1982

The San Patricios and the United States-Mexican War of 1846-1848

Dennis J. Wynn

Loyola University Chicago

Recommended Citation
https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_diss/2310

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Dissertations at Loyola eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Loyola eCommons. For more information, please contact ecommons@luc.edu.

Creative Commons License
This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 License.
Copyright © 1982 Dennis J. Wynn
THE SAN PATRICIOS
AND THE UNITED STATES-MEXICAN
WAR OF 1846-1848

by
Dennis J. Wynn

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of Loyola University of Chicago in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

May
1982
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In carrying out this study I have been helped by many people and institutions in Mexico City and the United States. I would like to give special thanks to my dissertation Director and committee, Rev. Charles E. Ronan, S.J., and Drs. Paul S. Lietz and Joseph A. Gagliano, for the encouragement and advice they offered. I would also like to thank Dr. Ignacio Rubio-Mañé, President of the National Archives of Mexico, and his able assistant, Salvador Victoria, for the warmth and hospitality shown this visitor to their country. Finally, a simple thanks to my wife Jane, and my parents Anne and Edwin, who made my achievements possible.
VITA

The author, Dennis Joseph Wynn, is the son of Edwin Joseph Wynn and Anne Marie Wynn. He was born April 28, 1947, in Chicago, Illinois.

His elementary education was obtained at St. Nicholas School of Chicago, Illinois, and secondary education at Mendel High School also of Chicago, where he graduated in 1965.

In June 1969, he graduated from St. Joseph's College of Rensselaer, Indiana with the degree of Bachelor of Arts with a major in history. He received his Master of Arts in history from DePaul University of Chicago in 1973.

In September, 1973, he entered Loyola University of Chicago. In September, 1977, he was granted an assistantship in history. In 1978, Dennis Wynn was appointed a Lecturer in Latin American history at Loyola.

While a Lecturer at Loyola, Dennis Wynn wrote an article on the history of the opium trade. It was entitled, "Hell Flower: A Study in Opium." It was published in an
Dennis Wynn is currently a member of Phi Alpha Theta, an international honor society in history.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acknowledgments</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Life</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Introduction                                  | 1    |
| Chapter I Early United States–Mexican Relations | 7    |
| Chapter II The U.S. Army During the War with Mexico and Its Relationship to the Problem of Desertion | 23   |
| Chapter III Mexican Efforts to Foster and Secure American Desertions | 64   |
| Chapter IV The San Patricios 1846-1847         | 96   |
| Chapter V The San Patricios 1847-1848          | 147  |
| Summary                                       | 203  |
| Selected Bibliography                         | 207  |
| Appendix                                      | 220  |
INTRODUCTION

Sir . . . Have you any record in your office of the number of deserters hanged near the City of Mexico, September 13, 1847 . . . Some newspapers in San Francisco cite that affair to prove that Catholics are disloyal . . . .

A private citizen to the Assistant Adjutant General, 1896

Any past account of the San Patricios usually descends into a name calling polemic between Protestant and Catholic writers with each using only fragmentary material to support their arguments. Protestant writers have long contended that the San Patricios were composed of Irish Catholic soldiers who deserted their adopted country, the United States, to fight for Catholic Mexico. Their implication, whether explicit or subtle, was that a Catholic's first loyalty was to Rome and his religion. This view was merely an offshoot of earlier anti-Catholic views imported from England and expressed periodically in nativists' outbursts. On the other hand, Catholic writers go to great lengths to disprove the religious and racial

makeup of the San Patricios and also to prove the loyalty of Catholic Americans during the Mexican War. The end result is that the real story of the San Patricios and their proper place in history is clouded with emotion.

The San Patricios or St. Patricks is one of the several names given to the Mexican Foreign Legion during the United States-Mexican War of 1846. The bulk of the San Patricios was composed of deserters from the American Army. They represented a microcosm of the then American Army, that is, they included in their ranks a large number of foreign-born soldiers, especially Irish and German. The Irish, however, led the unit and gave it its character, flag, and probably its name. This, plus the fact that the Mexicans made special appeals to the Irish to join their cause, contributed to the misconception that the unit was composed entirely of disloyal Irish Catholics.

From the beginning, many contemporary accounts of the War usually described the San Patricios as being Irish Catholics. This view was soon borrowed by various nativist Protestant groups, such as the "Know Nothings", to use and perpetuate their biased views. It was no surprise then that during the later half of the nineteenth century the War Department received a number of letters questioning the existence and purpose of the San Patricios. For example, in 1886, an Albert Richardson of California wrote to Washington to ascertain the existence of a group of
deserters who formed a battalion in the Mexican Army called the St. Patrick Guards. He went on further to ask if it was true that they showed "their fidelity to the Mexican Government by burning the American flag and then hoisting a Green Flag with a harp on it." The War Department replied that they had no information concerning a unit called the St. Patrick's Guards, but privately acknowledged the existence of American deserters in a Mexican Army unit.

Several years later, in 1895, Philip O'Ryan of the Monitor Publishing Company of San Francisco wrote the Department seeking information as to the truth that at the battle of Churubusco in 1847 the Americans captured two hundred deserters fighting for Mexico and they were all Irish Catholic. The Assistant Adjutant General, E. Woodward, replied that there was no official record sustaining such a belief. However, again in a private memo, the Department admitted that some deserters were court-martialled for traitorous conduct shortly after the battle of Churubusco. It seems that officials were reluctant to release information about the San Patricios to the public. This reluctance contributed to the mystery

---

2 Ibid. Letter of Albert Richardson to the Adjutant General, April 24, 1886.

3 Ibid. Letter of Philip O'Ryan to E. Woodward, Assistant Adjutant General, October 25, 1895.
surrounding their existence.

Next year the Mexican War veteran, Daniel Maloney, wrote the War Department again seeking information to rebut certain newspaper articles from California which stated that the existence of the San Patricios proved the disloyalty of Catholic Americans. His request was followed several months later by another from a C. B. Howard who also wanted information in order to resolve a controversy then raging in Texas concerning the truth that a large body of Irish soldiers under the command of a Major Riley deserted the American Army and fought for Mexico. The War Department would not or could not release any information.

Finally in 1915, at the urging of two congressmen, William Coleman of Pennsylvania and Frank Greene of Vermont, the military released a memorandum briefly describing the trials of the San Patricios. The vague memo carefully avoided mentioning any religious or racial origins of the deserters but did imply that some, especially their leader, John Riley, was a Catholic and an Irishman.

---


5Ibid. Letter of C. B. Howard to Daniel S. Lamont, Secretary of War, March 14, 1896.
During this time, historical articles concerning the San Patricios began to appear. The first one was by G. T. Hopkins entitled, "The San Patricio Battalion in the Mexican War." Hopkins, in his own words, based his article on unnamed American and Mexican sources; and, while he did present certain correct facts, he also used a number of misconceptions which, in essence, continued to cast aspersions on Catholic loyalty by presenting the San Patricios as foreign-born and Catholic. His article was followed in 1935 by Edward Wallace's "Deserters in the Mexican War." Wallace was more objective in trying to present the San Patricios and their relationship to both the American and Mexican armies; however, he still relied heavily upon Hopkins's article and hence perpetuated prejudicial views. Both these articles, in turn, were rebutted by Sister Blanche Marie McEniry. In her work "American Catholics in the War With Mexico," she disputed


the racial makeup of the San Patricios by investigating the surnames of those San Patricios captured by the Americans. By so doing, she proved that there were other nationalities, even Americans, in their ranks. As far as the religious issue, she stated that it could never be resolved as there was no way to determine the religion of the soldiers. According to her, Irish sounding names were no proof of Catholicity. Other articles soon followed which, while trying to present accurate information on the San Patricios, still centered on the issue of religion. This seemed to be the only answer to explain their creation and existence. Why else would so many Americans turn traitor to their country?

The answer is more complex than just religion. It involves such issues as an unpopular war, the religious and nationalistic mores of the times, conditions in the U.S. Army of that period, and of course, the success of the Mexicans to capitalize on these problem areas. Once the San Patricios are viewed within these contexts, then the existence of the unit and the varied and complex characters that made it up can be fully understood. It will be this writer's purpose to present these issues and in so doing to tell the complete story of the San Patricios from their formation to their disbanding.
CHAPTER I

EARLY UNITED STATES-MEXICAN RELATIONS

In 1819, the United States and Spain signed the Adams-Onís Treaty by which Spain ceded Florida to the United States for $5,000. The treaty also determined the boundary between the United States and Spanish territories to the Pacific Ocean, with the United States renouncing ownership of any Texas territory formerly claimed under the Louisiana Purchase. Ratification of the treaty in 1821 coincided with the independence of Mexico, and the new nation promised to honor all Spanish treaty commitments. Nevertheless, the treaty had some most unfortunate repercussions in United States-Mexican relations. The surrender of the United States' claim to Texas provoked sharp criticism. Many Americans, including John Quincy Adams, the coauthor of the treaty, conceded that the day might come when Texas might petition the United States for annexation.1 However, others were more extreme in their outlook and demanded immediate action. They wanted Texas now. It was

---

America's destiny to expand across the continent. Coinciding with Mexican independence, this demand clouded the relations between the two countries from the beginning and set in motion a series of events which would eventually culminate in war.

The first event occurred after the United States purchased Louisiana from France in 1803. Now the Americans and Spain were neighbors. However, Madrid viewed the aggressive Yankees as nefarious and a threat to their possessions, while the Americans saw them as an obstacle to their expansion west. The showdown between the two powers would come in Texas, the vast fertile area separating the antagonists. Spain, recognizing early the importance of Texas, sought to colonize and fortify this sparsely inhabited area. Her intentions, however, were frustrated by wars, revolution and the reluctance of the Mexicans themselves to colonize Texas. Therefore, in the emergencies to which she was reduced, Spain was forced to relax her exclusive immigration policy and allowed outside immigration to that place. However, Spain did impose strict regulations upon these new colonizers. Like all Spanish subjects they would have to profess the Catholic religion and loyalty to the Spanish throne.

The first American to avail himself of Spain's new immigration policy to Texas was Moses Austin of Connecticut. In 1820 he made an application to the
Spanish authorities to introduce a colony of three hundred families to Texas. A year later his grant was approved; however, Austin died before he could effect any plans. His son Stephen went to Texas to carry out his father's work but was met with the news of Mexico's independence from Spain. In 1823, the Mexican Government validated Austin's grant.

After Austin's first colony was planted in Texas, all subsequent foreign settlements were made under a national law which was enacted by the Mexican Congress on August 18, 1824. This law fixed certain general regulations for the administration of the public lands and then transferred to the respective states the right and duty of developing the details of a colonization policy. The most important restrictions imposed upon the states by the federal act were:

1. That foreigners should not be settled within twenty leagues of the national boundary nor within ten leagues of the coast without concurrent approval of both the state and federal executives;
2. That no individual should be allowed to hold title in his own person to more than forty-nine thousand acres of land; and
3. That Congress reserved authority to stop, at discretion, immigration from any particular nation. [This requirement was merely a statement of an unquestionable national right and not aimed at the United States].


\(^3\)Ibid., p. 12.
Subject to the reservations of the federal act, the legislature of Coahuila and Texas passed a liberal colonization law on March 24, 1825. It allowed for various individuals to introduce at their own expense a certain number of immigrant families to public lands which would be procured from the government. These individuals known as empresarios would sign a contract and would have to fulfill a certain number of obligations, among which was a time limit in which to bring these families to Texas. If the empresario failed to introduce the stipulated number of families within the term of six years he lost his rights and privileges (the assignment of premium land went to the empresario) in proportion to the deficiency. Also, the contract would be totally annulled if he did not succeed in settling at least one hundred families.

As far as attracting settlers the empresarios had no problem. The idea of free land is enough to explain the settlement of Texas; however, other factors did contribute. The panic of 1819 wiped out many farmers in the United States. Suits for debt, foreclosures and evictions choked the court records of the period. If it were not for this depression many people would have never seen Texas. As most of the settlers came from the southern portion of the United States due to its proximity,

4Ibid., pp. 16-18.
the question of slavery presented a problem. When the legislature of Coahuila and Texas ruled in 1825 that the question of slavery would be subject to laws established in the future, that barrier was temporarily removed.

As these events were taking place in Texas, the United States was receiving its first Mexican minister. Jose Manuel Zozaya was presented to President Monroe as the minister plenipotentiary of Mexico on December 12, 1822. His confidential instructions included an order to discover the true American attitude towards Mexico. Zozaya soon discovered a faction in Washington which was opposed to Emperor Iturbide of Mexico and his form of government. Also many foreign diplomats were opposed to Zozaya. He was treated with indifference by the diplomats whose governments did not recognize an independent Mexico. They refused to attend official functions if he was present. It is no great surprise then that Zozaya wrote back to Mexico that "... the haughtiness of these Republicans does not permit them to look upon us as equals but as inferiors; their conceit extends itself ... to believe that their capital will be that of all the Americas ... as time passes they will become our sworn enemies ...".

---

Such was the opinion of the first Mexican minister to the United States.

While these events were transpiring in Washington, the American Government was hesitant in appointing a representative to Mexico. This delay was caused in part because the position was a delicate one and hence became a political issue. When the appointment was finally made it was several years later. Valuable time was lost. In 1825, Joel R. Poinsett was sent to Mexico as the first United States minister to that republic. In his instructions he was ordered to secure a treaty of commerce between the two countries. This he accomplished although the treaty was not ratified by the U.S. Senate. His instructions also commanded him to try to adjust the boundary between the United States and Mexico so as to give the United States the province of Texas. Poinsett was authorized to give to Mexico $1,000,000 for this modification. He was to use the argument with Mexican officials that such a cession would have the beneficial effect of placing the capital city of Mexico more nearly in the center of the country. Such absurdity clearly reflected American opinion of the Mexican in that he was merely an Indian and hence should be amazingly naive. The United States also thought that,

since Mexico was making large land grants in Texas to colonists from the United States, she did not value land very highly. Poinsett was by this time, however, keenly aware of the Mexican sensitiveness to the subject and did not even present the proposal, knowing that it was impracticable. He would not aggravate the bad relations already existing between the two countries.?

When Andrew Jackson succeeded Adams as president in 1829 he took up the subject of Texas again. He instructed Poinsett to renew the overtures to Mexico. He authorized him this time to offer $5,000,000. The reasons he gave for United States interest in Texas were more practical than before. He told Mexico that she would be giving up a large Indian population in Texas which was a burden to her military department; also, that the hostility of Spain towards Mexico would expose the distant province of Texas to the danger of dismemberment. But Poinsett was not the man to carry this negotiation to a successful conclusion. He had made many enemies during his four years in the Mexican capital by his attempts to spread American influence, and finally in October of 1829 Mexico requested his recall by Washington. Jackson accepted his dismissal not because of Mexico's allegations but, as he saw it, 


8Ibid., pp. 789-790.
Poinsett's predicament was due to the instability of the Mexican Government and to Mexican prejudice. At the end of 1829, the relations between the United States and Mexico were in an extremely unsatisfactory state. Not only had the early apprehension and bitterness in Mexico become more widespread and intense, but the unprecedented treatment accorded Poinsett had left the United States somewhat angry. At least two requirements would be indispensable to the restoration of harmony: a gifted diplomat and the suppression, for a time, of all attempts to acquire territory. Unfortunately, neither of these was met by the Jackson administration. A spoils politician by the name of Anthony Butler was sent to Mexico to replace Poinsett. Immediately, he made efforts to purchase not only Texas but also parts of California. Having a personal stake in Texan lands, Butler proposed to secure Texas by giving money bribes to the right people in Mexico or by taking a chattel mortgage on Texas for


Ibid., pp. 6-7.
American claims against Mexico. The mortgage would be foreclosed when the expected Mexican default in payments occurred. Jackson rejected the second proposal, but turned a blind eye to any success that Butler might have in using influence on Mexican politicians. 12

Butler's efforts increased the hostility and suspicions of the Mexican Government so much so that she now took some belated action to strengthen her hold on Texas. She sent General Manuel de Mier y Terán incognito to Texas to survey the conditions there. He found that all types of Anglo-Americans had settled in Texas, from honest artisans to outlaws. He further reported that most of them were not loyal to Mexico and therefore recommended that the growth of American influence be immediately checked. The Mexican Government responded by passing a law that in effect cancelled all colonization contracts; curtailed immigration; ordered the deportation of all illegal settlers; established additional army garrisons; and proposed to settle more Mexicans in Texas. 13 Unfortunately, full compliance with the law and efforts to introduce Mexicans into the province both failed, and as a result American


influence continued to grow.

The expected confrontation occurred in 1832 when a federalist revolt broke out in Mexico against the government's autocratic control. The Texans at once joined the liberal cause and supported its leader Santa Anna. After Santa Anna's success, the Texans hoped that they would return to self government and have less interference from Mexico City. In fact, they were so sure of their position that they drew up their own state constitution and submitted it to the Mexican Congress for approval.\(^{14}\) Santa Anna, however, not only denied their petition, but in 1835 he dissolved the federal system and made himself dictator. Many Mexican provinces including Texas rose up in revolt against Santa Anna's dictatorship. They called for a restoration of federalism. Soon, however, Texas realized the futility of that path and instead opted for complete independence. On March 1, 1836, a convention, representing all of Texas, declared independence from Mexico.\(^{15}\)

Santa Anna took the revolt of Texas as a personal insult and vowed immediate vengeance for this affront to the national honor. After a forced march north, Santa Anna caught and defeated the unprepared Texans at the

---

\(^{14}\)Barker, Mexico and Texas, 1821-1835, p. 122.

Alamo and Goliad. His massacre of the survivors from these battles inflamed public opinion in Texas and the United States, and this in turn caused a great influx of volunteers to Texas. With this added strength, Sam Houston, the leader of the Texan forces, finally defeated and captured Santa Anna at the battle of San Jacinto. In May, 1836, Santa Anna recognized the independence of Texas, and while the Mexican government immediately disavowed his actions she never made any attempt to reconquer her lost province.

The United States quickly recognized independent Texas; however, annexation was not as fast. President Van Buren, like his predecessor Andrew Jackson, did not wish to risk a war with Mexico over Texas; also, and most important, he did not want to arouse the issue of slavery. The South, hoping to carve Texas into five or more slave states, almost without exception enthusiastically backed annexation. From the Southern point of view the acquisition of Texas would strengthen slavery against domestic enemies by obtaining more political power in the United States government. However, the North opposed annexation; for not only would it shift the balance of power in Congress to the South, but it would also spread that

---

loathsome institution called slavery to new lands. Numerous and influential people therefore soon deluged Congress with protests against annexation, and in the face of this unpopular uprising, the proposal for union was rejected. After several more proposals were rejected, Texas struck out on a different path.

Independent but isolated Texas began to look elsewhere for friends after being rejected by the United States. Spurned by Washington she sent agents to Europe. The Texan envoy was welcomed with open arms by the British who recognized many advantages in an independent Texas. Texas as a separate country could interpose a barrier against the southward expansion of the United States. Accordingly, London recognized Texas and concluded treaties of amity and commerce with her. This change of climate so alarmed the then President, John Tyler, that it forced him to reverse and hence he began to press for the annexation of Texas.

Tyler realized that the real problem to get Texas into the Union would be the ratification of the proposal for Union; therefore, he attempted to create a more favorable climate in Congress. The scene of his labors would be in the North. There, political parties were divided on the Texas issue. The Democrats were divided three ways: their expansionists desired immediate annexation; their anti-slavery faction opposed annexation; their neutrals were
indifferent to slavery but were hesitant to accept annexation for fear it would break up the party and even the Union. The Whigs were also divided: one element opposed any extension of slavery; and another element disliked annexation but was hesitant to oppose it because of a desire to remain in harmony with Southern Whigs who favored annexation. 17

Tyler appealed to all political parties and warned them that unless Texas was annexed it would become a British satellite and the United States would be encircled north, south, west and at sea by British power. Tyler also appealed to the Northerners' pocketbooks. He pictured Texas as a promising open market for their agriculture, industry, commerce, lumbering and mining. Finally, he tried to explain that slavery, rather than be extended, would be destroyed. His argument was that slavery needed new land to be sustained. He pointed out that, although slaves would be sent to Texas, they would eventually be liberated after the land there became exhausted because the lands west of Texas were not conducive to a slave economy. 18


18 Ibid., pp. 100-103.
The American Senate, controlled by the North, did not buy Tyler's arguments and again rejected annexation. The President, ever fearful of the British, proposed an unprecedented joint resolution which would require for annexation only a simple majority in both houses of Congress instead of the usual two-thirds majority. This ploy worked and Texas was annexed on March 1, 1845. Three days later Tyler was succeeded by James Polk.

President Polk was elected on the expansionists' ticket. Part of his program included the acquisition of California. Now that Texas was a part of the United States he could pursue his goal from the beginning of his presidency. Like Texas, the American policy towards acquiring California included intrigues and offers of purchase. Again like Texas, both these means failed and hence California could only be gained by force. This time, however, the United States would have a direct role.

In 1845 before the annexation of Texas, Polk tried secretly to involve that territory in war with Mexico, a war the United States would inherit upon annexation.

---


When this failed, Polk thought that the annexation of Texas would incite Mexico into declaring war. It is true that Mexico had assumed a warlike tone and did sever its relation with the United States; however, domestic and other obvious problems prevented her from waging an offensive war. It was mostly idle threats and certainly not an irrevocable situation.

Polk's next move was to send John Slidell as an American emissary to Mexico to discuss American claims, California and Texas. He was instructed to try to purchase California but not to serve an ultimatum for that province as it yet might be acquired by Texas or an internal revolution. In any event, Slidell's mission was a failure, as the Mexicans would not even meet with him. Whether this was intended by Polk in order to make Mexico out as the villain and justify a declaration of war is speculation. The fact remains, however, that Polk now ordered American troops to occupy the whole of Texas to the Rio Grande River. This in itself was a bold act as the Rio Grande boundary had only recently been claimed by Texas and now Polk by his actions supported this illegal claim. The anticipated clash between American and Mexican forces soon occurred and now Polk could justify a
Polk went before Congress with the allegation that Mexico invaded the United States and shed American blood on American soil. On May 13, 1846, after much prompting but little time for consideration, Congress declared war on Mexico.

CHAPTER II

THE U.S. ARMY DURING THE WAR WITH MEXICO AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THE PROBLEM OF DESERTION

While putting together an invasion force in Texas, General Taylor was faced with the serious problem of desertion. The delay before the expected hostilities allowed for certain factors to make conditions conducive to desertion. Boredom, rough discipline, and of course, Mexican propaganda, all contributed to make the alarming desertion rate a major problem. It was very easy for an American soldier to swim the Rio Grande River to the Mexican side, and when he learned how well he would be received, many more took the swim. Most, however, were merely taking advantage of the proximity of a haven to escape from the rigors of camp life. What soldier would not prefer a drink with a pretty señorita to a manual of arms drill in the hot sun of south Texas. By April 11, one month before the War began, the Matamoros Gazette claimed that forty-three deserters and six runaway slaves had crossed over to the other side.¹

When General Taylor saw his forces draining off through desertion before the hostilities actually began, he was worried and realized that to keep his force intact some action was necessary. The leak had to be plugged. Therefore, Taylor's first action was to post picket guards at the river with orders to shoot anyone who attempted to swim across. On April 4th, the first American soldier was shot under this order, and the next day it was again repeated by the sharp shooting pickets. The first two victims of Taylor's get tough policy were Privates Carl Gross and Henry Laub. Both were in the infantry; and, most important for later nativist arguments, both were foreign-born. Their deaths did not deter others and the desertions continued.

Soon after this incident, the U.S. Congress received reports concerning the picket guards of Taylor and their quick-on-the-trigger reputation. Quite naturally an uproar in both Houses followed these rumors. A House resolution by John Quincy Adams asked, "that the President of the United States be requested to inform this House whether any soldier or soldiers in the army of the United

---


3National Archives, Record Group 94, (hereafter NA, RG94), Records of the Adjutant General's Office, General Correspondence, 1890-1917, No. 27932.
States have been shot for desertion or in the act of deserting, and if so by whose order and under what authority.\(^4\) With the United States and Mexico still technically at peace, how could a United States soldier be shot for desertion? Such an act could be permitted under extreme circumstances but only during an officially declared war. In any event, Mr. Adams's resolution was politely refused and war was declared several weeks later. With the escalation of hostilities, the number of desertions decreased but remained a constant problem.

In the beginning, President Polk and General Taylor feared that American desertions, caused in part by Mexican religious propaganda, could lead the conflict into a kind of holy war. With this in mind, they decided to hire Catholic chaplains to accompany the American columns moving down into Mexico. This would be the best refutation of the opinion held by many Mexicans that the United States was warring against their religion.\(^5\) It would also lessen the appeal made by Mexican propagandists to their Catholic brothers in the U.S. invasion force. Besides, ever since the declaration of war, the Adjutant General's Office was flooded with letters from officers, both Catho-

\(^4\) Ibid.

lic and Protestant, asking for the appointment of chaplains to their various units for "strong reasons" that "are so apparent." Before the War there were no chaplains in the U.S. Army.

To solve this problem, Polk sought the advice of Bishops Hughes of New York, Potier of Mobile and Kenrick of St. Louis, in choosing Catholic chaplains for his new army. These men, in turn, handed the problem over to the head of Georgetown College, Father Peter Verhaegen. For the job, he recommended two fellow Jesuits, John McElroy and Antony Rey. Both men were noted for their industriousness and dedication. Father McElroy was Pastor of Trinity Church in Maryland, and Father Rey, Socius to the Jesuit Provincial, was also Minister at Georgetown College. Upon hearing of their appointment, they proceeded to Washington for instructions. There they were given letters of introduction and officially appointed chaplains by the President. This was done by virtue of his discretionary powers as, at that time, there was no law authorizing such a commission. Their salary was $1,200 in gold.7

Father McElroy served Taylor's troops at Matamoros prior to the capture of Monterrey. His principal work dur-

6 NA, RG94, Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General (Main Series) 1822-1860, No. 316, 1846.

ing the ten months he served there was at the hospital, ministering to the wounded and dying. In the course of that time he attended approximately six hundred men, of whom he baptized eighty-five. After the War he spent the greater part of his life in Boston where he died at the age of ninety-five.

The other Catholic chaplain, Father Rey, accompanied American troops towards Monterrey and participated in its capture. His display of courage in serving the needs of the men during the battle earned him the respect and devotion of many of the troops. On a return trip to Matamoros to join Father McElroy, he was killed by a party of guerrillas. The people of the neighboring town of Marin were alleged to have been involved in the incident; and when the American troops heard of it, they burned the town down. Both men accomplished their purposes by administrating to the spiritual and material needs of the members, both Catholic and non-Catholic alike, of the U.S. armed forces. Their presence negated many of the arguments used by the Mexicans in attempting to entice the Americans to desert.

Other actions taken by Taylor and his subordinates

to discourage desertion among the troops included keeping a closer check upon the men. After the battle of Monterrey and especially after Buena Vista, the War in the north was, for all practical purposes over, and the troops became essentially an occupation force. This inactivity led to restlessness and invariably to a number of desertions. To combat this, Taylor resorted to curfews and roadblocks. He also instituted police patrols to round up deserters. It was the custom during this period for a commanding officer to pay a bounty for any deserter returned to his unit. This bounty usually amounted to $25, which was a considerable sum then. It certainly provided an impetus to soldier and civilian alike to go out and search for deserters. General Wool, a commander under Taylor, had a different solution to the problem. Instead of just searching for deserters, he ordered that all non-Mexicans without an honest occupation be rounded up and sent to Monterrey. The success of these actions is debatable, as the deserter or loafer usually avoided American patrols

10 NA, RG94, Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General (Main Series) 1822-1860, Nos. 314 and 317, 1846. A contemporary newspaper reported the desertion of a corporal and nine privates from a battery of horse artillery in August, 1847. This action so incensed the Commanding General that he offered a reward of $300 for their apprehension. The Daily Picayune (New Orleans), 13 August 1847.

and hence very few were captured in this manner. Rather, Taylor's greatest weapon was to permit the voluntary return of Americans who, while basically patriotic, deserted for an immediate need of wine, women, etc. These men often presented a very harsh picture of life behind Mexican lines. For example, as early as February, 1846, U.S. deserters began arriving at Mexico City. Some, regretting their actions, desired to return home and went to the American Consulate for help. The Consul, John Black, wrote to the Minister Plenipotentiary, John Slidell, at Jalapa for advice:

Sir

I embrace this opportunity to write a few lines by the English courrier. Mr. Bankhead having been so kind as to offer me his services to that effect.

Two of the deserters from our Army in Corpus Christi have presented themselves to me. Stating that they have repented of their crime in deserting the service of their country and wish to be sent back to their post. They are to leave here in the morning for Vera Cruz in the wagons. I shall write to Mr. Dimond to have them placed on board of one of our armed vessels, on their arrival at Vera Cruz in order that they may be seaward and sent to their post. One is a private in Company B 2nd Regt. U.S. Dragoons and the other a private in Company F 7th Regt. U.S. Infantry; one named Peter Smith and the other James Miller. I wish to have them sent back to their post as soon as possible in order that their return may deter others from deserting.

Yesterday then more arrived and I understand they would also like to return to their post. In case they should present themselves to me for that purpose, shall I also send them to Vera Cruz. As there is no provision made by our Government except for seamen and this
is a peculiar case there is but two native Americans among the ten. The two which I send I send on my own responsibility and risk, but shall wait your answer before I send the others.  

