



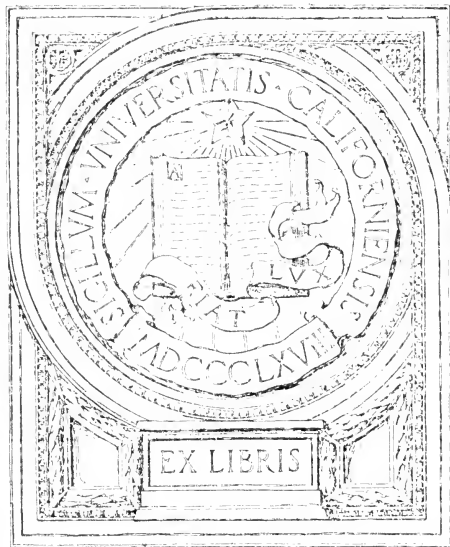
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THE BATTLE OF SAN PASQUAL

A Report of the California Historical Survey
Commission with Special Reference
to its Location

By OWEN C. COY, Ph.D.
DIRECTOR



CALIFORNIA STATE PRINTING OFFICE
SACRAMENTO
1921

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THE BATTLE OF SAN PASQUAL.

GIFT TO THE STATE.

In accordance with the provisions of an act of the Legislature approved by the governor May 16, 1919, the State of California accepted as a gift from Messrs. William G. Henshaw and Ed Fletcher one acre of land said to be the site of the battle of San Pasqual, fought between the forces of General S. W. Kearny and the native Californians (Mexican) December 6 and 7, 1846. The act also provided that the Historical Commission should prepare a narrative of the events connected with the battle; that it should determine the exact location of the several engagements; and recommend some manner whereby the state might suitably mark the site. In accordance with the act mentioned, this report is respectfully submitted.

HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF THE BATTLE.

The battle of San Pasqual, fought in the little valley of that name located in the northern part of San Diego County, was one of the bloodiest fought on Californian soil. The number of men engaged was not large nor were the casualties numerous as compared with battles of more recent wars. Its chief distinction lies in the fact that it was a battle fought upon California soil, which fortunately has been particularly free from bloody encounters.

The main events of the war with Mexico during the years 1846-1848 are well known to the readers of American history. Upon July 7, 1846, Commodore John D. Sloat raised the American Flag at Monterey and during the succeeding months the supremacy of the forces of the United States was recognized throughout the territory of Alta California, except by isolated bands of native Californian forces. One of these was the band of Andres Pico just north of San Diego.

The United States Government, knowing of the impending war with Mexico, had prepared for an attack upon California both by its naval forces and by the army. Under instructions Commodore Sloat, as before stated, took possession of the chief port and settlements during the summer of 1846. To cooperate with the naval forces Colonel Stephen W. Kearny was ordered to proceed overland, and after having taken possession of New Mexico was to push on and hold California for the United States. A letter of instructions from Secretary of War William L. Marcy to Kearny is of value in giving an idea of his instructions and the plan of action of which this battle was a part.

This letter, dated Washington, June 3, 1846, informed Kearny that the President had decided, in view of the impending war with Mexico, that the possession of Alta California was of prime importance; and that an expedition with that object in view was therefore ordered and

that he was designated to command it. He was also informed that an additional force of a thousand men had been provided to follow him to Santa Fe, to which place he was directed to proceed; and he was instructed, after making himself master of New Mexico, to press on with his remaining force to California. He was to enlist such volunteers as he might pick up along the way, the total enlistment not to exceed one-third of his original force. He was permitted to choose his own route, but it was suggested that the so-called "Caravan Route," by which the old communication between that country and New Mexico had been carried on, could be more easily traversed in winter time, and the wish was expressed that he should reach California by winter. It was expected that the United States naval forces would be in possession of the Pacific seacoast by the time Kearny would arrive there, and that they would cooperate with him in the conquest of the country. However, Kearny was not definitely bound to a fixed program, for Secretary Marcy's letter expressly stated that "A large discretionary power is invested in you in regard to these matters, as well as to all others." The letter of instructions ended with advice as to the government to be set up in the event of the conquest of California, and instructions for the kind treatment of the Californians.

Following the instructions, Colonel Kearny left Leavenworth about the end of June, occupied Santa Fe, and accomplished the conquest of New Mexico, as directed, in August. Having succeeded thus far, General Kearny, his commission as such having reached him at Santa Fe, made preparations for carrying out the remainder of his instructions, namely, those which dealt with the conquest of California.

He left Santa Fe on the twenty-fifth of September, 1846, having before him a journey of over a thousand miles, a great portion of which was absolute desert. A very interesting account of this journey is given by Lieutenant Colonel W. H. Emory, one of Kearny's aides, in his journal. Both he and Captain Johnston, another aide to Kearny, kept diaries of their experiences on the overland trip to California. However, the details of the trip, although very interesting, are not essential to our story. The main facts of the trip may be obtained from the following letter, the official report of General Kearny to his superior officer, General R. Jones, sent after Kearny's arrival at San Diego:

HEADQUARTERS, ARMY OF THE WEST,
SAN DIEGO, UPPER CALIFORNIA, Dec. 12, 1846.

