Campaign for Los Angeles

December 29, 1846-January 10, 1847

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By JOHN DOUGLAS TANNER, JR.

ON MAY 13, 1846, President James K. Polk signed a bill declaring that a state of war existed between the United States of America and Mexico. California, under Mexican rule since 1821, had divided sympathies. The Mexican government had been ineffectual and many of the indigenous population wished to see California independent, while others favored British or American domination.

On June 30 Colonel Stephen W. Kearny led the Army of the West, composed of 1658 men, out of Fort Leavenworth, Missouri, on the trail to California. His instructions, signed by William L. Marcy, Secretary of War, were to conquer and take possession of New Mexico and California and to establish temporary civil governments therein.

On August 18 Kearny, who had been promoted to brevet brigadier general, captured Santa Fé, New Mexico, and left the larger part of his command there. Several days later, near Socorro, New Mexico, the army met Kit Carson carrying despatches to Washington from Commodore Robert F. Stockton and Lieutenant Colonel John C. Frémont. Assuming from this information that the war in California was over, Kearny decreased his command a second time, leaving only one hundred dragoons to complete the march to California. The reports proved to be premature.

On December 2 Kearny and his force arrived at the ranch of J. J. Warner, in the shadow of Palomar Mountain. General Andrés Pico, then some sixty miles away and in command of the Mexican forces in the area, led his party of seventy mounted Californians towards San Pascual, a valley southeast of present-day Escondido. Here, on December 6, the two groups met in the predawn hours and the United States forces suffered their most costly defeat, in terms of mortal

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life, of the war in California. As the morning rays fell across the scene of the conflict, eighteen of the American forces were found dead; thirteen more, including Kearny, were wounded.

The crippled army, still under the command of the thrice-wounded general, dragged itself down the valley and once again encountered Pico's forces at a hill just east of the present Highway 395 at the north end of Lake Hodges. Thereafter, this hill was known as Mule Hill in memory of the mules that were sacrificed for food. Here Kearny was beseiged from December 7 to 10. About two o'clock on the morning of December 11, Lieutenant Andrew F. V. Gray, Stockton's aide-de-camp, with a force of 180 men arrived at Mule Hill to escort Kearny and the remainder of his bedraggled men to San Diego.

On December 12 the combined forces reached San Diego, and the slow process of recuperation began. It was then that the march to the Pueblo de los Angeles was conceived.

The American forces reasoned that a march from San Diego, co-ordinated with an advance by Frémont's army from the north, would create a pincer movement capable of defeating the Californian forces at Los Angeles, thereby ending the California theatre of the war.[1]

When General Kearny and his dragoons entered San Diego there was no celebration, no dancing in the streets, and no bands were playing. The fatalities of the previous week had risen to twenty-one and fourteen others were nursing their wounds. The majority of the troops were bivouacked at the jail on the southwestern side of the plaza, while General Kearny, received by Commodore Stockton with due respect, was given the commodore's own quarters. Kearny was immediately put in possession of Stockton's plans to march on Los Angeles.[2]

Commodore Stockton, anxious to see the march enjoy success and realizing General Kearny's qualifications for commanding a land force, offered Kearny command of the entire force while he would go as the general's aide-de-camp. Kearny declined the offer, stating that Stockton should command while he would accompany the commodore as aide-de-camp.[3]

Stockton then set to work to make preparations for the commencement of the march, sending an expedition to the south to bring back

horses and cattle. Captain Henry S. Turner, Kearny's adjutant, was given his pick of the horses for the dragoons.[4]

Stockton, in making preparations, had brought some four hundred sailors and marines who were under his command from their ships, and General Kearny proceeded to mold "Jack-tars" into soldiers.[5]

On December 28 Lieutenant William Emory received notification from General Kearny to report for duty as the acting adjutant general of the forces. Captain Henry S. Turner, the previous adjutant, was assigned the command of the remainder of the dragoons.[6]

Despite the problems that were incurred with leadership, in securing supplies, and in forming the sailors into land soldiers, the day of departure steadily approached. The general orders stated the forces would "take up the line of March for the Ciudad de los Angeles on Monday morning, the 28th instant, at 10 o'clock, A.M."[7] The departure, however, had to be delayed until the following day.

The troops went on parade just prior to the march, then Stockton called several officers together, including Captain Turner of the dragoons and Lieutenant George Minor of the navy, and remarked:

> Gentlemen, General Kearny has kindly consented to take command of the troops on this expedition. You will therefore look upon him as your commander. I shall go along as governor and commander-in-chief in California.[8]

Stockton left Captain John B. Montgomery, commander of the *Portsmouth,* in charge of the town and the fort, and at ten in the morning, on a gloomy December 29, Stockton and Kearny led a force of 607 out of San Diego. The Pueblo de los Angeles, the objective, lay 145 miles away.

The army was divided into four battalions composed of 55 dragoons, commanded by Captain Turner; 379 sailors and marines — some 84 mounted volunteers, including 30 Californians; scouts, and 44 officers.[9]

What type of roads was the force to follow? Inquiry has shown that the existent roads were all of the 'beaten path' variety with no evidence of government building, maintenance, or repairing. There was considerable travel between the ranchos over the path of least resistence, generally by watershed routes or by crossing highland formations at the easiest natural passes. Frequently these paths tended to follow Indian trails. El Camino Real, the legendary King's

Highway which connected the missions, had great flexibility. Whenever the road washed out or a tree fell across it, El Camino Real simply adjusted.[10]

The army, as it left San Diego, was equipped with muskets and boarding pikes, six cannons, mostly six-pounders, one howitzer, and a number of carts. The provisions, principally cattle and sheep, were protected by being herded into a square of men.

The march got off to a slow start in crossing the dry, sandy bed of the San Diego River, only one-half mile from the town. The oxen, weakened by lack of food, were unable to pull the *carretas* through the soft sand and up and down the small ravines and inlets which had been cut by the river, but were now dry.