Slidell agreed with Black that the two deserters be returned and punished so as to "have a salutary effect" upon other potential deserters; however, as to the others, he advised that they be left upon their own, or in his words: "as the men who have deserted their flag almost in the face of the enemy must certainly be worthless as soldiers or citizens, I shall not recommend the incurring any additional expenses to relieve them from the misery and hardships to which their crimes have exposed them."  

It should be noted that, among this group of ten men, eight were foreign born; hence Slidell's lack of concern could have been in part determined by an anti-foreign sentiment then popular in the United States. In any event, War soon broke out; and the deserters who presented themselves to Black disappeared into the interior of Mexico to

---

12 National Archives, Record Group 59, (hereafter) NA, RG59), Department of State, Despatches from the American Consulate in Mexico. Letter from John Black, U.S. Consul to John Slidell, Minister Plenipotentiary of the United States, February 27, 1846.

13 Ibid. Letter of John Slidell to John Black, March 1, 1846; and Letter of John Slidell to James Buchanan, U.S. Secretary of State, March 1, 1846.
become San Patricio soldiers or to be left to their own fate.\footnote{As a separate unit in the Mexican Army, the San Patricio unit was approved by Santa Anna in October, 1846. The unit received the name San Patricio after the battle of Buena Vista, February, 1847. See pp. 107 and 123.}

When General Scott succeeded Taylor as overall commander and started the invasion of the Mexican hinterland, he too was faced with the problem of desertion. As the Americans marched towards their capital, Mexican efforts to entice them to desert increased. General Scott, like Taylor, was quick to react. Ever the strict martinet, Scott formed military bodies to try and sentence any Mexican caught trying to entice U.S. soldiers to desert and the soldiers themselves if they deserted. He used the Court Martial for American soldiers who deserted; the Council of War for Mexican regular and irregular soldiers and civilians charged with military offences; and the Military Commission for Mexican civilians not charged with violations of the Laws of War, and American soldiers not charged with violations of the Articles of War.

Robert Anderson, Captain in the United States Artillery, sat on a Council of War which tried several individuals charged with enticing American soldiers. One such case which received some publicity concerned a German-Mexican soldier by the name of Martin Tritschler.

\begin{footnotes}
\item As a separate unit in the Mexican Army, the San Patricio unit was approved by Santa Anna in October, 1846. The unit received the name San Patricio after the battle of Buena Vista, February, 1847. See pp. 107 and 123.
\end{footnotes}
Tritschler was a native of Germany who immigrated to Mexico in 1834. He was a watchmaker by trade and soon became a successful businessman. In 1844, he became a naturalized citizen of Mexico. When war with the United States broke out, he joined the National Guard of Puebla and was commissioned a captain. He participated in the battle of Cerro Gordo. After that battle he was ordered by his superior, General Vincente Canalizo, to foment sedition among the American ranks by enticing soldiers to desert. In civilian clothes, he circulated German handbills among the U.S. troops, urging them to desert along with their horses and arms. After several weeks of this activity, he was finally caught. On June 17, 1847, he was arrested by a sergeant of the 8th Infantry and was charged with being an enemy agent and enticing American soldiers to desert. He was then brought before a Council of War presided over by Major General John Quitman who found him guilty of the charge and sentenced him to death. Many citizens of Puebla interceded with General Scott to spare Tritschler's life and finally upon the pleadings of Manuel María de Zamacona y Murphy, a famous lawyer of Puebla.

15 J. Ignacio Rubio Mañé, El Excmo. Sr. Dr. D. Martín Tritschler y Córdova Primer Arzobispo de Yucatán (Mexico City: ABSIDE, 1941), pp. 15-17.

Scott did spare him. On the 22nd of June, 1847 the General ordered his pardon on the grounds that Tritschler went insane during imprisonment.\textsuperscript{17} Tritschler, upon his release, became miraculously cured and went on to become a respected citizen and war hero of Mexico.\textsuperscript{18}

The Council of War which sat in the city of Puebla tried others charged with soliciting Americans to join their side. On June 25, 1847, it heard the case of a Mexican but acquitted him as the evidence was not conclusive. On June 29th it reviewed the case of a Belgian who persuaded some American soldiers to fight for Mexico, offering them money for their horses, arms, etc.\textsuperscript{19} Judgment was found against him and he was ordered executed. Despite such stiff punishments, however, desertions still continued. Even after General Scott captured Mexico City, soldiers in civilian attire and Mexican priests continued to entice American soldiers. The inroads made by this propaganda was enough to force Scott to issue an order to his men to pay no heed to their promises. He ended his order with the following warning:

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{17}Ibid., p. 231; and Rubio Mane, El Excmo Sr. Dr. D. Martín Trischler y Córdova Primer Arzobispo de Yucatán, pp. 18-19.
\end{flushleft}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{18}His sons, Martín and Guillermo later became, respectively the Archbishops of Yucatán and Monterrey.
\end{flushleft}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{19}Anderson, An Artillery Officer in the Mexican War 1846-7, pp. 226, 230, 231.
\end{flushleft}
Let all our soldiers, protestant and catholic, remember the fate of the deserters taken at Churubusco. These deluded wretches were also promised money and land; but the Mexican government, by every sort of ill usage, drove them to take up arms against the country and flag they had voluntarily sworn to support, and next placed them in front of the battle—in positions from which they could not possibly escape the conquering valor of our glorious ranks. After every effort of the General-in-chief to save, by judicious discrimination, as many of those miserable convicts as possible, fifty of them have paid for their treachery by an ignominious death on the gallows!  

Scott continued to fight this problem by going to the source of these enticements. As already mentioned, he convened Courts Martial for U.S. deserters and Councils of War for those Mexicans who sought American desertions. He continued this procedure even after the Peace Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed, for there were still many Mexicans who did not honor it and wanted to fight the Americans in any way they could.  


21A Council of War, convened in Mexico City, heard the cases of Tiburcio Rodríguez, Roman Robero, Manuel Sanzeda, and José de la Luz Vega, each charged with enticing Americans to desert. Rodríguez was acquitted; Sanzeda was sentenced to one month at hard labor; Robero was sentenced to hard labor for the duration of the war; and Vega was sentenced to be shot, later though, he was pardoned by Scott. All this occurred after the peace treaty was signed but before it was ratified by both parties. The North American (Mexico City), 27 January 1848 and 8 February 1848; and Ramón Alcaraz et al., Apuntes para la historia de la guerra entre México y los Estados Unidos (Mexico City, 1848; reprint ed., Mexico City: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, SA, 1974), pp. 368-369.
tance was over, they saw this as the only way they could hurt the Americans although it was pointless. In any event, the problem ended when Scott's forces evacuated Mexico.

The account of American desertion during the war with Mexico, and especially its contribution towards the formation of the San Patricios, has been the subject of much bitter debate among Catholic and Protestant writers. Many people, then and now, believed that religion was a key factor in causing these desertions; that faith was placed above patriotism; and that Mexican efforts to entice their fellow American Catholics to join them bore fruit. This view is an oversimplification of the problem. During the War there were approximately 2,850 regulars and 3,900 volunteers who deserted from the American military services. 22 To intimate that these soldiers and sailors

22 Philip R. N. Katcher, The Mexican-American War 1846-1848 (London: Osprey Publishing Ltd., 1976), p. 4. Francis B. Heitman, Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army, 2 vols. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1903), 2:282 states that 5,331 regulars and 3,876 volunteers deserted during the war; Justin H. Smith, The War with Mexico, 2 vols. (New York: Macmillan Co., 1919), 2:318-319 states that approximately 7,650 men, both regulars and volunteers deserted; and finally House Executive Document 62, 30th Congress, 1st Session, 165 recorded a report from the Secretary of War's office which estimated the number of desertions at 7,000. Various factors contributed to these different estimates among which were included inaccurate record keeping, especially among the volunteer units.
were all Catholic or sympathetic towards Catholicism is highly inaccurate and contrary to fact. The truth is, the causes of these desertions were many. Some were the sort that are common to all wars: distaste for military life, harsh discipline, disenchantment with war, misfits, criminals, and of course ideology and religion too.

When Taylor was putting together an army near Corpus Christi, Texas he soon realized that many of his units could not function at battalion strength. It had been a long time since America had fought a real war and Taylor's force of some four thousand men was the largest ever assembled since the War of 1812. As such, his men had to learn battalion drill and tactics in a relatively short time as a prelude to the expected invasion of Mexico. Taylor and his officers incessantly drilled the men. Reveille was at 4:30 in the morning and daily drilling covered at least five hours.23 The pace was hard and the complaints many. To instill discipline, officers and non-coms were permitted to inflict various modes of punishment with impunity. These indiscretions occasioned charges of brutality. George Ballentine, a soldier during

23Smith and Judah, eds., Chronicles of the Gringos, pp. 292-293.
the war, reported that the treatment of some of his fellow soldiers received from cruel and ignorant officers was so incredible as to be not believed. He stated that officers could and sometimes would inflict violence upon the men on the slightest provocation. Another soldier, William Tomlinson of the 10th U.S. Infantry, wrote home expressing the desire that someone inform Washington of the brutality of some of the officers. He would write himself but he reasoned that nobody in authority would listen to the complaints of a common soldier. He hoped that these officers would change their ways as "the men seem to form an opinion that some of the officers will soon depart from this world." Attacks upon tyrannical officers did occur and in one instance a North Carolina Regiment mutinied against its commander, Colonel Robert Treat Paine who was viewed by many of his soldiers as an unjust disciplinarian. A subordinate wrote that Paine harassed, punished, and arrested his junior officers for the most trivial circum-


25 Smith and Judah, eds., Chronicles of the Gringos, p. 424. This fact is interesting as it contributes towards illustrating the strong parallel between this war and a later United States conflict, the Vietnam War. It is fact that in Vietnam there were instances of unpopular officers being killed and otherwise subject to violence by their own men.
stances. As for the enlisted men, he allegedly beat a man for not tipping his hat to him; struck a private with his sword for having his hands in his pockets; and beat a man with a stick for no apparent reason. All these abuses by Paine culminated in a mutiny whereby his men refused to obey any of his orders and became openly hostile towards him. Paine soon realized that his life was in danger and when he received a petition signed by every company officer, save two, calling for him to resign he asked for outside help. Assistance arrived and the mutiny was soon quelled with the loss of only one life, a soldier Paine shot allegedly in self-defense. This incident served to illustrate that the American soldier was an individualist who would not tolerate incessant and unjust punishment from an officer.

The forms of punishment practiced by officers upon their men varied. One mode consisted of placing the culprit on top of a barrel and exposing him to the sun and to the abuse of anybody who happened along, just as in the punishment of public stocks in colonial days. Of course, if the soldier attempted to jump off the barrel a sentry was posted with orders to shoot or run him through with his bayonet. Another form of punishment consisted of placing a man on a high wooden horse. He was obliged to sit there

26 Ibid., pp. 424-431.
for a specific amount of time with his hands tied behind his back and weights hung to his feet. This form of punishment was several hundred years old and it would be used again during the American Civil War. Still another form of punishing the men was to dig a large hole in the ground, then place the offender in it, and put a wooden door over him. One man was placed in the hole for thirty days because he committed the offense of running past a sentry without giving the proper salute.

The most popular punishment in the American Army during the War with Mexico was called the buck and gag. The execution of this punishment required the culprit to be seated on the ground, with his knees drawn up and his arms wrapped around them. His wrists were tied together in front of his legs and a stick or pole was placed under his bent knees and over his arms. A gag was then forced into his mouth and thus he was unable to move or talk. He could be left like this for as long as his officer desired. This punishment was painful and humiliating.

---


The buck and gag is superbly illustrated in a work by a veteran of the northern campaign, Samuel E. Chamberlain, a U.S. Dragoon, who recounted in his journal how, in the autumn of 1847, he became a victim of such punishment. He even left a painting of himself and six others all bucked on the same pole. He tells how one day, as corporal of the guard, he was ordered by an officer to arrest a man who was selling liquor to the soldiers without the proper permit. The prisoner turned out to be an Irishman by the name of John Dougherty who had been discharged from the First Regiment of Illinois Volunteers for a disability arising from wounds received at the battle of Buena Vista. The officer who ordered his arrest was a Major Sherman who was reputed to be the meanest officer in the service. When brought before him Sherman ordered Chamberlain to give the Irishman fifty lashes on his bare back. Chamberlain thought the punishment too harsh and unjust; he refused to obey the order. Sherman, furious at Chamberlain, called him every name he could think of and ordered the other soldiers of the guard to seize and buck him, which they did. He stated that he submitted quietly to be bucked but after he was tied up the Major ordered that a large tent pin be put into his mouth and that he should be gagged. This caused Chamberlain intense pain. However, to his later amusement, six of the seven other guards also refused to flog the Irishman, and they in turn were bucked
with Chamberlain. The seventh guard obeyed orders. The seven insubordinate ones remained bucked for two hours. Chamberlain later recorded in his diary that that day was the blackest in his life.\(^3^0\)

These different types of punishment in the U.S. Army were not all nonjudicial in the sense that officers could mete them out at random. Some of these methods were prescribed punishment as a result of court-martial proceedings against offending soldiers. Summaries of courts martial held in the field are replete with lists of infractions and the punishments prescribed. For the most part these were traditional military sentences that differed little from those of Washington's army during the American Revolution, although some contemporaries thought that, when compared with other armies, the United States' methods were outdated and uncivilized.\(^3^1\) A private found guilty of drunkenness while on duty lost $6 of his pay and had to stand on a barrel every alternate two hours for five successive days from reveille to retreat. Another for the same offense had to forfeit $12 and received twenty days at hard labor and carried a fifty pound ball


\(^3^1\)Lloyd Lewis, *Captain Sam Grant* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1950), p. 188.
from retreat until midnight every night. Sleeping on duty brought demotion for a corporal, loss of his pay for the whole term of his enlistment, and work at hard labor with a twenty-four pound ball attached to his leg. Others received brands either on the hip or face, which was commensurate with their offense: HD stood for Habitual Drunkard, D for Deserter, and W for Worthless. For some offenses, heads were shaved and the culprit drummed out of the service to the tune of the Rogues March, all of which had a great effect on the morale of the soldiers.

The commanders of the American forces in Mexico, Generals Taylor and Scott especially, were, by the standards of their times, strict and sometimes cruel disciplinarians. Scott set the standards which his men should follow. He stated his position on discipline very clearly: "I will tolerate no disorders of any kind, but cause all to be rigorously punished. No officer or man, under my orders, shall be allowed to dishonor me, the army, and the United States with impunity." Almost immediately upon entering a fallen Mexico City, Scott ordered that a court

---

32Smith and Judah, eds., Chronicles of the Gringos, p. 423.

33Senate Executive Document 60, 30th Congress, 1st Session, 1029.
martial be convened. The first cases heard concerned four privates, a corporal, and a sergeant. The first three privates were charged with drunkenness on guard; they pleaded guilty and the court concurred. The fourth private was charged with mutinous conduct, to which he pleaded not guilty, and again the court concurred. However, the court did find him guilty of conduct unbecoming to good order and discipline, and sentenced him and the other three privates to be put in the charge of the guard for thirty days, and during that time, to ride the wooden horse from reveille to retreat with the exception of a one-half hour break for each meal. The corporal was charged with mutiny and drunkenness on duty; the sergeant with mutinous conduct and drunkenness on duty. They both pleaded not guilty. The court found the prisoners individually guilty and sentenced them to be shot to death. General Scott approved the proceedings, findings and sentences, and ordered that the sentences of the corporal and sergeant be executed the following day between the hours of six and eleven o'clock. 34

It has been stated that more persons had been shot or hung for various offenses by American officers in Mexico during the two years of the War than had been capitally

34NA, RG9/1, Mexican War, Headquarters of the Army, Orders and Special Orders, 1847-1848. General Order 294, Mexico City, September 21, 1847.
executed in the whole United States in the ordinary course of justice during a ten-year period. In any event, harsh and unjust discipline by headstrong and inconsiderate officers was the cause of many a soldier deserting his colors and at times his country too. In the words of an unknown soldier who attached a poem to a tree in a little village called Mixcoac some 130 years ago:

Come all Yankee soldiers, give ear to my song,  
It is a short ditty, it will not keep you long;  
It is of no use to fret, on account of our luck  
We can laugh, drink, and sign yet in spite of the buck.  

Sergeant buck him and gag him, our officers cry,  
For each trifling offence which they happen to spy,  
Till with bucking and gagging of Dick, Tom, Pat and Bill,  
Faith, the Mexican's ranks they have helped to fill.  


36J. Jacob Oswandel, Notes of the Mexican War 1846-47-48 (Philadelphia: n.p., 1885), p. 476. It can be again noted here that many parallels are drawn between two of America's most unpopular wars; the Mexican War and the Vietnam Conflict. One of these parallels or similarities is concerned with discipline in the army. The Niles Register reported that in September, 1847, some persons unknown made an attempt to assassinate Captain Bragg of the U.S. Artillery by placing a bomb shell under his bed. The shell went off but Captain Bragg escaped except for minor injuries. No explanation is given for this incident except "... that some of his men think he is to severe in his discipline." See the Niles National Register, 9 October 1847. In Vietnam, unpopular officers were disposed of in almost the same way; it was called "fragging" because a fragmentation grenade was usually the weapon placed under the officer's bed.
By law there was no national discrimination in the American system of military justice. Assigned punishments were usually designed with specific violations in mind and extraneous considerations such as race or religion or place of birth were not to enter into it. This was not the case, however; for the Irishman, Sergeant James Bannon was ordered shot to death after being found guilty of drunkenness and mutinous conduct. Others found guilty of the same charge were confined for thirty days and forced to ride the wooden horse. For desertion Private Dennis Sullivan was shot to death by a firing squad whereas Private George Miller, found guilty of the same charge, was required to make good the time lost, given fifty lashes on his bare back, and ordered to pay a fine. It seemed that the foreign-born soldier, especially if he be Irish or German, received a harsher sentence for the same offense than a native-born American.

Discrimination in the military during the Mexican War is understandable if viewed within the context of several facts. First of all, as the vast majority of the foreign-born soldiers were Catholic, this prejudice was two-fold: anti-foreign and anti-Catholic, and at times they became synonymous with one another. The Irish or German Catholic soldier was considered somewhat inferior

37 The American Star (Mexico City), 23 September 1847.
to the freeborn American and hence the double standard. Catholics in America had always been a silent minority. In fact, it was only with the American Revolution that they won the right to practice their faith. However, this did not accord them their full and just rights. Individual State Constitutions had articles which proscribed their political and legal activities. In all the State Constitutions which had been written between 1776 to 1787, with the exception of Virginia, election to high office was barred to Catholics. By 1790 Catholics had equal citizenship with Protestants in only five of the original thirteen states. It was a long and uphill battle which received various setbacks, but Catholics were making gains.

In the beginning of the nineteenth century a situation developed which threatened the gains of the Catholic minority of America. Foreign immigration suddenly appeared to be rising to alarming proportions. Because of


39 Catholics were free to vote in Rhode Island, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Delaware and Maryland; see John Tracy Ellis, American Catholicism (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1969), p. 70.
bad economic conditions at home and improved methods of ocean transportation, thousands of Catholic Irish and Germans flocked to the United States. By 1842 they passed the hundred thousand mark and doubled that amount in five years. Such an influx naturally caused tension among the Protestant Americans. Each section of the country felt deeply concerned at this immigrant invasion. In the northeast the tradition of American supremacy was being challenged by this foreigners; in the west the people saw these aliens as the usurpers of the political and economic leadership; and in the south the foreigner was resented for the additional strength that he gave the north.

40 The great famine of Ireland started in 1845 and ran for five years. Under normal expectancy, the population of Ireland in 1851 should have totaled over nine million. The census of 1851 returned a figure of six and a half million which was two million less than the estimated population of 1845. Ireland lost one-fourth of her population during these years; one million emigrated and the rest starved to death. The English were insensitive to the needs of the starving Irish. The Prime Minister, Lord John Russell, shirked his responsibility by preaching business as usual and non-interference by the state with the law of supply and demand. Irish coroner juries sitting on bodies dead from starvation returned the verdict, "Willful murder against John Russell, known as Lord John Russell." George Potter, To the Golden Door (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1960), p. 453; and Flag of Freedom (Puebla), 20 November 1847.

This fear of an internal subversion by foreign Catholics was channeled into a number of counter measures: anti-Catholic literature such as newspapers, books and pamphlets appeared profusely and helped breed prejudice; riots against Catholics occurred in Philadelphia in 1844 which resulted in the destruction of Catholic life and property. In 1847 the nativists changed the New York immigration laws so as to restrict the importation of poor immigrants; and in that year also, a religious convention was held at Binghamtom, New York, attended by all the Protestant sects, which resolved that they all recognized the dangers of Romanism and would seek efforts to avert them. Quite naturally then these feelings and the measures they spawned did not abruptly end with the advent of the Mexican War but rather exigencies forced them to become latent yet ever present.

When the Mexican War was declared, several misguided nativists tried to prevent foreigners from enter-

42 Fink, The Church in United States History, pp. 82-83.
44 Ibid., pp. 251-252.
ing the army. In 1846 Lewis Levin, \(^45\) a congressman from Philadelphia, tried to secure passage in the House of a measure restricting enlistments in various companies being raised for the Mexican War to native-born Americans. \(^46\)

This resolution appeared ridiculous in light of the fact that one-third of the pre-war army was foreign born, and for the last decade, chronically suffered from a shortage of recruits. As late as December, 1846, the army was seven thousand below its authorized strength. \(^47\) Naturally Levin's resolution was voted down. Some 47 percent of General Taylor's regulars would be foreign born; \(^48\) and General Scott's army would contain approximately thirty-five hundred foreigners by birth or one-third of his entire

\(^45\) Lewis C. Levin, one of the most rabid nativists of this time, was in fact a member of the South Carolina Jewish community. The former schoolteacher and lawyer moved to Philadelphia in 1838 where he edited a nativist newspaper to forward his new found political ambitions. He soon entered Congress as a member of the American Republican Party and stayed there until the Civil War where he was known as the legislative champion of nativism. He died hopelessly insane, and his wife and daughter both joined the Roman Catholic Church. Potter, To the Golden Door, p. 419.

\(^46\) Billington, The Protestant Crusade 1800-1860, p. 218.

\(^47\) Singletary, The Mexican War, p. 24; and Smith and Judah, eds., Chronicles of the Gringos, p. 28.

\(^48\) Katcher, The Mexican-American War 1846-1848, p. 4.
force. One New York Volunteer Regiment was made up of about eight hundred rank and file of which only three hundred were Americans, the balance being Dutch, Irish, French, English, Poles, Swedes, Chinese and Indians. Because of their position in society and bad economic situation many new immigrants went into the army for security. They could not vote in their new country but they could die for it. Foreigners provided the bulk of recruits for the regular army in the infantry branch. The more elite units such as the Dragoons were usually composed of native Americans. No naturalized citizen was permitted to enlist in the Engineer Companies.

---


50 German.

51 The "High Private," with a full and exciting history of the New York Volunteers, illustrated with facts, incidents, anecdotes, engravings, etc., etc., including the mysteries and miseries of the Mexican War, by "Corporal of the Guard" (New York: n.p., 1848), p. 10. It is interesting to note here that during this time, Negroes, whether free or slave, were only allowed at the front in the capacity of servants. A slave named Dan ran away from his master and passing himself off as a white man he enlisted in a Volunteer Company at New Orleans. When later found out at Vera Cruz he was dishonorably discharged. Smith and Judah, eds., The Chronicles of the Gringos, p. 465.

52 Ibid., p. 25.

53 Ibid., p. 465.
Nativist prejudice in the Army took various forms. Some officers merely called foreigners wretched or dumb and passed them over for promotion. Others, when sitting in on court martial proceedings would tend to give the Irish or German soldier a bit harsher punishment than the native American. For example, in a proceeding held at Vera Cruz, three soldiers were charged with "aiding and abetting a number of persons unknown in robbing the dwelling of Rosalie López." All three soldiers were found guilty. The first one, Sergeant J. J. Adams was demoted to the rank of private and forced to pay a fine to the López woman. The second soldier, Private Padfield was sentenced to ten days imprisonment and also had to pay a fine. The third soldier, Private Peter Murphy, who obviously was Irish or Irish American, was sentenced to two months imprisonment, to pay a fine equal to three months pay as a private, and to be dishonorably discharged from the service at the end of the term of his imprisonment.

54 Ibid., p. 25.
55 Lewis, Captain Sam Grant, p. 135.
ment. Other officers were indiscreet in displaying their innate hatred for Irishmen and the Catholic religion. A traveler to the Army posts of south Texas during this period recorded in his diary how the foreign soldiers were at the mercy of their commanding officers. He saw physical punishments for offenses which, in a European army, would draw only a few hours imprisonment. He saw soldiers suspended by their arms from the branches of trees for drunkenness. Sometimes their hands and legs were tied and then they were flung into a river to be pulled out before drowning and then flung in again. One soldier cut his throat because he was unable to endure the hardships of the service. All in all, these cruelties taught the Irish or German recruit that the liberty, equality, and fraternity of the United States were either hollow phrases or applied ironically to European novices.

Besides being violent and brutal, nativist prejudice against Irishmen often took a satirical turn. The newly arrived Irish were looked upon as an ignorant, simian type species of the human race. In literature and art,

---


Irishmen were made to look like monkeys. On the American stage this uncomplimentary caricature even dwarfed the Negro as the comic king of the boards. To a degree, this view was held when describing the Irish soldier fighting in Mexico. In many published journals, diaries, newspaper articles, reminiscences, etc. about the War, Protestant writers showed their prejudice by attempting to stereotype the Irish. For instance, a Yankee newspaper in occupied Mexico, printed the following article with the intention that it be humorous:

"..."well Pat, my good fellow," said a victorious general, to a brave son of Erin, after a battle, "and what did you do to help us gain this victory?" "Do," replied Pat, "may it please your honor, I walked up boldly to one of the enemy, and cut off his feet." "Cut off his feet! and why did you not cut off his head?" said the general. "Ah, an' faith that was off already," says Pat.

It was treatment such as this that caused many Irish much bitterness and some regrets as leaving their beautiful country. The German or Dutchman too suffered from this prejudice, even though, at this time, he was overshadowed by the Irish. He had the extra impediment of not speaking the English language, and therefore was considered more foreign than the Irish. His prospects were


60 Flag of Freedom (Puebla), 13 November 1847.
dim as one German American soldier wrote home from Mexico:

... my father having to support 7 children besides myself, I determined induced by flattering and encouraging accounts to try my luck in America but alas as many of my countrymen I found the contrary of what I expected.

This letter writer went to College in Germany and was fluent in French and German and yet when he came to America he could not find any suitable employment and hence he went into the army. After suffering numerous indignities, he asked the Prussian Minister to help secure his discharge in order that he may return home. 61

The immigrant soldier when faced with nativist prejudice and fear either bore it with an understandable bitterness, or else rose above it to become honorable soldiers and citizens of their new adopted country; some though, found it intolerable and deserted to the enemy.

61 NA, RG94, Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General (Main Series) 1822-1860, No. 318. It is interesting to note here that a German-born San Patricio, one Henry Octker, testified at his court martial, through an interpreter, that the reason he deserted the American Army, was on account of the harsh discipline he received from his officers. "The reason why I run away was because I could not do duty and they made me do it." Octker broke his collarbone in an accident while crossing the Rio Grande. His injury was never treated and hence it never mended correctly. It was impossible for him to shoulder a musket but he received no sympathy from his superiors. He also did not receive any from the court as he was sentenced and hung for desertion. NA, RG94, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, Orders and Circulars, 1797-1910, Vol. 41 ½. General Order No. 283.
The effects of nativist prejudice upon foreign-born Catholic soldiers was reinforced by Protestant contempt for the Catholic Church in Mexico and by the many atrocities committed by Protestants upon the local populace. A member of General Taylor's command made the comment after the fall of Monterrey that "nine tenths of the Americans here think it is a meritorious act to kill or rob a Mexican." This attitude was compounded by the fact that early in the War many Protestant officers showed no respect for the Church in Mexico; this was especially true of the Volunteer soldiers who came mainly from the southern sections of the United States. Most privately sneered at the Church and its rituals and called it "absurd" and a bunch of "flummery." Some openly practiced their prejudice by robbing churches and then stabling their horses in them. Such disrespect naturally caused a public outcry. Priests were assaulted, stripped of their robes, and then the Volunteers would parade around in them in front of their parishioners. These

---

64 Flag of Freedom (Puebla), 11 December 1847.
65 Flag of Freedom (Puebla), 17 November 1847.
outrages became so numerous that the Commander-in-Chief of the American Army, General Scott, became so fearful of its effects, not only on the Catholic Mexicans, but also on his own Catholic troops, that he issued the following general order:

Here, as in all Roman Catholic countries, there are frequent religious processions, in the streets as well as in the churches—such as the elevation of the host, the viaticum, funerals, etc. etc. The interruption of such processions has already been prohibited in orders, and as no civilized person will even wantonly do any act to hurt the religious feelings of others, it is earnestly requested of our Protestant Americans, either to keep out of the way or to pay to the Catholic religion and its ceremonies every decent mark of respect and deference.66

In spite of Scott's threats and a crack down on Americans who perpetrated crimes against Mexican civilians,67

66 Ibid., 20 October 1847.
67 Scott and his officers did enforce his general orders warning against committing crimes in Mexico. Military Commissions tried soldiers charged with crimes other than violations of the Articles of War. These Commissions also handed down strict sentences so as to make examples; for instance, at Jalapa on November, 1847, two teamsters were hanged after being found guilty of murdering a Mexican boy. At the end of December a soldier in the 8th Infantry was hanged for murdering some Mexican women. Such actions went far in appeasing the local people and countering Mexican propagandists but as far as acting as a deterrent it had just a minimal effect. Bauer, The Mexican War 1846-1848, p. 334.
unruly Volunteers, discharged soldiers, and deserters continued to plunder, rob, rape and murder all the way from the Rio Grande to the front. These actions did not go unnoticed by Mexican propagandists. They sought to use them to reinforce one of their basic arguments in promoting desertion—that of religion; they proved that the War was merely a Protestant attempt to destroy a Catholic nation.

