

THE CRABBE FILIBUSTERING EXPEDITION  
To Sonora  
1857

A BIT OF HISTORY

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PUBLISHED IN YUMA SENTINEL, DECEMBER 22, 1877

RE-PUBLISHED IN ARIZONA ENTERPRISE (FLORENCE) DECEMBER 13, 1890.

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COPY: FROM ARIZONA ENTERPRISE

COMPLIMENTS OF

CHARLES MORGAN WOOD  
Tucson, Arizona  
April 22, 1926

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G. C.

THE CRABBE FILIBUSTERING EXPEDITION

FROM ARIZONA ENTERPRISE DEC. 13 - 1890.

(Florence--Arizona)

A Bit of History, a brief review  
of Crabbe's Filibusteros,  
The Compact with an Ambitious  
Sonora Revolutionist and its  
Violation--The Defeat of Crabbe's  
Party and their Final Murder.

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Chas. O. Brown, of Tucson, has kindly furnished  
The Enterprise with a copy of the Yuma Sentinel of December  
23, 1877, from which the following account of Crabbe's  
Filibustering expedition to Sonora, is taken.

In 1856 Gandara was Governor of Sonora, but Ygnacio  
Pesqueira wanted to be. Harry A. Crabbe had married a member  
of the influential Ainsa family, of Sonora, and while down  
there on a visit to his wife's family he fell in with Pesqueira,  
who was on the point of organizing a revolution against the  
State Government. An agreement was made by which Crabbe was to  
bring one thousand armed men to accomplish the overthrow of  
Gandara. In return for this service his party was to receive  
an immense strip of land, extending across the northern frontier  
of Sonora and adjoining the American line. The explanation  
to be given to the general government of Mexico for introducing  
armed bands of foreigners and giving them lands, was to be  
that they were colonists settling the lands on condition of  
protecting the frontier against indian depredations. Crabbe

went to San Francisco and gathered together a lot of reckless, daring adventurers. He started with one-hundred men, leaving the others to follow as rapidly as they could be enlisted and organized. The party came by land and, in crossing the desert from Los Angeles to Yuma, experienced much suffering. At one time their provisions became so reduced that on dividing them around there was only a pint of corn to the man. Norval Douglas was of the party and, a companion having stolen and eaten and stolen his pint of corn, he shot him through the heart. Another member was a brother of the Col. Schneffer now operating among the mines of Mohave county. Marching up the Gila, Crabbe halted at the spot ever since known as Filibuster Camp, to recruit his animals before crossing the desert from there to Sonora. Meanwhile Pesqueira had overthrown Gandara and had now no use for Crabbe. Besides that, all Americans were unpopular in Sonora, and to have kept his word with Crabbe would have ruined the new governor with his own people and have compromised him with the Mexican Government. The bitterness of the war had not worn off. The purchase of Apache scalps by the States of Sonora and Chihuahua had attracted a rough lot of blood-takers. that reflected no credit on Americans. A few years before Crabbe's time, Parker W. French had led a party of about 25 Americans from Texas to California. Arriving at Cieuguita, in Sonora, they found the men all gone to the placer mines. They at once took possession of the place and held high carnival for three days. They hung the priest by the neck to make him tell where his money was; but the old boy was game and swore stoutly that he had not a cent. Finally his sister, to save his life showed French where the money was. They ravished every

female, without regard to age, and loaded with provisions and plunder these gallant pioneers went on their way rejoicing. French afterwards was a member of the legislature from San Luis Obispo county and generally known in California as "One-armed French".

Quite a number of such things having occurred the narrow-minded Mexicans were somewhat prejudiced against the brave "Gringos", and would never have permitted the new governor to admit Crabbe's party. Pesqueira rose to the occasion, denied all complicity with the filibusteros and began to raise the country against them. On reaching the first town, Sonoita across the line, Crabbe realized that things were changed. But believing that he would soon be re-inforced, that one or the other of the two hostile factions in Sonora would join him as soon as he secured a foot-hold, with a forbidding desert behind him and a rich country ahead and reckless of the future, he decided to advance. Before leaving Sonoita, Crabbe addressed the authorities in the following letter, which was translated and published March 30th, 1857, in a supplement of the Vos de Sonora, the official newspaper of Pesqueira and from which we now translate;

Sonoita, March 26, 1857.