The troops followed a portion of El Camino Real through Rose Canyon to the summit of Torrey Pines Grade, then descended into the mouth of the Soledad Valley, about thirteen miles from San Diego.[11] They then turned to the southeast and marched an additional mile and one-half to the mouth of the Peñasquitos Canyon where they made camp at eight in the evening.[12] Lieutenant Emory wrote of his part in the establishing of the first night's camp.

> I was ordered to ride forward and lay out a defensive camp, hoping to give confidence to the sailors, many of whom were now, for the first time, transfered to a new element.
>
> The plan of camp being approved, I was directed to make it the habitual order of encamping wherever the configuration of the ground would admit. The plan was the natural one to protect ourselves from the night attacks of the enemy who were all mounted.[13]

It was raining when the forces arrived in the Soledad Valley, and it must have been a demoralizing night for the men, particularly the sailors who were unaccustomed to long marches full of hardships.

As the sun arose the morning of the second day, few felt up to another day's march. The men approached Stockton in squads and asked for a twenty-four hours rest. Stockton granted their request, but after a few hours of restlessness decided to resume the march.[14]

The columns marched to the northeast as they entered the mouth of the Peñasquitos Canyon. Five miles up the canyon they passed the ranch house El Cuervo, the center of Rancho Santa María de los Peñasquitos.[15]

Three miles past the ranch house the army camped near a creek, ending a nine mile march, about one mile east of the present Highway 395 where the canyon runs just south of the Poway Valley Road. They arrived late and the camp was uncomfortable; the night was very cold as judged from reports of water freezing near the fire. In the distance the mountains were covered with snow.[16]

Word from San Diego reached the forces telling of Frémont and his men arriving in Santa Bárbara. Rumors circulated among the men that the Mexican forces were in the greatest confusion and were breaking up.

On December 31, 1846, the collection of United States Army and Navy forces made a slow bend to the north marching through a wide valley towards Rancho San Bernardo and the scene of the encounter at Mule Hill. The line of march was virtually along what is now Pomerado Road. The day was clear and beautiful — grass and oats sprouted on the hillsides. The troops spent the last night of 1846 camped at the base of Mule Hill. Stockton and his staff spent the night at the ranch house at San Bernardo.

> The Commodore [said Dr. John S. Griffin] has the most enlarged view of the hardships of a soldiers life — he has a fine large tent well supplied with table furniture and bedstead, I am told — while our old General [Kearny] has nothing in the world but his blankets and bear skin — and a common tent — one pack mule for himself, Capt. Turner and servant.[17]

Dr. Griffin tells of hearing reports that the Mexicans and a party of Indians had attacked the Indians living in the vicinity of the Warner Rancho and killed some thirty of them.[18]

The first day of the year, 1847, found the army moving to the northwest towards Mission San Luis Rey de Francia about twenty-three miles away. Their march took them through the present town of Escondido, at that time the Rancho Rincón del Diablo owned by Juan Bautista Alvarado. They then progressed along a line close to the present Highway 78 which runs from Escondido to Vista through San Marcos. This area is extremely flat with gentle rises on each side of the broad valley. About a mile and one-half past the town of San Marcos the foothills move in towards the valley, and the march led over several rolling hills. The army passed by the Buena Vista Ranchería, in the heart of present-day Vista, and camped near

a Luiseño Indian village about one and one-half miles away.[19] Throughout the day wild geese and cattle were in evidence, and Kit Carson, the famous Indian scout who had joined Kearny in New Mexico, managed to kill an antelope.[20]

The Californian movements for the three days from December 29 to January 1 can likewise be traced. The Californians were camped at Rancho de los Cerritos when the Americans left San Diego. They received word of the march from Domingo Domíguez, a soldier, who was at San Luis Rey when the march commenced. José María Flores, high commander of the Californian forces at this time, ordered men as far south as Las Flores to scout the Americans.[21]

A seven mile march on January 2 brought the force to the deserted mission of San Luis Rey de Francia. The columns followed the line of the valley for about two miles reaching the area of the Guajome Ranchería, then circled to the west, intersecting the present Highway 76 (Mission Road) about two miles distance and followed the road to the Mission.[22]

The keys to the deserted mission were in the hands of the *alcalde* who turned over possession to the United States forces.[23]

While the force camped at the mission, several men were to be flogged for disciplinary reasons. A delegation approached Kearny and asked him to intercede. When all were assembled Kearny walked up to the administrator and asked what the article was.

"Oh sir, this is the cat," replied the sailor.
"What do you use it for?"
"It is to punish men when they infringe upon the rules of discipline."
"But do you whip the men with so barbarous a thing as that?"
"Yes, sir."
"That is very bad."

At this point Kearny pulled out a pocket knife and cut the whip to pieces.

"Gentlemen, if you "Jack Tars" cannot be governed without the aid of so murderous an instrument as that, I'll have you know that my "Jack", and while I command here they are mine, shall not be degraded by my orders, and I request a favor, that none of you will ever attempt to lay the 'cat' upon the back of any man without my particular orders."[24]

John Forster met the United States force at San Luis Rey, providing it with twenty-eight yokes of oxen.[25] He reported that Andrés Pico was the present general of the Californians, that Frémont had left Santa Bárbara the previous Sunday (December 27, 1846); that Pico left Los Angeles that morning for the purpose of giving Frémont battle; that Pico had about six hundred men, and that Frémont barely had two hundred.[26]

Stockton immediately dispatched a courier with a letter to Frémont.

> . . . If there is a single chance for you, you had better not fight the rebels until I get aid up to you, or you can join me at the Pueblo.
>
> These fellows are well prepared. . . . If you do fight before I see you, keep your forces in close order. Do not allow them to be separated or unnecessarily extended. They will probably try to deceive you by a sudden retreat or pretended runaway, and then unexpectedly return to the charge after you men get in disorder in the chase. My advice to you is to allow them to do all the charging and running, and let your rifles do the rest.
>
> In the art of horsemanship, of dodging and running, it is in vain to compete with them.[27]

The march got under way early in the morning, but because of the rough country and the condition of the carts the progress was slow. Four miles of travel through the valley of the San Luis Rey brought the men to the Pacific Ocean. Turning ninety degrees to the northwest, the trail ran parallel to the ocean about one mile inland along the base of the hills. The force followed this line of march for six and one-half miles and camped on the night of January 3, one and one-half miles below the ruins of the Asistencia de las Flores.

