

In San Diego, meanwhile, Captain Heintzelman had received orders on December 13 from General Hitchcock to proceed at once against the hostile Indians. The next day the command left San Diego, arriving at Santa Isabel on the seventeenth. Accompanying Heintzelman was United States Indian Commissioner, O. M. Wozencraft, who spoke to a gathering of chiefs and capitanes the following day, presumably to inform them that he would shortly negotiate treaties with all the Indians in the region.¹²² Joining Heintzelman on the seventeenth was Captain Davidson and his detachment that had abandoned Camp Independence on December 6. While at San Pasqual, Davidson had received orders from Heintzelman to meet him at Santa Isabel.¹²³

Heintzelman divided his command, placing Bvt. Major J. B. Magruder in charge of some fifty men who were to proceed directly from Santa Isabel across the mountains to Los Coyotes Canyon. Captain Heintzelman, with a force of forty-six men, left on a circuitous route so as to enter the canyon by way of the desert. Before dawn on the morning of December 20, Heintzelman's unit left its desert camp and was in the canyon by daybreak. After moving about a half a mile, the soldiers sighted a party of between thirty and forty Indians advancing to attack. Leaving a small detachment to guard his rear, Heintzelman led his men across a small stream to meet the Indians.¹²⁴

Leading the attacking Indians was Chapuli, chief of Los Coyotes Cahuillas. Some twenty-five or thirty of his followers were armed with rifles.¹²⁵ After a short exchange of shots, the Indians cut off the engagement and fled through a dense swamp of willows and tules, up the canyon about half a mile to a village.¹²⁶ According to one soldier, the Americans were more frightened than the Indians, and had the Indians held their ground fifteen minutes longer, they might have remained in possession of the field.¹²⁷

Be that as it may, Heintzelman pursued the Indians to

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the village but found it deserted, his foe having moved on up the side of the mountain and around a point.¹²⁸ Under orders from Heintzelman, the village was set on fire and a party was sent out after the retreating Indians. Soon, a woman with a child in her arms appeared, seeking permission to speak with the commander of the soldiers. She identified herself as the wife of Bill Marshall and convinced Heintzelman that if he would call off the pursuit, the Indians would come in on their own accord. The fire was immediately extinguished and the pursuing party called back. Shortly, ten Indians appeared on the side of the mountain and were induced to come down by Heintzelman. Their leader was Juan Bautista, capitán of Pauki, a Cahuilla village located a few miles to the northwest. Bautista claimed that he and his people had been invited to join in the fighting but had refused because of their friendship for the Americans. To prove his point, Bautista agreed to send runners to the capitanes of nearby villages with orders that they report at once to Heintzelman.¹²⁹ The runners also told the leaders that they were soon to assemble at Temecula where they would meet with the United States Indian Commissioner, O. M. Wozencraft.¹³⁰

The following day a few Los Coyotes Cahuillas came in, seeking permission to look for the body of their chief, Chapuli, one of the eight Indians killed in the engagement. Most of the Indians, however, failed to report. Some Cahuilla leaders sent back friendly messages stating why they could not come. One claimed that he had to conduct a burial feast for his recently departed father, while another excused himself on account of illness.¹³¹ When most of the Cupeños failed to arrive at the specified time, Heintzelman sent Bvt. Major Magruder with two companies to search for them by way of the desert, and a detachment under a Lieutenant Hendershot was ordered to cut off their possible line of retreat. Magruder, however, met the Indians, including women and children, on the desert.¹³² Taken into custody were those who were thought to have directly participated in the murder of the