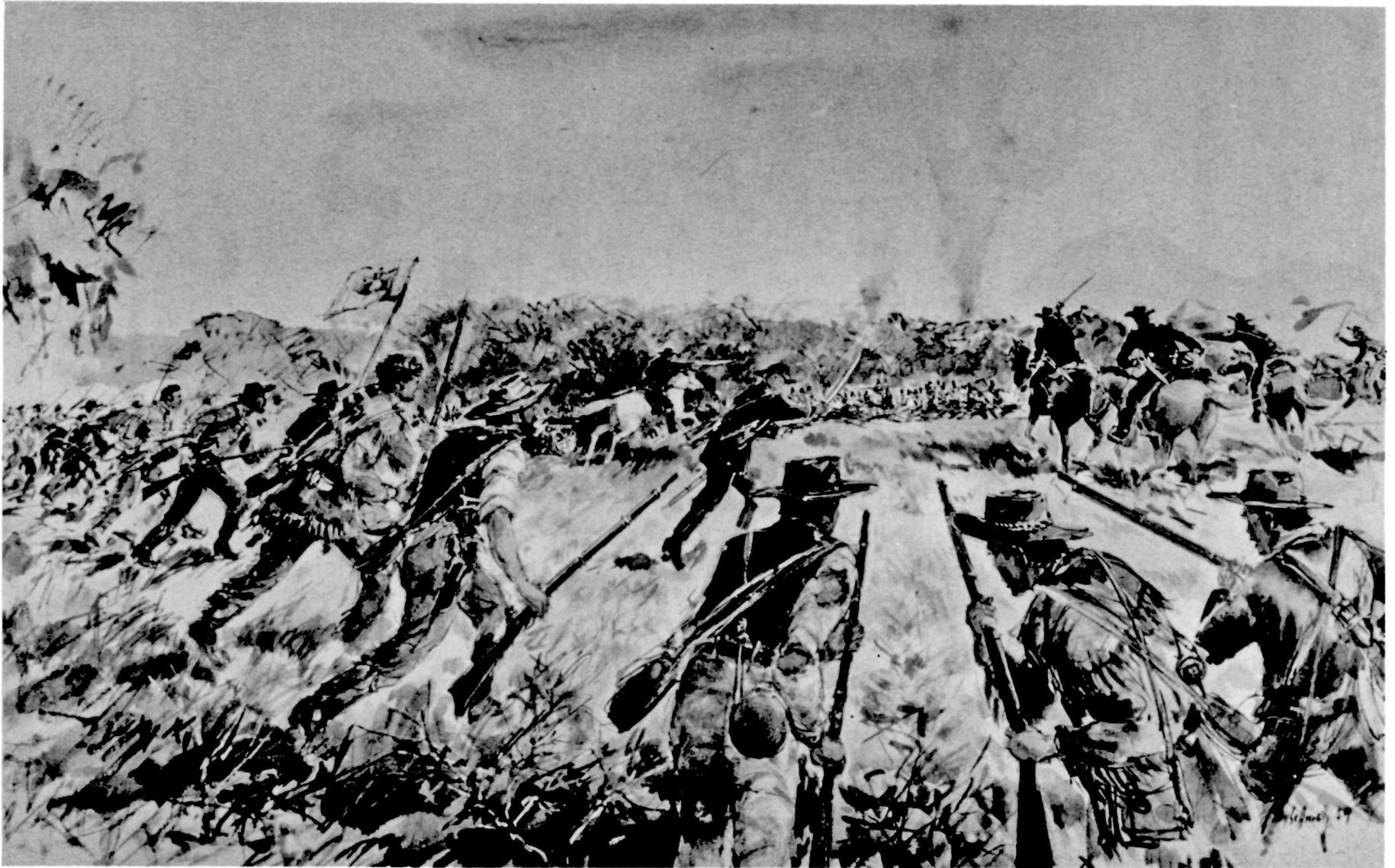
TRAVIS AT THE ALAMO. The battle at the Alamo fulfilled Travis' prophecy to Gov. Henry Smith: "I feel confident that the determination and valorous courage of my men will not fail them in the last struggle, and although they may be sacrificed to the vengeance of a Gothic enemy, the victory will cost them so dear that it will be worse for them than a defeat."

The Alamo--Daughters of the Republic of Texas, Custodians



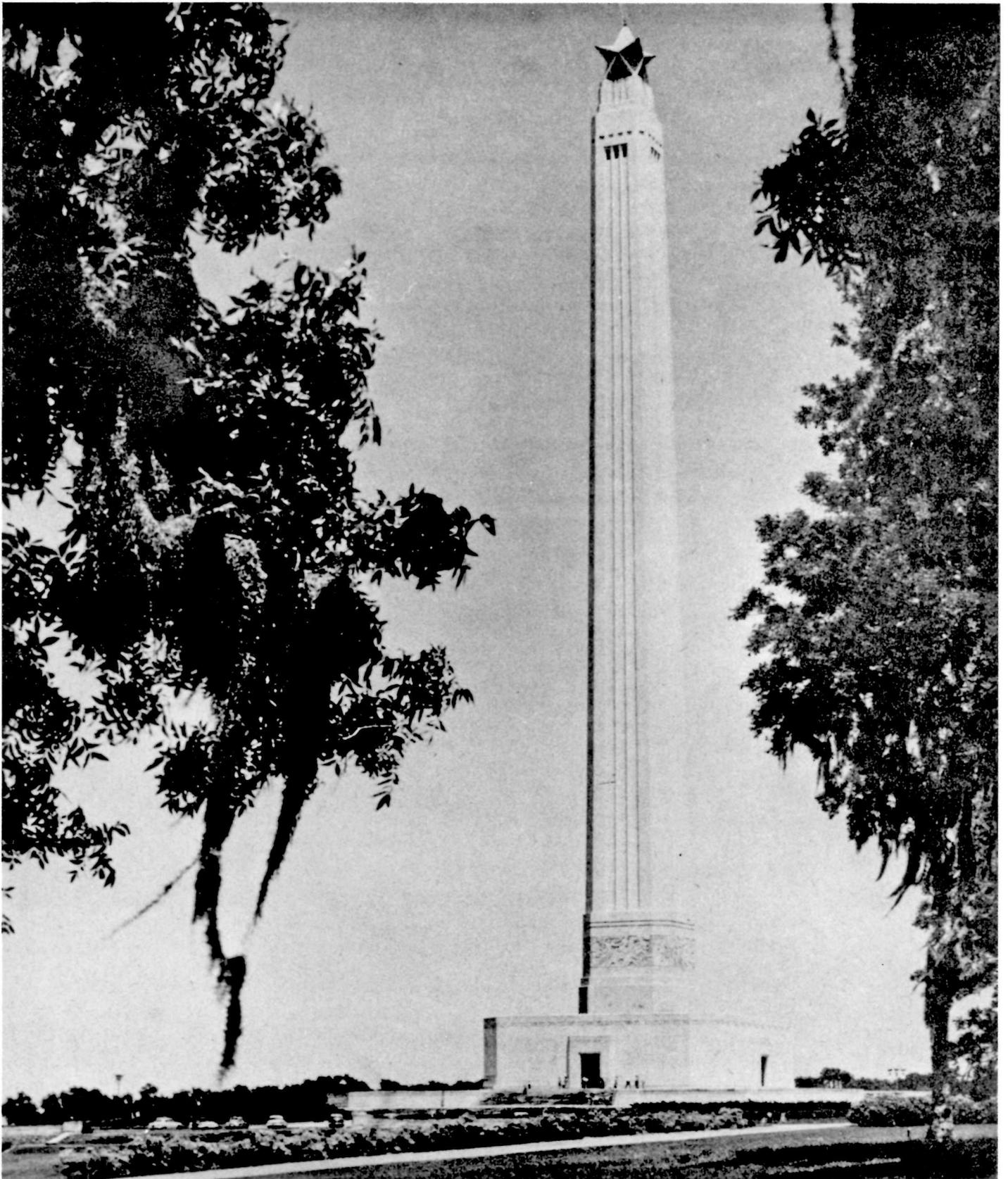
THE ALAMO, Texas. The shrine of Texas independence, where Travis, Bowie, Crockett and their men fought to the last, stands in the heart of San Antonio.

San Antonio Chamber of Commerce



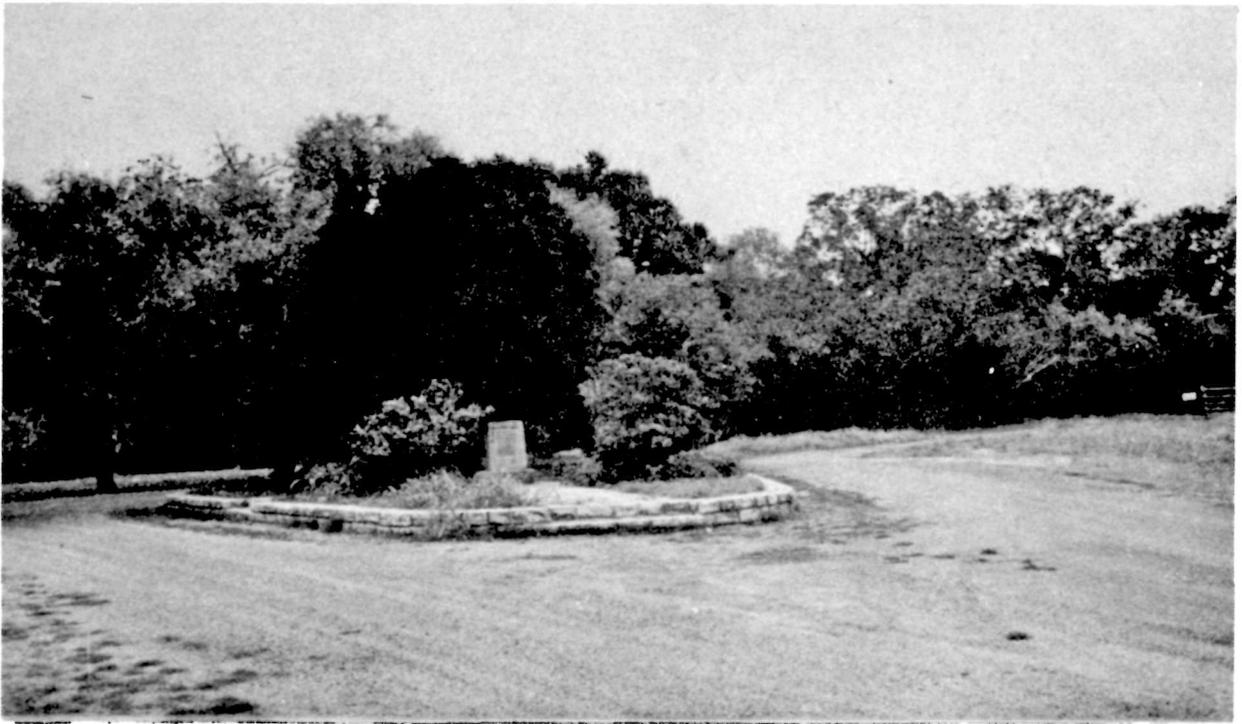
THE CHARGE AT SAN JACINTO. Texas artist E. M. Schiwetz here depicts the climax of the decisive engagement that won the Texas Revolution.

Courtesy Humble Oil Company



SAN JACINTO BATTLEFIELD, Texas. This granite shaft dominates the battlefield where Sam Houston defeated Santa Anna's Mexican troops and won the Texas Revolution.

Houston Chamber of Commerce



GONZALES, Texas. At this site near Gonzales Texans fired a small brass cannon loaded with scrap iron and chain at a detachment of Mexican dragoons, thus beginning the Texas Revolution. National Park Service photograph, 1958.



FRENCH LEGATION, Texas. Texas was an independent republic from 1836 to 1845. The French Minister, Count de Saligny, built this structure as a residence and the Legation of France. National Park Service photograph, 1958.



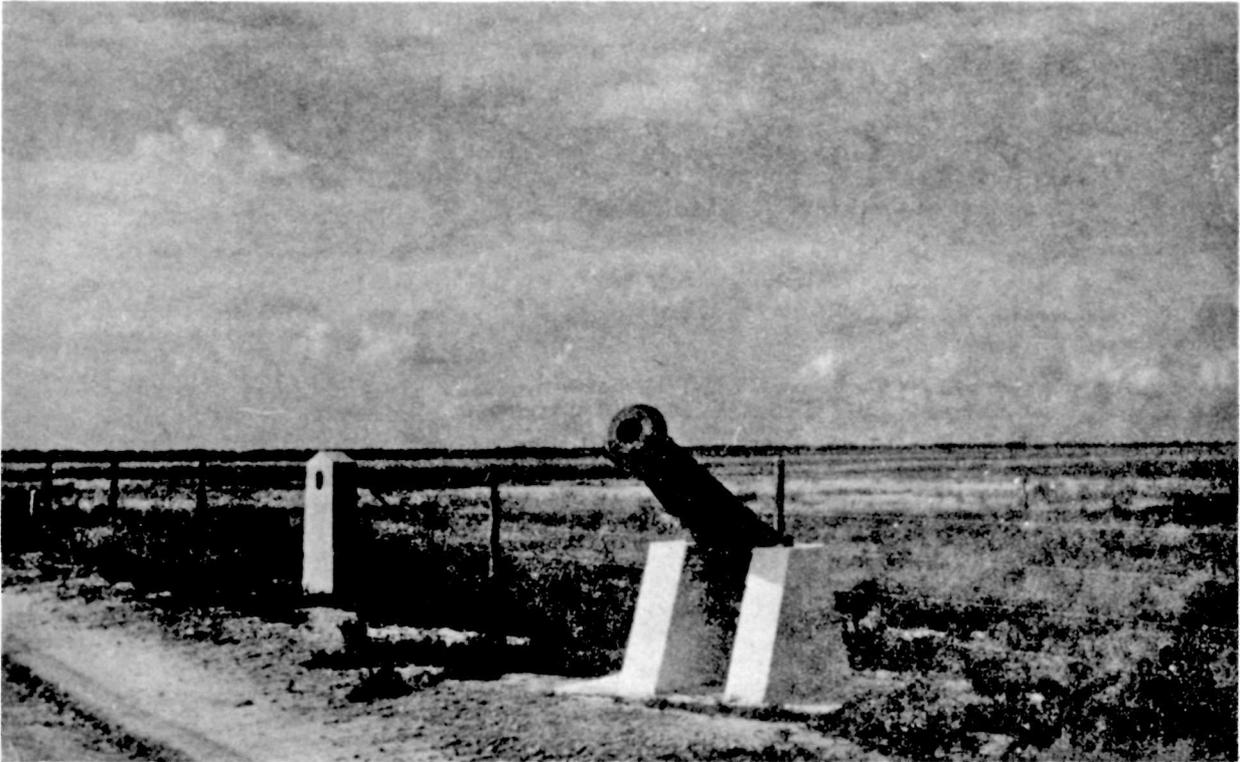
THE BATTLE OF PALO ALTO, May 8, 1846. This print, which appeared in The Army and Navy of the United States, shows Maj. Samuel Ringgold directing the fire of his batteries at Palo Alto. He was killed in the battle and one of the Rio Grande forts was later named for him.

