



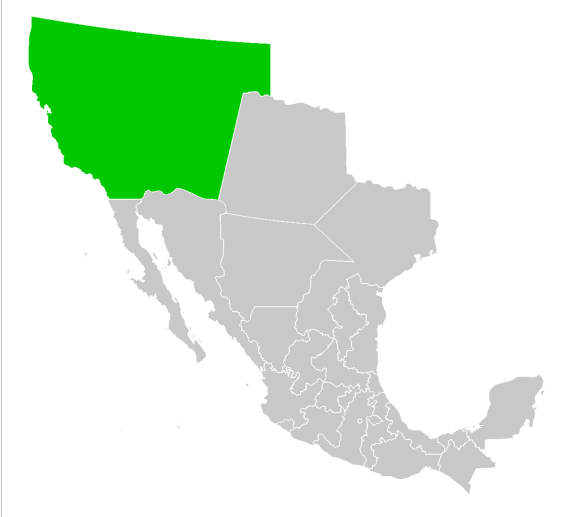


California Republic

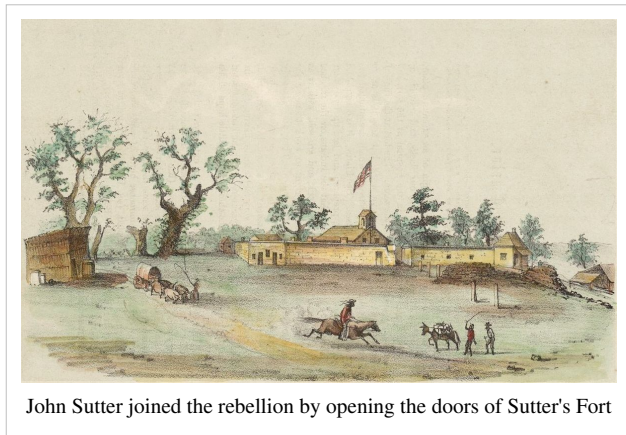
California Republic	
Unrecognized state	
<p>←  June – July  → 1846</p>	
<p> CALIFORNIA REPUBLIC</p> <p> The Bear Flag</p>	
	
Capital	Sonoma, California
Language(s)	English, Spanish, Indigenous languages
Government	Republic
Commander	
- 1846	William B. Ide
History	
- Independence from Mexico declared	June 14, 1846
- Occupation of Sonoma by U.S. military	July 9, 1846

The **California Republic**, also called the **Bear Flag Republic**, is the name used for a period of revolt against Mexico initially proclaimed by a handful of American settlers in the Mexican territory of Alta California on June 14, 1846, in Sonoma. This was shortly before news of the Mexican–American War had reached the area. The participants declared independence from Mexico, but they did not form a functional provisional government. Thus, the "republic" never exercised any real authority, and it was never recognized by any nation. In fact, most of Alta California knew nothing about it. The revolt lasted 26 days, at the end of which the U.S. Army arrived to occupy the area. Once the leaders of the revolt knew the United States was claiming the area, they disbanded their "republic" and supported the U.S. federal effort to annex Alta California.

The California Republic is notable for creation of the "(Grizzly) Bear Flag", whose symbols were later incorporated into the California state flag — including the words "California Republic".

Bear Flag Revolt

U.S. Army Major John C. Frémont arrived in California claiming to be on a mission to find a route to the Pacific (his mission officially was to find the source of the Arkansas River), he began encouraging a parallel rebellion among the Anglo-American settlers. As a result, thirty-three settlers in Sonoma, assisted by volunteers from among the American settlers and Vacqueros from the many haciendas, in the Sacramento River valley, captured the Mexican garrison of Sonoma and raised a homemade flag with a bear and star (the "Bear Flag") to symbolize their taking control. The words "California Republic" appeared on the flag but were never officially adopted by the insurgents. Their actions were later called the "Bear Flag Revolt."^[1]



