

November 7, 1974

Mr. Jerry MacMullen
382 Glorietta Blvd
Coronado, Calif.

Dear Mr. MacMullen:

In August I wrote to you concerning the collector or customs in San Diego during the 1850s. Unfortunately, you replied that the records of this period no longer exist, as they were discarded some time ago for the sake of "efficiency"! But I believe you did ask me to tell you if I ran across any sources of information. Happily enough, I did.

In the course of some long (and largely futile) correspondence with the National Archives, they informed me that two of their microfilm publications touching on the subject could be found in Western libraries. The first, entitled "Letters sent by the Secretary of the Treasury to Collectors at Pacific Ports," has been purchased by the U.C.S.D library. The second, entitled "Letters Received by the Secretary of the Treasury from Special Agents, 1854-1861" is at the University of Texas, El Paso library.

This second publication might be of interest to you, since it would contain the report of Special Agent J. Ross Browne on the condition of the customs depot in 1854. Browne was quite a character. After serving as official reporter at the California Constitutional Convention in 1849, he succeeded in being appointed Treasury Agent to inspect customs houses up and down the coast. Unlike the others, he took his job seriously, and said some nasty things about the way revenue was collected and the offices run--especially in San Diego. This report is also contained in his book Crusoe's Island (copy in U.C.S.D. library). Perhaps you would want to write an article about this man and his report? I thought I would bring it to your attention at least.

The Information I discovered from the National Archives, though valuable, will not be of use to my current research. Therefore I pass it on to you.

I wonder, though, if you could answer another question



for me. I have run across the names of some ships (were they boats then?) which purportedly operated in San Diego waters during the 1850s. Some doubt exists whether they were indeed here or not. The vessels were supposedly named "Fanny," "Pintus," and "Josephine." Do you know if any such vessels existed?

That is my report, and a question. Hope you are keeping well, and that I may hear from you. Dr. Moriarty sends his wishes.

Sincerely yours,

John L. White

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