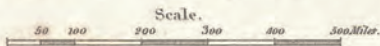




Uncovering the California Conquest

How the United States
Took the Golden State
from Mexico

MEXICO.



By The Madera Method Historians
of Madera South High School's
2021-2022 Historical Literacy Course



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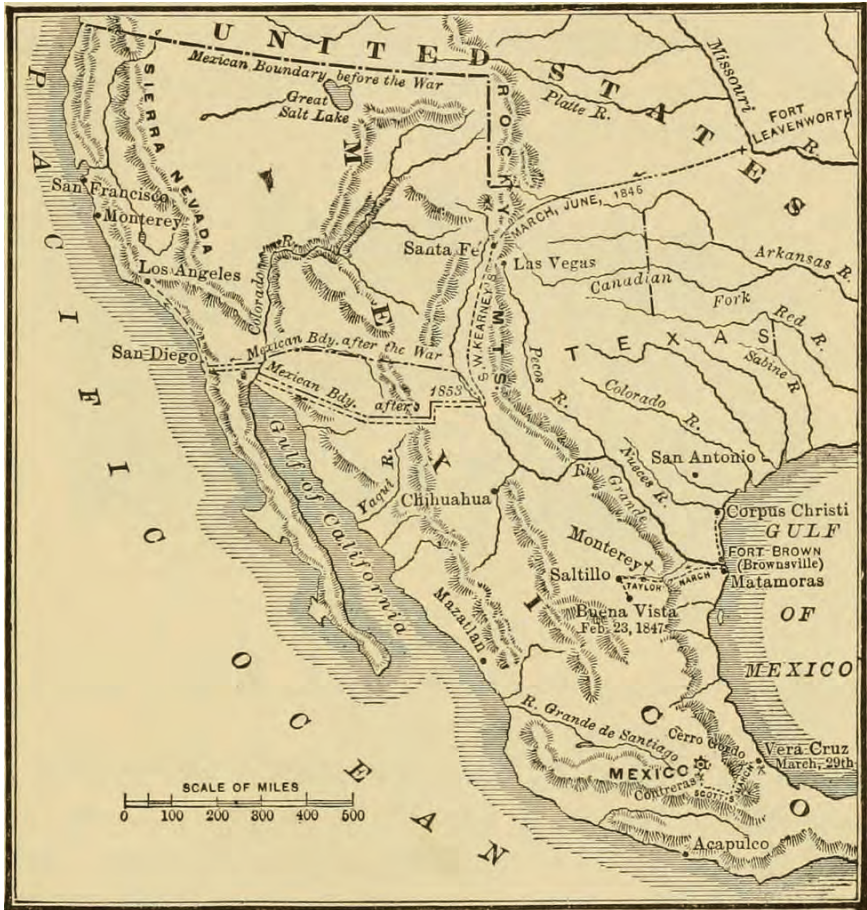


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Foreword

The Rich and Fertile Ground of Doing History

Exciting things are happening in California. History is being made in Madera. Young men and women at Madera South High School are doing history—and doing it very well, thank you.

The culmination of their work on the conquest of California is a cause for celebration. The project, as an example of what was referred to by author Irving Stone as the “Madera Method,” is indeed a model of excellence. It represents substantial original research and superb writing by the students and well deserves the recognition they are receiving.

I covet this experience for high school students everywhere. Without question, the teaching of history at all levels nationwide could benefit from a healthy dosage of the “Madera Method.” Why is that? Four important reasons immediately come to mind.

First, the story of the transformation of California from a province of Mexico into a state of the Union has allowed the students to do history. This in turn makes them more aware of the power of history in their own lives, resulting in a greater consciousness of themselves as historical beings. Instead of passive recipients, they have become active participants in the historical proves. It is a life-changing experience.

Second, history is far more than simply the memorization of names, dates, and facts. In the words of a colleague of mine, “History is a lot like life—and we will better come to understand the one to the degree that we come to understand the other.” The serious student of history investigates not merely events, but human thoughts and actions. This is the value of the “Madera Method.” It enables the student, once again, to have an exciting personal encounter with real people—like—Benjamin Lippincott who faced the same vicissitudes of life we face. It bridges the generation gap and bonds the present to the past, thus ensuring the future.

Third, the experience of working with primary sources and of having to place the personal narrative within the context of the larger national story is absolutely invaluable. The tough-minded methodology of this process allows each student to develop the important critical-thinking skills of analysis, application, synthesis, and evaluation. When finished the student can stand alongside Irving Stone and

say with excitement, "I am a writer!"

Fourth, this project is an excellent example of local history. In the words of Wallace Stegner, "This is the best kind of history, the history with more of ourselves in it than any other kind." To Stegner, local history is a healthy antidote for the enormous sense of historical loss he believes has accompanied the American experience in the 21st century.

I heartily agree, and I am reminded of the words of Stanley Pergellis when he was director of Chicago's Newberry Library. "True patriotism," he wrote, "springs from the soil and the streets where a man lives, from the rocks and rills he has known; if that local affection is wanting, the larger national affection in any sense that is real and lasting must be wanting too.

Enough said. I am delighted to salute each of the students for their uncommon achievements, and I am especially proud of their teacher, Valerie Shelton.

— Bill Coate

Introduction

In 1984, Mr. Bill Coate, a sixth-grade teacher at Howard School in Madera, embarked on what was originally planned to be a simple research exercise with his class. He took them out to a small cemetery near Chowchilla, where three gravestones stood in disarray, the lives of those interned there seemingly forgotten. Using the minimal information the headstones provided—names and dates—Coate’s students began looking into who the Minturns, the family buried there, were. One thing led to another and over the course of the school year, the project grew and resulted in the students publishing a historical narrative account in the form of journal entries that could have been written by the Minturn matriarch Abby Minturn. This would be the first of many such projects since dubbed “Madera Method” projects by infamous biographer and storyteller Irving Stone.

For years, the Madera Method ebbed and flowed, with projects mostly sprouting from various classrooms in grades five through eight within Madera Unified and beyond. This year, as the new historical literacy instructor at Madera South High School, I made it my mission to bring the Madera Method into a high school classroom. As a journalist-turned-educator, I was enthralled by our site’s impressive collection of primary source documents in the form of old microfilm newspapers dating back to the mid-1800s. In fact, it was the mention of this collection to me by former Madera South principal Oracio Rodriguez that prompted me to apply to Madera South, seeing the apparent alignment between the school’s goals and my own professional goal of somehow infusing my journalism background into my English classroom. When I arrived in 2019-2020, the Madera Method Special Collection and Archive had just recently been donated by Bill Coate and had not yet been put to good use by Madera South students. A first-year teacher, still enrolled in my credential program and familiarizing myself with the Common Core standards and methods of classroom management, I was not yet in a position to use these coveted source materials in my then English III and Yearbook classrooms. Then, of course, in March 2020, all aspirations seemed to halt as a result of the global pandemic. The special collection remained unused the following distance learning year. Then, entering my third year at Madera South, the alignment I originally saw came into view when I was asked to teach the school’s elective historical literacy course. There was no set blueprint for the course, but research and analysis of primary source documents was an essential component—viola! The perfect opportunity to dig into

the archive and try out the Madera Method I'd heard so much about. I reached out to Mr. Coate, and we got started. The result is the volume you now hold in your hands.

I didn't start before a gathering of gravestones. Still, I started by introducing my students to a series of letters available in the archive written by a man named Benjamin S. Lippincott. You have probably never heard of Mr. Lippincott, just as my students nor I had previously, but in his letters, he paints a vivid picture of his journey overland to California and his subsequent views and involvement in the Mexican-American War as a quartermaster in John C. Fremont's California Battalion and eventual statesman. I originally thought the letters would spark further inquiry into the life of this prominent, yet little-known, individual. However, it was clear my students' interest lay in the events of the war itself, which few of my predominantly Hispanic students knew little if anything about. A couple of students continued to pursue Lippincott's story, while others began vigorously researching the historical characters of Captain John Sutter, Dr. John Marsh, Consul Thomas O. Larkin, former Mexican governor of California, Juan Bautista Alvarado, and Californio General turned statesman, Mariano Vallejo. In their research, students drew from the primary sources of Lippincott's letters, the letters of other individuals, articles published in the first California newspapers, and historical documents such as Polk's Declaration of War and the text of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. They also drew from the secondary source of Irving Stone's historical narrative "From Mud-Flat Cove to Gold to Statehood". Their task was to create their own historical narrative, in the form of letters or journal entries that could have been written by the historical figure they had been researching. A couple of latecomers who joined the course the second semester were tasked with instead creating a well-researched account of the major events of the California Conquest to provide a solid secondary source summary for readers that would be a prelude to the historical narratives created by their peers.

In addition, students were tasked with sharing their research with a broader audience through our class-created podcast, the Madera Method Podcast, which we hope will grow into a venue where all students participating in Madera Method projects throughout the district and beyond can share their historical knowledge. You can find the transcript of one of these podcasts—an interview the students did with Mr. Coate—in the appendices of this book.

It was quite an undertaking, and I'm beyond proud of the 14 seniors in the Madera South Class of 2022 who stuck with this project through to the end. I know all have learned much through this intensive research and writing process. I hope everyone who reads their work will be enlightened by their findings and insight.

—Valerie Shelton

Acknowledgments

This project would not have been possible without the assistance and support of Mr. Bill Coate who contributed many of his afternoons to conferring with students in their research and providing feedback on their historical narrative work.

We would also like to thank history teacher Jordan Mattox, who graciously allowed us to use his podcasting equipment and assisted in the audio editing and publishing of the Madera Method Podcast.

We would also like to extend our thanks to the following Madera South and Madera Unified School District administrators who have shown considerable support for our class: Superintendent Todd Lile, VAPA Director Brandon Gilles, Principal Aimee Schramm-Anderson, Dean of Curriculum and Instruction Stephanie Hamblen, Vice Principal Jon Steinmetz, Vice Principal Ericka Moran, Vice Principal John Martin, and Vice Principal Elizabeth Puga.

A Chronology of the California Conquest and Its Makers & Shakers

1832

- Thomas O. Larkin came to California.
- Larkin wanted the U.S. to own California.

1836

- Dr. John Marsh arrived in Los Angeles.
- Isaac Graham helped Alvarado overthrow the Governor and take over California.

1837

- Marsh moved north and bought a cattle ranch, the Los Meganos ranch.
- The Los Meganos ranch was only 50 miles from Sutter's Fort.

1839

- John Sutter arrived in Monterey.
- Sutter was given 76 square miles of land by Gov. Juan Bautista Alvarado.
- Sutter wanted to build an empire in the Sacramento Valley.

Seeds of Rebellion: 1840

- Sutter built a fort a mile from the Sacramento River; he called it "New Helvetia." Isaac Graham began a plot to overthrow Alvarado and turn California into a Republic.
- Graham was arrested and put in jail in Monterey.
- Gov. Alvarado ordered Colonel Mariano Vallejo to arrest all foreigners and put them in jail in Monterey. Vallejo thought Alvarado's order was dangerous.
- Vallejo knew that the U.S., England, France, and Russia wanted to own California.
- John Marsh was arrested in April, although he was a citizen.
- Marsh was released after 2 days.

- Marsh went to Thomas O. Larkin to get help for the Americans who were in jail. After 13 days in jail, 40 foreigners were taken out of the Monterey jail and taken to Mexico City.
- Thomas Jefferson Farnham wrote a letter back East describing what Alvarado had done to the Americans in California. Farnham's letter was published, and it made Americans mad.

Americans Come to California: 1841

- England, France, and the United States were interested in owning California
- Russia decided to leave its base at Fort Ross.
- John Sutter bought all of the Russians' property. This made him rich.
- Covered wagon trains began to bring Americans to California.
- Navy Lieutenant George Emmons brought a covered wagon train down from Oregon to Sutter's Fort.
- John Bidwell organized a covered wagon train to go to California from Weston Missouri. It was the first wagon train to arrive in California from the East.
- A third wagon train arrived in California in 1841 (in addition to the Emmons Party and the Bidwell Party). It came from New Mexico. It was called the Workman-Rowland party.

Sutter Gets Ready: 1842 to 1843

- Manuel Micheltorena was appointed Governor of California to replace Juan Alvarado.
- Sutter worked to make his fort successful.
- He knew that all of the wagon trains coming into California would have to stop at Sutter's Fort. He would let them stay in his fort and rest. He would sell supplies and provisions to them. Inside the fort, along the back wall were rooms used for sleeping, cooking, and eating. There was also a blacksmith shop, a tannery, a storehouse, and a still. At the center of the fort were corrals for animals. Sutter had about 100 Indians working for him.

First Skirmish!: 1844-1845

- California Governor Micheltorena learned that war was coming between Mexico and the U.S.
- Alvarado and Castro rose against Micheltorena to take back control of California.
- Sutter joined Micheltorena as a Captain. Sutter put together a 200-man army.
- Alvarado and Castro fled with their army south. Sutter and Micheltorena chased after them to Los Angeles.

- There was a cannon battle.
- Sutter found out that Alvarado's army was mostly Americans.
- The two armies stopped fighting each other.
- Micheltorena went back to Mexico City.
- Sutter was captured.
- The new governor, Pio Pico pardoned Sutter.

The Conquest Begins: 1846

- In January 1846, Captain John C. Fremont with 60 mounted men rode into Monterey.
- The capital of California was moved from Monterey to Los Angeles.
- Gov. Pio Pico was stationed in Los Angeles. Jose Castro, head of the Californio army, was stationed in Monterey.
- Castro ordered Fremont and his men to leave California.
- Fremont refused. He took his men and set up camp on top of nearby Gavilan Peak.
- Fremont decided that he didn't want to fight Castro. Fremont and his men abandoned Gavilan Peak and headed for Oregon.
- Lieutenant Archibald Gillespie rode into Monterey looking for Fremont. He had a message for him from President Polk. Larkin told Gillespie that Fremont was on his way to Oregon. Gillespie rode after him.
- May 8, Gillespie caught Fremont and gave him President Polk's secret message. The message was "Seize California." Fremont turned his men around and headed back to California.
- On May 13, the U.S. declared war on Mexico.
- When Americans who lived near Sonoma learned of Fremont's return, they decided to launch the Bear Flag Revolt. The Bear Flag Revolt turned California into an independent country for 25 days. They were led by William B. Ide.
- On June 14, Ide and his men arrested Mariano Vallejo and took him to Sutter's Fort.
- On July 7, Commodore John Sloat, commander of the U.S. Navy's Pacific fleet, captured Monterey and declared California part of the U.S.
- On July 9, the Bear Flag Revolt quit and turned things over to the U.S. Navy.
- On July 12, the U.S. Navy captured San Francisco (Yerba Buena) Then the U.S. made plans to capture Southern California.
- On July 23, Commodore Robert Stockton took charge of California from Commodore Sloat. Stockton ordered the creation of the California Battalion. Fremont was put in charge, and Gillespie was his assistant.
- Fremont and Gillespie rode to Monterey and then were shipped to San Diego to conquer Southern California.

- On August 13, the California Battalion took over Los Angeles.
- Armed Mexican civilians rose against the American conquerors in the Siege of Los Angeles. It was also called the Battle of Los Angeles.
- The U.S. Army of the West, led by General Stephen Watts Kearny, entered California. They were defeated by the Californios in San Diego in the Battle of San Pasqual.
- Stockton's troops rescued Kearny's men and then marched on Los Angeles to retake it for the U.S. Fremont's Battalion joined them.
- The battle for Los Angeles ended with the Capitulation of Cahuenga. The Californios surrendered to Fremont.

1847

- The U.S. ruled California.
- Richard Barnes Mason was appointed the military governor of California. Mason's word was the law.

1848

- January 24. Gold was discovered at Sutter's Mill.
- February 2. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed by Mexico and the U.S. The U.S paid Mexico \$10 million. The U. S. took possession of California, Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah, and parts of Colorado.

1849

- 25,000 Americans joined the California Gold Rush.

1850

- September 9. California became the 31st state.



The Battle for California

By Johanna Garcia Espana & Daniela Altamirano-Ramirez

In 1846, tensions that had been steadily bubbling between Mexicans in the west and Americans in the east came to a head as both sides disputed the boundary of the newly annexed Texas, and President James K. Polk cried war. The war was swift, lasting merely two years, as Americans and their weapons outnumbered those of the Mexican troops. Many battles were fought, some in Mexico, others closer to the original point of contention near Texas, and others still in the territory of California, arguably the grand prize for the war's eventual victor, the United States. In a series of a few short months, American forces from both the army and navy seized California from the Mexican forces therein. Polk sent several agents, chief among them John C. Fremont, to rebel and seize power from the Californios, even ordering such men as Fremont to seize cities before the formal war was declared. While much of the action was fought outside of California, such as the major battles of Buena Vista and Veracruz, both fought in Mexico, there were pivotal skirmishes and battles fought within California's bounds as well, which the men whose perspectives we explore in later chapters would have been privy to. The following is a summary of each of these conflicts fought on California soil.

First Skirmish

The first skirmish in the series of conflicts in California had little to do with the building animosity between the Mexican citizens and foreign Americans and everything to do with an internal heat that was rising among groups of Californios

with dissenting opinions on how California should be run.

In 1844, it became apparent to Mexico City that a war with the United States was forthcoming, and a new Mexican governor, Micheltorena, was appointed to handle the oncoming onslaught. Troops provided by Mexico City for the capital California city of Yerba Buena, now known as San Francisco, were virtually nonexistent and inadequate. This was unacceptable to former governor Juan Bautista Alvarado and his military right-hand man, Jose Castro, who decided to try and take back California. Together, they challenged Micheltorena and attempted to overthrow him to get rid of his convict troops.

To defend himself against Alvarado and Castro, Micheltorena garnered support from John Sutter at Sutter's Fort, who had quite the growing community sprouting near the Sacramento River, with some men and weapons to lend the cause. Sutter had been appointed the captain of the Sacramento Valley by Micheltorena in July 1844 and took charge of a 200-man army that chased Alvarado's forces south to Los Angeles over a couple of months beginning on New Year's Day in 1845. The chase ceased in February. On the 20th, a brief cannon battle erupted, with Sutter's troops firing on Alvarado and Castro's army. There were few casualties—historians estimate somewhere between one and four horses, but no men perished in the skirmish. Why such a brief battle? Well, it didn't take long for Sutter to realize that almost all the troops in Alvarado's army were American, as were those in his. Discovering that both sides were really the same side—Americans—the troops ultimately came together under the leadership of Sutter's friend, Dr. John Marsh. In the end, Micheltorena fled back to Mexico City, while Sutter was captured and imprisoned, but later pardoned by the last Mexican governor of California, Pio Pico, who took pity on the man for merely following Micheltorena's orders.

U.S. Declares War

News spread slowly in the days of the old Western migration, but once President James K. Polk finally declared war on Mexico on May 13, 1846, Americans settled in California were ready. The final straw leading to the declaration? Failure on Mexico's part to succumb to negotiations set forth by the United States government seeking to establish the boundary of Texas as being the Rio Grande River, rather than the Nueces River, as was the boundary according to Mexico.

At this point, Texas was a free and independent state that had been annexed into the United States, to the detriment of Mexico. But, having gained the vast Texas territory, Polk was just gaining momentum in his quest to expand the United States, and the dispute of the few miles between the Rio Grande and the Nueces River and the resulting conflict, during which a few American troops were shot and killed by Mexican forces, was the excuse he'd been waiting for to declare war and send in the troops to capture not only California but Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah, and Colorado.

Bear Flag Revolt

In preparation for the impending war, John C. Fremont was lurking around California, claiming his sole venture was to survey and map out the land. However, secretly—or not so secretly as the Californios easily sniffed him out—Fremont had orders from President Polk to lay in wait and capture California.

In January of 1846, Fremont, along with 60 men mounted on horseback, rode into Monterey. During this time, the capital of California and its final Mexican governor Pio Pico was moved south to Los Angeles. The head of the Californio army, Jose Castro, however, remained stationed in Monterey and upon finding out of Fremont's presence, ordered him and his men to leave California in March 1846. Fremont refused and instead took his men to the top of nearby Gavilan Peak, where they set up camp and raised the American flag. Castro's men prepared to smoke Fremont and his army out, setting up their heavy artillery at the base of the peak. As Mexican cavalry ascended the mountain, 40 of Fremont's men went down to meet them but stayed hidden. No shots were exchanged, although some of Fremont's men were accused of stealing a few horses. The next day, the American flag hoisted at the top of the peak fell, and Fremont took this as a sign to abandon the fight at Gavilan Peak and head for Oregon to wait until the war was officially declared.

