

WALKER, THE WEE MAN WHO SAILED THE WORLD AS HIS AMAZING SUCCESS AS A FILIBUSTER AND BECAME PRESIDENT OF NICARAGUA

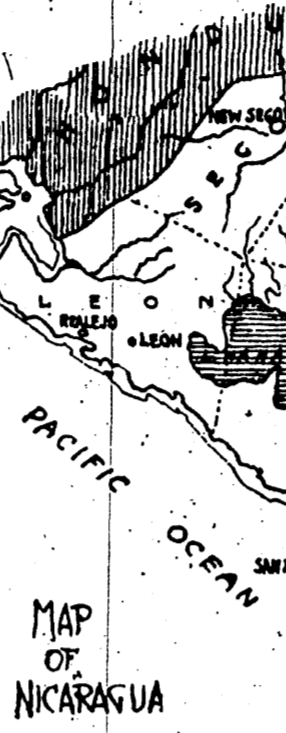


FILIBUSTER'S FLAG NICARAGUA

Mary arrived at San Juan del Sur. The British warship *Essex* was in her wake. Events were nearing a crisis.

There were numerous engagements between Walker's army and the allies, and hundreds and hundreds of lives were sacrificed. Then a new danger confronted Walker. It was famine. When this came his men deserted in droves. Soon there was not an ounce of bread in the city. The men lived on horse or mule meat for a few weeks, but there had to be an end to it. On the 10th of April the allies made a general assault and were repulsed. But April 22 when Commander Davis, offered safe-conduct to Walker and all his force to San Juan del Sur if he would evacuate Rivas, Walker accepted. Previously Davis had demanded that Walker surrender to him.

WILLIAM WALKER



MAP OF NICARAGUA

Commodore Vanderbilt was the chief spirit of the Pacific coast. He was contracted by the Transit Company, a San Francisco firm. The Transit Company was under contract to pay to the Nicaraguan government \$100,000 a year for the privilege of operating a steamship line across Nicaragua. Occasionally the business of the company was interrupted by the journeyings of passengers across Nicaragua made lively by the outbreak of a revolution. A gentleman could not be elected President of Nicaragua in those days without having the chair pulled from under him before he got well settled. A revolution every four months was the average. Some of the presidents could not read or write, but that made no difference in a country where only ten per cent of the population had been educated. When education amounted to anything, where nature had provided everything necessary for the contentment and well-being of a man, as in Mahomet's paradise. The climate in a great part of the republic was ideal. Work was unending, and there was no need of violent profusion and clothing was not a need. Man reaped without sowing and the harvest never failed. It would be paradise indeed, but for the villainous man.

In October, 1854, Nicaragua was more disturbed than usual. After the election of a year before Chorro, leader of the legitimist party, had exited Castellan, the leader of the democratic party, whereupon Castellan had returned, started a revolution with the aid of Hondurans, driven Chamorro out of Leon, the democratic stronghold, and then laid siege to Granada, the legitimist headquarters. This was the first of the month, the remarkable thing in Central American revolutions, when Castellan's allies were called home by a war in Honduras, and Castellan was in a sad plight. Just then Byron Cole appeared upon the scene. Castellan knew something of the ability of Americans as fighters, and gladly made a contract on his part for the complete evacuation of the army from the island. The settlers should receive a grant of 50,000 acres of land, and the army should get \$100 a month for service in war. Cole took this contract to the Man of Destiny, who was at that time in San Francisco, and he returned with the faith in the destiny of Walker than did the man who owned the paper.

Such rashness and daring appealed to the imagination of the forty-niners, and when Walker reached San Francisco, he received a joyous reception. As for the leader himself he looked upon the entire expedition merely as an incident in the great scheme he had in mind—the conquest of Mexico and Central America and the extension of slavery throughout those lands. He considered himself a nineteenth-century chieftain because he had to return to the editorial desk he made no sign. He took himself very seriously and was taken very seriously by every one else. No wonder he received recognition. There was no question as to his courage. He never weighed more than 130 pounds, but big men covered before him as underlings. He never was known to raise his voice, but what terrified those who aroused his passion was the fact that his eyes turned red, and he could have been in matters of etiquette and form, but was simple and unostentatious in dress. Although he lived in a community where the drinking and playing and among riotous-minded people, he never drank, never gambled and never was known to get into any kind of a rowdy and odd character for California in the early fifties.

