



# Pio Pico: The Last Governor of Mexican California

*Dr. Carlos Manuel Salomon Ph.D*

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Two-time governor of Alta, California and prominent businessman after the U.S. annexation, Pío de Jesus Pico was a politically savvy Californio who thrived in both the Mexican and the American periods. This is the first biography of Pico, whose life vibrantly illustrates the opportunities and risks faced by Mexican Americans in those transitional years.

Carlos Manuel Salomon breathes life into the story of Pico, who—despite his mestizo-black heritage—became one of the wealthiest men in California thanks to real estate holdings and who was the last major Californio political figure with economic clout. Salomon traces Pico's complicated political rise during the Mexican era, leading a revolt against the governor in 1831 that swept him into that office. During his second governorship in 1845 Pico fought in vain to save California from the invading forces of the United States.

Pico faced complex legal and financial problems under the American regime. Salomon argues that it was Pico's legal struggles with political rivals and land-hungry swindlers that ultimately resulted in the loss of Pico's entire fortune. Yet as the most litigious Californio of his time, he consistently demonstrated his refusal to become a victim.

Pico is an important transitional figure whose name still resonates in many Southern California locales. His story offers a new view of California history that anticipates a new perspective on the multicultural fabric of the state.

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