As Fremont and his men were making their way north, Lieutenant Archibald Gillespie, a fellow United State army representative sent to California under the guise of needing a better climate to nurse alleged health concerns, rode into Monterey to find Fremont and deliver an urgent message to him from the president. Consul Thomas O. Larkin informed Gillespie that he'd just missed Fremont, who departed for Oregon, and Gillespie rode after him. On May 8, 1846, Gillespie caught up with Fremont and his men and gave him the president's message. The message was simple: seize California. Immediately spurred to follow his president's order, Fremont turned his men around and headed back for Monterey. During the journey back, word reached Fremont of Polk's declaration of war with Mexico on May 13, 1846.

Upon hearing of the declaration and of Fremont's return to California, a group of Americans living near Sonoma decided to launch what would become known as the Bear Flag Revolt. Under the leadership of William B. Ide, this band of American patriots marched onto Colonel Mariano Vallejo's Sonoma ranch on June 14, 1846, arrested the Californio leader, and issued a proclamation declaring California as an independent republic. Vallejo was taken to Sutter's Fort and imprisoned there until, after a stint of 25 days as an independent country, the United States Naval fleet arrived in Monterey on July 7, 1846, under the command of Commodore John Sloat who declared California part of the U.S. On July 9, the instigators of the Bear Flag Revolt turned over control of the state to the U.S. Navy. On July 12, the Navy, already having successfully captured Monterey, captured San Francisco.

Siege of Los Angeles

With the north officially under United States control, plans were then made to head south to capture Los Angeles and southern California. On July 23, 1846, Commodore Robert Stockton took charge of California from Commodore Sloat. One of his first acts as leader was to order Fremont to form an army that became known as the California Battalion. While Fremont was in charge of this army, Gillespie was made his assistant. Together they rode from San Francisco to Monterey, where they boarded a ship that set sail for San Diego, from where they would march north to Los Angeles.

On August 13, 1846, a day after official word of Polk's declaration of war reached California, the California Battalion successfully took over Los Angeles, however, the Mexican Californios in the area did not just succumb to American rule. Fueled with rage, not necessarily due to Mexico's ousted government but more so due to Gillespie's rough treatment and seditious racist remarks, 400 armed Californio civilians rose against their American conquerors in the Siege of Los Angeles. This has also been referred to as the Battle of Los Angeles. In the battle, the civilians, organized under the leadership of former army officer Captain Jose Flores, Jose Carrillo, and Captain Andres Pico, captured a rancho in Chino where 20 Americans and foreigners were stationed. Then, on September 30, 1846, Flores' men captured their foe Gillespie and his men and marched them to San Pedro.

This uprising spurred similar rebellions throughout the state. On October 2, another group of armed Californios marched on Santa Barbara. Later, a band of Californios captured Consul Larkin, who was traveling from Los Angeles to Yerba Buena to visit his sick daughter. Scattered skirmishes erupted statewide, resulting in handfuls of both American and Mexican Californio deaths, some civilians. For a brief time, it seemed possible that Mexico might recapture control of California.

Battle at San Pasqual

The Battle at San Pasqual proved to be yet another victory for the Californios, although it would prove to be their final victory. Leading the Americans in the battle, fought December 6-7, 1846, in the San Pasqual Valley near San Diego, was General Stephen Kearny with an armed force of 100 dragoons and Archibald Gillespie and his 60 mounted riflemen. Together, they had two cannons and a howitzer. This would normally bode well for the larger American force, had they not been taken by surprise by a group of 80 mounted guerrillas under the command of Captain Andres Pico. Kearny, acting too hastily, sent a guard to charge Pico's troops, but the Californios held their ground and killed an American commanding officer, Captain Johnson, and one other. Enraged, Kearny sent his troops into battle, but despite superior numbers, the Californios were the superior horsemen. After two days of intense fighting, the Californios emerged victorious. The

battle resulted in the worst American defeat since the War of 1812. Twenty-one Americans were killed, 19 were wounded, and the American howitzer was lost. It's unknown how many casualties were on the Mexican side, but it was a clear loss for the Americans.

Battle of San Gabriel

Kearny, still reeling from the defeat at San Pasqual and full of resentment towards the Californios because of the deaths of his men and loss of the howitzer, combined his forces with Commodore Stockton. In January 1847, Kearny and Stockton's troops marched toward San Diego. The Californios catching wind of the vast American army were worried as they were outnumbered. The American Army fanned out with 500 soldiers marching north from San Diego to Los Angeles and then were met by Fremont and his 400 hundred soldiers marching south toward Los Angeles. Rather than back down, the Californios charged toward the Americans, flanking them on both sides. The attack took the American forces by surprise but didn't stop them from overtaking the Californios. The battle was going on strong as the American troops held their ground and the Californios had no choice but to retreat, resulting in a monumental victory for the Americans and General Kearny. After three months, an American flag was once again raised in the plaza of Los Angeles.

Capitulation of Cahuenga & Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo

At this point, it was evident that the Californios would need to surrender, but General Andres Pico refused to surrender to General Kearny or Commodore Stockton. Instead, Pico came to an agreement with John C. Fremont, whom he and the Californios respected. Fremont no longer wished to continue fighting and proposed a peace treaty with Pico, and on January 13, 1847, the Capitulation of Cahuenga, a treaty made between Fremont and Pico, was signed. In this, the Mexican forces under Pico agreed to give up their artillery. Both sides also agreed to release any prisoners of war and agreed to obey the American laws. The Mexican Californios were also allowed to return to their homes, where they would be treated as equals and given the same rights as American residents. This signaled the end of the conflict in the California Conquest, although the broader Mexican American War would not officially cease until a year later with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, made on February 2, 1848. In this treaty between the United States and Mexico, Mexico agreed to give the United States 55 percent of its territory—modern-day Arizona, California, New Mexico, Colorado, Nevada, and Utah—in return for a sum of \$15 million.

Manifest Destiny and the Lead-up to the California Conquest

By MSHS Historical Literacy Class

“War is merely the continuation of politics by other means.”

—Carl von Clausewitz

Before examining the minds and hearts of a few individuals involved in and around the California Conquest, we must first step back and consider what led to the conflict in the first place.

War is often waged for numerous reasons. In analyzing President James K. Polk’s declaration of war with Mexico, one may assume that simply this war was about what all American wars seem to be—defending our lives, liberty, and freedom from some foe. However, a speech made for the benefit, and arguably manipulation, of the public cannot possibly hold all the facts. A conflict in the disputed territory is mentioned. An envoy, Polk explains, was sent to peacefully negotiate with Mexican authorities. What ultimately ensued was an unpeaceful skirmish which resulted in some American troops dying.

What Polk never mentions are what the terms of the negotiations were, why a peaceful envoy was sent along with a parade of army soldiers, and how many men, approximately, died in the fight. We can infer that whatever the terms, they were disagreeable with the Mexican officials the envoy approached. We must wonder, however, why a peaceful negotiation should require a full army. If an army marched into a territory you believed was rightfully yours and made demands, you would certainly feel threatened, perhaps even strike first to send a message to get off your property. Given the lack of details Polk cares to share, one must wonder if that is precisely what the Mexican officials in this 150-mile space between the Rio Grande River and the Nueces River were doing—defending themselves. Whatever the case, the incident, from which the resulting number of casualties was likely few as it was omitted, was the supposed catalyst driving the United States to war with Mexico. And this wasn’t just a war to be fought over where the Texas border should be—it escalated overnight to war over the territories that now encompass

California, Utah, Arizona, Nevada, New Mexico, and parts of Colorado and Wyoming. Altogether, it was 525,000 square miles the Republic of Mexico would eventually cede to the United States. That was 55% of Mexico that would transfer and nearly double the size of the United States, all, if we are to trust Polk's war cry, as a result of a small conflict in the 150 square mile area near Texas.

The reality is the minor dispute had everything and nothing to do with the war. It had everything to do with providing a reason, but nothing to do with the actual reason, which was an American ideal of manifest destiny. When something is manifest, that means it is obvious to the mind or eye. So, when one manifest's something, they are setting their sights on something, putting that goal—that legacy—at the forefront of the mind as if to bring it into being by sheer will or self-fulfilling prophecy. Today, it can be considered a mindfulness strategy, when you envision the future you want in an effort to motivate yourself to make it happen. Then, there is the destiny part. If something is destiny or fate, it is inevitable, it is bound to happen. So, going back to the years leading up to the Mexican-American War, many Americans proclaimed it was Manifest Destiny—they could see it, clearly, unquestionably as an inevitability—that California, along with the rest of the far west, would become part of the United States. In their view, it was God's will that the United States would expand from the east to the west coast. In the words of John L. Sullivan, "Our manifest destiny is to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions."

Of course, President Polk could not declare war on principle alone, instead using the incident at the Rio Grande to launch the war with Mexico. In his declaration of war in 1846, Polk states, "Mexico has passed the boundary of the United States, has invaded our territory and shed American blood upon American soil. She has proclaimed that hostilities have commenced and that the two nations are now at war. As war exists, and, notwithstanding, all our efforts to avoid it, exists by the act of Mexico herself, we are called upon by every consideration of duty and patriotism to vindicate with decision the honor, the rights, and the interests of our country."

But what efforts were made to avoid the war, you may ask? The answer is simply a peace offering in the form of a monetary offer made by the United States to purchase the land. When Mexican officials refused to sell, however, feeling the amount offered was not substantial enough and quite frankly, insulting, negotiations ended and hostilities ensued. Not every American at the time was in support of such hostility nor even in support of the manifest destiny philosophy. Famous naturalist, poet, and philosopher Henry David Thoreau asked the pertinent questions at the time, "How does it become a man to behave toward this American government today? I answer that he cannot without disgrace be associated with it. I cannot to an instant recognize that political organization as my government which is the slave's government also." Given the circumstances, what we interpret Thoreau as trying to say was that a person with a moral conscience could not, in his right mind, support the United States government which also supported the

institution of slavery. Slavery may seem a completely different issue from the Mexican-American War, but in reality, the events of the conquest directly impacted the impending Civil War. In some ways, the focus on expansion and the war with Mexico deterred the internal conflict rising between the northern and southern states at the time, but with California eventually made the 33rd state in the union, and a free state, the issue of slavery was brought to the forefront as the number of states against the institution than would outnumber those in the south wanting to retain the practice. It's also important to note that Mexico did not condone slavery at this time and the majority of European countries, Britain included, had already abolished slavery.

Though Thoreau speaks out eloquently against the slave trade, one could easily ascertain that the philosopher was against the conquest and the entire concept of manifest destiny as well. Given the circumstances at the time, Thoreau and like-minded individuals suggested that support for the United States government at this juncture equated to support for the institution of slavery. These same individuals like Thoreau were adamantly opposed to the doctrine of manifest destiny and its implication that the United States had the right to expand its bounds into the territory that was under Mexican leadership.

In an effort to prevent President Polk from declaring war with Mexico, one congressman, Joshua Giddings, gave an impassioned speech before the House of Representatives on May 13, 1846, in which he questioned the events at the Rio Grande and the United States' attempts at peaceful negotiations. "What aggressive acts toward a foreign power could our army commit while on our own territory?" Giddings asks. "While the army was within the United States they could not commit violence upon Mexico. The order was also to abstain from all aggressive acts toward Mexican citizens. It seems that the President expected General Taylor to find Mexican citizens located within the United states....The President obviously intended to involve us in war with Mexico. No sophistry can disguise that fact. That truth will stand on the page of history for all time, to the disgrace of this nation and of the age in which we live..." He also points out that with the recent annexation of Texas that those citizens, who are predominantly Mexican but now considered Americans, deserve representation and the majority of them are against the slave trade. At the end of this speech, Giddings concludes that the United States citizens are not ignorant of the real reasons for going to war. "Sir, no man regards this war as just. We know, the country knows, and the civilized world is conscious, that it has resulted from a desire to extend and sustain an institution on which the curse of the Almighty most visibly rests." (Giddings, 1846). Of course, Giddings's words largely fell on deaf ears, but the essence of his speech and in particular his statements about the moral viewpoint in opposition to slavery that most citizens in the territory America was about to engulf would linger in the hearts and minds of at least one young congressman in attendance—Abraham Lincoln. Though rarely covered or merely glossed over in the standard U.S. his-

tory textbook, the impact of the California Conquest was far-reaching, ultimately influencing the Civil War.

Despite the protests of Giddings, Lincoln, Thoreau, and others, news outlets at the time published editorials in full support of the war with Mexico. According to an 1848 article in the *New York Evening Post*, there was some debate about the necessity of the war and the newspaper seemed to take the stance that everyone should be for it, the article says “Now we ask, whether any man can coolly contemplate the idea of recalling troops from the Mexican territory we at present occupy...and...resign this beautiful country to the custody of the ignorant cowards and profligate ruffians who have ruled it for the last 25 years? Why humanity cries out against it. Civilization and Christianity protest against this reflux of the tide of barbarism and anarchy.” This implies that Mexico is too ignorant and unable to care for the land and thus the United States must step in and take over. Another article, also published in 1848, but in a publication called *DeBow's Commercial Review*, states the inevitability of the United States expansion. “Have no results in Mexico taught the invincibility of American arms? The North Americans will spread out far beyond their present bounds. They will encroach again and again upon their neighbors. New territories will be planted, declare their independence, and be annexed. We have New Mexico and California! We will have Old Mexico and Cuba! The isthmus cannot arrest—nor even Saint Lawrence! Time has all of this in her womb. A hundred states will grow up where now exists but thirty.” While the United States has yet to expand to 100 states, we can't deny knowing the results of the Mexican-American War that nothing at that time could stop America from doubling in acreage, effectively chopping Mexico in half. Arguably the prime real estate in the crossfire was California, which would be the first in America's newly acquired land to declare statehood. As the 31st state—a free state, not a slave state—the balance of the United States would be disrupted, the result of which would launch the nation into a larger, deadlier war with herself.

It's within this context we now explore the inner workings of some of the prominent men in California at the time.



Juan Bautista Alvarado

By Jacob Oliveri

One of the last Mexican governors of California leading up to the Mexican American War, Juan Bautista Alvarado was a major player who, along with his uncle Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, were among the last of Mexico City's designated leaders to vie to keep California for Mexico. Born in Monterey, Alta California, in 1809, Alvarado was raised by his maternal grandparents, the Vallejos, as his father died mere months after his birth and his mother remarried. Growing up, side by side with his uncle Mariano as brothers, both men became active in the political sphere.

Alvarado is best known for serving as governor of Alta California from 1837-1842. He was a polarizing figure known prior to receiving the governorship as the leader of a coup that overthrew the previous interim governor of Alta California, Nicolas Gutierrez. An initial rogue for California independence, Alvarado and his followers even created a flag and constitution before reaching an agreement with Mexico.

Given his tendency toward anarchy in the past, one would think Alvarado would be keen once again to rally for California independence, but he instead

stayed the course with Mexico City, even as his more pragmatic uncle Vallejo wavered in allegiance, seeking instead the best option for the residing Californios, which eventually proved to be joining America. His steadfast alliance with Mexico, however, did not make Alvarado immune to controversy. In 1840 one of his confidants, Isaac Graham, who had assisted him in his coup of Gutierrez, plotted to thwart Alvarado from his newfound political seat. And, once again, after Alvarado was asked to step down from his post in 1844, he, along with Jose Castro, lauded yet another coup, this time against newly appointed governor Manuel Micheltorena.

The narrative autobiographical account below chronicles Alvarado's perspective on the major events of his life leading up to and during the California Conquest.

My name is Juan Bautista Alvarado, and in 1827, when I was only 18 years old, I began my political career as a secretary to the territorial legislature in Alta California. This position allowed me to accumulate enough wealth to build a modest Monterey house in 1831 for my mistress, Juliana Francisca Ramona y Castillo. In 1834, I was elected to the California legislature as a delegate and appointed customs inspector in Monterey. I held this position for some time until I set my sights higher and I made it my mission to become the governor of California. Still young and inspired by the quest for independence growing in the territory of Texas, I touted the idea of an independent California, of which I wanted to be the leader. I was able to persuade a crowd of like-minded men to follow me and along with the help of my uncle, I was able to overthrow governor Nicolas Gutierrez and was appointed governor myself at the age of 27. The city council in Los Angeles protested, but I had garnered the support of Mexico City and in time, the votes of my Monterey constituents.

Over the years, I had two daughters with Juliana, though we remained unwed as she wasn't the marrying kind. I loved her dearly but instead was persuaded to marry a more appropriate lady of my station, Doña Martina Castro, whom I officially wed on August 24, 1839, in Santa Clara, although I was not in actual attendance at the ceremony. Heartsick over the forced union and my inability to marry the woman whom I truly loved, I took to the bottle and became so intoxicated I was unable to function enough to get through the vows and my half-brother, Jose Antonio Estrada, stood in for me. After the wedding, I lived with my brother's bride in Monterey.

In all honesty, I continued to drink heavily after the arranged marriage, especially as Mexico's grasp on Alta California crumbled under my leadership and I lost political power. It all started in 1840 with my former ally, Isaac Graham, who in his drunkenness for power and jealousy of my success, got together with a group of foreigners and

planned a revolt against me, not unlike the same coup I had led against Gutierrez. Blast that Graham who would seek to use my own tactics against me! Luckily, Graham's plan leaked from his loose lips before it could gain traction. The drunk could not keep his mouth closed and blabbed about the revolt to the wrong people, who were thankfully loyal to their governor. Instead of ousting me, Graham got himself arrested, along with all other foreigners whom I ordered Vallejo to capture. He was later deported to Mexico City to await trial.

If only my conflicts with the foreign American citizens had been so swiftly dealt with. But alas, the United States was a force to be reckoned with and the incident with Graham somehow only ignited the flames of war, with a lawyer friend of foreigner Dr. Marsh writing a scathing opinion for the American newspapers of my harsh treatment of men like Graham. Leave it to a liar like Dr. Marsh to spin that scoundrel into a martyr. In all truth, I admit having Marsh himself arrested was egregious on my part. The man had been completely cooperative and had pledged his allegiance to Mexico, even marrying a Californio. I was so angry with Graham that I simply refused to see reason, even when presented by my uncle. But having been scammed by Graham, at the moment I felt I couldn't trust a single foreigner, even one as seemingly innocent as Marsh. But still, leave it to the United States to pounce on any small infraction and see it as some sort of divine sign that California was theirs for the taking.

In 1841, political leaders in the United States were declaring their doctrine of Manifest Destiny, and my Californio citizenry grew increasingly concerned over their ambitions. My uncle, Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, conferred with me and recommended that Mexico send military reinforcements to enforce their military control of California. He could not, however, persuade me to reason. He urged me repeatedly to bulk up the capital Monterey's defenses and send for soldiers and supplies from Mexico City. But oh how Mexico City failed time and again to respond to his pleas. The only response given was that Mexican president Antonio López de Santa Anna sent Brigadier General Manuel Micheltorena and 300 men to California in January 1842.

Everyone, Californio and foreigner alike, held my uncle in the highest esteem and he could be most persuasive — if he was unsuccessful in his attempts to garner my support, why would I blemish my reputation by making demands I knew Mexico City would not accommodate? I came to my governorship most unconventionally and in an effort of self-preservation I became too conservative — loathe my allegiance to Mexico City!

With Micheltorena on his way to Monterey, I was effectively being

pushed out of office. Before he even arrived, however, the United States, sensing our weakness, attempted to capture the city.

In October 1842, American Commodore Thomas Ap Catesby Jones mistakenly thought that war had broken out between the United States and Mexico. He sailed into Monterey Bay and demanded us to surrender. Micheltorena's force was still in the south, and the Monterey presidio was undermanned. I reluctantly surrendered. The next day Commodore Jones learned of his mistake, but I referred the matter to Micheltorena.

Micheltorena eventually made it to Monterey but was unable to control his troops, many of whom were convicts. This formulated rumors of revolt, and in 1844, disgusted with Micheltorena's incompetence, I became associated with the malcontents and sought to boot him out of office. I once again failed to listen to Vallejo's next modicum of advice to side with the most capable of foreign governments keen on taking over the territory, the United States, and instead put all my mislaid efforts into trying to take back control of Monterey from Micheltorena. Along with military leader Jose Castro, I fought to drive out Micheltorena and his band of convicts. I was detained in the conflict, but while personally unsuccessful in regaining power, the movement did scare Micheltorena back to Mexico City, where he was supposedly tasked with organizing a large contingent in preparation for a war with the United States.