On the morning of January 4 the army continued the march moving parallel to the ocean about three-quarters of a mile inland. About one and a quarter miles from the camp it passed the mouth of Las Pulgas Canyon through which Portolá and his men had marched seventy-eight years before. Another nine miles brought it to what is now San Onofre, and a mile beyond that, at San Mateo Point, it crossed to the seashore.

In this area the forces met with three men bearing a flag of truce — William Workman, Charles Flügge, and Domingo Olivas. They carried a letter from the Mexican commander, Flores,

expressing a wish to "avoid the useless effusion of human blood and its terrible consequences, during moments when a general peace might be secured."[28] Stockton rejected the letter without reading it and informed the bearers that if General Flores was captured he would be treated "as a rebel, and an officer who has taken up arms against the U. States in violation of his *parole*."[29]

Captain Samuel F. du Pont of the *Cyane* wrote to his wife from San Diego:

> A messenger boy came in from the army as we call it. . . . foreigners residing at the Pueblo had come in with a flag of truce from the Flores, asking to treat — which the commodore *declined* — saying he [Flores] had violated his word & he would listen to no terms. . . .[30]

Dr. Griffin felt that it was the assumption of the titles of governor and commander-in-chief in California by Flores that really enraged the commodore who claimed the titles for himself.[31]

From San Mateo Point the army marched for eight miles along the beach with the ocean to its left and the high bluffs of San Clemente to its right. The road was narrow so the army formed one column and was forced to make frequent halts for the rear to come up.[32]

At what is presently Doheny State Park the army turned north into the mouth of the valley leading to the Mission San Juan Capistrano and camped along the Boca de San Juan Capistrano, in the area of Serra. This day's march, nineteen miles, was the longest of the thirteen.

On January 5 the army broke camp and followed the San Juan Creek for two miles then turned slightly to follow its tributary, the Trabuco Creek. Marching one-half mile further, it arrived at the mission.

Tradition tells us that Marco Forster, the ten-year-old son of John Forster, was playing on the road as the soldiers approached. All of the children fled except Marco. Commodore Stockton, at the head of the columns, asked Marco if he was afraid, and Marco answered that he was not. Stockton then asked Marco if he would like to ride on the commodore's horse. Replying that he would, he rode into San Juan Capistrano behind Stockton.[33] As they entered the small town surrounding the mission, the band, Stockton's pride and joy, played "Life on the Ocean Waves."

The army left San Juan Capistrano the same day it arrived and continued up the valley. This route, along Trabuco Creek and then Oso Creek, is closely followed today by U. S. Highway 101. About one and one-half miles past the present-day settlement of Galiván the army left the trail marked by Highway 101 and followed a small valley into the present day El Toro region. This trail runs close to the tracks of the Santa Fé Railroad.

> The country passed over destitute of trees — plenty wild geese — ducks — Snow on the mountains in our front — everything green and spring like all around us, except the nights & they are devlish cold —[34]

The troops spent the night of January 5, and the early morning hours of January 6, at Rancho Cañada de los Alisos, owned by Don Juan Avila, who joined the march at Capistrano in order to induce his brothers who were in the Californian camp to leave it and lay down their arms.[35] The ranch was located about two miles northeast of the present El Toro post office.[36] A night of sleeping and chicken hunting came to an end, and the forces made ready to continue their march towards Los Angeles.[37]

A nine and one-half miles trek to the northwest took the columns of marching soldiers and sailors to the heart of what was to become the Irvine Ranch. The march had been moving steadily, but slowly, down hill — the elevation was dropping at a rate of twenty-five feet to the mile. One and one-half more miles and the forces were at the foot of Red Hill, known to the Californians as Cerrito de las Ranas, Hill of the Frogs. They continued another three and one-half miles through the present town of McPherson, and an additional three and one-half miles brought them to their camp of January 6. The complete day's march had been a long one of eighteen miles. They made camp near the Santa Ana River on the outskirts of the town of Olive, at Santa Ana Abajo, which belonged to the Yorba family.

Not a soul was seen in the town; those who were there were either old or sick and stayed behind bolted doors. The camp was laid out taking advantage of a deep ditch for one face: it was very defensible between the town and the river.[38]

Scarcely was the camp laid out when the famous Santa Ana wind

began to blow from the east, and steadily gaining intensity it blew for half an hour. Not only was the wind an unexpected and unpleasant occurrence, it also increased the Americans' vulnerability to attack had the Californians decided to press the advantage.

> Look to the windward you could not, for the least attempt at such rash proceeding was sure to fill the eyes, nose and mouth of the rash adventurer with the dust, to give him a half hours good work, with both hands to dig it out again.
>
> Growling was of no earthly use, for it did not mend the matter one whit, but then it eases a fellow's mind a little, and I verily believe that all the Growling done by the Sheet Anchor Men and Quarter Gunners of a squadron of 15 sail of the line in a 3 years cruise might be crowded into a small a space [of] one night, and then would fall far short of what was done this night of sandy memory.[39]

Sleep was hard to come by, and dawn came much too soon. The call "To Arms" resounded throughout the camp, and a disorderly search for muskets, carbines, pistols, and pikes followed. Fortunately for the troops, the fear of a raid by the Californians was a false alarm. Daylight also brought laughter to the camp as every man beheld the dirt encrusted face of the man next to him. The laughter subsided rapidly, however, as the sleepless night had shortened tempers noticeably.[40]

The line of march on the morning of January 7 was in a west by northwest direction along el Camino Nuevo Real. As the forces crossed the Santa Ana River, John Forster fell off his horse and retired to a nearby adobe for a change of clothing. He was captured by the Californian forces who, at this time, were under the command of Ramón Carrillo. Forster begged Carrillo to quit the resistance, was told to come back for the answer, and was then released unharmed.[41]

The march, still leading slightly downhill, moved through the San Juan Cajón between present-day Anaheim and Fullerton. Marching through present-day Buena Park, close to where the tracks of the Santa Fé Railroad now lie, the army stopped at Rancho Los Coyotes where the Los Coyotes Country Club now stands.