Various other factors caused desertion among American troops. The long periods that elapsed between the payments of the army while in Mexico was a serious

Unruly Volunteers were not only the scourge and disdain of the Mexican people but also of the Regular Army who viewed them generally as an undisciplined rabble. Of all the Volunteer Units involved in committing atrocities against the Mexicans, the worst offenders were the Texas Rangers and Arkansas Mounted Regiment. On February 9, 1847, one hundred Arkansans killed thirty Mexican men and women at Aqua Nueva in retaliation for a murder of one of their men. On March 28, a detachment of Texas Rangers massacred twenty-four Mexicans at the Rancho Guadalupe to discourage guerrilla activity in the area. In October, in retaliation for the sniper death of their captain, a group of Texas Rangers and others, sacked and pillaged the town of Huamantla, killing and raping its inhabitants.

grievance, causing much suffering and dissatisfaction. Some soldiers had to wait up to four months before receiving their pay which was supposed to be paid monthly. After such a long period, the improvident soldier would quickly squander his salary away and in a few days or weeks again be indigent. Given the quick and tremendous growth of the army during this period, and the distances involved, the paymaster's job was a difficult one. It was hoped that the soldier could be paid weekly but that suggestion was too impractical, especially under wartime conditions. Therefore the soldier, if resourceful, would resort to other means to supplement his salary. Naturally these means were usually dishonest and would include gambling, thievry, selling his equipment or even robbery. If caught and court martialled, he became even more bitter. As a consequence of this problem, many soldiers became

69 The salary of enlisted men during the war was: first sergeant, $16 per month; second, third and fourth sergeant $13; corporal, $9; musicians, $8; and privates, $7. Fayette Copeland, Kendall of the Picayune (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1970), p. 155; the salary of officers was quite different, not only in differences of amount but also in promptness of payment. The monthly pay of a major general in 1847 was $376, a colonel, $183, a captain $160, and a second lieutenant, $89. American Star No. 2 (Puebla), 26 June 1847.
disobedient and mutinous.\textsuperscript{70}

The Mexican War stimulated the Westward Movement. Many soldiers wanted to go to California or stay in Mexico after the War's end. For those Volunteers whose terms of enlistment had expired, there was no problem. They were discharged and paid off in Mexico. However, those troops whose enlistment term was for the duration of the war were required to be mustered out in the state that the unit came from. This caused a hue and cry from the ranks. Captain William Davis of the Massachusetts Volunteers wrote to William Marcey, the Secretary of War, pleading that the Regiment at least be mustered out at New Orleans rather than Massachusetts. Most of the men did not want to return there. "At least one half of the men . . . intend to seek their fortunes in the fertile regions of the South and West . . . Several intend fixing their fortunes in Mexico . . . ."\textsuperscript{71} Colonel James Lane, commanding the 5th Indiana Volunteer Regiment, together with his lieutenant colonel and eighteen other officers, also filed a protest to General W. O. Butler, the Commander-in-Chief.\textsuperscript{72}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{70}Ballentine, Autobiography of an English Soldier in the United States Army Comprising Observations and Adventures in the States and Mexico, pp. 213-214.
\item \textsuperscript{71}Smith and Judah, eds., Chronicles of the Gringos, pp. 453-454.
\item \textsuperscript{72}Butler succeeded Scott as Commander-in-Chief in January, 1943.
\end{itemize}
over the prospect of being mustered out in Indiana. General Butler, however, issued orders that no soldier would be discharged from the service until after his arrival in the United States. Colonel Harney, Commander of the U.S. Cavalry, took this problem to President Polk when he arrived at Washington. Polk, an adherent of Manifest Destiny, quickly ordered that soldiers be discharged in Mexico if they so desire. However, before any such benefaction could reach the majority of the soldiers, many men already deserted, some to disappear in Mexico, others to seek their fortune out West.

One reason why many soldiers wished to stay behind in Mexico was they just could not say good-bye to the pretty señoritas whom many fell in love with, and some even married. The beautiful Mexican girls captivated many a soldier's heart for:

All that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes.

One ray the more, the hue the less,
Had half impaired the nameless grace
That flows adown her raven tress,
Or brightly lingers o'er her face.

---

73 Smith and Judah, eds., Chronicles of the Gringos, p. 455.
74 Lewis, Captain Sam Grant, p. 277.
A staff officer in Mexico City wrote his sister if she would care to have a Mexican sister-in-law.\textsuperscript{76} Another young soldier, Lt. William Wilkins, wrote his father that "I might when I return introduce Señorita Constancia González—as Mrs. Wilkins Jr."\textsuperscript{77} Lt. Col. Henry S. Burton returned home with Señorita Amparo Ruíz as his bride.\textsuperscript{78} The list goes on and on, so much so, that during the debate whether or not the United States should acquire all of Mexico, one newspaper stated the problem will soon be solved as "Our Yankee young fellows and the pretty señoritas will do the rest of the annexation."\textsuperscript{79} But not all the happy couples went north; some wanted to stay in Mexico, and so when the units left, these soldiers deserted. One young soldier in the Northern campaign related how he and his bunk mate met and fell in love with two Mexican sisters. The girls pleaded with the soldiers to desert and marry them and live on their hacienda in Durango. The writer, a native American, could not desert his country.

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{76} Smith and Judah, eds.,\textit{ Chronicles of the Gringos,} p. 400.
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., p. 405.
\textsuperscript{78} Bauer,\textit{ The Mexican War 1846-1848,} p. 350.
\end{flushright}
but his bunk mate did desert, marry one of the sisters, and disappeared in Mexico. One instance where "lucky in love" proved very unhealthy concerned the case of a young Irish American soldier caught at the battle of Churubusco in a Mexican uniform. Dennis Conahan, a former U.S. Infantryman who later became a San Patricio, declared at his trial that he was impressed into the Mexican service after being captured while spending the night with his Mexican sweetheart. The court, being unromantic, found him guilty of desertion and had him hung.

The high rate of desertion from the many enumerated causes goes to illustrate the unwillingness of the late Jacksonian period soldier to serve his nation in an unpopular war at a cost of personal comfort. The many factors and movements attendant with these times are still the subject of much debate in some circles. This is especially true when compared with a later United States conflict. Terms such as Manifest Destiny, Nativist versus foreigner, can be interchanged with newer concepts called containment, patriotism, etc. But nowhere in all the


81 NA, RG94, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, Orders and Circulars, 1797-1910, Vol. 41\(\frac{1}{2}\). General Order No. 283. The authoress, Patricia Cox, expanded upon the love story of Dennis Conahan in her fictionalized account of the San Patricios; see Patricia Cox, Batallón de San Patricio (México: La Frensa, 1973).
history of America's wars, has the religious issue ever been raised as a decisive factor in determining the patriotism of an American soldier as was done during the United States' War with Mexico. Shades of the Black Legend have prevented some writers from discovering the various causes for desertion which were presented here; however, posterity will be satisfied when the truth can finally be put forth, free from religious and racial prejudice.
CHAPTER III

MEXICAN EFFORTS TO FOSTER AND SECURE AMERICAN DESERTIONS

I have to state that soon after my arrival on the Rio Grande the eire [sic] of desertion made its appearance and increased to an alarming extent that inducements were held out by the Mexican authorities to entice our men from our colors, and that the most efficient measures are necessary to prevent the spread of this catagion.

General Zachary Taylor, U.S.A.¹

Almost immediately upon arriving at the Rio Grande, Taylor and his troops were flooded with Mexican propaganda aimed primarily at the foreign-born and Catholic soldiers in the American ranks. The Mexicans well knew that there existed in the United States and her army a bad feeling against the recent Irish and German immigrants. Some 47 percent of Taylor's regulars were foreigners, with 24 percent Irish and 10 percent German.² Mexico knew that in 1844 anti-Catholic and anti-Irish mobs destroyed churches and killed Catholics in a series


of riots in Boston and Philadelphia.\(^3\)

Hence, by these pamphlets and proclamations, the Mexicans hoped to create rifts and dissensions within their enemies ranks by trying to entice these men to desert to their cause. Their appeal was based on ideology, religion and greed, offering them land and moneys if they came over to their side. All told, the result were such as to make desertion a bothersome factor in the War, one in which the commanding officers sought to quickly cure by harsh examples.

On January 12, 1846, Secretary of War, William L. Marcy, ordered Brevet General Taylor, commander of the U.S. forces gathered at Corpus Christi, Texas, to advance to the Rio Grande and take up a defensive position on the east bank of that stream. The breaking up of his camp, the removal of stores, and the organization of transport, all required time and, therefore, it was not until the beginning of March that General Taylor started his troops

\(^3\)The immediate cause of these riots was the issue of daily readings of the Bible in public school classrooms. The Catholics requested that a Catholic version of the Bible be used for Catholic children and that they be excused from Protestant prayers. The Nativists viewed this as a Popish plot to drive the Bible out of the schools and, hence, they sought to oppose this request. The riots that ensued in Philadelphia alone destroyed two Catholic churches, two Catholic rectories, two Catholic convents and a Catholic library—all valued at $150,000. The human loss numbered forty killed; sixty wounded and two hundred left homeless. George Potter, To the Golden Door (Boston Little Brown and Company, 1960), pp. 420-425.
toward the Rio Grande. It was Taylor's purpose to take up two positions on the upper side of the Rio Grande. He would occupy Point Isabel which, because of its defensive possibilities and adequate harbor, would serve as his base. The other site would be directly across the river from the Mexican city of Matamoros, Fort Brown, later called Brownsville.

On the twenty-eighth of March, Taylor arrived opposite Matamoros and there proceeded to entrench himself; across the river, the Mexicans did likewise. It would be at least four weeks until any hostilities would take place.

Meanwhile, as Taylor was employed in the erection of Fort Brown, he received information that General Ampudia was approaching with a large force for the relief of Matamoros. Taylor was prepared to meet them. However, before Ampudia arrived, a circular written in English mysteriously appeared in the camp. It was entitled "The Commander-in-Chief of the Mexican Army to the English and Irish under the orders of the American General Taylor." It was a call to the English and Irish soldiers of the American ranks to rise up and resist the barbarous aggression of the United States against the magnanimous Mexican nation. An additional appeal was made to Germans, French, Poles and others to desert the Yankees and join with the Mexicans in their fight against
the Northern tyrants. These would-be deserters were offered an expense-free trip to Mexico City. The authors of this appeal were Francisco R. Moreno, Adjutant, and Pedro de Ampudia, Commander-in-Chief. It was dated April 2, 1846, written on the road to Matamoros. Unquestionably this proclamation of Ampudia's started the ball rolling in Mexico's attempts to entice U.S. soldiers to desert and fight for their cause.

Mexico's fixation in the belief that it could seduce Catholics and especially Catholic-Irish away from the American ranks was based upon an affinity between

---

4 John Frost, *Life of Major General Zachary Taylor* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1847), pp. 48-49. General Ampudia officially started efforts to encourage desertion within the U.S. ranks by his proclamation of April 2; however, his predecessor, General Mejia, earlier used more subtle means to accomplish this same goal; for example, upon his arrival on the Rio Grande, General Worth, an aide to General Taylor, sent a spy over to the Mexican side to report on the enemy's strength. This spy posed as a deserter. The spy, a soldier of the 8th Regiment, U.S. Infantry, recrossed the river to the American side after spending a day within the Mexican lines. He reported that General Mejia offered him a commission of captain if he would raise a company of deserters and bring them over to the Mexican side. No mention was made of compensation at this time. Philip Norbourne Barbour and Martha Isabella Hopkins Barbour, *Journals of the Late Brevet Major Philip Norbourne Barbour, Captain in the 3rd Regiment, United States Infantry, and his wife, Martha Isabella Hopkins Barbour*, ed. with a Foreword by Rhoda van Bibber Tanner Doubleday (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1936), p. 30.
Spain and Ireland which was as old as Protestant England's
domination of the Emerald Isle. This closeness was rein-
forced by a small but steady intercourse between the two
peoples which included various past attempts to establish
Irish colonies in Latin America. These attempts included:
a Portuguese proposal to settle Irish emigrants from
St. Kitts in northern Brazil; the establishment of an
Irish colony by the Nueces River in Texas in 1830; an
testment to settle an Irish colony in the region of Boca
del Toro by the Federal Government of Central America in
1836; and many more. Most were half-hearted and ill-

5C. R. Boxer, The Dutch in Brazil 1624-1654

6Souvenir Program of the San Patricio County
Centennial Celebration and Historical Pageant, April 14-
15-16, Inc. 1936. The University of Texas Library; also
see William H. Oberste, Texas Irish Empresarios and Their
Colonies: Power & Hewetson, McMullen & McGloin; Refugio-
Mention can be made here of another factor which contrib-
uted to Mexico's belief that she could win over the Irish
from the American Army to her side; and that is, during
the Texas revolution of 1836 some Irish from the colony of
San Patricio were forced to fight for the Americans when
in fact their sympathies were with the Mexicans; see José
Enrique de la Peña, With Santa Anna in Texas, A Personal
Narrative of the Revolution, trans. and ed., Carmen Perry
(College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1975), pp. 76,
85, 185.

7Hubert Howe Bancroft, The Works of Hubert Howe
Bancroft, vol. 8, The History of Central America, vol. 3,
(San Francisco: The History Company Publishers, 1887),
p. 235.
planned and, hence, proved futile. But, the fact remains that these attempts set a precedent for a Mexican venture which would coincide and assist them in their efforts to entice Catholic Irishmen to desert the American cause. This venture was called the McNamara colonization project.

From 1838 to 1846, English interests in or designs on California drew as much attention as United States aspirations for that region. The English knew well the value of California with its commanding position on the Pacific, its fine harbors, its forests of excellent timber for shipbuilding, etc. Many of her ministers to Mexico urged that, by one way or another, California be made an English colony. In 1841, the English Minister to Mexico, James Pakenham, urged the establishment of an English colony in California either overtly or covertly. He recommended the transfer of California to the English bondholders who had taken over the Mexican debt. He feared that California, like Texas, would eventually become part of the United States, given the large number of Yankees settling in California and the inability of the debilitated Mexican Government to defend that territory.

The Earl of Aberdeen, Head of the British Foreign Office, put an end, however, to Pakenham's dream. His reply was promptly transmitted to Pakenham. It was as follows:
His Lordship directs me in answer to acquaint you for the information of the Earl of Aberdeen, that he is not anxious for the formation of new and distant Colonies all of which involve heavy direct and still heavier indirect expenditures, besides multiplying the liabilities of misunderstanding and collisions with Foreign Powers. Still less is Lord Stanley prepared to recommend the adoption of a plan whereby the Soil shall, in the first instance, be vested in a Company of Adventurers; with more or less of the powers of sovereignty and of Legislation, and the Settlement so formed be afterwards placed under the protection of the British Crown; which as it seems to his Lordship is the position contended for by Mr. Pakenham. 8

Pakenham perfectly understood the indifference of Great Britain to his plan. He realized that the day for colonial enterprises had passed and, as a result, lost interest in the entire project.

Pakenham was soon replaced by Mr. Charles Bankhead and British agents in California became temporarily indifferent to the fate of that territory. However, in the winter of 1845-1846, events transpired that stirred the British to new action. First of all came the final and expected annexation of Texas to the United States. Any suspicion of United States acquisitiveness became fact. Now, worries were centered around California as the next target of Yankee expansion. This fear was reinforced by the arrival of John C. Fremont in 1845. Brevet Captain

Fremont, U.S. Army, was ordered West to survey the Arkansas and Red Rivers in Texas. However, he disregarded these instructions and instead went to California in search of a usable wagon route west. In California, he got into a disagreement with the local authorities who ordered him to leave at once. He refused and entrenched himself and his force on the outskirts of Monterey daring the authorities to try to eject him. He even raised the American flag in defiance of Mexican sovereignty. It was only after the intervention of the American Consul, though, that bloodshed was avoided and Fremont was persuaded to leave California.

Regardless of the absence of hostilities, Fremont's high-handed methods convinced many people, including the British, that he was there to aid in the American conquest of that region. The new British minister, Bankhead, while prohibited by Aberdeen in London from direct interference in the movements in the province, did make less authoritative suggestions to London regarding the acquisition of California. One suggestion called for the colonization of California by Irish emigrants. It seems that in the winter of 1844 there appeared before Bankhead in Mexico City an Irish priest by the name of Eugene McNamara with just such an idea. When London turned a cold shoulder toward the

---

scheme, McNamara went to the Mexican authorities who were more receptive. Of McNamara personally, we only know that he was a native of Ireland, a Catholic priest and an apostolic missionary. However, we do know that he did propose a scheme which, while not successful, did later form a part of official Mexican efforts in enticing foreign and especially Irish soldiers in the American army to desert. This scheme called for the granting of large tracts of land in California to Irish emigrants.

McNamara's avowed object in this project was threefold: first, he said that he wanted to advance the cause of Catholicism, an idea consistent with official Mexican policy; second, he wanted to help his countrymen find a new and better way of life; and lastly, he wanted to save California from becoming a part of that anti-Catholic nation called the United States—a fear very much present in Mexico. Originally, he would start with 1,000 families; later he would claim that he could secure 500,000 families; but, in any event, each would be allowed one


11 Ibid.

square league of land. He proposed that the first colony be located on the bay of San Francisco, with later colonies at Monterey and Santa Barbara.

The Mexican Government seemed to favor the scheme, although the location of the colonies would be up to them. In January 1846, McNamara was informed by the Minister of Foreign Relations, Joaquín M. de Castillo y Lanzas\(^\text{13}\) that his project for colonization would be submitted to the Congress for discussion. That body recommended that McNamara go to California, select lands suitable for his purpose, and submit his project in regular form to the departmental authorities. McNamara followed their instructions and took passage aboard the British ship Juno, arriving in California at the end of May. Soon after his arrival, he met with Governor Pio Pico at Santa Barbara to discuss the project.\(^\text{14}\) His plan now called for the immediate settlement of two thousand Irish families (or ten thousand people) in an area of land between the San Joaquin River and the Sierra Nevada, from the Coumnes southward to

\[^{13}\text{Castillo was a former Secretary and Charge d'Affaires at the Mexican Legation in Washington. He was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs by President Paredes on January 7, 1846.}\]

\[^{14}\text{William R. Manning, ed., Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States, Inter-American Affairs, 1831-}\]

the extremity of the Tulares near San Gabriel. Pico approved of McNamara's plan and sent it to the state assembly for debate. On July 6, the matter was brought up and referred to a special committee. The following day the committee met in an extra session and approved the plan contingent upon a number of recommendations. The most important of these were that the land granted be only in proportion to the actual number of colonists and that the title to these lands not be alienated or transferred to any third party, especially a foreign government.\footnote{Bancroft, \textit{History of California}, 5:217-218.} The committee further recommended that the colonists be exempted from taxes for a number of years and also that import duties be waived for the first $100,000 worth of merchandise the colonists bring in with them. With these additions, Governor Pico made out the grant of land to McNamara for his colony. Of course, this grant was still subject to the approval of the national government, which was now engaged in a war with the United States.

At the end of July or August, McNamara left California on a British ship for Mexico via Honolulu. Upon his arrival there, his plan was referred to the Ministry
of Colonizacion e Industria where it disappeared from sight.

The events of the war moved so fast that McNamara's scheme lost its practicality especially after the early United States occupation of California. McNamara's plan, though, did coincide perfectly with Mexican propaganda efforts to entice Irish Americans from the U.S. ranks in exchange for land and other rewards. It made no difference to the Mexicans that California was lost to them forever; they would still promise U.S. soldiers acreage (according to their rank) in return for their coming over to the Mexican side.

And what of McNamara? After his return to Mexico, he seems to have been actively involved in official attempts to secure American desertions. He worked with the Mexican Foreign Minister, Manuel Baranda, to achieve this

16 Herbert E. Bolton, Guide to materials for the history of the United States in the principal archives of Mexico (Washington: Carnegie Institute of Washington, 1931), p. 363, states there are twenty-four folios in this archive concerning the petitions of Father McNamara. Unfortunately, this archive has since been dissolved and its contents sent to other archives. One of the main recipients of its materials was the subsecretaria de Asuntos Agrarios. In May 1977, this writer met with its director, Adam Rubio Olvera who, nevertheless failed to produce the folios mentioned by Bolton.
He was particularly active in the south where he tried to buy Irishmen in Scott's army. His name became such an anathema to American officers in General Scott's army that many called for his apprehension and execution.

The length of McNamara's stay in Mexico is unknown; however, he did remain until the presidency of Santa Anna, for it was rumored that Santa Anna finally confirmed his grant. About the time the Americans were entering the Valley of Mexico, McNamara left for Europe allegedly to make arrangements for his colony; but, in reality, to disappear into obscurity. Although there is no evidence, in all probability, McNamara was a very persuasive spokesman for a group of private land speculators in London. These men saw California's potential and therefore sought to obtain as much land as possible before it fell into the hands of the Americans or some other third

17 José Fernando Ramírez, Mexico During the War With The United States, ed. Walter V. Scholes, trans. Elliott B. Scherr (Columbia: University of Missouri, 1950), p. 127.

18 Potter, To the Golden Door, p. 489.

party. To avoid opposition from the authorities in a Catholic country, a priest was employed to negotiate for the founding of an Irish colony, even though the English backers of the colony probably had no intention of ever establishing one. In any event, if these men used Mexico, Mexico in turn, used McNamara to help her secure new recruits for her Army. What better choice than an Irish priest to convince Irish Americans to fight for Mexico. Both parties had ulterior motives but both only enjoyed minimal success.20

While McNamara and Baranda were working in the South, the Mexican Government employed others in the North to woo the Irish soldiers. An Englishman by the name of Nicholas Sinnott, together with a John Murray21 and Sr. González Angulo22 formulated a scheme similar in principle to McNamara's. They aimed at fostering desertions by promising large land grants to the soldiers according to their rank. The amount of land that was to be given to the deserters was as follows:

20 Bancroft, History of California, 5:220.
21 John Murray later withdrew from the scheme for unknown reasons.
22 Probably Don Joaquín González Angulo, Governor of Jalisco.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RANK</th>
<th>ACRES</th>
<th>EXTRA PER YEAR OF SERVICE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporal</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sergeant 2nd Class</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sergeant 1st Class</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Lieutenant</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Lieutenant</td>
<td>1200</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major</td>
<td>3000</td>
<td>1500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lieutenant Colonel</td>
<td>5000</td>
<td>2500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colonel</td>
<td>8000</td>
<td>4000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The plan did not state where this land would be located; however, although it was approved by the Minister of Foreign Relations, there is no record of any land distribution having taken place.23

Early in the War therefore, the Mexican Government was convinced of the great importance of promoting desertion in the American army, largely composed of foreigners. This effort was carried on by Government agents such as McNamara, Sinnot, and private citizens, who were not afraid to risk their lives for their country, and by military commanders such as Ampudia and Santa Anna.

Toward the end of April 1846, General Mariano Arista arrived at Matamoros to take command of the Mexican Army. He brought with him additional troops which would give him a total force of eight thousand men. With Arista

also came an increase in various tactics used to entice the Americans over to their side. Now, every day Mexican women came down to the river to wash and flirt with the picket guards on the other side. Their voices tinkled across the water as silvery as the church bells which now rang from dawn till dusk. With the bells came festivals, saints' day parades and music. The Yankee made fun of the Catholic ceremonies; but to the Catholic immigrants in Taylor's force, the processionals in the streets, the fragments of well-known chants, the church bells singing of marriage and death and sacred rituals brought thought of the homeland. At evening, the vesper bells, the perfumes of Mexico, the music of guitars and of women laughing all carried in the breeze that floated across the river. Next came a proclamation in English stressing God and Christianity again and again; it read: "Soldiers--you have enlisted in time of peace to serve in that army . . . . but your obligations never implied that you were bound to violate the laws of God . . . . The United States government, contrary to the wishes of a majority of all honest and honorable Americans, has ordered you to take forcible possession of the territory of a friendly neighbor . . . . Such villany and outrage I know is perfectly repugnant to the noble sentiments of any gentleman, and it is base and foul to rush you on to certain death in order to aggrandize a few lawless individuals in defiance of the laws of God.
and man . . . . Besides, most of you are Europeans, and we are the declared friends of most of the nations of Europe. The North Americans are ambitious, overbearing, and insolent as a nation, and they will only make use of you as vile tools to carry out their abominable plans of pillage and rapine." Arista concluded his proclamation by promising land to those who would desert and come over to the Mexican side. A private would get, at least, 320 acres, with higher ranks receiving more. 24

This proclamation seemed to have caused a surprisingly large number of desertions before the actual outbreak of hostilities, and, thus, gave General Taylor an added problem. It was at this time that Sergeant John O'Reilly of Company K, 5th U.S. Infantry, deserted. He would soon become a moving force in the formation of the San Patricios of which he would be made commander by the Mexicans. 25 In any event, the arrival of General Arista at Matamoros signalled the commencement of activities which eventually led to war.

After the battles of Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma which occasioned Congress' formal declaration of war,  


General Taylor began the American advance southward toward the important Mexican city of Monterrey. By mid-September in 1846, he was on the outskirts of the city and prepared for battle when suddenly another proclamation mysteriously appeared in his camp. It was a circular addressed to the American troops from the General-in-Chief of the Mexican Army of the North, Pedro de Ampudia. As mentioned, Ampudia was commander of the Mexican troops at Matamoros but was succeeded by General Arista. Now, through persistent intrigue, he again secured high command. Ampudia's circular, like previous ones, reminded the American troops that the War brought by the United States on Mexico was unjust, illegal and anti-Christian; hence, he urged the American soldiers to lay down their arms and seek the protection of the Mexican Government. He closed his short message by stating that those who wished to join the Mexican Army would be especially welcomed.26 This circular was accompanied by another issued by Ampudia but this one was sent to the Mexican troops. In it, Ampudia advised his men how to receive the Americans whom he expected to desert in large numbers. He told his men to welcome the deserters and to quickly conduct them to the interior of the country. He further warned that if any deserters pre-

sented themselves whose intentions were ulterior, they should be brought to headquarters; or if that is impossible, then they should be turned over to the police. 27

Ampudia's appeal to American soldiers to lay down their arms had no immediate effect, for as almost upon its receipt the battle for Monterrey began. The American assault on the almost impregnable city of Monterrey was to be a two-pronged drive with General William Worth moving in from the west and General Taylor moving directly against the town. The battle began on September 21 and after some very fierce fighting ended with the Mexicans' defeat on September 23. Several days later, the Mexican Army evacuated the town.

After the capture of Monterrey, General Taylor, with his forces, remained in the city making plans for future operations. It was here, during the lull in the fighting, that local Mexican priests made various attempts to induce further desertions among the Americans. Into the ears of the foreign-born soldiers came stories that the attitude of the United States toward Mexico was nothing but a masonic plot to destroy the Catholic Church in that country. They were warned that if they assisted in this plot they would be waging a war against their own religion. As an extra incentive, money and land was offered

those who would join the Mexican cause. 28 As a consequence, at least fifty men went over to the enemy from Monterrey. All of these men were U.S. Regular Soldiers—not Volunteers. 29

Upon learning of the fall of Monterrey, General Santa Anna left Mexico City and headed north to San Luis Potosí, intending to organize a massive force to defeat Taylor and gain the victory he so desperately needed to bolster his sagging fortunes. Taylor moved south to Satillo to meet him. On his way to meet Taylor, intelligence reached Santa Anna that there were, at least, two thousand Irishmen in Taylor's army who, with the slightest provocation, would desert and join him. 30


29 Wallace, "The Battalion of Saint Patrick in the Mexican War," p. 85; Luther Giddings of the First Ohio Volunteers stated as a reason why American deserters at Monterrey were Regulars and not Volunteers that the Volunteers were usually stationed in small towns where the priests were pious men of unblemished lives; while the better disciplined Regulars were stationed in larger cities such as Monterrey where they came in contact with pampered and frantic friars. *Sketches of the Campaign in Northern Mexico by an Officer of the First Regiment of Ohio Volunteers* (New York: George P. Putnam & Co., 1853), pp. 275-277.

therefore in accord, if not in league, with Mexican clerics who enticed potential deserters. All through the winter, they were at work offering, among the usual enticements, anywhere from $60 to $150, citizens' clothes, a horse, guide to the army, and 50¢ to drink to the health of Santa Anna. If these material rewards were insufficient, then there was the formal address issued by the priests of San Luis Potosí describing the rapine and plundering activities of the U.S. Volunteers, "... the Vandals Vomited from Hell." All these had effect on the U.S. troops and desertions continued up until the last battle of the Northern Campaign, the Battle of Buena Vista or Angostura. It was here that a bloody and indecisive battle was fought in which both sides claimed victory. However, it did prove several things: first, it settled with finality United States ability to maintain its boundary along the Rio Grande; and, second, it proved to the Mexicans that their efforts to entice American soldiers to their side was beginning to be fruitful. For it was here that the San Patricios made their first deadly appearance as a unit to the dismay of their ex-countrymen. With the Battle of

---


Buena Vista, the campaign in northern Mexico came to an end.

