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The purpose of this paper is to show how William Walker was toppled from power after initially being so successful in Nicaragua. Walker's attempt at seizing Nicaragua from 1855 to 1857 caused international consternation not only throughout Central America but also in the capitals of Washington and London.

Within four months of entering Nicaragua with only fifty-seven followers, Walker had brought Nicaragua under his domination. In July, 1856 Walker had himself inaugurated as President of Nicaragua. However, Walker's amazing career in Nicaragua was to last only briefly, as the opposition of the Legitimists in Nicaragua coupled with the efforts of the other Central American nations removed Walker from power.

Walker's ability as a military commander in the use of military strategy and tactics did not shine forth like his ability to guide and lead men. Walker did not learn from his mistakes. He attempted to use the same military tactics over and over, especially in attempts to storm towns which if properly defended were practically impregnable fortresses. Walker furthermore abandoned without a fight several strong defensive positions which could have been used to prevent or deter the Allied offensives.

Administratively, Walker committed several glaring errors. The control of the Accessory Transit Company was a very vital issue, but Walker dealt with it as if it were of minor importance. The outcome of his dealings with the Accessory Transit Company was a great factor in his eventual overthrow as President of Nicaragua. Walker's use of executions were inexcusable. Individuals which could have been dealt with differently were executed and subsequently became martyrs. Militarily and administratively, Walker failed to learn from his mistakes and failed to judge properly the importance of crucial decisions.

Because of his actions, Walker was unable to maintain his position in Nicaragua. On May 1, 1857 William Walker and his American Phalanx were compelled to surrender to Commander Davis of the United States Navy at Rivas. This ended Walker's first attempt at establishing himself in Nicaragua.

APPROVAL PAGE

This thesis has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of the Graduate School of The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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WILLIAM WALKER AND THE NICARAGUAN FILIBUSTER WAR OF 1855-1857

by

John Clyde Ellis, Jr.

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

William Walker and other adventurers of the times were referred to as filibusters. Because this word has evolved to a new meaning since the 1850's, it is necessary to define properly the word filibuster at this point. The word filibuster in the twentieth century is defined as "a member of a legislature who obstructs a bill by making long speeches." However, this word is derived from the Spanish word filibustero, which came from the Dutch word urijbuiter. These words in the 1850's meant an irregular military adventurer, a freebooter, who made war upon another country with which his own was at peace, with the intent of seizing and holding control of the invaded land. In the United States these filibusters were agents or instruments of the spirit of Manifest Destiny. To enlarge the territory of the United States in this instance, the move was south into Central America. Generally speaking, such actions of war were crimes against both nations, but realistically the act was held before popular judgment which rested upon the measure of its success. William Walker did not like the term "filibuster" for his followers, so he usually referred to his group as "liberators."

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

William Walker, "the gray-eyed man of destiny," became, in the 1850's, the storm center of political parties and governments on two continents. Even though almost completely overlooked in United States history, Walker for a brief period of time was a very successful filibuster, or military adventurer. He played an important role in the Manifest Destiny Era of the United States, but probably the main reason his exploits are either overlooked or he is pictured as a tyrannical filibuster, is simply that he was a failure. He had several grievous shortcomings which limited and curtailed his career at its zenith. Had William Walker been able to exploit and sustain his initial success and to be totally successful, like Sam Houston or Davy Crockett in Texas, he would possibly be remembered as a hero or a great American pioneer. Walker was a product of his times--a product of Manifest Destiny--a product of that strange breed of men who had reached the western terminus of the United States and now turned their restless spirits south to Central America and Mexico.

It is not the purpose of this paper to either laud or condemn William Walker for his intentions or for his adventurous spirit. To judge Walker on the basis of these qualities would be unfair, for looking back into the nineteenth century from the latter part of the twentieth century, it is difficult fairly to evaluate the man's motives and the pressures exerted upon him. There is, however, a justification for evaluating his success as a military commander and as an administrator, basing the judgment upon his actual deeds.

William Walker was an unlikely candidate to become the most renowned filibuster of the 1850's. Neither his mental nor his physical attributes seemed to indicate the character of a hard-driving, ambitious adventurer. As a young lad, he was described as a "mama's" boy because he read to his mother everyday instead of playing outside with boys his own age. William Walker was a bookish individual, graduating from the University of Nashville at the age of fourteen. At this period in United States history, however, most colleges were little more than the modern high school. From there he went to the University of Pennsylvania where he earned a medical degree, and then to Europe for further study. William Walker returned to Nashville to practice

medicine and became one of the leading surgeons of the city. However, for some reason, Walker soon tired of practicing medicine and moved to New Orleans where he began to read law and subsequently became a lawyer. However, because of his mild manner, William Walker was not a very successful lawyer. So again he changed careers. This time he became a newspaperman in New Orleans. For some mysterious reason--whether it was the plague, the death of the girl with whom he was in love, or because of the emergence of a fledgling adventurous spirit--he departed for California and the gold mines. Not making it as a gold miner, he again acquired the newspaper habit. Ironically enough, as William Walker was later accused in Nicaragua of being pro-slavery, both in California and New Orleans he showed in his editorials that he was not an ardent slavery man and he was often accused of publishing a "Yankee paper." While editor of the New Orleans Crescent, he ridiculed the filibustering attempts into Cuba by Narcisco Lopez.[1] Certainly none of his vocations or his actions up to this point seemed to indicate a bursting forth of the later feared William Walker.

Walker's physical stature certainly was not the type that would inspire adventurous souls to follow him to distant lands and into battle. He was a small man, between five feet

three inches and five feet five inches in height and weighing not much over a hundred pounds. His hair and eyebrows were tow-white, and his pale face was covered with freckles. An unnamed American filibuster who had intended to join Walker's forces had traveled as far as Greytown, Nicaragua before returning to the United States.* This filibuster gave a description of Walker's physical appearance as it had been told to him. "His features are described as coarse and impassable; his square chin and long jaw denote character, but his lips are full, and his mouth is not well formed."[2] (See illustration 1).[3] Furthermore, he was a man of few words, no laughter, no drinking or swearing, and no socializing. As Sam Absalom, a private in Walker's army, wrote,

> Instead of treating us like fellow-soldiers and adventurers in danger, upon whom he was wholly dependent, until his power was established, he bore himself like an Eastern tyrant--reserved and haughty--scarcely saluting when he met us--mixing not at all, but keeping himself close in his quarter.[4]

His physical and psychological outlook certainly contrasted with that of his soldiers. An English explorer,

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*This unnamed American filibuster later wrote an account of this adventure, which appeared in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, entitled "Run to Nicaragua."

MAJOR GENERAL WILLIAM WALKER.
Commander in Chief of the Republic of NICARAGUA
(*from a Daguerreotype by "Vance" San Francisco.*)

ILLUSTRATION 1

Frederick Boyle, described William Walker's followers in this fashion:

> Tall, upright, broadshouldered men they were nearly all. Their heads were well set on, hands and feet small, muscles like iron...the very pick of the Western States--men highly thought of even there for reckless daring....They were simply the most good-natured, good-tempered fellows I ever met with.[5]

William Walker must have been a most extraordinary man to be able to overcome his own personality and physical shortcomings, to control, to discipline, and to coalesce into an effective fighting force such a group of men. Even more remarkable is Walker's sudden change from a man of journalism, law, and medicine to a cold-blooded, ruthless filibuster doing just the opposite of what he had criticized earlier. Although this is probably one question which will remain forever unanswered, the answer lies somewhere in that nebulous realm of Manifest Destiny. Certainly, California at that time was filled with men of unbounded passion for adventure. These men could no longer push westward to new horizons, so they turned their attention southward. It was probably his association with such men that unbridled him from his inhibitions and enabled him to implant in his mind his mission in life--to open new lands

for settlement for the Anglo-Saxon and to become the founder of an empire. Indeed, if this was his mission in life, he certainly played the role to the hilt as a filibuster.

If today William Walker is looked down upon, it is because he dreamed and failed. If he had succeeded, we would certainly have a different image of this individual, and the credit for his success would have to be given to someone. With William Walker at the zenith of his success, Anna Ella Carroll, a political writer at this time in the United States,* gave credit to his mother.

> But, to give the secret of Walker's rise from the modest school-boy of Nashville to the presidency of Nicaragua, we must tell you he had a good mother, an American woman, who loved God and her country, and by gentleness, affection, and purity, exemplified and inculcated into the mind of her son the faith and doctrine of our Protestant Bible....Walker was educated a Christian youth, and made proficient in Christian law. This stimulated him to spread American principles, and enlisted the sympathy of his fellow-men in his new important mission of introducing a new administration and laws, exciting enterprise, and proclaiming human rights and freedom in that darkened land.[6]

Whether this was the reason William Walker was able to become such a well-known filibuster or whether it was

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*Anna Ella Carroll, during the Civil War in the United States was to become an unofficial member of President Abraham Lincoln's cabinet.

because he was in the right place at the right time, imbued with this mission of conquest, Walker became a true leader of men.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER I

[1]Edward S. Wallace, Destiny and Glory (New York: Coward-McCann, Incorporated, 1957), p. 146.

[2]"A Run to Nicaragua," Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, LXXI, No. CCCXCIX (May, 1857), p. 548.

[3]William V. Wells, Walker's Expedition to Nicaragua; A History of the Central American War; and the Sonora and Kinney Expeditions, Including All the Recent Diplomatic Correspondence, Together with a New and Accurate Map of Central America, and a Memoir and Portrait of General William Walker (New York: Stringer and Townsend, 1856), p. i.

[4]Samuel Absalom, "The Experience of Samuel Absalom, Filibuster," The Atlantic Monthly: A Magazine of Literature, Art, and Politics, IV, No. XXVI (December, 1859), p. 664.

[5]A Ride Across a Continent: A Personal Narrative of Wanderings through Nicaragua and Costa Rica, Vol. 1, quoted in Edward S. Wallace, "The Gray-Eyed Man of Destiny," American Heritage: The Magazine of History, IX (December, 1957), p. 28.

[6]Anna Ella Carroll, The Star of the West; or, National Men and National Measures, (New York: Miller, Orton, and Company, 1857), pp. 349-350.

CHAPTER II

THE POLITICAL SITUATION AND STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF NICARAGUA

Although Walker is mainly remembered for his filibustering activities in Nicaragua, his first attempt at filibustering was in Baja California (Lower California) and Sonora--respectively a district, at that time, and a state of Mexico. Although it seemed from the outset that the whole expedition to this natural appendage of the United States was to be a failure, William Walker did gain valuable experience. Also, he showed his indomitable spirit against superior odds and his unwillingness to give up until everything was lost. Even with Baja California being a natural appendage of the United States, it did not excite men's imagination, as Nicaragua did. With his own imagination fired and the irresistible star of destiny pushing him forward, William Walker saw in Nicaragua his golden opportunity, and, indeed, Nicaragua seemed to offer much to an ambitious young man with vision.

Reports from Nicaragua told of lush valleys, beautiful mountains, magnificent lakes, and of sparkling gold waiting

to be taken from the earth. But these reports of Nicaragua's natural beauty and resources were far overshadowed by one pregnant point--her location. Nicaragua, in the 1850's, was in the path of one of the world's major trade routes, and to the man with vision and a desire for power and glory, Nicaragua was a logical beginning. There was no reason why this valuable piece of real estate should not be controlled by Anglo-Saxon adventurers and eventually the United States.

Because of the dangers and difficulties of trans-continental transport in the United States, most American goods were shipped from coast to coast via Cape Horn. Naturally, economic interests were always looking for cheaper and easier means to accomplish this transport of material and men. Thus, eyes were soon fastened upon the isthmus of Nicaragua as a transit route, as it would be more economical and shorter. If the United States was to be strong and to hold California to the Union, there had to be safe and easy means of transport connecting the two sections of the United States. Nicaragua fitted the bill on all accounts. From New York to San Francisco via Cape Horn was 14,194 nautical miles; via Panama it was only 4,992 nautical miles. Nicaragua, although wider than Panama (175 miles compared to 55 miles), was not only 500 miles shorter but also

required only a twelve-mile journey on land. The remainder was a natural water chain of the San Juan River and Lake Nicaragua which could be navigated by boats.

Cornelius Vanderbilt, realizing the potential of the Nicaraguan isthmus, secured permission from the Nicaraguan government in 1849 to survey and construct a canal linking the Atlantic to the Pacific. However, Vanderbilt, instead of building a canal, constructed a twelve-mile macadam road from San Juan del Sur to Virgin Bay. From Virgin Bay to Fort San Carlos, large lake steamers would ferry passengers over Lake Nicaragua, then shallow draft steamers would transport passengers down the San Juan River to San Juan del Norte (Greytown) to await ocean steamers. The road was macadamized by July, 1851, and his new transisthmian facilities were incorporated into Vanderbilt's Accessory Transit Company on August 14, 1851.[1] Soon thousands of Americans were using the Nicaraguan isthmus as a transit route, averaging almost 2,000 persons a month.[2]

The strategic importance of the Nicaraguan isthmus, coupled with the political turmoil which constantly threatened the safety of Americans using the route, made Nicaragua ripe for exploit. She only awaited the right man to enter the picture. William Walker, making careful note of Nicaragua's

natural splendor, of her strategic importance, and of her political turmoil, found a star on which to hitch his ambitions.

Nicaragua had broken from the United Provinces of Central America in 1838, and ever since, she had been plagued with strife, dissension, and civil war. Essentially, Nicaragua's problem resulted from a conflict of interest between the two cities of León and Granada, neither of which was strong enough to establish its supremacy over the other. Granada's citizens were generally wealthy merchants and aristocrats because Granada had always been primarily a commercial center, and the surrounding farmland was dominated by a few large landholdings. This made Granada the center for the Conservative or Legitimist or "Servile" Party. Its political and social structure, however, was almost exactly opposite that of León. In León, there were few families of great wealth as its citizens were intellectuals and professionals. The countryside landholdings were small. Thus, León became the center for the Liberal or Democratic Party. This complete difference between the two cities made them inevitable enemies and the enmity found expression in armed conflict.[3]

The most recent civil war in Nicaragua resulted from the disputed presidential election of 1853. Both candidates--Don Francisco Castellón, representing the Democratic Party, and Don Fruto Chamorro, representing the Legitimist Party--claimed victory, but Chamorro, proving the most adept at intrigue, secured his own re-election. Subsequently, Francisco Castellón and his chief aide, Máximo Jérez, fearing persecution, fled to Honduras. Staying in Honduras for only a short time, Castellón and Jérez returned to Nicaragua on May 4, 1854, recruited an army, and sought to install Castellón as president by force. With the exception of Granada, they quickly secured control of Nicaragua. During a nine-month siege, Castellón and Jérez sought to dislodge Chamorro from Granada but were unsuccessful. Chamorro then received timely aid from Guatemala, and with Castellón's army decimated by disease and desertion, Chamorro's army burst out of Granada. By the end of 1854, Chamorro and the Legitimists were apparently gaining the upper hand.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER II

[1]James P. Baughman, Charles Morgan and the Development of Southern Transportation (Nashville, Tennessee: Vanderbilt University Press, 1968), p. 70.

[2]"Nicaragua and the Filibusters," Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, LXXIX, No. CCCCLXXXV (March, 1856), p. 315.

William Oscar Scroggs, "William Walker and the Steamship Corporation in Nicaragua," The American Historical Review, X, No. IV (July, 1905), p. 793.

[3]Dana G. Munro, The Five Republics of Central America: Their Political and Economic Development and Their Relations with the United States (New York: Oxford University Press, 1918), pp. 77-79.

CHAPTER III

WALKER SECURES CONTROL OF THE TRANSIT ROUTE

To help turn the tide and because Castellón was already familiar with American adventurers, he accepted an offer of American aid. This American assistance had been offered by Byron Cole, friend to William Walker and proprietor of a newspaper in California for which Walker had worked. In 1853, Cole went to Nicaragua ostensibly for the purpose of prospecting for gold there and in Honduras. While in Nicaragua, Cole saw in the political wrangling and civil war the prospect for successful intervention of American adventurers. Cole offered Walker a contract to come to Nicaragua to aid Castellón. Cole's first contract was rejected by William Walker because Walker realized that he would be violating the Neutrality Laws of 1818 of the United States.[1] However, Cole secured a second contract on December 29, 1854, which was a colonization grant and which allowed William Walker to provide 300 American colonists to settle in Nicaragua. In return, they would be guaranteed the right to bear arms. Although Walker secured the contract in February, 1855, he was unable to sail for Nicaragua until May 4, 1855.[2]

Not until June 16 did the Vesta, with its cargo of of William Walker and 57 followers, reach Realejo, Nicaragua. Charles W. Doubleday (already in the service of Castellón), Dr. J. W. Livingstone (ex-American Consul) and Colonel Félix Ramírez met the Vesta at Realejo and escorted William Walker to León to have an interview with Castellón. Upon meeting Walker for the first time, Doubleday later remarked, "Col. Walker, himself, did not, at the time, impress me as the man of indomitable will and energy which I afterwards found him to be. He was quiet and unassuming, 'as mild a mannered man as ever cut a throat or scuttled ship.'"[3]

Castellón, dubbing the Americans as La Falange Americana--the American Phalanx--proposed that the Americans form a separate corps.[4] William Walker was appointed to the rank of colonel in the Democratic Army and his men became naturalized citizens of Nicaragua on June 20. Castellón wanted William Walker's unit to assist General Jose Trinidad Muñoz, who had replaced Jérez as commander-in-chief of the armed forces, in an attack on Granada. Walker, however, realizing the importance of control of the transit route insisted that he be allowed to make that his theatre of operations and recapture it from the Legitimist Party. To Walker, the importance of the transit route was twofold:

(1) It would give him a command independent and separate from General Muñoz. (2) If he could establish and maintain a footing on the route, he would be able to receive recruits from the Americans passing over the transit line, and he would always have communication with both California and the east coast of the United States.[5] The transit route was the key to controlling Nicaragua, and Walker wisely realized it. Castellón soon gave in to the pressure from Walker, allowed him to undertake the mission, and promised Walker Nicaraguan troops under the command of Colonel Félix Ramírez.

