



Reconnaissance in Sonora: Charles D. Poston's 1854 Exploration of Mexico and the Gadsden Purchase

C. Gilbert Storms

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In 1854, funded by a syndicate of San Francisco businessmen, Charles D. Poston and a party of twenty-five men launched an expedition from San Francisco to Sinaloa and Sonora, Mexico, before trekking north into Arizona and returning to California. *Reconnaissance in Sonora* brings to light Poston's handwritten report to the syndicate about the journey, published here for the first time.

Poston led his party through Sonora and the territory of the 1854 Gadsden Purchase, which today encompasses southern Arizona and a portion of southern New Mexico. The syndicate's charge to the young adventurer was to acquire land in Mexico in anticipation of the Gadsden Purchase and the building of the transcontinental railroad. *Reconnaissance in Sonora* details Poston's expedition, including the founding of the town of Colorado City at the site of present-day Yuma, Arizona.

C. Gilbert Storms explores the American ideas of territorial expansion and Manifest Destiny, the national debate over a route for a transcontinental railroad, the legends of rich gold and silver mines in northern Mexico, and the French and American filibusters that plagued northern Mexico in the early 1850s.

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