The coup may have been more successful had it not been for John Sutter. I don't even know where to begin with that opportunist. His desire for military leadership was so deluded he came to Micheltorena's aid, sharing his wealth of supplies and troops, who were able to keep us at bay. When I gifted Sutter his 76 square acres of land in 1839, I did so under the assumption that he was simply a good businessman with elaborate and admittedly very fine plans for the Sacramento area. It was no problem to give him the land at the time, as no one had settled the area, but in hindsight giving Sutter anything was a major flaw. If it weren't for his welcoming fort, Americans making the overland trek to California would have no place to go upon arrival. How many conniving Americans must have come through Sutter's Fort to ready themselves for War against us? And if that weren't bad enough, the man was playing both sides, feigning loyalty to Micheltorena so Mexico City wouldn't suspect a thing. What a manipulative dolt.

If I only had such a mind as Sutter though, having been the only man to see the value in the cannon and equipment left behind by the Russians at Fort Ross in 1841. Why Mexico City didn't listen to my uncle's insistence to obtain those valuable assets is beyond me, but boy did Sutter capitalize. I daresay whomever Sutter aligns himself

with shall be victorious as he has more troops at his call than Mexico City has provided to even their golden child Micheltorena. But Sutter's true feelings were glaringly apparent when he discovered Castro and I primarily had American citizens on our side of the fight. Sutter ceased fire and had Marsh calm relations between the two camps of nearly all American soldiers. I have to respect Marsh for beating Sutter at his own game though—the men were unmoved by Sutter and surrendered him to us!

With Pio Pico appointed as governor, Sutter's detainment was short-lived as he pardoned all those associated with the rift between me and Micheltorena. At least Pico seemed more reasonable than Micheltorena. Unfortunately, Mexico City's delay in getting the supplies and men needed to stop a takeover proved fatal when once one John C. Frémont arrived in Monterey at the beginning of 1846.

I didn't much care for Fremont. He was clearly a scoundrel lying about his motives—creating geographical maps with the command of army soldiers? He wasn't exactly subtle. He had some sway and was able to establish a rapport with Vallejo, but at this point, I was done with politics and resigned to focus on my private life and business. Afraid of foreign aggression, Castro assembled a militia and as a confidant, I was obliged to be made second in command, but Frémont fled north to Oregon before we could pursue him further.

On July 7, 1846, United States Commodore John D. Sloat sailed into the harbor and occupied Monterey, declaring to the citizenry that the Mexican—American War had begun, with war having been declared by the United States on May 13, 1846. It very much reminded me of the ordeal with Commodore Jones, but this time the occupation was not in error, and we were unwilling to surrender. Castro and I once again joined forces to focus on combating the American threat, but by the end of August, Castro fled to Mexico, deciding he didn't want to deal with the political mess with a war going on. Then, I was captured. Following Castro's release, I spent the remainder of the war on his estate in Monterey. I no longer had a desire to be involved in the political upheaval going on. I instead left that fight up to Vallejo, who at one point was arrested, but eventually made a name for himself as a member of the first California Congress after the Americans took control of the area.

After the war, I was offered the governorship in Mexico City but I declined since I didn't want to deal with politics anymore. I also did not participate in the California Gold Rush, instead concentrating my efforts on agriculture and business. I opened the Union Hotel on the ranch in 1860, but my businesses were mostly unsuccessful. After my wife died in 1876, I devoted my time to writing the *Historia de California*.

Isaac Graham

By MSHS historical literacy students

The following narrative, journal entry was penned by students under the guidance of their teacher. It is written from the perspective of Isaac Graham after he was arrested for attempting to overthrow Governor Juan Bautista Alvarado in 1840. It is unknown whether rumors of the plot were true, though we know Graham vehemently denied any such plans. His role leading up to the California Conquest was minor, but significant in that his arrest was a catalyst for growing tensions between the United States and Mexico. A lawyer by name of Thomas Jefferson Farnham wrote an account of Graham's arrest and eventual deportation that ran in the eastern American newspapers. The detailed account accused Governor Alvarado of having Graham arrested because he owed him money. True or not, Americans believed Farnham, and anger with Alvarado and Mexico boiled over.

April 25, 1840

Curse you Juan Bautista Alvarado! Is this what our friendship has come to? All I ever did was help this usurper secure his position as the California governor back in 1836 when he overthrew old Nicolas Gutierrez and now Alvarado has the gull to accuse me of using his own plan against him a few years later? Does he even realize how absurd that notion is? I'm a successful man with a thriving distillery and hordes of cattle; it would be a travesty for me to sacrifice all this success for some half-witted plot against a former ally.

Do I think California would be better under American rule? Well, as compared to Alvarado's shaky leadership, yes, perhaps I do think that, but not enough to take it upon myself to oust the man. If what happens in Texas takes hold here, it will not be due to any interference from me. Rather, it would be the result of Mexico's incompetence and not preparing for such a takeover after witnessing it in Texas, knowing full well the American government's obvious intentions. And not just

America's intentions, but by golly, there are more British traders and Russians here who could also stake a claim. I suspect that is the real reason behind this nonsensical arrest.

Mexico City won't send you proper protection, so you cowardly decide to dispose of the 40 foreigners within a 20-mile radius of your capital. I highly doubt that will garner much sympathy from any European power or American who may seek to wage a war against you. If anything, this blunder, I foresee, will lead to further unrest in the region, making California prime for the taking.

All contemplation aside, arresting me, in particular, creates an adversary that Alvarado does not want. I knew the man was lacking, but to tarnish our relationship by accusing me of such blasphemous conduct is unforgivable. The allegations he makes are completely without merit. I admit, currently being of sober mind in prison, that I tend to run my mouth when well supplied with drink. It is possible that I said, in jest, that California would become the next Texas. Quite honestly, given Mexico's actions or lack thereof, I highly doubt I'm the only one to make such an observation. Even Mariano Vallejo, who I know likely did not want to arrest me--as I gather from his apparent discomfort in doing so—knows this is a real possibility. But simply stating, however drunkenly, and obnoxiously, that fact does not equate to collaborating on an in-depth plan to see that outcome more quickly and assuredly. As if I could plot anything substantial while intoxicated.

Say what you want of my character. I like my women, I like my drinks, but I am a simple man with very little in the way of political ambitions. I've been accused of many things in my day, but this is preposterous.



John Sutter

Narrative by Juan Rodriguez

Letters by Octavio Mora-Ramirez & Leslie Reyes-Merino

Journal by Castner Hatanaka

John Augustus Sutter was a Swiss immigrant to California known for establishing Sutter's Fort, a refuge for later American pioneers who made their way west. The strategic location of Sutter's Fort, between the once Mexican capitol of Monterey and Los Angeles in today's Sacramento area, along with Sutter's friendly relations with local natives and his ingenious procuring of essential supplies, including weapons and cannon, made Sutter a prominent figure in the California Conquest. An opportunist, Sutter was able to walk a fine line, appeasing Americans and Californios alike leading up to the Mexican American War. In fact, Sutter secured both Mexican and American citizenship. The height of Sutter's success occurred almost immediately following the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which officially ended the war with the United States purchase of the California, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, Nevada, and Utah territories. Before the ink had even dried on the treaty, gold was discovered at the Sutter's Fort mill, leading to the resulting California Gold Rush of 1849.

The narrative account, letters, and journal entries that follow tell the story of

the California Conquest from Sutter's unique perspective as a Swiss outsider who found his place in American and Mexican history.

June 25, 1862

Dear Readers,

Let me kindly introduce myself so you may look upon my notes, journal entries, and letters from the time of the Mexican-American War as though they were written by a friend and not some anonymous author. I am John Augustus Sutter. I was born in Switzerland, where I lived much of my young life before leaving my lovely, humble wife and five children. Before I was prosperous in California, I had befallen disgrace in my native land, under the strain of such financial debt as required me to go bankrupt and lose all I had, compelling my wife and children to move in with my spiteful mother-in-law, who refused to let me share her roof. Although I could go into detail about all that went wrong, I don't mean to unease your mind and bring too much attention to it because the focus of these documents is on my time as a pioneer in California. Once here, my life was completely changed, the old life was gone and replaced with vibrant, fresh, eyes.

"Well, now I'll be on my way to California darling," said John Sutter to his wife as he set sail from Switzerland to start anew in an unknown land.

I was born in the mountains across the long winding rivers of Switzerland. My mother-in-law didn't like me. I was unwelcome. I was kicked out of where I called home. I was in a prison only to be let out with only my wits to rely on. I've heard that there's a place in California where I could be all alone. Wilson, a man who gave me a ride to California, asked, "Now why do you wanna go anyways?" to which I replied, "I'm going to the valley. A captain said that beauty lies there. You see, I've only had one goal on my mind, to follow my only hope of total isolation. I know what I want, and wouldn't settle for less, you see, I want to be the master of my wilderness."

I've arrived. I slowly unpacked my stuff with the help of my crew. We rested and went upstream. The next day, we went down the San Joaquin River. It was then I realized things didn't add up. The map was completely different from what I'd seen. "I went down the wrong stream!" I realized. We turned our ship and headed upstream. It took two days to get toward the middle of the Sacramento stream.

"INDIANS!" a crewmate yelled out.

"AYAYAYAYA!" The Indian war cry broke out!

My crew was ready to defend the boat with their lives. They had fear written in their eyes. I, on the other hand, understood both sides of

the fight as I lived among the Delawares during my time in Cincinnati, Ohio. I raised my hand. I gave a calm gesture to my crew to lower their guns. I went to the shore unarmed. I looked at the Indian as I would to my crew member or a friend you haven't seen in a while and said "Adios amigo." The Indian with his cold stare looked up and down.

"Humf" said the Indian.

He didn't seem tense or angry toward me so I slowly explained everything. After explaining, I gave them presents and they seemed pretty happy! I won my first battle without the use of a weapon.

I found the perfect area to build my house. We started work on the house. Before we started work a crewmate asked, "shouldn't we name it?" I said, "New Helvetia it'll be called." A neat name don't you think? A paradise far from home.

It took more than a few months to finish the construction of New Helvetia. I built an organization where I sold cargo. It was an instant success. People were pouring in from everywhere. Everyone wanted to buy from me and I couldn't blame them. I fell in love with this place instantly. The location was beautiful: A magnificent river full of the freshest fish, a land rich with game. Agriculture was booming. I ate wild grapes so tasty you wouldn't believe it. It was the perfect area for me.

"This is the land for me," I said to myself.

Others didn't see it the way I did though. They hated the wilderness. So I was left all alone with a little Indian boy, a Hawaiian, and a cabinet maker named Mr. Welter, who was in my original crew. Constantly I wrote to my wife in Switzerland. At this point, I hadn't seen her in six years, but I wrote to her all the time about my misadventures and the gorgeous views I saw daily. The smell of the land was all piney, trees reached the skies and the mountain tops were covered with snow on top. Man! What a fantastic life I had! Lucky!

Little did I know that my joy would be short-lived.

May 3, 1840

Dear Mrs. Sutter and children,

Let me tell you of all that's happened to me so far. I was lucky enough to reach Monterey, and I was given 76 square miles of land! Seventy-six! How fortunate am I to be bequeathed this land by its governor Juan Bautista Alvarado? I would rather like to build my empire out here in the Sacramento Valley. Once I claimed my land by the Sacramento River, I built a nice, sturdy fort and named it "New Helvetia." I would love for you to be here to see this, but what I can describe to you is that it's tremendous. It's nice.

Let me not lavish you on all that's going good though... a lot is going

on politically you couldn't conceivably comprehend. To start, after getting settled, there was a demand for the arrest of all foreigners. This demand was made by none other than the very same governor who so generously gifted me my bounty when I arrived. Now, Alvarado seems resentful of this and seeks to destroy the goodwill he has made with all foreigners, including the Americans he is particularly outraged by. It is idiotic and only gives them more recourse to come after this land. Alas, I've decided upon trying to become a citizen to avoid arrest and loss of this grand property. There is no way in which I'm going to leave not now!

In the spring of 1840, when I was constructing a fort that would've been indestructible, I was interrupted by a man named Captain Mariano Vallejo. He was a man who seemed like he was the most important person in the world. He has this stern stare that makes you shiver when you see him. He came up to me and said,

"I'm angry, furious! Furious I say!" Captain Vallejo said as he approached me. He proceeded to tell me that everyone had to leave immediately.

"Now wait just a minute!" I demanded. "Where exactly are you taking us?"

"Monterrey. Let's go now."

We both knew that it was against the law. This didn't seem right to me or fair at all; the deportation of all of us. I'm sure this broke international law.

"This is so unfair!" I yelled. "Why is this even happening?"

Captain Vallejo seemed flustered as well. "You are all political prisoners."

Everything I worked for was for nothing. My land, my Magnus opus, was left for dead. All that was going through my mind was my failures. Constantly, I was reminded of how pathetic I was. A mediocre job was all I was born for. Here I was, being evicted from my own home again, this time not by force, but by fate. Then I realized something: I made a successful business, I was thriving here than when I was bankrupt back in Switzerland. I "made it" here, there isn't any way I'm leaving this place.

"Aren't you mad? Aren't you angry?" I tried to implore Vallejo with reason. "I'm not the only one being evicted, you lose too!" This took the colonial by surprise.

He paused for a moment and then said "No one insults Colonial Mariano Vallejo! Who do you think you are?"

"I didn't insult you!"

"I was insulted at every turn!" he clenched his fists and swallowed hard, apparently fighting back his mounting rage. "Look," he started

again, calmly, “there was nothing I could do. Do you know how it feels to do this?”

I stared at him blankly as his gaze drifted beyond me to something unseen.

“ARG! I want to rip their heads off!” he exclaimed a moment later, before once again settling himself to civility. “I know how upsetting this ordeal is for you Mr. Sutter. I’m compelled to act by duty and obligation to the wishes of my governor. I do not wish to quarrel with you further. If you and your settlers could please accompany me without protest, I will request the governor to have an audience with you when we reach Monterrey so you can make your complaints directly.”

“In my heart, I am a colonizer and I’m as every bit mad as I can be. I wanted to own this land!” I bemoaned.

Days passed by since I was sent away from my magnum opus, my paradise. I met a man imprisoned alongside me, Dr. John Marsh. I was a military captain and he was a man of medicine. We both knew we had absolutely no right to give ourselves those titles, but who would stop us? The West has little care for who you were before, what mattered was who you were now. You had a clean slate and could be whatever you want to be. So obviously I became captain. Marsh came as a doctor and later built a huge ranch! But that was before my good friend Marsh got captured and sent off to prison. He was sent there by Vallejo even though he was a legal citizen. He was vocal in his protest so within a few days they let him out.

“Now how did you Jimmy you’re way outta that one John?” I asked Marsh.

“I sweet-talked them into letting me out! It was easy, just made good conversation and somehow got out,” Marsh said. “Now ain’t that interesting...but I want to help those other people, they don’t deserve to be in there.”

So began his redemption.

February 19, 1841

Sir Thomas Farnham,

I write to you as I am currently in California where Americans and foreigners, including myself, were recently arrested.

In your recent article, you made Isaac Graham seem as if he was an innocent man arrested by a spiteful governor. In reality, almost everyone in California knows Graham is a drunk liar and he was plotting to overthrow Governor Juan Bautista Alvarado and turn California into a Republic. Governor Alvarado had been most accommodating to me previously in giving me 76 square miles of land

to establish Sutter's Fort. It is difficult to believe that he would have such a drastic change of mind toward his foreign friends, but thanks to Graham's shenanigans, I was shocked to hear that even John Marsh, who even became a Californio citizen, was arrested. I am worried since I still haven't become a citizen and risk losing my 76 square miles of land should matters worsen once again.

My name is John Augustus Sutter. I was born in Switzerland. The reason I came to California was that I got kicked out by my mother-in-law. I headed to Monterey, the capital of California where I found Mexican authorities who said I can stay in California. I can even get land but I have to become a Mexican citizen, catholic, and live in Mexico for a year. Even before I was given the land, I had already started building my fort. One thing you should know about me is that I like the wilderness. That is the reason I built my house where the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers come together.

A lot of people who came with me decided to leave due to the wilderness. It was only me, a few Hawaiians, an Indian boy, and a Mr. Wetler, who is the cabinet maker, who stayed. I quickly began to look for a high spot for my house. I decided to name my house New Helvetia, also known as New Switzerland. Living in the wilderness helped me meet new people. I made friends with Indians who live in the same area. I convinced them to hunt and build traps for me. Trappers and travelers started to visit my house. That's when I came up with the idea to build a fort and turn New Helvetia into a trading post. Finally, in July 1840, Governor Juan Bautista gave me 76 square miles of land. But now thanks to Graham, all foreigners are in hot water and I risk losing all I've worked so hard for. After five years here I don't know what to do. I keep failing, not having a good job, failing business, getting kicked out by my mother-in-law, and now could get deported.

If you are to make martyrs of foreigners, perhaps shift your focus to my friend Dr. Marsh or myself, both honorable foreign residents of California. But please, I implore you, don't cry for Isaac Graham. An ideal foreign citizen he is not!

Dear Consul Larkin,

It is now 1841. I still have my land even after the debacle with Graham and the horrid arrests that followed, but now I have another problem, for which I require your assistance in resolving. Douglas has been taking beaver hides from creatures within my sphere and is making a fortune with them in Canada. I have had enough of this outright theft. I approached Douglas directly and told him to stop hunting on my land. For now, it appears he has discontinued

his hunting in my vicinity, however, my land is so vast, that I would appreciate more eyes on my land. In this endeavor, I have offered to buy resources left behind by the Russian fur company at Fort Ross. I have been advised that Mexico City and Colonel Mariano Vallejo have refused to purchase the assets so I hope neither will harbor ill will toward me for seizing this opportunity to enhance and further secure my settlement. As you have an audience with Vallejo, I would appreciate your letting him know my sentiments and noble intentions.

In other news, hearing that the Bidwell party was heading to California and in dire need, I loaded two mules with provisions and sent two of my men to guide them overland to my fort. I see this as an opportunity to help fellow pioneers and I'm hoping some of the party will remain at the fort in my employ, as I will need more men to guard the resources being brought down from Fort Ross. I currently have around 30 men, mostly Indians, working for me. Overall, all things are running smoothly thanks in part to your investment. I may, however, need another loan. I presently owe a lot of money to people including the Russians. I would normally be able to pay my debts back come harvest, but I haven't been able to grow well due to the drought. If I don't keep up with my payments, I'm afraid I could lose my recently accumulated resources. I hope you understand my predicament and being a generous and wealthy man would oblige me in loaning me a bit more in good faith that this drought will soon cease and I will be able to return your funds promptly.

The Journal of John Sutter

April 10, 1840

I arrived in California via ship at the capital Monterey, after arriving in Honolulu, Sitka, Alaska first. Juan Bautista Alvarado was the first person to warn me about the northern part of California ruled by Colonel Mariano Vallejo. He said Vallejo doesn't like adventurous people like myself, coming into California to live independently. Juan Bautista seems friendly, maybe he and I will be friends in the future. As I walk around, I like the scenery of California, bright green and hot. I made my decision to come to California for a new life. I wasn't successful in my past life in Switzerland. I had a failing business and my family didn't want me. I had no money.

June 6, 1840

Today I plan to settle and continue my journey. I bought a lightship boat off of Captain Wilson, rented schooners, (Isabel and Niclas) guns,

ammunition, seed and farm equipment, and blacksmith and carpenter tools. I had mistakenly gone up and sailed the San Joaquin river, instead of the Sacramento.

July 1, 1840

When my group sailed up the right river, we encountered hundreds of Indians ready for war. My crew wanted to open fire, but I went down and talked with them. I was able to reason with them to such effect that their Indian Chief Anashe gave me a chance to explain my situation. I set up just beyond the Sacramento and American rivers. I have decided to name my little settlement New Helvetia. My settlement has been doing well, good resources and newcomers have joined my settlement.

October 14, 1840

Today foreigners have been arrested for conspiring to overthrow the government. I had nothing to do with this, but I've been told I tend to speak my mind about what I think is best for California. I want it to be a Republic.