SIR: As I have previously reported to you, I left Santa Fe [New Mexico] for this country on the 25th of September, with 300 of the First Dragoons under Major Sumner. We crossed to the bank of the Del Norte at Albuquerque, (65 miles below Santa Fe,) continuing down on that bank till the 6th October, when we met Mr. Kit Carson, with a party of 16 men, on his way to Washington city with a mail and papers, an express from Com. Stockton, and Lieut. Col. Fremont, reporting that the Californians were already in possession of the Americans under their command;

that the American flag was flying from every important position in the territory, and that the country was forever free from Mexican control; the war ended, and peace and harmony established among the people. In consequence of this information, I directed that 200 dragoons under Major Sumner, should remain in New Mexico, and that the other 100, with two mountain howitzers, under Capt. Moore, should accompany me as a guard to Upper California. With this guard, we continued our march to the south, on the right bank of the Del Norte, to the distance of about 230 miles below Santa Fe, when, leaving that river on the 15th October, in about the 33d deg. of latitude, we marched westward for the Copper mines, which we reached on the 18th, and on the 20th reached the river Gila, proceeding down the Gila, crossing and recrossing it as often as obstructions in our front rendered it necessary; on the 11th November reached the Pimos village, about 80 miles from the settlements in Sonora. * * * We crossed the Colorado about 10 miles below the mouth of the Gila, and, marching near it about 30 miles farther, turned off and crossed the desert—a distance of about 60 miles—without water or grass. On the 2d December, we reached Warner's Rancho, (Agua Caliente,) the frontier settlement in California, on the route leading to Sonora. On the 4th we marched to Mr. Stokes's rancho (San[ta] Isabella,); and on the 5th were met by a small party of volunteers, under Capt. Gillespie, sent out from San Diego, by Com. Stockton, to give us what information they possessed of the enemy, 600 or 700 of whom are now said to be in arms, and in the field throughout the territory, determined upon opposing the Americans, and resisting their authority in the country. Encamped that night near another rancho (San[ta] Maria) of Mr. Stokes, about 40 miles from San Diego. * * *

Very respectfully, your obdt. svt.,

S. W. KEARNY, Brig. Gen., U. S. A.

BRIG. GEN. R. JONES, Adjt.-Gen. U. S. A.

General Kearny's letter, curiously enough, makes no mention of the proximity of the hostile Californians, although he tells of the camp at the rancho Santa Maria. Referring to Lieutenant Emory's journal, we find that, under the date of December 5, he says:

"We arrived at the rancheria after dark, where we heard that the enemy was in force 9 miles distant, and, not finding any grass about the rancheria, we pushed on and encamped in a canyon, two miles below. * * * A party under Lt. Hammond was sent to reconnoitre the enemy, reported to be near at hand. By some accident the party was discovered and the enemy placed on the 'qui vive.' We were now on the main road to San Diego; all the 'by-ways' being in our rear, and it was therefore deemed necessary to attack the enemy, and force a passage. About 2 o'clock a. m. the call to horse was sounded."

Captain Johnston, who was killed in action at San Pasqual, in his last entry, December 4, tells of hearing rumors of the enemy, but does not mention at what time the Americans broke camp.

Before proceeding with the account of the battle which took place next day, it is necessary that we know something of the Californians on the opposing side.

About the time that Kearny was crossing the Colorado, General Flores, comandante of the Californians, sent Captain Andres Pico south to cut off the return of a party of Americans understood to have left San Diego for the region of Santa Isabel. Pico failed to connect with the Americans, but, nevertheless, remained in the south, making his headquarters at San Luis Rey and Santa Margarita. Located thus he cooperated with Captain Cota, who headed another band of Californians, in keeping supplies from the Americans. Nothing definite is

known of Pico's movements up to December 5, when we find him encamped at the Indian village of San Pasqual. His purpose, it seems, was to cut off the return of Gillespie, whose departure from San Diego was known. We already know from Kearny's letter, that Gillespie had succeeded in connecting with Kearny's force on the fourth of December. However, Pico was ignorant of this fact, as he knew nothing of General Kearny's presence in California.

Although there is conflicting testimony upon this point, it is reasonable to assume it true, for if Pico had been aware of Kearny's presence he would hardly have acted as he did. Osio, a California writer, claims that Pico had no idea of Kearny's proximity, when he camped for the night at San Pasqual. According to Osio, Pico's first intimation of the presence of Kearny was given by an Indian, who rushed into Pico's camp that night and told him that an American captain with more than two hundred men was encamped a short distance away, and had been joined by another American captain from San Diego.

According to Osio's account, the Indian, wishing to save Pico from surprise, told him of Kearny's intention to fall upon him unawares in the morning. Upon hearing this, Pico gave the order to mount and prepare to fight against four times their number.