National Archives



"THE CAPTURE OF GENERAL VEGA." This contemporary lithograph by Sarony and Major depicts the charge of Capt. Charles May's Dragoons at Resaca de la Palma, May 9, 1846. Captain May is shown brandishing a saber at Gen. Rómulo Díaz de la Vega, who was taken prisoner.

National Archives



PALO ALTO BATTLEFIELD, Texas. Chaparral has been cleared from these fields and fences erected where Taylor clashed with Mexican forces in the first major battle of the War with Mexico. National Park Service photograph, 1958.



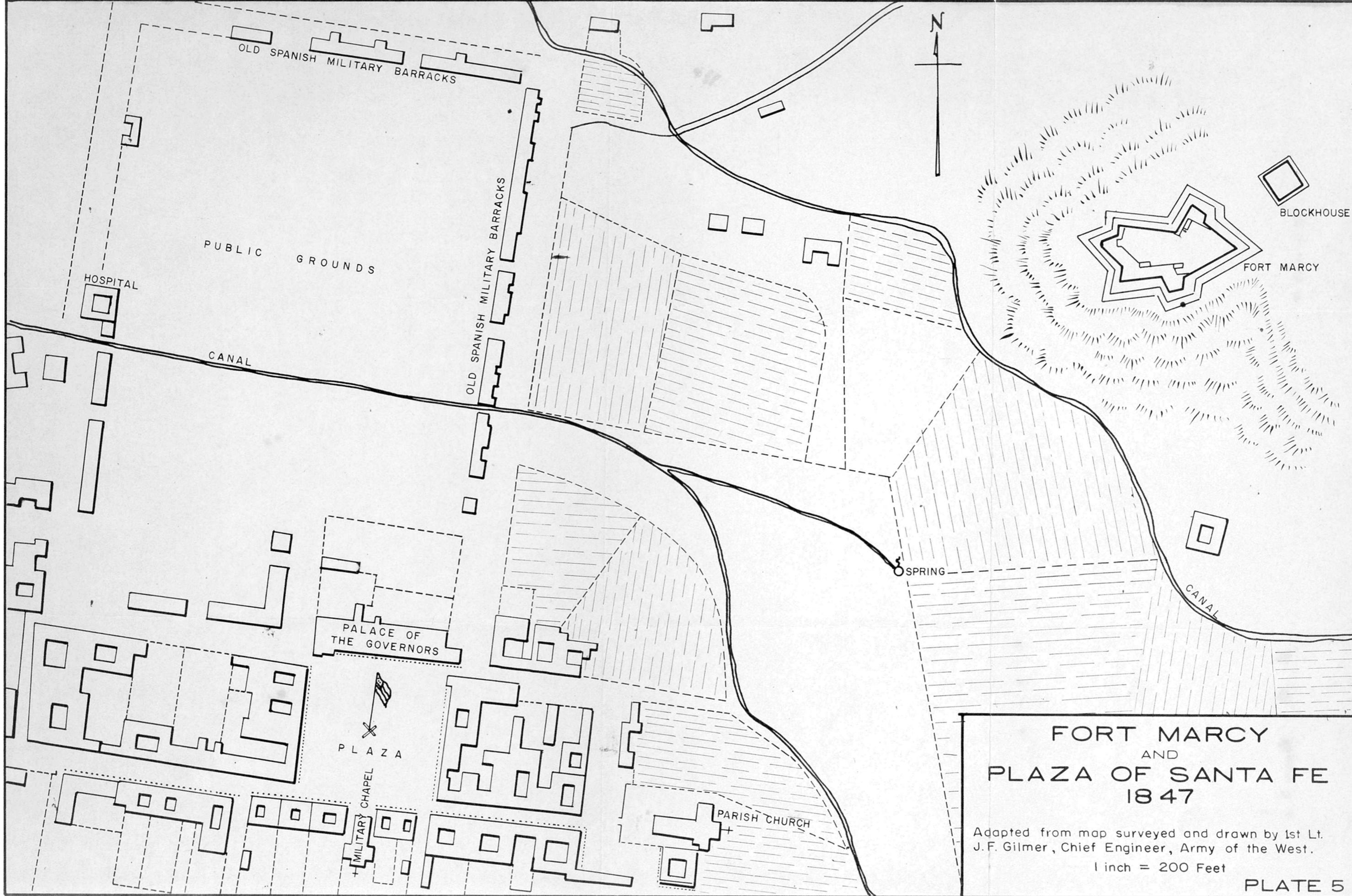
RESACA DE LA PALMA BATTLEFIELD, Texas. Citrus orchards partially cover the field where Taylor drove the Mexican Army from a resaca and across the Rio Grande. National Park Service photograph, 1958.



RESACA DE LA PALMA BATTLEFIELD, Texas. Palm trees outline bend of Resaca de la Palma, where Mexican and American troops clashed on May 9, 1846. Cannon was placed by Parker Commission. National Park Service photograph, 1959



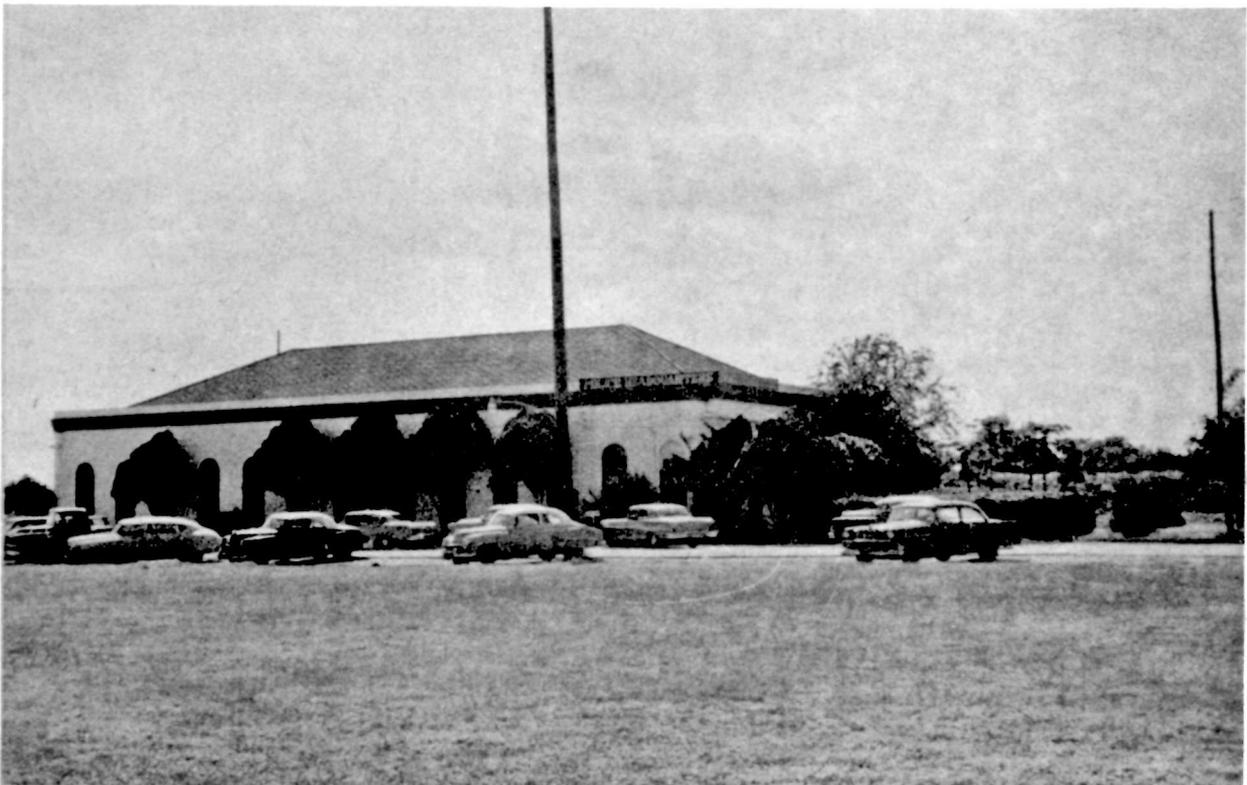
FORT BROWN, TEXAS. Heavy vegetation and low mounds of earth today trace the outlines of the earthen fortification that Major Brown defended against overwhelming odds during the opening phase of the Mexican War. A levee now separates the site from the Rio Grande. In the background is Brownsville's golf course. Upright cannon was placed by Parker Commission.



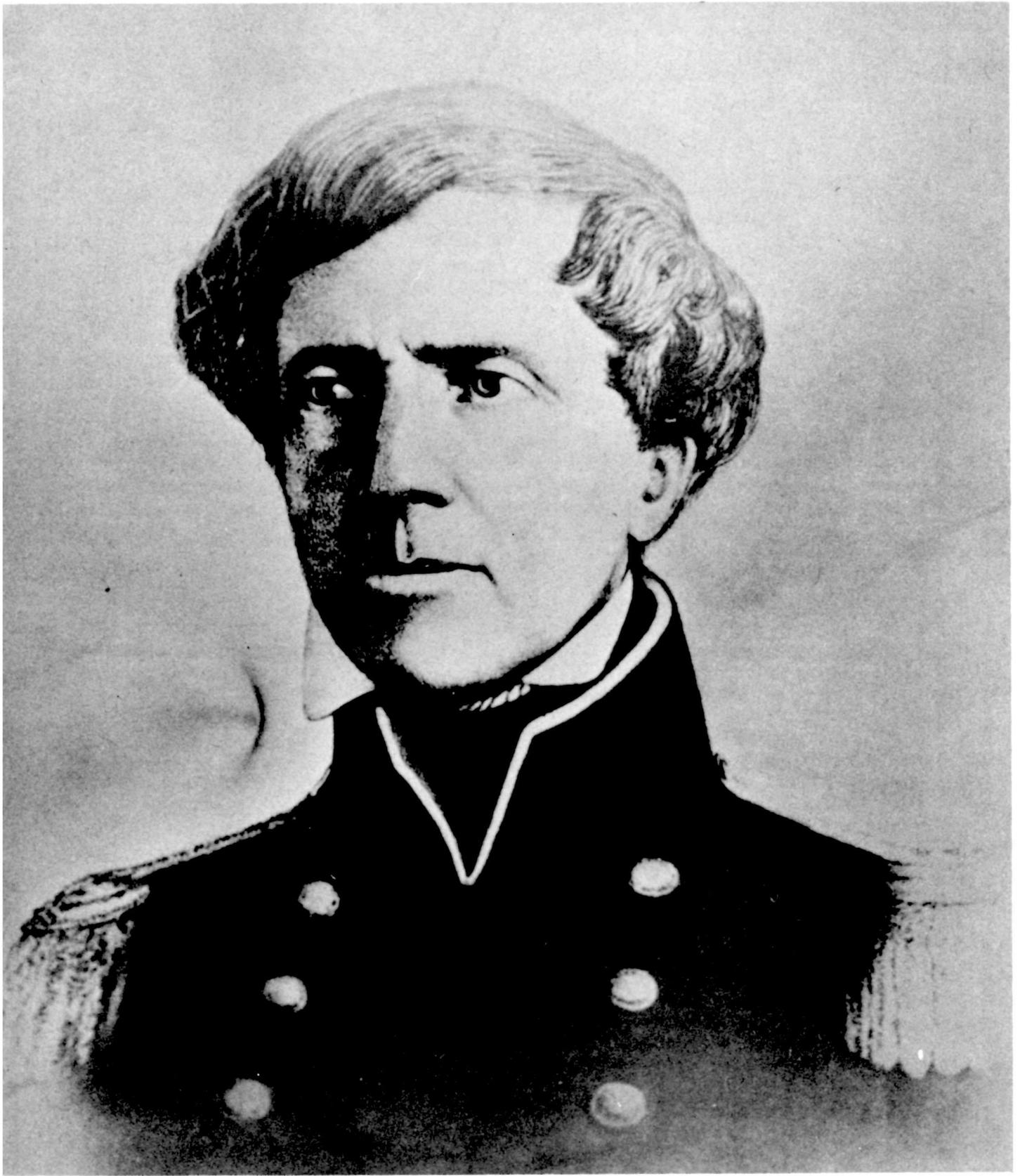
FORT MARCY
AND
PLAZA OF SANTA FE
1847

Adapted from map surveyed and drawn by 1st Lt.
J. F. Gilmer, Chief Engineer, Army of the West.

1 inch = 200 Feet



FORT BROWN, Texas. After the Mexican War Major Brown's earth fortification gave way to a permanent post. Above is the hospital, now housing Texas Southmost College. Below is administration building, now Brownsville Police Headquarters. National Park Service photographs, 1958.

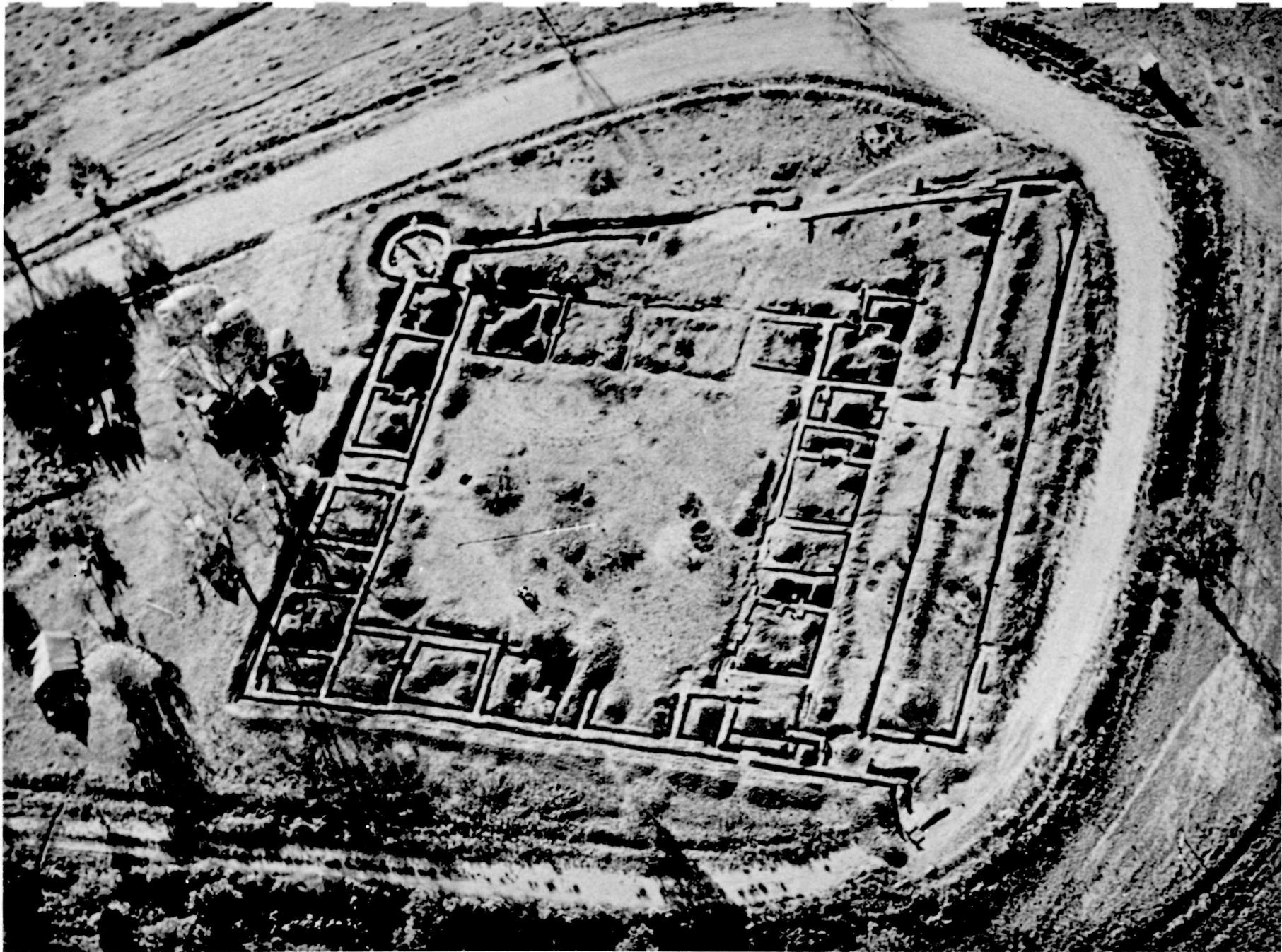


BRIG. GEN. STEPHEN WATTS KEARNY led the Army of the West across the plains from Fort Leavenworth in 1846, conquered New Mexico without bloodshed, and reached the Pacific in time to assure American success in California.
Museum of New Mexico