In an effort to bring a decisive end to the war, the United States realized that it would have to be carried to the Mexican heartland. With this in mind, it was decided that the capture of the Capital, Mexico City, was necessary. Washington decided that this could best be accomplished by way of the Gulf Port of Veracruz, the same route Cortez took over three hundred years previous. Therefore, on March 9, 1847, a large American invasion force, under the command of General Winfield Scott, landed unopposed three miles southeast of Veracruz. By March 29, the city surrendered and the Americans were on their way to the Capital.

Meanwhile, Santa Anna had returned to Mexico City from the north and was regrouping his forces when word reached him of the fall of Veracruz. He immediately marched to the coast and by April 5 had established his headquarters at Encero and planned to meet the Americans at the mountain pass of Cerro Gordo. Several days later, he drew up a defensive line that was over two miles long. He had combined his forces with those of nature to create an almost impregnable position. However, he made one big mistake; he only allowed for a frontal assault by the Americans. Scott, upon arriving on April 12 opposite the Mexican force, soon realized the folly of this and through
skillful maneuvering outflanked the Mexicans, attacked their rear and completely routed them on April 18. Santa Anna himself barely escaped capture. The road to Puebla and Mexico City was now opened.

These disastrous events for the Mexicans prompted them to look for various methods to forestall defeat. The contributions of the San Patricios in the various battles of the War, once again, inspired Mexican officials to foment desertions within the American ranks with the hope that this would further deplete their small army already hampered by casualties caused by the War. To implement any such plan, it was first agreed that mediations should be opened up with the enemy. Manuel Baranda, the Minister of Foreign Relations, viewed this not only as necessary for eventually ending the War, but also as an indirect way to prolong it so as to start their plan of fostering desertions and thus adding to their own strength. Baranda sent a confidential message through a third party asking Scott if he would consent to a temporary suspension of hostilities. Scott answered that he was interested in the suspension of hostilities but only on his terms, namely, complete surrender; otherwise he stated, he would march on the Capital. However, although he planned to forward his terms in writing to Baranda they were never sent because, it would seem, of the arrival of Nicholas Trist, President Polk's appointed negotiator, who disrupted the proceed-
In any event, Scott's advance on the Capital continued without hindrance from any armistice.

Foiled in his attempts to stop the American steamroller, Baranda had to work fast to implement his plan to recruit additional San Patricios. His efforts would be directed primarily toward the three thousand Catholics in Scott's army. To assist in writing the propaganda, Baranda turned to Manuel Payno, the editor of the journal, Don Simplicio. He, in turn, employed the writer, Luis Payno. Rives, The United States and Mexico 1821-1848, 2:434-435.

Edward S. Wallace, "Deserters in the Mexican War," Hispanic American Historical Review 15 (1935):378; see also his later article, "The Battalion of Saint Patrick in the Mexican War," p. 87 in which he claims that acting-President Anaya first conceived this idea. Ramírez and Guillermo Prieto, however, maintained that the idea came from Manuel Baranda. See their Mexico During the War With the United States, p. 127 and Memorias de Mis Tiempos (Mexico City: Editorial Patria, S.A., 1969), pp. 429-430, respectively.

Manuel Payno was, at various times, a senator, deputy, poet, dramatist, and a novelist; Ramírez, Mexico During the War With the United States, p. 127.
Martínez de Castro, to prepare the circulars which would bombard the American troops. Baranda also appointed the capable politician, José Fernando Ramírez, to work in conjunction with General Santa Anna in recruiting more Americans to join the San Patricios. The enticements they were to offer the American deserters were land and money. Ramírez had several objections to Baranda's plan, one of which included a fear that Santa Anna would not comply with the agreement made with the deserters because of "his uneconomical, inefficient management of funds." Baranda allayed Ramírez's fears by promising not to give the money, some sixty thousand pesos, with which to pay the deserters, to Santa Anna but instead to make it available when the time arose from certain taxes.

---

36 Prieto, Memorias de Mis Tiempos, pp. 93 and 430; it is ironic that the man whose circulars in part persuaded many San Patricios to fight for Mexico should meet the same fate at the same place as many of them did. Captain Luis Martínez de Castro of the Bravos Battalion was killed at the Battle of Churubusco where so many of the San Patricios were either killed or captured. The unit was decimated at this battle. D. Vicente Riva Palacio, ed., México a través de los Siglos, 6 vols. (Mexico City: Editorial Cumbre, S.A., 1940) 4:679; and Prieto, Memorias de Mis Tiempos, p. 392.

37 Ramírez in his own words does not call them American deserters, but rather Irish.

38 Ramírez, Mexico During the War With the United States, p. 128.
Baranda realized that American forces would soon occupy the large city of Puebla without any serious opposition and, therefore, he decided to start his project of enticement there. With the aid of Puebla's clergy and leading citizens, efforts would be made to lure the three thousand Catholics from Scott's total force of fourteen thousand men. After this was accomplished, the city with a population of eighty thousand would rise up and, with Santa Anna's help, defeat Scott. Everyone was confident of success. The first printed circular appeared in April 1847. It was from Santa Anna to the men of the American Army. In it, Santa Anna listed seven concessions he would make to any American soldier who would come over to the Mexican side. These concessions included: $10 each and two hundred acres of land; also, $5 for every friend a soldier brought over; and finally, the men could form their own companies and have their own immediate officers such as the San Patricios. With the circular was a special supplement entitled, "Mexicans to Catholic Irishmen."


40 The Daily Picayune (New Orleans), 7 October 1847.
Irishmen—Listen to the words of your brothers, hear . . . the accents of a Catholic people

Could Mexican imagine that the sons of Ireland, that noble land of the religious and the brave, would be seen amongst their enemies.

Well known it is that Irishmen are a noble race; well known it is that in their own country many of them have not even bread to give up to their children.

These are the chief motives that induced Irishmen to abandon their beloved country and visit the shores of the new world.

But was it not natural to expect that the distressed Irishmen who fly from hunger would take refuge in this Catholic country, where they might have met with a hearty welcome and been looked upon as brothers had they not come as cruel and unjust invaders.

Sons of Ireland! have you forgotten that in any Spanish country it is sufficient to claim Ireland as your home to meet with a friendly reception from authorities as well as citizens.

Our religion is the strongest of bonds.

What! can you fight by the side of those who put fire to your temples in Boston and Philadelphia. Did you witness such dreadful crimes and sacrileges without making a solemn vow to our Lord?

If you are Catholics, the same as we, if you follow the doctrines of our Savior, why are you men, sword in hand, murdering your brothers, why are you the antagonists of those who defend their country and your own kind.

Are Catholic Irishmen to be the destroyers of Catholic temples, the murderers of Catholic priests, and the founders of heretical rites in this pious nation.

Irishmen—You were expected to be just, because you are the countrymen of that truly great and eloquent man, O'Connell, who had devoted his whole life to defend your rights, and finally, because you are said to be good and sincere Catholics.

Why, then, do you rank among our wicked enemies?

Is it because you wish to have a grant of land that you may call your own?

But what can the most powerful armies do against a whole nation?

By conquest you can take the cities and towns, but never possess two feet of ground unmolested as long as there is a Mexican. The last of Mexicans is determined to fight without release for his country and his God.
But our hospitably and good will towards you tends you what by force you can never possess or enjoy; as much property in land as you may require, and this under the pledge of our honor and our holy religion. Come over to us; you will be received under the laws of that truly Christian hospitality and good faith which Irish guests are entitled to expect and obtain from a Catholic nation. Our sincere efforts have already been realized with many of your countrymen, who are living as our own brothers among us. May Mexicans and Irishmen, united by the sacred tie of religion and benevolence, form only one people. 41

This type of rhetoric enjoyed a limited success as a certain number, principally Irish Catholic, did desert the American Army at Jalapa and Puebla. 42 However, most Catholics and other Americans in Scott's army viewed the Mexicans as the enemy; hence, the Mexicans fell far short of their anticipated goal of three thousand deserters.

As General Scott entered the valley of Mexico toward the Capital, Mexican efforts to entice American soldiers increased. On August 12, 1847, General José Urrea of the Mexican cavalry issued a letter designed to encourage desertion. Urrea did not appeal to the men's religious beliefs but instead tried to point out that the War was immoral, unjust and atrocious, "one sent by Polk

41 Ibid.
42 Rives, The United States and Mexico 1821-1848, 2:434.
to Mexico," as he stated. A war that belied the revered republican principles as practiced by Washington and Franklin. Urrea's letter ended with an appeal to join the Mexicans:

Here you will find ground to cultivate and honest occupation whereby to gain the necessaries of life without great fatigue. You will find the sympathies of a generous people, and the tranquility of conscience otherwise not to be obtained; because the man who attacks and destroys the principle of Universal Moral, which brings together nations as it does individuals, cannot obtain it."43

Several days later, Santa Anna issued another letter addressed to the troops of the United States.44 It contained the same appeal as previous letters. He pointed out the immorality of the War and asked the deceived foreign members of the American Army to fight for a free Mexico after which they would be amply rewarded with rich fields and large tracts of land.45

The effectiveness of Mexican propaganda during August 1847 was minimal as on the 19th and 20th of that month, Mexico suffered two devastating defeats—one of

43The Daily Picayune (New Orleans), 12 September 1847.
45Archivo Histórico del Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (hereafter Archivo Histórico del INAH), vol. 32 (Series T-C), Doc. 21. A letter from the President of the Mexican Republic to the troops engaged in the Army of the United States of America, August 15, 1847.
which saw the destruction of the San Patricio Battalion which was composed mainly of American deserters. As the Americans stormed into Mexico City, Mexican officials made one last effort during the active fighting of the War to excite prejudice against the Americans and to court Irish favor. These efforts took the form of a newspaper article which was entitled "An open letter to the Mexican people." The article was without any signature but was of an official character. It was concerned with the execution of the U.S. deserters captured with the San Patricios at Churubusco. The article pointed out the strong bonds of friendship between European Catholics and Mexicans and praised those who followed the noble impulses of their hearts and passed over to the Mexican side which was fighting for a just cause. The article then went on to describe the execution of the poor, unfortunate San Patricios by the "Savages, demons and caribs called Americans."46

Several days later, on September 14, 1847, General Scott and the American Army occupied Mexico City. Two days later, Santa Anna resigned the Presidency. Aside from guerrilla actions, the fighting end of the War was

46 The Daily Picayune (New Orleans), 6 October 1847; and Niles National Register, 16 October 1847.
over. To be sure, a sizeable part of the Mexican Army was still intact but it lacked the will and leadership to mount an offensive against the Americans. However, the ruling class of Mexico was still not ready for peace; and no matter how inept they were they still sought ways to carry on the War. As a result, Mexican authorities planned an insurrection or rebellion against Scott in Mexico City. The conspiracy was led by Mexican soldiers in civilian disguise and by several members of the clergy. The plan included assassinating lone and drunken stragglers from the American side and also encouraging Catholics to desert. Again, the Mexicans relied upon the bond of religion with the added inducement of land. The insurrection, like so many other Mexican plans, did not materialize, but the assassinations and the enticing propaganda continued.

Although the American military leaders tried to follow a conciliatory policy toward the Mexicans, they found their behavior quite exasperating, particularly the continued enticement of the American soldiers to desert even after the armistice of 1847 was signed. It was very difficult negotiating a peace treaty. On the eve of their leaving Mexico City, American authorities held nearly

47 The Mexicans promised potential deserters rich lands in California; however, this offer was ludicrous because California had already come under American jurisdiction by 1846.

48 The American Star (Mexico City), 5 May 1848.
ten Mexican prisoners charged with enticing; therefore, their efforts at luring Americans into the Mexican Army continued until the final evacuation of American troops from Mexico.\textsuperscript{49} Perhaps this was the only way left in which they could fight, or in the words of Mariano Otero, Mexican Minister of Relations, "in those days, when the Mexican Army was almost destroyed, and scarcely could put up any resistance, it was believed that in such a desperate situation a stratagem of great importance was that of promoting desertion in the enemy's reduced army, largely composed of foreigners."

\textsuperscript{49}NA,RG94, Mexican War, Army of Occupation, Miscellaneous Papers.

CHAPTER IV

THE SAN PATRICIOS 1846-1847

As we have already seen the fruitful result of Mexican propagandists was the creation of the San Patricio unit. Mexican subversion, aimed at fomenting desertion within American ranks, had as one of its avowed purposes the utilization of these deserters as soldiers for the Mexican Army. The deserters, besides helping to thin out the ranks of the already small American invasion force, would also help to boost the strength of the Mexican Army, if prevailed upon to join it.

Despite predictions that the Mexican Army would win the War, as it was superior to America's, a closer inspection would reveal quite a few shortcomings. Compared with the American Army it was less self-sufficient and, in some areas, totally dependent upon outside sources. For example, in Mexico there were no facilities in operation for producing arms. Mexican fusiliers and grenadiers carried India-pattern Brown Bess muskets made in Great Britain. Riflemen had better weapons but they too were imported. They carried the British Baker Rifle.¹

Mexico made its own gunpowder but it was of inferior quality.

Quality of officers was another problem facing the Mexican Army. One European observer declared that the Mexican Officer Corps was the worst in the world. Many of them were ignorant of their duty and were members of the Corps because of its social and political value. Also, it was grossly overstaffed. Just prior to the War there were over twenty-four thousand officers out of a total army of forty-four thousand men. In other words, there were more officers than soldiers. This problem can be traced back to Spanish military reforms which occurred after the Seven Years' War in 1763.

In order to better protect her colonies, Spain expanded the role they would play in their own defense by enlarging and creating local militia companies. To attract the sons of New Spain to the militias, Madrid offered them special privileges for joining. One such privilege, called the "fuero militar," gave to the soldiers, military jurisdiction in all their legal affairs, civil and criminal. By joining the militia they would be above civilian law or at least have a special position within it. This new caste

---

2 Ibid., p. 20.
of privileged officers was a part of the legacy Spain left to Mexico. During the War of 1846, Mexican Army officers still enjoyed the "fuero militar," hence its obvious attraction to the not too always qualified candidate.

If the upper classes flocked to the Officer Corps it would be left to the lower classes to fill the ranks of the soldiers. The lower ranks of the Mexican Army held no privilege but instead were often filled with men who were poorly clothed, worse led, and seldom paid. Therefore, the rank and file was filled by conscription. The draft laws were the same as in colonial times. Lots were drawn on the last Sunday of every October. Those that were chosen had to serve six years. Technically, any man between eighteen and forty years without any dependents was liable; however, there was the granting of exemptions under certain circumstances. Examples of men normally deferred included those under five feet tall, agricultural workers, members of the clergy, schoolmasters and many other categories. Those who usually ended up serving were


6 In newly independent Mexico sometimes military service took precedence over agriculture; hence this deferment was rarely made. José Enrique de la Peña, With Santa Anna in Texas, trans. and ed. Carmen Perry (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1975), p. 8.
Indians, convicts, peons and the poor. The Mexican Army of 1846 was one of too few competent officers and too few willing soldiers.

On March 28, 1846, General Taylor and his army reached the Rio Grande, and almost immediately he was faced with the problem of desertion. For various reasons, men under his command crossed over the river to the Mexican side. Components of Taylor's force included: the 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 8th Infantry Regiments; 2nd Dragoons; and the 3rd Artillery. Deserters to Mexico came from each one of these units and later would be members of the San Patricio unit. The Mexicans were careful to flatter these men with the purpose that they fight for them. For example, two officers who, on routine patrol, were captured by the Mexicans, wrote letters back to the American line describing the courtesy and kindness the Mexicans

7Katcher, The Mexican American War 1846-1848, p. 21; and Jean Descola, Daily Life in Colonial Peru 1710-1820 (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1968), pp. 177-178. It is interesting to note that Santa Anna would later blame the fall of Mexico City on the "... disobedience ... cowardice ... and general lack of morale of our army ..." This situation was brought about, according to him, by "... the bad system of recruiting ..." Santa Anna gave little thought to the common soldier except to blame him for his mistakes. George Lockart Rives, The United States and Mexico 1821-1848, 2 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913) 2:650.

were lavishing upon them.\(^9\) Sometimes the Mexicans would allow their prisoners to return to their lines so as to tell their fellow soldiers how well they were treated by the enemy. However, if cajoling them to join did not work, the Mexicans would then resort to violence. Threats, beatings and imprisonment forced many a deserter to join the Mexican Army.\(^10\)

The first appearance of American deserters in a Mexican uniform occurred, appropriately enough, at the first outbreak of hostilities at Matamoros. It was here that General Taylor reported seeing them behind the artillery which pounded Fort Texas.\(^11\) The Fort was bombarded by Mexican cannons located at Matamoros; at a point east of the city; and on the northern bank behind the Fort. The seige began May 3, and lasted five days during which time the Americans lost only two men, although one was the

\(^9\)Lewis, Captain Sam Grant, p. 141.

\(^10\)Most of the San Patricios who were U.S. deserters, when captured, pleaded in their defense that they were forced to join the unit. In many cases this was true.

commander, Major Brown. After the seige the Mexicans, under General Arista, engaged Taylor at the battles of Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma. To consolidate his forces, Arista withdrew most of the artillery he used against Fort Texas except those pieces guarding the city of Matamoros. Most of this artillery was later captured by the Americans from the fleeing Mexicans. As there is no mention by the participants in these battles of American deserters manning Mexican guns, it is likely that the deserters stayed behind at Matamoros and were only used in the seige of Fort Texas.

At this point let us pause to look at the most prominent and famous or infamous (depending on whether you are Mexican or American) deserter of this War--a man who would later become the leader of México's Foreign Legion called the San Patricios--Private John Riley of K Company, 5th Infantry. Riley was born in Ireland in 1817. He came to the United States via Canada sometime in 1843. It

---

12 Fort Texas was renamed Fort Brown in honor of its slain commander; later it became known as Brownsville, Texas; see K. Jack Bauer, The Mexican War 1846-1848 (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1874), pp. 49-50.

13 Riley or Reilly. Riley's enlistment form spelled his name as Riley, while his court martial transcripts use the form Reilly. National Archives, Record Group 94, (hereafter NA,RG94), U.S. Army Register of Enlistments, 1845, 44:218; and NA,RG94, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, Miscellaneous Papers of the Army of Occupation, Mexico. File on John Riley.
was stated that he was a deserter from the British Army stationed in Canada. Once in the United States, he worked for two years as a laborer for a Charles M. O'Malley, a merchant and politician of Mackinac Island, Michigan. On September 4, 1845, Riley entered the U.S. Infantry at Fort Mackinac, Michigan. Several days later, he left with the 5th Infantry for Corpus Christi, Texas.

14 Some writers claim that Riley was a former sergeant in the 66th Regiment of the British Army, stationed in Canada, from which he deserted. This view is largely based upon an article which appeared in the Niles National Register on October 9, 1847. There was a 66th Regiment of foot soldiers in the British Army; however, it was basically a Welsh unit and in fact was later renamed the Princess of Charlotte of Wales' Berkshire Regiment. This does not preclude an Irishman's membership, as Irishmen always supplied a deficiency in the British forces but it was an unlikely occurrence. Arthur Swinson, ed., A Register of the Regiments and Corps of the British Army (London: The Archive Press, n.d.), pp. 148, 166, 233 and 267.

15 Charles M. O'Malley was born in County Mayo, Ireland and in 1835 settled in Michigan as a merchant. He soon entered politics and became a county clerk and later a member of the State Legislature. As the leading Democrat of the House, he put through a bill which changed the Indian names of five Michigan counties to Irish names: Antrim, Clare, Roscommon, Nenford and Emmet. Of Riley, O'Malley acknowledged that "...Riley worked in my employ off and on for the space of two years with whom I had more trouble than all the other men who worked for me, and more particularly as a Justice of the Peace, for he was always at variance with everyone he had anything to do with." NA,RG94, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, Miscellaneous Papers of the Army of Occupation, Mexico. File on John Riley; Collections of the Pioneer Society of the State of Michigan (1907) 4:349.
After a long march from the Nueces, he reached the Rio Grande on March 28, 1846. He was part of an American invasion force. One month later, he was first lieutenant in the Mexican Army; and a little time after that he would be an organizer and officer of a Mexican Foreign Legion composed mainly of American deserters.

On Sunday, April 12, 1846, two weeks after his arrival at the Rio Grande, Private John Riley requested permission to hear a Catholic mass. It was rumored that a Catholic priest would say mass in a farm building located just above the American encampment on the Texas side of the river. Captain Merrill gave Riley written permission to go. At this point Riley then contended that he was kid- 

16 Some historians contend that Riley's military career with the United States Army included tours of duty as a recruiting sergeant in New York and also as a drillmaster of cadets at West Point. See Edward S. Wallace, "Deserters in the Mexican War," The Hispanic American Historical Review 15 (August 1935): 374-383; Sr. Blanche Marie McEniry, American Catholics in the War With Mexico (Washington, D.C.: n.p. 1937); Edward S. Wallace, "The Battalion of Saint Patrick in the Mexican War," Military Affairs 14 (150): 84-91; and B. Kimball Baker, "The St. Patricks fought for their skins, and Mexico," Smithsonian 8 (March 1978): 94-101. These views are incorrect. Riley's military service of seven months and three days was spent as a private who enlisted in Michigan and was immediately sent to Texas. These facts are supported by military records and also verified by a written statement this writer had from Mr. Alan Aimone of the military history library at West Point on August 5, 1976.
napped by a party of Mexicans and brought to Matamoros. He was then confined to the barracks of the sappadores and was not allowed to communicate with the American forces in Texas nor with American deserters in Mexico. General Ampudia then held several interviews with Riley seeking information regarding the enemy. Riley stated that he refused to cooperate at this point and was forced, "as a prisoner with [his] hands behind [his] back," to accompany the Mexican Army when they evacuated Matamoros. On the 28th of May, he and the Mexican Army arrived at the town of Linares. It was here that, threatened with death, he accepted a commission of first lieutenant in the Mexican Army. The date was May 31, 1846.

During the summer months of 1846, Riley, other deserters and the Mexicans were preparing the defense of

17 May 5, 19, and 29.

Monterrey. At this time, contrary to some reports,¹⁹ there was no Foreign Legion in the Mexican Army. The San Patricio unit did not exist yet. Instead, they were attached to various Mexican units and served as individuals. Their primary function at Monterrey was directed towards refurbishing, mounting and later manning the over thirty-two pieces of artillery which guarded the city.²⁰ During the actual fighting, Riley and the other deserters distinguished themselves in the role of artillerists.²¹ After the Americans captured the city, they allowed the Mexican Army, including the deserters, to retire intact towards the Rinconada Pass. A unit by unit return of the

¹⁹G. T. Hopkins, "The San Patricio Battalion in the Mexican War, U.S. Cavalry Journal 24 (1913):279-284, and the latter Wallace articles, which are based upon Hopkins, contend that at Monterrey the San Patricios as a distinct military unit existed and took some part in the defense of the city.


²¹Manuel Balbontín, Año de 1846 Capitulación de la Ciudad de Monterrey de Nuevo León (Monterrey: n.p., 1974), p. 28; this author, who was a participant in the battle, also mentioned the heroic efforts of a Mexican sergeant in the battle by the name of Domingo Dufío. As this is an unusual surname an explanation could be that it is a Hispanicized form of Duffey or Duffy and possibly could be one of the deserters; see p. 24.
garrison presumably included the deserters.\textsuperscript{22} They possibly were included in the 211 count of artillery soldiers as that figure is abnormally high for the Mexican Army.

During October, 1846, when the Americans were occupying Monterrey, at least fifty more soldiers deserted to the Mexican side.\textsuperscript{23} This brought the number of deserters up to the strength equal to a military company, that is, approximately one hundred men. This occurrence prompted Lt. John Riley to petition his Mexican superiors and his new commander, Santa Anna, for the creation of a separate unit. From the beginning, it was the wish of most deserters to serve with their own kind and under their own officers, instead of being dispersed among the Mexican ranks. The Mexican authorities, in their desire to satisfy the deserters and entice more of the comrades, agreed and allowed them their company. They called it the "compañía de artillería formada de los desertores del


ejercito invasor."

Riley, a nationalist at heart called it "The Company of St. Patrick," or "the Irish Legion."

Mexico had a great precedent for the establishment of a Foreign Legion in her army. From the moment of independence foreigners played an important role in her military affairs that was disproportionate to their actual numbers. Americans and others fought in her drive for independence. They fought with Morelos and Mina. Later, many of Mexico's generals who fought in the Texas campaign were foreigners. General Filisola was an Italian; General Woll, French; Ampudia, Spanish; and Tolsa and Gaona, Cuban. Even at the start of the War of 1846 Mexico had

---

24 The artillery company formed from the deserters of the invading army, Detmar H. Finke, "The Organization and Uniforms of the San Patricio Units of the Mexican Army, 1846-1848," Military Collector & Historian 9 (Summer 1957): 37.

25 Riley wrote that he wished, one day, his flag of St. Patrick would fly over a free Ireland. NA, RG94, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, Miscellaneous Papers of the Army of Occupation, Mexico. File on John Riley.


28 de la Peña, With Santa Anna in Texas, p. 149.
many foreign officers. The Surgeon-General of the Mexican Army during this time was Dr. Pedro Vanderlinden, a Belgian by birth. 29 His assistants included a Major Liegenburg, a German surgeon, 30 and a Dr. McMillan, an Irish-born French citizen. 31 This Dr. McMillan, while a prisoner of the Americans, was instrumental in saving the life of General Shields who was shot in the chest. Shields was an Irish-born American who was also a Brigadier General of the Volunteers. Another surgeon in the Mexican ranks was Don Francisco Marchante who belonged to a family which, despite its Anglo-Saxon origins, was quite prominent in Latin America. 32 Besides the Medical Corps, there were foreign officers in other branches of the Mexican military. A Captain Furlock was an aide to General Ampudia. He assisted and acted as interpreter during the interrogation


32Alcaraz and others, Apuntes para la historia de la guerra entre México y los Estados Unidos, p. 82.
of Riley.33 A Colonel Emelio Langberg served in the Mexican Cavalry under General Urrea;34 a Sebastian Holzinger was a first lieutenant in the Mexican Navy; and a Don Holzinger was an artillery officer at the battle of Cerro Gordo.35 The list goes on and on. When war broke out many people in Europe flocked to Mexican Embassies asking to join their army. In many circles, the United States was looked upon as the aggressor and hence the enemy. The Mexican Minister to England, Doctor J. M. L. Mora, wrote home saying:

33NA, RG94, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, Miscellaneous Papers of the Army of Occupation, Mexico. File on John Riley. Furlock could have been a spelling deviation from Furlong, a name prominent in the Mexican military of this period. For example, a General Cosme Furlong was a member of the Army of the East, while a Marino Furlong was an officer in the Victoria battalion. José María Roa Barcena, Recuerdos de la Invasión Norteamericana (1846-1848), 3 vols. (México: n.p., 1885; reprint ed., México: Editorial Porrúa, 1971) 2:131 and 265.


35Alcaraz and others, Apuntes para la historia de la guerra entre México y los Estados Unidos, pp. 157, 176 and 182. These officers could have been related to Lieutenant-Colonel Holzinger who assisted General Urrea in the capture of Colonel J. W. Fannin during the Texas revolt of 1836; see, Rives, The United States and Mexico 1821-1848, 1:332.
Everyday I am receiving offers . . . of service to the Mexican cause in stopping the American invasion. Among these propositions are many that lack common sense . . . but they all give an evidence of sympathy to our cause. Many officers that served with honor in the English Army asked me to be made part of the Mexican Army . . . this matter is very delicate and can very well succeed if the contracts made here with me are not publicized by the Government . . . .

Jacob Martin, the American Charge d'Affaires at Paris, sent a dispatch to James Buchanan, the Secretary of State, warning him that Mexican agents had engaged about a hundred Carlist officers to enter the Mexican Army. They embarked from various European ports between the 10th and 15th of May, 1847, but their fate remains unknown. Their enlistment contract included free passage to Mexico, ten pounds bounty, naturalization, and certain privileges after they reached Mexico.


37 The Carlists were a faction in a long series of Spanish civil wars during the nineteenth century. Basically, they supported Don Carlos, a pretender to the Spanish throne. It is interesting to note that the Carlists also had a Foreign Legion within their army and therefore those who came to Mexico need not necessarily be Spaniards. Anthony Kockler, Mercenaries (London: Macdonald, 1969), p. 135.