Walker and his band, plus 150 Nicaraguan troops (not quite the 500 troops Castellón had promised), sailed from Realejo on the Vesta on June 23, 1855. The troops disembarked at Agua Callito, about eighteen miles north of San Juan del Sur and marched inland with Rivas as their objective.[6] They reached the town of Rivas, a strategic point near the transit route, on June 29, and began preparation for their attack. Due to the layout of the town, Rivas, like many towns and villages in Nicaragua, was practically an impregnable fortress if correctly defended. Most Latin American towns have a central plaza with all main roads radiating from this central plaza. The roads are lined with

adobe houses adjoining one another (See illustration 2).[7] Such a layout leaves the defenders with a very advantageous position since the plaza, as the heart of the town, is going to be the object of the attack. The defenders barricade the streets at the entrance to the town and place cannons and riflemen down the street from the barricades. Even if the barricades are overrun, the cannons and riflemen have open fields of fire down the street, and attacking troops almost have to advance down the open streets if they are to reach the plaza. Walker, apparently not realizing the near impossibility of successfully attacking a town like Rivas, selected a plan of attack which favored the Legitimists under Colonel Manuel Bosque.

Colonel Bosque, commander of the Legitimists at Rivas, not only controlled the best tactical position, but he also had approximately 500 troops versus Walker's total of 56 Americans and 150 Nicaraguans. Walker decided that his 56 Americans alone could storm and take Rivas. Advancing upon Rivas from the north, two of Walker's officers, Lieutenant Colonel Achilles Kewen and Major Timothy Crocker, were to advance simultaneously down the streets to the plaza. Colonel Ramírez and his 150 men were to guard the flanks and rear of the American troops.[8] However, from the

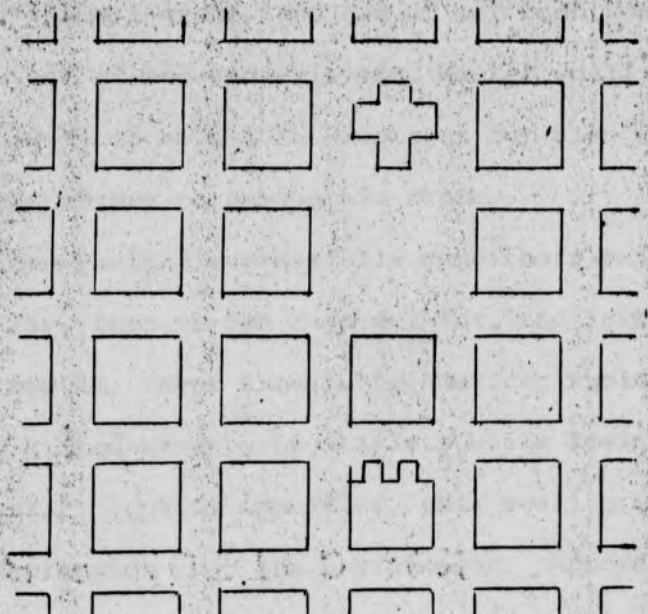
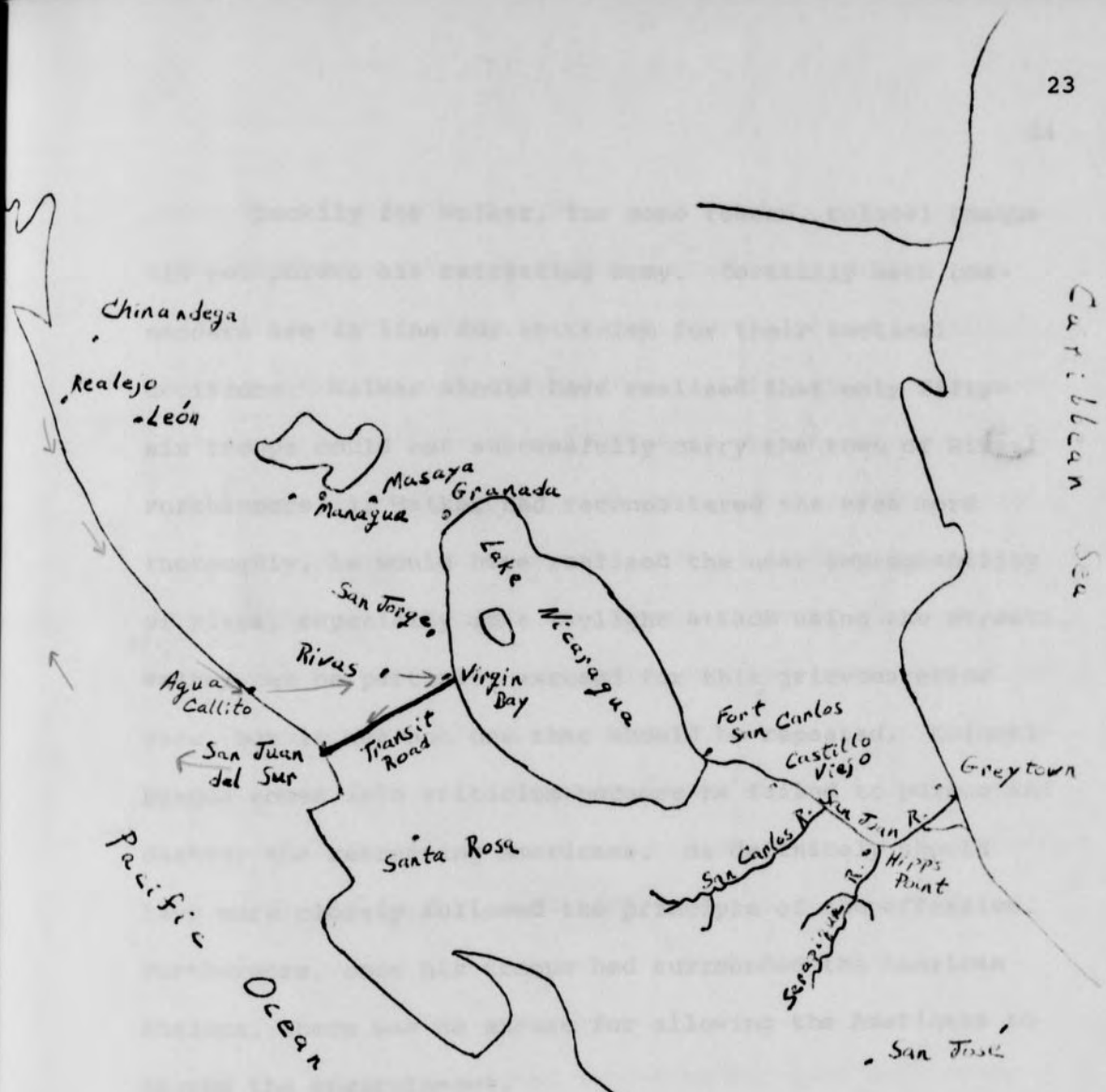


ILLUSTRATION 2

beginning things began to go wrong. At the first volley of fire, Colonel Ramírez and his troops immediately dispersed and fled from the town. Walker and his men, although advancing bravely and using their fire effectively, were soon bottled up for almost five hours in a group of houses on the edge of Rivas. On top of this, the Legitimists encircled Walker's small group, and had it not been for a desperate charge out of the encirclement, Walker would not only have lost his first battle in Nicaragua but also would never have had the chance to pursue his dream.

The American Phalanx successfully made their exit first to Virgin Bay, then to San Juan del Sur, and later to Realejo (See map A). Even though the American Phalanx was beaten, they killed seventy Legitimists while losing only six Americans.[9] Equally important, this small group left a lasting impression upon the Legitimists. According to William Wells, a United States citizen traveling in Nicaragua in the 1850's, "from that time forth it became generally known that in battle, to appear within 300 yards of our marksmen, was to die; and officers were the certain mark of the American sharp-shooters."[10] Much of the effectiveness of firepower was due to the American long rifles and Colt revolvers, which were immensely superior to the Legitimists' muskets.[11]



MAP A

These maps reprinted in part from Mapa: La Republica de Nicaragua, which is printed by General Drafting Company.

Luckily for Walker, for some reason, Colonel Bosque did not pursue his retreating army. Certainly both commanders are in line for criticism for their tactical decisions. Walker should have realized that only fifty-six troops could not successfully carry the town of Rivas. Furthermore, if Walker had reconnoitered the area more thoroughly, he would have realized the near impregnability of Rivas, especially in a daylight attack using the streets. Walker can be partially excused for this grievous error once, but it was not one that should be repeated. Colonel Bosque comes into criticism because he failed to pursue and destroy the retreating Americans. He definitely should have more closely followed the principle of the offensive. Furthermore, once his troops had surrounded the American Phalanx, there was no excuse for allowing the Americans to escape the encirclement.

Upon reaching Realejo on July 12, Walker accused Colonel Ramírez and General Muñoz for treachery which caused his defeat at Rivas. Due to this, Walker threatened to depart from Nicaragua and leave Castellón and the Democrats at the mercy of the Legitimists who were threatening an attack on León. To maintain Walker's aid, Castellón negotiated a new agreement with Walker through Byron Cole, which

ended the colonization grant. As a result of this new contract, Walker was authorized to enlist three hundred men for military service to the Republic of Nicaragua. Nicaragua promised each recruit one hundred dollars a month and five hundred acres of land at the close of the campaign. Castellón gave Walker authority to settle all differences and outstanding accounts between the government and the Accessory Transit Company.[12] After receiving this new contract, Walker was more eager than ever to secure control of the transit route. Thus, on August 23, against the command of Castellón, who wished him to remain around León to protect it, Walker sailed on his second campaign to the transit route. By his disobedience, Walker began to show that he had more in mind than just helping Castellón and the Democrats.*

The American Phalanx landed at San Juan del Sur on August 29 without any opposition from General Santos Guardiola, a Honduran, who was now in command of the Legitimist forces at Rivas. After staying at San Juan del Sur

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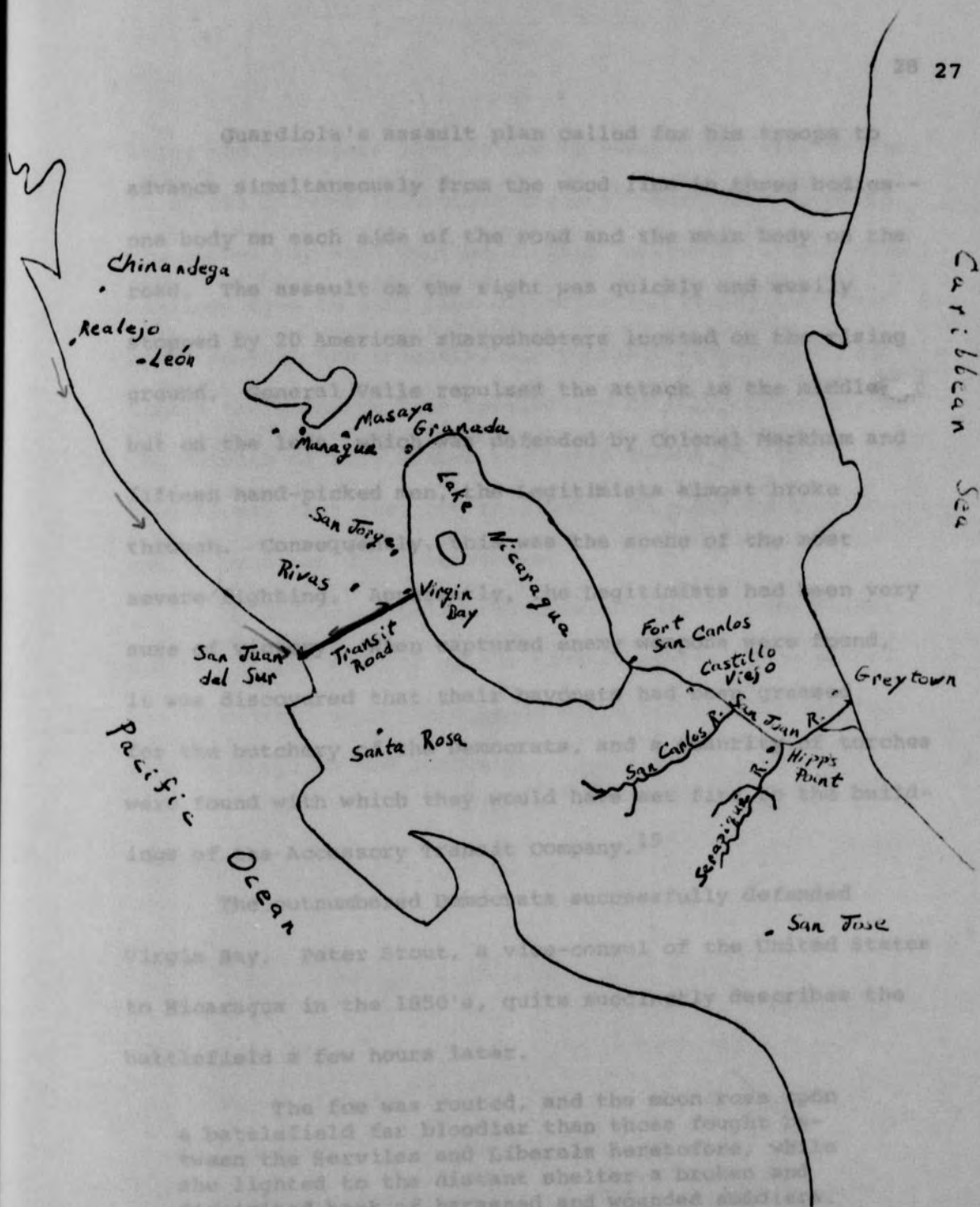
*The idea expressed in this sentence that Walker had more in mind than helping Castellón and the Democrats was expounded in a secondary source, William Walker: Filibuster, by Merritt Parmelee Allen.[13]

for a few days, the American Phalanx marched to Virgin Bay on September 2. Also on September 2, General Guardiola marched from Rivas toward San Juan del Sur to engage Walker in battle. Upon learning that Walker had departed for Virgin Bay, Guardiola turned his army around and marched after the American Phalanx. On the morning of September 3, Guardiola was ready for his assault on Walker's exposed position at Virgin Bay. Walker, with 50 Americans and 120 Nicaraguans under General José María Valle, superbly defended their position--repulsing Guardiola's assault which lasted for about two hours. The Democrats undoubtedly fought more relentlessly than ever for two reasons: (1) Guardiola had a reputation as the "Butcher," as he usually slaughtered his prisoners.[14] It would certainly cause one to fight harder for one's life if he knew he could not surrender. (2) By having Lake Nicaragua at their backs, the soldiers had nowhere to retreat. Being able neither to retreat nor to surrender, they <u>had</u> to fight and Guardiola suffered the consequences. Other terrain features favored the Democrats. On the right was rising ground and on the left the level ground was interrupted by ditches and covered with fences--affording protection for the defenders (See map B).


Chinandega
Realejo
León
Managua
Masaya
Granada
Lake Nicaragua
San Jorge
Rivas
Virgin Bay
Transit Road
San Juan del Sur
Pacific Ocean
Santa Rosa
Fort San Carlos
Castillo Viejo
Greytown
San Juan R.
San Carlos R.
Hipps Point
San Jose
Caribbean Sea

MAP B

Guardiola's assault plan called for his troops to advance simultaneously from the wood line in three bodies--one body on each side of the road and the main body on the road. The assault on the right was quickly and easily stopped by 20 American sharpshooters located on the rising ground. General Valle repulsed the attack in the middle; but on the left, which was defended by Colonel Markham and fifteen hand-picked men, the Legitimists almost broke through. Consequently, this was the scene of the most severe fighting. Apparently, the Legitimists had been very sure of victory. When captured enemy weapons were found, it was discovered that their bayonets had been greased for the butchery of the Democrats, and a quantity of torches were found with which they would have set fire to the buildings of the Accessory Transit Company.[15]

The outnumbered Democrats successfully defended Virgin Bay. Peter Stout, a vice-consul of the United States to Nicaragua in the 1850's, quite succinctly describes the battlefield a few hours later.