January 23, 1841

My fellow friends and acquaintances, who live in and around Yerba Buena came all together to throw me a party on a ship. They all wished me success in achieving my plan. I also heard my new friend Dr. Marsh thinks my plan is stupid and a waste of time because of my poor choice of land to settle.

November 30, 1841

I am presently in a feud with James Douglas of the Hudson Bay company, and with the Russian American Fur Company. They have stolen millions of dollars of my otter skins. After they decided to depart my land, we negotiated and have come up with a plan that I will be able to purchase all the resources they are leaving behind for a modest sum of \$40,000, to pay which I will make four payments over four years, the first two payments of \$5,000 and the third and fourth payments of \$10,000. The first three will be payable in wheat, peas, beans, tallow, and soap, and the fourth and final payment must be in cash. I personally think it is a mistake for the Russians to leave, although they have decimated the beaver population. With their strategic location at Fort Ross and their fine equipment, Russia could have easily taken over the territory by sending a few ships to California's shores. But their loss is my gain and I'm now in a prime position to influence the direction of the future of this land. Whichever country I partner with will benefit

from my assets and have a good chance of seizing California. I can't believe Mexico City did not want the Russians' property. This lack of foresight could prove devastating for them.

February 5, 1842

I've attained information that Bidwell and his party are floundering their way down the Sierra Nevada mountain range on the trek to California and my fort. To assist, I loaded two mules and sent two of my men to find them. They've since arrived at my fort with the guidance of my men. They arrived on January 28, 1842. I have given Bidwell, and several in his party, work now have about 30 foreigners in my employ.

July 9, 1843

Yesterday a whole group of people came to my fort for shelter. My fort has been completed. I have people, shelter, and power. On the downside, I have suffered a rough year, with the Russians, drought, and no food. I still have to pay back the Russians and I have the Hudson Bay company on my mind too. I need to have a good harvest to have a good year and make the payments to clear my debts. Back in October, a party of nine men had arrived at my fort. They are said to have made a safer route to my fort from the Sierra.

August 12, 1846

War has erupted between Mexico and America. There are a lot of rumors going around about who is at fault. I've heard the Americans captured California in Monterey briefly under Commodore Jones but soon gave it back. Now that war is officially declared, I think it is best if the United States does take over California. Having met many American pioneers at Sutter's Fort, I believe the beautiful country would thrive as a state of the union.



Thomas O. Larkin

By Brianna Ramirez

With research by Miguel Guzman Rosas

Thomas Oliver Larkin is most known for being California's first millionaire. A prominent figure, Larkin served as the United States consul to Mexico's California leading up to the California Conquest. Although a firm believer in the United States' ambitions to take over the territory, Larkin had a good relationship with the Californios despite his being adamant to maintain his eastern American roots, and his desire was for the U.S. to peacefully purchase the land. When the war was apparent, however, it was no secret which side Larkin was on and he was challenged to take on the role of a double agent. This would later result in personal tragedy for Larkin, who was captured by angry Californios when he was en route to visit his dying daughter—Larkin would sadly never get to say farewell to her. Following the war, Larkin continued to serve the United States government as a delegate to the Monterey Constitutional Convention in 1849 and a signatory of the Constitution of California. Larkin was also notable for opening the state's first hospital and for constructing the first brick building in California. At one point after the gold rush, Larkin was believed to be the richest man in the United States.

My name is Thomas O. Larkin, the official representative of the United States Government. What we did to Mexico, will be written in

history and I will write my perspective. Before I get ahead of myself, I shall tell you about myself.

I was born in 1802 and grew up in Charlestown, Massachusetts. At sixteen I lost my parents. At that time, I moved to Boston and took up a job making books. At the age of twenty, I realized I wanted to be a pioneer. New England and Boston were too crowded, so I went to North Carolina. In 1832, I got a letter from my brother, Captain John Cooper. He told me about California and his success while living there. If he could find success in the West, so could I. I headed West but not in a wagon like many, I came in a ship. I was also determined not to repeat my brother's practice of bowing down to Mexican authority in becoming a Mexican citizen and member of the Catholic Church. I would do no such thing. California has been neglected by Mexico after their detachment from Spain, thus I remained a proud American and showed Californios what excellent leaders Americans made.

When I arrived in California, I went to work as a clerk and bookkeeper at a small store in Yerba Buena. At first, it was rough but after a while, I became more comfortable. With a \$500 loan, I was able to move to Monterey and open my own store where I enjoyed selling supplies brought in by ships from Boston to the local Californios. The Californios reminded me of the locals back in North Carolina and I enjoyed getting to know them. My business was so successful that it wasn't long before I opened a flour mill. Oh, how much money I earned! All I had to do was sell and make flour, soap, potatoes, and otter skins.

Speaking of otter skins, my competitor the Russian American Fur Company has left California after killing every otter at Fort Ross. Their departure was relieving, they left a lot of property but this did cause panic among the Americans. If I recount correctly, they left their cannons, boats, plows, carts, harnesses, bridles, 1,700 oxen, cows, calves, 1,940 horses and mules, and 200 sheep. Whoever buys their property would be well equipped to negotiate territory in the future. England already had a man named James Douglas here in California, if Mexico were to lose control of California then they would be able to take control. Mexico did owe England \$50,00,00. Russia offered to sell it to Mexico but they refused, they offered it to Vallejo who also refused, they then offered it to the Hudson Bay company and they also said no. In the end, John Sutter wisely acquired the property the Russian company abandoned. This made Sutter the most influential foreigner in California territory.

After Russia left California, this left only England, France, and the United States interested in California. This is a slightly good circumstance for the United States because we still have a shot at

buying California. This is a wonderful situation for me as well. I will make more money after they are gone.

With the money I earned, I built the very first American house. It was a two-storied, multi-windowed, with wide verandas. I estimated the cost to be \$336. However, the actual cost came out to be \$491. Of course, It was nothing I couldn't afford. I became the focal center of newly arrived American Englishmen and Europeans. It was an unofficial American capital.

How can I forget my beautiful wife, Rachel Holmes? Oh, she was fairer than a siren! We met aboard New Castle, Oh how in love I was. Although, she was married, during the voyage we learned her husband was deceased. I took the opportunity to sweep her off her feet and asked her to come to live with me in California along with marrying me. She accepted and I was overjoyed! I would be marrying such a beautiful woman. I arranged the wedding in an instant and we got married! Right there, the first American ceremony on Far Western soil. We were the first American couple to get married in California. She bore me a son, and he was the first American born in California. Ah, Look at me fawning over my stunning wife, I shall move on.

When I arrived in California it was no secret that I wanted California to be part of the United States. Ever since Spain lost Mexico, California has been neglected and unwanted by its mother country. I won't want to take it by force, oh no that would have been a loss for everyone, especially me. If the Americans are civil about this, we can potentially buy California off of Mexico. Perhaps for \$15 million? It is only a matter of time and that did happen! I would say that if it wasn't for Issac Graham!

Oh, that imbecile ruined everything!! Not only did they make Governor Alvarado angry but they ruined the chance for the Americans to buy California. This simpleton with his chowderhead lackeys actually made a plot! Yes, a plot! To overthrow Alvarado, The Governor of California! Of course, that ignoramus and his dunderhead followers got jailed but it wasn't only them. Governor Alvarado ordered Colonel Mariano Vallejo to arrest every foreigner! Even Dr. John Marsh, who had his citizenship, was not spared. I was scared that they would do the same for me but they never came for me so I tried everything I could to make Alvarado comfortable to not arrest the foreigners but sadly he had already made up his mind. All I could do at the time was send them food for the jail was not as pretty as Alvarado built the rest of his city.

After a while, A man named Thomas Jefferson Farnham wrote a nasty letter back East. Farnham told Governor Alvarado once the Americans heard of what he had done, He would not be spared their

wrath. He later released the Americans. The damage was already done, it was too late. The Americans were cantankerous and many wanted to take California away from Mexico. It wasn't supposed to go like this, this is disastrous.

As I settle from the last disaster, Commodore Jones, waltzes in and declares that California belongs to the United States. He was behaving in a highhanded fashion and I advised the Californios to peacefully surrender. I did not want to shed any blood and Commodore Jones was happy. At midnight, I was accompanied by two Californio commissioners to Jones' ship and ultimately became an interpreter for them. Commodore Jones' happiness was short-lived as I told him that the United States and Mexico were waging a cold war rather than a hot war. I showed this simpleton recent newspapers and commercial letters from Mexico as my evidence. He issued orders to let us go. I do believe that I did a better job at keeping the peace. It was very neat and orderly that California still has a chance to be purchased. In concise, Commodore Jones is a very simpleminded imbecile. He did forfeit his commission which was the only rational decision he, without a doubt, made in his entire life.

Another simpleminded individual is Sutter. You may question my slight opposition towards Sutter and it is very simple, Sutter owes me money. He is a man with a charming, disarming personality, he has charisma. He has such wonderful ideas, he did make his fort operate perfectly, they are great ideas from a man who comes from Switzerland but he lacks money management skills. Not only does he owe me money but he owes more money to people like Vallejo. I don't know what he is doing with the money, he has all these wagon trains coming to him. He sells them provisions and supplies. He doesn't even pay his workers all he needs to do is feed them. I do know he did suffer an intense year of drought but he has 100 Indians working for him! He had no grain to sell nor did he have any successful work in his tannery. I would press him but he is having a rough time. I do not want to add more pressure on his conscience besides I don't need it anymore.

April 2, 1844, was one of the proudest moments in my life. I have the government in my hands! With this, I could, in time, lead a peaceful transition to American ownership. I eagerly wrote a letter to my friend, Alfred Robinson, to order me a resplendent uniform with gold epaulets. A handsome uniform would do me greatly, but Robinson had other plans. He was always one for practical jokes so he sent me two canes with solid gold heads with the bill. This elicited screams of anguish and heartache from me that could be heard from Monterey to New York.

I was now consul and my duty was to represent the United States

in all of the territories between the Pacific coast and the Rocky Mountains, the southern border of Oregon and San Diego. My major job was to ease trade relations between Americans and Californios. I shortly found myself officiating at marriages and funerals of Protestant residents, judging over quarrels between Americans on ships on the high seas. Suddenly, my new task was converted to caring for sick sailors off American vessels. Many of them came to my home to be cared for and they were fed with food paid for from my pocket. Their numbers soon grew exceedingly giant that I could no longer take them to my home so I made the decision. I built the first hospital in California but this manifested a perplexity, there were no doctors available. I think I have contrived writing for this evening, I shall write more at the crack of dawn.

In the skirmish 1844 - 1845, I just received news that John Sutter is headed to Los Angeles to burn it to the ground. I do not understand what has gotten into him. He joined Governor Micheltoreno, becoming a captain in an instant. He has an army of 200 men and is having a cannon battle with Alvarado and his captain, Castro. Both armies have Americans in their ranks. Presumably, Sutter found this out and, instantly, both sides stopped fighting one another. The two parties started to, in a way, embrace one another because they were all American. This is a relief. It was only a tussle between Americans and not Mexico. We still have a chance to buy California from Mexico. Sutter was arrested for what he did but was eventually let go due to the new governor, Pio Pico. This was an unwanted conflict, but I believe this will not come about a second time.

The world is in chaos! Especially my world, it's in chaos! Our President, President Polk, declared war on Mexico. This is not a false alarm! At first, I thought it was a hoax, grabbing the attention of all Americans. I was just informed that it is not fake news! It is all true, and no one told me, even though I am a consul for the United States. He wrote, "Though solemnly pledged by official acts in October last to receive and accredit an American envoy, violated their plighted faith, and refused the offer of a peaceful adjustment of our difficulties." I don't remember them sending an American envoy to Mexico. Am I not trusted enough to know what is happening in my government? "The Mexican Government refused all negotiation, and have made no proposition of any kind." What does he mean by that? What kind of proposition did the United States make for Mexico to reject us? "We have tried every effort at reconciliation. The cup of forbearance had been exhausted." He just repeated himself like a songbird in the morning, singing the same tune over and over. I can't think right now.

I shall write another time. I just need to clear my head and think about what is happening.

Today, I obtained a copy of another speech published in the newspaper. It was written by a man named Joshua Giddings. He arranged it in such a way that I very much agree with him. "I regard the message as having been put forth to divert public attention from the outrage committed by the President...Guilty in ordering our army [to] invade a country...Of provoking and bringing on this war." He is right; we were at peace with Mexico. It would be senseless to go to war with a country that is penurious. "All for the purpose of justifying himself in sending the army to the Rio Grande, and commencing the work of human butchery!" This is correct. We do not need to go to war. This war will empty my pockets, let alone kill many innocent and skint people. Mexico is indebted to us for taking their land. What do we have to gain anymore? He does bring this to light, "If the country is ours, why does he seek to justify the taking possession of it by reference to the fact that Mexico is indebted to some of our people?" What he inscribed next is something I truly sympathize with, "This war is waged against an unoffending people, without just or adequate cause, for the purposes of conquest... I will lend it no aid, no support whatever. I will not bathe my hands in the blood of the people of Mexico, nor will I participate in the guilt of those murders."

My thoughts on this unnecessary war are that it is gratuitous! Please do not misunderstand me, California should belong to the United States but I wish they would have bought it off. This war will cost me a lot of money. I would be more willing to pitch in to buy California. Oh, not to mention my many personal relationships. For Pete's sake, my brother is married to one of Vallejo's sisters! He's practically part of my family on my brother's side. He's my brother-in-law. I don't know what to do anymore, I want what's best for the United States, but I do not want to go to war. If getting California means going to war, I will fight alongside my fellow Americans and do what is best for the United States, even if I ruin the connections I've built between the Californios.

I had been writing letters to Secretary of State, James Buchanan. I could share some small sentences from our conversations; it won't hurt anyone. I wrote to him, "The Mexican troops about to invade the province have been sent for this purpose at the instigation of the British government." Buchanan inscribed back to me, "The future destiny of the Country is a subject of anxious solicitude for the Government and people of the United States. The interests of our Commerce, and our Whale fisheries on the Pacific Ocean, demand that you should exert

the greatest vigilance in discovering and defeating any attempts which may be made by Foreign governments to acquire control over that Country. In the contest between Mexico and California, we can take no part, unless the former should commence hostility against the United States; but should California assert and maintain her independence, we shall render her all the kind offices in our power as the Sister Republic. Great Britain by the acquisition of California would sow the seeds of future war and disaster for herself; because there is no political truth more certain than that this fine Province could not long be held in vassalage by any European Power. The emigration to it of people from the United States would soon render this impossible." I must depart at once, I seemingly have a visitor. I do wonder who it is.

At the end of January 1846, Captain Fremont arrived in Monterey with eight of his men. Captain Fremont along with his eight men are my visitors! Fremont told me they came to visit me, although I do have some doubts about this sudden "visit." Sometime later and I stood corrected, It was a meeting. I do not understand how Colonel Alvarado and Prefect Manuel Castro found out about Fremont and his small group but, they wrote me an inquiry, "Why is an American army officer in California with a body of troops, and why is Captain Fremont in Monterey?" I do not know what to do. Fremont assured me that he would deal with this inquiry and left at once. Fremont is a man of charm but he seems to depend on his charm to get him out of many situations.

Something interesting happened today. I was with a man named Rafael Gonzales. I told him that Victor Proudhon and I wanted California to belong to the United States. We were in my living room and, in an instant, he jumped up from my couch. "California libre, sobering, y independiente!" he said. This caught me off guard; I expected him to lash out and favor Mexico, but he did not. After this, no one went on record to continue any allegiance to Mexico.

Lieutenant Gillespie just arrived, and I greeted him warmly. He gave me a letter from the Secretary of State Buchanan. He wrote, "In addition to your Consular functions, the President has thought proper to appoint you a Confidential Agent in California. You will take care not to awaken the jealousy of the French and English Agents, thereby assuming any other than your consular character. Lieutenant Archibald H. Gillespie of the Marine Corps is a Gentleman in whom the President reposes entire confidence. He has seen these instructions and will cooperate as a confidential agent with you, in carrying them into execution." Lieutenant Gillespie brought news of the war, and it was wonderful news! California would finally be part of the United States. With such confidence, I immediately told Vallejo the news.

Now that I am part of this conspiracy, I wrote a letter to Vice-Consul Leidesdorff of Yerba Buena. It wasn't a plain letter, no it was a double talk letter! I shall share a small part of it. I wrote, "Has not enjoyed good health and wishes to travel through your part of California to enjoy the climate." I even told him to provide Gillespie with a boat, horses, and men, and to charge me. I even wrote that Gillespie "is a Gentleman of much information, and well acquainted with the countries he has passed through." After this, I provided Gillespie with letters of introduction to Americans and Europeans. These letters included Jacob Leese, William Richardson, Dr. John Marsh, Nathan Spear, an important merchant of Yerba Buena, and John A. Sutter. I do hope he makes it safely to his destination and runs into no trouble.

I sailed with Stockton for a meeting with Fremont. They both believe they would have General Castro's troops defeated in a major battle. I have been living with Californios for around fourteen years. A peaceful negotiation can help the Mexican officers to avoid humiliation and willingly be part of the American regime. I put this plan of mine into motion and nearly succeeded. I wrote to Abel Stearns, asking him to urge General Castro to send envoys to Commodore Stockton. General Castro wrote, "Wishing then, with the governor, to avoid all the disasters that follow a war like that which your lordship prepares, it has appeared convenient to the undersigned to send your lordship a commission...to know the wishes of your lordship..."

Oh, my little girl, you were taken from us too soon. I couldn't make it to Adelaide. Oh, Adelaide, your smile was so sweet it brought joy to each and every individual. You brought your mother and me so much joy when you came into this heartless world. I vowed to protect you from any danger, yet I could not protect you from your painful sickness. No matter how much money I have yet to gain, with you gone this void in my heart will never be filled.

Dr. John Marsh

By Brian Lopez-Ramos & Mari-Jamie Cancino

Dr. John Marsh was a controversial pioneer in California while it was still under Mexican control. A native of Massachusetts, Marsh made his journey west, by way of Michigan, where he served as a schoolmaster. When tragedy took his French-Sioux lover and unborn child, he defaulted to his only remaining passion—medicine and headed toward California under the pretense of having a medical degree from Harvard. While Marsh did in fact have a Harvard degree and had practiced medicine as an apprentice under a Boston physician, his degree was not in medicine, and he did not have a proper license to practice medicine. With few people having any medical knowledge at all on the western frontier, Marsh was able to pass off his Harvard degree as a medical one easily and few minded as a dishonest doctor was better than none at all. His care prices were considered outrageous to many, yet he was successful. He was also able to befriend the Californios by becoming a Mexican citizen and was granted a large expanse of land for his rancho. His military involvement was brief, only accompanying Sutter on his one quest as a captain, but his influence in inspiring other pioneers to head to California from the United States undoubtedly had an impact on the outcome of the Mexican-American War as the number of American pioneers in the area grew exponentially. He also had the ear of the influential millionaire and consul Thomas O. Larkin.

Looking back on my life, I have experienced nothing but misery and despair. I have gone through many traumatic things throughout my life. But, there were also many good things that I can remember, like getting through my dark times and achieving things I would have never thought possible.

It all began when I studied to become a doctor. Due to my family's low income, it was never something I thought I would be able to study, but it was a career choice I was passionate about. I always found

medical and agriculture books so interesting. Plus, becoming a doctor would allow me to provide for a family of my own and afford so much more than my parents ever could. By the time I was old enough to live on my own, I began pursuing medicine and attended Phillips Academy at Andover. After graduating from school with general education, I pursued becoming a doctor, but it was not so easy to do so. I worked hard to get into Harvard and miraculously did. During my time at Harvard, I studied anatomy and was an apprentice to several fully credentialed doctors in Boston. That helped me gain a lot of knowledge and experience about what being a doctor felt like. But as time went on, I simply lacked the funds to continue at Harvard, so I took a tutoring job at Michigan territory, intending to return to Harvard in a year or two.