If any Mexican official had any further objections to the establishment of a foreign unit which Riley termed the Irish Legion, he need only look towards his Spanish military heritage. There had always been foreign and especially Irish units in the Spanish Army during the Hapsburgs; however, the advent of the Bourbons to the throne led also to the arrival of several of the old Jacobite Regiments to Spain. Most of these Regiments were infantry and they remained in existence until 1818. Irlanda was originally the Queen's Regiment of Foot in the Jacobite Army, where it had seen service with James II in Ireland, and it was transferred from the French to the Spanish in 1715. Hibernia was of composite formation, and first took the field in 1710. Waterford, created in 1709, was disbanded in 1734, and its effectives were distributed among other Irish regiments, while Limerick passed into Neapolitan Service, and was dissolved at the end of the eighteenth century. Ultonia was stationed in Mexico from 1768 to

39 This term refers to the Catholic Irish Army of King James II of England which was the largest unified force which had up to that date been raised in Ireland. Its purpose was to fight the Protestants and their pretender who deposed James. The army was defeated by William of Orange at the battle of Limerick in 1691. The remnant of this force passed into the employment of continental states which were largely the enemies of England. G. A. Hayes-McCoy, A History of Irish Flags from earliest times (Dublin: Academy Press, 1979), p. 59.
1771. It is interesting to note that in view of the widespread opinion that green is a peculiarly Irish color the uniforms of the Jacobites were red. In later days, the facings of the Ultonia and Urlanda Regiments were blue, while those of other Irish Regiments were green. In 1802, the uniform was changed to blue in all the foreign units in the Spanish service. The officer remained Irish or of Irish descent to the very end, but from the middle of the eighteenth century onwards the rank and file were heavily diluted with men of other nationalities. The Irish briefly reappeared in Spain during the nineteenth century when four Irish units of the British Army were loaned to Queen Isabella II in 1835 in her fight against the Carlists. The units were: the Queen's Own Irish Lancers, the 7th Irish Light Infantry, the 9th Irish Regiment and the 10th Munster Light Infantry. Final mention may be made of Irish units in the New World during the nineteenth century. Simon Bolivar, the South American liberator, had within his forces an Irish Legion. This unit of five thousand men was raised by an Irish nationalist named John Devereux. This man, after being expelled from Ireland for his part in the Rising of 1798, joined cause with Simon

41Hayes-McCoy, A History of Irish Flags from earliest times, p. 124.
Bolivar. After many adventures on many continents, Devereux died in 1854 and was buried in the National Pantheon at Caracas, Venezuela. Among the young soldiers in the Irish Legion was the son of Daniel O'Connell, the champion for Catholic emancipation in Ireland. Devereux gave Morgan O'Connell a commission of captain in the Hussar Guards of the Irish Legion. The unit arrived in South America in 1820 and made a worthy contribution in several engagements. Dom Pedro of Brazil also had an Irish Legion which, like the San Patricios, contained many Germans and other nationalities, and yet the Irish gave it its character if not its name. In 1826, Dom Pedro sent a Colonel Cotter to Ireland to recruit immigrants as colonists and soldiers to fight in his war against Argentina for control of Uruguay. The Legion lasted until 1828 when it mutinied and rioted in Rio de Janiero after which Dom Pedro disbanded it. The Germans were sent to the German colony of Sao Leopoldo, and most of the Irish, some two thousand, were shipped back to Ireland; four hundred were settled in


The new foreign unit in the Mexican Army of November, 1846, started out as an artillery company. Americans deserting to this unit came from various branches of service; the most numerous were from the infantry, followed by artillery and finally cavalry. The Mexican Army, since independence, has always been deficient in her artillery branch. According to a contemporary saying, "the Mexicans had more cavalry than needed, and less artillery." In 1821, Mexico had 1,449 men in the artillery as compared to 13,645 in the cavalry. During the next few years the artillery branch was kept at the strength of three brigades, numbering about 1,800 men. When the war began, Mexico had, on paper, three brigades, five foot companies, a mounted brigade and a sapper battalion. These figures would nearly double her strength from the year 1821; however, when Santa Anna organized his Army of the North

---

47 Rives, The United States and Mexico 1821-1848, 1:94.
in 1847, he only had 584 men, both officers and soldiers, in his artillery branch.\textsuperscript{49} This neglect in quantity also extended to quality as the Mexicans lacked good artillery officers. During the Texas Campaign, a Mexican officer blamed the high loss of soldiers killed in capturing the Alamo on the inability of the commanders to utilize their artillery.\textsuperscript{50} In 1846, the situation was not improved. One official proposed the hiring of foreign artillery specialists to act as Training Officers,\textsuperscript{51} and in essence this was the initial purpose of the unit later called the San Patricios.\textsuperscript{52}

From October, 1846 until February, 1847, the San Patricios, along with the other remnants of General Ampudia's Army of the North, were stationed at San Luis Potosí. When Santa Anna arrived with reinforcements on

\textsuperscript{49}Alcaraz and others, \textit{Apuntes para la historia de la guerra entre México y los Estados Unidos}, p. 69f.

\textsuperscript{50}de la Peña, \textit{With Santa Anna in Texas}, pp. 42-43.

\textsuperscript{51}\textit{La Gestión Diplomática del Doctor Mora}, pp. 44-45.

\textsuperscript{52}Patrick Dalton, a San Patricio, deserted the American Army in October, 1846 and shortly afterwards arrived at San Luis Potosí. It was here that General Santa Anna personally requested him to take a post with the artillery, which he did. NA, RG94, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, Orders and Circulars, 1797-1910, Vol. 41\frac{1}{2}. No. 283; and Richard B. McCormack, "The San Patricio Deserters in the Mexican War," \textit{The Americas} 8 (October 1951):139.
October 8, plans were made for his first and only offensive against the Americans. As preparation for this operation, the troops, including the San Patricios, were constantly drilled and their equipment, such as the cannons, was refurbished and rechecked for use. In the beginning of December, Santa Anna decided to march north from San Luis and attack the Americans at Saltillo just before Christmas. The American Commander, General Worth, received information about this impending attack and called General Taylor for help. Taylor responded by sending several regiments for reinforcement. By early January, 1847, it soon became evident that the Mexican threat evaporated as Santa Anna decided not to attack the reinforced Worth. This prompted Taylor to withdraw a large part of the American forces occupying Saltillo in order that they could be used for the expected Vera Cruz invasion. This withdrawal caused Santa Anna to revive his plans to attack Saltillo.

On January 26, 1847, Santa Anna issued orders for the advance on the Americans. The next day, Wednesday, his vanguard departed. It consisted of a battalion of engineers, three companies of artillery serving as infantry and the foreign unit called the St. Patrick company.53

53 Rives, The United States and Mexico 1821-1848, 2: 338; and Alcaraz and others, Apuntes para la historia de la guerra entre México y los Estados Unidos, p. 92.
The bulk of the army left San Luis on the 29th and 30th. A few days after leaving San Luis, on the road towards the town of Matehuala, the Mexican Army met a group of American prisoners-of-war who were being sent to San Luis and from there to Mexico City. The Americans were impressed by Santa Anna's army of nearly twenty thousand men. They also saw the San Patricios. The deserters were recognized by their former comrades and they jeered and hissed at each other. A prisoner described the meeting:

Among the mighty host we passed, was O'Reilly and his company of deserters bearing aloft in high disgrace the holy banner of St. Patrick. One of these fellows was a Dutchman, who said to Corporal Sharp of Captain Heady's corps, tauntingly, "Vell, you ish goin to Shan Louish, hey?" "Yes," replied Sharp, "I am, and you ish goin to Saltillo, hey?" "Yesh," replied the Dutchman. "Then you ish goin to h_ll in ten days," rejoined Sharp. Some of these fellows were swept away by the cannon and musketry of Buena Vista, while others of them were reserved for a more appropriate doom.54

What is important about this meeting is that it is the first recorded eyewitness account of the unit's banner or flag. It is most unusual that a unit the size of the San Patricios would have their own standard but possibly

54Encarnacion Prisoners: Comprising an Account of the March of the Kentucky Cavalry from Louisville to the Rio Grande, together with an Authentic History of the Captivity of the American Prisoners, including Incidents and Sketches of Men and Things on the route and in Mexico, By a Prisoner (Louisville, Ky.: Prentice and Weissinger, 1848), pp. 43-45.
the Mexicans allowed it to entice more deserters. In any event, it added to the aura and myth surrounding the unit. A contemporary newspaper gave a good description of the flag:

The banner is of green silk, and on one side is a harp, surmounted by the Mexican coat of arms, with a scroll on which is painted "Libertad por la Republica Mexicana." Underneath the harp is the motto of "Erin go Bragh." On the other side is a painting of a badly executed figure made to represent St. Patrick, in his left hand a key and in his right a crook or staff resting upon a serpent. Underneath is painted "San Patricio." 55

Riley was very much pleased with the flag. In writing about it to some friends back in Michigan he described it as "... the glorious emblem of native rights, that banner which should have floated over our native soil many years ago; it was St. Patrick, the Harp of Erin, the Shamrock upon a green field ... ." 56 Riley's words leave the impression that the flag was created by the unit's lieutenant, that is, Riley himself. Aside from the mystery of its creator, there is also a difference of opinion regarding who made the flag. Sam Chamberlain, a member of the U.S. Cavalry who fought against the San Patricios at Buena Vista, stated that the flag was "embroidered by the

55 The Daily Picayune (New Orleans), 9 September 1847.

hands of the fair nuns of San Luis Potosí,"57 while Mexican sources cite it as being made by the crude hands of peasant women.58 In any event, it combined the ancient symbols of Irish freedom with the arms of the modern nation of Mexico. It was carried into battle at Churubusco and there it was captured by the 14th U.S. Infantry.59

On February 16, an American Cavalry patrol briefly skirmished with some Mexican soldiers near Encarnación. Although the Americans did not know it yet, this was the advance guard of Santa Anna's Army of the North. The bulk of the army reached Encarnación on the 19th and Santa Anna reviewed it the next day. By now the Americans were aware of Santa Anna and they withdrew into a defensive position at the Angostura Pass. Santa Anna then quickly arranged his forces. On his left were three heavy sixteen pounders

57 Chamberlain, My Confession, p. 124.


59 The North American (Mexico City), 24 December 1847. In October, 1977 this writer contacted Mr. Stuart L. Butler of Navy and Old Army Branch, Military Archives Division, National Archives, to ascertain if this flag still exists. Unfortunately Mr. Butler did not know if it still existed or its present location. A similar inquiry at West Point proved negative. Perhaps the flag is in some obscure corner of the Smithsonian Institute.
which overlooked the road. They were placed there by the Chief Engineer, General Ignacio Mora y Villamíl and Chief of Artillery, General Antonio Carona. The big guns were manned by the Foreign Legion. They were part of General Mejía's brigade which in turn was under Major General Francisco Pacheco.

Santa Anna began his attack on the 22nd of February by feinting a movement against the American right. This was unnecessary because it was impregnable as it was surrounded by deep arroyos. The main attack was against the American left. Santa Anna began it by forcing a skirmish with the Americans in the late afternoon but darkness brought a halt to the fighting. During the night Santa Anna began massing troops and artillery on the American left. Early next morning he hit the Americans hard. They

Most authorities agree that the San Patricios manned three heavy guns in this engagement; however, there seems to be a disagreement as to their caliber. Some sources state that all three were sixteen pounders. José María Roa Barcena, Recuerdos de la Invasión Norteamericana (1846-1848) 1:162; and Bauer, The Mexican War 1846-1848, p. 210. Some, that the three big guns were a sixteen and two twenty-four pounders. Lavender, Climax at Buena Vista, p. 192; and others contend that the guns consisted of eighteen and twenty-four pounders. McCormack, "The San Patricio Deserters in the Mexican War," p. 132; Fairfax Downey, "The Tragic Story of the San Patricio Battalion," American Heritage 6 (June 1955):22; and Edward J. Nichols, Zach Taylor's Little Army (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1963), p. 223. In any event, the cannons were a larger caliber than anything the Americans had. The advantage of weight of metal lay with the Foreign Legion.
put up a stiff resistance but the pressure slowly forced them back. The Americans then tried a counterattack but it failed and the American line broke. The line was quickly re-formed but it left a gap in which the Mexicans poured through and in the process inflicted many casualties and also captured a four pounder cannon. To exploit the break fully and crack the American center, Santa Anna moved the San Patricios and their three big cannons towards their left. The San Patricios struggled up out of the ravine and unlimbered their guns on the upper central part of the plateau. They poured fire and grape and death into the American ranks. Santa Anna, after being repulsed by the American center, switched to their left and kept pouring men, both infantry and cavalry, through the gap. His purpose was to capture their train and rear guard that was located at the Hacienda San Juan de la Buena Vista. The Americans beat back the Mexicans by a counterattack and attempted to rout them; however, their retreat was being covered by the San Patricio battery. General Taylor then ordered Lieutenant Daniel Rucker and a group of the 1st Dragoons to silence that "damn battery." One of the horse soldiers described what took place:

---

61 Lavender, Climax at Buena Vista, pp. 192-193.
62 Chamberlain, My Confession, p. 124.
Now the order was very easy to give, but rather difficult to execute, but such men as Rucker . . . are not apt to hesitate in the face of danger, so we tightened our saddle girths, and stripped ourselves of all encumbrances . . . With a firm grip on our sabres, down a ravine we went at a trot . . . and were soon hid from the sight of both armies . . . We passed many dead and wounded Mexicans in the gulches . . . We moved up another ravine and rising the bank, saw through the dense cloud of smoke and dust, the glittering cross that waved over the deserter's guns . . . Re-forming our platoons, we went for them at speed. I thought we would capture the guns without much trouble, as the pieces were so elevated that the shots passed high over our heads. Just as we were on them, the Bugler sounded to the "right," in the nick of time for our wheeling flank to clear a yawning chasm full ten yards wide that opened in front of the battery. We were soon under shelter in the ravine, and we kept down this to the road and struck for the pass.\(^\text{63}\)

The San Patricios placed their batteries in an almost unreachable position. However, despite the American failure to capture their cannon, they did carry the field that day. American artillery finally drove the Mexicans back and then shattered their lines. Santa Anna withdrew that night to the town of Agua Nueva. Several days later he started his retreat back to San Luis. Aside from guerrilla actions, there was no more large scale fighting in northern Mexico.

\(^{63}\)Chamberlain, *My Confession*, pp. 124-125. The author, a participant in the U.S. Cavalry charge against the San Patricios, stated that over the battery flew a green banner with a silver cross on it. This description is different from others of the unit's flag. Perhaps this was a different banner or else, during the charge, the soldier, thinking of many things, was mistaken. Chamberlain also printed a picture of the charge. It is now located at the San Jacinto Museum of History in Deer Park, Texas.
In the Mexican after-action-reports of Buena Vista, the Foreign Legion was praised for its performance. All of the officers received brevet promotions and were decorated for their part in the battle. Most important, though, was that from this time on they were called the Company of St. Patrick or the San Patricios by the Mexicans. They won their right to a name. The officers of the unit at Buena Vista were Commanding Officer, Captain (Brevet Major) Francisco Rosendo Moreno who was wounded in the battle. Other officers included First Lieutenant (Brevet Captain) John Riley, Second Lieutenants Camillo Manzano, killed in action, John Stephenson, who was wounded, and Ramón


65 Francisco Rosendo Moreno was born in Florida. In April, 1845, he was a Captain and Adjutant to General Ampudia. When the Foreign Legion, later known as the San Patricios, was formed he was given command of it. He spoke fluent English. Many U.S. deserters who became San Patricios later testified at their court-martials that they were forced to join the unit by Moreno who starved and beat them into submission. One San Patricio, Private Marques Frantius, stated he was forced to join after Moreno broke his collar bone. Moreno was later taken prisoner by the Americans at Churubusco in August, 1847. After the War he continued on with his military career. G. T. Hopkins to Justin H. Smith, 1 June 1917, Justin Smith Papers, University of Texas Archives, Austin; Unsigned Letter, Mexico City, 17 October 1847, Ibid.; Frost, Life of Major General Zachary Taylor, p. 49; Alcaraz and others, Apuntes para la historia de la guerra entre México y los Estados Unidos, p. 64; and NA,RG94, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, General Correspondence 1890-1917. No. 27932.
Bachelor or Batchelor. The total casualties suffered by the unit at Buena Vista were: one officer killed and one wounded; two sergeants killed; two corporals killed and one wounded; seventeen privates killed and four wounded. 66

Santa Anna and his army, after retreating from Buena Vista or as the Mexicans call it, Angostura, arrived in the vicinity of San Luis Potosí on the 9th of March. Now at this point certain events transpired which obscured the next movements of the San Patricios. When Santa Anna reached San Luis he was informed that there was a political revolt in the Capital. The time had come for him to stop these petty partisan revolts which were paralyzing the war effort and therefore he immediately made arrangements to go at once to Mexico City. Before he left though, he quickly formed a division of troops from the remnants of his army and the garrison that had been left behind at San Luis. He managed to gather together a force which numbered 5,650 men. It contained four battalions of light infantry, two battalions of the line, two batteries of artillery, and some squadrons of cavalry. The infantry, amounting to approximately 4,000 men was divided into two brigades under the command of Generals Ciriaco Vásquez and Pedro Ampudia. The cavalry

66 Diario del gobierno de la República Mexicana, 25-25 June 1846; and Lavender, Climax at Buena Vista, p. 211.
was led by General Juvera. Santa Anna ordered this army to start marching towards Mexico City. It left San Luis on March 15. General Mora y Villamil was left at San Luis with other remnants of units and ordered by Santa Anna to reorganize the Army of the North. Santa Anna then departed with a small detachment for Mexico City. Upon arriving there, he quickly appeased the feuding factions and prepared to meet the American invasion force which had landed at Veracruz. He ordered the military commander of the state of Veracruz to try to stall the American advance; he sent militia from Mexico City and Puebla to the front; and finally, he ordered Vasquez and the army marching from San Luis not to come to Mexico City but to march directly to Jalapa. He decided to meet the Americans at Cerro Gordo.

While these events were transpiring, the exact location of the San Patricios is not definitely known. The unit may have stayed behind at San Luis under Mora y Villamil; it may have been part of the force under Vasquez which went on towards Cerro Gordo; or it may have escorted Santa Anna to Mexico City. As for the first possibility, it is known from the court martial transcripts of John Riley that the unit was in San Luis in mid-March; however

---

67 Roa Bárceña, Recuerdos de la Invasión Norte- americana (1846-1848), 2:10.
all of the survivors of Buena Vista were there until the 15th. 68

Sometime in late May or early June, John Riley and the San Patricios were in Mexico City and attached to the Army of the East which Santa Anna formed after Cerro Gordo. How or when they arrived is unknown; but what is known, is that for the next several months, during a lull in the fighting, Riley was concerned with securing new recruits. With this in mind he visited American prisoners-of-war confined to Mexico City's fort named Santiago Tlaltelolco, and tried to persuade them to join the San Patricios. 69

68"The first place I saw Reilly was San Louis in March about the middle of the month . . ." (H. R. Parker, witness for the defense) NA, RG94, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, Miscellaneous Papers of the Army of Occupation, Mexico. File on John Riley; for various opinions concerning the whereabouts of the San Patricio unit in this period, see Wallace, "The Battalion of Saint Patrick in the Mexican War," p. 86; D. Vicente Riva Palacio, ed., México a través de los Siglos, 6 vols. (Mexico City: Editorial Cumbre, S.A., 1940), 4:714; Alcaraz and others, Apuntes para la historia de la guerra entre México y los Estados Unidos, p. 120; and Herbert E. Bolton, Guide to materials for the history of the United States in the principal archives of Mexico (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institute of Washington, 1913), p. 405.

If Riley's friendly overtures were not effective, then Captain Moreno, Commander of the San Patricios, would resort to physical abuse and torture in order to force enlistments. Several members of the unit were thus recruited.  

The San Patricios were also augmented by the drafting of resident foreigners in Mexico and by another influx of American deserters which came over to Mexico's side after the fall of Puebla. After the Americans occupied the city of Puebla on May 15, General Scott paused there several months to regroup his forces before pushing on to the Capital. During this time, Mexican

---

70 See supra, p. 123, footnote 65.

71 Richard B. McCormack, "The San Patricio Deserters in the Mexican War," p. 136. Mention can be made here of another source of manpower for the San Patricios, an almost unknown volunteer Lancer company. It seems that a number of American deserters belonged to this group, as its main purpose was to act as an escort along the dangerous roads leading to and from Mexico City and not engage in fighting against fellow Americans. The salary of these cavalry men was twenty-five cents a day. Many Americans in this group at this time were placed in the San Patricios, Mexico's Foreign Legion. NA, RG94, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, Orders and Circulars, 1797-1910, Vol. 41 1/2. No. 283, Court Martial of Hezekiah Akles.
efforts to entice American soldiers to desert bore fruit and enjoyed a partial success, for a fairly large number passed over to the Mexican side. Because of this increase, Santa Anna on July 1 directed his Minister of War, General Lino Alcorta, to issue an order changing the San Patricios from one artillery company to two infantry companies.\textsuperscript{71} The order read that "Two infantry companies of territorial militia are to be formed from the unit known as the Foreign Legion. They are to be named the First and Second territorial militia companies of San Patricio." \textsuperscript{73} Each company had a captain, a first lieutenant, two second lieutenants, a sergeant first class, four sergeants second class, nine corporals, four buglers and eighty privates, for a total complement of a little more than two hundred men.\textsuperscript{74} The uniform assigned to the unit was the same as that pre-

\textsuperscript{71} During this period, it was not unusual for foot artillery to serve also as infantry. The care and operation of artillery required few men while the remainder served in defensive and, at times, offensive operation, see, Katcher, \textit{The Mexican-American War 1846-1848}, p. 14; and Bauer, \textit{The Mexican War 1846-1848}, p. 20.

\textsuperscript{73} \textit{Diario del gobierno de la República Mexicana}, 15 July 1847.

\textsuperscript{74} \textit{Ibid.}, 21 July 1847.
scribed for the territorial infantry. The commander, Francisco Moreno, was promoted to the rank of colonel. John Riley was captain of one company while a Saturnino

The active militia regiments had been in the field so long that their uniform was almost the same as the regulars. They work dark blue coats with red collars, cuffs, turnbacks and lapels with yellow piping. Brass buttons had the unit designation stamped on them. The coat had tri-pointed false pocket flaps with a button at each point's end, while on each turnback were two yellow quivers with three arrows in each, two inches long. Trousers were sky blue with red piping, and the regular infantry shako was to be worn; see Katcher, *The Mexican-American War 1846-1848*, p. 26. This uniform was worn until the battle of Churubusco after which time the San Patricios seem to have worn only the undress uniform of the Mexican infantry until their final dissolution. See Finke, "The Organization and Uniforms of the San Patricio Units of the Mexican Army, 1846-1848," p. 38. An accurate presentation of their uniforms is made in the paintings of Don Troiani for the article by B. Kimball Baker, "The St. Patricks fought for their skins, and Mexico."
O'Leary was captain of the second one. Other officers included Ramón Badillo Bachelor, Auguste

O'Leary, along with many San Patricios, was captured by the Americans at Churubusco. At the time, it was stated that O'Leary's real name was Reid and that he was a lieutenant in one of the volunteer units from Louisiana, from which he later deserted. It was further believed that he was originally from New York and there was a fighter by trade. Unsigned Letter. Mexico City, 17 October 1847, Justin Smith Papers, University of Texas Archives, Austin. This view seems incorrect as there is no record of his court martial under either name. Rather, Mexican sources described him simply as an Englishman fighting for Mexico. This implies that he was a foreigner not a deserter. Former San Patricio Hezekiah Akles testified at his court martial that he was recruited by Captain O'Leary on the road from Puebla to Mexico City and that initially he received no pay from him. Captain O'Leary was badly wounded at the battle of Churubusco and possibly because of his condition and rank was paroled soon after being taken by the Americans. His eventual fate is unknown. NA,RG94, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, Orders and Circulars, 1797-1910, Vol. 41s. General Order No. 281; Alcaraz and others, Apuntes para la historia de la guerra entre México y los Estados Unidos, p. 255; and D. Vicente Riva Palacio, ed., México a través de los Siglos, 4:679.

See footnote 66; also, Diario del gobierno de la República Mexicana, 21 July 1847. G. T. Hopkins who first wrote on the San Patricios alleged that Bachelor or Batchelor was an American deserter who was captured at Churubusco and later executed. This view is incorrect. There are no court martial records for either name. Instead, Batchelor seems to have been of Latin background rather than English or an American. There were several prominent military men in the Mexican Army during this period that had the surname of Bachiller and perhaps were related to our San Patricio lieutenant. An inspection of the papers of the late G. T. Hopkins may eventually offer a clue to his exact identity. G. T. Hopkins to Justin H. Smith, 1 June 1917, Justin Smith Papers, University of Texas Archives, Austin; G. T. Hopkins, "The San Patricio Battalion in the Mexican War"; and José Enrique de la Peña, With Santa Anna in Texas, p. 111.
Morstadt, Patrick Dalton and Matthew Doyle. The soldiers that formed the new San Patricio unit were obliged to sign an enlistment contract for a term of six months. Up until that time, their services were the

Private August Morstadt of the 7th U.S. Infantry deserted his country on November 3, 1846, at Monterrey, Mexico. He claimed to join the San Patricios in June, 1847, and, because of his ability and conduct, successfully rose in rank from corporal to second lieutenant. He was captured by the Americans at Churubusco. He was tried and convicted of desertion and executed on September 13, 1847, at Mixcoac, Mexico. NA, RG94, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, Report of William Harney, Miscellaneous File, No. 45.

Patrick Dalton was a friend and lieutenant of John Riley. Like Riley, Dalton entered the U.S. from Canada and in 1845 joined the U.S. Infantry. He deserted on October 23, 1846, and soon became a San Patricio, rising to the rank of first lieutenant. He was captured at Churubusco and tried for desertion. On September 10, 1847, he was hanged at San Angel, Mexico. NA, RG94, U.S. Army Register of Enlistments, 1845, 44:68.

There is no information available regarding this officer; perhaps he was one of the two second lieutenants of the San Patricios that was killed at the battle of Churubusco. The names of these officers are found in Diario de gobierno de la República Mexicana, 21 July 1847.

During this period, volunteers in the American Army frequently served terms for six months. In fact, when war was declared, President Polk initially asked the various states for six-month volunteers. This term was later changed to one year. Perhaps the Mexican Government, in seeking new American recruits for the San Patricios, adopted this American policy as an extra incentive to join and thus could be an explanation for this condition in their enlistment contract. See, Bauer, The Mexican War 1846-1848, pp. 57 and 69-70.
result of an informal agreement with the Mexican Government stipulating that they fight for the duration of the War. Hence, with this new agreement, they would fight for a specific period of time and only under certain conditions. These conditions, as embodied in their contract, were six in number and included the following: first, that the Mexican Government give them lands to farm after the War; second, that those who wish to return to Europe after the War, could do so at the Government's expense and would receive an allowance in cash; third, the Mexican Government would furnish the San Patricios uniforms, shoes, lodgings, etc. during their term of enlistment; fourth, the first sergeants would receive five reals, second sergeants, four, corporals, three, and all other soldiers two and a half per day; fifth, Colonel Francisco Moreno was acknowledged as the commander of the San Patricios and whose orders were to be obeyed. Misbehavior would be subject to punishment according to the ordinance of the Mexican Army; sixth, the Legion, known as the San Patricios, would be subject in every respect to the aforesaid ordinances. 82 The commanding officer of the unit, Colonel Francisco Moreno, signed for Mexico. As mentioned the contract ran for a term of six months starting from the creation of the new San Patricio unit, July 1, 1847; however, for unknown reasons,

82 Mexico City, Archivo General de la Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores (hereafter ASRE), H/252(73:72)/381.
Santa Anna did not approve of the terms until August 9.\textsuperscript{83} In any event, the contract was retroactive.

Several weeks later, the San Patricios fought their last battle as a unit. The battles of Contretras and Churubusco, on August 19th and 20th, spelled doom not only for the San Patricios but for Mexico as well. On August 15, General Scott decided to march on Mexico City via the route from the southern shore of Lake Chalco to the village of San Agustín. Santa Anna by this time succeeded in collecting another army of about twenty thousand men; and, while his plan was to remain on the defensive, he was unsure as to which direction the American attack would come. Mexican military experts expected the main thrust to come from the east; and, therefore, Santa Anna strongly fortified a rocky hill known as Peñon Viejo which overlooked that approach to the city. In order not to take any chances though, Santa Anna ordered other troops to guard different approaches. He sent General Valencia and his seven thousand-man Army of the North to guard some of the southern routes and directed General Nicolás Bravo to defend the San Antonio-Churubusco road.\textsuperscript{84} Santa Anna, with the main part of his army, stationed himself at Peñon

\textsuperscript{83}Roa Bárdena, Recuerdos de la Invasión Norte-americana (1846-1848), 2:178.

\textsuperscript{84}Ibid., pp. 173-174.
In addition to the main force, Santa Anna had, as reserve, at least six brigades which were directly under his command. That of General Joaquín Rangel, contained the Grenadier Guards, the Battalion of San Blas, the National Guard of Morelia and the two San Patricio Companies. General Rangel and the San Patricios arrived at Peñón Viejo from Mexico City on August 9th in response to rumors that the Americans had begun their advance. There, they remained with the main force until about the 15th when it became apparent that Scott would come not from the east but by the southern route. Santa Anna then withdrew the greater part of his troops to the fortified positions of San Antonio and Churubusco to await the expected attack. He sent General Rangel's brigade, in-

85 A graphic account of Santa Anna's march from Mexico City to Peñón Viejo was written by Guillermo Prieto who was one of the many civilians who accompanied the soldiers; see, Guillermo Prieto, Memorias de mis Tiempos (Mexico City: Editorial Patria, S.A., 1969), pp. 402-403.

86 Roa Bárcena, Recuerdos de la Invasión Norte-americana (1846-1848), 2:174. Joaquín Rangel was a blond Mexican who had a science background. He started his life as a Government printer. He later met General José María Torne1 who persuaded him to change his career to the military, Prieto, Memorias de mis Tiempos, p. 422.