> The foe was routed, and the moon rose upon a battlefield far bloodier than those fought between the Serviles and Liberals heretofore, while she lighted to the distant shelter a broken and dispirited bank of harassed and wounded soldiers. Thus, was fought the first regular battle....[16]

While the Americans lost no one to enemy fire, they killed 60 of the 540-man Legitimist force.[17] According to Wells, the reason for such success is that "American rifles, with American eyes to give them direction and steady American hands to pull the triggers, are terrible weapons."[18] Although there may be some credibility to this statement, in the opinion of this writer the basic reason for their success was that they had to fight. They had nowhere to retreat and could not surrender.

By defeating this Legitimist force, William Walker now had gained control of the transit route. This placed him in contact with the outside world and enabled him to receive supplies and recruits.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER III

[1]Lawrence Greene, The Filibuster: The Career of William Walker (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1937), p. 60.

[2]William Walker, The War in Nicaragua (New York: S. H. Goetzel and Company, 1860), p. 25.

[3]Charles W. Doubleday, Reminiscences of the "Filibuster" War in Nicaragua (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1886), p. 105.

[4]Walker, The War in Nicaragua, p. 39.

[5]Doubleday, Reminiscences of the "Filibuster" War in Nicaragua, p. 110.

[6]Wells, Walker's Expedition to Nicaragua, p. 51.

[7]Rafael Obregón Loria, La Campaña del Tránsito, 1856-1857 (San José, Costa Rica: Antonio Lehmann-Librería e Imprenta Atenea, 1956), p. 146.

[8]Walker, The War in Nicaragua, p. 53.

[9]Ibid.

[10]Wells, Walker's Expedition to Nicaragua, p. 53.

[11]Merritt Parmelee Allen, William Walker: Filibuster (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1932), p. 65.

[12]Walker, The War in Nicaragua, p. 75.

[13]Allen, William Walker: Filibuster, p. 70.

[14]Doubleday, Reminiscences of the "Filibuster" War in Nicaragua, p. 156.

[15]Wells, Walker's Expedition to Nicaragua, p. 58.

[16]Peter F. Stout, Nicaragua: Past, Present and Future: A Description of Its Inhabitants, Customs, Mines, Minerals, Early History, Modern Fillibusterism, Proposed Inter-Oceanic Canal and Manifest Destiny (Philadelphia: John E. Potter, 1859), pp. 195-196.

[17]Walker, The War in Nicaragua, p. 93.

[18]Wells, Walker's Expedition to Nicaragua, p. 57.

CHAPTER IV

WALKER UNITES THE WARRING FACTIONS

William Walker's next step was to unite the two parties and establish a single party. This would be extremely difficult, as the Legitimist and Democratic parties had seemingly irreconcilable differences. But in order for Nicaragua to be a stable and prosperous nation and for Walker to use Nicaragua as a springboard for his empire, it was of the utmost importance that these Legitimists and Democrats be united. Walker revealed his plan of empire building--that of uniting all the Central American states and eventually Mexico under his control--to Doubleday. As Doubleday was sincerely interested in bringing democracy to Nicaragua, he became disillusioned with Walker and soon left.[1] Although Walker needed Doubleday's combat experience and knowledge of the country, losing one idealistic young man was not to deter him from his goal.

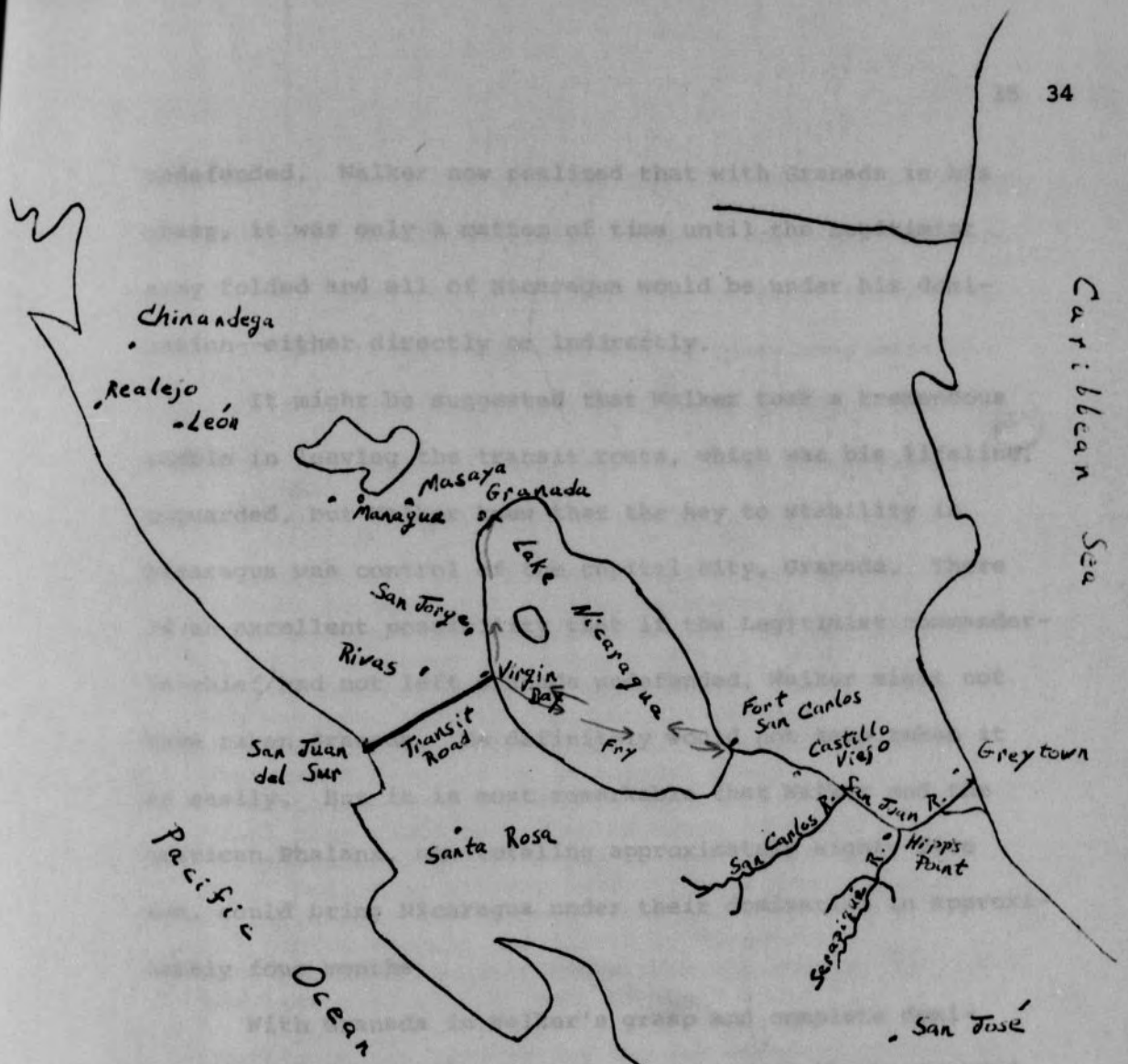
Having returned to San Juan del Sur shortly after his victory at Virgin Bay, Walker set up headquarters there for La Democracia--the Democratic Party. By October, 1855,

Walker's men secured control of the Accessory Transit Company's lake steamer, La Virgen. That evening, the American Phalanx boarded La Virgen and stealthily steamed up the coast to Granada. Around midnight and approximately three miles north of Granada, the American Phalanx and the Nicaraguan troops under Valle slipped ashore. Hardly firing a shot, the American Phalanx simply walked into Granada. A New York Daily Times dispatch describes the early morning action--

> At last the order was given to advance in double quick time, which was done with a cheer; at length the old western whoop was given, which must have aroused many a slothful guardian from his couch, and the whole force advanced on a barricade in one of the streets and gained the Plaza without any resistance.[2]

With this simple but masterful stroke, Granada belonged to William Walker. (See map C).

About the only shots fired were by Lieutenant Colonel Gilman and twenty-five Americans under his command who were detached to secure a fort about a mile east of the city. After firing only one volley, the forty defenders of the fort jumped into their boats and paddled away.[3] Quite unbelievably, Walker's coup succeeded without loss of life or ammunition because, in attempting to mass all troops in Rivas, the Legitimist army had left Granada practically


Caribbean Sea
Chinandega
Realejo
León
Masaya
Granada
Managua
Lake Nicaragua
San Jorge
Rivas
Virgin Bay
Fort San Carlos
Castillo Viejo
Greytown
Transit Road
Fry
San Juan del Sur
San Juan R.
San Carlos R.
Santa Rosa
Hipp's Point
Sarapiqui R.
Pacific Ocean
San José

MAP C

undefended. Walker now realized that with Granada in his grasp, it was only a matter of time until the Legitimist army folded and all of Nicaragua would be under his domination--either directly or indirectly.

It might be suggested that Walker took a tremendous gamble in leaving the transit route, which was his lifeline, unguarded, but Walker knew that the key to stability in Nicaragua was control of the capital city, Granada. There is an excellent possibility that if the Legitimist commander-in-chief had not left Granada undefended, Walker might not have taken Granada. He definitely would not have taken it so easily. But it is most remarkable that Walker and the American Phalanx, now totaling approximately eighty-five men, could bring Nicaragua under their domination in approximately four months.

With Granada in Walker's grasp and complete domination seemingly only a matter of time away, there occurred one of the most amusing events of this entire curious little war. A few days after the battle of Granada, two American filibusters, Birkett D. Fry and Parker H. French, arrived at Virgin Bay with additional recruits and wanted to participate in the action while it lasted. Fry and French plotted to capture Fort San Carlos from the Legitimists

(See map C). They commandeered the lake steamer, La Virgen, during one of its regular runs between Virgin Bay and Fort San Carlos. They neglected, however, to allow the passengers on board to disembark. The male passengers were invited to take arms and join the fight or go below with the women, as they chose. One passenger later recounted in verse:

> Of passengers, but few were now averse
> A fight to join, but willing to emerce
> A recompense for jeopardy in strife,
> By mulct assessed in currency of life.
> Yet, some there were, of apprehensive mind,
> Who murmered low, to fate but ill resigned.
> One cautious man, when urged to join the scheme,
> With timid face lit up in hopeful gleam,
> In anxious tone proceeded to inquire:
> "Will they shoot back when we begin to fire?"
> "O, certainly! They'll pay us back our coin."
> "Ah! well," he gravely said, "Then I shan't join."
> So ludicrous, the colloquy thus held,
> All rueful thought was instantly dispelled.
> Loud peaks of laughter broke from all around,
> And left each mind an echo of their sound.[4]

The captain of the steamer and two men were sent ashore to request the surrender of the fort, but they were seized and made prisoners. Subsequently, La Virgen was fired upon by twelve-pound shot from the fort but was not damaged. Then Captain Turnbull, who had arrived with Fry and French, and other American riflemen decided to go ashore and attempt the capture of the fort. However, while they were rowing to

shore, a rainstorm soaked their ammunition. They decided to forsake their mission, and La Virgen returned to Virgin Bay.

An hour later, the steamer San Carlos, enroute up river from below the fort to Virgin Bay, was accidentally fired upon by the fort, and a lady and one child were killed.[5] The Legitimists had believed the steamer San Carlos to be the La Virgen. They also retaliated with a raid on the property of the Accessory Transit Company at Virgin Bay on October 19, 1856. This relatively minor action was soon blown out of proportion and called a massacre. This was a propitious event for Walker, for he had needed something to force the Legitimists to the bargaining table. Thus, not only to retaliate for the San Carlos incident and the massacre at Virgin Bay, but also to exert pressure on the Legitimist forces, Walker ordered that Mateo Mayorga be recaptured and executed. Mayorga, a prominent Legitimist and Minister of Relations in the Legitimist government, had been caught at the capture of Granada, but had been subsequently released to illustrate Walker's good intentions and to show he had no grievance or ill will toward the Legitimists. But due to these incidents and Mayorga's high position in the Legitimist government, Walker decided that

by having him recaptured and executed, he would accomplish his objective, forcing Ponciano Corral, the commander-in-chief of the Legitimist forces, to negotiate with him.[6] Along with Mayorga's execution on October 22, the word was sent out that if there were any more incidents such as the massacre at Virgin Bay, then members of other Legitimist families in Granada would be subsequently executed. This forced Corral to come to the bargaining table and make amends with Walker. Although this provided the spark for the eventual peace treaty, the execution of Mayorga was the beginning of a series of mistakes which would eventually topple Walker from power. As a short range objective, it served its purpose, but as a long range objective, it was disastrous.

In the meantime, John H. Wheeler, United States Minister to Nicaragua, became involved in trying to secure peace between Walker and Corral. However, when Wheeler reached Rivas he was unable to speak with Corral as he was immediately incarcerated. In an attempt to secure Wheeler's release, Walker ordered the steamer, La Virgen, to proceed to San Jorge, the point nearest Rivas, and to fire four warning shots from the cannon. The Legitimists who held Wheeler were at first alarmed, but then hesitated at

releasing him. Upon realizing this, Wheeler told the general in charge, Pedro Xatruch (a Honduran aiding the Legitimists), "that if he stopped me any longer that the steamer had my friends on board and a thousand men would come and not a man would be spared." Wheeler was quickly released and soon returned to Granada.[7]

On October 23, General Corral, Commander of the Legitimist forces, and Walker signed a peace treaty terminating hostilities between the Legitimists and Democrats. The treaty opened with this statement:

> Generals William Walker and Ponciano Corral, being animated with the most sincere desire to put an end to the war which has destroyed Nicaragua, and anxious to remedy so great an evil, the first in virtue of the faculties given him, and the second fully empowered by the Government which resided in this city, have agreed, after mature discussion, in celebrating the following treaty.

The first article, probably the most important, stated: "From this day are suspended hostilities, and there shall be peace and frienship between the belligerent armies."[8]

It was agreed that on October 29, both the Legitimist and Democratic forces would assemble in the central Plaza of Granada. On October 30, the officers of the new Provisional Government would take their oaths of office. Patricio Rivas, named as President of the Provisional

Government for the specified time of fourteen months, was selected because, although he was from Granada, he was known for his middle-of-the-road views. William Walker was selected as the commander-in-chief of the armed forces. General Máximo Jérez was selected as the Minister of Relations. General Ponciano Corral was selected as the Minister of War. Colonel Parker H. French was chosen as the Minister of the Hacienda (Treasury) and Fermín Ferrer was chosen as the Minister of Public Credit.[9]

After the new officers took their oaths in the Cathedral, Padre Augustin Vijil,* the curate of Granada, delivered an emotional plea which was very complimentary to Walker for uniting the warring factions in Nicaragua.

> I have preached peace, liberty and progression to you, and you have cried more blood. Look at that man, General Walker, sent by Providence to bring peace, prosperity and happiness to this blood-stained, unhappy country. We all owe him and his brave men many thanks. I charge you to keep this peace, which promises so much for our country, for us, for all, etc., etc.[10]

From the beginning it seemed that foreboding overshadowed the new government and Walker's role in it.

---

*Walker later appointed Padre Vijil to become the Minister to the United States.

Although it was definitely necessary to impose penalties on individuals for crimes so as to maintain discipline, it seemed Walker enjoyed imposing harsh penalties, especially executions. This attitude made many enemies for Walker.

Although the first execution, that of Mateo Mayorga on October 22, occurred before the installation of the new Provisional Government, it still cost Walker many friends, as he was responsible for the execution.

The second incident involved one of his own soldiers. On the night of November 2, Patrick Jordan, having become highly intoxicated, accidentally killed a Nicaraguan boy. Walker immediately ordered his execution, and despite pleas from American officers, the boy's mother, and Padre Vijil for mercy, the execution was carried out.

A third execution occurred only a few days later. Despite General Corral's promises to honor the new government, treasonable letters written by him were intercepted by General Valle and subsequently turned over to Walker. On November 5, Corral was arrested and charges and specifications for treason were prepared against him--"forasmuch as he had invited Generals Guardiola and Xatruch to come and with armed violence disturb the peace of Nicaragua, and for conspiring with the enemies of the State to overthrow

the Government of Nicaragua; forasmuch as he had held treasonable correspondence with General Martínez and Xatruch."[11] A court martial board composed of American officers convened on November 7 and convicted him of treason, which carried the death penalty, but the board recommended mercy. Walker, however, did not honor the court martial's recommendation, and on November 8, Ponciano Corral, the Minister of Relations of the new Provisional Government, was executed by a firing squad.[12]

Walker's reason for not allowing leniency was that it would have showed weakness on the part of the new government and would have encouraged more treasonable acts. Whether this reasoning was right or wrong, the effect of the execution was to create a martyr of Corral, and thus to reopen old wounds which had just so recently been healed. Walker had again executed for effect. He had achieved some short-term value, but as a long-run objective Corral's execution was dubious at most. Stout, who was very pro-Walker, even shows concern for Walker's action in Corral's execution: "The entire country was shocked upon learning of his condemnation and death, and even the friends and supporters of the Cause felt that the stroke had been too hasty and severe, and for a time it is said that even Walker

himself shared the same opinions. But to succeed, treachery must be summarily punished."[13] The execution might have been erased from Walker's mind, but citizens of a country do not soon forget the execution of one of their leaders.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER IV

[1]Doubleday, Reminiscences of the "Filibuster" War in Nicaragua, p. 165.