On the other hand Palomares, a lieutenant in a company of California riflemen, claims that Pico left Los Angeles with a force of thirty men, expressly to follow Kearny, whose presence in California was known. According to Palomares' account, Pico arrived at San Pasqual in a rain, at about 8 p.m. Not wishing to fall in a trap, he sent two of his men, Pablo Vejar and Ysidro Alvarado, to spy upon Kearny. Palomares gives a vivid account of how Pico and his men waited all night in a drizzling rain for the return of these two spies who, as was afterwards learned, had been taken prisoner by a patrol of Americans. Palomares mentions the same incident of the Indian informant, as was mentioned by Osio, saying that at one o'clock in the morning an Indian approached camp, telling of an impending American attack. He was questioned by Pico, who refused to believe his story. The Indian left, only to return half an hour later with news of the approach of the Americans. This time his story was believed and Pico ordered his men to mount and prepare for attack.

Both Osio and Palomares agree fairly well concerning the warning received by Pico and his preparations. However, Palomares' statement that Pico left Los Angeles with thirty men to attack Kearny is not reasonable, for the Californians were not accustomed to making attack upon parties four times their number. Osio is undoubtedly right in his contention that Pico was unaware of Kearny's approach, and in this statement he is borne out by Botello, another contemporary, who claims that Pico afterwards told him that he had not wished to fight, but was

forced to it by circumstances which made it impossible to do otherwise. If Pico had not wished to fight, as he claims, he could hardly have been following Kearny with the intention of attacking him.

Referring to Emory's journal we find that the Americans broke camp in the early morning of December 6, reaching the vicinity of San Pasqual about daybreak. The order of march was as follows: Captain Johnston commanded an advance guard of twelve dragoons mounted on the best horses; close behind was General Kearny with Lieutenants Emory and Warner of the engineers, and four or five of their men; next came Captain Moore and Lieutenant Hammond with about fifty dragoons, many of them mounted upon mules, followed by Captains Gillespie and Gibson with twenty volunteers of the California Battalion. Lieutenant Davidson was next in line, in charge of the two howitzers, with a few dragoons to manage the guns, which were drawn by mules; and finally the rest of the force, between fifty and sixty men, brought up the rear under Major Swords, protecting the baggage.

Reaching the top of a slight rise, the Americans saw the village of San Pasqual spread before them. The Californians were drawn up to receive a charge. Ordering a charge, Captain Johnston proceeded down the slope at a gallop, followed by his men. He and his twelve dragoons being the best mounted, rapidly drew ahead of the main body of the Americans, and by the time they had reached the waiting Californians, they were alone. The Californians, taking advantage of this fact, stood fast, discharging a volley, then receiving the Americans with lances set. Captain Johnston fell dead at the first volley, with a bullet through his head, and several others were wounded. A furious hand-to-hand conflict took place, which was terminated by the arrival of the main body of the Americans, at which Pico's men fled, hotly pursued by the Americans.

However, the extreme variety of mounts soon became evident in the relative positions of the various pursuers, the American line being strung out for more than a mile. What Pico's plans up to this stage of the battle may have been no one knows for certain, although Osio claims that Pico feigned a retreat to lure the Americans on. However this may have been, after running some distance to more open ground, Pico suddenly wheeled his column, and rushed back to meet the Americans. The conflict, though brief, was desperately fought. The American firearms were practically useless on account of the rain and the time needed to reload, so the conflict resolved itself into a hand-to-hand struggle of clubbed guns and sabers against the lances of the Californians. The Americans fought bravely against heavy odds, for their mules were unmanageable, and their sabers too short to cope effectively with the long California lances.