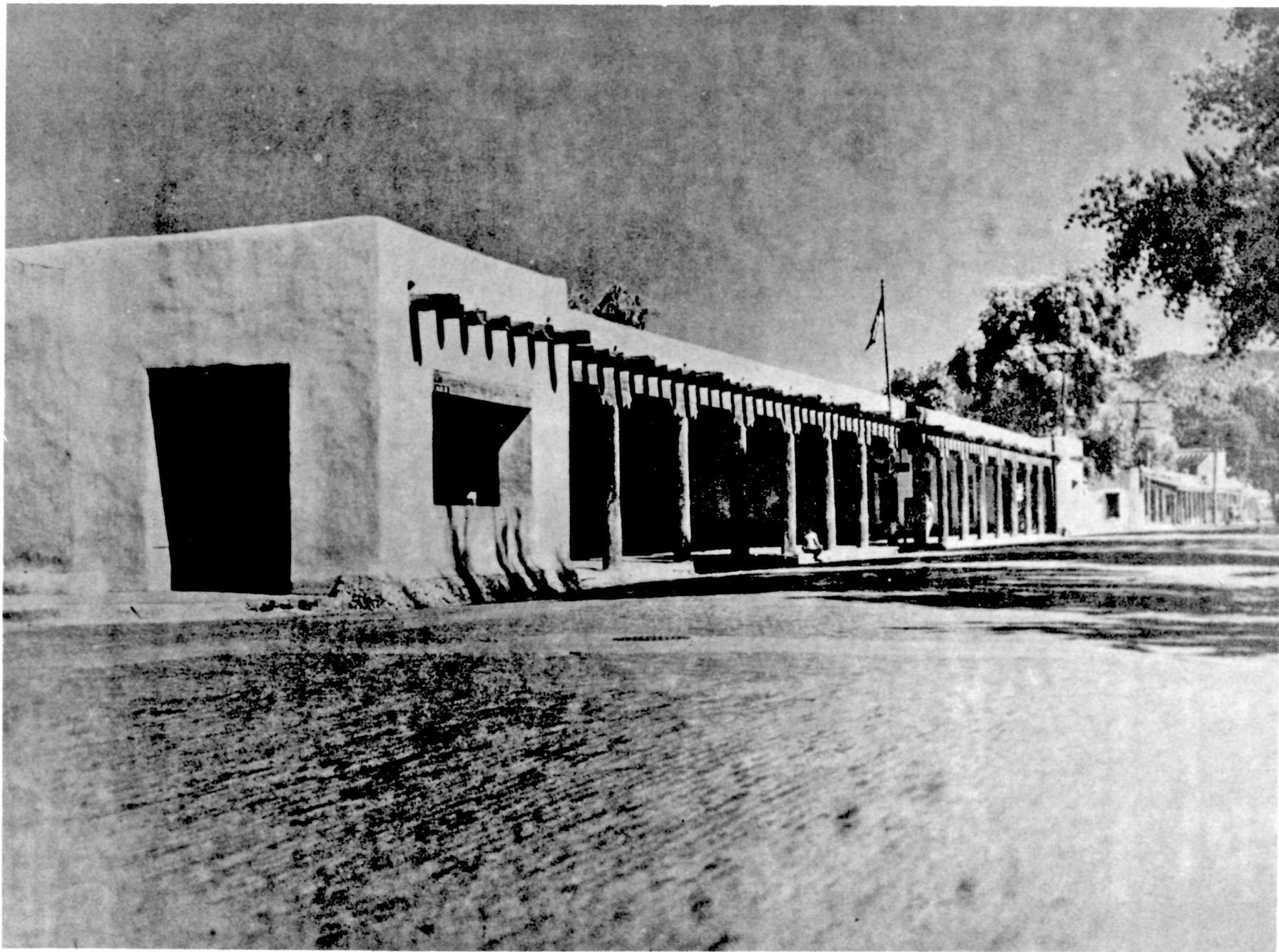


THE ARMY OF THE WEST. Frederic Remington here depicts Gen. Stephen Watts Kearny and his army somewhere on the Santa Fe Trail enroute to Bent's Fort and, ultimately, Santa Fe.

State Historical Society of Colorado



BENT'S FORT, Colorado. Recent excavations have uncovered foundations of this celebrated trading post, where Kearny's army paused before striking south into New Mexico.
State Historical Society of Colorado



PALACE OF THE GOVERNORS, Santa Fe, New Mexico. On August 18, 1846, General Kearny raised the American flag over the palace, seat of government for New Mexico since 1612.

New Mexico State Tourist Bureau



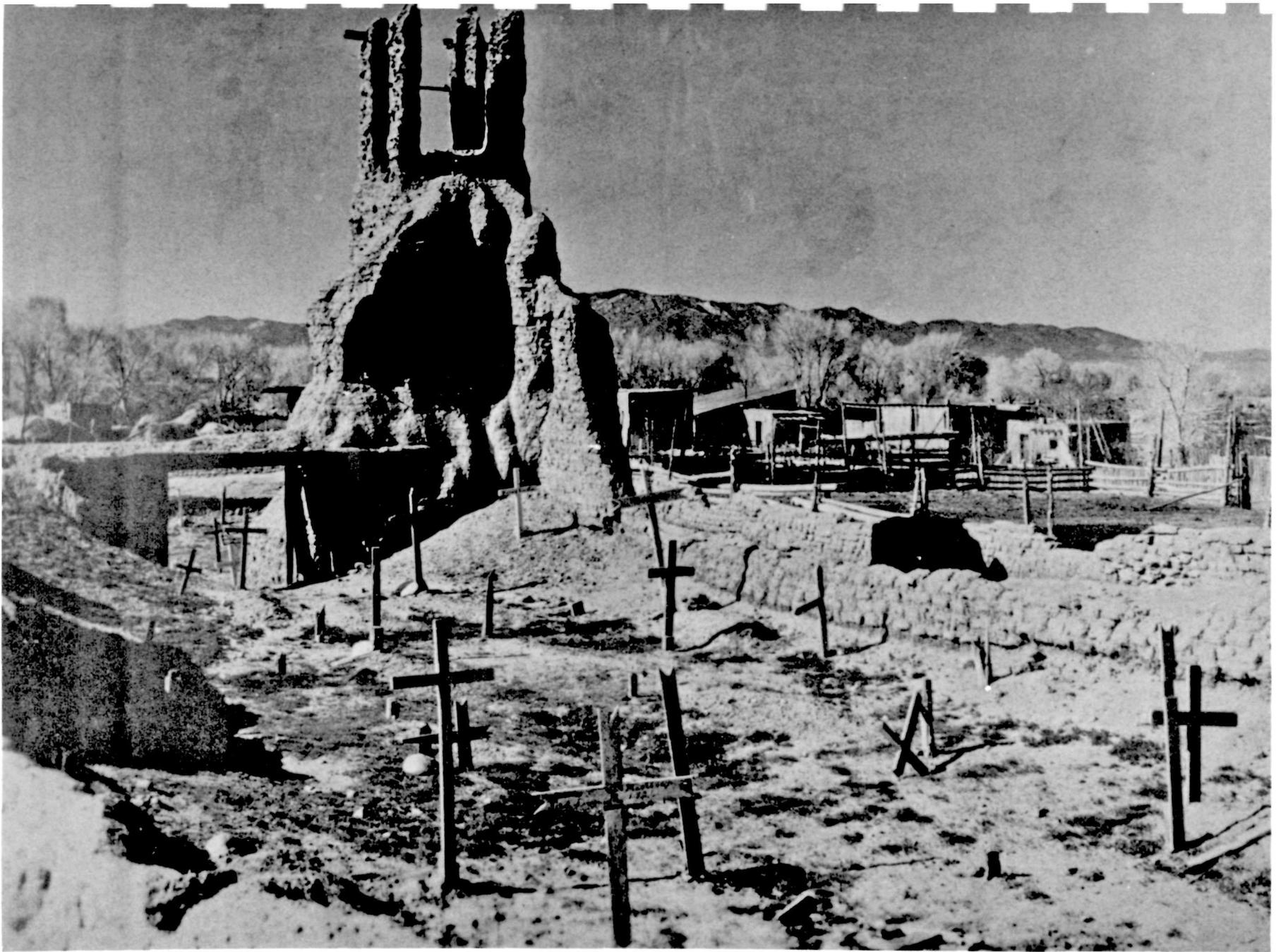
FORT MARCY, New Mexico. This view, looking northeast towards the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, shows earth mounds tracing the walls of the fortification in the left and right centers of the photograph. Mound to the left of the automobile covers remains of the blockhouse.

National Park Service photograph, 1958

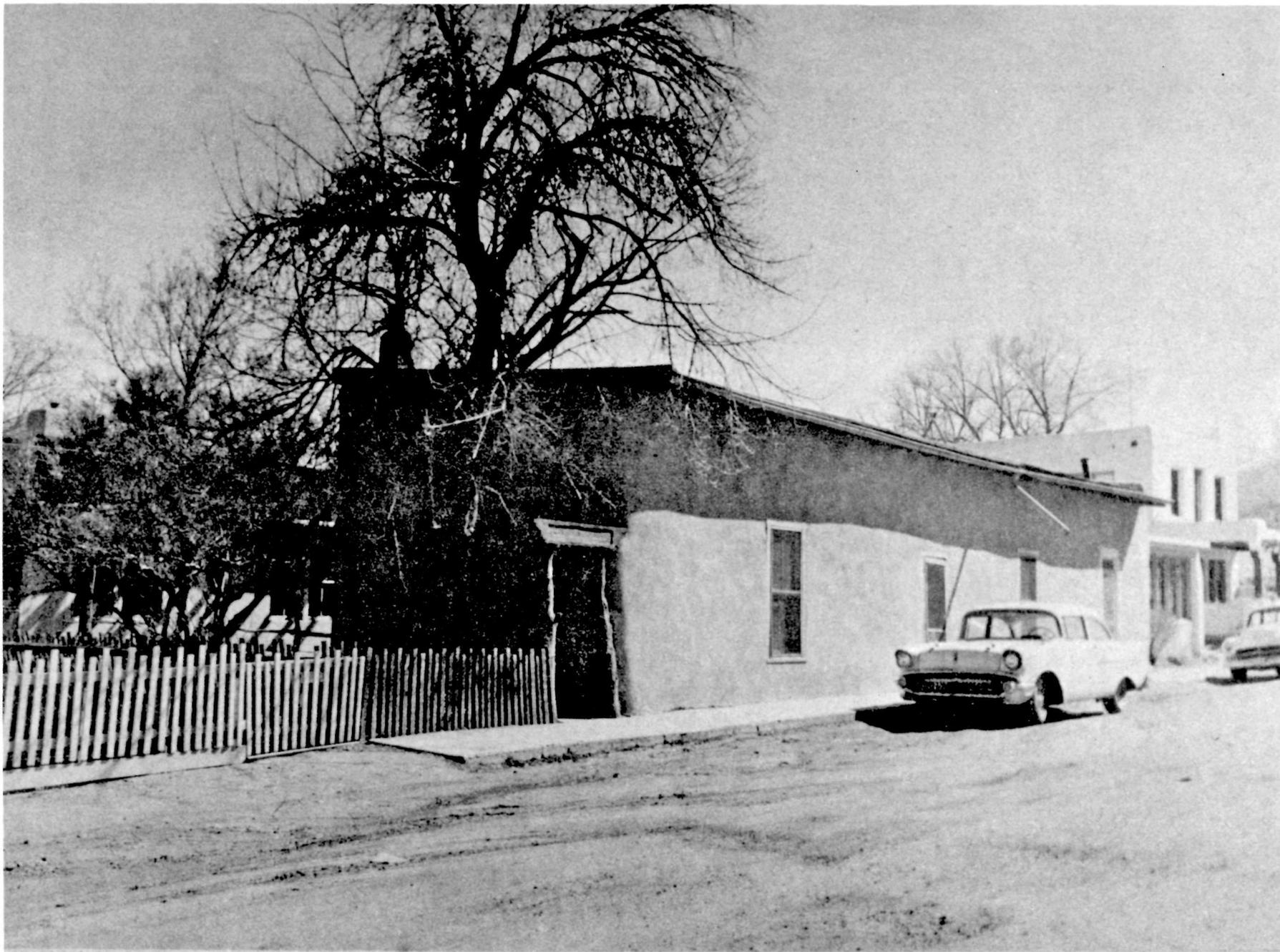


FORT MARCY, New Mexico. Cannon captured from the Mexicans were mounted at Fort Marcy to command the plaza of Santa Fe. This view, looking southwest over the city, shows outlines of the fortification.

