

SAN PASQUAL BATTLEFIELD STATE HISTORIC PARK.



Commemorating the Battle of San Pasqual 1846



Volunteer in the Parks

Are you interested in educating the public and preserving history? We are currently looking for energetic volunteers to assist with living history activities, school presentations, museum host, and office tasks.

If you are interested in learning more about the Battle of San Pasqual and sharing that knowledge with park visitors, we need you! For more information, please call San Pasqual Battlefield S.H.P Staff at 760.737.2201.

Special Thanks

San Pasqual Battlefield Volunteer Association
Witman Ranch
Joe Lopez
Lt. Col. Charles Waterhouse USMC
San Pasqual Band Native Americans
Staff & Volunteers
Ben Cueva



The History of the Battle of San Pasqual

A brief but bloody battle raged through this valley one cold December morning in 1846; part of a war between the United States and Mexico, now almost forgotten. This place has been set aside, not a monument to war, but as a reminder of the human ideals, actions, and passions that drive nations to bloodshed. Here you can learn what led to the Battle of San Pasqual, to events of that wintry day, and why some quarrels still endure.

The Battle of San Pasqual took place on December 6, 1846 between the United States forces led by Brigadier General Stephen W. Kearny and Californios led by Major Andres Pico. This battle was only one of the military encounters in California in the Mexican-American War, but it proved to be the bloodiest and the one with the most controversial outcome.

To conquer California for the United States, the Army of the West had marched in June, 1846 from Fort Leavenworth, in what is now Kansas, across the southern desert where they endured the lack of water, lack of food, and poor condition of their calvary mounts.

A few days out of Santa Fe, in what is now New Mexico, Brigadier General Kearny received erroneous word that California was in American hands and all was secure on the Pacific Coast.

Because of this misinformation, he sent two-thirds of his men back to Santa Fe and continued westward with a force of 100 men. The westward scout Kit Carson was pressed into service as a guide for the army troops as they progressed onward.

The journey across the barren desert took its toll on

the men and their mounts. When they finally encamped at Santa Maria (now Ramona) on the night of December 5, 1846, they were hungry, exhausted, and stiff from the cold and rain.

Nearby, a Californio force, led by Major Andres Pico, had encamped at the Native American pueblo of San Pasqual. News of the Californios' presence was brought to Brigadier General Kearny who sent a nighttime reconnaissance patrol to investigate the Californios' camp. Unfortunately, the presence of the patrol became known because of noises it made. Alerted to the possibility of attack, the Californios prepared for battle.

At dawn on a cold, rainy December 6th, the U.S. Troops rode over the hills between Santa Maria (now Ramona) and San Pasqual to face the Californios in the valley below.

In the resulting battle, the Californios' lances proved to be an overwhelming advantage over the U.S. troops' short swords and rifles with dampened gunpowder. Eighteen soldiers were killed during the battle; four others died later of wounds. Pico reported that only one Californio was killed. This figure is controversial.

That night, the U.S. forces buried their dead, bound up their wounded, then tried to continue to San Diego the next morning. They were stopped just past Rancho San Bernardo at what came to be called Mule Hill (just above Lake Hodges). There they were besieged by the Californios until the morning of December 11th when additional troop arrived from San Diego to rescue them. The Californios departed when they sighted the U.S. relief column.

The Army of the West, wounded and bedraggled, finally reached San Diego on December 12, 1846.