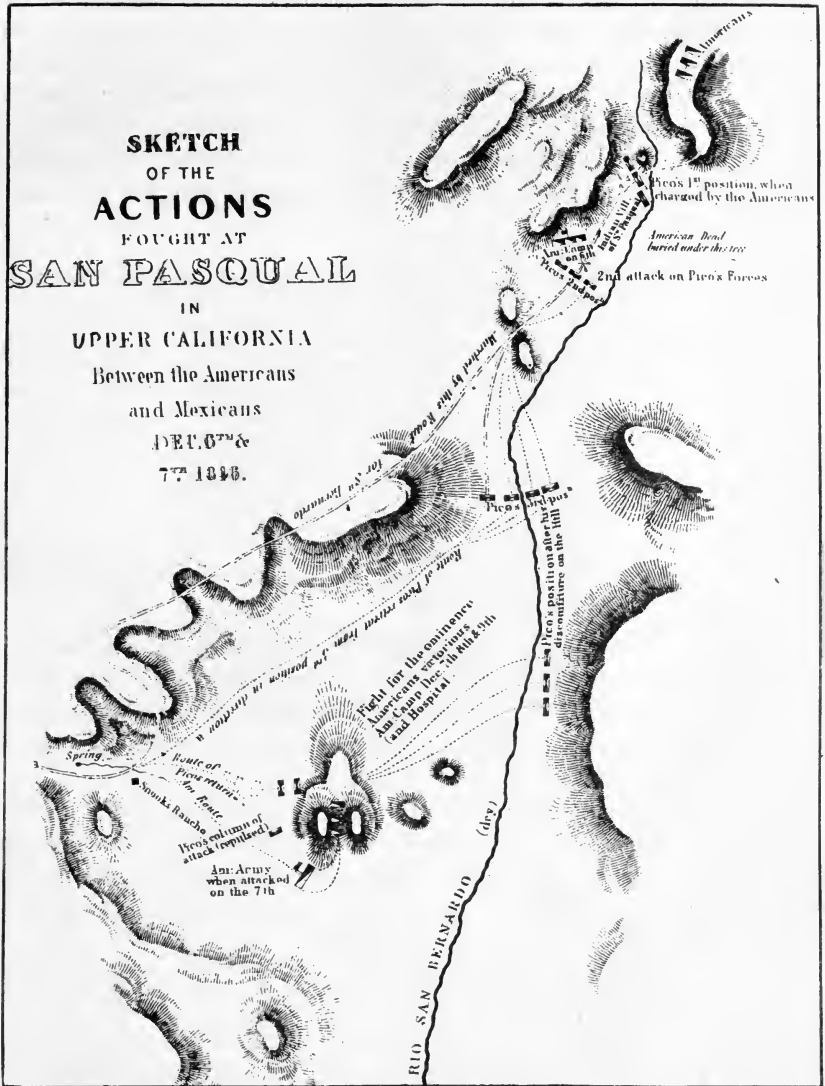
This hand-to-hand combat raged for several minutes. When the first fury of the assault had somewhat abated the rest of Kearny's forces arrived with the two howitzers, and the Californians again fled. The Americans were in no condition to pursue and indeed found themselves in a very unhappy plight. Emory says, "Our provisions were exhausted, our horses dead, our mules on their last legs, and our men, now reduced to one-third of their number, were ragged, worn down by fatigue, and emaciated." Since the mules were unable to transport the dead and wounded it was decided to camp at the site over night in order to bury the dead. This was done as secretly as possible under the cover of darkness, amid the howlings of a myriad of coyotes, who had been attracted to the scene of battle. Emory's description of the camp that night doubtless not only describes the place but also reflects the spirit of the men, for he says, "Our position was defensible, but the ground, covered with rocks and cacti, made it difficult to get a smooth place to rest, even for the wounded. The night was cold and damp, and notwithstanding our excessive fatigues of the day and night previous, sleep was impossible."

The exact number of casualties on either side cannot be determined, since there are about as many different reports given as there are narrators to give them. However, a fairly close estimate places the American dead at eighteen, with fifteen wounded. It is doubtful if there were any killed among the Californians, although several contemporaries speak of one Californian being killed. An estimate of all accounts places the Californians wounded at twelve, two of them seriously. Kearny himself was wounded, and Captain H. S. Turner assumed command, dispatching Lieutenant Godey and three others to San Diego for help.

Early on the morning of the seventh Kearny again took command, and started his ragged detachment on its way to San Diego with the threatening Californians disputing their advance. When they arrived at the San Bernardo rancho it was found to be deserted except for a few Indians, but water was obtainable for the animals and several chickens were killed for the use of the sick. No grass was found for the stock so they pushed on toward the river bed, driving many cattle with them. At this juncture the Californian horseman again made an attack upon the rear of the advancing army. Emory describes it thus:

"We had scarcely left the house and proceeded more than a mile, when a cloud of cavalry debouched from the hills in our rear, and a portion of them dashed at full speed to occupy a hill by which we must pass, while the remainder threatened our rear. Thirty or forty of them got possession of the hill, and it was necessary to drive them from it. This was accomplished by a small party of six or eight, upon whom the Californians discharged their fire; and strange to say, not one of our men fell. The capture of the hill was then but the work of a moment, and when we reached the crest, the Californians had mounted their horses and were in full flight. We did not lose a man in the skirmish, but they had several badly wounded. By this movement we lost our cattle, and were convinced that if we attempted any further progress with the ambulances we must lose our sick and our packs."

SKETCH
OF THE
ACTIONS
FOUGHT AT
SAN PASQUAL
IN
UPPER CALIFORNIA
Between the Americans
and Mexicans
DET. 6TH &
7TH 1846.



Map 1.—Contemporaneous map by Lieut. Col. W. H. Emory.

It was decided to stay there and await reenforcements from San Diego as the condition of the troops was such that to proceed further would be suicide. The numbers of the Californians were constantly increasing. Kearny had no way of knowing whether or not Godey had evaded the natives and reached San Diego. When it was learned that the Californians had several American prisoners they were forced to consider the serious situation they were in. It was decided therefore to try to get another message through to San Diego. Lieutenant E. F. Beale of the Navy, Kit Carson, and an Indian volunteered to attempt the perilous journey. Senator Benton thus describes the preparation for their departure:

“The brief preparations for the forlorn hope were soon made; and brief they were. A rifle each, a blanket, a revolver, a sharp knife, and no food; there was none in the camp. General Kearny invited Beale to come and sup with him. It was not the supper of Anthony and Cleopatra; for when the camp starves, no general has a larder. It was meagre enough. The General asked Beale what provisions he had to travel on; the answer was, nothing. The General called his servant to inquire what his tent afforded; a handful of flour, was the answer. The General ordered it to be baked into a loaf and be given to Beale. When the loaf was brought, the servant said that was the last, not of bread only, but of everything; that he had nothing left for the general’s breakfast. Beale directed the servant to carry back the loaf, saying that he would provide for himself. He did provide for himself; and how? By going to the smouldering fire where the baggage had been burnt in the morning, and scraping from the ashes and embers the half-burnt peas and grains of corn which the conflagration had spared, filling his pockets with the unwonted food. Carson and the faithful Indian provided for themselves some mule beef.”