National Park Service photograph, 1959



SAN GERONIMO DE TAOS MISSION, Taos, New Mexico. To crush the Taos rebellion, Colonel Price led an American army north from Santa Fe and layed siege to the pueblo. Many Indians sought refuge in this old Spanish mission, but were defeated when an artillery bombardment destroyed the church. It was not rebuilt.
New Mexico State Tourist Bureau

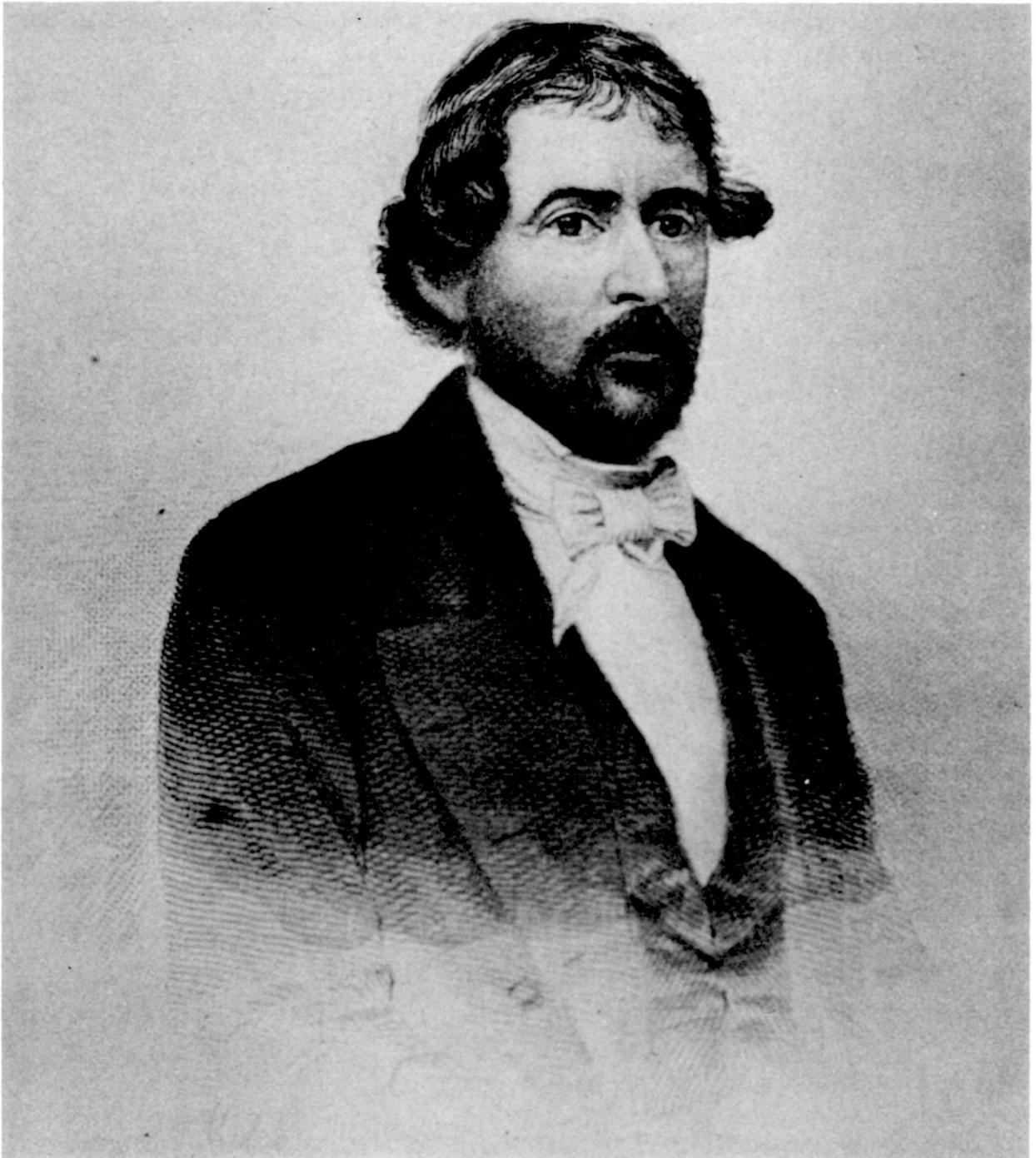


CHARLES BENT HOUSE, Taos, New Mexico. Early in 1847 New Mexicans and Indians revolted against American authority. Governor Bent was murdered at Taos, but his wife escaped by climbing through a hole knocked in a wall of their house. National Park Service photograph, 1958



KIT CARSON HOUSE, Taos, New Mexico. Famous mountain man and frontiersman, Kit Carson was with Frémont on his third expedition and fought with Kearny at San Pasqual. In this adobe house at Taos he lived and worked from 1858 to 1866. He is buried in the cemetery at Taos.

National Park Service photograph, 1958

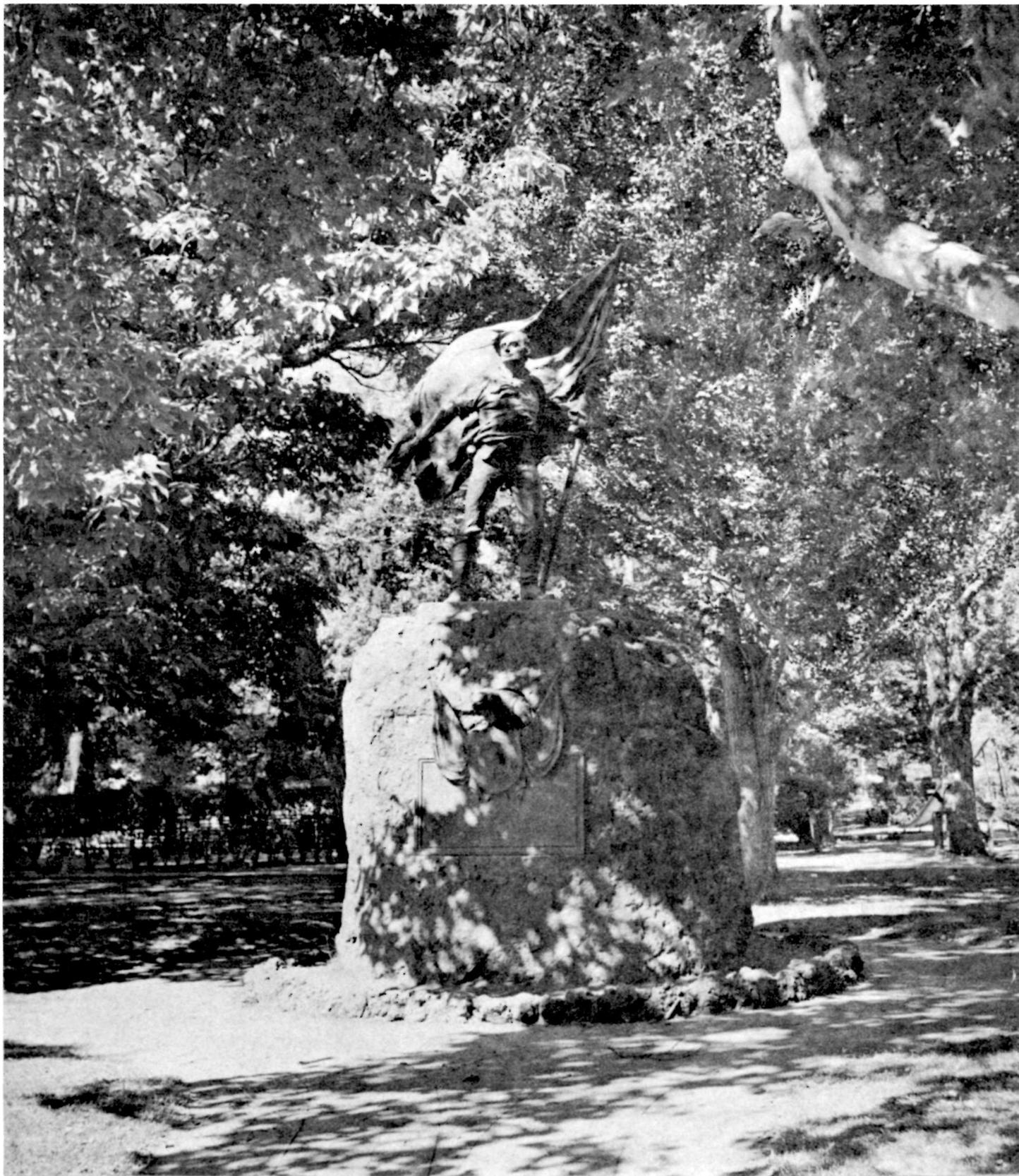


JOHN C. FRÉMONT. Explorer, pathmaker, presidential candidate, Civil War general, and controversial figure throughout his career, Frémont was a leading character of the Mexican War drama in California.

Society of California Pioneers



RAISING THE BEAR FLAG. This artist's conception of the incident in Sonoma Plaza, June 14, 1846, shows General Vallejo's home, soldiers' barracks, and Sonoma Mission in background. Above is photograph of the original Bear Flag, destroyed by earthquake and fire in 1906.



BEAR FLAG MONUMENT, California. This statue, showing a young pioneer with the standard of the Bear Flag revolt, was erected on the site in Sonoma Plaza where the Bear Flag was first raised on June 14, 1846. Facing on the plaza are the barracks of the Mexican period and the Sonoma Mission.
National Park Service photograph, 1959



COMMODORE JOHN D. SLOAT. At the outbreak of the Mexican War Sloat commanded the Pacific Squadron of the U.S. Navy and at Monterey on July 7, 1846, his forces took possession and raised the American flag.

Society of California Pioneers



My brave associates, partners of my toil, my feelings, and my fame, can Moan's words add vigor to the virtuous energies which inspire your hearts No! you have judged as I have the baseness of the crafty plea by which these bold Mexicans would delude you, they seek time only for the villainous purpose of enslaving you, even now the horrid note of preparation for scenes of deeper carnage is stealing silently on - the blood stained banners of Mexico wave their ensanguined folds o'er the chains of the Noble and the brave, I think I see them now, ah - e - e - horrid sight - boy give me some gin to revive me - forward and storm the works there is only one soldier in the fort - March
Music strike up -



Capture of Monterey Oct 20th 1842 by the
frigate United States & Sloop of War Cyane - Lat 36° 35' N in New California



MONTEREY CUSTOM HOUSE, California. One of the most historic buildings in California, over which flags of Spain, Mexico, and the United States have flown. On July 7, 1846, Commodore Sloat raised the American flag at the Custom House, proclaiming that henceforth California would be a part of the United States.

National Park Service photograph, 1958



SAN PASCUAL BATTLEFIELD, California. The monument in foreground, in San Pascual Valley, commemorates the battle of San Pascual, in which General Pico routed General Kearny's American dragoons.

National Park Service photograph, 1959



CAMPO DE CAHUENGA, California. The site of the Cahuenga adobe, now a memorial park within the city of Los Angeles, near Hollywood. Here on January 13, 1847, Andres Pico and John C. Frémont signed the Cahuenga Capitulation Treaty, ending Mexican War hostilities in California.

National Park Service photograph, 1959

Part II

SURVEY OF HISTORIC SITES AND BUILDINGS

This study encompasses a vast and highly significant phase of American history, not all of which is represented by historic sites within the boundaries of the United States. The Texas Revolution, here broadened to include the period of American colonization and the decade of the Republic, is amply commemorated by historic sites. So, too, is the Bear Flag Revolt and the Mexican War in California. Justly proud of the events by which they threw off Mexican rule and became part of the United States, Texans and Californians have preserved their heritage of this period. Other phases of the Mexican War represented by historic sites are General Taylor's operations on the lower Rio Grande and General Kearny's conquest of the Southwest. These sites provide a point of departure for grasping the larger patterns of the war, but do not entirely compensate for the absence of sites to illustrate the climactic episodes that occurred on soil that still belongs to Mexico.

Texans have preserved historic sites and buildings that illustrate almost every step in the progress of events leading to annexation of Texas by the United States. The State of Texas, through the State Parks Board, has taken the lead. Among parks that commemorate the history of this period are Goliad, Fannin, Gonzales, Washington, San Felipe, and San Jacinto. Scarcely less

active in historic preservation are the Daughters of the Republic of Texas, who have assumed responsibility for administering the Alamo and the French Legation, conducted an extensive marking program, and ably supported the efforts of the State. Few of the sites that have not been developed for public use remain unmarked, for the Texas Centennial Commission in 1936 erected a granite monument on virtually every historic spot in Texas.

At the same time, Texans have made little effort to preserve their Mexican War sites. Palo Alto, Resaca de la Palma, and Galveston's Ranch Battiefields have been marked but not protected from encroachment, while Fort Brown, despite the commendable work of the Brownsville Historical Society, is rapidly being absorbed by municipal and other institutions.

New Mexico has almost entirely subordinated this phase of history to its Spanish heritage. Some of the story is commemorated by a new State Monument at Mesilla, but the site of Fort Marcy, of utmost historical significance, has been neglected for years and has only survived because expanding Santa Fe unaccountably bypassed it. The superb Museum of New Mexico in Santa Fe interprets Spanish and aboriginal aspects of State history, but devotes little attention to events of the 19th century. The historical marking program of the State Tourist Bureau, however, does trace Kearny's route through New Mexico by attractive highway signs.

Events and sites relating to the transfer of California from Mexican to American control are regarded with great esteem by Californians, for this period is often viewed as the most consequential in the State's history. Among the most illustrative sites are the adobes, many of which also have important associations with other historical themes. The Monterey Custom House was the scene of critical events. The Casa Bandini in San Diego and the Avila Adobe in Los Angeles served as headquarters for American commanders. The Larkin House in Monterey was the home of the United States Consul, while the Vallejo residence in Sonoma and the Castro House in San Juan Bautista were residences of leading Mexican officials. The list of adobes that in some way were associated with the period is a long one.

Many public and private organizations concern themselves with commemorating this phase of California history. The Native Sons of the Golden West erected a monument to Commodore Sloat in the Monterey Presidio, carried on the early work of preserving the Monterey Custom House, and erected the statue to the Bear Flag Revolt in Sonoma. The Native Daughters of the Golden West and the Daughters of the American Revolution have marked many sites with monuments or tablets. The latter has marked San Pascual Battlefield, the capitulation site at Campo de Cahuenga, and Portsmouth Square in San Francisco. The Monterey History and Art Association

for many years has carried forward the work of preserving the Spanish-Mexican architecture of the city, and has placed interpretive markers along the "Path of History."

As in all fields of California history, the leader in preservation and interpretation is the Division of Beaches and Parks. Frémont's camp on Hawk's Peak is now part of a State park. Included in the Monterey State Historical Monument are nine buildings, among them the Custom House and Larkin House. Other State Historical Monuments of the period are the site of the battle of San Pascual, Sonoma Mission, the Vallejo Home, and a number of buildings at San Juan Bautista. The Avila Adobe is a part of the Los Angeles Pueblo project being developed by the Division of Beaches and Parks and the City and County of Los Angeles.

In the following pages historians of the National Park Service have evaluated the more important sites of "The Texas Revolution and Mexican War." The first group are those believed to be exceptionally valuable for illustrating or commemorating this theme of American History. The second group of sites, "Other Sites Considered," include those of sufficient importance to merit some attention but not judged of exceptional value. The third group, "Sites Also Noted," lists sites of marginal importance that were examined by Survey historians in the course of their travels.

SITES OF EXCEPTIONAL VALUE

The following sites are believed to be exceptionally valuable for illustrating or commemorating "The Texas Revolution and Mexican War." They have been studied, visited, and judged to meet one or more of the following criteria adopted to determine exceptional value:

1. Structures or sites in which the broad cultural, political, economic, military, or social history of the Nation is best exemplified, and from which the visitor may grasp the larger patterns of our American heritage. Such sites are naturally the points or bases from which the broad aspects of prehistoric and historic American life can best be presented.

2. Structures or sites associated importantly with the lives of outstanding historic personages.

3. Structures or sites associated with important events which are symbolic of some great idea or ideal of the American people.

4. Structures which embody the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type specimen, exceptionally valuable for a study of a period style or method of construction; or a notable work of a master builder, designer, or architect whose individual genius reflected his age.

5. Archeological sites which have produced information of major scientific importance by revealing new cultures or by shedding light upon periods of occupation over large areas of the United States. Such sites are those which have produced or which may reasonably be expected to produce data which have affected theories, concepts, and ideas to a major degree. (This criterion is applicable only in the aboriginal themes produced by the National Survey.)