While the "President of Sonora" gave his attention to the news of the mining camps and occasionally fought a duel with an offended argonaut, the owner of the paper, Byron Cole, was on his way back from New York to San Francisco. The principal route at that time was by sea from New York to San Juan del Norte (Greystown), Nicaragua, then by the San Juan river to Lake Nicaragua, and by land from Virgin Bay to San Juan del Sur, where the steamers from San Francisco, discharged and took of cargo and passengers. The Atlantic side of this traffic was controlled by a corporation called the Transit Company, of which

Castellan was succeeded by Corral, who took up a strong position in Rivas, commanding the road to Granada, the largest city in Central America. While Corral strengthened his position and prepared to give a hot reception to the Americans, Walker quietly laid his plans for a move that astounded Nicaragua. Granada is on Lake Nicaragua and is well guarded. Getting possession of a lake steamer, Walker got his whole force aboard hurriedly at night with his lights shrouded and his furnaces screened, he had his men inside the city before the sentries could spread the alarm. The surprised garrison, panic-stricken at first, tried to rally in the plaza, but it was no use. Walker's men drove them away in disorder. Evidently the night they had been one of festival and the inhabitants of the garrison had celebrated it with fervor and gaiety. At any rate, Walker, with a force of 110, captured the chief city of the republic and did not lose a man.

It has been the custom in Central American warfare to subject a conquered city to plunder, but that was not the case with Walker. He established a provisional government at once, put the city under guard and punished the first case of looting so severely that no more looting was heard of. Then he sent envoys to treat with Corral. Corral not only rejected Walker's proposals, but put the United States on the spot by accompanying his envoys into jail.

Walker meanwhile had received reinforcements from California, and his native force had increased until he had quite a respectable army. He might have given battle to Corral, but it was not necessary. Some of Corral's military staff or seven American travelers were crossing by the Transit Company's regular road, and Walker at once retreated to the court house, the military headquarters of state, Don Mateo Mayorga, who had been captured in Granada. Why Mayorga should be slain for the murder of a soldier is a matter that Walker did not seem to care. This seemed to strike terror to the soul of Corral, for he agreed to evacuate the city and to march to Granada, and side by side he and Walker marched to the cathedral, where a high mass and Te Deums were sung.

cabinet positions and made excellent progress toward reforming the affairs of the country, but he was not to go far undisturbed. On the north the Hondurans were massing a force of 5,000 men, both Honduras and Costa Rica declared war against Nicaragua, and Peru subscribed \$100,000 to aid Costa Rica. Honduras too, was on the eve of taking up arms. Both Honduras and Costa Rica got war supplies. If not financial support, from the British.

Walker went to Washington as a prisoner of war, and he preferred charges against the commodore and the officer who depended on active service. As for Walker, he was turned loose. For two years Walker made various efforts to lead expeditions to Nicaragua, but it was no use, the United States authorities watching him too closely. Meanwhile, the British and American governments kept a fleet of warships in Nicaragua waters ready to pounce on him any time he appeared.

Unable to get to Nicaragua direct, he determined to try to get there by way of Honduras, and in August, 1855, sailed from Mobile in the schooner Clifton with 100 men, bound for the island of Ruanan. He landed at Ruanan August 16, and a day later he captured Trullio, on the mainland. Scarcely had he captured the town than the British warship *Essex* appeared and the captain, Salmon, demanded that the surrender of Gen. Alvarez, meanwhile assembled to him him. Walker refused, and Salmon ordered his seventy men retreated down the coast. The *Essex*, with Alvarez and some of his force on board, was ready to pounce on Walker, when a British warship, the *Albatross*, appeared. Walker, the filibuster, surrendered to the British captain, but when the latter refused to surrender to the British, Walker turned him over to the Hondurans for trial. Capt. Salmon offered to plead for Walker if the president would ask, as an American, for his pardon. Walker's reply declined. September 11 he was arraigned before a court-martial and condemned to die the next morning by the gallows.

TWO SURVIVORS OF WALKER'S EXPEDITIONS NOW RESIDE NEAR THIS CITY

WASHINGTON has among its varied and picturesque veteran military population two former members of "Filibuster" Walker's armies, which first struggled and battled for an ideal and then a position in Nicaragua's fifty-four years ago. Both men have passed the three-score-and-ten-year mark, but despite their age, are as full of the vigor and fire of adventure as though the half century since their exploits among the Latin Americans was but a close neighbor in time.