Guided by the skill of Kit Carson, the three men eluded the besiegers and separately made their way to San Diego during the second night. There they found that Godey had successfully given the news of Kearny’s plight and that Commodore Stockton had already started a relief expedition on the way to San Pasqual.

The Smithsonian Institute at Washington, D. C., has erected a tablet to the memory of Beale and Carson in commemoration of the heroism displayed by them at this time. Since this tablet shows so well the attitude of this great national museum toward this battle, the inscription is given in full:

“BEALE AND CARSON HAILING STOCKTON’S FLAGSHIP

“AN INCIDENT OF THE MEXICAN WAR

“Kearny, sent from Santa Fe to occupy California, was met and defeated by the Mexicans at San Pasqual. The American forces were driven upon a butte in the desert on which there was no water and there surrounded by the Mexican forces. Edward F. Beale and Kit Carson, the famous explorers of the West, volunteered to go through the Mexican lines and get reenforcements from Stockton’s fleet at San Diego. They succeeded in crawling past the cordon of Mexican sentries in the night and by hiding in ravines in the day and traveling by night they reached Stockton’s flagship, after enduring great hardship.”

In the meanwhile the besieged Americans, who had been subsisting several days on the flesh of emaciated mules and the little water they



Carson-Beale tablet in the Smithsonian Institute—From Sabin, "Kit Carson Days."

could obtain by digging, planned to make another desperate attempt to proceed to San Diego. The surgeon reported upon December 10 that the wounded were able to make the journey and the order was given to make ready for a march early next morning. Emory then reports:

“We were all reposing quietly, but not sleeping, waiting for the break of day, when we were to go down and give the enemy another defeat. One of the men, in the part of the camp assigned to my defence, reported that he heard a man speaking in English. In a few minutes we heard the tramp of a column, followed by the hail of the sentinel. It was a detachment of 100 tars and 80 marines under Lieutenant Gray, sent to meet us by Commodore Stockton, from whom we learned that Lieutenant Beale, Carson, and the Indian had arrived safely in San Diego. The detachment left San Diego on the night of the 9th, cached themselves during the day of the 10th, and joined us on the night of that day. These gallant fellows busied themselves till day distributing their provisions and clothes to our naked and hungry people.”

This union of the two American forces entirely disconcerted the plans of the native Californians, and before sunrise they had withdrawn toward the north, leaving Kearny and his enlarged army undisturbed in their further advance. They arrived at San Diego upon the morning of December 12.

Thus ended the battle of San Pasqual, the most famous and the most sanguinary of California history. Although technically the Americans may claim a victory, since they remained in possession of the field, it is probable that another such “victory” would have been disastrous. There has been much comment made upon the battle at San Pasqual, and the general tone of critics is unfavorable to General Kearny. Bancroft, in particular, has characterized the attack of Kearny as a stupid blunder, Hittell also blames Kearny, but his tone is much less severe. He says in part: “There can be no doubt that the attack on San Pasqual was a mistake on the part of Kearny, who did not sufficiently take into consideration the condition of his forces, nor sufficiently appreciate the forces of the Californians.” Sabin, a more recent writer, says that it is probable that in this case Kearny was ill-advised by both Gillespie and Carson, upon whom he relied for guidance. He says:

“Gillespie was burning for revenge to counterbalance his discomfiture at Los Angeles. He made light of the California valor. So did even Kit Carson, who, in common with other mountain men of the Southwest, thought little of Latin courage. After their easy conquest of New Mexico, when the march from Bent’s Fort to Santa Fe, the capital, had been practically undisputed, General Kearny and his officers and men also were inclined to dismiss the Californians curtly.

Influenced by the contempt of Gillespie and Carson, and not realizing that here the fight was with free Californians accustomed to more initiative than the New Mexicans, General Kearny’s council decided to push on for San Diego, and to attack the enemy if they were opposed. In this plan was sound military sense. Boldness would win a way, whereas hesitancy might result in the little force being shut off from the sea and all supplies, and, by a constantly increasing foe, confined helplessly inland while their chances grew less.”

Military critics may differ as to whether the policy pursued by General Kearny was in keeping with the best military tactics. Be that as it may, this battle will take its place in California’s history as one which not only shows forth boldly the courage and fortitude of the men

who composed the American Army on the one hand, but also the dash and skill of the irregular California cavalry on the other hand. It constitutes an important incident in the American Conquest of California.