During my temporary break from college, however, I met the most beautiful woman of all—Marguerite De Coueaux. She was the daughter of a Sioux mother and a French Canadian father. Marguerite was slender as a reed, with flashing white teeth, and a lovely, slender face. I first met her in the first school of Michigan along with important people there. Time went on and we got married and had a son, but because she was part Indian we did not have a traditional wedding as most people do. Having started a family, I continued as an educator establishing roots in Michigan. Marguerite and I bought a home and settled. We shared six blissful years raising our son, Charles and were ecstatic at the prospect of adding a second child. But happiness in this world could never last long. Soon after we discovered she was pregnant, a rival tribe of the Sioux, the Fox tribe, was on the hunt for me. The Fox people were under the mistaken impression that I had something to do with the recent retaliatory actions the Sioux took against them in avenging the Fox massacre of the Sioux people.

While I had nothing to do with the fight, I was undeniably a Sioux sympathizer, not only due to being married to one but having developed strong relationships with the tribe in the process of writing a book about them and their language. Due to this, I had to relocate my family to New Salem, Illinois, to protect them from the avenging Fox tribe. The trip to New Salem was difficult, and I had to isolate myself from my family to keep them safe from any harm I could bring them. But unfortunately, separating from them was the worst mistake I have ever made in my life. On the journey, my wife passed away in childbirth along with my newborn child.

Overwhelmed with guilt over my wife's death, I was lost. I became an outcast. I decided to escape west and lived out on the road near Santa Fe for a while. After a short time, I was captured by Indians. I was afraid they were going to kill me, but then the Indians introduced

me to their chief who was in poor health after an arrowhead had struck him. Since I know the medical field, I aided the chief and, as a result, was set free in gratitude. It was during this experience I came to realize that I should continue to study to become a doctor and help those who need it because it was the only thing that would bring me joy and satisfaction after losing my wife and child. So that is when I decided to move to Los Angeles to pursue my goal of becoming a doctor.

I arrived in Los Angeles in 1863. In Santa Fe, I had been practicing to become a medical doctor and practicing it proficiently. However, I still had not obtained an official medical license and did not have the means to continue my education. Even though I was not a licensed doctor, I needed a way to make a living out in these strange lands, so I used my Harvard bachelor's degree of arts as a medical degree. When I headed up to southern California, no one was skeptical of my medical degree because I was the only "doctor" around. Not to mention, my Harvard degree was written in Latin, which no one could read. This allowed me to practice medicine legally, as delegated by the Mexican authorities in southern California. I know it was wrong of me to falsely claim to be a licensed doctor. But it wasn't all a lie since I had studied to be a doctor and just hadn't finished.

After I was permitted to practice medicine, I settled in the far west, which seemed okay at the time since I was the only doctor and that helped generate income. There were two main difficulties I was facing while staying in the west. First, people complained about my prices. They were considered high because I would charge a good amount of money for a professional visit. But the reason I had to charge so much is due to the second difficulty, that few people could pay in cash. For every visit I did not get paid in cash, I got paid in cowhide. The people here in the west did not have much money, so instead, they would give me materials or items worth my visits. There was this one occasion when an outraged housewife deducted 25 cow hides and washed a couple of my shirts instead, which was crazy since I did not ask her to do that. I was starting to think, 'what am I gonna do with my life?' because I couldn't just keep accepting cowhides with no place to store them or nowhere to sell them for money.

I started to recall this interesting gentleman I met back in Sante Fe. He gave me advice about living out in the far west. He told me I could become anything if I was able to prove myself. This man's name was Captain John Sutter, or so he told me. I discovered Sutter was making quite a name for himself at his Sutter's Fort, so I considered his words and decided to change and move up north. The problem was I had so much cowhide that my office looked like a warehouse. So I

later moved up to southern California, hoping to sell all the cowhide I had. It was difficult to sell cowhide to people, especially since there was no market up in southern California. But luckily, I found the right buyer and sold all my cowhide. And with the money I saved up, I was able to pack up my bags and explore California. Eventually, I settled down in an area not far from Yerba Buena. I bought up a huge chunk of land with the money I saved. I had always wanted to own land so I could live out my days as an old man, raise a family, raise animals, and grow crops. By 1837, I was the owner of Megalos Ranch. My days of adventuring out in the country were done, or so I thought.

In 1837, I had to attend a business meeting in San Jose. My gut was telling me to not go on this business trip to San Jose because of the rumors I had heard about all foreigners being arrested. Foreigners, including Americans, were being arrested from all over San Jose and Monterey. I kept convincing myself that nothing would go wrong on my business trip since I was a legal citizen and had converted to Catholicism. I was great friends with many of the Californios and thought I would be undisturbed. Unfortunately, I was wrong. I was seized by the military and Captain Vallejo and was taken as a prisoner to Monterey. Given my position as a physician and Californio citizen, I was able to talk my way out of prison within a day, but not all innocent foreigners were released, so I used my influence and had my lawyer friend, Thomas Farnham, write a report to be published by the American press. I'm not entirely sure how much impact this one letter to the public had on the war that later ensued, but it did not help relations between the two nations, and Americans cried for the release of men like Isaac Graham.

Although I tried to stay neutral as the war broke out, I can't deny that my prompting of friends back home, encouraging them to head west and settle here, likely exacerbated matters since it brought so many more Americans to the area. I also couldn't avoid getting involved with my friend Sutter. Before things between Mexico and the United States heated up in California, there was a rivalry in 1844 between the new governor Micheltorena and the former, Juan Bautista Alvarado. Sutter, who was of a mind to impress the new governor, was appointed as a captain to lead Micheltorena's troops—who were few and far between and primarily convicts sent from Mexico City. Sutter ended up leading, mostly his own army of foreigners and Indians from Sutter's Fort and recruited me to assist him as well. Once we all came face to face with Alvarado and Castro's men, however, it was clear that we were all foreigners, and mostly American. Once we began conversing, we decided that it was not in any of our best interests to fight each other on

behalf of two opposing leaders from Mexico City. Sutter was a hothead, though, so I was the one to step up and be the diplomat between the two camps of men. This occurred in February of 1845. Sutter was jailed as a result but quickly released by yet another appointed Mexico City governor, Pio Pico, who would end up being the last Mexican governor of California. I led in Sutter's absence for a brief period before hanging up my impromptu uniform.

I returned to my doctoring duties, which I figured would be sorely needed as the fighting began between the United States and Mexico. Being a doctor was a life I was satisfied with, and having lost the love of my life early on, I never expected to fall in love again. But after the war and the profitable gold rush, there were many more eligible women in the state, and I fell hard for Abigail Tuck.

Abigail was an independent, bright, beautiful soul. She could wander for days on end. She had the spirit of an adventurer. I remember the first time I encountered her. Mrs. Appleton, a lady who Abby boarded with, brought her to the mountain to show her around. Along the way, they encountered my residence. I was not there at the time. I'm forever grateful that they decided to come back when I was home. They decided to stay the night and be on their way at sunrise. We conversed for a while, and during this time, Abigail informed me that she used to be a private tutor and teacher, just as I had been a teacher in Michigan. When gold was discovered she decided to sail to San Francisco in hopes of seeking fortune and better health. We had much in common, and after a couple of weeks, we agreed to get married. We married on June 24, 1851.

Every day Abigail would remind me of how much she loved me, and I would do the same. A year later, we had a daughter. We named her Alice. She has dark blue eyes and very light hair, almost as if it were the color white. The Indians that lived on my rancho adored Alice. After we were married and had a child, I decided to build a new residence. I wanted Abigail to live comfortably. The residence is 7,000 square feet, a lot of space for my dear Abigail and Alice to fill with love and joy.

Despite my best efforts and to my dismay, Abigail's lung infection worsened. I believed that since I was a doctor, I should have been able to treat her, but I could not. The sickness would come back to haunt us. In the year 1854, her health started to become futile. Little did I know that within a year my beautiful Abigail would die in my arms. On a Saturday morning in August, she departed from the earth to an eternal home, where sickness and sorrow are not familiar. It brings me peace that she was calm and resigned when she passed. To this day, I am still overwhelmed with grief. I regret that I did not spend much time with

my dear having to leave frequently to attend to patients and conduct business. I can't imagine how scared and lonely she must have felt. I am so very sorry to my dear Abigail. This is my punishment, for although I masqueraded as a medical doctor and had such skills, I could save neither of the two women I loved so dearly in my life.

Benjamin S. Lippincott

By Janette Garcia-Garcia & Karina Garcia-Luis

Benjamin S. Lippincott is a little-known pioneer in California during the Mexican-American War who was later elected as a delegate to the First California Constitutional Convention as a representative of the San Joaquin District. We know from his eloquently written letters that he was a close friend and confidant of Colonel John C. Fremont, the most notorious military man and explorer of California, who was instrumental in capturing California for the United States. Though his association with Fremont makes him intriguing, Lippincott is also an interesting figure in his own right. From his letters, we know his journey overland to the state was an epic one, complete with a dramatic fight with Indians in which Lippincott took an arrow to the calf. He also traveled alongside members of the infamous Donner party, who parted from the larger Bryant company on the advice of explorer Lansford Hastings, who promised a shortcut. Lippincott wisely mistrusted Hastings and stayed on the original course and helped convince others not to follow Hastings, saving countless lives from the Donner Party's fate. On the fringes of fame in California, Lippincott maintained a low profile, not wishing to draw attention to himself. While he did serve in the American military as a quartermaster toward the end of the conquest, he stayed politically neutral, at least publicly, though privately, he supported Fremont's bid for the governorship. When he became a delegate, he did not ruffle any feathers but his letters indicate he would strategically surround himself with more vocal members of the California congress to feed them his suggestions. So, though unknown, one could speculate Lippincott was a mastermind behind some of the state of California's first major political players.

My name is Benjamin S. Lippincott, I'm not a very well-known historical figure, but I want to share with you my journey to California and my perspective on the events that led up to the Mexican-American War.

My journey from New York to California was a wild adventure with new changes. On May 10, 1846, we left the rendezvous point on Indian Creek, 25 miles west of Independence. On the way west, we occasionally met up with Kaw Indians, to whom we gave tobacco and other trifles in trades. We also met some Shoshones returning from buffalo country. They were loaded with meat, which we desperately needed and traded for, exchanging some of our knives and other essentials they desired. For the most part, all the Indians we encountered were friendly, but at Phalen's Bluffs on the south fork of the Patte, 17 heads of horses and mules were stolen by the Pawnees. Now here, we were breaking up our teams and were 500 miles from nowhere. But after all that, we were able to obtain one yoke of oxen, which we put at the wheel of our two mules, that we put in advance. A consultation was held and five individuals were selected, including myself, to go hunt for the lost animals. We searched for days and came up empty-handed. Tired and hungry on our way back toward our party, we had an unfortunate skirmish with a band of rogue Indians, who killed one of our men and left me wounded with an arrow to the leg. I almost succumbed to the fever of infection from my injury but made it through in part due to my quick thinking to pull out the arrow right away for fear it may have been dipped in a poisonous substance. The remaining journey was largely uneventful, though we had some in our company part from us near Santa Fe at the urging of Lansford Hastings, who knew of an alternative route. I found the man untrustworthy, so opted to stay with Bryant and the majority of our party and take the known safer route. It was around this time that I also met a most extraordinary man, John C. Fremont, who was exploring and mapping out the territory. I instantly knew this man would be key in the impending war with Mexico.

Once in California, I discovered the war had already begun, and I quickly came to know some other prominent individuals. Some relevant people I will discuss include Thomas O. Larkin, John Sutter, and Dr. John Marsh. Each of these men played a role in California becoming the territory of the United States. To provide some context, this war was first initiated around 1832 when consul Thomas O. Larkin arrived in California and wanted California to be part of the United States, so he sought a diplomatic purchase and not an all-out war. Following that, in 1836, John Marsh, who would later convince other American pioneers like me to follow, arrived in Los Angeles. At the same time, Isaac Graham was part of a ploy to aid Juan Bautista Alvarado in overthrowing the former governor and taking over California to make it independent. The coup was successful in that Alvarado gained power, but instead of

becoming independent, Alvarado reached an arrangement with Mexico City. The following year, in 1837, Dr. Marsh moved up north, where he purchased a ranch called the "Los Meganos Ranch," located only 50 miles from the future Sutter's Fort. In 1839, John Sutter would arrive in Monterey, where Governor Juan Bautista Alvarado gave him 76 miles of land. Sutter wanted to build an Empire in the Sacramento Valley, so a year later he built a fort a mile from the Sacramento Valley, which he called "New Helvetia." His fort had a wall around it which measured 150 feet by 500 feet. Meanwhile, unsatisfied with how Alvarado was fairing in the governor's seat, Graham now, allegedly, began plotting to overthrow Alvarado and turn California into a Republic. Eventually, Graham was arrested and thrown in jail in Monterey, along with all other foreigners Alvarado had ordered Colonel Mariano Vallejo to arrest. Vallejo thought Alvarado's order was dangerous, and he was correct. One of those arrested, despite his good standing, Dr. Marsh made a stink about his mistreatment, which reached the newspapers back in New York and increased tensions between the United States and Mexico. As more Americans began making their way to California via Sutter's Fort, Mexico could not contain their own leaders in the territory who fought among themselves. From 1844 to 1845, as I was making my way to California, a skirmish occurred between the latest governor of California, Micheltorena, and Alvarado, who, with military leader Jose Castro, was once again calling for an independent California. When Sutter learned of that situation, he offered Micheltoreno his army, which consisted of 200 men, if he let him be the captain, and Micheltoreno accepted. Upon learning those fighting for Alvarado and Castro were also primarily foreign Americans, however, fighting ceased, and Dr. Marsh, not Captain Sutter, negotiated a truce. No longer would either side fight for a Mexican leader. Now, they would be all in for a takeover by the United States.

As I arrived, this fighting under the leadership of Fremont was well underway. Having tremendous respect for Fremont, when he asked me to lend my services as a quartermaster, I could not refuse, although I consider myself a peaceful man and don't like the taste of war. I had previously turned down a role to serve as part of a secret mission, although such a role would have brought me notoriety. When Fremont's messenger enlisted my help in securing some supplies for his army, however, I was much obliged. It was a simple task, but it later brought me face-to-face with Fremont again, and he was most persuasive in convincing me to join the army myself. The war commenced rather quickly after just a few battles, mostly in the Los Angeles area, with the Capitulation of Cahuenga on January 13, 1847, and later the Treaty

of Guadalupe Hidalgo that would secure California and neighboring territories for the United States.

Once firmly part of the United States, I was adamant in my support of Fremont for the first American governor of the 31st state. From what I had seen of Fremont, I believed him to be a wise man who could manage authority. There was much debate over the governorship with General Kearny, but I attempted to influence my Whig party friends to support Fremont. Already Fremont had the support of many native Californios as well as navy officers. Kearny, however, told all who would listen of his concern of an insurrection breaking out if Fremont was made governor. Nothing would convince him of Fremont's right to be leader after Fremont had pledged his allegiance to the authority of Commodore Stockton of the Navy over Kearny. Kearny, I believe, was just embittered, having been the leader of the only battle lost to Mexico in the war for California, the Battle of San Pasqual. Not only was Fremont not even considered for the governorship, but Kearny went so far as to send him back east with his troops as a military prisoner.

The political situation in California certainly was and is quite complicated. I tend to be a neutral party and centrist. I prefer to stake my lot on individual people I deem worthy rather than on a party or policy. I can honestly say I'm one of the few who can listen diplomatically to multiple viewpoints and see the reasoning and merit behind all sides before casting my vote. I ultimately want what is best for this beautiful country and its citizens, so I'm willing to set my personal preferences and admiration for Fremont aside. It was the only way the First California Constitutional Convention could succeed. It did because a group of strong-willed American men came together and did as our forefathers before us and designed a constitution for all in this great state.

The Walla Walla Indian affair

By MSHS Historical Literacy Class

Shelton: We've been conducting all this research on the Mexican-American War, aka the California Conquest, this entire school year and taking on the perspectives of men on both sides of that conflict, but there is another perspective: the native American Indian perspective, that we don't know much about because many were slaughtered, they did not have written language, and/or their stories were not recorded. From history classes, we know about Columbus; we know about the slaughter of Indians on the east coast. But just as we never hear about the Mexican-American War, we never hear much about the Natives on the west coast. In reality, with the superior weather here in California, there were more Native Americans on this side of the country. Before Mexico built missions, the influx of Mexicans and foreigners involved in the fur trapping trade, the later gold rush, and the subsequent emigration of many Americans and Europeans, there were an estimated 150,000 to 200,000 Indians that called the areas in California home. Between 1840 and 1870, that declined to just 30,000 or less, depending on your source, some due to disease brought by whites, but mostly due to removals and massacres. This was down to 16,000 by the turn of the century. There were an estimated 500 tribes or distinct groups. Today, California still has the largest native American population. According to the U.S. Census, 12 percent of the 720,000 in the nation identifying as native American are from California, many of these are individuals who have relocated from other areas, but as it stands, according to the California Tribal Court, there are 110 federally recognized Indian tribes in the state. Some of these tribal names listed are familiar to us here in the Valley—Mono, Chukchansi, and the Table Mountain Rancheria—because these groups have built casinos on a portion of their land. In historical literacy, we also recognize the name of the Tule tribe, as one man we've been researching, Benjamin S. Lippincott, took charge of a band of Tule Indians, commanding them to fight on behalf of Americans in the Mexican American War. We can speculate this group's alignment with the U.S. at this critical junction allowed some of them to

survive the California Indian Wars that immediately followed the Mexican-American War. We cannot say what Mexico would have done or any other country with their eyes set on California for that matter, but we do know the American acquisition of California was not good for Native Americans. The California Indian Wars is even less discussed in history than the California Conquest. And for good reason. It was genocide, though not formally acknowledged as such until California Governor Gavin Newsom apologized for it in 2019. With this genocide, there is a lot of history that is lost. All we know are bits and pieces in newspapers and documents from the time of white colonization that mention one tribe or another—most often not in a positive light. Though we do not have the Indian perspective, we do want to share some of what we've found on one tribe—the Walla Walla people—who were based in Oregon and are federally recognized as part of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation in Oregon. We discovered an interesting story about some members of this tribe visiting California in 1845 in an article that ran in the September 19, 1846 issue of the Californian newspaper. We then found information on the same incident recorded by John Sutter in a letter written to consul Thomas O. Larkin on July 21, 1845. I'll let my students share the story they ascertained from these two primary sources.

1. What happened with the Walla Walla people, according to the Californian article?

Nikolas: The Walla Walla Indians were out hunting to get new deer and elk hide to trade and came across outlaw Indians. They defeated them and captured their horses, which had been stolen from whites. When they returned to Sutter's Fort, the Mexicans, who were living there, claimed the horses were theirs. This started a conflict because the Indians wouldn't give up the horses because of the rules they followed that were different from the whites. This conflict escalated until Elijah, the son of Chief Piipiopio, ended up being shot and killed.

Karina: According to the article, the Walla Walla Indians defeated the "mountain freebooters" and captured 20 horses that had been stolen from the whites. Once they found out they had been stolen, they refused to give them up, saying that according to their tribal laws, the animals belonged to them. This eventually led to conflict between Elijah, the son of one of the Walla Walla chiefs, and an American named Grove Cook, who shot him.

Johanna: What went down were some issues with horse trading and stealing. The Mexicans had previously fought with some outlaw Indians who stole their horses, and then later, the Walla Walla Indians, who were in route to Sutter's Fort, fought those same outlaw Indians, and then they took the horses, not aware that they belonged to the Mexicans near Sutters. Under the Indians' laws, even after they

found out they were originally stolen from the Mexicans, they were allowed to keep the property they took from an enemy tribe in conflict, even if that property had been stolen by that enemy tribe from someone else. Obviously, the Mexicans and Americans have a different law, that the original owners should get their property back. The Mexicans were trying to make a deal with the Indians to get back their horses, but nothing was working. Then, this American named Cook noticed that among the Mexican horses was a mule that belonged to him. He tried to get it back but felt threatened by this Indian named Elijah, who had a rifle. Elijah told him "I'm just going to shoot at these birds, go ahead and come get your mule and I won't kill you," but Cook didn't trust him, so he left. Later, Cook confronted Elijah at Sutter's Fort and shot and killed him. The rest of the Walla Walla Indians fled back to Oregon, leaving the horses behind because they were scared there would be more conflict with Sutter's men. The Americans and Mexicans were worried that they were going to come back and attack Sutter's Fort to avenge Elijah, who was the chief's son, but in the end, they were convinced to stay in Oregon.

2. What was Sutter's account of the event? How was it different?

Jamie: Sutter gave a bit more information and made Elijah seem like a kid, while the article made Elijah seem like an adult. I did not think Elijah was young until Sutter mentioned it. In Sutter's letter, he also describes Elijah as a rascal.