On the evening of January 7, satisfied that the enemy could not be far distant, the commodore ordered some of the scouts to proceed in advance and ascertain its position. The scouts returned with the information that the enemy was encamped on the west bank of the

San Gabriel River, some nine miles distant. The scouts were of the opinion that the Californians would do battle the next day.

> If it was to be our last night we were at least determined to make it a jolly one. . . . Nor was this disposition to make the most of the present confined to the men alone; the Officers caught the infection and mirth and amusement was the order of the day.[42]

For amusement the commodore had the band over to the ranch, and the California ladies assisted in holding a dance.

> . . . the California ladies were soon whistling around in the giddy mazes of the waltz, with their taper waists encircled by arms, which on the day following, would beyond a doubt be dealing death blows upon friends and relatives. But it made no odds to the Ladies, there was music and there was a chance for dancing, and at it they went, as if this was the last night in the world.[43]

John Forster, hoping to find Ramón Carrillo ready to surrender to the Americans, left the camp and returned to the area of Olive.

> My horse (a favorite one) was now completely fagged, and I saw it was necessary to procure a fresh one before I could proceed . . . *The Caponera* of the ranch was near, and we drove it into the *corral,* and selected a horse leaving mine there — Repaired to the house to inform the owner or someone representing him what I had done — but found the house abandoned. There was only one old Indian . . . from him I learned that every man in the place and everywhere else had been pressed into the military service — and that the Californian forces (about 600 strong) were ambushed in the willow thickets and mustard patches near what is now the town of Gallatin (about 10 miles south of Los Angeles).[44]

General Flores had moved his army from San Fernando to Lemuel Carpenter's "La Jabonería" (Soap Works) crossing of the San Gabriel, whose location was near the present-day crossing of the Santa Ana Freeway.

Stockton, upon hearing of the proposed ambush, made plans to alter the line of march, and on the morning of January 8 the American forces left Los Coyotes and marched through the heart of La Mirada, on a northwest heading along Meyer Road, to a point near the intersection of Telegraph Road and Norwalk Boulevard in Santa Fé Springs. At this point the army veered to a north by northwest heading, bringing it to the Paso de Bartolo near the

Whittier Boulevard crossing of the Río San Gabriel.

It was two-thirty in the afternoon when the army, after marching eleven and one-half miles, reached the plain bordering the San Gabriel River.[45] The plain is about two miles wide and gradually descends to the river's edge, then rises sharply about twenty-five feet, levels off onto a small plain, then rises sharply again. The river was approximately fifty yards in width, shallow, with a good deal of quicksand.

The army halted on the edge of the plain, two miles from the river, and began to eat lunch, but before finishing the Californians were seen on the east side of the river, the same side from which the Americans approached. The time for the march was at hand. The troops formed a square with the baggage, packs, oxen, and cattle in the center. The dragoons took the front with the sailors and marines on each flank. The volunteers formed the rear of the square.[46] This order of march was thought to be necessary due to the nature of the enemy's offensive ability, being mounted; also because the American forces were unaccustomed to field fighting.

The Californians had mounted their artillery on the second bank on the west side of the river; directly in range of the crossing. This would have been some six hundred yards from the crossing and about fifty feet above its level.[47]

A detachment of marines, under Lieutenant Henry B. Watson, was sent to strengthen the left flank of the square. One hundred and fifty of the Californians crossed the river to the east bank and made several ineffectual attempts to drive a band of wild mares upon the advance party. The Americans then moved forward to the ford in broken files. Captain Hensley's command was ordered to dismount, and, acting as skirmishers, to deploy at the front and to cross the stream which was fringed with thick undergrowth.[48]

The main body of the Californians, about two hundred strong, was stationed immediately in front of the ford. The right and left flanks were separated from the main body by about three hundred yards. The first cannon shot from the Californians missed its mark by such a great amount that it brought laughter from the Americans.

The United States columns halted on the eastern edge of the river, and General Kearny ordered guns unlimbered in order to return the enemy's fire. Stating that the river must be crossed with the cannon, Stockton immediately countermanded Kearny's order.

Not here, not here limber up again, forward, we must, we will cross the river with these guns. Now man, pull for your lives, your commodore is here, dont desert him, dont for the love of God lose those guns.[49]

The two nine-pounder cannons, dragged by Stockton as well as the rest of the men and mules, soon reached the west bank where they were immediately put to use.

The rear section of the army was long in getting across the river because the sand was deep and hard for the carts to manage. During the crossing one man was killed, Frederick Strauss, a seaman on the *Portsmouth.*

Upon assuming position on the low bank, a natural banquette, the right flank deployed to the right, while the left flank deployed into line in open order. The American artillery was beginning to harass the enemy who continued its fire. Commodore Stockton, seeing one of the American cannon miss its mark, jumped off his horse, sighted the cannon himself, and amid rousing cheers sent fragments of the enemy's cannon carriage high into the air. About twenty of the Californians advanced on their dismantled weapon, and hastily fastening their riatas to it, dragged it to the rear of the lines.

Captain Hensley's skirmishers then advanced and took the hill upon the right — the left wing of the enemy retreated before them. The six-pounder from the rear was ordered up; Captain Hensley was commanded to support it. The Californians, seeing this move, sent their left flank out in an attempt to charge the two cannons. Benjamin David Wilson, an American and son-in-law of Don Bernardo Yorba of Santa Ana, wrote in his *Narrative* that knowing the two forces would meet on the eighth, he rode to a high point in the hills skirting Los Coyotes Rancho where he could get a view of the encounter.