LOCATION OF THE BATTLE SITE.

In order that the true site of the battle might be determined, all obtainable data such as contemporary reports and maps, and other early maps of the region, were carefully studied and compared with the recent topographical maps prepared by the United States Geological Survey. Of greatest value in this work was the sketch map of these engagements prepared by Lieutenant Colonel W. H. Emory, who accompanied this expedition in the capacity of topographical engineer. With the exception of the course of the San Bernardo (or San Dieguito) River, which is indicated by Emory as running east of the American camp of December 7-11, the map mentioned is exceedingly accurate and gives sufficient number of recognized topographical features to permit an accurate location of the places mentioned in the report.

In this map the American advance is shown to have approached the scene of the engagements from a ridge crossing the river (then dry) at the Indian village of San Pasqual, where Pico's band was drawn up to meet them. This village is located near a small detached hill or knoll standing near the head of the valley apart from those forming the walls of the valley. The line of retreat is then shown down the valley on the same (north) side of the river to a place where the hills to the north seem to recede, forming a wider, more open plain. On this open plain the second and most desperate of the engagements was fought and here the Americans camped December 6.

After retreating between two small hills on the north side of the valley, Pico's forces are shown to have taken up their third position across the valley at a point where the highlands converge. Should the Americans proceed down the valley this would be an advantageous point to resist them. It did in fact force Kearny to take to the low hills to the north of the valley, while Pico held the valley probably somewhat in advance of the Americans. After proceeding some distance along the north edge of the valley the Americans turned sharply to their left and were attacked by the Californians as they ascended a hill on the other side. The former were then forced to take up a position upon this hill, and there they awaited reinforcements.

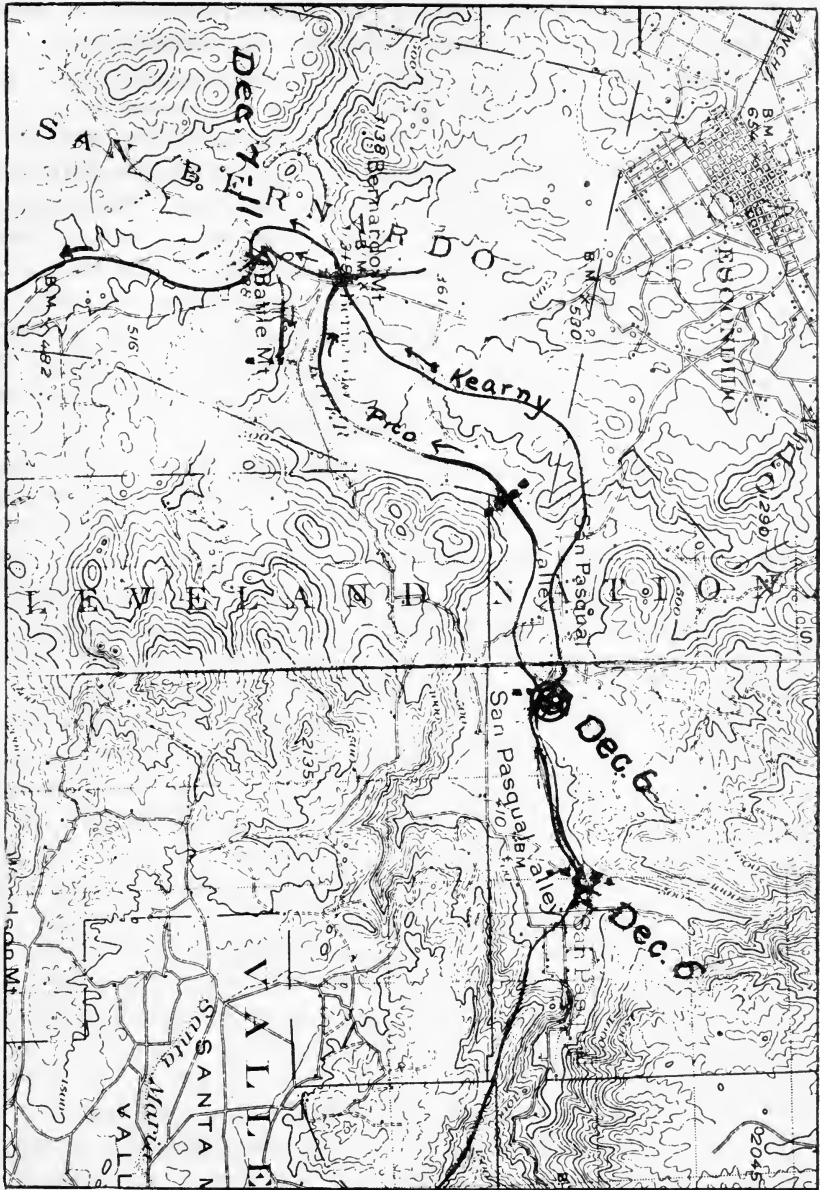
Guided by the map of Colonel Emory and the recent United States Geological Survey sheets, the Director of the Commission marked the approximate location of the various battle sites upon the topographical sheet. Two points seemed to permit of definite location. The Indian village of San Pasqual, at which the first engagement was fought, is undoubtedly the same as the village by the name upon the topographical

map, and also it seemed safe to assume that the third engagement, which was fought on the south side of the valley, took place upon the peak now known as Battle Mountain. On account of the absence of any scale of miles accompanying Emory's map, the distances shown thereon can not be accurately determined and are therefore only relative distances. The position of the second engagement was fixed in relation to the two points just mentioned as well as by other corresponding features in both the contemporaneous and recent maps.