John Sutter joined the rebellion by opening the doors of Sutter's Fort

As part of the Sonoma garrison, the rebels captured the Commandant of Northern California, General Vallejo, who openly endorsed the inevitability of the annexation of California by the United States. Vallejo was sent to Sutter's Fort in the Sacramento River valley, where he was kept a prisoner until August 1, 1846.^[2] The Republic's first and only president was William B. Ide,^[3] whose administration lasted twenty-five days. On June 23, 1846, Frémont arrived with sixty soldiers and took command in the name of the United States. The Bear Flag was replaced by the Stars and Stripes. The "republic" disbanded and Ide enlisted in the U.S.

forces as a private.

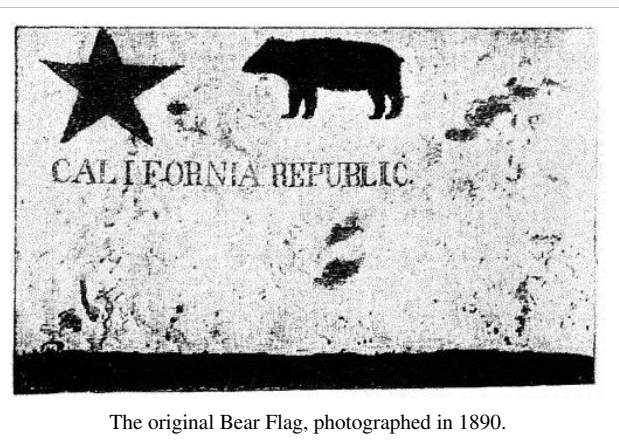
The Mexican governor sent 55 men to attempt to crush the rebellion, but General José Castro's forces were defeated at the Battle of Olompali.

Unknown to Frémont and the Bear Flag supporters, war had already been formally declared on May 13, 1846, but the news did not reach California until early July, when the frigate *USS Savannah* and the two sloops, *USS Cyane* and *USS Levant*, of the United States Navy captured Monterey, California.^[4]

Bear Flag

The most notable legacy of the "California Republic" was the adoption of its flag as the basis of the modern state Flag of California. The modern flag has a star, a grizzly bear, and a colored stripe with the words "California Republic". The Sonoma Plaza, site of the raising of the original Bear Flag, is marked by a California Historical Landmark.

The original Bear Flag was designed and made by William L. Todd, who was a first cousin of Mary Todd Lincoln,^[5] wife of president Abraham Lincoln. Todd painted the flag on domestic cotton cloth, roughly a yard and a half in length. It featured a red star based on



The original Bear Flag, photographed in 1890.

the California Lone Star Flag that was flown during California's 1836 revolt led by Juan Alvarado and Isaac Graham.^[6] The flag also featured an image of a grizzly bear *statant* (standing). The modern flag shows the bear *passant* (walking).

The original Bear Flag was destroyed in the fires following the 1906 San Francisco earthquake. A replica, created in 1896 for the 50th Anniversary celebrations, is on display at the Presidio de Sonoma (which was established in 1836 by Vallejo as a part of Mexico's attempt to halt Russian incursions into the region).

Proclamation of the Bear Flag Revolt

William B. Ide wrote a proclamation of independence on the night of June 14–15, 1846, and read it on the fifteenth.^[7]

To all persons, citizens of Sonoma, requesting them to remain at peace, and to follow their rightful occupations without fear of molestation. The Commander in Chief of the Troops assembled at the Fortress of Sonoma gives his inviolable pledge to all persons in California not found under arms that they shall not be disturbed in their persons, their property or social relations one to another by men under his command.

He also solemnly declares his object to be First, to defend himself and companions in arms who were invited to this country by a promise of Lands on which to settle themselves and families who were also promised a "republican government," who, when having arrived in California were denied even the privilege of buying or renting Lands of their friends, who instead of being allowed to participate in or being protected by a "Republican Government" were oppressed by a "Military Despotism," who were even threatened, by "Proclamation" from the Chief Officer of the aforesaid Despotism, with extermination if they would not depart out of the Country, leaving all of their property, their arms and beasts of burden, and thus deprived of the means of flight or defense. We were to be driven through deserts, inhabited by hostile Indians to certain destruction. To overthrow a Government which has seized upon the property of the Missions for its individual aggrandizement; which has ruined and shamefully oppressed the laboring people of California, by their enormous exactions on goods imported into this country; is the determined purpose of the brave men who are associated under his command.