The first man, Col. C. W. Doubleday, is a retired officer of the United States Army, with a long and enviable career in the service of the nation, both during the civil war and later in the western campaigns among the American Indians. Col. Doubleday was Walker's personal aid and one of his chief advisers during nearly all the hard campaigns that peculiar genius guided in Nicaragua. The second member, Walker's personal aid, is Capt. E. F. Ruffin, a member of the rank and file in the Nicaragua forces, who struggled valiantly under Walker's different detachment commanders in the days immediately preceding his downfall. Capt. Ruffin later joined the Confederate army and fought alternately in the Confederate army and navy. He closed his active military career in the struggles against the Austrians.

Col. Doubleday lives the typical life of a retired army officer, surrounded by his family at his country home, The Cedars, near Rosslyn, Va. Capt. Ruffin, alone in the world except for the companionship of other Confederate veterans in the city, appears a living by proof reading and appears content with life in modest bachelor quarters.

"Do you recollect Walker, Gen. Walker, as you used to call him?" said Col. Doubleday, repeating the question of the interviewer. "Why should I do it. I have written a book telling of our adventures down in Nicaragua. It all seems

like a dream now. Those were wonderful days. Almost each one of them was characterized by courage, foolhardy bravery or questionable diplomacy." It all ended in a final battle, and Walker's lights were lights indeed.

"Walker, in my opinion, was one of the most remarkable men this country ever produced. He was the bravest, the most sagacious and the most crafty soldier— if I may use the term—I have ever seen. His greatest fault was his contempt for his adversaries and his utter disregard of danger. It was the first fault that led to needless loss of life among his followers and eventually opened the way to his downfall.

"He was the most ambitious man I ever saw. He seemed to think he had a destiny—and sometimes I instinctively compared the visible results of his thoughts to the ambitions of Napoleon. His ambition, his avowed declarations for seriously and his lack of diplomacy in dealing with Central Americans and others were directly responsible for his death."

Col. Doubleday joined the "gold rush" in California in the latter forties, and after knocking about the far west, for several years wandered into San Francisco in the spring of 1854. It was while there, he said, that he was first attracted to the Pacific coast of Central America. He accordingly sailed for San Juan del Sur in Nicaragua, where he found a revolution in progress between Chamorra and Castellan, rival aspirants for the presidency. Chamorra represented the Nicaraguan aristocracy, and was backed by the church. Castellan was the champion of the Nicaraguan democracy and proclaimed himself as fighting for his rightful place and needed reforms."

Col. Doubleday organized a company of American and British adventurers and allied himself with Castellan.

He jumped into the thick of the fray in the latter part of the year, and in a few months with Gen. Don Maximino Jerez, a Castellan lieutenant, afterward the Nicaraguan minister to the United States, he served with the author of the story, about a year before the coming of Walker and his fifty-six fighting men from California.

"I was delegated by Castellan to meet Walker and his command at the coast and escort them inland," said Col. Dou-

bliday, "remarked the Walker veteran. "Before we would close the door the enemy swarmed about it like bees, and it was a terrific struggle to repulse them. Every one realized it was a case of death or the enemy succeeded in gaining an entrance, and if ever men fought like demons they did in those five or six minutes about the door of our temporary fortress. It was a hand-to-hand struggle, in which swords and revolvers were used short while the enemy advanced again, and while holding the bandage to the side, I was the first to try to get into the place in the rear. This maneuver was repeated several times, and with such disregard for the bullets of Walker's men that it was finally concluded that the best thing to do was to cut a way out into the open country. This doorway was hastened because of the number of men in killed and wounded and the wearing strength of those still fighting.

The determination to break our way out was immediately put into execution. The door was flung open and the members of the command in close formation dashed through the masses of the enemy opposed to them, ran under a street a short distance and then jumped into a ravine. Following with ravine for mile or so, they soon reached the open fields outside of Rivas.

"Our exit was so sudden," explained Col. Doubleday, "that Walker's men completely off their guard. They literally opened their ranks and let us pass between them, without firing a shot. As we reached the ravine we turned and gave them a volley which appeared to shoot them to the realization of what had happened. They didn't follow us, however. They probably had had enough fighting for one day.

"The saddest part of the attack and retreat was the necessity of leaving behind our dead and badly wounded. The latter begged us pitifully to take them along, but it was impossible. After we got out of the town we directed our native troops had fled from their post in the rear of the town almost at the beginning of the fighting."

In speaking of the order maintained by Walker among his men, Col. Doubleday referred to several executions of men who had deserted in the night, and several hundred looting towns and houses.