I saw there had been nothing decisive except the Californians rather gave way . . . a portion of the Californians made a charge that seemed for a time to have broken the Americans lines, which gave me much alarm. But as soon as the dust cleared I saw the Californians retreating, and from what I learned afterwards, had the charge been simultaneous of all Californian forces, the American lines would have been broken, and there is no telling what the end might have been.[50]

The enemy next collected on its right and made preparations to charge the left flank of the Americans. Kearny ordered the American

troops on the left flank to form a square, and the Californians received a warm reception from the musketeers of the ships, *Savannah* and *Congress*.

Plans were next formed for charging the second row of bluffs. In the *Missouri Republican,* an account of the battle stated that Stockton did not wish to attack these bluffs but wanted to go into camp instead. According to the author of that account, Kearny refused to establish camp and pushed on the charge.[51] Dr. Griffin, several days after the battle, wrote that he understood from Emory that

> . . . Stockton was anxious to camp on the opposite side of the San Gabriel River from that occupied after the action of the 8th. He [Emory] stood near General Kearny after the army had taken the first bank of the river and he [Kearny] had pistols in both hands, was near the Commodore, and said "I am ready for the charge."[52]

The order to advance was given by Kearny and up went the Americans charging the heights. The enemy's center contested for a few minutes, then retreated.

As soon as the hill was taken, arrangements were made to set up camp. Some of the Sapper and Miner Corps approached Stockton and inquired as to where they should pitch his tent.

> Oh dont talk tent to me now, I'm chock full of fight, d—n the tent, where is that band? Now here, stand you here, and give us "Hail Columbia" and in your best style too![53]

The camp was formed; good humor prevailed. Tattoo was beat out at an early hour, and the tired but happy forces went to sleep. The camp was located on the second, or highest bluff. There were several alarms during the night, all false, and the troops arose at an early hour eager for the forward march.

The march commenced at nine o'clock, and was due west along El Llano de las Lagunas.[54] This would closely follow what is today Olympic Boulevard. The forces entered a wide plain known as the Mesa. Scattered Californian horsemen and small reconnoitering parties constantly skirted the American flanks.[55]

After about six miles the Californians appeared in a well-chosen position, a high crest to the right of the Americans, flanked by a ravine. Upon seeing them there, the march was called to a halt and Kearny addressed the force:

> Let no man leave the station he holds in line till I give the order; those fellows will charge you, and then retreat thinking to draw you after them, but dont let them fool you.[56]

Stockton added:

> . . . I have found out that dodging Pompey is a good thing, dodging is my trade, and I am as good a dodger as any here in California, just keep your eyes on the big guns, and when you see the flash, fall down where you stand, and dont rise again till you hear the ball whistle over your heads; I tried it yesterday and found it a good plan. . . .[57]

The two armies began to exchange artillery fire, although the Americans continued marching. The damage sustained by the Americans was light. Mark A. Child, a seaman shot himself in the foot, while Lieutenant Gillespie and Lieutenant Rowan were both "slightly contused by spent balls."[58]

The columns halted and the artillery on the two flanks was placed in battery. The enemy, in front and on the right, was at a distance of six hundred yards. The nine-pounders soon made it so warm for the Californians' artillery that they carried the cannon off to their rear.[59]

The Californians prepared to charge, put their lances at the ready, and down they rode. The Americans waited patiently until the Californians were in range, then fired volley after volley upon them. The Californians tried all four sides of the square with little success, then they decided to make one last attempt to break through the American ranks by charging from all four sides simultaneously. The Californians could not withstand the hail of bullets rained upon them; they retreated to the ravines and left the Americans alone on the plains.[60]

The Americans continued the march across the Mesa and forded the Los Angeles River near what is now the Washington Boulevard crossing. From previous experience of the difficulty in controlling men when entering towns, it was determined to camp near the river

crossing and enter the Pueblo de los Angeles on the tenth, with the whole day before them.[61]

After the camp was established, the Californians, about four hundred strong, came down from the hills with their four pieces of artillery and marched towards Los Angeles.[62] This move led the Americans to believe that the Californians were not totally defeated, as they had previously thought, but would probably attack that night.[63]

The attack was not forthcoming; at nine o'clock in the morning a flag of truce was brought to camp by Don Eulogio Celis of San Fernando and Don Juan Avila of San Juan Capistrano. They hoped for an orderly entering of the town so that it would not be razed. This was agreed to, but not fully trusting General Flores, the army marched the final three miles to town in the same order as if it were expecting attack.[64] It marched parallel to the Los Angeles River, on the west side, and entered the Pueblo de los Angeles about noon. The hills surrounding the town were lined with Californians, "desperate and drunken fellows, who brandished their arms and saluted us with every term of reproach."[65]

The army marched steadily on, though Dr. Griffin admitted having a great inclination to shoot one Californian who was wearing a dragoon coat and who took particular delight in showing it off.[66] Just before the forces entered the plaza, a fight broke out on the hill between two of the Californians. The Americans thought that the fellow who got the worst of the fight was one of their own vaqueros.

> Instantly a man cried out shoot the damned rascal no quicker said than done. Out rushed several of Cyane's crew and blazed away — two or three dragoons followed their example — a rifle shot or two followed, and upon the whole I think the fellow got pretty well peppered. So soon as the man who was down got released, he jumped up and ran off with the rest — and so ended the row, except the old Genl pitched into the men for their bad conduct in fireing without orders, and for shooting so cursedly bad, — in not killing the rascal.[67]

The army marched into the plaza and Stockton began the task of setting up a headquarters at the home of Don Francisco Avila. This house which still stands and has been converted into a museum is located in the Los Angeles plaza, on Olvera Street.

Behold us then gentle Reader, with a Battalion of sea boys, safe in the City of Los Angeles, the Stars and Stripes waving over us, and our Band playing away for dear life the Quick Step of a musket and steps out in as true dress as if he had been for 40 years a soldier.[68]

The United States forces had come one hundred and forty-five miles over a period of thirteen days, arriving at the Pueblo de los Angeles on January 10, 1847.

