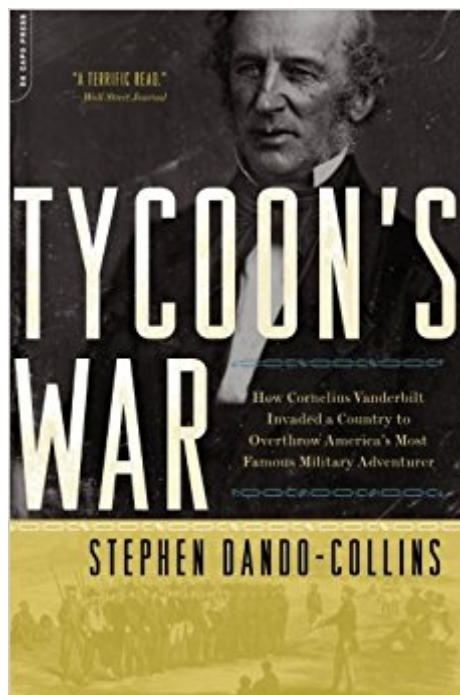




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Tycoon's War: How Cornelius Vanderbilt Invaded A Country To Overthrow America's Most Famous Military Adventurer



Synopsis

Written by a master storyteller, *Tycoon's War* is the remarkable account of an epic imperialist duel; a violent battle of the capitalist versus the idealist, money versus ambition, and a monumental clash of egos that resulted in the deaths of thousands of Americans. This incredible true story; impeccably researched and never before told in full; is packed with greed, intrigue, and some of the most hair-raising battle scenes ever written.

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Customer Reviews

The ground here is so fertile; it's a shame that Stephen Dando-Collins does approximately nothing with it. We start with one of the coolest lines in the history of capitalism -- a letter from a tycoon to his erstwhile business partners: Gentlemen, you have undertaken to cheat me. I won't sue you, for the law is too slow. I'll ruin you. Yours truly, Cornelius Vanderbilt. The story of wrongs avenged gets better. Because while Vanderbilt's partners are scamming him, the American William Walker is trying to take over Nicaragua. Vanderbilt needs Nicaragua; the gold rush is heating up in California, and Vanderbilt wants to shuttle passengers from the east coast to the west. Without a railroad or a Panama Canal, the quickest way to do this had been to send them around the southern tip of South America. Vanderbilt had another idea: send boats through the Caribbean to Nicaragua, get on the San Juan River at Greytown, follow the San Juan to Lake Nicaragua, use mules to cover a small strip of ground between the Lake and San Juan Del Sur, and dump them out onto the Pacific. From there, the trip up to California is comparatively short. There will be conflict eventually. On the one side we have Walker, the American "filibuster" (a term meaning something like "treasure-seeking

cowboy" before it meant "reading from the phone book for 72 consecutive hours"), hoping to carve out a new nation under his tutelage in South America. On the other we have a ruthless businessman who needs Walker's territory to make his money. While Vanderbilt plots his enemies' destruction, Walker draws thousands upon thousands of Americans down from the north into his private army and names himself president of Nicaragua. How do those thousands of Americans get there? They need to take ships, obviously.

I consider myself pretty well read and at least passably knowledgeable in American history, which is why I was surprised that I knew so little about William Walker. I first came across him in an odd little book called "Legendary Outlaws of the West" (Williams). A chapter discussed his early attempts to invade and claim Baja, Mexico. He was rebuffed by a notorious outlaw/rancher named Melendrez, who later was commissioned as a general in the army for helping defeat Walker and his men. You'd think Walker would return to the U.S. humbled, but instead - driven by a unwavering commitment to manifest destiny (translation: it's our right to do whatever we want) he set his sights on Nicaragua, ultimately leading a successful invasion with a handful of filibusteros (based on the Dutch word for freebooter - pirate - and source of today's "filibuster"). His dreams of empire were in direct opposition, ultimately, with shipping magnate Cornelius Vanderbilt who wanted to control access across the country via Lake Nicaragua to profit from trips to the west coast of America (at the time, pre-railroad, boats were much faster than going overland and the profits were obscene.) It was hard to know who to pull for in this war: a tough as nails mercenary who, after a series of victories, was elected president of Nicaragua, or the epitome of a capitalist successes, Vanderbilt, literally a self-made man able to devote millions to destabilizing Walker's regime in order to make more millions. This is a great book, thoroughly researched - in fact, I started to lose track of the many battles and the many players strutting across the stage only to be executed against an adobe wall - and I highly recommend it.

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