[2]"The Capture of Granada," New York Daily Times, November 5, 1855, p. 3.

[3]Carroll, The Star of the West, p. 357.

[4]Samuel F. Wight, Adventures in California and Nicaragua in Rhyme (Boston: Alfred Mudge and Son, 1860), p. 61.

[5]Carroll, The Star of the West, p. 359.

[6]Allen, William Walker: Filibuster, p. 85.

[7]John H. Wheeler, Diary and Personal Papers, 1854-1860.

[8]Wells, Walker's Expedition to Nicaragua, p. 77.

"Treaty of Peace Between Generals Walker and Corral," New York Daily Times, November 12, 1855, p. 2.

[9]"Nicaragua and the Filibusters," Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, p. 324.

[10]Wells, Walker's Expedition to Nicaragua, pp. 80-81.

[11]Ibid., pp. 92-93.

[12]"Highly Important from Nicaragua," New York Daily Times, November 29, 1855, p. 2.

[13]Stout, Nicaragua: Past, Present and Future, p. 198.

CHAPTER V

WAR WITH COSTA RICA--BATTLE OF SANTA ROSA AND THE SECOND BATTLE OF RIVAS

The other Central American nations did not like the idea of Nicaragua's being for all practical purposes controlled by an American filibuster and an American army. They realized that it would probably be only a matter of time before Walker would attempt to annex them. They also realized the possibility that if Walker were successful in Nicaragua, it would encourage other American filibusters to covet his success and to infiltrate their countries. It was, therefore, vital to the other Central American nations that Walker be destroyed for national security.

These Central American nations were encouraged and given confidence by the fact that the United States had failed to give diplomatic recognition to the Rivas Government, which was dominated by Walker. They therefore assumed that if they took belligerent action against the Rivas-Walker Government, that the United States would not intervene. A curious fact arises in reference to United States recognition of the Rivas-Walker Government. On November 10, 1855,

John H. Wheeler, United States Minister to Nicaragua, extended diplomatic recognition to the Rivas-Walker Government. However, on December 21, 1855, when Parker French arrived in the United States to take up his post as Minister to the United States, United States Secretary of State Marcy refused to recognize him on the grounds that the people of Nicaragua themselves had not acknowledged the new government.[1] As a result of this refusal by the United States to recognize Parker French, Central American nations were practically assured that the United States would not intervene in a war involving the Central American nations and the Rivas-Walker Government.

Walker had made a tremendous mistake in his selection of Parker French to become Minister to the one country he should have cultivated with all possible care. Parker French, before going to Nicaragua, had been involved in several scandals in the United States. In one, he had defrauded the United States Army in Texas of thousands of dollars. These facts were soon discovered and published, and probably constituted a great factor in Secretary of State Marcy's refusal to recognize French. Had Walker taken the time and interest to send a more reputable individual to the United States, recognition might have been

extended and might have made the Central American nations, especially Costa Rica, think twice about declaring war on Nicaragua.

Credit must be given to Walker for at least trying to preserve the new-found peace in Nicaragua. The Rivas-Walker Government sent letters and emissaries to other Central American nations stating that a compromise government had been established and requesting diplomatic recognition. Walker sent Colonel Louis Schlessinger, another filibuster recruited in the United States, to Costa Rica in an attempt to placate his most vociferous enemy. Schlessinger was treated with contempt and rudeness by the Costa Rican Government and sent quickly back to Nicaragua. Walker probably made a mistake in sending Schlessinger to Costa Rica. Schlessinger later proved to be a very poor military commander and had, in fact, misrepresented himself to Walker. In actuality, he was only a corporal, not a colonel, in the Austrian army and probably did not have the ability to be a successful diplomat.

On February 27, 1856, President Juan Rafael Mora called a special session of the Costa Rican Congress. By authority of this congress, he was to take up arms against the Republic of Nicaragua, to call for 9,000 volunteers to

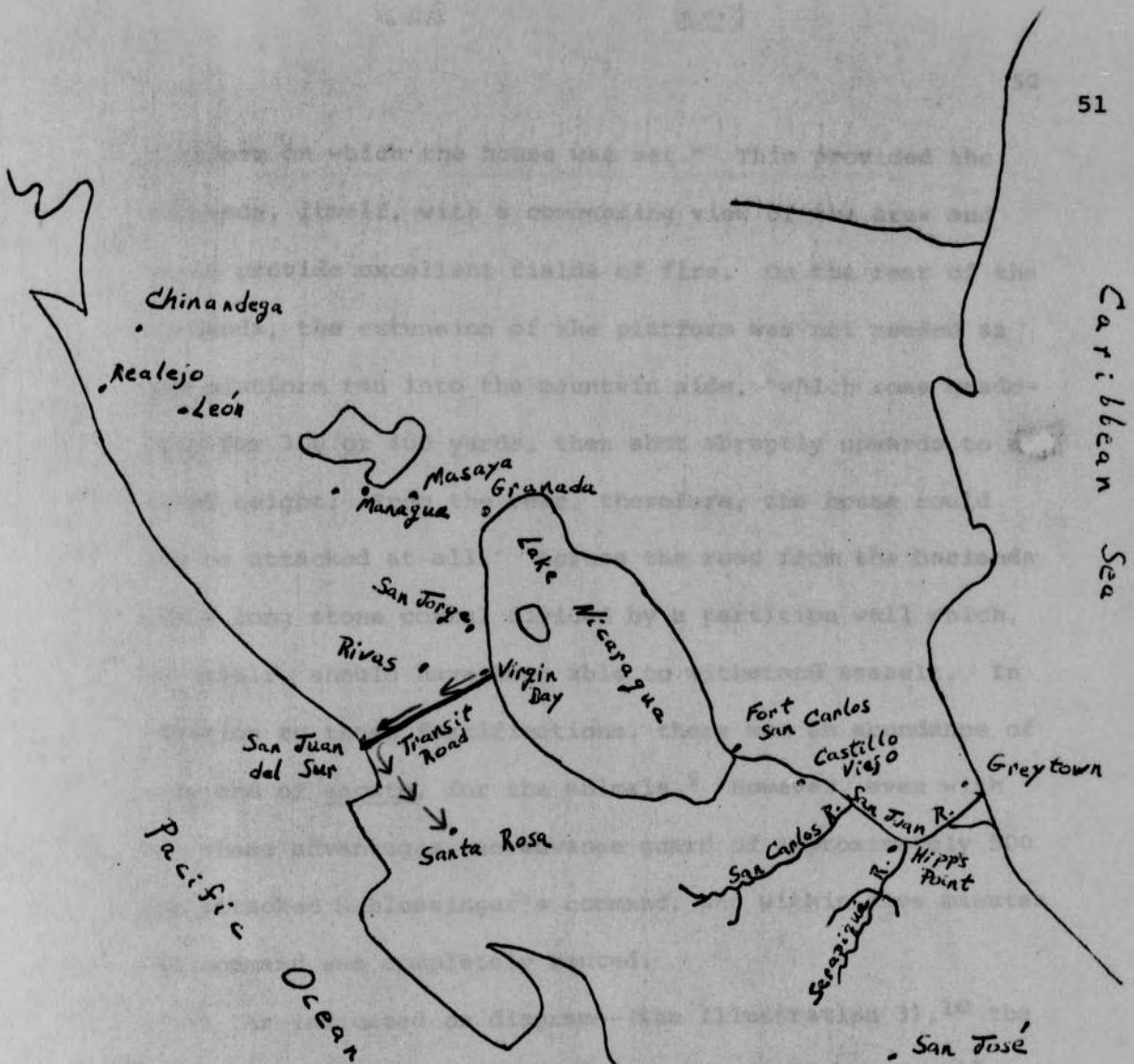
defend the Costa Rican people from the filibusters, and to expel the invaders from Central American soil.[2] On March 1, President Mora declared war against the Americans in the service of Nicaragua, but not against the government of the Republic of Nicaragua.[3] Consequently, the Rivas-Walker Government declared war on Costa Rica, and Walker issued the following statement: "We have sent them the olive branch; they have sent us back the knife. Be it so. We shall give them war to the knife, and knife to the hilt."[4]

By this time Walker's American Phalanx had increased to approximately 600 men. Walker instructed Colonel Schlessinger with 250 men to strike the first blow of the war by marching into the disputed territory of the Department of Guanacaste. By accomplishing this, the American Phalanx would have a strong outpost at some distance south of the transit route to guard against any surprise attack by the Costa Ricans upon the transit route. Also, these troops under Schlessinger would act as the "eyes and ears" of Walker's army and provide him with quick and reliable information. To guard against attack on the highly important San Juan River, troops were dispatched to occupy and hold Castillo Viejo and Hipp's Point.[5]

Colonel Schlessinger marched his battalion from Virgin Bay to San Juan del Sur on March 13 and continued the march south the following day. An ominous cloud shadowed Schlessinger's command from the beginning. Most importantly, his battalion was composed almost entirely of raw recruits, and with the exception of the Americans, the five companies of forty men consisted of three nationalities, having no common language. A French company was commanded by Captain Legaye, a German company by Captain Prange, a New Orleans company under Captain D. W. Thorpe, a New York unit under Captain Creighton, and a California company under Captain Antony F. Rudler.[6] This battalion was hastily put together with no time to drill together or even really to become acquainted until they began their march. Combining units of such diversity was bound to create friction. To command such a unit would have required a tremendous individual with a great deal of tact, courage, military knowledge, and an ability to communicate with the French and German units. Schlessinger fitted the bill only on one account--he spoke German and French. Schlessinger apparently neither cared for nor tried to improve his command. Certainly no commander would ever begin a combat mission without having an inspection of arms, yet Schlessinger never did conduct

an inspection from the time he left Virgin Bay until his defeat at Santa Rosa. However, what really astounds one is that "many were without so much as a screw to draw the charge; and some of the foreigners were so ignorant of the use of the arms, that they did not know which end of the cartridge to bite off in order to load."[7] On his line of march, Schlessinger continued to show his incompetence, as "no pickets were kept out, nor patrols sent in advance to watch the movements of the enemy, which was known to be advancing in heavy force." Then Schlessinger, at the point where he could at any moment of the day expect an enemy attack, sent his only surgeon as the bearer of dispatches to Granada.[8] Surely no commander should be guilty of such gross negligence.

On the night of March 19, he occupied the hacienda of Santa Rosa about 8 miles from his first objective, the town of Guanacaste. Santa Rosa was an excellent defensive position and Schlessinger should have been able to withstand numerous assaults (See map D). "The hacienda was a spacious and strongly built old Spanish house, situated on a rise of about ten feet from the road and surrounded on three sides by a strong stone wall of solid mason work (some 4 or 5 feet high), and which being fitted in with earth, formed an even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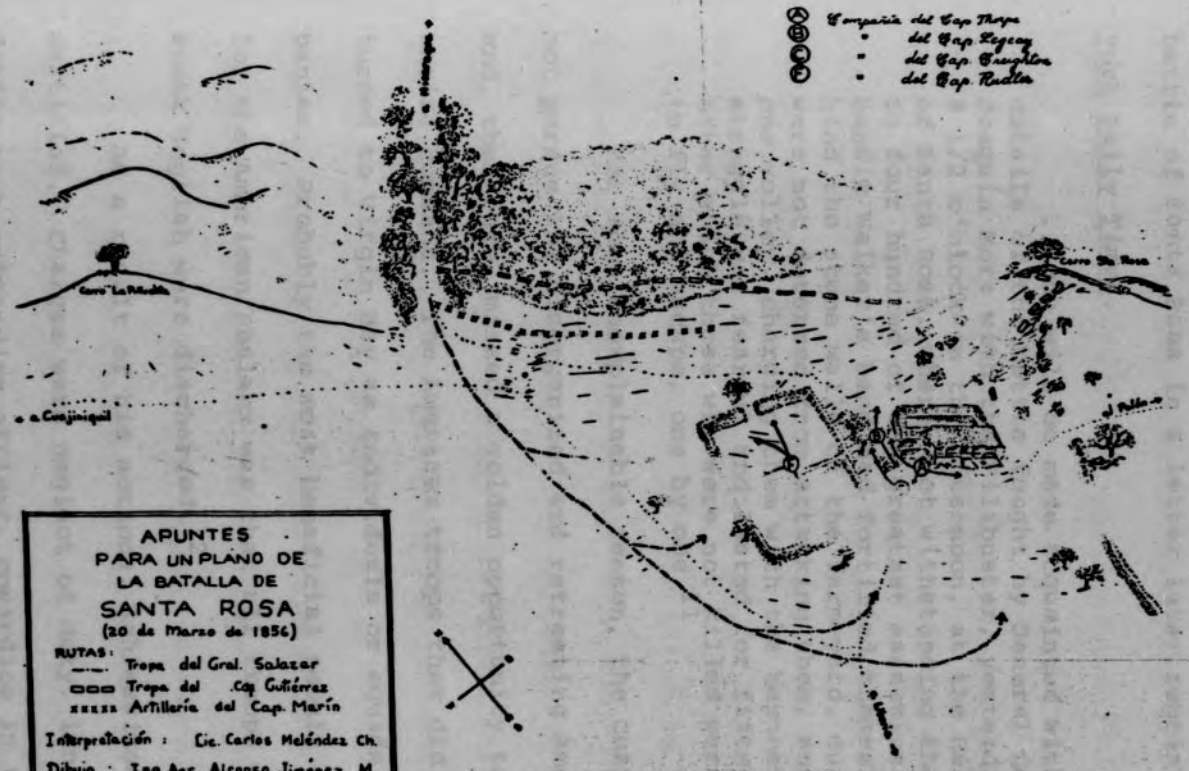
Lake Nicaragua
San Jorge
Rivas
Virgin Bay
Transit Road
San Juan del Sur
Fort San Carlos
Castillo Viejo
Greytown
San Juan R.
San Carlos R.
Sarapiqui R.
Hipp's Point
Santa Rosa
Pacific Ocean
San José

MAP D

platform on which the house was set." This provided the hacienda, itself, with a commanding view of the area and would provide excellent fields of fire. On the rear of the hacienda, the extension of the platform was not needed as the platform ran into the mountain side, "which rose gradually for 300 or 400 yards, then shot abruptly upwards to a great height. From the rear, therefore, the house could not be attacked at all." Across the road from the hacienda was a long stone corral divided by a partition wall which, by itself, should have been able to withstand assault. In addition to these fortifications, there was an abundance of corn and of sacate, for the animals.[9] However, even with all these advantages, an advance guard of approximately 500 men attacked Schlessinger's command, and within five minutes his command was completely routed.

As indicated on diagram--(See illustration 3),[10] the Santa Rosa hacienda was attacked on the right by a small body of Costa Ricans under Captain Gutiérrez, while the main body, commanded by General Mariano Salazer, came from the plain in front. At the sound of the first rifle fire, Schlessinger immediately fled from the hacienda, not even waiting to give any orders or directions. The raw recruits, seeing their commander fleeing, naturally fled also. Only

ILLUSTRATION 3



the New York company under Captain Creighton fired a volley during the entire action.

Costa Rican President Juan Rafael Mora describes the battle of Santa Rosa in a letter later reprinted in the New York Daily Times.