88 Ibid., 2:459.
cluding the San Patricios, to the Ciudadela or Citadel on the outskirts of Mexico City, to be held in reserve there. He did not send one company of San Patricios to join Valencia's Army of the North at Padierna, as some have claimed, but rather kept both companies at the Citadel until the battle of Churubusco. 89

On the 18th of August, American engineers, looking for a route to flank the Mexican line, clashed with pickets of General Valencia near a ranch southwest of the Capital

89 Authorress Patricia Cox states that one company of San Patricios was sent to Valencia to become part of his army and upon his defeat at Contreras this company was made prisoner by the Americans. This view is incorrect. All of the San Patricios that were captured by the Americans were taken at or near Churubusco. Valencia's force, which was destroyed before the battle of Churubusco, consisted of three divisions commanded by Generals Mejía, Parrodi, and Salas. The troops were: the active militia of San Luis Potosí, the Guanajuato Regiment (destroyed in action here), the Tampico Coast Guard, seasoned troops who had seen service in all the battles against General Taylor (destroyed in action here), the 10th and 12th Line Infantry Regiments, and the 2nd, 3rd, 7th, and 8th Cavalry Regiments. Perhaps Ms. Cox's view is based upon the fact that two cannons recovered from Valencia at Padierna were the brass six pounders the San Patricios captured from the Americans at Buena Vista; however, by this time the San Patricio unit was changed from an artillery company to two infantry companies and therefore did not man these cannons anymore. Ibid., 2:467-468; Roa Bárzona, Recuerdos de la Invasión Norteamericana (1846-1848), 2:173; Katcher, The Mexican—War 1846-1848, pp. 34-35; and Patricia Cox, "Los Hombres del San Patricio," Hagar 2000, no. 11 (1980), p. 20.
called Padierna. Santa Anna, upon hearing of the encounter, ordered Valencia to withdraw his force towards the city as he still expected the main attack at Churubusco. Valencia, a political rival of Santa Anna, viewed matters differently. He saw the withdrawal of the American engineers as a preview of a victory that would enhance him not Santa Anna and therefore he advanced to attack. On the next day Valencia's artillery again forced the Americans to pull back and now, as an unforeseen battle was beginning to develop, Santa Anna sent reinforcements to Valencia. He immediately ordered General Pérez and his brigade to march from Coyoacan to Padierna. Santa Anna himself followed Pérez with a regiment of his elite hussars and a cavalry detachment from Veracruz. At 5:00 p.m. on the 19th he overtook Pérez on the outskirts of San Angel and together they waited there until the next morning at which time they planned to effect a union with Valencia. However, while Santa Anna remained at San Angel waiting for daylight and Valencia at Padierna dreaming about future victories, the Americans spent their night

---

90 Pérez's three thousand-man brigade was composed of the 1st, 3rd, and 4th Light Infantry Regiments and the 11th Line Regiment. Roa Bárcena, Recuerdos de la Invasión Norteamericana (1846-1848), 2:174.

91 The elite mounted unit, Hussars of the Guard of the Supreme Powers, were named hussars in 1846 but had been in existence since 1843. For a description of their uniforms see, Katcher, The Mexican-American War 1846-1848, p. 29.
discovering a route to Valencia's so-called impregnable rear. By 3:00 a.m. they were in a position to attack. At sunrise the Americans stormed Valencia's front, rear and left flank. Within seventeen minutes Valencia's Army of the North ceased to exist. About seven hundred men were killed and over eight hundred taken prisoner; the rest retreated towards the city.\footnote{Bauer, \textit{The Mexican War 1846-1848}, pp. 295-296.}

The night before Valencia's defeat, Santa Anna called up Rangel's brigade to add to his reinforcements at San Angel.\footnote{Roa Bárceña, \textit{Recuerdos de la Invasión Norte-americana (1846-1848)}, 2:247.} When word reached him of Valencia's defeat, he decided that his only alternative was to pull in his defenses closer to the city. Therefore, he marched to Churubusco to order General Rincón to hold that point while he quickly organized the defenses of the gates leading to Mexico City. He sent Rangel's brigade back to the Citadel in order to be in a position to defend the Niño Perdido Gate.\footnote{Ibid., 2:259.} Before doing so, however, Santa Anna detached the San Patricio Companies and made them part of the defense at Churubusco. He originally placed the San Patricio Companies and the Tlapa Battalion at a fortified

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{Bauer, \textit{The Mexican War 1846-1848}, pp. 295-296.}
\footnote{Roa Bárceña, \textit{Recuerdos de la Invasión Norte-americana (1846-1848)}, 2:247.}
\footnote{Ibid., 2:259.}
\end{footnotes}
position by the bridge over the Churubusco River. They were to protect and help man a battery of five cannons. This occurred on the morning of August 20th.\textsuperscript{95}

Southwest of the Churubusco bridge, on the Mexican

\textsuperscript{95}Ibid., 2:271; and Alcaraz and others, Apuntes para la historia de la guerra entre México y los Estados Unidos, p. 245. Former San Patricio and U.S. deserter, Edward McHerron, testified at his court-martial that the San Patricio Companies were closely confined to quarters (at the Citadel) until the night previous to the battle of Churubusco. This would coincide with the time Santa Anna called up Rangel's brigade, part of which included the San Patricios, that was, the night of the 19th.

NA, RG 94, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, Orders and Circulars, 1797-1910, Vol. 41\textsuperscript{1/2}. No. 283, Court Martial of Edward McHerron. It should be noted here that several recent writers on the San Patricios, in looking for some justification for the American deserters in that unit, seize upon statements such as McHerron's in that they were confined in the Citadel and then marched out to battle, to present a notion that many of the deserters were forced to fight against their countrymen. For example, B. Kimball Baker states that the San Patricios were marched to the battle of Churubusco sandwiched in between the Independencia and Bravo battalions because of Mexican mistrust of their reliability. This statement, like many similar ones, is incorrect, as the Independencia and Bravo battalions were brought to Churubusco from Peñon Viejo several days before the San Patricios arrived. General Rangel's brigade included some of the most elite troops of Santa Anna's army. B. Kimball Baker, "The St. Patricks fought for their skins, and Mexico," p. 97; and Rives, The United States and Mexico 1821-1848, 2:481
right flank, lay the Franciscan Convent of San Mateo. This position, like the bridge, was also strongly fortified by the Mexicans. In addition, they held the road leading to the city, north of the river. At noon on the 20th, the Americans simultaneously attacked all three Mexican positions; however, the attacks were not coordinated and, in reality, consisted of three separate and distinct combats. In all three engagements, the Americans initially suffered heavy casualties. For the first time in the War, the Mexicans put up a determined resistance. General Rincón's able leadership, a good defensive position and the tenacity of the troops, all combined to give the Americans a "run for their money."

96 The convent was located about a quarter of a mile southwest of the bridge. The convent was actually a series of buildings which included a beautiful church dating from 1678. South of the church was a large building with a second story gallery overlooking several gardens. The whole complex was surrounded by a twelve-foot wall. Santa Anna had the walls scaffolded for infantry and dug huge entrenchments in front of the complex thus turning it into a formidable fortress. For a contemporary view of the fort (south wall) see, Riva Palacio, ed., México a través de los Siglos, ff. p. 677. For a modern photo of the fort (southwest wall) see, Cox, "Los Hombres del San Patricio," p. 20. It should be also pointed out that several contemporary books on the battle erroneously called the convent San Pablo. For example, Oswandel and Brooks, both participants in the War, wrote accounts in which they called the convent-fortress San Pablo. This error was later picked up by recent historians and transferred to their accounts. Edward Wallace and Sister Blanche McEniry in their articles concerning the San Patricios incorrectly called the convent San Pablo instead of San Mateo.
The first indication of any American victory came at the convent. The Americans drew a rough semi-circle to the south and west of the fort and then advanced. Despite suffering severe losses the Americans held their ground. After several hours of slowly gaining ground, the Americans were met by a slackening of Mexican fire. This was an indication that they were running out of bullets. At this moment, Santa Anna ordered into the fort a wagon of ammunition and an infantry company from Tlapa and one company of San Patricios.\textsuperscript{97} The other company stayed at the Churubusco bridge. Unfortunately for the defenders in the convent, the cartridges in the wagon were not the right caliber for the weapons they had. Only the San Patricios could use them, and use them they did.\textsuperscript{98} The San Patricios, along with the Bravo Battalion, were stationed at the ramparts in front of the fort and at the windows of the west wall. There, they manned three of the fort's seven

\textsuperscript{97}Alcaraz and others, \textit{Apuntes para la historia de la guerra entre México y los Estados Unidos}, p. 246; and Roa Bércena, \textit{Recuerdos de la Invasión Norteamericana} (1846-1848), 2:272. Almost every work on the San Patricios states that both companies of San Patricios fought inside the convent, and hence the unit perished when the convent was taken. This view can be easily disproved by looking at where those San Patricios were when taken prisoner by the Americans. The greatest number being captured by the soldiers of Generals Worth and Shield was near the Churubusco bridge. Also, most contemporary Mexican accounts of the battle state that only a part of the San Patricios were sent into the fort.

\textsuperscript{98}Diario del gobierno de la República Mexicana, 31 August 1847.
cannons and fired them with a deadly accuracy. It was said that some of their shots were directed against a few of their former officers with a deadly effect; or in the words of a participant "with the malignity of private revenge." However good their aim, it was not enough. Events then quickly happened. First, the troops north of the river finally began to give way to the Americans, and in panic they fled back to the city. The Americans, under General Worth, were then successful in partially surrounding the entrenchments at the Churubusco bridge. When they nearly encircled the Mexicans, a charge was ordered and in a few instants the bridge was cleared. The victory was swift and complete. The Americans captured a great number of prisoners and enemy ordnance. The North American commented: "Of prisoners we paused to take but few, although receiving the surrender of many; to disarm and pass them was deemed sufficient. Among them, however, are secured twenty-seven deserters from our own army, arrayed in the most tawdry Mexican uniforms." One company of San


100 Brooks, A Complete History of the Mexican War, p. 381; the North American (Mexico City), 23 November and 21 December 1847; and McCormack, "San Patricio Deserters in the Mexican War," pp. 132-133.

101 The North American (Mexico City), 21 December 1847. The 14th Infantry under Colonel Trousdale took part in this engagement and captured the San Patricio flag. Ibid., 24 December 1847.
Patricios was destroyed here.

About the same time that General Worth's troops carried the Churubusco bridgehead, General Twigg's division captured the entrenchments in front of the fortified convent. These maneuvers had the immediate effect of isolating the convent. The Mexicans, including the second company of San Patricios, fell back into the convent itself and put in a last ditch effort. It was reported that the Mexicans tried to raise the same flag of surrender three times and that the San Patricios ripped it down each time. Knowing the fate that awaited them, they were very desperate. However, without any ammunition, resistance was hopeless and finally Captain James M. Smith of the 3d Infantry entered the convent and stopped the slaughter by putting up a white handkerchief himself. The Mexicans, given the opportunity, quickly laid down their arms. The road to Mexico City was now wide open.

Captain Smith's brigade of Twigg's division received the surrender of the garrison. It numbered 104 officers and 1,155 men. Included were General Manuel Rincón, the commanding officer, ex-President Pedro Anaya and Manuel Gorostiza, ex-Minister to the United States.102


103 Rives, The United States and Mexico 1821-1848, 2:484.
It also included a number of San Patricio survivors, among them its leader, John Riley, and other American deserters. As regards the San Patricios who were American deserters, it soon became apparent immediately after the fall of the convent that they would have to be protected from the wrath of their former comrades. The American soldiers were so enraged at them that their officers had to intervene to prevent them from shooting or bayonetting them on the spot.\textsuperscript{104} In the words of an American participant, "They looked meanly enough ... to eat them up."\textsuperscript{105}

The actual fighting of the war was over for the San Patricio Companies, as the unit was destroyed at the battle of Churubusco. Before that engagement, they were at their authorized strength of two infantry companies, approximately 204 men, inclusive of officers. When the smoke of battle cleared, the San Patricios suffered a 60 to 80 percent loss which included those killed, wounded

\textsuperscript{104} Oswandel, \textit{Notes of the Mexican War 1846-47-48}, p. 472. At the later battle of Chapultepec, American troops nearly killed a Mexican captain after he surrendered because they thought he was a San Patricio on account of his name and light complexion. The soldier turned out to be a native Mexican and the son of the Mexican Minister to Great Britain. His name was Tomas Murphy and luckily he was spared. Manuel Balbontín, \textit{La Invasión Americana 1846 a 1847} (México: Gonzalo A. Estera, 1883), p. 131.

\textsuperscript{105} McCormack, "The San Patricio Deserters in the Mexican War," p. 133.
and captured. As far as the exact numbers within those categories, there seems to be a few discrepancies. Some authorities contend that there were over 260 American deserters in the ranks of the San Patricios at Churubusco; this number excludes the various other non-American foreigners which also made up the unit. Therefore, if this figure is accurate there would be three infantry companies of San Patricios at Churubusco instead of two. At the other extreme, Colonel Moreno, the overall commander of the San Patricios, claimed, upon his capture at Churubusco, that there were only 119 men in his unit. Of course he could have been referring to only the one company he was with when captured. Also, one must keep in mind that he gave this information to an American officer, his enemy, and hence could have been deliberately misleading.

The number of San Patricios taken prisoner at Churubusco also varies according to different sources:

106 Wallace, "Deserters in the Mexican War," p. 380, claims there were 260 American deserters in the San Patricios, while Downey, "The Tragic Story of the San Patricio Battalion," p. 22, and Tom Mahoney, "50 Hanged and 11 Branded: The Story of the San Patricio Battalion," Southwest Review (Autumn 1947):375, state there were 260 San Patricios, deserters and non-deserters alike. Two sources closer to the truth are Baker, "The St. Patricks fought for their skins, and Mexico," p. 98, and Potter, To the Golden Door, p. 486. Both state there were approximately 200 San Patricios, including an unknown number of American deserters.

107 Unsigned Letter, Mexico City, 17 October 1847, Justin Smith Papers.
however, the general opinion is that approximately 85 San Patricios were captured at the battle of Churubusco. This figure includes those who were taken at the bridge and in the convent. From this number 72 were deserters from the American Army. Casualties sustained by the San Patricios included the following killed: 2 second lieutenants, 4 sergeants, 6 corporals and 23 privates. These figures amount to 35 men killed in action and when taken with the 85 prisoners you have a total of 120 men; this leaves approximately 80 unaccounted for. This number probably survived the battle and escaped with the remnants of the Mexican Army. These surviving San Patricios fought in the last battles of the War as individuals, not as a


109 Diario del gobierno de la República Mexicana, 31 August 1847. These figures were submitted by ex-President Pedro Anaya who was a participant in the battle. Colonel Moreno admitted only 5 casualties for the unit. Unsigned Letter, Mexico City, 7 October 1847, Justin Smith Papers.
While the San Patricios lost the fight at Churubusco, Santa Anna still had high praise for them; in fact, he said if he had a few hundred more men like them he would have won the battle. The Mexican Government thought so highly of the soldiers who defended Churubusco that they issued medals to them--gold to the generals, silver to the officers and copper to the soldiers.

During the last battles of Mexico City the following units of the Mexican Army participated as units: Molino del Rey, the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Light Regiments, the 1st Line Regiment (destroyed in action here), 10th and 11th Line Regiments, and the Regular Standing Battalion of Mexico; at Chapultepec, the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Light Regiments, the 10th Line Regiment (destroyed in action here), the Regular Standing Battalion of Mexico, San Blas National Guard Battalion (destroyed in action here), and the Military Academy cadets and professors, with the Hidalgo Battalion; at the gates of the city, the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Light Regiments, the 11th Line Regiment, the Invalid Battalion, the 1st Active Regiment of Mexico, the Hussars of the Guard, the 2nd, 3rd, 5th, 7th, 8th and 9th Cavalry Regiments, the Michocan and Oaxaca Cavalry Regiments and the Tulancingo Cuirassiers. Katcher, *The Mexican-American War 1846-1848*, pp. 35-36. One American deserter related many years afterwards that he fought for the Mexicans at the battles of Molino del Rey, Chapultepec, and the gates of the city. John F. Finerty, *John F. Finerty Reports Porfirian Mexico 1879*, ed. Wilbert H. Timmons (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1974), p. 199. Irish deserters were reported fighting at Molino del Rey by the Boletín de Atlisco (Mexico City), 9 September 1847, as found in the Daily Picayune, 26 September 1847.


The North American, 16 November 1847.
CHAPTER V

THE SAN PATRICIOS 1847-1848

After the battle of Churubusco, General Scott, the American Commander in Mexico, ordered trials for those San Patricios captured who were American deserters. By General Orders 259 and 263 Scott convened two courts martial to try seventy-two deserters. The first court was called on August 23, 1847, at the village of Tacubaya with Brevet Colonel, John Garland as President. The court was composed of regular army officers from the infantry and artillery. The second court was convened a few days later on August 26 at San Angel. It was presided over by Colonel Bennet Riley, who, by the way, was an Irish Catholic soldier.

At Tacubaya forty-three San Patricios were brought before the court. The Chief Prosecutor or Judge Advocate, 


Major R. G. Buchanan of the 4th U.S. Infantry, produced two surprise witnesses for the army's case against the deserters. The two were former San Patricios who were foreign residents of Mexico but not American deserters. For unknown reasons John Wilton, a former English sailor, and Thomas O'Connor, an Irish muleteer, agreed to testify against their fellow San Patricios. The evidence they produced against them was so damning that six of the forty-three defendants offered no excuse for their actions and

John Wilson had been resident in Mexico for seventeen months before he was captured by the Americans at Churubusco and had been in the San Patricios for only about three months where he was a sergeant. He was an English sailor who jumped ship at Jamaica and came to Mexico via Havana. NA, RG94, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, General Correspondence 1890-1917, No. 27932. Cases of Henry Venator and James McDowell.

Thomas O'Connor was an Irishman who lived in Mexico City for nine years. He had been in the San Patricios not quite a month before his capture at Churubusco. NA, RG94, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, Miscellaneous Papers of the Army of Occupation, Mexico. File on John Riley. It is interesting to speculate as to why Wilton and O'Connor testified against their former comrades as their status was merely that of prisoners-of-war. O'Connor was returned back to the Mexicans shortly after the trial while Wilton remained a prisoner of the Americans until the end of the War.
pleaded guilty to the charges. The remainder tried to justify their conduct by offering a variety of excuses. Many, in fact about thirty, claimed that they were captured by the Mexicans while drunk and forced to join the San Patricios. Very few admitted to succumbing because of the bond of religion or monetary reward. One stated that he joined because he thought that the sole object of the Foreign Legion was to act as an escort for foreigners, not to engage in combat. Almost all who testified denied firing their guns against their former comrades. The court was unimpressed. The fact remains that all of the defendants were captured wearing a Mexican uniform while fighting against their fellow Americans. All were found

---


7 McCormack, "The San Patricio Deserters in the Mexican War," p. 137, is the only author on this subject to present the issue of intoxication as a reason for American desertions to the enemy; most others dwell on religion or race as the cause.

8 NA, RG94, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, General Correspondence 1890-1917, No. 27932. Case of Hezekiah Akles.
guilty.

The court at Tacubaya sentenced all of the defendants to death with the following exceptions: Edward Ellis was found to be improperly enlisted and therefore technically still a civilian and hence outside the scope of military justice. He was released and soon disappeared into anonymity. Lewis Prefier was found to be a man not in his proper senses and given a general discharge.9 The remainder were to hang except two who were to be shot. Martin Miles and Abraham Fitzpatrick were sentenced to be shot to death. This punishment was usually reserved for deserters not traitors. Martin Miles, however, was a deserter and a San Patricio, and there was nothing at his trial to show that he warranted any other death than that by hanging. His defense, like twenty-nine of the other defendants, was that he was captured by the Mexicans while drunk and forced to join the San Patricios.10 Why he was afforded a special consideration is a mystery. Perhaps an influential friend interceded on his behalf.

The case of Abraham Fitzpatrick is unusual in that, despite allegations to the contrary, he was not a San


10NA, RG94, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, General Correspondence 1890-1917, No. 27932. Case of Martin Miles.
Fitzpatrick was a career soldier whose family owned a prosperous farm in upstate New York. At the time of his disappearance or desertion, he was a sergeant in A Company, 8th U.S. Infantry. During his trial, Fitzpatrick testified that he was captured by the Mexicans while drunk and imprisoned. Later he was brought before John Riley and asked to join the San Patricios; Fitzpatrick refused. He was then taken to Santa Anna who offered him an officer's commission if he fought for them. Fitzpatrick emphatically stated that "he would never take up arms against the Americans." After the battle of Churubusco, he

The first historical articles on the San Patricios were written by G. T. Hopkins, "The San Patricio Battalion in the Mexican War," the U.S. Cavalry Journal 24 (1913); and Edward S. Wallace, "Deserters in the Mexican War," the Hispanic American Historical Review 15 (August 1935). Neither mentioned Fitzpatrick as a San Patricio; however, several years later McEniry in her work, American Catholics in the War With Mexico, listed Fitzpatrick as a deserter and San Patricio. She based this finding on an article in the Catholic Herald, 28 October 1847. She did not corroborate it. Later writers followed her example and included Fitzpatrick on their lists. McCormack, "The San Patricio Deserters in the Mexican War" implied that Fitzpatrick was a San Patricio and reinforced this position by using, albeit superficially, the transcripts from their court martial. If he would have carefully read the testimony he would have seen that, while Fitzpatrick was a deserter, he was not a San Patricio. He did not fight against his fellow Americans. Unfortunately present day writers such as B. Kimball Baker, "The St. Patricks fought for their skins, and Mexico," continue to perpetuate this misconception. Even the Mexican Government is not blameless. In 1974 she erected a monument to the San Patricios at San Angel and included on the scroll of names that of Abraham Fitzpatrick.
managed to escape and surrendered himself to American authorities. A character witness for the defense was Lieutenant James Longstreet who was Fitzpatrick's commanding officer at the time of his desertion. Longstreet testified that Fitzpatrick was a model soldier who distinguished himself bravely at the battles of Reseca de la Palma and Monterrey. He concluded by stating that he "had not known a better non commission officer . . . ." In consideration of his testimony, the court gave Fitzpatrick a nobler form of death.

The second court martial convened on August 26 at San Angel received more attention than its predecessor at Tacubaya because it contained among the defendants the illustrious John Riley, the leader of the San Patricios. Resentment against Riley ran high in the American Army. Many soldiers believed him to be the moving force behind the San Patricios. Every desertion from the army in Mexico was laid at his feet. The verdict could only go one way.

12NA,RG94, Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General (Main Series) 1822-1860. Letter of Bernard Fitzpatrick to William L. Marcy, Secretary of War, 6 November 1846; and NA,RG94, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, General Correspondence 1890-1917, No. 27932. Case of Abraham Fitzpatrick.

13He later became a famous general for the Confederate Army during the American Civil War.

14NA,RG94, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, General Correspondence 1890-1917, No. 27932. Letter of James Longstreet to the Adjutant's Office, 8th Infantry, 2 September 1847.
Riley sensing this, made an eloquent defense. After presenting several character witnesses, he pleaded that the only reason he cooperated with the Mexicans was to help his fellow American prisoners. The prosecution countered this by producing Wilton and O'Connor. The two former San Patricios testified against Riley. Their testimony corroborated what was common knowledge, that Riley was the immediate commander of the San Patricios and by his threats and enticements he caused other American prisoners to turn traitor to their country.15 Riley and the other twenty-eight co-defendants were found guilty and all were sentenced to be hanged.

As a matter of form, the verdicts of the two courts martial were sent to General Scott, the General-in-Chief, for his approval, modification or rejection. Scott was at once faced with a public outcry from the Mexicans, demanding or pleading that Riley and the others be spared from the hangman's noose. The Archbishop of Mexico and other

clergy, some prominent ladies, and even the English Minister to Mexico made representations to General Scott. In addition, a petition was sent by a number of foreign residents in Mexico asking leniency for Riley. It went as follows:

We the Undersigned Citizens of the United States and Foreigners of different Nations in the City of Mexico humbly pray that his Excellency the General in Chief of the American forces may be graciously please to extend a pardon to Captain John O'Reilly of the Legion of St. Patrick and generally speaking, to all deserters from the American service. We speak to your Excellency particularly of O'Reilly as we understand his life to be in most danger; his conduct might be pardoned by your Excellency in consideration of the protection he extended in this city to the persecuted and banished American citizens whilst in concealment by notifying in order he held to apprehend them and not acting on it. We believe him to have a generous heart admitting all his errors.

16 Hopkins, "The San Patricio Battalion in the Mexican War," p. 281; and the American Star (Mexico City), 20 September 1847. The American Star was an American newspaper published in Mexico during the War. It was originally edited by John H. Peoples and James R. Barnard, and began publication in Mexico City on September 20, 1847, just six days after the U.S. Army occupied it. Initially, it started out as a tri-weekly but after October 12, 1847, it became a daily. Before it closed, over two hundred issues were printed in only eight months. The Mexicans found the newspaper insulting, particularly towards the military and Santa Anna; see, Lotta M. Spell, "The Anglo-Saxon Press in Mexico, 1846-48," the American Historical Review 38 (October 1932):20-31; and Ramón Alcaraz and others, Apuntes para la historia de la guerra entre México y los Estados Unidos (Mexico City: Siglo veintiuno editores, S.A., 1974), p. 369.


The request was signed by twenty-one residents of Mexico City. Two of the twenty-one signatories, Peter Tracy and James Humphrey, were noteworthy in that they had a special interest in the defendants. Tracy, an Irishman residing in Mexico, befriended many American prisoners-of-war by giving them succor in the form of food and clothing.19 Some of these prisoners later became San Patricios, although it is unknown if Tracy had any direct role in this matter. On the other hand, James Humphrey, a Scottish doctor, was a surgeon in the Mexican Army and later served as a captain in the reorganized San Patricio companies of 1848.20 His motive for saving Riley was one of friendship or comradeship.

General Scott took all requests into consideration while reviewing the verdicts; however, his modifications were based primarily on a clear definition of the Articles of War. Legal loopholes rather than mercy saved many San Patricios from death. On September 8, 1847, Scott issued General Order 281 in which he made the final determination on Riley and the other twenty-eight San Patricios tried at

19Encarnacion Prisoners: Comprising an account of the march of the Kentucky Cavalry from Louisville to the Rio Grande, together with an authentic history of the captivity of the American Prisoners, including incidents and sketches of men and things on the route and in Mexico (Louisville: Prentice and Weissinger, 1848), p. 58.

20Ibid., pp. 64-65.
San Angel. He confirmed the sentence of death for twenty of the men. John Riley, their leader, James Mills, and Thomas Riley\(^{21}\) deserted from the army in April, 1846, before a declaration of war and hence the most extreme punishment they could suffer would be that of whipping and being branded with the letter "D" for deserter. Mitigating circumstances were such that Scott similarly reduced the sentences of Hezekiah Akles, John Bartley, Alexander McKee, and John Bowers. Edward M. Herron, a sixty-year old soldier, was pardoned outright in consideration for his son who was a soldier in the same regiment and who remained loyal to his country.\(^{22}\) Henry Neuer,\(^{23}\) a German-

\(^{21}\)No relation to John Riley.

\(^{22}\)Herron learned of his reprieve when Captain Davis, Aide-de-Camp to General Scott, said to him, "he had been ransomed through the loyalty of his son to the flag of his country." Herron then dropped to his knees and said, "This is worse than death! I would rather have died." George T. M. Davis, Autobiography of the Late Col. Geo. T. M. Davis (New York: n.p., 1891), pp. 228-229.

\(^{23}\)Henry Neuer was a German immigrant who settled in Pennsylvania. In May, 1846 he enlisted in the army, first as a dragoon and then in the artillery. After his court martial at San Angel he returned to his artillery unit to finish out his term of enlistment. He was discharged in 1851 as a private and returned to Philadelphia. In that year he made an application for "Bounty Land" to the Commissioner of Pensions in Washington, D.C. As a veteran of the Mexican War, he was entitled to receive land for his services. Whether or not he received such land is unknown as there is some doubt as to whether he was honorably discharged, a prerequisite for the reward. Neuer states in his application that he was honorably discharged while the U.S. Army Register lists his discharge as dishonorable. NA,RG94, U.S. Army Register of Enlistments, 44:190.
born ex-waiter, was legitimately captured by the Mexicans; and, although forced to join the San Patricios he refused to fight. Hence Scott also pardoned him.\textsuperscript{24} Quite naturally there was an uproar over the commutation of John Riley's sentence of death. It was urged upon Scott by the military that it would be far preferable to free all the other San Patricios than spare Riley's life. Scott rebutted their position by stating that, rather than deviate from the law, he would first lose his own army in battle at the gates of Mexico City.\textsuperscript{25}

Several days later, Scott issued General Order 283 which reviewed the findings of the court martial held at Tacubaya. He confirmed the sentence of death for thirty San Patricios. For James Kelley, John Murphy, and John Little he reduced their sentence to fifty lashes well laid on their bare back and branded on the right hip with the letter "D". They were also to wear iron yokes around their necks and be confined to hard labor for the duration of the War. Roger Duhan, John Thomas, John Daley, Thomas Cassidy and Martin Miles were also to receive fifty lashes and be branded with the letter "D" on the cheek. As regards John


Brooke, Scott took the court's recommendation into consideration and pardoned him because of his evident youth. David McElroy also escaped death because of his being a mere boy; and finally, Abraham Fitzpatrick was pardoned as he was not a San Patricio and probably not even a willing deserter. 26

On September 10, Scott's General Order 281 was carried out between six and seven o'clock in the morning at San Angel. Sixteen condemned San Patricios were marched behind the plaza of San Jacinto to a large scaffold. This scaffold was about forty feet in length and fourteen feet high. The beam or stringer was supported by three square uprights, one at each end and the third in the middle. Two prisoners each were placed in eight mule-drawn wagons which were alternately headed east to west. They were put in a straight line underneath the beam which held their nooses. Each was dressed in a Mexican uniform, the white caps being drawn over their heads. Five Catholic priests stood in front of the prisoners, giving the last rites to seven out of the sixteen who professed to being Catholic. The drums rolled and the muleteers cracked their whips. In a few seconds all had died save one; Patrick Dalton's noose was improperly fixed and hence he had to be literally choked to

26 NA, RG94, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, General Correspondence 1890-1917, No. 27392. Court Martial Cases of the above and Miscellaneous File, No. 45.
death. The execution was witnessed by all of the generals and their respective staffs as they were required to be present; also the prisoners' guards, a detail from the rifle regiment, and numerous citizens. The priests removed the bodies of the seven Catholics and buried them in a cemetery called Tlaquepaque which was located between Mixcoac and San Angel. The other nine laid underneath the gallows to await burial.