Having made these preliminary observations and indicated them upon the topographical maps, the Director of the Commission, in company with Assemblyman Fred Lindley and others, visited San Pasqual Valley on February 22, 1920, to determine the accuracy of these conclusions and to decide if possible whether the land accepted by the State by virtue of Statutes 1919, chapter 272, as the battle site, is the actual battle ground, or if there were sufficiently definite information available to determine such site.

San Pasqual Valley is a small valley about nine miles long, and varies in width, from one-half a mile to two miles. At the upper or eastern end of the valley the river, which is dry except during the rainy season of the year, emerges from a relatively narrow cañon. The general topography is strikingly like that shown on Emory's map. A small round knoll stands at the head of the valley upon the north side of the river. There is now a farm house here, but it is said once to have been the site of an Indian village. The hill mentioned is now used as a cemetery. While inspecting this site numerous Indian arrow heads and bits of pottery were discovered in the surface dirt, indicating that it had been the location of an Indian village. The tradition of the old-time residents of the valley makes this the site of the first engagement, and there can be but little doubt that the historical records confirm this tradition.

From this place we passed down the valley in an endeavor to locate the site of the second engagement, closely following the route indicated as that of the two opposing forces. Here again the map of Colonel Emory was found to be of great value, for his delineation of the topography, particularly the highlands forming the north wall of the valley, is very suggestive and there can be no doubt of their identity at the present time. Local tradition places the scene of the second battle about two miles from the first, at a place where the valley widens due to an opening in the hills from the north. It is here that the land deeded to the State is located. In view of the close resemblance between Emory's map of the battle, the topographical sheets issued by the United States, and the actual physical features, the Director of the Commission was not surprised to find that this traditional battle site was exactly upon the point as previously marked by him as the result of



Map 2. Topographical sheets showing routes of Kearney and Pico.
Crosses mark locations of the several engagements. The circle marks the battle site owned by the State.

his preliminary study of the historical evidence. He is therefore fully satisfied that the land deeded to the State is the site of the battle of December 6, 1846. This is especially true when it is remembered that this was a cavalry battle, and probably covered many acres of ground. There can therefore be but little doubt that the battle was fought over the ground selected, and it is furthermore very probable that it may have been the site of the camp upon the night of December 6.

From this point we proceeded farther down the valley. The present road passes between two small elevations to the north of the main valley, very suggestive of those shown on Emory's map. Near there the strategic value of Pico's third position across the valley at a narrow point is very evident, while on the other hand the low hills north of the valley have a gentle slope, thus making it possible for Kearny's army to ascend them and thus by watching the enemy in the valley to guard against attack. Traveling here was but slightly more difficult than upon the valley floor, until they approached the more mountainous region through which the river approaches the sea. It is probable that here the guides warned Kearny that they must turn to the south in order to avoid the mountains if they desired to proceed to San Diego. Pico's band seems to have been ahead of them, probably on the route to San Luis Rey, his headquarters. At any rate the American army's descent into the valley was not opposed, but as they crossed over to the southern side and were ascending the slope they were attacked from the rear by Pico's men. They were then forced to take up this position upon the small peak now known as Battle Mountain.

The one serious defect in Emory's map is met in locating the latter part of the route just described, as he indicates the San Bernardo River as running to the east of the site of this third battle, when in reality it runs to the north of the peak, and was crossed by the Americans just before the third attack of Pico's men. Serious as this may appear, it may be easily explained without calling into question the accuracy of his other observations. It must be remembered that although the date was in December, he describes the river as being dry. When the writer was there late in February, after a three days' rain, the river was just beginning to show signs of life and was even then not more than a good-sized creek. It is therefore very probable that the Americans crossed the dry river bed without recognizing it. Furthermore the topography here is somewhat deceiving to one who has not had opportunity to examine it carefully. The valley comes to an end in a cañon which suddenly grows narrow and because of a sudden turn in the river might give the impression, if no running water was to be seen, that it was only a side cañon rather than the outlet to the valley. On the other hand, the gentle slope of the valley wall on the south with a wide lateral valley might easily lead to the belief, as evidently enter-

tained by Emory, that the river passed through between these hills on the south side of the valley. When also it is remembered that the Americans were greatly handicapped while making their way across the valley floor, since the mounted Californians, not far away, were probably already preparing for an attack, there can be little wonder that Emory did not succeed in determining the exact course of the river channel. Later from the summit of Battle Mountain these points could not be determined.