> ...you will be made acquainted with the details of the battle fought by General Don Juan Joaquín Mora with the Filibuster, yesterday, at 4 1/2 o'clock in the afternoon, at the Hacienda of Santa Rosa, where, not withstanding that three to four hundred of the greatest assassins in the bandit Walker's band had fortified themselves behind the stone walls of the farm-yard, our men were not deterred from attacking them, and, after one volley, charging them with the bayonet. The struggle was fearful and lasted for fifteen minutes, after which those who were not killed were forced to fly and escape, one by one.[11]

For some unexplainable reason, the Costa Ricans did not pursue the disorganized and retreating American troops, and, therefore, missed a golden opportunity to destroy an entire command. The American troops that did escape returned to Virgin Bay as individuals or squads, not as companies. Probably the most beneficial result of the engagement for the American Phalanx was that all troops who could not speak English were discharged.[12]

As a result of his actions, Schlessinger was court-martialed. Charges were neglect of duty, ignorance of his duties as a commanding officer, cowardice in the face of

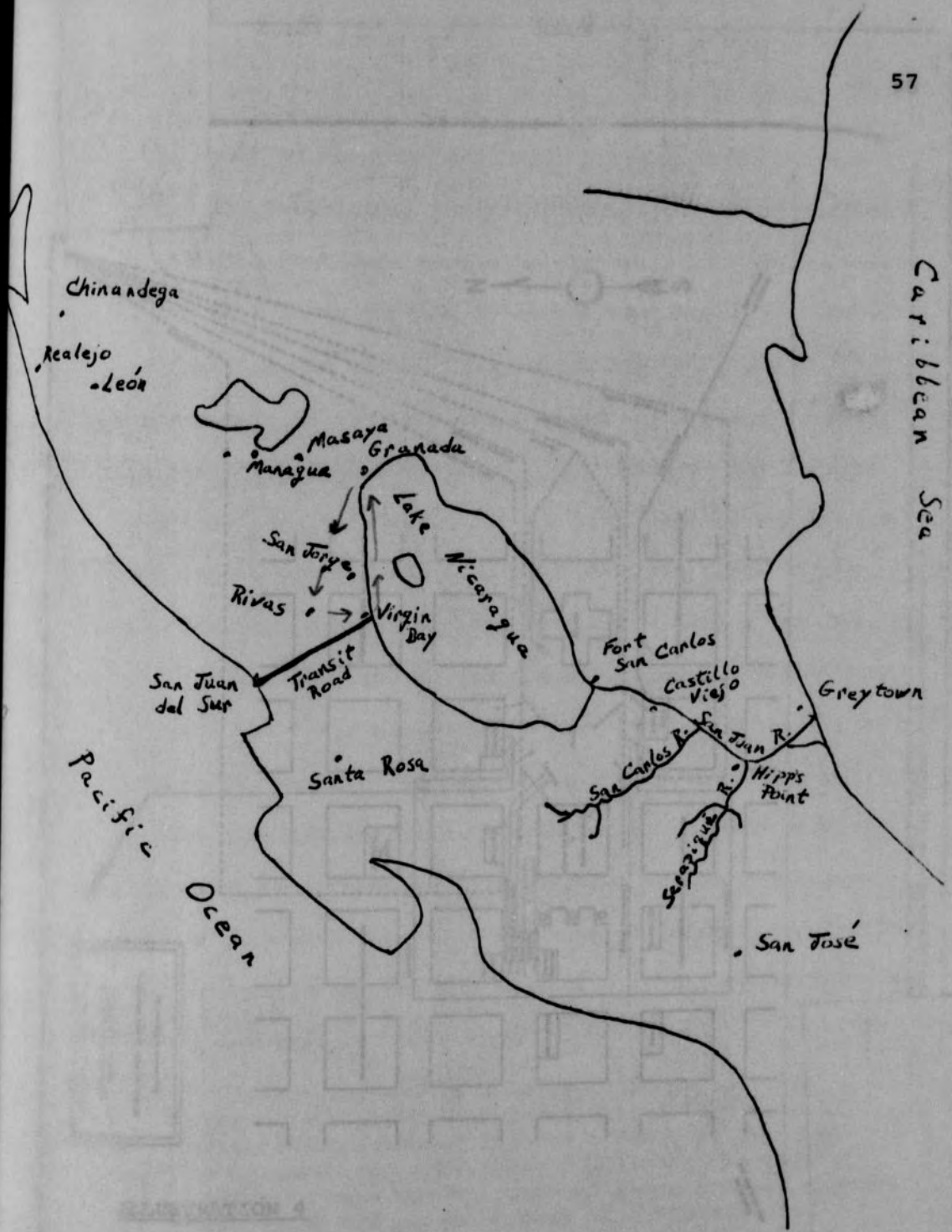
the enemy, and later, desertion. Schlessinger was found guilty of all charges and sentenced to be executed by a firing squad. He missed his execution, however, because he escaped while on honor parole during the trial. Thus, the order was sent out that Schlessinger could be shot on sight in Nicaragua.[13]

Receiving word of Schlessinger's defeat, Walker immediately moved the majority of the American Phalanx from Granada to Rivas in order to be able better to defend the transit route from the invading Costa Rican army. President Mora, upon learning of Walker's concentration of forces at Rivas, held up his advance at Peña Blanca on the southern boundary line of the Meridional Department (borderline of Costa Rica and Nicaragua). Having waited in vain for Mora's advance from March 30 to April 5, Walker, upon receiving news that threatened the security of northern Nicaragua, decided to return to Granada. He did leave a small detachment of Nicaraguan troops under Colonel José Machado to observe the movements of the Costa Rican troops.[14]

It was a colossal blunder on Walker's part to leave the transit route unguarded and to return to Granada since the transit route was so vital to his security, and 4,000 Costa Rican troops were waiting only a few miles away to

fill the vacuum should he depart. With Walker's departure, Mora immediately occupied Rivas and Virgin Bay on April 7. Walker, upon learning of the capture of Rivas, immediately made preparations to return to Rivas. On April 9, the American Phalanx of 400 American and 100 Nicaraguan troops under Colonel Machado departed for Rivas. At approximately three o'clock in the morning of April 11, the forces of William Walker were ready for their assault upon Rivas (See map E).

Walker's plan of attack was quickly to seize the central plaza and President Mora. Lieutenant Colonel Edward Sanders, with four companies of the First Rifles, was to enter by the streets north of the plaza and try to reach the house where President Mora was quartered about 80 yards from the main Plaza. Major A. S. Brewster, with three companies of the First Rifles, was to enter by way of the south side of the Plaza and also try to reach Mora. Colonel Bruno von Natzmer and Major O'Neal with the Second Rifles were to enter on the extreme left of the city. Colonel Machado, with his 100 Nicaraguan troops, was to move on Lieutenant Colonel Sanders' right. Colonel Fry was to hold his companies of Light Infantry as reserve.[15] (See illustration 4).[16]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MAP E

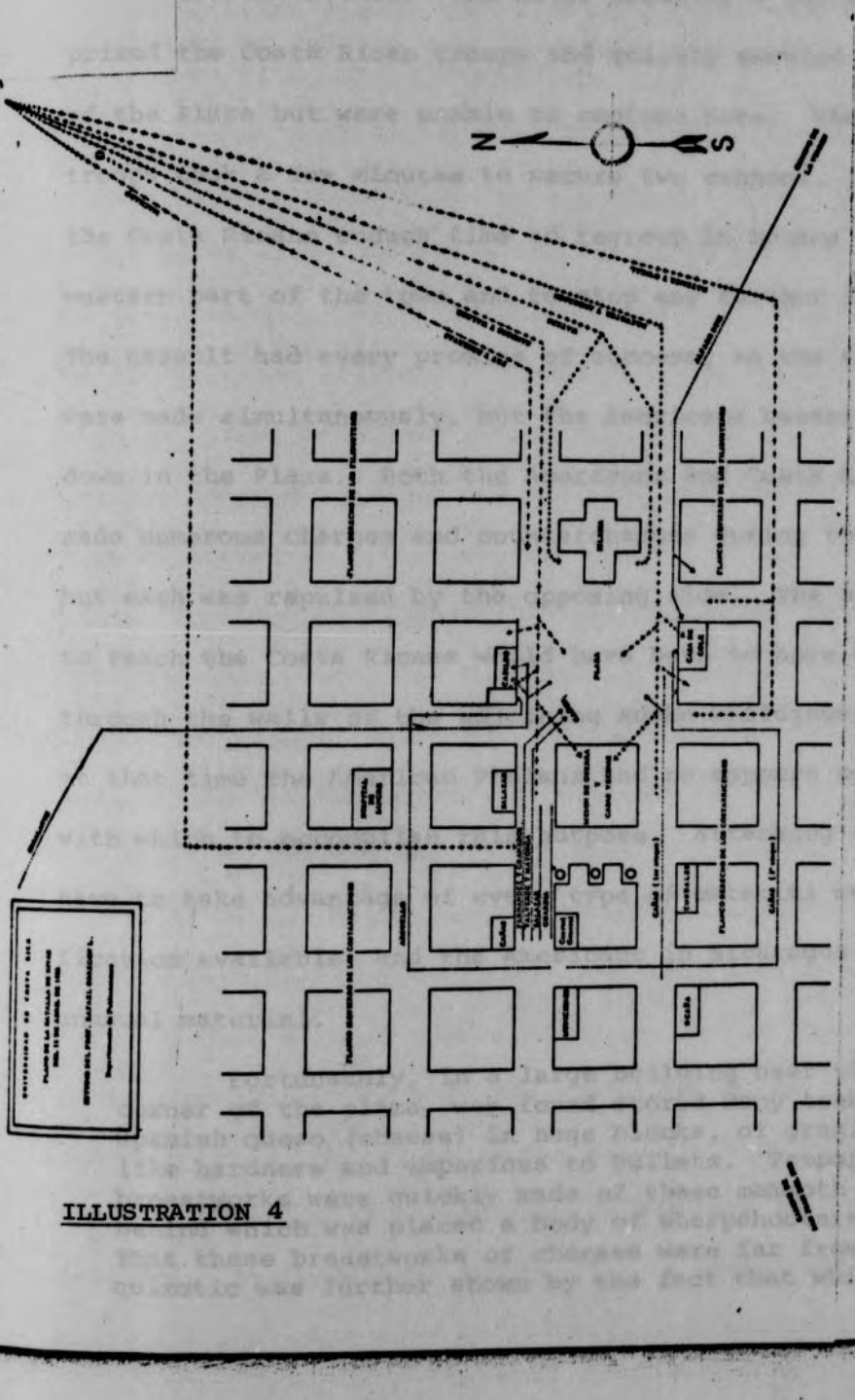


ILLUSTRATION 4

Colonel Sanders' and Major Brewster's forces surprised the Costa Rican troops and quickly secured control of the Plaza but were unable to capture Mora. When Sanders' troops took a few minutes to secure two cannons, it gave the Costa Ricans enough time to regroup in houses in the western part of the town and to stop any further advance. The assault had every promise of success, as the attacks were made simultaneously, but the Americans became bogged down in the Plaza. Both the Americans and Costa Ricans made numerous charges and countercharges during the day, but each was repulsed by the opposing side. The only way to reach the Costa Ricans would have been to bore or blast through the walls of the adjoining adobe buildings, but at that time the American Phalanx had no sappers or miners with which to accomplish this purpose. Attacking troops have to take advantage of every type of material or fortification available, and the Americans in Nicaragua found an unusual material.

> Fortunately, in a large building near the corner of the plaza, was found stored many tons of Spanish queso (cheese) in huge blocks, of granite-like hardness and imperious to bullets. Temporary breastworks were quickly made of these mammoth cheeses, behind which was placed a body of sharpshooters. That these breastworks of cheeses were far from quixotic was further shown by the fact that while

> our sharpshooters were not making targets of Costa Rican heads, they were satisfying their hunger by digging into the heart of the barricade with their jack-knives.[17]

Walker's situation was precarious as the troops were running low on ammunition, so a general retreat was ordered. Stout quite aptly describes the action at Rivas and in spite of their defeat, points to the courage and the fierceness of the American Phalanx. "Street by street was fought through, barricades were overthrown, houses fired and sacked, carnage reigned supreme, and the best and bravest of Walker's army fell dead on that eventful day...." Stout, in very picturesque language, describes the charge of the filibusters, "but the cool, undaunted Americans, who advanced to the thundering cannon, while yet the smoke kissed its warm lip, this to the foe was beyond all conception."[18] By midnight, the American Phalanx was on the road to Granada.

At Rivas, Walker again pointedly illustrated his failure as a military tactican. Not only did he abandon Rivas without a valid reason to do so, but he then returned a few days later with only 500 troops to attack the same place he had abandoned earlier. As already pointed out, Rivas is practically an impregnable fortress if properly defended. It could have been held by a small number of Americans who could have inflicted heavy casualties on Mora's

forces or prevented Mora from advancing to the transit route. Walker was no tactican, but President Mora, his brother General Juan Joaquín Mora, General José María Cañas, and the Prussian officer Baron Alejandro Bülow were no better, as they won the battle but lost the war.

They did not pursue the wounded soldiers and lost another opportunity to destroy much of the American Phalanx. But the greatest catastrophe occurred as the Costa Ricans violated one of the oldest sanitary rules in the world. Instead of burying their dead, they threw the corpses into the drinking wells. Within only a few days, cholera had broken out and was wreaking havoc among the Costa Rican army. On April 29, General Cañas ordered a general withdrawal from this strategic city near the transit route because the Costa Ricans had violated the most elementary health rules. By the time the Costa Rican army reached San José, the capital of Costa Rica, the army which had crossed into Nicaragua had been decimated by cholera from approximately 4,000 men to 500.[19] William Walker was again able to maintain his grasp on Nicaragua due to failures in the Costa Rican high command.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER V

[1]Wells, Walker's Expedition to Nicaragua, p. 100.

[2]William O. Scroggs, Filibusters and Financiers: The Story of William Walker and His Associates (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1916), p. 179.

[3]Walker, The War in Nicaragua, p. 175.

[4]James Jeffrey Rocke, The Story of the Filibusters, To Which is Added the Life of Colonel David Crockett (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1891), p. 99.

[5]Walker, The War in Nicaragua, p. 182.

[6]Rocke, The Story of the Filibusters, p. 100.

[7]Wells, Walker's Expedition to Nicaragua, p. 159.

[8]James Carson Jamison, With Walker in Nicaragua or Reminiscences of an Officer of the American Phalanx (Columbia, Missouri: E. W. Stephens Publishing Company, 1909), p. 72.

[9]Wells, Walker's Expedition to Nicaragua, pp. 156-157.

[10]Obregón, La Campaña del Tránsito, p. 116.

[11]"Highly Important from Central America," New York Daily Times, April 17, 1856, p. 1.

[12]Walker, The War in Nicaragua, p. 197.

[13]Ibid., p. 187.

[14]Jamison, With Walker in Nicaragua, p. 73.

[15]Ibid., p. 76.

[16]Obregón, La Campaña del Tránsito, p. 146.

[17]Jamison, With Walker in Nicaragua, p. 79.

[18]Stout, Nicaragua: Past, Present and Future, pp. 199-200.

[19]Allen, William Walker: Filibuster, p. 114.

CHAPTER VI

"AQUÍ FUÉ GRANADA"--"HERE WAS GRANADA"

On June 10, Walker had dissolved the government headed by Rivas and replaced him with Fermín Ferrer. Walker officially declared his action in the following decree:

> With such accumulated crimes--conspiring against the very people it was bound to protect--the late provisional government was no longer worthy of existence. In the name of the people I have, therefore, declared its dissolution and have organized a provisional government until the nation exercises its natural right of electing its own rulers.[1]

Subsequently, on June 29, 1856, Walker was elected president, having received the highest number of votes cast:

Walker	15,835
Ferrer	4,447
Rivas	867
Salazar	2,087[2]

The next scenario of perennial warfare began with the signing of a treaty of alliance on July 18, 1856, between the governments of Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador. These nations promised mutual defense of their sovereignty and independence, recognized Rivas as the provisional president of Nicaragua, and promised Rivas their aid with troops

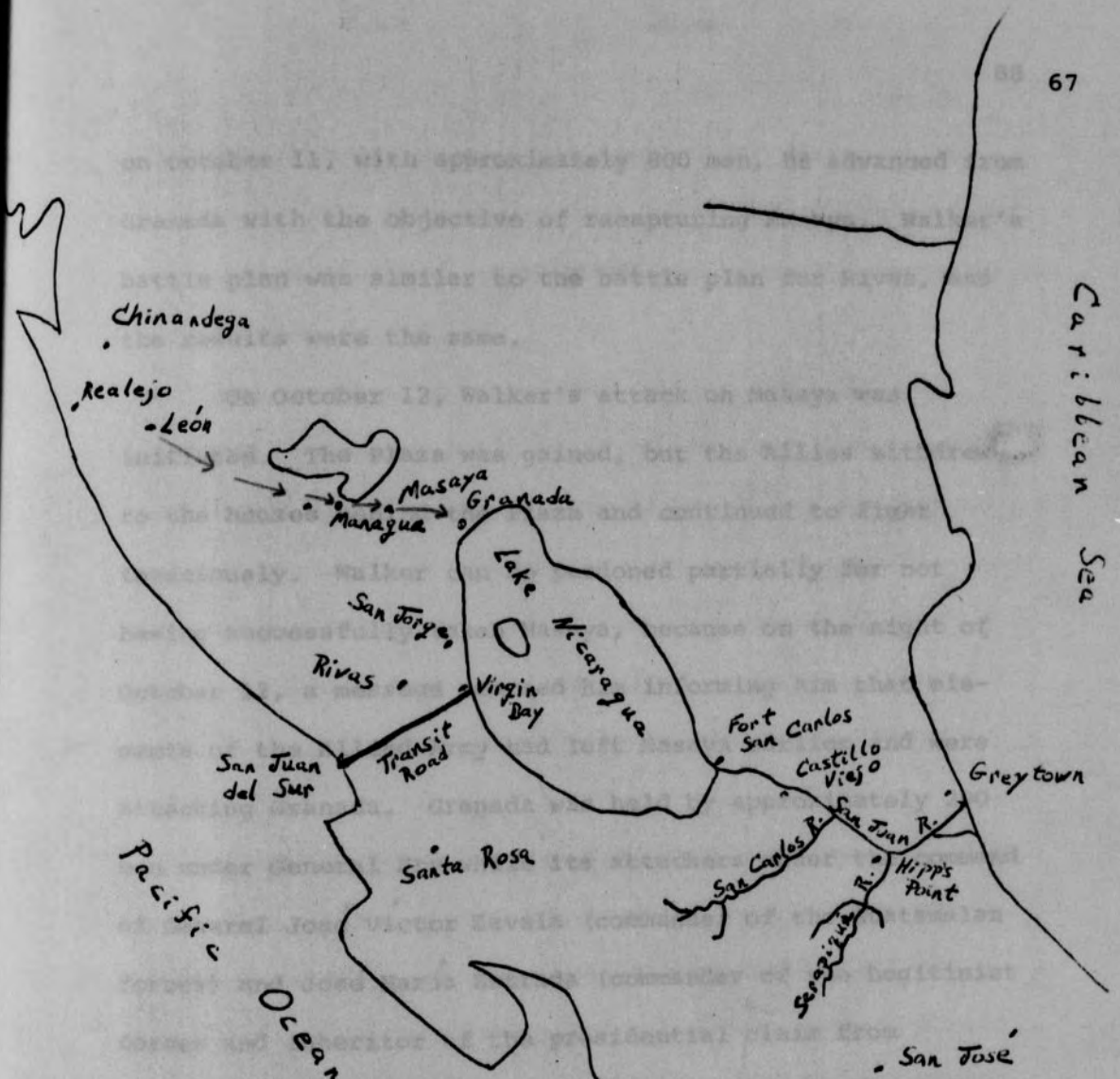
to drive out William Walker.[3] This occurred as William Walker reached the pinnacle of power in Nicaragua.