Johanna: Sutter writes to Larkin about what happened with the Walla Walla Indians from his point of view. He tells Larkin that after he discovered they had obtained stolen horses from a rival tribe, he tried to instruct the Indians in the ways of the new country and was working on persuading the older chiefs to give back the horses. He explained that Elijah was independent and even had issues among his tribe, having killed a couple of fellow Indians. He described Elijah as a difficult person who threatened Grove Cook when he tried to take back his mule.

Karina: Sutter describes Elijah as behaving saucy, haughty, and independently from the chiefs. He also talked about how Elijah had killed other men in his tribe. This was very different from the article in the Californian, which didn't say anything about Elijah's character.

Brian: Sutter portrayed Elijah as an evil tyrant among his people who escalated things.

3. Who do you think was to blame and why?

Jamie: I think Grove Cook made things worse. Elijah was being reckless like a teenager, and instead of going and trying to negotiate with the older chieftains

about his mule, he couldn't handle Elijah and decided to shoot him.

Johanna: I think both the Indians and Americans are to blame. The Indians should have just returned the horses and mule, and Elijah should not have threatened Cook, but at the same time, it was Cook who ended up shooting and killing Elijah and that was way out of line because all Elijah did was threaten him. Cook really started the fire since he actually killed someone, and it made everyone angry.

Brian: Mainly, I would say it is Grove Cook's fault and a little bit Elijah's fault as well because first off, Elijah was being hostile and did pull out his rifle when Cook tried to get his mule, even though he said Cook could get his mule back and promised not to kill him. Cook refused to let it go and decided to kill Elijah later when he was unarmed.

Octavio: I think Elijah is to blame because if he had just let Cook have his mule back he would not have died.

Janette: I think Cook was to blame because he shot Elijah on impulse when Elijah even let him take his mule. Elijah never posed a real threat to Cook, but Cook took it the wrong way and decided to shoot Elijah.

Castner: I think the blame lies with whoever gave the order to steal the horses from the outlaw tribes. If it was Elijah, then he is to blame. I also think if there was a civil conversation about getting the mule returned, the shooting would have been avoided.

Nikolas: The outlaw Indians or Mountain Freebooters who stole the horses in the first place are to blame because if they didn't steal the horses in the first place, the conflict would have never happened.

4. The main conflict here goes back to differences in customs and laws; the Indians had different agreements between themselves that they doubtless followed for centuries before either Mexicans or Americans emigrated to California and Oregon, but whose laws should win out? What is fair, in your opinion?

Jamie: I think the Indian law should win out because the Indians have been using these laws for centuries without any problem, so far as we know, and letting them keep their laws would be fairer than subjecting them to new laws they were not aware of. But, the Mexicans and Americans had more power and it was easier for them to enforce their laws.

Johanna: I feel the Indian law should be the rule in this case because they were

here first. Mexicans and Americans shouldn't have come in and just expected the Indians to follow their laws without even trying to educate them about those laws first. It was unfair to expect that when the Indians' laws were fair and agreed upon by all the tribes.

Brian: I think the Mexican or American law in California at the time was fairer because the original owner that had something stolen should be able to get their property back as long as they can prove it was theirs.

Octavio: Both sides should have come together to change the law to be something they could all agree on to avoid conflict, rather than each group just following their laws and trying to hold others to them when they didn't know. The government in charge should have tried to work with the tribal leaders to do this.

Castner: I think there should be laws made that everyone could agree to before they enforce their laws on each other. The laws should have been like the ones we have now, but this was back then, so I doubt they would have been able to communicate and come to an agreement. Back then, whoever's laws were pushed by violence won out. It wasn't fair, but that is the way it was.

5. Considering what ended up happening to so many Indians after more Americans emigrated during the gold rush, do you think such misunderstandings and differences in customs are what caused many Native Americans to be treated like criminals?

Jamie: I believe these differences made Americans and all Europeans warier of natives, but also vice versa, the natives were wary of whites because their customs were unfamiliar too. When people are uncertain of things, they tend to be more cautious and fearful and that can lead them to mistreat others.

Johanna: The Indians were not the bad guys; it was the Americans and other whites who took over and made them angry. If they did kill Americans, it was because they felt they were defending themselves and protecting their homes.

Brian: Considering that most Americans that settled on native land did not respect their peace or their rules and then provoked the Indians, they made it seem as if the natives were attacking them even though they were just following their customs of living.

Brianna: I think misunderstandings come about from not knowing about each other. The unknown and obvious differences between the two cultures caused many Americans and other whites to feel uneasy and hostile toward Native Americans.

Castner: The Indians did a lot of things that Americans and Europeans saw as weird and vice versa, but the Indians shouldn't have had to change just because some other culture came in and said so.

Appendix 1

An Interview with Bill Coate Transcript of Madera Method Podcast Episode 2

Mrs. Shelton: Why do traditional history courses seem to skip over the Mexican-American War? In 4th grade, students learn of the Spanish missions, but the history of the Hispanic influence in California ends there. Why do you think that is and how could, or should, history teachers incorporate this California history so we know more about our state and our background, especially since many students in California are Hispanic?

Bill Coate: I believe that the problem lies in the training of teachers. When you look at the education departments in the universities and colleges, they don't teach California history very well or, in some cases, at all. I never had a California history course in college. So, if you are not training teachers, they are going to think it is not important. That is the problem. They are ignorant, and they don't know. Now ignorant is not a bad word. It is just an absence of fact. They just don't know.

Leslie Reyes-Merino: Leading up to the war, I know a lot of Americans made their way west in wagon trains, following trails like the Oregon Trail. What role did this mass migration play in the lead-up to the Mexican-American War? What significant people came to California this way?

Bill Coate: I'm hearing the question about the influence of the western migration and the wagon trains.

Leslie Reyes-Merino: Yes, like the Oregon Trail.

Bill Coate: Well, when you refer to the trail, the California-Oregon trail was one trail up through the Rocky Mountains, and then it split. The impact of all those wagon trains, well, the first wagon train coming from the East to California came in 1841, and actually, there were three of them that year, but 1846 was the major year, they call that the year of decision where thousands came by wagon train. The

impact of Americans coming to California by wagon train, you can't overestimate it. What it did was put people here. It put United States citizens in Mexican territory. It put United States citizens in a territory that Mexico City wasn't controlling, so when the American leaders were already here they had to have people. So the wagon trains brought people and that laid the foundation for the conquest.

Mrs. Shelton: This was a follow-up question Leslie had asked, were there any significant people they are learning about in class right now who came to California this way?

Bill Coate: Yes, of course. I mentioned 1846. Benjamin S. Lippincott came in 1846. The Donner party was on a wagon train in 1846, and of course, their demise played heavily into the history of California and the conquest. Bryant, Edwin Bryant, who wrote that diary, came across the trail in 1846. A lot of those people came in 1846. As soon as they came to California the war started, so they joined the California Battalion to fight against the Californios.

Karina Garcia: When we talk about the Mexican-American War, we've learned that, in Mexico, this war is referred to as the California Conquest. What is the significance of this difference in labeling the events that led to the United States' acquisition of the West?

Bill Coate: Well, the Mexicans call it a conquest because they lost the land; they were conquered in the war. They lost the war. Americans want to humanize this event. When you talk about a conquest, that means somebody hurts. Somebody bleeds. Somebody dies. You can take it and call it the Mexican American War, and it kind of puts both sides on an equal basis, which was false. It should be known as the conquest because that is what it was.

Brian Lopez-Ramos: How did the annexation of Texas lead to the conquest of California and the rest of the west? Why not just stop with Texas? According to Polk's declaration, the main catalyst he points to as the reasoning behind going to war with Mexico is a dispute over territory near the Rio Grande. The two countries couldn't agree on the boundaries of Texas and chaos ensued, and apparently, some Americans were killed. Polk is vague on numbers and particulars, but from your knowledge, what happened in this disputed area, and why did it signal greater conflict beyond the bounds of Texas?

Bill Coate: Very well. You hit upon the heart of the problem in understanding the conquest. Go back to 1836. Texas was part of the Mexican state of Casa Cadehava (sp?). They revolted, won their independence for 10 years, and it was an independent country. In 1845, they applied for admittance to become a state, and in late

1845, they were admitted. Mexico did not like this. Then the boundary dispute erupted. The United States said the boundary of Texas is the Rio Grande River. Mexico said no, it was the Neuasus (sp?) River. That left a no man's land, so the United States under Polk moved troops under Winfield Scott into this no man's land. Mexico moved troops across the Rio Grande into that no man's land, and troops from Mexico fired at the American troops on land that Mexico said was theirs. When that happened, Polk saw his chance and said, "ah-ha" and he went to congress and said, "blood has been shed on American soil." Well, it wasn't American soil, Polk called it American soil, but it was disputed soil. It was soil between the Nessus River and the Rio Grande. So Polk asked congress to declare war and, because of that, the war was declared. Polk did that because of manifest destiny, and he did that because he knew it would lead to the conquest of California, which is what he wanted in the first place.

Janette Garcia: In your opinion, did Polk have other motives for going to war? If so, what were those motives?

Bill Coate: I, and most of the historical community, believe that President Polk was such an expansionist president that his sole purpose in the White House was to move the boundaries of the United States to include all the land from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific. Some people even wanted the United States to extend from pole to pole. But, Polk's primary objective for serving as president was to enlarge the territory of the United States, go into the war, have the war, and conquer California.

Miguel Guzman-Rosas: What happened to those who were against the war? Did they just fall silent or continued to speak out?

Bill Coate: Now, of course, I have to know, are you talking about Americans who were against the war or Californios who were against the war? If you are talking about Americans, let me point out one famous American who was against the war: Abraham Lincoln. Abraham Lincoln was a congressman in 1846, and he kept hearing, "this is the spot where American soldiers were killed," "this is the spot," "this is the spot," so Lincoln kept rising in congress and saying, "Show me the spot, show me the spot where Americans were killed on American soil." And he rose and said that so much that they began to call him Spotty Lincoln. So he was, Abraham Lincoln was, absolutely against the war with Mexico. There were a few other Americans who were against it, but the majority were for it. The vast majority were for it. Now, let's talk about the Californios. The Californios, in particular. To my knowledge, no Californio leader wanted to fight that war, however, there was one important Californio leader who preferred that California be annexed to the United States, and that was Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo. He knew that Mexico

City didn't care that much about California, and he knew that either England or France or Russia, or the United States was going to take California. He preferred the United States. While we don't have opposition to the war from Californios, we do have support for the annexation of California to the United States.

Octavio Mora Ramirez: What role did Native Americans play in the war?

Bill Coate: Understand this, during the war, there were about 8 to 9,000 Native Americans, but most of them were living up in the mountains. There were about 1,000 Native Americans who had been taken into the missions and so forth. When the war started, John Sutter enrolled a couple of hundred Native Americans to join his army. John C. Fremont and the California Battalion, when he fought, had a whole battalion of Native Americans, but as far as numbers, the comparative numbers, they were small. They didn't make the difference, but they were there fighting on the side of those who wanted the conquest. Most of them, however, did not take part.

Juan Rodriguez: How was the relationship between the people living near the Native Americans?

Bill Coate: How was the relationship between who? Which groups?

Mrs. Shelton: The Californios or the Americans?

Juan Rodriguez: In John Sutter's story, it says that he was living close to Native Americans and had a close relationship with them, but how was it?

Bill Coate: Good question. There was an attitude of—learn this word please—paternalism. Every European-descended citizen, whether they were American or Californio or Anglo or Hispanic, both sides looked at Native Americans as being inferior. Both sides did what they could to use Native Americans. Look at Sutter. He had them working in the fields with sticks, plowing with sticks. The missions would bring them into the missions and baptize them and rule over them so every person we call European, whether they descended from Spain, Mexico, the United States, France, or Russia, it didn't matter they all looked upon Native Americans as subhuman.

Jacob Oliveri: What role did the issue of slavery have on the war, with Mexico having abolished slavery and the U.S. on the brink of Civil War? If and how did the Mexican-American War influence/impact the coming Civil War?

Bill Coate: Well, first of all, Mexico did not abolish slavery, they never had slavery,

so there was nothing to abolish. In their constitution, upon independence, they wrote we will have no slavery. Having said that, you have to understand the way they treated the Pawnee, for instance, was not the same, but there was no absolute ownership. Now, the issue of slavery becomes important in the conquest because once California became part of the United States. It upset the balance. At the time, there were 15 free states in the United States and there were 15 slave states. Once California became a territory, it was only a matter of time before it became a state. In 1850, in September, California, the former province of Mexico, became the 31st state in the union. That was the impact of slavery on the United States because now the question was what is going to happen to slavery now that California is part of the United States and it now becomes the 16th free state, and in the Senate, that means the free states now have the vote. That is the impact, and that is what happened. Following that came the compromise of 1850. So the conquest of California was one of the deciding factors in bringing on the Civil War because of the problems it created between the states.

Castner Hatanaka: Can you explain some of the major battles and turning points of the war?

Bill Coate: Yes, I can. If you look at 1846 that is the major, well, that is the year of the war in California, the action of Fremont, Fremont coming into California and going into Monterey and forming his California Battalion, it's a long story, but when Fremont brought 60 armed men into California and went to Monterrey and Castro chased him out. He took these men north to Oregon a man by the name of Archibald Gillespie caught up with him. He had secret orders from President Polk. Those orders were turn around, war is coming, go and take California. When he did that Fremont turned around and came back to Sutter's Fort. That caused a group of California settlers to attack Sonoma so there was a major conflict there. The Bear Flag Revolt started and these guys wanted to make California an independent country so they captured Vallejo, took him to Sutter's Fort and then Commodore Sloat and the Navy came in and took over San Francisco and Monterey and raised the flag there almost without a shot, so northern California in the first half of 1846 is now in control of the United States. Then, a fellow by the name of Kearny, Stephen Watts Kearny, a general, brought troops into southern California and was the basis for taking over southern California in the Battle of San Pasqual. Then the people in Los Angeles rebelled for a little bit and Fremont went down and put that down so General Pio Pico signed a surrender called the Capitulation of Cahuenga. So those three things—the Bear Flag Revolt in Sonoma, the Battle of San Pasquel with Kearny, and the Capitulation of Cahuenga by Pio Pico. Each of you will get a copy of the major battles that took place.

Johanna Garcia: How did John C. Fremont become the notorious leader of this

war, and what led to his later legal troubles? It seems people either loved him, and wanted him elected governor, or they despised him.

Bill Coate: Fremont became important because after the Navy—it was the Navy and their marines who captured California—but Fremont was here with his California Battalion. So he became a representative of the army and he could move his army back and forth, which made him important. When he went down and re-established control of southern California and when Andres Pico signed the surrender called the Capitulation of Cucheunga, for a short time that made Fremont the head military man. So he considered himself to be the governor of California. Well, sorry, but Kearny was a general and he is already in California and he is saying no, no, no, I'm in charge. Then word came from Washington D.C. making someone by the name of Mason the actual American governor. So Kearny is then ticked off and he arrests Fremont for insubordination and treason and marches him back to Washington for a trial. This made Fremont angry and he quit the army. That was the crux of his legal trouble. However, he went up to Mariposa and struck gold in a mine he had there and his life didn't turn out all that poorly.

Brianna Ramirez: Before the war, the U.S. had a representative in California in the person of consul Thomas O. Larkin. Why was Larkin selected to be the U.S. representative?

Bill Coate: Larkin was skilled. Stone called him the consul with the gold-handled cane. When Larkin went to Monterey, made a fortune in trading in Monterey, and became the first millionaire in California, he obviously gained some power. He began to immediately negotiate with people like John Marsh and John Sutter on how they could make California part of the United States. So he became the leader, not for the conquest because he was against military action, but he wanted to make California part of the United States peaceably. He wanted the Californios to join willingly. It didn't work out that way, but that is what made him so important.

Brianna Ramirez: As I research Larkin, I get the distinct impression that he is racist toward the Californios, although he remains cordial with those in the Californio government like Mariano Vallejo. Being Hispanic myself, I've talked to a lot of people about my research and someone told me that Larkin had qualms with Mexicans because his wife, Rachel Holmes, ended up leaving him for one. Is there any truth to that?

Bill Coate: You are absolutely right. Larkin was anti-Hispanic. He came to California and he would not become a Mexican citizen. He would not become Catholic and, as you point out, he married Rachel Holmes, an Anglo woman, and they produced the first American baby born in California. I know nothing about Rachel

Holmes leaving him at all, much less leaving him for a Californio. I'll have to look into that, but at this point, I do know that Larkin was absolutely an avowed racist. He felt much the same about the Californios as he did about the Native Americans, as most Americans did.

Leslie Reyes-Merino: A goal of this class is to have our historical narratives published. Having gone through this process before and having had a few books published yourself, what most excites you about this particular project on the California conquest?

Bill Coate: What excites me the most about the project is you. What excites me the most about the project is that most of the students are Hispanic. I love that idea where students of Hispanic descent, whether it be Mexico...By the way did you know the term Hispanic is very broad, somebody from Portugal is Hispanic? Somebody from Puerto Rico is Hispanic. Somebody from Brazil is Hispanic. I suspect that most of our class have origins from Mexico, although I don't know that. All the other classes that I've taught are of Mexican derivation. But this is the exciting part where students have a stake in knowing the history of this country and knowing the history of this state. If we took every person who had blood ties to Mexico and traced their origins, we would find somebody connected to this story and the story of the conquest. If you have a drop of Mexican blood in your veins, the story of the conquest is your story, much more than my story or your teacher's story, and the fact that you are digging out the roots of the conquest excites me beyond belief.

Mrs. Shelton: Those are all the questions the students had planned today, is there anything else you would like to say?

Bill Coate: Yes, I want to say, I have sent Ms. Shelton a chronology of the conquest by a began with those guys in 1832 and run it year by year up through statehood—the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1868, the gold rush in 1849, statehood in 1850, it's all there. When you get that chronology, that should help you. You can take those tidbits and you can write about them as if you were participating or had participated in this event. I'm so excited about what you are doing and so is the superintendent. You are making history. You are making history now. I don't know if this has ever been done before. The conquest is something people have shied away from; nobody wants to handle that. I told you about the Mexican kid who wore the T-shirt that said "I didn't cross the border, the border crossed me." Let's understand this. This is something that people in California don't like to touch. We don't want to talk about this and the greater the percentage of Hispanic residents in California, the more nervous people get because we know that the United States—hear me out now—stole California squarely and fairly. I say

that with tongue in cheek, the square and fair part. The United States had a plan to take California and it is not unlike what is going on with Russia and Ukraine today. Russia wanted to invade Ukraine and the United States had its own way to invade California. Now, I'll argue that with anybody, anytime, and I would get a lot of opposition but I believe I have a case for that. This conquest was absolutely inhumane and wrong and I hope that you get angry enough to write about it because anger will move you. Anger will make you a scholar. So, I'm excited.

Appendix II

Lippincott Letters

Letter #1

Ciudad de Los Angeles,
Feby 6, 1847

John L. Stephens, Esqr.

