The San Patricio Battalion

The conquering army captured soldiers and executed them while also hanging civilians for cooperating with the guerrillas. A sizable number of Irish immigrants, as well as some other Euro-Americans, deserted to the Mexican side, forming the San Patricio Battalion. Many of the Irish were Catholics, and Irish Catholics resented the Protestants’ ill treatment of Catholic priests, nuns, churches, and other institutions. As many as 260 Euro-Americans fought on the Mexican side at Churubusco in 1847, many of whom were captured:

Some eighty appear to have been captured. . . . A number were found not guilty of deserting and were released. About fifteen, who had deserted before the declaration of war, were merely branded with a “D,” and fifty of those taken at Churubusco were executed. 63

Others received 200 lashes and were forced to dig graves for their executed comrades. 64

These acts were similar to those George Meade described in Monterrey on December 2, 1846:

They plunder the poor inhabitants of everything they can lay their hands on, and shoot them when they remonstrate; and if one of their number happens to get into a drunken brawl and is killed, they run over the country, killing all the poor innocent people they find in their way to avenge, as they say, the murder of their brother. 65

The lack of coverage of the atrocities during the war by historians is disturbing. Meade was certainly not a compromised source. Meade in that same December 2 letter writes,

The volunteers have been creating disturbances, which have at last aroused the old General so much that he has ordered one regiment, the First Kentucky foot, to march to the rear, as they have disgraced themselves and their State . . . [Taylor] impressed upon the officers the necessity of controlling the men and putting a stop to these outrages, which would inevitably end in the massacre of many innocent persons . . . [The Kentuckians] vowing their intention of killing Mexicans, to revenge their murdered comrades, and the same day one man, a Mexican, was shot within a hundred yards of the camp, and a little boy of twelve years of age, who was cutting corn-stalks to bring to the camp for sale, was shot in the field and his leg broken. This poor little fellow, all bleeding and crying, was brought by his relatives and laid down in front of the General’s tent, and he called out to look at him. 66

As General Winfield Scott’s army left Monterrey, soldiers under his command shot Mexican prisoners of war. 67