Our men were badly clothed and their shoes generally made by themselves out of canvas. It was very cold and the roads heavy. Our animals were all poor and weak, some of them giving out daily, which gave much hard work to the men in dragging the heavy carts, loaded with ammunition and provisions, through deep sands and up steep ascents, and the prospect before us was far from being that which we might have desired; but nothing could break down the fine spirits of those under my command, or cool their readiness and ardor to perform their duty; and they went through the whole march of one hundred and forty-five miles with alacrity and cheerfulness.[69]

Soldiers and sailors, marching through an unfamiliar country, across plains and over mountains, along the seashore and through canyons, were victorious in two battles and ended the Mexican resistance in the South.

After the Americans' arrival, Flores and his followers abandoned the field and the command then devolved on Don Andrés Pico, who with a small force travelled to meet General Frémont at Cahuenga. Pico obtained a favorable guarantee for his people, and on January 13 the two opposing commanders signed the Capitulation of Cahuenga ending the war in California.

NOTES

1. The principal sources of information concerning the thirteen day's march have always been:

John S. Griffin, "A Doctor Comes to California; The Diary of John S. Griffin, Assistant Surgeon with Kearny's Dragoons," *California Historical Society Quarterly*, ed. George Walcott Ames, Jr. (Vol. XXI, Nos. 3-4, Vol. XXII, No. 1.). Dr. Griffin, Assistant Surgeon in the United States Army and a member of Kearny's staff, was present throughout the march.

U. S. Senate, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., *William H. Emory's Notes on a Military Reconnoissance from Fort Leavenworth in Missouri to San Diego, California,*

Exec. Doc. 7 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1848). Emory, a lieutenant of Topographical Engineers, U. S. A., acted as adjutant general during the march. Hereinafter referred to as Emory.

John Forster, "Pioneer Data," MS, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1878. Forster, an English born Californian and brother-in-law of Pío and Andrés Pico, accompanied the army from Mission San Luis Rey to the San Gabriel River.

Joseph T. Downey, *The Cruise of the Portsmouth, 1845-1847,* ed. Howard Lamar (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958). Downey, a seaman, participated in the march and left an account of his experiences in his work, originally entitled "Odds and Ends or Incidents of a Cruise in the Pacific in the U. S. Ship Portsmouth from Jan. 1845 to May 1848. By Fore Peak."

2. These plans, however, were not secret. Dr. Marius Duvall, Assistant Surgeon on the *Portsmouth,* mentioned in his journal that he heard of the plans concerning the march on December 14 while stationed in San Francisco. Marius Duvall, *A Navy Surgeon in California, 1846-1847: The Journal of Marius Duvall,* ed. Fred Blackburn Rogers (San Francisco: John Howell, 1958), p. 76.

These first plans were somewhat vague, for as late as December 22, 1846, Kearny wrote a letter to Stockton suggesting that the march be commenced as soon as possible. Stockton replied that he wished to march on San Luis Rey as soon as possible and was desirous to go all the way to the Pueblo de los Angeles if it could be done without hazarding "the safety of the garrison and the ships in the harbour . . ." Samuel Johns Bayard, *A Sketch of the Life of Com. Robert F. Stockton* (New York: Derby and Jackson, 1856), Appendix B, pp. 33-34.

3. Bayard, *Stockton,* Appendix B, p. 32.

Military historians may never fully agree as to why Kearny refused command of the march at this time, as he immediately set out to regain his authority in California. Thousands of words have been written and read concerning this subject, but it is not the purpose of the author either to express an opinion or stifle the reader with voluminous comments of others. Kearny had the authority of the United States government, and was, in the final analysis, the one and only commander on the march. However, this fact must be viewed cautiously as Stockton was able to extend his authority beyond the limits set down on paper, and must be recognized as a primary source of authority throughout the duration of the march. The outgrowth of this impossible situation was the bitter struggle for political authority by the Stockton-Frémont faction as opposed to Kearny following the capture of Los Angeles. For additional information concerning this dispute, see: Dwight L. Clarke, *Stephen Watts Kearny, Soldier of The West,* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961.)

4. Turner informed Stockton that none of the horses were fit for service, and except for the volunteers the army took the line to Los Angeles unmounted.

5. The *Congress,* Stockton's flagship,; the *Savannah,* under the command of Captain William Mervine; the *Portsmouth,* commanded by Captain John B. Montgomery; and the *Cyane,* commanded by Captain Samuel F. duPont.

6. Emory, *Notes,* p. 114.

7. Bayard, *Stockton,* Appendix B, p. 34.

8. U. S. Senate, 30th Cong., 1st sess., *Message of the President Communicating the Proceedings of the Court Martial of Lieutenant Colonel Frémont,* Exec. Doc. 33 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1848), p. 47.

9. For a more complete list of the force see: Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California* (San Francisco: The History Company, 1886), V, 385-386.

10. Branches of El Camino Real also connected various ranches which had been under mission domain prior to the Secularization Acts of 1833 and 1834. Because of the flexibility of the road it is difficult to establish at all times the exact location of the famous highway.

11. This route can be established from the notes of Lieutenant Emory describing the dragoons' entry into San Diego on December 12 from Mule Hill:

> We followed the Solidad [sic] through a deep fertile valley in the shape of a cross. Here we ascended to the left a steep hill to the table lands, which, keeping for a few miles, we descended into a waterless valley, leading into False Bay at a point distant two or three miles from San Diego.

12. The army took the inland route here, "fearing that the hills on the sea coast road would embarrass the movement of our military and ox-carts." *Ibid.* p. 192.

13. *Ibid.,* pp. 115-116.

14. Bayard, *Stockton,* p. 143.

15. "Saint Mary of the Little Stones" was the first private land grant in San Diego County. Los Peñasquitos Rancho is a long narrow strip of land starting just east of the highway crossing of the Santa Fé Railroad at Sorrento, and extending along a creek of the same name to a line west of Poway. It comprised 8,486.01 acres of land.