I take advantage of Gov. Fremont's dispatch to address you for the second time, only owing to want of certain communications. My tour from New York has been one wild adventure with all the changes of an arduous trip, intermingled with some pleasure and instruction. On May 10, 1846, we left the Rendezvous on Indian Creek, 25 miles west of Independence. Col Russell (late Marshall of State Missouri) was voted the command of the party in opposition to Ex. Gov. Boggs (same state). Capt. Kuykendall of Santa Fe, New Mexico expedition was appointed 1st Lieut. Mr. Curry assistant editor of the St Louis Reveille, aid, and myself quartermaster. Sixty-nine wagons comprised our company. With exception of Col Russell's mess & our own, they were all families. Edwin Bryant Esqr. cousin of W.C. Bryant, R.T. Jacobs, son of the wealthy John J. Jacobs, Louisville & Col. R. formed one mess of the bachelors. Francis Power Esqr. of Boston, Jefferson with whom I left New York & myself the other; after three days journey we kicked Jefferson out the company which I never regretted afterward, although at the time inclined to stay with him. We had fitted out with a first-rate wagon & six mules, with harness complete, others were all ox teams. On arriving at the Kansas river, we became discontented at the slow progress of the caravan & with one other wagon left the main body, our own pilot to overtake an Oregon Co. we heard was one week ahead. Our friends parted reluctantly with us. Not expecting to meet until California, but it was ordered otherwise. We succeeded in joining the head company after traveling some 300 miles; occasionally meeting Kaw Indians to whom we gave tobacco & other trifles. Some Shoshones we met returning from the Buffalo country loaded with meat for which we traded & gave in return beads, knives, etc. Mr. Powers & myself had the credit of being better fitted out

than any wagons on the road and had the satisfaction of being associated with an amiable, pleasant companion, industrious & persevering who resembled E.H. Willians more than any individual I ever met. At Phalen's Bluffs, on the south fork of the Platte, 17 heads of horses & Jules were stolen by the Pawnees as grand a set of double refined thieves as the Prairies can produce. Here we were, our team broken up & 500 miles from nowhere, however, by dint of trade, we obtained one yoke of oxen which we put at the wheel of our two mules left we put in advance. A consultation was held, and five individuals were selected to hunt for the lost animals, myself among the number. Imagine a gentleman four in hand, ploughing the western prairie, although we met such a loss the ludicrous appearance of Powers with a pair of reins in one hand & ox go[a]d in the other, could not but excite some merriment, off started the wagons, leaving us to scout the adjacent prairies and hills with some four days provisions. We separated in the heart of the Pawnee hunting grounds, three riding to the south & Mr. Burgess from S. Carolina & myself to steer due east, the course from which we had just come. We found the trail of our horses & followed it some 80 miles until we lost among Buffalo tracks. We would frequently ride within 10 feet of some old bull sunning himself under the lea of a sand hill, but a near approach to them was so frequent we ceased to notice them. What an undertaking, roaming in a strange land in quest of a thieving band of Indians. The number we did not even think of amid barren & arid waste. The growth of which was the prickly pear and bitter wormwood, interspersed with a little grass sufficient to keep life in our animals & water! Several nights we camped near stagnant pools, the odor of which was loathsome. I can compare these pools to nothing but a barnyard puddle trod & mixed up by buffalo. We may have landed in Arkansaw but luckily striking the trails which I knew. Quite an argument between Mr. Burgess & myself over which end of the trail to take—I finally convinced him & we turned our faces west again, unsuccessful in our hunt—exhausted with fatigue & provisions gone. We dismounted & drove our animals ahead of us. They became so tired I succeeded in killing a fat Buffalo cow, from which we took sufficient to last us until we reached the wagons—Our companions, who had taken the other course, we had no knowledge of & finally the eighth day after leaving our company, we again found snugly camped on the north fork of the Platte & the others had returned to camp the like unsuccessful after 3 days search—we supposed the distance we had traveled about 300 miles—one adventure is worth relating—while making for the grassy bottom of the Platte just at night—we discovered two Indians on the bank of the stream—We agreed to approach them & take them, prisoners—supposing them to be armed with only

bows & arrows—but the knaves saw us when about 300 yards from them—discharged a gun at Mr. Burgess & fled—I dismounted & took a crack at the devils, but did not hit—for fear of interception from a larger body in the night—we traveled fifteen miles farther & camped. At Fort Laramie, Powers & myself separated, he concluding to go to Oregon—I retained the wagon & cattle—he the mules & his share of provisions—in the states my trade would have been \$75 the best bargain but in a wilderness it was different. The mules were good pack animals for which he desired them. I loaned my wagon & cattle to an emigrant whose team was nearly exhausted & wagon had broken down. With him, I joined with now, no care.

From this time on, no incident worthy of notice transpired, except the breaking up & forming of new companies. In the meantime, the rear companies had overtaken us—Russell resigned his control & with some 7 or 8 others packed through from Laramie—I stayed with the wagons, commenced trading in horses with mountain men & Sioux Indians & found myself in possession of 7 head when we left Laramie—(my notebook is some 600 miles north from here, consequently dates, I cannot remember). On arriving at Bridgers trading post on the Black fork of the Rio Colorado of the west, we found Lansford W. Hastings, author of a work on California & Oregon, who had discovered a nearer route by some 300 miles, by the way of the Salt Lake & great desert leaving the old rout & Fort Hall to the North. He succeeded in inducing about $\frac{1}{2}$ the emigration to follow him, but his statement to me was so unsatisfactory, concerning the route that our company followed the old trail, knowing that was passable—the result showed after traveling at least 300 miles farther—we came in ahead, our teams in better order, our provisions now plenty—

Oh! The fishing, speckled trout & the salmon trout were my daily prey—with a Yankee rod & reel I astonished the Hoosiers—a singular fact, not a trout to be taken in the streams east of the South pass, but in every brook, in the west, I caught trout—even Mary's or Ogdens, a river which sinks in the desert—running a meandering course of 300 miles—sometimes flowing & again the bed entirely dry—even in such a stream I took trout weighing upwards of 3 pounds—On the same stream the Shoshone Indians, a tribe of the Snakes, committed many depredations on the emigrants. Frequently shooting at the men & at night killing cattle. They drove off several heads of our cattle, killing some & wounding others. At a meeting of our Company it was resolved to attack the devils, recover our cattle if we could & chase them severely & accordingly our little army paraded, numbering 17 men all told, only two others & myself on horseback, 14 on foot. The Indians had

possession of a large tract of rushes, very high and thick. Their number at the lowest estimate was put down at 150, but I am confident it was a tribe of 300 souls, who had placed themselves in that position to prey on the emigrants. We sallied forth and came within long rifle shot. I was selected to fire the first shot. I chose my ground, fired, and every man disappeared, supposed to have been hit. Upon which the well-known Indian yell was raised & onward we rushed, diving them before us. Our first charge resulted in our killing two Indians, on our side two men were wounded with arrows & one horse, and our leaders were slightly wounded in the wrist. Upon consultation, we resolved to charge, your humble servant then leading, which resulted in dislodging them from their stronghold & forcing them to the hills & rocks. No loss on our side and 3 Indians were wounded. Up to this time, we had been fighting them for some four hours. Our men elated with success, demanded again to be led on with a view to take some prisoners as hostages for their future good conduct—After driving about 50 of their warriors in the rocks we imprudently charged to within ten feet, and not less than 20 arrows were aimed at me alone—I escaped unhurt, but discharged “Yucatan” well loaded with buckshot in their faces.

We drew back about 30 yds from the redskins & opened a sure-fire on them killing four more, but during the action, a Mr. Wm. P. Salle, of St. Louis, a brave, cool, & determined Gentleman received a mortal wound, of which he died 3 days after and so keen were the devils to kill him that no less than four arrows pierced him at the same time & his horse was also killed under him. Nor did I escape a slight token of their regard. I had dismounted and exchanged “Yucatan” for a rifle with which I was operating. I had successfully dodged all their arrows when a gun to my right burst which drew my eye for a moment from the foe who took advantage of the opportunity & shot me through the right leg below the knee cap. It struck the bone, pierced there beneath the sinew & there was I, most beautifully feathered—I immediately grasped the barbed point that protruded & drew the arrow its length through to which I attribute my quick recovery, the feathers wiping out all poisonous matter from the wound—14 days from, I hobbled out on a pair of crutches made of willow & an old oxbow & six days from that threw them aside & have felt no inconvenience from the wound since, save when exposed & drenched with rain. Some 8 or 10 days previous to my arrival at Sutter’s Fort, I was taken ill with the camp fever, of which after two weeks of sickness I recovered. From Sutter’s Fort on the Sacramento, I started down that beautiful river, across the bay of [San] Francisco to Yerba Buena on the south side—Here I hired a boat, invested my funds in Groceries, & returned to Sutter’s Fort, sailing the

boat myself to trade with the emigrants. Being engaged for ten days at which time with my small capital I cleared \$107. For the next 3 weeks, I was traveling from one part of the Bay to another always with goods, trading for hides & produce, at the expiration of that time, Fremont & his little army started for lower [Southern] California to quell an insurrection broken out there, (Messers Jacobs & Bryant) who I before mentioned had raised a company of Tule Indians wrote me desiring I would join them, Col Russell obtained for me a commission Fremont, Jacob Captain, Bryant & myself Lts. of the Indians. We left the head of the Bay—joined Col Fremont 120 miles below at the mission of St. Johns— There we commenced a memorable campaign. One which could only have been conducted by our indefatigable leader.

On our arrival at Sutter's Fort, the American flag was flying & on my arrival at Yerba Buena it was there waving, the U.S. Sloop of War Portsmouth Capt Montgomery, the Warren, Capt Hull & the Savannah, Capt Mervin were lying in port with some seven or 8 merchantmen & whalers. The Bay exceeds any port or harbor I ever saw & the present site of (good herb) is well adapted for a commercial location. Com. Stockton in the Congress had sailed the day before for Lower [Southern] California, where Fremont—who was then raising volunteers from the Emigrants, was to cooperate with Fremont had already been made Governor by Stockton & a civil Government was being formed when this revolution commenced which brought out the present array. On the Salinas Plains near Monterey, a company of 54 Americans under Burrows was attacked by 165 (Spaniards) Californians. The Americans with their awful weapons, the rifle, defeated the enemy with the loss of three men killed. Among the rest are the brave Burrows. The loss of the Californians as I was informed by Thomas O. Larkin, our former Consul, who was a prisoner at the time & necessarily a spectator, stated their loss at 16 killed & wounded, our company did not join the main body till after this fight. Our reception at Camp by Col. Fremont was gratifying; from the first day's march, we were made the advance guard & retained that position until we entered this City of the Angles, whimsically so called by Com. Stockton. A batch of adobe houses covering an area of a mile square with some 900 inhabitants. I was frequently detached by the Col.--with a foraging troop & was successful capturing horses & frequently prisoners, our passage across the St. Barbara Mountain with four pieces of heavy artillery, was a bold & glorious achievement and entitled our noble leaders to the praise of his countrymen, at the Rincon (or corner) where the mountains run into the sea & at only low tide could we pass was also another daring exploit. The schooner, Julia Ann (a prize) with two guns was sent at this point to cooperate, but the

Californians deserted their posts & fled still further south. At the Mission of Buenaventura, we gave them two shots from our long gun, but here they again dispersed. At this place news reached us of the arrival of Gen. Kearny with 500 Dragoons—Also that the great I Amso-called here—was advancing with 700 marines & sailors from the Congress & Cyane. The California Gen. Flores had challenged Fremont. Here we were only 400 strong, advancing towards an enemy 1600 strong & the best horsemen in the world. But Flores, having a more contemptible opinion of the marines & sailors than he had of riflemen, judiciously attacked the commodore on the 8th of January, but withdrew after sustaining considerable loss, on the 9th they again attacked the Co. who had now formed a juncture with Gen. Kearny with his 500 Dragoons but was defeated with the loss of 60 killed & wounded the Comd. the loss was but 3 killed & wounded. This victory enabled Stockton to take this place. He entered the Town four days before our arrival; the Spaniards, however, would not surrender to him, they capitulated with our leader & surrendered their armies, Col. Fremont is again Gov. Com. Stockton has marched to Santiago on the coast & Gen. Kearny to San Pedro. It appears Kearny arrived here with instructions to conquer the country & institute a civil government, his orders from Government were dated the 6th of last June, Stockton was invested with the same Power only of the prior date, and Stockton contended he had conquered the country & appointed a Govr. & neither Fremont nor Stockton did recognize Kearny's authority, no doubt you will see accounts in the papers at length, as I know communications have been forwarded from here to the press. Col. Russell is sec.; of state & a council of 3 Americans & 2 natives been appointed to put our laws in execution. They are appointed by the Gov. for this & next year, after that the election goes to the people. Capt. Jacob returned to the states via Panama. E. Bryant than whom a more sterling man never lived, returns by the mountains. He has been taking notes and intends to publish his work as soon as he can after he arrives in the states & from war. I say a better account of this country will [not] be necessary. I am now asst. Qrmaster holding my comn. Still of Lt., Both officers have gone, apart of the Battalion disbanded, but the Indians are still here and under my control. Not an idle day has passed since I arrived in Cala. & to you again do I return sincere thanks for the opportunity in launching out on the rough seas of life, Should it meet your approbation & you wish to start one of your nephews to this country a certain and sure competency await any individual who would now invest money in anything, whether you contemplate such an adventure now, I know not—Vehicles selling at home from 80 to 100 is worth 400 to \$500—machines thrashing, corn shellers, mining or cradling machines 200 percent above cost & charges

can be realized. Dry goods of all kinds of hardware, in fact, the country is destitute of all merchandise.

I have in my possession an article from Thomas O. Larkin former consul, and the best merchant in the country, guaranteeing to raise & put in my possession \$4000.00 which amount I am to invest in goods at the Sandwich Islands. The appointment of Asst. Qmaster has been offered to me. But I wish only to remain in employ temporarily. Mr. Larkin is above; he expects to be here soon in the Hawaiian Barque, Don Quixote. Commander Paty with whom I sail for the Island. My letter of introduction has been of the utmost importance to me. At once being made acquainted with all the prominent businessmen of the country. The amount due me from Government & funds & property on hand amounts to not one cent less than 900 Dols. Mr. Larkin is now building a large store and warehouse, at Yerba Buena which will be open for produce & Genl. sortment store. I have secured two lots in the town, the seat of Government at present or for this time is here, but will be removed north after this session. California is all that I expected, both as regards soil and grazing purposes but for an agricultural country it is not well adapted, some rich mines of Lead & Silver have been discovered & mining operations will commence soon as the Govnt. Is thoroughly settled. The resources of this country are immense, but under the control of the natives never would have been brought out now the Anglo-Saxon race predominating everything looks up & even the lazy indolent Spaniard who before thought work a disgrace will be sure striving to earn, in fact, they must work now or the Yankee will root them our & soon have their property. The express by which I forward this starts in the morning, with the noted Kit Carson, Gov. Fremont's guide as a bearer of dispatches. I would write E. H. W. [Ezek Hartshorne Williams] mother or some of the boys but must defer it until after I arrive at the Sandwich Islands. I am very desirous to hear from home, to receive any papers or news would be very acceptable. When you hear from me again, I shall be some 600 miles north doing business with all to gain & not much to lose. Commodore Sloat left the coast before my arrival, consequently, your friend's kind letter is still in my possession. With respect & remembrance to all, I conclude hoping you may enjoy the same blessing "health" I now have. Remember me affectionately to all your family & to my good mother. Send her word that Ben is trying to do well.

Affectionately,
Ben S. Lippincott

Letter #2

Ciudad de Los Ángeles

Feby 7, 1847

E. H. Williams, Esq.,

This will serve to introduce you to Adjutant, L.T. Talbot, Bearer of Dispatches from Gov. Fremont to U.S. Govt. Any attention paid to Mr. Talbot will be duly appreciated by your affectionate Bub.

Benj. S. Lippincott

Letter #3**Ciudad de Los Angeles, Upper California****March 2, 1847****Dear Bub,**

This will serve to introduce to your acquaintance, Col. Wm. H. Russell, Sec. of State of California, under Gov. Fremont. You will find him a pleasant, affable & instructing acquaintance. If so an opportunity should offer that you could introduce the Colonel to mother & Amelia it will be a source of gratification to me. He will be enabled to inform all concerning this "El Dorado" of the west. No doubt through Jno. L Stephens Esq., you heard from me dated February—since that time, I have remained here as assistant quartermaster in the California Battalion & consequently one of Gov. Fremont's staff. My salary is good & amply sufficient for all present wants. My prospects too are flattering. The Gov. (as Col. R.) will inform you detailed me to accompany him to the States on secret duty to the Capitol. But considering the expenses of traveling and elapse of time before I again returned to California, although my salary still continues & expenses paid. I would arrive here about as I would start, I accordingly respectfully declined the appointment, although I might gain "notoriety." Quite a complicated political machinery is now in operation here as well as in the states. Commodore Stockton arrived on this coast sometime easily last May, with instructions in case of a war with Mexico to conquer the country & establish a civil government. At the same time, Major Fremont received his commission of Liet. Col. Fremont & was to cooperate with the Commodore. Recruiting officers were sent to meet the immigrants who to a man enlisted. Myself, Gov. Box [Boggs], Capt. Reed & one or two others did not at the time on account of sickness. I could then as early as Nov. last. I could have obtained a captaincy but my health (having suffered with the Camp fever) was an obstacle & again I desired to enter the broils of contending parties as little as I could—Stockton sailed for the southern coast & Fremont with 450 as hawkeyed riflemen as ever

pulled triggers marched down through the country. Oh! That campaign & the spirits that formed that little army, fatigue, endurance, toil, hunger & oftentimes drenched with the heavy rains were all over come & on we came.

Com. Stockton landed his marines & sailors numbering 400 men at San Diego, 165 miles south of this & marched his men on foot to meet Fremont, on the memorable plains of Kowango [Cahuenga]. But we had been detained for want of horses traveling over 600 miles in the most inclement season that Stockton, who was about five days travel nearer the focus: Vs City of Angeles was met by the enemy in the 8th & 9th Jany & a severe skirmish ensued, which resulted in the defeat of the Mexicans & consequently he marched triumphantly in the city. Notwithstanding their defeat, the Mexicans on superior horses were not captured. They immediately presented themselves to Fremont who was now within 2 days of the city & surrendered which mortified the Naval Officers. The idea of their capitulating with the "barefoot Battalion."

What brought me amongst them is simply this, while selling a small consignment of goods at the head of [San] Francisco Bay, a messenger came with a request from Col. Fremont to proceed to Yerba Buena (the New York of California) & there procure a cannon, ammunition, etc. & deliver it to an Officer who in the meantime would arrive at the head of the Bay.

On my return with the gun, my feelings were enlisted for the cause & I proceeded with the escort to Camp St. Johns, 120 miles south. Here Fremont tendered me a Lieutcy in Co. H (all Indians) which I accepted & from that time on was in more perilous service than any other co., constantly as an advance guard, except when on a horse-raising expedition. With a detachment of 10 as rascally redskins as ever drew breath I succeeded in taking three prisoners & they were the first brought into camp in the campaign. So here am I now about 600 miles south of San Francisco hale, hearty & busy. But the politics. It appears Genl. Kearny with the same instructions from Gov as "Fighting Bob" arrived just after the conquest of the country & demanded to be recognized as Governor. That was a Pill neither Stockton & Fremont would swallow accordingly for the time he withdrew, but still intent on the Governorship. While this counseling was going on at [Los] Angeles, the Gov. sent another Governor in the person of Col. Mason from Virginia, who arrived at Monterey some 500 miles north of this. Com. Shubrick also arrived & succeeded Stockton, and Biddle also arrived. Now the jealousy of the Naval commanders to Stockton is well known & Kearny thinking to enlist them proceeded immediately to Monterey. Thereafter a long consultation Kearny

was pronounced Governor, issued his proclamation & as a superior officer, and ordered Fremont to report to him instantly. Fremont wisely relinquished his authority without transgressing any law, either civil or military & this morning started north. What the results will be, time will develop. But all the officers (many very intelligent men too) concur in the opinion that Fremont is entitled to the Governorship & we are now daily looking for the return dispatch that was forwarded to Washington after the capitulation. The Union Naval officers "in mass" are in favor of Fremont. A son of Louis McClane was a major in our Battalion, but Shubrick very cavalierly ordered him afloat & then similar instances. The popularity of Fremont among the natives [Californios] is unbounded. Threats are even made if Fremont is not Governor, they will raise another insurrection. Colonel Russell is now on secret business on this same subject. Col. Benton is the father-in-law of Fremont. Calhoun is his warm friend & through the Russell family, Marshall of Missouri (whig) expects to conciliate the Whig Party. So long as good pay, so long am I here, etc.