Even though Walker was now officially president of Nicaragua, ex-Provisional President Rivas still controlled León and Chinandega. Walker's American Phalanx still held the stragegic positions in Nicaragua and should have been capable of stopping or deterring for a considerable time any allied advance, especially from the north. The American Phalanx held the strongly fortified city of Masaya with approximately 400 men under the command of Lieutenant Colonel James McIntosh; Walker's cavalry, of approximately 200 men, the Rangers, under the command of Major John Waters occupied Managua, the point most advanced toward the enemy. The bulk of the American Phalanx was stationed at Granada. As has already been indicated, most Latin American cities were built around a central Plaza with roads radiating from the Plaza, lined with interlocking adobe buildings. Masaya and Managua were no exception to this rule, and they should have offered stiff resistance to any advancing army.

General Ramón Belloso of El Salvador was the commander of the Allied Army. (At present the Allied Army was composed of the governments of Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador,

and the Rivas faction in Nicaragua). General Belloso began his march on Walker from his headquarters at León with approximately 2,300 men on September 18, 1856. As Belloso approached Managua, Walker ordered Major Waters to abandon his positions there. Thus, Belloso entered Managua unresisted on September 24. Belloso for some unexplainable reason delayed in Managua for a week. But again, as Belloso advanced on Masaya, the last American defensive position before Granada, Walker unbelievably ordered Lieutenant Colonel McIntosh with some 400 men to abandon their strong defensive position without a contest. This certainly seems strange in the light of two important aspects. First, Masaya was known as the granary of Nicaragua, and to wage a successful conflict or control a nation, the nation's breadbasket must be controlled. Secondly, "Masaya was located high on a promontory and accessible only by tortuous mountain roads...Almost any body of efficient soldiers could have held the city indefinitely against any army attempting to reach it from below."[4] (See map F).

Apparently, Walker wanted to concentrate all his forces at Granada and make Belloso challenge him there. However, if this was his reasoning, he changed his mind, and


Chinandega
Realejo
León
Managua
Masaya
Granada
Lake Nicaragua
San Jorge
Rivas
Virgin Bay
Transit Road
San Juan del Sur
Pacific Ocean
Santa Rosa
Fort San Carlos
Castillo Viejo
Greytown
San Juan R.
San Carlos R.
Sarapiquí R.
Hipp's Point
San José
Caribbean Sea

MAP F

on October 11, with approximately 800 men, he advanced from Granada with the objective of recapturing Masaya. Walker's battle plan was similar to the battle plan for Rivas, and the results were the same.

On October 12, Walker's attack on Masaya was initiated. The Plaza was gained, but the Allies withdrew to the houses behind the Plaza and continued to fight tenaciously. Walker can be pardoned partially for not having successfully taken Masaya, because on the night of October 12, a message reached him informing him that elements of the Allied Army had left Masaya earlier and were attacking Granada. Granada was held by approximately 200 men under General Fry while its attackers under the command of General José Víctor Zavala (commander of the Guatemalan forces) and José María Estrada (commander of the Legitimist forces and inheritor of the presidential claim from Chamorro) commanded approximately 700 men.

In spite of appearances, Zavala and Estrada were not part of a grand strategy to entrap Walker and cut him off from his base of supplies. They had simply deserted Belloso and Masaya and decided to attack Granada when they learned Walker was enroute to Masaya. Thus, by jealousy and luck,

not military brilliance, the Allies almost snared Walker. Immediately upon learning of this situation, Walker ordered the evacuation of the attack positions at Masaya and returned to Granada at full speed.

On the morning of October 13, the First Rifles commanded by Colonel Markham of the American Phalanx quickly engaged and dispersed the forces of Zavala and Estrada on the edge of Granada. Thereby Granada and the American Phalanx were saved for a short time.[5] Ironically, the American Phalanx drove the enemy from Granada on October 13, exactly one year after their capture of Granada from the Legitimists.

Soon after the battle of Granada, Charles Frederick Henningsen, Walker's most renowned soldier, arrived in Nicaragua to offer his services to the American Phalanx (See illustration 5).[6] Henningsen had been devoted to the military, having seen service in Spain, Hungary and Russia. He had won great renown for his part on the side of the rebellious Carlists in Spain and with the revolutionists in Russia and Hungary.[7] He had written numerous books on military tactics and campaigns, and was an expert on artillery and the Minié Rifle. Henningsen's offer of service was quickly accepted, and he was promoted to the

GENERAL CHARLES FREDERIC HENNINGSEN.

ILLUSTRATION 5

rank of major general. From this point on, Henningsen was very instrumental in the conduct of Walker's campaign.

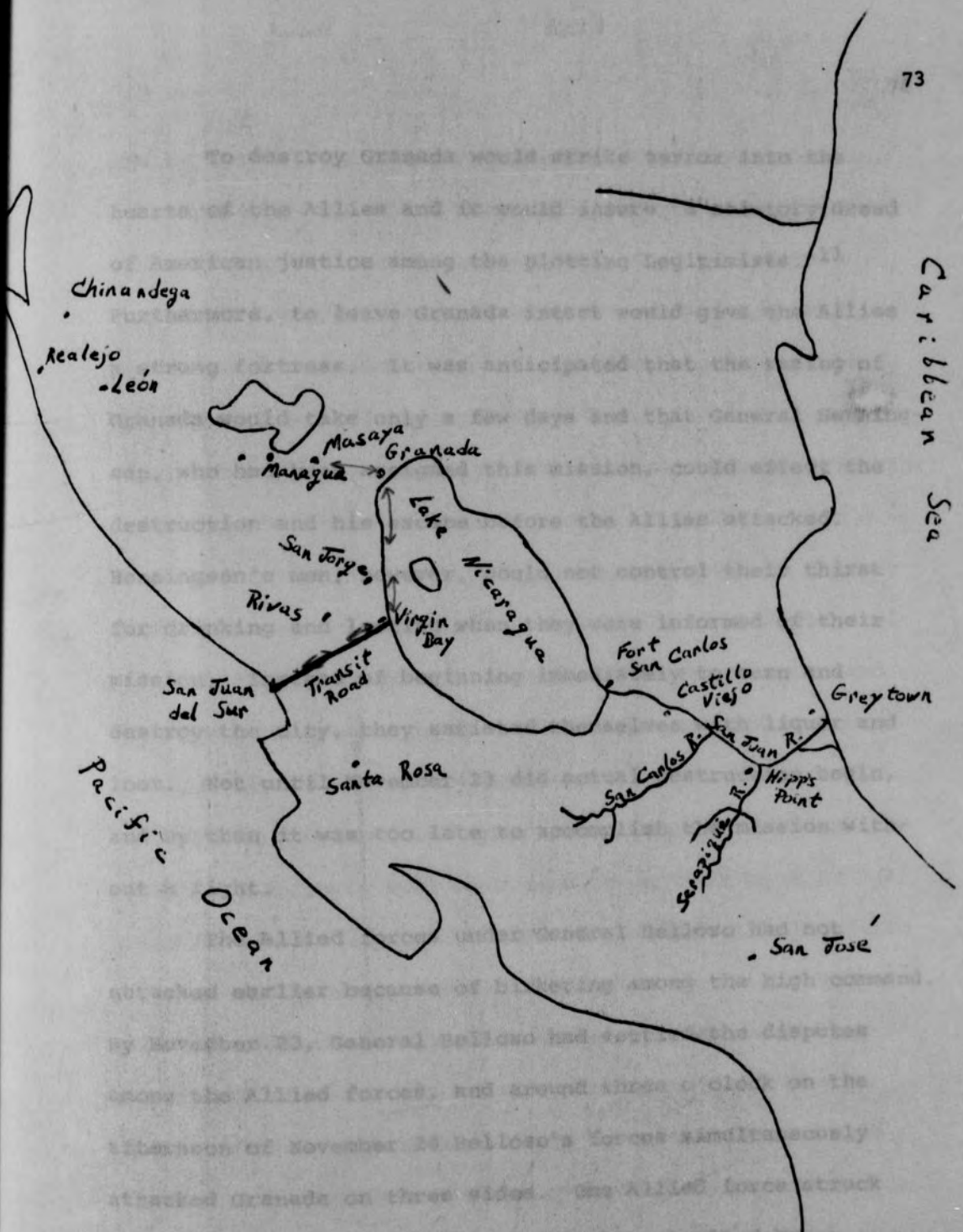
On November 1, 1856, President Mora of Costa Rica declared war on the Walker regime in Nicaragua, thus completing the encirclement of Walker's Nicaragua by the Allied forces. On November 7, General Cañas occupied San Juan del Sur, which was not garrisoned by the American Phalanx. In fact, the only American force in the entire district around San Juan del Sur was the "navy," which consisted of only one small sloop, commanded by Captain Callender Irvine Fayssoux.[8]

Walker then decided to try to strike both the Allied armies at San Juan del Sur and at Masaya before they could effect a link-up. Walker had to attack the Costa Rican army at San Juan del Sur in order to keep open his lifeline, the transit route. On November 11, Walker proceeded to Virgin Bay with approximately 250 men. On November 12, the American Phalanx met and completely routed the Costa Rican army of approximately 800 men under General Cañas.

Cañas' army was entrenched on a hill on the transit route near San Juan del Sur. When Colonel Natzmer's men assaulted Cañas' position on the right, the Costa Rican forces began an orderly retreat. Under the leadership of

General Henningsen, the Rangers relentlessly pursued Cañas' troops and, in effect, completely scattered his command.[9] The next day (November 13), the American Phalanx returned to Granada and one day later (November 14), Walker and approximately 250 men marched on Masaya. For three days (November 15-17), Walker's men fought desperately for the control of Masaya. But again, as at Rivas and Masaya earlier, the American Phalanx was able to penetrate only a short distance into the city. Finally, around midnight on November 17 Walker called off the attack and returned to Granada on November 18.[10] Once more, the Allied Army failed to pursue a physically exhausted band of men and missed another opportunity completely to shatter Walker's army (See map G).

On his return to Granada on November 18, Walker decided that Granada not only had to be abandoned but it had to be destroyed. Surely what followed at Granada from November 19 to December 14 not only constituted one of the most remarkable aspects of the whole Filibuster War, but also was the worst example of destructiveness during the Filibuster War. Walker ordered Granada's destruction because of its symbolic importance.


Caribbean Sea
Chinandega
Realejo
León
Masaya
Granada
Managua
Lake Nicaragua
San Jorge
Rivas
Virgin Bay
Transit Road
San Juan del Sur
Fort San Carlos
Castillo Viejo
Greytown
San Juan R.
San Carlos R.
Hipp's Point
Santa Rosa
Pacific Ocean
San Jose

MAP G

To destroy Granada would strike terror into the hearts of the Allies and it would insure "a salutory dread of American justice among the plotting Legitimists."[11] Furthermore, to leave Granada intact would give the Allies a strong fortress. It was anticipated that the razing of Granada would take only a few days and that General Henningsen, who had been assigned this mission, could effect the destruction and his escape before the Allies attacked. Henningsen's men, however, could not control their thirst for drinking and looting when they were informed of their mission. Instead of beginning immediately to burn and destroy the city, they satiated themselves with liquor and loot. Not until November 23 did actual destruction begin, and by then it was too late to accomplish the mission without a fight.

The Allied forces under General Belloso had not attacked earlier because of bickering among the high command. By November 23, General Belloso had settled the disputes among the Allied forces, and around three o'clock on the afternoon of November 24 Belloso's forces simultaneously attacked Granada on three sides. One Allied force struck the northern suburb of Jalteva, but was repulsed by Henningsen's most able aide, Major Swingle. Another force

had as its objective the Church of San Francisco, but it was repulsed. The third force accomplished its objective of capturing the Guadalupe Cathedral, thus effectively sealing off any escape route to Lake Nicaragua as the Guadalupe Cathedral overlooked the street running from the lake to the main Plaza.

Henningsen, realizing that his only hope of effecting an escape was to reach Lake Nicaragua where Walker was waiting for him aboard La Virgen, began a tortuous journey in that direction. From house to house, day by day, until December 13, Henningsen's command fought their way toward the lake. They were faced not only by a hostile army but also by disease and near starvation. Only a man of indomitable courage could have accomplished such a feat. Henningsen's troops were able to blow up the Church of San Francisco which they had successfully defended in the first assault, and to recapture the Esquipulas Church and the Guadalupe Cathedral. From the Guadalupe Cathedral, they slowly built breastworks toward Lake Nicaragua. Their escape, however, was effected only by Colonel Waters with a relief force which successfully stormed three earthen breastworks and led what remained of Henningsen's force to the wharf where they were evacuated onto the steamer La Virgen.

Of the 419 men, women, and children that Henningsen was leading from Granada on November 24, only 227 were capable of bearing arms. By December 14, the total of 419 men had been drastically reduced because 110 had either been killed or wounded, 40 had deserted, and two had been captured. Before boarding the steamer, Henningsen implanted in the soil a lance bearing a strip of rawhide with the words, "Aquí fué Granada"--"Here was Granada," for Granada had been completely devastated.[12]

Here again at Granada, the fighting spirit and recklessness of the Americans was illustrated. Calvin O'Neal, after seeing his brother fall to enemy fire, secured Henningsen's approval to lead a charge against enemy positions forming near the Church of San Francisco. Henningsen provided O'Neal with thirty-two hand-picked men. O'Neal and his men charged straight into a formation with reckless abandon.

> The slaughter made by the thirty-two rifles was fearful, and so far were O'Neal and his men carried by the 'rapture of strife' that it was difficult for Henningsen to recall them to the Plaza. When they did return, it was through streets almost blocked with the bodies of the Guatemalans they had slain.[13]

Because Walker had abandoned Granada, the symbol of authority in Nicaragua, he now had successfully to defend

the transit route or remain without any base of operations in Nicaragua. Walker decided to concentrate his forces at Rivas and await reinforcements by way of the San Juan River or San Juan del Sur. Walker occupied Rivas without a fight on December 16. Generals Cañas and Jérez had abandoned Rivas upon hearing of Henningsen's relief at Granada by Colonel Waters and had decided to join Belloso at Masaya.

Walker's recent military successes were not indicative of growing Allied military strength in Nicaragua. He had defeated Cañas near San Juan del Sur, had struck hard at Masaya, had successfully destroyed Granada, and had finally taken Rivas without so much as firing a shot--but time was running out. Walker's vital artery, the San Juan River, was about to fall to Costa Rican forces.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER VI

[1]Walker, The War in Nicaragua, p. 228.

[2]Scroggs, Filibusters and Financiers, p. 201.

[3]Ibid., p. 250.

[4]Greene, The Filibuster, p. 232.

[5]Walker, The War in Nicaragua, p. 294.

Scroggs, Filibusters and Financiers, p. 254.

Allen, William Walker, p. 122.

[6]Roche, The Story of the Filibusters, p. 150.

[7]Wallace, Destiny and Glory, p. 207.

[8]Scroggs, Filibusters and Financiers, p. 255.

[9]Walker, The War in Nicaragua, pp. 305-307.

[10]Scroggs, Filibusters and Financiers, p. 256.

Walker, The War in Nicaragua, p. 312.

[11]Greene, The Filibuster, p. 247.

[12]Walker, The War in Nicaragua, pp. 319-340.

Scroggs, Filibusters and Financiers, p. 269.

Greene, The Filibuster, pp. 247-268.

[13]Walker, The War in Nicaragua, p. 319.