He also solemnly declares his object in the Second place to be to invite all peaceable and good Citizens of California who are friendly to the maintenance of good order and equal rights (and I do hereby invite them to repair to my camp at Sonoma without delay) to assist us in establishing and perpetuating a "Republican Government" which shall secure to all: civil and religious liberty; which shall detect and punish crime; which shall encourage industry, virtue and literature; which shall leave unshackled by Fetters, Commerce, Agriculture, and Mechanism.

He further declares that he relies upon the rectitude of our intentions; the favor of Heaven and the bravery of



those who are bound to and associated with him, by the principle of self preservation; by the love of truth; and by the hatred of tyranny for his hopes of success.

He further declares that he believes that a Government to be prosperous and happyfying in its tendency must originate with its people who are friendly to its existence. That its Citizens are its Guardians, its officers are its Servants, and its Glory their reward.

— William B. Ide, *Head Quarters Sonoma*, June 15, 1846

Notes

- [1] Sonoma Valley Historical Society (1996). *The men of the California Bear Flag Revolt and their heritage*. Arthur H. Clark Pub. Co.. ISBN 978-0-87062-261-8.
- [2] Heidenreich, Linda (2007). *"This Land Was Mexican Once": Histories of Resistance From Northern California* (<http://books.google.com/books?id=9oXGsh3hCo4C>). Austin: University of Texas Press, 77-87. ISBN 978-0-292-71634-6
- [3] William B. Ide Adobe State Historic Park (http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=458), California State Parks.
- [4] "Commodore John Sloat" (http://www.pbs.org/kera/usmexicanwar/biographies/john_sloat.html). *US-Mexican War*, Public Broadcasting Service.
- [5] Bear Flag Museum (<http://www.bearflagmuseum.org/JHusseyArticle.html>) retrieved 13/6/2008
- [6] *Flags over California, A History and Guide* (http://www.militarymuseum.org/Flags_Over_Ca.pdf). Sacramento: State of California, Military Department. 2002. .
- [7] Several versions were created of the Proclamation. (<http://www.militarymuseum.org/BearFlagRevolt.html>) Fred Blackburn Rogers *William Brown Ide, Bear Flagger*, Appendix A, Ide Proclamations

References

- Bancroft, Hubert Howe *The Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft*, (<http://www.1st-hand-history.org/Hhb/22/album1.html>) *History of California* vol 22 (1886). Also at *History of California, VOL. V. 1846-1848* (<http://www.bearflagmuseum.org/BancroftIntroTOC.html>)
- Rice, Richard B. et al., *The elusive Eden: A new history of California* (2001) ch 7.
- Harlow, Neal *California Conquered: The Annexation of a Mexican Province 1846–1850*, ISBN 0-520-06605-7, (1982)
- "Simeon Ide's *A Sketch of the Life of William B. Ide*" ([http://www.bearflagmuseum.org/Simeon Ide Life of William B Ide Table of Contents.html](http://www.bearflagmuseum.org/Simeon%20Ide%20Life%20of%20William%20B%20Ide%20Table%20of%20Contents.html)). Retrieved 2008-01-30.

External links

- "The Bear Flag Revolt" (<http://www.nps.gov/goga/historyculture/bear-flag-revolt.htm>) (U.S. National Parks Service)
- John Bidwell, "Frémont in the Conquest of California (<http://www.sfmuseum.org/hist6/fremont.html>)", *The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine*, vol. XLI, no. 4, February, 1891
- The Bear Flag Museum (<http://www.bearflagmuseum.org/>)

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