Next came Riley and the others who were to be whipped and branded. They were marched to the front of the Church of San Jacinto and tied to trees. Their shirts were removed to expose their bare backs. Then two Mexican muleteers inflicted fifty lashes with all the severity they could muster. Their backs soon had the appearance of a pounded piece of raw beef. General Twiggs who was in charge of these proceedings purposely hired Mexicans to administer the whippings because, as he so sarcastically put it, Riley being a major in the Mexican Army could not be whipped by a common American soldier. It was said that Riley did not stand up well to the whipping. The men were cut down and then branded with a two-inch "D" on their right cheeks. Finally they were ordered to dig the graves for the bodies of the nine San Patricios that the priests did not remove. This was done underneath their gallows.

After their chores were completed, Riley and the survivors
were confined to prison.\textsuperscript{27} The fighting of the War caused a short delay in the execution of the four remaining defendants tried at San Angel. On September 11th, they were hanged on a tree at Mixcoac.\textsuperscript{28}

On September 13th, General Order 283 went into effect. Colonel William Selby Harney of the U.S. Cavalry was in charge of the execution of the thirty San Patricios tried at Tacubaya. The ferocious and cruel method he devised in carrying out his orders contributed to his reputation as being a very vengeful officer. The site selected for the hanging was a high piece of ground outside the village of Mixcoac. On this hill he had built a gallows similar to the one at San Angel only that it was on a larger scale. He decided to hang all thirty at once. At daybreak he marched the prisoners out to the sound of cannonfire; the battle for the nearby fortress of Chapultepec already began at 5:30 a.m. Harney was in a bad humor when he started the execution. It seems that when the prisoners


\textsuperscript{28}The American Star (Mexico City), 20 September 1847.
were brought out there were only twenty-nine men. Harney discovered that the missing man, who was wounded at Churubusco, was still in the hospital. He quickly went there to fetch the prisoner, whereupon the surgeon informed him that the man lost both legs in battle and would shortly die. Harney replied, "Bring the damned son of a bitch out! My order is to hang thirty and by God I'll do it!" So the dying man was brought out and hauled to the gallows in a wagon. All the men were then stood up in their wagons and nooses were put around their necks. Harney read them the Order for their execution and then pointed to Chapultepec Castle which was plainly visible, and over which the battle was still being fiercely contested. He told them that they would not be hanged until the American flag would appear over the fort. They would live long enough to see an American victory. One prisoner allegedly replied to Harney, "If we won't be hung until yer dirty ould rag flies from the Castle, we will live to eat the goose that will fatten on the grass that grows on yer own grave, Colonel." Another said, "Colonel: Oh colonel dear! Will ye grant a favor to a dying man . . . ?" Harney asked him what he wanted and he replied, "Thanks, thanks, Colonel, I knew ye had a kind heart. Please take my dudeen out of me pocket, and light it by yer eligant hair, that's all, Colonel!" The red-headed Harney lost his temper and hit the man in his mouth with his sword hilt. Thereupon the witty San
Patricio, spitting out his teeth, cried out, "Bad luck to ye! Ye have spoilt my smoking entirely! I shan't be able to hold a pipe in my mouth as long as I live." The mirth soon died down when the Americans began their infantry attack at eight o'clock. For some time, the battle was in doubt, but when Santa Anna refused to send reinforcements an American victory was assured. At 9:30 a.m. the fort was captured and the American flag broke over the castle. When Harney saw the flag, he gave the order for the wagons to start up, and then, thirty bodies were seen swinging and kicking in the wind. The final eight defendants were brought and each received their branding and whipping before returning to their confinement.29 Thus, all the captured San Patricios were punished according to the Articles of War for the United States.

29NA,RG94, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, Miscellaneous File, No. 45. Col. Harney's report of the execution of the deserters; the American Star (Mexico City), 20 September 1847; "General Harney," Journal of the United States Cavalry Association 3 (March 1890):2; K. Jack Bauer, The Mexican War 1846-1848 (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1974), pp. 304-305 and 316-318; Samuel E. Chamberlain, My Confession (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1956), pp. 226-228. Chamberlain, a soldier in the Mexican War, wrote a descriptive account of the hanging of the San Patricios at Mixcoac, however, he was not actually present at the execution and hence received his information from hearsay accounts. Other sources, such as Bauer, claim that tradition states that the San Patricios met their fate with no bitterness, and in fact recanted their actions by cheering when the American flag appeared over Chapultepec.
The execution of the fifty San Patricio soldiers captured at Churubusco left a deep impression on everyone but especially upon the Mexican people. When news of "... the terrible slaughter of our luckless Irish soldiers ...",\(^{30}\) and the "... mutilation of the unfortunate Irish ..."\(^{31}\) reached the Mexican populace, there was a tremendous uproar. A riot occurred in Toluca and there the people demanded retaliation. They tried to wreak the vengeance upon American prisoners but were stopped by the Mexican authorities.\(^{32}\) Many Mexicans were now convinced, more than ever, that the Anglo-Americans were barbarians. They viewed the San Patricios simply as unhappy members of the American Army, who, because of past discriminations, changed allegiance and became true Mexican patriots.\(^{33}\) As such, they thought that they should be treated solely as prisoners-of-war and not subject to punishment usually reserved for criminals.

\(^{30}\) Ramírez, *Mexico During the War With the United States*, p. 160.

\(^{31}\) *Arco Iris* (Vera Cruz), 10 September 1847.

\(^{32}\) *Encarnacion Prisoners*, p. 85.

This concern was viewed by many Anglo-Americans as a kind of false sympathy which typified the Mexican character. In fact, one of the leading American newspapers in Mexico during the War, the North American, devotion considerable space in proselytizing this notion. Its editor, W. C. Tobey, was an extreme critic of the San Patricios and also a denigrater of the Mexican people. In his articles about the San Patricios, he charged that some prominent Mexican citizens visited daily "these miserable apologies for humanity . . . " carrying to them all sorts of luxuries such as mattresses, sheets and shirts while their own countrymen are neglected. He goes on to say that the San Patricios have all their essential needs supplied to them by their former regiments and that the Mexicans are making them into a bunch of " . . . fat rascals . . . . " "What are we to think of a people so lost to the opinion of the world, so impervious to shame!" "If cowardice, treachery and falsehood are stepping stones to fame, these people have earned the immortality of eternal infamy."^{35}

^{34}The North American was published in Mexico City from September 29, 1847 until March 31, 1848 by W. C. Tobey, who was also a correspondent for its sister paper, the North American of Philadelphia. When the paper closed most of the staff returned to Philadelphia; see Spell, "The Anglo-Saxon Press in Mexico, 1846-48," pp. 20-31.

^{35}The North American (Mexico City), 7 December 1847.
American and Mexican criticism of Tobey's articles prompted him to personally visit the San Patricios to ascertain the truth. His attitudes and views remained unchanged. He described their prison as comfortable apartments which were equipped with mats and in some instances beds. "In fact, the rooms and its appointments were cleaner and more comfortable than any debtors prison . . . ." As for the men, " . . . most of whom spoke a tongue foreign to our own . . . ." they were dressed as well as most soldiers. Riley himself wore clean cloths and had good shoes. Tobey then reverted to his criticism of the Mexican people for showing great concern over " . . . the fat deserters . . . ." while their own countrymen starve and rot in filth. "Are people who are guilty of this worthy of the respect of any nation?" 36 Therefore, the polemics continued on both sides: the Americans despised their traitors while the Mexicans loved their San Patricios. Throughout the War efforts would be made to secure their release only to be rebutted.

In October 1847, one month after the fall of Mexico City, Santa Anna turned over the supreme command of the army to General Reyes and in a short time left Mexico for another exile. General Reyes then brought his troops to Queretaro which was the seat of the Mexican Government, as Mexico City

36 The North American (Mexico City), 24 December 1847.
was occupied by the enemy. At Queretaro, Reyes' forces were attached to those of General Herrera, the Commander-in-Chief. Herrera, because of illness, soon resigned his command and was replaced by General Mora y Villamil who was appointed Minister of War on October 21. Mora y Villamil then began a reorganization of the army. He created, on paper, three new divisions under Generals Filisola, Alvarez, and Bustamante. In November, 1847, the total Mexican force still under arms amounted to 8,109 men. They were scattered throughout the whole country but the largest concentration, nearly 3,000 men, was at Queretaro. By December, enough men had been gathered together to form a new San Patricio company, as the other two, as we have seen, had been destroyed at Churubusco. The order was given that all survivors of the former companies who found their way back were to be put into the new company. It was to be placed under the command of General Bustamante. Many survivors, with the help of the Mexican people, did find their way back to the company. An example of this assistance can be found in a private letter written to Mariano Riva Palacio, a deputy in the Mexican Congress at


My Dear Friend

The bearer of this letter is a poor soldier of the San Patricio Company who was wounded at the battles of Angostura and Churubusco and was not discovered by the Americans after they entered the City. After suffering much he was able to regain his health and is now searching for D. Anastacio Bustamente to whom he has been recommended by a person of his confidence in order that he may employ him in some way so that he may earn a living. I understand that Sr. Bustamente might be in Guanajuato, and since he had funds to take him to Queretaro, I did not hesitate in giving him this to give to you so that you may give him whatever necessary to continue his journey, whether from public funds or from a collection amongst friends, and if neither will do, then please count on my help for whatever is needed. I assure you that upon advising me I will send whatever is necessary. There are many reasons why we should interest ourselves in these people and for these reasons I count on my recommendations being taken care of. I know there is an absolute agreement between these ideas and yours. Your dear friend who to you wishes you all the happiness in the world, and B.S.M.

José María Andrade.39

Whether or not this San Patricio found a job or rejoined his company at Queretaro is unknown, but the fact remains that many San Patricios who survived the devastating battles of Mexico City found their way back to their old unit.

The new company of San Patricios was also augmented by new deserters from the American Army. In spite of the fifty San Patricios hung for deserting their original colors, fresh desertions still depleted the American ranks.

39University of Texas (hereafter UT), Riva Palacio Papers, Document 2454. Letter of José María Andrade to Mariano Riva Palacio, November 18, 1847.
Even the Mexicans noticed this and in it they found a false hope that it would help their cause. A Mexican spy, in reporting to the Government at Queretaro, noted the strife among the American leaders and the dissension among the troops. "... many of their troops ... especially the Irish ... say that the Mexicans are right in making war against the Anglo invaders. The day before yesterday ... an assessor friend of mine overheard an Irishman say if all Mexicans took up arms against the Anglos, he and almost all of his countrymen would desert and join the ranks of the Mexicans." Rumor and heresay contributed to the myth that all Irishmen were in sympathy with the Mexicans, but still they continued to entice them to join their ranks. In response to this problem, General Scott, the Commander of the American forces in Mexico, issued General Order 296. In essence, it went as follows:

Let all our soldiers, Protestant and Catholic, remember the fate of the deserters taken at Churubusco: These deluded wretches were also promised money and land, but the Mexican Government by every sort of ill-usage drove them to take up arms against the country and the flag they had voluntarily sworn to support, and next placed them in the front of battle, in positions from which they could not possibly escape the conquering valor of our

---

40 Ibid., Doc. 2471. Letter of Juan de Dios to Riva Palacio, December 11, 1847.
ranks. After every effort of the general-in-chief to save, by judicious discrimination, as many of those miserable convicts as possible, fifty of them have paid for their treachery by an ignominious death upon the gallows.\[41\]

Even the American newspapers in Mexico helped by writing articles intended to discourage potential deserters. The North American reported that if many a potential deserter did not learn a lesson from the hanging of the San Patricios they should listen to those deserters who voluntarily returned to their units as "... they all agree upon one story--the hard fare they received, the suspicion with which they were treated and the sufferings they endured," convinced them that they were far better off by not turning

---

\[41\] The complete text can be found in Davis, Autobiography of the Late Col. Geo. T. M. Davis, pp. 260-261. It is interesting to note that present-day writers on the San Patricios have quoted this Order out of context so as to present a prejudiced view against the Catholic soldiers of Scott's army. For example, in the first sentence, regarding the warning to both Protestant and Catholic soldiers, many writers have omitted the word Protestant and thus convey the idea that only Catholic soldiers were dishonorable. The first writer on the San Patricios, Hopkins, "The San Patricio Battalion in the Mexican War," does such a thing. Several years later, in 1937, McEniry, American Catholics in the War With Mexico rebutted Hopkins and called his mutilation of Scott's Order an example of a prejudiced contention rather than the objective truth. Unfortunately, later writers such as McCormack, "The San Patricio Deserters in the Mexican War," and Wallace, "Deserters in the Mexican War," followed Hopkins' example and thus perpetuated the rather biased view against Catholic loyalty during that period of time.
traitor. The desertions still continued and by March, 1848, enough survivors and new deserters had been gathered together to form a second San Patricio company. They were now at their previous strength of two companies.

While the Mexican military was rebuilding the San Patricios, the Government was trying to secure the release of those remaining San Patricios who were held prisoner by the Americans. Even before the fall of Mexico City, Santa Anna tried to make the release of the San Patricios a precondition for any peace settlement. This, of course, was refused; but even after the battles for Mexico City assured the Americans of a final victory, the Mexicans still persisted in their efforts to free them. Towards the end of the War, General Mora y Villamíl, one of the Mexican peace negotiators, met with General Scott to discuss freeing the men. Mora y Villamíl reported to his Government that Scott told him that he would free all the prisoners-of-war after a peace settlement; however, in regards to the San Patricios—

42 The North American (Mexico City), 6 January 1848.
cios who were deserters from the American Army, he would free only those who fulfilled their sentences. Mora y Villamíl pressed Scott for their unconditional release. He made it clear that it was the wish of his President that all good Mexican subjects be given their freedom. Scott then gave him the impression that he would do all that he could. When no action was forthcoming, Mora y Villamíl tried again with Scott's successor, General William Butler, but again he could not secure their release.

Finally, with the signing and ratification of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo between the United States and Mexico, the San Patricios held prisoners were at last set free. On June 1, 1848, General Butler issued General Order 116 which called for the immediate release of the men.

---

45 M. de la Peña y Peña.


47 General Scott was relieved of command by President Polk on January 13, 1848 and left Mexico May 2.

Riley and the others were incarcerated on the second floor of a fort called the Citadel or ciudadela which was located just outside Mexico City. Upon receipt of Butler's Order, Lieutenant Gibson, the officer of the guard, went to their quarters and read them the Order. Then their heads were shaved and the buttons stripped from their uniforms. They were escorted from the Citadel while a drum and fife detachment played the "Rogue's March." The names of the released San Patricios were: John Riley, John Wilton, James Mills, James Kelly, Hezekiah Akles, Thomas Cassidy, Samuel (John) Thomas, John Daley, Martin Miles, John Bartley, Alexander McKee, Peter O'Brien, Edward Ward and James Miller.

49 The University of Texas (hereafter UT), Justin H. Smith Papers. Letter of G. T. Hopkins to J. H. Smith, June 1, 1917.

50 The lyrics to the "Rogue's March" went as follows:

Poor old soldier, poor old soldier,
Tarred and feathered and sent to hell,
Because he wouldn't soldier well,


51 These men, with the exception of Wilton, were deserters from the American Army and court martialled under General Orders 259 and 263.

52 There is no record of these men as ever being in the American Army. Perhaps, like Wilton, these San Patricios were foreign residents of Mexico but not American deserters.
Instead of a hero's welcome, Riley and his men, on returning to the Capital, found a quiet and occupied city. Riley spent his first week of freedom begging for food and money. He was trying to find his way back to his unit which was difficult in a war torn and weary country. He seems to have been at San Agustín around June 11th, and there he solicited the aid of a Mexican lawyer by the name of Carlos Franco. Franco described the incident in a letter to a government official:

Whilst the small sum of my resources have permitted, I have helped the Irish defenders of Churubusco, giving food and lodging in my house (this house of yours) to six of them and also their deserving captain, Don Juan Reilly; this man urgently needs money for his soldiers as each day new ones arrive (and they are the best troops of General Worth). He has asked me to give it to him. Despite the concerted efforts which I have taken in obtaining the necessary funds, it has not been possible as this area is very poor. This obliges me to bother you and distract you from your many concerns and to beg you, if possible, to order that the necessary sum of money be given to the aforementioned Mr. Reilly.

The Minister of War quickly sent a messenger, Captain Cortaran, to San Agustín with fifty pesos for Riley and his men. With this money Riley left for Queretaro to rejoin the San Patricios.

---

53 Prieto, Memorias de mis Tiempos, p. 423.
54 UT, Riva Palacio Papers, Doc. 2703. Letter of Carlos Franco to Riva Palacio, June 11, 1848.
55 Ibid., Doc. 2713. Letter of Carlos Franco to Riva Palacio, June 13, 1848.
Meanwhile, a revolution occurred headed by a famous guerrilla leader named Padre Jarauta. He was a Spanish priest who, during the war, was one of the most feared guerrilla chieftains operating between Mexico City and Vera-cruz. One June 1, he issued a plan for revolt against the new President of Mexico, General Herrera. The feigned reason for the revolt was his opposition to peace with the United States; however, the real cause was that Jarauta and his Royalist party represented the privileged groups within Mexico and as such they feared Herrera who was a moderate. He was soon joined by General Mariano Paredes and together their forces captured the important city of Guanajuato on June 15. President Herrera reacted with unusual promptitude. He ordered the army to proceed at once to the rebel stronghold to recapture it for the Government. Part of Herrera's force included a company of San Patricios who were to occupy the nearby town of Silao. The people were weary of fighting, especially after two years of war, and hence the rebellion soon collapsed. Within a month,

56 For a biography of Jarauta, see, Prieto, Memorias de mis Tiempos, pp. 477-478.


58 Ibid., 4:712.
Paredes was exiled and Jarauta executed, and thus the fighting was over but the intrigues still continued.

After the Jarauta disturbance, both companies of San Patricios were assigned to Guadalupe Hildago, just outside Mexico City. Their duties consisted of policing the highways and streets in order to make them safe from criminals who multiplied due to the anarchic conditions of post-war Mexico. The San Patricios were placed under General Lombardini's Division.59 He was their supreme commander. It was here also that John Riley was promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel and made the immediate commander of both companies. Other officers included Riley's Adjutant, José María Calderon, Captain James Humphrey,60 Lieutenants Peel and Maloney61 and Second Lieutenant Henry...

59 UT, Riva Palacio Papers, Doc. 2689. Letter of José María Godoy to Riva Palacio, June 8, 1848.

60 Humphrey was a Scottish doctor.

61 Patrick Maloney was born in Ireland in 1823 and immigrated to the United States as a young man. In September, 1846, he enlisted in the 5th U.S. Infantry, however, the independent Maloney was not suited to the regimentation of military life. On June 28, 1847, he was tried by a court martial for attacking and beating his sergeant. He was found guilty and ordered to forfeit six months wages and carry a thirty pound steel ball from reveille to retreat for one month. On August 7, 1847, Maloney deserted the army and some time after joined the San Patricios. The American Star--No. 2 (Puebla), 1 July 1847; and NA,RG94, U.S. Army Register of Enlistments, 45:157.
During the Paredes-Jarauta revolt some officers in the Mexican Army supported them in their attempt to overthrow the Government. This caused President Herrera to look at the loyalty of certain officers. Because of some vague connection with Paredes, John Riley was one of the officers being watched. A rumor soon circulated that another revolution would occur on the 23rd of July in which Riley and some San Patricios would assist Paredes' supporters in kidnapping the President and his cabinet. Herrera had Riley followed. The man entrusted with this mission carried a Presidential Order which gave him the authority to arrest Riley if he did anything unusual. One night Riley left the barracks and went into the Capital. He went to various places but when he stopped at a house at 11 Medinas Street, a place known as a hangout for conspirators, he was arrested. Herrera then divided the San

---

62 Henry Thompson was promoted from sergeant to second lieutenant between 10 February and 6 April, 1848. Finke, "The Organization and Uniforms of the San Patricio Units of the Mexican Army, 1846-1848," p. 38. Regarding Calderon and Peel no information can be found.

63 There seems to have been a debate over the loyalty of the San Patricios during the Jarauta-Paredes revolt. Some prominent Mexicans viewed them as in a "mischievous mood," while others urged an expansion of the Foreign Legion to crush Paredes once and for all. However, it was a fact that several Irish deserters from the U.S. Army fought with Jarauta. UT, Riva Palacio Papers, Doc. 2738. Letter of Veramienza to Riva Palacio, June 21, 1848, and Doc. 2740. Letter of Godoy to Riva Palacio, June 22, 1848; and Oswandel, Notes of the Mexican War 1846-47-48, p. 508.
Patricios. One company was ordered to the garita\textsuperscript{64} of Peralvillo in Mexico City. The officers were separated from the men and were detained. The soldiers were ordered to prepare to march out against the Indians in the mountains. The other company stayed at Guadalupe.\textsuperscript{65} When this company heard of Riley's arrest, they were much alarmed. Some even heard the rumor that Riley was executed. Lieutenants Peel and Maloney called the men together to discuss the situation; and, after a brief talk, about one hundred men decided that rather than die in a Mexican prison they would indeed join Paredes. Colonel Calderon, Riley's Adjutant, tried to dispel their fears and persuade them that no attempt on their lives was contemplated. Unconvinced, the company marched out of their barracks to join Paredes. Undaunted, Colonel Calderon followed them, arguing that they should return to their quarters. After a short distance he was able to persuade all but thirty-five to return. The smaller group continued on to the small town of Cuautitlan which they had hoped to sack. However, the authorities were forewarned and the rebels were forced to surrender to a superior force.\textsuperscript{66}

\textsuperscript{64}Sentry box or watchtower.

\textsuperscript{65}Riva Palacio, \textit{México a través de los Siglos}, 4:713-714.

The company was recalled to Mexico City and quartered there under the Government's watchful eye. When the threat of mutiny quickly passed, Riley and the others were released. The San Patricios were included in the military budget for the last time in August, 1848, and shortly after Herrera dissolved the unit in order to avoid any further trouble.

After the unit was disbanded, most of the San Patricio soldiers were discharged from the army and went their own ways. However, some did stay in to pursue a military career. While these men seemed to disappear into anonymity, several foreign-named soldiers would appear on the muster rolls now and again and could very well have been former San Patricios. For example, in 1849, Governor Moreto of Durango formed a body of irregular cavalry in order to put a stop to Indian depredations in his province. An irregular force was necessary as the Federal Government, ever fearful of revolution, purposely limited the number of regular troops on the northern frontier. Moreto's mounted

---

67 UT, Riva Palacio Papers, Doc. 2789. Letter of José María Godoy to Riva Palacio, July 1, 1848.

68 Ibid., Doc. 2878. Estimated budget of payments that will come in the present month. Francisco S. Iglesias, Comisaria General del Distrito y Estado de México, August 8, 1848.

69 Riva Palacio, México a través de los Siglos, 4:714. Riva Palacio states that when the Mexican Government disbanded the unit it discharged some but not all of its members.
guerrillas were composed mainly of foreigners: German, Irish, and Yankees. They were commanded by a Captain Box who had held some subordinate commission in the Mexican War. Governor Moreto offered to pay Box and his soldiers two hundred pesos for every Indian head delivered to him. Box accepted this contract and shortly afterwards delivered some of his goods. However, for some unknown reason, Moreto refused to pay Box. There was an argument and both sides terminated the agreement. A rumor abounded that Box had killed some friendly Indians in order to collect a quick and easy reward. In any event, while many native Mexicans were critical of these foreign guerrillas, one German writer saw fit to eulogize their efforts. Deeming them a theme by which he could make literary capital, he wrote the following:

Forty heroes of the Western States of America arrived in Durango. Durango is in mourning; for Indians had besieged the town and had demanded, as the price of its ransom and of their leaving the city unscathed, two hundred virgins of the best families! After much painful hesitation the demand had been complied with, and the virgins have just departed. Hinc illae lacrimae: therefore Durango groans. But the sympathy of the Sons of Freedom is now roused, and forth they sally to fight the Indians and rescue their captives.

Battle, victory, and the recovery of the two hundred ensue; and the spectacle closes with a soul-stirring tableau of the intense gratitude of the townsfolk, of the disinterestedness of the Yankees, and of their magnanimous departure; beautiful eyes growing dim with tears, as the last stately form of this band of heroes is darkened by the shade of the town-gate.\(^1\)

More realistically, foreign mercenaries were often used in rebellions against the Government. These minor revolts occurred frequently in the more remote northern provinces of Mexico. In 1851, a Conservative, Colonel José María Carbajal, pronounced against President Mariano Arista and his Liberal Party. Carbajal's revolt failed for various reasons but a contemporary view blamed it on his use of the Yankees. As one anonymous letter writer stated, "I hope there will be no more defections from the National Guard to Carbajal; it seems to have stopped because many of its members are discontented with Carbajal because of his use of armed foreigners. If he used only Mexicans many here would defect to him."\(^2\)

Probably the bulk of Carbajal's mercenaries were Anglo-Saxon types of filibusters from Corpus Christi and

---

\(^1\)G. F. Von Tempskey, Mitla, A Narrative of Incidents and Personal Adventures on a Journey in Mexico, Guatemala, and Salvador in the Years 1853 to 1855, with Observations on the modes of Life in those Countries, ed. J. S. Bell (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longman & Roberts, 1858), pp. 95-97.

\(^2\)UT, Riva Palacio Papers, Doc. 5469. Unsigned letter, Matamoros, October 11, 1851; also Doc. 5505. Letter of Cristobal Andrade to Don Mariano Riva Palacio, October 25, 1851.
New Orleans as he did most of his recruiting north of the Rio Grande River on United States soil.73 However, it must be noted that at this time, there were, according to Government records, close to nine thousand foreigners residing in Mexico.74 Some of these were probably in the military and former San Patricios could also have been represented here.

Finally it must be mentioned that during the period of the French Intervention in Mexico there was a group of guerrillas called Los Patricios which fought for the Empire against Juárez. They were led by a Captain Remugio Toledo and may have contained former San Patricios or Irishmen in their ranks which would account for their rather unusual name. Los Patricios operated in the neighborhood of Tehuantepec which they captured and held for the Empire up to the last weeks of its existence.75 During this time, the French also planned to establish Irish military colonies in Mexico to aid Maxmilian in winning over the countryside. A bulletin from the French Chief of Staff in Paris sent to Mexico in 1864, entitled, Memoria sobre la inmigración irlandesa, outlined the reasons for such a move. Be-

73 Ibid.
74 Callcott, Church and State in Mexico 1822-1857, p. 216.
sides helping Maximilian conquer the rural areas, these colonies could well have put him in a better position to build up a power base to rival the then-divided United States. The English, of course, would be grateful to Mexico for accepting the Irish, as they were always glad when they left Ireland. It would be easier to rule and subjugate a less populated country. However, before the plan was implemented, the American Civil War was over and Maximilian toppled from his throne.

After the War of 1846, some San Patricios left the army and tried to adjust to civilian life in their new adopted country. John Wilton, the San Patricio who testified against Riley at his court martial, later became a merchant and had a large residence in Mexico City as late as 1860. Regarding John Riley, it was alleged that, after the dissolution of the San Patricios, he returned to the United States where he sued the Government for $50,000 in damages for his flogging, branding, and imprisonment. The suit was supposed to have been entered at the District Court of Cincinnati, Ohio; however, that Court has no record of

---


any such case. Another rumor had Riley marrying a wealthy Mexican woman and rearing a family. Today, quite a number of Rileys appear in the telephone directories of Puebla, Guadalajara, and Mexico City. In any event, Riley soon disappeared from history. The commander of the San Patricios, Colonel Francisco Moreno, later became Military Commander of Mexico City and went on to enjoy a distinguished military career. He was praised by General, and later President, Mariano Arista as "a person of good judgment and excellent talents."

Reports of a German keeping a bar, an Irishman

---

79 This writer made personal inquiries at the U.S. Federal District Court encompassing Cincinnati and has been informed that there is no record of such a case; see also George Potter, To the Golden Door (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1960), p. 488.

80 UT, Justin H. Smith Papers. Letter of S. G. Hopkins to Justin H. Smith, June 1, 1917; and Chamberlain, My Confession, p. 226. At this point mention can be made of an interview this writer had with Patricia Cox of Mexico City, authoress of Batallón de San Patricio in 1978. Miss Cox stated that today in Mexico there are several prominent citizens with the family names of O'Connor and Kelly which trace their origins to a San Patricio soldier; however, she did not personally know of any relatives of John Riley in Mexico.