16. Griffin, "A Doctor Comes to California," *CHSQ,* XXI, 345.

17. *Loc. cit.*

18. This was a retaliation for the famous Pauma Massacre where eleven Californians were killed by Indians under Manuel Cota at Warner's Ranch. *Loc. cit.*

19. The Buena Vista Ranchería was at the center of what is now the town of Vista. Consisting of 1,184 acres, it was granted, in 1845, to Felipe Subria, a Luiseño, who had been a neophyte at Mission San Luis Rey de Francia. The ranch house is still standing and has been restored.

20. Griffin, "A Doctor Comes to California," *CHSQ*, XXI, 345.

21. José Francisco Palomares, *Memoirs*, tr. from the MS in the Bancroft Library, Berkeley, by Thomas Workman Temple in the *Early California Travel Series* (Los Angeles: Glen Dawson, 1956), XXXII, 53-55.

22. The author has established the route of January 2 on the premise that the area had been mission holdings and therefore trails would have existed between the rancherías. Furthermore, a segment of El Camino Real connecting the Mission de San Luis Rey to the Asistencia de Pala ran close to present-day Highway 76. Topographical maps indicate that this would have been the easiest route through the hills and the mileage approaches the six and one-half miles mentioned by Emory. Emory, *Notes*, p. 117.

23. Mission San Luis Rey de Francia was founded June 13, 1798, and reached its maximum population of neophytes, 2,869, in 1829. The mission was established in a broad valley through which flowed El Río de San Luis Rey.

24. Downey, *Portsmouth*, p. 194.

25. Stockton sent Captain Samuel Hensley with Forster to Forster's ranch at Santa Margarita to receive the oxen. Forster also began to furnish the force with horses. Forster, "Pioneer Data," p. 44.

26. Griffin, "A Doctor Comes to California," *CHSQ*, XXI, 346.

27. The author includes this quotation for the insight it renders into Stockton's own battle plans. Bayard, *Stockton*, pp. 143-144.

28. Thomas C. Lancey, "U. S. Ship of War Dale: Its Cruise Together with Gleanings by the Wayside, including the Conquest of California." From the San Jose *Pioneer* (1879-1881), p. 526.

29. Forster, "Pioneer Data," p. 45.

30. Samuel F. du Pont, San Diego, January 8, 1847, to Sophia du Pont, item W-9-1022 from the Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Collection of the Eleutherian Mills Historical Library, Greenville, Delaware.

31. Griffin, "A Doctor Comes to California," *CHSQ*, XXI, 348.

32. Emory, *Notes* p. 117.

33. Terry Stephenson, *Caminos Viejos* (Santa Ana: Santa Ana High School Press, 1930), pp. 47-48.

34. Griffin. "A Doctor Comes to California," *CHSQ*, XXI, 349.

35. Forster "Pioneer Data," p. 47.

36. Rancho Cañada de los Alisos was a grant of 10,688.8 acres granted to José Serrano originally by Governor Juan Alvarado. The ranch house has been restored.

37. Downey, *Portsmouth*, p. 196.

38. Emory, *Notes,* p. 118.

39. Downey, *Portsmouth,* pp. 196-197.

40. *Ibid.,* pp. 198-199.

41. Forster, "Pioneer Data," pp. 49-50.

42. Downey, *Portsmouth,* p. 200.

43. *Ibid.,* p. 201.

44. Forster, "Pioneer Data," p. 51.

45. The great flood of 1867 cut a second channel in the plain. The old channel, where the battle took place, is now called the Río Hondo. The new channel is the present-day San Gabriel River.

46. The advance guard was under Captain Samuel S. Hensley, the rear guard was commanded by Lieutenant Hiram Rheusaw. Kit Carson and seven others acted as scouts. Company C 1st dragoons, under Captain Henry S. Turner, and Company D musketeers of the *Cyane,* under Captain Edward Higgins, occupied the front, with two pieces of artillery, under Captain Richard L. Tilghman, on each flank. The right flank was composed of marines, Company C musketeers of the *Portsmouth,* under Captain Benjamin F. B. Hunter, Company C carbineers, under Captain James M. Duncan, Company A carbineers of the *Cyane,* commanded by Captain J. Fenwick Stenson, and Company A carbineers of the *Congress,* under Captain John Reed. The whole right flank was under the command of Captain Jacob Zeilin. The left flank was composed of Company B musketeers of the *Savannah,* and Company A musketeers of the *Congress,* under Captain John Guest; the whole force under the command of Captain William B. Renshaw. The rear was composed of two pieces of artillery, under Lieutenant William H. Thompson; the guard of the day, forty-nine strong, under Philip H. Haywood; one company of riflemen, under Renshaw; Captain Santiago E. Argüello's company of California volunteers; the whole under the command of Lieutenant Archibald Gillespie.

47. The actual point of crossing was several hundred yards south of where Whittier Boulevard currently crosses the Río Hondo. A monument, located on the corner of Washington Boulevard and Bluff Road, commemorating the battle is approximately one mile southwest of the crossing.

48. The principal information concerning the battle of January 8, 1847, is derived from Emory, *Notes,* pp. 119-120; Griffin, pp. 350-351; Downey, *Portsmouth,* pp. 202-211; and Bayard, *Stockton,* pp. 144-145. Information from other sources will be noted.

49. Downey, *Portsmouth,* p. 206.

50. Wilson, Benjamin David, *Narrative,* dictated to Hubert Howe Bancroft, December 6, 1877 (Pasadena: A. C. Vroman Inc., n.d.), n.p.

51. *The Missouri Republican,* 14 June, 1847. This article was signed "Justice", and is thought to have been written by Philip Cooke, who was with the famous Mormon Battalion.

52. Griffin, "A Doctor Comes to California," *CHSQ,* XXI, 354. The author does not believe that Griffin's observation fully documents the assertions in the *Missouri Republican,* note No. 50; however, it does leave room for some conjecture regarding this point.