Based upon the exceedingly valuable map of Emory and the information contained in the numerous other contemporary accounts there can be but little doubt but that the sites of the three engagements can be located with all the accuracy required in cavalry battles such as these were, and that the land accepted by the State of California as a gift from William G. Henshaw and Colonel Ed Fletcher under the provisions of the Statutes of 1919, chapter 272, is the true site of the battle of December 6, 1846.

SUGGESTED MEMORIAL.

Many methods have been suggested as suitable means of marking this battle site. Probably the best is that prepared by Colonel Ed Fletcher, one of the donors of the site, who recommends the construction of a community house built of adobe and tile, with a suitable boulder marked and placed in a good location in front of the building, with a tablet calling attention to the event commemorated. An inscription either upon the boulder or on the walls of the house itself should give the names of those killed and wounded. Action of this character on the part of the State would not only mark the spot but also encourage the local people to care for the surrounding landmarks. Assurance has been given that should the State see fit to make a small appropriation toward a suitable memorial, the remainder would be raised within the county.

Respectfully submitted,

HISTORICAL SURVEY COMMISSION.

OWEN C. COY, *Director.*

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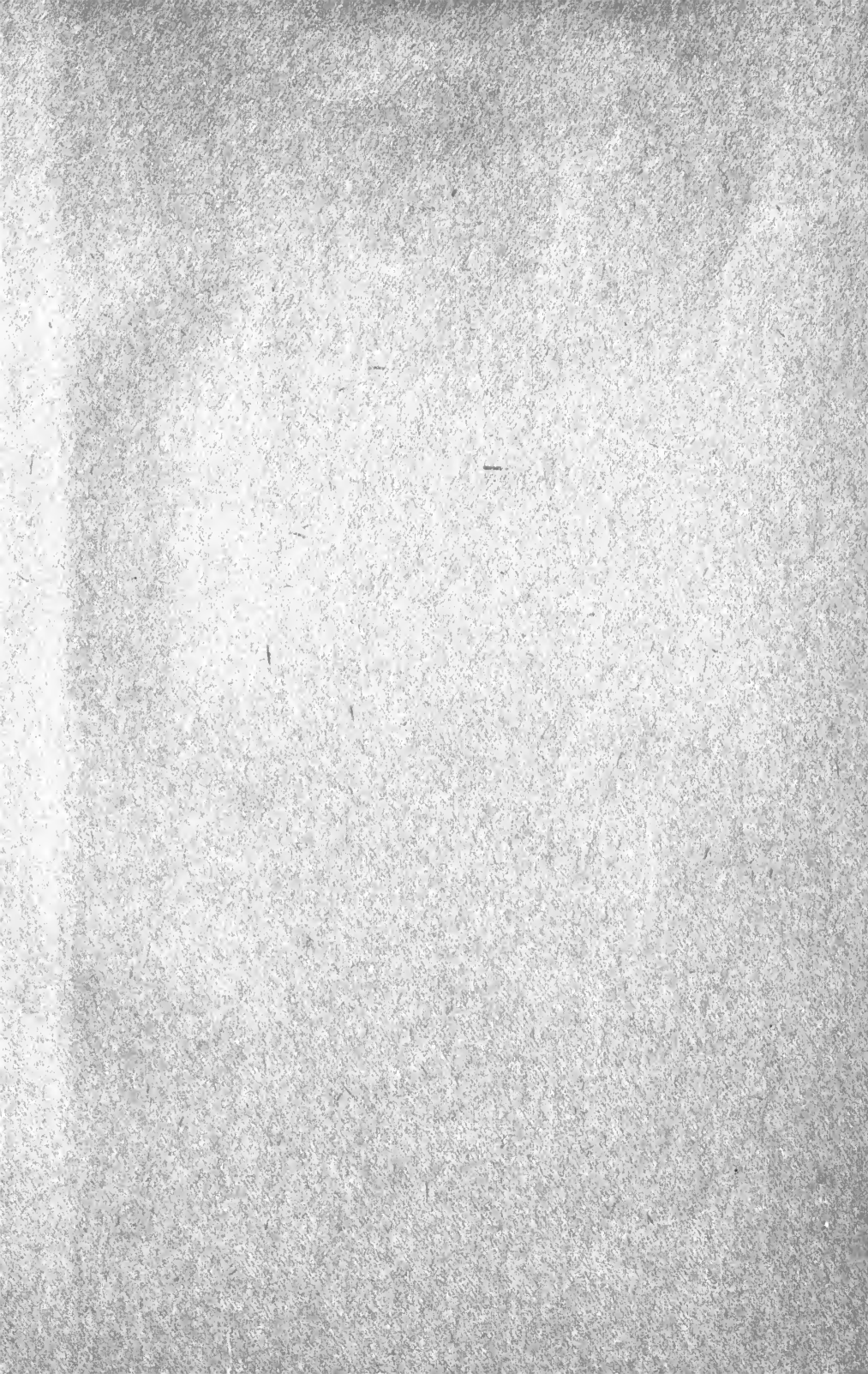
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