"I witnessed several of these executions," the veteran remarked. "It was terrible to see men who made up the rank and file. Walker was firm in having his orders maintained."

Col. Doubleday remained in service of Walker until after he was elected to the presidency of the republic and participated in a large number of fights of his principal campaigns. After Walker assumed the reins of government, Col. Doubleday returned to America, where, he spent the winter of 1857, and in the following spring set out for Central America again with reinforcements. It was while he was sailing off the coast of Honduras

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TWO SURVIVORS OF WALKER EXPEDITION IN WASHINGTON

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within a hundred yards of his home. His wife and family had been present in the city during his trial, and following the judgment of death they either could not or would not leave. All morning we heard the members of his family weeping over his impending fate. The hysterical shrieks of his eldest daughter were pathetic and heartrending.

"About 11 o'clock Corral came out of his prison between two keepers and, under their direction, took a seat in a chair already prepared for him in front of a high brick wall of a nearby building. He waited quietly and without a sign of nervousness until the firing squad took its position about twenty paces in front of him, under the command of Capt. Gilman. As one of the men started to tie a band across his eyes Corral waved him aside and, looking straight at the dozen men before him, said in Spanish: 'Senors, don't hit me in the face. That's all I ask of you.' Then indicating that he was ready for the band, he turned his head to permit the knot to be tied as quickly as possible.

"Just at this moment I noticed Walker come out of his headquarters and lean against a post in such a position that he could see everything that was going on. Capt. Gilman gave the order to fire in a low voice, and twelve shots rang out almost instantly. Corral sank from his chair, the blood spurting from his chest and spattering over the pavement. He was dead the moment his body reached the ground.

"We examined the corpse shortly afterward and found eleven bullet holes in the region of the heart within a space of eight inches. We learned that afternoon that one of the rifles had been loaded with a blank."

To all enemies of the caliber of Corral the filibuster was merciless, according to Capt. Ruffin, and in speaking of another incident in which he disposed of an individual who plotted against him or his men the former Walker soldier told of the capture of a native near Rivas on whom were found orders to poison a spring of water at one of the permanent camps.

"When Walker found the proof on the man he was beside himself with rage," said Capt. Ruffin. "He first thought of turning him over to a drumhead court-martial, but later, in a burst of uncontrollable anger, called a number of the men to his headquarters and told them to take the prisoner out and do what they wanted with him.

"Well, we were not possessed of the delicate instincts we have in our mature years," mused the old man after a moment's pause. "The fellow would have killed about half of us if we hadn't

caught him, so we came to the conclusion that hanging would serve him right. The whole command had a sort of impromptu lynching party. We took the fellow out in the woods and strung him up on a tree and let him die there. The details are of no consequence, and, besides, it was by Gen. Walker's orders, or rather, permission."

Capt. Ruffin's last service with Walker was as a member of a patrol along the San Juan river on the southern border to watch the advance of the Costa Rican army. It was in this part of Nicaragua that he served directly under Col. Wheat, later a noted Confederate soldier, as colonel of the Louisiana "Tigers," Col. Lockridge and Col. Titus of Kansas border war fame. A portion of this time he was besieged by the allied armies of Central America and with his companions was forced to kill and eat the company's pack mules.

"The nearest I ever came to being captured was along this river when a company of Costa Ricans jumped out of the underbrush and attempted to surround two other men and myself on mule back," he said. "It was on one of the rockiest roads I ever saw, but rocks didn't count in getting those mules over the ground to safety. They fairly flew. It isn't a pleasant thing to see about a hundred Central Americans stick as many bayonets in your face with a chance of a sugar cane knife getting into the play if the bayonet won't do. They were not twenty feet away when we first saw them coming out of the bushes, and the sight gave me the shivers for a month afterward."

Capt. Ruffin recounted several adventurous tales of efforts on the part of his command to march across the country and join Walker near Granada just before he was driven from the country. These efforts failed dismally because of the superior number of Walker's opponents. Conditions finally became such that Ruffin and his companions returned to America to take up other and less dangerous occupations.

"I think a few went back to Trujillo with him the last time, but they were very few," remarked the old man. "We began to realize then that his conquest of the country was an impossibility."

"Were you ever paid for your service under Walker?" he was asked.

"Not a cent," he replied with a smile. "We weren't fighting for money. It was for what might have come afterward. We were a nery lot of dreamers, though."