CHAPTER VII

THE CAMPAIGN FOR THE CONTROL OF THE SAN JUAN RIVER

Walker had unwittingly made an enemy of the most powerful man in the United States in the 1850's--Cornelius Vanderbilt. Unfortunately for Walker, he had become a friend of Cornelius Garrison and Charles Morgan, two agents of the Accessory Transit Company, which had been established by Vanderbilt. Morgan and Garrison desired for themselves control of the Accessory Transit Company, and they needed Walker's aid to assure themselves of securing control. They lent the Rivas Government of Nicaragua $20,000, provided Walker with access to lake and river steamers, provided free passage for recruits to Nicaragua, and promised continued aid. By thus aiding Walker in his conquest of Nicaragua, they enlisted Walker into their services.

Garrison and Morgan pursuaded Walker to revoke the original charter of the Accessory Transit Company and to recharter transit rights through Nicaragua to them. Walker in turn pursuaded President Rivas to sign both the revocation (February 18, 1856) and the new charter (February 19, 1856).

This proved to be Walker's most fatal mistake while in Nicaragua. He had angered the great and powerful Cornelius Vanderbilt. Vanderbilt subsequently plotted the downfall of Walker in order to secure the reinstatement of the original charter which allowed him transisthmian rights. Through two agents, William Robert Webster, an Englishman, and Sylvanus H. Spencer, an American, Vanderbilt pursuaded President Mora to follow a plan which he would finance. He had decided that the best way to topple Walker was to block his main artery, the San Juan River, and thereby shut off the flow of supplies and recruits into Nicaragua, and he had the right man for this task in Sylvanus Spencer. Not only did Spencer know every detail of the San Juan River (he had been a steamboat captain on the river), but he was also very angry with Walker. The rich stock he owned in the Accessory Transit Company was worthless as a result of Walker's revocation of the original charter.*

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*Because Spencer's part in the San Juan River Campaign is so important, his family background provides an interesting backdrop. He was the son of John Canfield Spencer who was the Secretary of War under President Tyler. But his brother Midshipman Phillip Spencer was hung at the yardarm of the United States brig-of-war Somers for mutiny in 1842, and achieved the dubious distinction of being the only officer in the United States Navy ever to be executed for mutiny.[1]

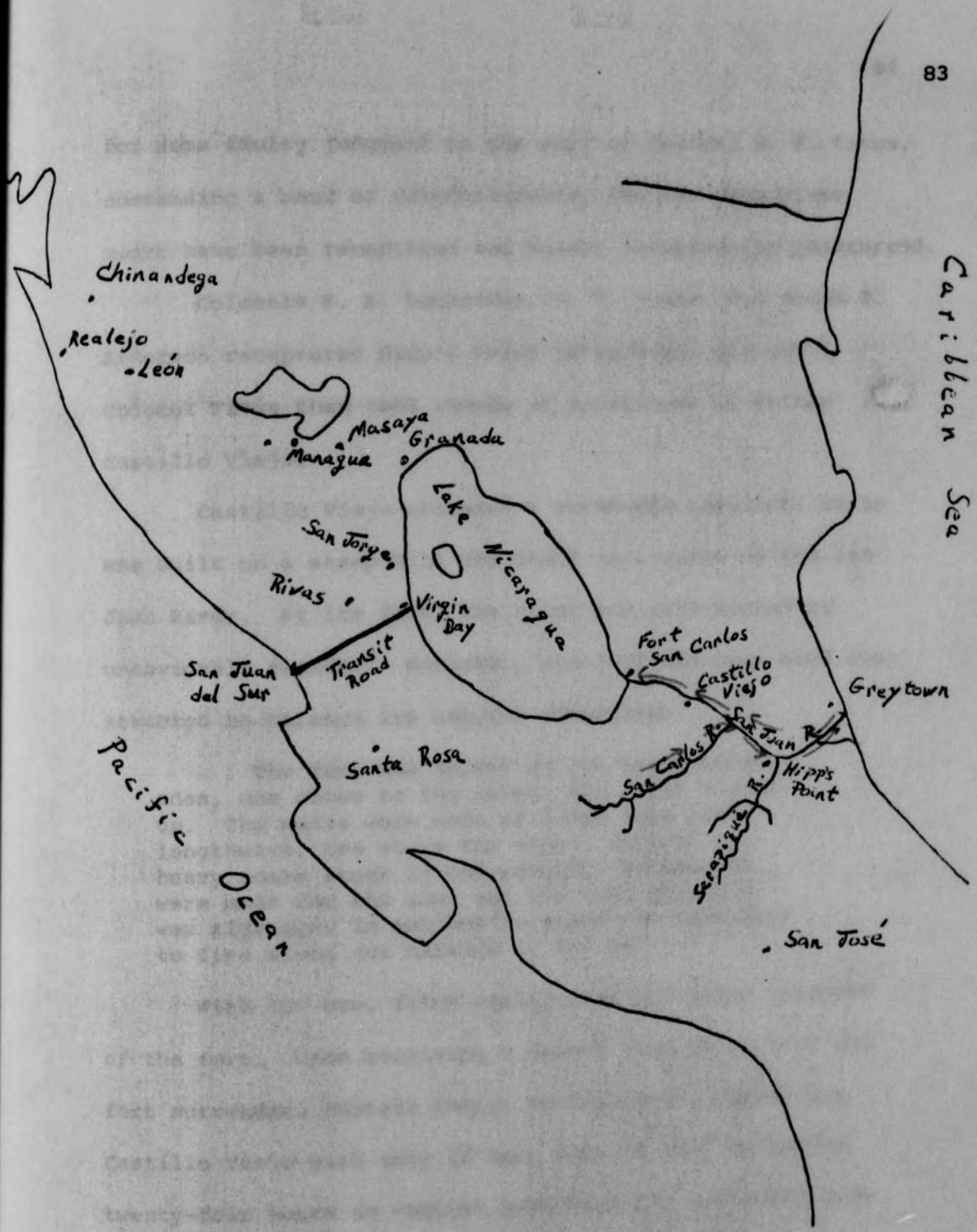
Spencer personally took charge of one expeditionary force and departed San José, Costa Rica, on December 10. Spencer and his 120 men entered the San Juan River at the confluence of the San Carlos River and the San Juan River. From there they floated down river to within a short distance of the very strategically located Hipp's Point, a fort at the junction of the San Juan River and the Serapiqui River. Knowing that Hipp's Point was well fortified on the river and practically undefended in the rear, Spencer led his men inland and attacked from the rear, capturing Hipp's Point in less than five minutes. The fifty American defenders offered little resistance, as their weapons were stacked. They were eating a meal and no guards had been posted in the rear. After successfully taking Hipp's Point on December 23, Spencer and his men employed a tactic of floating down river on rafts and completely surprised the crews of four river steamers at Punta Arenas[2] (across the river from Greytown).

Spencer then traveled back up the San Juan River and effected a link-up with an additional 1,100 troops under General José Joaquín Mora (brother of President Mora of Costa Rica). They captured the lightly defended Castillo

Viejo and then tricked the commander of Fort San Carlos into surrender. When Spencer and General Mora gave the standard arrival signal to Fort San Carlos from aboard the captured steamer La Virgen, Captain Kruger, commander of the fort, came out to greet La Virgen. He was met by Spencer and Mora who demanded he surrender the fort or else forfeit his life. Thus Fort San Carlos, which occupied a commanding position on a bluff at a point where the San Juan River joins Lake Nicaragua, was surrendered to Spencer and Mora without a fight. (See map H).[3]

On January 2, 1857, Spencer and Mora captured the fastest, largest, and last of the lake steamers, the San Carlos. With the capture of the lake steamers, the forts, and the San Juan River, Walker for all practical purposes was shut off from contact with the outside world.

William Walker was unaware of all these events taking place on the San Juan River, but it was only a matter of time before he would have to surrender to the Allies, as they now controlled all of Nicaragua except the environs of Rivas and San Juan del Sur. Walker made his last desperate stand at Rivas while waiting for expected reinforcements to arrive via the San Juan River from Greytown. The reinforcements did arrive in Nicaragua, and had it not been


Chinandega
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Managua
Masaya
Granada
Lake Nicaragua
San Jorge
Rivas
Virgin Bay
Transit Road
San Juan del Sur
Santa Rosa
Pacific Ocean
Caribbean Sea
Fort San Carlos
Castillo Viejo
Greytown
San Juan R.
San Carlos R.
Serapiqui R.
Hipp's Point
San José

MAP H

for some faulty judgment on the part of Colonel H. T. Titus, commanding a band of reinforcements, the San Juan River might have been recaptured and Walker successfully reinforced.

Colonels S. A. Lockridge, H. T. Titus, and Frank P. Anderson recaptured Hipp's Point on February 13, 1857. Colonel Titus then took charge of operations to retake Castillo Viejo.

Castillo Viejo occupied a strategic position, as it was built on a steep hill and stood in a curve of the San Juan River. At its feet, the river was interrupted by unnavigable rapids.[4] Moreover, the fort had been well constructed to balance its natural advantages.

> The fort was formed of two heavy stockades, one close to the water, the other higher up. The walls were made of large logs laid lengthways, one above the other, secured by heavy posts stuck in the ground. Embrasures were made for the guns and the line of walls was zigzagged in and out to allow the defenders to fire along the outside of the walls.[5]

With 180 men, Titus easily took the lower defenses of the fort. Upon receiving a demand from Titus that the fort surrender, Captain Cauty, an Englishman commanding Castillo Viejo with only 30 men, replied that he needed twenty-four hours to request permission to surrender from his superior at Fort San Carlos. For some reason Titus

agreed, but in twenty-four hours Castillo Viejo had been reinforced and Titus was forced to retreat. Titus nevertheless could have taken the fort practically without a fight in February, but one month later, Lockridge found it too heavily guarded and decided that the fort was not worth the risks of an assault.[6]

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER VII

[1]Arthur D. Howden Smith, Commodore Vanderbilt: An Epic of American Achievement (New York: Robert M. McBride and Company, 1927), p. 210.

[2]"A Run to Nicaragua," Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, p. 544.

[3]E. H. Squier, "Nicaragua: An Exploration from Ocean to Ocean," Harper's New Monthly Magazine, October, 1855, p. 577.

[4]Squier, "Nicaragua: An Exploration from Ocean to Ocean," p. 577.

[5]C. Napier Bell, Tangweera: Life and Adventures Among Gentle Savages (London: Edward Arnold, 1899), p. 66.

[6]Walker, The War in Nicaragua, p. 362.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SURRENDER OF WILLIAM WALKER'S FORCES AT RIVAS

Because of Rivas' strategic location near the transit route, Walker decided to prepare Rivas as a final defensive position and to wait there for expected reinforcements. Under the guidance of Henningsen, Rivas became what it should have been to the Costa Rican forces--practically an impregnable fortress. It was defended by stone barricades and eleven pieces of ordnance--two mines, three six-pounders, two howitzers, and four mortars.[1] Henningsen also ordered that a wide swath be completely cleared around Rivas, leaving excellent fields of fire for the artillery and riflemen.

With his army of 518 fit soldiers, Walker was able to resist the Allied army, approximately 7,000 men, from January to May 1. Not only were they able to withstand a formidable siege for a considerable length of time, but the American Phalanx was also able to mount several small offensive operations. The American Phalanx struck Obraje once on January 25 and assaulted San Jorge four times--January 29, February 3, February 11, and March 16. None

of these assaults was successful in taking their objective; however, they did show that even though the small American Phalanx had nearly been surrounded at Rivas, it was not ready to roll over and die.

By the middle of March, however, the Allies had completely surrounded Rivas and undertaken siege operations. Again, the American Phalanx showed its still formidable fighting spirit and proved that a small group of men in Rivas could withstand the assault of a much larger force. On both March 23 and April 11, the American Phalanx repulsed two Allied assaults, inflicting heavy losses. The Allied assault on April 11 did carry one side of the lower Plaza, but the Allies were driven out. This became the last engagement of the war. The Allies realized it would be foolish to try to carry Rivas by assault, so they undertook a holding operation to starve the American Phalanx into surrendering.

The end to Walker's presidency came May 1, 1857, when William Walker and the American Phalanx surrendered to Commander Charles H. Davis of the United States sloop-of-war, St. Mary's. Commander Davis had arrived off San Juan del Sur on February 6 under orders to protect American lives and property, but to remain strictly neutral. According to

Lawrence Greene, a historian in the twentieth century, he was to do what he could, unofficially, to get Walker out of Nicaragua.[2] On April 24, under a flag of truce, women and children had been safely evacuated from Rivas. On April 30, Walker agreed to surrender to Commander Davis under guarantee that he and his men be safely escorted out of Nicaragua under the protection of the United States flag.

Walker really did not have an alternative to surrender for a number of reasons. First, he had only enough food on hand to sustain his men and himself for two or three more days. Second, Henningsen had told Commander Davis of the possibility that the American Phalanx could breach the siege lines of Rivas and escape to San Juan del Sur and board their one ship "navy," the Granada. Davis informed him, however, that he would not allow the Granada to sail out of the harbor. Third, there was positively no hope of new recruits arriving to reinforce the American Phalanx. Fourth, as each day went by, Walker's force was being constantly drained by death, disease and desertion. Of the 919 men Walker had reported in his command in January, only 463 surrendered May 1.

One wonders why the Allies permitted William Walker to leave Nicaragua so easily when Walker's eventual capture seemed so inevitable. Cañas, commander of the Allied Army, was well aware of the situation he was in. First, he knew he could not take Rivas by assault. Second, while he was waiting for Walker to capitulate due to lack of food, his own army was also being reduced by death, disease and desertion. Within the past two months, his besieging army had been reduced from almost 7,000 men to approximately 2,000 men.[3] Third, Cañas realized that dissension and bickering might at any time break out among his various nationalities and could result in the complete disintegration of his army. General Cañas was, therefore, more than happy to allow Commander Davis to undertake negotiations and secure the surrender of William Walker's forces at Rivas.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER VIII

[1]Stout, Nicaragua: Past, Present and Future, p. 208.

[2]Greene, The Filibuster, p. 291.

[3]Roche, The Story of the Filibusters, p. 146.

CHAPTER IX

PERSONAL EMPIRE OR ANNEXATION TO THE UNITED STATES

One important factor should be discussed. Although William Walker was a product of Manifest Destiny and believed strongly in his own destiny as a leader, it is a debatable point whether or not he intended for Nicaragua, once firmly under his control, to be annexed to the United States or to form the first state of his own private empire. In the opinion of this writer, Walker was firmly bent on establishing his own empire in Central America, separate from and independent of the United States.

The first proof of this theory was that when Walker revealed his plan of a Central American Empire to C. W. Doubleday, Doubleday rejected the plan and decided that he could no longer support Walker, because he, himself, was sincerely interested in helping the Nicaraguan people.[1] It was obvious to Doubleday that Walker was only interested in himself and his own aspirations of grandeur.

More evidence of Walker's empire-building plans was shown in his inaugural address on July 12, 1856, when he

apparently was warning England and the United States to keep away from Nicaragua.

> In our relations with the more powerful nations of the world, I hope that they may be led to perceive that although Nicaragua may be comparatively weak, she is yet jealous of her honour and determined to maintain the dignity of her independent sovereignty. Her geographical position and commercial advantages may attract the cupidity of other governments, either neighboring or distant....I trust that they may yet learn that Nicaragua claims to control her own destiny and does not require other nationalities to make treaties concerning her territory without asking her advice or consent.[2]

In this statement, Walker was directly speaking to England and the United States who had taken it upon themselves to adopt the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty by which they assumed the right to fix the boundaries of Nicaragua without consulting the republic. This in itself indicates that Walker intended to maintain Nicaraguan sovereignty.

Probably the greatest indication that Walker intended to establish his own empire came to light in a letter written by Walker to Domingo de Goicouria, his Minister to England, concerning the policy Goicouria should pursue as Minister. Although the letter was written August 12, 1856, it was not until November 24, 1856, that the letter appeared in print in the New York Herald.

Goicouria, a Cuban patriot, had traveled to Nicaragua to offer his aid to Walker in return for Walker's helping him to free his native Cuba from Spanish domination. Walker accepted his help, but Goicouria became disillusioned with Walker soon after his arrival in Nicaragua. Walker, however, persuaded Goicouria to go to England to be the Nicaraguan Minister to the Court of Saint James. On his way to England, Goicouria decided to remain in New York for a time. While in New York, he attempted to settle differences between Vanderbilt and Walker over the revoked Nicaraguan charter. Vanderbilt was willing to settle the quarrel, but after Goicouria informed Walker of Vanderbilt's willingness, Walker bluntly told Goicouria that he did not need his advice or help. At this, Goicouria completely broke with Walker. He then decided to publish a letter revealing Walker's empire intentions.

The letter reads, in part,

> With your versatility, and if I may use the term, adaptability, I expect much to be done in England. You can do more than any American could possibly accomplish, because you can make the British cabinet see that we are not engaged in any scheme for annexation. You can make them see that the only way to cut the expanding and expansive democracy of the North is by a powerful and compact Southern federation, based on military principles....Tell_____ _____.