53. Downey, *Portsmouth,* p. 211.

54. Palomares, *Memoirs,* p. 60.

55. Emory, *Notes,* p. 120.

56. Downey, *Portsmouth,* p. 212.

57. *Loc. cit.*

58. Griffin, "A Doctor Comes to California," *CHSQ,* XXI, 351.

59. Lancey, "U. S. Ship of War Dale," p. 542.

60. The monument marking the location of the battle at the Mesa may be found near the corner of Downey Street and 44th Street near the present Union Stock Yards in Vernon. The location of the Californian cannons on a rise on the east side of the Los Angeles River would place the site of the actual battle in the area of the thirty-four hundred block on Olympic Boulevard, about one mile north of the present monument. This site was derived by transferring the Californian artillery emplacements from the sketch of the battle by Emory to a topographical map. The range of the Californian cannon was under six hundred yards, and the first hint of high ground to the Americans right is slightly over one mile from the monument.

61. Emory, *Notes,* p. 121.

62. One of these cannons was the famous 'old woman' cannon used at the Battle of Domínguez Ranch. It is presently on display at the United States Naval Academy. Two of the cannons were heavy cast nine pounders. The fourth was the howitzer captured from the Americans at San Pascual. *Governor Pío Pico Mansion Newsletter,* November, 1964.

63. Emory, *Notes,* p. 121.

64. *Loc. cit.*

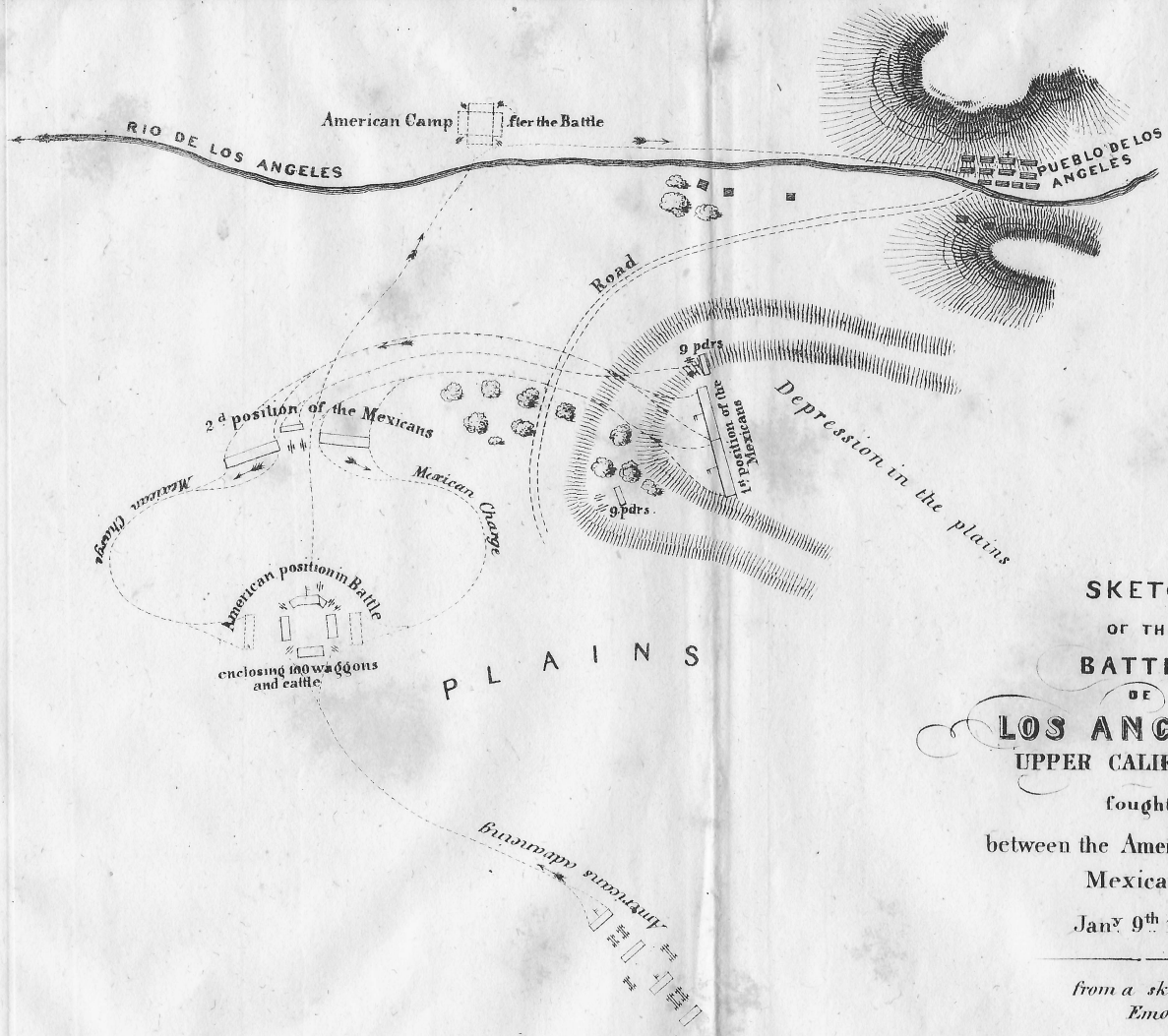
65. *Loc. cit.*

66. Griffin, "A Doctor Comes to California," *CHSQ,* XXI, 352.

67. *Loc. cit.*

68. Downey, *Portsmouth*, p. 215.

69. U. S. Senate, 30th Cong., 2nd Sess., *Dispatches Relating to Robert Field Stockton's Military and Naval Operations*, Exec. Doc. 31 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1849), letter of February 5, 1847.



SKETCH
OF THE
BATTLE
DE
LOS ANGELES
UPPER CALIFORNIA,
fought
between the Americans and
Mexicans
Janʸ 9th 1847.

from a sketch of Emory

A Rollinet engd