6. All historical and archeological sites and structures in order to meet the standards of exceptional importance should have integrity, that is, there should not be doubts as to whether it is the original site or building, original material, or workmanship, and original location. Intangible elements of feeling and association, although difficult to describe, also may be factors in weighing the integrity of a site or structure.

7. Structures or sites of recent historical importance, relating to events or persons within 50 years, will not, as a rule, be eligible for consideration.

THE ALAMO, TEXAS

Location. Alamo Plaza, San Antonio, Texas

Ownership and Administration. Owned by the State of Texas, administered by the Daughters of the Republic of Texas.

Significance. (Criteria 1, 2, and 3) Site of one of the most spectacular and heroic episodes in American history, the Alamo was the chapel of San Antonio de Valero Mission, established in San Antonio in 1718 by Franciscan friars. The mission was secularized in 1793 and ceased to function, but the chapel, which came to be known as the Alamo, served as a Spanish and Mexican military hospital from 1803 to 1835.

Following the outbreak of the Texas Revolution at Gonzales on October 2, 1835, a Mexican army under Gen. Martin Perfecto de Cos occupied San Antonio. With the "Army of the People," Stephen F. Austin laid siege to the city on October 24. After six weeks of inactivity, the army was on the point of dissolution when the Texans learned that Mexican morale was low. Ben Milam reputedly shouted, "Who will go with old Ben Milam into San Antonio?"¹⁰⁰ The army

100. Stephenson, 66.

assaulted the city and, after five days of fighting, forced Cos to cross the San Antonio River and take position in the Alamo. This proved difficult to defend, and Cos surrendered. He and his army were permitted to leave the city and return to Mexico.

A small Texan garrison commanded by Lt. Col. William B. Travis remained in San Antonio. In February 1836 the main Mexican army, about 3,000 men under Gen. Antonio López de Santa Anna, reached San Antonio. Travis immediately withdrew to the Alamo and refused to surrender. In a plea to Texans for help, he declared, "I shall never surrender or retreat."¹⁰¹ Thirty-two men from Gonzales answered the call, bringing Travis' force to 188 men. On March 6 the Mexicans breached the walls and slaughtered the entire command. There were no survivors. Among the dead were the noted frontiersmen James Bowie and David Crockett. About 70 Mexicans were killed and 300 wounded. Santa Anna had suffered a severe blow to his prestige, and had been delayed for two critical weeks.

Together with the execution of Fannin's men at Goliad on March 27, the annihilation of the Alamo's defenders created a great wave of revulsion in Texas. It helped to unite quarreling factions and strengthened the will to throw off Mexican domination. It also won sympathy for the Texan cause in the United States. Texans went on to victory with the cry, "Remember the Alamo."

101. Ibid., 71.

Present Status. The Alamo in 1836 included not only the stone chapel but much of the original mission compound and walls enclosing a large courtyard. Today only the chapel and some ruins of living quarters are standing. The remainder has been obliterated by modern buildings. Together with a museum and salesroom, the complex occupies a city block on Alamo Plaza in downtown San Antonio. The chapel itself, as slightly modified by the U.S. Army during the Mexican War, houses paintings depicting scenes during the battle of the Alamo and portraits of its defenders, as well as artifacts illustrating the Texas Revolution. The site is maintained by the Daughters of the Republic of Texas as a shrine of Texas independence.

References. George L. Rives, The United States and Mexico, 1821-1848 (2 v., New York, 1913), I; N. W. Stephenson, Texas and the Mexican War (New Haven, 1921); William C. Binkley, The Texas Revolution (Baton Rouge, c. 1952); Eugene C. Barker, The Life of Stephen F. Austin (Nashville, 1925).

SAN JACINTO BATTLEFIELD, TEXAS

Location. Harrison County, Texas, 22 miles east of Houston.

Ownership and Administration. Owned by the State of Texas, administered by the State Parks Board and the San Jacinto Museum of History Association.

Significance. (Criteria 1, 2, and 3) The decisive engagement of the Texas Revolution, the battle of San Jacinto insured the victory of the revolutionaries and, ultimately, independence of the Texas Republic from Mexico. Independence paved the way for

annexation by the United States, which in turn brought on the Mexican War and acquisition by the United States of the entire Southwest and California.

On March 1, 1836, Texan leaders gathered at Washington-on-the-Brazos, reorganized and strengthened the government and, on March 2, signed a formal Declaration of Independence. Sam Houston was made commander-in-chief, and took command of his poorly equipped army at Gonzales. As Mexican forces approached, he retreated eastward looking for a suitable place to make a stand. Learning that Santa Anna had divided his forces, Houston made a rapid march southeastward and, on April 21, confronted Santa Anna between Buffalo Bayou and the San Jacinto River.

The Texans, 783 strong, deployed in a grove of trees on Buffalo Bayou. The Mexicans, about 1,150 strong, bivouacked on an open prairie between the trees and the San Jacinto River. "Deaf" Smith burned the bridge that was Santa Anna's only means of escape, and Houston's men charged the enemy camp. Taken by surprise, the Mexicans fled towards the river, where they were all either killed or taken prisoner. Santa Anna himself was among those captured, and on May 17 signed treaties that brought the conflict to a close. Nine Texans died in the battle, and 34 were wounded.

Present Status. San Jacinto Battlefield is now a state park and monument. The dominating feature of the area is a 570 foot granite shaft erected in 1936-39 to commemorate Houston's victory.

The base of the monument houses a fine museum of Texas history. A reflecting pool, memorial sundial, and landscaped areas complete the park, which encloses the scene of the battle. Troop positions and other important sites are marked, but the natural scene has been almost entirely obscured.

References. Eugene C. Barker (ed.), Texas History (Dallas, c. 1929); R. N. Richardson, Texas, the Lone Star State (New York, 1943); Andrew F. Muir, "The Mystery of San Jacinto," Southwest Review, XXXVI (1951); Aubrey Neasham, Special Report on the Proposed National Historic Site of San Jacinto Battlefield (Ms. Report, National Park Service, August 1941).

MEXICAN WAR SITES, BROWNSVILLE, TEXAS

Location. Cameron County, Texas. Fort Brown is in downtown Brownsville. Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma Battlefields lie on the north edge of the city.

Ownership and Administration. The two battlesites are in private ownership. Fort Brown is partly in private ownership, and partly owned by the city of Brownsville. Administrators are Texas Southmost College, the Brownsville Police Department, and the Brownsville Historical Society.

Significance. (Criteria 1,2, and 3) Aside from Fort Marcy, treated below, these are the principal sites in the United States illustrating the Mexican War. The battles of Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma were the only important battles of this war fought on American soil. They demonstrated the superiority of American arms,

gained the United States great prestige at home and abroad, and cleared the way for invasion of Mexico. Many regular officers who later became generals in the Civil War received their baptism of fire in these engagements, and the American commander, Gen. Zachary Taylor, later won the presidency almost wholly on his record in these and later battles in Mexico.

General Taylor's army reached the Rio Grande in March 1846 and threw up an earth fortification across the river from Matamoros and the Mexican army of Gen. Manuel Arista. Following the first engagement, at Galveston's Ranch, Taylor, believing that the Mexicans were moving to the mouth of the Rio Grande, left Maj. Jacob Brown with 50 men to defend the fort and marched his army to Point Isabel. The Mexicans promptly crossed the river. Part of the force besieged the American fort and the rest set out after Taylor, who had heard the bombardment and was hurrying back to Brown's relief.

On May 8 Taylor's 2,300 men met Arista's 3,300 at Palo Alto. The Mexicans attacked and were twice repulsed. They then retreated to Resaca de Guerrero and took up new positions. The Americans moved into a parallel ravine, Resaca de la Palma, and next day resumed the fighting. Deploying his infantry through the chaparral and sending his cavalry in a sudden charge down the road, Taylor captured the enemy artillery and put the Mexican foot-soldiers to rout. With heavy losses, they fled back across the Rio Grande in panic.

The earth fort had held out until Taylor arrived, but Major Brown was wounded and later died. The fort was named Fort Brown. It was strongly garrisoned throughout the war, and in 1848 became a permanent post. The town of Brownsville grew up adjacent to it. During the 1850's it protected the Brownsville area from hostile Indians and kept a check on border disputes. During the Civil War it played a key role in the contest for Brownsville, important port of entry for war material, and was occupied by both Union and Confederate forces. It continued to be garrisoned as a military installation until abandoned by the army in 1944.

None of the three sites can fully meet the criterion of integrity. However, because of their undoubted historical significance, and because of the absence of other sites to illustrate this significance, the question of integrity appears not to be a bar to national recognition.¹⁰² All three sites therefore merit a classification of exceptional value. If this reasoning is rejected, Fort Brown, with its superior retention of historical values, is a better recipient of recognition than the two battle-sites.

Present Status.

Palo Alto Battle field. The chaparral has been cleared from

102. Fort Marcy, New Mexico, might conceivably illustrate events on the lower Rio Grande, although the link is tenuous. Fort Marcy represents an entirely different phase of the Mexican War.

the site and it is now pasture land broken by fence rows. In the southwest corner of the highway intersection stands a monument erected by the Texas Centennial Commission together with a cannon placed by a commission headed by Gen. James Parker in 1921.

Resaca de la Palma Battlefield. This site merely suggests conditions as they were in 1846. The bend of the resaca has been cleared of chaparral and a citrus orchard and private estate cover the battlefield. Both Resaca de la Palma and Resaca de Guerrero, once filled in, are again full of water, with tall palms surrounding them. A Texas Centennial monument marks the site. A cannon mounted on a concrete base, placed by the Parker Commission, stands next to the highway one-half mile north of the monument.

Fort Brown. Mounds of earth covered with vegetation define the outlines of the earth fort, next to the levee south of the later fort. Except for the levee and nearby golf course, the site has not been too seriously impaired. It is marked by a tablet and a cannon placed upright on the north edge of the fortification. The second fort is represented by a number of buildings dating from 1868. These include officers quarters, hospital (housing administrative offices of Texas Southmost College), headquarters building (now headquarters of the Brownsville Police), and the chapel (now Brownsville Historical Society). Modern construction and remodeling of the old buildings have altered the appearance and somewhat destroyed the historical setting of the second Fort Brown.

References. George L. Rives, The United States and Mexico, 1821-1848 (2 v., New York, 1913); U. S. Grant, Personal Memoirs (2 v., New York, 1885), I; Justin H. Smith, The War with Mexico (2 v., New York, 1919), I; Joseph C. Sides, Fort Brown Historical (San Antonio, 1942); William R. Hogan, Special Report Covering the Proposed National Historic Site of the Battlefield of Palo Alto (Ms. Report, National Park Service, May 1940); Id., Special Report Covering the Proposed Resaca de la Palma National Historic Site (Ms. Report, National Park Service, May 1940); M. R. Tillotson, Report on Proposed Fort Brown, Texas, National Historical Park (Ms. Report, National Park Service, Feb. 28, 1947); Id., Supplemental Report on Proposed Fort Brown, Texas, National Historical Park (Ms. Report, National Park Service, Oct. 13, 1947).

FORT MARCY, NEW MEXICO

Location. Northeast edge of Santa Fe, New Mexico

Ownership and Administration. Owned by heirs of L. Bradford Prince.

Significance. (Criteria 1 and 3) First United States military post in the present states of New Mexico and Arizona, Fort Marcy represented the American conquest of the Southwest. After the long march over the Santa Fe Trail, Gen. Stephen Watts Kearny's Army of the West reached the first settlement in New Mexico, Las Vegas, on August 15, 1846. From a housetop on the plaza, he formally took possession of the province for the United States. But the capital city of Santa Fe remained in enemy hands, and Gov. Manuel Armijo was thought to be organizing defenses at Glorieta Pass, gateway to the city. The Governor in fact had assembled an army at the pass, but it scattered upon the approach of the Americans, and Armijo fled south. On August 18 the Army of the West

entered Santa Fe without firing a shot. Kearny hoisted the American flag over the historic Palace of the Governors and, from the rooftop next day, again proclaimed New Mexico part of the United States.

The first need was a fortification from which the Americans could defend the city should a Mexican army advance up the Rio Grande to challenge the conquest, or should a local insurrection break out. General Kearny therefore assigned Lt. William H. Emory and Lt. J. F. Gilmer, his Chief Engineer, to reconnoiter and choose a location for the fort. Two days later, after examining the entire town and preparing a detailed map, the officers reported to Kearny. They had selected a high hill on the northeast edge of town, 800 yards from the plaza. It was, said Emory, "the only point which commands the entire town, and which is itself commanded by no other."¹⁰³ Kearny approved the choice, and on September 16 named the post Fort Marcy, after Secretary of War William L. Marcy.

Under Lieutenant Gilmer's direction, construction began immediately. Kearny left for California in October with most of the army, but Missouri Volunteers and Mexican laborers finished the fortress by the spring of 1847. It was an "irregular hexagonal polygon," with adobe walls nine feet high and five feet thick. These walls were surrounded by a ditch eight feet deep and enclosed an

103. Quoted in George R. Gibson, Journal of a Soldier Under Kearny and Doniphan, edited by Ralph P. Bieber, Southwest Historical Series, III (Glendale, 1935), 220 n 358.

area 270 by 80 feet. A log building in the compound served as a powder magazine, and an adobe blockhouse, east of the gate outside the walls, served as both barracks and additional defensive works. Fourteen cannon mounted on the walls commanded the city.

Fort Marcy was never called upon to defend Santa Fe. As a result, the garrison in 1848 established itself in quarters near the Palace of the Governors, seat of the civil administration. By the early 1850's a second Fort Marcy was begun that ultimately occupied an area north of the plaza. This fort, a conventional western post, was occupied until 1894.

Although Fort Marcy never had to meet a challenge to American domination, it is nevertheless exceptionally valuable. Alone of important Mexican War sites in the United States, Fort Marcy retains a high degree of integrity and at the same time illustrates a significant phase of American history. It stands for the achievement of General Kearny of conquering the Southwest without bloodshed, more specifically of capturing Santa Fe, the first foreign capital to fall to American soldiers, without firing a shot. It stands for the extension of American boundaries to the Pacific--the acquisition of the future states of New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Nevada, and California. By the same token, it stands for Manifest Destiny, the great motivating idea that, as much as any other factor, produced the Mexican War and the rounding out of the continental boundaries.

Fort Marcy also exemplifies the conquest of California. Santa Fe was Kearny's base for the expedition to the Pacific. Although native Californians had risen against the Mexican authorities, the issue was in doubt until the arrival of Kearny's dragoons. And it exemplifies the explorations attending the conquest. Enroute to California, Kearny went down the Gila River and made known the character of that country. Lt. Col. Philip St. George Cooke, with the Mormon Battalion, took wagons south into Sonora, north along the San Pedro, and down the Gila. These contributions to geographical knowledge proved useful three years later to emigrants swarming to California after the discovery of gold at Sutter's Mill. The Cooke Wagon Road, in fact, became a major highway to the Pacific in the late 1840's and 1850's. Better than anywhere else in the nation, one can grasp at Fort Marcy the meaning and the larger patterns of the war with Mexico and its results.