> he must send me the news and let me know whether Cuba must and shall be free, but not for the Yankees. Oh, no! that fine country is not fit for those barbarous Yankees. What would such a psalm-singing set do in the island?[3]

This must have been a blow to ardent expansionists, for it does seem to indicate Walker's true purpose. Walker not only wanted a military federation led by him but also wanted a barrier to any further southward expansion by the United States.

As further proof, Walker decreed on September 22, 1856, that all laws and decrees which had been passed by the Federation of Central American States from 1824 to 1838 and continued in force in the new Nicaraguan Constitution were now null and void. One of the acts of the Federation of Central American States had been the abolition of slavery, and now with Walker's decree of September 22, it became possible to reintroduce slavery in Nicaragua. To Walker, slavery was a means to an end. He wanted to induce Americans to colonize the land, and this could only be accomplished with either contract or slave labor. Furthermore, Walker stated that another object of the decree was "to bind the Southern States to Nicaragua as if she were one of themselves."[4] This slave republic in Central America

would have the same aims and aspirations of the southern United States, and thus the two areas would be closely drawn together.

As an indication of his complete takeover and intentions, Walker redesigned the Nicaraguan flag and coined the motto, "Five or none." The motto would seem to indicate that he meant to bring all five nations in Central America under his domination. (See illustration 6).[5]

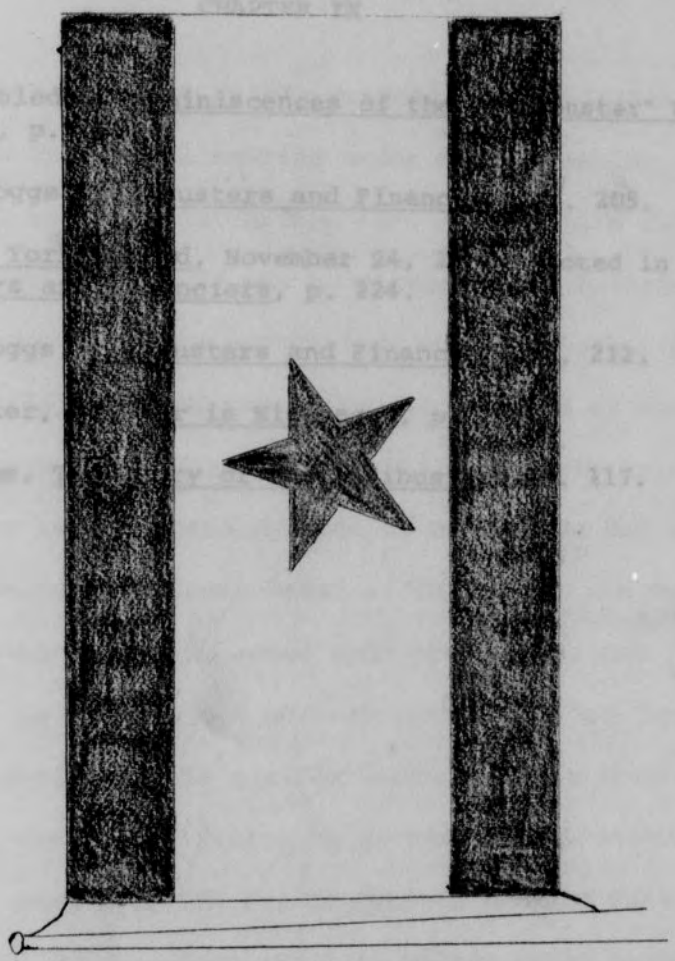

ILLUSTRATION 6

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER IX

[1]Doubleday, Reminiscences of the "Filibuster" War in Nicaragua, p. 165.

[2]Scroggs, Filibusters and Financiers, p. 205.

[3]New York Herald, November 24, 1856, quoted in Scroggs, Filibusters and Financiers, p. 224.

[4]Scroggs, Filibusters and Financiers, p. 212.

Walker, The War in Nicaragua, p. 266.

[5]Roche, The Story of the Filibusters, p. 117.

CHAPTER X

CONCLUSION

Whether or not Walker desired to establish a military federation in Central America under his domination, he did accomplish the very astounding feat of leading a filibustering expedition of 57 men to Nicaragua and bringing the country under his sway within four months. Walker did not lead the filibustering expedition as an agent of slavery expansionists or as a tool of capitalistic enterprise. He did so only at the encouragement of Byron Cole and with the hope of realizing a dream--that of fulfilling his destiny. Because Walker dreamed, acted upon his dreams, and yet failed, he is the subject of much criticism. If, however, he had succeeded in his mission--either having Nicaragua annexed to the United States or establishing a prosperous and stable empire of his own in Central America with Nicaragua as its keystone--William Walker would probably today be considered a hero. Be that as it may, Walker failed.

In the opinion of this writer, it is valid to point out errors which Walker made in the fields of military

tactics, administration of justice, and appointment of officials. This writer does not feel that Walker should either be criticized or praised for his decision to lead a filibustering expedition to Nicaragua. Walker was only acting and reacting to opinions and pressures of the era of Manifest Destiny in the 1850's.

Thus, a hypothetical question arises. How could William Walker fail so disastrously and miserably after having accomplished so much in so short a time? In the first place, Walker quite simply was no military tactican. In only two instances did he show signs of using strategy and tactics to his advantage.

The first instance was his most sensational exploit--the routing of the Legitimists from Granada. He had steamed from Virgin Bay up Lake Nicaragua, and captured Granada, the capital city, while the city had been left practically undefended by the Legitimists in order to concentrate their forces at Rivas in an attempt to destroy Walker.

The only other use of good military strategy occurred when Walker tried to prevent the Allied armies from linking up. He accomplished this by quickly moving from Granada to the transit route where he defeated the Costa Rican army

near San Juan del Sur. He then returned to Granada one day later and attacked the Allied forces at Masaya the next day. Although Walker is given the credit for this second campaign, probably much of the credit for its success should be given to Charles Frederick Henningsen's military brilliance.

In several instances, Walker's horrendous decisions did much to destroy the American Phalanx. In three cases, Walker simply gave up practically impregnable cities--Rivas, Managua, and Masaya--without a fight. In addition, as soon as the enemy took two of the cities--Rivas and Masaya--Walker decided that he <u>did</u> need the position and subsequently tried to recapture the same city he had voluntarily given up only days earlier. Walker was guilty of not learning from his mistakes. He seems never to have learned that he could not successfully race into a city such as Masaya or Rivas and seize the defended central Plaza. What usually happened in these cases was that Walker's men would seize the Plaza while the enemy would surround the American Phalanx by occupying the buildings outside the Plaza. They would then force the Americans to fight their way out of the city. That situation should certainly have happened only once, but it happened four times--twice at Rivas and twice at Masaya.

Walker was able, however, to capitalize even on these mistakes because of the ineptitude of the Allied generals. Not only did they allow him to break out of their encirclements in his "slam-bang" attacks on these cities, but also they never tried to pursue and scatter his retreating army. Even when Colonel Schlessinger was so horribly defeated at Santa Rosa, the Costa Ricans did not attempt any pursuit. However, the greatest indictment that can be laid against any general occurred during the Costa Rican occupation of Rivas. The Costa Rican general allowed corpses to lie unburied and indiscriminately to be thrown into drinking wells. Naturally, disease and death ran rampant through the ranks of the Costa Ricans. Out of about 4,000 troops that crossed the Nicaraguan border, only approximately 500 returned to Costa Rica, and most of the deaths were due to disease resulting from cholera.

In addition to unfortunate military decisions, Walker also was guilty of administrative mismanagement. He failed miserably in two crucial appointments--one a military appointment and the other a ministerial designation. Walker appointed Louis Schlessinger as battalion commander of his invasion force into Costa Rica. Schlessinger proved to be one of the most inept military commanders on either side

during the Filibuster War. He also appointed Birkett D. Fry as Minister to the United States, and this poor choice probably helped influence Secretary of State Marcy to refuse to extend diplomatic recognition to the Rivas-Walker Government.

Even though executions seemed to be an easy solution to Walker's political problems, the detrimental long range effects more than offset any short range gain. This is shown by the executions of Mateo Mayorga and Ponciano Corral. Walker used the execution of Mayoraga to secure the surrender of Corral's forces in October, 1855. He then effectively used the execution of Corral as an example to others not to attempt to commit treason against the state. In the long run, however, the two executions simply made martyrs of Corral and Mayorga and increased public resentment against the American filibusters.

Foremost among Walker's failures was his inability to realize that Cornelius Vanderbilt was the man who could make or break his position in Nicaragua. Walker not only revoked Vanderbilt's charter on the Accessory Transit Company, but he also refused Vanderbilt's offer of $250,000 in return for restoring the original charter which gave Vanderbilt the transit rights he wanted.[1] Because of this, Cornelius

Vanderbilt sponsored and financed Spencer's expedition to sever Walker's control of the San Juan River--his vital lifeline. Therefore, at the expense of American money and men, Walker lost control of the San Juan River because he refused to mend his differences with Vanderbilt. He had made the fatal mistake of trying to tangle with Cornelius Vanderbilt.

But even with these shortcomings, Walker had three undeniable assets. Even though it did not appear that he had the physical stature to be a leader, William Walker possessed the inborn ability to guide and shape the destinies of men. His uncanny piercing steel-gray eyes persuaded many to follow him to their graves. There was an old Indian myth which stated that one day a man with gray eyes would come who would deliver them from the oppressive yoke of Spanish servitude. Walker took full advantage of this myth and his gray eyes to persuade many Indians to support him.

Much of the success that Walker enjoyed depended upon the fighting ability of his soldiers and their willingness to perform under hostile fire. There have been several examples already mentioned, but C. Frederick Henningsen after the Civil War in the United States quite succinctly

describes the bravery of the American Phalanx.

> I was on the Confederate side in many of the bloodiest battles of the late war; but I aver that if, at the end of that war, I had been allowed to pick five thousand of the bravest Confederate or Federal soldiers I ever saw, and could resurrect and pit against them one thousand of such men as lie beneath the orange trees of Nicaragua, I feel certain that the thousand would have scattered and utterly routed the five thousand within an hour. All military science failed, on a suddenly given field, before assailants who came on at run, to close with their revolvers, and who thought little of charging a battery, pistol in hand..., Such men do not turn up in the average of everyday life, nor do I ever expect to see their like again.[2]

William Walker was indeed the prince of the filibusters of the 1850's until his death, on a third try to occupy Central America, in 1860 in Honduras. Due to the strategic importance of Nicaragua, Walker created much consternation not only in Central American nations, but also in "the capitals of Washington and London." It is no doubt true that William Walker would be better remembered today if the War Between the States in the United States had not occurred. The mass of names and heroes arising from that conflict far overshadow one filibuster's successes and failures in the Central American nation of Nicaragua in the 1850's.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER X

[1]Baughman, Charles Morgan, p. 82.

[2]Edward S. Wallace, "The Gray-Eyed Man of Destiny," American Heritage: The Magazine of History, December, 1957, p. 125.

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APPENDIX A

COMRADES OF WILLIAM WALKER

Sam Absalom
Frank P. Anderson
A. S. Brewster
Francisco Castellón
Byron Cole
Captain Creighton
Timothy Crocker
Charles W. Doubleday
Callender Irvine Fayssoux
Fermín Ferrer
Parker H. French
Birkett D. Fry
Cornelius Garrison
Charles H. Gilman
Domingo de Goicouria
Charles Frederick Henningsen
Máximo Jérez*
Patrick Jordan
Achilles Kewen
Captain Kruger
Captain Legaye
J. W. Livingstone
S. A. Lockridge
James H. McIntosh
José Machado
Colonel Markham
Charles Morgan
José Trinidad Muñoz
Bruno von Natzmer
Major O'Neal
Calvin O'Neal
Captain Prange
Félix Ramírez*
Patricio Rivas*
Antony Francis Rudler
Mariano Salazar*
Edward J. Sanders

Louis Schlessinger
Major Swingle
D. W. Thorpe
H. T. Titus
Captain Turnbull
José María Valle
Augustin Vijil
William Walker
John Waters
John Wheeler

---

*Those who switched from aiding Walker to aiding the Allied cause.

THOSE OPPOSED TO WALKER

Ramón Belloso (a Salvadoran)
Manuel Bosque
Alejandro Bülow
José Maria Cañas (a Costa Rican)
George Cauty
Fruto Chamorro
Ponciano Corral
José María Estrada
Santos Guardiola (a Honduran)
Captain Gutiérrez (a Costa Rican)
Tomás Martínez
Mateo Mayorga
Juan Joaquín Mora (a Costa Rican)
Juan Rafael Mora (a Costa Rican)
General Salazar (a Costa Rican)
Sylvanus H. Spencer
Cornelius Vanderbilt
William Robert Webster
Pedro Xatruch (a Honduran)
José Víctor Zavala (a Guatemalan)

APPENDIX B

IMPORTANT DATES OF THE FILIBUSTER WAR

December 29, 1854	William Walker approved colonization grant sent to him by Byron Cole for settlement in Nicaragua.
May 4, 1855	The Vesta departed from San Francisco, California for Realejo, Nicaragua with Walker and fifty-seven other Americans.
June 16, 1855	The Vesta reached Realejo.
June 23, 1855	The Vesta with Walker and the American Phalanx sailed for the transit route.
June 29, 1855	The American Phalanx repulsed at Rivas.
July 12, 1855	Walker returned to Realejo.
August 29, 1855	The American Phalanx returned to San Juan del Sur.
September 3, 1855	The American Phalanx defeated the Legitimists at Virgin Bay.
October 13, 1855	Walker captured Granada.
October 17, 1855	Parker French and Birkett Fry unsuccessfully attempted to capture Fort San Carlos.
October 19, 1855	A "massacre" occurred at Virgin Bay.
October 22, 1855	Mateo Mayorga executed.
October 23, 1855	Walker and Ponciano Corral signed a peace treaty ending hostilities between the Legitimists and Democrats.

October 30, 1855	Patricio Rivas inaugurated as President.
November 8, 1855	Corral executed for treason.
February 18, 1856	Charter of the Accessory Transit Company revoked.
February 19, 1856	Charles Morgan and Cornelius Garrison granted charter for transisthmian privileges through Nicaragua.
March 1, 1856	President Juan Rafael Mora of Costa Rica declared war on the filibusters in Nicaragua.
March 13, 1856	Nicaragua declared war on Costa Rica.
March 20, 1856	Louis Schlessinger defeated by Costa Rican Army at Santa Rosa.
March 30, 1856	Walker occupied Rivas.
April 5, 1856	The American Phalanx abandon Rivas.
April 7, 1856	Rivas occupied by Costa Rican troops.
April 9, 1856	Walker decided to return to Rivas.
April 11, 1856	Walker defeated at Rivas.
April 29, 1856	General José María Cañas abandoned Rivas due to a cholera epidemic.
June 10, 1856	Patricio Rivas dismissed as President of Nicaragua by Walker.
June 29, 1856	Walker elected President of Nicaragua.
July 12, 1856	Walker inaugurated.
July 18, 1856	Treaty of alliance signed between Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala.

September 22, 1856	All acts and decrees of the Federation of Central American States declared null and void.
September 24, 1856	Managua abandoned by the American Phalanx.
October 1, 1856	Masaya abandoned by the American Phalanx.
October 12, 1856	Walker attacked Masaya.
October 12, 1856	Granada attacked by elements of the Allied Army.
October 13, 1856	Allied Army routed at Granada by Walker.
October, 1856	Charles Frederick Henningsen arrived in Nicaragua.
November 1, 1856	President Mora of Costa Rica declared war on the Walker regime in Nicaragua.
November 7, 1856	San Juan del Sur occupied by Costa Rican Army.
November 12, 1856	Costa Rican Army defeated by the American Phalanx near San Juan del Sur.
November 13, 1856	Walker returned to Granada.
November 15-17, 1856	Walker defeated at Masaya.
November 18, 1856	American Phalanx retreated to Granada.
November 19, 1856	American Phalanx began evacuation of Granada.
November 24, 1856 - December 14, 1856	American Phalanx besieged at Granada by the Allied Army.
December 16, 1856	Rivas occupied by Walker.

December 23, 1856	Hipp's Point captured by the Costa Ricans.
December 24, 1856	Steamers captured at Puntas Arenas by Costa Rican expedition.
December, 1856	Castillo Viejo fell to the Costa Ricans.
December, 1856	Fort San Carlos occupied by the Costa Ricans.
January 2, 1857	Costa Ricans capture steamer San Carlos.
January 25, 1857	American filibusters repulsed at Obraje.
January 29, 1857	Filibusters repulsed at San Jorge.
February 3, 1857 & February 11, 1857	Filibusters again repulsed at San Jorge.
February 13, 1857	Filibusters retake Hipp's Point.
February, 1857	Filibusters unable to capture Castillo Viejo.
March, 1857	Filibusters again fail to take Castillo Viejo.
March, 1857	Rivas, headquarters for Walker, surrounded by the Allied Army.
March 23, 1857	Allies repulsed at Rivas.
April 11, 1857	Allies again repulsed at Rivas--this was the last engagement of the Filibuster War.
May 1, 1857	William Walker and the American Phalanx surrender to Commander Davis of the United States Navy.