Don Jose Maria ReDondo,

Prefect of the District of Altar:

Sir:

In accordance with the colonization laws of Mexico and in compliance with several very positive invitations from the most influential citizens of Sonora, I have entered the limits

country with one-hundred companions and in advance of nine-hundred others, in the expectation of making happy homes with and among you. I have come with the intention of injuring no one; without intrigues public or private. Since my arrival, I have given no indication of sinister designs, but on the contrary have made pacific overtures. It is true that I am provided with arms and ammunition, but you well know that it is not customary for Americans or any other civilized people to travel without them; moreover we are about to travel where the Apaches are continually committing depredations. From one circumstance I imagine to my surprise, that you are preparing hostile measures and collecting a force for destroying me and my companions. I know that you have given orders for poisoning the wells and have prepared to use the vilest and most cowardly measures. But bear in mind, sir, whatever we may have to suffer shall fall upon the heads of you, and those who assist you. I could never have believed that you would defile yourselves by such barbarous practices. I also know that you have not ceased to rouse against us, by mischievous promises, the tribe of Pagagoes, our best friends. But it is very likely that, considering my position, your expectations will be baffled. I have come to your country having a right to do so, and as has been shown, expecting to be received with open arms, but now I conceive that I am to encounter death among enemies destitute of humanity. As far as concerns my companions now here and about to arrive, I protest against any evil procedure among them. You have your own course to follow, but bear this in mind: Should blood be shed, on your head be it all and not on mine.

Nevertheless you can make yourself sure and proceed with your hostile preparations. As for me, I shall lose no time in going <sup>to</sup> where for some time I have intended to go and am only waiting for my party. I am the leader and my intention is to obey the promptings of the law of nature and of self preservation. Until we meet at Altar I remain,

Your obedient servant,

Henry A. Crabbe.

This letter is given to the warden of Soncota to be delivered without delay to the prefect at Altar.

H.A.C.

In the same supplement was published with a high-toned proclamation, which we re-translate as follows:

YGNACIO PESQUEIRA,

Substitute Governor of the State and Commander-in-chief of the frontier.

To His Fellow Citizens:

Free Sonoranians! To Arms, All!!

The Hour has sounded, which I lately announced to you, in which you would have to prepare for the bloody struggle which you are about to enter upon.

In that arrogant letter you have just heard a most explicit declaration of war made by the chief of the invaders. <sup>does</sup> What reply it merit? That we march to meet him.

Let us fly then, with all the fury of hearts intolerant of oppression, to chastise the savage filibuster who has dared, in unhappy hour, to tread our national soil

and to provoke, arouse our ire.

Show no mercy no generous sentiments towards these hounds!

Let them die like wild beasts who, daring to trample under foot the law of nations, the rights of states and all social institutions, dare to invoke the law of nature as their only guide, and to appeal to brute force alone.

Sonorians let our conciliation become sincere in a common hatred of this accursed horde of pirates, destitute of country, religion or honor.

Let the tri-colored ribbon, sublime creation of the genius of Guadalupe, be our only distinctive mark, to protect us from the enemy's bullets as well as from humiliation and affront. Upon it let us write the beautiful words, "Liberty or Death," and henceforth it shall bear for us one more sentiment, the powerful, invincible bond that now unites the two parties of our state, lately divided by civil war.

We shall soon return covered with glory, having forever secured the welfare of Sonora and having, in defiance of tyranny, established in indelible characters this principle: The people that wants liberty, will have it.

Meanwhile, citizens, relieve your hearts by giving free scope to the enthusiasm that oppresses them.

Viva Mexico! Death To The Filibusters.

Ygnacio Pesqueira

Ures, March 30, 1857.

Crabbe pushed forward with all his party, except two

who had been left sick on the American side of the boundary, and took a position in the town of Gaboroa in great force from all parts of Sonora. Crabbe fought his way from house to house until he occupied one of the largest buildings in the heart of the town and held it for several days.

His men were splendid marksmen and the Mexicans say that if a finger was put in sight, an American bullet was sure to hit it. Carmen Huila, an old woman who died here at Yuma last last year, was down there. Her son was in the belfry of the church; not seeing him she called him; he barely exposed his head to answer her when a bullet went crashing through his brain and he fell dead on the ground at her feet. After more than half of his party had been killed or wounded, when his provisions and ammunition were nearly exhausted, when he himself had been wounded and the roof burned off the building he was in, Crabbe surrendered, upon the most definite and most emphatic assurances that he and his party should be treated as prisoners of war. Within twelve hours every man of them was a corpse on the ground outside the town and the hogs were devouring their unburied bodies. A party came across the line into the United States, and butchered in their beds the two sick men left by Crabbe, and who had never been in Sonora at all.

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