Present Status. The site of Fort Marcy has suffered no encroachment other than a dirt road leading from a nearby highway. No modern buildings or improvements mar the natural scene, which in total has changed little since 1846. Mounds of earth several feet high, bordered in places by remains of the surrounding ditch, trace the outline of the adobe fortification, and a single large mound covers the foundations and part of the walls of the blockhouse. Excavation would undoubtedly reveal extensive remains of the fort. Once a city park, the site has reverted to private ownership and

receives no particular use except as scene of certain events connected with the annual celebration of Fiesta de Santa Fe.

References. Ralph E. Twitchell, The Conquest of Santa Fe, New Mexico, and the Building of Old Fort Marcy, A.D. 1846, Historical Society of New Mexico (Santa Fe, 1923); George R. Gibson, Journal of a Soldier Under Kearny and Doniphan, ed. by Ralph P. Bieber, Southwest Historical Series, III (Glendale, 1935); William A. Keleher, Turmoil in New Mexico, 1846-1868 (Santa Fe, 1952); "Report of Col. J.K.F. Mansfield ... Regarding his Inspection of the Department of New Mexico During . . . 1853" (National Archives).

MONTEREY CUSTOM HOUSE AND LARKIN HOUSE, CALIFORNIA

Location. Monterey, California

Ownership and Administration. State of California, Division of Beaches and Parks.

Significance. (Criteria 1 and 4) The town of Monterey, capital of California during the Spanish, Mexican, and early American periods, contains a number of buildings that are important both historically and architecturally. In considering Monterey sites associated with the acquisition of California by the United States, two are outstanding--the Custom House, where the American flag was first raised and California officially proclaimed part of the United States, and Larkin House, a distinguished architectural example and home of the American consul appointed by President Polk as a confidential agent with instructions to help bring about the American acquisition of California.

Together the two buildings commemorate the passing of California from Mexican to American control, an event of enormous importance in the history of westward expansion. As Cleland points out in his introduction to A History of California: The American Period, "the event of primary importance in the history of California is its transformation from a Mexican province into an American state. To this event . . . the Spanish period looks forward; from this event, dates the California of today."

The Larkin House is a seldom encountered example of a building which is of great importance for both architectural and historical reasons. Architecturally, it helped to establish a new and distinctive building style, the "Monterey." Historically, its builder, Thomas Larkin, was intimately involved with the effort by the United States to gain possession of California.

From his arrival at Monterey in 1832, Thomas O. Larkin, shrewd and patriotic Yankee trader, began to make himself the foremost merchant in the Mexican capital. He came to join his half-brother, Capt. John Cooper, and, although intending to manufacture flour, opened instead California's first retail and wholesale store. He was one of a group of American residents, alert to commercial advantage and engrossed with the trade potential, whose energy gave them remarkable influence. To the end of the Mexican period they transacted most of California's business.

Larkin quickly became a leading and affluent citizen, developing an important commercial and trading business along the coast, and eventually became the leading American in Alta California. He built Monterey's first wharf, established the first non-military hospital, and brought the first American woman to live in Monterey. Because of his knowledge and position, he was appointed, in 1843, first U.S. Consul in California. His home, which served also as office and store, became the gathering place for Americans. His political influence rapidly increased and he furnished his government with invaluable information. Thoroughly acquainted with the economic and political conditions of the province, at a time when public attention was turning to California, Larkin wrote accounts widely printed in eastern newspapers, the New York Sun making him a regular correspondent. His dispatches contained practical advice covering all phases of emigration to California, including instructions for the overland journey.

In dispatches to Washington, Larkin gave less space to commercial than to political topics--military strength of the province, its relations with Mexico, the attitude of American residents, ambitions of European nations in California. Inevitably, when President Polk's plan to purchase California failed, he decided to use Larkin as his agent in trying other means. In October 1845 Secretary of State Buchanan sent Larkin instructions appointing him confidential agent of the President and giving him considerable

discretion in preparing the way for annexation of California by the United States.

In the complex and often controversial events that followed, Larkin was a key figure. To him came very important person, American and Mexican, associated with the events of the day. And from Larkin went dispatches to the State Department that had a marked influence on American policy. As tension mounted between the United States and Mexico, Polk sent Lt. A. H. Gillespie, U.S. Marine Corps, to Larkin with instructions to assure the Californians that, if California became independent, they would be welcomed into the United States, and to exert every possible effort, in case of war, to keep California out of the hands of a European power. Although the outbreak of the Bear Flag Revolt ended Larkin's plan for peaceful acquisition, his contribution to events leading to annexation was a major one.

In 1834 Larkin began construction of the house that was to become the first American consulate in Mexican California. Completed in 1835, it was a spacious structure with thick adobe walls, broad porches and balconies on three sides, two long reception rooms, six bedrooms, and a large garden outside. To this home came Mexican officials such as Castro and Pico, Yankee traders such as Alfred Robinson and William Heath Davis, and American naval officers such as Jones, Sloat, Stockton, and Montgomery. After Sloat's flag-raising ceremony at the Custom House on July 7, 1846, he and his

senior officers adjourned to the Larkin House to splice the main brace. When Gen. Stephen W. Kearny went to Monterey as first military governor of California, he resided in the Larkin House. As a result the building is sometimes called the first American capitol of California.

The early history of the Monterey Custom House was closely concerned with the important California hide and tallow trade, which was largely responsible for acquainting the United States with the resources of California. Every trading vessel plying the coast of California was compelled to enter its cargo at the Custom House, and a single vessel might pay from \$5,000 to \$25,000 on its cargo. (However, evasion of tariff charges, smuggling, and bribery were devices not infrequently resorted to by pious Yankee traders.) The revenue collected at the Custom House from this trade provided almost the only support of the civil and military operations of the Mexican Government, and in some years amounted to more than \$100,000.

Mexican officials found the customs revenue an irresistible attraction, and control of the Monterey customs became a major political issue. Changes in personnel of the Custom House were frequent as governor after governor, along with his appointees, was ousted from office.

The first raising of the American flag in California, an opera bouffe affair, took place in Monterey in 1842. Commodore Thomas

ap Catsby Jones, commanding American naval forces in the Pacific, received information that mistakenly led him to believe that the United States and Mexico were at war. Hastening to Monterey, he seized the town on October 19, 1842, and raised the American flag over the Custom House--and promptly lowered it the following day, with apologies, upon learning that he had seized the capital of a friendly power.

In 1846 Commodore John D. Sloat, commanding the Pacific Squadron, had instructions to occupy the California ports the moment he received news of war between Mexico and the United States. While at Mazatlan he learned of the battles of Palo Alto and Resaca de la Plama and proceeded in somewhat leisurely fashion to Monterey, reaching there on July 2. Exhibiting little of the aggressiveness characteristic of the American Navy, he hesitated for several days, conferring with Larkin, making plans for the conquest, and becoming increasingly alarmed at the possible action of Admiral Semour and the British fleet. (Later evidence indicated that only absence of official orders prevented Semour from attempting to forestall American occupation of the California ports.)

Finally, stimulated by news of Frémont's actions in the north, fear of the British, and the urging of his own officers, Sloat acted. On July 7, 250 sailors and marines from the flagship Savannah landed on the beach and marched unopposed to the Custom House. Here they formed a square at the north end of the building and, while a 21-gun

salute was fired, raised the American flag. Amid the impressive ceremonies, the Commodore's proclamation, announcing that "henceforth California will be a portion of the United States" and promising full privileges of citizenship and religious freedom, was read in both English and Spanish. Then the Custom House was garrisoned.

Although there were sporadic hostilities, especially in southern California, before American possession was secure, the raising of the flag at Monterey essentially marked the beginning of United States authority. In later years the courts held that the date of Sloat's occupation of Monterey officially marked the end of the Mexican regime. No land grants made by the Mexican Government after July 7, 1846, were held valid. During the military occupation of California, Mexican revenue officials shared the Custom House with the American troops.

Present Status.

Larkin House. The Larkin House marked a distinctive departure from the traditional adobe structures of the period. Larkin helped introduce a Spanish-California style now known as the "Monterey," which became popular and spread throughout the country. Two stories high, it was marked by a four-way sloping roof and balconies and verandas reminiscent of New England. It is today an exceedingly handsome and well-preserved building, with its softly-tinted adobe walls, picturesque upper balcony, iron-barred windows, and walled

gardens containing roses and fig trees. Until recently the home was in the possession of the Larkin family. It was donated to the State of California by Larkin's granddaughter and is now a State Historical Monument, furnished in period style, including some pieces of furniture that originally belonged to Larkin.

Custom House. The most recent evidence indicates that construction of the Custom House began in 1827, when the balconied north tower was built. Larkin, as contractor for the Mexican Government, enlarged the building between 1841 and 1846. It was completed in its present form in 1846, with a two-story north wing, a long one-story central section, and a two-story south wing. Abandoned as a custom house about 1867 because of decline in volume of business, it deteriorated in succeeding years. In 1901 the Native Sons of the Golden West began restoration. The State of California, in 1903 and again in 1917, appropriated funds for rehabilitation of the structure. At this time it was under trusteeship of the State, which held custody under an agreement with the Federal Government. The Custom House was purchased in 1938 with half the funds contributed by the citizens of the Monterey area, the remainder by the State. It is presently administered by the Division of Beaches and Parks as a State Historical Monument. Recent archeological investigation has uncovered the site of the original flag pole. The building, a fine example of period Spanish architecture, is in excellent condition. It is tastefully furnished with period pieces,

including Larkin's desk, along with museum exhibits explaining its history. The Custom House is located directly opposite the entrance to Monterey's Fisherman Wharf, a picturesque waterfront attraction of restaurants, curio shops, and catch pennies.

References. Robert G. Cleland, A History of California: The American Period (New York, 1922); and "The Early Sentiment for the Annexation of California," Southwest Historical Quarterly, XVIII (July 1914 to January 1915); George P. Hammond, ed., The Larkin Papers (Berkeley, 1951-); Robert H. Parker, "Building the Larkin House," California Historical Society Quarterly, XVI (December 1937); Reuben L. Underhill, From Cowhides to Golden Fleece (2nd ed., Stanford, 1946).

SONOMA PLAZA, CALIFORNIA

Location. Sonoma, California, north of San Francisco Bay.

Ownership and Administration. State of California, Division of Beaches and Parks.

Significance. (Criterion 1) The Bear Flag Revolt is one of the most confusing movements in California history. Its causes and effects, as well as its over-all importance, are subjects that historians have argued for more than a century. This is in part due to the actions of such enigmatic figures as John C. Frémont. It is also due to the fact that the Bear Flag Revolt was an interrupted movement. Had not the Mexican War intervened, the Bear Flaggers, as a preliminary to annexation by the United States, might have extended their control over northern California just as the revolutionaries had done in Texas a decade earlier.

In June 1846 California verged on explosion. Frémont and his band of heavily armed frontiersmen had participated in a number of episodes, such as the Hawk's Peak affair, which angered the Mexican Government and suggested to native Californians that the United States meant to acquire the territory by any means necessary. The several hundred American settlers who had arrived in California in recent years despised and distrusted Mexican authority. Rumors circulated that Governor Castro was gathering a small army to attack the foreigners, that all Americans would be expelled, and that further immigration would be forbidden. Although Frémont's command served as a rallying point and American settlers turned to him for leadership, the Captain adopted an attitude of neutrality.

The revolt began on June 10, 1846, when a dozen recruits under Ezekiel Merrit, a tobacco-chewing illiterate patriot, seized 200 horses that Governor Castro had ordered brought to Monterey. Perhaps inspired by easy success, and knowing the certainty of Mexican reprisal, the Americans decided to continue the attack. At dawn on June 14, 33 patriots, "about as rough a looking set of men as one could well imagine," recalled one of them, descended on Sonoma, political and military center of the province north of Monterey. Here lived Mariano Vallejo, dominant figure among the northern Californians, a man friendly to the Americans, and already committed to Larkin's plan for independence. General Vallejo was roused from his bed and informed that the town had been seized. Negotiations

were somewhat delayed by Vallejo's hospitality, the American leaders becoming casualties from overdoses of wine. The rank and file then elected William B. Ide to represent them. An idealist who believed that the time had come to establish the California Republic, he drew up the articles of capitulation, which were signed, and took possession of Sonoma.

As a first step in the creation of the new government, a flag was designed from a piece of unbleached cotton cloth, consisting of a star painted with red ink, faced by a crude figure of a grizzly bear, and along the lower edge the words CALIFORNIA REPUBLIC, also done in red. The Bear Flag, now California's official emblem, was raised over Sonoma Plaza. Ide, newly elected president of the republic, declared that the war for Californian independence had begun and invited all patriotic citizens to join the movement. He proclaimed that the aim of the movement was to set up a "Republican Government" in place of the "Military Despotism," and promised that the new government would guarantee civil and religious liberty. Unable to resist the opportunity, Frémont ended his neutrality, received Vallejo as his prisoner, and seized from Ide leadership of the movement. Although the Bear Flaggers fought one battle, a comparatively bloodless one, soon thereafter came official news of the outbreak of the Mexican War. The burden thus shifted to the military forces of the United States, the Bear Flag movement had no further necessity.

The charge has been made that the Bear Flag Revolt was unnecessary, that it ended hopes of peaceful annexation, and that it in no way hastened American acquisition. Yet it was perhaps only a matter of chance that the timely outbreak of war with Mexico replaced the Bear Flag volunteers with United States regulars. Otherwise it is quite possible that the revolt would have ended in successful seizure of control of California for the United States. The raising of the Bear Flag at Sonoma represents the beginning of the revolt by Americans to throw off Mexican rule and bring about by force the annexation of California by the United States. For Californians, the Bear Flag Revolt stands as one of the most significant, albeit romantic, episodes in California history.