I might have been more strongly induced to return but oh that horrid trip over the mountains. If I do return, it will either be by sea or by Panama, but as I think at present some two or three years must elapse. In a commercial point of view, this country must attract considerable attention, [San] Francisco bay particularly, but on beauty & safety exceed your far famed harbor. The principal trade is from the Sandwich Islands & goods of all descriptions are enormously high. The first ten days I was in the country I proceeded from Sutter's Fort on the Sacramento, to [San] Francisco Bay & there invested my funds after which (in ten days) I cleared in hard cash 107 dolls. Again the next ten weeks while selling goods, some on consignment, some my own head of bay, I cleared 120 dolls. These are not occasional instances but daily occurrences & will until an influx of Genuine Yankees & their wares flood the country. The resources of the country are not yet developed. Mines for instance abound in all quarters, lead in the north & at no future day, a great trade will be opened with China. In this section gold & silver abound—This country is like all that has been the scene of war the last 12 years, constant revolution has occurred which not only draw forth all the money but decreases the stock which is (hide & tallow). The staple product tends to ruin the country. A description of the town's manners & customs of the inhabitants might employ me for some time & the account would be exactly the description of Kendall's Santa Fe expedition or Hasting's work on California. My letters were of material benefit at once introducing me to many businessmen & consequent advantages. I have seen California from the headwaters of Sacramento

to San Diego (cast your eyes on Mitchell's map), but it does not suit me. Want of timber, want of water, want of communication except on horseback or by sea, & greatest of all objections a want of agricultural country. As a grazing district it exceeds any I have ever seen, and a man that does not own from 3 to 20 leagues, has no (rancho) or farm at all. The Catholics with all their pomp & ceremony flourish here, but the Mormons who are fast congregating here create some jealousy. Now if Shep wants health & to improve his affairs, let him start to Independence & from there here, astonishing as it may seem, invalids from the states pronounced passed [past] medical aid have started on this trip regained their health & now are enjoying the best of health. No exaggeration when I say they kill a bullock, hang it up at their door, the air so pure & there [it] remains in their warmest weather until eaten by the family. I could write many a page.

Whether great inducement, to return, is my desire to see mother, to see all, but I know I would be sacrificing my expenses & eat up my earnings. I have never been from home, that my desire was so strong to return. Col. Fremont's offer made me unsettled and vacillating for a week, but my conclusion is settled & here I stay. My warmest thanks for all your kindness & my love to "all," don't let the least chances pass without writing & I shall answer every opportunity. Remember me kindly to Fletcher & introduce the Col. to him, also to Jno. L. Stephens Esq. & say to him, his kindness to me is remembered & I shall write him at the first opportunity. I introduced Major Talbot to you who left here on my express in February. You will find him much of a Gentl. Wm. H. Hanford was desirous to hear from me, tell him to come & see this country & no danger of him being dissatisfied. Now if Wm. would induce Bloom Hammond to invest every cent he could raise for staple articles of any kind for this market, he would make a good adventure. Many are the advantages open for any adventurer who invests his funds in your market. Mr. Frank Ward, a New Yorker, sailed in Brooklyn, before I started, with \$1500 in goods & now commands at least \$10,000. He comes to New York this year. I will write to him. Remember Uncle Ben to all the little ones & tell them he often thinks of them. To mother, Amelia, Clarence, the boys all, all my love.

Your affectionate Brother,
Benj. S. Lippincott

Letter #4

Convention Hall

Sept. no Oct. 1st, 1849

Sister Amelia:

To you, I again drop a few lines my antipathy for corresponding certainly originates more from thoughtlessness, than from a desire to communicate with you all, but one letter can say to all that I enjoy the same good health & prospering slowly. On the other side you have a design for 'the seal' of the new State of California—With my usual desire of copying, I imitated the design recommended by the committee, & thought that none would appreciate it more, (however hastily sketched) than yourself. Here I go in my wild way of introducing to you almost an enigma without in the first place stating your Brother is a member of the Great California Convention. Elected by the people & met to frame a constitution for this new state—the particulars, of which will probably be printed in Journals at home. I was elected from the San Joaquin district one of the two richest portions of California and receiving one more vote than any delegate from the same district. T. Lloyd Vermule sits alongside me & I can assure you no disgrace to our representation. So you will see I am again in politics, but only for the consummation of one object; vis-a-vis to prove to my friends at home that I have warm friends here, & those who support me.--Again I am desirous to see Col. Fremont, a Senator from this State, who will certainly come on as soon as we are admitted—He has much talent here & many aspiring & prominent men, but they have "never seen it rain here yet."

Mr. Beale now rooms with me & will come on the wings of Mercury with our Constitution when completed. He will call & see you in New York. Col. Fremont & family are here & I had the pleasure to hear from Mrs. F. the other day that a chair at her table was always vacant for me. Oh, what a splendid lady—You would be pleased with her. She is certainly instructive & amusing & Oh! How bitter when she chooses. My prospects are the same & when I last wrote home my business in the mines have proved lucrative & my investments in land good. We have removed the seat of Gov. to San Jose de Guadalupe, where fortunately I owned 31 lots, which only advanced 20 percent. I sold my last lot in San Francisco on the first of Sept. which cost me \$400 for 2000 dols. This I have reinvested—You will soon hear of a new town called "Eureka," which I have the honor of locating & having surveyed. It is situated in my district nearer the southern mines than any other town. Mr. Blair, a partner, steams the San Joaquin, has arrived to run exclusively to our town, & Col. Fremont, also a partner, has discovered a mine, not a place

which pours out riches inexhaustible, but a short distance from the site.

Ned Beale is very anxious to have me accompany him home, but I would sacrifice so much & the previous lesson has taught me to be patient. I was desirous to see you all, which induced me to sell out before which property now is worth over 200,000 dols.--should I be successful this winter will come to see you all in the spring as communication is now so easy by the Isthmus.

A Mr. Savage, Foster, & myself form[ed] a Co. which went in operation last April—& just the other day news came to me they had with the Indians under our control got out 38 pound[s] of gold in one day, but I have no positive assurance of this fact but have no doubt they are very successful.

I recd. From Jno. L. Stephens a long letter, he has (condescended), last steamer, offering any assistance, but prosperity does not need it—however—I advised him to make a spc. Offering to take an equal share. What his answer may be I cannot say but he may possibly accept. The house is adjourned and I am now waiting in my room—Ned lies dozing on the bed, waiting with anxiety for the results of our labours.

[At least one page of the letter is missing since the letter is unsigned]

Letter #5

San Francisco

Jan. 8th, 1850

Jno. L. Stephens Esq.

It affords me pleasure to introduce to your acquaintance Genl. Thos. J. Green. The Genl. had the honor of representing one of our most populous districts in the first Senate of California. You will glean from him desirable intelligence in relation to this "term."

A scheme is now afoot to locate the capital of Cal. Capital (money) and influence is not wanting--the Genl. will explain fully. I shall write you particulars, by this steamer, in the care of the Genl., who will see you at Panama. David Broderick Esq. of this city joins me in our remembrance to you.

With due respect,
Yr. obdt. sert
Benj. S. Lippincott

Letter #6

Senate Chamber [San Jose]

Jany 26, 1851

Sunday morning

Dear Sister;

Your affectionate letter of the 10th of November is before me and how to employ the knowing letter than writing home, I know not. How is it I never heard of Hattie's marriage, your letter bearing the first information. With all my heart, I wish her happiness and do not doubt from the character her husband bears, that she will enjoy her share.

Ere this Shep is amongst you & a gratification it must be to mother. I have not written as punctually since his return. I heard from Charles a short time since he was still in the mines, and I feel thankful he is located in the most thickly populated district on account of the recent Indian disturbances. My former partner has been driven from his camp on the Fresno & three young men murdered by the Indians, all his property has burnt since a battle has been fought in which some 50 Indians were killed & subsequently they in large numbers attacked another settlement in the night & massacred 76 Americans. The Govm. has ordered out troops to aid the miners & we have been the last two days legislating to create a war fund to defray expenses. I fear the war will be protracted as the Indians counting all the tribes from Sacramento to Tulare Lake number about 9,000 who subsist principally on root & acorns & can take refuge in the impregnable vastness of the Sierra Nevada. Charles was well & should I hear he is not successful will send for him. Will you allow Mr. Vanity to say a little about himself? I think I see you nod assent. You must know our Gov. P.H. Burnett resigned some two weeks since, & the Lieut. Gov. Mr. Mc Dougal installed as Gov., consequently a Lieut. Gov. as President of the Senate was wanted. There were many aspirants in our body. I declined a nomination, but rec'd a majority of the votes. I then requested each member not to support me. But Genl. Douglas, a warm friend (our State Marshall) & another Senate would vote for me, so that if you see the vote you must not think I would allow myself to be run & defeated.

Mr. Broderick who is a New Yorker I warmly supported. Much feeling exists here between Northerners & Southerners. This ultra radicalian I despise, particularly a fanatical Southerner. Quite a compliment was paid me a few days since the title of Col. is prefixed to my name—The first intimation I had was in the State Journal that the Hon. B.S.L. & Col. J. Neely Johnson were appointed aide de camp to his excellency Gov. McDougal.

How heart rendering is the news about those two little boys? Do

send for them & put them to school. I will forward \$1,000 to Shep. for that purpose. That puppy Leonard ought to be cowhide within an inch of his life. My feelings have not been as much ruffled in a long time as when your letter cautiously speaks of his cruelty—something should be done, a day of retribution will come—when he must answer for this inhuman conduct. I wrote to your cubs & directed them to subscribe to me at the Capitol.

Overtures of great interest have been made me by aspirants—for instance a position worth \$1,000 per annum & perquisites but I hold off. The legislation is within one or two of a tie as regards politics—I have acted independently & with two friends whom I control and can wield the balance of power. Fremont is very friendly & polite. T. Buttler King calls my room most every day. The small potatoes are still more friendly & ever obsequious—so much for management. I have been thinking seriously of making a flying trip home this spring—circumstances will govern—I am desirous of seeing you all—What would you say; to see me home weighing about 186 lbs., hearty & hale—stalk in among you someday—although I began to count years & they number too. I feel the same buoyancy of spirits as when I was 18. My health is excellent. This climate suits me—think of the 26 Jan'y sitting here with my window up & the birds singing gayly & such succession of days everyone who remains 2 or 3 winters in this state will never be satisfied with the cold northeasters, snow & sleet of your latitudes.

Monday morning 27th Jany. Another fine day & here am I at my desk penning again. The Government appointment I yesterday mentioned has just been reported—We have a mass of business before us which will occasion a long session—how position opens one's eyes to the intrigues of the world. So many advances made so differently & all emanating from some interested motive in the 4th of Feb. a grand flare-up comes off. I send Anne a ticket, tell her if she only had wings how soon she would fly over. Tell Ned he's a Dutchman & won't write to Uncle Ben. I suppose your little ones are all at school. By the by I made arrangements this morning to send E.H.W. instead of Shep \$1000 which is all the same. Please expend it for the little boys of Clem, Milly & Eugene. Let Hart use his fragment. I will strive & write mother a few lines this steamer. I can judge her anxiety to hear from us & will try & reciprocate all favors from home. As ever your affectionate Brother.

My love to all!
Ben S. Lippincott

Letter #7

San Jose Jany 28th, 1851

Senate Chambers

Jno L. Stephens, Esq.

Dr. Jn.

Your last favor was recd just previous to the convening of the Legislature. In relation to the Vallejo Scheme, I have secured from Genl. Vallejo and Capt. Frisbee (his agent) two shares--one for yourself and myself, and the other between Col Geo McDougal and myself. The bill for the removal of the capital from this place has passed our body by a vote of eleven to two. Fears are entertained for its safety in this house, but I can assure you, young politicians, as we are, deeper intrigue we never resorted to. This is a school calculated to make one better acquainted with human nature than any I have ever been connected with.

You will notice our friend D.W. Broderick Esq. is our president, Lieut. Gov. filling the place of P.H. Burnett who resigned.

I was waited upon by a committee to take the appointment and also by David but declined. Much feeling exists between Northern and Southern members. This ultraism of the South and fanaticism of the North I despise and have kept aloof from either party. My course has been independent.

The Legislature is very nearly a tie and with two friends who go with me, I shall be able to paralyze the action of either unless the movements are formidable. Questions have been made by prominent men aiming at the Senatorship, but always through third persons. Upon all occasions, I listen. The candidates now before us are J.C. Fremont, Jno. W. Geary, Jno B. Nelles, T. Butler King, and Soloman Heydenfelt. All have their strong friends, and should each party conform to a caucus nomination, I predict a Democrat will be returned. I was shown a letter written by King this morning intended to this steamer, recommending to Millard Filmore my appointment as one of the U.S. Com[missioners] to settle the old Cal. claims. It was not at my request, but would accept--it may have been a "feeler." Constant intimacy with these Gents. show the influence at work and Gov. patronage is freely distributed.

I was not sufficiently explicit in relation to the seat of Gov[ernment]. The city is divided into thirty shares, and for each share secured to the shareholders, it is necessary they should give bonds for the payment of \$7500 dolls per share to be paid in two years from the time the Gov. signs the Bill or so soon as property can be sold, the proceeds to be paid to the Board of Directors. All this I can easily arrange already many are desirous to take hold and advance for an interest. I have no doubt a most profitable investment will be made again. The influences

used by Genl Green as agent for influential individuals at home are carrying their due weight.

You will observe by the papers the disturbance with the Indians. I fear a protracted war. They number 8 or 9000--subsisting on roots and acorns and taking refuge in their mountain fastnesses. The Governor has ordered out a force in connection with a force dispatched by Genl P.F. Smith. I have just recd from Senator Woodsworth a recommendation to President Fillmore in favor of myself as a commissioner to settle claims of our citizens against the U.S. Govt. It was signed by every senator. I understand there is also one in circulation in the House. It will do no harm to forward them. 29th Jany.--T.B. King has opened (privately) a serious question in relation to the Quicksilver mines of this place. The Almaden Mine yields now at the rate of \$1,200,000 per annum and other equally rich veins are in the vicinity. I have certain knowledge of some facts that should prove profitable--More anon.

Before the receipt of your letter, I had your circular published in the "Herald" and forwarded some copies to you, desiring to draw attention here to the completion of your giant work in which our people are vitally interested. Any service I can be, I will willingly lend my attention. Some of my plans must obtain, for instance, being chairman of the committee on public buildings and state prisons. I have a scheme to report a bill in which the Gov. will have the appointing power of superintendents and be authorized to let to parties the care of the prisoners for their clothing and subsistence, in the lieu of the labour to be performed--at the rate of labour here a most profitable arrangement will be made--of course through third persons.

Your old friend Dennis is doing well. I never meet [him] that he does not speak of you--Please give my best respects (he will say) if you write. I also met Jno. Mc[?]. He has done well. Casserly, who brought a letter from you, has his paper in full blast in San Francisco. Please remember me to Uncle Benj. By last mail I had recd from home all well. With due respect, Your obedt servt.

Benjamin S. Lippincott

Letter #8

San Francisco July 14th, 1852

Jno L. Stephens Esq.

Dear Jn.

Your letter of June 23rd was received through the hands of [...?...] Stephens this morning. Now in relation to any property or share of property coming to me from my father's estate in which you may be

interested, I freely and willingly accord to you the authority on my part to do as in your judgment you may think best and will willingly ratify when I return to the states anything that may have been done by you predicated upon my assent thereto. I shall strive and be at home the following year.

My shoulder is now at the wheel again. I am not involved nor can I command a heavy amount, neither can I ever relinquish the desire to come out of California better than when I entered it. You no doubt will be interested in my present--I am now engaged in superintending the state prison labor. Having an interest myself, aside from the salary of \$400 a month. We are employing them at a steam brickworks owned by the co. and I have made with the labor 43,000 bricks per day and can compete with any concern in Cal. for contracts. We have offered our proposition to the Pacific Steamship Co. at Benicia to supply material for their works and other contracts supplying builders in this city.

The site of the State prison has been changed from Vallejo to within 500 yds of our grounds. The land purchased by the state commissioners, the deed made and delivered the state and paid for; offers will be accepted this week to furnish material. Now some of the com. are interested in us. "We may by chance get the contract. At any rate, my time is employed and I receive good pay for it. I have been dabbling in several things and plan a foothold, yet some of the money cannot burn.

Politically too independent to ask for anything and to be a party hack? Too senile and hypocritical for me. Although there are many prominent men here who owe their advancement partly to me whose influence I might command, but nothing is made of it, unless one stoops to downright stealing, such as I have witnessed here. I await the time when with pleasure, I can sit down and rehearse to you the course of many of our prominent men here and the general listing of many you know. The last fire in June one year ago hurt me indirectly, but I will not complain--good health stout heart and a desire to do what is right will yet bring me along. This life is a long rough road and will not do to travel too fast. One's "mule" might get "tender footed."

I gave Lieut. Gov. Purdy and Mr. A.H. Sibley a letter each to you. Do engage them in conversation you will find they can post you in relation to matters here. Will you please remember me kindly to your father--

A grand Dem. ratification meeting took place in the plaza. More unanimity could not have been expected. California will give Pierce four thousand majority--Mr. Purdy will call to see you; he can give you more information than I could write on a piece of paper. He is one of our most popular men and deservedly so. Sibley is a Whig and if he returns here in time will get the Whig nomination for Mayor of this city. If you meet any of my people will you please remember me to them. I

am a poor correspondent and seldom write. One longing wish I have, is to see my good old mother once more.

With due respect, As ever,
Benj. S. Lippincott

Letter #9

Santa Barbara
May 18th, 1853
Mr. B.D. Wilson,
Dear Sir,

Your favor came to hand after some delay and I did not answer it expecting every week to start for Los Angeles, but not being able to get farther south this time, I hasten to write you in relation to the subject we were speaking of.

You wrote that the spring had partially dried up; it must certainly fine vent somewhere in the same neighborhood and should you succeed in procuring possession, I will pay half the expenses by a draft on through Palmer, Cook, and Co. Machinery and apparatus has been forwarded to this state by Gov. Purdy's brother who will be prepared to operate as soon as he arrives. I feel assured in stating to you nothing can be lost by a moderate outlay to secure the right to the spring and a small quantity of land adjacent. Should you judge it of sufficient importance to claim your time and attention for a short time, please acquaint me at your earliest convenience.

Respectfully, Yr. obdt. servt.
Benj. S. Lippincott

Letter #10

Sacramento 28th March, 1854
Mr. J.W. Mandeville,
Sir

Enclosed I send a letter from Mrs. D.A Enyart. Please peruse it and at your earliest convenience, I would respectfully request an interview. Mr. Enyart is desirous to have an answer and I am as equally desirous that an amicable understanding should be had between you.

Can you call at the Orleans, say this afternoon at 4 or 5 o'clock.
respectfully

Yr. etc.
Benj. S. Lippincott

Letter #11

San Francisco

Nov. 5th, 1855

Friend Houghton,

In relation to the matter of the young man we spoke of, Mr. Broderick has told me if you will forward to him or to Gov. Bigler the recommendation to mercy in his favor, it shall be promptly attended to.

Do not fail to pay attention to this. Of course, I feel much interest in it, but would not have Vermule know it. It is a sad thing and enough to break his poor mother's heart. Your early attention is respectfully requested--

Yr. Obt. Servt.
Benj. S. Lippincott

Letter #12

New York

August 10th, 1855

Dear Uncle,

I have called upon Mr. Burger, 51 Courtland St., one of Mr. Dayton's administrators and he paid the [?] after talking a short time, he wishes particularly to see you about releasing Mr. Dayton's estate and taking two other parties with of whom he says are as good as the estate. His object is to get released from serving as administrator until the end of the lease. If as he says, he will give two persons of either of whom are as good and better than the Est. I can see no objection to canceling the lease and letting them settle the Est.

Tomorrow I will deposit the money as per your request at the Merchants Bank.

Yours,
B.S. Lippincott

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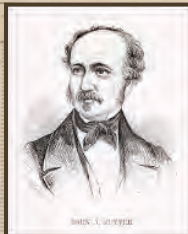
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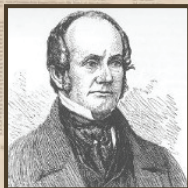
How the United States Took the Golden State from Mexico



One of the last Mexican governors of California leading up to the Mexican American War, Juan Bautista Alvarado was a major player who, along with his uncle Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, were among the last of Mexico City's designated leaders to vie to keep California for Mexico.



John Augustus Sutter was a Swiss immigrant to California known for establishing Sutter's Fort, a refuge for later American pioneers who made their way west. The strategic location of Sutter's Fort, between the once Mexican capitol of Monterey and Los Angeles in today's Sacramento area, along with Sutter's friendly relations with local natives and his ingenious procuring of essential supplies, including weapons and cannon, made Sutter a prominent figure in the California Conquest.



Thomas Oliver Larkin is most known for being California's first millionaire. A prominent figure, Larkin served as the United States consul to Mexico's California leading up to the California Conquest. Although a firm believer in the United States' ambitions to take over the territory, Larkin had a good relationship with the Californios despite his being adamant to maintain his eastern American roots, and his desire was for the U.S. to peacefully purchase the land.