81 UT, Riva Palacio Papers, Doc. 4647. Letter of Mariano Arista to Mariano Riva Palacio, September 11, 1850; and Doc. 4732. Letter of Arista to Riva Palacio, October 14, 1850.

in the mines, a North American coachman, and a French hotel proprietor, all attest to the presence of a notable foreign element in Mexico right after the War. It is most likely that the War stimulated this growth, especially when one considers the relatively high desertion rate among U.S. troops stationed in Mexico during the conflict. Regarding the San Patricios, membership in that unit did not always guarantee success in a xenophobic post-war Mexico; however, in the words of a former San Patricio, "... some Irish and German Catholics who deserted from Taylor's division afterward settled down, married, and grew rich in this country." It seems, nonetheless, that many of the San Patricios were looked upon with suspicion and often branded with the words traitor and deserter. This attitude, in addition to the fact that Mexico was exhausted, gave the civilian San Patricio very few prospects. More often than not he usually ended up like Pat the beggar. For example, Lt. Henry Wise, U.S.N., travelling across Mexico after the fall of the Capital, reported the following:

---

83 Von Tempskey, Mitla et-al, p. 22.
84 UT, Riva Palacio Papers, Doc. 5334. Letter of José F. Cervantes to Sr. D. Mariano Riva Palacio, July 27, 1851.
85 Von Tempskey, Mitla et-al, p. 275.
In Salamanca, where we stopped to bait and change horses, a number of beggars surrounded the coach, and in one I at once detected the pure Milesian brogue and visage. He was whining and limping about, with a tattered hat and stick, imploring alms in the most ludicrous attempts at the Castilian tongue. "Why Pat, you're a deserter," said I, from the top of the vehicle. "Who siz that?" quoth he, evidently startled. Forgetting his infirmities, clapping on his sombrero, and clenching the stick in readiness for a fight, or flight, as he peered among the crowd; and stepping up to a miserable leper, whose face had been painfully stereotyped into a broad grin, he poked him sharply in the ribs, and roared out, "Ye lie ye baste! I was sick in the hospital, and the Gineral tuk me off in his own carridge." Here, Pat, I'm your man! "Ah! is it there ye are Liftinint? you're a pacock ov a boy! will ye give us a rial?" No! but if you chance to be caught by the Yankees, you'll get a rial's worth of 'hearty-chockes and caper-sauce,' I replied, going through a little pantomine with heels and neck, for his especial benefit. "No, be jasus: thim Harney blaggards will never choke me while the Dons is so ginerous." This was the last I saw or heard from Pat.

Probably the saddest story concerning the fate of a San Patricio was related by a Chicago Tribune newspaper reporter by the name of John F. Finerty who visited Mexico in 1879. Finerty's purpose for going to Mexico was to report on the prospects of the new President, Porfirio Díaz. To accomplish his goal, Finerty travelled across Mexico visiting not only the large cities but also the small towns as well. It was at a pueblito called

---


88 A little town.
Tasquilla that Finerty met what he called, "one of the most unfortunate human beings it has been my lot to encounter." 

While refreshing himself at the local inn, Finerty was "struck by the appearance among the villagers of an old man of undoubted American aspect." He became curious as to why this aged American, who had the look of poverty on him, should be found in such a place. After treating the old reprobate to several glasses of hot tequila, Finerty discovered his history. It seems that this individual, who used the alias of Baldwin, served in the United States Army during the War of 1846. Baldwin was in the regular infantry and saw action in most of the major battles of the War. He served under General Taylor at Palo Alto, Reseca de la Palma, and the siege of Monterrey. Later, under General Scott, Baldwin fought at Veracruz, Cerro Gordo, and Churubusco. He served with distinction; however, fate soon intervened and eventually placed him in his present station.

During the armistice, prior to the fall of Mexico City, Baldwin was stationed on the west side of the city. While on picket duty he "could plainly see the lights in the houses of the City . . . ", and he thought to himself what a good time he could have drinking with the señoritas, and so he decided to desert. As he came to his conclusion, 

---

89 Finerty, John F. Finerty Reports Profirian Mexico 1879, p. 201.
the sergeant of the guard, who happened to be his personal enemy, visited his post. Fearing that his intentions might be discovered, at the first opportunity he cracked his sergeant over his head with his musket, knocking him out. Baldwin then deserted his post and his country. His reasons for doing so, harsh discipline, and the lure of women and drink during the lull in the fighting, were the same as for many San Patricios thus making them human, weak and pitiful. After many nights of dissipation, Baldwin, like other San Patricios, claimed that the Mexicans forced him into their ranks and so he became a traitor. He took part, on the Mexican side, at the battles of Molino del Rey, Chapultepec, and the Gates of the City. After Scott captured Mexico City, Baldwin and "many other American deserters of all 'previous nationalities' were obliged to fly for our lives." After the War, Baldwin returned to the Capital but found little favor with the Mexicans especially since he was a Yankee and a Protestant.

I soon left the capital, and now for more than thirty years I have been, more or less, like Cain, a vagabond and a wanderer upon the earth. I am, in truth, a man who has no country, and I freely confess that I deserve to be in that condition. I was married many years ago, but my wife, a pretty Mexican woman to whom I was much attached, died long ago, leaving me no children. I am now all alone in this cold world, without wife, child, or friend. My native country is closed against me forever. I'd be taken and executed if I dared return there, because, even changed as I am, some old comrade would be sure to run across and recognize me. In spite of my long residence in Mexico, I never could warm up
to is as a home. I banish care by drinking, when I have the money to pay for liquor, and by moving constantly from one place to another. Nobody knows my real name, and nobody shall—it will die with me. You are the first white man to whom I have related my miserable story in many long years. You will repeat it sometime, perhaps, after I am gone. The end cannot be far off now.90

Besides begging, many U.S. deserters and possibly some San Patricios turned to crime in order to earn an easy living. The Daily Picayune reported that a party of American robbers were operating in the area of Saltillo and that they "plunder every Mexican they come across and would our people, as a matter of course, if they came in their way."91 Close to the end of the War, robberies by U.S. soldiers, past and present, became quite common; for example, ten soldiers broke into a woman's house in Puebla, robbed her and then tried to rape her. The United States military governor of the city, Colonel Thomas Childs, offered a $50 reward for their apprehension.92 These deserters also robbed their fellow Americans. Three robbers stole over $3,000 from an American merchant in Mexico City. The leader of the group was described as a United States officer and his two accomplices as enlisted men.93

90Ibid., pp. 195-200.
91The Daily Picayune (New Orleans), 7 September 1847.
92Flag of Freedom (Puebla), 24 November 1847.
93Daily American Star (Mexico City), 28 December 1847.
United States military and later Mexican authorities tried, albeit in vain, to curtail this type of activity.

There were some San Patricios who did not desire to pursue any type of vocation in post-war Mexico but rather be sent to Europe. These men petitioned the Mexican Government for help to this goal. This of course was probably done by those in the unit who were foreign born. In any event, by the terms of their original enlistment contract the Mexican Government was obliged to assist them.⁹⁴

On August 31, 1848, twenty San Patricios of Irish nationality appeared before the Governor of Vera Cruz, Juan Soto. They asked Soto for help in securing passage on a vessel bound for Europe, as they lacked the necessary resources to return home. Owing to the poor condition of the State Revenues, the Governor wrote for advice to the Minister of Relations, Mariano Otero.⁹⁵ On September 13, Otero, after conferring with President Herrera, replied

⁹⁴Archivo General de la Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores (hereafter ASRE), H/252(73:72)/381. Copy of the Agreement made between Mexico and the soldiers belonging to the San Patricio Company, August 9, 1847. Article 2 of the Agreement states, "Those who do not wish to remain in this country will be sent back to Europe at the expense of the Supreme Government, and besides will be given an allowance in cash."

⁹⁵ASRE, H/252(73:72)/381. Disposición para que Los soldados Irlandeses. Letter of Juan Soto to Mariano Otero, Jalapa, September 1, 1848.
that those who voluntarily wish to leave Mexico will be given free passage; further, this passage will be paid from the National Treasury and will be by the most economic means available.96

Days passed and the funds were not forthcoming. Meanwhile Soto, pressed with the expense of feeding and housing the twenty San Patricios, wrote again to Otero on October 2, pleading for the President to intercede and issue the necessary order to the Comisaria General to release the needed money.97 Finally, Otero replied on October 6, stating that the President ordered the release of the federal money in Veracruz to facilitate "the embarkation of the discharged soldiers of the San Patricios and the rest of the Americans who have remained loitering in that place."98 At last the men could return home to Europe.

Another group of former San Patricios petitioned the Mexican Government at the Capital for monies promised them under the terms of their contract. On June 30, 1849, the Comisaria General, by orders of the President re-

96Ibid. Letter of Mariano Otero to Juan Soto, September 13, 1848.
97Ibid. Letter of Juan Soto to Mariano Otero, October 2, 1848.
98Ibid. Letter of Mariano Otero to Juan Soto, October 6, 1848.
leased 250 pesos to a Colonel Don Jose Maria Urecha in order that he may give 20 pesos each "to the Americans of the Batallion called San Patricio" for their services in the War. They could do with this money as they saw fit. This group of twelve men were: John Little, James Kelley, Thomas Cassidy,99 John Chambers,100 John Vader, John Linger, John Lynch, John Vosbor, Joseph Green, William Fischer, William Eglen, and Charles Smith.101 This seems to be the last official Mexican word on the San Patricios.

It is worthy of note that the San Patricio Battalion had its Mexican counterpart in the Spy Company. This company was created after the American occupation of Puebla in May 1847. It was composed primarily of Mexicans (and other soldiers of fortune) whom the Mexicans referred to derisively as Pablados.102

99 Little, Kelley and Cassidy were American deserters, tried and punished by the Court Martial at Tacubaya.

100 Chambers was a San Patricio but not an American deserter. He was captured at Churubusco and held prisoner by the Americans until June 1, 1848. NA, RG94, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, Orders and Circulars 1797-1910. General Order 116, Headquarters of the Army in Mexico.

101 These men are unknown. The complete list of the pensioners can be found in Archivo General de la Nación (hereafter AGN) Ramo. Montepios, vol. 51, folio 607. Unsigned ledger from the office of the Comisaria General of the Federal District, June 30, 1849.

102 One with the lowest rank in society.
General Anaya, after being captured at the battle of Churubusco, was so overcome by the sight of these men in United States uniforms that he experienced an epileptic fit.\footnote{Alcaraz and others, Apuntes para la historia de la guerra entre México y los Estados Unidos, pp. 257-258.}

In any event, just as the Mexicans persuaded many Americans to desert, the Americans themselves resorted to the same methods by inducing Mexicans to desert to their ranks. More often than not, the deserters who became American agents and traitors to their country were inmates of Mexican jails. Furthermore, General Scott's policy of paying well for their services soon made it apparent to the poorer classes that they were in a better position under the Americans than under Mexican Governors.\footnote{Callcott, Church and State in Mexico 1822-1857, p. 199.} Sometimes, though, desertions occurred without any inducements as shown in the diary of Major Philip Barbour of the 3rd. U.S. Infantry:

\begin{quote}
A deserter came to the General last night from Monterey, stating that he was a regular soldier of the Mexican Army and had deserted on account of
\end{quote}
Ampudia's cruelty to him; that he knew General Taylor to be a brave man and was ready and willing to render him all the assistance in his power against Ampudia. The fellow I believe was a little drunk.

The story of the formation of this unit is interestingly related by Ethan Allen Hitchcock, Adjutant to General Scott. He tells how one day while General Worth, the leader of the occupation troops, was inspecting the city, an individual by the name of Manuel Domínguez was pointed out to him as a leader of note. It was alleged that Domínguez was a leader of robbers who should be arrested. Worth agreed and went into action. However, after a few days confinement, he sent for Domínguez and explained

General Pedro de Ampudia was a Mexican of Cuban birth who began his career in the Spanish Army in 1818. During her revolution Ampudia came to Mexico and had prospered ever since. When war with the United States broke out he was Governor of the State of Nuevo Leon as well as the Commander of the Army of the North. He had a reputation for being harsh and sometimes cruel towards his men. Regarding desertion, he warned his soldiers, "He who at this moment would desert his colors, is a coward and a traitor to his country." John Frost, Life of Major General Zachary Taylor: with Notices of the War in New Mexico, California, and in Southern Mexico; and Biographical sketches of Officers who have distinguished themselves in the War with Mexico (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1847), p. 109.

to him that he was arrested on a complaint by one of his own people and that the American authorities had no charges against him. Worth pointed out to him, however, that he had no friends among his fellow countrymen, and therefore he ought to join the American cause. This ploy worked and Domínguez even agreed to bring his whole band of guerilleros over to the American side.

Hitchcock goes on to tell how General Worth turned Domínguez over to him with the order to work out details. After meeting with Domínguez he arranged for him to enlist about two hundred men and form them into several companies. They were to operate under the direct orders of General Scott. For their services they were to receive $20 a month; thus far Hitchcock. 107 In addition, the United

States Government guaranteed them a safe passage to the United States or some other neutral territory at the end of the War. Their prescribed uniform consisted of round felt hats encircled with a red scarf and grey jackets. The officers and non-coms wore the insignia of the U.S. Army. Later their uniforms were changed to a great coat trimmed with red collar and cuffs. They carried lances, escopets, swords, and pistols, and were well mounted. Their duties included intelligence gathering, scouting, and messenger service. For example, the Spy Company helped a young supply officer named Ulysses S. Grant locate roads and trails to transport the necessary items to an army on the march. They also helped in describing the topography of the country and in locating enemy breast works and

110 A type of shotgun.
111 They were also known as Domínguez's Scouts.
gun implacements and the like. However, most important of all, they acted as counter guerrillas, helping to locate and destroy Mexican guerrilla bands who harassed American troops and their supply lines.

Part of the Spy Company stayed in Puebla after its formation and used it as a base for its many operations, such as keeping the road to Veracruz open and checking the many robber bands which infested the surrounding area. Another part of the unit accompanied General Scott on his march to Mexico City. This group participated in the Battle of Churubusco where they may have engaged in battle their rivals in treason, the San Patricios.

Dominguez was given the rank of colonel and acted as the overall commander of the unit. He accompanied Scott during the battles for Mexico City. In fact, Domínguez liked to be addressed as Colonel Domínguez of His Excellency General Scott's Life Guard. While Domínguez was general supervisor of the unit, the part of the company that went with Scott was captained by a man named Spooner

---

114 Lewis, Captain Sam Grant, p. 234.
115 Daily American Star (Mexico City), 9 January 1848.
who was also appointed by Scott. Hitchcock remained the liaison officer for this group.

The other group of the Spy Companies that stayed behind in Puebla were under the immediate command of Captain Pedro Arria. Arria answered to Colonel Thomas Childs, the Military and Civil Governor of Puebla. The liaison officer between this group and Childs was Alphonse Wengierski. He was also Childs' secretary and translator. Arria and his men performed well for Childs; for in an official despatch Childs had nothing but praise for the Spy Company because of their invaluable services, especially in gathering information on enemy movements.

116 Spooner was a Virginian who had been a robber under Domínguez before the creation of the Spy Company. George Winston Smith and Charles Judah, eds., Chronicles of the Gringos (Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 1968), p. 231.

117 Niles National Register (Washington), 27 November 1847.

118 Wengierski was a sort of a soldier of fortune who fled to the United States from his native Poland after becoming involved in various unsuccessful rebellions there. From the United States he travelled to Mexico to seek out a fortune and after the War broke out he availed himself of the first opportunity to enter the American service. As Childs' liaison officer to the Spy Company, he planned and directed many of their operations. He was killed by the enemy in November, 1847. He was thirty years of age. Flag of Freedom (Puebla), 3 November 1847.

119 Niles National Register (Washington), 27 November 1847.
After the fall of Mexico City, Scott ordered Domínguez and his men to rejoin the other detachment of the Spy Company at Puebla. This was done, in part, because of the hostile reception Domínguez and his men received in Mexico City, but especially to allow him to recruit new members to make up the losses he sustained while fighting with Scott. If any of his men were ever captured by Mexican soldiers, they were shot on the spot. Domínguez also carried despatches from General Scott to Colonel Childs and some letters bound for Washington via Veracruz. Domínguez reported that the roads from Mexico City to Puebla were full of guerrillas and that he had a rough time in getting through. Several times the guerrillas had driven the Spy Company into the mountains for safety. He hoped that the road to Veracruz would be less dangerous.

On October 23, 1847, he and his men left Puebla for Veracruz, but on their first night out they were attacked by a band of guerrillas. The Spy Company engaged them successfully and Domínguez took several prisoners and captured

---

120 *Flag of Freedom* (Puebla), 20 October 1847.

121 *The Daily Picayune* (New Orleans), 26 September 1847.

a number of horses. The Spy Company killed or wounded over one hundred of the guerrillas. Domínguez then returned to Puebla with his trophies.123

For the next several months Domínguez and his Spy Company were engaged in carrying despatches to and from Mexico City to the coast.124 This duty was relatively uneventful until January 6, 1848, when Domínguez and his men came in contact with a body of Mexican troops near Nopalu- can. It seems that the owners of the haciendas of St. Gertrude and Santa Clara near Nopalucan approached Domínguez and told him that a group of guerrillas under General Anastasio Torrejón were operating in the area, harassing and stealing from the haciendas. They asked him for help. Domínguez ascertained their number and location and then ambushed them. Catching them unawares, he managed to rout them and in the process he captured their leaders, Generals Torrejón, José Vincente Miñón and Antonio Gaona along with fifty of their men. This last group included two American deserters, but it is not clear whether they were San Patri­cios or not. These prisoners were then turned over to Colonel Childs at Puebla but not until a formal complaint was lodged against Domínguez by an American officer who

123 Flag of Freedom (Puebla), 23 October 1847.
124 Ibid., 17 December 1847.
accompanied him on patrol. 125 Dr. Elisha Kent Kane was an Assistant Surgeon in the U.S. Navy during the War. Because of military business, he was travelling with Domínguez when they attacked Torrejón and his group. Kane reported to General Scott that Domínguez and his men tried to kill Torrejón and the others; also when an American officer tried to intercede in their behalf he was also assaulted by Domínguez; finally Kane charged that Domínguez robbed his prisoners of all of their belongings and deprived them even of basic food and clothing. 126 Needless to say, nothing came of the charges.

When the Americans started to evacuate their troops from Mexico, Domínguez came to realize that his espousal of their cause had compromised his position. Earlier, when the War was still in progress, Domínguez was asked whether he was afraid of being killed by his countrymen for acting with the Americans after they left the country. He replied rather boastfully, "That is our business, we will take care of ourselves." 127 Now that the War was over, he was singing another tune. He knew that his life was in jeopardy; so he asked for asylum for him and his men. The United

125 Niles National Register (Washington), 19 February 1848.


127 Anderson, An Artillery Officer in the Mexican War 1846-7, p. 266.
States Government acquiesced; for asylum was a provision of their enlistment agreement. So Domínguez's Scouts were shipped to Texas at the Government's expense. 128

Approximately one year later, the Mexican Minister to the United States, Luis de la Rosa, was complaining of the robbing, murdering and smuggling going on at the United States-Mexican border areas. Rosa attributed these criminal acts to "some of those outlaws who during the war between the United States and Mexico quitted the Prisons of Puebla and served in the army of the United States under the name of Contraguerilleros. Unfortunately these former convicts of Mexico have established themselves on the frontier in the territory of the State of Texas." 129 His pleas went unheeded which was to be expected during those perilous times, and so de la Rosa again protested those constant border depredations, "excesses which it will be still more difficult to check so long as the frontier shall continue to be the resort of the Mexican liberated convicts, who, under the name of guerilleros accompanied, in the late war, the Army of the United States." 130


130 Ibid., Letter of Luis de la Rosa, Mexican Minister, to the U.S. Secretary of State, August 11, 1849.
United States Government promised to increase its patrols of the border if Mexico would do likewise; however, in regard to Domínguez's former followers Washington remained conspicuously quiet.

Manuel Domínguez, the leader of the Spy Company, moved to New Orleans with his family after the War. There, despite pleas for help by General Hitchcock, the United States Government abandoned him and left him to his own wits to eke out an existence and living. While it is very difficult to justify the treasonous actions of Domínguez, the fact remains that he proved faithful to the United States and there is no record of his every betraying that trust.

SUMMARY

After the French Revolution it was considered correct form that every man should fight for his own country and dishonorable that a man should serve under another flag. The citizen-soldiers of the nineteenth century replaced the small professional armies of kings and nobles. Nationalism rather than pecuniary gain was now the motivating factor for a man to take up arms. Yet certain atavistic emotions lingered in man despite the advances of the modern world and hence some countries continued to find and keep foreign mercenaries of a sort on their military payroll. The French and Spaniards had a Foreign Legion so why not Mexico.

Early in the War with the United States, Mexico discovered the preponderance of foreign-born soldiers in the opponents’ army. This element, just prior to the War, began to arrive on American shores in such numbers that they occasioned severe forms of prejudice against them on the part of the Protestant Yankees. This prejudice showed itself in the blatant discrimination that European Catholic immigrants suffered in the civilian and military society of America. After war broke out, the Mexicans, knowledgable about the prejudices that American Catholics were suffering, capitalized on the issue in their efforts
to entice the Catholic soldiers in the American Army to desert. A propaganda campaign, therefore, was developed and used for the duration of the War. The Mexicans appealed especially to the Irish and German Catholics who made up the bulk of the foreigners in the American Army to join them in their fight against the perfidious Protestant Yankees. For those who did not succumb to the religious call, the added inducement of land and money was also held out.

These deserters, together with other foreign residents of Mexico, were grouped together to form a Foreign Legion known as the Batallon de San Patricio or the St. Patrick's Battalion, a name probably given to it by its Irish-American leader, John Riley. Initially, the unit started out as an artillery company but was later expanded into two infantry companies of over one hundred men each. It fought in the battles of Buena Vista and Churubusco. At the latter place it was destroyed in action, with most of its members either killed or captured by the Americans. After Churubusco, those captured San Patricios who were deserters from the American Army were tried by two court-martials. Of those found guilty, fifty were hanged for their crime of treason; others received lesser punishments. This was not the end of the story however; for the unit was re-formed towards the end of the War and continued to function for nearly a year after the Americans evacuated
Mexico. Their new duties consisted of patrolling different areas to protect the populace from highwaymen and hostile Indians. Later they became involved in the Paredes-Jarauta revolt and were finally dissolved in the post-war budget cuts of the Herrera administration. Many remained in Mexico and a few returned to Europe with the Government's help. For a complete picture of the San Patricios this last year cannot be excluded.

It should be noted, however, that although the Mexicans appealed to the religious sentiments of the Catholics in Scott's army, the majority of deserters did not go over to the Mexican side because of religion primarily, but rather for a variety of reasons such as harsh discipline and impressment into the Mexican Army while drunk. The frustrated but charismatic Irish nationalist, John Riley, and his able lieutenants, such as Patrick Dalton, had mixed motives for deserting. They commanded such social misfits and drunks as Henry Whistler, a bricklayer, and Gibson McDowell from Delaware, a man "well known among politicians as one of the availables whose vote fell to that side which caught him last . . . ."¹ For Whistler, army life was difficult as he had already deserted the American Army several times before he finally succeeded in joining the Mexicans.²

¹Flag of Freedom (Puebla), 11 December 1847.
²American Star—No. 2 (Puebla), 1 July 1847.
Other examples were Bill O'Connor of Philadelphia and Richard Hanley. O'Connor escaped his family debts and responsibilities by joining the army. When the army became too difficult, he deserted and joined the San Patricios. Before he deserted though, his wife, Mary, tried unsuccessfully to get him discharged so he could return to his family duties. Richard Hanley, on the other hand, was a good soldier and a good artillerist. He was really kidnapped by the Mexicans and forced to fight for them. After his capture at Churubusco he told a friend that the reason he stayed with the Mexicans was that he feared his American commanding officer more than the consequences of being a traitor. It was ironic that his former commander, James Duncan, presided at his court-martial and later ordered him hanged. The San Patricios, like other Foreign Legions, contained men who joined to escape something or somebody, or to fulfill some need or desire. Religion, despite some historians, was not the only reason for desertion and the subsequent formation of the San Patricio Battalion. Discrimination and army discipline were much more consequential.

3 National Archives, Record Group 94, (hereafter NA, RG94), Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General (Main Series) 1822-1860. No. 312, 1846.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. Primary Sources

A. Manuscripts

1. Archives in the United States

University of Texas. Justin H. Smith Papers.

"Unsigned letter, Mexico City," 17 October 1847.


University of Texas. Riva Palacio Papers.


Washington, D.C. National Archives, Record Group 59. Department of State.

Despatches from the American Consulate in Mexico.

Despatches from the Mexican Legation in Washington.

Washington, D.C. National Archives, Record Group 94.

U.S. Army Register of Enlistments.


Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General (Main Series) 1822-1860. No.'s 316-318, 1846.

Records of the Adjutant General's Office. General Correspondence, 1890-1917. No. 27932.

Letters Received.

Miscellaneous File, No. 45.
Miscellaneous Papers of the Army of Occupation, Mexico. File on John Riley.


2. Archives in Mexico

Archivo General de la Nación.


"A letter of General Pedro María Anaya to Luis de la Rosa, Minister of Relations," 2 June 1848.

Disposition of the Irish soldiers--
"A letter of Juan Soto to Mariano Otero, Jalapa," 1 September 1848.

"A Letter of Juan Soto to Mariano Otero," 2 October 1848.

"A letter of Mariano Otero to Juan Soto," 6 October 1848.

B. Documents in Print

1. Newspapers

The **American Star** (Mexico City), 1847.

The **American Star**--No. 2 (Puebla), 1847.

**Arco Iris** (Vera Cruz), 1847.

The **Daily Picayune** (New Orleans), 1847.

**Diario del gobierno de la República Mexicana** (Mexico City), 1846-1847.

The **Flag of Freedom** (Puebla), 1847.

The **Niles National Register** (Washington), 1847-1848.

The **North American** (Mexico City), 1847-1848.

2. Diaries, Memoirs, Letters, and other Documents


Alcaraz, Ramón; Barreiro, Alejo; Castillo, José María; Escalante, Felix María; Iglesias, José María; Munoz, Manuel; Ortiz, Ramón; Payno, Manuel; Prieto, Guillermo; Ramirez, Ignacio; Saborio, Napoleon; Schiafino, Francisco; Segura, Francisco; Torrescana, Pablo María; and Urguidi, Francisco. **Apuntes para la historia de la guerra entre México y los Estados Unidos**. Mexico City, 1848; reprint ed., Mexico City: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, S.A., 1974.


Encarnación Prisoners: Comprising an account of the march of the Kentucky Cavalry from Louisville to the Rio Grande, together with an authentic history of the captivity of the American Prisoners, including incidents and sketches of men and things on the route and in Mexico. Louisville: Prentice and Weissinger, 1848.


Ramírez, José Fernando. Mexico During the War with the United States. Edited by Walter V. Scholes. Translated by Elliott B. Scherr. Columbia: University of Missouri, 1950.


II. Secondary Sources

A. Printed Views


Collections of the Pioneer Society of the State of Michigan 4 (1907):349.


Frost, John. Life of Major General Zachary Taylor: with Notices of the War in New Mexico, California, and in Southern Mexico; and Biographical sketches of Officers who have distinguished themselves in the War with Mexico. New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1847.


Rubio Mañé, J. Ignacio. **El Excmo. Sr. Dr. D. Martín Tritschler y Córdova Primer Arzobispo de Yucatán.** Mexico City: Abside, 1941.


Souvenir Program of the San Patricio County Centennial Celebration and Historical Pageant, April 14-15-16, 1936. The University of Texas Library.


APPENDIX A
APPENDIX A

SAN PATRICIOS

Officers

Ramón Batchelor
José María Calderon
Patrick Dalton
Matthew Doyle
James Humphrey
Patrick Maloney
Camillo Manzano

Francisco Moreno
Auguste Morstadt
Saturnino O'Leary
Peel
John Riley
John Stephenson
Henry Thompson

Soldiers

Hezekiah Akles
Patrick Antison
John Appleby
John Bartely
John Benedick
John Bowers
John Brooke
Patrick Casey
Thomas Cassidy
John Cavanaugh
John Chambers
Denis Conahan
John Cuttle
John Daley
George Dalwig
Kerr Delaney
Roger Duhan
William Eglen
William Fischer
Fred K. Fogal
M. T. Frantius
Farian Fritz
F. W. Garretson
Joseph Green
Richard Hanley
Berney Hart
Roger Hogan
George Jackson
William Keeck

James Kelly
Harrison Kenny
John Klager
John Linger
John Little
Henry Logenhamer
Elizier Lusk
John Lynch
Martin Lydon
Lawrence Mackey
Hugh McClelland
John McDonald
Gibson McDowell
James McDowell
David McElroy
Ed McHerron
Alexander McKee
Lachlar McLachlen
Martin Miles
James Miller
Thomas Millet
James Mills
John Murphy
John Myers
Peter Neil
Henry Neuer
Andrew Nolan
William Oathouse
Peter O'Brien
Francis O'Connor  
Thomas O'Connor  
William O'Connor  
Henry Oetker  
Richard Parker  
Lewis Preifer  
John Price  
Francis Rhode  
Thomas Riley  
John Rose  
Herman Schmidt  
John Sheehan  

Charles Smith  
James Speers  
Samuel Thomas  
John Vader  
Henry Venator  
John Vosbor  
William Wallace  
Edward Ward  
Lemuel Wheaton  
Henry Whistler  
John Wilton
The dissertation submitted by Dennis J. Wynn has been read and approved by the following committee:

Rev. Charles E. Ronan, S.J., Director
Professor, History, Loyola

Dr. Joseph A. Gagliano
Professor, History and
Associate Dean, Graduate School, Loyola

Dr. Paul S. Lietz
Professor Emeritus, History, Loyola

The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the dissertation is now given final approval by the Committee with reference to content and form.

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

February 9, 1982

Date

Charles E. Ronan, S.J.
Director's Signature