Present Status. Sonoma Plaza, with the buildings surrounding it, is one of the best preserved areas of the Mexican period in California. The plaza was laid out in 1835 by General Vallejo, who established the Pueblo de Sonoma in that year. On the site of the original raising of the Bear Flag is a monument, a bronze statue representing a young pioneer holding the staff of the Bear Flag, which floats above him. Facing the flag-raising site is the Sonoma Barracks, a two-story structure built in 1836 and well preserved today in private ownership. This building was headquarters of General Vallejo, and was used as quarters by American troops in 1847. Among the other existing structures facing the plaza are an adobe dwelling which was the townhouse of Vallejo; the Blue Wing

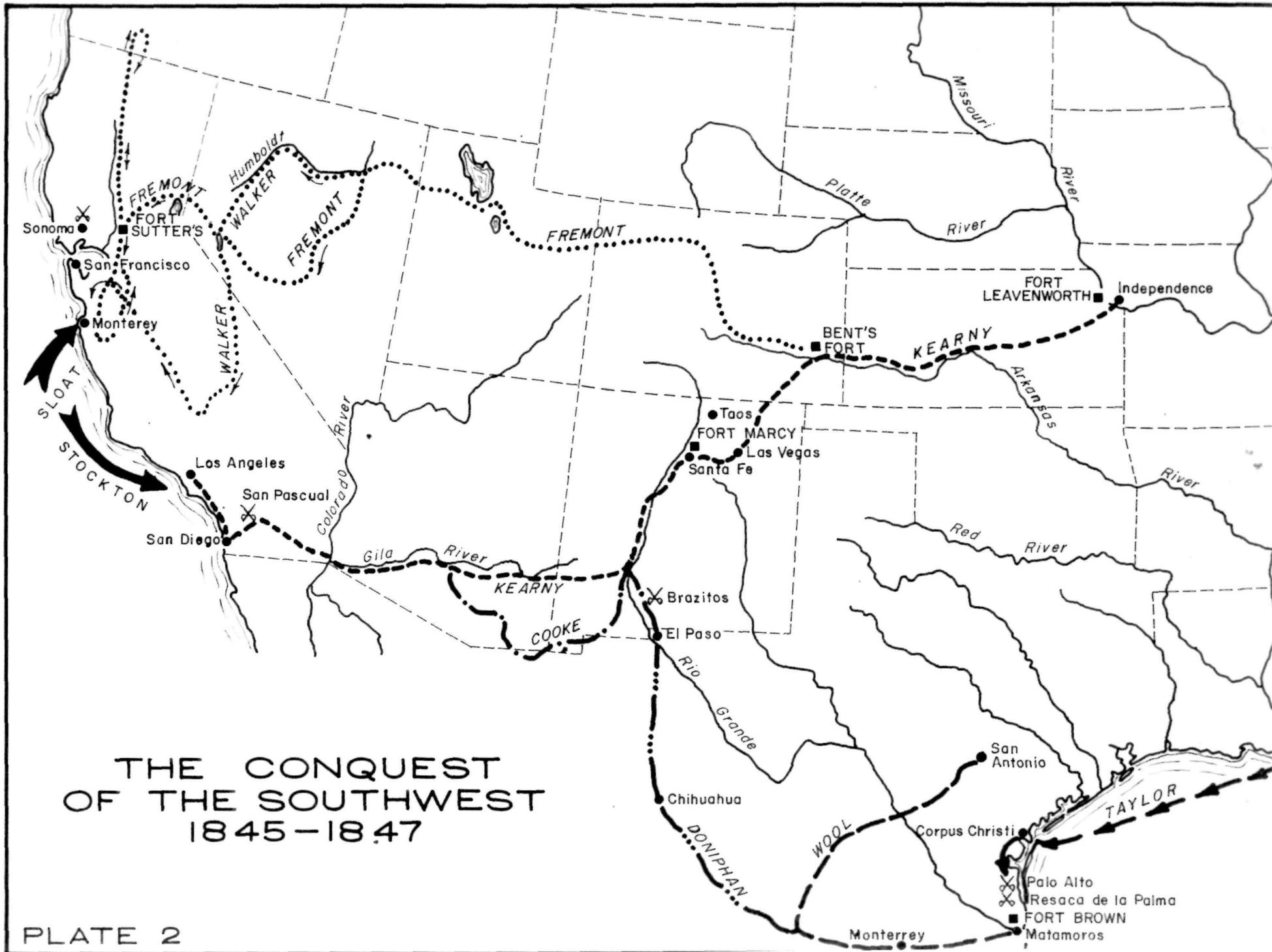
Hotel, a rendezvous for Forty-niners; and Mission San Francisco Solano, founded in 1823 and restored as a museum. Several other early adobe buildings on the plaza have been remodeled, including the El Dorado Hotel and the homes of Vallejo's brother and brother-in-law.

The State Division of Beaches and Parks administers a number of properties in and near Sonoma: the restored Mission, on the plaza; General Vallejo's home, Lachryma Montis, with its Swiss Chalet storehouse, at the edge of Sonoma; and seven miles to the east the Petaluma Adobe, largest adobe structure in northern California, once headquarters of Vallejo's vast ranching operations.

References. H. H. Bancroft, History of California, V (San Francisco, 1886); Robert G. Cleland, A History of California: The American Period (New York, 1926); John A. Hussey, "Bear Flag Revolt," American Heritage (Spring, 1950); William B. Ide, Who Conquered California (Claremont, N.H., 1880).



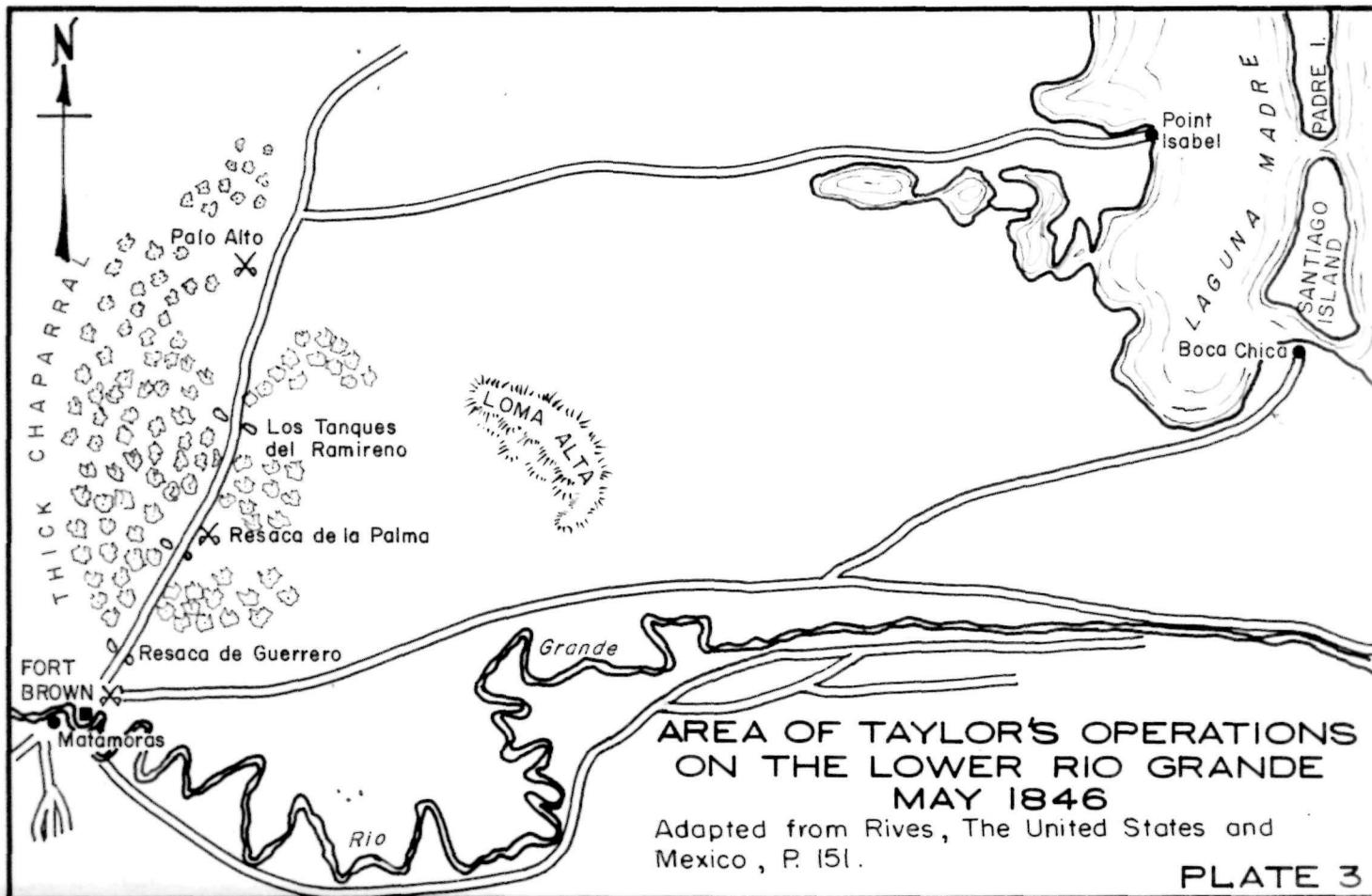
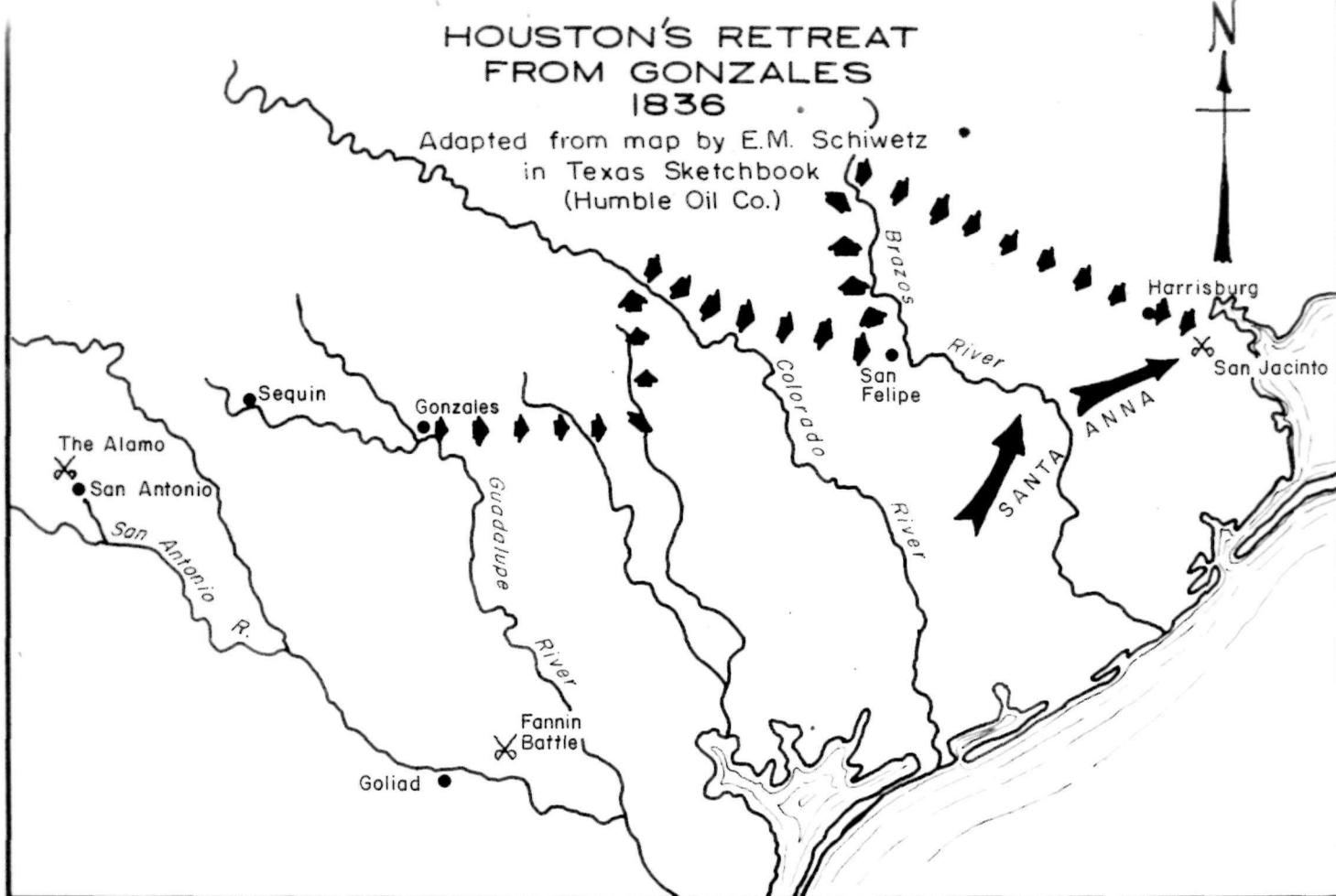
TERRITORIAL EXPANSION
IN THE WEST
1800-1853



THE CONQUEST
OF THE SOUTHWEST
1845-1847

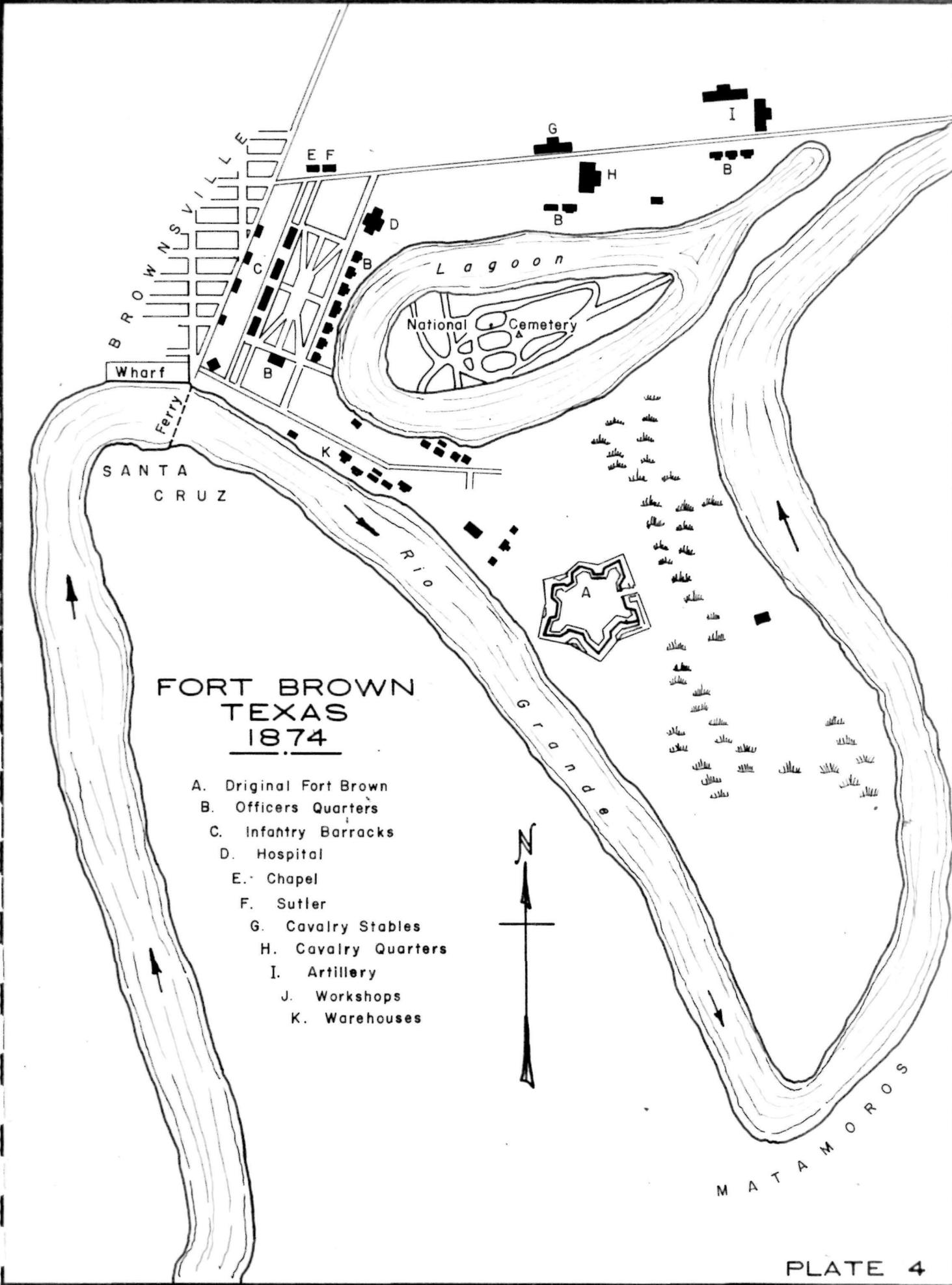
HOUSTON'S RETREAT FROM GONZALES 1836

Adapted from map by E.M. Schiwetz
in Texas Sketchbook
(Humble Oil Co.)



