

William M. Adler
5 February 2015

Dear IPRAF,

My colleague Jody Jenkins and I received a 2013 Peace Research Grant in support of our film, "Sweet Home Costa Rica: A Story of War...and Peace." We are pleased to provide you with our final report.

The film's objective was to document how ordinary Americans of the mid-20th century struck an extraordinary blow for peace. We hope that the film serves as an instructive and entertaining piece of recovered history and that it will provoke contemporary audiences to contemplate their own place in the war economy of the early 21st century.

As you will recall, our film chronicles a group of Quaker war-resisters from Alabama who left the United States in the fall of 1950, during the Korean War. "I felt that it was my duty," one émigré, Marvin Rockwell, told us, "to try to show as many people as possible how wrong war is." Marvin and four other members of the Fairhope, Ala. Monthly Meeting of Friends went to prison for refusing to register for the draft. Had they registered, they believed, they would have been "sanctioning war," a step that neither their faith nor their consciences permitted.

Shortly after Marvin was released from federal prison in late 1950, he and some 40 other Quakers from Fairhope – nine families in all – took a resounding stand: they left the US, a country that had denied them the right to religious freedom, and immigrated to Costa Rica. "We really didn't want to raise our kids in the States, where the atmosphere was so militaristic," Mary Rockwell (a relative of Marvin's by marriage) told us. "We settled on Costa Rica because it was a peace-loving country and they had just gotten rid of their army."

After a six-month search for suitable land on which to settle in Costa Rica, the Quakers moved to a remote and isolated cloud forest they named Monteverde, or Green Mountain. There, as the film documents,

they set about building a life of pacifism and community. A Meeting House, a cooperative cheese factory (many had been dairy farmers in Alabama) and a Friends School were the first institutions they established, all of which are flourishing today.

Through interviews with the handful of surviving pioneers and their children, as well as with American and Costa Rican historians and political scientists (including the current president of Costa Rica, Luis Guillermo Solís, a former academic), and through extensive use of archival photos, newsreels, letters, diaries, home movies, news clippings and court records, the film chronicles the Alabama Quakers' decision to emigrate – to uproot themselves and their families from everyone and everything they knew -- and their efforts to build community anew in Costa Rica.

We were interested in how our subjects fit into their time and place. The film frames their story in both the American postwar peace movement as well as that of post-Civil War Costa Rica. (The brief but bloody Costa Rican war lasted for three months during 1948.)

Regarding the former, the film briefly examines the wartime and post-war pressures and influences at work in the US: the ways in which words such as “patriotism” and “freedom” were used to intimidate and persecute pacifists.

As to Costa Rica, we explore how the country came to embrace the Quaker testimony of peace, what that decision says about Costa Rica's identity, culture, politics and the economy, and how and whether its decision to abolish the army might be replicated elsewhere.

At this writing the film is not quite finished. We have a 52-minute rough cut, which we have shown to audiences in Monteverde (where Bill is based), and Savannah, Georgia, where Jody lives and works. The final cut will come in at 56:46 – the requisite length for a work to be screened on public TV.

We still lack interviews with two subjects, both of whom have agreed to be filmed later this month. Once we insert those clips, we'll be ready for the final edit. Our plan is to premiere the film at the [Monteverde](#)

[Institute](#) on April 19, 2015, the 64th anniversary of the founding of Monteverde.

Following that screening, we plan to make the film available for download on our website and will also make DVDs available. And as soon as we have the final version on hand, we will be submitting it to PBS as well as to international television outlets for consideration. (And of course we'll send copies to IPRAF.)

Thank you for your generous grant, and for all the vital work you do around the globe to advance peace research.

Sincerely,

Bill Adler