AREA OF TAYLOR'S OPERATIONS ON THE LOWER RIO GRANDE MAY 1846

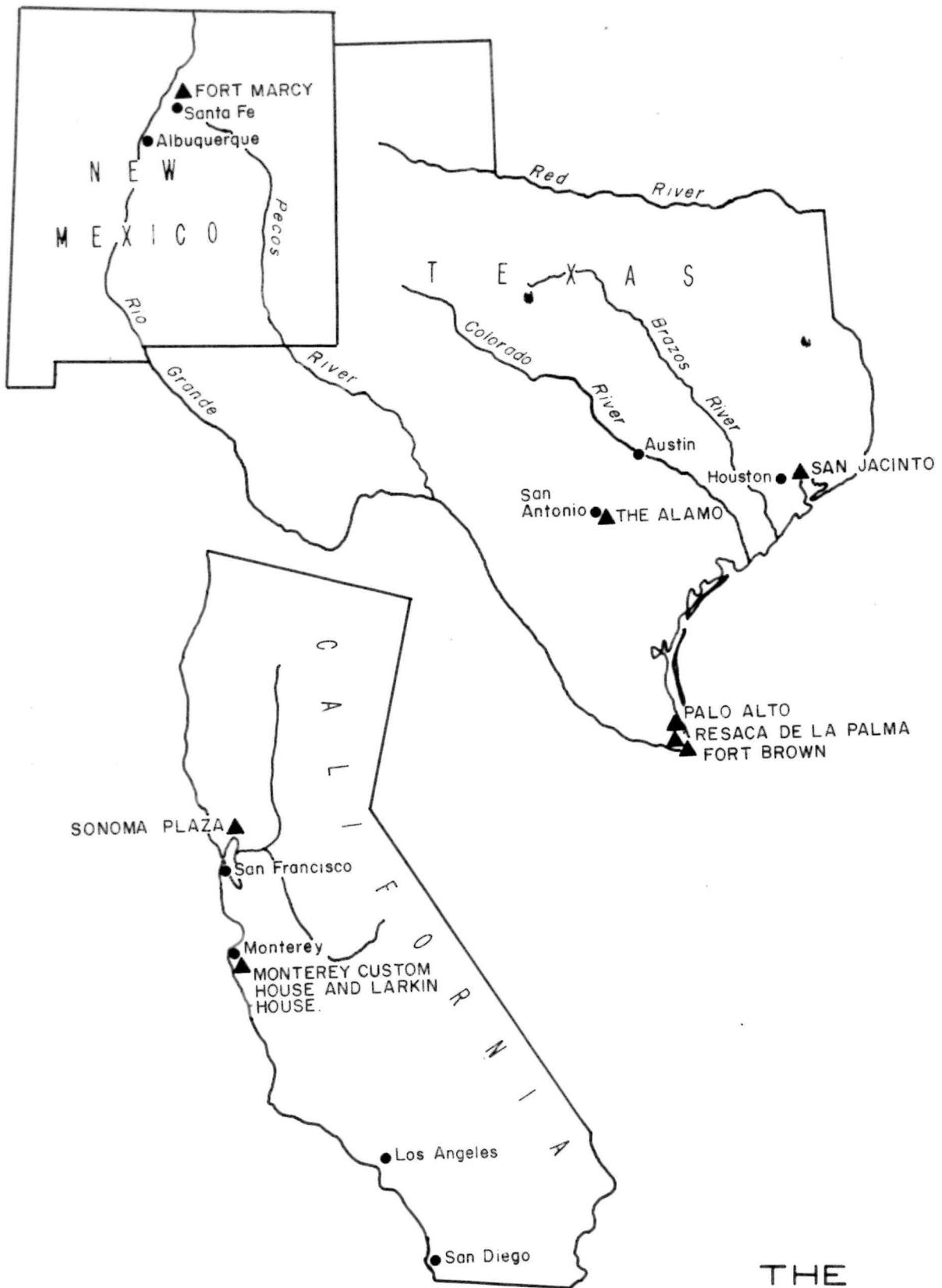
Adapted from Rives, The United States and Mexico, P. 151.



**FORT BROWN
TEXAS
1874**

- A. Original Fort Brown
- B. Officers Quarters
- C. Infantry Barracks
- D. Hospital
- E. Chapel
- F. Sutler
- G. Cavalry Stables
- H. Cavalry Quarters
- I. Artillery
- J. Workshops
- K. Warehouses





THE TEXAS REVOLUTION AND MEXICAN WAR

▲ HISTORIC SITES OF EXCEPTIONAL VALUE

OTHER SITES CONSIDERED

Historic sites discussed in this group were judged of sufficient importance to merit some recognition but not of exceptional value when measured by the criteria reproduced on pages 72-73.

San Felipe de Austin, Texas.

Founded in 1823, this settlement was headquarters of Stephen F. Austin's colony of American immigrants. In the years before the Texas Revolution it was the unofficial capital to which the colonists looked for leadership in their controversies with the Mexican Government. Organized opposition to Mexican policies centered in San Felipe, and colonists assembled there in 1832 and again in 1833 to voice their dissatisfaction. The convention that led to an open break with Mexico and, later, the Texas Revolution, met at San Felipe in 1835. Destroyed during the Revolution, the town was rebuilt but lost its importance when the county government was moved in 1848.

Stephen F. Austin State Park, in Austin County, now encloses the site of the original town. It contains a reproduction of the log cabin in which Austin lived, and the Stephen F. Austin Memorial Monument, a bronze statue of Austin. The approximate sites of other historic buildings of the colony are also marked.¹⁰⁴

Washington-on-the-Brazos, Texas.

The Texas Revolution had been in progress since the autumn of 1835 when, on March 2, 1836, delegates from American colonies throughout Texas assembled in an unfinished frame building at Washington-on-the-Brazos. They drew up and signed a declaration of independence from Mexico, framed a constitution for the Republic of Texas, and organized a revolutionary government.

Washington State Park, at the village of Washington in Washington County, commemorates this event. It contains a one-story

¹⁰⁴. Aubrey Neasham, Special Report on the Proposed National Historic Site of San Felipe de Austin (Ms. Report, National Park Service, August 1941).

frame building designed as a reproduction of an early capitol of the Republic; the house of Anson Jones, last President of the Republic; and a granite shaft upon which is inscribed the text of the Declaration of Independence.

Gonzales, Texas.

One of the early American colonies in Texas (1825), Gonzales was scene of the opening shot of the Texas Revolution. Refusing to surrender a small brass cannon, Texans on October 2, 1835, opened fire with scrap iron and chain upon a party of Mexican dragoons, who promptly retreated to San Antonio. Stephen F. Austin organized the first Texan army at Gonzales and marched on San Antonio. Later, Gen. Sam Houston ordered the town evacuated and burned in the face of advancing Mexican troops. Houston's retreat from Gonzales ended in the victory at San Jacinto.

The sites associated with the opening shots of the revolution are well marked in and around the modern town of Gonzales.

Goliad and Fannin Battlefield.

Retreating from Goliad towards Victoria, Gen. James W. Fannin and a Texan army clashed with Mexican troops under Gen. José Urrea on March 19, 1836. Outnumbered two to one, Fannin surrendered the next morning. He and his men were marched back to Goliad and, at the old Spanish presidio there, 352 men, almost the entire command, were executed on March 27. Together with the Alamo, the Goliad incident gave Texans a rallying cry and won sympathy for their cause in the United States.

At Fannin State Park east of Goliad a large monument commemorates the battle, although landscaping has destroyed the natural setting. At Goliad, the chapel of the presidio of Nuestra Señora de Loreto de la Bahía, where Fannin's men were executed, is still standing and in use as a Catholic parish church.

French Legation, Austin, Texas.

The French Legation exemplifies the years of Texas independence and symbolizes inauguration of diplomatic relations between the Republic and other nations. It was built in 1841 by the French Charge d'Affaires, Jean Peter Isidore Alphonse Dubois de Saligny. A provincial French style cottage, it was the most pretentious

building in Texas at the time. Saligny worked to prevent annexation of Texas to the United States, but left when his attempt failed.

Now the oldest building in Austin, the Legation has been acquired by the State. The French Legation Committee of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas operate it and is now refurbishing and furnishing it.

Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

Important frontier post during the Indian Wars, Fort Leavenworth was located near the eastern terminus of the Santa Fe Trail. Gen. Stephen W. Kearny organized the "Army of the West" there in the spring of 1846, and throughout the War with Mexico it was the outfitting station for military traffic bound for New Mexico.

Still an active army installation, Fort Leavenworth includes many buildings, still in use, dating from the late 19th century.¹⁰⁵

Bent's Old Fort, Colorado.

Adobe trading post founded in 1833, Bent's Fort became a major way-station on the mountain branch of the Santa Fe Trail. In 1845 it served as point of departure for Frémont's third expedition, which played an influential role in the conquest of California. The following year, 1846, successive detachments of General Kearny's Army of the West paused at the fort before marching over Raton Pass into New Mexico, and throughout the remainder of the war it served as a storehouse and hospital for military traffic enroute to New Mexico.

Archeological excavations by Dr. Herbert Dick of Trinidad State Junior College have revealed the foundations of the fort. The site is owned by the State of Colorado and administered by the State Historical Society, but has recently been approved by the Advisory Board for admission to the National Park System.¹⁰⁶

105. Fort Leavenworth is fully evaluated in Military and Indian Affairs (August 1959), one of the series of reports making up Theme XV, Westward Expansion and Extension of the National Boundaries, 1830-1898.

106. Bent's Old Fort was evaluated in Ray N. Mattison Report on the Santa Fe Trail (June 1958), another study under Theme XV.

Las Vegas Plaza, New Mexico.

Las Vegas was the first town of importance in New Mexico reached by Kearny's army. On August 15, 1846, the American flag was raised over a building on the plaza and Kearny, from the same rooftop, proclaimed New Mexico part of the United States. Center of "Old Town" Las Vegas, the plaza retains much of its Spanish-Mexican atmosphere. The building from which Kearny read his proclamation, much altered, is still standing. On a monument across the street is inscribed Kearny's proclamation.

Palace of the Governors, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Not until Kearny, repeating his performance at Las Vegas, raised the American flag over the Palace of the Governors in Santa Fe and proclaimed New Mexico part of the United States was the bloodless conquest of the province completed. The flag was raised on August 18, following the peaceful entry of the army into the capital city, and the following day Kearny addressed the citizens of the city in front of the Palace. Built in 1610-12, the Palace is still standing on the north side of the Santa Fe Plaza.¹⁰⁷

Mesilla, New Mexico.

With the Gadsden Purchase of 1853, the boundaries of the United States assumed their present form. On July 4, 1854, a flag-raising ceremony in the plaza of Mesilla confirmed the transfer of sovereignty. The entire purchase area--modern Arizona south of the Gila River--became part of Doña Ana County, New Mexico, with county seat at Mesilla. Mesilla remained the capital of this vast region until creation of Arizona Territory in 1864.

Mesilla is still a small Spanish town with many buildings dating from the 1850's grouped around the plaza. A replica of the bandstand and flagpole of 1854 have been constructed, and an annual pageant re-enacts the ceremony of July 4, 1854. The plaza has recently become a unit of the New Mexico State Park System.

107. The building is fully treated in Theme IV, Spanish Exploration and Settlement (April 1959).

Cahuenga Capitulation Site, California.

With Kearny and Stockton in control of southern California and Frémont approaching from the north, the California irregulars could offer little further resistance. On January 13, 1847, at the Cahuenga adobe, Andres Pico and John C. Frémont signed the Cahuenga Capitulation Treaty, which ended hostilities. Although neither Frémont nor Pico had authority to conclude such an agreement, it was later approved by both governments. The site has been completely altered. It is now a small city park in North Hollywood, with a modern recreation building occupying the site of the original Cahuenga ranch house.

Casa Bandini, California.

Commodore Robert F. Stockton, commanding the Pacific Squadron of the U.S. Navy, used the Casa Bandini as his headquarters during the occupation. After the battle of San Pascual, Lieutenant Beale and Kit Carson reached Stockton at this headquarters and obtained reinforcements for Kearny's hard-pressed troops. The Casa Bandini, built in the 1820's, is well preserved today and is operated as a hotel in San Diego's Old Town.

Dominguez Rancho Battlefield, California.

On this site occurred a colorful skirmish of the Mexican War popularly known as the "Battle of the Old Woman's Gun." With the help of a four-pound swivel gun, a force of Mexican horsemen under José Cavillo defeated American troops seeking to occupy Los Angeles. The ranch is now a Catholic school in the outskirts of Long Beach.

Hawk's Peak, California.

Ordered by the Mexican Government to leave California, Frémont in March 1846 retired to Hawk's (or Frémont) Peak in the Gabilan Mountains near San Juan Bautista Mission, built a fort, and raised the American flag. Although he withdrew after three days, the affair is considered to have contributed to the outbreak of the Bear Flag Revolt because it increased the animosity between the American settlers and the Mexicans. The site is now included in a California State Park.

Natividad Battlefield, California.

This minor skirmish, a few miles east of Salinas, was unusual largely because it was the only "battle" in northern California during the Mexican War period and because it involved no regular United States troops. A group of 75 loosely organized American settlers bringing 300 horses to Frémont at Monterey was attacked by a force of about 150 native Californians, who failed to capture the horses or prevent the Americans from uniting with Frémont.

San Diego Old Town Plaza, California.

The plaza was the center of San Diego life during the Mexican period, and here in 1846 the Mexican flag was lowered and the American flag raised at the time of the occupation. In the vicinity of the plaza are several fine adobe buildings dating from the time of the American acquisition.

San Pascual Battlefield, California.

Gen. Stephen W. Kearny, marching from Fort Leavenworth by way of Santa Fe, and suffering severe hardships on the route into southern California, arrived in San Pascual Valley, north of San Diego, on December 6. There his force of regulars was attacked by a superb band of horsemen led by Andres Pico. Kearny, although reporting a victory, also had most of the casualties and an increased respect for the military abilities of the Californians. Part of the battlefield is preserved as a State Historical Monument.

Frémont Campsite (Klamath Lake), Oregon.

Lt. A. H. Gillespie, U.S.M.C., bringing messages and instructions from Washington, met Frémont here on May 9, 1846, in one of the most dramatic and controversial incidents of the American acquisition of California. That night Frémont failed, for the second time in his career, to post a guard. The camp was surprised by a camp of Klamath Indians, and several men killed.

SITES ALSO NOTED

Texas

Peach Point Plantation
Fort Velasco
Anáhuac
San Patricio
Galveston's Ranch Battlefield

New Mexico

Raton Pass
Glorieta Pass
Brazitos Battlefield
Charles Bent House, Taos
Kit Carson House, Taos
San Geronimo de Taos Mission

California

Avila Adobe, Los Angeles
Monterey Presidio (including Fort Mervine)
Estudillo Adobe, San Diego
Fort Stockton, San Diego
Fort Point, San Francisco
Montgomery Square, San Francisco
Jacob Leese House, Sonoma
Salvador Vallejo House, Sonoma
Castro House, San Juan Bautista
La Mesa Battlefield
Murphy Ranch Site
Olompali Battlefield
San Gabriel River Battlefield
San Marcus Pass

